

RAGING SWAN PRESS

GM'S MONTHLY MISCELLANY:

JUNE 2014



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GM'S MONTHLY MISCELLANY: JUNE 2014

Featuring material from some of Raging Swan Press's newest products as well as classic releases of yesteryear, advice articles and material from Creighton's own *Borderland of Adventure* campaign, the *GM's Monthly Miscellany* series is a terrific free resource for the busy, time-crunched GM.

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Thank you for purchasing *GM's Monthly Miscellany: June 2014*; we hope you enjoy it and that you check out our other fine print and PDF products.

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SOURCES

As well as new, never seen before material from my own *Borderland of Adventure* campaign, this instalment of *GM's Monthly Miscellany* presents information from several Raging Swan Press products and advice articles including:

- **Village Backdrop: Prayer's Point** Alexander Augunas.
- **Alternate Dungeons: Mystic Groves** Alexander Augunas.
- **Minotaurs of the Black Hills** Creighton Broadhurst

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FOREWORD

By the time you read this, I'll have a new blog! I've been pondering moving from my LiveJournal blog of longstanding (raging-swan.livejournal.com) to a WordPress blog for some time and I've finally pulled the trigger. You can check out my new blog at creightonbroadhurst.com. Please let me know what you think – I think the format and layout are a real step up for me!

In any event, Herein you'll find excerpts from some of Raging Swan's newest products as well as material from a golden oldie – *Minotaurs of the Black Hills*. I've also included a selection of advice articles from those posted weekly at ragingswan.com/articles as well as material from my Borderland of Adventure campaign. This month, I present the dragon, Vesicwyr in all her malign glory. Vesicwyr has long been a thorn in the side of the party, but sadly the heroes have yet to defeat her. On that subject, I've also include the chase mechanics I used to simulate the PCs fleeing her lair. As always, the material from

my campaign has been slightly scrubbed to remove the intellectual property of other companies but it is otherwise pretty much as I've used it myself. If you want to keep up with our adventures, you can read weekly session summaries on my new blog: creightonbroadhurst.com.

Finally, the art below is another piece by Matt Morrow. It depicts the oft-sunken stairs leading to the Fane of the Undying Sleeper which features in the adventure of the same name. The adventure features a new crazy-easy to use format which makes prep and game play a breeze. I hope you try it out.

I hope you enjoy the material in this GM's Monthly Miscellany, but more importantly I hope you find it useful and that it enhances your campaign. If you've got any comments or questions about Raging Swan Press, I'd love to hear from you. You can contact me at creighton@ragingswan.com.



FREELANCE ADVICE: ARE YOU A PIXIE DUST DESIGNER?

PIXIE DUST DESIGNERS ARE AMAZING, NATURALLY TALENTED DESIGNERS. WHATEVER PROJECT THEY TOUCH, THEY EFFORTLESSLY SPRINKLE IT WITH THEIR MAGIC PIXIE DUST. WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT TO BE A PIXIE DUST DESIGNER?

Pixie dust designers are somewhat of a rarity. In fact, I'd go so far as to say they don't really exist. It's easy to look at a designer's body of work and only see the result. It's much harder to look at their material and see all the hard work and effort that goes into its creation.

Successful designers work at all facets of their craft. They don't rely on pixie dust. Successful designers know there is no such thing as a quick fix as a freelance game designer. They build solid skills and practises to enable themselves to produce the best material possible. A successful designer:

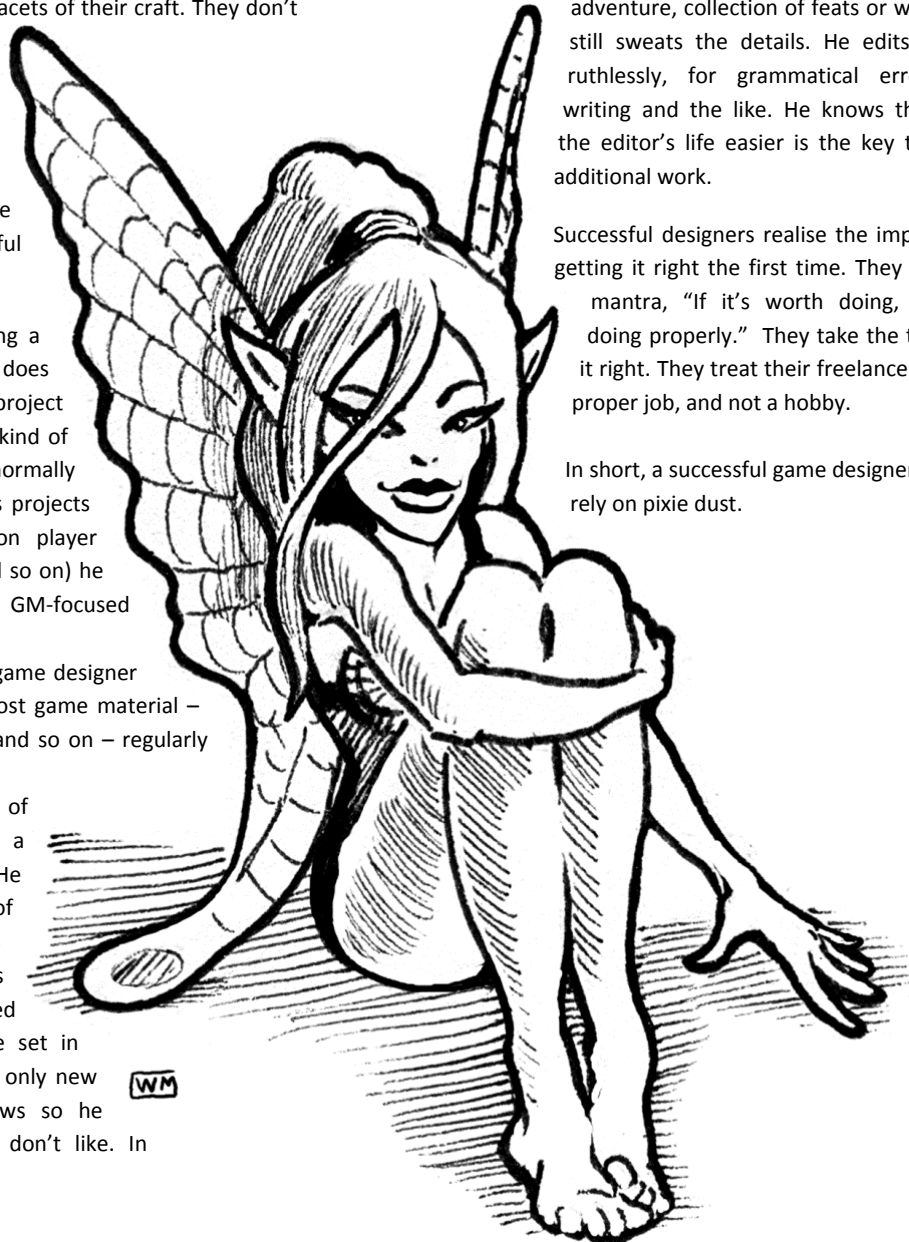
- **Researches:** Before approaching a company, a successful designer does his research. If he is pitching a project to a company he knows what kind of products the company normally releases and makes certain his projects fits. If a company focuses on player options (new feats, classes and so on) he doesn't pitch them a GM-focused supplement (and vice versa).
- **Trains:** A successful freelance game designer practises his craft. He might post game material – stat blocks, encounters, feats and so on – regularly to his blog.
- **Reads:** Reading a wide range of material is key to being a successful game designer. He reads around the subject of game design and linked fields of interest to increase his knowledge. He reads related subjects to the genre or rule set in which he works. He reads not only new releases but also their reviews so he knows what people like and don't like. In short, he reads... a lot.

