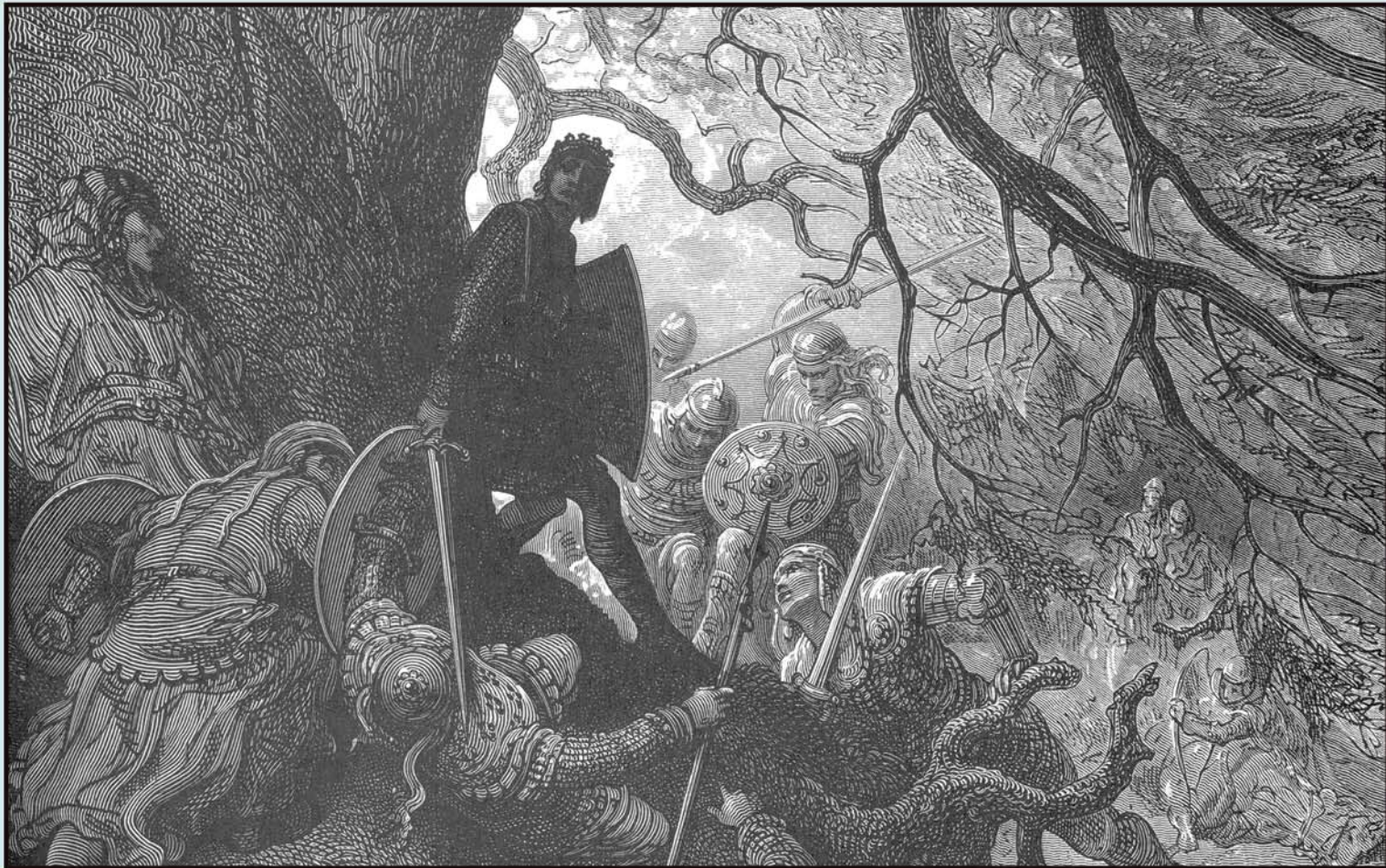


HACKMASTER®



HackJournal Issue #34 Winter - 2011

Welcome to the newest edition of HackJournal, the HackMaster magazine for players and GameMasters around the world! Whether you profess to be the greatest fighter, thief, mage or cleric, you can't afford to pass up a single issue! Here's just a sampling of the inventory of secrets revealed herein:

- Dodebix – a dwarven dice game
- Details on water law for Aces & Eights
- A new HackMaster monster – the manticore
- A tavern setting for use with your HackMaster campaign

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HACKJOURNAL 34

This quarterly PDF supplement is written specifically for (and by) the members of the HackMaster Association, a member-driven organization of HackMaster players and GameMasters who meet to discuss and play the HackMaster role-playing game. The HackJournal also previews special pre-release material, including 'alpha' and 'beta' rules previews for future HackMaster products! HackMaster Association members are encouraged to try out these new rules and provide feedback on the Kenzer and Company discussion forums.

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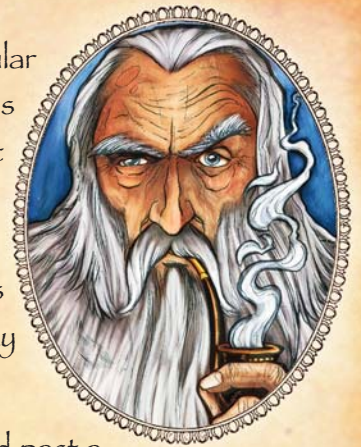
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The game known as “dodebix” (which I pronounce as “do’-de-bij”) is a popular dice game among several clans of dwarves. Much speculation exists as to its origins — some even claiming the game first appeared among gnomes (the chief argument being that this game relies on randomness more than strategy, making it seem more like a gnomish game than a dwarven one) and that the dwarves “appropriated” it, but the most likely tale, at least according to scholars possessing sufficient free time to debate such vital issues, tells of an unlucky Dwarven gambler with the unlikely name of “Bix.”



This story claims that, after a very unsuccessful day with the cards, Bix walked past a gnomish gemcutter’s shop and noticed a set of four carved, 12-sided forms in his display case. Desiring these items, but short on cash, he devised a crude gambling game in the hopes of winning them.

His luck remained sour, and Bix ended up apprenticed to the gnome (several historians believe this gnome was none other than the near-legendary Gultemp Gemsmith, but no hard evidence exists to either support or refute this claim) for a decade as a result. During this time, Bix learned to carve sets of these stones for himself, and further refined the game he created. When he finally returned to his own people, he brought with him a game that has remained very popular ever since. — ✧

The Game of Dodebix

by Charles E. Brown (#MA-3-01384-03)

Traditionally, the game begins with the Presentation, then the Exchange before beginning the first of three Throws.

During the Presentation, the eldest participant shows the set of four dice (4d12) he brought and recites their history – what materials were used, any hardships faced during construction, etc. This progresses by descending age until the youngest player Presents their dice. Typically each Presentation begins and ends with the Presenter taking a swig of ale.

When the youngest player finishes their Presentation, that player then selects one die from all of those Presented (traditionally one that another player brought) and rolls it, beginning the Exchange.

If the die rolled comes up Even, all participants pass the set of four dice that they brought to the contestant to their left; if the number rolled proves to be Odd, they pass their dice to the right (in a rare two-player game, it is customary to omit this die roll and simply exchange dice).

During the Throw, all contestants roll their dice simultaneously then determine the results as follows:

Number	1d12 showing scores	3d12 showing scores	All 4d12s showing scores
1	-1	5	35
2-5	0	5	8
6-9	1	8	# rolled + 4
10-11	2	11	# rolled + 8
12	4	21	31

Further, each roll of 12 allows the player to perform one of the following tasks (during the first throw, the youngest player rolling a 12 chooses their action first – and may hold to see what the other players do; during the second Throw, the eldest chooses first, and on the final Throw the player currently having the lowest score goes first with order of actions proceeding up from there):

1. Re-roll any single die
2. Force another player to re-roll any one of his or her dice
3. Block a forced re-roll (against yourself or another player)

The game proceeds through three Throws, with cumulative scores kept. The winner of the first and second Throws gains one special perk – if, on the first toss of the next throw all four of their dice show different numbers, they may re-roll any or all of them. If two (or more) players tie on a Throw, nobody gains this ability. Again, dwarves traditionally take a swig of ale before each Throw.

