

The Seeker

The Journal of Intrepid Adventuring

Volume the Fifth on this Great Day of Numbers the Sixth

Redeemable at any Resteraunt for a bill for the amount you charged.

**OPEN THE PORTAL OF YOUR
IMAGINATION AND WITHIN
YU SHALL FIND.....
DUH DUH DUH DUNNNNN**

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Conventions

We are attending, or trying to attend more conventions this year in hopes of promoting the Castles and Crusades line and getting more people involved with the organization. However, we are only two people and need some help. In the future we will be announcing and finally implementing our 'DM's of Note' program. What this is basically, is a request for help at conventions. It is not the type of help that involves work but rather - running games. Usually, by the time we arrive at a con or work all day at one, we are just too tired to run games or play in them and we would like to bring people in to do that for us. Though we can not offer much we might be able to offer something. As such, if any of you are atetnding or planning to attend conventions next year, please let us know and we will see what we can do to get you in for free and run games. Now this is not open to everyone, but only to a few select experienced DMs. We are developing criteria now. So keep us in mind next time you headout the door.

A MESSAGE FROM THE TROLL DENS

Well, here I go again, in my unending quest to reveal to you - the consumptor - what it might be like to work in the office of a Troll Lord Trolling. What is new in the lands of Oz this month? You might find yourself asking this question and you might not, to wit I would reply, were the question ever posed, "so much I can not even begin to cover it all." But I shall try.

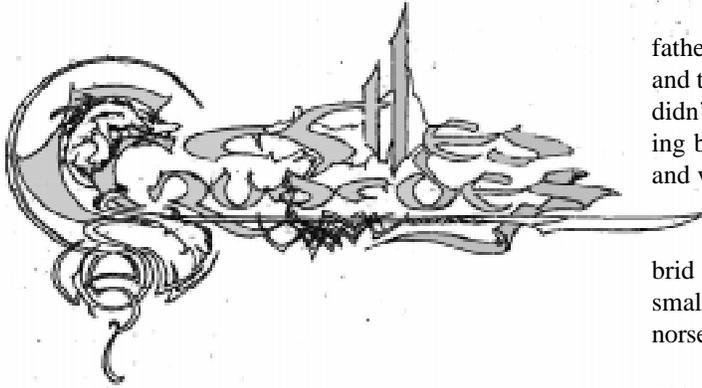
First, I got up again this morning, didn't quite know where I was. So I took a Sunday morning sidewalk to the end of the street to get my bearings. Lo and



behold, I was at home. So I went back, sat down in front of the computer and ate some Fruit Loops. After a little while of that I got sorta bored and meandered out into the yard and picked some weeds. Then I ate some more Fruit Loops.

Then it occurred to me. I needed to finish formatting a book. So I took to the computer once more and stared at an endless stream of meaningless words and pointless dribble until I realized I was reading the Seeker. So I ate some fruit Loops again, got ill, laid down, slept the whole afternoon, got up and stared at the computer again.

This time, it stared back and was not a little miffed at me....



LIBERATING THE GAME MASTER

The most modern incarnation of Dungeons and Dragons is a natural by-product of the evolution of The Game. What started as a fantasy literature based, story telling game of individuals has become a game of squad level infantry tactics with magic. Copious amounts of septic rules, combined with tactical maps, charts, universal player equality and formulaic character generation has gone far toward removing the original spirit of the game. Originally, the challenge of the game was to pit yourself/character against situations both perilous or mundane. Now the challenge is to apply the proper tactical responses to a situation to render it neutral or destroy it. Much has been lost or left aside in the evolution of the game, much of what was fun, invigorating and challenged our imaginations has slipped away. Its ours to win back.

I first began gaming in the mid '70s. I played war games with my brother, Davis, and our father who was an instructor at the Army War College. Somewhere in there Davis acquired D&D books and began running his friends through various games. I joined him at some point. He ran tough games and he made the stories, he made the judgement calls, he told us the rules – how to make characters, how to do combat and all the other stuff that came with it. The stories were always Howardesque. My fighters – that's all I played – were always pitted against mythic monsters. In my memory its like a really good Lin Carter story of swords, sorcery and spired towers.

I began running games in the late 70's and really hit my stride in the early 80s. My games were slightly different than Davis's. The grisly realism of Howard's tales were charged with the heroic fantasy of Edgar Rice Burroughs. But the game made the shift with no effort. The rules were fairly simple, if lacking in fine point realism, and adapted to much of any style of play. I learned this when I joined other groups and other games. Always to my amazement. We were playing the same game?

We all knew that the game lacked certain elements of realism. Davis and I really knew this because we played with our

father on an occasion and he always wondered about this and that tactical situation. Those games were a hoot, for he didn't care so much for the colorful flavor text of Davis' DMing but rather wanted to know where his enemy was, who and what he was using so he could kill him. But the game had rules, at least the frame work of rules, off of which we could build. We added critical hits, hybrid forms of parrying, detailed the rounds some and other small various and sundries. If we needed the noble knight or norsemen, we adapted the classes on hand to what we wanted.

