

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

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# From the Editor

## Sound off!

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

Write to Dana at  
adriayna@yahoo.com

What exactly is it about a role-playing game that attracts us? What is it about an RPG that instinctively grabs us, holds us, shakes us up a bit, and simply won't let go? While there are a number of factors, ultimately, the answer resides in the heart of every gamer.

For CRPGs, there is the visual stimulus, but much more importantly is the game itself—how it plays, the character customization, the freedom and the plot. For PnP RPGs it is the interaction you can have with others and the almost limitless possibilities at your fingertips.

Immersion in any RPG game is of all importance—the RPG experience should truly be one that, at least for a little while, makes you feel you are in a different time, in a different place, or exist as a different individual. For some, it is an escape from harsh reality, for others a chance to explore a new world, and yet others, a chance to find out about your own perceptions and yourself.

For any type of RPG, there is always a connection. A connection with your character(s), a connection with the overlying plot, or with a PnP or multi-player CRPG game, a connection with your fellow players. It is this connection that keeps us coming back for more. It is this connection that drives us to want bigger and better things with each new edition or release. It is this drive that makes us RPG gamers.

With our newest edition of the Trumpeter, here is to more fuel for your fire.

Best Regards,

Dana Driscoll

*Dana Driscoll*

Editor In Chief  
Silveren Crossroads E-zine

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image by Florin Badita

# Gaming Tips by Scott Fitz

## When Gamers go Bad! #1 Power Gamers

Every kind of gamer has the dark potential to disrupt the game if they take their natural interests to extremes. The most common and dreaded extreme is the power gamer. The power gamer wants to be "The Best", however he or she perceives it. A power gamer wants the most powerful and effective character in the campaign at all times, either so they can whip any challenge or just for their own ego needs. They score a personal "win" every time they can show their character is bigger, badder, and better than the other players or the GM's NPCs. They will play the game hard, wrangling ever advantage from the written rules and arguing for others, all to achieve their own ends. While what they are doing technically is not illegal in a game, but it certainly can suck the fun out of it for most of the troupe of gamers (troupe being the players in your gaming group.)

Ask any GM about what to do with a power gamer and their first response will probably be one of the following: "Take a baseball bat to them," "Run them over with a car," or "Shoot them." While nobody wants to actually kill the power gamer, GMs are very serious about trying to get them out of their game. A power gamer can destroy campaigns and gaming troupes and most GM's are powerless to stop it.

However, there are some steps you can take to minimize a power gamer's disruptive antics in the game.

Before you take any steps, you, the GM, should talk to the rest of the troupe about it. This will allow you to find out the group's opinions about the power gamer, and if they have a problem with the player's actions. This allows you to determine the appropriate level of response to the power gamer's actions.

Here is a list of steps you can take to deal with a power gamer, listed in the approximate order of use.

**1) Don't punish them:** Technically, what they are doing is not "wrong" according to the rules of the game. And the book rules of the game are all that the power gamer is going by. Direct punishment for what they are doing rarely works; it just upsets them, and makes them try harder. In other words do not try to "punish their characters" or "teach them a lesson" because all they will see is the GM on a grudge run or a new set of challenges to overcome. The GM needs to eventually convince them somehow that the game is more fun if they don't powergame. That can only be done through example.

**2) Don't Give it away:** Many GMs give into the power gamer's demands for power and specific rule interpretations. Appeasing the power gamer only generates resentment among the rest of the troupe. In addition, you are basically giving your game over to someone who is not the GM. The law of fun (which briefly stated "if a game is not fun, stop playing") applies to GMs as well. By giving in and letting the power gamer run amok, the game is ruined for the GM as well. Don't let this happen to you. Stand firm.

**3) Don't boost the power level of the game:** Many GMs will see the power gamer's need for power as a need to have a higher overall level of power in the game. You can play it this way, but it becomes a fool's game that you cannot win. While you will make the power gamer temporarily happy, they will soon want more and better toys. In addition you will be in a type of arms race with the power gamer (and to a lesser degree every player). As the characters become more powerful, the challenges must be more powerful. To overcome the new challenges, the characters must be more powerful, and the cycle continues. So all you have done is made it harder to find new things to keep your players challenged.

**4) "Just say no" in character creation.** The primary tool of a power gamer is a character min-maxed to the bleeding edge of efficiency and with powerful combinations of gifts/ boons/ skills. Certain combinations can be exceedingly powerful. A GM should look at each character, asking questions of the player on each aspect of their character. If anything seems amiss, or the character seems over-powered, the GM shall repeat the sacred "ward vs. problem character" mantra: "I'm sorry, but that character is a little overpowered for the campaign as it is. Even though it is perfectly

legal and done according to the rules, I am afraid I cannot let it in the game. Sorry." (Repeat as necessary.) If you the GM know the character is possibly going to be a problem in the future, and you let it into the game, you have no one to blame for your troubles except yourself.

**5) "Keep saying no"- character creation is an ongoing process.** A power gamer, if thwarted in the character creation, can easily acquire the things they need to over power the game with experience. They can complete killer combos of gifts/ boon/ skills with their new-found experience. The GM should monitor all advancements to avoid elements that they are uncomfortable with.

**6) Never put anything in your game you cannot deal with.** Magic items that seem okay come back to haunt you in the hands of the Power Gamer. Make sure the uber-item designed to stop the Big Bad of the quest can only be used vs. the Big Bad, or has limited charges, or something that prevents it from being used against everything else after the Big Bad is stopped. Even lesser items can cause issues. Be very careful what magic items and special things you allow in your game.

**7) No rules discussion in game.** This rule should be re-stated at the beginning of every game session. Be adamant. Tell them that repeat violations of this rule will result in either your ending the session right then OR zero experience for the entire adventure for everyone. Tell them you will be happy to go through it all between sessions and make the time to have those discussions.

**8) Make sure that all "house rules" have been discussed and if necessary are written out before hand.** The difference between your interpretation and the book interpretation can cause untold hassle if a power gamer is present. Talk out any possible problem areas or variant rulings that you will be using with the group. This discussion will determine if the power gamers will they abide by group decisions about rules (which means there is hope) or are they dedicated to a specific read or a specific subset that's causing the rest of the group problems (which means there is no hope.) If they are unwilling to abide by your or the group's interpretation, they are really unwilling to play in your game and might wish to make other arrangements.

**9) Shape a campaign so it negates the character's mechanical advantage.** This solution takes more work on the GM's part, as they must design scenarios that most of the players like AND negate the power gamer's mechanical advantage. If the power gamer has a massively powerful combat character and the other players are willing, move the campaign towards politics and courtly intrigue, where that advantage will seldom come into play. This will force them to role-play to reassert their position as "The Best."

**10) Teamwork:** Your troupe's rabid role-player is probably the player with the most problem with the power gamer. Team the power gamer up with the role-player. Each of them has skills they can teach the other (role-playing skills for game mechanic skills), and base both of their experience points on how the other does in its new area. The Power gamer will learn to role-play and your rabid role-player might actually learn the rules to the game.

**11) Change the reward system to one that de-emphasizes combat or power solutions.** This becomes a new house rule. There are a variety of ways to change this. The Wheel of Time D20 game did it by making experience solution based, so players received X amount of experience no matter how many things they killed, if they solved the issue at hand. Other games give other ways of handling it. Pick one that best fits you. Tell everyone about the new official rules for the game. Once the power gamer realizes that they have to play their character well to become more powerful, they'll soon learn how to apply all the ingenuity they used in mathematical twinkling to better role-playing.

**12) Sit them down and talk to them.** If they are a mature adult, it might work. Tell them about the concerns you and the troupe have. Work with them actively for a time. They might change their ways enough not to be a problem for the troupe. If you simply cannot reform them, and they are not contributing to the kind of game you and your other players want to run, tell them they are no longer invited to the game. Easier said than done, I know. Remember, sometimes being a GM sucks.

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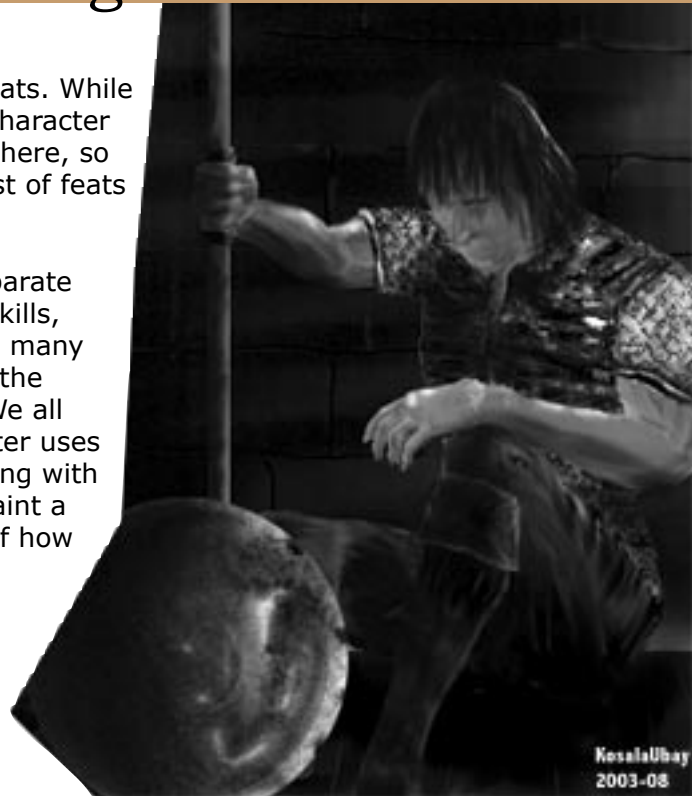
## The Warrior's Edge

by David Paul

One of the most exploited aspects of the d20 system is feats. While it's true that there are far more feats available than any character will ever use, there are so many different characters out there, so many combinations of ways to play, that expanding the list of feats is a good thing.

In my own campaign, I've provided my players with a separate handbook detailing campaign-specific information about skills, feats and other aspects of the game. Included therein are many new feats. One aspect of feats that often is overlooked is the description of their effect from the story's point of view. We all get what Power Attack does, for example. When a character uses it though, I imagine someone taking a Babe-Ruth-like swing with an axe, or a frantic lunging strike with a sword. I try to paint a picture in my players' minds when I'm DMing a combat, of how the using of a feat looks.

In what follows I've included several feats from the aforementioned, campaign-specific handbook that I've allowed my players to use. In addition to the statistics of each feat, I've included a description of how it looks when used and why it was chosen for inclusion in this handbook.



### Improved and Greater Withdraw

Who hasn't figured out the advantages of playing a lightly armored, wily combatant who is developed through taking levels in both rogue and fighter? The advantages are enormous, since the character likely has a high dexterity, weapon finesse is a likely choice, and with tumbling into flanking positions, that extra sneak attack damage will put you in league with the plain old fighter. But what about that plain old fighter? What happens when you're playing a fighter and there are all these rogues whirling about, evading damage that you're just soaking up? The idea for this feat came from watching fighters in the group take all kinds of damage, not only from spells that require good reflexes to avoid, but also from all those opportunistic attacks that tumblers can get around. There's nothing more frustrating than getting clobbered every time you walk into or out of the area threatened by a creature with a tremendous reach. So, I devised a little feat that the poor fighter without the marvelous tumbling capacity of the rogue could take to avoid a bit more of the damage.

#### Improved Withdraw

You may withdraw from most opponents with reach without drawing attacks of opportunity.

*Prerequisite:* Combat Expertise

*Benefit:* As a full-round action, you may withdraw as normal, but because of your skill in doing so, not only is the square you started in not considered threatened, neither is the first square you move into.

*Normal:* Normally only the first square you move out of is not considered threatened when you are withdrawing.

#### Greater Withdraw

You do not provoke attacks of opportunity while withdrawing.

*Prerequisite:* Improved Withdraw

*Benefit:* You do not draw attacks of opportunity when you perform the withdraw action from anyone, regardless of reach or position, while you move. You may not, of course, move through a space occupied by an enemy while withdrawing.

*Normal:* Usually you might draw attacks of opportunity when withdrawing, especially from creatures with reach, or creatures other than the primary enemy from whom you are withdrawing.

*Describing the Feat:* After clobbering and getting clobbered by the ogre last round, Kang has decided to gather his bearings and maneuver away from the lumbering beast. Rather than take the attack of opportunity from the ogre's enormous club, Kang continues to jab and taunt with his longsword even as he masterfully steps around and then away from the ogre's reach.

### Sidestep

There's nothing quite as novel as the 5-foot step. This inclusion in the game allows characters to make incremental movements without the anxiety of figuring out attacks of opportunity. Some movements that draw attacks of opportunity seem strange and contrived, but the 5-foot step seems natural. In fact, I describe it as the natural positioning and repositioning of combatants during a melee. But, why shouldn't someone be particularly adept at such movements? Why not allow someone with fantastic combat skill to have the ability to take yet more such movements during a melee?

### Sidestep

You can slip a 5-foot step into your full-attack action.

*Prerequisite:* BAB +11

*Benefit:* If you are using the full attack action and have three or more attacks to deliver in that full attack action, you can sacrifice one of those attacks and take a 5-foot step in its place.

*Normal:* You cannot normally take more than one 5-foot step in any round.

*Describing the Feat:* Derebos pulls his greatsword over his shoulders and prepares to wade into the oncoming rush of barbarian orcs. Fully a dozen of the brutes are charging up the hill, axes at the ready. However, Derebos' skill in combat is marveled at and sung about by bards that these orcs have never known. As he wades into battle, he moves infrequently but deftly, stepping from one fallen opponent to another about to fall, striking with the adept precision of a masterful combatant, but with fewer blows than a stationary warrior.