Traditionally, the participant scoring the highest total at the end of all three Throws (in the rare event of a tie, the winner is determined by all tied players re-rolling their dice with the highest overall total claiming the prize) selects one set of dice (rarely the one they brought) as their prize, continuing on down until the lowest scoring player claims the last remaining set of dice.

Many who have observed the game claim that dwarves seem to enjoy creating the dice to play more than actually playing the game – and that dwarves make more side bets on who will choose which set of dice as their prize first than actually wager on the winner. Some dwarven afficianodos comment that they find it odd that those other races who adopt the game generally ignore this, the “most important part” of it.

Metagaming

If played in the “traditional dwarven manner,” the player whose dice the winner claims (unless the

winner claims his own - in this case no Honor is gained or lost) gains one point of Honor.

Note that most sensible gamers find it anathema to permit others to touch their regular dice. For this reason, all who intend to play games of Dodebix should purchase four distinct 12-siders (available at any reputable game or hobby store) and keep these segregated from their regular stash. This permits actual die passing, in the dwarven tradition - and allows you to swap particularly lucky (or unlucky) dice into or out of your regular collection with minimal fear of contamination.

Methods of cheating exist within this game – a participant with either Gambling or Pick Pockets skills may attempt to “control” the die – handle as an Opposed Check against the better of Gambling or Observation skills for any observer. The cheater gains a +10% bonus to their skill score if an ally makes a Trivial Distraction check (or if the intended cheater makes a Very Difficult one). The cheater then may place the die with any face showing they wish; anyone beating their check notices the attempt – what they do with this knowledge is up to them, though if anyone notices, regardless of their actions, the cheater loses a point of Honor.

Spending an Honor point allows the re-roll of one of your own dice - at the GM's option, a player may spend five Honor to force another player to re-roll.

Spending a Luck Point allows the character to “bump” a die (provided, of course, they can describe how the die shifted), allowing the character to turn the die so that a face adjacent to the one actually rolled sits on top (*i.e.*, given a common d12 configuration, the faces adjacent to, an “11” are 9, 5, 6, 12 and 10; a Luck Point allows the player to turn the die to any one of those faces instead of leaving it on the 11).



Winning the West: Water Law

by Andrew Wayne Franklin (#OK-4-00193-01)

The *Aces & Eights* RPG provides ample opportunities for PCs to become builders, advancing businesses and developing communities. The counterpoint to the lone vigilante is the growing western community. To build this community as a GM, you need many things, the foremost of which is water!

Water law in the historic West serves as a guide to water law in the Shattered Frontier. Understanding the broad course of water law is useful to *Aces & Eights* characters in a variety of fields. Miners, ranchers, millers, saloon-keepers (beer is mostly water) and farmers all have significant water needs. In the Shattered Frontier, as in the historic West, it's a lot easier to keep the water if your neighbors are on your side. Read along, pardner, to see how water law issues can enhance your game.

Water rights fall into two major types and were allocated on several different bases in the historical West. Though the Shattered Frontier is different from the historical West, the differences are sufficiently slight that each of these doctrines can easily be used by your NPCs or by PCs with the Law skill to justify control of water.

Few campaigns will delve into the deepest springs of water law, but taking a dip into the realm of water law provides important verisimilitude for your *Aces & Eights* game. This verisimilitude will allow you to create real conflicts that don't have to involve firearms. The following story is fictional, but draws on many water law issues to help you see how water law creates stories for your game.

It was early winter 1874 when the Governor of Arapahoe Territory, a portly fellow with a dark handlebar mustache, met with Judge John Lorenzo Sawyer. Judge Sawyer, a raspy-voiced gray-haired octogenarian, had just handled a serious situation involving a boomtown, Jonesville. Jonesville was a proposed town site near some significant gold diggings and presented a complicated legal conundrum.

The Jonesville Cattle and Land Company, the town's founders, claimed riparian water rights extending for about 200 miles. Jonesville Cattle and Land Company intended to raise cattle and render them in town for sale in the Cauldron. Lands near the gold diggings were claimed by over a dozen parties; most of these were small miners but the Midas Mining Company had the strongest claims.

The Midas Mining Company wanted to build a canal system so it could blast the hillsides for gold. The Midas Mining Company had water claims under Mexican law, owned a checkerboard pattern of riparian lands and like

the other miners, claimed water rights on Arapahoe Territory land by prior appropriation. The Jonesville Cattle and Land Company sued the Midas Mining Company and the small miners for damaging the value of its cattle herds with their water withdrawals. Over half of the cattle died during the summer and the town of Jonesville was about to go bust. The Jonesville Cattle and Land Company had also asked for an injunction against the Midas Mining Company's canal project.

Judge Sawyer knew that Mr. Jones, the president of the Jonesville Company and Mr. McCleary, the president of the Midas Mining Company, were hard men. Neither would back down and failure to resolve their conflict legally could lead to violence. The noted train dynamiters and bank robbers, Pete Jones and 'Kid' Clinton, had been seen skulking about Jonesville, clearly looking for contract work since there was no bank or train depot in the town.

Judge Sawyer asked the Governor, *"If I rule, will you send the territorial militia to back me?"* The Governor, who was a former legislator from Illinois and had studied law, said, *"If the law is sound, my militia will put those who fail to comply with it in the ground."* Judge Sawyer ruled in favor of the miners, as so much of the land in question was federal land that no individual person could own the water rights. However, he came up with a split decision, recognizing the riparian rights of both companies and calling for a study of prior appropriations in the area. The canal could be built, but only if a stream study could show that there was enough water to water 160 acres of the Jonesville Cattle and Land Company's land and that the Midas Mining Company's rights were the oldest prior appropriation rights.

The Midas Mining Company was unhappy with the ruling, but had the oldest water right so it was given a chance to move forward with its canal. How did Judge Sawyer reach his decision? Read on to learn about water law principles he used to inform his legal decision.

Types of Water Rights

There are two major types of water rights. The oldest and most well-known water right is the **riparian right**. Riparian rights are rights to water granted by ownership of land along a stream or river. Riparian rights are correlative, meaning that all owners along that river have a right to use the water. This usufruct, or use right, was primarily for small domestic needs or livestock grazing. After five years, riparian rights which were unchallenged became prescriptive rights, thus guaranteeing users a claim to the water. However, if an upstream riparian rights holder used all the water, the downstream riparian rights holders were out of luck.

Riparian rights do not include the right to alter the stream or channel. Thus few mining or industrial enterprises could operate and irrigation could only be practiced on a small scale under the riparian doctrine. While the origin of riparian rights is debatable, by 1833, Kent and Storey, two renowned American lawyers, discussed them at length in their legal commentaries. By 1833, there were legal problems with the riparian doctrine because the Market Revolution meant that new uses for water challenged the old ways folks allocated water.

Appropriative rights are the newer of the two major types of water rights. Appropriative rights emerged in the American West, because riparian water law did not work there. Gold miners wanted to control the flow of a stream so they could get at the good placer gold deposits.

In the West, the U.S. government claimed only navigable rivers and the important tributaries, leaving the ownership of western waters fluid. In the prior appropriation system, you get a water right by using the water. So, under prior appropriation, water could be used for mines and farms without owning the land. Land with questionable land titles, such as Mexican land grants, could be used while the land ownership was in litigation. Prior appropriation rights were also easy to adjudicate—the first to use the water had an unlimited right to the water. That right could not be lost by disuse. While prior appropriation was not the only water law of the West, it was popular because it could be adapted to local conditions and was simple to administer.

Judge Sawyer saw that there were claims under both the riparian rights doctrine and the appropriative rights doctrine in his Jonesville case. Since much of the land was federal, riparian rights could not be obtained on that land. Judge Sawyer threw out those land claims. Private riparian lands had legal titles, so those lands granted water rights correlated to the other riparian water rights. The Jones Cattle and Land Company and Midas Mining Company both had an obligation as riparian rights holders to not interfere with the rights of each other. Prior appropriation was allowed on federal land, so those claims were presumptively valid.

Sawyer knew that most of the water uses on federal land were by miners, but the claims were quite unclear, so he deferred judgment on those until the claims could be verified. Midas Mining Company had the oldest right, so they had the right to the water near Jonesville under both doctrines.

