

OD&DITIES

The Original Dungeons & Dragons Fanzine

EDITORIAL

Welcome to Issue 4 of OD&DITIES, the OD&D fanzine. Some excellent articles this issue, including four new character classes. Probably the best of the bunch is the Necromancer, a nine-page article submitted by James Mishler, complete with his own spells (seven pages worth!). Other submissions include a Ranger class by the same author, and an article on Weapon Mastery by Dan Eustace, and a short story, 'The Dragon's Childhood' by Jason O' Brien.

As you will have noticed, OD&DITIES has undergone a format change, now available only in RTF and PDF format. The reason for this is a man named Shane Mclean, who has volunteered to convert OD&DITIES into PDF format, placing it in a far better form. If you haven't seen these new versions, check them out now - he has done an absolutely outstanding job, improving the layout tremendously. Heartfelt thanks to Shane!

On a more serious note, OD&DITIES will be undergoing another change. Henceforth, OD&DITIES will publish Mystaran material submitted to it, on equal terms to OD&D articles. (These must, however, be in OD&D format.) There are two main reasons for this. The first is that I believe OD&DITIES has to grow to survive, and the best direction for this lies towards Mystara. The second is that another excellent fanzine, the Tome of Mystara, recently published its final issue, and I believe that there is a need for a Mystaran fanzine.

Those of you who prefer the non-specific nature of OD&DITIES need not worry. To accommodate the new material, OD&DITIES will expand. Instead of replacing the old style of articles, OD&DITIES will add them on. Also, I am putting out an appeal for articles related to other gameworlds for OD&D, such as Thunder Rift or Pelinore (from the old, and excellent, Imagine Magazine). In short, keep the submissions coming, as fast as you can, and OD&DITIES will accommodate them. Happy gaming!

As always, please send any letters or submissions to Methuslah@tongue.fsnet.co.uk.

Richard Tongue
Editor

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AC 4 : Book of Marvelous Magic

This accessory promised much when I first opened it - 500 new magical items, including references to those in the Basic, Expert and Companion sets. Penned by Gygax himself, my hopes were high. Too high. This is an interesting compendium of new magical items, some serious such as

the Medallion of Empathy and the Armband of Healing, others comic, such as the Log of Snoring or the Ruby Slippers, although none are as bad as AC11. This book is quite useful, but a DM can manage quite easily without it. However, it is not the wonderful set of new magical items that I hoped (although some are quite useful.)

GETTING STARTED

By R.E.B. Tongue

Over the previous three issues, this article covered moving players up from Basic levels all the way through to the Expert boxed set. Now we are going to move to the field of campaign design. This issue, we cover the important issue of character creation, and the formation on a adventuring party.

Character creation is one of the admirable points about OD&D. It is simple, quick and easy. A new player can roll up a character in 10 minutes. The rules of this process are amply covered in the Basic boxed set, so that aspect will be skipped over. One little hint, however - try and get hold of the 'Dragon Cards' from the Challenger set. Included amongst these are seven that cover the creation of each type of character found in the Basic rules, and these can be of great use when creating a set of characters - simply pass these out to your players and leave them too it.

Although the players are the ones who seem to be making the decisions, you, the DM, also have a lot to decide at this point. As well as the Basic seven classes, there are also countless others available - the new creatures in Orcs of Thar and the Creature Crucibles, classes such as the Mystic, found in the Rules Cyclopedia, and others such as the Barbarian and Psionicist found in this issue of OD&DITIES. You have to decide whether any or all of them are available. Most of these decisions are easy - if your campaign does not take place near an ocean, using 'The Sea People' is out of the question. If in civilised regions, the Barbarian class might not be appropriate (but

don't assume this - a 'fish out of water' campaign can be highly interesting). These decisions must be made with extreme care - if a class does not suit your campaign, you should not include, no matter what your players demand.

Once this is done, you have the matter of equipment to consider. It can be a good idea to role-play this aspect of events, especially for beginners. A trip through the market can provide demonstrations of the rules, and even a fight can be thrown in to demonstrate combat. This also allows you to have influence on the equipment characters receive - will they need garlic for their first adventure? You can make sure they have some. You can also limit anything that you do not want them to have, or add any items of equipment you think are useful. Another idea might be to start the PC's off as prisoners in a dungeon, with no equipment (as in 'Escape from Zanzibar'), but in this case you must be very careful to allow for this in the first adventure.

Once each PC has generated their character, it is a good idea to ask the player to write to paragraphs about the character - one about his background, the other about his personality. Allow him limited free rein - the second son of a Noble is fine, but the Prince of a Kingdom is over the top. This will help the PC get to know the character, and give you some valuable plot hooks.

When they have finished the process, have them repeat it, once or twice. Even in OD&D, it is distracting to be rolling up another character in the middle of the game if one dies, so have replacements ready. If they are not used in any other way, they can be worked in as henchmen later on.

Next Issue : The First Adventure - Design and the Game.

By R.E.B. Tongue

This is a new, semi-regular section that will review some of the available netzines, covering OD&D, Mystara, or fantasy role-playing. OD&DITIES is not the only netzine around, fortunately, and it is our wish to encourage the readership of as many of the 'zines as possible, in order to encourage this aspect of the hobby. If anyone sets up their own netzine that covers any of the topics mentioned, or finds one on the net, please let me know on Methuslah@tongue.fsnet.co.uk so that it can be reviewed here.

World of Mystery

This is a newly established e-zine that covers Mystara, Al-Qadim, and some generic information. For a first issue, this seems fairly well put together. The format it is in (wordpad) is one that is easily read by any computer,

but does detract from the 'magazine' feel. What rules are present do not seem to correspond with any single edition of AD&D, seeming to be a hybrid of 2nd and 3rd (I am open to correction on this point) rather than OD&D, and so this may lessen its usefulness to an OD&D player.