This really took on a life of its own when I settled down in 1984 with a group that I game with to this day. Over the years we adapted hundreds of house rules that fit the mood and style of our play. New classes, new weapons, new equipment. The whole gambit. It was easy to do. Todd loved archers so he took the fighter and made himself one. It wasn't difficult and we could do it within the context of the story. It wasn't too powerful, or too odd, or too particular. We could adapt it to our more literary style of play. This was possible for the rules system was fast and loose - and mine. I wove the tales. I set the tone, so I, as the game master was the final arbiter of what could and could not fly in the game. This allowed me to keep control of the game I wanted to run, and they wanted to play. Fairly quickly we began building off of each other, I changed my methods to suit their desires and needs (some of them) and we worked on 'rules' for our game.

With the advent of characters like the Cavalier and Barbarian, a subtle change came over the game. Game masters were presented with characters that were heavy with powers that could easily unbalance a game. This started the trend of gearing the game toward the players. Though on the surface this may seem like a good thing as there are, after all, five to one, players to game masters. But what it actually represented was a subtle philosophical shift in the game itself. The shift was one away from the story telling, of being part of something, to a game where you pitted yourself against something. When that is the objective the play is different, its one not of imaginative storytelling in which you might fall victim to the tale, but to one of tactical mastery of situation, of simulated combat.

That was not the original intent of the game, but rather the natural evolution of the game. The idea of pitting yourself, or your character, against an opponent, involves the idea of winning. When 'winning' becomes the objective of a role playing game you are no longer playing that *role playing game* but rather playing a *simulated combat game*.

Simulated combat games need unambiguous rules. Hard and fast rules that cover many levels of play. The rules for Firefight were short, simple and easy to digest. Simulated combat games with fantasy elements must follow the above formulae, but are far more difficult. The second edition of Dungeons and Dragons attempted to do this, and in some respects it succeeded. Through the use of player kits it managed to

detail the abilities of a character, and give the player of that character far more material to work with, to empower himself. It succeeded in allowing the game to evolve into something closer to Firefight.

The other byproduct was that the literary was pushed even further aside. The combats were odious things that took time and involved facing, deployment, speed, reaction, movement and all those other things a good squad leader needs to understand before he goes into battle. The game master became more of a judge and less of a storyteller. The epic story was hard to relate amidst hours of countless tactical questions. But the rules were cumbersome as well, there were too many variables. Once you start down that road you have to finish it. The variables caused problems in realism on both sides of the screen.

These were addressed in the monumental third edition of the game. The tactical situations were treated with amazing detail, monsters were put on equal playing fields with characters and everything designed to be inter-changeable. This worked well for character advancement. Winning the game was not necessarily easy, but now the player had all the elements of the story at his command and could out maneuver the DM, if only he knew system well enough. The leveling of the field was beautifully done, but the sacrifice was the element of story. Now the players could spin the tale without the game master.

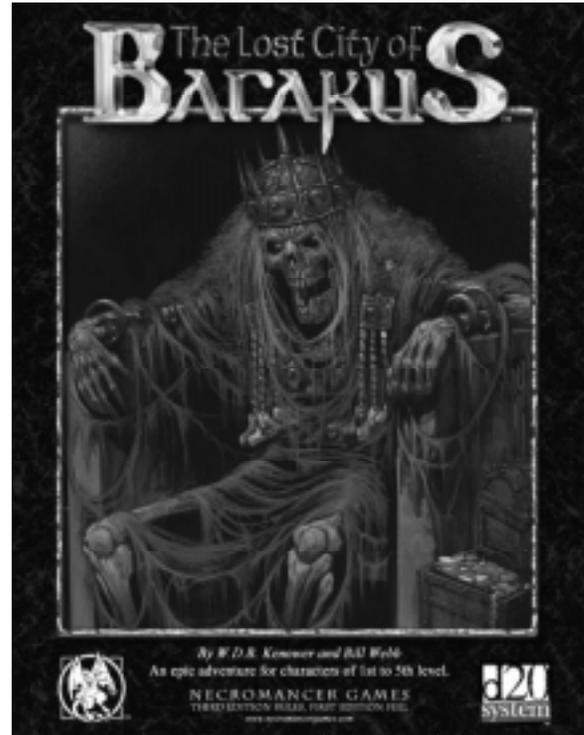
The advantages are huge. Combat is more realistic. The rules flow easily and need only minor tweaks here and there. A group can tailor them how they see fit by throwing out some rules, keeping other. No matter the adjustments the frame remains and the game will flow smoothly. It's a good game folks.

But what it lacks is the epic feel of the story. The tale. You can't hear the bending of the bow before the arrow is loosed, for it is far more important for you to know your dodge abilities. The game master doesn't tell you that you 'leap back, the scathing flames singing your hair.' The dice and mechanics now do this for the game master. A good game master judges what happens to players not by contesting dice, but by deciding what should happen for the affect.

