Signs & Portents

10

d20 system™

Danger in the Westermarck!
First Adventure for Conan the RPG

Eldritch Vampires
Spell-thirsty New Fantasy Power Class

The Fomorians
More Evil Comes for Slaine

Plus. . . King Conan, Celebrity PRC for Babylon 5, Darkology CyberNet/Horror setting, Rune Magic, Saddle Soaring Dredd Craze and lots, lots more!
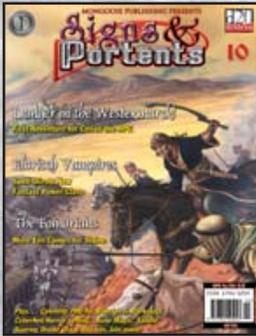
Cover art from The Road of Kings by Chris Quilliams, featuring Conan as a Zuagir bandit chieftain

Editorial

Heya,

'Mingy.'

This is the word of the moment at Mongoose Hall. Technically it means extremely small or stingy, but here it has come to mean 'ubered up', if you get my drift. Any time one of the guys generates a new character, we examine it for mingyness (it should be pointed out that the correct pronunciation is as in the *Emperor Ming*). Things like an inappropriate character concept (an idea we are very proud of here at the Hall, but which, like any great idea, is open to abuse), a loaded set of feats, you know the sort of thing.

Currently I have been accusing Alex's character Orfeo of being Mingy, mainly as he is practically unkillable due to all the defensive ploys he has taken as a cleric. He in turn has suggested that my character Tharg (the Magnificent) is not exactly spotless, being as I recently did over 60 points of damage to a target when it wasn't even my turn thanks to Tharg's particularly handy Combat Instincts feat.

The question is, can you ever create a character who *isn't* mingy? Oh, sure, you start off with the noblest of intentions, but after the dice are rolled and you look at the stat line, tell me you don't have second thoughts about the character class you had intended to play. How many times have you heard somebody else say 'hey, those stats would make a great sorcerer/paladin/bard, etc. Then you sit looking at the collection of great RPG books you own (Mongoose, obviously) and how much of a crime would it be not to make use of them? Plus, all the rest of your group are going to do it, right? All in all, it's just unavoidable. You will be lured by the dark side.

OK, enough moralising. We recently got some feedback from playtesters on one of our Conan adventures, which I thought I would share with you. This is advice about straying into Pictish territory:

1) Never spend the night in the Pictish Wilderness.
     1.1) If forced to spend the night in the Pictish Wilderness, fortify your position.
     1.2) Ask the GM if there's a safe haven nearby.
     1.3) Always shift positions.
2) Don't go on a scouting mission wearing armour that slows your movement or hinders your skill checks.
     2.1) Running is safer than fighting.
3) Use trees for cover, concealment and height advantage.
4) Bossonians should always fight defensively.
5) Never place yourself in a position where your enemy might be able to harm you.
     5.1) Always use ranged weapons until your foes are upon you.
     5.2) Always make them come to you.
6) Don't chase Picts through the forests after a planned ambush.
     6.1) 'It's a trap!'
7) Spread confusion among your enemies. Causing a diversion can be very effective.
8) Picts in Hunting Paint are not dangerous, Picts in war paint are.
9) Deception is often more effective than confrontation.
10) Regroup, reorganise, reinforce.

If you had any doubt about playing Conan the RPG, this should swing it. How often in a fantasy game does the suggestion of taking off armour actually make any sense? How often has your party camped in the middle of a dungeon, blithely ignoring the fact that there may be a whole tribe of orcs pottering about nearby (unless those 10 you just killed really have been living like hermits in that room for the last decade). The team in question had twenty armed soldiers plus themselves against less than a dozen Picts.

Get Conan, play Conan, love Conan. I am Old Bear, hear me roar!

Oops, too much caffeine, time for a lie down. See you next month.
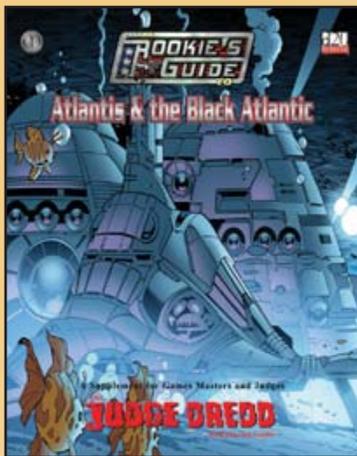
Ian

EYE ON MONGOOSE

New Releases This Month

Atlantis is a word that conjures up mystery and intrigue when mentioned, and like the fabled city of legend, the way station of Atlantis acts as a magnet for explorers, vagabonds and tourists alike. Located in the middle of the Black Atlantic Ocean and protected only by a handful of judges, Atlantis is a port of call for ships, subs and a focal hub of the amazing Trans-Atlantic Tunnel that connects Mega-City One to Brit-Cit. Pirates are always a broadside away and boardroom dealings and politics work to drain every ounce of willpower from the citizens employed to make sure the station runs properly. Atlantis is a place where the rich and famous stand above the common man and where it is as simple to disappear from sight as it is to board the Zip monorail.

Mid-way between Mega-City One and Brit-Cit lies six service plexes, the largest of which is Atlantis. A staging point for both commercial and passenger transports from the European mainland to the American mega-cities. Atlantis is home to nine million citizens, workers and support staff, and a hive for black market smugglers and racketeers who profit from the hapless law-abiding population. A small cadre of judges from Mega-City One and Brit-Cit keep the peace. Like the mythical city from which it took its name, Atlantis is a place of mystery and intrigue where anything can happen and the unexpected is just around the corner.

A perimeter wall runs Atlantis's entire circumference. Aqua cannons the station's first line of defence, are mounted every one hundred. If the station is threatened by devastation, hammerhead missile silos are ready to take action, manned by G-chimps, genetically modified chimpanzees. If Atlantis should suffer extensive damage and is in danger of disintegrating, the upper mezzanine can be freed from its moorings, emptying its ballast tanks to float up to the surface where the inhabitants can be evacuated.

This 128-page book is a detailed guide to the amazing ocean based station of Atlantis, its occupants and everyday life in one of the harshest environments on Earth. Games Masters will find a wealth of background information that can be used in either a citizen or judges campaign, including new feats, skills, prestige classes and equipment, as well as a whole host of other information to whet the appetite of both Games Master and player alike.

You will find details of the citizens who live and work on the station, as well as the worst dregs of humanity that prey upon them. Smuggling and piracy are commonplace and Games Masters will find details on running pirate campaigns and one off adventures. The judges of Sea Watch are the last line of defence on Atlantis and it is these brave men and women who work tirelessly to keep the populace under control and stamp down hard on crime. Players can now choose from a number of new judge Prestige Classes from the members of Sea Watch to Harbour and Ocean Patrol, or investigate illegal aliens as an Immigration Control Judge. A wealth of information is provided for the Games Master to seed adventure ideas or run an entire campaign located on Atlantis, and details of the station, the Trans-Atlantic Tunnel and Poseidon the Justice Departments underwater facility are provided.

This book also provides details on piracy and the pirates who operate in the Black Atlantic and some of the other oceans of the world and provides details on some of the strange and fearsome creatures found in the darkest depths of the Black Atlantic.

So whether you plant on partaking in a game of Aquaball in the Seaview Park, diving at the Jacques Cousteau Underwater Training centre, or just waiting for the connection to Brit-Cit, The Rookies Guide to Atlantis offers you all this and much more.
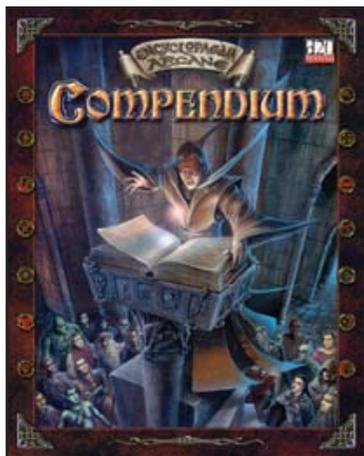
The first Encyclopaedia Arcane Compendium brings together four great EA titles together for the first time. Demonology, Necromancy, Battle Magic and the all-new Transmutation.

Demonlogy takes your mage along the path of summoning beasts from other planes, sworn to do your bidding but intent on taking your soul. Can you skate the line that separates power from disaster?

Necromancy opens up the world of the dead. No longer will you ever be without a manservant again! All the powers of the afterlife will be yours to command.

Battle Magic is perhaps the ultimate in destructive combat power. Sweep whole battlefields with your arcane spells and alter the destiny of kingdoms, if you dare.

Transmutation is a brand new, never before seen Encyclopaedia Arcane, focusing on the fascinating world of magical alteration. Fully 35 compatible, it's a great new addition to the EA range.

This may be your last opportunity to get hold of these hard to find releases, all of which have been thoroughly reviewed and updated by Mongoose supremo Matthew Sprange.
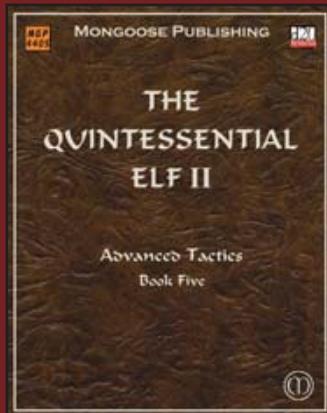
What do we say about elves? What can we say that has not already been said?

Elves delight the readers of fantasy books and gamers alike. Ephemeral beings of light and spirit, they dance just on the edge of our awareness. They can be angels and demons, the personification of otherworldly magic or nature spirits depending on who does the telling. They may be warriors, wizards, singers, poets, dreamers…or nothing at all, just figments of movement at the corner of our eye.

It is this seemingly infinite well of possibilities that causes us to come back to elves again, and again, and yet again. Elves can embody the best of us, our purest qualities unsullied by the decay of time or the grime of compromise. Unlike the more pragmatic humans they act on the epic scale, directly choosing good and evil without flinching.

The Quintessential Elf II does not aim to revolutionize the portrayal of elves that already exists in the literature of fantasy gaming. Elves are the single most commonly written about race; trying to change the accumulated perceptions created by such a mass would take a work of rare genius.

Rather, Quintessential Elf II focuses on trying to help the reader get the most out of what he already knows about elves. It starts off with basic rules for tailoring elves to fit specific roles in a campaign or world. We then move on to discuss building truly epic elves using multiple classes and legendary career paths that lead to the ultimate reaches of combined martial might and elven magic.

Elves have always been amongst the most popular racial classes to play, and the Quintessential Elf II is designed to break new ground, unlocking a whole new aproach to playing this perennial favourite. This latest 128-page release is simply unmissable!
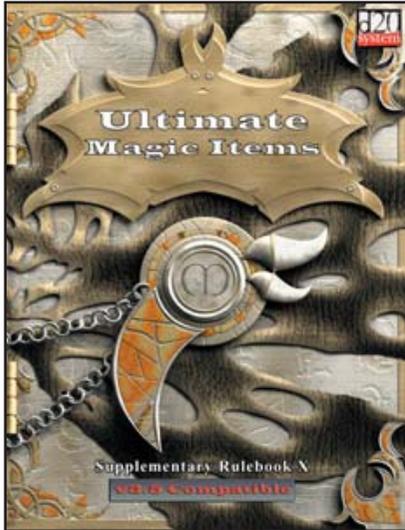
Ultimate Magic Items is a giant 256 page hardback compiling and expanding upon the most popular magic items that have appeared in our d20 supplements since the game system was released, all brought up to date to be fully-compatible with the 3.5 revision.

If you like magic items (and who doesn't?) then you are in for a real treat. Everything from a bog standard magic sword to the immovable rod (with its 101 uses) is covered in detail, making this the only stop you ned for any magic item.

If it's magic and it's an item, then Ultimate Magic Items has it! Magic items - they're fantastic!

As 2261 dawns the galaxy seems to have paused for a moment. Hushed conversations in the halls of power seek understanding of the new situation. The great leader of the light fell into darkness at Z'ha'dum. The great enemy, injured badly by his final act of courage, has withdrawn to their places of power. In the silence the minor powers begin to retreat as well. Meanwhile a malignancy grows in the heart of the Centauri Republic; cutting it out will lead to the freedom of Narn and the eventual destruction of the Centauri People. But worse is to come; somewhere out in the uncharted reaches of hyperspace former allies gather for what will be the greatest battle of the age.

In 2260 the war of words became a shooting war. The grand ideals of the Alliance, not to mention their need to operation independently from Earth, were put to the test of flame and death. They survived, bloody and beaten, upheld by the voices and presence of the great leaders who proved that they would sacrifice everything to preserve life.

The coming year will test their resolve even further. Legends will walk among them, both from elder days long forgotten and newborn, forged in the fires of the present day. Along the way legends and common men will pay terrible prices. Friends will fall. Hope will be betrayed, only to rise like a phoenix from the ashes.

In the year 2261, everything changed.

No Surrender, No Retreat is a 144-page Sourcebook describing the events of 2261 as they appear in Season 4 of Babylon 5. It explores in detail the personalities, events, and technology that shape the next million years of civilised evolution. Used in conjunction with the other season books and the core Babylon 5 RPG, No Surrender, No Retreat allows the Games Master to extend his games beyond 2259. Characters can participate in the grand sweep of the Great War, assist the Mars colonists in their bid for independence, or stand firm against the alien influenced Sheridan and his mad war of conquest.

It is a time for legends to rise up and walk the galaxy once more. The crew of Babylon 5 may be the most obvious of those legends but they do not stand alone. Characters surviving the events of this season have the opportunity to write their names among the stars for all eternity.
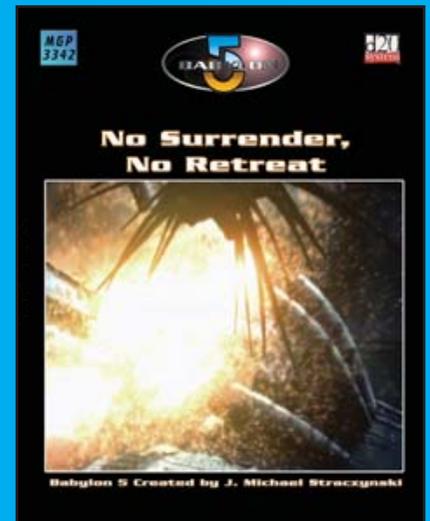
FEATURE *RELEASE:*

CONAN
THE ROAD OF KINGS

ROBERT E. HOWARD and those following him have woven a fascinating tapestry of wealth, poverty, pitch black evil and epic struggles for life in a world determined to kill even the hardiest. Herein is written the descriptions of this harsh world: Proud lands of tarnished civility burning with civil wars; barbaric wildernesses of savage killers hunting with primitive weapons; dreaming kingdoms of dark priests worshipping with bloodied daggers; noble demesnes of arrogant knights fighting with grim determination; ancient realms of haunted towers lurking with baleful menace; towering crags of icy rock slumbering with hidden peoples; and great seas of crimson waves brimming with cruel pirates.

As the Road of Kings takes a traveller through the glittering and decadent realms of the lost Hyborian Age, so too does this tome work toward the same end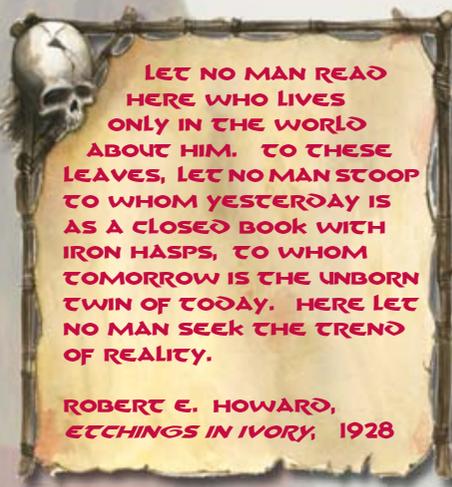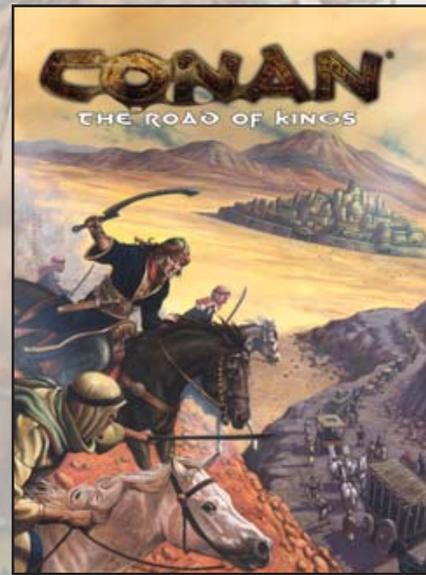. These fabled lands of ancient times are the shimmering background of your *Conan* games, the gleaming backdrop against which your action is set. These cultures, the grand forbearers of more modern times, are magnificent and degraded all at the same time. Each culture has its dark, rotten core and its flashy exterior, its gilt mask of civility.

It is our world, yet it is not a world any of us would recognise. It is a world that is dimmer than the memory of a fleeting dream, yet is bright as the glowing dimness of a dying ember lying amid the coals of a lost fire. It is a world of the distant past, from a time before our recorded history, a time that is forgotten by us… almost. The ghosts of that far-flung age come to us to tell their tales, so we may live them again and thrill to their adventures.

Open up the book of Von Junzt, which lies grim and foreboding in front of you, and read about an age undreamed of by modern science. Open the tome called *Nameless Cults*, where is written a translation of the Nemedian Chronicles, and read of black eons known to us as the Hyborian Age…

> *Let no man read here who lives only in the world about him. To these leaves, let no man stoop to whom yesterday is as a closed book with iron hasps, to whom tomorrow is the unborn twin of today. Here let no man seek the trend of reality.*
>
> *Robert E. Howard, Etchings in Ivory, 1928*

This magnificent volume not only contains enthralling details of every major Hyborian country, it includes chapters on successful Hyborian Games Mastering, Campaign Starters, new feats and treasures plus a detailed timeline of events during the life of Conan.

Devotees of the mighty Cimmerian have been waiting literally generations for this book - the definitive gazetteer of the Hyborian; written by award winning Conan savant, Vincent Darlage, this will be as valuable to colectors as it is to gamers.

200 full colour pages enclosed in a stunningly rendered hardback cover await you. Go forth, and tread The Road of Kings!

COMING SOON FOR CONAN!

THE PIRATE ISLES

RETURN OF THE [REAL] KING

CONAN
THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

[A] TALL MAN, MIGHTILY SHOULDERED AND DEEP OF CHEST, WITH A MASSIVE CORDED NECK AND HEAVILY MUSCLED LIMBS. HE WAS CLAD IN SILK AND VELVET, WITH THE ROYAL LIONS OF AQUILONIA WORKED IN GOLD UPON HIS RICH JUPON, AND THE CROWN OF AQUILONIA SHONE ON HIS SQUARE-CUT BLACK MANE; BUT THE GREAT SWORD AT HIS SIDE SEEMED MORE NATURAL TO HIM THAN THE REGAL ACCOUTREMENTS. HIS BROW WAS LOW AND BROAD, HIS EYES A VOLCANIC BLUE THAT SMOLDERED AS IF WITH SOME INNER FIRE. HIS DARK, SCARRED, ALMOST SINISTER FACE WAS THAT OF A FIGHTING-MAN, AND HIS VELVET GARMENTS COULD NOT CONCEAL THE HARD, DANGEROUS LINES OF HIS LIMBS.

R. E. HOWARD, *THE HOUR OF THE DRAGON*

KING CONAN

Medium-Size Humanoid (Cimmerian barbarian 15/ soldier 2/thief 1/pirate 2)

Hit Dice: 10d10+50+15+6+2+4 (137 hp)

Initiative: +20 (+6 Dex, +14 Reflex save)

Speed: 25 ft.* (plate armour)

DV (Dodge): 29 (+13 level, +6 Dex)

DV (Parry): 25 (+7 level, +8 Str)

DR: 14 (+10 plate armour, +2 visored helm, +2 natural)

Attack: Greatsword +26 melee; or Bossonian longbow +24 ranged

Full Attack: Greatsword +26/+21/+16/+11 melee; or Bossonian longbow (+8) +24/+19/+14/+9 ranged

Damage: Greatsword 2d10+8, or Bossonian longbow 1d12+8

Special Attacks: Ferocious Attack, To Sail A Road Of Blood And Slaughter, Sneak Attack +1d6/+1d8, Sneak Attack Style (broadsword), Greater Crimson Mist, Versatility (proficient with all weaponry, double threat range)

Special Qualities: Fearless, Bite Sword, Trap Sense +5, Uncanny Dodge, Improved Uncanny Dodge, Mobility, Improved Mobility, Greater Mobility (not usable in current armour), Damage Reduction 2/-, Seamanship +1 (+1 to DV on board ship), Pirate Code (Baracha Rockets and Smoke), Trapfinding, Barbaric Code of Honour.

Space/Reach: 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1)

Saves: Fort +20, Ref +20, Will +13 (+16 vs. Corruption, +15 vs. fear or Terror)

Abilities: Str 26, Dex 22, Con 21, Int 20, Wis 19, Cha 21

Skills: Balance +16, Bluff +28*, Climb +20, Decipher Script +13, Hide +15, Intimidate +15, Gather Information +10, Jump +10, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (geography) +15, Listen +13, Move Silently +25, Perform (song) +6, Profession (sailor) +12, Ride +15, Search +8, Sense Motive +14, Spot +13, Survival +15, Swim +13

Feats: Track, Diehard, Endurance, Fighting-Madness, Leadership, Sleep Mastery, Dabbler (Counterspells), Striking Cobra, Navigation, Combat Expertise, Improved Sunder, Greater Sunder, Improved Trip, Brawl

Possessions: Greatsword, superior black-painted plate armour (maximum Dex bonus +3), superior visored helm, arming sword, poniard, Bossonian longbow, 24 arrows.

These possessions and game statistics assume Conan is fully prepared for war, and attired accordingly. If attacked at his palace, he might be unarmoured, and if expecting something more like a skirmish than all-out war, he is more likely to wear a simple mail shirt or mail hauberk than the full plate armour he is given here. Although Conan has had access to Akbitanan weapons at times during his career, he does not appear to use them when king of Aquilonia, presumably wielding Aquilonian-made weaponry instead.

Even as king, Conan is still very much a man of action. If he discovers a threat to his rule, he will tend to ride out and meet it head-on – though these days he may ride out at the head of many thousands of armoured knights. He has learnt a certain degree of caution, and will certainly act in a manner befitting his high Intelligence; but given no other options, he would sooner be acting than sitting about in a council meeting.

His position as king will probably never be entirely secure. Perhaps no king is ever so fortunate as to be secure, but Conan in particular must deal with almost constant attempts by the old ruling house to restore its crown. Even the common people, though they know on one level that Conan is the best thing that has happened to Aquilonia in many years, still sometimes feel an emotional nostalgia for the old tyrant King Vilerus. In any event they are fickle, and soon forget the liberating benefits Conan's reign has brought, especially if roused by a sentimental bard or charismatic rebel.

CONAN, KING OF AQUILONIA

Tales from Mongoose Hall

Ian Barstow

This issue we start off a brand new campaign, featuring some of the Mongoose team's favourite and longest lasting characters.

Featuring the world's most indestructible cleric, a fighter who can do 60 points of damage when it's not even his turn and a paladin with a Death List and a sword bigger than he is…

Mingy? As if.

having seen my character Casper so brutally despatched at the end of last month's TFMH, it comes as something of a relief to write about a fresh campaign.

Many of you will be aware of the Terrible Trio of Agamar, Orfeo and Tharg, characters who have seen much action at Mongoose Hall in the past. For those who are not up to speed, a brief résumé is in order. These three were part of the original Mongoose Hall campaign, back before Signs & Portents existed, in the days when Mongoose was in its infancy. The group then consisted of the above along with Daniel Bishop and David Dorward from the Thursday group, who played somebody I can't remember and Randy the Tree Climbing Sorcerer respectively. You can probably guess how Randy got his nickname. Actually, his real name wasn't Randy, but by now you will know of my propensity for renaming people's characters for them.

Randy seemed to spend a large amount of his time climbing things to avoid trouble. In fact, he was directly responsible for Tharg (my character) being captured by those creatures with Minds and Flaying bits that I can't talk about. This is a long story but being as it cost Randy his life, it's worth going over.

We were in a dungeon (this will come as something of a shock, I know) setting up an ambush for the aforementioned Tentacle-Heads and their minions. Having taken up good cover and come up with a surprisingly complex plan (by our standards) the whole show was trashed by Randy who had some kind of brain failure, running out of cover to fire off some devilishly potent spell, only to be told the spell was a full move action and he was effectively standing out in the open waving his arms around like a girl.

With the whole thing falling apart – and having made fifth level without losing one party member – Tharg ran out into the corridor to drive off the Tentacle-Heads, only to get put in some sort of Vulcan Death Grip before getting teleported into the ether. This story will be expanded upon shortly, but on the plus side Randy got butchered so all's well that ends well.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. There are a few early adventures of this party that you really ought to know about before we set off on more massacres. First off, Agamar and Tharg really didn't like each other to begin with. Not surprising really

when you consider their cultural differences. One is an elf noble with a kingdom to conquer and more than a little interest in gold, whilst the other is a half-orc escaped gladiator with a passion for erupting into violence and a fear of incarceration.

First evening, Agamar decides to pick a fight with a monk in a tavern (early signs that this paladin was something of a non-conformist). Anyway, it turns out that the monk is harder than Agamar and proceeds to beat the snot out of him, taking the opportunity to urinate all over his golden armour after the thumping. This led to many weeks of teasing, and many NPCs approaching Agamar and asking if he's the elf who…well, you can guess the rest.

Ian's Roleplaying Tips #212

Don't Get Too Cocky, Kid

How tempting is it, first time out with a stonking new character, to pick on the first likely villain you meet? Just remember, if they urinate on your armour you might not live it down.

Next thing of note I remember is Agamar and Tharg going looking for a cow, whilst returning a boat. We had been boating around a swamp attempting not to drown and part of the deal was that we returned this

boat to the farmer we had rented it from. With the rest of the party healing from the Minus 9 Club™ it was down to Matthew (playing Agamar) and me to return the boat and get the cow. Why did we need a cow, I hear you ask. Well, basically it was a bribe to a dragon to stop the land from flooding. It's a long story.

When we get to the farm, things don't go very well. Agamar, being the arrogant snob that he is, simply tied the boat to the back of his warhorse and dragged it cross-country. This seemed fine to Tharg, whose life experiences make Spartacus appear fully rounded. Two days later, arriving at the farm, we approach the farmer and his son, presenting the boat. Sadly, we now make the discovery that dragging a boat for two days isn't particularly good for it. In fact, it can technically wreck it. In short, the boat is more like pile of wooden scrap now, and the farmer isn't best pleased.

This is of little concern to us (we are, after all, top class adventurers who are going to do him a favour by placating the local dragon and stopping the unwanted irrigation). I recall leaving the dealing to Agamar whilst I went to select a suitable cow from the corral. The next thing I hear Agamar being berated by the farmer, accusing him of criminal damage and all sorts of nasty things. While Agamar and the farmers start a fistfight, I climb the fence and seek out a nice fat cow…

As the cattle part, I am left facing an enormous bull. Now, I'm currently nudging 3rd level, and this is a BIG bull, but Tharg's not about to back down. The bull might well think that he's going to sort me out, but what he doesn't know is that I've got Strength 20, am carrying a *ba gua do* (and know how to use it) and this looks more or less like an arena to an ex-gladiator. Resplendent in his ignorance, the bull does that usual bull thing and snorts a bit, scrapes the ground and charges.

Sir Agamar in all his glory. The yellow stains can't be seen, mercifully…

Back to back 20's later, Tharg is standing over the headless body of the bull, howling in the approved gladiatorial manner. OK, so cutting out its heart and smearing the blood all over my face might have been a touch over the top, but frankly the reaction of the farmers was disappointing. Having stopped

pummelling Agamar, who was seriously considering drawing his sword and teaching them a proper lesson in humility, they totally failed to appreciate the beauty of my one-stroke kill and accused me of cow murder, or some other idiotic yokel crime.

Naturally I'm having none of this. I take two cows (for good measure) kick down the fence (the rest of the cows leg it) and throw some friendly abuse at the peasants before Agamar and I disappeared into the distance, more than satisfied with our day's work.

A week later we are in court. The bloody farmers have only grassed us up to the local squire, who has had us arrested for all sorts of offences. Still, no worries. We have Orfeo, priest of Kelemvor and self-proclaimed attorney-at-law to defend us. Things go badly from the start. The farmers begin telling a pack of lies, completely exaggerating the damage we have done. Meanwhile, Orfeo doesn't so much as raise one 'I object!' I've seen Perry Mason and I know what sort of thing is required, so I object for us. This inspires Agamar, who begins to berate the whole court as illegal and not worthy to try him.

