Adventure Guide's Handbook

For "Gods & Monsters" Adventure Guides

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Running the Game

As the Adventure Guide, your duty is to present the game world, its inhabitants, and its choices to the players. Other games call your role game master, referee, and storyteller. You are all of those titles. As game master, you are the player who can most make or break the other players' enjoyment of the game. As referee, you are called on to adjudicate between the players and the non-player characters and situations in which the players' characters find themselves. As storyteller you will be presenting the various threads, plots, situations, and adventure hooks that the players will choose from to create the campaign.

Some players will prefer fewer choices, some more. It is up to you to determine which they prefer and to create the adventure accordingly.

Remember that your players' characters are the heroes of the story. Everything that you create are vehicles for the player characters to be heroic. All of the adventures, the non-player characters, the countries and continents and worlds, are all for their benefit.

Remember also that role-playing gaming is a shared experience. Everything that you do as Guide you do along with the other players in the game. Role-playing is not an adversarial game, and Guiding is not an adversarial experience. You can't win if the players lose. "Losing" and "winning" should not retain their traditional meaning in a role-playing game. You aren't the dealer in blackjack.

Organizing Game Sessions

As the adventure Guide, you will have your hands full creating the non-player characters and the adventures. Request an organizationally-minded player to organize the game: make sure everyone is at the right place at the right time, with the right food and other materials.

Normally you will game in someone's living room, dining room, or basement. You'll want a table on which you can roll dice and put snacks, and space for everyone to sit comfortably. Often, you'll all sit around a kitchen or dining room table, but you can also just sit on couches and chairs around a coffee table. Whatever is most comfortable for you is what you should do.

Managing Game Sessions

In a moment we'll start talking about how to create adventures, how to determine the outcomes of the struggles and contests the player characters take part in, and how, in general, to manage the world in which these adventures and struggles occur. Right now, I want to talk a little about being an Adventure Guide in general.

Reasons and examples

Being an Adventure Guide is not difficult, but it does require paying attention to the rest of the players, and it requires a willingness to deviate from—yet stay true to—your pre-made plans. Within your adventure notes, you will have both reasons and examples. Your notes might say that Count Renard is angry at the peasants because they haven't been able to pay enough taxes to maintain his lifestyle. As an example your notes might say that if someone tries to organize a county fair, he will forbid this, because it wastes too much money.

But other things are also happening, and if the players choose to have their characters do something that invokes this reason, you'll need to decide what Count Renard's reaction will be. You'll be creating your own "examples".

What is this game about?

Gods & Monsters is about taking on the role of archetypal fantasy figures, delving into mysterious ruins, meeting strange and exotic creatures, defeating them in tactical encounters, solving cryptic riddles, and finding arcane treasures in the hoards hidden beyond these exotic creatures and puzzles. Weird places. Exotic creatures. Battle. Treasure. Riddles in the dark. Every adventure should have at least two of those.

What happens during an adventure?

There are certain things that the players should be doing at any moment during the game. If these things are not happening, chances are that someone isn't having fun.

1. Meeting the inhabitants of the world;
2. Seeing the world;
3. Making a choice for their characters;
4. Solving puzzles as players, using their characters as tools;
5. Resolving issues, such as fights, using game rules;
6. Resolving issues, such as calming a bureaucrat, using role-playing;
7. Talking amongst themselves as characters;
8. Talking amongst themselves as friends.

I may have forgotten something in this list but basically, something needs to be happening for every player at all times. These are things that the *players* should be doing. It isn't enough that

you are presenting one of these to one or two of the players. All of the players need to be doing one or more of these things.

If that something is "talking amongst themselves as friends," you may want to consider if something game-related ought to be happening. Kibitzing among yourselves is a time-honored tradition in role-playing games. Different groups spend differing amounts of time on non-game-related items. But in general, people are at the table to game. Sometimes, kibitzing is an indication that the players have finished their "turn" and it is up to you to initiate the next act.

Describe what characters see, but not what characters do: that's up to the players. If nothing is happening, don't spend too much time describing it. There is no need to role-play nothing. If you know, for example, that nothing is going to happen on a seven-day journey, ask the players if their characters are going to do anything in those seven days, resolve those things, if any, and then the journey ends. Move on to the next scene.

Conversely, if the players want to play the whole seven-day journey, you need to make sure that something happens on those days: they need to be meeting inhabitants, seeing the world, making choices, and resolving issues.

Choosing opponents

You'll notice, when we get to creatures and encounters, that the die you roll to determine survival points for creatures is just a bit smaller than the die that warriors roll for theirs. Combine this with the player characters' automatic maximum first level survival point roll and player characters will generally be able to defeat opponents that are equal to their own level.

As the characters rise in level, they'll be able to compete against opponents that are of higher and higher relative levels. You'll have to judge how much higher based on their previous experience against such opponents and how much assistance (such as magic items or spells) they have.

In general, the main opponent will be higher level than the characters, but will have lower level henchman and other forces for the characters to struggle against. During the climax of the adventure, they will strive against a primary antagonist that is higher level than they are.

Adventures

I'm going to let you in on a really big Guide secret. Let's say the adventurers are sitting in the tavern and they decide to go west, over the mountains, and you've never even thought about what lies over the mountains or how those mountains might be crossed. What do you do?

You make it up.

That's what you do with everything as the Guide. You make it up, or you borrow it from someone else who made it up.

Normally, you'll try to make an adventure up before the game starts. It helps, when you're making up what lies west, to know what lies elsewhere. There are only a few basic kinds of adventures. Most adventures are expansions and combinations of the basic adventures.

Adventures at their most basic consist of a group of characters taking part in a set of encounters. Your players will provide the characters. Your job is to provide the encounters. Often, these encounters will be placed on a map that you've drawn. Each encounter might be marked or numbered, and a corresponding adventure key will describe each marked encounter. Often, characters will not meet each encounter. The players will choose which direction to go, and their characters will meet encounters based on that decision.

An "encounter" is either a place, a creature or group of creatures, or an item or set of items. A place is a location, usually one of the most basic parts of your map. A forest, a river, or a castle are all places, as are the rooms within the castle. Places often contain other encounters. A place might contain a creature, an item, or another place, or any combination of these. A wilderness map might contain a ruined temple as one place. The key for the wilderness map would then describe the ruined temple, as it looks from the outside. But the ruined temple might have its own map, containing all the places ("rooms") inside the temple. Places inside the temple are likely to contain encounters with creatures and with items.

Creatures are any person, monster, or animal that the players' characters can interact with. A townsperson is a creature, as is a goblin, a dragon, or a deer or squirrel. A talking mirror might be a creature, if it is intelligent, or an item if not—or it might be both. Creatures will sometimes carry items. Often, the manner in which characters interact with creatures will make or break the adventure in the minds of the players.

Items are things that the characters can take, manipulate, or view. Items can be treasure, tools, machinery, games, toys, furniture, or writing scrawled on a dungeon door. Gold coins are items, as are magic swords, books, or paintings. Characters will often collect unique or marketable items for later use or sale, or simply because the player feels it is within the character's role to want that particular item.

Kinds of Adventures

Dungeons and Ruins

Abandoned underground settings such as dungeons or mines, and ruined cities or castles make wonderful settings for adventures. Generally, the 'dungeon' will not be totally abandoned: it will now be occupied by monsters. Some of its traps may still be functional, and there may be newer traps created by the newer denizens.

Dungeons will also often contain clues as to who used to live there, why, and why they don't live there now.

A variation on the abandoned ruins is the citadel or stronghold created expressly to protect or imprison a special artifact or creature. The traps in these "dungeons" will often be in full working order.

There are many parts to the fun of dungeon exploration: finding out that the ruins exist, getting to the ruins, getting into the ruins, exploring the ruins, and getting out of the ruins.

Intrigue

Adventures of intrigue often happen in cities. The characters might get caught up in a rebellion or in stopping a rebellion, or they might be charged with the investigation of a crime that someone else doesn't want investigated. Or they discover that there's treachery afoot—or perhaps they *are* the treachery.

Adventures of intrigue don't have to be overtly political in nature. The classic hard-boiled detective story is an adventure of intrigue. If the story has "byzantine" plot twists, it is an adventure of intrigue. That's what "byzantine" means: it's from "Byzantium", the Eastern Roman Empire, which was known for its byzantine plots and maneuvering.

Tactical

Where political intrigue ends, wars begin. Characters might join in a war and fight in a larger battle under higher command, or they might be leading their own troops in battle, or they might be working as a special strike force.

Characters also can involve themselves in battle because they are protecting someone or a group of people from another group. Think "The Seven Samurai".

Sightseeing

Some great adventures can be had simply traveling from place to place. Adventurers can marvel at new cities, meet new people, and see new things. Characters often travel between adventures, and this travel can itself be an adventure.

Sightseeing adventures are often a collection of "marvels", strange things that they can tell stories about when they retire and return home.

Reasons for Adventures

The reasons that characters go on adventures are much more varied. A king might send them on a quest to find a powerful item of magic. During this quest, they travel to strange lands, occasionally enter and search ancient ruins, involve themselves in foreign political intrigues, and protect helpless villagers from danger.

Or people are disappearing from their home town, and they investigate what's happening. During the investigation, they solve a mystery, infiltrate the kidnappers' stronghold, and engage the kidnappers in battle.

Or something evil is happening, and it sounds a lot like something evil that happened a long time ago to a near-mythical ancient culture. Can the adventurers find the ruins of that culture and search the ruins for clues as to what is happening before it is too late?

Foreshadowing Adventures

Foreshadowing means giving the characters clues to an adventure or adventure goal well before the adventure starts. For example, rather than giving them the tale of Eric the Bald's treasure the night you're going to start running the adventure, you have them hear it in a bar three or four adventures earlier. This adds realism and believability to the game—the game world doesn't look as if it's being created on the spot to fit the plot.

If you have a good idea of the history and cultures in your world, some foreshadowing will happen automatically. If you know that there was a war with goblins fifty years ago, you will have already had veterans of the goblin wars hanging out in taverns, and perhaps teaching the neophyte warriors how to fight. Later on, when you decide to run an adventure in an old, undead battlefield, you'll have the goblin wars ready for use for that purpose.

It is relatively easy to foreshadow adventures. When you get an idea for an adventure sometime in the future, write the idea down. Later, have a troubadour, grizzled veteran, or foreign traveler tell a story about that adventure idea. Sure, when you sit down to actually write the adventure, everything isn't going to match with the story your players heard. But that's realistic, too.

The magic items that characters find can also lead them to adventure. If you think that you'd like to have an adventure in an abandoned underground Dwarf stronghold sometime, make one of the magical items that the characters find be from that stronghold. Not only will this add an internal consistency to the game, it will also make the characters that much more likely to want to follow that adventure. They already know that the Dwarfs of that stronghold built some useful stuff!

Layering

If there will be multiple sets of adventures for the same characters, you will need to provide layers of knowledge in your world, layers which the characters will peel back like an onion. Clues left in previous storylines will grow to adventures after the characters "solve" or "complete" the current storyline.

Designing Adventures

Encounter Entries

When you design adventures, you will often have entries for non-player characters that the characters may meet. Your notes may be as simple as "There are three ogres here," or it may include a detailed description of the ogre family's interpersonal relationships and what they'll be looking for in any encounter with the player characters. For any encounters that the players may end up interacting with—especially if they may end up fighting with them—you probably will want to also note, in abbreviated form, the abilities of the creatures in question.

If the encounter listing also involves a location, you may wish to include two descriptions, one for you and one for the players. The following example describes three ogres who are in their lair 40% of the time during the day and 95% of the time at night. They are evil, fantastic creatures that fight with spears, have a defense of 2, and have 27, 33, and 23 survival points respectively. The encounter is keyed as "23", probably on an accompanying map of the area. The first paragraph is for the players; it is what their characters see. This paragraph is usually set off from the rest of the text in some way, and is called "flavor text". The rest is for the Guide, and may or may not become available to the players' characters, depending on the characters' actions.

When writing flavor text or describing an encounter to the players, consider what their characters see, what they hear, what they smell, what they feel, and what they taste. If you find flavor text difficult to write (but find it easier to have flavor text than to describe encounters impromptu), first list what, if anything, the characters would see, hear, smell, feel, and/or taste. List these sensations in order.

After you write the flavor text, you'll write information that only the Guide knows, but which the characters might discover through careful searching or judicious use of logic. Remember that there is never any need to hide things from the Guide. The more relevant information you can give to the Guide, the more prepared the Guide will be for all the strange ideas players come up with. This is especially useful if you expect other Guides to use the adventure, but it is also helpful for you: it is amazing what you'll end up temporarily forgetting in the heat of a really good game session.

23. The Old Grotto

> Faded marble columns, ancient and cracked, form a semi-circle around a large polished black stone. Vines twist around the columns, and bushes have overgrown the stone, nearly hiding it. Bones and garbage lie scattered about. An oddly warm and rank smell emanates from the cliff area to the south beneath a slight overhang.

This was once a place of worship for the Ancients. The area to the south is the makeshift home of three Ogres: three brothers who left their clan in the High Divide during a battle with the Dwarves of Feltarn. The brothers don't like fighting; that's why they left. While they will have no qualms about intimidating (and even fighting) weaker groups, they will be more than happy to also just ignore them or (if the visitors provide the alcohol) party with them. The Ogres will also be open to barter. Alcohol, food, and things that make their life easier, will all be valuable to them.

The Ogres (Metlyl, Tekyrn, and Yskern) are very knowledgeable of the Goblin clans in the area, including their relative strengths, animosities, and homes. They've even had a few run-ins with the Kotorvato (wolf-rider) tribe. While the Ogres won't out-and-out lie to any moderately strong visitors, they won't be averse to saying something like "I heard one of the kotors mention something about that" to any request for information about something the

Ogres don't know about. If the Ogres feel that they could easily defeat the party, any lies are possible. Still, any charismatic and aware group should be able to acquire some useful information from the three brothers.

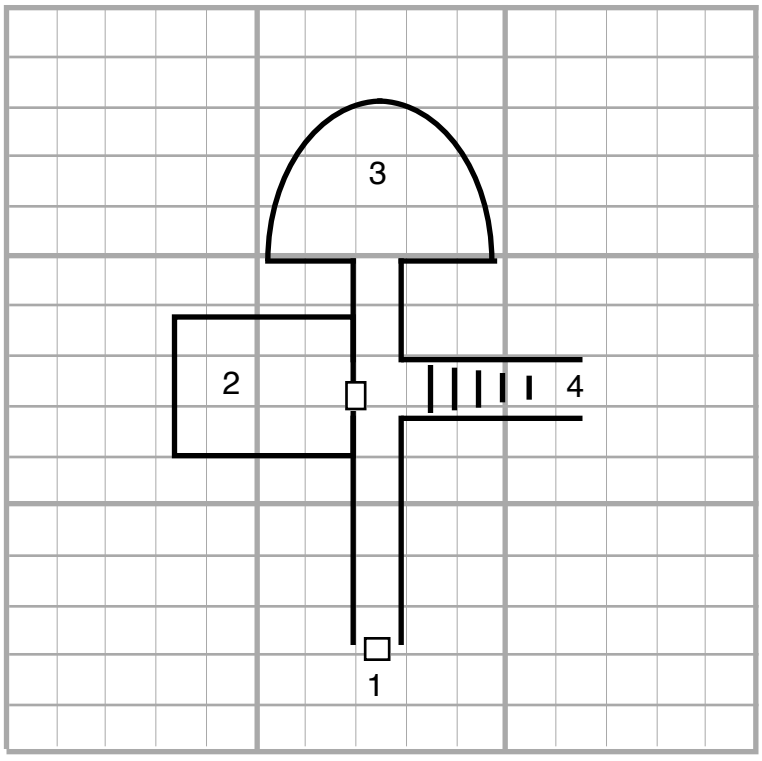
The Ogres have little in the way of treasure. They've built a spit over a fire pit and put away a little bit of jerky for the winter. They also have three small obsidian wolf-statues "guarding" their fire pit. They took these from the worship area. They are finely crafted, worth about 300 gold each, and weigh about 10 pounds each. The Ogres will talk to them as if they were real pets, but they're just making fun of them. They might try to convince a gullible person that the little statues are magical and worth trade for lots of money or some real magic, or some task.

Three Ogres (Evil, Fantastic: 5; Move: 12; Survival: 27, 33, 23; Defense: 2; Attack: spears; Lair: 40%/95%)

Maps

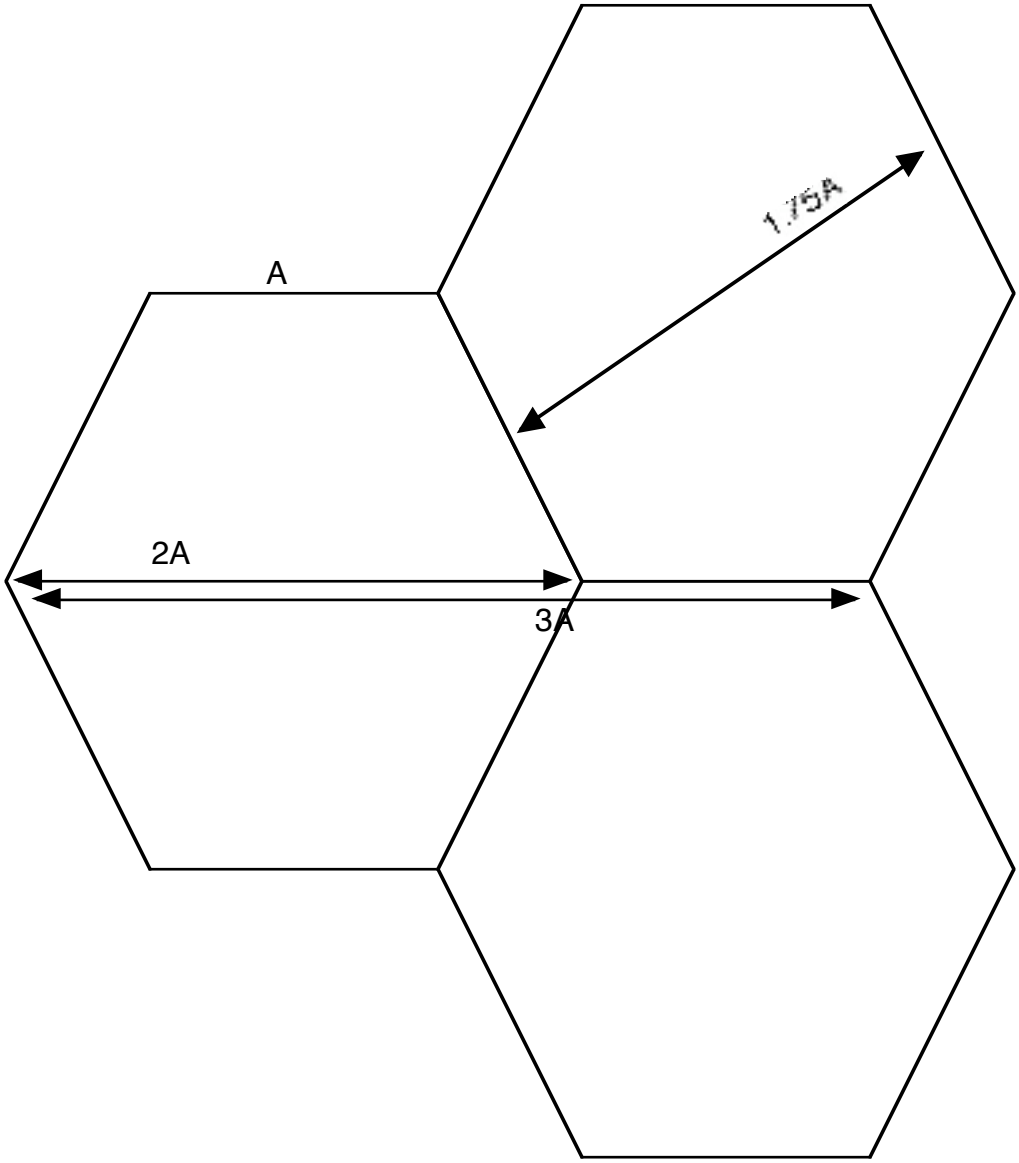
Grids

You can find square grids for drawing maps at just about any good stationery market. If you can find "engineering" pads, some lines will be marked with thicker lines, allowing you to easily count large distances on the map. You may add up diagonals in a square map if you add 40% to the length of a square's sides. For example, if one square is five feet, a diagonal on the squares will be seven feet. If one square is ten yards, the diagonal on the squares will be fourteen yards.



