

The Silven  
**Trumpeter**  
The Official Magazine of Silven Crossroads

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Wanganella ©  
Glenrowan ©  
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Of Police, near Mansfield  
VMJ-03

# From the Editor

## Sound off!

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

Write to Dana at :  
adriayna@yahoo.com

Welcome to the fourth edition of the Silven Trumpeter. This month marks a very important time at Silven Crossroads—the celebration of our one-year anniversary! Several special events are planned at various times throughout the month, including a birthday chat and prize giveaways.

While we are only on the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Silven Trumpeter, the online version of the zine itself has been around since the conception of the site. While the number of writers and topics has expanded significantly, the zine has always maintained the same standards of high quality and reaching out to a broad audience.

This month our feature comes from Shane Cubis, our resident Australian loremaster. Along with our regular regiment of your favorite authors, we are premiering three new columns: Player Characterization, Faith Based Initiative, and Through The Lens of History.

As always, feel free to contact me with your rants, comments, or suggestions.

Best Regards,

Dana Driscoll

*Dana Driscoll*

Editor In Chief  
Silven Crossroads E-zine



# Top Industry News

## Exit Blizzard, Enter Flagship Studios

Flagship Studios, the new software development firm formed by a group of key figures who recently left Blizzard Entertainment, has launched their official website and revealed some details about the mission of the company. While their first game has not yet been announced, you can check out who they are and what they hope to accomplish as a new and innovative force in the interactive entertainment industry.

<http://www.silven.com/pcmac.asp?case=show&id=166>

## Wizards of the Coast sues Nintendo

WoTC is suing Nintendo over patent infringement. ICV2 has the scoop.

<http://www.icv2.com/articles/news/3675.html>

## Humanhead Games has Released a Free Adventure

Following in the wake of their successful Redhurst Academy d20 accessory, Humanhead Games have now released a free adventure to compliment the Redhurst Academy title. Download it here:

<http://www.humanhead.com/hhgames/RAM/ram.html#ramadv01>

## Wizards of the Coast Cancels Upcoming Miniatures Lines

"Wizards of the Coast today announced that it will not be releasing the two Dungeons & Dragons nonrandomized miniatures products: Orc War Party and Outlaw War Party. The decision was both a business-related one, as well as one based on player feedback. Both products were scheduled to release in February 2004. For more information on their other D&D miniatures products and the miniatures skirmish game, visit the Miniatures section of the Dungeons & Dragons website or the miniatures product information listings."

<http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/minis>

## EnWorld Saved by the Community

EnWorld, one of the premiere d20 portals on the Internet announced earlier this week that it may have to shut down due to major financial problems. In a phenomenal show of support, the site-wide community raised a massive \$16,000 USD, in just 24 hours, to pay of the site's debts.

Read all about it here:

<http://www.enworld.org>

## Paradigm Press Announces Two New Products for its Spacebuckler d20 Line

Twisted Paradigm Press announces three new titles for its 2004 product line in support of its upcoming d20 System role-playing game *Spacebuckler*, a unique space opera set in an alternate Age of Sail.

The three new titles are:

- *Spacebuckler: Blades and Broadsides*, a supplement for soldiers and sailors with new rules for swashbuckling swordplay and a wealth of setting information, to be released Spring 2004
- *Spacebuckler: The Great Work*, the definitive d20 System supplement for alchemy and alchemists with a grounding in the real-world Western Mystery Tradition, due out in early Summer 2004
- *Spacebuckler: Mysteries of Venus*, the first of many "planetbooks" featuring in-depth descriptions of the jungle planet and the surprisingly complex culture of its primitive reptilian denizens, due out in late Summer 2004

All three titles will be published in .PDF format and made available for sale on RPGnow.com.

Details are at the company website below:

<http://www.spacebuckler.com/pressrelease2.html>

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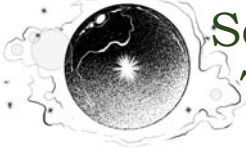
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## Gaming Tips by Scott Fitz



### See it my way : Mirror Characters as a Tool for Quick, Quality NPCs

If you are a GM, no matter what genre or game you play, you will frequently find yourself in need of quality allies and enemies for your campaign and simultaneously find yourself pressed for time. Just any old NPC will often not do. You want someone with a full conception and a good personal history. The problem of creating quality NPCs is a problem every GM can appreciate.

This problem takes on a whole new level for the GMs of certain genres or games. Take super-hero GMs for example. The additional mechanics required make "throwing together" an NPC at the last moment much, much, more difficult. There is an entire layer of mechanics beyond the conventional stats/skill/archetype-class bit. The difficulty of creating a good NPC is one of the reasons why GM's constantly recycle the same old staid villains. Games with complicated background and mechanic systems make creating characters a time consuming process.

Yet, there is a solution. And you don't have to call in the next five minutes in response to an infomercial.

While I was running a super-hero campaign, the solution presented itself in the comic book source material: Mirror characters. For example, the *Squadron Supreme* and the *Imperial Guard* are skewed copies of the *Justice League* and *Legion of Superheroes* (of their time). Even though the characters were new, we the fans knew what to expect from them because of the characters they were based upon. It was both fan homage and a great writing tool that allowed great characterization on brand new characters.

And you are asking yourself... "SO!?! What is he rambling about and how is this applicable to gaming?"

You can mirror characters and use them in your game. Choose a character you know well. These characters can come from any source: books, television, movies, comics, or videogames. Historical figures will work as well. Use the character as the inspiration for filling in the blanks of the character history, conception, and personal information. The character you find is also used as a template for the type of skills and special abilities the created character should have. The new character is reflection of the original.

A direct or true reflection is simply copying the character directly into your game. The problem with true reflections, besides being lame most of the time, is that the other players may argue with you about what the "true" stats/skills/level/class/etc and history of each character are that you copied. If your players are fans, you will have the old adage, "Get three fans together and you will have four opinions." Perfect reflections of characters cause problems, where NPCs only based on a character allow you most of the advantages and none of the drawbacks.

Taking the analogy a bit further, there are many kinds of mirrors, most of them the fun-house kind. There are three main variations, Distorted, Dark/Tinted, and Combined.

Distorted characters are characters based on existing character. You change one or two things, and you have a brand new character. For example: *The Night*: An acrobat with a radar sense, who is a blind judge by day and a vigilante for justice at night, is basically *DareDevil*. *Quantum*, Blond Mega-Hero from another planet, fighting for truth justice and peace is basically *Superman* (or the *Martian Manhunter*) with a different costume and different weakness. *Chance*, a beautiful, red-headed mutant probability shifter with an evil villain for a father (*Speedster*) and brother (*Sonics*) is the *Scarlet Witch* with the serial numbers filed off and stuffed in a new costume. *Captain Dorshan*, an experienced, bald, submarine captain, with a Shakespearian actor's English accent, is obviously *Captain Picard* of *STNG* fame.

Try the "mirror character" technique and see how this makes things much easier. You know the characters, their skills, powers, abilities, and their stories. Someone else has done all the hard work for you, creating and developing the character. You can adapt every aspect you need for your game and ignore the rest of the character's continuity. If any questions come up, you can think about the character's original continuity and make a decision based on it. These adaptations allow you to ignore the problems you will have if you copy the characters directly.

Dark or tinted mirror characters are just that, they are darker reflections—usually turning heroes into villains and vice-versa. The hero's conception becomes twisted so he becomes a villain. Here are some examples: *Blaster*, a political activist and master of tactics with an optical blast is *Cyclops*. Hint: you can adapt the entire x-team if you need villains. *The Black Widow*, a female acrobat with the proportional strength of a spider who does what ever she wants without responsibility for her actions, is a female *Spiderman*. *Agent Unknown*, a female super-spy whose Modus Operandi has to do with wigs and disguises, is Jennifer Gardner's character on *Alias* with a different allegiance. And this technique does work in reverse. *The Punster*, whose sanity snaps after being dunked in chemicals to be permanently turned into a clown and fights crime with gadgets and a punch line, is a heroic version of the *Joker*. His Nemesis is obviously *The Bat*, a psychotic killer who kills those who offend his sense of justice. Dark mirror characters work well when you need a villain team in a pinch.

Combined characters are much like the amalgam characters, taking two heroes or villains and combining elements from both of them, thus creating a mix. The elements can be a combination from their personality, history, skills, or abilities. Imagine the changes in their world. Imagine *Clark* (of *Superman* fame) being found by the *Wayne* family, and not yet having his powers when his parents were shot down. Take your favorite detective character and place them in the body of a golem or other animate. That character might be the first non-human detective or might become the leader of an animate revolt. Imagine a *Flash*-like character that shoots arrows like *Green Arrow*. Imagine the bad guys from *Die Hard* as the goblin minions in your campaign. You see where this can be handy, but possibly more time consuming as there are more decisions to be made.

Groups are just as applicable to mirror. I was hard pressed for a heroic pirate and crew in a fantasy game, so I pulled the *Star Trek Original* crew and came up with *Captain Tiberius*, a handsome, womanizing adventurer; *Vullan*, a logical half-elven mage and first officer; *Helmsman Su*, a Samurai-esk adventurer; *SKA-Ti*, a highlander half-orc as master of the sails; and *The Bones*, the creepy old medic. With one or two quick decisions, I had a full crew, with a deep history, in a fraction of the time it would of taken for me to do it from scratch.

Television or movies are another great source for finding single or group mirror characters. Imagine the characters like the ones from the TV show *CSI*, developing or being given powersuits and became superheroes or being the crew of an exploratory vessel ("Captain Grisham to the bridge"). Take the characters from *The Sopranos* and see them as the "thieves guild" for your fantasy city or their developing powers after being exposed to toxic waste. Bidda boom.. bidda bing... super Mafiosos. Your favorite movie bad guys become the powerful nobles and henchmen your players are interacting with. Using the mirror technique, you allow someone to do most of the work; you just need to adapt that character to your needs.

Fictional characters are not required. You can mirror the characters in your own campaign. If you want to truly challenge the players, make copies of their character sheets and throw them against themselves (with the serial numbers and appearances changed). Using previous copies of the characters, you can create generic bad minion, or a younger and less experienced hero in training who looks up to the original character as a role model. This situation can be flattering, but can lead to awkward situations, especially if you change the gender. In my *Nippon* game, our superior warrior, a ronin, was constantly challenged to do better and work harder by an ex-ronin sohi (temple guard) who was the same character, but of a higher level.

Mirror characters are a great tool for the busy GM. They allow characters with depth and history to be created almost instantly. These grand characters become a good reflection upon you, as your players appreciate the new NPCs. And if they find out your secret, they will have fun trying to figure out who was the source character while playing with the "hauntingly familiar" characters. All in all, mirror characters are excellent resource.

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**Author's note:**

It is recommended that readers familiarize themselves with other articles featuring Earl Munster by checking out our archives below:

<http://www.silven.com/articles.asp?case=show&id=11>

<http://www.silven.com/articles.asp?case=show&id=16>

## Earl Munster on the Glorious Nature of Curses

By Kosala Ubayasekara

It was going to be another long night of campaign planning. Armed with the traditional bag of chips and a pot of coffee, I was seated in front of my computer, viewing the latest modifications of my campaign map. I had been flooded with ideas all day and my fingers were itching to put it down on paper before I forgot. The fingers moved rapidly across the keyboard...but wait. What was this? Everything on the screen was funny. The words were being written backwards! I tried typing in a few more sentences. There was no doubt about it. It was as if the screen knew what I was going to type in advance and was printing it backwards.

I got up with a start, consummately annoyed at this interruption to my creative flux. I gave it another try for several more minutes, attempting every possible variation, before giving up with a flurry of gesticulations and banging my head off of the keyboard. Suddenly, I heard a quiet chuckle behind me and whirled just in time to see a shimmering in the air in my room, heralding the occasional arrival of my otherworldly visitor. The short, stout figure that materialised was wearing a familiar blue cloak, but the face was different. Great, wild strands of hair shot of his head at every angle and a white moustache covered the upper lip.

"Gveetings my young earthly fvend!" said the figure.

The voice was unmistakably that of Earl Munster, renowned mage and robed crusader. The face and accent however were different...though strangely familiar.

"It is I," he continued, "Earl Munster. I am merely tvying to emulate that vonderous human specimen Halibut Einstein. Ze only human vit enuf intelligence to hav become a magus!"

It all suddenly fell in place. The hair, the moustache...I slapped myself on the forehead. Rushing over to give the little mage a hug I whispered, "Its Albert. Albert Einstein."

"Vatever," came the inevitable reply. "I have come to further enlighten you modern age Dungeon Masters on a very handy tekniqve that is not being utilised to its full potential."

Seeing my blank look, he continued, "Ze curse my boy, ze curse. You DMs curse far too little!"

Clapping his hands, the great Earl Munster prepared for yet another of his renowned lessons. The room shimmered and darkness enveloped me, but I could still hear his voice, "Let me give you a demonstration of vat I mean."

The new surroundings were that of a typical, rush-hour common room. The last rays of a fast sinking sun danced on metal goblets and serving wenches whirled around crowded tables and singing patrons. They seemed not to notice Earl Munster and myself as we levitated slightly below the rafters.



"Take note, my boy, zat many a DM thinks of curses only in the terms of cursed weapons and items. But vat is a curse actually? It is a hindrance to one's preferred activity. Ze inability to achieve a particular goal or realise ze conclusion to an endeavour, eventually driving ze cursed individual to a point of fvustration and apathy. Therefore a cursed item zat merely inhibits your quality of combat is not zat effective in ze way of cursing ze individual."

I wasn't actually quite with it, but I nodded politely anyway. The Albert Einstein of medieval fantasy continued, "So, vat is vastly more effective is to give ze recipient of a curse ze inability to accomplish his or her most pressing task. For example, see ze barbarian standing over zhere." He was pointing at a largish brute of a man. "Zat man has just zis evening stolen from a blind beggar, who has silently cursed him. Little is the barbarian aware zat he is already paying his penance for his crime."

As we watched, the barbarian took a loving look at the mug of dwarven ale in front of him, and swallowed heartily. Astonishingly enough, it went into his mouth, poured out the back of his neck, and right onto the floor! The astounded barbarian whirled around to stare at the pool of ale on the floor in amazement. The other patrons seemed not to notice. The barbarian ordered another round and drank deeply. Once again the liquid went into his mouth but poured right out again from the back of his neck.

"You see my boy, as a DM you could have punished ze barbarian's act of thievery by giving him a cursed weapon and inhibiting his combat skills for a time. However he would have found a way around it. But zis curse enables him to taste his favourite drink in his mouth, but never to feel ze liquid in his belly, thereby denying him his most favoured satisfaction. Ultimately it will drive him to madness or to a life of drinking milk. Both will be equally distressing to ze warrior"

"Creativity is of ze essence in finding ze right curse for a given individual. One zat proved tragic to one man may be dealt with easily by another. So show some imagination as a DM when cursing your players."

Clapping his hands, the little mage brought us back swiftly to my attic. "Now my boy, I must be off. I apologise for the shortness of zis visit but I have zis pressing engagement earlier in your timeline with zis fool Englishman who vishes to exchange his kingdom for a horze." And that being said he faded away, still talking to himself on how much help we humans needed.

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## Will, the Word and the Way

by Edward J Kopp

Awareness of the phenomenal world is stretched thin and is reluctant to come back to me. My heart and respiration rate are so slow I appear perfectly motionless, my body folded into contortions that take years of training to perfect. In this position, I am able to immerse myself in the Word and the Way, which allows me to reach the noumena of the Holy Ancestors. As my sense of I returns the sounds of the jungle fill my ears. The screams of predator and prey ring loud, a jungle cat takes one of the members of the troop of monkeys living in the trees. I can smell the blood on the heavy, humid air. I blink once, twice, and the last golden rays of a fiery orange sunset reflect off of the clear ocean surface. My breathing and heartbeat are back to normal and the python I find coiled in my lap, soaking in the last of the sun's warmth, slides away, as what it thought was a warm stone becomes a living man. I've always wondered what it is about my meditative form that attracts all form of snake.

With slow deliberate movements I unfold my limbs. My body thrums with the energy I've been channeling from the noumenal universal consciousness that is the Holy Ancestors. The will of the Holy Ancestors is with my course of action; their approval made evident during today's fast and meditation. As one of the Learned I have been taught the Wisdom of the Holy Ancestors, unlike our brethren the Descended, who are born with Blood Knowledge and direct descent from the Holy Ancestors. I have spent years of tutelage learning the Word and the Way, which makes me the lesser half of our clerisy, one of the Learned. The Holy Ancestors revealed to me during my meditations today that no living member of the Descended is more capable in the practice of the Word and the Way than me. That can only mean our Honorable Father is dead.

The Honorable Father has been in the decadent nation of Avyan with a mission of emissaries to bring the Wisdom of the Holy Ancestors to the High Council of Avyan. I'm sure there were many secular reasons having to do with trade and politics for going to Avyan, but the Honorable Father is considered the direct conduit to the Holy Ancestors for the people of our island nation of Redin. His actions must always uphold the Word and the Way. Today that conduit became me. The will of the Holy Ancestors filled the noumena and it was revealed that my destiny is to lead our people. To do that I'll have to break centuries of tradition that states the Honorable Father is only raised from among the Descended. In breaking that tradition I may well break the people of Redin.

The recently departed Honorable Father had exiled me and my brother Learned to an ancient monastery on a remote side of the main island, exiled because of the stirrings of militancy in our rhetoric. It takes news two weeks to travel by our nations finest ship, one week less than any other sailing vessel. Yet it only takes the Avyan flying vessel hours if they should lend one to bring the body and news back to Redin. Relations between our two nations have been prickly at best for decades so I'm counting on the two-week advantage of information to gather my brothers, throw out the Descended from power and step into the position of Honorable Father to lead our people to a greater destiny. We have been training for such an opportunity for generations. The Learned have discovered new ways to use the Word and the Way to give us a powerful advantage, the ability to channel vast amounts of the energy that is the noumena of the Holy Ancestors increasing our vitality, our strength and our prowess. And those few of us who are nearly as powerful as I have become Warriors of the Word and the Way, channeling the universal will of the Holy Ancestors.

As I prepare to leave my meditation clearing I feel something old and powerful nearby. I have felt this a number of times before since arriving at the monastery three years ago. I had hoped not to leave the mystery unanswered before seizing control of the Temple of Unity and the congregation of worshipful Redin. This will be my last chance; for once I am Honorable Father I will have to focus on worship, not fanciful feelings of antiquity. I concentrate and slow my breathing to the pulse of the night, feeling out into the dark with near tangible will of the universal noumena. I snake a tendril out, weaving it in between the trees at the edge of the clearing, casting about carefully for the power and great age I sensed. As I am getting closer a large form moves out of the dark forest, lumbering on long limb it emerges out of the deeper darkness of the tree line.

"Do not waste your time or effort looking for me, you know I am here because I will it to be so," it says in a deep bestial basso.

Before me stands one of the reclusive Ornus, a species of Ursava, the ancient bear brothers of the Dwarves. They inhabit the deep inner jungles of our islands, far from the habitable coasts. This one must be old indeed as grey hairs cover its snout and pepper the black mask that marks all Ornus. They are masters of cunning and charm and find themselves at home in the shadows as well as the deep jungle. What brings this elder representative to abandon the dark to speak with me is a mystery.

"I do not find it a waste of my time to find myself in the company of one as ancient and wise as yourself, Grandfather."

The Ornus is six feet at the shoulder when walking on all fours and stands upright to his full fourteen feet, then sits down on his haunches. Folding his hand over what becomes a large round stomach, he looks at me with serene intelligence and wisdom. The aura of great age and power emanate from him.

"You are still filled with the energy you channel from your Holy Ancestors. Your senses are heightened so now is the time to tell you the truth about the death of your Honorable Father. You will know I am not deceiving you," he rumbles like a distant storm.

"How do you know the Honorable Father is dead? There has been no such news to the people of Redin. We would be in mourning," I say. I'm surprised that this Ornus knows what the Holy Ancestors have just revealed to me.

"Your Holy Ancestors aren't the only ones who can divine the truth about things that are far away. And you are not the only one who knows he has died. It was by ritual suicide, after being disgraced before the Avyan High Council by his elder daughter and the murder of his precious younger. But even then he was reacting to the strings being pulled by a puppet master. Just as you are about to."

"I am about to act out the will of the Holy Ancestors, not reacting to the jerk of some string. I will be the next Honorable Father."

"And lead your people into a bloody civil war. Do you hunger for power so much you will shed the blood of your people?"

His comment is meant to dissuade me from the path that the Holy Ancestors have brought me to. If I had not experienced the direct knowledge of the Holy Ancestors will meditating this very day, I might have been persuaded to alter my course. But I am alive with energy of their divine will and know that the fire that burns in my heart and soul cannot be false.

"My path is clear," I say. "It is the will of the Holy Ancestors that I become the Honorable Father and I cannot ignore the will of my gods."

The ancient Ornus stares at me, reading deeply into my soul. I feel a struggle between our wills taking place on a plane I travel through to visit the Holy Ancestors on the way to the noumena. For a moment his words sound wise and I begin to trust his elder knowledge but I quickly feel the force of the Holy Ancestors flow through me bringing me to my senses.

"What witchery do you try, Grandfather. Are your words not so truthful to be accepted on their own merit? Do you need to persuade me with means other than truth and logic?"

