

GARY'S 4 APPENDIX

A Thoughtful Zine



DESIGNED FOR USE WITH

**OLD-SCHOOL
ESSENTIALS**





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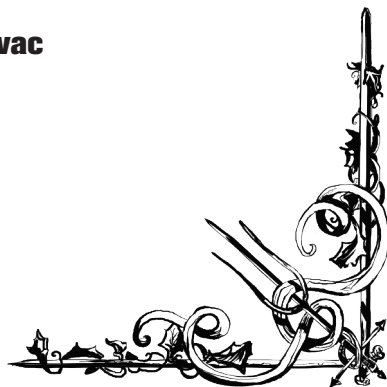
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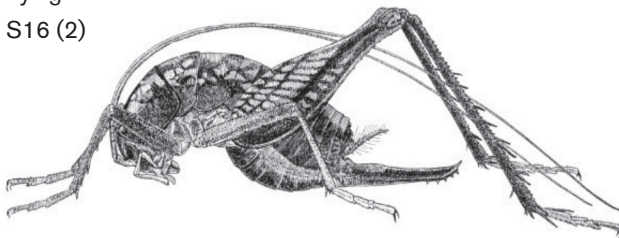
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CAVE LOCUST

2–3' long, herbivorous, giant crickets that dwell in caverns.

AC	4 [15]
HD	2 (9 hp)
ATT	1x bite (1d2) or 1 x jump (1d4) or 1 x spit (stench)
THACO	18 [+1]
MV	60' (20') /180' (60') flying
SV	D12 W13 P15 B15 S16 (2)
ML	5
AL	Neutral
XP	20
NA	2d10 (1d10)
TT	None



SPECIAL

Blend in with stone: May be overlooked or mistaken for statues, due to their stony colouration.

Shriek: If attacked or frightened, shriek to warn others. This may attract wandering monsters (20% chance per round).

Jump: Very skittish. If attacked, usually flee by jumping up to 60' then flying away. 50% chance of jumping at a random opponent, in which case treat the jump as an attack.

Spit: Used defensively. 10' range. Target treated as AC 9 [10]. The affected character is covered in stinking spittle: unable to act for 1 turn (save versus poison). Until the goo is washed off, others who come within 5' must also save versus poison or be violently sick.

Poison immunity: Immune to yellow mould and most poisons, due to their habit of eating fungi.

A huge subterranean insect, whose diet includes lichens, fungi, molds, decaying corpses, and small animals found inside caves and tunnels. They are skittish creatures and will flee from danger. But when trapped or threatened, they will not hesitate to eject a foul-smelling fluid. Spelunkers tell frightful stories of stampeding hordes of cave locusts crushing their companions or causing them to plummet to their deaths.

Because they are common and prolific, cave locusts are a critical part of the diet for various under-dwellers. The locusts are edible for humans and humanoids. The meat has a musty taste but becomes palatable if cooked with select mushrooms and fungi. In addition to raising them for food, underground inhabitants also create locust sanctuaries as a natural early warning system, because the insects' loud chirping will alert them to an approaching intruder.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Roll 1d6 on this encounter table if you get "Cave Locust" on the adventure's random table.

1. As they approach, the player characters smell a nauseating stench and hear creatures vomiting. Make another roll on the adventure's encounter table to determine what type of creature or creatures fell victim to the cave cricket's spittle. Their sickness ends in 1d10-1 minutes.
2. The adventurers hear locusts chirping, alerting the party to a nearby threat. Roll on the adventure's random encounter table to determine what set off the locusts.
3. A herd of 1d10 cave locusts are stampeding towards the party. Roll for initiative.
4. A small group of cave goblins appear with a docile cave locust, which is not afraid of humans or humanoids. The goblins train locusts to trill when they smell a type of fungi the goblins cherish, and to screech when it approaches dangerous molds, jellies, and fungi. Goblins also train some cave locusts (2-in-6) to perform songs. The price for a trained locust is 100gp and 115gp for one that "sings."
5. The adventurers encounter cave locusts, but the effects of cave-locust spittle vary, based on the toxins in the fungi they eat.
 1. **Blindness** (Save vs breath or suffer blindness for 10 minutes).
 2. **Acid** (Save vs breath or the victim's armor/clothing dissolves in 10 minutes).
 3. **Sticky** (Halve movement rate until spending 10 minutes removing the residue).
 4. **Psychedelic trip** (Save vs poison or the character is incapacitated for 10 minutes and, upon awakening, believe they touched the face of God).
6. The characters encounter cave locusts infested with long, parasitic worms, making them aggressive. The parasite removes the locusts' normal fear of predators and drives them into a suicidal feeding frenzy. The infected locusts will attack living creatures without hesitation, and even leave the caves in search for food. Upon the death of an infected locust, 1d6+3 twenty-foot-long worms, thick as a human thumb, emerge from the corpse. These writhing creatures will immediately search for a body of water to lay their eggs. The worms are harmless to the adventurers but whether they know this or not is at the Game Master's discretion.



CHIMERA

Horrific, hybrid monstrosities with the forequarters of a lion, the hindquarters of a goat, the wings of a dragon, and three heads: goat, lion, and dragon. Dwell in wild, hilly areas, or sometimes in dungeons.

AC	4 [15]
HD	9** (40hp)
ATT	2x claw (1d3), goat 1 x gore (2d4), lion 1 x bite (2d4), or 1x breath (3d6)
THACO	12 [+7]
MV	120' (40')/180' (60') flying
SV	D8 W9 P10 B10 S12 (9)
ML	9
AL	Chaotic
XP	2,300
NA	1d2 (1d4)
TT	F



SPECIAL

- **Attack pattern:** Dragon head: 50% chance of breath attack, otherwise bites.
- **Breath weapon:** Cone of fire: end 10' wide, 50' long. Can be used up to three times per day.

Chimeras are monsters whose form is a composite of various creatures. Some, such as the infamous version presented here, have an abnormal number of appendages or heads. Each chimera has a unique appearance. Those sharing the same physical form vary in shape, coloration, and outer covering (scales, feathers, fur, etc.). These evil creatures relish instilling fear and hopelessness into their prey before killing them. Some have the capacity for speech and will taunt their victims.

THE CAVE OF EKHIDNA

Legends state that deep in the caves of the Alternaan mountains, a chaos godling Ekhidna mates with foul beings and malevolent godlings to create monstrous children to torment the people of the mountains, forests, and valleys. Most of the children born of chaos do not survive long, as evidenced by the malformed corpses littering the approach to her cave and the interior.

Another legend tells that deep in the cave is a fleshy pulsating sphere with the texture of raw meat. This is a manifestation of chaos, which seeped through a planar fissure. It reaches through time and space, plucking helpless creatures to pull, twist and mold.

BUILD A CHIMERA

The creature has three components: the head, the body, and the limbs. To determine the creature for each component, roll a d100 (or whatever is appropriate) to determine the page number of your favorite bestiary.

THE BODY

This establishes the size, hit dice and armor class for your quick-build chimera. The result also determines the creature's special abilities, such as resistance. If the result is not sufficiently menacing, roll again or use the stat block above.

THE HEAD

The chimera gains all the attacks associated with the randomly determined creature's head, such as horns, bite, and breath weapons. There also is a 2-in-6 chance the creature has 1d3 additional heads. Randomly determine all heads.

THE LIMBS

The chimera gains all the attacks associated with the randomly determined creature's appendages. This roll also determines its method of movement, such as walking, flying, or swimming. There is a 1-in-6 chance a land creature also has flight or a flying creature also can run.

Note: Increase or decrease the severity of monster's damage based on the base body size. If the dice determines the creature is large-sized creature, but you roll the heads or limbs of a smaller-sized creature, increase the damage the creature inflicts. For example, increase a 1d6 attack to a 1d8 attack. Conversely, reduce the amount of damage for a large creature's head on a smaller creature's body.

This methodology for rolling up a chimera requires a bit of imagination at times. I recommend embracing any incongruities that pop up. Using the OSE list doesn't allow for many "normal" creatures, such as chickens, deer, or groupers. Remember, GMs are free to add other creatures into the mix—they can even draw inspiration from a children's zoology book.

A QUICKER BUILD

A. Determine locomotion. Roll 1d6.

1. Walking.
2. Slithering.
3. Flying.
4. Burrowing.
5. Swimming.
6. Roll an additional form of locomotion.

B. Determine its head. Roll 1d4 to determine the number of heads.

Randomly determine the creature form for each head. This can be done by rolling randomly using the OSE bestiary or by using random encounter tables. Use the creature's natural bite/horn attack for damage. If the head has any special abilities (e.g., a red dragon breathes fire), the chimera's head also has the ability.

C. Determine the body of the creature. Use the same method as above. The result is the body's appearance and any weapons on its arms or legs.

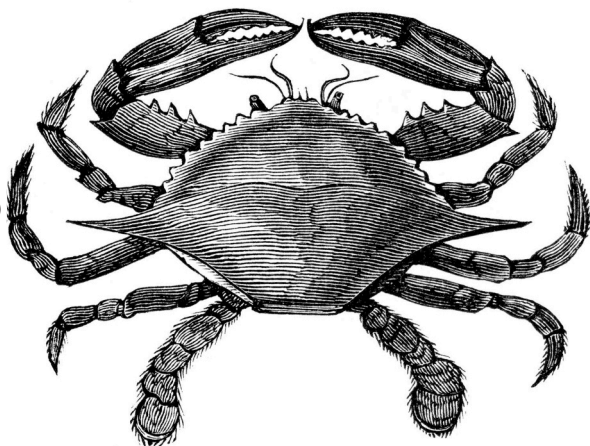
D. Determine hit die. Roll 2d6.

Please note space constraints do not allow for elaborate tables to ensure every chimera randomly generated isn't problematic. Use this method as guidance and ignore or modify any results to suit your game.

GIANT CRAB

*Unintelligent crustaceans that lurk in coastal waters and creep along beaches.
Cannot swim.*

AC	2 [17]
HD	3* (13hp)
ATT	2x pincer (2d6)
THACO	17 [+2]
MV	60' (20')
SV	D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2)
ML	7
AL	Neutral
XP	35
NA	1d2 (1d6)
TT	B



SPECIAL

- **Ravenous:** Attack any moving creature.

A monstrous scavenger. Sailors fear becoming shipwrecked and the thought of their ship sinking in the Hinder Islands fill them with an even greater dread. Notorious for its treacherous coast, the giant crabs inhabiting the region are the grist for many a wild tale. Rescued survivors recount how, after making it ashore, they witnessed giant crabs emerging from the dark waters. The crustaceans consumed the shredded flesh of their crew mates after killing them with cruel serrated claws.

