

Silven Trumpeter

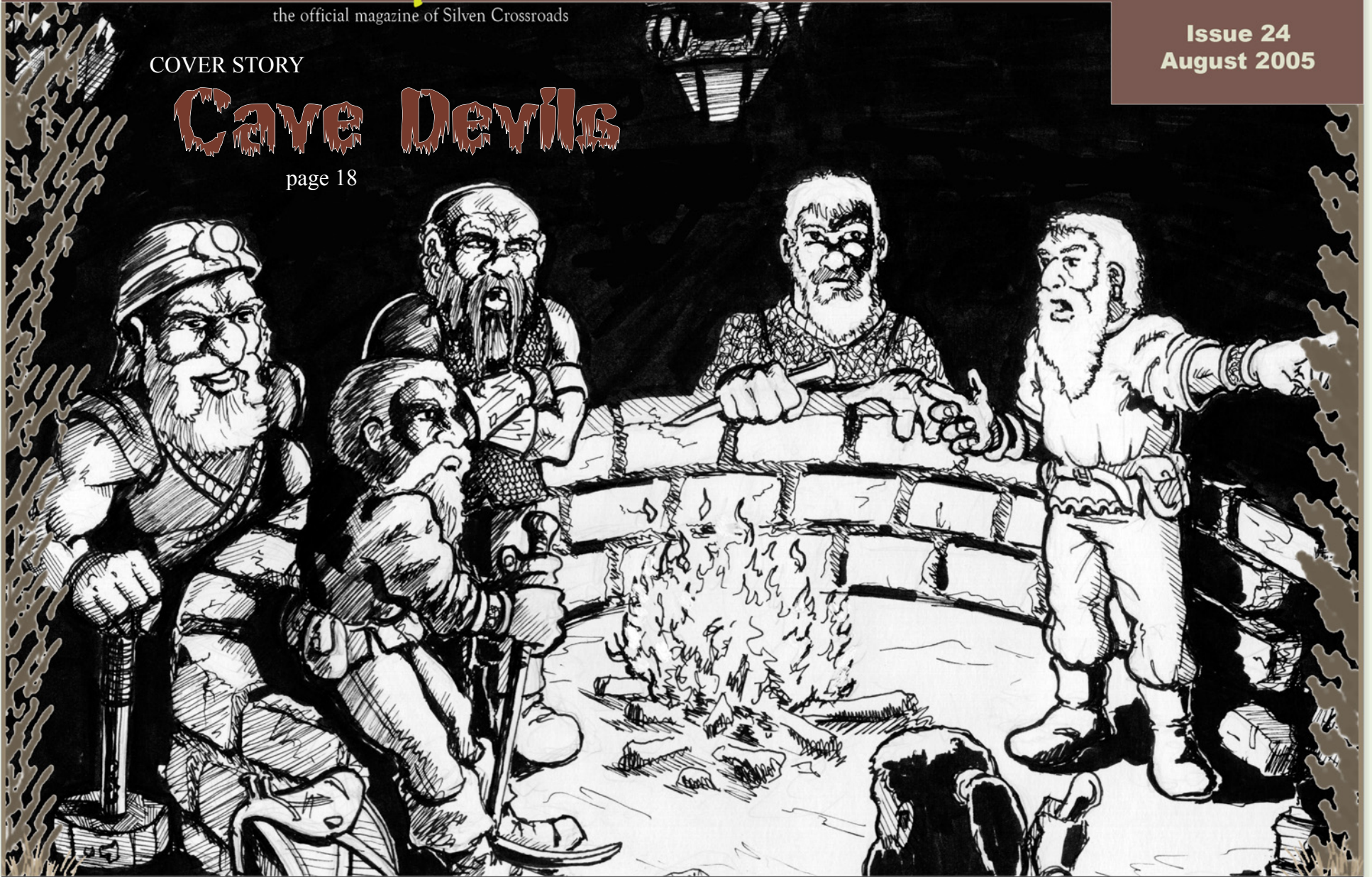
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Hi there! Welcome to the 24th issue of the Silven Trumpeter!

It's August, and in the world of gaming, that means Gen Con! We've been making plans for this for months now, and they're starting to fall into place to bring you some of the most up-to-date, comprehensive coverage of the largest gaming convention in the world.

Silven is sending a team of writers and editors to Gen Con, armed with press passes and digital cameras, with the goal of bringing Gen Con to everyone on the Silven Crossroads. We're planning for daily updates to the site, or even several times a day, providing announcements of new products, coverage of the major events, chats with your favorite gaming celebrities, photos, video clips and more. If you can't make it to Gen Con yourself, the Silven Crossroads is going to be the next best thing!

Immediately after Gen Con, that team of writers and editors is going to sweat and scramble to put together articles providing even more coverage of the convention. In the next issue of the Silven Trumpeter, you can follow those reporters' footsteps and "listen in" on exclusive interviews and chats, take a peek at an event you might have missed, and try out a new game or two.

So there are exciting things in the works! It all starts on August 18th, so keep your eyes at www.silven.com and enjoy.

Have fun and have games!

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

The Adventures of Starlanko the Magnificent

HOME AGAIN

by Matthew J. Hanson

"Ah! Starlanko the Magnificent! I have a letter left in my care for you," Melek greeted Starlanko as he walked into the Ambrosia Inn.

"A letter? How quaint." Starlanko took the envelope from the innkeeper. It was sealed with green wax. The seal depicted a wide branching tree, underneath which were elven letters, which roughly corresponded to "S. J."

"The seal of House Jennir," murmured Vox, one of Starlanko's current associates. Starlanko had only recently been traveling with Vox, and knew not nearly as much about her as he would have liked. She had once spent most of her time as a burglar, but she had recently turned to adventuring as part of her quest to become lawful. So that she could use a bow. A bow that she had stolen.

Meanwhile, Starlanko's other associate, Redreck the Fierce, had fortified himself at the bar, and was enjoying some well earned recreation.

"You recognize the seal?" Starlanko asked.

"I've seen it," Vox remarked. "Anybody who has passed through Avalos Forrest has seen the symbol of House Jennir."

"Of course," Starlanko said, and began reading the letter.

"What does it say?" Vox demanded.

"Oh, it seems it's a letter from Lady Jennir. We've had some dealings in the past. Apparently she's uncovered some ancient texts from the family archive that she thinks I might be interested in."

"Oh." Vox said. "You're not intending to meet with her, are you?"

"I don't see any reason why not. She has proven a valuable resource in the past, and we don't have anything better to do at present."

"It's just..." Vox trailed off.

"Yes? Do you have something you would like to say?" Starlanko inquired.

"No, it's nothing."

"Of course you don't have to accompany me to Avalos if you don't want to."

"I realize that."

"Though if there's something in Avalos that you are avoiding, I would appreciate at least knowing what it is. That would be the lawful thing to do."

"No. I've no problem with Avalos. I just need to do some shopping first."

"Prithee master, wherefore art we here?" inquired Funbane, Starlanko's talking sword. Starlanko, as it happened, did not know how to use a sword, but that did not prevent him from carrying Funbane everywhere he went. Well, nearly everywhere.

"Apparently Vox needs some new clothes before we can venture to Avalos," Starlanko explained, as he and the sword waited outside the fitting room of Elnor's Clothing Emporium.

About the Author

Matthew J. Hanson is an aspiring writer, as well as a long time gamer. He normally lives in Minnesota, but is currently finishing his senior year of college in Beloit, Wisconsin. Recently, his 10-minute play *Who is Ruth* was selected as the winner for the American College Theatre Region III winner, for their 10-minute play competition, and it will be advancing to the national competition in April. If you would like to learn more about Matthew J. Hanson, please feel free to visit his website at www.matthewjhanson.com.

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"Be it truly necessary for women to adorn themselves in this profligate attire?" Funbane asked, referring to the copious dresses, which contained copious ruffles.

"Absolutely necessary. Unlike inanimate objects, a woman cannot simply parade herself in public unsheathed. That would take all the fun out of."

A moment later Vox stepped from the fitting room, wearing a sleek silver dress. It was a far cry from the solid black utilitarian shirt and trousers she normally wore.

"Well?" Vox asked.

"You look positively radiant," Starlanko stammered. "The belle of any ball."

"You're right. It's horrible. What was I thinking?" Vox said, and darted back into the fitting room.

"Normally they take it a little better than that," Starlanko said.

Three hours, five shops, and countless outfits later, Vox finally settled on an appropriate outfit. It was a plain brown tunic, with a gray skirt. Over this she wore a light gray shawl. Starlanko suspected that she had layered clothes below the tunic and skirt, as she looked noticeably less thin than she naturally was. Starlanko also noticed that the piece of cloth she had tied around her head, ostensibly to keep her hair back, conveniently covered her pointed ears as well. That, along with the skillfully applied makeup, made Vox look positively human.

"Now that your disguise is complete, may we get underway?" Starlanko asked.

"Disguise? Really. Just because a girl wants to try a new outfit does not mean that she is wearing a 'disguise.'"

"What I don't understand," said Starlanko, "is that you must have stolen things from just about everywhere. What is it about the House Jennir that makes you so nervous?"

"For somebody who is in such a hurry to get going, you ask an awful lot of questions."

"We can walk and talk at the same time," Starlanko informed her.

"What's that, sorry, I can't hear you," Vox said and ran ahead to her horse. Starlanko decided he had prodded the subject enough for the moment.

Starlanko the Magnificent and the rest of his party made the journey to Avalos forest with no trouble at all. While most outsiders referred to Avalos as though it were a single homogeneous elven community, it was actually a loose confederation of villages, small towns, and two moderate-sized cities. And while all pledged allegiance to Dallius the Poet Prince, for the most part, these small communities were left to govern themselves.

One such community was the village of Cambrel. The village was known for its vineyards, and for the House Jennir, easily the most powerful elven family in the area, perhaps one of the most powerful in the whole forest.

Starlanko's meeting with Lady Jennir proceeded excessively well. The tomes she had uncovered indeed provided several new arcane insights that Starlanko had never before seen, and all that Lady Jennir asked in return for allowing him to study them was the honor that he would dedicate any innovations based on the tomes to her. It was possibly one of the best meetings Starlanko had had in a long time.

After the meeting was over, Lady Jennir, being a more than gracious host, offered to see Starlanko to the door. Though Redreck the Fierce had accompanied Starlanko to the meeting, Vox had elected to wait outside. To "guard the horses."

"A pleasure as always," Starlanko said to Lady Jennir as they parted. "We really do let too much time go by between our little chats. I shall be more diligent about making my way to Cambrel in the future."

"I pray that you do, good Starlanko," replied Lady Jennir. She stood at the door, and watched as the adventurers mounted their horses. "Hold. You there, miss, you look familiar. Do I know you from somewhere?"

Vox stared hard at the earth below her. "I doubt it, your Ladyship. I am but a humble traveler."

"No, there is something familiar about you. Come here, let me get a better look at you."

If Vox had run, she would have attracted immediate suspicion, so instead she descended from her horse and lumbered up the steps to Lady Jennir's door. "And don't bury your face like that. Look up at me," Lady Jennir demanded. Again Vox

complied. "Hmm... I know I recognize you from somewhere. But I can't quite place it," Lady Jennir said. "Oh, no matter, if I can't recall, it must not be important."

Vox descended the steps as quickly as she could without actually looking like she was running away. It was not quick enough.

"Bibsly! Bibsly, it is you! My goodness, where have you been all these years! You know, most of us thought you were dead. Your mother held out hope of course, but the rest of us... Well, I guess the rest of us turned out to be wrong in the end, because here you are, alive... and dressed in a rather pathetic manner. Really dear, you look positively common. We must do something about that before you see your mother, or the shock will kill her."

"Oh, Lady Jennir, is that you?" Vox stammered. "You look as though you've gotten younger since I've met you."

"Oh really," Lady Jennir blushed and fanned herself.

"Truly, Lady Jennir," Starlanko chimed in, "you don't look a day over 150."

"Flattery, my dear Starlanko, will get you everywhere."

"Well, it's been nice catching up with you, Lady Jennir," Vox said, "but I've really got to be going."

"Nonsense!" Lady Jennir said. "I must find you a proper gown before you call upon your mother."

"That's okay, we don't have time to see Mama just now."

"Not see your Mother! You disappear for decades, popping up again in the company of a wizard, and you don't even have the time to visit your own mother! As her dearest friend in the world, I would be mortified if I allowed you to disappear again

without a word. If that occurred I might have to withdraw favors I have so recently provided. I might have to call upon my personal guard, or even send a notice to the Prince."

"I don't think that will be necessary," said Vox through gritted teeth. "I'll be happy to dine with Mommy tonight. I just need something nice to wear."

As Vox shambled back up the steps to Lady Jennir's estate, Starlanko walked along side her. "Biblsly?" he whispered.

"I've cut out men's tongues for less," Vox hissed back.