"You do not understand what draconic labyrinth of subterfuge and lies awaits you. I had hoped it wouldn't come to forcing your will, but you force my need. I cannot cut the strings that pull you to this bloody destination, but I can change how you walk the path."

The ursine elder stands to his full height, dwarfing my long and lean form. I feel true fear strike me as the immensity of his power emanates in powerful waves of antiquity. Waving his hands in complicated patterns he creates a vortex of power that swirls like a vermilion cyclone in front of him. Suddenly from some deep powerful realm a burst of energy expands out in a rush, enveloping me briefly in ruby red clouds, which leave me powerless to react. I felt the strength of the elder seep into every orifice filling me with an unnatural urge to do something...I fight it, but he's so powerful...

"No! Stop what you're doing... I must save my people; I must do the will of the Holy Ancestors! What are you doing to me?"

"I would never interfere with the will of your Holy Ancestors for it was they who allowed my ancestors to live here in secret many thousands of years ago. I have only changed the method by which you can achieve that will. I have made it impossible for you or anything you say or do to lead to the bloodshed of your people. Violence is never the best way."

I stand in shocked disbelief. "What do you mean? The Descended will defy me and the will of the Holy Ancestors because it breaks with tradition that has kept them in power and the Learned subjugated, even though we are as Touched by the Holy Ancestors as any of them. They will not hesitate to shed our blood to keep control and raise the next Honorable Father."

"This I do not doubt. That is why it will be a great and worthy struggle to use peaceful means of passive resistance to overcome their oppression. To stain your hands with the blood of your own people is in opposition to everything your Holy Ancestors intended for the Redin. Blood begets blood. Your rule will be tainted with

blood and bloodshed will continue after you have taken the position of Honorable Father.”

“Many will follow you willingly. There is no denying the Learned have been wronged for many generations and you know that you already have a great deal of support among the lay folk. But what of the Merchant Cooperative? Will they willingly support your claims?”

“No,” I say. “The soulless Merchants Cooperative is a front for the decadent and gold loving Avyan. They do not understand matters of the clerisy and salvation. They support the Descended to maintain the status quo.”

I can feel the ancient ones Geas upon me like a second skin, only tight, constricting and ill fitting. I know that without my choosing I cannot use, promote nor condone violence in my bid for Honorable Father. How will I ever bring my people into accordance with the will of the Holy Ancestors if we cannot even raise our hands in defense? And yet how can I deny the will of the Holy Ancestors when it has been made so clear to me that it is I who must lead us through these dangerous times.

“You have doomed my people Grandfather. I cannot see how we can protect ourselves, force the Descended to allow me to become Honorable Father and save our island nation from what ever calamity the Holy Ancestors are warning me about,” I say.

“You are still trying to fight. Conflict will not bring you to the seat of Honorable Father. Your enemies must come to love you for your courage. Your strength will be there for all to see as you stay your hand, do not gather the power given you by your Holy Ancestors, do not strike out in anger. Caress in loving-kindness. Cure the afflicted and praise the Holy Ancestors for their wisdom. If what you have learned is true you cannot help but win out. Love is always greater than Hate or Fear. You will rule with love from love freely given. Then you will lead your people into a time of peace and prosperity.”

“This cannot be happening. I have become the head of the most powerful militant sect of Learned. We are prepared and able to remove the Descended from positions of authority, by force if need be, and you have destroyed all. I feel myself sicken inside just thinking about all the plans we have already made. Now I must put a stop to them before it literally kills me. How is this just? My free will has been taken from me and why? What care is it of the Ornus how the humans rule themselves? I thought you wanted us extinct, or at least culled to a manageable number.”

“Your understanding of me and my brethren is partial and fragmented at best. Yes, there are cousins of mine among the Ursava who will happily devour this island filled of you humans. But the Arctos live far to the north and sleep for long months at a time, sometimes years or decades. We Ornus are more interested in how you interact with each other and with the Avyan in particular. They are not what they seem and draconic minds more convoluted than yours or mine rule in that land of metals.”

From deep in the shadows a dark featureless form emerges carrying a wooden chest bound with brass. This shadow form places the chest before the ancient Ornus and withdraws into the stygian blackness under the trees. Opening the chest with exquisite care the Ornus motions me forward to view the contents. Inside is white bread in a peaked loaf as if pinched up into a point. I gasp as I recognize those funny shapes for Sha-man-na, food of the Gods.

Reaching in and grasping a loaf of Sha-ma-na the Ornus breaks it in two. “I break this bread with you to journey inside the mind of the universe and discover the truths hidden there. Will you join me?”

Stunned at what is being offered me, I’m almost without the capacity to speak. Some how I mumble out the words, “The honor is mine to share in knowing the universe with you ,old one. Are you here to guide me, Grandfather?”

“We all journey our own path. I am just here to see you off on all the paths not taken. I will show you the paths as we leave this place for many others but you will be on your own choosing from the vast multiverse the path to universal peace.”

Amazingly the Ornus then began to fold himself into permutations of positions of enlightenment I had never seen before. Slowly I folded myself into the same form. The Ornus then handed me my half of the Sha-ma-na, which I placed on my crossed lap. Opening myself to the will of the Holy Ancestors I could feel the shiver of energy slide into me telling me the Holy Ancestors are guiding my actions. I eat of the Sha-ma-na. It is tasteless, without substance, yet slides down my throat like a liquid to fire through my stomach into my blood, which thrums with power. I eat the rest in a single swallow. The Holy Ancestors burst through my brain and the brilliance of their perfection blinds me with terror. All senses become one as the fear tastes like things sound and the feel of the universe smells like knowledge. It is overwhelming and just as I think I can take no more I rise to a higher level of truth and universal understanding.

I feel the fear pass, leaving love. The all-pervasive love of the universe for itself is left. I feel that love growing inside me, filling me with understanding. It is not a love of just the Holy Ancestors, though they are part of that love. It’s love of the universe because it is a UNI-verse. A single entity composed of the parts that I

call reality and many more parts that I don't have names for. The place I travel through to reach the Holy Ancestors is part, the people of Redin are part, Kumari Kundun and Hanuman the Monkey King are part, but there is something wrong with the Avyan. They are not entirely of this universe. There is a dark, winged presence looming over them. It isn't evil. It just doesn't belong in this universe.

I pass over that for now, overwhelmed by the universe and how it is everything. It is part of me as I am made of it. And the same phenomenal existence that is made of me shares some of phenomenal existence with the old Grandfather sitting across from me in a pose that shows a high degree of understanding of the Ways and we are the same. I can feel that what is me is him. We are the same, universal. I understand my Geas and what it means.

As one, I let the Ornus know I understand and that understanding is universal. I see my path with a new strength of conviction and direction of purpose. The universal Truths have been revealed to me and it is my purpose to teach the Learned and the Descended and bring us together in love of the Holy Ancestors, the whole greater than it's parts.

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by Kou and Ali



## Silven Crossroads Interviews

### Fantasy Artist : **Todd Lockwood**

After much debate at Silven Crossroads on the thoughts behind the kinds of art that go into RPG books, we decided we should dig further. Todd Lockwood, one of the artists that worked on the D&D Core Rule books was generous enough to sit down with us and answer some questions.

**Q1: To get us started off, why don't you tell us a little about yourself and how you got into art as a career.**

I was born and grew up in Boulder, Colorado. I had the Rocky Mountains in my backyard, and I got to see the "summer of love" through the eyes of an eleven year old in a college town. I watched *Lost in Space* in the third grade, when G.I. Joe was new, and *Star Trek* after that. Needless to say, science fiction consumed my childhood. Later, in my teens, I discovered Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, and fantasy came to sit side by side with science fiction in my heart. As an adult, I became fascinated with mythology, particularly transformative mythology and the hidden meanings of myth. Joseph Campbell is a hero of mine for his thoughtful and thorough exploration of the world's myths.

My first artistic influence, like so many in my field, was Frank Frazetta. Later came Michael Whelan, though I had some ad-world influences, too, particularly after I started art school including David Wilcox, Peter Lloyd, Boris, and Jeff Jones. But I really wanted to be Michael Whelan. I studied at the Colorado Institute of Art, which is primarily a design school. The quarter after I graduated, they started conferring Associates Degrees for the coursework I had finished, so I claim to have an associates degree, though I technically don't. I got a good job in a hot design shop in Denver right out of school, and won a bunch of awards—even a silver medal in the *Art Directors Club of New York* annual show—but after a year and a half, I had had enough. I left to pursue illustration. I spent fifteen years doing ad work. Coors was one of my biggest clients; I have painted a lot of beer cans. I could do dew drops in my sleep. At one point I had some covers that I had done for *Satellite Orbit Magazine* in the *CA Annual*; for years after that I was the "satellite dish guy". I came to really hate satellite dishes. If I had ever had a painting with both a beer can and a satellite dish in it, my ad career would have been complete.

Throughout those years, I was an avid *Dungeons and Dragons* player. My friends and I were still active gamers when I left Colorado to work with TSR, though we were playing a game called *Earthdawn* by then. I

flipped when TSR started having really good art on their products. Jeff Easley's stuff particularly interested me: so moody and fluid, so deft. Then Brom came along and really blew my doors off. I started to get more and more frustrated with the work I was doing, stuck in the wrong market. I had agents in New York—very high-profile, reputable agents—who were simply not interested in marketing me to the book companies. Or, in doing their job. I was doing work I hated, for people without a clue.

Then Terry Czezko at *Asimov's* gave me a couple of magazine covers. That was the beginning. I felt revived; I was painting things that interested me! I told her that I wanted more of that kind of work, and she suggested that I hang a show at one of the sci-fi/fantasy conventions, preferably WorldCon. I said, "hang a show at a what?" I had never heard of sci-fi conventions. I was that naive. I had heard of GenCon, the premier gaming convention, but it was in Milwaukee. I wasn't so rabid a D&D player that I wanted to get that far for a game. I had no idea. But I took my *Asimov* covers and some personal work to the WorldCon in Winnipeg.

It was a revelation! I met other artists and saw so much amazing work. I wanted to hide my own paintings—or burn them. But then I met Michael Whelan, who responded very favorably to the black and white work I had done, particularly "Cerberus". I went home inspired, and determined to do more and better work. From Winnipeg I got some interior work for Carl Gnam, at *Realms of Fantasy* and *Science Fiction Age* magazines. With those two magazines and my *Asimov* and *Analog* covers, I was starting to build a portfolio of published work in the field I had always wanted to be a part of. I fired my agents in New York.

My first work in the gaming industry was some cards for *Chaosium*, and for Phil Foglio's naughty deck. Then a friend I made at a convention—a very good friend and a talented, wonderful guy—David Martin, who has been around the convention/gaming/sci-fi/fantasy block more than a few times suggested me to an art director at TSR. I had sent TSR portfolios in the past, but they didn't want to look at ad work, and weren't going to give covers to someone who couldn't show them what they wanted to see. But now I had the beginnings of a real portfolio. The art director, Stephen Daniele, gave me a bunch of character portraits for one of the *Spellfire* decks. Then he gave me some book covers for TSR. Then, when Fred Fields and Robh Ruppel both quit within a month of each other, a magical door opened. It was very much a matter of being the right person in the right place at the right time. I knew the games, had done some work for them that they were happy with, and they needed someone quickly. TSR had burned some bridges with some of their other prospects, but that worked for me. I was happy to jump.

**Q2: How does the process of becoming a professional artist work? How would a newbie artist go about making his hobby a profession? What advice would you give to artists aspiring for their big break?**

It's not something you can be casual about. If you are not passionate about pursuing a career in art, I can guarantee you that your competition will be. Study, draw, network, draw, paint, study, draw, visit museums, get schooling, draw, paint, and go to art shows. And draw.

I learned to draw by drawing from my head, observing everything around me. My guess is that you did too. At some point you realize that what's in your head isn't sharp enough. I do the gesture sketches to get the action and movement that I want, then shoot photos of models as close to that as I can get (without forcing them to do something unnatural) to provide details and nuance of light and shadow. There are artists who do everything out of their heads; Jeff Easley for one, but you can tell. He gets away with it because he has a real sense of action and a distinctive style. I don't think most artists should try. I do it from time to time when the characters aren't really big and the lighting is fairly simple, but I wouldn't advise it until you've had a few years of figure painting under your belt. Rick Berry is another, and his figures are amazing. I swear I thought he had a model that he used regularly... the guy just has an incredible understanding of form and texture, and the dynamics of light. I hate him. :o)

I also have an extensive "scrap" or "swipe" file that I've built up over the years. I kept every magazine that ever came by me, and eventually cut all the pictures out and organized them by category. I seldom find exactly what I need, but I can always find enough stuff close to what I need—a sky, a texture of tree-trunk, stone formations—to fake it believably. I also ordered the Wildlife Fact File a few years back: every month they send eight or so "Fact File Cards" with several photos each of different animal species. Right now it comprises over five hundred file cards, and is something I go to all the time to find a wing from the right angle, or a cat's leg that will help me see muscle forms beneath, etc. They have started a new line of cards now that I am starting to get; basically the same thing, but bigger and with more pics—invaluable. Fashion magazines can be a great place to go for clothing inspiration or a good photo of a woman when you need something basic in a pinch. Swimsuit magazines can be good too: the poses are frequently less weird than in some venues. Porn mags—even soft-core, like Playboy—are almost never useful.

I use the mirror, too, all the time, especially to check my artwork. It's a good trick for catching yourself before you commit to a big mistake. When you see it backwards, you bypass your preconceived notions of what you are doing and see it as it is. Very useful. Also look at it upside down and sideways; as it is especially good for checking balance and composition. Another good trick I got from a book called "Drawing From the Right Side of Your Brain": an exercise, really. You take a magazine photo, any photo will do, and tack it up upside down. Then draw it upside down. Or draw it upside down, but reversed. Also draw with your left hand from time to time. I do this when I am stuck on

something, and it just won't look right. Set it aside, do these exercises, and come back to it. Bang! Nail it every time. It awakens that part of your brain that sees forms as they are, not as you have taught yourself that they are.

Do you have an art education? If not, get one. It needn't be fancy or expensive, but it needs to accomplish some important things. The most important thing for this genre, at least as you start your education, is to get some basics right up front. Know your anatomy, understand the color wheel, light and shadow, perspective, and composition. Basic design matters an awful lot (look at Brom's work). Don't think you can fake a human body unless you understand it inside out—literally. Most artists shouldn't try to fake it ever.

Pay attention to everything, and I mean everything. Biology, anatomy, engineering, math, astronomy, meteorology, physics, religion, mythology—it all comes into play at one time or another. Computers are changing everything, so it wouldn't hurt to learn computer skills. More and more artwork is being done for computer games, and the applications are starting to get truly awesome. I suspect that 3D computer art will be the best market for years to come. A good concept artist is hard to come by, though, and all the computer shops need 'em. That said, you have to know your art skills, and never assume that you have anything down "well enough." I can't stress this enough, even if you intend to work mostly on computers. You can't depend on computer applications to do your lighting and effects for you; you can't tell when the computer is getting it wrong if you are letting it think for you. Learn what things really look like by painting or drawing them. You have to know your anatomy, composition, color theory—all the art school basics. Learn to draw before you start to paint; you can't make a good painting from a bad drawing. Find an art school that teaches the basics and is serious about it. I'm afraid I don't know of any myself- it's been too long, and I went to a design school. I am my own teacher, which means that my teacher had no idea what he was doing most of the time. ;-)

A friend of mine, Donato, had this to say about Art Schools once, when asked a similar question in an email discussion:

"I'm not a big fan of 'pure art' schools (School of Visual Arts, FIT, RISD, Ringling School of Art...), after teaching at two of them and being a practicing professional, I wonder where all the THOUSANDS of art students go each year after graduation. I am not exaggerating about that number either. With each passing year I have begun to appreciate the 'liberal arts' education I had partaken before, and the few classes I had, during my art training at Syracuse. Technique helps a lot, but having a brain that works on new ideas can carry you further. I am more a fan of apprenticeship with an established pro. With that all said, I recommend schools that are not purely art schools, so that the curriculum is structured for a more rounded education.

Syracuse and RISD (with the option to take classes at Brown University next door) are the only ones I am familiar with first hand. It's a tough balance to strike

because most schools have horrible art programs. I spent 6.5 years getting my bachelors, and those extra 2.5 years of classes made a HUGE difference. The biggest factor in picking a school for art is not about the school, but whether the person wants to be an artist.”

It’s true: attitude is far more important than anything else. You must be willing to learn, \*and never stop learning.\* I have seen a lot of artists with sterling educations, who could not ignite any passion in their viewers. And I’ve seen artists with no formal training that could blow your doors off.

Then, go where the artists doing the work you want to do go to hang out. For science fiction and fantasy, that would be science fiction and fantasy conventions. Almost all of them have art shows, but some of the better ones are World Con, Dragon Con, Gen Con, and Luna Con (Search the web for more info on these). Network, get critiques, observe and learn. Attend the Artist Guest of Honor’s slide presentations. Talk to them. It will energize you and inspire you.

Never stop learning.

**Q3: What is your process for creating a piece for an RPG book? And Q9: How does WotC or a contractor approach you with core rulebook art projects? In essence, art is a major factor in determining setting. A picture tells a thousand words, and it is imperative that the art reflect the intentions of the product. So with this in mind, how is an artist approached and what is the communication that goes on between parties to get things right?**

It generally starts with the Art Order. The people who decide what products will be, and when they will release, give me a rough idea what the product will be about. Ideally, I’ll get a manuscript or outline to read, and I always have a long discussion with the writers. Sometimes the Art Order is good, but more often it is what a writer thinks will make a good picture—not always on target. For example, for the *Book of Golems (Creatures of the Night; Ravenloft)*, the Art Order suggested a mad wizard fighting off his creation, a Wax Golem. Unfortunately, the Wax Golem looked “just like its creator, and completely human.” That doesn’t make for a very telling picture of what a golem is. It doesn’t capture the essence of “golem”. So I asked them to read the different golem entries from the book to me. It seemed like each one had the same lead-in: “looking just like a human” or “almost indistinguishable from a human.” I didn’t like any of them, until we got to the Spell Rune Golem (which you can view on my website, in the Illustrations, Gallery II section) a self-created golem made from the chopped and gathered remains of an evil treant. It looked almost completely inhuman, apart from walking upright.

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I was very fortunate at TSR and WotC in that I was given a great deal of trust by the writers and editors. They give me a lot of leeway to create what I think is right. Books tend to be a little more restrictive, because they often are derived from real times and places, and the character and monster descriptions can be limited by the author’s creativity or visual skill. In those cases, I have to work a little harder to bend the framework into a direction that I find more interesting.

Once the image has been decided upon, I do very small sketches called “thumbnails” (because they’re typically as small as a large man’s thumbnail!) to explore composition; the arrangement of dark and light masses, and character explorations of any new monsters or characters. When I have some of each that I like, then I do them again larger, with more focus on the movement and details. You can see the ones I did for Spell Rune Golem in my art book, next to the finished painting. When I am comfortable that I have what I want, I do a half-sized rendering (these days, usually in *Corel Painter* or *Adobe Photoshop*) to present to the client, often coloring it up first. When that is approved, I start the final drawing. This I do in pencil or *Painter*, to the size of the finished painting. If I am working traditionally in oils, I then take that drawing to the local copy shop and use their giant document copier to transfer it to



watercolor paper, which I mount to hardboard with acrylic medium, seal with more medium, and paint over in oils. If it is going to be a digital painting, I do 90% or more in *Painter*, with some touch-up in *Photoshop*.

**Q4: What medium do you normally use?**

I prefer to paint in oils when I can take that much time, but computers have changed the marketplace so much that it is hard to pull off. *Corel Painter 6* is my favorite digital medium, with *Photoshop* to do some color balancing or effects here and there, but mostly just to turn my RGB files into CMYK for the printers.

**Q5: When doing your drawings, do you value realism over stereotypes?**

Absolutely, even if I'm painting a stereotype. One of the joys of designing the look of D&D was that I got to turn stereotypes on their ear from time to time; making the archetypal monk a black woman, for example, instead of an Asian male, or drawing a paladin that was a half-orc. How much fun is that!?? :o) The heroes will still be more muscular than anyone you or I know, and the women will be more beautiful and sexy, but I don't like comic-book extremes, personally. A guy with forearms or a woman with breasts bigger than her head is simply not believable. Realism keeps you in the story, makes it a possibility. That's important when selling fantasy: striking that balance between super-reality and realism.

**Q6: Do you paint and/or sculpt miniatures?**

I don't, actually. We used Steve Jackson's excellent cardboard miniatures when we played-- it's what we could afford in time and money. I made a couple of clay miniatures for my own characters, but it's time consuming, and I couldn't do one for everybody, so I never used them. These days, my close-up vision had been so destroyed by working on the computer (and age) that I can barely see the detail on miniatures even with my glasses on, so I'm not likely to start on miniatures now. Which is a shame, because there are so many good ones out there, many of which were based on my drawings! Oh well...

**Q7: What is your creative environment like?**

There are toys, books, and cool visual props like skulls and stuffed animals everywhere. At Wizards of the Coast, there were also creative people everywhere, which is simply amazing if you can find it. I'm working at home these days, freelancing once again, and I do miss the people most. Music helps, but I sometimes prefer to work in complete silence, too.