- **Up To Date:** Keeping up to date with industry developments and trends is particularly important in a fast-moving industry such as the game industry. If an industry leader releases a new set of rules, a successful freelance designer keep abreast of the development.

- **Sweats the Details:** Even if his creation is the greatest adventure, collection of feats or whatever he still sweats the details. He edits his work, ruthlessly, for grammatical errors, loose writing and the like. He knows that making the editor's life easier is the key to securing additional work.

Successful designers realise the importance of getting it right the first time. They live by the mantra, "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing properly." They take the time to get it right. They treat their freelance works as a proper job, and not a hobby.

In short, a successful game designer does not rely on pixie dust.



PRAYER'S POINT AT A GLANCE

The quaint village of Prayer's Point has always been blessed with prosperity, but in recent decades that prosperity has blossomed. Named for the favourite meditation spot of a legendary paladin of yore, Prayer's Point attracts travellers looking to find their fortunes in the lost ruins of a dwarven hold and pilgrims who believe the village's namesake, Prayer's Rock, is touched by divinity. Residents certainly believe the village is blessed, for the waters of Angel's Bay glows as pure as truegold each morning as the sun rises and children born in Prayer's Point often show traces of the divine: nowhere else in the known world has as high a concentration of locally-born aasimar children and these children are often born to families with no history of divine contact.

Still, even such a tranquil place as Prayer's Point isn't without its problems. Some villagers whisper lycanthropes in the nearby forest, Nirvana, are the only explanation for the sudden disappearance of the forest's animal life and the strange howls echoing through the woods at nights. Drunk beggars claim ghosts walk the city's graveyard and that strange, rotting carcasses float down Angel's Run towards the bay but such claims are often dismissed by most as the ramblings of superstitious oafs. In fact, resentment between Prayer's Point's growing mercantile and aristocratic elite and the poor grows by the day as more and more folk are evicted from their homes due to inflated property taxes designed to drive them from the village. And underneath this class warfare and superstition lies the horrible truth: terrible, unnatural things that crave nothing more than wanton death lurk within Mount Hoarfrost.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Neelah Strongblood

Government Autocracy

Population 180 (98 humans, 62 aasimar, 10 halflings, 4 dwarves, 2 elves, 2 half-elves, 2 kitsune)

Alignments LG, NG, N, LN

Languages Common, Celestial, Elven, Sylvan

Corruption 0; **Crime** +0; **Economy** +1; **Law** +2; **Lore** +0; **Society** +0

Qualities Tourist attraction

Danger +0

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Creig Broadton (location 8; LN male human cleric 2) Prayer's Point's only residential cleric, Creigh spends most of his time tending the village's graveyard.

Delilah Silversheen (location 4; NG female aasimar bard 2) Deliah's store, Silversheen Odds and Ends, is the only establishment in the village selling adventuring gear.

Evorn Whisperleaf (location 7; LG male elf paladin 4) Evorn dwells in Beggar's Haunt and protects and tends its denizens.

Hans Trueblood (location 3; LG male aasimar paladin 6) Prayer's Point's finest son, Hans has become a champion of his home.

Kyomi Weifeng (location 2; NG female kitsune rogue 3) The owner of Prayer's Point's treasured inn, Kyomi keeps to herself in fear of prosecution from the villagers.

Neelah Strongblood (location 3; N female aasimar aristocrat 3) Prayer's Point's mayor loathes her reliance on the coin of travellers and seeks to make the village self-sufficient.

Rodrick Yarlson (location 4; LG male dwarf expert 3) The blacksmith of Prayer's Point, Rodrick was exiled from his home in youth for a crime he didn't commit.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the village comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Prayer's Rock:** Sitting in the village square, this stone is the subject of many legends and is the village's namesake.
2. **The Lass & Lady:** Kyomi Breezeblessed's inn has a reputation among travellers for its quality and comfort.
3. **Village Hall:** Erected before Prayer's Rock, the town hall acts as the legal and economical heart of Prayer's Point.
4. **Silversheen Odds and Ends:** Prayer's Point's general store is stocked with exotic goods brought to the village by pilgrims.
5. **Angel's Bay:** Fed by Angel's Run, the shores of this bay glisten like truegold in the morning light.
6. **Rainbow Bridge:** Named for its iridescent dwarven panelling, this bridge glistens like its namesake in the morning sun.
7. **Beggar's Haunt:** Those too poor to own homes in Prayer's Point have taken to living under the Rainbow Bridge.
8. **Elder's Cradle:** Across Angel's Run from Prayer's Point lies Elder's Cradle, the final resting place of the village's dead.
9. **Nirvana:** Named after a legendary celestial realm, this nearby forest boasts a high concentration of celestial animals.
10. **Mount Hoarfrost:** Looming above Prayer's Point, Mount Hoarfrost is a majestic mountain with a dark secret.

MARKETPLACE

Resources & Industry Animal game (hunting and fishing), lumber, tourism

Base Value 600 gp; **Purchase Limit** 2,500 gp; **Spellcasting** 3rd; **Minor Items** 2d4; **Medium Items** 1d4; **Major Items** –

When the PCs arrive in Prayer's Point, the following items are for sale:

- **Potions & Oils** *oil of align weapon* (good only), *cure moderate wounds* (2), *protection from evil*
- **Scrolls (Arcane)** *haste*
- **Scroll (Divine)** *magic circle against evil*

VILLAGE LORE

A PC making a Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local) check may know some information about Prayer's Point. A successful check reveals all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 10: Prayer's Point is a small village at the mouth of Angel's Run. Mothers who spend most of their pregnancy there reportedly have an unusually high chance of birthing an aasimar.