The first issue is sixteen pages long, but seems a little light. There is an article on the 'Bellman', a town crier NPC class, which seems well designed if limited in usefulness, followed by an article on Tralardan food, which is little more than a list of dishes. This is followed by some NPC descriptions, detailing background and personality but lacking statistics. These do not seem to be designed for Mystara. Then comes part one of a series of rules on Hardball, a sport practised in Al-Phatia, which again seems well designed. However,

NETZINE REVIEWS

THE PSIONICIST (cont'd)

may be kept hidden, as the Psionics of the world seek to escape persecution. To introduce Psionics into a campaign, especially if your players are unaware of their existence, one useful approach is to use one as a henchman or an important NPC. Psionics can keep up the pretence of being a fighter or thief, using their powers carefully to avoid detection, and it may be some time before the players notice this. Then, the NPC can be worked out of the campaign if desired, or can be converted into a PC if the class has taken hold.

A Psionist character can cause problems to DM because his powers are left purposely vague. Telepathy and Telekinesis have many uses, which can be dreamed up by an imaginative player, and ESP acts as a sense to help keep PC's out of trouble, although it is very unreliable at its lowest levels. As with some Thief Skills, no player should ever make an ESP check, or your surprise will be spoiled anyway, no matter what the result. You should make sure to introduce other Psionics into the campaign also - any fantasy Inquisition will most likely make full use of such power, as will other nefarious organisations such as Thieves' and Assassins' Guilds. Always, care must be taken to keep this class balanced, but if it is taken, it can be a valuable addition to a fantasy campaign.

By James Mishler

The Necromancer is another new class for OD&D, recommended for NPC's only.

Prime Requisite: Intelligence.
Other Requirements: Chaotic alignment.

Experience Bonus: 5% for Intelligence 13-15
10% for Intelligence 16-18.

Hit Dice: Starting with 10th level,
+1 hit point per level,
Constitution adjustments do not apply.

Maximum Level: 36.

Armour: None; no shield permitted.

Weapons: Dagger only. Optional (DM's discretion): staff, blowgun, unholy water, and whip.

Special Abilities: Spells, necromantic abilities.

A Chaotic Magic-user of 9th level or greater may choose to study the secrets of Undeath more closely and intensely than other magics. If she does so, she changes character class and becomes a necromancer. To become a necromancer, the magic-user must seek out and occupy an ancient crypt, burial mound, or cemetery, where he establishes a sanctuary for the research of the mysteries of Entropy and Undeath. He must study there, undisturbed, for three to six months (1d4+2, rolled by the DM).

During this time the prospective necromancer will be contacted and tested by entropic entities. These spirits and lesser fiends will instruct the magic-user in the knowledge that enables her to further delve into entropic magics. Tests of the magic-user's worthiness may well include interruptions by good and lawful adventurers seeking to stop the magic-user from attaining her goals. These tests are welcomed by Entropy, as they will either strengthen the might of their follower while eliminating allies of life or eliminate an unworthy novice. After the initial period of testing and study the magic-user joins the ranks of the necromancers.

romancers.

A necromancer is solidly Chaotic. The pursuit of necromantic and entropic magic is an evil and chaotic act. They will associate with other aligned types only in order to use, abuse, and then discard or sacrifice them.

Abilities and Restrictions

Upon successful completion of the training period the new necromancer gains the following abilities and restrictions:

Magical and Necromantic Spells.

A Necromancer continues in levels and spellcasting ability as a magic-user of the same level. He may learn all spells normally allowed to a magic-user, as well as spells from the Necromancer spell list. He must still maintain a spellbook for his magic-user spells, as any normal magic-user, as well as create a new tome (during the training period), called a Grimoire.

The Grimoire is a separate spellbook for necromancer spells, and is used in all ways as a normal spellbook. When the necromancer first attains that status, her Grimoire will contain one spell each of levels one, two, and three. Other spells can be gained and added to the Grimoire by scribing them from necromancer scrolls, from another Grimoire, or by learning them from other necromancers or fiends. A necromancer may also create new necromancy spells, see below.

Ulzaq Familiar

A necromancer gains the service of an Ulzaq familiar (see DMR2 Creature Catalog page 57) upon completion of initial training. The beast will serve his master to its full ability, though not necessarily with joy.

Undead Liege Status

A Necromancer gains the ability to control undead creatures as if he was an Undead Liege equal to his level (Cyclopedia page 217). The necromancer may never be commanded as a Pawn. Note that skeletons and zombies created by an Animate Dead spell cast by the necromancer do not count toward the total Hit Dice of undead the necromancer may control.

A necromancer that later attains undead status as a vampire, nosferatu, mummy, or lich will be able to control three times his level in hit dice of undead rather than the standard two times.

THE NECROMANCER

THE BARBARIAN (cont'd)

mour as AC6). Depending on the level of contact with other cultures, some metal items might be evident - but should be extremely rare. (The chief may have a steel sword, captured in battle decades ago, for example.)

These cultures are usually tribal, with small groups of no more than a hundred - usually as much as the local terrain will support. If the area is large, there may be other tribes, but it is unlikely they will work together - warfare is far more likely, although every few generations a leader may unite the tribes for an assault on some enemy, often the encroaching civilisation.

Money will not be invented at this point, and normal currency will be all but useless. Barter will be the major innovation, and people from outside would do well to consider what might interest barbarians. This barter could be in the usual form of items, or could be in the form of labour ('I will mend your hut in exchange for an axe' .)

The tribes will usually be organised with one warrior at the top. Sometimes he will be hereditary, but more usually it will be the strongest warrior, who fought his way to the top. A shaman or witch-doctor could also be in evidence, or certainly a wise man. Whether he has any magical powers or not is up to the DM. If he does, using a Cleric (or a Shaman from GAZ 12 if available) is probably wise.

