

Critical: Go Westerly



A Funny Fantasy Game by Geoff Bottone and Jonathan Lavallee

Critical!* Go Westerly

Written by!: Geoff Bottone and Jonathan Lavallee

Edited by!: Amber Hines

Every Single Piece of Art by!: Avery Liell-Kok

Layout by!: Jonathan Lavallee

Fonts!:

* Kingthings Foundation by Kevin King

<http://www.fontsquidrel.com/fonts/Kingthings-Foundation->

* Caudex by Hjort Nidudsson

<http://www.fontsquidrel.com/fonts/caudex>

<http://caudex.sourceforge.net/>

* Dwarf Font-1 by Dan Smith

<http://www.acondia.com/fonts/runes/>

Playtesting and Special Thanks to!:

Amber, Brennan, Curt, Kathryn, Heather, Eric, Avie, Kate, Vinny, Dave, Yvonne, Joe, Mary, Carmine, Catherine, Monkey, Rowan, Daegan, Matt, Sam, Jeff and Cliff.

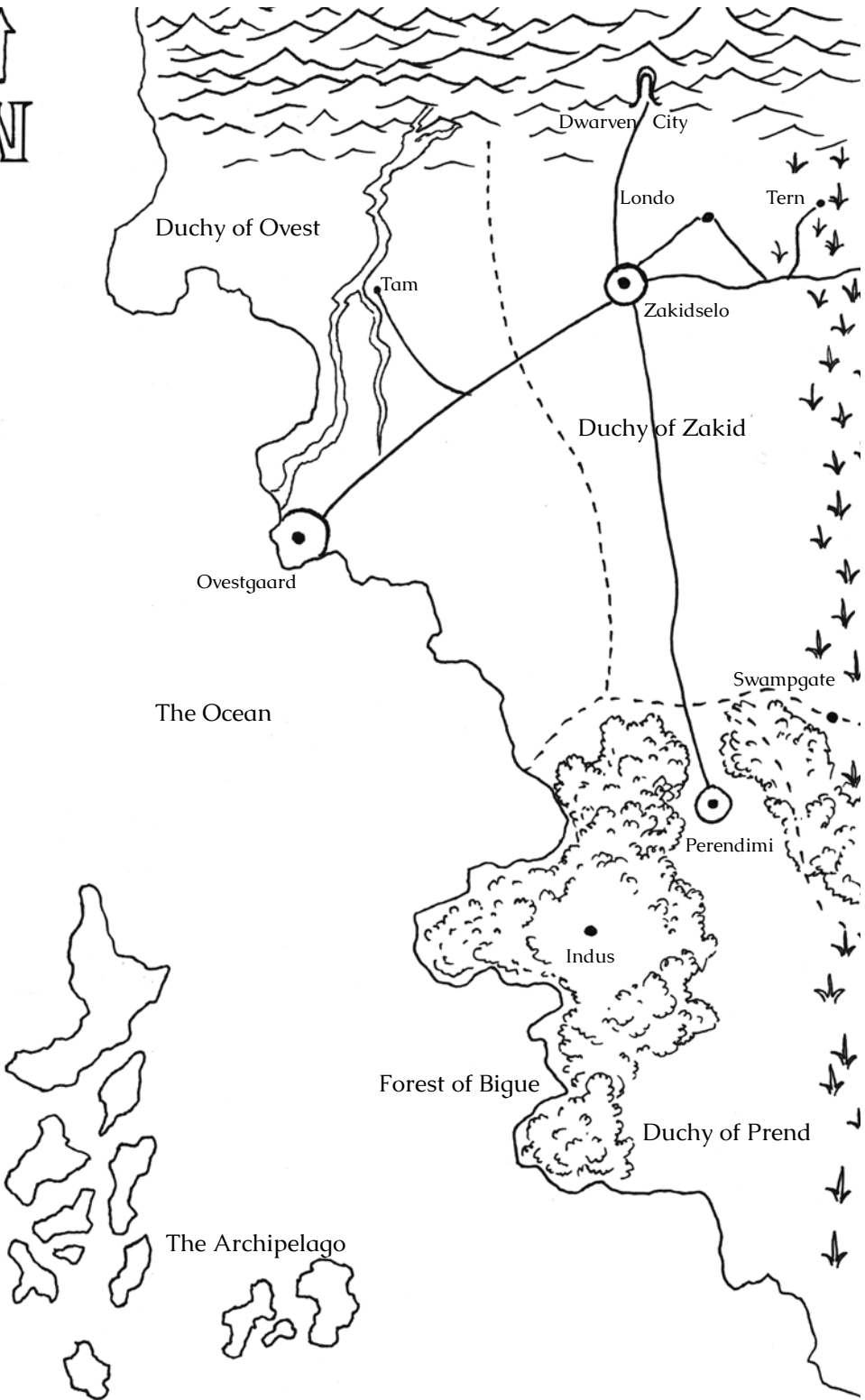
And Romper Room, because that's what plays in my head each time I do any sort of Credits thing.

Table of Contents

Introduction	iii
Character Creation	1
What Makes Up a Character?	3
Stats	3
Skills	5
Habits	7
Items	8
Potions	9
Paying for Items, Potions and Increases	11
WAIT! Aren't there Elves and Dwarves in your world?	12
Character Creation Summary	14
Our Wandering Heroes	15
Tara the Raging	16
Barnabas Ramsey, Wizard	19
Mabel Hood, Singing Pirate	22
Marten Iij, Thief Priest	25
Angelique Doto, Quillsman	28
Daphadiana, the Nice Bard	31
Urist Axebeard, the Dwarf	34
Mary, the Wench	37
Stelph, the Elf	39
The Places You Will See	43
The Kingdom of Westerly	43
The Duchy of Ovest	44
The City of Ovestgaard	46
The City of Tam	57
The Duchy of Zakhid	59
The City of Zakidse/o	60
The Breadbasket	64
The Duchy of Perendimi	66
The City of Perend	68
The Forest of Bigue	72
The Bloodwoods	75
The Razorback Mountains	77
The Great Eastern Marsh	81
The City of Swampgate	82
Out In the Marsh	86
The Eastern Empire	88
The Archipelago of Outremere	90
The Pirate Island	90
The Isle of the Necromancer	91
The Interactions	92
The First (and Only) Rule You Need	92
For the Bartender: Calculating Be Hit	93

For the Player: Calculating To Hit	93
Rolling the Dice	96
Lending a Helping Hand	96
Bribing Your Way To Success	97
Critical!	98
When the Bartender Rolls Dice	99
Combat	100
Combat Rounds	100
Damage	101
Area Effect Damage	101
Taking Damage Like a Main Character	102
Total Party Wipe	103
Healing	104
Interactions Summary	105
Bartending Lessons	106
Making Characters	106
Running this Thing	108
The Rule of Yes	108
The Rule of Funny	109
Enlisting Your Players to Tell the Story	110
You Can't Kill Them	111
Using the Success Table	111
Magic and Cheating	112
I Need a Number: Which One Do I Use?	113
GOLD!	113
Multiple People Attacked a Monster, Who Gets the Gold?	114
I'm Running Out of Gold, Here!	114
Other Types of Treasure That Aren't Gold	115
Spending Gold for Self-Improvement	115
Hazards of the Course	115
Doors, Walls, and Other Breakable Objects	115
Traps	116
Building Your Own traps	117
Praise the Thief!	118
Sample Traps	118
Locks	119
Monsters and Other Such ilk	120
Building Your Own Monsters	121
The Monsters Of Westerly	122
Chapter 6	149
Religion of Westerly	149
Chapter 7	I
The Appendices	I
Extra Adventurers	V

**Because. Punctuation is Still Funny.*



Funny.

Funny is one of five or six words in the beaten, swollen remains of a language we call English that is nearly impossible to quantify. You see, funny is subjective. Funny is personal. And just because I think it's funny doesn't mean it is empirically funny. Hmm, that does make a bit of a quandary.

Let's consult a higher power: *Mirriam- Webster*.

Funny: *adj* \fə-nē\

1 a : affording light mirth and laughter

b : seeking or intended to amuse

2: differing from the ordinary in a suspicious, perplexing, quaint, or eccentric way. often used as a sentence modifier <funny, things didn't turn out the way we expected>

3: involving trickery or deception <Don't try anything funny>

That didn't help much.

Fine. Let's go with this: You hold in your hands a monument to funn-no.. that sounds pompous and overindulgent. It has no flair.. no pizzazz.

HURRY! HURRY! HURRY! YOU HOLD IN YOUR HANDS A RIP-ROARING GOOD TIME AN- oh, what the hell?

We'll come back to "Funny."

Not just fantasy games, but most fantasy novels tend to take themselves VERY seriously (with the notable exception of Terry Pratchett's fantastic Discworld series). If that's what you are looking for, go away. You are looking in the wrong place. Don't get me wrong, Westerly has its fair share of foreboding, intrigue, danger, all the tropes you are used to. But it hasn't forgotten the most important thing that almost every fantasy world has abandoned outright- the whimsy and fun of youthful imagination. There is no reason that humor and fantastical creatures can't go hand in hand into that dark night singing away the darkness with a smirk and laugh. In fact, I for one encourage my chocolate and peanut butter to mix well, and not just in my fantasy.

In the Kingdom of Westerly (and well, the rest of the Continent for that matter), that mix hasn't been forgotten and that's why it's beautiful- even the Porque Market. Beautiful. If nothing else, like Pratchett, Westerly straddles the line between serious Sword & Sorcery and the works of Douglas Adams sprinkled with the irreverence of Monty Python. I know, that's a lot to swallow, but let me expound. To really understand what makes the Kingdom of Westerly, and the game Critical! as a whole tick, we should start at the beginning- With my friends, Jon and Geoff.

Critical! Go Westerly

“He was a dreamer, a thinker, a speculative philosopher... or, as his wife would have it, an idiot.”

— Douglas Adams

Thanks, Mr. Adams. Jon and Geoff, both prolific game designers on their own, conceived *Critical! Go Westerly* as something completely different than it ended up. It started as a role playing game version of another successful game Geoff had worked on in the past. While this incarnation had one of the most important elements missing from games these days (It was actually FUN!), it was missing it's own voice and didn't make the cut for the property Geoff and Jon were striving to get licensed. Needless to say, the pair was crushed, but over breakfast at a game convention in the American Midwest, I poked and prodded and watched them soldier on, convinced the license wasn't necessary. They were right. *Critical! Go Westerly* (named at that very breakfast) finally found the voice it was missing and grew into something great.

I have a theory about games that I will share only here (until I share it somewhere else). The greatest games, the ones that stick with us, that we talk about long after we've played, that we create our own in jokes about aren't made up of just rules. Anyone can write rules. The greatest games are a marriage of rules and story (or setting, what have you). The greatest games don't just make players compete or roll dice, they take you on a journey. They blend their stories with a player's participation to make a player feel like he is a part of the story. Like he needs to hear more. It is an elegant combination.

Like chocolate and peanut butter.

Like comedy and fantasy.

So where does that leave us? With a wonderful romp; a delightful journey through a world of political strife, bloody battles, and uncommon valor.

Oh, and one more thing.

This game is really and truly
Funny.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Blomquist', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Joseph Blomquist

Introduction

in which we discover who is responsible for the mess

Eat, Drink, Fight, and be Merry, each one of those is important because it's been capitalized, but also because that is the basis of Critical!: Go Westerly. Play that character you always wanted to have in a world slightly twisted sideways. Sally forth into a world where monsters are organized by height, dysfunctional duchies try their best to deal with their personal demons, and a land war is fought over who doesn't have to control a monster filled, bug infested swamp. You will gather gold for personal gain by killing monsters and pilfering off of friends who stay conscious on the other end of a fight. You will learn how to fight, and help others, and cheat your way to victory in wonderfully descriptive training montages.

Critical!: Go Westerly is more than just a collection of punctuation nestled between a valley of words. It's a world that is in dire need of questionable heroes who know how to fight and how to cook, possibly at the same time. A world in dire need of Bards who are willing to stop at nothing to produce the best music that they can. Fallen sports heroes who are looking for a less dangerous line of work, or even Wizards looking to advance their careers by walking about righting wrongs and wronging even worse evils. A world in dire need of peat farmers, because it's a dirty job and somebody has to do it.

Adventure and hijinx awaits! All you need to do is keep reading, and convince someone else that they really want to be the Bartender.

Creative Commons?

We believe that the best things in life are shared. This means that all the rules in the game are licensed under a Creative Commons BY-SA license. This license means that the rules are available to be used by anyone who wants to use them and make their own game. All you need to do is make sure credit us for the original work.

For more information you can check it out at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5/ca/>

Unfortunately the world is not under the same Creative Commons license. It's under a BY-NC-SA which means that if you want to modify it or make your own additions that's totally fine but you can't sell it and you have to share it with everyone else, too. We think that's only fair since that is what we're doing with you!

The Illustrations are all copyright Firestorm Ink but were done by the Amazing Avery Liell-Kok.

Special Thanks

We'd like to take this time to thank all the people that wanted to be thanked. They are ranked according to the level that they contributed to the Indie Go Go Campaign for Critical!: Go Westerly.

Fledgling Adventurers

Cheryl Trooskin-Zoller, Bill Browne, Sarah Brown, Darren Watts, Darren Watts' Evil Twin, Nicholas

Well Read Mages

James Binnie, Corey Reid, Kate Graham, Eric Swenson

GSSC Alumnists

Brennan Taylor, Heather Graham, Katherine Bryant

The Adventurers (With Characters in the Back of the Book)

Kate Bullock, Curt Covert, Brett Easterbroko

In Name Only (Those who wanted amounts kept secret)

Scott Wachter, Susan Bianculli, Lorenzo Orselli, Mikael and Angela Andersson

**To the Contributors that wished to remain anonymous
Thank you.**

Chapter 1

Character Creation

wherein we meet our adventurers and a bad idea

The first thing you're going to want to do is figure out what sort of person you'll play in the Kingdom of Westerly. Will you be a dashing warrior/chef, with a sword in one hand and a spatula in the other? An intrepid pig farmer looking to make a name for themselves as an adventurer? An aspiring musician seeking vengeance for their sabotaged performances? A retired Quillsman looking for a less dangerous line of work? An out of work chef who is wandering the world looking to hone her skills? Whatever you decide you want to be, you will build your character with the rules below.

If you'd rather jump right to the action, we've got some characters all ready for you in the back of this section. We've done the "hard work" of building their stats and creating their backgrounds, and all you need to do is take them out on wild adventures. You should still take a glance at this section before you head out, just so you have an idea what the numbers on your character sheet mean.



What Makes Up a Character?

A character is a collection of four categories: **Stats**, **Skills**, **Habits**, and **Items**. Each of these defines your character in a different way. We'll describe each of these categories in turn and we'll tell you how many points you have to assign to your characters.

Stats

Characters are made up of four primary stats. These stats are bought with points. There are also three fixed stats which start at the same level for each character. Finally, there is an AC stat, which probably doesn't mean what you think it means.

Primary Stats

The four primary stats are the basis for your character and will be used whenever you make dice rolls to attempt a task. These stats are:

Strength: This represents your character's physical strength, stamina and overall health. Characters with a high Strength can lift great weights, bend iron bars, hold you back by putting their hand on your head, pose particularly well, drink like a fish, and easily shrug off the effects of poisons, infections and traps. Their physiques decorate all the inspirational posters, urging everyone else to work harder and to lift heavier things. Characters with low Strength can get knocked over by a stiff wind, are the ones being held back by a hand on their heads, have a hard time lifting that second tankard of ale, and generally are the average everyday people who don't get noticed for their physique.

Smarts: This stat represents your character's intelligence, problem-solving ability, and perception. Characters with high Smarts can negotiate the weird puzzles and traps that always seem to crop up in dungeons, translate ancient runes, play mind games, enjoy a good poem, and notice when monsters are sneaking up on them. They are the ones who write all sorts of books, from non-fiction treatises to the epic tales of heroes that live on for generations. People with low Smarts will have a narrower approach to problem-solving, usually involving smashing things to bits. They also don't notice ambushes until the arrows are lodged in their chests, and spend their time writing things like role playing games.

Sneak: This stat is your character's general stealthiness and agility. Characters with high Sneak are quite adept at climbing sheer surfaces, balancing on precarious ledges, stealing gold from other players, stealing gold from the Bartender, tying other people's shoelaces together when they're not looking, and slipping past monstrous guardians without arousing suspicion. Those who aren't as blessed in the Sneak department are the type of people who walk down the middle of the

road, wearing lots of clanking armor and holding a bright lantern, all the while shouting, “Adventurer coming through! Bring out your Monsters!”

Smile: Everyone loves a good smile, it can ease tense situations and bring sunshine to an overcast day. Smile is your character’s personality and charm. Those that have a high Smile can win over a crowd just by winking at them, or blowing a kiss. They always have their hair in place, their clothes are impeccable and they are never at a loss for words, wishing they had said something clever. Characters with low Smile often sit in the dark corners of taverns and brood menacingly. They learn to enjoy the taste of their toes, since they frequently put their feet in their mouths.

All primary stats are measured on a scale from 1 to 6 with 6 representing the best anyone could ever be and 1 meaning the worst that is possible with anything regarding this Stat. The average for any Stat is 3, which puts you very firmly in the Grade C camp.

Primary stats come into play whenever you want to roll some dice to see if your character does something amazing, which they should be doing on a regular basis.

Secondary Stats

These are the other stats. You’ll never use them to modify a dice roll and they tend to have very little in the way of variation, but your character just wouldn’t be an adventurer without them.

Damage: This stat represents how much damage you can do with your standard, everyday gear. Even if you’ve had your equipment stolen by thieves, we can assume that as a seasoned adventurer, you can always pick up a stick and poke a monster in an ideal place to cause harm. Every character starts with a Damage of 2.

Fortitude: Fortitude is the measure of your mettle and represents how much you can take before being knocked unconscious. When you get hit in combat, blasted by magic, stuck in a trap, get your finger caught in a door, fall off of something high or accidentally drink poison, your Fortitude will decrease. You want to make sure that this stat stays as high as you can. Every character starts with a Fortitude of 20.

Now we’ll let you in on a secret. You don’t have to worry about dying in this game. I know for some people the gut wrenching terror of potential death is the only thing that keeps them in line, but bear with us. No matter how much damage you take, the worst thing that will happen to you is that you will pass out for a while. Hopefully you’ll wake up before the rest of your party gets knocked out or there might be some bigger repercussions, but that’s covered in Combat on Page 100.

AC: Adventuring is thirsty business. With that in mind, we've created the AC stat, short for Alcohol Content, which tracks just how drunk your character has become. Some might scoff and say that this is irrelevant, but when you figure that your adventures will pretty much always start in a tavern, it only makes sense that the AC stat exists.

The higher your AC, the faster you'll pass out. If at any time your Fortitude is lower than your AC, you'll pass out as if you were stone cold sober and had dropped to 0 or less.

Gold: Gold! Those pretty, round pieces of metal with the faces of various rulers stamped on them. It's how you'll afford powerful items, weapons, and armor. Gold will allow you to enjoy the sweet comfort of the White Griffon Tavern. It will buy you some drinks, and then it will buy you some more drinks. Most importantly, it's the way you and your fellow adventurers keep score. Nothing is more satisfying than leaving a dungeon with more gold than your bosom companions. Gold has some special rules that are covered in the Gold Section on page XX.

Stat Points

When you build your character, you get 12 points to spend on your Primary Stats. As a reminder, the maximum at each skill is 6 and the minimum is 1 which makes the average 3.

Skills

While stats are the innate qualities of your character, skills are things that your character has become good at through training. Your character will have obtained their skills through long hours of study, cultural immersion, out of sheer necessity during their previous adventures, and possibly through a correspondence class or two.

Skills can expand your horizons in amazing and unexpected ways, mostly because you can have just about any skill that you want. It's true! If you want a skill called, "Fantastical Scum Sucker" then you have it. If you think, "Best Sword Fighter in the World!" would be a handy skill to have, then you can take that, too.

The key thing with skills is this: You can always try to convince the Bartender that you can use a skill, no matter how ridiculous the application it is, provided it makes at least some vague kind of sense for the situation at hand. So, if you think your sword fighting skill will help you julienne a salad, make your case.

The Bartender, of course, has final say. If she says, "no!" emphatically while slamming her fist down, you're going to have to back down and accept her judgement.

That's why you're not going to get a laundry list of skills from us. We'd much rather have you use your imagination. Be creative, be fun, but if you end up with a skill you can't use because your character hasn't come across any Scum to Suck, don't come crying to us.

Skills fall into one of four categories, which are as follows:

Help You: A Help You skill does exactly what it sounds like. It benefits your character and no one else. Many of the standard adventuring skills, like Jumping, Climbing, Dodging, Swimming, Picking Locks, and Hiding are Help You skills.

Help Others: Not all skills are incredibly selfish. Some of them can actually help others. You use these skills to do something for another person, or a group of people. Any skill that keeps other people safe or supports them in some way is a good Help Others skill.

Hurt Others: These are the skills that you use to hurt monsters and, sometimes, other people. You can hurt them immediately, by attacking them; a short time in the future, by making and setting traps; or even emotionally, by using hurtful words and gestures. Anything that you can think of that will give the bad guys big boo-boos falls into this category.

Cheating: Cheating skills allow you to bend the rules of any game, even the rules of the game you're currently playing, *Critical!: Go Westerly*. If you can cook up a really good reason why a Cheating Skill will work in a given situation, go for it. You might amuse your Bartender enough so that she'll let you do what you want to do, because a happy Bartender is a benevolent Bartender.

Skills are rated from 1 to 3. This value represents the bonus you get when using a Skill.

For Example:

Urist Axebeard has a Hurt Others skill called You Never Met an Axe You Couldn't Use to Kill Something (3). A huge door blocks Urist's progress through the dungeon, so he decides to chop it to pieces. Urist wants to use his You Never Met an Axe You Couldn't Use to Kill Something skill to increase his damage, because he's not worried about the door trying to dodge his attacks. The Bartender agrees and Urist's damage is now 5 instead of the base of 3.

Later on, a Little, Agile Monster annoys Urist. This time, Urist wants to use his You Never Met an Axe You Couldn't Use to Kill Something skill to add to his chance to chop up the Little, Agile Monster. This would add to his Strength of 5, giving him a total of 8. The Bartender agrees and sighs, knowing that things are going to go badly for her little creature.

When you make your character, you get 6 points for your skills. No skill can have a value higher than 3.

Habits

Everyone has habits. They are the little things you do, without thinking, in your everyday life. Characters in *Critical!: Go Westerly* also have habits. They are quick and easy guidelines on how to act in certain situations, which gives you an opportunity to role-play your character more effectively.

Like Skills, Habits have a number associated with them. This number represents how ingrained this habit is, and how much it's going to affect your character. If you feel that a Habit will help you out in a certain situation then you can try to convince the Bartender that you can use the Habit. If she agrees it will give you a bonus but you can only use the Habit once per encounter.

However, Habits have a drawback. Because they are ingrained in your character, they can surface at inopportune times to cause problems. If you are in a situation where one of your Habits would cause a problem, the Bartender can use your Habit as a penalty. You can try to argue all you want, but usually it's pretty futile as the Bartender takes great pleasure in making sure that the things you think will make your character better will actually make them worse.

For Example:

Angelique Doto has the habit Adrenaline Junkie (2). This Habit will be of great benefit anytime Angelique would like to leap into action or do something dangerous. Whenever this happens, she gets a +2 bonus.

However, if Angelique and her companions are parlaying with a powerful Lich, Angelique will have a really hard time just talking when she knows she could be doing something awesome. Her player may want to reason with the Lich for a variety of reasons, but the Bartender will gently remind her that "you know what? You really just want to leap into action!" and then will bestow a -2 penalty when she tries to negotiate with the Lich.

That situation will probably end up with Angelique whooping in excitement as she vaults over a Fireball.

Your character always starts with the Habit, Gotta Get the Gold (3). You get 3 points to spend on additional Habits. Like Skills, Habits have a maximum value of 3.

Items

Items are specialized adventuring tools, weapons, and other gear. Items will either give fixed bonuses to any of your stats, or will give you a skill in which the value can only be used to increase the likelihood that you will succeed on certain types of rolls. Items can give you more Fortitude, they can allow you to deal more damage, they can give you greater Strength, Smarts, Sneak, or Smile, but that's all they get to do.

The benefit is that the Bartender doesn't really have to be convinced too often when you want to use an Item. If you have a Magic Sword that gives you a +2 to damage, you'll easily get a +2 to damage when you use that sword to make with the stabbing. However, you can never use your sword's bonus in any other way. It won't make your attacks more likely to land. It won't heal you. It won't light a campfire. It doesn't hand out candy to small children. It only gives you +2 to damage.

One thing that you need to be aware of concerning items is that they can be lost, broken, stolen, outdated, obsolete, ineffective, illusory, or anything else that might prevent you from using them. Monsters, as a general rule, will covet your items, and will happily use them against you if they can get their grubby paws on them.

You'll need to spend gold to purchase items. The bigger the item's modifier, the more it costs. It costs 2 gold per +1 modifier, but you have to buy each level every time you want to raise that modifier. For instance, you can buy a coat which adds a +1 to your This Coat Makes Me Look More Important Than I Am skill for 2 gold. If you want to buy the same Coat but have it add a +2 to your skill, you would have to spend 6 gold: That's 2 gold to make it +1 and an additional 4 gold to make it +2.

That's complicated, so we made a little chart that will help you figure out costs.

Modifier	Breakdown of Cost	Cost
+1	2	2 Gold
+2	2+4	6 Gold
+3	2+4+6	12 Gold
+4	2+4+6+8	20 Gold
+5	2+4+6+8+10	30 Gold

The pattern should be easy to follow after that. Keep in mind that items probably shouldn't go beyond +5 total modifier unless they're legendary items of awesome power.

If you already have an item and you want to make it even better, you'll have to pay gold to do so. That will be covered when we talk about Improving Yourself on page 115.

If you need some inspiration for your item purchases, feel free to consult the short list below. If that's not enough for you, we have a slightly longer list in the Bazaar section of the book.

Item Name	Effect	Cost
10' Pole	Detect Traps (Helps Self +1)	2 Gold
50' of Rope	Rope Climbing (Helps Self +1)	2 Gold
Comfy Suit of Armor	-1 Opponent's Damage	2 Gold
Especially Well-Made Sword	+1 Damage Well Swung Sword (Hurt Others +1)	6 Gold
Impressive Adventurer Threads	+1 Smile	2 Gold
Magic Wand	+2 Damage	6 Gold
Magically Sharp Sword	+2 Damage Well Swung Sword (Hurt Others +1)	12 Gold
Thief's Tools	Locks go Bye-Bye (Helps Self +2) Disarm that Trap! (Helps Self +2)	20 Gold
Spiky Shield	-1 Opponent's Damage Shield Spikes to the Face (Hurt Others +1)	6 Gold

Potions

We can hear the arguments brewing.* Potions in their own section? Aren't they just like every other item? The short answer is that while they're similar to basic items, they have a few extra rules that require some explanation and, by extension, this section.

Potions all have one thing in common: they all start out with an alcoholic base. Sure, an alchemist could use water, but alcohol is better for leaching the magical properties of the other ingredients. Plus, you know, water is full of germs.

Few adventurers have an issue with the "secondary effects" caused by potions made predominantly of booze, but there is an obvious danger. Your potions may heal your wounds and give you special powers, but if you drink too many of them too quickly, you'll be face down in a stupor long before you reach the good part of your dungeon crawl.

*Courtesy of the Potion of Punslinging. Yours for 4 gold!

There are three types of potions, and they're described below.

Healing Potion: These potions are the soothing salve that keep you conscious and keep your gold out of your friends' pockets. Every 2 gold you spend on a healing potion will allow it to restore 3 Fortitude. Unfortunately it also raises your Alcohol Content by 1. This effect is cumulative, so if you spend 4 gold on a healing potion it will heal 6 Fortitude and increase your AC by 2.

For Example:

Mabel has been taking a beating from a giant Vegetable Golem that's ransacking the salad bar of her favourite restaurant. She takes a moment to knock back a healing potion she had stowed in her hat. This potion set her back 6 gold, so it'll heal her 9 Fortitude and increase her Alcohol Content by 3.

Boost Potion: Sometimes, your regular stats just aren't going to cut it. You're not strong enough to tear that gate out of the wall, or you're not charming enough to attract that interesting individual on the other side of the bar. Luckily, there are boost potions that can help! All you have to do is drink one and they'll modify one stat, or give you a specific skill, until the end of the encounter. Every 2 gold you spend increases the modifier by +1 and adds 1 AC.

For Example:

Daphadiana is locked behind a portcullis and her friends are on the other side fighting an Undead Lich Fiend that has been plaguing their steps for the past year. She knows that the Lich can't stand upbeat music. Now if only she could get through the portcullis to aid her friends with a quick tempo theorb number!

She doesn't have enough strength to open up the gate, but she does have a Super Strong Now (6) Potion on her (a bargain at 12 Gold!). She drinks it and her Strength and Alcohol Content both go up by 6. She tears through the gate and begins to rock out!

Magic Potion: This is a catch-all category that covers every other type of potion. Magic potions let you do cool and exciting things, like fly, turn invisible, or shape shift. When you consume a potion, the effect is described by the Bartender, including any bonuses or penalties you might suffer from drinking the potion. Each magical effect costs 4 Gold and raises your Alcohol Content by 2.

For Example:

Stelph opened a chest and found a Potion of Fire Breathing. What a lucky find, especially considering the Ice Elementals in the next room. Smiling, he chugs the potion and begins to belch fire, gaining +3 to his Attack and 2 to his Alcohol Content.

During the battle, Stelph tries to offer some helpful suggestions to Mabel. The Bartender says that Stelph has to make a roll because Mabel might not hear him since he's going to be giving the instructions with a helping of firebreath. This roll will be at a -3 penalty.

It can be hard to come up with your own potions on the fly, so we have provided a small list of them for inspiration. There are more potions in the Bazaar section, as well.

Potion Name	Effect	AC	Cost
Minor Healing Potion	+3 Fortitude	+1 AC	2 Gold
Potion of Avian Elixir	Turns you, but not your Items, into a bird	+2 AC	4 Gold
Potion of Combat Prowess	Gain Skill Super Sword Swinger +2 (Hurt Others)	+2 AC	4 Gold
Potion of Firebreathing	Gain Habit Fire Belcher +3	+2 AC	4 Gold
Potion of Invisibility	Gain Habit You Can't See Me +3	+2 AC	4 Gold
Potion of Keen Awareness	Gain Skill Keen, just like the title, eyesight (Help Self) +2 Can See Invisible Things	+4 AC	8 Gold
Potion of Ogrish Strength	+2 Strength	+2 AC	4 Gold

Paying for Items, Potions and Increases

You can use the 10 gold provided by your Gold stat to buy yourself some Items, Potions or a single stat and/or skill bonus. The cost of a potion is listed above, but to increase a stat or skill by one costs 10 gold.

This bonus can be added to any primary or secondary stat.

Well, That's It!

Now you're ready to go out adventuring! You might want to come up with a name, and a background and a history, but right now you're ready to go forth and brave the elements!

**WAIT! Aren't there Elves and Dwarves in your world?
Can't I play one of those? Please!?**

Sure. Every fantasy kingdom has elves and dwarves kicking around, and Westerly is no different. For the most part, elves and dwarves live insular existences in their own communities, but there are always one or two particularly adventurous specimens willing to travel into the outside world and deal with humans. If you really want to be an elf or a dwarf, that's fine with us.

Elves

Elves are tall, slender, haughty beings with pointed ears. They firmly believe that they are more knowledgeable, more graceful, more elegant, more refined, and more capable than any other creature on the planet. Anything that you can do, an elf has already done better. And then they wrote a poem about it.

They wear their hair long, mostly to show off how shimmery and elegant it is. Elvish hair comes in a wide assortment of colours, usually in the fluorescent spectrum. It has been said that if you see a group of elves from the sky, it looks like a bunch of walking flowers. If an elven child is born with brown or blond hair the other elves will quickly use magic to make sure that their hair becomes as chromatic as everyone else's.

Playing an elf provides no statistical bonus whatsoever. You will start with the same points as a human character. You're still better than they are, though, because you're an elf. Trust us.

Dwarves

Dwarves are squat, solid people who stand about three feet in height. They are as sturdy and immovable as the rocky depths in which they live, both physically and mentally. It is said that once a Dwarf has decided how to feel about something, that's how they feel about it for pretty much the rest of their lives unless something really earth-shattering happens.

Unfortunately, dwarves tend to default to feeling rather negatively toward anyone who is not a dwarf or any object not of dwarven make. To make matters worse, if you are lucky enough to get a dwarf to think

highly of you, it only takes one or two missteps before they start to view you with suspicion. Conversely, if they think you're incompetent, it takes years of exemplary performance in order for that opinion to shift.

Dwarves, like elves, believe that they are superior to all the other races. Unlike elves, they don't feel the need to talk about how awesome they are. Anyone who looks at anything made by dwarves can easily see that they are superior, which is why dwarven crafts are so highly prized.

Unlike elves, dwarves believe in simple, sturdy things. Dwarven hair colour comes in all sorts of shades, so long as it's brown. Any dwarf with different colour hair either learns to like hats or is very quickly ostracized and exiled from the Dwarven city they call their home.

