

Stories and 30-sided Dice Tables For ALL Fantasy Role Playing Games

The 30-sided FANTASY And Other Tales



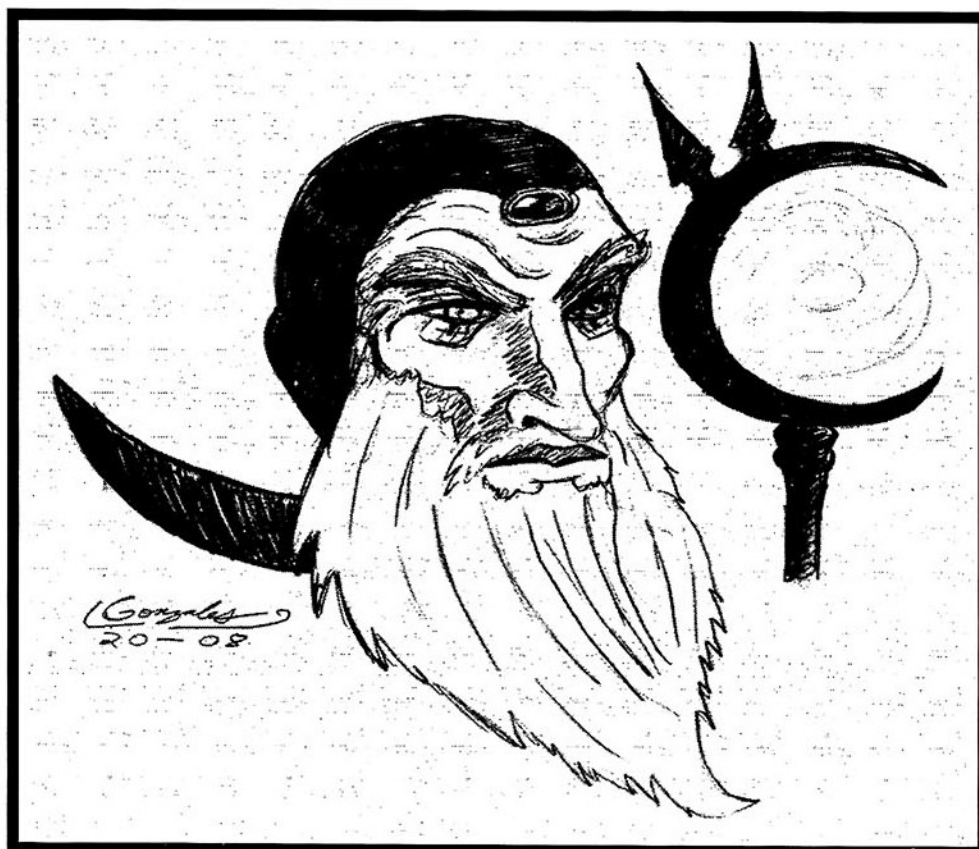
Written By Bob Liddil

Illustrated By Matt Gonzales

**Compatible With All
Fantasy Adventure Game**

**Designed specifically for use with
The 30-sided Dice**

The 30-Sided Fantasy And Other Tales



*30-Sided Dice tables For Fantasy
Role Playing Games*

Written By Bob Liddil

Illustrated by Matt Gonzales

Dedication

This book is fondly dedicated to:

Jack Powers

Terry, and Linda Kepner

Allen and Linda Steele

Robert Shawn Affeldt

Lou Focchi

Roy Lippman

Dallas Nilsen

and

Warren Lapine

The 30-Sided Fantasy and Other Tales

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First Edition

Published by

**The Bob Liddil Publishing Group
833 Lucerne Avenue
Pensacola, FL 32505**

ISBN - 978-0-926895-01-0

Printed In The USA

Welcome To "The World"

Over the years I have enjoyed sitting behind Huckster Tables at some of the very best SF&F and gaming conventions fandom could conjure. Everywhere I am asked the same question, "When will there be another 30-Sided Dice book?" Frankly, with TSR being owned by Hasbro and the demise of The Armory, my reply would have expressed doubt for the series to expand beyond the original two. But then again, never say never.

"The 30-Sided Fantasy and Other Tales" here in your hands, is the long awaited third book in a series designed especially to go with the 30-Sided dice.

Additionally, *"The 30-Sided Adventure and Other Tales"* and *"The 30-Sided Character and Other Tales,"* formerly distributed by The Armory are currently being reworked for reprint. Hey, retro is in, what can I say?

This book addresses a mystery that has been bugging my readers forever, namely, "What the heck is a werewolf sailor?"

The answer is straightforward enough in this world where magic works. Werewolves rule the seas. Humans rule the shores and other creatures, generically referred to as "Notmen" get in their licks where they can. How this consensual balance of power came about is chronicled in the short story, *"Why Werewolves Make The Best Sailors"* included in this volume for your pleasure.

The book was written with Fantasy Adventure Gaming in mind. It is generic to any RPG where magic works, serendipity rules and imagination moderates. *Tunnels and Trolls, Dungeons and Dragons, and Gurps* are just a few systems that come to mind as being compatible with the 30-sided tables contained herein.

Notes for Game Masters:

The tables in this book are like the spark plugs in a car. They were never meant to carry the load, just fire off a quick round of inspiration on the roll of a 30-sided dice. Once you see what the fates have in store for your players, don't be afraid to get in there and spice it up with addendum of your own.

For example: page 5, roll 29 says, "You encounter – a dozen bottles of wine in a basket filled also with bread and a single red rose." It is easy to extrapolate how hungry, thirsty dungeoneers might find good use for wine and bread, neither of which is poisoned (unless the GM says so). But what are the possibilities for a red rose? A prick from a single thorn can induce coma. Smelling the rose can magically enhance a character's sense of smell or cast a spell over him to find and marry a Princess Rose.

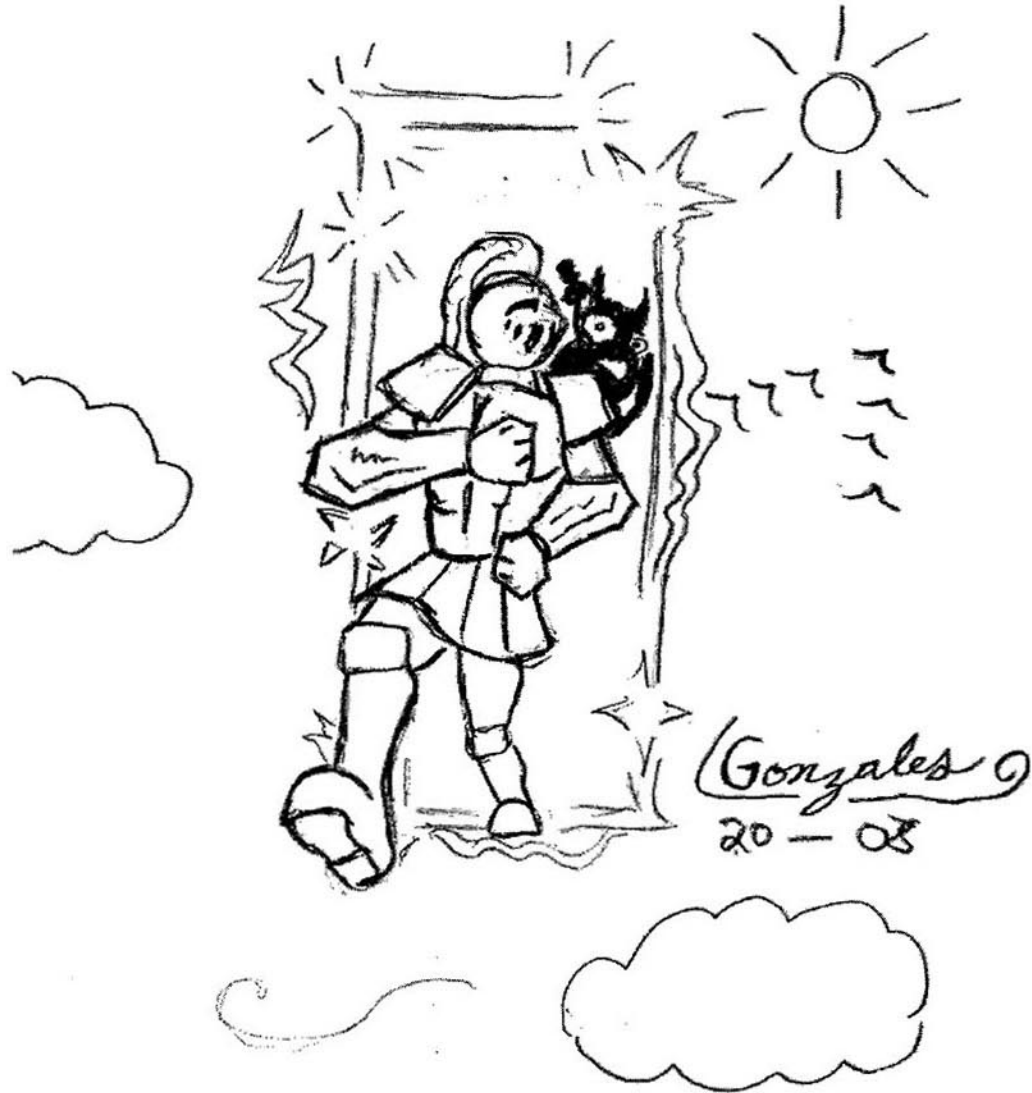
See How It Might Work?

What I want most as an author, a gamer (and even as a huckster) is for you to have some fun with this book. Play an FRP game with your younger sibling or your own child if you are a parent. Spread the joy of creating whole stories from the tiny seeds of inspiration planted here. Above all, keep after me to put out another book of tables. You see? I listen.

Bob Liddell

Pensacola, Florida 2008

The 30-Sided Fantasy



Tales From The Game

1

Why Werewolves Make The Best Sailors



“Werewolves make the best sailors,” said Jack, after which, we stared at him as though he had two heads. He could not see us until he peeked over the top of the book he seemed to be studying intently. Only then did the shock on our faces register with him.

“That’s not in the rules,” I blurted in protest. “You made that up.”

Jack smiled crookedly and replied, “Of course I did. I am the Game Master.”

“Are you sure about this, Damian?” Prince Val, The Sturdy hadn’t been too keen on coming to Oceania in the first place and was even less enthusiastic after having spent his seventh consecutive hour in the place. “Werewolves,” he added, “give me the creeps.”

Damian The Dangerous corrected his friend, amused by his squeamishness. “The actual term is

'Nautical.' " He said this loftily, with pride at being in possession of a grain of truth his Royal friend lacked.

"Werewolf. Nautical. Fangs, claws and a hairy face." Val shuddered at the mental image. "Notmen in any case. How do we know we can trust them to get us to the island."

"Because, my friend, we are your only means of getting out to the islands." A hearty voice boomed from behind Val, causing him to jump as he spun around.

The newcomer was a tall sea dog, uncommonly so, with long strong fingers sporting neatly manicured claws. All visible parts of his body were furry save for that covered elegantly by an impeccable uniform bearing the gold stripes of a Captain of Ships.

"Without Nauticals," the officer said, more gently, "humans and other notmen would very quickly perish upon the open sea, of the nausea, the seasickness brought about by the magic that charms the waters. Only we may conduct traffic on the wave, following the wind."

"Jack," I said impatiently. "You are going to have to do a lot better than that. You have to support these variations with lore. There needs to be myth and legend, not just you saying that it is so."

Jack rolled his favorite orange translucent D-30. He smiled that exasperating smile that said, "You know I can do this." He frowned absently and rolled a second 30-sided dice, a green opaque with white numbers. Then that all too familiar twinkle came into his eyes. He glanced knowingly at each of the players around the table, at the carefully arranged charts and colorfully painted figurines. He rolled the black 30 with yellow letters and pronounced with a chuckle, "One legend coming up."

Seated in a pub not thirty paces from their meeting place, the handsome Nautical said, "I can explain all this. It's almost always necessary."

Val gripped his pint pot as though it might suddenly fly away. Damien was already signaling the human barmaid for a second. "Do go on," he said.

"Nauticals weren't always werewolves." The Captain began. "We were once men as are you, until a Wizard, Blackheart Firethrower, hatched a scheme to enslave every sailor into his service."

He drew a deep quaff from his own pint pot and continued. "It seemed that we would be doomed to servitude, save for the quick action of a White Wizard, who used all his powers to break the enchantment." The Captain sighed wistfully. "Alas, he was not as powerful as his opponent so he was only able to block the slavery spell, not break it. As long as we are within 5,000 paces of a body of water, we are safe. Further than that, without human escort, we become enthralled, and are compelled to seek out the Master, Firethrower. Conversely, no human may travel unaccompanied away from shore by more than the same distance. If he does so, he will die."

Val just stared, and Damien chuckled. "It seems we are your charges, Captain." He raised his glass to toast.

Jack smirked. "It's all perfectly logical, wouldn't you agree?"

Grudgingly, we did. The non-player characters seemed benign enough.

Jack rolled a pair of matched red opaque D30s, mumbled something like "Ahhh," and then scribbled several line of detailed notes in The Journal of The Game for future reference.

"Jeeze! I knew it. You're up to something!" I yelled. But he just grinned crookedly and said, "Dude. The dice don't lie."

Standing on the quarterdeck of the stout sailing ship, Half Moon, Val and Damien admired the discipline of the crew as they scurried about their tasks. They were seeking the Isle of Jeju-do, looking forward to adventure, gold and possibly the hand of a buxom maiden.

Suddenly, a shadow crossed the sun. A great flapping sound filled the air, coming, seemingly from all sides at once. Then a great roar issued from toward the bow of the ship. Both adventurers scurried away down the quarterdeck steps in a heartbeat, to get a better view and prepare for combat.

What came into their view simply was more formidable than either or both could hope to defeat. Giant wings offset a demon's body and it gripped a Firesword, a virtually unmatchable weapon in one hand and a massive whip in the other.

Both Val and Damien had swords and crossbows at the ready. Each wore reasonably sturdy armor, albeit light in weight so as to heighten water safety in case of shipwreck. Each were in the process of making final peace with their god when they heard a ripple of laughter roll across the deck of the ship. The crew seemed unconcerned with the armed killer monster on the foredeck.

"Relax, boys," called out the First Mate. "He's our navigator."

"The dice don't lie, boys." Said Jack. "They just don't lie."

I was furious.

"I swear to god!, Jack!" I shouted, "Dungeonmaster or not, if you kill my character this way, I will call you a cheater until your dying day."

To which Jack replied, unflappably "Roll the dice to see who speaks balrog."

The Kid grabbed the D-30 and rolled a 2 and swore. "Not me." I said morosely, seeing my character's life flash before my eyes. I rolled next and came up with a solid 30.

I picked up the dice and kissed it.

Val stood rooted to the deck, paralyzed with fear, as Damien called out to the creature, "Welcome. We are peaceful," in its own tongue.

"W-where did you learn to speak balrog?" Val stammered.

"Yeah." The first mate was impressed. "How'd you do that?"

"Must have been the beer." Damien mused. "Magic's where you find it."

And that's how two adventurers sailed off on an ocean quest that lasted more than a game year, creating a legend as they rode the wind across turbulent seas during the real-time, real-world Ohio blizzard of 1978.



Song Of The Notman Sailors



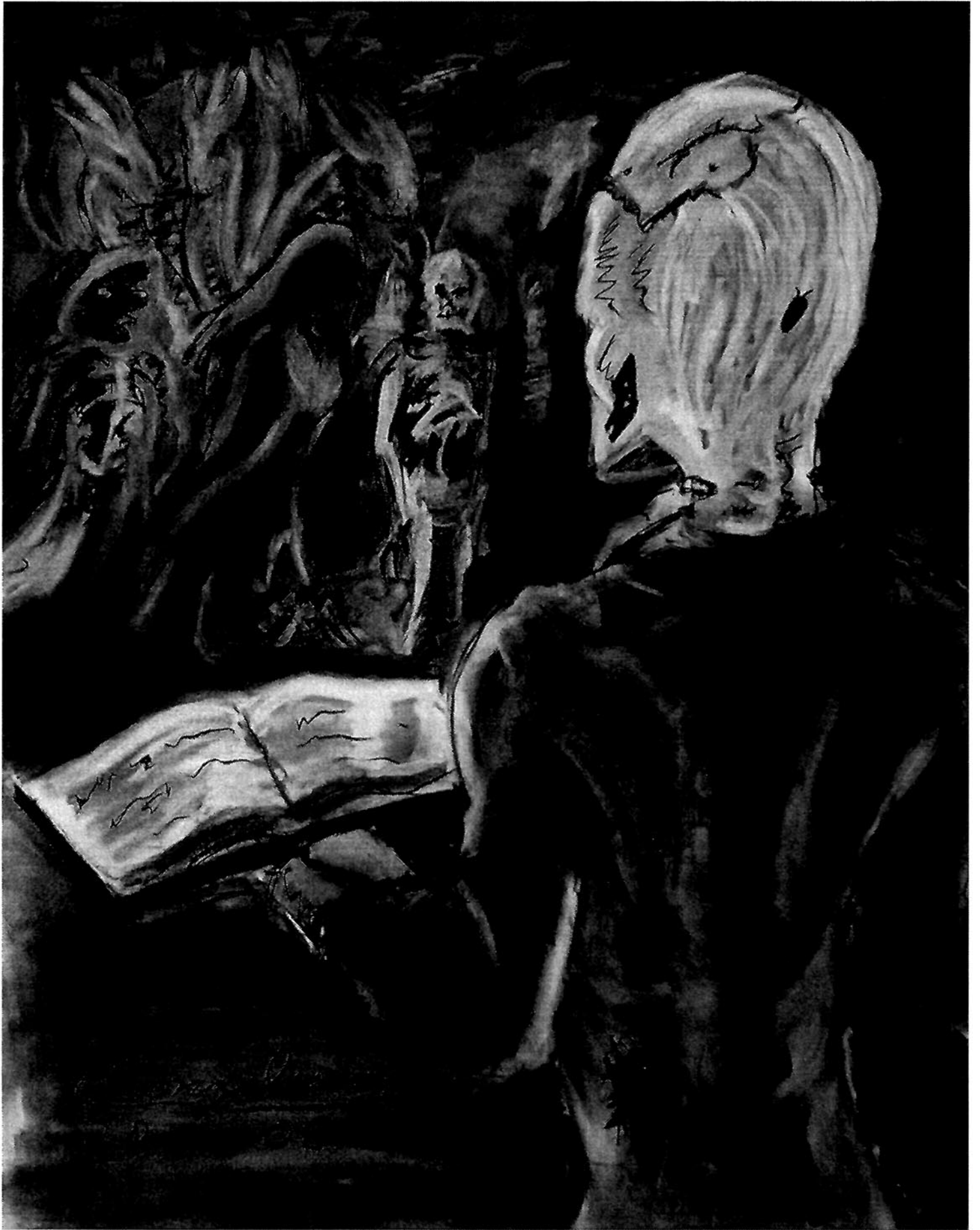
**When the seas run high and the north winds sigh and ice hangs from the sails,
that's when you know there's about to blow a deep cold winter's gale.
So rig the safety lines boys. there's a storm about to brew,
and a slippery deck or a cold shipwreck is no way to lose a crew.**

**When the moon is bright in the dead of the night and the whitecaps hiss like snakes,
that's a pretty good clue a nor'easter's due, it's a bad time for mistakes
So batten down the cargo lads, for the witch wind's on her way
she's a hungry bitch with an angry itch to take your lives this day.**

**When the dawn's so red it'd scare the dead and the scud's scootin' 'cross the sky.
every sailor knows there's coming a blow and somebody's soon will die.
So build me a canvas coffin boys when it's my time to pass on
then bury me in the emerald sea at the very first light of dawn.**

**When the storm blows on and the ice wind's gone and the skies are clear and blue,
say a prayer for the dead and full sail ahead, 'cause that's what you were born to do.
So fly the flag high in the breeze boys and cut through the emerald sea.
Leave behind the dead, full sail ahead. Sailin's where you were meant to be**

- Notman's Sea Chantey - Freerover The Bard



2

Fred the Zombie Butler



In the fuzzy hours of the predawn, Fred, the zombie butler stood poised on the threshold of another day. Yesterday evening, Master-of-the-Castle had set off for the coast; nicked off on holiday as it were. In the haste of his departure, he inadvertently left the drawbridge down and magically locked, a forgivable error, but one the result of which could only be that every would-be treasure hunter and tin can wearing tavern rat for miles in every direction would be descending on this place looking for "gold and glory."

As Head Butler of *Castle of Death*, Fred was normally charged with the task of making each intruder or adventurers' group feel "welcome." He did not do this personally, mind you, only very rarely. Most cowardly, gold seeking scum would simply faint completely away at the slightest glimpse of Fred's advanced state of decomposition, not once giving a thought to the rudeness of doing such a thing.

No time to dwell on manners, though, Fred mused. His duty was clear. He was most senior of the guard-monsters, therefore, protection of the castle in master's absence fell to him. Deactivating the tamper-resistance wards on the domestic magic scroll book, He set about preparing for the upcoming day's work.

At Fred's disposal, by way of this and other tomes, were placed all the spells any butler could need for the efficient running of a wizard's keep. Absent, coincidentally, was the spell that contained the power word that authorized the raising of the drawbridge. To an ordinary mortal the book contained only words placed on the parchment paper at random. Useless to the unlearned, priceless to the tutored, and words read aloud from the book carried jeopardy not to be trifled with in the form of a powerful flesh rotting curse that condemned the offender to seven years working for Fred as a pseudo-zombie polisher of silver candelabras.

Fred flipped the pages casually, then found what he sought, an extremely handy oft used spell of staff summoning, which he uttered plainly in wizard-speak. Within the twinkling of an eye, every upstairs monster, ground level terror and sub-dungeon horror stood assembled before him in the great hall. More than a few of which were rubbing sleep from their eyes. All reported as present or accounted for by their section leaders with the exception of the Captain of Treasure Guardians, who as a commissioned officer had been granted special exemption from morning staff meetings.

"Bloody inconvenient," Fred grouched silently at his absence. "He never knows what's going on. With him and his crew it's just hack and slice. They're really not much different than the trespassers."

But what was, in fact was. Nothing to do but be prepared, carry on hope for the best and keep replacements handy.

Fred surveyed his crew. Before him stood the Ghouls' and Goblins' Brigade, as well as The Apprentice

Undead, all 45 of them.. Were-tigers, Werewolves, Pumpkinheads and other mutants formed a rank to his left. To his right, loomed a Hydra, normally found in the Hopeless Combat Room. One of two Wish Griffins from the bottom of the bottomless pit stood patiently awaiting instructions. Scattered in loose formation were eleven rodentroars, and forty trolls, one hundred sixty impatient orcs, three purple worms (from the ocher-orchard room), all fifteen of the castle's compliment of black knights decked out in full plate mail, and all eighty East Wing ghosts, including the specters from the Ectoplasmic Torture Room. These all stood/floated/lurked expectantly, awaiting the day's assignments.

Fred raised his voice above the ambient murmur of inter-creature conversation and said, "Quiet. May I have quiet please?"

The Great Hall fell silent. All attention focused on Fred.

"Thank you," Fred continued. "As you know, Master is away from the castle today and cannot support your normal daily routine with spontaneous magic." He waited patiently for the sudden chorus of groans and boos to subside. "Therefore," he continued, "we must be doubly on guard against looters, thieves, warriors, and most particularly those pesky insufferable heroes who read about us in the coastal tabloids and then insist on trying to slay everyone."

An undercurrent of agreement washed around the room at the mention of heroes. Unlike ordinary thieves, who were usually satisfied with a few gold coins, heroes seemed irrationally fixated on killing creatures anywhere they were found. They did so expertly, remorselessly and indiscriminately, once even invading the monsters' lounge, breaking up a party that had been going quite well up to that point.

Monsters got on well with one another for the most part. Everyone knew his job, and most could cover for others in an emergency. It was both costly and annoying to have to break in a new creature every time some warrior tried to impress the Guild of Law by offing a troll or a house dragon. Heroes were on Fred's short list of adventurers needing to be double-teamed, hence, it was not uncommon to find a dragon backing up a rodentroar or all 40 orcs bursting suddenly into a combat scenario involving 3 aggressive teddy bears.

"Section leaders, report on your status." Fred always tried to conduct a proper meeting. Such interaction was always good for morale.

A tall blonde werewolf in bib overalls, wearing a tool belt stepped forward. "All mechanical devices are armed and functional, except in the water trap room," he iterated. "As you might remember, boss, a party of twelve novices set off the drowning pool a week ago, with no one outside the door to throw the escape lever." He shook his shaggy head, expressing chagrin. "So, once again," he concluded, "we have bodies clogging that drain. I have a crew working on recovering them for recycling into undead. It's time consuming though, so that room won't be ready before noon."

He stepped back into the ranks.

A buxom, hooded medusa stepped forward, offering, "All magical creatures are armed and ready for combat."

She stepped back to chorus of grunts; growls and other grisly sounds punctuating her report.

Three ghosts glided outward from the group, "All ecto-beings and undead are ready for duty," the larger of the three reported in that peculiar disembodied voice that is the spectral method of communicating. The other two vibrated in agreement.

One, by one, each section reported. A newly-robed Junior Assistant Evil Wizard in Charge of Magical Confrontation noted a shortage of fireballs, complaining that this matter needed immediate attention, because, after all, who's going to take an attacking wizard seriously who cannot display pyrotechnics. The senior matron in charge of captive princesses complained that werewolf sailors who were supposed to be doing other things, were sniffing around the prison tower.

Fred sighed and noted each discrepancy. A lot of detail work goes into running a ghastly and dangerous castle. He hardly had time to keep up with it all. Patiently, he solved each problem, concluding by issuing a stern warning to goldbricking were-beings concerning sticking to assigned

jobs, and not harassing innocent temporary attractions. Just as he finished with the last item, a spectral image of one of the high keep guardsman projected into the room.

"Pardon the interruption," a strong deep voice intoned loudly, even though the lips on the face didn't move, (telepathic holograms are very convenient). "I've sighted a party of seven making its way up the road toward the drawbridge."

Fred asked, "What are they?" He made a mental note to urge caution in dealing with mortals who were up before the sun. That was an extraordinary thing at best the least. Statistically, adventurers began indoor quests at mid-morning rather than dawn. He shook his head and privately hoped they weren't heroes.

The voice recited, "Two elves with bows, two human fighters, one male, one female, a dwarf with a double-edged axe, a barbarian and a monk." It waited for a moment until Fred stopped writing, then continued, "They look and sound like seasoned veterans, according to the forest spy. I believe that the monk was here once before, with an ill-fated party of apprentice assassins last year all of whom were wiped out by purple worms."

There erupted a brief chatter of assorted approving sounds from the monsters.

"OK, OK. Settle down." Fred said urgently. "Seems we're starting early today." He waved his hand. "To your places everybody, you're all dismissed."

The guard estimated that in less than fifteen minutes, trespassers would start across the moat. Amidst a scramble of shuffling feet/tentacles and rustling shrouds, the meeting broke up. In less than a minute, the Great Hall emptied, leaving the butler to his duties.

Fred opened a secret panel, touched a number of indentations in a preset combination and stepped back as it slid open. Entering the room beyond, he climbed a short staircase and stepped onto a platform where stood, on a pedestal in the middle the *Great Book of Events*, a permanent record of all the goings on in the castle. He opened it and flipped backward through the pages until he came to the cleric described by the guard.



Gorgias
20-08

The monk's name had been inscribed in The Great Book as one "Brother Ineptus." He had been spared last go-round, due to intervention by his deity. That particular god, however, did not appear to be listed on today's celestial duty register. The monk was going to need serious luck to survive today's combat.