SPEL'S WONDROUS ANIMATION

When cast upon the corpse of a giant crab, this spell creates an open space within the shell large enough to fit two people. Once inside the giant crab, the passengers can manipulate the creature's shell like a gruesome vehicle. This shell vehicle also will operate underwater and provide the passengers with air. The spell lasts for 1d6 days before the crab shell crumbles and falls apart. For the spell to work, the giant crab cannot have been dead for more than 24 hours.

DEVIL FROM THE DEPTHS

Giant, devil crabs are members of an ancient, intelligent aquatic race and not simply large versions of normal crabs. They face extinction within a few hundred years as their numbers continue to dwindle. These malevolent creatures are more than mere monsters; they have agendas and seek to further them. Perhaps they are tearing apart a fishing community to find a lost item? Or maybe they seek adventures to retrieve something they need? Assign a devil crab 5 HD and one or more of the following abilities:

- **Charm:** Save vs spell or be compelled to obey the devil crab. The effect lasts for 24 hours.
- **Servants:** Each devil crab commands 2d6 other giant crabs.
- **Communication:** If grasping the corpse of a humanoid, the devil crab can communicate though the dead body.

ARMOR ALTERNATIVE

Clever armorers can fashion armor and shields out of the exoskeleton of these creatures. At the market, exoskeleton armor is 75% of the price for metal armor of the same AC.

Armorers sell this armor at 75% of the normal cost for metal armor of the same AC. The chitinous armor is susceptible to breakage. Any time a weapon strikes a person wearing crab armor, there is a 1-in-6 chance the AC value of the armor will be reduced by one point.

FOOD RESOURCE

Though not a delicacy, the flesh of giant crabs is edible and is a staple in some communities. Each giant crab is worth 1d3x50gp.

TREASURE

Giant crab lairs have a clutch of eggs. The eggs are delicacies and will fetch 1d6x100gp if sold in the markets of large cities.

KNOWLEDGE

Magic users casting a clairvoyance spell upon the corpse of a freshly killed giant crab gain the ability to ask the deceased creature 1d3 questions. The questions must pertain to events or history of the region. The GM will respond with only one-word answers—and they must be truthful.



CYCLOPS

20' tall humanoids with a single, central eye. Dwell in caves, alone or in small groups. Cultivate grapes and raise sheep.

AC	6 [13]
HD	11* (49hp)
ATT	1x fist (3d10)
THACO	11 [+8]
MV	60' (20')
SV	D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (5)
ML	12
AL	Neutral
XP	1,900
NA	1(1)
TT	None

SPECIAL

- **Attack penalty:** -2 penalty on all hit rolls, due to limited depth perception.
- **Rock throwing:** Up to 200'.
- **Slow-witted:** Can be tricked by clever PCs.
- **Curse:** 1-in-20 cyclops can place a curse on a character once a week. Save versus spells or be afflicted by a curse of the referee's choosing. (Maximum possible effects: -2 penalty to saves, -4 penalty to hit, an ability score reduced by 50%.)



These one-eyed monstrous brutes originate from Greek mythology, children of the gods of the sky (Uranus) and the Earth (Gaia). Portrayed as dim-witted, brutish giants in the *Odyssey*, they were a hazard Odysseus used his cunning to overcome. The cyclops also featured in the classic movie *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* but appeared to have animalistic intelligence.

In role-playing games, we often treat them as variations of giants, which leaves them narratively flat. The following variants take three approaches; borrowing from the mythology of Hephaestus, imparting a new mythology, and expanding on the cyclopes as presented in the *Odyssey*.

THREE TYPES OF CYCLOPES

1. DEMI-GODS

Upon this mortal realm, legends state none surpass Vin, Shael, and Draa in their mastery of the forge. Bards spin popular tales of mortals seeking these mono-eyed giants, pleading with them to fashion wondrous items. The journey to the trio's volcanic home in the Emberic Mountains is fraught with dangers. Adventurers put their lives, and sometimes fortunes, at risk to plead their case, hoping for the demi-gods to condescend to hear their requests. Some accounts tell of virtuous people persevering through hardship to prove their worth. At the end of the journey, the cyclopes reward the seekers with items

enabling justice to prevail. Some accounts teach how greed leads to ruin, or getting what you want leads to sorrow.

Adventure Hooks:

- The characters come across a passage leading to the abode of The Three. This is an opportunity for them to negotiate with the primal smiths.
- The characters encounter a wondrous item fashioned by the legendary cyclopes.

2. THE BUILDERS

In days of yore, the cyclops people were not the savage brutes which now inhabit the lands. Though most lay in ruins, the children of Vin, Shael, and Draa, designed and built splendid monuments and buildings. Indeed, they built the Dividing Wall and the magnificent altar upon Mount Deverha. While these places once served noble and often mundane purposes, they now house beasts and horrific monsters, and the fate of the noble cyclopes remains a mystery. Some legends say they left for a land more bountiful. Other legends state the gods themselves snatched them away and forced them to toil without rest or recompense. Perhaps they are not all gone from the land. Bards tell of people seeing cyclopes in remote regions, building structures to serve unfathomable purposes.

3. THE BRUTES

These creatures are brutes dwelling in caves, or in simple homes, raising sheep and cattle for food. While they find cattle and sheep suitable fare, they relish the flesh of humans and demi-humans, especially grinding the bodies of their victims into jelly to spread over bread.

While they are simple brutes, they can speak and are often quite chatty. They love to bargain, especially if they have the upper hand, but are not good at it. Tales are told of clever adventurers tricking these creatures, who pride themselves on sticking to their commitments in a bargain, but often twist words to change the meaning of their commitment. It is best to make haste before the cyclops realizes it has been fooled.

Cyclopes are very dangerous to fight but are great monsters to use by GMs who want to place characters into a high-risk situation, requiring cunning to escape or steal treasure.

Legendary Items of Note:

- **Gottbreekar:** A sword capable of slaying gods but stains the body and soul. Living a normal life after wielding the blade is no longer possible—the bearer now has indigo-colored skin and a presence putting others in a state of unease.
- **Etnertia:** Iron spikes able to pierce any material. Once driven in, the spikes are nearly impossible to remove.
- **Gomma Dee-Aeshee:** A shield emitting a continuous light, as blinding as the sun, which destroys the undead with its golden rays. The shield will not depart from its bearer while the owner lives, thus complicating the life of the person carrying the shield.

DERVISH

Fanatically religious, nomadic people who wander steppes and desert regions, living in tents.

AC	6 [13] or 4 [15]
HD	1 (4 hp)
ATT	1x weapon (1d6 or by weapon)
THACO	19 [0]
MV	120' (40')
SV	D12 W13 P14 B16 S16
ML	10
AL	Lawful
XP	10
NA	0 (1d6+1 x 10)
TT	A



SPECIAL

- **Mounted:** On warhorses.
- **Arms:** 50% of group have: leather armour, shield, lance; 25% have: leather armour shield, shortbow, sword; 25% have: chainmail, shield, lance.
- **Camps:** Groups commonly combine and live in a camp or tribe of up to 300 dervishes, plus women, children, and animals. 25% chance of a wood or brick enclosure.
- **Camp leaders:** Led by 10th level cleric.
- **Intolerant:** Of other religious views.
- **Holy war:** Occasionally wage war against other religious factions. Will slay people of different faith, or take them prisoner. Prisoners must convert; otherwise killed or used as slaves. Characters of Lawful alignment may be asked to join the holy war. Dervishes are highly suspicious of those who refuse (without good reason).

** Note that the above items Intolerant and Holy War are problematic. These terms reinforce a monolithic stereotype of a real-world group of people. Even a cursory study of history reveals these terms stem from pejorative stories relayed by unreliable people. I did not remove the questionable text from the SRD, but I recommend ignoring it.

No group of people is a monoculture. Communities differ one from another, as do the individuals within the community. With some exceptions, dervishes are a migrating people who shepherd livestock in large flocks to different regions, based on the season. They are an important source of wool, trade, and news to the communities along their migration paths. Here are three different ways to use dervishes in your campaign:

1. ALTRUISTIC

The term dervishes in this context refers to the devotees of Konsha, whose traditions teach the importance of charity, humility, and advocating for the downtrodden. While the people in the region venerate Konsha, there is no standard or unified doctrine. Each tribe differs in practice but remains united in their creed of service to those in need.

ENCOUNTERED IN THE WILDERNESS

The dervishes are pilgrims on a journey seeking spiritual “winnowing.” They may join the adventurers if they deem the characters are on a good or just mission.

Have the characters make a Monster Reaction Roll (2d6).

- On a Neutral result (6-8), they will join the party if paid as mercenaries.
- On an Indifferent result (9-11), they will join for free and will stay long enough to aid in the next fight.
- On a Friendly result (12+), they will remain for the duration of the adventure.

Dervishes joining the group will often remind the characters of the importance of service and support for the poor and encourage them to donate any excess wealth.

Altruistic dervishes believe it is their duty to protect the people around them, including farmers, shepherds and travelers of all types and cultures. A core, cultural tenant is to treat all travelers, even the adventurers, with generous hospitality, such as providing a safe place to eat and sleep. They also will provision the party and heal any injured characters.

Characters who demonstrate their core virtues will be asked to join them in service to Konsha, upon the completion of a required three-year pilgrimage of sanctification.

The dervishes also can be an obstacle and may have their own good reasons for attempting to thwart the adventurers. They might need an object the adventurers seek for themselves, the adventurers’ success will create an undesired effect, or perhaps the characters are traveling across the dervishes’ holy ground.

2. NEUTRAL

These dervishes are nomadic pilgrims, traveling to different holy sites each season. This is a core tradition to their culture spanning back hundreds of years. Over time, frontiers become populated, cities grow, and nations expand. Boundaries exist now which didn’t even a hundred years ago, making migrations more difficult as free land diminishes and states become hostile. The normal good-naturedness of these people dissipated generations ago, and conflict is on the horizon.

3. CHAOS

These dervishes worship a malevolent deity or being, and their presence before the characters forebodes something wicked upon the horizon. This is an opportunity for the GM to sprinkle in some Cthulhuesque lore, with Nyarlathotep being a fitting choice for a deity.

Note: If going down the chaos route, consider dropping the Arab trappings of the dervishes and model this group from a different culture.

DOPPELGÄNGER

Intelligent, human-sized shape-shifters of wicked character and highly magical nature.

AC	5 [14]
HD	4* (18hp)
ATT	1x bite (1d12)
THACO	16 [+3]
MV	90' (30')
SV	D6 W7 P8 B8 S10 (10)
ML	10
AL	Chaotic
XP	125
NA	1d6 (1d6)
TT	E



SPECIAL

- **Shape stealing:** Can adopt the form of any human-like creature (7' tall or less) observed. Then proceed to attack the person mimicked.
- **Trickery:** Will attempt to kill a PC, take on their role, then attack the party by surprise (e.g. during a battle).
- **Reversion:** If killed, reverts to its original form.
- **Spell immunity:** Unaffected by sleep and charm spells.

