

# OD&DITIES

THE ORIGINAL DUNGEONS & DRAGONS FANZINE



Issue 9



February 2003

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<b>Editorial</b> .....	<b>2</b>
My regular rant ... <i>R. E. B. Tongue</i>	
<b>Letters to the Editor</b> .....	<b>2</b>
The readers' comments.	
<b>Getting Started</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Our continuing series on starting a new OD&D campaign. <i>R. E. B. Tongue</i>	
<b>Compendium of Characters</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Two exotic NPC's for your campaign. <i>R. E. B. Tongue</i>	
<b>Governing Gods</b> .....	<b>4</b>
A collection of deities with a difference. <i>Guy Robinson</i>	
<b>First Strike</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Who goes first: the fighter or the Orc? <i>Erin D. Smale</i>	
<b>Street of a Thousand Adventures</b> .....	<b>6</b>
A resting place for the sorcerous. <i>Geoff Gander</i>	
<b>Some Enchanted Item</b> .....	<b>7</b>
The start of a new column on magical items. <i>Erin D. Smale</i>	
<b>An Interview with Gary Gygax, Part I</b> .....	<b>8</b>
An interview with the unquestioned father of RPGs. <i>Ciro Alessandro Sacco</i>	
<b>Combat sans Matrix</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Streamlining combat in OD&D. <i>Erin D. Smale</i>	
<b>The World of Herol, Part I</b> .....	<b>18</b>
The first part of a new campaign world for OD&D. <i>Carl Quaif</i>	

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# Editorial

Well, welcome to the first issue of OD&DITIES for the New Year. Issue Nine. I think it is possible to say, without fear of contradiction, that this is the best issue yet. The first half of an interview with Gary Gygax, the first part of a new campaign setting, this issue is packed full of goodies. The response this issue has been excellent, with more articles coming in that we could squeeze into this issue – but please, please keep them coming in! I would like to apologise to all of those whose articles simply would not fit in this issue – but they will all see publication soon, I assure you! At the moment, Issue 10 is planned for late March, deadline for the Tenth, so get those submissions in! Artwork too, please cover and internal – and thanks to the excellent Jeremy Simmons for the piece gracing this issue's cover.

I would just like to apologize in advance for the necessity of publishing in two parts. It is not something I like to do as a rule – I'm sure it will prove a source of some frustration to our readers, I know it would for me. However, these two articles, the Gygax interview and the World of Herol, both struck me as perfect for OD&DITIES, but were just too long for one issue. Rather than hold one back, I decided to run them in parts. I would also like to apologize to Scott Casper, who was incorrectly credited as Scott Gasper in Issue Eight – sorry, Scott!

The Guild of OD&D passed a milestone recently – with a hundred members. It has really turned into an excellent list – I urge you all to take a look at it. A real community is building there, something that was not present a few years ago. It just goes to show that there is still plenty of life in OD&D.

In other news, OD&DITIES is up for an award! We're in the nominations for the Origins awards this year, under Best Roleplaying Magazine. So please, please, register your vote at once. Right now! The issue will still be there when you get back! Seriously, please vote, and cross your fingers for us. More details to follow in Issue Ten.

**Richard Tongue**  
Editor, OD&DITIES

## Letters to the Editor

*Please keep those letters coming in, as usual to [Methuslah@tongue.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:Methuslah@tongue.fsnet.co.uk)*

Hil

First of all, let me present myself: I'm a 28-years old italian RPG player. I'll play OD&D since the age of 13, which means that more than half of my life was devoted to this beautiful game.

During these long years, I've obviously red, mastered and played many other RPGs - from AD&D (1st, 2nd and 3rd edition) to Tunnels & Trolls, MERP, Rolemaster, Stormbringer, Runequest, Chivalry & Sorcery, plus some other Italian-made games as Katakumbas or I Cavalieri del Tempio (Temple's Knights is a rough translation in English) which I think were never published in UK or USA. I've also enjoyed many solo adventure books (one for all, the Lonewolf series, or the wonderful Warlock of Fire Mountain) and some other fantasy boardgames as Talisman, Dungeonquest, Heroquest and Advanced Heroquest, Willow and Warlock of Fire Mountain. Now, finished with this boring list, I wrote to you just to make my compliments for your great work in keeping alive OD&D, which I simply consider the

best RPG ever made - both for his flexibility and simplicity. I must admit that I'm also a "collector" of OD&D material - I've almost all the material ever published (amongst the others the complete GAZ series, nearly all adventure modules, all boxed sets, plus the "legendary" white box and the first four supplements). I tried over the time to play some campaigns both using the Rules Cyclopedia and the Gazetteer series, and even the white boxed set - but unluckily here there is a great lack of players - to continue playing I'm literally forced to play D&D 3E (not too bad, but the atmosphere created by OD&D is another thing!) and some other minor RPGs (like Vampire or Mage, too bad!). I stumbled across your site and fanzine by sheer luck, and I enjoyed it very much - good articles, interesting reviews of products, playable adventures and very good rules and character class add-ons. In brief, I loved it - especially now that Dragon and Dungeon are completely (and sadly) entirely devoted to 3E.

I blame WotC for letting OD&D die - it was the greatest mistake they can ever do.

I know that now "new" players wants only World of Darkness and similar, but I think that all those new games simply have lost the original spirit and flavour of OD&D game. This is why I try always to get my friends involved in an OD&D campaign play. If I find some time I will also like to submit some articles - I've created thousand of home rules in those years of playing and I wish to share it with other fans. Actually, I'm working for some Italian fanzines and submitting some material to Ken St. Andre (the creator of Tunnels and Trolls) who is getting published in this days. So, just keep up the good work and continue to keep high the OD&D vessel, there will ever be some "old time" fans like me that will appreciate your efforts. Sorry for the length of this letter and for my poor English, and thank you again.

**Tosatt Earp**

*Thanks for the letter – most appreciated as always! I think your English is pretty good. I certainly agree that there is a danger of the flavour of the older games being lost in new editions, that's why I began OD&DITIES in the first place, to help preserve it. I'm glad you like OD&DITIES, it's always great to hear that it is being used. Feel free to send in your submissions, as many as you like.* ■

# Getting Started

R. E. B. Tongue

Well, over the last few instalments we have created a campaign setting, and worked out the framework of an epic campaign. Epic campaigns can be excellent for both beginning and advanced players, and if they are successful, your players will be talking about them for years to come. If you are trying to introduce some new people to D&D, then this is an excellent way to do it. However, it must be said that having only the epic campaign theme can lead to a one-note campaign, a campaign fixed in one mould only. Players may come to expect the same plotlines every week (Not the evil Dark Lord/Evil Undead/foul Orcs again!).

The simple way to combat this is to introduce sub-plots, and one-off adventures into the campaign thread, elements that do not contribute to the overall story but still add to the experience for the players. One-off adventures are the simplest to introduce, and can be on any

number of themes. A dungeon is discovered that the PC's are able to investigate, or a group of bandits starts operating in the woods, and the PC's are hired to remove them. These should not be a part of the campaign arc, but can contribute to it, and should draw from the progression of the campaign. For example, a group of PCs befriending a local lord will likely be asked to provide assistance with various problems faced by their new benefactor.

These one-shot adventures should be very specific in their nature, either tied to a location or a single person. Examples of this could include clearing out a small dungeon, curing the lycanthropy of the lord's wife, rescuing a kidnapped child from a tribe of wild elves, or exploring an enchanted mountain pass. Keep these plots simple to work out – they will form a break in the campaign for the PC's, and the players. It is advised that it should be fairly obvious that these are not connected to the main plot, as paranoid PC's will often see conspiracies wherever they go.

The sub-plot is a different type of animal completely. This is a continuing

thread throughout other adventures, either running through the whole adventure of just for a short time. These can be much more complicated and intricate. Whereas one-shots were connected to a specific location or person, these sub-plots should be connected to an individual PC, and should be much more story oriented. (As such, it is recommended that all of the PC's should have an individual sub-plot at some point.)

These plots should involve either the background or the personality of the PC. Optionally, the player himself can be consulted with such elements. An example of this type of sub-plot would be finding a PC's long-lost sister, who was kidnapped by pirates many years ago. (As a twist, she is now the leader of the pirates, and the fact that she is the long-lost sister will not be immediately apparent.) Alternatively, the DM can come up with such elements on his own. For example, he can have a Magic-User PC learn of an ancient spell book of a long-dead wizard, which could lead to a long quest to find it, in between other adventuring. It can be as mundane as one of the PC's deciding to take over a local Inn, or as complicated as finding a lost golden dragon egg by the light of the new moon on the Plains of Gehenna. The idea is to engage the PC's on a different level, to promote greater individual role-playing than a group campaign will sometimes allow. ■

## Compendium of Characters

R. E. B. Tongue

The characters covered in this issue's Compendium are strangers, representatives of other cultures. Although the practice should not be common, adding a representative of a culture not otherwise found in your campaign world should not be frowned upon, quite the reverse. Having, say, a 'Samurai' arrive at the castle of King Arthur could make for some interesting experiences, though it should be kept in moderation. The pair described

below could add such an exotic element to your campaign. Basic statistics and signature equipment are described, as well as notes on personality and background.

### Kirika 4th level Lawful Fighter

Str: 14, Dex: 18, Con: 13, Int: 9, Wis: 13, Cha: 12, HP: 22, AC: 3, Blowgun (6 poison darts, Save vs. Poison or die), Club, Leather Armour + 1

Kirika is a representative of a culture living in the jungles of a far-away land. He was a noble of his people, who would have

been the leader of his tribe. However, the local witch doctor despised him, and sought power for himself, and so Kirika was sold to a group of slavers. Upon arrival, he managed to escape by jumping over the side of the boat, and barely reached the coast. The strange new world he found himself in fascinated him, and he has decided to learn what he can from it – before returning home to seek vengeance and regain that which was stolen from him. Kirika is extremely inquisitive about all manner of things, but particularly crafts such as metalworking – he will seek to learn about metal tools whenever possible. His courage is unbounded, but he has a fear of magic, especially those that influence people against their will. He is seeking money to finance a return to his land across the ocean, and also he seeks brave adventurers to accompany him. The PC's could be the ones who find him, and teach him of their land, or they could be hired by Kirika to return with him to his tribe.

*Continued on page 27 ...*

# Governing Gods

Guy Robinson

When people design pantheons for OD&D people can often forget how different forms of government can make excellent themes from gods, especially if these gods are generally mortals before they became gods. Who better to deify than notable figures that brought about great changes, innovations or order in their lives? All references to real people living, dead or undead is completely accidental in this article, honest.



## Hearth

### Chaotic God of Families and Feuds

A primal god of basic governance, Hearth laid down the principles that the only right of ruler-ship and justice lies in the family or extended clan. Followers believe that wrongs should be righted through the execution of feuds between the families of the offender and the offended. Hearth rites include the adoption of a stranger into a family or clan, marriages and formal declarations of vengeance and strife.

## Fief

### Neutral God of Feudalism and Oaths

Said to be a son of Hearth, Fief is the god who set out the principle of feudal government while he was mortal. This shifted the focus from families to hierarchies of power, obligation and defence that start to define differing social classes. Feudal government has become the norm for many countries and Fief's rites are used to establish and maintain balance within these societies.

## Regal

### Lawful God of Monarchy

As the first legendary king, Regal is the deified embodiment of the principles of kingship. He is said to have a daughter for each true kingdom and these figures of Sovereignty personally watch over the succession from one monarch to another. These kings and queens tend to head establish states, backed by Regal's authority.

Royal capitals generally feature a temple to Regal as large and as prestigious as the monarch can afford. People seeking to become kings generally are wise to build such a temple and staff it with Regal's priests before proclaiming themselves so.

## Redken

### Lawful God of Socialism and Newts

A relatively later god, Redken is a god whose priests can be found among the lower classes, as defined by the doctrines of other gods of governance. His role is to encourage people to support and strengthen these people and as such his priests are often involved in considerable works of charity. Socialist Paladins dedicated to Redken are often found, in times, of war supporting conscript units. In such a role they often restrict their armour and weapons to the median equipment borne by their units, excepting when they have potent magical items that could best be applied to the furtherance of the unit's military success.

## Demos

### Neutral God of Democracy and Rumours

A less popular god, Demos seeks to advocate principles of democracy that are appropriate to the wealth, education status and population size of a government. They seek a balance – sometimes recommending that democracy be scaled back until a country is ready for it. Generally priest of Demos seek to ensure that people who are fit to decide and express personally their own views influence government.

## The Iron Lady

### Chaotic Goddess of Commerce and Choice

A goddess popular with merchants and the rich, the Iron Lady stands for better government through freedom for all in the way they spend their wealth. This is held by her priests to benefit the whole of society, even the poorest that have the least ability to chose under such a system. She is also a goddess of rain, which her priests use as a metaphor of the benefit of wealth to all through the "trickle down" effect.

## Hatton

### Chaotic God of Revolution

A god supported by those that seek change, Hatton is the god of revolution and violent changes. His priests travel throughout the land seeking to encourage population to seek a "better" form of government. Generally thought they always seem to advocate a form different to the one current one that is in place. They are unafraid to advocate war and espionage to further their goals, which are not coordinated at all – often drawing fellow priests into confrontations with each other. ■

# FIRST STRIKE

## How to get the jump on initiative rolls in OD&D Combat

Erin D. Smale

### Introduction

Determining combat initiative in the official OD&D rules is a straightforward matter: every round, each side rolls 1d6, and the side with the highest result goes first (RC/102). Optionally, the DM may allow for individual initiative using the same 1d6 method, perhaps further granting that the die result is modified by the combatant's Dexterity score. Like most other rules in OD&D, the system is easy to learn and quick to use, but somewhat short on realism. Not that the system needs to be trashed, but it could stand the influx of some tension—something to make determining initiative more than a simple back-and-forth routine of d6 tosses. This article suggests an alternative initiative system that maintains the random element of a die roll while making realistic allowances for combatant ability. In the process, the system allows a granulated view of the individual actions taken during an chaotic combat round.

### Determining Initiative

As in the official rules, initiative is determined at the start of every combat round, but is arbitrated via 1d12 rolled by each combatant. In all cases, the d12 result is modified by the combatant's Initiative Rating (IR), a relatively static modifier (see below) that reflects circumstantial conditions such as Dexterity, weapon size, attacker size, and attack type. The actual initiative result, then, is the d12 roll plus the combatant's IR.

combatant may move up to his encounter speed and still attack (RC/103). While the system works best with individual initiative rolls, and individual PCs should always roll their own initiative, the DM may allow group initiative rolls if the number of PC foes is unwieldy. For example, if a party of four PCs encounters an ogre and five orcs, each of the PCs would roll their own initiative and the DM could probably manage the six initiative rolls for the ogre and the orcs. If the same party encounters a pack of 14 giant rats herded by 3 kobold guards, however, the DM would probably make only two initiative rolls: one for the rats and one for the kobolds.

### Initiative Rating

A combatant's Initiative Rating (IR) is a reflection of how rapidly he may act during a combat round. As such, IR reflects weapon skill, size, Dexterity, and attack mode. Typical modifiers are shown on **Table 1**; all are cumulative:

**Table 1: Initiative Rating**

Condition	Modifier	Condition	Modifier
Weapon Mastery: UN	-4	Attacker Size: T	5
Weapon Mastery: BA	-2	Attacker Size: S	3
Weapon Mastery: SK	0	Attacker Size: M	0
Weapon Mastery: EX	1	Attacker Size: L	-2
Weapon Mastery: MS	2	Attacker Size: G	-4
Weapon Mastery: GM	3	Changed Weapon	-2
Weapon Size: S	2	Magic Item Use	-1
Weapon Size: M	0	Dexterity Adjustment	var.
Weapon Size: L	-3	Cast Spell	- spell level

Once initiative is determined, combat actions may begin, starting with the combatant who possesses the highest initiative result, whose action is resolved immediately. The combatant with the next lowest initiative result resolves his action next, then the combatant with the next lowest initiative result, and so on. Because actions occur in "real time" (i.e., they are resolved immediately in the order of highest initiative results to lowest), it is possible for a slow combatant to be knocked out of a fight or incapacitated before he can act. Regardless of the actual initiative results, the numeric difference between initiative results of different combatants, or how many combatants are in the fight, all combat actions occur in the same combat round (unless an action chosen normally consumes more than one round). Remember that a

For convenience and easy look-ups, players and DMs should note beforehand a combatant's IR for size and dexterity. This way, the number is always handy as a "permanent" modifier to initiative rolls, to be further modified by attack type or combat action chosen.