This is because magic is usually regarded by such tribes as an evil force (although this need not necessarily be so.) Magic items and powers are regarded with suspicion, as normal men cannot wield such powers. They are looked on with fear because they cannot comprehend how such powers can exist without evil. Clerical powers, deployed properly, tend to be more subtle, and more directly useful to the day-to-day activities of a tribe.

This is only a brief precis of barbarian culture. There are many sources to consider. Although it is now out-of-print, perhaps the best is TSR's Complete Book of Barbarians, an excellent resource for a barbarian campaign. Examining such cultures as the Early Vikings or the Celts could also be useful, depending on the flavour of campaign you are running.

Adventure Hooks

- Many years ago, an evil magic-user fled into the hills to escape justice after betraying his lord to the enemy. He was believed dead, but recently word has come back that he is living amongst a barbarian tribe in the mountains. The PC's are hired to track him down and kill him. After heading through the inhospitable terrain, and meeting other barbarian tribes, they find the villain, who has used his powers to take over the tribe. The PC's must try and defeat him, either through force of arms or by convincing the tribe that he is an 'evil magic-user' and must be destroyed. (Expert, levels 5 - 9)
- A young barbarian warrior is accused of a crime he did not commit, and is exiled from the tribe forever. He must now make his way in the world, and can do this either by setting off into the wilderness, seeking adventure, or heading into civilisation, which he will find extremely strange and confusing. His ultimate goal is up to him, either to return to his tribe and prove his innocence when he is strong enough, or to carve out a new life for himself in his chosen environment. (Campaign hook, starting at Basic, level 1)
- The son of the Tribe's chief is taken by slavers while on a hunting expedition. The PC's are told to follow the slavers and bring him back. The slavers have taken him to a city (of the DM's choice) and have already sold him. This could lead to a long chase after his new owner, or a brief fight scene with the slavers, followed by a longer one with the local authorities (to whom the slavers are in the right.) The PC's can then either return to their tribe or continue adventuring in the wider world, with or without the chief's son. (If the chief's son dies in the course of the adventure, the PC's might not be able to return!) (Expert, levels 4 - 6).
- A small group of young barbarian warriors are set to track a Troll that has been attacking the village recently. First they must find its lair, an abandoned stronghold, then must enter a dungeon and kill it. The stronghold will give them hints about the nearest civilisation, and they may wish to investigate that later. (Basic, level 1)

THE GOLDEN EAGLE (cont'd)

This will bring them to the attention of Dolfric, who will send Danverin after them, which can be either a single adventure in itself or can be a continuing plot. Finally, the Golden Eagle can launch a full-scale attack which must be met by the PC's, using the War Machine rules or in a raid on their headquarters - or both. As a reward, they might be awarded the local area as a dominion, especially if they have risen to Name level over the course of the adventure.

This is just a broad outline of a possible campaign - other adventures can be added, and other activities involving the Golden Eagle. Some OD&D modules suggest themselves as possible for use in such a campaign. B1 : In Search of the Unknown can be used as the home base of the Golden Eagle, with suitable modifications. DD4 : The Dymrak Dread can be used as the base of a tribe of Goblins that has affiliated with the Golden Eagle - simply add an 'adviser', a first-level thief, to help provide a connection. X1 : Isle of Dread can be used also, if the campaign is set near a coastline - the PC's could be competing with Dolfric to find a rare artefact, hidden in the jungle.

One thing to remember when running the campaign is that the Golden Eagle will grow over time, and its members will become more experienced. More Eagle Warriors

will be brought into the organisation, new groups of monsters and bandit gangs will be brought in, and the leaders will gain in experience, always staying a step ahead of the PC's.

As mentioned in the 'Epic Heroes' article, it would be a good idea to construct a calendar of events, describing the activities of the Golden Eagle and other major NPC's and organisations, in comparison with the PC's. Such a calendar must be flexible, but it can provide assistance in planning adventures, particularly those where the Golden Eagle will not be directly involved.

The climax of the campaign should be memorable - a grand battle between the forces of the PC's and those of Dolfric, a raid into the heart of the bandit lair, or a duel to the death - the actual adventure will depend on the PC's, and the circumstances that have led to the final encounter. One final idea would be to allow one of the main enemies to survive, to remain as a future threat. Danverin would be a formidable enemy, as would Magnus the Red, and both are of the mentality that would encourage them to leave if the situation was desperate. To help this, make sure their deaths are not shown - Dragonlance had an 'obscure death' rule, where the bodies of villains were not found - something similar could be used here, to confound your players for many sessions to come.

By Jason O'Brien

The dragon was born on a cold wet and windy day in Kaldmont. His place of birth was in a large cavern high in the Altan Tepes mountain range on the border between the realms of the kingdom of Karameikos and the republic of Darokin. This dragon was considered slightly peculiar by his siblings. The reason for this was that unlike your average red dragon this one wasn't the slightest bit evil. As an infant his mother tended to and trained him, his brother and his two sisters in all the dragonly skills of survival and flight. He relished in the ability to fly and liked nothing better than to soar among the clouds and while away his time.

The day soon dawned when his mother deemed both himself and his siblings capable of taking care of themselves and she promptly chased them from the lair with a vicious series of blows. She attacked him first as she never really liked him, she thought he was too soft. His siblings exulted to see this assault on their hated, weird brother, but soon found themselves facing the same fate. He suggested they stay together and help each other only to be disappointed at their roars of vicious laughter. They all went their separate ways, and the poor little dragon flapped dejectedly off on his way south.