Seeing that unlimited water rights would destroy Jonesville, Judge Sawyer did as many western judges did.



Don't assume everyone will accept your water rights.

He found a legal compromise. Midas Mining Company had two types of rights but the riparian rights were the most important in this case. Jonesville was entitled to some water for its stock.

Judge Sawyer, after identifying where water rights came from, had to allocate those water rights. The allocation basis of water rights is also important, for water rights have to balance individual needs with those of the community. Water rights in the West were allocated on four major bases: individually, communally, in the Spanish form and in the Mormon form.

The individual form of water rights is fairly simple—one person obtained the water right and managed it for their own benefit. An individual farmer obtaining riparian rights is a good example of individual water rights. Communal water rights under the U.S. model generally were part of planned farming communities, such as Riverside, California and Greeley, Colorado. These small farming communities were supposed to be an alternative to the large agribusiness ‘factory farms’ that developed in the West.

By allowing a group of people to work together to manage water, communal water rights allowed more capital intensive-projects to be carried out. Hydraulic mining companies, like the Midas Mining Company in our story, took ample advantage of communal water rights as they blasted the hillsides with water at high pressures to obtain gold.

Mexico

Mexican water rights in the West are perhaps the most important water rights, because so much of the West was under Mexican control before the United States (or a variety of nations in the Shattered Frontier) took over Mexican lands. Spanish water law was first codified for the Western Hemisphere in 1681 under the *Recopilacion de leyes de los reynos de las Indias*.

Spanish water law presumed all water was the property of the Spanish monarchy, but in practice the monarchy delegated authority over water allocation to the local level. Most water rights were allocated by the town council, or *ayuntamiento*.

The Plan of Pitic made each town’s water in what became northern Mexico and the American Southwest a common resource, like pastures, game fish and mineral resources. Water rights were neither correlative nor absolute, meaning that everyone was entitled to a just portion based on their needs. In a *pueblo*, or village, there

were several types of land from house lots and individual farmland to common grazing lands and common woods. *Propios* (public lands worked in common to generate municipal income) and some *suertes* (individual farmland), came with irrigation rights in California. In California, a *suerte* was 200 *varas* by 200 *varas*, or about 6.9 acres. At colonization, each family had about 4 *suertes* of land and could use water on 2 *suertes*. Mexican water rights were thus important to building the community and attached to specific land types, making them easier to trace but hard to manage since allocation had to be just.

Deseret

The Mormons of Deseret are known as important people in the West, but their contributions to water law are minimal. The Mormons eschewed individual ownership and control of water was in the hands of the Mormon Church. Water projects were communal projects and water was allocated on the basis of a portion of stream flow. The Mormon Church appointed water-masters to carry out the water projects.

Until pressured in the historic West by non-Mormon waterusers, Mormons did not create private water rights. So, if you end up in Deseret, don’t figure on getting any water rights unless you are Mormon and have some church elders in your pocket.

Legalese

Now that you know how water is allocated, you might want to know how to keep it away from your competitors using legal means. There are three major ways to fight your opponent’s water claims, all of which were used in the epic struggle between two California cattle barons, Charles Lux and Ben Ali Haggin, to control the state’s waters.

The first is to try and **show your opponent filed a claim falsely**. Lux and his partner Henry Miller paid workers in San Francisco to file claims under the Desert Land Act of 1877, which allowed each person to acquire 640 acres of federal land if they irrigated it. Workers would then sell the claim to Lux and Miller for a few dollars, defrauding the U.S. government. Haggin tried to argue that most of the lands in question were not desert lands, but were swampland and thus not suitable for acquisition under the Desert Land Act of 1877.

The second method is to **show water rights are not being used**. Cattle barons such as Lux and Haggin controlled hundreds of thousands of acres and used the

water part of the time. So, they kept suing each other over unused water, trying to get the claims thrown out for nonuse under the riparian rights doctrine. If you aren't using the water, you must not need it, was the logic.

Filing an injunction was the final method to control water and primarily used against dams, canals and other water storage facilities. Filing an injunction is a legal means to stop an action; if you can legally delay the construction or use of water, your foe may not be able to survive the loss of business.

In the nineteenth-century West, the place most water-seekers fought their legal battles in local courts. Only Nebraska and Wyoming tied water rights to the land and had water commissions with authority to adjudicate water rights. In other western states, prior appropriation and riparian rights doctrines were used by local courts. Local control meant that few water rights claims were formally filed. On the public domain, federal law dominated. There were few federal water laws and few federal water cases in this time period. Federal water interest (beyond navigation) in the West was insignificant until the early twentieth century.

The General Land Office, part of the Department of the Interior, was the site where claims on federal land were filled and recorded. Local GLO offices were notorious fraud sites and enterprising characters perpetrated great land frauds there. *Lux v. Haggin* went as far as most cases went in the period, a state supreme court. GMs with substantial interest in water law cases should examine state supreme court cases and the Federal Recorder for U.S. cases.

In Aces & Eights

After hearing Judge Sawyer's story and thinking about the nineteenth-century court system, you might wonder how to apply its principles to your game. Here's where the skill system comes in!

Lawyers will need both Law and Reading Comprehension/Penmanship to read legal cases and related documents. Most water law cases will be based on application of common law principles, so they will be Average or Difficult tasks without a law library.

To understand where water flows, the Cartography, Geology and Survival skills are important. Characters with the Cartography, Geology and Survival skills can be expert witness in water law cases-making them suitable candidates for PCs hirelings or PC gunfire. Engineering Design is useful for planning water conveyances such as

dams, canals and watermills. Finally, if there is a negotiation, trial or other social interaction, having the right social skills can help a character solve their water law issues.

Even if you're not playing a traditional *Aces & Eights* campaign, this article can help improve your mastery of any RPG where water is a legal issue. If you're enjoying Terminal Studios's *The Running Death* adventure (available for free on the Kenzer and Company online store), the zombie apocalypse does not end water law problems – it makes them local problems instead of large-scale problems. Late in the zombie apocalypse, when communities are on the brink, water law should follow simpler forms because there will be few bureaucrats left. Like early California, legal control of water in *The Running Death* will be obtained by the cunning. Land barons could emerge if the zombies are turned back, giving you a great post-apocalypse villain like you've seen in so many movies such as *Mad Max*, *Waterworld*, and *The Book of Eli*.

In the Kingdoms of Kalamar

For players in the *Kingdoms of Kalamar* setting, the *Disjhy*, *Zoa* and *Geanavue* PDF supplements provide extensive detail on how water is used in each city. In other parts of the *Kingdoms of Kalamar* setting, such as P'Bapar, the laws of the country and its economic condition are a good indicator of appropriate water law. P'Bapar is primarily a mining and grazing country, with a small bureaucracy, so prior appropriation makes the most sense there.

Kalamar's extensive corrupt bureaucracy calls for a sea of water law that only specialist lawyers can navigate. For those using other settings or game systems, remember that water is essential to life and societies will take steps to manage water.

Now that you've thought a little about the importance of water law, pardner, go and use it to make your game better!



GAMEMASTERS ONLY BEYOND THIS POINT

The following section in its entirety has been expressly classified by the HMGMA (HackMaster GameMaster's Association) as GM Proprietary Information (a.k.a. "GAMEMASTERS EYES ONLY" material). What does that mean exactly? Well, for one, if you are a player, then this is your frickin' cue to stop reading. Put this book down, and step off — PERIOD.

You should only be reading this section if:

- I. You are already a certified HackMaster GameMaster or;
- II. You are a GameMaster-in-Training and have dedicated yourself to mastering the game of HackMaster and are working toward becoming a GM yourself (i.e., you plan to study the material herein, actively assemble your own group of players and step behind the Shield).

Take heed, the consequences for a player reading GM Proprietary Information are severe and such transgressions are taken very seriously. I should also add that it is reprehensible to feign interest in becoming a GM simply to gain access to GM restricted material such that one could use it to gain an edge as a player. Such individuals are the lowest of the low and are universally despised. They risk eternal banishment from the game. So please, consider this a friendly warning and proceed accordingly. If you do not meet the criteria set forth in I. or II. above, please stop reading now.



