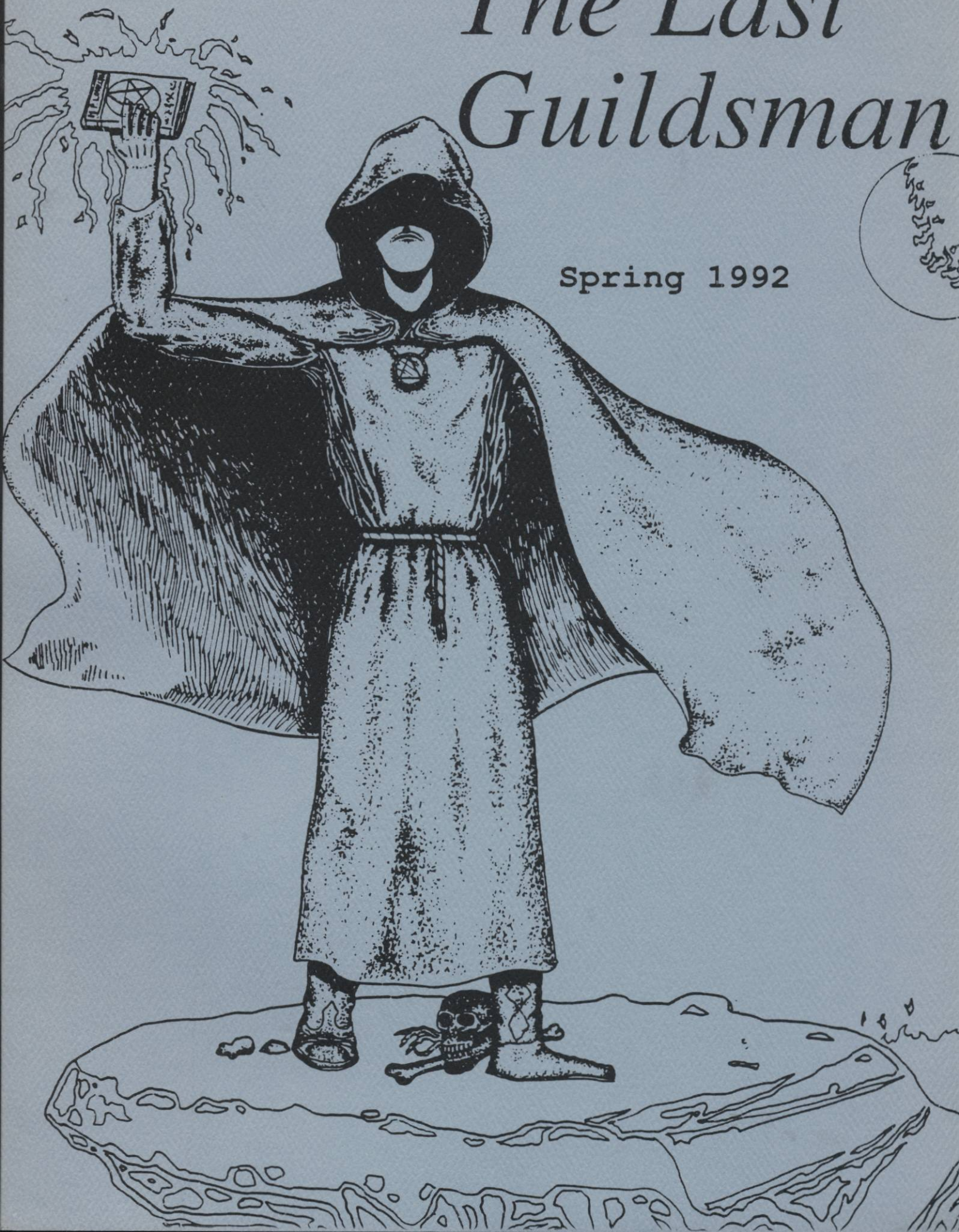


The Last Guildsman

Spring 1992



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The Guildsman #6

Spring 1992

Cover: The Last Guildsman

Darrin Jones

A Blurb from the Bard

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A Blurb from the Bard

Lethargic greetings gentle reader, and welcome to this this last, lethal, and quite possibly lobotomizing issue of The Guildsman. Since issue #5, we've scoured the campus, looking for some deranged personage with the qualities (or rather lack thereof) to continue producing this beloved publication with which you are currently so unwittingly mesmerized. Suffice it to say that no such fool...er...individual exists. Thus, as expected, this issue will in all likelihood be the last which we shall inflict upon you. Oh, stop crying! I'm not. Wah!!!

Blame for this travesty of literature goes to our immensely distinguished contributors and to Brian (asmodeus) Saylor who helped with the editing and formatting as well as fending off the sleepies during our various late night excursions into electronic publishing. We both hope that you enjoy the final effort, as it were, and if you have any comments, criticisms, snide & nasty remarks, or job prospects, you know where to reach us.

Hasta la bye-bye, gentlebeings, and let the games begin!

— Jim Vassilakos
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Riverside, California



All Our Evil Ways

A Refutation of the Satanic Connection
Original Compilation by Loren Miller

millerl@wharton.upenn.edu

For years there have been those who claim that role-playing games are satanic. While some of us prefer to lay down and hide our heads in the sand (TSR), others speak out against what they view as hypocrisy. In this article, the latter sort of folks examine all our evil ways.

A Case in Point

A young boy with *strong* roots in christianity became disenchanted with religion in general as he grew up. He fell into very anti-social behavior (thieving, pyromania). While in high school, he ran across a kid who knew a *lot* about magic and played D&D. Our disturbed hero fell in with this crowd, and soon was playing D&D regularly. He always played evil characters.

Now this poor soul never really read for pleasure. In fact, *all* that he had read for the past three years was First Blood and Rambo. One of the players recommended the Dragonlance series to him. He loved it, empathizing with Raistlin 100%. He read the first book in one night, bought the next two, read *both* in one night, and begged his DM to give him more. His pleas were granted: Thomas Covenant; Dune; David Eddings; Tolkien. Soon this maladjusted youth began writing himself, specializing in poetry. He expanded his reading range, including such great works as Les Miserables, all of Joyce, and...oh yeah...the Bible. Indeed, our wayward youth regained his faith, and now this year published a book of poetry, dedicated to me: The DM. True story.

Oh, yeah. For what it's worth, he wants to be a priest.

— Timothy Toner (a.k.a. Deus Imperator)
tgt33358@ura.cso.uiuc.edu

Prince Valiant the Satanist?

Have your religious friends read Le Morte D'Artur by Malory (or Steinbeck's version). If not, have them

watch the Family Channel's animated version of the Prince Valiant comic. It's on Mondays at 8pm.

Yes, you read right. Pat Robertson's Family Channel is running a new show based on the Prince Valiant comic. It's a little cheesy, but it would be a good way to show a religious person that the Arthurian Legends are not satanic literature, because it is from these stories that most FRPGs formed. Dragons, knights, damsels in distress...all of these came from the Arthurian Legends. So if one set of armored warriors, pious priests, and knowledgeable wizards are okay to read, then why isn't another group?

I made a list of crucial elements that were in the first several episodes of Prince Valiant. All of these are also the backbone of most RPGs:

1. Evil baron defeats good guys and exiles them from their home.
 - What!? A religious channel is saying that the bad guys win?!
 - In FRPs this is the plot hook that sets the good guys into doing something to regain the home.
2. Prophetic dreams.
 - Sounds like Robertson's channel is delving into mysticism.
 - Used in FRPs to nudge the adventurers into going the right way.
3. Spell casting — by swamp witch and Merlin.
 - It seems it's okay to pretend that spells exist in stories...
 - One of the spell casters is a good guy, so this throws out the idea that all magic is evil or satanic...only some of it is. And the good guys do *not* use the evil magic.
4. Authority figures can be evil and corrupt.

- Another baron suppresses his people and forces the blacksmith's daughter to marry his wimpy brother.
- In FRPs this sets up a lot of adventures. The good guys have to overthrow the abusive leader.

5. Monsters are real and too dangerous to let live.

- The very first episode had a giant lizard, probably meant as a dinosaur or dragon.
- In FRPs monsters as opponents are a staple in an adventurer's diet. They have to be killed or defeated for the greater good.

This show is broadcast nationally on a religiously affiliated network. Robertson himself has spoken out against Fantasy Roleplaying Games, but he broadcasts a TV show that is very similar to most FRP campaigns.

— Dan Kopes
DDK2@psuvm.psu.edu

Better Torch them Books, Pat

Many people seem to think that Fantasy Roleplaying is inspired by black magic and Necronomicon-like grimoires. In fact, J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, The Hobbit, and the world of Middle Earth, which are key influences on almost all fantasy roleplaying games, were primarily inspired by Christian (Catholic, to be precise) ideas.

J.R.R. Tolkien was a devout Christian, and a close friend of C.S. Lewis, one of the great Christian thinkers of our time and the writer of the fantasy and science fiction classics (respectively) The Chronicles of Narnia and the trilogy comprising Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, and That Hideous Strength. Some of Lewis's work in That Hideous Strength is acknowledged inspiration from Tolkien's writing (not to mention a large dose of Christian theology).

Yes, Christianity and fantasy can co-exist.

Another FRP-like Christian fantasy is The Faerie Queen by Edmund Spenser, with the Red-Cross Knight and other allegorical characters engaging in typical FRP exploring and monster-bashing.

Roleplaying gamers should also emphasize that their games exist in a moral world (that is, of course, if their players do not regularly play evil or psychopathic characters) and that wrongdoing and skullduggery usually rebound on the bad guys. Despite the

fact that TSR strongly discourages evil player characters — providing scenarios that are aimed almost exclusively at good and neutral alignments — most critics think that players are all thrilling in immoral deeds. They don't realize most of us play the good guys in the white hats who ride off into the sunset after the last scene.

Facts or Fiction?

James Dallas Egbert III

The original claim of a teen committing suicide due to D&D was a hoax. In 1979 James Dallas Egbert III disappeared from Michigan State University, as described in a book by the detective on the case, William Dear (The Dungeon Master, 1984, Ballantine, biographies). Dear rambles a lot and he may be dramatizing too much, but he made headway not from talk about D&D played in underground "steam tunnels" on the campus, but only after he contacted a man who was keeping boys as young as 11 in his apartment who claimed to know where Dallas was. It turns out the boy was 16 years old and in his sophomore year, a genius but also lonely, on drugs, and gay. He "ran away from it all", got stoned down in those tunnels, and staggered over to the home of a gay friend. This person got nervous when later the police search started, and Dallas was shuttled from gay to gay until he ended up in Louisiana with "friends". It could have been a prostitution ring involving juveniles.

Dear's only concern was to bring the boy back, so he kept the facts hidden for 5 years until he wrote the book. For that reason, D&D continued to be blamed, especially nine months later when Dallas committed suicide (probably out of embarrassment). I don't know how far to trust Dear's account, particularly in view of his choice of title which was made to "market the book better."

John Torrell: Great Christian or Loony Toon?

The very first published anti-D&D writings were from the Reverend John Torrell in 1980 (Christian Life Ministries, now called European-American Evangelistic Crusades, in Sacramento, CA). Torrell claimed that "these players go nuts with it! They start confusing fantasy with reality." That's an ironic claim in view of his own published "political" views in his newsletter, The Dove. He claimed that Ronald Reagan secretly surrendered the U.S. to the Soviet Union at the Iceland Summit in 1986, with a five-year transition period before the Russians assumed complete

control. Well, guess who surrendered to whom?! He also claimed that George Bush's membership in the Order of Skull And Bones fraternity at Yale means that he has devoted his life to Satan! Torrell also claimed that the logo for the Seoul Olympics was a cyclic "666" symbol, and many other inanities. A perfect conspiracy theorist. Torrell's radio show got kicked off one station for making anti-Catholic remarks, but he soon wound up on another.

The Racist Foundation

The famous woman who claims her son killed himself due to D&D, Patricia Pulling of Richmond, Virginia, is in league with some pretty questionable people. It seems she's a sort of guest director of the National Coalition on Television Violence (NCTV) run by Dr. Thomas Radecki from near Chicago. This man has put out loony claims that people are severely influenced by violent acts seen on TV and counts the number of violent acts per hour. According to his criteria, The Smurfs average 13 per hour! He also says tickling, snowball fights, Donald Duck cartoons, and the Christian Broadcasting Network are all bad for the mind and that anger should be suppressed because "only God has the right to be angry" in flagrant opposition to the catharsis theories of his psychiatric discipline.

Now, every issue of The NCTV News has a margin column where a "partial list of endorsers" is listed. Notice that its "partial", so they want to bring out what they feel are the most notable names who "support" them. One of these names is Prof. J. Phillippe Rushton of the University of Western Ontario, in London, Ontario, Canada. This professor published his theories of a "race hierarchy" where Blacks were rated inferior to Whites, and both ranked below Orientals. He got some of his funding from an American group called the Pioneer Fund, which is said to be racist.

And yet he is listed as a notable endorser of Pat Pulling and Thomas Radecki from 1985 to at least 1989! This raises the possibility that various little "causes" such as D&D-bashing are merely used to raise funds for what *really* interests these groups...hatred and racism.

Backlash

The only Catholic tract against the game of D&D had to be pulled out of religious bookstores — because of its sources of information. This was called "Games Unsuspecting People Play — Dungeons and Dragons" by The Daughters of St. Paul Press in Boston (light green cover, sub-digest size, 24 pages or so) and authored by Louise Shanahan.

Originally this was from a Canadian Catholic magazine called Our Family in Battleford, Saskatchewan, re-made into a tract. However, two of their "sources" of information on the game were the Rev. John Torrell and also Albert James Dager (who calls Catholicism the "Babylon Mystery Religion", claiming it's a mix of true Christianity and Babylonian rituals such as communion and the confessional). Since both of these were anti-Catholic, the tract was discontinued, and the DSP will no longer accept any manuscripts from Louise Shanahan! She obviously didn't research these sources sufficiently.

I did and gleefully pointed it out to the publisher, which withdrew the tract.

Sean Sellers Recants

If videos of Sean Sellers (a teen on death-row in Oklahoma) are presented on The 700 Club as testimony of the link between violence and D&D, it is only because videos are all they can come up with. They can't link up with him live — because he no longer claims that D&D caused his crime!

In a letter dated February 5, 1990 from Sean Sellers to game designer Michael Stackpole, Sellers concluded with, "Personally, for reasons I publish myself, I don't think kids need to be playing D&D, but using my past as a common example of the effects of the game is either irrational or fanatical."

Remember, people on death row are opportunists. They will claim that UFOs tampered with their brains and this caused them to kill. They will claim most anything to get parole, and who can blame them? Of course, as more judges and wardens are D&D-players, such a claim will not be possible within ten years. In this case, concerning D&D, familiarity will kill the contempt against the game rather than "breeding contempt". Only distance and ignorance breed contempt against the game. The more it is understood, the less people make charges against it!

CAR-PGa

TSR Inc. does a little to debunk anti-D&D claims, and an organization of game manufacturers called the Game Manufacturers' Association (GAMA, c/o Greg Stafford, Chaosium Inc., 950A 56th St., Oakland, CA 94608) has done a lot to research these claims. However, there is now a fan-based organization I helped to found in 1988 called the Committee for the Advancement of Role-Playing Games (CAR-PGa). The principal people are as follows:

- William Flatt
8032 Locust Ave.

Miller, IN 46403

tel. (219) 938-3382

Very dedicated to the issue because his father assaulted him for playing D&D with a vacuum cleaner pipe.

- the Rev. Paul Cardwell, Jr.

c/o Hippogriff Books

111 E. 5th St.

Bonham, TX 75418

Aa gamer who prefers Chaosium-style rules, author of the MythWorld game, and an ordained United Methodist minister (teaching, not preaching) aged 58!

- Mr. Pierre Savoie

22-B Harris Ave.

Toronto, ON M4C 1P4

CANADA

tel. (416) 690-6985

Age 30, analytical chemist by trade. I initially kicked off CAR-PGa with some diligent research on the exact groups which criticize D&D. Sometimes jokingly called "Head of Research" in the organization because I have a five foot stack of files and correspondence on the subject.

Concluding Ideas

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation did a radio show on their AM network in the "Ideas" series, Canada's most intellectual radio program, entitled "Dungeons and Dragons" (aired May 29, 1991). It concluded as follows:

"The National Coalition on Television Violence and BADD say they have 125 cases of D&D-linked deaths. Only 40 of these cases have been published, and half of those are anonymous.

The ones they do cite details for have no causal link with games. In every trial where Mrs. Pulling and Dr. Radecki have appeared, always as expert witnesses on the defense side, the defendants were convicted anyway, and in no case adjudicated by the courts has gaming ever been implicated in any crime."

This is not some schlock show, and transcripts are offered for most of their programs, including this one, for 5 Canadian dollars per airdate. To order, indicate the title and airdate of the show and send

CDN\$5 or equivalent to: CBC IDEAS Transcripts, P.O. Box 500, Station "A", Toronto, ON, M5W 1E6, CANADA.

I assisted a little in the research for the show, and you may find it a refreshingly positive broadcasting of the facts about game-playing.

Further Reading

There are at least two books in print so far which debunk anti-D&D theories in the context of "Satanism". These are:

- Satanism in America: How the Devil Got Much More Than He Deserved by Shawn Carlson and Gerald Larue (1989, Gaia Press. P.O. Box 466, El Cerrito, CA 94530-0466, tel. (415) 527-9414). It is spiral-bound, 280 pages, and the price is \$12.95 (Californians add \$.94 tax) + \$1.50 postage. 50 of these pages is a special appendix by game designer Michael Stackpole of Chaosium, Inc. directly dealing with the anti-D&D claims.
- In Pursuit of Satan: The Police and the Occult by Robert Hicks (1991, Prometheus Books. 700 East Amherst St., Buffalo, NY 14215, tel. (716) 837-2475). Hardcover, 420 pages, US\$23.95 plus maybe \$3 postage. 25 pages devoted to D&D by this criminal analyst plus additional chilling references. For example, in Chicago there is a wing of the Hartgrove Hospital called *The Center for the Treatment of Ritualistic Deviance*. It's influenced by silly Satanism seminars, and one of the criteria for being a potential patient is "heavy involvement in fantasy and role play [sic] games". Therefore, a young teen can be "hospitalized" here with the consent of his parents for being a D&D-player — all legal and proper!

This book was given a favorable review in an editorial in the July 1991 Dragon, by Michael Stackpole, who curiously did not mention his own involvement with the first book.

— Pierre Savoie
Micol Labs BBS
Toronto

"You can have peace, or you can have freedom, but don't ever count on having both at once."

— Rob Crawford
betel@buhub.bradley.edu
Bradley University

Between Darkness and Dawning

©1991 Angelia Sparrow

asparrow@cs.umn.edu
University of Missouri — Rolla

Sometimes getting laid just isn't worth the trouble, but then again, sometimes it is.

The young man listened to the chanted Prayer Before Evening Meal as the rest of the students marched past his door. On the fourth stanza he sighed and got up from the edge of the bed to kneel in the center of the room. As the fifth stanza finished, Immaculate Androzius looked in on him. "Still praying, lad?" he asked.

"Yes, Immaculate. I only hope to be worthy of our Blessed Goddess and be cleansed tonight." The words stuck in his throat but apparently convinced the superior. As he left, the youth's stomach reminded him noisily that he had not eaten since dinner the night before. A fast was always required for purification, and he consoled himself with the thought that five priests had been fasting too.

All for you, my sister, he thought, wondering if he should curse her for the ordeal he was facing. Then remembering that both of them were being punished, he sighed and remembered their last day together.

The only sound was the wind in the trees and the faint whicker of their horses. Somewhere a bird called. The forest glade was awash with sunlight that turned Zara's black hair a rich cinnamon color. She was pale under the green robes, despite their many meetings here. At fourteen, she had lost the coltish look of a child but did not yet have the rich curves of a woman. Her breasts were but half-formed, and her moon-blood had not yet begun to flow. At fourteen, he was lean and bronzed from much exercise in the sun and strong from his training.

They had spread their cloaks and neither had risen a virgin. It was awkward, but sweet, until the invaders came. Mikel, Vand and Jeran, out hunting, had stumbled onto the twins' glade. She had been lying beneath him with a look of bliss on her face when he had looked up at the three shadows. "So this is how you act when no one watches twin born."

Vand made the word into a curse. "Mikel found you and brought us here. We will take you back to face Father. The midwife should have strangled the

slut at birth. Now you have no more decency than to rut with your own sister, like an animal. Don't dress, just your cloaks." The point was moot since Mikel had gathered all of their clothing into a bundle. Then it was a blur. Standing unrepentant before their father, the king, and his brother-in-law, the advisor. Hearing a death sentence, which was mitigated by their mother's intervention. It had been changed to banishment and life-imprisonment in this Destroyer-forsaken monastery.

The memory of Zara and the still burning coals of his anger would sustain him through the night. Using his Power, he prepared to awaken two hours before midnight and went to sleep.

Upon awakening, he resumed the kneeling position, noticing that the knees of his robe were getting dusty, although he had swept his cell that morning. He pondered what he would be saying that night.

An hour and a half before midnight, two priests came for him. They escorted him to the bathhouse and assisted him in the ritual bath. He donned the robe of pure white linen which he had made himself, according to custom, under the direction of Purified Liniosh, who had charge of the looms. He had not once complained about the three months of woman's work involved in weaving and sewing the garment. He knew all skills were useful and could see potential for learning to sew.

As they escorted him to the Chapel of Purification, three others joined them. Five priests, the holiest number of Vanada, and one unrepentant student, soon to embark on a new life. The Eldest stepped before the altar and genuflected. The other priests and the prince did likewise. The blue star with the gold sword on it seemed to glow in the torchlight. The others knelt.

"Everpure Vanada, Innocent and Holy, we, Your servants, beg Your Mercy for our transgressions. But we know that by Your Laws there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood. With us stands one who has erred most grievously and yet is desirous of Your Mercy. Everpure One, the crimes he has committed have turned him red as blood. We ask, that



JALYL

with the shedding of his blood, they would be shed away. For the sake of Law and Goodness."

