

7/1/2008



# The Sword and Quill



# Sword and Quill

Volume 8 Issue 2

## GUILD MASTER'S ADDRESS

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Members of the Lakeland Role Playing Guild,

Time certainly is moving quickly for the Guild. The final quarter of our eighth year already is upon us and so much has happened. Even more awaits us in the coming weeks. The pace may be a little hectic and I am sure there will be a panic attack or five but that sense of harried excitement is a tradition in the LRPG.

What has happened so far this year? Simply put, gaming and fun! We kicked off our new year in September with our big annual party and then went to Orlando the following weekend for Hurricon and three and a half days of gaming and partying. In October, we started our new modern horror

campaign, *Apocalypse Over Lakeland*, with a well-received preview night followed by full-length adventure in November. January saw the return of *Arena* and the preview of our new fantasy campaign, *Novus Somnium*. March brought the a follow-up fantasy adventure as well as the preview of our science fiction campaign, *Interstellar Overdrive*. In April, the Guild had more horror and sci-fi adventures before going back to Orlando in the beginning of May for Recon and another weekend of gaming madness. Beyond gaming, we had two fun holiday parties for Halloween and Christmas featuring light and open gaming along with tons of fantastic food. Additionally, we have had a couple of casual social nights where we strengthened our bonds of community and friendship.

We certainly have had a packed and busy year so far and that amount of activity will be continuing to the end of year eight. What is coming up soon? From June until August, we will have at least one more installment of *Arena*, and two more sessions in our *Interstellar Overdrive* campaign. In mid-July, we will hold a planning and play-testing session in preparation for the next Hurricon in September. (Please check the message board for updated information about this event.) And before the close of this Guild year, the LRPG Officer Corps will be meeting to plan the

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Annual Meeting and to draft the rough plan for our ninth year.

Even with the amount of gaming and fun we have, the Guild also is a community with a strong human element touched by real life. The friends we all have within the LRPG always are there to share our experiences both good and bad. We all have been touched by two experiences related to the call of duty. Guildsman Kevin Halleran enlisted with the US Army Reserves a couple of years ago and for the past several months has been stationed in Kuwait with a military intelligence unit aiding our nation's activities in the Middle East. A few of us have been keeping in contact with Kevin and he is doing well and enjoying his work a great deal. Our former Campaign Coordinator and Guild Officer Bryant Cable enlisted in the late summer with the United States Army and at the end of October left

for basic training in Georgia followed by an extensive amount of advanced training in Alabama. Upon completion, he will be a US Army warrant officer qualified to pilot the Apache attack helicopter and ready for deployment wherever our country needs him. Please join with me in keeping our friends in thoughts and prayers and in wishing them good luck.

The occasional seriousness of life aside, the Guild has had a very good year to date and has some great things still to come. Let us all join together and celebrate that life with the fun and camaraderie that good gaming and good friends can provide.

Peace and happy gaming to you all!

Scott M. Presley  
Guild Master  
Lakeland Role Playing Guild

## Guild Officers and Contact Information

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## Calendar of Events

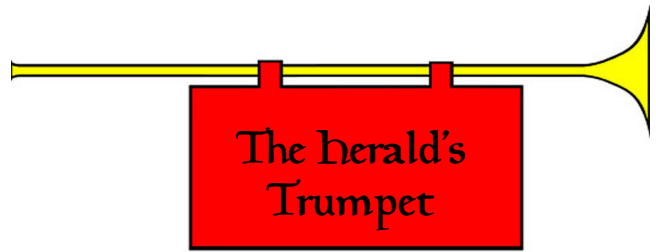
All events start at 7 pm unless otherwise noted.

This calendar is tentative and is subject to change. Please check the website for updated information.

June 13	New Fantasy Campaign #3	Unitarian church
June 27	Interstellar Overdrive #2	Unitarian church
July 11	Open Social Night	Unitarian church
July 25	Apocalypse Over Lakeland #3	Unitarian church
Aug 8	Interstellar Overdrive #3	Unitarian church
Aug 22	Arena #5	Unitarian church

### Locations and Directions:

The Unitarian church is located at 3140 Troy Ave in Lakeland. From south Lakeland, take S.Florida north to Glendale. Turn right on Glendale and then take the second right onto Troy Avenue. The church is at the end of the street.



Hello!

The best intentions sometimes go awry so rather than four editions of the newsletter this year, we are down to two.

However, I think you will find the content in this issue as interesting as the first.

We have two great character profiles from our Guild Master, Scott Presley as well as a new ranger class by a Gus Ballard. Ryan Trevillyan has given us a nice synopsis of his recent D&D game and we also have a great article by Will Harrison on a 'lost' game system. Tad Keslon gives us some GM Tips. I have attempted to introduce you to pulp fiction, an increasingly popular genre for your role playing.

I am still hoping to get some submissions from those of you who have been a bit shy! This newsletter is for the club but it also shows the rest of the gaming community who we are and what we do. The more exposure we get, the more gamers we attract and the more games we can play! So think of some great ideas for future newsletters and feel free to send them to me.

Also, check the forums for the special GM day on Saturday, June 19<sup>th</sup>! All players and GMs are welcome to this special gaming day.

Laura Wampfler  
Sword and Quill Editor



**LRPG Special Event**  
GM Day  
Saturday, June 19, 2008  
At the Unitarian Universalist Social Hall  
Don't miss your chance to play the games  
that will be presented at Hurricon 08.  
Check the LRPG Forums  
for times and details.

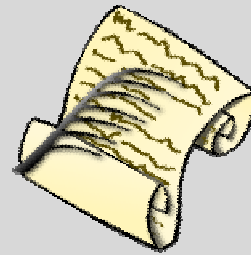
## *SYSTEMS THAT TIME FORGOT!!*

*By Will Harrison*

Hello my fellow gamers and collectors. The idea for this series of articles is to breathe a small amount of life back into some systems that have fallen by the wayside over the years. All of us who have been gaming for any amount of time will occasionally find deep in a drawer, or chest, or box in the garage books and material for old games that have ceased to be published. Some of these are old, and unfortunately, with the state of the industry, some are not so old. I will tend to simply give an overview of the system, give some comments on it, and if there are any websites or other support still out there, point them out to you as best I can. I won't get too much into the history of the product, as the websites I will try and list will have a greater amount of background. My purpose here will be to draw attention, shed a little light if you will, upon those systems that just may deserve to have a little more time in the sun. As many of you know, I have tried to run some of these at the HMGS conventions. Two of the systems I have run are Steve Jackson's venerable, *The Fantasy Trip*, and Game Designer's Workshop (not to be confused with those *other* guys) *Space: 1889*. I hope to discuss these systems in later articles, as well as others such as *Justifiers* and *Dragon Storm*. Hopefully others will follow.

For now, I'd thought I start this out with a look at *Sky Realms of Jorune*. I personally have a boxed edition, which was the second edition, and have recently managed to pick up, with a lot of help from Guildmaster Scott Presly, the Third Edition. I will admit that the most I have actually done with either of the editions is create a character or two, which I think is really the best way to learn the basic mechanics of a system anyway. I have not run an adventure, but with the materials I picked up with third edition, I hope to run the starter adventure I managed to acquire.

The second edition came out in around 1985 and was a very nice boxed set including a players guide, a sholari guide (which is the



### **Exchequer's Report**

**By Jeff Whealton**

As of June 10, 2008, the club has \$606.47 in the bank with one check outstanding.

I am looking for ways to spend the money, especially on small inexpensive prizes for the annual party. If you have any suggestions, PM Jeff on the forums.

The fiscal year closes on the 31st of August. The balance at that time will be the starting point for the next fiscal year.

game's name for the gamemaster), a tauther guide (a very useful small guide for beginning players as to what they, as budding adventurers, would actually know in the game), charts, errata, character sheets and an introductory adventure named, *The Skyrealm Kolovisondra*. The boxed set is, and indeed all the editions of *Jorune* are, very well illustrated by one of the co-designers, Miles Teves, whose artwork alone would make finding a copy of this game a worthwhile endeavor.

The third edition came out in around 1992 and was produced by those good folks at Chessex. The main rulebook is about 200 pages and is also filled with illustrations by Miles Teves. Once again, the artwork is worth collecting. The third edition appears to have extended the information and the races known in the world and does stream line a lot of the rules from the second edition. Let me say here that even though I may not have actually run a game, a thorough reading of the character generation rules and then actually generating your own character will show

you that both the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> edition systems are somewhat complex. The third edition seems to be less clunky, but is not a system to be taken lightly. The good thing is that the third edition contains iconic pre-generated characters for all the occupations that a character can start with. This is a good way to get the players up and running fast. When introducing a new system to players, I always want to supply them with characters in the beginning. Makes the playing just a little easier, eh what?

The setting of this game, however, is what really sets it apart from other systems. The genre it would fit into would certainly be science fiction, but just from reading the materials, you get a feel from it that's not quite like anything else you may have encountered. The general background of the game takes place on an alien world that earth has colonized named Jorune (by the humans that is). The planet at the time of the human's arrival already has several forms of intelligent life, some native, but also some non-native. Indeed, discovering the background for some of the races and the reasons behind their being on Jorune is a potential plot hook for campaigns. The humans get along reasonably well with the other races, including the dominant native race, until war back on earth causes the colonists to panic. They start taking land not given to them, and generally run riot over native areas in an attempt to acquire all the resources they think they will need. The native species, called the Shantha, stop the humans, and in the process make the human's technology dangerous to attempt to use. The humans fight back, lots of sapient get killed, and a dark age falls upon Jorune. The time period of the game takes place some 3,500 years after the colonization by humans. The Sol system with earth is just a dot in the sky, and humans are now a part of the Jorune landscape. Several intelligent races have been bio-engineered by the humans, and the Shanthas, as well as the other non-native intelligent life still exist.

One of the things that makes this game so engaging is the use of language. The *Sholari Pack*, a resource for the third edition, contains not just the ubiquitous gamemaster screen, but also a player glossary for the players to use. Once the *Sholari* (see the use of language here?) is able to get the players to use the Jorune terms for everyday life, the immersion can begin in earnest. It's not a tavern, it's an inclep. There aren't laws, there are yords, and the police who enforce them are yordigs. It's really a simple concept, but far reaching in how your players, and the *Sholari*, can transport themselves to an alien world, with alien cultures and a humankind that has become different, but still familiar.

