

BEST OF GREYHAWK #15

Excerpted from the World of Greyhawk folder #15 (6/22/1996 – 8/1/1996)
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August 24, 2013

It has been nearly two years since I compiled my last “Best of”, be it the recent publication of the Canonfire Chronicles or the satisfaction of having, at last, found and purchased “*Vecna: Hand of the Revenant*”, the fact is, that it as woken in me a fit of nostalgia, and has given me the envy to compile another Best of Greyhawk folder.

In this folder the ambiance on the forum is starting to be sour and is fueled by discussions such as:

- “*Greyhawk is dead*”
- “*This folder is dead*” [Iquander]
- “*What I would like TSR to release as new Greyhawk material*”,
- “*I leave this forum for Greytalk (Mailing list created in april 1996) and I will never go back*”.

Back in 1996, Greyhawk fans were strictly limited by TSR rules and a mostly ineffective "AOL-only" policy:

[Sean Reynolds, TSR Online Coordinator] Once again, please note that you are able to write whatever you want for Greyhawk and use it in your own campaign group, and can also distribute it outside of that **group if you do it through TSR's sites**, such as the TSR Online forum on AOL, the TSR Roundtable on GENie, and the TSR licensed internet site on MPGN (ftp.mpgn.com).

[Sean Reynolds, TSR Online Coordinator] When you became an AOL member, you agreed to abide by AOL's Terms Of Service. If you don't like that, you can leave AOL. (In answer to the question: Is it OK to post openly and freely exchange ideas, such as is guaranteed by a recent Supreme Court Decision?)

[DTorsiello] Let me begin by stating I don't endorse any censorship in any of these folders, but I'd like to ask the powers-that-be exactly why wasn't Eric Boyd's post on FR novels bumped from the GH folder to a more appropriate folder? Why is it that GH is selectively persecuted (Nitescreed getting pushed out of the FR folder being the most recent among countless other examples)? I've watched a parade of talented minds walk away from this folder over the past year and I'm beginning to understand why. In fact, I'm beginning to think I should join them. I'm sick of the treatment you've been giving my favorite-- indeed, many people's favorite-- campaign world. I whole-heartedly echo the sentiments of previous posters who have called for TSR to sell the rights to GH rather than spitefully and vindictively destroy it. I would also like to add that I believe that TSR has clearly violated the first amendment rights of several posters here and that I, for one, would support any and all appropriate legal action that anyone here may choose to take in the future.

Hopefully, in the midst of those depressive discussions some contributions really emerged. I have selected only true Greyhawk subjects, but in this folder you could also find some discussions and criticisms on the Greyhawk and Forgotten Realms novels, and the direct answers from Elaine Cunningham (@ECunningqhm) herself.

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GREYHAWK DEATH ?

Extracts:

- [Deathleaf3] Dragon Mag recently printed the last Greyhawk info as an article about the Dragon Orb.
- [R. Moore] What do you mean by "last" Greyhawk article? We'll continue to print good GH articles whenever they arrive.
- I think he meant "last" as in "most recent", as opposed to "final".
- I should have been a touch more specific, by indicating that the most recent TSR produced Greyhawk Related item was printed in a Dragon Magazine. But my later statement still holds true, unless TSR management has suddenly taken a serious left turn. No new GH material will be published separately.
- [Zagy 103] 'Tis true the world has sunken into the morass known as "TSR's Cancelled-But-Not-Forgotten-Realms." - Fortunately the world is kept alive in the hearts and minds of its many faithful followers.

Subj: Greyhawk ATTACK!!!

Date: 7/8/96 9:37:14 PM

From: Marckeb

Went to see where everyone went, when post were slow here. And where were they to be found but on the attack in the "What I'd Like To See From TSR" area, under "TSR General Information" which is under Q&A

I love it, TSR wants our opinion, so give it to them! Let them know that Greyhawk fans are out here and want Greyhawk back. Join the attack and see how many different reason they can come up with for cancelling GH, which if you haven't heard by now (TSR seems to have ignored this news) has the second largest folder in AOL and the third most request for adventures in Dragon Magazine :-)

Subj: Bogus, BS, Balderdash, Hooey.

Date: 7/8/96 8:41:45 PM

From: Iquander

Ok, I'm usually firmly on the side of the entrenched on the whole aspect of why Greyhawk was cancelled, etc.

