
SANTICORE 2014

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O Toughest Santicore, I would like an adventure describing the machinations of the Flower Devils and their bitterest rivals, the Silk Demons.

- Mateo Diaz

FLOWER DEVILS VS SILK DEMONS

by Pearce Shea
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The Flower Demons and Silk Devils are meta-organizations, occult and recondite accumulations of various organizations, cults, guilds, families agents and cells, self-organized according to taste and innermost drive. They have no proper leader, because they aren't formally organized, though they have notable figures that might mobilize great numbers either through notoriety or charisma. This is about a countryside from your campaign (something highly populated and civilized) and its central, walled city (if not walled, you'll need to improvise reasonable siege defenses).

Flower Demons are Dionysian, fleshy or corpulent, hungry, drunk, debauched, known for their parties and dances, for their excesses and their violence, beautiful but quickly worn out, blotchy. They are the wealthy, dissolute children of hard-fisted aristocrats and merchant-princes, they are the thousand and one ticks that hang on the royal hound. In less lofty circles, they are craftsmen, and brewers and minor magicians and tacticians and every other kind of artist or drunk. Likely: *succubi, wererats, most innkeepers, drunks and revolutionaries.*

Flaws: gluttony, substance abuse, debauched, strung out, insane/visionary

Progress: sweats chemicals or alcohol, constant sores around the palms or mouth and nose, wheezy breath, yellowjack cough, constant fever, visions

Final: fruiting bodies yield delicious sacraments, mouths in palms, wererat, succubi

Silk Devils are calculating, greedy, long-fingered, usually wealthy and powerful or connected to those that are. They name all the torturer-demons and the crueler angels among their allies, and they have the ear, and often the purse strings, of most of the aristocracy. They know the dirty little secrets, especially of the famous and powerful, but really of everyone. Likely: *several princes of Hell, liches, vampires, ghouls, rogues, angels, powerful aristocrats and guild members.*

Flaws: greedy, sociopathic, cruel, controlling, arrogance

Progress: can smell gold in a short radius, horns and/or tail, communicable jaundice

Final: some kind of undeath, implements used for controlling the mind or the body by nose, wheezy breath, yellowjack cough, constant fever, visions, fingers about an inch or so too long, shortcutting the mind (like marionette strings)

When player characters encounter NPCs of either organization, roll a d6. 1-3: pick a suitable flaw, 4-5: and a suitable sign of progress, 6: and a final state. These conditions/states are achieved by standard means. If an NPC is undead, they likely strove to make themselves that way and its up to the GM to discern the means (if necessary - it usually isn't). I normally assume unimportant NPCs that are also monsters are relatively minor monsters. There is a 1 in 3 chance a villager is a member of either organization, a 1 in 2 chance any townspeople is a member and all city folk are allied with one or the other.

Also read "lich, vampire, ghoul, succubi, angel and wererat," liberally. Rather than a lich or ghoul, perhaps the merchant is just undead and knows some spells or their touch paralyzes and leave it at that. Or perhaps the bohemian revolutionary simply can turn into a rat and has a poisonous bite and that's just a thing that is true about them. The idea here is you're looking to paint these NPCs with some common characteristics. They don't have to all be wererats in the strictest sense of the term nor is ghoulism and wereratism the common end of members of the organizations, just a descriptor of what that end is like.

Also also when I say undead, I don't mean a shambling, forever hungry, insensate monster, I mean a shambling, forever hungry nihilist (or monomaniacal tyrant). Picture revenants (sickly looking people) and not decaying undead. The line between living and undead should feel like the line between passion and mania.

Given the nature of these organizations, it is entirely possible for a person to be a member of both, pulled by self-indulgence and pleasure in one direction, by desire for power and control in another, though this is increasingly unlikely the more a character progresses down one or the other path.

Here are their signs: Flower Demons mark things with a circle with radiating petals (usually all rectilinear) and Silk Demons Mark things with three parallel horizontal lines and a fourth line perpendicular through them (think: sort of like i ching) and these signs they may be found in tattoos, on skulls like a stamp, on frontispieces, crates, doors, on keystones of buildings. They may be seen in the iris of the most devoted members, or in the whorls of their fingers.

Assume that any of a character's underworld contacts is a member of one or the other (thieves tend to be Silk Devils, bums and drunks, Flower Demons). Assume that most NPCs at least know well one person in a constituent organization. Player's characters may be one or the other too, albeit in a limited way. If you're playing type V, browse character flaws for things that smack of power-hunger, or gluttony or the like.

Characters

Bards and Barbarians are often Flower Demons (3 in 4 chance), and sometimes Wizards (50). Rogues, Paladins, Wizards and Warlocks (3 in 4 chance) are often Silk Devils.

Items and Places

The great Silk Book is a record of every little shame and failing and special demons and devices are required to find the right section (it being infinitely long and never in one place at one time (meta-spatial and temporal)).

The Garden of Leppo is bright in its grottos, foggy and dim in its pathways. It leads to all places and times. It is meta-spatial and temporal and therefore grows in a number of lost vales, the untended gardens of lost palaces (or manors tenanted by the insane or the infirm aristocracy), or the wild gardens of the witch and the artist. Its paths lead both to the lands of the elves, before their fall, and to Leng both post- and pre-collapse.

Stamen of Venus are metal and glass rods of intricate filigree which may be used as a mace or holy implement for deities of Tempests, Cruelty, Barbarism, or the like.

Tongs of Van Leiden are heavy iron tongs, their ends glowing as if with heat. Larger variations may be used as a mace and grant advantage when employing coercive means against anabaptists (or anyone else, really).

Happening

Play this subtly at first. While in town (any town, all towns), villages and cities, there are increasing numbers of street-corner preachers denouncing the guilds and calling for local rebellion and there are guildmen-at-arms killing, en masse, peasants (mostly women, artists) on the charge of witchcraft, treason or some combination of the two. There are piles of bodies before long. Mounds, stacked, just outside the walls, decaying, heaps at crossroads, whole villages emptied out and "heretic" and "usurper" posted throughout (if a player asks about the use of "usurper" tell them that usurpation is punishable as a future offence - intending to seize power without the legal, natural and divine authority is as bad as seizing it (and indeed is actually punishable, as most usurpers go unpunished)). Characters that ask around about the deaths and politics will be assumed to be

looking for membership in one or the other organization (both are eagerly recruiting).

Finally, after tensions have built sufficiently (likely after the Players have shown enough interest in the Flower and/or Silk), the next time the player characters are in the walled City, it explodes in rebellion. The temples will be pulled down, the guilds burned and all wealth redistributed. This will look a lot like looting, but with a religious zeal and organization. There will also be people painting the walls, musicians, orgies.

Trying to leave the city is difficult (to slip out: there is a per person 1 in 6 chance of success at night, 1 in 20 in the day) and suspect. Denouncing looting, the murder of the guildsmen (see below) is outright heretical and will quickly lead to any such character's name being called on the daily Request for Audience (read aloud from the wall and major squares every morning at dawn).

Anyone not following the increasingly erratic orders of the Voice of the Petal and her council will be tortured and then executed by removing their petals (a slow skinning). These executions happen daily (almost hourly in the first few days) to the delight of most of the remaining citizens. Petals (the flesh of the executed) are blessed by the Voice and sold for enormous sums, to be worn like a sash. They grant the wearer one level 1 cleric spell/session. The people being executed will be, to the person, the wealthiest and cruelest citizens. For every day the city is sacked, there are 3d4 new sashes made, meaning that before long, more people than not will have access to magic.

If the characters make it out of the city, the local nobles will have a Confessor-Ambassador (Likely a lich in a palanquin with a bald head and a deep voice and eyelids removed [always vigilant!] with implements of torture sewn into its skin) very interested in what the characters have encountered in the city. It will be perfectly happy to extract information from those unwilling but is equally happy to just pay the characters for help. And will promise quite a lot of money and power if they should be willing to work as agents in the City.

If left alone the walled city repels several attacks led by the Confessor-Ambassador until collapsing in on itself. Most of its citizens are wererats by this point. Within a year of the City's collapse, every other city will have wererat agents of the Petal led by flower succubi, though there are bounties on all their heads. Within a couple of years, most infected cities will fall, monarchs will be executed, disease and societal collapse will be the norm. Bands of drunken, violent peasants and women will roam the countryside, many riding dire wolves.

If undermined the city collapses and the party will be awarded titles of honorary burghers. All will begin to show signs of leprosy. The Confessor-Ambassador will head clean-up efforts and will begin to build himself a personal guard from the corpses the dead guildsmen, many who will "return" some time after, their skin ragged and

FLOWER DEVILS VS SILK DEMONS

waxy, claiming to have just barely escaped execution (this is timed such that the Confessor-Ambassador believes its killed all witnesses to the Guildsmen's execution. Of course, there will always be at least one survivor, hiding in terror or begging someone to listen to them, because they know the guildsmen is dead, they saw him/her die!).

If the PCs do nothing and instead just run away, the City collapses, but not before a desperate Confessor-Ambassador raises an army of undead, making it the most important person in the area. It then begins to torture to death any other authority figure that refuses to bend the knee. It begins to publicly carry around portions of the Great Silk Book. Soon, the Confessor-Ambassador will rule an empire with an undead aristocracy.

NPCS

Confessor-Ambassador Constantine Veth (treat as Lich, has a vorpal dagger named Bellatrix, after his daughter); his personal guard are 12 ghouls, each with a single cantrip from Type V (6 cleric, 6 Wizard).

There is a thirteenth kept bound in a brass case, when the case is opened and the bindings undone (can be managed with a single clasp at the back, all in sight are affected as if touched by a ghoul (usual saves apply) (happens 1/session). Bound Ghoul (Rupert) is insane and incredibly violent. The City Leaders (treat as Lvl 0s, though all have advantage when wheedling, arguing, seducing or intimidating (your call)

Recruiters

Some of these are clearly of one side or the other, but some are not. Your call as to whatever is most interesting at the time they show up.

Absalom Dufreisne (lvl 3 Rogue, Armor as leather, poisoned dagger, knows the password to all the aristocrat's clubs, works as a fence, will poison as many nobles as possible when the time comes with imitation purple lotus powder [short term effects as normal, always save v death or die])*The Black Hand* (Quintuplets: 4 lvl 5 Fighters with +1 tarred maces and +1 blackened splint mail, and a seemingly endless supply of bombs and 1 lvl 7 Warlock[Berthold]. Warlock is bound time a void god and can eat time 1/session (last turns is as if it never happened, but Berthold is exhausted and has to rest for a turn).

Emile DuVec (Lvl 0, incredibly wealthy, incredibly old, incredibly large moustache. Duke of something. Wears ornate plate and saber, which is frequently rattled. Hates all change, is thoroughly a Silk Demon and cannot be harmed by mundane means. If killed, he and his armor, turn to stone, shatter and blow away. He wakes up on his throne in his palatial home the next morning, angry. Probably destroying the throne would stop this, but no one knows for sure. Mansion is huge, black and made of mostly metal and looks like a Gothic castle with cathedral-like ornamentation. Emile is senile and longs for days when he was in the field, commanding troupes and tries to agitate for a war. Every month, he stages mock battles to the death, using prisoners. The winners are set free or offered a chance to serve Emile. He maintains a retinue of 37 ghouls.)

Madame DuVec (treat as vampire. Used to be thoroughly a Silk Demon, now feeling a bit more sentimental in her "dotage" [she is several hundred years old, maintaining her youthful appearance via monthly consumption of a virgin] and given the recent conversion of her beloved children to petal, she is starting to walk the garden path. She has 37 flaming knives hidden in a pocket dimension. She will summon them at will and can throw them as she wants. Treat as magic missile, albeit with fire and knives).

The DuVec Twins (treat as vampires. One can feel whatever the other is feeling, and with recent dislike of papa, who is getting a bit senile, the Twins have turned Flower Demon and spend much of their time in orgies of blood and sex. Both are about 16-years old looking, but are as old as their mother, less a few decades. They have mummified children dolls they move about on long sticks like simple marionettes. Three are as small mummies and seven as flesh golems)

Winnifred Karlldottir (lvl 6 Paladin of Pleasure and Voice of the Petal, 20 Charisma, +2 red Plate and flail)

Ovetchny Ovetchnytych (Lvl 0 agitater, advantage in political arguments, drinking, gang violence)

Goodman Price (lvl 3 Cleric of Tempests, wears no armor, holds no weapon and is eager to die for the revolution. Beloved of the commoners. Cha 18, advantage when discussing religion.)

Dear Secret Santicore

A world spanning occult conspiracy that isn't the Masons, Illuminati or Ethelhu Cult; no more than a page of background, suitable to a range of roughly real world settings, and possibly state for minion, coordinator and base level members for Fate's love.

Thanks!

L.S.

THE ORDER OF THE MACHINE

by Daniel "Thaumiel Nerub" Neffling
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THE ORDER

The Order Of The Machine believes that there must be a balance. For each happening, an opposite. Only the Machinists know just what must be balanced.

If a car is burnt in a downtown riot, an old junk car is mysteriously fixed at the slums. If a baby is kidnapped, a lost child finds her way home. If a person survives a violent robbery, elsewhere a life is lost. It's hard to figure out the scale that The Order is working at. If an old building is renovated do they destroy another? If a city crumbles in an earthquake, will they balance that - and how?

Some say they act like gods, but they do only what they believe in. No one knows - not even those in the order's ranks - who is behind this all. All they know is it must be done. The Machinists give orders. The cogs and Clockworkers enact them. No one has seen a Machinist in person.

They walk among us unnoticed. If you observe carefully, and know what you are looking for, you might spot a person who doesn't quite fit in. When they perform acts of balance they strive to be unwitnessed. But sometimes, despite their precautions, someone sees them. Then they deal with the situation: the person is proselytized into the Order or other, even extreme, means are used to keep the Order unrevealed for the public. The Order will never stand being open to exploitation, as that would affect the balance.

Cogs observe their surroundings videotaping incidents. They give their results to Clockworkers who deliver the data for Machinists to analyze. Files shared in secured networks and coded magazine advertisements are example methods used.

The Order Of The Machine has no known headquarters. The Machinists' locations are unknown and the management well hidden. Members mostly get messages to their phones, letters to home address or hints in the surroundings only they understand. They have been everywhere from Cairo to Reykjavik, New York to Hong Kong. Are they residents or travellers? No one knows.

Sometimes a member goes rogue, substituting his own views on balance for The Order's. These members are a big risk for the balance, the organization and public order, and are dealt with as soon as possible. Sometimes the rogue survives the manhunt; it is believed there is a hidden organization of rogues, who have the balance in their unbalanced hands.

A COG

A member of the order who acts as instructed from higher ranks of the Order. They don't question what they should do, because they understand that it must be done, what ever it is, to maintain the balance. They look like average people from a distance, but when observed closely they seem to be cold, calculating and distant.

A cog in the machine, Balance operator

Skilled (+2): Being unnoticed, What ever it does to maintain balance

Bad (-2): People skills

Stress: None (first hit takes them out)

CLOCKWORKER

More experienced members who have authority to proselytize new members and take care of those who have seen them at work.

They usually have one to three cogs with them when they do their work. They work with almost unearthly skill, committing actions impossible for a normal person.

Foreman of the balance, Unearthly execution

Skilled (+2): Being unnoticed, Executing balance, What ever the instruction is shall be done

Bad (-2): People skills, Empathy

Stress:

THE ETERNALLY YOUNG

by Matt D
mattdamico@gmail.com

Dear Secret Santicore—

*An obscure cult that has achieved acceptance into
the mainstream.*

Thanks!

D.S.

PLAYERS WILL KNOW

"The Eternally Young" is a company in the city formed by a merchant named Grace Meeks. Grace is hugely popular amongst females (mostly) through the marketing and sale of herbal and exotic beauty treatments. She has personally gone to the far reaches of the world in search of new products and beauty techniques to research and sell, bringing her in touch with unknown and unmapped places and peoples.

Grace built a large following after releasing a product called 'Corezo', a line of skin rejuvenators which gave users the ability to look remarkably younger. The treatment also included a treatment program, in which consumers could participate with instructors at local establishments. The program was very detailed, including meditation, chanting, and breathing techniques. With the popularity gained off this, Grace became a household name, and people all around began following her exploits.

Three months ago, Grace sailed out in search of new wares to add to her business. She left the city's seaport sailing in the lead ship of a fleet of seven large vessels. Over 151 company employees went with her off to an area of ocean which had been little explored. Rumors spoke of islands inhabited by strange people. Little is known, but there are old stories of a fountain of youth, where the natives are incredibly old, but do not look a day older than 21.

Anticipation was kept high by her company during her absence, and everyone looked forward to see what she would return with. Two weeks ago, a scout ship from the coast guard alerted the port that they had visual confirmation of several ships approaching and identified

them as Meeks' ships. Word quickly spread throughout the city and many townspeople dropped what they were doing to see the ships dock.

The ships slowly came in to the cheers of everyone, and the mayor personally stood at the main dock to welcome back the crews. As the flagship drew near, Grace could be seen on deck standing with two very large men. After dropping anchor, the crews began to disembark, and the mayor walked towards Grace to welcome her. People up close could see Grace had looked oddly different. For one, her eyes seemed to almost phosphorescently glow white. She was also wearing gloves which was strange since it was warm out. She extended her arm to shake the mayor's hand. Her demeanor was calm, yet something was amiss.

She took to the podium next to the mayor as the cheers continued on in celebration. She beckoned them to stop with her hands, and everyone began to listen. She began to talk about being relieved to be back home, and spoke to how the journey was not without its problems. During the expedition, the crew found an isolated civilization where the natives were all young and beautiful looking. She told them that she did indeed find a formula that would literally turn back the years of age of whoever drank it.

The people in this land had a unique religion and worshipped a primitive, yet fake god within a temple. They were fiercely guarded about their youth potion, but allowed her to have some. She knew that she had a hit on her hands, but the natives would not share the manufacturing process. Surreptitiously, she and a few others stole the formula from the temple in the dark of night.

Unfortunately, the natives did not like the fact that she had taken this, and many of them attacked her crew. She found friends amongst the tribe, who turned on their brethren and helped repel them. It was done at great cost, as over half her original crew had been cut down forcing her to flee back home. Thankfully, the ones who turned on their tribesmen helped facilitate the vacant positions of those who died or were lost during the attack.

Grace was given a large welcoming home parade shortly after, and her crews began to unload the goods obtained. Her company quickly began to producing and marketing the formula she acquired, and with keen business sense, created a subscription program that attached a wellness plan which would be available at all their establishments.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

Grace Meeks is no longer the same person as when she had left. Her hands are silvery metallic which she keeps obscured by wearing gloves. Her eyes glow bright white in the dark, and her teeth are made of the same metal as her hand.

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED

Grace did come across another civilization, but they did not fight the crew off like she claimed. Instead, when she inquired about what they worshipped, the natives introduced her and several of her crew to the Entity. The Entity reached out telepathically and wiped their brains clean and warped them into something different.

The Entity is contained in a small cylinder that fell from the sky a long time ago. The people of the village have worshipped the entity as a god ever since. The Entity is neutral evil, alien, and psychic. It feeds off the mental energy of humans.

The Entity's plot is to accumulate enough energy to contact something even darker than itself. It sees Grace as a way to reach more people, devour their minds, and hopefully call whatever it is trying to reach to come to Earth and join it. When the Entity came into contact

with Grace, it drove her and her shipmates insane, enslaving them. The natives of the island slew and ate the rest of her crew.

The Entity is now located in Grace's corporate headquarters, safely hidden behind a legion of devout followers. It grows more powerful as customers line up to feed it.

NPCS

Grace Meeks, Undead Beauty Guru

AC 16; HD 5; Attack Bonus +4; Special Attacks: Psychic Lash - Damage 2d8; Range 12"

The Entity

AC 19; HD 10; Special Attack: Mind Control – 1 attack per 3 rounds, range 3, a failed saving throw means the victim is under the complete control of the Entity, and may act as its minion. After 24 hours, the victim is lost completely, becoming effectively undead.

Cultists vary in stats.

THE DEATH CULT

by Anonymous

Dear Secret Santicore—

Love about a brutal and death cult.

Thanks!

D.R.

The first nine generations of the death cult went about things in a perfectly sane and Presbyterian way; they worshipped their own death until dying of natural causes at a ripe old age. Death was seen as the ultimate closure, and this reflected the human need for resolution, which was completely lacking as a social custom at the time.

In order to glorify death for the longest possible time they had to imagine it thus, and act in such a way that it would come true, so they lived very cautious lives and were terrified of disease. Sewers and public baths were built together with temples and cathedrals.

Later generations grew impatient with the slow pace of the worship, and envisioned younger and more gruesome deaths, again, engineering them to make it happen. Assisted suicide either by wasp or by honey became common practice, and as time went by church membership was restricted to the dead alone: you had to have killed yourself before even joining the church, you willed yourself posthumously to it. The great majority of worshippers were catechumens, not yet ready to enter the church. Rituals, instead of being officiated surrounded by the cultists, were instead carried out in catacombs or crypts where only the dead was present. Living worshippers were relegated outside: the living were not worthy enough to share the sacred space of the dead.

The only living members of the death cult were merely morticians and sextons, taking care of the exalted bodies. And their bodies were to resemble the dead:

sextons were force fed until they looked bloated like a rotting corpse, morticians had their lips stitched until they were like withered corpses.

And crypts and catacombs replaced baths and sewers. And the rat came and its fleas took their toll, and the church grew. And the root-rot came and its visions took their toll, and the church grew. And war, and the Great Earthquake, and rivers changed their flow. And the church grew.

Eventually all worshippers died. The sextons walled the officiants in, the morticians prepared the sextons and themselves. The church has never been greater, and it died out, forgotten.

Other religions worshipped god without wanting to be like god. The distinction between the mundane and the sacred is ever-present. Necessary, one would say. In fact religions were mostly very humble and acknowledged the gulf between what they worshipped and what they could become.

But the death cult worshipped what every man inevitably became, so in a way it was the most arrogant and heretical of all.

When the death cult resurfaced 50 years later, it was as a result of a reconciliation of two rival gangs of foreigner grave robbers looking for relics. Plenty of collector teams, tomb raiders and the like sprang up

because the death cult had acquired this kind of chic: people didn't really believe in it but they wanted skulls and corpses of foreign lands around their tastefully appointed homes.

And the seers read their books. And new catechumens sprang up. Rituals restarted. Sextons and morticians wandered around crypts again, and new crypts and catacombs were dug and built. Even in the land beyond the sea. It was a fashionable cult for rich people very much into curio collecting.

