

The Silven
Trumpeter
The Official Magazine of Silven Crossroads

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From the Editor

Sound off!

Got an urge to send a note to our editor? Would you like to volunteer as a writer?

Write to Dana at
adriayna@yahoo.com

The topic of alignments has been a rather debated issue over the years, especially among tabletop gamers. Some systems work with literally no alignment, others use a shifting alignment scale, and still others encourage or require you to choose your alignment at the time you create your character. Even some CRPG games fall into the "alignment chosen at character creation" mold, or give the player no choice between the differing alignments. Are any of these systems the best way to look at alignment? I suppose it depends on the individual and/or the gaming group. Every individual who considers the subject will come up with a slightly different definition of what alignment is, how it works, and the difference between what is virtuous and what is villainous.

Perhaps though, if you want to look at alignment at all, it is better to look at it this way: it's not alignment that should dictate your character's actions but your character's actions that should dictate alignment.

With Halloween right around the corner, there is no better time to delve into the *dark side* of gaming. This month our extended feature article crawls out of the corruption, filth, and rot of all that is evil to shed a bit of light on the subject. Along the same *dark* theme, "For Love or Dragonflies" tells the story of a man in the middle of a bloody political power struggle, and "Antipodean Adventures" takes a look at some good, some bad, and some downright evil Bushrangers.

So what specifically is the *dark side*? What is it that makes something good? Evil? Neither? That is ultimately up to the reader to decide.

Best Regards,

Dana Driscoll

Dana Driscoll

Editor In Chief
Silven Crossroads E-zine



Top Industry News

Bioware Unveils the Jade Empire RPG World

As noted before, Bioware has been hinting about its own gaming universe which they are going to set some of their future RPG games in.

It is now officially here, information below:

<http://jade.bioware.com/>

d20 News: Malhavoc Book Takes You to Heaven and Hell

Game designer Sean K. Reynolds introduces us to the holy, the fallen, and the damned in his new d20 sourcebook *Anger of Angels*, on sale now from Malhavoc Press.

Anger of Angels gives you everything you need to run a campaign amid the Great War between Heaven and Hell, including 11 new races of angel and as many new kinds of demon, complete stat blocks for the angels and descriptions of eight archangels, geographical overviews of Heaven and Hell, plus new feats, prestige classes, mortal organizations, and angelic and demonic magic!

Sample some of the art and a preview free at:

http://www.montecook.com/mpress_Angels_PR.html

Book of Erotic Fantasy d20 License Terminated

WoTC has terminated the d20 license for Valar Project's *Book of Erotic Fantasy*. Valar has announced it will now be published as an OGL product. Details here:

<http://www.silven.com/news.asp?case=show&id=323>

WotC Changes d20 License Retroactively with 'decency' Clauses

Wizards of the Coast has revised the d20 license, creating an uproar among the d20 community and publishers. Many members of the d20 community are raising the question of hypocrisy over the recent termination of Valar Project's d20 license as Wizards has already published the controversial *Book of Vile Darkness*.

Discuss it here:

<http://www.silven.com/forums.asp?case=show&read&forumgroupid=6&forumsubsectionid=11&hreadid=1216>

White Wolf announces d20 versions of Trinity, Aberrant and Adventure!

Fans of the innovative and dynamic White Wolf role-playing games can look forward to new d20 hardcover editions of the acclaimed Trinity, Abberant, and Adventure! game settings, to be published under the popular d20 System.

"We wanted to make these exciting games available to the large audience of gamers who use the d20 rules," said Mike Tinney, President of White Wolf.

Gamingreport has the scoop here:

<http://www.gamingreport.com/article.php?sid=10298&mode=&order=0>

Seraphim Guard Launches Two New Game Lines

Seraphim Guard, publishers of *HeartQuest: Romantic Role-playing in the worlds of Shoujo Manga*, has announced the beginning of development on two new anime-style roleplaying games using the same system based on the FUDGE engine.

Seraphim Guard founder Michael Hopcroft commented "We've had good success with shoujo role-playing for two years now, but there are a lot of anime genres that have been under-covered in the RPG industry. In publishing new games, not only are we strengthening our line but we are bringing to new fans these exciting fields."

The two new games have the working titles "Spell-Slingers and Sword-Saints" and "Arena Gods."

Details are at the company website below:

<http://www.seraphimguard.com/>

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Gaming Tips by Scott Fitz

GM Block

GM block is a serious problem in the role-playing world. Related to writer's or actor's block, it prevents the GM from being creative and enthusiastic about his or her work. GMing can be very demanding. Each GM needs to be creative consultant, a director, an author, a referee, and still be everyone's friend after it is all said and done. Because it is a lot of candles to be burning at one time, it is only natural that one or more occasionally goes out. However, once the GM begins to falter, so does the game. To be honest, nothing stops a campaign cold more than a burned out GM.

The signs of burn out are obvious, if you know what to look for: a) lack of enthusiasm for your own play; b) throwing the same old plots at your players time and time again; c) seeing your scenarios fall flat on a regular basis; d) not finding a new hook or way to go in your campaign; and e) players expressing dissatisfaction about the game which they never have before. If you believe any of these are happening to you, you might be suffering from some degree of burn-out. If your players notice it, then you are definitely suffering from burn out, which could be the cause of your GM block.

There is hope. There are a number of things you can do to revitalize your creative juices and GM power.

Sometimes there are physical reasons for why you are not feeling creative. Try to make sure you are getting enough quality sleep, taking in a little exercise, and limiting the amount of chemical modifiers you are taking (caffeine and nicotine being the biggest contributors). If you have any physical ailments, try to get them resolved. You can't do your best when you don't feel your best.

Sometimes you just need a change of pace. Trying going someplace new, or just different, from where you normally go to prepare or play. The change of location may help you to dislodge the GM block.

Most people have a time of day when they're the most creative. Do your brainstorming then. If you don't know what time you are most creative, try a number of times out till you hit the magic time. Always leave a notebook and pencil by your bedside. You might wake up with a new approach that can get you started again. Also, carry a "little writer's notebook" with you. That way, you can capture good ideas as they occur.

Read! I've been burned out before, and reading new things always reawakens my imagination. I personally read fantasy books to stimulate my creativity but any genre will work. The books do not have to game related fiction. In fact, books of a type you never normally read are best for inspiring you. Along the same theme, watch movies with different themes. A western can give you ideas completely different from ideas inspired by a martial arts movie. Get ideas from dramas, mysteries, suspense, horror, and more. Reading and watching movies may have some feature that might provide the spark of inspiration from which a campaign might be born.

Use your eyes and your ears. Artwork, both fine and graphic, are great sources of inspiration. You can get ideas from a painting of the countryside, a castle, or maybe even a portrait. Flip through your books and see what kind of artwork is in them. I recommend the annual Spectrum book series as the best inspiration art book of all time. On the same note, music can be a great inspiration. Check out music (and its lyrics) of genres and nationalities other than what you normally listen. Many songs tell stories other than boy + girl + complication = love of some sort. Those songs can inspire adventures.

Sometimes you need some help to get over the rough spots in your creative drought. Don't be afraid to read and borrow stuff from others. Take ideas and add them together. Role playing magazines always have little things that help a GM, and they can be scoured for ideas you could use.

Review your previous work. It might help to go looking through some of your old material. Look back at other things you have written, and try revising them to fit your current campaign. Also, the players may react differently to a situation than another group of players. If they do, this will get you thinking on a different line.

Try developing different parts of a campaign that you haven't already. See what the players could explore, be it physical, emotional, or spiritual. Try a moral dilemma instead of your normal court intrigue or combat. Take the group to a new part of your world as of yet unexplored. An invasion from

space or another plane will always take a game in new directions.

Another tactic is writing small pieces of information or creative thought. Writings could be one line of a scene description; three sentences describing the organization of a religion; a fast write-up for an NPC; some game mechanics; a new monster; or even a game tip. Once you can begin to write things down, they can inspire you to move on to other things.

Note: The hardest part of being creative is "the starting." Try taking pieces of the middle of what you want to do, then go back and work on the beginning or end.

Ask a friend who is not involved in your current campaign read over your work. Talk about it and see what ideas he or she has that can be integrated. There is no such thing as bad constructive criticism. If the friend doesn't like something about it, change it or make it better. Listen to his or her comments and suggestions no matter how negative they might be regarding your ideas. After all, you don't have a better idea... at this time.

If you can, try writing a short story. Make your brain work in a different way. Put something down on the paper, anything. Make it small. Start in the middle or write just a piece of it. Make an outline. Think creatively about something unrelated. Spend time just sitting quietly day dreaming. Take a break. Give up for awhile and do something different. Most likely, you are burned out because you are overworked. Enjoy some down time to rest your brain. Curl up with a good book and let yourself drift to a different place.

If it does not work for you one way, try another. Consider switching to another campaign setting or system. A new setting may be a refreshing break from the standard things your players are used to. If you play fantasy all the time, use a different section of your brain and try a science fiction game. Sometimes you really need a break from the usual. A change is definitely required if you're out of ideas or burnt out.

A major change is that you can even try playing for a while, letting someone else take over the GM's chair. Recharge your batteries by not using them, but not growing rusty by still playing.

Something I can not stress enough--tell people. As you are working through a case of GM block or GM burnout, make sure to inform your players that you are blocked. Sometimes this is in the form of an apology for the games you have been running. This way they know about your issue and can adjust. Sometimes they can even help.

There is no magic formula for resolving GM block. It is as individual as each individual GM. However, these techniques have worked for many GMs (and authors and actors) over the years and are a great place to start.

Discuss article at Silven Crossroads

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Text-Only version

▶ <http://www.silven.com/print.asp?case=article&camefrom=ezone&id=56>



The Seven Blades of Samanume

by Matt Haught

Samanume Okasa was quite possibly the most legendary swordsmith of the eastern kingdoms. Hailing from a long line of swordsmen and smiths, he learned his craft at the feet of the undisputed masters of his clan. Even as a youth, Okasa showed remarkable aptitude for the arcane and the divine arts, as well as his family's traditional occupation. It was clear to his elders that he would surpass them in skill and talent, and his blades would bring honor and glory to the clan. Combining magic and skill, he began forging enchanted blades for the clan's greatest samurai to use in battle. So armed, the armies of the Samanume clan subdued their neighbors, but made no attempt to expand in a war of conquest.

As his reputation grew, Okasa began to search for new and exotic ways of crafting ever more powerful weapons. His quest took him to the centers of elemental power throughout the known lands, from the deepest ocean to the highest mountain, and from restless volcanoes to fallen citadels. As his pride swelled with each new blade, he even sought to harness the destructive power of the Void and imbue a weapon with it. This mistake cost him dearly. The blade, which came to be known as Well Drinker, took on a will of its own, and sought to destroy its creator and all that he held dear. To this end, it manipulated and corrupted all who wielded it; until it found its way into the hands of an undead warrior long thought banished and destroyed.

To atone for this evil, and in an attempt to save himself and his clan from annihilation, Samanume crafted the last of his legendary blades: Cleansing Light. He poured his hopes, his dreams and even his soul into this last weapon of surpassing goodness, hoping against hope that he could create a blade powerful enough to oppose his failure and its wielder. Though the creation cost him his life, he succeeded.

The great champions of all the clans assembled, each bearing one of Samanume's legendary katanas. Together they beat back the horde of undead raised by their enemy, and returned the lands to peace.

Well Drinker could not be undone, but it was subdued and neutralized. It resides now in the heart of the Samanume clan fortress, held in check by the power of Cleansing Light. In turn, the great holy sword cannot be removed from the vault without releasing its dark twin. The other five blades have become scattered across the world as their wielders inevitably perished in battle, and wait for the time when a worthy warrior should lift them in battle once more.

Rampart

The first of Samanume's legendary katanas, *Rampart* is an *Adamantine Construct-Bane Katana +2* forged from the great adamantine portcullis buried in the ruins of Kosa Castle. It grants its wielder DR 5/adamantine when held. *Rampart* can inflict critical hits upon constructs and objects, as well as creatures protected by *fortification* effects.

Damage: 1d10 + 2 19-20x2 Slashing; or vs. constructs 1d10 + 4 + 2d6 19-20x2 Slashing

Plus Equivalents: +7 (+2 enhancement, +2 *bane*, +2 DR special ability)

Caster Level: 15th

Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *Stoneskin*, *Shatter*

Market Price: 101,400

Cost to Create: 50,900gp + 3920 xp

Heatstroke

The second of Samanume's blades, this *Flaming Water-Bane Katana* +2 was forged in the fires of Mount Hirosaki from molten volcanic ore. The smith took the white-hot blade and plunged it in the snowcap surrounding the crater, but the blade never fully cooled. The red-hot blade does not harm the wielder, but anything flammable may catch fire (Reflex save DC 15 for attended or magical items) if struck. Upon a successful critical hit, *Heatstroke* inflicts 1d2 temporary points of Con damage from dehydration in addition to normal critical hit damage. This Con damage affects plants and oozes as well as creatures protected by *fortification* effects, but otherwise does not affect undead or constructs. Creatures of the Water subtype trigger the sword's *bane* ability and take double Con damage on a critical hit. This Con damage can be restored by a day's rest with plenty of fluids.

Damage: 1d10 + 1d6[Fire] + 2 19-20x2 Slashing; or vs. creatures of the Water subtype 1d10 + 1d6[Fire] + 4 + 2d6 19-20x2 Slashing

Plus Equivalents: +7 (+2 enhancement, +2 *bane*, +1 *flaming*, +2 special ability)

Caster Level: 17th

Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *Horrid Wilting*, *Heat Metal*

Market Price: 98,400

Cost to Create: 49,400gp + 3920 xp

Tsunami

The third of Samanume's legendary blades, this *Acidic Fire-Bane Katana* +2 was forged from the keels of sunken warships and quenched in the Sea of the Drowned. Samanume forged this blade for the legendary samurai Ichitara Osaki, who was widely known for his two-blade fighting style. In the hands of a character that possesses the Exotic Weapon Proficiency [Katana], Two-Weapon Fighting and Improved Two-Weapon fighting feats, *Tsunami* forms a twin blade in the wielder's free hand. This blade is a lesser version of *Tsunami*, being a *katana* +1 that counts as a light weapon for the purposes of fighting with two weapons. Creatures of the Fire subtype trigger the sword's *bane* ability.

Damage: 1d10 + 1d6[Acid] + 2 19-20x2 Slashing; or vs. creatures of the Fire subtype 1d10 + 1d6[Acid] + 4 + 2d6 19-20x2 Slashing

Plus Equivalents: +7 (+2 enhancement, +2 *bane*, +1 *acidic*, +2 special ability)

Caster Level: 13th

Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *Mage's Sword*, *Melf's Acid Arrow*, *Create Water*

Market Price: 98,400

Cost to Create: 49,400, +3920 xp

Kamikaze

The fourth of Samanume's storied katanas, this *Anarchic Frost Katana* +2 was quenched not by water, but by the icy winds of the storms that howl endlessly at the top of Mount Hirosaki. When the wielder performs a Whirlwind Attack, *Kamikaze* surrounds its bearer with a swirling windstorm that provides one-half concealment (20% miss chance) and bestows the effects of a *protection from normal missiles* spell. This whirlwind lasts for 1d6 rounds.

Damage: 1d10 + 1d6[Cold] + 2 19-20x2 Slashing; or vs. lawful creatures 1d10 + 1d6[Frost] + 2d6 + 2 19-20x2 Slashing

Plus Equivalents: +7 (+2 enhancement, +2 *anarchic*, +1 frost, +2 special ability)

Caster Level: 15th

Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *Chill Metal or Ice Storm*, *Obscuring Mist*, *Chaos Hammer*

Market Price: 98,400

Cost to Create: 49,400, +3920 xp

Moonbeam

This *Silver Brilliant Energy Katana* +3 was crafted from purest silver for Samanume's Samurai daughter. In the hands of a male, it is merely a *katana* +1. In a woman's hands, though, its full potential is recognized. The blade transforms into a shaft of pure moonlight, ignoring physical armor. In essence, the user need only make a touch attack to score a hit. The sword grants its user Darkvision (90') and a +2 bonus to saves against *fear* effects. Because of the nature of the blade, it cannot be used with Parry or any similar Feats, nor can it affect constructs or objects. Unlike most *brilliant energy* weapons, however, it is fully effective against undead.

Damage: 1d10 + 2 19-20x2 Slashing

Plus Equivalents: +8 (+3 enhancement, +4 *brilliant energy*, +1 other abilities)

Caster Level: 22nd

Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft **Epic** Magic Arms and Armor, *Gaseous Form*, *Continual Flame*, *Darkvision*

Market Price: 278,400

Cost to Create: 144,400, +11520 xp

Well Drinker

This *Keen Ghost Touch Katana* +5 was the sixth blade forged by the great Nihon sword master, Samanume. Composed of the finest layered steel so heavily infused with the non-essence of the Void that the blade itself has become semi-ethereal, *Well Drinker* thirsts to consume all life. Samanume sought ever more powerful sources for his weaponry, and after exhausting all other sources, he turned to the Void. Thus, reluctantly, he started work on *Well Drinker*. When Samanume brought the unfinished blade to his family's ancestral spring, still red hot in its bed of coals, he found a pair of *ronin* defiling the sacred waters by bathing in them. In a fit of uncharacteristic rage, he slew them with the still-hot blade. The sword, tempered in the blood of men, was fated to drink often from the well of life.

Well Drinker, in addition to the properties mentioned above, inflicts half of its total damage (round down) as negative energy damage. If wielded in one hand, the sword only applies half of its wielder's Strength bonus to damage. If wielded in two hands, the sword only applies normal strength bonuses (not 1.5X). If wielded in the off-hand, the sword does not benefit from a high Strength. Upon any successful critical hit, *Well Drinker* casts *destruction* (DC 20) upon its target. *Well Drinker* is an intelligent weapon (Int 5, Wis 15, Cha 15, Chaotic Evil).

Damage: 1d10 + 5 17-20x2 Slashing/Negative

Plus Equivalents: +14 (+5 enhancement, +1 *keen*, +1 *ghost touch*, +4 *Destruction* criticals, +2 Negative Energy damage, +1 Intelligent)

Caster Level: 24th

Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft **Epic** Magic Arms and Armor, *Keen Edge*, *Destruction*, *Plane Shift*

Market Price: 392,400

Cost to Create: 196,400, +23120 xp

Cleansing Light

The seventh and last of Samanume's blades, *Cleansing Light* was the swordsmith's attempt to atone for the forging of *Well Drinker*. This *Holy Undead-Bane Katana of Disruption* +5 illuminates all undead within 60' of the unsheathed blade with a faint luminescence equivalent to *faerie fire*. Upon a successful critical hit, an undead must make a Will save (DC 18) to avoid the *disruption* effect. Undead susceptible to sunlight take double damage from *Cleansing Light*. The wielder is also protected as by the spell *negative plane protection* whenever the weapon is held and unsheathed. *Cleansing Light* can issue forth a *sunbeam*, as the spell, once per day. Finally, if used in the hands of a Paladin or Cleric who can channel positive energy, the weapon can issue forth additional *sunbeams*. The Paladin or Cleric can sacrifice one use of his Turning ability to call forth the beam.