Being a Dwarf provides no statistical bonus whatsoever to the game. You will start with the same points as a human character. You don't need a numerical advantage, though. You can still briskly walk rings around them.

*as a quick note, this is where the Creative Commons - BY-SA license ends. Everything after this is BY-SA-NC. until we get to the rules, but we'll let you know when the license shifts again.

Character Creation Summary

1. Spend your **twelve (12) points** on your Primary Stats. **One (1)** is the minimum that needs to be in each Stat while **six (6)** is the maximum in any stat. The average is **three (3)**.

Strength: How strong and tough you are

Smarts: Intelligence and intuitiveness

Sneak: How agile and stealthy you are

Smile: How charming and likeable you are

2. Fill out your Secondary Stats.

Fortitude starts at **twenty (20)**.

Damage starts at **two (2)**.

AC starts at **zero (0)**.

Gold starts at **ten(10)**.

3. Spend your **six (6)** points on your Skills. The maximum a Skill can be is **three (3)**.

Skills can be named anything you want, but fall into one of four categories.

Help Self - Skills that will only help you

Help Others - Skills that will help a group of people
(you can be included in this group)

Hurt Others - Skills that will hurt other people

Cheat - Skills that break all the rules

4. Spend your **three (3)** points on your Habits. The maximum a Habit can be is **three (3)**. You can name a Habit anything you like. You also get the Habit **Gotta Get the Gold (3)** for free.

5. Spend your **ten (10)** Gold on Items, Potions or One Extra Skill Point or Stat Point.

Items cost two (2) Gold per +1 Bonus and every extra +1 bonus must buy all the previous levels as well.

Healing Potions cost **two (2)** Gold per 3 Fortitude they heal

Boost Potions cost 2 Gold per +1 Bonus

Magic Potions cost 4 Gold per Effect

Increasing a Skill or Stat by one (1) costs ten (10) gold.

6. Pick a race, if you have to. The three races are Human, Elves and Dwarves. There is no particular bonus if you pick Elf or Dwarf

Chapter 2

Our Wandering Heroes

or a rather odd collection of riff-raff and rabble

Because we know some people are impatient, we have a set of adventurers ready for you to copy and explore the world of *Critical! Go Westerly* with. These characters have their own background, their own character sheet and even their own name and are a great option if you don't feel like doing all that Character Creation stuff, or even if you as the Bartender want to insert them into your game. Feel free to use them, that's what they are there for.



Tara the Raging

Tara grew up in the small city of Tam and aspired to be the best graduate to come out of the Gwendolyn School of Advanced Swordplay and Cookery. This was her goal, stated at the tender age of five, and she would not deviate from it or tolerate anyone who got in her way. She started her days shopping in the market with her mother, learning the art of discerning good food from bad, and then practising her swordplay in the backyard on her brothers. She spent the rest of her time with her father in the kitchen, cooking up the family's evening meal. Whenever anyone tried to leave her at home, or didn't want to play with her, or didn't let her cook, she would rail against whoever got in her way until they relented. This caused her to be able to quickly understand the picking of produce, the cooking of food, and the causing of bruises. In fact, she excelled to such a great degree that the Gwendolyn School of Advanced Swordplay and Cookery allowed her early entry, a rare exception to the minimum age requirement.

At fifteen she was considered a top notch cook, and a brilliant fighter. However, she wasn't at the top of her class. Whenever her opponents were able to make her angry, she would lose concentration and end up losing the competition, be it swordplay or cooking. This is how she got the moniker Tara the Raging. Soon every student was made aware of this weakness and they did their best to exploit it. They knew that they couldn't beat her on their own, that this was the only way to win. It didn't always work, she was still excellent at using both the whisk and the sword, and more often than not she did more damage than was considered proper when enraged. One day, in her sixteenth year, she maimed a student who had called her finer virtues into question. She hurt him so badly that he was unable to continue in the program. That's when Gwendolyn the Sixteenth had to expel her from the school on the basis that Tara simply couldn't handle the pressure of being in that environment.



Tara swore at them and promised that she would show Gwendolyn the Sixteenth how wrong she was in expelling her. She knew that she could handle whatever life threw at her, and do it better than the rest of

the losers who were still at the school. Buckling on her sword belt and packing her fine collection of boning knives, she set out to learn through experience. She traveled the realm trading her cooking skills for money until she was able to purchase a proper set of adventuring gear. It was a long hot road, with many days spent head deep in the bowels of a tavern kitchen feeling like she was sous-chefing her very existence away. One day, when making sure the casks of wine were able to be served, she felt the need for another glass. Eventually this led to her drinking at the Taverns she worked for. Originally it was because she was trying to increase her knowledge of fine wines and ales. Then it was because that's what everyone else was doing at the Taverns. With every drink, her new kit seemed further and further away.

During her nineteenth year, when she had a bigger reputation as a drinker than a fighter or cook, she ran into some old classmates of hers. She wasn't happy to see them, but they were more than happy to flaunt their credentials and good deeds in her face. They said she was nothing but a poor under-cook and a drunkard, and Tara being Tara yelled at them and told them that none of them could hold a candle to her skills. They dared her to go after an evil Lich that was terrorizing the local populace. The evil Lich Malcoom Sheepsheer, a wizard so foul that he was known for being able to cut warriors down with both words and spells. Apparently, he had released his latest masterpiece, a spell that incapacitated his opponents with nausea.

Finishing her third Firebreath Ale, Tara grabbed her rusty sword and ran out of the White Griffon Tavern. Her old classmates chased after her, since they didn't want to be responsible for her death. However, she slipped past them as they stumbled about in the dark, and made her way to the Lich's lair. When she arrived, the Lich laughed at her pathetic weapon and cast his nauseating spell. He wanted to watch her writhe on the ground, dry heaving, before he killed her and sent her body back to the city as a warning. Unfortunately for Malcoom, the alcohol content of Fiona's blood allowed her to ignore the nausea created by the spell. Besides, as a seasoned drinker, she had felt like this many times before, and each time had managed to get her sword to stick into the correct people. Much to Malcoom's surprise, she cut him down before he had time to raise any actual defenses.

She returned from the Mountain no worse for wear and received a hero's welcome from the village. From that day forth, Tara went on to do more noble deeds. She managed to out drink the Thundering Troll of the Burning Bridge and forced him to leave him home. She out cooked Harold Garvey, the harshest taskmaster to ever hold a whisk. She even out dueled Sir Hastings Hasterlot to win the coveted Gelder prize. Because of these victories, no one bothers her when she asks for that extra belt of liquid courage. The cost of this constant refilling has caused Tara to spend more gold than she usually wins.

Name: Tara the Raging

Stats

Strength	5	Damage	2			
Smarts	2	AC	0			
Sneak	2	Fortitude	20			
Smile	5	Gold	0			

Skills

Unmatched Swordfighter (Hurt Others + 2)
Big Time Drinker (Help You + 2)
Super Cook (Help Others + 2)

Habits

Gotta Get the Gold (3)
I Smell Booze! (2)
What Did You Call Me? (1)

Items

Sword of Super Strength (+1 Damage)
Hefty Armor (+1 to Defense)
Liquid Courage Antidote (Healing Potion, +3 Fortitude, +1 AC)

Barnabas Ramsey, Wizard

Barnabas Ramsey is a wizard, but you wouldn't know it to see him. He wears normal browns and greens, rather than the fancy colours that most other wizards tend to favour. He's avoided the slight bulge that most wizards get in their middle-age with all the sitting and pondering about their homes. He's really a nondescript, middle-aged man with a neatly-trimmed beard who dresses more like a banker than a wizard. He's never worn a pointy hat in his life, thinks a decent pair of pants is more practical than even the most voluminous robe, and if he were to have a magic wand, it would be of the most plain and practical sort.

Barnabas has spent the last thirty years of his life in The Wizardry, the premiere magical school in all of Westerly. Unlike most apprentices, Barnabas did not have time for drinking, carousing, playing games, talking to people, or having fun. School was serious business, and deserved to be treated as such. When he wasn't in the library, he was either in his room studying or in the cafeteria, sitting by himself and eating the unsalted gruel that was well suited for his delicate stomach.

Through his many, many years as a student, his teachers found Barnabas to be an accomplished, if unimaginative student. His classmates thought that he was stuffy and a bit obnoxious. Given the chance, Barnabas would lecture them at length about their flashy showmanship and gaudy attire. Magic, he would explain, is serious business--a complicated discipline that demands perfection and dedication. Its practitioners should be thoughtful and focused, not hyperkinetic tricksters that blast everything they see with fireballs and arcane frippery.

Now that he has finally taken all the courses that he can at the Wizardry, and has graduated -to the joy of his professors and fellow students- Barnabas has gone out into the world looking for work. He has found employ in several adventuring parties, and his compatriots, much like his former classmates, have found him to be smart, competent, and an extremely talented wizard. All that and an insufferable pedant. This is largely because Barnabas finds the world that he inhabits to be a far more ridiculous place than he would like. He tends to pepper any dungeon delve he's on with commentary like the following: "Wait, wait! There's an ebon drake, two skeletons, a goblin, and a scizor giant in this room together? The doors aren't big enough for them to get in here! Where do they sleep? Where does their food come from? What are they doing here? Shouldn't they be at one another's throats? What do they do to entertain themselves? There's not even a deck of cards in the place!" Unfortunately for Barnabas, whatever he is questioning is more than happy to explain to him why things are working out the way they are.

Barnabas' true goal is to get back into the Wizardry and become one of those exalted professors who get to drone on at length about what they feel is important with magic. To do that, he has to do something magically extraordinary and he just doesn't have the imagination for that. He's hoping that his book will suffice. He has filled it with the information he has received from the Monsters and People he has questioned during his adventures. He is not a good writer, since the things he thinks are frivolous are the things that make for a good story. He is hoping that it will be a wonderful research tool for Wizards in the Wild.

If only he could take the time out during a combat to write down what he's been told. However, that is far too silly.



Name: Barnabus Ramsey, the Wizard

Stats

Strength	2	Damage	2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Smarts	6	AC	0	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sneak	3	Fortitude	20	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Smile	1	Gold	8	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Skills

Magic Missiles, Fireballs, Lightning Bolts, etc. (Hurt Others + 2)
A Wide Assortment of Practical Magical Spells (Cheating + 3)
Oh, I Read About This Somewhere... (Help You + 1)

Habits

Gotta Get the Gold (3)
Stop, Stop, You're Being Too Silly (2)
Not Particularly Exciting (1)

Items

Boring Magical Defense Ring (+1 to Defense)

Mabel Hood, Singing Pirate

Some people are born with a destiny. Others spend their lives trying to find out what their destiny is and how they can achieve it. A fortunate few have their destiny fall into their lap. Mabel Hood is one such person. As a child she had already resigned herself to a boring little life, on a boring little island, doing boring everyday things in the insignificant Archipelago of Outremere. She was born to a wealthy local merchant who ran the island in all but name and was raised to be a prim and proper lady. The type of lady that wore uncomfortable dresses, spoke demurely when spoken to, didn't sing, didn't drink, and would be happy to dutifully inherit the family oyster shucking business. Mabel did her best to try to comply with the wishes of the family, and many of the island residents, even though she secretly hoped that there was far more to life.

This is why she was rather excited when the pirates attacked her island. Not that she didn't have some fear, she did come from a wealthy family and no one likes to be kidnapped, or killed, by pirates. No one likes to watch their family getting carted off into slavery by pirates. No one even likes watching pirates set fire to things, well, other than other pirates. None the less, it was an exciting time. Especially when Mabel discovered that these pirates were quite different.

The standard pirate has the look of someone who clearly has been at sea for far too long and is in dire need of a bath. They're missing teeth and in the early stages of scurvy. Their clothes are in tatters and their weapons are usually in need of heavy repair. These pirates were different in that they were all quite attractive, had bathed recently and were in possession of all their teeth. They dressed immaculately and did battle with their rapier-like wits rather than messing about with a notched and beat up cutlass. They broke the islander's spirits with their tongues within minutes, there was even a song involved in the process. They didn't kill anyone, though they did loot all the fancy things that they could find.

Mabel watched them work and marveled at their skill and mastery. Oh, to be a singing pirate, free and fearsome! To dress in flashy, impractical clothes, to sing loudly and to mock the shortcomings of one's enemies in verse! This was the life she wanted. This was the life she was going to have.

With great determination, Mable made her way down to the docks while her family cowered under their beds. She demanded that she be let on board and declared that she was going to one day captain that ship. The captain, a jolly sort of fellow, enjoyed her brashness and allowed her aboard, and she joined the crew without an audition. Quickly they were off and Mable set forth on her spirited musical adventures on the high seas.

These days were cut short when Mabel and her mates ran afoul of some scurrilous pirates. They burned the ship, shot whoever they could find and looted the hold. As the ship burned down, Mable escaped on a life boat and made her way to the coast of Westerly. She decided that she was going to have to learn some of the more practical aspects of adventuring, the better to defend herself on future maritime journeys. So far things have gone well, and she's been able to use her new found ability to talk to people, loudly and boastfully, to get what she wants. Her silver tongue has managed to get her and whoever she is adventuring with out of trouble.

Her inability to stay quiet has gotten them in even more trouble.



Name: Mabel Hood, Singing Pirate

Stats

Strength

3

Damage

2

Smarts

2

AC

0

Sneak

1

Fortitude

20

Smile

6

Gold

8

Skills

Swashbucklery! (Hurt Others + 1)

Dazzle Friend and Foe with Linguistic Gymnastics (Cheats + 2)

Dress Impeccably for All Occasions! (Help You + 2)

Nautical Knowledge (Help Others + 1)

Habits

Gotta Get the Gold (3)

Spontaneously Burst Into Song (3)

Items

New Sword (+1 Swashbucklery!)

Marten Iij, Thief Priest

The Gods of this land do not have names, they have titles. These titles are short, to the point, and encapsulate just about everything you would want to know about the deity. They will tell you what the Gods like, what they don't like and what sort of people you will find who are interested in serving as a member of their clergy. For instance, The Warrior is the Goddess of Fighting. Her Priests, when they're not fighting people, like to talk about how much they wish they were fighting people. Priests of the Gourmand talk about the Festival they just recently attended while they're planning their next large meal.

With that image in mind, it is easy to assume that the sort of person who becomes a priest of The Thief would like to skulk around in dark cloaks, get into trouble, and steal Gold and other valuables from merchants and adventurers. They would tithe a section of their ill gotten gains to their goddess, and there would be lots of impromptu meetings in dark corners and hastily whispered words around candles and hooded lamps.

This is mostly true. However, Marten Iij runs completely counter to this image. He feels that there are many different ways that The Thief can be honored and he wants to do it a different way. Ever since he was a child growing up in the Gristle of Ovestgaard he knew that the way that most other Members of Her Glorious Shadow acted was a little bit obvious. He felt that there was a better way, for him, to honor her glory but he just didn't know how. Then, while walking past the White Griffon Tavern he heard a couple of adventurers talking about all the traps that they find in the dungeons and how annoying it was that any people they hired to deal with them were so quiet and aloof, making it difficult to trust them. He decided then and there that no one would ever say these things about him.

That's why Marten wears a loud doublet and ostentatious hat over close-fitting, understated black clothing. If he's in a Tavern, you'll find him in the middle of the room, downing a few pints and laughing with friends rather than nursing the cheapest ale in a shadowy corner. He's a practitioner of all the Most Holy Rites of The Thief, as detailed in the Mouser 3:16-42, but insists that he'll never use those skills on someone who doesn't deserve it. He reserves the right to judge if someone deserves it. So far, The Thief hasn't given him any reason to doubt his ability to detect the guilty, freeing him to lighten their purses.

Marten prefers to use his many skills to further his lust for a life of adventure! He finds the idea of sneaking around in dungeons, dodging deadly traps, and prying eyes out of idols much more satisfying than breaking into people's houses or blackjacking local merchants as they walk home from the Marketplace. Many orthodox members of his faith find his good-natured and more "noble" thievery to be more than

a bit blasphemous, but Marten has found some acceptance with the mellower and more adventure-oriented Reform sect of his faith.

Marten is much beloved by anyone who has adventured with him for any length of time. “He stood behind me for two hours, and didn’t stab me once!” said a wizard to a companion as they drank with Marten at the White Griffon. Another companion, a warrior, marveled, “He found my Magick Sword at the bottom of the ravine and he gave it back to me. He didn’t even try to ransom it away or anything!” He constantly gets these glowing endorsements from his previous comrades, which means he should be adventuring for a long time.



Name: Marten Iij, Thief Priest

Stats

Strength	1	Damage	2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Smarts	3	AC	0	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sneak	6	Fortitude	20	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Smile	2	Gold	2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Skills

Fearlessly Mess Around with Locks and Other Dangerous Devices
(Help You + 2)

Fencing (the Sword Kind, Not the Selling Kind) (Hurt Others + 1)

The Luck of the Goddess (Cheating + 2)

A Reading from the Book of Mouser (Help You + 1)

Habits

Gotta Get the Gold (3)

Thievery of the Most Gentlemanly Sort (3)

Items

Rapier (+1 Fencing (The Sword King, Not the Selling Kind))

Set of Thieves' Tools (+2 Fearlessly Mess Around with Locks and Other Dangerous Devices)

Angelique Doto, Quillsman

There have been many names associate with the game of Quill. Graham “Troll Skin” Maldonado was considered by most to be the toughest individual to ever play the game. He seemed to be unfazed by the quills coming out of the Quill and would run at top speed towards the goal. Many of the other players weren’t used to people running with his speed and strength and he would break tackles left and right. “Vicious” Annie Faulkner who was known as the most dangerous player ever to toss a Quill. She was the innovator of using the Quill as an offensive weapon, where she would intentionally lose possession of the Quill to take out the opponent’s best player. Finally, there is Oscar “Goal” Ellison who is known for scoring the most points in Quill history. However, they are all old news. The most current player that captured the imagination of the nation was Angelique “The Wizard of Quill” Doto.

Angelique comes out of the smaller village of Northern Zakid, where she grew up watching the sport and practicing with whoever and whatever she could. She would go into the Three Foot Range and insult the first monster she could find so she could try to outrun it. She would practice her Quill skills everywhere and anywhere, much to the dismay of fruit vendors, bakers, and numerous other merchants and villagers. She would show up to all the Armory games and as many of the open practices that she could. That sort of dedication was noticed. That led to her being drafted by Armory. It didn’t take long for her to have an impact on the team. She won the rookie of the year trophy as she led the team all the way to the finals. Then she took the team to the Quill Cup in 784, 785, 786 and 790. This was the first time there was a three-peat champion. She earned her nickname, “The Wizard of Quill,” from her ability to make the Quill ball do things most other players couldn’t. She had a great understanding of the intricacies of the game and was able to get the quills to either stay put or extend whenever she wanted to. It was a skill that was loved by her teammates and feared by her opponents.

Alas, Quill players have notoriously short careers, and Angelique was no different. In early 793, during a match with the Mauve Wings, she suffered a pierced lung, a ruptured aorta, and a bruised clavicle after the ball fell on her from a great height. It was called a foul, since air balls are notoriously difficult to dodge, and the player was suspended for the rest of the season, but the damage was done. The Armory fans watched in horror as their Wizard was taken off the field on a stretcher. She spent months trying to recover from her wounds and return to the game and the team that she loved, but her injury proved to be too great and she spent the rest of the year on the shelf as Armory placed just outside of the playoffs for the first time in over a decade. Eventually she did recover from her injuries, but she was never really the same player after that. She kept trying to push herself to prove that she was

fine, keeping the ball a little longer than she should, or making passes that were just a little bit on the hard side. That year Armory ended up in last place and she decided that it was time to hang up her shoes and put the Quill down. She retired as a hero and penniless, since she constantly took smaller contracts to keep playing with her favorite team. No one seemed to notice how quickly Angelique had to sell many of her trophies and her memorabilia to make ends meet. It got so bad that eventually she had to sell her house and travel.

Because of her financial woes, Angelique decided that she was going to recapture the imagination of the nation doing something that was just as dangerous as Quill and far more lucrative.

Dungeon delving.



Name: Angelique Doto, Quillsman

Stats

Strength

5

Damage

2



Smarts

3

AC

0



Sneak

2

Fortitude

20



Smile

2

Gold

10



Skills

Dodge Sharp or Otherwise Dangerous Things (Help You + 2)

The Wizard of the Quill (Hurt Other + 2)

All-Around Athlete (Help You + 2)

Habits

Gotta Get the Gold (3)

Adrenaline Junkie (2)

High Pain Tolerance (1)

Items

None - Nothing - Nada - Zip

Daphadiana, the Nice Bard

Suffering is the crucible of truly great art. The creations forged through the fires of adversity are the ones that survive the weight of the ages. This is the philosophy of Mr. Scale, of the Scale Schoole of Musicology in Ovestgaard. Aspiring bards who attend his Schoole are known throughout the kingdom, usually well beyond their death. That's why the auditions to get in are so arduous that there are frequently fights that break out between parents in the stands, just so that they can get those couple of extra bars for their child. They understand what's at stake.

Daphadiana would attend the auditions every year and be amazed at all the music that was being made by these young people. She didn't really notice the fighting that was happening around her, all she knew was that she wanted to be playing the music for as long as she possibly could. She waited patiently, practicing in all of her free time, until finally she was old enough to try out and try out she did.

During her audition, two things got her through. The first was that she had spent the better part of everyday practicing so that she was rather good with her musical instrument. The second was that she was so nice to all the other competitors and their parents that they felt bad trying to out muscle her. Her goal was just to be herself, who it should be noted is a really nice person who thinks the best of people all the time, and get into the school. She barely noted the levels of unapologetic jackassery that went on around her. After her audition piece Mr. Scale looked rather bemused that no one had tried to interrupt her, despite the fact that she had gone over time.

Once inside the school, Daph as her friends call her, found herself in an ensemble for the first time and learning how to play with a group of people. It was a new experience to her, but she found out that she loved it greatly and her ensemble loved her. Not only was Daph an excellent player, but she was willing to play in a support role as well as a lead role which a lot of other ensembles were having problems with. She was such an inspiration that the rest of the ensemble did what was best for the piece and not for themselves. It made them the front runners to graduate from the school.

They might as well have painted a bullseye on their back and handed the rest of the school crossbows.

Things got very nasty very quickly. Daph had to fend off several bands of armed assailants in the quad. The lyrist found all her strings cut into useless one inch lengths. The Bodhran player woke up one morning to find his shattered drum tucked into bed with him. That was just the beginning.

As the attacks on them grew more and more intense, Daph's bandmates started to get frustrated with her because she didn't seem to want to be "playing the Scales".

She dropped out of the Schoole before the end of the year. Made a bit bitter and a bit wiser by her experience, Daph now wanders the world as an adventuring bard. She hopes that she can gain enough experience at dungeon delving to "toughen up," so that she can better weather the depredations of the Schoole. She still plans to graduate by focusing on her talent, but woe betide anyone who tries to mess with her after she's crawled around in caves under the earth.



Name: Daphadiana, The Very Nice Bard

Stats

Strength

2

Damage

2



Smarts

3

AC

0



Sneak

2

Fortitude

20



Smile

5

Gold

4



Skills

Shred on the Theorbo (or Other Stringed Instrument) (Help Others + 3)

Improvised Percussion (Hurt Others + 1)

I'm Really Nice! No, Really! (Help You + 2)

Habits

Gotta Get the Gold (3)

Thinks the Best of People (1)

Music Lover (2)

Items

Theorbo (+1 Attack, +1 Defense)

Urist Axebeard, the Dwarf

The Warrior decreed that all creatures that live in the Mountains should be organized by height. Dwarves, unfortunately, were included in this grouping since they were beings that dwelled in the mountains. Dwarves traditionally occupied land that was now home to creatures six feet tall. Thankfully Dwarves found a loophole that allowed them to stay where they were. Through a series of tunnels they extended the opening of Mendelbaldean into the three foot range. They are contented to keep toiling away in their Clan Halls at their forges, or slaughtering the various monsters with their well-made battleaxes.

Urist was just like any other Dwarf child who grew up in Mendelbaldean, eager to make things and crush heads. It was only after puberty hit that he realized that the simple life of a Dwarf living in the Razorback Mountains would forever elude him.

Urist was too damn tall.

In the divinely regimented lands of the Razorback Mountains, Size Matters. It determines where you can live, and with the Dwarves having thwarted the will of The Warrior once already they weren't keen on giving that Goddess any ammunition against them. The clan elders muttered that he wasn't really a Dwarf anymore, being too damned tall, and his standing in Dwarven society suffered as a result. They muttered that he should probably go live with his soul family --which were obviously humans-- rather than his birth family, and that he might be happier with like-heighted beings. There was much fighting between Urist and his family and the Elders, however with each passing day the Elders were worried that they were going to get a visit from the Priests of The Warrior, and they would have to find another legal loophole for them to exploit to keep Mendelbaldean where it was.

Frustrated with the fact that did he not have any clothes that fit him properly and nothing in Dwarven society was made for his height, he packed his few Dwarvish possessions, put his ax over his shoulder and left. It was a hard day for his family, and the Elders didn't feel very good about themselves but no one stopped Urist from leaving.

After he left, he went around looking for a place to belong. He tried to make his own stone dwelling, but he didn't bring the proper tools and he couldn't go back and ask for some. He tried to make friends with the Orcs in the area, but they all fled at the sight of a Dwarf or tried to kill him for trespassing on their lands.

Dejected and homeless, Urist left the Razorback Mountains and traveled into Westerley proper. Though he finds that most humans are quiet annoying and irritate his Dwarvish sensibilities, he is pleased to be able to have some place to call a home. He finds that humans don't judge him on the basis of size, but on how well he can swing his ax. He's very capable of swinging his ax, so he's been able to carve out a nice niche for himself with adventurers. Despite his popularity, he does long for the buttressed cave ceilings of Mendelbaldean.



Name: Urist Axebeard, The Dwarf

Stats

Strength

5

Damage

2

Smarts

2

AC

0

Sneak

3

Fortitude

20

Smile

2

Gold

2

Skills

Extremely Detailed Knowledge of Stone and Stone Masonry (Help You + 3)

You've Never Met an Axe You Couldn't Use to Kill Something (Hurt Others + 2)

Discern the Monetary Value of Items (Help You + 1)

Habits

Gotta Get the Gold (3)

About as Likely to be Affected by Magic as Your Average Rock (2)

Pretty Tall, for a Dwarf (1)

Items

The Dwarven Axe Koganusân (+1 You've Never Met ..., +1 Damage)

Steel Helmet (+1 Defense)

Mary, the Wench

Mary has spent all her life rubbing elbows with the lower classes. Several generations of Mary's family have been patrons of the White Griffon Tavern franchise, and it is no surprise that Mary is a long-time employee of the local establishment. She's a tough, hard-working individual with a keen intellect and two heaping fistfuls of common sense. She's been around adventurers her entire life, and while she finds the tales of fortune and glory to be exciting she'd much rather be in a civilized tavern with food and adequate lighting instead of some dark dank cave surrounded by monsters.

Despite being a 'civilian,' Mary has earned the respect and admiration of all the long-time patrons of the White Griffon Tavern through her even temperament, no-nonsense attitude, and biting sarcasm. She's heard all the tales, and can tell you what you did wrong with any adventure because she people who have already made that mistake or worse. Very few adventurers have fallen pray to bad advice from Mary. New and inexperienced adventurers who see Mary as nothing more than the "hired help" or, even worse, a shrinking, giggly girl that will be impressed with their empty bravado and pushy attitude, find themselves skewered on the end of her wit or, worse, tossed out of the White Griffon on their ear.

There have been rare occasions when Mary has been called into service to defend her tavern and her town. She once helped hold off a gang of bandits for two weeks, armed with nothing but a paring knife and a cast-iron frying pan. One time, though she doesn't like to mention it, she even went into an actual dungeon, to help a party of adventurers recover the Inn's cauldron, stolen by a group of hungry Kobolds.

Her previous forays occasionally embolden her adventurer patrons, who try to cajole her into joining them in their dungeon delves with promises of vast wealth and early retirement. Most of the time, she just puts them off. Then one day, the owner of the local White Griffon Tavern told Mary that he needed her to go out and get her some rare herbs. She would pay her handsomely for doing so. Mary, grumbling about how it would have been easier to just hire adventurers to do it, went out and managed to find the rare herb and along the way defeated the evil Warlord G'nomut who was busy planning an invasion of Westerly.

Now, when an adventurer is asked for, the owner of the White Griffon just sends Mary on an errand for something the Tavern needs and lacks at the moment. Mary grumbles about it, but people are always ready to help out if she asks for it or are willing to hear the stories that she tells when she comes back.

Name: Mary, The Wench

Stats

Strength

2

Damage

2



Smarts

5

AC

0



Sneak

2

Fortitude

20



Smile

3

Gold

4



Skills

Associates Degree, Gwendolyn School of Advanced Swordplay and
Cooking(Correspondence courses) (Hurt Others + 1)

The Endurance to Work Twelve Hours Straight. On Her Feet. In a
Corset. (Help You + 1)

Managerial Skills and Delegation (Cheating + 1)

Use Common Sense (Help You + 3)

Habits

Gotta Get the Gold (3)

Pretty Sarcastic (1)

Self-Reliant and Self-Rescuing (1)

Let's Look at Things Rationally (1)

Items

Trusty Fry Pan (+1 Associate Degree, GSSC, +1 Damage)

Stelph, the Elf

The Elves of the Forest of Bigue have decided long ago that they are better than everyone else. It's not just that they've got more patience and knowledge than the rest of the races. It doesn't help that they're just that much prettier than the rest. Some elves feel that they're so much better they should just be their own kingdom and separate from Westerly. Others just want to keep to themselves. Stelph feels that it's his job to help educate the lesser races, to improve them so that one day, eventually, they might be able to better themselves. Of course they would never be as good as the elves, but it never hurts to help others along. Stelph, despite being tall and pretty with the physique of a thirteen-year-old human boy, is only ninety-five. This may be old for humans, but he is quite young for an elf. He tends to lie about his age to other elves he meets in the hopes that they think he is a lot wiser and more experienced than he really is.

Stelph decided quite early in his life, around the age of fifty, that he would go out and bring a new golden age to the lesser races. To achieve that he focused on his lessons in nature magic, becoming quite proficient at the magic of the trees and of the plants. He also picked up the powerful combat skills needed for the practice of *lifwiinjiii*, which is the ancient Elven art of Sword and Bow but not at the same time. While his teachers gave praise, Stelph still didn't feel quite comfortable around his own race.

Despite his insecurity about measuring up to members of his own kind, Stelph doesn't have any of this anxiety while dealing with the other races. That's why he's more than happy to lend his expertise to various adventuring parties. He frequents the bars and taverns of Westerly, which are never as good as the Elven Inns back in Indius, looking for adventuring parties that are missing a member or two. His bright orange, long flowing locks tend to draw a lot of looks to the group, which helps them feel like they're dealing with someone who has a lot of proficiency with dealing with dungeons. When they travel and adventure, he can often be heard in the din of battle, shouting encouragement and giving pointers to his companions. Many a dungeon delver has had his spirit buoyed up by a cry of, "oh no, your finger positioning is all wrong! Watch me! Do it like this!" or, "that was a perfectly adequate attempt at a parry in fourth! Too bad your iron sword is so heavy and crudely made!"

When not in the dungeon, Stelph helps educate his companions on the finer things in life. As an ambassador of Indius he feel that people should be made aware that the only good wine is elven wine, and that the only music that's worth listening to is lyre music. His tips on how to travel like an elf, which means anything from putting up your tents properly to packing your bags properly to dealing with the proper way to have a campfire. Being so incredibly helpful, Stelph has been quite the popular fellow. He's joined thirty adventuring parties over the past two years, each one better off than they were before he joined them.



Name: Stelph, the Elf

Stats

Strength	2	Damage	2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Smarts	3	AC	0	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sneak	5	Fortitude	20	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Smile	2	Gold	4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Skills

Move Effortlessly and Silently Through Nature (Especially Treetops)
(Help You + 2)

lifwiinjii, the Elvish Art of the Bow and Sword (Not at the Same Time)
(Hurt Others + 2)

Nature-Based Magic (Cheating + 1)

Extremely Acute Elvish Senses (Help You + 1)

Habits

Gotta Get the Gold (3)

Can I offer you a Helpful Suggestion (2)

Self-Reliant and Self-Rescuing (1)

Insecure and Stammering around Other Elves (1)

Items

Elvish Bow (+1 lifwiinjii, The Elvish Art of the Bow and Sword ...)

Elvish Sword of Great Antiquity (+1 lifwiinjii, The Elvish Art of ...)

Name: _____

Stats

Strength



Damage



Smarts



AC



Sneak



Fortitude



Smile



Gold



Skills

Habits

Items

Chapter 3

The Places You Will See

where we discover history and geography colliding

The Ocean

The Ocean is a wide expanse of water that covers the western and southern sides of the Kingdom. It continues north beyond the Razorback Mountains and touches several parts of the Eastern Empire. The Ocean is wide and expansive and no one has managed to come back from any voyage to the other side. This may be because of the various monsters that are rumoured to live within the deep, dark depths of The Ocean. The few people who say that they know what exists on the other side are often drunk, and always scoffed at.