Hex grids are useful for wilderness maps, where the characters can literally choose any direction. Cells in hex maps have six sides, allowing you to easily add up diagonal directions.

If you need to know the math, the distance between two opposing vertices is twice the length of a side. The distance between two sides (how you'll normally measure a hex) is three quarters larger than a side.



This means that if you are counting straight across, each two hexes are three times the length of one of the hex's sides. Usually, you'll want to provide, on the map, the "diagonal" distance as well as the short or long distance, so you won't have to do the math during the game. If you use two as the side distance, the diagonal distance is 3.5; if you use four as the side distance, the diagonal distance is seven.

Walls

In general, your walls on different floors should line up. While there may be walls on lower floors that are not on upper floors, significant walls on the upper floors will almost always be supported by walls or partial walls (such as columns or archways) on lower floors.

Because of this, floorplans for upper floors often look like simplified versions of the floorplans for lower floors.

Where is my horizon?

Usually, the limit to how far characters can see will be some obstruction, such as a building, a forest, or some hills. Mist and darkness will also limit vision. Sometimes, however, the characters will be on flat plains on a clear day and the only limit to their vision will be their perception and the horizon. Once something goes below the horizon, it can't be seen. But where is the horizon?

Height	Horizon
3 feet	2.3 miles
4 feet	2.7 miles
5 feet	3 miles
6 feet	3.3 miles
8 feet	3.8 miles
10 feet	4.3 miles
12 feet	4.7 miles
15 feet	5.2 miles
18 feet	5.7 miles
24 feet	6.6 miles
30 feet	7.4 miles
40 feet	8.5 miles
50 feet	9.5 miles
75 feet	12 miles
100 feet	13 miles
150 feet	16 miles
200 feet	19 miles
300 feet	23 miles
400 feet	27 miles
500 feet	30 miles
1,000 feet	43 miles
2,000 feet	60 miles
3,000 feet	74 miles
4,000 feet	85 miles
5,000 feet	95 miles
7,500 feet	117 miles
10,000 feet	135 miles
12,000 feet	147 miles
15,000 feet	165 miles
20,000 feet	190 miles

This unfortunately requires some math. On an earth-sized planet, the horizon for a six-foot tall person standing at sea level or on flat plains will be about 3 miles. This means that they can see features that are at ground level for up to three miles (depending, of course, on the quality of their vision and the size of the object). Features that are higher than ground level can be seen further. For example, two six-foot-tall people walking towards each other could, assuming all other conditions were perfect, begin to see the tops of their counterpart's head at six miles: once their horizons meet, they are technically in sight of each other.

But, what if they stand on higher ground? This is where the math comes in. However high their eye is in feet, take the square root of that. Then multiply it by 1.346. That's the horizon in miles.

To determine the horizon for anything, take the square root of its height in feet and multiply by 1.346. To see how far something can be seen, get that thing's horizon, and add it to the watcher's horizon. That is the distance at which the tip of the thing begins to come over the horizon.

Thus, the tip of a 200 foot tower could be seen coming over the horizon, by a six-foot person standing on a four-foot hill, at about 23 miles. Of course, this assumes that other conditions are fine, that there are no obstructions, and that the player makes a likely difficult perception roll. But we can also see that fifty feet of the tower will be over the horizon for that person at 19 miles—because that's the horizon distance for a 150 foot tower.

Characters walking towards a 12,000 foot peak will begin to see its peaks from 150 miles away.

You've got some leeway if you need it; atmospheric conditions can sometimes result in refraction, bringing sights that should be below the horizon into view. And it is still up to you to assign a difficulty level to sighting something above the horizon.

Treasure

There can be many different kinds of treasure, but generally it comes in the form of rewards, money, things that can be sold for money, magical items, knowledge, or equipment.

Be careful how much money, magic, and knowledge your adventures contain; too much, and the game becomes less exciting, too little and it can become frustrating.

Rewards

Rewards usually come after the adventure is completed; the adventure was part of a job that the characters were hired to do, and now their employers pay up. Or as a result of their adventure, they've assisted, freed, or otherwise done something nice for someone who is now grateful, and rewards them. Rewards don't necessarily have to be cash; they can be things that the rewarder feels are important, such as a good horse, a cart full of grain, or their daughter's hand in marriage. Great wizards might grant magical assistance as a reward; rulers might grant status or land. Land grants are often in places that the ruler thinks need taming.

Money

Chests full of gold and silver coins, piles of gold, some creatures collect treasure in the form of money, and sometimes the money is what the characters were after. When money is found in a dungeon, it will often be "old" money from previous monarchies, previous dynasties, or even previous cultures. How this affects its salability is up to you, but in general, the more different it is, the more it becomes easier to melt it down than to try and use it as real coinage.

Money is the most traditional form of treasure, and carrying sacks of it out of a dungeon can be very satisfying.

Things That Can Be Sold

Most "treasure" in "real" dungeons probably consists of this sort of thing. What we call "antiquities" have real worth beyond what they're made out of. Ornate wine pourers in the shapes of dragons, jewelry, crowns, books, paintings and other artwork, furniture, all can, if well-made, be worth a lot of money if returned to civilization and sold.

Some such items will be easy to carry back. Some will be more difficult. A crown of gold might be easy; a crown of gold made in the shape of hundreds of tiny leaves attached to a golden branch will be more difficult. Such an artifact might be worth 1,000 gold coins or more if returned intact, but only fifty or so after being pounded flat due to being stuffed in someone's backpack and trudged back on the back of a horse, occasionally slung down to the ground or tossed across streams.

Magical Items

Magical weapons and other artifacts can often be found on the corpses of their previous owners, or locked away in strongboxes in a stronghold whose knights were destroyed centuries past.

Knowledge

Perhaps the greatest treasure is knowledge. Sorcerors are always on the lookout for new spells. Maps can lead to greater adventure and greater treasure. And journals can provide insight into mysterious creatures, or hint at passes through impassable mountains.

The journals of the now-dead denizens of one ruined castle can include references to more ancient ruins, which will contain more ancient treasure and more ancient danger.

Equipment

When you've been trudging through the desert for weeks and your water ran out two days ago, there is little treasure more appealing than water. Old weapons, extra draft animals, lanterns, flasks, all might be of use to an adventuring party, turning them from "dungeon dressing" into treasure.

Dungeon Dressing

"Dungeon dressing" are things that probably don't matter to the success or failure of the characters, but that add to the experience of being in the "dungeon", ruins, or other location. Good dungeon dressing invokes a sense of realism, a sense that this dungeon really did exist before the characters found it. This location, whatever it is, had a use, and evidence of that use remains.

To add good dungeon dressing you need to know what the location was used for. What was it used for in general, and what were the last things to happen there? Did the royal family have a big party before the goblin armies surprised their forces and ransacked the castle? Then the royal ballroom will reflect this—there may be decorations, tables set up, and even leftover food, nearly petrified. Did the goblins break in *during* the party? Then there may be skeletons, both of the nobles and the goblins, among the party's detritus.

If this was a place where an individual lived, what kind of an individual were they? Messy? Neat? Self-righteous? Proud?

When describing anything, especially when writing flavor text, consider the *purpose* to which the structure or room was put. Consider what it was *last used* for. Think about its *light sources*, and consider its *state of repair*. How much natural degradation has occurred, how much has occurred from animal sources, and how much from the raids and ransackings of humans or other intelligent creatures.

Light Sources

Rooms do not have to have light sources; they can be completely dark. But usually the former denizens needed some way of seeing while in the room. It may be that they brought their light source with them, by carrying torches or lanterns. It may be that torches or candles were ensconced in the walls. It may be that windows or skylights allow natural light to enter the room. And in rare circumstances there may be magical light illuminating the area.

Candle holders can range from simple to artistically complex. They can be carried, built into the wall or furniture, or in the form of hanging chandeliers. Fireplaces or braziers can provide heat as well as a flickering light.

In the time periods of most adventure campaigns, windows were usually either fully open or fully closed: glass wasn't used unless it was for decorative purposes. An unshuttered window let in not only light but also breezes or inclement weather. Clear glass was a mark of luxury and status, and in the early period only let in light for illumination. The glass was not clear enough to

see as clearly through it as one can see through modern glass. It was only in the 1800s that glass-making technology advanced enough to make glass more common in average buildings. Until then, the shutter was the most common way of closing a window to keep the wind out.

Portraits

Portraits are a great place to hide secret spyholes, secret doors, or secret safes. But they also weren't totally uncommon simply on their own. A proud person might have a self-portrait. A dedicated follower might have a portrait of their secular or religious ruler. A person might also have a portrait of their spouse, their sponsor, their child, their family, or their ancestors. They might have been given the portrait of a friend as a gift.

Portraits can also give clues as to the state of life in the ruins before they were ruins. A portrait made before the mad prince's room was boarded up might show a doorway where there is no doorway now…

Notes and Books

Some kinds of people like to keep diaries; others might keep simple notes. Diaries of important or brilliant people can be as good as tutorials. A military leader's diary might have more than just information about the way the battles went, it might be a resource for ensuring that battles go well. Diaries can also provide clues as to the layout of a building, or about rooms that might not be obvious. ("We played in our secret attic playground.")

Professionals in a field might also have copies of important books relating to their fields. Hobbyists might have books relating to their hobbies. Military leaders, surveyors, and guides might have maps.

People in the past, before photography, were often much better at drawing than the average person is today. It was a useful skill. Diaries, notes, and maps may contain drawings to supplement the text.

Hobbies or Preoccupations

Depending on the time period and the culture, certain hobbies may be prevalent. Many people grow (or collect) plants, or collect and (maybe) catalog rocks, gems, insects, animal heads, or drawings of any of those. Some might collect marvels, or things that were marketed as marvels. Even in the real world unicorn horns were a popular item. All unicorn horns in a fantasy world don't have to be real either.

"Naturalists" might also have the rudimentary tools of scientific inquiry. Scales, magnifying lenses (if the technological level allows it), flasks of various liquids, furnaces, bellows, and tongs might each be useful to various experimenters.

Furniture

If people lived there, the kinds of furniture they kept can provide insight into the kind of people they were and the kinds of things they did. Besides the "normal" furniture such as beds, bureaus, tables, and chairs, rooms might contain chamber pots if the structure did not have indoor plumbing. Kitchens were often kept completely separate to avoid a kitchen fire burning the main

building down. Were musical skills common? Musical instruments might be kept to be played or merely as decorations, like dress swords.

Clothing

The kind of clothing a person wears tells something about them and their profession. Different professions might have uniforms such as military uniforms, clerical robes, or chefs hats. People might have clothing for specific occasions, such as dances, dinners, walking, and sitting. Warriors might have special weapons and armor designed solely for dress. And professions will also have functional clothing such as chefs' aprons or warriors swords and armor. Sometimes they'll keep these in special rooms. Others will keep such clothing in their main room, or in a small room (such as a closet) off of it. Depending on how the location fell into ruin, there may be clothing of different kinds on the dead (if there are any), or set out waiting for their owner to return and prepare for tea.

The material that clothing is made from, and the colors that clothing is dyed, provide more than clues to the culture that made and (possibly) wore the clothing. It provides information about the plant life that the makers had access to.

Stylistic Fads and Lost Motifs

If you're familiar with architecture, painting, or any form of art, you know that there are styles and motifs that come into and go out of favor over time. The presence of these features can provide information about not only when the structure or item was created, but who created it and who influenced them. Stylistic variation can provide information in the same way that layers of sediment and human remains can for geologists and archaeologists.

Sometimes such styles evolve naturally, and sometimes they are born from some popular or visionary artist. Including such stylistic markings adds verisimilitude to your ruins. Ruins of different ages would have different styles, and be inspired by different designers or sources.

Perhaps more interesting are the lost motifs that were once nearly universal but have all but disappeared. These can indicate massive social or political upheaval. An observer unfamiliar with twentieth century history in our world would notice the near-universal use of the swastika in commercial, functional, and other art up until the forties. It appeared in postcards, in native American-inspired art and Near East-inspired art. Go on any house tour of a house built before the forties and you're very likely to see decorative pottery or tapestry that includes the swastika symbol on it somewhere.

After about 1940, the swastika nearly completely disappeared from popular culture. Where it continued to appear, its meaning would appear completely different, cluing our theoretically ignorant visitor into the fact that something major happened involving the swastika.

Such a clue to such a major event would not be obvious to the player characters immediately. It would only become apparent over time, as they observe (through your flavor text) the art objects in the abandoned areas they explore.

Overpowering Player Characters

Sometimes characters will get into situations that they cannot win. They will take the wrong turn and suddenly face overwhelming odds, or in the course of the adventure they'll be pitted against a much larger opponent. You will find that players will often have their characters fight to the death rather than allow their characters to be captured and stay alive.

This is not so unrealistic as you might think as the omnipotent Adventure Guide. It is certainly true to much of our pulp sources where heroes fight on against overwhelming odds until completely incapacitated, and it even makes sense in real life. If characters surrender to a small hostile group now, they will only find themselves disarmed and facing a larger hostile group later. This is true whether they're facing bandits or lizardmen. The odds might be bad now, but they'll only get worse after a surrender.

This is especially true if the characters are carrying powerful magic items, or are relying on a sorceror who requires many spell components. Unless the characters have a good reason to believe they'll be treated well, a last desperate stand with their weaponry and spells intact makes more sense than letting their weapons and spells get taken away. Surrender almost always makes an adventuring party weaker. An infinitesimal chance of survival by fighting now is better than a nonexistent one by fighting unarmed later.

Sometimes you'll have been the one to pit the characters against overwhelming odds for the sake of a greater storyline. You have to be very careful when doing this, and make certain that you understand the situation from the character standpoint. The players might know that you wouldn't put their characters in an untenable position, but you can't ask their characters to trust the Adventure Guide. The characters don't know the Adventure Guide. The characters only know their enemies. If the characters can't trust their enemy, the players aren't going to have their characters trust you.

Also, players often resent Adventure Guides trying to "railroad" an adventure like this. Players prefer their characters to have choices. If the adventure begins to look more like a railroad that can only go one direction than a path with many branches, players will have less fun, and will take the game less seriously. Within these rules we talk about "characters" and "stories". We use novel-writing terminology as a metaphor for many game-related events, but it is only a metaphor. Your games are not novels. They are not "written" by a single person. If they are stories, they are stories comprised of the combined choices of every player.

Game masters sometimes get frustrated by what they see as players inability to let their characters get captured within the "story", but there's a similar perception on the part of players to game masters: game masters often treat their overwhelming hordes as if they were one individual, instead of as a number of individuals each of whom would rather not die today.

Or worse, as simply a tool to force a plotline.

It is important to look at these choices from the character perspective. It also helps to look at some examples of captures in our fantasy sources and in real history.

In real life, enemies on the medieval battlefield would often capture enemy leaders and ransom them later. This was partly because both sides were led by nobles who shared a bond of not

wanting to set a precedent that nobility should be killed, and also who had the wherewithal to raise money to pay a ransom. This situation doesn't often apply to player characters, but if it does you will want to make sure that the characters know that ransoms are to be expected in most circumstances. And that the ransoms, once paid, will be honored.

In more modern times, soldiers can be willing to surrender because they know that the other side keeps prisoners of war safe. Armies will keep prisoner of war camps because they know that it makes soldiers more likely to surrender. But, again, POW camps don't usually apply to player characters in a fantasy game. They are not soldiers, and their enemies don't usually have POW camps.

Why should characters surrender?

What reason do the characters have to surrender? Remember, from the character perspective, surrender is deadly unless there is a good reason to do it. Characters must have a reason to surrender. In both fantasy and real life, surrender is usually more dangerous than resistance. Criminals don't ask for surrender because they want to be nice to their victims. They ask for surrender so that further resistance will be even more difficult. Normal people often fall victim to that trick, and die. But heroes should be more wary, and usually are.

Can they trust their captors? Without trust, surrender is a dangerous proposition. What have the captors done to show that they can be trusted? Have their captors done anything to show that they cannot be trusted?

Characters are more likely to be willing to surrender if they have met the enemy before and know that the enemy can be trusted to honor the terms of surrender. They are more likely to be willing to surrender if they have seen the enemy act honorably or if they have seen the enemy make an overture of trust. They might be more willing to surrender to a trusted friend, or to an enemy they've dealt with before.

What do the characters have that is irreplaceable? Are the characters carrying items that cannot be replaced and that are worth fighting to the death over? Have they received any indication that captured items will be returned to them? Will the removal of these items make them even weaker compared to their captors?

What time constraints are on the characters? If you've set up a situation where the world will end, or a friend will die, and the characters are under a deadline, they may well see delays as unacceptable, even to the point of death. Capture takes a long time. Captives don't usually have any say over how quickly they get to discuss terms of their release. Characters under a deadline are less likely to surrender unless there is some indication that they'll be able to quickly continue on their mission.