**Q8: What are your favorite art books?**

Any of Whelan's books figure prominently. I also absorbed all of Frazetta's work. The Spectrum annuals are astounding, because they come at you from so many angles at once. Brom's books are good, of course. I like Bouguereau (and Rembrandt and DaVinci, too.

*The Art Techniques of Tim Hildebrandt* is a good one for technique.

**Q10: What are your feelings about gender-equality in gaming in general? How should gender-equality be reflected in artwork?**

That's a tough topic, because, as we know, fantasy is loaded with stereotypes. The two biggest are that women are scantily clad and drop-dead-gorgeous, and men are gigantic, muscular killing machines. They are stereotypes that play more to men's fantasies than women's. Being a man, I understand them. But I also tire of them. As I mentioned, I don't like to see a bicep bigger than the guy's head, or breasts so huge that the woman could not possibly walk upright. I admit, I like my fantasy heroines scantily clad. But I also want the costume to make sense. If scanty is impractical, then it can't be scanty. Mailee was a nice balance of the two, and could get away with it because she's a magic-User and doesn't need armor, whereas Lidda is practical in armor. Scanty isn't the only way to make an outfit sexy, either. The female fighters I designed had armor that would actually protect them-- no chain mail bikinis, certainly none so light and flexible that their nipples showed through! That may work to stimulate puerile fantasies, but it doesn't tell a believable story. It is a tricky balance to mix sex and action. One thing I really despise is the "come-hither" look on fantasy women, as if women are really only interested in seducing men. Puh-lease...When it's appropriate, like on a lady vampire, that's one thing. But when it isn't, it just isn't.

Of more concern to me, personally, in fantasy art is racial equality. I intended Regdar as racially unidentifiable. That worked better in the drawings than in the paintings, but it was my intention. I had to work to get any races other than white past certain individuals at WotC. Lidda should look a little Mediterranean, Ember is black, and Hennet and Naull are Asian. I failed to get racial varieties into the demi-human line-ups. Apart from the dark-skinned Drow, they are all more-or less Caucasian/Mediterranean. It is something that still needs to be fixed, IMHO.

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*We want to thank Todd Lockwood for taking the time to share with us. For more information on Todd and his artwork, you can visit his website at: <http://www.toddlockwood.com>. Another place to find Todd on the 'net is at [www.asfa-art.org](http://www.asfa-art.org). Here you can view his latest art awards for 2003: best hardcover book jacket illustration; best gaming-related illustration; and best magazine cover illustration. If you are looking for print sources, besides his numerous artwork found in Wizards of the Coast publications, you can also locate him in Spectrum, an annual compendium of the year's best sci-fi/fantasy artwork.*

**Artwork featured in this article are copyright Todd Lockwood. All Rights Reserved.**

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# d20 Reviews

at Silven Crossroads

what to buy...what to buy?



## "Monte Cook's Arcana Unearthed: DM's Screen and Player's Guide"

Authors: Monte Cook

Publisher: [Malhavoc Press](#)

Reviewed by: *Bradford Ferguson*

Review date: 10/08/2003

### CLASS: Arcana Unearthed Accessory

**STR: 10** (*Physical*). Screen is thick stock but flimsy. Guide is staple bound.

**DEX: 14** (*Organization*). Screen flows from category to category. Guide is organized well.

**CON: 12** (*Quantity of the Content*). Accomplishes what it sets out to do, but material is skimpy for the price.

**INT: 14** (*Quality of Content*). Pretty good. Some hints in the guide are very basic.

**WIS: 14** (*Options & Adaptability*). Conversion notes for D&D to AU, character sheets for each class.

**CHA: 12** (*Look & Feel*). Cover art recycled from other AU. Interior art of guide is concept art.

For the full review see:

<http://www.silven.com/adnd.asp?case=show&id=163>

## "Dungeons and Dragons Player's Handbook v3.5"

Authors: 3.5 revision by Andy Collins based on original work by Monte Cook, Jonathan Tweet, Skip Williams

Publisher: [Wizards of the Coast](#)

Reviewed by: *Kosala Ubayasekara*

Review date: 10/19/2003

### CLASS: Core Rule Book

**STR: 16** (*Physical*). Excellent, tough, laminated cover.

**DEX: 17** (*Organization*). Fabulously organized and laid out.

**CON: 15** (*Quantity of the Content*). Provides all the information you need and then some in most areas. One or two sections lacking in detail.

**INT: 15** (*Quality of Content*). Gaming ideas and hints are provided throughout the book.

**WIS: 15** (*Options & Adaptability*). Lots of options and clear descriptions of how to integrate them are provided. More variant rules would have been nice.

**CHA: 17** (*Look & Feel*). Excellent artwork, good layout and cover.

For the full review see:

<http://www.silven.com/adnd.asp?case=show&id=162>

### Scoring definitions

**18 = Superior.** Best of the best.

**16 = Very Good.** Part of a Baker's Dozen.

**14 = Good.** Most gamers would like this.

**12 = Fair.** Some gamers would like this.

**10 = Average.** Most gamers would be indifferent.

**8 = Subpar.** Flawed, but not without promise.

**6 = Bad.** Most gamers would dislike this.

**4 = Very Bad.** Among the Dirty Dozen.

**2 = Inferior.** Worst of the worst.

### "Campaign Planner"

Author: Philip J. Reed

Publisher: [Mystic Eye Games](#)

Reviewed by: *Bradford Ferguson*

Review date: 10/13/2003

### CLASS: Preparation Supplement

**STR: NA** (*Physical*). Product is electronic. It is ethereal and has no physical form.

**DEX: 12** (*Organization*). Forms follow each other in a logical fashion.

**CON: 16** (*Quantity of the Content*). Nearly every possible form is covered.

**INT: 16** (*Quality of Content*). Forms cover the essentials.

**WIS: 14** (*Options & Adaptability*). This product was made to notate the options that you use. Great for homebrews.

**CHA: 14** (*Look & Feel*). Forms are clean, simple, and look nice. Printer friendly.

For the full review see:

<http://www.silven.com/adnd.asp?case=show&id=159>

### "e-Adventure Tiles - Wilderness Ruins" and "e-Adventure Tiles - Cave Passages"

Artist: Edward Bouelle

Maker: [SkeletonKey Games](#)

Review by: *Bradford Ferguson*

Review date: 10/12/2003

### CLASS: 2D Terrain

**STR: NA** (*Physical*). These are electronic (.PDF) supplements. They are incorporeal and have no physical form.

**DEX: 14** (*Organization*). Product is organized into 3 different .PDFs within each .ZIP file.

**CON: 12** (*Quantity of the Content*). Both e-books are short for the price. Lots of free content on the website.

**INT: 18** (*Quality of Content*). Great art. Each tile has handy thin black and white scissor lines.

**WIS: 16** (*Options & Adaptability*). You can arrange the tiles how you want or print out extras.

**CHA: 18** (*Look & Feel*). Did I mention great art?

For the full review see:

<http://www.silven.com/adnd.asp?case=show&id=158>

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

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

# PvP, Is it for you?

By Magnus Kaliptic

Player versus player (also known as PvP) an interesting twist in both game play and role-playing in computer/console RPG games. Games in the industry today have come and gone, some have been successful and some have been a flop. What makes these games a success or a bomb? Many things actually, far too many to list. In my own opinion, I would say one deciding factor would be how well PvP is implemented into the game. Most games these days have its own system for this, most try new ideas and some use those ideas already implemented by other gaming companies. PvP affects everything in the game from the economy in-game to the resources the developers work with to the players themselves.

PvP is still a work in progress; no game on the market today has a real well made system for it. This is changing ever so rapidly as more and more of the player base flock to PvP though. Many games these days are being made specifically for the PvP fan base. I must say though, it is a heated debate on forums and such, so many people dislike PvP in its entirety. This has caused a division among us gamers of late. There are three types of communities—the community who loves PvP, the community who casually PvP, and the community who despises it. So what community do you yourself fall into? Can't decide? Do you not know enough about PvP to really make a decision? What can you as a player expect from PvP'ing?

Well first off I must warn you, most PvP worlds are very dangerous and very different. Even though games differ in the way PvP is implemented, you must always be careful. Some games have zones or sections of the world that are PvP only and in some you are always in a PvP area. Trash talk is a very common thing that goes on in these types of environments. Since PvP draws in a very diversified crowd you do have your share of immature players. This does not only apply to young people but everyone. You do also though have your share of honorable players. Things happen on the fly and certain words are said that may offend some people. I suggest if you have young children to watch carefully if you do not want them exposed to such things. While some of you could care less, I am just giving you parents and certain people a heads up of what to expect.

On the upside there are many rewards if you are in the PvP world and/or scene. I do find for the most part that PvP is very exciting and a test of how good you really are. PvP is all about alignment really. You, as a player, can make a name for yourself very fast in certain situations depending on how you conduct yourself. I personally have been playing CRPG games for many years and the alignment system that AD&D uses can apply to everyone who plays. It applies to individuals and guilds alike.

Speaking of guilds, you will find as wide of an assortment as you would without being into the PvP scene. From my own personal experience, I have found that guilds associated with PvP are actually more closely nit than those not. There are guilds for everyone, but if you are more a defender type player, then there are guilds for you. If you are more of an attacker, then there are guilds for you. If you cannot find a guild you like or cannot get along with others, then by all means make your own. PvP is about one on one fighting just as much as it is about guild vs. guild or nation vs. nation.

PvP is still a minority compared to regular game play. I suggest if you want to get into PvP or try it out to ask around for games that your friends feel you would like. Find a game that is focused on PvP, which is limited since not many games are at the moment. You have to realize since PvP is still considered a minority in the gaming world, most games are not going to have a perfect system worked out. Nor will PvP get the proper attention it deserves from the developers. This is not to say there are not games out there that do not have an excellent system for PvP. This is just a reminder that while PvP is on the rise it is still not in demand.

So we are back to the question, what can you expect from PvP today? This all depends on two things. The first thing is you and your style. The second is the game itself. So go ahead, ask around, do your research. Find out if PvP is for you or not; I just hope this helped at least a little bit in your decision and outlook on the PvP community.

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## Shirts or Skins?

By Raymond Huling

Here's a question—does it bother you that our d20 community, diverse and independent as it is, expects good and evil to play for mutually-exclusive, clearly identifiable teams? Does it seem less than quite right? I'm not talking about shades of grey here. I'm asking whether we ought to consider throwing black and white together, allowing them to interact while maintaining their differences—full contrast in full cooperation, in other words. Think this impossible? It has happened before in our own history:

*On Sunday, May 8, 1429, Joan of Arc, a maid from the village of Domerémy, achieved the relief of Orléans. When she arrived, the siege had lasted for seven months; nine days later, the English quit. At the Bastide des Tourelles, Joan had taken a bolt from an arbalest between her neck and shoulder; she needed to be carried from the field. She drew out the projectile herself and spent a few hours in rest. In the late afternoon, somewhat recovered, she demanded the progress from John the Bastard, commander of the defenders. He had just ordered the retreat. She begged him to wait and having obtained his consent, went off to pray in a vineyard. Ten minutes of this and she rode back, took up her standard, and stormed the walls. The French soldiers, whom Joan constantly berated for their swearing and whoring, inspired by their beloved champion, took Les Tourelles on May the seventh.*

*On returning from her victory at Orléans, Joan urged Charles VII and his court to ride immediately to Reims, deep in English territory, so that he receive his coronation. Her voices had chosen this place and would accept no other. The group fought their way through to the city and the ceremony took place. A corner had been turned in French history; they would, slowly, regain their nation. The court, however, had had enough of Joan, for they feared her popularity among the people. They withdrew their support from her endeavors, resulting in her capture before Campiègne. The Catholic Church, under the sway of the English, burned her alive at Rouen on Wednesday, May 30, 1430.*

*This same church executed Gilles de Rais on October 25, 1440. Gilles de Laval, Baron de Rais, had killed and tortured over a hundred and fifty children so horribly that for years after his death, the peasants of the region would, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October, beat their children to the blood, in order that they remember just what evil exists in this world.*

*What makes this all so very interesting is that it was Gilles de Rais who had carried Joan of Arc from the walls at Les Tourelles; he had been her bodyguard—and at the coronation of Charles VII, Gilles had been named Maréshal de France, at 25, the youngest ever to have received this honor.*

It was this specific, historical example that brought me to ask, what's with this "party alignment" business? Why, while knocking together a choice adventuring party for the *Temple of Elemental Evil* video game, why do I have to deal with a proscription against my throwing a paladin in with some CE necromancers and barbarians?

For those who haven't forked over the fifty bucks, Atari, Troika, Wizards of the Coast, Gary Gygax, and who knows who else entered daringly into a byzantine arrangement that has resulted in the *ToEE* computer RPG, a beautifully detailed, horribly buggy, and amazingly conservative adaptation and conversion into 3.5 rules of the most famous of mega-adventures. No question it's the best CRPG of the year, but, buggery aside, it has its faults, the most insidious of which is that the game forces its players, in the very first step of party creation, to choose for their groups one of the famous nine alignments, lawful good to chaotic evil, with respect to which each character must remain within one step. At first blush, this makes sense: the plot, they tell us in the enormous but admirably clear instruction manual, *responds* to this choice; morality determines the sequence of events. Each alignment—or, more accurately, alignment radius—has its own version of the game, fitted out in accord with its proper motivations. And this is true: the game does indeed feature nine different introductions, it continues this brand of distinctiveness in some of the dialogue, and, presumably (I haven't won it all nine ways), finishes ennedically as well.

Two questions: what does this really mean game-play-wise, and why only one step? First, this set-up may change the order in which you kill subordinates and underlings on the way to confronting the boss. This "switching around" routine enjoys a certain vogue these days, as quite a number of D20 modules that employ the same sort of half-juggled structure announce themselves as 'non-linear.' Let's take Necromancer Games' *Aberrations*, as an example of this—it's a fairly new, fairly well-received pen-and-paper module, published by a multiple award-winning press. Here is how it presents itself on page two of the instruction manual: "Aberrations is arranged in five parts, although these parts are playable in any order they are encountered by the PCs. Similar to an absurdist play[!], the first part is the beginning and the fifth part may be considered an end. The middle parts, however, can be run in any order." We'll ignore the contradiction and instead marvel at the multiplicity of choices that the jumbling of three segments gives us—perhaps not even that—since the players' whimsy determines the order, and, as part five takes place in the basement of the manor explored in part four, it stands as pretty unlikely that, as they make their way down the stairwell, any caprice will turn their feet toward that unexplored mine miles off in the hills. Players usually can discern which actions a module approves of and which it doesn't. DMs always can: in the present case, if the players don't check out the town right away, giant moths come around and wreck the joint.

Film-flam, then, but as such it's representative, because, despite its origin in alignment choice, which is an important difference and one which we'll talk about shortly, the variation in *The Temple of Elemental Evil* amounts to the same thing: it is a cosmetic difference. I did as well to outfit my party with pink mohawks as to click on a morality for them—which, sincerely now, wouldn't bother me so much, if not for the fact that I'm *restricted* by this costumery. Yes; I enjoy the vignettes and the minor changes of the schedule of destruction—but why not let me play it with the guys I want?

Maybe the alignment restrictions are due to programming considerations? Not at all—I understand that space allows for only so many permutations and that this game can't exceed the limitations that it honestly and even proudly announces for itself. It is no more than an elaborate series of tactical situations. I accept that. Leave it at nine possible paths, then—I *don't care*. Call my company of a paladin and four slavering devil-worshippers neutral or whatever, I'll play *that* game and happily go about my day. Why should this bother anyone? Certainly, no in-game logic conflicts with this: I rolled up a party of full-on LGers and proceeded slaughterously to pillage poor ol' Hommlet. Interestingly, the good citizens of said village continued to relate to me, tediously, their barn disputes and so on. Also, the Cuthbertists had no compunctions about healing me of the wounds that I'd received from Burne's Badgers as they tried to prevent me from butchering unarmed peasants. Further, do I really need to adhere to an artificial and frankly naïve notion of alignment, in order to suspend myself in disbelief as I plow through the game's universally despised dialogue? I've come to kill things in interesting ways and look at cool graphics. I've come to test my mettle as a 3.5 tactician in a nostalgic setting. Right?

Now, none of this means to say that I don't appreciate the accomplishment here. *The Temple of Elemental Evil* video game marks the best presentation of alignment in twenty years, possibly ever. It actually gives full weight to the entire spectrum of the D&D moralities. Thus the difference between its illusion of variegated lots and *Aberrations*. Tabletop modules that rip off *Call of Cthulhu* always appropriate one of two aspects, investigative (ex.: *Death, Terror, and Madness in Freeport*) or slimy (ex.: *Aberrations, The Tomb of Abysthor*), and they always leave behind any of the moral ambiguity for which that game is justly praised. Even beyond its structural shortfall, *Aberrations* can't deliver the 'free-form' quality it promises, because the morality it expects the characters to display draws a line through its encounters, as with all D20 adventures—they encourage the players to do the right thing, either on principle or on credit, because, otherwise, the story doesn't work.

It doesn't surprise me that *The Temple of Elemental Evil* bucks this practice of intending itself exclusively for play by a neutral good party, particularly in this format and at this time, for three reasons: 1) The hottest video games today owe their status entirely to the opportunities to pursue evil or at least criminal story lines. 2) Gygax had some involvement in the conversion, and evil characters occupied a standard role in the early days. 3) For quite some time, game designers have offered up evil in their products like a handful of dirty magazines pulled from under a mattress. I think that some of them took this opportunity to—within their point of view—get away with it.

With regard to this last remark, I want to add that, yes, somewhere in the eighties, certain RPGs did enjoy a single glorious moment of pseudo-satanic infamy, and the resultant culture of childproofing has given a certain outré air to what once would have been commonplaces. Having been plushed, it now excites the industry inordinately when it tries on a little leather.

But we have some genuine moral diversity again, and this is good—but it in no way good enough, for even in *ToEE* the use of alignment remains *weak*. What precisely does that mean? If alignment amounts to no more than just another factor that determines the dynamic between elements in a tactical situation, if it totals, in other words, to pluses and minuses, if it translates from paper to play as a *mechanic*, rather than a *quality* of the game, then it is weak.

I have no problem with this: I like arithmetic; I like poker; I like chess; *I like the tactical game*. This is not power-gaming. It is a striving against luck and another person's skill within clearly-defined formal constraints. The most often-sounded praise of the *ToEE* video game rings true: as a number of tactical encounters strung on a thin plot, it *does* accurately represent the d20 experience.

We ought not to kid ourselves, however. For the weak game, the means and ends of all alignments are the same—color for the tactical environment—and this comes nigh to meaning nothing. In the strong game, the game with plots *truly* driven by alignment, it *also* happens—and quite often—that the desires of good and evil adequate to the same means and the same ends, but this has profound significance. What does it say that Joan of Arc and Gilles de Rais fought side by side—and, further, that the *same church* executed them both?

Alignments, when played strongly and in all their diversity, bring meaning to a succession of encounters. It isn't too much to say that even a d20 game has the capacity to support genuine ethical inquiry. For those interested, the development of these games can have actual stakes—as much as any philosophical dilemma. As a corollary, for those, such as myself, more interested in fun, this unbounded exploration of alignment eliminates linear plots—any attempt to anticipate all acts of conscience, which every encounter in this sort of game *must* be, confounds the usual concatenations of fight scenes. By-the-numbers adventures simply cease to exist.

This doesn't come easy; in fact, I've never yet seen a publication that even approaches an intelligent handling of the strong use of morality in an RPG, much less a d20 product. Without question, all recent supplements and adventures have failed miserably, even in the extraordinarily limited parameters they've set for themselves. Look at the *Book of Vile Darkness*. Does it help us to introduce compelling moral confrontations in our games or does it help us to dress up a villain? The latter, of course, and not even all that well! It seems clear upon a reading of this book that Monte Cook has never run an evil campaign, and, to be perfectly frank, that whole sections of the work can only have been arrived at through a certain innocence, one maybe a bit blind to its own prejudices (seriously, the section on drug trafficking comes off like a straight-up conversion of a 'just say no' pamphlet). I don't want to get down on this one too much, either, as the book does offer some new scary monster make-up, but it no way constitutes a mature exposition of the possibilities a deeper use of evil may provide. I'm not referring to mal-aligned PCs here—even within the nerfous confines of Cook and Coast, even if evil remains, perversely, within the purview of the DM, we don't have to confine its form to purple-lotus-munching foot fetishists.

It's much more serious of a prospect—and much more compelling of a scenario—to confront wrongdoing that doesn't obviously declare itself as such. Or, even more, to find it difficult even to determine where or if it occurs. The argument against relativism in these games comes easily to hand—and I agree with it, but only to the extent that it demonstrates precisely why game designers refuse (or fail) to write modules intended for use with evil characters: they wouldn't be any different. Written in the same spirit as standard adventures, these inversions would only show that the morality current publications display has always been only a veneer. Evil campaigns just strip away any moral pretense; they allow players to forego the ritual heroism and skip right to the fighting. The D20 game needs to paint itself as anti-relativist, because only in this way can it maintain the illusion that alignment exists at all.