Let's get something straight, though. **The "new" material from TSR isn't a heaping pile of putrid filth, as seems to be the prevailing wisdom here in this folder.**

While I will say that, often, I find the "flavor" of the older material much more to my liking, if Greyhawk had ever been treated with half of the care that has gone into recent sourcebooks (Al-Qadim comes to mind, as do the Sigil books for PS--while I hate the city, I think the treatment in those books puts a lot of Greyhawk stuff to shame) it wouldn't be cancelled.

I recently picked up Faiths and Avatars, and I must say that I would have killed for a product like this for Greyhawk, and I still would. The level of depth in that product in particular is stunning. It puts any and all of the GH god material to shame, despite the fact that I don't agree with all the mechanics (avatars, etc.).

I'm not talking about TSR's marketing. I'm not talking about TSR's alleged snubs to older gamers.

I am talking about, at least a few, products that, if they had been made for Greyhawk, wouldn't have ruined the setting a la "the middle years" or, I hate to say it, even the "Greyhawk is Really This Big Secret Campaign That I Play on a Map of Chicago And I'm Never Going to Give Out Any Useful Information to the World Because I Have Six Players Who Might Not Be Surprised By One of My Awesome Ideas And So Here Are Some Product Ideas That I'd Like To Brag About Here In My Misspelled Dragon Column, Even Though They Will Never Exist, Ever, Because, Really, I Don't Want to "Ruin" My Home Campaign Because I Am the Egg of Coot, and I Alone Determine the RULES, and Anyone Who Bends Them is Cheating" halcion days of Good Ol' Gary Gee.

I, for one, wish we had a few more "new TSR" Greyhawk titles to play around with.

Iquander

Subj: GREYHAWK Seminar???
Date: 7/12/96 10:08:08 AM
From: TSR Roger

Since the original posting on the GREYHAWK Seminar I will be running at the GEN CON game fair in Milwaukee, I've decided to focus on talking about different types of campaigns that can be run using the GREYHAWK setting. Audience participation will be encouraged. I'll write up a handout listing 101 (maybe) campaign types I've thought up (some obviously based on things people have discussed here, such as druid-oriented campaigns or "post-holocaust" Flanaess set-ups), and after the seminar is over, I'll send it over for posting in "Download of the Month." If anyone here is able to attend the seminar, please let me know your log-on name when you see me, so I can say, "Duh, um, ah, I *think* I remember you."

Also, if you plan to ask me why TSR cancelled GREYHAWK products, or what Gygax is doing right now, forget it; this gets nowhere fast. You know it and I know it.

I'm sticking to chat about churning out a great campaign on your own, which is the best part of all.

Subj: My Other Post
Date: 7/22/96 12:16:52 AM
From: NiteScreed

Given the anti-spam/crossposting rules, I can't post the same thing in two spots, even if it relates to two areas. Fine. I have to choose. BUT I can tell you where to go, so to speak;). I have posted a message called Honesty in the "what I'd like to see from TSR" folder in the General Information Area. I commend it to you. It has to do with Greyhawk and TSR's lack of credibility when they tease Greyhawk fans with vague promises of future products that are never released.

NightScreed, ever mindful of the crossing signs

THIEVES OF THE FLANAESS

Subj: Thieves of the Flanaess I
Date: 7/9/96 5:02:07 PM
From: Cmillly

As some of you know I'm a big fan of the thief class, to the extent that the campaign I currently run is an all thief campaign. While this campaign is currently set in the City of Greyhawk, and involves the guild of that city, I've started to do some research into how thieves are represented throughout the rest of the Flanaess.

Most of this research has centered around guilds of other cities and how they are organized and operate, although I have also come across some information dealing with the rulers of various nations or cities.

I'm posting the information I've found for those who are looking to expand upon these and other cities, as well as how thieves are played in their own campaigns, whether as PC's or NPC's.

An excellent resource was WG8 Fate of Istus, which for those of you that don't own it, does an excellent job of expanding some of the lesser known cities of Oerth.

1) FoI pg 3-5. While thieves and their guilds are prevalent throughout the Bandit Kingdoms, the description of Rookroost provides some excellent detail on the guild of that city, an organization with many similarities to the guild in Greyhawk, in that they both virtually control their respective cities, although with very different methods of obtaining this power.