Damage: 1d10 + 5 19-20x2 Slashing; or vs. evil creatures 1d10 + 5 + 2d6 19-20x2 Slashing; or vs. undead 1d10 + 7 + 2d6 Slashing; or vs. evil undead 1d10 + 7 + 4d6 19-20x2 Slashing

Plus Equivalents: +14 (+5 enhancement, +2 *holy*, +2 *bane*, +2 *sunbeam*, +2 *disruption*, +2 *protection*)

Caster Level: 25th

Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft **Epic** Magic Arms and Armor, *Holy Smite*, *Continual Light*, *Sunburst*, *Consecrate*, *Negative Energy Protection*

Market Price: 450,400

Cost to Create: 225,400 +18,000 xp

For OGL compliance of this material see the first link below



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▶ <http://www.silven.com/adnd.asp?case=show&id=105>

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▶ <http://www.silven.com/print.asp?case=sectionarticle&camefrom=adnd&id=105>

The Inns and Outs of Evil

by Dana Driscoll and Lance Kepner

Lance and Dana are both in an evil aligned campaign with Lance as a player and Dana as the DM. They have teamed up here to give you both sides of running an evil aligned game.

Part 1 - The DMs Perspective

In this first part Dana takes the reins and shows you the DMs side of running an evil campaign with commentary from Lance.

Good vs. Evil:

Why would anyone want to play in an Evil campaign? My group began playing evil because two of my players were interested in trying it. I wasn't too sure at first—after all, there seems to be a RPG reaction to avoid evil, but I was willing to give it a try. I asked the rest of the group and got mostly negative or disinterested responses. Still, I encouraged the group to make the attempt for several sessions. If they did not like playing evil, we could pick up our good campaign once more. They agreed, and we have been having a blast playing evil every weekend since.

When you break it down, DMing an evil campaign is fundamentally different from DMing a good campaign. This is simply because of the nature of good and evil. Evil is the antagonist—the instigator. Evil masterminds plots, kills, steals, cheats, and bribes with no consideration of others. Good simply reacts to evil's actions. Most of the time, good groups need something evil to stop, someone to save, or something wrong to set right. In most cases, for a good party to act, evil has to stir up trouble. Evil PCs have very few limitations when compared to good PCs. There is nothing an evil PC cannot do—often this involves consequences, but truly, evil PCs have complete freedom. Evil characters may even commit acts of good if it furthers their aims.

Does this mean that evil is easier to DM than good? It honestly depends on the gaming group you have. I have found that good is much easier to prepare for, but evil is easier to wing it. I have also found that good needs more coaxing, more pre-planning as far as plot goes, but less work on group cohesion. Evil groups require little preparation, but usually group cohesion is an issue. And while you might not have to prepare as much for an evil campaign, you will have to

respond to the group and players much, much more. If you are a DM that has trouble with “on the fly” games, DMing an evil campaign will probably be more difficult. If, however, you enjoy DMing by the seat of your pants, you are in for a treat!

In essence, the difference between DMing a good campaign vs. DMing an evil campaign is that the role of the players and DM is often reversed. In good, the players react while the DM plots ahead and plans. In evil, the players are often the instigators, leaving the DM to handle reactions and consequences.

Lance: *The same goes for the players too. More evil PCs will have their own agendas than good PCs. This involves extortion, bribery, murder, theft, and grand larceny. It's fun but a lot of work to plan everything out! Evil makes you think.*

Beginning an Evil Campaign:

How does one begin an evil campaign? For players, the process is no different than creating a good character. They choose a background, class, race, personality, etc. There are several areas DMs should consider when giving boundaries for character creation, covered below in the “Character Creation” section. For a DM, however, major consideration is required on a number of issues before running your first session. These include what additional sourcebooks will be allowed/used, how to keep your PCs from killing each other, and how to get them to work together.

First, let's discuss the sourcebooks. *The Book of Vile Darkness (BoVD)* by Monte Cook is a must-have for any evil campaign. There are new feats, new spells, evil prestige classes, new evil items, and some very vicious monsters lurking within the covers of the *BoVD*. The *BoVD* also covers areas on which good rarely treads—sacrifice, sadism, vile acts, vile gods, evil weather, torture and execution devices, and drugs to name a few. I did not give my players free access to everything within the pages of the *BoVD*. Usually, some in-character research or effort was involved. For example, the spell casters had to do extensive research to access the spells contained within. Feats (such as Thrall to a Demon) required finding a demon and signing a contract, making an exchange, and some other form of

sacrifice. Familiarizing yourself with this book and putting good use to the information within will help you immensely with your evil campaign.

The second book I purchased was *Evil* published in 2001 by AEG (Alderac Entertainment Group, Inc). What I liked best about this book is that, unlike the very short section Monte Cook wrote about how to run an evil campaign in the *BoVD*, *Evil* dedicates over half of the information in the book to evil campaigns. Titled "Mercy is for the Weak" the second half of the book takes a DM through almost every aspect of running an evil campaign. Not only are there tips and tricks for beginning and designing a campaign, there are also sections on the sometimes overlooked aspects of society and how they relate or are affected by evil—politics, economics, geography, demographics, sites of interest, religion, magic, and NPCs. Both books are excellent and contain very different types of valuable information for use in your evil campaign. Also, look forward to *The Book of Erotic Fantasy*, which is set to hit the shelves in October.

The next consideration to ponder when designing an evil campaign is how to keep your PCs from killing each other. They are all evil, after all, and they will have no compunctions about murder. While PC free will is great, this makes for a pretty lousy gaming session for one or more players who have to keep rolling up new characters. There are several tactics I have used to keep the party together. The most obvious way is to give them a common enemy or a similar goal. If this is a particularly difficult goal or enemy, common sense will tell them that the more people they have to help, the better their chances of survival. The second way is simply to use their pasts. If the PCs grew up together, are related, or survived some trauma together, they are more likely to get along. A third way to keep the PCs from killing each other is to use in-game motivators, such as NPCs. In the first session of my evil campaign, I did not require that the PCs create their histories to encompass the entire group. Several PCs took that option, but I left the character creation completely in their hands.

Keeping PCs from killing each other and getting them to work together go hand in hand, as when they are working together, they are not at each other's throats. What I did to promote both was to use an in-game solution. At our first session, I used a local NPC mercenary lord, known as The Ackdar, to help promote group cohesion. First, the Ackdar hired the PCs to kidnap an old loremaster and bring him back alive to the Ackdar's palace. The Ackdar did not offer the group a lump sum of money but rather individual, equal rewards so that if they killed each other, it

would not increase their profits. Capturing the loremaster alive took more planning than simply slitting his throat, so the PCs knew that if they wanted the reward, they would need to work together. This worked surprisingly well, and no PCs were lost in the first session.

What should your first session be like? My best advice is to listen to your players during character creation. It is quite possible that through their ideas of what their characters want to accomplish or their past histories, you might not have to come up with anything at all but rather build off of what your players create. Developing a strong authority figure worked in my case. Other ideas include: they are all prisoners working to escape, mutineers on a ship, or part of a mercenary band being hunted by the law. Once you get them working together, the sky is the limit!

Lance: *Playing an evil PC takes some consideration, but that gets pretty pointless fast. My character had an eye to be an assassin, a hired mercenary with skills. That idea lasted two sessions before game events opened the career path of Lord of The Universe. Evil PCs develop sometimes in deeper ways, because of the planning and effort needed to keep them alive on a daily basis. Strong characters are a must, and don't be surprised if your fighter with an INT of 8 starts buying Headbands of Intellect because being the smartest usually means surviving the longest.*

Character Creation:

When I began the evil campaign, I did not have any specific requirements for my players in creating characters. However, depending on your group, you might want to give your players some character creation guidelines. Here are some things to watch out for:

- Having too many chaotic evil characters can end in a bloody mess. Alignment can be tricky, because CE can still be played quite well and work in a group. For example, one of my CE PCs, who is probably most of the players' favorite, is a gnome cleric of Nerull. His whole goal is death, slaying, and killing. He also wants to seek revenge on the church of Heironeous. Since running with the party increases his funds for his masterminded plot and gives him lots of living things to kill, he is fine.
- Another issue you have to watch is hatred. This is pretty much a no-brainer. If you have a proposal for a human fighter who despises all halflings and the other three proposed characters are halflings, you will have bit of a problem.
- I recommend having each of your players create an extensive character background and

personality. This will help you and them get the most out of the sessions. What made them become evil? Were they good at one time and fell into evil?



Character art by
Florin Badita

Lance: *Evil characters are quirky. A good player always adds some quirks to his or her characters, but in an evil campaign it's necessary. This accomplishes a few things. One, it usually means giving your character a vice, a vice that can get you into lots of trouble. It also keeps you on the down low. If you take an invincible character into an evil campaign, you will probably not live three sessions because of that attitude. Perfect evil beings don't exist because the characters with the "I hate perfect people" quirk killed them all.*

The Larger Campaign:

Even if you do not have a larger campaign planned out and you have creative PCs, you don't need to worry. The beauty of evil is that your PCs will create their own campaign. In fact, I advise against throwing an evil group into a straightjacket campaign where there are very few choices and little time off. Let them be free to plunder, plot, and pillage, all with dire consequences, of course. When you run an evil campaign the way I have described, consequences are the key to keeping the PCs on their toes. Keep track of every individual the

PCs cross, upset, kill, and steal from, as each of these people, their friends, or families will wish for recompense. Various groups may even work together to see to the downfall of the PCs. Countless sessions of mine have simply been the PCs going off individually and working on their diabolical or economic plans. While it is very interesting, in a large group like mine, these sessions tend to get a bit long. To counter this, if each PC has something that he or she wants to accomplish by him or herself, I often encourage them to talk to me outside of the game so that I can keep things moving.

Lance: Many times the evil players won't care one bit about the larger campaign. Don't let this get you down. The most important thing to an evil character is usually himself or herself, followed by the propagation of his wealth or evil. The campaign you have planned is usually a stepping-stone for evil PCs to accomplish their own motives.

Location:

One of the reasons I believe that my evil campaign was a success is because of location. I started the PCs in a place where evil types would be sure to be found—in the nearly lawless city of Machazau headed by the chaotic evil mercenary lord, the above mentioned Ackdar. The Ackdar has two laws for those living in town—don't mess with his stuff and don't wear green clothing, as that is his own personal favorite. This setting gave them a place to create a small headquarters for their operations and gave them leeway as far as the law went when they were first starting out. When they did go to other cities, especially good-aligned cities, they usually got themselves in trouble. The lawless hive comes at its own price, however. Things are dangerous, even deadly, and the PC's only hope of survival in the long run is to be the strongest, be defended, and stick together.

Location was the key factor in my campaign. From their headquarters, each PC could individually branch out and start whatever plots and schemes he or she saw fit. In this case, it also served as a way of uniting the group.

Lance: *As a player, it is important in an evil campaign to be aware of all the "players" in a city. Knowing who runs what in the location you're in is key to survival. Also, knowing the border areas and kingdoms is important. Evil in this sense is often more complicated than good, and much more a strain on the DM when a player asks out of the blue, "How many thieves' guilds do I know exist in the city, who are their leaders, what are their colors/tags, and where are there hideouts?"*

Plans and Schemes:

What is evil without a diabolical plot? Every one of my eight players has something he or she is scheming. Evil PC plots can be as elaborate as taking over an entire city to plotting to kill the next-door neighbor.

Deciding how to handle PC schemes and plots will probably take up a lot of your time. The key is to be as realistic as possible without discouraging your PCs. While no plot is going to run absolutely perfectly, I do not recommend putting a glitch in every plot to be sure it fails. Every plot will usually be faced by some sort of competition or problem: another evil group trying to foil the PC's plans, the wrong people getting wind of a scheme, or a good party trying to stop them. However, if the PCs have thought of everything, planned well, and kept their mouths shut, there should be no reason for a plan to fail. If they are stupid and word leaks out, their plans have the possibility of collapse. Keep in mind that your PCs are not the only evil people in the world—there are others just as evil working on their own, possibly conflicting plots and schemes.

I was truly amazed by the creativity and inventiveness of my PCs. One PC decided to start a whorehouse, which has turned into a successful, profitable business. She had to deal with advertising, competition, unruly customers, recruiting whores, hiring guards, etc. Another PC, the CE Cleric of Nerull mentioned before, has the goal of storming the nearby church of Heironeous in the area. Since the church of Heironeous happens to not only be in the middle of a good-aligned city two days travel from the PCs but also is extremely well defended, his planning, recruiting, and collecting the army of undead is taking a lot of time and effort. Another PC is working to build a fighting arena/coliseum. Yet another is manufacturing drugs, while a third is working on marketing addictive candy to children. When you give your PCs the reigns, it is interesting to see what they will create.

Lance: *Evil plans always have holes. Don't try to find or make a foolproof plan, there isn't one. When scheming, just be open to all events, and prepared to scrap the entire plan to save your life. And remember the consequences!*

Consequences & Reputation:

Chances are, your PCs are going to get on the bad side of many, many people. Again, keep it as realistic as possible. How would these people (or their friends/family working for revenge) act? Often, the people who are out to "get" the PCs are as intelligent as the group and have the

resources to spare. Do not be afraid to entrap them, teach them a lesson, or throw them in jail. They have to learn to deal with their actions.

The PCs may build up a reputation for themselves because of their many acts of evil. Don't hesitate to send a good party full of paladins to search for them. Quite a few of my PCs have prices on their heads and wanted posters plastered to the walls of good churches and lawfully aligned cities. While this fact may cause them a great deal of trouble, most of them are rather proud of the recognition and work diligently to get their "numbers" up.

Closing Thoughts:

I highly recommend giving evil-aligned games a try. Even though my group was hesitant at first, I believe we have all had a more enjoyable time playing evil than good. As a DM of an evil group, you will face new challenges that you have never encountered while playing good. Embrace the challenge and expect a rewarding experience.

Lance: *I, for one, have had a blast. It was a much more intelligent and thought-demanding game than any good campaign. You have to be prepared for everything. There are many roles to assume, and the entire party can fit in. Maybe I get more out of it because I am technically the "leader" of the evil party. Being such I must be that much more dastardly and cautious, as well as look out for the well being of my comrades in evil. Look for my article next month when I delve into the world of Evil PCs.*

Part 2 - The Players Perspective

In the last part we took a look at evil from the DM's perspective with commentary from the player. Now, Lance Kepner takes the reins with information for the player, with commentary from Dana Driscoll, the DM.

Character Concept and Creation:

The key to an evil campaign from a player's point of view is power. Power is divided into two separate, yet equally important, classifications. These classifications are actual power and perceived power. What an evil character strives for is actual power. What an evil character must realize, however, is that a large percentage of all power is perceived and that perceived power used correctly can be actual power.

It is imperative that a player starting an evil character has a clear idea of the ambition of that character as it will greatly influence that character's development. As I said in the last

month's article in my comments, it is nigh impossible to fully plan an evil character's development, as there are just too many factors in an evil setting. But, a character's level of ambition will most likely never change. For example, when I started my character, I intended him to be a rogue and possibly an assassin; his ambition level was high for the simple fact that he wanted to steal incredibly memorable and important items. When it was time for him to look down a new career path: the wizard, his ambition didn't change, but his goals did. As long as you know what kind of ambition interests your character (and you have the intelligence to utilize the ambition), any class can be used equally in evil. However, I would suggest, for versatility's sake, multiclassing a caster mixed with a non-caster, such as rogue/wizard or a cleric/fighter.

I have personally found that playing a well-rounded character provides a much more invigorating and usually longer-lasting experience. At first, a well-rounded character in an evil setting tends to have a balanced variety of skills that not only serve to further the character's power, but also to keep that power "under the radar." At about mid-game, your versatility starts coming to the forefront and you start being recognized by the party for that versatility. In the late game, your versatility is usually insurmountable by the rest of your scheming co-patriots.

Dana: *I would suggest to the DM's out there to let your players be creative. I cannot stress enough that to run an effective, fun, and thought-provoking evil campaign, you need to be as flexible and free as possible in how you run the game. This does not mean throwing out rules or allowing over-powered combos, but be willing to let your players have freedom starting at character creation and continuing onward. For players-get an idea of what type of personality and drive your character will have. Class determines a lot, but not everything. In my campaign, some of the best schemes were not developed by the wizards or sorcerers but rather by fighters. Just because you have chosen to play a fighter or other melee-oriented class, do not let your class limit your goals and motivations.*

Group Cohesion:

There are many different factors that go into the creation of an evil group. Group cohesion is probably the most important for long-term survival. If you have a nice DM, you may have a situation in which your evil party has worked together before, are friends, or have a mutual pre-existing understanding of each other. In any

other situation, it is extremely difficult for evil PCs to coalesce into an evil group. You need the group, as I have said before, primarily for survival. There truly is strength in numbers. Unlike a good party that utilizes each character's strengths to make a better group, an evil party facilitates only the common goal of survival. Nothing else is ever as important.

This fundamental of aspect of evil groups leads to very interesting group dynamics. You must always remember that an evil group is together because it is easier to survive that way. As long as you understand this, group dynamics should never tear a group apart. Any disruption to the group that can adversely affect the group's survival probabilities must be dealt with swiftly and harshly. For example, in our party, there was a very mischievous elven female bard who had evaded a trap which had caught the rest of the party. She saw fit (as any evil character would) to immediately make off with the prize of that adventure. What she didn't count on, however, was the party's escape from the trap. The party soon caught up with her, just as she was laying claim to the reward for the prize. She was subsequently tortured and brutally slain (after slain, she was raised as a zombie by the cleric necromancer and added to his undead minions). The moral of this story, from an evil perspective, is not simply "do not betray your allies," but rather, "when you betray your allies, you had better make damn well sure that they are dead, and until then, don't betray your allies."

Group members will always have personality clashes. While the first few sessions may be rough and require some softer words, evil characters will generally recognize by the third session or so that their survival is dictated by the cooperation of the group.

Dana: *To a DM, group cohesion is always a prime concern. After all, you do not want to end up running a different session for each character. While you can push and prod for the group to work together, it is ultimately up to the PCs. Don't be afraid or angry if the group kills one or more members-in the long run, this can actually work out for the group's benefit. Each time a PC was lost or a new player joined the game, I made them start out at the base experience for one level lower than the average level of the group. This helped to keep things in balance and kept PCs from getting themselves killed every session.*

Character Plans:

As Dana said in the previous article, good reacts while evil acts. Evil characters will always be the masterminds and the masters of scheming and

plotting. Therefore, it is essential, as an evil character, to develop your own diabolical plans. Whether these range from destroying the life of your former best friend or conquering the world, the plan is always at the heart of the matter. Generally speaking, a character's plans are as intimate as undergarments and shared with others about as much (if you want an example of a great 'masterminded' plot, check out the recent movie *The Count of Monte Cristo*). One must constantly be wary as to what the other PCs in the group are planning and how those plans might affect one's own plans and possible survivability. In evil, the old adage is quite applicable "keep your friends close and your enemies closer." Maybe in another article I will delve into the madness that evil plans and give some instructions as to how to better formulate those plans, but for this article, simply understand that your plan is your life.

Dana: *Individual plans were a large part of some of my sessions. Sometimes the PCs would even work in small groups on a scheme, but with all the PCs, there was something they were plotting that was theirs and theirs alone. I suggest keeping a good supply of scrap paper or sticky-notes at the table for passing notes on private matters. If the private matter is going to take time, ask the player to come in early and go to another room to take care of individual matters.*

After a while, I realized that to be able to react to the schemes of the PCs, I had to document everything they were doing. I began keeping detailed notes, both on the individual PCs and his or her plans and on the group in general (including where they had been, what they had done, who they had pissed off). These notes came in especially handy when I was preparing before a session. If I was stumped for ideas or wanted a change, I would simply have one of their enemies lay out a trap. Make it realistic though-if the PCs kill someone important, it may be weeks or months before the murderers are discovered or the case is solved. It may take even more time for the good parties to track down the culprits and find a way to ensnare them. Be creative.