That's screwy. Let me pose a challenge—toss alignment in *every* mechanical form. No spell descriptors, no detections, no weaknesses, no protections—none of it. Then, forget all party restrictions; anybody can play on any team—in fact, let's say that *religions* no longer have any alignment. The clergy of any church may be of any morality. Wouldn't that be interesting? This would even answer the question, implied above, of smiting. Everybody likes to smite, but how would it function without a conversion of morality into math? Well, try allowing the righteous to punish anyone who actively opposes their belief system. This is reasonable, balanced, and yet allows for genuine moral conflict: the paladin cannot smite the cruel vicar who worships the same gods he does, but he can certainly wale away at the unfortunate peasants who riot against the oppressions enforced by this evil clergyman. How's that for a test of faith?

Finally, invest your adventures with moral quandaries—not so tough, given the times we live in—and turn a full-spectrum party loose on it. Let them debate and conflict and compromise over the course of action. This entails complications, but who needs a simple game? Once players have gotten the hang of tactical mastery, they'll begin to look for other purposes in the game. Strongly-played alignment is one of those purposes.

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### Vision 1: By the Gods! The Faiths of Ancient Greece and Rome

Ave and well met. Welcome to the first installment of Through the Lens of History where I will take various pieces of history and show how they can be used to make compelling settings and scenarios for games.

Now, who am I to take on this task? My name is Sean Holland, I have been a gamer for 26 years. I currently DM one D&D campaign and play in two others. I have a BA in History (minor in Philosophy) from the University of Portland, Oregon, and I am working on my MA in History at the University of Georgia. I do some writing and playtesting for the game industry. If you look at any of AEG's recent "One Word" series of books for the D20 system you will find my name in there somewhere and I have had other writings published over the years as well.

The subject of this installment is Ancient Religion; focusing on those of Greece and Rome. Modern religion in the West is heavily shaped by the success in the Western world of the various Christian denominations and the prevalent separation of Church and State but it was not always so . . .

#### Part I - The History

The Ancient Greeks and Romans paid respect to a wide pantheon of gods and goddesses, in both public and private ways. The Romans admired Greek culture and adopted a great extent of Greek religion, even incorporating many of their own gods within the Greek myths creating a continuity of faith and belief between the two societies. The civic religion of the city-states was a public celebration, sanctioned by the authorities, to please the gods and benefit the city. Private religion was the personal faith of the individual and ranged from the universal acknowledging of the household gods to enthusiastically joining cults of various types.

Religion and authority have been intertwined for as long as there have been recognizable versions of either. Priests acted as advisors, scribes, and scholars, keeping the early empires running while the kings provided leadership and the military power needed to protect the empire. Vast religious ceremonies and pageantry featured rulers as divine representatives of the gods to awe and inspire the people. Here in Ancient Greece and Rome, religion supported the state and the state returned the favor making it very difficult to tell where one ended and the other began.

The *polis* or city-states of Ancient Greece and Italy readily mixed religion and the state. Each of the Greek *polis* had its own patron god or goddess, such as wise Athena for the city of Athens. The divine patron symbolized their city and they and their associated symbols were used in art and coinage representing the city. The gods were thanked for their patronage during great festivals which adored the gods through parades, songs and sacrifices.

Among the festivals was the celebration of the first fruits, at the beginning of the harvest to thank the gods for their generosity. Athletic games and contests of drama and poetry were often parts of the festivals; this was how the Olympic Games began and were dedicated to the gods. Greek religious beliefs held that the Olympians enjoyed the same pleasures as their mortal followers.

Religion was a public occasion, even among the mystery cults (more about them later), with many open displays of piety. Worshipers prayed standing proudly before the gods, speaking loudly so that all could hear. Both the Greeks and Romans believed in the dignity of humanity, not prostrating themselves before the gods but approaching them as one seeking aid from a trusted superior would, with confidence. Festivals were religion were large, an occasion for the entire community to thank and beseech the gods, to publicly show both the piety and wealth of the city.

Public religion was very important to the people of the *polis*, as a unifying force of tradition and civic pride, it represented the very soul of the city. It was an aspect of civil society, joining religion and politics, as well as a chance to see and be seen. Following the public religion was expected of all who lived there, it was a sign of being part of the city, but people were also welcome to follow whatever other gods they wished (as long as they were not a threat to the state). But there was private religion as well.

One such private religion was the mystery cult, defined as such because the members learned greater religious mysteries (or secrets) as they gained greater levels of initiation within the cult. Membership and even initiate rank was something that was usually openly and proudly proclaimed. It was just the actual religious mysteries that were kept secret. Mystery cults can be viewed more as exclusive clubs rather than secret societies. They certainly supported their members' ambitions and helped one another to advance but they did not seem (as a general rule) to be seeking to change or overthrow the governments they lived under. Most of the mystery cults came from either the fringes of the Greco-Roman World or from outside of it. Because of this they were sometimes called 'Eastern Cults' and occasionally provoked official suspicion and backlash against their members.

For the ancient Greeks and Romans, sacrifices were an important way to thank the gods for their patronage and assistance (and to demonstrate one's wealth and piety). Typical sacrifices were animals; large animals for major festivals, smaller ones for lesser occasions (or smaller budgets). Since the temples were places for the gods to keep their belongings, the sacrifices were performed in public at altars in open places where the smoke of the offering could make its way up to the gods. The animal was killed before the altar; it was ritually butchered by a priest or priestess. The inedible parts were burned for the god, hence "burnt offerings," while the remainder was cooked and shared by the priests and worshippers.

A common small sacrifice was the *libation*. When drinking wine, a small portion was first poured out upon the ground to thank the gods. Other sacrifices given were tokens inscribed with thanks, decorations for the temples and shrines, and, for the wealthy, new buildings and land for the temples. These sacrifices were often lavishly decorated and openly inscribed with the name of the giver and the reason for the gift. These offerings were given in thanks for such things as returning safely from a dangerous trip or success in some endeavor. In the household shrines, simple sacrifices were made, incense was burned, and the gods were given a small share of each meal as *libations*.

Just as there were gods of the city, there were gods of the household as well. The Romans had the *lares* that protected their homes and occupants. Sacrifices were made to them throughout the month by the household. Gods abounded in the polytheistic system, from the small gods of the house to major deities that guided cities. Nothing was so unimportant that it did not to have its own god to whom a sacrifice could be made.

Sacrifice was important as a symbol that joined god and worshiper. The worshiper sacrificed in thanks for aid that the god had given and with the expectation that the god would continue to look kindly upon him or her. If things went wrong, then the worshiper either had not sacrificed enough or had made some mistake in the rites.

The Romans were great sticklers for “the right rites,” expecting them to be performed exactly as they had been done in the past, and attributing any misfortune to failing to properly perform the ritual. Indeed Rome possessed an entire class of religious specialists, called a *pontifex* (pl. *pontiffs*), who possessed their own college and advised worshipers on what rites were needed and how to perform them. The head of this college, the *pontifex maximus*, became an important political post and was held by Julius Caesar, by later Roman Emperors, and, even today, if one of the titles of the Pope.

In Rome, and to a lesser extent in Greece, important rituals were performed by civic officers who acted in a priestly role as part of their official duties. For example, a senator might undertake a ritual sacrifice to Mars, god of war, before sending the army to fight. A *pontifex* would direct the senator in the proper ritual and the senator would undertake it, acting as a priest for the duration of the rite. This often made the line between civic officials and civic priests very thin. Though professional priests and other religious specialists did exist and performed rituals for both the public religion and for private citizens.

As is evidenced, religion and civil society had a complex interplay in the Ancient Greek and Roman cultures and this article did not even touch upon oracles and divinations. For the city-states, religion and government walked hand in hand, one supporting the other. While private citizens supported the gods of their city, they often sought out more for themselves, a private religion that appealed to their own sense of faith. In a pantheistic societies, worshipping several gods was not only acceptable, it was expected.

## Part II- Breaking it apart and putting it back together

Now, this is all well and good but how does it affect a game?

Most game worlds, like the Ancient Greek and Roman states, are based on pantheistic religious structures. By looking at them we can gather some idea of how game worlds may treat religion and faith. What ideas can we use?

**Public Gods.** Each city is likely to have its patron god or goddess and a devoted civic cult. People who stay in the city, especially if they are wealthy and influential, will be expected to support the civic cult, or, at the very least, not interfere with it even if their patron is a different god. This is not a betrayal of a pantheistic god, just an acknowledgment that you are in someone else’s territory and that you show respect for them.

Faith is not binary in pantheistic system, you may have one god as your patron deity, but you ask another appropriate god or goddess for help as needed. For example, Ares, god of war, will not help you get a good crop. For that you appeal to Demeter, goddess of grains. The city and its people are going to be suspicious of those who will not join in and support the civic religion. After all, the government and the religion are allied and if you do not respect their god, you are not showing respect to the city.

**Festivals.** Everyone likes a celebration! It is a chance to unwind, to have some fun and thank the gods as well. Everyone is happy, right? All sorts of things can go wrong at a festival:

- ▶ A rival power might wish to sabotage the festival to offend the gods and make the city vulnerable to attack. Perhaps the prize sacrifice has been stolen and must be recovered...in a few short hours before the parade starts.
- ▶ There are shady dealings at a contest and the characters are asked to help one of the factions who have been suffering mysterious accidents. This would be especially effective if the characters are foreigners—then they could be asked to help fellow countrymen who are competing.
- ▶ The characters may wish to compete in the contests of a festival themselves. Be it a festival of sports, like the Olympics, or of dramas or poetry. It will give the characters a taste of something different. However, their rivals are very intent on winning, as it is a great honor. Will the competition stoop to dishonorable means to insure their victory? Will the characters?
- ▶ An impartial judge is needed for one of the contests and one of the player characters is chosen. Everyone wants to win this year and offers of bribes and threats soon start pouring in. As the character is tempted, remind them that the gods may be watching as well. Is it better to offend mortal or divine powers?

**Mystery Cults** Something is up with one of the mystery cults and it may represent a threat to the social order. The characters are asked to investigate the cult and spy on the secret religious ceremonies to see if the cultists are planning anything illegal. The activities of the cult may or may not be entirely innocent, but in either case they will be upset to find people spying on private ceremonies.

The character may find the idea of a mystery cult intriguing and join. This could put them on the opposite side of the equation, trying to convince the city that they do not have any ill intentions toward the city, but at the same time being unable to reveal any of the secrets of the cult.

**Pontifex Politics.** One of the characters want to seek office as a *pontifex* and the college of pontiff plans a rigorous set of task to test the characters worth. The pontifex's post carries status and influence, making it valuable to the rival political factions making it much sought after. The character is likely to face considerable difficulties in his or her tests from both expected and unexpected quarters.

**"The Right Rite."** Something is going very wrong for one of the cities and it is discovered that it is because an important rite has not been performed. But they are not sure which one it is because it has been lost! Earthquakes, fire or war, or even the humble rat, may have destroyed the needed information in the temple's archive. Now the city's priests and agents are scouring libraries and temples far and wide to try and regain the missing ritual.

As things keep going from bad to worse in the city, a great reward is offered for the missing ritual. This causes charlatans and fakes of all stripes to come pouring into the city offering false hope and ineffective rites. Can the characters find the right rite and save the city?

#### Supplemental d20 Material: **New Feats**

##### ▶ Civic Priest [General]

You are authorized to oversee religious rites and rituals in your home city and are afforded respect and honor because of it.

**Prerequisites:** Citizen of the city, Diplomacy 2 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 2 ranks.

**Benefit:** You gain a +2 bonus to Diplomacy checks. When dealing with others in your city you receive a +2 circumstance bonus to Bluff, Intimidate and Gather Information checks as long as you are acting in an official capacity. Most citizens of your city will offer you reasonable aid if requested.

**Special:** As a civic priest, you will be expected to attend festivals, oversee rites and other such duties for your city.

Note that this feat does not require any actual ability to cast divine spells, the DM may change that to suit the campaign.

##### ▶ Pontifex [General]

You are recognized and skilled in the proper instruction of religious rites and proper rituals. Those who follow your instructions exactly can gain greater results from their faith.

**Prerequisites:** Citizen of the city, acceptance into the college of Pontiffs, Concentration, Diplomacy 2 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 4 ranks, Wis 11.

**Benefit:** You gain a +1 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy checks involving anyone who lives in your city or who is pious towards your city's gods and a +1 bonus to Knowledge (religion) checks.

By working with a divine spell caster, you can increase the power of their spells. The divine spell caster must follow your instructions exactly. This increases the casting time of the spell by one minute per level of the spell and requires sacrifices worth 50 gold per level of spell being cast. The Pontifex must make a Knowledge (religion) check with a Difficulty Class of 10 + the level of the spell and the caster must make a Concentration check with the same DC. If either check is failed, the spell is unsuccessful and is lost without effect. If both are successful, the spell is cast as if the caster were two levels higher. Only one pontifex can advise on any ritual.

**Special:** As a pontifex you will be expected to advise and direct religious rites and rituals for the city.

Note that this feat does not require any actual ability to cast divine spells, the DM may change that to suit the campaign.

The mechanics of both of the above feats are adapted from Monte Cook's *Arcana Unearthed* book, from the feats *Priest* and *Aid Spellcasting* respectively.

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## Rebels in the Dungeon, Part 1

by Raymond Huling



If it hadn't been for the Skullards, four black-haired women heavily and darkly robed and hooded, standing naked in the formation of a square, around a fifth, all of them by their stillness observing and, to a degree, imposing a solemn quietude, then the other group gathered in the husk of the ancient cathedral, a dozen or so cloaked figures, unevenly dispersed near the aisles, most of them huddled in the dust, would have been much more interesting. A fifteen year-old boy had gathered them together, these others who shunned the voiceless women. He was a swart whelp, his skin a mark of south-lander bloodlines or, at least, those of the middle islands; his name evinced his origin further: Qamus, son of Qamar. He'd sought them out, each on the word of the one he'd found just before, and contracted them, paid them up front in strange black coins, their flan a gemstone that suffered not the slightest patina, nor scratches from curious knives, not the slightest indication of wear, though their legends, not carved, but somehow punched in the stone, had been written in a crude cuneiform, impenetrably alien to modern literacy, but obviously, even to the most ignorant eye, of an unsettling antiquity. But they lay dense with wealth in the hand, unquestionably worth the risk of one's whole and entire expendable life. His bodyguards had come first, his troop of killers next, and his guide at the very last, a rigid vector of decreasing trust, extending outward on the promise of rare deeds implied by the face of the boy's sombre treasure.

Under the watch of his second hire, a tall and rangy woman, her ash-blond hair bound into braids, he knelt to the earthen floor of the great nave. The old folk of the city called the gaping structure the *Basilica Grave*; it stood awkwardly, seeming almost frozen in its place, near the center of an unevenly circular quarter of abandoned buildings. Its recesses had been sacked barren. Engineers had directed laborers in the salvage of the place: everything had been taken; glass, wood, statuary, furniture, masonry right to the point where to remove a single brick more would have been to draw down the rest in a massive and final cascade. He tugged a curved chunk of stone from the bare ground, a feature snapped off the head of gargoyle—*ay haf fahnd ahn eer*—his heavily accented words intoned richly in the enormous hollow. His guard smiled thinly as he brushed it clean; she adjusted a strap on her armor and glanced at the Skullards—for they did keep the eye: shaven marmoreally smooth everywhere but their scalps, the hair of which hung past their hips, even to their thighs, and, indeed, their skin, in the eglisian shadows, gloamed as marble does, except a little left of center on their chests, where there set like the sun of melancholy a stylised black tattoo of a skull. One would almost have failed to notice, in this light, that their eyes rested deeply uprolled in their heads, that their mouths slacked open a little, and that the width of this rictus measured exactly the same as the collar inked around each of their necks.

*I thought the'like the quiet, Harra Kemis*—the speaker was another of his guards, the first of them, actually, and the one he trusted most. They'd met through argument. The boy had, mostly through his ignorance of the language, disparaged the man's horse, at the docks of a minor port. Ghlaf stood exactly the same height as the blonde woman, four or five inches taller than their young employer, but he seemed shorter: he'd been bald but for a strip of bristles that ran from ear to ear since he reached his full growth; born ugly, he grew uglier every day; his knotted limbs and weathered skin aggravating this dispulchritude. Had a pig been pulled and pounded down man-wise, enormous, rugose hands and feet welded to it, and its nose shoved under a bit, we'd have a second Ghlaf in this world—so long as this re-molding included the infusion of the cheeriest and most gravelly-voiced of good humors: *get ready to meet yer maker, kiddy*—he'd told the boy, intending only to provide him with an instructive thrashing. Qamus had simply looked at him oddly, his head turned at a slight angle—*thayr ahr nau maykars*—That drew up the soldier's mangy eyebrows, but slowed neither his wit nor his step—*then get ready to meet nobody*—The boy laughed.

*Thay daunt leef weeth ahs*—This response from their young Harra turned the eyes of the two warriors to each other. The constant otherworldliness of this business had begun to wear on them. Ghlaf scratched at the wiry stubble on the back of his head, then rubbed his hand over that face all broken with the ruts of wrinkles. Young master Qamus stared openly: fascinated by the man's physiognomy, he admired the way in which his great fingernails—not long, but hugely square and thick, like shingles—accentuated the horribleness of the features they caressed. Sedis, the woman, threaded her fingers with her sword-hilt. The boy liked her face, too: an inelegant mass of scar tissue splayed out under her left eye, contrasting sharply with her otherwise smooth, golden skin. *Harra Kemis...has anyone ever done this before?*—It took a moment for the question to disturb the boy's rude reverie, and then he seemed not to understand the reference—*This Harra, the whole thing...has anyone ever crossed the Brogældor?*—*yays...eet hahs habhend...baht ay daunt nau thah foolnays... ahf thah tay!*—he gestured a round emptiness between his hands.

*We'd best ask the gui'then*—they all of them looked to a darker stretch of the vast chamber, near to where Qamus's group of assassins huddled. The last of these assassins whose service he'd bought stood apart from the rest, as befitted her role: by far the worst of them, the most brutal, the foulest, and the only one dressed exclusively in white. She kept it in tatters, at least, the virgin's cloth she wore, raggedly shorn halfway up her thighs. Their guide, who lay then at her feet, having found within himself the admirable capacity for sleeping even in this most harrowing of environments, had told them some weeks before that in the north, in the lake country, they called her *picioare murdare*—dirty legs. One would have wondered why they'd been so selective or why they'd selected that aspect out from the rest: almost her whole skin crusted with filth, most of it blood. Even at that moment, it blackened her limbs into indistinction: her back to them, they could see only the spare, pale length of her shift and the patches of her long auburn hair not clotted black.

None of them called to her; the boy and his two guards stepped softly to her side, the scent of the dust giving way to that of her ichorous lamina. With her right hand she worried at the hilt of a butcher's knife, about eight inches long in the blade, forged from a single wedge of steel. They didn't look directly at her; very few people did: in all the world, there may have existed not a single creature exceeding her in raw beauty, a condition she enjoyed disguising with gruesomeness. Among the mortal exceptions to this aversion, counted the young man laid out at her feet: he'd grown up in the kingdom of the fey, and he'd jaded there as well—which didn't at all mean that he'd neglected to notice the extremity of her charms; no; he'd told her a long, long time before then, that if he could he'd pay her homage by turning her hair into snakes. This, among other courtesies, had endeared him to her. *Streambryd*—the soldier addressed her—*does he sleep there, streambryd?*—before she deigned to answer, he rustled himself sedentary. She knelt silently beside him. The curls of his hair showed a little under the brim of his straw hat. He looked up—*strumpet?*—rhoticising the word to lightly mock Ghlaf's coastal burr. Ghlaf smiled his few large yellow teeth, but he watched the fey-girl carefully, as the mockery had been intended mostly for her. Even with so small a weapon, she could have cloven through her man's neck in a single blow, rolled his head right down his back, before he could have twitched his fingers in his lap, and he knew that, in front of her love—to say nothing of her loyalty to the boy's pay, came the reflex to murder. He chuckled.