Doppelgängers are from the world of Enla Ga, a planet at a juncture of the Fae lands and the astral plane. This peculiar situation gives these shape-changing beings easy access to the many planar realms, and they travel far, seeking wealth and magic. While greed is a powerful motivator, the shapeshifters gain no small pleasure in using their mimicry to sow seeds of betrayal and confusion. Some say their love for creating emotional distress exceeds their thirst for riches. Indeed, they show this by the great lengths they go to build elaborate hoaxes. Tales exist of doppelgängers spending decades in persona to topple empires and corrupt religions.

Originally, these malicious shape changers could only change their skin color, not their body structures. Seventeen millennia ago, a sentient obelisk appeared in their land. A malevolent object of chaos. Over time, the obelisk changed the minds and spirits of these forest dwellers into vassals fit to fulfill its bidding. They became psychic vampires who absorb fear, bewilderment, and emotional pain, returning to feed the dark obelisk these intense emotions.



Here are some alternate ways to handle doppelgängers, based on literature and film. Many times, they are not evil.

1. The adventurers stumble upon the corpse of a party member (determine randomly) who is currently alive. The corpse is from a future where the character is dead. Tie the method of death to a hazard in the current adventure. Weird.

2. A doppelgänger of a current party member (determine randomly) appears to give the party a dire warning. In mythology, some doppelgängers were spirits warning of an impending catastrophe.

3. The doppelgänger precedes the adventurers into a settlement. Its words and activities create a problem for the targeted character (determine randomly) when they enter the town. Perhaps this is a case of intentional identity theft, or maybe just bad luck for the characters. Make this a fun mystery without punishing the players.

4. A character's doppelgänger acts in a non-malicious way, perhaps living a life of wealth. The target character arriving in town creates confusing interactions with its many diverse denizens.

5. Expand the shape-stealing ability of the doppelgänger to normal four-footed creatures, such as horses, cattle, or dogs. This allows for more GM shenanigans to play against the well-worn trope of the RPG doppelgänger. Indeed, even a single doppelgänger used like the alien monster in the movie *The Thing* has the potential for a memorable encounter.



DRAGON TURTLE

Gargantuan sea monsters with the body and hard shell of a turtle and the head, tail, and legs of a dragon. Lurk in huge caves in the depths of the ocean, only rarely coming to the surface.

AC	-2 [21]
HD	30* (135hp)
ATT	2x claw (1d8), 1 x bite (1d6 x10) or breath (special)
THACO	5 [+14]
MV	30' (10'),/ 90' (30') swimming
SV	D4 W5 P6 B5 S8 (15)
ML	10
AL	Chaotic
XP	9,000
NA	0 (1)
TT	H



SPECIAL

- **Breath weapon:** 90' long, 30' wide cloud of steam. Can be used up to three times per day. All caught in the area suffer damage equal to the dragon turtle's current hit points (save versus breath for half).
- **Mistaken for island:** When floating, can be mistaken for a small island.
- **Attack ships:** Sometimes try to destroy ships and eat the crew by surfacing below.
- **Treasure:** From sunken ships.

Dragon Turtles are difficult to creatures to add to one's campaign. They are nearly impossible to kill unless the characters are at very high levels of experience. Their enormous size and limitation of being aquatic creatures makes them rarely usable as presented. With a bit of imagination, the creatures make for memorable encounters to surprise the players.

SHELL SETTLEMENT

On top of the shell of a dragon turtle, there's a settlement (or tower) with structures to keep air-breathing creatures alive underwater. Perhaps the settlement is a base for an infamous and elusive band of sea raiders. This makes for a 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea scenario, where the characters must find and stop a would-be Captain Nemo from his campaign of unstoppable piracy and destruction.

DUNGEON

Carved into the turtle's shell is a small or medium dungeon, accessible while the shell is above the surface of the water. For added complexity, have the dungeon flood every time the turtle submerges. If the flooding is complete, this creates a so-called clock the adventurers must race against or face certain death from drowning. If the flooding is partial, this creates any of the following complications:

- A race against time or be trapped.
- A race against time or be trapped in an undesirable part of the dungeon.
- Flooding changes the nature of the rooms and creates difficulties for characters.
- Being trapped underwater turns the dungeon into a survival game because the adventurers have limited food, water and possibly air. This changes the theme from plundering to survival.
- Having factions inside the dungeon presents an interesting twist. Enemies may become necessary allies or allies may become sudden enemies in the battle for limited resources.

KAIJU

The dragon turtle is a kaiju (think Godzilla and Mothra) and it can walk upon land. The dragon turtle is destroying coastal towns, and the people live in fear.

REASONS:

1. A person or people in the city committed a grievous sin (or slight) and the gods are directing this cyclopean monster to enact punishment upon the land.
2. Someone stole something dear to the dragon turtle, such as an egg from its clutch, which it searches for in desperation. The characters need to find and return the item to persuade the dragon turtle to stop its rampage.
3. A malevolent being placed an enchantment upon the dragon turtle, causing it to rampage. The enchantment can be enthrallment or the infliction of pain. Perhaps a neighboring kingdom is waging war or maybe a petty wizard seeks vengeance for some perceived slight. Stop the enchantment and save the city.
4. Pirates control the dragon turtle and are directing it to lay waste to walled towns and cities. The breached walls and dwindled defenders make raiding the city much easier.
5. To stop the rampaging dragon turtle, the characters must find another massive creature to enthrall. This can be another dragon turtle, a dragon, a kaiju-like creature, even a giant ape.

CREATING SWORD-AND-SORCERY ADVENTURES

Travis Miller

Your scheduled game session is canceled. But two members of the group still want to play. So do you, but running the normal session isn't going to work. You want to run something but have little time to prepare, and don't have time to read through a published adventure.

You could pull out a one-page dungeon or make one with a random generator, but you want to try something different. A fun option is a short session using a classic sword-and-sorcery, short-story framework.

SWORD AND SORCERY TO THE RESCUE

Sometimes, all I want is the fun of fantasy adventure gaming without the commitment of a campaign. My preferred method is to use the basic mechanisms of a simple game and improvise as much as necessary.

Veteran referees who are good at improvising may find this easier to pull off than someone who is new. I encourage you to try it, even if you are a little green.

To get to playing quickly, I need a basic framework. My framework needs to be simple, easy to keep in mind, and provide a structure for improvisation. Sword-and-sorcery adventures have characteristics ideal to set up for one or two players and a single session.

The convention of classic sword-and-sorcery fiction is having one or two adventurers go after wealth or try to stay alive.

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

I want this to be a fast-paced and focused game. Sword and sorcery depends on pace and action. I strip out everything that isn't necessary.

THREE ABILITY SCORES

The only ability scores needed are Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution. Roll 5d6 and drop the lowest two dice. That gives an average of slightly above 13. If you need Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma during the session, have the player roll 3d6.

TWO CHARACTER CLASSES

Limit character classes to Fighter and Thief. Priests and wizards tend to be villains in sword and sorcery. The fighting man and the thief are the archetypal heroes of the genre and easiest to put together.

FIFTH LEVEL

For high adventure fun, the characters need to be sturdy and competent. At the same time, you don't want to take all the danger out of the game. Fifth-level characters have respectable hit points, are quite competent but still need to be careful.

SIMPLE WEAPONS AND GEAR

Sword-and-sorcery characters, with a few exceptions like Elric, tend to have whatever weapons are at hand.

Though the Grey Mouser calls his sword Scalpel, it is noted in several stories it's not the same sword. The Mouser just calls whatever sword he owns Scalpel. This suits the game I'm cobbling together quite well. Give players the choice of a few weapons each. A sword and offhand dagger or a big ax. Whatever suits the situation.

Resource management is not a focus in this kind of game. If gear is important, let players have it without going through the hassle of going through the price list. Typically, classic adventure-story heroes end up stealing what they need or have acquired it before the story starts. To go along with that, money always seems to be an issue. They are either rolling in it and defiling themselves in a gambling den or they are completely broke and looking for a mark to relieve of their wealth.

THE ADVENTURE

One of the nice things about staying within a genre is it gives you some creative constraints. Those constraints limit your choices and keep you focused on what matters, the choices and actions players take during the session. I like to break adventures into parts, focus on each part individually and then integrate them into a whole. This is the fastest and easiest way I know of creating an adventure.

Your adventure needs a general background setting, a goal the PCs are after, and what prevents them from getting it.

1. THE GENERAL SETTING

Sword-and-sorcery adventures don't vary much in the places they occur. For the purposes of making a quick adventure, pick one or roll 1d4.