When a spy took these arguments to the high inquisitor the members of the cult were all arrested and condemned to eternal life. Ageing, but never dying. Being forever kept away from what they want.

People say that catechumens keep up the pretence that they worship death so that their worship will never end. Some people say that most have actually all quite grown to like living forever. A few say that after a while they become too old to move, and morticians prepare them like corpses, and sextons stash them in wooden boxes outside of their hidden catacombs, forever alive, forever wailing.

SECRET CULTS AND GUILDS OF THE DESERT KINGDOMS

by Daniel Dean
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Dear Secret Santicore—

A 1d20 table of secret cults and guilds of the Desert Kingdoms.

Thanks!

A.

D30 SECRET CULTS AND GUILDS OF THE DESERT KINGDOMS

- 1 The Ministry of Olives is one of the most powerful guilds in the desert, controlling the trade of food and holding a death grip on fire itself. They are impossibly shrewd, and with good reason: they control a genie whose counsel and muscle has been afforded the Ministry by centuries old wishes. The genie had the idea for putting oil in “lamps,” vessels like his own, which he can inhabit to destroy enemies of the Ministry. The Ministry is not particularly malevolent unless a single copper of their worth is on the line, and then kings inevitably bow to them like tall grasses.
- 2 The sun is death and distance may mean slaughter, so parley with the tiny-little-kings of the Walking Circles, the Speakers of Cities, the Unison. When the Unison grow old they go the the Circles. In the circles the speak forever and are vessels, with their sisters and brothers, conduits for massive magics that can transport thought, deed, flesh, or steel across time and space. Every circle speaks to itself, all other circles within a city, with the city herself, and with all other circles. A circle cannot be broken by leaving it. When you join a circle you only burn out and are replaced. Any Speaker has the accumulated sum knowledge of every scholar in every city, of every Speaker and the Speakers Who Were. Breaking the circle to ask them anything breaks all circles. Woe betide anyone foolish enough to do so, for death will come as a blessing to them. Too many towns and kingdoms depend on the circles and the swift they bring. It would be the destruction of an age. The Unison work for everyone, and are prepared to kill everyone for everyone’s benefit.
- 3 The tamers of horses, the creepers of camels, the stealers of the desert ships. The Reindancers teach their obscure art, both entrancing and entranced, to any strong enough to endure their training and flexible enough to leave their scruples back in the kingdoms when they go out. They have a hand and interest in every horse seller, breeder, and rustler in the desert, and they speak the language the beasts understand in horrible alien machinery detail. They will leave you to die when you camp in the night. They will sneak out of the city in the night and strand your armies and posses. They will send a thunder upon you and crush wood and clay and bone and make you an example. Pay the ponyman.
- 4 Wet cloth sticks to hidden faces, the eye holes in their rough masks revealing red flesh, not particularly lined up with where eyes should be. They rise from the sands as if stepping up from a lake, reaching out with nigh-skeletal hands from beneath thick, large, moist (impossibly moist in this climate) robes and cloaks. They arrive, they strike, and then they sing back into the sea of sand. These are the Day Ghosts, and they are desert vampires. They ‘sleep’ always beneath the sands, waiting for prey to near. Then they kill it, protecting themselves with a thick mist and coverings, and sink back into the sands, feeding from the blood as it is absorbed by the sands. They exert a powerful influence on their area, Charming and casting Illusions on travelers, sending the ensorcelled into towns to disrupt life and drive people from them, or simply having their thralls lead unwitting groceries to a “short cut.”
- 5 The Posterrorists have an awesome burden on their shoulders: they must make history to happen. One thousand one prophecies were cuneiformed into a column and they are enacted in the order of their interpretation. The full shape of these prophecies will not be revealed until they are all understood and enacted, at which point these Historians will put all events into their proper order and write a history which fits it. Then they will obliterate dissenting view. The first prophecy they ever translated was instructions to write instructions to future historians. No one can say how long this had been going on. They always need something done, and there’s always more room in history for someone on history’s side.

SECRET CULTS AND GUILDS OF THE DESERT KINGDOMS

D30 SECRET CULTS AND GUILDS OF THE DESERT KINGDOMS

- 6 Forty clans of thieves haunt the wastes. They have their own traditions of initiation and conduct, they have their own little techniques and gimmicks, but all are slave to the code of the Robberdamme, Great Lady of Greed. A thief will never impede one of his brothers in their craft. A thief helps other thieves. A thief never asks for help. A thief never forgets. A thief never kills if she can help it. A thief always kills to protect his clan. A thief cannot suffer a non thief to know of the Robberdamme. They love coin, sex, drink, song, acrobatics, magic tricks, actually-magical loot, and dust-colored clothing. Every thief knows these, and everyone knows of the thieves. This is all true. This is also a lie. Robberdamme hangs rotting but animate and demanding in the Lair of Locustre, harvester and burner, and the starved and droughted of the world are made ready to receive her by the thief guilds under Robberdamme's Law, for salad is only an appetizer for meat for Locustre.
- 7 The Knotted Shroud have a specific territory to which they keep but will never be found in the same spot four nights in a row, and they'll be impossibly far away when you look for them. If a man lives in a room then a man's world is only a room. If a man walks always the world then the man's room is the world, and every world outside his own potentially his as well. Any may swear fealty and subordinate themselves but the Vermillionaires who lead the column of travelers never permit anyone to leave their fold. Even the bodies are burned for fuel. Each man is a room. Believe in a journey that never ends, and if they are worthy enough in their travels they will find themselves on that road.
- 8 They walk where they want, they strike where they want, they melt into the heat. The Untouchable are never seen but they make sure people know whose hand exactly is at work. In their great black fortress they pile up their coins and take their pleasures...well, most of them. The Untouchables not only can't be caught they can't be...touched. The lack of carnal gratification and isolation from even their fellow men, lest an accidental brush of the elbow occur, has occurred more than one to sanction themselves from atop what came to be called Suicide Spire. If you touch the Untouchable, even accidentally, they will fly into an enormous rage and try to decant your body's contents at the molecular level.
- 9 Mirages speak to those who listen. Kings and plunderers and demons and saints have all spared the Burning Eye, whose veils hide the sight of ash but who 'see' in the visions which plague travelers a truth, a secret medium of transmission, a technology. To learn and bear witness to this constantly unfolding miracle, always on the verge of thirsting to death, is the highest achievement a man can hope for in his life. Sometimes they lie about what they see, seeing what the lie will bring, and in this way they garden the stones of the world.
- 10 Do you know what lies beyond the Canyons of Blood? What causes that rainbow every sunset behind Ragged Mountain? Where do the trails of Unpashatiann lead? Do you know what secrets the desert holds? The Tygers do not know, not entirely, and it kills them. Tygers have literally dropped dead in their pursuit of a perfect map of their desert - every dune, every weird rock, every blown-out stone formation. The desert is constantly changing, making this achievement impossible, making their efforts hopeless, making it a kind of spiritual journey. They will share information freely but oppose any perceived attempt to stymie their search for knowledge. They will question you endlessly on where you've been, what you've seen, and add it to their records. You will always run out of patience with this before they will.
- 11 Another age awaits beyond this one. A better age. More plumbing. In pale stone chambers hidden under ivory facing they dream and wait for it in a sorcerous slumber. Eleven are awake at any time, who call themselves the Aging, and they trade every midwinter with the Patient. They seek isolation and protection for themselves and their brothers and so pay large sums to rag-tag bandit groups and other mercenaries too stupid and unorganized to be a threat. These bands keep the sands about well clear of intruders. In times of great need the Aging may wake many or all of the Patient. The Aging may be disciplined for this but the Patient always act on the pleas or guidance of the Aging. Remember, every minute they have to deal with you is a minute they're dying, a minute of glorious age robbed from them.
- 12 They come on lithe sailboards, circling the city-sized tall ships like flies around a meal. The Commission earns its freedom on the back of fear. They collect a hearty protection tax from the regions which they are known to sail, cutting through the sand like a knife through wine. Those who do not heed this tribute and carry the standards of protection in their caravans are subject to fearsome raids. The Commission gets its due one way or another. From time to time they break their contracts in order to more adequately reprovision. More often such an errand requires a trip to a village or larger town, where the Commission scavenge for everything that isn't nailed down. Their secrets are not in their ships, but their sails, and every Commission vessel has a horrible thorny worm in its hold spinning strange magical silk.

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- 13 On the rocks of Clashpoint grows the Dire Narcissus. Those who can find them in those rare places too remote even for birds may enjoy the vulgar fruit of the Husband Pear. Some merely make do with the mundane spices and illegal syrups that the shady cells of normal society trade in. Some just eat every scorpion they see in case it's one of the glow in the dark ones. They call themselves the Otherhood and theirs is every growing and creeping thing that will make you trip balls. In some ways they are at the forefront of science in this world, and know secrets of nature usually only druids ever learn. They guard these secrets loosely but guard their practices with lethal force and an intense, palpable paranoia.
- 14 When you come across a wide lake, clear as a mirror, and on that lake is a great white city, you see no mirage. This is Calfishatnee, city of the snow sorcerers. Some say they created the desert, some way they came here ages ago to work in secret from their enemies, and it's entirely possible that their being here is as much a surprise to them. It's hard to say, for Calfishatnee is a frozen city. Its citizens, viziers, pharisees, and sorcerers are still frozen, constantly melting, yes, but also constantly freezing. There is an equilibrium and it tilts the way of thaw. The servants and vassals of the city, for example, those vested with the least of its power and therefore less susceptible to the effects of (...what? Godsmoting? Spell out of control? Shrewd plan to escape to another era)...those men and women are waking up. They are free enough to move about but every moment is an agony of freezing to death in rockbaking heat.
- 15 Theleon was reduced to ash. Every rock was scattered. Every throat was opened. Every book was eaten. Every god was befouled. They were forgotten. They were erased. They are returned. It began happening a couple decades ago, spirits of the Theleon were born again into new flesh all across the kingdoms. They know one another by sight but are otherwise just like everyone else in their homelands. They want revenge on the descendents of their destroyers. They want to raise anew Theleon. They are bound and doomed to this struggle. If you kill them you only put them in a baby.
- 16 The Norocoyn are one of the oldest bloodlines in the desert. Some say they were firstborn of the desert, emerging first from the sand and shaping the temples and peoples of the great scorched lady. They have been a constant presence, their fingerprints on the throat of history. They are everywhere, even much reduced from the previous omnipresence. The newest generation stands ready to squander their legacy, to let the positions of power the family has jockeyed into from kingdom to city to town slip from Norocoyn grasp. Not yet, though: their elders see the weakness of their progeny and have set themselves to ensure their legacy will outlast them, and perhaps outlast the sand. Norocoyn hold many stations and various allegiances. There are often members on either side of a given conflict. Family matters above all, though, and anything judged wholly to the family good by Norocoyn elders is supported across all lines.
- 17 Beastly: not so much a distinct clan as several. Each clan patterns themselves after a desert animal, most of whom spend most of their time sheltering from the killer light of day in underground warrens or buried by their own hand in the scorching sand. Most of these clans get along with one another well enough, and any den may have members of several different clans, separated from their groups, sheltering together and waiting for the relative safety of twilight. You have...
1. Fennec
 2. Kangaroo
 3. Velociraptor
 4. Ostrich
 5. Dung Beetle
 6. Trapdoor Spider
 7. Tortoise
 8. Prairie dog
 9. Double Scorpion
 10. Leopard
 11. ...and all of them fear the Snakes (see 23).

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- 18 Gods do not take on the flesh of man. Man is too small. Gods take on the flesh of kingdoms, of kinds, of peoples. Only foolish gods ever do this (Why give up your normal god-ness to hang out in meat?) and so only foolish gods become stuck, as Edurak the Glass did. Flowing and razored, Edurak the Glass was beckoned among his people in a ritual lasting a thousand days. Now he is his people, in every real way, and they him. They act of one mind and accord. They flock across the desert like a great migration of birds. When one vessel dies, Edurak keeps moving it until he finds a new, fresher house, and then pours that portion of his god-ness into it. He is only a small god so there is no danger that all will become Edurak. However, he is relentless and cannot be forever destroyed, and he craves power in this world he is stuck in. When his full population is assembled he has all of his godly might and even apart his vessels are dangerous, magical, and bloodthirsty. So there is a danger that Edurak will become all. By attrition.
- 19 There is an army without a country, a kingdom without a home. The children are soldiers when they are born, their choice made by the choices their parents made. Their past has evaporated in the scorching dryness but they were all running from something. Charges of murder, desertion in other legions, the wasting of their home kingdoms by brutal enemies. Within the arms of Cloister Forsaken all find a home and safety. Higher orders of the Cloister walk out in large groups for things like trade, provisions, and counseling their neighbors on the fate of the desert. They are a passive group but make no mistake, getting to them is its own gauntlet, and many desperate people die searching for them. Their home is its own danger as well, for it is a submerging city in sand, and walking its briefly exposed streets courts the disaster of being trapped there, dying without the protection afforded the Cloister.
- 20 Merchants of some power and influence are aware of a charm, a curse really, which may be placed upon their wares and stores. Only the most powerful merchant in any community will know this though they may guard many stalls and shops with it. Should they be stolen from, then the victim becomes a Ropemaker. Essentially, their skin becomes thick, tight, calciferous, and begins to slough off like papery snakeskin, revealing a tighter, thicker layer. This continues until movement at all is so difficult that breathing is restricted and they “hang” themselves, though the sufferers are usually caught and actually hanged before then. Ropemakers have nothing to do with one another before the curse strikes them but they find one another and work together to steal enough to survive, take out what revenges they can against those who cursed them or attempt to find cures together, and are willing to pay (by stealing) for anyone who can help with either. They often have to sequester themselves from town in day to day life, actually weaving thick, hearty, cable-like ropes from their own flesh and trapping animals and caravans in flesh nets to survive.
- 21 Skyfire demand redwater from caveless. Caveless hurt. Caveless take. Caveless walk Skyfireless, walk skycaved. Caveless not make redwater for Skyfire. Skyfire angry. Uscave angrier. Childfires, roar, hunt, redwater redwater redwater.
- 22 Goldenfoot soldiers march across the wastes, endlessly. They do not make camp. They do not eat or thirst. They only march, cloaked in citrine, never striking, never drawing their swords or planting their standards. UNTIL, that is, they are summoned. When an oath is broken by blood and fortune. Then the Goldenfoot come to serve the betrayer, acting out her orders. They demand petty soldiers’ wages, and go away, and camp, and eat, and make war on their new master’s enemies. But they never stop. They can never be dismissed. They keep coming back, keep collecting their coin, until their new master’s personal fortune is exhausted. Then they collect their master as price. The betrayer’s feet are cast in gold while they are alive and aware and they join the march.
- 23 Like you don’t need a snake cult? Every desert needs a snake cult. This one believes us the bone dust leavings of a stellar serpent. We are of snake and the snake’s children are here to remind us of that. They live in filth and lead hedonistic lives. They ignore magic and even discreet poisons because their preferred weapon is the snakes themselves. The Watchers Winding see all and speak the language of the world, able to move snake within snake to destroy snake or protect snake. They are not the charmers. They are snake. Only lesser snake, though, and if they work hard enough that might change. They eat only snakes and can hunt them for miles, gathering them for their rituals, for their armory, for their supper. They cannot be truly blinded. They see as snakes do, with heat and smell. Perhaps from the shell of this world will come another stellar serpent, larger, who will eat her mother and make all her servants a part of her. Perhaps the maddest the desert has to offer are naturally attracted to the Watchers Winding. Perhaps they’re just fucking with everyone, using theatrics and a seeming chaos to disguise a larger, lateral motive.

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- 24 The sands of time are not metaphorical, nor are they a magic item, a special silicate. They are typical grit set into hourglasses enchanted with sympathetic charms and ground to the cutting edge of science. Everything in the kingdom has its own timer, and the ministrations can speed or slow the effects of the passage of time. In this way they cheat at everything. Their armies are swifter. Their great heroes live long, storied lives. Their poor are kindling, threshed and sacrificed on the blocks of progress. The plants of the kingdom bloom most vividly and bloom nearly forever. The king will outlive the sun, and the sun does not come to the cities unless the Glassblowers' Guild permit it.
- 25 The Brethren Anointing are an order of pious prostitutes with chapters in many cities across the desert. They make and keep their own coin, which is way frustrating for the local taxers and royal accountants. Among these is a marque of favor. If you perform a great service or deed for them the Brethren bestow this upon you. It is every Brother's to give and all accept this tender above all else. You can spend it for carnal gratification, sure, but you can also spend it for secrets, for lodging, for security, for almost anything a Brother or His have to give or lend. There are, in smaller towns and even in some regions of the desert near the great kingdoms, those who find the Brethren a toxin upon the face of the sand. The Brethren protect themselves by training the younger Brothers to be excellent sharpshooters. A small crossbow in their hands is a fine musical instrument, a well crafted spell, and if your setting has guns then the Brethren always have them even when they're otherwise scarce.
- 26 The Circus of Death exists anywhere a couple hundred people can gather, moving about. It has rugged champions, celebrated monsters, and courageous daredevils, and they never wear the same body twice. Men, Women, Beasts....the Ringmasters go from town to town, transforming their surroundings to the amusement of travelers and peasantry. Fantastico the Brave. Warbeast. Golden Punch. Mariah Doom. Elephant. These famed gladiators live within the magic rings of the Ringmasters, and can inhabit any living vessel the Ringmaster ordains. The world around them becomes the legendary feats and traps of the Circus. The Guillotine Dance. Crimson Chamber Magnifques. The Break. The Ringmasters make good coin from their patrons but their real money is made renting out their abilities for executions and propaganda.
- 27 The Season of Whirlwinds hide deep in the burned red canyons, devoting themselves to an austere life of introspection. Their precepts are these: You are yourself, not a part of yourself, not a first draft. There is Self and there is Other, and only by making the Other into Self can you reach Oneness. That which cannot become Self, which is not thought or deed, is air, to be breathed in as needed but, also, to be expelled, and disregarded. That which spurns the Self must be forgiven. That which hates and opposes Self must be avoided. That which may not be avoided must be destroyed.
- 28 A cry in the open desert night can be heard for miles. The voices which still echo in the inhospitable dark and the arid days have shaped the sand, guiding traffic, scaring away scavengers, and providing help and hints about the dangers. There is such a thing as a "bard" in the desert but those with mouth-magic in the golden cities are not entertainers or storytellers. They are Wastecallers, whose songs and words are long-range warfare. Give them a wide berth. Do not steal from them or amuse them. Do not defy them. They much speak to you then, and none can help you.
- 29 The whipmasters are dead. The drills are destroyed. The picks are abandoned. There are only the Salt Children now. The spirits of the dead slave children have taken over the rich spice trade of the desert, freed their brothers, and crystalized their new bodies in huge shafts. They wander into village squares and high courts, dissolve, and then form their new bodies back below. They pull all manner of valuable mineral out of the walls with their touch, replacing their body parts with the new elements. They don't ask for money. They simply give. In return, when they kill, revenging themselves on some individual or descendant who they believe responsible for their enslavement, people turn a blind eye. This is out of self preservation really. The Salt Children are not powerful but they are relentless and they are needed, so making an enemy of them is inadvisable.
- 30 The fastest growing cult in the desert is the Red Fool, who believe that crossing the open desert unaided and unprovisioned literally burns the sin out of your body and absolves you of the evil of one murder. Anyone you kill is a freebie. The local authorities dispute this, obviously, but many watchmen and guardians are adherents of the Red Fool, and it is a faith that certain governments encourage in order to placate the poor and thin out their nearby rivals.

Dear Secret Santicore—

I like barbarians and I like horror but I don't quite know how to reconcile the two. If you will, some elements for a PC coming from a horror-tribe. Quirks, lore, histories, it's all good, baby.

Thanks!

R.S.

HORROR BARBARIANS

by Mike Evans
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THE MANGLED FACE CLAN

HISTORY The Mangled Face Clan once started as a peaceful group of nomadic wanderers. After wandering for many years, the tribe settled in an ancient grove of weeping willows, believing it a safe and hospitable land. At first the members of the clan shrugged off the voices that whispered softly in their minds, ignored the urges of violence against those that wrong them, and fought against the desires to mutilate their own flesh. Eventually the clans will broke and they succumbed to the dark forces feeding poison into their minds and the Mangled Face Clan was born.

LORE The dark spirits of death shall guide the hand of the clan! They will bring death to all enemies; striking enemies in the dead of night gives us strength and weakens their resolve; by mangling our faces we protect ourselves from the forces of the light and healing.

QUIRKS Members of the Mangled Face Clan will not cross running water unless they have dumped a vial of their own blood into the water, thus protecting themselves from the cleansing properties of water; The Mangled Face Clan will not fight when the sun is at its zenith unless absolutely necessary, for the sun silences the whispers of the dark spirit.

RITUALS Ritual of the Blight- This ritual takes 1 hour to cast. The beating of drums, the burning of horrid smelling incense, and the sacrifice of 6 HD in creatures (preferably humanoids, double the HD amount if animals), allows the clan to cast the spell Unholy Blight (Cleric, level 4) on their enemies within a 1 mile radius. The clan prefers their shamans to open with this attack on their enemy's encampment while they are sleeping.

This ritual is extremely dangerous to cast, for it is possible to let loose dark spirits that ravage and destroy all that they come across. The participants of the ritual risk their very souls each time they cast it. Those that are unworthy, become ravenous husks of the dark spirits, who attack all they come across.

PREFERRED WEAPON Weapons with jagged and pitted blades, so as to mutilate the flesh that it cuts. The handles are usually made from the wood of the weeping willows of the clan's sacred grove.

CLAN TROUBLE Paladins of the god of the sun have moved into the area to cleanse it of the evil presence and to bring the clan to justice. Already the presence of the dark spirits has dimmed.

THE HEATHENS

HISTORY There was no fall from grace or corruption of this clan, they have been rotten and vile since their inception over 500 years ago. The clan believes they are disciples of the demon of blood and pain, Azbahar, and desire nothing more than to spread their master's word throughout the land. The clan lives in the blighted lands, and is somehow immune to the toxic miasma that permeates the region, and attacks all the settlements of the outlying areas.

LORE The Word of the Azbahar:

The good and generous shall be punished for their weakness.

The churches of healing and the light shall be torn asunder.

Enslave those that can serve a purpose, dispose of those that have none.

Blight the land and expand the reach of Azbahar.

QUIRKS The Heathens are afraid of their own reflection, believing that the image is actually a trick of the Heavens. When any of the Heathen Clan sees a mirror, they go berserk and will do anything in their power to destroy the mirror. If the mirror is not destroyed in 3 rounds, they lose their composure, believing the mirror enchanted and will flee.