*It's happened twice...once a thousand years ago and again seven hundred years later*—this man, their path-finder, their guide for place and for lore, who'd been stolen from his cradle by goblins and elves, a changeling left for his mother's arms, he had tuned his ears to the subtleties of fairy harps—very few whispers escaped him—the first was the first of the guthwardes, as you call them, *min freond...the brogæaldor were in a way still very young back then. They didn't have the purpose they do now. They sought conquest; they drove inland over the isthmus and took the southern rim in a month*—he paused to pat for his wineskin; he caught it up and pulled from it—*unfortunately for their purpose, they hadn't been observing the rise of the woodland tribes, nor that of the lake-folk. Chieftains had become lords and one of them rose and drew the people together...they broke the onrush of the brogæaldor*—with a breath of laughter, he put his hand over hers, the one that held the knife—*they were very young then*—he wore clothes of burlap over sack-cloth; no one knew why. A few thick strands from his tunic twined at his neck; he tugged at his collar—*then, many years later, when the guthwardes enjoyed the fullest extent of their power, a peasant girl came out of the east to the border country. She came with the mission of liberating the lands that the enemies still held from their incursion. She claimed divine purpose and flyted the guthwardes to return these holdings, to reunite the people. Somehow this came to pass—she convinced them of her holiness. One lord in particular played a key role here, the vilest tyrant of them all, a child-eater, a raper, a pious and superstitious man. He took her side and the rest eventually followed. She began to fulfill the destiny established by the first king—you know they even say that she found his sword, lost for an age. On the march westward, she held the army at the last great crossroads for three days, while she conferred with her spirits, then she sent out her pages to dig in a nearby kurgan and bring back the sword that they would find there, a huge weapon with five trees etched into its blade. They came back with it, and she wore it throughout the campaign*—he took off his hat and the fey ran her slender, spiny black hands, like compass needles, through his hair—*they won of course...they beat back the occupying forces of the brogæaldor, but this peasant maid, they lost her to them in one of the last battles and they couldn't get her back—really, they didn't want to—they'd already won; they didn't need her anymore. They had a peace to divide up, and she would have interfered with that—what happened to her? They burned her alive...funny, though...the same end waited for the guthwardes. When they people rose against them, they got the stake as well*—Qamus smiled, his teeth almost glittering in contrast with his dusky skin and ink-black hair—*yays...ahlf oos boorn*—Sedis fixed her yellow eyes on the reposeful guide—*what happened to the sword?*

An impact on the floor spun them all around before he could even look up at her. Someone had leapt or fallen from one of the paneless lancets that pierced the wall some thirty feet above them, and the boy's whole group rushed with remarkable grace past the immobile Skullards to the intruding figure. *Meoleas!*—Ghlaf reached out to bring him to his feet, the sailor who'd been sent out alone to retrieve the barter for this deal with the strange women—*Nau*—Qamus ordered him back. The man, Meoleas, had made it to his hands and knees; he wore only breeches, carried a small sack and clutched a large, thick-bladed knife; his bare toes dug into the ground; sweat rolled from him in fat droplets. With gestures alone, Qamus directed Sedis and Ghlaf; the assassins formed into ranks behind them, and from their formation came the last of his bodyguards, a mestiza, her skin browner than the boy's. She held a curved sword of mottled alloy. At her approach, the other two each stepped a foot onto one of the struggling man's hands. She touched the estoc of her blade against his neck, taking the hilt with both of her hands. The boy bent down and caught a few drops of the sailor's thick perspirings: he smeared it between

his fingers: he saw tiny specks of white suspended in the fluid—*prautayct me*—of all of them, only he had the chance to move back even one step, before a terrible blow struck the cathedral, higher than the window Meoleas had fallen from.

Vast and white and crystalline, a colossal shape pounded through the stones and came upon them. They sickened instantly in its presence, stumbled or writhed in vertigo, as its radiations fired their nerves, as if all flesh became eyes to its sun. It sundered the nets of the vault as it gathered itself into a clearer form, stretching up more than seventy feet. The thief now fairly bathed in a milky exudate; his companions had fallen away from him—but something of his plague had infected them. They began to drown in their own filth and blood, and none of them had been touched by or even so much as looked directly at the thing; they had no idea at all what was killing them. For its own part, the monster had difficulty perceiving them, except as aberrations in the order it knew. The trace it had left on poor Meoleas had drawn it here, and it had come to restore everything to its place. Unaware of itself or the others or of pain or anger, it began to vibrate with a song of loss and the justice that would negate it, until a much harsher discordance unbalanced its perceptions. It whirled on the Skullards, slashing away half the head and an entire shoulder of one of them, before they caught it. The boy and his companions found themselves suddenly reprieved. They looked through their tears to see it kneel before the five women. The nearest one, the one it had touched stepped to it, blood gushing from the spring of her wounds; she laid a hand to the crystal skull of the giant. It whimpered once, as the central figure raised her arm and made a slight, flicking gesture. Beneath the fingers of her proxy, a great crack sundered the swaying head, silencing it and extinguishing its light. This dullness traveled swiftly through its corpse; it became ash-grey within its shell in scant moments. One of the uninjured women stepped forward, turned to the boy and let her mouth fall open; he wiped his lips and stood, though he trembled. Her jaw remained perfectly still as a voice sounded from deep within her throat—*they saw a demon chase a thief into the cathedral...they saw it fall*—Qamus hobbled to the half-naked, bootless man, who had, incredibly, maintained his grip throughout the ordeal, and loosened his fingers from the bag. Halting only a little, he laid it at the feet of the Skullard.

*Master Kahmus, we can clean ourselves and rest at a house not far from here...I know this city well; I will lead the way*—he nodded his assent to his second guard. As they wound their way deeper into the alleys, pursued now only by the roar of the falling church, the auburn-haired assassin, Simo, looked askance at the boy—*she pronounces your name differently than the man...who says it right?—she says eet clahsahr, baht naht rayt—why don't you correct them?—ay dahnt hayr fahr nayms*—she smiled.

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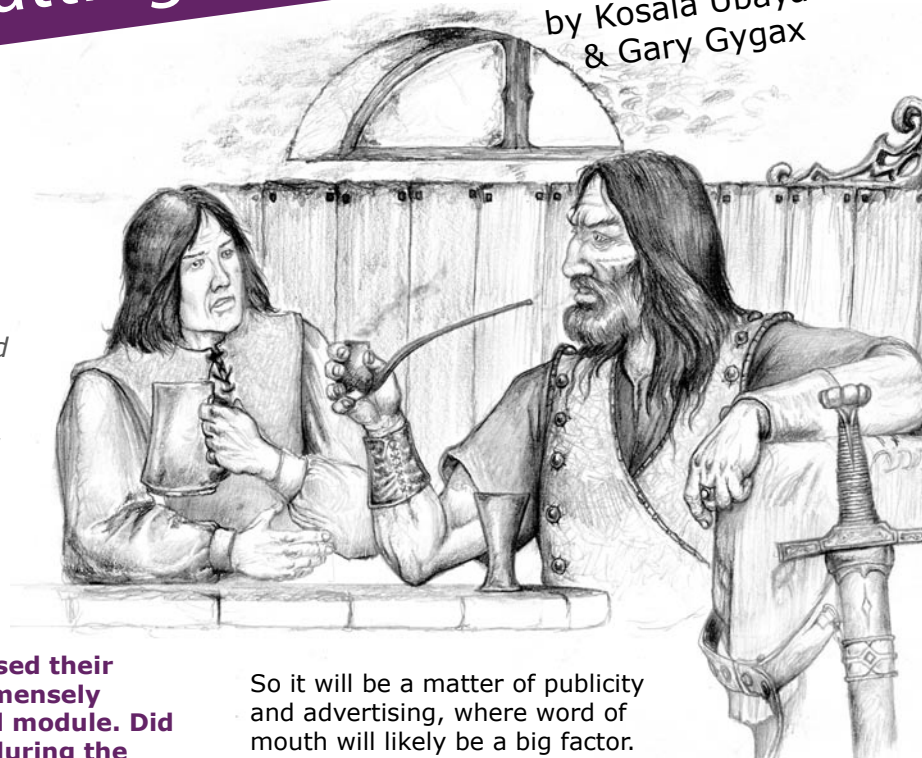
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# Chatting with Gary Gygax

by Kosala Ubayasekara  
& Gary Gygax

Welcome to the ninth edition of our regular monthly debate and informational pieces done in collaboration with Mr. Gary Gygax, the original creative mind behind the *Dungeons and Dragons* role-playing game. Today we ask the gaming guru more questions put forward by our members on the site.



**Q1: Troika Games recently released their computer adaptation of your immensely popular Temple of Elemental Evil module. Did the developers confer with you during the development of the game, and if so, in what capacity did you influence the game.**

Troika did indeed contact me before the ToEE computer game was released. They had about a half-dozen questions as to intent and their initial understanding was absolutely in agreement with what I had originally meant in the paper version of the adventure. In short, they really didn't need anything from me but confirmation that they had the whole module down pat. Even their new dual approach, players having the ability to play through with evil aligned PCs absolutely fits the spirit of the original. It is no wonder to me that the product is so well received. Troika has real gamers there converting the paper game to electronic format.

**Q2: Turbine and Atari are working together to develop a Massively Multiplayer Online (MMORPG) version of the D&D game set in WoTC's new game world - Eberron. The game has a release date set for 2005. Do you think this will conflict with the upcoming LA game MMORPG? Are both these games targeted at the same user base?**

It is certain that the target audience for all MMORPGs is the same, so yes. Any new entry in the field competes with all others. If the D&D game makes the 2005 release date, the likely one for the LA MMO game's release, the competition for players will be rough, for the D&D title is the best known, of course. What LAO has going for it is that it isn't yet another D&D-type game online, and has many technical features that I don't believe the competition will have.

So it will be a matter of publicity and advertising, where word of mouth will likely be a big factor.

**Q3: Some of the most popular gaming modules of the early years in D&D were written by you, yet I have not seen much work done in the way of modules for your Legendary Adventure product. Have I simply missed them or have you decided not to do set modules for the game?**

You have missed a bit, then;) While it is true that I have had to spend the majority of my creative time working on new RPG systems over the last 10 or so years, the Necropolis adventure module originally done for my Dangerous Journeys system Mythus FRPG made quite a splash when Necromancer games released it in d20 format. Last spring, Troll Lord Games published another module of mine, The Hermit, both in dual system d20 and LA game format.

The Trolls are currently working on a huge module I wrote, the Hall of Many Panes. It should take an average group about a year to play through if they have regular weekly game sessions lasting three to four hours each. The last I heard the HoMP was slated for release as a boxed set with two books and who knows what else in it. The release date was projected to be December, but that might have slipped.

Also in the works at Troll Lord Games will soon be an LA game primer version campaign-setting module named Living the Legend. It has a hamlet base setting and then various adventure scenarios for role-playing and combat, the latter including a lengthy dungeon crawl at the conclusion, so the module should provide at least 10 to 14 game sessions with

the fully written-out adventures provided. Of course, there are many adventure hooks and other suggestions so as to facilitate use as a campaign base. I am lobbying for the book to have a large color fold-out map of the village area, but the Author proposes, the Publisher disposes...

**Q4: On the Lejendary Adventure website, there is a notice about Dreamcadence Productions producing a series of accessories for the LA game line in their Incredibook format. Can you tell us a little more about what this is and what we can look forward to in this new venture?**

About all I can say in this regard is that it isn't likely to happen. The LA game system is not an open license, and anything produced using it as a basis is a derivative work that Trigeer Enterprises must own in order to protect its copyrights. Evidentially, that was not understood by Dreamcadence when they posted their announcement. They had no contract, and when one was sent, the matter of IP ownership ended their plan. From our perspective, the idea of producing and owning derivative material is quite unusual, shall I say. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the terms and conditions offered otherwise were professionally fair and on the generous side.

I must add that by no means will Trigeer ever offer any open licenses to the LA game system. The mess that the OGL and d20 license have produced should be a red flag to all IP owners.

**Q5: Troll Lord Games has announced on your forums that they are going to publish an introductory boxed set for the LA game RPG as well as support material. Can you expound on what kind of support material they are referring to?**

While the contract isn't signed and sealed, we have what is essentially a done deal with Troll Lord Games. Next year, they will indeed be publishing an LA game primer (lighter still) version in a boxed set--core rules, monsters and magic items, and a short adventure module, possible more, such as dice, included--followed closely by the campaign module mentioned above, Living the Lejend.

Also likely to appear from TLG in 2004 will be two core rules supplements to the LA game (Tomb of Knowledge supplementing the Lejendary Rules for all Players and the Lejend Master's Lore books plus More Beasts of Lejend), done in paperback, and possibly a hardbound book or two--one on Shamanism & Witchery, the other the Lejendary Pantheons book. If all goes as planned, in 2005 they will publish revised LA game core rules in hardback versions, thus replacing five paperback books with three hardbound ones, and one or more sourcebooks.

What is contemplated here is that Troll Lord Games will gradually assume the role of lead publisher for the LA game system, while Hekaforge Productions becomes the principle publisher of support material--modules mainly.

Finally, Trigeer is pleased to announce that Sentient Storm will be producing official LA game miniatures soon. That agreement is being executed by all parties concerned.

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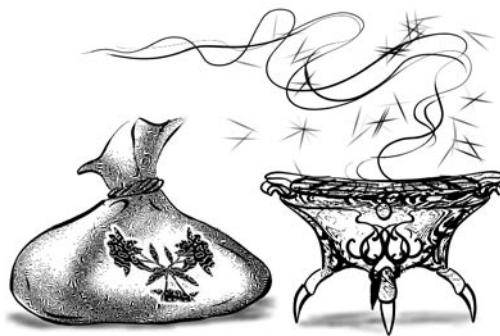
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## Faith Based Initiative: A Gamer's Guide to Religion: Oil and Water??

*By Eytan Bernstein*



Most gamers cringe when they think of Sunday school. The same goes for Hebrew school, bar mitzvahs, confirmation and other so-called wonderful events that go on in the life of someone raised in a religious tradition. Most of us have nothing but bad memories and mental (if not physical) scarring from our religious upbringing. So perhaps you are thinking--why is someone I've never met talking to me about how religion and gaming might mix? I've finally moved away from home and no one is making me go to church or say any stupid prayers. I hope that by the end of this article, you will feel a little bit more interested in how gaming and religion are related and a little less peeved about me bringing it up in the first place.

Perhaps I should tell you a bit more about myself so you can see why this subject interests me. I am 23 years old, a grad student in secondary social studies education program (which means being a middle or high school social studies teacher), a musician, a Jew, a gay male, and an American. Like many of you, my religious experiences growing up were sometimes rocky. I found that the intricacies of ancient cultures were interesting, but the dogma, traditions, and requirements were inflexible and intolerant. Around the age of 14, I began to discover that I had feelings that were anathema to my religious tradition. Over the next few years, I defined my sexual identity as gay and realized that my religion had absolutely no place for me. Homosexuality simply wasn't talked about and most gay people left the religious community. That's exactly what I decided to do as well.

My initial coming out experience was actually more accepting than most. When I was away at college, my sister announced that she was getting married. She had found a nice, handsome, successful, and rich Jewish boy. When my mother told me, it was as if a huge weight had been lifted from my chest. Now, there was someone else in the family who would grant grandchildren. Someone else would raise good little Jewish kids who would go to services and have bar mitzvahs. That someone no longer had to be me. So, I nonchalantly told my mother the following, "Mom, I am never getting married." She looked at me incredulously and said, "what does that mean? What do you mean you're never getting married? Oh... I guess I should have known. It just never occurred to me." In other words, you're gay, I guess I should have known sooner, but I wanted to live in a fantasy. My mother and father adjusted relatively easily. They took an interest, albeit distantly in my love life and wanted to be a part of my world as a whole. They came to realize that certain tenets of Judaism simply were not going to continue in my life at that point.

So, you might ask, how does this all relate to gaming? Throughout my teenage years, gaming was always an escape from stress and inner turmoil. I was dealing with something in which I had no support network and gaming was a way of relieving tension. Over time though, it grew to be so much more. Gaming grew to be a passion of mine. I enjoyed seeing stories played out and characters developed. I liked being able to do the impossible in a setting where the rules were all different, yet human nature remained essentially the same. What always seemed lacking to me was a sense that the worlds and characters had complex spiritualities and moral frameworks. Gaming so often painted pictures of fairly sanitary religious traditions. In some games, it was as if Christianity was converted into a polytheistic tradition without changing many of its basic functions. It simply didn't make sense. Most people used the Greyhawk gods as filler in Dungeons and Dragons because they don't feel like doing anything more with it. But I ask this—why go to the trouble of defining every aspect of a character's life, but skimp out on their beliefs.

Because of many peoples aversion or ignoring of religion, we end up with a lot of atheist D&D characters. If they are not atheists, they simply don't follow a god. I hate to break it to most gamers, but there is no such thing as an atheist or an agnostic in a medieval setting. That mindset simply doesn't exist. We could vastly enrich our gaming experience by finding a set of beliefs for our characters that reflect who they are. Maybe you were tormented by your religious upbringing. It's entirely likely that some characters might have been also. Characters often have as much if not more baggage than their players. If hack and slash is what you are about then this article probably doesn't interest you anyway. But if you are hoping to enhance your gaming experience, take a few minutes to think about what your character's religious motivations are. I did just that in my gaming experiences in Montreal.

I can say emphatically that Montreal is one of the best cities in the world to be a gamer. McGill University has such a large variety of people with so many different gaming interests. It was here that I really broadened my horizons and began to create truly 3 dimensional characters. It was also here that I picked up an interest in comparative religion. I started to learn how the different religious traditions were constructed. I researched how different cultures came to believe in magic, curses, gods, and monsters. Comparative religion was not studying the dogma of a religion, but rather, it was learning about how cultures came to be the way they are. I frequently wrote papers concerning things

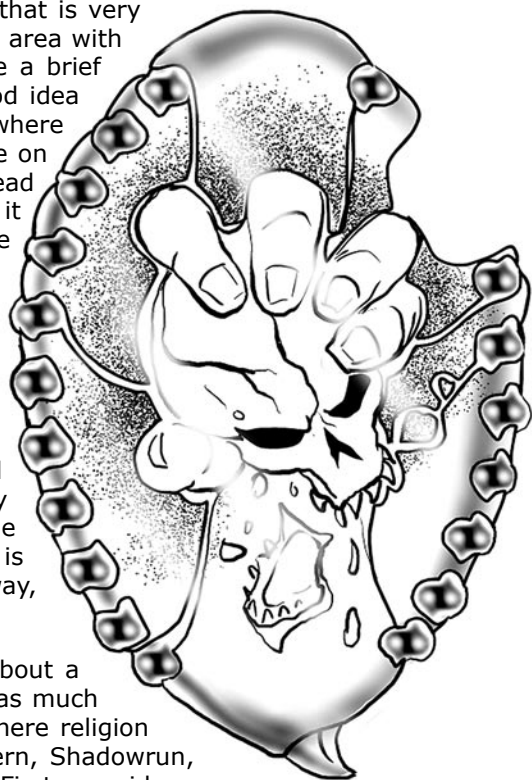
that interested me in gaming. I did a cross-cultural thesis on how magic developed in different religions. I came to realize that a people's worldview – the way they see the events of their existence – is their religion. Whether or not we attach a label to a tradition or god is almost irrelevant.

I took this notion with me when I finished my degree and moved back to New York. A few months ago, I came in contact with the Silven editor and chief. She was moving to my area and was interested in setting up a game. We corresponded for a while and she mentioned how she was interested in getting people to contribute to her fantasy setting. I looked at the website and thought it was really great stuff, but what seemed most lacking was a religious framework. I mentioned this and she said that it never occurred to her to really think about it. They had been using preexisting gods for their world. So, I decided to write up my own. I took a couple of months (due to a variety of other commitments), but eventually came up with a set of gods. I tied them into the world as it existed and the calendar. After we began instituting them in our new game, it became apparent that a unique set of gods and religious traditions in a world greatly enhanced the setting. We are still working on how all of this will play out, but I think it has added a great deal.

So where does all of this lead? I would hope that at the very least, people might start to think about how they can improve their gaming experiences by more fully considering their character's religious beliefs. Those beliefs don't have to have anything to do with the player's upbringing, but can if so desired. We all bring something of ourselves into gaming. No one but the best actors (or role-players) truly disappears completely into their characters. Why fight your natural inclinations? Take a little time to think about why you like playing the characters you do. Maybe then, you can more fully flesh out your characters into three-dimensional people.

I've created an informal checklist to help flesh out your character's religion (if you don't already have an idea). This is primarily for fantasy based systems, but I will write a bit about how to deal with modern characters as well.

First, think about where the character originates. If she is from a rural area, it is unlikely she will worship a god of thieves or inventions. Think about what the region was like in which she grew up and whether this lends itself to many gods or just one. An area that is very secluded might only have one god that is directly tied to the land. An area with many neighbors is more likely to have many gods. Next, determine a brief sketch of the character's life up until this point. I think this is a good idea for most characters anyway, though it does not work for all. Decide where your character has been, what kind of people he met, what his stance on crime is, and what organizations he might have joined. This should lead directly into the third question – alignment. Many people debate what it means and whether or not it even has a place in role-playing. For the time being, most of us still use it, so it's best to determine it for your character rather than having it forced on you. The previous questions you have answered should help make part four pretty simple, but some people may wish to deviate. Perhaps you were a simply country farm girl who lived in a remote region, but happened to come across a ruin that introduced you to a dark god. You could be an urbane city dweller who became one with nature when he got lost in the forest and met a bunch of druids. Your religion might also be something you inherited from family, though you may not relate to it very much (much like many of us today). Your beliefs may have even caused you to make some enemies. Religion in fantasy settings tends to be circumstantial. It is based on where you group up, your family, who you met along the way, and/or just pure happenstance.



We've seen what you might do with a fantasy character, but what about a modern character? Modern characters cannot attribute their religion as much to where they grew up. Sure, there are some places in the world where religion is a given, but in many settings where we play – such as D20 modern, Shadowrun, Palladium, or GURPS – there are many more complicated factors. First, consider your character's location even if you don't think it is a definite determining factor. If you grew up in the US, you are most likely to be Protestant, though there are minorities of Catholics, Jews, Buddhists etc. Next, consider what your character's childhood and upbringing were like. Did you go to Church or Synagogue? Was religion an emphasis in your family? Did you resent or embrace this? Third, consider your character's occupation. Today, occupation has less to do with religion than it did in the past. We have religious mobsters and atheist humanitarians. Unlike a fantasy setting where morality and religion are often directly linked, this is not so for modern settings. Despite this, your occupation may clash with your religious beliefs. You may need to be a bit more creative than in fantasy as we are often trying to simulate realism in modern characters. Your character could be an atheist, though this is often an easy way out. But, that is up to you. Even if you choose to make an atheist character, it is a good idea to decide how your character came to that decision. It is never something that popped out of nowhere. It is almost always a result of either conscious thought or negative religious experiences.