Now what this kind, good hearted little dragon did not know at this early stage of his life was that the star dragon, immortal ruler of all the good dragons on this world had chosen one of the dragon spirits over which she held sway and reincarnated

him in the body of an Yet unborn red to try and steal some of the followers from diamond the immortal ruler of all the evil dragons in this world. The plan was that as he grew the young red would first get a small number of converts of the same breed of dragon, which were the most powerful breed among the evil dragons in the two kingdoms on the edge of his birth sight. And then use them to work on converting the rest, and once all the evil dragons in this realm had been converted he was meant to expand his sphere of influence. This was a very risky experiment by the star dragon based on a method used frequently by the immortal Hel in the reverse form. Star had discovered what Hel was up to and decided that it would be worth trying for herself. Hence the birth of a kind good-hearted young red dragon. She knew it was going to be a struggle for the young dragon merely to survive its early life before it remembered its true purpose in life so she had arranged some help for him along the way, but we shall hear more on that later.

As we have already seen the poor young dragon was cast adrift in the big bad 1 world by a mother who didn't care for him and turned on by his greed driven siblings, heading south in search of somebody who understood him. He flew towards the growing line of trees that were the outskirts of the Raddleb woods, thinking to find himself a home there and possibly some friends to help him ease his lonely heart. Little knowing that dragons of all kinds were both feared and hated by most mortals on Mystara, as most were ignorant of the differences between one kind and another, although most who had ever had any dealings with dragon kin were of the general consensus that reds were by far the worst breed. So on he flew ever nearer to lands frequented by the mortal races.

He decided to land in the woods central most clearing so as not to be seen by anyone to soon. There he began

THE DRAGON'S CHILDHOOD (cont'd)

to build a lair for himself, working mainly by instinct he found a small cavern suitable enough for his needs in a wooded hill nearby. This he concealed by dragging various bushes and boulders around the mouth of the cavern.

While the dragon was out hunting for his supper one bright spring morning, he heard voices through the trees, they sounded very angry. He decided to listen to see what was afoot. The voices were those of large Elven hunting party from the nearby town of Rifflian, they were arguing about what should be done about the dragon in the woods. Some there wanted to hunt him out and destroy him, others wanted to wait until the dragon showed signs of being a danger to their community. The young red was surprised that the younger elves were so vehement in their belief that the dragon was already a danger to their community due to the very fact that he was in the area. As he sat and listened a deep booming voice echoed through the clearing in which the elves were holding their discussion.

"You should listen to the younglings, for as soon as I have destroyed you I shall destroy your whole community as well."

With a loud whoosh the clearing suddenly filled with a noxious green gas which felled most of the younger elves, the older ones retaliated with lightning bolts, but the huge green managed to dodge them easily enough, he then swooped in to finish off the few surviving elves in close quarters. The young red watched in horror as the green made short work of the elves. One of the elves though badly wounded managed to crawl into the bushes, unnoticed by the green. When the green had finished in the clearing he took to the air and flew to the north-east. The young red moved to where the injured elf lay. The Elf sensing the presence of something managed to look up, he gasped then said in a broken and defeated voice.

"Go on beast kill me and go join your comrade in the destruction of my village and my people, there is nothing I can do to stop you, and you have nothing to gain by gloating over the body of a near dead elf."

"But I mean you no harm " replied the red. "In fact I would like to help you if i could, I am shamed by the actions of my cousin just now."

"Is that so," said the elf sarcastically, "then rush off and rescue my people from him.", he said, not daring to believe this beast of the most brutal and savage variety of dragon. With a gasp and a shudder he died.

The poor red was so over come by what he had witnessed that he resolved to do his best to aid the Elven village, so off he flew in pursuit of the huge green. He saw that the green had already begun his attack on the Elven community and several elves lay dead, but he seemed to be taking his time and toying with them. This enraged the young dragon who swiftly gained height and then dove on the green grip his throat in his jaws, and bearing him to the ground. The green was badly injured by the crash, but the red was cushioned from the brunt of the blow by the greens

body. The red quickly recovered and raked his claws along the body of the dazed green, then he quickly took to the air again, and before the green could recover he breathed his fiery breath in his face. The green recoiled in agony and howled out his pain for all to hear, but recovering quickly he turned and breathed his gaseous breath in a billowing cloud at the red, who just managed to dodge barely out of the way. This gave the green time enough to get back into the air, whereupon he prepared to make his next attack.

This was not to be though, for the defenders of Rifflian had mustered and were now counter attacking, this gave the red the opportunity to breath on the green again, a lightning bolt from below finished him off. The red thought that this would finish the problem of the attack on the elves but the elves were of the opinion that the two dragons were the cause of their problems and decided to rid them of the remaining threat. The little red was shocked to see that he was now the target of the elves anger and attacks, he flew as high as he could to escape their spells and headed back into the woods. The young red was now feeling a bit confused after all hadn't he done his best to save the Elven community from harm at the hands of one of his own kind and they thanked him by attacking him as soon as the danger was over. The young dragon decided he would have to be more careful in the future. He went to the clearing that night and recovered the bodies of the dead elves. Under cover of the night he flew to the edge of the woods near the town and landed, he knew elves could see in the dark so he approached the village very carefully and placed the bodies on the ground then took flight again, fully aware that he had been watched the whole time. He flew back to his clearing by a circuitous route to ensure he wasn't followed.

When entering the clearing he noticed various items lying around on the ground, which must have belonged to the dead elves, which he decided to keep, as he didn't fancy another trip to the Elven village, at least not just yet anyway. The most fascinating item there was a spell book dropped by one of the spell casters. This he decided to cuddle up with and study for a while.

A few weeks later while he was practising some of the spells he noticed a large shadow and looked up in time to see a large green female flying down into his clearing. She landed across the clearing from him and looked him over warily, then she asked in a sibilant voice.