Seemingly far too many adventures begin and end in the same place – the tavern. It is there that hooks are delivered, allies are found, enemies are made, and wounds are healed. Yet, more often than not, these bastions of *booze* and *broadwords* are simple scenery. Rarely is the local tavern fleshed out enough for it to become more than a place for players to rest their characters between adventures.

This article is designed for the GM's convenience with a simple, valuable goal: making the local tavern more than just a location. Should you choose to use the Rusty Mule as your PCs' locations between destinations, then you'll have not only a tavern, but one with a rich back-story, as well as with fully fleshed out NPCs and compelling Bait & Tackle scenarios.

The Rusty Mule – At a Glance

The Rusty Mule is not designed with any specific location in mind, although it is most 'at-home' in the Young Kingdoms. However, it can be placed wherever you, the GM wish, and serve whatever purpose you need it to be: a way-station between towns, the only pub in a tiny hamlet, or one bar of dozens in a large city. Regardless, most of the details remain the same, with the exception of the spoken languages – these should be modified should you place the Rusty Mule in an area far from where Kalamaran is spoken.

Any PC who looks around notices one thing immediately – the tavern is cramped. All-in-all, the tavern is roughly 30 x 15, but the area in which patrons may loiter is even smaller –

30x10. Within this relatively small area are three long tables which seat three per bench, two round tables for one person per stool, and a long bar that seats eight patrons. On a busy night another dozen may find themselves standing about, vying for a brew.

Behind the bar are two locked doors. One opens into a narrow closet, where bottles and kegs (both empty and full) are kept. The other opens into the office of the couple who own the bar – Stroguld Feledar and Korasela Olcren.

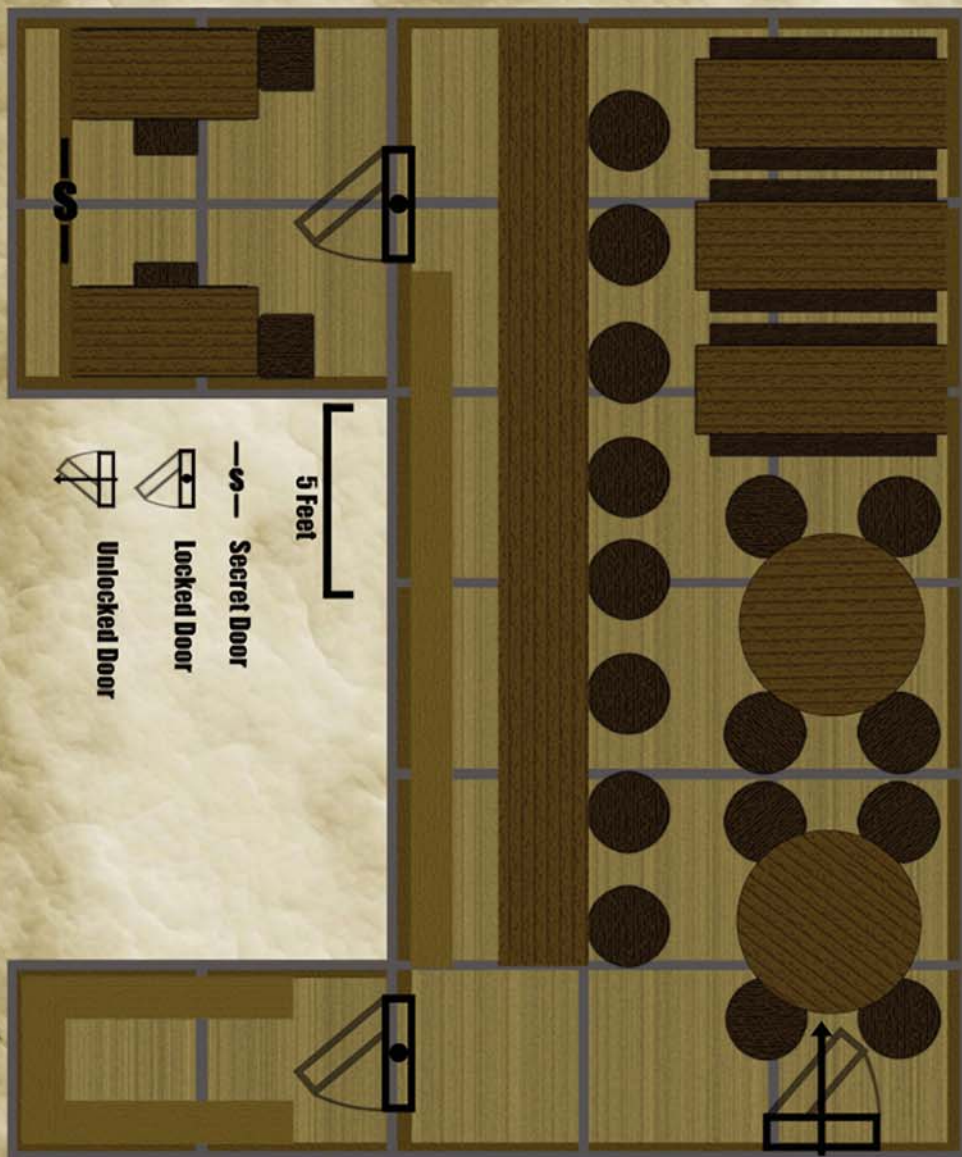
Tavern Brawls

Fights are an all too frequent occurrence. It doesn't help that the bar seems designed to facilitate fractious interactions – the tables are too big, the areas between them are too tight, there's barely room to walk even when the tavern isn't overflowing with people, and, worst of all, it's impossible to open the door without bumping into anybody seated near it. This seat, known as the "fight seat," is often the last to be claimed, as anybody with the misfortune of sitting there is battered repeatedly by the opening of the door until, often, he finally loses his temper and starts swinging.

The owners of the Rusty Mule rarely call in the local watchmen. Instead, they enjoy the atmosphere that a good brawl creates, and they seem to encourage it – as long as the fights are not too destructive. Though the tavern is in regular need of repairs stemming from these brawls, Stroguld and Korasela initiated a successful policy – anyone who fixes a broken chair, table, or fixture receives a free drink or two.

The Rusty Mule

Serving Drinks & Breatings Since 535 I.R.



This map is scaled for use with miniatures (i.e. 1" = 5 feet). When printing, ensure your print driver is set to print at 100% and not "scale to fit" or some other setting that may shrink the image.

Asa Saketi: She is young, beautiful (despite a scar which runs down her face), and ambitious. She'd never admit it, but she took a job at the Rusty Mule for one reason: both Stroguld and Korasela have no heir. By being there, in the right place at the right time, Saketi knows that she may one day find herself married to Stroguld and co-owner of the tavern.

If they had any hint of her intentions, surely some would accuse Asa of being manipulative and opportunistic. In reality, she's simply a good person who came from nothing and is afraid of ever going back there again. What she hasn't taken into account is the possibility that Stroguld might die before Korasela – something which, were it ever to occur, would tear Asa's plan to pieces.

Asa Saketi (Serving Wench): N Kalamaran human female; HP 22, Init +2, Def +1, DR 0, ToP 6 /5; cooking/baking 23, first aid 13, language (Kalamaran) 67, resist persuasion 40; Quirk greedy

HP (22/6): 

Pargrum Lind: Pargrum is tall and muscular, with a shock of red hair that hints at a strong Kalamaran ancestry. He now serves in two functions – he tends the bar, pouring drinks and listening to the exaggerated stories of the regular patrons, and he serves as bouncer.

Pargrum Lind (Server and Bouncer): N Kalamaran human male; HP 23, Init +3, Defense +0, DR 0, ToP 6 /6; language (Kalamaran) 70; laborer; Flaw pocking

HP (23/6): 

Tomare Balemo: You've read the old standard description: "Little is known about the mysterious thief... enigma ... riddle ... dressed in black ... blah blah blah." None of that applies to the young thief Tomare Balemo. While most thieves remain aloof, she loves to roll up her sleeves and get in on the action. Although most thieves dress in dark colors, she regularly wears outrageous outfits. Whereas most thieves speak as if only to whisper, Tomare can't keep her mouth shut. She can regularly be heard yapping on about something or other, be it her opinion on the future of the Young Kingdoms, or the likelihood of killing a hobgoblin under pretty much any scenario imaginable, or... or...