Lady Jennir led them all to a sitting room where Starlanko and Redreck were given wine and told to wait, while Lady Jennir absconded with Vox. They returned several times, and each time Vox modeled a different dress. Lady Jennir solicited Starlanko and Redreck's opinions, but Starlanko doubted that his responses actually mattered. Finally, after examining a dozen options, Lady Jennir decided that a long, flowing, red velvet dress would be the perfect thing for the prodigal daughter to wear to her reunion. This, incidentally, had been the first dress Vox had tried on.

The house of Lady Verden, who evidently was the mother of Vox, who was evidently called Biblsly once upon a time, was not far at all from estate of Lady Jennir. Starlanko, Vox, and Redreck were welcomed by an elderly servant, who seemed to recognize Biblsly, but acted as though the reappearance of long-departed members of the household was an everyday occurrence. He led them to the dining room, where the evening meal was already in progress.

"Lady Verden," the servant announced, "your daughter has returned."

Lady Verden did not look up from her food. "Terna? Is it trouble with her husband again?"

"No madam, I beg your pardon. Your daughter Biblsly has returned."

"Biblsly!" Lady Verden leapt to her feet. "Is it really you?" She rushed to embrace her daughter. "It is you. But where did you get that dress? Really, darling, red is not your color."

"Hello, Mommy dearest," Vox said, with as much mock cheerfulness as she could stomach.

"Oh, Lebret," Lady Verden said to the servant who had led them in, "we'll need another place setting for dinner. And if you could find something in the back for Biblsly's servants, I sure that would do well."

"Actually, Mama," Vox said, "these are my business partners, and I insist they dine with us."

"Really. Your... business partners," Lady Verden sneered. "Oh pray, won't you introduce us."

Starlanko took the matter of introductions into his own hands. He stepped confidently to Lady Verden and offered her a somber bow. "Starlanko the Magnificent, at your service. You may have heard of me?"

"No, I'm afraid I haven't heard the slightest." Lady Verden looked at him intently. "Are you some kind of sorcerer?"

It took a lot to faze Starlanko the Magnificent, but somehow Lady Verden referring to him as a "sorcerer" accomplished the task. His cheerful demeanor struggled against what he hoped was only a crime of ignorance. "No, madam, I am a wizard."

"Oh, a wizard, how quaint."

"And this," Starlanko yearned somehow to salvage this interaction, "is Redreck the Fierce."

"What charming *epithets* you all have." There was something about the way Lady Verden emphasized the word "epithets" that made Starlanko's eyes narrow. Lady Verden did not need an epithet. She was nobility, and nobility relied exclusively on lineage to carry the weight of their names. "Please, won't you sit down?"

Starlanko, Redreck, and Vox all took a seat at the table. Starlanko sat across from Lady Verden, and somehow poor Redreck found himself wedged between Vox and her mother. Also on Starlanko's side of the table sat an elf who looked like a man who had aged prematurely. The elf had not said anything yet, and said nothing more now. Indeed the man seemed oblivious to anything beyond the venison on his plate. Presumably he was Vox's father.

Several more dishes were soon brought to the table, and the party began to enjoy what was presented to them.

"So, darling Biblsly," Lady Verden said. "What have you been up to all these years?"

"Oh, you know, a little of this, a little of that."

"We could be considered adventurers," Starlanko said, "though most of our work really focuses on customer communication."

"I see," Lady Verden uttered. "You know your sister is married now. To a lawyer. They're expecting their second child. Jermine is an absolute marvel. Jermine's their first child. My first grandchild. Really, Biblsly, I always thought that you would be the first one to give me a grandchild, not just because you were the oldest, but the care you always showed to your dolls as a little girl, I always knew you were destined for motherhood. But here I am a grandmother,

and you, nearly a hundred and thirty, and still unmarried."

"But, Mama," Vox said, "whatever makes you think that I am unmarried?"

Lady Verden swallowed. "Oh, you are married then, Bibsly? Whyever then did you not bring him to dinner?"

"But Mama," Vox said, "whatever makes you think I did not bring him to dinner." Redreck had left his hand casually on the table. Now Vox took that hand in hers, looked at Redreck and smiled.

The man who was presumably Vox's father was now focused on his mashed potatoes. Vox beamed with the joy that can only be found in defying one's parent. Everybody else was stunned into silence. It was difficult to tell whether Lady Verden or Redreck looked the more terrified.

"Really, Bibsly. I'm not old-fashioned. Interracial marriages are fine for other people, but you are a Verden. You deserve better than some brutish... human."

"Redreck and I are in love, and I'm afraid that's all there is to it, Mama."

"This has gone far enough, Bibsly. I am a tolerant woman, but you really have gone beyond the pale. I demand you annul this marriage as once."

"I wouldn't dream of it!"

"Then I may have no choice but to take more drastic measures," Lady Verden scowled.

One wall of the dining room was a large window, looking out into a masterfully tended garden. That window now shattered as five elven warriors plunged through it. At the same time, clusters of elven wizards and other elite-looking soldiers appeared by magic in the room. The dining room

"Then I may have no choice but to take more drastic measures," Lady Verden scowled.

table was surrounded. Vox's father was having a terrible time getting his peas to stay on his fork.

A rugged-looking elf, who bore two swords, spoke in a baritone voice that Starlanko thought he recognized. "Leska Vail, you are under arrest. Surrender peacefully, or we will have no choice but to use force."

Vox rose, and put her hands in the air.

"Bibsly, darling, do you know what this all means?" Lady Verden asked.

"It means I'm saved," Vox replied. "They've come to put me in prison."

To be continued?

Bonus Material

Vox: Female elf rogue 11; CR 11; Medium humanoid; HD 11d6+11; hp 52; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22, touch 16, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +8; Grapple +11; Atk +8 melee (1d6, shortsword), +15 range (1d8+1/x3, +1 *longbow*); Full Atk +8/+3 melee (1d6, shortsword), +13/+13/+8 range (1d8+1/x3, +1 *longbow*); SA Sneak attack +6d6; SQ Elven traits, improved evasion, improved uncanny dodge, low-light vision, trapfinding, trap sense +3; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +13, Will +4 (+6 enchantments); Str 10, Dex 22, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills and Feats: Appraise +7, Balance +7, Bluff +5, Climb +3, Disable Device +16, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +10, Forgery +5, Gather Information +3, Hide +26, Intimidate +5, Jump +2, Knowledge (local) +5, Listen +7, Move Silently +26, Open Lock +16, Search +18, Slight of Hand +21, Spot +8, Tumble +10, Use Rope +7; Precise Shot, Point Black Shot, Rapid Shot, Stealthy

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Elven, Goblin

Possessions: +2 *mithral chain shirt*, shortsword, +1 *longbow* with 40 arrows, 10 cold iron arrows, 5 silver arrows, and 5 adamantite arrows, *amulet of resistance* +1, *boots of elven kind*, *cloak of elven kind*, *gloves of Dexterity* +2, *handy haversack*, *potion of cure light wounds* (2), *keen vorpal bow*, 152 gp.

New Magical Wondrous Items

Amulet of Resistance

These amulets offer magic protection in the form of a +1 to +5 resistance bonus on all saving throws (Fortitude, Reflex, and Will).

Faint abjuration; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *resistance*, creator's caster level must be at least three times the amulet's bonus; Price 1,000 gp (+1), 4,000 gp (+2), 9,000 gp (+3), 16,000 gp (+4), 25,000 gp (+5);

ZEN AND HOW TO MAKE MONEY AS A SUPERHERO

by Christian R. Bonawandt

Vrrrrrrrrrb!

I stumbled in a half-sleep daze from the kitchen to the couch where my cell phone was vibrating. The sound, like an electronic bumblebee, was barely audible. My brain absently registered that the caller ID said *Private*.

I flipped the phone open and, between crunches of Raisin Bran, said, "Huh?"

A pause. "Cobalt?" asked a strange voice, low, cool, but not quite hiding his uncertainty.

"Wrong number."

"This is Chad Balto, right?" the voice insisted. At 9:05 a.m., it was little more than a disembodied voice. Nine is pretty early for me, considering I'm sometimes out all night fighting crime. Or hanging out with Lara, my super-powered girlfriend. But I had to be at work by 10 if I was going to pay my share of the rent.

"Who the hell is this?" My irritation roused me from delicious semi-consciousness; I was full-on awake, and just a tad upset.

"My name is Jim Wagner. I own Salsa Tan in Babylon. You might know it. The place is only a few miles down the road from you."

He knew my real name. No shock, since the papers had published that when I took down Goldstein and German, two super-powered guys wanted for assaulting police officers and resisting arrest. He had my phone number, which was

obnoxious but not to be unexpected in today's information age. But he also a decent idea of where I lived. That was kind of creepy. If I was going to be making enemies, I didn't want them to be able knock on my door.

Worse, though, was the thought of solicitors knocking on my door, trying to buy me.

"Let me guess," I said, trotting back to my cereal, now thoroughly soggy, milk almost at room temperature. "You want to hire me to watch your place at night. The teenagers who race their cars down Deer Park Avenue sometimes hang out in your parking lot and you want me to chase them away, since the cops won't or can't."

Another pause. I spooned some Raisin Bran into my mouth. Nothing but wet flakes.

"I'm prepared to offer you \$250 per night. You'd only need to stop by about every half-hour from midnight to three. That's almost a hundred bucks per hour."

"Sergio, from the diner in the same lot, he offered me \$400. Ask him where you can stick that offer."

I hung up. Fifth offer like that in two weeks. A bar in Levittown wanted me as a bouncer. One of the malls asked if I could patrol the parking lot at night. A jewelry store in Commack offered to pay me to hang out when they got a new shipment of stock. That one I almost took. And I'm still not positive why I didn't. Except that whole point of being a hero was to help people who couldn't afford to buy it . . . I think.

The car wheezed when I turned the key. I held it there a little longer, tapped the gas. The Saturn continued muttering a strained pant, but refused to kick over. "Battery," I told the 40-something-year-old woman in a pink pant suit. "This is, what, a 2002? You have the battery it came with?"

She nodded, somewhat disinterested.

"It's to be expected. Wait in the lobby; I'll be done in ten minutes."

The woman glanced at the door between the garage and the tiny room that passed for the lobby like she was afraid of it. Mo--hanging over the cash register, staring angrily out the window at the people gassing up--had that effect on people. He was a creepy Middle Eastern guy with a uni-brow, wild hair and chapped, scabby lips regardless of the season. He could be nice enough when you were forced to tolerate him.

That was not why she hesitated.

Shuffling a bit, pretending she was about to leave, the woman stammered, "Are . . . are you that guy?"

In my head, I reviewed the myriad retorts I have amassed for such statements. My frustration kept me silent.

"I read about you in *Newsday*," she said more confidently.

I popped the hood of her car, then strode to shelf where we kept the battery tester. After snagging a wrench, I shouted to Dom to grab me a new battery while he was in the back room.

"My sister used to see this guy," blabbed the woman in the pink pant suit. "He keeps calling and leaving nasty voice mails, even though they broke up two months ago. Just the other day she saw his car drive away as she came home from work."

Dom came out of the back room with a new battery, still in the box. He lofted the thing at me as gently as his 300-pound guinea arms would allow.

I caught the battery against my chest like a medicine ball. The wrench slipped from my grip and clamored stupidly on the concrete floor. "If you think he's dangerous, call the police."

"Well," she said, "You know how long those kinds of things take. And then you have to prove that he's a threat. I was hoping, if I gave you his address, you might--"

"Whaddaya think Chad is? A superhero or the fuckin' mafia?" barked Dom from across the room.

Funny thing is, I almost told her *sure*. My knee-jerk reaction was to throw a glare at Dom. He had a point, though. But the woman in the pink pant suit was right, too.

"That's not how I operate," I mumbled, setting up the battery tester. I did not even really need to test the thing. I know cars, and I knew damned well the battery was on its last leg.

The woman made an angry, snorting sound. "What use are you?"

She stormed out the door into the lobby. The needle on the batter tester wiggled weakly. The thing was essentially dead.

#

At 8:30 that night, I met up with my "sidekick," Carol--a.k.a. Lady Dynamite. A fitting name for someone who could spontaneously explode any or all parts of her body and then come back together again like it was nothing. Lara wasn't fond of

Carol as a person, let alone as my sidekick. In some ways I would have rather had her over Carol as a partner, but she chose to squander her powers rather than accept my offers to join the battle against crime or evil or whatever.

"Check it out," Carol said, strutting around in her new costume. I had convinced her to ditch the red-and-blue tights she wore when we first met.

Now she sported tight black pants and a loose, Chinese-looking shirt of dark-red and dark-blue. Her boots were dark red, made of a real flimsy, elastic material. Like the shirt, she had made the boots herself. One of Carol's favorite tricks was making her feet explode so as to propel her like a rocket. She kept a few pairs of those boots in a satchel on her motorcycle.