At which point the prosecutor (who also appears to be the judge, rather worryingly) asks if he's the *same*

Agamar who got pissed on. Whilst I'm trying to get Petrocelli (if you don't understand the legal reference then you aren't old enough – shame on you) to question the impartiality of the court, Agamar is attacking the squire (he being said prosecutor, judge and probably executioner to boot). Sadly, it turns out that the squire can do the odd spell (I smell some GM plot-fixing here) and has turned Agamar into a brick. I manage to pop the farmer on the noggin prior to getting the brick treatment, which sadly added assault to the list of offences.

The deal is this: we get to stop being part of the construction industry in return for a fine of 1,000 gp each. This is conveniently close to the amount of money we each have, and with Orfeo doing his impression of the invisible man (Randy is by now hiding up a tree somewhere) we are left with little option but to front up. This gets the two farmers and the squire put on the Death List.

Ah, didn't I mention the Death List? Surely you are familiar with it. After all, doesn't *every* paladin have one? No? It might just be Agamar then. I did say he had his own way of doing things. As we have gone through the campaign, the Death List has expanded considerably, but top of the list are these three. They'll get theirs, oh yes.

But I digress. The court experience seriously bonded Tharg and Agamar, and since then they have become practically inseparable. Mostly this consists of them habitually bickering over magic items, money or just clanking along at the back of the party yacking. This tends to ruin any hope of sneaking along, but as we have developed we have become so loaded down with magical equipment that we just butcher everything in sight anyway.

In fact the party has become a bit like that movie, *The Big Red One*. In this movie, the core group of soldiers don't even bother learning the names

of the new guys as they get killed so quickly and regularly. In this case, it is David and Daniel who go through characters with terrifying regularity. Most are not worthy of mention, but the case of the sacks and the giants is worth mentioning.

Following Randy's satisfying brutal death, and having had Orfeo successfully blind half the party on several occasions thanks to his Day-Glo magic shield (it's actually a *sunburst* spell), we were down to the three of us once more when we came across a pair of hill giants preparing to roast the contents of two sacks. You can imagine the arrangement. In the sacks are David and Daniel's new characters, notable mainly for the incredible series of dice rolls that saw David's new character score two 18's and a 17. Needless to say he was really looking forward to playing such a high powered character…

Ian's Roleplaying Tips #41

Don't Ever Assume…

…That the other players care as much about your character as you do.

 Had the approaching 'rescue party' made any attempt at silence, things might have ended differently. Sadly, Tharg and Agamar were yacking on about something or other and by the time they rounded the bend there stood two hill giants, armed and ready for action. Well, 'armed' might be a bit generous. They were both drunk and whilst one had picked up a huge piece of firewood, the other had snatched up the closest thing to hand – Daniel In A Bag, to be precise. This left David's uber character attempting to crawl out of his bag, in order to begin his expected XP surge.

To be honest, lessons really should have been learnt. Twelve seconds later both giants and David are blind,

courtesy of Orfeo's shield. David has staggered out of his bag and promptly fallen into the fire pit, whilst Daniel is being used as a club by a blind, drunk giant. The look on David's face was a picture as he attempted to climb up the wrong side of the fire pit, only to fall back in and burn to death. At the same time, Daniel was being pulped against Agamar's custom-made mithral armour. Daniel's character just about survived on –8, but David contrived to lose the best character he had ever rolled up without rolling a single dice on his behalf. Is this a record? I like to think so.

Moving on, after Tharg 'vanished', I played a drow Harper's Scout for a while, but it got annoying being racially abused all over the place. Having gotten killed by some unpleasant mage following us sorting out a dragon, we decided to bring Tharg back into the story. Now, this where it gets complex, so sit up and listen properly. You'll remember that everybody's favourite half-orc had been teleported to heaven knows where; well, Paul (who was GM-ing this XP-fest) decided that Tharg would come back as a walking time bomb. The Tentacle-Heads had worked on his brain and convinced him that he was the Left Hand of Kelemvor, effectively making him the god's personal death machine (at least that's how Tharg sees it). This has led to a number of theological discussions with Orfeo who is none to eager to accept Tharg as Kelemvor's anointed. Sooner or later a *commune* spell will attempt to decide this once and for all. I'm not sure that this is the only spanner in the works for Tharg though, but only time will tell.

So, dragons have died, maidens have been rescued, and vast piles of cash have been made. Next month the campaign begins again, introducing two new characters, the brothers Esslin and Jerrith, played by Doghouse (Ian Belcher) and Rich Neale (Rich Neale). See you then. Now, give me a 'praise Kelemvor'…

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Rune Magic

Giving spellcasters flexibility while keeping game balance

By Joe Wetzel

Fed up with the same old way of doing magic? Know what your party mage is going to do before he does? Perhaps you are a wizard who wants a bit more spice in his life?

Whatever your needs or motivation, read on. You know you want to...

Rune magic is a much more flexible system than standard arcane or divine magic. The system described here allows a character to vary the strength, range, duration and other factors of a set of key effect runes. The system computes a number of spell points (manna) a particular spell costs to cast. A new class, the rune mage (see below) has an amount of manna based on his level and intelligence modifier. (See Table 9 for the specific values.)

A rune magic spell has several possible types of runes:

† **Effect:** Think of this as the verb of the spell. At the spell's core, what does it do?
† **Power:** Many spells are intended to do an amount of damage. The power rune measures this.
† **Range:** The further away a spell's effects can occur, the more manna it will cost.
† **Area of Effect:** The larger the spell's area of effect, the more manna it will cost.
† **Duration:** Changing the duration of the spell will also adjust the cost.
† **Target:** Some spells (particularly detect and protect spells) require a target other than or in addition to an area of effect.

Some of these runes adjust the cost of the spell.

To derive the formula for a spell, use the charts below to determine the costs of each rune, keeping in mind the spell's desired features, and multiply each rune's costs together to determine the spell's cost. However, damage runes are added together per die then multiplied with the other rune costs. So a spell doing 4d6 of damage will cost 12 points for just the damage runes needed because each d6 costs three points.
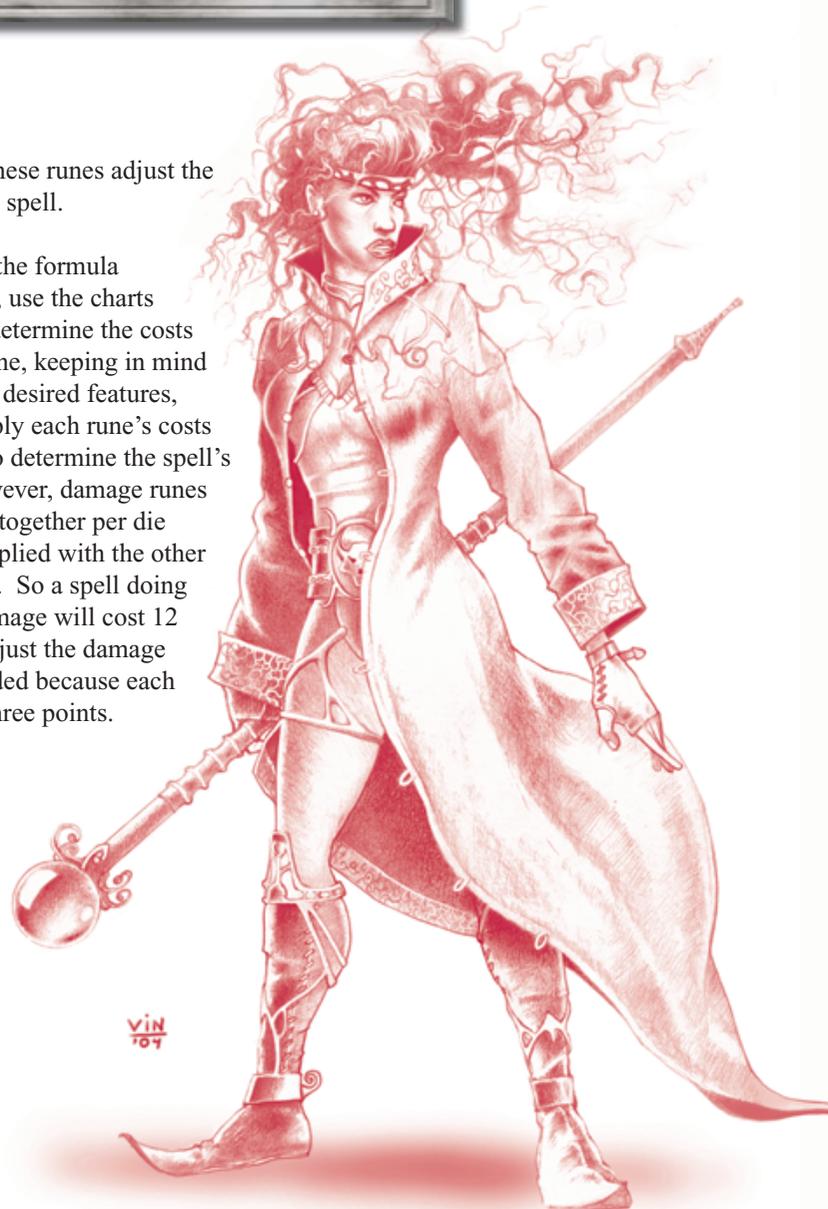
Table 1: Effects

Effect	Name	Description	Component	Cost
Acid w/Bonus Damage	Chow	Double damage, but additional damage is spread out over the next 2 rounds as evenly as possible.	A few drops of acid	2
Always Hits	Yeow	Added to a spell that already has an effect rune. As the name states, this rune causes a spell to 'always' hit its target, but the target may still get a save, be resistant, or otherwise be immune.	A broken arrow	2
Animate Object	Hin	Allows a spell to cause a non-living object to move. The cost varies by the size of the object being animated.	A ball of string	<Small: 1 S/M: 2 L/H: 3 G/C: 4
Arcane Energy (Initial rune for all rune mages)	Muun	Needed to add a damage effect to a spell, but it may be required for other spells also.	None	1
Charm	Yan	Makes a creature or creatures your friend. The target(s) receive a saving throw.	A shiny stone	= #HD
Detect	Vu	Used to detect something, usually based on a target rune in the spell	A wishbone	1
Enhance Weapon	Phin	Often used to add a spell effect to a weapon, such as combining arcane energy with a damage rune and duration and range runes to add bonus damage. Or, it may be used to provide an attack bonus.	A few grains of Mithril dust	4 x bonus to attack, or 4 for other uses.
Fire w/Bonus Damage	Yun	Adds a magical fire effect to a spell. If a spell does damage the damage is doubled. It may also be used to create a light source, start a fire, etc.	A small candle	2
Hold	Fru	Freezes the target(s) in place. If it is a creature, it can breathe and perform purely mental actions, but it can not move. The target receives a saving throw vs. Will. The caster must declare in advance how powerful (total #HD) he will make the spell. The target gains a +6 bonus to the saving throw for each full HD short the spell is.	A small figure (such as a chess piece, doll, etc.)	= #HD
Ice w/Bonus Damage	Lu	Adds a magical ice effect to a spell. If a spell does damage the damage is doubled. It may also be used to lower the temperature in the area, etc.	A piece of glass	2
Illusion (Audio)	Bin	Causes sound to be heard in the area of effect as thought by the caster. Listeners may receive a saving throw at the Games Master's discretion.	A conch (not consumed by the spell)	2
Illusion (Visual)	Lo	Causes a visual illusion to be heard in the area of effect as thought by the caster. Viewers may receive a saving throw at the Games Master's discretion.	A glass prism (not consumed by the spell)	8
Improve Ability	Nu	Improves a single ability score of the target(s)' by an amount specified by the caster. If an area of effect rune is used the spell affects all creatures in the initial area of effect.	A few drops of blood	4 x bonus
Improve Skill	Xul	Improves a single skill of the target(s)' by an amount specified by the caster. If an area of effect rune is used the spell affects all creatures in the initial area of effect.	An owl feather	Bonus / 5
Protection	Xiao	Protects the target from something, based on the target rune chosen.	A small piece of leather	1
Resize (Enlarge/ Reduce)	Jib	Enlarges or reduces the target by a specified number of size classes (Tiny, Small, Medium, etc.) The target's abilities (Strength, for example) is not changed by this spell. However effects based solely on size do apply. If the target is unwilling, he receives a saving throw vs. Will.	A hair from a giant	4
Sleep	Zun	Causes a comatose slumber to come over the target(s). Targets receive a saving throw. The spell does not affect unconscious creatures, constructs, or undead.	A few grains of sand	= #HD
Summon	Mukl	Summons an outsider (extra-planar creature) that attacks the caster's enemies. It appears where the caster designates (within the range of the spell) and acts immediately on his turn. It continues to attack enemies (unless the caster can communicate otherwise) through the duration of the spell.	A small container such as a jar or flask. (not consumed by the spell)	6 x #CR
Weaken Ability	Ru	Lowers a single ability score of the target(s)' by an amount specified by the caster. If an area of effect rune is used the spell affects all creatures in the initial area of effect.	A few drops of snake venom	4 x bonus

Table 2: Power Runes

Effect	Name	Requirement	Description	Cost
d4	Ka		Provides a d4 of damage to a spell. This rune may be added multiple times to a spell. These costs are added together, then multiplied with the spell's other runes to determine the spell's total manna cost.	2
d6	Ki	d4, 2nd level	See above, but the rune provides a d6 of damage.	3
d8	Ko	d6, 4th level	See above, but the rune provides a d8 of damage.	4
d10	Ku	d8, 6th level	See above, but the rune provides a d10 of damage.	5

Table 3: Range

Category	Name	Requirement	Distance	Cost
Caster/Touch	Ba	Initial rune for all rune mages	0 ft.	1
Short	Bi	Caster/Touch	25ft + 5ft./2 lvls	2
Medium	Bo	Short	100ft + 10ft./lvl	3
Long	Bu	Medium	400ft + 100ft./lvl	4

Table 4: Area of Effect

Category	Name	Requirement	Description	Cost
One creature, object, or 5ft cube	Sko	Initial rune for all rune mages	Typically, if the targets do not wish to be in the area of effect, they receive a Reflex saving throw. Also, a touch or ranged touch attack may be required by the Games Master.	1
Small circle	Nim	1 creature, etc.	See above. Circle with a 10ft. radius	2
Medium circle	Nem	Small circle	See above. Circle with a 20ft. radius	3
Large circle	Nen	Medium circle	See above. Circle with a 40ft. radius	4
Small cone	Wer	1 creature, etc.	See above. Cone 25ft. long and 15ft. wide at far end	2
Medium cone	Wur	Small cone	See above. Cone 50ft. long and 25ft. wide at far end	3
Large cone	Wul	Large cone	See above. Cone 100ft. long and 50ft. wide at far end	4

Table 5: Duration

Category	Name	Requirement	Description	Cost
Instant/1 Round	Ja	Initial rune for all rune mages	Used by many spells for an instantaneous effect.	1
1 Round/Level	Je	Instant/1 Round	Makes a spell last for a short combat period.	2
10 Rounds/Level	Ji	1 Round/ Level	Makes a spell last through a longer combat period.	3
10 Minutes/Level	Jo	10 Rounds/ Level	Makes a spell possibly last through several encounters.	4
1 Hour/Level	Ju	10 Minutes/ Level	Used to make a spell last for hours.	5
1 Day/Level	Jaw	1 Hour/Level	Used to make a spell last a few days.	10

RUNE MAGIC ARE IT IF CAN HARM!

Table 6: Special Targets

Special Target	Name	Description	Cost
Alignment	Lin	Allows a spell to work with alignments of target(s). Must declare the alignment (good, evil, neutral, lawful, chaotic) for the spell when cast. The target receives a Will saving throw.	2
Armour Class	Em	Used when a spell affects the target's armour class. The caster must pre-determine the armour class bonus granted by the spell.	2x bonus
Elements	Mo	Allows a spell to affect how creatures handle the weather. Must declare type of elements (heat, cold) when cast.	Damage ignored/2
Languages	Hif	Used when the spell must do something about a language the target(s) do not know.	1
Magic	Mig	Allows a spell to target magic in some way.	1
Poison	Chu	Used when a spell involves poison.	2
Portal/Door	Cha	Used when a spell involves portals, including doors and secret doors.	2
Saving Throw	Heg	Used when a spell will affect the target(s) saving throws.	2x bonus /save
Thoughts	Ur	Allows a spell to work with the target(s) thoughts.	4
Traps	Ro	Allows a spell to affect traps in some way.	4
Undead	Ru	Used when a spell specifically targets undead.	2

For example, a 1st level rune mage can make a weak *fireball*, if he has chosen the required runes:

Arcane energy (1) x Fire (2) x 3d4 (6) x Small circle area (2) x Short range (2) x Instant (1) = 48 manna.

But if the character is 6th level, the *fireball* can be much stronger:

Arcane energy (1) x Fire (2) x 5d6 (15) x Large circle area (4) x Long Range (4) x Instant (1) = 480.

Even though this spell would do more damage and have a larger area of effect than the 3rd level arcane *fireball* spell, it would require the rune mage to choose a very specific set of runes and allow the character very little variety.

While it is easy to see how to formulate many existing arcane spells (some examples are below) it is notable just how many new and useful spells can be created using this system. For example, to protect from poison combine the protection rune with the poison target rune and whatever duration and area of effect runes matching the situation.

Table 7: Existing Arcane Spell Conversion Examples

Spell simulated	Effect	Power	Range	Area of Effect	Duration	Special Target	Total Manna
Acid Arrow	Arcane Energy: 1, Acid: 2	2d4: 4	Long: 4	One creature: 1	Instant: 1 (plus acid special effect)	N/A	32
Cat's Grace	Improve ability (+2): 8	N/A	Caster/ Touch: 1	One Creature: 1	10 rds/lvl: 3	N/A	24
Detect Magic	Detect: 1	N/A	Caster: 1	Medium Cone: 3	10 rds/lvl: 3	Magic: 1	12
Endure Elements	Protection: 1	N/A	Caster/ Touch: 1	One Creature: 1	1 hr/lvl: 5	Elements (5): 2.5	13
Fireball (5th level caster)	Arcane Energy: 1, Fire: 2	5d6: 15	Medium: 3	Small Circle: 2	Instant: 1	N/A	180
Hold Person	Hold (4HD): 4	N/A	Medium: 3	One Creature: 1	1 rd/lvl: 2	N/A	24
Jump	Improve Skill (+30): 6	N/A	Caster/ Touch: 1	One Creature: 1	10 rds/lvl: 3	N/A	18
Mage Armour	Protection: 1	N/A	Caster: 1	One Creature: 1	1 rd/lvl: 5	AC (+4): 8	40
Magic Circle against Evil	Protection: 1	N/A	Caster/ Touch: 1	Small Circle: 2	10 min/lvl: 4	AC (+2): 4	32
Magic Missile	Arcane Energy: 1, Always Hits: 2	2d4: 4	Medium: 3	One Creature: 1	Instant: 1	N/A	24
Magic Weapon	Enchant Weapon: 4	N/A	Caster/ Touch: 1	One object: 1	10 rds/lvl: 3	N/A	12
Mass Invisibility	Illusion (visual): 8	N/A	Long: 4	Large Circle: 4	10 min/lvl: 4	N/A	512
Summon Monster IV	Summon(CR3): 18	N/A	Short: 2	N/A	1 rd/lvl: 2	N/A	72

Table 8: Example New Spells

Spell Description	Effect	Power	Range	Area of Effect	Duration	Special Target	Total Manna
Destroy a small object, such as a lock.	Arcane Energy: 1, Acid: 2	4d4: 8 (object's hp determined by Games Master)	Caster/ Touch: 1	One object: 1	Instant: 1	N/A	16
Enhance a weapon's damage by 2d6 of fire damage	Enchant Weapon: 4, Fire: 2	1d6: 3	Caster/ Touch: 1	One object: 1	10 rds/lvl: 3	N/A	72
Weak fireball doing 6d4 of fire damage to a small area.	Arcane Energy: 1, Fire: 2	3d4: 6	Small circle: 2	Short range: 2	Instant: 1	N/A	48
Very strong fireball doing 8d6 of fire damage to a large area from further away.	Arcane Energy: 1, Fire: 2	4d6: 12	Large circle: 4	Long range: 4	Instant: 1	N/A	384
Protection from poison. At the Games Master's discretion this may only improve a saving throw against particularly strong poisons.	Protection: 1	N/A	Caster/ Touch: 1	One creature: 1	1 hr/lvl:5	Poison: 2	10

The process for casting a spell can vary among rune mages. Most rune mages must speak the names of the runes while they draw them in the air and present a spell component for the primary spell effect rune. The spell component is magically consumed during the casting of the spell, unless specifically noted otherwise. Some rune mages vary this spell casting process. For example, some may draw the runes individually on parchment and present these while casting instead of drawing the runes in the air. In any case, unless a Games Master determines otherwise for a particularly complex spell, rune mage spells take a standard action to cast.

The number of runes used in casting a spell affects initiative. Each rune used in a spell subtracts (worsens) one from the caster's initiative. For example, if the caster's initiative roll is 12, and the spell the caster will cast uses 4 runes, the caster will cast the spell on when it is time for those with an eight initiative to go.

Considerations for Games Masters

The Games Master must carefully watch the flexibility this new magic system provides. If a character is attempting a spell that seems much too powerful relative to what a wizard of a similar level could perform, there is probably something wrong. In these cases there are several things the Games Master can do:

† In extreme cases, the Games Master could determine that the spell fails because some other rune (perhaps even one not yet 'discovered') is needed for the spell. The character should get a Spellcraft check to guess this before wasting the manna points on the spell.

† Give the potential targets of the spell a saving throw, or give them a bonus if a saving throw is already called for.

† Diminish the effect of the spell in some way.

† Require a ranged touch or a touch attack when it makes sense to do so.

† Require a spell to take longer than a standard action if it is particularly complex or powerful, at least until the character is higher in level and has therefore 'practised' it.

† There may be other runes you or your players wish to create. Make sure you create several sample spells for any new rune with different range, duration, area and target modifiers when it makes sense to develop an appropriate and balanced manna amount for the new rune. If some spell with the new rune doesn't seem balanced, use the strategies above to keep things balanced.

Keep in mind that even if a spell does seem too powerful at first, if the character is using almost all his manna for the day to cast it, overall the spell may still be balanced. After all, the character won't be able to do much more casting until resting and studying.

Another issue a Games Master may wish to decide is exactly how a Rune Mage learns new runes. Some Games Masters may want to make sure that a Rune Mage has access to a mentor, library, sage or some other plausible method a Rune Mage can master a new rune or two when a level is gained. Alternatively, it can be assumed a Rune Mage has a book with his own runes he is studying and therefore new runes can be learned whenever the mage levels-up.

Rune Mage

Rune mages do not study completed spells the way wizards do. Instead, they study the key concepts of magic one at a time. This allows a rune mage much greater flexibility when actually casting a spell. She can choose from all the magical runes he knows and alter the effects based on other runes he knows for duration, range, area and several other factors.

However, this flexibility must come with a price. As mentioned above, rune mages study key concepts of magic in depth generally one at a time. 1st level rune mages know only eight of these key concepts (four common to all rune mages, and four selected by the rune mage).

Rune mages also use a manna point system to determine how many points a spell costs to cast and how many points the mage can use that day without studying and meditating (see above).

Rune mages generally do get along well with traditional wizards and sorcerers. In fact, rune mages may study with wizards. The two groups simply have different theories on how to study and create magic. However, these differences are enough to prevent a Rune Mage from using scrolls created by a Wizard. Rune Mages may use all other magic items a Wizard may use, subject to the Games Master's discretion as always.

Adventures: Rune mages adventure for reasons similar to wizards. They too seek knowledge, power, and the resources to conduct their studies. Rune mages may also adventure for noble or ignoble causes.

Characteristics: Rune mages typically relish the flexibility of their magic.

Alignment: Rune mages are even more likely to be lawful than wizards, mostly because their spell system is so orderly and takes a more organised mind to understand it. But neutral and some chaotic rune mages do exist. They may be good, evil, or neutral.

Religion: Like wizards, rune mages often revere a god of magic. Many also follow gods with a magical domain, but rune mages are more concerned with their arcane studies than prayer.

Background: Rune mages are generally accepted with wizards as members of a distinct, diverse group. In civilised lands where rune mages join guilds or academies, rune mages will identify themselves according to their primary runes and those runes they wish to learn.

Races:
† Humans study magic for any number of reasons: curiosity, ambition, lust, etc.
† Elves are fascinated by magic, and many study magic for the love of the art. They often have an artistic flair.
† Gnomes don't often become rune mages – they prefer specialise in Illusion magic as wizards – but there are some gnomish rune mages.
† Half-elves have either elven or human reasons to study magic.
† Dwarf and halfing rune mages are rare because their societies typically don't encourage the study of magic, but they do exist.
† Half-orc rune mages are very rare because they don't often have the mental capacity to study magic.
† Savage humanoids are very, very rarely rune mages typically due to a lack of intelligence and the inability to find training. Their magic is more often sorcerer magic.

Other Classes: Many other classes would not know the difference in a rune mage's or wizard's magic. Therefore, often they are treated in the same way. But overall rune mages prefer to enjoy the protection that traveling with a group of other adventurers offers.

Game Rule Information

Rune Mages have the following statistics:

Abilities

† Intelligence adjusts how many spell points (manna) a rune mage

has and how hard his spells are to resist. See the column titled 'Bonus Manna' in Table 9 to find how many extra manna points a character gains at each level for high Intelligence. The Difficulty Class of a saving throw against a rune mage's spell is the rune mage's level divided by 2 (round up) + the rune mage's Intelligence modifier + 10.
† The Armour Class bonus for high Dexterity is particularly valuable to rune mages because rune mages rarely wear armour due to its arcane spell failure percentage.
† A good Constitution improves a rune mage's normally limited hit points.

Alignment: Any.

Hit Die: d4.

Class Skills

A rune mage's class skills (and the key ability for each skill): Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Profession (Wis), Scry (Int), and Spellcraft (Int).

Skill points at 1st Level: (2 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill points at Each Additional Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the rune mage.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: Rune mages are skilled with only the club, dagger, heavy and light crossbow, and quarterstaff. Rune mages are not proficient with any type of armour or with shields. Armour interferes with a rune mages ability to cast spells. Based on the type of armour worn, there is a chance the spell will fail. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Sleight

of Hand, and Tumble. Also, Swim checks suffer a -1 penalty for every 5 pounds of armour and equipment carried.

Spells: A rune mage casts spells very differently from wizards, sorcerers and other spell casters. At 1st level, a rune mage choose four magical runes he has learned. In addition, all rune mages receive the following runes:
† Arcane Energy (Effect)
† Caster/Touch (Range)
† One creature, object, 5ft cube (Area of Effect)
† Instant/One round (Duration)

These eight runes will serve as the only runes he may use when casting a spell. A 1st level rune mage may choose only one power rune (d4), but may choose to learn any effect, range, area of effect, or duration runes. These are the only runes the Rune Mage may use to cast a spell, provided the mage has enough manna to cast the resulting spell. (For the full description of creating and casting rune magic spells, see the section on rune magic above.) A rune mage may choose to learn one new rune on even numbered levels and two new runes on odd numbered levels after 1st level.

Note that two target runes (those on Table 5) may be chosen instead of just one. These runes are more general purpose and not as complex in nature so they are easier to learn.
Bonus Languages: A rune mage may substitute Draconic for one of the bonus languages available to the character because many ancient tomes of magic are written in the language and rune mages frequently learn the language to study the texts.

Scribe Scroll: A rune mage gains the bonus item creation feat Scribe scroll, enabling him to create magic scrolls.

Spellbook: A rune mage does not keep a spellbook in the same way that a wizard does, but a rune mage has a book detailing his knowledge of magical runes. She uses the notes to study and meditate daily for an

hour. This helps him remember how to create magic from the motions, words, and components used.

Spell Mastery: A rune mage can take the Spell Mastery feat usually reserved for wizards. Each time the rune mage takes this feat, choose a number of specific spells equal to the mage's intelligence modifier. A specific spell is one specific combination or runes. Two spells which vary by any rune are different spells. Thereafter, the rune mage can prepare these spells without referring to a spell book.