The point is, Tomare talks. A lot. Except for one thing – it takes exceptional ears to realize that, in spite of her flurry of words, she says nothing important. People who, for years, have been regular participants her diatribes cannot tell you what she does for a living. However, if you connect the pieces for those patrons, they may realize that, occasionally, they leave the tavern with less money than they should...

Tomare Balemo: NE Kalamaran human thief 1; HP 24; Init -1; Spd 8 (7); Rch 2'; Atk +2; Dmg 2d6p-1; Def +1; DR 2; ToP 7/ 5; Luck 10+1d6; Hon 9

Notable Skills: disarm trap 16, hiding 20, identify trap 15, language (Merchant's Tongue 51, other regional language 70), listening 17, lock picking 14, pick pocket 24, sneaking 22; *Profs:* short sword and dagger

Equipment: short sword, dagger, colorful robes concealing leather armor, 2d6 sp, 3d4 cp

HP (24/7): 

Shyrosch: For somebody who spends so much time in a tavern, Shyrosch is rarely (if ever) somebody you'll see drunk. Sure, he'll come in and loudly order a drink, often demanding "the largest mug of ale you have," to the roaring cheers of the other patrons, but if you look closely you'll notice something peculiar. The mug of ale is never so much as sipped upon.

Instead, Shyrosch watches. Shyrosch waits. Shyrosch listens. And if he overhears a man make a snide comment about the Deje and their taste for a drink, Shyrosch follows. And then he pummels. He is fiercely proud of his heritage, and he is also undeniably loyal. If a PC treats him with respect, he responds in kind. And, if a man he respects is in great need, he answers the call.

Shyrosch: NG Deje human fighter 1; HP 28; Init +4; Speed 7 (6); Rch 2' (short sword); Atk +2; Dmg 2d6p +2 (short sword); Def +5; DR 6; ToP 8/ 6; *Flaw:* hard of hearing

Notable Skills: language (Kalamaran 44, Deje 70, Kalamaran 29), resist persuasion 32, salesmanship 22

Equipment: short sword, small shield, leather armor, 10 cp

HP (28/8): 

Chonad: If Shyrosch is hypersensitive, then his best friend Chonad is oblivious. He is big, strong, and enjoys nothing more than a good laugh and friendly banter. Consequently, Chonad regularly gets himself – and his friends – into trouble with his mischievous antics.

If Chonad is challenged to a friendly wrestling match, he'll accept. If he is dared to scale a building, or swim a lake, or to steal the sergeant's horse, then he does so not with malice, but certainly without hesitation. When caught, or noticed performing his crazy antics, he simply shrugs and says, "Only kidding!" It is only because they believe him that Chonad has never been arrested, and it is only because he's so incredibly strong that Chonad has never been assaulted.

Chonad: CN Deji human fighter 2; HP 33; Init +4; Spd 6 (5); Rch 2'; Atk +3; Dmg 2d6p+3; Def +4; DR 3; ToP 11/ 6; Hon 13

Notable Skills: language (Merchant's Tongue 48, Deji 71), resist persuasion 37; *Profs:* dagger and short sword

Equipment: short sword, studded leather armor, 4 sp, 3 cp

HP (33/11): ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐
☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐

Bendar Plonblon: Bendar Plonblon made his name decades ago, as a well-traveled (and extremely successful) merchant. Before he retired, it was said that when you saw the Plonblon name on an item, what you really saw was quality and assurance. These days, Plonblon sells nothing, save the illusion that he's still a wealthy man.

Several years previous, as a way of commemorating his recent nuptials – and ensuring that he'd keep busy enough to stay out of his young wife's hair – Plonblon invested heavily in a line of merchant's gear. Little did he know, however, that he was being duped by a con-artist who pocketed most of Plonblon's coins and used what was left to produce items of dramatically inferior quality. Thus, Bender finds himself in a conundrum – he has a massive overstock of Plonblon's Peculiar Prospecting Products for All Occasions of Merchantry and Otherwise, a product that, morally, he refuses to sell. *"After all,"* he says, *"how can I sell it when it's got my name engraved right onto the item that's falling apart?"*

Consequently, he spends his days at the tavern, sorrowfully drinking.

Bendar Plonblon: LG Brandobian human; HP 23, Init +2, Def +2, DR 0, ToP 6/ 5, agriculture 34, current affairs 38, language (Brandobian 74, Merchant's Tongue 48); *Quirk & Flaw:* superstitious (white cats are unlucky), pocking; *Equipment:* wedding ring (1 sp), 6 sp, 9 cp

Brava Plonblon: This young lady, who believed that she was marrying into wealth, is miserable and anxious. She's miserable because her husband, a wretch of a man living off of his name's reputation, does nothing to treat her or satisfy her. She's wont to say, "*It's true what the old women claim – there's no 'man' in 'husband'!*" And she's anxious because she's waiting – for what, she can't say, but she says she'll know it when she sees it.

To herself, she is willing to admit that ‘it’ probably involves a strapping young hero-type with an eye for her beauty and a bag full of silver, who’s willing to whisk her away to any other town in the world for the promise of a kiss, and the insinuation of a whole lot more...

Brava Plonblon: CN Brandobian human; HP 21, Init +4, Def -4, DR 0, ToP 5/ 5, agriculture 23, current affairs 52, language (Brandobian 75, Merchant's Tongue 44); *Quirk:* superstitious (red is lucky color)

Equipment: wedding ring (1 sp), locket (17 cp), 1 sp, 5 cp

HP (21/5): ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐

Burlom: Burlom enjoys being a stereotype. He loves bounding into the tavern – always a step behind his beard, he says, to better warn them of his arrival. He enjoys the free drinks, for there is always some fool willing to buy him a couple for the price of his tales – stories of working in mines he’s never seen, and living in vast underground cities that, as far as he knows, don’t even exist.

For Burlom is a liar. He didn't grow up (nor "grow out," as they say) underground. As a baby, he was left to die on a mountainside, where he was eventually found by a Deji hermit. It was this Deji man who raised him, but he wasn't a particularly caring man – in fact, he enjoyed abusing Burlom. He bounced his fists off Burlom's head, and kicked him about as though he were a ball until finally the dwarf grew strong enough to kill him. Since then, he's been traveling from place to place, surviving on his charm, and, of course, on the goods and gear of the luckless and gullible humans he lures into his trust and murders...

Burlom: NE dwarven fighter 5; HP 48; Init +3; Spd 8; Rch 2'; Atk +7; Dmg 4d4p+5; Def +6; DR 2; ToP 15/ 8; Hon 20;

Quirk: compulsive liar

Notable Skills: intimidation 28, language (Dwarven 70, Merchant's Tongue 36), resist persuasion 40; *Profs:* battle axe, club, longsword and short bow

Equipment: Battle Axe +1, leather armor, small shield, 34 sp, 13 cp

HP (48/15): 



BAIT & TACKLE™

*Adventure Hooks
and Encounters for
the GM to run with.*



The following are just a handful of adventuring opportunities that can occur from within the Rusty Mule tavern. They can be as short as a single gaming session, or can be stretched into multiple sessions of exciting play and adventure! Remember – in most of these scenarios, many of the details are merely alluded to. It is up to the GM to flesh them out.

Ale Run

Encounter: 3 brigands (102 EP), 1 thief (67 EP)

Potential Yield: 25 sp, plus 4 short swords, 1 suit leather armor, 1 dagger, 3 sp, 33 cp, 11 trade coins

Potential Story Awards:

- Bringing the ale back before the carter (50 EP)

The Bait: It's Veshday, and disaster has struck the tavern! The carter who normally delivers the tavern's ale failed to arrive. It was only through some quick brewing of cheap ale in the cellar that the Rusty Mule managed to stay in stock throughout Homeday and Godday, but now Stroguld and Korasela are desperate. Next week is the anniversary of the tavern's opening day. If they remain without their best ale, the owners stand to lose lots of money.

Therefore, Stroguld and Korasela are willing – nay, anxious – to pay the PCs 25 silver pieces (total) to make the trek to a nearby village, where their best local ale is brewed. There the PCs are able to obtain 10 kegs of ale on a line of credit the Rusty Mule has established. The barrels will need to be transported via a cart pulled by mules or horses. They need not buy the cart and animals, only rent them and their drovers for 2 sp (total round-trip). The pay is given only upon mission accomplishment.