What the role playing games need are easy to learn, hard and fast, adjustable, simple rules that can accommodate many styles of play. We had those, once, long ago.

In a side note, I'm really not bashing the third edition. It really is a well constructed, heart stopping, fun game. As any of you who have played in just about any of the Necromancer Games modules might know (they have managed to catch both of the styles of play in the best possible combination). But what the rules system is not, is one that supports storytelling. Its not a game where you can weave a mist, but rather a game where you overcome the mist.. It's a contest not a story.

Necromancer Games



Plunge into the forgotten city of Barakus where only the bold survive! Explore cavernous dungeons, intrigue with wary soldiers and battle horrors from the edge of time. Barakus is an Epic introductory location-based adventure for character levels 1-5, revised for the 3.5 system. This huge adventure provides months of gaming material. The book details a complete city, the wilderness surrounding it, and a huge, 5-level dungeon. Dozens of minor quests and puzzles are used to distract and entertain adventurers while the main storyline builds to a crescendo.

This adventure and sourcebook contains over 30 highly detailed side quests that take place in the wilderness and city, and the dungeon itself contains over 200 numbered encounter areas. Players can attempt to stop the city beggars from being sold as slaves, face bandits in the wilderness, expose the corruption of a noble family, and destroy an ancient evil that caused the downfall of the lost civilization. Written by industry renowned authors WDB Kenower and Bill Webb, this adventure is the perfect way to begin a new campaign, or to continue an existing one.

Available only from Troll Lord Games!!!

**Visit Necromancer Games online at
Necromancergames.com**

Frankenburry

The Crack Parade

The wind blows chilly on winter nights when the temperature drops below 30 and a drizzle occurs. Yet it is summer and warm. It is night however. And a dark night it is. Or would be, except the moon is full and casting a bluish noir light across the entire city. Even the shadows are blue it is so blue. Purplish is more like it. Hazy purple shadows. Everything is gritty also, there are lots of chains dangling around and broken stuff everywhere. There is so much broken stuff in the alleys that bums have a difficult time finding comfortable boxes to sleep in. Everything is old also; there are old cars, old trains, old hats and antique looking old black lacy clothes everywhere.

Louigies House of Pasta sits in the oldest part of the town. Cobbled roads busy with traffic form a maze of old world transylvanian charm around Louigies which is heavily accented by a new interstate overpass that stretches overhead - which is even busier than the cobbled roads below. Inside this innocuous restaurant are a myriad of odd characters of little import to this story or plot but simply here to add a sense of decadent preternatural horror. Louigie himself, in all his gargantuan glory, waddles back and forth from table to table to honor his most esteemed and ferocious guests, the dreaded 'mosses.'

The mosses, so named by their eternal enemies, the Vampires, or snaggle teeth as the mosses are wont to call them, gather here once a month to celebrate Monday Night Football. But it is Tuesday night and that means foul things are afoot or they are using last years calendar to set up appointments and meeting dates.

Luscious, the leader of the mosses in this war raging with the blood sucking gap toothed dandy freaks, gathered his pack of ravenous wearwolves and wearpups together to plot and plan a twisted and devious manner in which to pull the wool over the eyes of the pesky vamps and their sidekick tramps and lay them to waste. However, Luscious is sorta of dimwitted, having never attended an institute of higher education nor, for that matter, ever even having learned to read. (Often his friends would comment on his lack of knowledge. "What, were you raised by a pack of wolves." This was often followed by bowls full of jelly like laughter - and then a slaughter, Luscious does not like being made fun off, especially when it comes to his education and grooming habits.) Being about as intelligent as a tree stump infested with termites, Luscious' plan consisted of little more than, "Hey lets get together sometime and kill us some vamps and tramps."

The mosses were losing the war. At least they seemed to be losing the war but it seemed also that with every plot twist they were staging a comeback of one sort or another. These comebacks had been going on for nearly 2 billion years or ten thousand books or so and seem unlikely to ever end - the comebacks that is, not the plot twists because they are sorta being rehashed since they have all been tried. What they are doing now is refining the twists.

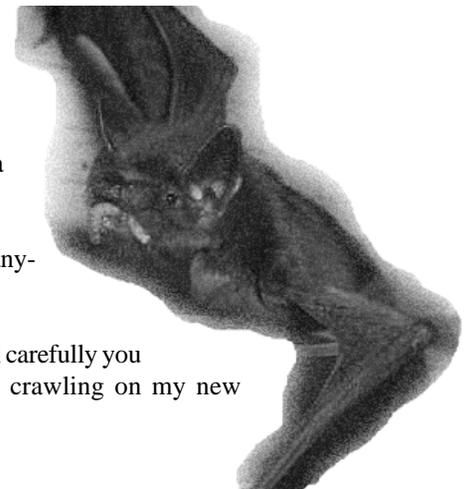
It is all these plot twists that brought the monster... but I am getting ahead of myself.