Below are some examples, using the IR modifiers above:

- ◆ **Human Fighter** with DEX 13 and Skilled mastery in the short sword: IR = +3 [+0 (Medium attacker) +1 (DEX adj.) +0 (Skilled mastery) +2 (weapon size) = +3]
- ◆ **Human Fighter**, as above, swapping his short sword for a halberd (BA mastery): IR = -6 [+0 (Medium attacker) +1 (DEX adj.) -2 (Basic mastery) -3 (weapon size) -2 (changing weapon) = -6]

*Continued on page 28 ...*

# Street of a Thousand Adventures:

## Martigan's Rest

Geoff Gander



his expansive, one-storey brick building sits at a quiet intersection. The establishment's tall, narrow windows are bracketed with brightly painted shutters, and beneath each one is a flower box filled with violets, pansies, and forget-me-nots. The stout, oak door, painted a brilliant sky blue, is decorated with an ornate bell-pull (whose chimes were hand-crafted in Ochalea), but regular patrons know enough to just walk in.

Inside, the wood-panelled walls have been stained to a honey-brown colour, and at regular intervals there are small, tasteful paintings of country scenes, and mounted shelves holding anywhere from one to four books, most of which show signs of use. Interspersed among the shelves are carvings of dragons, pegasi, griffons, and other fantastic beasts, all of which hold fist-sized glass spheres – these provide magical light after the sun sets, and their gentle golden glow produces a cheery atmosphere. The floor of the main room, which takes up about half of the building, is covered with a great carpet, whose spiraling patterns are a veritable riot of colour (a gift from an Ylari emir). Scattered throughout this room are numerous tables and chairs, all of which, though in good condition, show obvious signs of heavy use over the years. At the far end of the room is a long counter and a handful of stools, behind which is a simple door.

Martigan's Rest is open from 6:00 am to midnight, seven days a week. The proprietor, an average-looking, fortyish woman who calls herself Martigan, decided to open a casual lounge where those of her profession – magic users – might congregate for tea, coffee, liqueurs, and other reasonably priced light fare while sharing news, spells, and other information. Non-spellcasters are of course welcome (their money is as good as anyone else's), but those who know about Martigan's preferred clientele tend to stay away. Martigan herself is a very pleasant

woman, who will think nothing of taking a half hour or more to chat with newcomers about her business, sights to see in the city, and any rumours that she thinks they might be interested in hearing; her capable assistants, two young women named Aldea and Catherine, are more than capable of handling the patrons if their employer is occupied (they are both low-level magic users, though they will not reveal their abilities unless an emergency arises).

Although Martigan does not advertise, her establishment is known to traveling mages far and wide, and most of what is said about her business is positive. Martigan's Rest is known as a comfortable rest stop, a place where wizards and their companions may relax for a few hours. There are only two rules that Martigan enforces – patrons must not duel on the premises, and they may not solicit business from other patrons, unless invited by that person to sit with them first. Failure to comply with the first rule will result in banishment for life; violation of the second rule result in banishment for at least one year – no exceptions. This is to ensure that those who wish to enjoy a few hours of safety and solitude will get it. In all the years Martigan's Rest has been open, there have been no duels, and only one person was thrown out for soliciting.

Martigan herself is a veritable fount of information about local history, and she traveled extensively in her youth, such that, if presented with a strange object, she has a fair chance of identifying it. Also, the books in the main room may contain lore that might be of interest to the PCs – Martigan is more than willing to sell one of them, should she be asked about them. In this case, the DM should decide beforehand what the books are about, but some sample titles are below:

"The Habitat and Customs of the Green Dragon", by Thurmond Redbeard.

"Alchemy Made Easy", by Giovanni Storti.

"Legends of the Sea of Dread", by Julius Severnus.

"The Cult of the Black Worm", by anon.

"The Rise and Fall of the Eastwind Dynasty", by Edwin Linton.

The remainder of the building, which patrons are not permitted to see, consists of the kitchen (accessible through the door behind the counter), where Martigan and her employees prepare the food that is served, as well as living quarters for the three women (all comfortably appointed rooms), a small indoor privy, and a narrow staircase leading down to a root cellar. In the cellar, Martigan keeps several sacks of potatoes, apples, and other perishables that can be placed in cold storage. Hidden away in one corner is a small wine rack, containing vintages from around the Known World.

### Adventure Hooks

→ *Martigan's Rest is a good place for adventuring parties to acquire information about legends, which may turn into opportunities for adventure. As mentioned above, Martigan herself is an excellent source of such information, and, provided the PCs behave themselves, she will provide it free of charge; frequent patrons will find her more forthcoming about such things, of course. Regardless, polite PCs will find Martigan's Rest to be a convenient sanctuary, if only for a few hours.*

→ *Low- to medium-level PC magic users will also benefit from the informal spellcasters market that exists here; if invited to join another mage at his or her table, PCs may be able to buy, sell, or trade spells, and obtain information about new areas of research. Prices, and what constitutes a "fair exchange", are best determined through reaction rolls, and roleplaying. If a PC magic user plays his or her cards right, they may end up with a mentor for a time.*

*Continued on page 27 ...*



# Some Enchanted Item

## Hither and Yon: A mated pair of nefarious blades

Erin D. Smale

*Some Enchanted Item* features a unique magic item in each issue of OD&DITIES, complete with a loose historical context that may be adapted easily to any OD&D campaign and adventure hooks wherein the item itself can be central to game play. In our first instalment, we'll take a look at *Hither* and *Yon*, a mated pair of blades possessing a powerful punch and a dark past.

### History

*Hither* and *Yon* were commissioned a century ago by one Elbrolac, a cold, ruthless assassin for hire operating from the free city of Port Jansor. Elbrolac, known also as Jansor's Scourge, slew no less than three score minor nobles and well known politicians during his short but pestilent career. In what some posit a bid to incite war with neighbouring Nadoria, Elbrolac was hired to commit a wave of politically motivated slayings in which he wielded *Hither* and *Yon* with a deadly efficiency that culminated in the bold murder of Port Jansor's popular Lord Mayor.

The assassination incited unanticipated outrage, and Elbrolac, who sought to flee Port Jansor, was foiled through the renewed vigour of the local constabulary and his betrayal by other underworld figures who believed that Jansor's Scourge had finally gone too far. Within a week of the Lord Mayor's death, Elbrolac was rooted out and summarily sentenced to death.

The Silent Square within Port Jansor's Founding District is so named for Elbrolac's execution, for while he was set on a pyre fuelled by Elemental flame, he uttered not a sound of protest, spite, or agony whilst he burned, instead fixing his gaze firmly upon a rising sun of full, radiant glory. Elbrolac's ashes were left to wash away in the rain, and his fearsome blades were sequestered in the City Treasury. During a robbery some 25 years ago, the blades were stolen—amongst other treasures—by what most believe to be remnants of Elbrolac's now dormant sect. No account of their use has surfaced, and their present location is today unknown.

### Appearance and Powers

*Hither* is a short sword +2 with a worn handle and nicked blade that radiates a faint crimson light when foes of the wielder are within 50'; its leather scabbard, worn and cracked, bears an Auld Common runic inscription: "Outward from Within doth this Death-ward blade flow." *Yon* is a throwing dagger of returning +1 that, as its companion, appears well used, but returns unerringly to its wielder if an intended target is missed. These respective powers function if either blade is possessed. If a thief of any alignment owns both and draws them in combat, the thief gains a +1 "to-hit" bonus on any backstab attempt as well as a +1 AC bonus from the automatic parrying effect of either blade in motion.

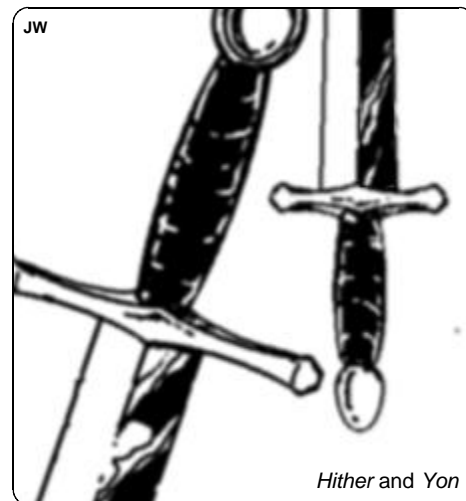
### Adventure Hooks

The twain blades *Hither* and *Yon* may spawn any of the following adventures:

- ◆ Elbrolac's sect is still active and indeed possesses the blades; it is possible that an encounter with the sect features the twain. If the PCs run afoul of the sect, it is certain that *Hither* and *Yon* will be used in an attempt on their lives, which may grant witness to some measure of the blades' powers (whetting, no doubt, the appetite of any PC thief).
- ◆ News that one of the PCs owns the pair reaches Elbrolac's sect, which sends out some muscle to reclaim the blades. If these thugs are defeated, the sect sends progressively stronger bounty hunters to divest the PC of the pair.
- ◆ One of the blades is stolen or lost, and the (N)PC owner naturally wants it returned (since both are required for full

effect). While the PCs are hunting for the missing blade, the original thief attempts to steal the other.

- ◆ The (N)PC owner of the blades is losing sleep, haunted by nightmares populated by the spirits of those slain by Elbrolac. At first, no obvious connection between the nightmares and the weapons exists, but the longer the owner possesses and uses the blades, the more alarming the dreams become. Eventually, the owner sees sad and angry spirits during waking hours, suffering constant torment until the blades are either destroyed or the spirits are mollified.
- ◆ As above, but the nightmares feature Elbrolac, who disapproves of the current owner. The nightmares and visions stop only after the PCs find the Elbrolac's tomb, constructed in the sewers beneath Port Jansor's Silent Square by loyal sect members after Elbrolac's execution. Of course, Elbrolac's undead form must be defeated to stop the visions. ■



# An interview with *Gary Gygax*

## Introduction

### Introduction by **Ciro Alessandro Sacco**

As many, many gamers around the world and especially Italian ones, I have always hoped to have the privilege to meet Gary Gygax, the co creator of Dungeons & Dragons and creator of the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons game. My hopes were at last satisfied when Gary Gygax came in Italy in 1999, for the Mod Con gaming convention: unfortunately, the large (and growing!) queue of fans eager to have their D&D products signed by him forced me to avoid any questions (nonetheless I have a D&D Basic Set and a B2 module signed by him!). Then this year on the excellent web site EN World ([www.enworld.org](http://www.enworld.org)) Gary Gygax started a long thread about himself, his projects and everything else that might be imagined by gamers. I was extremely pleased to see how easygoing, friendly and accessible Gary is to his/her fans, so I gathered my courage and finally asked him for an interview, an interview that quickly grew in size to seven pages of questions(!) due to the long research in magazines as "White Dwarf", "Dragon", "Space Gamer", catalogues and Gary's biography and bibliography. I want to add that Gary and myself edited the interview. I'm really proud of this little cooperative effort with the Father of D&D/AD&D and one of the nicest, open and less pretentious people I have ever met in all the facets of life. The fact he accepted to spend so much time on the interview, despite his busy schedule, it's the best proof of this.

### Introduction by **Gary Gygax**

Here I must insert my own introductory comment. The laundry list of questions that follow were not initially well received by me. What a chore, I thought, as I looked through the lot. Of course many of the inquiries need be answered in greater detail that has been furnished; but the fact is that I have to earn a living writing, so the time called for to respond fully is just not possible save by being taken in bits and pieces over a period of weeks. Although I have gone to some lengths in several areas to supply as full an explanation as possible, all things considered, I am not totally satisfied. While I enjoy communicating with my fellow gamers, there are limits to the extent I can do so in this sort of interview. If you find my answers incomplete or unsatisfactory, sorry: I did what time allows just now, as **Ciro** can't wait forever for my response. Contact him about this and possibly he'll compile another list. Then I will groan, grumble at him, and eventually answer those new questions too, most likely. Allow me to add that **Mr. **Ciro Alessandro Sacco**** has clearly spent a lot of time researching and preparing his questions. Because of that, I made a greater effort than usual to answer as fully as I was able. Be sure to thank **Ciro** for this, as he deserves lauds for his penetrating questions covering subjects seldom if ever touched on by other interviewers.

### Introduction by **Richard Tongue**

I would just like to thank both **Ciro** and **Gary** for being allowed to publish this interview, which I think is the most complete one I have ever seen, and certainly the most interesting, in **OD&DITIES**. The interview will appear in two parts, the next slated for **OD&DITIES Ten**. Enjoy!

## Gary Gygax, The Man

Does that mean you think I have grown up? Wrong!

**Could you please tell us about yourself: age, hobbies outside gaming, how did you discover gaming in first place and so on?**

I was born 27 July 1938 in Chicago, Illinois. It was there that learned to play games: pinochle at age five and chess at age six. Of course, playing with toy soldiers, "ruleless military miniatures" if you will, occupied a good bit of my time then too, with blocks and Tinker Toys adorning the battlefield. My family removed to Lake Geneva in the summer of 1946. Later on there, various board games and chess variants were added, while in my teens we tried some simple rules, along with ladyfinger firecrackers fired from Britons cannons, to add some order to games with toy soldiers. That was not a success. Finally, in 1958 I came upon The Avalon Hill Company's board wargame, "Gettysburg". That sealed my fate, for thereafter I was a wargamer and eventually a gamer in the larger sense.

Hobbies of the past include stamp collecting, tropical fish, small animal keeping, hunting, fishing, hiking and camping. Along with reading a fair number of books of fiction and non-fiction, listening to music (classical, blues, Spanish, and modern jazz the favourites), that pretty well covers my leisure time activities.

**I noticed a 'paranormal experiences' section in your biography: do you really believe in the paranormal?**

Of course there is the paranormal. To deny it is to flout reason. There are things that happen that cannot be explained by any scientific means. Some of that is paranormal. Exactly what is paranormal, what isn't, I'll leave to those who worry about such things. I do know, for example, that things have happened to me that have no rational or scientific explanation and those I consider as outside the known: paranormal.

**Reading your biography, I noticed you did some work in the boardgaming field, especially for Avalon Hill. How this experience started? Was it an interesting one? Did you attempt to sell D&D to them?**

The game you speak of, "Alexander the Great", along with another board wargame, "Dunkirk" (the invasion of France and the Low Countries in 1940), were originally published by a small game company, Guidon, or which you have a question about later on. When that company went out of business, Avalon Hill contacted me to secure an agreement to revise and publish the Alexander game. As I had been a fan, then became a friend of, Tom Shaw, then the V.P. of Avalon Hill, and his assistant was Don Greenwood, a gamer I had known for some years via postal exchange and he being a member of association I had co-founded, the International Federation of Wargamers, working with them was quite pleasant.

One of the most satisfying compliments I ever received was from one of the principals of Game Designer's Workshop, that laud in regards to the detail of the Order of Battle of the forces involved in the "Dunkirk" game. Since originally designing it, I have done more research, corrected some errors I discovered in the German OB, and one day I would very much like to see the campaign in play as a computer game.

In the summer of 1973, before my old friend, Don Kaye, joined me to found Tactical Studies Rules, I did indeed call Avalon Hill and ask if they might be interested in publishing the game that was to be known as D&D. They laughed at the idea, turned it down. In 1975 Tom called back to ask if maybe they could take over publication. It was my turn to laugh. After that we laughed together about the whole affair when we met at various gaming conventions.

One last thing. I did another board wargame, this one published by TSR. In 1976 we released my "Little Big Horn" game, the tactical conflict between the 7th Cavalry under Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer and the various 'Sioux' and allied Indian tribes. Two other small publishers likewise introduced their own like games at Origins that year, as it was the 100th anniversary of the battle. Of course, all three companies suffered sales-wise, as interested gamers were divided. The LBH game was actually quite accurate, and the Cavalry had a fair chance to triumph, just as Custer had hoped — if they stayed together and had their pack train with ammunition with them.

