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Hello and welcome to the 25th issue of the Silven Trumpeter!

As many game designers will tell you, trying to represent a company at Gen Con makes it nearly impossible to do everything that you want to do. This was my first time representing the Silven Crossroads at the Best Four Days in Gaming, and I was amazed at how fast those four days went! As I was driving home, I was still thinking, "Wait! I haven't seen half of the exhibition hall! I missed the art gallery! I still haven't met Bob Salvatore!" Where did the time go?

Well, I'm hoping that you'll find in these pages where my time went. The other Silven Crossroads representatives and I spent hours trying new products, attending seminars, interviewing authors and game designers, snapping photos and – of course – playing games! Since then, we've been typing our fingers numb to bring it all together and present as much as we can to you, our readers. Whether you made it to Gen Con and just want to relive some of it, or if we made it to an event you missed, or you weren't lucky enough to get there this year, you'll enjoy the articles that we have here for you.

I do have to offer my apologies to the guys at Chaosium. Of all the seminars and workshops and news releases I attended, yours was the only one recorded only in audio and not on paper. Due to the time it takes to transcribe from audio, I was not able to put together the article covering your upcoming releases and your incomparable Cthulhu Rally in time for this month's issue. Please don't feed me to anything!

But that brings me to my next point. There was simply so much going on at Gen Con that we just couldn't get it all done in time for this issue! So look for more Gen Con features in the October Trumpeter. I can promise that you'll hear about Chaosium in there, and I know for sure that we'll have a look at some of the costumes gamers wear, at least a few product reviews, and more.

Enjoy!

Elizabeth R.A. Liddell
Editor-in-Chief
The Silven Trumpeter

Gen Con Coverage: The Future of *Dungeon* and *Dragon* Magazines

by Elizabeth R.A. Liddell

Of all the magazines and ezines in the gaming industry, there are few – if any – that can hold a candle to the fame and longevity of *Dungeon* and *Dragon* magazines. As the only publisher with permission to print material for Forgotten Realms, Eberron, and the other settings licensed by Wizards of the Coast, Paizo Publishing stands in a unique position in the industry. On Friday, August 19, 2005, five of the editors of these two publications let fans in on some of the plans they have for the future.

The speakers at this panel were Erik Mona, the editor-in-chief of *Dragon* and *Dungeon*; James Jacobs, managing editor of *Dungeon*; Jason Bulmahn, associate editor of *Dragon*; Jeremy Walker, assistant editor of *Dragon*; and F. Wesley Schneider, assistant editor of *Dragon*. Mike McArtor, assistant editor of *Dragon*, was unable to attend the seminar.

A Look at the Past

A touch on the recent past of the magazines is needed to understand the future. Erik Mona mentioned the "relaunch" undertaken by both magazines about a year ago, where each publication was given a fresh take. The content was reviewed and evaluated to ensure that both magazines were meeting the needs of their readers.

The relaunch of *Dungeon* was significant, as it marked the move to the current format with three or four adventures in each issue, guaranteeing at least one low-level, one mid-level, and one high-level adventure. It also marked the end of *Polyhedron*, replacing that section with tools aimed toward DMs (Dungeon Masters), such as the campaign workbook.

Dragon's relaunch introduced several new departments, such as the "Class Acts," the "Ecology of..." series, "Spellcraft", and the "Magic Shop" (renamed from the "Bizarre Bazaar"). The speakers admitted that there were several other departments that they initially placed in the relaunch, but the ones we see today are the ones that survived. The relaunch also brought about a new format for the magazine.

The Future of *Dungeon*

The speakers first delved into the future of *Dungeon*. Currently, *Dungeon* is in the third installment of a twelve-part adventure path (a series of ongoing, linked adventures that can be used individually or in one complete campaign) called the "Age of Worms." This series is a follow-up to the Shackled City adventure path that ran in the previous two years. Unlike Shackled City, the Age of Worms series is running every month. This provides material more often for the eager DM, while also getting it out of the way sooner for DMs not using that particular adventure path. This adventure path is being supplemented by PC-safe material in the corresponding issues of *Dragon*. Age of Worms also includes conversion appendices for the DMs who are interested in using the adventure in the Forgotten Realms or Eberron campaign settings.

The editors are currently planning for the third adventure path, since the concept has been so successful. Once the last installment of the Age of Worms has been printed, readers can expect the new path to begin within four or five issues.

Aside from the adventure path concept, *Dungeon* has individual adventure plans. Given the success of the "Maure Castle" remake in issue #112, the editors have lined up two more high-profile

adventure writers to write similarly updated versions of classic adventures. While no names were given, no one could mistake the excitement these gentlemen felt about this upcoming material.

Also, due to Paizo Publishing's unusual position, *Dungeon* is going to provide support for the Forgotten Realms and the Eberron campaign settings. The editors hope to provide six adventures for each setting per year. Additionally, they're working to fit in epic-level adventures and psionics adventures as often as they have space for them. Finally, they mentioned that in just a few issues they'll be printing an adventure for the Oriental Adventures setting.

The final exciting product from *Dungeon* is a 416-page, full-color hardcover printing of the Shackled City adventure path. Those who ran the series know that it covered eleven installments, but this book will contain a twelfth adventure written by Christopher Perkins, as well as handouts, a postermap booklet featuring Christopher West's cartography, and a two-sided postermap of the "before" and "after" maps of the city of Cauldron, also by West. That book is available now from paizo.com.

The Future of *Dragon*

The role of *Dragon* has changed in the last few years. Where once this magazine held the podium as far as *Dungeons & Dragons* (D&D) material was concerned, its power has been diminished as other d20 publishers and even Wizards of the Coast have begun to infringe on its territory. Therefore, *Dragon* is starting to focus on providing material that the other publishers simply cannot provide, such as some of the inherent backstory of D&D, rules about protected monsters (such as a feature on the Githyanki from several issues past), and material from Wizards' campaign settings. In the same vein, the editors are moving away from articles that simply detail a new prestige class or new feats, since any d20 publisher can produce that kind of material.

In the next few issues, readers can expect material supplementing the Age of Worms adventure path running in *Dungeon*, all safe for PCs to read.

Issues are also in the works containing campaign components; concepts like "The Plague," designed for use in any existing campaign. An upcoming issue will feature astrology and the heavens, while December's issue will have a heavy emphasis on magic.

A feature that has run in the past and will continue to run in *Dragon* is the "Demonomicon," an article that examines one demon lord from the standard D&D lore. The article gives a new take on that demon lord as a character, rather than just the stats provided in the source material. Each installment provides information about a demon lord and its cults, its layer, servitor creatures, and more. These articles are around ten pages long, and give a character that is fully fleshed-out and ready to use in a campaign.

Dragon is also planning more content based on the Forgotten Realms, Eberron and Greyhawk campaign settings. Ed Greenwood will feature in a few upcoming issues, writing a series of articles covering well-known cities in the Forgotten Realms. The editors are also working on a series of postermaps, designed in cooperation with Wizards of the Coast. These maps, designed to scale for miniatures, will be usable for both the D&D Miniatures game and regular D&D games.

In October or November, fans can expect the *Dragon Compendium, Volume I*. This 256 page book will feature some of the best and best-loved articles from *Dragon* magazine. According to Erik Mona, there's a lot of material published in *Dragon* that many readers haven't read – after all, the magazine has been around for 30+ years, and not all gamers are old enough to have seen it all the first time! He placed special emphasis on this being only the first volume; he hopes to see it as a series recapturing that great material from the past.

Questions from the Audience

Will *Polyhedron* ever come back? Most likely not, with the current publisher and editorial team. While *Polyhedron* was very popular with those who used it, those who did not were rather violently opposed to it. Several publishers have tried a *Polyhedron*-like product, and it just hasn't been successful: the market as it stands won't support such a product.

What is the current status of *Undeclared*?

Undeclared was a Paizo publication covering "games you can win." It suffered a similar situation as *Polyhedron*, but the editorial staff and CEO Lisa Stevens all want to see it return in one form or another. The only hint that the panel would give us is that "plans are in the works."

Are there plans to update or redo the archives of the magazines?

Not in the same format. The CD-ROM of the first 250 issues of *Dragon* magazine came out without getting all the rights they technically needed for the project, and the lawsuits encouraged them to not do something like that again. However, Paizo plans to introduce a massive, comprehensive index of all articles to help people find a given article in their hard copy collections.

Will there be more material published online as PDFs?

Yes! There has been a very positive reaction to having handouts, maps and similar items available online so that a DM doesn't have to cut up her issue of the magazine. "Age of Worms Overload" is a package of supplemental material for that adventure path, containing all the information that the adventure writers wanted to provide but couldn't fit into their adventure modules.

Furthermore, Paizo's license with Wizards of the Coast states that when there are no longer print copies of a given issue to sell, Paizo may instead sell that issue as a PDF.

Looking for a good laugh?

Read about Erik Mona's slip of the tongue regarding PDF products at the EN World RPG Awards ceremony on page 6 of this issue.

Will there be any more support for the classic, first-edition Greyhawk setting? Yes. Supplements for the Maure Castle adventure will be coming out "until we tell [the writer] to stop." These supplements are meant to be compelling without being dependent upon the reader's knowledge of first-edition Greyhawk, so die-hard fans and new players alike can use the material.

Are there any plans to continue with "A Novel Approach?" Yes. This concept (designing material to flesh out a world as presented in a novel or series of novels) is wildly popular with those who have read the books. However, that's usually a pretty small percentage of the readership, and this approach is also less than timely.

Instead, the editors are trying something called a "Divine Inspiration," a more timely approach that can tie in popular television, manga, movies, the latest release in a current series of novels, and the like.

However, the editors are in the planning stages of doing major features like the George R. R. Martin *Game of Thrones* issue and the Terry Brooks issue. Look for two more "themed" issues coming up in the next year. According to Erik Mona, "one is a long-dead fantasy writer that people 'sort of like,' and one is a modern fantasy author who people really like."

You introduced new articles with your relaunch. Are any of these going to be phased out? Most of the articles that were going to be removed have already gone. Others have moved from a monthly format to once every three months or so. While nothing is on its way out the door, formatting and layout are still being tinkered with, so don't be surprised if your favorite column looks a little different than it did last issue.

Gen Con Coverage: The EN World RPG Awards at Gen Con Indy 2005

by Elizabeth R.A. Liddell

The EN World RPG Awards, more commonly known as the "ENNies," are an annual, fan-based series of awards for tabletop roleplaying systems and their products and publishers. Created in 2001, the ENNies are decided through product nomination, a panel of judges, and fans voting at the EN World website. There are seventeen award categories ranging from cartography to best adventure to best fan site, and the awards are announced annually at Gen Con Indy.

The 2005 ENNies were awarded at a ceremony on Friday, August 19th, at 9:00 p.m. The occasion was held at the Indiana Roof Ballroom, a strange but classy venue for a ceremony that really shone. Whereas some game industry awards have been awarded in less-than-flattering methods, the ENNies were presented in style.

While the news of the ENNies winners has by now been thoroughly plastered over the Internet, this article aims to communicate the spirit of the awards. The event was comfortable and enjoyable, and allowed the winners to show their appreciation for their fans – an aspect of a company that many of us never get a chance to see. Here, I'll share the jabs and the jibes given at the ceremony, give some impressions, and poke a little fun myself.

Interestingly enough, 2005 is the first year that the ENNies have had a sponsor. This year, DriveThruRPG.com sponsored the Best Electronic Product Award, marking the first time that a company has helped to defray some of the costs of the awards and the ceremony itself.



DriveThruRPG.com, sponsor of the 2005 EN World RPG Awards

Guests entering the ballroom were greeted with low lights and a cash bar tended by tuxedoed gentlemen. To someone running from Chaosium's Gen Con Cthulhu Rally (and up six flights of stairs only to discover that one cannot access the ballroom from the stairs and thus running back down all six flights of stairs), the atmosphere was enough to make someone breathless and street-clothed feel decidedly underdressed!

White tablecloths and candlelight welcomed guests to tables. The tables to the front of the room were reserved for (and filled by) those individuals representing nominated products. Between press coverage and general spectators, nearly every table had a few people, but no one was uncomfortably pressed for space.

We were welcomed to the ENNies by Alan Kohler, who introduced the other members of the 2005 Board of Directors: Russell Morrissey, who remained in England, and Denise Robinson, doubling as Business Manager for the 2005 ENNies. He also introduced two lovely girls who had the honor of presenting the awards to the winners.

It should be mentioned that Mr. Kohler, Ms. Robinson, and the two award-distributors were all dressed to the nines. Only one other nominee that I was aware of was wearing a suit, but there were several dresses, a few groups wearing matching company shirts, and a good deal of khaki-and-polo-shirt ensembles. Even the nominees wearing jeans and t-shirts looked as if they had put a bit of effort into their dress this evening. My own favorite would have to be the gentleman whose black t-shirt was printed with the white lapels, bowtie and shirt of a tuxedo.

Each winner, both of Silver and Gold ENNies, was invited to the stage to receive the award and give a few words in appreciation, but encouraged to

If you haven't yet seen the winners of the 2005 EN World RPG Awards, you can check it out here: The ENnie Awards.

"for the love of God, introduce yourself!" Many of these speeches were short and to the point: thanks to the fans, thanks to those who contributed to the project, and one "Cheers, guys," from Black Industries upon winning the Gold ENnie in Best Production Values for *Warhammer Fantasy RPG*.

