

Footprints

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The Staff

Publisher	Steve Yates
Editor	Chris Gonnerman
Associate Editor	Steve “bloodymage” Willett
Associate Editor	John Turcotte
Cover Art	Erik Wilson
Title Graphics	Jim Lassiter
Interior Art	Sir Clarence, Brant Bollman, Erik Wilson, Elizabeth Stewart, Lord Kyle, Tamaris Tregarth

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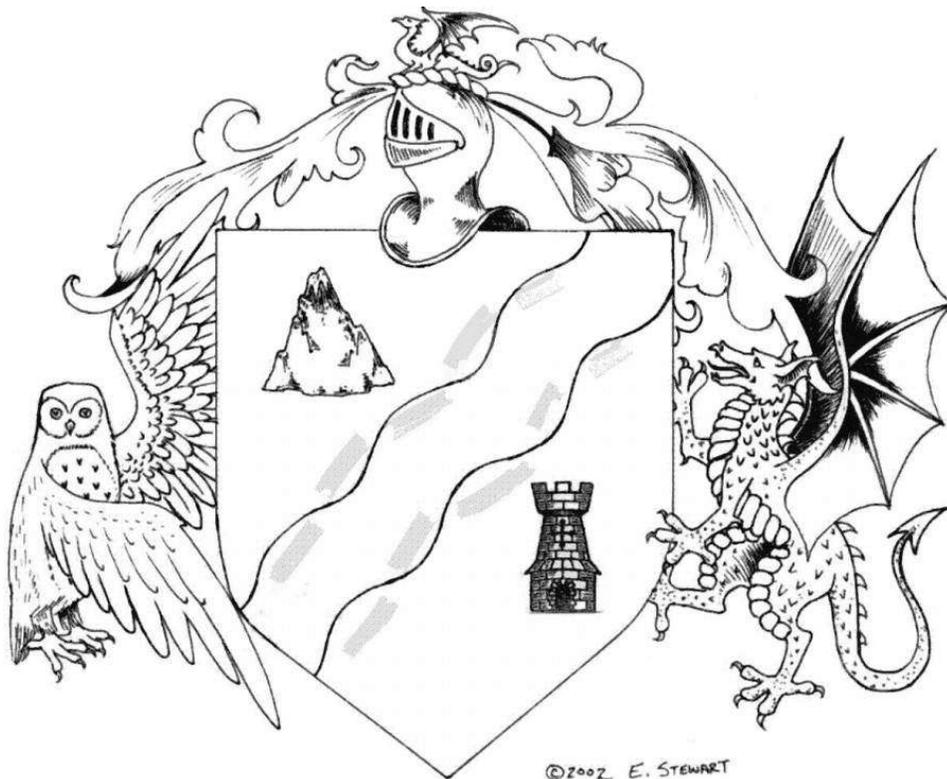
% in Lair:

I can't remember when I've had more fun putting together Footprints! This issue contains never-before-published material by the esteemed **Len Lakofka**, as well as a story by **Jim Ward**. After you've enjoyed this dose of old-school goodness, you can look forward to more from both of them in future issues.

On top of that we have an excellent module by our own John Turcotte, the results of the Sharp and Pointy contest, several excellent articles and another cartoon from Brant Bollman!

Enjoy!

Chris Gonnerman



The Lost Cache of Father Tomas

An AD&D Adventure for 1st Level Characters

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BACKGROUND: New Sevetburg hardly seems the proper place for an adventure. The small, sleepy town clings to the shore of Lake Sevet, crowding the high walls of its defending keep. On the eastern shores of the lake, small orderly farms sweep out to the forested hills. Yet, here you have been drawn, invited by the intriguing proposal of the keep's steward. Still, you have been treated well, kept in warm rooms at the inn and fed your fill. For two days you have enjoyed the hospitality of Steward Gregory, until he arrived at the inn this evening, through the servant's entrance and without an escort. Meeting in secrecy in a small cloistered kitchen, the elderly but spry man greets you over cups of mulled cider.

The remains of Old Sevetburg, he tells you, are three miles southwest along the lakeshore. There, when he was a younger man, he served the Chamberlain of the Old Keep. The land had been gifted to an ill-favored younger son of the Count, ostensibly to keep watch on the northern farms and forests of the Borderlands. The Castellan was a pious man, given to excessive donations to the church, all at the expense of the peasantry. It was the extent of his generosity, it is said, that brought Father Tomas to Sevetburg.

The cleric was a proud man, only too happy to receive the patronage of the Castellan. Within a year, the cleric had convinced the lord to construct a chapel within the keep, a thing quite unheard of in that day. No expense was spared, and soon the people of the fiefdom groaned under the taxes and tithes imposed upon them. Father Tomas exhorted the peasants, under fear of damnation, to sacrifice what little they had towards the construction of the temple.

The toil and cost was nearly more than the fiefdom could bear. Rich tapestries hung on the walls, and services were held upon an altar decorated with precious metals. Behind

the altar a masterful stained glass window was built depicting the cleric and the Castellan basking in a righteous glow from the heavens, the window set to receive the sunrise over Lake Sevet. The Castellan and his family attended services daily, sometimes more.

But most impressive of all the Castellan's gifts was a chalice secretly commissioned and offered to the priest on the eve of the Summer Solstice, a solid gold cup set with six perfectly matched sapphires. Gregory himself, attending service more out of duty than of respect for the clergy, beheld the cup. Indeed, word of it, and of the gold and treasure donated to Father Tomas, spread far and wide.

Undoubtedly, it was the rumor of the chalice and the treasure that brought the berserkers. Sweeping down from the cold foothills of the north, raiders from the Köthic Tribes pillaged the fief, striking so suddenly, that the townspeople could not reach the keep in time. Many fled into the fields and forests and could only watch helplessly as the bailey was looted and the walls of the fort besieged. Within three days, the fierce invaders forced a breach and killed all those inside. It is said that as they pillaged the church, they tortured Father Tomas to reveal the location of his fabled chalice. He refused to divulge its location to his tormentors, and in retaliation, they burned the church down with him inside, razing the town as they left.

All this occurred nearly thirty years ago, when the Steward was a young man. Many have searched the ruins of the old keep for the chalice during that span, but no trace of the treasure has ever been found. Most have assumed it was destroyed in the fire, if it existed at all. Others are certain that it adorns the table of some barbarous lord even now. Gregory, however, has always been drawn to

the Old Keep. Virtually nothing is left of the chapel, he tells you; only charred ruins remain.

Four years ago, while visiting the ruins and ruminating on the folly of his former lord, he noticed something he had never noticed before. Virtually the entire great stained glass window was gone, save for the lower left portion, that depicting the feet of the proud cleric. His right foot was depicted as resting upon a small gold cup. Excited, Gregory more closely examined the old glass. Cleaning off decades of grime, he clearly saw the symbol of a star etched in the glass beneath the cup, and beneath that, stranger symbols still.

He believed he had found a clue other treasure-hunters had overlooked. Slowly, so as not to arouse suspicion, he began to frequent the ruins. Scouring the shell of the chapel, he at last found a flagstone in the furthest corner of the church, upon the lower left corner of which was etched a star, identical to that depicted in the window.

It took him some weeks to furtively remove enough rubble to attempt to move the stone. His efforts were rewarded when he revealed a steeply descending narrow stair, a secret passage! It was all he could do not to descend there and then. He was no fool however, and he concealed his excavation.

Discreetly, he sent out word for those of adventurous minds to descend to the secret vault. It was an agonizing time, for he was certain that others would discover the window's clue. To prevent that from happening, he himself destroyed the remainder of the window, but not before making a drawing of the cryptic symbols (provide the players with the handout provided at the end of this adventure).

At last, his secretive entreaties were answered, and a small band of southerners arrived. Gregory offered them the same conditions he has offered you: if the chalice can be found, he will pay each member of the team 500 gp in addition to one-half of any other treasures recovered. Under cover of darkness, the mercenary company set out. The expedition was brief. Watching the

moonlit ruins from a distance, Gregory was startled when he heard fearful shrieking. He watched as the party raced out of the ruins, screaming as if demons pursued them. What followed was a hair-raising chase through the moon-lit forest. When at last he caught up to the band's leader, the warrior threw the window-sketch at the steward's feet and swore an oath to never reenter the place. The only description Gregory could obtain from the terrified young man was that "Father Tomas is still burning."

The Steward blows on his hot drink to cool it. "I cannot tell you for certain what you may find beneath the old chapel," he confides, "But I am certain that the chalice lies beneath."

DM'S NOTES: This adventure is designed for 1st level player characters. The party should number between 4-6. It would be best if the party had at least one thief in attendance. The adventure's locale is deliberately left imprecise; the DM may place the adventure in any location of his or her choice.

THE CLUES: The stained glass window was designed by Father Tomas, and does indeed provide clues to the location of his secret cache. The cleric was able to seal off the area before the berserkers breached the keep's walls. The fragment preserved by Gregory depicts the foot of the cleric gently resting atop a small gold cup, indicating that the treasure was underfoot. A star is etched on the cup itself. The star indicates where the secret entrance can be found. Beneath the cup are three curious icons: a quartet of eyes, a pyramid and an odd black tree. These icons can guide the PCs if they can divine their meaning.

The Quartet of Eyes: This icon provides the PCs with the safe path through Area 5.

The Pyramid: This icon provides the clue to the true resting place of the chalice, behind the mural of the mountain vista in Area 10.

The Tree: This icon warns of the guardian the Father Tomas set to guard his treasure, the *kampfult* at Area 11.

START: The party is asked to set out at night, on foot, and not to bear any lights until ready to enter the secret vaults. Gregory does not wish any passing travelers to question the nocturnal activities at the old keep. He can provide the party with any reasonable equipment they may need, but will not provide any armor superior to leather, or any magic items at all.

The night is quite cold, and the cloudy sky hides the party's departure from the inn. The remains of Old Sevetburg are perhaps a brisk hour's walk over the newly harvested fields from the walls of the new keep. Twenty years have passed since the savage invaders ravaged the town, and little is left. Old Sevetburg was a settlement of the "motte and bailey" variety, the small town hidden behind a wooden palisade. Above it, on a hill overlooking the lake, a walled keep served as the seat of the Castellan.

Nothing is left of the bailey at all. Only the remnants of an odd stone wall, and a curious grassy mound provide any sign that a town once bustled where the party now steps quietly. Only a hollow shell of crumbling stone is left atop the hill, nearly overgrown with scrub and wicked thorns.

The Old Keep: The keep is ruined, and no part has been left standing. If the DM wishes, perhaps other entrances exist, leading to forgotten larders, dungeons, etc. The remains of the church still bears its rounded wall, but the upper levels and roof are gone. Searching the area with illumination, following the Steward's directions, the party can easily find the heavy flagstone. It requires a strength of 13 or more to lift.

Note that the secret vaults below are dark and damp. Unless the party members all have infravision, some light source will be needed. The area has a claustrophobic feel; unless otherwise noted, the ceilings are only 7' high. All doors are stuck, unless otherwise noted, requiring successful OPEN DOORS rolls to pass.

1. SECRET STAIR: The stair descends 18' down. The secret passage is only 3 ½' wide and 6' high. At the bottom is an iron-banded wooden door. It is slightly ajar. Any thief can

determine that the door was once locked (the key is long lost).

2. WATER-DAMAGED CHAMBER: A nearly overpowering wave of mildewy stench roils out of the room when the portal is opened. The door opens into a small 10' x 10' chamber with a 7' high ceiling. Vivid frescoes once covered the walls, but severe water damage has caused the paint and plaster to peel and slough off. It is difficult to determine what the frescoes represented. Only enigmatic figures can be dimly made out through the ruined artwork. Thick coats of algae have grown, forming a furry brown border along the base of the walls. A small waist-high shrine on the opposite wall is empty.

This room contains nothing of interest. The door to the left of the entrance is slightly ajar.

3. FATE OF THE UNFAITHFUL: Just beyond the door, three steep steps lead down into this room. The walls here are as damaged as the previous chamber. It is impossible to make out with certainty what the murals here originally depicted. The stench of mold is much stronger, making it difficult to breathe. The bottoms of the walls are thick with fungus. At the far end of the chamber is an identical door. There is something on the floor next to it.

The "something" is the shriveled remains of a young woman who died here nearly twenty years ago. Her corpse lies against the wall. If disturbed, four angry **giant rats** (HP: 4, 3 (x2), 2) will emerge from their lair in the wall to protest her removal. She wears a leather cuirass, but it has split and is useless. A dagger at her side has rusted away. However, her corpse hides 18 greatly tarnished silver coins on the floor.

If an attempt is made to open the far (false) door, the trap in the chamber is sprung. The door leading to Area 1 snaps shut with surprising strength. At the same time, freezing water begins to rush into the room through vents in the walls at floor level (concealed by the fungus growth). The water depth increases at the rate of 1' per round, i.e., the chamber will fill in 7 rounds. The door to Area 1 must be forced open to escape. The door will open on a 1 in 6 per try. Note that those PCs with Strength of 16-18/50 will be able to

force the door on a 1-2 chance, while PCs with 18/51-18/00 Strength will be able to do so on a roll of 1-3. The freezing cold will sap the victim's strength at the rate of 1 point (or 50% of exceptional points) every other round, making it progressively more difficult to force the door open.

The trap was sprung once already, slaying the young thief whose body has been found. There is insufficient water remaining in the secret cistern to fully maintain this trap. Once the chamber is full, the water will begin to drain out within two rounds, thence draining at the rate of 1' per round. PCs trapped in the chamber when it completely fills will suffer 1-2 points of damage the first round, and 2-4 points on the second. Any player may declare that his or her PC is holding their breath at the last moment before the chamber is completely flooded. If such a declaration is explicitly stated, those PCs suffer no damage on the first round, and only 1-2 points of damage on the second.

Note that some PCs, such as a heavily armored dwarf for example, will be submerged prior to the room being filled unless assisted by taller companions. In any event, any torches or lanterns will be completely extinguished.

One full turn after the water has completely drained away, the door to Area 1 will unlock, unless it has been forced open already. Lost strength points return at the rate of 1 point per 2 turns.

4. HAUNTED VAULT: The walls of this chamber are richly decorated. The party's lights play off the bright paints. A cleric and a knight are depicted as joining a procession of saintly personages outside a fabulous castle, perhaps to embark on a pilgrimage. Doves and ravens fly above the figures' heads, carrying flowers that form a fanciful border along the ceiling. There is an identical door at the far end of the chamber.

The moment the players enter the room, a frightful event takes place: with a flash of light, a man fully engulfed in flames explodes into existence in the center of the floor, shrieking in agony. This **phantom** will cause all who

behold it to save versus spells at -2 or flee as if affected by a fear spell. The phantom will only be visible for two rounds before vanishing. This is as far as the PCs' predecessors made it. The phantom will not reappear if the room is reentered.

Beneath the depiction of the castle gate on the eastern wall is a concealed door. Short of removing the plaster, the door will only be discovered if the artwork is closely examined, and even then the chance is only 1 in 4. The door can be opened on a 1 in 10 chance unless the plaster is chipped away first.

5. THIEVES' REWARD: Five feet beyond the door is another portal. The wooden door is banded in bronze. The ever-present frescoes depict a dark shadowy copse. Haunting figures are depicted peering out at the party through the boughs and from between branches.

If the pull-ring of the door is touched, a 6' by 6' section of floor swings down, revealing a ten-foot deep pit beneath the trespasser. The bottom 4' of the pit is filled with freezing black water. Any person completely within the area falls into the pit with no possibility of avoiding the trap. Anyone on the threshold is allowed an opportunity to roll less than his or her Dexterity on a d20 to avoid the fall.

Victims suffer 1-3 points of damage from the fall into the pit. The trapped portal is a false door. Victims in the water will lose points of strength as in Room 3.

6. PATH OF THE FAITHFUL: The frescoes of this chamber depict a dozen frowning kings on elaborate thrones looking down upon the room in judgment. The floor is made up of sixteen separate 3' x 3' stone slabs. In the center of each slab is etched the numeral "i," "ii" or "iii." An identical door is at the far end of the room. Rushing storm clouds have been painted on the ceiling.

Refer to the illustration of this area. If any weight exceeding 30 pounds is placed upon a section bearing the inscription "ii" or "iii," a **dust devil** is summoned (HP: 8) and attacks any living creature in the chamber—beginning with the trespasser. The 'devil remains for nine

rounds before being dispelled. Only one dust devil is summoned per slab, per day. Thus, a PC who races across the chamber may well summon a swarm of these creatures! Note that the door at the far chamber must be forced open like all others. Dust devils will not pursue foes outside of this room, although they will cause the door to Area 4 to slam shut if the PCs flee.

The Steward's sketch provides the PCs with the correct path through the test: by stepping on those four sections inscribed with an "i," the party may safely cross.