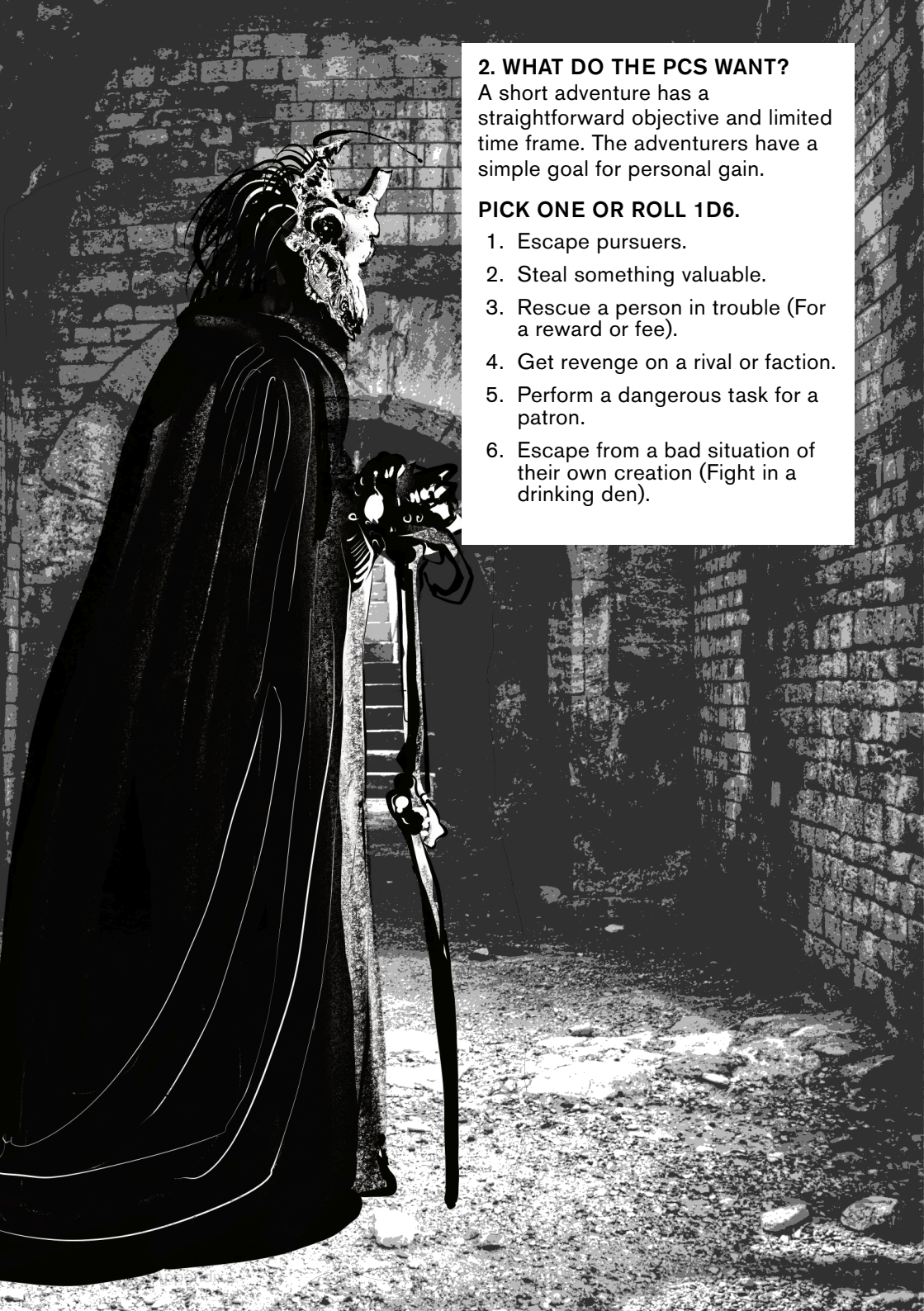
1. A degenerate city.
2. Ancient or abandoned ruins.
3. Unyielding wilderness.
4. Strange otherworldly location.

Urban settings like Lankhmar and Zamora in *City of Thieves* are full of possibilities. Their key features are an ancient (perhaps forgotten) past, corrupt government officials, decadent aristocrats, myriad temples and gods, rich merchants, and criminals.

Ancient ruins are common in fantasy RPGs. In sword-and-sorcery stories, they may feature old protective magic, guardians, loitering demons, or a tribe of savages who are the diminished descendants of a collapsed civilization.

Tractless wilderness between cities are harsh and dangerous. Most sword-and-sorcery heroes find themselves in deserts, jungles, badlands, tundra, or the steppe at some point during their world travels.

Sword-and-sorcery characters are sometimes transported to surreal worlds. The laws of physics are suspended, time stopped, with multiple incarnations of the same hero combined into a single super-being to fight an alien from another dimension. Occasionally, the surreal invades the "normal" world, presenting a threat.



2. WHAT DO THE PCS WANT?

A short adventure has a straightforward objective and limited time frame. The adventurers have a simple goal for personal gain.

PICK ONE OR ROLL 1D6.

1. Escape pursuers.
2. Steal something valuable.
3. Rescue a person in trouble (For a reward or fee).
4. Get revenge on a rival or faction.
5. Perform a dangerous task for a patron.
6. Escape from a bad situation of their own creation (Fight in a drinking den).

3. WHO OR WHAT IS STANDING IN THEIR WAY?

Without conflict, there is no game. We need to figure out what stands in the way. There may be more than one, or a combination of several to build a complete adventure.

Choose or roll 1d8.

1. Corrupt authority figure (Priest, general, servant).
2. Supernatural entity (God, demon, spirit, ghost, extra-dimensional being).
3. Wizard/sorcerer/necromancer/witch/warlock.
4. The natural world (Jungle, mountains, cold, the ocean, predators).
5. Miscreants (Thieves, gangs, mountebank, grifters, assassins, pirates).
6. Wealthy elite (Unscrupulous merchant or decadent aristocrat).
7. Cult (Worshippers of Set, monks, keepers of a temple).
8. Overwhelming odds (An army or warband, a tribe of primitive people).

4. BUILDING ENCOUNTERS

I try to keep my encounters to 20 minutes or less. For a game lasting a few hours, that works out to be about eight encounters in total.

An encounter has the same basic structure as an adventure. The players have an objective they are attempting to achieve, and something stands in the way. On their way to the big objective or final encounter there are several lesser encounters.

Here is an example of the encounters a sword-and-sorcery adventure might contain:

1. A small problem or fight.
2. Info gathering encounter or social encounter.
3. Environmental obstacle.
4. Medium-difficulty problem or fight.
5. Environment obstacle.
6. Big Reveal.
7. The Big Fight.
8. Resolution.

5. THE SETUP

In a sandbox campaign, the setup would be the point where players still have an option not to undertake the adventure. Since this is a one shot, the players either go along or there's no game. The setup is just telling the players: Where are we? What is the situation? What are we after? What do we know? How do we start?

The setup also is how you communicate the necessary information to the players. A typical starting place is a gambling den, brothel, the street in a bad part of town, a summons from a mysterious wizardly patron.

If you can open with an action encounter, even better. More than a few sword-and-sorcery yarns start with the characters in peril for their lives. Examples include being jumped by a gang of thieves in *The Shades*, marooned by pirates on an island, being chased by mercenaries after their side was routed in a battle.

6. ESCALATING PROBLEMS AND BATTLES

If you don't start with action, you want to get some going as soon as possible. Start with less dangerous challenges and escalate as the adventure proceeds. At the beginning of the session, use easily defeated foes, like guards protecting the manse of a wealthy merchant, a few lesser members of the thieves' guild, an acolyte of a cult.

A problem the characters face might be a physical obstacle, such as a tower, a ravine, or the door to the jail cell where they have been imprisoned. The key idea is each problem, each battle gets progressively more difficult on the way to the final encounter.

7. MYSTERIES AND SECRETS

Many sword-and-sorcery stories have some mystery for the characters to unravel or a secret they learn. If you have a little time to construct your adventure, work backwards from the so-called Big Reveal. Ask yourself, "What do the players need to know to solve the puzzle?" At a minimum, give them three clues leading up to the moment of truth. More is better.

Adventurers chasing down leads and clues, especially if they are social encounters, can provide you with all kinds of situations to improvise a combat encounter. Are the players getting close to solving the mystery a little too fast? Throw in a fight with a half-dozen henchmen to slow them down a little.

Revealing a secret, like how to use the Heart of the Elephant, a magic jewel said to be the source of power for the sorcerer Yara, doesn't necessarily mean a big fight at the end of the adventure. It might only be a series of

more difficult problems to solve with a few minor fights and a bit of exposition where the characters learn the sad story of Yag-Kosha.

8. IMPROVISE

Making it up as you go won't produce a complex scenario of interwoven plots and intrigues. But you might be able to make it feel like one by simply riffing off questions the players ask.

You have slapped this adventure together at the last minute—the players should understand. Nobody expects you to have a whole complicated campaign worked out. You don't need too. You only need a problem large enough for a two-hour session, with smaller problems to challenge the characters as they progress toward their goal.

When a player speculates aloud about what is going on or what other dangers they need to watch out for, and you think it sounds cool, drop it into the next encounter.

9. ALTERNATING ENCOUNTERS

You can run back-to-back-to-back combat encounters, or back-to-back social encounters, if you want. I try to interject some variation, so there is a build and release of tension as the game progresses.

A basic structure might look like:

1. The adventurer is escaping pursuit with a runaway harem slave through the swamp.
2. There's a fight with a few of the emperor's guards.
3. They progress further, and they drop into some quicksand.
4. A big snake tries to constrict our hero to death.
5. Some local hunters show up and want to take the slave.
6. A hippo attacks.
7. The head of the emperor's guard shows up.

CONCLUSION

If you have only one or two players and a short time window to prepare a game, sword and sorcery provides a framework that works and is familiar to fans of classic-fantasy adventure games. The next time you need something quick and easy, I suggest trying the basic formula of classic swords and sorcery for a quick, low-prep game of high adventure.

Every story of Conan starts with a different setup. There's no reason your heroes can't be in a big city this week and take shelter in an ice cave the next. This method won't have the satisfaction a long-term campaign provides, but if your option is something simple and fast or not gaming at all, you might choose to play something simple and fast.

Though I've laid out a method for a one-off session, this also could be the format for a regular game night featuring the same characters. Each week, the characters can have an adventure completely unconnected to the previous one. I wouldn't bother with experience points or leveling. Weapons, gear, and money might be totally different. Simply, give the characters a new adventure, and off you go.



D&D AND THE SWORD-AND-SORCERY GENRE

Oliver Brackenbury

Sword and Sorcery and Dungeons & Dragons have had a round-about influence on each other, starting with the very creation of D&D in 1974. It wasn't until 1979 that the Appendix N Reading List would be published in the AD&D Dungeon Master's Guide. Many similar lists have been published in the backs of later editions of D&D, as well as other TTRPG rulebooks, but only the Appendix N Reading List is Gary Gygax's personal list of reading which influenced him during his co-creation, with Dave Arneson, of the world's first TTRPG.

The list contains Tolkein and Lovecraft, but there's also a great deal of Sword and Sorcery to be found; Poul

Anderson, Lin Carter, L. Sprague de Camp, Gardner Fox, Rober E. Howard, Fritz Leiber, Michael Moorcock, Andre Norton, Andre J. Offutt, Fletcher Pratt, Jack Vance, Manley Wade Wellman, and Roger Zelazny combine to make up about three quarters of the list. Moreso, classic S&S characters were often statted out in Dragon Magazine, which also published original S&S fiction by Leiber, Saunders, and more.

OD&D Gods, Demigods & Heroes and the legendary first printing of Deities & Demigods, even featured "The Melnibonéan Mythos" – stat blocks and scads of flavor text for the setting of Michael Moorcock's Elric tales.

D&DECLINE

So it's ironic how the early 80's explosion of D&D's popularity, when the '81 & '83 versions of the Red Box helped make it much more accessible, contributed to the end of Sword and Sorcery's second wave of mainstream popularity. There were other factors, such as S&S publishers becoming creatively lazy, prioritizing very simple, similar stories, which did nothing to show how varied and surprising the genre can be, and economic factors leading publishers to their still extant love affair with trilogies of thick, so-called doorstoppers, which are the opposite of S&S's shorter, more episodic style.

However, I would not be the only one to argue D&D's explosion of popularity contributed to a greater codification of fantasy fiction at large ("You gotta have dwarves, and they gotta be basically little Scottish people..."), shaping readers' expectations, and what authors wrote, to meet growing public demand for something more Tolkein-esque, with magic systems and generally more high fantasy.