The guild of Rookroost has a very strong guildmaster who rules her guild with an iron fist. This is the type of guild that retains tight fist control of its operations, and tolerates no interference in its operations. An extremely dangerous situation for any PC's who crosses this guild.

2) FoI pg 58. The city of Leukish, for all of its wealth and sizable population, has no organized thieves' guild. This would be an excellent opportunity for an enterprising PC to attempt to establish himself as the dominant thief in this city.

Also the large amount of street crime can be used as an opportunity to relieve free spending PC's of any excess wealth.

3) FoI pg 83-84. Little is said of the thieves guild of Chendl. However given the alignment tendencies of the populace (strongly lawful), it's obvious that the guild would have to operate with great discretion. I see this guild more along the lines of an organized crime family, avoiding muggings and pick pocketing, and concentrating on more organized activities such as extortion, smuggling, and the like.

This type of situation should provide the creative DM endless possibilities for his PC's, whether they are thieves or not.

<cont'd>

Date: 7/9/96 5:02:52 PM

From: Cmillisy

I found information on the Principality of Ulek in two sources, the Complete Thieves Handbook, and the WoG Boxed Set Glossography:

The CTHB describes the guild of Gryax (pg 82-83), as well as providing detailed information on the guildmaster himself. The Glossography (pg 17) lists the current ruler of the Principality as a Thief 5/ Fighter 11. While this seems innocent enough, one must remember that Gryax is the capital city. It seems quite plausible that a connection exists between the two, a situation that could make for some interesting political gaming.

The CTHB (pg 85-86) also describes the ruling structure of the guild located in Monmurg, Hold of Sea Princes.

As one can see, while thieves and their guilds are located in cities across the Flanaess, they differ greatly in their structure, operations, and relations with other citizens. For PC's and DM's looking to get involved in the politics or underworld of these cities, thieves can provide an interesting road.

Now my GH collection is small in comparison to some, I welcome any attempts to expand on this list.

-Chris

IUZ THE EVIL (NPCs)

Subj: Iuz the Evil

Date: 7/11/96 1:50:27 PM

From: Lefto

Maybe someone can help me with the following problems, or perhaps TSR published errata on Iuz the Evil that I haven't seen. Having just recently purchased the aforementioned product, I have just discovered several discrepancies.

1. In the description of Vayne, it says that Ghisellin of Furyondy nearly killed him. Ghisellin, according to the Marklands, is the Royal Mage of Nyrond and fought on the Almorian front. Ummm...

2. Lord Obmi, of the Boneshadow, is listed as an 11th level fighter. In G3 (in all its forms), he is a 9/11 fighter/thief. Keak (presumably taken from the Gord books) is listed as a fighter/mage, and while Gygax does at one point mention this, he never uses weapons or wears armor or does anything in fighter fashion.

'Artifact of Evil' also mentions that each member of the Boneshadow had no knowledge of the other members, which makes Keak and Gleed unlikely prospects for this group assuming Obmi is indeed a member (which seems well established).

3. Eclavdra is a 17th lvl Priestess of Lloth??? Again looking at G3, we see that Eclavdra is 10/10 cleric/fighter. We have heard of her being a priestess of the Elder Elemental God and as a priestess of Graz'zt. In both of these latter positions, she was in opposition to Lloth (I want to say it real quick here - DEMON Queen of Spiders). Thus, while her worship of a particular Power is debatable, certainly we could agree that Lloth is not that Power - at least not without some explanation as to how this came about.

4. The Greater Boneheart all have reached 18th level, yet Vayne, a former member of this infamous pack, is only 16th level. Any ideas?

Incidentally, if Obmi is an 11th lvl fighter, he must have a natural strength of at least 19. Assume he went up 2 levels as a thief as well and make him 11/13 ftr/thief and he seems a far more appropriate member of the boneshadow. It's no wonder Iuz sought him out for service, if you look at his stats from G3:

S 18/94 (now 19) I 18 W 18 D 16 Co 17 Ch 16

Lefto

Subj: Re: Iuz the Evil
Date: 7/11/96 5:59:06 PM
From: Emirikol7

Lefto,

My findings concur with yours. I haven't worried about it too much, but I do know that it has been a few years since G3, and the current situation of Eclavdra's levels may have changed. However, without 10 levels of fighter hit-points, she would be seriously weakened. I'm sure I understood where you would place her priestly associations.