Finally, just a word about current support; Rather than list a whole lot of websites, the best direction I can give you, gentle reader, is to Google Skyrealms of Jorune. It will lead you to the Jorune webring, which has a number of still active sites. I've actually downloaded a number of articles and maps for the system from one of the sites. All in all, there seems to be a lot of material out there if you can get a copy of the system in either of the editions.

I found my copy of 3<sup>rd</sup> edition at Waynes World Books, which sells through Amazon.com. There seems to be at least a couple of copies for sale most of the time, and the price seems to remain reasonable. Read and enjoy!!



# GAME industry news & NEW releases

Presented by The Fantasy factory

Welcome to the latest look at the hobby game industry! Along with a brief listing of upcoming releases, the column also offers a quick look at recent game industry developments.

## INDUSTRY NEWS

The announcement of the summer release of *Dungeons & Dragons 4<sup>TH</sup> Edition* continues to make waves. The latest bit of fallout come from an announcement by Goodman Games, the publisher of the popular *Dungeon Crawl Classics* line of pre-generated adventure modules. After the December release of *DCC #52*, the line goes on hiatus until the new rule system is made available to outside publishers for use. The response has been mixed as the line has many fans and the gaming community still is sharply divided over the 4<sup>TH</sup> Edition issue. Industry observers are questioning the wisdom of the company's decision as it will keep their cash-cow off store shelves for at least a few months.

On a related note, details on WotC's "licensing" of the new edition are causing a stir. There will not be an Open Gaming License for 4<sup>TH</sup> Edition but there will be an edition-specific game system reference available to outside publishers. The catch is in the "one way or another" clause in the agreement. If a company wishes to join in the support of the new game, that company is precluded from continuing to support the earlier version. If a company wants to continue to support *Edition 3.5*, then that company is blocked from producing and releasing anything related to the new edition. Rather than allowing companies and players to be involved in both versions of the game, and thereby servicing two active and vocal camps in the hobby, WotC is dictating how other companies will run their businesses. In addition to angering many players, the company behind "the world's most popular role playing game" now are doing the same to fellow companies in the gaming industry. At a time when the market needs to be unified and supportive of all of its participants, the arrival of 4<sup>TH</sup> Edition threatens to harm the industry and marketplace through forced factionalization even as it spurs much-needed sales and increased revenues.

Paizo Publishing is one game company that has chosen their side of the D&D argument. They have announced the continued support of *Edition 3.5* through their own *Pathfinder RPG*. Scheduled for release in August 2009, this game will modify slightly the previous edition while remaining faithful and compatible with all earlier material. Even better, the changes and adjustments being made are available for free review by the players. Alpha Test versions can be downloaded -- for free -- from their website and feedback and input is encouraged. The Beta Test version will be available for sale at this year's GenCon as well as at retail. Through this open and cooperative effort, the company hopes to engage and involve the players in improving the game experience and create what truly can be called "our game."

Mongoose Publishing has announced an agreement with Marc Millar to handle his classic science fiction RPG *Traveller*. Two distinct lines will come from this arrangement. The first is the return of the classic Third Imperium-era *Traveller* and the second is *Traveller 5*, the newest edition of the venerable sci-fi game which is supposed to move the timeline into the beginnings of the newly formed Fourth Imperium. Mongoose will be making an Open Game License available for other companies wishing to provide support product. As at least the first product line will be based on the mechanics of the original with additional elements from the subsequent versions, it is unclear what effect this agreement will have on Far Future Enterprises' license of facsimile reprints of the game books from the 1970s and 1980s. Stay tuned for updates on this matter.

Another partnership was announced recently as well. Fantasy Flight Games has partnered with European company Rackham to distribute in America the company's *Confrontation*, *Ragnarok* and *AT-43* games and miniatures. Rackham made a big splash a few years ago when they started limited releases of their product in America as their miniatures are fantastic. Their transition from metal minis to pre-painted plastics has kept them running with current trends, as has the sci-fi *AT-43* line. Even with that high interest, sales have lagged due to slightly higher prices and issues with shipping to America. This, combined with a downturn in market presence in Europe, has caused the company to file for the French equivalent of corporate bankruptcy protection. The partnership with Fantasy Flight Games promises to improve product availability and heighten marketing awareness.

## **NEW RELEASES**

Here is a listing of new products, some of them very late in shipping and some already in stock, slated for release between October 2007 and August 2008. For a more thorough solicitation preview of upcoming releases, please stop by the store and ask to see a copy of [Game Trade Magazine](#).

\*OCTOBER\*

### **Fantasy Flight Games --**

*Mutant Chronicles CMG* (\$29.95 for starters, \$19.95 for boosters): a re-launch of an older property in a new format; futurist setting of megacorporations controlling the solar system and a risen ancient evil bent on humanity's

destruction; starter sets contain six fixed 54-mm pre-painted figures, eight dice, 100 battle cards, a double-sided map, tokens and rules; booster sets contain four random 54-mm pre-painted figures. (This item is late.)

### **Palladium --**

*Heroes Unlimited 2: Armageddon Unlimited* (\$18.95): adventure, sourcebook and reference tying in with the Minion War storyline running through *Rifts*; rather than waging open warfare as on other dimension, the fiends of Dyval act covertly on *HU* Earth in hopes of fomenting world-spanning war and destruction. (This item is late.)

\*NOVEMBER\*

### **Iron Wind Metals --**

*Classic Battletech Assault Lance Pack* (\$36.95): box set of four metal miniatures -- Atlas, Cyclops, Hunchback and Vindicator. (This item is late.)

*Classic Battletech Command Lance Pack* (\$36.95): box set of four metal miniatures -- Awesome, Dragon, Enforcer and Panther. (This item is late.)

*Classic Battletech Recon Lance Pack* (\$35.95): box set of four metal miniatures -- Clint, Assassin, Cicada and Spider. (This item is late.)

*Classic Battletech Striker Lance Pack* (\$35.95): box set of four metal miniatures -- Grasshopper, Hermes II, Jenner and Commando. (This item is late.)

\*DECEMBER\*

### **Iron Wind Metals --**

*Classic Battletech Fire Lance Pack* (\$35.95): box set of four metal miniatures -- Banshee, Catapult, Dervish and Trebuchet. (This item is late.)

*Classic Battletech Support Lance Pack* (\$35.95): box set of four metal miniatures -- Zeus, Jagermech, Quickdraw and Whitworth. (This item is late.)

### **Privateer Press --**

*Forces of Warmachine: Pirates of the Broken Coast* (\$29.99): first book in a new line examining each of the faction within the game's setting; features new fiction, new art by rising star Andrea Uderza, new miniatures and stats for new warcasters, warjacks and soldier units.

### **Wizards of the Coast --**

*Dungeons & Dragons 4.0: Behind the Screen -- Races & Classes* (\$19.95): first in a short series of books offering insight into the development of the latest version of the classic RPG through essays from designers, developers and editors.

*Star Wars Saga Edition: Starships of the Galaxy* (\$29.95): **D20** sourcebook and supplement presenting statistics and deck plans for vessels from throughout the setting's timeline as well as advanced combat rules and new character options.

\*JANUARY\*

**Steve Jackson Games --**

*Muchkin Cthulhu 3: Unspeakable Vault* (\$9.95): latest expansion for the Lovecraftian-inspired version of the long-running card game; illustrated by European artist Goomi, the set features his cutely-twisted take on the Mythos.

**Wizards of the Coast --**

*Dungeons & Dragons 4.0: Behind the Screen -- Worlds & Monsters* (\$19.95): next in a short series of books offering insight into the development of the latest version of the classic RPG through essays from designers, developers and editors.

\*FEBRUARY\*

**Mongoose Publishing --**

*Traveller RPG* (\$33.95): updated version of the classic science fiction game drawing on mechanics from original rules and later editions; includes material on several basic classes and their specialties, equipment, ship construction and world and system generation.

**Osprey Publishing --**

*Field of Glory* (\$34.95): new tabletop wargaming system from leading publisher of historical reference material; full rules with photos and diagrams along with a history of warfare.

*Field of Glory: Rise of Rome* (\$19.95): sourcebook providing a detailed army listings for the Roman Republic and its enemies from the war against Pyrrhos to Augustus.

*Field of Glory: Storm of Arrows* (\$19.95): sourcebook detailing the armies of the Later Medieval period and a thorough overview of the era from the hundred Years' War to the War of the Roses.

**Paizo Publishing --**

*Pathfinder Chronicles: Gazetteer* (\$17.99): travelogue overview of the world setting used as the background for the *Pathfinder Chronicles* series and the *Gamemastery* adventures.

\*MARCH\*

**Mongoose Publishing --**

*Traveller RPG: Mercenary* (\$27.95): supplement book providing additional classes, skills, options and equipment for military-themed characters including professional soldiers, guns-for-hire and pirates. (This item is late.)

*Traveller RPG: Spinward Marches* (\$27.95): supplement book detailing one of the most well-known regions of known space; examines the peoples, worlds, governments and corporation of the area plus the involvement of the Imperium and the Zhodani Consulate in the area. (This item is late.)

\*APRIL\*

### **Catalyst Game Labs --**

*Classic Battletech: Interstellar Players II -- Jihad Conspiracies* (\$24.99): sourcebook providing detailed information on the major individuals and groups involved with the Word of Blake's jihad across the Inner Sphere. (This item is late.)

### **Hero Games --**

*Fantasy Hero: Atlantean Age* (\$26.99): supplement detailing the mythic island's rule of the world through its powerful wizards' magic and science. (This item is late.)

\*MAY\*

### **Mongoose Publishing --**

*Traveller RPG: High Guard* (\$29.95): supplement book providing additional details specific creating characters in the Imperium's navy; also includes advanced space combat rules and enhanced ship construction guidelines. (This item is late.)

### **Paizo Publishing --**

*Pathfinder Chronicles: Guide to Darkmoon Vale* (\$17.99): sourcebook and reference guide exploring the fey-haunted wilderness located at the edge of Korvosa's civilized lands. (This item is late.)

### **Troll Lord Games --**

*Starsiege: Event Horizon* (\$29.99): boxed set RPG using the *Siege* engine from *Castles & Crusades*; material supports play in pulp, realistic and space opera styles; contains rules, setting information, screens, characters sheets and dice. (This item is late.)

\*JUNE\*

### **Green Ronin Publishing --**

*Mutants & Masterminds: Wild Cards* (\$39.95): campaign sourcebook based on fiction works of George R. R. Martin and others in which a virus wipes out 99% of the population leaving the majority of those remaining as mutated

“jokers” or as super-powered “aces”; includes full history of the setting, profiles and game stats for major characters and an introductory adventure.