THE OSRESCUE

THE EARLY GROGNARDS

Leap ahead to the early 2000's and you have the birth of the Old School Renaissance, encouraging players to cast their minds back to Fantasy roleplaying in the vein of the earliest editions of D&D. Many OSR blogs, zines, and games themselves encouraged gamers to check out that same list of formative fiction, The Appendix N Reading list.

GOODMAN GAMES

Goodman Games' Dungeon Crawl Classic, in particular, was born, and their whole ethos was to capture the wilder, less codified fantasy feel of the Appendix N reading list era. This got more people rooting through secondhand bookstores, seeking out classic works, including plenty of Sword and Sorcery.

I myself was one of those people, and the works I found played a large role in inspiring me to found my own S&S magazine, New Edge Sword & Sorcery. I've not been alone in this; Goodman Games even publishes their own S&S magazine, Tales from the Magician's Skull, and a third wave of popularity for S&S seems to be brewing, with no small amount of support from TTRPG fans. Heck, you've even got new RPG systems being published with the aim of capturing that Sword and Sorcery feeling in particular!

OTHER SYSTEMS

- **Barbarians of Lemuria** is the best lightweight system for a proper Sword and Sorcery game. When riffing on a genre known for slim, fast-paced tales, this is a good direction to explore.

- **Sunken Lands** maps the excellent playbook-driven system of Beyond the Wall to S&S fiction (one playbook is basically, "You are Elric"); these playbooks build a rich Sword and Sorcery inspired background for each character, including mutual ties around the table, helping even players with no genre familiarity to find that flavor with their character from the start.

- **The Astonishing Swordsman and Sorcerers of Hyperborea**

captures the pulp vibe with its art, and is noteworthy for only featuring human classes, replacing the concept of "race" with cultures both real (Greek, Roman, Carolingian Frank, etc.) and fictional (Amazon, Atlantean, Mu, etc.).

This focus on humans and cultures, rather than demihumans, is not only truer to most S&S fiction, it can result in more complex peoples for your players to embody or encounter. The GM and players will at least have to riff off real life cultures who are all more complex than, "You know, snobby, pointy ears." It will also contribute to making the inhuman more fantastic.

- **Black Sword Hack** expresses the classic S&S theme of barbarism vs civilization with how it eschews traditional classes in favor of backgrounds depending on the characters' chosen origin: barbarian, civilized, or decadent.

Experimenting with these concepts will help free your players from the usual good-evil, lawful-chaotic frameworks, and bring them into a more S&S role-playing mindset.

THE FORGE OF THE WEAPONMASTER

Dave Semark

Weaponmaster Akanthu's travels are over, and he has settled within the palace of the Sultan to stoke his forge and create weapons. For what Weaponmaster Akanthu doesn't know about weapons of war is not worth knowing. He is a man now at peace with the world, and with himself, as he accepts the passage of time and the arrival of the twilight of life. He welcomes students with promise, and former enemies with honor, to sit at his feet and learn, so the ancient arts, the beauty in archaic and arcane weapons of war, will not die with him.

Here are some of his favorites. But be warned: ancient weapons from times past were brutal and those who wielded them were ruthless and gave their enemies no quarter.



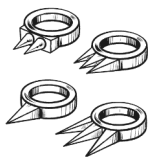
THE ROMAN SCISSOR

A scythe-shaped blade attached to a metal-arm sheath fitted over the fist and forearm, the Scissor is a slashing off-hand weapon, leaving the warrior's main hand free for a sword or other traditional weapon. Weighing upwards of 5lb and made of steel, the armored sheath can be used to block attacks—it is very good against slashing or clubbing blows, but much less effective against stabbing weapons. The slicing blade cuts through ropes, nets, and fabric. Favored by some for its ability to block before a quick, slashing counterattack, other warriors dislike the Scissor, as it ties up one hand and is hard to re-equip if dropped in the heat of battle.



KAKUTE

Another non-traditional weapon is the Kakute, although this is the weapon of an assassin, not a soldier. Also known as the Supaikuringu (spiked ring), these weapons are solid iron finger rings with one, two or three fierce spikes. These rings are worn like traditional rings, either with the spike facing outwards—for punches and other blows—or facing inwards—where they are applied to pressure points on the victim's body to shock and stun. While not immediately deadly, a punch with the rings tear flesh from the victim's face and can easily gouge an eye and leave the target blind. The spikes can be daubed with poison, for ninjas and other silent assassins, but you'll need to speak to Apothecary Marendja about that.



BAGH NAKH

Literally meaning tiger claws, the Bagh Nakh is a claw-like weapon from ancient India. It's designed to be worn on the palm, concealing four or five metal claws, each of which can be three or four inches in length. While the Bagh Nakh is not as covert as the Kakute, it can be concealed. As such, it has a reputation as an assassin's weapon, but not the unseen assassin who kills in silence and is long gone before the murder is even discovered—a Bagh Nakh assassin has the courage of their convictions, to look their victim in the eye before bringing down their doom with a brutal swipe of the tiger's claw.



MARU

Inspired by the twisted horns of the Indian Blackbuck, the Maru is made with two horn-like spikes pointing in opposite directions, with a crossbar handle covered by a small shield, or buckler, for protection. Excellent in defense, the twin blades allow for fast and effective parrying and the central shield can be brought to bear for more powerful incoming blows. A fast weapon in the right hands, as a series of parries and feints can quickly be turned into a stabbing counterattack.



HALADIE

Made in a similar design as the Maru, the Haladie is a twin-bladed, dagger-like weapon for use with one hand. As with the Maru, the Haladie is excellent for defense, blocking and parrying, allowing for a quick counterattack, but is a light-weight weapon and cannot block or parry heavy swords, and is less effective against stabbing. The Haladie often has a third blade on the handle, in the style of a knuckleduster, making it the only known dagger to have three blades. Often used in the off-hand, the Haladie—in the hands of an expert warrior—is a great defensive counterattacking weapon, leaving the main hand free for a spear or sword. A variant of the Haladie, the Willow Leaf, is a two-bladed throwing knife which is deadly at short range.



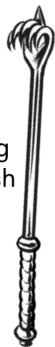
SHOTEL

Moving to swords, the Shotel is an ancient Ethiopian sword with a meter-long curved blade, designed for soldiers mounted and on foot. The curve of the blade has two primary purposes. From horseback, it lowers the point of the blade and allows the warrior to thrust into an enemy on foot with greater precision and power, rather than slashing as they would with a traditional straight sword. This delivers fatal stabs to vital organs, rather than the more easily defended and perhaps less immediately fatal, slash. Wielded by a warrior on foot, the curve of the blade makes it easier to strike the enemy over the top of or around their shield. Many warriors favor this weapon for these reasons, but the Shotel is purely an offensive weapon—its curve makes it harder to control a parry against an incoming attack. But when used with a shield—or more effectively with an off-hand weapon, like a Haladie—the Shotel is a weapon to be feared.



KHOPESH

The Khopesh sword is one of the most exotic and exciting weapons in Weaponmaster Akanthu's arsenal, and perhaps the hardest to forge. Originating from ancient Egypt, the Khopesh is a twisted sickle sword with a razor-sharp facing edge and a nasty spiked hook at its tip. At the base of the pommel is another small crescent blade, enabling a vicious back-handed swipe against an enemy. Up to 60cm in length and made of bronze and steel,



the Khopesh is a superb attacking weapon, with a terrible slash and the ability to hook onto and tear flesh or disarm an opponent. With its curved facing blade, the weapon doesn't parry and block heavy weapons well, but as an offensive weapon it is second to none. Many warriors, keen to establish their bravery and heroism, and to add a veneer of the exotic to their reputations, will enter battle wielding a Khopesh in each hand, their skill in swirling the beautiful blades mesmerizing and intimidating their enemies in equal measure. If you ask nicely, the Weaponmaster will give you a demonstration—if you ask nicely.

ZHUA

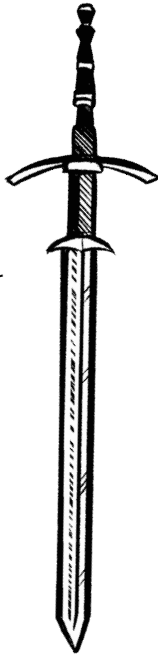
Another weapon whose design takes its inspiration from the tiger's claw or the bear's paw, but the Zhua places the sharpened blades of the claw at the end of an iron shaft. This longer reach allows a skilled warrior to hook enemy weapons and shields, and wrench them from their grasp, or snag a mounted opponent and unseat them.



The weapon can also be used as an improvised spear in close quarters, to impale flesh and tear it from the victim. Some warriors love the Zhua for its intimidating reputation, but it can be unwieldy. It can't be thrown as effectively as a traditional spear and is little better than a heavy staff once an enemy gets inside the weapon's reach. But, working within a group of soldiers, the Zhua can be an effective tool, with the Zhua wielder bringing enemies down or disarming them, leaving their comrades to finish them off with spear and sword.

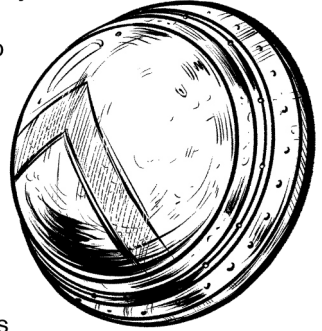
ZWEIHANDER

Perhaps the most traditional of all the weapons on Akanthu's list is the Zweihander—a two-handed steel sword of enormous length and weight. Carried by specially selected warriors, chosen for their size and strength, the Zweihander sword is a brute in battle. Often used to counter enemy pikes and halberds by swiping through the thick wooden shafts as soon as they come into range, these swords are heavy and unwieldy, despite the meticulous craftsmanship that goes into them, making them as well balanced as any sword in the empire. Many Zweihander swords leave a section of the blade unsharpened, allowing the warrior to grab the blade with one hand and use the weapon to block powerful attacks. Akanthu's old Zweihander can be seen in a place of pride on the wall before his forge.



ASPIS

A huge round shield of ancient Greek design, the Aspis is as much a weapon as it is a key part of a warrior's defense. Held with a handle on the edge of the shield, with a leather arm strap at its center, the Aspis is easy to control for a warrior with the strength to handle it. Once the warrior is expert in the shield, he is allowed to sharpen the shield's rim as if it were a blade, using the edge to slice and slash at an enemy. Each shield has a bespoke boss, made for the warrior in question and either weighted as a bludgeoning tool, or forged into spikes and blades, to tear at the flesh of an enemy foolish enough to get close. Each shield forged by Weaponmaster Akanthu is made for a specific warrior. They must earn that right, through prowess and bravery in battle, and the shield is theirs and theirs alone. If they fall, the shield is returned to Akanthu and melted down in his forge, so every future warrior carries the spirit of their deceased heroes with them.