Edgar Rice Burroughs

I'm a fan of Burroughs' "Tarzan" series and find it a useful source for fantasy adventures. As an example, I've just pulled out "Tarzan and the Castaways", and found a point where Tarzan is a captive. Backtracking to find out how Tarzan was captured, we find that this is a typical example of fighting "to the death". Burroughs (the 'Adventure Guide') has special plans for Tarzan, however, and the enemies capture Tarzan alive.

First, Tarzan hears some hunters killing elephants indiscriminately; Tarzan considers himself a protector of the jungle, so he tracks them down. They have firearms, he has none. Tarzan doesn't care. He tells them he's going to kill them for killing the elephant. Mullargan, the "heavyweight champion of the world", pulls his gun, but Tarzan, "only" five feet away, attacks anyway—and succeeds in disarming Mullargan before Mullargan can fire.

This is a common mistake by beginning game masters: assuming that players will surrender the moment a gun is pulled on them (or, in fantasy, a knife is at their throat). In both fantasy and real life, surrender is dangerous in such situations. Experts will tell you that if an opponent has pulled a gun on you, you have to assume they mean to kill you. That's the time to resist, and crime statistics back it up: those who resist when a firearm is pulled on them survive more often than those who surrender.

Heroes know this, and they resist. Tarzan doesn't give up because someone else is pulling a gun on him. In fact, he initiates combat against an armed opponent who was not yet a threat to him! To avenge a death that he cannot reverse. And he's successful.

Further down the page, some tribesmen called the "Babangos" see Tarzan and the hunters fighting and decide to capture everyone.

> The Babangos, realizing that the three men below them were thoroughly engrossed and entirely unaware of their presence, advanced silently, for they wished to take them alive and unharmed. They came swiftly, a hundred sleek warriors, muscled and hard, a hundred splendid refutations of the theory that the eating of human flesh makes men mangy, hairless and toothless.
>
> Marks saw them first, and screamed a warning: but it was too late, for they were already upon him. By the weight of their numbers, they overwhelmed the three men, burying Tarzan and Mullargan beneath a dozen sleek dark bodies; Mullargan saw him raise a warrior above his head and hurl him into the faces of his fellows, and the champion was awed by this display of physical strength so much greater than his own.
>
> This momentary reversal was brief—there was too many Babangos even for Tarzan. Two of them seized him around the ankles, and three more bore him backward to the ground; but before they succeeded in binding him, he had killed one with his bare hands.

Tarzan, like any good player character, fights to the very end. He knows what kind of dangerous creatures lurk in the jungle. And this time he's right: these are cannibals. They mean to eat him.

After they bind him in combat, they tie him tightly; he's captured. Burroughs knew that he was setting up a situation where Tarzan would fight to the death, so he ensured that Tarzan's captors wanted him alive and were willing to capture him alive even after he killed some of them. Of course, he did this by making them cannibals who wanted their meal alive, ensuring that Tarzan is going to do his best to escape as soon as feasible.

Novelists have all sorts of ways to capture their "player characters" and they make use of them. Sleep gas, binding during combat, knocking unconscious, nerve poisons. Good authors do not have their main characters captured through a surrender that makes no sense to the character's

perspective. Either the surrender was set up ahead of time in a manner that makes surrender reasonable, or the surrender is forced on the characters by knocking them out or tying them up.

In a discussion about this on Usenet, another person gave a different Burroughs example. I don't follow John Carter of Mars, but this example has John Carter surrender without Burroughs having Carter fight to the end. In chapter three of "A Princess of Mars" he is faced by a small army armed with firearms. Carter realizes that fleeing is too dangerous when facing so many firearms. His choices are only to fight or to surrender. He has never met these fearsome enemies before. Without more information, it will make more sense to fight to the death than to surrender.

The leader of the Martians recognizes this, and decides to defuse the situation. Despite not even speaking Carter's language, the Martian chieftain must gain Carter's trust.

> The Martians, after conversing for a short time, turned and rode away in the direction from which they had come, leaving one of their number alone by the enclosure. When they had covered perhaps two hundred yards they halted, and turning their mounts toward us sat watching the warrior by the enclosure.
>
> He was the one whose spear had so nearly transfixed me, and was evidently the leader of the band, as I had noted that they seemed to have moved to their present position at his direction. When his force had come to a halt he dismounted, threw down his spear and small arms, and came around the end of the incubator toward me, entirely unarmed and as naked as I, except for the ornaments strapped upon his head, limbs, and breast.
>
> When he was within about fifty feet of me he unclasped an enormous metal armlet, and holding it toward me in the open palm of his hand, addressed me in a clear, resonant voice, but in a language, it is needless to say, I could not understand. He then stopped as though waiting for my reply, pricking up his antennae-like ears and cocking his strange-looking eyes still further toward me.
>
> As the silence became painful I concluded to hazard a little conversation on my own part, as I had guessed that he was making overtures of peace. The throwing down of his weapons and the withdrawing of his troop before his advance toward me would have signified a peaceful mission anywhere on Earth, so why not, then, on Mars!
>
> Placing my hand over my heart I bowed low to the Martian and explained to him that while I did not understand his language, his actions spoke for the peace and friendship that at the present moment were most dear to my heart. Of course I might have been a babbling brook for all the intelligence my speech carried to him, but he understood the action with which I immediately followed my words.
>
> Stretching my hand toward him, I advanced and took the armlet from his open palm, clasping it about my arm above the elbow; smiled at him and stood waiting. His wide mouth spread into an answering smile, and locking one of his intermediary arms in mine we turned and walked back toward his mount. At the same time he motioned his followers to advance. They started toward us on a wild run, but were checked by a signal

> from him. Evidently he feared that were I to be really frightened again I might jump entirely out of the landscape.

Burroughs makes absolutely certain that Carter "knows" it is safe to surrender. The army's leader orders the army to back off so that he faces Carter alone. The leader steps off of his horse, and then throws down his weapons. He speaks in clear (if unintelligible) tones, and holds the "handcuffs" in his open palm. When he has captured Carter and he asks his army to return, they start running. He tells them to slow down and not be so threatening. Carter not only has a reason to trust his enemy enough to surrender, he knows he can trust his enemy even after he has surrendered.

Honorable enemies who seek to capture powerful foes with minimal loss of life on both sides recognize that their enemy must trust them. They will make graduated promises and keep those promises even after their captives surrender. And it makes sense for opponents to want the other side to surrender. Surrender minimizes the loss of life on both sides. Groups that accept surrender and treat captives well will find that more opponents surrender rather than fight to the death. This applies to player characters as well as to your non-player characters. If the player characters gain a reputation for killing captives or treating them poorly, their enemies will fight to the death or run away if it is safe to do so, but will rarely surrender.

Gender

There is a space on the character sheet for a statistic which is almost never referenced in the game rules: gender. Assuming basically humanoid races, gender will usually, but not always, be male or female

There are no rolls for pregnancy. Player characters should never become pregnant, nor should they become parents, unless the player agrees. This has nothing to do with gender: Guides should not require major, permanent changes to player characters without player approval. Similarly, characters should not be subject to rape or similar humiliations. While rape may be realistic under some of the circumstances that characters find themselves in, this is not a realistic game.

It is very easy for a game to spin out of control, with lasting detrimental effects to the players' friendships, if these cultural taboos are broken. Players may find it interesting to play through some of these events: characters may become pregnant, may change gender, may lose arms, legs, or senses at the player's request. The Guide, however, should never make the request, even as a suggestion. They must come specifically and explicitly from the player.

Using Canned Adventures

When preparing to run a canned adventure, read over the adventure a couple of times to familiarize yourself with the settings, the themes, and the encounters. Take notes about what parts you don't like, what parts you might wish to emphasize, what parts you might wish to de-emphasize, and what parts you might wish to remove or change.

Change the adventure to fit snugly within your own campaign. Look at the adventure from your players' perspectives. If your players prefer certain kinds of adventure, you might want to add something of that sort. If they like tactical adventures, you might provide at least a diversion that

allows them to take on another group of foes. If they prefer puzzles, play up the puzzles that exist, or add new ones (perhaps replacing one or two of the hack and slash room encounters with a puzzle encounter).

If you are not using the campaign world that the adventure was designed for, or if the adventure was designed without a specific world in mind, change the adventure to fit into your world. Replace the key figures in the game to match figures that already exist in your campaign world, or modify them to fit better with your world. Change names, towns, and creatures as needed.

Re-read the adventure after your changes and look for inconsistencies you might have created. Also, keep an eye out for inconsistencies that already exist: some problems will get through the editing process. Sometimes problems that the author considered minor will turn into major problems in your own world. Do not be at all shy about taking a pencil and glue to any adventure! If the adventure is an open source one, take it straight to your word processor or text editor.

Characters

Players

One of the big differences between role-playing games and most other kinds of games was best described by Callan Sweet and Joel Shempert on the Forge. Callan wrote that "rearranging your character's activities for a better story is a skill" that not all players have. "It isn't a skill you should automatically have. One doesn't try and plan out chess for a more exciting game."

When we say that role-playing games don't have winners and losers in the traditional sense, this is part of what we mean. As Joel responded, "if a chess player beats his opponent, but does so inefficiently, it's a legitimate critique to point out how he could have played better, and checkmated 10 moves earlier."

That's not a legitimate critique in Gods & Monsters. All it can be is a suggestion.

Keep this in mind if you have players who are new to role-playing games. There's nothing wrong with trying to win, but in a game where winning means something else it may degrade their enjoyment of the game. The solution is to Guide the player to recognize what is and isn't a win *within the game*. Achieving short-term and long-term goals is a form of winning.

One example of a game everyone's familiar with that is planned out to be more exciting is televised football. When one set of players gets too bogged down, their goal changes from offense to defense. I'm not saying you need to put your players on the defensive when they start "losing", but it is one option. Even though the overall goal (winning the game by having more points than your opponent) remains the same, the short-term goal has changed.

Sometimes you'll have to find out what short-term goals interest your players, and you'll need to formulate them as wins. Like the powers that be who formulate football's rules, it will often fall on you to plan out the session for a more exciting game.

Saving Rolls and Ability Rolls

Gods & Monsters presupposes a "Dumasian" universe where success depends on inborn ability and role in the story. Study and hard work can assist in any success, but what matters is your character's abilities and archetype. When a character attempts some action, you'll generally ask the player to make a saving roll or an ability roll to determine the success of that action. They might make an Intelligence roll to build a bridge, or a Strength roll to lift an object. Sometimes, you'll ask them to make such a roll for actions that they don't know they're performing, such as a Perception roll to detect an ambush.

You'll usually request a saving roll when the action would be performed better by an experienced archetype, a long-running character. The ability to detect an ambush is heavily dependent on the character's experience. A longer-running character is more likely to know that an ambush is about to occur than will a new character at the beginning of a new story.

If the character's basic abilities are more important, getting better comes specifically through study or training, and level is mostly irrelevant, you can ask for a roll against an appropriate ability. For example, to lift something, a roll against strength is most important. In general, the only way characters get to lift more, even in books and movies, is by becoming stronger or by practicing weightlifting, not by becoming more experienced.

The risks

Players should understand the risks of failure. It's often a good idea to, before the player makes the roll for their character, say something like "If you fail this, you will…". The player can then make an informed choice about what action they'll take and what results they'll risk for their character.

Difficulty

Depending on the difficulty of the action, you may grant a bonus or a penalty to the saving roll or ability roll. You can do so based on the size of the obstacle or the relative difficulty of the action. Read the guidelines in the rulebook for more information. Be careful when applying both difficulty levels and obstacle size penalties, that you aren't counting some difficulties twice.

Characters can also have *Skills* that assist them in making these rolls. A character with two points of *Engineering*, for example, would gain a bonus of two when attempting to build that bridge.

One action per roll

Don't divide actions into more than one roll outside of life-or-death situations; and inside of life-or-death situations, multiple rolls should help the character rather than make death more likely. Don't try to work out the physics of an action. Just ask for a reasonable roll with a reasonable difficult level. When you start trying to focus too much on a single character's action, you end up ignoring the other players.

Often, outside of conflict one short scene will be no more than one roll per person. Don't sweat anything smaller than that. Contests don't have a specific time-frame or duration. Generally, they apply to one scene.

During a conflict, contest rolls will usually be one round's worth of activities, but not at the expense of breaking up the contest into boring rolls. Every action should be fun or exciting or both. That includes every roll.

The consequences of failure

If one of the characters has to know the answer for the game to proceed, then the act of asking the question is all that is necessary. You will usually want to avoid situations where the characters must perform specific actions and know specific facts or be unable to proceed. Where this is unavoidable, however, you will want to make the knowledge or success automatic: since you've designed the adventure so that someone has to know, then someone will know it.

You will also want to avoid being too close with world information. On a failed roll, characters will still know or do *something*. If the player fails an Intelligence roll to know the history of Castle Oberon, they may still know some relevant information about castles in this world. Make

sure that you let them know that they failed the roll, however, so that they will know to bid mojo if they desire it.

Mojo

Mojo use always matters. If a player chooses to bid mojo on a roll that doesn't matter, and they bid enough to succeed, you must either make it matter or tell them that while they have bid enough to be successful, spending that mojo will not advance them towards their goals. They can then choose to withdraw their successful bid.

Specialized tasks

You might also decide that a task is a very specialized task. This means that it is even more difficult for someone without any skill to perform the task. If building a bridge is a specialized task, then anyone without Engineering will have their intelligence halved before applying the difficulty penalty and making their roll. Those with Engineering ability will not halve their intelligence before applying the difficulty penalty and making the roll.

Generally, some things everyone can try, and they'll be rolled against an ability with no modification based on whether it's been studied. Other things only specialists can try, and the ability score will be halved.

Multiple attempts

Remember that trying the same thing multiple times involves an increasing penalty, and that characters can take their time for a bonus.

Time

How long does it take to perform a task? That can vary widely depending on the task in question. Generally, you'll need to make a ruling on the fly based on how much has to be done to perform the task and how long you and the players think it ought to normally take.

When is a roll required?

In a role-playing game such as Gods & Monsters, it is easy to see when abilities such as strength, agility, and endurance come into play. The game is played in words and imagination. The player's own physical abilities don't matter. Characters also have charisma, intelligence, and wisdom, and these are more difficult to handle. The player's charisma, intelligence, and wisdom are also used in the game. If they weren't, the game wouldn't be nearly as much fun.

When a player has their character say and do the right thing, no roll is required. A roll is necessary when there is ambiguity. So if the player has their character offer a dryad a gem the dryad will likely be friendly. If the player takes that friendliness as license to make fun of the dryad, a Charisma roll will be required to ensure that the jest is taken as intended.

If the player chooses to have their character look in the desk drawer, they'll find what's obvious in the desk drawer. If they say merely that they're searching the room, a Perception roll will be required to recognize that what's in the desk drawer is important.

Also, the player characters are almost always the center of attention. Unless there is a specific rule covering a situation, players will make the saving rolls and skill rolls that affect their character. When a player tries to have their character bluff their way past a guard, a charisma roll (with appropriate modifiers, including their opponent's wisdom or charisma) might apply. If a non-player character tries to bluff a player character, the player gets to make a perception roll (with appropriate modifiers according to the non-player character's skill and charisma).

Player knowledge, character knowledge

When characters know more than their player does, the player can roll dice to gain access to that knowledge. A player who knows nothing about building bridges can still have their character make an Intelligence roll to successfully do so. What happens when the player knows more than the character does?

One answer is to treat the game encounters as puzzles and obstacles for the player to solve. The players can act on the knowledge that they have. Their characters can know both what the players know and what is on their character sheet.

Another answer is to treat the encounters as a chance to roleplay the character. Where the player and character have possibly different knowledge, the player must choose:

1. the character would know this;
2. the character would not know this;
3. the character might know this.

For the first two cases, no roll is required. In the latter case, the Adventure Guide and player will need to determine a difficulty level as normal for any other knowledge the player is attempting to access via their character.

Neither of these answers are right or wrong. Both answers are valid, and both can be fun. They also overlap. Even with the second answer, player knowledge will still inform character knowledge but to a lesser extent. But it does help to make sure that everyone is on the same wavelength when it comes to player vs. character knowledge. If you see a conflict, you may wish to bring the issue up and make a group decision.

Otherwise, however, when players use player knowledge as character knowledge, and it makes reasonable sense, allow it.

Absolute numbers and abstract rolls

Gods & Monsters walks a fine line between abstract and absolute measures of what characters can do. Characters have specific amounts of money. Players keep a list of exactly what the character carries. Within the rules there is a chart of movement rates with exact speeds, and in the character creation section there was a chart of how much characters can lift and carry. This Adventure Guide's Handbook includes a complex chart detailing the distance to the horizon.

They are there for uncontested actions and for guidelines. In general, however, whenever a character is in some sort of contest or conflict, they will make an ability roll or a saving roll. This gives them the opportunity to be lucky and unlucky, and to do amazing things using mojo.

In general, if you are comparing a character's capability to another character, and there is a question of success or failure, the player will need to roll.

Automatic success and failure

Ultimately, whether you allow an automatic success and/or an automatic failure for actions that the character would normally never succeed at or normally never fail at is a matter of style. Whatever you choose, you should be consistent: players must be able to reasonably know what their chances of success or failure are. And the same should apply to non-player characters as to characters.

Automatic Success

You can allow for an automatic success on a roll of 1 on the die, regardless of modifiers, and regardless of how low the target number is. This means that even for an action that is impossible to succeed at, the character will still succeed one out of every twenty times on average. For low level characters, in stressful situations, this isn't going to make much of a difference: in any life-or-death situation where multiple rolls are required to succeed, the chance of success is infinitesimal. In combat, for example, any opponent that has such a high defense is also likely to have a decent number of survival points. Even if a character hits once, they're probably not going to hit enough times to take the creature down.

As characters increase in level or in number, however, an automatic success might make a difference. As the characters increase in level, they will be able to last longer against "unstoppable" opponents, giving them more opportunity to make "impossible" rolls. And the more characters that are involved, the better the chance that someone will make the impossible roll. If there are ten characters engaging an impossible creature, there is about a 40% chance each round that someone will hit.

Remember that the same applies outside of combat as well. If there are ten characters attempting an impossible task, there is a 40% chance that someone will succeed. Whether or not you and your group consider this a good thing is a matter of style.