Repercussions:

Understand that every action you take in the world has a consequence. Since a DM in an evil campaign can usually only interact with the players by reacting to their actions, you must constantly be aware of how substantial your actions are, and thus how substantial the reactions are. Do not think that if you kill a wealthy and renowned merchant (as we did), you will get away with it without any repercussions.

Those repercussions may take time, but I guarantee you, they are coming. Therefore, it is essential, and I hope this sheds some light on the nature of evil, that your primary goal for the initial stages of your evil character's life is defense. You will not get anywhere in the world by being solely defensive, but by preparing and choosing your battles and having a safe, well-guarded base of operations you can ensure your survival. Remember that it is easy for DM of a good campaign to look at your players as heroes and treat them thusly, but also understand, as a DM of an evil campaign, you must look upon your players as villains and treat them thusly. Simply understanding that your actions have consequences raises your likelihood of survivability. And you must never forget that that you exist in a fluid world where not all repercussions will come back on you. It is possible to manipulate the repercussions so that they hit others.

Dana: *Going right along with what I was saying in the previous section, keeping notes is of utmost importance. If you run your campaign for a long period of time, you will never remember everything and everyone the PCs upset or kill. Your old notes are a great way to keep things going-there is always someone out there looking for retribution. As time went on, my PCs built quite a reputation for themselves. They were smart however, and with gold from their plunder, they created a fortified and well-defended base of operations. Nobody can think of everything, however, and forgetting protections from scrying almost was the end of them. If they have a great enough reputation, or have simply upset the wrong individuals, these individuals will go to very great lengths to see to the downfall of the PCs. It's your job, as the DM, to determine what good people would do and make it happen.*

I do want to mention that in some cases, the PCs will get away with "murder" or whatever else they might be doing. If their plans are solid enough and they are smart, there might not be any way for the good authorities to hunt them down. Be realistic-while every action has a consequence, not every action can be traced. My PCs liked to use scapegoating as a way of getting themselves out of trouble, which worked in many cases. As we are still playing the campaign, I am not at liberty to say more at this time on the subject.

Evil Archetypes

It is difficult to play a good campaign without having selected or developed a character that does not fit into an archetype. The same can be said for evil. While good characters can have

quirks, evil characters with quirks may find it extremely difficult to survive. There are three basic archetypes of evil: insane, sneaky and apathetic.

The first is the insane archetype. Members of this archetype usually amass generous quantities of perceived power. They are smitten with rages, violent killing sprees, or incredible displays of power. They keep the other PCs guessing as to their true intentions, but generally have no true intentions other than what they are doing at that exact moment. While they can plan and plot diabolical schemes, these plans are usually ill prepared and poorly thought out.

The second archetype is the sneaky archetype. The PCs in this archetype can range from lowly rogues and assassins to manipulating kings or queens. Being sneaky does not mean you have to have a thief's skills; rather, it means you have the power of manipulation. Members of this archetype will manipulate others as a way of life and as a means to their ends. They will usually lie, cheat, and steal their way into positions of actual power while building a strong base of perceived power. Their plans are the most thought-out and long-term schemes that one could ever hope to devise. But, it is rare that their schemes ever get carried out because they fail to trust anyone else enough to involve others in their plans.

The last archetype is the apathetic. This type of PC cares little for plotting or planning. They are more likely to be followers and live for the everyday occurrences. They like to be comfortable but don't mind having a few pots on the fire. While these schemes are nowhere near as complex as the other two archetypes, they are more realistic and achievable. The apathetic archetype, however, can and usually does have extreme amounts of actual power. They are more likely to be characters that existed in one of the other archetypes and have already fulfilled their goals. They are sometimes characters that have vast resources at their disposal, usually through previous acquisitions or family.

Like a good campaign, you usually do not want to stereotype and play a purely archetypal character.

Dana: You might even see a bit of each archetype in your characters, depending on the situation. Most PCs in my group fit into one of the three archetypes, but some are a general mix.

When creating a character, it is a nice guide to follow. For those DMs out there who are playing good, the archetypes are also applicable to Big Bad Evil Guys (BBEGs).

Summary

To summarize, playing evil is fun, but thoughtful. You need to be constantly on your toes as to your actions. An evil D&D campaign, in my experience, plays out more like an empire-building strategy game than your typical tabletop dungeon delve. For some this can be a great change of pace, an exciting twist or addition to any campaign, or simply an inner quest for the evil within. Classifying all evil campaigns is just as difficult if not as impossible as classifying all good campaigns. The differences within each are so varied that no two games would ever be the same. Try evil if you think it would interest you in the slightest. I can't go into as much depth in this article as it is an overview of evil, but if you are interested you may contact me at lance@stationaryorbit.com with any questions or personal comments.

I implore anyone and everyone who has had any experience with evil campaigns, evil PCs, or has comments or question for either of us to respond and add comments below.

Dana: *I do not recommend playing an evil campaign if you have minors or children in your group-some subjects can be rather dark and twisted. Playing evil can be shocking, disgusting, and even gruesome. But more than anything else, it is a blast. While I have always enjoyed being both a DM and a player, I believe my best experiences to date with Dungeons and Dragons was running this evil campaign. My players, all very inventive and creative, always kept me on my toes and surprised me every week. I continually look forward to what they may try to do next, appreciating the unique and interesting perspective that each individual brings. When the players have the reigns, a totally new and awesome experience awaits.*

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Exclusive Interview

with Michael Wiemholt

interviewed by Kosala Ubayasekara

Recently, we had the opportunity to sit and chat with Mike Wiemholt. Mike is the owner and founder of RPGpost.com. Since the site has recently seen a shift in its focus, we thought it worthwhile to inform the RPG community about Mike's new efforts. Mike was generous enough to give us some time to discuss it.

Q1: Begin by introducing yourself and your background in RPG's.

Well, let's see... my name is Michael Wiemholt. I'm 26 years old and have been playing *Dungeons and Dragons* since I was 12. I played "Old" *D&D* [1st edition] at first but after a few years, I started playing 2nd Edition and played that all the way until 3rd Edition came out. Since 3rd Edition came out, I haven't had as much time to play as I would like.

I also played other RPG's during that time. They include, for the most part, *Rifts*, *Champions*, and *Alternity*.

Q2: Tell us a little about what RPGpost.com used to be and why you decided to change its direction?

Well, I'll have to backtrack a little to answer this one. Not that long ago, a few others and myself started a d20 company (Mindqwerk Studios). We began producing adventures, for which I did the artwork, layout, and cartography. These were available for free download, and in the future, we had planned on selling them.

However, there seemed to be a negative view of PDFs at the time as compared to print material. Many think that quality products can only be found in print form, for instance, (which is not always the case). I had joined a group of other PDF companies (about 30) where we could discuss the business of selling PDFs and share ideas or encounters (good and bad) with larger PDF and print companies.

So, the purpose of RPG Post at the time was the promotion of companies who made their primary business through the sales of RPG related PDFs online.

However, our interest in Mindqwerk Studios slumped after making our first three adventures, so we split off to other projects and called it

quits. For me, the decision was more about my frustration with "review" sites choosing not to review PDF products in a timely matter (or at all) when compared to the printed products.

Of course, when you are a prominent "reviewer" of RPG material, you get books sent to you free of charge and with it comes a certain expectation from print companies in many cases... not necessarily an expectation of rave reviews (though, would you continue to ship books to review sites who regularly gave them bad reviews?), but at least timely reviews. The whole process is skewed in my opinion, but that's a whole other subject. ;)

The rights to our adventures were bought by www.philipjreed.com shortly after calling it quits which, I hope, shows something for the quality and work we put into them.

With no need to promote our PDF sales, I decided to pull the plug on promoting any PDF sales through RPG Post, and thus, RPG Post was void of subject matter.

Q3: The change to RPGpost today seems to make it a site heavily dedicated to world building. Tell us a little bit about why you decided to focus on that and how RPGpost.com approaches that aspect of role-playing.

RPG Post is indeed heavily dedicated to World building. I made this decision for a few reasons.

First of all, I needed something to use RPG Post for. I liked the name, and love RPG's so I knew there had to be something I could do.

Secondly, I chose World building as it is an avenue not covered well online in my opinion. How many sites have Feats and Monsters? A lot. But no one really covered World building to the extent I planned.

RPG Post approaches world building in much the same way the 2nd Edition World Builder's Guidebook does. It was a book I thoroughly enjoyed. With tables for every aspect of World creation, you could simply walk through the book, rolling d100 here and there, and come out with a decent world. Now, I never did this. In fact, I used the book more as a reference guide.

It helped me remember where I should be focused, when, and why. Plus, it was full of ideas and helpful historical information.

RPG Post is simply a place for world builders to come and share ideas. Most of the activity takes place in the forums, but the site itself has sections dedicated to the different aspects of World Creation. Cities, Kingdoms, Historical events and more are broken into easily digestible sections, and direct links to those specific areas of the forums can be found as well.

Once I had decided on this, I realized that many people who design worlds are often times interested in designing a new game system, or modifications to the ones they currently use. And so, we also have a Game Design section and corresponding forum category as well.

Q4: What tools and services does the site provide for those that are intending to build their own worlds, and what do you have planned for the future?

Well, the site is still being worked on, but at the moment...

- 1- Categories. Categories that help break the creation process up into manageable sections. This helps the process move along more smoothly, and keeps the creator from feeling lost in a sea of information.
- 2- Forums. Forums that are broken up into the same categories as those on the site, allowing you to easily get/give feedback on similar subjects with others. In fact, many ideas of our members have been plugged into the site categories as well.
- 3- Articles. We currently have a series dedicated to gods and their many roles in a newly created world. It is a bi-weekly series that helps the reader learn more about the interaction of gods in RPG environments, as well as the many options available to them when deciding how to work them into their worlds.

In the future, I'm hoping to break the world building categories into more specific sections dedicated to different genres such as Fantasy and Sci-Fi. Currently, we cover the creation process from the Fantasy aspect, but try to keep things general enough that they may apply to any world, despite the intended genre.

I also hope to have a section dedicated to displaying worlds created by our members.

The Game Design section will eventually be broken into sections such as Magic Systems, and Combat Systems with examples of different ways to resolve them using various dice, methods, and number systems.

I have many more ideas and plans, but I'm rather longwinded and am already making this longer than I intended. ;)

Are you interested in helping Mike out with RPGpost?

Visit the website at:

<http://www.rpgpost.com> and see what you can do.

Q5: What are the main hurdles that you have to surmount to realize your vision for RPGpost?

My primary hurdle is lack of help. I have done everything on my own, with some help recently from the members with regards to content for some sections. Matthew J. Hanson is doing a great job writing 'The Gods Themselves' series, but other than his articles, all other site content and work is done by myself.

The next major hurdle is simply the volume of information involved and how I can relate this most effectively to the reader. I have already decided the current layout will work great for now, but in the future it will have to be updated to better display the information I intend to share.

Q6: How is RPGpost funded today?

RPG Post is funded through my sweat and blood. Ok, not really, but I am actually alone on this project. I plan on putting no money into the site, and thus will ask for none in return. Once money gets involved, it becomes more a job than a hobby, which is not my intention. I'm relying more on word of mouth (or text) to help promote the site, as well as various banner swaps and things of that nature.

Fortunately, web design and graphic arts is my job so I can handle that aspect. And the fact that I have a long background with RPG's and a love for them really helps a lot.

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For Love and Dragonflies

by Edward J Kopp

The details involved with dressing for the Council's Court are complicated and subtle. One wrong color, one poorly knotted sash, a vest of the wrong cloth, even shoes out of style could be a serious breach of etiquette that offends my Patron. That would effect my future as a breathing Av'.

There is no finer thing than to be an Av'. The Avyan culture is divided into a caste of three (four if you count slaves, which I don't). First is the Av' of the Golden Torc, also called an Av': the leaders, the philosophers, and the purest of Avyan Blood. Second is the Ev', our warriors. The Silver Torc Ev' live and die for the Avyan, their Blood is spilt on the field of battle and the decks of ships. Lastly are the Bok', wearing the Bronze Torc. They are our crafts and tradesmen, considered low born but a necessary and integral aspect of Avyan society. All members of each caste begin their name with their Torc as a prefix, to help identify a person's station. Only slaves wear no Torc and slaves are not people, they are property. It can become a serious faux pas when dealing with foreign dignitaries when they are not wearing gold around their necks.

I cut a fine figure as I finger the thick gold torc that entitles me Av' to my name, wondering as always, how the offspring of two anonymous Bok', or bronze torcs, could test for the Av', and pass. It was always rumored in the youth clubs that those two particular Bok' had been chosen specifically to reproduce by order of the Council. Normally Bok' partners are chosen by lottery on the full moon and only last for one month. This way they can concentrate on their crafts. My torc is finely detailed to look like a Golden Dragon circled around my neck, each scale, ripple of muscle, fearsome tooth is finely displayed in all it's awesome might.

Only Ev' of the silver torc and Av' can freely choose sex partners. Only Av' have the right to reproduce without the Council's permission. I wear my ornate Av' with a dragon motif as I dress for the night's banquet in honor of the emissaries of the small island nation of Redin, our ancestral brethren. My clothes are all custom made by the finest tailors, my boots from the best cobbler and both of the latest fashion. When I walk into the banquet hall, I will be letting everyone know I am in high standing with my Patron, Av'Bhaskar, Speaker for the Council and host of the feast. I wear the Twelve Spotted Dragonfly medallion of his Chosen bestowing me the right to arrest or detain any class of Avyan, even other Av'. I wear that medallion over my left breast, which identifies me as his Bloodsworn. It is an honor to be Chosen; to become Bloodsworn is the finest thing one not a member of the Council can strive for.

Unlike most Bloodsworn, my greatest weapons are my wits and charm, but I do wear a ceremonial dueling dagger on my left thigh. The scabbard is covered in the glyphs that identify me as a Master of the Dance and the number of duels I've had. Dozens of rubies signify the number of duels to first blood I've won and five black opals show the number of duels to the death. There are no pearls to count the losses. I've always felt a little guilty that there are so many victories to the blood and only five to the death, but like I said, my wits and charm are what made me Chosen, not my skill at arms. My Patron has plenty of bodyguards.

That's why I receive missions like tonight's. Feast on the best food Avyan tables can offer, drink pure glacier ice water in honor of the Ancestors with the guests and seduce the most beautiful of women. Though exacting, my Patron gives me the most delightful missions.

...Meanwhile...

"There is no way I am wearing that horrible wig aunt Sodta. Since I cannot wed or even be allowed a suitor it matters not if I look like a fair maiden or young boy. I like how my hair looks shorn so short. It's cute."

The young woman is indeed cute, with short blonde hair, a petite womanly figure and blue eyes, a strong sign of Avyan blood. Long blonde locks lay scattered across the marble chamber floor, evidence of her recent fashion make over.

"You just don't understand what you have done Melynda. The Court of the High Council is not the place to be daring," the older and darker woman said. "With this one act you may offend the entire High Council of Avyan and make a mockery of your Honorable Father, and the rest of our mission, and thereby make fools of all of Redin. We will be seen as uncivilized simpletons from the islands."

"I don't care. It will only be a bigger offense if I arrive at the feast tonight wearing that dreadful wig perched upon my head," Melynda said. "I am just one small unimportant girl who isn't allowed to become a woman. Why should anyone pay attention to me or my hair?"

"You represent your nation and everything reflects on your Honorable Father. This meeting is a very important event and it's time you stop acting the child if you ever want to be treated as anything else."

Sodta looked at the results of her young niece's willfulness and left her alone in her chamber to think on what she had just said.

A frustrated sigh left Melynda's lips. How come no one understood that it just wasn't fair that she couldn't marry and have a family until her older sister was betrothed first. Not that Mooreinya wasn't beautiful in her own right. She was the polar opposite of Melynda, who was normally a well behaved and sweet tempered girl; it was Mooreinya who is a willful and foul tempered. Mooreinya had dark dusky skin, thick black hair and dark eyes. She carried their late Mother's coloring and their Honorable Father's pride and stubbornness. Melynda contemplated her own stubborn willfulness, surprised that she had done such a daring thing as cut her hair so short.

A dutiful daughter is how she had been raised to be, and now she was rebelling in the only way she knew how.

...

Entering the Court of the High Council, Av'Devdan looked the crowd over. The usual sycophants clustered around the different members of the High Council as well as foreign emissaries from Redin. It looked like a complicated dance, groups twirling and swirling through the crowded room, making obligatory stops at various Councilors, making sure to see and be seen.

I spot my Patron; we exchange glances. Standing next to him is a beauty by any standard; the elder daughter of the emissary is dark and exotic by Avyan sensibilities. It would be a pleasure to taste her sweet dark lips and suckle at such lovely breasts. I wondered if her nipples are as dark or darker than her plum colored, full lips. She is an exotic bloom waiting for me to pluck. The lust in my eyes must catch her notice as she grins devilishly at me.

Wine and spices are as abundant as the cold, fresh glacier water that is the drink to honor the Ancestors discovering the Avyan homeland. The story goes that a ship named Eden traveled the furthest from the Land of the Beginning Times. When they ran out of fresh water and were sure they'd die of thirst, a great iceberg of pure glacial water came into view. The crew knew that the ice flow was no good, just frozen seawater, but this new floating mountain was something new. A boat was launched and it was found to be pure water, as pure as if it had fallen from the sky. It was a wonder and savior to behold. The crew of Eden finished circumnavigating what is now Avyan with a large piece of the iceberg in tow and sailed for home with the news of a safe place to live. So in memory of the sacred Ancestors who founded Avyan and brought us to such a powerful and bountiful nation we drink pure glacier water at all the most important functions.

A surreptitious glance around the room placed all the main players; my Patron the Speaker for the Council, the other High Council members (as well as their toadies) and the emissary from Redin were all resplendent in the Highest of Court Fashion. It was while looking for possible trouble I noticed the most delicate bird; a celestial being gracing me with her presence. For the first time I felt something stir in me that had never been there before. I would have sworn it was bred out of me; the capacity to feel romantic love. Oh sure, I can love my Patron, love my favorite cat or even love my fellow citizen; I especially love rutting with women of all sorts. But blood boiling, heart pounding, dry-mouth romantic love is a stranger to me. I prefer to keep it that way. I make it a point to keep well away from anything that could be so dangerous as True Love. I clamp down on it and bury it some place deep within the Darkness. She is so bright and beautiful I may have fooled myself, the thought crosses my mind I could change, give up my life for True Love.

I have to recall I will never enjoy such a thing as Love. It is amazing how quickly the Dark within me redoubles in strength. I am not the teller of romantic tales. I bring the Darkness, the moment just before Death's embrace; it is that final moment I was bred for, when nothing else matters because this is your dying breath, my gift to you. That's the story I know.

During the after dinner entertainment of jugglers, musicians, and acrobats, I made a move towards the dark beauty I had seen earlier talking to my Patron. During the meal I got the subtle signals identifying her as my target. Realizing that it would take something exotic to capture this hothouse bloom I procured a bottle of Golden Dragon Wine and two crystal tumblers. Dragon Wine is meant to be drunk as a shot, all at once. I knew that her smoky demeanor hid a fire inside and the novelty of Dragon Wine itself should win her to my bed, let alone the effects of such potent drink. As I approached the couch she was reclining upon I saw that fair sweet celestial girl sitting at her feet. I knew the Redin emissary had two daughters, but could this be the second. She looked the purest of Aryan blood; blonde hair, blue eyes and fair complexion browned by the sun. And her hair was as short, if not shorter, than a man's.