Right now Louigies was under the watchful eye of a mistress of the night, a vampiress. Wrapped in tight leather garments that clung to her like skin like grease on a monkey showing every sleek curve, she hung upside down on a metal girder sticking out of an old church belfry. Though she was supposed to be watching Louigies for signs of activity, in fact she was staring at a pile of rumpled clothing, leather boots, guns and ammunition that spilt onto the streets below when she turned into a bat. Selena (a French Canadian by birth) often forgot about the effects of changing into a bat. "And to think," she thought to herself, "I bought those boots yesterday, \$500.00 down the drain. And how on earth am I going to get oil and gas stains off that leather, guess I'm shopping tomorrow. I know, I'll get Francie and Marcie to go to Saks and that other cool place down on Broadway. Ohh they'll just love it, it has all these neat little rings and gadgets I can use to pierce every single square inch of my body and we can stop and get hair cuts and..." and on and on and on.

Selena really didn't like changing into a bat. Bats stink, and no matter how much perfume she wore, she still stank as a bat. Also, when she changed back to human form there was always a little bat stench that lingered around her. She also felt a burning desire to eat mosquitoes when in bat form. Yet the circumstance required the change. She needed to hide and there is no better place to hide than an old belfry since they are generally nasty, grimy, dark, greasy, roach infested malignant pits of human despair which are rarely, if ever, visited. "Uggg I hate this job." "What?" her beautiful male sidekick chirped in bat. "I said I could eat a Bob."

"Ohh, hey can you see anything?"

"No, but if you listen real carefully you can hear some roaches crawling on my new boots."



“Ohh yeah, hey where did you get those, they look real good on you, real sexy and all. I think I’ll get a pair for my honey bunch.”

And so the conversation went. Repeating it would be pointless.

“Hey Selena.”

“Yes Joe.”

“Can you see anything?”

The two bats were supposed to be watching for suspicious activity but, being bats, they couldn’t see anything. In this way, the vamps missed the monster as it sidled out of the bluest shadow and slowly made its way across the cobbled road.

Meanwhile, across town in a deserted mansion inhabited by one of the Twelve Vampire Clubs, sat Odious Stensh, the eldest of the Elders, munching on a piece of human blood pie, cooked up in the Houses’ ancient brick ovens and covered in strawberry jam, these pies were known world round for their deep flavor and salty taste.

“Hmmm, scrumpdileicious...” Cawed the nearly toothless old codger.

Continued in the Next issue of THE SEEKER....
Muahahaha

Troll Con ***

October 25 and 26

in

Little Rock Arkansas

roll Kon 3 is growing... This is going to be the largest game convention in Arkansas history.

Our artist Guest of Honor is Quinton Hoover of Magic the Gathering fame. JC McDaniel with Devil Dog Designs will be showing his modern military miniatures. Games Workshop is sponsoring the miniatures room. There will be non-stop GW games including Blood Bowl, a Rogue Trader WH Fantasy Event, and demos. There will soon be a link from GW to their schedule of events. Other miniature games will be in the same room. D20 Publisher Troll Lord Games of Little Rock will be hosting the first meet of the revived Castle and Crusade Society.

The convention will be at the Wyndham Hotel in North Little Rock, AR.

Admission for October 25 and 26 will be \$10, ages 15 and under will be only \$5. Event fees for Living Campaigns and miscellaneous events will be \$2. The \$1000 Settlers of Catan Tournament is \$15. The Magic the Gathering State Championships will be \$10.

NEW FROM TROLL LORD GAMES



New from Troll Lord Games, Path of the Magi, is a d20 sourcebook of unprecedented depth! In this 150 page case bound book each and every gamer, players and DMs alike, find a wealth of information to play, design or run wizards through the ultimate role playing experience. The first in a series of books Path of the Magi marks the beginning of a renaissance in the realm of gaming where role playing and roll playing meet. The experience begins with entrance into the University of the Magus where the initiate learns all there is to know about spell craft, the guilds that master it and those they fight. The reader also finds new spells, feats based on the zodiac signs, skills, magic items, equipment and more. Path of the Magi is an all inclusive role playing experience with appeals to all gamers, not just those who run a table! Sean K. Reynolds, co-author of the Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting, leads a group of authors including: Mike Mcortor, W. Jason Peck and award-winning game designer Jeff Quick down the Path of the Magi.



The Coming of the Elves

This fourth war changed forever the world of Erde. From the fell magic of Ondluche, the splintered imaginings of the All Father came to life. Faerie came into the world, with its beautiful Queen and Goddess, Wenafar, and all the magic that it promised. The immortal elves, sprung from the purest of the All Father's thoughts, came to life in the deeps of the great forests, as did the gnomes and halflings. All were thoughts of the All Father, and as such, were unlike the Dwarves and Goblins, whom alone of the people of the world, were pounded out of the substance of the Maelstrom and bore the mark of the Language of Creation.