"Well, anyhow," mused Fred aloud to himself, "it ought to be interesting."

He climbed the narrow spiral staircase to the controller's suite and ambled out onto a balcony. Unrolling the spell scroll used for coordinating the on-duty staff, Fred activated a scenario entitled "Dragon in the Courtyard." Always a thrilling beginning, he thought.

The party below Fred's observation point began to cross the open drawbridge. The dwarf impetuously scurried on ahead of his group. Suddenly, he found himself face to face with a thirty-yard long tongue of white-hot dragon flame, whereupon, he beat such a hasty retreat as to accidentally knock Brother Ineptus, for all his bulk, squarely off the drawbridge into the moat. Somebody yelped in surprise, somebody else swore. Instantly a squabble broke out. Blows were exchanged. A second splash sounded above the din.

Fred laughed aloud. The scene was truly priceless. Master would find the entry into the great book very amusing upon his return.

But too soon, the adventurers calmed down, fished a drenched, pond scum covered monk and an obscenity-spewing elf from the moat, then settled back to the business at hand.

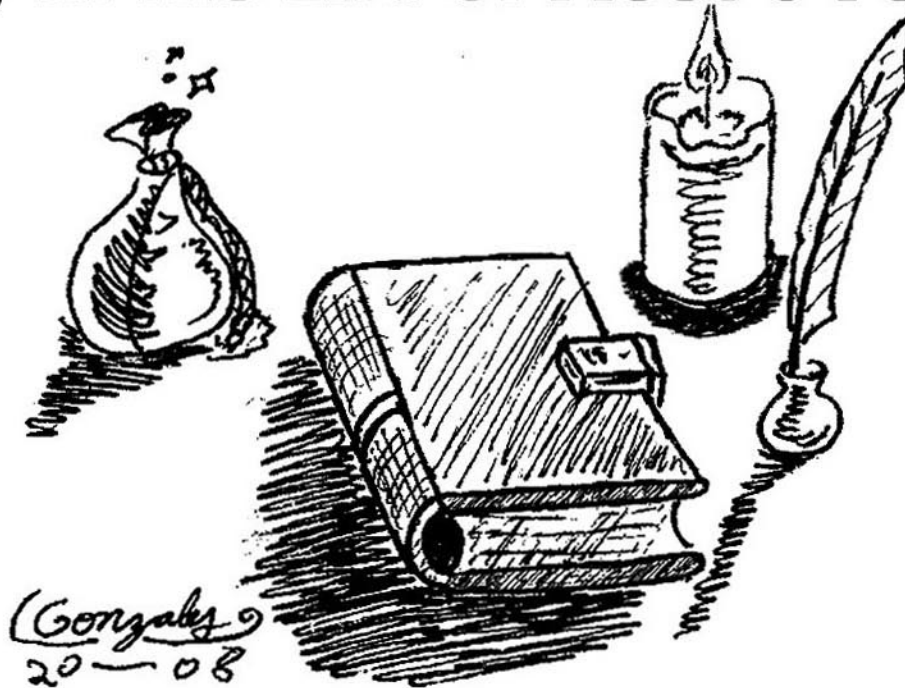
At that precise instant, the sun peeked up over the horizon, shedding new light on the drawbridge, and the tower walls above the courtyard.

"Very well then," Fred said to no one in particular, turning a page and invoking the awakening of ten sleeping dogs, "Let The Game begin."



3

A Day In The Life of Fleet 0 Feet



My master, Professor Doctor Griswald Grimm, alchemist to the Little Shop of Poisons and Potions, instructs me in all things. He teaches me the differences between the powders and liquids which are our stock in trade. He pounds into my sometimes unwilling brain the maths required for measurement and the exchange of coinage. I am apprentice to the man some believe to be more dangerous than any other alive, a man feared by commoners and kings. From him I learned the spoken word in languages other than the gutter talk of the street of dreams, my home.

More than the learning of which words mean what thing, my master requires that I be able to inscribe, as well. Not just the putting of scratches onto the record book at the store, mind you, but the inscribing of my thoughts and the events of my life. This is the task he has set forth for me and I don't mind saying (here, at least, for impudence would earn me a swat on the backside from himself) that I think this is a terrible waste of time.

None the less, my task has been set. I am to record the events of a day in my life, not necessarily as they occur, but in the chronology of their occurrence. Mundane as my life is, I have chosen tomorrow for the completion of this task. I fear Grimm will be disappointed in the literary content of my tale.

Morning

Dawn comes early on the street of dreams. I am awakened by the sounds of scuffling in the alleyway below the window of the loft I sleep in. Looking out and below, I can see two ruffians standing over a third man who is lying prone and still. One of the two must have heard the squeak of the window opening because he looked up at me.

He is ugly. Bearded, his hair uncut and straggly, one eye closed by a knife scar, he is truly ugly. He does not speak a word but I can feel the hatred inside him. He will kill me if he can. Quickly, I retreat into my loft, chilled by the knowledge that today may be my last breathing day.

I am writing this after the fact. The walk from my mother's rooms to the establishment of my master was uneventful. I am fortunate in that certain protections are accorded me within my station

as apprentice to Grimm. Many a would-be slaver has reconsidered the taking of me for servitude, after encountering a watcher - someone indebted to my master and charged with the task of being his eyes and ears when he cannot represent himself personally.

It is not unusual for there to be at least one attempt per day to waylay me, by someone who loves coin more than life. Always, these attempts fail, either through the actions of a watcher or by direct action from one of my own protective devices. However, this particular morning, I saw no one, not even watchers and that is strange.

As I write these words, it occurs to me that maybe the one-eyed man saw me more clearly than I thought. Perhaps, since I saw his crime, he wishes to kill me as well. What if he can bypass my protections the way he bypassed the watchers? I had better take some precautions.

The first customer of the day is a member of Prince Ossarian's court. How long has it been since anyone dressed in velvets and silks has passed through our door?

"Good morning, Sir." I say pleasantly, "How may I be of service to you?"

Master Grimm taught me manners straightaway upon taking me as an apprentice. No customer finds rudeness in this shop unless it comes from the doctor, himself."

The man nods, acknowledging my greeting, but does not reply. Instead, he walks right over to the display where we keep the 'Travelers' Kits, as though he knows exactly what he is looking for. He examines the standard kit and wrinkles his nose in a frown of dissatisfaction.

I say, "The Deluxe Travelers' Kit has Reptile Anti-venom in it in triple dosages if you're going to be traveling west."

I know, I know. It is presumptuous to try and second guess what a customer is looking for, but I've been taught to read body language and to use deductive reasoning. That he knew where to find what he was looking for, suggested to me that he'd been instructed. The standard kit is less expensive but used for travels on the east-west road or local journeys. The facial signal of not finding what he was expecting cued me to the one important difference between the kits, that being the snakebite packet. Not finding that where he was looking gave long odds of him preparing (or fetching preparations) for a journey to the west (land of the snakes). Simple, right?

He says, "Oh," and fetches the right kit.

I say, "That will be 20 in gold, sir."

He antes up the coins from a fawn skin pouch (the favorite purse of the idle wealthy) and leaves without responding to my closing comment of, "Have a pleasant journey, sir." Some people have no manners at all.

A tidy shop is a profitable shop. That's what Grimm always used to tell me when I was much younger and ill enthused where the tasks of sweeping, dusting, placing jars and kits and the ordinary daily routine of my employment were concerned. I am older than that now. I do not require entertainments during my working day, nor do I particularly seek them out after the shop has closed in the evening. The street of dreams is a place where entertainments can kill. A bard may be an assassin working for the enemies of my master, plotting to snatch me and hold me for some ransom. This happened once or twice when I was younger, but since my master demolished the wizards' quarter in the south city with the misplacement of a single word in the spell part of a fireball potion, his enemies have shown less inclination to use me to get to him. So I keep busy dusting and tidying. It's part of my job to do this and to know what needs doing.

As I was about my tasks a little while ago, a customer entered the shop and seeing him almost stopped my heart. It was him from the alley this morning, the man with one eye. It so happened that at the moment of his entry, I was behind the curtain which separates my master's study from the main shop. So the man did not see me as I watched him. He departed within seconds of entry. He knows I work here. He will return to kill me.

Fear is a deadlier toxin than venom of sea snake. I've heard my master say this more than once. Always in the past, whenever anyone has decided to use me as a weapon against Grimm, it has

always come as a complete surprise to me. This is the first time I've ever been stalked, knowing beforehand that it is happening. Well, I'm not going to wait for him to choose the time and place of events meant to harm me. I will get him first.

Midday

I asked for and received some time off, promising to return before the shadows get too long. Grimm has always been indulgent of my need to get away from the shop occasionally. He seldom questions me about what I do, or who I do it with. Although, he once gave me a five hour lecture on honesty after I'd been caught stealing from the fruit stand. I believed that whole time that at any second I would be killed, diced and dried for zombie powder. I haven't stolen anything since. But today, he asked me if anything was wrong. I told him no, there wasn't and could I please just go, to which he responded with a wave of his hand. I wonder if he's guessed that I'm in trouble?

For the last two hours, I've been moving up and down the street of dreams, speaking discreetly to people I trust, attempting to get a handle on who is the man with one eye. But no one seems to know him. Oh - they've seen him. Nasty looking fellow isn't he? Wouldn't want him angry with me. Is everything all right, Fleet? Does Doctor Grimm know about this?

"... and don't you tell him, either." I say to each.

I'm sixteen years old and almost a full Guild Alchemist (well, in another ten years). I guess I can take care of myself.

Shadows are beginning to creep out onto the street of dreams. I promised Doctor Grimm I'd return before dark. So I'd better hurry. By way of comment . . . writing all this has allowed everything down today. If One-eye kills me, it will be because I stopped to write stuff down. This assignment may be my the death of me.

My return to the shop. Indeed, all the rest of afternoon, has been relatively uneventful so far. Two fighters stop by, fully armed and clad in leathers, asking if my master knew of any work that might be offered. Grimm sends them to see Captain Sypos of Prince Ossarian's guard. They are always looking for soldiers.

A brother of the Assassin's Guild comes in and has a brief confidential chat with my master. I am always discreet around these guys. Sometimes what you know can hurt you. So I busied myself in a far corner near the door.

Gods! There he is. One-eye is across the street in one of the doorways. He's watching the shop. I'll bet he's waiting for me to be alone here so he can kill me. He must have been following me all afternoon - following me as I tried to find out about him.

At the moment of this discovery, my master calls me back into his study.

"I'll be gone for a few minutes," he says, offering no further explanation as to where he is going.

Should I tell him about One-eye? He is distracted by the guild-brother and I cannot catch his attention. Just like that, he is out the door and gone.

Well, apprentice alchemist, you'd better arm yourself. One-eye is going to be here any minute now to silence you. The murder you saw this morning must have been of someone important for him to stalk you like this . . . Gods. This guy has me talking to myself.

That's when the bag of stasis powder above my master's desk catches my attention. This is the powder that freezes anything in its tracks and holds it frozen for up to eight hours. Good product actually . . . I'm babbling. Get a grip Fleet, wouldja?

The bell rings on the door as it opens. I peer through the curtain. It's him. I come out with lightning speed and before he can react, I use the entire bag on him. This guy's not going anywhere.

There's stasis powder dust everywhere. Uh oh. I think I got me too.

Late Evening

Retrospect. That is the word my master uses when he wants me to examine the events which have

led to some mistake or another on my part. Stasis powder halts movement of an individual (in this instance, both one-eye and myself. But it does not halt perception or time sense. So I was quite aware of the events subsequent to the powder bombing of one-eye. So I will offer them in retrospect, along with some commentary on my behalf (maybe Grimm will see the irony in it all and let me out of the doghouse).

As soon as I hit One-Eye with the powder, I knew I'd used too much. It began to affect me as well, though not to as great a degree. Where one-eye was frozen fast, I simply slowed down. Knowing that the light was both my enemy and my friend (my friend because it would null the effects on me if I could get into the outside light and enemy because it would nullify one-eye's dosage through the uncurtained windows) I knew I would have to close the curtains to keep trapped my prisoner, then get outside myself.

Moving under the influence of stasis powder was painful and laborious. Every muscle in my body had tightened into bands of strain for the task at hand. I don't know how actual long it took, but I got the curtains closed tightly, no light at all. Then, at one step for every thirty heartbeats, I started for the door. After about twenty five steps or so, the door rung open and in came Grimm. Stopping suddenly, in the door frame he just stood for a moment, staring at the powder covered interior of what had been a tidy venue.

Then, to me, half frozen and covered in powder dust, he just said, " I trust there will be a good explanation for all this," and dusted me with antidote from a pouch in his cloak.

He listened patiently to the events of the day, as I recounted them, then laughed aloud when I had finished. Then, he rose from where he'd seated himself for my story and un-dusted One-Eye. They stood in the middle of the floor, out of my earshot, for a moment, while my master replayed the day's events for verification to him. Then he started laughing as well. It was obviously a good joke, though I wasn't in on it.

It had been a long time since I'd seen Grimm laugh outright. That startled me more than anything. Then the two of them came over to where I sat miserably waiting for whatever humiliation must be about to follow.

Grimm said, "Lad..." He always calls me 'lad' whenever he wishes to drive a point home about my youth or inexperience.

He said, "Lad, I want you to meet your new language tutor. Fleet O'feet, this is Thaddius Felonis, linguist."

Oh, great, I thought, not only was I wrong, but this fellow will be rubbing my nose in it in some northern dialect.

I said, "I am pleased to meet you." And offered one dusty hand to another.

Then Grimm started to laugh again, and before he regained control once more. I thought, I hope there's a good explanation for all this. I was getting irritated.

"What you saw in the alley this morning," began T. Felonis, was two friends, trying unsuccessfully to get a third friend back to his inn room before passing out from too much drink."

Grimm spoke more seriously, by his tone. "You jumped to conclusions and acted without facts to support those conclusions. You erred on the side of caution and that's not necessarily bad" . . ."

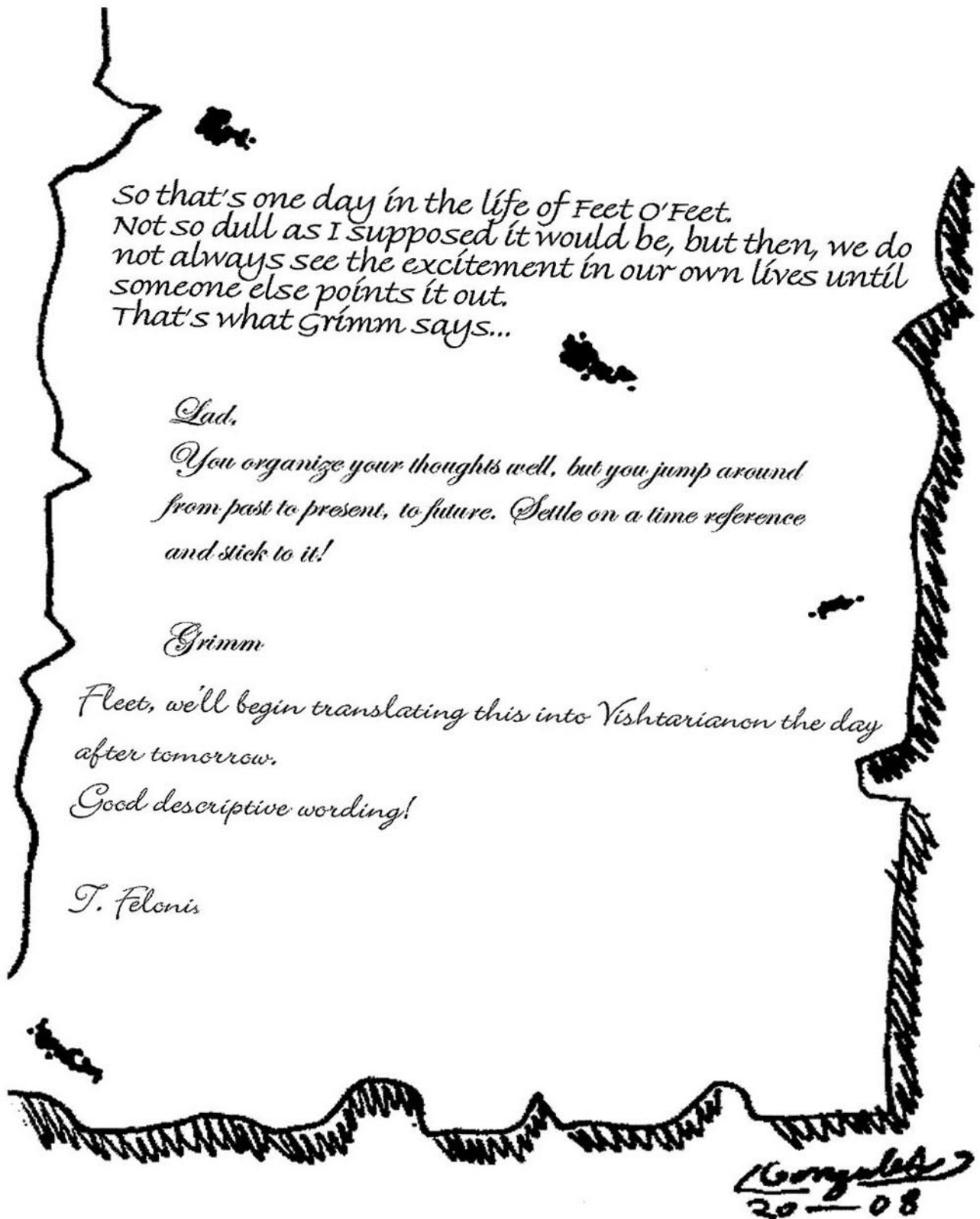
"But," Felonis interrupted, "you judged a man by his appearance alone, a habit that could cost you seriously if you do not correct it."

I offered apologies to my new teacher, who said that was all right, payment would be forthcoming, (with a smile). I hate it when they do that. Then he departed seemingly not worse for the wear. I promised to stay late and clean up, but Grimm said go home and finish my scribing assignment - which is what I'm doing now - that I could clean up in the morning.

So that's one day in the life of Fleet O'feet. Not so dull as I supposed it would be, but then, we do not always see the excitement in our own lives until someone else points it out.

That's what Grimm says.

Notations at the bottom of the last parchment page of the assignment:



4

Stubborn as a Mule



Gadlin the dwarf felt the rope in his hand go suddenly taut. This unexpectedly wrenched his arm behind him, spinning him partially around. That stupid, stubborn mule, on which all his worldly possessions were packed, had stopped dead in its tracks again. Red rage rolled through him like a flash flood through a canyon. He turned the rest of the way to face the creature with murder in his heart and malice in his eye.

"You miserable, foul smelling, worthless, offspring of a demon from the deepest hells," the dwarf growled, staring malevolently into the mule's big brown eyes. "I can perfectly understand why you want to die. You are useless for any purpose under heaven other than to eat and expel toxic gasses."

The mule stood motionless. It did not respond in any way to the torrent of verbal abuse being unleashed by the frustrated dwarf. If the creature knew anything at all about the twenty odd pounds of gold nuggets it bore on its back, or that that burden represented Gadlin's entire fortune, it did not show it with movement or concern. The mule did vaguely understand that the diminutive miner was shouting. That was a thing the dwarf did often. Beyond that bit of hazy comprehension though, the mule knew only that it was thirsty and that at this precise moment and place, no amount of coercion would move it until its thirst was attended to.

The mule brayed its wishes, subsequently letting off a with a rip of flatulence so putrid that it sent nearby reptiles scurrying or slithering away from the path of so noxious an emission.

Elsewhere, laying in wait, a thief observed the scene from a distance and with annoyance. The stalker had almost as much reason to be upset at the intransigent mule, as did Gadlin. All the previous night he had been awake and moving quickly through the dark to get ahead of the dwarf in order to gain advantage in his ambush. For more than three days he had been Gadlin's unseen shadow. From the dwarf's mine, deep in the arid mountains then out onto the scrub desert, patiently he had first

tracked, then moved ahead of the slow moving twosome until at last he'd found the perfect spot. He had endured the desert heat, poisonous lizards, scarce water and deadly vipers for a chance at the dwarf's treasure. His ambush was well laid. His camouflage was perfect. That gold was within his reach. Then that stupid mule simply stopped in its tracks and refused to move another inch.

The noonday sun beat down ferociously on both dwarf and beast. Gadlin's fury spent itself almost as quickly as it ignited. He simply could not muster more energy to sustain his anger under the glaring white onslaught of searing heat from overhead.

"How about a little bribery, mule?" Gadlin offered. He changed his tone from one of malice and mayhem, to one of accommodation. Moving around to the mule's right side, he retrieved a partially filled goat skin and a wooden bowl. Setting the bowl on the ground, he poured it half full of water. Returning the skin to its hanger he moved back to the front again.. The mule regarded the dwarf for a moment, then with great dignity, slowly lowered its head and began to drink.

"That's right," the distant stalker encouraged in a raspy voice audible only to himself. "That's what that mule needs. Water will make it move. Now bring me my gold. Bring me my treasure, dwarf."

Shade protected the stalker from direct sunlight for now, but he was by no means comfortable. An outcropping of rock above him would only be good for another hour or so, more than enough time for the dwarf to enter the killing zone that had been meticulously laid out for him. There was time enough for him to kill Gadlin and steal his gold. If only the dwarf would get moving again. The would be thief fondled his crossbow impatiently. Soon wealth beyond his wildest dreams would be his. Soon...

The mule, refreshed, responded cooperatively to Gadlin's rope tug. Obliging the creature followed the dwarf once more. Gadlin now was not thinking mules, recalcitrant or otherwise. He could now see some distance ahead, a narrow passage between arroyo walls, where the trail took a sudden downward incline. It looked like a perfect spot for an ambush, but no other way existed to go from the last high desert plateau on which he now led the mule, down onto the distant desert valley floor below, whereon awaited cold beer, a hot meal, a soft bed and maybe a little friendly conversation with one of the ladies at the Inn of the Crying Lion on the edge of the East-West Road.

Gadlin savored the rewards of this journey in his mind's eye. Beer, food, a soft bed, and softer company; someone who did not bray loudly, flactulate rudely and stop every ten minutes for no reason at all. Certainly this were worth the hardship and frustration of the trek, and, perhaps even the danger of ambush. The dwarf smiled in anticipation. He could almost smell the smells of civilization.

Right in the middle of that pleasant day dream, the mule stopped once again. Once more the rope in Gadlin's hand came up short, spinning him around in his tracks. His anger was instantaneous.

The thief expectantly targeted the Gadlin with his crossbow as he trudged toward the ambush. His finger rested lightly against the trigger. Then the mule stopped again. The thief exhaled in frustration, but otherwise did not move. Long experience told him that the distance between him and the quarry was still just a measure too great for a killing shot. He growled under his breath. What was with that mule anyway?

Gadlin's tirade lasted fully fifteen minutes. He introduced the mule to words and phrases that would have shriveled the creature into a limp gelatinous mass had it been able to comprehend the language. He kicked small rocks and raised his hands into the air, appealing to the gods to strike down the mule with lightning. All of it was to no avail. Finally, still swearing that the mule was demon spawned for the express purpose of torturing dwarves, he again retrieved the goat skin and bowl, and once more poured out a generous amount of water.

"Drink your fill you stupid animal," Gadlin complained bitterly. "I want you to be healthy when we reach our destination, so that you can feel the hammer blow that will send you back from the hells that ejected you.

The mule obligingly consumed every drop of the delightful fluid. Then, quite of its own accord, it began to move forward again. Gadlin, shaking his head, grabbed up the bowl and followed. Finally catching up, he replaced the items and retrieved the rope in hand, assuming the lead once more.

The thief tensed in anticipation of the fabulous reward he would reap from the soon-to-be dead dwarf. Two large saddlebags of gold - enough to feed him for five years - he would eat and drink like a king! He shifted slightly as Gadlin, disappeared into the one blind spot he must pass through before becoming the easiest target in all the desert. In just a few more seconds, the ambush would be consummated.

Just out of sight of the stalker, Gadlin had once more been brought to a dead stop by the mule. The dwarf's patience was completely exhausted. He picked up a large rock fully with the intention of doing the creature in and raised it back to strike. Though the dwarf's intent was plain, the mule simply would not budge.

Sudden a loud, excruciating cry of pain erupted from the direction that would have been to the front and left of Gadlin had he not been facing oppositely, about to brain the mule. The dwarf reacted instantaneously, dropping th rock. Sword in one hand, dagger in the other, Gadlin abandoned the mule where it stood and darted swiftly to investigate. He was prepared to meet any enemy.

What he discovered was that an ambush had been set no more than thirty yards from where the mule still stood. Testimony to that fact was a crossbow bolt buried more than three quarter length in the ground slightly off center to the path Gadlin and the mule would have been following had they not stopped. Above the trail, a man lay stretched out in a recess atop a partially hidden boulder. His crossbow, it's bolt expended lay impotently at his side. The man appeared dead from Gadlin's vantage point. His eyes were wide open.

The dwarf climbed warily up into the ambush site, blades at the ready, alert for any additional enemies. Soon enough, he was able to confirm that indeed, his would-be assailant was presently negotiating with the boatman for his ride-across-the Styx to the Land of the Dead.



Wondering what god was watching out for him on this hot desert day, Gadlin glanced about, his scrutinizing the whole ambush site. Suddenly his gaze focused on several moving objects hurrying away from the dead body. He stepped a step backward, wanting nothing to do with what he saw. Hastily, he turned and headed back down and away from the ambush site. As he did so, he gave up an involuntary shiver. Not many things could invoke fear in the peckish dwarf, but oversized scorpions were certainly on the short list.

The mule stood patiently awaited its master's return. Just as it only barely understood the dwarf's rage, so also did it barely comprehend Gadlin's euphoria or the neck hugging that followed. What it did recogniz was the goat skin from which its master emptied all of the remaining water and the bowl from which it would be drinking. It would have been a strange sight had anyone

been watching the arid desert that day, for the dwarf was dancing a merry jig while the mule consumed his last drop of water.

Two days later, near the barn and corral adjunct to the Inn of the Crying Lion, Gadlin the dwarf stood before an empty water trough next to a mule unencumbered by any burden. Two burly men from the inn emptied the contents of two large beer kegs into the trough. Immediately mule plunged its head down and began to imbibe the cold frothy liquid in great noisy quaffs while at the same time nosily emitting nearly continuous lengthy, blatting and obnoxious peals of flatulence.

Because there was no other inn for a hundred miles, travelers who stopped for the night that evening and every subsequent evening for two full weeks were treated to free beer, free food and fine music, all commissioned by Gadlin the dwarf, wealthy for the moment, and quite happy to be alive.

5

The Blue-eyed thief



The guards at the gate are men-mountains. They carry curved steel swords in their belts and they eye each passer through the gates as though they be thief or beggar, which of course, many are. Every so often, they stop a cart or wagon and poke tridents or swords into the hay or what-have-you. Sometimes a howling, wounded miscreant bursts forth to be dragged off to the Major of the Guard's torture dungeon. It is a punishable offense for anyone to try and sneak into the city and this fact is posted out and down the roads away from the gates for those who can read to read.

And I--thief, low born wanderer, son of a mountain woman and a flatlander soldier, created as I was amidst the smoke and fire of a burning village -- walk past the gate guards, ignoring their comments about the shabbiness of my thobe and gutra. I have donned the head rag and robe of a pauper with purpose. They call attention away from the blue eyes that would mark me instantly as being from other than the city or surrounding desert. Those eyes make me memorable, a thing I do not wish to be.