"Nice outfit." I slipped into my hoody. That, cargo pants and a handkerchief-turned-facemask was the whole of my ensemble. Anything more than that would be too comic-book-ish. And I was reconsidering the facemask.

"I have another surprise," Carol said, grinning with childish glee. She began popping up off her heels, hands clutched in front of her. "Got us a mission!"

"A mission?" laughed Dane, my roommate, from the couch. "I didn't know you two were detectives."

I already knew where this was going. It fit with the pattern of the last couple weeks. "We're supposed to patrol the streets."

Carol's face scrunched into a pout. "You don't understand. One of the strip malls on Commack Road had three of its four stores robbed in the last month."

"And so we know for a fact that it will be robbed tonight?"

"No, but one of the owners thinks it's a group of hoodies who hang around there all the time. He wants us to shake 'em down, see if was them, or if they know who."

Dane turned up the volume on the TV, chuckling to himself and humming the tune to the Adam West *Batman* series.

"He offered me \$1,200," Carol said, her eyes growing wide at the prospect of such money.

I stormed up to her, bent over so I could get right up into her tiny face, and said, "We're not mercenaries. I'm not beating up a bunch of gang members because someone's too scared to call the cops."

Carol and I locked gazes. Carol was a smart girl, but had the emotional capacity of an 11-year-old. She liked to play back-up, preferred that I take the lead. Now her green eyes stared back strong. That was unusual. My gaze faltered. "Then I'll go by myself," she growled.

"Fine, I'll just patrol as usual," I said casually. I did not want to show just how uncertain I was over this whole thing.

#

I did not go on patrol. Instead, I went to the gym. The neon sign that read *Kung-Fu* flickered with the stomps of five grown men and three kids as they practiced their form. It was almost nine-o'clock, so class was winding down. I was still in my hoody and cargo pants, mask rolled up in the big pocket on my left pant leg. I slipped my shoes off and kneeled before the entrance to the workout area. Sifu Chuck noticed me out of the corner of his hard, dark eye. His gaze, however, remained firmly and untiringly on the eight people in front of him.

This was one of the more advanced forms, which meant I had already missed the trips and throws

part of the class. That was what I needed the most practice with, and was the reason I had switched from Sifu Chuck's Tai Chi lessons to Shoalin Kung-Fu.

The class did five more rounds, then Sifu Chuck turned his back to the class and said, "Meditation. Ten minutes."

He nodded at me, gestured to follow him. They, the senior-most student in the room that day (next to me) and the only guy in the entire gym who seemed to really dislike me, cast an ugly glare my way as he set out the straw mats for meditation. I closed the door behind me as I entered the office, the only business-like area of the tiny gym. An efficient little Ikea desk, a poofy Asian plant, two hard wood chairs and a small couch with ribbed cushions were all that filled the tight room.

Sitting in one of the chairs, I told Sifu about the offers for money, about Carol going out on her own to threaten those thugs. More importantly, I told him that I had no idea what was the right thing to do.

Sifu listened without moving. If not for the unnaturally gradual rise and fall of his chest, I could have believed I was talking to a statue. His eyes rarely blinked, and his face showed no emotion. Somehow, though, I knew he was taking it all in.

When I finished, Sifu nodded once. "What is this, real life or a comic book?" he said, his words tainted with an accent picked up from years of living in China and Singapore.

"Real life," I said, with no certainty as to what that meant.

"Whose rules are you following?" Sifu asked.

"Rules for what?"

"That's my point." Sifu thrust a thick, calloused

"Sifu listened without moving. If not for the unnaturally gradual rise and fall of his chest, I could have believed I was talking to a statue."

finger in my direction. "You are the hero. It is up to you to decide what is right and wrong."

So my answer was the same as the dilemma. Why did I come here for advice?

Sifu picked up on my confusion. "Are you stupid? Someone wants to give you money, take it. You are still doing a good thing. Just don't turn a good thing into a bad thing."

My jaw was going slack from trying to understand what the hell that meant. "You mean don't beat up anyone just because someone says they're a bad person and gave me money to do it."

"This is not a comic book," Sifu said, without acknowledging my last remark. "You are trying to help people. Help them. Some will offer you money. You don't have to take it. You don't have to turn it down. You don't have to do anything. Use your judgment. If they seem like they are telling the truth, fine! If not, forget about it."

He leaned in closer to me. I leaned in, too. His hand stung the side of my head, more from the speed than the strength behind it. "Use your brain, dummy. Now go help your partner. And don't ever leave her behind again."

#

My bike cut through the air at 85 mph. I spotted Carol outside a wannabe Taco Bell. She was pinned against an SUV, surrounded by eight fashionably-poorly-dressed thugs. Their shirts and pants hung loosely off them, like a kid who had raided his parents' closet. Their eyes were fierce and serious, their posture crooked yet solid.

Tires squealed against the pavement as I slid into the parking lot. A puff of smoke added a nice dramatic effect.

All heads turned toward me. "Yo, i's *him!*" one of them slurred.

A tall, slender man with a dark black complexion broke off from the pack. A white do-rag was pulled tight across his bald forehead, tied in the back like a ponytail. "So 'dis da guy they call Cobalt, huh?"

He reached around for something behind him. My hands lit up fast, charging my superpower--nasty energy beams that kick like a rocket and burn like fire.

The thug stepped back, hands up in front of him. His expression went from Bad Ass to Mr. Nice Guy. "Yo, chill, man. Can't a niggah get a autograph?"

"Autograph?"

He pulled a pen from his back pocket and a receipt from the taco joint. It already had *Lady Dynamite* scrawled across it.

The sea of thugs parted as Carol bounded to my side, green eyes aglow with delight. "Tricky and his friends are on our side. They just told me about two guys they've seen around a couple of nights before each break-in."

"Yo, dat Mackie kid be crazy," uttered one of the thugs, a wide guy with frizzy cornrows.

"Mackie?" I inquired.

"Mark MacAlister, is his real name," Carol said.

"They know him from school, I think."

It was hard to think of this group of ever stepping foot in a school, let alone young enough to even apply the idiom *know from school*. But that could have just been Carol being Carol. "Who's the other guy?"

The wide guy shrugged. "Pssh. Dunno. Some ugly mutha fucka who look like he been hangin' out in a dumpster. Some kinda crackhead or some shit, you know."

Tricky stepped up to the front. It was evident from the take-charge sway in his step that he was the leader of this little crew. "This is our turf," Tricky said, with a slanted nod. His finger gestured to the other seven hoodlums behind him. "We see everythin'. You got to know." He pounded his fist on his heart. "We respect the cause. Believe dat, man. Cobalt and Lady Dynamite need somethin', you come to the Hard Island Boyz. We got your back."

That's when it hit me. We had just gotten paid \$1,200 to make allies. And who knows--we just might end up solving this crime.

Libem Liboriam

The Complete d20 Guide to Books

by Dana Lynn Driscoll

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

What others are saying...

[Crothian of ENworld.org](#)

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

» 4 out of 5

[Bill Perman of GamingReport.com](#)

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

» 3.5 out of 5

The Silven Bestiary

Monsters of Flame - Part II

by Kyle Thompson

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

This month's topic is again, beasts of the flame. In the second half of the article, there is a bonus section containing the statistics for Korl the Mage and his two companions, new monster abilities, the item statistics for a new poison, and the statistics for a new shop: Gew and Hazel's Shop of Magical and Mystic Pets.

Flame Paw

Medium Magical Beast (Fire)

Hit Dice: 10d10+33 (88 hp)

Initiative: +5

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armor Class: 19 (+5 Dex, +4 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +10/+14

Attack: Claw +14 melee (1d6+4 plus 1d4 fire) or bite +9 melee (1d4+4 plus 1d4 fire)

Full Attack: 2 claws +14 melee (1d6+4 plus 1d4 fire) or claw +14 melee (1d6+4 plus 1d4 fire) and bite +9 melee (1d4+4 plus 1d4 fire)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Breath weapon

Special Qualities: Continual glow, DR 10/magic, immunity to heat, vulnerability to cold

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +5

Abilities: Str 19, Dex 20, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12

Skills: Jump +10, Listen +12, Move Silently +11, Spot +7, Search +6

Feats: Ability Focus (Breath Weapon), Toughness, Weapon Focus (Claws)

Environment: Any warm or the elemental plane of fire

Organization: Solitary, pair, or pack (3-20)

Challenge Rating: 6

Treasure: None

Alignment: Usually lawful neutral

Advancement: 11-12 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment: -

A wolf-like figure approaches you, glowing strangely in the distance. As it nears, you realize that the beast is aflame and its eyes burn with hunger.

Flame paws are wholly remarkable beasts. They appear much like a wolf, but they have a long strand of pure flame that comes off of their backs like a hyena's ridge of fur. Their fur is always a bright red or orange and their eyes are glowing orbs in the dark.

Flame paws were discovered by a long forgotten ranger of some long-past age and have since been trained as pets and guards because of their

extreme loyalty. A shop in Silven, Gew and Hazel's Shop of Magical and Mystic Pets, is especially well-known because it generally has two or three flame paws in stock.

Combat

Flame paws are extremely ferocious in battle, especially when protecting an owner or master. They often try to take damage for their masters.

Breath Weapon (Su): 20-ft. cone of fire, damage 2d6, Reflex DC 17 half. The flame paw can only use this ability once every 1d4 rounds.

Continual Glow (Su): A flame paw always gives off as much light as a torch does.

Pyro Ooze

Large Ooze (Fire)

Hit Dice: 15d10+90 (165 hp)

Initiative: -5

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares)

Armor Class: 4 (-1 size, -5 Dex), touch 4, flat-footed 9

Base Attack/Grapple: +11/+16

Attack: Slam +15 melee (1d8+5 plus 1d4 fire)

Full Attack: Slam +15 melee (1d8+5 plus 1d4 fire)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Force-feed, spell-like abilities
Special Qualities: Immunity to heat, SR 15, vulnerability to cold

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +0, Will +2

Abilities: Str 21, Dex 1, Con 20, Int -, Wis 5, Cha 12



Skills: -

Feats: -

Environment: Any warm

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 8

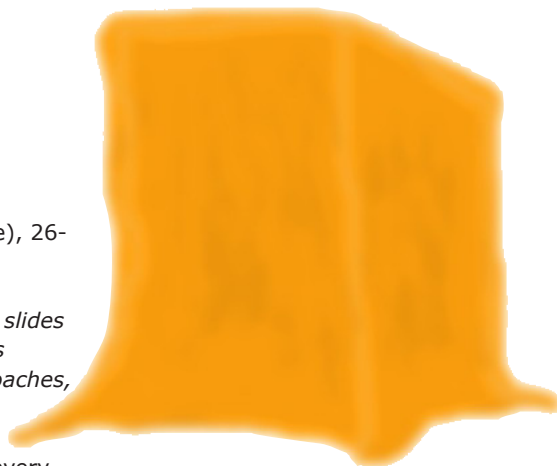
Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 16-20 (Large), 20-25 (Huge), 26-27 (Gargantuan), 28-30 (Colossal)

Level Adjustment: -

A large cube of flame red protoplasm slowly slides down the corridor toward you. The corridor's temperature rises slightly as the thing approaches, but not to unbearable heights.



Pyro oozes are one of the strangest beasts every recorded in the Silven Bestiary. Pyro oozes are aware that they are highly poisonous to many other living creatures if they are ingested, and literally force-feed small pieces of themselves to their prey. These pieces are regenerated within the span of a couple rounds.

Pyro oozes are extremely dangerous and are often the bane of many adventurers. Since the protoplasm is tasteless, it is often used as a poison in the food or drink of an assassin's target. A small piece of pyro ooze protoplasm goes for about 2,000 gp on the black market.

Combat

Pyro oozes fight with instinct, not skill. They use their force-feed ability as often as they can and will generally attempt to finish their prey off with their spell-like abilities.

Force-feed (Ex): Pyro oozes are able to force their enemies to consume some of their protoplasmic bodies. They do this by covering the mouth area of a creature with protoplasm until the creature is forced to swallow the protoplasm. When this ability is used, the pyro ooze makes a melee touch attack (+15 attack bonus). If the attack succeeds, it means that the target has swallowed the piece of protoplasm. If the target is wearing something that covers their mouth

(this must be harder than cloth), then the following effects are automatically negated.

The swallowed protoplasm acts as a deadly poison. 1d4 rounds after the successful force-feed attack, the target must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 18) or take 1d6 Con and 1d4 Dex initial damage. One hour after the initial damage, regardless of whether or not the target succeeded on the initial save, the target must make another Fortitude save (DC 20), or take another 1d8 Con secondary damage.

If both saves are failed, the afflicted creature must make another Fortitude save (DC 22) or take another 1d4 Con damage. If this save is also failed, the afflicted creature must make a final Fortitude save (DC 25) or die.