The following two checklists should help when you create a character. Keep in mind, these are meant as a guide. The ultimate idea here is to just to create a character that is fully fleshed out.

### **Fantasy Checklist**

- **Upbringing:** Where did the character grow up? (include region, religions of the area, history, etc..)
- **Influences:** Who did the character meet along the way (family, organizations, religions)
- **Alignment:** What is the character's moral framework (alignment, feelings on killing, issues of property).
- **Religion:** how do your upbringing, influences, and morality lead you to a religion? How does this religion affect your character's choices, goals, etc.? Did this religion lead you to make enemies, friends, allies? Are you at odds with your religion or do you have problems with it?

### **Modern Checklist**

- **Upbringing:** Was religion dominant in your home country? Were you a minority or were you part of the major group? Did your family go to services?
- **Occupation:** Do your occupation and beliefs clash? Is your job in any way related to your religious upbringing?
- **Atheism/Agnostic/Non-practicing:** There are legitimate reasons for modern characters to be atheists. If you are, is this something you struggled with for a long time? Or are you an agnostic who simply doubts the existence of God? If you are non-practicing, think of the reasons why you choose not to practice. Is it because of your upbringing or is it an active choice?
- **Religion:** Your religion should be a composite of upbringing, personal choice, lifestyle, occupation, personal experiences. If you are non-practicing, there should be reasons for it. Most people who don't practice were turned off by something. This should reflect in your character – it certainly reflects in the people we know.

This article has served as an introduction and discussion of how you might relate religion to your character. Here is a quick rundown of some of the other issues you'll see in the upcoming articles. First, I'll be tackling religious fundamentalism and its crusade against gaming. The ultimate question here is whether or not there is anything in gaming that actually violates anyone's religious convictions. Other topics may include the construction of pantheons - a discussion both of existing ones and how you might create your own. I will be examining how you might incorporate various preexisting world mythologies into your home game. If you have any questions or topics you'd like to discuss or see in a column, you can always contact the Ezine via comments or simply post on the Silven boards. For now, don't forget that gaming should always be about fun and that whatever you take from these articles is ultimately for your own further enjoyment of the gaming experience.

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# Bridge Wight

medium undead

**Hit Dice:** 6d12 (39hp)  
**Initiative:** +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)  
**Speed:** 30ft  
**AC:** 15 (+1Dex, +4 Natural)  
**Base Attack/Grapple:**  
**Attacks:** 2claws +6 melee  
**Damage:** claw 1d6+4  
**Face/Reach:** 5ft by 5ft/ 5ft  
**Special Attacks:** improved grab, strangle, create spawn  
**Special Qualities:** fast healing, turn resistant, spider climb, bridge bound  
**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +7  
**Abilities:** Str 17, Dex 13, Con -, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 15  
**Skills:** Listen +9, Tumble +10, Intimidate +11, Spot +9  
**Feats:** Improved Initiative, Alertness  
**Climate/Terrain:** any (bridges)  
**Organization:** Solitary, Packs(2-6)  
**Challenge Rating:** 3  
**Treasure:** 1/4 standard  
**Alignment:** Chaotic Evil  
**Advancement:** 7-12hd(medium size), 13-18hd(large size)  
**Level Advancement:**

## Description:

Bridge Wights resemble what they were in life, guardians of a bridge or similar span. That resemblance is only superficial, as upon closer inspection these desicated looking creatures are revealed for what they truly are, undead mockeries of what they represented in life. They are always dressed in the uniform they wore in life, though it is torn and dirty. Their bodies are nearly skeletal and their arms end in terrible claws. They peer out at the world with baleful glowing green eyes.

## Campaign Hooks:

The Bridge Wight can be encountered on a long unused bridge, or could be the first indication that a keep or town that your group frequents has been infiltrated due to the actions of a lazy or deceitful bridge guard.

## Combat:

The Bridge Wight is a cunning combatant. It will use its unassuming appearance to its advantage, outside of 30 ft it takes a spot check DC 20 to tell that a Bridge Wight is an undead creature. It usually attacks spellcasters or missile shooters first, attempting to use its very disturbing strangle attack against them. It will use its spider climb ability to crawl around the bridge and attack from various directions. If fired upon from a distance it will send its spawn out to try to deal with the attackers while it crawls under the bridge for cover.

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this Ability the Bridge Wight must hit with a claw attack. If it successfully grapples an opponent it will attempt to use its strangle attack on the next round.

**Strangle (Ex):** This disgusting attack is unique to the Bridge Wight. It will cough up some of its own entrails and tie them around an enemies neck. To do this it must succeed in making a grapple attack against an already grappled opponent, you then use the drowning rules in the dmg to track strangulation. The Bridge Wight can move on to a new opponent when this attack is successful, and it takes either a strength check DC 24 or escape artist check DC 22 to get out of. You cannot cut someone free of this without slitting their throat, so this is not an option.

This summer Silven Crossroads hosted a d20 monster contest. We are proud to present our winning entry here, sent to us from Eric Runyan.



**Create Spawn (Su):** Anyone killed by the Bridge Wights Strangle attack rises as a Zombie 24 hours later unless raised before then or consecrated. Destroying the body with fire also prevents the transformation.

**Fast Healing (Ex):** Bridge Wights heal 2 hp a round

**Turn Resistance(Ex):** Bridge Wights turn as an undead 4hd higher, and can never be forced to leave their bridge.

**Spider Climb (Su):** Bridge Wights act as if always under the effect of a Spider Climb spell.

**Bridge Bound:** If a Bridge Wight is ever removed from its bridge it is instantly destroyed

**Undead:** Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

## Habitat/Society:

Bridge Wights are created when guards assigned to a certain bridge either are killed while being extremely lax in their duties or are traitors who purposefully betray their duty. They are often encountered on the bridge to a ruined castle that was sacked because of their inattentiveness or betrayal. They are then cursed to do what they failed to do in life, guard the bridge.

# PC (Player Characterization) : The Organic Method

By Pike Stephenson

Welcome to the first issue of Player Characterization in what I hope to be a long run of informative pieces to aide in character development and playability. I chose the title Player Characterization because it is the key emphasis of these articles; focusing on the character as an individual and how your portrayal of her can enhance gaming sessions for all involved.

Let's start with something I call "the Organic Method". How many times has the following scenerio happened to you?

Your Game Master is starting a new campaign and has asked you to create new characters for the next gaming session. With what little information the GM provides, you spend countless hours working out a detailed genealogy going back seventeen generations. Then, you develop a complex personality matrix full of likes/ dislikes, favored color combinations and food tolerances. Finally, just to round her out, you write out your character's personal history from conception up to the last five minutes just in time for the first game. You are SO ready to play her because you know this character inside and out, yet...

By the end of the first session your masterpiece felt lifeless, devoid of personality and flatter than three month old road kill, so flat that you turn the entire biography into confetti. What went wrong? Why didn't she spring to life and dazzle the other players, or you? Everything felt right prior to the game but within the confines of the new campaign world, many details or her personality just didn't fit or some role-playing aspects came up at the table that you wished you would have included. Now what?

Take a moment to sweep up your mess and try an alternative approach called the Organic Method. No, this is not about modern gardening but rather a method of character development that starts with the basics and uses the fertile environment of a gaming session to create a fun and exciting character persona!

## Step #1: The Skeleton (You and a Blank Piece of Paper)

When you start a game cold, trying to make your character fit can be complicated or disruptive. Even if you think you know her intimately (as in the above example), you could be forcing her to react or over-react during the game, which is worse than not reacting at all. Since this is all new, there isn't any real drive or motivation to force your character into the maw of danger. This lack of a deeper connection with the setting is to be expected and should be taken advantage of.

The first session is always a learning experience for both the GM and players. While the GM is trying to establish the new environment with powerful descriptions and engaging story hooks, the players

attempt to absorb the world they have thrust their characters into. The basic question is: where to start?

The simplest thing to do at the opening session is play to a stereotype. I'm aware that this goes against everything most role-players live for. We so often try to develop characters that stand apart from the rest and not some worn-out cliché. Trust me; this method will help lead you and your character towards that goal.

By stereotype, I refer to three key components: genre, profession, and race. Each has its own built-in precepts you can quickly adapt and utilize for building a mock personality. With genre, you borrow from the wonder of the setting. Fantasy offers realms of ringing steel and dazzling magic. Sci-fi rockets you from one bizarre universe to the next. A Superhero setting pits you outside the law fighting mad men bent on world domination. Each of these provides an identifiable concept to slip into and play.

Genre is by far the easiest of the three to pull ideas from. Any one of us can look back to novels, television programs, or movies that have drawn us into different worlds full of colorful characters that stand out from the crowd. If you think back, many of these stories would be dry and lifeless if it wasn't for the diverse personalities running amuck. Would Star Wars have been half as fun if Han Solo wasn't such a risk taker haunted by his numerous mistakes? Finding inspiration through these mediums should not be difficult. Think about all you have seen or read and find one character you enjoyed the most that fits, or at least comes close to, your current character. Chances are your GM has filled his campaign with many familiar non-player characters the same way.

Next, your character's profession lends more basic ideas to work from. Whether you are playing an up front fighting type, armed to the teeth and ready for battle, or a healer of mind and body, your character's "job" defines her. Within each genre, character classes/ professions/ archetypes provide clues as to what makes this person do what they do. Read through your game book descriptions as most of these provide colorful summaries of the jobs or classes and the kind of individuals who perform them.

In most RPGs, players have a list of races outside of human to choose from. Many of these races have a predefined attitude or trait that sets them apart and you can use. Most of these traits were designed to help the player get into the minds of the unique perspective of an alternative race. It would be just as difficult to pretend that you were from Russia as it would to be an elf without some knowledge of the culture and definable attitudes. Again, these can feel extremely stereotypical but they are also a necessary crutch to ground your character within her world.

From these three elements, borrow what you need to play and prepare to move towards the second stage of development.

### Step #2: Adding Meat to the Bones (Taking a Cue from the Game Master)

Paying attention to the details presented by the GM is a tremendous aide in crafting your character. A good campaign combines tone (dark, epic, or farce), plot (defining elements that act like a lodestone pointing towards a specific goal) and player character involvement. Unless you have a strong grasp of the first two ingredients, the third will often fall short.

If your GM hasn't provided you with a brief write up about the campaign, take some time during the first session to jot down a few game notes. Is there an obvious theme that exists throughout the game? Are there any social concepts that the non player characters convey, such as class perceptions, racial tolerances or common fears of magic and power? Often, it's the NPCs that act as a "looking glass" for the players. Getting a sense of where the NPCs are coming from can open a whole new world of characterization ideas.

Keep track of the NPCs that you feel would have the greatest impact on your character. Later, after the session, ask your GM more about them. He will most likely have plot twists and hidden agendas he's not ready to divulge but remind him of this: your character did not grow up in a vacuum. She witnessed nations grow and crumble, monumental discoveries in science and history or may have even participated in the coming of a new age. Your character existed before taking flight in this bold new adventure and you GM should help provide you with the details to breathe some life into her.

Also, by emphasizing some choice pieces of campaign material, you will directly involve your character in the thick of it. Guilds, secret societies, underground movements or interplanetary coalitions are general examples that could offer role-playing potential and an agenda that may parallel your maturing character. Many causes or fights have a tone all their own and would greatly define your character's personality and give her some serious drive when it comes time for character interaction!

Now there is one last place to help cultivate your character's personality- the other players.

### Step #3: Fleshing it out (Taking a Cue from the Group)

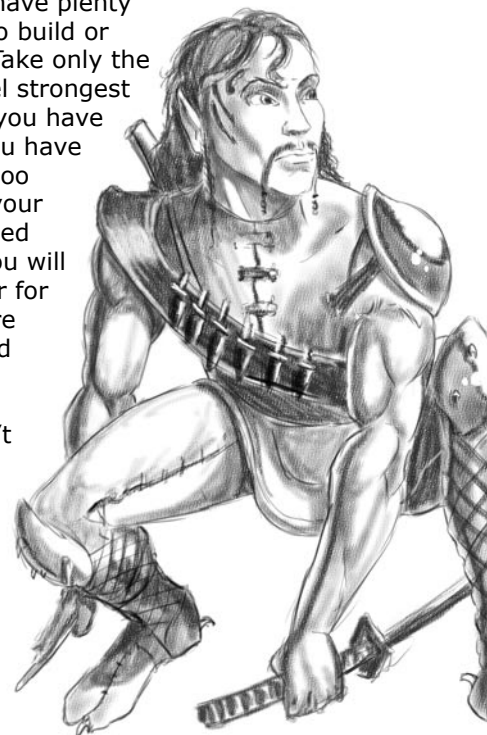
Within every gaming group there seems to be a player or two that have little to no trouble slipping into a character. They put on a game face with practiced ease and magically enhance the feel of the session. Whether it's a gift, talent or a fluke, these folks thrive on the challenges of role-playing. Others tend not to worry about the play acting and focus on the game at hand. They're steadfast and true to themselves and play off of

some aspects of their characters, just enough to get by. Sitting amongst this ensemble, you can gain another avenue to play your character and fill in any gaps left by the group.

Watch for the emerging personalities of the other characters. Sneak, vengeful, compassionate or boisterous are some examples of common personalities that players grant their PCs. Too many of one type can make the game a competition and those involved may lose sight of the direction of the campaign. The wrong types, those that go against the grain of the campaign tone, will certainly cause ample friction and propel your Game Master into a hair pulling frenzy. As the game progresses, make a list of the other PCs ethnic backgrounds, professions, and personalities. If another player has a character similar to yours, list their similarities and their differences. Are there some personality quirks that you can exploit that they haven't? Does your character's strength(s) mirror the other characters? How about weaknesses? Flaws and weaknesses offer wonderful opportunities to shape a character.

Another suggestion is to ask the players why they are portraying their characters in a particular way. A brief description lets you know their general demeanor and could help them find areas of their character they may want to build upon or others they might wish to change. As you establish who these other "people" are you will be able to get a deeper connection with this person you are pretending to be.

In the end, you should have plenty of material with which to build or rebuild your character. Take only the information that you feel strongest about. Don't think that you have to include everything you have seen or heard because too much detail could turn your character into the dreaded cliché. With any luck, you will be playing this character for a long time so make sure that you find her fun and interesting. If you don't like her then what's the use of playing her? Don't squeeze her personality out, let it grow. It may take a couple of gaming sessions but in the end, she will be someone you know and love.



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# Polyglot : Gathering Information

A monthly column by Dana Driscoll

Welcome back to Polyglot, your source for RPG language insight. Last time we discussed language down to the most basic of levels—naming. This month, we tackle the rather overlooked subject of language-based information sources—including the media, the town gossip, local newspapers, and word-of-mouth.

Information is a central driving force in any campaign, and as a DM, you have to figure out how to give your player characters the information they need for the session to work (or perhaps more accurately stated, the way you want it to work.) So how do you accomplish this task? Do you find yourself always resorting to a summons, an event, or simply a call for adventurers? There are multitudes of ways that PCs can find out the necessary information. This article will detail both classic methods and a few little-used alternatives in information gathering.

## Information Basics

Basic information is essentially the same, regardless of what type of campaign you are running. The following list of interrogative questions all apply to the information you will be providing to your players—*Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?* All of these questions may not need addressed depending on the type of information and what it is being used for in the campaign. Remember, however, your PCs still might ask, so be prepared to answer each of these if necessary. For some types of sessions, the lack knowledge about one or more of these questions can be a motivating force, as in the case of solving a mystery.

Your campaign setting will have a major impact on the way information is used and how fast it travels. If you are playing in a modern or futuristic setting, the ways of gaining information and the speed of information travel is enhanced when compared with your standard fantasy setting. Without powerful technology or magic, information will be slow to spread and when passed on by word of mouth, often plagued with inaccuracies.

An important thing to remember about information in general is that there is no completely accurate fact. Each individual will see a situation from a different angle and/or interpret what he or she sees a different way. This also means that while there can be individual truth, there is no completely accurate way to view an event—each person, bringing his or her experiences and motivations will interpret what he or she hears and sees in a slightly different way.

## Method #1: Word of Mouth

Quite easily the most basic of information sources, the “word of mouth” method, also known as town gossip, usually works only for the most basic information types. While the common folk might not know much, they are usually very attentive to happenings in the town and, therefore, have a wealth of information not provided by other sources. I have observed that in my campaigns, PCs tend to believe whatever townfolk tell them, making word-of-mouth a rather prominent tool. Consider that in many cases, the piece of information known has been spread entirely too thin, and the original meaning lost, distorted, or changed by one or more individuals.

Keeping those things in mind, word of mouth can be a very useful tool—and is often one of the first PCs will attempt to utilize. How can you use word-of-mouth to further your campaign? Here are some suggestions:

- *Remember that what the townfolk observe is only a fraction of what is really going on.* While townfolk may be a good source of general information based on what they overhear or see, they usually only know bits and pieces of the truth. A normal individual who is uninvolved in local activity but sees something suspicious will speculate, which can lead to false rumors.
- *Most rumors are false.* How can the PCs be sure that the information they learn or the rumors they overhear are the truth? Is it possible that the rumor has, in actuality, been started by an individual to further some plan? Has someone spread the rumor to cause a stir to shift the town’s attention elsewhere? There are all sorts of reasons that the information the PCs find out from the townfolk is twisted, constructed, or downright false.
- *The town gossip can be a very effective tool.* There are usually one or two individuals in a town (many more in a city), who stand out as the “know-it-alls.” These people are like collectors, but instead of collecting antiques, magic items, or coins—they collect gossip. The town gossip may have his or her

own agenda when conveying information to the PCs. The town gossip may even be paid off to mislead the PCs when providing information.

- *The townsfolk can lie to cover up facts.* Just like the town gossip, who might be coerced in some way to mislead the party, entire towns can be paid off or blackmailed to keep their lips sealed or convey inaccurate facts to lead the party astray.

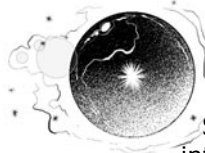
### Method #2: The Local Bard or Scop

Often more well-versed and well-traveled than the town gossip, the local storyteller, traveling scop, or bard, can be a wealth of information—but usually at a price. A bard is an information-dealer by trade, collecting information and then selling it at a profit. Some scops may even trade information—if you can give her a good tale, she may give you the information you are looking for in return. The sale can be in the form of a conversation or limeric, but bards are also known for their songs, dances, and general (but often fact-filled) entertainment. And just like everyone else, be sure to develop wants, desires, and motives for your local scop.



### Method #3: Local Authorities

Similar to the town gossip, the local authorities, government, merchants, land owners, and other involved parties will have their own agendas and/or political struggles to deal with. How much they will say or the validity of what they say can be called into question. Just like a town gossip, local authorities can be coerced or bribed into keeping their mouths shut, giving false information, or misleading the party to further their own schemes.



### Method #4: Seers and Fortune Tellers

Seers and fortune tellers are an interesting but sometimes dangerous element to add into your game. Before considering using them, you have to decide whether the power to see into the future and the past is a real gift or simply moneymaking scheme in your campaign world. Once you have decided this, you can plan accordingly. Perhaps in your world there are both types, and it is difficult for the two to be told apart.

If you are dealing with an NPC scam artist set up as a fortuneteller, remember to make it as believable for the PC as possible. How does the scam artist operate? Does he have a crystal ball, perfume, and use illusions to help gain the coins from the travelers purse? Usually, scam artists will speak in riddles and keep things very general. They never will give specific dates, times, or descriptions. Their “predictions” and “insights” into an individual’s life are usually so general that they can be applied to just about everybody. Also, a false prophet will most likely never tell the party that their future is full of trials, tribulation, and death. After all, people are more likely to pay for a good fortune than a bad one. Examples of possible fortunes include:

- *You have recently fallen into some trouble.*
- *While you wish you had more money now, the future will bring wealth.*
- *While your past is troubled, your future is bright.*
- *I see a man in your future who will hold your destiny.*
- *You are in control of your own fate.*

Scam artists can also be a way to bait the PCs for trouble. If an adversary has a vendetta against the PCs, what better way than to hire a pseudo-fortune teller to lead the PCs astray.

True visionaries can be a powerful enemy or ally. If divination spells or powers are part of your game, consider placing a diviner in a town to either bait your PCs or provide them valuable information that could help their quest in the future.

### Method #5: Publications and Media

Have you ever considered using newspapers, flyers, broadcasts, or other forms of media to convey information? The media can be an amazing source of game-enriching news for your PCs to learn.

Before creating or developing any type of media, several questions need to be considered. The same types of considerations that are given to the town gossip and authorities can be given to local media—who owns it? Who runs it? Who pays them? Who bribes them? Where do their interests lie? What are the freedom of speech laws in the area? Knowing the “players” on the local and national scene can help you create a believable bias.