In the same biography I read: "Editor-in-Chief, Guidon Games (publisher of wargaming rules and wargames)". What kind of company was Guidon Games? An amateur publisher or a professional one? Did Guidon Games pay you for your work?

**Guidon Games had a game shop, sold gaming via the mail, published a magazine and likewise printed and sold military miniatures rulebooks and boxed board wargames. They were small but certainly a legitimate company (I dislike using 'professional', as they professed nothing: they were a commercial enterprise). I was paid for the work I did for them, yes. Unfortunately, sales volume did not make the income received thus sufficient to do more than supplement income from other work. I was asked to go to work for them full time. That would have required me to move to the state of Maine. Tom Wham did so, but I thought their new location was a poor choice. Furthermore, the company was not run in an aggressive and responsive manner. In my opinion there was no chance for growth and success as things stood and I said so to Guidon. Sadly, I was correct in my judgement. On the positive side, it was then (1972) that I determined I needed to start my own publishing company.**

**At the time were your various efforts enough to support you and your family or were you forced to have a 'real job' outside the gaming field?**

As noted, I had to do various other work after leaving the insurance underwriting and sales field late in 1970. In order to have a job where I could work at home, have as much opportunity as possible to devote to game design and writing, I learned shoe repair, acquired the necessary equipment and began doing such trade from my residence. That was something of a sacrifice, as the sand table in my basement had to move to make room for machinery, but that big table found a home in Don Kaye's garage. It was not until the middle of 1975 that income from game-related work was sufficient to provide my entire income, that money needed to support myself and my family.

**How big was the gaming market in the '70s? I gather that Avalon Hill and then SPI were THE publishers of the age with a mainly historical line — the first efforts in the fantasy and SF field seem to start really with the publication of "Godsfire" by Metagaming... Is this correct?**

No accurate data regarding the size of the consumer audience for board wargames and military miniatures in the

1960s (when I became active) and in the early 1970s is known to me. My considered estimate for the consumer audience the USA and Canada during that period is from 100,000 to 150,000, this including "Diplomacy" game players. Avalon Hill was far and away the largest publisher back then. SPI eventually moved into second place in the early 1970s.

As for Metagaming Concepts, I don't recall them being active before 1975 or 1976 (we sold/distributed their product line for a time). D&D was certainly the first fantasy game that achieved any success, and that was followed by "Traveller" (the first big sci-fi role playing game N.d.R.) from GDW. I think it was after the success of D&D that efforts to publish other fantasy, SF, and general RPGs were begun. Of course I am going back nearly 30 years and my recollection might be faulty...

## TSR and the birth of D&D

Actually, the D&D game was conceived and written about a year before we formed a partnership, had a company aimed at publishing it.

**Surely this question has been asked you a zillion times, but, for the benefit of our Italian readers, could you kindly tell it once more? How was D&D born?**

I wrote a 50-page manuscript that I titled "The Fantasy Game" late in 1972. Much of the content of the game was drawn straight from "Chainmail - Rules for Medieval Military Miniatures", the "Man-to-Man" and "Fantasy Supplement" portions that I had authored, to be exact. This manuscript was sent in the mail to a dozen or so of my wargaming associates around the USA for their play testing and feedback. The reception was overwhelming and all positive. In the spring of 1973 I revised the material to 150-page length — essentially what was printed as the D&D game's three rules booklets in January 1974. This draft of the game was sent out to about 30 people and the reaction was so intense that I was sure we had a winning game. As an aside, at that point I thought we would sell at least 50,000 copies to wargamers and fantasy fans. I underestimated the audience a little... It wasn't until the middle of 1975 that the true scope of the appeal of the "Dungeons & Dragons" game was understood by me.

As to how I conceived and wrote the

game in the first place, that would take many pages to explain, so I won't go into it other than to say it was the culmination of more than 30 years of living and doing that enabled the process.

**In your FAQ you write "1973: Gary and Don Kaye form Tactical Studies Rules, an equal partnership" and then "1974: Brian Blume is admitted as an equal (1/3) partner". Did both of you admit a new partner to help financing the publication of D&D?**

As an introductory explanation and a matter of possible interest to your readers, Don Kaye was a childhood friend. As a boy under age eight, I spent most of the summer in Lake Geneva. I met Don there when I was six years old. He was a friend of my usual playmate there, John Rasch, who lived next door. When my family moved to Lake Geneva permanently, when I was eight, Don was a year-round buddy. We bicycled, camped, gamed, and generally 'hung out' together from then on — with a lot of other lads of course. Unlike me, Don was a good student and he encouraged me, without much success, to pay more attention to studies. He is greatly missed...

Don and I wanted to get the D&D game out as soon as possible. If we had waited until sales of our one set of military miniatures rules, "Cavaliers & Roundheads", generated sufficient funds, it would have been 1975 before we could publish.

**I know that 1,000 copies of D&D were initially produced, the fabled First Edition. Is it true that you and your partners personally assembled every copy and then shipped them to customers and distributors?**

It is absolutely true. We wet and stuck the front and spine labels on the boxes, collated the reference sheets, folded them and placed them in the box, then collated the three booklets, put them in, closed the box, and set the completed game on a shelf. That goes for the second printing in brown boxes also, 2,000 copies run in October of 1974. The next run of 3,300 was sold in white wrapped pre-printed boxes, but hand assembly was also done, that in the basement of the house I lived in. In fact, I personally toted all the cartons of booklets, 9,000 in all, from the truck tailgate down into the basement storeroom. It was a hot June day in 1975 that I remember well today.

After that run we found a printer to do all assembly, ran 25,000 late that summer for delivery to the building we were in process of acquiring to house the business.

**Regarding distributors, what were your distribution channels at the time? I suppose that wholesalers were mainly in the historical gaming business — what was their reaction to this new weird game based on fantasy and with no board or counters?**

At inception, Tactical Studies Rules sold direct to consumers, shipped to game shops and hobby stores and wholesaled only to three distributors. Interestingly, those three were all manufacturers of miniature figurines. Those "distributors" ordered in small quantities, 25s and 50s. In 1975 we picked up one or two real distributors. Joining the Hobby Industry Association of America and exhibiting at their annual trade show in 1976, TSR Hobbies, Inc. then began to establish a regular network of distributors.

**How long did it take to sell these first 1,000 copies? What was the feedback from gamers? Is it true that you received many phone calls during the night to clarify some obscure aspect of the rules?**

The first sale was an individual copy to a gamer and it was mailed off at the end of January. The initial print run of 1,000 copies took seven months to sell out — February through September 1974. We received the second printing of the D&D game in October 1974, shipped those beginning in November. Those were out of stock by May and in June we received the print run of 3,000 copies noted above. Heritage Models did the printing, and their charge for the job was covered in their over-run of 300 copies, these they sold to shops. The arrangement worked well for us, as cash flow was always a problem.

Parenthetically, photostat copies of the manuscript rules were made, and when the commercial game was published, fans not willing or financially unable to expend the princely sum of \$10 for the product did likewise, copying the material on school (mainly college/university) machines. We were well aware of this, and many gamers who had spent their hard-earned money to buy the game were more irate than we were. In all, though, the "pirate" material was

more helpful than not. Many new fans were made by DMs who were using such copies to run their games.

From the end of 1972 on I received much mail and many phone calls. Unlike my current schedule, in those days I did a lot of work late at night, and many a telephone call was received after midnight. I recall one enthusiastic young DM who "took me on a phone adventure" that lasted two hours, concluding well after 2 AM, so he could test both his DMing ability and his material. Of course most of the calls were in regards to rules questions or inquiries about how best to handle some aspect of game mastering. As the number of enthusiasts grew, I finally had to have my telephone number "unlisted," or else I would have had to spend most of each day talking to DMs and players.

## Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson

Not a lot to say here, as it has been over 20 years since Dave and I had much to do with each other...

**What was exactly the role of Dave Arneson in the creation of D&D? In his [www.castleblackmoor.com](http://www.castleblackmoor.com) web site, Dave defines himself 'the father of role playing'.**

As Dave noted in his interview in "Different Worlds" #3, I wrote the whole of the D&D game. Arneson contributed ideas for the D&D game. Also, some of the contents of the D&D Game supplement, "Blackmoor", contained his concepts and writing, as developed and edited by Tim Kask. As for paternal claims to roleplaying, well, if Dave wishes to call himself that, okay. That's his affair. He must be very old, though, because as far as I can tell, roleplaying began about the time children in past historical ages played "let's pretend" games...

For my part I am satisfied with whatever credits others care to assign to me and I believe my work speaks amply for itself.

**Was Dave Arneson's role recognized by TSR Hobbies? How many times did he sue TSR Inc.? I remember hearing from Peter Adkison in 1997 that he had finally settled the last suit of Dave against TSR Inc.**

As to Arneson's role in the creation of D&D, Tactical Studies Rules (actually me in this case) listed his name on the product, right? His name continued to be so shown when Tactical Studies Rules was acquired by TSR Hobbies, Inc. He received royalties according to his contract. The "Blackmoor" supplement was published and promoted. That answers that question fully I should think.

Only one legal action was filed by Dave against TSR. That never went to court, was settled.

What Peter Adkison was referring to, I am sure, is the acquisition of certain remaining rights held by Arneson in the D&D game. There was no litigation involved, of that I am sure. WotC made Dave Arneson an offer for residual rights, he accepted, and that was that. I speak with authority here, because thereafter the same process acquired the residual rights I held.

**What is your relationship with Dave Arneson now?**

As far as I am concerned, one might characterize the relationship between Dave and me as distant but cordial. We are separated by distance and approach to gaming. We have no interaction in gaming or casual communication, but when we meet we enjoy a pleasant exchange. As a matter of fact, if Dave were to be running a miniatures game at a convention I was attending, I would make an effort to play in it.

## The facts about the recalled D&D module

A bizarre affair indeed, that!

**The D&D module B3 Palace of the Silver Princess was published in two versions, one with an Orange cover (written by Jean Wells) and another one with a Green cover (rewritten by Tom Moldvay and published in Italian too). Legend has that you ordered the recall of the Orange version because you considered the artwork questionable in many cases and that the entire print run was destroyed, excluding for a box of 75 copies tossed in the trash (and quietly taken away in the night) and some unreturned employees' copies. This module is one of the most sought after by collectors and of course it can command very high**

**prices. What is the truth about this module?**

You ask the man who decided on the "Amazon" and "Temptress" illos in original D&D, the "Eldritch Wizardry" supplement cover about something in the artwork in Jean Wells's module being 'objectionable'? I am quite at a loss as to how to respond....

Actually, it was Kevin Blume who literally pitched a fit about the product, demanded it be recalled. I had no input into the matter and I would have quashed his objection had I been able to do so. The fact is, though, that there were three persons on the Board of Directors of the company—Brian Blume, Kevin Blume and me. Similarly, while I was the President and CEO, Brian placed himself in charge of creative affairs, as President of that activity, while Kevin was President of all other operations. This effectively boxed me off into a powerless role. If a 'President' under me did something I didn't like, my only recourse would be to take the matter to the Board of Directors where I would be outvoted two to one.

## The many faces of TSR

From my perspective, those "faces" were all pretty ugly from about 1981 on...

**The first company you were partner in was Tactical Studies Rules but, as you write in your own FAQ "1976: Don dies of a heart attack in January. His wife is impossible to deal with. TSR Hobbies Inc. is formed, and this corporation buys out Don's widow". I remember reading that Don Kaye was instrumental in the D&D publication, having cashed an insurance policy to have money enough for printing the first 1,000 copies. Is this true? Do you think if Don Kaye had not passed on, things would have evolved in a different way?**

Don Kaye borrowed against a life insurance policy he had, the sum drawn out being \$1,000.

There is no question in my mind that had Don Kaye lived, the whole course of later events at TSR would have been altered radically. Don was not only a very intelligent guy, a gamer, but he was also one who was not given to allowing the prospect of greater profits to cloud his judgement in regards to the long-term

viability of the enterprise he co-founded, was so proud of.

**As it's written in your biography, from 1976 to 1983 you were President of TSR Hobbies despite Brian and Melvin Blume having the 65% and then the 70% of company's shares. Were the relations between you and the Blumes good or at least tolerable? Did they give you directions about the company's evolution and business strategy or did you set them by yourself?**

Melvin Blume was Brian's father. He purchased shares in the corporation. Then, at Brian's insistence, I agreed that Kevin, a younger brother of Brian then managing the accounting and fulfillment operations at TSR, be allowed to own those shares. They were duly transferred and then Kevin became a member of the Board of Directors.

I have spoken earlier of the structure that the Blumes imposed on TSR in 1981. As another example of things before then, late 1979 or early 1980, I issued some instructions. When Brian heard what I had ordered he shouted loudly for all to hear: «I don't care what Gary said. I own controlling interest in this company and it will be done the way I say!». I should have parted ways with TSR then and there, but I still had a lot of loyalty to the company and the vision upon which it had been created. Anyway, from that point on, I had little control, and in general what I desired be done was ignored or the exact opposite was put in place.

**I know that in those first years D&D and RPGs enjoyed a phenomenal growth and TSR Hobbies experienced booming sales not only in the US but in various other countries too. At its peak TSR, Inc. (successor of TSR Hobbies) employed over 300 staffers according to The Space Gamer # 69 (May – June 1984). The famous 'James Dallas Egbert III case' seemed to have a decisive role for the media coverage of the game and the booming of sales thereafter. Could you describe to our readers this case and its consequences?**

James Dallas Egbert III was a troubled young man who attended university in Michigan. I understand that he played the D&D game and possibly he and some of his associates might have explored some tunnels under the university to see if they

might serve as a place to live roleplay. All of that was reported in the news media here, but the credibility of the news media is suspect.

There came a time when Egbert disappeared from his school and his mother called in a private detective, one William Dear, to investigate. Mr Dear was imaginative, if nothing else, and he apparently seized upon the opportunity to sensationalize the matter, going so far as to suggest that Egbert was lost in the steam tunnels or that, because of D&D, some foul play might have occurred. The news media gave such wild speculation a lot of coverage. Then Egbert was discovered in Texas where he had gone to be with his father.

Of course the continual press coverage of this, their mention of the D&D game and its 'dangers' caused sales to skyrocket. We couldn't print fast enough to fill orders. I had projected growth for the year to go from approximately \$4.2 million to \$8.5 million for that fiscal year. Because of the 'Egbert Affair', TSR grossed \$16.5 million. Gross pre-tax profit was about \$4.25 million. Immediately after those results, the Blumes took what was effectively total control of TSR. The corporation subsequently realized greater gross sales, but never thereafter did the profit margin come close to that. I did not believe in heavy borrowing and expansion beyond the means of the corporation to manage comfortably out of profits and the Blumes did.

Staff size was also something the Blumes seemed to revel in. There were indeed over 300 employees in TSR in 1983 and 1984. They oversaw all personnel - human resources as they preferred to call it—save for a small personal staff of my own doing special creative projects and assisting me with my duties. Although I did not have any direct control of operations, I was still seeing to the corporate 'face', directing advertising and promotion and generally in the forefront where business deals with large companies were to be conducted.

**Did you ever read "The Dungeon Master" book by Dear, the private detective that solved this case? What was the book's impact at the time and what is your judgement of it?**

No, I never read it. Undoubtedly those that did got a rather misleading impression of RPGs in general and D&D in particular. Any impact that the book in question had was minimal in my judgement. It was the news media, particularly

TV, which caused real harm to the reputé of the game with their unfounded assertions and gross exaggerations.

**In 1981 you negotiated a distribution deal with Random House, the biggest US publisher. Did you approach them or vice versa? What was the result of this deal for TSR Hobbies?**

I was in process of negotiations with Simon & Schuster when the woman who was then the VP of Sub-rights Licensing at Random House telephoned me. Not surprisingly, this was instigated by her two sons, both of who were then avid D&D gamers. When she mentioned that we could conclude a deal speedily, get into book trade distribution in a matter of months, not a year, I immediately booked a flight to New York City. After a couple of days of meetings we had struck an excellent agreement, good for Random House and great for TSR, I assure you.