7. FATEFUL CHOICE: This chamber takes the adventurers' breaths away. This chamber is more richly decorated than any other scene yet encountered. The ceiling depicts a wondrous heaven with luminous clouds and flocks of doves. Spectacular frescoes on the walls depict three priestly figures. Beside each is an archway with a recessed stone portal without pull-ring or handle.

On close examination, a small lever can be found carefully camouflaged within each fresco. The figure to the right of the entrance is a young country priest in a woolen cloak and simple sandals standing in the midst of a wooden grove. He respectfully lowers his eyes and offers a rough-hewn wooden cup to the viewer. The figure to the left is an aged cleric piously contemplating the heavens from the marble steps of a massive temple. He holds a silver chalice reverently. The figure opposite the door is a stern abbot seated upon a high throne. He casts a fierce glance at the viewers. A fabulous golden chalice encrusted with gems is clasped in his ring-laden hand.

This chamber is trapped. Only the right portal leads further into the complex. That tableau depicts Father Tomas as he saw himself: a humble and pious servant of his deity. If the lever to the right is pulled, that portal rumbles slowly opens, revealing Area 8 beyond. If either of the levers on the left or center are pulled, both those stone portals slowly rise, revealing terrible guardians left behind to guard the chalice. Behind each portal is a horrible mockery of a man, a straw scarecrow bound with leather twine and sinew, with a

frightful painted gourd where its head should be! Each **straw golem** (HP: 20 each) shambles forward and attacks. The golems can fight for 9 rounds, after which they fall apart. They will pursue fleeing trespassers.

8. ANTECHAMBER: The door into this chamber remains open unless and until the correct lever in Area 7 is pulled again. The vivid murals here are more somber and dark than in previous rooms. Huge dragons and vengeful angels threaten those who enter this chamber. On the side walls, a procession of pious pilgrims kneel and genuflect before the fierce guardians. There is an iron-bound door at the far end of the chamber.

The far door is locked and trapped. If the door is pulled open without first removing the trap, a ceramic pot in Area 9 beyond is tipped and broken, and a fine spray of acid will be shot from slots above the doorway, seeming to come from the maw of a ravaging dragon. The acid cloud will cover the 5' area before the door, causing all within the area of effect to suffer 2-8 hit points of damage, unless they successfully save against breath weapon, whence damage is halved. Note that those unfortunate victims who fail their save must also determine whether or not their possessions are destroyed by the acid (Dungeon Master's Guide, p. 80). Remember to require clerics to roll for their holy symbols. If the door is opened, the inhabitant of Area 9 will stride forth.

A secret door, only 3' high may be found on the wall to the immediate right of the entrance into this chamber. It is obscured by the mural of a praying pilgrim, who blends in with the devout throng, but for a rough wooden cup in his right hand. It will be found only 1 in 8 unless the party members assert that they are searching the figures. The plaster can easily be chipped away, allowing entrance into Area 10.

9. FALSE VAULT: Immediately behind this door is a towering figure clad in gleaming field plate armor, bearing a massive flail. The full helm is plumed and its gilded facemask fashioned to represent a growling lion.

This guardian is a **zombie** (although it may not be recognized as such) (HP: 14) left behind by Father Tomas; all that remains of one particularly miserly baron whose lack of faith disturbed the cleric. The zombie has armor class 2 due to the armor, and the field plate will absorb 1 hit point of damage per die inflicted, up to 12 hit points. Note that the armor is quite valuable if it can be salvaged. Indeed, it is the most valuable item in this chamber!

Beyond is a richly decorated room. The walls are alight with vivid murals depicting the knight and cleric in a wondrous and heavenly citadel, prostrate before the feet of a majestic lord. Winged figures and fantastic monsters look down upon the pair with pride. A wondrous vestment is set upon a rough manikin. A flat-topped chest is bound and locked in the center of the chamber. A richly embroidered place setting is set atop it; upon it rest a crystal ewer and ladle, and a gold censer and lamp.

The vestment, although brightly dyed, is made of wool. The ewer and ladle are actually made of colored glass and are of modest value (2 gp apiece). The censer is gold-plated and worth perhaps 15 gp. The lamp itself is brass. All items are enchanted with a *Nystul's magic aura* spell.

The chest is both locked and trapped, unleashing a *wyvern watch* upon the opener at the 9th level of experience. Within is a single item wrapped in linen. It is, in fact, a pyrite (fool's gold) cup set with false gems of blue glass. It appears to be worth some 800 gp upon a rushed review, but any genuine inspection will reveal it to be nearly worthless (although the *Nystul's magic aura* cast upon it may lead the party to believe otherwise).

10. TRUE VAULT: Beyond the secret door is a fabulous chamber. No expense has been spared to decorate this chamber. Gold dust and crushed gems have been added to the paint to create breathtaking vistas. Guided by his priest, a faithful knight arrives in the heavenly Holy Land. At the opposite end of the room, the majestic throne of heaven strikes awe into the viewer. The effect is

ruined only by extensive water damage that has affected the wall to the left of the entrance. A marble altar sits at the feet of the center mural; a small chest before it.

The marble altar holds an intricately adorned golden bowl and ladle, worth 550 gp and 275 gp, respectively. Beside them is a folded vestment woven from some shimmering thread. The vestment, if worn by a lawful cleric, allows its wearer to cast a *magical vestment* spell upon himself once per day at the 9th level of casting. By itself, this wondrous garment is worth some 3,600 gp. Resting gently atop the vestment is a gold censer worth 300 gp. Within is a block of wondrous incense that, if lit, functions as a *divination* spell cast by an 11th level cleric. There is enough present for four such uses.

The chest is locked, although it is not trapped. Within are secreted some 800 gp and 200 sp, together with a tiny (3" x 3" x 2") silver chest adorned with mother of pearl. The chest looks to be worth 750 gp. It continually radiates *protection from evil* in a 10-foot radius. The chest cannot be opened by anyone other than a lawful cleric of 12th level or higher. What lies within, surely a minor relic of some kind, is left to the DM's discretion. Perhaps the mystery of its contents will lead to further adventures.

No cup or chalice can be found. It is not here.

A concealed door was once expertly hidden under the fresco of a majestic peak. Due to the water damage, however, it can now easily be found if searched for. The door is 3' high and slides roughly to the side.

11. THE WELL: The concealed door leads to a roughly hewn chamber. The cavern walls are unadorned. The air is cold. In the center of the room has been laid a large (3 ½' diameter) circular stone. Beneath this capstone (which requires a strength of 13 to lift aside), a yawning pit descends down into the frigid darkness. The well is some 30' deep, with the bottom 4' filled with ice-cold water.

There are neither stairs nor ledges, although the rough stones do provide numerous hand

and footholds for daring climbers. Thieves gain +10% to climb walls rolls and even non-thieves can clamber up and down with a 65% chance of success (although non-thieves wearing cumbersome armor suffer a penalty similar to that affecting similarly-attired thieves (Unearthed Arcana, p. 22), with any armor better than studded leather causing an identical maximum penalty (-30%). The easiest way to descend, of course, is to be lowered down on a rope. Note that anyone falling the length of the well will suffer 2d4 hit points of damage.

Twelve feet down the shaft, a sharp-eyed adventurer may spy a particularly large stone (some 3' x 3') in the wall of the well. The icon of a small cup has been scratched into its surface. The stone is kept in place with mortar. If it is pried free (an exhausting effort), it will splash loudly down into the water below. A small crawlspace can be spied beyond.

Anyone wriggling through the crawlspace discovers the lost cache of Father Tomas. Beyond is a roughly 5' high by 8' wide cavity. Several heavy burlap sacks have been piled here.

Lurking just above the entryway however is Father Tomas's final guardian, a loathsome **kampfult** (HP: 13) that will seek to strangle any who enter. As it attacks the first creature entering, it may be difficult to assail; its victim's body no doubt blocking others from entering the fray.

If the **kampfult** is dispatched, the true treasure of Father Tomas, wrung from the backs of the

Sevetburg peasantry, may be looted. The sacks contain 3,181 gp, 6,733 sp, and 7,252 cp. In addition, the cleric has hoarded a great collection of simple jewelry, religious icons and family heirlooms worth 1,200 gp collectively. Beneath the sacks is a chest of lacquered wood. The chest is locked, but not trapped. Within, the chalice of Father Thomas is wrapped in deep purple silk (itself worth 50 gp). The chalice is dazzling, and is worth some 16,000 gp.

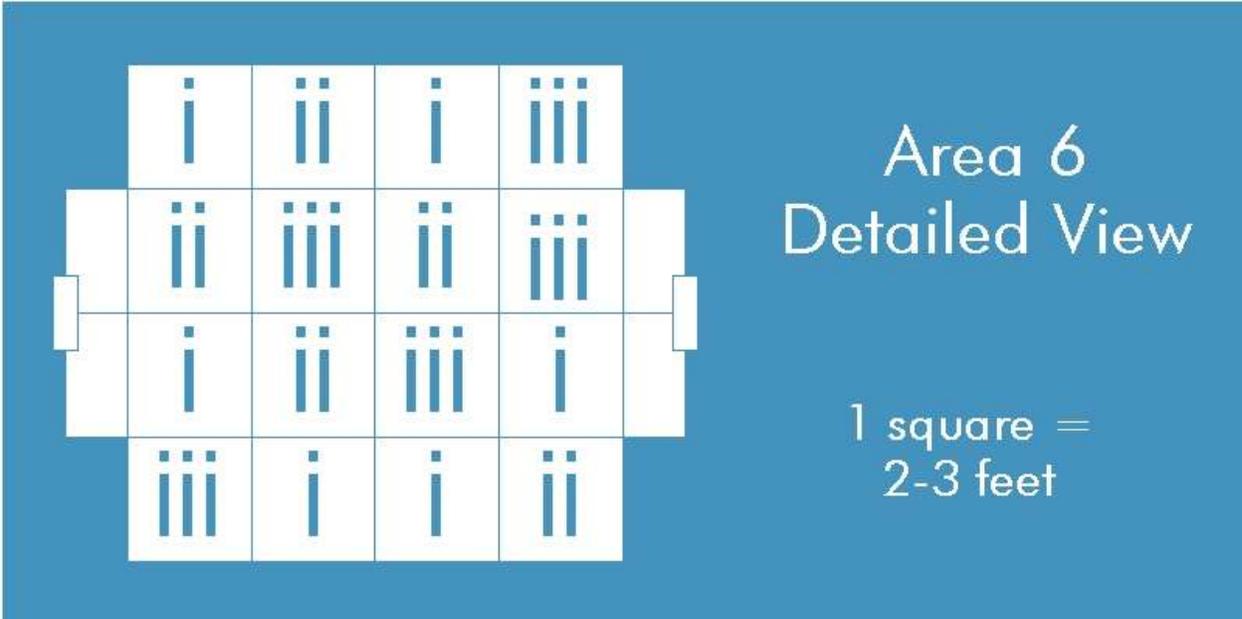
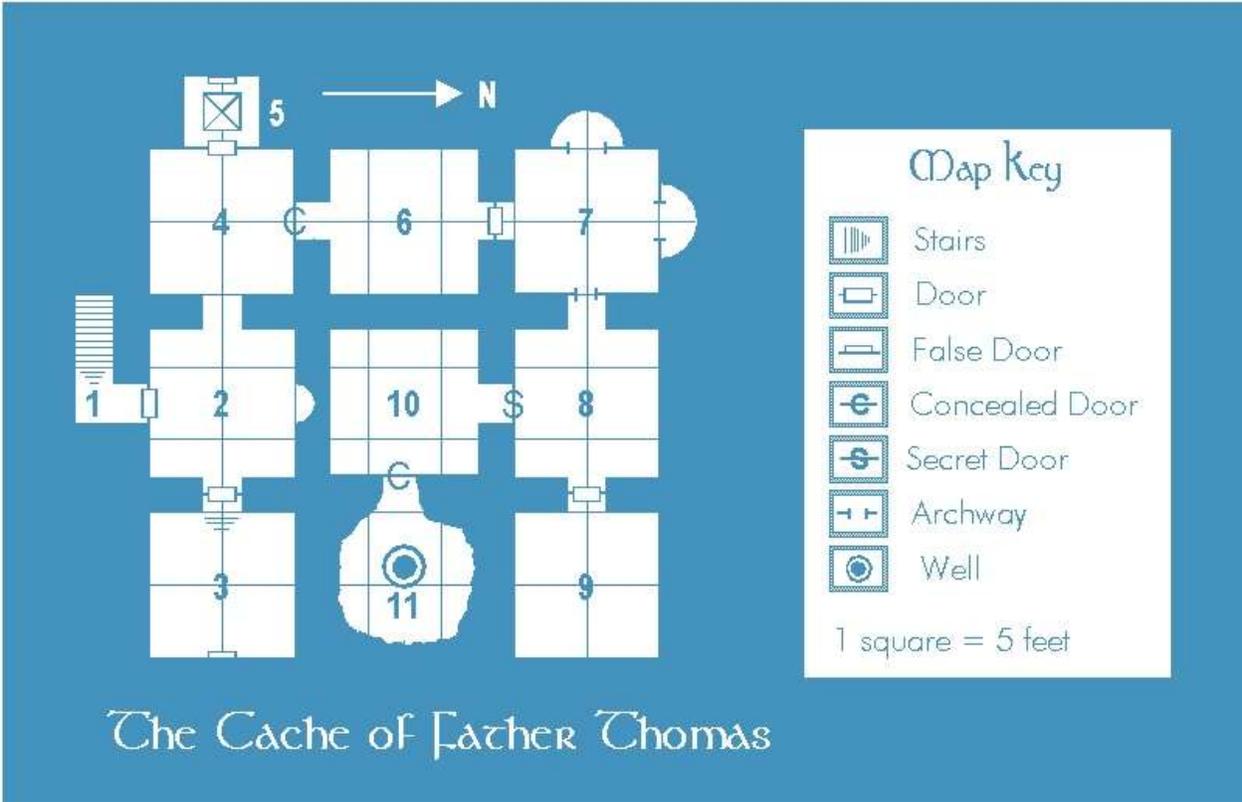
REWARDS OF THE STEWARD: The heroes may come to regret their arrangement with the Steward. The chalice is, after all, worth more than all the treasure in the complex by itself. However, Gregory is waiting outside for their return. He is a very powerful man in the area, and should the PCs attempt to abscond with the chalice, they may never find rest again.

If they return the chalice to the Steward, he will be overcome with emotion and they will have gained an influential patron. He will gladly pay the heroes and can also be easily persuaded to award each survivor with a fine mount, complete with tack and harness.

EXPANDING THE ADVENTURE: The DM is encouraged to expand upon the area to provide additional adventuring opportunities. It is possible that there may be other hidden rooms beneath the ruins of the Old Sevetburg Keep. Furthermore, the Steward is likely to be inclined to hire the heroes' services for additional errands in the fiefdom. Lastly, word of the chalice's return may reach the ears of the sons of the old Köthic raiders ...

HERE ENDS THE LOST CACHE OF FATHER TOMAS







The NYSTUL and LENDORE ISLE Campaign

Copyright © 2005 Len Lakofka

Roughly 1978 to 1985

Character Generation in General

This is not a complete guide to character generation but some guidelines on one method of doing the job. It is how the players created their characters in my Lendore Isle campaign.

My philosophy is to play interesting characters with potential for heroic things. Thus a character with S 11, I 9, W 12, D 10, Cn 13, Ch 9 might be just below average on three six sided dice but who wants to PLAY him? If you truly want to role play well you have to overrule brilliant and wise decisions by this guy as well as keep the player in check. The player cannot suggest a brilliant plan to the party except through his character's mouth. So Intelligence 9 and Wisdom 12 just do not cut it.

I used 4d6, drop the low die, to generate characters. You rolled **seven** times (eight when Comeliness was used) and recorded the scores in order. You read the three highest dice of course. The players would roll with me present. I asked them to roll each time, pause, and record, then roll again. I asked to SEE any roll of 17 or 18 before the dice were picked up. Is that an insulting request? I did this with most everyone, certainly every campaign. If you don't tempt people to say they rolled four 18s then they won't, will they? So I would get up and walk over and see the player's 17 and if he or she rolled 18 I wanted to see the 4th die. If it was 5 or 6 I might award a special bonus if I felt generous that day.

So let's say the rolls are:

15 17 14 13 16 8 15

You may now make TWO changes.

1. You may eliminate one score (usually the 8 of course but not always)
2. Make one transposition.

They are in ORDER because you are going to read them S I W D Cn Ch. I used the order Strength, Intelligence, Wisdom, Dexterity, Constitution and Charisma because that is the way it was in 1978. This limits the final result a little bit and makes up for the 4d6 instead of the 3d6 method. Let's say we eliminate the obvious 8. The result is:

S	I	W	D	Cn	Ch
15	17	14	13	16	15

If this is a brand new party I will limit the number of non-humans, and I might be specific on races that cannot begin the game, though all races will come into play as time passes. There might not be an Elf in the town where you were raised for example; or Dwarves might be shunned or even stoned by the local rulers (if those rulers are evil). Races depend on the DM's scenario (which he should have penned before he begins to dice up characters) and thus there might be no Gnome or Halfling, for example, in the first batch. To me batch means one player character per person at the table. This will change as characters die off. (Early players will not have the contacts or gold to buy a Raise Dead, so death is death.)