Automatic Failure

Similarly, you can rule that die rolls of 20, regardless of the modifiers, always result in failure. This means that even actions for which a character cannot fail, failure will still occur one out of every twenty times on average. This generally won't make a difference whenever multiple characters are attempting a task, or when success is hinged on long-term success. One failure is not likely to recur over multiple rolls, and a character that needs to roll more than 20 to fail is likely to have good defenses and enough survival points to survive a single failure. If multiple characters are able to attempt the same action, the chances of everyone failing rapidly become impossible.

Where automatic failure will make a difference is when important outcomes hinge on a single die roll, and the players have managed to work things so that that single die roll is one that their characters are extremely good at, or have managed to work extremely good modifiers to increase their chance of success on that die roll. Even if they're really good at the action and they've

managed to do everything right so that their chance of success would otherwise be 100%, with automatic failure they will still fail on a die roll of 20.

On one hand, this can mean that all actions have some level of suspense attached to them. On the other hand, it can also mean that despite the best efforts of players, their plans can be destroyed by pure chance if they have hung their hopes on a single die roll. Which option is the best will depend on the style of the group in question. The decision is ultimately up to you, as the Adventure Guide.

Experience

The Guide can choose any means to determine how much experience to give to characters. I recommend approximately 400 experience points for each night's adventure, where an adventure lasts approximately four to six hours of playing time. Especially difficult multi-night adventures might be worth an experience point bonus of up to 200 points at the end of the adventure.

You can choose to give out a set number of experience points per night, or you can choose goals in the adventure, and set a specific number of experience points for reaching each goal.

Competitive Experience Awards

The standard experience award system is extremely non-competitive, and very easy to calculate. Some groups like a more competitive award system, one that awards characters for adventurous actions. Character advancement is a game, too, and sometimes a standard award per session isn't enough to motivate players to play the game—even if they claim to want to. If you find that the players generally enjoy game night, but that they complain that their characters are too cautious, or take too long to take action, you might consider switching to the competitive experience system.

For every creature encounter defeated, the characters taking part in its defeat gain experience points for the deed, shared equally among them. One simple way of counting that experience is to give ten points for each survival point of the defeated creatures, plus a hundred points for each level of the defeated creatures. For each sufficiently dangerous special ability (such as poison or paralysis) add another hundred points per creature level to the total.

Add up the awards for the game session, divide the award among the characters, and then for each character subtract twenty times the character's level. Round down.

For example, the characters meet and defeat six goblins over the course of the adventure. Goblins are level 1, so the award starts at 100 experience per goblin, for six hundred experience points. The total survival points of all six goblins is 37, for another 370 experience points. The total experience points is 970. There are four characters who took part in the goblins' defeat, so each character receives 242 experience points before adjusting for level. One of the characters is first level; that character receives 222 experience points. The other three characters are second level. They receive 202 experience points each.

In general, you will not give a bonus for an adventure being "especially tough" if you award experience for creatures defeated, as the latter will automatically adjust for toughness.

You can also award experience for treasure earned in the course of adventuring. However, this assumes that you place treasure according to the difficulty of solving the puzzles, finding its hiding places, and defeating its guards. One monetary unit is one experience point. Treasure must be both retrieved and brought to safety to count towards the experience point award. Only easily convertible treasure counts toward experience: mainly coins, gems, and jewelry. 'Priceless' items, such as magic items, don't count, and items of service or utility, such as furniture, salt, and alcohol, don't count either, until they are converted to monetary units. (A special old wine that counts more as treasure than as beverage might well count.)

The goblins had fifty three monetary units, a gem worth 125 monetary units, and a piece of jewelry worth 434 monetary units. Before the adventure is over, the jewelry is stolen and they spend six of the coins. This leaves them with 47 coins and a gem worth 125 coins, for 172 total experience points. That's 43 per character. Each character receives 43 experience points for the treasure that they managed to retrieve during the adventure.

Characters cannot gain more experience for one encounter or from an adventure's treasure than it takes to reach the next level. Any experience beyond that is overkill, and lost. Still, characters are likely to advance somewhat more quickly, especially at higher levels, using competitive experience than using standard experience.

You can increase the competitiveness of competitive awards by instituting a "hit or be hit" rule for encounter experience. Under this rule, a character must either hit an opponent during the encounter, or be hit by an opponent to share in the experience award. Note that this changes the nature of the competitiveness of this system: in addition to competing against the world, the players/characters will also compete against each other.

One disadvantage of awarding competitive experience is that it significantly increases your recordkeeping. You can ease this by awarding experience for encounters immediately following the encounter, but this will mean doing math during the adventure. In general, you will want to award experience for each *encounter* not for each individual creature defeated, as that vastly increases your record-keeping, especially if you use the "hit or be hit" variation. Keeping track of each creature rather than each encounter will, however, certainly increase the competitiveness of the awards.

Gaining New Skills and Abilities

When characters gain new skills or abilities, it does not always have to mean that they suddenly acquired these abilities. Within the game, characters rarely know about levels, specialties, or combat bonus pools. Sometimes, the characters will need to study to learn new skills. Sometimes, the "new" skills can be explained by saying that the character always knew the skill, but "only now have they had reason to use it." Or perhaps, if they did have a reason to use the skill before, but failed to do so, it was because they had grown rusty in the use of that skill since "leaving the farm." After discovering that the skill remains important, they resolved to restore the skill they used to know.

The ability to learn new magic spells can be explained as the result of special insight, perhaps insight gained over the previous adventure.

In general, the players will have to work with the Guide to explain, if such explanation is required, the appearance of their characters' newfound abilities.

Archetype-Only Abilities

In general, only members of an archetype can use the special abilities of that archetype. Only sorcerors can cast spells, only monks may use psychic powers, and only warriors can create a combat pool out of their attack bonuses. Where other archetypes can use such skills, the rules specifically cover their lessened ability. For example, while fighting is the domain of warriors, other archetypes may also fight but with fewer attack bonuses (at higher levels) and with a lesser facility (greater penalties for using unfamiliar weapons).

The general rule is that specialized abilities can only be performed by the archetype that has that ability, and less specialized abilities can only be performed by other archetypes with penalties to the roll and less facility with successes. Where this is likely to come into play the most is with thieving abilities. Some of the thieving abilities are things that any character might attempt to do during their career: disguise themselves, climb a wall, move silently.

You will not want to use the thief rules for non-thieves, except as a guideline for an upper limit of ability. Success rolls will almost always be against an ability rather than a saving roll (saving rolls get better with level, and only thieves get better at these skills). For example, if a non-thief attempts to climb a wall, you'll choose an ability (probably the worse of agility or strength) and have them roll against that ability with a difficulty level depending on the wall. A relatively smooth stone wall will likely be at least *extremely difficult*. The character will move more slowly than a thief—probably one sixth movement. And their movement will be somewhat louder than walking: they'll be breathing more loudly and letting some mortar drop to the ground.

On the other hand, a thief ability as specialized as hiding in shadows will not be open to non-thieves. The thief's *hide in shadows* ability penalizes other characters' saving rolls. A non-thief trying to hide will at best be able to avoid granting their opponents a bonus to notice them.

Making Things

Creating New Spells

Players with sorceror characters will want their characters to research completely new spells. Besides ensuring that the spell's level and statistics are balanced with the game world and with other spells of its level, you will also want to judge how long it will take the sorceror to successfully acquire the materials and knowledge necessary to research the spell.

Making new spells is mostly a matter of applying the appropriate mojo. However, no amount of mojo can allow the creation of spells that "don't make sense" in the game world. You will need to work with the player to come up with a spell that both makes sense and is what they want. At various points the two of you should write up the spell that their researches are leading towards, giving them the option of diverging to a different spell.

For example, a player might want their character to create a spell that lets their character remember, exactly, scenes or objects. So, they write up what they want the spell to do, and you might come back to them with something like *Vivid Recall*, that lets them remember a scene or object, but only once, and which must be remembered within a few days. After remembering, the recall degrades to a normal memory.

If that's fine, then that's what their research leads to. But they might counter that they are going to guide their research towards finding a memory spell that lasts forever, not just several days.

You might then counter with something like *Flash Memory*, in which the memorization lasts forever but once remembered is gone completely. If they object that they'd like to view the memory any number of times, you might decide that as a memory this is an impossible spell (or you might not, it's up to you), and if so, you might give them a Learning roll to consider another tack. (Obviously, if the player chooses to have their character consider another tack, no roll is needed.) You might then counter with something like *Crystal Record*, where the memory is stored in a crystal, and may be viewed any number of times over several days.

Skills and Specialties

In general, a player may choose any "skill", even one not listed. A skill adds to the character's current ability or saving rolls, and does not greatly increase the power of the character. You will want to examine new skills to make sure they aren't already covered by existing skills, and to see whether or not they should belong to a specific archetype. Skills should not directly assist archetype-oriented functions such as combat, magic, and thief abilities.

If you accidentally allow a skill which should not be a skill, there's nothing wrong with removing it from play or modifying its scope. Frankly, if removing a skill greatly changes the game, it almost certainly should not have been a skill in the first place.

Specialties can be more powerful. Specialties *can* directly affected an archetype's abilities. Specialties expand on the basic archetypes to create unique characters. If you allow new specialties into your adventures, you'll want to carefully examine them for prerequisites (other specialties that must be taken first) and requirements (archetype, minimum level, and minimum ability scores). You'll also wish to ensure that the specialty is a single specialty; if it should be two specialties, break it up. Try to keep your specialties fantasy-oriented unless you specifically wish to break away from the fantasy genre.

When you allow or create a new specialty, always reserve the right to modify them at a later time as you "playtest" them. You'll always discover more about a specialty's scope once it's in play than you could imagine when you were designing it. You may wish to give your players the option of retroactively choosing a different specialty if you modify it so far that they don't want it any more.

When Spells Collide

When two or more spells, spirits, or psychic effects conflict, it's really up to you what happens. In general, however, it helps to have a few simple guidelines.

Some effects don't really conflict. A *raging storm* does not conflict with *fair weather faith*, for example. The one spirit calls a storm and the other protects an individual from the storm. If a target is under the effect of two *fast friends* spells, and the two friends start fighting, the target is likely to want to break up the fight, and this may trigger a saving roll, but there's no need to ameliorate either of the effects.

If it is possible for the effects to mix, let them. Light and darkness can create a haze, for example, with the level of darkness determined by the difference in levels between the conflicting casting or manifestation levels.

For effects where saves are allowed because of tension or normal conflict, the save will probably be triggered. The target above under the effect of two *fast friends* spells is likely to get a saving roll against each of them.

Where the effects are numerical in nature, there isn't really a conflict, just an adjustment. If both *Indestructible Object* and *Brittle Object* are cast on the same object, adjust accordingly: if one is at +4 and the other at –3, the total is +1.

Bringing In New Characters

Bringing in new characters is a little more difficult than starting a completely new group. First, you've got to "back-story" some reason for the new character to want to join the existing group. The new character could be a never-before-mentioned relative or friend of an existing character (or, if the new character is replacing a dead character, of the old character). Or, the new character could be searching or striving for the same thing—or something related to the thing—that the existing group is striving for. Or, they can meet simply through chance and join up on the hope of glory, money, and/or friendship.

A stickier issue is experience points. The obvious thing to do is start new characters with zero experience points. After all, they're new characters that haven't been played before. But not only does this make new characters that much more likely to die off because they're over-matched by things that the existing group can easily defeat, it also isn't necessarily true to our fantasy sources. As characters increase in experience, they tend to meet with comrades of similar experience.

One solution is to run the new character through a separate set of adventures to bring them partially up to level. This is most viable when there are multiple new characters coming in at the same time, and it can be especially profitable when the new characters are being played by new players. New players are often best started with low level characters so that they can familiarize themselves with the game and with their own abilities. And they are often best started on their own with no "experienced" gamers becoming impatient or laughing at their lack of expertise. Even good-natured ribbing can sometimes throw a new gamer off.

For experienced gamers, who are coming in new or who are replacing a dead or retired character, it often makes sense to "give" their characters an initial allotment of experience points to bring them up to a level that makes them viable as part of the group. Have the player write up an outline of what their character did that makes them this experienced.

How much experience do you give them? This is really up to you and your group. Simple solutions are usually the best: give them enough experience to match the lowest-experience character in the group, or give them half the experience of the character they're replacing (or of the lowest-experience character in the group). The latter provides an incentive to not overdo the "heroic death" routine. Too many heroic deaths ends up not being heroic at all.

Playing Evil

Evil individuals make a choice of being evil, although they aren't likely to call it that. Evil is selfish and manipulative. At the extreme ends, evil is sociopathic. While they won't necessarily call themselves evil, the choice is still made. There are people who pride themselves on successfully manipulating those around them, and who even argue openly that such manipulation is the right way of dealing with others.

Evil often considers itself pragmatic, but usually this pragmatism is short-term. This doesn't make it necessarily the same for every evil person: an evil Elf is likely to see a different short-term pragmatism than an evil Orc. The Elf may have hundreds of years left; the Orc only decades.

Player characters generally should not be evil, unless the entire gaming group wishes to play an evil or mixed-code party. If one player wants to play an evil character, the other players should be informed. If a player doesn't think that others in the group will be able to act correctly with the out-of-character knowledge that the player's character is evil, consider that those other players are probably not going to enjoy the gaming session either. Any players that aren't mature enough to suppress out-of-character knowledge aren't likely to be mature enough to enjoy the role-playing challenges of playing with an evil character (and that's only the polite way of putting it to the player who wants to secretly play an evil character).

The World

There is no default world setting for Gods & Monsters. This game is about the characters, and any generic quasi-medieval world will suffice. The default World of Highland is based vaguely on a combination of the American west and medieval Europe of myth.

There are many pre-designed game worlds on the market that you can purchase, as well as many available on-line. You can use the worlds of any fantasy book series that you enjoy—just remember to keep the players' characters in the forefront of the adventures.

But you can also create your own world, basing it on the kinds of adventures you and your players would like their characters to have.

Concept

When creating your world, think about what sorts of things you want to go on in that world. What books, movies, or other works are your inspirations? If you were writing a movie based on this world, what would be your short description of the concept? For example, you might decide on a world of "worlds within worlds" similar to many of the writings that went on at the turn of the century and later.

> The Dreamlands are inspired by the dream works of Lord Dunsany and H.P. Lovecraft, the works of Edgar Allan Poe and E.R. Eddison, J. M. Barrie's "Peter and Wendy", L. Frank Baum's "The Wizard of Oz", Stephen King's "The Stand" and his "Gunslinger" series, and the Super Mario video games. The Dreamlands are a place of riddles, secrets, hidden treasures, strange creatures, and worlds within worlds. The depths of the deepest dungeon may lead to new lands. Holding the right key may open doors you never knew existed, to places you never believed possible. A castle of ice overlooking a grand waterfall, cities that float in the air. The Dreamlands encompass every form of high fantasy, intense horror, and Byzantine politics. The Dreamlands lack only moderation.
>
> Anything is possible, if you but know where to look.

Conflict

There probably should be some major conflict going on in the world, which the players will, first, be pawns in, and, later, begin to take control of. This conflict might be a war, or it might be a tyrant, or it might be some byzantine politics, or anything else that the players might find interesting to "take sides" on. You don't have to figure out the overlying conflict immediately, but keep in mind that you'll want one as the campaign progresses. You will also want to decide, eventually, how prevalent knowledge of this conflict is.

At the beginning of the campaign, the most important "conflict" for your players will be their characters' immediate survival. But as the campaign progresses, their characters will begin to take a wider view. Listen to what your players say in character about what they *think* is going on in the campaign world for some great ideas about what really is going on.

The Dreamlands are unraveling. Within the Dreamlands, the world is moving on to a more mundane reality. Lost cities, devoid of life, haunt the edges of some realms. Some realms themselves have been lost, fallen forever into nightmare, the paths to their kingdoms now unknown. Others, at the frayed edges of the Dreamlands, have fallen apart and come back together in a mangle.

Different realms have different connections to the Dreamlands. Some realms far from the center of the Dreamlands may not even know of the reality of their existence, knowing of other realms only as murky legends of faerie rings or deep caverns to hell, or castles on the tops of clouds.

Most residents of the Dreamlands are not aware of this "moving on" of their lands, but they will have legends of heroic times, and heroes unmatched by the heroes of the present time—who, often enough, gain their heroism picking at the ruins of the earlier heroes and their battles and great cities.

Magic

How common is magic? How common are sorcerors? Does every town have its hedge magician who sells cheap magic in exchange for a side of beef or a bushel of tomatoes? Or are sorcerors rare, powerful beings who hide away in remote towers, forever practicing their arcane arts away from any prying eyes?

Towards the center of the Dreamlands, magicians are common, great sorcerors rare. Magic is the ability to manipulate the malleable dreamworld itself. As one goes from the center to the edges of the Dreamlands, sorcerors become rare.

The Dreamlands may be viewed as a great world tree: on the leaves of the tree is the illusion of separate worlds. Here doorways and openings are required to pass from place to place. At the branches this illusion vanishes. No longer are portals necessary to pass from one world to another. Instead paths lead naturally from branch to branch.

Divine Intervention

How often do the gods involve themselves in mortal affairs? Are there divine conflicts going above and beyond the important mortal conflicts of the campaign? Or are mortal conflicts also the concern of the gods? Which gods exist? You can pull pantheons from our own history, or make up your own, or both.

Sorcerors, Prophets, and Psychics, Oh My!

In myth and legend, there hasn't been much of a difference between sorcerous magic and divine magic, and psychic powers are mostly an invention of modern fantasy. Depending on the type of campaign you're running, you may decide that three kinds of "magic" is too many. Normally, you would strike either psychics or sorcerors—playing Gods & Monsters without Gods, after all, would be a bit odd, although certainly fantasy literature abounds with priests who would best be modeled on the sorceror archetype. You might even decide to strike two and leave only one of the magical archetypes.

Moral Codes

What do moral codes mean in your world? Are they mere guidelines that have no real standing? Or are they part of the foundation of the world? What power do they have in the mortal world? Do they act through deities, or do they have their own messengers or lines of communication?

Some campaigns give everyone, down to the chimney sweeps and street urchins, moral codes. In others, moral codes are mostly invisible until the characters reach higher levels, where they begin to notice the strings behind the curtains, and later the hands holding the strings.

In some worlds there will be secret societies devoted to the furtherance of their moral codes, waiting to induct the appropriate heroes when those heroes have proved their worth. In others, the moral codes will be sources of power for those who follow their path. And in still others the moral codes will be simply different ways of viewing the world and the actions of others. In such worlds, the spells related to moral codes, and the specialties related to moral codes such as the exemplar, will probably not be available.

Where to start playing?