DC 20: Prayer's Point is named for a legendary paladin who would meditate at Prayer's Rock each day while he prepared his holy magic before climbing Mount Hoarfrost to do his god's work. The villagers believe this is the source of the unusual powers of Angel Bay's waters.

DC 30: Aether Dawnbringer, the paladin of legend, fought against horrible monsters from the depths of the Abyss dwelling within the hollow heart of Mount Hoarfrost.

VILLAGERS

Appearance The villager's are well dressed and practice excellent hygiene. Most model their appearances after aasimar, using makeup to hide blemishes and bleach to lighten their hair.

Dress The people of Prayer's Point favour bright, plain clothing reminiscent of clerical garb. Wealthy villagers trim their clothing with precious metals and jewels.

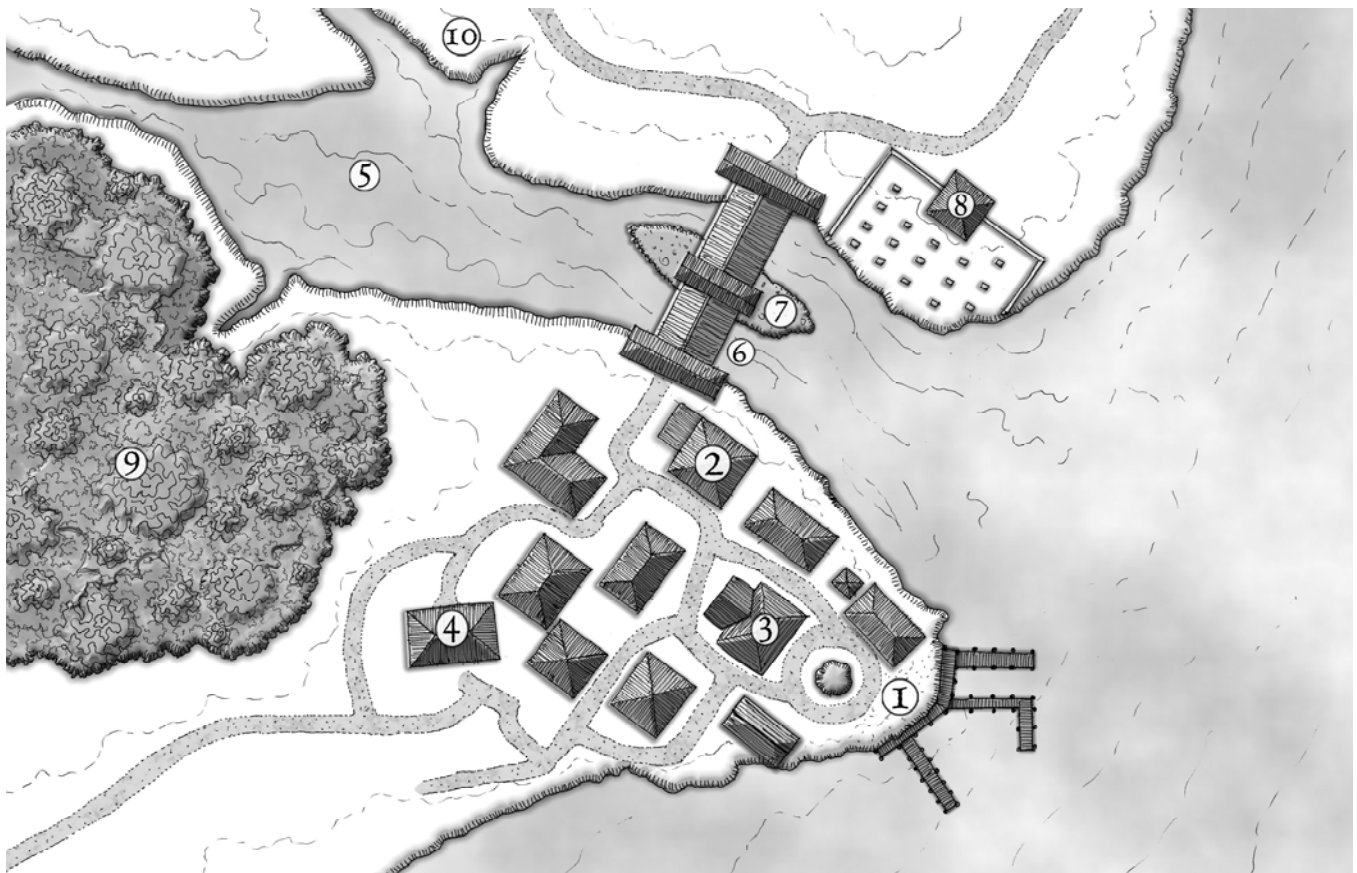
Nomenclature *male* Bar, Hans, Olaf, Sven; *female* Anna, Deliliah, Hannah, Neelah; *family* Broadton, Silversheen, Strongblood.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A PC can use Diplomacy to gather information about Prayer's Point and its surroundings. This takes 1d4 hours and requires a DC 10 check. A PC exceeding this check gains one additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10. Use the table below to determine which rumour(s) the PC learns.

D6	RUMOUR
1*	A family of werefoxes dwells in Nirvana.
2	Humanoid body parts sometimes float down Angel's Run towards the bay.
3	Game has become scarce in Nirvana, the nearby forest.
4*	The cleric of Elder's Rest has been seen digging up graves in the middle of the night to use in dark rituals.
5	Women who spend much of their pregnancy in Prayer's Point have an unusually high chance of birthing an aasimar children.
6	Mount Hoarfrost used to house a dwarven hold, but the hold and its residents mysterious vanished centuries ago.

*False rumour



MYSTIC GROVES: DRESSING

The appearance and characteristic of a mystic grove are a vital part of highlighting the site as a unique, exciting place of adventure. Whether the mystic grove is the abandoned haven for an ancient druid or the lair of an insidious pack of gremlins, choosing appropriate dressings for your mystic grove helps to establish the tone of the adventure as well as player expectations for what horrors might lurk behind every tree.

FUNCTION

Most mystic groves serve as homes for wildlife and lairs for powerful druids who covet them as wellsprings of natural divine magic. Because most animals and fey coexist within the grove and the druidic population of a given grove is seldom more than a single druid, few buildings mar the grove's pristine mystique. Below are some common examples of how a mystic grove's inhabitants utilize their homeland.