If we were to give awards for the awards ceremony, the "Shortest Speech" award would certainly go to Green Ronin's Robert Schwalb, who took a mere six seconds to give his name and state "So, thanks a lot!" I also think that if there were a category for "Most Gracious and Professional Speaker," it would have to go to Sue Cook of Malhavoc Press, whose words of thanks were so polished and clean that I suspect she practiced in front of a mirror! Her finesse was further marked by the other half of Malhavoc Press, Monte Cook, whose speech of thanks featured "um" as strong competition for the most common word.

Some of the speeches were very helpful in letting the audience know where credit was due. The Gold ENnie winner for Best Cartography, "the World Map of Greyhawk" by Paizo Publishing, gave credit to its cartographer, Robert Lazaretti. The Silver ENnie went to the City State of the Invincible Overlord (Necromancer Games), whose speakers credited Ed Bouelle with the cartography.

Likewise, we learned that the Best Cover Art Silver winner, Green Ronin's *Blue Rose*, was done by Stephanie Pui-Mun Law and perfectly matched the producers' view of the game. The Gold ENnie winner in the same category was *Beyond Countless Doorways* by Malhavoc Press, who commissioned the cover artwork from artist rk post.

The Gold winner for Best Interior Art went to Monte Cook's *Arcana Evolved*, again by Malhavoc Press, and the audience learned that – evidently – when you leave the artwork to the last minute

and commission work from fifteen different artists, you just might come away with an award-winning collection! On the other hand, the representatives from White Wolf Publishing, upon their receipt of the Silver ENnie in the same category (for *Vampire: The Requiem*), gave no credit to their artists, instead gracing the audience with a disinterested "uh, thanks."

This was only one of several somewhat out-of-place speeches by the representatives of White Wolf Publishing. In his acceptance speech for the Silver ENnie for Best Writing (*World of Darkness*), Justin Achilli began by thanking those who worked on the product, but wrapped up his speech with a vehement "Rock the f*** on," not ten feet away from the two young girls handing out awards. Perhaps it's just my maternal instincts, but it can't be too hard to show some respect and restraint when you're around other people's children!

That, of course, was not the only mishap on a speaker's behalf – and certainly not the most amusing! After accepting several awards, Erik Mona of Paizo Publishing wrapped up his speech for the Gold ENnie in Best Aid or Accessory (*Dungeon Magazine*) by insulting a large share of the other attendees with his line, "Thanks especially to our subscribers, without whom we'd all probably be broke, and probably trying to sell you PDFs or something."

Ironically, the next award was for Best Free Product or Web Enhancement, in which the *Dungeon* magazine maps and handouts in issues #114-122 won the Gold ENnie. He began with "So, about PDFs..." to the laughter of the crowd. He later admitted that he had said something "pretty freakin' stupid" and welcomed the PDF revolution in the industry. However, Monte Cook got the last word in that debate, upon his receipt of the Gold ENnie for *Arcana Evolved*: "To my good friend Erik Mona: I put out PDFs and I think that they're a very viable format, and that you should try one."

With the last speech came an interesting bit of information. The Gold ENnie for Best Publisher went again this year, to Green Ronin publishing, making it their second consecutive ENnie for this category. Chris Pramas mentioned in his speech that Green Ronin had suffered a tremendous financial blow about six months earlier. The team of individuals working on the last few products had been doing so at reduced salary, and that the products had been released almost at a loss. There was a time, he said, where they weren't sure that the company would survive. For those of us who follow Green Ronin's products, it's heartening to see that they've overcome such a struggle and are continuing to work on and release the products that we love.

So there you have it: the gossip, the word on the street, the pokes and prods from one company to another and back again. My hope is to be able to cover the ENnies again next year – and hopefully to see a few products from Silven Publishing up there as nominees!



The Indiana Roof Ballroom, venue for the 2005 EN World RPG Awards.

All the winners of either a gold or silver EN World RPG Award. If only we could name them all!



Gen Con Coverage: The Gamer Olympics

by Elizabeth R.A. Liddell

Ever wondered if you could accomplish some of the feats your DM lays in front of your role-playing character? Now is your chance to find out! Test your strength by swinging a sword as hard and as accurately as possible. Test your accuracy by throwing a javelin at your enemies. Test your combat prowess against a warrior. Test your dexterity when crossing the "Chasm of Doom" and running through heavily trapped "Passage of Death." The final test will be one of grace and a keen eye: The Archery Range. Once your final score is determined, you will be awarded a prize and experience points for your hard work.

This was the challenge laid out to gamers who participated in the Gamer Olympics, a Gen Con event presented by the Edhellen Armoury and the Belegarth Medieval Combat Society. Having always wondered how well I would stand up to my characters, I couldn't resist the opportunity to give the Gamer Olympics a shot and share the experience.

I figured that I'd do fairly well. I have a fairly athletic background: in high school, I ran cross country (somewhat slowly), swam (somewhat poorly), ran the hurdles (quite poorly) and pole vaulted (not terribly well, but I was the first female to compete in my state). I've also had some martial arts training, some practice with foam weapon fighting, and a few chances to practice my archery skills. So, if nothing else, I am not the average gamer who's spent most of his time indoors!

Now, I could have made my life easier and worn street clothes. But I knew exactly what my character wears on a daily basis, and I was curious to know what that was like. So, come the morning of my scheduled Olympicizing, I dressed exactly as my character would have: poofy-sleeved shirt, tight bodice, long leather belt with several

pouches, and wide-legged pants. Granted, I was not carrying the excessive amount of stuff and multiple weapons that my character would have carried, but I found myself at a general shortage of crossbows, swords and daggers that morning.

I was only slightly surprised to see myself as only one of several people dressed in somewhat character-ish costume. Costumes of all sorts are common at Gen Con: you'd be in an odd spot indeed if you didn't run into a Ghostbuster, stormtrooper, anime character, or wizard. So I suppose it might have been that people wanted to wear their costumes that day, rather than necessarily having the same crazy idea that I did of really putting the character concept to the test.

The Events

Upon entering the room, each participant was required to sign a liability waiver, acknowledging that there was a possibility of injury and agreeing not to hold Gen Con or the sponsoring societies responsible. Then we were handed character sheets to provide both our character's and our real names, and ushered on to the first event.

We quickly found out that the events were not quite what had been advertised. Some were the same, and some obviously had the same idea, but some were really not at all the same. For instance, the javelin-throw was entirely gone, and we had gained an event testing our speed at donning armor. But none of us were inclined to make a fuss about it, since it was all just fun anyway.

I figured that since my outfit was based on my current D&D character, I might as well just use that name on my character sheet. Unfortunately, I made the mistake of writing out her full name, rather than what people called her. It seems that humans in both our world and the D&D world have

Interested in some of the costumes you might run into at Gen Con? Check out the small percentage of costumed individuals we caught on film in our Gen Con Costume Corner.

trouble pronouncing Oscelesansti Avanthrular. The nickname "Ozi" went over much better! All in all, there was a good variety of names. The gentleman in front of me went with "Sir Not Appearing in This Event," while we were told that they had seen no fewer than four Trogdors on the previous day!

The first event was the Feat of Strength. The idea was to test how hard and how accurately we could swing a sword at a target. In this case, the target was a sand-filled ball placed upon a pedestal, and the sword was one of the foam swords we would later be sparring with. It looked easy, but appearances are deceiving! I did well enough on the "hit it hard" idea, but my accuracy wasn't quite on the spot. While I did hit the ball, I didn't hit it in the right place to really send it anywhere. My score on this event ended up being a pitiful "6."

Next, we were given a scenario: the Surprise Attack. It's the middle of the night, we're sleeping, and our camp has been ambushed by [insert enemy of choice here!]: we have to get our armor on as fast as possible! Our armor in this case was a pair of triple-buckled greaves, a tabard, helmet and shield. We had 45 seconds to get everything on, and every second after that took a point off our score. It turned out that buckles take more time to put on than I thought – I finished breathlessly in 43 seconds! I still received a score of "20" for my Armor Proficiency, but I felt pretty silly when the girl ahead of me finished in 35 seconds – after not knowing what greaves *were* when she started!

The next event was Storm the Castle. Unfortunately, the castle they had brought with them had broken, so they had improvised a moat with crossing stones instead. There were, I believe, twelve "stones" to cross, and only twenty seconds in which to do it. Furthermore, as we proceeded, the stones got further and further apart – and points were deducted if we missed a stone!

I took a running start and finished within the time limit, crashing into the last stone knee-first, but I wasn't quite on target for three of the stones and was awarded a final score of "17."

Then came the Passage of Doom. Evidently the Passage had been upgraded since the day before, when players were easily making it through. This was a harshly scored event – we had only fifteen seconds to traverse the passage (which, admittedly, was only about twenty feet long), but for each of the many bell-laden strings we disturbed, we were deducted some two or three points. This was the event where my outfit really took away from my score, since my poofy sleeves and wide pants demanded a bit more room for passage than the Passage allowed. While I still finished within the time limit, my Agility score ended up being only a "9." Maybe I should have asked for extra credit for being in costume!

The slowest-moving event was definitely the Robin Hood, where we were given a longbow and four arrows to send through a set of smallish windows on a bit of wall. The arrows were heavily padded on the front (a necessity to maintain safety and the integrity of the target), which made it difficult to predict the first shot. I watched many people shoot high, low, and wide of the target – it was obvious that some people had never handled a bow before. I took a slightly Zen-archery approach, and I did at least hit the wall with each arrow. I scored with two of my four, sending them through the largest window, but only reached a score of, again, "6."

The final event was the Fight to the Death. In reality, it was more of a Fight to the Sixty Seconds, but it was a good amount of time to really get a workout! We were given our choice of foam weapons, and two gentlemen took turns facing off against us. The moderator, quite the image of Aragorn, son of Arathorn, in a surcoat featuring the Tree of Gondor, was kind enough to hold both my glasses and my belt-of-many-widgets. I chose two longswords (easier since they were foam and

thereby quite light!), and Lord Soth, a tallish man with rose-embossed black leather armor, came to meet me in the ring.

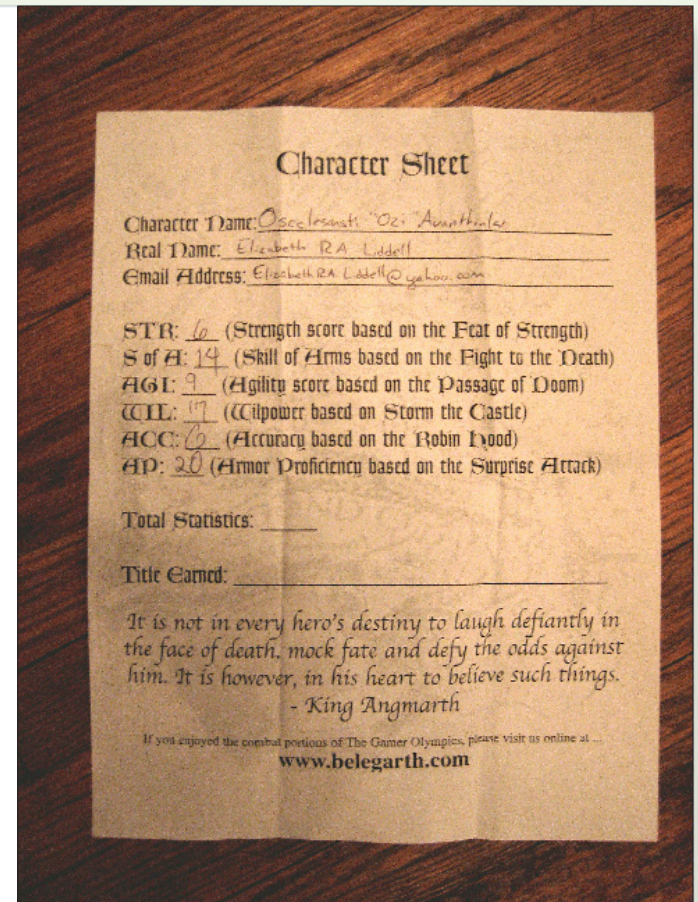
Reading about Drizzt Do'Urden makes one think that fighting with two swords is downright easy. I can assuredly say that it is not! I'm definitely right-handed, and I kept finding my left hand just kind of hanging around. It wasn't until maybe the last fifteen seconds or so that I really got both hands working together and scored a few last hits on my foe. I took a few hits myself – at a penalty of five seconds of inactivity each – and ultimately walked away with a score of "14."

The Aftermath

I think I might have missed a final table – my character sheet is conspicuously missing the "Total Statistics" score and the "Title Earned." I was, however, very glad to find myself a drinking fountain and catch my breath. A tight bodice might help in attention-getting, but it makes it pretty much impossible to take a deep breath.

As I went on to my next activities, I found that I was definitely worked up from the Gamer Olympics! My hands shook with adrenaline as I looked over dice to purchase in the exhibition hall, and my legs trembled when I bent down to stash my purchase in my backpack. As the day progressed, I found a sharp ache in my left elbow, eventually driving me to take painkillers to soothe the pulled muscle there.

But would I have passed on the experience? Never! I might not have done as well as I had expected (or hoped!), but I loved having the opportunity to size myself up against my well-loved character. I have a greater respect for her ability to fight in a tight bodice, and I can hardly imagine having a strength of 13. I will probably compete in the Gamer Olympics again next year – and hopefully I'll have gained a level or two by then!