Once you know what sort of a world you want, you've got two ways of continuing. If you have the time, you can continue to describe this world from the top down, going from the ethos to the parts of the world (continents on a standard earth-based world), to the kingdoms, major cities and major players in those cities. Or, if you don't have the time, use a bottom-up approach. You know what kinds of things go on in your world, so create the place the characters will begin (probably a village or city), and then create the adventure that they'll go on. Keep a list of possible future adventures as well, so that you can foreshadow them during this first adventure. If you have time, you might place this first village on a crude map so that you have some idea of what other cities, villages, or landmarks are nearby.

If you plan to start the characters in lost dungeons, it often is easier to start them in small towns or villages at the edges of kingdoms. This makes it easier for them to reach the ruins outside of the kingdom. Later, the characters will journey to the great cities of the world. If, however, you plan to start the characters by involving them in Byzantine politics, you'll probably want to start them in a metropolis that contains such politics. Later, they might also interest themselves into traveling to the once great ruins outside the kingdoms' borders.

Money

In the rules, all costs are given in a single default monetary unit. In real life, of course, there are usually many monetary units, and the characters will end up finding more than just "gold coins" or "silver coins". You'll need to decide what level of detail you want in your game. The easiest thing is just to have a standard coinage used everywhere. It might be a simple base-10 system:

Coin	Worth
Silver Coin	1 monetary unit
Gold Coin	10 monetary units
Bronze Coin	.1 monetary units

Or, you might use a more medieval-like system where units are in twelfths, halves, and sixteenths:

Coin	Worth
Silver Coin	1 monetary unit
Gold Coin	12 monetary units
Bronze Coin	1/16th monetary units
Half-bronze	1/32nd monetary units

Or, you might have different systems of coinage in different areas, each with their own names.

Crosspoint Mint:

Coin	Image	Metal	Worth	Weight
Pound	Ship and Sword	gold	20 monetary units	.06
Bishop's Pound	Bishop and Sword	gold	240 monetary units	.6
Shilling	Ship and Sword	silver	1 monetary unit	.06
Penny	Cross and Sword	silver	1/12th monetary unit	.01
Half-penny	Cross and Fish	silver	1/24th monetary unit	.01
Farthing	Plus and Plus	bronze	1/48th monetary unit	.04

Great Bend Mint:

Coin	Image	Metal	Worth	Weight
Great Pound	Crown and Sword	gold	120 monetary units	.36
Mayoral Pound	Scroll and Face	gold	20 monetary units	.06
Mayoral Shilling	Face	silver	1 monetary unit	.06
Mayoral Penny	Crucifix	silver	1/12th monetary unit	.01
Mayoral Farthing	Fish	bronze	1/48th monetary unit	.04
Sous Tournis	Crown and Scepter	gold	40 monetary units	.1
Gros Tournis	Crown and Cross	silver	4 monetary units	.1

There might be completely different coinage systems used in the past civilizations that the adventurers are looting. In general, money is worth less in countries outside of where it was made, from 10% to 50% less. Money from one or perhaps two influential trading countries may be worth more than local money, especially if the local economy is depressed.

Remember, however, that in a world where money is made from valuable metals, there is always a built-in support level. At some point it becomes worthwhile to melt the gold, silver, or bronze down and sell the metal. Of course, the metal's value can vary as new mines are found or old ones peter out.

Because the metal in coins is worth something, coins—especially gold and silver coins—run the risk of being "chipped" to remove slivers of the metal. The slivers are melted down and sold, and the coin (the chiseler hopes) can still be used at face value. This is one of the reasons that modern

coins often have reeded edges. The vertical grooves make it obvious if someone has removed parts of the edges of the coins.

Availability of Equipment

You may decide to adjust the availability of some equipment. For example, if your fantasy world does not contain firearms (or only contains them in certain areas), characters in your world (or in that area) will be unable to purchase them. The level of technology present in your world may also affect the availability and price of armor (especially the better plate armors).

You might also adjust availability or price of some equipment due to temporary concerns. During periods of war, especially naval war, hemp rope tends to become hard to find (and be expensive when found). Substitutions will have to be made; for example, if hemp rope can't be found, the characters may have to use lower quality jute rope. You will then have to decide the effects of the lower-quality substitute that the characters use.

In some cases, items may still be available on the black market but be illegal. Such items will only be available at higher prices and it may be dangerous for the character(s) to be caught carrying such items.

Weather

Generally, you'll want to choose appropriate weather for the locale and the adventure. When in doubt, you might simply roll a d20 and assign worse weather to higher rolls. The higher the roll, the more active the weather, and the lower the roll, the more mild. A high roll in winter is likely a blizzard. A high roll in the summer a thunderstorm.

If you want more guidance, you might choose to make odd rolls good and even rolls bad. High rolls mean cool and wet; low rolls warm and clear. A roll of one would mean a beautiful day, a roll of two would mean a horribly hot day, and a roll of 20 a huge storm.

Creatures

Wandering Monsters

Wandering encounter charts are an acknowledgement that this is not a board game. You don't know how long the players are going to have their characters remain in each location. You can't plan for it by specifically setting each encounter. Your adventure, like their path through it, is not set on cardboard. You need to be able to choose encounters based on their actions.

"Wandering Monsters" can be quite controversial among gamers. The basic notion is that there are some encounters that are not set in advance by the adventure designer. These encounters will be with a creature that inhabits the area the adventurers are in. On the one hand, this can flavor an area with inhabitants that the adventurers would not normally meet but that still inhabit the area. On the other hand, they can throw a random wrench into a carefully planned adventure.

Regardless of whether you need true wandering monsters or not, it can be useful to have a simple "creature population" table for the important areas that the adventurers will travel through. Done correctly, this will give you a quick and easy way to see what creatures inhabit the area, and how often, on average, each type of creature is likely to be encountered.

I recommend making a quick overview table first. For example, in a forest far from inhabited areas, you might have:

Percentage	Encounter
01-02	Civilized Folk
03-10	Humanoid Creatures
11-80	Normal Animals
81-100	Fantastic Creatures

This tells you at a glance that in this area, only two percent of the characters' encounters will be with what you call "civilized folk". Fully 20% of the characters' encounters will be with "fantastic creatures". If you like improvising, you might stop right there and make up the rest during the game. If you want further detail, you can make a separate table for each overall area:

Civilized Folk	
01-50	Humans (d20)
51-75	Elves (2d20)
76-100	Dwarves (2d10)

You can see that half the time, such encounters will be with humans, and if meeting humans there will be 1 to 20 humans in the encounter group.

Fantastic Creatures	
01-10	Undead
11-20	Dryad (1)
21-30	Rock Dryad (1)
31-40	Yeti (2d6)
41-60	Giant Spider (2d4)
61-70	Walking Tree (1d4)
71-75	Living Light (1)
76-85	Owl Dragon (Specific)
86-95	Green Dragon (Specific)
96-100	Chaotic Mist

There are two items in this list that are further categories themselves: undead, and Chaotic Mist. Presumably, somewhere in this area is a source of undead, and somewhere in the area is a manifestation of the Chaotic Mist. Also, two of the encounters have a "number appearing" of "Specific". There is a specific Owl Dragon, and a specific Green Dragon living in this area, and no more. Encounters will be with that particular creature.

"Wandering Monster" encounters with these tables may be chosen by the Guide with or without dice. If the Guide decides that there is going to be a wandering monster encounter, and it will be random, a "95" on d100 would indicate a "fantastic" encounter, and a further "39" would indicate a yeti encounter. Finally, rolling two d6 for "1" and "3" would mean an encounter with 4 yeti.

How often do encounters occur?

That's up to the adventure's designer and you as the Guide. Usually, encounter chances will be listed as a percentage ending in zero, such as 30% or 20%, and a time period, such as once a day, or once an hour, or even once every ten minutes. Wandering through a forest, the encounter tables might specify a 20% chance of an encounter once per day. When rolling random encounter chances, it is easiest to assume that "00" means "0", so that you are rolling a number from "zero" to "99" instead of from "1" to "100" as normal on d100. This means that if, for example, there is a 20% chance of an encounter, a roll of "0" or "1" on a single ten-sided die will indicate an encounter; any other roll will indicate no encounter.

If the characters are doing something that you, as Guide, decide will slightly increase or decrease their chance of an encounter, you can modify the percentage slightly. You might decide that they have a 24% chance of an encounter, because they're not being as quiet as they might. Now, a "0" or "1" still indicate an encounter, and a "3" through "9" indicate no encounter. But on a "2", the ten-sided die will have to be rolled again, and anything from "0" to "3" indicate an encounter, and "4" to "9" indicate no encounter. In other words, on a roll of '2' for the tens, you'll need to roll the full d100.

Large groups will incur more possible encounters than smaller groups. The encounter possibility should assume a medium-sized group of human-sized adventurers: four to seven members. If there are more members, the chance of an encounter will increase.

Group Size	Increase
8	5%
16	10%
32	15%
64	20%
128	25%
256	30%

If there are thirty-three members in the group, and the normal chance of an encounter is 30%, the real chance will be 45%. Of course, some of those possible encounters may decide to steer clear of such a large group.

Two Small members count as one member. Four Tiny members count as one member, and eight Fine members count as one member. Thus, if the thirty-three creatures above were all pixies (tiny creatures), they would only count as nine individuals, so their encounter chance would be 35% instead of 45%.

One Large member counts as two members. One huge member counts as four members. One Gigantic member counts as eight members, and one Titanic member counts as sixteen members. three humans (medium), and three horses (large) will be a "group size" of nine.

Generally, encounter chances will be rolled more often in inhabited buildings, and less often in wilderness areas.

Creating New Creatures

When I create new creatures from myths and legends, I like to search a variety of sources. I have a number of books about mythology and fantastic creatures, and I'll look up the creature in each of those books, taking note of the parts I want to keep, the parts I want to ignore, and the parts I think might be kernels of more interesting ideas. There will often be references to similar creatures in other cultures, and I'll follow up on those references. If these fantastic creatures are real, after all, the same creature may well appear under different names in different cultures, even though in "real" life some mythological creatures are similar only because they spring from the same human need. In your game world, similar creatures in different cultures might be the same creature seen from different perspectives. I'll also use the Internet as one source for information. Many webmasters have researched specific creatures of interest and have placed that research on-line.

It is important to reconstruct not just the powers and appearance of the creature, but also its underlying importance, its niche within your campaign world. Find ways to reconstruct the culture of the creature. In real life, the creature's culture is generally the same as the culture that created it, but in our "real" fantasy, these creatures will have their own culture. Determine which powers the creature *really* has, as opposed to those that are mythological even in the mythological world you are creating. Look for origins. Where did this creature come from? Look for motives. What do these creatures look for out of life? Are they Evil? Good? Ordered? Chaotic? Or do they just not care? Are they related to divinity, or to the faerie, or to the giants? Who put them there? What are they doing now? Where are they going? Are they part of some deeper cause?

Don’t neglect modern mythology either. Many novelists create marvelous worlds filled with unique takes on mythological creatures, as well as with completely original creatures.

Fuse all of these sources into one, and you will have a creature that, while it is clearly identifiable and “could be” its mythological counterparts, is also a unique addition to your campaign world. Every culture remakes its mythology. Be your own culture.

Optional Rules

Gods & Monsters is a fairly simple role-playing game. But it's easy to add or modify rules if you want to change the way it works. You will usually want to stick with the normal rules for beginning players. Once the players are familiar with the core rules, you and your group can decide whether or not you want to use any additional rules.

Player-Centric Combat

If you don't mind giving up most of your die rolls—and especially if you don't fudge combat die rolls in favor of the players—you can let the players make all of the combat rolls that affect their characters. Instead of you rolling attack rolls for their opponents, they will roll defense rolls against those attacks. The percentages will be the same, but instead of you making an attack roll and comparing it against their defense, they will make a defense roll which you will compare against their opponent's attack.

For example, a player character with a defense of 4 is attacked by a non-player character with an attack of 1. Normally, you, as the Adventure Guide, will roll d20, with a bonus of 1, and if your total is less than or equal to 6 (ten minus four), the attack succeeds. Thus, a roll of seven or less will result in a successful attack. With player-centric combat, the player rolls d20, with a bonus of 4, and if the roll is less than or equal to 9 (ten minus one) the attack fails. Thus, a roll of 13 or less by the player will result in a successful defense.

The advantage of this system is that players gain insight into what their characters are "seeing". If they "were" their characters, they would know fairly quickly how hard it is to attack and how hard it is to defend against an opponent. By making their own rolls in both cases, the players can see this more clearly as well. They'll know that they successfully defend their character on a roll of 5, but not on a roll of 11; on a roll of 6, but not on a roll of 8. It is much easier for them to see what their character is facing.

The disadvantage is that it makes it somewhat more difficult for you to fudge attack rolls in secret. It also might be somewhat more difficult for beginning players to grasp that opponents don't "attack", but that the players both attack and defend. And of course, PC vs. PC and NPC vs. NPC opposition becomes a special case: for PC vs. PC and NPC vs. NPC, each party will continue to make attack rolls as normal.

If you allow player-centric combat, then for each attack/defense pair you can allow another strategic combat option: focus on defense or focus on attack.

For focus on defense, the player chooses ahead of time that the best roll will go to defense; the worst will go to attack. For focus on attack, the player chooses ahead of time that the best roll will go to attack, the worst will go to defense. The player then makes both rolls at the same time.

Where attack and defense don't occur as a pair, this option obviously isn't available.

Light vs. Deep Damage

In the default game, spirits with the ability to manifest the healing of wounds come to first level prophets. Healing wounds becomes the most mundane of spirit manifestations, which runs somewhat counter to our fantasy sources where healing is a spectacular and at least somewhat rare occurrence.

We can reduce the need for common healing by breaking survival point damage into two kinds: deep damage that heals as normal (slowly) and light damage that heals relatively quickly. Players will need to keep track of the two different kinds of damage separately, though they both apply to normal survival points.

Gods & Monsters simplifies the rules by combining all kinds of damage—aching muscles, cuts, scratches, sprains, bruises, and fatigue—into one. This greatly simplifies the paperwork for players and guides, but it also means that divine providence is required to refresh fatigue, skill, and aches and pains as much as to heal gaping wounds.

In this modified version, "deep" damage that lasts a long time, such as wounds, torn muscles, sprains, and deep bruises, continues to take a long time to heal naturally. "Light" damage such as fatigue, minor aches, light bruises, and cuts, heals much more quickly.

The player must keep track of two survival point totals: half of a character's maximum survival points are "deep survival" and half are "light survival". The player will use the total survival points only to determine the maximum deep survival and the maximum light survival. Every time the character gains survival points, both deep and light survival are re-determined. When halving, round deep survival up, and round light survival down.

Every time the character takes damage, it goes first to any "light survival" that the character still has. Once light survival is depleted, damage goes to "deep survival".

Light survival can return even when deep survival is at zero, and even when the character has injuries. The character's light survival level has no effect on injuries and death rolls.

This means that players need to keep track of two types of damage. But it also means that they can heal their light damage more quickly. This makes healing magic much less necessary. Light damage heals at Endurance plus level points every ten hours, with Wisdom as a minor contributor. Deep damage heals as normal.

Under rare circumstances, some kinds of damage may go directly to "deep" damage.

Add two to the levels required for any healing spells or spirits that heal damage. For example, the spirit manifestation "Restore Vitality" will now require a third-level spirit, and the minimum damage healed will be spirit level minus 2. Healing spirits will heal deep damage first, and then light damage.

Critical Hits

Some people like to have fights where more bad things can happen on really good attack rolls. These are commonly called “critical hits”. Using critical hits can make for a very different game. In the core game, players have a general idea of how much their characters can put up with in combat. With critical hits, every time characters enter combat, they run the risk of being disabled even while they’re otherwise fine. Becoming disabled (blind, stunned, sprained) will often mean death in combat. Consider this carefully before choosing to use critical hits in your game.

Critical Hits occur on a roll of 20% of the attack roll required; i.e., if a 10 is required, a critical hit occurs on a roll of 1-2; if a 20 is required, a critical hit occurs on a roll of 1-4. Round down. If a 14 is required on the die roll, a roll of 1 to 2 will result in a critical hit. If a 1, 2, 3, or 4 are required on the die roll, no attack can be critical. (Another way of thinking about this is to multiply the roll by 5. If this number would also have hit, the hit is critical. That is, if a 3 is rolled, and a 15 would also have hit, this is a critical hit.)

If you use deep vs. light damage, critical hits always add to deep damage (or injuries if deep damage is at zero). You can stop here for a simpler critical hit system, and ignore special effects.

Critical hits can also result in special effects. Victims must make a Fortitude or Evasion roll (whichever is easiest) to avoid the effect. Magical protection benefits this saving roll. On a called shot, the special effect will be the nearest rolled that is appropriate for the called location.

Score	Special Effect	Effects
01-18	Second attack allowed	Roll second attack normally with same weapon.
19-34	External sense reduced	penalty of 1d6 while using that sense alone, half that while using it in conjunction with another sense.
35-58	Tool use reduced	-1d4 to attack and all rolls using that kind of limb.
59-70	Mobility reduced	-1d4 to movement, half that penalizes defense (round down).
71-80	Stunned	Penalty of 1d6 to all rolls, bonus of half that to rolls against the stunned character (round down)
81-88	External sense disabled	penalty of 6 while using that sense alone, or 3 while using it in conjunction with another sense.
89-94	Tool use disabled	One limb is disabled. Penalty of 2 beyond any other penalties.
95-98	Mobility disabled	One limb is disabled.
99-00	Unconscious	

The special effect will last one round per damage point done in the critical attack.

External senses are, for most humanoids, sight and hearing. Stranger creatures may have other senses that can be disabled in an attack. Roll for the sense at random (chosen as appropriate for a called shot).

Tool using limbs are, for humanoids, the hand or arm. Mobility limbs for humanoids are legs and feet. Loss of use of a mobility limb, for most medium-sized creatures, will reduce movement by 6. For small creatures, it will reduce movement by 3. If the creature has multiple means of movement (such as flying via wings and walking via legs), roll randomly for the mobility affected. Loss of certain kinds of limbs (such as wings) may well completely disable that type of movement. The Guide will need to apply common sense as to whether to apply a movement

penalty (less than the maximum number of limbs will still afford some movement) or to disallow movement altogether (all limbs are required for any movement).

If you choose to use critical hits, you might also use a more general “critical success”, where any success that is 20% of the roll required is a stronger success than normal.

Gods

In fantasy worlds, gods can walk among us. In some campaigns the gods might be amorphous beings who rarely dabble in mortal affairs, such as Cimmeria's "Crom". In other campaigns on the other end of the scale, the gods might be as common as in Greece, where any passing swan might be a god in disguise.