#### **Steve Jackson Games --**

*GURPS: Thaumatology* (\$39.95) : collections a number of alternate magic systems from earlier and out of print supplements including *GURPS Spirits*, *Cabal*, *Voodoo*, *Celtic Myth* and *Religion*; also contains guidelines for running magic-centered campaigns and for incorporating real-world occult beliefs into the game system.

#### **Wizards of the Coast --**

*Dungeons & Dragons 4<sup>TH</sup> Edition: Players Handbook*; *Dungeons & Dragons 4<sup>TH</sup> Edition: Dungeon Master's Guide*; *Dungeons & Dragons 4<sup>TH</sup> Edition: Monster Manual* (\$34.95 each) : core rule books for the latest version of the original role playing game.

\*JULY\*

#### **Steve Jackson Games --**

*GURPS: Mysteries* (\$19.95) : sourcebook exploring how to craft and include mysteries of any type and scale into any genre.

*GURPS: Spaceships* (\$14.95) : sourcebook companion to *GURPS Space*; presents rules for ships from TL7 to TL12; offers additional information on space travel, ship design as well as a mapless space combat system.

*GURPS: Supers* (\$24.95) : sourcebook expanding on material from *GURPS Basic* and *GURPS Powers*; provides new templates, skills, advantages and scenario and setting creation guidelines.

#### **White Wolf Publishing --**

*Mage the Awakening: The Silver Ladder* (\$31.99) : sourcebook detailing the history, methods and goals of this arcane order; includes new spells, artifacts and legacy paths.

*Vampire the Requiem: Clanbook Mehket -- Shadows in the Dark* (\$19.99) : latest in a series exploring the major clans of Kindred; includes clan-specific bloodlines, merits and disciplines.

#### **Wizards of the Coast --**

*Dungeons & Dragons CMG: Against the Giants* (\$21.99 per booster) : latest expansion for collectible miniature game updated to the new rules; focuses on giants and each pack contains one huge-size miniature, seven standard-size miniatures and stat cards for each.

\*AUGUST\*

#### **Chaosium --**

*Call of Cthulhu: Pulp Cthulhu* (\$24.95): setting book for long-running horror game presenting guidelines for running adventures in the 1930s.

*Call of Cthulhu: Secrets of Morocco* (\$20.95): sourcebook examining the unknown mysteries of North Africa from Casablanca to the depths of the Sahara.

#### **Mongoose Publishing --**

*Traveller RPG: Beltstrike* (\$29.95): a complete campaign focusing on the asteroid miners union, the Belters, and their enemies in the Pentad Coalition, a collection of interstellar pirates and terrorists.

#### **Paizo Publishing --**

*Pathfinder Chronicles Campaign Setting* (\$49.99): an extensive sourcebook and reference detailing the world of Golarian from its civilized realms to the barbarian lands to the unforgiving wilderness and beyond; includes information on over thirty deities and their religions, new spells and magic rules plus a poster map of the setting.

**The Fantasy Factory**  
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## CHARACTER PROFILE -- KIUME BAGANDA

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### **BY GUILD MASTER SCOTT M. PRESLEY**

One of my favorite parts of the role playing game hobby is character creation. If time allowed, I could sit happily for hours on end filling out record sheets for the various PCs and NPCs rolling through my mind. It is fortunate that I enjoy the generation stage so much because it is a recurring action for me as I play at Artisan Doug Fordham's game table.

This table has been running for several years with a mostly stable group of players across three campaigns. The cast of characters in these campaigns, however, has been mutable to say the least. While a few characters have come to the table through player choice, most have arrived due the death or debilitation of earlier ones. Such is the case with my latest character for our recently resumed *Eberron* campaign.

After my changeling rogue's draining encounter with a vampire at the close of the previous story arc, I needed something new to play for the next cycle of adventures. That need combined with my current trend of working outside of my comfort zone to yield Kiume Baganda. The character is a half-orc wizard, a concept far removed from the standards of fantasy gaming. Even in the *Eberron* setting, where many long-help tropes of the genre are tweaked and

turned on their heads, a cerebral half-orc is extremely uncommon. Time will tell if the concept actually works. With luck, he will be around for several adventures before a replacement is needed.

Here are the stats for Kiume at the start of the table's current adventure. He was generated from material in the *DD3.5 Player's Handbook* but his future advancement will draw from additional sources. In a few months, I hope to present a higher-level version of Kiume with more adventure-themed elements to compliment his more bookish basic nature. Until then, happy gaming!

\* \* \*

Kiume Baganda -- male half-orc wizard 5: HD 5D4+1; hp 21; Init +3; Spd 30ft; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10; Base Att & Grp +2 & +2; Att +2 melee or +6 ranged, sling w/masterwork bullets or +5 ranged, range touch spell; Full Att +2 melee or +6 ranged, sling w/masterwork bullets or +5 ranged, ranged touch spell; SA n/a; SQ half-orc traits (darkvision 60 feet, Orc blood); AL lawful neutral; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +7; AB Str 10 (+0), Dex 16 (+3), Con 12 (+1), Int 19 (+4), Wis 15 (+2), Cha 12 (+1).

Skills, Racial & Class Features and Feats: Concentration +7, Craft (calligraphy) +10, Decipher Script +10, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (history) +8, Knowledge (planes) +8, Languages (Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Gnome, Goblin, Orc), Profession (scribe) +10, Spellcraft +16; Simple Weapon Proficiencies (club, dagger, heavy crossbow, light crossbow, quarterstaff), Skill Focus (spellcraft), Spell Focus (abjuration), Spell Focus (divination), Summon Familiar.

Spells Known: 0 -- Acid Splash, Arcane Mark, Dancing Lights, Daze, Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Disrupt Undead, Flare, Ghost Sound, Light, Mage Hand, Mending, Message, Open/Close, Prestidigitation, Ray of Frost, Read Magic, Resistance, Touch of Fatigue; 1<sup>ST</sup> -- Alarm, Burning Hands, Color Spray, Comprehend Languages, Identify, Mage Armor, Protection From Evil, Ray of Enfeeblement, Shield, Summon Monster I; 2<sup>ND</sup> -- Blur, Hypnotic Pattern, Invisibility, Protection From Arrows, Scorching Ray, See Invisibility; 3<sup>RD</sup> -- Arcane Sight, Dispel Magic, Invisibility Sphere, Magic Circle Against Evil, Tongues.

Spells per Day (research): (4/4/3/2, Save DC 14 + spell level; abjuration and divination Save DC 16 + spell level) 0 -- Light, Message, Read Magic, Read Magic; 1<sup>ST</sup> -- Comprehend Languages, Comprehend Languages, Identify, Protection From Evil; 2<sup>ND</sup> -- Protection From Arrows, Protection From Arrows, See Invisibility; 3<sup>RD</sup> -- Arcane Sight, Dispel Magic.

Spells per Day (adventuring): (4/4/3/2, Save DC 14 + spell level; abjuration and divination Save DC 16 + spell level) 0 -- Daze, Message, Read Magic, Resistance; 1<sup>ST</sup> -- Alarm, Color Spray, Mage Armor, Protection From Evil; 2<sup>ND</sup> -- Hypnotic Pattern, Protection From Arrows, See Invisibility; 3<sup>RD</sup> -- Dispel Magic, Magic Circle Against Evil.

Spells per Day (combat): (4 / 4 / 3 / 2, Save DC 14 + spell level; abjuration and divination Save DC 16 + spell level) 0 -  
- Acid Splash, Daze, Flare, Ray of Frost; 1<sup>ST</sup> -- Burning Hands, Color Spray, Mage Armor, Ray of Enfeeblement; 2<sup>ND</sup>  
-- Protection From Arrows, Scorching Ray, Scorching Ray; 3<sup>RD</sup> -- Dispel Magic, Invisibility Sphere.

Possessions and Equipment: (general items) clothing, traveler's outfit; clothing, scholar's outfit; bedroll; case, scroll; 2 ink vials; 2 inkpens; 10 parchment pages; pouch, belt; sealing wax; signet ring; soap; waterskin; (documents) identification papers; traveling papers; (class items) spell component pouch; spellbook, waterproofed; (services) 2<sup>ND</sup> level spell research; 3<sup>RD</sup> level spell research (arms & armor) sling w/masterwork bullets x50; (magic items) 4 Potions, Cure Light Wounds; Potion, Cure Moderate Wounds; 2 Scrolls, Mage Armor; 2 Scrolls, Obscuring Mist; Scroll, Daze Monster; Scroll, Scorching Ray; Wand, Detect Magic; Wand, Enlarge; Wand, Magic Missile at 3<sup>RD</sup> level; Wand, Shocking Grasp (wondrous items) Cloak of Resistance +1; Heward's Handy Haversack; (coins & gems) 17gp, 8sp.

Appearance / Background / Personality: Kiume Baganda is a half-orc male and an adult at 26 years of age. He is 5' 8" and 150lbs with dark skin tones, brown eyes and black hair pulled back tightly. He is the middle-born child of a minor clan associated with House Tharashk in Zarash'ak, the City of Stilts, in the Shadow Marches. He showed an early interest and aptitude in the arcane arts, which led to an appropriate scholastic program in the small port city. His high academic achievement and helpful connections in the Great House secured for him enrollment in the Library of Korranberg in Zilargo. Kiume declared himself a citizen of the nation prior to starting his advanced studies. Upon graduation, he signed on for the required four-year term of service with the Library, serving as an adjunct instructor and research assistant. He recently has relocated to Sharn in search of field research opportunities. Kiume possesses few of the typical half-orc mannerisms and instead is level-headed, soft- and well-spoken and slow to anger. His natural interest in learning and gathering knowledge, strengthened by his time in Korranberg, is a strong motivation source in his life. And while he has left his homeland behind, he still follows his family's long-held oath and tradition of opposing the Cults of the Dragon Below and the influence of the daelkyr.

## CHARACTER PROFILE -- GNOMISH AGENTS

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### **BY GUILD MASTER SCOTT M. PRESLEY**

One of the appealing aspects of the role playing game hobby is the opportunity to be creative. As a game master, that opportunity is increased through the design and development of characters, settings and situations. Once given the chance to exercise that creativity, a gamer's ideas stream forth at an increasing pace, often to sit in reserve for a future use that never manifests. It is a situation in which many find themselves and I count myself in that number.