The prince rose and went to kneel before the altar. He kissed the symbol of Vanada that hung around his neck before removing it to lay it on the altar. He held out his arms and two of the priests slit the seams it had taken him hours of labor and many pricked fingers to sew. It fell to the knotted cord at his waist. He knew the entire garment must be soaked through with his blood before they would pronounce him shriven.

The Eldest took up the Rod of Scourging, and tossed Incense of Purification into the brazier. The smell was like flowers dipped in blood. The other four began to pray quietly. The penitent began the prayer of confession. "Blessed Vanada, Holy Everpure One, I kneel before Your altar in atonement..." the rod cracked across his back, drawing blood. It hurt but he did not falter, "... confessing my filth to Your Light. I expose myself to You, Holy One, trusting Your Mercy and Justice. There can be no forgiveness without the shedding of blood. For such a crime as mine, there is no sacrifice I can make, save my own blood. I ask that this would be sufficient to appease Your Wrath at my transgression. I confess to violating Your Laws of The Body, of unlawful sensual experience, of defiling myself and my sister in Your Sight."

He picked up the symbol and clutched it to him, its sharp points digging into his chest and creating a secondary pain source. A few drops of blood fell on the front of the robe and he could feel his back was awash.

From behind him a priest intoned, "What is the First Law of The Body?"

"Be pure in action and sickness shall depart from you," came the response.

"How have you violated this Law?" asked the second.

"I have committed impure actions."

"What Law have you violated by your actions?" asked the third.

"I have violated the Fourth Law of The Body. I have experienced unlawful sensuality. I lay with my sister, defiling us both. I beg the mercy of Vanada for this crime."

The Eldest had tired and, giving the rod to the next highest rank, began the Litany of Sin. The youth before the altar made the correct responses to accompanying blows.

The ceremony continued through the night. Torches were replaced as they burned away, and the five priests alternated the beating with questions about the Law and his sin. The white robe that had cost him so much labor was soaked through with his

blood. He knew it was to be a symbol of how the best deeds are obscured by sin. Once or twice he had nearly fainted but called to mind Zara's face and his anger. The fact that this was all for show made it no easier to bear.

He comforted himself with the images of those who had condemned him to death. He saw Mikel, the tale-bearer, the sneak, dead in a hundred ways, sometimes by Zara's hand, sometimes by the combined might of the twins, but most often by his own. His father, the pompous patriarch, so self-righteous, as if he had never done anything unlawful, he killed in a multitude of fashions. He would be avenged for every stripe laid on his back this night and for every sickening platitude he was being forced to mouth for the benefit of these pious simpletons who could not see through his act.

Dawn came at last. All six were bone-weary, and the prince knew he would never rise from his knees without help. "Most Holy Vanada," rasped the Eldest, in a voice harsh from long chanting, "accept the sacrifice of the penitent and grant him Your Blessing as he takes Your holy robes as his vocation."

"Blessed Vanada, make me worthy to serve You. Let the sins flow from my soul, even as the blood flows from my body before You. Until the end of the span You grant me, let me serve Your Holy Will. For the sake of Goodness and Law."

Each of the priests laid a hand on his ravaged back and pressed it to the altar, one at each corner and the Eldest in the center, in token of his sacrifice. Two priests helped him up onto legs that would no longer support him. They half-carried, half-dragged him to the bathhouse and washed away the blood. Ointments were applied and his back was bandaged, although he would carry the scars to his grave. The blood-stained robe was folded up and set aside, and he was helped into a soft grey acolyte's robe. One last walk to the Chapel of Purification completed the ritual. He carried the bloody robe to the altar and covered it with coals from the brazier.

"With this, I burn my pride, my sin and myself. I am Yours, Everpure One, to do with as You will." The robe burned slowly. Outside he could hear the bell for morning services. When the last of the robe was burned, two priests accompanied him back to his quarters.

"Sleep, little brother," one told him. "Tomorrow, you will leave your secular studies and begin your journey. The Goddess had taken you back to Herself."

As the door closed and the footsteps faded, the young man lay on his stomach and smiled despite the pain. It had all worked beautifully.

"All for you, my dearest Zara," he whispered. "For you and for revenge!" He reached out to his twin across the miles that separated them. He had suffered, and it seemed only right she take some of that pain. But her guards were up, and she was asleep behind them. His sister, the sorceress. One day they would rule the world. Buoyed by this thought, he drifted off to sleep.

In the city of Shargat, on the banks of Lake Vadenais, a young woman had awakened in the middle of the night, calling her twin brother's name. Her back was afire, and her mind filled with prayers to a goddess she had rejected two years before.

"Those love truth best who to themselves
are true, and what they dream of dare to
do."

Tarot for Prophecy in Roleplaying

©1991 Mark Grundy

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Among mystics, tarot has been widely held to have prophetic powers. Though most roleplayers don't subscribe to this belief, you can easily use tarot in a role-playing game to make story-like prophecies. Mark shows us how with detailed examples and a bale full of flair.

If you've ever tried GMing prophecies in roleplaying, you'll probably recognize the problem:

You want to put in a prophecy to spice things up and to focus the players' attention, but you also want to keep the game challenging. Maybe the players have come up to a prophet looking for some answers to a quest, or perhaps they just hear about a prophecy concerning them. Players being what they are, how can you make the prophecy interesting, spontaneous and accurate without taking away the players' freedom of choice?

Prophetic Dreams

Here is a solution that works for me. I normally use it whenever a player wants an important divination performed. To use this method, you need a tarot deck with "suggestive" pictures on "relevant subjects" (i.e., the pictures on the cards should suggest stories that fit in with your game). If you don't have such a tarot deck and don't want to acquire one, then you can equally well collect relevant pictures from magazines etc. . . and paste these onto standard cards. Here's how it works:

My divinations are mostly done through drug-induced dreaming (this is for the *characters* — not the *players*!) Usually, the player character (*PC*) dreams the dream, and then some prophetic non-played-character (*NPC*) interprets the dream for them. The use of cards makes the prophecy nice and moody for the players, and this can be enhanced with low lighting, music and incense.

State the Question

I ask the player to state the question. Some questions give better answers than others. "How can I find my long lost brother?" is better than "Where is my

long lost brother?", because it admits more shades of meaning, and because it gives the player more to do when the dream is over. So first, the prophet usually advises the PC on the best form of the question.

Symbolize the Question

In the world of dreams, everything is a symbol. In the narrative, the PC begins in a void, as will without body. Their consciousness is focussed around a box, and in the box is a symbol of their question. First, I ask the player to describe the box: its size, its shape, its construction, any ornamentation, how it is opened, etc. . . The player can provide any answer they want, as long as it is vivid and detailed. Eg. "The box is made of dark brown wood, ancient and highly polished. It has two hinges of gold and a golden lock shaped like an oak-leaf. The box is unusual, because it has six sides."

Second, I ask the player to describe what is in the box. I remind them that this is the symbol of their question. They must not forget the question, or else they will be lost in dreams until they can remember. I ask the players lots of detail about the symbol. Eg. "A bronze fish-hook stuck in an apple. The apple is young, green and perfect. The bronze fish-hook is old and rusty. There is no line attached to it; the apple has no leaves and no stalk."

Invent a Little Story

These descriptions are written down in keyword form, and now the tarot comes into play. I draw five cards, one at a time. Each time, I describe the scene on the card and ask the player for a response. I try and describe the scene in a way that makes sense to the player and his problem, but this isn't strictly necessary. Each card represents one facet of the problem. The facets are:

Earth (I have): Family, possessions, physical health, and wealth. Usually, a place where the question or problem begins.

Fire (I will): Will, ambition, aggression. Usually, how the PC's desires affect the question.

Air (I think): Thoughts, communication, society, travel. Usually, secret knowledge about the problem or a place where the PC must go in order to solve the question.

Water (I feel): Dreams, intuitions, emotions, love. How the problem affects the PC or the PC's loved ones.

Outcome: The resolution of these things.

This method is based on a simple tarot system called the Elemental Tarot (by C. Smith and J. Astrop; published 1988 by Viking) — so called because it is based on the four elements. I've found the cards useful for roleplaying purposes, and I'll use them for the following examples without describing the cards in great detail. Any other deck that has suggestive pictures will also work with this method.

Example

First card is: Daughter of Earth, with keywords Artist/Poseur

GM: You come upon a sunny hillside where a young naked woman plays with a golden ball. She spins the ball upon her fingertip, then kicks it over toward you. She says "Hello. What are you doing here?"

PC: I pick up the ball and throw it back to her. "I am looking for my brother", I say.

Second card is: Father of Air, keywords Evangelist/Dictator

GM: The girl laughs, and snatches the ball out of the air. "He is in the sky," she says. She points into the sky, where dark clouds are gathering. It begins to rain, and the ball hisses and melts into the ground. "I am cold," she says, as her naked body trembles.

PC: I cover her with my cloak. "How can I get into the sky?" I ask.

Third card is: 2 of Earth "Plant", Choice/Vacillation

GM: She smiles in gratitude at your gesture and ceases to shiver. "Climb the tree, silly," she laughs. Where before the ball had melted into the ground, now a great tree stands with golden leaves. It has many boughs and seems to reach all the way into the sky.

PC: "Thank you," I say to the woman. I carefully climb the tree.

Fourth card is: 1 of Earth "Seed", Win/Bright Prospect

GM: You climb and climb. Finally, you reach the tip of the tree. The clouds are still above you, and it is no longer raining.

PC: "I look around, calling my brother's name."

GM: "The wind snatches the words from your mouth, and the sky seems to howl its laughter at you. As you begin to descend the tree despondently, you see a little nut: a yellow acorn."

PC: "I pluck it, and continue down the tree".

Final card is: 2 of Air "Zephyr", Discussion/Impasse

GM: "The wind screams its outrage and snatches the little acorn from your hand. Your cries chase the gale into the distance, and you awaken."

Interpretation

As the little story progresses, I make notes about each scene. Interpretation can be difficult and sometimes has to wait until the next game-session. At other times, you can interpret it all straight off. This one is being done off the top of my head as I write, and I've tried to keep the symbolism simple. Before describing my interpretation, it will help to explain how I arrive at it:

The Box represents the environment of the problem. Any long-range or general statements about the problem can be seen in the shape and qualities of the box. The player usually has no conscious idea of the significance of the box, but invariably, every player makes a different box for each problem.

The Object inside the box represents the true nature of the problem. Perhaps the player meant for the apple to be the brother and for the fish-hook to be a way of bringing him back. But the fish-hook is old and rusty, suggesting perhaps that the player fears that something sinister and barbed lies behind his brother's disappearance. We, however, can interpret the symbol as it appears to us.

Each of the phases of the story represent elements of the solution to the problem. We interpret these in the light of insights we've developed through the Box and the Object. For the thing to be convincing, we try and find a meaning for every image that occurred during the dream. To give the interpretation further credibility, we present it in the words of an interesting NPC. Here's an example:

Example

Phelps sweats beneath the Egyptian sun and waits as the old prophet wipes his hands upon his grubby jellaba, takes a puff from his hookah, and speaks:

"There is an old family who have taken your brother. The wood of the box is the wood of their homeland. Remember it, for when you have found this wood, you will have found them. There are six sides to the box, and so six members of this family were party to the plan. The two hinges of gold were the two well-paid men who did the deed, and the golden oakleaf is a countryman of yours who concealed it. He is a countryman because the oak is a tree of your homeland, but we see that the wood of the box is not oak, and so your brother is not in England, effendi.

"The apple is your brother as he was, young and perfect, yet green and not mature. The rusty hook tells us that he was taken at sea, but there is no line in the hook, and so you shall learn nothing by this fact.

"The naked woman is one whom you shall soon meet. She is wealthy and passionate, yet she is also capricious and she will toy with you. She will offer you riches, and you will reject them. She will offer you love, and you will refuse it. In time, she will face a great trouble, and you will aid her. Only then can you win her confidence.

"Your brother is in the keeping of a great lord, far beyond your station. His words roll about the sky, and lesser lords tremble. Only through the woman can you get close enough to recover your brother. The wind smacks of intrigue and deceit. The box was old, effendi, and so your brother's abduction is part of a plan that has been years in the making.

"If you follow my words, you will win your brother, effendi. You will find that he is less than once he was, and yet more. The youthful flesh of the green apple is gone, but his seed is golden. However, the great lord and his minions will snatch your brother away again. If you would regain him, you must arm yourself with knowledge, and be prepared to speak with a clear mind and with great wisdom.

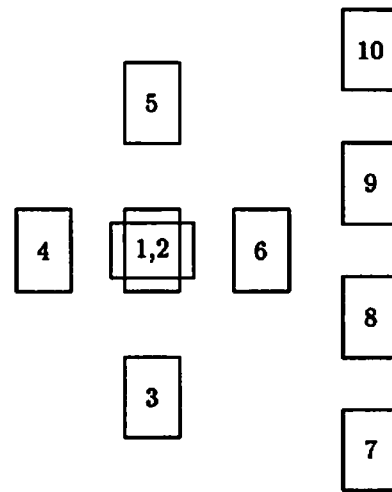
"Of my own wisdom, I have no more to give you. Allah preserve you effendi, for we shall not meet again in this life."

The Celtic Cross

The Elemental pattern (or *spread*) is simple and straightforward, but you can also use more traditional tarot spreads. The most popular spread is known as the Celtic Cross. It gives you more information, and so it's best used when you want to generate a lot of

story from a single prophecy. The Celtic Cross spread also works with any deck, but is most commonly used with the Rider/A.E. Waite deck. For simplicity, I'll stick to using the Elemental deck in my examples.

In the Celtic Cross spread, ten cards are laid out in the following pattern:



The first card is placed vertically, and the second card crosses it; the other cards are arrayed around the center as shown. The meanings of the card positions are as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Question | 6 Near future |
| 2 Influence | 7 The querent's attitude |
| 3 Basis of the question | 8 Environmental effects |
| 4 Recent past | 9 Pros & Cons |
| 5 Present | 10 Outcome |

Example

Sir Tathal is an Arthurian knight who serves an old holy-woman in Cirencester. As an orphan, he was raised by the holy-woman who is both his family and his liege. Because of his profound loyalty to her, Tathal is often flat-broke and without even a horse to bear him. Sir Tathal is a clever tactician and a fearsome foot-fighter with his two-handed maul. He looks fierce and cunning, but is actually very staid and homey. He loves arguing pointlessly about religion with his liege, and cannot conceive of life without her.

But his liege is getting old, and spends more and more time in Cirencester. Of late, she is subject to uncontrollable coughing fits, and Tathal is concerned that she may die soon. He has never known any other family or liege but the old woman; Tathal fears for his future.

One day, as he is traveling alone on an errand to St. Albans, he meets an old crone. For one bezant she

offers to tell him his fortune, and Sir Tathal accepts. The bent and wizened lady produces a dark, polished bowl of red wood from her possessions and fills it with still water from a shady pool. She hitches up her rags, sits on a lichenous rock and breathes steam onto the bowl of water. Through the steam, she peers at Sir Tathal. His question is this: "Five Winters hence, what liege shall I serve?"

From the Elemental deck (which I posted previously), we draw ten cards and lay them out in the pattern shown. The purpose of the pattern is to help you remember what each position means. It also adds to the mood. Here are the cards that I drew...

1	Virgin	Receptivity
2	5 Fire: Furnace	Stimulation/Discontent
3	Mother of Air	Career Minded/Intriguer
4	2 Air: Zephyr	Discussion/Impasse
5	10 Fire: Flare	Passion/Revenge
6	10 Earth: Desert	Change/Loss
7	Hanged Man	Vulnerability
8	Mother of Fire	Business Minded/Liberator
9	Judgement	Forgiveness
10	Daughter of Fire	Organizer/Workaholic

And this is the reading:

The Question: Virgin

"You stand in fear of your future, Sir Tathal," the hag rasps. "You know that there will be change within five winters; you hope that all will be well, but you fear that it shall not. For now, you have neither the wisdom nor the strength to see to your own welfare."

The Influence: Furnace

"A powerful force is coming, and it shall do you no good. The change that you fear will be harsh, and it will take valor and courage to face it."

The Basis: Mother of Air

"There is intrigue here. One with ambition seeks to separate you from your liege. While you are naive and passive, your enemy will likely succeed."

The Recent Past: Zephyr

"The message that you bear to St. Albans contains news of importance to one who can help. Yet that one shall not act in time."

The Present: Flare

"Even as we speak, Sir Tathal, your enemies have enacted their revenge. Violence has been done that cannot be revoked."

The Future: Desert

"Alas for you, sir knight! That which you most fear will come to pass. You will lose liege, family and home."

Attitude: The Hanged Man

"You will seek to redress the wrongs that have been done with no thought for yourself. You fear loneliness far more than your own death."

Environment: Mother of Fire

"A woman of power will try and use you in this. She is cunning and bold; beware lest you serve her greed instead of your heart."

Pro's and Con's: Judgement

"You will have the chance to visit justice upon those who have wronged you and your liege; your future will depend upon the forgiveness that is in your heart. If you can show mercy, then from this calamity you will triumph. Yet if you seek vengeance, your suffering will increase."

Outcome: Daughter of Fire

"For the enemy of your liege has a daughter. She has the passion of her mother, but also that kindness and sensitivity which belongs to the best of maidens. If you cause harm to her mother, the damsel will work tirelessly to your downfall; but if you show mercy, her heart will reach out to you. She will work to restore order from the chaos that her mother has made, and she will become your liege."

With that, the old crone empties her bowl and limps off into the forest. His face ashen, Sir Tathal stares after her, not knowing whether her prophecy is demon-spawned lies or mystic truth.

Discussion

What makes these methods better than the usual systems of Twenty Questions and Pokey Little Rhymes?

- The usual systems tend to bind players and the GM to pre-determined plot ideas. This system builds story ideas for both the players and GM, and so it offers more flexibility for story development. Thus, the players and the GM are less likely to feel "forced".
- The interactive nature of this system allows players and GMs to swap story ideas without ever leaving the realm of the story-world. This greatly enriches the possibilities for future play without hurting the mood of the game being run.

- By the nature of their development, the prophecies tend to come out sounding enigmatic and mysterious. This is very much in keeping with the prophecies that you find in literature.
- Because the players interact during the prophecy's development, they are more likely to remember the prophecy, and hence will be more likely to use it in deciding what to do next. Pokey Rhymes are quickly forgotten, but interactive stories are remembered much more easily.
- The prophecies are great for ambience. The mood can last for many sessions, and the use of pictures saves the GM from having to work too hard on the narrative.
- Because the prophecy is created only a bit at a time, and because most of the images come from the player or from the tarot deck, the GM doesn't have to be brilliant at story improvisation or poetry. As a GM, you can do interesting, full prophecies on short (or no) notice, and not commit yourself to nonsense that you don't know how to run later.
- Use only as much detail as the story requires. A dream or vision about tomorrow's joust may not need as much detail as the loss of Sir Tathal's liege. If that is so, use a smaller spread, such as the Elemental spread that I mentioned earlier. In some cases, a single card can be sufficient. Eg. "2 of Earth: Plant. Keep your lance-point away from the earth, or you will be undone."
- Make sure that the questions in your spread are pertinent to the prophecy; they should be aimed at answering *how* and *why* questions, rather than *who* and *which*. The *who* and *which* should come from your interpretation, rather than from any particular position in the spread.
- Keep your mind open. *Don't* do a tarot reading if you already know what you want; it'll likely produce a conflicting result that will confuse you. The best time to use it is when you've got lots of half-baked ideas but nothing coherent.
- When you read a spread, start with lots of little, unconnected observations; then draw them together toward the end. Don't look for one immediate, obvious answer. In the Elemental spread, I often keep the last card face-down until I have drawn all the observations that I can from earlier cards. In the Celtic Cross spread, I keep cards 9 and 10 face-down for the same reason. This is also good for suspense value.

Further Suggestions

For roleplaying, there are some principles to follow that will help you produce a good prophecy:

- Make it of personal relevance to the characters concerned. Tie it in to their motives and their lives to date.
- Try not to mention names. Let the players work out who is referred to. The greedy, intriguing woman of Tathal's prophecy *might* be Morgan le Fay or might be someone else. Let later events determine this. That way, if you want to change things to suit the prophecy, you aren't stuck.
- *Never* tell the players "you shall do this"; instead, talk about the consequences of various actions, so that they get some freedom of choice. That also gives *you* freedom to work around the PCs' actions if they do something unexpected.
- Tie your prophecy into as many current story elements as possible, and provide reasons for why the prophecy will go a certain way. The more you do this, the less arbitrary it will seem. The more you can make the players believe in the prophecy, the more that they will work to make it come true.
- Be prepared to look for non-obvious interpretations of the cards. For instance, in card 10 of the Celtic Cross example, I noticed that Daughter of Fire was in the same suit as Mother of Fire. Therefore, the mother had a daughter. I also chose to interpret "organizer/workaholic" as a person who would either re-construct Tathal's life from the carnage or work incessantly for his downfall. These interpretation are consistent with the cards, but needn't be obvious.
- Make sure that you tie everything into the original question. Don't let your free-association run away too far.
- Be prepared to re-work some of your interpretations if new ideas come to light; sometimes you need to do this to make things fit. This is true both for the reading and for the story that comes from it. For instance, the Daughter of Fire mentioned above could be a real daughter living with the mother, but she could also be adopted, or exiled, or even some stranger who inherits the Mother's wealth. It's useful to keep

these things in mind if Tathal accidentally kills or alienates the NPC that you have created to fulfill the prophecy.

- A good prophecy is a story-contract between you and your players. If you use prophecies to walk all over your players, or if you break the terms of the prophecy, then the players will stop trusting you and get bored with your crystal ball-gazing. So write your prophecy down (as well as your ideas for making story out of it), and after you have run the story, make sure that your players understand how each element of the prophecy came true. Ideally, at least half of the way the prophecy works out should come from player contributions. If this is not happening, it means that you aren't giving your players enough freedom.

Final Comments

So far, I've discussed a method for creating improvised prophecies, and how to turn them into story. In concluding, I'd like to make some observations about how to integrate this method into effective play.

I've found prophecies to be especially useful during the early days of a PC's development. They help give a direction and purpose for the PC, and if you do it flexibly enough, it doesn't overconstrain the developing personality. If Tathal were a new PC, you could use his prophecy to direct some solo play before introducing him to other PCs. You could fulfill some of the prophecy then, and leave other bits hanging for later use.