### Fast Action

You know those action sequences in movies when someone is running at top speed and either snatches some object from someone, lifts a child out of harm's way, or otherwise performs some heroic action at or near the end of a sprint? Or how about the man who runs up to his horse, mounts it in a snap, and is off to chase the enemy? These are tough things to pull off using the combat rules in D&D. So, although this feat isn't often selected by my players, it's one that allows someone to perform a little bit of heroism that otherwise can't be accomplished in one

round.

### Fast Action

You can act before, during or after a run action.

*Prerequisites:* Run, Dex 13, Lightning Reflexes

*Benefit:* If you use the run action and move no more than three times your normal move, you can take a move action before, during, or after your movement if that action doesn't itself require any additional movement. You cannot use this feat in medium or heavier armor, or when carrying a load heavier than a light load. You also cannot use the move action portion of this action to lift anything that would make your load heavier than a light load (i.e. you can't run up to an adult in chain mail, lift him out of the way of danger, and continue to run).

The move action, if taken at the end of your run, can be substituted with a 5-foot step if you wish. You still lose your Dex bonus to AC from using a run action. The move action that you take must be one that's possible to accomplish given what you're doing, and even so the DM may judge that appropriate skill checks or ability checks be made to accomplish the task. Thus, you can mount a horse as it's a move action but it may take a Dex check to succeed; and though loading a light crossbow is considered a move action, you may need to succeed at a Balance check to keep from tripping, a Dexterity check to successfully load the crossbow, and perhaps a Concentration check to do two things at once.

*Normal:* You cannot normally take any other actions in any round when you take a run action.

*Describing the Feat:* A party has entered an enemy's keep; the members are weary from fighting their way past the outer guards and are not looking forward to the battle that's about to come. Hearing the echoing footfalls of the approaching soldiers causes the jittery rogue Quester's smile from getting in to fade to a grim line. But, he brightens up again when he sees what looks like a few curative potions sitting on a table in the next hall. On his turn, rather than prepare for the oncoming battle, he runs past the table, grabbing a single potion (his free move action), stopping only when he's a good sixty feet into the next spacious chamber. This action would probably require a Dex check to grab the potion, although a DM may allow the player to roll a Sleight of Hand check instead if the character has ranks in that skill.

### Melee Expert

This one is perhaps a bit more on the munchkin side of things and a bit less on the cinematic. But, that doesn't mean we can't force the puzzle-piece to fit. I'm here imagining the combatant who can give up some of his usual attack sequence to instead pull off two very good

strikes. Unlike power attack or cleave, this feat follows from proficiency in melee combat.

### **Melee Expert**

You are a master of melee combat.

*Prerequisite:* BAB +11

*Benefit:* As a standard action, you may make two melee attacks, both at your highest base attack bonus -2. You may not attack again during this turn (though you can still take an attack of opportunity later but it will also suffer from the -2 penalty). You may not combine this with Flurry of Blows if you are a monk. If you fight with two weapons, you may attack with the same weapon twice or with each weapon once, but you do not gain a bonus attack with your off-hand weapon if you attack twice with your primary-hand's weapon. You may take a move action or a 5-foot step during the movement portion of your action. *Note:* This feat can be used with other feats (such as Cleave) unless those other feats require a full round action. If another feat limits your movement (for example, with Cleave you cannot take a 5-foot step before the extra melee attack), then that limit still applies.

*Normal:* Your usual number of attacks in a round is governed by the full attack action rules and your base attack bonus.

No one with a base attack bonus of +11 or higher is a slouch in a free-for-all. Anyone this good at combat has seen a fair share of fights. So, what happens when someone studies this kind of combat? When someone makes it his passion to get involved in these kinds of fights, and learns to maintain a level of skill in these battles? One answer is that he preserves his skill for striking enemies; in game terms, his highest base attack bonus is exploited in his fights.

*Describing the Feat:* Anselmo the Gray's swiftness with the greatsword is legendary, but what the surrounding trolls didn't count on was his precision. Instead of attacking as frequently as he clearly could, he attacked a bit less often but with very great accuracy. His fewer strikes were more likely to hit and so he was a more efficient combatant than his allies who attacked more often, but hit their targets less frequently.

Would a fighter with a +16/+11/+6/+1 sequence of attacks really want to give all that up for a +14/+14 sequence of attacks? It depends, don't you think, on how hard it is to hit his opponent? After all, two hits are better than one hit and three misses.

## **Stamina and High Stamina**

Unlike the previously mentioned feats, this one will show its face less often in combat. But, it allows for someone to shrug off the kind of weariness that can show up in combat.

Did you ever see the movie *Alive*? During the movie, two of the characters are walking for days in a blinding blizzard atop a mountain chain in southern Chile. On the way back from a trek to find food, shelter or help, one of the two has to return carrying the other. The kind of exhaustion demonstrated in this scene is unnerving—most of us couldn't make it. But, this young man found inner reserves of strength that allowed him to go on despite the fact that his body was so fatigued that it should have shut down. I'm going after something similar to this in these feats.

### **Stamina**

You can resist fatigue.

*Prerequisites:* Endurance, Con 13, Base Fort Save +5

*Benefit:* Any time you might become fatigued, make a Fort save (DC 19). If you fail, you are fatigued. If you succeed, you only suffer ½ the penalties (i.e. -1 to Str and Dex) and can still charge and run (but only at three times your move—four times if you have the Run feat). If you engage in actions that would fatigue you again, you may still become exhausted.

If you fail your save, you may attempt another save after four hours. If you succeed at this, you are no longer fatigued.

*Normal:* Usually you cannot overcome fatigue except through rest; and doing so requires eight hours of rest.

### **High Stamina**

You can resist exhaustion.

*Prerequisites:* Stamina, Con 15, Base Fort Save +7

*Benefit:* Any time you might become exhausted, make a Fort save (DC 23). If you fail, you are exhausted. If you succeed, you only suffer ½ the penalties (i.e. -3 to Str and Dex) and move at ¾ your speed.

Further, you have a +2 to all saves and checks vs. fatigue. And, you only require 30 minutes of complete rest to overcome exhaustion and instead become fatigued.

*Normal:* Usually you cannot overcome exhaustion except through rest; also, exhaustion usually reduces your speed to ½ normal.

Rather than describe these feats in a combat situation—which would probably just be something along the lines of "He just won't go down!"—I figured I'd say something about the mechanics of these feats. You can see that, for example, a single-classed rogue or wizard isn't going to qualify for the Stamina feat until 15th



level, but that a multi-classed character with levels in three classes with high Fort saves can qualify for this by 3rd level. The prerequisites with these feats require that a player craft his character into a certain type of individual. If you want to play a character with amazing endurance and resistance to fatigue, you can do it with clever multiclassing and the right selection of feats. A character who started as a barbarian and then became a ranger as he slowly changed from one kind of wilderness-based personality to another, could qualify for Stamina as his 3rd level feat and High Stamina as his 6th level feat. A barbarian/ranger who spent all his feats this way wouldn't be nearly as good in a fight as many other fighter types, but he'd be the one you'd want around when everyone was falling from exhaustion. I see this big burly man with biceps as big as my waist, carrying half a party of characters on his back despite conditions of weakness that would have killed a horse.

## Wound

In some of the supplemental material for D&D, there are special attack feats that can do considerable extra damage. One in particular allows someone with a sneak attack to reduce the hit point damage of the attack and instead cause the target to lose some mobility. I was thinking of that when I designed this feat. I was instead picturing the hulking brute of a man, perhaps an orc barbarian, perhaps a really muscular human fighter, who could hit so hard that the victim of the attack would actually be weaker after the hit.

## Wound

Your attacks are vicious.

*Prerequisites:* Power Attack, Improved Critical, Weapon Focus, BAB +16

*Benefit:* On a successful critical hit, when using a weapon with which you have Weapon Focus and Improved Critical, in addition to the damage that you would normally do, you also inflict one point of Con damage.

*Normal:* Usually a special attack, such as a spell-like ability, is required to score ability damage against an opponent.

*Describing the Feat:* Gurg (a monstrous mix of hard-to-identify races, perhaps part orc or part ogre, perhaps both) stands just over eight feet tall and is mighty proud of his sword that stands taller than most men. He's seen many battles against all manner of foes, and today he stands toe-to-toe with a foul black dragon. As the two exchange blows, Gurg scores a tremendous strike, under the dragon's left front leg, where the beast's torso and appendage meet. The blade cuts neatly into the dragon's scales and leaves a gaping tear. As the blood spurts from the hole, the dragon's eyes momentarily flash something close to fear as the beast realizes that Gurg's strike wounded him far more than it should.

*Disclaimer:* Some DMs will argue that such a feat shouldn't be allowed, because ability damage belongs to things like magical monsters and poisons. But, extreme physical damage is extreme physical damage. If you've ever been in an accident or had a serious injury, you might just recognize that temporary loss of Constitution handles that pretty nicely in D&D. And, since the feat requires a critical hit to be effective, it won't happen all that often. If you want to include the feat as a DM but feel it's too powerful, consider allowing a Fort save—if the creature makes the save, then perhaps the critical hit does an extra 2d6 damage instead. Or, consider having the single point of Con damage be the entire critical hit damage, and have the weapon score no other damage on that strike.

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OGL Compliance: **See link below for the OGL compliance of this article.**

## Other d20 stuff on the site

If you found this article interesting, you may also want to check out:

### ***Review of the Book of Vile Darkness***

<http://www.silven.com/adnd.asp?case=show&id=103>

Ken Gustafson provides a thorough review of the *Book of Vile Darkness*.

### ***The Ins and Outs of Evil***

<http://www.silven.com/adnd.asp?case=show&id=107>

This article is part one of two providing readers with a dualistic viewpoint for running and playing in evil-aligned campaigns.

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## Exclusive Interview

with Skip Williams

interviewed by Bradford Ferguson

This is an interview with Skip Williams who is the author of **Cry Havoc** and designer of **Draconomicon** with numerous other credits to his name in the gaming industry. Skip Williams has been "the Sage" for over 15 years for the Sage Advice column of Dragon Magazine. Bradford Ferguson sat down with Skip and conducted a telephone interview with him on August 20th, 2003. What follows is the part one of the interview. The second part will be posted September 1st in the d20/D&D Section of Silven Crossroads. Sound bites will also be posted next Monday provided they can be transferred.

### 1) What do you love about gaming?

I like the sense of camaraderie that gamers have. I like going places in my mind and doing things that I normally would not do, or visiting places that I normally would not visit. You might say that I game for the same reason that I read National Geographic.

### 2) Do you play in a weekly D&D game? Are you the Dungeon Master or the player?

Not currently. We are out in the backwoods of Wisconsin and we have not actually hooked up with any local gamers, so I am between campaigns. Curiously enough, our insurance agent is a player who may be interested in getting a gaming group going.

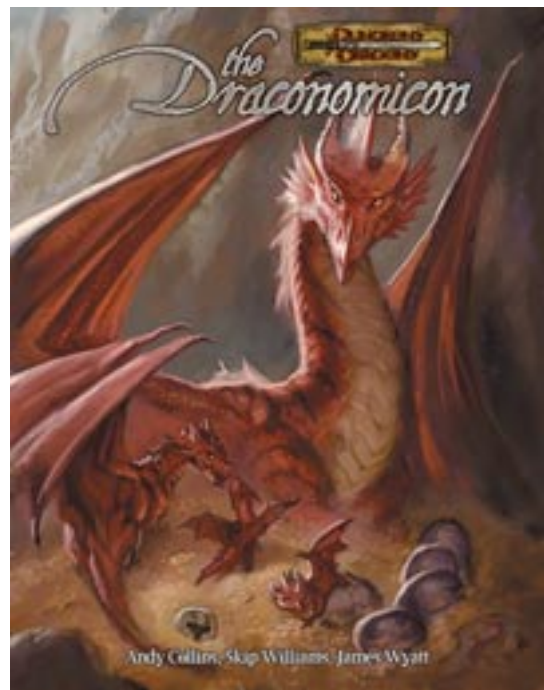
### 3) Do you have any favorite player characters or villains over the years?

Well, I have a ton of favorite PCs and villains, how much time do you have?

There was this character that was ultimately the inspiration for the Arcane Trickster from **Tome and Blood** that might be an interesting one to talk about. He called himself "Lucky Bruce" but that was actually just a pseudonym. I do not actually remember what his real name was. He was a rogue that was concealing the fact that he was a multi-class rogue/wizard. This was in the days when multi-classed spellcasters could be formidable. He was occasionally capable of appearing to be the world's greatest thief, because he had a magical bag of tricks to fall back on. He had disguises and generally kept everyone guessing .

### 4) Can you briefly tell us about your current or future projects?

I can sure talk about Draconomicon. The other stuff that I have in the fire, at this point it is too early to talk about, though I am working on a big adventure set in a salt mine for WotC. I am having a good deal of fun working hand in hand with the cartographers of Wizards of the Coast to design this rather intricate salt mine that I will populate with all kinds of nasty creatures.



### 5) Will this adventure have a "classic" feel to it?

I think it probably will. It is going to be a little more atmospheric than a lot of the stuff that I do.

### 6) What is your role with the Draconomicon book? Do you use special software to collaborate over the Internet?

I was the designer who happened to be assigned the biggest chunk of the book. I was still at WotC when I was working on the book, so it was not hard to coordinate with the rest of team.

**7) How many pages does each major color dragon average in Draconomicon? Are there any new features in their write-ups that have not been seen in any product to date (an example would be monsters as playable races, but that is not new anymore. Maybe vicious Tactics?)?**

It is hard to say. Each "color" gets a section about its habits, behavior, and habitat in a "field guide" sort of format. Other sections deal with dragons as monsters in the game. There are loads and loads of new goodies for dragons in general, plus tips on using dragons well. (There also are goodies for dragon hunters.)

**8) What is one of your favorite things about Draconomicon?**

I am personally very happy with a section of the book that deals with dragons as the fantastic creatures that they are. There is everything from scholarly notes on the draconic life cycle to detailed anatomical drawings.