Table 9: The Rune Mage

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Base Manna	Bonus Manna	Magical Runes and Feats
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	50	Int mod x 3	4 starting runes, 4 chosen runes, scribe scroll
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	100	Int mod x 5	1 magical rune
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	200	Int mod x 10	2 magical runes
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	400	Int mod x 20	1 magical rune
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	800	Int mod x 40	2 magical runes, bonus feat
6	+3	+2	+2	+5	1600	Int mod x 80	1 magical rune
7	+3	+2	+2	+5	2400	Int mod x 120	2 magical runes
8	+4	+2	+2	+6	3200	Int mod x 160	1 magical rune
9	+4	+3	+3	+6	5000	Int mod x 250	2 magical runes
10	+5	+3	+3	+7	7500	Int mod x 350	1 magical rune, bonus feat
11	+5	+3	+3	+7	10000	Int mod x 500	2 magical runes
12	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8	15000	Int mod x 750	1 magical rune
13	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8	22500	Int mod x 1000	2 magical runes
14	+7/+2	+4	+4	+9	30000	Int mod x 1500	1 magical rune
15	+7/+2	+5	+5	+9	40000	Int mod x 2000	2 magical runes, bonus feat
16	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10	55000	Int mod x 2800	1 magical rune
17	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10	70000	Int mod x 3500	2 magical runes
18	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11	90000	Int mod x 4500	1 magical rune
19	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11	115000	Int mod x 6000	2 magical runes
20	+10/+5	+6	+6	+12	150000	Int mod x 7500	1 magical rune, bonus feat

Darkology
An OGL Horror/CyberNet Setting

CYBERNET CYBERPUNK ROLEPLAYING

HORROR

Lizard

> There are some differences in mechanics between OGL Horror and OGL CyberNet. In general the CyberNet rules have been used for Darkology, since the setting assumes the player characters will be made from those rules, but horror saves and magic rules from OGL Horror are included as needed.

It is one of many such complexes. It squats along the coastline of Northern California. From orbit, it is a blazing flare of light, a glowing tumour on the Earth. From the ground, it is a dark, shapeless mass, stretching from horizon to horizon and up to the sky itself.

For half a billion people, it is home.

It is the Essef Arcology, and monsters live there.

The arcology was not planned; it congealed out of the dozens of cities and towns of the Bay Area over a century. As urban sprawl became more and more prohibited, but with population pressure remaining unabated, there was no choice but to build up rather than out. Bottlenecks of traffic forced more connections to be made, underground in webworks of tunnels and passages, in the air as buildings sprouted tubes and walkways. Eventually, it all blurred into a single structure, individual buildings merging into a seamless whole. The original city structures were girded in nets of diamond-infused steel, and became the base on which new construction was built; the new city grew on the old, encrusting it like a pearl of neocrete and plasteel.

The same thing happened all across the world. The rural areas were abandoned to a handful of reactionaries and to those driven from the cities. Agriculture moved indoors, plants growing in hydroponic units the size of small cities, meat growing in vats of nutrients and artificial blood. The tiny rooms and cramped corridors in which most of humanity lived, worked and died were made palpable by the spell of digital illusion which gripped most minds. Neural induction circuits and real-time rendering turned dark hallways into sunlit passages, made small rooms seem to be chambers in vast complexes.

Nations vanished. With nearly all the population living in them, it was the arcologies which mattered, and the world became governed by the ten greatest of them, with the dozens of lesser arcologies joining in ever shifting patterns of alliance and betrayal.

But there is more.

Man is not alone in the arcologies. The jungles of plastic and glass of nanodiamond and bioweave in which man now lives are home to those that prey on man and which always have. In the shadows of the undercities, things, which are neither man nor beast, run in packs and run down prey. Far, far, below, where the vast

Bay Area Arcologies

Okay Arcology

Essef Arcology

SanJay Arcology

pumps and dredges seek to pull fresh water from the tortured oceans, there is another city, a place where fish walk and think, and, within that city, they plot to bring back their ancient lords. In a world where the sun never intrudes, the former lords of night are free to walk where they will, when they will, and their immortal games are played out within the urban maze. The digital realm has always appropriated the metaphors of magic, but sometimes the metaphors become literal, and those who seek power battle among themselves with code and spell.

External Geography

The central bulk of the arcology, its spine, if you will, coils around the former San Francisco bay like a sleeping cat. It contains numerous towers and outcroppings, generally growing higher as they approach the centre of the primary curve. The tallest of them ascend a mile, and many of the lesser towers dwarf the greatest buildings of the 20th century. The upper reaches of the towers are forever surrounded by vehicles, personal flyers of the wealthy flitting from point to point in the arcology without risking the dangers of mass travel, along with huge cargo and passenger craft from other cities. From a distance, it seems as if a haze of flies and vultures perpetually hover above the city.

Beyond the central spine, lengthy tendrils stretch deep into the long-abandoned suburban sprawl. In some place, these extensions are surrounded by the shells of the dead cities they replaced; in others, especially in the former Marin area, they are themselves encrusted in green, where the forests have reclaimed the land.

The city also extends far beneath the ground. Deep mining shafts plunge miles into the earth, bringing up ores and minerals and things

best not named. Layer upon layer of fabrication and assembly plants lie under the city, as do the vast recycling systems. This area is not supposed to be inhabited, but it is. Over the centuries, uncounted numbers of the lost and forlorn have made their way down here and settled in, living like vermin on the leavings of those above. They scurry through the factory mazes and mineshafts, making tools and weapons from the copious waste. The workers who maintain the systems sometimes claim they are no longer human, that the generations spent below have twisted them, making them into monsters.
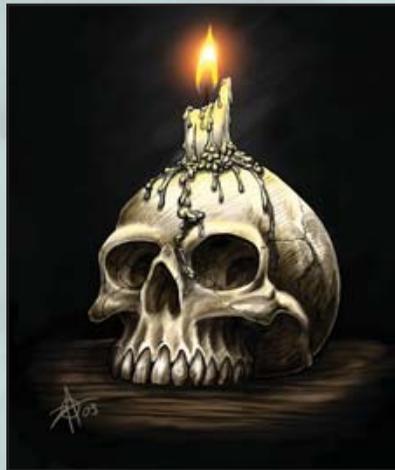
The Bay itself is a mass of filth and sewage, more swamp than ocean, now, and filled with everything which the body of the city excretes as irreclaimable. The grey-green haze of effluent shrouds it in perpetual twilight, and the filtered, wan glow of the sun has little impact on the reeking mire.

Beyond the arcology, there is only a blend of ruin and wilderness, the proportions varying wildly even over a small area. Few humans live there, as the ground has been poisoned and the air befouled. A handful do, however; exiles or visionaries who have fled the city outwards, rather than downwards. Their lives are harsh and brief.

Internal Geography

The city grew on top of older cities, absorbing and replacing them. It was never planned or designed; it congealed around the existing structures until it drained all the life from them and then grew fat and bloated on their stolen essence. Nonetheless, over time, order has evolved, creating distinct regions and zones within the city.

Steeples

The steeple zone is, as might be guessed, the highest portion of the arcology. Each steeple towers at least 150 feet above the bulk of the arcology proper, and the tallest, Ruby, stretches upwards for 1000 feet. Steeples are the homes of the most powerful families, clans or corporate leaders, containing enough living space for a thousand of the arcology's less privileged citizens but usually inhabited by a dozen or fewer. Each of the major vampire families has a steeple, as do the larger corporations and the wealthiest citizens in general. The steeples are all named after gemstones and coloured accordingly; the origins of this tradition are forever lost. Unlike most of the arcology, the steeples were a deliberate, late addition, rather than the result of the congealing process which built the arcology as a whole.

Oldest Town

This section, rarely seen by any but the most destitute, is the skeleton of old San Francisco lying under the encroaching bulk of the arcology. Most of the buildings have been completely encased in newer construction; it is possible to open a door deep in the sector and find oneself looking at a large, wooden-floored room with the shattered remnants of a bay window staring out at a concrete wall. In a few areas, accidents of time and construction have left the streets of several blocks accessible, creating

an eerie ghost city, a place where the desperate or daring can walk on the actual ground and see the shells of the original buildings around them. A few take up residence in the still-accessible lower floors of these buildings; most, however, flee, as there is a disquieting, haunting atmosphere to this place. Some of the more literate describe trying to live here as akin 'to living in a cemetery – sleeping in the coffins, with the corpses.'

Dredge Zone

While no one (other than Seaspawn) live in the vast sprawl of water recycling and pumping machinery that continually churns the waste of the city back into food and water, there are multiple levels of residential zones just above it. The stink of the machinery below, and the continual damp, bathes the entire region in a foul-smelling fog, and centuries of moisture leakage have made rot and rust omnipresent. This is the area inhabited by the poorest folk who are still allegedly citizens, and their lot is not made easier by the fact that the Virtuality tends to be spotty or damaged in this region, allowing continual glimpses of the true world in which they live to seep through.

The Complexes

The majority of the working and lower-middle classes live here, in endless concrete corridors lined with endless identical doors leading to endless small, identical apartments. On average, each citizen will be able to afford about 100 square feet of personal living space on a typical lower class salary; the middle class can luxuriate in about twice that much. The complexes are perpetually shrouded in the Virtuality, and only a widespread system failure can cause the illusion to flicker off for any length of time. The area contains some open areas, shopping districts and auditoriums. Most food is purchased either from warehouse-like markets or vendors operating

pushcarts which include simple synthesis engines and a supply of bulk biomass, but a handful of entrepreneurs have secured the necessary permits to open small private establishments, which serve the same food as the pushcarts but in as luxurious an environment as the Virtuality can provide. It still *tastes* like salted wet cardboard, however. Educational crèches, with a few specialised training schools for the 'best and brightest' and countless 'vocational schools', which are little more than child labour factories, abound.

Substeeple

Beneath the steeples are the homes of the middle class and the upper class, with quality, space and amenities increasing with each upward level. At the lowest levels, the substeeple zones are basically identical to the complexes, but with fresher paint; on the upper levels, small mansions separated by a few dozen feet of actual grass and with windows that actually face the outer world predominate. (The view from the windows is almost always a Virtuality illusion, but, if the illusion is deactivated, there's a real window there, not just a wall.) The inhabitants of the substeeples are obsessed about their position and security, knowing that the slightest failure could send them down to the

complexes, or worse. The substeeples are mostly secure from supernaturals, as well; the Cabal are the only such folk who regularly travel here, and they do so mostly because they tend to *live* here.

The World Outside

The growth of the arcologies was a consequence, though not an intended one, of 'greenbelts' and 'slow growth', combined with rising fuel costs and the inability to find a viable substitute. As automobiles became too expensive for all but the rich, and as regulations slowed, then stopped outward growth, the burgeoning population of Earth crowded into cities, which grew upwards and downwards rather than outwards. Revolutions in genetics and tissue culturing moved agriculture from the rural regions into the cities as well, with massive factories replacing farms. Aside from an infinitesimal number of holdouts – luddites and the like – the world slowly divided into incredibly dense urban conglomerations and barren, empty, wilderness. The suburbs towns and smaller cities were abandoned, left fallow, while the arcologies grew ever larger. The national governments lost importance; identity was bound to the city complex. Today, the world resembles ancient Greece writ large, a collection not of nations, but of city-states, each containing more people than lived on Earth at the dawn of the 20th century. There is an endless dance of alliances and treaties, with war and peace shifting rapidly, almost incomprehensibly.

There are no more trans-national corporations, for there are no nations. Rather, corporations bid with the governing bodies of the various arcologies to provide goods and services, and to win lucrative sales contracts. Most arcologies allow only one provider of an item,

whether it is synthetic meat or neural induction fibre, and competition for such contracts is vicious, both metaphorically and literally. Sometimes, arcologies will go to war over disputes regarding such deals, and the warfare is brutal, consisting of saturation bombing followed by urban assault. The soldiers who have battled in Arcology Wars are physically and psychically scarred; urban combat in the 21st century was nightmarish, but it is nothing compared to that of the arcology era.

All of the arcologies are home to horrors. So many people in so small a space create a psychic vortex that opens gates. The accumulated miasma of suffering, misery and hopelessness is an eternal buffet for the creatures of nightmare. They will do all they can to make sure mankind stays this way forever.

Digital Geography

The arcology is not a world only of ferrocrete and mould, but also of information made almost flesh. The datasphere of the arcology can be divided into two general portions – the Virtuality and the Deeps.

All inhabitants of the arcology, save those born in the most remote reaches or those whose existence is wholly secret (such as Seaspawn), are fitted from their earliest childhood with neural induction fibre, which grows throughout body and mind. This allows them to dwell in a world of 'always on' digital data, which is fed directly into their senses by uncounted transmitters. Much of what 'exists' in the arcology actually does not exist at all. The signs over every door, the menus at the synthsoy carts, the gaudy window displays, the fancy clothes and exotic hairstyles of all but the very wealthy – all are illusions. The Virtuality has its limits; it can overlay data, but it cannot hide reality completely, and it cannot transmit anything but the crudest touch, smell or taste sensations, yet, when enmeshed in

its cocoon, the arcology is a place of bright colours, beautiful gardens, glistening gemstone walkways and clean, well-lit public spaces. Only when the Virtuality fails in an area, or when someone willingly turns off their induction circuitry, does the grim, grey, claustrophobic and rotted reality of the arcology become soul-crushingly apparent. For this reason, few ever leave their precious womb of illusion, except when absolutely necessary. The first time a character deactivates the Virtuality willingly, they must make a DC 12 Fear save or suffer 1 Shock point; this will be repeated if the Virtuality is not left again for another year or more. If the character is forced out of the Virtuality, the DC is 15 and the Shock loss is 1d4.

To enter the full-sensory realm of the Deeps, one must 'duct in', usually by a touch interface. For the utilitarian purposes of everyday life, ducting in requires only a small contact point. For example, suppose a lower-middle class citizen of the arcology wished to order food at a synthegrub vendor. He would touch a small nodule at the vendor's stall, finding himself seemingly standing in front of a buffet lavishly appointed with a variety of delicious foods. He would tap the foods he desired and then duct out, to find his credaccount depleted and an extremely poor facsimile of the desired foods synthesised in front of him. This takes much less time than it seems; actions in the Deeps occur roughly two times faster than the equivalent actions in the real world.

To truly experience all the Deeps have to offer, however, an induction coffin is needed. Once in the coffin, the user has all external sensory input suppressed and all sensation is fed through the neural induction circuits which permeate his body. Touch, taste and smell all come 'on line', and in a well-designed simulation, there is no way to tell that what you are experiencing is not real, except for the memory of entering the coffin and the omnipresent icons

superimposed on your view, allowing you access to emergency functions such as logging out. Some hackers have found ways to deactivate even these, and, in coffins equipped with full lifecycle systems, spend years or decades living in the virtual reality of their choice. Some, lacking such life-support systems, merely block hunger of thirst signals and commit a slow, but pleasant, suicide.

However, the Deeps offer more than mere entertainment. It is by traversing the maze of worlds that information can be accessed. Everything that is known is here somewhere and it is all connected in one vast maze of knowledge. Guardians patrol the corridors of power, as they always do, but the skilled and the lucky can battle past them. Of course, finding out the truth about the nature of life and unlife in the arcology can be hazardous to life and sanity. Those who 'climb the steeples', breaking into the most secure data vaults belonging to the most powerful of the arcology's residents, often meet grisly ends or simply vanish.

Also roaming the Deeps are the Revenets, the minds of those who died in physical agony while ducted in. A rare few of those killed while so helpless have remained, their souls trapped in the Deeps, while they plot revenge against their murderers. Revenets are not bound by many of the 'rules' of the Deeps, and can slip past security protocols like ghosts – which, of course, they are.

The Horrors

Vampires

The sun does not dare to enter the arcology, and so, those who shun its baleful glare find they have free rein to reign. The vampire families are the lords of the city, the top of the heap both literally and figuratively. There is not a political or corporate power of any note which is not in some way vampirically controlled. They

keep their numbers small, and their infighting checks their power, but they run things and everyone knows it – well, everyone who understands the nature of the arcology.

There are perhaps a dozen major families, each of which has a few sub-families as part of its hierarchy of power. The three largest families are:

Valdbergen: The oldest and most tradition bound of the major families. The elders of the family remember the days when no news could travel faster than a horse could run, when the world seemed to stretch to infinity beyond the horizon. This new world of confined physical space and unbounded digital realms has never sat well with them, but they cling to power as a dying carnivore clings to its prey. The youngest Valdbergen is a century old; they rely on their living thralls to run most of the technology which surrounds them. This anachronistic attitude is seen by many of the other families as the Valdbergen's greatest weakness, and plots against them tend to exploit it. The Valdbergens maintain strong relationships with the Berlin Habitation Zone and Greater London. They completely shun the Floating Hive.

Harkton: This is the youngest family to achieve truly great power, and the only one whose Archon is still among the unliving. Isabel Harkton was the first vampire to come to America from Europe, and by the time her sanguine kin had arrived, she had already seeded her first generation throughout the forming colonies. The Harktons were never unopposed in America, but they retained their grip on it, and have always been as progressive as vampires get, meaning, never more than a decade or two behind the times. The Harktons have pawns on the boards of the major biotech and Virtuality corporations, and prefer to control businesses over governments.

The Coterie: The Coterie is not a true family, rather, a collection of those who do not fit into the structure of families but who need structure nonetheless. Not so much a social circle as a social web, the Coterie is a mix of individuals, including many of the most idiosyncratic and eccentric. The Coterie are the most diffuse of the major vampiric powers, with self-identified members spread throughout the arcology. Unlike the true families, they mingle with all social classes, and, thus, have a much better feel for the true state of arcology affairs. Their lack of cohesion keeps them from truly exercising this power, however. If a sufficiently charismatic leader could achieve control of the Coterie, he or she could end up running the arcology in a decade or two.

The Ferals

Animals are few in the arcology, and those which do thrive are those which have learned to co-exist with man. Thus, the dominant feral force in the arcology are the Rats, and they come in a variety of breeds. Ratman gangs control and plunder the lower levels of the arcology, competing primarily with each other, but occasionally with the small clusters of other ferals who have found a way to hold on.

Major Feral gangs include:

Wiretail: A wererat gang, the wiretails are tech scavengers. Unlike most of their ilk, they disdain direct, physical conflict, preferring to wage war via their cunning weapons or even in the Virtuality. If pressed they can fight, and they usually adorn themselves with blades designed to enhance their natural lethality.

Toxos: The Toxos, another wererat gang, are found in the worst waste dumps, surrounded by lethal poisons, biological and radioactive waste and mutant retrovirii. They take twisted pride in their plethora of disfiguring scars and oozing pustules, but, also, in the many 'gifts of the waste' which they have 'earned'. Most Toxos have developed special abilities, as well as crippling defects, from their continual exposure to mutagenic chemicals.

Tunnel Pack: One of the few wolf kin packs to get their teeth on the throat of the arcology, the Tunnel Pack survives by being more vicious than anyone else, by striking first and hardest in any territorial dispute. They also use their nature to inflict terror, sending scouts into distant territories to attack, rend and kill, leaving only their gang emblem behind.

Ghouls

Ghouls are beings who fed on human flesh in life, and who found it sustained them after death. Much as vampires feast on blood, ghouls feast on meat, and this lack of an overlap between their food sources means there is room for alliance. Furthermore, the realms favoured by the demented, degenerate ghouls are the opposite of those preferred by the calculating, genteel vampires; this too limits the scope of competition and increases the benefits of alliance. The ghouls are the eyes, ears and messengers of the vampire families, at least on the lower and sub-surface levels of the arcology. They rule below, even as their sanguine allies rule above, and the human cattle which stock the sprawl are caught in the middle and preyed upon from both sides. Ghouls, much like ferals, organise into gangs, but their gangs tend to be small roving bands, rather than powerful factions battling over turf. Gang membership is likewise fluid, and there are no great powers among the ghouls.

Darkology Ghoul

This is a template which can be applied to any humanoid, but which is normally only applied to humans living in the Essef Bay Arcology. This is an acquired template. It is gained when a character knowingly consumes human or other sentient flesh, without needing to do so solely for immediate survival, and dies with its meal still undigested. If the corpse is not destroyed within 48 hours, the thing reanimates as a Darkology Ghoul and instinctively seeks out others of its kind.

The ghoul uses all of the statistics of the base creature, except as noted here.
Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature, +1.
Creature Type: Changes to Undead.
Hit Dice: Change to D12. Ghouls have no Constitution score.
Special Qualities: The creature gains 2 points of Damage Reduction, as well as the abilities noted below.
Attacks: The base creature gains claws and teeth, which do damage according to its size. For Medium creatures, the bite does 1d6 damage and the claws do 1d4.
Ability Scores: The base creature gains Str +2, Int -4, Wis +2, Cha -4.
Horror: Fear 15, Madness 10.

The base creature gains the following Special Qualities:

Vampiric Affinity (Ex): Something has forever bound the ghouls and the vampires, at least in the arcology. Ghouls have a -4 to all Will saves against any mind-affecting abilities wielded by vampires, including the Domination ability. However, the ghoul is immune to blood drain and energy drain attacks.

Feast of the Planarian (Su): Whenever a ghoul eats a sentient being's brain, it may make a DC 15 Wisdom check. If it succeeds, the ghoul will gain all of the victims skills at a -2 penalty (use the higher of the ghoul's skill or the victim's modified skill if the ghoul already has the skill), and also has some of the victim's general knowledge, for a period of 1d4+Wisdom bonus (minimum 1) hours. During this time, the ghoul may make a DC 15 Wisdom check to recall any fact or information the victim knew, at a rate of one such piece of information every ten minutes. It is this ability, more than anything else, which makes them such valuable spies for their vampiric masters.

Need to Feed (Ex): The ghoul must devour sentient flesh from a still-living being at least once a week, or it takes 1d4 points of temporary Constitution damage. This does not heal until the ghoul has fed.

Seaspawn

The bulk of the San Francisco Bay has been encrusted with the arcology, to the point that most of the shoreline is now fully enclosed, with machinery reaching outwards into the open areas of the Bay to belch waste into it and to draw up sewage for purification and refinement. This maze of pumps and piping is among the most desolate parts of the arcology, at least as far as humans are concerned. The area has become an outpost of seaspawn, creatures half fish and half human, that have lived in exile beneath the sea for untold aeons. Now, though, they have found a safe place to build and breed above the surface, mostly undisturbed. Even the city's vampire lords know of them only as

vague rumour, and most dismiss such rumours out of hand. Ghouls and ferals rarely encounter them, and, when they do, the result is usually bloody and fatal. The seaspawn need normal humans for purposes of magical ritual, and they often send scouting parties to the lower levels to hunt. Rarely, though, they need humans with specific traits or characteristics to fulfil the terms of a ritual; then, the scouts must venture far up into the arcology, risking exposure.

The Cabal

Humans are not without resources of their own, of course. A rare few remember the oldest arts, the dark secrets long since forgotten by the bulk of humanity, and they have preserved this ancient lore. Datacrystals inscribed with runes, magic circles etched with acid into the metal floor of an abandoned workroom, clandestine meetings in almost forgotten nodes of the Virtuality – these are the hallmarks of the Cabal.

The Cabal can be loosely defined as an alliance of groups of magi, most of whom have little in common except an interest in magic. Each group has a long and rich history which invariably includes splits, squabbles, and out-and-out war with the others. The Cabal is aware of the true nature of power in the arcology, and consider themselves equal participants in the game; only a few see themselves in the role of 'saviours' of humanity. Most came to the Cabal to seek power, and power shared is power divided.

The Cabal weave magic by a mix of spells and rituals. Most circles will have access to the spells in the *OGL Horror* book, and all have some unique spells known only to their initiates. These spells must be learned normally, as per the rules in *OGL Horror*. Non-cabal members can also learn them, if they find the words and formulae, but should word of this security breach reach the Cabal, all circles will set aside their squabbles to hunt down the perpetrator.

Some of the many factions of the Cabal include:

The Callers: There are many worlds, separated by walls which define where one reality begins and another ends. The Callers seek to open doorways into those worlds, to bring across beings of tremendous power and compel them to service. As a general rule, the former is far easier than the latter, and many circles of

Callers have met bloody ends in the process of unleashing an otherworld horror on the arcology. A few, however, have mastered the necessary skills, and they can send their servants on all manner of errands, very often involving the elimination of rival Cabal members, and anyone else who might have ever annoyed them.

Seaspawn

Medium Monstrous Humanoid
Hit Dice: 4d8+16 (34 hit points)
Massive Damage: 21
Initiative: +2 (Dex)
Speed: 30 ft., Swim 45 ft.
Defence: 14 (+2 natural, +2 Dex; flat-footed 12, touch 12)
Base Attack Bonus/Grapple: +7/+7
Attack: 1 claw 1d4+3 or by weapon
Full Attack: 2 claws (1d4+3) or by weapon
Space/Reach: 5 ft. x 5 ft /0 ft.
Special Qualities: Damage Reduction 5, Amphibious, Fire Vulnerability
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +6
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8
Skills: Swim+19, Hide+8,Listen +8, Climb+7
Feats: Improved Damage Threshold
Horror: Fear 15, Madness 15

Amphibious (Ex): Seaspawn can survive in water of any depth, without regard to pressure, temperature or salinity. They can also live on land for extended periods, up to 24 hours in any but the driest environments. After that, they take 1 point of Con damage per hour out of water. This heals at a rate of 1 point per 5 minutes when fully submerged.

Fire Vulnerability (Ex): Seaspawn take double damage from fire.

Toxic Gremlins

Drains: Wisdom and Constitution
Range: Sight
Duration: Casting result in rounds
Target: One object or person
Components: V, S
Saving Throw: Special, see below

Toxic Gremlins summons forth a small band of tiny creatures, resembling 6-inch high, winged humanoids that have been consumed by all manner of vile diseases. Tiny bones can be seen beneath the rotting flesh, and a miasma out of all proportion to their size wafts from them.

These small servants of the Callers are anathema to technology. The Caller must always specify a single individual or machine as their target, and, presuming that target is within line of sight, the gremlins will fly to it. (Anyone witnessing this will most likely dismiss it as a bug or a hack in the Virtuality.) Once there, they will attack, doing 1d4 points of damage per round to either a machine or to any cyberwear, implants, weapons, armour, or so on carried by an individual. This damage ignores hardness; a swarm of toxic gremlin can reduce machines to ruin in seconds. A targeted individual may make a Reflex save (DC 10 + Casters Int Modifier + Points spent on spell) each round to protect his machines by swatting the flying pests away – if he even understands that they're real.

If an individual is targeted, they will also become infested with a virulent illness. This is a Contact DC 14, 1 Con/1d4 Con disease with an incubation period of 1 day.

The Weavers of the Virtuality: The Virtuality surrounds everyone, and, thanks to omnipresent neural induction, is seemingly everywhere. The Weavers seek to control it, not by crude hacking techniques as webcrawlers do, but by altering the fundamental paradigms which control it. Weavers can reshape the Virtuality at whim, creating illusions that can have lethal effects, as they are formed directly in the minds of the targets.

Warp Virtuality Perceptions
Drains: Wisdom and Charisma
Range: Sight
Duration: Casting result in rounds
Target: One individual per casting result/5
Components: V, S
Saving Throw: Will negates

Warp Virtuality Perceptions changes the way in which the target or targets perceive the Virtuality which surrounds them. This can be subtle, causing a sign to change its wording (replacing a warning of biohazard with a sign reading simply 'Exit', for instance) or grandiose, causing monsters to seem to spring from the ground. A Will save will negate the effects. The images are not directly harmful, and cannot touch or impede the victim, but subtle use of this spell can be lethal, adding a seemingly solid floor over a gaping pit or hiding enemies until the victim has come within range. The warped images must be the same for all targets of the spell, and those not affected by the spell perceive the Virtuality as it really is.

The Enlightened: The Enlightened do not care about means, as the other circles do, but about ends – the ends being power, power, power. They seek control, for the sake of control. They use spells of manipulation and enchantment in order to create an ever-growing web of servants, flunkies, and slaves. Their games of plot and counter-plot easily exceed those of the vampire families in viciousness, for they know they have to strike quickly, having only a few decades in which to live.

Clear The Path
Drains: Charisma
Range: 10 foot radius centred on caster
Duration: Casting result*10 in minutes
Target: Self
Components: V, S
Saving Throw: Will negated

The teeming masses of the arcology are the bane of every truly superior being, and the Enlightened are by definition superior. To have to shove through the mob or squeeze into a packed transtube is a base insult. As such, this spell is used when the indignity becomes too much to bear. The caster is surrounded by an invisible aura that subtly but powerfully commands all in the area to clear out. Where he walks, he walks unopposed; crowds part before him, tube cars empty, lines break up into chaos. The caster can manually exempt anyone he wishes from the spell's effects. Those who are affected generally do not realise it; each thinks the impulse to suddenly move was their own idea. This spell will not compel people to move into danger (such as backing into a furnace or off a walkway) and will not work on anyone actively hostile to the character.

The Role of the Players

While it is possible for players to take on the roles of the various supernatural creatures which run through the arcology, the main thrust of a Darkology campaign is to play relatively normal humans slowly becoming aware that their world is not just a sewer of crime, corruption, pollution, hopelessness and decay, but that it is a sewer ruled over by bloodsucking fiends, shape-shifting monsters, and fishman cultists. As such, it is best to begin a Darkology campaign by treating it as a standard CyberNet game, and revealing the true nature of the world slowly. Why does the corporate flunky hiring the player characters for his dirty work have several bottles of blood hidden behind the fine alcohol in his office bar? Why did that tunnel gang mutilate the bodies of the victims so viciously? How did the person the player characters were sent to kidnap seem to turn invisible just as they approached?