The time between the initial and secondary damage often fools the afflicted creature into thinking that he or she is on the way to recovery. A quick cure for this affliction is crushed root of oak mixed with one crushed maple leaf and water. This concoction requires no skill to make and automatically negates the poison. Most alchemists or healers know of this cure and it can be bought in most stores for a small fee (generally one or two coppers).

Spell-like Abilities: 1/day - *burning hands* (DC 13), *catch fire** (DC 14). Caster level 2nd. **Catch fire* is described in the bonus material of this section.

About the Author:

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

Bonus Material

This month's volume of the *Silven Bestiary* contains lots of bonus material. First is a new spell; a list of all the monster special abilities that have appeared in this column, written in a neutral form so you can tack them onto your own beasts; and the description of the poisonous protoplasm from a pyro ooze in item format. As an extra bonus, you'll find the stat blocks for Korl the Mage and his party. Last is a description for a new store, complete with a price list and the stat blocks for the store owners.

New Monster Special Abilities

Continual Glow: A [monster] always gives off as much light as a torch does. This light is not extinguished until several hours after death.

Force-feed: [Oozes] are able to force their enemies to eat some of their protoplasmic bodies. They do this by covering the mouth area of a creature with protoplasm until the creature is forced to swallow the protoplasm. [Ooze] must make a melee touch attack [attack bonus + Strength modifier]. If the attack hits, the target has swallowed some of the protoplasm.

This ability is only for oozes. The effects of swallowing the protoplasm varies from monster to monster.

Comment: The effects of swallowing the protoplasm should be taken into account with regard to the monster's challenge rating.

Unbearable Heat: [Monsters] are constantly surrounded by extreme heat. Any creature within five feet of a [monster] must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 10 + Strength modifier if positive) or take [damage depends on size: see table below] subdual damage. Any attacks on a [monster] that are made with small or smaller weapons or natural weapons also deal [damage

Size	Damage (Subdual/Lethal)
Fine	-/1
Diminutive	-/1
Tiny	1/1d2
Small	1/1d4
Medium	1d6/1d8
Large	1d8/1d10
Huge	2d6/2d6
Gargantuan	2d8/2d8
Colossal	2d10/2d10

depends on size: see table above] lethal damage back to the attacker.

Comment: This ability is powerful, and the monster's challenge rating should be adjusted for it. Also, only monsters that are continuously flaming and have the Fire subtype should have this ability.

Flame: [Monsters] may send out (any number varying from creature to creature; DM's choice) 20-foot-long streams of flame in any direction every round. Each line of fire deals 2d8 fire damage. The target can take half damage by succeeding at a Reflex save (DC 20).

Comment: This ability is powerful, and the monster's challenge rating should be adjusted for it depending on the number of streams of flame the monster is able to produce.

New Spell

Catch Fire

Evocation [Fire]

Level: Sor/Wiz 0

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: 1 min./level (D)

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: No

The next object the target touches, other than those objects already being held or worn, instantly catches fire. This only works on flammable materials such as cloth or paper. If the next thing touched is a living being, that being must succeed on a Reflex save (DC caster level + spell level) or take 1 point of damage per round. The afflicted being must spend one standard action to put out the fire in order to stop this damage.

New Item

Pyro Ooze Protoplasm

This protoplasm, a pale orange in color and tasteless, acts as a deadly poison. 1d4 rounds after ingestion, the target must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 18) or take 1d6 Con and 1d4 Dex initial damage. One hour after the initial damage, regardless of whether or not the target succeeded on the initial save, the target must make another Fortitude save (DC 20), or take another 1d8 Con secondary damage.

If both saves are failed, the poisoned creature must make another Fortitude save (DC 22) or take another 1d4 Con damage. If this save is also failed, the afflicted creature must make a final Fortitude save (DC 25) or die.

The time between the initial and secondary damage often fools the afflicted creature into thinking that he or she is on the way to recovery. A quick cure for this affliction is crushed root of oak mixed with one crushed maple leaf and water. This concoction requires no skill to make and automatically negates the poison. Most alchemists or healers know of this cure and it can be bought in most stores for a small fee (generally one or two coppers).

This material is not legal anywhere. It can only be found in dark alleys and other black markets. Its price ranges from 2,000 to 10,000 gp, depending on the seller.

Bonus Material cont.

Korl the Mage and his Party

Korl the Mage: Male human sorcerer 15; CR 15; Medium humanoid; HD 15d4+45; hp 84; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +8/+3; Grp +9; Atk +13 melee (1d4+5 plus 1d6 electricity, *Lich'dem'ino* [+4 shocking dagger]) or +9 ranged (1d8, light crossbow); Full Atk +13/+8 melee (1d4+5 plus 1d6 electricity, *Lich'dem'ino* [+4 shocking dagger]) or +9 ranged (1d8, light crossbow); SA —; SQ +1 to all saves (*robe of the archmagi*), darkvision 60 ft.; AL CG; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +12; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 20.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +14, Craft (Alchemy), Craft (Armor) +13, Craft (Weapons) +12, Knowledge (Arcana) +19, Spellcraft +15; Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Staff, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Forge Ring.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/8/7/7/7/6/4, save DC = 15 + spell level): 0- *dancing lights, daze, disrupt undead, flare, ghost sound, ray of frost, read magic, resistance*; 1st- *burning hands, chill touch, mage armor, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement*; 2nd- *acid arrow, flaming sphere, ghoul touch, invisibility, web*; 3rd- *explosive runes, fireball, flame arrow, lightning bolt*; 4th- *bestow curse, ice storm, lesser globe of invulnerability, wall of fire*; 5th- *cloudkill, cone of cold, fabricate, feeble mind*; 6th- *chain lightning, circle of death, forceful hand*; 7th- *summon monster VII, limited wish*.

Possessions: *robe of the archmagi, wand of magic missile* (5th level, 50 charges), light crossbow with 40 bolts of icy burst, *amulet of natural armor* +4, *Lich'dem'ino* (+4 shocking dagger), *wand of summon monster IV* (4th level, 25 charges), *wand of fireball* (4th level, 25 charges), 5,000 gp.

Korl the Mage is famous for several discoveries in the fields of herbology, alchemy and magical ecology. Korl is currently thirty-seven and resides in Silven with his companions. He and his companions still adventure, and when they are not out of town on business they frequent Silven's taverns.

Kabith: Raven familiar; CR —; Small magical beast; HD 15d8; hp 42; Init: +2; Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft.; AC 22, touch 22, flat-footed 20; Base Atk: +9/+4; Grp +0; Atk: +9 melee (1d2-5, claws); Full Atk: +9/+4 melee (1d2-5, claws), SA: —; SQ: alertness, deliver touch spells, empathic link, improved evasion, scry on familiar, share spells, speak with animals of its kind, speak with master, SR 20; AL CG; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +11; Str 1, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +14, Craft (Alchemy) +20, Craft (Weapons) +12, Knowledge (Arcana) +19, Spellcraft +15; Weapon Finesse (claws).

Languages: Common.

Kabith is Korl's raven familiar. Korl found Kabith suffering from a broken wing on a hiking path during one of his journeys and nursed him back to health. The two have been inseparable since the event and constantly work together in Korl's explorations and studies.

Middik: Male halfling rogue 15; CR 15; Small humanoid; HD 15d6+15; hp 96; Init: +5; Spd 20 ft.; AC 24, touch 15, flat-footed 16, Base Atk: +14/+9/+4; Grp +14; Atk: +17 melee (1d4+4, +2 dagger) or +20 ranged (1d8+2 plus 1d6 fire, *Soulfire* [+2 flaming light crossbow]); Full Atk: +17/+12/+7 melee (1d4+4 +2 dagger) or +20 ranged (1d8+2 plus 1d6 fire, *Soulfire* [+2 flaming light crossbow]); SA: sneak attack +8d6 damage; SQ: defensive roll, evasion, halfling traits, slippery mind, trapfinding, improved uncanny dodge; AL CG; SV Fort +7, Ref +15, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 21, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +18, Balance

+23, Bluff +21, Climb +22, Disable Device +18, Hide +27, Move Silently +25, Open Lock +18, Tumble +18; Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Run, Spring Attack.

Languages: Common, Halfling.

Possessions: +2 dagger, hat of disguise, iridescent spindle ioun stone, masterwork thieves' tools, 3 potions of cure serious wounds, *Soulfire* (+2 flaming light crossbow) with 40 bolts, +5 studded leather armor, 6,000 gp.

Middik met Korl through their shared work. Both Korl and Middik were just beginning the adventuring business when they were both hired by the same person for the same job. They enjoyed working together and became companions. Middik lives with Korl, Kabith and Daria in Silven. Middik is forty years old.

Daria, Female elf fighter 15; CR 15; Medium humanoid; HD 15d10+48; hp 167; Init: +6; Spd 20 ft.; AC 27, touch 14, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +20/+15/+10; Grp +25; Atk: +25 melee (2d6+8/x3 plus 1d6 cold, *Frostbite* [+3 icy greatsword]) or +19 ranged (1d8, longbow); Full Attack: +25/+20/+15 (2d6+8/x3 plus 1d6 cold, *Frostbite* [+3 icy greatsword]) or +19/+14/+9 ranged (1d8, longbow); SA: —; SQ: elven traits; AL NG; SV Fort +12, Ref +9, Will +4; Str 21, Dex 19, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +10, Ride +22, Use Rope +13; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Ride-By Attack, Shot on the Run, Spring Attack, Toughness, Trample, Weapon Focus (Greatsword).

Languages: Common, Elven.

Possessions: *Amulet of natural armor* +2, *Frostbite* (+3 icy greatsword), +2 full plate, +2 large steel shield, longbow with 40 +2 arrows, 3 potions of cure serious wounds, 5,000 gp.

Daria was rescued by Middik and Korl from a dungeon held by a large band of thieves. Daria is one hundred thirteen years old.

Bonus Material cont.

Gew and Hazel's Shop of Magical and Mystic Pets

Gew and Hazel's Shop of Magical and Mystic Pets combines a small front shop that carries foods and other pet-related goods with a large warehouse housing several types of strange and fascinating beasts from all across the land. The animals are all treated well and sold as pets to the rich or as companions to adventurers. They are suited especially well for spellcasters, though Gew occasionally serves adventurers of a different nature, such as a fighter or a barbarian.

Gew runs the shop with his wife Hazel. The two of them opened the shop together as adventuring companions and business partners, but their love grew alongside the business and they were soon wed. Both are druids that take several trips a year in search of more animals to take into their care. While they are gone, Gew and Hazel leave another druid or ranger in charge of the shop and animals.

Each animal at Gew and Hazel's shop is cherished and not sold lightly. Gew and Hazel refuse to sell an animal unless the animal seems to enjoy and accept the buyer. There are *detect magic* spells cast throughout the store to ensure truth in the animals' attitude toward the buyer.

The front shop is about twenty feet by twenty feet and has a counter in the back right. The front of the shop is stocked with food stuffs and other products for animals, such as magic saddles and horseshoes. Prices are generally reasonable.

The back warehouse is far more interesting than the front. The back is about forty feet wide and sixty feet long, with two levels the same size. The upper floor does not have any stalls or stables to hold the animals. These animals all graze on magically generated grass, or are fed by the druids.

All the animals on this floor of the shop live in peace, maintained by housing carnivorous or otherwise dangerous or aggressive animals on the lower level and the herbivores on the upper

floors. Unlike the upper level, the lower level does have large stalls to keep different types of animals apart, thus preventing them from attacking each other.

The store generally houses about fifty to sixty animals at a time, with a selection ranging from celestial badgers to dire bears to flame paws (see description above).

Gew: Male human druid 10; CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 10d8+10; hp 68; Init: +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16; Base Atk: +9/+4; Grp +11; Atk: +11/+6 melee (1d6+3, +1 *scimitar*) or +10 ranged (1d4, sling); Full Atk: +11/+6 melee (1d6+3, +1 *scimitar*) or +10 ranged (1d4, sling); SA: —; SQ: animal companion, nature sense, resist nature's lure, trackless step, venom immunity, wild empathy, wild shape (up to large, 4/day), woodland stride; AL NG; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +11; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 19, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +14, Diplomacy +13, Handle Animal +13, Heal +17, Jump +6, Knowledge (nature) +14, Spellcraft +14, Survival +17; Alertness, Dodge, Endurance, Mobility, Track.

Languages: Common, Elven, Druidic.
Spells: 6/5/5/4/4/2, save DC 14 + spell level.

Possessions: +2 *hide armor*, light wooden shield, +1 *scimitar*, sling with 30 masterwork bullets, 1,000 gp.

Hazel: Female human druid 10; CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 10d8+23; hp 76; Init: +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16; Base Atk: +9/+4, Grp: +11; Atk: +11/+6 melee (1d6+3, +1 *scimitar*) or +9 ranged (1d4, sling); Full Atk: +11/+6 melee (1d6+3, +1 *scimitar*) or +9 ranged (1d4, sling); SA: —; SQ: animal companion, nature sense, resist nature's lure, trackless step, venom immunity, wild empathy, wild shape (up to large, 4/day), woodland stride; AL NG; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +12; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 20, Cha 12.