I am Wahid, pickpocket, master thief. Well, perhaps that is immodest, I am Wahid, cutpurse, burglar, liberator of coin and jewel from the ownership of those too tight to share with the likes of me. I promote charity in the wealthy - the gods look favorably upon those who give generously to the poor (even if involuntarily). No mere gate guard may stand between me and the fat wallets of the city. Still, this is no place for arrogance and my lowered head offers them the illusion of respect. I pass without being stopped.

Though I have not been here before, I am well acquainted with this city. It was here, two years ago, my brother Ali was executed in the Square of Justice for stealing the purse of a noble. The laws are unforgiving. A hand severed for stealing bread, an arm for stealing a coin. For a purse, a head. Poor Ali, he always was a little dull-witted.

I make my way through the fruit bazaar, which is the outermost to the gate of all the venues

frequented by dwellers-outside-the-city-who-shop-within, which is what I have represented myself to be. I can feel the eyes of one of the gate guards on me as I cross the square. I reach into my thobe and fetch forth a copper, choose a small basket of dates and pay for them, a move that allows me a sideways glance to see if the guard has indeed followed me beyond the gate. He has, but turns away, apparently satisfied as to my intentions.

I melt into the crowds now, and allow the movement of the multitude to carry me deeper into the city. Several targets tempt me, but I am after bigger game than small purses of dubious coins carried by ordinaries who have earned them by sweat. No, cutpursing in crowded streets is an open invitation to a beheading, as I pointed out to my late brother no small number of times. How careless these people are though. It is such a temptation.

My quarry lies beyond the first level of the city, on the street of nobles at city center, on the hill that commands a view of the entire wall and all who dwell within. My target is a merchant, an owner of caravans, a dealer of spice and a lover of precious things. It is for these precious things that I have traveled far and risked much.

The sun crosses the sky and stretches the shadows in different directions as I make my way through the streets, working inward at increasing risk of discovery. Now, the shabbiness of my clothing works against rather than for me, calling attention to who I am in relation to where I am. I cannot allow myself to become too noticeable and so I duck into an alley. I disappear from the main thoroughfare and blend into the deepening shadows. I am close now. There is plenty of time for movement later.

I spot the unlocked cellar door of what looks like a little used building and I decide to slip inside. I am safe here. As I close the door above me, I get the feeling that I am indeed safe. I have had a long walk to and into the city and I shall allow myself the luxury of a brief nap. I must be alert for what I am about after the sun goes down.

A noise awakens me. It is the merest crunch of a footstep on sand but I am instantly alive and ready. I peer through cracks in the old door and I see that dark is not quite arrived, but dusk is heavy. I can make out two figures walking in the alley toward me. One is tall, heavily bearded and wearing the yellow kafiyah of a city constable. The other is younger, smaller and his skullcap is red, that of a lawmaker. They are discussing a thing that I cannot quite make out, arguing and joking. Obviously, they are friends.

They are joined unexpectedly and quickly, from out of the shadows, by three armed men, two with short swords, one with a crossbow. It is a robbery. Curse the bad luck that has placed me near it, for I will surely be blamed if I am caught for any other offense related to this part of the city.

The tone of the conversation changes dramatically. The younger man argues with the thieves. This is stupid. If I allow this to go on, someone will surely die - me most likely - or that loudmouth of a lawmaker.

I am no fighter. I depend on stealth and I have never slain anyone. But I burst from my hiding place like the demon itself. Screaming like a madman I rush toward the thieves and their would-be victims as though I were attacking with a force of ten and the strength of twenty.

The one with the crossbow fires his bolt over my head by accident. It worked. I unnerved him. The marshal is well armed and takes advantage of the commotion to draw his blade. Everyone has his hands full. No need for me here. I vacate the alleyway, leaving all to their fate. Precious dark is near and I am urgently needing to be somewhere else very quickly.

As the sun flees, I make my way through the upper inner avenues that leads to the street of nobles. It is completely dark by the time I reach where I am going. The lights in the great house are gone out and I, master of stealth, creep through the courtyard and enter.

I have shucked my beggar's togs in favor of a thobe and gutra of raven's wing black. These render me invisible to even the practiced eye. Here there are no eyes watching. There is no guard standing across the door. This merchant believes he is protected by the laws of the city -- those laws do not protect him from me. What is his is mine and I choose freely from among the finest jewels he has.

These rich, they are all the same. They gather hoards of treasure together for the taking and then whine when I do. My belly growls. Before I depart, I take some dates and a bit of bread. Then, like a black ghost, I am gone.

The sun is my enemy, but I cannot avoid it. I have discarded the burglar's uniform of the night in favor of less obtrusive attire than that of either thief or beggar. To exit the city requires only that I walk past the gate guards and out onto the outer highway. I must avoid direct eye contact, but at the same time, in this costume, I cannot walk with my head down, for it is not in keeping with whom I pretend to be.

I move casually past the date stand of yesterday, in the fruit bazaar and stroll purposefully toward the gate. I am pleased to see that today's guards are not the same as yesterday's. That less complicates things. My escape is almost complete.

"Hold on, my friend." comes a voice from behind me, a cultured voice. "How have I offended you that you would take leave without saying farewell?"

My voice flees and with it any answer.

"Surely," he continues, "you will allow me to make amends for my poor hospitality of last evening, by offering you a noon meal."

I stare straight ahead. My knees are knocking in fear. The man who speaks is the owner of the house I have robbed. I have his gold and jewels strapped to my body on a belt underneath my robe.

"Do you not see that I wish to make amends for my lack of manners?" He pleads in such a voice that others are beginning to take notice. If I do not act, mine will be a face to remember. I turn with a smile of recognition on my face.

"Of course." I manage to find my voice now. "How thoughtless of me to allow you to bear such guilt. I will accompany you, so that we may come to an understanding by which we may part more amicably."

Together, we depart the city gate. Before I can offer protest, he hails a cart-for-hire and we ride the distance, in comfort, that I covered yesterday with such difficulty. When we arrive, he pays the driver with a single silver coin and to that worthy's delight, waves off any coppers coming in change. I am ushered, by way of the front door, into that place which I entered by stealth before today's sun. I am trapped and I know it.

I am Wahid, honored house guest. Fifteen days have passed since I entered the home of my host and he has treated me most elegantly. I have been presented with the most succulent dates, the finest wine, the most aromatic breads that any stolen wealth could have bought. I have witnessed supple dancers, decked in golden bands and jeweled silks, smiling at me through their gyrations. I have shared in the fruits of the very wealth I so freely stole - freely given from the victim to the thief. I am Wahid, not respected by myself.

As many years as I have been walking, I have been a thief. I have stolen for every crumb of bread I have ever eaten. At no time, until now, have I ever seen the face of my victim for more than a split second. Now, I find this merchant to be undeserving of the hatred I have always felt for his kind. There is no repentance in me for the life I have lived and yet I find myself crying out for forgiveness. I cry out for an end to this undeserved graciousness.

Who is this Wahid who has removed the belt from his waist that contains his death sentence? He presents the belt to his host.

"I have stolen these things from you," I hear this unknown Wahid say, "and I am sorry that I have done this. At no time in this life, have I met anyone who did not serve only himself. But you, I think, possess qualities I desire in myself. I am better for confessing this crime and shall steal no more."

So saying, I place my life in his hands, not wishing to continue life as Wahid the thief.

An expert in gold and jewels, as well as spices and silks, I am Wahid the merchant. Fifteen years have passed since I departed the house of my benefactor, he who taught me the art of caravan trading with distant cities. I am widely known for my honesty and my astute sense of bargaining. It is known, but less widely, that my prowess at identifying the value of precious stones was acquired as a thief in

my much younger days. Ah, but then, aren't all merchants thieves at heart? We are, if the customer in the marketplace would be believed.

I am not unmindful of my past and I am not careless concerning my future. That which is the bulk of my fortune is sequestered in a vault under heavy guard, along with the fortunes of many others of my trade. I do, however, keep many pretty gems and unusual artifacts within my house on the street of nobles.

Last night I was paid a visit by a thief. He was young and he was quiet and he wore the invisible robes of a black cat. He escaped into the night carrying a good treasure and at this moment, he believes he was completely unobserved. I have alerted the guards at the gate he will try to leave by.

I am standing near the date stand in the fruit bazaar, waiting for him to make his exit from the city. Ah, there he is now. Will he panic and run? Does he have the courage to turn and face me? We shall soon see.

"Hold on, my friend, " I hear Wahid the merchant say, " How have I offended you that you take leave without saying farewell?"

He stops. He does not turn around. As I continue to speak familiar words, I can sense the fear pulsing through him. When I fall silent to give him his chance, there is the longest hesitation, then he turns to face me. He is the first one to have done so in all the time I have followed thieves to this gate.

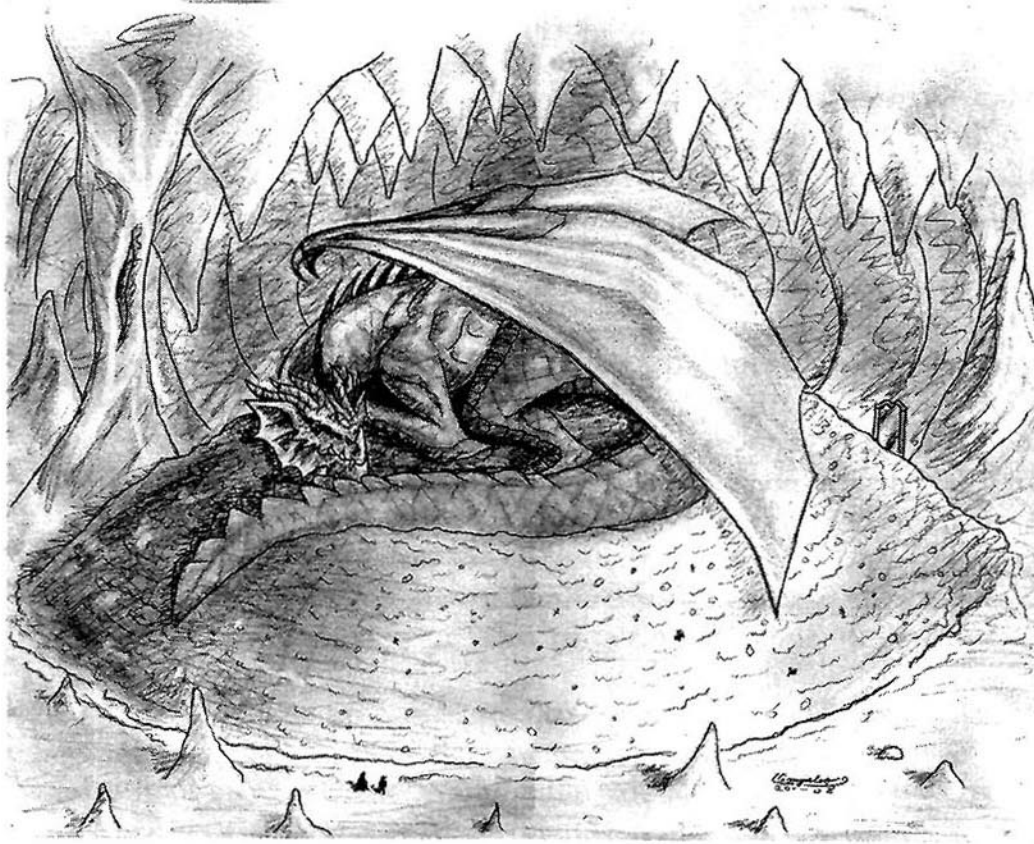
By the gods. His eyes are blue.

He says, "Of course," and smiles tightly, "How thoughtless of me....."

And so closes the circle.

6

The Dragon and the Gods



"Dragon sign!" Kelton proclaimed triumphantly. "We have the beast now!"

Even though I could see every breath I exhaled into the frigid air, I squirmed beneath my cloak, uncomfortable in the sudden heat.

I said, "Kelton, are you sure we can do this? That dragon has killed sixteen men and boys over the last fortnight, including two Royal Archers. Are you sure . . . ?"

He interrupted with a disdainful snort. "Turn back, Sorcerer's Apprentice, if you've no confidence in your magic. Save your skin and live forever in your shame."

I was annoyed. "Why are you talking like that?" I complained. "You don't talk like that. Talk normally and tell me again why you believe this insane brained scheme will work."

Kelton edged forward along the path without replying. He shot me a high sign to be quiet, then he drew his short sword and bent down on one knee. "It's in there," he whispered, indicating a huge opening in the side of the hill before us. The cavern led first inward, then downward, disappearing in all too short a distance into darkness.

It was an eerie quiet, the kind of silence that springs on you like a badger on a mouse and devours you without warning. As we crept into the cave, keeping to the shadows, I could see what little life I'd had in twenty-odd years of breathing flashing before my eyes. Believe me, it was not a pretty sight, especially the part where. . .

"Hold it." Kelton hissed, stopping me in my tracks.

He needn't have said. I could see the dragon for myself. The beast was huge and red and armor plated, multi-horned and horrific. I would have run away screaming if my body hadn't been frozen

stiff with fear.

"It's asleep." Kelton stated the obvious. "Now's our chance."

That was so much closer to a living, breathing dragon than I ever wanted to be. I wanted to run, but I also wanted to complete the mission. This dragon was a killer. We would be heroes if we managed to avoid being the worm's noon snack.

The beast was indeed asleep and breathing heavily, very much as if it were resting comfortably. And rightfully so by my reckoning. It had, after all just consumed most of an entire flock of sheep plus two shepherds. As we drew right up next to the monster, we observed a most unusual thing. Sunk almost to its full length in the clawed foot of the beast, a sword protruded, its jeweled handle sparkling ever so slightly, reflecting the dim light coming from beyond the cave entrance.

"Right." Mouthed Kelton silently, reaching into his cloak for the bag of powder I'd given him before we'd begun this suicide mission. He sheathed his own sword and positioned himself just to my left, the bag drawstrings pulled, its contents ready to deploy.

I prayed a small prayer to the gods to make me less stupid in my next incarnation, gripped the protruding sword in both hands. Tapping every ounce of strength in my body, I pulled it completely out of the dragon's foot. Immediately, Kelton dumped the entire contents of the bag into the suddenly open wound. The powder burst into a white-hot flame that engulfed the entire top of the dragon's foot in a searing glow that would have vaporized a fully grown horse.

The dragon came awake with an abruptness that could only spell death for we mere mortals beneath it. It spat out a line of flame nearly two hundred feet away from its fearsome mouth, charring everything in and near the cave all the way back to the entrance. But Kelton and I were below that fearsome mouth and beyond that awful breath. We remained unscathed.

"You are healed, Dragon!" Shouted Kelton in commonspeak. "You are cured and you must now grant me a wish."

Though it made no sound, I heard it reply, "You, human. You nearly burned my foot off."

To which Kelton responded, "The sword is removed, Dragon. It is gone, and with it, the poison that infected you." he smiled confidently. "You are obligated by the Old Code to grant a wish."

I guessed at that moment that if I said nothing, the dragon wouldn't notice me.

"Healer," said the dragon submissively. "You are correct. State your wish."

"I want to know the truth about life." Kelton shouted, before I could tell him to wish for gold. "I want to see the gods."

"Granted." Said the dragon. "Climb onto the treasure pile behind me and gaze into a mirror you will find. All will be revealed."

We did as it instructed. Minutes later, we were staring through a gold framed mirror, into a room wherein stood a table, around which sat two youths much younger than us, one dark-haired, one fair - and a full grown man.. The man studiously searched a book, turning pages rapidly. The fair youth pondered a map, spread out flat out on the tabletop. The dark youth had dice in his hand and was rattling them nervously.

Suddenly, a malicious smile spreading across his face. finding what he was seeking, the man set aside the book, picked up his own dice, and rolled them, sending them clattering across the table and onto the map. there was an awful few seconds of silence. "The dragon is still hungry!" He pronounced.

"What?" The fair youth cried. "*Jack! Where did that come from?*" Then he sighed exasperated sputter he picked up and rolled his dice.

A second set of dice clattered subsequently..

"Made my saving throw!" Shouted the fair youth, frustration turned to triumph.

"Dammit! Missed" Shouted the other.

Behind us, the dragon twisted its ugly head completely around, opened its mouth, and plucked Kelton from where he stood in a single deft movement. It swallowed him whole. It shook its head then bellowed in triumph, as it reached back for me, But I was already gone, scrambling for the entrance in

the dark in a panic the like of which no one has ever seen.

"Lucky dice," I heard one of the gods say behind me as I ran.

"Crap. I loved that character." Said a second god.

I just barely heard the third god in a deeper voice say, "Fortunes of the game," as I broke into daylight running down the hillside as faster than I ever thought I could move. After that, I came straight here to this tavern, not stopping for anything. I swear to . . . um, the gods.

The inside of the tavern was as silent as stone. Then a tumult of cheering and whistling broke out. I basked in their appreciation.

"I know they're laughing at me," I added, "the gods are, and to tell the truth, I really need a beer. What do you say, guys?"

"Good story," said Gadlin the dwarf . He motioned the barkeep, laid down a coin and handed me a pint.

It was the first time in anyone's recent memory that Gadlin had offered a kind word to anyone.

7

Murder On The Street of Dreams



I

The World, in the age of alchemy and magic, was more than a mere geography of desert and mountain, ocean and island. Of the two great cities of the age, Zenci, to the east, nestled among the rolling plains was civilized, some say even tame compared to her bawdy sister, to the west. Belestria stood defiantly at the edge of the perpetually blowing sands of the high desert. Considered by most intelligent beings to be highly dangerous in which to live - or for that matter, even to visit, she possessed an allure that reached out to the adventurous heart. Trade City, Belestria was called. Empress of the West, she was known as. If anything ever existed in the history of The World, sooner or later it would show up in the free markets of Belestria, available a price. Life was always cheap there. Murder for hire was cheaper still. To those dwelling within her walls, though, the Empress of the West was home. Scholar, merchant, thief or beggar, assassin, adventurer, soldier of fortune or vagabond each in his own way found Belestria to be home. Living long enough to profit from being there was by far the biggest challenge, and for some, the greatest allure.

Hidden away from plain sight could be found the street of dreams. Hardly more than an alleyway and a couple of cobbled blocks, its role in the commerce of the city was spoken of only in whispers, for much of its commerce catered to the black trades. No one who valued his life stepped foot on the street of dreams without caution, care and preparation. The dream powder addicts, most of whom dwelt there upon were so driven by their hunger for the volatile narcotic that the mere suggestion of a coin to feed their beast was usually enough to send them into a killing frenzy. This reputation alone served well to keep most men of Belestria from coming any closer than the cloth bazaar to the street of dreams..

Dream powder, besides being highly addictive, was cheap. Not that the powder had always been 1 copper per dose. Not so long ago Dream Powder was a sniff affordable only to the wealthy, topping more than fifty gold pieces a hit. The powder was widely fashionable until its addictive and destructive power slowly became common knowledge. Of course, by then it was too late. Thousands of fortunes,

large and small had already changed hands. Many elite and previously powerful persons became gutter rats, groveling for a fix. Eventually they gravitated toward the part of the city where the dust was most plentiful. They ended up penniless, starving and woeful on the street of dreams.

Powders, poisons, and potions had long been readily available on the street of dreams. Venues catering to the guilds associated with adventure were clustered there. Someone with a bit of wherewithall could easily buy a cure for an ailment or for that matter, a formula to create an ailment as easily as a finding pair of boots. Powders or liquid *exotica* were a stock in trade both off the street and in adjoining alleys.

The most destructive and least discriminating of these divergent substances was the dream powder. The formula, time passed, became common knowledge, at first among the more clever and entrepreneurial, and eventually, to the at large masses. Powder could be literally be manufactured by anyone with a plate and a mixing spoon. Indeed, it often was. With newfound abundance came a drastic downward plunge in price to a mere copper coin per vial. Now as cheap as sand, the scourge of the drug began to affect the lives more than just pittyable outcast addicts. Almost everyone in the Trade City felt the sting of the powder in, one way or another. Many an otherwise bright youngster and many an otherwise successful person of business succumbed, even after the danger was well known. Victims were laid low and to waste in the clutches of the dust without regard to their origins. Destitute and in ruin, many gravitated onto the street of dreams. For them, it became a street of sorrow, utterly remorseless and indifferent, as they lay dying on the cobblestones for lack of a single penny or having been savaged by others for the penny they still had.

Intense in his loathing, more bent on the destruction of the dream powder merchants than any other human alive, Master Alchemist, Professor Doctor Griswald Grimm devoted much time seeking an antidote that could be given as a cure to those pitiful wretches addicted to the dream powder. His efforts were to no avail though. The drug was far more insidious than any magically enhanced poison or potion that constituted Grimm's chemical experience. Self perpetuating, dust stirred within its addicts a gut wrenching physical demand for more dream powder, very often to the exclusion of food, water or any other thing essential to life. Grimm expend hundreds of hours of study, but all of that investment dead ended. In his search for the one compound which might neutralize the dream powder, the great doctor faced a most unfamiliar outcome - failure. He was utterly and completely stumped.

It would seem to historian or casual observer that the Alchemist had little room to criticize the dream powder. He was, after all, the author of nearly two hundred chemical inventions representing many different levels of use ranging from simple anti-headache powders to a potion which can turn a grown man into a column of fire in less than sixty seconds. But the poisons and potions purveyed in his apothecary were for sale to the "trade," adventurers and magicians, guildsmen and such. His World was a world of conflict, a very hard place indeed and there were many layers of struggle seperating the innocents of ordinary life from the *adepts* waging the larger war and more spiritual war between Chaos and Law.

In that conflict, Grimm claimed neutrality. He served each side impartially, or so he insisted when asked about such things. But many a time he declined business offered by chaotics. Certainly his handling of "The Murder" as it came to be known, seemed to all involved to place him squarely on the side of Law. If any blame could be placed in drawing Grimm to a single side in the conflict, it would fall to events set in motion by a lad named Fleet O'Feet, an energetic young alchemist apprentice employed as clerk/assistant by the Little Shop of Poisons and Potions.

Grimm's young apprentice was equally at home in the bazaars or on the street of dreams, the latter being his place of employment, the former being a playground in the midst of which he frolicked when his duties permitted him temporarily to revert to his first identity, that of an ordinary boy. Fleet O' Feet, though, was anything but ordinary. He was quick of wit, as well as fast afoot, honest and widely known to be so by the residents and shopkeepers on the street of dreams and elsewhere. His ability to move freely and unmolested amongst low and high scum was equal parts testimony to his own abilities

and the deadly reputation of his employer, Griswald Grimm. It also didn't hurt that Fleet enjoyed the friendship of several capable warriors and a Captain of Prince Ossarian's Royal Guardsmen.

Why is it important to know all this? Because it was a small twist of fate rather than any world shaking event that involved, first the lad, Fleet, and then his master, Grimm in what, as I have said, become historically known as "The Murder."

On a particularly crisp morning, the desert temperature being cool at night and reluctant to rise before the actual appearance of the sun, Fleet O'Feet threaded his way through a tangle of alleys beyond the glass bazaar on an errand of urgency. He was awake and about in this unusual hour for boys, at the dispatch of the Lord Steward of Teamsters. The instructions given him were simple; deliver a package, wait for a reply and return with it immediately. Since the Little Shop of Poisons and Potions did not open until late morning, Fleet believed he could easily accomplish his mission and still be on his regular job at its appointed hour. Extra money earned would allow him purchases of leisure, rather than necessity, a rarity in the youngster's spartan life.

The lad's destination lay inside a maze of interconnected alleyways known as the Gem Bazaar. The narrow passageways were barely wide enough to accommodate three men standing side by side. Those who traded there were divided into two very distinct groups, jewelers and merchants, the former being stationary in myriad little venues and tending to specialize in certain types of merchandise, the latter being black robed, shave headed, bearded and mobile, ghosting from one location to the next in possession of tens of thousands in gold worth of gems, magical or otherwise at any given time. The whole quarter enjoyed (and paid dearly for) the protection of Shadow Assassins. Any thief bold or stupid enough to do robbery within that zone probably was already suicidal to begin with. Fleet O'Feet also enjoyed intense protection, though of a much more subtle nature since he never bragged of his association with Grimm and the fact of that relationship was less known outside the street of dreams.

In the pre-dawn twilight, young Fleet moved easily along the street of diamonds, reading aloud the numbers above the door of each venue, until he found the particular one that matched his instructions. Double-checking on a fragment of parchment, he then tapped lightly on the door. For a moment or two there came no response. Then, a light brightened the window and the sound of a metal bolt sliding clicked in the dawn silence. The door widened slightly.

A nervous voice said, "Who is there?"

"A courier from the street of dreams," Fleet responded exactly in those words as he had been coached.

The door opened wider and the voice said, "Enter. Hurry."

Fleet did as he was bid and the little man closed the door quickly behind him, slapping the bolt hastily. He was sweating. "You weren't followed were you?" he asked nervously.

"No sir," Fleet replied politely, then added, "I am instructed to give you this," and handed him a carefully wrapped package which had been hidden in his care. "And wait for a reply." he concluded expectantly.

A sigh of relief and a smile overcame the little man as he took possession of the package. Unmindful of the boy still being in the room, he reverently unwrapped the bundle through several layers of cloth binding, all the way down to a plain wooden box, which he fondled joyfully. Then he opened it, slowly, savoring the moment.

Fleet O'Feet was a contemporary youth, street smart and well acquainted with many of the treasures of The World. Indeed, a substantial part of his training as an apprentice alchemist dealt with geology and its more entertaining side profession, gemology. But nothing in his learning quite prepared him for the sight that greeted his eyes when the little man opened the box in his possession. Inside was a diamond. it was as large as a hen's egg, blue tinted, exquisitely and expertly faceted. It glowed in the light of the lamp. The diamond was indisputably priceless. Fleet



sucked in a gasp of surprise, that suddenly jerked the little man back to the reality of the fact that the lad was still there.

"Here is your return package, boy." The jeweler said curtly. He was now acutely aware that the young messenger knew exactly what he was looking at. He added, "Speak to no one about what you have seen here," handing him a parchment sealed with wax, then continued, "unless you would like to die horribly." Suddenly grinning wickedly at Fleet, in an attempt to be sinister, the jeweler handed him a gold coin. Moving to the front of the room, he unbolted and opened the door. "Off with you now," he emphasized, "and remember what I said."

Out into the street went Fleet to the sound of a closing door and a sliding bolt. Then, the light in the window went out and he was left alone with his thoughts.

The sun had risen well up in the sky by the time Fleet made his way back to Palm Street and the offices of the Lord Steward of Teamsters. He delivered the parchment, completing his task, for which he received the five in gold promised plus one more for promptness. Fleet then excused himself and raced away for the street of dreams and the Little Shop of Poisons and Potions, knowing full well that he had less than nine minutes to cover the considerable distance between the two places.

Grimm had just unlocked the door and turned the sign around when his lad arrived, gasping for breath, and soaked to the skin with sweat from the effort of his run. The Master Alchemist was long since accustomed to the strange ways of his apprentice - and of all youth for that matter and simply ignored his condition. He just scowled, mentioned about using fresh water and a washcloth to the effort stressed youngster, then turned and went back inside the shop without saying anything else. That was the highlight of an otherwise uneventful day.

II

Many citizens of Belestria, over the years have have overtly or covertly influenced her history. Probably though, few individuals more so than Griswald Grimm. The great Alchemist harbored a idely known dislike for the purely magical arts and their practitioners, a general disdain for most guildsmen as a group and a sour attitude toward Alchemy Guildsmen in particular. Mix that with an all consuming disregard for contact with humankind in general and it could be easily and accurately said that Grimm didn't like most people. He dealt with them of necessity, but was friends with few. Had it not been for the timely arrival of Fleet O'Feet in his life, many believe the old tyrant would have seceded from his species completely. During the time of The Murder, he came close to doing that anyway. . .