Communion: Their deep connection with fey magic makes mystic groves a preferred place for witches, druids and other divine spellcasters to commune with the natural world and the divine entities that sponsor it. These folk often erect small shrines at the mystic grove's sacred heart, offering their praise and thanks every day while praying for the blessings of the natural world. Servants of abominable gods of plague and decay also seek out mystic groves as envoys of destruction. Such folk use their twisted magic to spread unnatural blights throughout the mystic grove, corrupting its denizens into rabid monsters. If left unchecked, the sheer power radiating from a mystic grove often spreads the blight outward towards even more susceptible land in an epidemic of rot and misery.

Courts: Fey creatures permanently dwelling upon the Material Plane often create mystic groves as meeting grounds for fey to gather. Whether discussing frivolous events or planning defences against encroaching mortal woodsmen, mystic groves serving such a purpose are often the most fantastic of them all as the constant use of fey magic has warped the very land itself to serve its purpose as a secluded meeting place. Plants exuberate a calming aroma allowing rational thinking and the trees themselves steer encroaching mortals away from their master's location. Animals are "improved" by fey blessings to serve as guards and companions while plants are urged to grow as natural walls, barring intruders. Mystic groves visited by the most powerful of fey often distort time and space itself within their borders, allowing the fey to commune on an issue for as long as they please and ensnaring unfortunate mortals for decades before the whims of the fey allow them to escape.

Survival: The vast majority of a mystic grove's inhabitants dwell there for no other reason than to find the sustenance needed for survival. Animals intrinsically sense the primeval energies permeating a mystic grove and thrive within it, often growing to impossible sizes or becoming supernaturally strong from exposure to the fey magic bathing every animal and plant in the area. Over time, virtually any creature experiencing prolonged exposure to this energy gains fey attributes, though the effects are strongest when the creature was conceived and born within the mystic glade itself.

DRESSINGS

Use the table on the following page to generate interesting characteristics for your mystic grove. Some of the features listed below may be inappropriate for your mystic grove based upon its setup – ignore or modify such entries as appropriate.

Expensive Materials: Some of the mystic grove dressings described below include descriptions of expensive art objects or valuable plants or animals. Typically the dressings below have a maximum gp value equal to the gp reward for an encounter with a CR equal to the party's APL –2, although the exact value for such valuable items is subject to GM approval.

Harvesting Dressings: While most of the dressings are part of the mystic grove's terrain or creatures most can be harvested by canny PCs. In order to harvest a dressing from the mystic grove, a PC must make a skill check with a DC equal to 15 + the average CR of an encounter set within the mystic grove. The skill check used should be appropriate for the object being harvested and failing by 5 or more ruins the item.

Modifying Statistics: Many of the dressings describe below provide bonuses to creatures encountered there. Generally speaking a creature must spend a minimum of one uninterrupted month living within a mystic grove, eating food grown or hunted within the grove, bathing within its water and so on. Even then, it is far more common for these bonuses to be imparted to creatures conceived, born and raised within the grove. At the GM's decision, some of these bonuses may fade away if a creature spends too much time outside a mystic grove, does not regularly return to a mystic grove or is not exposed to an adequate amount of fey energy.

Multiple Dressings: Although most mystic groves only possess one of the characteristics noted on the table below, at the GM's decision each result on the table might correspond to a single area within the mystic grove (such as one encounter location). Instead of rolling on the table, a GM may choose to simply pick appropriate dressings to implement.

D%	MYSTIC GROVE DRESSINGS
01	The grove's denizens are hardier than most, granting creatures encountered within it a +2 enhancement bonus to Strength, Dexterity and Constitution.
02	The grove's denizens are smarter than most, granting creatures encountered within it a +2 enhancement bonus to Intelligence, Wisdom and Intelligence.
03-05	All animals encountered within the glade have vibrant colourations and unusual markings.
06-08	Common birds encountered in the grove caw insults in Common at trespassers.
09-10	All animals encountered within the glade have vestigial body parts belonging to other animals (such as butterfly wings or bird feathers).
11-13	Colonial organisms encountered within the grove build their homes in a style eerily similar to humanoid villages.
14-16	The sap of the plant within the mystic grove is blood red.
17-20	Random plants growing in the grove grumble and bark like animals when touched.
21-23	Dozens of skeletons are tangled amidst the roots of trees and undergrowth.
24-26	The leaves of every plant encountered within the mystic grove grow in the shape of a young, natural creature.
27-28	The undergrowth within the mystic grove is oddly coloured compared to that growing outside its borders.
29-30	Instead of mating, animals encountered within the grove are born from womb-sized fruits.
31	Each day, all creatures sleeping overnight in the glade gain the benefits of a random <i>animal aspect</i> for 24 hours.
34-36	Humanoids venturing into the grove find its flowers smell like their favourite food.
37-38	At night, the grove's underbrush glows with a calming, cool light as <i>faerie fire</i> .
39-40	Crystalline growths of varying shapes and sizes protrude from every plant in the grove. If harvested, the crystals are worth 1 gp x the crystal's weight.
41-45	Prayers painted in herbal dyes are written in Sylvan across random trees in the grove.
46-50	A relaxing aroma wafts through the air. This imposes a -4 penalty on Perception skill checks, but heals 1 extra hit point per hit die when a creature rests for 8 hours within the grove.
51-54	Animals and magical beasts born within the glade have hide as strong as steel, granting them DR 5/cold iron.
55-59	Trespassers encounter figments of random childhood memories within the glade, functioning as <i>project image</i> .