Different types of media usually take a bit more time to prepare, but can be well worth it. For the best results, newspapers and other forms of media need to be prepared in advance. Actually creating the documents in question will give you the best in-game results, but if that is not possible, at least writing down what the documents might contain is a good idea. A simple set of “wanted” ads posted on the wall when your players walk in the door for the session can add depth to a campaign (especially if the posters have one or more of the PCs faces.) When you know your PCs are looking for an adventuring job, creating a classified/job board (such as one that would be found at the local inn or eatery) can give them an interactive way to choose a new adventure. You can use a particle board and tacks, or simple sticky notes on the wall to achieve this purpose.

The web can be a great resource to keep your campaign going between sessions by creating a “local” newspaper where the players can read the latest events of the world. Depending on how broad

your campaign is, you can make it a local paper or a more general regional newspaper. While most DMs simply do not have the time to create entire newspapers for a town, creating a few headlines or one story is a quick way to achieve the illusion of a real paper without all of the work.

If your game is set in a modern or futuristic setting, other media methods may be available—radio and television broadcasts, a regional or galactic information sharing network, or data capsules. Be creative within the confines of the setting you use.

### Method #6: Letters and Correspondence

Do not ignore the power of messenger and mail systems within your campaign. How is the mail handled in your campaign setting? Is there a regular service or do private individuals act as messengers and couriers? Is information digital and therefore instantaneous? Are there powerful magic users who will send instantaneous messages for a high price? Does the party need to contact an individual? How important is the message? Can they intercept messages from others? Can others intercept their messages?

If you are using messages and mail within your campaign, again, creating the actual documents can add a level of depth for your players. And as always, keep in mind that couriers, messengers, or message senders may all have their own agenda.

### Information Sources: The Players Perspective

While the majority of this article is devoted to a DMs handling of information, players also need to understand how to interpret and use information sources within a campaign. Here are some tips and questions to ask to help you along:

- Who are you getting the information from?
- How reliable does this person appear? Do you have reason to trust the information provider?
- Can you collaborate the information with multiple, varied sources? If sources differ, does one side seem more predominant than the other?
- Remember that some information can be found from sources you do not expect. If you are searching for information on an individual, their enemies or adversaries may know more and be willing to share more than anyone else.
- Look for information in the most unlikely of places.
- While some information may be misleading, other information is correct. Be sure to take all information into consideration, however unlikely it may seem.

Remember when distributing or seeking information and sources, consider validity, trustworthiness of speaker, and possible motives. I also look forward to addressing any questions or comments you may have, so feel free to contact me.

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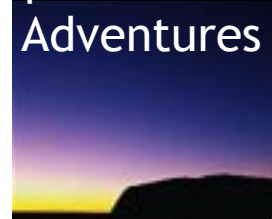
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A monthly column by  
Shane Cubis  
this month with the able assistance  
of Marnie Landrigan

# NED KELLY

## Antipodean Adventures



G'Day all. This month, as promised, I want to focus on the most famous of Australian bushrangers – Ned Kelly. Kelly has a special place in the heart of Australians. He is an icon, and his image can be found on everything in Australia from signs that warn against shoplifting to sliced bread. Kelly, and his accompanying gang, were the last of the bushrangers. They have inspired innumerable stories and many films. The first feature length movie ever made was about the man himself, filmed here in Australia. First, let's take a look at why Ned has become such a hero to the people of this broad, brown land.

### **Background, or What Happened?**

Ned Kelly was born in 1854 of Irish, Catholic convict stock, which did not leave him held in very high esteem among the rulers of the colony. At fifteen, he was arrested for his part in two robberies alongside infamous bushranger Harry Power. The Kelly family was routinely harassed. A notable instance of this harassment occurred when a trooper by the name of Constable Fitzpatrick came to the Kelly homestead, attempting to drunkenly court Ned's sister Kate. Dan (Ned's younger brother) knocked him down and the trooper's pistol fired. Fitzpatrick somehow cut his hand in the scuffle. Ned, who claimed to have been miles away at the time of the incident, was later accused of shooting the trooper through the hand. In the aftermath of this affair, Mrs Kelly was sentenced to three years jail for assisting in the attempted murder of a policeman. Ned evaded capture, and swore revenge on Fitzpatrick and the establishment he represented.

Kelly's most infamous run-in with the police, beyond his final showdown at Glenrowan, occurred at Stringybark Creek. Four policemen – Constables Scanlon, Lonigan, McIntyre and Sergeant Kennedy, on the hunt for Ned and his gang, made camp at the creek. Unbeknownst to them, the Kelly Gang were camped less than a mile away. Ned spotted the troopers on one of his regular reconnaissance trips, and headed back to camp to warn his comrades, knowing that as outlaws he and Dan would be shot on sight.

The next day, when Kennedy and Scanlon were away from their camp, the gang snuck up and demanded the surrender of Lonigan and McIntyre. Lonigan jumped up, and was immediately shot dead. McIntyre threw down his arms. When Kennedy and Scanlon returned, Ned demanded their surrender as well. A gunfight ensued, as both parties dodged through the bush, exchanging fire. Ned, an expert marksman, shot Kennedy and Joe (another member of the Kelly Gang) killed Scanlon. McIntyre fled on horseback. The gang covered the remains of their fallen foes with blankets – a curiously honourable gesture – before taking their weapons and

leaving the area.

McIntyre's report, wherein he painted the altercation as a cowardly ambush, sparked an area-wide search for the Kelly Gang. They lost much public support, but as the police grew more tyrannous in their search – holding suspected allies of the gang for months and raiding homesteads without warrants – this grassroots support once again began to grow.

Euroa was the gang's next big haul. They robbed the National Bank in that town, relieving the establishment of 2000 pounds in coins and notes. They also burnt a number of records (probably saving some poor farmers from having to pay back their debts!)

During the next bank robbery, in which the gang stole some police uniforms in order to hold up the Bank of New South Wales, Ned set out his political agenda in a famous document now known as the Jerilderie Letter (named after the town in which it was written). In this 10,000 word document, which was more of a manifesto than anything else, he referred to his enemies as "a parcel of big ugly fat-necked wombat-headed big-bellied magpie legged narrow-hipped splay-footed sons of Irish Bailiffs or English landlords which is better known as officers of Justice or Victoria police..." He also outlined the reasons for his life of crime – he aimed to create a self image that reflected a revolutionary rather than a common thief and murderer. Ned passed the Jerilderie Letter on to a local newspaper editor, understanding the importance of the media in drumming up popular support.

Glenrowan was the place where Kelly fell. He and his gang took over the stationmaster's office. Knowing that a train full of troopers was probably headed their way, the Kellys had ripped up the train tracks, hoping that the ensuing wreck would take out a significant proportion of their opposition. Ned planned to pick off any survivors as they emerged from the wreckage. The gang, with townsfolk as hostages in tow, moved over to the Glenrowan Inn, where they threw a party. Most of the 'hostages' were Kelly supporters, who amused themselves with drinking, dancing and long-jump competitions. A school teacher by the name of Curnow, who taught history, convinced Ned to let him take his wife and children home. After gaining Kelly's trust, Curnow ran to the track and flagged down the train with a lantern wrapped in a red silk handkerchief. He did so because he wanted to be a part of the history he taught.

The police, numbering around fifty, left the halted train and quickly made their way to the area around the Glenrowan hotel, moving quietly through the trees. By

Sam they had the place surrounded. They called out to the Kellys to surrender, and received a response as the gang emerged from the hotel with guns blazing. After the first exchange, Dan, Steve, and Joe (who had been shot in the leg) retreated back into the structure. Dan ordered the townsfolk trapped in the hotel to lie flat, so as to avoid being shot. Ned did not return to the hotel, but stayed among the trees, dressed in a suit of armor and a helmet crafted from iron.



Women and children who attempted to flee the hotel were fired upon by police, who kept up a steady rate. Around dawn, Joe Byrne stood up during the gunplay and drank a toast to the gang from a bottle of whiskey. Halfway through, a bullet pierced his groin and he fell, dead. Kelly had made his way back to the hotel to rescue his companions, and arrived just in time to see Joe fall. Dazed, and losing blood, he stumbled out the back and passed out in a ditch. He woke up two hours later, loaded three guns and staggered to his feet.

Kelly emerged from early morning mist, still dressed in his ninety pound suit of armor. The bullets of the police could not penetrate the metal, and it seemed that Ned was invincible as he took the lives of his foes one by one. Alas, one of the troopers noticed that Kelly's legs were unprotected. Shots were aimed squarely at these extremities, and Ned was swiftly brought down.

Later that day, the police wished to flush out the remaining members of the gang, who they believed were still holed up in Glenrowan Hotel. They attempted to do so by setting fire to the western side of the building with kerosene-soaked straw. As the fire blazed, a priest named Father Gibney rushed inside when he heard that a townsman could possibly still be trapped inside. He found the dead bodies of Steve Hart and Dan Kelly, who appeared to have committed suicide in the realization that their battle was futile.

Kelly was nursed back to health before being tried and hanged, in the same prison which still held his mother. Her final words to him were "Mind you die like a Kelly, son." He was 25 years old.

### **Principal Characters or NPCs**

**Ned Kelly (1854 – 1880):** Ned tended to be a man of action rather than thought. He was a fierce Irish nationalist, and a hater of police. Articulate and loyal to his friends and family, Ned saw his life of crime as more of a rebellion against the English state than a simple matter of robbing people for money. After being brought down in a blaze of gunfire at Glenrowan, he was hanged on November 11th, 1880.

**Dan Kelly (1861 – 1880):** The loyal younger brother of Ned, he was more of a thinker than his brother. His sensible advice was often ignored by the gang's leader.

Dan was extremely loyal to his family, and would do anything for them. At Glenrowan, his body was burned beyond recognition.

**Steve Hart (1859 – 1880):** Hart was a former jockey, and was aged only 21 when he was killed. He had a public argument with Ned during the Jeriderie raid, in which Steve took a clergyman's fob watch and Ned demanded he return it. He was once heard to say to Dan, "A short life and a merry one." The first part of this statement was certainly true. His body, like Dan's, was burned beyond recognition in the fire of Glenrowan.

**Joe Byrne (1857 – 1880):** Byrne was a wise, patient man and a friend of Ned and Dan for almost all their lives. Legend goes that he enjoyed a regular appetite for opium and women. He was present at Stringybark, and was from that moment on a full member of the gang. Joe was killed by a bullet to the groin. In the end his scorched body was tied to a door in a lifelike position so that photographs could be taken of it by local journalists.

**Aaron Sherritt (18?? – 1880):** Sherritt was a friend of the gang, who betrayed the gang by informing the police of their activities. If he had been present at Stringybark, it is likely that he would have been a member of the gang alongside the others. He was threatened and cajoled by the police, and inadvertently implicated Byrne as a member by asking that Joe be spared punishment (in return for Sherritt's information). Byrne heard about Sherritt's betrayal of the Kellys, and in a fury he went to Aaron's house and shot him dead. This murder, in part, led to the events at Glenrowan.

**Harry Power (1819 – 1891):** Power was of a generation of bushrangers that led the way for the likes of Kelly and his gang. He courted Mrs. Kelly for a number of years, and it was during this time that Ned was shown (rumored reluctantly) the life of crime that he was later to embrace, through an apprenticeship with the old outlaw.

### **Basic Adventure Ideas**

1. The Kelly gang have been arrested, and it is up to the PCs, who are local to the region, to bust them out of jail before they are executed.
2. The PCs are guarding a mail coach, which is held up by the Kelly Gang. They may fight them off, or join them – sparking off a whole bushranger campaign (as seen in last month's *Antipodean Adventures* column).
3. The PCs are policemen and detectives brought over from Europe, and they have been charged with the task of bringing the Kellys to justice. They must track the gang down in the bush (a task which will be made harder due to the fact that the Kellys know it like the back of their collective hands) and bring them back to town, dead or alive.
4. The PCs take on roles within the Kelly Gang, or play a rival bushranging gang that meets up with and helps/hinders the Kelly Gang with their adventures.



## Other Genres

**Space Fantasy/Science Fiction:** Captain Ned Kelly of the Starship Glenrowan gathers together a band of followers (the PCs) and travels to the planet of Cubisia-6 to seek revenge on the corrupt, tentacled space-police officer who kidnapped his sister and framed his mother for attempted murder. Along the way, they gain the help of a number of steadfast supporters including an antiques dealer who knows a great deal about anachronistic armor, a infamous bare hands boxer who Ned defeats in a bout and subsequently befriends Ned, and a league of beautiful women who will go to all kinds of crazy lengths to help their heroes succeed.

**Fantasy:** A half-orc family in a primarily human settlement is being mercilessly picked on and accused of horrendous crimes by the local, allegedly paladin-like constabulary. Now the eldest son, a hotheaded half-orc named N'ed, has been arrested for the murder of a local guard. He will be beheaded unless the PCs can prove his innocence.

**Modern:** The government intends to sell off a bundle of land to overseas investors, ignoring the fact that it is currently inhabited by the PCs and their brethren – who have been offered nothing in compensation and issued with a notice demanded they vacate the area immediately. The PCs must turn to a life of crime and rebellion to stop these nefarious plans and save their community.

**Horror:** The Kelly Gang rise up from the dead, flanked by the remains of all who opposed them. The whole bunch look like wraiths trapped in a twisted mockery of the armor he wore during his last stand at Glenrowan. They will stop at nothing to bring down the government and make Australia an Irish Republic. Or, if this is too political for your gaming group, they need to kill all the descendants of the men who killed them.

**Humour:** Turn Ned's helmet into a garbage can. Hilarity will ensue.

**Pulp:** A young hothead has taken it upon himself to recreate the Kelly legend. Wearing armor that masks his face, this anonymous character has embarked on a life of crime, aided by high tech gadgets and an almost supernatural dexterity. The PCs have to track him down and bring him to justice. His true identity will be a shock for all involved.

## Conclusion and Resources

The image of Ned's helmet is a powerful symbol in Australia. "As game as Ned Kelly" used to be a widespread simile, and his life has been the subject of many different books, artworks, songs and movies. The popularity of the recently released film starring Heath Ledger is a tribute to power his story still holds for us today. I have included the names of some resources below, which offer more information and flavour on the Kelly gang.

**Books:** There are a multitude of books on Ned and his gang, but I have chosen a select few of quality and

merit.

Peter Carey, *The True History of the Kelly Gang* (2000): This first person narrative allows readers to feel complete empathy for Kelly and attempts to draw conclusions as to what really motivated his actions. The style of the writing is taken from the largely unpunctuated flow of the Jerilderie Letter, to give a sense of authenticity.

Ian Jones, *Ned Kelly: A Short Life* (1995). This academic history 'textbook' provides detailed facts on every important aspect of the Kelly Gang. Ian Jones is regarded as the leading spokesman on Kelly history and has been called upon by many film makers, authors, and artists to verify facts.

Brian Ridden, *Whistleman* (2000). This recent fictional text centers on a young boy whose life crosses paths with the Kelly gang. It views Ned Kelly favorably, as somewhat of a saint or hero and poignantly reveals how obsessed the Australian nation is with this part of our history, all through the metaphor of a young boy's journey.

**Movies:** Most of these movies are titled the same way – with an imaginative twist on the protagonist's name. Hence I have added the year of release and a bit about each film so they can be differentiated.

*Ned Kelly* (1970): Stars Mick Jagger as Kelly. This film is terrible, and avoids any acquaintance with historical truth. Still, it may be useful for some flavor or a good laugh.

*Reckless Kelly* (1993): A ridiculous Yahoo Serious vehicle – a follow up to 'Young Einstein'. Ned is a modern-day video store owner and motorbike rider who travels to Hollywood for some reason. His helmet is a garbage can.

*Ned Kelly* (2003): An excellent retelling, with an emphasis on realism and empathy for the character.

*Ned* (2003): A comedy version of the legend, coincidentally made at the same time as the film above. Ned's helmet is once again swapped for a garbage can.

**Artworks:** The most well known pieces of 'Kelly' art were created by Sidney Nolan in the 1940s. These artworks have simplified the Kelly legend into one unforgettable symbol – the black helmet. Such is the power of this artwork that it has become living symbols of the Australian identity, famous in its own right, and applauded in events such as our 2000 Olympic Games opening ceremony.

**Websites:** This is the ideal place for international readers to find out more about Ned Kelly and bushrangers in general. Some of my research for this article came from the sites below. In these sites you can find maps of the region, pictures of the gang and armor, and more information for your Ned Kelly campaign.

[www.ironoutlaw.com](http://www.ironoutlaw.com), <http://www.nedkellysworld.com.au>, [www.nedkellythemovie.com](http://www.nedkellythemovie.com)

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## Star's Night Part 3

By Aaron Todd

*Ynara had been a patient woman. She had been waiting for five years to get a solid lead. She was certain that this Bollen could tell her something. So, when she lost the hand, she would stick around long enough to let the dealer finish for the day and then follow it. She would have been right behind the unknowing messenger if she hadn't been detained by a low-life hustler who thought he could muscle his money from her.*

Once outside, Ynara quickly looked around, hoping beyond reason that the Bollen had not already disappeared. Down the somewhat busy street to her right about a hundred yards away, she saw it turning a corner. There may have been seventy or eighty people between her and the corner, but she did not see any of them as she broke into a brisk run towards the spot.

Reaching the corner, she slowed, not wanting to alert it in any way or raise any suspicion. She looked around the corner and noticed that this street was significantly less crowded. She could see the fat man and his mechanized assistant about a hundred feet away. She could walk quickly enough without causing a stir and catch up to them in a minute or two.

The Bollen actually moved much better than she would have thought for a being his size. He waddled his way along the road with his pudgy little legs moving as though they were much longer than they were. The ART appeared labored by the slowness of the pace and the suitcase that it carried, but it was not likely bothered by it.

This street was mostly residential. There were many single-story homes which would provide her less cover for her intended activities, but there might just be enough going on so as not to draw too much attention to her when she made her move.

There was a local security enforcer a few houses down and on the opposite side. She had only seen a couple of them since she had landed and knew that they were not very aggressive in these parts. They were used more to prevent riots and large-scale activity than deal with petty commotion.

Still, she would have to keep at least a peripheral perspective on him. She had drawn enough attention from security personnel in other sectors. She didn't need to add this one. She would move along the street as quickly as she could without breaking into a run. She couldn't lose the Bollen as slowly as it went, so she felt pretty good about her chances.

As she got closer, she reached into the pouch on her left leg to remove the portable circuit scanner she carried with her at all times. Besides being a great diagnostic tool for her ship, it was a very useful in many other ways, including slicing into locks and blocking scanners when she didn't want someone to know what she was carrying.

It was also rumored to be good at blocking some of the neuro-electrical synapses in the brain of an ART. She had not yet had to try it out herself, and she hated to trust rumors, but it seemed like a good time to see if there was any validity to the rumors.

The enforcer went into one of the local merchant's shops just seconds before a man riding on his hover-bike came flying around the corner behind her. Making a fair amount of noise, it kicked up all kinds of dirt on the road. Nearly hitting her as he passed, Ynara found herself diving for cover into the front door of a house on her right.

As the man continued on down the street, still kicking up dust, he got the attention of the Bollen and his aide. They turned around just in time to get out of the way of the speeding vehicle. The Bollen knocked over the ART with his considerable girth as he stumbled for his own safety.

Ynara came back out of the door ignoring the shouts of whoever was inside. She hadn't bothered to look deeper within to see who the resident was, but they were obviously offended by her abrupt intrusion into their home. Ynara ignored the sounds as she cautiously scanned the unnaturally hazy street. She saw the Bollen struggling to get back up. Apparently, during the disturbance, she had missed the fact that the Bollen had buried his assistant underneath the force and size of his own body.

The Bollen worked at getting to his feet, struggling to right himself from the awkward position of lying down. Once standing, he began to kick at the ART, trying to get it to get off the ground.

In seeing this, Ynara figured the fat man must have somehow knocked it out or jarred one of the *ART's* computer components loose. Either way, it was down, and seemingly not getting up anytime soon. Ynara had her chance, and she was not about to pass it up. Whether or not the circuit scanner would really have worked, she would have to find out another time.

She ran towards the fat man as he kicked at his baggage-handler. She was only about fifty feet away now. She'd be there in seconds. She pulled her pistol out of its holster at her left leg, knowing that she'd need it very soon. She hoped that he would not look up.

Arriving at her target, the Bollen had not noticed her approach. He was too busily distracted by his task at hand. He continued to yell and kick at the man on the ground, but the *ART* did not move. This is what she wanted to see. The *ART* was not getting up. She had her best chance.

"All right, fat man, turn around, real slow," she stayed back a few feet from him, pointing her gun right at the Bollen's head.

"What are you talking ab..." as he turned around, quicker than she thought he might be able to. He found himself staring down the barrel of her gun.

"You really don't listen very well, do you?" She raised her voice.

"What is this about?" The rumble in his voice could have curdled milk. It really irritated her.

"You're the one from the card game. What do you want?"

"We'll find out in a minute. Now shut up and get moving. Around the corner, now. Go!" Keeping the pistol aimed at his face, she waved towards an alley just behind him and to the left.

"Don't be ridiculous, I'm not going anywhere. Go away now girl. You might get hurt," he said with indignant pride.

Without hesitating, she lowered her pistol to his side and just slightly grazed his big stomach with a shot that would just barely burn him. That should get his attention.

"Owww!" What sounded somewhere between a scream and a burp escaped his mouth as he leaned slightly forward and to the side where the new hole in his shirt was. He was sweating, now. "What do you think you are doing little girl?"

"I said move," she motioned again with her free hand.

