

Well of Souls



By Chris Chinn and Peter Nordstrand.
Illustrations by Chris Chinn.
Layout: Peter Nordstrand.

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Foreword

Working on *Well of Souls* was a very liberating experience for me. I wanted to know how to write a scenario with no predetermined plot, where the players create the theme of the story through play. Chris offered to help, and *Well of Souls* is the result. It was one of those rare instances when I got to say "ah, I knew that," but still gave me with a distinct feeling that I have learned something new.

Most of the cool meaty stuff in here are thanks to Chris. He created the central conflict and designed the narrator characters. I added *HeroQuest* stats and wrote about Spring Fountain and some other background material, such as the mythic background and the notes for the heroquest to Damsel Ophidias realm.

Well of Souls has taught me a lot. Thank you Chris, and thank you also to the good folks at the Forge (see the bibliography on p. 4) who have helped, criticized, and inspired.

PETER NORDSTRAND

Contact Information

Peter Nordstrand
pnordstrand@swipnet.se

Chris Chinn
bankuei@earthlink.net

Ask Questions Here:
We'd love to discuss this scenario with you at the HeroQuest forum at The Forge.
<http://www.indie-rpgs.com/viewforum.php?f=13>

Neighboring Fiefs

Sir Eustef has carved out his land, and held onto it with fierce determination and cunning. He's held any rivals at bay through strong politicking, allegiances, and unspoken threats as necessary.

The setting gives very little specific details about the neighboring fiefs, other than that they are political rivals, and probably looking to take advantage of the chaos. This, again, is a dial for you to use as you see fit. If you want to keep the focus tight, and just focus on Trymirwal, you need only minimally detail the other fiefs. If you want to make it a "big picture" scenario with political maneuvering all the way up to the king, you can do that as well. You can also easily introduce Trymirwal as a small out of the way place that is not too far from an on-going campaign.

with motivations and goals, and all you need to do is pick an narrator character, or two, and have them do something, either of their own accord, or in reaction to what the player characters are doing. Pick one or two, put them in a scene with at least one hero, and let things happen. When things slow down, cut to another scene, pick another character, drop them in a scene. Lather, rinse, repeat.

There's only two skills you need to apply regularly to make this sort of scenario work. First, you must be able to roleplay a single character. If you have that much skill, which is basically the same as any of your players, then you are halfway there. The second skill, is to think of what would be interesting, or at least dramatic. If you know two characters don't like each other, you know that putting them together will make trouble, and make things interesting. Boom! It's the same skill applied by producers of reality tv and talk shows over and over.

There are no "hooks" in this scenario. If you decide to run this scenario, both you and your players must agree to hook in the player heroes. The heroes may already know folks in Trymirwal, they might have arrived a few weeks ago and just made friends, it doesn't matter. Everyone has to agree to have emotional ties with some narrator characters in Trymirwal, aside from that, its open game.

Finally, recognize that the narrator characters and their conflicts we've provided are all simply tools for you to use to make interesting stuff happen. Take any or all of them, change them, play them nice, play them mean, use them the way you want to. Add characters to the conflict, create servants, friends, family if you want. Expand the conflict, create the neighboring fiefs, have politics, drag in the king if you like.

You can use *Well of Souls* to run a series of sessions or a whole campaign off of. The scenario ends when the group has closed a climax and decides they've

done most of what they want to do with it, whether we're talking having decided the fate of Lord Eustef and his sons, restructured the politics in the entire kingdom, or simply gotten the "girl" (whoever they've fallen in love with).

The *Well of Souls* is a flexible set of tools, loaded with conflict, drama, and characters, and is waiting for you to pick it up, and use it. It's designed to work for narrators in the same fashion that characters work for players. The players come to the table, never knowing what's going to happen, but they can always look to their character and figure out how to act or react. As a narrator, look to the list of characters, look to the central conflicts, and use that as a guide for "what happens next".

The *Well of Souls* is yours to use. It's waiting...

Scenario Length

Depending on how you want to run *Well of Souls*, you could have it be a short scenario of a few sessions, up to a campaign in and of itself. If you want to close things up, I'd suggest drawing things to a climax around the two major issues of deciding who will take power, and the fate of Lord Eustef's soul. Otherwise,

Bibliography

Everything you need to play *Well of Souls* can be found in this scenario, and the *HeroQuest* rulebook. Don't let anybody trick you into believing otherwise. For those interested in learning more, here is a list of suggested reading.

Glorantha and Seshnela

Metcalf, P., and Stafford, G. *Glorantha: Introduction to the Hero Wars*. Issaries, Inc., 2000.

HeroQuest Voices is a free pdf available at <http://www.issaries.com/products/3001.html>

Roleplaying Theory

The *Well of Souls* is a scenario designed to facilitate a play style where the players play major roles creating the outcome, as opposed to enacting it. Folks familiar with roleplaying theory will recognize this as narrativism, or protagonism. If you're interested in such things, begin by reading Chris' "Ways to Play" column:

<http://www.rpg.net/news+reviews/collists/waystoplay.html>

Also, check out The Forge:

<http://www.indie-rpgs.com>

The term Bang was first used in Ron Edward's excellent roleplaying game *Sorcerer*. His game company is called Adept Press.

<http://www.adept-press.com/>

you can expand things by dealing with the neighboring fiefs, their politicking, and the actions of the king and Rokari Church in all this.

Enter the Heroes

The only requirement for heroes in *Well of Souls* is that they must have emotional ties to one or more supporting characters and a vested interest in the rulership of Trymirwal. Probably the best way to lay this out is to present a summary of all the supporting characters and who they are, and let the players choose which characters their heroes interact with, and what the nature of the relationship is.

Don't be afraid to let your players know who all the movers and shakers are. They may not know them all intimately, or their dark secrets, but they've probably at least seen or heard of them somewhere. There's no "secret bad guys" in this scenario, so feel free to let the players know all the supporting cast before play begins.

The heroes could all be newly created to fit into this scenario, in which case, the relationships will be long standing and part of their history. Heroes may have also recently arrived in Spring Fountain, for whatever reasons, and have stayed for a couple weeks to a couple months, plenty of time to develop friendships, rivalries and relationships.

Character Flexibility

Well of Souls leaves a lot of room for interpretation and modification. This wasn't done out of laziness, but to give you open windows to customize *Well of Souls* to your needs.

Each of the characters are described with enough motivations so that you can get a handle on what they're about, but most can be played in a range from well intentioned good people to evil conniving jerks, depending on your personal take on them. No one is all good, or all evil, but you can determine where on that spectrum they reside. One of the strengths of *Well of Souls* is that there is no "main bad guy" to fight, or simple answer. It's a nasty moral quandary, involving who should lead, and who should be punished, the how's and why's, which can only be determined in play.