RITUALS The clan is able to sacrifice one innocent humanoid and some of their own blood to their dark master, Azbahar and summon a demon imp (demon type I) from the hells. A demon imp remains until slain and will spout prophecies and decrees from Azbahar (not all of them are true). These imps will serve the clan loyally and defend them from attacks.

Each time a member of the clan summons a demon imp they become less human, taking on a more demonic appearance. The clan shamans know that the transformation will eventually turn their warriors into the very demon imps that they are summoning and this is the price to pay to Azbahar for asking for his power.

PREFERRED WEAPON The heathens prefer two-handed axes that have been consecrated in the blood of those who were sacrificed to summon the demon imps. The axe is cool to the touch and has a faint red glow.

CLAN TROUBLE All the demon imps were found dead in the village center. There is no sign of a struggle or incursion. The clan shaman is unable to hear the dark whispers of Azbahar.

THE STALKERS

HISTORY The Stalkers believe that the spirits of animals give them strength and fuel their rage. The clan shamans have developed a strange form of spellcraft that allows them to graft animal parts onto the bodies of their warriors. Some warriors will give up their limbs to be gain the claw of a bear. Others will have the tusks of a wild boar grafted to their face. All warriors have the eyes of an animal and are gain low-light vision. These barbarians are monstrous in appearance and their visage causes even the bravest warriors to tremble in fear at their approach.

LORE The Stalkers believe that the strength and ferocity of animals is eternal and only by absorbing that essence can the warriors reach their full potential. Those that disrespect animals shall be cursed to be weak and feeble for all their days.

QUIRKS The Stalkers will not attack outright unless absolutely provoked. The clan prefers to attack like an animal, slinking silently in the dark and striking quickly. When cornered they launched out striking blindly.

RITUALS: The clan knows of a ritual that allows them to bathe in the blood of one hundred animals under the new moon thus imbuing them with the strength of the creatures. Those that take part in the ritual are immune to fear effects and have their strength enhanced (+2). This effect last for 4d4 days after the ritual is complete.

The ritual is not performed lightly, for it has a high risk of failure. However the benefits of feeling no fear when going into battle are too great to ignore.

It is not clear whether the ritual is successful until it is too late. Those that wish to bathe in the blood of the animals must do so immediately. The first signs that the ritual has failed do not manifest until the dawns first light. If the ritual fails the land is blighted and dies within a 3 acre radius. The animals in the area become contaminated and diseased. The warriors that bathed in the blood become necrotic and mutated, their minds slipping into an enraged bestial state.

Sects of the clan have been wiped out by because of this ill-gotten ritual.

PREFERRED WEAPON The Stalkers prefer to use weapons crafted from the body parts of animals. The weapons are tempered in a holy fire that makes the teeth, claws, and bone as strong as steel.

CLAN TROUBLE Something has consumed all the animals in a 3 mile radius of the Stalkers encampment. Without the power of their rituals and the spirits of the animals to guide them, the Stalkers have begun to become agitated and lose themselves to mindless bestial rages.

Dear Secret Santicore—

I would like the biographies of the ragamuffin crew of a pirate interplanetary spelljammer. The game is D&D 4e but I can adapt whatever you create as needed.

Thanks!

D.M.

INTERPLANETARY PIRATE RAGAMUFFINS

by Shoe Skogen
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CAPTAIN XARAPHRESH

Tough, straight forward, impatient with nonsense and time-wasting. An alcoholic. Hardened by tough times, but a secret idealist. Susceptible to fast-talking and appeals to sentiment. Scrupulously fair. Tugs hair when nervous, becomes awkward around the innocent and in-need. Had planned once to be a tailor, before Tragic Events.

Captain Xaraphresh is a Warlord. Give the Captain lots of powers that command other PC's, and Wizard feats. Make sure they have decent Charisma.

FIRST MATE GOLDENTHAL

Pragmatic, deceitful, a very good bargainer. Feels both resentful and protective of the Captain and the crew. Highly motivated by duty and obligation. Stubbornly civil and pleasant, but has a secret cruel streak.

Has a wonderful poker face, but is prone to brooding and getting tangled into drama. Has a weakness for ill-advised love affairs.

Goldenthal is a Rogue, with powers that move other targets. Snap them up some Charisma or RP boosting feats.

PILOT TALLULAH KEYES

Anxious, twitchy, introverted. Very highly observant. A romantic, but very picky. Becomes easily over-stimulated. Became deaf as a child, and uses a combination of magic and sign to communicate. Has almost eerily quick reflexes. Plays correspondence chess with partners all across the galaxy, and if very drunk, will admit to having once been a chess champion. Shies away from conflict, but has a smart mouth that sometimes creates it.

Tallulah is a Wizard, with a controller build. Enchanter. Give Tallulah feats that boost initiative and HP.

BRAVO TAANS

A simple soul, good-hearted and earnest. Very quick to laugh, or to start a brawl. Guns! And fighting, and beer! Also knitting. Will knit things for friends, and expect to see them worn. Is tall and broad, with huge callused hands and big clumsy feet.

Loves dancing and sings with great heart, but a bit off-key. Is as tough as nails, and socially as rusty - but big-hearted and well-meaning, always.

Bravo Taanis, as one might imagine, is a Fighter. Use the PHB version, and if you want to concentrate on guns, give her lots of ranged attack powers.

SECURITY EXPERT AHMED RUUHL

Eccentric and pedantic, prone to monologuing. Suspicious of magic. Will happily tell long, shaggy-dog stories about missing limbs, though the stories change with each telling. Exceedingly clever, sometimes too clever for anyone's good. Entirely uninterested in romance. Prone to making complicated plans that depend on things going a certain way. An exceedingly well-trained fighter, who uses knowledge of geometry and physics in combat.

Ahmed is an Executioner (assassin), and heavy on damaging attack powers. Give him some feats that reinforce damage.

MECHANIC AKIO XOM

Friendly, helpful, and smart! A robot. Has no concept of privacy or boundaries. Likewise shame. Is fascinated by new things, very quick to ask questions. Is quite fond of mechanical devices and speaks to them with friendship and affection.

Akio is a Warforged Artificer. Downplay damaging powers, to instead focus on RP and skills to make them well-rounded.

DOCTOR SOPHIE HAN

Adorable, tiny. Very clean off the job, messy off it. Fond of the drink. Speaks very clearly, to compensate for a childhood speech impediment which sometimes re-surfaces when very frightened. Sends money to family 'back home'. Loves to go slumming, and thinks rough places and roguish types quite wicked and fun. Has a very badly calibrated sense of danger and risk.

Oh, Sophie. She's a Bard, built with feats that improve healing.

Dear Secret Santicore—

*A wise and grashing one, some nights I find myself
a-wanting of a list of Dungeon World moves that
pertain to Garden-Sports oriented Combat and
Dungeoneering Skills.*

Thanks!

A.S.

GARDEN SPORTS ORIENTED COMBAT AND DUNGEONEERING MOVES

by Sean Smith
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GARDEN SPORTS ORIENTED COMBAT

When you **blindly throw a lawn dart in the air**, roll+WIS:

- On a 10+, you hit a random enemy chosen by the GM; you are highly surprised.
- On a 7-9, the dart will hit nothing or anyone (including your teammates) randomly chosen by the GM.
- On a miss, you likely have managed to sink it into your own head.

When you **use a bocchia ball to discover the safety of a region**, roll+DEX:

- On a 10+, you roll are able to determine how safe the surrounding terrain might or might not be.
- On a 7-9, the ball rolls erratically and the GM can give you information which may or may not provide any real assistance.
- On a miss, the ball is lost and the GM determines a ramification.

When you **charge into battle swinging your croquet mallet**, roll+STR:

- On a 10+, you strike your enemy mightily shouting “Off with their head!”; if this manages to take your opponent down, it does just that.
- On a 7-9, you swing erratically; choose 2:
- You hit yourself as well. Split the damage with your enemy.
- You expose yourself such that the enemy gains an advantage.
- You strike one of your comrades.
- On a miss, the mallet breaks and the GM makes a hard move.

When you **attempt to precisely strike an object with your mini-golf club to achieve a goal**, roll+INT:

- On a 10+, you are a master of physics and achieve your goal. Describe how this happens.
- On a 7-9, you strike too hard. You achieve your goal, but your calculations were slightly off and there is a negative side effect. GM decides but you describe it.
- On a miss, the object ricochets and hits you for 4 damage.

When you **attempt to save something from falling to the ground with your badminton racket**, roll+DEX:

- On a 10+, you save it and do so with style. Describe it.
- On a 7-9, you are able to save it but put yourself in unnecessary danger. Describe how.
- On a miss, your racket breaks and the GM makes a hard move.

MI-GO CHARACTER MOVES

FLYING THRU THE AETHER

With this ability, you are able to fly through any environment without negative impact. +1 forward when taking advantage of this.

BRAIN CYLINDER

You are able to safely transfer the conscious of a living entity through space while maintaining their intelligence. This can be transferred to a willing host. Roll+INT. On a 10+, all works as intended. On a 7-9, it works but the intellect is damaged in some significant way as decided by the GM. On a miss, the intellect is lost forever.

ENTER SUSPENDED ANIMATION

Instead of approaching the Black Gate upon your last breath, you instead enter a state of suspended animation. The GM decides when this state ceases.

EXTRA APPENDAGES

Five pairs of appendages are standard for most of your kin but you are special and have an extra set. Apply +1 to hack-n-slash attempts.

EXTRA WINGS

Your wings don't normally work well on Earth. With these, you are able to navigate in Earth's atmosphere with ease.

WRETCHED HUMANS

Your deep hatred of humanity is great indeed. Take a +1 forward against any interactions with those of human stock.

NOT OF THIS PLACE

You are not of this realm. Those interacting with you socially receive a -1 on all rolls when trying to interact with you. This holds true in reverse as well.

GARDEN SPORTS ORIENTED COMBAT AND DUNGEONEERING MOVES

ROBOT CHARACTER MOVES

DANGER WILL ROBINSON

You have an uncanny knack for knowing when you are in danger. When warning your allies, they receive +1 forward on their next action.

EXTERMINATE!

You are a killing machine. All live must be exterminated. You gain +1 on all hack-n-slash rolls.

DANCE

You are capable of dances that no puny human could duplicate. All who witness this are more likely to heed your words.

IMPENETRABLE

Your exoskeleton is so sturdy that it cannot be easily penetrated. You gain +1 to your Armor.

VISIBLE BRAIN

Your mind is organic and your creator chose to show it off to all those willing to gaze upon its horror. You gain a +1 INT when your opponent is confused and baffled by this unnecessary exposure.

SELF-DESTRUCT

Instead of taking the Last Breath move, you may instead choose to Self-Destruct. All entities in a nearby space take 10 points of damage and are knocked to the ground as you explode in fiery doom.

Dear Secret Santicore—

A random generator for npc hobbies/affiliates/
political party/other social clubs (fantasy preferred).

Thanks!

C.S.

WHAT DOES THIS NPC DO IN HIS / HER / ITS SPARE TIME?

by Dave Younce
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TABLE A

D10	GENERAL CATEGORY
1	Collecting (roll on Table B, Collections)
2	Athletics (roll on Table C, Athletics)
3	Social Club (roll on Table D, Clubs)
4	Arts & Crafts (Roll on Table E, Arts & Crafts)
5	Performance (Roll on Table F, Performance)
6	Outdoor Pursuits (Roll on Table G, Outdoor Pursuits)
7	Academics (Roll on Table H, Academics)
8	Religion (Roll on Table I, Religion)
9	Politics (Roll on Table J, Politics)
10	Criminal (Roll on Table K, Criminal)

TABLE B

D12	COLLECTIONS
1	Coins and currency
2	Pottery and basketry
3	Artwork
4	Books, engravings, scrolls, and literature
5	Religious relics and symbols
6	Statuary and sculpture
7	Permanent illusions
8	Jewelry and ornamentation
9	Memorabilia and historical artifacts

D12 COLLECTIONS

10	Body parts and monster parts
11	Songs, myths, and stories
12	Clothing, masks, and costume

D6 COLLECTIONS ADJECTIVE

1	Primitive / Ancient
2	Foreign
3	Holy
4	Monstrous and Demihuman
5	Erotic
6	Contemporary

TABLE C

D12	SPORTS	SUBCATEGORY
1	Rural sports	1, Wood-chopping; 2, Sheep shearing; 3, "goose game"; 4, Tug of War; 5, Greased pole climb; 6, Bale-tossing
2	Equestrian	1, Buzkashi; 2, Polo; 3, Jereed; 4, Horseball; 5, Pasola; 6, Jousting / Hastilude
3	Animal Racing	1, Horse; 2, Dog; 3, Chariot; 4, Yak; 5, Ostrich or other large bird; 6, Ape
4	Ball and Stick	1, Lacrosse; 2, Stickball; 3, Shinty; 4, Hurling; 5, Cricket; 6, Jai Alai

D12	SPORTS	SUBCATEGORY
5	Wrestling	1, Greco-Roman ; 2, Alligator; 3, Grappling; 4, Collar-and-elbow; 5, Alysh / Belt; 6, Glima
6	Rodeo	1, Roping; 2, Bull Riding; 3, Bronc Riding; 4, Monster Riding; 5, Steer Wrestling; 6, Penning / Cutting / Sorting
7	Team Ball Sports	1, Pasuckuakohowog; 2, Football / Soccer; 3, Rugby; 4, Harpastum; 5, Pallone; 6, Handball
8	Throwing	1, Hammer Throw; 2, Road Bowling; 3, Snow snake; 4, Caber toss; 5, Keg-tossing; 6, Stone put / Shot put
9	Bloodsports	1, Bull fighting; 2, Cockfighting; 3, Dog fighting; 5, Bear baiting; 6, Insect fighting
10	Ice sports	1, Hockey; 2, Bandy; 3, Curling; 4, Broomball; 5, Speed Skating; 6, Ice Yachting
11	Pub sports	1, Billiards; 2, Snooker; 3, Table Tennis; 4, Darts; 5, Bocce; 6, Trucco
12	Martial sports	1, Jigger; 2, Fencing; 3, Cloak-and-Dagger; 4, Palio; 5, Archery; 6, Matrak / Stickfighting

TABLE D

D12	CLUBS
1	Tavern-based Social Club
2	Fan Club (1, Nobility; 2, Bard; 3, Adventurer; 4, Dragon; 5, Folk Hero; 6, Sports)
3	Fraternal Order
4	Gambling Club (1, Cards; 2, Dice; 3, Wheels; 4, Cockfighting; 5, Racing; 6, Gladiatorial Combat)
5	Collecting Club (Roll on Table B)
6	Merchant Guild (e.g. Grocers)
7	Crafts Guild (e.g. Shipwrights)
8	Service Guild (e.g. Sewerworkers)
9	Farmers Cooperative

D12	CLUBS
10	Secret Society
11	Gentleman's Club
12	Charitable Service Organization

TABLE E

D12	ARTS AND CRAFTS
1	Painting
2	Sculpture
3	Brewing
4	Winemaking
5	Carpentry
6	Stonemasonry
7	Haberdashery & Embroidery
8	Millinery
9	Knitting
10	Woodcarving
11	Cooking
12	Chariot / Wagon Customization

TABLE F

D12	PERFORMANCE
1	Dancing Troupe (e.g. Morris dancers)
2	Community Theatre
3	Puppetry
4	Musical Troupe
5	Singing Troupe
6	Exhibition Pugilism
7	Acrobatics Troupe
8	Competitive Eating

D12	PERFORMANCE
9	Martial Arts
10	Interpretive Dance
11	Circus / Carnival
12	Jester / Jongleur / Comedy Troupe

D12	ACADEMICS
8	Literature & Folklore
9	Cartography & Geography
10	Art History
11	Travel Writer
12	Divination & Oracular Practices

TABLE G

D12	OUTDOOR PURSUITS
1	Hunting (small game)
2	Hunting (large game)
3	Hunting (monster)
4	Fishing
5	Trapping
6	Competitive Vegetable Growing
7	Beekeeping
8	Animal Husbandry & Breeding
9	Falconry
10	Mountaineering
11	Boating
12	Monster Domestication

TABLE I

D12	RELIGION
1	Monastic Order
2	Gnostic / Heretical Sect
3	Ultraconservative version of Mainstream Sect
4	Utopian Movement
5	Cult of Personality
6	Cult of the Dead/Undead
7	Demonic / Diabolic Cult
8	Carcosan / Elder Evils Cult
9	Monstrous Worship Cult
10	Church Choir
11	Proselyting / Evangelism for a Mainstream Sect
12	Clergy of a Mainstream Sect (or Lay Clergy)

TABLE H

D12	ACADEMICS
1	Alchemy
2	Philosophy
3	History
4	Mathematics & Astronomy
5	Arcane Magic
6	Linguistics
7	Mechanics and Constructs

TABLE J

D12	POLITICAL CAUSES
1	Expansionist
2	Rights of the Underprivileged
3	Racial/Species Unity
4	Racial/Species Separation
5	Protection of Nature
6	Protection of the Nobility

D12	POLITICAL CAUSES
7	Revolutionary / Anarchist
8	Democratic Movement
9	Anti-Criminal
10	Anti-Adventurer
11	Isolationist / Non-interventionist
12	Monster Protection / Rights

TABLE K

D12	CRIMINAL
1	Thieves Guild
2	Assassins Guild
3	Thug Gang / Protection Racket
4	Prostitution Ring
5	Slaving Ring
6	Drugs & Illicit Substances
7	Street Con
8	Beggars Guild
9	Banditry
10	Tombrobbing / Delving /Vandalism
11	Extortion & Blackmail
12	Smuggling Ring

Dear Secret Santicore

This one humbly asks for a random chart of reasons why the PCs should not kill every NPC they encounter. I'd like random (fun) reasons that a party of basically murderous adventurers would be made to think twice about killing a useless NPC. Get crazy.

Thanks!

A.M.

30 REASONS NOT TO MURDER RANDOM NPCs

by Alasdair Cunningham
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ROLL REASON

- 1 Because the NPC is dead already...they just don't know it yet.
- 2 The moment the party becomes hostile, the NPC disappears in a puff of smoke.
- 3 The moment the party becomes hostile, the NPC swells up to five times their normal size. (Like a puffer fish)
- 4 The moment the party become hostile, the NPC shrinks down to approximately 10cm and runs away.
- 5 Because the NPC leans closer, whispers menacingly in their leader's ear and says, "I know what you did last summer..."
- 6 Because the NPC reminds a party member of a favourite relative on their mother's side.
- 7 The NPC moves their hands from side to side in some unfathomable and arcane fashion, and then stares intently at the party saying, "I am not the person you are looking for...move along now. You mean me no harm."
- 8 The party DID kill the unfortunate NPC...they are just back for more.
- 9 The party DID kill the unfortunate NPC...they are just back for revenge.
- 10 They went to Adventuring School/Thieves Guild/Villains Anonymous together.
- 11 Because the NPC is chockfull of swagger. When confronted he throws out his chest, waves his hands in the air, and screams, "Do you know who I am? Do you know who I am? Huh? Well, do ya?"
- 12 Because when the party become aggressive, the NPC falls to the floor and begs for mercy, saying, "Don't kill me...please. I'm just the piano player in a whorehouse..."
- 13 Because he/she pulls up their shirt to reveal a time bomb with less than five seconds on the clock.
- 14 The NPC grinds a cigar out on the floor and says, "I know where you live..." then holsters his RPG aggressively, muttering "Say hello to my little friend..." over, and over again.
- 15 Because it has been a loooong day, and they just don't have the energy for it.
- 16 Because the NPC speaks with a forked tongue, and the characters find this...unsettling.
- 17 Because the NPC is the last of their kind in the entire universe.
- 18 The NPC owes them money...lots of money, and are worth more alive than dead.
- 19 Because they are the Walrus, Goo-Goo-Gachoo.
- 20 The NPC is a herald of the future come to warn them of some imminent danger.
- 21 The NPC is a Cyborg replica from their past, present, future.
- 22 The NPC is so smelly and dirty that the adventurers don't want want to dirty themselves or their weapons.
- 23 The NPC magically transforms himself into a cute little cuddly widdle bunny rabbit...
- 24 The NPC magically transforms himself into a 3000 year old red dragon... "How you like me now? Huh?"

30 REASONS NOT TO MURDER RANDOM NPCs

ROLL REASON

- 25 The NPC is very attractive, charming or both. A sexy bar wench or a travelling storyteller perhaps. Basically someone that raises the charisma of the party, someone that they like so much that they just don't want to kill them.
- 26 The NPC is a child... It would take a pretty heartless and evil party that smites a kid...play on their heartstrings.
- 27 Alignments are at stake here suckers! Unless you are a bunch of Chaotic Evil wannabe serial killers, you can't go around shuffling others of the mortal coil.
- 28 Witnesses. Lots and lots of witnesses. Any killing done now is going to have dire consequences for the party.
- 29 Not good for your street cred. People talk and will begin avoiding the party at all costs. They will quickly find themselves banned from all inns and hostelries they try to visit.
- 30 Young love. The NPC reminds one of the group of their first girlfriend/boyfriend.

Dear Secret Santicore —

What I want most for areas is a enduring, troublesome, long term nemesis. Someone/thing that will vex player characters across many adventures. Sometimes via background machinations, sometimes in their face. But always coaching and returning to haunt their futures. Always that is, until characters have achieved enough power and resources to finally defeat their ultimate nemesis.

Thanks!

N.H.

RIVAL NPCs

by Mike Monaco

<http://mikemonaco.wordpress.com>

DEAR ANONYMOUS DM,

Of course I'd need to know a lot more about your campaign and your players to know what will work. But I think it might be helpful if I talk about some nemeses I've used and suggest how you could use something similar.

Nemeses are often evil NPCs rather than monsters, but this is hardly the only the way to go. Nemeses in my own games have generally been other adventurers retired or abandoned PCs, NPCs who were mistreated in some manner, and so on. The great thing about adventurers as nemeses is that they can recruit additional NPCs to form entire rival parties, making their threat increase as needed, but also diminish when party members leave. The following nemeses all appeared at various times in my Telengard campaigns.