As the character stands he is not really set up well to be much other than a magic user. The two 15 scores are both wasted. With 16 for Constitution the player does not want to move that

score. So you can see how being forced to leave the scores in order has a limiting effect. The best fighter is likely 17 13 14 15 16 15 but you can't quite get there with only one move. The 17 can move to Strength or move to Dexterity. The advantage long term is of course to Dexterity. If you can avoid being hit AT ALL due to Armor Class adjustment you will fare MUCH BETTER than if you leave the Dexterity score at 13. Many of the upper level spells and even some monster attacks are best avoided altogether by sidestepping the claw, touch or weapon. Many a low level character learns that all too quickly after the first Ghoul attack!

Let's say our player makes one switch.

S	I	W	D	Cn	Ch
15	13	14	17	16	15

That looks like a thief to me but it can make a decent cleric. He would still get two bonus first level spells and that's quite good. As a magic user a 45% chance to FAIL learning new spells is more than enough to say no to that class. (I used this "Chance to Know Spell" table: 13 = 55%, 14 = 60%, 15 = 65%, 16 = 70%.) Yet a thief does win out in the long run. If the player asked if I would allow a Halfling, then the character becomes:

S	I	W	D	Cn	Ch	Race
14	13	14	18	16	15	Halfling

Now I would let players make a series of rolls to flesh out the character. I usually didn't care about height, weight, eye and hair colors and sex. Yet I wanted to be a partner just in case one of those would be of interest to me as the DM; a character 6'8" tall or with flaming red hair can matter.

First and foremost I wanted to know the character's current number of Experience Points and thus determine his or her level. There is no one chart for this roll since as DM I might want to limit the top character to 3rd level. But let's use this table for right now:

d% Roll	1 to 50	51-70	71-85	86-95	96-100
Fighter	8d20 + d%	12d20 + 2d%	8d% + 200	12d% + 400	d4 * 6d%
Mage	200 + d%	300 + 2d%	500 + 4d%	1000 + 6d%	1500 + 10d%
Thief	10d20	8d%	d4 * 4d%	d6 * 6d%	1000 + 6 * d%
Cleric	400 + d%	600 + 2d%	800 + 3d%	1000 + 4d%	1500 + 4d%

Notes:

4d8 = roll four 8 sided dice.

d6 * d% = roll a six-sided die and multiply by a percentile roll.

8d% = roll eight percentile rolls and add them up.

Our Halfling, named Pseudo, rolls 73 so he gets to roll 3d% and add 800. So let's say that is 1040, well on the way to 2nd level. The DM can make a similar table based on his or her needs and desires.

Next he rolls for his parents and mentor. I would have a table for the town determining who's who including a few farms and abodes near the town. There would be a select number of thieves in town so we would have to find his current teacher. (He might have been taught the basics elsewhere especially if he is another race so that would in the table for non-humans.) I would learn that he resides in the leather smith's home and the tinker is his current mentor. Why did I want to know this now? I want to see if those two major characters possess any magic item (s) that they might lend or even give to him. I would determine a percent from my knowledge of the town and have him roll d% twice. Either he would or would not get something (the something might be mundane like a weapon, a water skin or a 20GP gem).

Next I would roll to see if he has any possessions of note from prior adventures. Look up each percent chance below and multiply by the character's level.

	Weapon	Defense	Miscellaneous Magic Item	Potion or Scroll	Ring
Fighter	10%	10%	2%	1%	1%
Mage	1%	4%	8%	6%	3%
Thief	3%	0	3%	1%	2%
Cleric	7%	12%	6%	8% scroll only	3%

Note: DM can limit maximum % chance; the players don't get to see the tables, do they?

So the thief gets to roll five times. I often watched these rolls too, but not always.

He gets very lucky and rolls 2% on the Miscellaneous Magic roll. I would have a list of items. I'm not going to let him roll randomly and get the Eye of Vecna!

The list might be:

1 - 40	Boots of Elven Kind
41-60	Bracers of Defense AC8
61-73	Cloak of Protection +1
74-80	d4 doses of Kheoghtom's Ointment
81-94	Necklace of one Missile (4d6 fire ball) ¹
95-00	Ring of Spell Storing ²

Notes:

1. You watch, he will screw up the first and last Fire Ball he may ever throw.
2. I made rings of spell storing unique to a specific spell or I'd allow any first level spell of a certain type like an Alteration. I would determine that at the time of presentation.

He rolls 97 and I give him a *Ring of Spell Storing*. I would have a table for that too. (The DM's work is NEVER done.)

Rings of Spell Storing must be filled by the appropriate spell caster, magic user or cleric. He would most likely charge to replace the spell.

1-40	Light	Cleric or Mage!
41-60	Cure Light Wounds	
61-75	Silence 15' Radius	
76-85	Detect magic	Cleric or Mage!
86-94	Jump	
95-97	Spider Climb	
98	Feather Fall	
99	Forget	
0	Invisibility ¹	

Notes:

1. Invisible does not mean inaudible nor does it mask smell. I also ruled that a direct attack by the wearer ALWAYS negates invisibility from a spell immediately on the striking of the blow or throwing of the dagger. Also casting another spell negates invisibility as the conjuration begins. Rings of Invisibility can function again in one to six rounds after an action that negates invisibility (DM ruling of course).

As the need for a second character came along I would anticipate this by having the players roll up a second character during the first few adventures but I would withhold the appearance of the character until an appropriate time. I once had a party kill off the new player character because they did not realize who he was! As DM I played the new character at the introduction and then gave control the person who rolled him up.

Some notes on the Nystul campaign.

During the period of time that the Nystul campaign went on (Brad, Genny, Mike and Brian Nystul and Mark whose last name I don't remember) the players went through about 40 player characters. A lot of characters were killed off over the years and only the cream of the crop (and the very lucky) survived. Thus you will note that three of the fighters have an 18+ strength. These were characters that rolled natural 18s and then they rolled their percentile. None of them rolled 00.

We played this campaign on most Sundays (about 45 a year) from about 1PM to 9PM and many nights we played till 11PM so we could watch Doctor Who on public TV. You will note there are no 11th level characters and only one achieved 10th level.

The players who survived till the end had a total of 22 deaths with the appropriate resurrections. I did not automatically reduce constitution by one; I'd let them roll for it. However, I did watch each Resurrection Roll as the player made it. Dead was dead forever if you failed. The number of times a figure could be raised was limited by the beginning Constitution score.

The Nystul Family believed in the BIG PICTURE and did lots of things to make a DM very pleased. The Ruin at Bone Hill was an example of their coordinated effort. Once they cleared it out they took stock of their wealth and actually postponed training for two characters to bring in workers to clear the rubble and hire dwarves and gnomes to build and supervise the building of new walls, putting up a new main gate and refurbishing the interior. The renamed structure was called Voxbonder Abbey and was presided over by Ralyman the cleric, then about 5th or 6th level. There was a side alcove devoted to Fortubo, a Suel Deity who more or less adopted the race of dwarves as his own. Fortubo was an honorary deity in the pantheon of dwarves and some dwarves worshiped him as their patron.

Later in the campaign they adventured north of the city of Kroten, having dispatched the evil Duke of Kroten and his henchmen (a High Priest and a Wizard). The town was Grellton I believe. (I named a god Grell, but then that name came out as a monster so Gary Gygax renamed him Llerg.) After its evil lord was dispatched, the temple there was converted to a Temple of Fortubo and the town renamed Dwarfhaven. The key player in the sacking (I mean freeing) of Grellton was Dobfur, then an 8th level Cleric. As a reward he was asked by Fortubo himself to travel to a place where dwarves were being treated as thralls. That mini-campaign lasted almost six months of real time and the freeing of the dwarves was quite an event.

Fortubo gave Dobfur a unique promotion. He was named a High Priest and given the power to Raise Dead on Dwarves and Gnomes! Unheard of! He could try to raise a human at a 30% penalty. Further he was given some magic, the Scepter and Crown came from that pay off, and he was allowed to bring back to Dwarfhaven a few dwarves from the other world (six or seven of them).

The word spread like wildfire that the dwarves now had a High Priest on Lendore Isle and soon a ship arrived from Irongate. It contained 40 or so dwarves as well as a few gnomes who paid homage to Dobfur and agreed to become his followers. (They did expect to be fed or course, a small housekeeping problem that Dobfur organized with great skill.)

Mike Nystul and Brian Nystul still do design work for role playing games though I'm not 100% sure of who they work for these days. I lost touch when I moved to Long Beach, California, from Chicago in 1985. Mike was more aggressive and impetuous while Brian was more conservative. Mike did many brash things that got him killed more than once. One of them was using his magic user as a flying spell launch pad during a major melee. As he rose above the clatter and begin casting a Fire Ball someone yelled "There's a target!" and many orc archers found something to shoot at! Oops!

Gellcuff has an *Eye of True Seeing*. It is IN his eye socket since both of his real eyes were taken during torture by the Duke of Kroten. Gellcuff had the Eye from a prior adventure. When Gellcuff refused to talk under torture his god (Phaulkon) rewarded him (after his rescue of course) by emplanting the Eye. The Eye had all of its magical powers and also allowed Gellcuff to see clearly up to 50 feet. Between 50 and 100 feet things were blurred. He was blind beyond 100 feet. (You can't have everything.)

Where was it going in the next two years?

I moved to Costa Mesa California in 1985 and that ended the Nystul campaign. I did have a plan for the next adventures of course. The party had adventured in the entire middle and east coast of Lendore Isle and all that was left was the western large peninsula.

They began with the Secret of Bone Hill and the large ruin of a temple in that module. Subsequently they renamed and reworked the ruins calling the new Temple to Phaulkon Voxbonder Abbey. Later they adventured in Grellton and after throwing down the evil there converted the town to Dwarfhaven and founded a temple of Fortubo. Both of these temples drew clergy and henchmen as well as hirelings for the prelates of the two temples. Voxbonder drew mostly humans and Dwarfhaven called to Dwarves and some Gnomes.

Under Voxbonder Abbey there was a teleporter that led to a room guarded by a Stone Golem and also by a trap that magically flooded the room with poison gas. The gas, of course, did not affect the Golem and it could beat them up while they strove to not pass out or die in the gas. In the same room there were four other teleporters. They could have jumped on one of them and gone somewhere else. The somewhere else list, as best I recall it was to:

Kroten, the large temple there

Lo Reltarma, another temple basement

Grellton, aka Dwarfhaven, beneath the castle in a secret room they did NOT find

Manville (which was not named for MEN but for MANticores)

The 5th teleporter of course went to Bone Hill (aka Voxbonder Abbey).

While they could have used these teleporters to go from place to place that was never their plan. They were planning a frontal assault on the stronghold of Asmogorgon (the site of the room with the five teleporters). They were summoning their "armies" (if they were lucky this would be 250 individuals) as the move to California occurred for me in Real Time.

Asmogorgon (minor history of that place to follow) would retaliate by putting a Major Demor and a Major Devil in their respective basements! (A few minor demons and devils to make it interesting would also go along for the ride.) These teleportations would occur if and when the invaders were spotted coming into the Skull Mountains (Peaks) that guarded the pass into the city. Havoc would prevail behind them and they would be notified just as they were moving forward. Either get back to Voxbonder or Dwarfhaven or find two steaming ruins after a few days of action by the Demon and Devil. The "army" would be about one to two full days march

from their home bases by that point if they moved at fastest speed. A few orc and gnoll war parties would harass their movements regardless of which direction they went in.

Their best action was to send the major characters back home and leave the "army," under the command of a few of the principals, to wipe up the orcs and gnolls. If they had left a few principals behind at Voxbonder and Dwarfhaven then perhaps they could have dealt with the Demon and/or Devil without anyone coming back home. That would have depended on how the player characters divided themselves among Dwarfhaven, Voxbonder and the army. That decision was being made by the player characters when we had to stop.

One of the more interesting pieces of magic they would run into if they made it to Asmogorgon was worn by the High Priest of Syrul. She was not human at all, or even a follower of Syrul but instead a minor Devil. They would discover this if they physically attacked her. At that point she would transform while summoning a few lesser devils to protect her.

She was wearing a suit of plate armor of very special quality. In melee she did NOT act as leader but just an important henchman so that the best party fighter(s) would go to her chief minion who would give orders to surrounding troops etc and appear to be the group commander.

Plate of Anti-Magic (unique: there are no duplicates)

XP value: 10,000

Cost: 45,000gp

The wearer enjoys armor class -4 while moving without any inhibition. Note: the wearer can bear a shield and can use dexterity if applicable. The armor absorbs energy (fire, cold, lightning) to some degree: 2d6 of damage reflects back to the caster doing no damage to the wearer. 2d6 of the damage is absorbed and returns to the wearer as curing in the next melee round.

The armor wearer is only struck by a magic weapon of +2 or higher potency. +1 weapons that strike the armor itself explode doing 2d4 to the weapon wielder and 1d4 to the armor wearer. (Note that +1 / +x weapons are considered +1 unless they are +2 or better vs. the wearer!) Non-magical weapons that strike the armor simply break, shatter or disintegrate but there is no damage to the weapon wielder or the plate wearer.

+2 and better weapons do damage to the plate wearer but run the risk of exploding. The weapon's save is 10 or higher on d20; weapons gain +1 to the d20 roll for every plus above +2 or if the weapon has a bonus plus against any special class or type of creature. So a +2 weapon/+4 vs trolls would gain +4 to it's saving throw. If the weapon saving throw is below an adjusted 10 then it explodes for 2d6 damage to the plate wearer and 4d6 damage to the weapon wielder. There is no saving throw for either the wearer or the wielder from this damage. Those within 5 feet of the WIELDER take this damage as well.

Examples:

Determining if the armor is struck: Consider a man in no armor. His armor class is 10. Put on the armor. It is now -4, so armor class has shifted 14 places. If a roll of 4 hits armor class 10 based on the wielder's level, weapon and strength then any roll of 4 to 18 hits the ARMOR and does not damage the plate wearer based on the weapon. However it might explode and that would cause damage to the plate wearer and weapon wielder alike. If he is wearing a shield as well then 19 hits the SHIELD and not the armor. All 20's hit the plate and of course do weapon damage to the wearer.

Situation: Four (or more) attackers attack the plate wearer, three from the front and one from behind. If the weapon of the any of the front three explodes, all three take damage, but the rear attacker takes no damage from the explosion.

Situation: The attacker has +3 sword that does 1d6+1 damage. His physical strength is 17 so +1 more to hit and damage. His level alone lets a 16 hit armor class -4. So now if he rolls 12 or better he hits the plate wearer (16 -3 -1).

With his first roll to hit he gets a 14. He rolls 4 on d6 for damage so the weapon does 4+1, +3, +1 = 9 damage. The weapon now rolls on d20, getting a 15 -- no explosion.

On his second roll he gets a 7, hitting the armor but not damaging the wearer. He rolls for the weapon and gets a 3 -- the weapon explodes! 2d6 = 7 and 4d6 = 13. The weapon is destroyed, of course.

The explosion does not affect any other worn items, even mundane items.

To add to the doom and gloom the armor is pure evil so that anyone putting it on would have to save vs their wisdom DAILY for the rest of the time they wore it into battle. Even putting it ON would require the save to occur. Should this save fail, the wearer's alignment shifts immediately to evil. However, making the save allows use of the armor for 24 hours without another such save. However, *Detect Evil* by a 7th or lower level spell caster will not find the evil.

If the wearer DIES in the armor the armor explodes for 6d8 damage to all within 2" of the armor.

What a FUN melee that would have been!

It was my feeling that from 3 to 5 player characters would be killed in this final assault to rid the island of Evil once and for all. I will itemize the key Asmogorgon minions and henchmen as well as give a total roster of beings, underworld creatures, undead and monsters that were available to the city in a future article.