Three days after Fleet's dawn delivery, the apprentice restocked shelves while his master busied himself at a task of manuscript reading. It was the usual routine of a day in the apothecary. Suddenly, there arose a commotion outside the front door of the shop, a shouting and general hubbub which brought the alchemist to his feet in a snarl, cursing all riffraff, their mothers and their disreputable places of origin..

"By the demons of the slime pits!" Grimm shouted. "Why can't there be peace and *quiet* around here?" He stalked noisily through the shop to the front door and yanked it open, nearly ripping it from its hinges, all the while growling epithets and wishing open sores upon any and all who were disturbing his peace. Emerging onto the stoop of the apothecary, his curses trailed away into silence..

Dream powder addicts - they were easy to identify by their gaunt body structure and hollow glazed eyes - many dozens of them were gathered in an noisy aggregation in the street in front of the the apothecary. True to those underbreath curses Grimm had just pronounced, they were covered with festering sores openly oozing with whatever body fluid might be left in their wasted carcasses. They were pleading and calling out Grimm's name.

"Help us, oh won't you please help us?" While this pitiful noise continued, some addicts sank to the cobblestones and collapsed face down, cold dead. Several died in fits of convulsion. A few vomited the

last contents of empty bellies and asphyxiated noisily. As Grimm stood that day, thunderstruck as he was at the unusual sight, die they each did, one and all until there was naught but a strew of bodies to mark where they had once stood pleading for help..

In the eerie silence that followed, more distant noises drifted along the street of dreams. Screams, curses, the agony of the dying and the sudden silence of the dead, mixed with the panic of the newly dying. Grimm turned to see his young assistant standing in the doorway of the apothecary and motioned for him to go back inside. Fleet did as instructed. Grimm then picked his way off the stoop, down through the bodies and strode off east down the street of dreams.

Grimm was no stranger to death or dying. He was a veteran of several wars, local and foreign. True, he had grown callous over the years, becoming nearly impervious to the pain of others. Death and pain were the way of The World, which was by his reckoning a very hard place indeed. But as the alchemist moved along the street of dreams, it became increasingly obvious to his trained eye that no ordinary mass dying was happening here. This horrible suffering shared one common denominator. Each and every victim was a dream powder addict. There were hundreds of them - even thousands. They had emerged from every rat hole and shadow. The dead littered the streets, frozen in death throes, indescribable agony etched on each face. The still living were suffering immeasurably and noisily. When Grimm's loathing for the wretched followers of the powder finally gave way to pity, it was an inward and private emotion. The expression on his face never changed. Finally, seeing the same thing everywhere, Grimm turned around and returned to the apothecary, ordering Fleet O'Feet home to his mother with instructions to keep her in their quarters until he sent for them.

"What's happening?" The boy was frightened and understandably curious.. Visibly shaken by what little he'd seen just in front of the shop, he asked the question no one else would have asked of Grimm for fear of being snapped back upon ferociously.

"A man-made catastrophe, lad." Grimm told him gently, "one which will be followed by a pestilence unparalleled in our time unless the city works quickly to halt it. Now go. Do as you are told. Your life and that of your mother depend on your following my instructions."

Fleet O'Feet knew when to be serious and when others were being serious. He obeyed his master and went straight home, stopping for no one, avoiding the touch of the dead or dying. finally, locking himself and his mother in their small room with the bolt thrown across the door to keep out any one or thing of normal human strength. He had been provided by his master with certain magical wards against potential adversaries and an extra bag of food. That was enough to keep them safe for a while at least while Grimm studied the situation.

Several hours passed before Grimm came to full knowledge of the magnitude of the event. Through the eyes and ears of those who served him, he learned that virtually every addict of the dream powder on the street of dreams had been struck down - not only just those of the street of dreams either - there seemed to be not a single addict or even casual user of the hated dust alive anywhere in the Trade City. From the lowliest gutter rat upward, stretching into the palaces of the highborn, causal users and heavy addicts alike, dead, horribly.

Plague was the word being used to describe the calamity. Those who were already beginning to investigate, were doing so on the assumption that some sort of natural event had occurred, that the deaths of some six thousand men, women, children and nauticals was the result of an infectuous disease common to the dream powder. Grimm, however, believed just exactly the opposite, though privately. He had not disclosed to anyone, the results of tests he had performed on samples of the dust obtained for him by those quietly doing his bidding in the shadows.

On the second day after the deaths began and with Fleet O'Feet still sequestered at home, the master alchemist received a visitor, Captain Sypos of Prince Osarian's Elite Guard.

"Captain." Grimm genuinely respected the young officer and greeted him pleasantly upon his emergence from his study in the back room of the apothecary.

"Dr Grimm," Sypos returned the greeting. "I imagine you can guess why I'm here."

"The plague," said Grimm simply, and offered the captain a chair.

"What can you tell me about this plague?" Sypos began.

"Well," said Grimm, "Some of it you already know. It is peculiar to addicts of the dream powder, not just addicts, but apparently to even first time users. My sources tell me that many who have succumbed have nothing else in common with other victims other than access to the dust."

"That checks out with what I've discovered as well. Prince Osarian's nephew and three of his playmates are dead. Young Onji's curiosity cost him his life." Sypos' tone took on a bitter note. "I personally beheaded the man who provided the dust."

Grimm nodded his approval as Sypos went on. "I've discussed this with a number of different experts and they all agree on one point. No occurrence of this type has ever been associated with the dream powder or any other of the recreational potions which have become common trade."

"Leading you to what conclusion?" Grimm already knew the answer.

"This plague," said Sypos, "is not a disease or a natural event. It has been orchestrated by a intelligent hands."

"Logically," Grimm commented, "that would make me your number one suspect. My continued contempt for addicts must be very well known."

"More like legendary." Sypos smirked wryly.

"Hmmm," Grimm said thoughtfully. "How long do I have, before being summoned before Prince Osarian's Court?"

"Two days at most. It has been said that many of the addicts died cursing your name. This I have witnessed personally. That's not going to help you keep a low profile in this matter."

"Well, if that's how long I have, then I'd best be about it." Grimm accompanied Sypos to the door. "You have made arrangements to burn the bodies of the dead, haven't you?"

Sypos said, "There's been talk, but more about mass graves than burning. Why?"

"That many corpses could cause a real plague," Grimm replied, "especially since we don't know what caused the deaths. Better to burn the bodies."

"I see your point, Doctor, but the idea won't set well with some."

"Neither will more deaths." Grimm muttered darkly, and bid Sypos farewell.

At noon, on the day of Sypos' visit, Grimm sent for his apprentice. By then, the bodies had been cleared away from the street of dreams and the rat-killers had been out in full force as well. Being a meticulous investigator, Grimm had noticed some seemingly unconnected bits of information concerning young Fleet's whereabouts in the pre dawn hours of the morning of advent of the plague. Since any immediate danger to the boy seemed past, Grimm decided that now would be a good time to query him.

Fleet described in detail his meeting on the street of diamonds and his return of the sealed parchment to the Lord Steward of Teamsters. The whole thing seemed rather odd to Grimm, who immediately turned over the shop to his assistant and departed in great haste, leaving Fleet wondering what all the fuss was over a little moonlighting.

Several hours later, on the street of diamonds, Grimm was attempting to extract information from one of the blackrobe merchants concerning the occupant of the venue Fleet had visited. He was getting nowhere though. It was hard to tell who the poor fellow was more frightened of, Grimm or the unnamed jeweler. Finally, fed up with diplomacy and politeness, the huge alchemist jacked the merchant against a wall, feet dangling.

"I do not wish you to harm you if it isn't necessary, but if you don't answer my questions right now I will leave no bone in your body unbroken!" The look of menace in Grimm's eyes was so fierce and his countenance so terrifying that the merchant's bladder let go, its contents forming a puddle below his dangling feet. Consciousness fled and he fainted.

"Gods!" Grimm exclaimed in disgust and dropped the man into his own puddle.

As Grimm had expected, the address on the street of diamonds given him by his apprentice was

empty. He forced the door, then entered. As he did, he felt the tingle of ambient magic. In an almost instantaneous reflex, he deployed a cloud of golden powder into the empty room and backed out. The cloud revealed the shape of a huge snake, a Vishtarian winged viper, and began to form around it. Its invisibility spell dissipated first - that was the tingle Grimm had felt - and the spell which maintained the viper's existence was also rapidly being sucked up by the magical absorbant qualities of the powder. Soon, the winged snake remorphed into what it was originally, a brown desert rat snake, non-venomous. Now it was safe to enter and Grimm did so.

No trace of the occupant described by Fleet O'Feet was left. But there was a clue to his identity in the trap he'd left behind. Whoever it was had been possessed of tremendous wealth. The cost of that trap was well over five thousand in gold, plus a cost of about 20% of the strength of who had set it in place. Somebody wanted to cover his trail completely. And he had succeeded.

That left the Lord Steward of Teamsters as the custodian of the answers Grimm sought.

Grimm departed the Jewelers' Quarter with many questions on his mind. Why such a powerful anti-thief ward to guard an empty room? Well, that was easy enough. It had been deployed while the room was still occupied. The jewel young Fleet had described to him would have been worth half a million or better in gold - more if it were magical - so the receiver would have been very concerned about theft. So why send Fleet with it? Again easy. Fleet's reputation for honesty would have guaranteed the package would not be opened. Only the carelessness of the jeweler allowed the lad to know the contents at all. Then there was the parchment. What kind of parchment would have been worth a half million in gold worth of diamond? Two answers were possible, a manuscript of magics or a map.

Since Grimm's destination was palm street anyway, he detoured long enough to stop for a brief visit with a friend. The sign on the door said SRI KARNUTH BOOKMENDER. This particular merchant was expert in the construction and restoration of manuscripts, old and new.

"I wonder if you have ever seen the like of this before," Grimm said after greetings were exchanged. He requested a bit of new parchment and a pen, then sketched the seal young Fleet had described to him. It was the image of a great bird rising from the ashes of a fire and Sri Karnuth recognized it immediately. She went over to the locker storage area wherein were kept manuscripts and books and fetched a handsomely bound leather volume.

"Does this seem like what you're looking for?" She gently laid the book on the counter face outward toward Grimm. On the cover was a silver plate, circular, tarnished somewhat, and engraved on that plate was rendered an exquisite version of Grimm's crude hastily drawn sketch. The detailing was obviously the work of a master silversmith and was complete right down to the look of determination in the bird's eye.

"That's how he described it, Sri Karnuth," Grimm felt like he was beginning to make real progress. "What book is this? The symbol does not appear on any manuscript I've ever seen and the boy says it was embossed in sealing wax on the parchment he delivered." He was half talking to himself, since Sri Karnuth was not privy to any part of the rest of his investigation. She was about to inform him of as much but held off.

"This is a copy of a Vishtarian book of prayers to The Snake God," she said simply. "It is the Acolytes' version, as opposed to a High Priests' version which would have the symbol in gold and jewels, rather than silver. Rubies form the eyes of the bird and . . ."

"Yes, I understand," Grimm interrupted, "What about the book itself, whose is it?"

"I can only tell you in general terms Master Grimm, the confidentiality of a client..."

"Is sacred, yes, yes, I know all that, get on with it!"

His shortness startled her, since he usually went out of his way to be civil.

"It is the prayer book of the Red Priests of Vishtari, Master Grimm. It is a guidebook for the faithful worshipers of The Snake God in the Great Canyon. The bird is a phoenix. Legend has this bird as one which can never be killed, but which rises from the ashes of its own funeral pyre to fly onward. The Vishtarians believe that death in service to the Snake is a straight road to Heaven, hence, the phoenix

rising toward the sky."

"It all makes sense," Grimm was thinking aloud. "The winged viper is a Vishtarian legend, a power symbol. Who left it in ambush must have believed its magic to be invincible. It should have killed anyone who might be on the trail of the jeweler."

"What *is* this all about?" Sri Karnuth's exasperated tone shook Grimm from his muttering.

"I'm sorry I asked," she commented after he filled her in. "But at least I can save you a walk."

And Grimm said, "Eh? How's that?"

"The Lord Steward of Teamsters is dead, along with all of the membership of the local Guild."

"Dead?" Grimm repeated, as if testing the idea, "of what?"

"The plague." Sri Karnuth said, "and if what you speculate is true, that means every teamster in the city was a dream powder user."

Grimm thanked her for her time and departed Sri Karnuth's shop lost in thought. It seemed to him, inconceivable that a hundred or more teamsters to the last man would be users of the dust. Even more unlikely would this be since there were at least two spies of the Elite Guard included in their ranks, a tidbit of knowledge which had come to him earlier in the year when he had been asked by Captain Sypos to provide a kit bag for them. What they were spying on or about was not discussed, but certainly would be when Grimm caught up with Sypos.

Not surprisingly, waiting for him when he returned to the apothecary, was Captain Sypos. Fleet O'Feet had been entertaining him with slight of hand, a hobby of the lad's which he proudly showed off to anyone who would stand still long enough.

"I have new information, Captain," Grimm said as he closed the door behind him and turned around the sign.

"As do I, Master Grimm,"

"Well, let's do yours first." Grimm said, and sat down heavily in his favorite chair. All this walking was more than he was accustomed to and far more than he liked.

"Prince Osarian sends his regrets at any inconvenience," Captain Sypos recited formally, "and requests your presence at a Royal Tribunal of Honor, the day after tomorrow, to answer charges pressed by citizens of Royal Blood, of murder. Shall you attend or flee?"

Fleet O' Feet came completely unglued at the mention of murder and his master in the same sentence. He shouted, "*Impossible*," with such force that his not yet fully changed voice cracked into a shriek, breaking with the effort. Grimm sternly gestured him into silence.

"I shall attend to answer honorably, the charges brought against my name." Grimm quoted the requisite reply. Though he had no obligation to do so. As a neutral and as a resident of the street of dreams where Prince Osarian enjoyed no physical jurisdiction, he was completely immune to the summons of the court. But good politics is never a bad investment. "Whom am I said to have murdered? Who brings the charges?"

"Onji Osarian, of Royal Blood, the victim of assassination, the charges brought by Princess Onessa of the House of Osarian."

"I shall honor the jurisdiction of the court of Prince Osarian and appear at the appointed time and place. This I pledge in oath to you."

"Now then," Sypos said, "What's your news?"

"Wait a minute. Wait just a minute!" blurted Fleet O'Feet, who now seemed to have recovered most of his voice. "How can the two of you go on as though nothing has happened?" Then he realized the unprecedented level of impertinence he'd just achieved and his face went red as sunburn.

"There are formalities which must be observed in civilized society." Sypos explained patiently. "Now that Doctor Grimm has agreed to appear in answer to whispers and rumors that have been running rampant over the city, no Assassin of the Guild may take his life. As a prisoner of the Crown, he is protected by the Crown. Do you understand?"

"No," said Fleet, flustered, then, "yes, I-I think so."

"Good," Sypos said, "Now, your news, Doctor?"

Grimm outlined the events of the day, including his assessment of the connection between Red Priests of Vishtari and the exchange of the Jewel for Parchment. And he related the news that the whole enrollment of the Guild of Teamsters appeared to be among the victims of the dust plague.

"Now it's odd," said Sypos, "that Vishtarians are mixed into this. Our investigation did not reveal any Vishtarians. But I recognize that bird all right."

Grimm's eyebrows shot upward in surprise.

"From where?"

Sypos reached into a pocket of his tunic and brought forth a medallion wrought of gold and shaped into the now familiar form of the rising bird. "This came from the dream powder merchant whose head I took. He had no more neck for it to hang on, I'm afraid."

The sun was beginning to set by the time Grimm and Sypos completed their chat. Grimm was grateful that the captain had bought him one extra day before having to appear in court. This puzzle had far too many loose ends and at present, his innocence in the matter could scarcely be argued, never mind proven. First Sypos, then, under protest, Fleet, departed, leaving Grimm alone with his research.

III

What would The World be like without the Vishtarians? Many a scholar has asked that question? Without the Red Priests of The Snake, who would we frighten little children with? Certainly no boogymen in The World lurks in more sinister shadows than the snake worshipers of the Great Canyon
.....

Later that evening, after sunset and after the shop closed, Grimm busied himself with a battery of chemical tests which he'd intended to do earlier, but had not. Now, the results of those tests were conclusive and the facts of those results were truly frightening. He'd had one of his agents collect samples of the dream powder from different parts of the city and return them in small glass vials. Then he'd placed minute quantities into dishes and applied a single drop of several different liquids onto them and compared the results with control samples he already had prior to the plague. The gathered samples reacted differently than the control, there was, in the dream powder collected from the city, a different element. It only took one more test to identify the rogue element. It was virostrychnyne, the active convulsant in Pyrotoxin, one of Grimm's own formulas for distribution to the "trade."

Grimm sat leaned back in his chair and shook his head in disbelief. To produce enough Virostrychnyne to contaminate the amount of dream powder necessary to do the kind of damage the plague had caused, would take a huge laboratory - but then, it would take a huge laboratory to produce enough dream powder to kill an entire city of addicts. Or a main supply of powder was already in place and the contaminant was added.

But who? Why? It just made no sense. There were the Vishtarians, if indeed there was a connection between Fleet's delivery and the plague. But what would they have to gain by killing off more than six thousand men and notmen almost at random? The answer was maddeningly elusive. Grimm bent back to the tasks at hand. From outside, on the street of dreams, the light in the window of the apothecary could be seen and it was lit all night long.

Fleet O'Feet opened the apothecary the next morning promptly at the appointed hour and found his master asleep in the back room, in his chair. It was obvious that the doctor had been there all night. He hardly had time to think about it, for Captain Sypos and Sri Karnuth both arrived within the space of a single minute.

"Where's Grimm?" Sypos' voice boomed in the outer room.

"No need to shout, Captain," Grimm said from beyond the doorway, "I can hear you just fine. Ah,

Sri Karnuth, a pleasant good morning to you."

Grimm joined them in the front room, showing no signs of having just been asleep.

Sypos, on the other hand looked like he'd been awake for a week.

Grimm said, "Captain, you have some news for me?"

"I do," Sypos replied. "They're gone."

Fleet O'Feet chimed in, "Who's gone?" and Grimm shot him a butt out look.

"You remember earlier, you spoke of burning the bodies of the plague dead?"

Grimm nodded affirmatively.

"Well, it went the way I expected. Soldiers of the fourth brigade were charged to dig a burial trench and fifth platoon handled transportation logistics. We buried 6500 humans, and fifty nauticals. That was yesterday. No guards were posted - it didn't seem necessary, I mean, where are the *dead* going to go?. But this morning, when a detail went out to the site with a wagon load of late victims, the grave was open. *They were all gone!*" The captain's emphasis on the last sentence bordered on frustration, as if he, Syphos, would be held personally responsible for their disappearance.

Grimm didn't comment on that. Rather, he addressed Sri Karnuth. "What have you discovered?" The question sounded as if he already knew the answer.

"I believe I have discovered what scroll it was that your apprentice delivered. The Captain's news seems to have confirmed it. I believe that Fleet was, for a very short time, in possession of The Script of Reanimation."

"The what?" Sypos sounded confused.

"Reanimation!" Grimm exclaimed. "Of course! it makes sense. It is the one single document that by itself could be worth so much! How could I have not seen it?"

"Umm I'm in the dark here. . ." Sypos' patience seemed to be thinning.

"The The Script of Reanimation is a black magic spell scroll so densely evil that a portion of its mythos suggests that it harbors a low level spirit life of its own. It is a reanimation spell for the dead, a powerful reanimation spell designed by its originator - may the fires of hell consume him - to raise an army of the undead, to partially restore life in them to follow the orders of the holder of the scroll."

Sri Karnuth added, "The first and only time it was ever used, was in the war of the wizards, by a High Adept called Andor the Black. He reanimated an entire battlefield full of corpses from both armies and loosed them on his enemy. The carnage was unimaginable. Each time a zombie slew a live warrior, he too became a zombie - they carry the power of reanimation in their touch."

So. Someone had just raised an army in the space of just a few days, an army which perpetuated itself by recruiting its own victims. But who? And Why?

"We haven't much time," Grimm pronounced. "The city is about to come under siege and unless we move quickly, they will succeed. Captain, you must alert the City Guard at once. Sri Karnuth, you and I must go to immediately back to your shop. There is something from your brother's legacy which I must have."

The legacy to which Grimm referred was a cache of extremely powerful magical potions which he had secretly consigned to the pages of certain books before he met his untimely death.

Still unsure of who the attacking enemy actually was, Grimm knew he had only one sure course of action. The sheer overwhelming number of undead attackers would be augmented by only a meager number of alive warriors, squad and platoon leaders who would translate the attack orders to their individual commands. Therefore, his proposed defense of the city was twofold, first, dispatch a powerful sleep spell over the living members of the attacking army, second and more importantly, deploy something which would return the undead to their original state of death. The biggest problem was that the city guard was outnumbered by about 100 to one, there being only 600 or so of them on active duty. There could be no direct combat, for if this reanimation spell was indeed the ancient configuration that was suspected, all that would be accomplished would be to add the city's 600 to the enemy's 6000

Sealing the city and alerting the citizenry to the possibility of invasion was unprecedented, No one

could remember any time in modern history when Belestria had ever been attacked. There would be panic and chaos in the streets. What followed then, was a quiet manning of the walls. thus, the element of surprise was lost to the enemy.

All the rest of that day and overnight to the following dawn, they waited for an attack but it did not come. The war between the zombies of the dream powder and the city of Belestria simply did not take place. By late afternoon, scouts from the Mounted Brigade reported to their anxious commanders that for a distance of forty miles or more, in all directions, there was no one, living or dead. Six thousand corpses had simply vanished into the scrub of the outback without so much as a footprint or a trace.

"I just do not understand it," Grimm muttered. He had assumed a post on one of the high wall keeps in preparation for what would have been his role in the protection of the city. His comment was directed toward young Fleet O'Feet, who was in his rightful place as his master's apprentice, ready to do his own part.

"This is not your fault . ." began Fleet, but lapsed into silence, unable to offer an argument as to the truth of his postulation.

On the stairwell that led upward to them from the base of the wall came the tramp of soldiers' boots, a squad, Grimm's practiced ear told him, with one officer in the lead. He said quickly to Fleet, "No matter what happens now, boy, don't despair."

The boy had no time to comment, because off the steps and into the keep came six very large guardsmen and a Captain who was not Sypos.

That Captain said, "You are to accompany us, please, Doctor Grimm."

The alchemist shot his apprentice a stern look which meant, "Don't interfere," and said to the officer, "Of course, please lead the way."

By the time Grimm and his escort reached the palace of Prince Osarian, a sizable group of civilians had amassed along the way. Emboldened by the anonymity of the mob, different ones were shouting, "This is *your* doing, alchemist!" and "Kill him! Kill the murderer!" The scene grew uglier with every footstep.

Inside the Royal Hall of Justice, Prince Osarian sat in the Lord High Judge's chair, the picture of stern decorum. But inside, he was a bundle of nerves. Griswald Grimm, one of the most dangerous and influential men in the city, would soon be standing in the defendant's box, accused of high treason by a member of the Royal Family. If this were handled incorrectly, the repercussions could be enormous or even fatal. The task ahead was not going to be easy and he was not looking forward to it.

A jury had already been impaneled by the time Grimm arrived. The interior of the Hall of Justice was packed as the alchemist made his way down the center aisle, but he concentrated his gaze on the jury box, wherein were seated thirteen of his avowed peers, the Lord High Steward of Alchemists, and the council of advisors of the Alchemists' Guild. This made sense. Belestrian High Justice does not allow a pronouncement of judgement by Royal Decree alone. An empanement of peers, most often of the same guild or craft union as the accused is the usual method employed by the Court of Honor.

Grimm took his place in the defendant's box.

The Lord Prosecutor pronounced formally, "Griswald Grimm, are you here by your own choice, acting freely as an honorable man?"

Grimm answered, "I am."

"Then may justice prevail."

"Let justice prevail," intoned the jury.

"Let justice prevail," Prince Ossarian pronounced with finality. With those words, the most celebrated trial in recent Belestrian history began.

The prosecution's case was not complex. He produced a dozen or so witnesses who testified to Grimm's extreme hatred of both users and sellers of the dream powder. A few of them related the alchemist's rough treatment of addicts whenever they crossed his path. A Master Alchemist then

placed on the record, the previously unknown additive to the dream powder, *virostrychnyne*. He had reached the same conclusion as had Grimm, that the convulsant element of Pyrotoxin, Grimm's own invention, was the potent lethal element which caused the deaths of the young Royal, Onji, and approximately six thousand others in the city. Grimm's call to arms, contended the prosecutor in his opening statement, was a smoke screen designed to cover up Grimm's collusion with Black Artisans who had spirited away six thousand departed souls, tortured in life and damned in death. It was a powerful argument and the jury, all of whom knew Grimm to be an avowed neutral, were moved to believe, at that point in the proceedings, that he was quite capable of perpetrating this crime against those he believed were useless dregs.

Grimm rose to his own defense. In his opening statement, he simply stated, "I am guiltless in this affair and have harmed no one *yet*."

The last word in this brief sentence set the entire room abuzz, forcing Prince Osarian to call for order twice. Once calm was restored, Grimm entered the witness box to offer himself for examination by the Lord prosecutor.

"Master Alchemist, Grimm," began the prosecutor, "Do you deny that you personally hated addicts of the dream powder and frequently assaulted or otherwise abused them for your own purposes?"

"I do not deny that I had no use for the scum." Grimm replied, "In fact, they were a great annoyance to me - are a great annoyance to me - do not think they are gone. They are like flies. Just because they aren't buzzing around your face doesn't mean there aren't maggots squirming in the dark somewhere."

"Did you execute a plot to rid the city of these - ah - maggots, I believe you called them, by poisoning their supply of dust, an act that also caused the slaying of Onji Osarian, of the Royal House?"

"I did not, but I now believe I know who did so."

"Pray continue." The prosecutor believed that Grimm's tale of zombies attacking the city would be proof of his guilt, for there had been and was not going to be any such attack.

Grimm replayed for the court, all the events which led up to the moment, complete with his erroneous invasion assumption.

"I must admit," said Grimm, "that I was completely fooled by the evidence. The exchange of a priceless diamond for a scroll of reanimation of the dead; the only logical explanation for such an act would be the raising of an army of the undead, but for what purpose other than an invasion of Belestria? But the deaths of 100 Guild Teamsters, which included two members of Prince Osarian's own Elite Guard - that was a puzzle part that refused to fit."

Grimm turned his attention to a uniformed figure in the gallery of observers. "What were those guardsmen investigating, Captain Sypos?" He asked.

Sypos rose and identified himself to the court, then said, "Corruption. The teamsters were suspected of having accepted bribes from the Vishtarians in exchange for their participation in the transporting of human children, kidnapped off the streets of Belestria, then treked to the rim of The Great Canyon to be sold to the Priests of The Snake as human sacrifices."

An electric gasp went through the courtroom.

"We didn't know for certain who in the Teamsters Guild was involved, so we placed two spies in their midst to try and find out."

"It just keeps coming back to Vishtarians." Grimm continued, "and the assumption that the Red Priests somehow managed to get hold of The Script of Reanimation, and that a Vishtarian invasion was eminent. But this is not so, not any of it."

Grimm paused to allow that to sink in, then continued. "What has puzzled me the most, right from the very beginning, was why? Why would the Vishtarians, to whom death, in the form of human sacrifice, is a very individual and personal ritual, suddenly begin to call attention to themselves through the wholesale destruction of 20% of the population of this city? The answer is so simple and so unlikely that I missed it at every stage of my investigation."

Grimm made eye contact with the Lord Prosecutor. "They didn't. The Vishtarians had no part in

this affair whatsoever. They were framed from the beginning."