But these creatures were young, few in number, and knew not the world at large. Many years passed before they began to grow and explore. Only the Elves came to the world with a knowledge greater than themselves, for Wenafar, their Queen, was the incarnation of the All Father's dreams of the original trees. She loved the Elves and gave them knowledge.

The Codex Erdiuch

Though little is known of the early days of the Elves, it is generally accepted that they came to the world during the Third Great Goblin-Dwarf War. They paid heed to none of the other races but took after their Queen, Wenafar the Faerie Queen. They called her The Lady of the Stars for they believed that she came from the worlds in the heavens, and in this, they were partially right.

In those early years the Elven folk kept to themselves. They lived secretive lives, always lingering on the borders of Fay and Erde. They feared the harsh clangor of the Dwarves, and the they did not understand the rage of the Goblins. Other monsters stalked them, dragons long in the tooth and the Trolls too. The latter of these found the taste of the Elves to be the fairest of treats and they fed upon them whenever they could.

From these horrors the Elves fled and hid themselves ever deeper in the woods of the world. In time they learned the secrets of the trees, and they learned to speak with the forest giants. They learned to blend with the shadows of leaves and they mastered the art of spear and bow, of bola and rope, and net. They knew nothing of the working of metals but shaped

wood as if it were a part of themselves. Indeed, the wood they shaped mirrored the desires of the elves as they spoke to it, magical songs of making and power, and the wood came to life in their hands. This last skill, though much lost to the Elves of the modern world, they learned from the greatest and oldest of the creatures of the world, the Sentients.

In their fear of dying, the Elves spent many long years hidden in the deep vales and shadows of the world's forests. There they came across great stands of Sentients that still lived in those days. These trees, born of the All Father's crafting in the Days before Days, were possessed of the greatest knowledge of the world. They spoke the Language of Creation in its entirety and they knew the mind of the All Father. Though reduced in numbers and only seldom breaking from the cool earth, they took up residence in the darkest and deepest forests, and beside streams and pools, there to think on things that timeless creatures ponder. There, the Elves found them, and they, the Elves and the fair folk, evolved.

The Sentients took to the Elves and they taught them many things that they knew. They imparted the vision of the All Father and the world at its making, and the Elves wept and pulled upon themselves in grief for the world was much changed and few now lived who knew of its original beauty. For the Elves were sprung of the All Father's purest of thoughts, from his dreams, and in those days they knew little but for beauty and tenderness. But in their new found knowledge they came of age and joined the world, not as watchers, but as inhabitants. In this they began to leave the world of Fay and dwell ever more in Erde, for they longed to rebuild the world of old.

The years that followed are long ones for the Elves, for little is known of them. They wandered from Fay and from the forest deeps in search of the visions of the Sentients. They migrated from land to land, and always some few remained behind, so that in the space of many years Elves came to be found all across Erde, though they held no kingdoms and lived in the wilds as families, building towers of wood.

But as a people they passed from the annals, for the Dwarves and Goblins, who held sway over all the world, did little but war upon each other. The long strife left little room for the wildness of the Elves. For the Elves, nothing for certain is known of these years. Even the stories have largely been lost, though some resonate still. These are usually dark tales of Goblins slaying some family in the wild, or Elves being carted off to the pits of some horrid monster.

What is known is that Elves came into contact with Men of many walks, and learned from them the skills of metal working and stone fashioning. They fashioned towers and castles in the wild places and bound these with songs of power so that little could harm them. Even time washed against them like water upon rocks. The towers lasted for long years and even now, in the wild places, where the wild things are, old Elven towers are found lost, lonely and abandoned, occupied only by the memories of a world long gone.

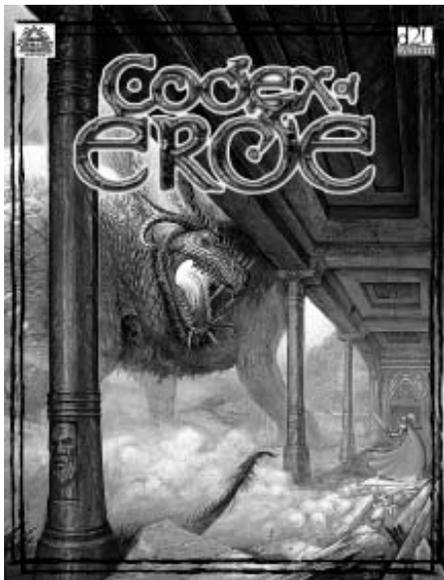
Time passed and the Dwarves wasted themselves in destroying the Goblin Hordes so that both people passed and peace came to the world for a time. Thus ended the Great Ages of the World.

The Age of Men began and the Elves lived with them and traded with them, for ever were Men of like minds with the Elves, for their ancestors were close to Mordious the Mother. The Elves remained in isolated family groups, but their craftsmanship took a decided turn from that of the Dwarves and Men, their teachers. They made towers tall and coated them with wondrous metals and their walls were thin but bound with the magics learned of the Sentients. Indeed, their homes resembled the wonderment of Faerie, which the Elven folk named Shindolay. They sought ever to learn and in their long years they became distinguished scholars. Though in truth, history and annals of things were not their preserve, but rather linguistics, philosophy and astrology. They built libraries and stocked them with scrolls and books and manuscripts of studies of the natural world. In battle they preferred to keep aloof from the field, choosing the lance and bow in place of the axe or shield. They wore high helmets that reflected their towers, and the heraldry of the Elves was marvelous and filled with many colors.