Character Classes in Darkology

The Connection: This class functions much as it always does, for the world of the arcology is still a world where who you know is at least as important as what you know. The main difference is that the Connection is sometimes asked or hired to do *odd* things. Things like delivering ten gallons of blood from a children's crèche to the Ruby Steeple. You learn, of course,

not to ask questions or, if you do not learn this, sometimes, you decide to change the answers.

The Corporate: The Corporate is, as always, stuck between a rock and a hard place. Greed perpetually wars with shreds of conscience. Those who aspire to do some good can justify concessions to convenience by thinking that if they lost their position, they could not do any good at all. The nature of business in the world of the arcologies magnifies the corporate viciousness of typical CyberNet settings considerably; there is no second place. Either the contract is won or it is lost; the powers that control the arcologies also control the corporations, and they feed off suffering. Discovering this fact, discovering that everyone is kept at each other's throat solely for the sake of misery, can drive a Corporate over the edge...or entice him to finally take the risks and do something to change it.

The Jacker: The Jacker's role changes little in this setting, save that they may find their most lucrative hauls are of items no one should value. The finger bones from some dead corp? An ordinary copper bracelet? Some choose to investigate these mysteries in more detail, and what they find may terrify or intrigue them – or both. Beyond this, though, the Jacker remains committed to stealing from the rich and giving to himself, with, perhaps, a bit tossed to those in need.

The Soldier: Whether a gang member concerned only about turf or a scarred and hollow-eyed veteran of a protracted arcology war, the Soldier's skills are always needed. Combat and death attracts those who live on misery, and so, the Soldier is more likely to have seen things he should not have. He has seen people take a dozen bullets and laugh it off. He has seen a dredgezone bruiser

explode into eight feet of fanged lethality. Worse, he has seen, though he wishes he never had, packs of *things* emerge onto the battlefield when nothing remained but the dying and tear the still living to pieces with their teeth.

The Webcrawler: More likely to be called a Deepwalker in this setting, the role of the Webcrawler is mostly unchanged, except that the Deeps hold more dangers than software. The fact that minds enter the Deeps via neural induction means that psychic abilities work here, and there are intellects which dwell entirely in its recesses. Supernatural mind-affecting powers function normally in the Deeps, and vampires often use

those who have found their digital sanctums as thralls, turning their skills against their enemies.

The Professional: Most of the inhabitants of the arcology do one thing, and do it as well as they feel is necessary to avoid punishment or demotion. A few take pride in their skills, or see possibilities of advancement, but most are drones, slogging through the day for no purpose other than to survive to slog through the next day. Some, however, become exposed to 'reality' through no fault of their own, thus finding themselves with an impossible decision to make…

A Star Is Born

The Media Star Prestige Class for the Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game

The universe of Babylon 5 is a connected one. Nearly all civilised planets are enmeshed in a grid of lightspeed links, with uncounted terabytes of data pulsing around the world each second. The planets themselves are nodes in a galactic network of tachyon beams. When Emperor Cartagia sneezes, President Clark says 'Gesundheit'. There are thousands of channels of communication reaching between worlds, but the vast majority of attention is focused on an infinitesimally small percentage of those – some estimates are that 95% of the major races' citizens regularly read, view, or listen to only 0.01% of all entertainment and news sources. The individuals who manage to place themselves on those channels – as singers, commentators, newsreaders, or salesmen – have tremendous influence and wield great, if unofficial, power. The sneer of a single Minbari art critic may doom an artist to obscurity, even if a thousand lesser-known critics adore him; if Rebo tells a joke, it will be repeated on Narn and Melat and Centauri Prime within a standard day.

The Media Star is one who has achieved that level of prominence. They are known almost everywhere in the galaxy. They are given special treatment and accorded honours for no readily definable reason; their fame seems to surround them with an aura of invulnerability. Docking regulations are waived, red tape is cut. Ambassadors will toss aside an appointment made six months previously in order to meet with them.

For many, fame is an addiction worse than any other drug, and they would rather be hated than ignored. Others see their fame as a tool to do good – to rally a cause or to end an injustice.

The price is privacy. Everything they do, from their choice of wine to their current lover to their favourite episode of 'Drazi In The House' is public knowledge. Fame, like understanding, is a three-edged sword. Image is everything; as harmless a sin as excessive gambling can become a galactic scandal. Ex-lovers and former employees will enrich themselves by telling any secrets they can remember – or imagine. An adoring public can become a lynch mob in seconds.

This prestige class also includes celebrity athletes; to help better define them, use the following variant on the Perform skill:

Perform (Sport): This skill governs the ability to engage in formal physical games or competitions which have well-defined rules. The governing attribute can be either Strength (for sports such as weightlifting, discuss throwing, or wrestling), Dexterity (for sports such as baseball, ice-skating, or gymnastics) or Constitution (for sports such as long-distance running or swimming). While specific tasks in an extended simulation of a game might call for other skills checks (Balance, Tumble, Swim, etc.), this skill measures an overall ability to play a game according to its rules and conventions. A masterful street brawler may still fail to win a boxing match due to his lack of knowledge of the specific style of fighting called for. Synergy bonuses for high ranks in related skills (Tumble and Balance with gymnastics, for example) should be granted freely by the Games Master.

Additional Hit Points: 1, 2 for Athletes.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Media Star, a character must fulfil all the following criteria.

Race: Any of the Major Races. The League races do not have sufficient penetration in other races' media to be truly galactic sensations.

Skills: Perform 8 Ranks, Diplomacy 4 Ranks.

Special: Have a widespread and established public career with heavy media exposure – this may be as an athlete, singer, actor, activist, commentator, and so on.

Class Skills

The Media Star's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are

The Media Star

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref*	Wil*	Special
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Price of Fame, Undue Influence
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	I'll Mention You To My Producer
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	Let's Put On A Show!
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	Too Famous To Kill, My People Are Coming
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	'No, I just look like him…'

*Characters whose fame comes from athletic or other more physical pursuits may swap the Will save for Fort or Ref, with the Games Master's permission.

Bluff (Cha), Computer Use (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), and Sense Motive (Wis).

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Media Star prestige class.

Price of Fame: This is a 'negative' ability, in that it is likely to cause the character some trouble. Everywhere he goes, he can be identified. If he enters a room, all in the room automatically get a Spot check at a DC of 20 - ½ the character level (*not* just class level!) to immediately notice him. This attention might be nothing more than the memory that 'Ooh, I saw Rebo at the same holocomplex I go to!' or it might be more obnoxious, ranging from a request for autographs to a challenge to a fight. ('My brood partner has your scent-marking in her nest rather than mine! I'll kill you!'). Gather Information checks made to find out the character's whereabouts and activities gain a +4 bonus. Disguise checks made by the character suffer a -4 circumstance modifier unless the disguise is total – a human made up as a Narn, for example.

Undue Influence: People have an instinctive tendency to want to help celebrities, for reasons no one can articulate. The Media Star may add his class level to all Bluff, Diplomacy and Gather Information checks. Further, NPCs not actively hostile to the character have their base attitude shifted up one level unless there is some compelling reason for them to be unimpressed by fame.

I'll Mention You To My Producer (or Coach, or Agent): The Media Star can always find someone wanting to 'break in' to the business, and can usually secure their aid for an implied, but never explicit, promise to help them somehow. A DC 20 Gather Information check can give the Media Star the equivalent of a Contact for the next 24 hours. This ability can be used a number of times per week equal to the character's Charisma bonus. Note that abusing a contact's trust too blatantly will turn them against you.

Let's Put On A Show!: A Media Star temporarily bereft of cash can usually find someone willing to pay them to do what they are famous for, often in circumstances which they would never accept except due to desperation. An athlete stranded on Centauri Prime following a bad spat of gambling might agree to play on the side of a powerful Noble in an upcoming grudge match against a rival house. A news reporter might be convinced to give a lecture about the beauty of the free press to a group of students. Whatever the humiliating circumstances may be, they do produce a temporary influx of wealth – 1d6 x 500 credits, usually enough to arrange a ticket home or secure needed supplies. This ability takes a minimum of a day to use.

Too Famous To Kill: Barring hired assassins and the like, most thugs are smart enough to know that killing someone famous can bring even the most apathetic law enforcement organisation down on their heads. In a potential combat situation, hostiles will avoid shooting at the Media Star unless he is shooting at them or unless they need to prevent him getting away. Otherwise, they will just attack his friends and let him run off.

My People Are Coming: Given any access to a means of communication, a Media Star can usually assemble a crowd of fans. This will amount to 1d6 x Charisma bonus 1st level characters, mostly Workers, who will show up where the Star has told them. This can be useful in terms of providing too many witnesses to a potentially criminal act, providing cover during a firefight, or intimidating an enemy. This ability can be used once per week, and cannot be used if the previous use resulted in a mass slaughter.

'No, I just look like him…': The Media Star has learned to pass himself off as not being himself, at least some of the time. A DC 25 Bluff check will enable him to ignore the 'Price of Fame' ability for the duration of a meeting, a meal, a trip to the theatre, etc. This will not work if his presence is expected. Furthermore, obviously, none of his other abilities can be utilised while this ability is in effect.

them with the opportunity to change spells in the pool; however, this is not without its risks.

Alignment: Though they can be of any alignment, the nature of an eldritch vampire's powers often almost requires that they be somewhat self–motivated, even at the expense of others. Eldritch vampires following more restrictive alignments (either lawfully or morally) often have stock explanations for their behaviour or specific codes regulating who and how they draw power.

stealing with each other, which is viewed as 'friendly' competition. On rare occasions they have formed fraternal orders to openly share and swap spells from their spell pools.

Races: Aside from humans and human-blooded races, eldritch vampires are most common among humanoids that have some natural talent for the arcane arts (such as elves and gnomes). Every so often, a halfling manages to pick up the methods of eldritch vampirism, but they are almost unheard of in the realms of dwarves and orcs.

Other Classes: Eldritch vampires are on decent terms with all other spellcasters, provided they share a similar alignment or disposition. They share a few common points with rogues and bards, especially those regarding what they expect the world will provide them with. Clerics are the most likely to be offended by their acts and often find them somewhat blasphemous, unless the eldritch vampire in question is particularly devout and working on the behest of a temple or clergy. In general, martial classes consider them to be no more than another type of spellcaster and treat them accordingly.

Continuing with our fantasy magic theme this issue, we leave the violent fighting world which has dominated recent Power Class characters, and turn to magical thievery.

Admit it, you took one look at the 'V' word and started thinking buck teeth and garlic…

E ldritch vampires are living sieves for magical energy. While their supernatural power is not innate, they have the unique ability to draw magic from external sources and store it within their own conscious. Through meditation, eldritch vampires can focus on stored magical energies, conquering, manipulating and releasing them at will.

Power Class:
ELDRITCH VAMPIRE

Tim Hitchcock

Adventurers: Eldritch vampires are natural born adventurers. Their power is dependent upon external sources, thus they crave seeking out new wells of energy. As an eldritch vampire progresses, suitable powers become more and more difficult to acquire, inspiring them to pursue epic quests.

Characteristics: Eldritch vampires gain magical power by taking it from others, storing stolen spell energy for later use. Eldritch vampires can cast spells more often than those spellcasters with formal training, however they can only store a limited amount of energy, granting them a narrow choice of spells to choose from when meditating to refresh spell energy. Their use of spell pools allows them more flexibility in their overall spell choices by providing

Religion: Eldritch vampires are not intrinsically restricted in their beliefs. Some attribute their powers to divine gifts, taking roles as self-proclaimed prophets or avatars and others are pious simply out of habit or culture. It is not unheard of for an eldritch vampire charlatan to impersonate the role of a cleric or adept in order to better access spells.

Background: While eldritch vampires acknowledge the existence of others of their ability, they are not a tight-knit group. They are often competitive and protective of the abilities they store in their spell pools. It is also common for eldritch vampires to actively engage in spell

Role: Eldritch vampires are extremely versatile spell casters, and are able to focus on fulfilling different roles within the party as defined by their current batch of pooled spells. Their range of spells can provide everything from strong offensive magicks to healing powers, divinations and summoning. Additionally, they make good protectors, based on their power to steal and absorb the magic of their enemies.

GAME RULE INFORMATION

Eldritch Vampires have the following game statistics:

Abilities: Wisdom determines how powerful a spell an eldritch vampire can cast, how many spells he can cast per day, and how hard those spells are to resist (see Spells, below). Because of his lack of formal combat skills, low hit dice and armour check penalties for casting, Dexterity and Constitution are also important to the eldritch vampire. Finally, the eldritch vampire has a few Charisma-based skills that are important in his hunt for potential new sources of magic for his spell pools.

Alignment: Any.

Hit Die: d4.

Gold: 3d4.

CLASS SKILLS

The eldritch vampire's class skills (and key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Knowledge (arcane, religion, the planes) (Int), Profession (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), Use Magic Device (Cha).

Skill Points at 1st Level (2+ Int modifier) x4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 2+ Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the eldritch vampire:

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: Eldritch vampires are proficient with all simple weapons. They are not proficient with any type of armour or shield. Armour of any type interferes with an eldritch vampire's arcane gestures, which cause a spell with somatic components to fail.

Spells: An eldritch vampire can cast a limited number of spells per day based on the energy he steals from the thoughts and memories of those around him. He has no limitations on spell type and can absorb power from both arcane and divine sources. Although an eldritch vampire can absorb any type of spell, he always casts his spells as if arcane spells, of their original source. Eldritch vampires cast spells spontaneously and need not prepare specific spells in advance; however, they must spend time each day meditating on absorbed energy in order replenish their spell slots (see below).

To absorb, prepare or cast a spell, the eldritch vampire must have a Wisdom score equal to at least 10 + the spell's level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against an eldritch vampire's spell is 10 + the spell level + the eldritch vampire's level (max +5).

Like all spellcasters, an eldritch vampire can only cast a certain number of spells per day. The eldritch vampire also receives bonus spells if he has a high Wisdom.

Eldritch vampires do not learn spells, they steal them. Like a sorcerer, the eldritch vampire has a limited amount of spells to choose from. These spells are referred to as his pooled spells. Unlike his amount of spells per day, the total number of spells an eldritch vampire can have pooled is not affected by his Wisdom score, but instead remains fixed as shown on *Table 1.1: Pooled Spells*.

Unlike a sorcerer, an eldritch vampire can alter the spells in his spell pool by stealing or absorbing spell energy from outside sources. In order to alter his spell pool, an eldritch vampire must first have an empty slot in his spell pool of the same level as the spell he desires to replace it with. When meditating, the eldritch vampire not only prepares the energy he needs to spontaneously cast spells from his spell pool, he also decides if he wants to cleanse his spell pool of any unwanted spells. This means that during his meditation, he can opt to permanently remove spells from his spell pool, leaving him available slots to add new spells. However, stolen or absorbed spells are not immediately available for use and cannot be accessed until the eldritch vampire has time to meditate and prepare his spell energy. This makes replacing spells in the pool a little bit risky, as the eldritch vampire must decrease his already small selection of spells in order to do so.

The three methods of acquiring spells are:

Spell Sponging: Whenever the eldritch vampire encounters another spellcaster willing to share his thoughts, he can select a single spell

from the willing caster's mind and then attempt to make a Spellcraft check (DC 10 + spell level) to transfer it to his spell pool. Spell Sponging requires a number of minutes equal to the level of the spell to be transferred. The procedure requires concentration and any interruptions cause the transfer to be unsuccessful. If the Spell Sponging fails, the eldritch vampire cannot make further attempts to sponge any more spells from the willing caster for a full 24 hours.

An eldritch vampire can attempt to sponge any spell, provided he has an appropriate spell slot of the same level available in his spell pool. An eldritch vampire can also attempt to sponge spells stored in magic items such as scrolls and wands. The Spellcraft check to sponge spells from an item is equal to the spell level + the caster level of the item's creator.

Spell Absorption: When an eldritch vampire is struck by an opponent's spell, he has the opportunity to absorb it into his spell pool. Again, in order to do so, he must have an empty spell slot available in his spell pool of the same level as the incoming spell. The eldritch vampire then forfeits his saving throw against the incoming spell and instead attempts a Spellcraft check against the spell's DC in order to 'absorb' it into his spell pool. If

the Spellcraft check fails, the eldritch vampire suffers the full effect of the incoming spell. Spell Absorption is also limited by the eldritch vampire's class level. The eldritch vampire can attempt to absorb 0-level spells at 1st level, 1st level spells at 3rd level, 2nd level spells at 7th level, 3rd level spells at 11th level, 4th level spells at 15th level, and 5th level spells at 19th level.

Spell Swiping: Once an eldritch vampire reaches 5th level, he can attempt to swipe spells from unwilling targets. As a full-round action, the eldritch vampire can attempt to make a touch attack against an opposing spellcaster. If he is successful, as part of that same round the eldritch vampire can scan that target's thoughts to select a single spell from the target's mind to attempt to swipe and add it to his spell pool. If he can make a successful opposed Spellcraft check against the target's Will save + the spell level of the spell being swiped, the swipe succeeds. If the attempt fails, the eldritch vampire cannot make further attempts to swipe any more spells from the targeted caster for a full 24 hours. Spell Swiping in combat is dangerous and provokes attacks of opportunity. Like spell swapping, Spell Swiping also requires concentration, so should the eldritch vampire be disturbed during a spell swipe attempt he must succeed at a Concentration check or fail automatically.

For example: A 6th level eldritch vampire attempts to swipe a 2nd level spell from the mind of an 8th level wizard. After making a successful touch attack he makes a Spellcraft check and with his skill point modifier gets a total of 23. The defending wizard makes a Will save and gets a 22, but he then adds the level of the spell the eldritch vampire was trying to steal, giving him a total of 24. This means the eldritch vampire fails and the wizard is immune to further theft attempts for 24 hours.

An eldritch vampire can only attempt to swipe a spell if he has an available spell slot in his pool. Spell Swiping is also limited by level as follows; the eldritch vampire can swipe 0 and 1st level spells 5th level, 2nd level spells at 9th level, 3rd level spells at 13th level, 4th level spells at 17th level, and 5th level spells at 20th level.

The eldritch vampire begins play with three 0-level spells and two 1st level spells of the player's choice. This leaves him one empty 0-level slot in his spell pool. He can cast any spell he has in his spell pool at any time, provided he has not used up his spells per day for that level. Therefore, he can cast the same spell multiple times per day and need not decide ahead of time which spells he will cast.
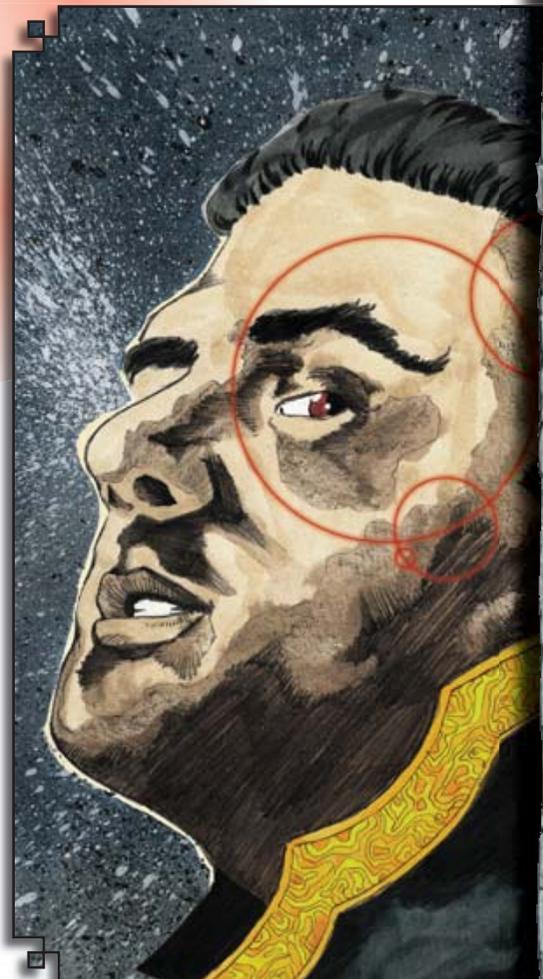
Table 1.0 Eldritch Vampire

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Special
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Spell Sponging, Spell Absorption (0-level spells)
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	Spell Absorption (1st level spells)
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	Spell Swiping (0 and 1st level spells)
6	+3	+2	+2	+5	
7	+3	+2	+2	+5	Spell Absorption (2nd level spells)
8	+4	+2	+2	+6	
9	+4	+3	+3	+6	Spell Swiping (2nd level spells)
10	+5	+3	+3	+7	
11	+5	+3	+3	+7	Spell Absorption (3rd level spells)
12	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8	
13	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8	Spell Swiping (3rd level spells)
14	+7/+2	+4	+4	+9	
15	+7/+2	+5	+5	+9	Spell Absorption (4th level spells)
16	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10	
17	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10	Spell Swiping (4th level spells)
18	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11	
19	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11	Spell Absorption (5th level spells)
20	+10/+5	+6	+6	+12	Spell Swiping (5th level spells)

Table 1.1 Eldritch Vampire Spells Per Day

Level	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	5	3								
2	6	4								
3	6	5								
4	6	6	3							
5	6	6	4							
6	6	6	5	3						
7	6	6	6	4						
8	6	6	6	5	3					
9	6	6	6	6	4					
10	6	6	6	6	5	3				
11	6	6	6	6	6	4				
12	6	6	6	6	6	5	3			
13	6	6	6	6	6	6	4			
14	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	3		
15	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4		
16	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	3	
17	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	
18	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	3
19	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4
20	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6

Table 1.2 Eldritch Vampire Pooled Spells

Level	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	4	2								
2	5	2								
3	5	3								
4	6	3	1							
5	6	4	2							
6	7	4	2	1						
7	7	5	3	2						
8	8	5	3	2	1					
9	9	5	4	3	2					
10	9	5	4	3	2	1				
11	9	5	5	4	3	2				
12	9	5	5	4	3	2	1			
13	9	5	5	4	4	3	2			
14	9	5	5	4	4	3	2	1		
15	9	5	5	4	4	4	3	2		
16	9	5	5	4	4	4	3	2	1	
17	9	5	5	4	4	4	4	3	2	
18	9	5	5	4	4	4	4	3	3	1
19	9	5	5	4	4	4	4	3	3	2
20	9	5	5	4	4	4	4	3	3	3

NEW ITEM

HEADBAND OF SWAP RESISTANCE
This simple dark leather headband is about a half-inch in width and is embossed with protection symbols. When tied around the forehead of a spellcaster, it provides a + 10 bonus to Will saves against Spell Swiping attempts by eldritch vampires.
Faint abjuration; CL 8th; Craft Wondrous Item, *nindetection;* price 1,000 gp

NEW FEATS

DICHOTOMISE SPELL SLOT (METAMAGIC)
You can increase the maximum amount of weaker spells in your spell pool by breaking apart more powerful spells.
Prerequisite: A spell pool.
You can break apart an existing spell slot to create additional lower level spell slots at a one to one ratio.   For example, you can break a 3rd-level spell into three 1st-level spell slots or a 2nd-level spell slot and a first level spell slot. The spell slot to be broken

HUMAN ELDRITCH VAMPIRE STARTING PACKAGE

Armour: None (speed 30 ft.).
Weapons: sickle (1d6, x2 crit, 2 lb., slashing); Light crossbow (1d8, crit 19-20 x2, range inc 80 ft., 4 lb.,piercing).
Skill Selection: Pick a number of skills equal to 3 + Int modifier.

Feat: Combat Casting.
Bonus Feat: Toughness.
Pooled Spells: 0-level spells – (1 empty spell pool slot), *acid splash, light, purify food and drink.* 1st level spells – *doom, shocking grasp.*

Gear: backpack with waterskin, one day's trail rations, bedroll, sack, flint and steel. Spell component pouch, three torches.

Gold: 3d4.

Skill	Ranks	Ability	Armour Check Penalty
Spellcraft	4	Int	-
Concentration	4	Con	-
Knowledge (the planes)	4	Int	-
Diplomacy	4	Cha	-
Gather Information	4	Cha	-
Use Magic Device	4	Cha	-

apart must contain a spell. When the dichotomy takes place, that spell is expended and can never be replaced or reintroduced to the spell pool.

HEIGHTENED ABSORPTION (METAMAGIC)

You can absorb spells one level higher than your current maximum Spell Absorption level.
Prerequisite: Spell Absorption ability.
You can use an empty spell slot in your spell pool to absorb a spell one level higher than your maximum absorption level. The empty spell slot must be two levels greater than the spell you intent to absorb.

HEIGHTENED SWIPING (METAMAGIC)

You can swipe spells one level higher than your current maximum Spell Swiping level.
Prerequisite: Spell Swiping ability.
You can use an empty spell slot in your spell pool to swipe a spell one level higher than your maximum spell swiping level. The empty spell slot must be three levels greater than the spell you intent to swipe.

IDENTIFY PREPARED SPELLS (METAMAGIC)

You can attempt to scan an opponent's mind to learn the precise nature of his prepared spells.
Prerequisite: Scan Eldritch Aura.
Benefit: Once you have used Scan Eldritch Aura to determine the amount of spells your opponent has, you can make an additional Spellcraft check (DC 20 + spell level) to attempt to identify some of his spells. You can identify a number of spell-levels worth of your target's spells equal to your eldritch vampire level; however, you cannot identify spells from any spell level you have not first targeted with Scan Eldritch Aura.

For example: after successfully scanning his opponent's eldritch aura, an 8th level eldritch vampire who succeeds at his Spellcraft check can identify 8 spell levels of the

opponent's prepared spells. He chooses to identify three 1st level spells, one 2nd level spell and one 3rd level spell for a total of 8 spell levels (3x1+2+3=8).

In order to be effective, your opponent must be visible and within 100 feet of your location.

MULTISWIPING (METAMAGIC)

You can make multiple attempts to swipe spells from an opponent, even after previous attempts fail.
Prerequisite: Spell Absorption ability.
Benefit: Following a failed attempt to swipe or absorb a spell, you do not have to wait 24 hours to make a second attempt against the same target.

SCAN ELDRITCH AURA (METAMAGIC)

You can attempt to scan an opponent's mind to size up how many spells he has prepared or knows. The longer you concentrate on studying your target, the more you can learn about the spells he has prepared.
Prerequisite: A spell pool.
Benefit: You can attempt to detect whether your target knows any spells of a level equal to the number of continuous minutes you study him and, using a Spellcraft check (DC 15 + spell level), you can detect the precise number of spells he knows or has prepared for that level. The maximum number of spells this Feat can scan for can never exceed the maximum number of spells you can have in your spell pool; neither can you scan any spells of a higher level than those you can cast.

For example: an 8th level eldritch vampire who scans an opponent for 4 minutes and makes a successful Spellcraft check, learns that his opponent has as many spell (or less) as himself.

In order to be effective, your opponent must be visible and within 100 feet of your location.
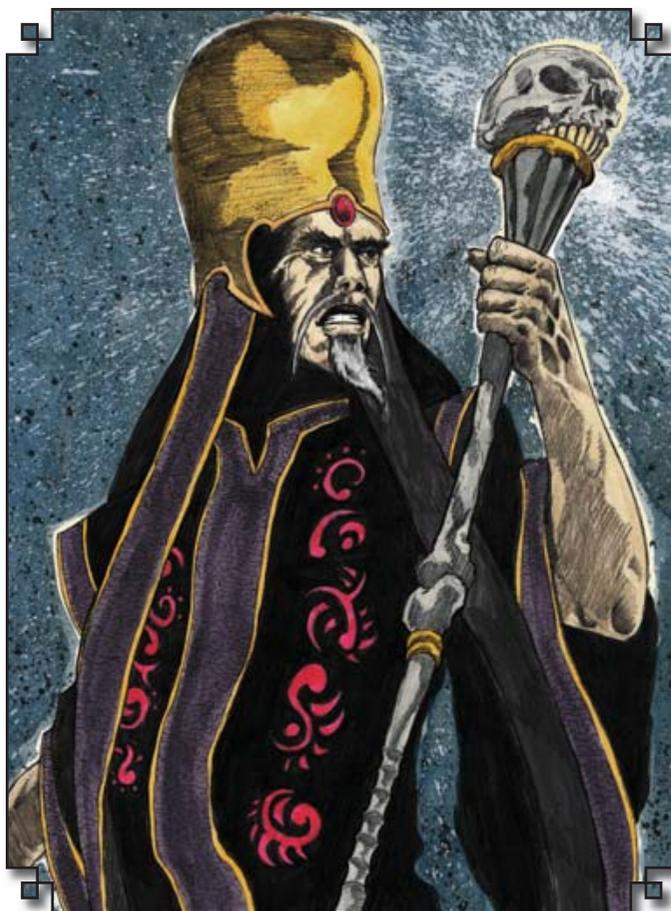
FOMORIANS
THE DARK OF THE SEA

By Tim Hitchcock

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FOMORIANS

Long before the plague of humanity came to the shores of Alba, the fomorians lived in the brumal waters along its shores – outcasts of centuries long past and shunned by all living things. Even the earliest ogham writings they are mentioned with antipathy, and ancient texts such as The Book of Dun Cow describe them as the monstrous spawn of the accursed Bress, eldest son of Elathan, high king of the Tuatha de Danann, who turned his back to the sun and plunged his soul into the icy depths of the sea.