Motivation

Gods can have many reasons for caring about or playing with mortal fate. These reasons can range from the petty to the grand. There might be a grand conflict being played out between the partisans of each moral code, each trying to gain the upper hand over the other. Or, the gods might just be jealous, bickering super-humans, ready to smite rivals on a moment's notice if someone starts thinking they're smarter, faster, or more beautiful than the gods. Such gods can fall in love with mortals, and be jealous of their mortal rivals.

In between, the gods can, rather than taking direct part in mortal affairs, offer aid to mortal heroes, as in the events leading up to the battle of Troy.

Power

It is important in a fantasy game to remember the difference between "the gods" and "God", especially if you are currently a worshipper of a one-omnipotent-god religion. The "one god" is generally an all-powerful being whose self permeates, and probably is, the universe. When God thinks, things happen. In the Jewish and Christian Old Testament, God decided to make the world, and it was made. In pantheonic religions, it wasn't generally so easy. Maui had to fish land from the ocean to make room for mankind, for example. And before him, other gods argued about how to separate the Earth and the Sky (who were gods themselves). Some gods wanted to destroy the Earth and the Sky, others wanted to separate the two gods peacefully. After the peaceful option won, battle raged between the factions.

These gods are not omnipotent. They're not someone you want to cross in a fight, unless you're a god yourself, and even then the result is not going to be pretty "down on earth". These gods have greater or lesser power over, or gain it from, some aspect of nature or mankind, and may see things happen in the world through this aspect. They are generally difficult to kill—even if you chop them up and spread them to the wind, somehow they manage to find a way back, although their penis might end up in the wrong place. They generally live in another place, land, or heaven where the gods live, such as Mount Olympus or Asgard. They live forever, or at least until killed by another god.

Moral Codes

Do gods follow moral codes? In 'real life', or at least real legends, gods do pretty much whatever they want to, seemingly petty in one story and honorable in the next. In your game, it will

depend a lot on what the moral codes mean. Are they simply guides for players? Then they'll probably just be guides for the gods as well. Are they an over-riding ethos, implied if you allow exemplars in your game? Then gods who choose a moral code will be bound to them as much as or more than mortals.

Some options can include:

- Gods are not bound by moral codes at all, existing independently of them.
- Gods may be aware, unaware, aligned, or unaligned. The more powerful the god, the more likely they are to be aligned.
- The moral codes exist through the gods' creation. Gods are not bound to them in the same way as mortals are.
- The moral codes are the overriding supernatural powers of the world, and bind even the Gods, or exist beyond the Gods as the Gods exist beyond mortals.

Demigods, Elder Gods, Spirit Gods, and Heroes

The main portion of any pantheon is held by the "normal" gods of that pantheon. Zeus and Hera, for example, among the Greek gods. Many religions include earlier gods whom the current gods overthrew, or who for some reason "left the scene". Because of the influence of Lovecraft, these "elder gods" are often seen as immensely powerful, but it doesn't have to be the case. In Greece, the elder gods were mostly vanquished, left to perform elder-god-like things such as hold up mountains. Heroes are people who have left an astounding impact on the culture and religion. Most of the saints are heroes of Christianity. Demigods are those heroes or legends whose exploits resonated so well with either the gods or the people (depending on your theory of where gods receive their power) that they have attained god-like status in the religion. Hercules and Mary are demigods of their respective religions. Spirit gods are gods invested within a particular location, such as a special grove or river. The influence of spirit gods may wane the further the prophet travels from the spirit god's center of power.

Gods and elder gods may dispense any level of spirits (although in some cases, elder gods will not do so, or will be forbidden to do so). Demigods may dispense spirits of first to fourth level, spirit gods of first to third level, and heroes of first to second level.

Heroes rarely require prophets. The relation between spirit gods and their prophets is usually even more intimate than with other gods and often has a very specific purpose.

Avatars

It is very difficult for gods to die on the mortal planes in most fantasy worlds. Gods rarely fully manifest themselves in the mortal world. They normally come in mortal guise, sometimes not even in humanoid form. Zeus was well known for coming in the form of animals or even rain. Jehovah called to Moses as a burning bush.

These mortal forms of gods are called "Avatars". In Christian terms, Jesus, and the flames that came to rest on the apostles' heads, were each avatars of the One True God of Christianity. This is part of the meaning of the Trinity, the "Three who are one". Each form has autonomy, but each form is still but a part of the whole.

Sometimes, the avatar does not even know it is a god. Dr. Donald Blake did not know he was the thunder god Thor, even after he assumed the thunder god's powers.

The avatar may, at times, contain the whole of the god's self. Dr. Donald Blake was Thor, confined for humility to human form. In Kevin Smith's "Dogma", with Jehovah's avatar placed in a coma the god was unable to resume god-like persona as long as the avatar remained alive but unconscious.

Sometimes, gods come to the mortal planes in avatar form by their own volition. Other times, lesser gods will be forced to come to the mortal planes by their ruling god (Odin, Zeus), either as punishment or to learn some lesson. In some fantasies, even mortals may control when an avatar is formed. H. P. Lovecraft's horrific gods were often unable to take form unless at the behest of mad priests, or at the mention of their name.

Often, when an avatar is defeated in the mortal planes, the god is unable to return to that plane for a specific period of time.

It is difficult to create hard and fast rules on the use of avatars in *your* campaign. Avatars can be different from fantasy to fantasy and even from god to god. Their power may wax and wane with the seasons, the stars, or the actions of their followers.

- Avatars might be powerful or weak.
- Avatars might be knowledgeable about their status or oblivious.
- Avatars may have the full knowledge that they have as deity, or they may have only a subset of that knowledge.
- Avatars might be born of mortal blood, or might be created by the god as needed.
- Avatars might be mortal or immortal.
- Avatars might be here on their own volition or under orders from another deity.
- Avatars might share in the current vision of their central god-like form, or might know only so much as they knew when they took the avatar's form.
- Avatars might be oblivious to mortal needs such as hunger or lust, or might be fully affected by such needs.
- Avatars can exist for noble reasons or petty reasons.
- Avatars may exist at will, or at some special occurrence, such as an astrological event or the mention of their name.

Involving the Gods

If you decide to involve the gods in your campaign, you need to be very careful. This is a story about your players' heroes, and your players' heroes need to remain at the center of the story.

All rules are made to be broken, but I might recommend that if player characters meet a god or two at lower levels, that these be powerless avatars, present only to manipulate or guide the heroes. At higher levels, the characters might receive more direct guidance, but would also be involved in more direct dangers as a result of that guidance.

And if one god is taking an influence in the course of mortal affairs, there is probably at least one other god who is opposing that influence.

The influence of the gods should probably be only slowly revealed over the course of many adventures. Such involvement should probably not be the stuff of a single adventure.

Worshippers at War

In real life, many wars have been fought over different interpretations of the same religion. For whatever reason, the gods have not intervened directly, and as far as we know not even indirectly, to correct whichever side was wrong. In a fantasy world, with the gods intervening for so many other trivial things, why wouldn't they get involved when their worshippers fight with each other?

It's something you'll need to think about. Some gods probably like it when their worshippers hone their combat ability and ruthlessness on each other. Others might be horrified. They might appear as powerful avatars, or send a prophet to teach their followers the right path.

Another interesting question is, what happens when worshippers worship only slightly different pantheons? Is Zeus really just Jupiter with a different name? Sometimes, conquering cultures would "assimilate" the ruling gods of their conquered lands into their own pantheons. What happens in "heaven" when this occurs? Is the god truly assimilated? Or merely humiliated? Will such gods seek revenge for themselves or their conquered worshippers?

More Information

For a wonderfully off-beat view of the life of the gods, read Douglas Adams' "The Long Dark Tea-time of the Soul".

For some interesting rules on using gods and avatars in fantasy campaigns, see "The Primal Order" by Peter Adkinson.

For a long and tedious discussion of mythologies, look for Frazer's "The Golden Bough". You probably want the abridged version. The full version is a sanity-blaster. Proof? Just look at anyone who claims to have read the full version.

Other Planes of Existence

There are planes of existence beyond the physical plane that the characters inhabit. The most commonly used will likely be the astral and ethereal planes, but depending on the campaign there may be others, such as the planes of existence where the gods live, or the planes of existence where demons live.

The Astral Plane

The astral plane is a "spiritual" plane. This is where ghosts walk. Such creatures can often break through to the physical world, especially through dreams.

The Ethereal Plane

The ethereal plane is an extra dimension that crosses and binds the visible dimensions. The ethereal plane may be used to travel long distances in short times, as in the *teleport* spells. Sometimes also known simply as the *ether*.

Arcane Lore

Places of Power

Ley lines. Holy ground. Ancient Indian burial grounds. The Norse called it *naming*. We call it *ritual*. Every item has a place, and some of those places have power. This kind of magic draws its power from names and from places of power. If you follow the correct instructions, say the right words, in the right place, the hidden world will reveal itself to you. And the more chanting cultists you have assisting you, the better off you are.

There is no reliable means of detecting a place of power other than watching its effects.

Rituals in a place of power

Ritual does not require that the preparer or performer be a sorceror, prophet, or monk (although sorcerors will have access to spells that make them more effective at it).

Preparing and performing a ritual is a dangerous, complex, time-consuming task. The ritual must be prepared and performed nearly exactly, or failure will result, and failure during a ritual may well have catastrophic effects.

Rituals may only be performed on a place of power. Outside of a place of power, rituals have no effect whatsoever. Rituals usually take hours or days to complete, and often have multiple stages.

One character preparing the ritual (drawing any magic circles and signs, and organizing chanting cultists or sacrificial victims) must make a Learning roll to successfully duplicate the ritual's needs. There may be penalties to this roll depending on how the character learned the ritual; if they translated it from a language they don't know very well, for example, there may be a penalty for that. If their source for the ritual was incomplete, there may be a penalty for that.

One character performing the ritual (speaking the words and making any necessary movements) must make a Willpower or a Perception roll to successfully control the ritual. Generally, when trying to banish something or expel something, a Willpower roll will be required; when trying to control something, a Perception roll will be required.

If the character preparing the ritual fails their Learning roll, and the character performing the ritual continues anyway, the amount the Learning roll was failed by is applied as a penalty to the Willpower or Perception roll.

Places of power have levels and natures. In campaigns where moral codes are basic to the world, places of power will also be aligned with a moral code.

The level of a place of power determines how useful it is in performing a ritual. When a place of power's nature and moral alignment coincides with the ritual being performed, the person preparing the ritual gains the level as a bonus to the Learning roll. When a place of power's moral alignment opposes the ritual, the person preparing the ritual gains the level as a penalty to the Learning roll. (Irrelevant natures do not detract from the roll.)

When a place of power's moral alignment coincides with the moral code of the person performing the ritual, that person gains the level as a bonus to their Willpower or Perception roll. When the place of power's moral alignment is opposed to the moral code of the person performing the ritual, apply the level as a penalty to their Willpower or Perception roll.

Rituals generally can create only limited, simple effects; the more powerful their effects, the more time and energy is required to duplicate and control the ritual. Rituals can take weeks, months, or years to prepare and just as long to perform.

Prophets can make use of *chanting cultists* if the place of power matches the ritual performer's moral code. Each chanter must make a Charisma roll. If there are two or more successful chanters, the performer gains a bonus. At two or three successful chanters, there is a bonus of one. For four, five, six, or seven successful chanters, there is a bonus of two. For eight through fifteen, a bonus of three, sixteen through thirty-one, a bonus of four, etc. The bonus cannot exceed the Willpower of the ritual performer.

Riddles

In some worlds, riddles have power. A riddle challenge is serious business, with the winner and loser bound to the agreement made over the riddle. Riddles can take many forms, but the answer must always be obviously true once stated. Answers do not have to be the answer the riddler expects. If the answer is obviously true once stated, it is a valid answer.

When one person or group challenges another person or group to a riddling contest over some issue, and the challenge is accepted, the participants are bound to the results. Any cheating or reneging will bring consequences from the gods or other underlying power of the world.

If the loser in a riddle contest does not honor their side of the bargain, the injured party gains one automatic success at an opportune time for some action in opposition to the dishonorable party. The success may be chosen by the player playing the injured party after any roll, although it is the Guide's duty to inform the player if choosing the automatic success at that time gives no real benefit. The injured party also gains a bonus of 1 to any rolls in opposition to the dishonorable party. These benefits last until the dishonorable party honors the agreement made over the riddle. If the riddle contest takes place in a place of power , the injured party bonus is increased by the place's level.

Any party that cheats in a riddle contest automatically loses and suffers the consequences.

The party trying to answer a riddle may not steal the answer from the riddler. "Stealing" means acquiring it from the riddler's mind or from any item on the riddler's person. Riddles do not understand the concept of extant property; if the answer can be stolen from elsewhere that is not cheating.

The party giving the riddle must not ask an impossible riddle. (If they ask an impossible riddle, and are answered with a true answer, one that seems obvious once given, the effects of dishonoring the riddle are doubled.)

Riddles placed in a place of power increase the place of power's level by one with regards to the riddle's context. Only one riddle may be in effect for any given context.

Magic Items

Magical items are things that carry magical powers. Potions can carry magic, scrolls can carry magic, amulets, rings, and weapons can carry magic. Different kinds of items will generally carry different kinds of magic.

Some magical items have an intelligence about them. These can "talk" to the bearer, giving advice or information. Normally, intelligent items will be permanent items, such as weapons, rings, or amulets. Potions and powders are not intelligent in most worlds.

Magic items are created through spells, with the appropriate specialties. Magical and religious artifacts can be created by gods, prophets, and sorcerors in places of power, and sometimes through an act of immense sacrifice by other archetypes.

Some magic items will be created by the players' characters, a few might be acquired through their clans or masters, and most will be acquired through adventuring into hidden places.

Depending on your campaign, all magic items should have a known origin. While your players might not know the source of an item's magic, you as Guide should know who created it and why. This is especially true of permanent magic items that can pass from hand to hand and have a mythic history before ending up lost in a dungeon in the middle of nowhere.

Most magic items may be created using some combination of spells such as "Permanent Enchantment", "Protection from Dispel", and "Target Contingency". "Indestructible Object" is also commonly used to protect permanent magic items. The alchemical specialties will also be used to create truly permanent magic items, especially potions and scrolls.

Some magical items will be "intelligent". They may communicate with their bearer in some way (empathy, telepathy, or speech) and advise the character; some may also attempt to take over the character's actions. Such items will have an intelligence, a charisma, a wisdom, and a creature or archetype level.

Communication through telepathy or speech is reasonably exact, although speech will require that both the bearer and the sword know the same language. Communication through empathy is done through emotion and "urging". The character may feel, for no reason, hatred for a particular target if the item is designed for smiting that individual or kind of creature. Or the character may feel the "urge" to detach her military unit from the whole and circle around if the item feels that such would be better military tactics.

If the item decides to more forcefully control the character's actions, it may force the character into a battle of wills. The character may do the same if it is the weapon in control. The character or item may also decide to voluntarily "lose" the battle, under some circumstances. The character and the item each make a Willpower roll. If the party trying to take control fails, nothing happens. If both parties are successful, neither may take any action. If one party is successful, that party is now in control of the body—at least for that round.

Items that communicate via telepathy gain a bonus of 1 in the contest. Those that communicate via empathy gain a bonus of 2. For every moral code side (good/evil and order/chaos) that the magical item has that the character does not, the item gains a bonus of 1 in the contest (the reverse is also true if the character has more moral code than the item).

Prophets, Sorcerors, and Monks

Sorcerors will enchant just about anything to create a magic item, even mundane items. Prophets tend to prefer to place their spirits in potions and in staves. Potions require faith on the part of the drinker: faith and trust. Staves represent steadfastness, a prime quality of faith. Monks must use special crystals if they wish to siphon their power for later use.

When a magic item embodies a spell, spirit, or power, and it allows the bearer choice to shape the spell, spirit, or power, the item will usually only be usable by the appropriate archetype: sorcerors for spells, prophets for spirits, or monks for powers. Thus, a necklace of change shape into bear could be used by anyone; but a necklace of change shape into anything could only be used by sorcerors (if *change shape* is a spell).

Books

"Librams" or "Tomes" usually offer some form of magically enhanced training. The reader must be both pre-disposed to the training and able to read the book. Usually, this means that certain books require that the reader both know the language and be a specific archetype. The book of the Wudan in "Crouching Tiger" offered clearly enhanced training if one could decipher the meaning and was a warrior. Simply looking at the pictures wasn't enough, nor would the ability to read it help a thief, no matter how skilled.

Magical tomes can offer increased levels as an archetype, or offer increased abilities within the archetype. Books often require months of study to gain the benefits of the teachings therein, and may remain useful to the reader for years.

Incense and Candles

Magical incense or candles often affect an area, or help with ritual magic. They might protect an area from evil spirits, or protect individuals within their radius of effect from magical scrying or mind-reading. They might even protect from physical effects such as poison or extreme cold. They will have a duration (the period of time it takes them to burn up), and candles are likely to last longer than incense. Candles will usually be able to be started and stopped, so as to prolong their usefulness.

Mirrors and Paintings

Magical mirrors and paintings often allow strange dimensional effects, such as long-distance travel, or entering another world. They might also invoke spirits or demons for divinatory purposes. Crystal balls offer similar magical abilities to mirrors, such as seeing the future, seeing far away, or even communicating far away.

Potions

Anyone wishing to take advantage of a potion must drink the potion. It is one thing to drink a potion offered by a trusted sorceror, and quite another to drink potions found at random in a dungeon or stolen from a wizard's lair. Potions generally alter the body, stature, or physical makeup of the drinker. Potions can heal, they can increase fighting prowess, and they can change the shape of the drinker.

Potions also can offer some mental abilities, such as the ability to control a certain type of animal or monster.

Potion effects are almost always temporary, the major exception being "heal" and "poison" potions. Individual potions can have widely varying durations and numbers of uses, but in general a potion will contain enough for one usage. Potions can take 1-10 seconds to take effect.

Powders and Oils

Powders and oils are usually sprinkled or rubbed onto the recipient and offer some protective power or bodily change. An oil might turn the recipient invisible, or able to walk through walls. A powder might, as in "Peter Pan", allow flight.

Powders usually take effect immediately. Oils usually take two to three rounds to apply.

Relics

Relics are a special kind of magic item. Besides being unique, they usually have a mythical status in the world, having been created by or for the Gods, or perhaps with a special purpose at the beginning of recorded history. The Ark of the Covenant was a relic in the Old Testament, and the Grail was a relic in Arthurian legend. Relics carry special responsibilities as well as special powers, and they often have a "corrupting" influence on the bearer, as the One Ring had on the characters in "The Lord of the Rings".