Price Lists

Creatures

Creature	Price
Blink Dog	1,000 gp
Celestial Horse	2,000 gp
Celestial Wolf	5,000 gp
Dire Bear	9,000 gp
Dire Wolf	5,000 gp
Flame Paw	15,000 gp
Giant Eagle	5,000 gp
Giant Owl	5,000 gp
Hippogriff	4,000 gp
Krenshar	2,500 gp
Pegasus	8,000 gp
Shocker Lizard	2,000 gp
Unicorn	8,000 gp

Supplies

Item	Price
Feed: 1 day	10 gp
Feed: 5 day	40 gp
Grooming: Large	200 gp
Grooming: Medium	100 gp
Grooming: Small	50 gp
Horseshoes of Speed	1,900 gp
Horseshoes of the Zephyr	3,000 gp
Saddle: Riding	10 gp
Saddle of Speed*	2,000 gp
Temporary Care	10 gp/day

*As horseshoes of speed

Skills and Feats: Concentration +15, Diplomacy +14, Handle Animal +14, Heal +18, Jump +6, Knowledge (nature) +14, Spellcraft +14, Survival +18; Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Power Attack, Toughness.

Languages: Common, Elven, Druidic.
Spells: 6/6/5/4/4/3, Save DC = 15 + spell level.

Possessions: +2 *hide armor*, light wooden shield, +1 *scimitar*, sling with 30 masterwork bullets, 1,000 gp.

Cave Devils

By Adam Janus

Roc crept silently through the tunnel, broad nose sniffing the stagnant subterranean air, large slitted pupils wide open, night vision scanning the oppressive blackness. Long, lanky arms and short, muscular legs attached to a lean, greenish-black, goblinoid torso made the creature at home walking on his hind legs or on all fours. Clutched in one hand was a black staff, made from a hard, fibrous fungus called darkenroom that only grows deep underground. The top third of the staff was fitted with a bronze axe blade.

Covering his long, greasy black hair was a blackened copper skullcap lined with fur from the giant subterranean ground sloth. His ragged piecework clothing and armor were a combination of sloth hide, darkenroom fiber, and bones: typical garb for a subterranean scavenger like him. Long pointed ears and sharp teeth gave this creature a decidedly sinister appearance.

Cavea Delvaheem is the ancient elven name given to this unusual being and its ken. They are called cave devils in the common tongue. They were here before the elves; they evolved thick skin and acidic blood so the rhexauradon, or rhex, an ancient race of reptile men who used to rule the earth, wouldn't eat them. They were survivors, adapting to their ever-changing world and circumstances. They adapted to life underground when the earth's new races shunned and hunted them. Some retreated to the forests: the Trehun Delvaheem, or tree devils, they were called. Just like the rhexauradon, the delvaheem became creatures of legend; out of sight, out of mind.

Roc was the chief of his tribe of delvaheem and of the tribal war party that crept along silently behind him. Most were already adorned with the bones of their foes, and more proudly displayed their warrior slashes: open wounds rubbed with ash, leaving gray scars. A small number of them were untried, but eager to earn their bones and slashes, eagerness fueled by the inborn hatred of the oppressed.

"They are ready for a blood-letting," Roc thought as they reached the end of the subterranean tunnel. It looked out over a cavernous chamber. Once it was probably quite beautiful to behold. Now it was strewn with debris, dust, and age. Once-tall pillars and columns lay broken and crumbling, shadows replaced the light, and rats and the occasional goblin or cave devil replaced whatever ancient race used to dwell here.

Roc stooped within the deeper shadows of the tunnel's mouth, looking at a small fire flickering far across the vast hall.

"Dwarves," he hissed to himself as if the name left a bad taste in his mouth. A team of dwarven exploratory miners sat around the fire, which appeared to be made in the center of a long-dry fountain. Surrounded by the marble remains of hulking gargoyles and archaic guardians, the dwarves noisily discussed directions and likely ore deposits while the accompanying warrior escort set about the task of setting sentries and securing the perimeter of their crude camp. They were oblivious to the danger lurking in the shadows. The smell of roasting meat set the cave devils' stomachs to growling and their sharp teeth to gnashing.

A hand gesture directed Roc's warriors out of the tunnel, scattering in four directions. They were all smeared with muddy clay, camouflage against the dwarves' dark- and heat-vision. Each delvaheem was armed with stone-tipped spears and long bronze knives; they would flank the dwarven trespassers and seek out sentries while keeping to the deep shadows.

Resting on his haunches, waiting patiently for his warriors to reach their intended positions, Roc reached into a crevice to his right, pulling out a large rat skeleton he had stashed there during his last foraging trip to the area. The skeleton was mostly devoid of meat, but to a scavenger, it still had its uses. He snapped the largest rib bone in half and sucked out the marrow, smacking his lips as if eating a delicacy. He then returned the unused bones to their hiding place, and tucked the hollow rib bone in a pouch at his belt. Scavengers discarded nothing.

Violent images from his past flashed across Roc's vision while he waited. In his mind's eye he saw the vast underground lake where he lived as a whelp. He saw himself swimming and catching sucker fish. He could smell the sloth meat and mushrooms roasting in the fire pit. Firelight twinkled off the veins of precious metals running through the stone walls of the cavern, dazzling and beautiful to the eye. On the other side of the fire pit stood his grandfather, Grokar, leader of the tribe. He was holding his axe, the handle fashioned from darkenroom and the head made from the razor-sharp claw of the giant subterranean ground sloth, the staple of their primitive society. The elders had just returned from a hunt, and life was good.

Suddenly from behind Grokar, the rock wall exploded with a fiery flash, sending stone shrapnel flying through the cavern and sprinkling the lake like molten rain.



Ducking Grogar's axe, the ranger came up hard, bringing his own enchanted axe around. [Image copyright Devil's Workshop. Used with permission.]

Through the fissure poured armed dwarves, singing battle songs and hewing delvaheem left and right. Leading the slaughter was a berserk red-bearded dwarf with wild eyes, a subterranean ranger. Dwarven subterranean rangers often accompanied metallurgists and exploratory mining teams to uncharted areas. The delvaheem, led by Grogar, had just ambushed a team of dwarven trespassers a week prior.

Roc saw his grandfather leap in front of the red-bearded berserker, primitive axe held high. Ducking Grogar's axe, the ranger came up hard, bringing his own enchanted axe around. It impacted the left side of Grogar's head with a noise that still haunted Roc to this day. Roc saw his grandfather's head explode, spraying blood, brains, and bone all about. Grogar's axe, symbol of his chieftom, flew high in the air, end over end, to land in the lake, lost forever.

Outwardly, Roc appeared calm while these unpleasant memories flashed through his head, but inside, his blood boiled with revenge and murder. It was on that very day that his once proud tribe began a life of

hiding and scavenging, splintering into small, nomadic groups because of dwarven greed and colonization.

Gripping the tunnel's rim, the delvaheem chief swung out of the cave and jumped to the cavern floor, landing in a crouch as softly as a cat. Confident that his warriors were in position, he made his way toward the dwarves' fire, his senses alert and muscles taut, using the debris and deep shadows as cover.

As Roc silently approached a dwarven sentry, his vision began to swim in a red haze, his hatred bubbling to the surface. The sentry sat on a large piece of rubble with his back to the advancing delvaheem chief, idly sharpening his dagger and humming a dwarven drinking song. Without warning, Roc leaped on the dwarf's back, bringing his darkenroom axe around, and with both hands he pulled the handle up under the dwarf's bearded chin.

Roc pulled the dwarf backwards off the rock, twisting to his left and pulling his knees in, planting them on the dwarf's back as he drove the surprised warrior face first into the cavern floor. Using his leverage, Roc pulled up on his axe, choking off the dwarf's airway while pushing the air from the dwarf's lungs with his knees.

Overlooked in his furious attack were the dwarf's knife and sharpening stone, which clattered to the floor on Roc's initial assault, drawing attention from the dwarves around the fire.

"Grond! Ho, Grond! Ya alright? Where ya at?" bellowed another dwarven warrior while drawing his axe from his back. He tapped another fighter on the back, the pair hastened from the ring of firelight toward the sentry's last known position.

Roc heard the the rattle of armor and the stomp of heavy, iron-shod boots running his way. Releasing his grip on the darkenroom handle, Roc brought

his copper-clad head down on the back of the struggling dwarf's skull, momentarily stunning his victim. Opening his mouth, the delvaheem chief then bit into the back of Grond's neck with a vice-like grip, his teeth penetrating flesh and muscle with a wet pop before grinding into the dwarf's spinal column.

Warm blood and spinal fluid pumped from the wound, filling Roc's mouth and spilling to the stone floor, adding to his murderous madness. With a final twist of his head, Roc felt the blood stop pumping, a tell-tale sign that the dwarf's heart had ceased to beat.

Pulling his axe from beneath the dead dwarf, Roc leaped to his feet to face the advancing dwarven warriors, who stopped in their tracks at the sudden appearance of the bloody, savage delvaheem.

"Oi! Cave devils!" yelled the dwarves. "To arms, to arms!"

Chaos erupted in the cavernous hall as the echoing sound of weapons being drawn with shouts of surprise and anger mingled with the feral shrieks and screams of the attacking delvaheem warriors. Roc growled and spit blood and bits of vertebrae at his surprised enemies before turning and nimbly running through the debris. He hastily climbed atop a huge fallen pillar, glancing behind him to ensure that the two enraged dwarves followed before jumping to the floor on the other side. Instead of running to safety, though, Roc turned to his left and ran down the length of the concealing pillar. Reaching the base, he peered around, and much to his delight, he saw one dwarf run down the right side, around the pillar, while the other clambered over.

Silently running up behind the climbing dwarf, who was hampered by his heavy

armor, Roc brought the bronze head of his axe down on the back of the dwarf's leg. He felt his blade slice through leather breeches, flesh, and the tendons and bones behind the dwarf's knee. Bellowing in surprise and pain, the injured dwarf fell from the pillar, landing heavily on the stone floor. He struggled to stand on his injured leg as Roc fell on him, swinging his axe with two hands back and forth, up and down. Trying desperately to defend himself, the dwarf pulled himself up to one knee, holding his mail-clad arms out in front of him. Roc's axe sliced off fingers and slammed into the side of the dwarf's face, shattering the warrior's jaw in a red mist of blood and teeth. Savagely kicking the dying warrior in the face for good measure, Roc stooped over him and snatched the dwarf's finely forged steel dagger from his belt sheath. Then, hanging his gore-covered axe over his shoulders, the delvaheem chief climbed back atop the fallen pillar.

Lying flat, Roc scanned the darkness for the remaining dwarf, his slitted pupils open so wide that they looked like polished black stones. He could hear the angry dwarf shouting challenges to the surrounding shadows while striking the side of the pillar with the flat side of his battle axe. Roc could feel the ringing reverberations in the stone through his belly.

"Come on out, ya murderin' devil!" the dwarf growled. "Ya can't hide from Dymak and me thirsty axe forever, ya cowardly, sneakin' pile a goblin scat!" he shouted, his beard flecked with spittle.

Roc extracted the hollow rat bone from his belt pouch and gently tossed it behind the raging dwarf. Growling incoherently, the dwarven warrior turned, swinging his axe with murderous intent, only to have it whoosh through empty air and slam into

"Torches!" bellowed Relgar, his voice booming and echoing through the tunnel.

the side of the pillar, eliciting a shower of stone and sparks. Seizing the opportunity, Roc gripped his stolen knife and leaped from the pillar, landing heavily on the dwarf's back. Staggering, Dymak released his hold on his axe, letting it dangle from its wrist thong, and raised his gauntleted hands in an attempt to grab his attacker's arms, which encircled his thick neck. Although he was about the same height as the dwarf, the fierce delvaheem chief was half as broad and roughly a third of the burly warrior's weight. Roc wrapped his legs around Dymak's waist and hung on, trying to bring his stolen dagger up against the dwarf's throat, but the thrashing warrior's thick beard and his iron grip on Roc's wrist prevented the delvaheem from inflicting a lethal wound.

Reversing his forward momentum, Dymak suddenly threw himself back against the fallen pillar, pinning the delvaheem and knocking the wind from his lungs. Unable to draw air and feeling the bones in his right wrist grinding and breaking, Roc desperately grasped the blade of his knife with his left hand. Feeling the knife's razor-sharp edge cutting deep into his palm and fingers, Roc slowly turned the point inward, through the dwarf's thick beard. His head swimming, bright flashes of light exploding in his vision, he inched the dagger's point closer to Dymak's throat. Every muscle in his wiry body screamed with the effort. Finally, Roc felt the knife tip meet resistance.