There are a group of islands, the Archipelago of Outremere, located just off the western tip of Westerly. While they are officially recognized as part of the Kingdom, they are lawless, and often don't recognise the rule of Westerly.

The Kingdom of Westerly

As the famed elven historian, Kwimbitz the Sage, has remarked: Westerly is interesting, provided you're a Westerlian. Much of this has to do with its location. Nestled between the Ocean, a mountain range teeming with monsters, and a really nasty swamp, Westerly is pretty hard to enter. This is also the big reason why most Westerlians are content to remain within their kingdom's borders for their entire lives. This has left Westerly pretty insular, and many folks don't really know, or care, what goes on outside its borders.

Some Westerlians who live on the edges of Westerly have a better understanding of the people that live next to them. The people who live in the east can find out about what goes on in the Eastern Empire, and anyone who lives on the western shores will likely get news of the Archipelago. Those in the southern or central regions are usually so embroiled in their own problems that they rarely pay attention to anyone else, except to complain that the rest of the Kingdom annoys them.

The Kingdom of Westerly has been ruled over by the Stout Family for many generations, and is currently governed by the Stout King, Port Liiam. There have been many good Stouts, and a few poor Stouts, but the current crop has been at best indifferent. For as long as they have been in power, these Stouts have worked very hard to increase their own fortunes, giving little thought or effort to anything else.

Despite this, there are plenty of people who simply adore their monarchs, and are willing to overlook what can be considered minor transgressions, as long as it doesn't interfere too much with their status. Unfortunately, there are those who are less fond of the Status Quo, especially in the outlying duchies. Sure, they say, having rulers that don't get in your way is a good thing, but rulers that think it's okay to sit back and watch their own coffers grow at the expense of their fellow nobles is simply unfair.

The discontent in the outlying duchies is only kept in check by the strong Dukes. If the Dukes fall or change their minds, the Stout King could have some problems.

The Duchy of Ovest

The Duchy of Ovest is the most important duchy in the Kingdom. Not only is it the seat of the ruling Stout family and home to the capitol, but it is comprised of several hundred square hectaroos of fruit orchards, rolling hills, grasslands and rich farm fields. The Duchy provides fine foods to the rest of the Kingdom and abroad, and stretches along the western edge of the Kingdom and hogs all of the available coastline. Ovest views all the other Duchies as their grubby and unwashed cousins who lack such necessities as beaches, luxury goods, and basic social skills. They are happy to take pity upon their more backward neighbours and regale them with tales of the "Big City" and "civilization."

Citizens from Zakhid and Perendimi both tolerate and foster the Ovestian feeling of superiority. Mostly because it is far easier to get someone to part with their money if they think that you're a forest-dwelling simpleton who has never seen silk clothing or a restaurant before.

The main city of Ovest, properly named Ovestgaard, is the largest city in Westerly. It serves as both the capitol of the nation and the seat for the Duke of Westerly. Port Liam rules here as King, and Brian Stout, his third cousin (once removed), reigns as Duke. Brian Stout holds his title because the King and Queen (Her Esteemed Majesty, Elizabeth Porquehoff) do not have any heirs.

That there are no direct heirs to the Throne is troubling, but rumors of Brian's deranged mental state make native Ovestians even more nervous. Brian frequently demands that the Stout Guard--the ducal troops--arrest anyone he doesn't like and behead those he has decreed to be "stinkyfaces."

The Duke's bloodthirsty personality can be blamed, in part, upon the old tales that he particularly enjoys about the dark, ancient days of Ovest, when assassins garroted nobles in their homes and the streets ran red with commoner blood. Many are concerned that Duke Brian's preoccupation with this darker period in history may put an end to the many generations of peace in Westerly and plunge the nation into bitter civil war.

Duke Brian's ministers and counselors are less concerned, however. They firmly believe that His Grace's violent mood swings and unpleasant temperament are due in no small part to his overindulgence in sugary sweets combined with the simple fact that he is a five-year-old

boy. Aaron Baaldergast, the Duke's Minister of State, is confident that his lord will one day grow up and leave his violent tendencies behind. Until then, if the Duke gets carried away, it is always within his ministers' purview to send him to his room without supper.



The City of Ovestgaard

Ovestgaard is the Jewel of Westerly and the Lighthouse of The Ocean. It is the city from which all good things flow into the Kingdom, and where the refuse of the nation is quietly poured out into the ocean. It is a sprawling metropolis with a bustling port, a very active market, several well-known schools, Hoggart's Castle, and the headquarters to the most famous tavern franchise on the continent: the White Griffon Tavern. It is a centre of culture and learning within the Kingdom, where the school of magic and members of the world's only known lending library rub shoulders with a wide assortment of theatres and singing houses.

Ovestian theatre and songs are quite in demand across the Kingdom. Those who live in Ovestgaard often take access to this level of culture for granted. The most popular play currently performed in the city and abroad is, "The Great and Noble Stout." Shown several times a day across the city, by royal decree, it chronicles the rise of the Stout family and their even-handed governance of the Kingdom of Westerly.

Ovestgaard is a large city, with many fascinating destinations for the curious tourist:

Hoggart's Castle

Hoggart's Castle is home to the ruling Stout Family. It is found on the tallest hill in the city and is surrounded by a most impressive wall. Generations of Stouts have made it their home for centuries, adding modifications to the castle at their whim. These modifications have transformed the castle from an orderly structure to a sprawling eyesore that dominates the eastern portion of the city. There are wings in every direction, with occasional vestigial wings sprouting off of those wings. Adding to the confusion are the towers and buttresses (flying and otherwise) that stick off of it every which way, giving a visiter the impression of a nest built by a cross-eyed bird.

Scholars have noted that the chaotic castle floor plan has saved quite a few royals in its day. Assassins sent to dispatch one monarch or another simply couldn't find their way in the castle and were caught wandering the halls looking for their target, the exit or, on at least one occasion, the nearest privy.

Even those who live within the castle find that getting lost can be a daily occurrence. The Wizard Bazzing, former advisor to the current king's father, was rumored to have embroidered his stately robes with a map of the castle for just such an emergency.

Castle Tours

The Kingdom's heart is Hoggart's Castle, and many people want to have a finger on the pulsation. In order to prevent citizens from wandering the halls until they starve to death, the Stouts created the Royal Order of Hoggart Guides. Five times a day, these loyal servants of the realm conduct tours throughout the castle. Visitors are regaled with tales from the castle's long and colourful history. Only those who have exhibited extensive knowledge of the castle and its grounds ever get asked to join this group, and being asked to join is one of the highest honours a member of the household staff can achieve.

Sometimes, the Order will be sent to rescue tourists who have become separated from their tour group. These forays often take the Guides to places of the castle that are well off the beaten path. These areas may be in disrepair, or have become inhabited by strange and savage beasts. For this reason, all Guides are proficient in a wide variety of weapons and hand-to-hand combat.

Castle Gift Shoppe

The Castle Gift Shoppe is located at the junction of Northeast Wing A and Northeast Wing F. The Royal Order of Hoggart Guides operates the shop, selling castle memorabilia to interested visitors. It's such a popular spot with the Order that they will take tour groups into the store two, or even three, times to make sure that their charges have every opportunity to pick up their special souvenirs. The most expensive commemorative items, and thus the most popular with the Guides, are the Hoggart Tankards which are crafted to look like various parts of the castle and tricky to drink from, and the Quicklash Sword Belt, complete with the Peace Bond Loop that comes undone at the slightest tug, for your convenience.

Shoppers can also purchase prints of the original drawing of Hoggart's Castle, from when it was just a wee keep; a cunning replica of Gifford's Puzzle Door; and an exact scale model of the Misshapen Stone.

Royal Guard Corps House

This sturdy building is located in Courtyard F2 and houses the loyal, Royal Guard, who protect the castle and its occupants. Visitors are always excited to see the changing of the Guard, which takes place every day at noon and at six. Visitors are frequently dismayed to learn that the Guides and the Guard don't get along, and so the Guides schedule their tours to avoid this popular attraction. Visitors that try to view this spectacle on their own tend to disappear for about a week or so, when they are found half-feral, often rummaging through the

pantry of one of the auxiliary kitchens.

Visitors can also see the guards at their posts throughout the castle, standing vigilant against any manner of threats to King, Queen, and Castle.

The Royal Guard is proud of their discipline and training. Not only does it allow them to withstand the assaults of large and dangerous monsters, but it also permits them to stand without moving or reacting even to the intense prodding and catcalling of the tourists. Visitors should be warned that the Royal Guard do react when they hear a certain secret word. Upon hearing the word, a soldier of the Guard becomes a death-dealing machine, rapidly bludgeoning into unconsciousness any non-Royal or non-staff member in sight.

To keep the morale of the Royal Guard high, this secret word is changed daily.

Queen Samantha's Collection

There are many fondly remembered stories of Queen Samantha Stout. She was a Queen of charm, grace, impeccable fashion sense, and good and upright character--apart from the delightful habit of taking small, shiny objects that didn't belong to her. Some whisper that the Queen was cursed by a powerful Wizard. Others say that this joyous tendency won her the heart of a Thief Lord. Alas, he was imprisoned and executed. The Queen was unable to return his ardor, as she despised thievery.

What makes this collection special is that each item once belonged to notable citizens of Westerly, all of whom were too respectful of Queen Samantha to ask that their valuables be returned. Visitors can see the Set of Mismatched Utensils, pilfered from tables across the Kingdom. Also on display is the Signet Collection, which contains at least one ring from every noble house in Westerly (with some duplicates). The most famous piece in the Collection is the complete chess set of the Baroness of Sedgwick, a constant childhood companion of the Queen.

The Collection is one place where most tours take an extraordinarily long time, allowing people to examine the objects thoroughly and ask questions about each individual artifact. The curator of the Collection is quite happy to answer any questions at length.

The Hall

For those who live and work within the castle, the best place to eat is a restaurant called The Hall. It is the dining hall of the Stout family run

by Chef Silongo, one of the most famous Chefs ever to graduate from the Gwendolyn School of Swordplay and Cookery. His most famous dish is called the Dragon Steak, which he first created out of a dire necessity. In his youth, a village invited Chef Silongo to cook for them while on his quest to slay the dragon Xlntkaptasdsaggd. He was so worried about facing the dragon that he didn't check his ingredients as carefully as he should have, and several important people ended up with food poisoning after he left.

The villagers cursed the chef for his tainted feast, and had started to gather up pitchforks and torches so that they could search for the man who had given them food poisoning. But before they could form into an orderly mob and pursue him, Silongo returned after successfully slaying the dragon. Ashamed at what his tainted food had wrought, he quickly sliced up some steaks from the dragon, sauteed them in a delightful wine sauce and served it to those who were still sick. The steaks were delicious and cured the entire village.

The Hall's version of the dish doesn't use actual dragon, since they aren't that easy to obtain. Those with a distinguished palate consider the taste to be quite similar and many gourmands, and fellow graduates of Gwendolyn's, are constantly trying to figure out how Silongo manages the flavours and the cut of the meat.

The people who live and work in the Hoggart's Castle may dine at the Hall any time they like. It's one of the perks of working in the Castle. Those who live outside have to make reservations on the is a three-month-long waiting list to get in. Being seen inside the Hall is such a major status symbol that many a merchant has beggared themselves to try to be seen eating with the scullery maids and serving boys who eat there on a daily basis.

The Stout Court

The Throne Room is the nexus of Hoggart's Castle and houses the Stout Court. The Court is made up of members of the various Noble Families that feel the need to be near King Liiam, as well as anyone who has petitioned to see the King. Those who have never been here experience a moment of awe at the opulence of the room. Their goggle eyes and slack jaws are always good for a spot of fun behind the hands and fans of the courtiers more used to the sights and sounds of the Court.

Here is where the real power of the realm lies, between the whispered words and backroom deals between the nobles and their ruler. Occasionally a petition from a commoner will be taken under advisement by the King, but rarely will it ever make it into law. The most recent petition was passed as the Refuse Statute, put forth by Mr. Refuse, an Ovestgaardian garbage collector. This new law states that

anyone throwing their night soil out their window as Mr. Refuse passes underneath must pay a fine of five gold.

The White Griffon Tavern

The world's most famous tavern franchise has its headquarters in the city of Ovestgaard. How the White Griffon Tavern came to be is a tale as stirring as some of the grandest epics. Here is the story, as paraphrased from the Tavern's latest brochure.

When Mila the Mighty first ventured forth seeking adventure, she found the local taverns not to be to her liking. She wanted to be guaranteed, after a tough day of adventuring, to find a tavern where the ale was good, the food filling, and the room warm and not infested by lice. As a novice adventurer, she didn't feel that she had the capital or the time to open such a place, but it continued to be a dream of hers for many years.

One fateful day, Mila slew a ferocious White Griffon that terrorized the city of Ovestgaard. The Crown rewarded her with a plot of land inside the city, and offered to build one building on it to her exact specifications. Realizing her opportunity, Mila asked that a her ideal tavern be built so that she could share her vision with the world. Eventually it became known far and wide as the place where adventurers, and those who wished to hire them, would meet and eat. The food was delicious, and the ale was perfect. Sometimes, the common room got a little too warm with all the people in there, but one could always open a window. Demand to get into the place was so high that at one point a dwarf wound up pushing an elf through a wall to make room at the bar for his two cousins.

That's when Mila the Mighty, and now the Very Wealthy, decided that every city ought to have a White Griffon Tavern. That way, there would be plenty of room for anyone who wanted to belly up to the bar, and one wouldn't have to travel all the way from Swampgate to Ovestgaard to bask in the ambiance. Mila insisted that all versions of the White Griffon Tavern had to look and feel exactly the same, both to perpetuate her vision and to ensure that adventurers wouldn't feel too lost or disoriented after waking up from drunken celebration.

With that, she traveled the land, looking for trustworthy people to run these local franchises to her demanding levels and exacting payment schedule. Soon, White Griffon Taverns had sprung up everywhere. They're nice places to go, to be sure, but anyone who's been to Ovestgaard knows that nothing beats the original. The decisions for all the other White Griffon Taverns are made here, up in the attic where Mila's desk and the original White Griffon head are on display.



You can recognize the White Griffon Taverns by their standard coat of arms. A sword, a bow, and a white griffon head on a shield that hang outside the door. They say that if you've been in one White Griffon, you've been in them all. There are some members of the old adventuring guard that grumble about the homogenization of the tavern experience, but many others are happy to do away with the bugs and rotting food they might come across in their travels.

The Porque Markets

The Northern district of Ovestgaard is where you'll find the Porque Markets. Guarded on two sides by the Enrome City Walls, the Markets house a wide variety of merchandise, from the exotic to the mundane. While most of the Markets are made up of the stalls that stand in the middle of Porque Square, they also include the shops that line the Square and those that occupy the streets adjacent to the Square. It's quite prestigious to be considered a dealer at the Porque Markets, even if all you sell is the polish that the weapon dealer two stalls down uses to shine their merchandise.

Some of the shops in the Porque Markets are quite famous. One such place is the Festival House, which is home to the most interesting party supplies. Dazzling fire lights can be purchased here, as well as enchanted party favours that explode into wonderful gifts, peals of laughter, or piles of ash. Originally designed as weapons by the Eastern Empire, these devices did little to the enemy forces other than shower them with confetti. They famously gained their new use when a conquering army fired them off after capturing a fortress. The conquerors were so thrilled at the noise, lights, and gifts that they let the losers retreat without killing them.

When Viola Hunt, owner of the Festival House, heard of these weapons, she travelled deep into the Empire and brought back as many as she could. They sold so well that she set up a caravan that does nothing but bring in these favours. They are kept in a secure place, and she has the only key, but there have been many attempts to steal these goods from her shop.

Another famous store is the Limace Liason, where strange and exotic goods can be had for an exorbitant price. If there is one ingredient missing from your spell, or if you need a weapon, lost for the ages, to defeat a powerful demon, there is a good chance that you can find it at Limace Liason. All you'll have to do is be able to afford the ridiculous mark-up. New patrons of the store should be made aware that the proprietor greatly discourages questions about the origins of the wares.

The Docks

The Docks are the financial lifeblood of the Stout Family and the City of Ovestgaard. The Stouts, and some lesser noble families and merchants, base most of their businesses out of the Docks and employ an army of sailors and laborers to move their goods around for them. The Docks never rest, as ships need to be loaded and unloaded at high speed, to be ready to go as soon as the tide shifts.

There are rumours that not all the ships that come in deal in legal goods, or that some are really pirates in disguise, looking for a lucrative merchant vessel to plunder. These rumours are largely unsubstantiated and repeating them before the city's provost can get you thrown in the clink for suggesting such a thing. There has never been a recorded pirating incident within the Westerly Royal Waters. What happens beyond the waters patrolled by the Westerly Navy is beyond the scope of the Royal Statistical Association.

Another feature of the Docks is the large collection of taverns and inns that cater to the "grog n' swill" crowd. The places where the sailors and dock hands go on their off hours are all nautically themed and should be avoided unless you have a particular fondness for shanties, grog, salty language, and old sea dogs.

All but lost amongst the Dockside taverns and inns, are the ruins of the old Wet Griffon Tavern, the White Griffon Tavern's failed attempt at a seafaring themed version of their popular franchise. There are many reasons why the place failed, but the main one was that the sailors seemed to expect a certain amount of swill, scum, and shanties in their drinking establishment. Bar fights and shivings, which normally provided valuable entertainment, just didn't happen at the Wet Griffon. The bartender was hardly ever sullen, and that put off most of the dock workers.

The Wet Griffon only lasted a few short months before it was deserted. Some say that the spirit of the tavern's original owner, who sank his life savings into the franchise, still haunts the tavern, dusting off the buoys, straightening the fish nets and the ship wheels while cursing and moaning those whom he feels are responsible for the tavern's failure.

The Gristle

Ovestgaard is a clean and friendly city and most certainly does not have an area where those who desire questionable and illegal items can buy them. However, if Ovestgaard did have such a place, it might be called the Gristle.

If the Gristle existed (which it doesn't), it would be frequented by particular breeds of unsavoury individual, such as thieves, murderers, robbers, the desperate, and hot-headed young nobles. This area, if it was a part of Ovestgaard, might also be home to the mythical Ovest Guild of Thieves. If such a group did dwell in this 'Gristle,' they would probably steal ridiculously overpriced goods from the cleaner northern parts of the city and then sell those goods at a more reasonable rate to those living in the southern portion of the city.

If such a group did rule over all of the Gristle (which, I should remind you, doesn't exist), its members would likely be cult figures for all those who lived in the area. Supposing, hypothetically, that the Duke offered a thousand Gold Piece reward for the apprehension of the Guild's charismatic leader, Farmer Giles, it would not be enough of a reward for the people of this non-existent neighborhood to give him up. Again, this presupposes that Farmer Giles is a real person, which he is not.

People wanting to visit this 'Gristle' could only venture there as part of a mental exercise, since it doesn't exist. They could imagine that it would probably be situated on the south side of the city, next to the Docks. If one wished to be fanciful with their imagination, one might imagine that the entrance to the more unsavoury parts of the Gristle might be cleverly concealed behind the outhouse of the Rusty Scupper Inn.

You know, theoretically.

The Plaetia de la Fourchette

While the Plaetia is not the largest theatre in Ovestgaard (that honor falls to the Grand Canon) the Plaetia certainly is one of the most famous. Many of the great Westerlian plays, playwrights, and actors have taken a turn across the Plaetia's stage. In the early days, it was home of the legendary playwright Rosalyn van Barthon and her theatre troupe, the Diffused Effulgent. There are tales of her last play, a comedy so transcendently humorous that it moved the audience to tears.

The Plaetia has also seen its share of tragedy. In 341, during a performance of, "The Divine Ascension of The Healer," a masked intruder assassinated King Ibrahim Logge. Despite the play being about one of the most beloved deities of the land, when the actors cried out to see if there was a healer in the house, none could be found.

Currently, the Plaetia is home to the Royal Players, a troupe of elite actors who are famous throughout the Kingdom. The only way to become a part of the Players is to hope that one's thespianish skill catches the eye of one of the members of the Royal Family. The prestige that being a member of the Royal Players brings has driven many actors to stage "ambush plays," on the King's Carriage in the hopes of winning

a coveted Appointment. It is a risky endeavour, as those that fail are arrested for waylaying the King, but that hasn't stopped at least four different plays from being staged at his coach this year.

The Scale Schoole of Musicology

The smallest, and most influential, music school in Westerly, the Scale Schoole of Musicology prides itself on its rigorous training methods. Since only one group can graduate per year, as per the directives of Mr. Scale, the competition between the students is fierce and it is not uncommon for battles to break out during entry and graduate auditions. This activity is quietly encouraged by Mr. Scale as it helps weed out those that are not ready to face his tough learning techniques.

The Entry Auditions are performed before Mr. Scale and a couple of associates and close family members who are forced to sit in the far back of the auditorium. Two musicians are paired up and each take turns playing their auditions pieces. Mr. Scale then decides who, out of the two performers, will gain entry into the school. On the rare occasions they will let both in, and on the less rare occasions they will deny both applications. There is a lot of tension from the family members in the crowd who try to cheer their daughters and sons on, though this does lead to combat in the visitor's section. Again, this is subtly encouraged by Mr. Scale and his associates.

The school itself is segregated into groups. Each group learns together, using their instrument of choice, while still having their own individual lessons. This intensive training is one of the reasons why there aren't many students within the school. In fact, the drop out rate is rather high as students get more and more work piled upon them over the course of the year. Many break and refuse to touch an instrument again. Some even shudder when they hear music being played. This is also subtly encouraged by Mr. Scale and his associates.

The Exit Auditions are performed before the school, and a wider audience. Each group, the people you have spent the year learning with, battles with other groups for the one graduation spot. Only one collective will make it out of the school that year, the others need to continue to pay their fee and try again the following year. Because the fear of returning for another year is intense, many students will stoop to actually engaging in physical combat, despite the fact that it is forbidden. Those that graduate have learned to break a lute string in a particular way that it will fly across the room and strike their opponents. Flutes have turned into blow guns, stringed instruments have turned into bows, and drums and tambourines have rather obvious uses. In fact, all graduates of the Scale Schoole of Musicology are quite deadly with any musical instrument.

This is encouraged by Mr. Scale.

The Wizardry

There is one magical school in all of Westerly, and it's the Wizardry. This means that anyone who has any sort of magical talent will end up making the trek here if they wish to improve their talents. That's not to say that magic is controlled by the Wizardry, or that people can't increase their magical potency with alternate means of education, but it sure is easier to learn when most of the Kingdom's wizards are in close proximity.

The Wizardry tries to make sure that those who have a propensity for magic can apply to and learn from their school. They have very generous grants and work study programs which allow students who can't afford the fees to work their way through the school and to pay off their debt for the next ten years. This work usually includes a lot of menial tasks like copying illuminated spell books, mopping up failed potion experiments, serving food to other students, and generally making sure the place is running.

This has created a divide between the students who can afford to pay and the students who cannot. Those that have the money tend to act dismissively towards the students who are working their way through Wizardry. The students that need the grants and work studies are bitter at being ignored, even if they happen to be better at magic than those who have money.

There is also a divide between the more traditional school professors who believe in a well rounded approach to magic and the hotshot, young specialist wizards who study a single field of magic to the exclusion of all else. The old guard feels that this is an irresponsible approach, creating wizards that are rather useless unless they're dealing with their own type of magic. Practitioners of the "new" magic feel that only by focusing on a specific field can they push the boundaries of magic and make much needed breakthroughs. The arguments between the two are rather intense, and have resulted in several magical battles between angry wizards. The students, being aware of this, make sure to force the more vocal ones into bitter debates in the middle of classes. This allows them to avoid dealing with tedious lectures and gives them more time to not do homework.

The City of Tam

Tam is the second largest city within the duchy of Ovestgaard, and the third largest city in the Kingdom, at least during the school year. It is quite a famous city, not for itself (it's pretty unremarkable, as cities go), but because it is the home of the Gwendolyn School of Advanced Swordplay and Cooking, which is run by the Beldan family. This school trains the world's most famous fighters and chefs, who are frequently the same people.

The Gwendolyn School of Advanced Swordplay and Cooking

The Gwendolyn School of Advanced Swordplay and Cooking (hereafter shortened to GSASC by order of the Royal Typesetters Guild) is one of the most prestigious schools in the Kingdom. Through its rigorous training, GSASC students learn how to use a blade to do pretty much anything, from gutting an enemy to filleting a fish. These techniques take years to master, with many gruelling exams and practicums, but people come from all over the Kingdom, and sometimes from beyond, to take lessons there. A few don't survive the training (the custard classes are especially brutal), but those that graduate are in demand wherever they go. Sometimes they are needed to fight off monsters and dragons, other times they are called upon to make salted meat palatable after a long, hard winter. No matter what kind of blade is involved, a graduate from the GSASC is worth the high price that they charge for their services.

Much to the chagrin of the Mayor of Tam, the GSASC rules the city of Tam in truth, since much of the city's infrastructure is designed specifically to support the school and most of the populace either works for the GSASC or goes to school there. When the school lets out for the end of term, the population drop is radical enough that Tam goes from being the second largest city in Ovest to something akin to a sleepy farming hamlet.

Since the school is so central to Tamish life, pretty much everyone who lives in Tam treats the Beldan family, who own the school, like royalty. Every command issued from the Beldan household is answered immediately, because to disobey a Beldan is to threaten the livelihood of Tam. Anyone who goes against the Beldan family, both within the city and without, also invites the wrath of a large collection of dangerous and well-trained alumni that would gladly fight and die for their alma mater.

The current dean of GSASC is Gwendolyn Beldan, the sixteenth Gwendolyn who has run the school. At the tender age of seventy, Gwendolyn XVI has been dean for twenty-five years and has done a lot for the school, including the implementation of general adventuring

classes. Too many good swashbuckling sous chefs were lost during the practicum portions of their training because they didn't have the necessary skills to survive. She fought long and hard to create a curriculum that taught wilderness lore, orientation, and fire building alongside the more traditional axe-wielding and pastry chef courses. The new curriculum is quite popular, especially among those warrior-chefs that come from the cities.

Despite having great success with managing the school, Gwendolyn XVI really wants to go adventuring before she feels that she's no longer able to. One of the things holding her back are the weird succession rules that Gwendolyn I set down in her will all those many centuries ago. The will states that the first child of the next Beldan generation, who is also named Gwendolyn, will inherit the school.

The younger generation of Beldans includes two children who were both born on the same day at around the same time twenty-five years ago, and who are both named Gwendolyn XVII. Since the day of their births, the parents of the respective Gwendolyns have used whatever evidence and excuses that they could find to prove that their Gwendolyn was the real heir and the other one was a filthy, cheating impostor. It's gotten to the point where these sides of the Beldan family are on the verge of open warfare to determine who has the right to control the family and the school. Gwendolyn XVI doesn't much like either of Gwendolyn XVII, but she knows that something will need to be done soon before the strife tears the family apart.

The Joysts

Whenever there is a major competition involving people moving at high speeds on animals, it takes place at the Joysts, which can be found on the outskirts of Tam. At least, it used to. The Stout family, not too fond of physical activity, have not held a tournament at the Joysts in over a decade. This hasn't stopped knights and other folks from illegally practicing their craft and holding tournaments at the Joysts on the sly. They post lookouts and then hone their jousting skills, rushing at each other at high speeds.

As time has gone on and the jousts have become more frequent, they have begun to get a bit of an underground following in the city. These underground matches haven't yet drawn the attention of the crown, but it's only a matter of time before word gets out and then the Joy Riders will find out if their activities will become sanctioned, or if the crown will crack down on them.

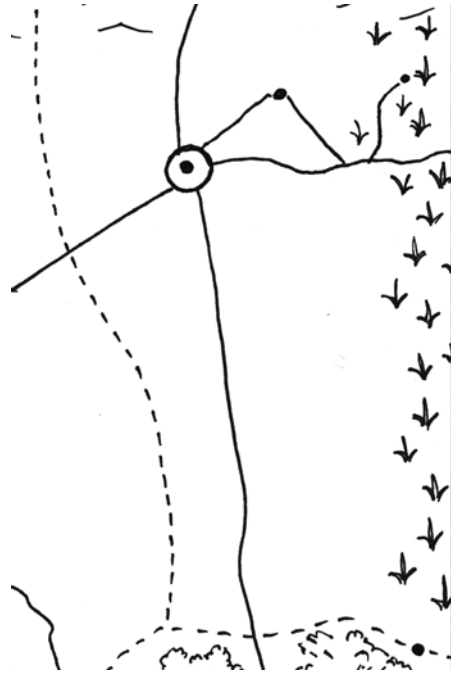
The Duchy of Zakhid

If the Duchy of Ovest is the brains of the Kingdom, then the Duchy of Zakhid is the stomach. More than half of the food that the Kingdom consumes comes from this Duchy, and what is not eaten in Westerly gets shipped over to the Eastern Empire or through the Docks to the rest of the Continent. Zakhid is known for the quality of their meats, vegetables, fruits, and grains.

In the south of Zakhid lies the Forest of Bigue, a dark and mysterious place full of magical weirdness as well as hearty people who make the forest their home. The forest spills over into the Duchy of Perendimi further to the south. To the north of Zakhid are the Razorback Mountains, filled with Monsters, Magic, and Mayhem in a particular order.

The second largest city in the Kingdom, Zakidselo is the capitol of Zakhid. It doesn't have the same cosmopolitan air that Ovestgaard has, but it does hold its own as a major city. Any overland transportation goes through Zakidselo before it goes anywhere else in the Kingdom and beyond. This makes it easy for people, and goods, to get in and out of Zakidselo. This has caused the people who live in the city to try to be on good terms with travelers. It's part of the rustic image that the city tries to maintain. Anyone on the street will be more than happy to talk your ear off; the people in Zakidselo are frightfully pleasant.

The Duke of Zakhid, Duke Aragala, is a mysterious recluse. No one has heard from him in a long time, ever since he shut himself up inside the Ducal House. No one knows why he became a recluse, but people don't seem to mind since the Duchess Aragala has taken the visible control of the reins. She's represented His Grace at various functions, events, and parties, but this hasn't stopped the rumour mill from churning out numerous theories about the Duke's condition. The most popular rumour is that something happened to his face, such as a disease or an attack by a spurned mistress. Some say that he no longer exists and that the Duchess is actually the one in charge. Another rumour is that the Dragons got to him, and they're controlling him with their mind powers. Some even spin tales of sinister plots involving the Eastern Empire using the Duke in a byzantine plan to conquer Westerly.



The City of *Zakidse/o*

Zakidse/o is a landlocked city, and they're quite fine with that. Ovestgaard can keep its filthy port and their smelly ships. *Zakidse/o* is a hub city, linked to every single city and town of note, and a few that are off key. Most of the major trade caravans have their headquarters here, and anything and everything created by craftspeople makes at least one stop in *Zakidse/o*. This means that the city is rather welcoming to strangers. Due to the configuration of the roads, a lot of new people will be coming into the city, and many amenities have popped up. Cart sellers, repair shops, taverns, drinking houses, food sellers, luxury dealers and many White Griffon Taverns can be found on every single major road leading to and from the city. Be prepared to haggle because as a famous *Zakidian* once said, "The best things come with strangers, and they pay twice as much as anyone else."

There are several points of interest in *Zakidse/o*:

Whitely Manor

Whitely Manor is the Ducal House of the Aragala family which was originally built by Gentleman Whitely. It was purchased by the Aragala family when the Gentleman ran out of money. It was originally his plan to build an expansive country manor estate where he could retire after years at court. Unfortunately, he kept changing his mind about what he wanted his house to look like, and the constant restructuring caused his expenses to keep rising. He soon owed so much money that he needed to offload his manor house before his creditors could take what he owed them out of his hide. He sold the manor at one tenth the value and died penniless in a gutter, but the house has kept his name despite the fact that the Aragala family has owned it since its completion.

The manor is guarded by a large, thick hedge that protects it from casual view. The hedge was planted by the most recent Duke Aragala in an effort to increase his privacy. Some people have tried to cut down parts of the hedge, either to get a good look at the house or to relieve congestion on the city streets around the manor, but they always grow back thicker and stronger than before. Curious gawkers, spies, burglars, and reporters sometimes try to force their way through the hedge to poke around on the manor grounds. They invariably get stuck, and the city watch has to be called to cut them out. The guard leaves them hanging in the hedge for an extra hour or two, to help them learn the error of their ways.

Another famous feature of Whitely Manor is its iron gate. The gate has been magicked to only open for members of the Aragala family and their invited guests. This means that outsiders can only enter or exit the grounds with the family's leave. This makes visits nerve-wracking,

because if you offend the Duke or the Duchess you may find yourself trapped on the manor grounds forever.

There are rumours of a nasty dungeon built underneath the manor, but no one who has come out through the gate has ever seen it. It might have been part of the original plan by Gentleman Whitely, it might be a new addition put in by the Aragala family, or it could just be rumour. No one can confirm anything.

Sometimes, an enclosed carriage can be seen travelling to and from the premises. Despite people's best efforts, the identity of the passenger has never been revealed. It could be the Duke--most people assume that it is--but no one is quite comfortable when the carriage passes by. It is just another mystery that surrounds the secretive Aragala family and Whitely Manor.