**9) How is the art shaping up for Draconomicon?**

In a word, great! My hat's off to Dawn Murin, our art director, and to Todd Lockwood and Sam Wood, the conceptual artists.

Todd, Sam, and I spent many hours brainstorming numerous details of draconic life and I think the effort will show. Rob Lazzaretti and Todd Gamble also deserve kudos for producing a great series of dragon lair maps.

**10) For the past 200 issues of Dragon magazine, you have written the Sage Advice section. You must have questions repeated quite a bit, can you tell us what it is like sorting through the questions?**

Have you ever seen maple syrup made? I believe the ratio is something like 40 to 1. 40 gallons of sap to 1 gallon of syrup. The Sage probably is in that range. Questions tend to come through in batches - whatever people are talking about at the time. There tends to be a glut of questions occurring. The current glut of questions all revolve around version 3.5 about what has changed or has not changed and what is mistaken. Whenever new books come out, there is a lot of that. There is a lot of discussion about the Manyshot feat and how it works with other feats. This is currently a topic of discussion on internet chat lists. You also have other questions that show up in spurts regarding attacks of opportunity, regarding how wizards get their spells, things that you do not talk about

every day but they are very familiar when they hit the mailbox.

**11) Maybe this question can lead into what you are going to do for Fast Forward Entertainment... Has there been any thought to a Sage Advice project similar to the 25th Anniversary of Dragon where they put all the past Dragon issues on a compact disc (CD)?**

Not to my knowledge. Although there is a lot of Sage Advice every time a revision comes out. You can actually look particularly now that all that stuff is collected in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) you can see a lot of stuff that is already in 3.5 that first saw print in Sage Advice. Nobody has really ever felt a big desire to do a Sage Advice compendium, because that stuff tends to get worked into the game (as it evolves and is revised). I should tell you that I am no longer involved with Annotated Player's Handbook with Fast Forward (FF). There were some concerns raised with some legal issues. There was just enough anxiety and tension both inside WotC and FF that FF and I decided that it was better if I was not involved. You will have to ask FF about what exactly that book is going to contain these days. There will be nothing like that me out of that book.

I am however working on a series for the Wizards website which tentatively entitled "Rules of the Game" which is a series of essays about various aspects of the game and how do things are supposed to work, with one or two departures in there to cover topics I think people will find useful. The current lineup includes a long discussion of sneak attacks, there is also an article about changing your game into metric units for people who do not live in the United States - particularly for people who went to school after the early 1970s. There are all kinds of people in the world who are interested in playing D&D that do not know what an inch or a foot is and have a very hard time figuring out what the game is talking about. I spend some time in this particular series explaining what is going on and doing all the math that you need to do to make the game metric. Anyway, "Rules of the Game" is ongoing and there has been some talk about compiling those.

**12) In regards to the Sage Advice, will you one day pass the torch on to someone else? If so, do you have any idea whom you would select?**

I imagine that I am not going to remain the Sage forever. As far as torch passing goes, I suspect that that is going to be up to the editor

of Dragon Magazine. As a columnist for the magazine, I serve at the editor's wish. I have actually lost count of the number of editors that I have been through. I began with Roger Moore way back in the dark ages, and Dale Donovan and Dave Gross, and there was one in between Dale Donovan and Dave Gross. Jesse Decker just recently left Paizo Publishing (the publishers of Dragon) to go join Wizards. Chris Thomasson is the current editor. I suspect that when I ready to move on, finding a replacement is going to be Chris' problem. When that happens, I may be able to help him out. It is definitely something that I have not given a lot of thought to. Sage Advice is not a hereditary title or anything. It is like being a warden at a church or like serving a cabinet post, I serve at somebody else's pleasure.

### **13) How has the internet affected your day-to-day work as an author, designer, and editor?**

Sage Advice has become totally internet driven. That was a big change. I used to receive piles and piles of letters. Now it is all e-mail. The only time I got paper letters was from prisoners, because they do not have internet access. The pile of letters from the prisoners has not been forwarded yet from Paizo Publishing (the publisher of Dragon Magazine) so I have not read a paper letter for quite some time. Ideas get around a lot faster these days. So if somebody has a question or has a gripe, then it gets other people to talk about it or kick it around. There are a lot of echoes and opinions. What people expect and how people play the game changes much more rapidly these days than it did in the past.

### **14) Are there any memorable moments or stories from either GenCon 2003 or prior GenCons that stand out?**

I was there at GenCon 2003 with the Fast Forward contingent. I was with them during their entire booth setup which I had not done for years and years. We got there and we had discovered that the FF people had suffered a fair amount of mishaps: somebody had tripped on a curb in Chicago and broken his hand, one of their truck drivers had been stopped in Tennessee and given a big fine for not stopping at a weigh station and had to go through a mandatory eight hour rest period. He arrived in not exactly a good mood. In the middle of all that finding the tools and finding the

scattered contingent and getting everything set up. The Fast Forward booth was pretty complex everybody that they represent for their distribution business that they were covering for the show so they had the shelves and Sovereign Press and a number of sub booths. It was quite a production.

### **15) How is it to work with your wife Penny?**

Penny and I do not work together all that often. When we do, it is usually when we are designing together and we usually take great delight in playing with players' minds when we do adventures together. Mostly, she has her work and I have mine, and we sit at computers and wave at each other a couple of times a day. We pass stuff back and forth for review and to get reality checks. We do not that many opportunities to work 'hand in glove.' We are both freelancers working out of the same house. We do a series for the WotC website called "Vicious Venues" that we can actually work on together. The running theme there is "Here is what it looks like, and here is what is really going on."

### **ABOUT SKIP WILLIAMS**

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and has been Dragon Magazine's Sage since 1986. Skip is a co-designer of the D&D 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the Monster Manual. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (his borscht gets rave reviews). Skip's recent credits include **Cloud Warriors** (Fast Forward Entertainment) and **Cry Havoc!** (Malhavoc Press).

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# Do you SoU?

## A review of NWN:SoU

For those of you that are out of the Neverwinter Nights (NWN) loop, Shadows of Undrentide (SoU), is the first expansion pack for the huge hit Neverwinter Nights to arrive on the store shelves. With the huge success of NWN, SoU has some mighty shoes to fill. Therefore, we have taken our time playing this expansion and writing this review, to ensure that we provide to you the fullest possible picture of this highly anticipated first expansion.

Let's begin with the bad news. The graphics engine has not received any significant improvement. Although the original graphics engine does do a decent job, it shows signs of its long development period and is not up to par with the other real-time 3D games you will encounter in your local store. Having said that, the engine does support a huge variety of graphics cards and resolutions, making the engine good enough to not inhibit your enjoyment of the game and not requiring you to have the latest hardware to run it.

The good news is that the plot of the game is astronomically better than the original campaign in NWN. Whereas NWN provided a fairly linear and predictable plot line, SoU has a tight, controlled, and intense plot with a powerful kick at the end. New NPCs, better environment interaction, and more attention to minute details make SoU a very nice story to play through.

The expansion includes a host of new additions to the game engine itself. In our extensive play tests, we have discovered that this feature will enhance the longevity of the NWN gaming experience considerably. So, let's run through each factor and take a look at the pros and cons.

Several new tile sets, objects, and creatures have been added to the engine as a result of the SoU expansion, and these additions clearly show that Bioware is continuing to learn lessons with every new game they put out. The new tile sets are graphically more detailed, show greater variation, and add wonderful ambiance to the expansion. Along with a new musical score and what we believe are new sound effects, the expansion provides a very enjoyable gaming experience. If you have played NWN previously, you will find yourself constantly stopping to wonder "What's that?" or spot some little graphical detail in a nearby object that will amaze you.

Along with new tile sets and objects, the game includes a host of new spells. Magic users will be delighted with the new Bigby spells that allow some nice strategic additions to gameplay as an arcane character. The new prestige classes also add considerable depth to the role-playing experience and force a player to think about your character's development in his or her chosen class and plan ahead for the future. Our play test was conducted with an Elven ranger that moved into the Arcane Archer prestige class, and the gameplay was well balanced and enjoyable throughout.

Builders and designers will be happy with the additions and enhancements that have been made to the DMclient and the Toolkit. Many bugs have been ironed out, new methods and properties have been added, and the server appears to be considerably more stable than before. **[Editors Note:** We did not stress test the server under heavy gaming conditions and this conclusion should be considered our gut-feeling from the test session, rather than the result of comprehensive testing.] Since a full technical overview of the scripting enhancements and developments are outside the scope of this review, we suggest that builders look to the Bioware website at [nwn.bioware.com](http://nwn.bioware.com) for the exact details.

The game is paced out over two chapters with an interlude episode in between. Each chapter begins with a cinematic while in-game cut scenes set the story throughout the game itself. The in-game cut scenes were very nicely done, with intelligent camera angles and excellent timing to dialogue and events. We expect to see the NWN community producing home-grown modules to really take on this idea of in-game cut scenes to further plot lines. Although some community

FORGOTTEN REALMS

NEVERWINTER  
NIGHTS

SHADOWS  
of  
UNDRENTIDE

modules are available that already utilize cut scenes, Bioware has set the standard for creative camera angles and mood setting using this feature.

Bioware has also shown a great attentiveness to the developments being made by the community using their game engine; frequent NWN gamers will see that the new addition has been inspired by several community made enhancements to the NWN engine. For example, SoU sports full control of henchmen inventory and a collection of highly useful grenade style weapons that enhance your strategic options in the game considerably.

The SoU campaign itself is scripted to take advantage of individual traits in each character, making the game eminently repayable. The ranger character we tested with found himself able to talk to animals for information and see tracks on the ground to find the passage of enemies. We are eagerly testing out new character combinations to see what hidden gaming goodies can be discovered.

The only real gripe to speak off in the expansion is its length. Considering the price, another 10-15 hours of gameplay would not be remiss. However the re-playable quality of SoU does make up for the short completion time. In short, if you own NWN, SoU is a must-buy expansion and gives gamers a nice interlude while they wait for the larger expansion yet to come, Hordes of the Underdark.

by Kosala Ubayasekara

### Enjoy this article?

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NWN: Hordes of the Underdark:

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## Unknown Soldier

by Edward Kopp

### First Night

Why did I become one of the King's Men? I'm not sure any more. A steady job had something to do with it. The training with weapons for sure. A sense of Patriotism and duty must have been in the mix somewhere. Most of all, I remember thinking that it would be a sure way to impress women; the gleaming breastplate, the King's emblem (plus the scars and tattoos, but those came later), how could I not have my pick of any woman not noble born, and even then you never know. I would be debonair.

I seem to recall the recruiter waiting until after I had sworn my Oath to tell me how easy duty is patrolling the Royal grounds the Grand Gate. I didn't learn about the 1,000 pieces of gold required for those positions until my second day of training. And let me tell you about training, in one word: brutal. I have never hurt, hated, been terrified, exhausted and confident all at the same time. I couldn't wait to strap on the high plumed helm and scarlet cloak of a fully trained King's Man. Of course it turns out those are only for the 1,000 gold crowd, our future officers. Positive my spirits couldn't get any lower as duty assignments were handed out to the new recruits, I should have realized every kingdom needs a border patrol and some one to man those border outposts. What I would never imagine is just how far north those outposts could possibly be...

All these thoughts raced through my mind as I counted campfires on the hills surrounding our post, King's Point, or as we like to call it the King's Prick. It's been three years now, survived a few raids and many patrols. Whether by luck, instinct, or intellect I've made my way to the rank of sergeant. Never have I seen as many greenies in one place as I do now.

Before sunset, you could see the hills crawling with those green bastards. How so many factions, tribes (and races even) of those clannish, brutal creatures ever organized is beyond me. Rumor control has it that a powerful leader somehow consolidated the warring clans of hobgoblins and now they're beating the rest into submission. Another said a powerful Necromancer was taking over the wilds to the north and driving all the greenines south. All I can tell you is that I'll devote a year of service to the Church if I survive the coming slaughter. Well, maybe a month; at least a week.

These new guys have no clue. They honestly believe a band of heroes will swoop in and save the day, just like in the stories. I'm not gonna be the one to spoil childhood fables, but I've been in those life and death situations, and the only heroes are the guys left standing when it's all over. We are on our own. That's what makes us an outpost, we get slaughtered by the invader to give the better trained and armed King's Men time to prepare for war and swear oaths on our brave souls, we that died to the last man delaying this terrible horde. And as senior guy, I need to feed this bullshit to my newest recruits.

I get to break it to them that our so called Battle Mage that will blast the enemy with arcane might from a safe distance died of the hurty-squirtie bloody runs because we're on the edge of it all and no one with enough Faith in the Gods is here that could cure him of that terrible disease. Who knows? Maybe if they believe hard enough those mythical heroes will come save our asses any second now.

I have to make my rounds now, bolster the boys, let them see an old vet like me coolly walking the walls, not showing any concern for our hopelessly outnumbered souls. I give the encouraging nod, grunt and occasional wink to those oh-so-young faces. I can only think they'll be dead this time tomorrow. There are men praying to their personal gods (making their own deals I'm sure), playing dice, and staring grimly at that which awaits us. I see spirits pick up a little as I finish the rounds of my quadrant of the wall, "The Nor' Easter" we call it. When the wind blows across the ol' Nor' Easter, men have been known to die frozen at their post. It's also the steepest side of the plateau, "easier to defend" I tell the men. I joke with a few other older guys that at least the bastards were kind enough to attack while the weather is nice. New guys never get it.

Even the hottest day is a cool spring afternoon this time of year so far north. We get the occasional hot spot somewhere in the middle of summer when the black flies are at their worst. As night deepens that coolness can turn downright bitter at times, like tonight, even on the Summer Solstice. I tell the men to stay alert and vigilant; and remind them what an honor it is to defend the King's land. I decline to include my estimates of how many will survive till the morrow and of those how many will permanently be disfigured and maimed. My job is to prepare them for battle, not reality.