I have been running my own campaign setting for over a decade and playing at other tables for even longer. As a result, I find myself with more ideas than I can use regardless of how much game time I schedule. One set of such ideas involves gnomes and their place in my original campaign setting of Thonbria.

Gnomes in the fantasy genre typically are portrayed as quirky pranksters or befuddled inventors rather than a race of resourcefulness or mystery. I never have liked that approach and set out to do something different with the race in my world. I wanted a race connected to many cultures yet a part of none but their own. I wanted a race accepted by all yet questioned by everyone. I wanted a race helpful to anyone in need yet reluctant of reciprocal aid. I wanted a race seemingly knowledgeable of everything yet highly secretive about themselves. I wanted a sense of mystery. I wanted the potential for great revelation. I even wanted an element of cloak-and-dagger machinations.

I achieved all of that by engaging my love for secret histories and conspiracy theories while I sketched the outlines for my gnomish race. In Thonbria, gnomes are the Illuminati, the Secret Masters pulling a great many strings and directing large segments of history toward their own purposes. Amongst this larger group are multiple orders with their own motivations and methods to follow in pursuit of the race's Great Work. These orders include: the Church; the Templars; the Masons; the Order of Zurich; and the Loremasters. Of these, the Templars are divided into Crusader and Sentinel camps while the Masons have multiple subgroups focusing on different crafting professions.

This preliminary work represents the extent of gnomish development to date. There are a few additional details and even a small handful of non-player characters but there is little in the way of solid and playable material. The prevailing theme of Titan resurrection in the Thonbria campaign has not offered the race a sensible entry to the story. However, a few hints of their non-standard role and characteristics have surfaced in the characters' awareness during two adventures. The full extent of the gnomes' place in the world likely will have to wait for some point in the future.

In the meantime, here is a quartet of characters involved with the gnomish Illuminati. Each of the four adventurers has a connection to at least one secret society and together they represent an effective covert intelligence team. The group members' backgrounds reveal a bit more depth on the racial culture, the motivations within the various societies and paths of future advancement and development. As a collective, the group is a good illustration of how a functional party can be assembled from the perspectives of game mechanics and story elements.

Fnord!

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**CHARACTER #1:** Nadia Camille Maubois

**RACE & GENDER:** Gnome female

**CLASS & LEVEL:** Fighter 3<sup>rd</sup>

**ALIGNMENT:** Lawful Neutral

**STRENGTH:** 10 (+0)

**DEXTERITY:** 16 (+3)

**CONSTITUTION:** 14 (+2)

**INTELLIGENCE :** 14 (+2)

**WISDOM :** 12 (+1)

**CHARISMA :** 12 (+1)

**INITIATIVE :** +7

**ARMOR CLASS :** 18

**HIT DICE & HIT POINTS :** 3d10+2 & 28

**SAVES :** Fortitude +5, Reflex +4, Willpower +2

**BASE ATTACK & GRAPPLE :** +3 & -1

**MELEE ATTACK :** +9 with +1 *short sword* (1d4+1, crit 19 - 20 x2)

**RANGED ATTACK :** +7 with dart (1d3, crit 20 x2, range 20ft)

**SKILLS :** (24 skill points) Climb +4, Craft (alchemy) +4, Craft (weaponsmithing) +5, Hide +7, Intimidate +3, Jump +4, Listen +3, Ride +5, Speak Languages (Common, Gnomish; Dwarven, Elven), Swim +3, Tumble +4

**FEATS :** Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (short sword)

**RACIAL FEATURES :** Ability adjustments (+2 Con, -2 Str); Small size (+1 AC, +1 attack, +4 Hide, must use Small weapons, carry capacity is three-quarters that of Medium character); move 20 feet; low-light vision; weapon familiarity (treat gnomish hook hammer as martial weapon rather than exotic weapon); +2 Save versus Illusion spells; +1 DC to all saves related to all Illusion spells cast by character; +1 attack versus kobolds and goblinoids; +4 dodge bonus to AC against giant-type monsters; skill bonuses (+2 Listen, +2 Craft <alchemy>); spell-like abilities (1/day -- *speaking with animals* <burrowing creatures only, duration of 1 minute>; with Charisma score of at least 10: 1/day -- *dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, *prestidigitation*; all at 1<sup>st</sup> caster level, DC 10 + Charisma modifier + spell level)

**CLASS FEATURES :** Armor Proficiencies (light, medium, heavy); Shield Proficiencies (buckler, light, heavy, tower); Weapon Proficiencies (simple, martial)

**EQUIPMENT :** masterwork chain shirt, darts (x6), +1 *short sword*, alchemist's fire (x2), tanglefoot bag, thunderstones (x2), *potion of cure light wounds* (x2)

**BACKGROUND :** Nadia is a thoughtful and deliberate fighter capable of quick action at the right moment. While not trained or well-versed in social skills, she does have an innate sense of decorum. After the required apprenticeships during adolescence, she surprised her family by taking a term with the regional militia. At the end of that year's service, she was offered and accepted a commission for a second term as a unit leader. Upon completion of this duty, Nadia was recruited by the Church and assigned to its standing defensive force. The majority of her assignments to date have involved providing protection to envoys traveling to the Dwarven Kingdoms and the humans' Perdican Empire. She plans soon to begin advanced education, including a term of religious studies, in hopes of qualifying for enlistment in the Templars.

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**CHARACTER #2 :** Lucien Alexandre Foucault

**RACE & GENDER :** Gnome male

**CLASS & LEVEL :** Bard 3<sup>rd</sup>

**ALIGNMENT :** Neutral

**STRENGTH:** 10 (+0)

**DEXTERITY:** 14 (+2)

**CONSTITUTION:** 13 (+1)

**INTELLIGENCE:** 14 (+2)

**WISDOM:** 12 (+1)

**CHARISMA:** 16 (+3)

**INITIATIVE:** +2

**ARMOR CLASS:** 16

**HIT DICE & HIT POINTS:** 3d6+1 & 16

**SAVES:** Fortitude +2, Reflex +5, Willpower +4

**BASE ATTACK & GRAPPLE:** +2 & -2

**MELEE ATTACK:** +6 with masterwork rapier (1d4, crit 18 - 20 x2)

**RANGED ATTACK:** +5 with dart (1d3, crit 20 x2, range 20ft)

**SKILLS:** (48 skill points) Appraise +2 (+4 with woodwork crafts), Bluff +6, Craft (alchemy) +4, Craft (woodworking) +7, Decipher Script +5, Diplomacy +10, Gather Information +6, Hide +6, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (history) +4, Listen +6, Perform (panpipes) +11, Sense Motive +7, Sleight of Hand +4, Speak Language (Common, Gnomish; Dwarven, Elven; Draconic, Terran), Spellcraft +5 (+7 with scrolls), Use Magic Device +9

**FEATS:** Negotiator, Weapon Finesse

**RACIAL FEATURES:** Ability adjustments (+2 Con, -2 Str); Small size (+1 AC, +1 attack, +4 Hide, must use Small weapons, carry capacity is three-quarters that of Medium character); move 20 feet; low-light vision; weapon familiarity (treat gnomish hook hammer as martial weapon rather than exotic weapon); +2 Save versus Illusion spells; +1 DC to all saves related to all Illusion spells cast by character; +1 attack versus kobolds and goblinoids; +4 dodge bonus to AC against giant-type monsters; skill bonuses (+2 Listen, +2 Craft <alchemy>); spell-like abilities (1/day -- *speaking with animals* <burrowing creatures only, duration of 1 minute>; with Charisma score of at least 10: 1/day -- *dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, *prestidigitation*; all at 1<sup>st</sup> caster level, DC 10 + Charisma modifier + spell level)

**CLASS ABILITIES:** Bardic knowledge; bardic music 3/day (countersong, *fascinate*, inspire courage +1); Armor Proficiency (light); Shield Proficiencies (buckler, light, heavy); Weapon Proficiencies (simple, long sword, rapier, sap, short sword, shortbow, whip)

**SPELLS KNOWN:** 0 level -- *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *lullaby*, *message*, *read magic*, *summon instrument*; 1<sup>st</sup> level -- *charm person*, *expeditious retreat*, *ventriloquism*

**SPELLS PER DAY (TYPICALLY PREPARED):** (10% spell failure chance from armor) 0 level -- *detect magic*, *lullaby* (save DC 13), *message*; 1<sup>st</sup> level -- *charm person* (save DC 14), *ventriloquism*

**EQUIPMENT:** +1 leather armor, darts (x6), masterwork rapier, masterwork panpipes, spell component pouch, *scroll of comprehend languages*, *scroll of cure light wounds* (x2), *scroll of magic weapon*, *wand of color spray*, *elixir of truth*

**BACKGROUND:** Lucien is a skilled musician and socialite equally at home alone on stage as he is in a multicultural crowd. While adequate in a fight, he prefers to rely on his glib tongue and magically-infused music for personal defense. His natural talent with a tune, love of hidden knowledge and social-adaptability have served Lucien

well during his post-apprenticeship tenure with the Lorekeepers. His recent assignments have involved spreading information as much as gathering it and sometimes at the behest of the Church. His immediate goals are completing a new song cycle and learning the truth behind the recent change in the regional council's membership.