The dream part of the prophecy usually takes about half an hour of intensive play with a single PC. Usually, the other players in the group are happy to watch this develop, but it's possible that some players will find the Fruedian gymnastics boring. So it's normally best to run prophecies toward the end of a game session. That also saves you from having to interpret the prophecy on the spot, and it forms a nice breaking point for the session. Your interpretation often benefits from a good night's sleep, too.

Prophecies are a lot of fun, but it's possible to overdo them. Running multiple prophecies concurrently for the same group of PCs is a recipe for disaster — there's simply too much to keep track of.

Frivolous use of prophesying devalues it and wears out the GM. To discourage its over-use, my NPC prophets normally impress upon the PCs how dangerous prophesying is. Firstly, because the dream-world is a dangerous place and it's easy to get lost, or to meet something *nasty* that may dog your footsteps all your days. Secondly, these prophecies

are *always* supposed to come true. Prophets often warn that not everyone has the courage or wisdom to use prophetic knowledge wisely.

In play terms, the prophetic system I've described is a bit like a credit-card: you trade off some immediate satisfaction against an undertaking to pay up later in terms of story. It's a mature tool to help direct stories improvised by the whole group. It *isn't* suitable for providing plot short-cuts for lazy players. As with credit-cards, players looking for cheap gratification from this method are liable to get in over their heads.

"Isn't it strange? The same people who laugh at gypsy fortune-tellers take economists seriously."

— Cincinnati Enquirer

"Looking into the cakes is like looking into the future. Until you've tasted it, what do you really know? And by then, it's too late."

— Merlin (Excalibur)

Fantasy Races

Jim Vassilakos

Here's a compilation of PC & NPC races from Jim's World of Divlantia. Most of them have been pirated from various sources (AD&D, Talislanta, Palladium, etc ...). Use them with caution unless you (like Jim) don't mind throwing game-balance out the window just to see what happens.

Overview

Humans: Sidurhi, Norhin, Latacian, Auduin, Sandran, Woses.

Elves: Faeria, Astari, Sindai, Laiquendi, Quenya, Sylvan, Vale, Grugach, Teleri, Mirin, Aevia, Sawila, Ariane, Drua, Drow, Hisilomea, Muzgash.

Dwarves: Khazad, Durin, Modsogner, Nibelung, Emynaugrim, Aghar, Duergar, Derro, Pech, Azer.

Halfings: Harfoots, Fallohides, Stoors, Hairfeets, Tallfellows, Stouts.

Gnomes: Gnomes, Gnomekin, Svirfneblin, Weirdling.

Goblins: Goblin, Gremlin, Kobold, Kappa, Norker, Tasloi, Urd, Xvart.

Jinxkins: Jermlaine, Mite, Snyad.

Salamen: Firenewt, Eandroth.

Sprites: Atomie, Booka, Brownie, Buckawn, Dwarvling, Forlarren, Gelledain, Grig, Killmoulis, Kored, Leprechaun, Pixie, Quickling, Sprite.

Six Races of Men

1. Sidurhi: People of the South Bay

The Sidurhi are a race of sea travelers and merchants, their port settlements dotting the Bay of Divland from the mouth to its tributaries. They have tan or olive brown skin, dark brown or black eyes, dark hair and typically range in height from 5'6" to 6'3".

2. Norhin

The Norhin are an alliance of four barbarian clans just east of the vicinity of Alderhaven. They have fair skin, blue or green eyes, blond or red hair, and typically range in height from 6' to 7'.

3. Latacian

The Latacians are a fair skinned, brown eyed folk from the Westlands who founded Palatine and her sister states. Their hair color commonly varies from black to light brown, and they typically range in height from 5'6" to 6'3".

4. Auduin: The Easterlings, Forsaken People

The Auduin, direct descendants of now dead Anduin Empire of the Sun, are a broad shouldered warrior race from the Wilderlands and the lands east of the tall HellFire peaks. Nomadic by nature, they are feared for their ruthless and fierce disposition but are respected for surviving amidst the turmoil of the Wilderlands. The Auduin are tan skinned with black eyes and black hair and typically range in height from 5'9" to 6'6".

5. Sandran: The Dark folk

The Sandran live in the great desert of the south midlands and most notably in the Nwy river valley and Nubian Empire. They are a fierce race, second only to the Auduin in the art of warfare, yet their civilization is perhaps the most socially and technologically advanced on the face of Divlantia. They have dark skin ranging from milky brown to jet black, black eyes and hair, and they typically range in height from 5'3" to 6'3".

6. Woses: The Wilderlanders

The Woses live in the north and east fringes of the Wilderlands. They are a primitive people who run naked in the woodlands, where they are invisible among the trees. They are somewhat short with their stumpy legs and hunched-over backs, however, they have very thick arms and are uncommonly strong though weather-worn. Some tribes still fight the Drua, believing the

war of the races to still continue, however, most desire no part in the affairs of men or elves. They have ruddy brown skin and brown eyes and wear their dark hair braided and their arms tattooed to declare their tribal allegiance and status. They average 5'3" to 5'9".

Seventeen Races of Elves

1. Faeria: True Elves

According to legend, these elves were the direct descendants of the Gods and are the ancestors of all other elves. Neither sleeping nor aging beyond adulthood, they are spirits without any single form, yet they can assume the shape of any creature or none at all. They have great command over the language of creation which was passed down to them by the Gods of Light, and they share their thoughts with each other through a racial telepathy, hiding no secrets from others of their race which is like a closely-knit family. Since the age of the first sun, few have dwelled on the prime material, the race having hidden itself in its astral home world of Aelfland, and according to legend the conduit between Divlantia and Aelfland was severed long ago in fear that Demons might one day come to find it. However, there are tales of some who ventured to Divlantia via the treacherous Plane of the Dead.

2. Astari: Butterfly Elves

The Astari are a slender and delicate race with large translucent butterfly wings and fragile antennae. Their skin varies considerably in hue with shades of turquoise, violet, aquamarine, and rose being most common. They are natural empaths, able to read and project thoughts at will. To most other races they seem flighty and utterly irresponsible, but their spirits are said to be ancient, filled with the precious secrets of ages past. They are the elvish race most closely related to the Faeria and range in height from 4'6" to 5'.

3. Sindai: Grey Elves

The Sindai are elves of extreme intelligence and wisdom. Like all elves, they are very reclusive, living in isolated meadowlands hidden deep in lush mountain valleys. They have either silver hair and amber eyes or golden hair and violet eyes, the latter variety being the more closely related to the Astari, and thus to the Faeria. They range from 4'9" to 5'3" in height.

4. Laiquendi: Green Elves

Cousins to the Gelineidain, the Laiquendi are a diminutive race of forest dwellers. Child-like in appearance, their hair, eyes, and skin are all varying shades of green, and they dress in loin-cloths made of soft, woven mosses. They speak the secret language of the plant world and are able to influence all plant life. They are shy though playful creatures when at home in the woods. Taken away from this environment, they gradually wither and die of sadness. They range in height from 3'3" to 3'6".

5. Quenya: High Elves

The Quenya are a noble race of elves with pale white skin and bright blue-green eyes. They are slender in build with hair ranging in color from golden yellow to light brown. Being the least reclusive of all elvish races, they are the most likely to be found in close proximity with humans and the most likely to mate and nurture offspring with humans. Many are sailors, ship-builders, and explorers while their most noble are from the house of Annoc. Slightly tall for elves, they range in height from 5'2" to 5'6".

6. Sylvan: Wood Elves

The Sylvan are a race of forest dwellers, having tan skin and with yellow to coppery red hair. Their eyes are light brown, light green, and hazel. They are very reclusive and generally avoid contact with even other elven races. They range in height from 4'10" to 5'4".

7. Vale: Valley Elves

The Vale are as tall as many humans and thin with distinctive though somewhat blunt elven features. Other elves shun them, and Vale dislike associating with any races except gnomekind which they tolerate. They have blond hair and blue-green eyes and are typically neutral to chaotic-neutral in alignment. They use cooshee (elven dogs) as guard animals and, being somewhat nomadic, are found in family groups of ten to forty individuals. They range 5'3" to 5'9" in height.

8. Grugach: Wild Elves

The Grugach are akin to the Wood Elves, but are smaller, thinner, and fairer than their Sylvan cousins. They have broad shoulders and greater strength than most elves and are excellent trappers, but they are completely xenophobic, distrusting even other sorts of elves. They range 4'4" to 4'8" in height.

9. Teleri: Sea Elves

The Teleri are aquatic sea elves. Found almost exclusively in heavy kelp forests of quiet coastal waters, they are friends of dolphins. They have greenish-silver skin, blue-green hair, and gill slits on their throats. They range 4'8" to 5'2" in height.

10. Mirin: Ice (Blue) Elves

The Mirin are a race of tall, blue-skinned, elves who dwell in the northern icy wastes. They live in majestic ice castles and have a highly developed culture in which they practice an art known as melding or soul-touching. They are entirely immune to cold and range from 4'8" to 5'6" in height.

11. Aevia: Winged Elves

The Aevia, with their excellent endurance, are the only Elven race capable of flying over great distances for long durations. They have pale skin and large powerful wings often blue or purple in color. Their claws are razor sharp, capable of rending flesh from bone at a moment's notice, and they are capable of using a psionic mind-blast which causes a stunning pain in their prey. They are friends of giant eagles, and often share mountain habitats with the birds, commonly living in mountain caves, nurturing their eggs, and protecting their young. Tall for elves, they range some 5'2" to 5'8" in height.

12. Sawila: Feathered Elves

The Sawila are a peaceful race of albino elves, who in lieu of hair, sport bright feathery plumes. Their skin is nearly translucent and their eyes are the color of clear crystal. Their songs and dances have the ability to affect weather, tides, winds, and various sea creatures. They range in height from 4'4" to 5'.

13. Ariane: Dark Elves

The Ariane, or Dark Elves, are the ancestors of both the Drua and the Drow which have inherited the Ariane's black skin which is like smoothly polished onyx and their long snowy white hair. The Ariane are a race of very few individuals who have hidden behind long hoods in fear of being mistaken as one of the evil Drow. They have a racial religion, more extreme than the Sylvan, which treats all things in nature as living, sentient organisms. They have the ability to commune with anything in nature, and they value experience and knowledge above all other

things. They average in height between 4'8" and 5'2".

14. Drua: Lost Elves

The Drua are an offshoot of the Ariane which, after the wars of the races, went into seclusion in the deep wilderness rather than leaving the world of light as did their cousins, the Drow. They can manipulate their feet just as easily as their hands, though both are clawed with razor sharp nails. In temperament, they are very withdrawn, often seeming lost in thought. They have psychic links with each other and can send messages to each other at will. Their eyes are steel grey in color with silver traces along their irises, and they are somewhat tall and lanky for elves, ranging from 5'4" to 5'10" in height.

15. Drow: Black Elves

The Drow dwell in dark labyrinthine caverns in DeepEarth where they have built a complex and powerful maternal-based society, mining adamantite and working their black arts. They are highly intelligent and ambi-dexterous and are probably capable of taking back the surface world from their cousins who defeated them in the wars of the races. They shun sunlight, however, and will venture forth onto the surface only on the cloudiest, gloomiest days. Direct sunlight stings their skin, causing one point of damage per minute of exposure. They average in height between 4'10" and 5'2".

16. Hisilomea: Twilight Elves

The Hisilomeans are a race of warrior elves, sworn to protect their greater brethren, the Faeria, Astari, and the Sindai, and in particular, to preserve and defend the great elven city of Eldamar (or Elvenhome), which rests in the depths of the Mirthwood and is also called the "Invisible City of Spirits" by humans. The Hisilomeans are most closely related to the peace-loving Sindai (Grey Elves) and are known among humans as the "People of the Mist," the implicit association to the ultra-reclusive Nibelung (a family of dwarves) both intentional and accurate. Just as the Hisilomeans guard Eldamar, so also are they charged with the defense of its greatest treasure, the Well of Souls, from which the souls of mortals are brought into the world.

While many a sage might argue that the Hisilomeans, for all their martial skills, are as peace-loving as their cousins, no doubt should exist as to their ferocity and seemingly venomous

rage, for not only are the Hisilomeans sworn to defend, but when life's lost and damage done, they are sworn to avenge. This dichotomous outlook has merged the naturally chaotic-good spirit of the Hisilomean within a rigid, honor-bound, caste system where rules must be adhered to without exception and where vengeance must be acknowledged without the presence of hateful emotions. While the races' true spirit is stifled, they find release within the glory and bloodshed of battle.

Like the Drow, the Hisilomean race is matriarchal, however, that is due more to genetics than discrimination for there are no Hisilomea males. When mating with any elf, a female offspring will be Hisilomea and a male offspring will be of the other race. When mating with humans, half-Hisilomeans (of either sex) will result, but the incidence of such unions are very low.

The skin pigmentation of Hisilomeans is somewhat darker than that of grey elves, but hair and eye colors are similar (silver with amber or gold with violet). Hisilomeans range in height from 5' to 5'6".

17. Muzgash: Fallen Elves

Known also as Orcs, these vile creatures are the descendants of elves who were captured and magically twisted by the hand of Morgoth, a powerful and ancient demon-lord. They have dirty-grey or brownish-green skin and large amber eyes. Their hair, if any, tends to grow in stringy black patches. They range in height from 4'10" to 5'4".

Ten Races of Dwarves

1. Khazad: Mountain Dwarves

The Khazad are the most ancient and noble race of dwarves. They are a stubborn, indomitable race, persistent in labor and hardship, a race of deep-delving miners and masons, metal-workers and the most wondrous stone-masons, and a fiercely proud and warring people. They are stocky and strong and have coarse, ruddy brown skin and long dark beards, thick and frothy with homemade ale. But they are also a smallish folk, though tallest among their cousins, ranging some 4'6" to 5' in height. Their language, Khuzdul, was once jealously guarded, but is now well-known.

Among the Khazad, there were seven families, though only three survive to this day, those being of Ironstaff (of the North), Belegost (of the

East), and Nogrod (of the South), and only the House of Nogrod still stands. Originally, the Divlanti Khazad came from the lost Dwarven home of Khazad-dum which was ruled by the First Father, King Durin I or Durin the Deathless after Ziusudra's voyage. Today that home is called Moria and is said to lie far beneath the Eastern Mountains somewhere beside the Shallow Lands.

2. Durin

The Durin are named after the First Father and are the smiths of magical weapons, principally axes and swords. They are slightly smaller than Mountain Dwarves, ranging 4'3" to 4'9" in height, and their skin has a deep bronze hue. Their eyes are deep golden orbs with a far seeing quality. Many are withdrawn or morose, but they will honor any commitment even unto death.

3. Modsogner

The Modsogner have a somewhat pale appearance except for their shiny pink cheeks and bright eyes. They are the makers of non-lethal magical items, and compare their work as the better half of dwarven crafts. They are a happy folk in their dens but are extremely reclusive, even to the point of dropping everything to escape the attention of non-dwarves. They are 4' to 4'6" in height and typically overweight.

4. Nibelung: Children of the Mist

The Nibelung are the most reclusive and probably the most innately magical race of dwarves. They are very pale in complexion and make their dens under the ground in the dense of forests, sometimes being seen in a morning fog. They speak in high-pitched voices and run away as soon as encountered, apparently wishing to play no part in worldly affairs. Popular rumor has it that they hoard magic items and stolen gold, and some legends say that they occasionally inhabit cities, polymorphed as rats or birds, carrying the souls of newborns nested within twigs or specks of food. The Nibelung average 3'6" to 4' in height.

5. Emyrnaugrim: Hill Dwarves

The Emyrnaugrim are much friendlier than their mountain cousins, as many live on the surface world in towns and villages so that they interact with other races frequently and readily accept the friendship of strangers while working in local mines and quarries alongside humans. They

have a pale complexion with brown, black, or grey hair, and most range in height from 4'3" to 4'9".

6. Aghar: Gully Dwarves

Gully Dwarves are a highly individualistic race, finding comfort in a solitary lifestyle with occasional tendencies toward evil. They are considered rouges of the dwarven race and are viewed with much suspicion by other races. They have tan complexions and range in height from 4' to 4'6".

7. Duergar: Gray Dwarves

The Duergar are a race of evil dwarves, malicious in the extreme. They live deep beneath the surface world and cannot bear direct sunlight. They appear as emaciated, evil-visaged dwarves with dark grey skin and glowing red eyes. They range in height from 4' to 4'9".

8. Derro

The Derro are a degenerate race of dwarves who inhabit the subterranean realms of the Under-Earth. They hate any light and suffer from nausea in sunlight, however, they occasionally venture upon the surface world at night to kidnap humans and other races for their slave trade. Their hair is pale tan or yellow and their skin is white with a light bluish undertone. Their eyes are large luminescent spheres, and they range in height from 3'9" to 4'3".

9. Pech

The Pech are a spindly species of dwarf, often disassociated from the elder race due to their innate magical ability. Their thin bodies with long arms and legs and broad hands and feet are surprisingly strong and well adapted to the trade of stone masonry, their very flesh reported to be nearly as hard as granite rock. The Pech are basically a good species, though rather reclusive and often apathetic to the needs of other creatures. They hate bright light and have the phobia of open spaces characteristic of many of the subterranean races. Their skin is pale yellow and hair either red or rusty. Their eyes are large and pupiless, and they typically range in height from 3'9" to 4'3".

10. Azer

The Azer, also known as the Fire Dwarves, inhabit earth nodules within the elemental plane of fire at the pleasure of their legendary King,

Amaimon. Perhaps the strangest of all the dwarven races, their skin is like molten brass and their hair and beard are composed of flame. They are an unfriendly and laconic race who share the dwarven capacity for heartless greed, however their word of honor is absolute and their trust, even to newcomers who are yet unproven, is rarely denied. The Azer range in height from 4'6" to 5'.

Six Races of Halflings

1. Harfoots

The Harfoots are the second most numerous of hobbit strains. They have nut brown skin and dark shaggy hair. Most enjoy the company of dwarves. They measure 2'6 to 3' in height.

2. Fallohides

The Fallohides are the least numerous of hobbit strains, being taller, thinner, and of fairer skin than other halflings. They are the most adventurous and playful of their kin, preferring the company of elves. They have hazel eyes and sandy brown hair and range in height from 3'3" to 3'9".

3. Stoors

The Stoors are the bulkiest of the hobbit races. They have dirty brown skin, and many grow beards. Their hair is dark and curly and often unkept, and at meals they are often gluttons even by hobbit standards. Unlike other hobbits, they wear boots and other footwear. They range in height from 3' to 3'6".

4. Hairfeets

The Hairfeets are the most numerous of hobbits. They have tan skin and dark hair, and like most hobbits they are an unassuming, conservative people who burrow their homes in the hallows of small hills, cheerful of countenance and proud of their heritage. They range in height from 2'9" to 3'3".

5. Tallfellows

The Tallfellows, as their name suggests, are the tallest of the halfling races, ranging from 3'6" to 4' in height. They have the fairest skin and blondest hair of hobbits, but are somewhat more serious than the Fallohides, though they also enjoy the company of elves.

6. Stouts

The Stouts are the smallest of halflings measuring only 2'3" to 2'9" in height. They have ruddy complexions with brown hair and eyes. They are fond of smoking pipe-weed and being lazy, and though hospitable, they tend to enjoy their private quietude more seriously than any of the other hobbit strains.

Four Races of Gnomes

1. Gnomes

Gnomes are cousins of dwarves and often live upon earthen burrows or inside rocky hill formations. They have woody to grayish brown skin color with white hair and grey-blue to bright blue eyes. They range in height from 3' to 3'6".

2. Gnomekin

The Gnomekin are a brown-skinned race of small humanoids native to dark UnderEarth Lairs. Despite their small stature, they are extremely tough and durable and can survive falls of up to forty feet without any apparent harm. They are strong and incredibly resilient, so that non-magical poisons do not affect them. They possess extraordinary dexterity, so that they can climb sheer walls with ease and they have keen hearing so that they can detect approach of creatures by pressing an ear to the ground and listening intently for only a moment.

Gnomekin can see clearly even in pitch darkness and possess infravision as well, however, bright light causes them pain so that they must wear fine cusps of red colored crystal over their eyes during surface excursions. They are an endearing folk with childlike features and large, green, luminescent eyes and a mane of soft black fur which turns white with age. They average in height from 2'10" to 3'6".

3. Svirfneblin: Deep Gnomes

Svirfneblin dwell in the deepest recesses of the UnderEarth mining gems and mineral veins. They are gnarled and very muscular, and their skin color is medium brown to brownish gray. They have grey eyes and tend to be bald of hair. They range in height from 2'9" to 3'3".

4. Weirdlings: Wish Gnomes

Weirdlings are an eccentric offshoot of gnome characterized by a life span that is not limited in years so much as in wishes, thirteen to be exact. They are scavenging thieves by trade, pilfering

various items of little consequence from travelers during the night, their shriveled yellow skin and black beady eyes bespeaking poorly of their bold courage and adventuresome spirit. Weirdlings range in height from 2' to 3'.

Eight Races of Goblins

1. Goblin

Goblins are a surprisingly prolific race with a variety of viable offshoots. Combining their well known fondness for torture with an economy based on enslavement, the goblin social code seems to be one of might makes right. Goblins range from yellow to dull orange to brick red in skin color, their eyes reddish to lemon yellow. They hate sunlight and like orcs live stunted life spans rarely stretching further than fifty years under even ideal conditions. Goblins range in height from 3'9" to 4'3".

2. Gremlin

Gremlins are perhaps the most innately magical form of Goblin, subject to the widest variety of mutations imaginable. They are notoriously chaotic in a rather demonic sense of the word, delighting in vandalism and killing as a matter of sport, and are adept at spying and eavesdropping, being both quick and elusive. Gremlins become invisible at will and have an innate telepathy. They can also detect magic by touching an object in question and have an uncanny talent for spotting magical portals and dimensional gates. They reproduce by the application of conservative amounts of water which form tumor-like egg sacks bearing new members of the species in a matter of minutes or even seconds. Most are greenish in color, many having iridescent, butterfly-like wings, and their tails and heads are often covered with rows of tiny, yellow, blue, or black spikes. Gremlins typically range in height from 1'6" to 3'.