My Gamer Olympics character sheet – if only d20 were this simple!

Gen Con Coverage: A Visit to The Forge

by Elizabeth R.A. Liddell

The Forge is a moderately-sized booth in the Gen Con exhibition hall, tucked away just a few spaces down from the central food vendor. It is home to a wide array of small, independent RPGs, and was one of the few places I managed to stop and visit during my few excursions into the hall. Tony Lower-Basch, the entirety of the Muse of Fire label, was kind enough to give me brief descriptions of some of the most recent games at The Forge and give us a demo of his own, ENnie-nominated game *Capes*.

The first game we discussed was *Breaking the Ice*, a game about romance and dating. Players begin with certain affinities for one another, and their goal is to take their characters through various situations to form a romantic bond. One of the key aspects of the game is that the players will exchange characteristics with one another; so, if a man and a woman are playing, the man will play a female character, and the woman will play a man. This provides some distance between the players and their characters, thus allowing everyone to feel comfortable playing in an environment that might otherwise make them uncomfortable.

Then we discussed *The Mountain Witch: A Tale of Blood in the Snow*. The players are a group of ronin samurai, headed up the mountain to destroy the witch at the top. The key question is whether or not the players will trust each other enough to get to the top of the mountain and, due to the bond of trust between them, risk betrayal when they get there. This is represented in game terms through an actual mechanic representing trust, which allows the player to see exactly what he does and does not trust. Furthermore, players can manipulate those trust levels, gaining and losing trust between the characters. This trust mechanic becomes a central element of the game play, as characters who trust one another can accomplish great things, but also risk the dangers of betrayal.

The game *Polaris* assumes that before human history, there was a splendid kingdom of ice at the top of the world. In this kingdom, everyone was happy and art was a way of life...and then they all died. Players in this game take on the role of a character in the last few days of that civilization, and the main question of the game is what your character would do to keep someone alive for one day longer. Who will you save for one day, and what will you do in order to do it?

Under the Bed presents a small child in a terrible situation. A light-hearted session of this game may place the child in London during the blitzkrieg – will the child survive long enough to get to the shelter? A more brutal game would have a child in the midst of his parents' divorce, forced to choose which parent he will go with – a situation so real to so many of us that it really does hit home. The players, however, are acting as this child's toys, trying to influence and protect the child by giving him the mental traits he will need to survive and become an adult. Those mental traits, however, are often things like disobedient, cowardly, or fast – so when the child is faced with a decision between going to church with Mom or to the ball game with Dad, the toys may encourage the child just to run away and hide while Mom and Dad aren't looking. The game plays off of our natural instincts and knowledge: we all know that kids can be hurt, and we want to protect them to the best of our ability.

I had been hearing a bit about the ENnie nominee *Burning Wheel*. Tony described it as a fantasy game much like *Dungeons & Dragons*, but with a system of mechanics that helps to identify and quantify elements like "getting creeped out." While *D&D* handles combat, it simply lacks a system to handle the idea of wandering through the woods and just barely being able to hear something scurrying about, but not being able to see or

identify it. Designed for an experience much like the *Lord of the Rings* (and not just the module!), *Burning Wheel* allows you to play without having to choose between experiencing the "feel" of the game and actually playing the game. For example, rather than simply talking back and forth in character for an hour, the mechanics step in and handle the highlights of the argument. This also gives the argument a final endpoint at which the characters know for certain which one of them has the final word – combining the mechanics and the play into one.

A Demo Session of *Capes*

The game *Capes*, designed by Muse of Fire, is unique in that it encourages a group of players to keep around a pile of characters with no real connection between any one character and any one player. Instead, any player can pick up any character he likes, and change it whenever he wants to. These characters are standard comic book staples, with super powers and often with names to match.

The game play has no storyteller or game master. Instead, the characters describe the scenes as they occur, using their super-powers as well as tokens denoting both the ability to twist the game to your side, and debt for that same ability. While a single opposed dice roll determines the winner of an encounter, the actual events that occur are described entirely by the players involved. Furthermore, while someone may lose an encounter, she is still rewarded with tokens that she may use in her favor later on.

In my three-player demo, our characters were "The Iron Brain," the evil mastermind consisting of a brain in a cybernetic jar; "Shinobi", a former superhero turned evil; and "Major Victory," who can be summed up in his motto "...because Justice will always lead...to Victory!" Tony himself played The Iron Brain, I took up Shinobi (whose sole purpose was to humiliate Major Victory), while my fiancé took on the role of Major Victory and

simultaneously took on the hands-on-hips, flexed pecs, and ridiculous grin of the far-too-confident defender of freedom.

Perhaps the most fun aspect of this game was the complete separation of character and player. My fiancé played the role of Major Victory to the hilt, and not because he thought the character was particularly amazing – but because it was so outrageously funny! Yet his representation of that character was so ingratiating that both Tony and I wanted to (and proceeded to) fire missiles at Major Victory. And the whole time, my fiancé was laughing because he knew just how uproarious his portrayal of the character was. There was no one offended or put off, just a good time all around!

I would like to again thank Tony Lower-Basch for his time presenting these games to me and for introducing me to *Capes*. I walked away from The Forge with a pile of books, including both *Burning Wheel* and *Capes*, and I look forward to the games we will have with them both!



Silven's Indie RPG reviewer Nash DeVita at The Forge booth, after a demo of another game, *Sweet Dreams*.



Tony Lower-Basch (Muse of Fire), designer of *Capes*, in front of The Forge booth at Gen Con Indy 2005.

Gen Con Coverage: Chat with Malhavoc Press

by Elizabeth R.A. Liddell

If you're looking for more details about *Monte Cook's Arcana Evolved*, look at Monte's website for new products, news releases, interviews, Monte's Design Diary and more.

It's been an exciting year for Malhavoc Press! In the past year alone, the company has released two large products that have generated wide industry interest, as well as many other supplements. In a Gen Con session entitled "Chat with Malhavoc Press," however, we found that the plans in the works for Malhavoc are even more ambitious! This article brings to you the products in the works at Malhavoc, plus some tidbits that don't appear even on the Malhavoc Press website.

What Has Malhavoc Done?

In the last year, Malhavoc Press released two large products that caught the attention of the gaming industry. The first was *Monte Cook's Arcana Evolved*, an updated and expanded version of the variant player's handbook *Monte Cook's Arcana Unearthed*. At a startling 432 full-color pages, *Arcana Evolved* contains not only the rules mechanics that – among other things – so smoothly integrate magic into the game, but also setting material from Malhavoc's popular Diamond Throne setting, more spells, more player options, more art, and more just about everything! Monte Cook himself described *Arcana Evolved* as a "Director's Cut" version of the product: not necessarily required to play, but chock-full of extras that no fan would want to miss!

The other large product from Malhavoc Press is *Monte Cook Presents: Iron Heroes*, written by Mike Mearls. This is another variant player's handbook, but while *Arcana Evolved* focuses on magic as an integral part of daily life, *Iron Heroes* takes exactly the opposite approach. This book provides players with the options needed to build their characters

focusing on the mundane skills and abilities, leaving magic as something truly arcane and esoteric.

Both of these product lines have begun amassing supplements. *Arcana Evolved* is obviously in the lead, having been around for several months longer. Its product line includes several game supplements, a collection of short stories, and a miniatures line produced in cooperation with Iron Wind Metals. It also has a large, active fan community at www.DiamondThrone.com. *Iron Heroes* has only been on the shelves for about a month, but its first supplement, *Mastering Iron Heroes* was released as a pdf on September 1. It also has a line of miniatures, produced in cooperation with Magnificent Egos.

Where *Arcana Evolved* is Going

The largest product in the works for *Arcana Evolved* is the *Spell Treasury*. Since the release of *Arcana Unearthed*, according to Monte's 'Arcana Evolved Update' at Gen Con, players and fans have raved about the new magic system in this variant rules set. Along with that interest has been a steady demand for new spells, which are finally being delivered in the *Spell Treasury*.

This sourcebook will contain hundreds of new spells for all spellcasters using the *Arcana Evolved* rules. It includes converted spells from the SRD, *The Complete Book of Eldritch Might*, and other sources, as well as spells that have been previously released only in the exclusive pdf *The Grimoire II*. Of course, it also has new spells created entirely for this book. In all, the spells in this tome will more than triple the number of spells available for *Arcana Evolved* players.

The spells are all ready to use with the *Arcana Evolved* system, including heightened and

diminished effects and magic item creation modifiers. It also contains many sidebars explaining various uses of the spells. Furthermore, the spells are compatible with both *Arcana Unearthed* and *Arcana Evolved*.

In the *Arcana Evolved* Update, Monte took a few moments to explain the steps involved in converting a spell from normal d20 rules to the *Arcana Evolved* rules. These steps begin with determining whether or not a spell is even relevant to the rules (for example, anything that affects alignment simply doesn't apply!), to determining the magic item creation modifiers to creating the heightened and diminished effects for the spell. After hearing this description of the process, I really appreciated the work that had gone into converting the spells from the SRD.

It was also mentioned in the session that the *Spell Treasury* would contain some of the completely mundane spells that are likely to occur in a magic-based society: for example, a spell that does nothing but keep the rain off. While these spells aren't terribly useful in an epic campaign, Monte said that he feels it helps to round out the setting.

The *Arcana Evolved* Update also brought up the fan site for the game, www.DiamondThrone.com. The site is run by a group known as the Council of Magisters, and one of its members, Tom Lommel, spoke about the site. Monte also highly praised the site for its support of the game. It features weekly updates of DM tools, fiction, characters, adventures and more, as well as a messageboard community for fans of *Arcana Evolved*.

Miniatures have been produced for *Arcana Evolved* in the past and new figures will continue to be produced through Iron Wind Metals.

Where *Iron Heroes* is Going

As mentioned, *Iron Heroes* itself was released only recently. The first supplement, *Mastering Iron Heroes* was written by Mike Mearls and released in

More information on the *Iron Heroes* line can be found here. You'll find new and upcoming products, free demos and updates, as well as links to supporting products through other companies.

pdf format on September 1. This book acts as a DM tool for *Iron Heroes*, offering explanation of the rules systems and advice on using them in game. It also includes a section on changing the rules to accommodate any game. The print version is scheduled for release in November.

The second book in the works in the *Iron Heroes* line is the *Iron Heroes Bestiary*, again designed by Mike Mearls. A simple concept, this book presents two dozen foes for player characters to go up against. It also presents new villain classes, an idea arising from *Mastering Iron Heroes* to make NPC creation easier. There are also new feats based on the monsters in the book.

Iron Heroes has its own line of miniatures figures through Magnificent Egos. The first series was

At the Chat with Malhavoc Press, Monte's hands were a blur as he described the product he's been working on: *Ptolus: Monte Cook's City by the Spire*.



available for display at Gen Con and will be available for purchase through the Malhavoc site (www.montecook.com) starting in September.

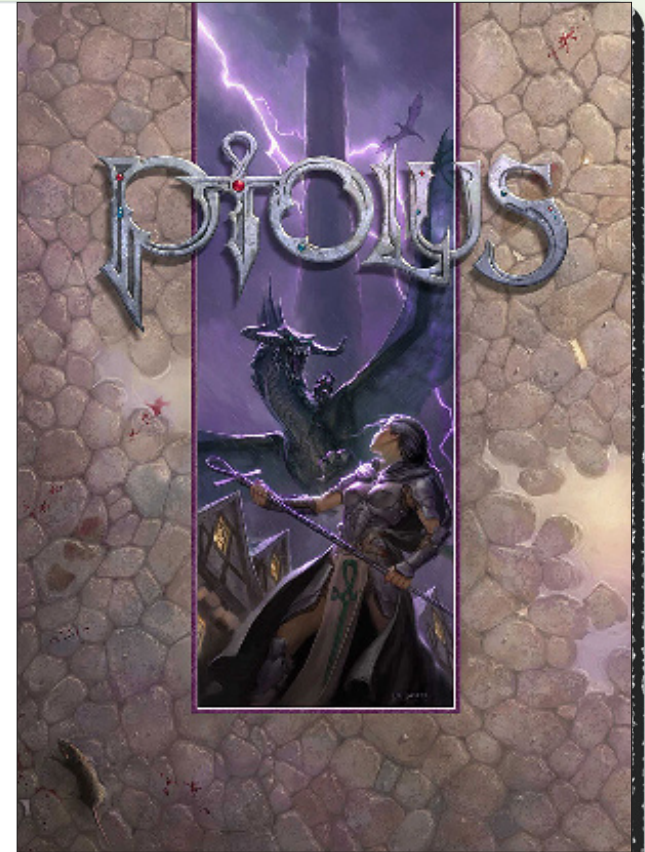
Malhavoc's Latest and Greatest

It was in *Dragon* magazine's August 2005 issue that Monte Cook first announced the product that had been generating hype for weeks: *Ptolus: Monte Cook's City by the Spire*. It is the campaign setting that was used to playtest the original 3rd Edition *Dungeons & Dragons* rules and has continued to play home to Monte's campaigns since. It is also planned to be the most deluxe RPG product available on the market.

While some information about the *Ptolus* project had been bouncing around since the *Dragon* announcement, the Chat with Malhavoc Press event at Gen Con was really the first time Sue and Monte really got the chance to present the project in detail. The entire audience was able to get in on the excitement of the product! Even people who admitted that, at first, they weren't terribly interested in *Ptolus* walked away impressed and enthusiastic.