The Tackle: The missing carter, Nef Mokira, didn't neglect his duties. He is, in fact, legitimately delayed, having been captured by a roving band of ale-starved brigands. However, to his fortune, the brigands drink themselves silly and he is able to escape with most of his cargo intact, just as the PCs acquire their own load. The PCs now find themselves in a three-way race. If the carter beats them back to the tavern, the deal may be called off, and if the PCs aren't careful, the brigands may hunt them down...

Brigands (3): HP 25; Init +2; Spd 8; Rch 2'; Atk +2; Dmg 2d6p; Def +1; DR 2; ToP 5/ 6

Equipment: short sword, leather armor, 9 cp and 3 trade coins each

1. HP (25/8): ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
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2. HP (25/8): ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
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3. HP (25/8): ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
☐☐☐☐☐

Thief: NE mixed race human thief 1; HP 24; Init -1; Spd 8 (7); Rch 2'; Atk +2; Dmg 2d6p-1; Def +1; DR 2; ToP 7/ 5; Luck 10+1d6; Hon 16

Notable Skills: disarm trap 16, hiding 20, identify trap 15, language (Merchant's Tongue 51, other regional language 70), listening 17, lock picking 14, pick pocket 24, sneaking 22; **Profs:** short sword and dagger

Equipment: short sword, dagger, leather armor, 3 sp, 6 cp, 2 trade coins

HP (24/7): ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
☐☐☐☐☐

Nef Mokira: N Kalamaran human; HP 22, Init +4, Def +4, DR 0, ToP 7/ 5; animal training (horses) 34, carpentry/woodworking 38, language (Kalamaran 74), resist persuasion 11

HP (22/6): ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
☐☐☐☐☐

Additional Information: Nef is traveling at a slow pace as one of his mules was injured in his encounter with the bandits and limps behind the cart leaving only a single jack to pull his heavy wagon. If the PCs urge their drovers to make haste, they can easily beat Nef back to the Rusty Mule despite his current lead (in fact, they will pass him along the way).

The brigands should only come into play if the PCs spend time dilly-dallying in town. It would be folly to attempt to predict the ways in which this could occur but when it does – it will be readily apparent! Suffice it to say that if they proceed directly to town, procure a cart/wagon and teamsters without undue hassle and then load up the ale and depart, the brigands will still be too hung over to bother with attempting to rob them.

Come Out and Play

Encounter: Malvus Letlen (133 EP), 3 brigands (102 EP)

Potential Yield: 4 short swords, 1 dagger, 8 sp, 15 cp, 6 trade coins

Potential Story Awards:

- Defeating the men without killing them, then handing them over to the guards (50 each)

The Bait: It's just another night at the tavern, until the stranger Malvus Letlen arrives. He's somewhat brutish in appearance and more than a little backwards in his mannerisms, speech and dress. After surveying the bar for several minutes, he looks over to Shrosh and Chonad and says, *"Ah, buy my Dejy friends a drink before they rob me of my money so they can buy it themselves!"* Naturally, Shrosh is upset by this, and soon the men are engaged in a shouting match. Before long, Stroguld or Pargrum steps in and says *"Cease this disturbance! Take it outside, or I'll take you both there!"*

It is then that the men wander out into the street. As they go, Asa approaches the PCs and says *"Please make sure he's safe out there? I think the stranger may have a friend!"*

The Tackle: Malvus has more than one friend outside - in fact, he has three. If the PCs follow, they are ambushed by two men standing at either side of the door, while Malvus and one other man fight Shrosh.

Of course, if the PCs are able to help Shrosh defeat them, then the Dejy man feels indebted...

Malvus Letlen: N Kalamaran human fighter 2; HP 33; Init +2; Spd 10; Rch 2'; Atk +1; Dmg d6p+d4p +2; Def +2; DR 0; ToP 11/ 7; Hon 22

Quick & Flaw: racist, myopia




Notable Skills: language (Kalamaran 60), observation 37, survival 41, tracking 38; *Profs:* club, short sword, dagger, knife, shortbow

Equipment: club, dagger, 8 sp

HP (33/11): 

Brigands (3): HP 25, 25, 26; Init +2; Spd 10; Rch 2'; Atk +2; Dmg d6p+d4p; Def +1; DR 0; ToP 5/ 6

Equipment: club, 5 cp and 2 trade coins each

1. HP (25/8): 
2. HP (25/8): 
3. HP (26/8): 

Additional Information: This is an opportune time to utilize the unarmed combat rules. Should you do so, Malvus' intent is to beat up Shrosh not kill him. Both he and his brigand buddies will utilize fist fighting until either they are clearly out-matched or their opponents draw blades. At this point they will grab their clubs and step it up to felony battery. If two of their number are incapacitated, the rest will flee.

Plonblon's Precarious Problem

Encounter: Saterus Vitir (133 EP), 6 brigands (204 EP)

Potential Yield: 6 clubs, 1 short sword, 1 dagger, 22 sp, 37 cp, 21 trade coins

Potential Story Awards:

- Capturing Saterus alive and turning him into the authorities thereby permitting Bendar to pursue civil damages and restore his reputation (250 EP)

The Bait: One day, while in the Rusty Mule, Bendar Plonblon approaches the PCs with a wide grin on his face. *"Great news! I've finally found a man who is willing to buy that shoddy product, to which my name has the misfortune of being attached! But I need your help!"* He explains to the PCs that the man is willing to buy the items for coppers on the silver (as opposed to 'pennies on the dollar'), but only if Bendar is willing to invest 50 silver into a business venture that is guaranteed to succeed. The problem is that he only has 1 silver he can afford to invest.

If the PCs are willing to cover the other 49, he guarantees he can double their money within two months' time. They only need to deliver his - now their - investment, along with Bendar's faulty goods, to the trusted merchant for the deal to be complete. Bendar loans them his old merchant's cart, in which they can transport the goods.

The Tackle: Bendar is being duped again. Worse, it's by the same man who conned him into buying the merchants' bags to begin with! If the PCs agree to deliver the items and the money to this merchant, upon arrival they are ambushed by the man and half a dozen muscular brigands. *"You poor foolth," he says with a noticeable lisp, "don't you know that Bendar Plonblon ith the greatetht idiot of them all? Of courthe, you've learned the lethon now, but at a great cotht..."*

He then robs the PCs and (if possible) sets fire to Bendar's cart before disappearing into the night, unless the PCs attempt to fight their way out of it!

Saterus Vitir: NE Kalamaran human fighter 2; HP 29; Init +2; Spd 8 (7 jab); Rch 2'; Atk +1; Dmg 2d6p+2; Def +2; DR 0; ToP 9/ 7; Hon 20; *Quirk:* greedy

Notable Skills: language (Kalamaran 71, Brandobian 35, Merchant's Tongue 44), resist persuasion 27, survival 41, tracking 38; *Profs:* club, short sword, dagger

Equipment: short sword, dagger, 22 sp, 13 cp, 9 trade coins

HP (29/9): 

Brigands (6): HP 24, 24, 25, 26, 26, 27; Init +2; Spd 8; Rch 2'; Atk +2; Dmg d6p+d4p Def +1; DR 2; ToP 5/ 6

Equipment: club, leather armor, 4 cp and 2 trade coins each

1. HP (24/7): 

2. HP (24/7): ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
☐☐☐☐
3. HP (25/8): ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
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4. HP (26/8): ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
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5. HP (26/8): ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
☐☐☐☐☐☐
6. HP (27/8): ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
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Bar Room Bawl

Encounter: Narim (67 EP)

Potential Yield: wedding ring (1 sp), locket (17 cp), dagger, 13 cp, 20 sp

Potential Story Awards:

- ▶ Convince Narim to turn on Brava without violence (80 EP)
- ▶ Turning Brava in to local authorities and not killing her (50 EP)

The Bait: The PCs overhear the sobbing of a young lady in a nearby chair. It is Brava Plonblon, lamenting her poor fortune of marrying her fool of a husband. Worse, she recently fell for another man, one who was daring, dashing, and charming, only for him to steal her beloved locket and wedding band. She explains, through body-wracking sobs, that she does not care about the wedding band (*“which, ::snuff:: is probably worth a lot of money, ::sniff::”*), but the locket was a gift from her mother. If the PCs are willing to hunt the man down, she is willing to pay them her wedding ring once they return to her the locket.