3. Kobold

Like Goblins, Kobolds are generally found in dank, unlit caverns or dismal forests. Haters of sunlight, they delight in killing and torture. Unlike their cousins, their life spans stretch well over twice as long, and they often employ animals such as giant weasels or wild boar as guards. Interestingly, they are born via the shell, females accounting for a full 50% of the species. Kobolds have rusty brown to rusty black hides, no hair, and reddish eyes. Further, they have small horns

tan or white in color, useless for butting but seeming to serve some social purpose. They range in height from 2'6" to 3'6".

4. Kappa

Kappas, also known as bowl-heads or cap-heads, are a malicious form of water goblin, often confused in scholarly texts with a crustaceous creature known by the same name. What makes their species so fascinating is their peculiarly shaped skull, purposely designed either by evolution or sorcery to hold water in the absence of their natural environment. Gills at the bottom of this bowl leech air through the water so that a Kappa may survive on land so long as his bowl contains water, one head-full usually sustaining the creature an hour or more until it is drained in the job of keeping the external body surface wet. Kappas have green-blue skin and beady black eyes like a fish. They range in height from 3'9" to 4'3".

5. Norker

Norkers typically live in small nomadic communities which subsist within their environment by slave-raiding and mining. Their rusty brown hide, a form of exoskeleton, wears as their armor and three inch fangs serve as a secondary weapon. They range in height from 3'9" to 4'3".

6. Tasloi

Tasloi make their habitats in steamy tropical forests, typically living in tribal units of under a hundred individuals. Making their homes in the trees, they are slow and clumsy on the ground but abound with great dexterity in the branches high above using their long arms and legs and prehensile feet with great efficiency. Although omnivorous, the tasloi have a taste for human and elven flesh, normally attacking from above with nets, surprising their prey and then quickly retreating as soon as the enemy has regained its footing. Flat-headed, they are rather stupid, but their shy and malicious nature combines into a fearsome and effective hunting style, making them a stronger foe than they might otherwise represent. Tasloi have shiny green skin which is sparsely covered with coarse black hair. They range in height from 2' to 3'.

7. Urd

The Urd are an aggressive, winged relative of the kobold, making their lairs in subterranean caverns near the surface world where they live in ex-

tended family groups of several hundred individuals. They have short, ivory horns, red-rimmed eyes, and flattened noses like their cousins, however their extendable, leathery wings provide flight and their livelihood. They tend to fall victim to other avian carnivores and denizens of the UnderEarth, yet flesh out a sustenance quite well on the wide variety of foods provided by a mixture of subterranean and surface world diets.

8. Xvart

Xvarts live underground and in forest lands, often surviving in large tribes numbering among the hundreds. They rake out a living by raiding their neighbors, foraging, enslaving, and taking hostages for torture and ransom. They have bright blue skin and orange eyes and typically range in height from 2'9" to 3'3".

Three Races of Jinxkins

1. Jermlaine

Jermlaine, also known as bane-midges, tunnel out complex subterranean networks where they live in extended family groups, cohabiting with giant rats which they often utilize as steeds in battle. They are very quick, quiet, and are expert at remaining unseen. They are cowardly by nature, preferring to run from a fight unless it is obvious that they can overwhelm their enemies by the use of traps, pits, and snares, minimizing their own losses. They subsist by thieving, preferring to employ battle tactics only for trespassers. Their grayish-green skin is hairless, lumpy and ill-fitting, their muscles knotted and heads shaped as blunt, leathery cones. They range in height from 10" to 1'2".

2. Mite

Mites make their homes in narrow tunnel networks alongside and under larger subterranean corridors. They subsist by scavenging, often using trap doors, nets, and trip wires to ensnare lone wanderers who they then beat, strip, and leave bound at the mercy of passers-by. Their high-pitched, twittering voices convey only the most rudimentary information; thus, they do not share in any complex language. Their skin varies from light-grey to violet in color, and they typically stand 1'9" to 2'3" in height.

3. Snyad

Also known as Pestie, Snyads dwell in tunnel networks adjoining subterranean passages like their

cousins, the Jermlaine and Mite. They move silently, achieving surprise with an almost unsurpassed mastery and subsist by stealing small trinkets which they use for occasional barter. Although sharing the Mite "language", or rather lack thereof, they do cooperate well with their brethren toward the achievement of common goals.

Two Races of Salamen

1. Firenewt

The Firenewt live in volcanic regions, grouping together into war bands for the purpose of hunting and marauding their neighbors. They possess a limited fire breath and a high resistance to fire based attacks, often roasting their victims alive before feasting. Like Kobolds, they propagate by way of the shell. The firenewt's smooth, dry hide is mottled brown in color, darkest along the spine and fading to near white at the belly. They range in height from 4'6" to 5'.

2. Eandroth

The Eandroth live in desert regions, forming loosely bound, tribal societies. Able to survive without food or water for extended durations, they travel the sandy wastes on Silonar steeds, often hunting in war parties of two to four dozen individuals. The males outnumber females eight to one, taking part in semi-annual ritual combats in order to earn mating rights. Though commonly a childish and good natured people, they turn extremely aggressive during the mating periods, attacking with little or no provocation. After surviving fifty or so mating seasons, the Eandroth undergoes a mild metamorphosis. The males smooth hairless skin begins flaking away, exposing a darker mesodermic layer which wrinkles and tightens around thicker and more powerful muscles. Females, after surviving so many thirteen month gestations, become grossly fat; however, their mental faculties expand enormously, allowing them to assume leadership position in the tribe and learn a variety of psionic talents.

All Eandroth, regardless of age, have the psionic ability to generate heat points on fixed locations, a talent they often use for starting fires or rendering enemies unconscious by generating heat points within an opponent's skull. After the metamorphosis, an Eandroth may live for an addition three hundred years. Like their cousins, the Eandroth have mottled brown or khaki colored hides and range in height from 4'6" to 5'.

Fourteen Races of Sprites

1. Atomie

The Atomie are a nocturnal sprite encountered only in the most secluded forest glens. Dwelling in groups of up to a hundred members, they are architects of the woods, building comfortable dwellings in the hollow trunks of trees. Their long thin arms, legs, and fingers suit well their nimble and magical nature. Their heads are long, with narrow ears, and they range in height from 9" to 1'3".

2. Booka

Booka, also called attic-sprite, make their dwellings in the eaves and rooftops near chimneys, always doing housework while there is nobody awake to observe them. They are very quick and capable of a rather limited flight, often playing tricks upon evil creatures or causing accidents for individuals who offend them. Bookas have thin, almost emaciated bodies and range in height from 9" to 1'3".

3. Brownie

The Brownie are a friendly race of magical, woodland sprites, their strain of halfling blood lending a fondness for the simple life to an otherwise chaotic, spritely nature. They are natural craftfolk, making and repairing simple items with ease and have excellent senses and outdoor skills. Brownies range in height from 1'3" to 1'9".

4. Buckawn

The Buckawn are a race of magical, woodland demihumans. Less friendly and far trickier than the cousins, the Brownie, they use their superior senses to hide in foliage, surprising trespassers. They have dusky shaded skin and range in height from 2' to 2'6".

5. Dwarvling

Dwarvlings, often confused as members of the Dwarven or Goblin families, are malicious nau-gomorphs generally appearing as ugly, horned, gaudily-dressed dwarves. They are impervious to electricity and make capable spellcasters, often utilizing minor enchantments to earn favor with the powerful or wealthy. They range in height from 3' to 3'6".

6. Forlarren

The Forlarren are the offspring mix of nymph and devil, causing their existence to be a sort of

twisted limbo for which they, like the undead, seek eternal vengeance. However, upon killing an individual, the creature's better side often shows great remorse over the deed, offering survivors its services until next again its devil half resumes control. Forlarrens have the ability to heat metal, often employing this talent as an initial attack. They are ugly creatures with horns and cloven hoofs, their bent frames ranging in height from 4' to 5'.

7. Glinedain

The Glinedain, or Laiatani as they are also known, live in self-contained communities deep within rain forests. A peaceful and sensitive race, they cannot bring themselves to harm others but will employ plants in the defense of their homes. They speak the language of the plant world and are highly prized as horticulturists, but often wither and die of grief if stolen from their homes and exposed to unfamiliar environs. The Glinedain have hair, eyes, and skin all of varying shades of green, giving them a natural camouflage in forests. They range in height from 3' to 3'6".

8. Grig

The Grig are a race of magical, nocturnal sprites who live in sylvan woodlands playing and dancing beneath the moon with their cousins. Although shy of strangers, they are otherwise friendly and may entertain travelers with dance and music. Their legs are like that of a grasshopper's, allowing them to leap for long distances assisted by small, gauze-like wings in their descent. They range in height from 1'3" to 1'9".

9. Killmoulis

The Killmoulis prefer to dwell in large granaries, often inhabiting tunnels under the floors or in the shadows above dark rafters. They come out to feed only when it is quiet, often playing harmless tricks on workers and killing animals which guard foodstuffs. They have large heads relative to their thin bodies and emaciated limbs, using their trunk-like noses to draw in food. They communicate via telepathy and range in height from 9" to 1'.

10. Korred

Like many of their cousins, the Korred are a magical, dance-loving folk, however their immense strength sets them apart, allowing them to hurl boulders over great distances. Further, their contagious laughter is also used as a form of attack,

reducing their opponents to laughing idiots in the midst of combat. They are also stone artisans, much like the dwarves, except they employ magic in their tunneling with great effect. The Korred have cloven hooves and long, wispy hair and beards, standing to a height of 2'6" to 3'6".

11. Leprechaun

The Leprechaun are a reclusive and mischievous race of magical sprite, dwelling in fair green lands of lush rolling hills and quiet secluded dales. They utilize their magic to become invisible, create illusions, and polymorph objects, often employing these talents to steal items of interest from travelers. Their fondness for wine, however, is unequaled even among the dwarven races and can with care be used as a way to their horde of stolen treasure. Leprechauns typically range in height from 1'9" to 2'3".

12. Pixie

The Pixie are a form of magical sprite, making their dwelling in wooded areas. Normally invisible and highly mischievous, they are prone to harass trespassers via a multitude of magical talents. They range in height from 2'3" to 2'9".

13. Quickling

The Quickling are a malicious, slender, and extremely quick sprite race who's metabolisms have been accelerated beyond a natural pace. They are invisible when motionless in their natural surroundings of a dark forest and are seen only as a blur whilst in motion, making their capture extraordinarily difficult. Their lack of patience and stunted life spans make their training as spellcasters next to impossible, however, they are capable of certain innate magics inherent to their race. Quicklings stand 1'9" to 2'3" in height.

14. Sprite

The Sprite are a shy and reclusive race akin to the elves. Dwelling in remote meadows and wooded glens, they utilize their magical talents in combat only if previously attacked, preferring to stay hidden from trespassers by becoming invisible. Sprites range in height from 1'9" to 2'3".

"Forget about searching for the truth; settle for good fantasy."

Ranma Stuff

Niko Simonson

This article was inspired by Rumiko Takahashi's animated series Ranma ½. What the descriptions lack in accuracy, they make up for in inspiration value. Many of the items and maneuvers may not be appropriate for a serious campaign but are included to provide ideas for games such as Paranoia, Toon, and especially for Teenagers from Outer Space which was itself inspired/pirated from Urusei Yatsura, also created by Rumiko Takahashi. In short, use with caution.

Magical Stuff

The Pools of Jusenkyou

In a secluded valley, deep within a treacherous mountain range, one might have the misfortune of encountering the cursed pools of Jusenkyou. Within this valley, there are one hundred forty-four bodies of water. Numerous clusters of bamboo poles stick out from most of the pools. In each of these pools one or more creatures have died at some point in time.

Anyone who is unlucky enough to fall into a pool is cursed to assume the form of whatever drowned in the pool whenever he finds himself wet with cold or even luke warm water. Only scalding hot water can restore the unfortunate to normal. The individual retains his personality no matter what form, but means of communication might be limited. The second time someone falls into a pool, the new form will be permanent. Here are some victims of Jusenkyou:

- A cute, red-haired, adolescent girl. This is the antidote for female victims.
- A male. This is the as-yet undiscovered antidote for males.
- A small, black, pot-bellied pig.
- A giant panda bear.
- A white cat with lavender ears and tail.
- A white duck.
- A giant toad.

- A pterodactyl.
- A saber-toothed tiger.
- A buddhist monk. His holiness was such that anyone in this form becomes a complete pacifist. This is an exception to what was said about personality.
- A bear, snake, eagle, and bull. The resulting combination is a snake tailed, bear bodied, bull headed monstrosity with eagle wings that allow flight.

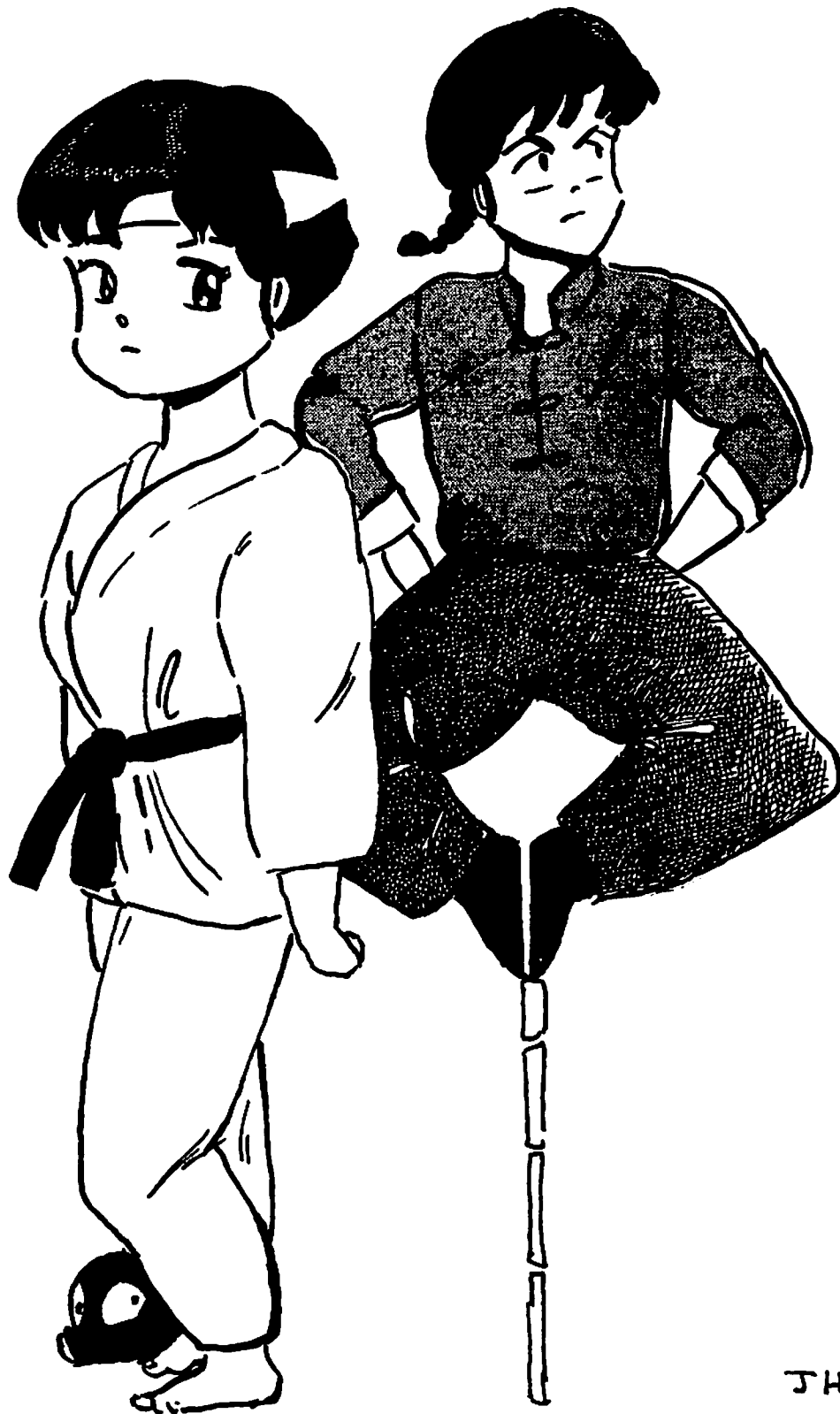
Miscellaneous: There is a guide who can lead people to these pools, but despite his best intentions, can never seem to completely inform his guests why the pools are dangerous in time to stop them from cursing themselves. There is also a committee which monitors the activities of the victims to keep them from using their powers in evil or obnoxious ways. People sometimes foolishly seek out the pools as a place to train or to duel. Perhaps the pools convey great powers to someone who can avoid being cursed during their training period.

Shampoo of Selective Amnesia

When applied to the head by one who is knowledgeable of the ways of shampoo, the victim will completely forget that one person in his life has ever existed. Furthermore, he will forget any subsequent meetings with that person after they take place. The applier of the shampoo may choose who is forgotten. Only another magical shampoo can remove this curse, unless something about the forgotten person is so memorable that demonstration of this quality can shock the victim to recovery.

Pendant of Bodily Correctness

Inside this pendant is medicine that can cure any subtle physical disturbance in the body. It will not remove curses like those of Jusenkyou or lycanthropy, for instance. It could negate an acupuncture curse or a quivering hand, though.



Robe of Spacious Concealment

This is a white, elegantly diagramed robe with long, spacious sleeves. The wearer can store any number of objects in the robe and pull them out from the sleeves. There is no limit to the dimensions of what may be concealed or removed. Note: while there are no problems with this item in a TFOS game, GM's of more serious campaigns might wish to make an encumbrance and volume limit or might wisely decide not to use this item at all.

Bottled Jusenkyou Water

Unlike many magical springs and fountains, the waters of Jusenkyou can be bottled, stored, and transported. Some unscrupulous people may use this cursed water to their own foul ends. However, often they are cursed themselves, due to the perilous origins of these potions.

Decanter of Endless Jusenkyou Water

A very dangerous magical item whose powers are self-explanatory.

Jusenkyou Powder

A packet of this powder can seemingly turn ordinary water into Jusenkyou water. However, this effect is temporary. The water will only work once to bathe people, and those who are cursed will only stay that way until they are bathed in hot water, while those who were apparently cured will be cursed again the moment they are doused in hot water. These packets are primarily the tool of unscrupulous con artists.

Three Vessels

There are three vases: one red, one blue, and one yellow. When placed together in a certain, dry, spring bed, the depression will fill with water that will remove the Jusenkyou curse, (unless the spring is out of order...in which case there may well be a sign in some obscure part of the pool).

The last time a search for these vessels was enacted, one was found hidden in a girls' locker room, another in a large booby-trapped fortress of two very hostile siblings, and the third at the end of a very roundabout trail. Each vessel contains a clue to the location of another, but to find the first, a map is required.

Genuine Jusenkyou Powder

This is just like regular Jusenkyou powder, except that the effect on the bather is permanent. This is, therefore, much harder to acquire and is usually unlabeled.

Cursed Pot Sticker

Anybody who eats one will suffer an uncontrollable urge to hug anyone in earshot who sneezes. This is a good magical item for winter. The primary ingredient is a type of hypnotic mushroom that may have other unusual effects.

Nanban Mirror

When a teardrop falls upon the surface of this mirror, the bearer and all those around will be instantly transported to the place and time that the bearer is thinking of. It is probably very rare that the bearer is actually thinking of the place and time that he thinks he is thinking of the moment the teardrop hits the surface, so it is up to the gamemaster not to tell the players what the mirror does, but just send them wherever he feels when a teardrop falls upon it.

Bracelet of Love

Upon this bracelet are three pearls: one white, one light blue, and one dark blue. These stones can be easily plucked off the bracelet. When someone swallows one of these pearls, that person will fall in love with the first person that he or she sets eyes upon who is of the opposite sex.

Sigil of Invincibility

When this potent character is inscribed in ink upon a person's stomach, that person will be unbeatable in combat for as long as that character is unmarred. The character cannot be defaced by any means short of the beneficiary contorting in such a way as to make it unrecognizable. In the mean time, no blow can land upon the possessor of the sigil, no matter how immobile he is, and none of his blows will miss. His strength will know no bounds for the purpose of breaking bonds as well.

The only drawback to this is that the sigil is in the form of a ridiculous-looking happy face that nobody could possibly take seriously. This magical character is not recommended for a bunch of hack-and-slashers, however, it's great for a TFOS game filled with image-conscious teenagers.

Red String

When this string is tied to two people's fingers, the two will immediately fall in love. Nine hours after it is tied for the first time, it will disappear. If it is still being worn, the love becomes eternal. It can be cut in the meantime, but must be attached at the end of that time. When the string is broken, the two victims will not have a clear memory of the events that occurred while it was worn.

Dragon String

This string of dragon's hair serves as a magical seal. One proven application is the prevention of hair growth when bound in the hair.

Censer of Exorcism

When a victim of possession inhales the fumes of the censer, the inhabiting spirit will be forced to leave the victim and assume a semi-corporeal form. The cursed forms of Jusenkyou victims are actually possessing spirits, but their personalities do not impose themselves upon the people that they inhabit. When freed, they could be completely different from their host and are quite likely to have many supernatural powers.

Bandage of Continual Lust

A person who accidentally wears this cursed bandage will immediately fall in lust with each and every member of the opposite sex of the same species that is met.

Tattoo of Weakness

This symbol is burnt upon the back of the victim, who will immediately become ineffectually weak. The victim will not notice this weakness until a task that requires any moderate application of strength is required. The victim will then spectacularly fail.

Miyamoto Musashi's Boken

This was originally the wooden practice sword of Miyamoto Musashi, the greatest swordsman in Japanese history. It is now infused with Musashi's soul. His ego is very strong, and it is quite likely that the wielder will be possessed by his will. When in possession of the body, Musashi will be able to put to use all of his legendary sword skill. The boken itself is incredibly hardy and can cut through anything.

Bakeneko Bell

This large bell can be used to summon the Bake Neko (Hell Cat). The Bake Neko is a giant (about the size of a large bull), ghostly, white cat with large, glowing, yellow eyes. It can assume a material form or become complete ethereal and invisible. In the latter form, it can possess people. The Bake Neko likes to endear itself to the possessor of the bell, is attracted to any sort of ringing bell, and lusts after cute females. It is quite easy to accidentally summon the Bake Neko by ringing the bell too much. The bell itself is about two feet wide, golden, and makes a loud tinkling noise.