It was obvious that Sue and Monte had been working on this project for a long time and were very excited about it. During the entire seminar, Monte hardly sat down and his hands were flying too quickly to catch on film! He was, in fact, so enthusiastic that in the middle of answering a question he asked, "I'm really excited to start showing you some pictures, so can we do that and then we'll get back to questions?"

Ptolus is a huge city by an impossibly high rock spire topped with the fortress of a long-dead evil archmage. It plays home to most of the world's adventurers, luring them with its massive complex of underground tunnels and ruins. It also lures evil and chaos for the same reason: not only does a drow city lurk beneath the



Cover of *Ptolus*, artwork by Todd Lockwood. ©2005 Monte J. Cook. Used with permission.

city streets, but also other sources of chaos and evil. *Ptolus* has played home to four of Monte's campaigns since 1997, and was designed, in a way, as the setting to "help [the basic tenets of] *Dungeons & Dragons* make sense."

As interesting as the setting itself may be, the *Ptolus* product is even more amazing. The hardcover book alone will be somewhere between 600 – 700 pages, with over a hundred pages of artwork and maps. The product will also include a CD-ROM of supplemental information: another 350 pages of additional adventures and source material; the adventure *The Banewarrens*, which

The *Ptolus* section of the Malhavoc Press website was launched on August 25, and contains not only more depth on the information presented here, but also previews of the page layouts, artwork, content, related products, and updates from Monte. That site can be found here.

takes place beneath the city; *Chaositech*, one of the evils waiting below the city; conversion rules for *Arcana Evolved*; the *Player's Guide to Ptolus*, a PC-safe guide to the city; and maps and handouts.

The book itself is unlike any campaign setting that's ever been released. Faced with the massive amount of material, Sue and Monte chose to present *Ptolus* in the style of a travel-guide book. It includes color-coded sections and icons for different districts, regional maps, a table of contents for each chapter, and statistics including quality ratings and costs for restaurants, inns, and other locations. In full awareness of D&D players' habits, Monte has even included with each location a listing of how much the players would have on their hands if they were to rob the place blind!

The art in *Ptolus*, of which we were shown a tiny fraction at the seminar, is spectacular. The maps are all beautifully drawn, some of which are taken as artwork in their own right, and not just strictly overhead maps. Artwork is also used as a "reminder" throughout the text: when a character is referenced, you might see a small portrait of him so that you recognize his presence in the area. These "reminder" pieces are actually just cropped artwork from the NPC's larger portrait, which provides a consistent image of the character.

The layout, likewise, is quite attractive, with plenty of space and plenty of margin notes throughout the text. These notes might include a "reminder" portrait of an NPC, a quote from another NPC, or references to relevant locations or events. Any time a character or locale is referenced in the text and appears in bold text, it will have a corresponding margin note with a cross reference. After all, with over 600 pages, simply locating information in the book threatens to be a problem,

and Malhavoc is trying to alleviate that problem as much as possible.

There are also features such as the "Word on the Street," containing rumors that the PCs might hear as they're moving throughout the city. "Info Checks" are brief sections describing what a character might know at various DCs of Knowledge (local) or Gather Information.

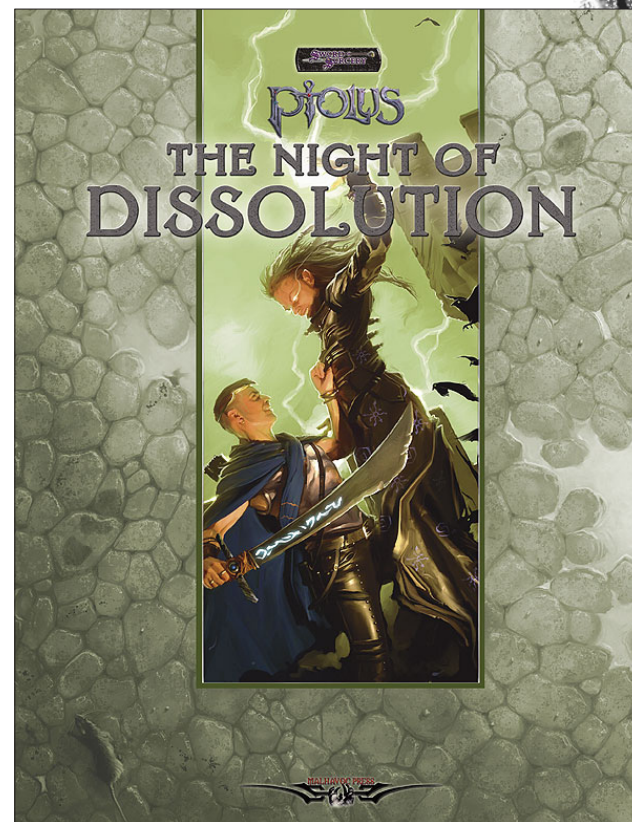
In order to make the book as user-friendly as possible, it contains comprehensive indexing. It will also come with three sewn-in bookmarks so that the DM may mark his favorite and most-used sections, and the stat block for the NPC he knows he'll be using later on.

An interesting question came up at the seminar. With as much detail as has been put into this setting, how much of the city is set in stone and how much is left for DMs and players to define on their own? Monte replied that even with all the information in *Ptolus*, only about one third of the city is laid out, leaving the other two thirds to our imaginations.

There is already an adventure planned for *Ptolus*, called *Night of Dissolution*. It explores some of the evil and chaos in the depths of the city, featuring chaos magic, the Galchutt and the fanatical cult that worships them. Designed for mid-level characters, this adventure is one of the bonus products on the CD-ROM that comes with the *Ptolus* book.

Those who preorder *Ptolus* have been promised a stockpile of fantastic extras for the product. Each preordered copy of the book will be signed and numbered. Additionally, those copies will be sent out with five print copies of the *Player's Guide to Ptolus*, a hardcover copy of *Night of Dissolution*, and a membership to the Delver's Guild website – where direct-from-Monte content will be released every week until the book's release in August of 2006.

The Delver's Guild is a phenomenon that only a city of adventurers could support. It is a guild for those who venture under the city of Ptolus, and since adventurers are drawn from the world over to explore the depths, it enjoys a roaring business. One can purchase insurance for expeditions into the undercity, up to the (costly) point where members of the guild will track down your corpse and resurrect you if you have a mishap while exploring! This is just one tiny example of the depth and flavor that *Ptolus* brings to DMs and players.



Cover of *The Night of Dissolution*, artwork by Kieran Yanner. ©2005 Monte J. Cook. Used with permission.

The *Ptolus* project has been given a lot of support from other companies. In May 2006, we will see the debut of a *Ptolus* comic book, written by Monte Cook himself and published by DB Pro. Fiery Dragon is planning to re-release the adventure *Queen of Lies*, set in Ptolus. Skeleton Key Games is planning a series of electronic maps, done by ENnie award-winning cartographer Ed Bourelle. Also in the works is a collection of counters specific to the Ptolus setting.

Of course, hearing about everything that this product entailed, we were left with one question: the price tag. *Ptolus* will retail at \$119.99, making it the most expensive single RPG product to hit the shelves yet. However, Malhavoc Press has set up a payment plan, where one can put \$20 down and make payments of \$10 per month until either the balance is paid or the product is released, at which time the balance is due in full. I believe this also marks the first time an RPG book has been offered with financing!

"Ptolus." Just how is that pronounced, anyway? Are we looking at another drizzit? The first reaction might be to try something like "pit-O-loose." Thankfully, the actual pronunciation is much easier on the tongue: you can more or less just say "tallest" and drop off the last "t." Isn't that better?

Origins Coverage: What's up with Green Ronin

by Bill Paulson

The following is from a question and answer session held with Chris Pramas, President and Founder of Green Ronin Publishing, during Origins 2005 and has been updated through GenCon 2005. Green Ronin was started by Chris Pramas when he was a game designer at Wizards of the Coast during the development of Third Edition *Dungeons & Dragons* (D&D). Green Ronin was the first publisher to release products for the d20 system with its Freeport series of adventures. They have become one of the top publishers for d20 and Open Gaming Licensed products. Thanks go to Mr. Pramas for his time.

Upcoming Releases from Green Ronin

The next big releases from Green Ronin are the *Thieves' World Players' Manual*, released at the end of July, and the *Mutants and Masterminds 2nd Edition* in September. The first supplement for the Thieves' World will be *Murder at the Vulgar Unicorn*. There are quite a few supplements planned for the Thieves' World line, including *Shadows Over Sanctuary* and a continuing line. Chris felt that the Thieves' World would be a solidly popular system and a valuable addition to the Green Ronin line. Gen Con update: Early copies of *Mutants and Masterminds 2nd Edition* were available for sale at Gen Con 2005.

Thieves' World is a setting based on a series of books edited by Lynn Abbey that was extremely popular in the 1980s. It was innovative in that it featured a large and dangerous fantasy setting that was shared amongst writers setting short stories in one city. Some of the characters would recur through the stories and plotlines would develop across stories. The books were very influential in fantasy RPGs including early D&D. The book series has been reprinted and new novels and stories have been published, set in the city of Sanctuary.

The Impact of *Blue Rose* and True20

I asked Mr. Pramas about the impact of the *Blue Rose* game and its system. He replied that *Blue Rose* was always planned as a three book arc: the core rulebook, *The World of Aldea* supplement and the *Blue Rose Companion*. They were pleasantly surprised at the reaction to the basic system. The extremely positive reaction to the adaptation of the SRD rules led to the development of True20 as a separate system. True20 is now free from the trappings of the *Blue Rose* world setting, fast playing and easy to use, and is available as a PDF for download from RPGnow.com. The True20 system will also be released in a print edition and will feature several campaign settings chosen from Green Ronin's campaign setting search. These settings will not be stand-alone games but will be meant to be used with the True20 system. Gen Con update: a special edition softcover of the True20 rulebook was available for sale at Gen Con 2005.

Green Ronin and PDF Publishing

With the mention of True20 as a PDF, I asked Mr. Pramas about the PDF side of the business. He stated that while the focus of the company would always be on its print products, he felt that the success of the early release of *Blue Rose* as a PDF download was significant in getting the word out about the system and contributed greatly to its success.

The RPG industry in general has seen a slow down recently in sales of d20 fantasy products, and business consolidation and bankruptcies in the distribution side of the business have taken a toll on the third party publishers that use the d20 logo on their products. This recent downturn and shake up in the RPG industry has not hit Green Ronin as hard as it has other companies in the industry. This

Blue Rose is a game replicating the Romantic Fantasy genre as written in novels by Mercedes Lackey, Diane Duane, Tamora Pierce and others. The Romantic Fantasy genre usually contains the themes of trying to find your place in society, living in harmony with the natural world, and protecting both the natural world and the harmonious society from outside forces bent on subversion and destruction. *Blue Rose* features a unique setting called Aldea, developed by Green Ronin for the game.

is where the business strategy of being in early has paid off. Green Ronin was one of the very first d20 publishers and established themselves as a name with quality. This reputation has enabled them to weather the downturn in the industry as well as internal problems such as a shift in printers and distributors.

Green Ronin and Black Industries

Black Industries is the publishing arm of Games Workshop, makers of the extremely popular Warhammer series of miniature wargames. Black Industries is using Green Ronin as the development house for the 2nd Edition of the *Warhammer Fantasy Role Playing Game* (WHFRPG). The revival of the WHFRPG has proven very popular, with a second print run being ordered. WHFRPG also has won several awards for its design, including Best Game at the EN World RPG Awards announced at Gen Con 2005.

Green Ronin also won a slew of Silver Awards at the annual EN World RPG Awards, including a Silver for best publisher as voted by fans alone. They also won the Gold ENnie for overall Best Publisher, for the second year in a row. The success of the PDF version of the True20 rules and the numerous awards won by Green Ronin at Gen Con bodes well for the games coming from this design house.



The *Warhammer Fantasy RPG* from Green Ronin and Black Industries walked away with a number of ENnie awards this year.

ZEN AND HOW SUPERHEROS MAKE ENEMIES

by Christian R. Bonawandt

Mark MacAlister. Nobody I knew. He was a five-foot-five, tubby guy about six years younger than myself. Living with his parents in the town of Commack before starting Suffolk Community College in a couple months. An ugly, pimply, kid who probably picked his nose and has never been laid. I was about to make an enemy out of him.

As soon as he answered the door, he recognized me. Well, he recognized Carol, my sidekick, anyway. He had ejaculated the words *Lady Dynamite* like they were orgasmic, but guilty at the same time. It made me feel like I was right to trust my gut and go after him, rather than sit around and hope he committed a crime we might be able to stop.

"Whaddayawant?" he blurted, in a sort of half-admiration, half-fear induced state of shock. His lip was crooked like he might either crack a giddy smile or burst out into tears.

We weren't really sure he was one of two guys burglarizing a strip mall down the block. I had been trying to make a name for myself as a superhero. Carol and I rolled once against a pair of legitimately wanted super-powered criminals. With her day job as a reporter, she helped make the story into something and got me a rep. Instead of fighting crime for free, though, people were offering us money. The owner of the property that was being burglarized was offering a big payout if we found the perpetrator. Problem was, I'm no gumshoe. Carol has some investigative skills, but not enough to make us private eyes or anything. So the only tactic I could see was to scare the daylight out of our only existing suspect.