**Along D&D and AD&D, TSR Hobbies attempted to diversify publishing many board games, for example Divine Right (one of the most popular and still one of the most sought in the collector's market), granting Judges Guild licenses to publish products 'approved' for D&D and AD&D, granting Grenadier Models to produce official AD&D miniatures and selling licenses for a coloring album, party items and much more. How many licenses did TSR Hobbies sell regarding D&D and AD&D? What was the most weird product carrying the D&D or AD&D logos? I'd go for the party items, but you could now better...**

You are lumping apples and oranges together here, so I'll divide my answer into separate parts.

TSR did seek to broaden its base of games by publishing other RPGs and also board games. Had any of the non-fantasy RPGs been properly supported, I am certain that each such game would have established a fan base and made a small but sufficiently ample profit so as to justify retaining it as an active line. Similarly, as you note, the "Divine Right" game was excellent, and had it been promoted and managed properly, it too could have become a standard title on the TSR backlist of games.

Licensing is another matter entirely. It is generally a most desirable thing, as contracting with another firm to allow them to use trademarks and images to produce

ancillary products, or place such marks and likenesses on their products, is both "free money" and excellent advertising. The figurines license granted to Grenadier was the first given by TST, as I recall, and then a succession of others followed. The license granted to Judge's Guild was, admittedly, a lot of work in that products had to be carefully reviewed for continuity with the AD&D and D&D game systems. This was not handled well at TSR, and eventually the license was withdrawn. Thereafter I strongly advocated arranging a licensing agreement with Mayfair Games for their "Role Aids" product line, but I was outvoted in the board meeting considering the question. A bit later on I was actively promoting a merger with Games Workshop, but the Blumes managed to frighten off Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone. Of course that merger would have given those two 25% interest in TSR, and the control of the company would no longer have rested in the hands of Brian and Kevin. Such are the vicissitudes of corporate affairs.

As for the most unusual product licensed, I suppose I'd have to vote for the green "Big Wheel" plastic tricycle with a dragon head on the front of the handle bars (Amazing! N.d.R.). My youngest son, Alex, surely did enjoy riding one when he was a tot though.

**Exactly, when and for what reasons your relationship with the Blumes started to degenerate in, forgive me for the expression, an all out war for the control of the company?**

This has been pretty well answered in various responses above. The motivation for the Blumes to want to assume control was, in my opinion, the money. My receiving royalties, small percentages, but meaningful when sales volume was taken into account, and the recognition given mainly to me seemed to have clouded their perspective and affected their judgement most adversely.

**In 1982 TSR Hobbies decided to terminate the license to Grenadier Models and started producing its own AD&D Official miniatures and then a line of toys. There was an interview to Kevin Blume in The Space Gamer #63 (May – June 1983) about this subject. He said: "We licensed part of our AD&D toy line to LJN, a large company in our field (...). We retained for ourselves anything else that might come from Dungeons & Dragons". Why**

**TSR Hobbies embarked in such operations in fields already having a lot of well-established manufacturers? Were such choices part of the reason of, I quote your FAQ, "TSR had accumulated \$1.5 million debt that they [the Blumes and others managers] couldn't figure out how to pay"?**

Diversification into the manufacture of miniature figurines for use with role-playing and other games was not a bad idea in my opinion. If the new undertaking had been managed properly, integrated with the publishing, the miniatures line could have been profitable and enhanced the corporation's market share. That publishing and figurine manufacturing, properly integrated and supported, function well is well demonstrated by the success of Games Workshop. That established, I do not believe that TSR did manage the matter well. However it was not a substantial factor in the debt position that the corporation found itself in 1984. To the best of my knowledge the following are the major contributing factors:

→ the Blumes had acquired, without approval of the Board of Directors, a craft company called Greenfield Needlewomen. This company was owned by one of their relatives. While military/fantasy miniatures might be successfully integrated into a game publishing company, a line of needlecraft and associated products certainly could not.

→ Kevin Blume had overprinted the previously successful multiple-path D&D adventure books, so that there were in the warehouse some millions of copies of these various books that could not be sold.

→ over a million dollars of systems furniture had been purchased or leased, and it was sitting unused, unpacked for the most part, sufficient for hundreds of employees that did not exist.

→ TSR was over-staffed, 300 plus employees, while operations needed less than 200. Furthermore, there was considerable nepotism involved.

→ The corporation owned and leased over 70 automobiles.

There were other egregious things contributing to the financial problems of the corporation, but the above are the salient ones.

**In the same interview, Kevin Blume states: "I mean, Mattel would desperately love to buy us [TSR Hobbies]" and this after 'debunking' rumours of you and Duke Siefried**

**leaving TSR Hobbies and forming your own company and the Blumes selling remaining shares to Mattel itself. Was this true? Were there large entertainment and toy corporations interested in acquiring TSR Hobbies? Considering the company had enjoyed such an amazing growth in a few years, had some very successful product lines, very loyal fans and strong brands, the idea itself surely had a lot of merit in their eyes (especially for Mattel, I suppose).**

TSR had received inquiries about acquisition from other corporations for several years prior to 1984. As far as I know the Blumes were not interested in selling.

I never considered forming another company, with or without Duke Siefried.

As a matter of fact, though, I had been contemplating for some time the prospect of taking TSR public. When I encouraged employees to acquire shares in the corporation it was because I assumed that the company would move into the public arena. The Blumes opposed me in this.

As for interest in acquisition, I offer the following factual account. As the CEO of Dungeons & Dragons Entertainment Corp. I was meeting with Mr. Sid Shineberg, President of Universal in 1984. I had made the appointment to discuss a motion picture based on the game. In the course of that hour-plus long meeting, Mr. Shineberg said, and I quote as nearly as memory permits, the following: "We would like to acquire you (TSR/D&D Entertainment), joint venture with you, or engage in just about any co-venture you name." Of course I was knocked back on my mental heels, but I think I kept a poker face. What an opportunity, I thought. Then the reality of the Blumes came to cloud the rosy vistas I had glimpsed. I thanked him, explained that I held only a minority ownership in TSR, but assured Mr. Shineberg that I would relate Universal's interest to the Board of Directors at its next monthly meeting. Even as I said that I knew there would be no positive response from the Blumes. That proved to be the case.

As a positive, though, I took from that meeting a positive assurance that Universal would give D&D Entertainment a very positive look when it came time to present a major motion picture project I was working on. Right after the meeting with Mr. Shineberg, I met with Orson Wells. He subsequently agreed to become a part of the project, take the main supporting role. Not many weeks

ater I met with Edgar Gross, then the Executive Producer for John Boorman, and after another meeting that was moving forward too, with a date to be set to meet with Mr. Boorman to present the script and see if he would produce and direct. With that done, all that remained was to take the package to Universal, meet again with Mr. Shineberg. A very strong prospect for getting a deal indeed, all that. Before I could go further down that road I had to return to Lake Geneva because of the financial crisis at TSR (1984). This you mention later on, so I'll speak no more of that at this point.

Here I must again digress to provide the reader with the background that will enable a better understanding of TSR under the Blumes. After the reorganization where Brian and Kevin Blume boxed my position as president and CEO into a powerless role, they were evidently not completely satisfied. A part of that possibly stemmed from the fact that by sheer force of personality, along with occasional mutterings about leaving the company, I managed to stop some of their plans and even managed to get something I thought wise past them and into the works, so to speak. A part of their dissatisfaction might have stemmed from their own self-doubts. Whatever the reasons, the Blumes decided that TSR must join the American Management Association ("AMA"—thankfully now defunct). This was done without my approval. Soon the company was visited by their "experts," people who in my opinion were likely helpful to widget manufacturers and firms providing ordinary services. As a matter of fact these "experts" had no clue about the hobby game field. That evident lack notwithstanding, the Blumes had the AMA people assess TSR operations, then give all employees 'training' in endless meetings, those for the upper tier of personnel at expensive resort facilities. I attended one only, and my judgement was that the whole of the program was farcical, nothing but waste. As I was vocal in my opinion, it is likely that that solidified the Blumes in their commitment to the AMA.

Their next step was to expand the Board of Directors to six, bringing in three 'outside' directors, all members of the AMA. One was a lawyer from a large Milwaukee law firm. Another was a personnel officer from a Milwaukee area company. The third owned a company that made medical equipment. I was absolutely astonished at such a move. Of

course these three directors, brought in and paid because of the Blumes, "suits" quite ignorant of hobby gaming and generally hostile to the culture I had originally created for the company, were solidly behind Kevin and Brian and opposed to me. That I referred to them as Moe, Shemp, and Larry likely didn't endear me to them. That those three stooges of the Blumes sat on the Board of Directors for some two years and facilitated the mismanagement of TSR by the Blumes is undeniable.

Whatever I brought before the board was likely to be voted down by a five to one margin.

Not long after Williams gained control of TSR, she dismissed those stooges. They knew I was going to do that the instant I gained control, but I do believe that they thought Williams would not, as they supported her. That, of course is typical but very ironic to me, as under her management TSR came to far worse straits than had occurred under the Blumes, albeit it took more time for the collapse to occur. When it did, TSR had about \$30 million in secured debt and what I believe was in the neighbourhood of at least two or three million of unsecured debt, possibly much more. I know the secured debt figure, because I was an unsecured debtor who was owed six figures from the settlement of the suit TSR brought against the *Dangerous Journeys* game. I also spoke with an author who was owed over a half million in royalties.

**The Space Gamer #65 (September/October 1983) announced a deep 'reorganization' of TSR Hobbies with the firing of 40 employees and the birth of four companies with the same board of directors (you, Brian Blume and Kevin Blume) on June, 24. We see the birth of TSR, Inc., TSR Ventures, TSR International and TSR Entertainment Corporation. The article refers to "financial setbacks in the first half of 1983" as possible cause of this split. Why was this structure put in place? Was it effective? We know that TSR Entertainment was renamed D&D Entertainment Corporation and that it was instrumental, with your guidance, to the birth of the D&D Cartoon Show and that TSR Inc. was 'the' TSR for fans and professionals, but what happened to the other two companies of the group?**

Discharged employees were rehired or replaced all too soon. As to the rest, aside from the fact that there were six members of the BoD, that is essentially correct, although I am not quite sure of what 'financial setbacks' means. As I recall, TSR's financial report for 1983 showed over \$32 million in gross sales, with a marginal profit — very marginal. That was not so much a setback as it was a demonstration of poor management.

It might be worth noting that the sales manager in position in 1983 pushed a lot of product into outlets that I knew would not be able to sell it. I was vocal about this and what I warned against was ignored. When returns came in 1984, the sales manager had moved on to another position, his track record of 'sales success' at TSR likely adding much luster to his resume...

I had virtually no input in or knowledge of TSR Ventures. I was kept in the dark. It was involved in production of plastics and toys in the Far East, but beyond that I can't say. TSR International was established to manage overseas business, distribution and sales there, licensing and production. When the chickens of the Blume mismanagement of the corporation came home to roost early in 1985, TSR Ventures was folded. Later on, when Williams was in control of the corporation the same thin happened in regards to TSR International and Dungeons & Dragons Entertainment Corp.

I can also say that from what I recall Kevin and Brian saying, the separate corporations were aimed at keeping foreign income away from US taxation—they were envisioning millions and millions of dollars rolling in. The ownership of D&D Entertainment Corporation was held by the TSR Exempt Profit Sharing Trust and, as that trust covered in the main Brian and Kevin and me, it is likely that this corporation was seen as a more or less hidden income source by the Blumes.

When I was instructed by the Blumes to move to the West Coast and head up TSR Entertainment, the first thing I noted out there was a distinct dislike of TSR, this from earlier contact with the Blumes, as far as I could ascertain. Thus I immediately requested the BoD for a name change, and I got my way without any real fight. That is likely due to the fact that the Blumes considered the operation a good way to keep me out of their hair, and the name I asked for was a logical one considering the recognition factor. ■



# Combat sans Matrix

## A rapid "to-hit" arbitration system for OD&D combat

Erin D. Smale

### Introduction

Combat sessions in my OD&D campaign are, no pun intended, a double-edged sword. For the players, it's a thrilling opportunity to flex their fantasy muscles and overcome their characters' foes. For the DM (read: me), it's a potentially tedious time to consult combat matrices, add up modifiers, and umpire "to-hit" rolls. Don't get me wrong—combat is an important part of the game, and I like a hard-won fantasy rumble as much as the next guy. But let's not kid ourselves: combat can be a pain, because arbitrating it fairly is sometimes more work than play. Ironically, as the fastest-paced part of OD&D, combat probably slows down the game the most.

Unfortunately, that's the way the original game designers paved that particular road, and the "official" combat system, while largely suited to its task, has some serious speed bumps. The relationship between the attacking "to-hit" roll and the defender's armour class is among the most vexing in this respect, simply because it takes one of several various tables printed in small type to interpret the result of each toss of the combat die. If you've played OD&D for any length of time, you already understand how combat works. But you also have an idea of the time required to referee a single attack. For most attacks, it takes only a few seconds, but there is always that attack laden with a slew of modifiers, the attack that, for one reason or another, takes a disproportionate share of time to figure out.

I don't advocate a complete overhaul of the official system, but I do think that ways exist to make combat easier to arbitrate. If you've every balked at the need for your character to roll "higher" to hit a "lower" AC numbers, or you've taken the time to deliberately memorise which pages of the rulebook contain the combat matrices, this article may provide a more intuitive solution.



### Armour Class

The first task in streamlining combat is to make sense out of armour class values. Fundamentally, the idea of AC is good: it's a single number used to indicate the degree to which a combatant is protected from physical blows. As it stands in the official rules, however, AC is not exactly intuitive: for reasons not entirely known to this writer, the original D&D authors chose to present armour class in a puzzling manner: *low* AC values are better than *high*

AC values. This requires alteration, since nearly every other aspect of the game promotes high values over low. Indeed, even enchanted armour is described with magical "plusses" such that, bafflingly, a suit of **leather +2** provides more protection than a suit of **leather -1**, despite the fact that lower numbers are better than higher ones.

The new AC system described herein favours high values, comprised of a base AC figure augmented by modifiers that represent armour worn, the use of a shield, Dexterity adjustments, and other appropriate factors. The benefit of the system is that it accommodates, without the need for alteration, all of the existing AC modifiers extant within the rules. With little effort, OD&D players and DMs can convert AC values from the official system, calculate new AC values within the new system, and quickly recognise the intuitive value of the switch.<sup>1</sup>

### Base Armour Class

Base armour class is a being's AC value *sans* protection, or, put another way, a being's worst natural AC. In the official system, the worst value possible is AC is 9, and this represents the base AC for most. Those with natural armour (e.g., scales or a thick hide) or DEX adjustments possess better base AC values. For example, a character with a Dexterity score of 16 (a +2 bonus) has a base AC of 7; a black widow spider (RC<sup>2</sup>/206) has a base AC of 6.

To set armour class back on the intuitive track, upon which high numbers are better than low, we need first to convert base AC values. Let's assume that there exists a deliberate correspondence between the d20 "to-hit" roll and the official armour class range: namely, that the current AC values occupy the d20's low side (i.e., 1 to 9). Since we're converting to high numbers, we'll look for new AC values on the d20's high side, or, more precisely, from 11 to 20.

To maintain consistency, we'll establish that each point below ten in the official AC system is counted as a single point above 10 in the new system. Thus, the base AC 9 in the official rules becomes a base AC 11 within the new system. For those with improved armour classes, the same formula applies; a black widow's official AC is 6; under this system, base AC becomes 14.

### Determining Actual AC

A combatant's actual armour class is determined by applying all normal AC modifiers to the base AC value. For example, a **ring of protection +3** grants a +3 modifier to the wearer's base AC. A DEX adjustment of -1 modifies base AC by -1. A normal shield, which improves AC by 1, provides an AC modifier of +1; a **shield +2** provides an AC modifier of +3. Unless otherwise noted, all such AC modifiers are cumulative.

Actual suits of armour, under the new system, no longer provide an overall AC value *per se*; instead, they modify one's base AC. For example, leather armour provides, in the official rules, an AC of 7, which is two points better than the typical base AC of 9. In the new system, then, leather armour provides a +2 AC modifier. A revised table of AC modifiers for official armour types is cited below and is suggested to replace that found on RC/67:

**Table 1: Armour Types<sup>3</sup>**

Armour Type	AC Mod	Cost (gp)	Enc (cn)	Body Location(s) <sup>3</sup>
Banded Mail	+5	50	450	Torso, Arms
Chain Mail	+4	40	400	Torso, Arms
Suit Armour	+10	250	750	Head, Torso, Arms, Legs
Leather Armour	+2	20	200	Torso, Arms
Plate Mail	+6	60	500	Torso, Arms, Legs
Scale Mail	+3	30	300	Torso, Arms
Shield	+1	10	100	Shield side of defender

Using Table 1, then, a character with a base AC 11 wearing leather armour has an actual armour class of 13. The same character with chain mail and shield has an AC of 16.