I also personally liked Ombi better as a Fighter/Thief than F/Mage-especially since he is a dwarf.

As for the rest, they make great rumors don't they!

Em

Subj: Re:Iuz the Evil
Date: 7/11/96 7:15:22 PM
From: Iquander

>>>

'Artifact of Evil' also mentions that each member of the Boneshadow had no knowledge of the other members, which makes Keak and Gleed unlikely prospects for this group assuming Obmi is indeed a member (which seems well established).

>>>

Aheh. Read a little more of Gygax. You'll get the hang of when he actually means what he writes, and when he's just being careless.

It seems quite obvious that Obmi, Keak and Gleed are all part of Iuz's "secret group" (not named the Boneheart, or anything else, in the Gord books.)

I say Carl got this one right on the head.

>>>

3. Eclavdra is a 17th lvl Priestess of Lloth???

>>>

No. My guess is that Sargent had difficulty rationalizing Eclavdra as a priestess, as Graz'zt, who, according to 2nd Edition lore, does not sponsor priests (or at least not of the 17th level, personal-name basis).

I choose to ignore this, and make her a priestess of Graz'zt, as per Gygax. As you state, it's really unlikely that she'd have changed sides to the Spider Queen (especially since this is not mentioned in her Iuz the Evil profile). This one was just a dumb mistake, imho. Easily fixed, however.

>>

It's no wonder Iuz sought him out for service, if you look at his stats from G3:

S 18/94 (now 19) I 18 W 18 D 16 Co 17 Ch 16

>>

While these stats do seem remarkably munchkiny, I do believe that Gygax, several times in *Artifact of Evil* and the books that followed), mentioned Obmi's exceptional strength. Clearly, though it is of a perverted bent, Obmi is also very cunning. I'm not sure I'd give him an _18_, mind you, but he's not an idiot.

The Wisdom and Charisma scores are, by all accounts, ridiculously high. I'd cut them both in half.

Iquander

CELESTIAN (Description as per Faith & Avatar)
--

Subj: Celestian

Date: 7/26/96 8:02:47 PM

From: Deathleaf3

Name of Diety: Celestian (The Far Wanderer)

Power Ranking of Plane Name, Alignment: N(G)

Portfolio (Spheres of Dominance): Stars, Space, Wanders

Aliases: The Far Wanderer

Domain Name:

Superior: None

Allies: Wenta, Atroa, Sortillion, Telchur, (The Four Winds), Beory, Fharlanghn, Velinus, Pelor, Phalukon
While Celestian is looked upon by some as a Power of Weather, he is more a power of the Stars, and less of Oerth Weather. Thus he is not in direct competition with any of the Oerth powers of the Winds, and is instead more of an ally.

Foes:

Greater: Syrul, Nerull

Lesser: Iuz

Least:

Symbol: Black Circle with Seven Stars

Worshipper's alignment: Any Good

Powers Description: "The Far Wanderer appears as a tall lean man of middle years. His skin is of ebony hue and smooth. His eyes are of the same color as his skin. He is quick and absolutely silent in his movement. He speaks but seldom. His garments are of deep black, but somewhere he will always wear his symbol: seven "stars" (diamond, amethyst, sapphire, emerald, topaz, jacinth, ruby) blazing with the colors of far suns." (Gygax, 1982)

Avatars: Has not appeared on Oerth since the founding of his church.

Other manifestations: Seven spinning gems in a dark cloud, each pulsing as a voice emanates from the cloud.

The Church:

The followers of this powerful, if infrequently revered god are known as Stars of Celestian. Stars are not common, and their temples are often associated with libraries in large cities. A few smaller temples exist in smaller towns, at the fringes, away from the lights and sounds of the town that would interfere with their worship. These priests are powerful weather controllers, and often revere other deities as well.