Roster of Player Characters

Alberk

(Player: Genny)

Title:	Knight Commander	Alignment:	Lawful Good
Race:	Human	Deity:	Jascar
Class:	Fighter	Height:	5'10"
Level:	8	Weight:	185
Str:	18/61	Birthplace:	Keoland
Int:	13	Age:	27
Wis:	10	Died:	4
Dex:	15	Armor:	Chainmail +2
Con:	16	Shield:	+3
Cha:	17	Protection:	Ring of Fire Res.
Attacks:	Fauchard +5* Trident +1 Bow & Arrows	Hit Points:	67
Magic:	Pot Clairaudience		
Special:	*Detects Precious Metal, Detects Shifting Passages, Locate Object, X-Ray Vision; Purpose: Slay Demons, Paralysis of lesser Demons		

Arthur

(Player: Bob)

Title:	Red Star	Alignment:	Neutral Good
Race:	Human	Deity:	Weejas
Class:	Mage/Cleric	Height:	5'6"
Level:	10/3	Weight:	135
Str:	8	Birthplace:	Duxchin I
Int:	16	Age:	36
Wis:	15	Died:	2
Dex:	9	Armor:	BracerAC3
Con:	15	Shield:	
Cha:	12	Protection:	Displacer Cloak
Attacks:	Dagger +2	Hit Points:	37
Magic:	Ring of Levitation, Ring of Invisibility, Pipes of the Sewers, Amulet vs. Detection & Location, Wand of Secret Door & Trap Detection, 6 Scrolls, 3 minor Wands		

Alkaris

(Player: Mike)

Title:	Knight Commander	Alignment:	Lawful Good
Race:	Human	Deity:	Jascar/Bahamut
Class:	Paladin	Height:	6'3"
Level:	9	Weight:	205
Str:	19	Birthplace:	Phaulkonville
Int:	14	Age:	30
Wis:	14	Died:	0
Dex:	15	Armor:	Platemail +5
Con:	15	Shield:	+5
Cha:	18	Protection:	Talisman +4 vs. Fire
Attacks:	Broadsword +3 Longsword +1 Lance +1	Hit Points:	80
Magic:	Cloak of Protection +2, Ring of Feather Falling, Wand of Negation		

Wildawine

(Player: Brad)

Title:	N/A	Alignment:	Neutral
Race:	Halfling	Deity:	Norebo
Class:	Thief	Height:	3'2"
Level:	8	Weight:	68
Str:	13	Birthplace:	Irongate
Int:	14	Age:	36
Wis:	11	Died:	1
Dex:	17	Armor:	Bracer/Defense AC3
Con:	12	Shield:	Cloak +2
Cha:	10	Protection:	Ring of Protection +1
Attacks:	Dagger +4 Dagger of Venom*	Hit Points:	32
Magic:	Gem of Seeing, Ring of Spider Climb, Ring of Free Action		
Special:	*5 doses lethal poison, save for 5d4 damage		

Dobfur

(Player: Genny)

Title:	Baron, His Prominence	Alignment:	Lawful Good
Race:	Dwarf	Deity:	Fortubo
Class:	Cleric	Height:	5'1"
Level:	9	Weight:	150
Str:	16	Birthplace:	Blemu Hills
Int:	14	Age:	110
Wis:	16	Died:	0
Dex:	12	Armor:	Platemail +3
Con:	16	Shield:	Cloak of Pro. +2
Cha:	18	Protection:	Scepter*
Attacks:	Hammer +3, Returns when Thrown** Hammer +2 Flail +2	Hit Points:	74
Magic:	Ring of Minor Spell Storing, Scrolls, Crown +3 vs Fear		
Special:	*Protection from Evil, 10%Mag Resistance **Dimension Door 3/day		

Fred

(Player: Brian)

Title:	N/A	Alignment:	Neutral Good
Race:	Human	Deity:	Phaulkon
Class:	Ranger	Height:	6'4"
Level:	7	Weight:	220
Str:	17*	Birthplace:	Nyrondy
Int:	13	Age:	25
Wis:	14	Died:	3
Dex:	13	Armor:	Chainmail +2
Con:	13	Shield:	+3
Cha:	12	Hit Points:	50
Attacks:	Short Sword (Flames) Broad Sword +2		
Magic:	* Girdle of Hill Giant Strength		

Gellcuff

(Player: Brian)

Title:	N/A	Alignment:	Lawful Neutral
Race:	Human	Deity:	Phaulkon
Class:	Fighter	Height:	5'10"
Level:	8	Weight:	170
Str:	17*	Birthplace:	Dwarfhaven
Int:	12	Age:	31
Wis:	8	Died:	1
Dex:	13	Armor:	Splintmail +4
Con:	16	Shield:	+3
Cha:	8	Hit Points:	46
Attacks:	Frost Brand Shortsword+1		
Magic:	Eye replaced by Gem of True Seeing, Ring of Free Action, Ring of Invisibility, Brooch of Shielding		
Special:	* Girdle of Frost Giant Strength,		

Ralyman

(Player: Brad)

Title:	Knight Banneret	Alignment:	Lawful Good
Race:	Human	Deity:	Jascar
Class:	Cleric	Height:	5'7"
Level:	9	Weight:	135
Str:	13	Birthplace:	Frost Barbarians
Int:	14	Age:	28
Wis:	18	Died:	1
Dex:	17	Armor:	Chainmail +2
Con:	14	Shield:	+1
Cha:	12	Hit Points:	42
Attacks:	Mace of Disruption Flail +2		
Magic:	Scrolls		

Bond

(Player: Mike)

Title:	N/A	Alignment:	Chaotic Neutral
Race:	Half-Elf	Deity:	Weejas
Class:	Fighter/Mage	Height:	5'8"
Level:	5/5	Weight:	115
Str:	16	Birthplace:	Nyrondy
Int:	15	Age:	81
Wis:	11	Died:	3
Dex:	11	Armor:	Chainmail +3
Con:	16	Shield:	+3
Cha:	12	Protection:	
Attacks:	Longsword+1 Bow & Arrows		
Magic:	12 Arrows +1, Ring of Protection from Normal Missiles, Cloak Flying		

Flint

(Player: Genny)

Title:	Knight Bachelor	Alignment:	Lawful Good
Race:	Human	Deity:	Jascar
Class:	Fighter	Height:	6'0"
Level:	7	Weight:	170
Str:	1881	Birthplace:	Zeif
Int:	12	Age:	24
Wis:	14	Died:	0
Dex:	15	Armor:	Splintmail
Con:	16	Shield:	+2
Cha:	10	Protection:	Ring of Pro. +3
Attacks:	Longsword, Dragon Slayer* Bow & Arrows		
Magic:	Crown(Levitate/Shield/Protection from Normal Missiles), Lyre of Building		
Special:	* Dbl Dmg vs Cold, Detect Lawful, Comprehend Color Dragons		

Grimbold

(Player: Brian)

Title:	N/A	Alignment:	Lawful Neutral
Race:	Dwarf	Deity:	Fortubo
Class:	Cleric	Height:	4'9"
Level:	6	Weight:	145
Str:	15	Birthplace:	Glorioles
Int:	14	Age:	102
Wis:	17	Died:	0
Dex:	15	Armor:	Platemail +2
Con:	19	Shield:	+2
Cha:	13	Protection:	Cloak Invisibility
Attacks:	Mace +2	Hit Points:	49
Magic:	Ring of Spell Storing (Cure Light Wounds, Bless)		

Heerow

(Player: Mike)

Title:	N/A	Alignment:	Lawful Good
Race:	Halfling	Deity:	Norebo
Class:	Fighter	Height:	3'4"
Level:	5	Weight:	73
Str:	16	Birthplace:	Dreadwood
Int:	12	Age:	28
Wis:	12	Died:	0
Dex:	17	Armor:	Chainmail
Con:	13	Shield:	+3
Cha:	12	Protection:	
Attacks:	Shortsword +3/+6 vs shapechangers* Sling & Bullets	Hit Points:	28
Magic:	Rug of Flying		
Special:	*Detect Secret Doors		

Zeelon

(Player: Genny)

Title:	N/A	Alignment:	Neutral
Race:	Elf	Deity:	Norebo
Class:	Mage/Thief	Height:	5'3"
Level:	6'6	Weight:	120
Str:	14	Birthplace:	Dreadwood
Int:	15	Age:	150
Wis:	16	Died:	3
Dex:	18	Armor:	Studded Leather +3
Con:	14	Shield:	
Cha:	13	Protection:	Ring of Regeneration
Attacks:	Broadsword, Flame Tongue Dagger +3	Hit Points:	150
Magic:	Brooch of Shielding, Rope of Climbing, Amulet vs. Detection and Location		

Sormat

(Player: Brad)

Title:	N/A	Alignment:	Chaotic Neutral
Race:	Human	Deity:	Phaulkon
Class:	Fighter	Height:	5'2"
Level:	6	Weight:	180
Str:	1865	Birthplace:	Oumtsy
Int:	12	Age:	46
Wis:	15	Died:	4
Dex:	14	Armor:	Chainmail +1
Con:	13	Shield:	+2
Cha:	12	Protection:	Ring of Fire Resistance
Attacks:	Broadsword of Dancing* Bow & Arrows	Hit Points:	41
Magic:	Eyes see Invisible		
Special:	*Detect Metal, Gems, Shifting Passages *Shield / Read Languages / Levitate 3/day		



Suel Gods

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NAME	Portfolio	Symbol	Vestment	Color(s)	Animal(s)/Monster(s)	Holy Day(s)	Worshipped in:	Churches in Barb States	Churches in Ratik	Types of Clergy	Alignment	Majority of Followers
LENDOR	Time, Tedium	Scepter with 16 Stars	Hat & Robe	Silver	Silver Dragon	1st of Month	Church	None	Marnar	Clerics	LN	LN, Mages, Astronomers
Norebo	Luck, Gambling	Two Eight-Sided Dice	Robe, Bare Head	Brown/ Dark Green	Satyr/ Rabbit	Freedays	Woodland Mound	Yes	Yes	Clerics & Druids	CN(E)/ Non-lawful	Thieves, Gamblers
KORD	War, Brawling	Gauntlet, Clenched Fist	Girdle, Boots & Gauntlets	Red, White Blue	Ape / Gorilla	Godsday	Battlefield	Patron	Yes	Clerics	C(G)	Fighters
Phaulkon	Open Air, Birds	Feather(s) or Arrow(s)	Headdress, Feather cap	Blue & White	Any Bird esp. Hawk	Freeday, 1st day Spring	Hillside	Yes	Patron	Clerics & Druids	Good	Good
SyruL	Lies, Deceit	Two- Prong Fork	Robe, Shaved head	Yellow & Brown	Poisonous Snake	Moonday, Full Moon	Outdoors during Full Moon	No	No	Clerics	Evil/Neutral	Evil and Humanoids
Fortubo	Stone, Metals	Hammer with Glowing Head	Robe or Cape, Iron Cap	Brown or Gray	Burrowing Animals	1st Earthday of Month	Caves, Stoneworks	Seldom	Near Mts	Clerics	LG	Lawful, Miners, Dwarves
WEE JAS	Magic, Death	Skull before a Fireball	Expensive Robes	Grey, Black & White	Lawful Undead/ Spell-casting Dragons	1st Festival day	Cathedral	as Death	Yes	Clerics	LN(E)	Intellectuals
Pyremius	Fire, Poison, Murder	Lit Torch & Vial of Poison	Multicolor Robe & Hat	Red, Yellow & Orange	Barbed Devil	Moonday	Below Ground	Few	No	Clerics	Evil/Neutral	Evil and Humanoids
Beltar	Malice, Deep Caves	Fangs of a Snake	Robe	Black or Dark Gray	Vampire or Snake	Last Starday	Deep Caves	Some	No	Clerics	CE(N)	Non-Lawful / Humanoids
Llery	Beasts, Strength	Necklace of Bear teeth	Girdle & Full Beard	Brown or Green	Bear, Snake, Alligator	Last day of Month	Outdoors	Patron	Yes	Clerics & Druids	CG(N)	Barbarians/ Berserkers
Phyton	Nature, Beauty	Oak Cudgel or Scimitar	Crafted Clothing	Earth tones	Sprite/ Pixie	Festival Sundays	Woodland	No	Esp. forests	Mostly Druids	N	Farmers/Rangers
Xerbo	Sea Business	Turtle Carapace	Robe & Bare Head	Blue green	Turtle, Dragon Turtle	Waterday	On Ship in Port	Ports	Ports	Clerics & Druids	LN	Fisherman/ Merchants
OspreM	Voyages on Ships	Fish head (skull)	Decorated Metal Armor	Gold, Blue or Brass	Barracuda, Whale, Dolphin	Waterday	On Ships	Ports	Few	Clerics	NG	Sailors/ Fishermen
Lydia	Music, Daylight	Musical Instrument	Long Flowing Vestment	Bright Multicolored	Singing Bird	During a Rainbow	Outdoor, Open Air	No	Marnar	Clerics	LG	Scholars/ Musicians
Bralm	Insects, Industry	Limb of a Giant Insect	Caped Robe	Dull Brown & Yellow	Giant Insect	Workday	Beehive, Ant Hill	No	Few	Clerics (Druids)	N	Lawful, Non-Good
Jascar	Hills, Mountains	Ore- Bearing Rock	Robe or Armor	White or Earth tone	Cloud Giant	Earthday	Underground, Hill-top	No	Few	Clerics	LG	Good, Non-Chaotic
Akwamon	Storms, Life in the Sea	Design of a Ship	Long Cape	White, Gray & Blue	Any Sea Creature	Waterday	Large body of water	Ports	Ports	Clerics & Druids	CE	Fishermen
Bahamut	Metallic Dragons	Hammer	Platinum Armor	Metallic Color	Singing Bird	1st Godday	Mountain side or summit	No	Few	Clerics	LG	Good, Non-Chaotic
Tiamat	Colored Dragons	Colored 5 pointed Star	Five-Color Striped Robe	Red, Blue, Green, White, and Black	Male Colored Dragon	New Moon	Dragon cave	Very few	No	Clerics	LE	Evil

Note: Deities named in ALL-UPPERCASE are Major deities, those in Mixed-Case are Minor deities.

The Standard Bearer

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The man who is tenacious of purpose in a rightful cause is not shaken from his firm resolve by... the tyrant's threatening countenance.

-- Quintus Horatius Flaccus

We'd taken the standard day's ride, or walk in my case, naturally all of it up hill, to reach the twin towers of the evil wizard, Blackheart. For the thousandth time I found myself wondering why evil wizard's always had dark sounding names. Most of these types came from humble backgrounds. You'd think some lovely, little peasant wench would know better than to give her son such a moniker. A smart knight could rid the land of a generation of evil wizards by just going around and bashing all the black-this's or dark-that's, long before they came into their magical power. I supposed such action, although incredibly brilliant in concept, wouldn't be the honorable thing to do. What chance for valor would there be in striking at the young? On the other hand, I'd found valor a highly overrated ideal.

As standard-bearer to the High Paladin of Dragon Mountain, there were certain forms to be met by our opponents and ourselves during the beginning, middle, and end of any given assault. These forms began exactly twenty arch-dragon wingspans from any given foe. I was the one who got to determine how far twenty wingspans were.

We neared the twin towers and I didn't like the lay of the land. The cliff around the tower appeared blasted clean of vegetation. Imagine not liking an occasional mountain orchard or cliff lily growing up around your place; I know I can't. This wizard dwelling appeared to be bad to the bone. The two towers stood one behind the other on the edge of the cliff attached to Sleeper's mountain. Only one small trail led to the lower tower portcullis. I bet Blackheart wasn't in the near tower, but a host of his minions, with fang and claw would be there to say, 'Hi.'

The towers were the standard wizard-made things. Black stone, perfectly shaped from top to bottom, undoubtedly designed and raised

in an hour's time, in the dead of night, during the dark of the moon. They had the proper sinister look. They commanded the area in the standard menacing way. To no one's surprise, just eyeballing them, made a person uncomfortable. You know the usual yadda, yadda, yadda wizard stuff.

Standing exactly seven paces in front of the Paladin, I went into my spiel. It's a good bit; my Paladin Lord and I worked the speech out over several months when I first started standard bearing for him.

"The High Paladin of Dragon Mountain, Champion of the Eastlands of Delmar, Hero in the Troll Wars, protector of the weak and all things fair, and Lord of castle Death Spike challenges the evil wizard Blackheart to mortal combat!"

Perhaps the mortal combat bit was a tad over used. On the other hand, how else was one killer going to tell another killer that he intended to fight until one of them was dead?

We'd been on our way home to Death Spike castle when we heard about this Blackheart character. Apparently, he'd been going around killing virgins and tiny babies. Of course, we had to stop him, even if he wasn't exactly in our territory. I mean everyone knows it's crass to kill virgins for any reason.

The first fireball caught no one by surprise. Lava-hot, flames of immense size and power washed over the magical circle around us to no effect. Seven paces was of course the maximum range of a Paladin's magic negating sphere. I knew it and the wizard tossing the fireballs now knew it. Spell casters being what they are, the wizard had to try. So, now the fiend was aware that my Paladin owned a high, holy sword of considerable arcane power. Soon the bastard would know a few other things as well. The standard

lightning bolts leapt out turning to dust inches from my face. Spells like the Black Death ray, all-powerful Splintering Maw, horrible Claw of Arkanos, and the ebony Mystic Blade enchantment all turned to dust as soon as the beams, blasts, and spheres touched the protective field surrounding the paladin. The Mystic Blade enchantment was a good touch. I thought to myself that we hadn't seen a good ebony Mystic Blade enchantment in several years. That spell proved this wizard bum was no slouch in the magic department. Wouldn't it be nice if evil wizards only had ravaging death spells to use against heroes? Unfortunately, for my high Paladin, such wizards always had minions, monsters, and machinations to use against the good guys.