Finally, feel free to add more narrator characters than the ones we give you. Most of the characters do not have detailed family, friends, or followers listed, and that is all open room for you to insert more narrator characters or the player heroes themselves. Realize that if a player wanted to play Lord Eustef's brother, or a third son, that would work just fine, and not "break" the scenario.

Important Concepts

Which son wished for death? Which son wished for life?

This is totally up to you as the narrator. Realize that even the son who wished death upon his father did so in the typical adolescent "throwing a fit" sort of rampage, not actually wishing it to be true. Of course, since this scenario is very flexible, you could totally change the feel of it by making it intentional. *Well of Souls* is a scenario designed to create messy moral questions, and with neither son intentionally causing this problem, the question comes up, "What is the right thing to do now?"

What's their reactions when they figure it out?

Both sons will feel guilty and messed up about it when they make the connection. Depending on how you choose to run them, they could simultaneously figure it out, or one could make the connection before the other one does. The sons could confess, or try to hide their responsibility in the affair.

Consider these possibilities:

- ∴ Both sons make the connection at the same time, confess, family reunited.
- ∴ Both sons make the connection, but only one confesses, and the other deliberately lets his brother take the fall.
- ∴ One son makes the connection, and the other, in anger, wants to see him punished, only to realize later, his own role in the problem.
- ∴ Some other variation? Up to you...

Under a Winter Moon...

A wish for Death,
A prayer for Life,
A land in Turmoil...

The Well of Souls

Well of Souls (Guardian)

When Enval liberated Trymirwal, he reconnected with the ancient past. He spent a full season of prayer and fasting. When he finally arose, a well sprang to life beneath his feet. Many years later, a fountain was built around the spring. The *Well of Souls* has no personality or identity of its own. It is just a sacred well. Unfortunately, only the lord can control its magic. While Eustef is in a coma, the people of Spring Fountain cannot benefit from its powers.

Method: Emanation.

Form: A beautiful, ornate fountain.

Communication Manifestation: The shape, color, and odor of the water.

Functions:

Awareness—Sense Armed Intruder 15 \mathbb{L} 2.

Blessings—Lord of the Lands 1 \mathbb{L} 3 (Command Peasant, Fertile Fields, Strike Down Peasant, Tear Apart Enemy Unit). (This functions as a wyter ability.)

Defense—Protect from Earth Magic 9 \mathbb{L} 2.

Wells

Wells is Lord Eustef's personal demesne, centered around the town of the same name. It is the focus of the military, spiritual, and economic might of the fief.

Ruler: Eustef.

Adult Population: 720.

Army: 3 knights, 7 sergeants, 38 foot soldiers.

Townpeople of Wells

Wells is a small town of about 60 buildings, a marketplace, and a stone church. Wells Manor, protected by a moat and a wooden palisade, overlooks the settlement from a nearby hill.

Leader: Council.

Adult Population: 180.

Congregation of Wells

Peasants from the surrounding countryside gather weekly at the newly renovated church of Wells. The building is a source of great pride among the populace, and a testimony to the piety of their Lord.

Leader: Father Rance.

Members: 700.

Reliquary

The church's reliquary is the frontispiece of Saint Rokar's personal copy of the Abiding Book.

Communication: The blood of Saint Rokar appears on the paper.

Functions:

Awareness—Perceive Sin 2 \mathbb{L} .

Blessings—Work Even Harder 7 \mathbb{L} .

Defense—Be Content 15.

Vassals

Biche

Adult Population: 180.

Army: 1 knight, 4 foot soldiers.

Boyenne

Ruler: Serge of the Crescent Sword.

Adult Population: 380.

Army: 1 knight, 2 sergeants, 14 foot soldiers.

Mime

Ruler: Old Maslin.

Adult Population: 320.

Army: 1 knight, 3 sergeants, 10 foot soldiers.

Stalos

Adult Population: 150.

Army: 1 knight, 2 foot soldiers.



Narrator Characters

The narrator characters serve as your tools to drive conflict. Act and react to the actions of the player heroes, and push towards the action. Focus on their motivations, and their personality for the moment, try to get a feel for each character. Listed with each character is a question or two, to help inspire you as to what sorts of actions, reactions or interesting scenes might occur with each character.

Lord Eustef Fresleven

Lord of Trymirwal, Protector of Spring Fountain

Older man, perhaps late 40's — early 50's. Tough, built like a blacksmith. An astute pragmatist, who holds little illusions about the nature of power or those who would try to oust him. Lord Eustef has managed to hold his position over his fief as a benevolent dictator through his ability to discern character, competence, and earn the loyalty and trust of good men. He has also managed to hold his political rivals at bay through sharp maneuvering and always having a trick up his sleeve. Lord Eustef is a good man who is all too used to making hard decisions in life.



What would be best for his people? What is best for his sons?

Keywords: Orderly of Saint Gerlant Flamesword 17¹, Cavalry Soldier (Shock) 4¹2.

Significant Abilities: Intimidate 5¹, Judge of Character 11¹, Political Strategy 5¹, Tough 19.

Weapons and Armor: Broadsword +3, blessed lance +6, iron chainmail +6.

Marks: Is in a coma.

Formulary:

Miracles of the Saints, Volume IV (possesses talismans for Burn Wound Closed 20¹, Commanding Shout 1¹2, Flaming Sword 2¹2, Heal Me Now 16¹, Rally Followers 18¹).

Relationships: Bannerette of Spring Fountain 20¹, Love Sons 5¹, Member of the Household of Great Fire 7¹, Member of Wells Congregation 4¹.

Guilbert Fresleven

Eldest Son

Eldest son, next in line for control of fiefdom. Guilbert is a young man in his mid 20's, well liked by the people. While his father remained fairly distant, although seen as a fair ruler, Guilbert has always been a man of the people. Vibrant, young, and full of energy, he's always been one to lead with his heart, more than his head. While this has endeared him to the populace, his governing skills are not up to par. Not only that, but he is a bit hot-headed to those he believes underestimate him.



How can he show his love and loyalty? How can he prove his worth?

Keywords: Cavalry Soldier (Shock) 4¹, Common Magic 17.

Significant Abilities: Charismatic 7¹, Energetic 16, Etiquette 1¹, Political Strategy 15.

Weapons and Armor: Fancy sword +2, chainmail and shield +4.