Swinlow (sneaky bastard nemesis). Swinlow began as a player character Thief, but was eventually expelled from the group when he was noticed looting treasures while the rest of the party was in a lifeordeath struggle with wraiths. Shortly before being expelled, he had been 'punished' for various selfish acts by the party by being Reincarnated rather than Raised after being killed. Whether or not your players are adversarial enough to create such conflicts, Swinlow's career as an adversary is a useful model. If you'd simply like to use him, here he is:

Swinlow. Race: Hobgoblin, Class: Thief (level 6). S15, D 18, C 13, I 12, W 9, Ch 10. Equipment: Leather +2, Sword +1, Ring of invisibility, coffer containing a Wraith.

He will use his ring to avoid detection and steal anything of value he can find, leaving behind vicious notes and befouling the party's food and drink if he can catch them unaware or camping. His favorite tactic is to tail a party to a dungeon or other adventure locale and rob them on their way out, when their HP, spells, etc. are depleted. He is also not above backstabbing PCs (typically selecting magic users or clerics as targets).

He eventually recruited a company of hobgoblins to assist him in his ambushes, and of course he will sacrifice them ruthlessly to obtain his ends. As time wore on, he set himself up as a minor tyrant, ruling a clan of hobgoblins who used sleeping gas projectors and hot air balloons to rob and enslave nearby populations.

Swinlow is a villain who can thus 'grow' with the party. Having been reincarnated as a hobgoblin, he is outcast from civilized society, so his reach has clearly defined limits. He probably can't practice a lot of courtly intrigue (unless he obtains some sort disguise), but he can harass the players to no end. The look on the paladin's face when his hippogriff mount was stolen by an invisible Swinlow was priceless.

Stonefoot (rival adventurer nemesis). Stonefoot was originally a dwarf NPC who had been captured by the party while under the influence of Gold Bug Shroom (a species of edible cave mushroom which drive the eater mad with goldlust; a small colony of dwarven and gnomish miners had succumbed to this madness and were occupying an old mine which was one of the first dungeons the party explored). In my campaign, the party rather ruthlessly tortured him to reveal where he kept his treasure, but upon discovering the nature of the gold bug shrooms and their effects, they released him. His foot had been severed during the torture, though, so he replaced it with a block of stone and took the name Stonefoot. He then recruited additional adventurers to help him loot the megadungeon complex the players were by then exploring.

Stonefoot did not directly attack the party, though. Instead, he used his own party's bard to enhance his own reputation, constantly stealing credit for the party's achievements. There are few things that irk a party more than seeing someone else honored in the town square with statues and hearing their exploits credited to others in songs in the taverns. Even worse, Stonefoot's party's thief kept careful track of the player party and burgled their headquarters and tailed them. When the players were observed limping out of a particularly hardfought area of the dungeon, Stonefoot's crew swooped in to loot the treasure the party left behind. I frequently had Stonefoot's party returning from areas the party had just explored or cleared out, carrying huge bundles of loot the party missed or was unable to carry on their own.

Stonefoot's lieutenant was an elf with a crystal ball, which he used to sry on the party and learn of their most shameful secrets and missteps. Stonefoot & crew alwaysseemed to know about fumbles and mistakes the aprty made, and taunted them about them ceaselessly. It helped that he had a legitimate grievance against the party. The slow burn continued for as long as I could draw it out.

At one point a berserker from Stonefoot's party challenged a character to a duel, and during the duel Stonefoot's thief attempted to pick the other character's pockets. He was caught and slain on the spot, and the berserk lost the duel, which might have seemed to be a crippling blow for the Stonefoot group. However, death is an opportunity for more direct villainy. At this point Stonefoot took up with an evil cleric, who had the slain NPCs raised as the undead. Ideally, his party should be a sort of bizarro set of alteregos of the players.

Stonefoot: Dwarf fighter level 27. S 17 D 12 C 19 I 14 W 11 Ch 12, Axe +1, shield +1, Mail +2, stone foot allows extra "kick" attack for d6+1 damage, ignoring shields.

Elrond Hubbard: Elf magic user/fighter 5/5. S 12 D 15 C 11 I 16 W 14 Ch 16, Crystal ball, wand of lightning, elfmail, shield, sword +1, bow +1.

Thief 5.

Berserker (fighter) 6.

Cleric 8.

Bard 4.

The pirates of Delos (Generic bad guys nemesis). This was an impersonal nemesis always showing up to create problems when least expected, harassing the party's hometown when they were away, leading giants and bugbears to assault the town in a full on siege, and so on. They made thier first appearance as a pair of spies in the dungeon. Anything bad could be the work of the pirates. Some crucial supply or piece of equipment is unavailable due to the pirates, at low levels. Dealing with the pirates would require a sea-borne (or aerial) assault on their island city, which would obviously require a high level party at the head of an army, though a midlevel party could perhaps take on a single ship or small fleet of pirates in the right conditions.

Cyclopeatron (chaotic wizard nemesis). The most traditional nemesis the party encountered was Cyclopeatron, a stereotypical mad wizard. He was obsessed with transmutation and crossbreeding monsters. His lairs were spread across many dungeons (summer home, main lab, winter retreat, etc.) and all featured disturbing monsters, PC-inciting traps (my favorite being a rustmonster generator in the center of a large, open room that was activated when someone reaches the middle of the room...you never saw party of dwarves and paladins panic so badly), mysterious devices with unpredictable effects, and so on. Many minor villains had letters to or from him, reporting on their activities. In my own campaign he was usually traveling in other dimensions or times, so the party never did track him down. Because they never met him, and only found the leftovers of his villainy (for example, a dozen workmen he'd transformed into scorpionmen) they found him all the more infuriating.

When two PCs were killed in a dungeon, and their bodies left behind in the mad retreat, sure enough Cyclopeatron found the corpses, fused them together, and animated them as flesh golem. (In fact, they never knew this, but they did actually meet him once. Disguised and playing the part of the weak and ineffectual mayor of a foreign city, they actually accepted a mission from him which nearly got them killed and left him with a valuable Macguffin, which they would later discover the importance of...had the campaign not fallen victim to summer schedules and DM burnout!)

Of these nemeses, I think the most effective is definitely the rival adventurers. This will work if your campaign world not so lawless that people murder each other in the streets, and/or if your PCs are lawful enough not to attack the rivals just for being pains in the ass.

I can't recommend highly the device of taking an unimportant looking NPC, and promoting him to rival adventurer. Maybe your players saved a youth who looked up to them, but was not allowed to join them as a squire. He's mad as hell about that humiliation, and becomes an adventurer to spite them (a thief would be best then, since they can start so young). Or maybe they aided some local ruler, and the court 'hero' he used to look to, overshadowed by the adventurers, vows revenge. In this case, it's less a matter of the party being able to deal with the enemy, so much as not having a legal or ethical license to do so. It simply takes a long time before the nemesis makes the shift from merely being a nuisance or annoyance to being an actual danger and villain. Once that Rubicon is crossed, you can still make the nemesistoo powerful to confront. Maybe he has found a powerful ally (demon, dragon, wizard, etc.) or powerful artifact that makes him more dangerous.

If you prefer the mad wizard trope, that has a lot of possibilities. The main thing I'd worry about is making sure he or she does not expose himself or herself to danger too early on, for depending on the rules, one initiative roll could lead to spell interference and a prompt wizard beatdown by even low-level PCs. So I'd definitely keep a wizard offstage for as long as possible. Mirror images or other illusions, magic mouths, and so on would be perfect for letting the baddy taunt the PCs while sending his minions and tricks after them. A wizard type that creatures monsters (a necromancer, say) is kind of obvious, but he might just as well have hordes of minions. Better yet, what if the wizard has a job, title, and social power instead. Rather than sending worgriders and flying monkeys, he could issue warrants, put up wanted posters, and otherwise make life miserable for the players. A very memorable nemesis I faced as a player was Gleep Wurp the Eyebiter not the character from old TSR products but a bizzaro wizard who had been transformed into a beholder. Only we didn't know he was a beholder until we foolishly tried to stand up to him after defeating some of the minions he'd sent after us. Looking over the above I notice that really there are two kinds of nemesis being suggested one with personal vendetta (which can probably best arise from play) and another that is impersonal.

Swinlow and Stonefoot have it in for the party; the pirates and Cyclopeatron are evil or crazy or both, and it's really nothing personal until the PCs begin to cause trouble for them. So I guess you should think about how that dynamic will fit your players. Are they likely to make an enemy? Or are they just dogooders who will eventually cross a dobadder? So, here's an NPC nemesis suitable for use in generic D&D type games, who can 'grow with the party'.

Young Patrick. Human, Thief. S10 D16 C15 I14 W9 Ch10.

He will be among the civilians in a village whether the party saved it from some bandits, or just cleared out the local haunted cave, or stopped on their way back to a real city with a mule or porter loaded with silver recovered from a dungeon. He will ask to join the party as someone's squire/apprentice (pick the PC with the highest Charisma, maybe), but should be obviously incompetent: armed with a blunt table knife, carrying a bundle of twine and a few pine branches as torches, and barefoot. He wouldn't last a day on a real adventure and looks barely 14 years old. However, he will stumble across a small cache of gold a few days after the party rejects him and equip himself properly. Then he'll begin to tail them, picking up their leavings from the dungeon, attracting a few likeminded wannabe adventurers with his tales of treasure, and by the time the party levels up, they hear of another band of adventurers.

Young Patrick's crowd is not all as inexperienced as he, but they all believe his increasingly shocking tales of misuse by the adventurers (who took his share of the loot, left him for dead, and so on). They generally make things miserable for the party by besmirching their names, taking credit for their good deeds, and clearing out loot from dungeons the party think they've cleared. The average level of his party should be about the same as the PCs. They will eventually cross the line and give your players a reason to fight them, perhaps robbing them at the exit of a dungeon, killing their henchmen, or similar villainy. Here's a nemesis the party will need to work their way up to matching.

Heinrich Lanceson, necromancer. Human, Magicuser. (I don't necessarily bind NPC spellcasters to the same rules as PCs. If your players can tolerate that, Excelsior! If not, MUs as nemeses can be fragile and will need a lot of planning.) S11 D12 C16 I18 W14 Ch 8 (18 w/r to undead).

Heinrich is stooped and aged, but surprisingly spry due to the magical lifeextending elixirs he has crafted for himself. He has a vast library (full of traps like poisoninked decoys, explosive runes, etc.) and access to whatever spells the DM finds useful. He has spent decades animating various skeletons and corpses. He occasionally sends skeletons to kidnap humans for his experiments (perhaps the first encounter the PCs have with him will be fighting off one of his raiding parties), and also uses ghoul allies to retrieve bodies from graveyards and crypts most often nobles, wizards, and other persons of importance, for he enjoys the irony of forcing the corpses of the once mighty to be his servants.

The PCs will likely find that NPCs, henchpersons, or other folks they've run into appear among the undead, thanks to him. Most disturbing of all, Heinrich likes to reanimate monsters. A party who slays some menace will no doubt be annoyed to learn that the ogre, giant, or chimera they lately slew has been sighted again. Heinrich has a secret lair, which is guarded by a variety of undead creatures, most notably an undead white dragon. The dragon is a zombie, and the cold lair has kept it relatively wellpreserved, but when the party finally determines to track him down, it will provide an unexpected challenge! I hope that is helpful.

Dear Secret Santicore—

I would like to see a writeup for some alternate PC races in Dungeon Crawl Classics (could double as B/X or Cyclopaedia D&D.) Sorry that is so specific.. in DCC, your race is your class.

Thanks!

P.S.

THE LONELY HEIR

by Paul Wolfe
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Though the Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG is based on the dzo system, the designers went back to the original Appendix N literature to build in the "feel" of old school sword and sorcery (and not a small amount of sword and planet). Your wizards are bound by some supernatural patron and walk a thin line between ultimate power and ultimate personal sacrifice. Warriors buckle swashes all over the damn place with their Mighty Deeds. Clerics (even the lawful ones) bind themselves to the will of their deity, often with deleterious effects. And the Thief snickers in the background, while scooping up treasure and hoping that the folks with the armor soak up all the arrows. The game also includes the standard Tolkien inspired archetypes: elf, dwarf, and halfling -- because D&D.

An underlying theme of DCC RPG is that everything encountered is somehow unique. You will not fight a manticore you will fight The Manticore. Your standard tiered list of humanoids are statted up in the Core Rules, but these entries are meant more as examples for Judges to build their own. Magic is magical and ultimately fatal to the caster. Magical items are rare, unique, powerful, and often rife with danger. Only a small percentage of mortals ever live long enough to achieve the kind of power necessary to create even the least powerful relic. That leaves the origins of magical relics with supernatural patrons and deities who always exact a price for such boons.

The game can stretch in various ways -- we've run a caveman game based on Michael Curtis' Frozen in Time and an unpublished Daniel Bishop adventure. I played in a game where we were citizens of Geneva, Wisconsin 1974 transported first to the dungeons of The One Who Watches from Below and then through various means ended up in Tim Callahan's Crawljammer setting. Now my erstwhile professor of Chinese history crawls the hills of the Purple Planet at the head of his own tribe of kith. I'm currently running a game based on a high fantasy version of late-classical period Japan. The system allows for that stretching because it's easy to develop what you envision. And for me, that vision starts with classes.

Through all the permutations, I've developed and posted several classes for my home game. Everything from samurai to robots. From onmyoji to tokar, a savage replacement for dwarves. Character classes set the tone for the campaign world. You can't crawljam without lizard men. And you can't be in peril on the

purple planet without kith. These archetypes dominated Appendix N literature, and consequently, birthed the concept of classes in the games we grew up with.

What I have for you today, my Santicore devotees, is a new class for DCC RPG: The Lonely Heir. The class is based on an amalgam of protagonists from HP Lovecraft's many stories (most notably, Randolph Carter). This is the first in a series of classes based on an archetype from an Appendix N author that I will make available on my blog in the coming weeks. Planned entries are from Jack Vance's Planet of Adventure, Edgar Rice Burroughs various planetary romances, Andre Norton's Witch World, Manly Wade Wellman's Hok the Mighty, Howard's Almuric, and even a strange one from Tolkien. If you have any suggestions or feedback, hit me up on Google+ or on my blog: <http://www.mysticbull.com>.

THE LONELY HEIR (LOVECRAFT)

Many of H.P. Lovecraft's protagonists were of similar mien: Lonely young men bequeathed some arcane artifact by a dead relative. And they followed similar paths: to be the teller of morbid tales of obsession, a quest for otherworldly power, and ultimately, of descent into madness at the hands of that otherworldly power. And, strangely, they always seemed get their closest friends killed. The most famous of these protagonists was Randolph Carter, who appeared in seven of Lovecraft's stories and was believed to be a somewhat autobiographical character. The trajectory of Randolph Carter is familiar to many players who run wizards in DCC RPG: It all ends in pain.

You are the lonely heir. Pampered and overeducated, your life has been a bubble where all of your basic needs and most of your desires are fulfilled without you having to lift a finger. In this environment, boredom and ennui have driven you to knowledge considered anathema among your family, friends and colleagues. Digging through ancient texts and deciphering arcane knowledge has led you to lonely and haunted locales. Your association with persons considered untouchable by your upper crust associates has led you even farther afield, testing intoxicants, charms and incantations that could lead you to ultimate power or doom your very soul. Through it all, you manage to attract one devoted friend who follows you to the most damnable of places, defends you from the denizens that lurk there and often lends you the only courage that you've ever known.

Hit points: Lonely heirs gain 1d4 hit points per level.

Weapon training: Due to the lonely heir's upbringing, he or she is trained in some martial style or weapon, such as the rapier, the long bow, hand-held firearms, or even an exotic martial art. The lonely heir can choose one weapon at 1st level, representing often years of boredom-driven study with a master. Though lonely heirs can wear armor, they rarely do so, relying on their "friend" to protect them from physical attacks.

Alignment: Lonely heirs can be of any alignment, and though they are normally of Lawful upbringing, their detachment from the mores of normal folks and their curiosity of the unknown often cloud their sense of right and wrong. The cosmic war between the forces of Law and Chaos, where the secrets of the universe seem to reside, and the lonely heir's strict moral upbringing cause much internal conflict and trepidation.

Caster level: A lonely heir's caster level equals his or her class level. Note that the lonely heir does not add the caster level to a spell check (see Spell Check below).

Magic: Like wizards and elves, the lonely heir is able to harness the unknowable, unnamable and corrupting forces of the universe to produce feats of wonder. Unlike others that practice the arcane arts, the power of the lonely heir's magic comes from a deep knowledge of ancient and esoteric texts, not directly from demons, gods, and spirits. At 1st level, the lonely heir holds an arcane source that contains 4 spells each of 1st or 2nd level. One of these spells is Attract Friend. The lonely heir can cast these spells using a spell check, as described below. These spells are determined randomly and are affected by mercurial magic. The lonely heir can learn and cast patron bond, invoke patron or any patron spell however, doing so could trigger a Psychic Event, as described below.

The arcane source can be anything the judge and/or player can conceive: a grimoire, a scroll in an ancient language, a clay tablet, a skull with a trapped alien intelligence, etc. If the arcane source is lost or destroyed, the lonely heir loses the ability to cast spells until he or she can find, translate and study another. This process may take several months. **NOTE:** If the lonely heir's Intelligence score indicates he or she can know more spells than those granted by level, the caster can transcribe any found spell into his or her arcane source. The character always starts with 4 initial spells and never receives spells at subsequent levels. Spells must be found and learned to be added to the character's repertoire.

The lonely heir casts spells by making a spell check. His or her spell check is usually 1d20+spell die+Intelligence modifier+Luck modifier. The lonely heir does not use his or her caster level to modify the spell check.

The Spell Die: A lonely heir's grasp of magic is slippery — having acquired the knowledge from half-understood grimoires, raving lunatics and vague dreams. As such, the lonely heir does not receive a flat spell check bonus, but instead receives a Spell Die. The result of the spell die is added to the spell check.

The Friend: The lonely heir invariably attracts a stalwart friend that accompanies, protects, and, unknown to the friend, supplies the lonely heir with additional arcane power. See the Attract Friend spell.

Comprehend Languages: The lonely heir is a student of foreign and arcane languages, both written and spoken. When attempting understand a language, the lonely heir applies his or her level and Intelligence modifier to the roll. Discerning simple meaning is DC 10, while more complex interpretations are DC 15 or above. This skill is similar to the thief's Read Languages skill, but also applies to spoken languages. See Languages below.

Psychic Event: When a lonely heir encounters a powerful supernatural entity, such as a demon, spirit, god, or the like, the character must make a Will save (DC = 9+HD of entity) or suffer from a Psychic Event. Upon recovering from the event, the lonely heir loses 1 Personality, permanently. The Judge ultimately decides if a creature encountered qualifies to trigger a Psychic Event.

Luck: The lonely heir's luck modifier applies to rolls for corruption and mercurial magic, as well as all spell checks. Also, see the Attract Friend spell for additional uses of Luck.

Languages: The lonely heir begins play with two languages, in addition to his or her known languages (from 0-level and Intelligence bonuses). One of these additional languages is consider an Esoteric Language and is the language in which his or her arcane source is written (or spoken...or thought). Esoteric languages may be ancient, magical, and/or otherworldly, depending on the Judge's campaign setting. Each level beyond 1st, the lonely heir can learn additional languages equal to his or her Intelligence modifier. This requires a week of study per level and a source (written or oral) of the language. At the end of this time, the caster makes a Comprehend Languages check: 1d20+caster level+intelligence bonus (DC 20). On a failure, the lonely heir may not attempt to learn that particular language until he or she gains a level.

Action Dice: Like a wizard, the lonely heir's first action die can be used for attacks or spell checks, while the second (if applicable) can be used only for spell checks.

Level	Title
1	Blueblood
2	Favored
3	Heritor
4	Patrician
5	Brahmin

Level	Attack	Crit Die/Table	Action Dice	Spell Die	Known Spells	Max Spell Level	Ref	Fort	Will
1	+0	1d6/I	1d20	1d3	4	2	+0	+0	+1
2	+1	1d6/I	1d20	1d4	5	2	+0	+0	+1
3	+1	1d8/I	1d20	1d5	5	2	+1	+1	+2
4	+1	1d8/I	1d20	1d6	5	2	+1	+1	+3
5	+1	1d10/I	1d20+1d14	1d7	6	3	+1	+2	+3
6	+2	1d10/I	1d20+1d16	1d8	6	3	+2	+2	+4
7	+2	1d12/I	1d20+1d20	1d10	6	4	+2	+3	+4
8	+2	1d12/I	1d20+1d20	1d12	7	4	+2	+3	+5
9	+2	1d14/I	1d20+1d20	1d12+1	7	5	+3	+3	+5
10	+3	1d14/I	1d20+1d20+1d14	1d12+2	8	5	+3	+4	+6

ATTRACT FRIEND

Level: 1	Range: Self Duration: Lifetime* Casting Time: 1 week Save: None
General	Through his or her familial connections and adventures, the lonely heir locates a somewhat willing partner who, through a lengthy ritual, bonds to the caster for life. This person is typically of the same sex as the caster, is physically if not mentally gifted, and serves as the caster's constant companion. A spell check is made at the end of the ritual and the caster must spellburn a minimum of 10 points. See below for additional effects.
Manifestation	Varies
Corruption	Roll 1d6: (1-3) minor, (4-5) major, (6) greater
Misfire	N/A
1	Lost, failure, and worse! Roll 1d6 modified by Luck: (0 or less) corruption, patron taint and misfire; (1-2) corruption (3) patron taint (or corruption if no patron) (4+) misfire. Note: The caster suffers from a Psychic Event for 1d30+30 days. After this time, the caster can cast this spell again.
2-11	Lost. Failure. The spell is lost for 1 month.
12-13	See What Kind of Friend Are You?
14-17	
18-19	
20-23	
24-27	
28-29	
30-31	
32+	

FRIEND STARTING LEVEL

Spell Check	12-20	21-25	26-31	32+
Starting Level	0-level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3

FRIEND TYPE

Spell Check by Alignment	12-17	18-23	24-29	30+
Lawful	Protector	Scholar	Scholar	Sorcerer
Neutral	Protector	Sorcerer	Sorcerer	Alien
Chaotic	Protector	Alien	Sorcerer	Scholar

WHAT KIND OF FRIEND ARE YOU?

The type of friend attracted varies by the caster's spell check (as above). Any friend has the following traits:

- o-level character — The friend begins as a standard o-level character, though may have additional class levels based on the spell check.
- Share Luck: The friend can spend Luck on the caster's behalf (or vice versa), at the discretion of the caster.
- Shared Backgrounds — The friend speaks the caster's native language and generally knows the caster's moods and needs.
- The lonely heir gains bonus hit points equal to the friend's.