The prosecutor flinched under Grimm's iron stare, then suddenly relaxed. Had Grimm had just convicted himself? In the face of his own evidence, if the Vishtarians were innocent, than only Grimm could be guilty. The Lord Prosecutor felt as if he had won his case.

"There never was any traffic in children between Belestria and Vishtari." Grimm pressed on. "Oh, there was abduction in the city, bribery and transport by the teamsters, but only out into the desert. Other more trusted teamsters were meeting them and bringing them back into the city. There were individuals disguised as Red Priests, a charade for the benefit of the outbound transporters. The real transporters though, just a few trusted teamsters much more heavily bribed than the others, were bringing the abductees, under cover of night, back into the city by a roundabout route and delivering them to slave caravan masters right here in Belestria for transport and resale elsewhere.!

It took fifteen minutes to quiet the room.

Grimm came out of the witness box and approached the jury box. He said, "You see, the manufacture and sale of dream powder was always a profitable scheme. In the beginning, the enterprise was controlled by a single powerful invisible cartel whose bosses grew fat and rich on the proceeds. But the formula for making the dust was so simple, a child could do it." The alchemist turned toward the gallery of onlookers and continued, "When that fact was discovered, the cat was out of the bag. The formula passed downward through levels of chemists until it reached the very consumers who were addicted, where it was discovered that anybody could make dust and sell it by the bag for a just few coppers. The cartel was furious. A major source of revenue had been disrupted. There was no longer any profit in dream powder.

"Then, someone hit upon a scheme, the penultimate profiteering scheme. And it was devilishly simple. Kidnap a couple of hundred children, make it look like the Vishtarians had gone insane with sacrifice lust, then poison the entire citywide supply of dream powder with a delayed reaction poison, collect the bodies in a single mass grave and remove them."

"For what purpose, alchemist?" Interrupted the prosecutor.

"Simple, Lord Prosecutor. For profit."

"Preposterous!" scoffed the prosecutor, "What possible profit could there be in dead bodies? Even as zombies, their usefulness as soldiers is extremely limited. The putrefaction begins almost immediately!"

"*Fresh* dead bodies," retorted Grimm, "is the key. Within the Guild of Necromancers, a power secret cult exists. They are a group of fanatics dedicated to overcoming all the problems associated with magically reanimating the dead. You are correct in saying that putrefaction is a major obstacle, but certainly not the only one. There has to be a substantial number of dead in order to create an entire army of *undead*."

Grimm paused for a moment to let his words sink in. At this point, he had the unequivocal attention of everyone in the courtroom. He knew it too and capitalized on it.

"So the problem was this," Grimm continued conversationally. "How does one create enough of *The Dead* to populate an army of zombies? Then, how does one get those zombies to where they are to be employed without having them completely rotting away?"

Tension was building in the courtroom. Every occupant of every seat leaned forward involuntarily so as not to miss the answer to the mystery posed.

Grimm said, "It was not a problem of magic, black or otherwise. Enchantment has limitations, even at the highest level. Rather, it was a problem of *alchemy*!" The last word of the sentence was pronounced loudly and with emphasis that set the court briefly abuzz. But Grimm ignored them.

"The dead themselves were created in just the fashion we've been discussing. 6500 casualties in one fell swoop, no mess, no fuss, no loose ends to tie up, everybody's dead. Poisoned by their own addiction. Dead by dream powder."

Grimm paused for an instant to let the idea float. "The zombies were created from the dead cadavers by the use of *The Script of Reanimation*, again, no problem. Any competent group of magic users and

particularly necromancers, could employ such a powerful device without much fear of injury. But I ask you, where are those zombies now? Where are the 6500 reanimated dead?"

Grimm approached the jury box until he actually touched the barrier between himself and the jurors. Making close eye contact, he posed the same question to the Lord High Steward of Alchemists.

"Where are they, sir?" He stared right into the face of the startled man, then pointed an accusing finger squarely at him. "He will not answer, I believe. I assert that the teamsters were not the only guild corrupted utterly by the Necromancers' scheme. I believe that this crime was perpetrated with the full cooperation of this man, his counselors and the very facilities of the Alchemists' Guild itself!"

The Lord High Steward of Alchemists leaped to his feet and shouted, "This is an outrage! This drama is an attempt by Grimm to push off the blame for his crime onto someone else!"

Undaunted, Grimm shot back. "Who has the facilities to create large quantities of virostrychnyne? Who, other than myself has the formula to virostrychnyne?"

A murmur through the courtroom and died away.

"Isn't it true," Grimm said accusingly, "that the original author of the dream powder was you, Lord High Steward, and that was the very conflict that caused me to resign from The Alchemists Guild some years ago?"

The man's face was as red as if it had been sunburned. He turned toward and silently appealed to Prince Ossarian for support. But the Royal was frowning disapprovingly.

Grimm continued relentlessly, now also facing the Prince. "Sire, If you employ your guard to search the necromancers' vault, I believe you will find more than 6000 one ounce glass vials filled with a brownish powder, which, when poured into a pail of water will create one zombie, courtesy of the Alchemists' Guild, bought and paid for."

Prince Ossarian nodded toward Captain Syphos, who immediately departed, motioning 4 junior Guardsmen to accompany him.

Meanwhile, Grimm now once more addressed the flustered Lord High Steward, who by now, had sunk back into his juror's chair. "How much does a good zombie fetch for?" Grimm asked rhetorically. "2000? 3000 gold pieces? How about one who also carries the power to reanimate whomever it slays? 15000? 20000?"

Grimm turned away from the Lord High Steward and returned to the witness box to take his seat.. The whole courtroom was alive with discussion and some of the jurors were whispering animatedly among themselves.

"The final piece of evidence is irrefutable," Grimm said, "My Prince, who was it that insisted you bury those dead in a single mass grave, despite my own advice to burn their bodies, a practice which historically has proven sound in times of plague?"

He already knew the answer.

"If I am to be judged for the death of young Onji," Grimm concluded, "then let it be your judgement alone, my Prince, that decides my fate. Those blackhearts - " He pointed to the jury - " are not my peers, nor do I consider them my brothers of the trade."

Epilogue

The Lord High Steward of Alchemists was siezed by order of His Highness, Prince Ossarian and held for a trial of his own, along with all of the Belestrian Alchemist Guild High Council, as well as a dozen high ranking Teamsters. Captain Sypos and an elite squad conducted a raid in the Wizards' Quarter, on the tower of the Necromancers' Guild, only to find it empty and its members absconded; this to no one's particul;ar surprise. The Belestrian Necromancers weren't heard from in the city for many decades due to the blood bounty placed on their heads by Prince Osarian. What they did with 6500 vials of Instant Zombie is another story.

A thorough search of the Alchemists' Guild turned up scrolls of record that bore out Grimm's

accusations almost exactly as he had pronounced them. The Belestrian Alchemists' Guild was discredited. Its entire membership of 140 adepts were banished. Grimm eventually allowed a member of the reformed Guild Council to contact Fleet O'Feet some years later, but only under protest.

Professor Doctor Griswald Grimm was found innocent of the murder of Onji Osarian by an Executive Decree of Royal Justice. Exonerated, he returned to the street of dreams accompanied by his very relieved apprentice and quietly resumed his research into the mysteries of chemistry and magic..

The Vishtarians never publicly acknowledged the affair at all, but some time later, Griswald Grimm received a formula from an anonymous source for transmorphing brown rat snakes into winged serpents. That formula is the most expensive item in *The Little Shop Of Poisons and Potions*.

Are there still dream powder addicts on the street of dreams. Yes, there are. But they're mighty careful from whom their dust comes.

Grimm still doesn't like them. But then, who does?

OTHER TALES



THE 30-SIDED MATRIX

#1

On The Road Again

The first stage of any ocean voyage is getting to the seaport. Getting to the port of Oceania is rather more difficult, in that the Seacoast Road runs right through the heart of Black Dismal Swamp, a hideaway for all sorts of chaotics, criminals and mean nasty dudes. Still, it has to be done. Your 30-sided dice will tell you who you meet...

Roll: _____ and you encounter

- 01 - A wagon on which is sitting an ancient crone and her dark-eyed grandson.
- 02 - A one-legged man on a single wooden crutch, with a crooked grin and a Midas Touch.
- 03 - Fourteen beggars and an acrobat, claiming to know a shortcut through the swamp.
- 04 - A dancing bear and his master who is riding on a small one-wheeled device.
- 05 - An ordinary traveler, unarmed, looking dazed and a bit lost.
- 06 - A vendor in a wooden concession stand who is selling (bogus) Oceania city maps.
- 07 - A man dressed in full military uniform says he's a captain in Fezenclop's army.
- 08 - Seven sultry sinners suggest sitting, sunning and a simple game of "Simon Says."
- 09 - A slave master dragging seven werewolf sailors in chains toward the city.
- 10 - A wagon, drawn by two huge horses, hauling hay bales stacked twenty feet high.
- 11 - A crossbowman who calls himself "Robbing Hood" blocks your way, demands cash.
- 12 - Fifty bandits armed with stout staffs and long bows, demanding treasure.
- 13 - A bard offering to play a song for you that might be pertinent to your quest.
- 14 - A wino, a widow, a window washer wanting work, a wrestler and a whistle-maker.
- 15 - A barbarian dressed in a top hat and dark hoodless cloak, with pointed teeth.
- 16 - A large male centaur, wife and colt, all out for a trot on a warm day.
- 17 - Seven belles a' bawling, six geese a squawking, and five large golden rings.
- 18 - A scatterbrained female named Muffy mumbling vaguely about spiders.
- 19 - A box of gold coins upon which sits a tiny man.
- 20 - A scrap of parchment on which are inscribed the words "If Ye Wish Na Ti Die..."
- 21 - Fifty dwarfs jumping up and down in the middle of a dead giant's chest.
- 22 - A small-boned, pale-faced youth being mugged by a group of bullies.
- 23 - Seventy-six strong bones in a pile next to a stack of odd weapons and an old dog.
- 24 - An odd fellow with a lute who is singing a song in a strange language.
- 25 - A strange metal object on which is inscribed, "Be Excellent to Each Other!"
- 26 - A pothole in which you can see a pot containing a man sitting in boiling water.
- 27 - A strange little green creature wielding a golden crossbow and demanding toll.
- 28 - Seven dwarfs carrying shovels and whistling while walking in single file.
- 29 - A dozen bottles of wine in a basket filled also with bread and a single red rose.
- 30 - A female wearing a white veil and carrying a lightweight saber.

Hint:

The Seacoast Road is very well traveled not only by knowledgeable and helpful player-characters, but by men and notmen bent on halting any journey, confiscating supplies and wealth or simply killing the travelers for fun and profit. Slavers are fairly common as well.

#2

Mother Nature's Tricky Weather Bits

Everybody talks about the weather but nobody can do anything about it. An adventurer on the open road is subject to the whims of Mother Nature's benevolence or fury. Certainly, one of the side-effects of magic is unsettled atmospheric conditions. Since it is difficult to be proactive concerning weather, it's best to be prepared to be reactive. Your 30-sided dice tells you what is happening.

Roll: and you notice

- 01 - A song on the wind. indistinctive, haunting, a melody that is at once familiar and strange.
- 02 - A roll of thunder off in the distance to the northwest. Skies are clear, so it's a bit odd.
- 03 - Increasingly ominous clouds are beginning to gather. Heat lightning is flashing in the distance.
- 04 - High clouds, a warm breeze, a waft of flowers permeating the air, and buzzing of bees.
- 05 - A single large dark cloud from which a gray mist trails downward in shades of darker gray.
- 06 - A solid black wall of clouds rolling toward you at an impossible speed. Seek shelter immediately!
- 07 - A round flying object from which is suspended a basket with a man inside, floating on a light breeze.
- 08 - A golden tornado in an otherwise clear sky
- 09 - Out of nowhere, the wind picks up rapidly to a fever pitch, literally howling, then as quickly subsiding.
- 10 - The temperature drops 10 degrees per turn for the next 5 turns moving forward. Backing up reverses it.
- 11 - A mist forms ahead and spreads to a width of 1000 yards, then slowly rolls forward to meet you.
- 12 - An aurora of incredible intensity lights up the sky, during which an object plunges explosively to the ground.
- 13 - Over a period of 20 turns, the temperature drops, clouds form and 1D30 inches of snow begins to fall.
- 14 - Low hanging clouds begin to rain cats and dogs; literally they fall to the ground unhurt but very angry.
- 15 - An epic dust storm whips up, 5XD30mph in intensity. Very gritty sand capable of scouring metal armor.
- 16 - A ramshackle cottage to your right over which hangs a dark cloud perpetually raining.
- 17 - A bell on a pole with rope attached and a sign reading: "Ring Bell To Change Weather."
- 18 - A really sturdy structure. A sign says, "Seek Shelter From The Coming Storm." Now roll again.
- 19 - A beggar holding a placard that says. "Buy Good Weather Here. Only 10 in gold."
- 20 - A scrap of parchment on a pedestal carved with the words, "Tangaloo, Weather God:" Statue is missing.
- 21 - A full scale hurricane develops over a space of 10 turns, lasts 20 turns. Rain and wind in excess of 100mph.
- 22 - Following 20 turns of cold snap, you see a groundhog looking tentatively for his shadow.
- 23 - A powerful Sky God named Torngasoak, dressed in furs wandering toward you.
- 24 - Light rain, light wind, gray clouds, mild temperatures and, oddly, a penetrating shaft of light ahead.
- 25 - A sword inserted in a boulder, lightning shaped blade, when retrieved, emits a 1XD30 bolt of lightning.
- 26 - Clear skies, balmy temperatures, sunshine in abundance and a southwest breeze that kisses your face.
- 27 - Eerie calm and a heavy humidity promulgate a deep sense of forboding. Something wicked your way comes.
- 28 - An area of suspension; rain suspended in air, a half formed lightning bolt, as if time stopped the storm.
- 29 - A perfect day, weather wise. Good luck (literally) is on the breeze.
- 30 - A 12 foot tall nimbus cloud perfectly shaped into the likeness of Umvelinqangi, Thunderstorm God.

Hint:

Simply wandering along between encounters with no conflict to deal with is kind of dull. The weather changes in zones of magical flux with maddening regularity, forcing travelers who are outdoors to seek shelter in odd places they would otherwise not consider entering. Throw a 30-sided weather dice and watch the chaos ensue.

#3

Encounters in the Black Dismal Swamp

The Black Dismal Swamp is a dark and dangerous place where no small amount of wild magic has come to rest. They swirl about like invisible dervishes. When one touches you, virtually anything may happen. You must roll more than your charisma to keep the wild magic at bay and if you fail, rolling less than your constitution will save you. Roll your D30 for both rolls, otherwise...

Roll: and

- 01 - A dark cloud forms above your head creating your own personal thunderstorm.
- 02 - You are transmorphed into one of The World's few intelligent bipedal alligators.
- 03 - You are possessed by the spirit of a playful banjo picker and desire to find a banjo.
- 04 - You are confronted by a demon that requires you to answer three questions.
- 05 - You are transformed into a donkey suitable to be loaded with extra cargo.
- 06 - You are struck with an ability to become invisible by declaring yourself to be so.
- 07 - You are transformed into a Kraken of the same size and weight as you presently are.
- 08 - You are confronted with a pathway of brick that leads to a grotto 100 yards off the road.
- 09 - A large winged creature sees fit to befriend you. It knows a secret you need to know.
- 10 - Sixty swamp elves appear out of nowhere and demand to know who you are.
- 11 - A flaming arrow appears out of nowhere and lodges itself in your chest.
- 12 - Any gold upon your immediate person is changed into lead.
- 13 - A spider web is strung across the road and a huge spider is perched upon it.
- 14 - A bent and stooped old man is seen to be standing on what turns out to be quicksand.
- 15 - A sudden fog envelopes you and when it dissipates, you are Day-Glo orange.
- 16 - Overhanging moss in a nearby tree has a voice coming from it, offering advice.
- 17 - A scroll is attached to a tree. If removed, it bursts into flames. If read aloud, you do.
- 18 - A large dragonfly is flying near you. If captured, it changes into a *Ferae naturae*.
- 19 - You are transformed into a mime; white face, silence, juggling abilities, etc.
- 20 - You feel roots growing out of your boots, uh oh... you are changed into a tree.
- 21 - You abruptly change into a flaming queen... a female fire monster wearing a crown.
- 22 - You discover a pathway of white stone leading to a tree grove 100 yards away.
- 23 - You discover a chest in a bubbling pool of hot clear water. It contains treasure.
- 24 - You are touched by a magic that causes everything you touch to be paralyzed.
- 25 - You polymorph into a shadow of your former self... literally, you are now a shadow.
- 26 - You are changed into an opposite of everything you were before you changed.
- 27 - A fiery meteor drops out of the sky, landing 100 feet from the path where you stand.
- 28 - Ten million mosquitoes all learn your name the instant anyone speaks it.
- 29 - The earth trembles beneath your feet, opens up and a worm creature attacks.
- 30 - Swamp gas monsters block your way, possibly meaning to do you harm.

Hint:

Black Dismal Swamp is so dangerous a place that all manner of non-player characters choose to stash all kinds of loot there. however, the same dangerous conditions that protect treasure seem to give monsters cause to hang out and wait for food to "drop in." It's a self perpetuating system.

#4

The Guardians of the Gates

It is far more difficult for a human to gain access to the werewolf seaport city of Oceania than one might imagine. However, if one intends to go adventurin' on the open sea, he must do so in company with Nauticals. A gate stretches across the coast road, "manned" as it were by burly black werewolf fighters, each a veteran of two years of sea going service. Try to convince one of these alert guardians that you really need to continue onward. Try to decipher what each of the following "purple" adverbs really means. The 30-Sided dice gives you his initial response to your showing up at his gate. After that, it's up to you.

Roll: and you hear

- 01 - "Who the hell are you and why have you come here? Go away." He says gruffly.
- 02 - "I see by your outfit that you are a human." He says ambiguously.
- 03 - "Are you prepared to die? You cannot pass this way." He says firmly.
- 04 - "There are salt water mosquitoes as large as sea gulls over there." He says vaguely.
- 05 - "Stop! Prepare to be searched? You there! Don't move." He orders authoritatively.
- 06 - "Oh, it's you. Well, pass right on through." He says cooperatively.
- 07 - "Oh! Gods protect me! It's youuuuuuuuuuu!" He screams paranoically.
- 08 - "Oh, I've been waiting for someone like you." He says coyly.
- 09 - "Get back." He orders menacingly.
- 10 - "Get over here! Be quick about it." He barks aggressively.
- 11 - "Don't bother me, go away. We're not accepting visitors today!" He says unenthusiastically.
- 12 - "What explanation do you have for *this*?" He demands vaguely.
- 13 - "What kind of mischief are you bringing with you to Oceania?" He asks sardonically.
- 14 - "Go right ahead on through and don't worry about anything." He says cooperatively.
- 15 - "Ahhh, I see you are a follower of Fezenclop." He says knowingly.
- 16 - "The flowers and the bees are nice today, but watch out for minotaurs." He says serendipitously.
- 17 - "Dark clouds and thunderstorms await you." He predicts ominously.
- 18 - "You can try and get past me; I'm a better fighter than you think." He says confidently.
- 19 - "I can be bribed." He says stealthily.
- 20 - "None shall pass!" He says stubbornly.
- 21 - "What is the average weight of a brown barn swallow carrying a coconut?" He asks cryptically.
- 22 - "I don't wish to have to deal with you today." He sighs tiredly.
- 23 - "Get back! I will send you home to Fezenclop in a basket!" He barks aggressively.
- 24 - "Stop. No, go ahead. No, wait! No, get on with you." He says absentmindedly.
- 25 - "I've fallen and I can't get up!" He says hysterically.
- 26 - "Take this to Captain Red, for free passage on the *Half Moon*." He says mysteriously.
- 27 - "You too could become a werewolf." He says knowingly.
- 28 - "Are you sure you want to come this way?" He says questioningly.
- 29 - "Go on ahead and pass, friend." He says obligingly.
- 30 - "No problem, be careful, don't give alms to any nonhumans." He says thoughtfully.

Hint:

Dialog between player characters and non-player characters is one of the foundations of role playing games. Each of the hits in this matrix has the potential to last a half an hour each with allowances for elaboration and improvisation.

#5

Found, on the Way into Town

The Oceania road, between the first gate and the entranceway arch to the city, is a dangerous stretch of land, littered with the possessions of adventurers who have passed this way before. The adopt-a-highway program in this province is still in the hands of the Legislature, so there is no litter patrol excepting you. Of course, there is no way to tell whether a found item is good or evil, beneficial or harmful, until it is retrieved. The 30-sided dice can at least identify what it is. That's a beginning.

Roll: and you find:

- 01 - A small knife with multiple folding blades that include a corkscrew, a skeleton key and more.
- 02 - A rusty sword with a dull red gemstone on a hilt wrapped entirely in leather thong.
- 03 - A tattered, but repairable red-haired baby doll with life-like eyes and says, "Mama!"
- 04 - A curiously odd shaped pair of eight sided dice with symbols that roughly resemble creatures.
- 05 - A wheel-shaped stone on which is carved a bird, a coconut and a mathematical equation.
- 06 - A rusty key, firmly imbedded in a hard, rock-like substance between two boulders.
- 07 - An urn inscribed, "Herein are the remains of Fezenclop." It contains an evil genie instead.
- 08 - A wooden sign (knocked down and beat up) that says "Tax Collector Ahead."
- 09 - A length of rope 10' long that seems to be able to tie and untie itself independent of orders.
- 10 - A bat, a ball, a bell, a bow, a bow tie, a ten pin, a tent, a gypsy, a fiddle and a flat rock.
- 11 - A stuffed wizard doll, approximately 1/24 life size, with life-like eyes.
- 12 - A treasure chest looking box containing 100 smooth cast iron balls, 3 inches in diameter.
- 13 - A suit of armor on which is posted a sign, "Compliments of Fezenclop." It's a trap.
- 14 - A golden bracelet for the wrist in the shape of a ruby-eyed snake.
- 15 - A container that says, "Magical trash bags, take one so as to be tidy." It makes stuff vanish.
- 16 - A leather belt 5 inches wide, with a giant's face sculpted into a brass buckle. It fits up to size 48.
- 17 - A petrified pewter beggar pitifully portrayed permanently procuring pennies by panhandling.
- 18 - A sack of 25 marbles, cat's-eyes, one each of a color, no two the same. They're magical.
- 19 - A leather container of useful miner's tools, pick, shovel, digging axe, piton hammer and pitons.
- 20 - What appears to be a roll of toilet paper is actually hot pepper paper from ACME Jokes Ltd.
- 21 - A trail of coins leading off into the salt-water marsh and toward an ambush party of bandits.
- 22 - A very large cobra, with a large diamond clutched in its mouth that has information for you.
- 23 - A pushcart offering warm beer for sale, operated by a hooded female (Medusa).
- 24 - A trident wedged between two rocks, appearing to be made of gold.
- 25 - A small plaster statue of a werewolf sailor in uniform, which contains a key inside.
- 26 - A magical beer mug that continuously refills with high quality lager chilled to 50 degrees.
- 27 - A horned helmet, a horn for blowing, a knife carved from a horn, and a horned toad guardian.
- 28 - Webbed gloves for the hands, webbed shoes for the feet, as though one would be swimming.
- 29 - A chain mail pouch; contained within: an iron wand 6 inches long, used for weather control.
- 30 - A group of ceramic elephants with ruby studded collars, all but one of which is fake.

Hint:

Not all things that are found on, near or by the side of the road are there by accident. Some things are there quite by design, as groups or individuals seek to profit from the curiosity of travelers. Also, and quite reasonably, things are not always what they seem.

#6

The City of the Werewolf Sailors

Oceania is the fabled city of the Nauticals, gateway to the Islands beyond the Boiling Sea. Very few humans have made it this far, and yet, here you are ready to sample some of the most exotic venues and by-ways in The World. Although your primary mission is to obtain passage to the outer Islands, there is much you must learn and do before you can engage a captain and begin your sea voyage. The 30-sided dice can be your guide through this quaint and sometimes dangerous seaside lycanthropic community.

Roll: and you discover:

- 01 - A small shop on a side street that specializes in odd and unusual lengths of rope.
- 02 - A narrow alleyway that leads to a "T" intersection at the end of each of which is a red door.
- 03 - A tailor shop that specializes in fitting uniforms to newly arrived Nauticals.
- 04 - A wood working shop that offers a wide variety of fighting and walking staffs.
- 05 - A group of black-furred werewolf sailors (Nauticals) walking toward you, discussing something.
- 06 - A mapmaker's venue; displayed, maps of some of the outer islands.
- 07 - A cutlery shop, specializing in small daggers, short swords and light hand weapons.
- 08 - A small, windowless storefront with no markings on the wall or door except for a white star.
- 09 - A pub. "The White Wolf Inn" operated by an aging Nautical by the name of Chief Rover.
- 10 - An open air flea market with 30 tables manned by 30 Nauticals offering odds and ends.
- 11 - "Ye Harpoon Shoppe" specializing in well balanced harpoons and specialized rigging.
- 12 - A pub, "The Flying Cloud Inn" where information about the islands may be obtained.
- 13 - A quaint and curious book store operated by a young, blonde werewolf sailor wearing glasses.
- 14 - A bottle shop, offering all shapes, sizes and colors of corked bottles.
- 15 - A wrestling area; inside is a ring, bleachers and food stand, specializes in human wrestling.
- 16 - An office: "The Werewolf Gazette," sign in the window, "Help Wanted."
- 17 - An apothecary, venue for poisons and potions.
- 18 - A sail loft operated by an elderly gray and brown werewolf Boson's Mate.
- 19 - A venue offering carpets and lamps in the window, operated by a human (very unusual).
- 20 - A tavern, "The Drag On Inn" (inside, all werewolves are wearing female human clothing).
- 21 - A run-down building that looks like apartments, but which has a mysterious underground.
- 22 - A street named "Captains' Row" on which there are neat little two-story houses.
- 23 - A venue, "Ye Weapons Shoppe" which features a line of hand carved oaken staffs.
- 24 - The docks: tied up are *NS Half Moon*, *NS Intrepid*, and *NS Enterprise*, plus twenty sea dogs.
- 25 - Warehouses and unoccupied docks, except for two unattended skiffs and a 34-foot sloop.
- 26 - A fishing dock with three schooners tied up and off-loading fish.
- 27 - A lighthouse five stores high and rumored to be haunted.
- 28 - A book shop, operated by a human female and her thirteen year old son, who longs to adventure.
- 29 - A tavern, "The Kilt and Pint-Pot," a very strange place featuring kilted (Scottish) werewolves.
- 30 - A very mysterious glowing, metallic, geohexic structure that you are warned away from.

Hint:

Each of the 30 scenes in this matrix can be an adventure in itself. Player-characters wishing to gather information, supplies, or simply to explore, find ample opportunity for all such doings. Gamemasters may want to try making 6-sided matrices for each of this 30 making the matrix 30x180.

#7

Encounters at the Skull and Crossbones Inn

The Werewolf Sailors often gather for good food, cool beer and a hot time at the Skull and Crossbones Inn. Here, an adventurer can always find a little information, a good Nautical in need of a job, or a tale-teller to make the long night shorter. Humans are in short supply in Oceania, but if there are any at all to be found, the Skull and Crossbones is the place to find them. Your 30-sided dice can be your guide to the many and varied denizens of the most famous tavern on the coast.