60	Creatures dwelling in the grove gain a +4 morale bonus on attack rolls against creatures wearing armour made from hide or leather.
61-63	Phosphorous fungi sprawled across the soil twinkle in harmony with any words spoken within 10 feet.
64-66	All creatures born within the mystic glade possess a faint aura of transmutation magic.
67-60	The terrain within the mystic grove bears signs of flame scarring.
61-63	All fruit growing in the mystic grove is inedible by visiting explorers and animals.
64-65	Creatures with an Intelligence of 3 or higher gain a constant <i>speak with plants</i> and <i>speak with animals</i> effect while within the mystic grove.
66-70	The bark on every tree within the mystic grove is set with dozens of impressions of humanoid faces writhing or screaming in pain.
71-73	All of the animals born within the mystic glade are <i>awakened</i> .
74-76	Living creatures conceived within the mystic grove that remain there throughout their youth grow at an accelerated pace, typically reaching adulthood in half the usual amount of time.
77-70	The sap of all trees within the grove hardens into perfect beads of amber, when exposed to the air.
71	The trees within the grove are as hard as iron. They possess hardness 10 and 10 hit points per inch of thickness.
72-75	The leaves of every plant in the mystic grove grow in the shape of a random Sylvan symbol.
76-80	Plant seeds sown within the mystic grove grow at rapid paces; for example, an apple seed sprouts into a full seedling overnight.
81-83	The bark of all plants growing in the grove are coloured and patterned like poisonous snakes.
84-86	Animals encountered within the grove have bark for hide and ivy for fur or feathers.
87-89	Living creatures encountered within the grove have the giant simple template and ordinary plants are ten times their usual size.
90	A spring at the mystic grove's heart causes creatures drinking its water to stop aging for 100 years, after which they continue to age normally.
91-93	Dozens of trees within the grove are sized and shaped like various humanoid races and some trees are wearing weathered clothing.
94-95	A tree at the centre of the grove is scrawled with the answer to every question that has ever been asked by mortal minds within earshot.
96-97	Any footprints a humanoid leaves within the grove appear identical to those of its spirit animal instead of its usual tracks.
98-99	Roll twice and apply all results.
100	Roll three times and apply all results.

MINOTAURS OF THE BLACK HILLS

The servants of a now all but extinct, powerful race, the minotaurs of the Scarlet Axe yet dwell among the rough, craggy peaks of their ancient home. Protecting the places of their winged masters — the Yith — the Scarlet Axe tribe continues its bloody tradition of warring against the centaurs claiming the surrounding moorland.

The Yith were ancient even before the tribe's distant ancestors emerged from the passages twisting through the hill's deep roots. Belligerent warriors and confident in their ability to claim this new place as their own, the Yith's demands of fealty meant nothing to the minotaurs. Bloody war swept the hills as the Yith rose up to crush the upstart invaders. When it was over, the surviving minotaurs knelt in the blood-soaked dust before their new overlords. Now, living only to serve their winged masters, the Scarlet Axe carefully guards all approaches to the Yith's three nigh-impenetrable citadels.

ECOLOGY & SOCIETY

The Scarlet Axe is a chaotic, warlike society in which perceived weakness is a virtual death sentence. Might is all within the tribe, with each minotaur's personal position in its hierarchy depending upon its ability to crush enemies and bind others to its service. Blood feuds among them are commonplace and usually only end with the death of one of the protagonists.

No chieftains or warlords dwell among the tribe's ranks for the Yith tolerate no rule but their own. Instead, powerful minotaurs become champions and gather about them a retinue of followers. A champion rules his warband through a mixture of bribery and threats and a champion's status is directly related to the number of warriors he commands. Warriors only remain loyal to a leader who provides booty and slaves and quickly abandon an unlucky or stingy leader. Successful raids enhance a champion's status and promises of battle-glory and treasure easily sway the bestial minotaurs' allegiances. Thus, such bands are in a state of constant flux as warriors abandon one champion for another. The greatest champions command warbands of

IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Minotaurs of the Black Hills' design enables a GM to easily insert the Scarlet Axe tribe into a home campaign. Although as written they are servants of the Yith, it is simple to change the minotaurs' ancient lords to another race more suitable to a GM's campaign. Alternatively, the GM can simply rule the Yith extinct and that the minotaurs linger in the Black Hills simply because it is their home.

In any event, adventurers successfully exploring the Black Hills gain the thanks of the Centaurs of the Cloven Horn (see *Centaurs of the Bleak Moor* for more information).

forty individuals while lesser warriors sometimes only lead a half-dozen followers. A champion's will only extends as far as he can enforce it; infighting between bands is common.

The Scarlet Axe is unusually civilised. The Yith taught them many secrets — metal work, rudimentary architecture and engineering, the science of war, and so on. The Yith even taught the minotaurs to tame the raging lust for violence and slaughter running through their veins. Thus, many tribal warriors have levels of fighter and ranger instead of barbarian.

After so many years living in their thrall, the taint of the Yith runs strongly through the tribe. Sorcerers are relatively common among them and are accorded high status. Powerful minotaur sorcerers take on many aspects of their ancient masters and the most accomplished are even summoned to dwell within the vitrified lairs of the batfolk.

Nomenclature: The minotaurs favour short, simple personal names but often add flavoursome epithets based on their battle exploits or physical attributes. Examples of their names include:

Personal Names: Culs, Drec, Hefr, Llasnn, Lult, Nilv, Rhannt, Slost, Tawld, Tyfrt, Vethk, Vywunt, Zul.

Epithets: Blood Axe, Curved Horn, Strong Arm.

LAIRS

Dwelling in small groups throughout the Black Hills, the Scarlet Axe tribe normally claim convoluted, multi-level cave systems with many entrances as their homes. The minotaurs know these cavern systems intimately and use them as home and armoury.

Only the most powerful and honoured sorcerers dwell among the Yith; for the rest, the caverns of the Black Hills are their home. A few sorcerers serve champions while others dwell alone — better to explore their unique heritage.

TRIBAL LORE

A character making a Knowledge (nature) check may know some information about the tribe. A successful check reveals all information gained by a lesser check.

DC 14: This is a minotaur of the Scarlet Axe tribe. The Scarlet Axe tribe dwell in the Black Hills and are relatively civilised by minotaur standards.

DC 19: The Scarlet Axe tribe are the enemies of the Cloven Horn centaur tribe that dwells on the Bleak Moor. The minotaurs guard three ancient fortresses in the Black Hills and launch regular raids from them into the Bleak Moor.

DC 24: The Scarlet Axe tribe were once servants of an elder race that haunted the Black Hills. The Yith were a race of bat-like humanoids that held sway over the hills and surrounding moorland.

COMBAT & TACTICS

Incredibly disciplined and organised for minotaurs, the warriors of the Scarlet Axe remain bloodthirsty maniacs that revel in the din and gore of battle. Trained by their masters to control the raging bloodlust coursing through their veins, they yet yearn for the clamour and chaos of battle. Revelling in their enemies' suffering and pain they hunger for the honour and prestige of slaughtering their foes.

At the start of battle, the warriors quickly close with their enemies, using their powerful charge to inflict devastating wounds. Once in battle, they harry their foes mercilessly, cleaving them with their massive greataxes.

Formidable opponents on their own, warriors fight in pairs cooperating to defeat a single opponent before moving onto the next.

Sorcerers hang back from melee (at least until their bloodlust overcomes them) using their spells to target enemy leaders.