So the Elves lived in small family groups, avoiding the world at large. But as with all things, their world changed as Men became seduced by the powers of Thorax. In time the wars of old were reborn, this time bound up in the kingdoms of men, and they spilled over the world.

The histories speak little of these days, indeed, many of the annals of all the folk were lost in the early wars as kingdoms fell and vanished. Only the Mammoth Scrolls dutifully record the passage of time, but they are lost to the world at large. It is not until the rise of the Aenochian Empire that the annals again refer to the Elven folk in kind. The long wars between Ethrum and Aenoch saw Elves fight men in large numbers, and but for one of their number, they always fought against the men of Aenoch. They lived in their own realms deep in the wilds, for many years avoiding the Empire's reach. But during the Wars of Liberation they found themselves at odds with the Emperor and many joined against him. A fierce people when roused, the Elves left a lasting mark on the men of the west and they were given lands to call their own.

Of this was born the first and only Elven Kingdom. Ruled by Queen Adavia, the realm of Elean stood upon the edge of the Shelves of the Mist. Here a great host of like-minded Elves lived in peace, being content with the wonders of those dark woods and deep valleys. Though in truth, bands of elves settled elsewhere across both the lands of Ethrum and Aenoch. The most notable of which lived upon the edges of the wild north of Kayomar, home to the Elven Prince Lothian, father of Daladon Half-Elven, whom later came to play a great role in the history of the world.



“The All Father lingered in the world for many ages, and laughed and reveled at the racing of the Twin Sisters. He marveled at the Seasons and marveled even more when he saw the world take shapes of its own accord. Grasses grew and strange plants as well, rising from the soils of the world. There were other things, creatures which lived as memories of his original thoughts, those who stole into the world before the Wall of the World was made whole.”

The Codex of Erde

Explore the fantastic World of Erde, Troll Lord Games' official fantasy campaign setting in this 256 page, illustrated, hardback sourcebook with all the d20 crunchy bits you have come to expect. This core book is the foundation upon which rest the Companion Books, Modules and Sourcebooks of the Troll Lord Games d20 enterprise. Also, the Codex is the essential book for the Legends of Erde campaign, an ongoing d20 fantasy campaign supported by local gaming groups and conventions across the country. The setting resounds with its own vibrant spirit, a world where historical mythology is bound with a touch of fantasy to bring the Epic back to the game. Join the tides of History!!

“Ultimately, the genius of this book is that everything builds upon everything else. The book is extremely well written which is rare these days, and the exacting attention to detail is astonishing.” Chris Berman

The Angry Gamer

There is nothing on the earth, under it or above it so frustrating as the phone. I hate that infernal machine so much I grind my teeth to nubs thinking about it. I dream of its constant ringing. Ringing. Ringing. Its like a burglar who creeps into your house stealing moments of your life away. And for what? Nothing.

Anytime I hear that machine rattling off its toneless bells I can't help but think: "Why are you calling me? I have ABSOLUTELY nothing to say and I sure as hell don't have anything to add to your otherwise interesting day! If I had something to say . . . I would call you!" But of course the caller is thinking "But I have something to say to you." But I don't want to hear what you have to say!

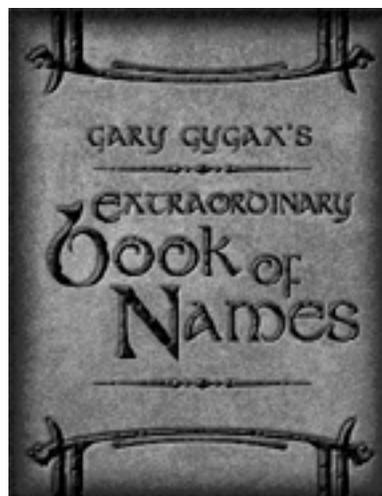
Of course the source of the problem is the phone company itself. If I didn't think about all the money I'm paying to various corporations just to be able to talk it would make it more enjoyable to talk. But always in the back of my head is the thought, I'm talking to you and paying someone for the right to do just that: talk! What a commodity to invest in. Lets charge people to talk. How about this, lets charge people to drink water. . . wait, they already to that. . . lets charge 'em to BREATH! Next they'll be asking us to pay them for the right to spend our money. Wait . . .

To add insult to injury we pay these people for bad service, bad connections, no customer support, high rates, incomprehensible bills, service fees, set up fees, service fees on the customer support while they're setting up service fees on our rates! These idiots (and yes I mean YOU SOUTH WESTERN BELL) couldn't run an ass scratching stand efficiently much less a phone company efficiently!