The islands of the west, whose names are now erased and forgotten, were the birthplace of humanity, the paradise of the goddess given as a gift to her beloved children. Little is recorded of this age before the tale of Elathan and the downfall brought on by the progeny of his son Bress. At the coming of his manhood, Bress became obsessed with one of his father's consorts, a beautiful young girl named Brigit who was the daughter of the Dagada. Elathan tried to discourage his son's affection by demeaning him in front of the girl. This soured Bress against his father driving him to seek the power to avenge himself. The goddess heard him but ignored his prayers, yet another was listening. In the blackest ocean, Dagon the Devourer sent his secrets to the young man; whispered in salty waves that crashed against the crags

of the western islands he promised him the might of his dark sorceries. On the night of Bress's 16th birthday, Elathan was found murderously drowned in the ocean, his body bound and weighted with rocks. As was customary, Bress took the throne after his father's passing and took Brigit for his queen, but his rule over the Tuatha De Danann was brief.
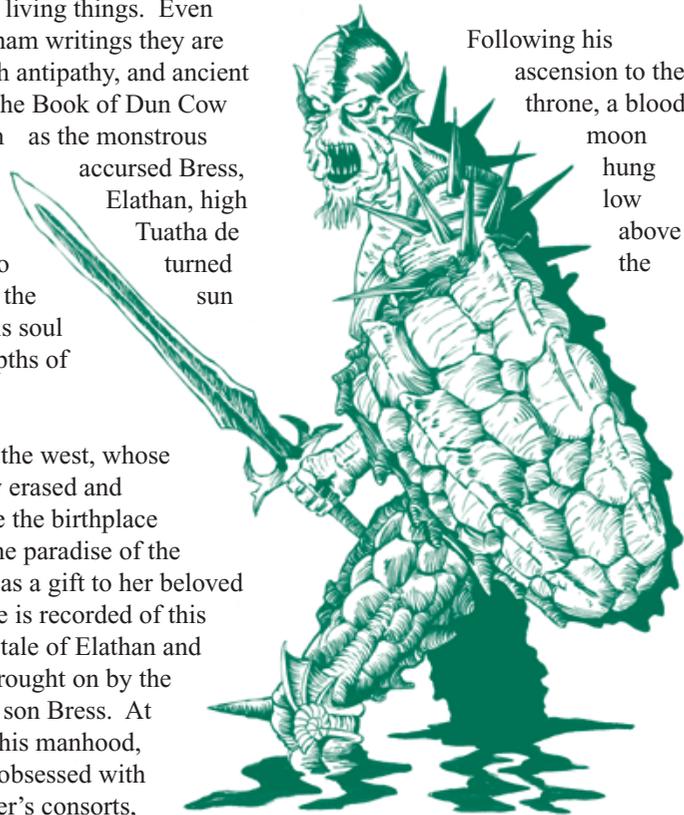
Following his ascension to the throne, a blood moon hung low above the islands for ten days, a sure sign of the anger of the goddess. In their divinations, the witches saw visions of Bress bathed in the blood of his father, but feared to make open accusations of patricide against the king. All the while Bress grew stronger, filled with the forbidden lore of the blackest sorceries. Followers swarmed to him, worshipping him as if he was a god in hopes of being bestowed with the dynamism of his

sorcery, a belief he encouraged. The witches were finally able to challenge his intentions when, on the eve of Beltaine, Brigit gave birth to their first child, a goat-headed monstrosity with three-arms that howled until the distressed queen threw it into the sea. The child was certainly the omen of the goddess and the witches publicly decried Bress as a worshiper of Dagon. Bress in turn berated his witches as followers of a weak goddess and offered the command of the potent sorcery of Dagon to all who would follow him. Then with an imposing display of sorcery, he set the witches ablaze at his very command.

When word of the king's goat-headed child and witch-slaying sorceries spread throughout the isles, the tribes united and an army was raised against the king, demanding his immediate execution. However, before their arrival, Bress and his followers fled northeast to the isle of Lochlann where they erected a huge fortress and shielded it with dark magic fuelled by drowning sacrifices to Dagon. However, where Bress could escape the wrath of men, he could not undo his betrayal to Danu. The goddess no longer shed her warmth upon Lochlann, great waves flooded the island and, without the sun, the waters froze them, sealing everything beneath a crust of ice. Those that chose to follow Bress she also cursed, robbing them and their offspring of the beauty of humanity by marking them as malformed mutants so none could ever forget their treachery.

Twenty years ago, the fomorians hailed the coming of a new messiah; a child born with a deformity of such power that it made him a living artefact. He became known as

Balor of the Evil Eye because his gaze withered all those it fell upon. Balor raised a massive invasion force and almost conquered all of Alba before the Celtic tribes united and drove them back into Lochlann. Since then neither Balor nor his eye have been sleeping. Instead, he has been patiently plotting his revenge, slowly testing the humans with small incursions and waiting for the precise moment to launch another full-scale conquest of Tir Nan Og.

The Fomorians

While typical fomorians are described in *Slainé: The Roleplaying Game*, their powers, appearance, skills and deformities can create a diverse selection of unique creatures. Fomorians can progress, gaining experience and developing to become potent foes.

Personality: While most humans find fomorian reasoning difficult to grasp, it is really quite simple. They believe that the Land of the Young and anything in it is theirs. They arrived first after being driven from the utopian western isles and consider it was bad enough that the Tuatha de Danann forced them into exile, refusing to grant them any claims the eastern lands. They are spitefully malicious and want nothing more than to extract vengeance against humanity. To accomplish this task they send parties of invading troops into the lands south of Lochlann. Their sole purpose is to defeat the spirits of those they conquer and turn them into slaves or food. They conquer and humiliate their victims and are content to slowly watch entire cities starve and freeze to death while under their occupation.

Physical Description: Fomorians are deformed and misshapen bipedal creatures that appear to have mutated from humans and other animals. Most are vaguely amphibian in appearance with exaggerated frog or fish-like features and bestial teeth and claws. Still, the variation of fomorian mutation can be extreme, ranging from cold-blooded reptilian features to those with the heads of exotic animals or goats, boars. Some have thick hides and are easily mistaken for shoggy beasts while others have scales, blotchy flesh, or even metallic feathers. Others grow deformities such as extra limbs, teeth, eyes, or even multiple heads. The most terrible fomorians have mutations so fearsome that their powers resemble formidable magic. Similar to the warped ones of the Tuatha de Danann, these *living artefacts* become the fomorians' greatest leaders.

Relations: Fomorians have little to do with any creatures but their own kind; even among themselves, relations are despicable. Fomorian prejudice goes beyond humanity and extends into their ranks as a harsh caste system that delineates the expendable from the exceptional. At the top are those who claim direct decent from Bress, followed by those gifted by Dagon with deformities or sorcerous talents. Occasionally fomorians form alliances with the Drunes, but these are temporary at best. Overall, the fomorians place no faith in humanity or gods of those they consider lesser races. If the Drunes want to bring about Ragnarok so be it; just so long as humanity is destroyed in the process.

Names: Fomorian names resemble those of humans, however they tend to be less traditional and more descriptive of their appearance. For this reason, fomorian names are more or less genderless: Balogh, Bressaich, Buarainech, Caoirnean, Dagonilk, Dungmaw, Ethniu, Finaoch, Nogo, Quagslime, Rudor, Sallowmire.

Fomorian Racial Traits

All Fomorians have the following racial traits:

†   +2 Str, +2 Con, -2 Dex, -2 Int, -2 Cha.
†   **Hit Dice:** Classed fomorians do not start out with 2d8 hit dice, but gain them by character class.

†   **Limited Class Selection:** Fomorians can choose from the following character classes: Noble Warrior, Thief, Tribal Warrior and Witch (Sorcerer of Dagon).
†   **Medium-size:** Most fomorians are of medium size, however some do grow to monstrous proportions.
†   **Speed:** Fomorians have a base speed of 30 feet and a swim speed of 30 feet.
†   **Subtype:** All fomorians have the aquatic and cold subtypes.
†   **Natural Armour:** Fomorians have thick hide that provides them with a natural armour bonus of +5.
†   **Natural Attack:** Fomorians have the following natural attacks: 2 claws 1d3+1, bite 1d3.
†   **Swimmer:** Fomorians gain a +6 racial bonus to swim checks.
†   **Sea Power:** Fomorians have turned to the worship of Dagon and gain their sorcerous powers from the cold, black sea. A fomorian's base Sea Power is 6 (see fomorian sorcery section).
†   **No Enech:** Fomorians consider the concept of honour distasteful and are always considered to have an enech score of 0. Fomorians that belong to the Bresson tribe or have a dramatic mutation can take the Leadership feat without enech, however fomorians can only gain cohorts or followers that worship Dagon.
†   **No Geas:** Fomorians have no druids and therefore are not subjected to geases.
†   **Mutations:** A fomorian has a 50% chance of 1d4 mutations determinable by the tables below.

Mutations

While most fomorians have a similar appearance, the curse upon their race causes many of them to take on a variety of physical alterations and deformities. Use the following charts to further pervert any existing fomorian or fomorian subspecies.

Roll 1d4 to determine the type of mutation: 1 head, 2 limb, 3 skin, 4 deformity.

FOMORIAN MUTATION TABLES

1d8	Head	Effect
1	Goat	Butt Attack (melee, 1d6)
2	Bull	Gore Attack (melee, 1d6)
3	Lizard	Regeneration 5
4	Serpent	Poisonous Bite (Fort save DC 15, 1d4 Con)
5	Pig	Scent Ability
6	Fish	Water Breathing
7	Baboon	Low-light Vision
8	Extra Head	Spot +4, Never Surprised

1d6	Limb	Effect
1	Cloven Feet	Kick Attack (melee, 1d6)
2	Tentacles	Improved Trip, Reach 10ft.
3	Flippers	Swim Speed 60ft.
4	Pincers	Crushing Grapple (1d6 per round)
5	Extra Arm	Extra Attack
6	Extra Leg	+10 Speed, +2 Balance

1d8	Skin	Effect
1	Mottled hide	DR5 /Bludgeoning
2	Shell	+4 AC, DR2/ Piercing
3	Metallic feathers	+2 AC, Slashing Feathers (melee, 1d8)
4	Scaled	+2 AC, Aquatic Subtype
5	Slimy	+10 Escape Artist Checks, Corrosive Slime Attack 3/day (ranged, 1d4)
6	Pustulant	Diseased Touch Attack (Fort save DC 12, blistering disease causes 1d4 loss of Con)
7	Exoskeleton	+6 AC
8	Spines	Piercing Grapple (1d6)

1d8	Deformity	Effect
1	Hand in chest	+2 Grapple
2	Extra eye	Darkvision (60 feet)
3	Large	+1 HD, +2 Strength
4	Lizard tail	Slam Attack +2 Melee (1d8)
5	Noxious	3 times a day release a 20-ft. radius Stench (Fort DC 14 or become sickened 1d12 rounds)
6	Tusks	Bite (1d6 + Strength)
7	Fish Tail	Slam Attack, Melee (1d3); Swim Speed 40ft.
8	Extra Row of Teeth	Bite (melee, 1d8)

'OH, YES ... THE FOMORIANS HAVE SWEPT DOWN WITH THE ICE SHEET! USING ICE TOWERS, OPERATED BY DRUNE 'ADVISERS', THEY ARE DESTROYING ALL WHO BEAR ARMS AGAINST THEM!

THEY ARE OVERJOYED TO BE TRIUMPHING OVER THE TRIBES OF THE EARTH GODDESS AFTER EARLIER HUMILIATIONS!

NEW TRIBE: THE BRESSONS

The Bressons are those who can trace their lineage back to Bress, the exile whose rejection of the goddess caused him to become the progenitor of the fomorian race. Of all the fomorians, they are the least practical when dealing with humans and are particularly cruel and torturous conquerors.

NOBLE WARRIOR

Bresson noble warriors are practised at instilling the utmost terror in their opponents. Their dominant personalities make them strong combatants and fearful leaders. Bresson noble warriors are trained in the use of intimidating exotic weapons. At first level, they gain two bonus exotic weapon proficiencies in iron poleaxe and punching spades.

Fomorians nobles have a reduced bonus feat selection, as they are never able to learn the feats of the Tuatha de Danann. Fomorian nobles choose feats from the following reduced feat list:

Ambidexterity, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency, Expertise, Great Cleave, Grip of Iron, Improved Critical, Improved Unarmed Strike, Improved Two Weapon Fighting, Mobility, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Spring Attack, Sunder, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus, Weapon Specialisation, Whirlwind Attack.

TRIBAL WARRIOR

Bressons tribal warriors are weaned on hatred of the Tuatha de Dannan and from a young age are taught how to deal with them.

Tribal Enemy – Bressons have extreme loathing for those that exiled them to Lochlann. A Bresson tribal warrior chooses one of the tribes of the earth goddess as his favoured enemy. At 1st level, 5th level and every five levels thereafter (1st, 5th, 10th, 15th, 20th) he gains a +1 cumulative bonus against his favoured enemy to all attack rolls, damage rolls, and skill checks.

Fear of Witches – The descendants of Bress have inherited his fear of the witches of the goddess. Whenever a Bresson comes within 60 feet of a witch that belongs to one of the Celtic tribes, he becomes ill at ease and suffers a –2 circumstance penalty to all attack rolls, damage rolls and skill checks. Witches of other origin (i.e.: Drune, Nemedian, Midgardian, or fomorian sorcerers) cause them no such penalty.

WITCH (SORCERER OF DAGON)

Fomorians practice a form of Dagon worship similar to witchery that empowers them in the sorcerous arts. Since they have a long-standing hatred for witches, as a matter of semantics they refer to their witches as sorcerers. Unlike most of humanity, fomorian sorcerers tend to be males. To make a fomorian sorcerer, use the witch character class with the following alterations:

† **+1 Base Sea Power:** Fomorians do not use Earth Power but instead gain their powers from the sea. Substitute any Base Earth Power increase with a Base Sea Power increase so that at 1st, 4th, 8th, 12th, 16th and 20th levels he gains a Base Sea Power increase of +1. His maximum Sea Power should also increase accordingly.

† **Drowned Offering:** At 2nd level, a sorcerer perfects his ability to gain power from sacrificially drowning opponents. Whenever he attempts to make an offering to Dagon by trying to drown an opponent, he suffers a –2 penalty to his Fortitude to avoid drowning. Additionally, he gains extra Sea Power from the death at the rate of +2 per HD of the victim. These Sea Power points can be used to pay for the cost of a spell, added to the sorcerer's base Sea Power, or stored in a vessel such as a seaweird.

† **Blood Drowning:** At 3rd level, a sorcerer learns to draw Sea Power without submerging himself in the sea by slitting the throat of a sacrifice and forcing him to drown in a bucket of his own blood and human tears. Using this unpleasant method, a sorcerer gains 1 Sea Point per each HD of the victim as if he were submerged in seawater

† **Drowning Ceremony:** At 5th, level a sorcerer perfects his ability to appease Dagon with his drowning ceremonies and gains +1 Sea Point for ritually drowned opponents. This includes offerings made with a blood drowning. At 10th level, the bonus rises to +2 Sea Power, at 15th level to +4 Sea Power, and at 20th level to +4 Sea Power.

† **Glamourer:** Fomorian sorcery focuses mostly on curses and glamours, therefore when a fomorian sorcerer reaches 7th level he does not gain the *summoner* ability but instead gains the *glamour* ability. He gains a +1 bonus to his magical attack roll when using all glamour spells. This bonus increases to +2 at 13th level and +3 at 19th level.

LOCHLANN: THE ACCURSED ISLE

The tribes of Danu refer to the massive glacial formations above Alba as Lochlann even though the island Lochlann sank completely when the seawaters swallowed Atlantis years before the second flooding drove the Tuatha De Danann from the western isles. Still, the fomorians consider the glaciers as their lands; then again, they consider everything their lands. In truth, the glaciers surround Lochlann, forming an ancient prison around their accursed isle, so for centuries fomorians have been forced to rely on the worship of Dagon and his foul sorceries to sustain them in the harsh environment.

The island itself is large, but remains submerged and the surrounding waters are encrusted with thick sheets of ice. Stone pipelines break through the glacial surface creating passage from the seafloor to the frigid wastes above. Below the ice, the pipelines connect to vast cities protected by earth-powered force barriers sustained by enchanted stones called the *Seaweirds of Dagon*. Older structures lay sprawled and half crumbling on the ocean floor, remnants of the goddess's wrath. Newer settlements are dug deep into the surrounding ice or built into natural caverns. These are easier to maintain, as fewer *seaweird*s are required to maintain the force fields that protect them.

Lochlann has few resources of its own; the frozen land bears little seed and less life. Fuel and food are scarce commodities, as are building materials, metal, and the accoutrements of daily life. Therefore, their primary means of survival is the pillaging and conquest of the southern lands. More recently, Lochlann has also been pressed by a new nemesis. For the past 5,000

Lochlann
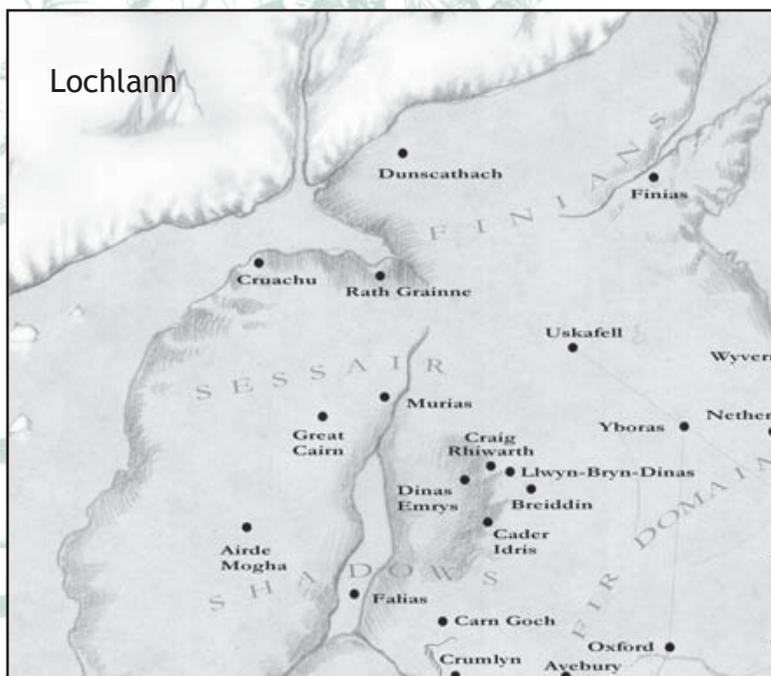
years, the *seaweirds* have been crucial to the survival of the fomorians, but like all things, the passing ages have waned their force. With this threat to the stability of their cities, the fomorians have initiated even more aggressive tactics as they are driven into further dependence on outside resources, not just for food and fuel, but also for drowning sacrifices to keep the seaweirds filled with power. Incursion forces are growing and strongholds such as the Dún Bhalair on Tory Island have become strategically important, allowing a steady stream of supplies to make their way back to Lochlann.

TORY ISLAND

Although it is less than three miles long and only three-quarters of mile in width, Tory Island is striking in its feral beauty and rugged, ocean-carved cliffs. The coastline is unwelcoming and rocky spires of sea granite lay just beneath the dark ocean waters hungering to bite the timbers of incoming ships. For its starkness and strategic location, Balor chose Tory Island to be the location of his great fortress, Dún Bhalair, from which he plans to lead his new invasion into Tir Nan Og. Dún Bhalair juts out against the grey sky atop the wild cliffs of the island's eastern promontory. Its four ramparts crown the hill ensconcing an array of stone shelters that house troops, spoils and slaves. On the crags below the Dun Bhalair is a deep cleft called Príosún Bhalair into which the fomorian chieftain throws his prisoners; sacrifices to Dagon, drowned when the tide rises and angry seawater crashes over the rocks filling the fissure.

At any given time, a unit of at least 60 fomorians and a commanding officer with at least five class levels and 1d2 mutations guards Tory Island.

FOMORIAN OCCUPATION

To increase their resources fomorians seize and occupy human settlements under the premise of offering them protection. Fomorians consider themselves superior and since humans can produce valuable goods and services for them, fomorians feel they deserve their protection. Their primary interest is not destroying humans, but manipulating them for the greatness of Lochlann. When fomorians come across a human settlement, they first seek audience with the tribal leader and demand to set up a military base. Next, fomorian military forces move in and prevent anyone from being 'strangled in their own entrails'. Of course, the military needs to be paid, so

heavy taxes are extracted, but these are usually so terrible as to starve or freeze more than two-thirds the human population. Still, human settlements are used as disposable resources to be strip-mined and discarded when they are no longer productive. When finished, the fomorians simply move on to the next settlement and set up camp.

A typical invasion force consists of 1d2 fomorians units each with a unit commander of 5th to 8th level and 1d2 mutations, and a Bresson general of 10th level or higher.

DEATH AND TAXES

Humans do not understand why their conquerors destroy the crop fields and then raise taxes. The truth of the matter is that the fomorians like to taunt and dehumanise victims as they were once taunted and dehumanised. When weekly taxes cannot be paid in food or other items, fomorians instead request more insidious payments. The following taxes represent an array typical of those an invasion force might impose.

Food Tax: Food tax is applied per household. The tax is equal to the amount of food needed to feed one person for a week. This usually means that under fomorian occupation, most households are always short food for one person. Occupants of those households forced to ration food due to excessive taxation suffer from hunger and have their Constitution scores temporarily reduced by –2 for the extent of the fomorian occupation.

Fuel Tax: Peat and wood are valuable resources in the frigid lands of Lochlann. As with food, fuel taxation is applied per household in a weekly amount that leaves the house cold for one day out of seven and occupants run the risk of freezing if temperatures drop too low. Occupants of those households forced to ration fuel due to excessive taxation suffer from chills and suffer a –4 penalty to saving throws against the cold for the extent of the fomorian occupation.

Tear Tax: Sea devils cannot cry, thus women's tears are precious to them. Breaking the will of the women and forcing them to tears is a favourite pastime of the troops. Tear tax is usually extracted by whim or to break the spirits of upstarts. Tears are collected in special horns and stored barrels then shipped back to

Lochlann for the pleasure of Balor. Human tears are also a common spell component in fomorian sorcery. Those who bear witness or are subjected to a tear tax collection suffer a –2 penalty to morale for one full week.

Nose Tax: Quagslime the tax collector dreamt up this sinister tax, whereby those short on payments have their noses cut off, leaving them with a monstrous appearance and a fearful reminder of what might come next for those who continuously forfeit on their taxes. Those victims of a nose tax suffer a permanent –4 penalty to Charisma and lose 1d4 points of Enech.

Cumal Tax: Fomorians need love too, so when subjugates are short on quarterly taxes, fomorians collect the prettiest tribal women as their slaves. Those who allow their loved ones to be taken from their homes as fomorian slaves loose 4+1d4 points of Enech and anyone bearing witness to such an event suffers a –2 morale penalty for two weeks.

Fomorians falsely parade themselves as very generous conquerors, always willing to offer protection, advice, and food to their subjugates. They are quite secure with their racial superiority over all of humanity and stand firm in their belief that they are doing what is best for the world. Consequently, they take any slights to their hospitality very seriously and any human who refuses advice, protection or food is guaranteed swift retribution. Fomorians see their conquests as playthings, and it is common enough sport for them to grab anyone they consider scofflaw, tie him to a post and shoot crossbows at him for amusement.

Feeding Pits

One of the great concerns of running a military base is figuring out how to keep troops fed. The creation

FEEDING PIT

Fomorian Hovels

500 Feet

Fomorian Hovels
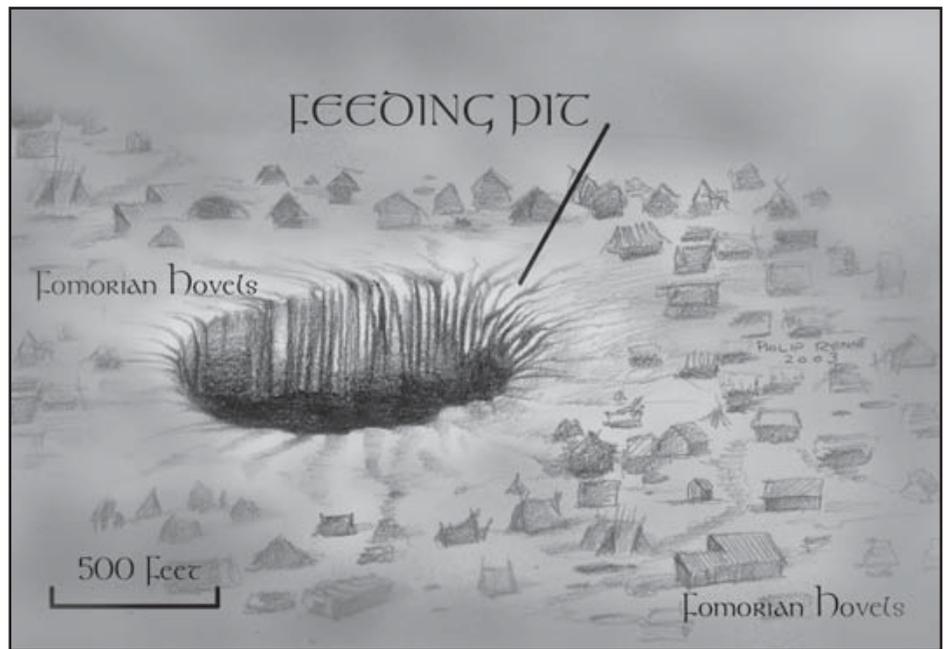
of the communal feeding pit is the fomorian answer to this dilemma. Sheets of animal hide are hung on great wooden stakes creating a huge pool into which is poured cauldrons of a foetid morass of half-decomposed animals and mouldering plant-life. Larger pits can feed dozens at a time, covering hundreds of feet in waist-deep mire of floating carcasses. As tribute to their self-indulgent gluttony, many of them bathe themselves in the pits as well. The mixture is enchanted (see *brew feed* spell) to provide sustenance only the fomorians can stomach and most other creatures become ill just from its appearance and stench. Any non-fomorian that comes within 30 feet of a feeding pit must make a Fortitude save (DC 12) or become *nauseated* until they can move away from it. If the Fortitude save is successful, the character is immune to the stench for a full 24 hours. Any non-fomorian eating from the pit must make a Fortitude save DC 20 or become nauseated for 2d8 minutes.

Fomorians are excessively proud of their food pits and frequently allow those they subjugate to partake in communal feeding out of 'fomorian generosity'. They are greatly offended by any who decline such offers (for whatever reason) or those who become nauseous at the sight, smell, or flavour of their food.

Mundane Items
Tear Horns

Fomorians prize human tears for their spells and sorcery. Their resemblance to seawater and purity of form make them a pleasing offering to Dagon and they are consumed in rituals, symbolic of Dagon's all-consuming waters. Tear horns are used to collect tears, preferably from human females. They are sealed with noxious unguents such that opening the lid near a victim's face gives off a scent so potent they are forced to cry. Tears can be held back with a successful Will save (DC 15), but that generally offends fomorian tear collectors, inviting them to slit the offender's throat. A full horn holds the tears of 18 humans.

Punching Spades

Punching spades are unique fomorian weapons developed out of their love for close-quarter combat and accentuate the damage of their natural fighting style. The weapons consist of two, two-foot-long, narrow, shovel blades with a slight beak-like curve that are strapped over the forearms with the iron tips protruding out about six inches over the knuckles. There are two styles of using punching spades. The standard one involves blocking and punching whereby a single attack is made while the other

Exotic Weapon Medium-size	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range Incr.	Weight	Type
Punching Spades	50 séts	1d8/1d8	18-20/x2	-	6 lb.	piercing

hand blocks incoming blows like a small shield. The more complex method allows the wielder to make two attacks but prevents the shield bonus. Using the two-attack method is considered fighting with two weapons so the wielder suffers any penalties normally incurred for fighting with a second weapon in an off-hand. A character trying to use only a single punching spade in combat suffers a –2 penalty to his attacks but still gains the +1 AC bonus as if carrying a shield.