I make a complete circuit of the wall, picking up rumor and discussing tactics with other veterans of King's Prick. Consensus among the newer men is nervous bravado. Most of the vets are already sharpening their belly daggers (never understood why call them belly daggers when they're meant for our throats); the last thing you want is to be alive if captured. Man flesh is a delicacy for the green races and most prefer to cut the choicest parts when the captive is still living, as it adds to the flavor so the stories say. For the most part the standard thinking is that the greenies will wait till the dark of moon set and make an assault on the Western Gate. Once the gate falls we'll be left holding the Prick, as it becomes a total blood bath as those bestial monsters push their way through in wave after mindless wave of blood frenzied berserk fury.

While standing above the Western Gate, I look out over the fiery orange stars of campfires that cover the invisible landscape. In my mind, I draw constellations: Gutted Soldier, Headless Orc, and others just as morbid. Right in the middle I see what can only be the King's Prick itself, come to taunt our last hours. I spit out a curse on our King's royal phallus, calling the black dripping rot on it (the one that makes you wish you were only pissing razor blades). I turn around as the curse leaves my lips, I realize I'm staring at the 'Nor Easter and the hills are black. I had swore I saw bands of greens moving that way during the setting sun, but not a campfire betrayed the presence of the enemy. My gut instinct, luck or what ever you want to call it that's kept me alive for more than half of my five-year hitch tells me to get my ass over to my quadrant now.

No sooner do I arrive at station than I can hear a high, gibbering, and ululating laughter that means only one thing to me; gnolls. I quickly call for the acolyte assigned to my platoon and have him conjure simple light spells cast on an arrow of a few archers. I order the bowmen to fire in three different directions, one halfway down the side of the bluff, the other two in random directions down slope. I almost wished I hadn't.

The mass of gnolls shocks me. Hundreds of the brutes are streaming up the steep side carrying ropes and ladders. For every one with a means to scale the 'Nor Easter's walls there are a dozen more charging right with them eager for the taste of fresh human flesh. I blow my horn, sounding the cry of invaders in my quadrant. My warriors rush to the ramparts eager to defend the wall against invaders, peering into the blackness, as the beasts now avoid the circles of light knowing that archers pick off any foolish enough to allow themselves to be illuminated or back lit for more than the briefest of moments.

Immediately, grappling hooks, connected to knotted lines, start to clang against the stone wall. My men cut the lines as quickly as possible. Archers pour arrows straight down into the faces of the gnolls as they try to climb the ropes. Ladders and hooks fly through the air faster than I think possible. Usually gnolls attack only in bands of tens or twenties and always from ambush. There must have been hundreds, if not thousands, for the assault to progress so quickly. This makes no sense. Why attack like this with the moon still so high? Even as I call out to the men to stand fast against the beasts, the first few are leaping over the wall, dying to clear the way for their fellows. I knew we were in desperate straights.

I look through the bodies engaging in the clash of death and desperation; I see mass confusion among the constellations covering the surround hills. A large detachment of well disciplined ranks come at the gnolls from their exposed right flank. Instead of cutting a bloody swath through the massed berserking gnolls, they instead began to beat them down into submission, their numbers doubling the hyena-faced monsters. Using the flat of swords, clubs and brutal fists, the hobgoblins are trying to stop the gnolls instead of pressing the attack. I expected the rest of the Prick to be bloody by now, yet men from other quadrants seem free to help beat back the enemy.

Confused, surprised, and oddly optimistic, I turn to rally and organize my troops when something hits me in the back that sends fire and ice through my spine. Only as the strength gives out in my legs and I see myself falling over the outer edge of the ol' Nor' Easter do I smell the unmistakable

rancid odor of gnoll behind me. I twist as I fall, arms wheeling for a balance that no longer exists in my severed spine, my momentum sending me over the side. The last thing I remember is a hideous bastard of hyena offspring lick the dripping blood off of its battle ax as it pulls the massive weapon from my back...

I awake to pain and numbness. I lay face up; my eyes and ears are closed with blood. A weight presses down on what I can still feel, the dead weight of bodies. Without moving, I take account of my injuries. There is only cold and immobility from the waist down. The pressure on my chest is bearable, but restricts how easy I breathe. When I try to move my right arm, it twitches and the searing pain of multiple fractures makes me want to vomit. The agony is so intense I black out...

### **Day One**

I can't understand how I'm still alive. Night has ended. A red tinged glow comes through my closed eyelids; the first rays of the morning sun hitting my blood-encrusted eyes. I continue to play dead (it's not that hard), trying desperately to figure out what has happened and what's going on. My ears are stopped with dried and congealed blood (whose I'm unsure) and I can only hear muffled grunts and snarls. The sound of hobnailed boots marching, the gibbering whining snarl of cowed gnolls and the unmistakable roar of angry greenies arguing in guttural goblin speak. Why am I still alive? Why aren't I being beaten, or eaten, or any other of a multitude of nasty things? Instead I am helpless; crippled and blind and on the wrong side of my ol' Nor' Easter.

Denied my sense of sight and sound, I must use what senses are left to determine my fate. I can feel the weight of what can only be many lifeless bodies on my chest; I am at the bottom of a pile of corpses. The weight is crushing and constant. If not for the strength of the steel in my battered breast plate I'm sure I'd drown in my own blood as my ribs staved in, puncturing a lung, drowning me in my own life's fluid. What skin is exposed along my arm and face can feel the coarse and shaggy coats stiff with blood of at least a few of the gnolls who died in the attempt to breach the wall. The weight pushes me into a grave above ground; my cairn built of the cadavers of the gnolls that were beat back.

The stench is nauseating. Wet shit-dirty dog that's rolled in a putrefied dead animal smell fills my nose. Bladders, bowels, whatever bodily fluid is available from the inside is leaking from every orifice it can find to escape the corpses. The last undigested remnants from the entrails of eviscerated gnolls cover me. With all the will I have at my command, I force myself not to vomit.

The sun rises and the bloody light that filters through my crusted lids grows brighter. Already the temperature is above normal and the air rancid and stifling. I can't move and I haven't died. I have to risk it and move my left arm (the only uninjured body part I have). Hoping I can't be seen so deep in the pile of corpses, I slowly bring my left hand to my side and run my hand up to my face. I feel drying blood covering me, wet, sticky and thick, more like wet paint than life-giving fluid. It's so substantial and congealed I'm amazed my nose hasn't filled with the stuff and suffocated me. I scrape away as much as I can from my left eye, which is glued shut. With forefinger and thumb, I pry apart my lids, eyelashes tearing out, causing sharp and vivid lances of pain to shoot through the left side of my face. Once my vision clears I nearly scream in fear at the site of a gnoll with fangs bared looking me right in the face.

The pain of tearing eyelashes apart vanishes as my initial fear eases away. The gnoll's dead, unlike me. Ugly and dead. I clear and pry apart my right eyelid, only to discover an empty socket. It seems my right eye has literally been knocked out of my skull. Why am I not dead? I must be just moments away and don't realize it yet. What kind of Gods would let me live any longer in this condition?

I wish I could recall the final words the acolytes are always muttering over the dead. Maybe they're actually telling you the secret password that lets you pass from a broken mortal coil and ascend to the Heavens...

It seems the Lord of Flies has come and taken resident in my neighbor Ugly Gnoll. Flies are crawling everywhere, climbing into every open orifice they find and just move right in and start dancing (that's how it looks any way). Ugly Gnoll has flies crawling in and out of his face. It's unpleasant to watch. What really has started to bother me is that the flies think I'm just as good as place as any to do their little dance. I'm not sure, but I think one got inside my skull through my nose. I tried blowing it out, but I was afraid of making too much noise.



The smell is unbearable. I'm covered in piss, shit, guts, and blood. Once the noon sun hits and cooks it for a while the smell is indescribable. If the flies trying to crawl into my nose didn't seem to be bringing big chunks of the rancid smell of abused dead bodies, I might be able to ignore how much it keeps me at a continual gag. Gods help me... I vomit anyway. The wracking of my innards wrenches my shattered arm... I black out from the pain...

I'm still alive. How can this be! The sun has passed well over 'Nor Easter... my cairn seems to be in the shade cast by the Prick as the sun sets. It will happen again, more bodies to build my cairn as the dead honor me. The mask of flies that Ugly Gnoll wore to the masquerade today is gone. A number of beetles have taken their place it seems. Screams, the clanging of steel on steel sound where I'm guessing the Western Gate is from here... this goes on all night as the beetles fight over which one gets to eat which of Ugly Gnoll's eyes... I have lucid dreams where I'm floating over the Prick watching my brothers-at-arms beat back wave after wave of greenies...

## Day Two

It's morning again. If I'm not going to die of my wounds perhaps the fever I feel starting to fester in my mutilated right arm will hasten the hour. If only the weight weren't so great I could reach under my breastplate and grab my belly dagger. Unfortunately, my cairn is settling, like an old castle, and my left arm can no longer reach below my collar as the weight is so great.

The Lords of the Flies are returning, along with many different little verminous brethren. Beetles, centipedes and nameless other creeping crawling carrion eaters converge on my mighty cairn. My only mourners, they ignore me as they dig in to the funeral feast I've laid out for them. Ugly Gnoll seems a particular favorite of my guests. I can see the skin of his face undulate as the progeny of the flies dancing begin to move and stretch. Ugly Gnoll goes through many different facial expressions, each more disturbing than the previous.

Watching Ugly Gnoll helps me forget the stench that is building around me. Blood and my own vomit cover my face and neck, and it's then I realize how thirsty I am. How long have I been laying here? Why am I not dead?

I can still hear the sounds of battle coming from the far side of the Prick. Stupid greenies must have got bottlenecked at the Western Gate. There are so many of them though. I turn my head hoping to see between the gaps of limbs and bodies stacked so haphazardly on top of me. The motion makes my head spin and I lose consciousness for a while...

I wake up and can't see. What if one of those fucking beetles has eaten it! I'm blind... until I realize it is night and there's nothing to see. I'm so thirsty. The smell is so strong I could never eat, but a sip of fresh water would bring my spirits soaring... I realize I can just barely make out my own right arm. It is swollen, red and oozing puss. The chiurgeon may have to take it off after the battle. Then I could take a pension and settle down some place warm. A little farm where I can raise dates, it has to be warm for dates, warm all year round. They taste so sweet and juicy they quench my thirst, only I've never known a date to squirm before eating.

Maggots are falling in light drizzle from Ugly Gnoll's open eye sockets and nostrils. His tongue, black and swollen, creates a dam that holds back thousands of the squirmy little creatures. I can feel them crawling across my face looking for an opening. Slowly they wiggle their way towards my right eye, where now remains only a gaping hole. My left hand is trapped and I am weak. They wiggle and jiggle and tickle their way inside my head munch munch munching away at the yummy goodness inside.

With my little eye, I spy something green and nasty. A lot of green nastiness and they're about to hold off a charge of a platoon of King's Pricks pike and swordsmen.

I blink and they're gone. I blink again and it's...

### Day Three

I open my one good eye and it feels sticky and rheumy, like it may very well be for the last time. I am so thirsty. I open my mouth and my new friends the maggots drop so kindly into my mouth. Munch but no crunch. I lay catching them like raindrops... *rain drops keep falling, they keep falling...* when the dam that was once a tongue bursts and a deluge of wiggly jiggle little morsels of juicy goodness cascades into my open mouth, running down my face and chin as I munch and swallow. Munch munch munch. I'm choking.... To many... Munch faster, munching munch... I'm choking. Make it stop. I'm suffocating. The wriggly little jiggles are filling my throat, my nose, and even my gaping hole for a right eye bye bye Miss Fantasy Pie. I look down with what I spy with my one good eye I spy my cold dead legs over flowing with maggot manna. My legs move once again swinging and swaying as armies march forth chomping munching crunching. A large centipede claims my cock for it's very own, the poor shriveled up thingy (the cock, not the centipede). Beetles pour forth marching two by two Hoo-ray... Hoo-ray... As they all come marching down when Johnny comes marching home... I scream and dream I scream and maggots spew out of my mouth with the force of my entire insides squeezing at once. **BLAAHHGG! I AM MAGGOT!**

There is no pain now. I feel nothing. I can think clearly. I take each day and seal it away, in a part of my soul where the bits of evil that are kept once they've been over come. I feel lethargy calling me. Sleep of dreamless peace. I feel the promise of many a cold winters night as the wind blows across the 'ol Nor' Easter.

#### Authors Notes:

These are provided to fill in any gaps so you can use this story as part of your home campaign.

The gnolls broke ranks that first night because they were hungry. That many gnolls in one place tend to feed at their own whim. There is an army of hobgoblins getting all the greenies organized. A powerful warrior has consolidated the hobgoblins and is using different types of goblinoids to raid into the King's Land. The hobgoblins find themselves dealing with the unreliable, hungry gnolls the first night.

The first night the hobgoblins have to expend time and energy getting the gnolls back in line. By attacking when they did, they blew the element of surprise and a large number of able bodies due to mass casualties, as the post is able to concentrate their defense against the gnolls. I just used how the D20 Monster Manual described both races and just did what I thought followed from what I read.

When they do attack, the surprise of a few thousand gnolls streaming up the side of Nor' Easter is gone (since the change tactics and make a mass attack on the Western Gate, using gnolls as soak troops) and the outpost can once again concentrate their forces for defense. The initial strategy was to have the gnolls attack on the side of the 'Nor Easter, but they never waited for the setting of the moon when there'd be the least light. The gnolls decided they were hungry now and commenced to attack even though nothing was ready with the rest of the greenies. Instead of attacking King's Prick the first night the attack is delayed, the surprise of gnolls attacking from an unexpected direction allowed the out post to concentrate on defending the Western (and only) Gate.

Something is pushing the greens out of the Northlands. Whether it's a Necromancer, giants or some other nastiness of your own concoction, evil is alive and well up north.