WELCOME TO THE PLEASUREDOME

Dave Semark

The Pleasuredome is the one place in the realm where any person can find any entertainment and enjoy it at the Sultan's expense. The place isn't really a dome—it's a city of domes, towers, amphitheaters, gambling halls, recreation complexes, stadia and open fields where every entertainment imaginable is available. But a word of caution—the tastes of some people, from some times in history, can be pretty grim. You have been warned.

GAMES TO WATCH

Starting at the gentler end of the spectrum, you can always go to the theater. People across history have enjoyed the theater. From the classic tragedies of *Antigone* and *Medea*, comedies, Shakespeare, a night at the music hall or theater is something folks have always enjoyed. Then there's the circus, with its trapeze artists, jugglers, lion tamers and clowns. All good wholesome family entertainment.

Then you have the harsher end of the spectator spectrum, but entertainment still enjoyed by millions. Chariot and horse racing, bear baiting, and gladiatorial games of all sorts. Gladiatorial games often aren't as bloody and fatal as we may think, but wounding is common and death in the ring is by no means rare. Fights must entertain the audience, and a quick kill—while exciting and shocking for the audience of the day—doesn't give the entertainment value the gladiators'

Lanistas want. In the later Roman Empire, and as Christianity spread, gladiatorial fights became less and less popular, replaced with animal racing, featuring horses, horse and chariot, and camels.

But throughout history, racing hasn't been humane, with many animals and occasional riders killed for the peoples' pleasure. At the worse end, in ancient times, the concept of incendiary war pigs (which were used in ancient battles to frighten war elephants) was taken further, and pigs were set to race as they burned.

The other spectator "sport" guaranteed to get the family out on a Sunday afternoon is the medieval public punishment. These range from the humiliating and degrading, but not life threatening: parading through the streets for your crime or being locked in the village stocks, both of which would allow the good folk, and their children, to throw hard and smelly things at the convict. Public floggings can kill, if the scourger is evil enough with the whip. Then there's public executions. A good hanging would turn the people out in droves, sometimes to see justice done, but in most cases just to watch the spectacle. These executions became mini festivals, with stalls selling hot food and strong drinks, and musicians earning a few coin for their efforts.

You'll be pleased to know the Sultan has even gone so far as to ensure there's a ready supply of murderers, arsonists and pillagers waiting for those public punishments in the Pleasuredome, if there's an appetite for it—and looking on the faces of those from across the realm who've travelled from far and wide, I think they're ready to be entertained!

GAMES TO PLAY

Throughout history, sports of all kinds have been enjoyed by anyone and everyone, and entertainments like gambling and hunting are ubiquitous. That said, at many times in history, hunting was the preserve of the nobility, chasing down boar and deer on their vast estates, while any hunting by others was considered poaching, was entirely illegal and frequently punishable by death (more folks for the public punishments!).

Villagers would play a sport called Gameball, or Soule, in an event which would eventually evolve into modern football and rugby. But these games weren't small affairs—the whole village would turn out to play the next village, kicking a ball made from an inflated pig's bladder along the valley. There were no rules, other than to score through a goal that might be as far as a mile away and might have moved by the time you got there. Violence was part and parcel of the game, and probably created ongoing, inter-village feuds and rivalries.

A less inflammatory pastime, also enjoyed at festivals, was apple bobbing. In medieval times, a barrel was filled with water and apples would be floated within it. Each apple would be marked by a young man from the village, and the young ladies, hands

behind their backs, would lean in and try to retrieve an apple with her teeth. She would then be courted by the young man whose apple she “bobbed.”

With slightly more adult, and perhaps less youthfully innocent, overtones as apple bobbing, people would also play a game called Hot Cockles. A mixed group of adults would blindfold one person, then take turns spanking them on the behind with a wooden paddle. The person being “cockled” would have to guess who was spanking them, and if they got it right, they would swap places. It's unclear what the point of this game was, other than perhaps mild titillation and sexual teasing, but it was popular.

CULTURAL EVENTS

Naturally, throughout history some entertainments have never really changed. Music and storytelling are commonplace, with minstrels and troubadours, bards and poets, captivating audiences large and small. Feasting and festivals mark the passing of the year and bring people together in common cause and celebration. Pilgrimages and religious devotion, be they cultural responsibilities and duties for people throughout history, have also proved a way into a wider community and—in a sense—entertainment for many.

SEX AND DRUGS

People have always sought potions, powders, or other narcotics to give them a rush, a thrill, a different experience from everyday life—and while these often bring terrible repercussions, they do enhance the experience, at least for a spell. Then there's sex. I don't need to say any more about this, other than it's free at the Sultan's Pleasuredome.

ENCOUNTERING WEATHER

Zac Goins

In the Referee's Tome (OSE) and the Dungeon Masters Guide (AD&D 1e), there are virtually no mentions of weather. The only exceptions are details about waterborne adventures and how wind can affect the length of your voyage. And while I don't think storms, blizzards, flooding, and other natural phenomena should be the backbone of your adventuring career, I do believe they put the so-called meat on the bone.

Off the top of my head, in The Fellowship of the Ring, the heroes face dense fog, heavy rain, flooding, blizzards, and the threat of avalanche.



Why should other adventuring parties experience only sunshine and the occasional drizzle? What's more, I believe severe weather is much better at playing the part of a "random encounter" than most monsters. A storm is often just a storm, and once weathered, it may be easily forgotten. Orcs, daemons, trolls, and other vagrants may start as a random encounter, but often leave lasting tendrils of speculation in the minds of the party. In other words, the threat of monsters as random encounters is that they are likely to take on a life of their own and become a distraction.

Lord knows we don't need any more distractions at the table.

- **Severe weather** is clean, while still being threatening.
- **Severe weather** is direct, while still offering variety.
- **Severe weather** highlights terrain and climate, allowing for skills and resources to come to the forefront, which are often otherwise forgotten in the bowels of a dungeon.

In the Dungeon Masters Guide (AD&D 2e), we find weather makes an appearance, but only as a means of slowing down travel. Dust storms and sandstorms, gale-force winds, heavy fog, ice storms, and so on, are now a threat, but only to the tight schedule.

I propose, with a brief setup and a short list of mechanics, a way weather can take on the lion's share of on-the-road hazards.

DETERMINING WEATHER

Whenever a Wilderness Encounter is necessary, roll a d20 instead of a d8 on the Wilderness Encounter By Terrain table (Referee's Guide, p. 134). On results from 9-20, the encounter type is Weather.

Consult the appropriate table below, selecting the most appropriate weather based on the current season and terrain type. If multiple options are appropriate, determine the result randomly.

	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER
Barren Hills and Mtns.	1. Heavy Fog 2. Rain, Heavy 3. Rain, Torrential	1. Gale-Force Wind 2. Rain, Heavy	1. Freezing Cold 2. Ice Storm 3. Snow, Normal	1. Freezing Cold 2. Ice Storm 3. Snow, Blizzard
Clear and Grasslands	1. Flash Flood 2. Rain, Heavy 3. Rain, Torrential	1. Dust Storm 2. Rain, Heavy 3. Scorching Heat	1. Flash Flood 2. Heavy Fog 3. Rain, Heavy	1. Freezing Cold 2. Snow, Normal 3. Snow, Blizzard
Desert	1. Sandstorm 2. Scorching Heat	1. Sandstorm 2. Scorching Heat	1. Sandstorm 2. Scorching Heat	1. Sandstorm 2. Freezing Cold
Forest	1. Heavy Fog 2. Rain, Heavy 3. Rain, Torrential	1. Rain, Heavy	1. Heavy Fog 2. Ice Storm 3. Snow, Normal	1. Ice Storm 2. Snow, Normal 3. Snow, Blizzard
Jungle	1. Flash Flood 2. Rain, Torrential	1. Scorching Heat	1. Rain, Heavy 2. Scorching Heat	1. Flash Flooding 2. Rain, Heavy
Lake and River	1. Flash Flood 2. Rain, Heavy 3. Rain, Torrential	1. Flash Flood 2. Rain, Heavy	1. Freezing Cold 2. Heavy Fog 3. Rain, Heavy	1. Freezing Cold 2. Ice Storm 3. Snow, Normal
Ocean and Sea	1. Gale-Force Wind 2. Heavy Fog 3. Rain, Torrential	1. Gale-Force Wind 2. Rain, Heavy 3. Scorching Heat	1. Gale-Force Wind 2. Ice Storm	1. Freezing Cold 2. Gale-Force Wind 3. Ice Storm
Settled and City	1. Flash Flood 2. Rain, Heavy 3. Rain, Torrential	1. Dust Storm 2. Flash Flood 2. Scorching Heat	1. Freezing Cold 2. Heavy Fog 3. Rain, Heavy	1. Freezing Cold 2. Gale-Force Wind 3. Snow, Normal
Swamp	1. Flash Flood 2. Heavy Fog 3. Rain, Heavy	1. Rain, Heavy 2. Scorching Heat	1. Heavy Fog 2. Rain, Heavy	1. Heavy Fog

SEVERE WEATHER MECHANICS

When determining the effects of severe weather, the GM should track how long it takes the party to either (a) navigate out of the weather, or (b) find safety by other means. Failing to achieve either should result in a consequence. The severity of the consequence is determined by the weather type and the cumulative number of turns the party has spent in the elements. This is further outlined in each of the weather-type descriptions.

NAVIGATING OUT OF WEATHER

The GM should start out the encounter by secretly determining the scale of the weather in miles. Each weather type modifies movement to a greater or lesser extent (read further), and losing direction is also a possibility (Advanced Fantasy: Player's Tome, p. 225). Characters cannot both attempt to navigate out and find safety by another means.

Follow these steps when navigating weather:

1. Determine pace in miles.
2. Roll for Losing Direction.
3. If the party has made it out, suffer no consequence. If the party remains in the weather, suffer the Navigation Consequence listed. This ends the day.
4. Roll 1d4. On a 1, the weather effect ends for the next day. Otherwise, start these steps over for each subsequent day.

FINDING SAFETY BY OTHER MEANS

Every character has the potential of having the right combination of tools, spells, skills, and abilities necessary to secure safety for the group. That said, everything becomes more difficult in a storm. The GM should track the number of turns (10-minute intervals) the party attempts to find safety, and while every character may be actively participating, only one character may make an ability check each turn. Every character actively participating must take a turn before any character may make a second attempt, though it is not a requirement for every character participate.

To find safety, the party must succeed in a number of checks as outlined in the specific weather type. Until they do, they will suffer an Ability Consequence at the end of each turn.