Relationships: Leader of Rowdy Idealistic Young Men 17, Liked by the People of Spring Fountain 5 \mathbb{L} , Love Eustef 3 \mathbb{L} , Member of Wells Congregation 19.

Flaws: Hotheaded 1 \mathbb{L} , Overconfident 15.

Hero Points: 4.

Personal Augments:

Look Good talent (+2 Etiquette or Charismatic)

Stay Awake talent (+2 Energetic)

Hugo Fresleven

Younger Son

Younger son, quieter and of cooler head. In his early 20's Hugo inherited his father's perceptiveness, if not his intimidating presence. Hugo is the sort of young man who says little and tends to fade into the background, but picks

up every nuance about a person or a situation in an instant. He is well aware of the political turmoil that surrounds his house, and the various other knights who have been trying to find some political means of ousting their household. Hugo is all too aware of what is at stake. While he does believe in loyalty to his father, and the people, he also is acutely aware of the actions of their rivals. He is afraid he may be forced to act in order to protect his house, just what that action is, well, he's not sure of just yet.

What is best long term decision? What is best for his house? What sort of hard decisions and sacrifices is he willing to make?

Keywords: Petty Noble 20.

Significant Abilities: Assess Personality 5 \mathbb{L} , Perceptive 10 \mathbb{L} , Political Strategy 3 \mathbb{L} , Sword Fighting 14 \mathbb{L} .

Weapons and Armor: Hand-and-a-half sword +3, hardened leather +1.

Relationships: Care for the People of Trymirwal 5 \mathbb{L} , Love Eustef 1 \mathbb{L} , Member of Wells Congregation 1 \mathbb{L} .

Hero Points: 4.

Old Guard

The old guard are the chosen followers of Lord Eustef. All are loyal, competent, and generally good folks. All hope for Eustef's recovery, but most if not all, are preparing in the eventuality that he does not return.

Alfan

"Shield of House Fresleven"

Arguably the strongest, and most loyal supporter of Lord Eustef, Alfan owes his life to Eustef and will do anything for him. Alfan is a stern traditional man, but not high on airs, rather very down to earth and practical. He's been Eustef's "ear to the people" and his right hand man. He's

not the brightest, but no fool either. Alfan will be the first to step up for the heroquest to save his liege and soul brother's spirit. He has absolute faith that Eustef will pull through, and may have trouble dealing with the situation if Eustef chooses to pass on.

How can Lord Eustef be saved? What would Eustef want to be done in this situation?

Keywords: Cavalry Soldier (Regular) 9 \mathbb{L} .

Significant Abilities: Brave 13 \mathbb{L} .

Weapons and Armor: Sword +3, lance +5, heavy chainmail and shield +5.

Relationships: Loyal to Eustef 4 \mathbb{L} 2, Member of Wells Congregation 17, Respected by Townsfolk 1 \mathbb{L} .

Followers: Retainer 2 \mathbb{L} (Madsen: Squire 18).

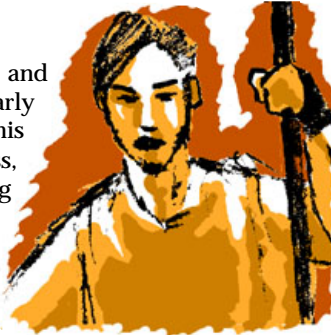
Personal Augments:

Brave (+3 Close Combat)

Lady Collette

Lord Eustef's sister in law. When her sister Aileen passed, Eustef had grown into a cold, unfeeling man. Lady Collette eased him through his grieving and naturally an affair developed. Collette is a still a spinster, and while it's fairly "common knowledge" about the relationship between the two, it has surprisingly avoided serious gossip and scandal. Collette has always been the pragmatist, able to cut to the heart of a situation and tell it like it is. Lord Eustef's coma has her terribly depressed, because she is well aware of the politics of the situation. She's willing to accept Guilbert as the heir, but will lobby to get Hugo as much power as possible to keep the people safe and things running smoothly.

How can Eustef's land and people be kept intact? What balance of power will be the best for the Eustef and his sons?



Keywords: Noblewoman 10L.

Significant Abilities: Exert Authority 9L2, Grooming 14L, Politics 13L.

Relationships: Love Eustef 1L, Member of Wells Congregation 2L.

Guilbert's Supporters

Guilbert's popularity gives him a wide range of supporters and followers. They like him, and see him as being a good ruler, based off of charisma more than actual ability. Guilbert has friends and contacts everywhere, although some may simply be trying to "schmooze" on up to gain favor with him or his father.