The Center Point

When all the roads in the kingdom come through your city, it is easier if they all meet at the same place. In *Zakidse/lo*, that place is called the Center Point. The road that runs toward the West from *Zakidse/lo* to Ovestgaard is called the Digging Way and is one of the safest roads to travel. Not only is there a constant stream of people on it, but The Stout King has a personal interest in making sure that trade along this road happens unimpeded. The road that leads south to Perend is called the Hind Way and is good until you get to the Forest of Bigue, when it becomes overgrown, and filled with angry creatures. The road that runs to the border of the Eastern Empire is called the Melting Path and it too is kept clear of bandits by the Stout King to keep goods flowing outward. The road to the North is the Sword Road, and since it leads to the Razorback Mountains tends to not be well maintained.

The Center Point is the main market for *Zakidse/lo* and it's known as the best local market in the kingdom. The Porque Markets might have more exotic goods, but if you want something that was produced in Westerly, you'll not find a better place to acquire it. Artisans, farmers, crafters, quilters, and butchers set up booths here to sell their goods. The food is the freshest, and most expensive, of any you'll find in the kingdom. There is a rumour that if you know the right people you can get a discount reserved only for the locals, but people tend to be tight lipped on the subject for fear of losing their own privileges.

The Temple to the Gods

While the Gods are praised in different places throughout the realm, there is only one place where all the Gods are revered. The Temple to the Gods, located just next to the Center Point, is a place where every



Westerlian god gets a chapel or shrine, even the ones that are less well-known. They say that when the Gods need to converse, they wait until the darkest hour and meet in the Temple.

The Exchange

The most visited spot within the Temple is the Exchange. This is where the Merchant and his followers post the bounties on the various monsters. As the Merchant decreed, monsters are bad for business, and anyone who kills a monster gets the reward posted at the Exchange. Troublesome or dangerous monsters net a large reward, while some very weak monsters have no bounty at all. Most monsters, especially those that fetch a high price, really, really hate the Exchange. Many are the stories of monsters who attack or try to infiltrate the Exchange, hoping to remove the divine bounty on their heads.

Quill Arena

Quill Arena is the ancestral home to the Kingdom's favourite game, Quill. Quill is a dangerous sport, practiced only by those who are strong of will and thick of skin.

During a game of Quill, the players are split into teams that fight over and try to carry the Quill ball from one end of the arena to the other. The Quill is specially made from the magically modified skin of a Timid Porcupine. Whenever it is moved quickly or thrown it extends its razor sharp quills in all directions. This allows certain brave players to use the ball as an effective weapon against the members of the opposing team, especially considering Quill players wear no protective clothing of any sort. The challenge is finding the perfect speed to move the Quill so that you can avoid impaling yourself, and the tackling line of the other team, while still having a chance to score before the bell rings.

Legend has it that the game of Quill came about when one family from Ovestgaard tried to steal a favourite pet from a Zakidian wizard. The wizard, in a fit of pique, cast a spell which caused the pet to sprout sharp quills. This would have been fine, except that the wizard had forgotten that he had also sent out his servants to steal the animal back. There were many injuries that day, but the people watching were so enamored with the debacle that others tried to emulate it. And so, Quill was born.

Purists frequently wish that the game would return to these roots, and use live animals instead of enchanted balls made of animal skins. Having the animal run all over the field, attacking those that it didn't like, they say, would increase the difficulty of the sport. Despite these protests from a vocal minority, Quill proves to be very popular. Last

year, the Ovestgaard Winds won the Quill Cup in a three-hour sudden death match. They hope to hang onto the trophy this year, but their team has been ravaged by a large number of mysterious injuries.

The Breadbasket

Most of *Zakid*, but especially the plains east of the city of *Zakidse/lo* is home to the vast farms, ranches, and orchards that are the duchy's claim to fame throughout the kingdom. Aided by rich soil, plentiful rain, and wide-open spaces, the farmers and herders of *Zakid* ply their trades and provide food for the rest of the kingdom and, to a lesser extent, the world at large.

Though it sounds refreshingly simple and somewhat idyllic, life in the Breadbasket can be quite difficult. Farmers and ranchers must wake up well before the sun and toil until sunset in the fields and groves of *Zakid*. Contrast this with your typical adventurer who, let's be honest, usually doesn't wake up until at least noon, and only then because the barkeep is poking them with a broom and asking them politely to at least climb onto a bench.

The common folk of *Zakid* must also contend with an unusually large and diverse group of burrowing pests, which have a nasty tendency to corkscrew up out of the ground to eat livestock and scatter the spring plantings. We're not talking rabbits and moles--well, okay, we're also talking about them--but they're the least of a *Zakidian* farmer's problems. Perhaps it is the extremely rich soil, or perhaps it's the way that *Zakidian* farmers till their land, but the earth beneath the Breadbasket fairly teems with giant bugs, voracious worms, peeved dire badgers, rabid ground squirrels, and other burrowing critters that even the most dedicated scholars have not had time to quantify. The farmers and herders make do with fences and homemade alchemical sprays and the like. These tend to keep the less persistent critters at bay, but it does little to stop armies of giant ants from hacking through crops and barns alike.

An adventurer who can stomach waking up extra early and who doesn't mind jumping into holes will find no end of honest work in the Breadbasket. The rewards for such deeds are, sadly, not traditional, but most adventurers don't mind getting paid in farm-fresh produce for a little pest control.

The Village of Londo

Londo is a small, yet prosperous village located in the middle of the Breadbasket. It was once a much sleepier little farming community, with nothing much to recommend it apart from picturesque views of rolling wheat fields and herds of gently lowing cows.

All that changed when The White Griffon Tavern opened a franchise in Londo. It seemed like the most logical place to do so, considering that Londo is situated on the Melting Path and spans the banks of the River Uine, two of *Zakid's* most important trade arteries. Sure, there was already a tavern in Londo, but it was a dark and somewhat dreary place, frequented only by people who lived in Londo. It was easy enough to raze it to the ground and build a new and better tavern on top of it.

This new tavern comes complete with an attached inn, perfect for feeding and housing the crowds of adventurers and merchants who travel the Melting Path to Swampgate and points eastward. The addition of the White Griffon franchise has turned the small farming community of Londo into a much more lively place. Merchants pack their wagons into the open fields around town, and adventurers carouse and sing well into the night.

Despite the much improved nightlife and tavern fare that the White Griffon Company has brought to Londo, most of the locals choose not to participate. The local farmers and ranchers now take their evening meals at home or head down for a quick pint at Fillillian's Barn. Fillillian's is an impromptu watering hole where the bar is made out of a plank and two sawhorses and where, if you want to play darts, you have to be mindful not to hit Fillillian's cows. The ambiance is quiet and dark, and they tend to be a bit standoffish to any adventurers who come stumbling in.

Terne

Terne is the city that is right up against the Great Eastern Marsh, and is famous only because nothing ever happens there. Terne has only one road that exits the town, and that road leads to *Zakidse/lo* by way of Swampgate. The marshland surrounding Terne is the most tame out of all the Great Eastern Marsh, and no monsters have ever come out of there to attack the town. No one guards the road, since no one has anything of value that would make it worth the effort. There are merchants who travel this road, but stealing from them is a sign that you are incredibly desperate, and no thief truly wants to look that bad in front of his or her peers.

No one goes to Terne unless they absolutely have to, because Terne is terminally dull. Even the most momentous things that happen near Terne never seem to impact the city itself. For example:

During the Great Quake of 550, Terne was the only city in *Zakid* unaffected by the tremors. Many of the townsfolk, sympathetic to the other people in the duchy, jumped up and down to get in the spirit of having an earthquake, but it wasn't the same. The Magistrate, seeing

an opportunity, declared the day Jumping Day and made it a town holiday. No one showed up for the next Jumping Day in 551 and all subsequent Jumping Days were cancelled.

The Great Drought of 600 didn't significantly impact Terne because the Marsh provided them with all the water that they needed.

The Great Hailstorm of 670 had no effect on Terne while it devastated the rest of Zakid. Only one hail stone did hit the town, but it landed on the Magistrate and knocked him out. This might have been a problem, except that he wasn't well-liked and the rest of the folk of Terne quietly rejoiced his state of unconsciousness.

The few people who have escaped Terne talk about how hard it is to leave, almost as though they were compelled to stay.

The Duchy of Perendimi

The third Duchy of the Kingdom of Westerly is its smallest and most politically unstable. Isolated from the rest of the Kingdom by the Forest of Bigue and the Great Eastern Marsh, ideas tend to echo inside the duchy until they explode in a fit of political grandstanding and general protest. Oftentimes, what is being protested doesn't actually exist, but that doesn't matter much to the people in the duchy.

There is only one road that leads out of the Duchy and that cuts through the Forest of Bigue, connecting the capitol, Perend, to the city of Zakidselo. The duchy has no ports, despite having a large area of coastline, thanks to some rather obnoxious decrees by the Stout King. This decree, among many others, further isolates the duchy and fuels the inexhaustible discontent of one or more of Perendimi's political parties.

This isolation has led to the rise of many separatist groups within the duchy, all of them wanting their own specific demands met. These demands vary wildly from group to group, but the one thing that they all have in common is the desire to leave Westerly. There are five major political groups, if you include the group that actually wants to stay on as part of Westerly. Each group is busy shouting at one another and trying to prove, with limited success, that their philosophy is the best philosophy. They are as follows:

ELFQ: This group is made up of the elves of the Forest of Bigue. They believe that the humans of Westerly exist solely to drag the elves down and keep them from being even more amazing than they already are. ELFQ believes that only by tossing off the yoke of human ruler-ship can they become truly haughty. The most militant members of EFLQ don't just want to separate the Duchy from the Kingdom, but the Forest of Bigue from the Duchy. They want to control what goes on in the woods,

like who is good enough to travel through it, and who has the right to cut down trees or pick herbs.

The Anarcho-Fantasmagoria: This group is made up of the Faeries who, like the elves, live in the Forest of Bigue. They don't want anyone to be the boss of them, human, elf, or otherwise. They work against anyone who thinks that there needs to be any form of government at all. The most active out of all the groups, they have been known to harass those who disagree with them by playing their Faery Music really loudly all night long. This not only prevents their detractors from sleeping, but forces them to dance until the sun comes up. In the quasi-hallucinatory state that follows, these opponents are much more susceptible to Faery suggestion.

The Anarcho-Fantasmagoria protests the government in Perendimi in other ways. They constantly paint the sides of houses and other buildings with their mark, a brightly coloured A with fangs, which is widely feared around Perendimi. Once a Faery paints this mark on your house, you can't wash it off or cover it up, and it implies that you sympathize with the Faeries' anarchistic philosophy. You'll find it a lot harder to borrow gardening implements or cups of sugar from your more traditional neighbors after this tagging.



The Brothers and Sisters of Perend: This third group of people is comprised mostly of humans. Their families have lived in Perendimi since its founding, and they've never stepped outside its borders. They feel that they know how to run their own affairs better than some government fat cat in Ovestgaard. Some of them are even more "independent" in their thinking than that, and are none too keen on their next door neighbours' offer of advice on their crop rotation. They'd probably declare their house a sovereign nation if they could. They don't trust anyone who isn't them, and since that's everyone else they are very mistrustful indeed.

The Merchants' Consortium: This cabal of merchants list among their grievances some vague and poorly-worded concerns that can easily be made to fit the philosophies of any of the previous three groups. The elves think that they totally support the elf-only agenda. The fairies think that the merchants want anarchy. The Brothers and Sisters of Perend think that the merchants just want to be left alone. Even some of the Nationalists think that the merchants are on their side, supporting a Perendimi that is firmly a part of Westerly.

In actuality, the only thing the merchants care about is making money. They strive to appear reasonable and open to the philosophies of all the other groups so that they can continue to do business with them. When platitudes aren't enough to grease the wheels of mercantilism, a pile of gold dedicated to one or more political causes works more than well enough.

Everyone suspects the merchants' true motivations, but no one wants to point it out for fear of losing out on periodic non-taxable donation money.

The Nationalists: Anyone in the Duchy who isn't a part of the preceding four groups is lumped into the Nationalists by default. Often derisively referred to as, "The Rest" by the separatist groups, the Nationalists are a diverse group of people with diverse reasons as to why they want to remain as a part of Westerly. Their major political advantage is that the lead spokesman for the Nationalists happens to be Duke Chariseau of Perendimi. The Duke doesn't care for any of the separatist groups and has made it clear that he isn't going to be asking the King for permission to separate from Westerly anytime soon. However, he isn't doing anything about the separatists. He's letting them do what they want and, even though it might bring the whole duchy to the brink of a large scale civil war.

The City of Perend

The capitol of Perendimi, Perend sees a lot of action for a not-so-big town. While the town is the traditional home of the Dukes of Perend, the separatist factions make use of it as their personal testing ground. They try to rally others to their cause, and do their best to out-rhetoric one other in the eyes of the general public. They hold public demonstrations and maintain their turf with large street protests, vandalism, theft, and the occasional scuffle. The City Watch, led by Provost Robyn "the Red" Barassa, is used to this kind of conflict and is adept at quick responses when it comes to street violence. Some call the Watch's behaviour twitchy, since they ride out on a moment's notice if anything even slightly suspicious happens in Perend, but there are those that appreciate their desire to protect the city from the Separatist factions that would tear it down to prove that they are right.

Some might say that this behaviour is rife with the potential for abuse. There have been watch members who have overstepped their bounds and used their power for their own gain, but Provost Barassa has always come down hard on these members of the Watch. This has led some to believe that she just likes getting angry at people.

As if this wasn't enough for Perend to deal with, its northern city wall happens to butt right up against the Forest of Bigue. The Forest is a magical place filled with oddities and magical happenings. Things happen here that don't happen anywhere else in the world. It was rumoured that, due to the magic of the Forest, Perend once vanished for an entire week. There have been stampedes of ghosts, talking animals, and other worldly beings that waltz right out of the Forest and into town. Adding these supernatural occurrences to the constant political instability makes Perend one of the most chaotic places to live in the Kingdom.



The Square

Considering that his city was a hotbed of political tension, Duke Chariseau thought it would be a good idea if people had a place to say whatever they liked, thereby unburdening themselves of their pent up aggression. He also thought it would be a good idea if those people had to say their piece in front of other people. And so, the Duke created the Square just outside of the northern wall of the city, in the shadow of the Forest of Bigue.

The Square is a large stage with a lectern on it. The stage is big enough to hold about four to six people and the lectern is covered with a thin sheet of iron to offer a modicum of protection to the speaker. The wood that makes up the stage has been stained a wide assortment of colours from all the fruits and vegetables hurled at it throughout the years. The most colourful, and most heavily damaged places on the Square, are those where large fruits have been shot from portable catapults.

At the Square, anyone can climb onto the stage, get behind the lectern, and speak their mind on any topic that they wish. Anything is fair game as a topic of oration, but speakers are warned in advance that they are responsible for any repercussions of their speech. If the assembled group of listeners starts a riot due to something a speaker says, then the speaker must pay for the damages to the city. If a volley of produce gets thrown in their general direction, Provost Barassa will do nothing about it.

The Square has become a major source of entertainment for Perend. People show up prepared for each day's speeches. They bring food to eat, and food to throw, and are ready to cheer madly when someone says something that they happen to agree with. The various political factions in town always pack the audience with their followers when their leaders speak at the Square. The space is big enough that they'll also pack the Square when their opponents speak, so that they can boo and hiss and otherwise make trouble for them. They do restrain themselves better here than they do elsewhere in Perend, because they're responsible for what happens and Provost Barassa is only too happy to present them with a bill for damages.

The Provost's Place

The home of the City Watch of Perend is called The Provost's Place, in honor of the unholy terror who is the current head of the Watch, Provost Barassa. She is the best fighter in town, and graduated summa cum escam from the GSASC. Rumor has it that if Gwendolyn XVI had had her way, Provost Barassa would be the new heir to the dean's chair of the GSASC. Provost Barassa decided that she preferred Perend to Tam, and went home to pursue a career in law enforcement.

The Provost's Place is a squat stone building, with a formidable defensive perimeter, siege weapons, lots of arrow slits, and barred windows. It is perhaps the most well-defended building in the entire kingdom, and some say Hoggart's Castle would fall before the Provost's Place admitted defeat.

Inside the imposing building are barracks for the Guards, an infirmary, and lots and lots of cells where criminals are kept before they face the overworked magistrate. Thankfully for the magistrate, her chambers are conveniently located inside the Provost's Place. There are rumours that since everything is kept inside those slate walls, there are rampant problems with people disappearing. The Provost agrees, and says that people who enter never exit the same way again.

There is no use in complaining, the Provost has the Duke's ear, and he approves of her methods.

The Museum of Perend

The Museum of Perend is a private affair run by an elderly couple, who have staffed it for the past thirty years. Elwood and Nathaniel Freelott have been slowly accumulating anything that they think has any historical importance to Perend and Perendimi. They've gone to great lengths to acquire these artifacts, and frequently one of the two of them is out on an "excavation quest" to bring back something to add to the collection.

The museum occupies the lower levels of their quaint little cottage, and is open during the day, every day. Either Elwood or Nathaniel--whichever of them is currently not out gallivanting--will be more than willing to answer any questions on the artifacts crammed into narrow display cases. No one is more knowledgeable on topics ranging from the Hair Bow of the Elven Warrior Amber Sunrise to the Severed Right Finger of the Mad Wizard Nemesis Shadowfinder.

Some people have tried to liberate the artifacts, but they have never succeeded. No trace of the thieves has ever been found, due to the diligence of Elwood and Nathaniel. The Provost, rather than show concern about this sort of thing, praises the museum's security and is glad that she doesn't have to process yet another criminal.

The Rope Works

This long warehouse is owned by the Himp family and is the most prosperous rope manufacturer in the entire Kingdom. Bales of plant fiber are loaded into one end of the warehouse where, through carding and braiding and twisting and tying, they are eventually turned into the coils of sturdy ropes piled up against the far end. The Rope Works makes rope for just about every possible application, from the huge cables used to moor ships at port to the world-famous Himpen Light 50, the gold-standard of adventuring rope. Alestair Himp, the current proprietor, has ambitious plans to expand his company into the string and twine market.

The Boatman and the Penguin

One of the few taverns that aren't under the White Griffon Tavern banner, the Boatman and the Penguin is run by an old sea dog who felt the need to have a bit of the sea next to him despite the fact that he was in a landlocked city. The walls are festooned with nautical paraphernalia, from helm wheels to fishing nets and shells. It even has a ship and sea-themed menu. The owner, Ghost Grim, makes sure that everyone has a good time and enjoys themselves. Or else.

The or else is a threat, but not a particularly veiled one. Anyone who isn't having a good time, or causes a ruckus, is met with "The Plank," a beverage and skill contest. The object is to drink a random amount of drinks, created by rolling two sailors' dice, and then trying to walk The Plank, which is a very narrow board placed over a very wide privy. Any winner gets their money refunded and is allowed to laugh in Ghost Grim's face. Alas, there haven't been any winners yet, but there have been several broken bones, lacerations, and bouts of alcohol poisoning.

This is yet another location in the city where the somewhat hostile actions of the host are reacted to with extreme slowness by the Provost.

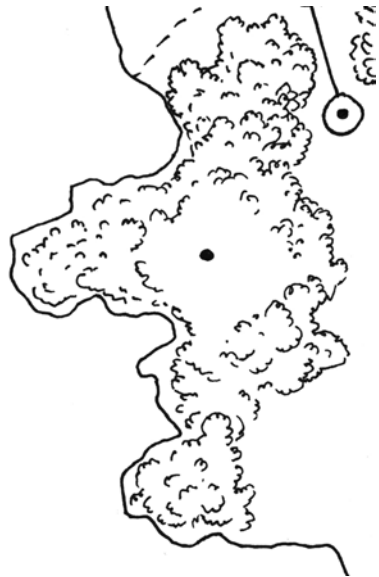
The Forest of Bigue

The Forest of Bigue has always been considered to be part of Perend, even the bits of it that are in *Zakid*. This Forest is quite mysterious, and is not fully understood even by those who call it home. It is full of both deciduous and coniferous trees and has been about the same size throughout recorded history -- despite the logging communities that surround and inhabit the forest.

Some say that the forest stays the same size because the loggers in those villages know exactly how much to cut, so that there are never more trees cut down than sprout up in a given year. Others say that there is magic that keeps the forest at its current size. No matter what the reason, it clearly doesn't bother the people who live there, so they don't comment on it much.

The Forest spans the border between *Zakid* and Perendimi. Folk from Perendimi are proud of the woods and it seems to provide them with some slight measure of magical protection. People from *Zakid* try to deal with the forest as little as possible, apart from the *Zakidian* logging towns on the northern fringes of the wood. They'd much rather deal with Perendimi and have Perendimi deal with the forest, since the forest seems to like Perendimi a lot better.

The one road that connects the duchies of Perendimi and *Zakid* is the Long Road. It seems to be the only trustworthy road through the forest, even if it is sometimes overgrown or enchanted. Those



who try to find alternate paths through the forest wind up lost, alone, starving, or with a quest to achieve.

These quests can lead to fame and fortune, or it can lead to a grisly and gruesome death, but that hasn't stopped reckless adventurers from seeking them out. Indeed, there are plenty of "adventure tourists" who flock to the Perendimi side of the forest, in the hopes of being the next person to do a great deed, like slay the Necromancer Aelae. However, the death rate of these tourists has increased over time, as if the forest is annoyed. This makes some of the locals nervous, wondering what the forest might unleash when it's temper is finally piqued.

There are a couple of notable sites that exist in the forest, if you're able to find them. Not all of them are welcoming. In fact most of them are down right hostile, but they are shrouded in myth and history. If you come across any of them, consider yourself very fortunate.

Indius - The Elven City

Indius, or the Elven City if you're a busy human who can't be bothered to remember what the name is, is interwoven amongst the trees of the Forest of Bigue. It is comprised of treetop ledges and catwalks, delicate stairways that wind down tree trunks, and natural plazas built among the roots. It is known for its delicate architecture and natural beauty.

Indius is not a sprawling city, at least not in the horizontal sense. It only takes about ten minutes to walk from one edge of the city to the other, but much longer than that to navigate all the ups and downs within the city. The Elves won't, or can't, extend the border of their city beyond the current edge. This may be due to some magic of the Forest of Bigue, but no elf will talk to any outsiders about it.

Not many non-elves have seen Indius. Elves have a general disdain for those they consider to be beneath them, which includes everyone who isn't an Elf, and people whom elves hold in disdain are simply not invited up to their forest city. The few non-Elves who have been given the honor of seeing the city have reported feeling like small, unruly children stared at disapprovingly by angry adults while trying to sit quietly in a room filled with delicate, rare, and breakable objects.

Provost Barassa is doing her best to infiltrate the city. She wants to find the leaders of the ELFQ and arrest them for their crimes. So far, she has had no success, but she is nothing if not persistent.

Indus, The Great Tree

Not everything is serene within the elven city. While the Elves work very hard to make the outside world believe that everything is perfect in Indius and no one ever disagrees, this isn't actually true. Sure there's your usual petty squabbling, but much of the real rancor in the city has to do with Indus, the Great Tree that stands at the heart of the city of Indius.

The reason why those words are so similar is because Indus happens to be elvish for Great Tree and Indius happens to be elvish for the City of the Great Tree. So yes, the elves live in the City of the Great Tree built around a Great Tree called Great Tree. This is one of the reasons why they dissuade the other peoples of Westerly from learning elvish.

The tree is large (one might say, "great"), and exquisitely maintained by the Stardin family. And that's the reason why there's such strife in the Elven community. According to ancient elf law, the maintenance of Indus must be shared between all the elvish families, because maintenance of Indus is one the highest honors an elvish family can have.

Unfortunately, the Stardin family refuses to relinquish the magical shears that allow Indus to be pruned. They say, that as the oldest of all the families, they should have a longer turn at being stewards of the Great Tree. There have been some attempts at trying to get them to return the shears, but the Stardin family has hidden the enchanted scissors and they have more than enough magical power to make sure that they stay hidden.

Faery Rings

There are many small Faery Rings all over the Forest. They are marked by small circles of mushrooms, or trees, or rocks, or anything else intentionally placed in a circle. Most larger creatures don't notice that they've come upon a Faery Ring until they've put their foot inside the circle, and by then it's far, far too late. Once ensnared by a ring, the creature is stuck until they Faeries decide to let them go.

This is something the Faeries often forget to do, since they're chaotic creatures of whim, fancy, and loud music. Once they have something trapped, the Faeries happily subject them to all three, with the added bonus of vicious complaints about Faery society, the corruption of the political systems of Westerly, and the difficulties of being unnoticeable in the forest. Creatures that are able to listen politely may be let go with only sore eardrums for their trouble. Creatures that resist or argue anger the Faeries, and then there's no telling what they'll do.

Trespassers in Faery Rings will discover that most, if not all, Faeries belong to the Anarcho-Fantasmagoria and delight in causing as much chaos as they possibly can. They want to destabilize the entire nation, and ultimately the rest of the continent. The Faeries believe that rulers are really the root of all evil. To them, there is no difference between a magistrate and a necromancer, they're all just trying to keep you down.

Deep Wood

Deep Wood is the largest logging village in Perendimi. That's not saying much, since only about seventy-five people live there. Wood from the Forest of Bigue is in demand, since people believe that things built from this wood have magical properties. While the Forest of Bigue seems to ally itself with the Perendimi, it seems to have a great affinity for Deep Wood.

There are strange things that happen around the village, the usual things that go on in the forest. They just never seem to follow you into town. The people there don't comment on what's going on, they don't comment on much being a rather closed mouthed group, but they do admit that something is strange.

The Bloodwoods

Anyone conversant with the magical nature of the Forest of Bigue expects weird things to happen once they step off the Long Road. Getting lost? Sure. Cursed by Faeries? Embarrassing, but bearable. Strange wilderness beasts? We were hoping to run into some, actually.

There's one particular area of the forest where the pedestrian weirdness takes a more sinister turn. The trees here are black and twisted, their dry branches decked with hanging moss. Low-lying fog pools in the dank hollows between the trees, and off in the distance, wolves howl. That's how you know you've entered the Bloodwoods.

The folk of Perend have this to say about the Bloodwoods, "the moment you realize you are in the Bloodwoods, you should turn right around and head back to a more sensible part of the magical forest." On the other hand, most adventurers feel that once you've gotten to the Bloodwoods, you've finally gotten to the, "good part," and the best thing to do is to boldly keep going forward.

Anyone who ventures deep into the Bloodwoods will find them to be a much more hostile place than the rest of the Forest of Bigue. The mundane, usually harmless forest animals have been warped into dagger-toothed killing machines. There's terribly little to forage: the plants that grow in the accursed groundwater are more likely to make you sick than to sustain you, and the previously mentioned, formerly

mundane animals are not only dangerous to hunt, but their meat is, more often than not, lethally poisonous.

People who venture here must contend with an array of horrifying creatures, from mutated hell-beasts to assorted varieties of the undead to the groups of black-robed cultists that are somehow able to live here and worship their dark gods without getting killed by the fiends that call the Bloodwoods their home.

There is much speculation as to how this section of the forest became so perverse and corrupted with malignancy. It's commonly thought that a curse was laid upon the Bloodwood in antiquity. Another theory contends that an object of great evil fell from the sky, burying itself in the heart of the Bloodwoods corrupting the surrounding area. Or, it could be all the cultists that are constantly running around and blaspheming things.

The Graveyards

There are lichyards, mausoleums, catacombs, dolmens, barrows, and ossuaries aplenty in the Bloodwoods. They have proven quite popular with both the local cultists and parties of adventurers. The cultists find the ambiance of the graveyards ideal for performing their dark rites, as well as convenient places for creating undead slaves. Adventurers like the graveyards because it's easy to find undead and cultists to kill and, if there's time, plenty of undisturbed graves that may yet contain treasure.

The Ghost Tower

The Ghost Tower is another frequent destination of adventurers braving the Bloodwoods. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, the Ghost Tower is located on the edge of the Bloodwoods and is comparatively easy to get to without dying. Secondly, the Ghost Tower is the home to Aelae, Perendimi's most infamous Necromancer. The price put on Aelae's head by the City Council of Perend is so huge that even the largest parties of adventurers could easily retire if they brought the Necromancer to justice.

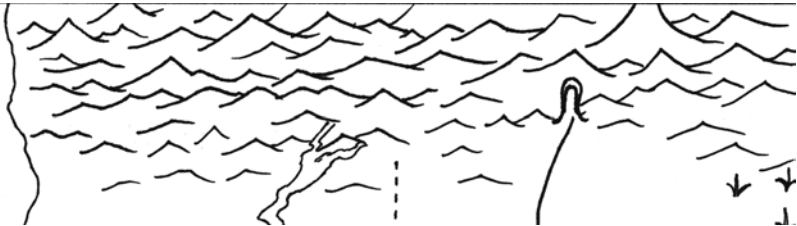
Unfortunately, Aelae has such a high price on her head because she's proven notoriously difficult to defeat. Her insidious tower is guarded by giant spiders and her hordes of the undead. It is surrounded by a field of beautiful, blood red roses that, while pretty, exude a perfume that causes hallucinations and waking nightmares. Its interior is defended by so many traps that it would make a kobold weep just to see it. As if that weren't bad enough, the Tower is haunted by the souls of hundreds of adventurers that have fallen to Aelae's wrath over the years.

You would think that the stories of these formidable defenses would warn people off of trying to enter the Ghost Tower, and you would be wrong. If anything, they seem to be encouraging, almost daring, adventurers to try to break into the Ghost Tower and defeat its master. Aelae seems to be fine with this, for now, considering that she has world shakingly powerful magic at her disposal and always seems to need more undead gardeners for her rosebushes.

The Razorback Mountains

This range of mountains forms the northernmost border of the Kingdom of Westerly. Little is known about the lands to the north of the mountains, mostly because few of the people who have survived the arduous trek over them have any energy left for a trip back.

The mountains are a favourite destination of young adventurers looking to make a name for themselves, because they are utterly crawling with monsters, from the tops of their jagged peaks to the deepest depths of their subterranean caverns. The mountains are also an exceptionally diverse ecosystem, home to just about any sort of monster you can possibly imagine, along with a few underground horrors that, for reasons of continued mental health, you shouldn't imagine at all.



There are two key features that add to the mountains' convenience for adventurers, both of which were brought about by Most Holy Edicts of one or more of Westerly's gods. In the first place, you can't throw a rock in the mountains without hitting a shepherd's hut, mountain town, or wandering trader. This makes it extremely unlikely that a band of adventurers, no matter how ill-equipped or unprepared, will ever die of exposure or have to eat one another to survive.

The second, and more notable feature, is that the monsters in the Razorback Mountains sort themselves by size.

The Three Foot Range, which is just one step up from the Northernmost Plains, is inhabited by various creatures that are no more than three feet tall. The various Goblin tribes make up the majority of the inhabitants, but the Kobold Nation maintain their home in the Three Foot Range as well. Frequently forgotten, and quite bitter about it, are the Dwarves of the Dwarven City of Mendebaldean. The Three Foot

Range is ideal for the novice adventurer because the short monsters aren't particularly dangerous or threatening, though the gold tends to be rather slim.

Anything that's more than three feet tall but not much over six feet tall resides in the Craggy Foothills, more commonly known as the Six Foot Range. These hills are sharper and much less hospitable than the gently rolling Three Foot Range. Novice adventurers who get too full of themselves may clamber up one of the many rocky paths into the Foothills, only to find themselves surrounded by savage tribes of Orcs, Hobgoblins, Rockoliths, and Half-Ogres. Luckily, there are quite a few average-sized human hermits who dwell within the Foothills, and they can be relied upon to give shelter, comfort, and advanced first aid to weary travelers.

Those adventurers who are brave enough and have purchased enough climbing gear, may venture into the more inhospitable High Crags, called the Really Big Hills by the locals. Nestled between the sheer drops, icy cliff faces, and too-narrow ledges, are the caves of monsters that are between six and twelve feet tall. There are Ogres, Trolls and other creatures that the tallest human would have to look up to.

If you're an adventurer who hasn't had quite enough of a challenge, and who doesn't mind feeling constantly lightheaded, you can always ascend to the Lofty Peaks. This is the home of three warring clans of Giants, a few tribes of Cyclopes, some Titans, and one or two rather cranky Dragons. All of these creatures are between twelve and sixteen feet tall, and can casually step on you without noticing.

For those who wish to test their mettle not upon the mountains, but beneath them, a similar rule applies. The Warrens beneath the Three Foot Range contain subterranean creatures no longer than three feet in any direction. Beneath the Warrens are the Mazy Caverns, where unimaginable horrors up to eight feet long slither and crawl. Those that discover the ancient staircases left behind by some Lost Race can feel free to descend into the Lower Dimness, where twelve foot long monstrosities shamble through dusty ruins.

If you want to go lower than that, feel free to do so. However, most of your companions will be more than happy to stay where they are. They're also keeping the torches.

The Halls of Mendebaldean

Mendebaldean is the greatest of the dwarven strongholds. It is most commonly referred to as the City of Dwarves because humans lack imagination. Since Indius is called the City of Elves, the humans of Westerly felt that they should call any city that has Dwarves the City

of Dwarves. Dwarves find this nickname of their stronghold to be both silly and redundant, and some Dwarven cartographers have taken to applying the label, “City of Humans,” to every other city in Westerly, including Indius.