The desperate dwarf slammed his iron helmed head back, breaking the delvaheem's nose with a crack and sending more bright flashes across the chief's field of vision.

With one final thrust Roc felt the dagger's tip poke through skin; he felt a whoosh of air on his ravaged left hand as it penetrated the wind pipe

and sunk further into the dwarf's neck. Then he was falling. He would have heard the dwarf's death gurgle except for his own blood pounding in his head. Opening his mouth, the delvaheem chief gulped air into his oxygen-deprived lungs before his ruined, bloody nose slammed painfully into the back of the dead dwarf's head, and he lapsed into the blessed blackness of unconsciousness...

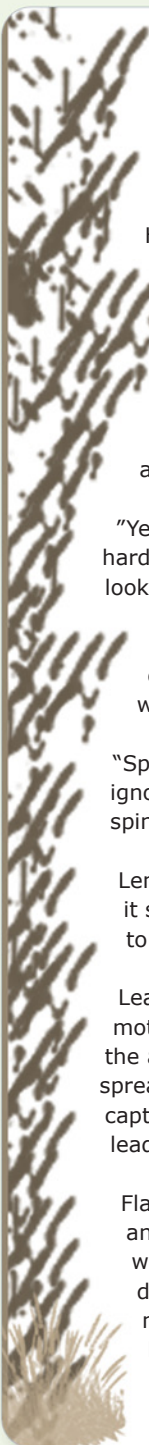
There was only the smell of blood and rot, the distant buzzing of flies, and the scurrying scuttle of small rat feet.

"Death," Captain Relgar Maul silently mouthed to himself as he stood stock still in the deep shadows of the subterranean corridor, waiting for the return of his scouts, who bore the news he already knew.

Behind him was a silent score of subterranean rangers, elite slayers from the dwarven royal Mauler clan. Black cloaks and hoods covered boiled leather armor and enchanted blackened steel weapons. Black steel mesh hung over their faces to hide the glint of heat-vision eyes. They appeared to be the shadows of shadows to all but the keenest of eyes and sharpest of senses.

They had traveled night and day, rarely resting, covering a distance in one week that took the mining party a month to traverse.

Relgar gripped the haft of his axe, feeling the dwarven enchantments thrum up and down its length. He sensed, more than he saw or heard, his scouts silently returning through the inky blackness.



Quick finger and hand motions conveyed one word to the dwarven captain: Clear.

"Torches!" bellowed Relgar, his voice booming and echoing through the tunnel. He swept his hand back, removing his hood and face mesh, revealing a battle-scarred visage covered by a thick red beard streaked with gray. His eyes bored into the scout, eyes that had been described as wild, even mad.

"They are dead?" Relgar stated more than asked.

"Yes, sir," responded the scout, swallowing hard as if trying to keep bile down. His face looked pale in the flaring torch light.

Relgar studied the scout's face, as the hair on the back of his neck rose; he wondered what could rattle an experienced warrior so.

"Spit it out, Lemmel," commanded Relgar, ignoring the chill running the length of his spine.

Lemmel swallowed hard again. "Ya need ta see it sir. In the cavern," he responded, gesturing to the tunnel mouth behind him.

Leaving three guards in the corridor, Relgar motioned the rest ahead. They filed into the ancient hall in orderly, practiced fashion, spreading out to the right and left, flanking their captain, who strode purposefully behind the leading scout.

Flaring torches shed light on the ruins of an ancient, long-forgotten civilization as they wended their way through the scattered debris. After going around a massive, marble gargoyle statue, crumbling with age, Lemmel stepped aside, revealing the cause of his discomfort and revulsion.

In the shallow depression of what may have once been a fountain, partially sheltered by squat, grotesque gargoyle statues, were the nightmarish remains of a dwarven camp site.

Set up around the extinguished cooking fire were the severed heads of the mining party Relgar's team of rangers had been sent to find. Some had their eyes gnawed out and facial flesh stripped by rats, and most still wore their death expressions. Fat flies and maggots crawled throughout the rotting skulls, which rested in dried, coagulated puddles of their own blood. In the middle of the cooking fire was a crude spit, with the partially eaten remains of a dwarven torso still impaled on it. Scattered all around the camp site were pieces of bone, clothing, and armor, but most of the mining teams possessions and bodies had been scavenged or eaten.

Relgar tore his eyes from the gruesome scene in the fountain and focused on the base of a statue on the other side of the oval depression, where on the base of one of the statues one word was scrawled in blood.

A growl began deep within Relgar's belly as he began to shake with rage. Gripping his axe in two hands, he leaped to the fountain's floor, scattering the remains of the grisly campsite in his fury. He ran across the depression to the other side, to the focus of his ire. With a cry that echoed around the vast hall and down many dark, dusty side passages, the dwarven captain brought his axe down in the middle of the scrawled word. Flies scattered and sparks flew as the enchanted blade bit deep and wedged into the marble. Reverberations ran down the haft's length, numbing Relgar's hands and jarring his broad shoulders. Fists clenched, he raised his face to the shadows of the hall's ceiling, and screamed. The one word, scrawled on the statue's base in blood, the one word which enraged Captain Relgar Maul from the elite slayer unit of clan Mauler's subterranean rangers, was: ROC.

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A chalkboard-style illustration of a graveyard at night. In the center is a large, rectangular tombstone with the word "CURSES!" written on it in a jagged, blocky font. To the left is a smaller, rounded tombstone. In the background, there's a tall, thin, spire-like structure. The scene is lit from the bottom left, creating long shadows and highlighting the textures of the tombstones and the surrounding grass and bushes.

by Eytan
Bernstein

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

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

Curses! features the following:

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

Pointing Out the Obvious

Gamers Like Stuff

by Elizabeth R.A. Liddell

When I first started gaming, I would routinely descend into a dark, dank shop in a rather rotund guy's basement, filled with model trains and airplanes, balsa wood and spongy green bits, and racks of tiny bottles of Testor's enamel, only to ignore all that and instead find the RPG book I wanted. That dim basement was really a hobby store, meant far more for someone looking to build an exact replica of a now-extinct train line than for those of us looking

for the newest White Wolf supplement. But it never struck me as odd that gamers, looking for swordfights and action, went to the same place as people who spend grueling hours bent gluing together a tiny model of a World War II fighter.

Then I moved to a new city for my graduate program and encountered a true game store. This place had *aisles* of new and old games and supplements – racks upon racks of the newest releases, classic favorites, games by independent designers that I had never heard of, adventure modules for games that I had never heard of, used books, outdated games, collector's editions, and on and on.

It was only after growing accustomed to this gamer's paradise that I realized how odd it was that the game stores I had grown up with (and other game-and-hobby stores, even in this strange new city I had found) had such a disparate, dual focus. They sold games, sure, but they weren't game stores like this

one was. They were hobby stores, and they just happened to carry RPG materials as well. But as counterintuitive as that feels to me, almost every place I've ever found to buy RPG books and materials is more of a hobby store than a game store.

And I have to say, it's odd. Who came up with the idea that someone who likes painting intricate, historically accurate insignia on a model airplane would like sitting around a table in a dingy basement and pretending he was a half-orc fighting off the legions of the undead, or a sophisticated, centuries-old vampire striving for a higher rung on the social ladder? The materials needed, the application of those materials, and the end result are so drastically different that there doesn't seem to be any reason at all that any hobby store would have even begun carrying RPGs, much less the large number of these shops that do.

Of course, we all know the roots of our pastime, the descent (ascent?) from modern, miniatures-based war gaming to fantasy gaming to the plethora of games we enjoy today. So it makes some amount of sense that the stores that carried models as the precursors to war games then carried the war games, and then continued to carry the RPGs.

On the other hand, if we follow that logic, then these hobby stores should also carry video games, since these also have roots in war gaming and RPGs; but most of the hobby shops that I've encountered carry nothing of the sort! Even my gamer's paradise carried only the occasional

Pointing Out the Obvious is an irregularly published column intended to, well, point out somewhat obvious things, written in the author's extremely not-copious spare time. While the author would like to think that she has the creative genius to come up with a new topic every month, she does in fact know that it is far more likely that she will write two or three columns and run out of obvious things to point out. Therefore, the author would more than happily welcome suggestions of obvious things to point out from other gamers and readers of the Silven community.

software package for character creation, and a few map-design or character-illustration programs. They don't, because they're different products, no matter where they were derived from. Expecting to find RPGs at a hobby store seems sort of like expecting to find fuel oil and diamond jewelry in the same store. Sure, they come from the same source, but they've become so different with time and application that they hardly have anything in common anymore. The last time I went to buy sheet music for a bassoon concerto, I didn't see Eminem's latest on the shelves, and there isn't a whole lot of Gabrieli where I go to buy my Rammstein.

Now, as gaming has become more popular and more mainstream, RPG books have started popping up in more and more places. My local Barnes & Noble now carries a select few RPG titles, evidently randomly selected, and my local Borders has a whole three shelves dedicated to titles from the major companies. Even the tiny Waldenbooks in my local mall has a full section of roleplaying resources, including Mage Knight and Heroclix figures!

They don't carry everything, though. If I wanted to find something by Malhavoc Press, a copy of the new edition of Shadowrun (mine is only about twelve years old), *Big Eyes Small*

Mouth supplements, or a new game that I've never heard of before, I'd still have to go to the dank basement hobby store.

The odd thing about that observation, though, is that I can get just about any of those in electronic format, from my own desk at home, and for less than I would pay in either a large chain store or a tiny hobby shop. PDF-format games are searchable, printable, and with my tiny laptop, far more portable than a bookshelf full of 100+ page hardcovers. By all practical and logical thinking, those hardcover books should be obsolete and I shouldn't even want the physical versions anymore.

So why do I continue to brave the depths of that hobby store? Why do I dig through aisles of unassembled models and paintbrushes smaller than Q-tips to find what I can get far more easily online? Am I crazy? Do I like going out of my way for things?

I don't think so. I think the answer is as simple as the excitement I get when I see a package in my mailbox. It's something new! It's a book! It's something that I can pick up and feel and heft and put on my bookshelf along with all the others. I can stand back and admire how large my collection of RPG books is, congratulating myself on having the same supplement for two different versions of a game, counting my Player's Handbooks, and eagerly awaiting the day that my collection is large enough to merit a second bookcase.

And the excitement I get over a new book is entirely overshadowed by the excitement I get at the prospect of buying new dice. From my first trip into the dank basement shop up to this very day, I cannot go into a hobby store without buying at least one die. Maybe it's because I roll horribly and can't convince myself that

a new die might just help me roll a bit better. Or maybe it's because that deep blue die with the glittery purple flecks and silver numbers is just so pretty that I can't pass it up. Maybe it's because the yellow d6 with a dragon instead of a one pip reminds me of one of the first dice I ever bought. Sometimes I see something new, like a d7 or a d30, or some of the faceted-rod-shaped d10s, or a percentile die that's a tiny d10 encased in a larger, clear d10, or a spherical d6, or...well, I'm sure you can imagine how it goes. My dice collection – perhaps "addiction" is a better word – assuredly rivals the galleries of those who spend hours assembling models of antique battleships.

And I think that the connection I'm looking for, that logical link between hobby stores and RPGs, is right there. As gamers, we're still collectors. We like stuff. We like *having* stuff. Who can go out and buy only the book she absolutely needs, ignoring all the supplements available? Who has only one tube of seven dice? Who plays miniatures games with only the starter sets? We like to get new things, to have them, and – though perhaps we don't realize it – to collect them.

The industry itself supports that theory. Given all the advantages of a PDF-format supplement (searchability, portability and cost-effectiveness to name a few), print books shouldn't have a market anymore. Yet there are more RPG books available today than ever, more in hardcover than ever, and in more (and more mainstream) locations than ever. People are buying books, and they're buying them – at least in part – because they are things that we can have and collect.

Alternately, we could just look at the upcoming gaming event of the year (at least as far as a Midwest-based American is concerned) – GenCon! Just upon checking in, a GenCon attendee is given a bag full of demo cards, special-release issues of gaming comics, card covers, pins, stickers, flyers, and, if you're lucky, even a mini-game or other neat stuff. As you wander through the exhibition hall, you can't help but collect more and more loot.

I know that I still have some of the free material that I got at my first GenCon years ago. It's an honored part of my gaming collection, and I'd bet that almost everyone treats "GenCon Loot" the same way I do. If people didn't hang onto this stuff, get addicted to it and come back for more, the vendors wouldn't give it away. It's just more evidence that we're collectors – and the people who know are using it for their advantage as well as ours!

So maybe it isn't so odd that we, collectors in our own odd way, go to the same dank shop as those who collect other things, like model trains and airplane kits. Perhaps those shop owners knew us for who we were when we first started the RPG industry, and they're just holding onto a great thing.

Who can blame them?