Where the acquisition of a normal magical item will be the subject of one or two adventures, the acquisition—or disposal—of a relic could well be the subject of an entire campaign.

Relics can come in any form, from the One Ring to the Carriage of the Sun to the Mighty Organ of the Great Bard.

Rings, Amulets, Boots, and Belts

Rings and amulets are worn, on the hand or around the neck. These most often offer a protective benefit, such as a bonus to defense (a "+2 ring" is one that offers a bonus of 2 to defense, which will also often offer the same bonus to saving rolls), or a protection from missile attacks. They might also offer bonuses to ability scores. Belts especially are known to enhance strength or physical prowess. Boots might assist in running, jumping, or stealth.

Scrolls

Scrolls are magical spells inscribed for instant use. Only sorcerors and prophets may use magical scrolls, and each only may use their own kind of scrolls. Scrolls are usually inscribed to be cast at a level equal to the minimum level needed to cast the spell, plus d6.

A few scrolls are designed to be used by anyone who can read them. These are usually protective scrolls or cursed scrolls.

Wands and Staves

Wands and staves often offer powers very similar to spell-based or spirit-based powers, and are often usable only by sorcerors or prophets, depending on the item. Wands and staves usually are "charged": they can only perform their tasks a certain number of times. A wand, when found partially used, will usually have d100 charges remaining. A staff will have 2d20 charges remaining. Wands will function at a sorceror or prophet level of 4+d6, and staves at a sorceror or prophet level of 4+2d6.

Weapons

Most often, magical weapons are swords. The "Green Dragon" of "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" is an example of a magical sword, as is Excalibur in the movie of the same name. Both of those weapons were magically sharp, able to "do more damage" than normal weapons.

Weapon magic will most often be expressed in terms of bonuses to attack and bonuses to survival point loss. A +1 sword, for example, gives a bonus of 1 to attack and a bonus of +1 to survival point loss. A +1/+2 sword gives a bonus of 1 to attack and 2 to survival point loss.

Extra special weapons might also offer other powers, such as increased defense, additional attack forms, or divinatory powers. Often weapons that grant these additional powers are also powerful items that bear some intelligence or some ability to control the bearer.

Cursed weapons can work in one of two ways: they can force themselves magically to hand whenever the wearer enters combat, or they can influence the wearer to believe that the weapon aids rather than hinders. Cursed weapons can give penalties to attack and survival point loss, or they can hinder the bearer in other ways.

Magical Item Examples

All magical items should have a story. You should use the names of important historical personages from your own campaign for your own magical items. Some magical items might well be shrouded in such mystery that the players have no idea where they were made or for whom. But the Guide should know.

Cape of Shadows

The Cape is rumored to originate from the Elves of the Long Lakes, although it has mostly seen service in the hands of human thieves. It attracts shadows and natural darkness, causing the wearer to blend in with natural shadow.

The Cape of Shadows grants Thieves a bonus of 4 on "Hide" rolls and a bonus of 1 on any attempt to surprise. It grants any wearer a bonus of 1 to defense against missile and melee combat. The Cape does nothing to protect from sounds or smells giving the wearer's location away.

The Golden Eyes of Tialnambe

Three golden eyes were made by the half-elf Avieglien after the fall of the elder race of men, to protect those the Elves care most deeply about. Those who wear the golden eye, as ring or necklace, gain a bonus of four to all defensive saving rolls, as well as to defense. Whenever desired, the golden eye can light the area ten yards before the bearer, in a sixty-degree arc, with a bright light; or it may shine a beacon one foot wide for sixty yards. Once per day the bearer may call forth a shield through which no normal weapon may pass, neither sword nor missile. Magical weapons might break through, but are at a further penalty of four to attack. The golden shield lasts for ten minutes.

Only humans or half-humans, with a good moral code, may use the golden eyes. Any of evil moral code who wear a golden eye will feel unease and restless, and will have a penalty of four to attack any creatures with a good moral code.

The golden eyes were made with golden necklaces, but the necklaces, while long-lasting, were not magical and may not have survived the ages. One is known to have been placed on a ring.

Clauricane's Harp

On successfully playing the harp, the character and what the character is carrying become invisible. The character may move only at up to normal walking speed while playing the harp. Others will hear the music, but as if from a long distance. A successful perception roll must be made to determine the general direction of the harp (and thus the character).

The harp also masks the character's smell, and muffles the noises the character makes (so that it appears to be coming from far away, as the music).

Using the harp requires the skill "Musical Instrument" for harp playing, and a successful skill roll is required to use the harp.

The Protective Ring of Boaz

Legends still tell of the flight of Boaz into the mountains with the entire Southern armies on his trail following his infiltration of Prince Stomroy's treasure chambers. Rumors place his protective ring in the custody of two or three lesser heroes in the centuries since his disappearance.

The ring grants the wearer a bonus of 2 to defense and to all saving rolls.

Girard's Ring of Invisibility

A simple silver ring, it bears no inscription or patterns except the letters "Gir. Nelson" on the inside. When worn, it becomes invisible. When the wearer becomes unconscious, or sleeps, the wearer becomes invisible. The ring was created by Girard Nelson, a Stigmatic Priest, a sorceror of the Order of Stigmas di Cristo on the western slopes of the High Divide.

Elven Shoes

The fabled Elven shoes are not for Humans or Elves, but for horses: three sets are known to exist, though one set was lost in the great war against the goblins (as was the great horse Fiendril

and its rider, the Elven warrior Caremesendil). The horseshoes make their steed's movement completely silent. In Elvish, the shoes are known as irenafien, "silent as the wind".

The Bull Sword

Known also as the Sword of Taurus, the sword was made by the wizard Measure and the Night Prophet Alazar for use by the evil warrior Taurus the Empty, and has since been used by many warriors before disappearing centuries ago.

The sword grants a bonus of 1 to attack during the day, and a bonus of 3 to attack at night. It also grants a bonus of 2 to the point cost for increased number of actions.

The sword can confer Strength (as the spell, cast at sixth level) once per day.

The sword is intelligent: it has an intelligence of 13, a charisma of 13, a wisdom of 15, and is Ordered Evil. It has the skills of Tactics and War Lore, and may communicate with its bearer through empathy. It is seventh level for purposes of saving rolls, and, if it takes over the bearer, may act as a seventh level warrior.

Prophets or priests of Christianity who attempt to use the sword must save vs. Willpower or go stark raving mad for d4 rounds. At the end of that period, another save vs. Fortitude is required to maintain consciousness. If the character falls unconscious they may be woken normally.

The Sword of Ellesan

Forged by Dwarves and wielded by Elven kings, the sword was broken in the last battle of the Deadless Lord. The Elf call it "Lirel len-Elessan" (which means, simply, "the sword of Ellesan"). It was last wielded by Elessan Torilarvan, whose name means "Sword of the Silver Forest". Fine inscriptions cover the blade. On one side of the blade is written the story of its forging in Dwarf runes. On the other, the story of its creation in Elven script.

The sword is now in two parts, the hilt and the lower part of the blade, and the middle and tip of the blade. Each part grants the bearer special powers. The tip of the blade confers protection from undead. No undead may touch the bearer unless the bearer provokes attack. Even then, the bearer gains a bonus of 2 to defense and all saving rolls against undead attacks.

The hilt and base of the sword confer the ability to Turn Undead (as the Specialty), as a fifth level prophet. Prophets who bear the sword gain a bonus of two to their level when "Turning" undead (but turn at a minimum of fifth level). In the presence of undead, it grows a full hilt, glowing green, and confers a bonus of 1 to attack and a bonus of 1 to defense against undead. Even when glowing, it may not be used to attack anything other than undead.

The Adventure of the Empty House

This relatively simple adventure will likely cover two gaming sessions, and can be used to introduce your players to the game. Important features include the introduction of an important city (Crosspoint), and an introduction to the horrors waiting to crawl up from the underground.

This adventure is designed for four to six characters of first level. At least one of the characters must be from Crosspoint, all of the characters must be in Crosspoint, and they must know each other enough to consider calling each other up when the opportunity arises.

Player's Background

One of the players' uncles has recently inherited a house from a "less fortunate" cousin who recently died of a rabid dog attack on the waterfront (the dog was found with the body and was put down). The uncle would like to clean the house up, and fix it up just enough to sell it. He has no use for a house on the waterfront. He is willing to pay twenty shillings (total; the characters can decide how to split the money) to his nephew to hire people to do it. This is a lot of money. He could probably get it done cheaper, but is doing his other brother a favor by "sharing the wealth" with that brother's son. He will also give them permission, should they ask about it, to decide whether to sell or discard any of the relative's things. They may keep the profit made on any sales. "The house is mostly empty anyways. There might be some knick-knacks in the main dining area if they haven't been stolen. That's part of why I need you to do this, to get rid of any incentive for thieves to break in. Prepare it for sale."

> Your uncle is an old man, about sixty years old, with a bald head wreathed in white hair. His demeanor is that of an efficient businessman, which matches his wood-paneled office, but as he hands you the key to the house on the hill, there is an unmistakable sadness in his eyes. As he takes your hand in his gnarled hands, he thanks you for taking this task, and asks you how your father is doing.

The player may or may not decide to continue the role-playing; you can use the information above and below as you see fit. The uncle is not normally talkative, but is in an expansive mood today should the player characters encourage it.

Guide's Background

A part of the underground has broken through to the basement of the player's uncle's house. Through it, an Oruat (or two) and a giant cucumber escaped. The cucumber may or may not be dead, depending on your needs.

As the players begin fixing up the house—probably a two-week job—a "jack the ripper" style killing spree begins (the players might or might not realize that their uncle's cousin was the first victim).

One of the first things you'll need to do as Guide is to name the player's uncle. If the player has a surname, the surname will be the same, as will the surname of the uncle's cousin.

The uncle and his cousin had not seen each other for many years, but they were once inseparable—about forty years past. They did everything together, including courting the same woman. The uncle "lost", but their friendship withstood that. It was only the growing economic and philosophical differences that caused them to drift apart. The uncle, however, still looks back on those days as the best days of his life: his greatest friend by his side, his business plan before him, scrimping, saving, and taking calculated gambles in the game of life to get ahead.

His business has gotten a lot more stable since them, he no longer has to scrimp. The hard times are gone, but so is the challenge. His own children, long grown to adulthood, now handle the day-to-day duties of the business, which is fine by him.

His cousin's wife, a wispy woman, died in childbirth after ten years of marriage. The infant did not survive the birth either. His cousin became a hermit after that, and rarely left the house.

Plot Thickeners

In general I find it useful to keep the plots fairly simple. The players will complicate things all on their own. Role-playing games are a lot like stories with four or five or more main characters. However, if you wish to add complications to the adventure, you might find it fruitful to give the uncle some nefarious connections, or to make the uncle innocent but not his cousin. Perhaps his cousin's money ran out, and he opened his home to unscrupulous individuals; perhaps as a safe house for pirates. Or some item he acquired in the past is desired by underworld figures or night cults. Who knows where he hid it, or what it even looks like. Is it in one of the boxes of his wife's stuff in the upstairs closet? Is it in plain sight but not obvious?

The Adventure

The adventure will mostly consist of trying to track down why the doors and shutters keep opening, and why the basement door is stuck, and finally confronting the Oruat either in the basement or perhaps in the upstairs room. This adventure involves only one real variable for you to keep track of: the Oruat. There are few secrets in this house, and no dungeons filled with a multitude of strange creatures. You can add as many variables as you feel comfortable adding. They may also end up talking to the neighbors, for example, who may have things to say about the old man. Or you might add other events going on in the city, such as a heat wave, a storm, elections, or strikes.

Larger adventures will often have many more variables for you to keep track of. You'll need to simplify your job by ignoring irrelevant variables until such time as they are needed. As you guide players through more adventures, you'll learn to draw in those variables that the characters have set in motion which would normally be outside their current position, and you'll get better and better at handling adventures where more things happen.

In between the rest of the adventure, the cleaning of the house will probably take about forty man-hours to complete.

Crosspoint

> As you walk up the steep streets of Seapoint Hill, you look around at the warped and weather-beaten homes. If you turn around and look down the hill, you can see the docks far in the distance, and the fishermen coming in from the bay. The smell of dead fish wavers in the air even this far up. Most people who see you pay no attention to you. Those that do pay attention deliberately ignore you.

It is early autumn in Crosspoint, the "foggy season" when fog rolls in from the sea and blankets the town in the evenings. Crosspoint is the largest city on Crosspoint bay, which is the center of a trading route that spreads north to the barbarians and pirates, south to the principalities of Great Bend, and west to Black Stag and the leather road. Ships bound for or from Great Bend to the South regularly enter and leave Crosspoint's harbor, and caravans regularly leave for the north and west.

Streets are tight and houses close together. Back alleys lead circuitously behind and between homes. In autumn (and for that matter, sporadically throughout the year), fog rises nightly from the bay and blankets the town when the weather is calm. The ocean to the east and the mountains to the west ensure tumultuous weather year-round.

Crosspoint is built on hills surrounding the bay. As in most cities, the waterfront area is the worst, and the high hills are for the "best" people.

The Neighbors

The neighbors mostly want nothing to do with the house or the adventurers. They work long hours at the docks or in the market and don't want any trouble. Most people in this area rent. Anastor Road runs east-west, down Seapoint Hill towards the docks. The docks are about five blocks further down. Spring Street runs north-south, and can be quite hilly.

Some of the people who live here are on the rise; others are on a downward slide into obscurity and poverty. Bartley Marston, the retired sea-captain who lives behind the abandoned house, is a bit on the positive side of senile, a nice enough man but gruff and set in his ways. You may decide to use him as a bit of comic relief, and perhaps to provide some strange stories about vampires or giant bats in the abandoned house. He was probably the only person to still visit the old owner when he was alive.

The House

> Your destination, similar to most houses here, is covered in peeling paint. A skeletal oak, untrimmed and hugging the front of the house, has dropped all of its leaves into the porch and front yard, if you can call it a yard. The leaves have begun to rot. The house stands like a haunted house in a haunted neighborhood, with ghosts behind shuttered windows. A damp wind blows dry leaves into the yard to join the wet, rotting leaves already there.

The house is towards the waterfront, halfway down Seapoint Hill. It is old and out of its prime, like most of the houses in this neighborhood.

Light Sources

Other than windows, the light sources in this house are candle holders, which may be carried from room to room. There are no built-in light sources, unless you count the fire place.

Strange Noises and Invisible Creatures

Before the characters meet with the Oruat, you should give them strange noises that have no monster behind them. The house is hold. A strong wind will cause the walls to creak. The oak outside the front of the house is touching the house; a light wind will cause its branches to scrape against the upstairs wall and shutters. Mice crawl in the walls, and rats can knock things over in the kitchen as they search for new homes if the characters force them out of their old ones. The snake can easily fit through holes that are practically invisible to unperceptive characters; if they turn their heads, or if it can find a corner to run around, it may well disappear, only to reappear later in another part of the house.

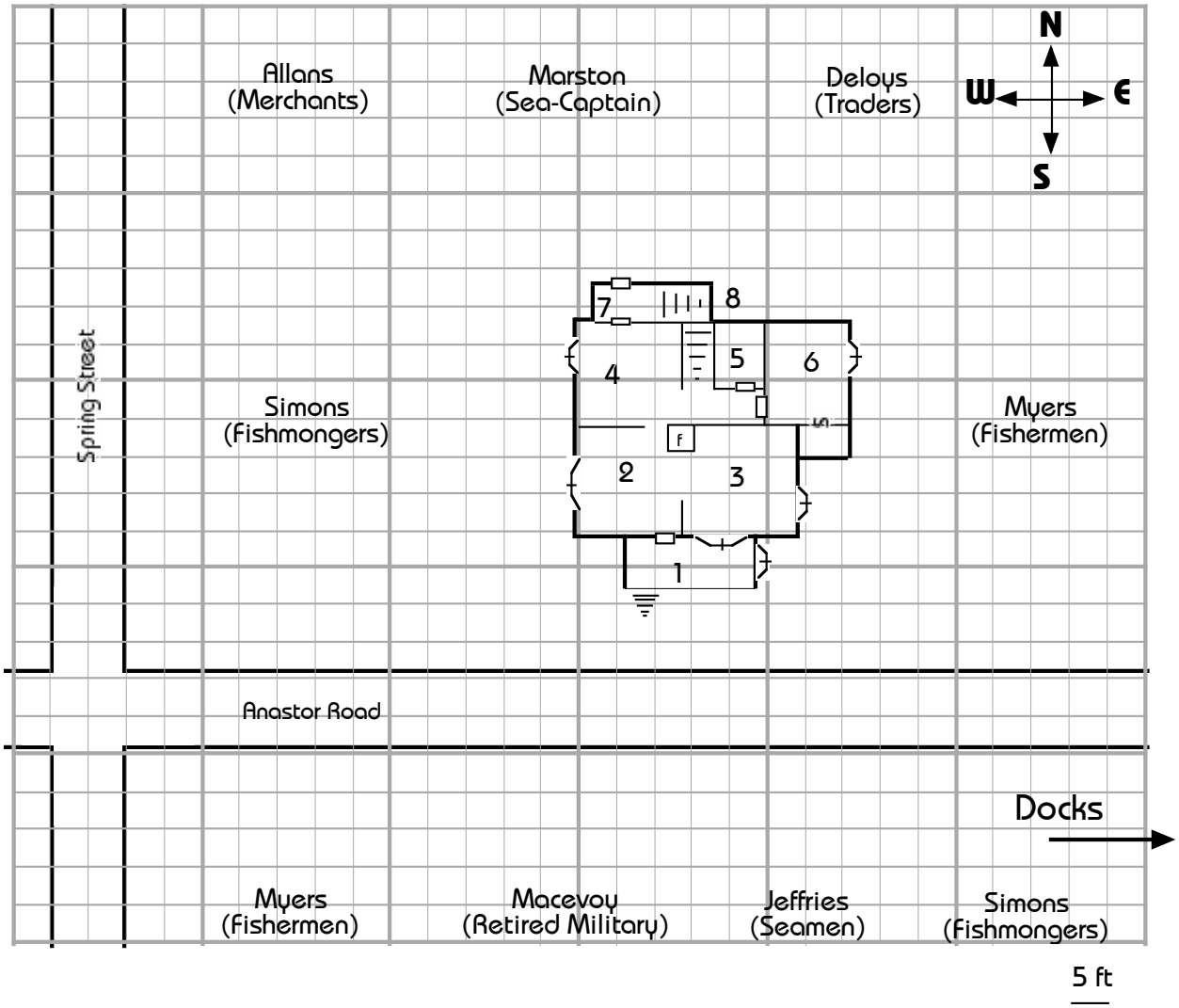
Wandering Monsters

There are few random encounters in this adventure. Outside, the only "random" encounters will likely be with neighbors, and you'll have to adjudicate that on your own. Inside, there are only four creatures the characters are likely to run into: the Oruat, rats, bats, spiders, and one poisonous snake that likes the pantry area. Rats and mice are unlikely to be seen unless the characters walk very quietly into a room. Mice will not attack. Rats and bats are extremely unlikely to attack, although the rats may try to steal any food that the characters bring. Spiders are not poisonous, and, while ubiquitous, are of the normal, tiny, though plump, variety. (You may use this to your advantage while the characters sleep.) The Oruat is unlikely to attack any group of two or more, unless they appear weak or it is very hungry. If you choose to have both Oruat in this adventure, they are still unlikely to attack a group of two or more, but may be more easily provoked into doing so.