Mendebaldean is a feat of Dwarvish ingenuity and engineering that is many thousands of years old. Though its entrance can be found in the Three Foot Range, much of the city is housed within the living rock of the Craggy Foothills, where the entrance is guarded by ornately carved stone doors more than sixty feet tall. This is a clever exploitation of a legal loophole, since it allows the Dwarves to get around the decree of The Warrior and live outside of their recommended height range, because technically their entrance is in the Three Foot Range.

The inner galleries and plazas of Mendebaldean are as huge as the entrance doors, with vaulted ceilings and massive colonnades. In the more widely-traveled areas of the stronghold, these spaces are lit by artfully placed and cultivated colonies of glow moss. In more private areas, the upper reaches of the halls are left shrouded in quiet shadow.

Many a first-time visitor to Mendebaldean has thought it odd that dwarves, who are roughly three feet tall, seem to favor living spaces that seem more suited to the Giants and Titans of the upper Razorbacks. Bringing such an observation up to one of the dwarves is an action likely to elicit quite a bit of guttural muttering and icy stares upon the commenter’s midsection. Most questioners understand that they’ve crossed a line and keep quiet, others that continue might find themselves having to deal with a lot of angry folk looking to pummel that very midsection.

The greatest example of this lack of understanding came from the great elven Sage, Kwimbitz. Upon his first visit to Mendebaldean, he commented on the fact that the ceilings were far too high to be practical for dwarves to build, let alone live under. The silence that followed was unheeded by the Sage who continued to ponder that if the Dwarves wanted to live in open, airy places, should give up living under a rock and build their city out-of-doors, like civilized people.

Kwimbitz is rather vague as to what happened after that. He mentions that there might have been a riot, but he couldn’t be too sure since he lost consciousness quickly and was out for over fourteen hours.

The Feet

Two trunkless legs--all that remain of an ancient statue--stand upon a plinth on Yeegher’s Tor, the tallest and best known of the Three Foot Range’s many hills. No one knows what the statue was built to commemorate, and no one living is capable of reading the strange

writings carved upon the plinth. Dwarves that have been asked about the statue have merely shrugged their shoulders. They know that they didn't build it (the proportions are all wrong), but they have no idea who did and don't really care to find out.

"The Feet" serve as a convenient landmark for those brave souls attempting an expedition into the Razorback Mountains. Many a planning meeting at a White Griffon Tavern has ended with the following exchange:

"Where will I find you?"

"Oh, I'll be standing beside the Feet. You can't miss me."

Once the Feet became known as a rallying place for adventurers, it didn't take long for enterprising merchants to set up shops around the statue. Known unofficially as the Carbuncle Market, these shopkeepers do a brisk trade in mining equipment, climbing gear, cold weather clothing, and a wide variety of hot drinks. There have even been rumors that the White Griffon Company may be opening a franchise location near the Feet, once they work out the trading rights with the local Dwarf clan.

The Crack of Eldfjall

Eldfjall is the Kingdom's most famous, and most active, volcano. It can be seen from miles off, thanks to the plume of black smoke that continuously issues from its crater. It erupts once every decade or so, raining down ash and hot rocks on any monsters that have become complacent and settled too close to its slopes.

The dwarves of Mendebaldean once venerated Eldfjall as a god, overawed as they were by the volcano's great heat and savage power. In modern times, most dwarves tend to worship the gods of the Westerlian Pantheon, or their own dwarven familial deities, though they still respect the volcano as a powerful natural force.

The Old Faith has not been entirely eradicated though, as teenage dwarves, looking for direction in their lives and wanting some independence from their parents, practice a heavily-modified version of the Old Ways. These religious observances involve traveling along the ancient dwarven road from Mendebaldean up to the mouth of the volcano. Once there, the dwarven youths sing praises to the volcano while dancing naked, until an answer is given by the Volcano. What that answer is varies from group to group, as none of them can come up with a unified idea of what the Volcano is trying to say and how Eldfjall is trying to say it.

When they have finished their rituals, the dwarven youths will cook boar steaks in the heat streaming from Eldfjall's vents, drink dwarven ale, and then finish up by ceremonially tossing their leavings into the magma pool below. Those dwarven teens that have participated in these rites find them deeply spiritual and life-affirming, in ways the non-initiated wouldn't understand.

Angar Falls

There are many waterfalls in the Razorback Mountains, but this is the waterfall. It pours out from a mountain lake high up in the Lofty Peaks, crashing down with thunderous force into a basin in the Craggy Foothills, which then continues running at full speed until it pours down into the Three Foot Range as the Irete Falls. It is truly an awesome sight to behold, and adventurers come from all corners of Westerly just to see it, and to pick through the bones and other scraps that litter the shores of the basin. The waterfall, while being an impressive natural wonder, doubles as a waste disposal system for the Titans who live far above.

Adventurers who are not satisfied digging through the garbage of Titans for the occasional discarded bauble can always try to brave the waters of the falls themselves. Those that can withstand the pounding water will find the main entrance of the massive Angar Complex, located in a secret cavern just behind the falls. The complex is mostly unexplored, since cutting through the falls is hard. There are rumours of a great treasure and a lost civilization behind the falls, prizes that are only waiting for those who can make it through the freezing, pounding water from Angar Falls.

The Great Eastern Marsh

The Great Eastern Marsh is the very large swamp that forms the easternmost border of the Kingdom of Westerly. It is widely known to locals as an extremely unpleasant place, full of brackish pools, sucking mud, and clouds of blood-sucking insects with proboscises sharp enough to penetrate even the sturdiest plate armor.

The Marsh teems with all manner of fauna. One need only venture a short distance into the Marsh in the early evening to be practically deafened by the buzzing of bugs, the peeps of frogs, the calls of a hundred different species of birds, and the screams for help from one or more adventurers trapped and sinking in pits of Rapacious Sand.

There is but one reliable road through the Marsh--if by reliable one means a road that is plagued by flooding, washouts, overgrowth, and swamp drake migrations. The Swamp Hollow Road departs from Swampgate and wends its way through bog and fen before finally

leaving the Marsh far in the east to arrive in the dry, dusty plains of the Eastern Empire. Few who have made the trek through the Marsh to that strange land have thought it was worth all the trouble.

Despite being an unforgiving landscape full of disease, parasites, savage creatures, and death, the Great Eastern Marsh has a surprisingly deep and complex political history. Westerly and the Eastern Empire have, in the past at least, gone to war over which nation holds dominion over the Marsh.

The battles for control over the Marsh are protracted and difficult, considering that they are most often waged deep within the Marsh itself. Throughout the course of history, many a Westerlian battalion has marched along the Swamp Hollow Road--their numbers dwindling thanks to mosquito-borne infections, dysentery, and lack of interest--to square off against a similarly depleted Imperial Legion. Sword blows would ring out on shields, and arrows would fly extremely slowly through the thick clouds of bugs.

In the end, only one nation can be the victor. And to the victor goes the right to force the loser to add the territory of the Great Eastern Marsh to their nation. The loser must attempt to manage it as best as they can, until such time, through contest of arms, they might force the other nation to take the Marsh back.

For more than a generation, the Marsh has been a province of the Eastern Empire, and the people of Westerly like that just fine. They hope that it will be many years yet before the Immortal Empress tries to force the deed to the Marsh back into the hands of the Stout King.

The City of Swampgate

The city of Swampgate is located on the border of Zakid and Perendimi. If it were any other city, its ownership would be hotly contested by the two duchies. Since Swampgate is built within spitting distance of the Great Eastern Marsh, each duchy is perfectly content to let the other one lay claim to it.

Despite what opinions Westerlians might hold about the Marsh itself, anyone who has been to Swampgate admits that the city is pretty darn impressive. Since there's no dry land to speak of, most of Swampgate is built upon raised platforms, whose tar-covered wooden pylons are stuck deep within the black, slimy muck of the Marsh. This keeps most of the city reasonably dry and also divides it into two rather distinct zones, both of which offer amusements aplenty to the wandering adventurer.

Ontop

Ontop refers to everything in Swampgate that has been placed on top of the platforms. It is a bustling maze of interlinked rope bridges, wooden walkways, and the occasional, hastily-placed plank. The buildings are made up of marsh grasses, which have been woven into thick sheets and tied to frames constructed of poles from the willow trees that grow in the area. Despite the fact that all of Ontop is made up of kindling, fires aren't common. Everything is so damp in Swampgate that nothing can sustain a flame for long enough to burn anything down.

The Peat Guild

Peat: An accumulation of partially decayed vegetable matter, which forms in the bogs and moors near the Great Eastern Marsh. Once it's harvested and dried out, just about everyone in Swampgate uses it for either fuel or insulation. Fermento & Sons, the oldest distillery in the city, uses the smoke from peat fires to dry the ferns that form the basis of their famous tangy, tongue-tingling, fern beer.

Because peat is of critical importance to everyone in Swampgate, it is a heavily regulated substance that falls under the direct control of the Peat Guild. The Peat Guild has a hand in every aspect of peat production, from the specifications of the peat shovels used to dig up the peat to the tariffs and tolls that must be paid whenever peat is exported anywhere else in Westerly.

The Chapter House of the Peat Guild sits on a platform on the northern edge of Swampgate. This platform was once level with all the other surrounding platforms, which change from year to year because of the suction powers of the swamp, but in a display of the wealth and power of the Peat Guild, a secondary platform was built on top of the first, so that this double deck rises above even the high platform that houses Swampgate's mayor.

The Peat Guild sees itself as the unofficial protector of Swampgate, and this attitude is reflected in many of its business dealings. Outside interests looking to purchase peat, or peat-related products, must be willing to pay through the nose or agree to some rather ridiculous trade agreements before the Peat Guild will do business with them. Anyone found illegally harvesting peat, or managing peat in any way other than those specifically outlined in the Swampgate Bylaws for General Peat Management and Production, is subject to heavy fines, imprisonment, and worse.

There are also the rumors that the Peat Guild wields its power and influence in increasingly disturbing and extralegal ways. Murmurs that filter up from Duskward hint that the Guildmasters of Peat see many

things, including rude foreigners, troublesome inspectors from the Crown, and other Guilds as threats to the security of Swampgate.

The Platform of the Gourmand

This very large platform stands in a prominent place near the center of Swampgate. It houses an open-air marketplace that is dedicated solely to the sale of food and drink. The aromas from the Platform of the Gourmand permeate the air above the city, beckoning travelers with the promise of charred, heavily-spiced meat and clay pots overflowing with fern beer.

The whole market has been declared a holy site by the faithful of the Gourmand, and visitors there will note his Priests making their rounds day and night, accepting generously offered free samples from the many stalls of the market. Those who are not of the Gourmand's faith will have to pay to sample the market's delicacies, which range from common fare to bug kabobs and frog entrails lightly braised in a sauce made from the vitreous humors of piranha eye.

The Temple of the Mosquito God

If one stays in Swampgate for any length of time, one will eventually decide that worshipping the Mosquito God is something that's worth doing. While many of the faithful have small shrines to the God in their homes and businesses, anyone who needs more direct intercession from the God comes here, to his great temple.

The Temple of the Mosquito God is constructed on one of the tallest platforms in all of Swampgate. The edge of the platform is ringed by pools of dark, stagnant water. Virtually every horizontal surface, apart from the narrow walkways for supplicants, are covered by clusters of thick yellow candles that are continuously replaced by acolytes and give off a cloyingly sweet odor when lit.

The perfume of these candles hangs heavy in the air, but not so heavy as the clouds of Mosquitoes that have free reign of the temple. Despite their deafening, omnipresent whine, and despite their tendency to partake of the involuntary blood sacrifice offered by supplicants, the mosquitoes are never harmed or even swatted at. Indeed, it is said that to cause injury to one of the Exalted Bugs In Attendance To His Divine Proboscis is a grievous offense, punishable by the Curse.

Supplicants, with heads bowed and faces covered by dense netting pleasing to the God, make offerings of sweet treats on the High Holy Altar. They offer prayers to the God for continued protection from insect-borne diseases and in the hopes that the God will show mercy.

Duskward

Duskward is the city beneath Ontop, located entirely underneath the platforms of upper Swampgate. Here the sun almost never shines, and the air is thick and humid. What light there is comes from carefully collected fireflies, which are encased in globes of hand blown glass and hung from the thick timbers of the platforms above.

Visitors to Duskward have remarked that this portion of the city is far less pleasant than Ontop, but what it lacks in natural light and relative dryness it more than makes up for in privacy. Many a dark sorcerer, misunderstood bandit-type, disgruntled noble looking for the simpler life, as well as the more typical sort of anti-social misanthrope, has found sanctuary here in the dimly-lit pathways and anonymous buildings.

Out of respect for everyone's shrouded pasts, people who go out-of-doors in Duskward take pains to neither look at nor talk to anyone else they happen to encounter. This does cause some bumps and bruises, since people who studiously avoid looking at anything while walking around in the dark tend to bang into buildings or one another, but long-term residents all say that it's worth it.

The Canoerey

If you ask anyone in Duskward for tips on how to safely navigate the Marsh, they'll probably just ignore you. If you're especially persistent, persuasive, or lucky, you might find someone who is more friendly than suspicious. They will tell you that tromping through the muck or trying to navigate the Swamp Hollow Road is a fool's game. They will tell you that the best thing for you to do is to buy yourself a canoe. They will then depart down a dark alley before you can thank them.

The Canoerey is the largest and most reputable canoe retailer in Duskward. Their canoes are made of the scaly hides of one or more reptiles stretched taut over a wooden frame. Despite the apparent flimsiness of their construction, the canoes are extremely durable, and can easily carry two adventurers in full armor, along with all their sharp and unsheathed weapons, without sinking or being punctured.

The Silver Nightshade Tavern

There was an attempt to open a White Griffon Tavern in Duskward. It seemed a logical choice, considering that there were two franchise locations in Ontop, both of which did quite a bit of business. Plans for the new tavern were abandoned, however, when the architects sent to Duskward encountered suspicious and hostile locals who muttered

vague threats under their breath. The denizens of that murk-shrouded place went on to explain that they already had a perfectly nice tavern, thanks very much, which had a much more appropriate ambiance as compared to the White Griffon and was much better about respecting people's privacy, if you know what I mean.

That tavern is the Silver Nightshade. Located on an island beneath the Platform of the Gourmand, it has dealt discretely with the populace of Duskward for more than a hundred years. No bards ever sing in the Silver Nightshade, and the fitful fire that burns in the hearth never does more than smolder, much less crackle merrily. The ceilings are low and the narrow booths are numerous and draped in shadow, perfect for enjoying a quiet meal or a clandestine rendezvous.

The current proprietor of the Silver Nightshade is Elmiranta Vargas, a petite, dark-haired woman who serves drinks with a slight smirk and knows better than to ask any questions.

Out In the Marsh

Beyond the city of Swampgate lies the Marsh proper, with more peril, excitement, and mud than any adventurer could adequately handle given two lifetimes, let alone one. There have been efforts made by both Westerly and the Eastern Empire to settle the Great Eastern Marsh. The civic engineers of the two great nations explained it thusly: If one could get people to live in the Marsh, one could finally have someone to tax so that all the roadwork and infrastructure that was necessary to make the filthy mess habitable could be put into place.

The Ruins

Those who have wandered the Marsh have noticed the presence of curious ruins, which are all that remain of a lost kingdom (or series of kingdoms) that ruled over the Marsh in an unrecorded era. Many of these ruins are little more than a half-sunken cornice, or a shattered column, or a giant stone head crowned with moss and creeper vines.

Some Marsh explorers have reported much more extensive ruins located in the deepest, darkest parts of the swamp. They describe ancient ziggurats that loom over the savage fens, curious tunnels that lead down into inky depths, and massive slabs covered with indecipherable pictographic writing.

Unfortunately for adventurers, for every legitimate expedition setting out from Swampgate to explore the ruins, there are a dozen charlatans hawking forged maps that promise an easy path to pyramids covered with beaten gold. Even if adventurers do manage to throw in their lot with a group of well-pedigreed scholars and treasure hunters, the

expedition leaders, more often than not, have unwittingly purchased a forged map from these same charlatans.

While it is not impossible for adventurers to find and explore the vast ruins of long-lost civilizations, it is much more likely that they will be sent on a wild goose chase through the Great Eastern Marsh. A chase that may result only in swampy feet, a sampling of insect-borne diseases, and an overwhelming desire to bludgeon any cartographers or dealers in “mysterious” curios that they happen across in the future.

Imperial Toll Plaza

Midway along the Swamp Hollow Road stands the Imperial Toll Plaza. This tiny outpost of civilization stands as a testament to the skill and determination of the Eastern Empire. It also serves to remind the folk of Westerly that it is the Empire’s turn to be caretakers of the Marsh, and that they’re taking their duty seriously, darn it, even if they hate every single minute of it.

The Toll Plaza is fortified like a garrison, with sturdy walls, parapets and gates. The Empire charges a nominal fee to enter the Toll Plaza, which can be doubled, or even tripled, if those seeking entry into the Plaza are being chased by a swamp drake or a group of angry Lizardfolk. Once inside, travelers may remain as long as they like, and there is no fee to leave.

The Toll Plaza contains many of the comforts and amenities common to the Eastern Empire. There is a money changer, where travelers can exchange the Gold of Westerly for the weird, I-shaped coins of the Empire. There is a small restaurant with a multi-lingual menu advertising all manner of spicy foods. Next to that is a market, where travelers from either realm can buy wine, rations, clothing, and weaponry tax-free. There’s also a bathhouse, a gambling hall, an expensively clean Inn, and an office where travelers can get their documents stamped and put into order.

In the middle of the Toll Plaza stands an impressive statue, covered in gold-leaf, of a stern-faced woman. She faces the Westerly Gate with her arms outstretched and her hair flowing in wild ringlets to her waist. Any native of the Empire is happy to explain that this is one of many statues of the Immortal Empress, the divine ruler of the Eastern Empire. The statue is not merely an edifice dedicated to the glory of the Empress, but a conduit through which the Empress can project her divine consciousness and power.

On very rare occasions, the statue glows with horrible radiance and a voice of fire and steel speaks in the Imperial tongue to the Empress’s cowering subjects. One Westerlian merchant, impressed at the

spectacle, asked a kowtowing Imperial subject to translate the words of the Empress. “Her Massiveness has graced us with Her presence to explain that all travel documentation must be stamped with the Senate seal and not with the Imperial seal,” said the man, before falling over in a dead faint.

The Plaza is presided over by Toll Commander Sextiminus and his garrison of Imperial Soldiers. While on duty, the men and women of the Seventh Imperial Travel Authority dress in segmented armor and white and gold cloaks. These cloaks, it should be noted, somehow remain spotless despite the omnipresent filth of the Marsh. When they’re not on duty, the soldiers dress in loose tunics and sandals, drink spiced wine, and argue over the rules of *lactae*, a dice game so complex that no Westerlian has ever been able to understand it.

The Eastern Empire

Many centuries ago, before Westerly was anything more than a collection of mud huts by the sea, a great empire arose in the east. It had its origins as a small, brutally warlike kingdom surrounded by other small and brutally warlike kingdoms. These kingdoms fought fruitless border wars for generations until one of them, aided by the powerful Immortal Sorceress, began to gobble up its neighbors and dominate the region.

Were it not for the putrescent marshlands to the west, the implacable mountains to the north, and the deadly desert to the east, the Immortal Sorceress’ burgeoning empire would have easily grown to have overrun the entire continent. No army could match the ferocity of her legionnaires in combat, and no city, no matter how well fortified, had even the slightest hope of withstanding the Immortal Sorceress’ magical might.

Once all the neighboring kingdoms had either been sacked or preemptively sworn allegiance to the Sorceress’ forces to avoid being sacked, the Immortal Sorceress changed her name to the Immortal Empress. Her first decree, after the name change, was that all the territory she now controlled would henceforth and forevermore be called the Eastern Empire. The Immortal Empress, now tired of conquest, returned to her great city of Ekialdea and put her fearsome intellect to work to stabilize her new Empire and prevent any rag-tag bands of plucky freedom fighters from gaining enough popular support to overthrow her.

In order to maintain the peace, the Immortal Empress enforced a policy of openness and tolerance upon her subjects. The myriad conquered kingdoms could still have all their gods, their art, their music, their unique style of dress, and their distinctive hats. It is for this reason that, today, the empire is a sprawling mass of cultures and peoples all

more or less free to be unique individuals while still tightly controlled by the iron fist of the Immortal Empress and her Senate of boot-licking toadies.

The Immortal Empress maintains control in several ways. The first, and most obvious, is her gargantuan army of highly-trained legionnaires. Everyone in the Empire is required to serve for at least a year in the Imperial Army. It is this training that helps to unify the people, and instills in them both a sense of discipline and a deep fear of ever rousing the ire of the Empress. These soldiers, attired in their segmented armor and brown cloaks, can be found virtually everywhere, day or night, marching in lockstep and ready to fulfill the Immortal Empress's slightest whim. The Empress takes such good care of her soldiers that, following the proscribed year of service, the military has devised a lottery system to decide who will be allowed to stay and serve, and who will be forced to return to their previous life.

The second method of control implemented by the Empress is a unification of language, currency, and measurements. While the disparate people of the Empire are permitted to make use of their own regional languages, money, and half-furlough measuring sticks, the Immortal Empress and her Senate have worked hard to create an Imperial Standard that must be used in all business transactions and in other aspects of public life.

The language of the Empire is based on the original language of the Empress's kingdom, with words and concepts from other languages pressed into service whenever the need arises. The current language is an ever-changing polyglot of dialects that can be understood by most of the people in the Empire most of the time. It is not uncommon, however, for someone in the northeasternmost part of the Empire to talk to someone from the western Empire and only understand about one word in five, or viceversa.

The currency of the Empire is known as the lasto, a copper coin cut in the shape of an "I," with a little hole drilled into the top. The hole allows the citizens to wear their money as necklaces and bracelets, both for convenience and for showing off their wealth.

The measuring system of the Empire is based upon the personal measurements of the Immortal Empress herself. For example, an Imperial Foot (8.4 inches), is equal to the length of the Empress's left foot. There is a smaller unit of measurement called the Thumb, which is equivalent to the tip of the Empress's left thumb, and a larger one called the Walk, which is how far the Empress can travel in one day without the use of reality-warping magic. The Empress is also responsible for a measurement of volume called the Emp, which is described as the smallest space into which She can comfortably squeeze.

These attempts to build unity and maintain the peace have served the Immortal Empress well over the centuries. They have been such a rousing success that any two individuals plucked at random from opposite sides of the empire--despite their widely differing customs, gods, language, and fashions--will both swear eternal loyalty to the Immortal Empress and her Senate and will gladly lay down their lives in the defense of the same.

This sort of attitude makes any Westerlian traveling abroad in the Eastern Empire more than a little bit nervous. This is because people from Westerly tend to have a much more relaxed attitude about everything, and regard the fanatical devotion of the Imperial Emperresses' subjects as just a bit too unseemly and intense. Well, that and the feeling of unease that one naturally gets when one is surrounded by an entire nation of people who would conquer you and your loved ones in a heartbeat if the Great Eastern Marsh were to suddenly disappear tomorrow.

The Archipelago of Outremere



The islands of the Archipelago are located across the Ocean to the west of Westerly. The islands that make up the Archipelago are so numerous that new islands are discovered each year. A cottage industry has formed around the exploration and mapping of these new islands. Since many of these islands are inhabited by either strange peoples or dangerous monsters, a secondary cottage industry has sprung up to find expeditions that have become lost and return with any artifacts or fragments of information that they can acquire.

Of the numerous island nations in the Archipelago, only a few are known by name to the insular folk of Westerly.

The Pirate Island

If you have a bunch of widely-flung island nations, they will have developed some sort of boats. These boats will be full of trade goods and travellers visiting different lands. These boats may become the target of pirates. Westerly has it's own set of pirates that live in the Archipelago of Outremere. A few of them are the dastardly, kill

everyone and take their stuff pirates. However, the most prosperous and well known pirates are the Singing Pirates and they are led by their Pirate Queen. What has made them famous are their large stage and dance shows that awe their audience into giving up their cargo. All the bloodshed is staged and all the violence perfectly choreographed.

As the secular and spiritual leader, The Pirate Queen doesn't stray far from Pirate Island. She has a hands off approach to governing her island, as long as its residents pay tribute to her, but she does have a soft spot for a good soft shoe and a great set of pipes. Petitions to her are presented by musical number, often created at the Port of Pirates, the main port on the island. In fact, there is a whole collection of playwrights and lyricists who hire themselves out to people looking to get the Pirate Queen's attention. Some of the better petitions are modified by the Queen herself to be used by her subjects on the high seas.

The Isle of the Necromancer

This gloomy crag of an island was once home to a byzantine realm ruled by ancient kings and ritualistic laws. That is, until the Terror came, laying low king and commoner alike with curses and plagues most foul. What was once a mighty kingdom is now a dusty sepulcher, its only inhabitants the bones and mummified remains of its former citizens.

The sole living inhabitant of the isle is the necromancer Phr'ed, who has set himself up as the de facto ruler of the island, and has used his prodigious magical abilities to animate many of the former inhabitants as his undead servants. They shuffle through the dusty streets, moaning quietly as they struggle to complete the simple tasks given to them by Phr'ed. Under his watchful eye, some small portions of the once great kingdom have begun to be restored, though significant reconstruction will require more powerful magic, more undead, or a higher quality of worker.

Very few people dare to set foot on the Isle of Phr'ed. There's just something off-putting about an island inhabited almost solely by undead.

Chapter 4

The Interactions

where we discover how things are done ... badly

The First (and Only) Rule You Need

There are as many ways to do things in role-playing games as there are role-playing games themselves. Some games try to emulate reality as granularly as possible, using lots of esoteric rules, charts that refer to other charts, and pages of theoretical mathematics. The reasoning behind this is that real life is pretty complex, and crazy stuff can happen.

Yes, it's true, most of the time you'll walk from point A to point B and get there just fine. But, depending on the weather, wind speed, time of day, ambient light, traction of your boots, your Dexterity, and the elasticity factor of the cartilage in your knees, there is a chance (however small), that you could fumble your Walk: Advanced Sauntering I roll, which will send you right to the Critical Perambulating Mishap Table, where you find that you not only shatter both your ankles, but that you also manage to fall and bash your forehead into the stomach of the wizard walking next to you. Then he rolls and finds out that the impact from your head ruptures his liver and both of his kidneys.

It should be obvious by now that Critical! isn't that sort of game. Pretty much everything that you try to do that's more complicated than sliding off a bar stool involves two things: Consulting the Success Number table and rolling 2d6.

For the Bartender: Calculating Be Hit

When you want to do something challenging, the Bartender will give you a Be Hit number. This number is covered in more detail in the section on Challenges, but all you really need to know is that a Be Hit number represents how hard it is to deal with whatever Monster, Trap, or other element that you're faced with. The higher the Be Hit, the harder the challenge.

For Example:

Tara wants to chop an Iron Golem in its ferrous ankle. The Iron Golem has a *Be Hit* of 3.

The Bartender may decide that a challenge is more difficult because of extenuating circumstances. (Yes, the wall is tricky to climb, and the fact that you're covered in salad dressing isn't helping matters). In cases like these, the Bartender will have you add a Difficulty Number to the Be Hit.

For Example:

Barnabas is ensnared in a goblin net trap. He wants to use magic to free himself from the net. The net has a *Be Hit* of 3 normally, but because Barnabas is trapped inside of it, the Bartender rules that he'll have a much harder time making the arcane gestures that activate his spells. The Bartender gives the task a Difficulty of 3, giving Barnabas a total *Be Hit + Difficulty* of 6.

For the Player: Calculating To Hit

Once the Bartender gives you your Be Hit, you will need to determine your chance To Hit. To do this, add your most appropriate stat to the following:

Any One Skill: Provided, of course, that you can convince the Bartender that your skill is appropriate to the situation.

Any Habits: Again, they have to be relevant to the situation at hand. Remember that Habits that would hinder you subtract from your To Hit.

The Bonuses of Items: If you're using an Item (or if you've quaffed a potion) that would help you out, you add that bonus to your To Hit.



Once you've gotten that number, look it up in the **Stat + Skill + Bonuses** column on the left of the chart. Then, follow along its row until you get to the column that matches the **Be Hit + Difficulty** the Bartender just gave you. The number listed is your **Success Number**.

To make it easier we've included a handy, dandy chart. Not that you need it, but some people like that sort of thing.

		Be Hit + Difficulty									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Stat + Skill + Bonuses (or To Hit)	1	7	8	9	10	11	12	12	12	12	12
	2	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	12	12	12
	3	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	12	12
	4	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	12
	5	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	6	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	7	2	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	8	2	2	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	9	2	2	2	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	10	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	5	6	7
	11	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	5	6
	12	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	5
	13	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	4
	14	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3
	15	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

For Example:

Tara has a Strength of 5, as well as the skill Unmatched Swordfighter skill (Hurt Others + 2). She has her Sword of Super Strength, which gives her a +1 to her Unmatched Swordfighter skill. Her total is an 8. Looking that up on the chart, we find that Tara has a Success Number of 2 against a Be Hit + Difficulty of 3.

Barnabas has a Smarts of 6 and the skill A Wide Assortment of Practical Magical Spells (Cheating + 3), for a total of 9. A quick check of the chart reveals that Barnabas has a Success Number of 4 against a Be Hit + Difficulty of 6.

Rolling the Dice

Once you have a Success Number, all that remains is to roll some dice. You only need two six-sided dice to play Critical!. Just roll them and add the results together. If you meet or beat your Success Number, you do whatever it was you were trying to do.

No matter how easy or daunting a challenge is, the highest a Success Number will be is 12 and the lowest it can go is 2.

It should be noted that you can always tell the Bartender you want to roll to see if you can do something. Want to tell if it's sunny or rainy? Roll 2d6! Want to stab that small woodland creature and eat it for dinner? Roll 2d6! Undead Necromancer giving you the blues? Roll 2d6! That's right! Even in the face of impossible tasks, unbeatable odds, the laws of physics, and common sense, you can always smile winningly at the Bartender, cup your dice in your hands, and say, "I'd like to roll for it!"

Be warned: If you ask for a roll and manage to fail it, you should be prepared for the Bartender to get a little malicious.

Also be warned: Things get interesting when you roll exactly what you need to succeed. We'll talk about that in a minute. Trust us, it will be fun though it might depend on your definition of the word, "fun."

For Example:

Tara really wants to stab that Iron Golem! She lets out a war whoop, readies her sword, and rolls some dice. Since her Success Number is a 2, she's guaranteed to succeed. She rolls a 9 and smacks the Iron Golem!

Barnabas attempts to magic himself out of the net. He needs to roll a 4 or more to succeed. He rolls a 5. Barnabas teleports himself three feet to the left. It's not terribly exciting, but he's free.

Lending a Helping Hand

Sometimes, one of your adventuring companions will try to do something, and you will decide to help them. That's terribly nice of you! Here's how that works.

You can only help one person at a time, and helping them takes pretty much all of your concentration.

If you are able to justify your aid to the Bartender, you get to make a roll using the same Be Hit number that the person you are trying to help is rolling against. The difference is that you must use one of your Help

Others skills and the appropriate stat.

If you succeed, the person you're helping gets to add your Help Others skill to their chance to succeed. This makes helping out really powerful, because they essentially get to use your skill like one of their skills. They can use it to give any stat a bonus, including Damage. However, in the event that your companion rolls a Critical! (the information on Criticals! is coming up) with your assistance, both of you are affected by the Critical! If your ally fails, then you're both affected by the failure as well.

If the Bartender rules that your skill isn't helpful, that doesn't mean you can't try to lend a hand, it just means you get underfoot.

If several people try to help out at the same time (and you'll know when they do by the din of loudly shouted advice) nothing happens other than that your companion, who is trying really hard to do whatever it is they're trying to do, feels a bit pressured and smothered and not at all in control of their personal space.

For Example:

Marten is trying to pick a lock on a dungeon door. He's got the skills and he's got the tools, but this is a really impressive lock, and he's not sure that he can do it.

Daphadiana unstraps her theorbo and tells the Bartender that she is going to try and play a soothing, lock picking melody in order to help Marten to get into the right frame of mind to pick the lock.

The Bartender is a bit dubious, but Daphadiana's player insists that there is a fine, long-standing tradition of bards being able to give numerical bonuses to all sorts of tasks through the power of their music. The Bartender concedes and allows Daphadiana to make a roll against the same difficulty number as Marten would be rolling against. She succeeds and thus allows Marten to add Daphadiana's Shred on the Theorbo (or Other Stringed Instrument) of 3 to his chance to succeed.

Bribing Your Way To Success

So you figure out a way to use your highest Stat, convince the Bartender to add your best skill, and discover that the Monster's Be Hit is such a comically low number that you're sure that success is pretty much guaranteed. Smiling confidently, you roll your dice and...

Oh, look, you failed. Fantastic.

But don't despair! There's a way to change that depressing failure into a bright and shiny success. It's bribery. And lots of it. All you need to do is give 4 gold to the Bartender to gain a +1 to the result of your dice

roll. This can get ridiculously expensive if you miss a roll by more than a point or two, so you have to ask yourself if it's really worth it. If it is, you can fork over that gold and succeed at whatever you were trying.

Keep in mind that if you spend gold to increase your roll enough so that you succeed, this is treated as if you rolled exactly what you needed. If you want to know why this might be a problem, you'll need to keep reading.