The Tower of Go

The Tower of Go is a large, quite immobile pagoda with but a single floor which is constructed of giant, pure white, square tiles. In the center of this construction is a Go board and two bags filled with the playing pieces. The building itself is a giant Go board if anyone cares to notice. The ceiling is so far up that it cannot be perceived through the soft glow that permeates everything. Whenever a playing piece is placed upon the board, a correspondingly large boulder will drop from the ceiling and land at the appropriate place in the Tower. The boulder will be black or white depending upon the color of the playing piece. Destroying the board will wreck the tower catastrophically, which is probably not a good idea. Obviously, this is a takeoff on the standard chessboard traps.

Shadow Incense

When these pellets of incense are burnt, the vapors will animate the user's shadow and imbue it with sentience. One application is its use by martial artists to train against someone who is their absolute equal. The shadow form is solid for as long as there are light conditions that allow shadows. If such conditions cease, the shadow becomes completely incorporeal. When the incense runs out, the shadow returns to the user. Training against this shadow will allow the user to rapidly accumulate experience or skill in unarmed combat. However, there is a cumulative chance (5-10% per use) that the shadow will be imbued with the user's life force and become a sentient being. The user will then notice an increasing fatigue, without actually suffering a loss in strength or agility.

The shadow will usually stick around its possessor but may sometimes sneak away to fulfill its own goals when it thinks its possessor is not paying attention (and how often do people pay attention to their own shadows?). The shadow has the same motivations and goals as the possessor, but is more devious

and suffers far less in the way of inhibitions while pursuing them. One way to force the shadow to return is to soundly defeat it in unarmed combat.

Sleeping Gas Nikuman

These delicacies are dumplings filled with tasty food. However, they have a nasty tendency to explode in the would-be consumer's face, releasing sleeping gas.

Dragon Hair Soup

Soup made with dragon's hair can promote hair growth in males. A bald man can expect to gain a full head of hair. However, someone with hair normally will find that it will grow out at the alarming rate of about an inch a second. At this speed, his hair will be all gone in about two months! Fortunately, this process can be halted by the application of Dragon String.

Spirit Picture Scroll

The beautiful scene from one of these hanging tapestries is actually derived from the essence of an imprisoned spirit. The spirit can cause the picture to animate, providing great entertainment to viewers. It is kept in the picture by a spirit seal. If the seal is removed, the spirit will be free to leave. The spirit must be convinced, coerced, or tricked into returning, as the scrolls themselves are only containers and have no power over spirits.

Noxious Sauce

Once upon a time, a girl made a pot of okonomiyaki (pancake) sauce and buried it for ten years to become an incredible delicacy. Unfortunately, before the sauce was buried, a boy spilled it all over the ground. So as not to be caught, he hastily reconstructed the sauce from the ingredients that she was using.

Ten years later, the ruined sauce is so nauseating that its vapors can drive away the most fearsome of spirits and a mere taste can incapacitate the victim for a good week. Woe betide any who dare to consume pancakes coated with this!

Haunted Equipment of the New Gymnastics

These ribbons, balls, batons, and hoops are haunted by the ghosts of their original wielders, who will cause grief to any who handle the equipment without proper honor or respect. As with most New Gymnastics equipment, these are rigged to deliver an unpredictable variety of surprises to competitors.

Great Dragon of God

A fearsome-looking, mechanical, Chinese dragon that requires two strong operators and belches scorching fire. Music emanates from the belly of the dragon which is impossible not to dance to, thereby ruining most attempts at defense. Victims are usually so traumatized that they cannot remember what trashed them.

Soba of Strength

The imbiber of this very oniony noodle soup will become strong beyond all mortal limits. An unfortunate side effect is the production of whiskers upon female users. The strength and the whiskers may be removed by the ingestion of but a single, small radish.

Katana of the Perfect Human

Similar to the sword in the stone, this katana is buried in a rock in a temple courtyard. Only a perfect person can free it. The katana will grant its bearer three wishes so long as he or she is a perfect person. Unworthy people will find themselves attacked by the sword. The outcomes of wishes may not be exactly what the person expected, but he or she will wind up satisfied.

Weird Items

The following items may not be inherently magical, but they certainly are strange.

Spatula Shiriken

These small okonomiyaki spatulas can be worn on a bandoleer and used like shiriken.

Red Bamboo Umbrella

This umbrella, made of only bamboo and red cloth is incredibly heavy. Only an obscenely strong person could ever hope to lift it. In the hands of a skilled wielder, though, it can function as a sword or club, a razor-sharp boomerang, or, most incredibly, a parachute. Furthermore, if the bearer was unfortunate enough to be cursed by Jusenkyou water, it is a great way to keep the rain off.

Equipment of the New Gymnastics

New gymnastics martial arts requires that the competitors attack each other with anything save their bare limbs. To this end, practitioners have developed razor-sharp hoops, clubs that suddenly produce

spikes, balls filled with gunpowder, swords disguised as ropes, skimpy leotards that double as Robes of Spacious Concealment, and several other incredibly mean devices.

Black Rose Bouquet

A timed sleeping gas bomb is concealed in this Valentine treat.

Flour Bomb

This is an exploding package of flour that makes for a great distraction.

Giant Spatula

Besides making gigantic okonomiyaki, this can be a devastating weapon in the hands of a trained wielder. It is about the size of a greatsword.

Giant Ping Pong Balls

These one to ten foot diameter ping pong balls are favored by users of the Soba of Strength. Often they are hollow and can conceal as many surprises as New Gymnastics equipment. There are balls that explode, glue bombs, balls that launch chains, balls that shoot forks, and balls that hatch frogs, among other things.

Spells & Techniques

Here is a brief guide to some colorful martial arts skills and mystic spells that have been employed in the series.

Tenshin Amaguri Ken "Chestnut Fist"

This is an incredibly high speed attack where the attacker launches hundreds of blows so fast that they cannot be avoided. Although the individual blows are puny, the cumulative effect is the same as a normal martial arts strike. The technique can also be used to quickly retrieve many small items from a hazardous environment. Training for this technique may be accomplished by plucking chestnuts out of a fire without burning the hands, grabbing fish from a waterfall, catching goldfish with rice paper hoops, or plucking all the piranhas out of a tank by their tails before they can bite.

Bakusaitenketsu

By instinctively knowing the weak point in any object, the practitioner can punch his or her finger through it to cause the object to blow up. If the object is very big, a blast crater about ten yards in diameter will be formed. The technique does not apply to anything made of living matter, but works very well against things like robots, golems, or animated snowmen. The debris from the explosion can be quite devastating as well, but the practitioner has hardened his body to it through the harsh training required to learn the skill.

Training for this is accomplished by tying the student up and suspending him from a tree in the lotus position. Only one arm is free, and the hand is bound so that the index finger is pointed out. A boulder, attached to a large tree branch, is swung like a pendulum at the student. When the student can detonate the boulder with his finger before getting smashed, he has learned the bakusaitenketsu technique adequately.

Impenetrable Block

This is the counter to bakusaitenketsu. The master releases a hornets' nest upon the student. When the student can destroy every individual hornet before getting stung, he is then so good that no attack that is not directed by a skilled martial artist can get through his defense unless it is smaller than a hornet.

Acupressure Curse

Variations of the quivering palm and vital area techniques can cause the victim to become particularly sensitive to various substances and unable to receive any benefits from them, such as hot water.

Bon Dance of the Spirits

This martial arts maneuver can only be attempted by a trained ice skater. It is a beautiful spinning dance that whirls the victim around the skater and leaves him defenseless against the hundreds of blows being landed upon him. The skater must take several hours to reorient himself to his surroundings after the maneuver during which time he is completely oblivious to events around him, or even those which affect him.

Separation Merry-go-round

By grabbing an opponent and spinning incredibly fast, an ice skater/martial artist can throw his victim into a wall at an incredibly high speed. This works best against pair skating opponents who may be holding each other when picked up.

Odd Weapon Choices

Many characters in the series use a wide variety of unusual weapons in their martial arts. Among them are:

- A red bamboo umbrella.
- A belt.
- Sweatbands.
- A wooden sword.
- Gymnastics equipment.
- Large colorful batons.
- A small pipe.
- Chopsticks.
- A giant spatula.
- Spatula shiriken.

Mind Control Maneuver

By attacking certain acupressure spots, a martial artist can render his victim open to hypnotic suggestion.

Hiryuu Shoutenha

This maneuver can be used by any martial artist, no matter how weak they are in relation to their opponent. By dodging his enemies' blows and luring him into a spiraling dance, the artist can, at the completion of the maneuver direct all the his opponent's energy against him in a massive upward thrust of vaguely dragon-shaped energy. This is usually enough to send his enemy flying into the sky. If the opponent is very strong, it might actually create a tornado that affects all those around. The martial artist must be sure not to get hit before the maneuver is completed, though.

Ancient Saotome Special Arts

Not all martial artists are brave and honorable. These peculiar martial arts involve the cowardly dodging of various blows, halting opponents' attacks so as to be able to run away, luring people into complacency so as to be able to launch sneak attacks, and rendering enemies helpless so as to be able to spectacularly smash them (the Frog Run Over by Big Rig technique). These secret arts are absolutely honorless but sometimes quite handy.

Expansion Maneuver

The user of this power can transform himself into a giant idealized form that towers over surrounding buildings. An ideal way to battle gargantua, it does take quite a bit out of the user and may only be maintained for half an hour at most. The caster will then be completely exhausted. If the user loses his courage, he will also revert to normal size, because the change is powered by his will to fight.

Yakisoba Net

Skilled chefs can turn dough into hand-pulled noodles. This skill takes this a step further by rapidly producing an entangling stream of noodles from a pile of dough. The victim can be several feet away and will be completely entangled in the morass of noodles. The noodles are quite strong and the wielder of the snare can put the victim through quite a lot of grief.

Happo Dai Karin

This spell summons a lit firework of variable size into the caster's hand. It blows up about ten seconds later. Once in a while, an incredibly large, long-burning firework will be produced. These fireworks can be tossed a grenades and produce bright, colorful, and damaging explosions.

Shower of Rice

With a pair of chopsticks and a bowl of rice, the practitioner of this technique can send a hail of tiny grains of rice as fast as bullets into an enemy. Note that rice grains are smaller than hornets.

Neko Ken "Cat Fist"

This is the most powerful of all of the martial arts, but the correct training technique has been long lost. The user of Neko Ken has a perfect defense and offense by shredding anything around him with his hands and moving so quickly so as to be able to destroy any incoming attack.

Unfortunately, the only training available to learn this skill involves wrapping the unfortunate in cat nip and throwing him into a pit filled with wild cats. The primary result is that the victim acquires an incredible phobia with regard to cats. However, if he is scared beyond his wits by enough exposure to a cat, he will be able to use Neko Ken. While using Neko Ken, however, the practitioner thinks that he is a cat and can only be brought to normal by sleeping in the lap of an essentially non-threatening person.

Journal of Prince Durin Ironstaff of Darkholm

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The following text was found hidden within a secret compartment beneath the throne of Darkholm. It describes the conquest and reclamation of the ancient dwarven city as well providing a clue as to the subsequent and mysterious disappearance of its inhabitants. The original text was written in Dwarvish in the Prince's own hand, each entry apparently dated according to the Age of the Third Sun, covering a period from middle 887 to late 888.

11 Elysium 887: Melchizidek the Grey visits me at my family den at Greenshire. The Wizard seems vibrant on this meeting, and we sit out by the Turquoise River and watch the sunset, talking legends and smoking pipe weed. In the evening we eat beef stew and drink frothy ale as he jokes about all the ignoble halfling tendencies which I've supposedly acquired. Around midnight the high wizard finally gets down to business and proposes a quest to Darkholm. His offer is not totally unexpected, as I had heard rumors that he wished to meet and do battle with Sauris, the Black Dragon of the late Theodred, and the fellow wizard Reinold who Melchizidek refers to as "the remaining evil." It is strange, of course, to hear him speak out so strongly or to wish to do battle with dragons or wizards, for this is not Melchizidek's kind of work or usual temperament by any stretch of the clay. Even after the burning of Portown, Melchizidek was loath to intervene, preferring to pretend that the citizens had brought the dragon's fire upon themselves by capturing and executing its master. Yet he has me at his side, as to retake Darkholm and find the hidden horde of my ancestors would be my greatest dream come to life.

Several pages of journey preparations follow.

17 Nightfall 887: We leave from Port Leo in a sturdy vessel. The company settles down for the night after a great feast on the high seas.

A page of uneventful journey in stormy weather follows.

26 Nightfall 887: We reach coast with a break in the weather. Melchizidek says that Durbin lies several days to the east and that the quickest route now is north up the coast and then east by foot.

Several pages of journey through Bleakwood (as the dwarves call it) follow. There are several bands of orcs making their south-westerly migration through the woods which the company carefully avoids.

7 Deepwinter 887: We enter Darkholm directly from the base of Mt. Draco, the key of my ancestors opening the river gates just as the Book of Mazes predicted. Wisps of black smoke rise from the summit, and the ground rumbles sporadically with trepidation during the night.

8 Deepwinter 887: With the benefit of the maps, we are for some distance able to negotiate the sinister, watery labyrinth which defends Darkholm, however, a new problem arises. The strange, watery creatures which now inhabit the caves along the Maze River's banks seem to disapprove of our presence. One raft falls victim to fire, while others are set upon by Giant Sharks and Gars. My soldiers are not used to fighting on board rafts, and if it were not for Melchizidek, my guess is that we would have all been slaughtered or drowned. Juhdin, my cousin, argues for me to burn our craft and venture further on foot. Melchizidek's warns against this, however, saying that we would have to fight every step of our journey if not protected by the water way.

9 Deepwinter 887: We set camp in a deserted grotto to repair our remaining craft. We are now on the outskirts of the Naugarth, lands that are truly Dwarven, and sensing this, our opponents are too wary to follow directly. We set camp here, and several of the youngsters rest while my uncle Balock, my second in command, accompanies me to the Well of the Fire God, where we drop the fallen stars of Ariocho recovered by Tamlin in Balin's expedition, to awaken fiery Amaimon from his slumbers.

10 Deepwinter 887: Our prayers are answered as the waters begin to steam and then boil. Hours

later, the giant sharks and gar which awaited us in ambush now float dead upon the water's surface. We assemble the rafts and take the river downstream. The steaming rapids soon fold into the whirling conduit pool where we abandon our craft and climb along the hanging chains. We regroup beside the still boiling shores and begin marching onward, through the worm tunnels, taking special pains not to disturb the denizens here.

- 11 Deepwinter 887: Dim and Oin fall victim to an uncharted trap. Balin consults the maps furiously while we attempt to clear our scouts' remains for a proper burial. There is no mention of a major trap in this vicinity. Without our two best scouts to examine our path as we follow, Amarth offers to take point, but Balock refuses, arguing that we cannot risk our only assassin. He takes point himself.

- 12 Deepwinter 887: Lost Glimi, Sodder, and Froin to Goblin attacks today. We killed a score and retreated into the Great Hall, locking ourselves inside. Our party appears to have split in the confusion, and I have no idea as to my uncle Balock's safety nor to that of Melchizidek's.

Several pages of minor skirmishes follow.

- 17 Deepwinter 887: I saw Balock's head on a goblin spear today. It is not an image I shall soon forget. We met our enemy soon thereafter, and for the first time I feel that I know the hunger of a true warrior, to kill without remorse and without fear of dying. So terrible was my wrath, that I put the company at grave risk, continuing the battle long after we had won the right of passage and in jeopardy of meeting the goblin's reinforcements. Juhdin pulled me from the fray at the last moment, and I nearly killed him, so heedless was my anger. I will name him as my inheritor when we find the others now that my Uncle is dead.

- 19 Deepwinter 887: The company regroups today at the Shrine of Healing. Melchizidek is well, thank the gods, as is most of the company. I name Juhdin as my inheritor and second in command, and we have a long meeting with the wizard on our next course of action, now that we have gained entrance to the city. Melchizidek wishes to kill Sauris, the Black Dragon of Theodred, while Juhdin is less prepared to do battle with dragons and more inclined to sweep away the Goblins while we have the advantage of the

city. I decide to heed to wizard's council over Juhdin's arguments.

- 20 Deepwinter 887: It seems as if the goblins knew of our plans. Instead of preparing defenses as Juhdin predicted, they were waiting for us in the west stairwell, apparently as a front line of defense for Sauris. Our climb will be a difficult one indeed, and I am sending troops to circle around, however, it will be several weeks before we can mount an effective offensive.

Several pages of battle field logistics and heroic displays of stupidity follow.

- 27 Yawehn 887: Sauris is slain, but the evil wizard Reinold has escaped up the stairwell to the east tower. We made ready to follow, however, Melchizidek halted us, saying that magic alone would defeat magic. Battle weary, both myself and Juhdin agree.

- 1 Newrain 888: Melchizidek returns from dealing with Reinold and says, "Our enemies are conquered, let us return to our homes in victory." Nearly all the dwarves of our company refuse to leave, and we tell Melchizidek that we are already home. He makes ready his leave to the Tri Isles.

- 2 Newrain 888: After the feast, early in the morn, Melchizidek tells me that a great change has befallen him, and no longer should I address him as Melchizidek the Grey. I ask him what evil magic has befallen, yet he says that the magic itself is not evil but has befallen by a one who is evil. Of this, he refuses to speak more, except to say that soon he will become Melchizidek the True. Our conversation turns to the dwarves of whom I am now prince. He warns that as the newly enthroned prince, I must protect my people, that the evil which has been conquered still lingers within the mountain and that we are better to avoid it. He warns me against rebuilding the east tower and even against exploring it, saying that terrible magic still lingers there and that forever more it must be known as the *Forbidden Tower* where none may venture. Also, he warns against any further deep mining. A passage to the Shallowlands might accidentally be opened, he explains, and we both agree that our defenses are too weak to withstand another large-scale conflict.

Several pages of rebuilding the dwarven city of Darkholm follow. The dwarves become preoccupied

with the search for Darkholm's hidden treasure which, it is assumed, the goblins have been too dense to find with nearly nine centuries of looking.

20 Summertide 888: We begin mining again, though I know it is against Melchizidek's wishes. The mineral veins are exhausted, but many of the elders believe that the lost treasure may have been buried at the very base of the mountain. We decide to mine only a little at the very ends of each vein so that a passage to the Shallowlands is not opened.

8 Leafall 888: There is a strong earthquake in the morning quickly followed by an eruption. The network of lava channels leading to the mountain's sides disperse the fires perfectly as designed. I had wondered for some time if after so many centuries they would still do their job, but my fears and concerns, I now see, have been for naught. Our dwarven forefather's built Darkholm to last. Now our duties are simply to clear the channels before further eruptions occur yet after the lava cools. The secondary channels are now being opened for precaution's sake in case Amaimon should see need to test us further.

18 Canis 888: We capture bane midgets in the mines. Several escape behind us, however, and we chase them to the city gates and corner them, but they mysteriously disappear. Norak, our diviner, says that it is a dark omen.

27 Canis 888: We find two midgets within the city. Under interrogation they tell us of a Sorceress named Veronica who lives in the east (forbidden) tower.

1 Nightal 888: The council of elders is held. Juhdin implores me to seek out this Sorceress Veronica of the east tower to see if she has our treasure so that my throne may be restored with the jewels and gold which my forefathers stripped away and hid so long ago when Darkholm was deserted. I refuse for a time to even hear the argument. Melchizidek warned me to stay away from the tower noting that the evil magic of his battle with Reinold was still potent and that whoever goes there can die of the magic or worse still, can bring it back to the city. However, all the elders are very insistent that we must at least try to contact her. We send back one of the midgets with a message that we seek the Dwarven Horde.

8 Nightal 888: A week has passed since we sent out message to the Sorceress, and we have not heard

back from her. Juhdin has called the guard to arms and the Elders expect me to soon lead a charge on the Forbidden Tower. I believe that my decision to even hear Juhdin's argument or for that matter to even allow the digging in the mines was a grave error. I should have heeded the Wizard Melchizidek's warnings to the letter.

9 Nightal 888: (Final entry) The midget returns quite suddenly delivering a message from the Sorceress. She says that she has the Dwarven horde in the east tower and that she has been searching for the rightful owner for quite some time. She says that she will let the Prince of the Dwarves, being myself, take the treasure back to the throne of Darkholm where it certainly belongs, and that I have but to venture forth with my people to the east tower. Immediately, Juhdin calls for a great feast of celebration and curses Melchizidek for his senile and unwanted advice. I still have reservations and desperately wish to speak with Melchizidek, but he is far away, and venturing to see him would mean leaving the Mountain and leaving Juhdin in command. So I have no choice, and we prepare to make the short journey to the tower. It should take only a day for the company to venture forth and back, and all are eager to make haste.

"Ignorance more frequently begets confidence than does knowledge."

— Darwin

How the Imperium Really Fell

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It all started late last year when Traveller players across the net heard an ugly rumor. The Imperium, GDW's extraordinarily comprehensive setting for the Traveller RPG, was going to fold because of a computer killing virus so that the gaming company could launch it's new product, tentatively called Star Viking, in a future, lower-tech extrapolation of the current and well-loved setting. Players, referees, and computer scientists alike were amazed, astonished, dumbfounded, and otherwise cranky about the news, not doubting GDW's willingness to smash it all (ala the assassination of Strephon) just in order to stir things up. Despite the injury, however, players seemed angrier over the affront to their intellect. "If they want to destroy the Imperium, why use a computer virus?" Why indeed?. In his article, Bertil introduces a more creative and somewhat more believable explanation concerning how the Imperium really fell. We all hope that GDW will read it and use it!

It was 1116 on a cold planet in the Swordworlds. Emperor Strephon and The Chairman of the High Council for the Zhodani Consulate met in the utmost secrecy at the request of the Emperor. Two years previously, the Consulate had sent a secret delegation to Capitol/Core to inform the Emperor of the result of a test several centuries in the planning.