There are seven orders of of Celestian. These orders are differentiated in four ways, as given below. The experience level range applicable to a certain order is given first, followed by the color of robe worn by members of that order, the main gem in the symbol for that order(the one in the center of the symbol, surrounded by the six others), and the special spell which is gained by a cleric upon attaining membership in that order." (Gygax, 1982)

" 1st Order: Levels 1-2, Light blue robes, ruby, Feather Fall
2nd Order: Levels 3-4, Light Gray robes, jacinth, Jump
3rd Order: Levels 5-6 , Violet robes, topaz, Levitate
4th Order: Levels 7-8 , Blue-Grey robes, emerald, Spider Climb
5th Order: Levels 9-10 , Dark Blue robes, sapphire, Fly
6th Order: Levels 11-15 , Deep Purple robes, amethyst, Dimension Door
7th Order: Levels 16-up , Black robes, Diamond, Teleport "
(Gygax, 1982)

Each spell is gained when the next level is obtained, and are cumulative. Each spell can be cast once per day, and are above and beyond all normally prayed for spells.

<cont'd>

Date: 7/26/96 8:04:05 PM
From: Deathleaf3

Clergy: Scribes, scholars, Astronomers, Navigators and Dreamers make up the bulk of the non priestly followers of this God.

Some barbarians in the north also follow this god, but they rarely advance very high in the priesthood, as they are unable to obtain the separation of spirit from earthly needs as many less concerned with day to day survival can.

Each year, as a form of self sacrifice, a priest will allow himself to be bound to a temple from one month, (typically during the winter, when roads and paths are covered with snow). During this time they will work for the temple, and perform many of the necessary chores required of them. Most other times, (with the exception of those too old to travel) they will be found upon the roads, traveling, and gazing upon the stars, their Brothers.

Clergies Alignment: Any Good

Dogma: Stars believe that Oerth is simply a temporary resting place for their souls before traveling upwards to the heavens and outer planes. This world, and life is just a brief pause, as the soul collects enough energy to make the final jump to the sky. They also believe that the stars are really the reflections of true Star's souls in the sky, serving Celestian in his heavenly travels and deeds. The only thing that their souls can take with them to the heavens is the knowledge that they can obtain and recall. They also believe that the stars can reflect their destinies, and previous Stars attempt to instruct current living Stars through their motions in the skies. This instruction is easily misinterpreted, for Celestian does not want to make it too easy to obtain their places among the stars.

Duties:

Sins: Evil acts, of destruction or death, brought out by lust of wealth or women. Injury to another Star. Destruction or theft of knowledge from those using it. The hampering or harming of any that seek knowledge or to travel. The obstruction of travel in any form, unless the reason for such travel is to destroy others. Caging of birds, or creatures able to fly is a grievous sin.

Day-To-Day Activities: Few younger Stars can be found within the temple or city limits unless summoned by a higher ranking Star, or seeking training. When Stars are temple bound, they often use skills learned upon the road to assist the temple. Those that have useful skills such as craftsmanship, or building, will work upon the temple, while those with entertainment abilities will perform for the other Stars til the wee hours of the night.

Important Ceremonies/Holy Days: Services and worship is always performed under the open skies at night, when the stars and hopefully Celestian himself, can see them. Weather controlling spells will be used if possible to insure that on a few holy nights, the skies are clear, and the stars are visible. Every new moon is considered a minor holy day, and when the new moon falls upon the seventh day of the month, it is a major celebration/religious holiday. During the few days before and after, large feasts are thrown, and many Stars cast off their otherwise serious natures. These days are uncommon, and may not occur more than once every few years.

Major Centers of Worship: Any city with a large library, or group of scholars, will have a shrine or temple dedicated to Celestian.

Affiliated Orders

* The Diviners of the Stars in the County of Ulek. This group is a collection of Sages and Scholars and Specialist mages interested in the passage of heavenly bodies and stars, and the possible correlations to the fate of Oerth. This group has several mid level Stars of Celestian within it. They have foretold much of what has happened on Oerth, including the Binding of a greater Evil power (Iuz) and its eventual release. Whether they knew of Iuz's eventual triumph over the Shield Lands and Tenh is unknown. Likely not, as considerable numbers of followers of Celestian were tied to that land, and have not been heard from since it's fall.