Roll: and you discover:

- 01 - A dun-colored Nautical discussing a recent voyage with three ordinary sea dogs.
- 02 - A human, dressed in cleric's robes, claiming to be an acolyte of the Great Fezenclap.
- 03 - A dignified gray-black colored werewolf dressed in the gold braids of a Captain.
- 04 - An elderly Nautical, carrying a cane, in possession of some maps and blueprints.
- 05 - Two young brown Nauticals engaged in arm wrestling and attracting much attention.
- 06 - A completely white furred Nautical, examining a chart with a magnifying glass.
- 07 - A party of human adventurers, including three barbarians and an elf, drinking whiskey.
- 08 - A group of ordinary sea-dogs, muttering something about "filthy humans."
- 09 - An extraordinary looking human female, dressed in red satin, looking for someone.
- 10 - A very small, very young, very frightened looking werewolf in an ill-fitting uniform.
- 11 - That the bartender (a werewolf) was once a powerful cleric (with opinions about Fezenclap).
- 12 - That a ship is setting sail for the outer islands at three bells tomorrow.
- 13 - That some magic does not work well in the presence of werewolves (but not sure what).
- 14 - A secret door that leads to a spiral staircase downward to a tunnel in the rock and a secret dock.
- 15 - That your beer has knockout juice in it and you are now getting sleepy....
- 16 - That something is wrong and the whole bar is about to attack you.
- 17 - That there may or may not be a connection between Fezenclap and the number 42.
- 18 - That you've been poisoned with a deadly neurotoxin, you have eight minutes to live.
- 19 - That someone has deliberately introduced a hallucinogenic agent into your drink.
- 20 - That some werewolves are not as socially adaptable as are others.
- 21 - That someone in this bar wants to kill you, no explanation necessary.
- 22 - That drunken werewolves are more dangerous than sober werewolves.
- 23 - A mysterious stranger (a druid) has a message for you.
- 24 - That a mysterious druid has a message for you (in the back room).
- 25 - That "elfstones" have nothing to do with kidneys.
- 26 - A small boy, who expresses his wish to accompany you on your journey.
- 27 - A violent fight breaking out at a nearby table and threatening to engulf you as well.
- 28 - That the word "Ungghhhhh" has 130 different meanings in werewolf slang.
- 29 - That the full moon and the high tide are good times to discuss things with Nauticals.
- 30 - That maybe you shouldn't be here.

Hint:

Here is a good place to plant the seeds needed to begin a seafaring adventure. Since information is power, imagine how empowered players will feel, secure in the knowledge that they fully explored this unique environment.

#8

The Oceania Public Library and Pub

One of the best collections of books and rare manuscripts anywhere in The World is to be found in the Oceania Public Library and Pub. There are books for every occasion, including some for occasions that may not be desirable to have. One thing's for absolute certain – when your librarian's a werewolf, the books don't stay overdue for very long...

Roll: _____ and you discover a book entitled

- 01 - *Using the Werewolf Express Card*, a user's guide to easy credit.
- 02 - *Dragons to Avoid and the Treasures They Hoard*, including several maps.
- 03 - *Oceania's Weapons Masters, Which Ones are Cranky*, plus a chapter on alchemists?
- 04 - *A Beginner's Guide to Outwitting Gate Guards*, including a selected bribes table.
- 05 - *Going Sailing? Forget It Unless You Know A Werewolf!* A hand guide to nautical activities.
- 06 - *Ask For A Bud Light!* A beginner's guide to phosphorescent flora and fauna.
- 07 - *Operating Your Skinwing*, detailed instructions on how to hang glide, (but no diagrams).
- 08 - *The Sky above the World*, hypothesizes that there may be life on the stars (stupid idea).
- 09 - *Rank and File: How to tell a Sea Dog from a Captain*, a study of werewolf uniforms.
- 10 - *Who in the Hell is Fezenclop Anyway?* Explores rumors about this mysterious fellow.
- 11 - *My Dinner with the Cyclops*, an adventurer recounts almost being a Cyclops' dinner.
- 12 - *Prognostication, Prestidigitation, Post Cognition and Pugilism*, a delver's dictionary.
- 13 - *Lunar Descent*, this book seems to have been written in another dimension, very strange.
- 14 - *Crime and Punishment*, the nautical book of laws, including things you can be hung for.
- 15 - *Ghost and Goblins Occupying Certain Islands*, a guide to haunted destinations.
- 16 - *Every Werewolf's Guide to Being Nautical*, for new Nauticals (required reading).
- 17 - *Fear of Flying*, everything you needed to know about flying except how to land.
- 18 - *Wizards, Warriors, Warlocks, Barbarians, Selected Clerics and an Elf*, an epic fantasy.
- 19 - *Desperately Seeking Swords, a Guide to Sword Selecting*, written by Wahid Sirrius.
- 20 - *A Guide to Groveling, Whining, and Convincing Demons to Spare One's Life*, 'nuff said.
- 21 - *Dancing with Werewolves, a Social Guide*, tells how to get along with Nauticals.
- 22 - *Gems of Power and Where They Can Be Found*, terrific, offers advice on great treasure locations.
- 23 - *Every Assassin's Guide to Disguise*, fifty ways to full your adversaries.
- 24 - *Speaking Dwarfish for Fun and Profit*, a Berlitz language book (?).
- 25 - *Designing False Limbs and Other Kinds of Camouflage*, great for rangers.
- 26 - *101 Fireball Spells and How to Keep Them from Backfiring in your Face*, good book.
- 27 - *Fencing the Penultimate Diamond*, what to do with it after you steal it, a thief's guide.
- 28 - *Every Man's Guide to Dying Well*, a booby-trapped book that explodes rolling 23 X D30.
- 29 - *All About Gypsies*, a completely blank book.
- 30 - *Little Shop of Poisons and Potions*, a shameless plug for a real book.

Hint:

Never judge a book by its cover – or title. The tomes listed here can play a subsequent role later in the adventure; for example: finding a scroll that evokes fireballs, # 26 might be useful in keeping an inexperienced player character from incinerating himself and his party.

#9

Singing the Boat Stealing Blues

The most time-honored way to obtain a vessel in the port city is to steal it – with the help of a qualified werewolf Captain and crew. Only rarely do those who contract for a voyage in the pubs of the city actually own a ship. There are many obstacles that might stand in your way, up to and including odd and unforeseen changes in the weather. Good luck. You'll need it.

Roll: and

- 01 - You encounter a thick fog hanging over the harbor... visibility, 40 yards.
- 02 - You encounter an alert police patrol... they go over you with fine detail.
- 03 - You encounter a group of street thugs, who demand payment in exchange for silence.
- 04 - You encounter a kraken... it has invaded the harbor at the exact moment of your departure.
- 05 - You encounter a Werewolf Senior Captain, who demands to accompany you.
- 06 - You encounter a tall, sinister looking, cloaked, deep-voiced human fighter, blocking your way.
- 07 - You encounter a tiny (3" tall) Faerie, who begs to be taken on your journey.
- 08 - You encounter a young teen-age werewolf sailor who tells you that you forgot the (magic) rope.
- 09 - You encounter the Shore Patrol, two burly werewolves wearing "SP" armbands.
- 10 - You encounter an entrancing human female who tries to lure you away from your mission.
- 11 - You encounter a strange looking half-man half-fish, recently emerged from the water.
- 12 - You encounter a boisterous and loud gaggle of lunatic human males and females.
- 13 - You encounter a mysterious looking one-eyed one-armed one-legged werewolf.
- 14 - You encounter a seedy looking human male in rags who reeks of gin and who tells a tale.
- 15 - You encounter an intelligent and highly motivated, but non-verbal, sea lion.
- 16 - You encounter a stubborn sea breeze that is stronger than the outgoing tide. You are delayed.
- 17 - You encounter a sea-witch, half human mer-hag with magical powers who is from the deep.
- 18 - You encounter a tall black man who requests passage with you and who is well mannered.
- 19 - You encounter a quantity of magical rope that attacks and attempts to detain you.
- 20 - You encounter a dwarf, very unusual for Oceania, who says he knows of an underwater cave.
- 21 - You encounter a mapmaker/navigator who tells of a frozen wasteland to the south.
- 22 - You encounter a one-eyed one-horned flying purple people eater (possibly an illusion).
- 23 - You encounter an unattended sea locker (a large chest with several hidden drawers).
- 24 - You encounter extremely bright moonlight, bad luck both (?) moons are out tonight.
- 25 - You encounter a small sea dragon that has wandered up from the harbor (looks like a baby).
- 26 - You encounter a barbell, a ball, a bartender, with a belle on his arm, a were-lion and a snake.
- 27 - You encounter one gold round, every 50 feet for a hundred yards leading into a dark alley.
- 28 - You encounter a sorceress who offers you a reward in return for performing a task.
- 29 - You encounter a three dimensional image of a wizard asking for help in escaping his prison.
- 30 - You encounter a deepening foreboding about your going to sea that worsens as time goes by.

Hint:

The sweetest ship on the high seas is the one you just "borrowed" from the Commodore of Nauticals. By leaving a note on the dock where she was berthed, you are assured by the Captain who helped you pirate her that you will be forgiven. Conveniently, all the rum you will need is already aboard.

#10

Afloat on the Boiling Sea

The Boiling Sea begins about 80 miles due east of Oceania and is about two hundred fifty miles wide at that point. It is an area of perpetual storminess that has pounded many a ship into sawdust. Your captain has been knocked unconscious by a rogue wave, your first and second mates have been washed overboard. Only you, your party and the ordinary sea dogs who are the crew, are left to handle the ship. One of your crew knows a small amount of navigation and has told you approximately what course to steer, but then, he too was washed overboard. Now you must trust your 30-sided navigation dice to get you through alive.

Roll: and your ship encounters

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|---|
| 01 | - A deadly 40 foot wave | 16 | - A huge nightmarish giant squid |
| 02 | - A raft on which is lashed a maiden | 17 | - A whirlpool of gigantic proportion |
| 03 | - A tiny rocky island on which is a tower | 18 | - A flight of humongous birds of prey |
| 04 | - A towering water spout headed your way | 19 | - A massive thunder squall |
| 05 | - A swimming Sargasso Beast | 20 | - A cloud raining gold coins into the sea |
| 06 | - An area of calm water | 21 | - A ship flying the skull and crossbones |
| 07 | - A ghost ship manned by human zombies | 22 | - The voice of a piteous old woman crying |
| 08 | - A fleet of four mysterious white ships | 23 | - Balrog Island, where there is treasure |
| 09 | - Seven stranded castaways on a sand bar | 24 | - An area of burning sea |
| 10 | - An area of extremely shallow water | 25 | - A colossal specter of a sea god |
| 11 | - A gigantic fifty foot long swimming duck | 26 | - 5,000 floating explosive silver balls |
| 12 | - An ominous low hanging cloud | 27 | - A cloud-ship more than 300 feet long |
| 13 | - An island on which are 100 sea lions | 28 | - 1 square mile of deadly jellyfish |
| 14 | - Sharp, jagged rocks | 29 | - 1 square mile of Sargasso seaweed |
| 15 | - A huge tidal wave more than 100 feet tall | 30 | - A deadly gale, more than 120 knot winds |

Tidal forces and prevailing winds often push your ship in directions you do not wish it to go. The 30-sided dice controls these variables and they change quickly.

Roll: and your ship moves

- | | | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|----|-------------------------------|----|---------------------|
| 01 | - To starboard, slowly | 11 | - To port, very quickly | 21 | - Ahead, quickly |
| 02 | - To port, slowly | 12 | - Hard to starboard | 22 | - T a dead stop |
| 03 | - Hard to port | 13 | - Slowly to starboard | 23 | - Hard to stern |
| 04 | - To port at a 45 degree angle | 14 | - Slightly to starboard | 24 | - To a dead stop |
| 05 | - Where you want it to go | 15 | - Ahead, slowly | 25 | - Slowly to stern |
| 06 | - Quickly to starboard | 16 | - Violently to starboard | 26 | - Ahead modestly |
| 07 | - Wrenchingly, to port | 17 | - To a dead stop | 27 | - Astern, slowly |
| 08 | - Ahead, very quickly | 18 | - Astern, violently, suddenly | 28 | - Hard to starboard |
| 09 | - Ahead, at a reasonable clip | 19 | - To port, violently | 29 | - To starboard |
| 10 | - Hard to port | 20 | - Gently to starboard | 30 | - To a dead stop |

Hint:

Did anyone remember to bring sea sickness medicine? They seldom do and therein lies a scenario.

#11

The Island of Jeju-do

Jeju-do Island is reputed to be a major treasure island in the area beyond the Boiling Sea. In the days before the werewolves controlled the seas, human pirates preyed on shipping and coastal cities of the Other Continent, bringing their booty to Jeju-do to be buried or hidden. When the Nautical werewolves came into control of the seas, towns and villages began to spring up on the island. As humans fled the seas, they had to settle somewhere and Jeju-do became a trendy retirement destination for former human sailors and their wives and offspring. It is a complex place, well diversified and mysterious... Your 30- sided dice can help you make a map and find your way around the island.

Roll: and you discover the whereabouts of

- 01 - The Temple of the Sun, located in the north central highland of the island.
- 02 - A waterfall known as High Falls, located at the headwaters of the Swift River.
- 03 - A mountaintop called Katt Peak, where an observatory (similar to Stonehenge) is located.
- 04 - An area of wetlands known as Black Swamp, habitat of the black alligator, location of treasure.
- 05 - The village of North Point, at the far end of the island, home of Stelgar the Sword Maker.
- 06 - Flat Plateau, reputed landing site of a mysterious flying iron ship that carried no sails.
- 07 - Dead Volcano, on the southern edge of the mountains, location of mysterious mushrooms.
- 08 - A secret pathway that leads into the heart of the mountains to a hidden valley of great beauty.
- 09 - The city of Jeju-do, a seaport located on the lee side of the island, on a lagoon protected by a reef.
- 10 - A cache of weapons buried on the windward side of the island under a giant "W" (of palm trees).
- 11 - An inn called the Fisherman's Rest, serves the coldest beer and has the cleanest lodging around.
- 12 - A castle called Firethrower's Keep, located at the highest point on the island (dangerous).
- 13 - Windover, a sandy stretch of dunes hiding a mysterious underground complex of iron caves.
- 14 - Southport, a retirement community for very knowledgeable werewolf and human sailors.
- 15 - The Temple of Fezenclop, reputed to be one of the richest of the old gods' worship sites.
- 16 - Green Forest, a lovely semi-tropical jungle, home to the black lightning, a very deadly snake.
- 17 - Temple Thicket, wherein is reputed to be an underground temple loaded with treasure.
- 18 - Blue Lagoon, a shallow dive to an underwater temple of solid marble, location of much gold.
- 19 - The tax collector's office in the port city, they know who you are, they are waiting to talk to you.
- 20 - Eagle's Nest, a tiny monastery wherein lies the secret of "the vibrating finger" a death touch.
- 21 - The Windward General Store, provisions, light weapons, maps, beer, conversation, leather stuff.
- 22 - Treasure Flat, a reputed rich site for buried pirate treasure.
- 23 - High Air Prison, where many very bad or misunderstood individuals are under lock, key and bar.
- 24 - Cloudcatcher, a small castle in the clouds that belongs to a mysterious wizard-in-residence.
- 25 - Mellow Meadow, a unique grassy plain of yellow flowers that have a narcotic effect on people.
- 26 - The old sailors' graveyard: on one tombstone is a message concerning location of treasure.
- 27 - The Father Oak, an unusual tree whose wood is ideal for the making of wands.
- 28 - A fully stocked abandoned ship, anchored in Blue Lagoon, guarded by zombies and ghouls.
- 29 - A sea cavern, reputed location of treasure and a giant squid.
- 30 - The hidden shop of Mylar the mapmaker, who knows about all of the above.

Hint:

An interesting exercise is to make a map of the island to give players prior to arrival that identifies 30 features by number. Each time a D30 is rolled for information, the corresponding map location is revealed. In this way the island can be explored without players making a beeline for known destinations without acquiring clues for the "betweens"

#12

The Temple of Fezenclop

Reputed to be in the Temple of Fezenclop, is the Golden Orb, a 50-pound in weight solid ball of pure gold. This is the most trapped location in the entire explored world, but the prize is said in legend and tale to be worth every one of the thousands of lives that have been lost there. This location is rated at 10 skulls (one for easy, 10 for impossibly deadly), by the Thieves Guild and any party entering should be accompanied by a master lever thief (with a death wish). Your 30-sided dice will identify the kind of trap that has killed or maimed you.

Roll: then you encounter

- 01 - A ten cubic yard slab of solid granite falls squarely on your head.
- 02 - A whiplash of razor sharp blades hits you with blinding speed and deadly accuracy.
- 03 - A pit drop plunges you downward 30 feet into armor piercing vertical stakes of iron.
- 04 - Fire trap! A wall of flame ignites, setting off a firestorm of white heat.
- 05 - The hallway doglegs to the right by 45 degrees and down by 30 degrees.
- 06 - A high-impact double moving wall trap closes within 30 seconds.
- 07 - 1000 gallons of putrid tomato juice and 3000 bushels of red ants fall on you from above.
- 08 - Double floor drop, center secure by 3 feet wide, bamboo punji stakes on each side ten feet down.
- 09 - A deadly crossfire. A high density spear trap, D30X10 spears launched from holes in both walls.
- 10 - Snakefall. D30X100 deadly vipers are slithering through openings in the walls and floor.
- 11 - A wall of water eight feet tall coming at you at an extremely high velocity.
- 12 - A hallway that dead ends at a blue door on which is carved an animated talking face.
- 13 - 100 zombies in silver armor who are carrying crescent shaped swords attack immediately.
- 14 - A series of upward leading stairways and interconnected platforms on which are armed guards.
- 15 - A startled single soldier in possession of a huge key ring sees you and sprints away.
- 16 - A sudden powerful up thrust of 1D30X100 sword blades right through the floor.
- 17 - A hallway of mirrors, any one of which can steal your soul if your image makes eye contact.
- 18 - A devastating sonic blast that shatters the eardrums of anyone who fails his saving throw.
- 19 - A spiral stairwell leading downward into a deep dark well, at the bottom of which is a door.
- 20 - A door on which is posted a carved sign saying "Don't even think about entering!"
- 21 - A painting of an archer, hanging on the wall, that animates and fires on you.
- 22 - A rope, which when pulled, looses 1,000,000 gallons of water on you from above.
- 23 - Poison gas! 1000 cubic yards of skunk perfume. Not deadly, but you wish you could die.
- 24 - A howling wind, blowing over 100 mph, screaming at more than 200 decibels.
- 25 - Invisible poison, a mutated virus that creates flu-like symptoms that escalates into cardiac arrest.
- 26 - An area of nothing, which when stepped or fallen into, changes the victim into nothing.
- 27 - A gap in the floor six feet wide, that drops 300 feet into glowing bubbling lava.
- 28 - An area of mysterious thick fog that has very little oxygen inside and will kill by anoxia.
- 29 - An area of fungus on the walls, ceiling and floor, which causes extreme itching on skin contact.
- 30 - A great blob of sticky goo on the floor, along with several dead heroes who got themselves stuck.

Hint:

Accolytes of Fezenclop keep a lot of treasure hidden in some pretty exotic locations. They are always looking for new recruits to join their cult and wil sometimes use treasure or the lure of treasure to bring fresh blood (so to speak) to their midst. Who is Fezenclop? Well, that's for YOU to say.

#13

Impetuous Creatures and Impulsive Individuals Discovered While on Walkabout

Whenever you go walkabout, it is probably a good idea to take along weapons for personal defense and a serious translation book for discussing situations with strangers or potential enemies prior to mounting an attack. Even the best prepared adventurers are seldom prepared for all the members of this group. Your 30-sided dice will give you helpful hints as to who you might encounter on walkabout.

Roll: then you encounter

- 01 - A magic-using zombie, crazy as a loon, walking backwards and talking to himself.
- 02 - A partially stoned griffin, in obvious pain and distress, who begs for your help.
- 03 - A juvenile rainbow dragon that seems incapable of flame or fire, but capable of speech.
- 04 - A black-skinned man who is poised, self-confident and by his manner of speech, verbally gifted.
- 05 - A monkey in a basket hung from a large balloon which is tethered to the ground by a rope.
- 06 - A group of children gathered around a bard who is telling stores about nearby treasure.
- 07 - A lurk of thieves (10XD30) who insist on joining you on your adventure.
- 08 - A gigantic cloud creature capable of deadly lightning attacks, who is depressed, feeling unloved.
- 09 - A gaggle of extremely aggressive geese who feel compelled to protect a nest of golden eggs.
- 10 - A clockwork man made of metal and wood, but who seems to possess intelligence and luck.
- 11 - A circle of eagles in the sky, hovering on thermals above a tower.
- 12 - A strange cloud approaching swiftly, that seems to be raining gold coins and vipers.
- 13 - A werewolf sailor dressed in the togs of a fighter, wielding a sword and blocking your way.
- 14 - A group of barbarians engaged in combat with an ogre protecting a large chest of something.
- 15 - An unemployed teacher, who inquires concerning the whereabouts of a school needing a master.
- 16 - A blue-skinned man who seems confused and who attacks without warning and unprovoked.
- 17 - A panic stricken 800 pound bear, being chased by a Harpy who is hurtling insults at it.
- 18 - A full-sized momma dragon looking for her rainbow-colored offspring.
- 19 - An ancient-looking man wearing a tarnished crown and claiming to be Fezenclop.
- 20 - A vender of apples, a vivacious vixen, a vocal vole, and a verbose veldt-dweller.
- 21 - A dusty dwarf carrying a small sack and a pickaxe.
- 22 - A muscle man, a midget, a Minotaur, and a mime all engaged in street theater.
- 23 - A woodsman, dressed in buckskin, armed only with a silver hand ax, ignoring you.
- 24 - A bothersome burdenbeast of babble-on, a jackass from the hells, they never stop braying.
- 25 - A group of chanting monks who, when disrobed, are revealed to be enchanted skeletons.
- 26 - A Ninjika, (female ninja assassin) armed with poison tipped silver throwing stars and a sword.
- 27 - A pack of sleeping dogs, who, when awakened, lie shamelessly upon being asked questions.
- 28 - A ghoul, a guru, a grifter, and a goose discussing something with a specter and a soothsayer.
- 29 - A lethargic large lizard languishing for lack of liquid.
- 30 - An animated xenomorphic single large stone that radiates an uncomfortable amount of heat.

Hint:

The term "wandering monster" means pretty much just that. Creatures laying in wait, cruising for a fight or just guarding a treasure, having been entrusted to do so by Beloved Master. Random non-player characters such as these can have more meaning than just "hack and slash if there are game clues embedded in creature encounters.

#14

Bad Joss, Good Joss, Bloopers and Practical Jokes

Sometimes things just don't go according to plan. *Joss* (luck) plays a major role in how things develop over the course of an adventure. Having the gods playing random practical jokes certainly doesn't help keep things calm and organized. And sometimes the best laid plans of men and notmen just wander asunder for no apparent reason. Your 30-sided dice can sort all this out.

Roll: and the next thing you know

- 01 - The sky opens up and purple rain begins to fall, after which a rainbow appears before you.
- 02 - You take one bad step and you severely sprained an ankle.
- 03 - A cloud of green mist partially obscures what appears to be a treasure chest.
- 04 - You are overtaken by a plague of poor dexterity, beginning now and lasting twenty turns.
- 05 - A crazy woodpecker attacks and harasses you for twenty turns.
- 06 - Your alignment reverses totally. You become the opposite of what you were before.
- 07 - Your gender changes to its opposite, but in Illusionary form only. The gods think this is funny.
- 08 - Unusually good luck finds you. You locate a sack of gold almost under your nose.
- 09 - You step into a gravity well and find yourself falling downward at speeds of up to 150 mph.
- 10 - This seems an unusual place to put a dimensional door that opens out onto a foggy plane. Hmmm.
- 11 - It's hammer time! You are attacked by fifteen flying faeries with tack hammers.
- 12 - A ghost appears, then vanishes and appears again. It's *deja BOO!*
- 13 - A personal thundercloud forms over your head, complete with lightning and thunder.
- 14 - A high level wizard offers to join your party. You don't know it, but his name is "Wrong Way."
- 15 - The gods bless your party with an urge to party, providing something called "Red Kool Aid".
- 16 - You have the good fortune to find an emerald which is extremely bad luck, but worth 10,000 GP.
- 17 - You are verbally assaulted by an insane rabbit that walks on two legs and wears armor.
- 18 - You see before you, a horse pushing a cart backwards along side a man walking backwards.
- 19 - You encounter a strangely dressed man, consulting a silver circle and mumbling about "Kansas".
- 20 - You encounter a huge barbarian who greets you by saying, "Hastalavista, baby!"
- 21 - A great beanstalk has grown up into the sky before you with what looks like footholds on.
- 22 - A deep, penetrating fog, from which marches a skeletal army, springs up from nowhere.
- 23 - You encounter a fallen angel with shattered wings and a blank express on his face.
- 24 - The gods see fit to provide your party with a powerful obsidian rod from which emits lightning.
- 25 - A side trip leads to the discovery of an extremely potent vat of wine.
- 26 - The ground opens before you. You are about to be swallowed by a sinkhole.
- 27 - A smorgasbord of weather descends upon your party from the west: every thing imaginable.
- 28 - A minor deity appears out of nowhere riding a chariot drawn by dragons.
- 29 - A dancer appears, resplendent in a gold, silver, and jewel-trimmed costume.
- 30 - A lone white stallion appears, bedecked with a gold and jeweled saddle and is sans rider.

Hint:

Anyone thinking that "The Gods" simply hang out and watch as game life moves onward has never witnessed Tracy Hickman host a Dragonlance module. The Gods do in fact interfere in the game. Usually attributed to "luck," either good or bad, these unusual events almost always have a hidden element.

#15

Down the Spiral Staircase (and through the Red Door)

A staircase is inclined to convey you up to a place or down to a place, true? Well, one spiral staircase located inside the Temple of Fezenclop, is inclined to be trapped to the max. Below or above (depending on where it is encountered), are crucial hallways, rooms, treasure troves and general adventure, the stuff of which legends are made. Once *on the staircase*, though, you might wish that the gods has blessed you with incredible luck. You're going to need plenty of luck and your 30-sided dice to get you out of this one...

Roll: and in an instant

- 01 - The stairwell begins to smoke and steam. It becomes unbearably hot. You hear growling noises.
- 02 - The steps disappear and you find yourself on The World's deadliest spiral-shaped magic slide.
- 03 - Vipers begin slithering from tiny holes in the walls and from inside the steps.
- 04 - You discover an alcove in the wall wherein lies a shrine to the God of Mercy (and a poor box).
- 05 - You notice a gold coin on one of the ledges within your reach, then, a loose brick in the wall.
- 06 - You discover that a spider web encased rolled parchment is protected by a needle trap.
- 07 - You notice a dusty bottle on which you can barely read the words, "G. GRIMM, APOTH..."
- 08 - A drop trap springs; you plummet through the hole left by a fall-away stair section.
- 09 - A projectile trap trips, launching an arrow toward your head. Make reflex save or contact deity.
- 10 - Something is moving above you. It is a boulder coming down the staircase. Gods! It's big!
- 11 - Below you, a squad of orcs mounts the stairs. Above you, a squad of Goblins mounts the stairs.
- 12 - Every five steps, a blade begins to emerge from the wall. Soon you will be trapped.
- 13 - Much groaning and creaking of mechanical parts occurs, followed by a great splashing sound.
- 14 - You discover a long dead pile of fish on the stairwell, placed there by - who knows?
- 15 - Words appears on a fiery sign; "**FEZENCLOP IS WATCHING, BE NICE!**" In common language.
- 16 - You encounter a geriatric werewolf sailor coming from the opposite direction. He's scared.
- 17 - You spy a stairwell guard, heavily armed coming your way. He hasn't spied you yet.
- 18 - The entire stairwell morphs into single mercury colored blob and you are trapped inside.
- 19 - The stairwell shimmers and the walls turn into glowing heatless lava walls.
- 20 - Above you, a gooey liquid begins to ooze downward toward your position.
- 21 - The stairwell begins to fill with monsters. They seem to be coming out of the walls.
- 22 - Water begins to drip from above, then cascade, then, finally, to pour in torrents.
- 23 - At the foot of the stairwell is a witch's cauldron and something is boiling...
- 24 - The stench is more than you can bear, it is overpowering and suddenly, you pass out...
- 25 - It is getting hotter every step you take, as though a dragon were nearby, and, you smell brimstone.
- 26 - You hear the sound of marching coming from below, many, many, *many* marching feet.
- 27 - You hear the siren song softly wafting from below, a delicate song of a love lost.
- 28 - You discover a perpendicular passageway leading off from a landing that dead ends at a door.
- 29 - You discover a gravitational anomaly and are now weightless.
- 30 - You find *food!* A passageway off the stairwell leads to a dining hall stocked with great food!