The Soul of a Man

By Kosala Ubayasekara

The soul of a man is a fickle thing, easily tempted by evil.

Rorn Talius leapt across the rooftops with the kind of ease that only came with a lifetime of practice. Memories flashed in his mind as they always did when he was on the hunt. Memories of his childhood, the first kill. He remembered the stealthy tread that came naturally to him as he stalked his prey, easily moving in and out of the night shadows. He remembered the fat man with the big purse. This would be his first time. His first kill. His ascendance from the role of a cowering youth, a victim of his situation, into the role of a master of his domain. He remembered the blood as it spurted all over him and the exaltation of his moment. He had done it! And done it easily.

He remembered cradling the fat purse in his hand and looking the fat man right in the eyes as the last of his victim's life crept away. The eyes had unsettled him somehow, but what did it matter? This was how he would survive the streets. He would be a warrior of the dark alleys, an assassin of the night. He knew it for certain then. A sharp cackle escaped his mouth, and he was only twelve. He had achieved his ascendance.

The soul of a man is a fickle thing, easily tempted by evil.

Rorn came to a graceful stop on a roof above a side road. He stretched his long frame to ease out any coldness in his body and took in the night breeze that crept

softly into his lungs. He smiled. The small chill of autumn was his favorite time to be out at night; the crispness in the air heightened his senses and brought a sense of urgency to his task. He looked down at the street below to see the last of the town's night owls making their way home from a drunken evening. In the distance he heard the slamming of doors and the iron-clad boots of the city watch moving away. Just below a drunk was pushing himself against the young body of a prostitute and groping for his money pouch.

The soul of a man is a fickle thing, easily tempted by evil.

Rorn turned away with a smile. He always enjoyed watching others tempted by the darker things. Enjoyed watching their inner character at war with itself. To be tempted or not to be tempted? Sin always won. But tonight there were more pressing matters. It was his night of ascendance. The very thought sent his heart beating. Tonight he would kill that old oaf that led and take the guild as his own. He was smarter, younger, and faster. There was no reason why he should not lead. The old one's time was past. Ascendance.

His mind went back to his early twenties, when he was making his way up the ranks in the guild. He remembered the lieutenant. That man had been in his way, standing in his way of moving up in the guild. He had earned his kills, and he was better than the dark-skinned lieutenant. What was his name? He couldn't remember anymore. But he remembered the kill.

The leap from the rooftops onto the shoulders of the darker man below, the quick thrust of the knife into the throat, the perfect vault onto the ground before the body even knew its life had been robbed from it. He remembered picking up the body of the lieutenant just before his victim died and smiling into his face as life left him. There was something unsettling in the eyes, but what did it matter? He had achieved his ascendance.

The soul of a man is a fickle thing, easily tempted by evil.

Now it was time again. Rorn came to a graceful stop at the edge of a nearby roof, and, with a single movement, slid down a makeshift drain and onto the ground. Entering a secret sewer opening, he moved rapidly underground and made his way past the guard posts, nodding at the familiar sentries posted there. Within moments, he was in the vast underground cave complex that was the guild's home. He moved swiftly through the darkness until he came to the heavily guarded entrance to the guild master's underground living complex. He could see a light in the window opening carved two stories above, and he moved around so that he was not in the view of the door guards.

Unslinging his equipment, he attached some custom-made hooks to his hands and started to climb. His thirty-year frame was well muscled and toned from years of life on the streets, and he made his progress effortlessly up the sheer face of the rock. His leather boots made no sound as they held him in place, and his clean-shaven face bore a countenance of grim determination. The window was near.

One flex of his legs and quick jerk of his hands and he was through. In the same movement he was on the single guard in the bedroom and his knife pulsed twice. The man died. He turned.

On the bed the old guild master stared at him in amusement. In the dim light of the room he could barely make out the guild master's face looking at him as if in expectation.

There was something unsettling about the eyes. But what did it matter? He had done it. What no other in the guild had managed to do, though many had tried. He covered the distance to the bed in one leap and his knife went in for the kill.

The guild master's gaunt hands met his wrists and stopped the attack short as if in a trance. The grip was impossibly strong. Rorn halted, held rigid in the grip, close to the face of his victim. Those eyes! They were the fat man's. They were the lieutenant's. They were all the others'.

A grin appeared on the guild master's face as it distorted hideously to be replaced with the elongated features of a monstrous abomination. "Yes," it hissed, "now you remember. I am your doom, a Soul Stealer. For centuries I have occupied the souls of others. This is how I survive." Rorn felt a throbbing inside him as if his insides were being pulled through his skin. Pain engulfed his mind. The cackling madness that was the creature's laugh penetrated right to his soul. The demon continued, "To occupy my host I must prepare him, for he must be truly evil, and such is born of your actions. Remember the eyes!"

Rorn remembered the fat man; he could have robbed him without killing him. He remembered the lieutenant; had there been another way?

Rorn felt the last, clinging bit of free will slip away as the evil seized possession of him, and the voice that spoke next was his own.

"The soul of a man is a fickle thing, easily tempted by evil. And you have been mine from the start."

Reviews, ReviewsReviews!

How we rate

Scoring definitions for d20 products:

18 = Superior. *Best of the best.*
16 = Very Good. *Part of a Baker's Dozen.*
14 = Good. *Most gamers would like this.*
12 = Fair. *Some gamers would like this.*
10 = Average. *Most gamers would be indifferent.*
8 = Sub-par. *Flawed, but not without promise.*
6 = Bad. *Most gamers would dislike this.*
4 = Very Bad. *Among the Dirty Dozen.*
2 = Inferior. *Worst of the worst.*

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8 = Fair. *Some gamers would like this.*
7 = Average. *Most gamers would be indifferent.*
6 = Sub-par. *Flawed, but not without promise.*
5 = Poor. *Some gamers would dislike this.*
4 = Bad. *Most gamers would dislike this.*
3 = Very Bad. *Among the Dirty Dozen.*
2 = Inferior. *Worst of the worst.*

Dreaming Cities: Tri-Stat Fantasy Genre

Dreaming Cities is, as the subtitle says, a genre book that covers urban fantasy as a whole. This is not just a broad genre book, however. It also contains three complete game settings: The Nightmare Chronicles, The World at Twilight, and The Small Folk.

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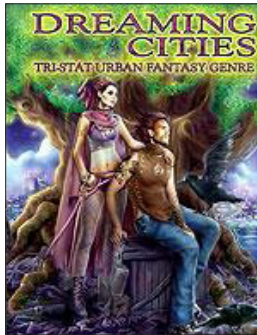
Gurps 4th Edition Basic Set: Campaigns

Campaigns is both shorter and less dense than *Characters*, but still contains a wealth of information.

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read on...

Dreaming Cities: Tri-Stat Fantasy Genre



About: 270 pages, hard cover, \$40.

Authors: Jason L Blair, Jamais Cascio, Phil Masters, Jo Ramsay, and Elizabeth Rich with additional writing by David L. Pulver and Jesse Scoble.

Publisher: Guardians of Order

Reviewed by: Nash J. DeVita

Review Date: May 9th, 2005

Reviewer Bias: This title was received for review purposes. I have dabbled in the urban fantasy genre quite a bit and was rather excited both when I first heard of this book and throughout its reading.

Dreaming Cities is, as the subtitle says, a genre book that covers urban fantasy as a whole. This is not just a broad genre book, however. It also contains three complete game settings: The Nightmare Chronicles, The World at Twilight, and The Small Folk.

Dreaming Cities is a 270-page hardback that offers complete Tri-Stat rules, a full background on the genre, character templates, gear, etc. Beyond the basics, this title offers three complete settings for which this book could be used. Magic, a major factor in many urban fantasy stories, is also included, with variable rules to fit just about any urban fantasy feel.

From the Back Cover

The Magic is Real

Ancient gods and modern myths rub shoulders in night clubs, ghosts and goblins ride the subway, and the faeries are ready to rock and roll! *Dreaming Cities* is a comprehensive core rulebook for playing and game mastering urban fantasy games, introduced with an astute and informative essay to this popular genre by Jo Ramsay. In addition, *Dreaming Cities* features three archetypal urban fantasy settings by a talented array of authors: Jason L Blair, Elizabeth Rich, Jamias Cascio, and Phil Masters.

Dreaming Cities, developed by Tri-Stat guru David L. Pulver, also details new rules for fantastic races and magic. With a plethora of occupational templates, magical spells and rituals, and adventuring equipment, you can create your character and be ready to play in minutes.

Evocatively illustrated by Sam Araya, Greg Boychuk, Marta Dahlig, Kelly Hamilton, Anne Rouvin, and Melissa Uran, *Dreaming Cities* raises the bar for urban fantasy role-playing.

Presentation

The cover features two individuals in front of a tree. The woman, standing, is very scantily dressed in a purple top, a pink cape, and fish-net stockings. The male, sitting, is wearing a pair of blue jeans and a brown tunic-type shirt. On his lap is perched a raven with its wings spread. The background holds a city skyline. The skyline set behind the large tree manages to perfectly yet simply capture the idea and feel of urban fantasy.

The interior is, as is stated above, evocatively illustrated by Sam Araya, Greg Boychuk, Marta Dahlig, Kelly Hamilton, Anne Rouvin, and Melissa Uran. This line-up features a number of artists I am familiar with (most notably Greg Boychuk of

Settings – A Brief Overview

The Nightmare Chronicles

The Nightmare Chronicles will be somewhat familiar to many gamers. To boil it down to the absolute basics, it is a setting that covers monsters entering the 'real' world, but only select people can actually detect these monsters and beings from another realm.

There are a number of different character types given here, making it quite unique. There are those that can channel super attributes, a sixth sense, or magic. Some people with these powers can only turn them on when around a monster; others, part monster themselves, must take care as their powers are 'on' all of the time. Then there are some characters, great demon-fighting warriors, who have been brought through time itself but have had their memories washed away.

All of these types of people, along with a few small agencies (government included), fight demons and otherworldly beings to protect the lives and psyches of all of human kind.

The World at Twilight

Almost all of us are told faerie tales and legends when we are young. They are just stories, right? Not really. These characters and realms once existed elsewhere. Now, however, they have begun to merge with our own realm.

Hansel & Gretel, Little Red Riding-hood, and many more characters, along with members of fae kind, gargoyles, goblins, etc., have all come to reside here in different forms. Some seek a new life in this new world. Others attempt to continue their old ways. Both tend to bring with them inherent issues.

The Small Folk

Tiny, magical humanoid beings have always lived among us, living among mice in the walls and dust bunnies in the rafters. These are, for the most part, a light-hearted people who hold nature in high regard. Some love to pull pranks. Others base their lives in hard work. Some work on new technology while others wreak havoc with it. These little people in their little communities, however, can have big problems.

UDON and Melissa Uran) and some I am not so familiar with.

Each page contains a fairly simple border. It is a light grey image of an individual. The image is so light that very few features stand out – to the degree that one cannot really tell if it is a male or female.

Content

Like most Tri-Stat books, *Dreaming Cities* contains the complete system details and character creation details. There are plenty of unique items within, though.

One thing that I must point out early on, because I am very happy to see it included, is a timeline of urban fantasy role-playing games. This is damn complete as far as I can tell. I am so happy with it because it includes smaller titles such as *Little Fears*, *Deliria*, and *Wyrd is Bond* - some of my favorite role-playing games, not just favorite indie publications!

There is also provided a nice list of works of urban fantasy. These are broken down by sub-type of urban fantasy as well as media type. These range from the popular and famous to short-lived and obscure.

Normally, with a Tri-Stat book, I would not go into much detail about the system but here I feel I must. This is only my opinion, but I feel that this is a major look at what *BESM 3rd Edition* (also from Guardians of Order) will look like.

As Mark C. MacKinnon told me in our interview last summer (at Gen Con 2004), the system is going to be streamlined as to use just a few sets of numbers and fewer charts/lists within the Attributes. This has all been done here, and if this is what *BESM 3rd* winds up looking like, I'll be quite happy with it (and that is saying something, since I hold *BESM 2nd Edition* as my RPG Bible).

These changes in the system were also seen in *Ex Machina*, the cyber punk genre book from Guardians of Order.

There are twelve templates of different sorts included here – occupation, 'occupation' (such as occultist or monster hunter, hence the quotes), and race (ghosts and faerie).

Magic plays a pivotal role in many urban fantasy settings, so complete rules for portraying different types of magic, psychic powers, etc., are provided so these things fit flawlessly within this specific genre.

Conclusion

With all this book has to offer and all of the pages contained between the covers, this is a lot of book! There is a lot of reading to be done here, covering the genre and role-playing in general.

I can't recommend this book enough to any fan of this genre. If you have the \$40 to spare and are a gamer (and I must assume you are, since you are here reading this review), do yourself a favor and buy this book. It is absolutely fantastic in this reviewer's eyes.

Archetype: Genre Book

Body 11 (*Game Mechanics*): The system allows great flow.