#### GM Plot Hooks:

For a mid level game, you can have you're players go to the Northlands and discover what's happening. Barbaric tribes of humans who live in the Land of the Long Day and Night (North of the arctic circle) have rallied and are driving their way south looking for soft southern kingdoms to plunder.

There really is a powerful Necromancer (I'd use GRs "Necromancer" book of their Master Class line) taking over the Northlands with uber-undead. Your players must discover the secret to his great power; the creation of the uber-undead (of all makes and models mind you). Maybe it's an

army of Hill, Stone, and Frost Giants (I use PCIs "Lords of the Peaks" part of the OGL Interlink series of books between them and GR) with Dire Polar Bears and what ever else your evil GM mind can come up with.

For a high level game have your player be the Heroes that save the outpost, *just like in the stories*. Then they can deal with the uber-undead and giants too.

For really experienced PCs and GMs this is what **I** would do if it were my home game.

It's 100, 1000 or any interesting number of years later and the cairn has been disturbed. Kings Point has not only survived, but has grown into a bustling town of northern fur traders, miners of ores and gems, and a fairly neutral place for the King's Men to deal with the tribes of those from the Land of Long Day and Night. Buildings near ol' Nor' Easter have long since covered the cairn with cobblestones and buildings of various types. The entire block was recently bought up by a group of merchant investors looking to build an upscale hotel to hostel the growing number of wealthy merchants, King's Men and nobles from distant lands. While digging to lay in the foundation the skeletons of dozens of gnolls were found and thrown in the town's large midden heap; one human remain was unknowingly added.

The hotel is a great success, safe and secure, snuggled up close to the Old Fort, the King's Men newly renovated barracks. Business is booming when the X year anniversary of the battle arrives and the ghost of the Unknown Soldier makes it's existence known with the first of five apparitions.

**Ghost #1:** d20 Turn resistance +10, stacks: The Unknown Soldier making his rounds preparing for the assault. Usually not malevolent, he tends to just walk the halls and when he interacts with the PCs he treats them like new recruits.

**Ghost #2:** This apparition is injured and blind in one eye. It's scared and hurt and will only fight in self-defense screaming about the pain the whole time.

**Ghost #3:** d20 Turn resistance +2, stacks: This one is slightly loony. It talks in non-sequiturs. It talks about Ugly Gnoll and Lord of the Flies and how the flies dance. It will beg for his belly dagger, ask the PCs if they like dates and complain about being thirsty.

**Ghost #4:** d20 Turn resistance +4, stacks: Poor bugger is completely mad. Depending on how long you take before getting you players to the hotel there will have been a series of murders. This would start with just a few servants, then a foreign merchant, and most recent a young noble. A member of the King's Men will never come to harm by this ghost. Occasionally maggots falls off of him.

**Ghost #5:** d20 Turn resistance +6, stacks: This is what I call Maggot Man. I'd make it drop maggots every-where it went, like a trail of crumbs. It also needs to spew maggots as a breath weapon. I'd feel free to bump up some of the damage meted out on the ghost template, but that's just because I'm not afraid to kill PCs that make stupid mistakes and my players always know it.

Put ghosts 2-5 on a four-day rotation, perhaps confusing accounts of the number of ghost there really are. Ghost #1 will always be around. It is possible to talk and get information from Ghost #1 as he can remember the point of being injured.

The only way to end the ghostly reign of terror is to piece together the mystery of who the Unknown Soldier is, find at least his skull in the midden and make a new cairn for him somewhere on the premise of the new hotel. The basement would be a good choice.

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▶ <http://www.silven.com/articles.asp?case=showreview&id=12>

# Chatting with Gary Gygax

by Kosala Ubayasekara  
& Gary Gygax

Welcome to another edition of our regular monthly debate and information pieces done in collaboration with Mr Gary Gygax, the original creative mind behind the Dungeons and Dragons role-playing game. This month we feature questions presented by members of Silven Crossroads that cover a variety of different topics:

## **Q1: How important are conventions in spreading the word about LA game? Is the Lejedary Adventure product line gaining ground through convention presence?**

Word of mouth is absolutely the best promotion for the LA game--or any other for that matter. That generally means a happy gamer telling others about the fun they had playing LA. Demos and games at conventions enable that, so they are important. A GM deciding to become a Lejed Master is the very best means for making converts to the system, for then the players get to adventure with their familiar group, and the degree of enjoyment is likely to be the highest. The LA Game Quickstart Rules were devised to facilitate the latter.

What the LA RPG needs most is a lot of exposure so as to make the mass of gamers aware that it exists. If only Hekaforge had a big advertising budget... Despite that lack, the LA game is growing thanks to grass roots support, online and convention presence.

## **Q2: When you make convention appearances do you have time to see the convention yourself? What is your view on RPG and gaming conventions? Do you enjoy them?**

Convention appearances demand a lot from me, so I don't get around much--no playing usually, and darned little time to walk the floor to see the exhibit booths. I really enjoy cons, but they tend to really tire me out, as I have to be attentive to so many fans. My favorite cons are small gatherings where I am just another conventioneer that can look around and play in this or that event. That's pretty selfish, I know,

but I fondly recall slipping off to play Napoleonic military miniatures at a DMG convention many years back. A role-player saw me there in the basement and wondered that I played such games, he clearly not knowing that I came from board war games and tabletop miniatures, those games being the root of the RPG;)

## **Q3: Where can someone read about what conventions you are appearing at?**

There is a "Gygax Watch" link on <http://www.lejendary.com> however, it is a pretty short list, as I don't make many. Between my bad left leg and getting older, it becomes more of a chore each year to attend cons, so I limit appearances drastically. Having a hefty appearance fee helps me do that too!

It is likely I'll be making an appearance at a new game shop in the Milwaukee area this autumn. That news will be advertised by the proprietor if the deal for the shop goes through. He plans to line up several notables from this area in that case--Clyde Caldwell and Chris Clark are also on board. I believe he is seeing if Jolly Blackburn, James Ward, and Margaret Weiss will come in for the grand opening.

I have tentative agreement to appear at three events this winter and early spring that are not far distant from my home here in Lake Geneva, but I am not sure all of them will come off:

JanCon, January 9-11, Layfayette Indiana-- appearing there with Chris Clark

PointCon, February (third weekend?), Stevens Point, Wisconsin

CodCon, April 17-19, College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, IL

It is probable that I'll be at Milwaukee Gamefest, 9-11 July also;)

**Q4: Have you written any fantasy novels? Are you planning to write any in the future?**

I have authored 10 fantasy novels, all in the 1980s. I haven't any current plans to write more, as I am very busy with game design work. There is an agreement in force for the production of the Gord the Rogue yarns in graphic novel form, though. They were supposed to launch last winter, then this summer, but problems with art and inking have delayed the release. The publisher's current plan calls for December announcement and release of an "Issue 0" introductory book.

I am really excited about this, for I have seen some of the illustration--really superb!--and the whole of the text of the novels will be included in graphic form or print. Each novel will be done in fill-color installments of comic-book size, and when a book is complete they will be bound into hardback form.

We have no plans for the three Magister Setne Inhetep fantasy mystery novels at present.

**Q5: Can you become rich as a freelancer RPG developer or writer? Is there any money in it?**

A fair question. The short answer is no. The longer one is don't quit your day job, figure that if you are good and work a lot you'll earn enough as a free-lanceer to buy beer and cigarettes. The RPG market is a niche one, small and jam-packed with fans who are creative and can write and design. That means competition is fierce, and that a goodly number of GMs create their own material, so sales of adventure modules are relatively low.

**Q6: Are you married? Do you have kids?**

Yes indeed. I married quite young, just after turning 20, and with my first wife had five children--Ernest, Elise, Heidi, Cindy, and Luke. In the early 1980's, I separated and was eventually divorced. Sons Ernie and Luke lived with me out in California then. I remarried later on in the 80's, and my wife Gail and I have a son Alex who is soon to be age 17.

Ernie and Luke have actually written a d20 module together, *The Lost City of Gaxmoor* (Troll Lord Games). Sadly, they do not plan to do more creative work in the RPG field.

There was a family gathering for my 65th birthday anniversary, and all six of my children and six grandchildren too came here.

**Q7: How did role-playing games come to be called that? Did you invent the term along with D&D or did it originate somewhere else?**

I don't believe that anyone can actually identify when the game form became known as "role-playing," or who first called it that. I didn't name it that, but in about a year's time after D&D was released most everyone was referring to it RPGing. It was a sort of spontaneous identification by many people simultaneously.

**Q8: Why is the game called Dungeons & Dragons?**

That is a really excellent name, D&D, isn't it? When I wrote the initial two drafts of the *Dungeons & Dragons* game I did not attempt a catchy, commercial title. The manuscript was simply titled "The Fantasy Game." Right after I sent the first manuscript out to about a dozen or so fellow gamers for play-testing late in 1972, I sat down at my desk and made a two-column list of potential names for the new game. I don't have that piece of paper any longer, but it had about 30 entries on it. Being aware of how to name a game, I wanted a single word title, or at most a catchy two-word one.

Armed with the choices, I polled my friends and family too. When my daughter Cindy, then quite a little girl, got all excited about "Dungeons & Dragons," I decided that her vote was the last I needed. I liked that combination best myself, as did most others. The alliteration was good, and it called to mind the "Castle & Crusade Society" gaming group I had formed in the late 1960s. When I took the second manuscript to the local printer in early January of 1974, it bore the title *Dungeons & Dragons*."

**Q9: Who was the original team behind TSR besides you, when you started it? Are they still active in the gaming industry?**

Donald R. Kaye and I formed a partnership in October 1973 that we named Tactical Studies Rules in recognition of the local game group we had formed, the Lake Geneva Tactical Studies Association, a military miniatures interest group. We published the *Cavaliers & Roundheads* (Jeff Perrin & Gary Gygax) miniatures rules for the English Civil War in October 1973. We wanted next to print the D&D game, but money to do so was not available, so in January 1974 Brian Blume was made an equal partner, and with his buy-in we were able to move forward with the release of that game.

Don Kaye died of a heart attack in January 1975. At that time his widow was bought out of the partnership and a corporation, TSR hobbies, Inc. acquired all the assets and liabilities of Tactical Studies Rules. Brian Blume is not active in the gaming field, although I understand he plays a lot of computer games.

#### **Q10: Do you game often with your family?**

Alex plays an Avatar (Xagnar the Rogue) in my regular Thursday night sessions of a Legendary *Adventure* game campaign. We have not played many games together as a family of late because of busy schedules--mainly Gail's. Gail and I or Alex and I do play some cribbage, backgammon, and *senat*, though. When other family members come here, though, we do get in a fair amount of four-handed cribbage, *Settlers of Catan*. and mah jongg. With cold weather coming soon likely Gail, Alex, and I will get in more gaming with *Rail Baron* and *Empire Builder* on the top of my short list.

If I could get Alex to play chess, shogi. or my favorite board war game, *Operation Overlord*, I'd be delighted. He is too involved in computer games to have inclination to do that, though. :(

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▶ <http://www.silven.com/articles.asp?case=show&id=46>

Hello and welcome to the second article of Polyglot. Last month, I discussed character descriptions in detail. This month, I tackle the more extensive of the description subject—descriptions for dungeon or game masters.

Descriptions are notably important to the gaming world, and no one has a larger responsibility when it comes to description than a DM. Good description helps enhance any game—making a person, place, or situation much more than an abstraction or four bare walls in a player’s mind. An example to illustrate:

**DM1:** *You look into the room. It has four chairs and a table where three orcs are eating. The orcs see you and charge.*

**DM2:** *The smell of must, rotting animal, and feces is almost overwhelming as you open the door wider to get a better look. Your lantern light creates dancing shadows across the small square room. Inside, a battered round wooden table and three chairs are strewn in a corner. At the table, three orcs are bent over a piece of fly-infested rotting meat. One snorts and turns its head to glare at you, shouting “Trusk grobmun!” They begin to draw their weapons and charge.*

The example proves how much life and depth a good description can add to a tabletop session. So, how can you create descriptions that add to your game? Read on to find out.

If you are running a published adventure, most of the detail—room descriptions, NPC conversations, etc. will be provided in the module. But what if you are running your own created adventures or heavily modifying pre-existing modules? Then, simply searching for the description boxes is not as easy—because you have to create them. While some DMs can add on-the-spot detail while they are running a session, others simply aren’t efficient at elaboration, so creating descriptions in advance is the key.

### **Description Guidelines:**

As a dungeon master, you are the sole conveyor and singular source of information for your PCs. If you have trouble with describing a world or making it come alive, this can have terrible effects on your game. If you simply are not good at describing scenes, situations, or NPC/monsters, your players might become confused or disinterested. There are two aspects to consider about descriptions for DMs—creating

them and employing them.

How does a DM create a good description? Depending on the type of description you want to create, different elements are necessary. These elements are outlined below. Regardless of what type of description you are creating, however, be sure to include more than one of the five senses in your description—smell, touch, taste, sound, and sight. By using all five senses (as opposed to only one or two) you can create a richer world.

The following list gives the basic information, by type, that should be included in any DM description:

**1) NPC descriptions:** these do not have to be nearly as detailed as the PC descriptions. Obviously, the more important the NPC (reoccurring villain, etc), the more detailed the description will need to be. Consider the following when creating NPCs:

- Any observable/obvious quirks or defects
- 1-2 personality descriptors (deceitful, greedy, generous, sly, etc)
- Physical description
- Accent/Languages spoken
- Affiliations (if you are in a town and it is important).
- Class/level
- Personal History (if applicable)

**2) Places (Urban Areas):** these are your towns, cities, spaceports, castles, and what is inside them.

- Overall description of the city (physical location, shape, nearby waterways or other geological features)
- Government, Law, and Law Enforcement (names of leaders, type of government, type of law enforcement, location and description of buildings, attitude of the townsfolk towards the law and government)
- Economy—what are the main imports/exports of the city? What types of things are readily available (and thus cheaper) and what types of things are harder to find? Location has a major role in what the economy will be based on.
- Important NPCs (who are not covered above, if any). Who is the captain of the city guard? What storeowner has a reputation for being a crook in town?
- Entertainment- are there any festivals, a circus, carnivals, theaters, whorehouses, etc?
- Separate descriptions of places you know the PCs will most likely visit and the proprietors—magic shop, inn, tavern, church or healer, general store, bookstore, herb/medicine shop, junk shop, parts shop, armor and weapon smiths, stables or space port, etc.