So far, the contest took all the standard turns. I looked back at my champion of champions to see if I should start our second phase of the battle. Once more, I admired everything about Paladin Trueheart. Mounted on Whiteflame, the high Paladin was every inch a warrior. I'd spent most of the night burnishing his huge plates of armor. The man stood seven feet tall in his stocking feet. A lot of armor was needed to cover such a frame. Each plate was engraved with a different style of heart symbol. There were sixty-two different pieces of magical armor and I knew every one by its magical name.

Last night while I worked on his armor, he worked on his holy sword. The magical, high holy weapon was a curved horse saber. Deeply etched in the long blade were the runes of magic negation, quick striking, and battle awareness. These runes glowed blood red when he went into battle. Each was like an ember now that he had the weapon drawn and resting across his saddle. He nodded for me to continue.

"Insofar as the High Paladin has been attacked from a distance, the standard rules of combat are now in effect!" I shouted hoping I was loud enough to be heard even to the second tower.

I really enjoyed when the standard rules came into play. The high rules of warfare were

boring to watch and always got my Lord's good armor dented terribly. Naturally, it was my job, after my Lord won the contest, to fix that armor. Few people had even a glimmer of an idea how hard it was to get dents out of magical armor.

Since we were now using the standard rules, I could fight by my Paladin's side. It was rarely a good idea to fight exactly along side the high Paladin. Although he's filled with battle sense, his sword arcs out all over the place and even the innocent, which I only slightly resemble, can get hurt. I did most of my fraying behind his back.

If I had any luck at all, this wizard would be like most of the rest. Soon the fiend would use a nasty trick in the battle, and then the low rules of knightly combat applied to this conflict. That's when the party warmed up a might. In any aggressive situation, getting my Paladin angry enough to have to use the low rules of combat was a bad idea for the foes, if you know what I mean. Using the low rules offended him. For some odd reason that only the fraternities of paladins knew, he felt he'd done something wrong if he had to resort to the low rules. From my standpoint, I loved them, because it meant anything goes for the standard-bearer of the high Paladin as well as the Paladin himself. Once, I even got to backstab an evil knight's ogre. The Paladin had been irritated at me for a month afterward. I have to hand it to him though; he never said a word about it. There was a lot to like about paladins once you got past their high and mighty ways.

Then there was the ten-person rule. My Paladin liked challenges so I wasn't allowed to enter the fray until there were more than ten foes facing him in any given combat. I could naturally fight anyone who was directly attacking me. Foes hardly ever wanted to stab me when my Paladin was around. Sigh.

So, we begin walking forward when all of a sudden and much to my happy surprise, the portcullis opens. That was lucky, because I didn't have the slightest idea how we were going to get it open by ourselves. The basics of high paladin battles often were left to fate

and my brawny back. Out from the tower, a wyvern and its rider move toward our position.

'Hot damn!' I thought to myself as I unfurled the standard. The entrance opened for us and we could kill something in the bargain, my glee almost knew no bounds. Wyverns were mean, poor cousins to dragons. Wild ones did a lot of bouncing from mountain crag to mountain crag on their long legs. Their wings were good for gliding, but only got in the way in a good fight. Their long tail did end in a poisonous sting. The poison was great for taking stains out of bloody tabards. Standing about twelve feet tall, they were useful battle beasts. Many experts believe the wyvern is the perfect monster for a rookie hero to encounter. My Paladin hadn't been a rookie since the Troll War.

I went up to the monster, the standard tight in my hands. The magical effects of the standard kept creatures like dragons and wyverns from biting off my head.

"Right honorable, soon to be dead foe of the high Paladin, in accordance with the standard protocols, be you the wizard of this tower?" I already knew the answer to my question, but I had to ask. The proper forms must be observed at all times, I had been told at least a thousand times by my Lord.

"No, I'm his senior apprentice. You may call me Algenon. I have come to parley. Are you this knight's squire, soon to be fried to a crisp person?"

The apprentice knew the forms; I had to give him that. "No, I'm the standard bearer. I work for a living. Oops, that wasn't part of the protocols, sorry. Do you intend to challenge the high Paladin in the wizard's place?" I knew the answer to this one as well, but had to ask the question.

"Heavens no. I'm here to tell you and this ruffian you serve to go away. Failing that, I need to ask how the knight would like to be buried after he is tortured for a thousand days, ripped apart by fiends, and had his soul twisted into an eternal spirit for the wizard's pleasure? You of course will serve as a slave

until the wizard's vampires have tired of feeding on your blood."

I couldn't help myself. A big belly laugh erupted from my lips.

Whiteflame moved up a step. I knew the champion was amused as well, but I shouldn't have laughed. It was bad form.

"The high Paladin worships the Goddess Wren. Use her ninety-seventh ritual to bury my master. Thank you for asking. Shall we continue?"

With the forms being properly followed by both sides for a change, I walked past the wyvern into the tower. Algenon moved beside me. His Wyvern barely kept in check. Its fangs dripped in its rage to rip and tear something, namely me as the closest target. Green globs of poison seeped out of its sting with every tail swoosh.

"Been with the paladin long?" Algenon asks in a friendly way.

"Just eight campaigns, but I was there for the Troll War. There was some interesting action in those magic filled six months, let me tell you."

"The Troll War. My wizard was asked to join on the side of darkness in that little scuffle. Probably was a good thing for him, he was in the middle of creating an iron golem at the time and couldn't be bothered. That ended badly for the wizards didn't it?"

I held the standard a little tighter and became really displeased. Golems were often even harder than dragons to kill. I moved the standard in a figure eight. My Lord sheathed his holy sword and took out his holy hammer. The new weapon was the only thing in our large arsenal that worked against golems.

"After that fracas was done, not a wizard was left alive. All the dead ones were in too many parts to even think about casting spells. Kinda like what's going to happen here. The high Paladin behind me was in the middle of everything during that war and that should tell you something."

"Oh, it does." Algenon waved his fingers for a bit and he and his enchanted beast started glowing green.

I must have talked too much, again. Pride is often more dangerous than a sword, the Paladin told me at least a thousand times. I vowed to myself to speak only standard-bearer stuff from then on.

"So Algenon, what's it gonna be? Is your master going to send fiends at us or try crushing us with magical catapult shots, or maybe something original like using an enchanted war machine?"

As we cleared the tower entrance, Algenon moved to a small alcove. He and the wyvern fit neatly inside this niche as if made for it. "Oh a little of all three I imagine should work just fine."

I didn't like the smile on the punk's face. We'd cautiously moved forward into a huge courtyard. The area was many times larger than the size and shape the surrounding tower would indicate. This effect was pretty standard for a wizard's tower. Rushing us from the left were fiends from hell. Each was at least nine foot tall. These fiends shimmered with evil power and their bone spears were the size of small trees. From the right, a huge spiked juggernaut of a war machine crushed the stones of the courtyard in its efforts to get to us and do some more crushing. From above and beyond us the other tower started belching magical stones shaped into boulder-sized death heads. I looked back to see Algenon beaming from ear to ear.

My Paladin charged off to battle the juggernaut. He loved fighting war machines, don't ask me why.

I planted the standard in the cobblestones. The pinion unfurled and started emitting a white, blinding light. The standard was a gift from the Paladin's goddess and its magics were especially made for fiendish situations. The minions of hell became half blinded by the glare the standard emitted. Then the pinion started singing holy praises to Wren the goddess of life and joy and the monsters flew

into a battle rage. I didn't much like the music either, but it didn't make me go crazy.

I stepped back and walked over to the still grinning Algenon.

"That's quite a welcoming committee your evil wizard has."

"It will do for a start. That's quite a hammer your paladin has."

"Oh, the hammer is a practical tool, but you'll see that Whiteflame's hooves are even better."

The danged apprentice waved his hands and went from glowing green to glowing purple with strange orange dots dancing around his body. I kicked myself, as I knew it was some sort of battle code for the wizard. I saw the entrance to the next tower change before my eyes. It went from a nice open gate to this narrow set of small steps ending in a high door.

Algenon was staring at the standard magically stuck upright in the middle of the courtyard. By this time the crazed fiends were going stark, raving nuts. They battered against the pole of the standard with their weapons, talons, and fangs. Every once in a while, one of them would be overcome with the glory of the device's holiness and just pop out of existence. After several minutes, there were only three fiends left.

"What else does that thing do?"

Now that the high protocols were not in force, I was allowed a little leeway in my conversations with the enemy's minions.

"Oh, soon it turns into a white dragon to help the paladin."

"It does," Algenon said with wonder in his voice. A few more waves of his hand and his mount glowed white.

"But I think the army of light spirits will be here before that happens." I said this casually as I drew my quarterstaff and rested on it.

The Paladin was just finishing the last of the juggernaut. Whiteflame had done most of the

damage with its magical horseshoes of thunderwalking. I could see by the way it frisked around that they had both had a good time dodging spinning juggernaut spikes. The machine was just parts lying all over the place.

Death skull boulders rained from the other tower, but they came so slowly and at such a regular rate that they were easy to duck. As the Paladin neared the remaining two hell creatures, one of the rock skulls took out a fiend, crushing its chest and smashing it to the ground. The holy light blasted the other out of existence.

I checked off the first tower as a wash. One more tower filled with enchanted monsters and an evil wizard and we could go home. Hopefully, we wouldn't hear about any other wizards or terrible knights. This quest had been unusually long and tiring. However, that was another story and I shouldn't be counting my basilisk eggs before they were hatched.

Since they seemed to be doing nothing but helping us, the enchanted death head boulders stopped.

The portcullis slammed shut behind us and an iron gate appeared on this side. That was fine by me as such things kept foes in as well as imaginary friends out.

Algenon started putting on some nasty looking wizard gloves. "I notice, standard bearer, that your quarter staff has one end capped in cold iron and the other end capped in silver. I think you will soon find those features very useful. On the other hand, the holy Wren runes carved in those heads will have no effect at all. My master is an advocate of Dolentha, the dark one. I look forward to our meeting at the top of the tower." He put the spurs to the wyvern and it bound forward.

"Sure you do chum," I whispered to myself.

I didn't have the heart to tell him that his death gloves of Krakaus wouldn't work on the Paladin or me. Some things people just have to learn the hard way. Now that he was gone, I threw my staff near the standard and took

out my short swords. I liked to get in close when I killed evil. I took a few more hits because of this style, but foes fell down a lot faster around me.

The Paladin grabbed up his standard and waved it at the second tower in boyish triumph. Technically, as long as I was able, he was supposed to let me wield the standard. I supposed he could be forgiven slight breaks in good form. He was only nineteen after all.

Out came the not unexpected iron golem.

The apprentice used his mount to leap to a higher balcony above the only portal of the second tower. This door ten feet up the side of the tower had only a narrow set of black stone steps leading up to the entrance. The golem stood with its huge metal arms folded across its titanic chest. It didn't come down to do battle. The twice-blasted monster waited for my Paladin to come up the stairs to it.

The wizard creation was nine feet tall if the thing was an inch. In the form of a human with arms and legs, its face was a mask of a man in terrible pain. The creation's eyes glowed from the lava flowing inside it. I saw little puffs of green gas escaping from what it used as a nose. I'd be willing to bet anything that gas was poison. Each of its tree-trunk arms ended in stubby iron hands larger than dinner trenchers. Its legs were wider around than the paladin's chest and they ended in odd three pronged hooves. A nasty thing it was. There were few things in the world that just begged to be destroyed, but this was one of them.

The high Paladin faced off against a wood golem during the Troll War. That creature took several hours to kill and a total of thirty powerful wizards, clerics, rangers, and armymen died in the struggle. When the battle was over, my Paladin had a broken leg, shattered arm, and there wasn't a spot on his body that didn't show a bruise. That golem was made of oak. This one was of iron.

Dismounting, the Paladin ordered Whiteflame to guard the standard. Then he asked me to help take off his armor! He could see the look of amazement on my face as he stripped off

his only protection against the barrel-sized fists of the enchanted monster.

"It'll hit me twice and all the magical armor in the world won't protect me from those killing blows. The trick is to get in there quick and keep away from its fists and hooves. Do you think bashing in its skull will kill it like it destroyed that wood golem you and I took out?"

I hated when he asked me questions. He was also being too kind. I'd only done one thing to help in the wood golem battle. He was better at everything than I was and any advice I gave him could get him killed. I really didn't like to think what an enraged goddess would do to his standard-bearer if the greatest champion the goddess had ever known died in battle and I wasn't killed as well.

"You move three times faster than that big wizard's creation. Take a head shot anytime you can. You have to pound it to pieces so take headshots and then aim for those hooves. If it can't walk, maybe we can get past it to reach the wizard. Use those stairs," I observed. "It must bend down to hit you. When it does, rap it good with your hammer. Are you sure you don't want to keep on at least your breastplate? That won't slow you down much."

"Standard bearer as usual you are filled with good advice. Just because you think so, I'll keep on that piece of armor. Now let's get this finished, we have a wizard to kill."

That made me feel all the worse.

He rushed up the steps with the vigor of youth. I took a drink of water, rinsed out my mouth and spat it on the ground. I reached for the mud I just made; I was thinking on the magical nature of giant, enchanted, wizard-made monsters. This evil spell caster had some major paybacks due and I was hoping the destruction of his golem would hurt him as much as it could be hurting us.

BONG!

The hammer the Paladin employed was highly magical. Its head was round on one face and spiked on the other. The round end appeared

covered in arcane runes of peace and brotherhood. Every time that end hit something, whatever it hit permanently turned white. With any luck, the iron golem would look like a snowman in no time at all. Opposite the round end was a large spike. Its powerful mystical runes dealt with unmaking things. I'd personally seen that spike shatter an evil ten feet tall idol into a million pieces. Right then I didn't like the idea of lava spurting out of golem holes, but a paladin's gotta do what a paladin's gotta do.

The high Paladin rained blows on the body of the golem. BANG! BONG! CLANG!

The thing started belching snaky-thin green gas clouds. The stuff quickly settled to the earth, leaving a slimy trail that sizzled on the stones of the tower and steps. The gas was just one more thing among a dozen needing to be ducked. The high Paladin was up to the task until the first barrel-fist hit him.

BAM! Half its head crushed in as it bent to swing at my champion. Its nose holes bent shut, thus ending the spewing of probable poison gas.

Twenty more blows to the monster's chest, arms, and legs did little damage. I stood constantly looking up, down, and all around. There would be no other foes to backstab the high Paladin while I was around.

Then a golem hoof caught the champion square in the chest. The monster's kick lifted him off the stairs and sent him flying thirty feet into the air. The quarter-inch thick chest plate had a huge center dent. I didn't like to think what the chest underneath felt like.

The golem leapt down from the stairs and moved for what it hoped was a deathblow. I threw the mud I'd been saving for just such an occasion. Sure, the monsters were magical. Sure, only enchanted weapons of extreme power could even put tiny dents in them. On the other hand, they gotta see. When you place a pound of mud in the eyes or in this case, eye, they are naturally going to have problems. This tactic seemed to work for both iron and wood golems. Over the years,

listeners of battle stories have been amazed at what a handful of mud accomplished.

The golem started flailing around and clawing at its one good mud-filled eye. The enchanted monster made really strange honking sounds and its own talons started ripping into its head. In seconds, spurts of lava and steam shot out of huge tears.

The Paladin was able to leap up and climb the stairs behind the blinded thing. With one blow, the rest of the monster's head was crushed flat.

The monster froze and tilted over. Score another one for the good guys.

As we ran up the stairs to the entrance of the second tower, we heard the mewling of a baby. Coming to the door, the high Paladin fell to his knees with a cry of anguish I'd never heard from him before.

There, in front of us was a mortal baby in pain. The wizard had materialized a living infant in the middle of the door. The child was half in and half out of the portal. Parts of its arms, head, and body were fused into the surface of the door. The horror of it paralyzed the Paladin. This act must have been all part of the plan for Blackheart who was really earning his name now.

That's when the singing started. Once the low rules of battle began, the goddess often took a deity-type hand in the proceeding. All too often, this came in the form of a holy and invisible choir of spirits erupting into songs of praise around the Paladin. We never talked about them, but the effect was bizarre. He started glowing with a celestial light. The music increased in volume as he neared whatever evil he was facing. He went from having the strength of ten to having the strength of a hundred. Although he became unimaginably strong, his body never adjusted well. He constantly ripped his hands as he tore away this or that. I felt uncomfortable the entire time the celestial music played. It was a good thing it didn't last long. With tears in his eyes, he touched the baby's face, dispelling the magic that kept it in the door. The infant turned to dust. It would suffer no more.

I was going to suggest he put back on his armor. Now that the singing started, there wasn't time for that. Drawing his holy saber in one hand and using his hammer in the other he bashed his way through the door.

Sobbing his anger, we went through that tower like a holy bolt of lightning.