In -7959, Imperial time, twenty years after their first orbital flights, the Zhodanis mounted an expedition to their planet's moon, Viepchakl. On the moon they found an extensive system of underground tunnels dating back to the time of the Ancients. It was still inhabited by Chirpers (regressed Droyne) similar to those found on Zhdant itself. There were also a small number of artifacts among those a psionic booster. This was a device that enhanced and focused the innate psionic power of teleporters so that one person marginally skilled in teleportation could teleport himself with full equipment or up to five other individuals (or warbots) over interplanetary distances. Furthermore, the device automatically compensated for differences in vector and potential energy between the two locations¹. Now, in a manner similar to when

the Imperium copied the first black globe screen from artifacts found on Knorbes/Spinward Marches, the Zhodani had succeeded in producing crude but working copies of the teleportation enhancing device.

The Zhodani delegation to Core informed the Imperium of this up to then highly secret development. They assured that it would be used in the case of an Imperial attack upon the Consulate or upon states allied to the Consulate and asked the Imperium to scrap all strategic fleet assets and only keep the anti-piracy detachments. Their claims were proven in a demonstration where a volunteer Zhodani and five warbot dummies teleported from a Zhodani cruiser to an Imperial cruiser over Jewell/Spinward Marches while both ships were engaged in heavy maneuvering at an interplanetary distance from each other.

The Imperial High Command was terrified. Their age-old nightmare of teleporting Zhodani commandos & warbots suddenly appearing in strategic locations inside Imperial ships had come true. With just one teleportation enhancer and a load of warbots, a lone Zhodani teleporter could immobilize scores of frightfully expensive Imperial ships.

For several centuries, both nations had been locked in a deadly arms race, and with more area to protect and more enemies to defend against, the bloated Empire was on the losing side. To avoid alerting the Zhodani and other enemies that the Imperial economy was on the verge of collapse, a policy of artificially inflating planetary GNP figures and underestimating ship costs was begun. Official figures claimed that the Imperium around 1GNP for defense while the real figure was close to 60penetrated the fa-

that hit Zhdant after their first moon landings: The meeting between Viepchakl and Zhdant Chirpers (the latter members of the expedition) activated the tailored plague sown by the Ancients as a part of their final war. During its incubation time, it was brought down to Zhdant by humans and Chirpers testing the device. Even though they knew what the device did, the Viepchaklite Chirpers had lacked the technical skill to energize the device themselves before the Zhodani landed. When the first Chirpers began to die on the moon it was too late. The plague had spread to the Zhdant Chirper population and soon it targeted the humans on both Zhdant and the moon. All life on the moon was destroyed, and on Zhdant all Chirpers and 90% of the humans died. It took the Zhodanis nearly a thousand years to drag themselves out of the dark age resulting from the plague.

¹This artifact was the reason for the devastating plague

cade, but it still fooled the Solomani, the Aslan, and the Vargr. While creative accounting by IISS, the Department of Finance, the Navy, and several Megacorps could hide the reality, it couldn't overcome it.

Emperor Strephon immediately ordered that a countermeasure to the Zhodani teleporters be found and installed on all Imperial warships. Navy scientists informed him that a countermeasure already existed: additional psionic shielding, but it was ridiculously expensive. The already existent shielding in the ships was one of the secret posts in the Navy budget. Repair and maintenance of the frail and experimental electronics sucked up immense amounts of money.

Economists at the Imperial Department of Finance then revealed to Strephon that the Imperial economy simply couldn't handle the strain of equipping all or even the most important ships with this new, expensive, and even more frail and hard to maintain shielding.

Forced into a corner between the militant faction in the Imperial Nobility led by Archduke Dulinor of Illelish ("The Zhodani *will* attack us. It is just a matter of time. Any peace-treaty on their part is a scam, so we *must* have this new shield") and the economic realities of the situation, Strephon had no choice except to start playing his trump cards.

The first was the *Darrian Option*. A sizable fraction of the Corridor fleet was ordered to transfer to the Solomani Rim while a similar number of ships in the Rim were transferred to Corridor. This was officially called a "unit exchange maneuver". In reality, however, the fleet that should of traveled rimward traveled spinward towards the Darrian worlds in Spinward Marches, gathering reserve units to boost its size along the way. Just outside the Darrian border this combined fleet stopped in deep space. A fleet courier continued on and delivered a message from Emperor Strephon to the Darrians.

The message was an ultimatum. It asserted that unless the Darrians attacked a long list of Zhodani systems with their 'Maghiz device'², elements of the Imperial Corridor Fleet would sterilize all Darrian worlds with nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. The Darrian response was that unless certain coded and outwardly normal messages continued to be transmitted over the Imperial Xboat Network from Darrian to certain places in the Imperium, preplaced Maghiz devices would be triggered on several strategic locations in the Imperium.

²The Maghiz device, also known by non-Darrians as the Star Trigger is a semi-mythical weapon that can induce sub-nova flares in a star. These flares will travel outwards at the speed of light and destroy all types of electronics within twenty light-years in a manner similar to nuclear EMP. Its accidental discovery set the Darrians back two thousand years.

The fleet left.

The second card was the *Ultraviolet Option*, an extension of the old Project Blackheart. Several Imperial deep penetration fleet intruders equipped with enormous deployable solar arrays would enter the Consulate. They would use their solar arrays to charge their jump drives. In conjunction with sporadic wilderness refuelings on cometary nuclei this would enable them to travel deep into the Zhodani Consulate without ever straying close to a system. Once at their planned locations, they would use the element of surprise to bombard Zhdant and several other core Zhodani worlds with nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Hopefully this would disrupt the Zhodani deploying of the teleportation device long enough for the Imperium to invade and crush the Zhodanis once and for all.

Just a few weeks after the five ships had departed, a new delegation from the Consulate arrived at Regina bringing proof that all five ships had been intercepted and destroyed before even leaving the Spinward Marches sector.

Their message can be paraphrased as follows: "We expected about as much from you untrustworthy Imperials, and we will overlook it. But try something more, and we will be forced to invade and crush you for our own protection."

Strephon had secretly been on Regina to direct first the Darrian option and then the Ultraviolet option while avoiding the usual time delays. He now requested an immediate summit. The location agreed on was the Swordworlds, allied to the Zhodanis but almost inside the Imperial sphere of influence.

Emperor Strephon traveled there to try to cut a deal not too unfavorable to the Imperium, but at least one person in his entourage viewed this as a capitulation and spilled the beans. Word about what was happening spread with a jump 6+6 fleet courier across the Rift to Illelish where Dulinor put in motion the plan he had prepared on the off-chance that Strephon would "chicken-out".

During the negotiations on that small, cold planet in the Swordworlds, Emperor Strephon tried every trick in the book. He promised a removal of all Imperial laws banning psionics. He promised a total demilitarization of Spinward Marches and Deneb. He promised the return of the areas the Imperium captured from the Swordworlds during the 5th Frontier War. He promised a cut-off of Imperial military support to their tenuous allies, the Darrians. He promised to open all Imperial military installations to Zhodani inspection teams. All this things demanded by the Zhodanis and refused by the Imperium in past negotiations. But every promise was dependent upon the Zhodanis not deploying their teleportation en-

hancer and that Imperial inspection teams would be allowed to ascertain that the Zhodanis held their half of the agreement. And the non-deployment of the teleportation enhancer was the only issue upon which the Chairman refused to negotiate.

In the end, Strephon had to yield. The enhancers would be deployed, but he managed to cut a much better deal for the Imperium than the original Zhodani proposal would have been. According to the final version of the agreement, the Imperium would permanently give up all claims for any area spinward of its current positions in the Marches, coreward of Deneb, and spinward of the Windhorn rift. The size of the Imperial fleets would be cut by 50%, and the Spinward Marches would be transformed into a demilitarized zone.

However, while Strephon and the Chairman of the High Council of the Zhodani Consulate signed the agreement, Archduke Dulinor traveled towards Core to perform the now infamous coup.

Strephon got wind of the assassination when his ship was attacked in Corridor on the way back. He diverted to his retreat position in Gushemege to rally his forces and strike back. Meanwhile Dulinor's coup had run into trouble.

Lucan, nephew of Strephon, third in line for the throne after the Grand Princess and Varian, his own brother, had promised to help back Dulinor by preparing incriminating evidence of Strephon's "treason" in exchange for the position as Archduke of Deneb. Dulinor's plan, as Lucan knew it, was that Dulinor would request an audience with the "Emperor"³, the Empress and the Grand Princess and shoot them. The Illelish Guard would then secure the throne room while Dulinor and Lucan presented the "proof" that Lucan had prepared. Dulinor would then denounce Strephon as a traitor to the Empire, assume the throne by Right of Assassination and declare war on the Zhodanis before they could declare war on him.

Both co-conspirators had planned to double-cross each other from the very start. Dulinor planned to have both Lucan and Varian murdered after he had received the evidence, because as legitimate heirs to the throne they would be threats. Lucan, also aspiring for the throne, planned to have his brother Varian and the real Strephon, returning from the Sword-worlds, murdered. He would then rally the Imperial Marine Guards to crush Dulinor after the assassination of the "Emperor", the Empress and the Grand Princess. Lucan would thus emerge as both the legitimate heir to the throne and the hero of the Imperium.

³ Strephon maintained a secret policy of using an actor surgically altered to look and sound like him to cover for him when he didn't want his absence from Capitol/Core to be known.

So while Dulinor shot and killed the "Emperor", the Empress and the Grand Princess in the throne room, one of his aides went to fetch Lucan and the data-files containing the evidence. Lucan was prepared for his arrival and had arranged it so that Varian would be there at the same time. When the aide arrived, Lucan personally shot him, Varian, a friend of Varian and a Marine guard stationed in Lucan's apartment. He then alerted the Marine Guard that he had discovered a coup in progress in the palace.

When Lucan and the evidence failed to turn up, Dulinor's plan fell apart, and he had to invent some other justification for the assassination on the spot. The alerted guard units meant that his own Illelish guard couldn't hope to secure the palace. Dulinor was thus forced to leave the palace for Illelish to rally his fleets. First he had to deal with Lucan. The war with the Zhodanis would have to wait.

During the intense civil war that followed, both Lucan and Dulinor squeezed every last quarter-credit out of every world they could lay their hands on. They needed the money to prepare their fleets for the expected Zhodani attack, an attack that never came. When the Imperium fragmented, the Consulate decided that the danger from the Imperium was gone for the foreseeable future and sent a messenger to Archduke Norris of Deneb where they told him that if he'd feel like breaking the signed agreement and fail to implement a DMZ in Spinward Marches, they would have nothing against it since they wanted their flank protected. But if he ever tried to move against the Consulate...

The Imperial Economy that had a hard time supporting the enormous military spending normally, couldn't hope to survive the Civil War. Military expenditures increased to over 80% of the GNP, an insurmountable load for any economy. It broke down as the Imperium fragmented. Lucan was hit least, because while he had raised the secret taxes like everybody else except Norris, he had left the actual economic management to the experts. Dulinor, on the other hand, had tried to control every last credit with disastrous results. Production everywhere fell through the floor, and the navies started to cannibalize commercial shipping when they couldn't afford to repair their frightfully expensive warships.

The destruction of commercial shipping led to even lower productivity, even lower tax income and a greater need to seize commercial shipping and so forth. This fateful chain of events continued until vast regions of space which had formerly been part of the Third Imperium lay without naval protection and outside the routes of the merchant lines. And this, gentle reader, is the concise history of how the Imperium really fell.

WHOOOPS!

Failed and fumbled tasks for 2300 A.D.

Brian Yip

Brian takes a stab at task resolution in GDW's futuristic RPG.

In 2300 A.D., a character will fumble on a task requiring a die roll 10% of the time. That's okay for Joe Novice trying to jury-rig a fusion reactor, but the Grand Master of Chess should not fumble the game away to Joe one out of ten times! Under the current rules, ability and task difficulty have no bearing on how frequently a botch occurs. Also, when a task is failed, the severity of failure is not related to skill.

Here's a suggestion:

When a task is rolled, and the die comes up "1", it is a fail, but not necessarily a fumble. Roll for the task again. If the task is failed a second time, then it is indeed a fumble. If the task is successful on the second roll, the attempted task is merely a failure.

Example: Joe Novice has a strength of 3 and wants to do the task:

To force open a door: Routine,
Strength, 6 seconds.

Joe needs to roll 7+ with a DM of 0. He rolls a 1 so he fails. We roll again: if he rolls 7+ this time, he just failed; but if he rolls 6-, he actually fumbles. Joe rolls a 5 so he actually fumbles, breaking his left pinky and jamming the door even tighter. If Joe had rolled an 8, for example, he would have merely failed and rolled 2d6 on the failure table as usual.

You can see that using this method, it is less likely to fumble simple tasks than, say, difficult tasks. Also, the higher DMs reduce the likelihood of fumbles. The ceiling chance of a fumble is 10%.

When a character fails (not fumbles), you roll on the failure table. Take one quarter of the task DMs, and use this as a negative DM on the failure roll. The mishap roll is not modified.

Example: Chip has Computer-9 and tries the hasty task:

To find information from a computer data bank (Hasty):
Formidable, Computer, 10 minutes.

Chip needs a 15+ with a DM of 9. He rolls a 3 and so he fails. When rolling on the Failure table, Chip gets a DM of -2 (negative 9÷4 rounded toward zero) because he's so good with computers. Chip rolls a 12 on the failure table. Normally this would be a mishap (2d6) but the DM of -2 makes the result 10 instead. So Chip need only check determination to try again instead of having erased the data base.

Note that the largest modifier is -2, so a serious mishap is still possible when doing a hazardous task.

"Failure has a thousand explanations. Success doesn't need one."

— Alec Guinness

Casual Encounters

Saylor

Olson

Vassilakos

Looking for some NPC's to spice up your game?
Here are a few with plenty of stage presence.

Erin MacFal by Brian Saylor

Character Name:	Erin MacFal		
Author:	Brian Saylor	STR:	15
Gamesystem:	AD&D	INT:	17
Class:	Bard	WIS:	14
Race:	Human	DEX:	18
Level:	8	CON:	13
AC:	3	CHA:	19
HP:	32	COM:	16
AI:	NG		

Bardic Abilities

Climb	Detect	Pick	Read	Identify
Walls	Noise	Pockets	Languages	Object
60%	20%	70%	70%	40%

Equipment

Canaith Mandolin: An Instrument of the Bards (see description in DMG). Can be played so as to cast *Cure Serious Wounds*, *Dispel Magic*, *Protection From Lightning* (10'r), *Protection From Evil* (10'r), *Invisibility*, *Levitate*, *Fly* once per day.

Long Sword (Kincaid): +3 to hit/damage, detect secret doors in 5' radius, and cast illusions twice per day.

Ring of Protection, +3: As per DMG.

Spell Book

Audible Glamer
Cantrip
Hypnotism
Stinking Cloud
Pyrotechnics
Tasha's Uncontrollable Hideous Laughter
Lightning Bolt

Personal History

Erin was born on the Isle of Cairbre to a line of bards that goes back five centuries. His father was a sailor, however, and when Erin was 8, his father disappeared and was never heard from again.

Erin spent most of his time growing up with his grandfather, Caithard, a bard of great renown who traveled widely to fulfill his role as mediator for the surrounding areas. Erin would accompany his grandfather on such trips which could range as far as a hundred leagues or more. This early exposure to travel hooked Erin, and he left home at the age of 16 to see the world.

Erin is almost constantly in transit. He'll stay in one area for a little while, entertaining the populace and learning the local legends, verse, culture, and history of the region, then move on to some other place. He will occasionally revisit places in which he was well received. He is driven by an intense curiosity and a desire to make the world a better place.

Erin did once return home briefly. Before he left, his grandfather presented him with the family heirloom, the *Canaith Mandolin*. This musical instrument can only be properly played by a bard of the MacFel blood, and its magical powers have saved his life on more than one occasion. In addition to its spell-like abilities, it is able to produce a range of tones much greater than such a simple instrument should be capable of.

When Erin is not entertaining, or with a local woman, he will be investigating the area: gossiping, learning local legends and fables, and checking out the political scene. If he cannot get the information he wants by talking to people, Erin is not above a little spying to check things out for himself. Because of this desire to know what's going on, he makes a great source of information.

When he finds great wrongs being committed, he will work to right them. He tries not to do this directly; instead he will motivate others to correct the situation. He will assist them with information, plans, advice, etc. He will only intervene if it is absolutely necessary (to take on the burden himself if no one else is available, or offer direct assistance to those who are helping). It is not that Erin is a coward, far

from it, but he always attempts to maintain an image of neutrality. In this way he may more freely travel amongst the "enemy" or be trusted with the position of mediator.

Entertainment Methods

Erin's repertoire of songs, verse, and stories is quite extensive. He will often play songs taught to him at his grandfather's knee, usually with magical accompaniment, such as *Gallows Pole*, *The Ocean*, *Battle of Evermore*, and others by the bard *Lead Zeplane*¹. Some more of his favorites include *The Curious Fate of Lord Darhan's Rightmost Eyeball*, *The Last Dinnertime Argument of Lord Albert and Lady Liza*, and *Elfin Wizard*.

When entertaining, he will often use magic to supplement his presentations. Typically this will be an *Audible Glamer* for backup or visual affects produced from cantrips or *Pyrotechnics*. He will also stoop to *Tasha's Uncontrollable Hideous Laughter* which he has found useful for warming up particularly tough crowds.

Suggested Scenarios

1. On their way to someplace of importance within some city, the party spots a minstrel on the street corner surrounded by children. He is playing *Battle of Evermore*² on his mandolin and seems to be watching the party. If the party approaches, he will duck down an alley and disappear. This meeting has absolutely no significance whatsoever.
2. Erin has found some evil in the area which must be exterminated. He approaches the party and explains the situation to them. He will try to persuade them to exterminate this evil; remember, Erin can be *very* persuasive. If they agree to help, he will give them vital information to help them achieve this goal. While the party is working to combat the evil, Erin will keep a close but discriminate eye on their progress. He may assist the party more directly if necessary; arrange diversions, incapacitate guards to release the party from captivity, etc.

¹ An eccentric bard in a faraway land.

² If the party must be hit over the head with a cudgel, have him play *Stairway To Heaven*, but only if it is really necessary.

Sample Songs

The Curious Fate of Lord Darhan's Rightmost Eyeball ©1992 Mike Shapiro

Lord Darhan, the mightiest knight in the realm
He sang to himself as he put on his helm:
"I've got me a sword and I've got me a mission
To fight at the battle of Grissom-On-Grissom."

BAAAAH! BLAAAH! GO BAAACK! YOU'LL DIE!

He saddled his horse, gave a kiss to his wife
(The last time he'd ever do so in his life)
He called for his squire and he traveled all day
He just couldn't wait to dismember and slay.

Long days, long nights he traveled the road cold
and endless beneath the grey sky
His sanity unraveled; he murdered his squire
and made henchman pie.

He finally reached the big scene of the fight
With limbs and intestines arrayed left and right
He drew forth his horse and leapt onto the saddle
So happy to finally get into battle.

However the ghost of his squire was there
More corp'real than most
he grabbed Lord Darhan's hair
He said, "Thanks for killing me, now you will die."
He took the knight's dagger and put out his eye.

Darhan screamed as his eyeball
flew out from its socket. Oh boy was he pissed
"Why'd you do that?!" he asked and the ghost said,
"I aimed for your groin but I missed."

Lord Darhan decided to fight anyway
He said "Who needs eyes?" and he leapt in the fray
His hubris, alas, was a little misplaced
And somebody caved in his skull with a mace.

His eyeball, however, rolled down to the ground
And lay there long after no one was around
It grew lots of moss and in time looked quite gross
And boy would it taste unappealing on toast.

**The Last Dinnertime Argument of Lord
Albert and Lady Liza
©1992 Mike Shapiro**

"Where shall we go out to dinner oh Liza
Oh where shall we go out to dinner tonight?
Hunger's a rabid squirrel chewing my stomach
Let's go to McGinty's and grab a quick bite."

"Why must we go out to dinner oh Albert
We certainly won't hit McGinty's tonight
He couldn't cook if you set him on fire
I'll bake you my meatloaf and you'll feel all right."

"Truth to tell Liza your meatloaf's disgusting
The thought of consuming it fills me with fright
I fed some to Fido and he died of cancer
So prithee let's go to McGinty's tonight."

"Better to starve than to eat at McGinty's
The service is slow and the help impolite
When you're there, you're a loudmouthed inebriate
Your drunken singing is not a delight."

"Starvation might not do you damage oh Liza
Some say that your figure could cause crops to blight
Each day this week we've endured your foul cooking
Which tastes like you sauteed a nest of termites."

"Why did I marry this ingrate?" asked Liza
"This slovenly foul-mouthed obtuse parasite
Let's see you cook if you're so god-damn hungry
You make us a dinner, you bald troglodyte."

"Surely," said Albert, "why didn't you say so?"
He grabbed a big knife and cut Liza to bits
He threw her bloody remains in a cauldron
Except for her eyes which he roasted on spits

"What a remarkable dinner," thought Albert
"When my bowels move a divorce they'll incite."
Sadly sir Albert fell prey to food poisoning
And died because he hadn't cooked Liza right

That is the story of Albert and Liza
A fun-loving pair who put on a good fight
Now their dead bodies are rotting with maggots
Please think of them when you eat dinner tonight

**Elfin Wizard
(Sung to the tune of Pinball Wizard)
©1992 Jesse Mundis a.k.a. Esedge Cyne Syg**

Ever since I heard of magic,
I've felt the forces call,
From Breacon down to Krydain,
I must have used 'em all,
But I ain't seen nothing like him,
In the guild rooms or the halls,
That quick, nimble, cute Elf
Sure casts a mean fire ball!

He stands like a statue,
In the presense of the Queen,
He's polished up his sword,
To a bright, metallic, sheen.
Spells at the ready,
He hears the force's call,
That quick, nimble, cute Elf
Sure casts a mean fire ball!

He's an Elfin wizard,
He just cast "Self to Mist"
An Elfin wizard's
Got such a mental twist.

How do you think he does it?
I don't know!
What makes him so good?

Ain't got no distractions
Immune to other's spells
Bolts of lightning flashin'
Transports his foes to hell
Summons nasty demons,
Standing eight feet tall
That quick, nimble, cute Elf
Sure casts a mean fire ball!