Sir Serge of the Crescent Sword

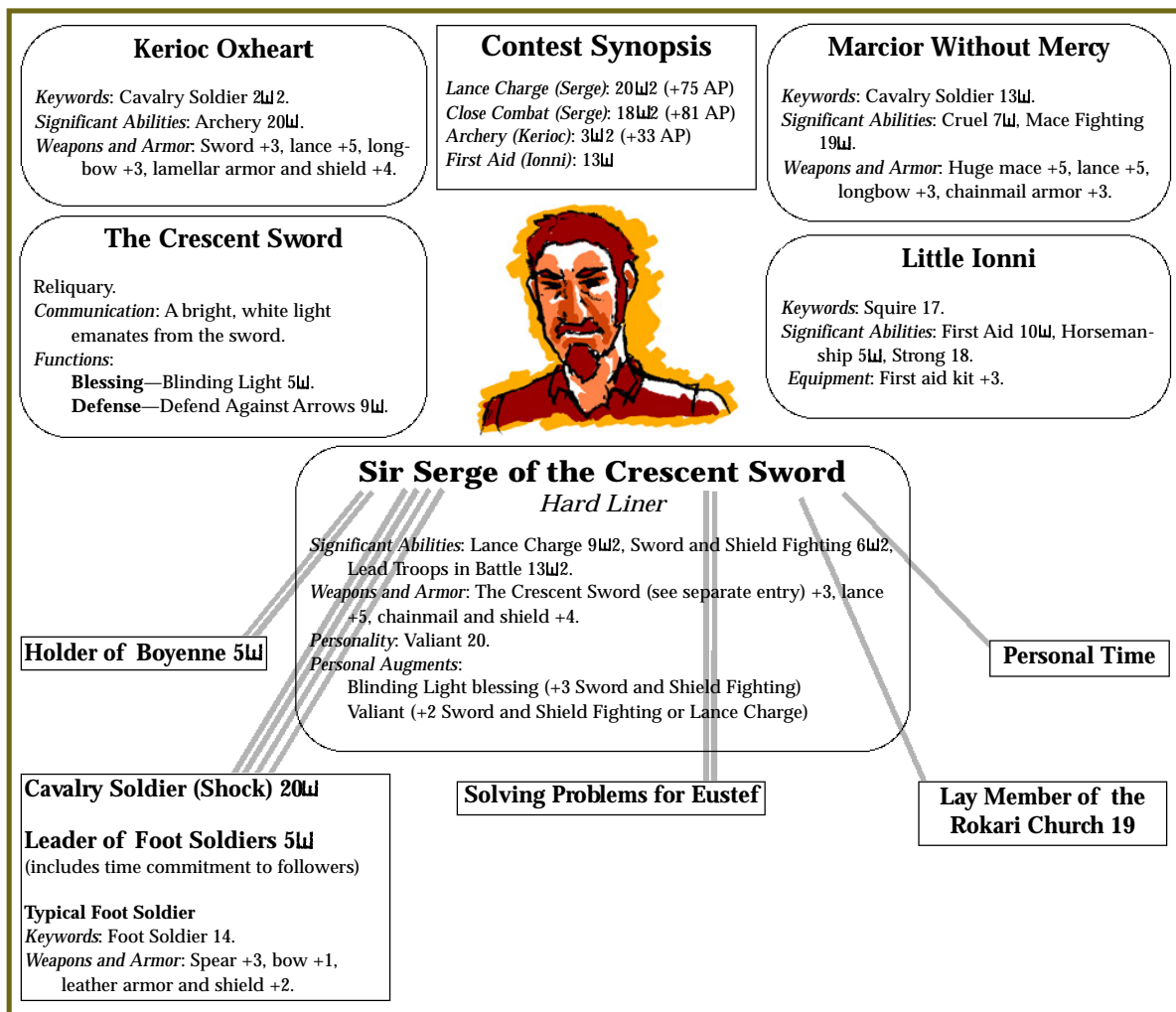
Loyal and competent as the rest, but Serge is much more pessimistic about the situation. He has already started maneuvering to put Guilbert in power, and is determined that he must have a strong hand to watch over him in his father's stead. Serge's cut and dried, this-is-how-it-is attitude has helped Lord Eustef handle the ugly and rough portions of managing his fief, but also will cause conflict with Guilbert when it comes to deciding how the people are managed.

How can Trymirwal be kept united and safe until Guilbert is fit to rule? How can the young whelp be kept under control?

Etienne

Friend, Confidant, Merchant

Guilbert's right hand man, a youthful 19 year old son of a merchant. Etienne has proved to be an excellent orator and "hype man" for Guilbert in dealing with the people. While Guilbert's interactions with the people haven't always been the most prudent or practical, with Etienne, they've always been popular. Etienne usually suggests popular, stopgap short term solutions to problems that eventually fail, although the



blame falls on Lord Eustef, and not Guilbert. Etienne is a young man fond of the good life, and while he does care about Guilbert, he also sees him as his ticket there. Etienne also tends to egg Guilbert into some hasty decisions based on the notion of “fun”.

What is the most fun thing to do at the moment? How can everyone have a good time?

Keywords: Merchant 13.

Significant Abilities: Bargain 16, Eloquent 19, Find the Fun 12L, Persuasive 19.

Relationships: Hype Man for Guilbert 11L, Liked by Townsfolk 19, Loyal to Family 15, Member of Wells Congregation 16.



with talent, able to assign the right person to the right job, and figure out what will help the people the most in a simple pragmatic way. Josette is overflowing with energy and is just a notch short of hyperactive in her duty. She also has a blazingly clear crush on Guilbert. Pretty much everyone except Guilbert has noticed this. She vehemently attacks anyone who has anything less than positive to say about him.

What can be done for the people of Trymirwal (as far as the Church is concerned)? What can she do for Guilbert (dreamy sigh)?

Keywords: Nun 19.

Significant Abilities: Administration 17, Passionate About Her Work 7L, Lively 1L, Recognize Talent 2L.

Relationships: Enamored with Guilbert 11L, Member of Wells Congregation 14, Subordinate to the Bishop 2L.

Deliam

Etienne's Father

A merchant who is in charge of most of the trade and supplies with Eustef and his House.

Deliam is a sharp businessman, and has been giving lavishly to Guilbert and Eustef over the last few years. He hopes to engender loyalty with Guilbert, knowing that the son is less business astute than the father, and hoping to make some good profit over the long run. He's not ruthless, just a good businessman with long term vision.

What can be done to provide a good life for himself and his family? How can he maintain his near monopoly in Trymirwal?

Keywords: Merchant 14L.

Significant Abilities: Bargain 7L2.

Relationships: Connections Among Craftsmen 15L, Love Family 5L, Member of Wells Congregation 12L.



Hugo's Supporters

Hugo has more support within the Old Guard and armed men than amongst the general populace. Many see the qualities of his father in him, and hope that he is the one leading the soldiers when the time comes.

Xavier

Militia Trainer

Xavier is Hugo's sword master, who's trained him in both the art of the blade, as well as that of strategy and thought. Xavier is only 35, but has been through some of the worst battles and roughest situations. Nonetheless, he is a collected, refined man, with a terrible insight into the realities of things. He understands that the neighbors of Trymirwal are going to make a move, politically, or forcefully, and take that which appears to be in chaos. He doesn't intend for his star pupil to fall to the stupidity and inaction of others.

What can be done to prevent Trymirwal falling to outside forces? How can Hugo be made into a hero?

What can be done to prevent Trymirwal falling to outside forces? How can Hugo be made into a hero?

Keywords: Cavalry Soldier (Regular) 8L.

Significant Abilities: Archery 13L, Spear and Shield Fighting 17L2, Sword Fighting 16L2, Sword and Shield Fighting 18L2, Teach Fighting Techniques 12L2.

Weapons and Armor: Iron sword +6, ringmail and shield +4.

Relationships: Backs Hugo 12L, Member of Wells Congregation 4L, Militia Trainer 9L.



Sister Josette

Sister Josette is a young nun, who has been a major part of reform and improvement in Trymirwal. She's helped restore churches, feed the homeless, and promote the church all around. She's an excellent manager and has an eye for men



Brier

When Brier's mother (Hugo's nanny) passed, Hugo took Brier in, so that she wouldn't be left starving. In her mid teens, she absolutely loves him as a brother, perhaps as more, but the line has never been crossed. She respects him for his upstanding morals, but sometimes wishes he would slide a little, at least for her. She has no real illusions about her life or her future or of having anything more in her life, but she'll do anything she can to see him get ahead. She's sort of living vicariously through his ups and downs in life.