A group of wannabe gangbangers calling themselves the Hard Island Boyz claimed Mark MacAlister--who they called Mackie--and some unfamiliar, scrubby-looking individual were always in the area during the night of the thefts. That wasn't much to go on. But Mackie didn't need to know just how much evidence we lacked. I had seen real cops use the "we got all the evidence we need on you" bluff work on some of the kids in the foster home I grew up in. I've seen it fail too, though.

"Can you step outside?" I asked in my best cop-voice.

Mackie did, shutting the door behind him. I wasn't able to get a look inside the long, one-floor house he lived in. He followed us to the curb of the residential street. I glanced around quickly. There didn't seem to be anyone around, not that people couldn't have been watching through windows or anything. With a stop sign on every corner every ten feet, I would be easy to hear a car coming and chill. It wasn't my top choice for a place to interrogate someone, but it wasn't like I was going to knock his teeth in.

"Mr. MacAlister," Carol said, "do you remember where you were a week ago from Saturday?"

He threw a glance from Carol to me to Carol. His fingers ran absently through greasy, mud-colored hair. "Um, yeah . . . or, maybe no. I'm not sure."

"Lemme throw out some possibilities," I said. "Skateboarding? On a hot date? Making millions on the Internet?"

There was some definite sweat beading up on his forehead. He bit his lower lip. "Um . . . I was at home, I guess, watching TV."

I feigned interest. "What were you watching?"

His eyes danced nervously around the socket. "Um . . . *Friends*, I think."

"That show's funny, but I can never catch it." Because only Dane, my roommate, watched that crap. "I was thinking much later, though. Like around 1 a.m."

"On the Internet, I guess."

"Do you have an alibi?" Carol asked.

He jumped like he had forgotten she was even there. I would have thought that if he hadn't been staring at her chest the whole time. "From the Internet?"

"Sure, he's got an alibi," I said, getting up in his face, my voice all menacing. Mackie cringed. "He has that accomplice. The scraggly looking guy from the security video."

Now I was hardcore bluffing. There was no security video. In all the robberies, the alarms, locks and cameras had been disabled or bypassed somehow. No real evidence of force, and not enough fingerprints to make an ID.

"Security video?" His voice quivered like Shaggy from *Scooby Doo*.

I grasped his shoulder with my left hand, digging my thumb into a pressure point on the collar. "Yeah, the one in the Tuxedo Place. The one you and your friend robbed for something like four grand, doing some two-thousand bucks worth of damage in the process."

His face grew red, his puffy cheeks jiggled a little. "Leave me alone. I didn't do anything. You're not policemen anyway."

My right hand glowed bright with my power. If he knew me, then he knew that Cobalt's power could burn his skin down to the bone. "That's right. The cops would have been a lot nicer to you than I'm about to be."

"Cobalt!" Carol snapped. She tossed me a look. Someone had to be the bad cop, right?

Briefly Mackie's face twisted in confusion. He squirmed out of my grip and started for the door.

I turned to go after him. Carol touched my shoulder, ever so slightly. I stopped anyway, since she could have made that hand explode in an instant, only to have it reform a second later while I was blasted ten feet away.

"We know it was you," I shouted to the closing door.

We jumped back on our motorbikes. Carol donned her helmet, then shook her head. "Nice job."

"Hey, I'm new to this."

"He almost wet himself."

I revved up the bike to drown her out. We headed out, back toward my apartment. At the first red light, I said, "Batman would have let him piss his pants. Then roughed him up until he talked."

Silence for a moment. The light turned green. "Not Adam West," she got in before we both shot off.

At the second light, she asked, "Are we going on patrol today?"

"Yeah, but it's early." It was just after six o'clock on a Friday. Carol had gone out of her way to leave work at exactly five so we could interrogate Mackie.

"What are we doing about Mr. Schober?" Carol

asked. The owner of the stripmall property. It was obvious that he was looking for an instant turnaround on this whole situation. He was putting up \$1,200 for us to do what the cops were taking their sweet time on. He wasn't going to want to hear that we only have one suspect, and that our interrogation was a ridiculous failure.

The light changed again before I could answer.

By the time we reached my apartment, I had convinced Carol that saying nothing was the best policy. If Schober called, we'd just say we were working on it. There was no way Mackie, if he was the guy we were after, would make a move tonight. And if that did happen, Hard Island Boyz had both our cell numbers.

While Carol changed out of her super-hero outfit, I called my girlfriend, Lara.

"I got some time until my next patrol. You wanna hang out?"

"I had a great day, thanks for asking, Chad."

"Huh?"

"You didn't even ask how my day was."

Great. She was in a mood. "OK--how was your day?"

"Fine."

"So you wanna come over?"

"I don't respond to booty calls."

How could this be a booty call? We had been seeing each other for two months and slept together twice. The term *booty call* did not apply. If I got to kiss her it was an accomplishment. For a girl with super-human speed, she was moving this relationship real slowly. I just wished I could have convinced her to join me and Carol in our

"adventures." At least I'd see her more than once or twice a week.

"Can you least come over for an hour?" I asked. "We could sit around and watch the mildew grow in the bathroom."

"I have an essay to write. Some of us understand the importance of a bachelor's degree."

Ouch. I wasn't proud of being a college dropout, but I was doing alright working part-time as a mechanic. Well, not really . . . but it didn't make me a bad person. "What the hell crawled up your ass?"

"You've just been taking this superhero thing too seriously."

Now I was pissed. "It *is* serious. You'd know if tried it. You'd understand if you were involved."

"Right now you're nothing more than a mercenary, doing shit for cash. All you're going to do piss people off and make enemies."

I glimpsed Dane eyeing me as I was talking. When I got off the phone with Lara, I made my way to over to him.

"Yeah, man, I don't know," Dane articulated. "She was acting funny the last time you brought her here."

"I don't think she likes me, either," someone else said.

I jumped. I hadn't even noticed that Carol was behind me. She had gone into my bedroom to change out of her superhero outfit. Now she wore little khaki shorts and a pink crop-top with the words *tease me* written in a glittery script. The less noble part of my brain registered a certain lack of a bra strap. The short shirt rose just high enough for me to pick up the bottom of an enviable six-pack. It wasn't her normal way of dressing. Or

maybe it was, and I just hadn't realized till now. Either way, my temperature was rising and the whole situation demanded immediate intervention.

Off I went, minutes later, to the gym.

And there I was, smack-dab in the middle of another awkward situation.

Sifu Chuck yelled at me briefly for showing up late, then let me go and change. When I came back up to the class, they were starting something new-- chin na, Chinese grappling. One of many reasons I had switched out of Tai Chi and into the Kung-Fu class.

The blue rubber mats were set out, which meant people were going to end up tossed on the floor. Sifu jerked his head at me, then regarded the class. "Miguel, you go with . . . Joe. Chad, you're with Trey."

Great. Trey. The second senior-most student, next to me. And the one guy in the whole gym who genuinely disliked me. He was half Spanish, half Irish and half Thai. Before joining Sifu Chuck's gym, he had been learning Muay Thai, a brutal form of kickboxing native to Thailand. It was a very unnatural, but nonetheless effective style that completely conflicted with the posture and methodology of Shoalin Kung-Fu. What that meant was, although Trey was ten times more likely to kick my ass in the street or a ring, the five years I spent learning Tai Chi, which was derived from Kung-Fu, made me that much better at the forms than him. Unfortunately, there's a huge difference between fighting the air and fighting another person.

Sifu showed us a couple of basic wrist grabs, hurling Shawn, a 285-pound black guy, on the mat in a fluid, side-stepping motion usually reserved for 1980s Michael Jackson videos.

Trey grabbed my wrist and attempted the throw. He turned and twisted it awkwardly, basically

stuffing my forearm into his warm, sweat-soaked armpit. It hurt, but my body was not in the least compelled to hit the floor.

"Wrong!" Sifu bellowed. He swept over to us, nudged Trey aside, but not so much that he couldn't see Sifu's hands. "Watch."

Before I knew it, my head was by my feet, and my feet were on their way to where my head was. Then followed the dull *thwap* of my back against the mat. This time, I remembered to exhale as I hit the ground.

I rolled immediately to my feet, my wrist throbbing slightly. "Chad, you try it."

Trey moved back into position, mud-colored eyes speaking volumes of curses in a single glare.

The footwork reminded me of one of my old Tai Chi forms. With that thought in mind, I grabbed Trey's wrist where mine was hurting the most. I did the motion. Trey stiffened his arm against my effort. That was good practice, since no one would really *let* me do this to them on the street. He grunted against me, but my fingers where in the right pressure points, and he ended up doubled over, just to ease the pain.

Then came the sudden punch to the balls. I stumbled back, muttering incomprehensible profanities. Trey straightened his body in time to take a backhand on the forehead from Sifu.

"Whasthemattawityou?" Sifu said, a remnant of his Brooklyn youth shining through the accent he had picked up from years of training in Asia.

"He didn't let go," Trey said, massaging his wrist with his other hand.

"You're supposed to tap your leg or the mat when you give up," Sifu said. "Get back there and try it again."

More glares. Another sad attempt. I was rewarded with another forearm-full of damp and distinctly aromatic armpit hair.

I paused after Trey gave up. Sifu was busy with another pair of students, so I faced Trey and said, in a low voice. "What's your problem with me, anyway?"

"Do I need a reason to hate you, superhero-boy?"

That would have been nice. In response, I grabbed his wrist and did the move again, this time harder and faster. He bent over, but I still couldn't flip him. Something to work toward, I figured. I let go before Trey could tap in forfeit. "Maybe you should get anger counseling."

"You're only good at this in theory," Trey snarled. "I've actually fought semi-professional fighters. Even with gloves on I could break your face."

I grabbed him again, this time by the opposite wrist. Trey was completely unprepared. I bent him so far over that his head nearly smacked his crotch. He landed on his shoulders. His feet made their way over his head by default.

"Might as well wear gloves because you suck at chin-na." Trey didn't hear me, but his brief, wheezing cough was victory enough.

#

After class, I checked my cell's voicemail. Nothing. No missed calls. I had been hoping but not hoping for either Carol or one of the Hard Island Boyz to call about Mackie or the strip mall or something. It would have been nice to hear an apologetic voicemail from Lara, too.

The spoiled-rich high-school seniors were racing their sports cars up and down Deer Park Avenue. Grotesquely fuel-inefficient engines purred loudly, like powerful, sexy, Japanese cat gods. I turned the corner to down the sidestreet and turned again

into the unlit parking lot behind gym. The lot really belonged to a doctor's office. Sifu leased a tiny corner of the building to run his gym. My bike was parked by the far fence, near the dumpster.

As I submerged into the shadow cast by the giant, brick medical office, I got that low hum in my gut. It was the kind of thing I always got, even when I was a kid, when I walked into poorly-lit areas; the feeling that no matter where you looked, a monster was surely lurking somewhere out of sight, waiting to jump out at you. I always got that feeling when I was leaving the gym, like Trey or someone was going to mug me.

This time I happened to be right.

It felt like a brick against my skull. A hollow bone-on-bone crack resounded in my ears. I landed on my shoulder. Something like a baseball bat slammed my spine. The stinging pain radiated from shoulders to tailbone.

My hands charged instinctively. Then I thought better of it. I knew it was Trey, because Thai boxers were famous for training their fists and shins to be like stone. Aside from that, though, Trey didn't have powers, and I was pretty sure this fact contributed to his animosity.

I rolled onto my knees. The quick movement made me dizzy. I paused long enough to take another shin to the gut.

"Hurry up," someone said. The voice was old and jaded, but vaguely familiar. I couldn't place it before a foot came at my face.

I held my hands out to block. The Converse sneaker stopped a couple inches from my hands. There was still an impact, and the back of my hands slapped my face. I was stunned, as much from the kick as from the fact that I had gotten hit without being, well, hit. In my Tai Chi class, Sifu sometimes talked about using one's chi to hurt someone without touching them, but I thought he

meant without touching them *hard*. Trey--at least I was pretty sure it was Trey--hadn't touched me at all.

"What the hell?" came another voice.

"Forget it, let's go," said the first mystery voice.

There was the sound of scrambling, sneakers crunching against dirty asphalt. I stood in time to see Trey deliver a flying knee to Mackie's chest—where the hell did *he* come from? Mackie flinched, hands flailing in childish fear. Trey's knee stopped an inch or two from the tubby kid, cracking against an invisible force.

Had Mackie come to save me? That couldn't possibly be. He'd have had to come really far out of his way to get here. What was Trey's problem with him? Were they battling for the right to fuck me up? Something here was whack.

Trey, his attack thwarted, landed on the ground unexpectedly. His right leg was still bent from the unsuccessful knee strike, and he stumbled to the side, hissing in pain. Mackie huffed angrily, then threw a wide, untrained hook. With well-rehearsed ease, Trey checked and blocked the hand in the circular Kung-Fu-style. Mackie tried again. This time his fist didn't even come close to Trey face. The invisible force field around his fist connected with Trey's jaw. His head jolted briefly, then Trey retaliated reflexively. The angled punch was again impeded by the force field.

A force field. That was why the foot hadn't come near me. Mackie had jumped me. Trey was saving my ass.

Now I charged up my power. "Trey! Down!"