<cont'd>

Date: 7/26/96 8:05:31 PM

From: Deathleaf3

* Ice Templars of Tenh. The few Paladins of Celestian were based at one of the larger temples/keeps in the Duchy of Tenh. Before that land fell to the Barbarians of Stonefist, they patrolled the northern lands with the Flaming Stars Sect of Celestian, and helped to protect from raiders. But it seems that they grew lax, and were punished by Celestian. For too long they relied upon the Astrology of the other followers of Celestian, and not enough upon patrolling and guarding to determine when they would be needed. They were caught unawares by the Horde that descended upon them from the North, and were almost completely Destroyed by the Fists might. Only a handful of Ice Templars and Flaming Stars escaped the destruction, as they were on a deep retreat farther north, and managed to avoid patrolling Fists on their route back south. They are now attempting to rebuild their Order in the South, primarily the County of Urnst. These efforts are hampered by their tarnished reputations as Templars, and by their mostly Tenh/Flan heritage. The highest level Ice Templar is a paladin of 10th level, and is assisted by two 8th level paladins and a 6th level paladin. The remaining Ice Templars are of 1st level, and there are approximately 15 to 20 of these youths. It is thought that a handful of these Paladins might have escaped further north, and have taken up residence with the Frost Barbarians, or slipped farther to Blackmoor. Nothing has been heard from these possible survivors.

Priestly Vestments: Special, See above.

Normal Priests: Stars of Celestian.

Ability Requirements: Int 15, Wis 16

Prime Req: Wis 16

Alignment: Any Good

Weapons: Dagger, Long Bow, Spear, Short Sword, Staff

Armor: non metal

Major Spheres: Astral, Creation, Sun, Travelers, Weather

Intermediate Spheres: Healing, Divinations

Minor Spheres: Guardian, Necromantic, Thought

Magical Items: As Priests

Required Proficiencies: Astronomy/Astrology

Bonus Proficiencies:

Turn Undead: -3 levels

Granted Powers:

1st Order: Levels 1-2, Light blue robes, ruby, Feather Fall

2nd Order: Levels 3-4, Light Gray robes, jacinth, Jump

3rd Order: Levels 5-6, Violet robes, topaz, Levitate

4th Order: Levels 7-8, Blue-Grey robes, emerald, Spider Climb

5th Order: Levels 9-10, Dark Blue robes, sapphire, Fly

6th Order: Levels 11-15, Deep Purple robes, amethyst, Dimension Door

7th Order: Levels 16-up, Black robes, Diamond, Teleport "

Addition Experience Cost Per Level: 10%

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Date: 7/26/96 8:06:48 PM

From: Deathleaf3

Speciality Priests: Flaming Stars

Ability Requirements: Int 15, Wis 16, Con 14, Str 14

Prime Req: Wis, Con
Alignment: CG, NG
Weapons: Dagger, Long Bow, Spear*, Short Sword, Staff, Battle Axe
Armor: Nonmetal, Chain in times of War
Major Spheres: All, Astral, Elemental (Air, Fire), Creation, Sun, Travelers, Weather
Intermediate Spheres: Healing, Combat
Minor Spheres: Guardian, Necromantic
Magical Items: As Priest
Required Proficiencies:
Bonus Proficiencies:
Turn Undead: -2
Granted Powers: As normal Star, + following :
Uses Fighters table for Combat
1st level : Resist Cold (once per day, Granted ability)
5th level: Immunity to Natural Cold (Constant ability)
Addition Experience Cost Per Level: 15%

Flaming Stars are the Protectors of the other Stars and the Stars affiliated orders. They are granted access to additional spells, and armor, so that they may combat those that would harm Stars. These Spells are similar to abilities that Celestian has himself. These spells cannot be inscribed upon paper as can other priestly spells, and can only be cast by Flaming Stars.

These Priests are tied to their temples or shrines for 3 months of the year, protecting and defending all those associated with the temple, including scholars and sages tied to the temple. In addition, these priests spend much more of their time learning combat techniques, and occasionally train with the few Paladins associated with these temples. These Stars are more likely to be found in combat with those that follow the dictates of Syrul or Nerull. Followers of Iuz are tolerated no more, but direct random combat with these foul priests is typically avoided. Because of the great inroads the Evil one has made of late, more planning is involved before such an attack is unleashed.

Flaming Stars have been known to group with Stalkers of Trithereon for limited assaults upon forces of Iuz or Syrul.