What can she do to express her love for Hugo? Is there any, possible way to earn his (forbidden) love in return?

Keywords: Servant 14.

Relationships: Idolizes Hugo 14^u, Member of Wells Congregation 13.



Sir Maslin

He is older than the Old Guard. Maslin advised Eustef's father, and now is retired from the political management arena. He pretty much just wants to die of old age, watching people live happy. Maslin, unfortunately, has seen what is going down, and he wishes Hugo was the older brother. Alas, he won't make any moves unless it seriously looks like its up in contest. Nonetheless he'll give the best advice anyone could wish for.

What is the wisest thing to do? Who is open to hear such advice, and how can they be convinced to undertake it?

Keywords: Advisor 15^u, Cavalry Soldier (Regular) 18.

Significant Abilities: Good Solid Advice 18^u, History of Trymirwal 19^u, Military Tactics 7^u, Political Strategy 17^u, Sword and Shield Fighting 16.

Weapons and Armor: Rusty old sword +2, chainmail and shield +4.

Relationships: Devoted to Hugo 5^u, Holder of Mime 11^u2, Member of Wells Congregation 6^u.

Flaws: Old and Decrepit 10^u (-3 physical activities; his mental faculties are in excellent shape, however).



Third Parties

Many other groups are involved in Trymirwal's dilemma. Some have personal interest, emotional, or otherwise. Some are simply tied in by the others who support or hinder one side or another.

Father Rance

Father Rance has been the spiritual advisor to the family line. During the periods of high corruption, Eustef supported him and shielded him from much of the corrupt politics of the church. With the new reforms, Father Rance has found himself being elevated in influence and praised for his steadfastness and morals. He's not quite comfortable with his new role, but has respect in the Church, and will provide a good ally for whoever leads Trymirwal. His primary concern is for Lord Eustef's soul, and the welfare of the people second. He is very concerned that Lord Eustef's spirit either pass on safely or return safely. He will also hope that Eustef's last wishes, if necessary, be carried out.

What can be done to save Eustef's soul? What can be done to see that he rests in peace, if necessary? What can the church do for the people of Trymirwal?

Keywords: Clergyman 8^u, Liturgist 20^u.

Significant Abilities: Venerate Makan 14^u2.

Relationships: Leader of Wells Congregation 12^u, Spiritual Advisor to Fresleven Family 6^u.

Followers: Retainer 2^u (Meines: Assistant Liturgist 17).



Raoul de Nesle

Rival to Deliam, Raoul wants either Hugo in charge or Etienne and Deliam out of the picture. He has been trying to get more trade with Eustef's family, and has only managed to make small sales with them. He's hoping to get the monopoly and push Jacques and his family out of Trymirwal. He wouldn't murder, but he'd definitely lie and do a bit of underhanded work to make it happen.

What is necessary to get business? How can Jacques be put out of business?

Keywords: Merchant 14^u, Orderly of Saint Mistandar 4^u.

Significant Abilities: Feign Sincere Interest 6^u.

Formulary:

The Ledgers of Credit (possesses talismans for Convincing Offer 9^u, Sense Others' Wealth 18, Strengthen Lock 15^u).

Relationships: Contacts in [Nearest Big City] 4^u, Rival to Deliam 20, Leader of the de Nestle Family 15^u.

Ecclesiastical Assessor Ratier

Ratier has been assigned to review the work Sister Josette has been undertaking. She's requested additional resources, and Ratier is there to approve further funding or deny it. He's risen high in status at a young 30, but strict in his views of the teachings. He is immensely impressed with her work, but at the same time completely upset with her feelings for Guilbert. Of course, he's also attracted to her, and not aware that he's "competing" with Guilbert in his head. He considers Guilbert to be a hedonist and a bad influence (notably to Sister Josette).

How is the Church best served? What is "best" for Josette, and how can she be protected from bad influences? How can Guilbert be shown for the sort of man he is?

Keywords: Church Official 4 \mathbb{L} , Member of the School of Saint Rokar 5 \mathbb{L} .

Grimoires:

Use The Abiding Book 7 \mathbb{L} (possesses talismans for Banish Daimon 3 \mathbb{L} , Calm Horse 6 \mathbb{L} , Calm Serpent 1 \mathbb{L} , Encourage Bravery 6 \mathbb{L} , Exert Will 19, Memorize Text 10 \mathbb{L}).

Use Saint Rokar's Third Encyclical 20 (possesses talismans for Burn Pagan Writings 20, Enter Library 15, Find Right Book 20, Read Book 1 \mathbb{L}).

Relationships: Attracted to Josette 18, Jealous of Guilbert 5 \mathbb{L} , Member of the Order of Rokar 3 \mathbb{L} , Works For the Bishop 4 \mathbb{L} .



Trencavel

Head of the Garrison

An older soldier, perhaps in his early 40's, strong, and a veteran of some rough times. Trencavel has worked closely with Lord Eustef in the past, and both have earned each other's respect. On the other hand, Trencavel hasn't had a chance to judge the merits of either son, and is a bit hesitant to simply trust the judgment of someone he knows not. Nonetheless, he's acutely aware of the dangerous position that Trymirwal is in, and will lobby for action and assistance to assure the safety of the land and the people.

What is best for the townsfolk? Is there anyone of the house who will listen to his (their) needs? What can be done given his limited (commoner) political power?



Keywords: Foot Soldier 3 \mathbb{L} .

Significant Abilities: Archery 2 \mathbb{L} , Lead Men 6 \mathbb{L} , Spear Fighting 8 \mathbb{L} (+64 AP from followers).

Weapons and Armor: Spear +3, bow +3, leather and shield +4.

Relationships: Leader of Garrison 7 \mathbb{L} , Respect Eustef 2 \mathbb{L} , Member of Wells Congregation 20.

Followers: Four Retainers 9 \mathbb{L} (Foot Soldiers 16).

Lady Noella

Widower

Wife of one of Lord Eustef's old allies, she's here to decide who gets to marry her daughter, Aimee. This marriage will give political clout to Noella's rule (until her son, now 5, is old enough to take control), and simultaneously link Trymirwal to her land's greater resources. She's traveled for almost a week via carriage with her daughter, and will arrive not long (a day or two) after Lord Eustef is incapacitated. She will be even more anxious to marry Aimee, and will be testing and eyeing whether Guilbert or Hugo will make a better match. Who she picks is based on who she feels will better be able to take control and hold it safely with stability, although she will encourage that person to take more "active" measures to force the other to submit, not to mention that she is quite willing to spread some gold around to influence folks.