He ducked and I launched a blast from both hands. I tried to tone down the burn factor and turn up the impact. This was something I had been practicing, but not entirely succeeding at. Regardless, the yellow beams splintered and fizzled

on impact with the force field. While down there, Trey went for his signature punch to the balls. He cursed when his knuckles hit force field again.

"Enough, you dumbass. Get in the car!" It was that first voice, coming from a green Sebring with tinted windows and no license plate. Mackie ran for the passenger side door. I fired another blast. It missed Mackie and melted the passenger-side mirror. The door slammed shut and the engine turned on simultaneously.

No big deal, I thought. Take out the tires, like I did once in my first-ever real superhero fight against Milton Tugger, who could walk through walls.

Before I could aim, the driver flashed his high-beams. The blazing light stabbed my eyes, a pain amplified by my throbbing, injured head.

It took a second to realize the car was coming right at me. Even then, I was frozen in place.

My body rocked with an unexpected impact. I thought as much to exhale, like when thrown on the mat. Concrete scraped my back, and the full weight of a human body crushed against my ribs.

Between my back, my head, my eyes, my chest and my back, I was shy on parts that weren't sore and aching. It made me think of Trey punching my balls, and my testicles began to throb in memory. The Sebring peeled off, its racing transmission merging with the roars of the other cars on the Avenue.

Trey rolled off me, then bent over to help me to my feet. "You alright?"

I groaned and wiped some dirt and tiny pebbles off my shirt. "Forget about it."

"Who the hell was that?"

"Do you *care*?" I snapped, in complete disregard of the fact that he had just rescued me from being run over.

"I'm not *that* much of an asshole," Trey mumbled, clearly pissed, but more so hurt.

Awkward silence. I touched the back of my head. Sensitive to the touch, but no blood. "You're just always so hostile."

Trey shrugged. "You're just so fucking pretentious and self-righteous. The whole superhero thing is kind of lame. That doesn't mean I'd sit around and watch you die."

Good point. Maybe the comic-book stigma of superheroes always having mortal enemies was getting to me. I mean, I had never once met another super-powered person who was trying to kill someone. The only one I had ever heard of was Bruce Kelp, a guy with Herculean strength who had thrown a car at a police officer. That guy was now in Creedmoor Psychiatric draining New York State of its supply of Thorazine. Mackie was the only enemy I had ever had that came after me. And I got the impression it was the druggie friend of his that was pulling the strings. If only I had an idea of who it was.

I glanced at my cell phone, which doubled as my house phone and watch. It had been crushed in the scuffle. "What time is it?"

"Five after ten."

Carol was waiting for me, and would be panicking that I wasn't answering my phone. "I gotta go meet up with my partner."

Trey nodded, and headed for his car.

"Hey, Chad, man," Trey said.

I turned around. "Yeah?"

"Good luck. I hope you catch that guy."

"Thanks, man." I straddled my bike, then looked back at him one more time. "Get home safe, dude."

Libem Liboriam

The Complete d20 Guide to Books

by Dana Lynn Driscoll

Libem Liborium: The Complete d20 Guide to Books is the most comprehensive guide to books and tomes available to the d20 industry ever published! *Libem Liborium: The Complete d20 Guide to Books* is an extensive, exhaustive, and creative resource that will be useful to many gamers as it was specifically written to cover the range of places and forms writing, books, and the quest for knowledge can take in a campaign world. The book details information about writing while adventuring, including a complete set of mechanics for writing, publishing, and marketing books from hand-publishing to mass book sales.

What others are saying...

[Crothian of ENworld.org](#)

This book does the job of being a complete book on books. It deals with the areas I wanted and showed me ones I did not think of. It seems to be the rare book that expands upon the campaign world in a way that no other has. It adds detail and levels of realism to the world without bogging down with irrelevant items.

» 4 out of 5

[Bill Perman of GamingReport.com](#)

...The amount of new spells and prestige classes found in later chapters will make this book a valued purchase. Beyond that you'll find write-ups for dozens of books, new deities and new mundane items. *Libem Liborium* also contains a random book generator that allows for GMs to create 100's of new books. In conclusion, while this supplement may not be as glamorous as say, a book about Barbarians, or a sourcebook on weapons, *Libem Liborium: The Complete d20 Guide to Books* is a treasure chest for the less combat oriented characters in your party, as well as an invaluable resource to bring the art of writing, researching, and learning to life. Those not interested in such things will still find plenty of useful tools for their fantasy game.

» 3.5 out of 5

The Silven Bestiary

Beasts of Iron

by Kyle Thompson

The Silven Bestiary is a monthly article that contains new monsters on a monthly basis. It will generally contain two to three monsters and occasionally a special bonus that includes other new material such as magic items, etc.

This month's volume of the Silven Bestiary features three monsters made from iron. Of these new constructs, the Iron Eye and the Ironmaw can be created, while the knowledge of how to construct a Lost One has been forgotten.

Iron Eye

Small Construct

Hit Dice: 1d10 (5 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: Fly 20 ft. (poor) (4 squares)

Armor Class: 17 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 17

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/-3

Attack: Slam +2 (1d6+1)

Full Attack: Slam +2 (1d6+1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Eye blast, spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Construct traits, darkvision 120 ft.

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +0

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 14, Con -, Int -, Wis 8, Cha 20

Skills: -

Feats: -

Environment: Any land and underground

Organization: Solitary, pair or group (3-8)

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Alignment: Same as creator

Advancement: 1-3 HD (Small), 4-7 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment: -

A small being consisting of a small, glassy red eye surrounded by iron floats toward you. The eye seems to glow slowly brighter as it approaches.

Iron eyes are small constructs that are often crafted to aid mages in battle as distractions because most are too weak to guard anything.

An iron eye is simply a large glass eye surrounded in iron, enchanted to float about four feet off the ground. Only the front of the eye is not covered. The glass eye is completely solid. This unusually large eye allows it to see much farther in the dark than most constructs.

Iron eyes understand but do not speak common.

Combat

Iron eyes will usually approach a foe and use their eye blasts as soon as possible. They also make full use of their spell-like abilities. Mages have realized that several weaker iron eyes in a group are more effective than one stronger iron eye.

Eye Blast (Su): An iron eye may release a blast

About the Author:

Kyle Thompson was born in Hawaii and is now sixteen years old. He enjoys writing and drawing. He currently is being schooled in West High School and is working towards some scholarships to get him through college. He plans to finish college with a degree in writing and continue on to write fantasy novels. His teachers, family and friends (including his roleplaying group) all support and encourage him. They all tell him that he has to take them to dinner when he gets paid, and his mom says that he will be moving her back to Hawaii.

of energy from its iris once every 1d4 rounds. The round before the eye blast is used, the iris of the iron eye begins to glow.

An eye blast does 1d8 damage to all creatures within a line of forty feet directly in front of the monster. All creatures in the line may make a Reflex save (DC 18) to avoid taking this damage.

Spell-like Abilities (Su): 1/day – *daze, flare, hypnotism, sleep*. Caster level 1st. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Construction

The center of an iron eye is formed from a 10-pound block of glass worth at least 200 gp. The iron surrounding it is melted down and formed from a block of pure iron weighing no less than 20 pounds. Assembling an iron eye requires a DC 15 Craft (glass-working) check for the glass eye and a DC 15 Craft (armorsmithing) check.

CL 8th; Craft Construct (found in the MM), *daze, flare, hypnotism, lesser geas, levitate, sleep*, caster must be at least 8th level; Price 12,000 gp; Cost 7000 gp + 300 XP.

Ironmaw

Medium Construct

Hit Dice: 5d10 (25 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armor Class: 18 (+3 Dex, +5 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+8

Attack: Bite +8 melee (1d6+4, x3 critical)

Full Attack: Bite +8 melee (1d6+4, x3 critical)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Lockjaw

Special Qualities: Construct traits, darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will -3

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 16, Con -, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1

Skills: -

Feats: -

Environment: Any land and underground

Organization: Solitary, pair, group (3-10)

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: None

Alignment: Same as creator

Advancement: 6-10 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment: -

A construct with two long mechanical legs runs in your direction, snapping a large iron mandible at you. Iron teeth as sharp as daggers line the mouth of the construct.

Ironmaws are generally used as minor guards for treasure stashes and wizard towers. They are composed of two long legs and a large mouth lined with sharp teeth. Ironmaws are known for their ability to lock their mouth closed while a creature is half-inside its mouth.

Ironmaws understand and speak common.

Combat

An ironmaw will tend to select one opponent and attempt to use its lockjaw ability on that opponent until it has killed the target or the ironmaw itself is destroyed.

Lockjaw (Ex): If an ironmaw scores a successful hit on a creature, it may automatically start a grapple

by locking its jaw closed. Each round the ironmaw successfully maintains the grapple, the grappled creature takes 1d6 damage. If the ironmaw fails its grapple check, it loses its hold on the creature.

Construction

An ironmaw's body is formed from a block of pure iron weighing no less than 400 pounds and costing 600 gp, melted down and formed into the parts of the body. Assembling an ironmaw requires a DC 18 Craft (armorsmithing) check.

CL 10th; Craft Construct (found in the MM), *lesser geas*, *limited wish*, *polymorph any object*, caster must be at least 10th level; Price 18,000 gp; Cost 10,000 gp + 800 XP.

Lost One

Large Construct

Hit Dice: 8d10 (40 hp)

Initiative: +3 (-1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares)

Armor Class: 23 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +15 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 23

Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+17

Attack: Blade +12 melee (1d10+7, x3 critical)

Full Attack: 2 blades +12/+7 melee (1d10+7, x3 critical)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Whirling Strike

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +1

Abilities: Str 25, Dex 8, Con -, Int -, Wis 5, Cha 5

Skills: -

Feats: Improved Initiative^B

Environment: Any land and underground

Organization: Solitary, pair

Challenge Rating: 7

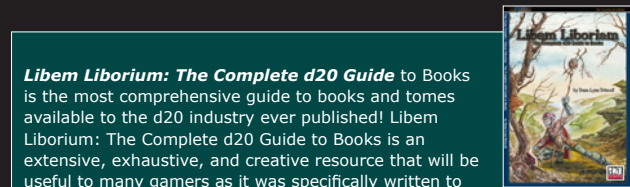
Treasure: None

Alignment: Always lawful neutral

Advancement: 8-12 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment: -

A large construct with black space for a face walks toward you, a tattered brown cape trailing behind it. Swords are where hands should be. The



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Deep in the forests of the the world, the legendary tree men stir as their world is threatened by the humanoid races. Their numbers dwindle as the centuries pass, but their will to survive is strong. Can they protect themselves and the natural world from fire, magic, and steel, or will they and their lore pass into the twilight?

Races of Twilight: The Green is the first in a series of d20 racial toolkits. Not simply a collection of elf and dwarf variants, the Races of Twilight series provides detailed information on unique and original player races that can be incorporated into any fantasy campaign.

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construct is rusty and covered in moss. It seems as if it has been centuries since it was last used.

Lost ones are constructs that were constructed during the height of an ancient empire. Since the fall of that empire, the lost ones have been left behind to watch as their cities crumbled to ruins. They vary in shape, but all of them are large because those who left them did so as reminders of their legacy, but found it too hard to make them any larger.

Lost ones can be found with various weapons built into their form, such as axes replacing their hands, but they are only proficient with melee weapons. Their attacks are always exactly as listed above.

Lost ones are always rusty, and depending on the moisture in the area, they may occasionally be slimy and have moss growing on them.

Lost ones do not speak.

Combat

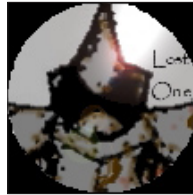
Most lost ones have lost track of their original orders due to their long period of inactivity. As such, they tend to attack anyone who approaches the ruins they guard.

Whirling Strike: Lost ones have waists that allow full 360-degree rotation. They take advantage of this ability by sticking both of their arms out straight, locking their lower body into place and allowing their upper body to spin rapidly. This ability can be used at will. Any creature within five feet of the lost one while this ability is active must make a Reflex save (DC 20) or be hit with a blade attack.

This ability removes the lost one's ability to make critical attacks with their blades and the ability to move, but does allow it a +2 circumstance bonus to its armor class.

Construction

Lost ones can no longer be crafted because the knowledge was lost ages ago. They have been outdated by golems.



If you're using the Lost One in your game, print and cut out this image to use as a miniature!

instinctive Wanderings

by Alisa Frisch

Greetings, gamers and Silven Trumpeter readers! I am pleased to be joining the staff of contributing writers to this online magazine and hope that you will find my new column both unique and helpful at the same time.

My name is Alisa Frisch and I've been writing for as long as I can remember. I've also been gaming since 1998, when I developed an interest in it during a day off while living in dormitories at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. I'm still serving in the U.S. Air Force, and I have found that gaming is a great discovery and provides great escapism in such an unpredictable career.

My friend and neighbor in the dorms, named Ben, had been gaming for 21 years. He showed me the many themes of gaming, such as space travel, wars, historical campaigns, and dragon-slaying quests. However, I soon found that any game containing animals drew my interest the most. It didn't matter how the animal was utilized in the game plot, whether it was as a non-player character, a protagonist, or even as a shape shifter. I just knew that I was hooked.

Seven years later, my military career has taken me to various places, where I inevitably seek out any gaming shop available, perusing the shelves for new and old titles featuring creatures as characters. I even found myself searching for fiction and nonfiction on mythology and shape shifters, eager to learn as much as I could about animals and their many uses in the gaming world.