I'm going to charge you to talk! What the %#&\$ is that? Would you come to my booth at giant-overpriced-retail-con if I charged you to ask me questions. Of course you wouldn't. You would laugh at me, heap scorn upon me and walk away with money in your pockets. But we pay the phone company to talk to each other...like I said, I don't have anything to SAY that's worth a dime, if its worth a dime I'll write it down!

Another thing that pisses me off are buttons! Those flipping buttons that you constantly push, push push and nothing happens! The only thing that is happening is MY buttons are being pushed. I try to get the DVD player to do something, I push a button and nothing. Absolutely nothing. You have to hold the damn thing down and hammer it with your thumb to get the cheap piece of crap to respond. I've got a hammer and a barbecue grill for that nonsense!

I'd rather be blind, poor and ragged. -- SKC



"I need a name...AN ORIGINAL NAME!" How many times have DMs, players, writers and designers mouthed that sentence. Well wait no more. This is the ultimate book of names. With over 100,000 names, name generators and more this source book is a must have for any game designer or writer. A veritable host of nationalities and cultures are covered from Indian, Korean and Mongol to Aztec and Mayan. From Medieval English to Spanish, from the fantastic to the mundane, from Italian, Jewish, Polynesian and more this extraordinary collection covers it all. Furthermore, a whole chapter is dedicated to place names and another to epithets. For the d20 enthusiast a new core class, the Onomancer comes to life with new rules on the magic of names and the naming conventions used by your world's powerful magi. Gary Gygax's Extraordinary Book of Names, the fourth book in the Gygaxian Fantasy World series, is the definitive name generator for any world, setting, adventure, story, book or tale you can imagine. This one is a must have.

Also Available from Troll Lord Games



The Skobbit

or

There and Trying to Get Back Again - A Skobbit's Holiday

In a hole in the ground there lived a Skobbit. Not a clean, neat, dry hole filled with the detritus of an uneventful life, but a gross, festering, dank, dark, rotted old sewage pipe filled with refuse, roaches, beetles, clipped of ends of wiggling worms and the malorderous efluvium of too much Mexican food. This pipe had a shiny round cardboard door painted with packing labels that fell onto a long cinderblock lined hallway when opened. There was nothing in here to sit upon. And it was very uncomfortable.

This skobbit of ours was a painfully poor skobbit even for skobbit standards, and his name was Nob Bobbin. The Bobbinses had lived in and around this particular drainage ditch since indoor plumbing was invented and vented. The Bobbinses were pathetic caricatures of pathetic caricatures. They were filthy, unkempt laggards of no particular worth and whose disappearance, if even noted, would bring tears of joy to the eyes of all around. One always knew what a Bobbins would steal without even thinking about it - anything. So everyone pretty much kept everything locked up day and night.

The mother of this particular skobbit, if she could ever be located, never claimed our skobbit as her son...

What is a Skobbit you ask?

Our Skobbit stepped outside the door one Wednesday afternoon after a long night o' drinkin', smokin', 'cookin', and steelin'. He grabbed a nearby twig and started to dislodge the various chunks of rat and beetle that had lodged between his three teeth when up came a Wizard.

Perhaps it was Nob Bobbin's penchant for thievery what brought The Wizard. Our wizard had lost various baubles over the years and whenever he passed through this neck of the woods a bar of soap, toothbrush or some other item of personal hygiene would come up missing. The evening before, this particular wizard of ours noticed he could not find his hair pick and decided to go looking for it before his hair and beard got all tangled and matted up.

Our wizard's name was Glandloss the Wizard. What? You have never heard of Glandloss, well, neither had our skobbit, Nob Bobbins. But all that was about to change....

To Be Continued

MOVIE REVEIWS

Well, I have not seen any new movies since last we met upon these pages so I don't really feel qualified to offer comment on any. Well, I did see one so I wrote a great big story about it, you might have noticed it towards the front of the Seeker - Frankenburry and the Crack Parade. I saw Underworld. That and that is about all I have to say about that.

So, although I did not get to watch a movie, I did listen to a lot of music. I went up to Archon in St Louis this past weekend to have some fun and meet some people. So I had some fun.

Well, anyway, I went alone and it is a 6-7 hour drive from my humble abode. I borrowed my brother's truck (that's Steve for those of you who do not know). I get me a pack o' smokes, some coffee and head down the mangled twisted mess of concrete and asphalt they mistakenly call roads here in Arkansas. I plunked in a CD randomly selected from Steve's CD holder. Marty Robbins.

OK, I can listen to some old country ballads (western really). Stories full of heartache and killing - lots of killing - lots of killing over women.

Well I plunked another one in - the soundtrack from 'O' Brother Where Art Thou.' OK, I can get down with some great old bluegrass jangles. Storied full of dying, death, dying and a little bit of death with some hard times thrown in.

Next Tammy Wynette. Allright, heartache and bad times had by all but told in a beautiful lilting voice and southern drawl. I'm OK. Johnny Cash sings ballads of the old west.