A significant consequence of this system is that creatures with improved base AC values are better protected when they wear armour than in the official rules. For example, a hobgoblin's official AC is 6 (RC/185). Under the official rules, if a hobgoblin wears leather armour, his AC remains at 6, since leather (AC 7) provides worse protection than the hobgoblin's natural AC. However, using the new

system, a hobgoblin (now with a base AC of 14) wearing leather will benefit from the armour's +2 AC modifier; such a humanoid has an AC of 16.

### Converting Official AC Values

Astute readers will note that the fastest way to translate an official AC value to the new system is to simply subtract it from 20. For example, an official OD&D character with plate mail and a **shield +1** (AC 1) becomes AC 19 [20 - 1 = 19]. This simplified system is recommended for use only when converting opponents from official publications, since, as mentioned, combatants with an improved base AC may enjoy a better actual AC than in the official rules.

### Using the New AC Values in Combat

With high AC values representing better protection than low values, it becomes a simple matter to determine the outcome of a "to-hit" roll: Simply put, if the modified "to-hit" roll is equal to or greater than the defender's AC, the attack hits and damage may be rolled. If the "to-hit" roll is less than the defender's AC, the attack misses.

The time-saving result of this convention is that the existing combat matrices (RC/106-7) no longer need be consulted. If you want combat to go even

its corresponding THMod, literally a cumulative total of all modifiers pertinent to that attack. As in combat described within the official rules, high "to-hit" rolls are desirable, so high THMod values are likewise sought. The nature of the THMod system allows that attack modifiers cited in the official rules may be applied to the THMod system without alteration.

### Base THMod

The base THMod for any attack is based on the attacker's class and level (or hit dice if a monster). As shown on the existing combat matrices (RC/106-7), the most efficient attackers are monsters, followed by fighters, then clerics and thieves, and finally magic-users. As characters earn experience levels, and monsters grow in hit dice, base THMod values improve, using a progression derived from the official combat "to-hit" tables.

While the base THMod values are summarised in the following matrices, it is worth noting that the values were determined by cross-referencing the attacker's class and level with an (official) AC of 0 on a d20 "to-hit" roll, then subtracting that value from 20. Thus, a 7th-level fighter, who needs a 15 to hit an AC 0 defender, has a base THMod value of +5. A normal man, who requires a 20 to hit an AC 0 opponent, has a base THMod value of nil (or +0). By contrast, a 15HD monster has a THMod of +12.

As shown, no base THMod value should be lower than zero, though other modifiers could render an attacker's overall THMod for a certain attack negative.

### Determining Actual THMod

An attacker's base THMod is the foundation of any "to-hit" roll, though the actual THMod of individual attacks can vary. To determine an attack's actual THMod, one must apply all normal attack modifiers to the base THMod value. For example, a **sword +2** grants a +2 THMod to any attack made with that weapon. A STR adjustment of -1 modifies all STR-based attacks by -1. Attacks from behind, which normally grant a +2 "to-hit" modifier (RC/108), provide a +2 THMod within this system. Unless otherwise noted, all such AC modifiers are cumulative.

### Base THMod Values by Class and Level

Use Table 2 to determine the base THMod values for PCs and NPCs, as derived from the existing OD&D combat matrices (RC/106-7):

**Table 2: Base THMod Values by Class and Level**

Magic-User Level	Cleric/Thief Level <sup>4</sup>	Fighter Level <sup>5</sup>	Base THMod
1 - 5	1 - 4	1 - 3	+1
6 - 10	5 - 8	4 - 6	+3
11 - 15	9 - 12	7 - 9	+5
16 - 20	13 - 16	10 - 12	+7
21 - 25	17 - 20	13 - 15	+9
26 - 30	21 - 24	16 - 18	+11
31 - 35	25 - 28	19 - 21	+13
36	29 - 32	22 - 24	+15
—	33 - 35	25 - 27	+17
—	36	28 - 30	+18
—	—	31 - 33	+19
—	—	34 - 36	+20

**Base THMod Values by Monster Hit Dice or Attack Rank**

Use Table 3 to determine base THMod values for monsters and demi-humans using attack ranks. As with the THMod values cited on Table 2, the figures on Table 3 are derived from the existing OD&D combat matrices (RC/106-7).

Note that demi-humans use the Fighter Level column on Table 2 until reaching their level limit. For dwarves, this is 12th-level; for elves, this is 10th-level; and for halflings, this is 8th-level. After these levels are reached, high-level demi-humans use the attack rank on their respective level advancement chart (RC/24, 26, and 27 for dwarves, elves, and halflings, respectively).

**THMod Modifiers (General)**

A combatant's base THMod value is always modified by the standard attack modifiers outlined in various locations of the official rules (weapon mastery modifiers are adapted from RC/76 while other attack modifiers are taken from RC/108). Unless otherwise noted, all modifiers noted on Table 4 are cumulative.

**THMod Modifiers in Combat**

During an attack, the player or DM need simply apply all relevant THMod modifiers to the standard d20 "to-hit" roll. If the modified result is equal to or greater than the defender's AC (as determined using the system detailed earlier), the attack hits and damage may be rolled. If the modified "to-hit" roll is less than the defender's AC, the attack fails.

For convenience and easy look-ups, it is recommended that a combatant's THMod with each weapon or attack type be noted on the character sheet or

NPC/monster description. Below are some THMod examples:

- ◆ **Pyrohydra** with 11 hit dice, attacking from above: THMod = +11 [+10 (HD 11) +1 (attack from above) = +11]
- ◆ **4th-level fighter** with Skilled mastery with the sword: THMod = +5 [+3 (4th-level fighter) +2 (Skilled mastery) = +5]
- ◆ **4th-level fighter**, as above, attacking from behind in total darkness: THMod

= +3 [+3 (4th-level fighter) +2 (Skilled mastery) +2 (attack from behind) -4 (total darkness)]

- ◆ **Goblin warrior** unskilled with the spear: THMod = -1 [+1 (HD 1-1) -2 (Unskilled mastery) = -1]
- ◆ **2nd-level thief** with DEX 16 and Basic mastery of the long bow, firing at short range: THMod = +3 [+1 (2nd-level thief) +2 (DEX adj.) +0 (Basic mastery) +0 (short range) = +3]

**Conclusion**

This article provides a rapid method for resolving attacks by making "to-hit" roll results clear without the need to consult existing combat matrices. The beauty of this system is that it requires only slight effort on the part of DMs and players, who are otherwise free to use the armour class and combat modifiers as presented in the official rules without alteration. With a little preparatory work, the systems described above are suitable for any OD&D campaign; with all optimism, I hope they save you time and make combat resolution as exhilarating as it ought to be...

*Continued on page 28 ...*

**Table 3: Base THMod Values by Monster Hit Dice or Attack Rank**

Monster Hit Dice	Attack Rank	Base THMod	Monster Hit Dice	Attack Rank	Base THMod
Normal Man	—	0	13+ to 15	H	+12
Up to 1 (inclusive)	—	+1	15+ to 17	I	+13
1+ to 2	—	+2	17+ to 19	J	+14
2+ to 3	—	+3	19+ to 21	K	+15
3+ to 4	—	+4	21+ to 23	L	+16
4+ to 5	A	+5	23+ to 25	M	+17
5+ to 6	B	+6	25+ to 27	—	+18
6+ to 7	C	+7	27+ to 29	—	+18
7+ to 8	D	+8	29+ to 31	—	+18
8+ to 9	E	+9	31+ to 33	—	+19
9+ to 11	F	+10	33+ to 35	—	+19
11+ to 13	G	+11	35+ and up	—	+20

**Table 4: General THMod Factors**

Condition	Modifier	Condition	Modifier
Weapon Mastery: UN	-2	Attacker Exhausted	-2
Weapon Mastery: BA	0	Target Exhausted	+2
Weapon Mastery: SK	2	Total Darkness	-4
Weapon Mastery: EX	4	Partial Darkness	-2
Weapon Mastery: MS	6	Missile Range: Pt. Blank <sup>6</sup>	+1
Weapon Mastery: GM	8	Missile Range: Short	0
Attack from Behind	2	Missile Range: Medium	-1
Attack from Above	1	Missile Range: Long	-3



# The World of Herol

## A new campaign world for OD&D, in two parts

Carl Quair

### The Planet

Herol is considerably smaller than Mystara, with a circumference of less than 10,000 miles. It circles its sun in a much closer orbit than Mystara; the Herolian year is only ten months long, as Mystarans measure time. However, its slower axial rotation gives Herol a "normal" 24-hour day.

Unlike Mystara, Herol is solid all the way through. Its incredibly dense core causes it to generate a gravitational pull equal to that of Mystara (and is what causes its slow rotation). Herol has an unusually thick crust which is all of a piece; due to this, earthquakes and volcanoes are all but unknown. Geological examination, if such a skill were available, would reveal that Herol itself is no more than 10 million Herolian years old.

Herol has two major and one minor continental land-masses, plus numerous islands ranging in size from a mile or two across to almost sub-continental. Its poles are both frozen, landless conglomerations of ice. The most densely-populated continent, Draman, holds three main, humanocentric accretions of population:-

- ◆ **The Empire of Jael:** The youngest and most dynamic grouping, the Empire has existed for many hundreds of years as a loose confederation of states under a nominal High King. It has undergone a fairly rapid expansion in the last two centuries, conquering or absorbing every kingdom it has come across; it dominates the south-eastern corner of Draman. Showing no signs of slowing its growth, the Empire is now beginning to encroach on territories claimed by the outermost of the Old Countries.

- ◆ **The Old Countries:** The original "cradle" of civilisation on Draman, The Old Countries are actually several dozen small kingdoms clustered together in the south-west corner of the continent. Although once far advanced in comparison to the rest of the planet, most of these realms have slipped into a "Dark Ages" period of non-development within the last thousand years, and show no signs of emerging any time soon. Most of their time is spent waging petty wars on each other and ignoring/turning their noses up at the young and vibrant civilisation encroaching on their outermost territories.

- ◆ **The One Thousand Cities:** The north-western portion of the continent - up to the edges of the North Polar region - contain multitudes of fortified, independent City-States, each one claiming and vigorously defending a swathe of land around them against all-comers. [Note that "One Thousand Cities" is a poetic title, rather than an accurate tally of City-States.]

The sparsely-settled, mountainous north-eastern segment is home to several dozen Dwarf Strongholds, and is the last bastion of the ancient Dwarfish culture. At one time, these were to be found all over the continent, but the burgeoning Human population has driven the elder race to the less-hospitable regions in the last few thousand years. [Many Dwarfs now live and work in Human lands; demographics suggest as many Dwarfs live in Human-controlled areas as in the entire Dwarf Territories.]

The other major continent, to the south-west of Draman, is called Uran'Dar by its nomadic natives. It has been little

explored by the Dramani - the small, north-eastern portion they have examined is scorched desert (where the aforementioned nomads dwell). The rest is unknown territory.

Finally, the lesser continent is Gileme, far to the West, which is covered in thick forest and jungle. Knowledge of this land - commonly called the "Demi-Human Homeland" - comes from Elven and Halfling immigrants during the last 500 years (Dwarves are the only Demi-humans native to Draman), and is sketchy at best.

### The Solar System

There are five major planets in the Heroli System, of which the innermost is Herol itself. The next world out is Galeia, which occupies an orbit slightly further from the Sun than Mystara does in its own system; this planet is mostly barren rock and ice, but a narrow temperate band, measuring 100 miles in width and bounded by high mountain ridges on either edge, does circle the planet's equator. Within that area, life proliferates; the majority of life-forms here are primitive, devolved races, the degenerate descendants of long-ago settlers. However, this world also harbours powerful Wizards (émigrés from Herol, in most cases, although some "Wizards" instead rely on technology to produce their wonders), strange, unknown societies (descendants of those Wizards, and of their servants) and relics of both advanced technology and powerful magic (from Herol's "Blackmoo" period, 100,000 years ago).

After Galeia are Kromus and Derelion, both uninhabitable gas giants orbited by lifeless moons of frozen rock; and furthest out is Maybe, an extraordinarily-bright object of roughly-Herolian size, which



appears to vanish and reappear from the skies at different times of the year. Herolian astronomers believe that Maybe possesses a large, dark satellite which blocks its radiance (actually, the planet is dimensionally unstable, and periodically slides out of normal space into the Nightmare Dimension and back. It is inhabited by Mujina, Malfera, and all manner of Nightmare denizens).

Herol itself is orbited by a single moon, known variously as Ranya (in the Empire of Jael), Sialli (in the Old Countries), or Luun (in the One Thousand Cities). Equivalent in size to Matera (in relation to its primary), it influences the tides in a similar fashion.

## Calendars

The Heroli year is 300 days long, divided into ten months of 30 days each. The starting point for each year varies according to which calendar is used. For details, see the chart below:-

### Herolian Calendars

Empire of Jael	1,000 Cities	Old Countries	Northwestern Territories
Perema*	Zannath	Lightfall	Coppermont
Keleia	Corennath	Brownglass	Ironmont
Jarra	Maloth*	Whitecold	Steelmont
Ormaea	Duloth	Sundark*	Bronzemont
Tarla	Kavaloth	Earthiron	Silvermont
Akka	Eroth	Greenshoot	Tinmont
Nos' Akka	Wulath	Whiteflower	Goldmont
Velima	Veridath	Newleaf	Brassmont
Dallala	Lerabath	Sunbright	Platinmont
Hamala	Sarrath	Cropharvest	Alloymont*

\* = signifies the first month of the year in that area.

**Notes on dating systems:** The Old Countries' calendar is derived from that used by the Lost Empires. The Jaeli calendar begins in the month when Emperor Jael was crowned. The City-States' calendar is derived from the building-date of Jalakka. The Dwarfish calendar's origin dates from when Iroin first became their Patron.

**Notes on month-names:** The months of the Jaeli calendar are derived from the ancient Lerenaki counting system. The months of the 1,000 Cities' calendar are named for the apocryphal "12 Kings of the North". The months of the Old Countries' calendar are given their ancient folk-titles. The months of the Dwarf calendar are

named for the metals worked by different clans; Alloymont, the first of the year, signifies the melding of all clans into one nation.

## Timeline

The following is a timeline for Herol as the Immortals know it. The dating system is that used by the Empire of Jael, since it is the most accurate of the calendars currently in use. "PE" is "Pre-Empire", the period before Jael the High King consolidated the disparate realms into an Empire; "GT" is "Golden Time", the period since that date.

**c. 10 million PE:** The Heroli System forms from cosmic gasses; the Sun ignites. At this time, there are four main planets (later called Herol, Galeia, Kromus, and Derelion). Tiny, cold moons of rock and ice form around the gas giants Kromus and Derelion; Herol and Galeia lack satellites of any kind.

occupied by small, warm-blooded, reptilian species; their development has been practically identical up to this point.

However, around this time, explorers and settlers from Maybe arrive (via enormous Gate magics) on Galeia and settle there, using their advanced magical powers to manipulate indigenous plants and animals.

**1,450,000 PE:** The Berserker Wars. The Galeian settlers are wiped out by Berserkers, massive saurian humanoids bred from the now-extinct indigenous species to serve as gladiators and warrior-proxies, in just over ten years. The Wars devastate the fertile band, causing a long period of famine which eventually destroys the few surviving animal species. Within 300 years only plant-life survives on Galeia.

A few settlers manage to escape the slaughter by Gating to Herol, the nearest habitable world; they bring poor fragments of their magical technology with them. Attempts to manipulate the development of native Heroli lifeforms go poorly, as knowledge slips away from the refugees with each passing generation. Within ten generations, the refugees have reverted to a pre-Stone Age existence. The slightly-evolved test subjects, however, begin to thrive.