Who is a more stable leader? How can his ascension be made firm? Who will be a better political ally?

Keywords: Noblewoman 16 \mathbb{L} 2.

Significant Abilities: Assess Social Standing 4 \mathbb{L} 3, Canny 3 \mathbb{L} , Command Inferior 5 \mathbb{L} .

Followers: Sidekick 9 \mathbb{L} (Daughter Aimee: Ache for Freedom 5 \mathbb{L} , Naive 17, Pretty 19).



Aimee

Bride to Be

Young woman of 17 years of age. Aimee is attractive, and has lived under her mother's thumb her entire life. She aches for freedom. She may prove to be more free willed than anyone could suspect.

Who looks like the best opportunity to live free, and do what she wants? Is there anything that can be done to manipulate the situation to her favor?



will provide stability to the area. Of course, Ratier and Rance may provide with differing reports on “what’s best” for Trymirwal.

Lady Noella and Aimee

Lady Noella and Aimee both serve as excellent means of pushing the tension between the brothers. When she arrives, the Old Guard will attempt to hide the situation from her, although she’s a smart woman, and will probably figure out the situation in a day or two at most. After that, she’ll attempt to quickly decide which of the two sons is a more suitable leader, and support his ascension as fast as possible.

Forbidden Love

This is a great source of conflict in this scenario, and you should feel free to use any of the conflicts provided, or add additional characters to complicate things, create more love triangles, etc. Jealousy and passion drive people to drastic, and irrational measures, all good for conflict. Also be aware that the consequences for violating caste or tradition differ based upon who you are.

Bangs

What’s a Bang?

First coined in regards to roleplaying by Ron Edwards, Bangs are events which serve as an action driving plot twist. What makes Bangs different than the usual pre-scripted plot events are:

- Y Bangs are **not** necessary. You can skip a Bang, or drop it completely and not “ruin” the game.
- Y Bangs are flexible, you can change it as much as you like, and it won’t be a problem.
- Y Bangs do not dictate the possible outcomes. They only present plot twists and problems, but no answers. Your players are free to deal with them as they see fit.

With that, you’ll notice that many of the Bangs presented are contradictory, or out of a chronological order. That’s fine. You can use these as you see fit, or skip them. The best way would probably be to see if they inspire you to create your own.

If you are using Bangs correctly, then you probably will be using less than one out of three or four of these as written, and either modifying some or making up your own, either between sessions, or on the fly. Most of these Bangs are written with the narrator characters as the focus, its up to you to write Bangs that fit your group’s heroes. You’ll want to either change the ones

provided, or write up your own specifically for the heroes your group creates.

Bangs are divided by subject, not necessarily chronological order.

Eustef’s Coma

Guilbert arrives both late and drunk to his father’s bedside. Hugo and Guilbert begin a shouting match, and the rift between brothers begins.

Sir Serge begins putting forth support for Guilbert, “You’re in charge while your father is unconscious. We (the Old Guard) will support and guide you.”

Raoul attempts to send for the best doctors to aid Lord Eustef. The doctors are good, just not that good, and provide more of a spy network within the manor. One of the heroes discovers this fact.

Lady Noella arrives by carriage, perhaps whilst others are in heated debate as to what to do.

Father Rance, discovers that the cause of the coma is magically induced, although he won’t know the source.

Lord Eustef appears in someone’s dreams, perhaps giving away clues about his current state between life and death

Garnering Support

Alfan may “volunteer” some of the heroes for the heroquest, not necessarily with their permission.

Sir Serge has little faith in the odds, and will be looking for folks to make sure that a transfer of power goes “smoothly.” He will quietly gather his supporters near Lord Eustef’s bedside, for “protection.”

Both **Raoul** and **Deliam** will offer what material support they can, perhaps trying to one-up one another in terms of winning influence.

Xavier may enlist some of the player heroes to protect and watch over Lady Noella, particularly the ones who are well mannered, will leave a good impression, and who think highly of, or support Hugo.

Xavier may also take action utilizing his contacts across Spring Fountain, to prepare an emergency plan in case if they suffer invasion. Should any knight find out about this, Xavier may be under suspicion of treason.

Trouble Brewing

Brier does not want Hugo to go to the heroquest, and will probably try to dissuade him, and hopefully engineer some way of keeping him from undertaking such a dangerous action, she’ll likely try to enlist the aid of the heroes, or trick them into her goals.

Trencavel brings news from the common folk that a neighboring fief has an unusual amount of soldiers garrisoned upon the border.

Lady Noella fakes an illness to see the reactions of the two sons.

Lady Noella and **Lady Collette** have a “polite but biting” conversation at the dinner table. Rivalry between the two continues, with them both attempting to get various characters and the heroes to side with them and present inconveniences to the other.

Raoul cuts a secret deal with one of the neighboring powers, perhaps giving them information on the Trymirwal’s troop strength, lay of the land, etc., in return for promises of taking over the dye monopoly of the area. Of course, one of the heroes should discover this.

Hugo, angry with Guilbert, may be practicing his sword upon a dummy, swearing at it as if it was his brother ... another character (such as Etienne, or perhaps a player hero), might mistake it as serious plans to assassinate Guilbert.

Forbidden Love

Sister Josette comforts Guilbert and attempts to make a move. He’ll likely go for it. A player hero discovers this, but the couple isn’t aware of it.

Aimee may fall in love with one of the heroes, complicating things very much.

Etienne will try to console Guilbert, through wine and women. He’ll also try to make sure Guilbert is surrounded by good friends, probably heroes if they’re involved.

Ratier may become furious with Josette, most likely over the fact that nothing he can do will tarnish her image of Guilbert. He might become physically and sexually abusive.

Sister Josette stumbles in upon Guilbert with another woman.

Brier attempts to tell her feelings to Hugo before the heroquest.

Now That’s Just Dirty...

Etienne realizes that Guilbert is his ticket to good times, and attempts to further the divide between brothers, through instigating and egging on Guilbert’s anger.

Serge has given his followers instructions to place themselves in strategically important locations, ready to act if Hugo’s supporters make a move.

Raoul drugs Etienne and Guilbert on one of their “outings,” the night before the heroquest, in order to play up Guilbert’s incompetence.

If **Lady Noella** sides with Hugo, she’ll ally with Ratier and attempt to draw in the Church into the matter to oust Guilbert.

If **Lady Noella** sides with Guilbert, she may see to it that Hugo is isolated, and anyone loyal to him is divided amongst the command of Serge and Alfán.