Just so that we're clear, you can only Bribe Your Way to Success if you have failed at your roll. As soon as you've managed to get to the target number...well, you'll see.

For Example:

Angelique leaps across a thousand-foot-deep chasm, confident that her Strength, her athletic prowess, and her borderline psychotic need for excitement will ensure her success. Her Success Number is 4. She rolls a 3.

Angelique takes a quick glance down at the staggering drop beneath her and decides that she would like to not fall that far, thank you very much. She plunks 4 Gold into the outstretched hand of the Bartender and adds +1 to her roll, making it a 4.

Woo hoo!

Critical!

You get a Critical! when the number you roll on 2d6 is equal to your Success Number. That means that, no matter how easy or difficult something is, you always have a chance to score a Critical!

When you roll a Critical!, something really good happens. Not only did you skewer that zombie on your sword, but you stabbed it so hard that you also impaled the zombie standing immediately behind it. They're both dead. Undead. Re-dead. Whichever. Yay! The Bartender will decide and describe the wonderful thing that happens when you roll a Critical!

Also when you roll a Critical!, something really bad happens. Yes, sure, you got two zombies with one sword blow, but now your blade is wedged in one or both of their breastbones. To make matters worse, they're both toppling backward into a deep pit, so you have the choice of either letting go of (and losing) your sword, or falling with them into murky depths. Boo! The Bartender will decide and describe all the terrible things that happen when you roll a Critical!

Lucky for you, the Bartender isn't immune to bribery. If you want two really good things you can ask your Bartender what her price is. It may vary depending on how important a situation is, and how often she's been bribed already, but it is gold that is well spent in order to make this happen.

Be warned that the Bartender can always choose to refuse your bribe and let the bad thing occur. It never pays to annoy your Bartender.

For Example:

Daphadiana finds herself surrounded by a horde of Stinky Bugbears. She makes with the people skills, hoping that she can talk her way out of the situation. Numbers are added together and charts are consulted, and Daphadiana learns that she has a Success Number of 6.

She rolls 2d6 and gets a 6 exactly. Critical!

Yay! The Bugbears are so impressed with Daphadiana that they are willing to escort her back to the surface of the dungeon.

Boo! The Bugbear chieftain is suddenly smitten with Daphadiana. He proceeds to follow her around, making romantic gestures and punching other Bugbears who get too close to her.

Daphadiana is not too keen on having a possessive Bugbear following her around, so she bribes the Bartender with 1 gold. The Bugbear love connection disappears. Instead, the Bugbear Chieftain gives Daphadiana a token of gratitude: A magical amulet!

When the Bartender Rolls Dice

There will be times when the Bartender needs to roll dice. Usually this happens when the Bartender wants to have a monster hit the players. In cases like this, the Be Hit number is a player's appropriate Stat. If the Bartender wants to damage a player, the Be Hit might be the player's Strength or Sneak. If the Bartender wants to confuse players, the Be Hit could be the player's Smarts.

Once the Bartender decides what Stat becomes the Be Hit, the player may decide that they want to use a Skill, Habit, or Item to increase the Difficulty for the Bartender. Naturally, the player will have to make sure that their Skills, Habits, and Items are relevant to what the Bartender is trying to do.

The Bartender then cross-references the Success Table using the To Hit of the Monster -- or Trap, or what have you -- and rolls 2d6. The Bartender follows the same rules for succeeding, failing, and rolling a Critical! as the players do.

Note that when the Bartender Criticals!, the result is always one especially good thing and one especially bad thing for the Monster -- or Trap, or what have you -- in question. The Bartender cannot bribe themselves to make the Critical! do two good things. Such is the price of mostly limitless power.

Combat

There are a couple of extra rules that will come up in combat. These little provisos need to be clarified before people start harassing the Bartender about them.

Initiative is not based on a set of numbers, or a bunch of dice. Initiative is decided by who you are.

Unless the players are taken by surprised, tied up, stunned, or otherwise completely and utterly impaired, they always go first. The Bartender can use whatever method to figure out the order in which the players get to take their turn. We suggest pure whimsy, but your mileage may vary.

After the players go, the Monsters get to go. As a general rule, the weakest monsters always act first, followed by the next weakest, and so on, until the strongest monsters have taken their turns. Unless, of course, that makes no sense in your scenario, in which case the Monsters take their turns in whatever order the Bartender decides.

After all the monsters go, any helpful, non-monster NPCs get to take a turn.

Combat Rounds

This is an arbitrary unit of temporal measurement that helps to keep combat somewhat organized. A round lasts as long as it takes for every participant (both player and NPC) to take a turn. When that happens, the round ends and a new round begins, with the players taking their turns, followed by the Monsters, and so on.

Use as many rounds as you need to resolve combat.

Damage

Whenever an attack hits, the target subtracts the Damage Stat of the attacker from their Fortitude. If a Monster is reduced to zero (0) Fortitude or less they die, yielding up their shiny treasures.

Remember, you can use a skill to increase the amount of damage you deal instead of adding it to your chance To Hit. You can also use any nifty items that you may own to put the pain on the creepy creatures!

For Example:

In a previous example, we discovered that Tara has a Strength + Sword Skill + Sword Item Bonus of 8. She's rather glad that she is skilled in killing things with her sword, because a pack of Annoying Imps is crawling all over her. The Annoying Imps have a Be Hit of 4, which means that Tara must roll a 3 or more to hit them.

She rolls an 11. SMACK!

Tara's sword strikes an Imp, who has 3 Fortitude. Tara has a Damage Stat of 2, but her sword also gives her a +1 to Damage. This does enough damage to reduce the Imp's Fortitude to zero, killing it. Tara flings the broken body into the wall of the cavern as she prepares to strike down another of her assailants!

Area Effect Damage

Whenever a wizard, or a thief with a freakish love of explosives, goes on an adventure, there is an extremely high probability that they will try to blast a number of foes with a single attack.

Before you calculate the damage, you have to first figure out how big the attack is and how many foes could reasonably fit inside the blast radius. We're not going to give you hard-and-fast radii or circumferences here; we figure you can make satisfyingly large explosions on your own.

Then you have to determine if the attack hits everyone in the blast radius. If every Monster in the blast has the same difficulty to hit, and you roll high enough, then you hit all of them. If monsters have different difficulties to hit and you roll high enough to hit some and not others, then assume that the more agile/alert/nervous ones leap clear.

Now, take your total Damage and divide it up evenly between the Monsters affected by the blast. If you do less than 1 Damage per Monster, you don't hurt them at all, but you will terrify them badly enough so that they're likely to run, surrender, or scream really, really loudly. If you do more than 1 Damage per Monster, then they take that damage as normal.

For Example:

Barnabas's path is blocked by a pushcart manned by four goblins. The goblins harass Barnabas and try to get him to spend his Gold on key chains, statues, snowglobes, and other gimcrack souvenirs so that he can remember his visit to the Razorback Mountains. Try as he might, Barnabas cannot talk the goblins out of trying to sell him something.

"This is ridiculous!" he shouts. "Right, that does it. Fireball!"

The goblins are all really close together, so they'll all get hit by the searing ball of flame. He rolls and succeeds. Since all the goblins have the same difficulty to be hit, Barnabas hits them all.

Before attacking, Barnabas decided to hold his Magic Missiles, Fireballs, Lightning Bolts, Etc. Skill in reserve and apply its rank of 2 to the Damage of his fireball. He does, increasing to 4. This, divided evenly amongst the four goblins, causes them each to take a point of Damage. It also lights the cart on fire.

Barnabas continues on with his journey, while the goblins form a bucket brigade.

Taking Damage Like a Main Character

When Monsters reach zero Fortitude or less, they just die. Player characters, on the other hand, are too important to meet such a pedestrian fate. After all, if they die, the fun stops, and we can't have that! For this reason all player characters are subject to some special rules that ensure their survival.

If a character's Fortitude ever drops below zero, or below their current AC, whichever is higher, they fall unconscious. That's it. They're out. Good night. Beddy bye time. The character can't do anything for a number of rounds equal to the number of Fortitude points below 0, or below their current AC.

If the battle is still raging on once you've regained your senses, you'll be able to stagger back into the fight if you want. However, you'll be as weak as a kitten and just 1 Fortitude away from falling over again. If your Fortitude dropped below 0, you'll have 1 Fortitude. If you fell below your AC then you'll wake up with 1 more Fortitude than AC.

If the fighting stops before you can wake up, then your companions will spend a few minutes going through your things, checking out what cool gear you have, and incidentally taking care of your battered body. You'll wake up at 10 Fortitude and 0 AC, but you'll have donated money to the, "Get My Friends Richer" charity.

For Example:

Mabel, Angelique, and Marten had the bad luck of activating the cranky wizard's magical defenses. In layman's terms, this means they're being attacked by three Iron Golems. Though they fight valiantly, their attacks don't seem to bother the Iron Golems all that much. As they begin to fall back to regroup, the Iron Golems pummel the adventurers, doing 8 damage to each of them.

Mabel has been having a rough time in the dungeon, and only has 3 Fortitude remaining. She is reduced to -5 Fortitude and passes out. She'll remain unconscious for five rounds as she gathers her wits in Dreamland.

Angelique has 15 Fortitude, but she's been chugging potions like a dwarf (Urist would be so proud!), so her AC is now 10. The Iron Golem's savage heel smash reduces her to 7 Fortitude. She would have been okay, except for the fact that she's more than a little tipsy. Since her Fortitude is lower than her AC, she also passes out and will remain unconscious for 3 rounds.

Marten, who has always tried to be really careful, has 12 Fortitude. The damage from the Iron Golem's attack reduces his Fortitude to 4. Though badly wounded, he has the presence of mind to make himself as inconspicuous as he can. This is more difficult than you might think, considering his outrageous hat.

You'll lose as much Gold as you had rounds left before you woke up split between all your remaining conscious companions. It may not always split perfectly, but then that's something they have to sort out. You're still too busy dealing with the monstrous headache that those monstrous creatures just gave you.

Total Party Wipe

Sometimes, things just don't work out. The adventurers face more monsters than they can possibly slay, or inescapable death traps that they have inadvertently sprung, or the squamous and tentacled visage of the Ultimate Evil. There's just enough time for a desperate grab for a weapon, or a hand flung across the face, or a short cry to one or more distant mothers. A moment later, everyone in the party lays strewn in broken heaps.

When this happens the party wakes up somewhere safe, fully healed and rested. Maybe the Gods of the land smiled upon the adventurers' best efforts, believing that they were good enough to warrant another try. Maybe the wizard had that contingency spell in place that automatically teleports them out of the frying pan. Maybe the wandering healer, Dex Machina, stumbled upon the party's broken remains and took pity on them.

For Example:

Marten is the last adventurer standing, and is doing his best to fend off the assaults of three annoyed, animated, forty ton iron statues with naught but his puny rapier and the luck of his goddess. As one of the Iron Golems swings its massive leg to punt Marten into next week, Barnabas, Tara, and Urist make a timely entrance!

The battle continues and four rounds pass. Angelique wakes up with 11 Fortitude and 10 AC. She realizes that her companions are in need of her help and she jumps headlong into the fray. Her timely aid makes short work of the last Iron Golem and the adventurers stand triumphant over their shattered adversaries!

Mabel is still unconscious. The other adventurers take time bringing her to her senses and she awakens with 10 Fortitude. Since she had one round remaining before she could get back up, she donates 1 Gold to the “Get My Friends Richer” charity. While most of the other adventurers try to decide who should get this solitary Gold piece, Marten reaches over and deftly pockets it, since arguing like petty thieves just isn’t gentlemanly.

No matter how the rescue gets hand-waved, the characters will all wake up in the stables of the nearest White Griffon Tavern with perhaps the worst headaches they’ve ever had. They will all have 20 Fortitude and 0 Alcohol Content, but they will have lost all of their items and gold.

Since the Tavern doesn’t serve destitute adventurers, the party will have to go back and get their stuff, or maybe cast about for a slightly less challenging adventure to earn enough gold to reline their pockets.

Healing

The easiest way to heal people during the course of the game is to use a healing potion. However, you’re going to run across a clever player who will wonder why they can’t use their Cheating or Help Others skill to restore some Fortitude to the other players. And they’re right, there’s nothing stopping them from doing that, but stopping every two seconds because someone got a scratch is annoying.

Because The Healer decreed that Healing is Important, it should only be done when people are really hurt. For this reason, the To Hit for using a healing-type skill is equal to the target’s current Fortitude. That means that if a patient has 19 Fortitude, the To Hit is 19. Unless the healer rolls a 12, the patient’s Fortitude will remain the same. If the healer does roll a 12, then the result is a Critical!

The amount that someone will get healed is the level of the Skill that the healer is using. If the healer had Dwarven First Aid at 3, then the patient would get back 3 Fortitude.

Interactions Summary

Basic Interactions

1. The Bartender determines the **Be Hit Monster Be Hit** or **Difficulty** of the Action
Modifiers for extra difficulty like environment effects, stress
2. The Character rolling determines the **To Hit**
Takes their chosen **Stat**
Asks the Bartender if a **Skill** they wish to use is applicable
3. Check the Chart or use the formula:
Formula is: 7+Be Hit-To Hit
4. Roll 2d6
5. Check Results:
Higher is success.
Lower is failure.
Exact is Critical!

Advanced Interactions

1. The Bartender determines the **Be Hit Monster Be Hit** or **Difficulty** of the Action
Modifiers for extra difficulty like environment effects, stress
2. Does anyone help?
One Helper gets to roll against the same **Be Hit**. Success means that the other player gets to use their Help Others skill.
Two Helpers get in the way and provide **No Bonus**.
3. The Character rolling determines the **To Hit**
Takes their chosen **Stat**
Asks the Bartender if a **Skill** they wish to use is applicable
Uses any successful **Help Others Skills**
4. Check the Chart or use the formula:
Formula is: 7+Be Hit-To Hit
5. Roll 2d6
6. Check Results:
Higher is success.
Lower is failure.
Exact is Critical!
7. If result is a failure, you can bribe the bartender with **4 gold** to get a **+1 bonus**.

Combat

Initiative

1. Players go First
2. Monsters go Next
3. Helpful NPCs go After
4. Unhelpful NPCs flail about and get in the way

Chapter 5

Bartending Lessons

where we uncover hidden mysteries with beverages

Critical!: Go Westerly is a funny fantasy game. That's how we've written it, and that's how we hope you will agree. Some people do have a problem with trying to be funny. You know what? We do, too. It's hard to be funny for more than five hundred words at a time. Sometimes, after writing what you think is a brilliant sentence, you have to sit back and consider: Is this *really* funny, or is *this three o'clock in the morning and I haven't been to bed in a week funny?*

One doesn't necessarily flow into the other easily.

This is why we've given you a section that details what's going on behind the bar. We'll give you tips on character creation, running the game, keeping the funny going, and how to deal with pesky things like monsters and traps and other problems you'll want to throw at your players to entertain them for several hours.

Making Characters

Character creation is a process that should not take a lot of time. The characters will first meet in a tavern, and then go forth on an adventure. We're not trying to dodge that trope, we're trying to embrace it fully. You should too, and you should take it seriously, because that's part of what makes it funny. The characters don't, and shouldn't, question why this happens. It's just the way things are done. With the way character creation is set up, we hope that it doesn't take much longer than 25 minutes.



I know it seems a little odd that we're not looking for long, involved backgrounds. Just enough to help the players figure out their skills. They can define the sordid details of their characters' backgrounds while they play the game. That way they can make things up as they go along, and when the opportunity for something amazing to happen arises they can grab the story ball and run with it. This also provides you, the Bartender, with the ability to both reward a player for coming up with a background idea that fits a situation (usually so that the situation turns out unexpectedly in their favour) and then punish them for getting around your dastardly plans by using their made-up history against them.

Running this Thing

We designed this game to be light-hearted, funny, and, most importantly, fun. Below, we've listed a few things for novice Bartenders to keep in mind so that the playing of the game flows naturally in this direction.

That being said, don't feel that the sections that follow are the most holy gospel of the game that must be adhered to at all costs. If you find that the suggestions presented here just don't work for your game or your group of players, then either deftly sidestep them and carry on your merry way or salt them to taste. We're not going to come to your house while you're out and short sheet all your beds just because you didn't run our game the exact same way that we do. We promise.

The Rule of Yes

If you've read the rules section of this book, you'll notice that we say something like the following just about every other paragraph, "If you want to do this, you have to justify it with the Bartender. If the Bartender says some variation of the phrase, 'cool beans,' then you may proceed. If not, then you can't. The Bartender's word is law."

We put that in there so that you can exercise some measure of control over the game. If players are trying to use the free-form nature of the rules of this game in a desperate attempt to "win" in every situation, you can stop them. If players are doing things that make the game less fun for you and the other participants, you can rein them in.

However, in most other cases, when players ask you if they can do things, you should say yes.

You should say yes, in part, because no matter what, the players are allowed to try any ridiculous thing that they want to try, even if it flies in the face of good sense. They have to roll to succeed, of course, and you can choose to make their Success Number so high that they are likely to fail, but they're allowed to at least have the option.

You should also say yes because it's more fun and more interesting than saying no. Here's why. Imagine we're playing a game. You're the Bartender and I'm the player. I ask you this:

"Do you think that maybe Manfred the Cave Fisherman could use his fishing skill to hook the opposite ledge, thereby making an improvised tightrope so that Salaria the Wicked Dexterous can cross the Chasm of Peril and reach the treasure chest on the other side?"

Suppose you say, "no." This puts the brakes on our forward momentum. We wanted that treasure chest. We don't really have any appropriate skills or items, and this was the only viable, or the first viable, plan we could come up with considering the skills and equipment at hand.

When you say, "no," it also gives you back all the control. Now, instead of being active participants, striving to get that treasure chest using our low cunning, we have to wait for you to give us access to the chest. Or we just fumble around in the dark, feeling a bit dejected, until you decide to let us do something else.

Now, pretend you say, "yes." We're super excited, because we've come up with this kind of harebrained plan, and you're going to let us go through with it because you trust us. We have agency. The reward for you, as the Bartender, is that you get to tell us what happens next. Yep, sure, the whole improvised tightrope works as advertised, but now Salaria is balanced precariously on fishing line when a horde of bats comes tearing down the passageway.

Good times still had by the Bartender.

The Rule of Funny

This is more a subset to the Rule of Yes than its own rule. Quite simply, if you're not sure if a player ought to be able to do something, consider whether what they're trying to do is funny or not. If it's funny, they should get a chance to succeed. Heck, if it's funny, they should probably get a bonus to their chance to succeed. It's a good rule to live by in this game, and it's how we've decided on a lot of things.

This goes for the players too, the ones who are most certainly reading this section despite the fact that it's supposed to be for the Bartender. You can try things that are outlandish and outrageous, especially if they're funny. If the Bartender is laughing then there's a really good chance that what you want to do is going to be allowed.

Enlisting Your Players to Tell the Story

You've spent about fifteen minutes writing down the outline for tonight's adventure on a cocktail napkin. You present your players with the opening scenario. You suspect that they'll probably pick Option A, but you also have a backup plan, cunningly called Option B, which you can fall back on in case your players zig instead of zag.

That's when they decide to pick Option X, which is the one thing you haven't thought of, and your whole carefully-crafted narrative goes straight to hell.

What do you do?

As mentioned above, the first thing you should do is say yes. If the players feel that it is more fun to go haring off on their own than to march obediently down the pathway that is your plot, let them do that. If you want, you can run ahead of them and post signs that will gently redirect them to the story you wanted to tell in the first place. Or, you can do what we do, which is to figure out what adventures your players really want to participate in. The best way to accomplish that is to let your players help you tell the story. Ask them pointed, leading questions to find out what their intentions are. If the players insist on walking off the edge of the map, ask them where they're going, why they're going there, and what it looks like. If the players want to talk to someone, let them describe who they're looking for, where they live, and why they're seeking them out in the first place.

The answers that you get can range from the prosaic, "We're not interested in the intrigues of the Ovestian court. We just want to go into the sewers under Ovestgaard and beat up some rats," to something more complex "I've been carrying around this weird idol for two games and I'd really like to know how valuable it is. Hey, Marten, you know where the Gristle is, right? Can you take us there and introduce us to a reputable fence?" If you let the players do that, then you know where to go.

Don't worry if you need to take a small break to come up with some stuff. That's fine. Players take it as a badge of honor when they mess up the Bartender, and you can use their amusement as fuel for destroying them, or you can use the time that they gloat to come up with some structure as to what the adventure is going to entail.

Once you let the players tell you what they want to do, the adventures practically write themselves.

You Can't Kill Them

One way in which we feel *Critical!* is different from a lot of other RPGs is that there is nothing in the mechanics that says a character is going to die. The main reason for that is we want players to be able to take large ridiculous risks and if they're always worrying about dying from a set of dice, they just won't take those risks. There are rules to inconvenience them, rules that strip them of their gold and give it to their friends, rules that even take every last piece of gold and gear away and make them work for it all over again, but there aren't any rules that say "This Character Dies Now!"

This isn't to say that you can't talk to a player and have their character die because it would be an awesome element to add to your story. Death can drive the other characters to seek revenge. Death can be the ultimate ending to a story, where one character sacrifices themselves for the good of everyone else. Death is useful in a story, so don't feel that you can't use it.

Understand that in *Critical!* the rules are all about inconveniencing your players when they make mistakes rather than killing them. That's your duty as the Bartender, keep your story well-stocked with setbacks, reversals of fortune and comeuppance. Dog their steps with deadly traps and dangerous monsters. If they mouth off to an undead fiend, then make sure that said undead fiend will do everything in their power to the lives of the characters miserable. That spell book they picked up was cursed and now they are only understood when they speak in rhyme. Those jeweled eyes they pried out of that idol, well now they've unleashed the God Murth'k into the world.

Make their temporary defeats hilarious, and they will enjoy it much more than dying.

Using the Success Table

You and your players will make use of the Success Table dozens of times per session. You tell them how hard something is to do. They cross reference that number with their Stat + Skill + whatever bonus or penalty you might add, and find out what they need to roll.

The hard part for you is figuring out how difficult any action is.

We're not going to lie to you. The numbers that you give the players are pretty much completely arbitrary. If you want to make something really easy for them to do, give them a low number. If, conversely, you want to make something really hard, give them a high number.

That being said, the number 4 is your friend. This is the number for something that's "Standard" difficulty. Whenever a player asks you

how hard a task is, think about it, but not for too long. If there's no particular reason why this task is particularly onerous, or if you're not sure what number to assign, then tell them, "Okay, it's a four."

Feel free to give your players larger numbers if you think the situation demands it.

Magic and Cheating

There will come a time when magic will give you a bit of a headache. Someone will give themselves a generic magic skill and they will use it with absolutely everything. This is their right--I mean, it is a cheating skill and they're using it creatively. It's also your fault for letting a generic magic skill or any too-generic cheating skill through. The question is how do you deal with it?

When it comes to magic, you're going to empower your player to give you enough rope to hang them with. Don't let them get away with saying, "I use my magic to do something". Have them describe what they're doing. The more they add to the description, the bigger target number you can give them. It sounds weird, but a lot of people are interested in not just doing something but doing something spectacularly. They want the large explosions and the huge magical vortexes and grand gestures with eldritch power flowing from their fingertips.

Let them. The difficulty number grows with each added element, and the players at the table won't really fault you for making something far more difficult if there are a lot of lights and flash.

For Example:

Runic the Wizard wants to get inside a prison. Angrily, he smashes his staff down on the ground. Using his, "Greater Knowledge of the Arcane Elements" skill (Cheating: 2) he will sunder the ground, causing a spray of lava to come shooting up from the center of the earth, emit a scorching ray of fire powerful enough to melt the prison wall to slag. Focusing his power, Runic directs the pillar of lava toward the prison wall, melting a hole in it. He hopes.

The Bartender says, "Well, that's a difficulty of 10. I hope this goes well for you."

Runic the Wizard changes his mind. It just so happens that he has a marmoset familiar named Gotterdamerung. He decides to levitate his marmoset into the prison so he can use his "Special Psychic Bond with Marmosets" skill (Help Self: 2) to help help the inmates without going into the prison himself. That's it, he just wants Gotterdamerung to go over the wall quietly, without a fuss.

The Bartender says, "Well, that's a difficulty of 4. Roll 'em."

This doesn't mean that you need to give difficulty modifiers for every spell that gets cast, but you might want to bring out that hammer if things are getting a little out of hand and they're using magic at every single turn.

I Need a Number: Which One Do I Use?

If you're in a situation and you want to know how much someone gets healed, or how many pieces someone cuts something into, the best number to use is the level of the skill. The higher the skill, the better they are at doing what they're doing, the better number they should have.

That's just a guideline. If you think they should have more, or less, that's your call as Bartender. This is just a nice guideline if you don't know and you need a number right now.

GOLD!

Gold is one of the most important things in this game. Players need it to buy themselves equipment, to make themselves more powerful, and because it is oh so shiny! Some pretty important game mechanics need Gold to work. Some pretty nasty traps can only be disarmed if you drop enough Gold in the coin slot.

For this reason, we've decided that Gold is not an abstraction. Rather than just a running tally on a character sheet, Gold is something that your players need to see, feel, and greedily drizzle through their fingers.

One of the easiest ways to get a physical representation of Gold is to bust open your piggy bank and dole out a pile of pennies. If you want to get fancy, you can use those plastic, gold-colored, Mardi Gras coins. Or, if they're in season and you want to give your players more of an incentive for grabbing the Gold, you can get those chocolate coins covered in gold foil.* You can also use poker chips, bingo tokens, or anything that you can use to give your players a tactile experience.

You should have enough Gold on hand to give every player their starting amount (which is 10), plus a decent-sized pile in reserve as the Celestial Treasury. This is the pile of Gold that you will reward the players with when they kill monsters and the like. Whenever the players bribe you, their Gold goes into the Treasury

*It should be obvious, but we'll say it anyway: If your players eat their money, they can't spend it later.

Multiple People Attacked a Monster, Who Gets the Gold?

This one is easy. The Celestial Treasury doesn't count who did the most damage to a monster, they only care about killing. This means that the person who ends up making the killing blow will get the Gold from the treasury.

Certainly this might lead to the players trying to position themselves to land the final blow and, therefore, get the Gold. That's okay. You should encourage this behaviour. It will give you more of an opportunity to clean house and then make them go delving after their lost gear when they all get creamed by some big monster.

I'm Running Out of Gold, Here!

Sometimes, after the players have defeated an especially wealthy opponent, you will begin counting out Gold from the Celestial Treasury and realize that you don't have enough in reserve, if you're using tokens, to pay them for their valor in battle.

What do you do? IOU!

We've included some IOU scrip with the game that you can copy, cut out, and hand out to players once the Celestial Treasury is exhausted. Don't wait until you run out of Gold to use them, though. Sometimes there's a hiccup in the delivery of the gold that requires an IOU. Sometimes the Thief will steal your Gold and give it to the Kobold Nation for your crimes against her chosen. If it's a good time to be funny with the IOUs, be funny with the IOUs. Just don't use them too often, because then it leaves the realm of funny and enters the realm of annoying.

Players should eventually be able to cash in their IOUs at any Temple of the Merchant. Now it doesn't have to be easy to cash them in. The priests at the temple could view them as forgeries, and your players will have to prove themselves worthy. There might be a quest that needs to be cleared out before they can give out the money for the IOUs. They just might not have the Gold on hand. Use whatever reason you feel is best, but ultimately they should get the gold for the IOUs because it's a token of good faith.

Good faith aside, IOUs aren't legal tender. Players can't use them to buy Items or raise their Stats, and they definitely shouldn't be allowed to bribe you to influence their die rolls. You have a Bar to run, after all, and you can't build a working business model on promises and credit.

Other Types of Treasure That Aren't Gold

If you feel like changing things up a bit, you can give your players Items or Potions instead of Gold. It's pretty easy to do. All you have to do is use the Gold provided by one or more monsters to purchase an Item or Potion using the standard rules. When the players defeat the monsters, they get less Gold, but they also get an Item or Potion.

For Example:

The players have defeated a horde of five Orcs. This would net them 5 Gold. However, the Bartender has decided that the Orc leader has a Wickedly Sharp Axe. This axe is a Well-Swung Weapon (Hurt Others - 1). By using the Item rules, the Bartender discovers that the axe costs 2 Gold. Which means that the players will have recovered the axe and 3 Gold.

Spending Gold for Self-Improvement

There is one more thing that the players can spend their Gold on. They can increase their numbers between adventures by spending Gold to get the proper training. That's why it has to be between adventures, it allows for a training montage. The montage is very important. Make sure that the player describes how they were trained, not just that they were trained.

The cost involved with training is quite simple. Any number you want to increase costs that number times ten (10) in Gold. You want to raise your Smile from one (1) to two (2)? For the low, low cost of 20 Gold you can get that done. The players just need to describe who they trained with and how they went about learning to be more charismatic. If they don't do a good enough job explaining it to you, then by all means take their money and deny them their improvement unless they pay another 10 Gold.

Training montages are important!

Hazards of the Course

There will be things that get in the adventurers' way that aren't monsters. There are natural hazards as well as created problems that hinder the players. This section will cover some of these problems.

Doors, Walls, and Other Breakable Objects

So, your adventurers are faced with a locked chest or a locked door, and they realize that they've forgotten to bring a rogue along with them. Without a pause, they take out their axes and swords and start chopping things apart. That's what these rules are for.

There are three ways to handle those times when the players need to break things. They're as follows.

Be Hit Number: The object has a Be Hit number. The bigger the number, the harder the object is to destroy. Have the player make a roll using their destructive Skill or Item. If they succeed, they destroy the object. This is most useful for those times when you want to put something in the players' way, but you don't want to have them waste too much time breaking it.

Fortitude: The object has a pile of Fortitude points. The bigger the number, the longer the object takes to destroy. The players pretty much hit the object automatically (it's not like it can defend itself. If it could, it'd be a golem, and then you'd use the monster rules) and deliver their damage as normal. This is most useful for objects that take a lot of time to destroy.

A Combination of the Two: The object has a Be Hit number and Fortitude. Again, the bigger the numbers, the harder the object is to destroy. You'll want to use this one for items that are tricky to hit and for ones that can stand up to more than a little punishment. Like the Wand of Doom that the evil wizard is waving around.

Traps

Whenever heroes go out seeking adventure, they're pretty much guaranteed to run into traps. Monsters have this annoying habit of adding spring-loaded poison needles, spiked pits, fire jets, swinging blades, crushers, pokers, and jars of really angry fire ants to just about anything they own.

Traps, much like Monsters, have the following three stats:

To Hit: When the trap goes off, the Bartender uses this stat to determine whether the trap crushes, stabs, poisons, or immolates whoever triggered it. Some really, really nasty traps hit automatically, at the Bartender's discretion.

Be Hit: This number represents how hard it is to notice and disarm the trap. If players don't notice a trap, odds are that they'll walk right into it. If the players do notice a trap and then fail their roll to disarm it, the trap should go off in the most spectacular fashion.

Damage (or Special): In most cases, traps are going to deliver a substantial amount of damage to whomever sets them off. If there is a damage value here, that's what gets subtracted from the victim's Fortitude.

In some cases, traps may deliver special effects instead of damage. For instance, an adventurer could get their legs snared by a rope trap and then get yanked upside down into the air. It doesn't hurt, but it makes things more Difficult, what with the disorientation and the blood rushing to their head. If the trap does some special effect other than damage, it'll be listed here.

Gold: This is how much the trap costs to build. You probably won't be using this stat much, unless the players start trying to build traps.

Building Your Own traps

We'll be giving you some sample traps in a moment, but you can easily build your own using the following template and rules.

The Trap Template

To Hit:	2
Be Hit:	2
Damage:	2
Special:	None to Start
Base Cost:	1

Improving Stats

You can improve the three stats (To Hit, Be Hit, and Damage) in any way that you like. Remember that higher numbers make traps a lot more dangerous. Be sure to keep track of how many points you've added to your trap's stats.

Making Your Trap Special

Feel free to exploit the Special category of a trap to make it as fiendish and dangerous as you like. The best traps are not necessarily the ones that do the most damage or are the hardest to defeat. Keep in mind, though, that only the most fiendish of traps will have more than two or three Special traits.

If you're stuck for ideas, how about the following Specials:

- Certain Skills and Items are useless against the trap.
- The trap increases AC (due to poison) instead of dealing Damage.
- The trap automatically resets a short time after it is disabled.
- The trap deals damage to whoever defeats it.

- The trap destroys an Item.
- The trap makes the victim temporarily forget a Skill.

Calculating Trap Cost

Add up the points you added to the trap's stats. For every Special that the trap has, add a further +1 to the total. Divide this number by 3 and get rid of the fraction. That's how much Gold the trap will cost to purchase.

Praise the Thief!

In every dungeon, there is one trap dedicated to the Thief. These traps are notable for two things: Their extremely lethal nature, and the prominent coin slot on the wall somewhere near the trap. These traps can be circumvented with significant difficulty, but can only be disarmed by adventurers tithing some amount of Gold to the Thief.

It should be noted that the coin slot is magical in nature, and once a coin is inserted, it immediately goes back into the Celestial Treasury. That doesn't mean that The Thief doesn't appreciate a good trick now and then, but those coin slots are there for a reason and there will be hefty smittings for any who try to cheat the Goddess of Cheats.