FOMORIAN SORCERY AND SEA POWER

Fomorians are formidable sorcerers who specialise in the creation of dreadful glamours that sap men's will and dominate beasts. The most drastic difference between fomorian sorcery and the magic of the Tuatha de Danann is that fomorians draw their power from the sea instead of the earth. Like the ocean itself, Sea Power is fickle and as soon as its wielder leaves the ocean, its magic ebbs from him like the falling tide. Sea Power functions almost identically to Earth Power and can be used to fuel any Earth Power spells, provided the caster meets all Power costs and spell prerequisites. The following restrictions apply to using Sea Power:

†   Creatures relying on Sea Power must be worshipers of Dagon and have participated in a drowning ceremony in which a sentient creature is drowned as a sacrifice to The Devourer. While Dagon worship is not exclusive to fomorians, it is almost unheard of among human tribes. Sea Power is exclusive and any creature that chooses to use it must first forfeit his ability to use Earth Power.

†   Beyond the caress of the ocean, Sea Power cannot be contained for prolonged periods. For every hour a vessel (either a sentient creature or a seaweird) is not submerged in seawater it loses 1 point of Sea Power.

†   Sea Power can only be gained or restored by complete submersion in seawater. A submerged creature regains Sea Power at the rate of 1 point per hour.

†   Any Earth Power penalties caused by wearing armour also apply to Sea Power.

There are no locations that boost Sea Power; however, additional Sea Power can be generated by presenting sacrifices of drowned sentient creatures to Dagon. A worshipper of Dagon gains 1 Sea Point per Hit Die of the sentient creature drowned. A fomorian sorcerer can also alter a drowning ceremony so that the Sea Points can provide even more power or fill a sacred vessel such as a seaweird (see Sorcerer of Dagon).

Drinking human tears can also boost Sea Power. Consuming the tears of 18 humans (a full tear horn) boosts an individuals Sea Points by 1 point.

SPELLS

Beast Glamour
Glamour
Sea Power Cost: 3 points
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature Touched
Duration: 1 hour per caster level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes
Magic Attack Roll: Sets DC for target's saving throw
Prerequisites: Fomorian
This glamour allows a fomorian to heighten and manipulate the huge wild beasts that roam the glaciers

of the north, turning them into monstrous battle mounts. When cast upon a wild animal, it accepts a single creature as its rider (either the spellcaster or someone specified by the caster). The rider is then able to mount the creature and direct it into combat. For the duration of the spell, the rider can command the glamoured beast to attack or retreat and order it to perform actions as if it had the following feats: Power Attack, Improved Overrun, Improved Bull Rush. Commanding use of a feat in combat is difficult and requires a Concentration check (DC 12) in order for the command to be successful. When the spell is over, the animal returns to normal. Fomorians typically use this spell on Fomorian War Boars and Elk.
Material component: tears from nine humans and a portion of food the animal likes.

Brew Feed
Curse
Sea Power Cost: 3 points
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 3 hours
Range: Touch
Area: 60-gallon cauldron
Duration: Instantaneous (see description)
Prerequisites: Fomorian

This enchantment is used to fortify the feed, which the fomorians pour into their communal feeding pits. The spell is cast over ingredients while they are being brewed in a massive cauldron supported on gimbals and mounted on a land barge. Once completed, the barge is rolled to the edge of a feeding pit and the cauldron contents are dumped in. A single batch can feed 20 fomorians for one day. Humans that smell or partake in eating fomorian feed suffer negative side effects including retching and nausea (see feeding pits section above).

Material Components: tears from six humans, a rotten animal carcass, brine and a bucket of mould.

Humiliate
Glamour
Sea Power Cost: 1 point
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature Touched
Duration: Instantaneous (see description)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes
Magic Attack Roll: Sets DC for target's saving throw
Prerequisites: Fomorian

When this spell is worked upon a victim, it temporarily breaks his will allowing the caster to violate him with an act that causes him to suffer from such humiliation that he loses some of his Enech (2d8 points). The chosen act of degradation must be simple and require no more than two minutes to complete, after which the spell's effect wears off.

Sample Acts of Humiliation
Rub one's own face in filth
Kiss the caster's nether regions
Make a marriage proposal to a dwarf
Offer one's spouse to a fomorian for lovemaking
Spit on one's tribal leader

Material Component: tears from six humans

Submission
Glamour
Sea Power Cost: 4 points
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Area: 30-ft. radius surrounding the caster
Duration: Sea Power 1 per 10 minutes
Saving Throw: Will negates (see description)
Spell Resistance: Yes
Magic Attack Roll: Sets DC for target's saving throw (see description)
Prerequisites: Fomorian

Those under the influence of this glamour perceive the caster's actions or the actions of his allies as the inevitable. Those that fail their Will saves allow the caster to complete his actions without attempts at resistance or dissuasion. Still, certain acts are disturbing enough that the victim receives a bonus to his Will save to shake off the spell's effect. Additionally, the victim is allowed a new Will save each time a disturbing action is repeated. Use the table below as a guide. This glamour is often used during tax collections or when a fomorian seeks audience with a tribal king.

Disturbing Action	Will Save Bonus
Collect a Food or Fuel Tax	+0
Eat a Family Pet or Beat a Man in the Streets.	+2
Collect a Nose Tax or Cumal	+4
Perform a Torturous Act or Execution	+6

Material Component: tears from nine humans

The Seaweirds of Dagon

Seaweirds are medium-sized oceanic stones that act as natural vessels for siphoning Sea Power. Carved long ago by fomorian sorcerers aided by Dagon's dark blessings, the art of their creation has been lost to the ages. When completely submerged in seawater, seaweirds slowly draw magical essence from the ocean that can be channelled. By arranging them in proper configuration, the fomorians can create powerful forcewalls that protect their cities from harsh currents or create wells of air, suitable for air-breathing fomorians and land dwelling slaves. A typical arrangement of five seaweirds creates a forcewall with a radius up to 500 yards. Time and overuse has caused the power of the seaweirds to weaken and where once they could self-sufficiently support forcewalls, a monthly drowning sacrifice of sentient creatures is needed to prevent them from burning out and becoming useless.

Living Artefacts

One of the most sinister aspects of Dagon worship are the mutations and disfigurements which he bestows upon the offspring of his most faithful servants. In extreme cases, the results attain the supernatural and create such monstrous perversions that they are considered living artefacts. Living artefacts produce supernatural effects at the expense of Sea Points paid at a one per use ratio. While Balor's Eye is the most infamous, there are a few others that are less known. Any fomorian born with such a power is considered blessed by Dagon and elevated to a position of leadership.

The Evil Eye of Balor: Whenever Balor opens his eye an arch of blinding flame shoots out in a 30-foot cone. Any living creature caught in its gaze is engulfed in the enchanted flames and withers into a dried husk; a successful Fortitude save (DC 25) reduces the effect to the permanent loss of 2d4 Constitution. Using the eye is a partial action that costs Balor a Sea Point.

Tongue of Hearts: Whomsoever is born with tongue of hearts is a frightening opponent, blessed with a blood hunger and an elongated serpentine tongue as strong as iron. As a full round ranged attack, the living artefact can shoot his tongue down the throat of any living creature within 15 feet. If the attack is successful, the victim must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 25) or be instantly slain as the tongue rips his heart out.

The Face of Fear: A living artefact born with this mutation can grab his upper lip and pull the skin back from his skull exposing the raw muscle and bone beneath. The sight is so mortifying that any sentient beings able to see the display and within 60 feet of the living artefact must make a Will save (DC 30) or become

frightened. Activating the face of fear is a full round action that costs 1 Sea Point.

BEASTS OF WAR

Fomorians ride into battle on glamoured beasts. The following animals from the *Slainé: The Roleplaying Game* Bestiary make appropriate fomorian mounts: Elk, Hairy One, War horse, and Sabre-tooths. Fomorians also glamour the monstrous boars native to Lochlann, which make most fearsome mounts.

Fomorian War Boar
Large Animal
Hit Dice: 8d8 + 40 (83 hp)
Initiative: +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative)
Speed: 50 ft.
AC: (+1 Dex, +8 natural, -1 size.)
Attacks: Gore +14 Melee
Damage: Gore 2d8 +7
Face/Reach: 5ft. by 10ft. /5ft.
Special Attacks: Goring Toss, Ferocity
Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +12, Ref +5, Will +8
Abilities: Str 25, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 2, Wis 11, Cha 6
Skills: Listen, Spot
Feats: Improved Natural Attack, Improved Initiative
Climate/Terrain: Cold Lands
Organisation: Solitary
Advancement: 9-10 HD (large), 10-11 HD (huge)

Fomorian war boars are unyielding behemoths of destruction, wild creatures of the glaciers glamoured by fomorian sorcerers to charge over battlefields trampling and goring all that stand before them. An average war boar is as tall as a man at the shoulders, is over 14 feet in length, and weighs several thousand pounds. Their hides are thick with bristling spiny fur that drapes their lean and muscled flanks. They have small, glaring eyes and long snouts and, instead of tusks, they have an impressive pair of long curling horns that dip along the length of their faces and the twist and taper to an iron hard point.

COMBAT
War boars attack by charging and goring opponents, disembowelling them with their horns and throwing them aside like rag dolls.

Ferocity (Ex): Fomorian war boars are such vicious opponents that they refuse to acknowledge their wounds and continue to fight without penalty even when disabled or dying.

Goring Toss (Ex): If a war boar scores a critical threat on a charge, it makes a Goring Toss. Instead of being slammed with the creature's horns, they are driven into the victim who is then lifted and tossed aside as the beast rears its head. A Goring Toss does 3d8 points of piercing damage and the victim is flung 10 feet in a random direction and lands prone. Upon hitting the ground the victim must make a Fortitude save equal to the amount of damage he took from the attack or be staggered for 1d4 rounds afterwards.

FAMOUS FOMORIANS
This section presents stat-blocks for a few of the more noted fomorians.

Buarainech
Male Fomorian Tribal Warrior 12:
Medium sized-humanoid (H 6'3", W 370 lb.); HD 12d12 + 24; hp 114; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 40 ft., Swim 30 ft.; AC 18 (+2 Dex, +5 natural, +1 shield); Attacks +16/+11/+6 melee (Iron Sword 1d8+, crit 19/20) or +15 melee (Gore 1d6+3); SA Bull's Head, Rage 3/day, Fast Movement, Expert, Tribal Fighting Style (Bresson – favoured enemy Sessair +3)); SQ Cold Subtype; Magic Attack Bonus +3; Base Sea Power 5; SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 12

Skills: Climb +7, Craft (weapons) +8, Diplomacy +3, Gather Information +3, Handle Animal+7, Intimidate +12, Intuit Direction +5, Jump +3, Listen +12, Move Silently +2, Perform +2, Profession (soldier) +10, Ride +7, Spot +6, Sorcery +1, Spot +8, Swim +9, Wilderness Lore +5

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Endurance, Power Attack, Sunder

Spells: Beast Glamour

Possessions: Named iron sword (*man-skinner*), small wooden shield

Description: Buarainech literally means *cow-faced*, and the name is true to form. Buarainech is foul and corpulent, his brown mottled hide resting on his frame in thick folds.

Tactics: Buarainech, father of Balor is a cantankerous and cowardly fomorian who prefers to order troops from behind the scenes or rule occupied territories whose subjugates have already had their wills broken by previous invaders.

Balor of the Evil Eye
Male Fomorian Noble Warrior 17:
Medium sized-humanoid (H 6'8", W 350 lb.,); HD 17d10 +51; hp 173; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., Swim 30 ft.; AC 21 (+1 Dex, +5 natural, +1 helm, +4 spiked mail); Attacks +26/+21/+16/+11 melee (Iron Pole-Axe 1d12+8, crit x3) or +19 ranged (Eye of Balor*); SA Tribe (Bresson – free iron pole-axe and punch spade proficiencies); SQ Aquatic Subtype, Cold Subtype; Magic Attack Bonus +3; Base Sea Power 6 (-6 in armour); SV Fort +15, Ref +6, Will +10; Str 22, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha14

Skills: Balance +7, Bluff +7, Climb +6, Intimidate +15, Jump +6, Listen +8, Perform +6, Ride +8, Sorcery +5, Spot +15, Swim +12

Feats: Cleave, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Iron Pole-Axe), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Punch Spades), Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Piles of Carcasses, Power Attack, Ritual Sacrifice, Sundered Heads, Toughness, Weapon

Focus (punch spades), Weapon Specialisation (punch spades)

Spells: Beast Glamour, Brew Feed, Humiliate, Protective Circle, Submission

Possessions: *Eye of Balor,* helmet, mail armour with armour spikes, named iron punch spades '*entrail-spoons',* 2 tear horns (full).

Description: Balor is a tall and muscular fomorian, with deep green leathery skin and although both of his eyes work, he keeps one closed, its lid swollen and puffy. His gums are red and swollen and his sallow fangs seem to leer viciously.

Tactics: Balor is a cruel and sadistic leader who enjoys riding into battle among his troops and withering opponents with his ensorcelled eye. His preferred mount is a glamoured elk. When occupying a village he is a spends his time aggressively harassing the local leader and seems to take great pleasure in bullying all that come before him, threatening to demonstrate on them the power of his evil eye.

Quagslime
Male Fomorian Thief 8: Large sized-humanoid (H 8' 0", W 750 lb.,); HD 8d6 +16; hp 43; Init +0; Spd 30 ft., Swim 30 ft.; AC 15 (+5 natural); Attacks +7/+2 melee (dagger 1d4+1, crit 19/20x2); SA Sneak Attack +3d6; SQ Aquatic Subtype, Cold Subtype, Jack of all Trades, Read Ogham, Traps, Skill Mastery, Uncanny Dodge; Magic Attack Bonus +2; Base Sea Power 5; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraise +10, Balance +6, Bluff +8, Climb +4, Diplomacy +5, Disable Device +6, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +6, Gather Information +13, Hide +6, Innuendo +8, Intimidate +13, Intuit Direction +5, Jump +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +1, Open Lock +6, Perform +3, Pick Pocket +2, Profession (tax-collector) +7, Read Lips +2, Ride +1, Search

+2, Sense Motive +10, Sorcery +2, Spot +10, Swim +10, Tumble +1, Use Rope+1, Wilderness Lore +2
Feats: No Honour, Alertness, Great Fortitude

Spells: Humiliate, Submission

Possessions: Iron dagger, tear horn (half full)

Description: Quagslime is a large waddling fish-headed fomorian with two rows of bristling teeth, small beady eyes, floppy ears, and a long sea-serpentine tail. He swathes his scaly blubber in human clothing achieving a wonderful mockery of the humans he so disdains.

Tactics: Quagslime is annoyingly facetious and loves to offer advice to the downtrodden, especially advice that causes them pain, suffering and humiliation. He thoroughly adores his job as tax collector and spends his free time dreaming of new types of taxes to inflict upon the downtrodden. To date, his most infamous proposition is the Nose Tax, which he is discovering quite hard to top. He typically rides around in a collection cart drawn by four horses.

FOMORIAN UNITS AND COMMANDERS
While fomorian raiding parties are common in the northlands, sea devils are most noted for their full-scale invasions and conquests. Raiding parties are usually only a foreshadowing of the plagues to come. Below are stat blocks for a typical fomorian unit and a unit commander.

Sample Fomorian Unit
Race: Fomorian
Class: Warrior
Level: 2HD
Unit Size: 60
Unit Type: Infantry
Unit Hit Points: 120+10%
Initiative: +1
Attacks: Iron sword, claw or javelin

Damage: Iron sword 1d8+1, claw 1d3+1, bite 1d3, or javelin 1d6+1
AC: 14
Ability Scores: Str 13, Dex 8, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 10
Saves: Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +0
Feats: Power Attack

Sample Fomorian Unit Commander
Male Fomorian Sorcerer of Dagon 5: medium sized-humanoid (H 5'7", W 150 lb,); HD 5d8 +5; hp 41; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., Swim 30 ft.; AC 16 (+5 natural, +1 Dex); Attacks +3 melee (dagger 1d4+3, crit 19/20x2); SA Hexer, Drown Offering, Blood Drowning, Drowning Ceremony (+1); SQ Aquatic Subtype, Cold Subtype, Extra Eye (darkvision 60 ft.); Magic Attack Bonus +3; Base Sea Power 10; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +8; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 15

Skills: Bluff +7, Diplomacy +7, Gather Information +7, Heal +7, Intimidate +10, Listen +6, Perform +7, Profession (herbalist) +6, Sense Motive +9, Swim +9, Sorcery +8

Feats: Great Fortitude, Toughness

Spells: A Murder of Fish*, Beast Glamour, Brew Feed, Control Water, Humiliate, Muscle to Blubber, Protective Circle, Submission

Possessions: Iron dagger, 3 tear horns (full)

*same as a Murder of Crows except for the following:

† A school of fish eats the victim
† The victim must be in water (a river, stream, pond, ocean, etc.)

Prerequisite: Must be a follower of Dagon
Focus: none
Material Component: tears from 18 humans

Design and Conquer

by Adrian Czajkowski

Gaming Symposium

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Running an Epic Campaign

Gaming Symposium is back, and with a new contributor, no less. Greg Smith addresses that regularly discussed and then instantly abandoned notion of epic campaigning.

Take a lesson from the styles of Tolkien and Straczynski, and push your gaming envelope.

Campaigns in roleplaying games are played in different ways. Most are run as episodic stories with little or no connection between one adventure and the next. While the characters advance, they have little impact on the world around them. Even when a campaign involves the overthrow of a major villain, the characters usually then move on to another town or another planet and a new villain. But don't you long for something greater? Famous among the sci-fi and fantasy genres are epic sagas such as *Babylon 5* and *Lord of the Rings*, why shouldn't we be able to create roleplaying campaigns of equal scope and grandeur?

Imagine playing in a game where the whole world relies on your characters to defeat the forces of darkness. It will not be an easy task because you are only a small group of people with only your wits and your will to succeed. You must face the enemy's forces alone, gather allies, convert those who would remain uninvolved and find powerful weapons to help your fight. The fate of every man, woman and child are in your hands and the enemy must be stopped.

In *Babylon 5* a group of military officers and diplomats gradually learn of the coming of an ancient enemy, the Shadows. The enemy insinuates its way into their own worlds' governments, beginning wars and spreading chaos and terror. The lead characters choose to stand and fight despite great personal cost. To stop the Shadows they gather allies among the League of Non Aligned Worlds, learn that the Shadow ships are vulnerable to telepathy, gain the use of the great machine and convince the Vorlons to fight alongside them. They must confront both the Shadows and Vorlons and free their own world before they achieve victory. Then, in the aftermath, they create the Interstellar Alliance.

Epic fantasy sagas have similar stories. The heroes, often the most unassuming characters, must take on the mantle of greatness to fight the coming foe. The characters must prevail while great armies of orcs ravage the land and the villain's dark servants seek them out. They travel far, through great peril, to release kings from the dark lord's thrall and lead armies against the ravaging foe. Often there is an item of great power that can destroy the villain, which must be found by the heroes. After all the characters' adventures, when the enemy is defeated and the world is united in peace, the heroes can return to their pastoral home.

What roleplayer would not want the experience of playing in such a campaign? Suddenly delving into dungeons doesn't seem like such a great pastime and protecting caravans from brigands is no longer exciting. Guiding your halfling from humble gardener, through the dark places of the world, to emerge as a hero, is surely a more fulfilling experience.

For the Games Master to shepherd both players and characters through a great saga of his own creation is hugely satisfying.

But such a campaign needs a Games Master, and not just your average Games Master. As well as being prepared to write and run adventures for his friends, he must be a budding Straczynski or Tolkien. Writing an epic campaign involves more work, but not as much as you might think. The following suggestions are intended to make the creation of such a campaign a little easier.

Planning the Story

A saga of the size we are envisaging requires some forethought. How much planning do you do? Straczynski had the plots of every episode of *Babylon 5* written on index cards before he started, but when Tolkien was writing *The Lord of the Rings* he started with no idea of where it was going and subsequently rewrote it from the beginning several times. A happy medium is what we are looking for.

You will already have an idea of the setting and story. Begin with the arc of the story, the overall plot. Decide on an ending – you should know the ultimate goals of the characters and have some idea of the means by which they reach those goals. As an example: I have an idea for a campaign set in the *Babylon 5* universe but in an alternate setting when the crew of the station have failed. The arc of the story, and the goal of the characters, is about freeing

all the races from the influence of the Shadows. This will be achieved by building a new army of light from scratch, finding and using the great machine and other ancient artefacts. Writing a whole campaign will probably seem an enormous and overwhelming task. However you do not need to write it all at once. In a television series, the overall story is broken into seasons and each season consists of a number of episodes. Similarly, a novel is broken into chapters. Your campaign can be broken down in the same way, with each episode being a single scenario. In this way, creating the whole thing will hopefully be less daunting.

Decide how many episodes you intend to write. The sheer size of the campaign is not nearly as important as the scope of the story. Think about how many sessions you will be running and consider previous adventures you have run; how many sessions did each take? Be realistic – the Shadow War arc of Babylon 5 lasted 88 episodes over four years and running such an involved and detailed campaign is likely to prove difficult. For example, if you game twice a week but only have a twelve-week college term, then 20 episodes would be a good number.

Having a structure to the campaign can be helpful. If you know where you are within the story, it will make it easier to plan and write individual scenarios. Break the campaign up into more manageable parts; call them seasons or books. Three is a good number of parts – a beginning, middle and an end.

Using my example of a *Babylon 5* campaign, I have decided on three seasons, much like the TV series. Each season will equate to a year of game time and will have twelve episodes. My scenarios tend to last two weekly game sessions, so the campaign is likely to last 72 weeks, or about 18 months. This is manageable as we have a stable and regular game. Each season will be a distinct part of the story: season one will be a gradual build up to fighting the Shadows, with

some apparently unrelated episodes; season two involves the building of alliances and gathering weapons for the coming fight; season three will be the open fight against the Shadows, leading to their ultimate defeat. Once your campaign has begun to take shape, you will be ready to write individual scenarios. You may have plenty of ideas for them. Do not write them now. You will have time as the game progresses; if you are like me you will usually write your adventures the morning before the game. Also, any Games Master will know that his carefully written adventures never survive contact with the players. This holds true for campaigns as well. Note down your ideas and where you intend to fit them into the story arc. This allows you a great deal of flexibility to change the story as it goes along.

You will probably not have every single chapter of the story planned out in advance. As the campaign goes on, more and more scenarios will come to mind and each one can be written as required. You will find that the players will suggest courses of action that will provide situations for you to write your game around.

There may come a time when you cannot write a required episode, so it is helpful if you prepare for such an occurrence. I suggest having a prewritten encounter or use a printed scenario to fill in. Do not be afraid to tell your players that you have not been able to write the next episode – they may suggest something or a short break may be all you need to begin anew.

Setting the Scene

As with any game, you will need to have prepared a setting. A campaign of epic scope should cover a large part of the game world or galaxy. Building such a setting from the ground up is an involved process. Again, do not do all of the work at the start. Firstly, detail the area the characters start in. You only need to have a loose idea of the rest of the world. You will need to

create specifics when the characters reach a new nation or planet. If the campaign involves recruiting allies from the realm of the horse lords, then the realm only needs to be on the map at the beginning; you can provide more information when the characters arrive.

Non-Player Characters are a vital part of any campaign. In a saga where the world is to be saved, there must be people to save, allies to help and villains to thwart. Give names and brief descriptions to major Non-Player Characters before you begin, even if they will not appear until later in the campaign. If you know that King Blackmane leads the horse lords and that he is stern but fair, then you can give the players an idea of whom they are likely to encounter before they arrive in his realm. A handful of major Non-Player Characters is all you need before you begin. The players do not need to know the names of Blackmane's bodyguards, for example.

There will undoubtedly be a large number of Non-Player Characters over the course of the game. Keep track of these. Write a list of their names and roles, both for your benefit and the players'. Characters are likely to recur and when they do so you will be able to prompt your own and the players' memories from this list. Should the characters return to the land of the horse-lords and find King Blackmane has been murdered, they should remember the name of the loyal bodyguard they met previously as well as that of the king's ambitious son.

A major villain is possibly the most important Non-Player Character. The players need someone that their characters can confront. The Dark Lord may be sitting in his fortress plotting the conquest of the world, but he is not really a threat to the characters themselves. If the big bad is never going to leave his tower or the villains are an implacable alien race, then you need to give the enemy a face. Whether that face is a once-friendly wizard corrupted

by the temptation of evil or Mr Morden, the human emissary of the Shadows, he or she should be able to taunt the players, foil their plans and die by their hands at the end of the campaign.

The Beginning

One important factor is still missing from your campaign – the characters. Give the players a brief description of the campaign you are going to run and what part of the world it begins in. Tell them what type of characters you would prefer and what type of characters you absolutely do not want. If alignments are part of your game, do not allow the players to chose one that does not fit. A half-orc would never have been a lead character in *The Lord of the Rings*, for example.

There may be a character who is vital to your story, i.e. a lost heir to the throne. Rather than make this character a Non-Player Character, give the role to one of the player characters. This will involve the players in the story far more than if the heir to the throne was simply someone they have to guard.

If you construct your stories around the characters you will probably consider giving the players pre-generated characters. I would recommend against this because players always prefer the characters they have created. Instead discuss with the players the role of the characters that you want them to play before they generate them.

Players often come up with unusual characters that are more difficult to fit into the story or are likely to create conflict within the party. Should this arise, discuss the character with the player and, if necessary, work out a compromise. Ensure that the character's goals fit in with the story and his actions are not going to get him thrown out of the group or killed by them. The other characters in the party may dislike him but they will usually work alongside him in this case. If this character does cause

conflict among the group, try writing an episode where the character's unique knowledge and skills are required.

The first episode serves two purposes – to start the story and to get the characters together. The story can begin in a small way or with a bang. Beginning with a battle or other spectacular opening will grab your players' attention and thrust their characters immediately into the story. But this is really only possible if the characters are already seasoned fighters. It will probably make it easier to integrate the characters. If the characters are thrust together in battle, there is an immediate camaraderie.

To begin in a quiet fashion can be more satisfying. If the characters are ordinary folk thrust into extra-ordinary events then this is the way to go. A tale that begins with an ancient ring passing from uncle to nephew, for example, can be far more intriguing than one that begins with hardened warriors battling it out. This may make it a little more difficult to gather the characters into a cohesive group. A little intervention for the Games Master will go a long way; for example, making one character related to another or having a debt of gratitude works wonders.

Further early episodes do not need to continue the overall story straight away. Build the campaign gradually by running apparently separate scenarios but add titbits here and there. News from the front, increasing incursions of orcs or fell creatures on winged beasts seen overhead all serve to connect the characters to the main story without actually involving them too much in the early stages.

Subplots feature in many continuous television series or epic novels. In *Babylon 5*, the story of Sinclair having a Minbari soul and becoming Valen is a subplot. They can provide greater depth to your campaign because they show the players there is more going on in the world than just the main story. Subplots are especially useful

in the early stages of the campaign to provide a plot that the players can resolve early in your story line, giving them a sense of achievement that the entire campaign cannot yet provide.

The Middle

As your campaign continues the episodes should begin to focus more on the main story. Perhaps the characters should be able to liberate a realm or planet from the bad guys. That realm could then become their ally and provide aid, shelter and even armies to fight for the cause. You should allow the players to gain several small successes but only one major victory in the middle part of the story. Do not be afraid to give them a few setbacks too, you would not want them to get overconfident.

The characters will be well developed and the players will have become attached to them. They will have gained experience and changed in the course of the story. Encourage the players to roleplay such changes as they can only add a further dimension to the game. The humble gardener may have become a warrior, the kitchen boy a powerful mage or the bloodthirsty warrior might have mellowed and become a leader of men. Romance may also have flourished between characters. Do not be afraid to give out experience points because in a long-term game the characters should become much more powerful than when they started. After all, they are becoming heroes.

If a small group of heroes is going to accomplish an impossible task and vanquish an unbeatable foe, they will need plenty of help and some powerful weapons in their arsenal. The characters will need to earn these through play. If they are to gain a starship, pirates must be driven off and the ship salvaged. They must free the king of the horse lords from the influence of an evil sorcerer before he will lend his armies to their fight. The players must have such tools, so there must be scenarios written about getting them.

To some Games Masters, the prospect of the player characters getting their hands on an army is a nightmare. Within the confines of an epic campaign where the enemy has an overwhelming horde of troops, the players' megalomaniac tendencies should hopefully not come to the fore. If the characters are less than responsible with the powerful weapons at their disposal, you may need to give them a little push in the right direction. *[The occasional mutiny works wonders…ed.]*

Once the players have armies and weapons at their disposal they will want to start taking the fight to the enemy. Do not let the characters rely on Non-Player Characters for their tactics. Encourage the players to become proactive. Have them come up with the plans. Set aside a game session so that the players can discuss their strategies amongst themselves. All you, the Games Master, has to do is take notes. You will probably find that these sessions generate plenty of ideas for scenarios too. Allowing the players to take control of your campaign may be a little frightening at first but you will find that it actually makes your life easier.