There was plenty of work for me, but it was all simple stuff. The high Paladin was a blaze of holy light. Anything even remotely evil shriveled at his coming. I finished off fiends, witches, several animated statues, and a mummy. Where the mummy came from, I'll never know.

The upper tower door blew open with the high Paladin's rage. In the middle of the room, in the middle of an arcane floor symbol, stood the wizard Blackheart and his apprentice.

I couldn't even remotely understand the words the celestial choir sang. I could see in the wizard's eyes that they unnerved him.

"Well done paladin. I must admit I didn't think you had it in you. And standard bearer, the mud pie was inspired."

Ok, I admit it. I backed behind my Paladin. It was the wizard's eyes. When they glanced at me, I felt my body quack in terror. I couldn't help myself. Algenon, the jerk, smiled at my cowardice.

"This pentagram of protection will stop, ulp!"

It stopped nothing. Leading with his holy sword, the paladin walked through the arcane symbols like they weren't there and all that magic turned to dust.

Oh sure, there was a huge blast of heat and it burned everyone some. In battles, I've found that you don't feel the really bad lumps until after someone, typically the enemy, was dead. If that dead someone was you, you didn't have to worry about charred flesh.

Not giving the wizard time to magically disappear, the high Paladin struck at this force of evil with his saber. It was met by the wizard's ebony staff. The thing had a beating heart at one end.

This wizard must have never fought a warrior, because he didn't see the hammer coming. The hammer came up from behind the Paladin and struck the wizard a mortal blow in the chest. It lifted the spell caster off his feet and threw him into the ceiling. The weapon crushed his chest and backbone and the wizard fell. The evil scum was still magically breathing, but the holy sword made short work of the beating heart at the top of the staff. Why do wizard's always put their beating hearts' nearby? Oh well, if you knew the trick of it, they were even easier to kill. At least the singing stopped, proving we were done here.

Algenon, the rat, squealed like a stuck pig at the death of his master and flew out the window. While the Paladin prayed over the body of the wizard, I caught Algenon in the back with a thrown silver dagger. The flunky died in mid flight bursting into flames as he fell end over end, down the cliff. It's a good thing silver throwing daggers are a gold piece a dozen because I lose a lot in every combat.

The towers started to break apart, no surprise there. The Paladin mounted Whiteflame and slowly left, mourning all the innocents who had died. I took the time to grab the typical small coffers filled with jewels and chalices filled with diamonds. Apparently, and I loved this part, wizards use a lot of valuable stuff in their magic making and the more powerful the wizard the more valuable their stuff.

That was one great feature about working for a high Paladin. Oh sure, he'd make me give twenty-five percent of the stuff to his goddess. I'd be giving another big part to the needy around Death Spike castle. I didn't know where they came from, but there were always needy around a paladin's castle. When all was said and done, there'd be plenty left and I was still making payments on my second castle on Dragon River.

THE END

The Yawning Trog -Barabuz



A Dwarf's Dream: Hard as a rock with a big chest.

Vingotsky's Vile Vessel (Necromantic)

A New Magic-User Spell by Stuart Marshall

Level: 7

Components: V,S,M

Range: 1 mile horizontally, up to 1000 fathoms vertically

Casting time: 2 turns

Duration: Permanent

Saving throw: None

Area of effect: 1 boat or ship

This spell enables the caster to raise a vessel from the bottom of the ocean as a ghost ship.

The material component for the spell is also the target vessel, which can be of any kind, from a tiny rowboat to a full galleon. If there is no wrecked ship within the spell range, then the spell will fail. If there are several, the closest will be summoned.

The Vile Vessel's appearance is not altered by the magic, so it is likely that its timbers will be staved in or rotten through, its crew skeletal or at least fish-nibbled, and its sails decayed and tattered. However, structural integrity is restored as normal for a vessel of its type (cf DMG). Further damage if any accrues as normal and can cause the vessel to sink once more.

The reanimated crew will for the most part consist of skeletons or zombies, like an Animate Dead spell. However, the ship's Captain and Officers (if any) may be more advanced undead in accordance with the following table:

D6 roll	Captain	Officers
1-3	Ghoul (lacedon)	Zombie
4-5	Ghast	Ghoul (lacedon)
6	Wight	Ghast

The crew of a Vingotsky's Vile Vessel are soulbound to the physical material of the ship, and they can only exist while in physical contact with it. This has several effects:

The crew may not leave the ship under any circumstances.

While on the Vessel, they cannot be Turned by a cleric (NB: The Vessel itself is subject to Turning; it is treated as a Special. If a cleric successfully Turns the Vessel then the crew will sail or row it away, rather than jump overboard to flee. The Vessel could also be Commanded by an evil cleric.)

Sunlight does not harm the undead aboard the Vessel, but it does oblige the ship's Captain and Officers to make every reasonable effort to avoid it. In other words, if there is a cabin still intact, then the Captain and Officers must retreat into it during the hours of daylight, but if there is no cabin intact, they can still function. The skeletons and zombies in the crew are unaffected by sunlight.

The crew may fight if commanded to do so by the Captain, but may not leave the ship to do so. Thus most combat activities will be confined to repelling boarders.

The spell gives the caster the power to command the undead aboard the vessel, including the Captain and Officers if any. This command will last until the last undead creature is destroyed, the Vessel is sunk once more or the caster moves out of spell range or dies.

If the caster loses control, but the Vessel remains intact, then it is set free to roam the oceans as a ghost ship and will seek to waylay and destroy vessels which are still crewed by the living.

The Sharp and Pointy Contest

A few months back Erik Wilson sent me a batch of artwork for Footprints. Among the several fine pictures therein I found the one displayed to the right, and I immediately thought, *this dagger has a story behind it*. So I posted it on Dragonsfoot and asked the members to submit their ideas about the weapon... what's it called, what does it do, etc. Multiple entries were allowed, and several posters took advantage of this rule. Afterward I found an impartial group of judges who had not submitted items to the contest to judge the entries. Voting was done "blind," with the identities of the authors of each entry being hidden from the judges. I want to emphasize that this was as fair as I could make it, because one *particular* Dragonsfoot member won both First and Third place.

Below are the winners of the Sharp and Pointy Contest. Enjoy!

First Place

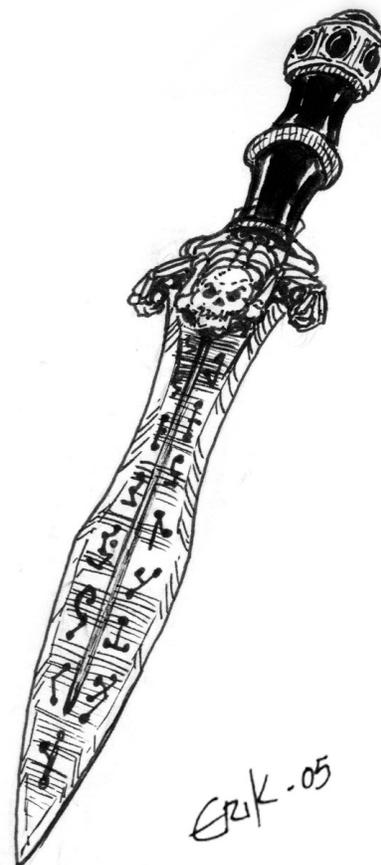
The Blade of Naktris

by Stuart Highman

The origins of this blade have been lost in time. It is known by a few knowledgeable sages that a powerful magic-user, Naktris, created the blade several centuries ago, but his motives and purpose are not known.

The blade itself is intelligent, but its motives remain as obscure as its creator, until it is ready (see below). When the blade is held by some intelligent creature the blade will communicate with it, and try to bargain, deal or otherwise coerce the wielder into taking and using the blade. It knows the locations of many treasures, some of which it may share with its owner. The blade is a +2/+4 weapon, and on a natural 20 the target must save vs. spell or lose a level. The total number of levels thus drained must be recorded. The blade can charm its wielder once per month, but this takes energy to do, costing one of the levels which has been drained.

Naktris passed on to become a lich, and he used the specially made dagger as his phylactery. A group of goodly adventurers managed to kill Naktris, but his phylactery and soul remained intact. Without the knowledge to destroy the weapon, they instead used magics to prevent the creature from taking on a body once more. Imprisoned in the blade Naktris waited. The dagger was sealed in the dungeon of the group's leader, but as time passed his legacy crumbled, his descendants moved on and his once mighty castle fell into disrepair. A few hundred years after the fall of the castle and its family, a group of goblins moved in and took over the castle as a base of operations. There they stayed and raided the surrounding settlements. When one of the goblins, Grarr, stumbled accidentally across the dagger, it spoke to him and promised him power. He and the other goblins were fooled, and he used the dagger in their raids. It brought them great luck, and soon they began to worship the dagger. Many years passed, and a goblin cult grew up centred around the dagger. The surrounding villages raised a bounty on Grarr, the religious leader of the goblin cult. A group of adventurers answered the call and raided the



goblins, killing all but one, Grarr who managed to escape with his dagger and a few of the more choice treasures that the goblins had kept. Horribly wounded, and having been driven mad by the dagger over many years, Grarr wandered and hid for many days before he passed away in a cave. There the dagger remains, until it is rediscovered.

The levels that the dagger drains are used as a source of power for Naktris to escape his imprisonment. He needs to drain 50 levels to gain enough power for this. 9d6 levels have been drained when the blade is discovered (if this value is, or gets above 50 then Naktris is ready to escape). A ritual known to Naktris (which can be imparted to the wielder) will need to be performed; this ritual requires no spell casting ability or any prior knowledge. The ritual requires a body, killed within the last 24 hours, and takes 12 hours to perform. Note that Naktris may promise to revive the body as a means to convince the wielder to perform the ceremony. Once completed Naktris will once again become a lich, using the new body. At the completion of the ceremony, any charm cast by the blade will be nullified. After three rounds Naktris will be able to teleport away and retrieve his items which he hid centuries ago, protected by many powerful magics. These items were well hidden and protected, and should not have been looted. Once he has his items, all spell use will return to Naktris, and he will begin to re-establish himself. He may choose to return to the site of his ritual, if he feels the need to exact vengeance upon the former wielder. Naktris will definitely do so if his dagger has been left behind.

Second Place

The Runeknife

by Michael Haskell

Clannis Strongheart
Knight of the Order of the Frost Bridge
Waycamp, The Downs

To,
Lord-Warden Bayn na'Dimhills and Lord-Heirophant Kavip na'Highguard
High Lords of the Order

Highguard Keep,
Foot of the Frost Bridge,
The Protectorate of the Highlands

My Lords,

In the stone throat of Devil's Deep, under Mount Defile, our secret fears have come to pass: the Runeknife has returned. But much worse, its power of corruption has grown, and out of the seven holy knights that you dispatched in your wisdom to investigate the rumors of evil under the shadows of that fell range, I am the only one who has reached The Downs to make this report to you.

Lords, you deemed me worthy to read the eldritch history of the forging of the Runeknife. Now that I have seen it myself, I cannot rid my mind of the passages from The Chronicles of the Stonethanes that described its bitter making. In that age dim in human memory and even passing into legend for our allies the dwarves, the Stonethanes held most of the mountains in peace and justice and tried to create from their harsh surroundings a society of plenty for their subjects. But under Mount Defile the necromancer Vakis, the Lifesbane, made his demesnes, and at the heart of this was Harrowforge. For long and long years this man preserved his life

beyond its natural span as he studies fell magic and drew evil to him below the threshold of sight of the Stonethanes.

Oh, my Lords, with what I have seen these last weeks, I must cling to faith as to a rock in an eldritch wind to remember the story of the night Lifesbane forged the Runeknife. He had culled from those who came to grovel in his service the finest smiths, dwarves who had turned to the paths of covert evil and their twisted derro and duergar kin; men of endless greed and ambition and even, so the Chronicles hinted, dark elves and other benighted creatures from deep beneath the earth. And Lifesbane gave them a workshop worthy of their cruelty: Harrowforge. Long all of these crafters worked, forging dark spells into the mithril that they twisted and corrupted with death and hatred. At last they brought their dark lord to Harrowforge, and he commanded that the Blood Troughs be filled with the lifeblood of five hundred captives who had lived in slow torment under Mount Defile. Into this horrible flow, he quenched the red-hot blade his smiths had forged, and muttering the most powerful and evil of his spells, he tempered its metal with death. From this horror, the Runeknife was made.

With its power, Vakis the Lifesbane made war upon the Stonethanes, leading his army of the living and the dead. Only in the final extremity, pushed to the foot of the Frost Bridge, did the holy knight Landin, known as Deathfoe, the Protector, push through the horde and challenge Vakis and cast him down, though Landin was wounded utterly in the fray. As he was dying, he commanded that the evil blade be carried to the glacier Frostheart and cast into its deepest crevasse. But the first soldier to reach the blade where it lay next to the ruined corpse of Vakis shrieked as he touched the skull-hilted dagger, and his body was sheathed in black, oily smoke that seemed to dissolve him as at his edges. He screamed as if his soul were destroyed. And as that happened, the last curse of Vakis took hold. His body, the Runeknife, and the tortured remains of that unlucky soldier all disappeared in a black whirlwind.

And for a thousand years the evil of Devil's Deep under Mount Defile has been silent. From that proud day our own order was born, even as the days of the Stonethanes ended. But I tell you now my Lords, that evil has rekindled Harrowforge, and I have seen the Runeknife itself, wielded by an undead horror. It must be Lifesbane himself, come back again. His eyes glowed in a skeletal head, and rotting finery clung to his form. With magic he blasted my troops even as we strove to reach him until only the other knights and myself attained his plateau. And there the power of the Runeknife was unleashed. As the black, blood-drenched runes on that fell blade flashed one by one, my brave friends turned on one another. Gardon and Gorr, the brothers Icefast, died on each other's blades. And after they fell, the knife flared again, and they rose, living dead, and clawed at Galth Stonemount where he desperately tried to fend off the hate-filled blows of Randir Rocksooth. He fell under attacks from all three. I tried desperately to reach the lich that commanded my fellow knights against one another, but as I did, I saw I was the only one left. All my fellows, living and dead, turned hate-filled eyes upon me. I called on our god, the Rocklight, Paal, Stonefist and Mountain Lord, and two of the corpses that had been my friends turned away. But the others advanced, as did the living men, their mouths twisted in hatred. Lifesbane began another spell--and I ran.

I am shamed, my Lords, but someone had to bring this word to you, no matter what the cost. Marshall all the armies and summon every paladin. Evil is awake again in the mountains, and in its dead hand, it wields the Runeknife.

Clannis Strongheart

(marked with his seal)

The Runeknife: Dagger +2/+4 vs. all good creatures. The powerful evil enchantments laid on this blade are as follows: Any good character touching the blade outside of combat takes 5-30 points of damage. The blade casts animate dead at 12th level of ability 2/day or at the level of its wielder if the wielder is capable of casting the spell. It also gives the wielder the power to charm, at will, as a vampire or other monster, so that commands totally contrary to the alignment and goals of the victim will be obeyed. This charm is not limited by visual contact once established, for the Runeknife provides a mental link anywhere on the same plane of existence. Initial saves against this power are at -2 for all LG creatures, for the Runeknife delights in corrupting them. Subsequent saves are made every two months to throw off the effect. After a year of service, the evil of the Runeknife will have so totally corrupted the victim that he dies. Any such victims animated by the Runeknife are restored as wights, known as Knifewights, totally loyal to the wielder. If a subsequent save is successful, the wielder of the knife will know immediately and will seek to destroy the former thrall, who is now both immune to the charming power of the Runeknife and proof against its necromantic uses should he be killed.

Third Place

Dagger of Sorgonath

by Stuart Highman

Several millennia ago there was an entity called Sorgonath, a godlike creature who lived on the Astral Plane feeding on the souls of the creatures who had died while on route to the outer planes. Sorgonath grew in power as he drank from the souls, which destroyed them and made him more powerful. As his influence grew, so did his thirst, and the gods of the Outer Planes began to wonder what was happening. Sorgonath had established a cult upon the Prime; though he did not require the worshippers for power, the influence that they brought only helped his aims. A team of adventurers was assembled by clerics of some of the gods, to travel to the Astral Plane and discover what was happening. Using the *astral spell*, a number of adventurers ventured forth, their bodies protected by a smaller group back on the prime. The majority of the group perished at the hands of Sorgonath, but a few managed to escape and return to their bodies to tell the clerics what they had discovered. Alerted, Sorgonath entrusted his own weapon, a dagger, to Lord Keryth, the leader of his cult. This dagger would serve two purposes: the first, to allow Keryth to destroy any group which attempted to attack Sorgonath again, and second to be used in a ritual to resurrect Sorgonath should he be slain.

Another group was assembled and a long and hard battle was fought on the Astral Plane and on the Prime between the forces of Sorgonath and the clerics who wished an end to his harvesting of souls. Eventually Sorgonath was beaten down, but the group which had attacked him also perished in an unrelated and unknown incident on the astral plane. The cultists on the Prime were beaten back, and Sorgonath's forces lost the dagger.