If a friend is killed, the lonely heir loses twice the number of extra hit points granted by the friend and suffers from a Psychic Event that lasts for 1d30+30 days. After this time, the lonely heir can cast the Attract Friend spell, again.

Friend and Protector: Protectors are generally physically-oriented and focus on the defense of the lonely heir. If the protector is higher than o-level, he or she is generally a warrior, dwarf, thief, or other martial character type.

The friend receives:

- Additional 1d4 hit points.
- +2 to Strength, Agility and Stamina scores (max 18)
- +1 to Reflex and Fortitude saves

The lonely heir receives:

- The lonely heir can burn a Luck point (the caster's or the friend's) in order to use the friend's saving throw modifier for Reflex or Fortitude or to use the friend's AC.
- The lonely heir can spellburn the friend's physical ability scores as if they were his or her own, at will.

Gentleman and a Scholar: Lonely heirs attract those just as curious about the supernatural and arcane as the heir. If the scholar is higher than o-level, the character is generally a cleric or other spiritual character type.

The friend receives:

- 1d4 additional languages from the Esoteric Language table.
- +2 to Personality and Luck scores (max 18)
- +2 to Will saves

The lonely heir receives:

- The lonely heir can burn a Luck point (the caster's or the friend's) in order to use the friend's saving throw modifier for Will saves or to deflect the results of a failed Will save to the friend.
- The lonely heir can deflect the results of a Psychic Event to the friend, though the heir still loses 1 Personality, permanently.

The Sorcerer: Due to their obsession with magical power, the lonely heir attracts those that also crave that power. If the sorcerer is higher than o-level, the character is generally a wizard, elf, or other arcane spellcaster.

The friend receives:

- The friend holds a grimoire with 1d4 additional spells of 1st or 2nd level (beyond the number of spells that the friend would normally receive, if applicable). The lonely heir can replace any spell he or she knows with a spell from the friend's grimoire by studying the spell for 1 week.
- +2 to Intelligence and Luck scores (max 18)
- +1 to spell checks

The lonely heir receives:

- The lonely heir can burn a Luck point (the caster's or the friend's) to cast a spell using the friend's spell check modifier or to cast a spell that the friend knows.
- The lonely heir can deflect corruption, patron taint or spell misfire results to the friend.

The Alien: Treating with powers best left alone, the lonely heir may also attract a being from beyond the ken of men. Though these creatures maintain human and/or humanoid forms, they retain an "otherness" that is invisible, but palpable to normal folks. These creatures are often sent at the behest of a god or supernatural entity seeking to either guide the lonely heir, convert the spellcaster to the cause, or thwart his or her plans. If the alien is higher than o-level, the creature be any character class.

The friend receives:

- The alien friend possesses 1d3 Arcane Powers. These powers are left up to the Judge, but may include spell-like effects, special attacks, and the like.
- +1 to all attributes. Additional +1 to one randomly determined attribute (max 18)

The lonely heir receives:

- The lonely heir can burn a Luck point (the caster's or the friend's) to use the alien's Arcane Power or to deflect corruption, patron taint or spell misfire to the friend. If the friend or the lonely heir dies, the lonely heir can make an immediate spell check (DC 20) to move the lonely heir's mind to the friend's body. If the spell check fails, dead character succumbs and cannot be recovered. If the spell check result is a natural 1, both the friend and the lonely heir die. NOTE: This must be done before the "roll the body" Luck check. If successful, the lonely heir maintains the friend's physical attributes and any Arcane Powers.

PSYCHIC EVENT

As the lonely heir gains power, there is a greater chance that exposure to the arcane results in wildly divergent behavior, either temporarily or permanently. When encountering any supernatural creature, a class of beings left up to the Judge, the lonely heir must make a Will save (DC 9+HD of the creature). On a failed save, the lonely heir rolls the die type indicated for his or her level on the Psychic Event table. This roll is modified by the lonely heir's Luck modifier (a negative modifier adds to the roll, while a positive modifier subtracts). Though there are game mechanics effects associated with each event, the player is encouraged to roleplay the lonely heir's newfound mental state, and the Judge may apply other, situational penalties (mechanical or otherwise).

Level	Die
1	1d3
2	1d4
3	1d5
4	1d6
5	1d7
6	1d8
7	1d10
8	1d12
9	1d14
10	1d16

DIE TYPE

The die type rolled represents the lonely heir's increased understanding of the unknowable (with ever more deleterious effects). For specific encounters, the Judge may increase or decrease the die rolled on the Psychic Event Table.

Roll	Psychic Event	Description	Duration
1	Bodily Control	Void bowels and bladder	N/A
2	Blurred Vision	All d20 checks involving sight -2	1d3 Rounds
3	Vertigo	All d20 checks involving Agility -2	1d3 Rounds
4	Stupor	All d20 rolls involving Intelligence -2	1d4 Rounds
5	Frozen	Unable to move; Can defend oneself; AC/Attacks/SPELL checks -2	1d6 Rounds
6	Stunned	No actions; drop anything held; move at 1/2 speed	1d6 Rounds
7	Dementia	Forget 1 spell	1d3 Turns
8	Invigorated/Lethargic	All d20 checks +2 for duration; After duration, all d20 checks at -4 for new duration.	1d4 Turns
9	Incapacitated	Unconscious.	1d6 Turns
10	Delusional	Various roleplaying effects; -2 to Will Saves	1d3 Days
11	Phobia	Choose 1; -4 to all rolls when presented with phobia.	1d10 Days
12	Paranoia	Various roleplaying effects; -2 to all d20 rolls	1d3 Weeks
13	Manic-Depressive	Various roleplaying effects; Will save per day for recurrence (DC 15 -1 per week)	1d4 Weeks or until saved
14	Amnesia	Lose all class abilities; Will save per day (DC 15 -1 per week) to recover	1d6 Weeks or until saved
15	Multiple Personality	Take a second class; Will save per day (DC 15 -1 per month) to retain identity.	1d3 Months
16	Dissociative Fugue	Lose class abilities and take on another class; Will save per week (DC 18 -1 per month)	1d6 Months or until saved

Dear Secret Santicore—

I would like a d12 based sorcerer-queen generator table. If possible, I'd like it to include sections like Name, Word Given Title (ie, To the mad, Y the corpulent, Y, virgin eater), favoured weapon, personality, race/class she hated, how she died, a secret she took to the grave.

Thanks! K.C.

D12 SORCERER-QUEEN GENERATION TABLE

by James Holloway
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D12	NAME	TITLE	D12	WEAPON	PERSONALITY
1	Zeruiah	the Bonehag	1	Gloves fitted with barbed claws.	Cold, distant and efficient.
2	Rubati	Mankiller	2	An ebony staff inlaid with forbidden runes.	Whimsical and unpredictable.
3	Ezikun	Bride of the Abyss	3	A crossbow whose bolts cause unspeakable agony.	Disturbingly sensual.
4	Oladabah	Mother of Iniquity	4	A scimitar whose ghostly blade brings madness.	Superstitious even for a sorcerer.
5	Illsona	Mistress of All Monsters	5	A brutal stone club more appropriate for an ogre.	Frank, and affable but ruthless.
6	Gorash Vek	the Just, Kind and Beauteous (said with terrified cringe)	6	A slender lance that casts no shadow.	Paranoid and easily alarmed.
7	Shadiah	She Who Treads on the Skulls of Gods	7	A sickle of bronze, worn down by years of sacrifice.	A rage-filled time bomb.
8	Lethrokku	the Devourer of Crowns	8	A crude shiv and a set of old brass knuckles.	Cares only for arcane knowledge.
9	Antsiba	the Blood-Crowned Empress	9	An experimental doomsday device.	Ceaselessly acquisitive.
10	Udvai	Heartrender	10	A bandolier of poison and acid vials.	Vain, arrogant, self-obsessed.
11	Tazgush	Priestess of the Formless Dark	11	An axe, once belonging to the royal executioner.	Devious and manipulative.
12	Vimugai	First of All Witches	12	A sword wreathed in blue flame, forged by no human hand.	Fanatically devoted to her cause.

D12	HOW DID SHE DIE?	SHE HATES
1	Spectacular laboratory accident.	Half-anything: "miserable abominations!"
2	Hunted down by paladins.	Other magic-users: "what presumption!"
3	Torch-bearing mob.	Fighters: "so crude!"
4	Driven mad by her own sorcery.	Clerics: "primitive superstition!"
5	Vanished as if she had never been.	Thieves: "my domain has law and order!"
6	Summoned what she couldn't bind.	Paladins: "I'm not taking any chances!"
7	Accidentally set off own deathtrap.	Multi-class: "just pick one!"
8	Prolonged, possibly arcane, sickness.	Humans: "fit only for slaves!"
9	Single combat with her daughter.	Elves: "you can't trust 'em!"
10	Shot with crossbow by unknown sniper.	Dwarfs: "spit on my floor, will you?!"
11	Destroyed along with her city by outraged gods.	Weird races: "another specimen for my zoo!"
12	Of old age, raving that she was not the queen at all.	Halfings: "so plump and delicious!"

D12	DARK SECRET SHE TOOK TO HER GRAVE
1	The identities of her inner circle of acolytes.
2	The location of the scroll on which she inscribed her prophecies.
3	The cure for the Reversion Plague with which she afflicted a rival kingdom.
4	The location of the key to the Maze of the Vultures, in which she hid her ill-gotten wealth.
5	The mystical formula which enables one to become a sorcerer-queen.
6	How to translate the ancient and mysterious Tablets of Azathkar.
7	A recipe for slow-baked Rot Grub, the greatest of all delicacies.
8	The True Name of the All-Devouring Lord, general of the armies of Hell.
9	A scandalous and alarming list of her lovers.
10	The secret of immortality (sadly ironic, that).
11	Which of the city's councillors betrayed the realm to her.
12	How to spot her shapeshifting secret agents, who have gone rogue after her death.



SUPER POWERS IN D&D TYPE FANTASY

by Blue Tyson
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The basic idea will translate to Tunnels & Trolls, or Runequest, or Dragonquest or other flavours with minimal tweaking. There are several possible approaches

1. **PCS START WITH SUPERPOWERS** Players can roll randomly below after rolling up a character as usual.
2. **PCS GAIN SUPERPOWERS ACCIDENTALLY** it would depend... were they exposed to monster offal? Strange radiation? Raided a wizard's lair and picked up some arcane gear?
3. **EXPOSURE LATER** If players do not realise the

potential for mutant or other powers exists, a roll of 1 or 20 on exposure could gain powers or mutations. Or a failed Saving Throw and then a 1 if wanting to make it less likely. There could be a disease of sorts: failed save is dead, just save is mutated in a not nice way (but gain powers), great save/20 is a fair dinkum superhuman.

4. **LATENT – MUTANT POWERS CAN BE ACTIVATED** You have a more focused or structured idea where all characters are mutants (who might be young and not have powers or not know what they are), or escaped constructs, or other-dimensional travellers, etc.

CHARACTER ORIGIN

ORIGIN	FIGHTER	THIEF	MONK	CLERIC	MAGIC-USER
Technology	01-04	01-06	01	01-02	01-07
Construct	05	07	03-04	03-04	08-10
Monster	06	08	05-06	05-06	11-13
Trained	07-12	09-14	07-15	07-10	14
Altered	13-16	15-16	16	11-16	15-16
Mutant	17-20	17-20	17-20	17-20	17-20

Choose a class as appropriate, paladins and rangers use fighter, assassins use thief, druids use cleric, illusionists use magic-user, etc.

POWER TABLES

D20	NUMBER OF POWERS
01	1
02-04	2
05-13	3
14-17	4
18-19	5
20	6

TECHNOLOGY ROLL

D20	POWER
01-02	Heightened Intelligence
03-04	Heightened Charisma
05-06	Magic Resistance
07-08	Psionic Resistance
09-10	Psionics
11-12	Companion Servant
13	Air Vehicle
14	Land Vehicle
15	Sea Vehicle
16	Teleportation
17	Dimension Travel
18	Force Field
19	Energy Drain
20	Special Weapon

Technological characters are presumed to gain their powers from some sort of devices or artifacts. Come up with what suits between the player and GM. Modify the table as suits.

CONSTRUCT ROLL

D20	POWER
01-03	Heightened Strength
04-06	Heightened Dexterity
07-09	Heightened Constitution
10-11	Heightened Intelligence
12-13	Heightened Speed
14-15	Body Armour
16-17	Body Weaponry
18-19	Flight
20	Special Ability

The character has been created by someone else. Could be a golem, a homunculus, a Frankenstein type creation, even a robot or clockwork person. Something along those lines.

If wanting to allow an option wrinkle, give the player +1 on Power Level rolls but -1 to all reaction rolls as those encountering them realise there is at least something slightly odd about the character.

MONSTER ROLL

D20	POWER
01-02	Monster Form
03-04	Poison
05-06	Disease
07	Extra Body Parts
08	Fear
09-11	Animal Form
12-14	Mineral Form
15-17	Vegetable Form
18-19	Hell Form
20	Other Form

For the Monster table, if the player has powers left and has rolled a 'Form' power, work with them to allow them to take a super powered version of one of the Form's abilities if they desire. Strong ape, barkskinned shrubbery, flying devil, etc.

As an added wrinkle, give them -2 to all Reaction Rolls from standard races and a bonus to the more Monstrous flavour to go with the flexibility of the above. Trying to scare or intimidate will get a bonus, in general.

Monster Manuals of various flavours are of course an excellent resource for characters like this.

TRAINED ROLL

D20	POWER
01-02	Heightened Strength
03-04	Heightened Dexterity
05-06	Heightened Constitution
07-08	Heightened Intelligence
09-10	Heightened Wisdom
11-12	Heightened Charisma
13	Heightened Speed
14	Defense Bonus
15	Attack Bonus
16	Detect Weakness
17	Body Weaponry
18	Body Armour
19	Magic Resistance
20	Psionic Resistance

Characters here are generally self-taught or trained by amazing experts. They might be the best they are at what they do, brought up by a strange mystic order on a hidden island.

ALTERED ROLL

D20	POWER
1	Heightened Strength
2	Heightened Dexterity
3	Heightened Constitution
4	Heightened Intelligence
5	Heightened Wisdom
6	Heightened Charisma
7	Flight
8	Energy Blast
9	Energy Manipulation
10	Absorption
11	Adaptation
12	Resistance
13	Body Armour
14	Weather Control
15	Regeneration
16	Growth
17	Shrinking
18	Stretching
19	Transmutation
20	Special Power

Accidental superhumans. Allow broad ranges of Energy as a special effect, heat, magnetism, light, gravity, etc. Work with the player for a Special Power to come up with something individual.

MUTANT ROLL

D20	POWER
1	Heightened Strength
2	Heightened Dexterity
3	Heightened Constitution
4	Heightened Intelligence
5	Heightened Wisdom
6	Fear
7	Flight
8	Energy Blast
9	Energy Manipulation
10	Absorption
11	Adaptation
12	Resistance
13	Body Armour
14	Weather Control
15	Regeneration
16	Resurrection
17	Death Touch
18	Mind Control
19	Heightened Speed
20	Mutant Power

Work with the player for a Mutant Power to come up with something individual.

Especially for the Altered and Mutant tables, put your favourite powers in, extend them, change them around. These are some basic, common type ideas. If you want Water Breathing and Empathy, then put it in!

POWER LEVELS

D20	POWER LEVEL	ABILITY SCORE	SAVE	EFFECT ROLL	DAMAGE	SPEED MULTIPLIER
01	1	18	8+	+3/-3	1d6	2x
02-03	2	19	7+	+4/-4	2d6	3x
04-07	3	20	6+	+5/-5	3d6	4x
08-11	4	21	5+	+6/-6	4d6	5x
12-14	5	22	4+	+7/-7	5d6	6x
15-17	6	23	3+	+8/-8	6d6	7x
18-19	7	24	2+	+9/-9	7d6	8x
20	8	25	1+	+10/-10	8d6	10x

POWER ADVICE

The basic idea here being in a D&D type fantasy world is to keep the superpowers a little more low key than the Silver Surfer, Hulk or Wonder Woman. If you do want to go for that and be more four-colour, then use an exponential power scale a la Marvel Super Heroes, Champions, Mutants & Masterminds, etc.

The use of Heightened Abilities should be straightforward. If wanting to get crazier, double them. Abilities up to 32, say or as you like.. Allow checks as the players go up in levels. If they roll over their power level on a d10 (or d20 if wanting higher) then put the level of the power up.

For speed, use the Power Level as a multiplier to base movement rates, with a minimum of double. So Level 1 is 2x and level 7 is 8x. A similar idea for growth. See the exponential more four-colour campaign type note above, which would give 2/4/8/16/32/64/128/256 etc.

For damage, go with 1 die per level. So a Level 3 Laser Beam would do 3d6 damage. Level 4 physical Body Armour would stop 4d6 damage in a hit. Or force fields versus lightning bolts, or magic resistance versus nasty spells. If wanting to ramp up, use d8, d10, d12, d20 etc. for higher power games. Or if using this idea with Pathfinder as compared to AD&D for

example.

For less obvious effects like manipulation and transmutation the Power Level makes it easier to produce the effect you want with an Effect Roll and harder to resist Transmutation or Mind Control, using common sense along those lines.. You can of course use spells as a guide if you like. Or sensibly so, even. In that sense, powers can be really powerful cantrips usable as you like.

Resistances get Saving Throws for the appropriate area.

FATIGUE

Superpowers could be used once per round/turn as it is in your game, at will. Or if wanting it to be more limited and demanding, then give technological powers charges like magic items and allow CON uses of a power before resting, or having to make Saving Throws to keep going.

PUSHING

A character may attempt to use a power at one level higher for a turn but must make their basic Saving Throw. If they succeed, they may use the power at the higher level and then must rest before using it again. If they fail, they may use the power for a round and then fall unconscious.

Dear Secret Santicore

Humblly, I ask Santicore.....for some memorable
rival adventuring parties that a group could come
across (either antagonists or just people who keep
showing up/getting in the way). A couple of
interesting groups would be nice!

Thanks!

A.R.

TABLE OF ADVENTURING PARTIES

by Nick LS Whelan
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No rules system was specified in the request, so I used Lamentations of the Flame Princess.

1 FOLLOWERS OF SENZHIN'DAL

Four monks. Three of whom are in their early twenties, and believe the fourth to be an important master of great renown. In point of fact the older man is a very charismatic drunk who was exiled from his own monastery.

Alasdair - Monk (Fighter)

AC 13, HD 3, Mov 140', 1 Atk for 1d6, Mor 7

Equip: Staff

Seshna - Monk (Fighter)

AC 14, HD 3, Mov 150', 1 Atk for 1d6, Mor 7

Equip: Staff

Hadrian - Monk (Fighter)

AC 12, HD 2, Mov 120', 1 Atk at +2 for 1d4, Mor 7

Equip: Staff

Shoutar - Monk (Fighter)

AC 14, HD 4, Mov 150', 1 Atk at + 1 for 1d6, Mor 6

Equip: Staff, Water skin filled with wine, 2d8 silver

2 BAND OF THE ROSE

Yvain himself holds to some extremely formal and antiquated ideas of chivalry. The party cleric is the "Lady" to whom he dedicates each victory, showering her in chaste attention which she revels in. The rest of the party, a dwarf, a thief, and a wizard, are so sick of this nonsense that they'd leave if Yvain wasn't so profitable to work with.

Yvain - Fighter

AC 19, HD 7 + 7, Mov 90', 1 Atk at + 1 for 1d8, Mor 11

Equip: Plate Armor, Shield, Longsword, all richly decorated with blue-and-yellow heraldry. 4d20 silver pieces

Laudine - Cleric

AC 18, HD 6, Mov 90', 1 Atk for 1d8, Mor 5

Equip: Plate Armor, Mace, A ring carved from emerald which allows the wearer to craft the personality of one target, if they fail a save v. device. Personality change ends if the ring is removed, or the ring is used on a new target. 3d10 gold pieces

Spells Prepared: Bless, Turn Undead, Cure Light Wounds; Heat Metal, Heroism, Silence 15' Radius; Dispel Magic x2

Hardak - Dwarf

AC 18, HD 5 + 10, Mov 90', 1 Atk for 1d10, Mor 7

TABLE OF ADVENTURING PARTIES

Equip: Plate Armor, Two-handed Warhammer, A leather sack with 7 small gemstones in it, each worth 1d6 x 100sp, 4d20 silver pieces

Ennia - Specialist

AC 14, HD 3, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 1d6, Mor 7

Equip: Leather Armor, Short Sword, Tinkering Tools, 4d20 silver pieces

Skills: Sneak Attack x4, Tinkering 5-in-6, Stealth 2-in-6

Tristum - Magic User

AC 18, HD 4, Mov 90', 1 Atk for 1d4, Mor 7

Equip: Plate Armor, Spellbook, Dagger, 4d20 silver pieces

Spells Prepared: Sleep, Magic Missile; Invisibility, Web

3. THE SILVER SISTERHOOD

An all-woman group. React at +2 to other groups entirely composed of women, and react at -2 to any group composed entirely of men. If the opportunity arises, they will extend the offer for any female party members to leave the PC group, and join them.

Asala - Fighter

AC 19, HD 6, Mov 90', 1 Atk for 1d8, Mor 7

Equip: Plate Armor, Shield, Battle axe, potion of cure light wounds, 2d6 silver pieces

Ceseka - Fighter

AC 18, HD 3, Mov 90', 1 Atk at +2 for 1d10, Mor 7

Equip: Plate Armor, Shield, Zweihander, 2d6 silver pieces

Esh - Halfling

AC 17, HD 4, Mov 120', 1 Atk (at +1 if ranged) for 1d4, Mor 7

Equip: Leather Armor, seven daggers, 2d6 silver pieces

Skills: Stealth 5-in-6, Bushcraft 4-in-6

Getta - Specialist

AC 14, HD 4, Mov 120', 1 Atk at -1 for 1d6, Mor 7

Equip: Leather Armor, Rapier, Silvered Rapier, Tinkering Tools, 2d6 silver pieces

Skills: Sneak Attack x5, Search 3-in-6, Climb 2-in-6, Tinkering 2-in-6, Stealth 3-in-6

4. CREW OF THE EON

A group of time travelers whose ship is broken, stranding them in this primitive time. Between them they have advanced knowledge of science and magic, so much so that they're classes are unrecognizable from what we are familiar with. They're currently assessing whether they have a chance of repairing their ship, or whether it would just be better to use their future knowledge to rule over the primitives. All have 1d4 hit dice. The technological devices used by the group require charging via a process known only to people from the future. Without recharging, all future tech will be useless within 1d4 days. For the magicists (future magic users), note that spells have improved significantly in the future, and that spellbooks have been replaced by microchips implanted in the caster's brain.