"Can you help me, I am looking for my mate he went out to hunt food for our brood about two weeks ago and never returned."

" I am afraid he will not return, as he was killed in battle with another dragon", said the red.

" Who was this other dragon? " she asked suspiciously.

The red answered quite simply, "Me."

With that the large green broke into a fit of laughter, "you a young stripling of a red killed Murmaseph the great green terror of the Raddleb woods. That's a good one, and why pray tell did you do that oh mighty red." she asked sarcastically.

THE DRAGON'S CHILDHOOD (cont'd)

"He was attacking an Elven village with no just cause or provocation." "What. Without provocation or just cause? What sort of a pansy red are you, never mind prepare to die at the hands of the mighty Verthandir."

With that she leapt at him, but the red had been expecting this, after all you don't grow up with a family of red dragons who hate your guts and live to tell the tale, without learning to anticipate their attacks, so he leapt clear and burnt her with his fiery breath, and then raked her with his claws. The green was sent reeling as she had expected to catch him off his guard and wasn't quite prepared for the ferocity of his defence, she knew now she had grossly underestimated her young opponent, so she took to the air to give herself more room to manoeuvre, the red sent a trio of glowing missiles soaring into the air after her, which she tried to dodge in vain as she knew these magic missiles never missed, the sight of such a young red being adept at the magical arts unnerved her, as she had never been able for it herself, she reeled slightly from the impact of the small glowing darts.

The young red used her momentary hesitation to good effect, he launched himself at her throat and raked her with his claws, tearing great gouges in her relatively soft underside, the green roared in agony at this attack and lashed out with a series of vicious claw attacks of her own gravely wounding the young red in the process, he broke off and gave her another blast of his breath, but his injuries had robbed him of the strength to make it count, so he used it to cover his climb into a large cloud bank. The green raced after him only to be struck by another trio of glowing magical darts straight in the face, one of them destroying her left eye. She reared back in agony exposing her throat to another vicious attack from the red's teeth, and her underbelly to his razor sharp claws, which slid into her as far as they could before tearing out great lumps of flesh, as the now mortally wounded green fell from the sky she gasped out for the red not to kill her offspring. "I never intended to.", was his soft reply.

The green's lair was on the far western edge of the Raddleb woods, it took the red four days to discover it, and when he did he found four young greens just past the suckling stage inside, it was just as well that they were able for solid food as he wasn't equipped to care for them otherwise, so he gathered some food and began to raise the four baby greens.

After several months the young greens were old enough to take on the hunt and begin their training in the basic Draconic skills of flight and survival. By this time the young red had also advanced a small bit in his magical studies and was beginning to think of the immortal powers. It was at about this time that a wandering cleric of a little known cult devoted to the star dragon came in search of the red. This was just as well as the eldest male green had been badly injured while out hunting; the cleric approached the lair very cautiously so as not to startle the red he then called out his identity and purpose in the Draconic

tongue. The red asked him for a sign of his intentions so the cleric healed the young green. Thus was the red introduced to the clerical arts and began to practice these along with his mage craft, this was the time when his goddess decided to reveal the truth of his mission.

One night as he lay sleeping on the customary treasure pile he had a vision of a beautiful gold dragon with shining scales the colour of the morning sun gliding gracefully down on almost gossamer wings to land softly beside him. He instinctively knew who this was and prostrated himself before this heavenly being, or at least as near to prostration as one can get with a dragon's bulk.

"Rise young Pyros, for that is indeed your name. You who have in past lives served me so well. Rise I say."

Pyros rose slowly to his feet and was instantly filled with love for this awesome being who stood beside him. He watched as one fore claw reached toward his head to take it in a careful grip.

"I will now return your memories to you so as you can continue with your mission, although you will still be fettered by the body of one so young. For if this mission succeeds you will be able to live another full and glorious life, dear Pyros."

Pyros flinched as he felt the unfathomable power of the immortals flow through his head and could feel the barriers on his memory being gently stripped away. He watched himself as a young impetuous gold trying to take on a much older red dragon and having to flee for his life, he saw himself gliding over the Adakian sound with his mate as they danced their way through the mating rituals, then witnessed the rise and fall of various dominions of the shorter lived races, both dark kingdom of high power living of the suffering of others, to lowly baronies of truly enlightened civilisations. All this swam through his head in one mind bendingly dizzying rush of memories both dear and unwanted, until he witnessed his death, whilst himself questing for immortality, at the hands of servants of Thanatos. This scene was followed by his brief existence as a dragon spirit in the halls of the star dragon. This he remembered with a sense of regret that it had ended and then he remembered the singular honour that had been offered to him in the form of this mission. When the images ceased to fly through his head and his vision had cleared he looked at the star dragon with a renewed sense of being and an increased sense of purpose. He also felt his mind all but humming with past experiences.

"Remember Pyros, you are my most beloved follower, if you need me I will come to you, just call." with that the vision faded and Pyros awoke in the cavern to discover that the greens had dreamt of the star dragon too. This was the true beginning of his mission and the prize was a second chance at life, which could lead to a second chance to quest for immortality and maybe even a seat at the star dragons right hand in the court of the dragons. With this heady wine to spur him on the time seemed to fly by, his studies of mage craft, and clerical magic had already increased ten fold due to his old memories, and had now advanced beyond what he had known in his past life,

THE DRAGON'S CHILDHOOD (cont'd)

he also remembered some spells long forgotten or lost by the shorter lived races.

The greens grew from strength to strength and soon he began to instruct them in spell craft also. The cleric stayed on and founded a church to the star dragon in the Radlebb woods; this attracted a small number of followers, and the attention of some powerful beings within the realm, and outside.