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**CHARACTER #3:** Claude Humbert Benoit

**RACE & GENDER:** Gnome male

**CLASS & LEVEL:** Cleric 3<sup>rd</sup>

**ALIGNMENT:** Lawful Neutral

**STRENGTH:** 10 (+0)

**DEXTERITY:** 12 (+1)

**CONSTITUTION:** 12 (+1)

**INTELLIGENCE:** 14 (+2)

**WISDOM:** 16 (+3)

**CHARISMA:** 14 (+2)

**INITIATIVE:** +1

**ARMOR CLASS:** 16

**HIT DICE & HIT POINTS:** 3d8+1 & 20

**SAVES:** Fortitude +4, Reflex +2, Willpower +6

**BASE ATTACK & GRAPPLE:** +2 & -2

**MELEE ATTACK:** +4 with +1 *gnomish hook hammer* (hammer end: 1d6+1, crit 20 x3; hook end: 1d4+1, crit 20 x4)

**RANGED ATTACK:** +4 with dart (1d3, crit 20 x2, range 20ft)

**SKILLS:** (24 skill points) Concentration +2, Craft (alchemy) +4, Craft (gemcutting) +6, Diplomacy +6, Heal +6, Hide +5, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (history) +6, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +5, Speak Languages (Common, Gnomish; Celestial, Dwarven), Spellcraft +5

**FEATS:** Martial Weapon Proficiency (*gnomish hook hammer*), Scribe Scroll

**RACIAL FEATURES:** Ability adjustments (+2 Con, -2 Str); Small size (+1 AC, +1 attack, +4 Hide, must use Small weapons, carry capacity is three-quarters that of Medium character); move 20 feet; low-light vision; weapon familiarity (treat *gnomish hook hammer* as martial weapon rather than exotic weapon); +2 Save versus Illusion spells; +1 DC to all saves related to all Illusion spells cast by character; +1 attack versus kobolds and goblinoids; +4 dodge bonus to AC against giant-type monsters; skill bonuses (+2 Listen, +2 Craft <alchemy>); spell-like abilities (1/day -- *Speak with animals* <burrowing creatures only, duration of 1 minute>; with Charisma score of at least 10: 1/day -- *dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, *prestidigitation*; all at 1<sup>st</sup> caster level, DC 10 + Charisma modifier + spell level)

**CLASS ABILITIES:** Turn undead; domain abilities (Knowledge: all Knowledge skills added to class list, cast all divination spells at +1 caster level; Protection: 1/day touch subject and grant +3 resistance bonus on next saving

throw); Armor Proficiencies (light, medium, heavy); Shield Proficiencies (buckler, light, heavy); Weapon Proficiency (simple)

**SPELLS :** 0 level -- *detect magic, guidance, light, read magic*; 1<sup>st</sup> level -- *command, divine favor, obscuring mist, (D) sanctuary*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level -- (D) *detect thoughts, status, zone of truth*

**EQUIPMENT :** masterwork chain shirt, darts (x6), +1 *gnomish hook hammer*, healer's kit, scripture book, silver holy symbol, spell component pouch, *scroll of bane, scroll of cause fear, scroll of comprehend languages, scroll of entropic shield, scroll of enthrall, scroll of hold person, scroll of lesser restoration, scroll of zone of truth, wand of cure light wounds, Quall's feather token (bird) (x2)*

**BACKGROUND :** Claude's studies were diligent and purposeful during his adolescent apprenticeships. His original intention was to enter the gem trade with hopes of possibly earning a membership in the Order of Zurich but his deep faith eventually brought him to the Church. His years as a seminary student firmly established in him an understanding of the faith's beliefs and knowledge of his people's much different pre-reformation customs. As an ordained cleric, Claude has ministered to the faithful, counseled the questioning and prayed for the fallen and departed. In addition to these tasks, he has taken part in several envoy missions to the Dwarven Kingdoms designed to guide these stone cousins toward a new understanding of divinity. In his available free time, Claude is refreshing his gemcutting skills and establishing professional ties with the Lorekeepers.

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**CHARACTER #4 :** Elisa Julliette Chabert

**RACE & GENDER :** Gnome female

**CLASS & LEVEL :** Rogue 3<sup>rd</sup>

**ALIGNMENT :** Neutral

**STRENGTH :** 10 (+0)

**DEXTERITY :** 16 (+3)

**CONSTITUTION :** 12 (+1)

**INTELLIGENCE :** 14 (+2)

**WISDOM :** 12 (+1)

**CHARISMA :** 14 (+2)

**INITIATIVE :** +3

**ARMOR CLASS :** 16

**HIT DICE & HIT POINTS :** 3d6+1 & 16

**SAVES :** Fortitude +3, Reflex +7, Willpower +3

**BASE ATTACK & GRAPPLE :** +2 & -2

**MELEE ATTACK :** +4 with +1 *short sword* (1d4+1, crit 19 - 20 x2)

**RANGED ATTACK :** +6 with dart (1d3, crit 20 x2, range 20ft)

**SKILLS :** (60 skill points) Balance +10, Bluff +4, Climb +3, Craft (alchemy) +4, Craft (calligraphy) +4, Disable Device +10, Forgery +3, Hide +11, Jump +5, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Open Lock +10, Search +7, Sleight of

Hand +7, Speak Languages (Common, Gnomish; Draconic, Giant), Spellcraft +4 (+6 with scrolls), Spot +5, Tumble +8, Use Magic Device +9

**FEATS:** Magical Aptitude, Nimble Fingers

**RACIAL FEATURES:** Ability adjustments (+2 Con, -2 Str); Small size (+1 AC, +1 attack, +4 Hide, must use Small weapons, carry capacity is three-quarters that of Medium character); move 20 feet; low-light vision; weapon familiarity (treat gnomish hook hammer as martial weapon rather than exotic weapon); +2 Save versus Illusion spells; +1 DC to all saves related to all Illusion spells cast by character; +1 attack versus kobolds and goblinoids; +4 dodge bonus to AC against giant-type monsters; skill bonuses (+2 Listen, +2 Craft <alchemy>); spell-like abilities (1/day -- *speaking with animals* <burrowing creatures only, duration of 1 minute>; with Charisma score of at least 10: 1/day -- *dancing lights, ghost sound, prestidigitation*; all at 1<sup>st</sup> caster level, DC 10 + Charisma modifier + spell level)

**CLASS ABILITIES:** Sneak Attack +2d6; trapfinding; evasion; trap sense +1; Armor Proficiency (light); Weapon Proficiencies (simple, hand crossbow, rapier, sap, shortbow, short sword)

**EQUIPMENT:** masterwork leather armor, darts (x6), +1 *short sword*, masterwork thieves' tools, *wand of magic missile* (1<sup>st</sup> level), *cloak of resistance +1*

**BACKGROUND:** Elisa is barely into adulthood and already has completed two apprenticeships and a single term in the regional militia. This brief enlistment honed her natural skills at stealth and taught her the importance of combat coordination and cooperation. These elements, as well as her skills at larceny and ability to be socially inconspicuous, make her a capable covert agent. Her freelance work attracted the attention of the Lorekeepers, with whom she currently is contracted. Recent assignments have been successful and Elisa senses that a permanent employment offer is forthcoming. Currently, she is enhancing her skills training and maintaining contact with her underworld connections for possible help in future missions.

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**GROUP BACKGROUND:** This group was assembled for a variety of covert missions for the Church and the Lorekeepers. The social skills, knack for subterfuge and combat abilities of the individuals make them capable of success in the eyes of their superiors. Together for only a few weeks, they already have completed one assignment and easily meshed, first by gender and then by skills and aptitudes. Future missions will push the group's capabilities but continued positive results may move them, singly and collectively, closer to involvement with the Secret Masters' centuries-long Great Work.

# Dungeons and Dragons: What's Below Synopsis

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*By Ryan Trevillyan*

This is the story of the heroes of the land of Azantia and how they calmed a volcano, saving the town of Calmost and every one for miles around.

Here are the heroes:

*Disilya Thidon*- Disilya has short, golden hair, beautiful light green eyes and a light tan from being in the sun most of the time. Disilya was taught to believe in the god St. Cuthbert when she was only 6 years old. Disilya also has an older brother who helps her when she needs help or is feeling bad. He would do anything to keep her safe. Disilya loves to smile and always sees the bright side of things. Some people hate that about her but most love her optimism. She has a beautiful laugh that fills the air and brings smiles to the faces of others.

*Clara of the Cliffwalkers*- Clara has long, light brown hair tied in to a pony tail, and is thin with a little muscle on her light tan arms and legs. Clara is one of the Valley Walkers from the east plains and has come to answer the call of Azerus. Fast to anger, she is not shy about showing it, and in fact, she likes it.

*Glithis of the Longhorn*- Glithis is the seventh son of the Longhorn leader, Glafar Greathorn. Glithis has a minor dislike of the Warforged because he thinks them unnatural.

*Fulgar of the Longhair tribe*- Fulgar is a Longhair shaman and has three years left in training with his shaman master. Fulgar rarely starts a fight unless it cannot be avoided and encourages others to do the same.

*Vilzar Thidon*- Vilzar has short, light brown hair and dark blue eyes. Vilzar is one of the best knights in the town of Calmost. Vilzar is Disilya's brother and he loves and will protect her with his life if need be. Vilzar is a gentleman and will never cheat in a fight even if it's the only way of winning, and he will not fight unfairly.

*Xrantin*- Strong and tough, Xrantin has seen many battles and his body shows it. He is one of the elite fighters in the group of Warforged called the "walls" that are specially trained for defense. Xrantin will come to the aid of any one he is working with even if it means his death. Nobler than any knight, he is even willing to stand in the path of many fully grown dragons when he is defending someone.

Along with two of the town mages they will brave the dangers of the volcano.

## **6:23 pm (in game time)**

As the party is walked along the streets of Calmost a few noticed a shadow at the corner of their eye and had the feeling of being watched. They decided to just keep walking to the capitol. The following was read when they reached the capitol: *The King's Haven of Calmost is the biggest building in the town. It has rows of columns all the way around and its in the shape of a big T. The outside walls are covered with words dating back at last 200 years, but it would take day, if not weeks to read them all .The doors into the building are double and at least 10 ft tall. They are carved with animal figures of all kinds.*

A member of the party knocked on the huge double doors. The door did not open for a moment and then a drunken man opened the door: *As they open the door they are hit with the voices of many people along with the songs of a local bard. The smell of cooked wild gazelle wafts through the door along with the laughter of children and the calls their mothers commanding them to sit and eat. As they walk in, they see the first room looks a lot like a fancy inn with a small fireplace on the right hand side where a bard is singing a tale of the last brave adventurers that were sent to the volcano. Across from them stands a second set of tall double doors and off to the left side is a bar with a bartender.*

Glithis walked over to the bar and orders a drink.

“Are you the new adventurers?”The barkeeper asked.

“Yes” replied Glithis.

“In that case, you get half off, but if you can get rid of those two drunks over before they start a fight, then it’s free.”

Glithis walked off to take care of the drunks. Vilzar all the suddenly noticed that there were no stables so he tied up his horse to one of the great columns. Meanwhile, Glithis head butted one of the drunks who were putting up a fight and the other fainted. Glithis then grabbed them both and threw them out where they landed in a pile of horse dung.

The party then went to ask the bartender/innkeeper about the king.

“His chamber is thru those doors (Pointing at the 2<sup>nd</sup> set of big double doors) and to the left.”