**3) Places (Dungeon):** good dungeon descriptions add an amazing amount of complexity to your game and help maintain player interest.

- What is the terrain/area the dungeon is located in? This will determine the basic wall composition, flora and fauna, and what might be growing or living inside.
- Once you have the basic composition, number each room. You can create a separate description for each room. You will really only need to describe hallways once.
- What is the room's function? What objects are in the room?
- What is the lighting like?
- What does the dungeon smell like?
- What is the general temperature and environment of the dungeon?
- Remember that if a group is living in the dungeon, they will need all of the basic amenities of life—a kitchen, a place to bathe, a place to sleep, etc.

## Tips and Techniques

If you write down descriptions in advance, write them on note cards. For a dungeon—number the rooms and give each card a number. Now simply write the description for each room on the card that corresponds to the room number.

This technique also works for NPCs, shops in town, and items. If you know your PCs are heading into a town, write up descriptions for the places that they are likely to visit. Be sure to write your shop description on one note card and your NPC Shop Owner description on another –this way you can mix and match them at later points.

The best part about using note cards for descriptions is that you can reuse them. Keeping them from adventure to adventure can save your neck at the table when you are stumped and need a good description. You can get a plastic note card/recipe holder at a local office supply store that will help you stay organized.

What about descriptions for the items that PCs find? You don't want to just give them the answer—"It's a +5 Vorpal Sword" or "It's a highly crafted handgun"—but, if they do not get the item in question identified during that session, you are liable to forget what they have when they ask later. Special, magical, or powerful items are costly and take time to make—meaning that each one should be unique. This is where the note card trick comes in again. You can create one-use cards with weapon descriptions on them. Give the card with the description (but not the name or function) to the PC. Number the cards and keep a separate list. Once a PC identifies the item at some later point, he or she can add the information to the note card themselves.

What about player character descriptions? Often, other than sex, eyes, hair color, age, and race PCs have no distinct description. At character creation, have players write out a full description using the guidelines for PC descriptions outlined in previous article (August 2003). Have players write a note card copy (using several if necessary) and keep it in your file. As PC appearances change with game play, you can have them update the note cards. A good way to do this in the D20 system is to have them update their description every time they gain a character level based feat (every 3 levels). Having PC descriptions on file is useful in a multitude of interactions, such as deciding who the enemy will attack, how NPCs will react to them, and even how much people try to charge them for goods/services.



Creating good descriptions can be simple with some thought, creativity, and planning. If you do have to create descriptions on the spot, simply remember to give yourself a moment to think, to include aspects from at least 3 of the 5 senses, and to go ahead and pull your backup note cards if needed. That is it for this month's edition of Polyglot. Join me next time when we'll discuss the wild world of names.

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▶ <http://www.silven.com/articles.asp?case=showreview&id=10>



G'Day all. Welcome to the first installment Antipodean Adventures, a monthly column which will deal with all manner of Australiana including history, politics, geography, mythology and specifically how to use it in a tabletop role-playing format. In this inaugural column, I have chosen to deal with one of the most significant events in Australia's history – the Eureka Stockade. The symbol of the movement, the Southern Cross flag (based on the constellation above us here in the Antipodes), has been claimed by a number of diverse groups as a symbol of freedom and independence.

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

It was during the summer of 1854, in a city of tents just outside Ballarat, Victoria. Miners had flocked from all over the world to seek their fortune on the goldfields, lured by tales of nuggets simply lying on the ground and fortunes easily made. Soon enough, these hordes found that the life of a prospector was one of hard and unrewarding work, especially since most of the surface gold had been picked clean. The weather was stinking hot, prices for goods and services were through the roof, and the police, called troopers, of the time were little more than thugs and bullies. Miners' Licenses were a lucrative source of revenue for the government, and trooper checks of these expensive documents were common. Many miners could not afford to pay for a license, and were forced to run and hide whenever the call of '*Traps!*' went out. The troopers would give chase and any license-dodgers would be arrested. It is important to understand that these license hunts were often an excuse for the exercise of police brutality and personal vendettas. Corruption and privilege were rife.

In September 1854, Governor Hotham, concerned at the number of miners prospecting illegally, ordered license hunts twice weekly. Tensions and tempers were flaring, but it would take two events in October to precipitate the final confrontation between prospectors and government.

The first event occurred during one of the regular license hunts. The wrongful arrest of the crippled Armenian servant of a local priest, and his conviction for allegedly striking a trooper, caused an uproar among the miners. Hot on the heels of this injustice came the acquittal of local publican, James Bentley, who had been accused of killing a miner named James Scobie. His pub, the Eureka Hotel, was razed to the ground by Scobie's friends and acquaintances. In response, Commissioner Rede requested reinforcements and a general crackdown on the behavior of the miners. Needless to say, this did not help to smooth matters over.

Beginning on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October, over ten thousand miners began to hold anti-government meetings on Bakery Hill, across from the Government Camp. Out of these meetings grew the Ballarat Reform League, a group formed in an attempt at negotiation and conciliation with the government. Their attempts at discussion were firmly rebuffed with often insulting and goading actions on behalf of Governor Hotham and Commissioner Rede. The situation was so inflamed that the arrival of military reinforcements later in the month was met with a rioting mob. The resulting melee left baggage carts overturned, several men injured, and a drummer boy dead. The miners once again gathered and resolved to burn their licenses.

Hotham and Rede responded with a license hunt.

There was open conflict between the troopers and the miners, who gathered once again on Bakery Hill. Under the auspices of Peter Lalor, the now-famous Eureka flag was unfurled, and the miners formed a council of war. They called for a Victorian Republic, full suffrage, and short parliaments. They fashioned pikes and spears, and set to work building a stockade, which was supplied with donated firearms and horses. In short, they resolved themselves to treason.

Emotions were running high as the stockade was built, but after a few days most of the men inside went back to work on their allotments. The numbers inside the stockade were even more depleted (down to only a few hundred men) on Sunday, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December, due to both desertion and the diggers'

belief that they would not be attacked on the day of rest. Of course, this is exactly what happened. At 3 a.m. a party of 276 troopers descended upon the Eureka Stockade, overwhelming the rebels. The battle lasted only about fifteen minutes. Thirty-four of the miners were wounded or killed, at a cost of fifteen governmental casualties. The rebellion was thoroughly routed, and a price was placed on the heads of the leaders.

In the aftermath, none of the miners were hanged for treason, as had been threatened. After they were found and brought to justice, Peter Lalor and his companions were acquitted. Although it seemed that the miners had suffered an overwhelming defeat, mining licenses were soon abolished, and the path was paved to a more equitable treatment for Australian workers.

### **Principal Characters or NPCs**

**Governor Hotham:** A seemingly good-hearted, if patrician, man. He has a definite fondness for maintaining law and order at any cost. He will not tolerate dissent or sedition from the populace, and has a very different view of 'good governance' than the prospectors of Eureka. The upstart commoners seemingly have no way of convincing Hotham of the rightness of their cause.

**Commissioner Rede:** One of two men to acquit James Bentley. He was unbending in his intention to 'break' the rebellion, and was under great pressure from Hotham to do so. He had been generally well-liked in his previous position as assistant to the previous commissioner, and during his confrontations with the diggers, he will attempt to convey the impression that he is 'just doing his job.'

**Peter Lalor:** A militant Irishman who later became a rather conservative politician. During the Eureka Rebellion, he is a charismatic and warlike firebrand who takes leadership of the miners when things come to a head. Lalor lost his left arm during the conflict at Eureka.

### **Basic Adventure Ideas**

1. The PCs who are short on cash require money to complete a quest, make repairs, train, etc. When things seem most bleak, the PCs are hired by Governor Hotham as troopers. The miners have gathered on Bakery Hill and must be dealt with. Hotham will not accede to the miners' demands, but warns the PCs that violence must be kept to a minimum lest full revolt break out. In the later stages of the rebellion, when the stockade has been constructed, the PCs could be put in charge of 'capturing the (Southern Cross) flag.

2. The PCs are simply passing through the area, en route to another adventure. They stop in at the Eureka Hotel and are caught in the fire. Their role in the affair is undetermined, with both the authorities and the miners regarding them with suspicion. They must first talk their way out of the immediate situation, and from there may act as negotiators or may simply choose a side.
3. The PCs have decided to strike it rich on the goldfields. A PC, or one of their friends/acquaintances, is wrongfully arrested during a license hunt. The PCs feel the injustice of the troopers firsthand, giving them a personal stake in the Eureka Rebellion. Lalor could be an ally, or a political rival in the leadership of the miners.
4. In the course of their adventures, the PCs overhear troopers discussing battle plans. They must warn Lalor and his men of the Sunday morning attack. Will they get there in time? Will the miners believe them or consider them government spies?

### **Other Genres**

Aside from its usefulness and entertainment value in a largely historical campaign, the Eureka Stockade has the trappings of an interesting plot in a variety of genres.

#### *Space Fantasy/Science Fiction:*

The overworked, six-limbed slave miners of Cubisia-6 are plotting rebellion against their reptilian, colonial masters – represented on Cubisia-6 by Governor Hotham and Commissioner Rede. The ruthless robotic police force and the lottery-based liquidation of miners for energy have pushed them to the edge. The 'stockade' could be a stormed colonial building, a natural system of caves, or perhaps a mine.

#### *Fantasy:*

Dwarven workers are being forced to mine an underground seam of some unstable, magical ore by hobgoblin overlords. After the brutal murder of the leader of the dwarves, they retreat into a resilient, albeit hastily-built stockade. The military mindset of both races seems fairly similar and could result in a very interested and well-matched battle. The presence of magic could play a major factor, especially if the dwarves are the only ones with the skill to extract the ore. The PCs could be hired by the clan of the enslaved dwarves for reconnaissance purposes. Compromise between the dwarves and hobgoblins will be very difficult to achieve, but may be necessary to ensure the

release of the slaves and/or the extraction of the valuable ore. A dwarven Lalor's lost arm could allow him to gain a powerful magic item, like Theros Ironfeld's arm in Dragonlance.

#### *Modern:*

Lalor is trying to make a name for himself to further his political career. He has infiltrated a group of disgruntled workers, and insinuated himself as their firebrand leader. He hopes that the conflict, no matter what the outcome, will cause him to be seen as a hero and a voice of the worker. Once elected, he plans to abandon this cause to further his own agenda (whatever that might be).

#### *Horror:*

The position of the stockade has a deep occult significance. Peter Lalor is a high priest of darkness, who is planning to sacrifice his arm in exchange for arcane power. Any blood shed in anger, in or around the stockade, will result in the awakening of a dark and powerful being that will destroy Australia. The PCs catch wind of this and must convince Hotham and Rede to avoid battle at all costs. Lalor, of course, will be doing all he can to instigate open conflict, making the job a lot more difficult.

#### *Manga:*

Gold is the source of all power. The government is secretly run by tentacled demons from Hell, and the miners are the reincarnations of ancient heroes who do not yet know that their destiny is to save the universe from the tentacle-demon predation. When the campaign begins, the rebellion has just begun, and neither side knows the true nature of the other. They are at a deadlock. PCs must prove their worthiness to intercede by winning a martial arts contest.

#### *Pulp:*

In the face of their first-ever civil strife, the government panics and releases their pneumatic, gold dust-powered deathbots. The conflict is horrifically bloody and blessedly brief, and now the government is backpedaling – they have become very unpopular with the community and are frantically trying to deny the existence of the deathbots. The PCs and a maimed Lalor are the only surviving witnesses to the slaughter.

## **Conclusion**

The Eureka Stockade is a conflict with parallels in many fields of fiction and history. The story captures the very essence of the underdog, or working man, rising up against what they see as unfair rule. It has captured the hearts of many Australian groups, notably the Republican movement, who advanced the idea that when (if!) Australia loses the shackles of monarchy, our flag should be changed to the Southern Cross flown on Bakery Hill.

I believe it to be a story with a theme that can be used in a variety of ways and genres. Both sides had a job to do, a responsibility to uphold, and ideals they held dear. Although history has tended to side with the miners, in many ways it was a battle without an obvious 'villain.' Whether this comes across in your game is up to the GM, but I feel that the negotiation side of the Eureka Stockade could produce sessions of in-depth role-playing and intense interest. On the other hand, running a full-scale, pitched battle between stalwart miners and determined troopers would also be a lot of fun!

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## Star's Night, Part I

*By Aaron Todd*

Ynara Diri looked across the playing table at the dealer with a level of contempt most would reserve for a being that they knew and hated. She did not know this thing, but she did know that he represented something to her that she desperately needed to get back. She'd seen the likes of his kind over the last five years, one after another leading to nothing but dead ends. She had a feeling about this one, though. He knew something and she would have to get it from him.

The Bollen in charge of the game looked back at her with its over-sized, bulging, wide set black eyes without even a shred of evidence that he knew of what she felt, however. These creatures, as much as she hated them, she had to respect. Their facial features were completely devoid of any emotional response.

Their skin was very taut, spread out over their very large, circular, bald heads. Very few facial muscles existed with the exception of some small muscular tissue around the eyelids and mouth. The muscles around the eyes were there for the rare times that they chose to blink. They could keep their eyes open as long as they wished, even while they slept. The muscles at the mouth were for the very obvious eating at any given time.

The fixed transparent internal lid over the eye kept all of the moisture necessary for normal function even on an arid planet such as this one. The external lids existed only to aid them in times of extremely luminous conditions, sandstorms, and the like. This feature made them excellent at their trade.