Sample Traps

Crushing Boulder Trap

To Hit:	8
Be Hit:	2
Damage:	5
Special:	Can Attack Multiple Characters
Base Cost:	5

Standard Pit Trap

To Hit:	4
Be Hit:	4
Damage:	3
Special:	None
Base Cost:	3

Standard Pit Trap with Spikes!

To Hit:	6
Be Hit:	4
Damage:	4
Special:	No Skills can be used if sprung
Base Cost:	5

Arrow Trap

To Hit:	4
Be Hit:	7
Damage:	3
Special:	None
Base Cost:	4

Poison Trap

To Hit:	4
Be Hit:	4
Damage:	3
Special:	Damage increase AC instead
Base Cost:	3

Locks

Locks are like Traps, except they don't do any attacking. They just have a Be Hit stat, which tells you how hard a lock is to pick. If the adventurers don't have someone of a larcenous bent in their party, the Be Hit number is also how difficult it is for someone to bludgeon the lock to pieces with a blunt object. It's a multi-purpose stat.

Monsters and Other Such Ilk

There will be times when your players will have to fight things. The things that they fight are called monsters, and they will be found in various places all over Westerly. Sometimes they will be in dungeons. Sometimes they will be in basements. Sometimes they'll be attacking villages. Sometimes they'll even be walking about in the daylight going about their business. Wherever they find monsters, your players will want to attack them for the money. You will want to make sure that they have a wide assortment of monsters to fight.

Making your own monsters is easy. They all have the same five (5) Stats.

To Hit: This is the monster's ability to get stuff done. This stat is used when the Bartender wants to put the hurt on some player. The higher their To Hit, the more likely they are to do what the Bartender wants them to do. In mechanical terms, this number will lower the Starting Number when the Bartender is trying to have a Monster do anything, from charging into attack to tying their shoes.

Be Hit: This is the monster's ability to avoid having bad things happen to it. You will always use this to increase the Starting Number when a player wants to do something to this monster. This means when they try to do anything, from trying to convince the monster to hand over their keys peacefully, to avoid being destroyed by a massive club, to attempting to disbelieve that something is happening.

Damage: Monsters, like characters, will deal this damage when they hit in combat. It will reduce a character's Fortitude by the listed value.

Fortitude: This is how much punishment a Monster can take. Once this number hits 0, then the Monster dies or is otherwise out of commission. As a general rule, Monsters tend to have a lot lower Fortitude than characters do.

Gold: This is how much Gold the players get for killing the Monster.

Other Stuff

Some monsters go beyond their basic stats. They, too, can have Skills. Just like character Skills, they will give a bonus equal to their level when used. The Bartender doesn't really have to justify how they are using the skill as much as players do, since they're only justifying use of the skill to themselves.

Building Your Own Monsters

Nothing is more frightening, or more funny, than your own imagination. This is why we're going to give you the template on how you can build your own Monsters. We'll provide a list of some of the regular Westerlian Monsters that are found in various places across the land, which are all based (at least initially) on the following template.

The Template

There is a base template that all Monsters start out with.

To Hit:	3
Be Hit:	3
Damage:	2
Fortitude:	4
Other Stuff:	None to Start
Gold:	1

Increasing Stats

Feel free to adjust your monster's stats to make them tougher or more interesting. Just keep in mind that more you add to a monster, the more Gold the players will get when killing them. For every three (3) points you add to a monster increase its Gold stat by one (1).

Let's say you want to make a monster that deals four (4) Damage. That will increase its Gold stat by one (1). If you wanted to make a monster that has a To Hit of five (5), a Be Hit of five (5) and a Damage of three (3) then increase its Gold stat by two (2).

You can also decrease one stat to put the points into another stat. The minimum any stat (other than Gold) can be is one (1).

Giving Skills

Monsters who want Skills can buy them with Gold as well. You can give a Monster up to three (3) Skills points for one (1) Gold. That means if you want to give a monster the skill, "Smells so bad it hurts (Hurt Others - 3)" then that will cost one (1) Gold. You can use those three Skill points as you see fit, but you can't use them to increase a Monster's Stats.

Description

You should give your Monster a name and a little description of where they live and what they do. Monsters tend to mean more if you give them reputations and personalities. Most Goblins, for instance, are well-known to be sniveling little creatures. If you want your Goblins to be brave and strong, then you'll need to describe them as such. It's up to you to decide how you want to play them, but if you give a consistent description to your players, then they'll have an idea what they're going up against.

The Monsters Of Westerly

The Monsters of Westerly are an odd lot, they tend to fall into standard tropes, twisted where appropriate. We've decided to group them by where you're more likely to find them.

The Razorback Mountains

The Three Foot Range

The Three Foot Range of the Razorback Mountains are the lovely low, rolling hills similar to those found at the beginning of any mountain range. The hills are pleasant, and would be a great place to live if they weren't crawling with monsters.

Goblins

There are a lot of goblins in the Three Foot Range. Filthy Goblin dens are so prevalent that you can't walk around without stepping into one.

This is unfortunate because these warrens are filled with traps for the unwary, as they twist and turn moving deeper into the mountains, making even the most certain of explorers question where they are going. Thankfully they are filled with Goblins who are usually too busy fighting among themselves to deal with random people who drop into their territory.

The reason for all the infighting is that each tribe believes that they follow the one true Goblin King who, as foretold in prophecy, is descended from the great Ka'Chack, the Original Goblin. The Goblins are constantly trying to unite themselves under a single banner, which means that any alliance between Goblin tribes is short lived, as it will devolve into backstabbing, biting, and pillaging pretty quickly.

If you do fall into a goblin warren by accident, and you feel like exploring it, they have pretty good supplies of Gold, weapons, shiny gems, and other objects of worth piled up in their caves. Many

adventurers believe that Goblin raiding is the way to quick wealth, but they frequently underestimate their opponents and rarely ever come back.

A few particularly enterprising goblins, who have grown tired of the constant fighting, have hired themselves out as freelance minions. Smart, usually evil, monsters tend to use these Goblins as cannon fodder, distracting foes while preparing vicious magical attacks, or putting their final touches on their ultimate death machines. These goblins for hire don't really complain, it's better treatment than they would have gotten in the warrens.

Goblins are small, misshapen creatures. They have small, squashed faces with large ears and come in a variety of greens, purples and navy blues. They don't have much hair, apart from the tufts that cling to their ears. They tend to be armed, though their weapons and armor have seen better days. With all the weapons about a standard warren they feel that if their armaments break they can just pick up a new one.

Not all Goblins are alike, either. Each Goblin Clan acts differently, and most of the time they can't be bothered with each other since they are the only ones that follow the true descendants of The Goblin King. The peer pressure when cross-clan goblins hang out can be brutally high.

Clan Stand'ard Goblin

Stand'ard clan is the largest clan of goblins in the area, but they are also the most maligned out of all Goblin clans. Even clans that dislike each other will band together to take out some Stand'ard Goblins. Adventurers get frustrated with them because they don't provide any Gold at all when squished against the wall.

This infuriates Stand'ard goblins. They hate getting passed over for "larger threats" and "bigger rewards." They will attack anyone who says, "Oh, it's just goblins" first and ignore the rest of the group until either the speaker eats their words or until all the goblins are dead.

To Hit:	3
Be Hit:	3
Damage:	2
Fortitude:	4
Other Stuff:	None to Start
Gold:	1

T

Clan R'ag'er Goblin

R'ag'er Goblins tend to attack, attack, attack and worry less about defending themselves. They believe that if they get the kill first, then they don't have to worry about anyone trying to kill them. Needless to say that R'ag'er Goblins are the least populous out of all the Goblin Clans. They say that this makes them unique, or special. Others have different words, but refrain from using them lest the R'ag'er Goblins try to eat their face.

To Hit:	4
Be Hit:	2
Damage:	3
Fortitude:	5
Other Stuff:	None to Start
Gold:	2

Clan Sh'Doh Goblin

Sh'Doh Goblins are the quiet ones, the goblins that people don't see until they're close enough to bite your face off. They are the most backstabbing of all the Goblin tribes.

Sh'Doh Goblins know this about themselves and don't trust each other at all. They have a low birth rate for goblins, mainly because they can't seem to get together frequently to reproduce like the other clans.

To Hit:	4
Be Hit:	2
Damage:	1
Fortitude:	4
Other Stuff:	Sneaky Goblin Feets (Cheat +3)
Gold:	2

Kobolds

The second most populous monster in the Three Foot Range is the Kobold. Unlike Goblins, Kobolds have created an advanced society that tries to improve itself every day. They have many of the same amenities

that many human cities have, such as roads, houses, and laws, and there are rumours that they are even more advanced in some ways. Their main wish is to simply be left alone.

Their problem is that because they are still classified as monstrous creatures, since they have the appearance of cute dogs that can walk on their hind legs, they are listed on The Exchange. This makes them targets for adventurers who are looking to make a quick gold coin here and there. They've tried to petition The Exchange to remove Kobolds from the list of creatures, but the envoys never seem to make it to Zakidselo with the request.

This kind of cavalier treatment has angered The Thief, who likes Kobolds a lot. She has been trying to intercede on their behalf with The Merchant, but since he isn't the biggest fan of The Thief he's refused to back down. In a fit of anger, The Thief has declared that she will steal any gold an Adventurer would get for killing Kobolds, and give it to the creatures themselves. The Merchant countered her decree with a decree of his own, even if the gold is stolen an adventurer that slays a Kobold will be given an IOU which is redeemable at any of the Merchant Temples.

To help these poor, beleaguered creatures, the Thief has increased the Kobolds ability to make traps. If a Goblin warren is full of traps, a Kobold den is one large trap in which they live. One trap leads to another which leads to another which leads to another, and if there are any people still alive, there is one final trap for good measure. This is what the Thief intended, and it frustrates her that adventurers still see Kobolds as something that needs to be destroyed. To help even further she's given the Kobold Kingdom some leeway in regard to any traps that are dedicated to her.

To Hit:	3
Be Hit:	5
Damage:	1
Fortitude:	2
Other Stuff:	Divine Trap Making (Cheat +3)
Gold:	2

The Six Foot Range

The monsters that dwell in this region of the Razorback Mountains are more than three and less than six feet tall. They are much stronger, tougher, and liable to mash novice adventurers into a paste ideal for spreading on toast.

Orcs

Orcs see themselves as noble creatures, despite the fact that they're the distant relatives of Goblins. Orcs live in the open mountain air and wander from peak to valley, and this makes them taller, stronger, smarter, and prettier than their smaller, warped cousins. This lifestyle also causes them to have fewer material goods. To make up for this, they take what they want from those who live near them. You know, like their Goblin cousins, or any humans who aren't as smart as Orcs. It should be noted that humans who venture into Orcish territory are always viewed by Orcs as being less intelligent.

Orcs are split up into various tribes, each with its own territory. Wars between the tribes never benefit anyone, so while the Orcs may not like one another, there must be a grave insult given before one tribe goes into battle against another.

Orcs look more humanoid than Goblins, and have a straighter stance and more upright face. Their ears are pointed, but not nearly as much as goblin ears, and their small tusks barely break their lips. These smaller tusks are quite sharp and can cause an incautious orc to lacerate their own face. This gave rise to the common insult, "Ka'zat Ker'zo," or, "One Who Chews Too Quickly."

Orcs are also slightly higher on the fashion scale than Goblins, wearing attire more complex than your standard loincloth. They tend to be fully garbed and wear armor, which leads to some problems for adventurers who have heard that Orcs are an easy kill.

Not only are Orcs able to forge and wear armor, but some of them also have magical abilities which they are more than willing to use on adventurers bent on killing them.

Claw Orc

Claw Orcs are a nomadic clan. They travel between all the clans trading goods that they've pillaged from the countryside. Shrewd merchants and reckless raiders, the Claw Orcs are feared by those that live in the mountains as well as by some of the other Orcs who are afraid to haggle too much with the Claw.

To Hit:	4
Be Hit:	4
Damage:	2
Fortitude:	4
Other Stuff:	1 Got Best Price (Cheat +1)
	1 Take with Ax (Hurt Others +2)
Gold:	3

Mnmetic Orc

The Mnmetic Orcs are the Orcs that practice magical arts for the tribes. Any Orc with any degree of magical talent will be brought into the Mnmetic Circle and once their training is complete they will be assigned to a clan, regardless of previous clan affiliation. They bring wisdom, guidance and magical firepower when needed.

To Hit:	5
Be Hit:	3
Damage:	2
Fortitude:	4
Other Stuff:	Magical Blasting Attack (Hurt Others +3)
	Wisdom of the Sages (Help Others +3)
Gold:	4

General Orc

In general, Orcs are pretty much the same regardless of their clan affiliation. They tend to be better than regular Goblins at hitting things, and when they hit they pack a bigger punch than expected.

To Hit:	4
Be Hit:	4
Damage:	3
Fortitude:	4
Other Stuff:	No Skills
Gold:	2

Rockoliths

There are a number of ancient standing stones that litter the slopes of the Razorback Mountains. Many of these are of dwarven make and covered with runes that advertise the reign of one dwarven king or another. These standing stones are little more than a curiosity. They're interesting to scholars and dwarves, but otherwise aren't all that exciting. Except when they turn out not to be Monoliths, but rather Rockoliths.

Rockoliths are living creatures of rock who have found their way into the Razorback Mountains. To the untrained eye, they are indistinguishable from other ancient standing stones. Some of them even have markings on them that look like dwarven runes. Whether these markings are indicative of some power of mimicry belonging to the Rockoliths, or whether the Rockoliths are victims of dwarven graffiti artists, none can say. The Rockoliths are rather quiet on the whole subject.

Rockoliths hunt by moving to an area where there are standing stones and standing very still, sometimes for years. When prey moves close enough to a Rockolith, they tip over and fall on it, squishing it flat. The Rockolith then rolls around in the goo that's left behind, soaking the nutrients up through pores in its body.

To Hit:	3
Be Hit:	1
Damage:	4
Fortitude:	6
Other Stuff:	Don't Mind Me, I'm Just Another Rock (Help Self + 3)
Gold:	3

The High Crag (The Really Big Hills)

At this range you will find some respectably-sized mountains and famous landmarks of the Razorback Mountains. Adventurers commonly come to this part of the mountains to test themselves against the Angar Complex or do battle with monsters near the Crack of Eldfjall. The critters dwelling here are really tough, which is about what you'd expect from things between six and twelve feet tall.

Salamanders

These big, serpent-like creatures rarely leave the caldera of Eldfjall, the Razorback Mountain's most famous volcano. They prefer to spend their time wallowing around in the magma shallows and spitting fire at one another. On occasion, they will venture forth from their furnace-like nesting places to hunt for food. They are not picky eaters and will dine on just about any other creature in the mountains. Scholars believe that this is because most creatures, no matter what they are, taste about the same when they've been reduced to ashes.

To Hit:	5
Be Hit:	5
Damage:	3
Fortitude:	8
Other Stuff:	Burn Baby Burn (Help Self +2)
	Spit Fire (Hurt Others +2)
	Can't Touch This (Help Self +2)
	Habit - ON FIRE! (3)
Gold:	5

Trolls

Trolls are the large, shaggy, mountainous creatures that have adapted in a unique way. In order to survive, they've learned to endure anything life throws at them. This means stomachaches from eating things that they probably shouldn't have, to cuts and bruises that they've sustained killing the thing they shouldn't have eaten. Trolls have spent years growing so that they're bigger than many things, and they've made sure that they smell terrible to drive away the few things that can kill them. They are never fun to come across because you don't really know what's worse, getting killed by the creature or smelling them.

To Hit:	5
Be Hit:	5
Damage:	3
Fortitude:	12
Other Stuff:	SMELL BAD! (Help Self +2)
	Super Regenerative Qualities (Help Self +2)
	Long, Flesh Rending Claws (Hurt Others +2)
Gold:	8

Ogres

Ogres are the largest creatures you'll find in the High Crag. They are the meanest, nastiest, least intelligent beings there and only survive because of their brute force and the willingness to use it. They use large branches for clubs, because they can't be bothered with anything else, and love to eat the adventurers that come hunting for them. The smart adventurer avoids these beasts, the lucky ones come back and talk about how much Gold they're worth.

To Hit:	7
Be Hit:	4
Damage:	5
Fortitude:	20
Other Stuff:	SMASH THINGS (Hurt Others +3)
Gold:	10

The Jagged Heights

These lofty peaks way, way up in the mountains are the ancestral homelands of any creature between twelve and sixteen feet tall. The most powerful creatures in the Razorback Mountains dwell here. Adventurers that venture here do so at their own peril.

Giants

Giants, as their name suggests, are really, really big. Giants are loners, fighting one another whenever they cross paths. If you needed the sheer amount of food, water, and living space that Giants need, you'd probably want to keep your piece of the world all to yourself, too. Forget towns not being big enough for two giants—most of them aren't big enough for one!

There are three major types of Giant: The Rock Giants, who are proud and strong and unwavering in their goals, the Paapire Giants, who are focused on learning and mediation, and Sci'zor Giants, who are aggressive and willing to destroy all those who get in their way. Legend speaks of at least two other types of Giant, the Lizard and the Bombard specifically, but no one reputable has ever met one.

There is a strict pecking order to Giant society. Rock Giants, for instance, are solid enough to withstand the sheer aggression from Sci'zor Giants, but they are easily outwitted by the cunning Paapire Giants. Despite this strength against Rock Giants, Paapire Giants find their plans cut to ribbons by Sci'zor Giants, and also get punched in the face.

Rock Giants

Rock Giants are the large brutish creatures that you'll find in most stories. They hoard gold and grind bones for baking supplies. They have mashed up faces and tufts of hair that sprout from the tops of their heads. Rock Giants aren't much for talking; their words tends to be short and uttered through broken teeth which makes them hard to understand. This frustrates them, and then they grab their clubs or large boulders to try and smash you.

They tend to be the first Giants that you meet, since they like the boulders that are found at the foot of the Jagged Heights.

To Hit:	8
Be Hit:	2
Damage:	8
Fortitude:	30
Other Stuff:	Rock n' Roll (Hurt Others +2)
	Thick Skin (Help You +1)
Gold:	13

Paapire Giants

Paapire Giants are the cleverest out of all the giants. They have figured out how to hide, despite their large size. One of the ways that they do this is by living in the higher crags of the Jagged Heights. The mountains themselves are larger and so they provide a greater amount of cover for their smaller than normal Giant Bodies.

Paapire Giants don't look as monstrous as the other Giants. They tend to use their smarts rather than their brute strength to solve problems. They still have the power other Giants have, they just like to save it as a last resort.

To Hit:	7
Be Hit:	4
Damage:	6
Fortitude:	28
Other Stuff:	Sneaky for a Big Person (Cheat +1)
	Blocky Block You! (Help You +1)
	Still a Giant, You Know! (Hurt Others +1)
Gold:	10

Sci'zor Giants

Out of all the Giants, the Sci'zor Giants are the most aggressive of the lot. They are very territorial, and will not permit trespassers to live.

To Hit:	10
Be Hit:	2
Damage:	10
Fortitude:	20
Other Stuff:	I Cut You Good! (Hurt Others +3)
Gold:	11

Dragons

Yes, the rumors are true; Dragons do have a lot of Gold lying about their lairs. It is also true that they are huge, can slice you to ribbons with their claws, snap you like a toothpick with one bite, have scaly armor that is impervious to almost all damage, and can breathe fire!

Even if a Dragon doesn't flambé you on first sight, that doesn't mean you're out of danger. Dragons are known for their complex minds and their inconsistent, or "whimsical" natures; they have paid princely sums for what seem like trivial tasks and sent adventurers on impossible quests in exchange for their lives.

Dragons come in all sorts of colours, but despite this, all tend to have the same stats. If you do have to face one in combat, good luck.

To Hit:	10
Be Hit:	7
Damage:	7
Fortitude:	41
Other Stuff:	Dragon Breath (Hurt Others +3)
	Superior Dragon Magic (Help You +3)
	I've Seen That Before (Cheat +3)
	Did I Tell You I'm a Dragon (Cheat +3)
Gold:	21

The Forest of Bigue

The Forest of Bigue is a mystical, magical place filled with untold mysteries and weird beings. Some of the creatures within can be found in other copses of trees, even in well-forested city parks, but you will certainly face them in the Forest of Bigue.

The Fae Folk

Faeries are mythical creatures that are interested in causing mischief and trouble for anyone who comes across them. They do things like kidnap people, steal items, spoil food, ruin the ending to your favourite theatrical performance, tease, taunt, and generally cause a ruckus. Faeries

Faeries are small creatures that dislike authority in any capacity, from teachers, to deities, to random adventurers that go on and on about how important and in charge they are. They just can't stand it. Faeries enjoy taking those sorts of people down a peg (or five) by playing practical jokes on them.

The Faeries themselves have virtually no social hierarchy. Sure, they say that they have a Queen and that there are rules to follow and whatnot, but that's only to give people the illusion that there's a method to their madness. In reality, the only reason a Faery stops pestering someone is because they've gotten bored.

Faeries do come in all shapes and sizes, but they tend to be on the smallish side, from a few centimeters to a towering meter in height. Faeries have a lot of piercings, along with spiky or crazy-looking hair. They wear ragged and ripped clothing and are known to swear loudly in places that they shouldn't (like temples).

To Hit:	5
Be Hit:	8
Damage:	1
Fortitude:	2
Other Stuff:	Can't See Faeries (Help You +3)
	Taste My Poison Sting (Hurt Others +1)
	Up to No Good (Cheat +3)
	Habit - Take That Authority-Figure Man! (3)
Gold:	4

Dryads

Dryads are the faeries of the trees. They don't like you, unless you happen to be a tree. This means that if you're in a forest protected by a dryad and you do something bad to a tree, they will hurt you. If you come across a dryad in a forest and try do something inappropriate, like light your pipeweed, or sharpen your axe, or (heavens!) flirt with her, she will attempt to make you stop living. It's a good idea to avoid any forest that has a known dryad in it.

Luckily, dryads are rare, solitary creatures that do not stray too far from their home tree. Dryads once lived near one another, but this always resulted in literal turf wars, where various different tree species tried to choke one another out of existence.

To Hit:	5
Be Hit:	5
Damage:	5
Fortitude:	5
Other Stuff:	I Don't Like You! (Hurt Others +2)
	Heal My Tree (Help Others +3)
	Habit - Did You Touch My Tree? (3)
Gold:	5

Fiendish Foes of the Bloodwoods

For whatever reason, these creatures rarely ever make it out of the Bloodwoods to menace polite society. That's a good thing.

Ominous Glowball

These balls of strange light can be seen at night flitting around the many graveyards of the Bloodwoods. Though not aggressive themselves, they have the ability to hypnotize anyone who looks at them for too long. They also have a nasty habit of forcing hypnotized victims to follow them right into the dens of the Bloodwoods's more violent denizens.

To Hit:	3
Be Hit:	10
Damage:	1
Fortitude:	4
Other Stuff:	Flicker in an Especially Soothing Pattern (Hurt Others +3)
Gold:	3

Mutated Hell-Beast

Ohgodohgodohgodohgod!

To Hit:	15
Be Hit:	6
Damage:	4
Fortitude:	10
Other Stuff:	Unsettling, But Conveniently Placed Spiky Protuberances (Hurt Others +3)
	Just Terrifying (Help You +3)
Gold:	10

Giant Spider

What would a fantasy game be without giant spiders? No fantasy game we'd want to play, that's for sure!

To Hit:	5
Be Hit:	5
Damage:	4
Fortitude:	6
Other Stuff:	Poisoned Mandibles that raise AC rather than deal Damage (Hurt Others +2)
	Easily Scurry on Vertical Surfaces (Help You +2)
	Shoot Extremely Sticky Webs (Help You +3)
Gold:	4

Cultists

Cultists are always human, at least when they first join up. Dwarves and elves lack the quirk of mental chemistry common in humans that makes murdering your friends and family for the tenuous favor of a

Dark God seem like a good idea. Cultists favor robes with deep hoods (the better to shroud their faces). These robes are usually black, though some groups of cultists prefer to wear red robes so that they can add a splash of color to their otherwise grim proceedings.

To Hit:	3
Be Hit:	3
Damage:	2
Fortitude:	4
Other Stuff:	Likes to Stab Things (Hurt Others +1)
	Unhealthy Reliance on Dark Magic (Help You +1)
	Habit - Mad Cackling (2)
	Habit - Burning Need to Sacrifice Something (2)
	Item - Evil Sacrificial Knife (+1 Likes to Stab Things, +1 Damage)
Gold:	3

Mystical Creatures

There is lots of magic in the world, most of which has become warped beyond all recognition. This is largely a result of those people who thought themselves magicians trying to wield spells of ancient and arcane power, as well as leftover Bad Things summoned up during the Wizard Wars that reshaped the continents and made everything suck for a long time. Because of this, there's no shortage of bizarre magical critters running about the place such as, constructed golems, magical blots of energy, and various flavours of the undead.

Golems

Golems are one of the more interesting creatures ever devised. They were created practically by accident in the year 133, when the wizard Samalanadin decided to rearrange his statue collection. Rather than move the statues by hand, he gave them mobility through magic. Since those early days, magicians have discovered you can turn just about anything into a Golem.

Iron Golem

Advances in technology have given us the Iron Golem, which surpass the Stone Golem in popularity. They're more durable, more destructive, and their custom (and expensive) iron parts make them obvious status symbols for the wizard trying to impress. Kwimbitz's Adventuring Guide, updated last year, now gives this rule of thumb to adventuring parties: If you see a Stone Golem, it'll be an easier fight, but you'll get less treasure. If you see an Iron Golem, that's when you know that there's stuff worth taking, and also that you should have brought along a six-pack of Healing Potions.

To Hit:	6
Be Hit:	3
Damage:	3
Fortitude:	10
Other Stuff:	I'm Iron, Man (Help You +3)
Gold:	4

Clown Golem

Deep down, just about everyone is scared of clowns. Some clever wizards chose to play upon that fear when designing their mechanical creations, giving birth to the Clown Golem. Few adventurers can withstand the sight of its dark, leering eyes, bright red smile, curly pompadour, and outlandish clown costume. They strike terror in any who face them, and many are the adventurers who have been found unconscious in the stables of the Inn, caked with greasepaint and wearing round, red noses. They are not for the faint of heart, or those with tragic childhoods.

To Hit:	3
Be Hit:	3
Damage:	2
Fortitude:	5
Other Stuff:	Creepy Clown Smile (Cheat +3)
	Powered Flower (Hurt Others +2)
Gold:	2

Vegetable Golem

Mages aren't the only ones to experiment with giving life to the inanimate. Cooks have been pushing the boundaries of vegetables for generations, coming up with soups, stews and consommés at incredible rates. It didn't take long for one cook to try to create a vegetable/meat hybrid. You know, a vegetable that could move around, seeking optimal growing conditions, increase in size when exercised, and become soft and tender when cooked?

Such was the dream of Chef Crebin, one that he spent his entire life trying to achieve. He lacked magical power himself, but he was possessed of deep pockets and an unshakable will, which helped him to hire half the hedge wizards of the East. Their research progressed apace, until the fateful night when the Vegetable Golem arose from its bed of moist soil to do the wizards' bidding.

All went well until the creature realized that its ultimate fate was death inside a pot of boiling water. Enraged, it attacked the wizards and Chef Crebin with such vegetative fury that only a handful survived. The creature escaped into the night, and to this day people can see it wandering fertile fields, planting its seeds.

To Hit:	4
Be Hit:	8
Damage:	3
Fortitude:	10
Other Stuff:	Veggie Strike! (Hurt Others +2)
	I'll Form a Head (Help You +3)
Gold:	6

Undead

Undead creatures are an abomination to the living, mostly because they hunger for tasty living flesh. There are many types of undead, each one with its own unique method of killing every living thing it comes into contact with. It's always best to avoid them if possible and destroy them utterly when you get the chance. Be sure to be thorough when putting down one of the undead. After all, they've died at least once already, and that didn't stop them.

Skeletons

These old bones have gotten up and started walking around on their own. Skeletons can be found around graveyards, catacombs, and wherever necromancers get together for their parties. Since they are made up entirely of bone, they're not particularly bothered by stabby weapons. The good news is that they're slow and kind of clumsy, so it makes them easier to fight; the bad news is that they're like potato chips—there's never just one.

To Hit:	3
Be Hit:	3
Damage:	1
Fortitude:	4
Other Stuff:	Them Dry Bones (Help Self +2)
Gold:	1

Closet Skeletons

This is a special type of Skeleton that somehow knows all your dirty little secrets. Closet skeletons cannot speak, but they can telepathically broadcast your darkest secrets to those around you, especially to the people standing immediately to your right or left. This tactic is particularly devastating against weak-willed foes, who will fight amongst themselves, allowing the Closet Skeletons to get close enough to kill them.

To Hit:	6
Be Hit:	3
Damage:	1
Fortitude:	4
Other Stuff:	Dirty Little Secrets (Cheat +2)
Gold:	2

Zombies

Zombies are the scourge of the living. They are relentless, hard to kill, and they feast on human flesh to keep their undead engines going. Zombies are made up of those members of the recently deceased that have decided for some reason that they want to still be walking about the place. Maybe there's a curse that makes them seek the living and kill them. Or maybe some socially awkward necromancer animates them so that he has a few friends. Or maybe the gods (well, the Destroyer) have raised an army of zombies to punish any annoying village. Thankfully they are so slow that you can usually avoid them with a modicum of personal vigilance and a brisk walking speed.

To Hit:	2
Be Hit:	2
Damage:	3
Fortitude:	9
Other Stuff:	Come on. They are Zombies.
Gold:	1

Vampires

Vampires are one of those types of monsters that can go in a variety of ways. You have the cool, sexy vampires that tend to read bad poetry, hang out in dark places, and try to seduce one another. You also have the vampires that are horribly butt ugly, the kind that have pustules, and misshapen faces, and unsightly tufts of hair. No matter what they look like, they all have the same powers. Vampires are never fun to meet alone in any dark place, not even if they're sexy, because all they want to do is drink your blood.

To Hit:	6
Be Hit:	6
Damage:	2
Fortitude:	10
Other Stuff:	Look Into My Eyes (Cheat +2)
	Mmm ... Mist (Help Self +2)
Gold:	4

Liches

Some wizards get pretty cranky when they reach their twilight years. They grumble that they've spent all this time and effort learning to sling spells of enormous power, only to fade away and die of old age just like that oaf who mucks out the local stable. Some of those wizards get over it, put their affairs in order, and go to their final reward.

The few that remain decide that turning themselves into horrible, eternally damned abominations sounds like a much better plan, even considering the drawbacks of not having skin, of being constantly followed around by plumes of eldritch fire, and the hassle of dealing with demons constantly popping up to try and claim what's left of their souls.

And so we have the lich: Everything that you hated about megalomaniacal wizards with an added helping of Undeath.

To make things more difficult for packs of goodly adventurers set on ridding the world of a lich's evil, they never work alone. Their lairs are stuffed full of zombies and skeletons, ready to march against intruders at the command of the lich's vampiric lieutenants.

Just so we're clear, liches hate working with people who are prettier than they are. These vampires? Yeah, they're not pretty, heavily-made up girls or chiseled, brooding boys dressed in crushed velvet. They're the really, really misshapen sort of vampires that slobber and howl and would sooner tear you limb from limb than read you poetry.

To Hit:	8
Be Hit:	8
Damage:	3
Fortitude:	10
Other Stuff:	Horrifying Death Magic (Cheat +2)
	Meet My Army of Skeletons (Help You +2)
	You Weren't Using this Life Force, Were You? (Hurt Others +1)
Gold:	8

Marshy Areas

The following creatures make their habitats in extremely wet environments. Most of them are found in the Great Eastern Marsh, but it's possible they could be found any place that's sufficiently muddy or humid.

Giant Mosquitoes

What's worse than a mosquito? A whole bunch of mosquitoes. What's worse than that? Mosquitoes that are the size of your hand and can drain a good-sized cow completely of blood in about a minute-and-a-half. These critters are big, ugly, and announce their presence with a loud droning whine that sends experienced marsh-dwellers fleeing indoors.

To Hit:	3
Be Hit:	6
Damage:	2
Fortitude:	4
Other Stuff:	Suck Blood! (Hurt Others +2)
	Exceptionally Agile Flyer (Help You +2)
	Habit - Hungry for Blood (2)
Gold:	3

Lizardfolk

The inhabitants of the Great Eastern Marsh are roughly human size, with thick, scaly hides, knobby bony protrusions on their head and back, and wide, saucer-like eyes that can rotate independently of one another. They dress simply, and somewhat disturbingly, in the hides of other (non-sentient) lizards and wear jewelry made out of shiny stones, woven cords, and animal teeth and bones. They rarely travel abroad without a sturdy walking stick, handy both for testing the solidity of the ground around them, as well as for helping to fish out wayward travelers who fall victim to the Rapacious Sands.

To Hit:	4
Be Hit:	4
Damage:	2
Fortitude:	6
Other Stuff:	Marshlands Survival (Help You +3)
Gold:	2

Swamp Drakes

These creatures are distant descendants of true dragons. They are not nearly as smart, can't fly, and don't breathe fire. They make up for it thanks to a generally foul demeanor, a mouth full of more pathogens than your average sewer, and the ability to generate an aura of stench so repulsive that it can peel the pant off of walls. These creatures would be avoided entirely by adventurers except for the one trait that they do happen to share with their dragon relatives: They like to collect treasure. Or, at the very least, things that are shiny.