I almost froze in my step, there were two ravishing beauties, one who made my heart flutter like the dragonfly on my medallion; the other so exotic she could cause a fever and the chosen subject for my seduction by my Patron. And it seems they are sisters. I almost didn't know what to do with myself, but training and knowing the consequences of displeasing my Patron led me to the dark eyed daughter, a seductive smile on my lips with a quick jest and flash of bottle and glasses. Within minutes, Mooreinya and I were in a private vestibule challenging each other to shot after shot. I'll say this for the fire in her blood; she almost drank me to the point where I began to have worries about my ability to perform the final act of my seduction. My superior breeding held true and she woke the next morning naked as the day she was born and a contented smile upon those plum sweet lips. And yes, her nipples are dark and succulent, sweeter than those luscious lips. And passionate. Superior breeding be damned, she wore me out. By the time we had finished our carnal dancing I was in need of a good rest.

Meanwhile...

"Did you see him aunt Sodta? That beautiful man who was drinking with Mooreinya? And did you notice the medallion he was wearing over his heart? It's a twelve-spotted dragonfly. That means he's Bloodsworn Chosen of the Speaker for the High Council."

"I see someone paid some attention to her instruction on High Court etiquette," said Sodta. "At least one of you seems to have behaved. Your sister hasn't been back to her bed-chamber yet and it's getting late. A proper lady shouldn't be misbehaving quite so blatantly."

"You don't think she's doing something rash and bold do you auntie? Not Mo?"

"Sarcasm doesn't become you child. Now prepare for sleep and let your Honorable Father worry about your sister and any wayward behavior she might find herself in."

The older woman helped Melynda undress and prepare for sleep. She soon left.

Looking out her window at the star filled night she sighed. She whispered to the diamonds twinkling above, "When will a beautiful man like that ever want an ugly pale girl, with hair hacked short, like me."

...

The next morning we had one last passionate roll in the sheets and then she gathered her clothes and left. We both had satisfied looks on our faces. Fortunately mine wouldn't get me into trouble, and the lack of her sleeping in her own bed has surely been noticed and gossiped about by the lowest kitchen slave and is even now working its way up to the ears of the emissary, and most importantly, my Patron. Mission accomplished.

But what do I do about this weakness I have discovered. What have I done seducing the sister of an angel who awoke a stirring in me I thought unattainable. Just knowing that I have this weakness is dangerous. If it should happen again, if I should meet another who stirs me so, or what if my Patron assigns her for the same treatment. It would be best to have her killed to protect my Patron and me but she has done no wrong other than be a creature perfect in beauty that has stolen my heart. What can I do?

The summons to appear before my Patron comes within twenty minutes of the lovely vixen's brown bottom departure. I dress for a morning meeting that will include a full debriefing and possible further assignment. Av'Bhaskar is a stickler for detail and every thing is adjusted just so.

I arrive in my Patron's audience chamber, a small room off of his personal office. The first day I entered this room, he told me to look around and see the room, that this was the way he liked it. Whenever I enter this room, the first thing I do is look for anything out of place to clue me in to what the mood is. I have been able to help my Patron during several impromptu needs by deducing what that need was from how the room was disarranged. Today an unknown dagger is lying on his desk and he has long strands of gold silken hair tied in a loop next to it. I caught a whiff of her sweet aroma, my heart did a pitter patter that Av'Bhaskar must have heard. He did not look happy. The dagger was of exceptional make, long with a sharp point, perfect for thrusting deep between the ribs and burying into someone's heart. I looked him directly in those flat golden eyes to make sure I understood. He nodded and I took up the stiletto and left the room.

... Meanwhile

"Is it true Aunt Sodta? Did Mo not come to her bedchambers all evening long until after the sun had risen this morning? Does my Honorable Father know?"

"Of course he knows child," she said, "and the attack on his honor is great. He may have to publicly chastise her, which you know would embarrass the whole emissary. The Honorable Father is in a delicate position at home and the poor behavior of the both of you has reflected terribly with the rest of our countrymen. I knew she could be trouble, but to loose her maiden unmarried or even betrothed. Her behavior is unfitting the daughter of the Honorable Father."

"I heard her tell my Honorable Father that she wasn't sorry, she flaunted herself and her actions in his face describing them in detail. I thought our Honorable Father was near to a fit of rage," Mylenda stifled a giggle at the thought of her Father's discomfort.

"And I thought that beautiful man was perfect, yet he got Mo drunk and stole her maiden. How could I ever think I might fall in love with someone like that?"

"What talk is this?" Aunt Sodta said sharply. "You will rid yourself of any such notion this instant. I knew coming to this decadent and evil city would be the corruption of her, but now you too? The Ancestors save us all."

"I was only day dreaming Aunt, a child is allowed to daydream aren't they. I would never desire one with so little morals as to seduce and steal the maiden of a young woman. I want a righteous man who sings me love songs and kisses me sweetly, but I would always abide by my Honorable Father's decision for who is appropriate. I could never love one such as he."

...

She was in my bedchamber when I returned from my Patron. I slide the stiletto into my nightstand as she slipped out of her clothes. Naked, brown, sweet warm flesh. Her nipples dark and succulent pressed into my chest as she covered me with kisses, promising me anything, to be my love slave, so long as I protected her against her Honorable Father. I placed my hand around her naked throat as I touched my Av' and swore her to my pleasure and service, unknowingly for her, making her my property. This should finish my assignment from last night perfectly.

I smiled down at the unknowing face filled with lust, fear and excitement. She thought it was all a big adventure. She would learn what it meant to swear away your life to an Av' in Avyan. Our laws are binding. She was mine. As she moved under me calling out her lust to her Master, her Honorable Father burst into my chamber... very bad form. I hoped he'd challenge me to a duel and we could have this charade done and over with. Instead he called my newest slave a whore and

disowned her. Since she wasn't his to disown anymore and she had become my whore, I found no reason to take insult. His good fortune because I'm sure I could have goaded him into a duel to the death.

After the Honorable Father stormed off I finished taking my pleasure with my newly acquired hothouse flower. What sweet nectar I found at her lips, ambrosia. Once our passions were sated, I left for the steam baths for a long soak to think over my situation and how best to fulfill my Patron's desire. I thought about Love and Dragonflies. Duty and Death. I left the steam baths clear-headed with my mission's end in sight.

... Meanwhile

"How could you Mo?"

"How could I not?" the dark beauty asked her fair sister. "It was pleasure beyond compare and freedom from our Honorable Father has set me free with a strong lover and protector without ever having to marry someone not of my choosing."

"Is that what this is about?"

"Not entirely, I am totally enthralled with this man, he makes love to me like a real man should. I can be as free and passionate as I want. Our Honorable Father can't keep me from staying here. I swore to stay and we play at him being my master and I am his love slave."

"No! Mo... our Avyan brethren keep slaves. What have you done?"

"Even if it's true, I'll be a love slave," Mo said and abruptly left the room.

Looking to the skies and praying to the most Holy Ancestors, of whom her family is direct descendents, "Please honorable and holy ones. Save my family from this misfortune. Our Honorable Father is in peril and my poor sister is unaware of what she's done. Help us escape this den of dragons."

...

I waited for things to quiet down a bit before going to her chamber to carry out my Patron's mission. She was kneeling in the sunlight, her beatific face bathed in rays of pure light. She sensed my presence eventually, which impressed me. Usually these assignments are the quickest and quietest. Who would suspect the Bloodsworn of the Speaker for the High Council to arrive and place two hands span worth of death into your heart.

She rose to her feet and it near took my breath away, she was poetry and grace in motion. I smiled my most disarming smile, hoping to regain advantage by bewitching her with my natural charm. Her beauty became cold and hard as the icebergs and glaciers we use to worship the Ancestors. I walked forward, my right hand extended to help her rise and the left slid the stiletto deep into her heart, piercing hers and breaking mine simultaneously. She sighed and sank to the ground, lifeless. I never got to even touch her in life, let alone kiss her. I pressed my lips to hers. Still warm and silky soft, I kissed her good bye.

... Epilogue

The Honorable Father, the living descendant of the Holy Ancestors, committed suicide brought on by the disgrace by his older daughter and the death of his younger. His death disgraced the Holy Ancestors and the Avyan host. His death left the position of Honorable Father empty back in the Theocracy of Redin and a bloody civil war broke out over whom is eligible for the position, those most learned or those with the right blood. Just as my Patron desired.

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The Annals of Jushaén of Ravenscar

by Kosala Ubayasekara

Greetings, gentle (or perhaps even not so gentle) reader. Thank you kindly for listening to the ramblings of an old man. Since we are about to embark on a journey of sorts through the histories of a world and its people, it is only fair that I introduce myself to you first. My name is Jushaén of Ravenscar, and I am considered by most to be something of a storyteller, traveller, and bard. Being elven by birth and blessed with a somewhat long life span, it has been my privilege and pleasure to wander the many paths of this great world, recording its many beauties and happenings in word and song. Many of these, if I may be so bold, have been sung in inns and taverns throughout this great land. But I digress. For these annals are not to be testament to my greatness, but to that of other storytellers and bards that have sung unheard songs of great battles, and the virtues of man and woman. So let us put a stop to this banter and be on our way.

A Blind Man's Sight

It was as a young man that I happened to first wander the coastal regions of the Realms. Upon one of these travels, I chanced upon a blind man who walked with me some distance, ever a smile on his face and a song on his lips. Having discovered that he had been blind since birth, I commented that he had unfortunately missed all the beauty of the world by not being given the gift of sight. Upon my utterance he burst into laughter and sang this song:

A little and gentle man am I, and thick is the darkness that shrouds me.
Yet think not boy that slow am I, or too blind to see thee.
Listen now to what I say, if hurried you are then humour me,
For I will open up your mind, so that at last you may see.



Hear you the cry of the cicada that calls its bride-to-be?
Feel you the anguish of the river that falls into the sea?
Hear you the song of the leaves as Old Man Wind greets a tree?
Or the patient grumble of the earth as it bears the burden of many feet?



A gift you say? Nay you err, and that is what deceives you.
Your eyes will promise a myriad of things, then in the darkness fail you.
To truly see you must shut your lids and let your soul lead you.
Hear the sounds, smell the scents and know it is light that blinds you.

And so I learned from a blind man the true nature of sight, and found over time, such beauty in the world that I was prompted to burst into song myself. Thus it happened that the nature of the Bard found me, and I have since wandered the length and breadth of the Realms in search of the songs that elude me.

- *Jushaén of Ravenscar*



Character art
by Florin Badita

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d20 Reviews

on Silven Crossroads

Scoring definitions

- 18 = Superior.** Best of the best.
- 16 = Very Good.** Part of a Baker's Dozen.
- 14 = Good.** Most gamers would like this.
- 12 = Fair.** Some gamers would like this.
- 10 = Average.** Most gamers would be indifferent.
- 8 = Subpar.** Flawed, but not without promise.
- 6 = Bad.** Most gamers would dislike this.
- 4 = Very Bad.** Among the Dirty Dozen.
- 2 = Inferior.** Worst of the worst.

"Shadowrun, Third Edition"

Developers: Michael Mulvihill, Robert Boyle
 Publisher: FASA Corporation
 Reviewed by: *Matthew B. Nuckles*
 Review edited by: *David Paul*

- Class: RPG Core Rulebook (Futuristic)**
STR: 6 (Physical). No book should fall apart this fast.
DEX: 14 (Organization). Everything is very logically placed and easy to find.
CON: 16 (Quantity). Most of what is here has been printed before, but there is a LOT here.
INT: 18 (Quality). It's the best flagship for a genre.
WIS: 16 (Adaptability). You can take this any direction you want.
CHA: 14 (Look & Feel). I miss Shadowtalk and the old Logo, but other than that, it's great work.

For the full review see:

<http://www.silven.com/adnd.asp?case=show&id=143>

"Ultramodern Firearms d20"

Author: Charles Ryan
 Publisher: Green Ronin Publishing
 Reviewed by: *Matt Haught*

- CLASS: Equipment Supplement**
STR: 14 (Physical). Typical glued-in hardback binding. Very sturdy.
DEX: 17 (Organization). Extremely well organized. The Features Index and Appendix tables help tremendously. Some subcompact assault rifles in the SMG chapter, some in the AR chapter, though.
CON: 12 (Quantity of the Content). 158 pages seems a little short and several well-known weapons were omitted.
INT: 16 (Quality of Content). Excellent density of content. New feats and weapon rules bring much-needed realism to *d20 Modern* without adding unnecessary complexity. However, some weapon information was inaccurate, and some of the weapons listed never made it into production. These were few and far between, though.
WIS: 16 (Options & Adaptability). Feats and weapons mesh excellently with *d20 Modern*. Some of the more realistic options, such as overheating machine guns, might be a little much for casual roleplayers.
CHA: 16 (Look & Feel). Excellent artwork,

something rarely seen with firearms depictions outside of the weapons industry itself. The greyscale illustrations are good enough to give the illusion of color. Each entry is set nicely on the page.

For full review see:

<http://www.silven.com/adnd.asp?case=show&id=142>

"Dungeons & Dragons: Monster Manual v.3.5"

Authors: Skip Williams, Jonathan Tweet, and Monte Cook
 Publisher: Wizards of the Coast
 Reviewed by: *Bradford Ferguson*

- CLASS: Monster Supplement**
STR: 16 (Physical). Typical WotC binding. Very sturdy.
DEX: 15 (Organization). Very well organized. Extra-planar creatures are scattered about though.
CON: 18 (Quantity of the Content). JAM-packed 319 pages.
INT: 16 (Quality of Content). Monte, Skip & Tweet. Enough said. Many monsters had no significant changes.
WIS: 16 (Options & Adaptability). Most customizable monsters yet. No lore or plot hooks however.
CHA: 14 (Look & Feel). Typical WotC high quality. Entries are packed too tightly together. Less than half of the art is new.

For full review see:

<http://www.silven.com/adnd.asp?case=show&id=140>

For all ten d20 reviews we did during the month of September, see our main site at

<http://www.silven.com/adnd.asp>

Chatting with Gary Gygax

by Kosala Ubayasekara
& Gary Gygax

Welcome to the eighth edition of our regular monthly debate and informational pieces done in collaboration with Mr. Gary Gygax, the original creative mind behind the *Dungeons and Dragons* role-playing game. Since the hot topic of the last month seems to be shenanigans of Wizards of the Coast (WotC) and the d20 license, we sat down to discuss recent events.

Q1: As you probably know already, WotC has decided to arbitrarily make sweeping changes to the d20 license by adding a morality/decency clause. This clause makes it impossible to publish certain types of content using the d20 license as it would be branded indecent as per WotC definition. Barring the fact that it is their license and they can do what they want with it, do you have any thoughts about the need for adding a decency statute to regulate d20 material?

I was made aware of the changes the day WotC announced them, yes. Arbitrary doesn't apply to something granted gratis, in my opinion. It is their property, and they have whatever rights remain to them after exposing it as they did through the d20 and OGL [Open Gaming License] to protect it. The action does seem somewhat odd, not to say hypocritical, after their promotion and publication of the *Book of Vile Darkness*, as most people will likely agree. That aside, I certainly do believe that there needs to be some constraints placed upon the use of d20 material. Decency should be a by-word in the paper RPG field, as subject to attack as it is.

Q2: The way this action was carried out by WotC has managed to scare some existing d20 publishers off the d20 bandwagon. Others have decided to stop their future d20 plans as well. Are there any steps that WotC might want to consider taking now to try and rebuild people's faith in the license?

From what I am told, d20 product sales have been tapering off considerably over the last year or so. Those publishers staying with the license will be unlikely to deplore others leaving it. It seems as if there was a superfluity of d20 product, so the reduction is more likely to improve the line than damage it.

How WoTC can do anything in regards "faith" in the license, other than to build the base audience for the *D&D* game, is quite beyond me. The content worth of d20 products is uncontrolled, and the decency requirements now imposed do little to speak to worth in regards to play value. The great variance of creative content in d20 has existed from the first, and the game consumer audience quickly learned that the d20 mark was no assurance of quality, only conformance to the standards of *D&D* game content, so they exercised caveat emptor soon after the flood of material hit the stands.

Q3: Lets talk licensing in general. In a previous Q&A we asked you what you thought about the OGL and you mentioned briefly that you would have asked third party developers to run all products by WoTC to receive a seal of approval before publishing. We ran this by WoTC and they responded with the fact that they lacked the manpower to do such a thing. Can you give us some thoughts about how you think such a thing as the OGL could have been pulled off better by WoTC considering the manpower restrictions, or quite simply how you would have done it if it had been your assignment to do so?

It is no secret that had it been up to me no d20 or OGL [license] would have been made available. If WotC did not want to expend resources producing support material for the *D&D* game, it seems logical to me that they should have offered low-royalty-cost licenses to select publishers. Such a license would allow the publisher to use the *D&D* trademark, not a "d20" one, so it would be more valuable to both the licensee and to WotC, for products produced under it would expose more consumers to the main trademark.

As for lack of manpower, I am rather at a loss to understand that statement. A royalty-paying license would yield the income needed for a staff member to review and pass on the acceptability of proposed support material under the *D&D* license. If a flood of material came, that would mean more license income, so sufficient staff could be maintained to see to the review process. Granted, they would not be a profit center, but the benefits accruing from the license and their work would certainly justify the operation in my view.

Q4: Is an open or restricted license for your *Lejendary Adventure Game RPG* a possibility in the near future?

No open license will ever be offered as long as I have any input into the matter. We have granted licenses to the *LA game* already. The main one is to the Dreams Interactive group for development of an MMP online version of the game. Another had been granted for a foreign language translation, this likely being announced in about two months, with the release of the translated game (we hope). Trigeer has just licensed Dreamcadence Productions to produce and distribute a line of adventure modules in PDF format for the *LA game* system. We are currently negotiating another license for paper publication so as to increase product numbers and improve form, but I can't give any details of this yet.

Q5: The existence of an open or restricted license for a particular product line has been shown to enhance the user base and appeal of the product in many different types of industries. Yet exempting the OGL and a couple of other examples, this notion has never broadly caught on among RPG companies. Do you think there is a reason for this?

I do not agree with the initial statement you posit. It is not demonstrable in regards to paper game products. As a matter of fact, the greatest sales of the *D&D* game product line came back in the early 1980s when no such open license was available, and tight control over the IP was maintained. Although I do not have the figures to prove it, I am relatively certain that the sales volume of original *D&D* books was greater than that attained by 3E, and I know that module sales then far surpassed any now being realized.

In my view, a game system should be consistent and controlled so as to assure the

quality level. This applies to paper and electronic games equally.

Q6: What do you think of the *Book of Vile Darkness*, if you have had the chance to read it?

I have not read that actual material, but I have read quoted excerpts and several summaries of the content. None of what I read made me think it was a work that should have been published for the *D&D* game, let alone by the company that owns the property. That sort of material should not be included in a game that purports to be "heroic" in nature and promoting the triumph of good over evil. With the publication of the *Book of Vile Darkness*, WotC has given detractors of the *D&D* game splendid ammunition for their attacks on it. To me it is a shame for them to have published the work.

Q7: In principle, how do you feel about Anthony Valterra's soon-to-be-released, *Book of Erotic Fantasy*?