Thus, "Instinctive Wanderings" was born. In this column, I will elaborate on gaming subjects related to animals, real or fantasy, and their roles and layouts in various gaming systems. My thoughts will "wander" to a new subject each month, while

the "instinctive" part is just that: talking about what comes naturally. I will try to find answers to questions you may have about your nonhuman characters, but are unsure how to ask. You may wonder what the latest lineup of *White Wolf* games are like, which *Dungeons and Dragons* dragon is the best to use in a storyline, or seek games that use anthropomorphic creatures.

I hope that this will be an interesting spot for those who love getting to know the beasts of our favorite old and new games. By the way, I would definitely say that Ben's game tutoring has paid off for both of us, for not only has it helped me to create this column, but he is now my husband as well! A gaming spouse – you have to love that rarity! This first column is my introduction, and I will begin my topics in the next issue, discussing the new *World of Darkness* and the updated rules of this horror role-playing setting after its recent makeover. Keep on gaming!

Born in New Jersey, Alisa Frisch is a devoted writer who enjoys penning a good fantasy/horror story or pen palling to numerous people throughout the U.S.

As a student at Bloomsburg University, she wrote articles for *Spectrum Magazine*, "The Voice" newspaper, and also the *Times News* in Lehigh, Pennsylvania. She earned her B.A. in mass communications and freelances whenever possible. She's been published in the science fiction magazine called *Abyss* as well as the "Wolverine and Rogue" website, which is devoted to *X-Men* fan fiction.

Alisa currently serves with the U.S. Air Force and has done freelance writing for military base newspapers. She's been gaming since 1998 and calls *Werewolf: the Apocalypse* and *Werewolf: the Forsaken* her favorites.

Echo of Linkbard

by Christina Talley

Srin stalked his fellow elves. The forest crawled with them. He knew bronze-skinned elves lay just beneath the tree shadows. He knew he would find them, catch them in their paths as they flowed like lifeblood under the skin of the leaves. They would yield their secrets to him; after all, there were no secrets one cousin could keep from another.

An elf's imagination can be the most boundless of all fancies. Srin's mind was gifted (some say cursed) by his own wild beliefs. It was of course Srin's idea to seek the ruins of Lilliki and his foolhardy idea to interview every wild elf tribe to discover any scrap of knowledge they might have of that grand, devastated nation. It was a shame that no others saw the genius of his endeavors, save the human he gave coin to for protection. As Srin examined another puddle that somewhat resembled a footprint, the human spoke.

"That's no elf's print, I tell you," Magria sniffed. The human woman gazed suspiciously around the trees and spit. "You're tracking deer again."

"Deer, you think?" Srin asked. "How many?"

She leaned over the blond elf's shoulder. "Two... maybe four. It's rained recently, may've been yesterday. Could've been any numbers for what I'm seeing."

Her elven employer stood tall and rubbed his golden chin, which was as smooth as her own. "Did they run?"

The hunter nodded her weathered head. "These were on their move."

"From what? Deer are peaceful creatures, no? Only a threat makes them run, I would imagine."

"When something gives them a chase, yeah, that's when they run. Elsewise they run too when they're being fools and get spooked by nothing. Either ways, you're still tracking deer. Thought we were looking for elves."

"Magria, your assistance is priceless. Yes, I know I am tracking deer. Deer are just what I'm looking for."

The human shrugged. It wasn't the first time the gold elf had changed his fool mind.

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The Dancers at the Oaks had told him what little they knew of the Buck Chasers. The Buck Chasers were yet another in a long list of leads he had pursued. Srin felt he had become more in touch with his wild cousins with each tribe he sought. Hunting them brought him a pleasure he was sure amounted to much more than any his golden brothers attained sitting in their libraries. And how much more had he learned! Why reinvent what others had held secret and safe for so long?

The ways of the forest elves alone were enough to write several treatises about, but it was the knowledge they unwittingly retained that he desired. Many knew the former glory of the great elven collective that was Lilliki. Many sought the secrets still entombed within that nation's remains, left for reasons only the dead knew. Srin sought not the corpse of that nation, not even the fragments of its last breaths that brought great amounts of gold coins in dark market deals. His quarry still lived and breathed, but not in the elegant, refined manner in which it once flourished. Srin wanted to discover how the magics of that nation lived on in its now primal citizens, the arcane talents of a great time adapting to primordial peoples. His mind spun with possibilities each time he discovered a new outlet for the secrets of his ancestors in these foreign cousins of his.

Finally he discovered the Buck Chasers, their bows drawn and pointed from the brush. In Magria's opinion, the wood elves had discovered them.

Using the tongue of the woodlands, Srin shared his desires with the arrow-pointing wood elves. They listened silently as the gold one gave his verbose excuses. They bound and blindfolded both intruders, and informed them that they would be taken to Echo. Srin could hardly contain his excitement.

As they drew close to the tribe's settlement, a strange sound took hold in their ears. Magria silently wondered if they had entered a tavern; Srin knew he was in the right place.

Both were pushed to the floor and their blindfolds removed.

"Echo is not here. Soon again she will return. Wait."

Srin thought how considerate it was to address them both in the common tongue for the benefit of his human companion. The huntress marveled at their surroundings.

The wild elves often lived in cities molded from the living trees, but never had Magria heard of one being crafted from shrubbery. It seemed that they were surrounded on all sides by stems and small leaves, some making paths a single elf wide but never actually concealing anything going on around them. She could see all of the city at once: elves dancing, elves eating, elves dressing, elves painting their bodies, and, most of all, elves drinking.

"Magria! Look at the paths!"

She could not answer him with her eyes: a nude male bathing with water from a basket captured them. The stunning elf man's acorn eyes smiled at her as he shook away the bright water from his braided hair. An ally of his tugged playfully on his friend's wet hair. They dashed into the brush, a group of dancers with drums concealing their lively chase.

"Magria, the paths!"

"Uh, yeah, it's like rabbit roads. You can see for..."

"No, look at the prints! They wear the boots!"

The huntress looked perplexedly at the elf. All this revelry around them and he wanted her to track them still? She cut him a curious look and turned to examine the print left by her escort. It was the footprint of a large deer.

Magria was nearly knocked into the dust as two dancing elves crashed into her. Looking down at their visiting obstacle, the two females shared a laugh and left their drinking gourd in her lap as an apology.

"Weird elves," Magria said, shaking her head.

Srin heard the sound of pipes being played. A roar of delight rolled through the shrub community as the twittering sound fluttered through the air. Quickly the music seemed to flicker closer to where

the two visitors sat. All at once it pulled Srin's heart into an embrace of bliss, his loins feeling the inspiration in his heart. He unconsciously tugged at his bindings as he twisted and fought to find the source of the music.

Above him, he spied movement. A figure of auburn shades, perched like a dainty mountain goat in the branches, flitted down, catching each step with the tips of its feet. As it drew close, its music seemed to overwhelm Magria, and the human slumped over in sleep brought by the same muse that so inspired Srin's passions.

The amber form skipped down to the forest floor, bending slightly the branches of the shrub from which her kingdom, her paradise, was formed. The horned woman giggled as she patted the human on her dark, sleepy head and took the feywine jug from her lap to suckle upon its sweet fillings.

"Madam... Lady of the Buck Chasers..."

The nude woman regarded the stuttering gold elf with a clever grin as she stood with a hand on each hip. She stood a moment, locking eyes with her captive. A drop of feywine slipped down from a corner of her smiling lips. Her tongue darted out to catch it just as she began to speak.

"I am Echo of Linkbard, mistress of the revels, creator of the Leaved Place. And by luck I find time for spending with the Buck Chaser tribe." Her people's light laughter answered her tease. "What are you about, stranger?"

"Lady Echo... I come to... I seek to... Could you untie me?"

The horned elf woman laughed boisterously, a laugh he had heard the two dancers imitate only moments ago. Her amber eyes settled on him. "In an exchange."

"For what? I give gladly," Srin replied, twisting in his ropes.

The gourd struck him solidly on the chest. "Drink," she grinned.

~~~~~

Airy waves of firm desire had taken him that night. That was all he knew at moonrise. The sounds of the elves carousing seemed distant as the breeze flowed over his skin. Then he realized his bed was tree branches, and that air passed both above and below him.

His startled reaction ignited that laughter again. The horned woman swooped Srin into her arms, filling his ears again with her deep chuckles.

"I have you, Srin. Do not fear any fall."

Srin gasped with his surprise. Not only was he held aloft by only the thinnest of twigs, he was as close as he'd ever been to a woodland elf, if that was what she was. And she was fantastically nude.

"Madam..."

"Echo," she corrected as she playfully flicked his nose.

"Echo, um, I came to you for information regarding Lilliki. I have seen the magic boots, those that reshape the footprints into animals'. How did..."

"Oh, why speak of what is gone? Is Lilliki here? Please. Don't be so concerned."

Srin quieted a moment despite his demanding mind. Innumerable questions and their indecipherable possibilities filled him. After listening to the winds for some lovely moments, he simply could no longer withhold his desire.

"What are you?"

Again she laughed. "I am Echo of Linkbard, a child of inspiration."

Srin blinked. "What does that mean?"

"These people are my dreams made true. They are my creation and my creators."

Srin's sharp face scrunched in thought. "I still don't understand. Where is Linkbard? Are we not among the Buck Chasers' tribe?"

"Linkbard is a satyr's name; he is my father. These are the descendants of my mother's people."

Feykin. He should have known. Perhaps he had known. Her step was too light, her laugh was too throaty. The fey... Even after the thousands of years elves had actually been aware of those giggles and breezes made flesh, there was no generally accepted opinion on them. Texts argued between themselves. Their authors lost hundreds of years of their lives to the subject, some never returning. An elf could lose himself utterly to the fey, and gods help any humans they chose to play with. Srin swallowed, hoping the stars were the same he had seen the night before and not those of a century he thought belonged to his twilight years. Such depths of time laid a dance away to creatures like this woman.

No, he couldn't think of her as a woman, not just as woman. Echo, despite being only of partial fey blood, would flow on through time like the stream that carves the canyon. He could not allow himself to ride her through a fall only he would notice with his mortality. His feet longed for the ground.

Srin nodded, then paused. "Wait... your mother's descendants?"

"Yep."

"But... then how old must you..."

"Oh, I'm twins with that star," she said waving her hand limply toward the night sky. "And," she added, "I am the mother of the dew that was the twinkle in your seventh grandfather's eye."

"So then you must have seen it all! What caused the fall of Lilliki? How did you all fall into barbarism? What magics did not survive?"

The horned elf huffed and then laughed again. "Always what is gone, is that what you want? How can you have what is gone, silly Srin? Why not hold me? You know, as long as you hold me, you won't fall down. Why not have more to drink?"

Srin declined more feywine, content to soak in his own brew of thought. Echo was an ancient woman, as beautiful and strange as the dead city he sought. Behind those fey horns, no doubt there lay the knowledge he sought, forgotten by all save this creature. Yet she did not care to revive any of it. Srin's brow smoothed under her touch, relaxing his body and mind.

Both Srin and Echo had what was there, leaving all the past behind.

~~~~~

The limber elven man ran his moist braids over her body. She squealed like a maiden as he teasingly doused her giggling body. Then water hit her hard in the face.

Magria came awake quickly to the splashes from Srin's waterskin. Looking up to her elven employer, her wet face's look moved from disorientation to grudging recognition. She spat water and shook her hair from her eyes.

"Where are we?"

"The forest. Yes, still in the forest. Can you tell when in the night it is?"

The huntress examined the sky. "Past the night's center. What happened to the elves?"

Srin exhaled confidently. "No concern, my dear Magria. They have left us. Gone forever." He wiped

the moist soil from his hands. "Now, which way back to that little village of yours?"

"If you're thinking to leave me back and wander through here on your own, I'm not being here to tell you what a fool thing that is."

Srin waved his palms to stop his companion's tirade. "Not in the very least do I plan such action. I have in fact spent far too much time here. Have you ever been to Wyrmcove, Magria? I hear they create all manners of new items there. I should think they do not call it the 'City of the Best Craft' for no unearned reason. Can you just imagine them, dear? All those craftsmen creating all those shining, sparkling, grand new things! New things none have ever imagined before! New things once locked in their makers' minds made real! New things..."

Magria set their packs against her back again. She muttered again, "Weird elf."

A chalkboard-style illustration of a graveyard at night. In the center is a large, rectangular tombstone with the word "CURSES!" written on it in a jagged, blocky font. To the left of the tombstone is a tall, thin, conical monument with a circular top. In the background, there are several other tombstones of various shapes and sizes, some with arched tops. The ground is covered in tall, dark grass, and the overall scene is dimly lit, with a few small lights or candles visible in the distance.

by Eytan  
Bernstein

***Curses!*** is a comprehensive d20 guide to the use of curses, hexes and other magical afflictions. ***Curses!*** provides background material for expanding the notion of curses in your game and includes several new prestige classes, new feats, spells, and a number of variant options. From voodoo dolls to sweating blood, ***Curses!*** is everything you need to torment your PCs or spice up your favorite evil game! If evil isn't your style, there are also a variety of tools for vengeance and punishment and material to make your NPCs more interesting.

***Curses!*** is not only useful to spellcasters but also to other classes. There are options for traditional hexers as well for those looking to add a little misery to their character - or that of others. The book also offers some rules that clarify and expand the existing d20 curse rules.