Idilium - Temporal Mechanist

AC 19, HD 5, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 2d12, Mor 6

Equip: Personal Force-Field Ring, Ray Gun, 1d100 future paper dollars

Skills: Tinker 12-in-12

Kroganberg - Historian

AC 19, HD 4, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 2d12, Mor 6
Equip: Personal Force-Field Ring, Ray Gun, A belt of Time Stop (usable twice before it needs to be recharged. Time stop lasts 1 adventuring turn). 1d100 future paper dollars

Maeon - Geologist

AC 19, HD 3, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 2d12, Mor 6
Equip: Personal Force-Field Ring, Ray Gun, 1d100 future paper dollars

Ogden - Magician

AC 19, HD 5, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 2d12, Mor 6
Equip: Personal Force-Field Ring, Ray Gun, 1d100 future paper dollars
Prepared Spells: Magic Torpedo (1d10 + 5 per missile), Unseen Soldier (Can only be hit with magic weapons, AC12, HD5, Mov 120, 1 atk for 1d8, Mor 12), Sleep (Affects creatures with 10 HD or fewer, can affect a number of creatures totally 40 hit dice); Invisibility (May affect up to 2 targets per caster's HD), Ray of Enfeeblement (Reduce to 1 STR for 1d12 days); Hold Persons (Number of targets equal to caster's HD)

Quirill - Temporal Mechanist Grad Student

AC 19, HD 1, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 2d12, Mor 6
Equip: Personal Force-Field Ring, Ray Gun, 1d20 future paper dollars
Skills: Tinker 7-in-12

Sashen - Historian Grad Student

AC 19, HD 1, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 2d12, Mor 6
Equip: Personal Force-Field Ring, Ray Gun, 1d20 future paper dollars

Uldren - Apprentice Magician

AC 19, HD 1, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 2d12, Mor 6

Equip: Personal Force-Field Ring, Ray Gun, 1d20 future paper dollars

Prepared Spell: Unseen Soldier (Can only be hit with magic weapons, AC12, HD5, Mov 120, 1 atk for 1d8, Mor 12)

5 FELLOWSHIP OF JIMMY

A group of creepily smiling adults, and a young boy named Jimmy. Several months ago, Jimmy stumbled on a Djinn who granted his wish to "be in charge of all the adults in town." He is able to read the minds of his party members, and can kill them with his mind. His powers have no effect on anyone born outside his home town. Any frustration the PCs cause to Jimmy reduces his party's reaction by 2. Jimmy has a very short temper.

Jimmy - Child

AC 12, HD 1, Mov 100', 1 attack for 1 damage, Mor 8
Equip: Pockets are filled with 3d10 gold coins.

Larch - Fighter

AC 17, HD 3, Mov 90', 1 Atk for 1d8, Mor 10
Equip: Chain Armor, Shield, Longsword

Leachman - Fighter

AC 16, HD 3, Mov 90', 1 Atk (at -1 if ranged) for 1d8, Mor 10
Equip: Chain Armor, Shield, Longsword

Keefer - Specialist

AC 16, HD 2, Mov 120', 1 Atk (at +1 if ranged) for 1d6, Mor 10
Equip: Leather Armor, Shortsword, Shield, Shortbow, 20 Arrows

Skills: Sneak Attack x3, Sleight of Hand 5-in-6

Mummy - Magic User

AC 12, HD 1, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 1d6, Mor 10

Equip: Enlarge

Spells Prepared: Sleep, Magic Missile; Invisibility, Web

Bates - Magic User

AC 12, HD 2, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 1d6, Mor 10

Equip: Spellbook, Shortbow

Spells Prepared: Faerie Fire, Floating Disc

Hatcher - Cleric

AC 14, HD 2, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 1d4, Mor 10

Equip: Leather Armor, Club

Spells Prepared: Cure Light Wounds x2

6. THE GRAND BROTHERHOOD OF THE MOST ADVENTUROUS GENTLEMEN

A group of 3 aristocrats wielding a number of magical treasures, trailed by 8 grunts who look disheartened and nearly mutinous. The aristocrats have hired these grunts to do all the work and take all of the risks, but keep all of the treasure and credit for themselves.

Earlhardt Anilius Photavyon Reginald Wilduerbach-Specialist

AC 20, HD 1, Mov 90', 1 Atk for 1d6, Mor 5

Equip: Plate Armor, Shield, rapier, dagger, Ring of Protection (+1 AC and Saves), 4d12 x 10 gold pieces

Skills: Sneak Attack x2, Architecture 4-in-6

Cheshire Tautalus Yinnow - Specialist

AC 19, HD 1, Mov 90', 1 Atk for 1d6, Mor 5

Equip: Plate Armor, Shield, rapier, whip, Wand of Lightning Bolt (6d6)(3 charges), 4d12 x 10 gold pieces

Skills: Languages 5-in-6

Albert the VIII - Specialist

AC 19, HD 1, Mov 110', 1 Atk for 1d8, Mor 5

Equip: Plate Armor, Shield, longsword, Fleetfoot Boots, 4d12 x 10 gold pieces

Skills: Sneak Attack x3, Search 3-in-6

Porker, Nikalum, Lester, Julius, Hucks, Fragus, Duwal, Burna - Fighters

AC 17, HD 3, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 1d8, Mor 6

Equip: Chain Armor, Shield, Longsword, 2d4 silver pieces

7. GRUCK AND THAELDON

A 4' tall minotaur and a gangly, 4' tall dwarf. A pair of very close friends who adventure alone. Gruck doesn't speak very well, but Thaeldon takes care of most of the talking, and Gruck trusts him.

Gruck - A Tiny Minotaur, Advances as a Fighter

AC 17, HD 4, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 1d8, Mor 8

Equip: Chain Shirt, Heavy Spear, 3d12 silver pieces, Ring of Protection (+1 to AC and Saves)

Special: Gains a +2 to attack and a x3 damage multiplier if charging at least 40' as part of its attack.

Thaeldon - Scrawny Dwarf Specialist

AC 14, HD 3, Mov 120', 1 Atk at +1 for 1d6, Mor 7

Equip: Leather Armor, Two small Hand-Axes, 3d12 silver pieces

Skills: Sneak Attack x4, Stealth 4-in-6, Search 3-in-6

8. THE DUNGEON DINING TOUR

A ravenous Blue Mag with discriminating tastes has

paid a small band of adventurers to escort him through the dungeon, slaying interesting monsters for him to eat. The blue mage is amoral, and if any of the party members demonstrate interesting powers, he will insist upon eating them.

Blue Mage Class: <http://hackslashmaster.blogspot.com/2013/02/on-blue-mage.html>

Yeales - Blue Mage

AC 14, HD 3, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 1d6, Mor 9

Equip: Fork, Knife, Spoon

Special: Alligator Skin (+2 AC), Bear's Maw (1d6 Bite),

Abilities: (Each use costs 1 point. 2 Points total)

Spit Acid (Ranged attack for 2d6)

Christon - Fighter

AC 20, HD 4, Mov 90', 1 Atk for 1d6, Mor 8

Equip: Plate Armor, Tower Shield, Spear

Angeliu - Specialist

AC 14, HD 3, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 1d6, Mor 7

Equip: Leather Armor, Rapier, Dagger

Skills: Sneak Attack x3, Search 4-in-6, Bushcraft 2-in-6, Climb 3-in-6

Haverford - Cleric

AC 18, HD 3, Mov 90', 1 Atk for 1d10, Mor 7

Equip: Plate Armor, Two handed mace.

Spells Prepared: Turn Undead, Cure Light Wounds, Command

Grummault - Cleric

AC 19, HD 4, Mov 90', 1 Atk for 1d8, Mor 7

Equip: Plate Armor, Shield, Mace

Spells Prepared: Turn Undead, Cure Light Wounds, Bless; Enthral

9 HELENA COMPANY

War buddies who got back from the Wizard Wars and set off together to make their fortune. Distrustful of wizards. They all go by the nicknames they've got for one another.

Narfer - Fighter

AC 16, HD 1, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 1d10, Mor 8

Equip: Chain Shirt, Zweihander, Dagger, Shortbow, 12 arrows

Belly Boy - Fighter

AC 17, HD 2, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 1d8, Mor 8

Equip: Chain Shirt, Shield, Longsword, Dagger, Shortbow, 12 arrows

Dog-Ear Jones - Fighter

AC 16, HD 2, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 1d10, Mor 8

Equip: Chain Shirt, Heavy Flail, Dagger, Shortbow, 12 arrows

Magic Missile Man - Fighter

AC 16, HD 3, Mov 120', 1 Atk at +2 for 1d8, Mor 8

Equip: Chain Shirt, Longsword, Shield, Dagger, Shortbow, 12 arrows

Babyface - Fighter

AC 17, HD 1, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 1d8, Mor 8

Equip: Chain Shirt, Shield, Longsword, Dagger, Shortbow, 12 arrows

Hangman - Fighter

AC 17, HD 2, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 1d8, Mor 8

Equip: Chain Shirt, Shield, Longsword, Dagger, Shortbow, 12 arrows

10. THE EXILES

A kobold, an orc, a goblin, a gnoll, and a lizard man. Each was exiled from their people, and have made their way by raiding human settlements, and plundering dungeons. The Gnoll, Hoagh, is the de facto leader of the group, though he often butts heads with the murderous Zebaster. But with the rest of the party firmly behind Hoagh, Zebaster must often decide whether to swallow his pride, or lose the only clan he has left.

Yishtin – Kobold, Advances as a Fighter

AC 15, HD 3, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 1d6, Mor 5

Equip: Shield, Spear, Shortsword, 2d4 silver

Skills: Sneak Attack x3, Stealth 3-in-6

Murog – Orc, Advances as a Fighter

AC 17, HD 4, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 1d8, Mor 8

Equip: Rusted Chain Shirt, Wood-And-Leather Shield, Cheap Longsword, Heavy Longbow, 8 arrows, 2d10 silver.

Kikkle Uk – Goblin, Advances as a Fighter

AC 14, HD 3, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 1d4, Mor 7

Equip: Leather Jerkin, Stolen Sickle, Rat skull necklace, 2d12 copper

Hoagh – Gnoll, Advances as a Fighter

AC 16, HD 5, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 1d10, Mor 7

Equip: Chain Shirt, Heavy Flail

Zebaster - Lizard Man, Advances as a Fighter

AC 18, HD 5, Mov 120', 1 Atk for 1d10, Mor 6

Equip: A heavy, many-notched axe

FOUR MONASTIC ORDERS

by Ed Hackett
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Dear Secret Santicore—

My wish, this favorite season, is for a description of a unique, non-Asian inspired monastery.

Thanks!

Initial of Requester

FOUR MONASTIC ORDERS

Throughout the lands there are numerous faiths and ways, and these are just a few of the monastic orders that preside over less cloistered matters. They have gone beyond the walls of their abbeys, priors or parishes to serve their order: some through vigilance or violence, others through compassion or conviviality.

Note: Each monastic order is followed by a Path. These are meant to offer more 5th Edition options for the monk class. Also included below is a random table for generating more monasteries.

GRAILLESECHE

Forgotten are the days of Grailleseche gewürztraminer, and the old wine cellars of the abbey are now used as a dungeon. The cellars are brimming with criminals rather than casks of wine and racks of bottles. Slowly over the years, Grailleseche has grown into a huge lakeside fortress with dozens of servants and skilled tradesmen working on site to provide for the monks and nuns that run the cellar prison under the aedificium. Grailleseche has become the most prominent prison in the lands and other nations have outsourced their criminal problem to the abbey-prison.

The order of monks and nuns that oversee operations have grown divided over their purpose; one sect, the Divine Grace of God, holds that the abbey was meant to safeguard against evil through prayer. While the other sect, the Righteous Hand of God, seek to seal away the evils of the world through divine power. The resulting schism has driven the Divine Grace monks and nuns from Grailleseche. They now wander the lands providing healing to any and all that require aid. The Righteous Hand, meanwhile, continue to maintain the most secure prison in the land. Tension between the two groups is escalating.

THE RIGHTEOUS HAND OF GOD

Leader: High Abbess Marthe Martine Adame

Hooks:

1. The Hand hires on adventurers to help bring in powerful fey, fiends and monstrosities. The Hand pays good prices for bounties.
2. 1287 Grailleseche gewürztraminer is a rare and extremely

valuable vintage. There are rumours that a cask of the wine can be found deep in a sub-cellar of the prison.

3. The prison holds a powerful Djinni noble.
4. The best healers of Grailleseche left in the schism. The Hand pays well for healing.
5. Rollin Havas will pay half of his thieves' hoard for his freedom.
6. The Divine Grace stole numerous texts when they fled the abbey. High Abbess Adame requests that they be recovered, peacefully if possible.

PATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS HAND

Long swords count as monk weapons for the Righteous Hand.

You may use a holy symbol as a spellcasting focus.

You can cast spells from scrolls. Any spell from the paladin spell list with a level equal to $\frac{1}{3}$ your monk level (up to 5th level) can be cast.

At 3rd level, choose one of the following smite spells: Searing Smite, Thunderous Smite, Wrathful Smite or Divine Smite (as 2nd level paladin power). When you hit an enemy with a monk weapon or unarmed attack, you can spend a Ki point to use your chosen smite against your foe.

At 3rd level, when you spend a Ki point to use your Flurry of Blows ability, all of the attacks are infused with the damage type associated with your chosen smite.

At 6th level, you can Channel Divinity. You must finish a short or long rest before you can use your Channel Divinity again. Channel Divinity: War God's Blessing (30 ft range, as a reaction grant +10 to any attack roll).

At 11th level, you can use your Channel Divinity twice between rests.

At 11th level, you can spend 4 Ki points to cast Staggering Smite or 5 Ki points to cast Destructive Wave.

At 17th level, you can spend 5 Ki points to cast Flame Strike or 6 Ki points to cast Blade Barrier.



THE DIVINE GRACE OF GOD

Leader: Sister Gertruda Bruhn

Hooks:

1. The tithe collectors for Grailleseche take too much. They must be stopped, peacefully if possible.
2. Sister Lily Claughton wants to return to Grailleseche. She regrets joining the defectors and wants to return to the cloistered life.
3. The Divine Grace suspects that the prisons are full of innocents. Further investigation is required.
4. The original Holy Edicts must be preserved and protected. The Hand are rewriting them now.
5. There are rumours of demon-possession among the Righteous Hand. The Divine Grace wants confirmation.
6. A celestial lion has come to assist Bruhn. It has strange dietary needs.

THE PATH OF DIVINE GRACE

You may use a holy symbol as a spellcasting focus.

Through divination, you have advantage on initiative rolls.

You can cast spells from scrolls. Any spell from the cleric spell list with a level equal to $\frac{1}{3}$ your monk level (up to 5th level) can be cast.

At 3rd level, when you spend 1 Ki point you can lay your hands on a wounded ally to heal 4 points of damage. When you spend 2 Ki points, you can dispel poison or dispel disease.

At 3rd level, you can spend 2 Ki points to cast one of the following spells: Aid, Augury, Enhance Ability.

At 6th level, you can Channel Divinity. You must finish a short or long rest before you can use your Channel Divinity again. Channel Divinity: Graceful Blessing (30 ft range, as a reaction grant +10 to

the AC of any target).

At 11th level, you can use your Channel Divinity twice between rests.

At 11th level, you can spend 5 Ki points to cast Raise Dead or Hallow.

At 17th level, you can spend 6 Ki points to cast Forbiddance or True Seeing.

THE FIGHTING FRIARS

The friars of the Sorchenite monastic order are wandering preachers and defenders of the poor and as such the friars take an oath of poverty, but they seldom observe that oath. The friars tend to travel widely and have established numerous small parishes. There is no centre of power for the friars. They are trained by whichever monk recruits them and they train whomever they can recruit, in turn.

Friars have failings and vices aplenty, but none so great as their love of booze. They are skilled brewers and heavy drinkers. This alcoholism has lent certain benefits to their fighting style. The friars are astute pugilists and grapplers. When armed, the friars will wield clubs, cudgels or staves. Friars are notorious brawlers and tend to fight dirty or drunk (or both). Most people regard the drunken friars as little better than the thugs and miscreants that they pummel into piety.

Important Figures: Brother Cormac Halloran, Brother Brutus Orcson, Brother Poul Locke

Hooks:

1. The brothers at the Parish of Brion have had their caravans of brewer's supplies raided several times. They are running out of beer!
2. The Bixildon Parish has grown quite rich with profits from the popularity of their Bixilbrau. The clink of coins is heard more often than the clinking of mugs in Bixildon.
3. The Shillelagh of Troughby is a powerful Sorchenite artifact.

Rumours put it in the hands of a forest hoodlum named Greybock.

4. A rare bottle of 1342 Basilisk Creek Stout has gone missing from Brother Cormac Halloran's collection. He will pay handsomely for the return of his most prized possession.

5. Brother Brutus Orcson has brewed the first healing beer. However, someone has stolen the recipe.

6. The friars at the parish of Hillstading have been massacred. The locals blame marauding orcs from the forest.

THE PATH OF THE FIGHTING FRIAR

Drink like a Fish: Friars of Sorchen are renowned brewers and drinkers of all kinds of beer. You gain proficiency with brewer's tools and have advantage on any rolls regarding the making or consuming of alcohol.

Friars gain improved proficiency with improvised weapons. A mug in a friar's hand becomes a brutal weapon (roll 1 additional damage die and drop the lowest roll).

Liquid Courage: while drunk or drinking, a Friar has advantage against fear effects and attempts to intimidate are at disadvantage.

Sober up: any time while drunk, a friar can spend an action to reduce the effects of alcohol to zero.

At 3rd level, you can make a Drunken Feint. You must move at least 10 feet, staggering drunkenly, to fool the enemy. This feint grants advantage on your first attack of the round. The target must make a Wisdom saving throw against your Ki save DC.

At 6th level, you can gird yourself against physical harm by quaffing alcoholic drinks. You gain temporary hit points equal to your Constitution modifier+level. Quaffing a drink requires an action. Once you use this feature, you must finish a short or a long rest before using it again.

At 11th level, you can Stagger and Swagger. Friars become potent drunken fighters. They gain advantage on Strength, Dexterity and Constitution saving throws and ability/skill checks while drunk or drinking.

At 17th level, you gain the Flame of the Holy Spirits: spend 6 ki points to make a breath of fire attack (as burning hands cast with a 5th level spell slot). The friar need not be drunk or drinking. He has become properly pickled.

COMMON FRIAR FIGHTING TACTICS

The Friar's Kiss is a sudden grappling attack followed by a brutal head butt. The friar uses his action to grapple the target by their clothes (usually the collar) and makes a head butt attack as a bonus action. The attack deals damage as a normal unarmed attack, but deals extra damage equal to the monk's Strength modifier. The target also continues to be grappled.

Eye gouge (1 damage, target blinded until end of its next turn)

Bite (1+strength modifier damage), especially when grappled.

Low blow (damage as normal, target loses reaction abilities until the end of its next turn).

THE WARMAIDENS OF VLOSKOTH

These terrifying, grim women feast on battle. They serve gods of blood and war. They have simple tenets of faith and show enemies no mercy. Their white battle gowns are soaked in the blood of their enemies and left to stain. They practice ritual scarification and their battle wounds are treated specifically to leave raised scar patterns. The deeper the red of a warmaiden's gown and the more elaborate her scars, the more fearsome she must be.

The Jagged Priory of Vloskoth is a small, well-fortified sanctuary for the nuns. Built among the obsidian crags of Mount Ethrae in the Firegate Pass, Vloskoth is a university of war. The training ground in the cloister resembles an armoury more than an harbour. The aedificium is home to countless treatises, texts and manuals on the arts of war. The balneary is the largest building on the grounds, it is a huge hot spring spa with slaves tending to the needs of the nuns. War councils regularly convene in the balneary - it is an old tradition.

Leader: Prioress Anushka Zhangal

Hooks:

1. The Obsidian Cross, a devastating fighting technique, is hidden away and scrawled on the walls of a volcanic cavern.
2. The fires of the Vloskoth forge have burned out. The dark prophecy begins.
3. The Barbarian Horde of the Blight Plains have taken several Warmaidens hostage - to their eternal shame. This is no rescue mission. Find and kill the Warmaidens.
4. The prioress is gravely ill. There are no suitable successors. Her death would destabilize the Priory.
5. When the first prioress fell in battle, her waraxe was taken. It rests in an Efreeti vault. The Warmaidens want it back.
6. Warmaiden Taisiya has abandoned the priory and now leads a death squad of githzerai assassins. She must be destroyed.

THE PATH OF BLOODED GLORY

Battle Nuns gain proficiency in Intimidation.

The Battle Nuns wield a wider array of weaponry: they can use any martial melee weapons with their monk attacks (but must use Strength to hit with attacks). Many sisters take up the morning star or battle axe and they tend to favour versatile weapons.

Warmaidens are resilient. They receive 1 extra hit point per level. (3 extra hit points at level 3.)

At level 3, Bloodlust. When you kill an enemy, you can spend a ki point and move up to half your movement to make an attack against

FOUR MONASTIC ORDERS

	LEADER	PRODUCT/SERVICE	LOCALE	PLOT HOOKS	SCANDALS
1	Abbot/Ab- bess	Scrivening	Mountain Pass	Schism, Aftermath	Sex! Sexy! Sex cult!
2	Immir	Academia	Basin	Schism, Forthcoming	Impregnation of/by local
3	Prior/Prior- ess	Medicine	Lakeside	Assassination plot	Huge orgiastic parties
4	Qadi	Brewing	In Fork of River	Tyrannical leader	Rewriting the Holy Edicts
5	Archpriest	Vintning	Island	Leaderless, deceased	Demon-possessed nuns
6	Hieromonk	Distilling	High on a Hill	Leaderless, deciding	Secretly Devil-worshippers
7	Imam	Cosmology	Underground	Under siege, outsiders	Take in enemy soldiers
8	Rebbe	Tinkering	Along a River	Suffering wasting illness	Drunk 24/7
9	Elder	Hospitality	Hanging on Cliff	Poor, no wealth at all	Miracles are faked
10	Tzaddik	Herbalism	At a Hot Spring	Ceased prayer, more concerned with product	Failed coup d'etat of local leadership
11	Deacon/ Deaconess	Discipline/Prison	On the Seaside	Ceased prayer, have lost faith	Open trade with enemy nation
12	Kvaltosh	Science	Edge of a Volcano	Leaders seek overthrow of local secular rulers	Tithe money spent on luxuries

another target.