"Do you who I am, I'm..."

"Just shut up and move, or the next time I shoot you it will hurt a lot more, I promise you."

"Very well," he said regrettably. He turned slowly and walked towards the alley.

She followed close behind, but not so close as to let him touch her if he turned around. While they walked, she looked around the street for anyone that was paying attention. She knew she might only have a few minutes before security arrived. Even the single guard she saw may have heard the commotion and was possibly heading out right now. She hoped he wasn't concerned with writing out a speeding ticket.

There were people watching her escort the Bollen into the alley, so she had no doubt that the moment she was out of sight, someone would call. Someone may have even called already, fleeing the scene the moment that it began. Taking one last glance, she confirmed that the *ART* was still not moving.

The alley was as typical as they get. Poorly lit with some small trash containers strewn about. It carried a smell with it that churned her stomach just enough to bring a small amount of bile back into her throat. In her mind, the Bollen should feel right at home. His own smell was bad enough. But as they got about halfway down the alley she stopped him.

"Alright, that's far enough. Turn around, back against the wall." She positioned herself in a way that she could see out the alley, just in case anything would come along, such as the *ART*. "Now, I need some information that I think you have. You ready to talk?"

"That all depends on the information you seek. All information has a price." He was trying to bargain with her.

"What!" She shot him again, with another glance on his other side. "I didn't come here to deal, unless it's with your life. Got me?"

"Yes, I think I understand now," clearly in pain, he put his hand on his side, neglecting the first wound. This one obviously hurt more. "What is it that you want?"

"I need some information. About a boy. Around eighteen standard years. One of you dealers took him from me five years ago. Anything ring a bell?" She was very angry.

"Yes, I think I know the boy. You lost him in a game, didn't you?" He was really sweating now. He was hurt and she was enjoying this. What she didn't know is that this one was a birth-mate to her prey.

"That's the one. He's my son. Where is he?" She leaned in a bit towards him, moving the barrel of the gun slightly closer to his face. She wanted answers.

"I don't know," he looked a bit scared.

"Don't lie to me!" She was yelling now. She shot again, but this time, the bolt flashed past his ear; not striking it, but certainly close enough to where he knew that she had intended to miss.

"I mean I don't know *exactly* where." He was definitely shaking now. His body trembling, his fat rolling, and his shirt quivering like waves on a pond broken by a stone.

"I'm listening," she got instantly quieter.

"I don't know exactly where he is, but I can tell you where they took him. The one you lost him to." He was calming down some now. He would talk nicely after this. The sweat-soaked shirt clung to him like loose skin.

"Well, get talking. I'll run out of time before I run out of charge on this gun."

"The one that you are looking for, the Bollen, I mean. His name is Danuno. He told me you would come looking someday." Whoever this thing was, he actually remembered her. She didn't know how she had warranted the attention and wasn't sure if she liked the idea.

"His name means 'Tyrant One' in your tongue," the Bollen continued as he relaxed a little more. He must have been feeling more confident now that he was talking. "He took your boy to become a miner. He owns several mining colonies in our sector, but he likes to take the younger ones to Centrix."

"Centrix!" She tried not to show her revulsion at the idea of knowing her son had gone to such a place, but her instinctual reaction belied her intention.

"Please, let me explain. Danuno does many things illegal. Many of us heard about what he had done with your son, but he is very powerful," It was trying to play at her emotions towards her son, now. "He has done this many times to many people. Your losing him in a card game was most unusual, though.

You are not the first and certainly not the last that he has done this to. He likes to use stolen labor, or criminals, because he doesn't have to pay them, just keep them alive and under guard so they don't try to escape or kill each other.

"He takes them to Centrix because no one there will bother him. And it is a very hostile planet. If he loses someone he did not pay for, it is of no great loss. He will just go out and find some more. There are many lost souls in the casinos above the planet. It is very economical." He was beginning to relax a bit as he was nearly hypnotizing her with his knowledge of her son.

"And as I am sure you well know, the authorities have banned the planet, so most are afraid to go near it except the religious fanatics, and they worship the planet as a temple. The planet is very rich in ore, though, and he mines this ore for his own. No taxes, you see."

"But how does he get on and off the planet? Security patrols that place like a government warehouse." More importantly, she was hoping to find out was how was she going to get on and off the planet.

"He pays them. Everyone has a price," He begins to snicker a bit.

"You know, you're right. What's your life worth," She put the barrel of the pistol right up against his forehead. "I'm waiting."

"What do you want, anything. I'll give it to you."

"Let's start by emptying your pockets and keep talking while you do. I'm sure you still have lots more to tell me.

He had little choice but to listen to her. He had already figured out that she could just as easily kill him as wait for him to empty his pockets. So, to save his skin, he gave her nearly everything he had. He was not about to give her everything, but he had given her a substantial amount, that should make her go away, while he was still only somewhat discomforted.

To be continued.....

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# Cartographer's Corner

by Dana Driscoll and Kosala Ubayasekara

## Mapmaking 101: The Basics

*Part 1 of a two part tutorial on making your own maps*

Is there a simple way to make maps? Depending on what you want to do, the answer is both *yes* and *no*. If you want professional quality maps, you are going to need artistic talent, a steady hand, and/or professional computer programs to make those maps. If you only need simple maps for your own use, you can explore the various mapmaking programs available to the RPG mapmaker. This article does not address specific mapmaking programs, but rather professional quality mapmaking techniques in two major categories: hand drawn and digital.

Hand drawn and digital represent the two major categories in mapmaking. Since one can scan a hand-drawn map at any point, some mapmakers will use both techniques, while others focus on exclusively one or the other. This article gives an overview both techniques.

### Hand-Drawn Maps

Hand drawing your maps is a time-tested, excellent way to create a large variety of maps. I especially recommend using this technique to beginner mapmakers, those of you who do not have access to programs like Adobe Photoshop or Illustrator, or for those of you who do not own a digital drawing pad. Some mapmakers may choose to finish their maps by hand as well—using watercolors, pencils, or markers—while others choose to scan their map into a computer and finish it with a program.

To begin a hand-drawn map, be sure you have good supplies. First, get yourself some high-quality paper. I bought a 9 x 13 spiral bound drawing tablet with extra-thick sheets at a local art store. You will also want to get a good pencil (I recommend using a normal wooden pencil, drafting pencil, or drawing pencil, as the pencils with refillable lead can leave indentations on your paper). Other supplies include a precise black ink pen, a good eraser (I recommend going with the Kneaded brand erasers, also available from an art supply store), a t-square, a ruler, and a compass. If you are planning on finishing the map by hand, you will need one or more of the following: thin-point markers, acrylic paint, watercolor paint, pastels, colored pencils, or watercolor pencils.

I begin by using a light pencil to sketch the map, using the t-square, rulers, and compass as needed. This is usually the longest part of the process. Once I confirm that the lines are in the right place and I like the look of the sketch, I go over the pencil lines with the black pen. Going over everything with pen is especially useful for scanning purposes, because it allows you to get cleaner, crisper scans with fewer smudges and bad spots. Always be sure to thoroughly erase your underlying pencil marks before moving on to other steps, otherwise, your map may end up looking messy. Once you have your initial inking done, you have a choice: finish the map by hand or scan it into a computer and use a photo-editing program to finish the map. One nice thing about scanning in a map is that if you have made mistakes with inking or drawing, you can correct those mistakes in digital format.

I have only done several maps completely by hand. Techniques include using watercolors, allowing the map to dry, and then adding accents with colored pencils. Another excellent finish for a map is to use watercolor pencils, which produce a neat effect. Depending on the map, hand-finishing may be faster than applying effects in a photo-editing program. I would suggest experimenting and finding what technique works for you. Hand-finishing a map with colored pencils, or watercolors, for example, creates a very unique look that is difficult to duplicate in a program like Photoshop.

### Do you make maps?

If you have been busy with some home made cartography, then consider showcasing it for our readers to see.

Silven Crossroads will happily publish your home grown maps for use by other gamers. Naturally you will retain full copyright of all the work that is originally yours.

Here are the requirements:

- ▶ It needs to be in a print quality. Minimum 72 dpi, preferably higher.
- ▶ It needs to be of a high quality and have a professional look and feel to it. If in doubt, look at our past issues and see the kind of maps we have published.
- ▶ It should preferably be a full A4 page in size and have a clear grid, scale and compass printed on it.

Send any maps you think qualify to [kosala@silven.com](mailto:kosala@silven.com).



### About this section

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

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

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

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

A few problems are associated with hand-drawn maps when transferring them into digital format. First, your scan may pick up every little spot of dirt or smudge that your hand-drawn map included. This will lead to increased cleanup time, up to several hours, before your map can be finished. Another thing that happens is that your scan may be too light, causing lines or spots to be lost from the map. This again causes a problem because you end up having to re-draw those lines with a mouse or digital drawing pad, which can be very tricky. A third problem that occurs is that your image is "flat", so when you bring it into Photoshop, you will have to get rid of the white around the lines before you can begin to apply many of the neat Photoshop effects to the map.

I have found that there are simply types of maps that are much easier to draw by hand and scan in rather than to attempt to create in Photoshop or Illustrator. At the same time, however, hand-drawing a map can create you additional steps when you do go to finish the map digitally.

### Digitally Created Maps

The program of choice of both our resident mapmakers is Adobe Photoshop. Before getting into specific mapmaking techniques in Photoshop, a word of caution. Photoshop is a very complex program to operate. If you are new to Photoshop, it is strongly suggested that you work through the tutorials that came with the program and keep the Photoshop manual on hand.

#### Selection tools

There are many ways to begin to create a map. Some mapmakers draw maps in a CAD program such as AutoCad, a drawing program like Illustrator, or a photo editing program such as Photoshop. I usually begin to create maps in Photoshop by manipulating the selection tools. I select an area, expand, contract, stroke or fill it and get the beginnings of a map. From there, it is more selection, lines, and fill manipulation to get the desired results.

Layers are really the key to mapmaking. Keep everything in separate layers and remember to use your history if you mess up. Don't flatten your layers until you are completely finished with the map (and I advise keeping a file with the layers intact just in case).

Your three best friends when creating maps in Photoshop are fill options, layer effects, and filters. You can create custom patterns and fill your areas to create totally unique effects. These patterns will stay defined in your program so you can easily use them over and over. Layer effects are an integral

part of my own mapmaking technique. If you keep everything in separate layers, you can take full advantage of layer effects ranging from pillow embossing and overlaying a pattern to shadows and strokes. The third important technique is the use of the array of Photoshop filters at your disposal. Even if you only have the standard ones (i.e. you haven't purchased additional filters like Kai's Power Tools), there is still an amazing amount of flexibility. Feel free to experiment to get neat results.

#### History Palette

#### Layers Palette

Replication and repetition is a way to save time while creating maps. If you create one object you can repeat it, turn it, or alter it and end up with many objects. I usually create objects in a separate file, flatten them, and drag them into my working document. Feel free to apply your layer effects and filters to your imported objects.

This section served as a brief introduction to what you can do in Photoshop with a digital map. Next month, Kosala and I will take you through a step-by-step process of creating a simple outdoor map in Photoshop.

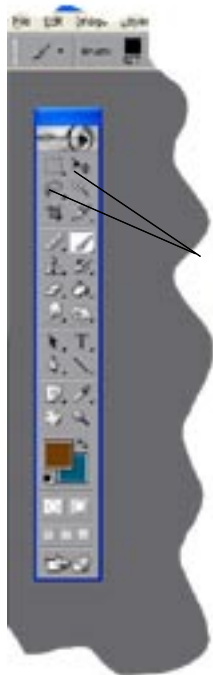
### Other Useful Programs:

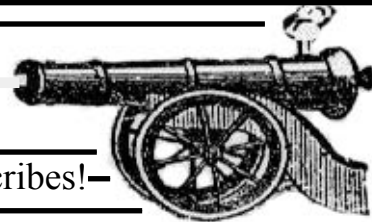
Three-dimensional programs are great for additional graphics to add to maps. I personally have the most experience with Bryce 3d, but have also used Infini-D and Poser. Bryce is great for overhead outdoor scenes, but is of very limited use for indoor maps. I have mostly used Bryce to create additional graphics for a map (i.e., a side view of a building, or front of a landscape).

### Wrapping things up:

Next month we will tackle a step-by-step approach to creating a simple outdoor map in Photoshop. In the future, we may also cover techniques for transferring hand-drawn maps into Photoshop and getting a map ready to edit.

When starting to make your own maps, it is important to remember three things. First—look at what other mapmakers are doing for ideas to get started. Second—be creative! Brainstorm about different maps you are interested in creating, but keep things small and simple when you are just starting out. And finally—mapmaking, like many other skills, takes practice. Your first maps may not look perfect, but the more you work at it, the better your maps will be!





## Mayor's Daughter Kidnapped Again. Mayor Gives Up

A report by Dak Tamble

Last Tuesday at roughly 5:45 in the evening, Griselda Shroderer, Mayor Silas Shroderer's daughter was kidnapped. She disappeared from the flower grove outside of town.

A ransom note was found that night by peasant farmer Turkis.

The ransom note demanded 1000 gold pieces for the safe return of the maiden.

"This is the fifth time they've kidnapped her. I am fed up. First it was 100 gold pieces and then 300. Now they're up to a thousand. Well, I hate to tell them but she's not worth it anymore," says Mayor Shroderer.

"This is getting rather annoying. You'd think the lady would learn not roam about in flowerbeds near sunset. But what do we peasant farmers know," says Turkis, hoeing.

## Local Fish Market Opening A Flop

by Poot Fenbottle

Last week, "Freddies Fish Market" opened its door for business. Denizens of Silven flocked to attend the opening and pick up some seafood for dinner. Patrons soon discovered a problem—no fish!

Salvia Sheen, a Silven resident, comments, "The sign says Fish Market! Where's the fish?"

According to Frederick Freizerbern, owner of the market, stocking the store takes time and funds

"It's a fish market alright." Freddie says, "But paying fishermen and buying fish takes money, which I was hoping to get by opening the store! It appears people aren't buying."

Onlookers threw a few coppers at Freddie for good measure, but otherwise left empty-handed. Freddie has announced that he will keep the market closed until his "Grand-Re-Opening" next month.

## New Boats to Use Wind. Oarsmen Outraged.

by Pelas Prigalum

In a fantastic advance of modern science, SilvenSea Boat factory announced that it would begin production of boats with sails. These sails would capture the wind of the sea granting boats access to an almost infinite power supply at a fraction of the cost of conventional oarsmen.

Oarsmen across the land and here in Silven are outraged.

"How arr we suppoz'd ta make uh livun, if ze new boatz dun't uze oarsman?," asks Yuri Blisterhands, local oarsmen.

The new boats would sail faster, more efficiently and cost far less per nautical mile than conventional oar powered boats.

"Me handz arr full o' blizterz frum yearz o' hurd work," Yuri says, "und ull be damned if ze wind ull take dat away frum me."

## Awakened Owl Not Wise or Old

Local Arch Druid and gardener Kamiya was seen tacking up signs to buildings (and people which she occasionally thinks is ironic) last week, stating that, in fact, owls are neither wise nor old.

The flyer explains that she awakened one such animal a fortnight past, expecting sage advice from the loft bird. Instead she received the coos and caws of juvenile barn owl interested in small field mice.

When asked what she hoped to accomplish by the task, she responded, "Had I known it would be as stupid as the commoners in town, I wouldn't have bothered. All it would ask was who? Who? Who? Over and over again."

Subsequently, as of this writing, the owl is considered missing and annoying. Anyone finding such a creature should back away slowly, and resist the urge to ask 'who who?' as it only incites rage.

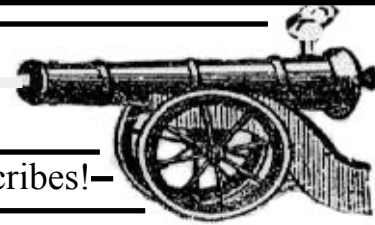
## Local Witch Outraged Over Cackling Birds

Last Thursday resident witch and swamp homemaker Delila Hagmonger, was arrested. She was charged with slaughtering and maiming birds, crows specifically. At her sentencing she was given 2 years community service by the DSS (Druidic Society of Silven).

Arch Druid Kamiya responded, "It is a disgrace and a horror that such an incident happened in our own town. One wasn't an annoying owl was it? No? Damn. Please don't print that."

When asked for comments, Witch Hagmonger responded, "Those damn birds. Always with their cackling. Don't they know they took away my job? Don't they know what pain they've caused me?"

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



Two months ago Witch Hagmonger was laid off by the Cacklers of Silven. The reason was unknown until now. An investigation is underway.

## Town Crier Fired Over Lost Voice

Monday Town Crier Floyd Phlegm was fired from his 30 year standing position.

Crier Phlegm's illustrious career cried such memorable events as Silven's Quintesentennial, the annual Undead Bash, and the End of the World Event of 3 years ago.

Crier Phlegm recently contracted a rare form of speechlessness which prevents all manners and forms of speech. The last few weeks on the job, Phlegm tried everything from miming, to charades, but the Criers Union would not have any of it.

Commenting from the Union is spokesperson Crier Haggardly, "Hear ye, Hear Ye! A crier, acting like a mime? Insolence!"

Crier Phlegm was unable to comment.

*From the community:*

## Write Barbarian Self Read and Teaches To

To write GuNtHer hard study tIme long.

Hand pEn break time often, me but trY again.

Think hArD tO try write and.

Oops. DrOOl paper On again.

Break pen again me Do.

StUpId Pen FeaTher! It nose make SneezE With TicKle!  
Smash Me Do.

<Edited due to graphic content>

*Editor:* We thank Gunther for his or her effort, and wish them the best of luck in their endeavors.

## Obituaries

### Burial Consultant dies of fright

Our beloved town burial consultant, Coffin Woodchuck, has died of fright whilst emblaming Barbarian Fighter, Ogrebreath. Ogrebreath, who died in bar room brawl the week before, apparently stood up in the middle of the embalming procedure due to the effects of a Ring of Regeneration that he was wearing. Coffin Woodchuck, having had a mortal fear of all things that return from the dead due to a childhood trauma, promptly had a heart attack.

## Public Poll: Feast Day: Turkey or Ham?

Orph Maloney, Wizard Extraordinaire

"A fine slow roasted duck"

Yuri Blisterhands, Upset Oarsman

"Hickory, or maple. No oak."

Falia Bluemoon, Druid

"Domesticated animals scare me."

Gunther Smashalot, Barbarian Poet

"DirE BoAr."

Poles Turkis, Peasant Farmer

"Gruel. And you'd eat it too if you knew what was good for ya."

## Classifieds:

**Wanted: Adventurers!** Lucrative opportunity, wealth, and potential hazards await you in the goblin caves to the northeast. Contact Silas Swahank for more information.

**Help Wanted: Bar Wench.** Bar Wenches needed. Good pay, great benefits. Missing teeth a plus! All inquires should be directed to Gerrik at the Rusty Bolt Inn.

**For Sale: Magic Beans!** Ever wanted to grow your own beanstalk? Well, now you can! Mariangle's Magic Beans are guaranteed! Now being sold at Helga's Herb Shoppe near the town square.

**Need help?** The Magnificent Peaprick Peersbelly is offering services to deprived adventuring groups. In need of a fighter? Rogue? Magician? Healer? Look no more---Peaprick is YOUR man!

**Suicidal Gnomes needed!** The famous adventuring party, The Brothers Grimm, are badly in need of some enterprising Gnomes for a once in a lifetime suicide mission to storm the cave of an Elder White Dragon. The job requires a small stature and genuine lack of interest in preserving your own life. Only serious applicants need apply.



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## Silven Trumpeter Magazine

The Silven Trumpeter is a monthly publication produced by the Silven Crossroads community ([www.silven.com](http://www.silven.com)). Articles and fiction appearing in the Silven Trumpeter are drawn from the various content areas of the Silven Crossroads site. Because of this, if you are interested in having a piece of writing published in the Silven Trumpeter, it must first be submitted for inclusion in a specific content area on the site. For more information, please contact the editor at [adriayna@yahoo.com](mailto:adriayna@yahoo.com)

### Publisher

Silven Crossroads. attn: Kosala Ubayasekara  
[kosala@silven.com](mailto:kosala@silven.com)  
c/o Lidström; Skyttevägen 17, 1tr; 19258 Sollentuna; Sweden.

### Editor in Chief

Dana Driscoll

### Contributing Authors

Gary Gygax, Sean Holland, Shane Cubis, Kosala Ubayasekara, Edward Kopp, Raymond Huling, Aaron Todd, Pike Stephenson, Eytan Bernstein, Scott Fitz, Magnus Kaliptic, Lance Kepner, and Dana Driscoll

### Contributing Artists

Veli-Matti Joutsen

### Contributing Artists

Kou and Ali  
<http://www.fantasywars.org/>

Florin Badita

<http://elfwood.lysator.liu.se/loth/f/l/florin/florin.html>

Todd Lockwood

<http://www.toddlockwood.com>

Vshane SF/F Fantasy Studio

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

Veli-Matti Joutsen


### Layout, and design

Kosala Ubayasekara



Next issue  
December  
01, 2003

Don't miss our special winter issue next month when we delve into the cold and wintry side of gaming, featuring a short story written specifically for us by Edward Kopp.



## Printing Tips

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

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

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