One of the most powerful beings attracted by the founding of this church was a Glantrian mage, no less a personage than prince Jagger Von Drachenfells himself, one of the star dragons staunchest allies among the mortals. His pa-

tronage and financial support helped the order to grow and the numbers of dragons converted grew as well. Pyros colour began to change as he grew older from the fiery red to the sheen of burnished gold, he quested and achieved immortality, and took his place at the right hand of the star dragon, and watched in glee as the ruler of all chaotic dragons went into paroxysms of rage to see her followers deserting en masse to the worship of star.

On one of the outer plains an immense form shifted in the throes of slumber, its huge bulk moving in response to its dreams, star began to awaken, and beamed a broad draconic smile at his most beloved servant, Pyros the dragon spirit.

"My dear Pyros, I've just had the most wonderful idea..."

By R.E.B. Tongue

Player's Introduction

For the last few years, the activities of the gangs of Brigands running through the Dark Forest have been growing to the point where nearly every caravan heading north comes under an attack of some kind. No traveller heading for the northern regions can hope to reach it alone, without protection, and even the King's Guard balks and entering the forest in small numbers. For protection, caravans of several wagons head up the trails through the Forest together these days, pooling their resources to get the best protection possible. They are often accompanied by individuals seeking safe transit north, who join the caravan to gain the protection of it's guards.

For various reasons, then, you have joined the last caravan heading North before winter, in the hopes of reaching the settlement of Nordheim before the storms set in. This journey has a reputation of being the hardest of the year, as not only are the Brigands attacking from their hidden camps, but the full force of Winter begins to attack as well, slowing down the journey and causing frostbite.

You set off from the last settlement in the civilised regions, Jartan, ten days ago and your caravan seems to have made little progress since. You entered the Dark Forest seven days ago, and the trail conditions have been growing worse and worse. Then disaster struck, last night, when a landslide buried two wagons and separated yours from the rest of the group. There is no way back, so you must go on, but alone you know in your hearts that the chances are slim.

DM's Information

The reasons for the characters joining the caravan are different depending on their character class. Fighters, Dwarves and Halflings have been hired by their Mercenar-

ies Guild for this mission, with a hundred gold awaiting them at journey's end. Any Thieves were hired as bodyguards as punishment for bungling a job - being sent into virtual exile in the Northern regions, with only forty gold awaiting them. Elves, Magic-users and Halflings are just along for protection. Clerics are guarding the artefact being shipped from the south. Obviously, the one wagon that escapes was carrying the PC's (although if there are more than four, this could be implausible - in that case half of them are survivors from the buried wagons, with some of their equipment lost. In addition, a Merchant named Rylax, owner of most of the cargo, and 3 Mercenaries, survivors from one of the buried wagons, are with the last wagon.

The cargo of the wagon is mostly cloth, with a chest containing fifteen emeralds (30gp each) for transport to the wife of the lord of Nordheim. In addition, and most importantly, a holy relic is on board in a sealed casket. It is an ancient diamond, inside a golden disk, that is supposed to symbolise the powers of the gods over man. The artefact has no special powers, but it is important as an ancient symbol of clerical power. (It is being transported to the temple of one of the clerics. If there is more than one cleric, pick one at random to be the guard of the artefact. The others are on a pilgrimage to a temple in Nordheim.) The merchant is the owner of all the other goods, and is being paid by the temple of the cleric to deliver the artefact, with the cleric present to ensure it's safe delivery. As well as the cargo of course, there are also ten days of rations for all - to be supplemented by hunting.

Chapter One

It is the eleventh day of the trip. The trail is getting worse and worse, and it seems less and less likely that they will make Nordheim before the winter sets in. During this day, one of the PC's finds an arrow in the road, seemingly of Goblin construction. The day wears out everybody, and the mercenaries all go to sleep. One of the PC's must be the guard. During the night, a strange noise comes from the undergrowth. If the guard goes to investigate, he finds a ten foot pit trap that could take him all night to climb out of. Any fragile objects (potions, holy water, etc.) are broken in the fall. Meanwhile, the others at the caravan are

rudely awoken by the sharp spears of a horde of Goblins!

In total, twelve Goblins have attacked the camp to begin with, and each get two free attacks on a target before anyone can fight back. The Mercenaries will be killed in this fight. Unless any PC said he was sleeping in his armour, then he is not wearing any, and there is no time to put it on (although shields can be snatched up if possessed. It will not be until the third round that any PC is able to attack the Goblins. The PC in the pit, if he is there, will be powerless to escape from the trap - it will take ten Dexterity checks to clamber out, each taking a round. If the Goblin's numbers are reduced by six, then another ten Goblins will come running out of the undergrowth. The PC's fight is hopeless, and there does not seem to be anything that can be done. Any Magic-User might have his spell, but that cannot kill twenty-two Goblins. Eventually, the PC's will just be outnumbered, and will be knocked out, one by one. At the last, the final PC to fall sees Rylax running into the bushes, being chased by five Goblins.

Chapter Two

Several hours later, the trapped PC has climbed out of the pit, and has returned to the camp. All the PC's are alive, but with only 1d4 Hit Points each. Any cleric or Magic-User making a successful Intelligence check, however, will find a dozen handfuls of Laumspur herb in the undergrowth, with restores 1d3 Hit Points per use. (It can be saved for a short time - four days - before losing it's potency.) There is not much left of the camp. The guard PC still has most of his equipment, obviously, but the other PC's are not so lucky. Their backpacks have been taken, with all of that equipment, any quarrels have been taken and long bows broken and thrown aside, and weapons have been taken too. Shields and most armour is gone, but any leather armour or any a PC's was wearing is still intact. Any worn items at all are still on the PC, as well. There is no gold left, and the cargo has been completely ransacked, with everything gone. Even the horses have been released into the forest. There is some equipment lying around the campsite, however:

- 12 handfuls of Laumspur herb (already mentioned)
- 1 suit of chainmail, human-sized
(from one of the dead Mercenaries)
- 3 goblin Hand Axes (1d6 Damage)
- 2 goblin Short Swords (1d6 Damage)
- 1 goblin Shield
- 5 days Standard Rations per person
- 1 leather pouch, containing 14 gp and a Ruby(25gp)
- Any number of improvised Clubs (1d4 Damage)
- 3 goblin Short Bows
- 14 Goblin Arrows (1d4+1 Damage)

At this point the player's goals will be different. The Cleric will demand that they try and find the artefact, for the glory of his religion, but most of the characters will probably either want to hunt down the goblins or escape to civilisation (which means going North - the roads South are closed for the Winter due to the landslide).