NOTABLE INDIVIDUALS

Heloc: Heavily scarred, this powerful champion leads a dozen warriors. Savage even by a minotaur's standards, Heloc's (male minotaur barbarian 3/fighter 2) implacable hatred is legendary among the tribe.

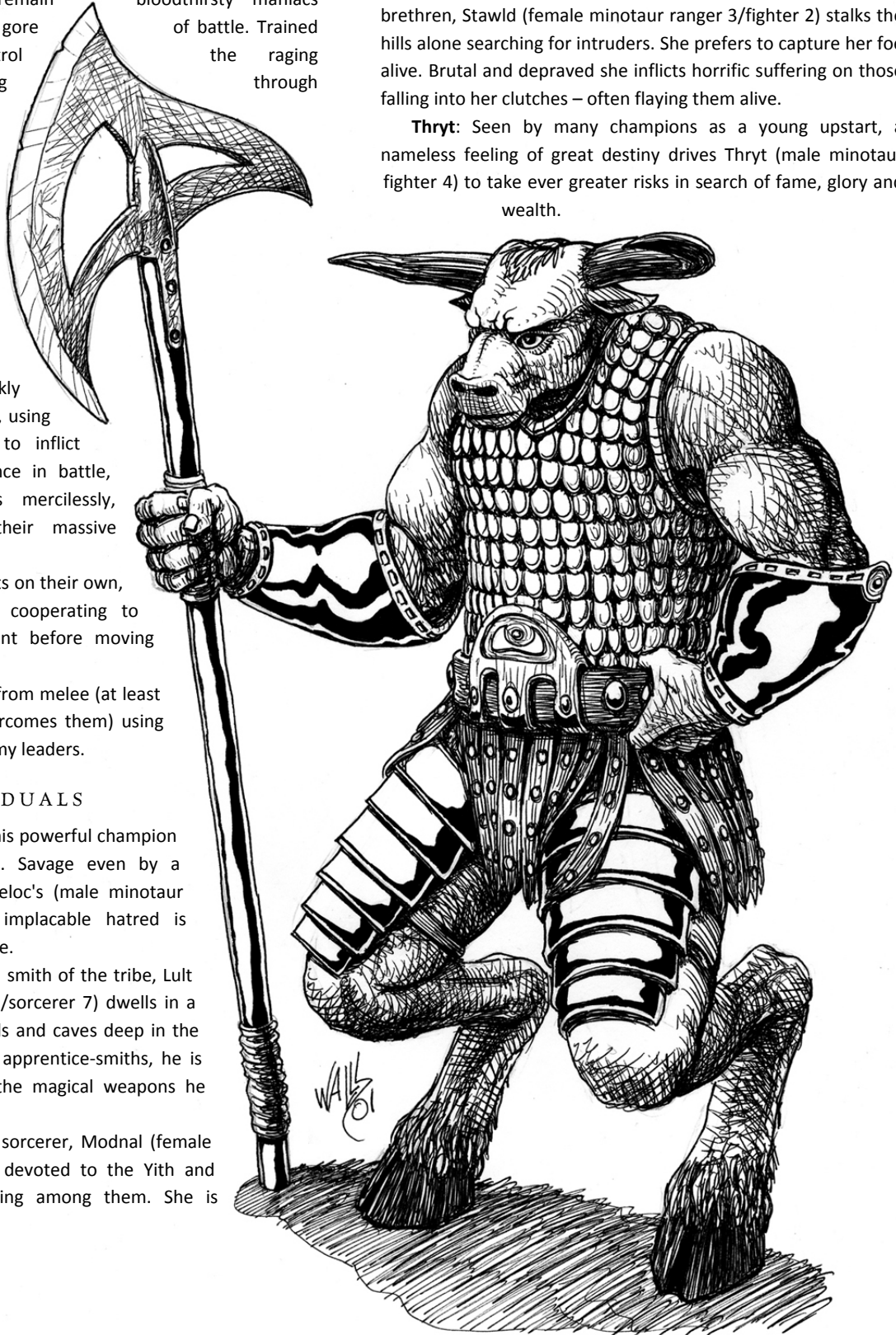
Lult: The most skilled smith of the tribe, Lult (male minotaur fighter 2/sorcerer 7) dwells in a rambling series of tunnels and caves deep in the hills. Attended by three apprentice-smiths, he is much sought after for the magical weapons he crafts.

Modnal: A powerful sorcerer, Modnal (female minotaur sorcerer 5) is devoted to the Yith and dreams of one day living among them. She is

ferociously loyal to her overlords and often accompanies raids into the Bleak Moor for centaur heads to adorn her hidden lair.

Stawld: Preferring solitude to the riotous caverns of her brethren, Stawld (female minotaur ranger 3/fighter 2) stalks the hills alone searching for intruders. She prefers to capture her foe alive. Brutal and depraved she inflicts horrific suffering on those falling into her clutches – often flaying them alive.

Thryt: Seen by many champions as a young upstart, a nameless feeling of great destiny drives Thryt (male minotaur fighter 4) to take ever greater risks in search of fame, glory and wealth.



FROM MY CAMPAIGN: VESICWYR

Consumed with anger at the treatment meted out by her siblings, this small dragon is much more dangerous than she looks.

Background: Vesicwyr has always been small for her size; forced to flee her parents' lair after her siblings tried to eat her, she wandered for months before finally discovering a small, uninhabited cave in the depths of the woods. A small tribe of kobolds dwelled nearby and Vesicwyr quickly broke them to her will. Now she rules the tribe with an iron grip using them as little more than bandits (albeit cruel, cunning bandits). The kobolds lurk in the woods and waylay travellers, bringing their valuables to Vesicwyr. In turn, she aids them against their enemies and allows their chieftain and his favourites to keep the treasures for which she has no use.

Personality: Cruel, but relatively intelligent, Vesicwyr knows physically she is not as imposing as her siblings (who she hates and fears). She loves shiny treasure, but has no need or desire for mans' trinkets such as weapons and armour. Fiercely territorial, she guards her realm jealously. She loves swimming and often launches ambushes from beneath a river or woodland pool.

Although she loves to give herself over to the savage battle lust lurking within her blood, she is pragmatic about her prowess. She loves using her breath weapon on enemies and flees battle if reduced to half hit points.

Mannerisms: When angry or upset, Vesicwyr snorts loudly. She loves the feel of flesh between her teeth and savagely worries fallen foes.

Distinguishing Features: Vesicwyr is small for her age. This sometimes leads foes to underestimate her – with catastrophic results (for them).