Likely, it will be far worse than the *Book of Vile Darkness* from what I have heard of it, but at least it will not have the d20 mark on it, so some distance between it and the *D&D* game can be asserted.

From a personal standpoint, I find the subject material prurient and juvenile in concept. It is not what I would ever consider using in a game, nor will I ever recommend the work to another. It is something I would never publish, as I believe that sexuality has little part in the role-playing game form. Of course, I do not question the author's right to publish such a work, or the right of those who wish to acquire it to do so, but I believe it to be destructive to the game form and deplore the mindset that considers it anything else but unsuitable.

Q8: Which d20 publishers (besides Troll Lord Games) do you think consistently produce the highest quality product?

As I do not regularly play new *D&D*, I do not believe I am qualified to make intelligent critical comments on the quality of content of d20 products in regards the play value therein. There are plenty of knowledgeable reviewers who make it a habit of doing that sort of thing ;).

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Unnoticed and Underappreciated: An Introduction to Console RPG Music

by Angus McBlane

Music is like emotion, varying in mood, tone, and scope. And just like emotion, music can be one of the binding elements of human culture. While cultural sub-genres are rarely understood by the mainstream, they are nonetheless an integral part of what makes up the larger consciousness. One such sub-genre is that of RPG music, specifically console RPG music. While relatively unnoticed and underappreciated by mainstream culture, RPG music has developed cult following all over the world.

Console RPGs have always been known to have what many other game genres lack, namely heavy plot and character development. Along with statistics-based experience systems and adaptable character development, these elements are the defining characteristics of the console RPG. One of the essentials of console RPGs that a large number of people overlook is that of the music. Music can be as important to an RPG as the other above elements and can add depth and mood to a game.

Who can forget the victory fanfare and simple intro melody that define any Final Fantasy game? That catchy tune lets the gamer know exactly what game he or she is about to play. RPG music, when used during the course of game play, can be an effective element that adds depth and seriousness to a situation, lightens the mood, or adds negative facet that sets a strong tone. How can one enjoy an RPG without the dark music that accompanies the villain, the lively music that plays when one wins a battle, or the themes that play whenever a certain party member speaks or acts? Music adds flare and character to seemingly uneventful sequences. Bad or repetitive music can sour an otherwise great game.

While merely listening to the music during the game and enjoying the scope, depth and mood it brings is enough for many people, there are those special individuals out there who are willing to pay top dollar to listen to RPG music outside of the game environment. Appreciating game OSTs (Original Soundtracks) is very different than in a game where music is used as a background element. When one listens to the music outside of the intended environment, one can truly hear all the nuances and elements that created the music that they enjoyed so much while playing the game. In some cases, music may give more insight into the game itself for those individuals who like to analyze all aspects of a game.

It is up to the composer to choose the right type of music to fit a particular scene. Who wants to hear a lighthearted whimsical track following the death of an important character? Music creates mood and emotion and if used properly can enhance the game experience.

Classically inspired soundtracks have become the relative norm in the world of console RPGs, but there are an increasing number of composers who will toe the line with other genres. Motoi Sakuraba composed not only classically inspired tracks but also many rock inspired tracks for Star Ocean III. Yasunori Mitsuda relied heavily on Celtic influences for both Xenogears and Chrono Cross and then dabbled in Choral music for Xenosaga, giving it an epic feel.

RPG game music, for the most part, is not "fake" as I have sometimes heard it described. Although composers still rely heavily on synthesizers, a few now attempt at fully orchestrated tracks within the game itself rather than just on an arranged album released at a later date. A good recent example of this trend is Mitsuda's work on Xenosaga Episode 1, which had a number of tracks fully orchestrated by the London Philharmonic and yet other tracks that blended synth and orchestrated elements. Also, RPG composers do not have to be limited to just one style of music even if classical has become the norm. The beauty of RPG music and RPGs themselves is that they are not just limited to any one style or setting but rather can have a multitude of different types and shifts within or among games.

Video game OSTs as a whole are denied their rightful place alongside the other music genres of the world. Why must lovers of games continue to be stigmatized as people who do not listen to "real" music? How is it not "real", can it not convey the same emotion and moods as so-called "real" music

can? Just because video game composers tend to rely on synthesizers for the most part, as a way of keeping costs down, the argument of video game music not being "real" is an irrational argument. Just consider how many people enjoy the relatively new mainstream genre of electronic music (techno, trance, etc.) that is also digital in nature. There is no reason for people to continue to deny RPG game music the title of "real" music. It is time video games were viewed as a form of art and one step in the right direction is to shake off the stigmatization of game music, allowing it to be truly appreciated the way it was meant to be.

Console RPG music isn't just the blips or bleeps of times gone by. It has developed and matured into one of the most beautiful and important aspects of any good console RPG.

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'Feel' and the Art of DMing

by Harry Kaiserian

D&D is a great game. It runs on a solid, versatile system that captures the fantasy genre well. But the rules themselves are only the beginning, the skeleton of the game that you play. Everybody builds upon those rules, fleshes them out, and creates the game in different ways. Some games are dark and gothic; some are gritty with a 'sweat and steel' approach; some are high romance; and some have an epic, mythical feel.

Whether a DM is running a single adventure or a full-blown campaign, every game has a certain feel, either by accident or design. Experienced DMs may choose a feel, but most stumble upon it - realizing only later, if ever, that their game even has a feel. This 'feel' is often a product of intentional design and it is more than just a by-product of the setting. It is the one thing that will engage your players and encourage them to interact, not with just the rules, but with the world.

Feel is the single most powerful tool at the DM's disposal. It is what transforms the game into an adventure. Feel defines the themes and archetypes that color your world. It establishes the nature of your world in the minds of your players and tells them what to expect. By creating a mood or tone with which the players can identify, feel allows the players to connect to the world you are trying to create. This makes your players more comfortable, makes the world seem more familiar, and encourages your players to role-play. It establishes a common context.

Infusing your world with a rich feel takes work. Though feel may be rooted in the details of a setting, it blossoms in the way those details are presented to the players. Filling your world with vampires and werewolves is not enough to give your game a gothic horror feel. Having the party belong to the Royal Guard does not mean you are running a swashbuckling campaign. A delicate synergy of setting and style is required to get the right feel and an awareness of exactly what about your game contributes to feel.

Intrinsic Feel - The Material

Intrinsic feel is that feel which is particular to the setting. This includes the description of peoples and places as well as any inherent changes to the core rules. The text itself inspires feel. The Forgotten Realms(tm) is different than the Scarred Lands(tm), which is different than Athas, the World of the DarkSun(tm).

If you use a published setting, you were probably drawn to it by the imagery and possibilities the setting presents. You set your game there because it seemed cool; because you liked the way it felt. The Red Wizards hold power in Thay. Goblins have overrun Moria. Giants rule the lands of the Diamond Throne(tm).

You might create your own setting because nothing else quite fits what you want to run. You include things that inspire a sense of wonder, mystery, or danger. A theocracy devoted to bloodthirsty gods of fire and illusion rules this empire; the trees of that zombie-infested forest feed on blood; and so on. Maybe you borrow from literature, history, or other settings. Regardless of the particulars, it all contributes to feel.

While the heart of any setting lies in the flavor text, any rules changes play an important part in determining the feel as well. The rules themselves are actually a very important part of feel because they govern actual game play. They dictate feel by controlling the game mechanics. The rules are the base language used to describe the way the world works, and that is key to describing the way the world feels. They allow the players and the DM to work from a common base of knowledge. PCs know what to expect when they encounter a paladin. They know that wizards need access to their spellbooks in order to prepare their spells.

The core rules as written do have an underlying feel, which may not be quite right for every setting or style. Changing the rules changes the feel. Many settings tweak the rules to reinforce the flavor they are trying to create: arcane spells generate heat in the Scarred Lands(tm); subterranean radiation changes teleportation effects in the Underdark; spells like *detect evil* work differently in the Ravenloft(tm) setting. Changes like these are great when it comes to subtly reinforcing feel.

Some settings change or replace the core classes entirely. Some settings introduce new PC races or change existing ones. Oriental Adventures(tm) introduces the samurai, wu-jen, and the sohei, among others. The halflings of Athas are lawful evil cannibals. Arcana Unearthed(tm) and the Diamond Throne(tm) setting have gone even further and completely re-written the magic system. Rules changes should work with and reinforce the feel inspired by the flavor text.

When you import feats, spells and Prestige Classes from any source, feel should be as much a consideration as balance. Ostensibly, the Mystic Theurge is balanced (if bland), but that does not mean it is appropriate for your world. The Red Wizard has great feel, but that feel may not fit your world. The Assassin is cool, but maybe you want assassins that are priestesses devoted to the God of Death. If you remove all spells related to teleportation from your world - you need to decide whether they are just not available or they just do not work.

House rules should face the same test. Do not introduce a house rule just because it is 'more realistic,' or because it 'makes more sense.' Look at how it will affect the feel you are trying to achieve. A detailed system of bonuses and penalties for fighting and swinging on ropes sounds great, but if it slows combat to a crawl and makes your PCs careful and cautious, it is not helping that 'swashbuckler' feel. Eliminating the 'death from massive damage' rule or ruling that everyone automatically stabilizes when reduced below zero hit points may not be realistic, but may encourage a more swashbuckler-y feel. Decide what you want, and design your game to match.

Intrinsic feel is everything that is 'hard-coded' into the setting. All the particulars of peoples and places, all of the setting-specific rules as well as any house rules particular to your campaign contribute to feel. I think when most gamers talk about feel, they are talking about intrinsic feel. This is an important aspect of feel, but not the whole of it: you could take the Ravenloft setting and run a campaign that feels more like *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Brotherhood of the Wolf*, or even *Scooby-Doo*; you could run a swashbuckling adventure set in the deserts of Athas on giant sand-schooners. To do that, you need to consider style or atmosphere.

Atmospheric Feel - The Presentation

If intrinsic feel is the 'what's given', then atmospheric feel is the 'what you do with it'. While all the work that goes into creating intrinsic feel is (hopefully!) done before you sit down to play, atmosphere is created while you play. The setting will help establish atmosphere, but, mostly, it's up to you, the DM.

Maybe you chose/created a setting because it inspired a certain style: swashbuckling adventures of flash and wit; dark forays into a haunted world; noble quests to uphold chivalric ideals. That's atmosphere. The flavor text should elicit and inspire engaging events to go with all that cool stuff that makes up the setting. Villagers are disappearing in the misty woods and the mysterious lord in his dark, brooding castle does nothing. Superstitious peasants lock their doors and offer dire warnings not to venture forth after nightfall. Wolves howl in the distance as the pale moon rises. Welcome to Ravenloft(tm), a world of gothic horror.

As the DM, you are the lens through which the players experience the world. You can flavor not just *what* they see but *how* they see. Do not rely on them to remember they are in Ravenloft(tm) - remind them. Constantly. You do not have to play in candlelit basements with horror movie soundtracks playing in the background (though that may help). Just describe the peasants gathering up their children and locking their doors. Detail the howling wolves, the dark clouds scudding across the pale moon, and the tangled, twisted woods. If you do not tell them about it, they will not feel it.

Use adjectives and adverbs to convey tone and mood. Appeal to different senses, if you can. Talk about smells, sounds, and textures as well as sights. A wet, blood-stained altar is different than a rough, moss-covered one, and both make a stronger impression than "an altar." "A pungent, animal smell fills the room, and you see five snarling orcs ready their weapons and prepare to charge" is much better than "there are five orcs in the room." Avoid using adverbs when talking about the PCs, especially those that describe emotions. Use adjectives to tell them *what* they feel, not *how* they feel. Do not tell the players "You fell uneasy" or "You are scared," unless they are under the influence of a spell or other effect. Use adjectives to describe physical sensations: "You feel the hair rise on the back of your neck" or "A sudden chill runs down your spine."

The best way to hold your players' attention is to be concise. Keep your descriptions short and to the point, but do not be bland. If you need to give a lengthy description, break it up. Give a little, then give the players a chance to interact with what you have given them. Then give them more. This will keep the players involved and interested. Start with the most obvious, most important details and work towards those that are less so. Once you get to the snarling orcs (obvious and important), move on to combat. Provide details on anything that would affect the fight while the players get ready, but save the descriptions of things like tapestries for later. Use combat to provide description and atmosphere: "Smashing the rotting chairs aside, the orcs rush forward, crushing moss and lichen beneath their boots," or "The orc drops to the dusty floor, his blood seeping between the worn flagstones."

How you present the setting is important, but atmosphere also depends on *what* about the setting you choose to present. Every encounter affects the feel of the game; use them to reinforce the setting. When the PCs travel through zombie-infested woods, they should encounter zombies, not hordes of orcs. If ghouls haunt the city's sewers, then the party should run into ghouls if they venture into the sewers. They do not need to be the first thing they encounter, but they should be there. Encounters like these work to establish the setting more firmly in the minds of your players.

The types of adventures you choose flavor the feel, too. Do not present your swashbucklers with cramped dungeon after cramped dungeon - give them assassins to thwart on runaway carriages and daring duels in chandeliered ballrooms. Chivalric Knights should undertake noble quests against oppressive tyrants; participate in tournaments for the honor of their Lord or Lady; and vanquish fell beasts.

The above examples are hardly conclusive. Ultimately, everything you put into your game alters the atmosphere. Every monster, every piece of treasure, every NPC, every secret society - every choice can add to, or detract from, feel. The key is to make all of those choices work for you. Make a list of adjectives that are appropriate to the feel you want. Come up with several complete setting-appropriate encounters instead of using random tables. Jot down descriptive phrases that inspire the tone you're trying to evoke. The more work you put into achieving a particular feel, the better your game will be.

The Payoff

Feel is what will make your game a role-playing game. A rich, consistent feel makes your world that much more tangible to the players. The more tangible you make the world, the more life the players will breathe into their characters. They will be able to play more seamlessly into the world, and everyone will enjoy the game that much more.

As the DM, you set the feel of the game. You determine whether the world is more like *Dracula*, *Brotherhood of the Wolf*, or *Scooby-Doo*. Your players then know what to expect should they decide to play their characters more like Van Helsing, Mani or Shaggy. Shaggy tries to pull the 'mask' off of the werewolf: if you have set the world up as a dark, dangerous place then they will not be surprised when Shaggy gets his face eaten.

When setting up a game, it is important to talk to your players about feel. The more you can tell them about the feel, the better. Talk about style and atmosphere. Let them know what you are aiming for and find out if that suits their tastes. If you communicate the tone of the game from the beginning, you will have fewer disgruntled players. Their character choices will be more appropriate and this will make it easier for you to plan adventures that spark the interest of the players and their characters. In the end, everyone has more fun - and that's really what it is all about, isn't it?

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One of the most difficult areas during character creation is naming. Three out of four times, players will have an amazing idea for a character, a detailed character background, a solid personality—and no name. Naming comes as an afterthought for many, it seems. Still, how important are names? Should a name accurately reflect the character, the place, or the NPC?

Choosing names are important to any gamer. Player character names are perhaps the most important choice out of all names, simply because players will be stuck with them for the duration of playing their character. A character name should reflect personality, occupation and in some situations, the ethnicity, cultural background, and/

or race of the character. Naming considerations are also important to a DM. Villains, local leaders, merchants, assorted other NPCs, and place names all can give a certain “feel” to your game. If you are running a lighthearted game, names like “Bob the Bard” and “Spankey’s Bar” might be acceptable. However, if you want your players to take the game more seriously and create a viable world, you will need names that reflect the feel and tone of your game.

This article will give you a method for creating or choosing meaningful names in the English language. Note that for those of you reading this article in a language other than English, there might be slight changes in name creation processes. Also included in this article is a list of name generation resources on the web.

The Sound of Names

So how do you go about getting a good name? There are two ways to do it—to find one or to create one. The key to picking/creating good names is knowing about the three elements important to naming—length of the name; what other words the name sounds like/rhymes with/ connotes; and the sounds used in the name. Let's take a look at a few character names, found via an online name generator, to help illustrate these “naming” elements. As you look at the four examples, try to picture the types of personalities, characters, and alignments that might have these names.

- A) *Fisk*
- B) *Jecla*
- C) *Arealath*
- D) *Thorkalta*

What do you think? *Fisk* is a short, one syllable name. It is quick, risky, sneaky and perhaps smells like fish (coming from the similar words

risk, fish, quick, brisk and the shortness of the name itself). *Fisk* is most likely an unpredictable character. *Jecla* sounds mysterious or perhaps a bit evil (coming from the similarity to Jackal or Jekyll). *Arealath* is tricky—the “areal” sounds good (coming from air or aerial), but the “ath” at the end is questionable. So perhaps this is a person who was once good and has fallen to evil. The “ath” of *Arealath* could also be kingly or of high strength and power. *Thorkalta* sounds like a barbaric or tribal female name. Perhaps *Thorkalta* is the wife of Thor. The “a” sounds at the end of both *Jecla* and *Thorkalta* mark these names as characteristically female. These are just my observations, but I assume that what you thought was similar in at least some respects.

Let's take a look at why these names garner the response they do. As mentioned before, the three elements that determine a name's meaning are length, sound, and connotation. All three of these categories are important, but usually one of the three will dominate in determining a name's overt meaning. So depending on the name you have, sound might not be as important as connotation, etc.

The Three Naming Elements

The first major element in a name is the length of the name. Length is probably the least important of the three major elements, simply because it is very situational. Most formal names are two to four syllables. Nicknames are often only one to two syllables. Because of this, short, one-syllable names are often a bit more lighthearted and fun than a longer name. In some cases, the longer a name gets, the more complicated and scientific it sounds. However, extremely long frivolous names can also have a humorous element.

The second major element in naming is connotation. When you have a name that

does not have a direct definition, words that are similar sounding to the name are often associated with the name, hence giving the name properties based on what it is similar to.

Connotation is really a combination of the different factors that add up to anything other than the literal meaning (if any) of the name. These factors include similar sounding words (and thus attached definitions), parts of words imbedded in the name, or words that the name rhymes with (again, connoting those definitions). For example, taking the earlier created name *Fisk*, it is similar to swift, risk, disk, brisk, all of which will play into how someone will view the name—and thus how they view the character or NPC.

The third major element is sound. The sound of the word is arguably the most important element, especially in the absence of forms of connotation, simply because that is essence of what a name is. Individual sounds or a combination of sounds themselves can have an effect on how a name is viewed.

Creating or Picking Good Names

This section takes the three basic tenets of names—length, connotation, and sound, and gives a guide for how to go about creating your own names. For those of you more interested in picking names from established resources, the process is very similar to creation. Above all, remember to try multiple techniques and to experiment.

Keep in mind that what I have listed below are guidelines, not absolutes. There are exceptions to every guideline and each name you are working on creating will have its own balance with the three basic naming tenets. Some names will be solely defined by connotation, and so sound will have no influence. Others will have no real connotation and thus be defined more by sound and length. With the disclaimer out of the way, let's get started.

Length

Length is important when creating or choosing a name. Short names can sometimes imply being humorous, being timid, or being of little importance. Short names can also imply stealth, quickness, and low visibility. Very long names usually imply dignity, importance, or complication. Remember that length works in conjunction with the other two elements and is not the only determining factor in your name.