There are, of course, some problems with simply escaping. It is at least twenty days travel to Nordheim, most likely more given the weather. Even if they arrive,

with no cargo and no supplies they will be penniless when they get there, which will upset the Thief especially. It is even doubtful that, in the ill-equipped condition they are in, that they can survive for long anyway. They will have to find the goblins, and try to salvage as much equipment and cargo as possible. There is even one lead if they try to follow the goblins - a set of muddy track leading into the undergrowth.

Chapter Three

The muddy tracks seem to lead on and on through the undergrowth. For a day and a night the PC's will be tracking the goblins (at this point a character may wish to try and hunt to increase supplies - he will find d10 - 3 days of supplies *for one person* if he goes hunting for eight hours) By the third day since the accident, almost at dusk, the PC's hear the sounds of a camp up ahead. There is a possible vantage point in a tree from whence a PC could observe the camp. (Make a Dexterity check. If it is failed, then the PC will fall into the Goblin camp, suffering D3 points of damage.) The camp contains an amount of Goblins equal to the number of PC's, with an interesting prisoner - Rylax, tied and gagged, lying next to the fire. The goblins seem to be just playing dice, and can be easily surprised by the PC's (Surprise roll of 1 - 4). They should not find it difficult, this time, to subdue the goblins, and can add to their meagre stock of equipment the following list:

- A leather pouch containing 17 Gold
- 3 days Standard Rations
- A bundle of twelve torches
- 2 goblin Spears (1d6 Damage)
- Any Magic-User's spell book
- Any Clerical Holy Symbols

Of course, as well as these items Rylax is present. He will be eternally grateful to the PC's for rescuing him, and promises them fifty gold each once they reach Nordheim. He arms himself with a goblin Hand Axe, and offers a Healing Potion he has been hiding to any damaged PC. At this point he reveals a hitherto hidden talent - he can speak Goblin. The camp was taking him and some treasure back to their base, whilst the rest of the Goblins went off in search of the rest of the caravan (they could not figure out why one wagon would be on it's own, although they took advantage of this weakness.) Rylax says he knows where the base is, inside some caves only a few days away, and suspects that the rest of the cargo, including the holy artefact, is being stored their for trade in the spring. There could also, he reckons, be other treasures stored their from previous caravans that have been lost in similar circumstance, and is all ready to tray and find the cave system and wipe out the Goblins who almost kill him. (After this, Rylax can be used as a replacement for any PC who has fallen during the previous engagement, if one managed to be killed by a Goblin.)

Chapter Four

Having rescued Rylax from the Goblins and discovered the location of their cave hideout, the PC's can now set off to recover their lost possessions and equip them-

selves properly for the journey north to civilisation. At his point, the PC's will begin to feel the effects of the cold - Winter is beginning to take it's toll. To represent this, the PC's will lose 1 Constitution for every day's travel. In addition, wounds heal at only half the normal rate. It is, in fact, five days journey to the caves, a trip that will stretch the party's supplies to their limits. Along their way, they may hunt as before, but if more than half the party attempt to hunt each must make an Intelligence check to find the party again. If they fail, they are separated, and a day's delay will ensue whilst the PC is found by the rest of the group. For any day in which a person does not have a ration, deduct 2 Constitution points and 1 Hit Point. (All HP and Constitution damage is healed after three days resting in warm conditions.)

After what will seem like an age, the party (or it's remnants) will finally reach the caverns, which seem fairly unimpressive. They are basically a hole cut into the side of a hill, with two stone pillars holding open the entrance. Inside the passages are shored up with wood. It might seem strange that the Goblins built such a settlement, but a few meters to one side of the hill the truth will become apparent - Dwarven graves, several decades old. The story written on one of them (in Dwarvish, obviously) describes how tribes of evil humanoids drove the Dwarves away over time. A returning expedition twenty years ago found three corpses frozen inside and buried them. Judging by the sun, it will be dark soon. The PC's might either rest outside, or try and enter the caves now. Rylax will try to dissuade them from entering the caves during the night, as there will be more goblins inside - if they go in the day then most of the goblin warriors will be out on patrol. (Rylax is correct - if the PC's ignore his advice double the numbers of all Goblins encountered with the cave system.) Hopefully, the PC's will decide to wait until the next day to enter, and will camp outside, away from the entrance. They will discover that Rylax was correct the next morning, when three raiding groups of six Goblins each leave the caves to find other wagons to rob. (Since they managed to steal so much booty from the PC's wagon, they are becoming over-confident.)

The PC's are now able to sneak quietly into the caves without being noticed, at least at first. Inside the cave system, all the tunnels are 10' wide unless otherwise noticed, and 6' high. The doors are all made of Oak, which will require a roll of 2 or less on a D8 to break down if locked (subject to any Strength modifiers). In the event the PC's are having too easy a time in the caves, then a returning patrol shows up and finds them at an appropriate moment. The groups details are : 6 Goblins, equipped with spears, hand axes or swords. One of them is a leader and has 6 Hit Points, and is equipped with a shield as well as his standard equipment, and has a +1 to his THAC0 roll. They each carry 1d6 Silver pieces and their weapons, as well as a day's rations (Their hunt has not gone well). One of them has been injured and only has one hit point - he will hold back and run to the nearest guard room for reinforcements if they seem necessary and available. This is purely optional and may be bypassed if the PC's are not faring well.