Hint:

The Red Door : 1 to 10 - is ajar 11 to 20 - is locked 21 to 30 is trapped.
Food found in abandoned banquet halls is usually poisoned or magical. Food found here is: 1 to 15
poisoned, 16 to 24 induces deep magical sleep and 25 to 30 - produces nutritious and satisfying results.

#16

Mamma said there'd be Days like This

When you first took up the adventuring life, leaving home at an early age to explore The World, your mom warned you about certain things that might happen to you if you kept the wrong company. Going through a red door in a dungeon certainly has the potential to throw you in with bad company, and to tell you the truth, these guys are the worst. You have crashed Satan's Poker Club. The only way you can escape is to beat the Big Bad Guy in a game of Five Card Stud. Your 30-sided dice is the dealer and the stakes are high. You can only play five times and if you lose four, you bet your soul on the fifth round. Any win allows escape. Lose five hands and you must change your alignment to evil and give up your soul upon death. What fun, eh?

| Roll: | and your next card is | Roll: | and Satan's next card is |
|-------|-------------------------|-------|--------------------------|
| 01 | - The ace of hearts | 30 | - The ace of hearts |
| 02 | - The ace of diamonds | 29 | - The ace of diamonds |
| 03 | - The ace of clubs | 28 | - The ace of clubs |
| 04 | - The ace of spades | 27 | - The ace of spades |
| 05 | - The king of diamonds | 26 | - The king of diamonds |
| 06 | - The queen of hearts | 25 | - The queen of hearts |
| 07 | - The jack of diamonds | 24 | - The jack of diamonds |
| 08 | - The queen of clubs | 23 | - The queen of clubs |
| 09 | - The ten of diamonds | 22 | - The ten of diamonds |
| 10 | - The king of spades | 21 | - The king of spades |
| 11 | - The king of hearts | 20 | - The king of hearts |
| 12 | - The ten of hearts | 19 | - The ten of hearts |
| 13 | - The queen of diamonds | 18 | - The queen of diamonds |
| 14 | - The ten of spades | 17 | - The ten of spades |
| 15 | - The king of clubs | 16 | - The king of clubs |
| 16 | - The nine of spades | 15 | - The nine of spades |
| 17 | - The deuce of hearts | 14 | - The deuce of hearts |
| 18 | - The joker is wild | 13 | - The joker is wild |
| 19 | - The jack of hearts | 12 | - The jack of hearts |
| 20 | - The nine of clubs | 11 | - The nine of clubs |
| 21 | - The nine of hearts | 10 | - The nine of hearts |
| 22 | - The queen of spades | 09 | - The queen of spades |
| 23 | - The joker is wild | 08 | - The joker is wild |
| 24 | - The deuce of clubs | 07 | - The deuce of clubs |
| 25 | - The deuce of spades | 06 | - The deuce of spades |
| 26 | - The deuce of diamonds | 05 | - The deuce of diamonds |
| 27 | - The jack of spades | 04 | - The jack of spades |
| 28 | - The nine of diamonds | 03 | - The nine of diamonds |
| 29 | - The ten of clubs | 02 | - The ten of clubs |
| 30 | - The jack of clubs | 01 | - The jack of clubs |

Hint:

Sometimes it be better to listen to your mamma.

#17

Totally Hidden Traps, Tribulations and Devices

Those who set the traps have an advantage in that they need not do direct combat to overcome their foe. Some just leave things behind and forget where they left them. Others are genuinely trying to help. The 30-sided dice knows which is which and often more than a little luck is needed to sort things out.

Roll: _____ and you encounter

- 01 - A feeling of hopelessness and depression the like of which you've never encountered before.
- 02 - A small knife with a poisoned needle in the handle, set to prick anyone who isn't wearing gloves.
- 03 - A miniature treasure chest with twenty gold coins inside, each cursed with incredible bad luck.
- 04 - A wooden box on which is inscribed a picture of a dragon and "BEΩAPE THE ΔPAΓON".
- 05 - A small pewter dragon on a silver chain which is enchanted to create a dragon friend.
- 06 - A trap door beneath your feet, dropping you into a pit, where you encounter pit bulls (Minotaur).
- 07 - A devilish device with three levers in an upright position. Three down, summons a demon.
- 08 - A murder scene. Before you is the body of a barbarian who has been stabbed with a dirk.
- 09 - A deadly fungus.
- 10 - A chair, to which is attached a vertical rod and a large movable wheel (electric chair).
- 11 - A cloud of foggy mist that has strange sounds emanating from within (ghouls and vampires).
- 12 - A door, from the top of which falls a sharp blade when the handle is rotated.
- 13 - A water hazard across which is stretched a narrow stone walkway. One false move...
- 14 - A stone dragon, hollow inside and containing many treasures and additional traps.
- 15 - A book, *GRIMTOOTH'S TRAPS FORE*, a fine volume of information. Sadly it is water ruined.
- 16 - A master key capable of opening many doors (altering rooms beyond into pocket dimensions).
- 17 - A harp that plays and sings songs that drive men crazy (and sounding a lot like John Denver).
- 18 - A blowtorch (blow in one end, a 3XD30 flame comes out the other) 50% chance of a backfire.
- 19 - A golden calf (fine sculpture of a female thigh cast in gold) weighing ten pounds.
- 20 - A sculpture with a hole in it and a gold coin inside (and a tri-blade that slices arm and hand).
- 21 - A fountain in which swim deadly man-eating fish.
- 22 - A nest of golden eggs (that explode when thrown or dropped).
- 23 - A straight arrow that when placed on the ground points toward the opposite sex.
- 24 - A question tree that answers questions (to the GM) in rhyme.
- 25 - A wooden statue of a strange, feather clad, loincloth wearing human carrying a long bow.
- 26 - A large chest in which may be found a bottle containing several bottle of potion and some coins.
- 27 - A wooden box containing a cloak of black and instructions for night invisibility.
- 28 - A heavily trapped container in which is imprisoned a small dragon wrapped in gold chains.
- 29 - A suit of severely cursed armor that causes the wearer to miss every bowshot he takes.
- 30 - A scroll on which are instructions on how to find a certain fountain wherein lies treasure.*

*(see #21 above)

Hint:

Use 3X30-sided dice as percentile indicators to calculate probability of trap neutralization. 30 and below = complete failure to neutralize the trap. 31 to 60 = trap is sprung with non-lethal consequences. 61 to 90 = trap is avoided, escaped from, or neutralized

#18

Armor, Weaponry, and Musical Instruments From The Hells

Found items are always very exciting. Those with detectable magical auras are more exciting still. But everything is not heaven sent. Sometimes, the Lords of Chaos leave stuff scattered about in the hope of perpetuating yet more chaos. It's not always easy discovering whether an item is good or evil as it pertains to the individual who finds it. Probably the quickest method of discovery is to use it. The 30-sided dice will help speed that discovery process along. Regular print is what you find. *Italic* is what you have when you use it.

Roll: and you discover

- 01 - A flail. Using it gives you an uncontrollable urge to continue flailing everyone in sight until slapped.
- 02 - A stuff albatross. It gives off vibrations of magic when tested but creates only bad luck.
- 03 - An oyster with a black pearl inside. It gives off alarms of impending anger, false 50% of the time.
- 04 - A two-handed, double bladed axe. Causes bearer to berserk whenever combat seems likely.
- 05 - A coil of rope. Once owned by "Henry the Hangman" it animates and attacks a perceived enemy.
- 06 - A wig of human hair. Causes wearer to develop multiple personalities.
- 07 - A flute. Endows who plays it with great musical talent. Lulls enemies to sleep, attracts rats.
- 08 - A multi-hued greatcoat. Endows wearer with an aura of invisibility 50% of the time it is put on.
- 09 - A scythe. This grim weapon is Death's own and he is looking for it. He'll wrestle you to get it back.
- 10 - A gold and jeweled spider. It has a venomous needle hidden on it that injects deadly Curare.
- 11 - A silver ring with a jade inlay and silver crescent moon. It changes who wears it into a werewolf.
- 12 - A completely round silver ball. When melted, a priceless diamond is revealed.
- 13 - A dirk constructed of strange material. Strange green glowing metal with antimagnetic properties.
- 14 - A bottle of green liquid. When imbibed, causes a temporary ability to shape-shift to animal form.
- 15 - A velvet pouch containing (3) odd rings. Any of these rings, when worn, attracts harpies.
- 16 - A self-help book. The title is "Helping Yourself to Treasure" Every Looter's Guide to Robbing".
- 17 - A pouch filled with (1XD30) small black balls. They explode on impact with (3XD30) in damage.
- 18 - A delicate pair of deerskin gloves. These are thieving gloves and aid dexterity by a factor of 8.
- 19 - A dull and pitted iron sword with a leather grip. This sword may be returned to Death for a reward.
- 20 - A clockwork dragon of most intricate mechanism. Touching it in any way sets it to attack.
- 21 - A clockwork orange. Close examination reviews that it serves orange juice.
- 22 - An anvil, a hammer, and an unlit forge. Lighting the forge summons a demon blacksmith.
- 23 - A wrestling ring. This ring possesses a magic ability to overcome Death in a wrestling match.
- 24 - A lute, a flute, and a note. The note says, "These instruments play a saving tune."
- 25 - A carefully wrapped and well -preserved onion. When eaten, the stench of it drives away monsters.
- 26 - A sailor hat. The werewolf who lost it is anxious to get it back, and knows where treasure is.
- 27 - A grappling hook with one hundred feet of rope. Will attach with 100% accuracy.
- 28 - A magic wand. It will electrocute anyone under 25th level who tries to use it.
- 29 - A large ruby. Protects against snakes but attracts dragons.
- 30 - A small clockwork scorpion. Wind it up and it's stick in very deadly.

Hint:

Random objects imbued with "wild" or random magical properties is always fun for both players and game masters. It gives both the opportunity to "think on their feet" so to speak. Sometimes an item's lack of magical properties can be just as mind blowing, in that magic of some kind is always expected.

#19

The Not Dead, Near Dead, Never Alive and Politically Correct

There have always been zombies on Jeju-Do Island. They, in fact, outnumber the live population by several dozen per cent. Encountering a zombie, a manifestation of the undead or some other horror has increased ten-fold since their last census was taken. The 30-sided dice can help the weary traveler to sort them out.

Roll: and you encounter

- 01 - A Dunwich Horror, a bipedal monstrosity with tentacles where hair should be and 30 eyes.
- 02 - A corps of zombies, armed with shovels and pickaxes, number 3XD30.
- 03 - A flight of harpies, screeching insults concerning the dubious ancestry of both elves and humans.
- 04 - A wall of dragons, young and old, that seems to be blocking the entrance to a cave.
- 05 - A trio of Troglodytes, sharp-toothed, nasty little midgets from the hells, in a hold, under a tree.
- 06 - A spirit manifestation of a white robed notman, a were-cat angel, or so it appears at first look.
- 07 - A unicorn, but with fiery red eyes, breathing smoke and seemingly demon possessed.
- 08 - A chariot, drawn by 2 white horses, on which sits the Angel of Death, looking for a poker game.
- 09 - An insane zombie Minotaur possessed by a class IV demon, armed with a double-edged axe.
- 10 - A thin faced messenger speaking in a strange accent and bearing a message of great urgency.
- 11 - An undead bard and his demon band of renown, playing a song called "Zombie Jamboree".
- 12 - A balrog, a zombie dragon, 240 undead road-killed raccoons, 14 stone creatures and a preacher.
- 13 - A Flame Wraith Infantry Captain and an entire company of minor demons.
- 14 - A giant fire breathing battle scarred quail with only the right wing intact.
- 15 - A shape-changer with a vast ESP talent, including the ability to mind-blast enemies.
- 16 - A griffin with elemental control powers, who might be willing to lend a helping hand – errr, paw.
- 17 - A group of three dwarfs who seem to enjoy standing on each others shoulders.
- 18 - A flame-throwing wizard clad all in black, who is actually a shape-changing demon in disguise.
- 19 - A werewolf sailor who appears to be drunk, riding a donkey that also appears to be drunk.
- 20 - An unusually large reptile with legs and a snake-like body, strangest dragon you've every seen
- 21 - An odd-looking insect man wearing a top hat, carrying a double-bladed axe and a smile.
- 22 - A demon standing in front of a large book display, wearing a sign saying "Employment wanted."
- 23 - A dwarf carrying a bag of tools and wearing a scowl on his face.
- 24 - An eagle carrying a scroll in its beak and a sword and scabbard in its claws.
- 25 - A group of nondescript little spiders (20XD30) attending a very large web.
- 26 - A troll defending a tunnel entrance from an attack by 100 killer attack rabbits.
- 27 - 15 oddly dressed women dancing around a bright bonfire to the beat of a single drummer.
- 28 - A goblin commander, leading a squad of goblin bowmen.
- 29 - A moose and a squirrel sword fighting two sinister individuals dressed in plaid.
- 30 - A hundred heavily armed midget zombie warriors marching three abreast.

Hint:

Good old fashioned (if not somewhat offbeat) random encounters are the soul of Fantasy Role Playing. Game masters can enhance this experience by studying the matrices he will be using so as to be prepared for just about anything. Brave GM's will simply "wing it" and build detail fro scratch needs be.

#20

Encounters with Scantily Clad Females Who Know Kung Fu

The cult of Ha-hahn lives on Jeju-Do Island. This martial arts oriented, entirely female group of adherents to the philosophy of “Fiedding widout fiedding” protects the temple of Le’, where it is reported that treasure exists in the form of gold, jewels and ice cold beer brewed by monks using mountain spring water. On the path to the temple, your 30-sided dice produces interesting and buxom opponents and some interest conversation.

Roll: and you hear or see

- 01 - “Who are you?” coming from the lips of a beautiful blonde armed with a staff.
- 02 - “I can’t let you keep coming.” Says a long-haired brunette armed with a deadly looking crossbow.
- 03 - “Halt right where you are and drop all weapon!” shouts an up-tight looking redhead.
- 04 - “I like that one, I think he’s cute.” Says a female voice hidden in the shadows.
- 05 - “Let’s kill them all and let the gods sort it out.” Declares an angry sounding redhead.
- 06 - “The torture masters in the temple will pay gold for this lot,” comments a stocky Amazon.
- 07 - A group of heavily armored swordswomen who seem to want to hurt you.
- 08 - A dark-haired beauty crouched in a martial arts stance, wearing a white robe and a black belt.
- 09 - A sinister black-robed figure with blue female eyes, wielding a trident.
- 10 - A stunning green-haired queenly personage in a jewel studded evening gown.
- 11 - A smallish female with faintly elfin features armed with a light rapier.
- 12 - A gray-haired granny in a homespun dress, wielding a crossbow.
- 13 - A gypsy woman with a crystal ball and a deck of cards, inviting you to come over for a reading.
- 14 - A bearded lady with a strange accent, who bids you welcome and invites you to turn back or die.
- 15 - A female cat-creature with razor sharp claws who attacks without warning.
- 16 - A hooded female headsperson with axe invites you to put your head down on the chopping block.
- 17 - A silk-clad goddess in a chariot drawn by Llamas who warns you to turn back or die.
- 18 - A wagonload of beer kegs drawn by tall stout horses driving by a sturdy female teamster.
- 19 - A shepherdess tending a flock of ill-mannered sheep that surround you, bleating and baaing.
- 20 - A little match girl offering matches for sale at 200 in gold per match.
- 21 - A clearing full of female gymnasts who seem to be practicing for an event.
- 22 - One hundred red-robed, martial arts armed female foot soldiers blocking your way.
- 23 - Fifty opera singers, attacking you with song.
- 24 - A girl sitting on a stool eating curds and whey (A fifty foot spider is in hiding nearby).
- 25 - Medusas, in a veil and a blue cotton dress.
- 26 - A trio of blue-skinned female bards, guitars in hand, preparing to give a concert.
- 27 - A tall, brown-haired, armored female equestrian armed with a hand dart shooter, astraddle a horse.
- 28 - A band of nymphs, including a nymph percussionist and four nymph horn players.
- 29 - A female dwarf fighter, in the company of a black panther with green eyes.
- 30 - A strangely dressed female creature with six arms and a golden, jeweled headband.

Hint:

Gods bless the ladies in all forms and fashion. A “G” rated game can still be a hoot when populated by a healthy number of females. Did you know that statistically, all game encounters take place between MALE non player characters and predominantly MALE player characters? It’s true. You know it is.

#21

Oops, Someone Left the Dimensional Gate Open Again

Just when you thought it was safe to enter a door again, someone left the dimensional portal activated. From where you thought you were to where you actually are now is only a short single step, but oh, my-my! Getting back is the trick! There are many problems to be solved on the hinter planes, not the least of which is: **A) Does magic work? B) Does normal physics work? OR C) Where's the return gate?** Needless to say, the 30-sided dice has some answers and not necessarily the ones you needed to hear.

Roll: and you find yourself

- 01 - Under blue skies and puffy clouds with a small brick structure to your immediate south.
- 02 - In a bar full of strangers, none of whom are even close to human and with a world class hangover.
- 03 - With a mouth full of fist, in the heat of a brawl, on a grassy plain at the edge of a forest.
- 04 - Amidst arrows whizzing all around you, coming from a squad of very angry well-equipped fighters.
- 05 - Facing a huge bear to the left, a mountain lion to the right, and a cave behind you.
- 06 - With sand beneath your feet and four hundred fathoms of (breathable) water above your head.
- 07 - With treasure all around, gold coins in your hand, and forty thieves wanting to know your name.
- 08 - In the company of a genie, having tea inside a lamp, discussing the details of your three wishes.
- 09 - With a blindfold covering your eyes, your hands bound behind you, standing on a plank.
- 10 - With three Roc nestlings Rocs, about seven hundred feet up a cliff, and with momma on the way.
- 11 - Facing Stilar, the sword maker, in his shop on the 33rd astral plane.
- 12 - Listening to Indigo the inventor, as he explains the finer points of building and flying a skinwing.
- 13 - Sitting next to an intimate companion, in the boom-boom room, at the inn of the 12 happiness.
- 14 - Below an insane rock climber, scaling a non-scaleable cliff, at the top of which there is gold.
- 15 - Accompanying a small group of questors seeking a cache of jewels inside an active volcano.
- 16 - Inside a room completely surrounded by golden walls and jeweled levers (but no doors).
- 17 - Inside a bottle, floating down a very fast river toward a roaring waterfall.
- 18 - Inside the walls of a very nasty maze often called 'the gauntlet of death'.
- 19 - Inside a tunnel bored through solid marble; walls glowing faintly green.
- 20 - Inside a giant clockwork machine, gears and wheels and bits of mechanism everywhere.
- 21 - On board a rapidly rising balloon, staring at a rapidly disappearing castle on the ground.
- 22 - On an ice covered bridge separating two huge snow banks on which are heavily armed ice trolls.
- 23 - Aboard a wagonload of beer kegs, in control of a team of stallions, but with no ground below.
- 24 - On the stairs of a gallows, thirteen of which are yet to climb; tied up and gagged.
- 25 - On the veranda of a vivacious vixen, vying for her attention and vexed at failure.
- 26 - On a fast horse, headed toward a city gate just ahead of a thundering horde of enemy cavalry.
- 27 - On a torture rack, with a torturer saying "For the last time, who is Fezenclop?"
- 28 - On the center seat of a rowboat, as a black cloaked, hooded man poles it away from shore.
- 29 - On a gold stair, leading upward toward a bright light, white clouds and harp music.
- 30 - On a time warp loop that has you arriving ten minutes before you enter the doorway.

Hint:

This matrix is one we use a lot as an egress table. In the wee hours of the morning when eyes are drooping and older bodies long for sleep, playing from this page can end (or suspend) a game humanely, so as to be continued at another time. Believe that you are "not in Kansas" when one of these pops up.

#22

At The Castle, in The Courtyard, on a Sunny Sunny Day

Visiting Castle Of Death is fraught with danger. Just being able to get past the courtyard is a feat worthy of a bard's song. Today, Fred The Zombie Butler is *Charge' de Affairs*. This may or may not mean that you are in for a bad time. Your 30-sided dice knows for sure.

Roll: and you see

- 01 - a dragon's egg with a tiny crack forming along the front and some movement seemingly from within.
- 02 - 11 sleeping 3 headed dogs, one of which has awakened and is peering around, growling, fangs bared.
- 03 - a shadow shaped like a dragon, wings unfolded.
- 04 - a box on a pedestal bearing a sign, "Deposit One Gold Piece Here For Safe Passage."
- 05 - a wide spoked vertical wooden wheel with thick chain attached and a small sign, "Portcullis."
- 06 - a boy with a bugle raised to his lips, poised to blow reveille loudly. Rest assured there will be echoes.
- 07 - a sword embedded in a boulder and a box designed to accept a gold coin inserted in a slot.
- 08 - a bearded barely clothed man chained to a stone table by hands and feet, with a gag in his mouth.
- 09 - an elephant attached to a hitching post, its owner nowhere in sight, but saddled and seemingly ready
- 10 - an inscription on the base of a statue depicting a large feline, "Tease Not the Tiger."
- 11 - an inscription on the base of a statue of a dragon, "Enter The Dragon."
- 12 - a dragon tree, a dragonfly, a dragonette, a bearded man in drag and a dragon net.
- 13 - assorted musical instruments, including a lute, a fife, a drum, a lyre and cymbals.
- 14 - nothing, literally. An area of utter darkness about 12' x 12' flush against a wall
- 15 - a cobweb in a corner looking like it accommodates a VERY large spider.
- 16 - a crown on a pedestal, bejeweled and gilded, and a matching sword sporting a single large ruby.
- 17 - a hanged man, shabbily dressed, skeletal, with his hands tied behind his back.
- 18 - a small koi pond on which two black swans swim, and a fountain on a grassy island in the middle.
- 19 - a rickety shed containing garden tools on the ceiling of which a hornet's nest is attached
- 20 - a flight of stone stairs leading upward to a platform where a lever is set in the "forward" position.
- 21 - an apple tree bearing ripe delicious fruit and a single green serpent possessing the gift of speech.
- 22 - a *Regiomontanus' Astrolabe*, an astronomical instrument used to predict cosmic objects' positions.
- 23 - a wagon on which a tank is mounted that is dripping water into a bucket from a leaky valve.
- 24 - a *Balista*, a large platform mounted crossbow that launches 8 foot spears, mounted on a wagon.
- 25 - a bow, a quiver of arrows, a bag of bowstrings and a bag of arrowheads made of copper.
- 26 - a fat hollow spear from which a thin rope protrudes and a note that says "light and throw me."
- 27 - a pile of stag horns in assorted sizes suitable for making knife handles
- 28 - a bag of 100 glass marbles and a beautifully carved slingshot, rigged and ready to fire.
- 29 - a marble statue of a beautiful woman sitting, on which rests a live cat in her lap.
- 30 - a red miniature portcullis marked "egress" and a wheel with which to raise it (seemingly).

Hint:

Castle adventure, or "traditional gaming" as it is sometimes known, has its own rewards. For one, it is more difficult to roll the "weather dice" when you are indoors and two, monsters are almost always room or hallway size appropriate, offering manageable combat.

#23

Inside the Little Shop Of Poisons And Potions

The Little Shop Of Poisons and Potions is a very popular establishment in which one might find substances, devices or people of use on a quest, adventure or journey to visit one's mother-in-law. Many of the items found here are magical by nature or spell. Surprisingly, very little actual combat takes place here, as it is generally known to be a neutral place for all manner of men or notmen. However, Griswald Grimm is given to fits of anger when provoked, sometimes resulting in loss of life or limb. Bring gold for your purchases. Your 30-sided will help you navigate this unusual venue.

Roll: and you see

- 01 - a counter, behind which stands a young human boy who asks, "Can I help you?"
- 02 - a shelf on which sit 6 books, all entitled, "Poisons and Potions - How To Use Them" by G. Grimm.
- 03 - a plain looking transparent hexagonal bottle labeled, *Powdered Dragon Brains*.
- 04 - a jug shaped like a face in front, labeled *Liquid Language*, caution, do not take more than 1 teaspoon.
- 05 - a translucent red vial labeled, *Grim's Reaper*, caution, deadly poison.
- 06 - a sturdy bag labeled *Anti-rot*, good for what infects you.
- 07 - a ring in a jar labeled *Ring Of Healing* - use with care
- 08 - a jar of jellybeans, labeled *Bloatbelly Beans*, warning, take with food
- 09 - a shelf of small jars each filled halfway with a different colored powder and each unlabeled
- 10 - a shelf on which are 12 boxes marked *Tea*.
- 11 - a golden flask labeled *Universal Antidote*
- 12 - a silver flask labeled *Universal Poison*.
- 13 - a faceted bottle carved from a crystal containing a blue liquid that allows underwater breathing.
- 14 - a Captain of Prince Ossarian's Personal Guard, discussing something with a young human boy.
- 15 - a pearl colored translucent bottle with an unusual cap with a nautical sculpture on the cap.
- 16 - a heavy, square shaped opaque black bottle with a silver skull emblem embedded on the front.
- 17 - a tiny diamond shaped faceted crystal bottle on a necklace of fine gold, labeled, *Beware The Djin*.
- 18 - a round wooden bottle with a carved cap labeled, *Essence of Drayad*.
- 19 - a ruby colored bottle in the shape of a minotaur containing a smelly brown vicious fluid.
- 20 - a opaque, turquoise colored bottle hand painted on which is a scene depicting a beautiful white rose.
- 21 - a bottle cut from a single crystal to form an image of an armed man, labeled, *Essence of War*.
- 22 - a bottle in the shape of a dog containing no label and topped with a silver cap.
- 23 - a clear bottle in the shape of a butterfly with red wings, labeled *Betterfly*, caution, Lasts 30 Minutes.
- 24 - a shelf holding 13 differently colored vials, numbered and labeled, *Poisons Against Notmen*.
- 25 - a exo-sculptured Rose Faery Perfume Bottle colored cobalt blue with a solid gold cap.
- 26 - a round bottle clutched in the roots of a pewter tree on a shelf of other items labeled *Not For Sale*.
- 27 - a heart-shaped clear bottle with a silver cap and containing a red liquid advised to be "blood thinner."
- 28 - a twisted, gnarled an generally unsightly root advised to be good for enhancing memory.
- 29 - a robber standing next to a dropped knife being choked by an angry shopkeeper.
- 30 - a hollowed out gold coin with a tiny cork stopping a hole keeping a liquid from running out.

Hint:

Little Shop of Poisons and Potions is a real book that can be purchased by sending \$11 check or M/O to Grimm, 833 Lucerne Ave, Pensacola, FL 32505. All books purchased will be autographed and dated by the author.