The Tackle: If the PCs catch up with the man, he has neither the wedding ring nor the locket. In fact, he tells them, *“she was the thief, for she stole my heart.”* He can tell them nothing important, for he is merely another dupe in Brava’s schemes.

When they return to the tavern, they find that Brava is long gone, and crying into his ale is her husband, Bendar. *“Oh, she left with some man,”* he sobs. *“But not before seducing him, and convincing him to break into your rooms (or wherever else the PCs may be staying)! They stole your money, I think. And probably, they made love on your own beds!”*

Indeed, the PCs will discover that unhidden, valuable items stored in their room(s) have been stolen. If they hurry, they may be able to catch the lovebirds on the road to the next town.

Bolwind (unwitting dupe): CN Brandobian human; HP 22, Init +2, Def +1, DR 0, ToP 6/ 5, carpentry/woodworking 30, language (Kalamaran 65); *Quirk:* lusty

HP (22/6): ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
☐☐☐☐☐

Narim (new lover): N Kalamaran human fighter 1; HP 23; Init +2; Spd 7 (5); Rch 2'; Atk +1; Dmg 2d4p; Def +2; DR 0; ToP 7/ 6; Hon 28; *Quirk:* lusty, needy

Notable Skills: appraisal (armor & weaponry) 14, language (Kalamaran 70); **Profs:** dagger, short sword

Equipment: dagger, 13 cp, 20 sp

HP (23/7): ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
☐☐☐☐☐

Additional Information: Brava and Narim may have a significant head start. Tracking is effectively useless for following them in town. An Average Glean Information check learns their direction of travel from the night watchmen at the gate.

If approached, Narim quite naturally assumes the PCs to be brigands out to murder and rob him and his lady and will not hesitate to react violently. He is, however, unaware of Brava’s thievery (she has no intention of cutting him in and will likely dump him as soon as they reach the next village).

If approached cautiously and informed of Brava’s true nature (this may take some time as he is enamored of her and unwilling to [initially] accept reason), he can be convinced to turn on her. Should this occur, Brava attempts to flee though will stumble and fall spilling her looted goods and bloodying her nose.

Red Dwarf

Encounter: Burlom (242 EP)

Potential Yield: Battle Axe +1, leather armor, small shield, 34 sp, 13 cp

Potential Story Awards:

- ▶ Sensing Burlom’s motives before any PCs die (100 EP)

The Bait: Once the PCs have established themselves as successful treasure seekers, Burlom approaches them. *“Great news, me friends!”* he says. *“After years of mining, tunneling, and hard work, me kin have finally reached this region! They are buildin’ a hallowed hall in yonder mountain even as we speak, and I wish to invite ye to come with me ta celebrate! Oh, there’ll be ale a’flowin’! Wimmen a’dancin’! Ya name it, it’ll be there, and of every lowlife in this here tavern, I wanna bring you!”*

The Tackle: Burlom is lying. He has instead noticed how successful and wealthy the PCs have become. As he treks with them out of the village and into the mountains, a series of unfortunate events occur. A poisonous spider – not necessarily indigenous to this part of the world – is planted in a PC’s sleeping bag. A mountain climb proves to be deadlier than it should be, with PCs at risk of ‘tumbling’ off the trail and into a gorge. When monsters attack along the way, the weakest PCs appear brave as they ‘step’ forward into combat.

In other words, Burlom is systematically killing each and every PC in order to have their treasure. If only one PC remains he draws his weapon and attempts to murder him!

A Long and Winding Tale

Potential Story Awards:

- ▶ Realizing they've been set up before committing a crime (75 EP)

The Bait: After having interacted with the PCs on numerous occasions, Tomare Balemo makes a surprising decision: she chooses to trust them and reveals her secret occupation. She does this for one simple reason: Tomare is pulling off a risky heist and she needs accomplices.

Of course, she doesn't tell them that. Instead, she makes the PCs a simple offer – "Help me do some crime, and I'll cut you in on full shares of the take!" If they accept, she informs them that she'll give them the details on the way, but not until after the tavern closes. Once closing time passes, she takes the PCs out of the tavern and into a nearby forest. It is extremely dark, and the PCs struggle to have any idea as to where they are going (Very Difficult checks on all rolls), and, as they walk, Tomare talks.

She explains that she was scaling the wall of a massive cathedral several months ago when she peered in through the narrow slot of the window. There, she witnessed a peculiar site – it was a priest, paying an extremely large sum to a man delivering a keg of ale in a barrow. This is what gave her the idea.

She carefully spent months casing the joint, but something was off about it. It was hard to explain. So, that's when she knew she needed help – oh, and here you are, outside of the forest and near the target.

The Tackle: As it is extremely dark out, and because the PCs are coming from a different direction than usual, they need to make Very Difficult checks to identify that she is having them rob the Rusty Mule. Tomare certainly does not tell them that they're robbing the Mule, but she does explain that they need to go through a window and search for a hidden door along the wall. She then helps them unlock the window to the office (the inside of which they are unlikely to have ever seen) and sends them on their way ... to rob their favorite tavern!

Make The Most of It

As you can see, the Rusty Mule has options on top of options. There are interesting characters, compelling hooks, and many opportunities for adventure!

CREDITS

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Elfin Mail

Elfin mail is a variety of chainmail designed to complement the inherent stealthiness of the elven warrior. While fabricated from superior steel, its links are considerably finer and more precisely interlocked giving it the appearance of having been woven from metallic fibre. Though offering no more protection than the crudest chainmail, it accomplishes this without burdening the wearer for it has but half the mass of contemporary designs.

Its unique construction circumvents the noisy 'jangling' typical of mail while hindering movement no more than heavy clothing. As such, a scout clad in such armor is no more likely to give away his position than were he wearing leather garments.

Elfin mail is crafted for an elf's body form and cannot be resized for another race without destroying it.

Damage Reduction: 5
Defense Adjustment: -1
Initiative Modifier: 0
Speed Modifier: 0
Movement Class Penalty: none
Type: Light

Staff of Striking

This magical item appears similar in form to an ordinary staff, albeit constructed from mahogany, fire hardened and lacquered giving it a rich and luxurious appearance. In some instances command words may be engraved onto its surface though this is not a given.

When employed sans charges, this staff functions as a +2 weapon affording the wielder a +2 attack bonus and inflicting 2d4p+2 damage when landing a blow. Activating its enchantment, however, provides a formidable increase in the weapon's effectiveness. When charges are expended, the staff gains a +6 Attack bonus and causes increasingly severe wounds commensurate with the number of charges depleted.

Charges Employed	Damage
1	2d4p+7
2	2d4p+14
3	2d4p+21

In its energized state, a Staff of Striking may also injure creatures only wounded by silvered weapons. No more than 3 charges may be utilized in any attack. Once all charges have been consumed, the staff may continue to be used as a +2 weapon.

MANTICORE

Also Known As: Matikoras, Tharkus

One of my Kalamaran colleagues in his history of the Elos refers to this savage beast as matikoras, but also mentions that the Elos Deji refer to the monster as tharkus, or "man-eater". The evidence suggests, as does my inclination, that the horrific creature relates closely to the androsphinx. The claim that it has three rows of teeth along each jaw and spikes at the tip of its tail that it rains like sling stones at distant enemies, is, I think, a fable passed on amongst that the folk of Dijishy, a baseless exaggeration owing to their excessive dread of the stately sphinx.

However, inasmuch as a certain druid of my acquaintance, a man fascinated not only with creatures of the green but also those of the arid lands, also records the creature I could not leave it out of my books, for there is much to be gained by neither believing nor yet disbelieving everything and everyone. Accordingly, I asked Dorran (for that is the name by which he is known to me) the question of whether there exists a beast called the matikoras, or tharkus. "What have you heard about the make of this thing?" I asked. "It is probable that there is some account given of its shape."