I thought I was
The wizard battle king,
But I just handed
My Magi Staff to him.

Even with my favorite demon,
He can beat my best.
His familiar leads him in,
And he just does the rest.
He's got crazy words of power
Never seen him fall...
That quick, nimble, cute Elf
Sure casts a mean fire ball!

Jezibel

by K. Olson & Co.

Character Name: Jezibel
 Author: K. Olson STR: 14
 Gamesystem: AD&Dv1 INT: 18
 Class: MU/Bounty-Hunter WIS: 14
 Race: Drow Elf DEX: 19
 Level: 10/10 CON: 16
 AC: -1 CHA: 15
 HP: 75 COM: 19
 Al: LE

Non-Weapon Proficiencies

Armorer Dancer Poisoner
 Swimming Torturer Ventriloquism
 Languages:
 Blackbird Elvish Lawful Evil
 Chaotic-Evil Gnome SilentSpeak
 Common Goblin Thieves' Cant
 Drow Elvish Lawful Evil Troll
 Dwarvish Orcish

Thieving Abilities

Open Locks	42%
Find/Remove Traps	45%
Move Silently	52%
Hide in Shadows	47%
Hear Noise	25%
Climb Walls	92%
Read Languages	30%

Special Abilities & Notes: 120' Infravision, 70% Magic Resistance, Surprised on 1 in 8, Dancing Lights (once per day), Faerie Fire (once per day), Darkness (once per day), Detect Magic (once per day), Know Alignment (once per day), Levitate (once per day), Clairvoyance (once per day), Detect Lie (once per day), Suggestion (once per day), Dispel Magic (once per day), Backstabbing (+4, x4), Assassinate (as 8th lvl assassin), Tracking (as 10th lvl ranger), Disguise (as 10th lvl assassin).

Spell List

<u>1st Level</u>	<u>2nd Level</u>	<u>3rd Level</u>
Burning Hands	ESP	Fireball
Feather Fall	Forget	Haste
Floating Disk	Invisibility	Lightning Bolt
Message	Mirror Image	
Read Magic		
Shocking Grasp		
Sleep		
Spider Climb		

<u>4th Level</u>	<u>5th Level</u>
Ice-Storm	Conjure Earth Elemental
Wall of Ice	Wall of Force

Belongings

Black crotchless panties (*Hey...live a little*)
 Black leather bra with nipple holes
 Gold Anklet of Warmth
 Ring of Fire Resistance
 Black leather vest
 Black Cloak with Pocket of Holding
 1 potion: Black Dragon Control
 1 potion: Water Breathing
 Wand of Fear
 Flask of Oil
 Bottle of pure water
 Crystal Ball
 Boots of Silence
 Chain Mail Armor (+2)
 Long Sword (+3)
 Mace (+2)
 Single-handed cross-bow (+2)
 Dart quiver
 12 darts (+2)
 Belt Pouch
 Vial of sleeping poison (5 doses)
 3 potions: extra-healing

Weapons Chart			Damage			Range			
Weapon	Prof	Thaco	SorM	vs L	RoF	PB	S	M	L
Long Sword (+4)	2	7	d8+6	d12+6	3/2	-	-	-	-
1-Hand X-Bow (+2+2)	2	4	d3+6	d2+6	3/2	3	6	12	18
Mace (+3)	1	8	d6+4	d6+3	3/2	-	-	-	-

Personal History & Notes

Jezibel was born the second daughter of the Arch-Priestess of Lolth. She was raised a princess, not knowing that it was her sole purpose to become a virgin sacrifice to the goddess on the moon of her first bleeding. However, on the day of the sacrifice, a band of Duergar raided the drow enclave, killing her family and taking her with them as a ~~lock~~-slave.

Performing for her masters and their guests, Jezibel learned certain skills, such as various forms of dancing, etc, which kept her alive. After two years, she was bought by Yukento, a powerful ogre-magi from the Shallowlands. Jezibel had always been interested in magic, and was fascinated by Yukento's power. With several months of exacting servitude, Jez influenced her master to take her into his confidence. Yukento began teaching her like an apprentice but still treated her as a slave.

During her apprenticeship, Jezibel came to know one of Yukento's associates, Brom. He was a Bounty-Hunter who often did work for Yukento. With a little use of Jezibel's well-honed sexual skills, she convinced Brom to teach her his trade. Jezibel was a quick learner and often absorbed more than either of her teachers intended to reveal.

After four years of servitude, Jezibel decided that she had learned all that she could from her teachers. She made her escape into the Surfaceworld during the black of night. Since then she has been using her magical talents as well as her bounty-hunter skills to make a living. Yukento was not at all happy about her escape, but he had grown tired of her. So instead of having her assassinated, he occasionally sends one of his servants to give her assignments for pay (usually in the form of a temporary reprieve from his wrath). Thus after many years, Jezibel has become a wandering bounty-hunter and a sorceress as well.

Suggested Scenarios

1. Jez is hired to capture one of the adventurers for some real or perceived affront to Yukento. She will stalk the party and attempt to capture the victim alive when the party is split up and resting (as in a city).
2. The party finds itself in jail awaiting a little round of questioning with the local sheriff. While waiting nervously, they see Jez who is awaiting her execution with numerous bruises and untended lacerations. Her offense is simply racial affiliation, however, the torturers are in the process of beating a few confessions out of her. She

promises to help the party in any way she can if they can help free her after their interrogation.

3. As #2, except that the party's offense is more serious than they realized. They must endure a little torturing along with Jez, but with luck, perhaps they can combine their respective talents to reach a joint escape.

Countess Adara von Talbot

©1992 Jim Vassilakos

Primary Stats

Str	Dex	End	Int	Edu	Soc
9	9	6	9	9	E

Advantages*

Combat Reflexes (15)

Toughness (20)

Disadvantages

Intolerance (10)

Bad Temper (10)

Greed (15)

*Advantages & Disadvantages gleaned from Top Secret/S.I.; I like to mix'n'match my rules systems.

Age: 30 yrs.

Skills: Admin-1, Brawling-1, Computer-0, Cutlass-0, Electronics-1, Forward Observer-1, Grav Vehicle-0, Handgun-1, History-1, Intrusion-1, Laser Pistol-1, Leader-1, Recon-1, Rifleman-2, Stealth-1, Submachinegun-0, Vacc Suit-2.

Items on Person: Commdot w/ multiplexer, communicator (TL8 Distant), translator (Zho, Vargr, etc.), titanium-tipped boots, integral laser pistol.

Record

1075	Born to the Marquis von Talbot of Yres
1084	Parents killed in Battle of Two Suns (4FW)
1093	Enlisted Imperial Marines, Infantry
1095	Awarded MCG during Police Action on Yres
1098	Entered Commando Arm, graduate from OCS
1102	Awarded 2nd MCUF during extended Police Action on Yres
1103	Promoted to Captain
1105	Received honorable discharge, crowned Countess von Talbot



Adara confronts the party concerning a sensitive topic.

History

Adara was born to the noble household of von Talbot, hereditary rulers of Yres. As a youth, she enjoyed all the privileges entitled a girl of her station, however, before she grew to maturity, she was made to understand the pain that such station can bring.

Adara's father was killed during the Zhodani invasion of Yres whilst leading the Imperial defensive during the famous Battle of Two Suns in 1084. Following the battle, there were opportunistic uprisings on both Yres and Menorb, partly a result of carefully placed Zhodani sleepers. Menorb, an established bureaucracy, handled the threat with bureaucratic efficiency, however the headless monarchy of Yres did not survive. It was due to the treachery of certain elements on Yres that Adara's mother and siblings were murdered. Only due to a stroke of luck did she survive. Since that time, Adara has hated the Zhodani and the people of her own world with a passion bordering on psychosis.

She served with the Imperial marines as an infantry soldier and later as a commando. During the extended police action on Yres, she was decorated thrice for her bravery and blood-thirst. As a result, her own people hate her nearly as much as she hates them, but they've learned to fear her even more.

Cecilia

Cecilia is Adara's most loyal and trusted friend, a servant who was given to Adara by the Marquis when Adara was seven years of age. As has always been the case among the von Talbots, Cecilia is not merely a servant, but also a trained assassin: a weapon to wield, yet also a device to keep Adara on her toes. It is Cecilia's unceasing duty to attack her master at the oddest of moments, just when such an attack is the least expected. Though this sort of training, Adara learned early how to take a punch, as well as the wisdom of stealth. As a consequence, however, her master has grown somewhat paranoid about her safety whenever Cecilia isn't in sight.

Personality

Adara is generally bad tempered, greedy, and even a bully. She likes to wield her social status for all it's worth, but she has not grown so fond of her title as to discard the chance for a mean and dirty fight or a little adventure. Rather annoyed that her current title provides little in the way of actual power (she was appointed by the Duke of Regina as a puppet figurehead), she now cruises the stars when she isn't busting butts on Yres.

The Yres System

Coordinates: Regina 0202, Spinward Marches
Spectral Class/Size: Solo K0VI
Stellar Mass: 0.43
Stellar Luminosity: 0.117

Orbit	Name	UPP	Remarks
*	Ellenel	K0VI	
1	Yres	BAC6773-7	
2	Nugget	X200311-B	Mining
3	Lark's World	XA3A100-B	Research
4	Ballodust	LGG	Gas Giant

Yres

Diameter:	11221 miles
Density:	0.98
Mass:	2.7
Mean Surface Gravity:	1.37
Rotation Period:	6 hrs
Orbital Radius:	0.52 AU
Orbital Period:	89.75 dys

Yres, once a proud monarchy ruled directly by the Marquis von Talbot, was reduced to anarchy after the 4th Frontier War. Although, the war was won, the Marquis was killed, and the planet broke out into rebellion against the ruling family. After two decades of police action on Yres, the Imperium has broken the revolutionary movement and established two rival governments on the world: The Wonderful Community, a religious dictatorship with strict moral codes, and the YLU (Yresian Liberty Union), a charismatic dictatorship ruled by popular conservative, Arthur Kuzumi.

The starport, nested in the small neutral zone between the two nations, displays the Imperium's indifference between the rival governments. Since the revolution, the household of von Talbot relocated to Menorb and has been elevated in status to the seat of the 8th County of Regina.

The world's 58 million inhabitants, as divided as they are, can no longer instill rebellion for fear being crushed by each other. However, neither can they choose a productive course for the world. This social conflict, as deadly as the corrosive atmosphere of the world, has created a climate of fear and desperation, where large-scale sabotage in the vast underground cities is commonplace, and where the occupations of the citizenry vary widely from defense and arms production to agriculture, mining, freight, and maintenance.

Nugget

Diameter:	2103 miles
Density:	0.13
Mass:	0.0024
Mean Surface Gravity:	0.035
Rotation Period:	14 hrs
Orbital Radius:	0.78 AU
Orbital Period:	165 dys

Nugget has been leased to Naugrim Enterprises, A sector-wide corporation with 7000 employees mining deep into the planet's core. The world is essentially a large ball of ice with a small but dense rocky core. According to the corporate scientists, the rocky core contains a sizable deposit of lanthanum, a rare mineral essential for key jump drive components. The Yres/Menorb governments don't know much of anything about Naugrim's operation, nor have they any inkling of the treasure trove to be found beneath a 1000 mile layer of ice. Although Naugrim is paying large sums for the mining lease, its expenses are only a mere fraction of the profits it may soon reap from the venture.

Lark's World

Diameter:	15460 miles
Density:	0.68
Mass:	4.9
Mean Surface Gravity:	1.3
Rotation Period:	21 hrs
Orbital Radius:	0.94 AU
Orbital Period:	218 dys

Lark's World was originally set-up to research a serious abnormality in an otherwise common world. The planet's molten core is roughly a tenth of a percent of what should be expected given its size, age, and orbital radius. Fifty-four Imperial scientists (including a sixteen member team specializing in xenarcheology) are currently stationed on the world researching the phenomenon.

Ballodust

Ballodust, the star system's only gas giant, also serves as the site of Outer Watch, a hidden network of robotic sensor stations fitted with specialized detection equipment, tight-beaming data to a relay station orbiting Yres. During the Battle of Two Suns in 1084, this secret outpost gave Yres the early warning it needed to tip the scales against the Zhodani and bring an early end to the Fourth Frontier War.

Suggested Scenarios

1. Adara has heard rumors of Naugrim's rapid expansion of operations on Nugget in the Yres system, an expansion which is not being reflected in official correspondence to the 8th County. She hires the party to unobtrusively check things out, fearing that an official inspection would only alert Naugrim that they are being watched.
2. The party is delivering supplies to Lark's World in the Yres system when a distress signal is received. The Leaping Krimm, the private yacht of the Countess, reports that its jump drive is damaged and that it is being pursued by pirates. The players are able to lay in an intercept course, but only if they act quickly. Of course, the Countess will be immeasurably grateful. She has just concluded a meeting with Naugrim representatives, and will be happy to rent the top floor of the Yresian Starport's Ambassador Hotel for the party. Of course, Naugrim is unhappy that she escaped the "pirates" which they manufactured to seal the company's good fortune, and an assassination is in the works unless the party is either intelligent or lucky enough to thwart it.
3. As #2, except a Mr. John Randall from Menorb (wealthy art dealer on vacation, really an agent for Naugrim) hires the party to find out how much Adara knows about the company's operations. Naugrim will bench their assassins until the party reaches a verdict. If the party communicates to John that Adara is suspicious, not only will she be a target, but so will they.

Dogood

Knight of Duskland
by Jim Vassilakos

Character Name:	Dogood		
Author:	Jim Vassilakos	STR:	18/83
Gamesystem:	AD&Dv2	INT:	7
Class:	Paladin	WIS:	14
Race:	Human	DEX:	8
Level:	1	CON:	16
AC:	4	CHA:	17
HP:	12		
Al:	(L)awful Good		

Proficiencies

Bastard Sword	Jousting Lance
Horseman's Flail	Long Bow
Etiquette (17)	Heraldry (7)
Riding (horse) (17)	Blind-Fighting
Swimming (18)	

Weapon Chart

Weapon	Thaco	D/A	Range		
Bastard Sword (1h)	18	d8+4 / d12+4			
Bastard Sword (2h)	18	2d4+4 / 2d8+4			
Long Bow (f)	20	d6 / d6	7	14	21
Long Bow (s)	20	d8 / d8	5	10	17
Dagger (h)	20	d4+4 / d3+4			
Dagger (t)	22	d4 / d3	1	2	3

Provisions

Splint Mail	Bastard Sword & Scabbard
Long Bow	24 Flight Arrows
2 Quivers	24 Sheath Arrows
Saddle Blanket	Dagger & Scabbard
Fine Fur Cloak	Gloves
Crown of Duskland	Backpack
Dry Rations (3 weeks)	5 Torches
2 Wax Candles	Lump of Soap
Light War Horse	Riding Saddle
Bit & Bridle	Horseshoes & Shoeing
Halter	Small Saddle Bags

"The difference between a psychosis and a neurosis? A psychosis is when you think 2 + 2 are 5. A neurosis is when you know 2 + 2 are 4, but it worries you."

Personal History

Dogood, as his name so clandestinely implies, is a good-guy. In fact, he's so damn good that it's downright nauseating. If you want to insert the proverbial bible-thumping paladin just to irk your players, he should be a good choice.

Of course, Dogood wasn't always such a peachy kind of dude. He was born in Duskland, land of the setting sun (okay, so I'm having trouble with names). His father, King Kalis, was ousted by the general of the army, an old but powerful warrior by the name of Gornath. The actual insurrection, however, was done with a twist. Gornath convinced Dogood to carry out the right of assassination to install himself as ruler. It was a deed Dogood willingly carried out in part due to his own lust for power and in part out of revenge because his father had given him such a stupid name.

Gornath was one step ahead of the foolish knight, however, as when Dogood set his father's crown (a simple unadorned band of gold) upon his head, he immediately began to repent his callous deed. Yes, the crown was a helm of alignment reversal (Oh lo and behold, aren't we a tricky one today).

Now Dogood stalks the land in search of wrongs to right and so forth, too ashamed to return to his kingdom and face up to his evil deed. His hope is to return one day and overthrow Gornath. If the crown is ever removed, however, it could make things a little confusing for those who helped him along the way.

Suggested Scenarios

1. The party is hired by Gornath to track down the murderer of old King Kalis. After a little investigation, they find Dogood building a shrine to the holy virgin. Dogood explains that Gornath is responsible for his father's death, though he is unable to elaborate much further. What happens next is up to the party.
2. The party is waylaid by some of Gornath's troops who are searching for Dogood. It turns out that one member of the party bears a striking resemblance the murderer at large. They are taken in for questioning and later released, only to stumble into the actual Dogood several weeks later while he is helping an old lady across the street.
3. As #2, except that instead of common troops, Gornath's assassins have mistaken the party member for Dogood. If one is captured and questioned at knife-point, she will accuse the party member of patricide but will not communicate further. The party later encounters the real Dogood, but must put two and two together on their own.

"As a child, I was an imaginary playmate."

Bits & Pieces

re-revisited

Somewhere between shadow's umbra and that which is afire with light, there the tapestry is woven, perspectives intertwined, and the Bard's stilted verbiage, as remorseless as it is hollow, plays within the silken strands that nebulously comprise the Bits & Pieces.

You know the gods are against you when...

- Your ring of free action gets stuck on your finger.
- Your Bucknard's Everfull Purse starts producing only chocolate coins.
- The case holding your chime of opening jams shut.
- Your ring of swimming rusts.
- Your necklace of adaptation doesn't fit.
- Your wings of flying start molting.
- You forget where you left your gem of insight.
- Your robe of eyes needs glasses.
- You can't find your cloak of elvenkind.
- Your ring of invisibility just vanishes one day.
- Your gloves of missile snaring steal all of your +3 arrows.
- You cut yourself on your periapt of health.
- Your plate mail of etherealness goes on a trip without you.
- Your sheet of smallness shrinks in the wash.
- Your manual of stealthy pilfering is stolen.
- Your potion of gaseous form evaporates.
- You notice your ring of sustenance is losing weight.
- Your rod of passage gets caught in the door all the time.
- Your Holy Avenger converts.

- Your staff of the woodlands catches the blight.
- You trip over your manual of quickness of action.
- Your amulet of proof against detection and location is nowhere to be found.
- Your gem of seeing turns opaque.
- Your staff of withering withers.
- You find your Nolzur's Marvelous Pigments are water-colors.
- Your rope of entanglement gets a snarl.
- Your pipes of the sewers back up.
- You lose your luck blade in a poker game.

On Finding a Magic Sword

Paladin: "I unsheathe it!" (Maybe it's a holy avenger!)

Sword: "Like dude, the light! Totally! Let's kill some of those gnarly orcs!"

Player gives GM a quizzical look.

Paladin: "Who are you?!"

Sword: "Dude! I'm a totally awesome sword!"

Paladin: "Who do you belong to?"

Sword: "I used to belong to a valley elf, but he like died, you know?"

— Russ Gilman
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Campus Information Exchange
University of Oregon

A dour old dwarf named Fritz
Was burned right where he sits
That happens, they say
When you get in the way
Of a dragon, just as he spits.

On Orcs and Skeletons

- Q: Why do Orc Women wear high-heels?
A: So their knuckles don't drag on the ground.
- Q: Why did the Skeleton never fight?
A: It didn't have the guts to.
- Q: Why did the Skeleton never go to a party?
A: It didn't have any ghoul-friends.

Regarding Elves

by Macrion and the Peacemaker, lately of the Drow realms.

- Q: Which is easier to unload, a cart full of dead elves, or a cart full of cannon balls?
A: The elves — you can use a pitchfork. Although it's more fun with live ones...
- Q: What's the difference between an elf and a halfling?
A: Better yardage when punting the halfling.
- Q: What's the difference between Galadriel and a glad bag?
A: One's empty, lifeless, full of garbage, and with no personality, and the other's a glad bag.

So this elf walks into this bar with this bald parrot on his shoulder. Bartender says, "where'd you get that ugly thing?" Parrot says, "Elven kingdom, there's scads of 'em there!"

- Q: What's golden haired, red, and hangs from the ceiling?
A: Elf on a meat hook.
- Q: How do you get it down?
A: Bring in some drunken dwarves and yell, "Piñata party!"
- Q: Why wasn't Jesus born to the elves?
A: Couldn't find three wise men or a virgin.

— Dr. Thaddeus V. Nuncheon
jeffj@yang.earlham.edu

Ogre Gets Married

"Do you, Nivek Ogre, take this woman as your lawful wedded... ah, what is that thing on your *back*?"

"Ah, it's..."

"Don't bother telling me. I can see it as well as you can. Mr. Ogre, I would like to remind you that this is the House of God, and He does not look kindly on such ill-bred japes. Besides which, you're dripping on my altar."

"Fath—"

"Don't bother apologizing, either. I'll have a choir boy clean it up. But in future, Mr. Ogre, I strongly suggest that you try to restrain from crucifying yourself at religious ceremonies. Now, then. Where was I? Yes. Do you, Nivek Ogre, take this woman as your lawful wedded wife, to have and to hold, ah, arr-urgh-gulp." Father O'Branahan clears his throat and swigs heartily from a handy bottle of communion wine. "Ah, fuck this shit. Do you want the broad or not?"

"CYAAAAAANNNNNIDE! GENOCIIIIIDE! FLAMING ACID DEATH! DEATH! DEATH! DEATH!"

"Hmm." The Padre pauses, takes another gulp of wine. "Can you translate, Norma?"

"I think he means 'Yes,' Father."

"Hmm, okay. What about you; do you really want this schmuck?"

"Fuck... I guess so."

"A-men. I hereby pronounce you man and wife, Nivek Ogre and Norma Gertrude Ogre. You may kiss the bride. *Christ!* No, not *you*, Jourgensen, you're just supposed to give him the ring — save your enthusiasm for tonight. Mr. Ogre? Mr. Ogre? Oh, Nivek?" The priest slaps Ogre lightly on the cheek but gets no response. "Shit." He turns. "Choirboy Kennedy, would you get me the methadone? It's on the rosewood cabinet under my rosary — you know, the vibrator cabinet — in the old Trojan box. Thanks. Oh, wait. Kennedy!" The boy, exiting, looks back. "The *ribbed* box. Be careful not to look in the other one."