As with all things, not everything will go according to plan. If a player character dies, the subplots and potential future scenarios revolving around that character will be stymied. This may not be a major impediment to the campaign and may simply require a little modification to what you had planned. However, if the character has been set up as a major part of the story, such as being the lost heir to the throne, you may have to bite the bullet and allow the character to live. J. Michael Straczynski, when writing *Babylon 5*, had a 'trapdoor' to allow each character to leave if necessary. If you have a character that is vital to the campaign, it would be a good idea to have such a trapdoor. The lost heir to the throne may have had a twin sister from whom he was separated at birth and the characters will have to find her.

Another problem that may arise is the splitting of the party. If this is a short-term split, simply run the groups separately for a session or two or allow the uninvolved players to take on the roles of Non-Player Characters that accompany or encounter one group. Should it prove necessary for a longer separation, i.e. one group of characters heads deep into the enemy's lands to destroy an object of power while another group rallies the free peoples to defend the land, then that must happen. This may seem potentially disastrous but in fact it allows you to expand the scope of your story. Allow the players to generate additional characters to fill each group. Running two parties is a little more difficult to keep track of but it opens up your tale, giving it a certain grandeur.

The End

Every tale has an ending. It is important that the conclusion of the story is not anti-climactic. If you only have a general end in sight, then as the campaign progresses you will need to come up with something more specific. It may be that the characters have in their possession all the tools to do the job and all they need is a plan to put into action or perhaps the enemy may have a weakness that they can exploit at just the right time. Whatever finale you come up with, prepare it as the campaign moves into its final stage.

With the end in sight, you must be ready to conclude subplots. Every subplot and dangling story line should be finished before the end of the campaign. Ask the players if they have any outstanding concerns or queries about the plot that you can iron out in a scenario. If there is a romance between characters, then bring it almost to the point of conclusion – have one of the lovers propose or wed the couple if one partner is going to die.

The finale, when you reach it, should be a spectacular climax. Victory must be bought with blood, sweat, tears and sacrifice. There should be at least one huge battle. The characters must have

one last desperate and daring attempt to make; to strike the enemy at his moment of weakness. There should be a final confrontation between the main villain and the characters and the villain should die.

However you should not let the players think that it is all going to go their way. Kill a major Non-Player Character. Have him die in brave sacrifice. Better yet, kill a character's loved one. Have her die in his arms. If a player character is willing to sacrifice himself in the final battle, then so much the better. You can even go to the extent of having the characters' homeland being ravaged by the last remnants of the enemy's forces. The story should end in victory but not victory without cost.

Once the dust has cleared, the players will want to see the results of their characters' efforts. An epilogue is the best way to do this. First recount the immediate aftermath of the final episode. Play out any weddings or memorials that are required. Then move the story into the future. Ask the players where they envisage their characters will be at one or more specific times ahead; for example one year, five years and 20 years. If the players want their characters to become President of the New Alliance, then let them. They have earned it. You may wish to prepare a scene or short scenario for each time and run them to illustrate that they have brought peace and prosperity to the world.

It is possible that you and the players will want to continue adventuring in the universe that you have created. You may have left a plot thread or two for the characters to track down. There is, however, a danger that anything that follows is going to be anti-climactic. Rather than follow the immediate events of the final episode with the same characters, consider moving the story years ahead. The characters could be the original characters' descendants and the threat they face will be entirely new and just as dangerous as the one their forebears defeated.

Jonny Nexus

ᘓ ALAS POOR EDAS, ᘓ
ᘓ WE KNEW HIM ᘓ

In a campaign of cool magic items[1], Edas seemed the coolest.

My Thursday night group has been playing a d20 campaign based on the *Dragon Warriors* roleplaying books written by Dave Morris and Oliver Johnson in the 1980s. Mark's a big fan[2] of the adventures in the books, so he has converted them to d20. We've been playing through them for a couple of months and have now reached the third book, The Elven Crystals. (Note: - I should at this point mention that the rest of this article does contain some pretty minor spoilers, so if you're planning on playing the *Dragon Warriors* scenarios you might want to stop reading now).

Having saved my character Noorl from his 'Sword of Damocles' by killing the duke-bloke (see my issue 7 column for details) we'd travelled back into the forest. Somehow (I can't now remember how we found out, and I'm not sure I knew then), we had discovered that a particular clearing, guarded by a hydra, contained the skull of a now-deceased, but once obscenely powerful, wizard. Called Edas.

Can you see where I'm going?

So we went to the clearing and attacked the hydra. My character Noorl (Wisdom 6, Intelligence not much higher) was first into the fray, gleefully chanting 'Iceflame' as he swung his sword this way and that. (I would have had him throw the magic spear, but it had been some weeks since I remembered I had it). Everything was going great – with the hydra two heads down (out of six) – when, without warning, two heads grew back from each stump, giving it eight heads in total, two more than it had possessed before we'd attacked the damned thing.

This was something of an unpleasant surprise to me, an unpleasant surprise that morphed into a humiliating surprise when it transpired – through five minutes of discussion involving a variety of exclamations, of which 'But haven't you ever seen Jason and the Argonauts?' was probably typical – that I was probably the only person in both the western and eastern worlds who wasn't aware that a hydra's heads grow back when you cut them off[3].

A bit of cheating (otherwise known as 'consulting the rulebooks') established that we needed to follow a two-step process: first chop a head off, then use flame to cauterise the wound.

Fortunately, Bog Boy's character had obtained a flaming dagger the previous week.

Unfortunately, when he actually tried using it – and we realised what a pitiful amount of flame damage it did – the phrase that came almost inevitably to mind was 'cigarette lighter'.

Eventually, following a combined effort involving Bubba's flame sword, an NPC wizard's[4] fireball spells, and Bog Boy's fag lighter, we managed to kill the hydra.

At this point – having totally forgotten that we'd had a reason to kill the hydra beyond the usual one of XPs – myself and Bubba wondered off to get healed, leaving Bog Boy to start digging under the boulder that stood in the centre of the clearing. Which was why it was he who came to be in possession of Edas – an intelligent levitating skull possessing a variety of powers, linked to its owner both telepathically, and also physically, by an invisible thirty-foot 'cord'. There is an obvious question here: why does a magic item require a leash? Well it might be an obvious question, but alas, it's one we never asked.

Bog Boy getting Edas was actually a mistake. Mark (who was currently GMing) had envisaged Noorl (*aka* me) ending up in possession of the skull to help compensate for my total inability to remember my character's abilities and possessions. Edas was supposed to hover over my shoulder as I charged into combat, giving a series of discrete coughed (telepathic) reminders:

'[Cough] Your force shield, Sir?'
'[Cough] Your stoneskin, Sir?'
'[Cough] Your ice elementals, Sir?'
'[Cough] Perhaps you should begin by throwing the magic spear, Sir?'

A Jeeves to my Wooster, as it were. But that wasn't to be.

The next session saw us walking through the night into the teeth of a bitter storm (I was all for stopping and finding shelter, but a few GM hints established that this wasn't in the script) until at day-break we reached a strange seaside village. There we found – among the usual inbreds and xenophobes – a sea captain (a confirmed member of the 'Ahh me hearties!' tendency) whose ship had been wrecked the night before. (Classic exchange between the sea captain and Noorl: 'Have you ever spent time at sea lad?' ... 'Erm, no.' ... 'Well you've got the walk of a man who has!')

We thought it was pretty suspicious that he'd been the only survivor of the shipwreck, but decided to give him the benefit of the doubt, and set off with him in search of the remains of his ship. This wasn't an altruistic action; it was because he'd described a crystal his ship had carried that sounded, to Bog Boy and Bubba, very much like the crystal we were looking for. (I, of course, was completely oblivious to this, and was just trailing along as usual).

After fighting off an attack by ghostly apparitions that first turned out to bleed, and then – when we carried on killing them anyway – turned out to be the villagers wearing white sheets, we came upon a signal tower that stood on an exposed headland.

Upon entering we were immediately confronted by a gargoyle, who became animate and attacked us. (Which was completely unnecessary, because stone statues are about the only thing we don't slaughter on sight). It was at this point that things became confused, because Bog Boy began talking in an ambiguous voice that could have been either in-character instructions or an out-of-character joke.

'Look at that one,' he said to Edas, pointing at Bubba's character Quat, who was of a rather strange racial background[5], 'his father's a celestial. If he knew what you were he'd destroy you. I'd destroy him before he kills you.'
Now this was doubly stupid because Bog Boy (who had a sheet of details about Edas) knew certain things about it that we didn't, one of which was its alignment.

Chaotic Evil.

I guess you could say that it was Bog Boy's 'Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?' moment.

Edas's first move was to cast Ray of Enfeeblement at Quat, at which point we realised, in-character, that something was wrong, and out-of-character, that Mark (the GM) was choosing to interpret the instructions as something that Bog Boy's character had actually said (or telepathically 'said'). Things were somewhat awkward at this point, because apart from anything else, we were still fighting the gargoyle.

Bog Boy took a swipe at Edas with his sword, missed, then told it to stop. (Less kind people might suggest that asking it to stop before attacking might have been a better move).

It chose to continue attacking.

Bubba and I then successfully attacked it with our Patriots, alternately freezing then flaming it, and dealing a significant amount of damage to it (i.e. not enough to kill it, but enough to render it mightily pissed off).

And Edas, though hurt, still had spells left. Like Fireball. Inside the room. On everyone. As you can no doubt imagine, Bog Boy's popularity with the group was now reaching lows hitherto reached only through alcohol-soaked arguments.

All us PCs had Evasion and – making the saves – managed to dive for cover and thus take no damage whatsoever (how we managed to dive for cover in an empty room is an exercise best left for those who worry about such things as plausibility and realism). But the female wizard (who made the save) still took 20 points of damage, while the old sea captain (who didn't) got toasted for the full 41 points. (We did think it interesting that

following his near fatal maiming he stopped speaking in his 'ooh arr maties' voice and just started talking normally instead.)

It was at this point – with the interior of the tower rapidly becoming a place of hell – that Bog Boy came up with what he thought was a rather cunning idea. He would simply run – aided by his Boots of Striding and Springing – out of the door and down the hill, dragging Edas behind him (on the invisible thirty-foot cord).

Objections could have been raised at this point; flaws in the plan could have been debated; but, given that we were trapped in an enclosed space being fire-bombed to hell and back by a psychotic skull, any plan which involved said psychotic skull being somewhere else was way okay by us.

So, first thing next turn, Bog Boy (who'd rolled the highest initiative) set off out the door at a fair clip. By the time Edas got to its turn, it'd already bounced off a doorframe and through the doorway and was flying backwards down the hill.

Unfortunately, Edas had yet more spells left. Like Cloudkill.

One moment we could see Bog Boy's character charging down the slope, and then the next he'd run straight into a suspiciously materialised yellow-green bank of cloud and apparently decided to lie face-down on the ground, motionless.

He was, to use a technical term, dead. While this was clearly a bad situation for him, it also had unpleasant implications for us: namely that the psychotic, and now somewhat battered, skull was free of the cord and hence fully mobile. Then, luckily for us, it thought better of taking us on, and flew off into the distance.

This wasn't quite the end of the story. Edas returned the next session, dropping through a hole in a ceiling into a cavern where we were battling a group of cultists, and generally sticking an unwelcome oar into the situation. This time we were prepared, and showed it no mercy. And that was that for Edas.

There was another returnee later that very same session, when the local vicar turned out to be so grateful at our removal of the cultists from his island that he resurrected Bog Boy's character free of charge.

So it all ended happily – or at least it did once we'd returned all his armour and equipment that, when he'd returned...
'Hang on a minute! That's my armour you've got on... and that's my sword... and that's my backpack!'
...he'd found us all wearing. Well what did he expect? A burial? [6]

[1] The co-GMs (Mark and Bog Boy) have chosen to load our characters down with a variety of powerful magic items. I have: a 'force field' shield; boots that help me do something in mountains and also give me 120 points of Stone Skin, twice a day; a magic 'electric-shock' spear and its accompanying glove; and a sword – 'Iceflame' – that does cold damage, can totally freeze the target on a critical hit, can conjure up to five ice elementals a day, and can fire shards of ice (I call them 'Patriots') as a ranged attack of up to 500 yards. There are a number of theories about why Mark and Bog Boy have given us so many items, but the current favourite is that they're tormenting me by giving me way more items than my 'crunch-lite' brain can handle.

[2] Strangely enough, we met one of the authors at a party given by James Wallis (formerly boss of Hogshead Publishing) and Mark – who normally views life through a cynical lens – went all fanboy. It was the first time I'd seen him be 100% sincere about anything in the ten years I'd known him, and quite frankly it disturbed me. Mentioning that we got invited to a James Wallis party might sound like I'm boasting, and in fact I am. However, I feel that this revelation is rendered less impressive by the fact that he's never since invited us back. The guys reckon this is because of an apparently inappropriate anecdote I told – to the assembled party – involving a digital camera, a woman, and a couple of toys not intended for use by under-eighteens. I have a horrible feeling they might be right.

[3] The more astute among you might be starting to realise why I'm not a full-time Mongoose writer.

[4] Some woman we'd found. I think she might be the bint whose boyfriend we found being tortured to death by a chain monster in the Duke's castle.

[5] It's a Forgotten Realms race that I don't believe is open gaming content, so I'd better not mention it.

[6] It wasn't that we didn't bury him, just that we forgot, and left his body out on the headland to rot.

Q&A

Quintessential Psion

Q The description for psibonded weapons mentioned a psychic 'pseudo bonus' associated with mithral weapons, based on an investment in them of some sort. How is this supposed to work?

A It is just trying to say that normally a mithral weapon is at +1 and you will need to invest psychic power in it to give it any extra bonuses.

Quintessential Sorcerer

Q In regards to the Arcane Blade prestige class (which is amazing), listed in the requirements is the ability to cast *keen edge* is there any way of removing this and instead up the BAB to +6 instead of +3?

A We would probably not recommend this as without the ability to cast this spell he will lose out on some of the higher level abilities, the casting of Improved Keen Edge to start with. However, in your own games you can do as you, the Games Master decide.

Q Regarding the Dark Pathways awakened ability, can the character emulate more than one alignment at one time, but in different parts of the body? For instance, could the character emulate Lawful Good in order to hold a Holy Avenger, but at the same time emulate an evil alignment so that he is not affected by a Blasphemy?

A I would say no to this.

Q One more on Dark Pathways. Why the need to suppress the ability in order to benefit from a positive alignment-based effect? Could you not just shift the perceived alignment to one that would benefit from the effect?

A Good point and I can see no benefit by suppressing this ability. The only thing I can suggest is if the character suppresses this, allow him to learn a spell for that slot instead, but he will not gain its benefits again until the next time he allocates a spell slot to it

Q How would a Detect Good/Evil/Law/Chaos act on the character?

A It would depend upon the alignment he is currently putting forth with this power.

Q What is projected is under control of the character but often he will not know what to emulate and only by trying can he ensure he has the right alignment. If he is projecting an Evil alignment, he may not be allowed into a Good temple for example.

A The ability to benefit from a spell of a different alignment is at the core of this ability and it is not really spell resistance. If the sorcerer is projecting a good alignment when in a Magic Circle of protection vs. Evil, then he should gain the benefits of that spell, as if he was that alignment.

Quintessential Druid

Q In the Quintessential Druid, you mention the feat Companion Focus, but it is not explained anywhere in the book. What is this feat please?

A This feat was replaced by the Extra Companions feat in the Feats section page 40 of the *Quintessential Druid* book.

Q Under the requirements for Vitiate Maiden it mentions 'venom immunity adaptation', but I cannot find this referenced anywhere. What is this and how do I get it?

A This ability is listed in *Core Rulebook I*, version 3.5, in the Druid's class section.

Quintessential Monk

Q Since the Monk has been redefined in 3.5, will there be an update to the Feat Pre-requisites to the Monk prestige classes?

A After reviewing the Prestige Classes in the *Quintessential Monk* book, we feel that there is no need for any major revision to these classes.

Q I was wondering, how do you figure out the number of attacks and penalties for a 4-armed monk character? How exactly do you apply base attack bonus to creatures with 3 or more natural attacks.

A You will need to have a look at the *Core Rulebook III* and look at the rules for the Multi Attack feat. This governs rules for using more than one natural weapon at once. This can get quite complicated but would be most accurate.

Another way to do it is that he only gets attacks for which he is allowed; if as a Monk he gets 3 attacks with Flurry of Blows then it does not matter how many limbs he has, he gets three attacks.

Quintessential Dwarf

Q According to *The Quintessential Dwarf* in order to fire my runecannon I need to make a full attack action, but with the 'snapshot' ability I should be able to do it as a 'standard attack action'. What does 'standard attack action' mean? Is it a 'standard action' or an 'attack action'?

A Normally firing a Runecannon is a Full-Attack action. This is the action where you would normally get multiple attacks in a round but as you are firing a runecannon you may only get one attack. A Cannoneer may fire a runecannon as a standard (space) attack-action. Basically meaning you do not have to take a full attack action to fire one and if you do you then get your multiple attacks.

The Ultimate Tools for the Ultimate Gamer
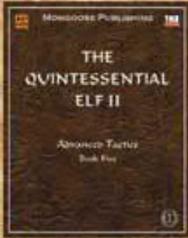
The new Advanced Tactics Series continues the revolutionising, best-selling Quintessential line with the new *Quintessential Elf II*. Written by Shannon Kalvar (Slayer's Guide to Ogres, Encyclopaedia Arcane: Star Magic)) and featuring rules for Elf characters throughout their careers, *The Quintessential Elf II* is an invaluable resource from First to Twentieth level. With epic expansion rules, multiclassing and a multitude of alternatives for enhancing and improving your elf's potential through legendary classes, survival tactics, new equipment options as well as prestige classes and feats designed for the experienced elf, this is an essential resource for players and Games Masters alike.

No Surrender, No Retreat continues the enthralling story of Babylon 5. The Earth Year 2261 sees the Babylon 5 universe bathed in fire. First from the long-awaited and climactic conflict between the Shadows and the Vorlons, and then the disintegration of the Earth Alliance into civil war, threatening the very existence of the Babylon station itself.

This is the definitive sourcebook for the fourth season of the hit TV show. Included is a full episode synopsis, campaign outline, story arc analysis, new rules, classes and vehicles for the roleplaying game.

Consisting of four Encyclopaedia Arcane titles brought together for the first time, the first *Encyclopaedia Arcane Compendium* provides readers with the opportunity of getting their hands on early and out of print Encyclopaedia Arcane titles in one convenient hard-backed volume. The Compendium also includes one previously unreleased Encyclopaedia Arcane title never before seen in print. Furthermore, the text is updated to version 3.5 for the first time, bringing all the books right up to date.

Mighty Armies is a brand new wargame, using Super-Size 15mm miniatures. Each box set contains a complete army, a full copy of the rules, a measuring aid and dice, giving everything you need to begin fighting immediately! Games typically take twenty to thirty minutes and the armies are eminently expandable through additional box sets or supplemental blister packs, permitting players to build giant hordes at an all new low price.

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Inside The Chainmail Bra

Can I Just be One of the Guys?

asks Lucy Bond

So, last time I was talking about the perils of being a female gamer, what with the problems you may encounter. These may include being treated over-favourably by your male compatriots:

You: 'My six-foot barbarian turns towards you haughtily, fingering the hilt of her sword, and regarding you with suspicion, stranger.'

Them: 'Well, hi there, sweetie! I think it's great that we'll be travelling together. In fact it's so great to have a woman in the party! Don't worry your pretty little head, we'll keep you out of trouble!'

You: (SLICE)

Or, they may include being the Games Master's girlfriend (which can work out badly in more than one way) or having other players expect you'll just be playing yourself, but with pointy ears and a bow…

This issue, I'd like to handle a few more 'female gamer' clichés.

Not all of us want to play Amazon Goddesses in Leather. Although that would be a great name for a game… *[not as good as Macho Women With Guns - Ed]*. I mentioned my love of complicated characters last time, but I'd like to elaborate. Why do we create our characters in our own particular style? What are we looking to achieve? Is it really just a case of wanting to play yourself but taller, slimmer and preferably with amazing skills and the charisma that

you normally lack? Or is it more about enjoying playing someone as *different* from your ordinary self as you can imagine? Isn't that why so many of us love fantasy novels? Strolling through the forest, you might not just get badly lost, or even encounter a couple of outlaws, but also a dimensional rift, swirling with indescribable colours around its torn edges, leading you into a different world. If you're going on a real adventure, why not go as a multi-lingual trickster from an ancient fictional culture, rather than as an accountant in fancy dress?

Also, is this just something I've observed, or are many Games Masters bothered by the idea of a troubled female character? Personally, as I've said before, I'd rather play someone complicated than play the Plus Ten Perfect Princess ™. So why is it that if she is single, I'm offered a flurry of NPC suitors, if she is moody and suspicious of others, she'll be pushed into having to trust them, and so on? It isn't a counselling session, it's a *game* and I might add, she *isn't real!* Surely this kind of thing is best sorted out by the players, Mister Games Master?

So, let's assume you've got a good Games Master who doesn't see you as a psychological puzzle that needs to be solved. Hopefully, he also doesn't believe that you require a 'happy ending' to keep your interest in the game. I've seen the most absurd sub-plots develop as players have their characters get engaged to be married, or set themselves up

in business, which seem to be a lot more about keeping one player happy than actually helping the campaign. Yes, this happens with both male and female players but I've seen the worst cases develop around a female player that the Games Master wants to keep in the game.

I speak from the point of view of a player. Hats off to you if you are a female Games Master but I've never had a go myself, so forgive my lack of references to female Games Masters. I once played a few games with one and she undertook to rip up my character sheet and change every aspect of the character's personality by force, once again, because he was 'troubled' and my Games Master wanted to 'sort things out' for him to see if he would change into a happier person. Seeing as he was a sociopath, it was lucky for her that she wasn't one of the other players, or a Non-Player Character. Needless to say, I rolled with it as best I could, while staying true to my original personality. After a few nights, we went back to our usual Games Master, by which time I'd pretty much salvaged my poor old character.

I'd really like to see everyone just totally wrapped up in their original, unusual character, involved in long-term, epic campaigns, at whatever level, having a grand old time with their friends, with a few less clichés and hang-ups to limit them; is that really too much to ask?

Play nice, folks.

The Latest Craze

Saddle Soaring

JUDGE DREDD Roleplaying Game

Matt Sharp

Reliable anti-gravity technology was first developed in the 2030's. These 'impellers' were originally massive drive systems that only the largest aircraft could carry, but after many years of development and miniaturisation they have evolved into small devices that can fit into the palm of the hand. Naturally, technology that allows a human to fly like a bird, unhindered by a bulky vehicle, quickly seized the imagination of people the world over. Before long, adventurous citizens of the Mega-Cities began to take to the air, evolving a method based on the lifestyle of their homes. In Mega-City One, batgliders threw themselves from their mile-high windows, gliding silently over the tops of their cityblocks. On the West Coast, in Mega-City Two, the beach bums added anti-grav impellers to their surfboards and launched themselves on powerboards. Across the Black Atlantic in Brit-Cit, aeronauts strapped miniature helicopters to their backs in order to glide sedately (if noisily) over their neighbourhoods. Texas City also developed a style based on their unique history. Like the ancient cowboys, Texans are only happy when in a saddle – thus the hover-saddle was born.

Hover-Saddle, Texas Tech Trailblazer

The most basic component of the saddle soaring craze, the Trailblazer closely resembles a traditional saddle – essentially a moulded seat covered with synthi-leather. Concealed beneath the seat is a small but powerful anti-grav impeller, which keeps the vehicle aloft. A small jet mounted at the rear provides forward motivation – there are no steering thrusters and, like powerboarding or motorcycling, the rider turns by leaning in the direction that they wish to go. The throttle is mounted in the left-hand stirrup. Justice Department regulations insist that the rider must be attached to a 'billycord', a small tether, which securely fastens the rider's ankle to his machine. In the event of the rider falling off his vehicle (a common occurrence for novice saddle soarers!), the saddle will immediately revert to hover mode, leaving the rider dangling upside down until help arrives.

Size: Small; **Defence Value:** 12; **Damage Reduction:** 4; **Hit Points:** 10; **Speed:** 150 (fly), Craze (saddle soaring); **Weapons:** None; **Crew:** 1; **Passengers:** 0; **Cargo:** 0 lb.

New Craze Skill

Saddle Soaring (Dex, trained only)

This craze skill allows a character to make effective use of a hover saddle. A skilled saddle soarer is able to manoeuvre his vehicle using only his legs, leaving both hands free for other actions – although it is strongly recommended that he avoid using any firearm that has powerful recoil. Without practice and training, it is extremely difficult to control a hover saddle. A character can make use of either the Pilot or Ride skills to attempt to fly a hover saddle, although he will require both hands. Any Pilot check is one and a half times as difficult, and a Ride check is twice as hard as normal; for example, a character wishing to exceed the safe speed in light traffic (normally DC 10) would require a Pilot check at DC 15 or a Ride check at DC 20. A character with 8 ranks in both the Pilot and Ride skills gains a +2 synergy bonus to his Craze (saddle soaring) skill.

Check: Mundane saddle soaring actions, such as cruising at altitude, do not require any checks. However, extreme manoeuvres may cause a succession of saddle soaring checks, all of which must be passed if the vehicle is to remain in control. See the rules on operating vehicles in *The Judge Dredd Roleplaying Game* for more details.

Rocket Rodeo

Saddle soaring soon spread around the world, although it has never become as popular as batgliding or powerboarding outside of Texas City. While most other cities were content to merely use a hover saddle as a flying machine, the Texans have always been a breed that likes to live dangerously and developed a suitably

suicidal sport based on the ancient principles of the rodeo. Complex tasks and spectacular feats that once took place on the back of a horse could now take place up to a mile into the air. If correctly performed, the rocket rodeo is an incredible spectacle where highly skilled sportsmen perform amazing stunts to the adoration of their fans. Of course, part of the appeal is the opportunity to witness the less skilled amateur riders make fools of themselves. Others are only present to witness the horrific accidents that are an inevitable part of such a dangerous event. Most Mega-Cities prefer to keep a tight control on the rocket rodeo, insisting that the event can only take place within a special 'Rodeodrome' where it can be properly supervised. An unofficial rocket rodeo event is a Code 14 Section 2 violation in Mega-City One, carrying a sentence of between 3 months to 20 years, depending on the severity of the breach. Only Texas City allows totally unsupervised rocket rodeo events. There are several special events that take place in the Rodeodrome, some of which requires specialist equipment or has variations that have spread onto the streets.

Bucking Bronco: A traditional Bucking Bronco act involved a rider attempting to stay on the back of a wild and untrained horse or bull until the beast either got used to having a rider or hurled them to the ground. Only a highly skilled horseman was able to remain in the saddle for longer than a few seconds. A 'Bucking Bronco' is a special hover saddle with eight jets instead of the usual one, each pointing in a different direction. When activated, a single, random jet will blast, propelling the saddle for a few seconds before abruptly cutting off, only for another random jet to take its place, again shooting the saddle in another random direction. This continues, each jet blast becoming more powerful but for a shorter duration every time. The idea is to stay in the saddle for as long as possible – an almost impossible task to maintain for any serious length of time.

Initially, riding a bucking bronco is a full round action and a Balance (DC 10) task. A character with at least 8 ranks in Craze (saddle soaring) gains a +2 synergy bonus to the check. However, the movements of the saddle become increasingly more violent, so for each round that the character remains in the saddle, the DC of the Balance check increases by two – so in the second round, the check would require a check against DC 12, the third DC 14 and so on. Any failure results in the rider falling from the saddle and the Bronco automatically cutting to hover. A Bucking Bronco will automatically shut off after ten rounds. A Bucking Bronco is useless as a conventional vehicle (it will travel 6d6 ft. in a random direction every round), but has DR 4 and 10 hit points.

Racing: Hover saddle racing is regarded as the purest form of saddle soaring, allowing the competitors to pit their wits and skills directly against other expert riders to determine who is the greatest. Races range from straightforward 'dashes' – essentially, an event to see which rider can cover a set distance in the fastest possible time – to sustained marathons or even obstacle courses. Time trials are also popular, with competitors making desperate efforts to shave a few nanoseconds from the world record speed.

While many races insist that only a standard hover saddle is allowed to compete, there are also the Extreme Leagues (known to all as the 'Wacky Races') that allow specially built or extensively customised vehicles to race. These races are popular with the fans, some only following the event in order to witness the latest weird designs to come from the brilliant (or warped) minds of the racers. Some are expertly crafted machines, but most are, at best, totally impractical or, at worst, so dangerous that their use is tantamount to suicide. Mega-City One ensures that the Wacky Races are kept reasonably safe, but the Texas City leagues are something else entirely –

the only rule is that there are no rules. A Texan 'custom job' is just as likely to be fitted with extensive weapons systems as it is to have a powerful engine, ranging from mundane but powerful missile launchers to the downright bizarre, such as huge pistons fitted with boxing gloves, intended to knock rival racers from the saddle.