The party went through the second set of double doors: *They open the doors to the hallway beyond as the doors close behind them. They start to feel like they are being watched again but there’s no one else here but them. As they look around, they see that there are torches along the wall every 20-30ft or so and that the hallway splits in two direction, one left and one right. They chose to go left as they were told but then: As they walk along they hear the faint sound of footsteps moving away from them. But when they turn to look they see nothing but can still hear the steps echoing off the walls.* They knocked on the door leading to the throne room.

“Come in,” a voice replies.

*When you open the king’s door you hear his voice boom out “Greetings good adventurers! I am Azerus and I am in need of your help if you will hear me out.”*

Azerus told the adventurers to go to the Warforged outpost and to get someone there to help guide them to the volcano. He offered the party horses and a map to help them on their way. In the morning the party set off to the outpost: *As they approach the outpost gates, a Warforged came up to them and asked that they dismount and follow him. They do as they are told and are*

*taken to an inn for the “living” races: As they enter the inn they see a big Warforged standing there staring at the. After looking them over, he finally speaks.*

*“You are the new scouts am I right?” Pausing, he continues, “I am commander Volkas and I am here to inform you that you have our support. “He then turns to a tough and strong looking Warforged.*

*“Xrantin, help them out any way you can, wills you? I will be in my tent for now. Good luck to you all and get some sleep. I will see you all in the morning,” he said as he walked out of the inn.*

The party headed up to the second floor of the inn and to sleep, except for but Xrantin who did not require sleep. They were all awakened by the battle sounds on the first floor and by the sound of big slithering things on the roof. Fulgar had no idea what was on the roof.

”It could be elephants but I do not know,” says Fulgar.

Clara strung three arrows and trained them on the stairs leading to their room. The others kept watch on the windows while Glithis and Xrantin stood at the top of the stairs. Then they saw a human come up to the stairs and stop as he noticed the party. He then shot a faintly glowing ray at Xrantin that hit him but it dispersed without apparent effect. Clara let loose her arrows and one after the other they thud into the human who winced in pain but stood defiant. Then one of the town mages started to speak the words of magic, creating ten shimmering jaws like that of a shark that fly at the human stranger. In an instant they tore him to pieces. The human began to shimmer and was replaced by a creature known as a Zern, which is a creature that has the ability to change their shape to fit the situation. Xrantin and Glithis then charged down the stairs and into the first floor room, where encountered at least half a dozen or more Zern and their leader.

The town mage descended the stairs after them, sending the snapping jaws to five of the Zern (two each). One of the Zern was easily identified as the leader. The leader dodged most of the jaws but still some hit him. Glithis roared and charged the same group, easily cutting one Zern down.

Disilya, praying to St.Cuthbert, stood ready at the top of the stairs with her brother at her side. Fulgar ran down the stairs to see if he could help with the fighting below.

The Zern leader sent a flurry of steel down on Glithis and one of the blows hit in the gut but Glithis did not seem to care or show pain. Instead it seemed to anger him even more. One of the Zern fired glowing rays at Glithis which hit and caused his skin to twist painfully.

Then a second Zern moved so he could see the town mage, still flinging jaws, and started to chant words of power and points at the pesky mage. The unfortunate mage suddenly morphed into a small rat and ran around frantically until he found the other town mage on the second floor who picked him up and placed him in one of his pockets.

Vilzar, who was watching the windows, saw two large human/worm creatures (Zern Bladethralls) slam into the window and fall to the ground outside. The second town mage ran over to the shattered window and cast stone grasp on the creatures, trapping them to the ground.

Fulgar used his Druid skills to change into a dire lion and charged the Zern leader, pouncing on him, tearing and raking. As he finally pinned the Zern, it melted to a pile of ooze, slipping out of his claws. Once he escaped, the Zern morphed back to his original form and started growing bigger until he was the same size as Fulgar (in the form of a dire lion). As the Zern leader readied to strike down Fulgar, he hesitated for a moment as if thinking about something and threw down his weapons, shrinking back to his normal size. He told his men to stand down.

"I wish to speak to the leader of this group," he shouts. Vilzar stepped forward to speak to the Zern.

"My name is Malkov and I need your help to free my clan. We have been forced to fight you by someone I have not met but who has captured my clan." He then hands a letter to Vilzar as proof: *Take out the scouts at all cost for if they discover what we are doing here, your clan will be enslaved for the rest of their lives. Don't even think about running away for I will find you. They will be at the inn at the Warforged outpost. Kill them there.*

*Jarmivlerak*

The party then decided to help Malkov free his clan and kill who ever has enslaved them. Malkov led them to the volcano and the entrance to a cave: *The cave entrance is as at least 10ft tall and 20ft wide and there is mist bellowing out of it. They can hear the sound of boiling water and what sounds like a fountain coming from inside. There are rocks all over the outside of the cave as if someone dug the cave out recently.*

The party then entered the cave and came to a room thick with the hot mist. A few of the party are hit by Gazers and knocked off their feet. Shapes overhead that appeared to be part of the cave's roof turned out to be two Mindflyers.

Fulgar changed in to a giant eagle and flew to attack them. Clara fired three arrows at one and wounded it badly, allowing Xrantin to finish it off with a few of his spears. The last is quickly taken out by the party and after the battle they searched the room, finding a trap door leading down. The party headed down a ladder to the lower floor: *As you climb down the ladder you are hit by the smell of dung and pee. When you step off the ladder and take a look around you see Zern everywhere trapped in what looks like glowing cages. There are a few that just stare into space with blank faces and do not even so much as look at you as you come in the room. There is a door across from you and a table that has a bunch of jars on. Next to the door is a chest sitting with a lock.*

Malkov ran over to the cages and started to beat madly on one as if he could smash it. The party searched the room and looked in the jars only to see a few Zern brains inside. Xrantin went over to the door and tried to smash it but the only thing he did was to put a dent in it and make a loud noise.

Xrantin then tried the handle and finding it not locked, he opened it: *As you open the door your hit by hot air and the smell of melting rock. This room is about 70ft long and 50ft wide. In the middle of the room sits a brightly glowing circle and what looks like orange glowing worms about 1ft in diameter and 4-5ft long. The air around them looks like water. As you walk in to the room, the ground rumbles and shakes .The worms seem to shake as well but you're not sure if it's the rumbling of the ground or the fact that it seems that they are being controlled by some unseen force.*

The worms quickly dug underground sensing danger. The party then spotted movement close to the roof and noticed three more Mindflayers, one in the robes of a sorcerer. The Mindflayers closed in on the adventurers, letting loose their deadly mindblast, knocking out one of the town mages. Malkov ran in holding small orbs which he tossed to each of the party members, telling them they had some kind of enchantment that would protect them. Three little Zern Arcanovore came running after Malkov and stood in a ready stance staring at the Mindflayers, waiting. The Mindflayers let loose their mindblast but the blasts were absorbed by the orbs which started to glow. With the protection of the orbs and the Zern Arcanovore the party managed to take out the Mindflayers very quickly. The volcano was calmed and thus heroes were born.

## THE END

# ARENA SYNOPSIS

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*By Ralph Pizarro*

With 3 arenas behind our guild, one might think that we have done everything there is to do with combat. This past session we had players wait until they had arrived at the arena to roll their stats 2d6+6. This way, players who had more time to create their characters would not have the usual time advantages that they usually have received. So people rolled stats and created 4th level characters for the Arena.

I personally created a half-orc bard. Those of you who know the D20 system can imagine how well I did. It turns out that bards are excellent in groups, but horrible as solos. Oh well, lesson learned.

After some practice runs, we began the battles in earnest. Now rather than have a single champion, we broke our battles into two groups. Those who won their initial battles and went on to battle in the Super Bowl and those who lost their initial battles and went on to duke it out in the Toilet Bowl. I had a perfect battle record and so was a good sport about all the victories I allowed my opponents to acquire at my expense.

Players had so much fun that we almost didn't care about the ranking. Though for those of you who need to know, our winner was a druid ran by a non-member. I can't wait to see how many people continue to come out for the next arena.

# GMinG Tips

By Tad Kelson

## Background:

Gaming since 10<sup>th</sup> grade (Christmas 1978)

The following systems mostly

- ❖ DnD (all varieties)
- ❖ Traveller
- ❖ Dark Conspiracy
- ❖ Call of Cthulhu
- ❖ Hero System
- ❖ Gurps

- ❖ Morrow Project
- ❖ Gamma World 1<sup>st</sup> Edition
- Familiar with
  - ❖ SLA Industries
  - ❖ Kult
  - ❖ Villians and Vigilantes
  - ❖ Palladium
  - ❖ Rolemaster
  - ❖ Others I forget even

## General Tips for GMs

- ❖ Stock NPCs
- ❖ Pre-made locations (ala Sprawls)
- ❖ Notecards with NPCs and adventure hooks, instead of reading right out of a module
- ❖ Atmospheric music. Set the tone, the theme the mood. Esp. for horror genre
- ❖ Network. Find other gamers / GMs with strengths to complement your own.
- ❖ Find your genre of choice and play / run in it
- ❖ Read up about the basis for that genre and use it
- ❖ Feel free to borrow from all sources such as books, magazine, radio, television, movies, comics, other games, etc.
- ❖ I like to draw from Personality tests to flesh out characters and also NPCs
- ❖ Find fonts on the Internet to spice up your player handouts like maps, scrolls, notes, job offers, etc.

## Superheros

- ❖ Newsletters
- ❖ Pull form life, headlines
- ❖ Did TV news broadcasts as plot hooks

## Modern

Research current trends using magazine

Examples include:

- ❖ Popular Science
- ❖ Popular Mechanics
- ❖ Gun Magazines
- ❖ Soldier of Fortune
- ❖ Use maps / street maps, play in the city you live in or used to live in to add in realism
- ❖ Internet resources

## Useful Websites

- ❖ [www.roleplayingtips.com](http://www.roleplayingtips.com)
- ❖ [www.gamegrene.com](http://www.gamegrene.com)
- ❖ <http://www.montecook.com/dmonly.html>

# A NATURAL RANGER CLASS

By Gus Badnell

Rangers. The very name conjures up some spectacular examples in literature – Aragorn, Robin Hood, Natty Bumppo (from Cooper’s *The Leatherstocking Tales*), and even Riverwind and Tanis (from the *Dragonlance* Chronicles). There is one thing common amongst all these examples – they lacked any spellcasting ability. They could be better classified as “natural” rangers. The *Player’s Handbook* does an excellent job with the ranger class, but for those looking for a non-spellcasting version – and one more attuned to the aforementioned “quintessential” rangers – either have had to suspend disbelief and regard their spellcasting as natural abilities, or disregard it altogether.