Connotation

Sometimes, the easiest created names are ones based on connotation. Simply take a word that you want the name to be associated with. Add, subtract, change the spelling, or switch around a few letters, and the name is born. For example, let's take the term *flame* and turn it into a fantasy name. By adding *-lla* at the end of the word, we get the name *Flamella*. Add an *i* and we have *Flamellia*. Next we add an *El* to the front and substitute a *y* for the *a* to get *Elflyme*. A great way to give a name a fantasy feel is to change the spelling or letters in your name. In English, there are multiple ways to spell a word that will all arrive at the same general pronunciation. You can branch out further by making more modifications, and soon you have an entire list of names: *Alflymie*, *Flayme*, *Flynne*, *Flamtine*, *Orinflamme*, *Selflame*, *Osflame*, and *Flaemal*.

Another way you can use connotation to your advantage is through compounding multiple words to create one name. This can be accomplished three ways—adding words to the beginning, adding words to the end, and infixing words in the middle. Going back to the example of *Flame*, we can compound the word with *stifle* to get *Stifleflame*. Other names include *Seaflame*, *Starflame*, *Flameall*, *Flameit*, and *Quickflame*. Infixing a word within another is a bit more tricky because you have to start with a word with at least two syllables. Taking the word *savior*, we can infix *all*, and get *Savallior*. Infixing can be tricky, as it does usually not occur in English, but sometimes produces great results.

A third way connotation can work is through what is called a blend. A blend is two separate words that are unified and shortened to create a new word. Simply remove letters from the end of one word and the beginning of another to create a blend. Combining *Grumpy* and *Stupid* we get *Grumpid* or *Stumpy* (pronounced *Stoompy*). *Slimy* and *Serious* combine to form *Slierous*. An infinite variety of names can evolve by blending words together.

Connotation is a great way to create amusing or comic-relief names. For example, *Thork* comes from *Fork*; *Poot* comes from *Poop*; and *Vlackass* comes from *Jackass*.

Sound

The sound section is based on research in a field called Sound Symbolism. The basic idea behind this school of thought is that how a sound is pronounced has an effect on how people view the sound and can have an effect

on what it means. I have given a list of sounds that are best for certain types of individuals. As mentioned before, if you are reading this article in a language other than English, there may be slight differences in how the sound section works for you, depending on what sounds your language uses.

Evil Names / Villain Names

Stick with the hard and sharp sounds. When pronounced, these sounds give almost a bite to the word. You will get the best results if you use hard sounds at the beginning and/or endings of words. Hard, sharp sounds include /p/, /t/, /b/, /k/; /d/; /g/. The hard consonants also work well for "strong" or "tribal" sounding names. Examples include: *Ralnegrump*; *Ackdar*; *Baelrackeen*; and *Karthat*.

Heroic Names

Heroic names are usually at least two syllables or longer. Often, heroic names have a combination of hard and soft sounds. Generally, beginning with a softer sound is better for a heroic name. See the hard sounds listed above and the soft sounds listed below. Examples include: *Alandar*; *Ellsiekan*; *Larathonon*; and *Trasivlela*.

Good Names

Good names usually have softer sounds. Soft sounds include all vowel sounds as well as /r/; /l/; /s/; /v/; /f/; /h/; /j/; /m/; and /n/. Examples include: *Navellium*, *Slanish*, *Virule*, and *Jasmus*.

Strange Names

Strange names will use either an outlandish combination of sounds or sounds that are not as frequently used such as /z/; /q/; /x/; and /v/. Examples include: *Xirokke*, *Quixx*, *Zivnoki*, *Thuz*, and *Quagzhine*.

Above all, feel free to experiment with sound, connotation, and length to create some unique and interesting sounds for your character or campaign.

Name Generation/List Sites

If you aren't comfortable or do not have the time to create a name, there are a large number of resources out there on the 'net to help. This is just a small sampling of what is out there as far as name generation resources on the web go. Use the above mentioned parameters to help you choose a name from the generation

lists.

<http://zoope.com/> - This is one of my favorite name sites. It contains over 10,000 names from all different regions of the world with detailed meanings. Most of these names are better for modern games, but some have that "fantasy" feel.

<http://ebon.pyorre.net/> - The EverChanging book of names is a shareware program that is regularly updated and is designed specifically for RPG gamers.

<http://spitfire.ausys.se/johan/names/default.htm> - This is a name generator that generates male/female names in fantasy, devery style, Tolkien style, Orc Tolkien style, Warhammer style, Felanna style, Babylon 5 Narn Style, and Swords Tolkien style.

<http://www.ruf.rice.edu/%7Epound/> - Chris Pound's Language machines. This is an extensive site that uses scripts to generate names. Along with the scripts themselves, there are extensive "sample" name lists from most of the major languages of the world, along with several created language lists.

<http://www.kabalarians.com/html/surf-by.htm> - Believe it or not, another place to find a large variety of names is on baby naming website. This site has close to 500,000 names, and is categorized by place of origin and alphabetical order. Most of the names on this site are better for a modern game, but some will work for fantasy.

Remember when designing or finding names to be creative. As a final tip, try doing something new with the next character or NPC you create by reversing the normal process of character creation with a small exercise in naming.

First, find or create a name you like. Next, look at the name you have chosen imagine what sort of person or character would have that name. Brainstorm and write the description for your character, so that your character fits the name. That's it for this issue of Polyglot. Join me next time when we begin to discuss modes and methods communication in detail.

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Alternative Rewards for Role-Playing

By Chris Perkett

DM: The King bids all of you forward. He says 'For saving the life of my only daughter from the wizard of dastardly reputation, I give you all this reward, a bag of gold sovereigns.' You each get 200 gold. The crowd cheers.

Player 1: (sigh) I spend more than that eating breakfast.

Player 2: What a crappy reward! It was his only daughter!

Player 3: Couldn't he at least have helped us out with Baron Bigthumbs? The whole kingdom knows that guy had us framed for burning down that nunnery!

Player 4: Lame!

Are your players bored with the standard rewards of gaming? Experience points, money, and magic items simply not keeping their enthusiasm? Here are a couple alternative rewards a DM can hand out to players for a successful mission.

Medals:

Instead of passing them a bag of gold, hand the characters the Kingdom's High Order of Merit, or the Silver Crescent of Courage. A suitably impressive honor can often be more memorable for a player than a monetary reward of gold and silver. Moreover, such awards can tie into a character's Reputation and her Influence, both discussed below.

When creating merit-based awards, first determine the number of awards and their hierarchy if necessary. A "Medal of Honor" is much more impressive than a "Purple Heart," for instance. Also, be clear as to what the criteria are for receiving such an award—is this an award for bravery, for being hurt in battle, or for acting in a specific way?

After determining the hierarchy and criteria for your awards comes the fun part: naming the award, describing the associated medal, and creating any necessary story behind the award. The story can be as elaborate as you like, or as scanty as time permits. If you're really creative or have too much time on your hands, you can even create a graphic to hand out to your players. To give you a better idea, here is a sample award:

The Argent Pentacle

The Argent Pentacle is awarded to those mages and sorcerers who use their magic in defense of the borders of the realm in a significant way (like using a fireball to decimate a large invading army of orcs before they overrun a border town). The medal is a silver pentacle, surrounded by a winged laurel wreath, worn as a pin on the mage's robe.



Titles:

Nothing says "success" like an award of a title. When Horvik the fighter suddenly turns into Lord Horvik, Champion of the Barren Plains, players take notice.

Titles can be as meaningless as you want, or can actually accord the character some clout in his country. Some titles, such as duke/duchess, count/countess, baron/baroness, viscount/viscountess, etc., traditionally are hereditary titles that denote authority over a portion of land (i.e. a baron usually rules a barony, a duke a duchy, and so on) and may entitle the titleholder to an annual income from taxation. Awarding a title like this to a character will usually transform a campaign from one of "standard freewheeling adventure" to a more politically oriented campaign, where players now find themselves overseeing the management of a fiefdom rather than simply adventuring. As a general rule, unless the players express an interest in such things, avoid awarding such titles.

That said, a number of titles can be awarded that do not automatically need to transform the characters into political leaders. Here is a small sampling of such titles:

Mark, Champion of the Scurvy Highlands

Mark, Hero of the Realm

Mark "Giant Slayer"

Lord Mark of Griffin's Gate

Another option is the creation of noble orders, similar to an order of knighthood, but less formal. These are often associated with medals/awards, as described above. Perhaps the recipients of the Argent Pentacle are inducted into the White Mage's Society. Such a group would give the character contacts in that group and could provide possible plot hooks to introduce an adventure to the party.

Don't be afraid to invent your own noble titles for your characters and the kingdom they live in. Even if the title awarded to the character comes with no other rewards, such titles can easily affect a character's Reputation and her Influence, both discussed below.

Knighthood:

An award of knighthood is often the culmination of years of dedication and training for the medieval man. It carries with it both responsibility and authority. Perhaps the characters have seen the knights of their particular kingdom ride past in their glittering armor, or have watched them walk through the marketplace in fine raiment of costly fabric, a fair maiden of excellent quality on their arm.

Similar to creating awards or noble orders, an Order of Knighthood can be as simple or as complex as the DM has time and imagination for. The title of knight can simply be a knight of the realm, with the ability for the character to call himself "Sir Skullcrusher" rather than simply Skullcrusher. It can also be the starting point of an entire story arc for that particular character as they rise within the Order of Knighthood they have joined by committing great deeds.

A degree of knighthood can make a character feel distinguished, while giving a DM another opportunity for plot hooks. Also, a knight is required to maintain a certain standard of living, which is an excellent way to relieve that warrior of some of his spare gold and silver.

Real estate¹:

Everyone likes to have a place to come home to, with player characters being no exception to this rule. Imagine: after spending a month on the road, several tense evenings in the wilderness and a couple sleepless nights in a haunted dungeon, there is nothing better than sleeping in your own warm bed. For that, a character needs a house, whether it's a hovel or a great manor.

If the party happens to have a hometown or city, perhaps the local mayor or city council would reward their recurring saviors with the deed of a small home they can call their own. In the campaign I play in, the town our party used as a

base of operations was decimated by humanoids. In gratitude for saving the townsfolk, a few characters were awarded abandoned farmsteads in the village.

Granting real property to your players gives them a feeling of belonging to the community where their home is located. Moreover, it allows for ample opportunities for role-playing tie-ins and side-plots. It also is a very effective additional drain on a character's money belt: furnishings, window glazing, additional rooms and the like don't come cheap!

Business charter:

Okay, so Conan the mercantile goods salesman doesn't have a very heroic ring to it. However, think of it this way: the characters spend so much time in the Laughing Duck Tavern, why don't they just own it? Rather than simply being guards for the merchant caravan, why not have a vested interest in it?

Some characters are designed with salable crafts in mind. A rogue with some metalworking skill could easily set himself up as a locksmith, and a mage willing to cast spells for pay is always in demand, even in the largest cities. However, granting a party a business charter doesn't have to mean they suddenly stop adventuring—after all, that's what hirelings are for.

Using my own experience as an example, our party acquired an inn from grateful villager whose town we just saved. The last innkeeper had actually been an evil lackey to a spirit naga that had been terrorizing the village, and was promptly tried and executed. The award of the inn gave our party a number of role-play opportunities. First, we had to hire an innkeeper (since none of us knew how to run an inn), and come up with startup costs and hiring pay. We created a special "inn fund" that we contributed to out of our dividing of treasure hoards we plundered. When we killed our first dragon (albeit a small one), we had a taxidermist embalm the head so we could mount it on our inn's wall. The inn is now covered with various mementos of our adventures. It also gave our party a reason to frequent that village again and again, to visit our inn and see how it is prospering.

As you can see from the above example, awarding a business charter can give the characters a steady source of income, implement adventure hooks, provide the characters with a sense of belonging to their community, and similar to real estate, can even be used to siphon off the party's excess money. After all, having everburning torches in every room doesn't come cheap. Finally, a business owner can garner a

certain amount of reputation and/or influence, as discussed below.

Reputation:

With the exception of thieves, people like to get noticed. This holds true for player characters as well. After all, what's the point of being able to slaughter a green dragon blindfolded with a magic butter knife if nobody knows you can do it? Why rescue another noble if the city guards still ask you who you are when you enter the gates?

With all of the above mentioned alternative rewards, reputation can be as basic as people knowing the names and recent exploits of the characters; knowing their names and hearing the occasional bard's song about them; or a sophisticated system of how reputation works with several of the character's charisma-based skills, like the d20 Diplomacy, Perform, Gather Information, or Intimidate. After all, a crowd is more likely to gather to hear a song sung by Led Zeppelin than Led Pencil.

My suggestion is if you are going to use reputation in your campaign as an alternative award, create a clear system that shows how it affects the above-mentioned skills or equivalent abilities in your system. While d20 Dungeons and Dragons² does not possess a rules system for reputation, d20 Star Wars does; my DM's home-brewed reputation system stems from that, for DM's seeking a template.

A character's reputation will be affected by several things, including awards, grants of noble titles, degree of knighthood, even business ownership, and vice versa.

Influence:

Take a page from our friends over at the RPGA. When they were handing out rewards, one of the things a character could receive was a certificate that allowed a character a certain amount of influence with some defined group or government. The characters don't have wear fedoras or speak in Brooklyn accents to know that after helping out the City of Tuckwallow, "someday they may ask for a favor."

Similar to Reputation, influence can be as simple or as complex as the DM chooses to get. Whatever the DM chooses, I strongly suggest that you make it clear to the players what their character's influence can achieve and what its limitations are.

Conclusion:

DM: The king bids you all forward. He says 'In the past, you have all shown yourselves to be true heroes of this realm, and we have rewarded your past efforts by proclaiming you Champions of the Kingdom. By saving my only daughter, I now award you our highest medal of merit: the Golden Turbit, and moreover grant you all lands west of the poisoned river as your sole fief.' He bids you all to kneel, then slips a golden medallion around each of your necks. The overcrowded chamber bursts into applause.

Player 1: Rock on! Lord Mark of the Barren Waste! How much does building a castle cost?

Player 2: This should get our magic lantern business off the ground!

Player 3: After the ceremony, I'm sidling over to Countess Wimple, to see if I can convince her to enter into an alliance against Baron Bighthumbs. I'm tired of that windbag's stupid accusation about the nunnery and I should have enough influence to get a couple of nobles to speak up for us.

Player 4: Sweet!

(Footnotes)

¹ Thanks to Christian Walker for writing a piece on this past month in Iron Rations, which I used for inspiration.

² 3rd Edition, anyway; I haven't bought version 3.5 yet.

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Bushrangers

A monthly column by
Shane Cubis

G'Day all. Bushrangers are the Australian equivalent of Wild West gunslingers and Robin Hood folk heroes. They roamed the bush in the 19th century, striking fear into the hearts of men and worming their way into the history books. They capture the imagination of bored schoolboys and entertain the general public with their stories of courage, heroism/villainy, and rebellion. In short, they are the perfect subject for a roleplaying game.

Background Information

There were two roughly distinct eras of bushranger activity in Australia. The first revolved around the actions of runaway convicts, who took to the bush in order to avoid the hard work and punishment they were receiving. Obviously most, if not all, of these bushrangers were born in England or Ireland.

'The China Option' serves as one reason for convicts to run away from their punishment. Geography was not a well known subject among these transported criminals, and the coastline of Australia had only recently been mapped out. It was generally believed that one could walk back to civilization, and that China was just over the eastern mountain range. Needless to say, a significant number of bleached skeletons lay a day or so out of the fledgling settlements – runaway convicts lost in the bush and victims of starvation. Those who managed to survive often came to the conclusion that a life of crime and preying on settlements, was preferable to repeated lashings and hard labor.

Later, bushrangers were 'currency lads' as opposed to 'sterling'. This meant that they were born in Australia. Their outlook was still very much European, but they tended to know the land like the back of their hand, and as such had a natural advantage over the often-imported police assigned to track them down.

Many bushrangers saw themselves as peasant heroes, defending the common people from the rich. Stealing and looting were meat and drink to all bushrangers, but some followed their own curious moral code. These self-imposed rules might have been along the lines of not stealing from those who could not afford it, being courteous to women, or even refusing to shoot a man who was married. These 'gentlemen thieves' often evaded capture for a very long time, even with huge rewards on their heads, because of the loyalty of the people in the community.

The Bushranging Campaign

The bushranging life can easily be adapted as a full campaign setting. In such a game, the PCs take on the roles of fictional bushrangers, riding roughshod over the fledgling settlements of Australia alongside their historical counterparts. It is not difficult to imagine the adventure possibilities involved in holding up mail coaches, robbing banks, laying low with the general populace as the police ride around, and pitched gun battles in the wilderness with troopers or rival gangs. Given the outlaw status of the party in such a milieu, campaigns will tend to revolve around the battle for survival outside (or on the edges) of society, and the constant cat-and-mouse game as the police attempt to track them down.

Allies

Many bushrangers were viewed by the populace as charming rogues. Some of them could be quite chivalrous, styling themselves as rebels rather than thieves. A significant number of settlers (who were partially made up from convict stock) identified with the bushranger ethos, and venerated anyone who made the police force look foolish. Some settlers could be counted on for a meal or a hiding place, especially if they were rewarded with a share of any booty. The bounty for turning in a bushranger climbed higher and higher, and it is interesting to note that many who had the chance to claim such a reward sided with the criminal over the establishment. In game terms, a party who acts respectfully and generously to the common people can expect more loyalty in return. However, any GM worth their salt knows that betrayal and plot twists lie deep in the hearts of those the player characters hold dearest.

Antipodean Adventures



Villains

In a bushranger campaign, the most natural enemies of the party will be the troopers – the physical manifestation of the law. Many of the police were bullies and corrupt, and can easily be painted as thugs. On the other hand, a dedicated and ruthless trooper could effortlessly become the archnemesis of a bushranging party.

The troopers were often assisted in their hunt for criminals by *blacktrackers*, the Aboriginal equivalent of rangers. These trackers were intimately familiar with the land and were skilled hunters among their native tribes. Blacktrackers were not necessarily loyal to the government, but knew how to do their job well. After all, why not help one white man hunt down another if there was something in it for you?

The warriors of Aboriginal tribes may have no compunction about attacking bushrangers who wander into their territory. By this era of history, they have probably discovered that they would be shown no mercy by white men with guns. If the party can convince the tribe that they are friendly, and receive friendship in return, then they may have found powerful allies – especially if there are practitioners of divine or arcane magic in the tribe.

Other villains of the recurring kind can be derived from another bushranger, or even an entire gang. This gang could be one of those mentioned in this article, or could be created from the whole cloth by the GM. If the campaign contains magic, the latter might be more desirable (although a few levels of mage might change the meaning behind the moniker of Captain Thunderbolt considerably). Perhaps the party is generally good, but on the wrong side of the law. They attempt to thwart the more evil schemes of other, more black-hearted bushrangers whilst staying one step ahead of the troopers. Or perhaps they have a kind of rivalry, continually butting heads over who is robbing which coach.

Why Become A Bushranger?

There are a number of reasons for a well-meaning party of adventurers to turn to a life of crime. These can either be taken as given, occurring before the campaign begins, or could form the basis of the first one or two sessions.

1. Persecution: Because of the reputation of friends, family or even neighbours, the character is continually watched, accused and arrested for possible connection to crimes. Even if they are eventually released due to proven innocence or lack of evidence, their time in gaol will have had an adverse effect on their livelihood.

They may find that their cattle have been stolen, their barns have been burned to the ground, or some similar tragedy has occurred.