To Hit:	6
Be Hit:	4
Damage:	4
Fortitude:	9
Other Stuff:	Toxic Bite (Hurt Others +2)
	Smells So Bad You Can Taste It (Help You +3)
	Habit - Cranky (2)
Gold:	5

Giant Frogs

They seem to grow everything bigger in the Marsh, and the frogs are no exception. Some of them are so large that a human child could easily use one as a mount. That is, provided the child could find a way to keep themselves from being exposed to the powerful hallucinogenic poisons oozing from the frog's skin.

Generally peaceful in nature, unless threatened, the frogs are usually seen as a benevolent presence by people living near the Marsh. They are the natural predators of many bugs, including the Giant Mosquito. The only downside is that these frogs are so big that their nighttime croaking can produce seismic events loud enough to wake the dead.

To Hit:	5
Be Hit:	3
Damage:	2
Fortitude:	6
Other Stuff:	Concussive Tongue Strike! (Hurt Others +1)
	Coated in Controlled Substances (Hurt Others +2)
Gold:	3

Tentacled Horror

These nightmarish creatures spawn in murky pools deep within the Great Eastern Marsh. When they hatch from their leathery egg cases, they're just wee little balls of fibrous tendrils about a foot across. They roll along the bottoms of the waterways, strangling small fish and absorbing their nutrients, until they become large enough to nest in a still pool or lake.

Once they find a place to settle, a tentacled horror does exactly two things: eat and get bigger. Those who know the ways of these terrible beasts can easily spot the telltale signs that one has infested a waterway. Wherever a tentacled horror resides, there is both a pronounced lack of wildlife of any sort as well as a preponderance of shattered animal bones scattered around the water's edge.

A tentacled horror remains in a torpid state for much of its adult life, only waking when it senses the vibrations of approaching prey. Most can only sense disturbances in the water close to it, but the largest and most dangerous have grown big enough and sensitive enough to notice the footfalls of approaching adventurers on the shore.

When it senses prey, the tentacled horror will lash out in all directions, seeking to grasp and throttle anything it can reach and pull it into its cavernous maws.

This is definitely a foe for experienced adventurers only. Just seeing this thing will give you nightmares for a week.

To Hit:	10
Be Hit:	4
Damage:	4
Fortitude:	15
Other Stuff:	Grab Multiple Tasty Morsels (Help You +3)
	Sense Approaching Food (Help You +2)
Gold:	8

Towns and Cities

These types of creatures tend to hang around where people are, either because people are their source of nutrition or (more often) because peoples' byproducts are a source of their nutrition.

Swashbuckling Rats

These creatures are indistinguishable from normal rats, except for the fact that they are bipedal, wear fancy clothes, and speak the common tongue. Each one, to a rat, is suave and sophisticated, and armed with a needle-sharp rapier. Despite their veneer of civility, Swashbuckling rats are unapologetic thieves, stealing from humans and other city-dwellers to enrich their complex rat society. They will rarely stand and fight anything that's larger than they are, though they have been known to poke at any cat that backs them into a corner.

To Hit:	4
Be Hit:	6
Damage:	1
Fortitude:	4
Other Stuff:	Navigate Small Openings (Help You +2)
	Dashing Swordplay (Hurt Others +2)
Gold:	2

Oceanborne Foes

There are all kinds of crazy beasts swimming around in the Ocean. Even if you discount all the mythological-type creatures that stock the waters around Westerly, you're still left with plenty of sharks, squid, giant jellyfish, and fish that get weirder and weirder looking the deeper underwater you descend.

Pirates

The terror of the high seas and the bane of merchant ships everywhere, pirates are a common threat to anyone who ventures out into open waters. While just about every pirate shares questionable fashion sense, a love of eye patches, and an unhealthy thirst for grog, it's important to note that not all pirates are the same. A few of the important sub-species of pirate are listed below.

Pirate, Backstage Thugs

These roving packs of ne'er-do-wells are always ready to loot and plunder any sailing vessel or poorly-defended island nation that they come across. These Pirates are rarely seen, unless they're already inside your hold taking your cargo while you're distracted with the stage show. Backstage Thugs do all the dirty work that the stars of the show just can't be bothered to do, but are necessary in order to make a show run.

To Hit:	5
Be Hit:	4
Damage:	2
Fortitude:	5
Other Stuff:	Scurvy Dog, I've got me Cue! (Help You +2)
	I've Got A Job Ta Do (Hurt Others +2)
Gold:	2

Pirate, Singing Privateer

These are what might best be referred to as, "legal pirates." These are the folks you go to in order to get a musical number written to try to sway the Queen of Pirates. They're all over Port of Pirates charging exorbitant prices for their services, and some of them are even good at

what they do. Their question to their clients are always, can you afford not to hire them?

To Hit:	4
Be Hit:	4
Damage:	2
Fortitude:	4
Other Stuff:	Dashing and Romanticized Roguery (Help You +2)
	Composition and Rhetoric (Helps Others +2)
Gold:	2

Pirate, Lead Adventurer

Lead Adventure Pirates are the sexy, singing pirates that are front and centre at every single floating stage show. They dazzle you with their vocal chords, they amaze you with their stunts, and steal the very gold out of your pocket while performing a heart wrenching soliloquy. These pirates are the people every single little baby pirate aspires to be when they grow up.

To Hit:	4
Be Hit:	5
Damage:	2
Fortitude:	6
Other Stuff:	Singing, Dancing, Leaping, Performing (Cheat +2)
	Swashbucklery! (Hurt Others +2)
	Why Yes That's A Real Sparkle In My Smile (Help You +1)
Gold:	4

Chapter 6

Religion of Westerly

where we discover some Gods and some tea

The Gods of Westerly are pretty low-key deities, tending to forgo the pomp, circumstance, blood sacrifice, and internecine conflicts that plague the pantheons of other religions. They try to be exceptionally reasonable, all-powerful beings, eschewing punishing doctrines and strict penance with a worshipper-friendly hands-off approach. A little prayer, a few coins in the local temple, and they're happy.

In the beginning, right before everything existed, the Gods of Westerly came into being. The Gods, realizing that they had the ability to shape a part of the primordial essence as they saw fit, decided to sit down and draw up plans for the creation of Westerly. This sitting down was done metaphorically, of course, since chairs didn't exist yet. Unlike the gods of the more savage pantheons, they all agreed that they'd have an equal hand in the design of the nation. While there was plenty of room at the table for spirited debate, they wouldn't put up with any vicious arguing or passive-aggressive sniping.

The table was, of course, also metaphorical.

In order to ensure that everyone at this metaphorical table felt like they had a chance to participate, the Gods decreed that each of them would be permitted to draft and enforce a Most Holy Edict, which would serve as one of the underpinnings of Westerly. Each Most Holy Edict would be vetted by a subcommittee of lesser, nameless gods, before being voted upon by the Westerlian Gods themselves.

Once the final bell was struck, and time started ticking merrily forward, the Gods realized that there were many particulars of creation that they had overlooked. These tiny, seemingly insignificant details caused many of the Most Holy Edicts to function against their original design. This period, spoken of in the Holy Books of Westerly, is known as the Time of Mild Inconvenience, and ran concurrently with the God Wars that almost destroyed the rest of the world.

Realizing that things had gone distressingly awry, the Gods of Westerly called an emergency meeting. Over some delicious toast and coffee (no longer metaphorical, thanks to The Gourmand), the Gods presented numerous reports about the unforeseen flaws of their Most Holy Edicts. Eventually, the Most Holy Edict Subcommittee decreed that each of the Gods of Westerly would get to create a second Most Holy Edict in response to another God's Most Holy Edict to correct the flaws. This was all properly ratified by the sub-subcommittee of lesser, nameless gods, and voted upon.

Even with all the talking and the voting and the new Edicts, the Gods realized that there were still flaws in their design. However, Westerly seemed to be functioning quite a bit better after the modifications, so the Gods called their creation pretty good, and went off to relax in the Godly Plane for a while and do whatever it is that timeless beings do in their free time.

Before they left, the Gods of Westerly decided that they were fine with a lot of the lesser, shapeless gods becoming real Gods of the Westerlian Pantheon. They figured as long as no one's spiritual toes were being stepped on they were pretty happy having more of them around. So while there are many main gods that are worshiped in the Kingdom, new Gods show up all the time and come and go as they please. Most of the mortals of Westerly just stick to the main Gods and leave the other Gods to the people on the fringe who feel that worshipping the Mosquito God is something worth doing.

The Merchant

The god of commerce is a shrewd and cunning deity. The cacophony of a thousand voices in a crowded marketplace, accented by the clinking of gold changing hands, is as music to his ears. It is said that he stands from a high place on the god plane and watches over the trading caravans and merchant ships that keep the wheels of business turning in Westerly. He is the patron deity of traders, bankers, shopkeepers, entrepreneurs, and ministers of finance. Those who are especially adept at wrangling deals, selling quality goods at reasonable prices, and living well off of their hard-earned profits enjoy his favor.

His Priesthood

Priests of the Merchant are tasked with aiding and abetting commerce in all its forms. They are the caravan guards that strike down monsters who try to steal trade goods. They walk the halls of power, making sure that taxes are reasonable, competition is fair, and monopolies are kept to a minimum. They keep the trade guilds in line, ensuring that they obey and honor the Merchant and that the people have a steady flow of goods. This is especially tricky, considering that some trade guilds, especially the ones dealing in decayed plant matter, have learned that they can make more money by ignoring certain of the Merchant's key teachings.

Those priests that Guard the Goods have a rather complex relationship with the followers of the Thief and the Thieves' Guild. The Merchant doesn't mind that the Thieves' Guild exists, but he does want to make sure that even these less-than-legal transactions are as fair as the more traditional ones. Of course, Those Who Count Coins Below have a much different definition of what's "fair" than the clergy of the Merchant does.

Most Holy Edicts

Monsters are Bad for Business and Should be Eliminated

When the first monsters began to pillage the lands and rob from caravans, the Merchant was appalled. If trade goods didn't arrive because pesky monsters got in the way, people would become angry and the coin would not flow. The Merchant decided to encourage goodly folk to defeat these vile foes. For mercantilism!

Whenever anyone, anywhere, defeats a monster, the Merchant immediately rewards them with an amount of gold from the Celestial Treasury based on the monster's listing on the Exchange. That gold is magically placed on their person and is then subject to the laws of physics, ownership and possession.

Alas, there is finite gold in the Celestial Treasury. Sometimes, reserves run low and the Merchant has to hand out IOUs to monster slayers instead of actual gold. This always causes some grumbling, but mortals know that they can redeem the IOUs at any temple of the Merchant for gold once the Treasury replenishes itself. This sometimes leads to even more grumbling when, on occasion, priests of the Merchant refuse to honor the IOUs. Considering some clever folks have tried to counterfeit IOUs, this position is understandable.

The Adventurer's Outlet

There is nothing more frustrating than when your adventuring gear gets broken, gets stolen, goes missing, or ends up being an illusion. The Merchant realized that this loss of equipment stings a bit less when you're able to go to your local goods store, blacksmith shop, or apothecary to buy replacements. In order to help both adventurers and the economy, the Merchant decreed that dangerous areas frequented by adventurers should have a convenient marketplace nearby. These adventurers' outlets would be under the Merchant's Divine Protection and as such would be a relatively safe location to rest.

The one problem (for adventurers, not for the Merchant's faithful), is that since there's nowhere else to go to buy things, all the goods purchased in the outlets cost double or triple what they normally would in an actual town. Still, money can be no object when you're trying to outfit yourself to rescue your last set of gear from the Bog Wraiths at the bottom of the Well.

The Thief

Mysterious and elusive, the Thief is often depicted as a woman of indeterminate everything (her body is always covered by a dramatically flowing black cloak). Of all the deities, she is known to be the one with the best sense of humour. It is said that her mind's eye is ever watchful of the low places where people of questionable repute gather. Her heart delights in intrigues, elaborately woven plans, and the daring heists that are but one step away from becoming complete fiascos. She is the patron deity of thieves, beggars, misfits, and rascals. Those who use cunning and guile, or who trust their fortunes to the throw of the dice have her favor.

Usually.

Her Priesthood

The priesthood of the Thief is a disorganized affair. There aren't a lot of rules about what to wear, how to worship, or what to eat. Pretty much the only way you'll ever know if someone is a priest of the Thief is when they tell you that they're a priest of the Thief. This means you have to take them at their word, which is the one thing you should never do.

Most regular folk, upon hearing that one of the Thief's priests is in their midst, organize themselves into watches and lock up all their worldly goods. Alas, that's pretty much all they can do to guard themselves against this priesthood, as they both enjoy the divine protection of Her hand as well as the temporal protection that prevents people from attacking clergy. Yes, even if they deserve it.



Considering that priests of the Thief get a pretty sweet deal, it comes as no surprise that regular non-religious thieves sometimes try to pass themselves off as priests to escape the slowly turning wheels of justice. The Thief does not take kindly to this sort of behaviour, and has, on more than one occasion, helped to lead angry mobs or squads of city guards right to the hiding place of the false priest.

Most Holy Edicts Gold is 9/10ths of the Law (Give or Take)

Material possessions are pretty easy to track. For instance, everyone knows what King Port Liam's crown looks like, so it's unlikely that you'll be able to steal it and casually pass it off as your artistic foray into the realms of avant-garde headgear. Even less famous objects have similar issues: That pretty red cloak that you have looks an awful lot like the one that that priest of the Merchant was wearing. Oh, and look at that, her name is sewn into the collar. Huh.

That's not to say that the Thief frowns on people stealing other people's possessions. No, no, quite the opposite. But what she does say is that if you get caught with something that doesn't belong to you, everything that follows is your own problem.

On the other hand, every piece of gold looks pretty much like every other piece of gold. Since there are a lot of pieces of gold out there in the world, and since it's really really hard to keep track of how many pieces of gold a person has, the Thief passed the following Edict. Provided that you aren't caught in the act of stealing gold, the gold in your possession is rightfully yours, regardless of what others might say.

The problems that arose from this Edict are pretty obvious. So obvious, in fact, that the other gods were surprised, and frankly skeptical, that the Thief hadn't thought of the ramifications of the Edict before the gods set Westerly in motion. In response, the Thief merely shrugged Her divine shoulders. She also might have giggled. Just a little bit.

Traps are Holy

When the Merchant had to start issuing IOUs to annoyed adventurers, the Thief decided to figure out a way to get gold flowing back into the Celestial Treasury. To do this, she decreed that anyone who installed any form of protective measures in their dwellings had to dedicate one trap to Her. The only way to circumvent the trap, other than being the actual owner of the dwelling, was by tithing gold into the convenient slot located somewhere on the trap.

The people, upon hearing this Edict, believed that the Thief would show them Her favor based on how elaborate the trap was. This led to a spike in extremely ornate and complex traps, with beautifully carved and inlaid tithe boxes made by dwarvish crafters. These lavish displays certainly made the Thief happy, and helped to pour gold back into the Celestial coffers.

It hasn't really done much to reduce crime, however. In fact, there are numerous cases where thieves break in just to steal the decorations on the Holy Traps. It's not a good idea to steal from the goddess of thieves, but there's no dissuading some people.

The Gourmand

Food, Drink, Song, and Life; those are the words that drive the Gourmand. Originally a very minor deity, the Gourmand has grown in popularity as food has become more plentiful and leisure time has increased for the general population. Whenever there is a feast, a party, or a cask of ale broached in good spirits, the Gourmand is there, laughing loudly.

Some say that the Gourmand is a dangerous and devious goddess, who lures people away from work and into an endless cycle of feasting, drinking, and sex. Her worshipers don't deny that they would rather be praising the Goddess than toiling in their fields or workshops. However, the Gourmand does try to encourage hard work. As she always says, "work hard, play harder".

Her Priesthood

The Gourmand doesn't have a traditional Priesthood. She believes that anyone who cooks, makes wine, or organizes and participates in festivals is a member of her clergy. She has a large amount of followers, and they know that in order to keep her favour they have to provide nothing but the best food, drink, music and entertainment to those that they serve.

She's quite a popular goddess over at the Gwendolyn School of Swordplay and Cookery, enjoying equal standing with the Warrior among the faculty and students.

Most Holy Edicts Festivals are Important

The Gourmand knows that people are in dire need of relief. The days are long and hard, and work is often draining and thankless. The Gourmand, in her excellent wisdom, decided that festivals must be

Holy, and that all work would stop during them, so that people could recover their spirits. This was fine at first, but then the people realized the Gourmand's definition of a festival was pretty broad and could be applied to just about anything--even if it was just two people together in a room with a loaf of bread.

Sharing is Better than Taking

The Gourmand saw that The Thief's edict was causing a lot of problems for people. Gold was being shunned by everyone, and this made it difficult to organize feasts and other such festivities.

To deal with this problem, the Gourmand declared that thieves could only take a percentage of someone's wealth. Many thieves complained about this Edict, but to no avail. This delighted the Merchant, and the gold economy was saved.

The Healer

The Healer, and his flock of caregivers, are known for being kind and generous souls willing to give of themselves until there is nothing left to give. Not to be outdone, some of them are able to give even beyond that. The Healer is kind and benevolent, and doesn't often lose his temper, but when something makes him blow his stack, even the Warrior runs and hides.

His Priesthood

The Healer's faithful are always looking for better ways to bring healing and comfort to people who are in dire need. They run free hospitals in areas that can't afford other health options. They brew healing potions by the cauldron-full in their churches. They travel to battlefields and clean up the aftermath. They have even been known to heal injured monsters, because the Healer believes that all creatures deserve kindness, respect, and positive Fortitude.

Most Holy Edicts Healing Should be Used on Those Who Need It

Once magical healing became readily available, the Healer noticed that people kept bothering his priests for trivial ailments, like hangnails and paper cuts. They would demand treatment, even if the Healer's priests were already busy with something important, like putting someone's spleen back together. When a minor noble cut his hand on his own rings, and decided his "injury" needed to be looked at ahead of a child with broken ribs, the Healer got really angry. He decreed that anyone

who demanded magical healing without being in dire need of it would feel his wrath.

This led to a precipitous drop in the population. Everyone saw how angry the Healer had become, and no one wanted to make him that furious again. So people declined to bother his priests with any injury at all, worried that the Healer would think that they weren't hurt enough. The Healer, being a kindly sort, felt bad about this. He amended the Edict so that people demanding magical healing for trivial injuries would not face his wrath. Instead, they would face the sarcastic laughter of his priests.

Emergency Magical Treatment

Since the world isn't going to get any less dangerous, and since adventurers and the priests of the Warrior aren't going to stop seeking out deadly foes in hard-to-reach locations, something had to be done to ensure their long-term survivability. And so, the Healer decreed that anyone who abandoned a life of mercantilism or subsistence farming for a life of adventure would enjoy his protection. Those adventurers that fell in battle without hope of rescue or retrieval would find themselves healed and transported--by deliberately vague means--to a place of relative safety.

The Healer did ask that any adventurers rescued in this way take a long time thinking about their choice of employment. Since the Healer knows what adventurers are like, he has also decreed that saying a quick thank you as you buckle on your sword and leap once more into the fray will also suffice.

The Destroyer

In every pantheon, there's always that one deity who is nothing but trouble. When the gods convened to sing the universe into being, there was one who sang off-key on purpose. When everyone else was having a good time hanging around in the workshop and creating races, they were off in some dark, brooding corner building grotesque monsters out of clay. Whenever it looks like there's going to be harmony in the heavens and peace on earth, they throw on their black, spiky armor and start a god war.

The Westerlian Pantheon has one of these, too. However, much like the other Westerlian gods, their "evil" god is way less terrifying than most. Yes, the Destroyer does wear black, spiky armor. Sure, he prefers the company and worship of hideous monsters over the normal folk of Westerly. Naturally, whenever the gods have a status meeting, he eats all of the corn muffins and leaves crumbs all over the place. But otherwise, he's not such a terrible god, really.

His Priesthood

The Destroyer is only seriously worshipped by monsters and the occasional antisocial human--you know, the kind that enjoy wearing dark robes, have blackened fingernails, and sport dark circles under their eyes because they are haunted by waking nightmares every single minute of their lives. They serve their god by terrorizing the cities and towns where decent people live. Because their god is a Westerlian deity, their destructive behavior is limited mostly to vandalism and to making a lot of noise outside of people's homes at three-thirty in the morning. Those of his priests who are particularly inconsiderate enjoy his favor.

Most Holy Edicts Entropy for the Entropy God's Sake

Everything breaks eventually. No matter how well-made something is, whether a sword, a house, or a political system, it will one day let out a soft sigh and fall to pieces. This is one of the big reasons why the Destroyer is so much maligned by adventurers. His Most Holy Edict all but ensures that no matter how fancy or powerful their various pieces of equipment are, they're all going to break or stop working eventually. Probably sooner rather than later, and at the worst possible moment.

This Edict has caused a lot of conflict between the Destroyer, the Merchant, and the Warrior. The Merchant wants quality goods that his priests can sell to the highest bidder, and the Warrior doesn't like it when her faithful are left half-naked, fighting monsters with teeth and fists.

Okay Fine, Upkeep Works

The Warrior and the Merchant harassed the Destroyer to amend his Most Holy Edict during the Time of Mild Inconvenience. One day, after feeling particularly harangued, the Destroyer snapped and wheeled on the other two deities. "Okay, fine, how about this? If mortals check on an item occasionally and keep it clean, I won't just let it rust into a useless heap for no discernible reason. How's that? Happy now?" Without waiting for an answer, he stomped off in a huff.

This means that with regular care, anything can stand the test of time, although things will still break if you neglect them for long enough or if someone intentionally tries to destroy it.

This Edict also proved surprisingly helpful with reigning in the most hardcore of the Gourmand's worshippers. It's hard to throw parties all day, every day, when your houses are falling down around your ears. With the Gourmand's faithful spending at least a desultory amount of

time maintaining things, the number of festivals diminished slightly and everyone else got some work done.

The Warrior

The goddess of battle is a fiery-hearted deity, with long, red hair to match! She loves nothing more than to hear the ringing blows that announce the beginning of a contest of arms. She is the patron deity of many adventurers, especially the sort who put on heavy armor, pick up giant axes, and hack their way through the ranks of evil monsters. Anywhere a naked blade glints in the morning sun; anywhere a warrior raises his voice in a lusty battle cry; anywhere two doughty heroes arm-wrestle over who gets to eat the last biscuit; there, you will find the Warrior smiling.

Her Priesthood

Priests of the Warrior strive for excellence in combat. Their weapons and bodies must be honed to razor-sharpness. Their armor and their souls must not have upon them any spot of rust, metaphorical or otherwise, lest they been seen as being derelict in their duties. They live for a good fight against worthy foes, especially when it means that they can stand tall and proud in the defense of those who cannot defend themselves. All who enjoy the thrill of battle, as well as the challenge of other physical pursuits, have her favor.

Most Holy Edicts For Adventure!

There is nothing worse for a cadre of powerful warrior-priests than to have nothing upon which to test their mettle. For this reason, the Warrior decreed that the kingdom would be exciting, full of monsters, traps, deadly magic, cunning foes, steep cliffs, and raging rapids. This Edict is directly responsible for the entire idea of Adventuring as an occupation.

Order of Difficulty

The Warrior saw many of her faithful being slaughtered by creatures that were far too powerful for them to fight, so she decided to step in and do something. She decreed that the multitude of monsters in the Razorback Mountains must organize themselves by size. She further decreed that, in any fight, monsters must march into battle in order of toughness. This Most Holy Edict ensures that adventurers always fight the weakest monsters first, giving them ample time to either improve their skills or run away before facing off against stronger foes.

This did not please the Destroyer, since most of the monsters of the Razorback Mountains worshipped him and, as a result, they were constantly plaguing him with desperate prayers to help them relocate. You know, because he's a god, and really strong, and he can carry all of their possessions in one trip instead of a hundred little ones.

The Destroyer became so frustrated with all of this imploring that he struck the earth with his sword, causing the mountains to heave and shift all at once, becoming the heavily-regimented peaks that Westerlians know today.

Chapter 7

The Appendices

where we have put the rest of the stuff you can use

This is the section of the book where we have put all the extra little do dads that you might want. We've given you another character sheet, in case something happens to the one in the middle of the book, the Dwarven Map of Westerly, a bunch of IOUs that you can print off as well as a couple of extra adventurers you may want to use you in your game.

Don't thank us for those, thank the people who contributed to the Adventurer level. That's all for them.

Name: _____

Stats

Strength



Damage



Smarts



AC



Sneak



Fortitude



Smile



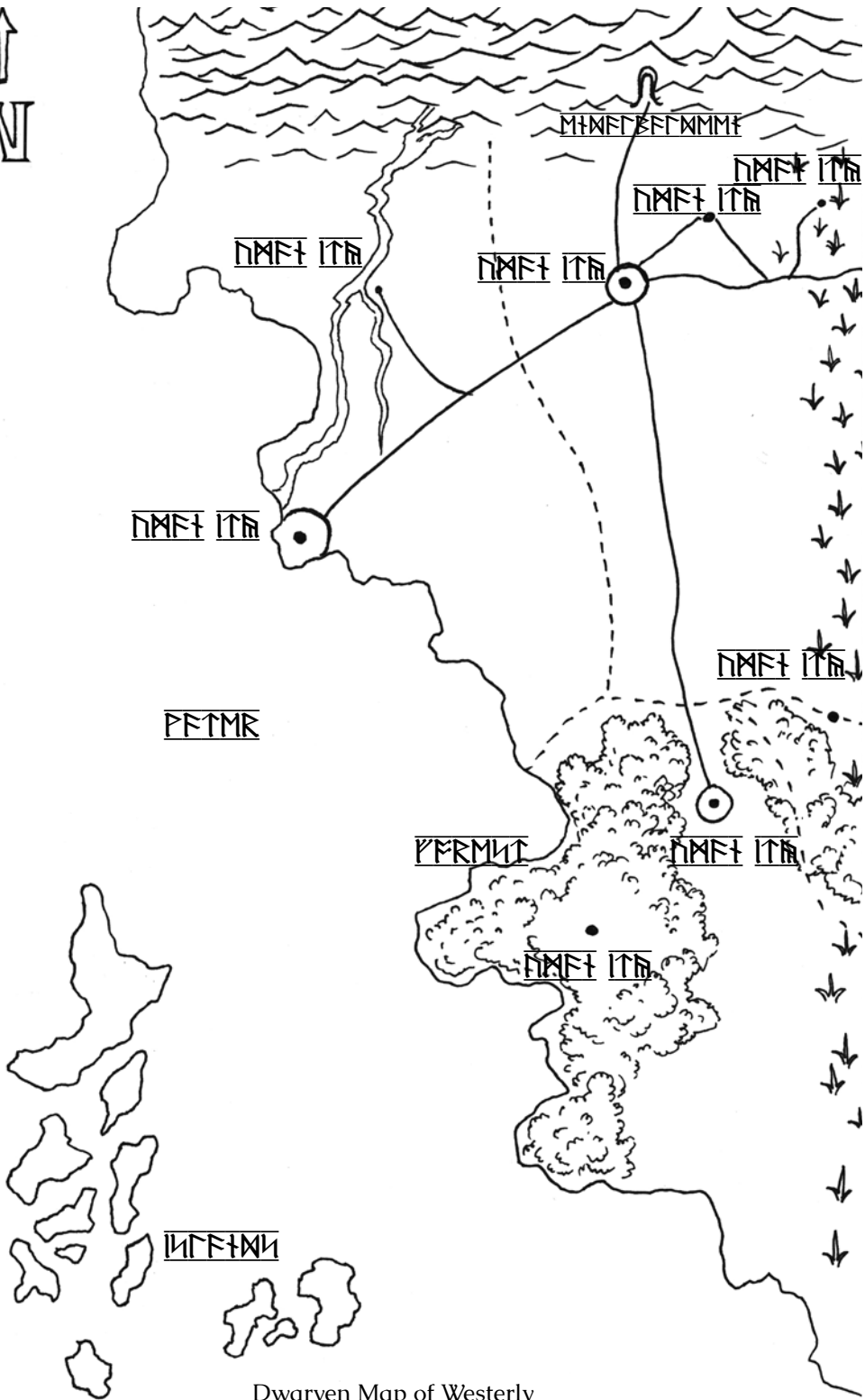
Gold



Skills

Habits

Items



Dwarven Map of Westerly

<p>I.O.U 1 Gold Piece The Merchant</p>	<p>I.O.U 1 Gold Piece The Merchant</p>	<p>I.O.U 1 Gold Piece The Merchant</p>
<p>I.O.U 1 Gold Piece The Merchant</p>	<p>I.O.U 1 Gold Piece The Merchant</p>	<p>I.O.U 1 Gold Piece The Merchant</p>
<p>I.O.U 1 Gold Piece The Merchant</p>	<p>I.O.U 1 Gold Piece The Merchant</p>	<p>I.O.U 1 Gold Piece The Merchant</p>
<p>I.O.U 1 Gold Piece The Merchant</p>	<p>I.O.U 1 Gold Piece The Merchant</p>	<p>I.O.U 1 Gold Piece The Merchant</p>
<p>I.O.U 1 Gold Piece The Merchant</p>	<p>I.O.U 1 Gold Piece The Merchant</p>	<p>I.O.U 1 Gold Piece The Merchant</p>

Extra Adventurers

Celenious Chance ... aka Jingle

There is a man who walks around Westerly with a smile on his face and some dice in his hands. He travels about the place, and he always seems ready with a wager despite the fact that it looks like he has nothing to lose. Despite that, people are always ready and willing to place bets with him, bets that he's usually wins. He takes a bit here, and a bit there and occasionally gets people to join him on quests. Quests like slaying dragons, exposing evil wizards and even taking back stolen jewels from the head of the Peat Guild in Swampgate.

This man's name is Celenious Chance, and he was once a head instructor over at the Wizardry. However, he is more commonly known by Jingle which is the sound that usually summons him. Jingle left the Wizardry under a cloud of controversy. He had caught some other professors with more tenure performing illicit magical experiments on some students and when he brought it to light he was the one who was reprimanded for exposing this behaviour. After being kicked out he started to wander, and discovered that he could do more good while working among the people than he could among his fellow wizards.

That's why he travels from place to place, always ready with a joke, always ready with a bet that could change your life if you're just willing to trust him. Bet on it.

Isabell Harmon, GSSC alumnist and aspiring Wizard

Some people decide early on what they want to do and stick with it. Other's find that what they thought was their dream in the end wasn't what they expected at all. Isabell Harmon was one of the latter group of people. She had just finished her honours degree at the Gwendolyn School of Swordplay and Cooking when she realized that the last thing she wanted to do spend her days slaving in a kitchen in some White Griffon Tavern somewhere, unappreciated and unknown. She was good, she did graduate Cum Laude after all, but she just didn't feel that this was her calling. What Isabell wanted was to study magic. The problem was that she didn't know if she had any magic in her.

While she could have gone to the Wizardry to study magic, the thought of spending another five to seven years inside another school made her skin crawl. Instead she thought that it would be best if she tried to learn this magic thing on her own, and the best place for that would be the Eastern Marsh.

She's spent the better part of the past three years in the Swamp. She's created a nice little home on one of quieter northern sections of the bog.

She has a nice view of the mountains, a lot of alone time, and a pet pig named Georgina. The best part is that Isabell feels that she is finally starting to get the hang of this magic thing. She's managed to far to be able to change her hair colour with a little bit of concentration, and from that she figures she's off the understand the deeper mysteries of magic.

Tobias Nielsen

Not many people from outside Westerly spend any amount of time inside the Kingdom. Usually they come in to do business, and then hurry home as fast as they can. Tobias Nielsen was different. He came into Westerly with a particular mission, he was going to use his fell powers to take over the Kingdom and shape it into what a paradise. Well, a paradise where every one's sole purpose was to serve Tobias Nielsen, or Lord Edge Storm as he preferred to be called. He would come in with his sallow complexion and his long dark robes and he would make the people of Westerly bow down before him.

Then something strange happened. When he was about to start his first evil plan, he ended up casting a spell that froze a bunch of bandits that were getting ready to raid a village. When the people of the small town saw what he had done, they feasted Tobias as a hero. Frustrated with this set back, he then went to another nearby village and tried to flood them out with a rainstorm. Thankfully for the villagers they had a huge blaze raging on a barn on the far side of town, the barn that held most of their work for the year. The rain put it out and Tobias found himself again celebrated much to his disgust.

This kept up as Tobias continued across the continent. Usually this is when a would be conqueror would turn to good and use his powers for the benefit of his or her fellow human being. Tobias, however, is still determined to conquer the Kingdom and has moved towards the mountains to try to raise a monster army. Unfortunately a lot of them have heard of Tobias and they think he's trying to trick them into joining an army for the Stout King.



Can you go from being your regular, everyday pig farmer to the defender of the realm? In *Critical: Go Westerly* you take on the role of adventurers doing adventurous things against giant adventurous creatures. Use your skills and convince your Bartender that you know how to handle any situation with your "Been Raising Pigs Forever" skill. Use your trusty walking stick to bash evil monsters over the head for their treasure. Describe the glorious training montage to improve yourself!

You can do whatever what you in *Critical: Go Westerly*, as long as it's funny.