Hooks: Vesicwyr's kobold servants fall upon the PCs. The PCs may chase the survivors back to their lair or discover news of the dragon from a captured warrior. Alternatively, if the party is particularly numerous or obviously powerful, Vesicwyr may aid in the kobolds' attack.

IN MY CAMPAIGN

In my campaign, Vesicwyr works for an as yet unknown shadowy figure that works against the PCs homeland. Thus, I've had to omit certain parts of her backstory as the PCs have yet to uncover all the relevant details. Still, you've certainly got enough to use Vesicwyr in your own campaign!

VESICWYR

CR 8 (XP 4,800)

This emerald green dragon has a single horn protruding from its snout.

Female young juvenile green dragon

LE Medium dragon (air)

Init +3; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., dragon senses; Perception +16, Sense Motive +11

Dragon Senses (Ex) Vesicwyr sees four times as well as a human in dim light and twice as well in normal light

Speed 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor), swim (40 ft.), woodland stride; **ACP** 0; **Acrobatics** +3 (+7 jumping), **Fly** +13, **Swim** +22

Woodland Stride (Ex) Vesicwyr can move through normal foliage at full speed without taking damage or suffering impediment. Foliage affected by magic, affects her normally.

AC 26, touch 14, flat-footed 22; **CMD** 29

(+3 Dex, +1 dodge [Dodge], +12 natural [Improved Natural Armour])

Immune acid, *sleep*, paralysis

Fort +9, **Ref** +10, **Will** +11; **SR** 19

hp 93 (11 HD)

Space 10 ft. (frightful presence 120 ft.); **Base Atk** +11; **CMB** +15

Frightful Presence (Ex) Creatures within 120 ft. of Vesicwyr with less than 11 HD must make a DC 17 Will save or become shaken (or panicked if it has 4 HD or fewer) for 5d6 rounds if they see her charge or attack. A creature making a successful saving throw is immune to her frightful presence for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Melee bite (reach 10 ft.) +14 (1d8+6),

2 claws +14 (1d6+4),

2 wings +12 (1d4+2) and

tail slap +14 (1d6+6)

Atk Options Combat Reflexes, Lunge

Special Actions breath weapon (40 ft. cone, 8d6 acid; DC 17 Reflex halves)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 1st; concentration +3)

1st (4/day)—*alarm*, *mage armour*

0—*detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 12), *mage hand*, *resistance*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th; concentration +13)

At-Will *charm person* (DC 13), *entangle* (DC 13)

Abilities Str 19, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 14

SQ water breathing

Water Breathing (Ex) Vesicwyr can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use her breath weapons, spells and other abilities while submerged.

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Natural Armour, Iron Will, Lunge, Multi-Attack

Skills as above plus Intimidate +16, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Spellcraft +16, Use Magic Device +16

Languages Common, Draconic, Goblin

Gear hoard total value 10,050 gp

FROM MY CAMPAIGN: ESCAPING VESICWYR

In my campaign, the party failed to kill Vesicwyr when they finally uncovered her lair. With the approach of a small pirate army also intent on looting the dragon's lair, I thought the heroes would flee the area. As it turned out, I was wrong, but here is the chase I designed. Hopefully, you'll get more use out of it than I did!

CARD 1

- **Fallen Trees:** DC 10 Climb
- **Dense Thicket:** DC 15 Escape Artist

CARD 2

- **Narrow Stream:** DC 10 Acrobatics
- **Spot Ford:** DC 15 Perception

CARD 3

- **Narrow Cavern Through Hill:** DC 15 Escape Artist
- **Steep Hill:** DC 10 Climb

CARD 4

- **Huge Fallen Tree:** DC 10 Climb
- **Muddy Low-Lying Bog:** DC 15 Acrobatics

VETERAN ORC PIRATE CR 1/3 (XP 135)
Clad in a chain shirt, this ugly, muscular humanoid wields a huge curved sword.

Male orc warrior 3/expert 1
CE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +3, Sense Motive -2
Speed 30 ft.; **ACP** -1; Acrobatics +3, Climb +8, Swim +8

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15; **CMD** 14
(+4 armour [mwk chain shirt], +1 shield [mwk buckler])

Weakness light sensitivity

Light Sensitivity (Ex) Orcs are dazzled in areas of bright light or within a *daylight* spell.

Fort +4, **Ref** +1, **Will** +1

hp 28 (4 HD); ferocity

Ferocity (Ex) An orc veteran pirate remains conscious when its hit point total is below 0. It is staggered and loses 1 hit point each round, and dies when it reaches -12 hp.

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +7

Melee mwk falchion +8 (2d4+6/18-20)

Ranged mwk light crossbow (range 80 ft.) +4 (1d8/19-20)

Combat Gear bolts (10), *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of shield of faith*

Abilities Str 18, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 7, Cha 6

SQ weapon familiarity (orc)

Feats Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (falchion)

Skills as above plus Profession (sailor) +2

Languages Common, Orc

Gear as above plus 12 gp

CARD 5

- **Dense Thicket** DC 20 Escape Artist
- **Shortcut** DC 15 Perception

CARD 6

- **Crumbling Hilltop Path:** DC 15 Acrobatics
- **Placid Pool:** DC 10 Swim

CARD 7

- **Sluggish River:** DC 10 Swim
- **Fallen Tree Spanning River:** DC 15 Acrobatics

CARD 8

- **Slippery Path:** DC 15 Acrobatics
- **Shortcut:** DC 20 Perception

CARD 9

- **Sinkhole** DC 15 Acrobatics
- **Steep Hill** DC 10 Climb

CARD 10

- Escaped!

PURSUERS

And, of course, you can't have a chase without pursuers.

VETERAN HUMAN PIRATE CR 2 (XP 800)
Clad in dirty studded leather armour this human has a distinctly unsavoury look about him.

Male human warrior 3/expert (sailor) 1
NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +5, Sense Motive +0

Speed 30 ft.; **ACP** 0; Acrobatics +6, Climb +7, Swim +6

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; **CMD** 17

(+3 armour [mwk studded leather], +2 Dex, +1 dodge [Dodge], +1 shield [mwk buckler])

Fort +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +3

hp 32 (4 HD)

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +4

Melee mwk scimitar +6 (1d6+1/18-20) or

Melee dagger +4 (1d4+1/19-20)

Ranged mwk light crossbow (range 80 ft.) +6 (1d8/19-20)

Combat Gear bolts (10), *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of shield of faith*

Abilities Str 12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8

Feats Dodge^B, Toughness, Weapon Focus (scimitar)

Skills as above Intimidate +3, Profession (sailor) +6

Languages Common

Gear as above plus 1d8 sp

GM ADVICE: REOCCURRING VILLAINS

REOCCURRING VILLAINS: PLAYERS LOVE KILLING THEM, AND GMS LOVE PLAYING THEM. EVERY CAMPAIGN NEEDS A REOCCURRING VILLAIN (OR TWO!)