2. Straightforward Malice or Madness: Some people just seem to be born into a life of crime. These characters will have been attracted to the idea of robbing and killing from an early age. They may have run away from home to join a gang, or begun with small crimes before graduating to murder. These bushrangers are the least likely to elicit support from the people, because they are so unpredictable and obviously evil.
3. Poverty: Just like their parents, transported to Australia for stealing food, some characters may have turned to crime in order to survive. Cattle rustling had very harsh penalties, and if the troopers find the remains of beef and a suspiciously branded piece of hide in your cottage, chances were you would be imprisoned. From there it was a very easy jump into the bushranger life, stealing gold from coaches and horses from fields.
4. Rebellion: This may be connected to one of the above reasons, or the character may have been raised with the spirit of Irish rebellion in their blood. They steal and disrupt the flow of the government with a political intent in mind, and will often talk to their victims of their reasons for turning to a life of crime. They may even write letters to the newspaper or governor, outlining their demands or political agenda.

Some Famous Bushrangers

Frank 'Darkie' Gardiner (1831 - 1904)

Gardiner was trained as a butcher, but supplemented this income with horse-thievery and cattle duffing. He was a natural leader – a very charismatic man with a woolly black beard – and a high profile bushranger. He was known as the 'King of the Road', and he inspired a number of young men in the 1860s to take up bushranging with his daring exploits. Gardiner masterminded the robbery of the Eugowra Gold Escort in 1862, netting his gang around 14,000 pounds (the average annual salary of a policeman was 60 pounds).

Fred 'Captain Thunderbolt' Ward (1836 – 1870)

Captain Thunderbolt was a gentleman bushranger. He was endlessly courteous to women, and never killed or even wounded a victim. He was an expert on horseflesh, and used this talent to evade capture on many occasions. Thunderbolt was one of the most successful of the bushrangers, undertaking daring robberies for over seven years. His constant companion and lover was Mary-Ann Bugg, an Aboriginal woman with high intelligence and wisdom. She could read and write, and she was intimately familiar with the land and general bush lore.

'Brave' Ben Hall (1837 – 1865)

Ben Hall was immensely knowledgeable about horses. He strove to be an honest, successful man, but was driven into crime through police persecution. Hall liked a dance and a laugh, and never missed a chance to show up the incompetence of a policeman. He was generally a sober man, who never really got over his wife leaving him for a trooper. All in all, he was a well-liked folk hero. He will do his best not kill a foe, but has no compunction about wounding or knocking them unconscious. In fact, he was seen by some to be possessed of a violent streak.

Dan 'Mad Dog' Morgan (18?? – 1865)

'Mad Dog' Morgan was a crazy man. He had long, wild black hair and a luxurious beard. Morgan was known to shoot people on a whim, and be apologetic immediately afterward. He had a fierce hatred of the police, whom he would generally attempt to murder on sight. He was extremely violent and abusive, and bragged that he could not be caught. 'Mad Dog' was merciless when it came to those he believed had informed

upon him. After he was shot dead by police, his skin was flayed from his body and dried, his head was studied phrenologically, locks of his hair were sold as souvenirs, and his testes were made into a coin purse.

Ned Kelly (1860 - 1880)

Ned Kelly is the most well-known bushranger in Australia and abroad. He has been the subject of many books, a few movies and a host of tourist paraphernalia. He was an Australian-born son of Irish convicts, and very vocal about his hatred for the police force. Along with his brother and childhood friends, Ned became an icon to many people – an image solidified in his final showdown with the police at Glenrowan, where he emerged from an inn dressed in full armour. Because he is such an icon, next month's column of *Antipodean Adventures* will be fully devoted to the story of the Kelly Gang.

There is a lot more to be written and read on the topic of bushrangers – this article is just a taste, an introduction. There are some excellent resources online, and more books than I could count. There have also been a few good movies (such as the recently released *Ned Kelly* starring Heath Ledger and Orlando Bloom) and television shows made on the subject, which may have a positive influence on the atmosphere and flavor of your game.

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Star's Night Part 2

By Aaron Todd

If hate had an expression, it would be the look on Ynara Diri's face as she glared that the card dealer across the table. He had just dealt her a hand that could have won on many tables, but not here and not today. The two drunk humans at the table with her had no respect for the game, although they had no idea that she was here to find a way to seek some revenge. Meanwhile, the innocent, while malodorous Farut had claimed the pot in this patient card game.

She hated the way the Bollen looked, especially when they spoke. Their vocal rings quivered as they made sound, appearing like rolls of fat on something that might otherwise be construed as a neck on most species. As if there wasn't enough she hated about these things, the speaking part only made it worse. But the one in front of her didn't speak much, which made dealing with it just slightly more acceptable.

"Enou fo me, thi ime," the Farut obviously had some trouble with standard language, speaking as though he didn't have a tongue. He stretched across his face what seemed like a smile, but it was hard to tell with the Farut. He had no trouble collecting his winnings from the table as he scooped them up with a single large hand and stood up slowly making his way for the door.

A gambler's paradise was hardly a place to move about quickly, unless you wanted to get shot at. And this bar was a gambler's paradise. It was rare that an evening went by without at least two Bollen running a game in this place. That combined with the h'rafa races shown over closed circuit behind the bar made it a magnet for those looking to make a quick buck.

The other two humans stumbled from the table, the one who could still stand acting as a living crutch for the hobbled drunk.

While looking at the Bollen, Ynara's eyes caught something over one of its massive shoulders that she wasn't sure how she didn't catch before. There was an ART leaning against the bar staring right at her. She had seen it earlier, but it wasn't paying her any attention, so she disregarded it as just a patron. But now, the half-human, half-mech was paying very close attention to her, obviously watching for her to do something. It was then that she realized that the ART must be working for the Bollen.

She wondered what the ART was doing with this thing. ARTs seldom took to the company of others. They were traditional loners, thinking themselves better than most living creatures. They believed their mechanical enhancements made them inherently superior to other species. They were stronger, more adaptable. Since their development, they tended to be either warriors or pilots. Their machine parts made them excellent at both, because they could go for long periods without nourishment or rest.

"Would you like to play again?" the fat Bollen rumbled his renewed question.

"No. Losing once a night is my limit. I play 'til I lose. Then I'm done." She knew that now was not the right time. If she made a move while the ART was watching her, she'd never get anywhere.

With that, Ynara got up from the table, slowly, watching the ART with an occasional glance. She made her way up to the bar. She'd have a drink or two as the Bollen waited for any more prospective players, and then she'd follow him when he left.

Having a seat at the chest-high bar, she raised her feet up off the floor to look comfortable. She was sitting between two Naru construction workers. They must be in for a drink after work. They each had two drinks in hand, leaving the other four to motion in disgust at the h'rafa races on the screens behind the bar. They must be losing.

The Naru were not a bad lot, generally. They were good and efficient workers, and found themselves in construction jobs more often than not. Their six arms enabled them to carry a

significantly greater amount of tools, building materials, and anything else they needed. Their complex muscular structure allowed the Naru to utilize their limbs on a completely individual basis. They could actually complete as many as four independent tasks at once.

Ynara had known a Naru pilot a few years back named Ruapa who had a specially designed ship that had all of the gun turret controls running straight from the cockpit. The turrets themselves were even manufactured to rotate independently, so as to allow multiple attack angles. He could shoot in two different directions and still pilot the vessel without missing a beat. She had once seen him in a dogfight with a dozen Waratu security cruisers. He had dispensed with them with as much ease as a child might dispense with a plate of food from a tray table.

These two were obviously not in the flight game, though. They wore the clothes of men who worked with their hands all day—a bit dirty and very tired looking.

But she was playing the waiting game now. Four players had made their way to the dealer's table, and she knew she would be awhile. She stopped paying attention long enough that she thought she might take in a race or two. She asked the bartender for a racing pad so that she could scout some of the animals and maybe place a bet if something caught her attention. He pulled one of the data-pads out from under the bar and brought it over to her.

The bartender was a very large human, nearly seven feet she guessed, and probably not a pound under three hundred. He seemed to belong in the bar as much as the liquor itself. With a towel slung over his shoulder and an apron around his waist, his broad chest and shoulders pressed his shirt out like a canopy. His arms were bigger around than her legs, so she imagined that he had thrown out a patron or two in his days. She started to think how nice it would be to watch the Bollen get tossed out on his larger than reasonable backside.

The air itself in this bar lent to deception. There were shadowed corners and rooms behind doors. There were rifles clearly mounted behind the bar should anyone start something or try to leave without paying, and another look at the bartender convinced her that he was not afraid to use them.

She glanced over the data-pad searching for the name of an h'rafa that might catch her eye, but nothing did right away. When she did bet on the races, she usually looked for the name of something that was familiar. Planets she visited, animals she had known, family members. She once found an h'rafa with the same name as her mother, Denare, but she lost that race.

She found one with the name, "Star's Night" two races after the current race and decided she'd throw down on that one. That gave her at least twenty minutes before she'd have to look at the screen again. How could she go wrong with betting on the name of the ship that had helped her survive this long?

The race came and went, there were some cheers and some boos after each race, but she made no noise, no indication that she had even wagered.

Two hours later, she had sipped her way through three drinks and watched two more hands that the Bollen dealt out. He'd won them both, so he'd be a jolly fat thing tonight, that's for sure. The ART had not paid her any attention since she sat down, so she figured she was off the hook with him. She must not have roused any of his suspicious alarms, or he would have at least acknowledged her once she got up.

The bar had actually gotten more crowded, which she liked. She never wanted to stand out in a group, or be noticed, because that was always a bad thing with her. She tended to stir up trouble and if there weren't enough people around, more people tended to notice what was really going on. If she could manage to get to the Bollen tonight, she was pretty sure that no one would notice what she was doing.

Once it was clear that the Bollen was done for the night and had started to pack up his table, the ART went over to the table to help. It took very little time to clear these tables, as they were designed for self-containment. The Bollen simply removed everything from the surface, pressed a button under the side by where he sat, then it collapsed and compressed into what looked like a large suitcase, which, of course, the ART would carry.

The Bollen were known for three things. The first, being fat, lethargic cretins. The second is that they are great card dealers. The third trait is that they are notoriously lazy. One was seldom seen without at least one servant. This dealer probably had another servant at his ship, or at the apartment where he was staying while he was here.

So his man-machine servant took the table and they started for the door. The servants always went first, to be sure that it was safe, and this servant was probably just as well equipped as any to protect his master.

She watched as the Bollen and his servant made their exit, and was ready to follow them. As she began to remove herself from the stool, she bumped square into a man who barely reached her shoulders, and a scrawny man at that. So, face to chest, the man tilted his head up. She knew him

"Ynara Diri, what a pleasant surprise," The meager man started.

"Tolrath Dill, I wish I could say the same," she was looking over him at the door. "I really don't have time to talk now, I have an appointment that I really need to keep."

"Oh, but it has been so long," his words dripped with as much oil as vinegar on her ears. The mere sound of his voice was annoying.

"Later, really," she began to push him aside, moving towards the door when a much larger man stepped into her view on the other side of her from Tolrath. He was nearly a head taller than her.

"But I insist," Tolrath continued. Placing two fingers on her shoulder he symbolically pushed her back down onto the seat.

She conceded, seemingly willingly, but it looked as though she was given little choice by the man in front of her. He stationed himself in front of her, just enough to the side of Tolrath so as not be completely behind him. He crossed his arms crossed over his chest in a show of clear defiance to her resistance. Tolrath took a poise of confidence as he raised his front foot and placed it on a chair next to him.

"Now, I believe that we have a few things to discuss, don't we?"

"Look, can't this wait, I told you I have a really

important meeting to get to."

"No, it can't wait!" his voice began to raise in an uncoordinated mix of frustration and challenge, coming out very much like the whine of a child.

Before he could start the next sentence, however, she looked at the bodyguard, who had altered his attention briefly to one of the monitor screens. Not wanting to miss an opportunity, she heaved her boot-laden foot up into the groin of the bodyguard, who subsequently fell to his knees on the floor, his face contorted to show the immense discomfort that followed the blow.

She lowered her boot back to the floor and followed it with the other foot, standing back up again and looking back down on the little man, she grabbed the front of his shirt.

"Don't you ever listen? I said later. I don't have time!" She gave him a small shove, and he fell into the chair he had been leaning on a moment ago.

"Stupid little man," she said in nearly a whisper. With that she started for the door, giving the bodyguard a small jolt with her hip, sending him the rest of the way to the floor. She did hope that no too many people had noticed, or they might try to stop her from leaving. So without making eye contact with any of the other patrons, she marched towards the door, not even turning back to look as Tolrath began to pout.

"We will finish this Ynara!" he was nearly crying as he yelled towards her.

She did not acknowledge the man; in fact she barely heard his rant as she made her way out the door. Bumping into a man that was getting off his barstool just two down from where she had been sitting, she was a bit stunned. She hadn't noticed him at all until her shoulder caught his arm. She was forced to turn towards him slightly, but he paid her no attention. She resumed course for the exit.

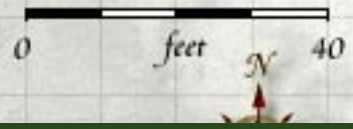
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Cartographer's Corner



by Dana Driscoll and Kosala Ubayasekara

The Library

Cartographers Index : Map ID 04 - Map ID 07

A library of this size and caliber would most likely be located in a large city and be near and/or affiliated with a center of learning (including a university, magic school, Jedi academy, or large cathedral.) Access would depend on which type of group had jurisdiction over the library, but would probably be restricted to those who could afford to pay an entrance fee, had completed a quest, or had some other political pull or affiliation.

This library could also potentially be located in a secluded and rather hard to reach place—protecting the contents from political struggles, warring factions or nations, or simply the wrong hands. The location will range based on your campaign setting but could include any of the following: on a demi-plane; in a secluded underground cave; secured away in the mountains; in the magically-cooled center of a volcano; on a floating iceberg; hidden within a forest; on a uninhabitable planet; or deep within a nebula or asteroid belt. The protectors of the isolated library would allow only those who prove themselves worthy to gain entrance to its archives.

The contents of the library itself heavily depend on the type of campaign setting, who controls the library, and where it is located. If you opt for the secluded library, more knowledge contained within would be guarded, preserved, and largely unknown. If the library is located in a large metropolis, more people would have access to the library and thus it would contain fewer secrets. Some possibilities of library contents include: church records and ledgers; historical archives; arcane research tomes; legends and lore; architecture; literature, plays, and poems; mythology; engineering and devices; periodicals; cultural/racial information; paranormal occurrences; court proceedings; census data and other city records.

Maps this edition

The library maps we bring you this edition were designed by Dana Driscoll, our Editor In Chief.

Making your own maps

We promised you last month that we would have a tutorial on map making for you this month.

We have bumped up the tutorial to next month instead, to have an opportunity to feature Dana's fabulous library layouts and to give us more time to work on a step by step article for you for the map tutorial.

Next month, Dana and Kosala will be taking you through the process of creating a map, texturing it, and provide hints and tips on using Photoshop to handle your mapmaking needs.



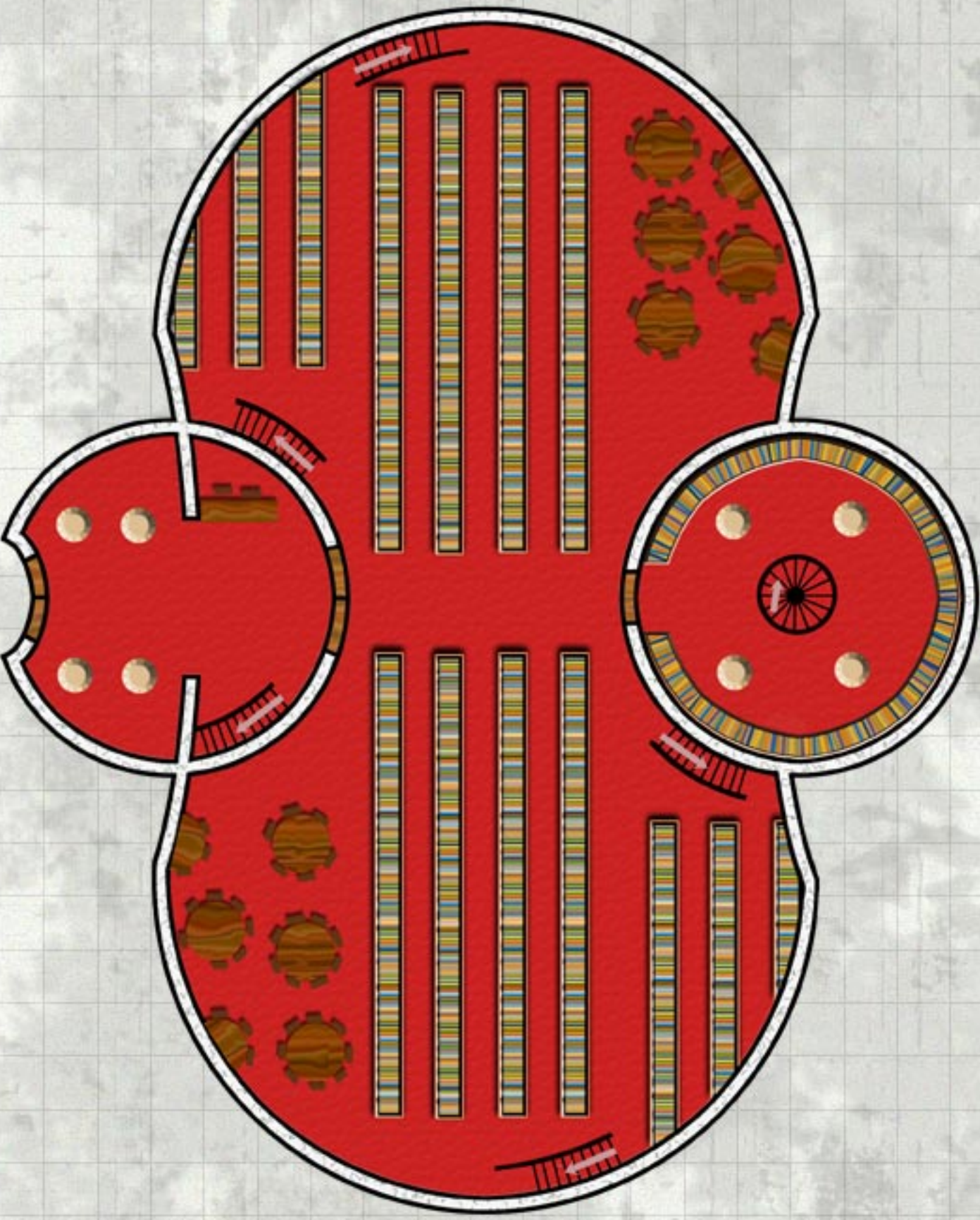
About this section

The Cartographer's Corner is your source for free, high quality color maps.

Each map that follows is a full page, in color and contains numbered areas so that a DM can easily make notes and keep track of what he or she wants where.

On this page we will present some adventure hook ideas that go with each map. These are usable in any fantasy based RPG and are presented only to give your imagination a kick start. We are very interested in hearing your feedback about how you use our maps. Head over to our forums and tell us.