"There are," replied Dorran, "tall stories current, which I cannot believe, yet I have seen the beast myself, though from a distance. I tell you truly, the creature has four feet, and that his head resembles that of a man, but that in size it is comparable to a very large lion. Further, the tail of this brute puts out barbs a cubit long and sharp as thorns; it shoots them like a volley of arrows at prey. Myself, I call it manticore, a name that I feel flows far easier off the tongue."



Because of obvious physical similarities to the androsphinx, most sages believe the manticore to be either a separate sub-species or the extremely rare mutant offspring of a gynosphinx, its appearance due to some mutation of birth (akin to the criosphinx and hieracosphinx). The truth of the matter remains a mystery, though none dispute the creature's physical characteristics.

In appearance, its main body resembles that of a very large male lion, but with several important differences. The head

unmistakably resembles that of a bearded human, though far larger, so the head of a giant may be more precise. The maw boasts treble rows of sharp, shark-like teeth. Two enormous bat-like wings (sufficient in both size and span to carry its weight in flight) sprout from its shoulder blades. Perhaps worst of all, the tail ends not in a furry tip, but a cluster of poisonous spines. The manticore can loose these upon opponents at range.

Manticore fur and wings range from light tan to reddish

SIGN/TRACKS



RANGE ON TELLENE



SIZE COMPARISON



shades of brown, with wings slightly darker shade than the body, due to black skin beneath less-dense, even sparse, fur. Dark brown and even gray specimens exist, while albinism has also been reported but not concretely verified. The underparts of body and wings carry generally lighter shades, while the tail spines sport a jet black, shiny sheen. A typical adult male stands between 4 to 5 feet tall at the shoulder, but larger specimens can grow as large as a horse. Females remain slightly smaller than their male counterparts. Weights for adult manticores tend arrange between somewhat over a quarter-ton and 1200 pounds.

Combat/Tactics:

A manticore's hunting tactics depend on the position of its prey relative to cover and to a lesser extend, whether the prey appears capable of injuring the beast. If the meal lies in open terrain with little or no cover and cannot reasonably flee from the Manticore, the monster will first launch a volley of poisoned tail quills with the intent of weakening its prey prior to engaging with its sharp claws and teeth. If multiple targets are available, a Manticore will generally also deploy its ranged attack, figuring, some will unavoidably escape in any case. Each spike attack launches 2d4p barbs and each barb deals 2d6p+3 points of damage with a range and attack die as if launched from a sling. The spikes can target any number of creatures within a five-foot radius (determine randomly). Though these spines grow back at a rapid pace, their number is not infinite; the creature may loose no more than four volleys per day and no more frequently than once every 10 seconds.

A manticore's quills contain a numbing venom. Those stuck by a missile must save versus a VF 9 poison. Failure indicates a -3 penalty to Attack, Defense and Damage for 3d6p minutes plus a one step movement rate penalty (saves result in a -1 Attack, Defense and Damage penalty). The toxin is cumulative potentially rendering those impacted by a fusillade of quills combat ineffective. Movement reduction is assessed at each increment of -3 combat penalties (i.e., successfully saving against 3 separate missiles nonetheless carries with it a aggregated movement penalty). Human jogging movement rates decrease thusly: 10'/s (normal), 5'/s, 2.5'/s and 1.25'/s. Should a creature accumulate -12 in Attack/Defense/Damage penalties, it lapses into unconsciousness.

If its prey appears capable of escape, the Manticore will swoop down using any cover, including the sun when in open terrain, to enhance its chances of surprise. Once in close-quarters combat, the Manticore savagely mauls its target with claw attacks, each claw dealing 2d3p+7 points of damage. After both claws successfully attack in sequence, the Manticore has grabbed its prey and thereafter will automatically inflict a bite causing 2d8p+9 points of damage every 5 seconds. Breaking a manticore's grip requires a knock-back attack or a Feat of Strength check (vs. d20p+20), which can be attempted after each bite attack. Grasped victims can only attack successfully with a dagger or smaller weapon.

Manticore

HIT POINTS:	33+6d8
SIZE/WEIGHT:	L/600-1200 lbs.
TENACITY:	Brave
INTELLIGENCE:	Slow
FATIGUE FACTOR:	1

MOVEMENT

CRAWL:	10
WALK:	15
JOG:	25
RUN:	25
FLY:	30

SAVES

PHYSICAL:	+16
MENTAL:	+12
DODGE:	+15

SPEED 4	INIT -2
ATTACK +14	DMG REDUCTION 9
DEFENSE +9	DAMAGE 5
medium REACH	TOP SAVE ▼
see below	

ATTACK: Claw/claw/bite attack has claws dealing 2d3p+7 each and bite doing 2d8p+9. Grip can be broken with a Feat of Strength (vs. d20p+20). May also attack w/ tail every 10s for 2d8p+5+VF 17 poison. Can launch fusillade of 2d4p tail quills that inflict 2d6p+3 damage per missile plus a numbing poison (VF 9) with range and attack dice as a sling.

SPECIAL ABILITIES:
flight

General Info

ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Nocturnal
NO. APPEARING:	1-4
% CHANCE IN LAIR:	15%
FREQUENCY:	Sporadic
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral Evil
VISION TYPE:	Standard
AWARENESS/SENSES:	Keen sight and hearing
HABITAT:	Caves or subterranean
DIET:	Carnivorous (humans preferred)
ORGANIZATION:	Individuals or pride
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any, save arctic (prefer warm arid)

Yield

MEDICINAL:	ground claws, drunk with wine, said to cure impotence
SPELL COMPONENTS:	tail spine, for Bar Portal spell ¹
HIDE/TROPHY:	a fully intact hide with wings may be worth much silver to trophy hunters
TREASURE:	incidental – arms, shields, dropped items, bits of armor and material wealth carried by victims
EDIBLE:	yes, edible but gamey
OTHER:	nil
EXPERIENCE POINT VALUE:	1250

Further, a manticore can thrash its tail like a spiked club to cause 2d8p +5 points of damage to any would-be rescuers of trapped victims. Such an attack can be effectuated independently of any claw attacks and occurs every 10 seconds (the first coming 10 seconds after grabbing a foe) against enemies on the manticore's flanks or rear only for the dangerously barbed tail cannot reach the creature's front. When doing so, the spines do not detach as they do during ranged attacks. However, those stuck by the tail receive a larger dose of numbing poison such that it is effectively a VF 17 poison. In lieu of such an attack, the Manticore can fire a ranged volley against targets in front or front flanks, again once every 10 seconds.

Habitat/Society:

The manticore lairs in mountain caves and such bleak surroundings appropriate to its dark temperament. Though it prefers warm, arid climes, these beasts can be found even among snow-covered mountain peaks or in lands with long winters.

During the fall, males and females may form pair bonds to mate. Average gestation time is long (when compared with a lion of similar body type), lasting nearly 300 days. The period between births is also distant, requiring a gap of 10 to 12 years. However, should a female lose her offspring, she may mate again within a few weeks and produce another within 8 months. The single birth offspring is born precocial, reaching full growth at the age of four but lacking sexual maturity until after its first century.

A typical manticore has a lifespan of 300 years.

Ecology:

When the manticore sees another threatening predator approach (a sphinx or armed giant, for example), it raises its tail above its back, rattles its spines and claws the ground with its forefeet.

A manticore craves the taste of man-flesh, including humanoids and demi-humans, and prefers to prey on those races over all others. The monster will attack and devour humans in vast preference to all other hominids. That said, a manticore will greedily consume any creature it can catch, consuming the entire creature, sometimes whole then lapping up any spilled blood with obvious delight.

Manticores love the taste of salt, and sometimes encroach on human habitats when in search of the mineral, eating not only those people unlucky enough to encounter them, but also any items coated in salty sweat such as saddle blankets, yokes and so on. Manticores also consume natural sources of salt, including salt-rich plants and mud in salt-rich soils, fresh animal bones, outer tree bark and even objects imbued with urine.

On Tellene:

Manticores seem most prevalent in the Elenon Mountains, for many monster hunter tales speak of the winged horrors dwelling in the peaks north of Dijishy. Tales of manticores elsewhere on Tellene are so vague that they could easily refer to androsphinxes or even to gorgons and griffyngs.

¹A manticore tail spine, used as an additional material component in the Journeyman level Bar Portal spell, increases the duration by 1 minute.