— Curtis Yarvin
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Brown University Department of Computer Science

"God favors Drunks, Small Children, and the *Cataclysmically Stoned*."

Frolicing with Dryads

One my players had a character spend the better part of a game year “frolicing” with a dryad. This was partly amusing because he was one of those congenitally attractive characters — a paladin. Not that he had taken vows of celibacy, but this was sort of outside of the kind of chaste and pure love that he believed was acceptable. In fact, “love” had very little to do with it. Some *other* L-word, maybe, but not “love”...

Of course, *he* didn't find it amusing. He was mortified. His party was right in the middle of a long and arduous quest, and they were being stalked by a demon lord upon whose demesne they were trespassing. He was kidnapped right out from the midst of his party, but then he'd look in those beautiful, perfect eyes, and forget all that — for a while.

He was finally released into the custody of a bunch of druids in the midst of a big religious ceremony. A guest at said ceremony (a bard who worshiped Loki) made a limerick on the spot that had half the kingdom laughing about the paladin within the month. The poor fellow eventually became known throughout the Empire for his *swordsmanship*.

There once was a paladin, Aidan
Who met a deciduous maiden,
They weathered the winters
And quite a few splinters
In the bough of the tree he was laid in.

Ahh, youth...

“When in danger
when in doubt
run in circles
scream and shout!”

Famous Last Words

We opened a door to find ourselves looking at the demon lord of gnolls, a few score of his followers, and a small dinosaur. In the moment of silence that followed the DM's description, as we were all trying to figure out whether he was pulling our leg, Ivor popped up with, “Anybody order a pizza?”

— Jeff Stehman

“In my present mood I could cast *Speak with Dead* and talk to myself.”

Elmer Fudd Lives!

Walter: “Werebunnies??” (The guy playing Walter had wanted a lycanthropic character.)

Cujo: “Uh, Walter, don't tell me you—”

Walter: “Welllll...”

Cujo: “Now lemme get this straight. We're to just wait here while you bare your ass to a werebunny and say, ‘Bite me’!?”

Mojo: (snickering to himself) “Yeah. Be wewwy wewwy quiet; weah humping wabbits!”

— Paul Brinkley
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Dept of Computer Sciences, Austin, Texas

“Sometimes I think the universe just waits for me to get cocky...”

— Todd Howard
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Kansas State University

Altitude & Stupidity

DM: You know the cave is 7' high?

Harst: So?

DM: You know you are 6' high?

Harst: Yeah, so?

DM: And the horse adds 3' to your height, approximately?

Harst: So?

DM: So you're charging *on* your horse, full speed, into a cave. What are you going to do?

Harst: (*As blandly as possible*) Hit my head on the cave roof.

As I recall, he took a *lot* of damage. Especially since his saddle was designed to keep the rider from falling or being knocked off. Ouch!

— Thanatos, DeathUrge
Master of Unknown Time and Space (Slightly Arrogant)
tgt33358@uza.cso.uiuc.edu
University of Illinois at Urbana

A Testimonial

I, brothers and sisters, shall step forth to give a testimonial!

Yes, it is true. I used to be into religion. I started out with Christianity. For a while it was great, but then I realized that it wasn't enough. I'd be going to church every Sunday, but right around Thursday I'd start to shake. I needed that next mass! Once a week wasn't enough. I started going on Saturday, then weekdays, then twice a day.

Then a friend introduced me to Judaism. I was hooked. I couldn't stop myself. I thought I could control it, you know? But I just kept going further and further. I read the Talmud. I tried orthodoxy. I even experimented with some eastern religions, and I still get flashbacks of peace and occasionally hear the sound of one hand clapping.

My parents were worried. They didn't know how to reach me. In desperation, they hired a group to de-program me. They strapped me in a chair and tried to, to stimulate my imagination! You can guess how horrible the experience was.

Well, friends, I finally saw the light. Now I keep a place in my heart open to Gary Gygax. He can save you, too.

— John Iv Kovacik
a.k.a. Biff the Wonder Twit
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University of Illinois at Urbana

"That the people of the world will get off their butts and start trying to change their world themselves, instead of invoking a supreme being to do it for them, we pray to the Lord..."

Arthur: "You know, it's times like this when I'm in a Vogon airlock about to be blasted into space with a man from Betelgeuse that I wish I'd listened to what my mother told me when I was a child."

Ford: "Why? What did she tell you?"

Arthur: "I don't know; I never listened."

— Hitchhiker's

"Time is the best teacher; unfortunately, it kills all of its students."

Magic-Users Anonymous

It could happen to you too, you little munchkin.

"Hi, my name is Fizban, and I'm...I'm...I'm a Magic-User."

(Many voices in unison) "Hi Fizban!"

"I first started using magic when some of my friends introduced me to it as a teenager. They had gotten hold of a couple of potions, and we each quaffed one behind my dad's barn. Before I knew it, I was flying high.

"After that, we looked for magic wherever we could find it — treasure vaults, abandoned temples, hidden crypts, dragon's lairs, anywhere. We were hooked!

"I remember casting my first spell — *Light*. What a rush that was! I thought I was being so clever by casting it on my middle finger and showing everyone my 'holy bird'. My dad didn't think it was very funny, though, and he tanned my hide good.

"After that, I realized that Mom and Dad were going to keep me from magic, so I ran away. My friends and I decided to band together. We did so under the pretense of doing good for others, but that wasn't the real reason we did it. We were in it for the magic!

"From then on, there was no turning back. I created my first spell book and acquired such spells as *Magic Missile*, *Charm Person*, and the versatile *Detect Magic*. Little did I know, the twisted, sordid paths my life would take from then on.

"It was downhill from there; I couldn't get enough. I soon graduated to the hard stuff. First *Fireball* and *Lightning Bolt*, then *Ice Storm*, *Teleport*, *Disintegrate*, *Power Word Stun*, *Polymorph Any*, and finally, *Wish*.

"It was too much; I was drunk with power. I couldn't have stopped, even if my life depended on it.

"Then one day, after eons of godhood, I realized the mistake my life had become. I had missed out on all the joys of life: a loving wife, a simple home, 2.3 kids, and cold beer. I decided to seek help.

"My good friend, Takhisis, suggested that I look for answers in the mortal realms. Well, after fruitless searches through the prime plane and many failed attempts trying to help others avoid the same mistakes I made, I decided to seek professional help. So I turned to Magic-Users Anonymous.

"Now I live a simple life. I've traded in magic for a shovel and a plow and make a modest living selling manure to other farmers like me.

"I would like to think that my life can now serve as an example to the young. Hopefully, they won't make the same mistakes that I did.

"Thank you all for your kindness and support."

— Jonathan Hart
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Georgia Institute of Technology

"Remember — Cthulhu loves you...for lunch."

The Difference of Experience

Party: We open the door and look in, but we don't enter the room (*there are some veterans of previous campaigns in this group*).

DM: You see a medium-small room. In the middle of the room is a pile of gold coins, about 10' high. You see various weapons and implements sticking out from the pile, all glowing with magical radiance. There is also a sign in the pile.

Party: (*In shocked disbelief, because I do not run Monty Hauls*) We read the sign.

DM: The sign, in common, says: "Monster Out to Lunch."

One of two neophytes to the game screams in delight and runs into the room, yelling "Mine! Mine! All mine!" He promptly disappears through the floor. The second neophyte ponders what he has just seen. He evaluates the ramifications and comes to the one conclusion a true rookie can make: "More for me!" he screams as he runs into the room.

The veterans shake their heads sadly and find a way to dispel the illusion that was over the acid pit.

— Douglas Holzworth
douglassh@meaddata.com
Mead Data Central
Dayton, Ohio

A pig ate his fill of acorns under an oak tree and then started to root around the tree. A crow remarked, "You should not do this. If you lay bare the roots, the tree will wither and die." "Let it die," said the pig. "Who cares so long as there are acorns?"

Yet Another Little Story

In this adventure our heroes have run into nearly every reptilian monster in the books, and most of them had been somewhat mutated, usually for the nastier. So, when they walk into a cavern and find a single, very tall, imperious looking Lizard Man, they don't go banzai immediately. Instead...

Lizard Man: Who are you, and what are you doing here?

PC: Er, well... (*Takes a quick look at the party: 2 humans and an elf*) We're from the, uh... Humans-Elves-Lizardmen League!

Lizard Man: (*Long pause*) Nice acronym.

Of course, then he started to whale on the poor PC, but that's life.

— Doug Dawson
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Lunar & Planetary Laboratory
Tucson, Arizona

"True evil is mundane. True terror is everyday. True darkness walks in the mid-day sun and smiles when you say hello."

— Bryan J. Maloney
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Purdue University

A Wish Come True

This PC... he had an eye put out by an arrow in an earlier campaign but now finds himself the recipient of a *wish*!

Party: What will you wish for?

PC: (*Grinning*) I'm *finally* going to correct my "limited outlook" on life! I wish my one eye was just like the other one!

DM: Everything goes black...

— Douglas Holzworth
douglassh@meaddata.com
Mead Data Central
Dayton, Ohio

"The only way to understand what mathematics mean by infinity is to contemplate the extent of human stupidity."

— Voltaire

End of the Universe

Many years ago, I was in a group that ran Traveller (with heavy modifications, especially in technology) over an extended period. One GM was particularly interested in having scientific reasoning behind lots of stuff. At one point, a character who was particularly prone to having extremely bad luck was caught inside of the event horizon of a black hole. He decided that the best way to get out was to *Jump* out

using the Traveller jump drive. The GM had previously decided on what principles his jump drives operated. When he heard what the character was doing, he just kind of sank his head into his hands. He then looked up and said, "You have just jumped simultaneously to every point in the universe. All of that matter collapses in on itself. The entire universe just collapsed into one enormous black hole. This campaign is over." God, the GM, picks up the black hole, shaking his head and *tsk-tsking*. He unravels the new universe. "Everyone roll up new characters."

— Brett Slocum
slocum@ssdc.honeywell.com

"People of Earth, your attention, please. As you will no doubt be aware, the plans for development of the outlying regions of the Galaxy require the building of a superspatial express route through your star system, and regrettably your planet is one of those scheduled for demolition. The process will take slightly less than two of your Earth minutes. Thank you."

— Prostetnic Vogon Jeltz
Hitchhiker's

Blowing up the World for the Sheer Helluvit
Famine! Chaos! Dogs and cats living together!
Ingrown toenails!

I've never blown up a campaign world out of anger, frustration, or spite before. But on numerous occasions, our group gets together to play a little homegame we affectionately refer to as "Zombie Bash". The rules fit on a single page. Fun, not realism, is the key. We use the same "system" for playing post-holocaust Road-Warrior-esque madness, too. But I digress.

Remember "Return of the Living Dead"? Well, Zombie-bashing starts just outside of town, about the time the nuke goes off. Wham! The PCs are far enough away to survive the immediate effects but are fully dosed to the gills with sub-atomic particles and gamma waves. They're gonna die in a few weeks anyway. This, I find, really helps add to the general futility and chaos that will follow.

Rumor has it that there is "rioting" in the city and that the military has attacked to suppress the revolt. The PCs then stumble across the "rioters" and discover that the Living Dead have an appetite. The ensuing flesh-feast usually consumes 4 out of 5 PCs

over the course of an evening's play. The idea isn't to survive — it's to go down with yer guns blazin', or yer axe swingin', or yer car burnin'. Style, man.

Anyway, whenever we get bored of having the best adventurers, shadowrunners, investigators, etcetera in town, a little Zombie Bash reminds us that *Inevitable Doom* is the name of the game.

— The Elder Dan

"The release of atom power has changed everything except our way of thinking... The solution to this problem lies in the heart of mankind. If only I had known, I should have become a watchmaker."

— Albert Einstein

The Nature of Mankind

A group of adventurers climbs over the wall, and they see the garden. In the middle of the garden, the DM tells them, is a Gazebo.

Player: What's it doing?

DM: (*Slightly confused*) Uh, nothing. Just sitting there.

Player: Does it seem to notice us?

DM: Uh, no, just sitting there.

Player: Is it asleep?

DM: It's not moving

Players: We sneak up and surround it (*detail routes and positions*). Attack!!!

DM: You've knocked it down.

Players: Is it moving?

DM: No...

Players: Keep attacking. Hack it into little pieces. We don't want to take any chances.

DM: Okay. A few minutes later, an old man with long robes and a big staff comes out of the house. "What have you done to my Gazebo?!" he cries.

— Pat Luther
luther@uop.uop.edu
University of the Pacific
Stockton, California

Sauramud's Advice Column for Young Wizardlings

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mmcalees@csr.uvic.ca

As those of you who keep up the on local celebrities may know, Sauramud is a wizard of some repute who possesses a shrewd eye on the vagaries of life as a wizard. Sooner or later it happened; he was approached by the Wizard Weekly News and asked to write an advice column. Once the fees had been discussed, he was more than willing to spread around his brand of wisdom. The following excerpts from his prolific pontifications have been reprinted with the W.W.N.'s permission.

Dear Sauramud: I'm having a difficult time coming up with the gold to obtain spell components and my adventuring companions are loathe to part with their extra treasure to help me out (the fighter keeps mumbling something about saving up for magic plate). What can I do to convince them to be more helpful?

Signed:
Component Needy

Dear Needy: The next time a magic sword or shield comes into the party's possession, demand an equal chance for ownership along with the others. If they balk because you can't use a sword, insist that you have as much right to any magic item as the next person does. If you win possession of it, make it generally known that you plan to sell it at the first town the party comes to but that you are open to reasonable offers from the other party members. It's amazing how loose the party purse strings can become when there's the prospect of losing a Magic Sword of Elven Puree. If this ploy doesn't work, then spike their rations with belladonna, pry the money out of their cold dead fingers, and buy yourself a new set of friends.

Dear Sauramud: Last week I was out dungeondelving with a few good friends when I had the misfortune to fall into a pit filled with water. I climbed out using the cleric as a sort of ladder, and he must have drowned while I was standing on his helm. Here

it is, nearly seven days later, and I'm still being yelled at by the other party members. They don't even seem to care that the pages of my spell book are all crinkly now that they've dried. What can I do to stop their endless whining?

Signed:
Fed Up

Dear Fed Up: Every cloud has a silver lining. You have to learn to accentuate the positive in situations like this. Say things like "Well at least we managed to salvage his armor and stuff" or "I'll bet you're glad that he wasn't the one carrying the map." If this doesn't break through their pettiness, then point out there's now one less way that the treasure and experience have to be divided up — that one gets 'em every time!

Dear Sauramud: I'm a beginning wizard and have just discovered that I'm not allowed to wear armor. Who decides this sort of thing? Isn't there a vote or something?

Signed:
Outraged Beginner

Dear Outraged: I'm afraid that the truth of the matter is that the gods hate wizards. Why else do you think everybody in the party hates their hardest working member; at low levels because he is exceptionally wimpy, can't wear armor, can't wield a weapon, and doesn't absorb enough damage to do much good. Just wait! If you live to become one of the elite who can reduce foes to sizzling strips of bacon with a wave and turn offensive townies into newts, then everybody hates you because they are afraid of you — and you *still* can't absorb a lot of damage! I can never figure out why people with the highest IQ's are always the ones stupid enough to take up wizardry as a profession. If I could do it again, I would have listened to my mother and become a butcher.

Dear Sauramud: The age-old question, which is better for a first spell, sleep or magic missile? I have a gold riding on this one.

Signed:

Anxiously Awaiting

Dear A.A.: You lose — they're both lousy for a first spell! Your best bet is to pick up the shield spell, then learn to hide behind the fighter and pray until you're fifth level.

Dear Sauramud: I'm not one to poke fun at the misfortunes of others, but whenever someone else in the party dies I make fun of them incessantly. What can I do to change? The other party members are talking about gagging me, which would play hell with spellcasting.

Signed:

Not one to talk

Dear N.O.T.T.: The problem here is that your party just doesn't appreciate you as a wizard — heck, you're the hardest working of that ugly lot and they rag on you because you get a little chuckle when one of them bites the big one? Let's see if *they* can laugh when they have to spend hours and hours every day pouring over a blurry spell book with crinkled pages while everybody else only has to polish his pig-sticker and pick the dead bits out of his armor.

Dear Sauramud: No matter how hard I try to disguise myself as a non-mage, every big ugly monster our party meets immediately spots me as a magic-user and directs most of their energy to dropping me fast. Needless to say, I wind up buying the farm every second adventure. The rest of the group is tired of shelling out for raise dead spells, and my health isn't what it used to be. Do you have any tips?

Signed:

Visibly Frustrated

Dear Frustrated: It's the unwritten law kid, everybody can peg a wizard! All you can do is learn to use the rest of the party more to your advantage. Hide behind the fighter and shout things like "Hey big ugly monster — the thief over there says your momma dresses you funny!" Get in the habit of placing inanimate objects between yourself and the monster; trees, rocks, dwarves — whatever's handy. Since

most monsters are even more stupid than a paladin, you can sometimes deflect their wrath away from yourself by appearing harmless. Try saying something like "Gosh! I wish now that I hadn't *used up all of my spells* for today already!" Then when it's scratching it's big ugly head, give it a lightning bolt up the schnauz!

Dear Sauramud: I realize this is a little out of your usual column range, but I need some advice. I'm a crow and the familiar of a certain wizard who shall remain nameless. My problem is that he tends to forget about my very existence and treats me like I don't exist (aside from the extra hitpoints he gets)! I haven't been fed for weeks. When I signed up for this job, no one told me room and board wasn't included! What can I do to make him notice me?

Signed:

Fading Fast

Dear Fading Fast: You mean some other poor sot got stuck with a *crow* for a familiar? Couldn't get something really neat like a quaiest or a brownie?! Must have been Lawful Good — we're always getting it up the backside in the rules. I know one poor sot who got a halibut — the rest of the party filleted it when he went back to the Wizards Guild to complain. Now take my lay-about familiar Whatsisname the cro... wait a minute!

Dear Sauramud: I can't figure out all this new selection we wizards are allowed. Should I specialize in a sphere or not? And whatever happened to the days of one profession for all?

Signed:

Uncertain

Dear Uncertain: Real wizards don't need spheres! Back in my time we used to get up every morning, rain or shine, pull on the ol' pointy hat and knuckle down to some serious study of the spell book. We didn't worry about wimpy things like *specialization*. We were real men damnit — there was none of this namby pamby I-only-do-spells-dealing-with-kelp.

Dear Sauramud: Is it considered bad form to cast *Charm Person* on the other members of the party to

cut down on useless chitchat? I mean, they'd just do what I advised anyway, right? After all, I am chaotic evil. I gotta have some fun.

Signed:

Puzzled About Protocol

Dear PAP: You're chaotic evil, and you're worried about protocol? Would that I had such problems! Charm them all you want — heck, if you're going to do that, why not just polymorph the lot of them into gorgeous babes too so you can have some fun after they're charmed! And whoever said there weren't any perks to being a wizard?

Dear Sauramud: What's the best place to cast Find Familiar at? What's the best kind of familiar to have?

Signed:

Lonely Apprentice Seeking Furry Friend

Dear L.A.S.F.F.: In a word, don't! Have you considered all of the ramifications of a familiar? You're just going to have to feed it and groom it and for what? A little roving target with your name on it! If you're really lonely for furry friendship, I know a monk in town who rents out sheep by the hour.

Alignment & Sorrow

Chaotic Evil means never having to say you're sorry.

Lawful Evil means never having to mean you're sorry.

Chaotic Neutral means you're often sorry, but oh well.

Lawful Good means you're just plain sorry.

Lawful neutral means that you're sorry but not liable.

Neutral good means you're always sorry.

Chaotic Good means you're really sorry, but you've got to run.

True neutral means that you may be sorry, but then again you may not.

Neutral Evil means you're never sorry, you see no need to be sorry, and you have a good laugh every time someone feels sorry around you.

— Thomas Omar Smith
a.k.a. Tom the non hacker
ts2a+@andrew.cmu.edu
Carnegie Mellon, Pittsburgh, PA

UPI — April 3, 1992. Baton Rouge, Louisiana:

Gary Gygax, the troubled founder of the Dungeons and Dragons game (now TSR inc.) and Steven Jackson, the creator of a popular rival role playing game, have agreed to settle the question of which game is better during Mardi Gras 1993. The method to resolve the dispute? "Wrestling in jello," said Mr. Gygax. "It's the only honorable way for gentlemen to settle disputes." Mr. Jackson, who's company was once raided by the Secret Service because it produced a game based on computer hacking, said, "Gary has always been a weenie. He should know that since I'm from Texas, I've already wrestled alligators in my swimming pool. He should be no problem."

The two founders have had many problems during the course of their careers. Mr. Gygax's games have been blamed for many teenage suicides and are said to encourage occult practices. He was also involved in a bitter dispute for control of his own business.

Mr. Jackson's company was nearly bankrupted by legal fees when the Secret Service confiscated computers and materials from the corporate offices because they believed the game GURPS Cyberspace was a manual for illegal computer hacking. Both men are said to be training daily at the level of Olympic athletes for the contest. The loser will be required to publically acknowledge that the winner's product is vastly superior and that his own is, "a worthless piece of crap... good only as toilet paper."

"The more things change, the more they stay insane."

Advertisements

and other droll meanderings

Desperately Seeking Submissions

Gryphon's Tome

A new, non-profit magazine called Gryphon's Tome is starting in Stockton and is currently seeking fiction, gaming articles, non-fiction, and artwork from writers who will donate articles w/o compensation (i.e. for the fame & the glory). If you always wanted to draw a comic for a bi-monthly gaming magazine, this could be your Golden Opportunity. Interested personages should email picard!pat@uop.uop.edu and ask for submission guidelines. Other questions should be email to the same address or to luther@uop.uop.edu.

— Pat Luther (Lex's Evil Twin)
luther@uop.uop.edu
University of the Pacific
Stockton, California

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*"Life's a big fuck and money is the lubricant
— without it, it hurts, and with it, it feels
really good."*



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J. H. LEE 92

"He who is certain he knows the ending of things when he is only beginning them is either extremely wise or extremely foolish; no matter which is true, he is certainly an unhappy man, for he has put a knife in the heart of wonder."