A bulbous race, to be kind, they were often extremely heavy and lethargic. Because they are relatively thin meant that they could actually fit through most doors without a squeeze. And the more successful they were, the fatter they were. Corpulence among the Bollen was a sign of dignity and wealth. They prized themselves to be among the richest races in the galaxy and as such they were very overweight. Inevitably, this meant that they had health problems that kept their doctors among the wealthiest of races as well.

A typical disease among them was commonly known as vocal paralysis, where their coiled vocal rings grew too large for their musculature. This resulted in an inability to speak and they would have to go on a diet; the worst of offenses among the Bollen. And even then, sometimes the voice never came back. It was also not uncommon to see one with a tube in their neck to help them breathe. The vocal rings also tended to cut-off their breathing during any time of exertion. Any extended exertion would certainly cause permanent damage.

This Bollen, however appeared to be in what the Bollen would call the "picture of health." Good and rotund, with full and functioning vocal rings. He had done well for himself that is for sure. And he was exactly what the Bollen Regency had wanted him to be when they sent him to this planet to remind the natives and the travelers what they were really good at.

Card Dealers.

They were known as the best and the worst card dealers in the galaxy, since their eyes never had to leave the table or even blink. Best for the trade; worst for the players. The fact that their eyes were nearly on the sides of their head and moved independently of one another allowed them the fortune of watching the entire table at once. Whether there was only one person playing, or seven others, the dealer could watch them all with equal interest.

The Bollen's featureless faces also gave them a distinct advantage. As any card player will tell a student of the game that all players, dealers, too, have a tell. They know when they have a good hand, and most have a good idea if they've won as soon as the cards are dealt. This race eliminated the possibility of any feature-tells, as their features remained fixed at all times. They showed no fear, sadness, or joy. These facets made them seem deceptive at all times. This again was a distinct advantage for their career. If they had been a generally more intelligent species, they would make great politicians.

Three other figures were seated at the round table, two humans and one a humanoid species called the Farut. They had a stench that made them almost impossible to be near, but their own lack of olfactory senses made them completely innocuous to themselves. Fortunately, this one didn't smell too bad. It must have spent enough time around others that had a sense of smell to know that a few drops of cologne could go a long way in not offending your friends.

The two other humans were obviously together, sitting right next to each other, wearing matching jumpsuits, probably from some poorly organized flight group in a nearby star system. Ynara had been on every planet within a dozen light years, but had never seen this particular type of uniform before.

She tried not to let it be too much of a distraction for her, though. She was always conscious of her surroundings. After all, there was a long line of people that she had angered over the last several years. Whether it was for killing someone that they knew, believing that she cheated at a game, or even stolen something from them, there were those that would just assume she disappear. So, she kept her guard up, but not so tight as to ignore the dealer that held her fate.

The first card was dealt without incident. No bets would be taken, but it could still be pivotal. If you started with a heavy negative, it might be tough to stay close to fifteen or to swing it the other way. If you started high positive, the same applied, but inversely. The dealer continued.

The first two cards had been dealt, and the gambling had begun. The Farut opened with a 25-credit bet. Little more than an ante, but enough to get it started. One of the pilots called, as did the other, so Ynara decided to as well.

The third card card was dealt and now the tells began to truly come out. She'd played against a woman on the last planet she'd been to that actually changed the hue of her skin slightly when she was dealt a noticeably good or bad hand. Ynara figured that this woman was either a really bad player or simply didn't seem to notice the tell. At least no one told her. Needless to say, she didn't win a hand.

Card three told the story for most of the players at the table. Taking the random was often risky and could throw you completely out of whack. Ynara looked at her cards only once before watching the rest of the activity on the table. Without the random, she knew what she had, so there was no point in looking down again until she was throwing down her cards.

The wagers flew from here. With the pot at one hundred with the start of the deal, the pot grew quickly and was raised four times before the total set in at seven hundred. This was not a large pot, but for inexperienced gamblers, it might seem like a lot. No one batted an eye in the direction of the credits on the table or the cards in their own hands, however. It was the cards the others held that they were concerned with now.

So, Ynara stared at this empty expression on the bloated figure seated in front of her, doing everything she had learned over the last five years not to show any emotion. That was how she had lost that time, the most important time. She had let her growing frustration get the better of her. This time would be different. This thing knew what she needed, and she would get it. The only way to get to him though would be to wait for her opportunity. It was not likely to come while she sat at the table.

The two humans mumbled something to each other, breaking the silence that had gripped the table for the last ten minutes. No one had spoken since the cards were dealt. It was considered rude to speak during a game, but it was obvious these two didn't understand game etiquette, nor did they care. Their glasses of ale had been emptied quickly since they sat down, and Ynara figured that the alcohol might be getting to them fairly soon.

The fools. This game required patience, and they were drinking ale like they hadn't had a drink in years. Soon, their patience would wane into nothing, along with their money. It was just as well. She didn't know them. Didn't care.

She looked directly back at the Bollen, who seemed to return her stare, but she could not be sure. It was time to play the waiting game now. The cards had been dealt and the bets had been laid. She had a good hand, enough to probably beat the dealer, but she could not be sure. There was no way to be sure.

She was sitting on an eleven, enough to qualify, but it was no fifteen. She was never comfortable with a hand unless it was at least positive or negative thirteen. So now she needed to decide whether to stand or take the random holo-card replacement that waited for her at the dealer's hand.

She knew that she could out wait the other humans and hold onto what she had for at least another hour before dropping her cards or calling for the random. This was the true trick of the game. Once she dropped, the rest of the table knew what she had as well as the dealer. She preferred to wait until everyone else had dropped. She had no idea how long the Farut would hold out, but she hoped not long. She wanted to get at this dealer.

There were all kinds of sounds going on around her. She could hear people arguing at a bar table not far from her, but nothing that they were arguing about could mean anything to her at this point. There were races on the Interplanetary Broadcast system at the bar, but they meant nothing. She could tune them all out.

She'd caught a glimpse of a mech walking with a limp amongst the tables, taking drink orders. The type of job she felt was appropriate for an artificial species, no matter how smart they were. Who would have guessed that the owner would let a mech keep a limp? Ynara wondered of maybe the mech had gotten it recently and the owner hadn't time to get it fixed yet. Was the owner lazy and figured it could still work, or was it possible that the owner felt it gave the mech character to give it a visible oddity? Something else Ynara could ignore and look at better when the game was over.

The humans were sweating now. Only five minutes had passed and they were on their next drink. They were either nervous about something, or their suits were on too tight. Ynara was leaning towards the former. Unfortunately this was not a time when they would talk. If they talked now, it interfered with the game, and they might be drunk by the time the game had ended, and then surely they would either say too much, too loudly, or nothing at all.

About forty minutes and five ales later, both humans dropped. One had only a six, but he had been more concerned with his drink than his cards anyway. What a fool to bet and drink your way out of a game. The other had negative twelve. After dropping their cards, they nearly dropped out of consciousness. One fell off his chair, while the other leaned forward onto his right hand, elbow at the edge of the table. Not a bad hand, but that told Ynara that she needed to take the random.

She hated the random, but it was her only chance now. She could still wait, however and let the Farut drop, but all that would accomplish would be to let the Farut hold out a second longer. She had a nine, an eight, and a negative six. There were very few cards that could help her get between twelve and fifteen.

She hit the green button in front of her, calling for the random. Her eight disappeared, and in it's place, another nine showed up. Her holo-cards fell to the table, showing them her twelve.

The Farut looked over at her and smiled. He hit the red button in front of him that dropped his hand, showing negative fifteen, a negative seven, negative eight, and a zero. That all but assured him of beating the dealer, too. He could only beat the Farut by matching. There would be no perfect hand (three zeros) in this game. There were only three zeroes in the deck and the Farut had just shown his luck in finding one.

The dealer dropped, showing a fourteen. The Farut had won. The pot was his. Ynara was not happy about it, but at least the Bollen hadn't won.

The other two humans left the table in disgust, the one carrying the other to a booth nearby. The one still standing mumbled something about cheating, although none had occurred as far as she could tell.

"You both played very well. Shall there be another hand?" the Bollen spoke with an extremely slow and low voice that virtually rumbled as it came out of his wide mouth.

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# GAMBLING AND GAMES OF CHANCE

by Chris Perkett

(With special thanks to Shecky the Card, dwarven thief, for his assistance)

The valiant group of adventurers, weary yet flush with wealth from their excavation of the Caves of Insanity, are enjoying a mug of fine ale in their favorite tavern. A bard plays a tune in one corner. The barmaids are young and pretty. And in yet another corner, several townsfolk are gambling, and the party wants in.

## Two Games of Chance

For that DM who wants to go the extra mile and allow PCs to participate in games of chance, explained below is a card game and a dice game, both popular all over the realms, as told to me by that most notorious of card cheats, Shecky the Card.

I'm not a cheat! I'm just very lucky. Ask anyone! I'm honest as the next guy! -Shecky (The "next guy" was in prison for fraud. -Editor)

## Siege (common game, simple):

Siege is a game played with two six-sided dice. It was made popular by soldiers and bandits alike because it could easily be played anywhere. It is played between two people. For this game, houses of chance will often have small bowls for the opponents to place their money in. The minimum amount of money for opponents to start out with is 15 coins each, as this is the maximum that any player can lose in one turn. However, what makes the game so popular is that there is no limit or end to the amount of money that can change hands in a game. Eventually, one opponent will bow out when she feels that either she has won or lost enough money.

### Basic Rules

1. Start by determining who is the besieger (attacker) and who is besieged (defender). This is done by rolling one die; the winner chooses the side.
2. The attacker goes first. He rolls two six sided dice. One of these dice will be the breaching or gate die and the other will be the army die. If using ordinary dice, use different colored dice to ensure you know which is which. If the breaching die comes up even, the attacker has failed to breach the gate and the attacker turns the dice

over to the defender; as his turn is over. If the die comes up odd, he has breached the gate.

3. If the attacker has breached the gate, look to the army die to determine how much money he takes from his opponent:

If die=1, then he takes 1 coin (this side of the die is called "lone spear" or "spear")

If die=2, then he takes 2 coins ("crossed swords" or "crossed spears")

If die=3, then he takes 3 coins (shield)

If die=4, then he takes 5 coins (rogue)

If die=5, then he takes 10 coins (warrior)

If die=6, then he takes 15 coins (monarch)

4. Play turns to the defender. If the attacker failed to breach the gate, the defender need only roll the army die to take from his opponent (see 3. above). If the gate was breached, the besieged must close the gate. She rolls the gate (breaching) die. If the defender rolls even, she closes the gate and takes money from the attacker as per 3., above. If she rolls odd, she fails to close the gate and the attacker merely needs to roll the army die to take more of the defender's money.

5. Play continues until one player calls it quits or runs out of money.

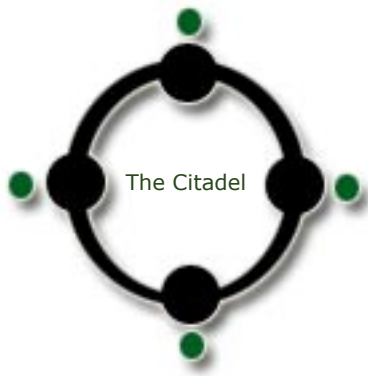
Example: Tarna, the half-orc barbarian, and Lystwyl, the elven bard, sit down next to the campfire to play siege. Tarna wins the toss and chooses to attack. She rolls an odd on the gate die, breaching the gate, and a five (or warrior) on the army die, and takes ten of Lystwyl's silver coins. On his turn, Lystwyl tries to close the gate, only to see a three staring up at him; the gate remains open. Grinning, Tarna picks up the army die and rolls it again- a six! Lystwyl gulps as he stares at the jolly little monarch on the die, and grudgingly hands over fifteen more silver coins. On his next throw, the closed gate (a four) faces up, and with a sign of relief, the bard rolls the army die. Another four (the rogue), and the elf reclaims five of his lost coins.

### Advanced Rules:

1. Draw a circle on the ground, with four smaller circles around the drawn circle at the cardinal points: north, south, east, and west. Both players usually place an object of extreme value within, or some treasure they both desire. The large circle is called the citadel, the smaller cir-



cles, the gates. Next to each gate, draw another small circle that faces the gate. These circles are the four invading armies. (see figure below).



2. Determine who shall attack and who defend the citadel by rolling; high roller picks.

3. On each gate, the defender places 15 coins of equal value. The attacker likewise places 15 coins on each army circle. These represent the strength of the attacking and defending armies.

4. Now the attacker rolls to breach a gate. He declares which gate he will try to breach and rolls the dice. Breaching is accomplished as described in the basic rules (by rolling an odd number on the gate die). If the attacker fails to breach a gate, turn passes to the defender.

5. If the attacker breaches the gate, both the attacker and defender roll the army die. This represents the battle at the open gate between attacking and defending forces. The amount of coin lost is determined by subtracting the defender's army die result from the attacker's. If the defender's roll is equal to or higher than the attacker's, the defender loses no coins. i.e. Vernash the rogue breaches the north gate of Kaen's citadel. He rolls a 5 (the Warrior) in his attack and grins at the defending elf, expectant that the magic ring within the citadel will soon be his. Kaen rolls a 2 (Crossed Swords) in his defense.  $5 - 2 = 3$ , so Vernash collects three coins from Kaen's 15 at that gate.

6. Now the defender has a choice: she may either attempt to close whatever gate was breached (if one was) or she may "sally forth," by opening a gate and attacking outward. A defender may sally without having to breach a gate through a gate already opened. Closing a gate is the same as in the basic rules, except that a defender cannot attack out of a gate she has closed.

7. Sallying is accomplished in the same manner attacking is. The defender must declare a gate that she will sally out from and attempt to

open it. Now the attacker defends with his coin stacks.