**400,000 PE:** On the continent of Gileme, the alien settlers have evolved into precursors of the Elf-race; elsewhere, the far more numerous native creatures - primarily mammals, but including some residual saurian or lizardlike races - have developed into crude humanoid subspecies. Around this time, the Immortal Iroin takes an interest in the pre-Stone Age culture on the continent of Draman, and begins to steer their evolution to his own ends.

**350,000 PE:** Due to solar flares, Herol goes through a "hothouse" period; the polar ice melts, raising the sea level. Native boat-building dwellers on the island chains, seeing their homelands swallowed up more and more by the sea each year, migrate to the continent of Gileme. Limited food-supplies and living-space have caused this subspecies to develop as small, light creatures - the precursors to the Halfling race.

The natives of Draman are developing as short, broad, powerful creatures, according to Iroin's design. Although most are still hunter-gatherers or primitive farmers, a few have begun to explore the rudiments of mining. On Uran'Dar, the native premen have evolved without interference, and are still at a simpler stage of development.

**c. 4 million PE:** A cosmic rift to the Nightmare Dimension opens on the outskirts of the Herolian System. The bright planet later called "Maybe" by the Heroli slips into the universe and takes up an orbit far beyond Derelion. The rift closes only partially; the planet remains dimensionally unstable, sliding back and forth between the "normal" and Nightmare universes in a rough 13-year cycle.

Coincidentally(?), life (simple, unicellular organisms) begins to develop independently on both Herol and Galeia within a few thousand years of this event.

**1,500,000 PE:** Both Herol and Galeia (along its fertile, temperate band) are



**110,000 PE:** Modern Man is now widespread across Uran'Dar; the first civilisations have formed, and are beginning to develop the arts of war. Pre-existing Immortals are garnering followings amongst the various peoples; the first Herol-native Immortal, the now-forgotten Gur'Midal, will ascend to Immortality within the next few years. Explorers from Uran'Dar discover Draman around this time, coming into contact with the indigenous Dwarfs (who at this stage call themselves "Iroin's People", which is wrongly translated as "Ironfolk" by the explorers; partly because of the Dwarfs' superior metalworking skills, the name is retained).

Numerous settlers will travel from Uran'Dar to Draman as their homeland becomes more crowded during the next few centuries, adopting and adapting the Dwarvish technology, eventually far outstripping their native continent in development.

**100,000 PE:** The Age of Legends: Herol has reached a technological Golden Age, comparable with the civilisation of first settlers on Galeia, so long ago. Interplanetary travel has become sufficiently advanced to send explorers to Galeia, whose fertile band is now a verdant realm. Many settlers relocate there over the next century. In addition to technological wonders, the art of Magic has grown to unprecedented heights amongst humankind, permitting the greatest Wizards to perform miracles of a type never seen before (or since). The art of Branding, a minor, hedge-wizard skill, has its beginnings around this time.

**95,000 PE:** Mortal magic has rivalled the power of the Immortals themselves for thousands of years, and mighty spells, which tap into the power of the planet itself, are almost commonplace. Most people can use magic, either directly or via Immortal worship; those few who cannot do so employ Branding to let them touch the power. Considerable numbers of mortals have attained Immortality in the last few millennia. Due to ideal living conditions and lack of dangerous diseases or predators, population growth has spiralled during the last two thousand years; overpopulation is now a serious problem. The mightiest Mages and Clerics on Herol meet in council, and decide to combine their powers to create a massive extra-Planar Gate, through which they will drag one or more inhabitable planets to occupy the "trojan points" of Herol's orbit, thereby providing unlimited living-space. After much searching, a small, verdant world is found in a nearby alternate Prime Plane. The Council decides to use this planet as a test for its process.

The plan fails disastrously. Attempting to pull the planet into this universe drains the already-overtaxed magic of Herol to dangerously-low levels, robbing the populace of their powers. Passage through the Gate strips the captive planet of its biosphere, killing millions of life-forms. Unable to control the new world's motion, the Council watch it slip into close orbit around Herol, which causes massive earthquakes and tidal waves around the world, slaying billions. Civilisation is all but destroyed, except in certain protected (or extremely lucky) locations. Less than one in ten thousand people survive the

cataclysm, and those that do are mostly saved by luck or the Immortals (who drain their power greatly to prevent total annihilation; many Immortals are themselves slain in the effort, Gur'Midal among them).

The magical energies of Herol are drastically - perhaps permanently - depleted by this event. The Immortals determine that the power might eventually regenerate, however, and decide to limit mortal access to magic, in order to both prevent a recurrence of this tragedy and give the planet a chance to recover. They decide to bind all magical use into the art of Branding and its derivations; now, no-one can access magic - either mystical or divine - unless they sacrifice some of their health or ability to receive a Brand. Certain Immortals teach chosen subjects the skill of Branding in their dreams; these first few awake with the black circle of the Overbrand magically imprinted upon their foreheads.

Civilisation is all but wiped out by this event; the planet enters a Dark Age, from which it will not emerge for many, many millennia.

**c. 45,000 PE:** A Branded Mage named Derelion ascends to Immortality in the Sphere of Thought; he has the distinction of being the first new Immortal to emerge since the cataclysm.

**10,000-5105 PE:** The Age of the Lost Empires. During this period, the Southwest region of Draman becomes the home to a succession of large, powerful Empires; that portion of the continent becomes either a centre for learning and enlightenment, or a vicious and corrupt realm of slavers and warmongers, depending on which Empire is in power. This period marks the first resurgence of true civilisation since the fall of the Age of Legends. Circa 9,000 PE, emigrants from the Empire of that period head North and found Amaron, the first of the One Thousand Cities.

The last Empire, called "the Realm of the Undying Sun" in the few surviving texts, finally falls in 5105 PE due to plague, famine, and riots. Many people escape to the East, eventually forming the Eastern Kingdoms. Both the Northern and Eastern Diaspora displace the Dwarfs who have lived on the land for millennia - Iroin's careful shepherding of his people has allowed them to bloom during the dark times, but they choose to give way to the more militaristic Humans rather than force a conflict. This pattern will be repeated, time and again, until the Dwarf realm is reduced to the inhospitable north-eastern segment of the continent.

**c. 8,900 PE:** A powerful Mage-turned-Merchant named Lomor ascends to Immortality in the Sphere of Time, having created Amaron, a small mercantile Kingdom, far to the North; his realm will endure (in one form or another) for millennia, eventually evolving into the City-State of Jalakka.

**3,500 PE:** Govenai, a Master of Brands living in what is now called "the Old Countries", dies and is reanimated as Herol's first Vampire. Within 50 years he has ascended to Immortality in the Sphere of Entropy; this marks the beginning of the slow spread of Vampirism across the continent.

**407 PE:** The Treaty of Three Kingdoms. The three Kings of Lerenak, Baer and Voros - warring, neighbouring nations in the south-eastern corner of Draman - agree to elect a High King to oversee disputes between their lands. The High King will have a estate to rule at the epicentre of the three lands, but no real power; his purpose will be as arbiter and final judge in their disputes. The High King is selected by lot from landless nobles in the three Kingdoms; Lord Geranda of Lerenak wins the title.

**300 PE:** The forested continent of Gileme is discovered, far to the West of Draman, by the ragtag survivors of a lost trading convoy. Exploration parties come across both friendly, burrow-dwelling Halfling farmers and mysterious, tree-worshipping Elves. They form treaties with nearby communities, and manage to obtain help in repairing their ships. A few members of each race return with the repaired and reprovioned ships; many more follow, in ships of their own design, over the next few decades.

**47 PE:** Jael, a nephew of High King Forien, is born in the Kingdom of Lerenak. A comet, clearly visible in the night sky, passes overhead on the night of his birth. This is taken as a good omen for the babe's future.

**35 PE:** The young Jael, while at sword practice, is inexplicably struck by a lightning bolt from out of a cloudless sky. He is unconscious for an hour; upon awakening, he is consumed with a message he apparently received from the Immortal Kromus - what Jael calls his "Dream of Empire".

**27 PE:** Jael enters the military and rises through the ranks at meteoric speed, earning the respect of all who come under his command. Many feel him to be "touched by the Immortals", and there is much wrangling to be assigned under him.

**10 PE:** Jael, now a renowned and very successful General, is named Heir to the High King, by an overwhelming majority of votes. Six months later, Forien dies of a massive heart attack; Jael, in the midst of a Summer campaign, is immediately recalled to take up his duties.

**7 PE:** Merelith, a powerful Cleric of Kromus, ascends to Immortality in the Sphere of Energy - one of only a handful of mortals to do so since the Age of Legends ended.

**6 PE:** Determining that what the squabbling Kingdoms need is strong leadership, Jael begins to consolidate his power base, placing his own loyal men in charge of the various national armies and seeding the Royal advisors with those sympathetic to his own ideals. His hold over the three Kingdoms grows firmer every year.

**0 GT:** Jael the High King forces the Kings of Lerenak, Voros and Baer to sign over individual control of their realms to him; his Dream of Empire is complete. The Empire of Jael is born. The modern system of dating commences from this point.

**3 GT:** In the new Empire of Jael, a powerful Fighter-Thief named Horelle ascends to Immortality in the Sphere of Time. She adopts the name Ranya (the name given to the moon in the Jaeli regions), and becomes the Moon-Immortal for the Empire. At about the same time, Merelith debuts as Sun-Immortal; the pair are quickly declared to be twin sisters by their respective Clerics.

**105 GT:** The Fiend known as Szthonda "the Burning Dark", Patron of a small kobold tribe, appears to a group of human exiles in the Northern wastes and commands them to build her a temple to manifest in. The City-State of Deremond springs up around the temple.

**200 GT:** The present day.

## The Nature of Magic

As per most human-occupied worlds throughout the multiverse, magic is divided into two forms - divine (provided by powerful, Immortal beings in response to worship) and mystic (shaped and controlled by the will of the individual). What makes Herol so different to other worlds is the specialised way in which these powers are accessed. Heroli practice the art of creating magical Brands, tattoos which provide some power or capability to

the bearer. Herol's Clerics, Druids and Magic-Users all rely on a Brand - usually granted at childhood - to allow them to access their class-related powers. High-level spellcasters may, in turn, learn the skill of Branding, creating new designs with unique or variant powers; unlike the Masters of Brands (see below), this does not require them to take on an Overbrand.

In addition to standard spellcasters, there are guilds of Brand Masters found all over Herol. These are skilled artists, selected in childhood to wear the Overbrand, which allows them to create Brands without needing to reach high levels of spellcasting expertise - but which severely limits their ability to progress in any class. Brand Masters of varying skill are found all over the known world, although their abilities and portfolios vary greatly.

Dwarf followers of Iroin, dwelling in the Strongholds of north-eastern Draman, practice the art of creating Forge-Marks, carved Brands which empower items with magical power; this skill is also practised by some humans, and in certain parts of the continent has been subsumed into Brand Master lore, but few have the skills of the Dwarf artisan.

Elves on the continent of Gileme (and their recent descendants) practice the art of beseeching the mindless spirits of wood and water to enter into objects worked from natural substances - particularly wood - and imbue them with power. These Embodiment rituals are a last, degraded remnant of the vast magics once possessed by the Elves' off-worlder ancestors.

The Halflings of Gileme long ago developed a variant practice, based on the Elvish form of worship, involving the calling-upon of "Ancestral Guardian-Spirits" (actually nature-spirits of a specific type) to temporarily infuse prepared totemic objects - like Gri-Gris or totem wands - with spell-like powers. This skill, called Ritual Enchantment, has been preserved by emigrant Halflings, and combines well with the powers of Branded Magi.

There are humanoid (and even human) Shamans on Herol; these lack spellcasting powers, relying instead upon direct intervention by their Patron Immortals, which is invoked and beseeched by prayer and by sacrifice of both animals and (if necessary) intelligent creatures. The majority of these tribes worship Entropic Fiends, rather than true Immortals, who are summoned by their followers to perform their wonders in person. Most such tribes practise the skill of ritually tattooing themselves; occasionally, an Immortal Patron might be prevailed upon to empower these crude designs, granting true powers to the recipient.

**DM's note:** the demi-human and humanoid systems of magic are probably best restricted to NPCs and to PCs of at least name level. In the latter case, the forms may be learnt as skills, at the DM's option.

The reason Herol's magic is so restricted is unknown by any mortal now living. Some Sages theorise that the Immortals, or at least those prevalent in the distant past, restricted magic to slow the ascension of new Immortals who might supplant them. Others suspect that, at some point in the planet's history, Herol's magic was freely available; but some cataclysmic event reduced its potency so much that now it can only be tapped through the medium of the Brands.

The truth lies somewhere in-between; Herol's magic was permanently denuded by the mighty spells created and cast during its Age of Legends. The Immortals, fearing a permanent loss of all magic, stepped in to place artificial limits on mortals' ability to draw on its power. These remain in place even today, and will most likely do so for all time.

**DM's note:** mortals dwelling on Herol's sister-planet Galeia do not require Brands to utilise magic - Galeia never experienced the loss of magic suffered by Herol. Should Galeian spellcasters - or those from other Prime Planes - arrive on Herol, they will be able to cast spells as normal, as the planet's magical potential has (at least partially) replenished itself over the last 200,000 years.

## Character Classes

Most of the standard oD&D character classes are available on Herol, but only one - the Fighter - is possible for unBranded natives. Details are given below:-

**Fighters:** The majority of Heroli (above the "Normal Human" level) are Fighters, since they do not require Branding to advance in this class. Fighters may Dual-Class if they can acquire a Brand, and have sufficiently high Character Statistics (see below). A Fighter may decide to take on trainees at any time, charging a rate commensurate with their skill.

**Mages:** Most potential Magi are chosen for apprenticeship between the ages of eight and fourteen, and given the Warlock Brand at the beginning of their last year of training, granting them the powers of a 1st

level Mage (before this Brand is applied, their training is devoted to the theoretical side of Magecraft). Magi may take on apprentices at 11th level - the earliest level at which the Branding skill may be learnt by a non-Brand Master. There are no Specialist Mage-classes on Herol, but any individual Mage can choose to specialise in the magic he chooses to practice.

**Clerics:** Young novices are taken in at between nine and twelve years of age, to be trained in the rituals and traditions of their church. Like Mages, above, they receive the Priest Brand in their last year of training. A Cleric may induct Acolytes into the church at 12th level, when the Branding skill becomes available. Certain Immortals (Merelith, in particular) offer their followers the opportunity to become Druids, instead; Druid-Acolytes receive similar training as Cleric-Acolytes. Because of the Branding-restriction, the concept of Druids as "self-taught wilderness-Priests" is unknown on Herol; those who follow this route become Hermits, instead - nature-dwelling, spell-less wise men who (DM's choice) advance as Fighters, if they advance at all.

In addition, many Immortals grant extra, minor abilities to their devoted Priests (see Immortal Worship, below).

**Thieves:** The standard "Thief" class is unknown on Herol; there is no single Brand which supplies the skills and abilities of this class, as with Clerics and Mages, above. However, any class can choose to receive one or more Brands which provide limited Thief-skills (the Moon-Touched Brand, for example, provides Hide in Shadows ability, while the Hands-in-Shadow Brand grants Pickpocketing skills), and plough some of their experience (xp) into improving or developing those additional skills. The PC may place whatever portion of his earned xp he chooses into each Branded ability, retaining the rest for his primary class; each Brand has its own "experience level" chart (see Brands, below). The most common Thief-variants are simple Fighter-Thieves, since - unlike Magi or Clerics - they do not need to sacrifice hp or attribute points for their primary class, but Mage-Thieves and Cleric-Thieves are not unknown.

**Dual-Class:** Since all classes (bar the basic Fighter) require the acquisition of one or more Brands to advance, those with some experience in their chosen class may wish to add the Brand of another class at a later date; a Fighter may choose to add Clerical or Magical abilities to his repertoire, for instance, or a Mage might

wish to advance in the Church. This involves the acquisition of the specific class-related Brand, which grants the powers of that class at 1st level; most who do this do not advance in the class, however. To improve the abilities granted, the adventurer must plough all xp gained in a particular adventure (decided on a case-by-case basis) into the Branded class, gaining nothing in his primary vocation. Although an individual might acquire several class-related Brands, only one can be improved in this fashion - no individual may Dual-Class in more than two adventuring professions, nor may they advance beyond 1st level unless their attributes are sufficiently high.