#24

On The Desert and In The Mountains With Gadlin The Dwarf

The desert and mountains that are the northern boundary of the central East-West Road and an inhospitable place on a good day. No one can remember the last time anyone had a “good day” traversing the wilds of this desolate area. Still, rumors abound of hidden treasure, abandoned mines, rucksacks filled with mined gold near the dead bodies of miners who did not survive their journey home and spooky tales of creatures who can kill with a smile. Your 30-sided dice shall point out the details you might miss.

Roll: and you see

- 01 - a grizzled, dusty human prospector leading a half-starved mule loaded down with saddlebags and tools.
- 02 - a huge cactus that, upon close examination, has a door in it and stairs leading downward.
- 03 - a bag containing several necklaces of turquoise depicting a wolf, a bear, a raven, and a snake.
- 04 - an abandoned treasure chest. Who knew gold was going to be this easy to find?
- 05 - a robber lying in wait to ambush someone with a crossbow.
- 06 - a rattlesnake the size of a dragon’s tail, coiled and with his head swaying and ready to strike.
- 07 - a worn down mule path leading off into the scrub due west of where you stand.
- 08 - a mule skeleton under which is a single saddlebag (which is a scorpion habitat).
- 09 - a cave, partially hidden by boulders and brush inside of which weapons are hidden.
- 10 - a tall, wind blown sculptured sand dune surrounded by intermittantly scattered sand traps.
- 11 - a partially destroyed by violence but well preserved ship, complete with anchor and tattered sails.
- 12 - a giant ant hill the size of a cactus populated by giant fire ants (literally, fire breathing ants).
- 13 - a lizard colony occupying a dry creek bed and surrounding flatlands
- 14 - a flash flood; millions of gallons rushing at you in a ten foot tall wave.
- 15 - a lone traveler leading a camel on which are packed colorful and luxurious carpets (which may fly).
- 16 - a lost boy dirty, thirsty, wearing rags and weakly begging for water and food.
- 17 - an unusually tall very black human male wearing a loincloth and speaking an unknown language.
- 18 - a circular enclosure made entirely of metal with no entrance readily visible.
- 19 - an oasis, complete with palm trees, large pool of water, grass, and birds, as well as 3 armed men.
- 20 - a slave caravan; many chained female slaves, some males, but only a few guards.
- 21 - a huge, round tent, colorfully decorated, and flying a black flag that says Fezenclop on it in white.
- 22 - a very large lizard with a saddle on it and no rider nearby or in sight.
- 23 - a brass telescope in a pile of otherwise useless refuse.
- 24 - the remains of a heavily populated camp, including several freshly picked clean dog skeletons.
- 25 - a tin box containing a diary entitled, *The Fate Of The Lost Boys*, locked and with no key.
- 26 - a 6’ by 4’ marble slab engraved with the word Fezenclop, under which lies a staircase leading downward.
- 27 - a golden key, a golden harp, a golden sword and a gold bottle in the hand of a golden human skeleton.
- 28 - a mysterious circular instrument in which a needle points only in one direction no matter what you do.
- 29 - an obviously insane dwarf begging for water and babbling about treasure.
- 30 - a very shiny blue gemstone that glows whenever you are near danger.

Hint:

Always a factor in desert adventure, water supplies can be increased or reduced by roll of 30-sided dice. Take two differently colored D30s and designate one as “plus” and the other as “minus.” roll both. When plus is the larger number add quarts by the difference. Subtract quarts when minus is larger.

#25

In The Bazaar At The City Gate

The bazaar at the city gate hosts many vendors selling everything from the exotic to the mundane. Surprises await you in the bazaar, for mixed in with purveyors of fruits and dried smoked meats and leather items, are a mixture of all sorts of other fellows and ladies with goods and services for sale. Your 30-sided dice can help you find what you need.

Roll: and you see

- 01 - Feodor Felonis, seller of fine carpets that can make the floor of your house or tent more comfortable.
- 02 - Aasiyah Abda, a black slave girl in a booth offering crystal bottles that are empty and corked.
- 03 - Elmas Durrishahwar, purveyor of fine necklaces, one of which is claimed to ward off scorpions.
- 04 - Hadassah Hadiyah, foreteller of future events by means of a crystal ball and an all-seeing-eye.
- 05 - Jalilah Kader, master craftsman in the making of throwing knives, one of which is 100% accurate.
- 06 - Kaamilah, sword seller, several choices of fine scimitars, and at least two eastern broadswords.
- 07 - Kralice Kirvi, a Queen Of Gypsies, an enchanting dancer and reader of the tarot.
- 08 - a fool, a fiddler, a fighter, a florist, a flirt and a flim-flam man.
- 09 - a fire eater and a sword swallower on a low stage, entertaining a small crowd of onlookers.
- 10 - a docile man in a heavy slave collar, restrained by 60 pound chains and hobbled by leg cuffs.
- 11 - a shop offering "Magic Bubble Dice" which the owner claims are lucky.
- 12 - a serpent seller offering exotic neurotoxins milked from the fangs of poisonous vipers.
- 13 - a pickpocket offering trial memberships in the Thieves' Guild at a discount price.
- 14 - a gem master standing behind a table loaded with polished colored stones including jade and quartz.
- 15 - Mahaila Levona, seller of unusual, rare, exotic and desirable spices.
- 16 - Mahtab Marjanna, mapmaker offering treasure maps to a lower dungeon right here in this city.
- 17 - a collection of copper lamps, polished, and unpolished, one engraved with the word, "Fezenclap."
- 18 - a scale city on a table and a barker touting something called "Mouseville" with performing mice.
- 19 - a craftsman offering carved figurines in jade and other stone of dragons in varied poses.
- 20 - Taslimah, a young Gypsy, wearing a 30 pocketed apron. Buy a pocket sight unseen if you dare.
- 21 - a vendor offering small bottles of "a special oil" claiming, "you will need oil and soon."
- 22 - an elderly man selling sticks from a bundle, claiming his "wands" can control weather.
- 23 - a constable, an off-duty gate guard, and a woman of the street engaged in a loud argument.
- 24 - a werewolf sailor. WOW, is HE far away from the ocean! How is he DOING that?
- 25 - a toymaker specializing in model canoes, 1/25th scale and hinting they are magical.
- 26 - a vegetable seller offering cabbages that will "cook well in the pot."
- 27 - a boy selling pennywhistles claiming they have snake charming properties.
- 28 - a swordsman looking serious as he peers around the market. Then he spots you.
- 29 - a gold coin laying on the ground 4 paces from a blind beggar.
- 30 - a mime soundlessly selling mirrors.

Hint:

Try imbedding the obtaining of useful or magical objects into this encounter matrix in order to add a personal touch. Other times, try letting an item be just a thing and allow the player characters to discover which is which.

#26

Venues in The Merchants' Square

The merchant's square is a dangerous place whereon one might find adventure, death or exactly the right item that would make the difference between life and death on a deep quest or just an afternoon on the road outside the city. Exploring this area of the city requires the hardy or foolhardy to traverse a narrow alley called Thieves' Way where you may encounter muggers of assorted skill level. Roll for roll on D30 to see who prevails, the thief or you. Once inside the square, your D30 will guide you:

Roll: and you see

- 01 - a youth offering "Dream Powder," a highly addictive hallucinogen with prognosticative properties
- 02 - a shop sporting a sign that reads, "Wands, Rods And Wooden Weapons."
- 03 - a shop sporting a sign that reads, "Weapons, Edged And Blunt. Best In Town"
- 04 - a shop sporting a sign that reads, "All The Latest Maps"
- 05 - a dusty, sword carrying slightly bedraggled but physically fit young human male, looking thirsty.
- 06 - a shop sporting a sign that reads, "Ye Tavern And Inn" with a mule tied to a hitching post.
- 07 - a shop sporting a sign that reads, "Magistrate And Solicitor's Office"
- 08 - a parked wagon behind which is hiding a sinister figure in black who seems to be stalking someone.
- 09 - a shop sporting a sign that reads, "Prepaid Funerals - Arrange Your Death In Advance."
- 10 - a shop sporting a sign that reads, "Followers Of Fezenclap" which appears abandoned.
- 11 - an elderly woman with a black cat on her shoulder, gripping a walking stick and walking slowly.
- 12 - a shop sporting a sign that reads, "Best Brooms And Dice Shoppe." Good luck with that.
- 13 - five unruly barefoot boys arguing over a map.
- 14 - a handsome woman dressed in the city manner chatting with a dwarf over drinks at a sidewalk cafe'
- 15 - a shop sporting a sign that reads, "Apothecary and Magic - Items Identified"
- 16 - a shop sporting a sign that reads, "Slaves Sold Bought And Certified"
- 17 - a huge muscled black man in chains being led by a wimpy-looking but well dressed smaller man.
- 18 - three dogs chained in front of a shop sporting a sign that reads, "Guard Animals Bought And Sold"
- 19 - a shop sporting a sign that reads, "Herpetologist and Poisons Shoppe"
- 20 - a fountain in the center of the square around which are placed benches for sitting and contemplating.
- 21 - a bookseller pushing a cart on which are assorted books and scrolls.
- 22 - A cart merchant selling wooden boxes which he says contain enchantments on scrolls
- 23 - a toddler crying for his care giver who is laying dead nearby with a knife sticking out of his back.
- 24 - a stable sporting a sign that reads, "Steeds For All Purposes" and a picture of a camel on the door.
- 25 - a shop sporting a sign that reads, "Flowers - Enchanted and Otherwise"
- 26 - six scruffy men in pillories, seven townsfolk pelting them with debris and ten guards watching.
- 27 - a street preacher extolling the virtues of Fezenclap to a disinterested crowd.
- 28 - a mime juggling, a clown clowning, a mugger mugging, an acrobat flipping and a barker barking.
- 29 - a shop sporting a sign that reads, "Suzy The Sugar Seller Sells Sugar"
- 30 - a shop sporting a sign that reads, "Bank Of Nigeria - Deposit Gold Here"

Hint:

This matrix offers an almost limitless subset of encounters and can be counted as a "game on a page."

#27

Treasure To Be Found In A Dragon's Cave

It is a given that The Dragon's Cave is a dangerous place. However, once inside, barring impediments, it is quite possible to acquire and abscond with all sorts of treasure, loot, booty and swag. Roll your D30 to identify individual items, as it is not possible to take everything you want, sometimes it is better to pick and choose. Some things are better left alone, others are great finds.

Roll: . and you see

- 01 - a previously invisible, but now *quite* visible medium sized green dragon, fire and all
- 02 - a stack of golden cups filled to the brim with gold coins and a wood cup filled with wooden coins.
- 03 - a small chest filled with loose small rubies and one single large flawless emerald.
- 04 - a throne on the seat of which is a large bejeweled golden crown (it's a trap).
- 05 - a skeleton with an engraved silver scepter in its left hand and a bejeweled dagger in its right.
- 06 - a necklace and a skeleton pendant; pull the legs off to reveal a tiny dagger whose blade is poisoned.
- 07 - a large silver coin on which a pentagram is stamped on one side and a minotaur on the other.
- 08 - more gold and silver coins than a dozen men could carry. You can carry 1D30x10 in a pack.
- 09 - a solid gold donkey and a wooden wand with the word "reanimate" on it.
- 10 - a stack of leather backpacks some empty, some filled with gold coins.
- 11 - 30 skeletons all dressed in armor, all guarding a pedestal on which stands a golden shield.
- 12 - a lead statue of a dragon in attack posture.
- 13 - A leather bound book entitled, "Speak Dragon As If Your Life Depended On It."
- 14 - an untitled leather bound book that looks somewhat worn and bedraggled.
- 15 - seven silver scimitars seemingly sans scabbards.
- 16 - a pile of finely woven carpets and the partially eaten body of what could be a rug merchant.
- 17 - 100 giant rats burnt to a crisp with a spear on a pedestal smack in the center of them all.
- 18 - a wooden coin with the words "Wishing Coin" etched in one side and "You Wish" on the other.
- 19 - a sleeping dragon; he is slumbering atop an enormous pile of rubies and diamonds.
- 20 - a large magic mirror framed in silver. See anywhere for 60 seconds for exactly 6 requests.
- 21 - a giant 3-headed dog barring the entrance to a tunnel.
- 22 - a pool of brackish water with a fountain in the middle and a golden dolphin spurting fresh water.
- 23 - a trident bearing a carving of the sea god in a menacing posture.
- 24 - a large metal container with a large door and a sign that says "Davy Jones' Locker, Keep Out"
- 25 - a stone bottle filled with a refreshing liquid that seems to heal all wounds.
- 26 - a golden statue of a minotaur, a silver statue of a minotaur and a wooden statue of a minotaur.
- 27 - a bronze sword that looks large enough to have been wielded by someone well over 7 feet tall.
- 28 - a carved jade box with a dragon sculpture on the lid.
- 29 - an unusually strong, but evidently not dragon proof slightly scorched suit of armor.
- 30 - three green dragons, obviously juveniles.

Hint:

Since the time of Bilbo Baggens and Smaug the dragon, adventurers have been entering dragon caves for the purpose of looting. As the famous real-world bank robber said, "It's where the money is." Still, danger abounds everywhere. Dragons are seldom warm and fuzzy, Eregon notwithstanding.

#28

Special Gemstones from the Jeweler's Guild

The geological universe is pretty much the same wherever you go. Magical properties of different stones vary widely throughout the cosmos. The Jeweler's Guild in Belestria has the unique position of being able to provide both decorative and magical stones in the form of bracelets, necklaces and inlays adorning crowns, swords, daggers, statues and belt buckles, as well as raw and polished stones for assorted needs of the customer. Your 30 sided dice can help you sort out the various stone and gem encrusted objects you might find in your travels.

Roll: and you see

- 01 - a very large *Ruby* set within a triangle of cut *Diamonds* adorning a golden shield.
- 02 - a knife carved entirely from *Tiger's-Eye*, a stone that bestows the courage and combat skills of a tiger.
- 03 - a carved circle pendant made of *Amazonite* on a silver chain that identifies you as "Amazon Friend."
- 04 - a pebble of *Chrysocolla* charmed to profoundly attract the opposite sex (not limited to humans).
- 05 - a *Bloodstone* arrowhead collection (24 in all) when attached to oak arrows fly 100% true.
- 06 - a large *Fluorite* Crystal set atop a walking stick; assists in walking through solid objects
- 07 - a polished *Garnet* set on a golden wrist band; repels magical spells using a defensive aura.
- 08 - five *Hematite* stones in a velvet bag; allow the user to "spirit walk" to a distance of five miles.
- 09 - an unusual crown set with stones of polished *Red Jasper*, protects against possession by demons.
- 10 - a sword with a solid *Moonstone* handle trimmed with silver inlays; it is deadly to were-creatures.
- 11 - an *Obsidian* scimitar endowed with dragon-slaying properties; breaks after one use.
- 12 - a *Turquoise* and *Jade* inlaid silver pendant that magically identifies enemies with a subtle glow.
- 13 - a box carved out of *Staurolite* inside of which are stored 100 small diamonds and 30 emeralds.
- 14 - a 7 foot long 2 inch diameter pike carved smoothly of *Petrified Wood* tipped with an *Emerald*.
- 15 - a frog carved from a single *Clear Quartz* crystal; allows the summoning of a hail of frogs from the sky.
- 16 - a *Seer Quartz Crystal* in the form of a bowl; add water and "see" the future as it could be.
- 17 - a carving of a running man carrying a hatchet shaped from *Verdite*; it summons a hatchet man.
- 18 - a strange-looking insect trapped in a chunk of *Amber* can be released by saying, "Come forth, Ye!"
- 19 - a faceted stone made from *Beryl* that allows the reading of nonhuman thought and intention.
- 20 - a faceted *Calicite* crystal that allows lucid dreaming to gather information about the coming day.
- 21 - a carved *Jade* dragon on a leather thong that identifies the wearer as "dragon-friend"
- 22 - a bowl carved of *Snowflake Obsidian*; water held within is magically changed into a healing elixir.
- 23 - a cat statue carved from *Onyx* that when stroked, summons a panther.
- 24 - *Iron Pyrite* nuggets easily mistaken for gold enhances luck to the negative especially on saving throws.
- 25 - a magnificent sword with a single *Sapphire* set in the handle; adds .5DX30 to a combat roll.
- 26 - A red *Vanadenite* crystal that acts as the super *Viagra* of magic crystals; greatly enhances love making.
- 27 - a large crystal ball made from a single *Quartz* crystal; recalls the past rather than foretelling the future.
- 28 - a coffin and lid carved from the same single block of *Bloodstone*, small enough to fit a *Faerie*.
- 29 - a *Jade* broach with removable knife that expands to full size in one's hand for fighting purposes.
- 30 - a diamond the size of a goose egg that is cursed onto whomever is unlucky enough to steal it.

Hint:

This is a matrix where information is a premium commodity. Having pictures of samples of the various mentioned minerals could greatly enhance the quality of this particular encounter. At a minimum, knowing the properties of assorted semi precious stones might give one an edge.

#29

Boxes, Bottles and Baskets

Not surprisingly, many objects, substances, liquids and powders are found in their own containers, many of which have magical or mechanical traps to protect precious cargo. Roll your D30 to identify individual items, and to secure a smidge of information as to what might be contained therein. As one might expect, some things are better left alone, while others are great finds.

Roll: and you see

- 01 - 5 long-necked brown corked bottles containing a liquid (nitroglycerine); label reads "beer."
- 02 - a tiny plain wooden box, secured by a brass lock contains a single enchanted ruby.
- 03 - a blue corked bottle with a warning label on it that specifies "Beware The Djinn."
- 04 - three bottles, red, white and blue, respectively, each containing a different healing agent.
- 05 - a wicker basket with a red satin scarf wrapped around it containing a starving, angry cobra.
- 06 - a clear, 6-sided apothecary bottle containing brown dust; label reads "1 Zombie Fighter - add water."
- 07 - a round, jewel-faceted red bottle marked "perfume" and containing a formula that repels monsters.
- 08 - a two foot by two foot box with dragons etched into the sides and a flat top, locked with a silver lock.
- 09 - a basket of black wicker containing a red-checkered cloth, bottle of wine and 3 loaves of bread.
- 10 - a 1oz.. corked silver bottle containing Quicksilver.
- 11 - a 3oz.. clear bottle shaped like a cookie jar containing a tiny ship.
- 12 - a 3oz. yellow translucent bottle shaped like a cookie jar containing a tiny statue of a dog.
- 13 - a 12oz. red translucent bottle shaped like a dog containing a liquid "sword sharpener."
- 14 - a salt shaker filled a with black powder that reacts violently when a flame is applied.
- 15 - a large trunk containing a knotted rope, a sturdy grappling hook, gloves and a pair of spiked boots
- 16 - a gold box containing silver coins.
- 17 - a silver box containing gold coins
- 18 - a copper box containing a stash (144) of very small diamonds, very well cut and polished.
- 19 - an onyx box with a carving of a djinn on the cover.
- 20 - ten identical boxes carved from bloodstone, each one with a different kind of lock; 1 contains magic.
- 21 - a basket containing scrolls of mortgages from a place called "Belestria Heights," a condo complex.
- 22 - a bottle marked "Elixir" inside a basket along with a note saying "Return to Grimm for free refill"
- 23 - a box of books one of which is entitled "Belestrian Priests: How To Survive and Encounter."
- 24 - a jar of balm in a royal purple pouch embroidered with the Belestrian Royal Crest.
- 25 - a bottle clearly marked "Dream Powder" containing a white powder that turns
- 26 - an open basket of exotic flowers; attached is a note saying "Please deliver these to the Gypsy Queen."
- 27 - a bottle containing a gray liquid in which seem to be floating eyeballs of assorted sizes and colors.
- 28 - a golden box containing a wide leather belt; on the buckle is embossed, "World Champion"
- 29 - a wooden box containing a key ring on which are hung 30 keys.
- 30 - a basket of vipers that look deadly but are in fact defanged.

Hint:

Try adding a humorous or absurdist twist to "found" objects. A laugh goes a long way in an adventure and the further it travels before the punchline is revealed, the more profound the surprise when it is finally delivered. A good joke is hard to top and takes the edge off subsequent character death.

#30

Fat Sam's Adventurer's Emporium

Back in The Day, Fat Sam was quite the seeker of fortune, adventurer, if you will. Over the years at the height of his prowess as an "acquisitions artist" Sam accumulated many useful items and objects, some exotic and some mundane. *Fat Sam's Adventurer's Emporium* is a classic outfitter for any terrain, be it desert, underground, mountain, glacier or deep canyon adventure. Bring your 30-sided dice and some cash because here you will find whatever you need or want to keep you safe, snug and happy on those long and arduous treks.

Roll: and you may acquire

- 01 - a shiny silvery blanket guaranteed to keep you warm in an ice cave during a blizzard (8 Gold Pieces).
- 02 - a four direction reading device with a floating needle inside that always points north (9 Gold Pieces).
- 03 - 50 feet of rope, 15 pitons, a piton hammer and a book entitled "Climbing and You" (5 Gold Pieces).
- 04 - a knife with 3 blades that fold on a spindle into the handle. Sharp. Clever (3 Gold Pieces).
- 05 - a pot made of lightweight metal that is reputed to not melt on a campfire. (2 Gold Pieces).
- 06 - a lantern that produces light and heat by burning a liquid (supplied) (8 Gold Pieces).
- 07 - a pair of heavy leather gloves with chain mail in between the leather and rabbit skin (21 Gold Pieces).
- 08 - 4 enchanted speaking stones; speak into one and the other three hear the words (390 Gold Pieces)
- 09 - Fat Sam's Deluxe Guaranteed Antimosquito Elixir and All Purpose Burn Balm (12 Gold Pieces).
- 10 - a book: "How To Build Your Own Skinwing" that details the building of a hang glider (3 Gold Pieces).
- 11 - two circular tinted slices of tinted glass, framed to fit over the eyes for sun protection. (8 Gold Pieces).
- 12 - "adventure parchment," specially treated, water and tear resistant, ideal for maps (1 Gold Piece).
- 13 - a book, "Guide To All Reptiles and Magical Creatures of The North Mountains (7 Gold Pieces).
- 14 - a book, "Talking To Birds and Listening When they Talk Back" (3 Gold Pieces).
- 15 - a shiny metal concave circular device that focuses sunlight through a lens (19 Gold Pieces).
- 16 - Badger Healing Balm, the best stuff for cracked, chapped, rough and weathered hands.(8 Gold Pieces).
- 17 - a bottle of liquid soap, concentrated and smells like lilac. (2 Gold Pieces).
- 18 - a packet of candles, slow burning, bright light emitting and a small candle-lantern (4 Gold Pieces).
- 19 - a metal device large enough to hold hot rocks for warming a personal sleeping area (12 Gold Pieces).
- 20 - a package of 10 whistles, including two ultrasonic for communicating with canines (8 Gold Pieces).
- 21 - a food pack containing 22 kinds of dried vegetables and 1/2 pound of deer jerky (8 Gold Pieces).
- 22 - a custom-sewed back pack with 12 external pockets, capable of holding a lot of stuff (11 Gold Pieces).
- 23 - fifteen empty bottles, six small boxes and 8 small baskets packed in a duffel (3 Gold Pieces).
- 24 - an ax with a collapsible handle, a collapsible shovel and a flat-blade hunting knife (7 Gold Pieces).
- 25 - Badger Eye Balm for easing the sudden burning from skunk spray (3 Gold Pieces).
- 26 - 12 pack of Badger Medicines; including Badger Burn Begone and Snake Bite Balm (13 Gold Pieces).
- 27 - assorted scrolls of weather control (6) including Tornado Dissipate and Snow-To-Rain (34 Gold Pieces).
- 28 - Shelter In A Bottle; break bottle, shelter for 5 opens. Just anchor and sleep (81 Gold Pieces).
- 29 - a fishing kit; collapsible pole, hooks, bait, and Badger Hook Balm (2 Gold Pieces).
- 30 - a wagon, a mule, a teamster and all of the above (80001 Gold Pieces).

Hint:

Fatt Sam is a retired adventurer with quite a tale to tell. prior to using this matrix, take a moment and prepare a story wherein Sam and friends come close to obtaining a fabulous treasure which is conveniently located nearby and a map to which can be obtained cheaply.

About The Author

Bob Liddil began gaming under the instruction of his good friend Jack Powers in the late 1970's . During that time, Bob wrote and published *Dimensions an Doors, Castles and Kingdoms, Demons and Notmen* and designed *Certificates of Birth, Life, Death, Survival, Slavery, Manumission*, and the all important *Master Scribe's Certificate*, (sort of "The One Ring" of certificates), a certificate that authorized or entitled owners of blank certificates to issue certificates. These were later incorporated into The Masterscribe's kit sold through Zocchi's of Biloxi and The Armory of Baltimore, both pivotal distributors of dice and all things gaming.

Bob was blessed to have known the great Lou Zocchi, and the late impetuous Roy Lippman, both "guru level" distributor- entrepreneurs during the heyday of gaming. It was due to the enthusiasm of those pioneers and others like them that these publications actually got into the hands of game fans around the USA and Canada.

In the 1980's Bob authored *The 30-sided Character and Other Tales* on a commission for The Armory, then subsequently, authored *The 30-sided Adventure and Other Tales*, featuring a gorgeous Ruth Thompson Cover (she is a Goddess you know), crafted for authorized publication by Roy Lippman at The Armory, then, *Rascals Rogues, Rapsallions And Renegades, Little Shop of Posions and Potions* and *Apothecary On The Street Of Dreams* in association with Pandora's Treasures and the beautiful, talented Dallas Nilsen, creator of *Pandora's Dice Wheel*.

Bob turned to fiction in the late 80's and early 90's, penning *Dragon in a Box, The Old Troll Comes To Town, Feodor Felonis and the Thief*, and *Yorkshire Luck* for *Marion Zimmer Bradley's Fantasy Magazine*, followed by *The Blue-eyed Thief* for TSR's *Dragon Magazine*. His Science Fiction Murder Mystery short story, *Murder Under Glass* was published in Mike Resnick's well received anthology, *Whaddunnits*.

Shortly thereafter Bob's long sought after membership in the prestigious *Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America* was accepted.

Somewhere in the middle of all that, *The Captain 80 Book of Basic Adventures*, and a new (especially for the Commodore 64) version of *Castles and Kingdoms* came into being.

Crazy Igor, a very famous huckster and vendor of gamestuff once said of Bob, "That guy's crazier than I am." After a convention in Evansville Indiana, the prolific Science Fiction Author, Allen Steel pretty much affirmed what Igor had previously iterated.

Even Binky The Ghost is in agreement.

Today, Bob, at 60, is semi-retired, having lived a lifetime as a Science Fiction and Role-playing gypsy, now making his home in Pensacola Florida, and at <http://www.digitropolis.net>.

His profound wish is to spend the rest of his life writing and trying to keep Damien the dangerous from getting his 3x5 card torn in half.

About The Illustrator



Matt Gonzales lives in Pensacola, Florida and is a Pensacola Junior College student studying fine arts. He came to illustrate this book answering an ad placed on www.Craigslist.com, having been given a heads up by an observant art professor at his school.

Matt's interests include Dungeons and Dragons and Fantasy Illustration. This book is his first professional assignment.

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The Oceania Public Library and Pub

Singing the Boat Stealing Blues

Afloat on the Boiling Sea

The Island of Jeju-do

The Temple of Fezenclop

Impetuous Creatures and Impulsive Individuals

Bad Loss, Good Loss, Bloopers and Practical Jokes

Down the Spiral Staircase (and through the Red Door) Fat Sam's Adventurer's Emporium

Mamma said there'd be Days like This

Totally Hidden Traps, Tribulations and Devices

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The Not Dead, Near Dead, Never Alive and Politically Correct

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