Follow these steps when attempting to find safety:

1. One character chooses an ability check to attempt. At the GM's discretion, this may be replaced by casting a spell or other action.
2. Roll the check, applying the Ability Check Modifier from the weather.
3. If the success puts the party over the threshold for Ability Checks Required, the party is safe and suffers no consequence. If not, suffer the Ability Consequence listed. This ends the round.
4. Roll 1d20. On a 1, the weather effect ends. Otherwise, start these steps over for each subsequent round.

Note: None of this considers mounts, weather-specific gear, or readily available shelter, all of which would likely improve the party's ability to navigate in severe weather.

DUST/SANDSTORM

Movement Effect: 50% + no missile fire or flight

Visibility: 20'

Ability Check Modifier: +3

Ability Checks Required: 4 (Must provide protection and/or shelter)

Navigation Consequence: At the end of each day, make a Constitution check, with a modifier of +2 per day traveled. On a failure, the character becomes exhausted. Already exhausted characters take 1 hit die worth of damage.

Ability Consequence: Once the party has failed two Ability Checks, each character must make a Constitution check after each failure. On a failure, the character takes 1 point of damage. A character who is reduced to half health in this way becomes exhausted.

FLASH FLOOD

Movement Effect: 25%

Visibility: Normal

Ability Check Modifier: +2

Ability Checks Required: 2 (Must provide safe footing and/or portage)

Navigation Consequence: At the end of each day, make a Constitution check, with a modifier of +2 per day traveled. On a failure, the character becomes exhausted. If a character fails by 5 or more, they must roll a d100 to determine if they drown, using guidance from the Player's Tome (p. 221).

Ability Consequence: Once the party has failed two Ability Checks, each character becomes exhausted. For each subsequent failure, they

must roll a d100 to determine if they drown, using guidance from the Player's Tome (p. 221).

FREEZING COLD

Movement Effect: 25%

Visibility: Normal

Ability Check Modifier: +1

Ability Checks Required: 2 (Must provide shelter and/or warmth)

Navigation Consequence: At the end of each day, make a Constitution check, with a modifier of +2 per day traveled. On a failure, the character becomes exhausted. Already exhausted characters take 1 point of damage per day traveled.

Ability Consequence: Once the party has failed four Ability Checks, each character must make a Constitution check after each failure. On a failure, the character takes 1 point of damage, and their Ability Check Modifier increases by 1. A character who is reduced to half health in this way becomes exhausted.

GALE-FORCE WIND

Movement Effect: 50% + no missile fire or flight

Visibility: Normal

Ability Check Modifier: +3

Ability Checks Required: 4 (Must provide protection and/or shelter)

Navigation Consequence: At the end of each day, make a Constitution check, with a modifier of +1 per day traveled. On a failure, the character becomes exhausted. On land, there is a 20% chance per day to encounter a tornado (Player's Tome, p. 154), and on sea there's a 50% chance each day of the wind turning

into a true gale (Player's Tome, p. 227).

Ability Consequence: Once the party has failed three Ability Checks, each character must make a Constitution check after each failure. On a failure, the character's Ability Check Modifier increases by 1. On land, there is a 10% chance each turn a character is struck by debris for 1d6 damage.

HEAVY FOG

Movement Effect: 50% and increased chance of becoming lost

Visibility: 20'

Ability Check Modifier: +1

Ability Checks Required: 1 (Must provide light)

Navigation Consequence: At the end of each day, make an Intelligence check. On a failure, nothing happens, but if the character fails by 5 or more, they become separated from the party and lost.

Ability Consequence: Once the party has failed two Ability Checks, the party becomes lost.

ICE STORM

Movement Effect: -4 to missile attacks

Visibility: 40'

Ability Check Modifier: +2

Ability Checks Required: 3 (Must provide shelter and/or warmth)

Navigation Consequence: At the end of each day, make a Constitution check, with a modifier of +2 per day traveled. On a failure, the character becomes exhausted. Already exhausted characters take 1 point of damage per day traveled.

Ability Consequence: Once the party has failed three Ability Checks, each character must make a Constitution check after each failure. On a failure, the character takes 1 point of damage, and their Ability Check Modifier increases by 1. A character reduced to half health in this way becomes exhausted.

RAIN, HEAVY

Movement Effect: -2 to missile attacks

Visibility: Halved

Ability Check Modifier: +1

Ability Checks Required: 2 (Must provide shelter)

Navigation Consequence: At the end of each day, make a Constitution check, with a modifier of +1 per day traveled. On a failure, the character becomes exhausted. If at least three characters fail by 5 or more, the party also becomes lost.

Ability Consequence: Once the party has failed four Ability Checks, each character must make a Constitution check after each failure. On a failure, the character becomes exhausted.

RAIN, TORRENTIAL

Movement Effect: 50% and -2 to missile attack

Visibility: 20'

Ability Check Modifier: +2

Ability Checks Required: 3 (Must provide shelter)

Navigation Consequence: At the end of each day, make a Constitution check, with a modifier of +1 per day traveled. On a failure, the character becomes exhausted. If at least two

characters fail by 5 or more, the party also becomes lost.

Ability Consequence: Once the party fails three Ability Checks, each character must make a Constitution check after each failure. On a failure, the character becomes exhausted.

SCORCHING HEAT

Movement Effect: 50%

Visibility: Normal

Ability Check Modifier: +1

Ability Checks Required: 2 (Must provide shelter and/or water)

Navigation Consequence: At the end of each day, make a Constitution check, with a modifier of +2 per day traveled. On a failure, the character becomes exhausted. Already exhausted characters take 1 point of damage per day traveled.

Ability Consequence: Once the party has failed four Ability Checks, each character must make a Constitution check after each failure. On a failure, the character takes 1 point of damage, and their Ability Check Modifier increases by 1. This effect is doubled if the character has no water rations. A character who is reduced to half health in this way becomes exhausted.

SNOW, HEAVY

Movement Effect: 50%

Visibility: 20'

Ability Check Modifier: +2

Ability Checks Required: 3 (Must provide shelter and/or warmth)

Navigation Consequence: At the end of each day, make a Constitution check, with a modifier of +2 per day traveled. On a failure, the character

becomes exhausted. Already exhausted characters take 1 point of damage per day traveled. If at least three characters fail by 5 or more, the party also becomes lost.

Ability Consequence: Once the party has failed three Ability Checks, each character must make a Constitution check after each failure. On a failure, the character takes 1 point of damage, and their Ability Check Modifier increases by 1. A character reduced to half health in this way becomes exhausted.

SNOW, BLIZZARD

Movement Effect: 25%

Visibility: 10'

Ability Check Modifier: +3

Ability Checks Required: 5 (Must provide shelter and/or warmth)

Navigation Consequence: At the end of each day, make a Constitution check, with a modifier of +2 per day traveled. On a failure, the character becomes exhausted. Already exhausted characters take 1 point of damage per day traveled. If at least two characters fail by 5 or more, the party also becomes lost.

Ability Consequence: Once the party has failed three Ability Checks, the party becomes lost, and each character must make a Constitution check after each failure. On a failure, the character takes 1 point of damage, and their Ability Check Modifier increases by 1. A character reduced to half health in this way becomes exhausted.

THAT DISTINCT FLAVOR

Oliver Brackenbury

Sword and Sorcery is a distinct Fantasy sub-genre, which is gaining popularity after laying fallow since the mid-80's. Because it fell out of vogue for a long time, the specifics of the term have been largely forgotten, diluting its definition so, to many people, it's now just another way of saying "Fantasy. You know, elves and dragons and stuff."

Arguing the fine lines between genres and sub-genres and sub-sub-genres can get pedantic, often falling into the obnoxious activity known as gatekeeping. But huge swathes of fantasy fiction, such as *Lord of the Rings*, are not Sword and Sorcery, and this is a distinction worth making. Sword and Sorcery has its own unique storytelling flavor, and its own particular literary history, which is tightly interwoven with the flavor and history of tabletop role-playing games. Becoming familiar with the sub-genre is worth doing, as Sword and Sorcery has a lot to offer your bookshelf and gaming table.

You'll find several definitions online and in print for Sword and Sorcery. I often joke that debating precisely what defines the genre is practically part of Sword and Sorcery itself! My personal favorite can be found in an excellent book on the history of the genre, "*Flame & Crimson: A History of Sword & Sorcery*," by Brian Murphy. Unlike others I've seen, his definition is

flexible. This is important, because when you're talking about a nearly one-hundred-year-old literary tradition, with who knows how many published short stories, magazines, books, films, shows, and video games, any inflexible definition will have a lot of exceptions.

Murphy lists seven commonly encountered elements of the genre. Then, without giving a specific threshold, says if there's enough of these present for it to feel like Sword and Sorcery to you, then it's Sword and Sorcery.

Here are those common elements, with my own short explanations:

1. PEOPLE OF ACTION

S&S protagonists, even Michael Moorcock's notoriously dour Elric, are adventure seekers: people who face problems head on, people who act. They're not all big buff warriors, but none of them are powerless, or inert.

2. DARK & DANGEROUS SORCERY

While there's often suggestions of how sorcery works in S&S tales, you won't find anything like contemporary magic systems. Sorcery is the stuff of chaos, frequently irrational, and often dooms those who would use it.

3. PERSONAL AND/OR MERCENARY MOTIVATIONS

S&S doesn't focus on murderhobos, but its protagonists are rarely heroes with a capital H, out to save the world through some grand conflict. You're more likely to get a small-scale character piece focused on a morally compromised, more relatable protagonist who's trying to survive.

4. HORROR/ LOVECRAFTIAN INFLUENCE

Sword and Sorcery was born in the 1930's pulp magazines, where many of its authors wrote horror as well, and it shows. Lovecraft was in regular correspondence with several of S&S' bigger names, such as Conan's Robert E Howard, and you'll find Easter-Egg references or even more direct connections to his work in a great many S&S tales of the day. This mixture of horror, Cosmic and Gothic and more, has echoed forward down the years to the present.

5. SHORT EPISODIC STORIES

The same pulp magazine birthplace, which got horror's chocolate in S&S' peanut butter, also set a standard for S&S being told in short stories which could be read in any order, because who knew what issue of which magazine would be a reader's introduction to your character? The pressure this put on making a story just vibrate with excitement and adventure to snare potential new readers further shaped the subgenre's storytelling mode, and this carried forward into the short (200 pages or less) novels which came later.

6. INSPIRED BY HISTORY

The very first S&S tale, "The Shadow Kingdom," came about because Robert E. Howard wasn't having luck selling a historical-adventure tale, so he added some supernatural elements and sold it to Weird Tales. Even when set in an antediluvian past, far future, or a secondary world, S&S tales will draw from history, erring on creating a variety of human cultures rather than demihuman civilizations.