At level 6, Mark of Obsidian: you sprout growths of obsidian along your arms and shoulders. Add your Constitution modifier to your AC. At level 14, your AC increases by 2.

At level 11, Keening Battlecry. Spend 4 ki points. You emit a scream of psychic force that terrifies all targets in a 30 foot cone. Targets make a Wisdom saving throw against your Ki save DC. Failure means the target must flee for 1 minute (or until it makes a saving throw at the end of its turn). If the target failed the save by 5 or more, it is stunned. At the end of each turn, the affected targets can make a new saving throw to break the effect. A stunned target also takes 2d6 extra damage from your attacks until it breaks the effect.

At level 17, Unchained: Spend 6 ki points. For 1 minute, you become a killing machine. You gain immunity to non-magic weapons and regenerate 10 hit points at the start of every turn. When you kill an enemy, you can spend 1 ki point to make an attack against every enemy within 5' of you.

Dear Secret Santicore—

A simple arbitration or generation system using playing cards. Can generate treasure, monsters, or be used to settle other questions in a simple and fun way. Only requirement is it use playing cards!

Thanks!

S.S.

NPC FACTION CARTOMANCY

by Joey Lindsey
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Here's the entry using a deck of cards to generate something - in this case, NPC factions. I think this is flexible enough to work for a guild, tribe, nation, pretty much any NPC group of 2 or more. As written it's to find the general flavor of new nations, like when making a new setting or if the PCs travel to a new continent.

This is meant to draw broad strokes and inspire further DM creativity - to be a launching point.

Grab a 52 card deck. Shuffle em. If you leave Jokers in, they mean the first thing that comes to your mind.

For each faction - these can be sides in a war, different nations on a continent, tribes in a valley, etc - lay cards in a cross, top - middle - bottom - right - left

Top is the public face of governance - switch what Kings and numbers mean to get a more bog standard "medieval" result.

King: long term central leaders, hereditary/feudal/etc (king, chief, Pope, etc)

Queen: rule by the awesomest or short-term figureheads

Jack: rule by workers or other form of mass rule (magically aided?)

Number: oligarchy (rule by small group of elites, such as richest or council of elders)

Ace: no central govt (every person for themselves/ family units / nation of separate tribes / etc)

Middle tells you where the real power lies - if the color is the same as the top, they support the public leadership or are too afraid to go against it; if the color is different, rebellion is brewing -

King: Aristocratic families

Queen: tastemakers, social connectors, popular opinion

Jack: whoever does actual work maintaining public resources

Number: general masses

Ace: draw a second face card and read "public face" results

Bottom tells you what the masses believe in

King: goodness and rightness of leaders

Queen: potential for greatness in everyone

Jack: freedom most important

Number:

6-10 - personal gain most important

2-5 - the tribe/nation/religion's perpetuation most important

Ace: foreign robots / aliens / ancient evil / powerful inhuman forces govern life

Right tells you about foreign relations -

King: dominance, manifest destiny, subjugation, war

Queen: stability; measured growth, peace, prosperity sought - diplomacy, trade, etc.

Jack: isolationism, maybe basic goods trade but no cultural exchange or expansion

Number: whatever's most profitable (could be any of the other options for the moment; what's considered "profitable" is determined by this card's suit)

Ace: peace and trade if your beliefs align, war and subjugation if not

Left tells you about loyalty of court (or within the council, among the tastemakers, the CEOs' personal assistants, the King's Generals, etc)

If higher card than top, has more power. If different color, seeks to destabilize and gain control. If same color, keeps figurehead in power to deflect blame.

Add all numbers (face cards are 10s). That is the Strength of the faction relative to the others. Check out how many of each suit a faction has. That gives you a general sense of what each faction is like.

Clubs - peasants, common soldiers, etc

Spades - spies, assassins, espionage and secret maneuvers

Hearts - Magic

Diamonds - technology

So the first example I got was:

2♣

Q♣- K♣ - 4♦

7♦

So a small oligarchy (2♣) whose advisors are more powerful but keep them in control to take the blame etc (Q♣). Real power lies with aristocratic families (K♣) - who support the oligarchy (both clubs). Foreign relations are determined by what's most profitable at this particular moment (4♦). The masses believe personal gain is most important (7♦) - diamonds, so financial gain.

The faction's relative strength is 33. It's all clubs and diamonds, so it's normal warrior-types that use a bit of tech.

2nd example -

5♥

J♠- 4♦- 4♥

10♣

So an oligarchy of magicians (5♥) being undermined from within by a more powerful group of spies and assassins (J♠). Real power lies with the masses (4♦) who believe in personal gain (10♣, so martial gain) and are loyal to the magicians (both red). Foreign relations are determined by what's most profitable - in this case magically profitable (4♥).

This one's pretty rich with implication - a small group of magicians is leading a nation of norms to gain magical power, and a group of spies within the ranks of governance is undermining them...

The relative strength happens to be 33 again, making this faction equal in strength to the first example. In a contest between these two nations, at least at the moment of generation, neither would have the upper hand. But give those spies in faction 2 a little time...

Just for fun, a 3rd example -

10♦

2♥- K♥- 10♣

3♥

So a wealthy oligarchy (10♦) rules, but real power lies with the magical aristocracy (K♥). The wealthy oligarchy is attended by house mages who are less powerful and loyal, so no inner turmoil here (2♥). The masses believe that the nation must endure above all else (3♥). Foreign policy is determined by whatever's most profitable (10♣, so martial profit).

A wealthy elite rules a heavily magical society. Lots to go on there!

This faction's relative strength is 35, so this nation is a tad more powerful than the two above.

I hope this makes sense! Enjoy.

Dear Secret Santicore

Most cruel of gives, I a humble petitioner ask for a means of filling my woe
 marketplace with accursed, villains, shifting peddlers, beggars, vagabonds, and
 their ilk. But not just who they are but why they are at the irrefutable bazaar.
 The place is busy and though a person may only meet 20 people in the course of
 their visit, 100 people would not be unreasonable.

Thanks!

J.F.

PEOPLE

by Jansen Thuresson

droo	First name	Last name (prefix)	Last name (suffix)	Business at the bazaar	Secret
1	Abgad	Knife	heart	Sells meat of unknown origin; 1 in 6 contains beneficial parasites	Been tracking the party for days
2	Ahq	Mold	ears	Sells painted pot shards as relics	Stolen identity
3	Almond	Old	daughter	Looking for ... (roll up another person)	His/her teeth are living beings; last of their kind
4	Aziri	Pocket	farer	Looking for a blood magician named ... (roll up another one)	Wanted for murder
5	Badsey	Twixt	ruse	Prizefighter; last match was against ... (roll another)	Mind reader; mute
6	Barker	Broth	brat	Wears a porcelain mask	Actually two people, one standing on the other
7	Billobi	Warring	moor	Crawls on all four, searching for that "special" coin	Breed imps at home in his/her cellar
8	Bog	Tot	tripler	Carries a big animal cage, says s/he lost "them"	Spoils food just by touching it
9	Cag	Skar	bringer	Pickpocketing (bad at it)	Body smell is slightly toxic
10	Coo	Booth	bub	Pickpocketing (good at it)	Undead without knowing it
11	Cut	Toe	eye	Exotic fruit merchant	Can't lie (under a spell)
12	Dodger	Ash	hater	Palm reader (quack)	Can't tell the truth (under a spell)
13	Dong	Teeth	tosser	Bodyguard for ... (roll up another person)	Steals memories
14	Druitt	Prat	thrasher	Broke merchant just closing up his shop	Shrinks to pixie size during night time
15	Edma	Star	whisperer	Selling home-made maps to a newly discovered continent	Bored noble, playing "common"
16	Estra	Fear	trawler	Doomsayer (can't shut up)	Dies every full moon; reincarnated at the next
17	Eugen	Moth	mangler	Mimer (unappreciated); specializes in "death-faces"	Clothes are a parasite
18	Exo	Baby	burier	Hatter; everything's made of food	Keeps a log book at home with details about every person s/he's ever met
19	Farthing-ton	Gob	collector	Loafer; can whistle the spell Strong Whistling	Just robbed a friend of the party

d100	First name	Last name (prefix)	Last name (suffix)	Business at the bazaar	Secret
20	Father	Filth	taster	Local guard (corrupt), works in pairs (roll up another person)	Working in collusion with another merchant; steals goods to sell
21	Forlorn	Salt	mine	Fishwife	Working with the law enforcers
22	Fhf	Log	and mud	Sells love potions (1 in 6 are magically, but actual emotion is random)	Paints charms all around town; may attract pixies
23	Garga	Fart	fob	Has miniature golems (clay) for sale	Sound of voice is delayed due to excessive time travelling
24	Gloth	Piss	master	Known drunk, ignored by most	Dust collector; tries to invent a new type of golem
25	Gy	Knob	hole	Merchant of extremely tiny weapons (finger sized)	Can turn small amounts of sand into glass at will, but will lose life doing so
26	Hasten	Rot	well	Merchant of ridiculously large weapons	Wakes up every day with one prepared spell, but have no idea what it will do
27	Hog	Much	less	Trying to buy meat but cannot speak the language	Has an unhealthy affection for cats
28	Hoop	Oath	bend	Drawing symbols on the ground (manic)	Stalks ... (roll up another person)
29	Idle	Tick	blood	Sings for money (knows one song)	Has a cast iron foot (cursed by a witch ten years ago)
30	Ihmren	Palm	bleed	Looking for trouble (already got a black eye)	Actually a forgotten minor deity (forgot it him/herself)
31	Iinez	Sand	peeler	Looking for a translator; has cryptic, unreadable note found in a pot	Both hands turn into solid iron when angry; almost drowned once
32	Iridia	Marrow	son	Sells outlawed wine (or so s/he says)	Possessed by a demon; original soul lost
33	Jahaja	Hill	barrow	Lost, naked, speaks gibberish	Will start stalking party if approached
34	Jarmin	Rough	flinger	Member of Priesthood of Animals; chants by imitating animals	Levitates 1 cm above ground at all times; will die if feet touches
35	Jil	Minx	flesh	Hungover poet at it again; arms tattooed with poetry	Half-tree, half-human. Hunted. Keeps to him/herself
36	Jug	Copper	wound	Just a nobody. No teeth	Collector of shrunken human heads, still kept alive through magic
37	Kar	Dirt	widgeon	Street food; everything from the sea	All items owned/sold are cursed; something about his/her hands
38	Kendrick	Wight	craft	Street food; dogs, cats	Werehuman; turns into a different type of person at full moon
39	Koki	Troll	lord	Street food; large beetles that must be eaten alive	Fence (low-risk stuff); 1 in 4 are broken
40	Kovet	Zest	pound	Potter (not a very good one). 1 in 20 pot contains a strange note from ... (roll another)	Fence (high-risk stuff); 1 in 12 are magical; 1 in 6 are cursed
41	Lady	Kill	head	Fletcher; arrows are bent and looks more like twigs, but works anyway	Knows the way to the hidden bazaar underground

d100	First name	Last name (prefix)	Last name (suffix)	Business at the bazaar	Secret
42	Laza	Bumble	fumbler	Fletcher; living arrows	His/her shadow is actually another living entity
43	Lump	Lung	bell	Sells expensive pictorial carpets; 1 in 12 is an actual dungeon map	Runs one of the many local gangs together with ... (roll up 3 more people)
44	Ly	Nose	odor	Back-of-the-hand reader; can see person's complete history	Has already stolen something minor from the party
45	Mama	Under	sung	Thimblerrigger	Self-fulfilling vampire hunter; needs no real proof of person actually being a vampire
46	Maggot	Cod	wing	Portrait artist; after completing the painting, will tear it apart and shout "RUB-BISH!"	Has a demon maggot infestation bubbling in his/her stomach
47	Muck	Nine	pot	Just another nobody that happens to look like your mirror image	A horn is growing from the top of his/her head (hidden under a leather cap)
48	Mildew	Fiddle	heel	Specializes in spices, lacks eyebrows	Forced to lure away children to a troll bridge just outside of town
49	Nour	Sick	pus	Crazy; acts like a stray dog; good at finding people	Gets town gossip from gargoyles
50	Nadia	Gib	fin	Boatsman; looking for a crew to sail to a newly discovered continent	Drips poison in food around the market
51	Nydd	Poor	ish	Boatsman; looking to replace his former crew that...uhm...isn't...eh..."here" anymore	The head is the only solid form on this body; rest is gas (hidden under clothes)
52	Nell	Little	letter	Gravedigger, emaciated; looking for a new shovel	Has a mechanical heart
53	Ort	Neck	rug	User of flying ointment; cats follow him/her at a distant	Can command small amounts of gravel for a short period of time
54	Ondo	Small	fry	Recruiter for Cult of the Free Flesh; looking for volunteers to sacrifice themselves	Has a treasure map tattooed on his/her body
55	Oze	Fish	drought	Hitman; offers people to hit him/her for money;	Left eyeball isn't his/hers; belongs to a witch that spies on the town
56	Pebble	Beetle	pore	Eats onions; talks about the old days and the old bazaar	Ages ten times faster than a normal human
57	Poriya	Nail	dweller	Washes hair in mud; says s/he's worth it	Pigs recognizes him/her as their true savior
58	Poppy	Sore	picker	Sells mules; looks like one, smells like one, talks like one	Astronomer; just made contact with a distant star through quartz crystals
59	Pix	Bone	caller	Tosses cabbages from a rooftop, shouting "INFIDELS!"	Heartbroken; planning the great revenge that will "show them all"
60	Qala	Rum	hoof	Town crier; mostly made-up news	Eyes and ears are detachable; used to work as a spy
61	Quinton	Gel	rib	Wears Boots of the Toddler; makes you walk like a drunk	Avatar of an avatar of an avatar of an extremely local deity (as in this street)

d100	First name	Last name (prefix)	Last name (suffix)	Business at the bazaar	Secret
62	Qoo	Wet	wit	Snake charmer; plays a flute; has several bite marks in his/her face	Has the reanimated body of ... (roll another one) in his/her cellar
63	Qit	Foot	loose	Chased by ... (roll another one), claims s/he stole his/her hat	Back is covered in eyes; all but one focuses on the same thing
64	Rust	Wither	skin	Sells blessings; writes them up on the spot (two-liners that rhymes; 1 in 20 works)	Coughs copper coins
65	Razi	Maul	pine	The Herald of Unwanted Things; clothes made of trash (quite mad)	Traps people in a small handheld mirror during the full moon
66	Roulia	Herring	herder	Alchemist; can break down smaller things into salts and strange components	Worshipper of Asudem, a cult that tries to turn statues into people
67	Ruf	Iron	belly	Scryer; sells glimpses of peoples homes (1 in 12 are real)	Shadow catcher; grinds them to dust; powder can be used for reanimations
68	Sofi	Mould	pie	Scryer; sells glimpses of peoples secrets (1 in 12 are true)	Mind and body are separated each midnight for two hours as distinct entities
69	Shahab	Gar	pipe	Writer; selling his/her latest book "The Bazaar Below Us; A Child's Tale"	Runs the "Small Monster Zoo" at the hidden bazaar underground
70	Sir	Ferry	pin	Sells puff pastry that looks like snails, worms, maggots, etc.; filled	Gills; need to find water to breathe in every ten minutes
71	Scar	Sow	fey	Part of a travelling theater group (roll three more people)	Teleports five feet in random direction every time s/he farts
72	Tally	Ale	rood	Sells used capes; 1 in 12 smells of garlic	Both will perish if eye contact is made with ... (roll another one)
73	Turtle	Hem	field	Skinner; specializes in pallas's cats	Roll four more people; these five can mend into a giant once/day; this person is the only one who knows it
74	Tab	Lock	scythe	Butcher of few words; nobody seems to know what happened to the last one	King/queen on the run from tireless assassins
75	Tamaran	Thrum	mower	Will do anything for cinnamon	Can stretch arms up to three meters
76	Uma	Tall	mole	Sells intelligent crows as companions (1 in 6 isn't intelligent; 1 in 4 isn't loyal)	Produces threads of silk from his/her own body; 1 in 6 risk turns into a cocoon instead
77	Uff	Sweat	brim	Monster hunter looking for ingredients for his/her next trap	Former head of the local thieves guild; wanted by most; planning to leave town
78	Uhnfeyn	Owl	haw	Poet; shouting his/her newest piece "WHY I LOATHE ..." (roll another person)	Turns into an indestructible statue when threatened
79	Ubo	Cold	grace	Farmer, selling crops; avoids eye contact	Escaped prisoner; circle tattoo on neck s/he tries to conceal
80	Viz	Fungi	stead	Debt collector; currently looking for ... (roll three more people); will pay for aid	Has a small vial of liquid annihilation; saving it for the revolution
81	Vala	Badger	toil	Beggar; claims s/he recognizes the party; looks a bit too clean	Ventriloquist; uses it to trick people into believing they are haunted

d100	First name	Last name (prefix)	Last name (suffix)	Business at the bazaar	Secret
82	Vex	Shrub	rot	Sells umbrellas made of animal skin (some works as shields)	Works together with ...; leads people away into alleys and mugs them
83	Valdibart	Rosy	ridge	Beggar; will work for food (unreliable)	Pirate captain; rest of crew are hiding in the underground bazaar
84	Wenn	At	noon	Face painter; 1 in 12 chance paint will protect as a helmet for the rest of the day	Last guardian of tiny, tiny forest world; keeps it in his/her hat
85	Winthrop	Stock	croft	Sells chickens large enough to ride on	Trying to find ... (roll another), a demon s/he summoned up and released
86	Wafa	Wall	love	Hireling; looking for work; chewing a bone	Footman of the rebellion. Waiting for a signal from ... (roll another)
87	Wheeler	Inn	house	Failed wizard selling mischievous spells (Legtripping, Hairdoundoer, Dog breath, etc.)	Cries blood, bleeds water; half-aquanoid
88	Xö	Waste	stone	Claims to be able to train anything into a war animal; sells small dogs	Has richness at the underground bazaar but forgot the way
89	Xinjiang	No	brick	Jester in exile; melancholic; torn clothes	Smuggles strange things from the underground bazaar to the surface
90	Xipe	Grey	sour	Sells clay pots that explodes on command; no eyebrows	Consumes food by absorbing its energy; two antennas folded into his/her ears
91	Xosa	Seep	cellar	Barrelmaker; shabby, bearded	Bounty hunter; looking for ... (roll another)
92	Yari	Wood	bug	Forges crude weapons from scraps (bones, hide, broken pots)	Ex-assassin; toes are actually concealed daggers that come off
93	York	Street	pugh	Sell trinkets made of fish bones/scales	Petty thief; can squeeze body into tight spaces; almost gelatinous
94	Ymn	Twine	cot	Musician; plays an instrument that seems to be almost playing itself	Ruler of his/her own plane, that's completely empty; small trinket around neck is the key
95	Yamanqa	Sty	arch	Used to work as a food taster for a far away queen	Shaman from a tiny, tiny forest world; grew out of his/her world; searching for it
96	Zan	Wee	bald	Shifts in and out of this plane at random; will pay greatly to have it stop	Bases all decisions on a roll of a die
97	Zopp	Free	ore	Claims to have been married to a bear once; lots of scar tissue; wears eye-patch; yells	Has the Devil's Dagger stuck in his/her chest; if removed, will summon 27 devils
98	Ålrick	Sea	scull	Cursed; appears as flat painting in our world	Disguised troll from the underground bazaar; a comb keeps the illusion intact
99	Älskade	Ripe	fig	Sells hallucinogenic mushrooms (1 in 30 are potent and will materialize the visions)	Has a hidden collection of ceramic cats at home; their waving paws dictates his/her life
100	Öl	Toot	hum	Sells leashes; once bought, they tether to an invisible animal	Pipe smoker; secretly smokes hair from other people to reveal their secrets (1 in 20 are true)

THREE ROBBABLE NPCs

by Lucian Smith
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Dear Secret Santicore—

*I would like three wandering NPCs that my
PCs will immediately want to rob.*

Thanks!

A.K.

VICTIM 1 SHERRI TING

Sherrri Ting is your system's equivalent of a high-charisma, high-intelligence, low-wisdom tax collector of an evil king (or insert your own local plot villain here). She has celestial blood in her ancestry somewhere, which has manifested itself as a very wide and diffuse (but powerful) 'reasonability field', which makes people inside it tend to see the world as she sees it, with the effect increasing the more she talks to you (about anything). Unfortunately, she is aggressively optimistic about things, and is completely convinced that the king she serves is a really great guy who people simply misunderstand, and that it is totally reasonable that everyone needs to give him all their money for the great public works that he does. When she and her guards enter a town to collect the taxes, she simply talks to people in town for a while 'to get to know them', and by the time she's done, everyone is more than willing to give up their money for this great king of theirs. Unfortunately, after she leaves town, the effect fades, and everyone gradually remembers what a horrible guy the king really is.

Sherrri is completely unaware of her talent, and her low wisdom has set her in her ways to such an extent that it would take several overwhelming scenes of physical evidence to convince her of the truth. Her high intelligence lets her see through attempts to convince her otherwise, and gives her the ability to construct creative rationalizations to counter almost all evidence that would otherwise dissuade her. Her king makes sure that this is unlikely to happen.

PCs who can cast 'detect magic' or the equivalent will be able to notice when they enter the 'reasonability field', but it is diffuse, making its borders unclear, and all but the most powerful of spells will be unable to pinpoint its source. A reasonable assumption to make would be that her group carries an artifact with them that exudes the field—a difficult 'Magic Lore' check or equivalent might bring to mind stories of other artifacts that have vaguely similar effects.

Sherrri wears a very distinctive bone brooch that has been in her family for generations that seems a likely target—it's not actually magical itself, but it does provide a clue about her celestial ancestry.

When the PCs encounter Sherrri, she will have just left the last village on her circuit, and be about to head back to the king's castle. Her guards are on high alert, but are also weary from the travelling, and have now spent so much time in Sherrri's presence that they, too, believe that their king is great and that people love him, and few people (if anyone) would ever want to steal from him. Sherrri will hail the group friendly, and will talk with them for a while before mentioning the road tax that her king levies, that the PCs really should pay. If your system has the equivalent of a 'compel', don't even have the PCs roll for this, just give them some reward (XP or a Fate Point or what have you), in exchange for being suckered. When they wake up the next morning, they'll realize they've been had. At that point, Sherrri and her group have only two days travel before they arrive at the castle, where they'll be basically untouchable. If the PCs decide to do some recon first, the village Sherrri just left will be filled with confused people, only now realizing what happened, and is full of people who would be more than happy to join the PCs on a mission of revenge. However, without some sort of magical/mental protection, they will be extra susceptible to Sherrri's reasonability field, and in once in her presence again, will suddenly remember the excellent reasons she had for taking their money, and will be confused and belligerent if the PCs try to convince them otherwise.