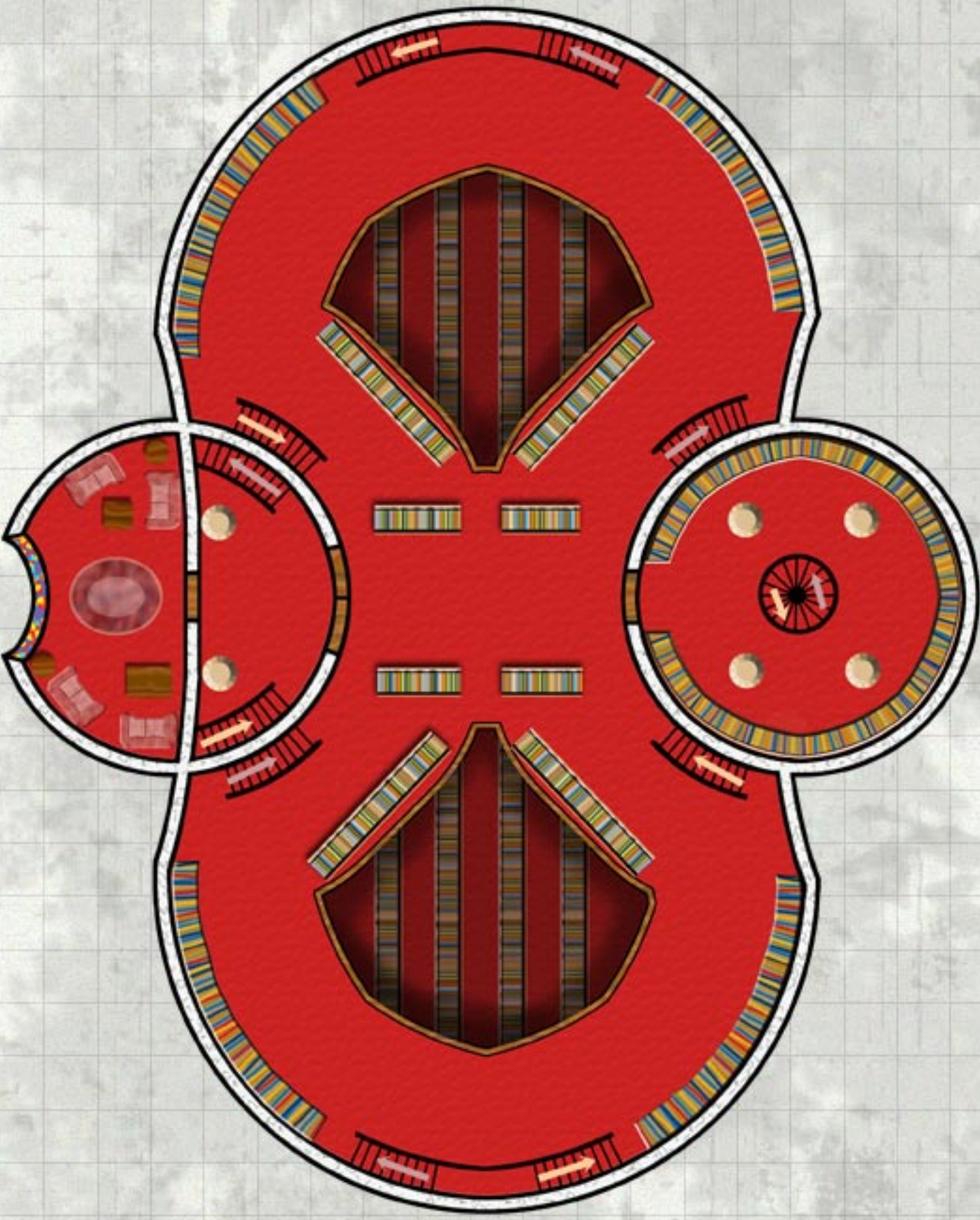
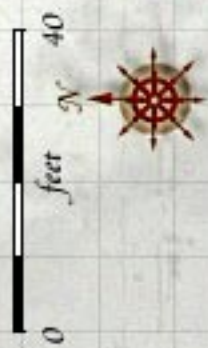
<http://www.silven.com/forums.asp?case=threads&forumgroupid=1&forumssubsectionid=56>



The Library - Floor 1

Cartographers Index : May ID 04

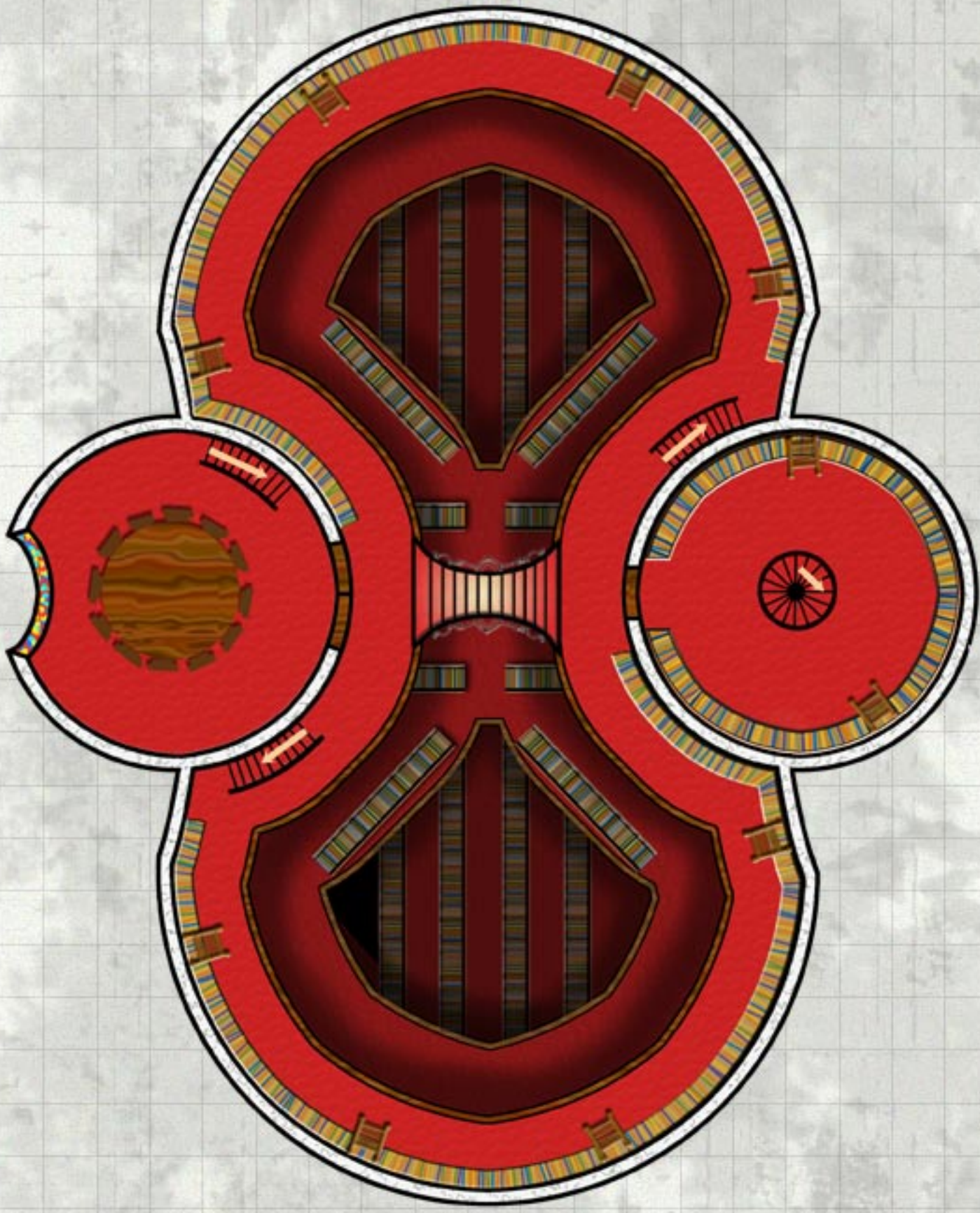
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The Library - Floor 2

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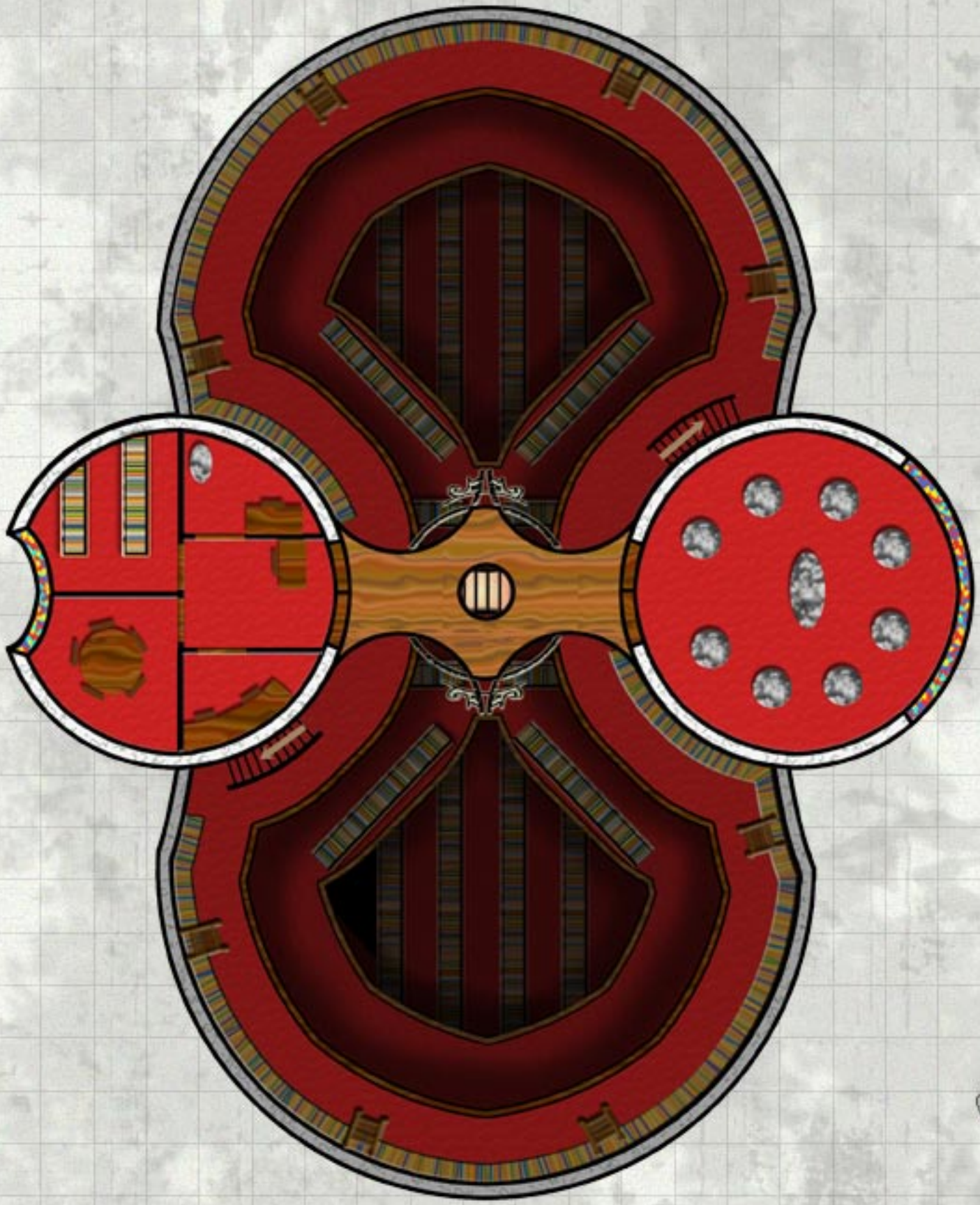
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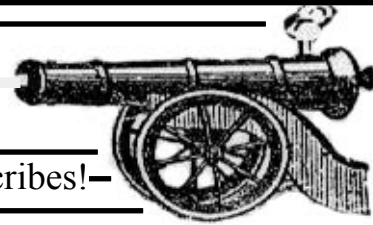
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The Fodder Cannon

Serving the City of Silven for over 1,000 Scribes!—



Orc Women: Do they really exist?

An investigative report by Dak Tamble

We've all been there right? Stuck down in the cramped, disgusting orc lair, surrounded by the foul smelling, yellow-tusked beasties. But in some recent encounters with orc kind, a curious question arose in my gnomish brain. Where are all the orc women? I mean these legions of scallywags don't materialize out of thin air. A wizard does not simply fabricate orcs for whimsy. And because of the existence of half-orcs, we know the males are all well and capable. Throughout my investigation, I uncovered numerous details that are striking, intriguing, and downright ludicrous to behold. But the truth must be told.

I started off the investigation like any other, asking a renowned bard. While she pondered for a moment, a skill that is called bluffing, she did recite one important piece of evidence...she didn't know. If a bard does not know then we are in trouble. Now that I think about it, aren't I a bard? If two bards don't know, then it's off to the clerics. The clerics, as usual, proved less than helpful asking if the orcs would convert. I told them the women might, and they asked where they are. So I've come full circle in religion again, it's nice to see that the world always works. In any case, my investigation continued down at the fighter's guild. These guys have probably seen the most orcs, so they should know best. They were all less than helpful. The responses were, "I don't know. I don't care. Are they hot?" and "What are orcs?" This track was getting me nowhere, and I needed to be somewhere. So there was only one thing left to do.

I stopped by the local rangers guild and asked them if they would help in my investigative report. They seemed up for anything, until I mentioned I needed to capture an orc. Oh boy. You thought druids were fickle; let me tell you something about these ranger folk. I basically had to barter a years worth of tips just to get a tracker. But problems aside (hey, its on the paper's copper not mine) we went out into the woods, the Orc Woods to be exact. I figured it would be a good place to start. Before you knew it, we had laid the trap for the unsuspecting orc. We were surprised when the trap sprung almost immediately. But to our demise it was a goblin. By the end of the day we had caught everything; everything except an orc that is. Sure we had a plethora of goblins, kobolds, gnolls, and formians, but no orcs. The ranger then realized that orcs were pretty much night people. Conscious of the ineptitude of my compatriots, I stepped in and laid the trap myself. I setup camp.

Sure enough around midnight on the second watch, we heard something. An orc! We subdued the creature with fluffy stuffed animals and a bath, and soon went off the torture chamber filled with wafting pleasantries. The orc submitted rather readily, and when asked "Where are your females?" He gave us the low down.

Apparently, once the orc females reach the end of puberty, and they have mated at least ten times, they undergo what this orc called "Mar'Ghul Tak" which roughly translated from the orc tongue means "Proactivehomeostatic Metabolic Syndrome." Which basically means that once orc women have a few (and by a few I mean a lot) baby nasties, they have PMS and become orc men. Gleaming our information from the orc, we let him go to be dealt with as any sweet smelling orc is dealt with.

So there you have it. The real genesis of orc women, err men.

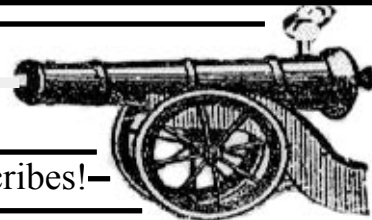
Local Warrior-ess Outraged Over Unfair Armor Prices

Resident warrior and shopper Silvina Stormslasher was outraged Wednesday at the armor prices posted in Smithy's Arms and Armor. Ms. Stormslasher was trying to purchase a brand new set of full plate armor when she was aghast at the price difference. "What do you mean it costs the same amount?" she was heard yelling, "I only wear a quarter as much." She was last seen storming out of the shop. Smithy's Arms and Armor commented on the incident stating, "We don't see what the issue is. Sure she only wears half as much as any male warrior, but we put a lot of work into those pieces. You know to prevent rubbing and chaffing and such." Smithy's Arms and Armor has recently announced that they will be offering discounted rates for women in the future, hoping to attract more female customers. Ms. Stormslasher refused to comment.

Mob Marches to Well. Finds Nothing.

A mob formed last Tuesday when resident and storeowner Shoddy McMerchant ran into the streets yelling, "A monster came out of the well and ate my baby." Soon thereafter a crowd of over two hundred grew and armed themselves with pitchforks, regular forks, and even some sporks. The mob grew rowdy as they marched the three blocks to the well. When they arrived, they bolstered themselves for the upcoming battle with the hideous baby-eating beast that lived in the well. All was looking bad for the would be beast as the mob marched ever closer to the well. When they finally peered down into the well and saw nothing, a disgruntled sigh was heard throughout the square. Old Hank was part of the mob and commented, "I wuz ready to keel that beest good, but thens, I realized that Shoddy guy had no babies. Wells I just turned meself right around there, and went home." Upset from the lack of baby-eating

The Fodder Cannon is a monthly humour section by Lance Kepner and Dana Driscoll. Readers are encouraged to contribute their own amusing shorts. Send to adriayna@yahoo.com.



beasts, and noticing people meander away from the square, the mob was soon dispersed. Sheriff Barnab commented on the situation, "Well this happens every now and again. People rile themselves up over nothing. Sometimes they get weapons, sometimes they just throw mud at the well until they tire themselves out. Sometimes there really is a monster in the well, and a few peasants get killed. Either way they learn their lesson for a little while. It all ends up keeping the peace in the end."

Phantom Mount Spooks Man, Paladin Atones

Last Friday, peasant and farmer Globin Harrow was spooked by a phantom steed and sent into fearful convulsions for more than thirty minutes. The steed was the magically summoned mount of a Pallis Parador, Paladin of Moradin. Mr. Parador rushed to the man's aid and administered healing techniques to calm the man. Mr. Parador was then seen heading for the temple to atone.

New Cleric in Town: Can't Raise People but Pets OK

Jandor 'Ul Baal's Pet Resurrection service officially opened for business last Monday. The cleric of Pelor is not yet experienced enough to raise the bipedal dead, but the quadruped kind work. He says, "Pelor has given me a gift, and I fully intend to use it to save all the pets of Silven Crossroads. Bring me your run over, your sick, your infected and diseased pets." Pet resurrection is a fairly new service, and costs 15gp for tiny or smaller animals, 100gp for small, and 500gp for medium sized pets. The large pet resurrection service is not available at this time.

Obituaries

Matron Delaney

Beloved dentist and oral caretaker, Matron Delaney, passed away today due to complications caused by a severe toothache in her heel. She is survived by her two daughters and an impressively large collection of decaying teeth, belonging to her various grateful clients.

Butcher Doo-fus

The butcher Tom Doo-fus has not been seen in three years and is therefore presumed dead. He is survived by his late wife Marianne Doo-fus who is now petitioning for a name change and accepting suitors for her fifth marriage.

The drunkard John

The town council regrettfully announces the death of our town beggar and drunkard, John. He will be sorely pissed..er missed.

Public Poll: Trick or Treat?

Orph Maloney, Wizard Extraordinaire

"With my extensive repertoire, I would have to say trick"

Sebastian Skiff, Rogue Troupe #7

"What do you think?"

Herr Yar Bashkun, Self-Proclaimed Pirate

"A trick up me sleeve and a treat in me whistle."

Old Haggard Lady, Old Haggard Lady

No comment as she proceeded to beat the questioner with her purse.

Dak Tamble, Bard and Investigative Reporter

"One time, at this old ladies house, me and some friends....."

Barton Beersblood, Thug

"You no trick me. Me smash you."

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Printing Tips

Printing out the entire e-zine can be very demanding on your printer and use a lot of ink. If you are conscious about the amount of ink you use in printing then we advise you not to print the entire e-zine.

Article pages and excerpts that we assume will be printed the most have been purposefully illustrated using light colors to conserve printer ink reserves. Printing out only the pages that you need will make it easier for you manage your ink usage.

Its recommended that you print the maps on glossy paper if you can. Glossy paper is available from most stationery or office supply stores and is more expensive than regular printing paper, but the quality difference in the print is worth it.