Mind 11 (*Organization*): I don't see it getting any better!

Spirit 10 (*Look & Feel*): Highly fitting.

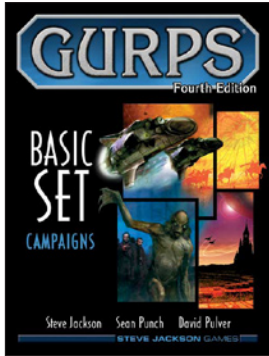
Attack 10 (*Value of Content*): Great value, even at \$40.

Defense 9 (*Originality of Content*): Nice take on a familiar genre.

Health 10 (*Physical Quality*): Bent corners and minor scratches on cover are all the damage I'd expect to see.

Magic 10 (*Options & Adaptability*): Urban Fantasy is a wide genre. Tons of options abound.

Gurps 4th Edition Basic Set : Campaigns



Authors: Steve Jackson, Sean Punch, and David Pulver

Publisher: Steve Jackson Games (www.sjgames.com)

Reviewed By: Joel Oberdieck

Review Date: May 22, 2005

Reviewer Bias: *I have long been a fan of GURPS Third Edition, but have neither played GURPS Fourth Edition nor had a chance to see it in action. This is the second part of my first roleplaying book review.*

Campaigns is the second half of the core book for *GURPS Fourth Edition*, covering most of the aspects needed to run the game. It is not necessary for players to own this book in order to play *GURPS*, but it would not be detrimental to play if they did have access to a copy. The book is 217 pages long, including appendices and index; hardcover; and illustrated with color throughout. The numbering is continuous from *Characters*, so the first page number is 339, and the first chapter is ten. The cover art is a compilation of works by Jeff Koke, Christopher Shy, and Rogéro, and a number of additional artists contributed to the interior – Abrab Ajmal, Michael Clarke, Chris Dien, Alex Fernandez, Roberto Marchesi, Torstein Nordstrand, Bob Stevlic, Dan Willems, Eric Wilkerson, and Leo Winstead.

From the Back Cover

Any World You Can Imagine.

This book is intended for Game Masters and advanced players. It covers physical feats, combat, vehicles and technology, animals and monsters, world design, and Game Mastering. 'Tool Kit' chapters let you create new creatures (and even PC races), artifacts, character abilities, and entire game worlds.

It also features a cross-world setting, Infinite Worlds, which you can use to create cross-genre campaigns...develop alternate histories...play modern characters in a fantasy world...whatever you like!

GURPS Fourth Edition offers regular new releases and extensive online support. It's based on 16 years of gamer feedback from the Third Edition, and is faster and easier to play than ever before. All rules are carefully organized, indexed, and cross-referenced. Charts and tables are clear and legible. And a library of 200+ Third Edition books already in print is a resource that will jump-start any campaign!

This is Book 2 of the two-volume Basic Set. Only Book 1 is necessary to play. Book 2 is required for Game Masters, and players wanting more detail will find it valuable.

Presentation

Similar to *Characters*, the cover of *Campaigns* has four color images fitted together in puzzle-piece form, each evoking a different setting. One image is two spaceships traveling at high speed. Next to this image is an image of silhouetted horsemen overlaying a compass image, invoking the feel of the Age of Exploration. The lower-left image is a horror-style fishman with several Victorian men in the background. Finally, the lower-right image is the cover from *GURPS Third Edition*, showing the silhouettes of fighter jets flying above a medieval

castle. All four images occupy the right half of the black cover, with text and logo in white and blue.

Continuing the formatting from *Characters*, the internal art is all in color and varies in size from very small to half a page, with most artwork relevant to a topic discussed in the nearby text. The text of the book is formatted in three columns, with additional materials placed in offset text boxes. Each chapter is color-coded with tabs on the top and bottom of the page to allow easy location.

Content

Campaigns is both shorter and less dense than *Characters*, but still contains a wealth of information. As one might expect, the rules section of the book is largely dominated by combat rules (as tends to be the case in roleplaying games). About half the book is devoted to various GM functions, such as running the game and designing worlds. Finally, the last chapter of the book introduces the default setting for *GURPS Fourth Edition*, the Infinite Worlds setting. We will now look at each of the chapters in more detail.

Chapter Ten, the first chapter of this volume, details rules for the resolution of just about every action a character can take outside of combat. These rules start with the basic resolution mechanic (roll 3d6 and check if the total is under your modified skill to determine success) and the mechanics of contested rolls. Quickly thereafter, however, the book goes into detailed topics such as figuring a character's lifting capacity, jumping distance, climb speeds, and even how fast a given character can dig a hole. Also covered in this section are mental feats, such as sense rolls, rolls to influence NPC reactions, and rolls to determine how a character responds to a terrifying event.

Logically, the next thing that the rules cover is combat, and *GURPS Campaigns* offers quite a lot on this subject. Contrasting the relatively brief treatment of success rolls in Chapter Ten, combat occupies the next three chapters of the

book (Chapter Eleven: Combat, Chapter Twelve: Tactical Combat, and Chapter Thirteen: Special Combat Situations). The first of those chapters, Combat, describes the basics of combat, including descriptions of the maneuvers players can choose each round, how characters move, and how the resolution of an attack works.

This last mechanic in particular is vital, but requires some getting used to for new players. In short, the attacker rolls vs. his weapon skill, and if he succeeds, he *might* hit his target. Assuming the defender is a living person, she can now roll against her defense (either dodge, parry or block) and only if she fails this roll does the attacker hit. This is quite different from systems where the attacker is rolling against a specific difficulty to hit or where the attack is resolved by a contested roll. Also, this dual roll makes it somewhat more challenging to eyeball how hard a target is to hit. As such, it requires special attention the first few times the combat system is used.

While everything that you need to run combat is included in Chapter Eleven, the book spends another two chapters discussing special cases in combat that may occur. Chapter Twelve: Tactical Combat, deals with how to play out GURPS combats on a hex map, should the players and GM decide to do so. This section doesn't really add any new rules, but simply maps out the rules from the previous chapter in deeper detail.

The new rules come in Chapter Thirteen: Special Combat Situations, which deals with a whole variety of combat issues that don't come up frequently. Examples include surprise, visibility modifiers, rules for combat while mounted or flying, targeting specific locations on a body, and a variety of special options related to ranged weapons and explosives. These two chapters are the densest in the book, but since they are all more detailed subsystems of the main combat system, they can be safely ignored by a novice or rules-light GM.

The fourteenth chapter deals with the unfortunate and inevitable consequences of combat: Injuries, Illness, and Fatigue. Here we learn about GURPS' take on Hit Points and how damage hinders performance. Again, this system takes some getting used to, as there is no concrete death number for characters. Rather, when a character has suffered more damage than he or she has Hit Points, the character must begin making Health checks to avoid passing out or dying (depending on amount of damage suffered). In addition, the system has rules for crippling injuries, which can temporarily or permanently render a damaged limb useless. These combined add an unpredictable element to combat, which many have interpreted as making GURPS a very lethal system. Thankfully, this section also includes rules for healing, both natural and medical. Rounding out the hazards are fatigue (which measures how exhausted you are) and rules for a variety of non-standard damage types, ranging from disease to pressure to drugs and finally to simple aging. This chapter is remarkably thorough in under 30 pages: if it can hurt someone, it's probably here.

Most of the remainder of the book is devoted to topics to help the GM flesh out a campaign. Chapter Fifteen: Creating Templates goes through how to create custom, concept-based packages for PCs and NPCs, such as specific warrior types and non-human races. This is focused on tailoring concepts to the GM's campaign, not on giving archetypical examples (that was in *Characters*). Chapter Sixteen: Animals and Monsters gives a few brief examples of non-sapient races to use as companions or opponents for the PCs, as well as rules for using them both as pets and as combatants. Sadly, this chapter lacks a comprehensive design mechanism for animals/monsters (we have been promised this in the forthcoming edition of *GURPS Bestiary*). Chapter Seventeen: Technology and Artifacts has rules for vehicular movement and combat (along with a table of sample vehicles), rules for electronics, gadgeteering (to allow those would-be mad scientist PCs to actually do something) and finally, rules for magic items.

Chapter Eighteen: Game Mastering and Chapter Nineteen: Game Worlds are the real GM sections of this book. Everything else has been, at least to some extent, useful to both players and GMs. These chapters, on the other hand, are designed specifically to help the GM design and run a good campaign. There are no secrets here, no hidden rules about how things actually work. Instead, these chapters are filled with advice which would prove valuable to a novice GM. In many ways, of course, Chapter Eighteen is just like any other advice to a GM that you may have read elsewhere; if this is not your first time GMing, you can probably safely skip this chapter. I would have appreciated more advice in this section on how to run the different types of games that the system is built to accommodate (horror, space opera, high fantasy, etc.) in addition to the same old basics of adventure design and running NPCs, and so I found this chapter rather disappointing.

Chapter Nineteen is better, giving us numerous aspects of societies that GMs should consider when designing a game, such as technology level, amount of social control, type of government and economics. This chapter is very handy for world design, pointing out the various things that must be considered in designing a logically consistent world. I consider this chapter the highlight of the GM material.

Finally, in Chapter Twenty we get a brief introduction to the Infinite Worlds setting, the new default setting for GURPS. The concept is that a near-future version of our Earth has discovered how to open gates into other parallel timelines, and the PCs are explorers entering these new worlds. Some are historically parallel, where (for example) it is currently the late 1800's, exactly as they occurred in our world's history. Some are alternate timelines, where history followed a different course (all the classics are represented here: a surviving Roman Empire, a victorious Third Reich, and the independent Confederate States of America, etc.). And some are weird parallels where magic works, a different race evolved to dominance on

Earth instead of humans, or gods walk the lands. In short, it is a framework that GMs can use to integrate any campaign world they wish into the core setting. It should be noted that this is strictly optional and choosing to ignore this chapter has no effect on previous chapters. Nonetheless, I personally like the setting and am glad that GURPS has chosen to add it as a default setting, as this gives justification to the universality of the system.

Conclusions

Much like the first part of the Basic Set, *GURPS Campaigns* is well written and informative. However, I feel that there are several issues with organization of this book.

First, the chapter layout seems a bit counterintuitive to me. In particular, I think that the chapter on templates would have better fit between Chapters Eighteen and Nineteen, thus accumulating all of the GM world-building tools in one section. Also, while I appreciate the idea of moving secondary systems of combat into their own chapter, I feel that the book could have worked better with these items integrated into the main combat chapter and other subsystems which were omitted from this edition of GURPS (such as the mass combat rules) put in that chapter instead.

Secondly, I was somewhat disappointed by things that they failed to include in this volume. I will admit, of course, that I would like to see everything GURPS in one or two volumes (and would gladly suffer the back injuries involved in carrying those massive tomes), but there are several glaring examples of things that could have been added in with little addition in size. For example, adding sections on how to properly run various genres of games and how to properly convey the feel of those genres would have been vastly helpful for a GM who, for example, wants to run a horror arc in a story, but isn't interested enough in a horror campaign to justify buying *GURPS Horror*. Also, the rules for animal and vehicle design (or at least simplified versions of

them) would have been useful, although these are forgivable given the completeness of the character creation system.

In the end, though, this book adequately conveys the workings of the system to new players and GMs. While it lacks the hordes of options that *Characters* possessed for character-building, it does contain virtually everything that most GMs would need to run a campaign.

Archetype: Core Book (2 of 2)

Body: 8 (Game Mechanics): Rules are clearly presented with examples.

Mind: 10 (Organization): Divided into chapters by topic, but the ordering of the chapters is a bit counterintuitive.

Spirit: 9 (Look and Feel): Art is generally unobtrusive, but is average quality.

Attack: 8 (Value of Content): Essential to playing GURPS, but lacks the outside appeal of *Characters*.

Defense: 10 (Originality of Content): Many new ideas outside of the rather stale "How to be a GM" section.

Health: 11 (Physical Quality): *Campaigns* is hardcover and well-bound.

Magic: 9 (Options and Adaptability): Covers a lot of ground, but serves as a gateway to more specific GURPS setting books.

RACES OF TWILIGHT

The Green

by Michael Thompson



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

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

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

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

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Silven Trumpeter Magazine

The Silven Trumpeter is a monthly publication produced by the Silven Crossroads community (<http://www.silven.com>). Articles and fiction appearing in the Silven Trumpeter are drawn from the various content areas of the Silven Crossroads site as well as contributed by independent authors.

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Be sure to check out next month's Silven Trumpeter – a special issue featuring Gen Con Indy 2005! With coverage of all the major events (and lots of the smaller events, too!), upcoming product announcements and new product reviews, chats with game designers and exclusive interviews, this is one issue you won't want to miss! And we'll still have all your favorites – Matthew J. Hanson's Adventures of Starlanko the Magnificent, fiction by Christian M. Bonawandt, the Silven Bestiary and more!