Rats (Animal: 1 pt; Move: 10; Survival: 1; Defense: 0; Attack: 1 pt, Number Appearing: d4)

Snake (Animal: 1/2; Move: 12; Survival: 2; Defense: 2; Attack: 1 pt; Special: Poison, bonus 1, damage 1, action time 1 minute)

Oruat (Evil, Fantastic: 2; Move: 8/20; Survival: 13 (Tanino), 11 (Koronaeg); Defense: 4/5; Attack: short swords; Special: scream)



The Front Yard

> An overgrown walkway leads up to stone steps that in turn climb to the front porch. Unkempt gushes grow wild on each side of the walkway. Tangled grass and weeds cover the walkway, and leaves from the oak to the right of the walkway are rotting on the steps.

The front yard has gone wild, and if they remain or poke around a lot, feel free to give them an encounter with some rats or the poisonous snake.

Front Porch (1)

> The boards creak as you step onto the covered porch. Puddles on the porch testify to the awning's poor condition. A porch swing, its pink paint peeling badly, sways slightly in the breeze, its chain links squeaking against each other in time with the wind. The shutters on the door and on the wall are closed.

If they've been relatively stealthy, you might let them surprise a rat or some mice, which scurry away as the characters walk in.

Dining Room (2)

> You turn the key in the rusted lock, and push the door open. The hinges scream as light pours into the darkened room from behind you. A wide, oval table, slightly warped, dominates the room. There are closed shutters to your left, and an opening to your right leads to another open space. Shelves covered with odd ceramic shapes separate this room from another room to the north.

The window, when opened, looks over to the Simons' house, and the space between the two houses, which is enough for a single carriage should it be necessary; it clearly hasn't been necessary for a long time. The old man has not used the dining room in a long time.

Piano Room (3)

> Windows to the east and west allow light into this room; it shines off of the dust of the floors. A few rugs lie in the center and on the sides of the room, and two solid chairs stand at the south wall. The fireplace in the northwest corner still holds a few ashen logs. On a shelf running above a couch along the north wall, a few portraits hang amidst candles in bronze holders.

The eastern wall is where the piano used to be. There is now a rug there, covering up the marks it made on the floor and the difference in coloration due to sunlight on the rest of the floor.

The piano has long since been sold, but a few portraits remain on the walls. There is a portrait each of the old man and his wife when they were young, and a portrait of the old man's parents (the players' uncle's father's brother and wife).

The piano room has a fireplace. However, the chimney is mostly blocked with leaves, dirt, soot, and shit. If the characters start a fire, as much smoke will come into the room as will go out the chimney. There is a 20% chance of the chimney starting fire in the first hour of use, and a 10% chance every hour thereafter. (It isn't really the chimney starting fire, but the stuff in the chimney.) If the chimney starts fire, the upstairs room (3) will be nice and toasty. There will also be a 30% chance of the roof starting fire (which means that the house will start fire) if the chimney fire is not put out within half an hour, and another 10% chance if the chimney fire is not put out within an hour. If the roof does not start fire, the chimney will clean itself out in an hour.

If the roof starts fire and is not put out within the next fifteen minutes there is a 30% chance that it will spread to neighboring houses. This would not be good.

This is where the old man was found with the stray dog (who got blamed for his death). A candle holder on a small end table by one of the chairs is burned down to the nub.

Pantry (4)

> A small table in the northwest corner of the room still has a plate on it with a smidgen of dried food, and a ceramic mug. Ants mill aimlessly about the table and floor, and around the small urns on shelves in the northeast corner. The south wall is made of shelves, on which stand odd ceramic bric-a-brac. A dragon fights a tiger, a ship sails on the back of a whale, and tiny gnomes frolic with satyrs amidst the old man's plates and glasses. In the southeast corner, a small hole opens onto a fireplace. Cast iron shelves allow the placement of pots and pans.

The old man had let his servant go, and was handling everything, including cooking, himself. The south wall, with the bric-a-brac, is not really a wall, but shelves. Through the shelves the dining area is visible. The old man used the kitchen table for dining, however, and rarely used

the dining room. The whale is worth five shillings, the dragon and tiger is worth eight, and the tiny gnomes are worth three (two of them are chipped). The plates and glasses are worth about 15 shillings total, and they could probably get 15 to 30 shillings for all of the pots and pans here.

Water Closet (5)

> A white ceramic tub, scummed with layers of grey, is on the right; a large water jug sits next to it on the floor. Brushes, clothes, and soap are on a shelf above the tub, and a razor and mirror are on a table on the other side of the room.

Master Bedroom (6)

> A high, round window allows the morning light into this room. There appears to be glass in each of the four squares. Ornate knotwork carvings in the dark brown walls repeat in square patterns across the walls, and a canopied bed stands in the northeast corner beneath the window. An ornate bureau with an oval mirror built into it, on the west wall, has underclothing draped over it and a tattered jacket hanging over the side.

The window in this room is a high window, seven feet off the ground and touching the ceiling. Glass is an indication that the owner of this house, at least at one time, had some decent money. This is the only window in the house with glass. It was for his wife. The glass is not entirely clear, but allows for the detection of movement beyond the window.

The ornate wall on the south wall includes a “hidden” closet. This is a style of woodwork that attempts to keep extraneous features (such as doors to minor rooms) from intruding on the design.

> The wall slides open to reveal a small room, filled with old clothing. The styles and the holes attest to the age of this wardrobe. A large white pot, stained with age, sits in the front of the closet.

Back Shed (7)

> Hooks hang from the west wall, holding only a single old jacket and a scarf. Old boots are on the floor below the hooks. Stairs go down to the east, and another door is directly opposite you a few feet away.

The door to the basement stairs has a hook-and-eye lock which, when the characters first enter the house, is unlocked. If they lock it, the Oruat will have to break out, though he will try to do so in a manner that allows him to close the door and spike it shut later. The door opens inward. Unless some weird precautions are taken by the characters, the Oruat will be able to remove the hinges to open the door.

Once the Oruat knows that there are people in the house, he will try to keep the basement inaccessible. The obvious choice is to spike the door shut so that it cannot open without forcing it open. Forcing it open when it is spiked shut will require a strength roll at a penalty of four.

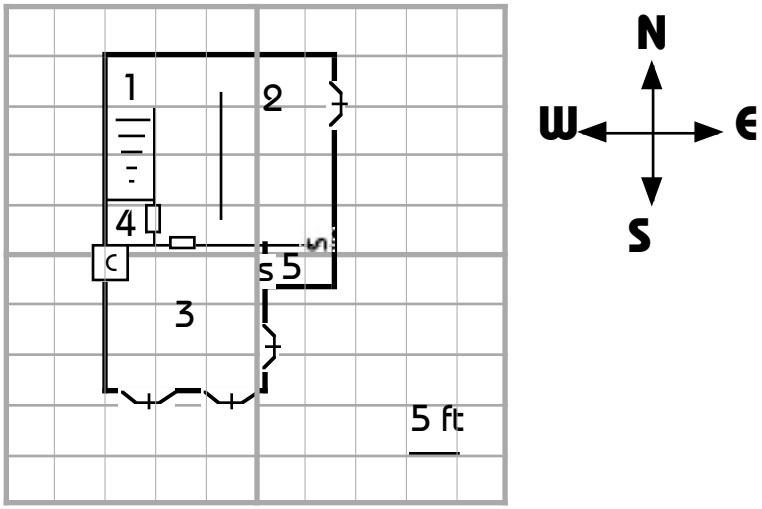
Just about any decent home will have a foundation and a pantry or full basement. Most homes in this area, however, are not decent homes, so the presence of a good foundation marks this as an older home, from before this area was heavily settled by the poorer classes.

Empty Woodpile (8)

> Beneath the upper floor, which overhangs this storage area, bark and bare ground are all that remains of what must have recently held much firewood. It is dank here, and still smells of old wood.

The neighbors have taken his supply of firewood, since he no longer needs it. There is a 10% chance of encountering the poisonous snake here.

The Upstairs



Landing and Hallway (1)

> You push abandoned cobwebs out of your way and come to the top of the stairs. The northwest corner of the house is covered in dust and dry strands. A wide hallway doubles back to your right. Through an opening in the east wall a dusty light comes in from an unknown room. As you turn the corner, you see movement through that opening.

The upstairs floor, especially the hallway, creak lightly with each step.

Depending on how much light they have, they may or may not be able to determine from the hallway that the "movement" they saw was themselves reflected in a dusty mirror.

Lounge (2)

> Rich brown walls in knotwork relief cover the walls of this long room. Shutters are closed on an eastern window, and a small bar lies empty, but for a single bottle, in the southeast corner. There is another open exit on the other end of the wall you just came through. An oval mirror, dusty and tarnished in the northeast corner, reflects not just you but the age and decay of this home.

There was a chandelier here; now only the fixture remains. The old man sold the chandelier for extra cash. The bottle is a mostly empty bottle of rum. There are two shot glasses on a shelf below the bar, and another bottle of rum. The four stools around the bar are removable, though they should really stay with the décor. They're worth two shillings each. The shot glasses are probably worth a quarter shilling total. The mirror is embedded into the north wall in the northeast corner.

He used to spend time up here with the old sea-captain, pretty much his only friend in the last few years.

Overlook (3)

> What once must have provided a panoramic view of the outside is dark and musty. Three sets of shutters are all closed, two to the south and one to the east. The chimney is in one corner of this room, and a small door opposite it lies partially open.

If the characters lock the doors so that the Oruat cannot get in, the Oruat will open one of the shutters here to get in, and then go downstairs, through the kitchen, and into the basement.

Hall Closet (4)

> Boxes tower in this room, threatening to fall on you as you open the door outwards. The walls are lined with shelves that you can barely reach because of the boxes.

These are all the things of hers that he has not gotten rid of yet.

Walk-Through Closet (5)

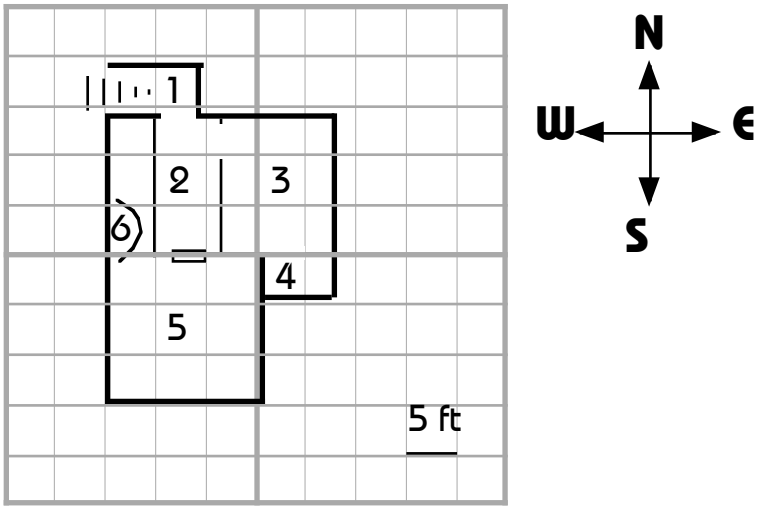
> The wall panel slides right, revealing a simple closet. It is mostly empty, except for thick, rolling dust balls covering the floor, and the smell of stale mouse turds on the air. Two stylized suits, perhaps twenty years old, hang, faded with dust, from the back wall. A pile of cloth lies in a jumble on the floor, covered in thick dust bunnies. In the far corner is a similarly-covered pair of dress boots.

The closet is almost empty. He had long since gotten rid of his wife's clothing; they reminded him too much of her and he needed the money for drinking. His own clothing has also seen better times, and he hasn't much of it.

Lost in the corner of the closet behind the boots is a small, simple box with a hinge. Inside is an old ring that the friend had given to that woman that both the uncle and his relative had courted when they were best friends. (This is the wife that died so many years ago.) The uncle would have thought it long-since sold as his old friend fell on harder times. The ring will fetch twenty shillings in the marketplace; if returned to their uncle, however, it has serious sentimental value. He will give them a reward of two pounds in gratitude.

> Your uncle is visibly moved by the trinket. He almost looks about to cry. He places the ring on his desk and opens a desk drawer to his side and pulls out some money. He hands you two pounds and holds your hand warmly as you accept. "Thank you for all you've done," he tells you. "If there is anything I can do for you in the future, please contact me."

The Basement



The basement door is barred *on the other side* following the first night the characters enter the house. The characters are unlikely to catch the Oruat by surprise; the door creaks and the stairs creak. If they do manage to come down quietly, however, the Oruat is (or are) in room two hanging from the ceiling. He will try to escape as best he can, preferably through the stairs rather than down the hole. If he cannot escape past the characters, however, the hole is his first choice, room five (which has a door that can be blocked) is his next, and the tiny room four is last.

The Oruat prefers living in the basement, both because it is familiar as an underground area, and because he wants to be ready if the earth opens up again and restores his way home. If he is chased off by the characters, or if he remains and the earth doesn't open up for a few weeks, he is likely to go off in search of another entrance to the underground, first in other parts of the city and then wherever he can find holes in the ground leading to unknown depths. He will likely head to caves in the mountains.

Basement Landing (1)

> The air grows drier as you step down the stairs into the stone foundation of the old house. At the bottom of the stairs, an opening on the right leads into a fifteen-foot hallway. You can smell roots and old wine.

Basement Hallway (2)

> Deep shelves line the left side of the hallway. A few old kegs lie on their side on the shelves, which are cracked and eaten with age. There is an opening on the east wall, through which you can see a few sacks, and a door on the far wall.

The door on the far wall is locked, and requires the key to the house to open.

Storeroom (3)

> The dry, cool smell of flour and roots and burlap greets you as you step into this small sideroom. At the south end of the room, a small open doorway leads into a darkened area. A few flasks stand on shelves around the east wall of the room.

This room contains sacks of food; flour, carrots, turnips. On the shelves is a little bit of oil: olive oil, flaxseed oil, and some butter and lard.

Tiny Storeroom (4)

> The sweet smell of onion and garlic permeates this small storage space. Small sacks hang from hooks in the ceiling, and bulge with bulbous roots.

Smaller sacks of onions, garlic, and peppers, though the peppers aren't in the best of shape.

Locked Storeroom (5)

> There is a musty, sour smell reminiscent of old wine. Rows upon rows of empty wine slots cover the far wall. Only a few wine bottles remain.

There are seven wine bottles, worth about 1 to 5 shillings each, in the wine slots.

Hole in the Closet (6)

> In the cramped space between the shelves and the wall, a long, thin gape in the floor descends into darkness.

The “long, thin gape” is about two, two and a half feet wide and four feet long. It leads down thirty or so feet through cracks and crevasses to the “glimpse of the underground” (see below). If they examine the opening, claw marks indicate that someone has scraped their way up—and down—the hole. The hole is not straight down. It goes at about a thirty degree angle. At the bottom, they will need to jump down about eight feet from the roof of the underground to the floor.

The Ripper Murders

Starting the night they are offered the job, and every three to four days thereafter, there are gruesome murders in the waterfront district. People are speaking of vampires and werewolves (and possibly witches, depending on the kind of religion and magic in your campaign world).

The Oruat is killing to eat. Every few days it ventures out of the basement in search of food, kills some human or animal, and returns. If you choose to use only one Oruat, use Tanino. If there are two Oruat, also use Koronaeg. Tanino is the one “in charge”, but really they’re two friends lost in a world they’ve never seen before, and unable to return home. Since they’re evil, they don’t care who dies as long as they survive.

A Glimpse of the Underground

> You crawl down the crevasse ten feet, twenty feet, thirty feet, until you come to a wide opening in the earth. The ground is cracked and crushed in a line directly beneath your feet, as if God had taken the two sides in hand and smashed them together. There is a large pile of something wiry just outside of your light. Rocky outcroppings and overhangs make your light cast flickering shadows on the walls.

The "something wiry" is either the giant cucumber or its innards. The Oruat do not generally live here, although they will run here if they fear getting caught. It is too difficult to climb back up, and they don't like the feeling of being unable to use their wings.

The Giant Cucumber Innards

If you choose to have the giant cucumber in the adventure also, then caught on the wrong side of the cave-in was a giant cucumber, which (if it still lives) Koronaeg is feeding from their scraps. The giant cucumber has 17 survival points. Koronaeg calls it "paersrole", which in their language means simply "stupid slug". The giant cucumber should not be alive unless the party is experienced enough or large enough to handle it. Otherwise, they will find the dead shell and the rotting innards.

Giant Cucumber (Fantastic: 3; Move: 8; Attack: Bite, Damage: 1d6; Defense: 0; Special Attacks: internal organs may attack separately, moving at 9, attacking with two tentacles for 1d4 each)

There are a couple of pouches tossed among the bones that the giant cucumber has eaten from. There are a total of 35 farthings, 21 half-pennies, 17 pennies, and 7 shillings among them. (These are, of course, only here if the giant cucumber was alive to be fed by the Oruat, who also tossed treasure down the hole in hopes of bringing it back with them to their home. Otherwise, you may or may not decide to place the treasure elsewhere in the house.)

The Wrap-Up

The characters now probably know that there are things that live below. Perhaps they'll want to try and explore further; you may decide that there are more intelligent creatures of the underground who occasionally travel above ground. Or perhaps there is an older city beneath the city of Crosspoint, and something must be retrieved.

Or, the glimpse of the underground can be temporarily forgotten. Depending on how the characters resolve the ripper murders, they may either be heroes, or have to leave town quickly. Their uncle may decide to help them with, for example, a recommendation as caravan guards. Or he might send them after a caravan lost many years ago, that he thinks might still be intact somewhere across the mountains and in the deep forest.

The short swords of the Oruat are well-made, with an interesting snake (or worm) design on the hilt. The leather of the hilt is an unknown animal (an underground creature). The swords are worth ten shillings (each, if there are more than one).

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