ALL RIGHT. I am getting a wee bit, down and out, sorta feel draggy all the sudden, like a dead weight is hanging to my back. I figure I am tired so I grab a cup coffee and head on down the road. Tanya Tucker, Emmy Lou Harris, Jahnnny Cash, and on and on.

All I can think after about 6 hours of this is, "Was the South really that depressing?" I mean, if even half of that happend to twice as many people I think I would have thrown in the towell a long time ago. I am surprised anyone still lives south of the Mason Dixon (not really, I have been to Detroit, no offense but hey....).

So then I think, "Its time to get rid of these CDs before I start to think of something radical and put an end to the misery of experiencing other people's miseries." Whoosh, out the window. Now I owe Steve 200.00.... Guess I thought wrong.

Adding Realism to your Game

Having observed games and gamers for a long time now, I thought it might be about time to vigorously pursue putting together some of the information I have gathered over the past 15 years as an archaeologist. I am gathering this information, trying to organize it and present it in such a manner as to be useful for game masters to flesh out their worlds. This is being done in conjunction with Gary Gygax's Fantasy Series though not in collusion with it. I shall be at the bottom of the social heap so to speak and

Farms and Farmers

The picture to the right is a rendition of a typical Herbridean Blackhouse or just Blackhouse. This was a typical farmhouse construction in the Middle Ages and especially during the Viking era in Scandinavia and the British Isles.

The structure originated from a simple longhouse (remove the barn) and later developed into a 'whitehouse' as floors were added and the byre and barn were physically separated from the living quarters.

The structures were double walled with either stone or wood - depending on availability and infilled with peat. The structures were fairly stable (some surviving to this day) and well insulated. The least sound part of the structure was the roof.

The roof was made of a layer of rough cut wood which was then overlaid by turf and then by straw. This was held in place by a broad net tied with anchor stones.

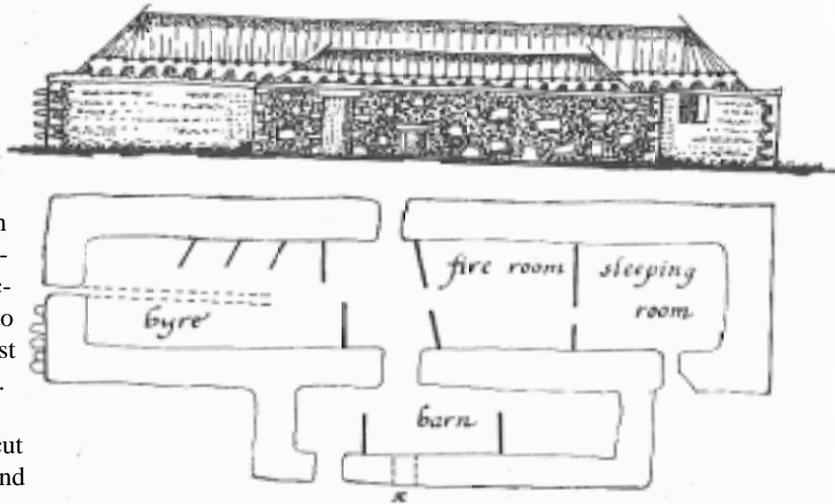
At either end of the roof section are 'corra thulchain' or sticks/poles stretching out of the structure to provide support for any roping. They are also symbolically related to the god of war and fertility in Celtic Mythology. Vikings used the ends of these sticks to mount the heads of fallen enemy.

As one can see, animals and humans lived in virtually the same space being only separated by a wooden wall. They shared entry and exit also. For the most part, all communal activity took place in the fire room. A central fire pit with a large pot would have been placed here and connected to the rafters overhead.

These farms were found in both remote areas and in small villages depending on the environment. People tend to live more closely together in areas of high conflict as there truly is strength in numbers. However, much of Scandinavia and many portions of England were not in constant states of war, despite current mythologizing of the time period, so it is not uncommon to find these farmhouse located far from larger communities and even other farmsteads of like size.

Transporting this idea to your Campaign

Using this as a template for a farmhouse will add a certain level of depth to your campaign. The current conception of farmhouses - ala the American west - are really only recent and highly westernized styles. And even these varied greatly



in shape and size and function depending on location, need and cultural background of the farmers.

This structure could easily be used as a basic house template for a farming community, especially those that occur in 'barbaric' settings. Additionally, they can be used as a base for demi-human farmhouses/houses to really give a sense of uniqueness to them.

For example, hobgoblins could use these as the basic structure from which all their buildings are erected - they must farm something you know. Perhaps they would keep their slaves with the animals - as many Vikings did.

Another manner in which to use this type of structure is for the poorer farmers of a community or perhaps the social outcasts - like halflings, should they choose to live above ground.

However, use this template and the others to follow to begin fleshing out different cultures and social atmospheres for your campaign setting and having a foot grounded in a reality never hurts when making people fascinated with your campaign setting.