Below you will find a non-spellcasting ranger variant. Not only are the ranger spells removed, but also the abilities added continue the *Player’s Handbook’s* theme of extraordinary abilities. This variant keeps the ranger balanced with other melee classes, all while retaining its former level of power.

**TABLE 3-13R: THE RANGER**

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+2	+0	1st Favored Enemy, Track, Wild Empathy
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Combat Style, Tend Wounds
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	Endurance
4th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Animal Companion
5th	+5	+4	+4	+1	2nd Favored Enemy
6th	+6/+1	+5	+5	+2	Improved Combat Style, Tend Wounds +5
7th	+7/+2	+5	+5	+2	Woodland Stride
8th	+8/+3	+6	+6	+2	Swift Tracker
9th	+9/+4	+6	+6	+3	Evasion
10th	+10/+5	+7	+7	+3	3rd Favored Enemy, Tend Wounds +10
11th	+11/+6/+1	+7	+7	+3	Combat Style Mastery
12th	+12/+7/+2	+8	+8	+4	Trackless Step
13th	+13/+8/+3	+8	+8	+4	Camouflage
14th	+14/+9/+4	+9	+9	+4	Tend Wounds +15
15th	+15/+10/+5	+9	+9	+5	4th Favored Enemy
16th	+16/+11/+6/+1	+10	+10	+5	Perfected Combat Style Mastery
17th	+17/+12/+7/+2	+10	+10	+5	Woodland Grace
18th	+18/+13/+8/+3	+11	+11	+6	Tend Wounds +20
19th	+19/+14/+9/+4	+11	+11	+6	Hide in Plain Sight
20th	+20/+15/+10/+5	+12	+12	+6	5th Favored Enemy

**Class Features**

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Same as the *PHB*.

**Favored Enemy (Ex):** Same as the *PHB*.

**Track:** Same as the *PHB*.

**Wild Empathy (Ex):** Same as the *PHB*.

**Combat Style (Ex):** Same as the *PHB*.

**Tend Wounds (Ex):** Beginning at 2<sup>nd</sup> level, a ranger with 5 or more ranks in Survival can use materials found in nature (medicinal leaves, berries, roots, fungi, and other such materials) to heal wounds on himself or his comrades. The ranger either makes a DC 15 (outside) or a DC 20 (underground) Survival check – this represents 1 hour of searching for the materials to make a poultice or a natural brew for the wound tending. Once the subject ingests or applies the concoction, the ranger makes a DC 10 Heal check. The subject is healed for 1 hit point for every point the check result exceeds 10. A subject can only receive the benefits of one wound tending per day, whether from the same ranger or not.

In addition, the ranger receives a +5 competence bonus on the Heal check to Tend Wounds at 6<sup>th</sup> level. This bonus only applies to the Heal check to Tend Wounds, and increases to +10 at 10<sup>th</sup> level, +15 at 14<sup>th</sup> level, and +20 at 18<sup>th</sup> level.

**Endurance:** Same as the *PHB*.

**Animal Companion (Ex):** Same as the *PHB*, but replace the first sentence in the second paragraph with the following: This ability functions like the druid ability of the same name (see page 35), except that the ranger's effective druid level is three levels lower than his ranger level (druid level = ranger level - 3).

**Improved Combat Style (Ex):** Same as the *PHB*.

**Woodland Stride (Ex):** Same as the *PHB*.

**Swift Tracker (Ex):** Same as the *PHB*.

**Evasion (Ex):** Same as the *PHB*.

**Combat Style Mastery (Ex):** Same as the *PHB*.

**Trackless Step (Ex):** Starting at 12<sup>th</sup> level, a ranger leaves no trail in natural surroundings and cannot be tracked. He may choose to leave a trail if so desired.

**Camouflage (Ex):** Same as the *PHB*.

**Perfect Combat Style (Ex):** At 16<sup>th</sup> level, a ranger's aptitude in his chosen combat style (archery or two weapon combat) reaches its fullest potential. If he selected archery at 2<sup>nd</sup> level, he is treated as having the Masterful Shooting feat (see below), even if he does not meet the normal prerequisites for that feat.

If the ranger selected two-weapon combat at 2<sup>nd</sup> level, he is treated as having the Superior Two-Weapon Fighting feat (see below) even if he does not have the prerequisites for that feat.

As before, the benefits of the ranger's chosen weapon style apply only when he wears light or no armor. He loses all benefits of his combat style when wearing medium or heavy armor.

**Woodland Grace (Ex):** At 17<sup>th</sup> level, a ranger's experience at maneuvering in natural surroundings improves. Any penalties for hiding and moving silently are halved, so long as the ranger is in a natural environment. Such penalties include the penalty for moving more than half speed in while hiding or moving silently, sniping (a Hide skill trick), or moving silently while traversing noisy surfaces.

Additionally, the ranger's penalties for tracking while moving up to twice his normal speed are halved again: from -10 to -5.

**Hide in Plain Sight (Ex):** Same as the *PHB*.

Below are the two feats selectable upon attaining the Combat Style Perfection ability at 16<sup>th</sup> level. Please note that Superior Two-Weapon Fighting originally appeared as a class ability of the Tempest prestige class in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition supplement, *Masters of the Wild*. In v3.5, the feat was renamed "Perfect Two-Weapon Fighting," and designated as an epic feat. However, to maintain

consistency with the other two weapon feats (Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, and Greater Two-Weapon Fighting) it has been revised below.

Masterful Shooting is a brand new feat.

## Masterful Shooting [General] [Fighter]

Your archery training has made your shots incredibly accurate.

**Prerequisites:** Dex 21, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Manyshot, base attack bonus +16

**Benefit:** You no longer suffer a -2 penalty to your shots when using the Rapid Shot feat.

Additionally, the penalties when using the Manyshot feat are halved (-2 for firing two arrows, -3 for firing three, and -4 for firing four)

**Normal:** Rapid Shot incurs a -2 penalty to every attack made in that round. When using the Manyshot feat, the attack penalties are as follows: -4 for firing two arrows, -6 for firing three, and -8 for firing four.

## Superior Two-Weapon Fighting [General] [Fighter]

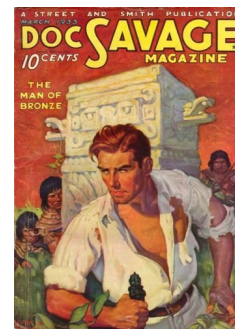
You have reached the limits of the two-weapon fighting style.

**Prerequisites:** Dex 21, Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Two-Weapon Fighting, base attack bonus +16.

**Benefit:** You get a fourth attack with your off-hand weapon, albeit at a -15 penalty.

**Special:** A ranger who chose the two-weapon fighting combat style can select this feat, even if he does not have a high enough Dexterity for it (though the other prerequisites must be met). But he can only use this feat when he is wearing light or no armor.





## *The Thrill of a Pulp Fiction Adventure*

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*By Laura Wampfler*

*Thump! A sharp spear sailed through the air imbedding itself into the trunk of a tree. The party of jungle weary adventurers stopped in their tracks. Jane shouted and drew attention to the tribe of natives behind them, spears waving menacingly. Jack pulled out his pistol and took a shot, but it only seemed to frenzy the natives further. The party took off running, attempting to dodge trees and flying spears. Directly in front of them a clearing appeared, occupied by a large weathered stone structure. Rafe ran toward the gaping opening in the stone and gestured to the others to run inside. At least from the doorway they could tackle a few natives at a time and stand a chance. The party plunged into the damp darkness of the building. Jack and Rafe stood near the door, their guns ready. To their surprise, the natives approached slowly and stopped about 20 feet from the building. They shouted to each other and gestured wildly before turning and running off, fear etched on their faces. Jack and Rafe looked at each other, a sense of foreboding doom sent shivers down their spines. Suddenly, a flickering light appeared at the other end of the room.*

*“Welcome. I have been waiting for you.” A laugh echoed through the stone chamber.*

Pulp Fiction...Indiana Jones, The Rocketeer, The Shadow, The Maltese Falcon..all these are examples of pulp fiction. Pulp can involve exotic locales, horror, mystery, swashbuckling, science fiction, and crime along with two fisted heroes, dastardly villains, and dangerous dames. Cliffhangers left readers or audiences literally hanging off the edge of their chair.

The term pulp fiction refers to the cheap pulpwood paper most of the early Pulp magazines were printed on. These were the magazines of the masses, read by the secretaries and the guy who installed your telephone. They certainly didn't appeal to the literary critics and the 'high brow' society of the time. The writers churned out a huge number of stories in a short amount of time and created rather two dimensional characters with formulaic plots. But wow, were they fun!

The Pulp Era is usually defined as the period between the two World Wars, the early 1920's to the early 40s. This was a time of advancing technology, from automobiles to airships to airplanes. Steamships plied the waterways and new means of communication erupted on the scene. Some writers extend pulp back to the turn of the century, and include tales of exploration and adventure in locales such as Egypt or the Dark Continent in their stories.

Regardless of the setting, the formula for pulp was always the same. The story takes the characters to an interesting locale...The streets of Chicago during the 20's, an Egyptian landscape, the jungles of Africa or the Amazon, a lost location hidden from the rest of the world, the island of a mad scientist. A Villain appears who wants something the player has or has taken something the players want. A strange murder has occurred, something the players must investigate. The hero or heroes have a menace hanging over their heads, something that drags them down, a secret they are afraid to reveal or a duty they feel called to defend. As the hero tries to catch the Villain or avoid the Villain, he is constantly challenged and struggles with the challenges. Fights ensue, action occurs, and the Villain leads the hero on a wild chase through an adventure. Larger than life, the hero manages to fight off these menaces and ultimately prevail. The Villain? He usually slips off to fight another day..but then, of course, we don't know that until the next episode.

Pulp fiction is a perfect genre for role play and is becoming more and more popular with role players tired of the typical fantasy scenarios. Over the years, a number of systems have been used for pulp gaming, including D20 systems. D20 Modern along with help from the D20 Past supplement can work well. You can find a variety of pulp adventures out there written specifically for the D20 system. Other systems, such as *Savage Worlds* can be easily adapted to a pulp scenario and Steve Jackson's *Gurps* has a setting for pulp called *Cliffhangers*. White Wolf's *Adventure* system and Evil Hat's *Spirit of the Century* are systems that were written specifically for the pulp fiction role play. You can find an extensive list of role play resources for pulp fiction on the web here: <http://project1557.wetpaint.com/page/Pulp+RPG's?t=anon>. This website also has other fabulous information you use for your pulp adventure. A thorough search of the Web will also help you find great ideas you can use for your adventure. Real life events and mysteries can become seeds for your heroic adventures as well as novels and movies.