***Curses!*** features the following:

- ▶ Background material for curses based on many traditions including: Ancient Greece, the Judeo-Christian Tradition, Voudoun and the Evil Eye
- ▶ A list of spells from the core rule books which gain the curse subtype - a new subtype for magical spells
- ▶ Variant rules on the use of the curse subtype
- ▶ New uses for the bestow curse and mark of justice spells
- ▶ 17 new spells for bards, clerics, druids, paladins, rangers and sorcerer/wizards.
- ▶ 12 new feats
- ▶ 4 new prestige classes

# The Sword of Eitri

by Adam Janus

A jagged bolt of lightning seared the cloudy night sky above the hill fort of Rath Aergar, frightening the men gathered on the wooden ramparts.

"Not natural," muttered Odar Mackai, the Rath Commander, as he stroked his long, gray-streaked, black mustache. As if confirming the commander's comment, another bolt of lightning lit up the night, revealing the massing horde of blue-painted feral elves. Alongside the savages were members of the large, ancient race of lizard men known as rhexauradon, or rhex, children of the dark crocodilian god, Sobek. They gathered on the tree line of the great Nethrun forest just out of bow range.

Feral elves and the children of Sobek had always been a nuisance, raiding Aergar's herds and crops, as well as supply and trade caravans, but never in concert with each other, and never in large numbers.

"A war party from hell," commented Raggan Dubh, Rath Aergar's druid and sorcerer. The wind whipped his red hair and green robes about his slight, freckled frame as he leaned heavily on his oaken staff.

Descending from the night sky, a crow landed on Raggan's shoulder. After a few clicking and cawing sounds, the black bird took flight and raced east.

"What says the bird, Druid?" asked Odar hopefully. "Mayhap a good omen from the gods of battle, Macha or Bran?"

"Whether from Macha, Bran, or the shapeshifting Morrigu herself, I know not," replied Raggan thoughtfully, "but the bird tells me there are many more foes gathered within the forest."

Odar cursed, then turned and paced the ramparts, barking orders and encouragement to the archers and spearmen on the wall. Only thirty were professional soldiers. The rest were villagers, farmers, and loggers from outlying communities who chose to defend their homes. All others had been sent to the subterranean passageways known as the Tunnels, which led all the way through the eastern spur of the Black Dragon Mountains to the Citadel of the Dragon, Aergar's patron city.

A commotion on the edge of the forest drew Odar's attention. The horde, which appeared to outnumber the defenders at least two to one, parted. Out from the tree line strode a tall figure, clad in the black wolf pelts of a feral elf warlock; he was followed closely by a huge, axe-wielding rhex. With a brush of his blue-painted hand, the robed figure pushed his furred cowl back, revealing long, flowing green hair and glowing red eyes. In his right hand was a long, black, double-edged sword.

A roar issued from the woad-painted horde of feral elves at the warlock's appearance, and their high-pitched, ululating cries shook the walls. They thrust crude bronze and stone weapons in the air, and their bone-adorned animal skin and fur garb gave them a wild look. Some wore antlers from great stags, horns from wild goats, and tusks from wild boars to add to their savage appearance.

Raggan ran down the rampart's stairs, followed by Odar. Upon reaching the compound, the druid leaned on the front gate, right arm outstretched and palm outward on the wood. Magic shimmered in the air as the wizard chanted, calling on the power of Merlin and the goodly pagan gods of magic to fortify the gates. Iron straps groaned as the wood seemed to swell, meeting the jambs and filling the gaps, sealing itself against any battering it might be about to receive.

Drums began to beat as the cries of the elves and roars of the rhex reached a fevered pitch. The warlock held his sword toward the sky and black magic pulsated and thrummed all around him, keeping time with the beating war drums. Lightning cracked from the roiling clouds, striking his raised blade. He leveled his sword, pointing it at Rath Aergar's gate.

A bolt of black energy issued from the warlock's glaive, striking the gates like a battering ram. The walls and the very ground they stood on shook from the force. Thick, iron-strapped timbers moaned in protest, turning red as dark energy crackled up and down their length. Raggan's spell held briefly before the gates exploded, sending wooden and stone missiles flying everywhere.

Some men died immediately, torn apart by shrapnel and debris, while the rest on the walls scrambled to regain their footing. Roaring lizard men charged toward the new opening in Aergar's wall, followed by the savage elves. Arrows began to fall on the ramparts, most clinking off chain and leather armor but some finding their marks. Crossbows thwacked and longbows twanged as the defenders returned fire.

Odar strode confidently through his ranks of infantry in the compound, taking his position in front; he addressed his gathered weaponsmen and villagers alike.

"Men and woman of Rath Aergar, beyond yon ruined gate," Odar gestured with his axe toward the smoldering remains of Aergar's gates, and the enemies beyond, "lies our greatest challenge. Be you farmer, peasant, or weapon man of many campaigns, today, you are all hounds of war! Today you are the hounds of Odar son of Kai!" This was met by much cheering, the smiting of weapons on heat-hardened wooden shields, and the thumping of spears and farming implements on the hard-packed earth.

"Whether in victory or defeat, whether we live to see Bel's light rising in the east or we are led to the kingdom of Don by the White Lady, the dryad of death! We will all hold our heads high, for we are the sons and daughters of the kingdom of Brynhalla! We are the warrior hounds of Odar Mackai! Bryyyyn-haaaaa! he cried, raising his axe above his head.

Many voices echoed the cry of Brynhalla as Odar turned from his assembled hounds. He stood firm, his steel gray gaze peering through the eye slits in his iron helm, looking through the ruined, smoldering gates. In the distance he could see the warlock atop the hill at the tree line, seemingly returning his stare. Then his view was obscured by advancing lizard men backlit by the elves' torches. Odar banged his axe against his enameled wooden buckler as the roaring reptilian children of Sobek leaped through the gaping hole in Aergar's wall.

Axe, hammer, and sword hacked and slashed at rending rhex talons and snapping crocodilian jaws as battle was joined in the compound. Odar Mackai sang a war song as he engaged the enemy, blocking a rhexauradon mace, sweeping the heavy blow aside with his shield and following with his axe. He grunted with satisfaction as his blade bit deep into the vile creature's neck, spraying him with foul-smelling ichor.

Still singing, the berserk human hacked his way through enemies to come to a farmer's aid. The farmer was holding his own against two rhex with just a lumberjack's axe. Odar leaped over the first reptile's long tail and with a downward chop severed its spine midway up its ridged back. He barely dislodged his axe in time to take a backhand swipe at the second creature, grazing its head. It dove in low, clamping its powerful jaws around the Rath Commander's calf. Yellow teeth penetrated steel greaves and sunk into his flesh, grinding against the bones of his leg.

Clenching his teeth against the pain, Odar firmly planted his feet as the creature attempted to shake

its head and roll, a move that would have ripped his leg from his body. He reversed the grip on his axe and brought its spiked top down on the lizard's head, pushing the spike through the monster's brain, killing it instantly.

Fully in the grips of battle madness, Odar Mackai roared to the heavens and sought out another foe.

###

While hand-to-hand combat raged in the compound, the archers were shooting flaming quarrels into the advancing hordes, igniting pitch-soaked bales of hay arrayed in the field. Raggan Dubh stood among them, enhancing their flaring arrows with his clean, earthy magic and throwing his own sorcerous bolts of fire and energy into the enemy ranks from the tip of his oaken staff. Many elves, engulfed in flames, ran screaming toward the forest, igniting others and setting the dry grass and fields ablaze.

Pausing to take a breath, Raggan felt the warlock's red eyes burning into him, and despite the heat, he felt a chill crawl over his sweat-soaked body. Gazing out across the flaming fields through the thick, black smoke, Raggan saw the elf calmly raise his sword and point it in his direction. The warlock's voice boomed unnaturally over the din of battle in a prayer to Set, the jackal-headed god of war, storms, famine, and all things evil. Dark, unclean magic rolled over the burning field and washed over the druid like a hot wave.

"Noooo!" screamed Raggan in anguish. His voice trailed off to a wet gurgle as he was engulfed in unbearable, searing heat. His skin turned bright red and blistered as his eyes melted from their sockets and his flesh ran off his bones. The archers backed away from the wizard, eyes wide with terror. Many dropped their weapons and abandoned the wall. Raggan continued to melt until nothing was left but a pool of molten flesh, cracked bones, and singed hair inside his green robes.

Laughing and chattering insanely to himself, the warlock left the tree line. He walked directly through the burning fields, passing unscathed through the roaring flames licking at his pelts. Picking his way through the charred corpses as if he was out for a leisurely stroll through a flowering pasture, the feral elf sorcerer made his way toward the blasted wall of Rath Aergar.

###

Odar Mackai, his leg throbbing in pain and bleeding freely, continued to fight like a man possessed. His bloody weapon left hewed corpses all about him while he continued to sing the battle song of his ancestors, oblivious to his pain and injuries. Lizard men and feral elves alike scrambled to get away from the battle-maddened berserker and his death-dealing axe. He kept fighting long after the rest of his comrades had fallen, leaving him the sole remaining human.

His back now to the wall, Odar would not relent. He cast off his dented helmet and peered out between strands of his long graying hair as it clung to his sweat- and blood-soaked face. His arrow- and spear-pierced shield was still strapped to his broken left arm, the jagged, battered edges and iron boss tearing painfully into the flesh beneath.

Suddenly, the elves and lizard men drew back and grew silent, and the song on Odar's lips faded. The only sounds were the cries of the dying and the crackle of flames as the warlock strode through the carnage to stand before the gore-covered human.

"Well met, valiant human," said the warlock, bowing slightly at the waist. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am Khirgar Battleclaw, and this is the Sword of Eitri." Khirgar dipped the end of the black blade into a pool of blood on the ground. An obscene shudder passed over the elf's face as the hideous sword appeared to soak up the thick red liquid, pulsing as if it had a heartbeat.



"We are here to take back what is ours," the feral elf sorcerer said in a lyrical, almost sing-song voice. His red eyes were glazed over, and all around him blue-painted savages and reptilian children of Sobek stood in rapt amazement.

"And to pass judgment on your kind!" boomed the warlock suddenly, pointing the strange sword at Odar, anger flashing in his evil eyes. "You will pay for the crimes of your ancestors with your blood and your soul!"

Growling like a cornered animal, Odar leaped at the warlock, raising his buckler and swinging his axe before him. With lightening speed, Khirgar sidestepped the human's murderous rush and brought his black sword down on the Rath commander's upraised shield with two hands. Sparks flew among a red mist as the blade cut through shield, mail, flesh, and bone.

In his rage, Odar barely noticed his injured arm, severed at the elbow and spurting blood. He turned and swung his axe where Khirgar had been a moment before. But the wizard moved with magical speed, stepping behind the raging human. Once again his black glaive licked out like a serpent's tongue, cutting through mail rings, parting flesh and muscle. The evil blade's razor sharp tip sliced through human vertebrae and ribs, and ropey wads of gore followed in its blurring wake.

Dropping his axe, Odar fell to his knees, the injury to his spine making his limbs numb. Yet, the warrior was still defiant. He looked up at the feral elf standing over him, his gaze filled with hatred.

"Brynhalla," Odar mouthed silently, and he saw the sweeping, two-handed swing of the black blade that parted his head from his body.

The headless corpse fell forward, still twitching. Blood pooled around the warlock's leather-wrapped feet. A grayish red mist began to issue forth from Odar Mackai's lifeless body, gathering in the air

above the onlookers' heads. With a bloodcurdling scream, the mist shot toward the tip of the sorcerer's upraised blade as thunder boomed and lightning cracked through the black storm clouds. The warlock laughed maniacally while the energy of Odar's warrior soul and spirit flowed into him through his pulsing black sword: the ancient, evil Sword of Eitri.

# RACES OF TWILIGHT

## The Green

by Michael Thompson



silven  Publishing

Deep in the forests of the the world, the legendary tree men stir as their world is threatened by the humanoid races. Their numbers dwindle as the centuries pass, but their will to survive is strong. Can they protect themselves and the natural world from fire, magic, and steel, or will they and their lore pass into the twilight?

**Races of Twilight: The Green** is the first in a series of d20 racial toolkits. Not simply a collection of elf and dwarf variants, the Races of Twilight series provides detailed information on unique and original player races that can be incorporated into any fantasy campaign. While intended for the experienced gamer who enjoys deep characterization and role-playing over one-dimensional heroics and “roll-playing,” **Races of Twilight: The Green** can be used by anyone who likes unusual characters.

Each of the races presented are in some way approaching the final phase of their cultural, political, or physiological development and are slowly fading from the world. Some have fallen into decadence and apathy; others have lost their dominance and position in a world of multiracial empires; still others have been crushed by disease, overpopulation, or magical travails. Whether each races dies and is forgotten or overcomes its difficulties and thrives is in the hands of players and DMs.

While each book provides numerous details on a new race, plenty of room is left for DMs to develop a unique background and role for that race in his campaign world.

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## **Next Issue: Oct 1, 2005**

Check out the October issue of the Silven Trumpeter for more coverage from The Best Four Days in Gaming: interviews, reviews, the Chaosium update and more. Plus, the Silven Bestiary takes a look at creatures from the Ethreal Plane, and you can be sure to expect new fiction from your favorite Silven writers!