In my own Borderland of Adventure campaign, we've been playing for over two years and in that time countless foes have fallen before the party's blades. However, some villains have escaped their doom more than once! The villains in question don't turn up very often, but when they do the party make a special effort to kill them. Why?

- **Emotional Investment:** If a villain has escaped the party repeatedly or even slain one or more party members, the players often thirst for revenge. Defeating such a foe is far more satisfying than killing a random evil overlord.
- **Plot Device:** Players emotionally involved in the struggle against a villain's schemes need few excuses to hurl themselves into an adventure featuring the villain, his minions or plots. Using a reoccurring villain is a terrific way of driving a story forward without overtly railroading the party.
- **Continuity:** A villain that grows and develops along with the party is a great feature of an ongoing campaign. It creates continuity of story and helps keep the campaign on track and on theme.
- **Verisimilitude:** A reoccurring villain is often one well-rooted in the game world. They may or may not be uber-powerful when the PCs first cross them or their minions, but their presence makes sense in the overall campaign. If the reoccurring villain is particularly powerful it removes the knotty question of exactly where all these powerful evil high priests or archmagi are coming from.

USING A REOCCURRING VILLAIN

Like any important campaign facet, using a reoccurring villain properly is not as simple as plonking them down in a dungeon room and waiting for the PCs to attack.

- **Use Sparingly:** In my campaign, reoccurring villains only appear occasionally; they are not a feature of every adventure. Some appear only once or twice in a year and then the PCs might not even get to fight them.

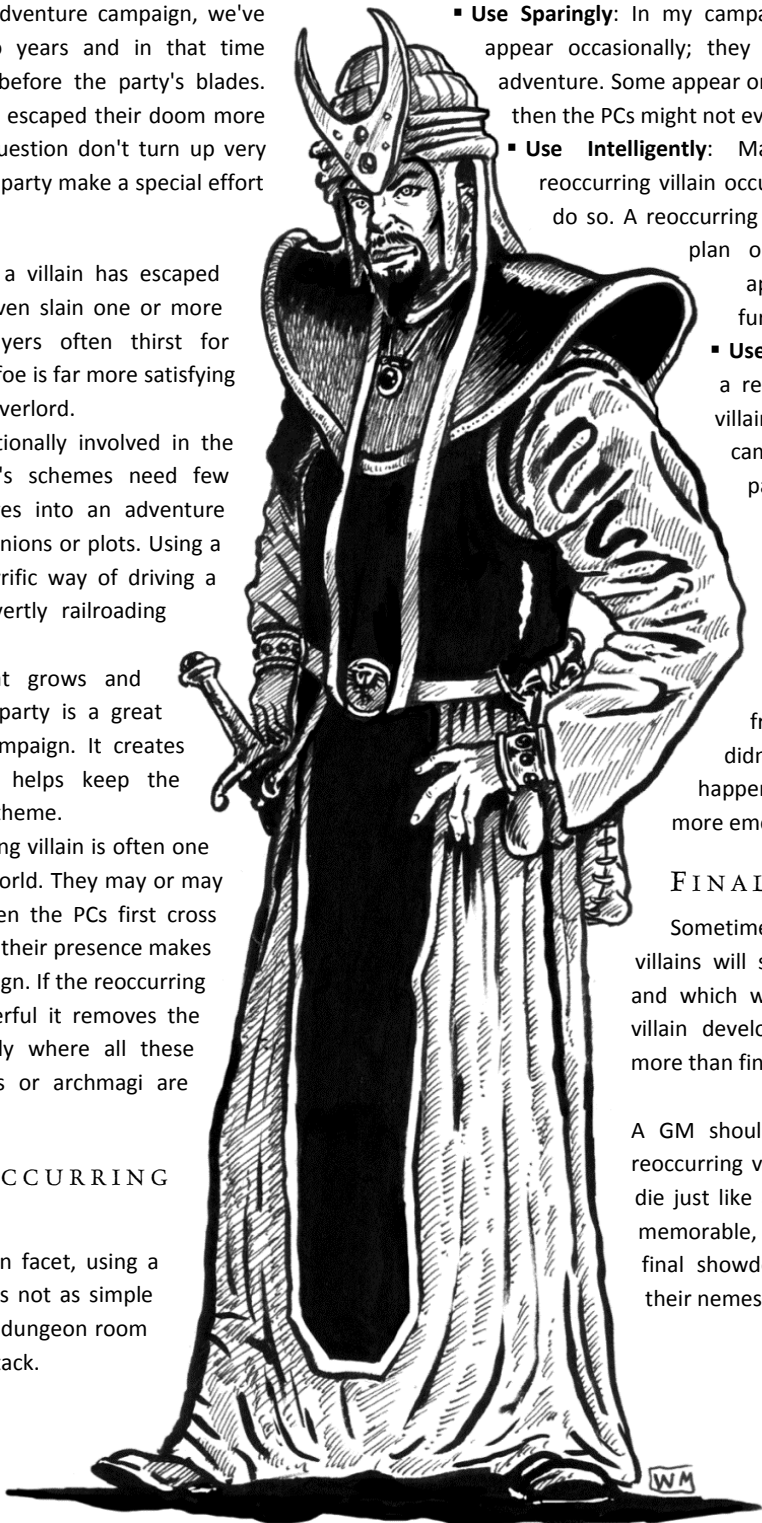
- **Use Intelligently:** Make sure that when the reoccurring villain occurs, it makes sense for him to do so. A reoccurring villain should have an overall plan or scheme and should only appear in adventures that further his scheme in some way.

- **Use Evilly:** The players must have a reason to hate the reoccurring villains and to want him dead. "Off camera" events, "he killed my parents" don't often work well because the players are not truly invested in the event. Rather, perhaps the villain defeated the party, stole an item they were also searching for, or managed to frame them for a crime they didn't commit. If these events happen in game, they have much more emotional impact.

FINAL NOTE

Sometimes, a GM can't predict which villains will survive the party's attentions and which will not. Having a reoccurring villain develop organically during play is more than fine – in fact, it's great.

A GM should also remember that even reoccurring villains are not immortal. They die just like any other villains. To be truly memorable, eventually there must be a final showdown between the party and their nemesis.



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