**Demi-Humans:** The majority of demi-humans (in particular, those Elves and Halflings still dwelling on the Continent of Gileme) are Fighters, due to the scarcity of Masters of Brands amongst them, although they do have the advantage of racial abilities (use the standard Dwarf and Halfling character classes, plus the non-spellcasting Elf-Warrior class from the Hollow World boxed set). Those who dwell on Draman have a greater range of classes available to them. There are no level limits for Heroli demi-humans.

- ◆ Dwarfs may be Fighters, Fighter-Thieves, Clerics (of Iroin, if born in the Dwarf Territories, or of any local Immortal if born elsewhere), or Druids (of Merelith in the Empire, or Varalle in the Old Countries). Dwarfs generally distrust magic - a race-memory holdover from the cataclysm, so long ago - so a pure Dwarf Mage is unlikely, although Fighter-Magi might be found in cosmopolitan areas. Other Dual-Classed Dwarfs are possible, but rare. Dwarf NPCs may be Masters of Brands. Stronghold Dwarfs also practice the art of enchanting metallic and gemstone items - such as weapons - with specialised Brands (called Forge-Marks), as taught to them by the Immortal Iroin.
- ◆ Elves may be Fighters, Fighter-Thieves, Clerics (if born in Draman, or converted; the Gileme Elves serve nature-spirits, rather than Immortals), Druids, or Magi. Dual-Classed Elves are possible, and more common than for other Demi-Humans; Fighter-Mage is a popular choice among those Elves with sufficiently-high attributes. Elf NPCs may be Masters of Brands. Gileme Elves also practise the art of charging wooden bows, arrows and other



weapons with the power of the Nature-Spirits (a practice known as Embodiment), granting them a form of magical enhancement.

- ◆ Halflings may be Fighters, Fighter-Thieves, Clerics (in Draman; Gileme Halflings practice Ancestor-worship), or Magi. Halflings rarely become Druids, since the Halfling mindset is more focused on cultivating the land, rather than living in harmony with it. Dual-Classed Halflings are almost unheard of. Halfling NPCs may be Masters of Brands. Gileme Halflings also practice the art of calling upon Ancestral Guardian-Spirits to temporarily infuse prepared totem objects, granting them power (called Ritual Enchantment).

**NB:** because of their wide evolutionary divergence, interbreeding between Humans and the Demi-Human races is impossible; the races are infertile with each other, so Half-Elves, half-Dwarves, etc. are unknown.

**A Note on Ageing:** although Herol's year is only ten (Mystaran) months in length, the maximum age-ranges for each species should be considered equal their Mystaran equivalents; the native races evolved and developed according to this world's life-cycle. For example, a Heroli boy of ten will be of equal development to his Mystaran equivalent, even though the latter would be twelve by Heroli terms. Should a Heroli journey to Mystara, he will age at a rate approximately one-sixth faster than a Mystaran native; conversely, Mystarans on Herol age one-sixth slower than the native populace. Inhabitants of Galeia - many of whom are descended from transplanted Heroli - age at the same rate as their ancestors, despite the longer year on their world.

## Immortal Worship

The number of Immortals known to be worshipped on Herol is far smaller than Mystara's broad Pantheon; since the cataclysm, which cost the lives of most native Heroli who had previously reached Immortality, only a handful of mortals have managed to ascend to that level of existence. As a consequence, certain Exalted beings (in particular, the Fiends and Demons of Entropy) have been adopted by certain tribes or communities as pseudo-Immortals. The Empire of Jael worship a small Pantheon of Immortals, who (according to their religious texts) all

belong to the same "family", despite their differing Spheres. The One Thousand Cities each have a City Patron whose church is the sole permitted "established" religion in that City-State - in some cases, the Patron is merely an Exalted being (such as a Titan or Fiend) who may or may not have access to a spell-granting Artifact. Few Immortals actively support more than one City-State, unless it has been conquered by another, although the same Immortal might be worshipped under different names in various Cities.

In the Old Countries, different Kingdoms worship separate groups or single Immortals; some of these have widespread follower-bases, covering many Kingdoms, while others are limited to single towns or small regions.

The following entities are among the best known of Herol's Immortals:-

### Empire of Jael

**Kromus (Warfather, Lord of the Skies):** Im32 (Heirarch), Matter. The chief Immortal of the Empire of Jael, Kromus is one of the eldest Immortals - his mortal origin, if any, is long forgotten - and one of the best known; ancient civilisations gave his name to one of the bright "wandering stars" in the night sky. Generally depicted as a powerfully built, black-bearded man in late middle-age, Kromus' statues either have him wearing plate armour (in his aspect as Father of War) or a flowing, wind-swept cloak over regal clothing (as Lord of the Skies). Kromus is also revered in the Old Countries as a Storm-Immortal, and is Patron Immortal of the City-State of Ohriman.

Clerics of Kromus in his "Warfather" aspect are permitted to wield a longsword from 1st level, and to gain levels of mastery in its use. Those who follow his "Lord of the Skies" aspect gain the ability to Predict Weather (as per the 1st level Druid spell) once per day at 1st level. This is in addition to their normal complement of spells.

**Senyanna (Lady of Battle, Comforter of the Slain):** Im30 (Eternal), Thought. In the Jaeli Pantheon, Senyanna is considered to be Kromus' wife and partner; like him, she is an advocate of war. The Jaeli believe that Senyanna comes for those slain in battle, carrying them away to an afterlife in Paradise. Her worship has grown with the Empire; two centuries ago, she was merely the Patroness of Women Warriors (a role she still retains). Senyanna appears to be a pale-skinned, black-haired warrior in black-lacquered armour.

The exclusively female Clerics of Senyanna in her "Lady of Battle" aspect

gain the ability to cast Maiden's Might (see below) on themselves only, once per day, at 3rd level. This is in addition to their normal complement of spells. Those (of both sexes) who follow her "Comforter of the Slain" aspect gain Healing as a bonus skill.

**Merelith (The Bright Lady, Empress of the Sun):** Im16 (Empyrean), Energy. "Daughter" of Kromus and Senyanna, and elder "twin sister" of Ranya, Merelith is the Sun Immortal, and Patroness of Nature. Depicted as a golden-haired, amber-eyed young woman of flawless beauty, wearing dazzling white robes. She is served by both Clerics (Sun aspect) and Druids (nature aspect, as "the Bright Lady"). Merelith's mortal origins lie within the Jaeli settlements that eventually became the Empire, where she was a Cleric of Kromus who was encouraged, possibly by Kromus himself, to pursue Immortality in a different Sphere. She achieved Immortality a little over 200 years ago. Merelith more closely resembles her "uncle", Derelion, than either of her "parents"; long-suppressed rumours place Derelion as her father, with Kromus fathering her twin, Ranya. This tale is now considered rankest heresy, and spreading it is punished severely - the Sun Priests are particularly sensitive about the tale's implications.

Clerics of Merelith in her "Sun Empress" aspect are able to Turn Undead as if one level higher than normal when the Sun is in the sky; since many Undead are not light-sensitive, this gift is more useful than might be readily apparent. Druids who follow her "Bright Lady" aspect may cast the Faerie Fire spell once per day, starting at 1st level. This is in addition to their normal complement of spells.

**Ranya (The Moon Queen, Lady of the Night):** Im15 (Empyrean), Time. "Daughter" of Kromus and Senyanna, and younger "twin sister" of Merelith, Ranya closely resembles Senyanna, with midnight-black tresses and moon-pale skin. Her eyes are fathomless pools of blackness. Ranya wears light-drinking robes of black velvet. As a mortal, she was a Jaeli Fighter-Thief named Horelle (Ranya was the name she acquired when she became Moon Queen, after the Empire's name for Herol's satellite) who followed Senyanna's teachings in her own fashion. She achieved Immortality in the Sphere of Time a decade after Merelith reached it in Energy, so their respective followings appeared more or less simultaneously; the pair have been considered sisters ever since. Served by her exclusively female Priesthood, called Moondaughters, Ranya is also worshipped

by creatures of the night, such as Lycanthropes or the occasional non-evil Vampire... and of course, by Fighter-Thieves like herself.

Clerics of Ranya in her "Moon Queen" aspect are able to see perfectly at night while outdoors, so long as the moon is visible in the sky; the range is 90', or 180' on the three nights of the full moon. Those who serve her as "Lady of the Night" may cast the spell Darkness with double the normal duration. This must be memorised normally, as part of the normal complement of spells.

**Derelion (Winged Lord, Brother to Eagles):** Im21 (Celestial), Thought. The "younger brother" of Kromus, Derelion is one of the eldest Immortals to still remember his mortal existence, which he left behind long before the first of the Lost Empires were built. Like Kromus, his worship comes originally from the region that became the Old Countries - he, too, has a planet named after him - but, unlike his "brother", Derelion retains most of his original attributes. Patron of all things that fly, and of those who study the magic of Air, Derelion is depicted as being a beardless youth with bright, golden hair and shining white wings. His garb varies depending on where he is worshipped.

Clerics of Derelion are able to memorise the Mage-spell Levitate as a 2nd-level Clerical spell. This is part of the normal complement of spells. In addition, a Cleric of Derelion who chooses to add a Warlock's Brand does not have to sacrifice additional Attribute points or hit points to acquire it - a gift from the former Mage to his followers - and may advance jointly as a Cleric-Mage. Such duallists, known as "Wind Children", make up roughly 10% of Derelion's clergy.

## The Old Countries

**Varalle (The Lady of Trees, The Spring/Summer/Autumn/Winter Queen):** Im19 (Celestial), Time. One of the most widespread female Immortals in the Old Countries, Varalle is depicted as a beautiful, Dryad-like figure with leaf-green hair and bark-brown skin, dressed in robes dyed in nature's colours. Druids (and the woodland-dwelling communities) worship her as Lady of Trees; her following is larger, in some places, than that of Kromus (who is variously considered her husband, her consort, or her lover by those communities who follow both Immortals). Varalle is also worshipped as the Queen of the Seasons, with Clerics serving her either in that role or following one seasonal aspect of her being - a single town might have

individual Shrines to the Summer Queen and the Winter Queen, for instance, with a separate Priest for each. In life, Varalle was a Nature-Priest of a long-forgotten Immortal, who lived in tune with the rhythms of nature; she hates and despises Undead, who exist outside the natural world, and encourages her followers to destroy them when possible.

Druids of Varalle in her "Lady of Trees" aspect may cast the Detect Danger spell once per day, starting at 1st level. This is in addition to their normal complement of spells. Clerics who follow her various seasonal aspects gain different powers, as follows:

- ◆ **Spring** - any one Cure spell may be cast for maximum effect, once per day.
- ◆ **Summer** - may cast the Light spell once per day, starting at 1st level. This is in addition to their normal complement of spells.
- ◆ **Autumn** - may pray for the 1st-level Mage spell Sleep as part of the normal complement of spells, starting at 2nd level.
- ◆ **Winter** - may use a Chilling Touch effect (equivalent to Cause Light Wounds) once per day, starting at 1st level. The power is ineffective against cold-using creatures. This is in addition to their normal complement of spells.

Followers of her general "Queen of the Seasons" aspect do not receive any of these bonus powers; instead, they may Turn Undead as if one level higher than normal.

**Govenai (The Everlord, The Undying, The Dark Redeemer):** Im14 (Empyrean), Entropy. Open worship of this evil Immortal has been banned in most civilised nations, but secret cells of his followers have been found in most major centres of population across Draman. In life, Govenai was a native of Jerek'Ha, in the Old Countries; he was a Master of Brands who grew more and more afraid of death as he grew older. In a desperate attempt to stave off death, he created the Vivicant Brand, which reanimated him as Herol's first Vampire - an act which earned him the right to seek Immortality in the Sphere of Entropy, despite his limited "level". Govenai is the patron of his "children", the Vampires (and, by extension, of all intelligent, corporeal Undead, although certain types deny any link to him), as well as those living followers who seek "immortality" through Undeath. He is depicted as a tall, pale figure in flame-coloured robes, his chest bared to reveal the Vivicant Brand burning bright upon it.

Clerics of Govenai - the living ones, at least - cannot Turn Undead; instead, they may control Undead, as if an Undead Liege, with the same results per level (i.e. if a "normal" Cleric can automatically Turn a Skeleton, a Govenai Cleric can automatically control it. Destruction-level Turning either operates as normal, or allows control of double the HD of Undead).

## One Thousand Cities

**Lomor (Merchantfriend, Wealth-Bringer):** Im12 (Temporal), Time. Patron of Jalakka, the oldest (and one of the wealthiest) of the City-States. His people are tradesmen and merchants, although the City produces and welcomes a large number of adventurers - who tend to bring in vast quantities of treasure, and spend it freely. Lomor is depicted as a middle-aged, brown-haired man dressed in fine clothes and dripping with jewels, with a broad, insincere smile on his face. In life, Lomor was a powerful Mage, born during the time of the Second Empire, whose adventuring exploits made him fairly wealthy; his genius for trade expanded that wealth into a vast fortune. Due to clever trade agreements and treaties with other City-States, Jalakka has never been attacked successfully, nor has it seen an invading army for over two centuries.

Clerics of Lomor gain Appraisal as a bonus skill at 1st level.

**Szthonda (The Burning Dark):** Exalted Fiend, Entropy. Patron of one of the Northernmost City-States, Deremond, the Fiend Szthonda (who resembles a grossly fat female Goblin with shiny black skin and eyes of incandescent white flame) has ruled over her domain for nearly a century. Deremond was founded by exiles and outcasts, driven from their homes into the blasted North. Szthonda was then the "Patron" of a small tribe of kobolds who dwelt in the frozen lands. Seeing a chance to increase her power on the Prime Plane, Szthonda whispered into their minds and souls, convincing the outcasts to build a massive obsidian temple to her. Once the temple was complete, she taught them a ritual which summoned her to inhabit it, and has ruled over them ever since. The city, which grew up around the temple, is bleak and ugly, filled with the dregs of humanity, as well as a goodly number of kobold slaves. Szthonda's "priests" are all Mages (she cannot grant Clerical spells) who serve her directly and oversee the frequent sacrifices which slowly increase her power - Szthonda's plan is to amass enough power to eventually reach true Immortal status - as well as acting as her eyes and ears in the city and beyond;

Szthonda is bound to the temple proper, and cannot leave without considerable preparation.

As noted above, Szthonda has no Clerics, only Mages. The Magi, however, all wear Szthonda's Mark (a special, Entropic Brand provided by the Fiend; it resembles a stylised image of the Fiend's own visage, picked out in black and crimson) upon their chests; by calling out an activation-phrase, they can cause themselves to explode in a burst of black flame (equivalent to a Fireball spell, centred on the Mage in question) which kills the Mage while causing severe damage to those around him. The more fanatical members of the coven believe that to die this way is to serve Szthonda eternally in the afterlife.

**Galgallan (The Warrior, The Bloody Sword):** Im7 (Temporal), Matter. Patron of Al'Sudera, one of the more Southerly City-States. Galgallan was a warrior Sponsored to Immortality by Kromus, achieving it less than a century past; his first worshippers, a troop of Fighters from the Empire of Jael, conquered Al'Sudera 55 years ago, ousting its resident Patron and installing Galgallan in her place. Al'Sudera is geared around its massive warrior-population, who hire out as mercenary troops each Summer to bring in money to the city. Galgallan is depicted much as he was in life; a tall, powerful warrior in blood-red armour, wielding a Greatsword (a two-handed sword) coated with blood. His hair is red, and stands up in blood-caked spikes. Galgallan's Fighters and Clerics likewise coat their hair with blood before battle as a homage to their Immortal. Incidentally, despite their overlapping portfolios, Galgallan's and Kromus' followers have never met in battle - Galgallan deliberately had his worshippers conquer a City as far from Kromus' City of Ohriman as possible, precisely to avoid such a conflict (which he would be unlikely to win).

Clerics of Galgallan may use any bladed weapon, without penalty, from 1st level. Few, if any, Clerics of this Immortal are known to use blunt weapons.