8. An attacker may also attempt to close gates on his turn, if he chooses. If an attacker chooses to close a gate, he does not attack, but instead either closes the gate or fail to do so.

9. The object in the advanced rules is to deplete the opponent's stack of coins piled at one of the gates. If the attacker takes all 15 of the defender's coins at any gate, he has won the treasure within the citadel. If the defender depletes an attacking army of all 15 coins, she keeps the treasure within.

Some greedy players will attack more than one gate or army to gain the most amounts of coins they can before winning through to the treasure, but such strategies are risky. In the one game between Shecky and myself, we had a hot and furious battle at the west gate before he decimated my stack of coins.

There is one variant that Shecky described to me in the advanced rules; the Warlord Option. Whenever the monarch is rolled in defense only, that gate or army is protected by the Warlord. The Warlord remains at that position for the remainder of the game; if rolled in defense afterwards, the player must re-roll. The Warlord himself does not attack, so roll attacks as normal, including monarch results.

### Cheating at Siege

Despite the simplicity of the game, it is very difficult to cheat at Siege, as it is truly a game of chance. The most common way is to use modified dice.

Shaved Dice are shaved on an edge to give them a greater chance to roll certain numbers. So-called "Loaded Dice" have been weighted to produce a certain result. Usually, cheaters will shave or weight the gate die to either roll more open doors (odds) or barred gates (evens). A shaved or "loaded" gate die will roll the desired result 4 out of 6 times. As DM, determine the desired result, then make either the 1 result (on a die that favors barred gates) or the 6 result (on a die that favors open gates) equal the desired result.

### Illusion (Common game, advanced):

Illusion is a card game developed by the gnomes. It is a true game of bluffing and resembles poker. There are as many variants as there are gaming houses across the world.

## Basic Rules:

1. Using a standard deck of cards, the dealer deals each player one card face down. He then deals everyone one card face up.
2. Each player places a bet, starting with the player to the dealer's left, clockwise to the dealer. Players may fold at this point.
3. The dealer deals everyone another card face up. Each player places a bet, as in 2., above. Players may fold.
4. The dealer deals everyone a third card face up. Now players place bets, boasting about the strength of their hands, until all players but one have folded or someone finally says, "Pierce the illusion, time for truth." When that happens, everyone turns over the card that is face down.
5. Scoring is similar to poker; in ascending order the winning hands are:

High card

Pair

Two pair

Three of a kind

Straight

Family: four cards all of the same suit

Royal Family: four face cards of any suit

Four of a kind

Variants include wild cards, switching the hidden card between players (still no looking at them), discarding and drawing cards, and even trading cards between players. However, the most famous variant is the pure gnomish version.

When a table of gnomes play Illusion, they play as above, but in the final scoring, they ignore all the cards dealt face up, and highest face-down card wins; ties split the pot. More importantly, gnomes never look at their face-down card. Instead they will out-boast and out-bluff the others into folding. A true master of Illusion walks away from a night of playing with a heavy purse and having never once revealed his hidden card.

No matter what variant is played, the game is all about bluffing. Every turn, the players should boast and bluster, making it seem their hidden card is the most valuable in the deck.

## Game Mechanics

While the cards are being dealt out (steps 1,2, and 3, above), in D20, every player rolls a Bluff and Sense Motive check (or a Profession: Gambler check in lieu of either). If a player's Sense Motive check beat another's Bluff check, they gain some insight about that person's hand. If

you are using another gaming system, use comparable checks or allow your players to role-play out their bluffs.

## D20 Example:

Tarna, Lystwyl, and Vernash sit down to play a round of Illusion. Vernash rolls a Bluff check of 10...he's not much on keeping his emotions to himself. Tarna, on the other hand, rolls a 17 Bluff check, smirking slightly. Lystwyl, though, is a professional gambler, and easily rolls a 24 on his Profession (Gambler) check (See below for more information). Meanwhile, his Sense Motive check of 21 lets him know that Vernash thinks his hand is strong, while Tarna is worried that she has nothing.

After the last card has been dealt out, the boasting about the hands begins. In D20, players roll Intimidation or Bluff checks to see if they can make other players think their hands are better. A player who beats another gambler's Sense Motive check by 10 or more is intimidated, and will likely fold. In other gaming systems, use comparable checks or allow your players to role-play their checks. Always roll checks for NPCs.

## D20 Example:

"Look at my cards, Lys," remarks Tarna with a sly smile. Two Rogues and a Queen smile up from the table before her. "You know I have a King or a Queen hiding here. Why not walk away while you still have some money left?" (Intimidation roll of 16) That convinced Vernash (Sense Motive 4), who threw his cards down in disgust. Lystwyl smiled back at the woman across from him. "If you are so very sure, why are you sweating and holding your breath?" he countered. (Sense Motive 22). "Moreover," the bard continued, "I show two threes and a wild card. Here are ten more golden sovereigns." The elf pushed the coins into the center of the table. "If you want to learn if I have one more three, it will cost you that much."

## Cheating at Illusion

There are two principal methods of cheating at any card game. The first is to deal the cards from the bottom of a prepared deck to ensure you receive the cards you desire. In D20, this can be accomplished through a difficult Pickpocket/Sleight of Hand check (15 and up). Some DMs may want to make this an opposed roll against Spot checks by the other gamblers. The other method is to use marked cards so you

always know what cards are in play, regardless of their facing. The gambler who chooses to use marked cards should be wary; even the best marked cards can be discovered by a successful Spot check.

### **Using Gambling or Games of Chance in your Campaign**

Aside from being an interesting diversion, gambling can be used as both a plot hook and a plot device to spring the characters into new adventures. Perhaps their contact plays a high stakes game of cards in an exclusive gambling den. Or, the steward of the castle has a weakness for Illusion and tends to gossip while he plays. An enterprising DM can find countless uses for games of chance within her campaign that will enhance the experience for everyone.

### **New d20 Rules for Gambling**

The d20 core rules do not cover gambling, that unique skill that combines elements of Bluff, Sense Motive, Pickpocket/Sleight of Hand, even Diplomacy.

New Skill: Profession(Gambler) (WIS; trained only)

This Skill gives the character knowledge of all standard games of chance and other forms of gambling, rules of the games, and even methods of cheating at them, where applicable. A character with 5 or more ranks in Bluff gains a +2 synergy bonus when attempting to bluff while gambling. A character with 5 or more ranks in Pick Pocket/Sleight of Hand gains a +2 synergy bonus when attempting to cheat while gambling.

Action: Knowing the rules to a commonly played game  
Suggested DCs: 5

Action: Knowing the rules to a rare game, advanced rules  
Suggested DCs: 10

Action: Knowing the rules to a complex or very rare game  
Suggested DCs: 20

Action: Cheating at a game  
Suggested DCs: 15+ DC of knowing the rules of game + ??

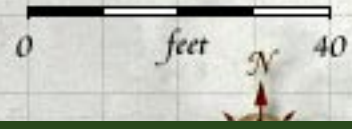
### **Using Old Skills in New Ways**

- Characters can Pickpocket/Sleight of Hand in an attempt to deal cards from the bottom of a deck, or to roll dice in such a way that specific faces come up.
- Characters can use Bluff and Sense Motive in card games to learn the strength of other gambler's hands, and to bluff about the strength or weakness of their own hands.

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# Cartographer's Corner



by Kosala Ubayasekara

## Forest City

*Cartographers Index : Map ID 02*

The map is shown at the scale provided due to the fact that it is a forest clearing. Feel free to scale the size of the map up or down as you see fit for your campaign.

#1) The village of Aldeyn is a travelers' and traders' oasis along a barren thirty-mile stretch of wooded highway. As detailed on the map, the inhabitants have created their village functional yet as unobtrusive into the forest as possible. The structures are all magically-enhanced tree trunks and stumps—still very much alive and growing.

#2) The village of Aldeyn is the midway point and sole contact between two major cities, Talkun and Barrathi. Talkun and Barrathi's leaders have little love for each other, but the two cities inhabitants still need many of the goods the two cities produce. The Barrathi and Talkun traders have found a sneaky way get the necessary items without actually traveling to the other city—meeting and trading at the halfway point, Aldeyn. The village of Aldeyn itself is constructed from hollowed out "stire-stones" that litter the countryside. "Stire-stones" are extremely strong, completely circular, and very lightweight. To create a livable environment, the tops of the stones are removed and a thatched roof is added. The stones also serve another purpose—in the chance that the two cities of Barrathi and Talkun go to war, the village can literally be picked up and transported to a safe location within the forest.

#3) The village of Aldeyn is a strange sight for travelers to behold. While it at first seems that it is a rather ordinary village, taking a closer look at the buildings and inhabitants one will find them slightly "off." The town structures are all constructed out of hollowed out gourds and pumpkins—where they grow or how they are grown, however, is the village secret. Because of this, visitors to the town are friendly, but still a bit suspicious of outsiders learning the secret to the farming success.

### Maps this edition

Both the maps that we bring to you in this edition of the Trumpeter were designed by Dana Driscoll, our Editor In Chief.

### Making your own maps

Several people have written to ask how the maps published in our previous edition were created. Although a complete tutorial on software and techniques are outside the scope of this column today, I thought I might provide some hints and guides for the prospective cartographer.

First things first, make sure that you are using an image editor that supports working in multiple layers. If you have the money to spare, then Adobe Photoshop is by far the best product for this purpose. If you are looking for a low budget solution then look to getting Jasc Paintshop Pro.

Work in a natural order

1. Decide on a scale
2. Decide on use of the map? Is it for screen viewing or print? Use a higher resolution for print maps.
3. Draw the map

Did that help you? Probably not! But our tutorial in next month's issue will, as we take you step by step through the creation of a high quality map using Photoshop.



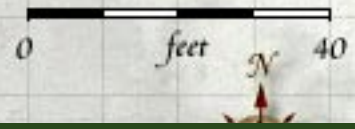
## About this section

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

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

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

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



## Magic Shop

*Cartographers Index : Map ID 03*

**Type:** Magic/Junk Store **Proprietor:** Moss Fenbucket Willowwhite

**Store Name:** Moss' Magical and Mundane Materials

### External Appearance:

The single-floor building is made entirely of brownish-gray, weathered sandstone. There are no windows in the store and lab areas (to keep the explosions in and the thieves out a night). There are windows in Moss' living areas however, as well as a rear entrance through the living room. While the store is open for business, Moss leaves the two front doors wide open, often with a pair of workers twirling ribbons and offering passersby samples of free cheese and wafers as a way to entice customers to enter the store.

### Internal Appearance:

When a customer enters through the southern double doors, the first thing that comes to mind is "What a junk heap!" Closer inspection of the clutter reveals that while it appears to be simply piles of useless rubbish, most of it is magical and/or valuable. The walls and tables are covered with scrolls, tomes, weapons, and many more strange, mostly unidentifiable objects. The room is large with high ceilings, but still seems crowded because of all of the junk. Besides the four long, worn wooden tables that hold most of Moss' wares, she has lined up a set of glass display cases that hold the most expensive and treasured of items.

The place even smells bizarre—almost like a foreign perfume. Moss keeps a small censer continually burning small incense squares. She just laughs when asked about the incense, but in reality the incense stimulates the senses and calms the nerves—both of which are good for business.

The everyday traveler will rarely see the rest of the building, as their business is in the shop. Going through the door and to the immediate left, one comes across Moss' laboratory. Most of the items in the store Moss has collected, purchased, or traded for over the years, but she does delve into some arcane tinkering in her own right. She will only fulfill strange or rather pricey requests normally, preferring to spend most of her time on her own scholarly pursuits.

The laboratory has long wooden tables lined with various instruments, junk, and half-completed projects. The lab is brightly lit, and is fireproof, acid proof, and explosion proof. The laboratory also includes a small storage room filled to the brim with labeled wooden crates.

Leaving the lab, walking down the hall, and entering the door on the right, one enters Moss' kitchen. As she spends most of the time in her lab, shop, or study, she pays little attention to preparing and cooking food. She usually eats at a local inn or tavern, and so the kitchen is rather bare with the few pans and utensils she owns mostly covered in dust.

Right from the kitchen is the living room and eating area—it is here that Moss will entertain guests, friends, or complete extended trades of merchandise. A red velvet overstuffed couch fills the larger part of the room, along with a hand-braided wool circular carpet.

Entering the door on the left, one enters Moss' bedroom. She has two cabinets, one that holds clothing and a second that holds personal items. She also has a small stand near her bed.

The final room of the house is Moss' pride and joy—her library and study. Books line the walls from top to bottom. Unlike Moss' store which is rather disorganized and cluttered, her library is completely organized by subject and author. The lovingly worn books are on a large variety of subjects including astronomy, mythology, arcane subjects, religion, botany, alchemy, and history.



- |                    |                         |                      |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 House of Worship | 6 Residence             | 11 Residences        |
| 2 Stables          | 7 Aldelyn General Goods | 12 Traders Post      |
| 3 Rusty Bolt Inn   | 8 Residence             | 13 Herbalist         |
| 4 Town Stores      | 9 Bors Blacksmithy      | 14 Residence         |
| 5 Residence        | 10 Aldelyn Manor        | 15 Residence         |
|                    |                         | 16 Town Meeting Hall |



# Magic Shop

Cartographers Index :  
Map ID 03



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# The Silven Giggle

by Kosala Ubayasekara

**Synopsis:** Our dauntless duo are set upon by bandits and the wizard is being mugged...



I can't I told you..  
I am on step 4...  
bandits are my freinds...I am in my happy place...theme song..got to sing my theme song...

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### Publisher

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

### Editor in Chief

Dana Driscoll

### Contributing Authors

Dana Driscoll, Gary Gygax, Kosala Ubayasekara, Shane Cubis, Chris Perkett, Edward Kopp, Aaron Todd, David Paul, Bradford Ferguson

### Contributing Artists

Florin Badita, Dana Driscoll

### Illustration, artwork layout, and design

Kosala Ubayasekara

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