The Goblin Warrens

1 Guard Room

This room is 25' sq. ft. in size, and contains a table, around which are sitting four Goblins armed with hand axes or swords. They seem to be playing dice - on the table are twenty-three silver pieces and three dice, one of them loaded. In addition are four mugs of Goblin ale, a vicious brew unpalatable to human stomachs. The PC's get an increased chance to surprise these Goblins (1 - 2 on a D6) due to their position. One of the Goblins, the strongest, will attempt to escape and warn the other guard room, if it has not already been attacked. In this case, the guards in Room 2 will automatically take the initiative, as they are ready for the PC's. (Also increase their numbers by one.)

2 Guard Room

This room is 25' sq. ft. in size, and contains a table, around which are sitting four Goblins armed with hand axes or swords. They seem to be playing dice - on the table are twenty-three silver pieces and three dice, one of them loaded. In addition are four mugs of Goblin ale, a vicious brew unpalatable to human stomachs. The PC's get an increased chance to surprise these Goblins (1 - 2 on a D6) due to their position. One of the Goblins, the strongest, will attempt to escape and warn the other guard room, if it has not already been attacked. In this case, the guards in Room 1 will automatically take the initiative, as they are ready for the PC's. (Also increase their numbers by one.)

3 Sleeping Chambers

This room is 25' by 50' in size, and is dimly lit, only four torches illuminating it's bulk. Along the floor are several sleeping bunks, contains six sleeping Goblins in all. There is a 1 in 6 chance that each Goblin will awaken upon the entry of a PC', who will awaken one Goblin per turn until killed. Each Goblins has 14 silver pieces and a dagger, with which he fights.

4 Storeroom

This room is 25' sq. ft., and contains two cupboards and a weapon rack, as well as three Goblin guards, one armed with Short Bow, the others armed with Hand Axes. The cupboards contain the cargo from the PC's caravan, silks and cloths, as well as thirty days Standard Rations, and the weapon rack contains a Mace, two Normal Swords, an Axe and twenty Combat Arrows (1d6 Damage). The goblins will attempt to fight their way out of the room into the corridor where they will call for help from either Room 1 or 2. The door is locked, with the key available in Room 5.

5 Goblin Leader's Quarters

This room is 25' sq. ft., containing a chair, fireplace and cupboard. It is the room of the Goblin leader, who, unlike his henchmen, has two hit dice and a Thac0 of 17. Two guards, armed with short bow and hand axe, stand outside his quarters, both with maximum hit points. The Goblin leader possesses a *Hand Axe +1* which he will use against the PC's and a *Potion of Healing* which he will drink if he can. In his cupboard is the clerical artefact and a sack containing 150 Gold Pieces, and five rubies worth 50

Gold each. On a belt around the Goblin leader's waist is Brass Key which opens Room 4.

Chapter Six

The PC's have managed to kill many Goblins from the settlement, and should have recovered enough of the cargo to make their trip profitable, as well as Combat equipment (from the Storeroom) to safely return to civilisation. It is a twenty-five day journey to Nordheim. For each day, roll on the following table, then proceed as the description describes.

<u>2D6</u>	<u>Event</u>
2	Blizzard. No movement for D4 days.
3	Lost. Do <u>not</u> mark off a day.
4	Stumble across deer pack. Do <u>not</u> mark off a day but add 3 days' Standard Rations to each PC.
5 - 10	Mark off one day.
11	Find hidden trail. mark off two days.
12	Encounter. The PC's stumble across three Goblins lost in the woods. They may fight or talk, at the DM's discretion.

Once the PC's reach Nordheim, the tale of their adventure reaches far and wide. Rylax uses his connections in the Merchant's guild to get the PC's 30% off Equipment at the Guild store (see table) for the duration of their visit. In addition, he rewards the PC's with 50 Gold each, in addition to the sum they were promised before leaving home, as well as honorary membership of the Merchant's Guild. For safely retrieving the artefact from the Goblins, the Cleric is also rewarded with a small signet ring that is a *Ring of Protection +1 against Undead*, an old holy artefact.

Experience

For completing this adventure, each PC's should receive 500 EXP. If they completely wiped out the Goblins at the stronghold, an additional 250 EXP should be given as a story bonus. The cleric who was guarding the artefact should also gain an experience reward of 100 EXP, if he managed to return the artefact safely. If he did not, the consequences will be grave.

Advice for DM's

This adventure is suitable for beginning characters, to start a new campaign, but perhaps for experienced players, as the module is somewhat difficult. It requires a northern setting and a large forest, which will require some work to a campaign setting. It was originally written to move a group of PC's from a civilised region to a frontier area in the north, which would have more possibilities for adventure. The module could be adapted to other settings, but would need considerable work. No map for the forest is given because it has to be tailored to fit into an established campaign world. In Mystara, this scenario could possibly take place in Norwold, with the characters journeying in deep winter from the capital Alpha to a remote northern province - in which case encounters with NPC's such as Heldannic Knights could be added for flavour. Other encounters should be added in the forest, to match with the PC's experience - perhaps an isolated woodsman could help guide the PC's to civilisation, or a pack of Wild Dogs could emerge to attack the PC's. The PC's could then return to the forest later for other reasons - something valuable might have been left in one of the wrecked wagons, which must be retrieved - this could require a long search if it has been stolen, and fill many sessions of gaming!

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