Hover Saddle, Arkensaw Extreme League Special

A large and powerful hover saddle designed for speed at the expense of safety, the Extreme League Special is popular in the Mega-City Wacky Races leagues. The most notable feature is the enormous rocket booster that takes the place of the normal small jet – this device is so large that the vehicle resembles an old ballistic missile with a saddle mounted on top. The EL Special is capable of incredible speeds and excels in a straightforward dash event, but it is extremely difficult to control. A character using a hover saddle must make regular Craze (saddle soaring) checks in order to avoid control loss. Simply flying at altitude is a DC 5 task; changing direction is a complex manoeuvre that requires a Craze (saddle soaring) check at DC 10. Any other manoeuvre listed in the *Judge Dredd Roleplaying Game* is much harder to accomplish – the DC increases by between 5 and 10 at the discretion of the Games Master.

Size: Medium; **Defence Value:** 10; **Damage Reduction:** 2; **Hit Points:** 15; **Speed:** 600 ft. (fly), Craze (saddle soaring); **Weapons:** None; **Crew:** 1; **Passengers:** 0; **Cargo:** 0 lb.

Roundup: Another popular rocket rodeo event is the Roundup. Descended from the practical skills needed to catch runaway cattle, the roundup consists of a saddle soarer pursuing a robotic bisoon (a

bisoon is a genetically engineered heifer/buffalo crossbreed raised in massive factory ranches in the Cursed Earth) armed only with an electrically charged lasso known as a 'lazoo'. The idea is to subdue the robo-bisoon and accurately steer it into a cage. This is a complex task – not only must the rider accurately hit his target, he must also ensure that the voltage of his lazoo is kept at exactly the right intensity to control the mechanical beast. Too little power and the robot will remain uncontrollable, too much and it will deactivate or even become enraged. It is extremely difficult to remain in the saddle while tethered to a three-ton rampaging robot and it is not unusual for fatalities to occur. A three-strong panel of judges award points based on skill, speed and style. The style category is often the clincher – a particularly spectacular or catastrophic blunder tends to impress the judges more than professionalism and speed, so a rider who is set on fire and hurled out of the stadium without getting anywhere near the target will probably still win on points!

The principles of the roundup have also spread onto the streets, particularly among tap gangs who have found that the lazoo makes an ideal weapon for capturing and subduing victims. Perps equipped with hover saddles and lazoos lurk above the pedways and slidewalks of the block plazas, waiting for a rich or prosperous looking victim. Once a prospective target is spotted, the tap swoops down, ensnaring their prey with the lazoo that shocks them into unconsciousness as the hover saddle soars away. This method allows the tap gangs to pick their victims clean of any valuables at their leisure. Of course, in Mega-City One a live human is also a valuable commodity and citizens snatched in this way often find themselves (or parts of themselves) sold on to the likes of slavers, organ leggers, body sharks and zzip pushers, although some of the more violent or less sophisticated perps are not above simply dropping them from a great height.

Electro-Lasso, Mauley Lazoo

A more sophisticated version of the simple length of rope used in a primitive lasso, the lazoo is a fifteen-foot length of flexible cable ending in a noose-like tether. The noose is intended to ensnare the head or body of its target, while simultaneously shocking the victim with a high voltage electrical charge, disabling the central nervous system of organic targets and short-circuiting electrical systems. Even though it remains in the wielder's hand, the lazoo counts as a projectile weapon with a maximum range of 15 ft. and no range penalties. A successful hit causes no immediate damage; instead the target becomes ensnared in the noose. An ensnared target suffers an immediate –2 penalty to attack rolls and a –4 penalty to Dexterity. Victims can free themselves with an Escape Artist check at DC 20 or burst free with a Strength check at DC 30, as a full round action. As long as the target remains ensnared, the lazoo wielder is able to deliver an electrical shock. This hits automatically and causes electrical subdual damage. A lazoo has three intensity settings: low power delivers 2d4 damage, the medium setting causes 3d4 damage and, finally, maximum intensity will inflict 4d4 damage. A lazoo requires a medium powerpack. This holds the equivalent of twelve *charges*; low power uses a single charge, medium will use two and maximum drains power at the rate of three charges a round. If drained of power, the lazoo can still be used to ensnare targets but cannot cause damage. Keeping a victim ensnared is a move-equivalent action.

Skilled saddle soarers have discovered another attack method when using a lazoo. If ensnaring a target from a hover saddle, the saddle soarer is sometimes able to drag their victim away with them. The saddle soarer and victim must make an immediate opposed Strength check; if this succeeds, the saddle soarer is able to drag the victim away, although controlling a hover saddle while simultaneously carrying an ensnared victim is a full round action that requires a Craze (saddle soaring) check at DC 25, and the vehicle's maximum speed is halved. If the victim wins the Strength check, the saddle soarer must make an immediate Reflex save (DC 20) or the lazoo is torn from their hand and the victim can escape from the noose as a move-equivalent action. Some hover saddles include a small hook or ring that allows the rider to tether a lazoo to the vehicle – such a device will provide a +5 circumstance bonus to the Strength check. Adding a hook costs 250 credits.

Weapon	Size	Cost	Black Market Cost	Dam.	Armour Piercing	Area of Effect	Critical	Rapid Fire	Ammo	Range Inc.	Wt.	Type
Electro-Lasso, Mauley Lazoo	Med.	700 cr.	32,000 cr.	*	-	-	-	1	*	15 ft.	3 lb.	Energy

ANY PORT IN A STORM

Inns

One of the first place most sailors and adventurers head for is the local inn. Sailors are very highly paid for commoners, as the maritime life is difficult and dangerous. Almost every port therefore has several inns. With this simple random chart, you can generate a suitable inn for your players in a matter of moments. No need to stop there either. With a little imagination, any of the inns below can be expanded and developed into a fully-fledged location. How often have you fumbled to come up with the name of an inn at short notice? Now you can just browse the list and pick what you fancy.
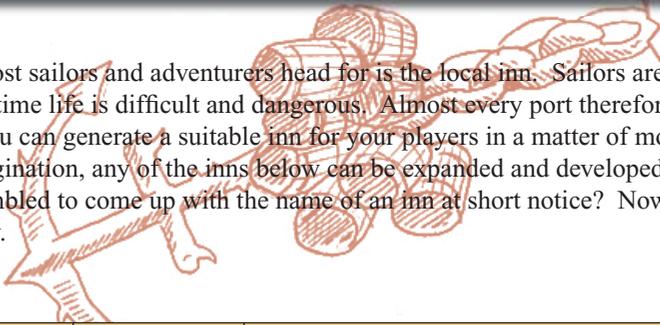
Random Inns

Roll	Name	Quality	Quirk
1	The Anchor	Abysmal	Diseased – anyone staying, drinking or even taking a breath of the foul air inside runs a high risk of falling ill.
2	The Bishop's Hat	Abysmal	Cursed - This inn is under a curse laid on it by a powerful cleric; its patrons bring one point of bad luck back to their ships.
3	The Red Salmon	Poor	Excellent food – the cook here is unusually good, and the seafood is very palatable.
4	Agrat's	Poor	Half-orc clientele – Agrat's is owned by a half-orc, and he welcomes other half-bloods.
5	The Black Lobster	Poor	Pirates – this inn is secretly of Good quality, and is the haunt of pirate captains. At any time, several can be found here, plotting.
6	Eye of the Storm	Poor	Unusually expensive – prices here are 10% to 25%, for no apparent reason.
7	The Dark Lord's Bane	Poor	Wants the business – this inn is trying to attract the custom of adventurers, and so hires drunks and greybeards to sit in the corners and 'act all mysterious and questy-like'.
8	Twice Round	Poor	Recruitment – Twice Round is well known as a place to get work on board a ship. Many arrive, have one drink, and are back out with the next tide.
9	Malis' House	Common	Sea Hag – the owner of this inn is a disguised sea hag. She secretly adds a magical potion to every drink.
10	Temple of the Sea God	Common	Former Temple – this inn was once a temple. The innkeeper has kept the robes and regalia of the temple, and the staff dress as clerics.
11	Reaver's Return	Common	Former ship – this inn is built in the hull of a beached ship, a former warship.
12	Here Be Dragons	Common	Adventurers – most of the inn's patrons are adventurers. It is somewhat more expensive than average, but is a good place to find work.
13	The Havens	Common	Quiet inn – this inn is notably quieter and more restful. Troublesome patrons are dealt with by the monk bouncer, Husan.
14	Clouds Abiding	Common	Elven inn - Clouds Abiding is run by an elven couple, and they serve elven food. The cellar has a pool for contact with aquatic elves.
15	Clan of the Cask	Good	Halfling inn – this inn is built above a halfling burrow. The whole clan works at this huge and popular establishment.
16	Pirate's Repose	Good	Despite the name, this inn has nothing to do with pirates. It was once owned by the city watch, and all the rooms have spyholes.
17	Her Lady's Favour	Good	Cult centre – this inn is owned by vampiric cultists loyal to Everdark.
18	The Strange High House	Good	This mysterious inn is located on the cliffs overlooking the town. The innkeeper is a bearded man named Olney.
19	Wind and Weave	Excellent	Wizard's Inn – only arcane spellcasters may stay at this inn. Guests are entertained by summoned lillends and djinni.
20	Admiralty	Excellent	Captain's Inn – the Admiralty is the haunt of respected and famous admirals and captains.

DANGER IN THE WESTERMARCK!

Eric K. Rodriguez

CONAN

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

We know you are all crying out to get involved in Conan games, so here's a little scenario to get you inspired. Set within the Pictish Wilderness, west of Aquilonia, you will have to deal with savage tribes and forest beasts. Characters should be 1st level, (4-8 players) ideally including a Borderer or Barbarian type character.

BACKGROUND

Until recently, the wild regions of Pictland had been left untouched by the hands of civilisation. Only a few, wooden forts were stretched along the Westermarck, the land that stands between the golden kingdom of Aquilonia and the trackless forests of Pictland. Desperate settlers from Aquilonia and the savage Pictish tribes that inhabit the wild forest have fought over this dark and dangerous land for generations. For the last few years, an uneasy peace has reigned along the frontier, with only a few, random skirmishes to mark the passing of time. Recently, the king of Aquilonia, King Numedides, has given land grants to many new barons and lords who have proven themselves in the brief war with Nemedia. One of these barons, Trejanus, has decided to take his land grant and immediately begin settling a small, untouched section of the Westermarck. This area of forest is south of the Aquilonian fort of Schondara, east of the Black River and west of the Thunder River. Baron
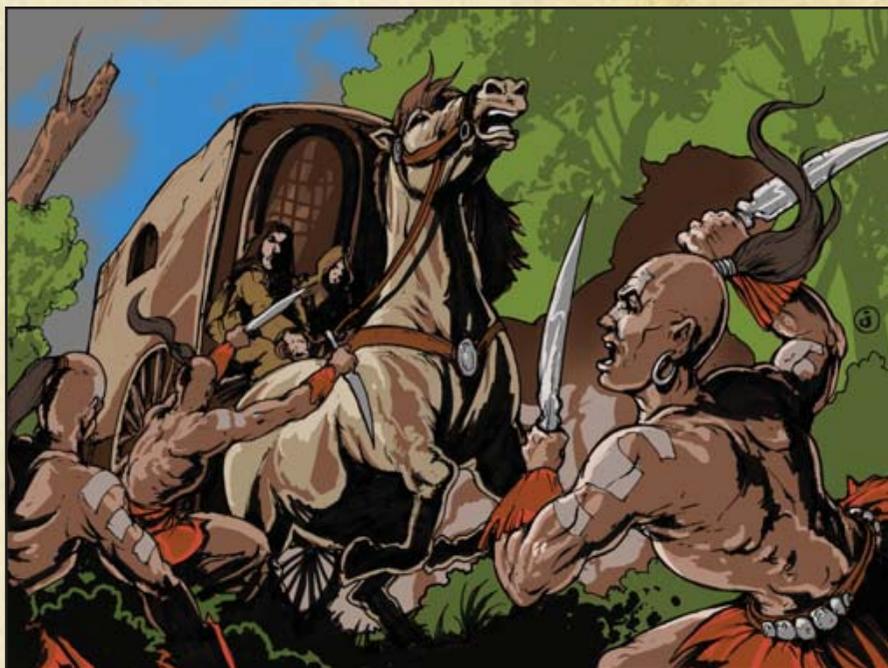
Trejanus has only a small retinue of men-at-arms, but does have a large supply of gold, which he uses to purchase the mercenaries he needs to hold his new lands.

The adventure starts with it being two day's past the first of a new month. The mercenaries and free companions that Baron Trejanus has hired are becoming restless. The supply train, carrying more food and necessities for Fort Drethil, has still not shown up and is now considered overdue. Baron Trejanus and the men at his fort can weather several more weeks without food or new supplies; however the mercenaries will not wait for their wages. Baron Trejanus was running low on supplies and coin and had a strongbox added to the supply caravan that hailed from Aquilonia proper. Over 300 golden lunas had been in the strongbox, and were to be used to pay the mercenaries and

traders that Baron Trejanus was dealing with. With the loss of the money, Baron Trejanus now finds himself in a dangerous predicament, with very few options.

The baron has no choice but to trust a few mercenaries or men of his retinue to go and find out what has happened to the supply caravan. Hopefully the adventurers will return with the strongbox intact, so that the mercenaries will be paid and continue to protect Baron Trejanus' interest. After being given their mission, the party should depart immediately for the road east, toward Aquilonia.

THE PICTS

Two Pictish tribes have formed a temporary alliance for the sole purpose of slaughtering the frontier settlers. The Black Boar tribe and the Red Hawk tribe crossed the Black River six days ago and ambushed the

PICTLAND

BLACK BOAR VILLAGE

BLACK
RIVER

6·····5·······

4·······

3·····2·······1

FT. DRETHIL

FT. SCHONDARA

AUGUSTUS
BRIDGE

KINGS
ROAD

FT. THANDARA

AQUILONIA

supply caravan just as it crossed over the Thunder River, from the border of Aquilonia. After looting the caravan, the surviving members of the war party travelled swiftly back across the Black River and into Pictish territory. While arguing over the splitting of the plundered goods, a fight broke out, which turned deadly. After the

bloody melee was over, the victorious Black Boar tribesmen left with a majority of the goods and went south toward their territory. The Chief of the Black Boar tribesmen is Gorla, a larger than average Pict, standing almost six feet tall. The real brains behind the chief is a shaman named Yagga, who worships the ancient god

of the wood and animals, Jhebbal Sag. Yagga has convinced chief Gorla that there is value in striking at the settlers' caravans, denying them food and water, so that sooner or later they will be forced to leave. Yagga was also able to convince chief Gorla that the metal strongbox, which Yagga has not been able to

open yet, is a valuable bargaining tool and that it must be of great value to the Aquilonians. When the full moon of Jhebbal Sag rises in 10 days, sacrifices will be made and Yagga's magic will be at its strongest. Then the strongbox will be opened and it's 'magic' used against the frontier settlers.

detected up to 300 yards away. Carrion birds take flight as the group enters the ambush area. Bodies, both men and beasts of burden, are spread across the caravan trail in a haphazard manner. Careful examination reveals that most of the bodies have crude arrows stuck in them, or show signs of cuts or gashes

by the savages; however a leg can be seen protruding from underneath a wagon, in what must have been the rear of the caravan. Characters with a combined Strength of 25 can lift the wagon upright and reveal what was underneath. The group finds the crushed body of a Pict, underneath the wagon, who bears many tattoos and body piercings. A character with the Knowledge (local) skill can make a check (DC 15) to determine what tribe the Pict hails from, and a general idea of its territory. If successful, the group determines that the Pict is from the Red Hawk. If a member of the group tries to follow the Picts, a Track (DC 20) check will reveal a faint trail heading west, back toward the Black River.

ANIMAL ATTACK

While trudging trough the trackless forest, the group comes upon a pack of wild wolves feasting on the carcass of a large deer. These wolves are not normal wolves, and do not flee at yells from the group or simple gestures. If any of the group moves within 30 yards of the creatures, they attack.

Wolves: Normal, (6), hit die and statistics per *Conan the Roleplaying Game*. No treasure.

BURNT SETTLERS' CABIN

Upon arriving, the first thing the group notices is that the cabin is still smouldering. The barn that is

THE ADVENTURE

CARAVAN AMBUSH

When the group arrives at the site the smell of rotting bodies can be

all about their bodies. An easy Spot check (DC 10) reveals that all the men's bodies are missing a tuft of hair from their heads. A character with Knowledge (local) skill (DC 10) can determine that many of the local tribes of Picts take a slain enemy's scalp as a trophy to hang on his mud and thatch hut. A Search check (DC 15) shows that little was left behind

adjacent to the cabin is still standing, and contains a few surviving livestock animals, although they look like they have not been tended to in days. A Search check (DC 10) reveals that no bodies are to be found. A search of the burnt out cabin reveals some salvageable items. Hidden under a floor board in the cabin, the group finds a pouch with 10 slightly melted silver coins and a gold chain and locket that holds the likeness of a pretty young woman. If a search of the barn is made, the group finds several farming tools, two 50-foot lengths of rope, and four sacks of edible grain. The barn also contains several domestic animals, which hold no value, unless the group wished to slaughter an animal for food. A Tracking skill check (DC 15) reveals that the war party did hit the farm and continued to the west.

CONSTRICTOR SNAKE ATTACK

After finding a ford to cross at the Black River, the group comes under attack from a giant constrictor snake. The snake should attack the group when they are at a point in the crossing where the water is at least hip deep. Randomly roll a dice to determine which character the snake falls upon.

Snake, Constrictor: (1), hit die and statistics below. No treasure.

Skills: Snakes have a +4 racial bonus to Hide, Listen and Spot checks and a +8 racial bonus to Balance and Climb checks. A snake can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened. Snakes use either their Strength modifier or Dexterity modifier for Climb checks, whichever is higher. A snake has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

> **Constrictor Snake**
> **Medium Animal**
> **Hit Dice:** 3d8+6 (19 hp)
> **Initiative:** +3
> **Speed:** 20 ft. (4 squares), climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.
> **DV:** 15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural)
> **Base Attack/Grapple:** +2/+5
> **Attack:** Bite +5 melee (1d3+4)
> **Full Attack:** Bite +5 melee (1d3+4)
> **Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.
> **Special Attacks:** Constrict 1d3+4, improved grab
> **Special Qualities:** Scent
> **Saves:** Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2
> **Abilities:** Str 17, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2
> **Skills:** Balance +11, Climb +14, Hide +10, Listen +7, Spot +7, Swim +11
> **Feats:** Alertness, Toughness
> **Climate/Terrain:** Warm forests
> **Organisation:** Solitary
> **Advancement:** 4–5 HD (Medium); 6–10 HD (Large)

Constrictor snakes are not usually aggressive and flee when confronted. They hunt for food but do not attempt to make a meal out of any creature that is too large to constrict.

Combat
Constrictor snakes hunt by seizing prey with their jaws and then crushing it with their powerful bodies.

Constrict (Ex): On a successful grapple check, a constrictor snake deals 1d3+4 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a constrictor snake must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

TRIBAL BATTLE
Now deep into Pictish territory, the group comes upon a disturbing and confusing scene. Splayed out in front of them is another scene of carnage, except the dead bodies that cover the meadow are Picts. A Spot check (DC 10) reveals that the bodies

are those of the Red Hawk tribe of Picts. A Spot check (DC 15) shows that one body bears the markings of the Black Boar tribe. A character with a reasonable Intelligence (DC 18 check) can determine that the two war parties must have had a falling out and fell upon each other to the death, with the Black Boar tribesmen coming away victorious. A Search check (DC 15) reveals several simple, barbaric weapons scattered across the meadows in different stages of wear and quality. Approximately five minutes after the group arrives at the meadow, a scouting party of Red Hawk Picts also arrives at the meadow and attacks the group, thinking them responsible for the massacre. None of the Picts speak Aquilonian, let alone any other language, so only a character who speaks Pictish will have a chance of convincing the Red Hawks that the group did not have anything to do with the massacre. The Picts are not friends with the white men, but if a character speaks the language and makes a successful Diplomacy check (DC 20), then the Picts will stop fighting, temporarily, to at least listen to what the characters have to say. If the group is successful, then they will convince the Red Hawk tribe to go to war against the Black Boars. Although this may not have an immediate affect in the adventure, this will affect the happenings in a continuing campaign. If the group fails to convince the Red Hawks to listen, then they fight to the death.

Pict Warriors: (5), 1st level Pictish barbarians, hit die and statistics per *Conan the Roleplaying Game*.
Treasure: assorted animal jewellery that can be traded for equivalent of 5 silver pieces. 1 Aquilonian crafted dagger: Average quality. 1 set of leather bracers, studded with turquoise, valued at 30 silver pieces.

VILLAGE OF THE BLACK BOAR
Hopefully the group arrives undetected and is hiding behind a rock bluff that overlooks the Black

Boar village. As the day progresses the characters can see that the village is filled with activity. Five large wooden poles have been driven into the ground and are covered in strange markings and carvings. A larger, more ancient-looking totem, covered in demonic and bestial visages, looms over the five smaller poles. A Spot check (DC 20) reveals the hut of the village shaman and the chief of the tribe.

him. Attached to the five sacrificial poles are what appear to be five Aquilonian settlers; one male, one female and three children. The group notices that although most of the warriors in the village are passed out or extremely intoxicated, a group of four warriors stand next to the chief; his ever-watchful bodyguards.

The most successful tactic would be for the adventurers to kill the shaman

the boar attack them. If the boar is slain before it has killed the sacrificial victims, then the demonic totem bursts into flames and topples down upon the shaman, crushing him into the earth. If this happens, whether the chief and his bodyguards are still alive, they flee into the dark forest depths, never to return. If the shaman is killed after the boar is summoned, then the creature goes berserk and kills at random. Chief Gorla and

BLACK BOAR VILLAGE

If the group waits for nightfall, they begin to see a grisly ceremony play itself out. Most of the tribesmen are becoming increasingly intoxicated by some local home brew, and can be seen laying about the village in various stages of inebriation. Many of the women and children of the tribe are gathered in a semi-circle around the five sacrificial poles. The shaman can be heard chanting in a guttural, inhuman tongue, gesturing occasionally to the large totem behind

first, interrupting his ceremony and causing pandemonium amongst the tribesmen. If the group causes some distraction, like setting the huts on fire, then this will successfully send the village into chaos, but the shaman will still complete his ceremony. When he does, a large black boar appears and walks toward the sacrificial victims, intending to eat them. Yagga completely controls the creature and if the characters present themselves, then he will have

his bodyguards will only flee if the boar is slain, otherwise they fight to the death. If the combat goes for over eleven rounds, then eight more tribesmen become sober enough to enter the melee.

If the characters are successful and the Black Boar tribe defeated, then they can search the village and find the following items: *Lord Trejanus' strongbox, 300 golden lunas, 33 silver pieces, miscellaneous jewellery*
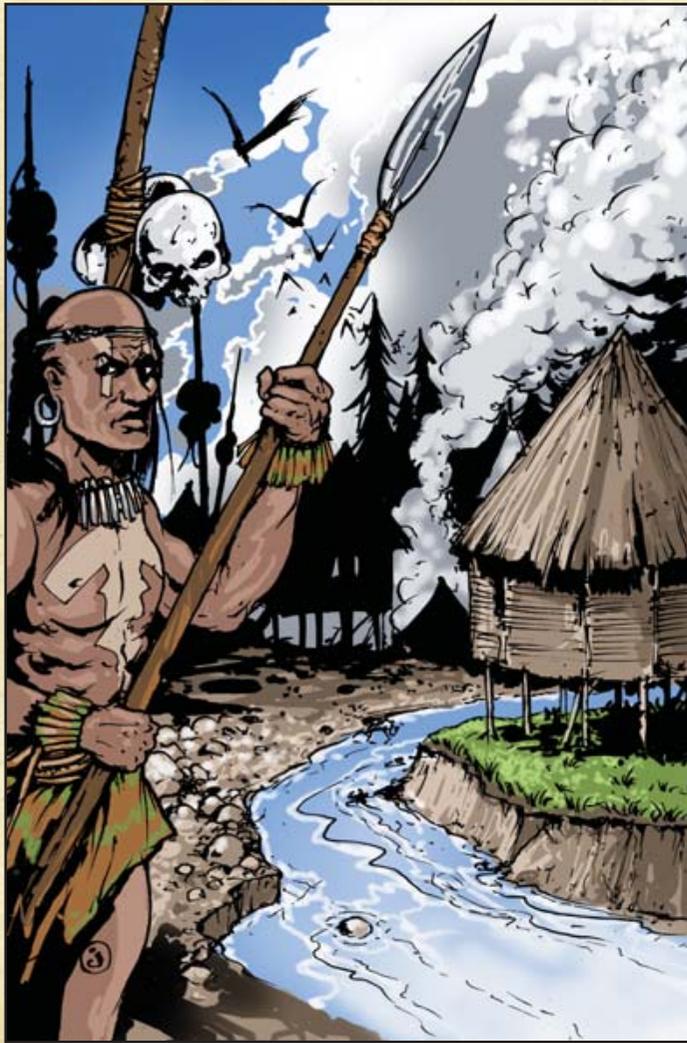
valued at 100 golden lunas, and 13 miscellaneous semi-precious stones, valued at 75 golden lunas.

Boar: Normal, (1), hit die and statistics per *Conan the Roleplaying Game.* No treasure.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Below you will find all the characters you will need to populate the Pictish village.

Chief Gorla: 3rd level Pictish Barbarian, hit die and statistics per *Conan the Roleplaying Game.*
Treasure: *Hide armour made of boar skin (average quality), wooden spear w/stone tip (primitive quality), bone handled dagger (primitive quality), Zingaran mastercraft short bow (Akbitanan quality), and the 'Necklace of the Boar', a magical*

stone necklace that allows the wearer to summon the strength of a boar once per week (+4 to Strength) and lasts for 10 rounds.

Chief's bodyguards: (4), 2nd level Pictish Barbarians, hit die and statistics per *Conan the Roleplaying Game.*
Treasure: *All four have hide armour made from various animals, weapons include 4 spears, 4 bone handled daggers, 2 crude short bows, 2 weighted twine nets (all weapons primitive quality), one mastercraft Aquilonian short sword (Akbitanan quality), and miscellaneous jewellery valued at 10 golden lunas.*

Yagga, Shaman of Jhebbal Sag: 1st level Pictish Barbarian/3rd level Pictish Shaman (Scholar), 12 Power Points, hit die and statistics per *Conan the Roleplaying Game.*
Treasure: *Vest made of bones, equal*

to hide armour (average quality), Steel dagger (average quality), sack containing the rare Purple Lotus and unique herbs and plants (valued at 500 golden lunas), Staff of Jhebbal Sag (staff allows wielder to use Summon Beast, Greater once per month with a 10% chance of gaining 1 point of Corruption per use).

Black Boar Tribesmen: (8), 1st level Pictish Barbarian, hit die and statistics per *Conan the Roleplaying Game.*
Treasure: *Miscellaneous jewellery and trinkets valued at 20 silver pieces, Stone-tipped spear (primitive quality), stone dagger (primitive quality), Stone Hand Axe (primitive quality).*

EPILOGUE

After freeing the captives, the group learns that they are a family of settlers whose farm was attacked and their cabin burned. The family lets the characters know that they will always be grateful and will always have a safe place to rest and recuperate. After the group makes it back to Fort Drethil and returns Baron Trejanus' strongbox, they are rewarded with 10 golden lunas each, and given letters of recommendation from Baron Trejanus himself. If the characters manage to start a tribal war between the Red Hawks and Black Boars, award them 200 experience points each. If they free the captives give them 100 experience points each. If the group manages to destroy the demonic totem, give each character 500 experience points.

THIS SHOULD GIVE YOU A LITTLE TASTER OF HOW INVOLVING ADVENTURING IN THE PICTISH WILDERNESS CAN BE. LATER THIS YEAR, IN *ACROSS THE THUNDER RIVER*, WE WILL BE PRESENTING A COMPLETE FRONTIER CAMPAIGN IN WHICH TO IMMERSE YOUR CONAN CHARACTERS!

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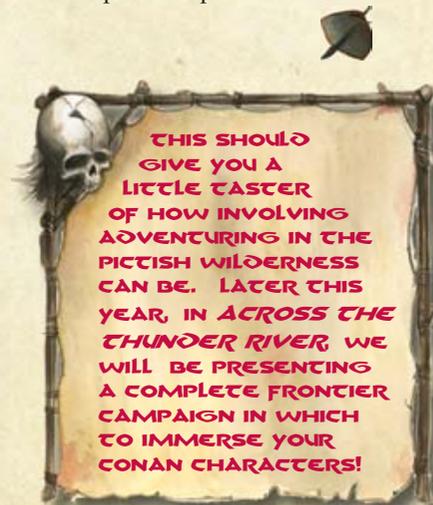
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