During the heist itself, the main obstacles the PCs will have to deal with are the guards (who should be scaled to be too much for the group in a straight-up fight), as well as Sherrri's reasonability field, which is active even when she's asleep, and will start working immediately when the PCs enter its range again, as they were already successfully influenced earlier.

If the PCs pull off a successful heist, should they merely steal their own money back, Sherrri's natural optimism will come to their aid, and she will assume that they had excellent reasons for taking their money back, and won't mention it to the king.

If they take more, the king will be quite displeased, and will start sending out more traditional brute squads to retrieve 'his' money. If they somehow manage to subvert Sherri herself and convince her of the error of her opinions (an incredibly difficult task), he will be absolutely furious, as this was by far the most effective means of tax collection he has ever used. Expect assassins in the PCs future, both for them and for Sherri, who they have now placed in mortal danger.

VICTIMS 2 & 3 TREYA BENTLEY AND BEZ

Treya is an archmage who unwisely gambled with a crafty traveler (Bez, who turned out to be the demon Bezaliel), and ended up with a lot of power, but with a geas to open a portal to Bezaliel's home dimension, allowing him to enter this world fully, and bring his army of demons with him. The game between the two continues, as she finds ways to delay, and as Bez watches to make sure she continues to work towards opening the portal.

In order to open the portal, many rare ingredients must be collected under special circumstances. In the past, Treya managed to get herself robbed of several rare and valuable components that they had collected, forcing them to start over from the beginning. She's hoping this will happen again, but Bez is watching like a hawk, making sure it doesn't. If Bez can see that Treya acted in bad faith, Treya's soul is forfeit, which itself would allow Bezaliel to enter this world by taking over her body (albeit not with a demonic horde at his back), and Treya is rather fond of her body, as she is currently using it.

Treya is an archmage several levels above what the party would be able to take on in a direct confrontation. She is a quiet woman who radiates power, both literally and figuratively. Bez is a very powerful demon on his home plane, but in this world, his power is currently limited to the confines of his human form (and bargains for power, but he's currently satisfied with Treya on that front). Bez strikes an incredibly handsome figure, but something about his face (and his grin in particular) is disturbingly off-kilter. If killed, Bez's body will disappear and re-form again, unscathed, a few feet away, in less than a minute, though this has given Treya enough time to convey short messages to those around her in the past. Bez can choose at any time to kill himself to affect the same result. He has no other magical powers, but is strong, agile, and perceptive. He does not usually fight (not seeing the point) and instead will just wake Treya if need be.

The party encounters Treya one evening when, sitting around their fire, they realize that they've been joined by a quiet, hooded figure, warming herself by the fire.

If attacked or provoked, she will defend herself handily, but if asked questions she will respond simply, never volunteering much extra information beyond her name, and not revealing anything that she feels would jeopardize her bargain with Bez. If asked what she wants, she will say, "I had hoped for a few moments of quiet, is all," and immediately, there will be high-pitched laughter from the darkness surrounding the campground, and Treya will sigh deeply. Assuming the party had a guard out, the guard will reappear at the campfire, saying that they caught the man sneaking around the shadows, and when confronted, laughed and gave himself up.

Bez is not at all threatened by the group, but will tell Treya it's time that they move on. Treya will reply quietly that they shouldn't be rude, and besides, perhaps these nice people would be interested in a game? She knows Bez has a weakness for games, and gambling in particular, and is unlikely to avoid a chance to while away an evening beating a bunch of lower-level adventurers. He has his own dice, and a complicated board game he's more than happy to teach to the group (particularly well-travelled PCs might have heard of it, which will impress him). He's not willing to gamble away anything he finds truly valuable, and will switch in a heartbeat from happy/insane to furious/insane if anybody suggests that the contents of Treya's silk pouch be the stakes in any wager, but will switch back to happy/insane if the idea is dropped.

Treya will suggest playing for information, and will be happy if Bez has to reveal things, but is actually simply trying to get the PCs to realize that certain things are important: by suggesting that they play to 'reveal Bez's true nature', she has already let the PCs know that Bez is not what he appears to be. By suggesting they play to reveal 'the contents of my silk pouch', she has already let the PCs know that there is something interesting in it (the spell components for opening the portal, the basic gist of which should be discernable to any mage in the party, or one knowledgeable in magic lore). By suggesting that they play to learn what magical defenses they use at night, she has let the PCs know that it might be possible to rob them. If any character has a particularly high wisdom or passes an appropriate social skill test at a very high difficulty, they can tell that this is what she's doing, though revealing this to Baz could be deadly to Treya—she will attack without further provocation if she believes that a PC is about to tell Baz something along those lines.

Play Bez broadly, as a supremely overconfident gambler for whom everything is working out exactly as he hoped. He laughs a lot, will leer at both the women and men of the group, and should annoy everyone before the night is over.

Treya should be played more quietly, but with a desperation that the more intuitive PCs (and players) should pick up on.

Treya defends herself at night with wards, and Bez will stay up all night on the lookout, both of which will need to be dealt with. If awoken, Treya will defend herself, but the terms of her agreement with Bez allow her to fight only to disable, and to defend herself more than her stuff—making the pouch a viable target. But much better to take it from her without her being awake.

The contents of the pouch are indeed quite valuable and rare material components for portal-based spells. If the party simply steals them and tries to sell them, Bez will figure out what happened pretty quickly and show up again to retrieve the items. If they want to actually reset Treya's quest, they'll need to ruin the components in some way, or use them to power a spell of their own.

There is another possible denouement to this story: the PCs could try to end Bez's dominion of Treya instead of just help her delay things again. To do so, a clever mage might be able to discern the intent of the components of the pouch, and be able to pollute them subtly, so that Treya or at least Bez would not be able to discern they had been tampered with. If done properly, casting the spell to open the portal to allow Bez to enter this world would instead banish him, breaking the terms of Treya's bargain, and allowing her to be free again. Though much of the power she now has is a result of that bargain, and would be lost, Treya is still a powerful mage in her own right, and would be happy to assist the party in whatever they needed. Assuming you don't want an extra NPC hanging around, though, Treya has some wrongs she feels she needs to right as a result of traveling with Bez over the past five years, and will take her leave when she can.

Thanks for the request—I found it was a great constraint to work with: how do you change a party's usual modus operandi from 'fight' or 'ignore' to 'rob'? Hope you enjoy!

-Lucian Smith

Dear Secret Santicore—

My players are such a whiny lot and demand something special. I search for a gonzo racial class suitable for any of the OSR retroclones. This class should have some weird or unique abilities and possibly random and/or detrimental elements.

Thanks!

C.T.

THE HUNTED

by Adrian M. Ryan
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A GONZO RACIAL CLASS FOR OSR STYLE GAMES

LORE

Those who have ventured into the deep forests often speak of the songs of the giants. Deep moanings can be heard, loud enough to be felt in the chest. The travel hundreds of miles, vibrating trees and sending the ears of animals up at the sounds. The forest itself seems to sing with deep sounds of the wandering giant tribes. But rarely is such a giant seen, even as the sound seems to emanate from right next to the travelers.

So rare are the sightings that some modern scholars insist that giants do not exist, that they are hypothetical inventions to explain the natural sounds the forest makes.

The giants are real, however. They not only have their songs, but also language and culture. They stand as tall as two men and as wide as three. They travel in small, disperse groups through the forests, foraging for the moss, lichen, and bark they call their food. They can be violent, but they never war amongst each other. For the giants have a secret that few men know, a secret that is contained in the slow songs they sing to each other.

In their slow songs, the word the giants use for themselves is “Hunted”.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Hunted are a nomadic race of humanoid giants that live in seasonal forests, foraging food from their surroundings. They are a thoughtful, plodding race, and one that serves as a bit of a thought experiment: What would a conscious, cultured race look like that is not at the top of the food chain?

Because of their dangerous surroundings and solitary existence, the Hunted are hunted by the apex predators of the forest, particularly wolves. Because of this, they have developed a culture that both fears and venerates the Hunters, who they look upon as avatars of god’s divine wrath. They have developed a culture that minimizes the risk that any giant, particularly young giants, will be brought down, but have developed a religion that helps them deal with the fact that most giants do meet a violent end between the teeth of their god.

The Hunted live and travel in large tribes of individuals, but because they require so much space to graze, they often will spend weeks not in physical proximity of each other. In order to stay in touch, to share information about the weather, predator movements, and just not to get lonely, the Hunted sing a low, deep, slow song that can travel hundreds of miles through the forest. This song contains information, but not in the form of words that make up sentences—rather, the information is contained in the grammar of the song, the way they sing it with each other, the musical points and counterpoints of the various participants. The song is a low slow lumbering thing that holds multiple layers of meaning, much of it just out of the conscious awareness even of the Hunted.

The Hunted are phenomenal bushcraftsmen. They can predict the weather days and weeks in advance, can track any animal over long distances, can tell from the sounds of the forest where packs of wolves or other predators are. In spite of their size, they can hide well in any forest, and even their slow singing will not give away their location. It is only through an excellent sense of smell or by happening upon an unsuspecting (usually very young or very old) giant that one will be found.

The Hunted navigate the north-south length of the continent every year. The summers they spend in the North, taking advantage of the abundance of food and lack of predators in order to congregate for two months as they give birth and raise their calves to the point that they can make the long journey south. In the winters, they again congregate at the southmost reaches of the seasonal forests, doing their best to help each other find food until the worst of winter relents.

They thus spend most of their time traveling, and only travel through the forests. As the forest is not unbroken, many have wondered how the Hunted make it from the top of the continent to its inner reaches without ever being seen.

In each of their semi-permanent settlements is a convent for the very old. Those few Hunted who have managed to live to the point where they can no longer travel settle in these areas and become the spiritual leaders of the Hunted. The Old Men live in the South, and the Nans live in the North. As such, two separate versions of the Hunted’s religion have formed, which the Hunted believe simultaneously.

The Old Men tell of the importance of accepting what is in a philosophy not unlike Buddhism. The Wolf comes for everyone, and so accepting Him when He does come, regardless of his incarnation, is an important point of growth. Once the acceptance of things as they are has been made, a Hunted can himself sense better, communicate better, and survive longer. The Old Men promote doing willfully and experiencing mindfully, and teach meditation techniques that help all the Hunted live better in the world.

The Nans, those who have grown up charged with protecting their young, do not take such a lazier faire attitude towards the Wolf. They teach that The Wolf is an unthinking force of nature as much as he is a cruel god, and as such the techniques that the Old Men teach are just as useful for understanding its ways in order to work around them and even challenge them. They teach the importance of sacrifice to the Wolf in order to satiate it, and the ways in which a Hunted can fight back with both intelligence and strength.

The Old Men and the Nans communicate between each other only through slow songs: at the beginning of each migratory season, as the Hunted leave a resting ground, those who will not be coming with them start a new slow song that will be sung that entire season. In this slow song is information that the Hunted will need to safely make it through the season, and when they arrive at their destination those Hunted who lived out the whole year since their last leaving will take in the song, help them sing it one last time, and then begin composing a new slow song for the traveling season ahead. Thus, the Nans sing to the new mothers and fathers of how to protect their children, while the Old Men sing to the young children of how to do well in the woods on their own and how to interact with society.

HOW TO PLAY

In order for the players to play as a Hunted, they must be willing to play a large smelly beast of a humanoid, a giant covered in green mossy fur and rough bark-like skin, with paddle-like hands of ridged leather that they use to scrub lichen off rocks, who will attract unwanted attention wherever they go. In return, they will play a creature that does not fear physical attack, has heightened senses, and can travel through the woods as easily as a whale through the ocean.

A Hunted can be played as a gentle giant, a dim-witted warrior, or a cunning barbarian druid. The player should know two things about the Hunted character: Why has the character left the tribe, and why has the character left the forest? These questions can be answered in many ways: maybe a whole tribe has left the forest to live with men or halfings, perhaps he was exiled for wrongful conduct and chose to leave the forest for self-punishment, or perhaps she lost her first young child and in her grief forgot the ways of gliding between the forests and actually reached the edge.

For examples of how to play a Hunted player character, look at the “further reading” section at the end.

MECHANICS

In game terms, the Hunted are a racial class that takes elements of Fighters, Halfings, and Dwarves and combines them with a large size and several custom abilities and disadvantages. I will be using Lamentations of the Flame Princess for reference, but rather than giving exact stats I will be explaining how to construct the Hunted class for your game using your chosen ruleset.

First, the size. Hunted require a minimum strength modifier of +1 and constitution modifier of +1. In addition, they receive a racial bonus of +1 to their strength or constitution modifier, as the player sees fit. So in most old school systems, if a player does not roll at least a 13 on both Strength and Constitution, they cannot play a Hunted (unless a kind system or GM is willing to let them swap stats after the roll).

Hunted are good fighters with long reach. Male hunted take a +2 to the base *melee* to-hit bonus, and females a +3, although progression from there continues as a Dwarf (in LotFP, to-hit never increases, in others it increases by the minimum amount per level). In addition, they all have a d10 hit dice, and a minimum HP of 6 at level 1. Finally, their tough hide gives them a +1 AC bonus for having “natural armor”.

However, the Hunted are not often trained warriors. Most know how to use a stone spear—it has fantastic reach even in *melee* (treat as a spear), does impressive bludgeoning damage (treat as a mace or warhammer), and can even be thrown (again, treat as a spear, although with no bonus to ranged to-hit), but cannot use any other weapons without training. In addition, any non-custom armor will do more harm than good by preventing the +2 to-hit bonus, and only increasing AC by 1/2 the usual amount. Custom-made armor does not have such restrictions, but costs 5x the normal amount due to added materials costs and the difficulty in sizing it properly, and can only be made by a master craftsman.

In addition, while the Hunted are strong and hearty, they are not agile, lucky, or accustomed to magic. They have the saving throw progression of whichever class has the worst in your ruleset (the Fighter in LotFP), and start with the saving throws of a level-0 character even as they are level-1. This can often be role-played as the Hunted simply accepting the world as-is, as the Old Men teach.

The Hunted also have three special racial abilities, described below, and a special racial disadvantage, described below that. The players can invoke the abilities whenever they make sense. The GM should invoke the disadvantage whenever it makes sense, and play it out to its logical conclusions.

ABILITY 1: SLOW SINGING

Wherever other Hunted are in range, the character can slow sing to communicate with them. This slow singing is available regardless of their relationship with those particular Hunted—the truth of the slow song does not follow the petty conscious social boundaries of regular speech.

Slow song does not work like speech. There is no back and forth, not even symbolic concepts underlying what is being sung. The character sings along with the others as if in a trance, and like tapping into an animal collective unconsciousness, comes out knowing certain things.

In practical terms, a certain length of singing will give the character certain knowledge. If the character would simply like to broadcast important information (“the forest is on fire!”, “the big baddie is coming!”), it takes only a half-hour of singing to broadcast it to others who will then incorporate it into their song. This song will continue to travel at a very rapid rate, upwards of 500 miles per day, but only to other Hunted.

If the player would like to know the answer of a yes/no question, they must simply sing for an hour, and then will know what the other Hunted communicated with them—although it may simply be “I don’t know”, and this they won’t know until after finishing the song. Singing for a longer period of time is more likely to result in a solid answer, as the song will have traveled a longer distance across multiple participants.

If the player would like to know the answer to a more complicated question, it’s likely that they will have to sing all day. Traveling is a prime time to sing, and so the GM may choose to make this easy by simply letting the Hunted’s player ask one question for each day of travel where the Hunted did not engage in any encounters or speak with the other players (to simulate their focus on the Song). The GM should answer in a way that is helpful but cryptic, and if the Hunted asks a question that the other Hunted wouldn’t know they may receive an unhelpful reply back. The more relevant the question is to the life of the average Hunted, the more specific and useful the answer will be—so asking where the wolves are or how warm the summer season will be is going to be more straightforward than asking the movements of men through the forest or the goings-on in a forest village, and asking about the political situation in a kingdom far from the forest will likely result in confusion or laughter rather than answers.

ABILITY 2: BUSHCRAFT AND HIDING

The Hunted excel in nature, particularly the woods. Whenever foraging for food or water, attempting to know the weather, or find their way through unmarked nature, they have the same chance of success as a ranger or halfling of the same level (so starting at a 1/2 chance in LotFP). This is true of all skills that could be construed as being “bushcraft” skills.

The Hunted can hide incredibly well when in the forest. They have no chance of being found by men when they put their mind to

hiding, and a 1/6th chance even while they move and/or sing. If a druid, ranger, or dog is doing the looking, the chance of staying hidden decreases by 1/6th.

If, while hiding, the Hunted makes a successful *melée* attack, that attack counts as a “sneak attack” under whatever rules you’re using. Or, if you’d prefer, the attack is a critical hit with all that implies under your system (acts as a roll of a nat 20, so it does full damage or roll on a special benefits table or whatever).

ABILITY 3: THE WORD FOR WORLD IS FOREST

The Hunted travel only through the forest, and have found a way to slip from forest to forest along magic lay lines, so that they never have to set foot in open plains even when any conventional travel route would take them there.

Slipping between the forests only works when groups are singing the slow song. They do not have to be in particularly close proximity, and indeed it is the slow song itself that anchors the Hunted to the forest.

To many Hunted, the space between the forest is but a myth, a sort of geographical boogymen that mothers tell calves in order that they not stray out of range from the safety of the song. To those who have seen it, it haunts them all their lives—either through fear of approaching it again, or through curiosity of what lies beyond.

A party with a Hunted can slip through the forests with it, as long as they’re singing a song as they go. Any possessions they are in contact with will come as well, as will any beasts that sing along—such as dogs howling, donkeys braying, or cats purring. The song, once it’s been taken up, is infectious, so this should all come through course. The hardest part is getting the party to sing together in the first place. It is only through a mindful but unselfconscious singing that they will align with the Hunted. The forest knows whether the song is sung sincerely or with only personal gain in mind.

The GM might want to prod the players into actually singing along the first time. There will be hemming and hawing, but only once everyone is in harmony (as poor a harmony as it might be) and have found a song they can sing together can the adventure continue. The song itself does not matter.

Traveling in this way does not cut down on the travel time, distance traveled, or resources required, but it does force all encounter rolls to be done on a forest table, the party has no chance of encountering settlements of any kind as they travel this way, and only druids, forest elves, and other Hunted will be able to track them.

DISADVANTAGE: WHAT IS THAT SMELLY ... THING?

The Hunted aren't readily accepted in human company. They are large, somewhat smelly, awkward, scary creatures. Their hands are flat and ridged, their brow sticks out past their snout, and their mouths are wet and gummy and full of rows of tiny molars. They can speak the common tongue well enough, although it sounds not unlike if an elephant were to speak English out its snout—deep, sonorous, and undignified. To men, they look like terrifying alien creatures, more animal than human.

And as such they are treated. Most who meet with the party will assume that the Hunted among them is either a beast of burden or a slave. They will cause villagers to run into their hovels or band together to drive it out, they will often not be allowed within city gates, and the best lodging they can expect at an inn is in the stables—and only if there are no horses there to be frightened (other animals besides dogs will largely ignore the Hunted and goats may even befriend them). In some of the more baroque cities, association with a Hunted may be a mark of social good amongst the noble classes, but only as men of high standing in Europe used to keep on “savages” as boarders—they are a mere curiosity to be paraded in front of their friends, and are still regarded as less than human.

Hunted generally do not feel comfortable in the presence of man. Man is, after all, an apex predator himself, one who was able to conquer all other predators and even domesticate the Hunted's god.

Speaking of which, the Hunted have a fearful veneration of dogs bordering on insanity. Female Hunted will often attack them on sight, unwilling to stop until the last one is dead (or they are). Male Hunted will do their best to hide from them, and if seen will pray loudly to the dog in hopes of a good clean death. Of course, many human-bred dogs are more scared of the Hunted than the Hunted are of them—although packs of dogs or well-bred war dogs will often attack the Hunted, or at least get very aggressive in their presence.

Being Hunted in a human world is not easy nor comfortable for the Hunted, and while the party might be quick to befriend a strong, intelligent, and skilled giant to help them on their quests, most of society will not react similarly.

FURTHER READING / WORKS CITED

Much of the society and behavior of the Hunted is based on real life behavior of the giant grazing mammals of the oceans, and the general concept for the slow songs is based on the mysterious songs of the humpback and blue whales. Any documentaries about humpback or blue whales are worth watching if you'd like to know more. I particularly like David Attenborough's BBC documentaries, such as *Ocean Deep* or *Life*.

The old communal language of the dolphins in *Startide Rising* by David Brin was an influence as well.

A possible backstory for a Hunted player character can be found in the book *1491* by Charles Mann. Mann describes the true story of the person we know as Squanto, the Indian Tisquantum (a name that literally translates as “Wrath of God”). Squanto was trained to be the personal bodyguard of the king of his tribe but was captured by a slaver ship as a young man and taken to England. He traveled Europe as the charge of various men who used him either for labor or as an ornament to show off to their friends—that is, he was little more than a slave. However, he twice learned the language of his captors, befriended them, and convinced them to help him return to his home. When he finally did arrive home, it was just after a plague had wiped out his entire tribe, and a neighboring tribe captured him, put him in a cage, and forced him to translate for them in their dealings with the Pilgrims. Some day I'll write a fantasy book based on the life of Tisquantum, but until then steal this story for your Hunted character.

The idea of slipping through the forest was taken from Peter Hamilton's *Pandora's Star*. Honestly the book isn't worth the read, but that was a pretty sweet idea to steal for an RPG. The name of the ability I stole from the Ursula K. Le Guin book, *The Word for World is Forest*, which I must admit I've never read. It would be easy enough to use the Hunted in an SF setting as a peaceful sentient race on a forested planet of some sort.

Finally, this is an updated version of a race I created several years ago in a thread on the worldbuilding forum on reddit. If anyone would like to see the original incarnation, just email me, but I promise it's not that exciting.

If you do end up using this racial class in play, I'd love a report on it! Any questions, additions, comments, or corrections are always welcome as well.

Dear Secret Santicore—

A piece of art depicting an adventuring group lowering a shanghai'd henchman on a rope to a group of slavering dire rats below. Or, if that's a bit much, the most unique looking, mutated dire-rat you can come up with would be cool.

Thanks!

M.W.

RATS!!!

by Michael Currie
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