If it comes to brother vs. brother, out for blood, **Old Maslin**

will support Hugo, making use of brilliant strategies utilized from his past experiences.

Politics, Politics

If **Raoul** has cut a deal with outside forces, there may be an invasion on the night of the heroquest, when most of the strongest leaders would be occupied.

The **Church** may decide to send in some of their own soldiers, to “ensure stability.”

If the situation persists, one of the **local neighbors** will appeal to the next highest feudal power for rights of protectorship.

The Church

Just a day before the heroquest, the **Church** discovers the “heresy,” and begins stomping it out.

Ratier is given temporary “leadership” of Spring Fountain until the situation returns to normal.

If Ratier is given leadership of the area before the heroquest, or Sister Josette is removed from power (such as perhaps being revealed in a scandal), the **Church constituents** may, or may not provide the same level of support.

The Heroquest

Most of the major conflicts should be resolved by the end of the heroquest itself, unless you plan on extending the scenario into a whole campaign. During the heroquest, you should use this opportunity to reveal the nature of Lord Eustef’s condition, perhaps a bit at a time. That is, the exact words which caused his coma may become known, if not who spoke them. One or both sons may confess to their role in it. Play it up for as much drama as possible. And of course, at the end of the quest, who lives, who dies, and who rules needs to be determined.



In order to successfully perform the heroquest, the questers need support from the various communities: The congregation of Wells, their families, the vassals of Spring Fountain, etc. Judicious diplomacy may even garner the support of outside forces, such as neighboring fiefs, Lady Noella’s domain, or Trymirwal’s liege lord. Some communities are described in this scenario. You will have to make up the rest. Characters desiring to disrupt the quest will be working equally hard to convince communities not to support the venture or even to condemn it. The communities have the power to make or break the heroquest before it even begins.

Remember that the Well of Souls itself is unable to channel support as long as the rulership of the fief is in

Mythic Background

Trymir was a great hero of our people. When he first settled in this unfortunate land, it was ruled by Damsel Ophidia of the Moist Between the Rocks. He subjugated the goddess and imprisoned her in her own mound. She attempted to break free many times, and almost succeeded on more than a few occasions. Her son Rascarl of the Slippery Dark tried to free her once, but was dismembered by Trymir's grandson Valle. Ophidia killed Valle by spitting poison into his eye. His family departed the region soon thereafter. The night of Valle's death is still known as the Night of the Bitter Scales. It is a time when the barrier between this world and the otherworldly realm of Damsel Ophidia is particularly weak, and not even the Well of Souls, built on top of her very prison, can fully contain her.

In 1472 Lord Nimms of the Belly banned the proprietary worship of Rascarl. When Nimms was killed in the ensuing Serpent War Invasion, Enval Fresleven seized the opportunity to reclaim his ancestral lands. He prayed for a miracle, and the Well of Souls sprang to life on top of Ophidia's prison.

question, effectively rendering the Bannerety unable to act as a single community. Various other groups, such as the vassals and congregations, retain their own guardians, of course.

More Bangs

Alfan may choose to follow Lord Eustef into the afterlife, perhaps to stay, perhaps not. This could create a whole further section to the heroquest if anyone chooses to accompany him.

Someone offers to grant a powerful ritual item for use in the quest, but asks for a dubious favor in return.

If **Lord Eustef's** physical body is slain (for whatever reason) while the heroquest is underway, he may become a wandering ghost, or be lost between worlds permanently.

If **Lord Eustef's** essential body is slain by serpents while the heroquest is underway, it may become a whole new being, perhaps vengeful, and angry, or his physical body may be possessed by Rascarl himself.

Heroquest Outline

There is no particular myth that details how to retrieve a soul from the clutches of Damsel Ophidia. Yet the questers must travel to Ophidia's mound in the Gods War and make her release Eustef's essential body. The information in the Mythic Background (see sidebar), is

relatively well-known, and is easily discovered by anyone researching the seven book library of Wells Manor. Father Rance is fairly familiar with the history of the fief, as is Old Maslin.

Preparations

Apply ritual modifiers as appropriate. A practice quest may be attempted, to provide a ritual bonus to the actual heroquest. Feel free to invent additional rituals.

The Crossing

Someone must conduct the ritual to open the way to the Other Side. Ratier is a good candidate, as are player heroes with *Open Portal of Power*, or *Venerate [Saint]*.

Ritual Bonus: +20 for holding the ritual on Ophidia's actual mound (the large hill on which both Wells Manor and the Well of Souls are located).

Entering Ophidia's Lair

Ophidia's mound is guarded by Rascarl. The questers must bribe, persuade, trick, or force him to let them pass. He is determined not to let any harm come to his mother.

Complication: Ophidia's prison mound is the lair of a goddess. Non-theists suffer an alien world penalty.

Tests and Crises of Faith

The questers must each face their own inner demons. This is an excellent opportunity to put the flaws and personalities of characters in the forefront of the story. Other alternatives include having questers choose between two values they hold dear. A hero with an unrequited love, may be offered a potion that will make the object of his passion fall for him. All he must do in return is to abort the quest. Of special importance are tests of a religious nature. Are heroes willing to disregard their own religious virtues in order to save Lord Eustef?

Dealing With Ophidia

In her own twisted way, Ophidia has been following the law of the land, as laid down by Trymir in the Ice Age, and amended by Enval Fresleven only 150 years ago: Obey the orders of Trymir's descendants.

Ophidia will try to make a deal. She wants to be released from her prison. However, only a legitimate descendant of Trymir—or someone receiving total support from a true descendant, thus acting on their behalf—has the power to grant her freedom. It is also possible to strike a more reasonable deal with the goddess. A quester may pit an ability (anything with a rating, basically) against Ophidia's Bargain 20W. If successful, he loses the ability permanently, but Eustef's soul is set free. Narrators should impose circumstantial modifiers as appropriate. ("You are offering her your *Drink Copious Amounts of Beer Without Getting Drunk* ability? That's a -20 penalty." "You are offering

her your *Respected by Farmers* ability? Neat! You get a +10 bonus.”) Ophidia cannot and will not accept non-theistic magic—spells, charms, or fetishes are of no use to her—nor will she accept flaws. Note that this is *not* a heroquest challenge, since the hero is deliberately giving away an ability.

Fighting Ophidia for the release of Eustef’s soul is another possibility. Ophidia will rely almost entirely on her *Reptile Earth* magic to fight, summoning servants, and turning the very earth against her opponents. Make it spectacular and memorable! As long as the effects are related to reptile earth, use her full ability rating of 18 \mathbb{L} 4.