## Others

**Iroin (Earth Father, Masterminer):** Im28 (Eternal), Matter. The chief Immortal of the native Dwarf population, Iroin was once the most widely followed Immortal on the continent, before the population explosion of Humanity over the last few thousand years drove his most faithful worshippers to the inhospitable reaches of north-eastern Draman. Iroin's worship is almost

completely restricted to the Dwarf Territories now, with a few thousand die-hard followers scattered about the rest of the continent. Iroin is depicted as a squat, broad, muscular Dwarf in the prime of life, with his long beard twisted into three plaits - one black, one red, and one blond - representing the three original Dwarf subraces. Like Kromus, he does not remember his mortal existence, and is believed to have created the Dwarven race in his image many thousands of years ago.

Dwarf Clerics of Iroin may learn the Forge-Mastery Skill (see below) at 9th level; they require only two skill slots to learn it, rather than the normal three. Non-Dwarf Clerics (there are a few) instead gain an additional skill slot at 9th level, to allocate at will.

## Brand-Makers

The designers and appliers of Brands fall into two broad categories: Experienced spellcasters who have chosen to learn the skill, or Masters of Brands, who are trained from childhood in the art.

The former (PC or NPC) must be capable of casting 6th-level spells - which precludes Mages of less than 11th level, or Clerics/Druids of less than 12th, from employing the skill, even though they can learn it at any time.

The latter (NPC only) receive a special Brand when apprenticed - a black circle on the forehead, called an "Overbrand" - which allows them to create Brands, but precludes them from ever taking on a character class (DM's option; a Master of Brands might be able to advance to 5th level as a Mage on the strength of his Overbrand - see the NPC description of Ledendran, below - but no further).

## Brands

Herol's native magic, no matter its source, is tied up in the creation of magical Brands, tattoos placed on certain parts of the body, which imparts some form of power to the Branded being. The process of Branding is akin to the tattooist's art; it requires special dyes, created using expensive and difficult-to-obtain ingredients, and a fine needle of solid gold to prick the skin and implant the dye beneath it. Once the tattoo is in place, an extensive ritual (equivalent to a 6th-level spell, and memorised in a suitable slot - each different Brand requires a separate ritual, which must be taught or researched) is performed to enchant the Brand. An individual can bear any number of Brands,

if they can take the strain, although certain Brands preclude the adding of others.

Brands detect faintly as magical to a Detect Magic spell; they can be removed only by a Dispel Magic cast by a Mage of at least five levels higher than the Brander (those created by a Brand-Master being a special case; Dispel Magic at no less than 12th level is needed to affect a Brand made by such a person), a suitably-worded Wish, or by physically removing the Brand - and the skin it lies beneath - from the body. The creator of the Brand (only) may dispel the Brand's powers by reversing the original ritual, although this leaves the bearer with a non-magical tattoo.

**Branding does not come without cost:** the recipient of the Brand must sacrifice a portion of her life-force, or physical/mental prowess, to help empower the magic. Each Brand received costs the recipient either one attribute point from their Prime Requisite - if there is more than one PR, the highest score is used - or 1d4 hp, deducted permanently from their total (DM's choice). The only exceptions to this rule are Attribute Brands (see below), which draw 1 point from an opposing Attribute, or Slave Brands, which deduct hp from the Brand-maker instead.

Brands fall into certain broad categories, outlined below:-

### 1) Class-Related Brands.

On Herol, the only character class available to the unBranded is Fighter; the following Brands are required to pursue other careers.

- ◆ **The Warlock Brand:** a crimson 5-pointed star, placed on the right cheek. This Brand grants the recipient the spellcasting abilities of a 1st-level Mage; any spells must be found and learnt separately, however. On Herol, this Brand is used to grant Mage-potential to likely candidates. The recipient has the potential to improve her abilities through training (and the acquisition of experience points), as per a normal Mage; if a 0-level human, she will progress normally as a Mage. If the recipient is already trained in another Class, however, she has the potential to become split-classed; to progress as a Mage, she must donate all XP received in any particular adventure into the Mage-class. No split-class character can progress in both classes at the same time, although she can alternate freely. Receipt of the Brand also permits usage of Mage-specific magical items as if a Mage of that level.

- ◆ **The Priest Brand:** a silver-grey birdlike shape, placed on the left cheek. This Brand grants the recipient the Turning powers of a 1st-level Cleric. As per the Warlock Brand, above, the recipient may advance as a split-class; however, he must ally with an Immortal or Ethos to do so - the initial Turning power is fuelled by the Brand itself. The Priest Brand allows the recipient to use Cleric-specific magical items, unless they are restricted to Clerics of particular Immortals.
- ◆ **The Druid Brand:** a brown, treelike silhouette, covering mouth, nose and eyes. This Brand grants the recipient the powers of a 1st-level Druid, functioning as per the Priest Brand above; however, 1st-level Druids cannot Turn Undead, so the only immediate advantage is the use of Druidic items. To advance, the Druid must ally with a suitable Immortal - Merelith and Varalle are the usual choices - or bond with a living forest as its guardian (not advisable for adventuring druids, as forest guardians cannot leave their forest).

**The Thief Suite** - there is no single Brand which provides the range of skills attributed to Thieves; those who wish to acquire those skills must pick and choose from the following selection. To improve in these skills, the Branded person must allocate portions of his earned XP to the relevant Brands. The Thief Suite Brands have their own advancement table, which is equal to roughly 15-20% of the normal "Thief" experience requirements for each Brand. The bearer can choose which Brands to improve, and which to leave undeveloped, at the end of each adventure.

- ◆ **The Moon-Touched Brand:** a black crescent moon, placed on the forehead. This Brand grants the recipient the ability to Hide in Shadows with the same chances, initially, as a 1st-level Thief.
- ◆ **The Hands-in-Shadow Brand:** a black silhouette of a grasping hand, placed on the underside of the left wrist. Grants the ability to Pick Pockets as a 1st-level Thief.
- ◆ **The Night-Slayer's Brand:** a black dagger, placed on the underside of the right wrist. Grants the ability to Backstab, with the same chances as a 1st-level Thief.
- ◆ **The Monkey Brand:** a black spiral - reminiscent of a curled monkey's tail -

placed on the base of the spine and left buttock. Grants the ability to Climb Walls as a 1st-level Thief.

- ◆ **The Lockpick Brand:** a thin, curiously-uneven black mark along the underside of the right index-finger. Grants the ability to Detect/Remove Traps as a 1st-level Thief.
- ◆ **The Brand of Silent Tread:** a black cat's-head silhouette, placed on the top of the right foot. Grants the ability to Move Silently as a 1st-level Thief.



- ◆ **The Trumpet Brand:** a cornet-shaped black mark, placed on the neck just behind the left ear. Grants the ability to Hear Noise with the same chances as a 1st-level Thief.

**NB:** Because of the high cost in HP or attribute points, few Fighter-Thieves acquire the entire Thief Suite; consequently, the abilities of this sub-class vary widely.

- ◆ **The Overbrand:** a 2"-wide black circle, placed on the forehead. This is the Brand worn by a Master of Brands (an NPC Brand-maker). It provides the ability to create and apply Brands without first having to be able to cast 6th-level spells. Application of the Overbrand prevents the bearer from pursuing a character class (which is

why it is only suitable for NPCs), although a Brand-Master can reach the equivalent of a 5th-level Mage on the strength of this Brand.

## 2) Brands granting unique abilities or skills.

While most skills may be learnt the normal way, certain Brands circumvent the normal learning process, providing the ability without the need for training. In addition, certain special powers may be granted through the application of a Brand.

- ◆ **The Brand of Prophecy:** a pair of blue zigzags covering the lips. This Brand grants the ability to perceive the future, both in dreams and visions. The power is not under the recipient's control, however, and occurs randomly (i.e. at the DM's convenience). Prophets on Herol are highly regarded for the most part, often taking positions of great importance amongst their people. In the Empire of Jael, citizens will often consult a Seer before embarking on any important task; in the Old Countries, wandering Wisefolk are treated with reverence whenever they visit.
- ◆ **The Beastmaster Brand:** a dun-brown representation of a curved animal horn, placed over the left eyebrow. This Brand grants the knowledge and skills of Animal Empathy and Animal Training to the recipient, but only for one particular type of beast (horse, dog, etc). A second such Brand may be placed over the right eyebrow if desired, to grant Skill with another beast type, but two is the limit. This Brand usually grants Skill with normal domestic animals, although wild beasts or even magical creatures (DM's decision) might be possible.
- ◆ **The Tale-Weaver's Brand:** a red-orange representation of a leaping flame, placed on the palm of the left hand. Tale-Weavers - men and women who make their living as wandering storytellers and historians - are regular and much-anticipated visitors to the villages and hamlets of the Old Countries; where the majority of the populace are illiterate, such people are the primary source of historical information, cautionary tales, and also gossip. This brand allows the Tale-Weaver to manipulate flame - a campfire, or a log fire in an inn - and create images which illustrate the stories he tells. An experienced Tale-Weaver can utilise this Brand to

make fires flare up or die down, or even to light or extinguish small (candle-sized) flames. The Brand is of little help in combat, however.

- ◆ **The Vivicant Brand:** see Undead, in the "Monsters" section, for details of this family of Brands.

### 3) Spell-related Brands.

Unlike the Warlock, Priest and Druid Brands, above, these provide specific spell-effects, spell-using capabilities, or magic item talents to the bearer.

- ◆ **Brands of Holding:** appearance and location vary, but usually a complex geometrical design. These function in the same manner as Rings of Spell Storing; they are designed to hold a single Magical or Clerical/Druidic spell of a certain level - the higher the level, the more complex the pattern. Most such Brands may hold any spell of the requisite level, which may be cast into the Brand by a suitable spellcaster. This remains until cast by the will of the bearer. A few of these Brands have spell-regeneration capabilities; they hold only one, unchangeable spell, which recharges itself for reuse after a certain period of time has elapsed (usually 24 - 48 hours).

- ◆ **Brand of Recovery:** a dark grey chain-link design, circling the bearer's neck. This rare, powerful Brand provides the bearer with the powers of a Ring of Regeneration, allowing her to automatically 1hp of damage per Turn. In addition, the Brand makes the bearer immune to a Ghoul's paralyzing touch, and provides a limited degree of protection from the ageing effects of some Undead - a flat 35% chance to ignore the attack completely (normal saving throws apply if this fails). The bearer cannot use this Brand to resist natural ageing, however. Few Brand Masters can reproduce this design now, although it was almost common a few hundred years ago.
- ◆ **Slave Brands:** These are individually-designed sigils, created by each Brand Master for his or her own use; they are placed on the subject's chest. The Brand Master must first place a Master Sigil on her own chest, twice the size of the Slave Brand, and costing one Intelligence point. Thereafter, each Slave Brand costs the Brand Master (not the Branded target) 1d4 hp from her permanent total. The unfortunate recipient of the Slave Brand obeys the Master as if Charmed,

with the notable addition that he or she will actually kill, or lay down his/her own life, if so ordered. Permanently enslaving others in this way is frowned upon by many Heroli; it might even be considered an Evil act (DM's decision).

### 4) Potency Brands.

Only one example-group of these is known:-

- ◆ **Attribute Brands:** simple circles of different colours, representing each of the Attributes, placed on various parts of the body (the palm of the hand for Strength, for example, or the forehead for Intelligence). These boost the level of the chosen Attribute by one; unfortunately, as noted above, any such gain will require the sacrifice of one point from another Attribute. No Attribute can ever be raised by more than one point, using this method. Should the Brand be Dispelled or destroyed, the raised Attribute reverts to its former level; however, the sacrificed point is not regained.

The above selection are only a small sample of the thousands of possible Brands; DMs are encouraged to create their own, as are PCs (with the prior approval of the DM, of course). ■

## Compendium of Characters

... Continued from page 3

### Virindi

#### 3rd level Neutral Elf

Str: 12, Dex: 13, Con: 8, Int: 16, Wis: 13, Cha: 10, HP: 12, AC: 4, *Normal Sword +1* Ethereality, Chain Mail Armour, Dark-tinted Glasses. Spells: Light, Detect Magic, Web

Virindi's tribe of Elves have lived underground for millennia, ever since the Sundering, when their forest collapsed into the earth. His people have been isolated since then, with only legends about the surface world. They have changed subtly to fit in with their subterranean existence – their eyes are sensitive to light now, and they have better infravision (double normal

range). Virindi was found unconscious by a group of adventurers and taken back up to the surface. Taking him to a local tribe of elves, they left him to make their way. The Elves recognized the mistake at once, but it was too late. When he recovered, Virindi attempted to find his way back to his people, but failed. Resigned to a life on the surface, he now has one desire – to find and kill the adventures who took him from his people. Virindi is single-minded about his desire, and is ruthless when it comes to his 'quest'. He knows nothing about the surface world, and cares even less – he makes no effort to fit in, simply is. Arrogant even for an Elf, he has a tendency to infuriate people with his stubbornness. In a fight, though, he is a devil, and underneath his exterior he is a loyal companion. The PC's could meet up with him at any time, and join him either in tracking down his 'enemies' (with a moral dilemma when they find out the truth) or in a return to the caves, in an attempt to find his people. ■

## Street of a Thousand Adventures

... Continued from page 6

→ *Martigan herself may become a significant NPC, too. Originally from Ierendi, she adventured for almost 50 years (thanks to several potions of longevity) before deciding to settle down and help those who, comparatively speaking, are just starting out. She is a powerful magic user (at least 20th level) who prefers to keep a low profile and take the time to enjoy life, but she will try to conceal the true extent of her powers if at all possible. As such, she could become a valuable resource person for the PCs.*

→ *All of this, however, is dependent upon whether or not they get along with the other patrons, and behave appropriately. PCs who come off as being boorish, or threatening, may very well be attacked later on by irate patrons, once they are on the road again.* ■

## First Strike

### How to get the jump on initiative rolls in OD&D Combat

... Continued from page 5

- ◆ **Human Fighter**, as above, drinking a potion: IR = +0 [+0 (Medium attacker) +1 (DEX adj.) -1 (magic item use) = +0]
- ◆ **Human Magic-User** with DEX 16 casting *magic missile*: IR = +1 [+0 (Medium attacker) +2 (DEX adj.) -1 (1st-level spell) = +1]
- ◆ **Human Magic-User**, as above, casting *Wall of Fire* from a spell scroll: IR = -3 [+0 (Medium attacker) +2 (DEX adj.) -4 (4<sup>th</sup>-level spell) -1 (magic item use) = -3]
- ◆ **Ogre warrior** with DEX 8 and Expert mastery in the long bow: IR = -5 [-2 (Large attacker) -1 (DEX adj.) +1 (Expert mastery) -3 (weapon size) = -5]
- ◆ **Troll** with average Dexterity: IR = -3 [-3 (Large attacker) +0 (DEX adj.) = -3]

## Conclusion

Admittedly, this system of determining combat initiative does require a bit more bookkeeping than the method described in the official rules. However, with some use, the Initiative Rating modifiers for various attackers and their combat actions becomes easy to calculate. The end result is a more realistic mode of initiative resolution, with the added benefit of garnering a clearer view of exactly what happens during a fight, and when. If you're looking to inject a bit more tension into OD&D combat, I encourage you to give this initiative method a try—you may be surprised to see who gets the first strike. ■

## Combat sans Matrix

... Continued from page 17

- 1 D&D co-author Dave Arneson's website (<http://castleblackmoor.com>) notes that the original combat rules were inspired by some naval combat game wherein lower numbers represented better armour, but this scant explanation still does nothing to justify the origin of this obtuse convention. Apparently, someone at sometime thought this made perfect sense; lacking clear evidence as to why, I am open to further enlightenment on this point.
- 2 *Rules Cyclopedia*, 1991, TSR, Inc.
- 3 The Body Locations column indicates which of the wearer's body parts the armour covers; this has no game effect and is used simply to provide some aid to visualisation.
- 4 Druids, if allowed in the campaign, use the base THMod values of a cleric of equal level.
- 5 Mystics, if allowed in the campaign, use the base THMod values of a fighter up to 16th-level.
- 6 Point Blank range is considered within  $\frac{1}{2}$  short range of a missile (e.g., a hand axe (range: 10/20/30) has a point blank range of 5. Short range is from 6-10; medium and long ranges are unaffected) ■

# OD&DITIES

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