The time of the ritual is approaching, and Sorgonath's forces are putting plans in motion to regain the dagger and resurrect their master, for they believe their rewards will be great.

The dagger itself is a +4/+4 weapon. If a creature is killed with the dagger its soul will be destroyed absolutely, and it will not be able to be *resurrected* or *reincarnated*, or have any spell cast on it which would require the soul, such as *speak with dead*.

Wandering Monsters

Ghoulid and Ghastoid

© 2005 Lenard Lakofka

	<u>Ghoulid</u>	<u>Ghastoid</u>
FREQUENCY:	Rare	Very Rare
NO. APPEARING:	3-8	1-2
ARMOR CLASS:	6	4
MOVE:	15"	15"
HIT DICE:	3+3	5+3
% IN LAIR:	40%	20%
TREASURE TYPE:	O, P, R	O, P, R, X
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-4/1-4/1-6	2-5/2-5/2-8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Paralysis, disease	
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below	
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Standard	
INTELLIGENCE:	Variable (see below)	
ALIGNMENT:	Evil (usually Chaotic)	
SIZE:	M	
PSIONIC ABILITY:	Nil	
Attack/Defense Modes:	Nil/Nil	
XP VALUE:	330+4/HP	825+6/HP

Ghoulids (and, more rarely, ghastoids) are created when an evil wizard of 11th or higher level and an evil high priest of 9th or higher level simultaneously cast the spell *animate dead* on a recently deceased intact body (dead no longer than 1 day per level of the lower of the two spell casters). The spell has a material component of a ghoul's (or gha'st's) hand, in order to create a ghouloid or ghastoid, respectively. The resultant creature will rise as a ghoul-like monster 24 hours later. It can be controlled by either the wizard or the cleric who made it. If both casters are 13th level or above, two ghastoids or ghoulids can be created at the same time. The spell requires a hand from two different ghouls or gha'sts if a pair is being created. The hand is placed on the chest of the corpse during the ceremony. The two casters must be touching the body (or bodies) simultaneously during the casting process.

These monsters begin to rot almost immediately upon animation so that its flesh falls away from their bones and their internal parts all decay save for the brain and eyes. The creature will therefore be mistaken as a skeleton (per *Monster Manual*) to casual observation. Complete decay takes thirty days. At the end of that time there is no foul aroma since the flesh and organs have turned to dust. If someone notices the eyes of the creature, it can be identified as more than a mere skeleton.

These monsters detest sunlight, but it does not harm them. Both ghastoids and ghoulids are immune to sleep, charm, mind-affecting magic, poison, death magic, and hold spells. While they can be hit with non-magical weapons, they suffer only one-half damage from the same. Silver, magical and blessed weapons inflict full damage. Vials of holy water will cause 2-8 hit points of damage on a direct hit and 1-4 points from a splash. Fire-based magic cause one extra die of damage while cold and electrical attacks do one die less. Ghastoids may be turned by clerics as wraiths while ghoulids are turned as wights.

The touch of these creatures require their victims to save vs. paralysis or the victim will fall over in a heap, paralyzed for 8-64 rounds. A successful bite, while it does not paralyze, must also be saved against (vs. paralysis). If the victim fails its saving throw, he or she is afflicted with a horrible rotting disease, and will take an additional 1-4 hit points of damage each round until *cure disease* is applied. Additional bites do not cause cumulative damage from the disease.

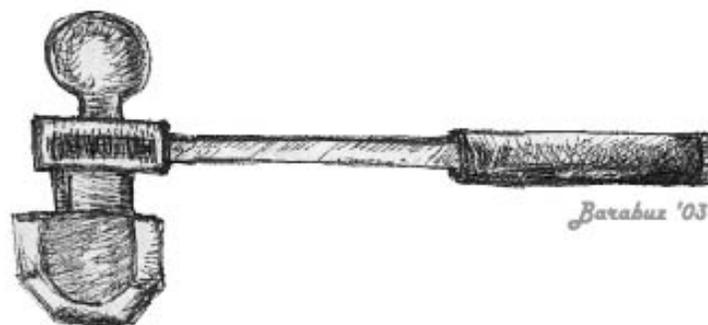
Cure light wounds or greater healing spells will stave off the rotting; one full day for *light wounds*, two full days for *serious wounds* and four full days for *critical wounds*. A *heal* spell will cure the disease. Note, however, no hit points are cured by using these spells; the additional disease damage is merely stayed. For example, if a victim with 30 hit points takes 18 points of damage including rotting and then a curing spell is applied, he will stabilize at 12 hit points. The spell will not give back any hit points. While in this state the victim's health is poor; all dexterity bonuses, if applicable, are lost and movement is reduced by 3". Spell casting is still possible but the person must roll less than his or her constitution score on a d20 on each attempt, or the spell fails during the casting process.

A ghastrid can reproduce itself by killing a human, dwarf, orc or groll and infecting the corpse with its rotting disease. Elves, Halflings, gnomes and other humanoids do not rise again if so slain. The monster created by the ghastrid is a ghoulid, not another ghastrid like itself. Such lesser undead ghoulids remain under the control of the ghastrid who created them. Note that a ghoulid cannot create more of its kind.

Since the ghastrid's or ghoulid's brain is present, the monster is capable of thought and innovation in carrying out a mission. They retain a vestige of their intelligence in life, losing 1-4 points through the animation process. Both types are clever enough to disguise themselves or even to use implements and weapons. They cannot activate any magic item that requires a spoken word or that needs to be in contact with living tissue to function (like magic rings). They are known to impersonate animated skeletons in order to fool their prey and then attack suddenly. Both ghastrids and ghoulids can wield magical weapons but the powers of the weapon will generally not function. Weapons such as a Flame Tongue or Cold Brand will flame or freeze if the weapon is evil-aligned.

Ghastrids and ghoulids cannot speak or hear but they can most certainly see and have infravision with a range of 30'. They can detect life forces (animals and monsters, but not plants) within 60' but that detection is not directional. They merely know that something alive is nearby. They will, of course, seek out that living being immediately.

In combat, ghoulids have a 30% chance of continuing to claw and bite at living victims in a melee situation, even if someone else damages them. If the melee has ended they will continue to bite and claw until the victim is dead 100% of the time. Ghastrids have a 15% chance of continuing to claw and bite at living victims in a melee situation but will turn to fight if hit for damage.



Ogham

by George L. Ullom and Dr. J. Curtis Clark

History and Use

The Druids used a particular method for communicating and remembering their wealth of tree-knowledge. This method is known as the Ogham [pronounced o'um]. It consisted of twenty-five simple strokes centered on or branching off from a central line. The Ogham characters were inscribed on stones or written on staves of wood. As a method of writing it is laborious; but as a language of symbolism it is powerful.

Each stroke of the Ogham corresponds to a letter of the alphabet. This letter represents the first letter of the tree allocated to it, so that the sign ** represents the letter B, and the tree *Beith*, the Birch. The sign ** represents the letter L, and the tree *Luis*, the Rowan, and so on. The essential point about the Druid use of Ogham is this: it provided and provides a glyph or mnemonic system. The Druids used a grove; a wood, filled with many trees and woodland plants. By clearly building up this wood within the inner mind and by then associating each tree or plant with a different number, god or goddess, animal, bird, color, mineral, star, divine or human principle, the Druid is able to retain far more information than if he simply learnt lists of such facts.

But to see the Druidic use of Ogham simply as a mnemonic for storing data is to fail to recognize its true purpose and value, for, having "peopled the forest" (having learnt the associations), the Druid is then able to use this network of data to produce numerous combinations and re-combinations. These associations start to interrelate and cross-fertilize of their own accord, even during sleep. The hard work of months and years of training starts to pay off as the Druid sleeps on (or perhaps in) his forest, and the various associations and connections between the storage points in his system start to communicate.

Magical Power

At its deepest, most symbolic core the Ogham is a language of power. Those with the knowledge and experience, e.g. an experienced Bard or Druid, learn to utilize the full power of the Ogham. A Master Bard may learn the Lesser Ogham, and a Druid may learn to use both the Lesser Ogham and the Greater Ogham. The Lesser and Greater Ogham may be used to evoke powers similar to the *Glyph of Warding* and *Symbol* spells.

Upon achieving the thirteenth level of experience, a Master Bard may permanently dedicate his 5th level spell slot to the Lesser Ogham. A Druid of the twelfth level may simultaneously dedicate both of his newly acquired 5th and 7th spell slots to the Lesser and Greater Ogham, respectively.

By inscribing these potent glyphs of power, the Druid or Bard may cause harm to any creature that enters, passes, or opens a warded area or object while the inscription is active, whether or not that creature was in the area when it was triggered. An Ogham inscription may guard a bridge or passage, ward a portal, trap a chest or box, and so forth. Each creature affected can attempt a save versus spells to take half damage or negate the effect, depending upon the particular inscription. A creature need save versus spells only once as long as it remains within the area, though if it leaves the area and returns while the inscription is still active, it must save again.

Until triggered, an Ogham inscription is inactive (though visible and legible at a distance of 60 feet). To be effective, it must always be placed in plain sight and in a prominent location. Covering or hiding it renders it ineffective, unless a creature removes the covering, in which case it will work normally. Multiple inscriptions cannot be inscribed in the same area.

As a default, the Ogham strokes are triggered whenever a creature looks at, touches, passes over, or passes through a portal bearing the Ogham characters. Regardless of the trigger method or methods chosen, a creature more than 60 feet away can't trigger them (even if it meets one or more of the triggering conditions, such as reading the Ogham strokes). Once they are inscribed, the triggering conditions cannot be changed.

Read magic allows one to identify the Ogham inscription. Of course, if it is set to be triggered by reading it, it will be triggered. "Reading" means any attempt to study, identify, or fathom the inscription. Throwing a cover over the Ogham strokes to render them inoperative triggers them if they react to touch. The Ogham cannot be used offensively. Likewise, an inscription cannot be placed on a weapon and set to activate when the weapon strikes a foe.

When inscribing the characters, the Druid can specify a password or phrase that prevents a creature using it from triggering the effect. Anyone using the password remains immune to those particular effects so long as the creature remains within 60 feet. If the creature leaves the radius and returns later, it must use the password again. Alternatively or in addition to a password trigger, the inscription can be set according to physical characteristics (such as height or weight) or creature type, subtype, or kind. The strokes respond to invisible creatures normally but are not triggered by those who travel past them ethereally. However, if a cabinet has three drawers, each can be separately warded.

An Ogham inscription cannot be affected or bypassed by such means as physical or magical probing, though they can be dispelled. *Polymorph*, and *nondetection* (and similar magical effects) can fool an Ogham inscription, though nonmagical disguises and the like cannot.

The Druid may elect to attune any number of creatures to an Ogham inscription, but doing this extends the casting time. Attuning one or two creatures takes negligible time, and attuning a small group (as many as ten creatures) extends the casting time to one hour. Attuning a large group (as many as twenty-five creatures) takes 24 hours. Attuning larger groups takes proportionately longer. Any creature attuned to an Ogham inscription cannot trigger it and is immune to its effects, even if within its radius when triggered. The Druid is automatically considered attuned to his own Ogham inscription, thus always ignoring the effects and cannot inadvertently trigger it.

An Ogham inscription can be removed by a successful *dispel magic* targeted solely on the inscription. An *erase* spell has no effect on the Ogham. Destruction of the surface where Ogham strokes are inscribed destroys them but also triggers them.

Strokes of the Lesser Ogham:

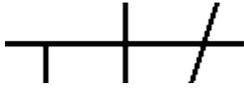


This inscription, at the inscriber's option, can *explode*, causing 24 points of fire damage, *shock*, causing a like amount of damage from electricity, *blind* (as the spell *cause blindness*), *paralyze* (as a *wand of paralysis*), or drain 1 energy level (as a *wight*) to the trespasser and to all within 60 feet of the inscription when activated. Spell resistance applies normally against this effect.

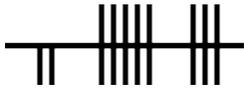
Strokes of the Greater Ogham



This inscription causes affected creatures within 60 feet to become *panicked* for 12 rounds.



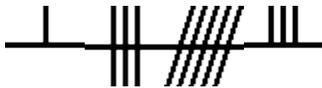
This inscription causes *hopelessness*. Creatures affected must turn back or surrender to attack/capture. This effect lasts for 3-12 (3d4) turns.



This inscription causes *sleep*. Affected creatures of 8+1 Hit Dice or less within 60 feet fall into a catatonic slumber for 5-16 (d12+4) turns. Sleeping creatures cannot be awakened by non-magical means before this time expires.



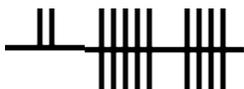
This inscription causes *weakness*. Affected creatures within 60 feet suffer a crippling weakness that causes them to lose 3d6 points of Strength.



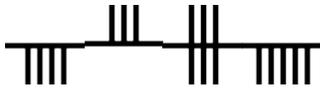
This inscription causes *pain*. Affected creatures suffer wracking pains that impose a -4 penalty on "to hit" dice and a loss of 2 points of Dexterity for 2-20 (2d10) turns.



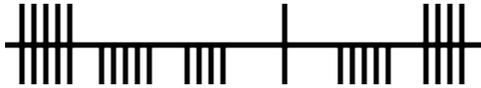
This inscription causes all within 60 feet to become *charmed* by the caster (as the *charm monster spell*) for 1-20 (1d20) turns.



This inscription *kills* one or more creatures within 60 feet whose combined total current hit points do not exceed 80. It affect the closest creatures first, skipping creatures with too many hit points to affect.



This inscription causes one or more creatures within 60 feet whose combined total current hit points do not exceed 160 to become *stunned* for 3-12 (3d4) rounds.



This inscription causes one or more creatures within 60 feet whose combined total current hit points do not exceed 120 to become permanently *insane* and unable to independently determine what they will do.

Roll on the following table at the beginning of each subject's turn each round to see what the subject does in that round.

d%	Behavior
01-10	Attack caster with melee or ranged weapons (or close with caster if attack is not possible).
11-20	Act normally.
21-50	Do nothing but babble incoherently.
51-70	Flee away from caster at fastest possible speed.
71-100	Attack nearest creature (for this purpose, a familiar counts as part of the subject's self).

An *insane* character that can't carry out the indicated action does nothing but babble incoherently. Attackers are not at any special advantage when attacking an *insane* character. Any *insane* character that is attacked automatically attacks its attackers on its next turn, as long as it is still *insane* when its turn comes. Once triggered, the power of these runes remains active for two hours. *Remove curse* does not remove the *insanity* caused by this inscription. Only *restoration*, *heal*, *limited wish*, or *wish* can restore the creature.

Ogham Alphabet

Ogham Rune	Ogham name	Standard name
	Beith	birch
	Luis	rowan
	Fern	alder
	Sail	willow

Ogham Rune	Ogham name	Standard name
	Nion	ash
	Uath	hawthorn
	Dair	oak
	Tinne	holly

Ogham Rune	Ogham name	Standard name
	Coll	hazel
	Ceirt	apple
	Muin	vine
	Gort	ivy
	nGéadal	reed
	Straif	blackthorn
	Ruis	elder
	Ailm	white fir
	Onn	gorse
	Úr	heather

Ogham Rune	Ogham name	Standard name
	Eadhadh	poplar
	Iodhadh	yew
	Éabhadh	aspen
	Ór	spindle
	Uilleann	honeysuckle
	Ifín	gooseberry
	Eamhanch oll	beech
	Eite	feather or arrow
	Spás	space

Natural History of the Trees of the Ogham

This list identifies one, or sometimes several, species that corresponds to each letter of the Ogham, including some history that seems to relate to the mythic and divinatory meanings of the plants. Many of the related species have similar appearance and similar natural history. The trees are presented in Ogham order, following the standard sequence of the Ogham alphabet. Each entry consists of the name of the Ogham.

Beith

(BEH), birch - The silver birch; the most common type of birch in much of the world. It grows up to 30 m (100 feet) high, but is more often found in spreading clumps on sandy soils. It is one of the first trees to colonize an area after a mature forest is cut; this is probably a large part of its symbolic connection with new beginnings.

Luis

(LWEESH), rowan - The rowan, or mountain ash is related to serviceberries. The red berries were historically used to lure birds into traps, and the specific epithet *aucuparia* comes from words meaning "to catch a bird". Birds are also responsible for dispersing the seeds. Rowans thrive in poor soils and colonize disturbed areas. In some parts of the world they are most common around ancient settlements, either because of their weedy nature or because they were planted. Rowans flower in May. They grow to 15 m (50 feet) and are members of the Rose family.

Fern

(FAIR-n), alder - The common alder is common along lowland rivers, where it grows with aspens, poplars, and willows. Like willows, alders sprout from stumps. This allows them to regenerate after heavy flooding. In protected sites they may grow to 20 m (65 feet) tall. This species is more common in the mountains, and is not restricted to moist soils. Alder wood is said to resist rotting when it is wet, and was the wood of choice for pilings in many regions. Alders are members of the Birch family.