7. OUTSIDER HEROES

Since its inception, Sword & Sorcery has followed characters who don't fit in. Conan the wandering barbarian. Poor Imaro being raised by a tribe who hate him for being born outside the community. Even an establishment character like Elric, the last emperor of Melniboné, is an outsider for being the only one of his people who thinks maybe it's a bad thing to sleep with your relatives or torture people. One way or another, Sword and Sorcery protagonists stand apart from society.



Adding Blood & Thunder to Your Table

Oliver Brackenbury

While there's no concrete formula for creating a Sword-and-Sorcery campaign, the genre does, at times, lean on established themes and tropes. To heighten the stakes and provide players with a classic S&S adventure, game masters in any role-playing setting should feel encouraged to experiment with one or more of the following considerations:

SHEEP AMONG WOLVES

Conan was always written as a sheep among wolves – so don't be having a retired lvl 4 warrior working the bar. Keep leveled NPCs a rarity.

PROTAGONIST AS OUTSIDERS

Sword-and-Sorcery protagonists are outsiders, and NPCs should view the characters with suspicion rather than see them as heroes. All magic-user classes, other than the Cleric, are particularly feared, and should be wary of revealing their gifts in human settlements, lest they get lynched by terrified villagers.

REACTION ROLL PENALTIES

Consider reaction roll penalties simply for PCs who look “uncivilized” or “roguish,” and staggered, deeper penalties for looking, acting or sounding sorcerous, or daring to actually perform sorcery.

MAGIC ITEMS ARE RARE

Make magic items rare, and difficult to acquire, but powerful and unique.

HUMAN ADVERSARIES

Lean toward human adversaries, including re-skinning orks or even ogres into particularly fearsome humans from different cultures. And when you want a monster, try for something unique. There's scads of random monster tables online. My favorite tool is the OSE-compatible The Random Esoteric Creature Generator by James Raggi, which features motivations and attack strategies, not just raw stats & special abilities for your beasts.

COSMIC HORROR

Bring cosmic horror into your game not only with dark gods and tentacles, but with a sanity mechanic. Many of Elric's companions had their minds blasted by what they saw in their adventures with him!

If a character witnesses an unspeakable horror, the Game Master may require the player to make a saving throw vs Spells, modified by the severity of the horror in question, with failure causing 1d6 temporary loss of WIS points. Have fun suggesting how to roleplay behavioral challenges caused by sanity loss. Points could be regained through rest, like HP loss, or through pushing back against the chaos in the adventure.

IN MEDIA RES

Hewing to the tone of classic pulp tales gives permission to skip over travel between adventures and begin them in media res, right at the door of the proverbial fireworks factory, or even in the middle of combat!

BORROW FROM DCC

As I mentioned, DCC is my favorite system to look to for S&S, TTRPG inspiration. Here are my OSE style interpretations of some of their rules & ideas, which can best bring that S&S feel to your campaign.

LANKMAR

For starters, it has a boxed setting lifted straight out of the S&S canon! DCC: Lankmar is named for the fictional city where Fritz Leiber's duo of Fafhrd & Grey Mouser had many classic S&S adventures. Even if you removed every single rule, you'd still have an excellent guide to the setting of a series which gave us the original concept of a Thieves' Guild.

FLEETING LUCK

That said, in DCC: Lankmar, layered over the standard DCC rules, are a handful of charming additions, such as Fleeting Luck: a floating pool of luck points each character has, which can be spent to boost not only their own roles but those of teammates.

OSE Interpretation: In OSE, the GM could award 1d3 points for rolling a natural 20 (good fortune), daring (tried something ballsy & creative? Fleeting Luck is your reward...so you'll feel safer trying even more ballsy, creative maneuvers!), and just plain fun (Made the table laugh?)

FLEETING LUCK

Points of Fleeting Luck, perhaps tracked with tokens, can be spent to provide +1 to any die roll by the PC, or by a fellow PC within eyesight.

This, combined with losing them all at the end of each session, encourages a more daring, co-operative, go-for-broke play style perfect for helping your players break free of an overcautious, "15 min adventuring day" approach.

MIGHTY DEEDS

The core system alone has facilitated many a great S&S moment at my table. Instead of feats, warriors have a Mighty Deed ability, which rewards improvised combat maneuvers like when a player's crazed barbarian swings his axe at an archer assassin's quiver, taking the feathers off all the arrows for a clever, colorful disarm.

OSE Interpretation: Each time a Fighter, Barbarian, or Dwarf rolls a natural 20 when attacking, they get to roll 1d6 on the Mighty Deed table for an additional result on top of whatever damage they deal.

Roll Combat Effect

1. **Blood & Thunder:** +1d8 damage, remove one of your opponent's limbs (PC's choice).
2. **Take Away Their Steel:** For armed opponents, their weapon is knocked out of their hand, landing 1d10 feet away in a direction of the GM's choosing.

For monsters using natural weaponry, either give them a -2 penalty to further attack rolls or remove one appropriate special ability - perhaps the warrior has severed the dragon's breath-weapon gland!

3. **Bronzed Thews:** Opponent is pushed back five feet for each of the PC's HD...BUT reduce this by five feet for every HD the opponent has more than the player. Example: A 2HD Fighter user her bronzed thews to shove a 3HD Bugbear, pushing it back only five feet, not fifteen.
4. **Trips & Throws:** Opponent is knocked prone and has to spend their entire next turn getting up.
5. **Hold the Line:** Temporarily increase the PC's AC by 2 until it is their turn again.
6. **Sundering:** Rip and tear at your opponent's armor. Reduce the target's AC permanently by 2.

AN UNPREDICTABLE MAGIC SYSTEM

Spell results are rolled on tables and can make even humble Sleep result in "dungeon-breaking" madness, like putting everything within 500 feet to sleep until the caster says otherwise, or fail so badly the caster grows a second face on their back, both of which happened to my group's striving sorcerer in a single session. In this way, magic feels less like another form of technology, and more like an unpredictable, dangerous force no mere mortal can fully master!

OSE Interpretation: Each time a user of arcane magic casts a spell, roll 1d6. A result of one means the player must roll on the following table, with the results interpreted by the GM.

Roll Magical Upset

1. **Corruption:** Sorcerous energy backfires into the magic-user, corrupting body and soul! The GM permanently changes the PC's appearance in a manner thematically appropriate to the spell - the higher the spell level,

the more grotesque! Example: Read Languages (lvl1) covers their body in indecipherable tattoos, while Stone to Flesh (lvl6) turns them - or part of them - into a golem.

2. **Inverse:** Charm Person repels the target, Locate Object hides the target in a new location, ect.
3. **Doubling:** Whatever the spell is, double it; throw two Fire Balls, expand the spell radius by 100%, etc.
4. **Phlogiston Phlux:** Roll 1d12 on the list of spells at the same level as what was cast, and the result is what the magic-user casts instead. Example: Trying to cast Read Languages means rolling on the level 1 spell list.
5. **Speed:** Reduce casting time in half or one step ("One turn" becomes "One round"). If instant, the spell may be cast again.
6. **Unwelcome Attention:** The spellcaster's perverting of the universe's natural laws has attracted unwanted attention! A Super-Dimensional Being (Use Spectre stat block) appears, bent on killing the PC. If it succeeds, then the PC is torn asunder at the sub-atomic level.

PATRONS

Demons. The ghost of a long-dead sorcerer. Interdimensional aliens. Or some other powerful entity with an agenda. Including supernatural patrons straight out of an Elric story who grant power in exchange for serving their agenda are a great way to complicate group dynamics. Once I had Bobugbubilz the frog demon whisper in a warlock's ear that he had to repay him for past boons by taking the dungeon's greatest treasure - what the group had quested for all session - and sacrifice it to him instead.

OSE Interpretation: Once a week, a magic-user may invoke their patron, seeking their aid in a dire moment. Patrons are capricious and difficult to get a hold of, so they should roll 1d6. On a 5 or 6, their patron will hear their pleas. If the player impresses the table with their roleplaying of this plea, I'd suggest making the patron hear them on a 4 or higher.

Similar to Contact Higher Plane, invoking your patron allows the PC to ask powerful, otherworldly beings for assistance. Unlike the spell, this is a more mercenary exchange, with more tangible rewards, but also an expectation that the PC now owes their patron a favor of the GM's choice, to be cashed in whenever the GM chooses. Penalties for failure to give the patron what they are owed are a great opportunity for the GM to steer the campaign with a mandatory quest, or give the player a unique, poetic penalty suitable to the overall theme of the patron.

When the patron answers a plea for help, roll 1d6 and consult this table for the result.

Roll Patron Boon

1. **"Not Now!":** Alas, you've caught your patron at a bad time. Absent-mindedly, they will teleport you 1d6x100 feet away from your current location, assuming this will render you safe from whatever's threatening you. If this would put you inside solid rock, or similar, the GM can choose the nearest available opening, whether surface or subterranean.
2. **Intimidating Aura:** A visually appropriate illusion (hair turning into snakes if their patron is a snake demon) manifests, making it clear to others the PC works in service of a terrifying force. The

aura gives a +4 bonus to a reaction roll when trying to frighten, intimidate, or impress.

3. **Unnatural Skill:** PC gains a +3 on their next action requiring a die roll, provided the action serves the agenda of their patron.
4. **Dark Gift:** Their patron gifts their servant with a new spell, randomly chosen from the highest level spell table currently available to the PC.
5. **Supernatural Reinforcements:** 1d4+1 warriors, use the Veteran stat block, appear ready to help the player. They live on even after an encounter or adventure has ended, requiring food etc., as with any other hireling, while being willing to fight to the death for the PC (no morale checks needed).
6. **The Divine Darkness:** There are things only the divine are allowed to know. Make everybody forget one fact, as it is dragged beyond the veil. This permanently changes the campaign world, though the sorcerer, the only one who still remembers, can slowly undo this by telling others of what has been erased. It doesn't have to be complex - imagine if you made those Ogres forget how tasty they find human flesh.

IN THE END

What I love most about all this is how chasing that S&S feeling at the table can help make the fantastic feel truly weird and wonderful again. If you're looking to breathe new life into your game, check out some S&S fiction!



Gary's Appendix is a collective effort by a creative menagerie to create a memorable zine for fantasy gamers. This is one in a series of zines that explores the curious and fascinating parts of our beloved hobby in a way that is thought-provoking and useful.

The inspiration for this zine is the Advanced Dungeons and Dragons Dungeon Masters Guide. Gary wrote and collected a vast amount of information, rules, and guidance. Its haphazard nature and perplexing subjects makes it as fresh today as when he penned the work almost fifty years ago.

We do not have the audacity to believe that we can produce a work that matches that evergreen classic. We are partakers of the past who seek to share our works, our journey and our excitement about the hobby.