Remember though, pulp fiction is not the same as the D&D dungeon game you play on a regular basis. Your heroes are larger than life, and while not super heroes they are super humans, just a little bit stronger, smarter and more talented than your average Joe. They can fight from the hood of a moving vehicle or swing through the trees on a vine, landing in just the right spot. They can pilot their airplane through a squadron of enemies and come out with only a few bullet holes on the fuselage.

Death is dramatic and is not at the whim of a dice throw. Rarely do pulp heroes die but often, they come close to dying. Instead, your players must have room for fantastic escapes from death. Just when we thought it was all over, the hero pulls one more trick from his sleeve and slips through the fingers of the Villain. Accidentally activating the booby trap in a tomb and sending the hero into a pit of spikes might hurt, but it doesn't kill the hero of a pulp fiction adventure.

Same is true for the villain. They seem to be remarkably resilient and they are certainly colorful! A Nazi trying to control the magic of an ancient artifact; a mad scientist who has created a gadget that can destroy the world; or the mob leader who is enlisting the help of some strange beings with special powers. They often employ minions to help them carry out their plots and throw obstacles in the way of the heroes.

Weird science and gadgets are a part of many pulp fiction adventures. Ray guns, super weapons that can affect the minds of the citizens, bizarre flying machines and underwater vehicles are some examples. The villains have control of strange objects that are unheard of by most of the people in the world and even the heroes don't understand how they work. But they know they are dangerous and must be stopped.



In a role play setting, the action should be fast and furious. Make use of the cliffhanger to jump from scenes, especially if your party is split. If your dice rolls say the hero should be smashed like a bug by the Giant Ape's foot, fudge it a little..let the hero slip between his giant toes. If the Villian dies, don't tell the players he is dead...let them believe that he MIGHT come back to weave his evil plans once again in the future and then do it! Bring him back again someday just to watch them squirm! Make sure your players give the heroes some weakness whether he is a sucker for a pretty face or is horribly unlucky. Use props, such as newspaper clippings, either real ones or ones created with a little imagination and some Googled

images. Exaggerate the evil accent or the frightened damsel. In short, create a level of excitement that your players will never forget.

Now, get out there and create a pulp fiction adventure for your next role playing event!

*The daring adventurers stared at the shadowy face flickering in the light of the torch. Jane gasped as the features became clear. It was none other than Baron Von Glick, the evil German industrialist who kidnapped Jane a year ago. Jack quickly moved between Von Glick and Jane, pointing his pistol toward the menacing mug. Von Glick moved the torch, revealing a lever on the wall behind him. Jack fired, but was unable to stop the villain from pulling the lever before the pistol's bullet struck the German, knocking him back into the darkness. Before the members of the party could check on Von Glick's condition, the walls began to tremble and the room became smaller. The opening collapsed and there appeared to be no way out. The heroes were about to be smashed between the stone walls! Would they escape to adventure again or was this the end? Was Von Glick dead or did he slyly escape through a hatch door on the floor?*

## ***THE CREATION OF A HERO SPIRIT OF THE CENTURY***

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*By Laura Wampfler*

The Spirit of the Century role playing system has a unique and exciting method of creating your heroic or villainous characters. This works best when sitting around the table with your gamers, all creating the character together. It can be time consuming for the GM creating a group of characters alone for a convention run but the end result may be better than expected since the GM can make sure the characters mesh well. For those who want a quick game, ideas for 'creation on the fly' are explained in the Spirit of the Century book and in the introduction available in pdf form for free at the website: <http://www.evilhat.com/spirit/sotc-content-preview.pdf>

First of all, you must find a character concept. Remember, this is pulp fiction so the more 'over the top', the better. For my example character, I decided to make an Indiana Jones type character minus the archeology background. I wanted a fellow that could guide my other characters into dangerous, exotic places, from the jungles of the Amazon to the deserts of Africa. So I created a character with the concept of "Explorer." I gave him the snappy name of Rafe Randolph, Explorer Extraordinaire!

Next, you are asked to create the background of your character. The character background section is broken into two parts, the character's childhood, followed by his experiences during the war. Since I kept the idea of the Century club in mind while creating my characters, I knew they were all born on January 1, 1901. This helped me to determine the age of the character during the background writing.

I decided Rafe needed an outdoorsy childhood so I set him in Montana on a ranch. But rather than a rich boy, I wanted someone who had to scrape by a little so I made him the son of the ranch manager rather than the son of the ranch owner. I threw in a bit of

spice by having him fall in love with the owner's daughter, who was forbidden to him. I might be able to use this in a game someday. Maybe the long lost love reappears in some setting.

During the war, Rafe was too young to enlist. But as happened often in the early wars, Rafe managed to lie about his age and join the war effort anyway. Since he is a 'hero' he was noticed and singled out as an exceptional young man. Rather than fight in the trenches, Rafe spent his wartime in espionage, gathering information from dangerous places. After the war, he used his knowledge to start guiding groups such as big game hunters or amateur archeologists to various locales.

Aspects are an important part of character creation in SofC. An aspect is simply a trait attached to the character's background. Rather than simply write down 'Rides Horses' or 'Fast', we write the aspects with the colorful language of pulp. So I created two aspects for each of Rafe's background sections. I gave him 'Home in the Saddle' and 'Rough around the Edges' for the childhood portion of his background, for example. These are used by the players and the GMs in a variety of ways. For example, if Rafe were to be invited to a fancy ball, the GM could compel him to be uncomfortable since he is a bit 'Rough around the Edges' and hates to dress in formal wear. The GM could also compel him to be looked down upon by those of a higher social class. Rafe's player could use the aspect to be comfortable talking with working people or to tolerate rough living conditions. The use of aspects allows the players to utilize their backgrounds to explain certain behaviors or get boosts in skills.

Besides backgrounds, Rafe also is given a novel of his very own. The novel gives us a glance into the kind of adventures in Rafe's life and again, can give both the player and the GM ammunition for later games. Rafe also gets to guest star in a novel belong to two other characters. For each novel, Rafe will receive two more aspects.

Skills are chosen next and are similar to typical skills in many games. However, they are chosen on a pyramid scheme, with each character receiving one skill at the highest level and two at the next level, and so on. Stunts, which are modifications of the skills, are chosen after the skill section is complete. Resolve and Endurance, two skills that can be selected, determine the 'hitpoints' for social and physical combat. Yes, in SotC, you can actually combat socially with someone.

Below is Rafe Randolph's completed character sheet. Unlike some games, SotC does not start your character off at 'level 1' and then make you wait eight months to have a true heroic character. Since pulp is about heroes, you start with a hero, which makes SotC great for a one shot pick-up game or a convention game. However, in a campaign, the GM can advance the characters through various schemes, including adding more aspects or skills. Characters can also change aspects as they grow and mature through role play. Fate points are spent to use aspects and you can also increase the number the players get as they advance.

While SotC is not your typical fantasy genre, dice heavy, slow moving dungeon crawl, it is the perfect system for fast moving story telling pulp fiction drama..or comedy. In my opinion and in that of many who have reviewed this system on the internet, Spirit of the Century's character creation delivers true pulp fiction characters.



## ***PHASE ONE: BACKGROUND***

### ***EVENTS***

Rafe grew up as the son of a ranch supervisor in Montana. He spent his childhood with horses and under open skies. As a young man, he fell for the daughter of the ranch owner. When her father discovered the romance, he sent the daughter away. Heartbroken, a young Rafe ran off, lied about his age and joined the army.

### ***FIRST ASPECT***

At Home in the Saddle

### ***SECOND ASPECT***

Rough Around the Edges

## ***PHASE TWO: THE WAR***

### ***PATRON***

Max Trader

### ***EVENTS***

Rafe's quick intelligence and strong body earned him respect among his superiors. The brass selected him for a special recognizance program. His job would be to go into dangerous places, gather information and to get get out, unnoticed or at least unrecognized. His training officer was a man named Max Trader, an expert with years of experience in espionage. Trader took Rafe under his wing and taught him everything he knew. Max disappeared with another team member somewhere behind enemy lines.

### ***FIRST ASPECT***

Abandon None

### ***SECOND ASPECT***

Thrill of the Hunt

## ***PHASE THREE: YOUR NOVEL***

### ***NOVEL TITLE***

Rafe Randolph in... the Heart of Danger

### ***GUEST STARS***

Axel Grace, Gadgeteer

### ***EVENTS***

Rafe Randolph leads a group of big game hunters into the heart of Africa. Far from civilization, the group encounters a menacing threat and must fight to save their lives. Will Rafe manage to bring his party safely back or will they perish in the wilderness? Will Axel Grace be able to help them or is he too late?

### ***FIRST ASPECT***

World Traveler

### ***SECOND ASPECT***

Born to be Wild

## ***PHASE FOUR: OTHER ADVENTURE***

### ***GUEST STARRING IN EVENTS***

Lady Jane Wellington in....The Thorn's Kiss

Following a successful expedition in Peru, Lady Jane is abducted while transporting the artifacts back to London. Are the mysterious objects uncovered in the excavation the motive for the kidnapping or is there another, more sinister reason? Can Rafe Randolph find her in time?

### ***FIRST ASPECT***

Bullheaded

### ***SECOND ASPECT***

Danger Sense

## ***PHASE FIVE: OTHER ADVENTURE***

### ***GUEST STARRING IN EVENTS***

Jack Granger and the Mad Phantom

Jack's friend and patron, Matt Cronley, goes down over the Pacific Ocean. Discovering that a number of planes have disappeared in this location, Jack goes to investigate. Will Jack and Lady Luck be the next victims of this mysterious trap? Or will he find the answers he seeks with the help of Rafe Randolph.

### ***FIRST ASPECT***

In the Nick of Time

### ***SECOND ASPECT***

Face the Onslaught

## Profound Quotes

"Let me strive, every moment of my life, to make myself better and better, to the best of my ability, so that all may profit by it. Let me think of the right, and lend my assistance to those who need it, with no regard for anything but justice. Let me take what comes with a smile, without loss of courage. Let me be considerate of my country, of my fellow citizens and my associates in everything I say and do. Let me do right to all, and wrong no man."

-- The Doc Savage Code