Sail

(SAHL), willow - Two common willows are the white willow and the crack willow. The white willow is named for the whitish undersides of its leaves, and the crack willow for the propensity of its branches to "crack" off (probably another adaptation to flooding). Both species grow along with poplars and alders along lowland rivers. They can reach 25 m (80 feet) in height, and they both vigorously sprout from stumps. Other willow species are shrubs, including osiers that grow along streams and eared willows of acidic, boggy soils. Willows are members of the Willow family.

Nion

(NEE-uhn), ash - the common ash is a major tree of lowland forests in much of the world, along with oaks and beeches. It grows to 40 m (130 feet) in open sites, with a broad crown reminiscent of elm trees. Ash was and still is an important timber tree, and is a traditional material for the handle of a besom. Ashes are members of the Olive family.

Uath

(OO-ah), hawthorn - Like willows, hawthorns have many species, and they are not always easy to tell apart. All are thorny shrubs in the Rose family, and most have whitish or pinkish flowers. The common hawthorn and midland hawthorn are both widespread. They are common in abandoned fields and along the edges of forests.

Dair

(DAH-r), oak - The oak of myth and legend is the common oak. It is sometimes called the great oak, or robust oak. It grows with ash and beech in the lowland forests, and can reach a height of 45 m (150 feet) and age of 800 years. Along with ashes, oaks were heavily logged throughout recent millennia, so that the remaining giant oaks in many parts of the world are but a remnant of forests past. Common oaks are deciduous, losing their leaves before Samhain and growing

new leaves in the spring so that the trees are fully clothed by Bealltaine. Oaks are members of the Beech family.

Tinne

(CHIN-yuh), holly - The holly is a shrub growing to 10 m (35 feet) in open woodlands and along clearings in forests. Hollies are evergreen, and stand out in winter among the bare branches of the deciduous forest trees that surround them. Hollies form red berries before Samhain which last until the birds finish eating them, often after Imbolc. The typical "holly leaf" is found on smaller plants, but toward the tops of taller plants the leaves have fewer spiny teeth. Hollies are members of the Holly family.

Coll

(CULL), hazel - The hazel is the source of hazelnuts. It forms a shrub up to 6 m (20 feet) tall, inhabiting open woodlands and scrubs, hedgerows, and the edges of forests. Hazelnuts are in the Birch family (Betulaceae).

Ceir

(KAIRT), apple - When most of us think of apples, we think of the domestic apple, but the Ogham apple tree was most likely the crabapple. This tree grows to 10 m (33 feet) in moist fertile soils in oak woodlands, and has been extensively cultivated. The fruits are small versions of the domestic apple, and also show the pentacle when cut across. Apples are in the Rose family.

Muin

(MUHN, like "foot"), vine - The grape is a vine growing as long as 35 m (115 feet), in open woodlands and along the edges of forests, but most commonly seen today in cultivation, as the source of wine, grape juice, and the grape juice concentrate that is so widely used as a sweetener. Grapes are in the Grape family.

Gort

(GORT), ivy - Ivy is also a vine, growing to 30 m (100 feet) long in beech woods and around human habitations, where it is widely planted as a ground cover. Ivy produces greenish flowers before Samhain on short, vertical shrubby branches. The leaves of these flowering branches lack the characteristic lobes of the leaves of the rest of the plant. Like holly, ivy is evergreen, its dark green leaves striking in the bare forests of midwinter. It is a member of the Ginseng family.

nGéadal

(NYEH-dl), reed - The term "reed" is used with great imprecision in North America, but it is clear that the reed of the Ogham is the common reed. This is a giant grass, with stems as high as 4 m (13 feet). It grows in marshy areas, where it often forms dense stands. Like most other grasses, the vertical stems live only a single year, dying in the autumn and being replaced with new green shoots in the spring. The dead stems rattle and whisper in late autumn winds. Common reed is in the Grass family.

Straif

(STRAHF), blackthorn - The blackthorn is a relative of cherries and plums, and is the source of the sloe fruit. It is a thorny shrub growing to 4 m (13 feet), often forming thickets on south-facing slopes. The blue-black fruits are edible, but bitter until after the first frost. They are members of the Rose family.

Ruis

(RWEESH), elder - The common elder is a shrub growing to 10 m (33 feet) in damp clearings, along the edge of woods, and especially near habitations. Elders are grown for their blackish berries, which are used for preserves and wine. The leaf scars have the shape of a crescent moon. Elder branches have a broad spongy pith in their centers, much like the marrow of long bones, and an elder branch stripped of its bark is very bone-like. The red elder is a similar plant at higher elevations; it grows to 5 m (15 feet). Elders are in the Honeysuckle family.

Ailm

(AHL-m), silver fir - The silver fir is one of the tallest trees, sometimes exceeding 50 m (165 feet) tall. It is named for its silver gray bark. In its appearance (and in its current, and undoubtedly ancient, use) it is the quintessential Yule tree. Like most conifers, it is evergreen, and like other firs it produces cones that fall apart while they are still on the tree. They are members of the Pine family.

Onn

(UHN), furze - Furze, or gorse, is a thorny shrub growing to 2 m (6 feet) tall. It grows in heaths, moors, pastures, and open woodlands. It produces bright yellow flowers around the time of the spring equinox. Furze is a member of the Pea family.

Úr

(OOR), heather - Heather is a shrub growing to 2 m (6 feet). It is a major component of the vegetation type called "heath", the source of the term "heathen". It is evergreen, and produces bell-shaped pinkish flowers in the late summer. There are a number of other plants called "heath" or "heather". Heather is a member of the Heath family.

Eadhadh

(EH-wah), poplar - The aspen grows to 20 m (65 feet) along rivers and as a pioneer species after fire or logging. It sprouts from the base and may form clumps or thickets. The black poplar reaches 30 m (100 feet) in sandy and gravelly soil along rivers. The white poplar is of similar size and habitat, but is more common in southern Europe. Poplars are members of the Willow family.

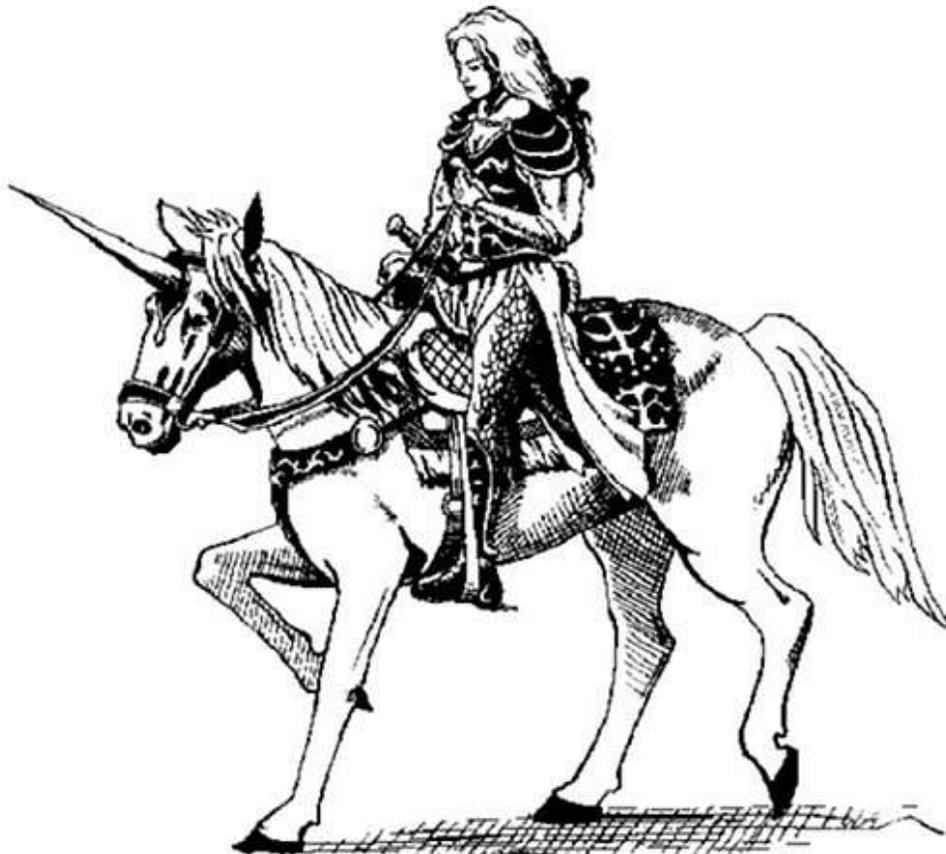
Iodhadh

(EE-wah), yew - The yew is a slow-growing conifer, living as long as 1000 years and reaching 20 m (65 feet). It is much less common in recent times because of over harvesting (its hard, springy wood was the source of longbows). The evergreen needles are very broad, and the seeds are produced in red, berry-like cones. Yews are toxic. Yew is in the Yew family.

There is an additional "blank" Ogham, "the unhewn dolmen arch", which is assigned to the mistletoe, a plant for which there is abundant evidence of its ritual importance. There are two common mistletoes in the world, both of which live as parasites on trees. The common mistletoe parasitizes many tree species, including oaks in the western part of its range. It forms white berries between Samhain and Yule. The yellow-berried mistletoe is found primarily on oaks. It is most likely the "golden bough" of legend. Mistletoes are in the Mistletoe family.

Credits:

This writer owes much of the content of this article to the valuable work of Dr. Curtis Clark, of the Biological Sciences Department at California State Polytechnic University in Pomona, California. Visit his web page at: <http://www.csupomona.edu/~jcclark/ogham/ogh-alpha.html>



Create Food and Drink

by Johnathan Fletcher

The first offering is a homemade cheese biscuit that has a marvelous texture and great cheese flavor. I prefer to make these with an expensive 3 to 5 year-old white cheddar cheese but mass market orange sharp or aged cheddar will suffice. The unique shape is created by using a bone-shaped cookie cutter, but lacking this tool, long, finger-wide strips may be cut out by knife instead.



Cheesy Pixie Bones

(Food Processor method)

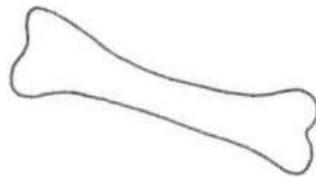
Makes a beautiful, flaky, golden biscuit to serve as a snack to your gaming group.

Ingredients:

- ¼ cup (50 ml) water
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups (500 ml) all purpose flour
- 1 1/3 cups (325 ml) sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 3 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
- ½ cup (125 ml) vegetable oil

Method:

- In a small bowl, whisk the water and eggs together and set aside.
- In the bowl of the food processor equipped with the steel blade, add flour, cheese, garlic and vegetable oil. Pulsate 5 seconds and scrape down the sides of the bowl with a spatula. Pulsate another 5 seconds. The mixture should have a texture like coarse oat meal.
- With the machine running, drizzle the egg mixture into the machine until the dough forms a ball. You should not have to use all of the egg mixture! Doing so means more work in the next steps!
- Remove the dough from the machine and divide into two balls.
- Knead each ball of dough on a floured surface, about three minutes.
- Roll out each dough ball till it reaches a uniform ¼" (5mm) thickness.
- Cut out biscuits using a bone-shaped cookie cutter. Place them on a foil lined baking sheet with ½" (10mm) spacing between biscuits.
- Preheat the oven to 400° F, bake for 15 minutes, remove from oven and turn each biscuit carefully. Return to oven and bake another 10 minutes.
- Cool on a cookie rack and serve once cool.



The next offering is actually the national dish of Ethiopia, a stew or **wat** flavoured with berbere. This spice, usually available from exotic food or African food stores, is fabulously flavoured and evinces a potent bite of heat. This wat can easily be prepared with chicken or lamb substituted for the tofu. Brown the meat pieces before adding to the dish.

Rasta Tofu Wat with Ethiopian Berbere

Ingredients:

- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 3 medium onions, sliced
- 1 medium-large firm potato in ½" cubes
- 8 oz. (224 gr) tofu, baked or very firm, in 1/2" cubes
- 3-5 tsp (15-25 ml) Ethiopian Berbere (to taste)
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and sliced.
- 1/2 cup (125 ml) vegetable stock or water with a dissolved bouillon cube
- 2 ½ cups (625 ml) green beans trimmed and cut
- 1 sweet red pepper, sliced
- 1 stalk celery, sliced
- Small bunch parsley, chopped
- 2 tbsp (30 ml) soy sauce
- Salt to taste

Method:

- Sauté onions gently in olive oil with pepper and celery until the onions are translucent. At the same time, partially cook the potatoes in boiling water, drain and reserve.
- Add the tofu, soy sauce and Ethiopian Berbere to the onions. Stir together for a minute and then add the potatoes and stock. Cover and simmer for about 15 - 20 minutes and then adjust spice and salt to taste. Carrots and beans are now added to the pot, along with extra liquid if needed, and the dish is simmered for 5 or 10 minutes until the vegetables are cooked but still retain some snap. Stir in the parsley and serve with a side salad of tomatoes, onions and cucumber and with rice or flat breads. Makes 2-4 servings.

I do recommend you start with 2 tsp of berbere and then add more to taste. Adding the whole amount at first can be very, very hot.

Can't find berbere? I don't know what stores in your part of the world carry it but I can give you a link to my supplier, Monsoon Coast:

<http://www.monsooncoast.com/monsoon.html>

If you consider your self a heat and spice lover try their Tobago Habanero Curry.



For those in search of exotic and creative snacks I present:

The FLT (Flumph-Lettuce-Tomato)

"Flumph" Ingredients:

- 1/3 brick extra-firm tofu, thinly sliced (think bacon thickness)
- 1/8 cup (30ml) soy sauce
- 1/8 cup (30ml) water
- Liquid Smoke™, 2-3 drops
- Vegetable or olive oil

Sandwich assembly is done as per a regular BLT. The only deviation for the "Flumph" is as follows: Place enough oil to cover the bottom of a frying pan on a medium-high heat. While the oil comes up to heat, mix the soy sauce, water, and liquid smoke together. I've used approximates for the measurements; these can be adjusted to taste. Once the oil is hot, spread the tofu across the bottom of the pan and cook each side to a caramel brown color. Once this is done, pour in the wet ingredients slowly (to prevent spattering), ensuring that the tofu is completely covered. Allow the mixture to reduce until the liquid evaporates and remove from heat. Assemble sandwiches.

Planning to have a group of Tooks over to dinner and no menu planned? No fear!

The Rosie Cotton-Gamgee Crockpot Roast

Ingredients:

- 1 4-5 lb roast. Cut matters not; the roast will cook for eight hours and that'll tenderize *any* meat.
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) sage
- 1 tbsp (15 ml or one large clove) garlic
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) ground peppercorns
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) kosher salt
- 4 good-sized potatoes
- 1 medium bag of baby carrots
- 1 good-sized white onion
- 1 8 oz (250 ml) can of beef broth
- 1 cup (250 ml) of red wine

The night before you're going to cook the roast, prepare it thusly: sprinkle the sage, garlic, salt and ground pepper on the roast evenly. Roughly massage the spices in to the roast. Put in a covered dish, refrigerate.

EIGHT HOURS before it is to be served:

Put the roast in the crock pot. Add the wine and beef stock, taking care to pour them beside the roast, not over it (you don't want to wash spices off). Set the Crock Pot to "high", cook for six hours.

At six hours, chop the onion into eight pieces. Peel and prepare the potatoes (quarter them or slice them to personal preference). Add the onion, baby carrots and potatoes to the broth. Cook at the same temperature for two more hours.

This recipe serves six. Other spices can be added, including parsley, basil, etc. Avoid oregano as its flavour tends to overpower potatoes and carrots easily.

The roast is best served with a merlot or cabernet sauvignon, hot bread and greens or salad. *Au jus* can be saved or served over the roast. Leftovers keep for two to four days (refrigerated of course). Strawberry tart or strawberry topped cheesecake makes an excellent dessert to this meal.

The nice thing is, if you time it right, you can have a hearty meal for hearty adventurers ready as soon as they walk in the door, or alternately at the end of a few hours' hacking and slaying!

The last treat to try is a baked ham and cheese casserole thick enough to stick to ribs of stoutest Dwarf.

Puissant Peccary Pot

Ingredients:

- 12 eggs beaten
- 3 cups (750 ml) milk
- 1/4 cup (60 ml) butter, melted
- 8 slices of bread, cubed
- Grated cheddar cheese
- 1 cup (240 ml) mushrooms
- Bacon, sausage, or ham, about 1/2 lbs (225 g) precooked weight cooked and cubed

Method:

- Preheat oven to 325° F (160 C). Grease 9x13 in (23x33 cm) pan.
- Mix eggs and milk together. Melt the butter and put in pan; add bread cubes. Pour egg mixture over cubes. Add mushrooms and meat. Cover with cheese. Bake in oven for 1 hour 15 minutes or until cheese is golden brown and crispy.



Pseudo Dragon