It is also possible for someone (Alfan, or perhaps even a player hero) to offer to replace Eustef’s essence

with their own. In this case, Eustef will return to life, but the self-sacrificing quester will enter a permanent state of torpor.

What Ophidia Knows

Ophidia knows the exact wording of the wishes made by Hugo and Guilbert, but not who spoke them. If this hasn’t been revealed previously, Ophidia may tell. See *Important Concepts* p. 5, for possible implications.

Aftermath

Make sure that the actions and choices of the questers have lasting consequences, good or bad.

If Ophidia is granted freedom, treat her as a landscape deity. She will be friendly or antagonistic depending on the circumstances of her release. See *Earthtop Hill* in *HeroQuest* p. 129, for a typical earth daimon. Substitute the functions as appropriate. The release of Ophidia will cause the Well of Souls to dry up. Also, the Church will consider the daimon a “spawn of the Devil.”

Remember!

Well of Souls does not have to end with a heroquest! Remember that the scenario is built around the decisions of the players. The heroquest is a likely, but not necessary, part of the adventure.

Rascarl

Rascarl has two incarnations: The Black Knight of the Slippery Dark, and a horde of snakes. Both are described below.

The Black Knight of the Slippery Dark

Keywords: Devotee of Ophidia 18 \mathbb{L} 2 (Reptile Earth affinity).

Significant Abilities: Hate Trymir and His Descendants 8 \mathbb{L} 2, Shapechange to Horde of Snakes 13 \mathbb{L} 2, Sword Fighting 7 \mathbb{L} .

Weapons and Armor: Big Sword +4, Enchanted Snakeskin Armor +6.

Tactics: In combat, Rascarl relies on his Sword Fighting ability (7 \mathbb{L}) augmented by his Reptile Earth affinity (+6) and his weapons and weapons (+10 = 3 \mathbb{L} 2). He gets an additional +5 if fighting Guilbert, Hugo, or any other descendant of Trymir. If threatened with defeat he will turn into a horde of snakes and attempt to escape into the safety of the earth.

Notes: Rascarl does not take the normal D+20 resistance modifier for difficult magic when turning into a horde of snakes.

Horde of Snakes

Significant Abilities: Bite 10 \mathbb{L} 2, Escape Pursuer 2 \mathbb{L} 3, Paralyzing Poison 19 \mathbb{L} .

Note The horde is treated as a single character here, but is not affected by multiple target penalties.

Ophidia

Damsel of the Moist Between the Rocks

Significant Abilities: Bargain 20 \mathbb{L} , Love Rascarl 2 \mathbb{L} , Mesmerize 12 \mathbb{L} 3, Spit Lethal Poison 11 \mathbb{L} 3.

Magical Abilities: Reptile Earth affinity 18 \mathbb{L} 4.



apart. And I couldn't figure out why. Did I do something wrong? Did the players do something wrong? I had to go back to the pre-prepared plot, the story that was already written, the scenario where the players only contribution was to provide color. Not only was I bad at this, it also bored me to death. I never told the players, but here is what I was thinking: "C'mon guys. Surprise me! Astound me! Do something unexpected! Sweep me off my feet!" It rarely happened, but when it did, everything seemed to fit again, and everybody, including me, had a good time. Yet I never understood why it went well. In what way were the successful sessions different from the unsuccessful ones?

The way I saw it, there were only two ways to run a game:

- 1) The pre-determined plot.
- 2) Winging it.

The pre-determined plot was a relatively safe method. As long as I relied on published scenarios and studied them well, the result was, well, acceptable. When using this method, the quality of my game-mastering was stable. It was not very satisfying, however. Improvisation, on the other hand, was a gamble. Sometimes it created truly amazing experiences. Other times it was just dull. A few times, it was disastrous.

One of the games where I usually managed to pull it off to everybody's satisfaction was *Vampire: The Masquerade*. In *Vampire* I sort of mixed the two methods. I prepared a large conflict, wrote a lot of gamemaster characters with ties to either the conflict itself or to one of the other characters (thus setting up sub-conflicts). Then I started it all off with a macguffin of some kind, such as "you hear a rumor that someone in town has a piece of the original cross in their possession." The players chased the macguffin, and I improvised the rest. Whenever things began to slow down, I improvised some kind of event, usually drawing inspiration from the main conflict. This is beginning to sound familiar, isn't it? Inspired by various city sourcebooks for *Vampire*, I even made complex relationship maps, which I continually referred to during play.

Only in hindsight do I recognize these patterns, however. Back then, I wasn't able to separate the behavior I just described from all the other odd stunts I pulled. For example, I did not see the relationship map as a potential tool for non-*Vampire* campaigns. In my mind, these maps were closely connected to a game of conspiracy and intrigue. What use could they possibly serve in a Gloranthan fantasy game?

So did I recognize different kinds of roleplaying? Sure. There were two sorts: Boring and fun. I liked the fun kind.

The Point

If you had shown me *Well of Souls* back then, I would have recognized it as great background material for a campaign. That's right, despite my own experiences as a gamemaster, I would have labeled it all background material, and I would have thought of the *Bangs* as a bunch of rather weak scenario ideas. In short: I would have seen *Well of Souls* as an unfinished scenario. I would not have recognized it for what it is: Precisely what I was looking for.

When talking about how to best present *Well of Souls* to someone unfamiliar with this particular style of play, I asked Chris to explain it in terms that I would have understood back then. So in a way, the target audience for this scenario is Peter Nordstrand five years ago.

Hopefully, you will like it too.

PETER NORDSTRAND

Afterword

This scenario was the result of an online discussion initiated by Peter, where he asked the very general question of, "How do you write a narrativist scenario?" at which point I jumped the gun and laid out an example conflict. He liked it, and the answer to his question would become an answer by example, as we took a simple idea and forged it into a full fledged scenario.

The biggest hurdle to overcome in writing this was trying to figure out how to communicate the information in the clearest, simplest, and most concise fashion, especially since this scenario, and narrativist scenarios in general, just won't fit into conventional scenario formats. While developing this on the thread, concerns about playability, accessibility, "staying true to Glorantha," all came up. Hopefully you'll get a chance to try it out and let us know what we did right, and what we did less than right.

Peter has been a good guy to work with, which is funny, considering we've never met face to face, and have only communicated online or via email. His ability to grab details, and focus issues at hand has been a phenomenal help in writing this. It very much helps to have a partner to egg you on and help you stick to deadlines to finish these sorts of things, particularly when you're not getting paid for them :) Plus his essay really nails some things I've wanted to say for a long time, do check it out.

Until next time,

CHRIS CHINN