<cont'd>

Date: 7/26/96 8:07:30 PM
From: Deathleaf3

Speciality Priests: Vision Stars
Ability Requirements: Int 16 Wis 16
Prime Req: Wis
Alignment: NG, LG
Weapons: Staff*, Long Bow, dagger, Short Sword
Armor: Nonmetal
Major Spheres: All, Astral, Creation, Divinations, Elemental Air, Elemental Fire, Sun, Thought, Travelers, Weather
Intermediate Spheres: Guardian, Protection, Healing
Minor Spheres: Charm
Magical Items: As Cleric
Required Proficiencies:
Bonus Proficiencies:
Turn Undead: -3 levels
Granted Powers: As Normal Stars of Celestian
Addition Experience Cost Per Level: 10%

Vision Stars are the seers and astrologers of Celestian. More than any other sect, these followers are interested in the future and in knowledge. These clerics are less likely to enter into combat or adventure than other priests are, and their reduced number of weapons and armors reflect this. Furthermore, these priests tend to be less hearty and vigorous than other priests, and have only d6 for hit points, instead of a d8, reflecting their increased time in study, and lesser time in exercise. Because of their increased study however, they have access to more spheres of

spells than the other sects, and take advantage of their divination abilities, something which no other sect has access to.

In addition, these priests are able to draw upon their skills at interpreting the stars to foresee the future. These Vision Stars can, once a week, make a proficiency check vs. Wisdom at Augury in an attempt to divine the immediate, near, or distant future. If successful, one hint of the future of the priest, or the priestly following is revealed to the Star. Examples of each might be as follows.

A party, containing a Vision Star has camped within a deserted keep. The Vision Star spends his night studying the stars, and searching for occurrences, asking questions out loud, once every hour, and determining if the stars have any answers. After the night has passed, and the morning Dawns, the priest attempts to combine the results of his answers into an understandable augury. If this check is successful, then the priest will know the answer to one of his questions. It is a form of Commune, but one which involves no actual casting of spells. Questions could range from the future if a certain weapon of evil is not destroyed, to the right choice of mountain paths to follow. If the check failed, the Priest will not know this, but will have the wrong answer for his question. He will assume that he has divined the correct response however. (Game terms, DM rolls, and then answers the player's question falsely if the check failed)

Speciality Priests: Ice Templars of Tenh

Ability Requirements: As Paladins

Prime Req: As Paladins

Alignment: LG

Weapons: As Paladins, but including Spear and Long Bow

Armor: Any

Major Spheres: All, Astral, Elemental (Air, Fire), Creation, Sun, Travelers, Weather

Intermediate Spheres: Healing

Minor Spheres: Guardian, Combat

Magical Items: As Paladin

Required Proficiencies:

Bonus Proficiencies:

Turn Undead: As Paladin

Granted Powers: As Paladin + the following:

1st Order: Levels 1-2, Light blue robes, ruby, Feather Fall

2nd Order: Levels 3-4, Light Gray robes, jacinth, Jump, Resist Cold

3rd Order: Levels 5-6, Violet robes, topaz, Levitate

4th Order: Levels 7-8, Blue-Grey robes, emerald, Spider Climb

5th Order: Levels 9- up, Dark Blue robes, sapphire, Fly

Ice Templars are the Paladins of Celestian. These Paladins gain some of the abilities that normal Stars of Celestian have, and can be ranked as members of the church proper. Unfortunately, many members of this once distinguished order fell to the same excesses as did many of the other Tenhs. While somewhat tarnished, the remaining members of this group are attempting to rebuild their Order and free their lands from the control of the Fists.

<cont'd>

Date: 7/26/96 8:09:33 PM

From: Deathleaf3

Spells:

Name: Aurora Ward Level: 2 Sphere: Astral

Components: V,M

Range: Touch

Casting Time: 1 seg

Duration: 7 rounds +1/level

Saving Throw: ½

Area of effect: One target

The Aurora Ward is a protective shield that can be cast by followers of Celestian. This prayer causes a score of small bright sparks to appear and begin to swirl about the caster, protecting him from physical assaults. These

sparks will form multicolored sheets or waves of light about the priest. This spell causes the target to blur and appear to spark, lowering his AC by two points. In addition, the spell burns and shocks any creatures other than the caster or the target recipient that attempts to cross it. This damage is minimal at lower levels, but can become very potent at higher levels.

At 1st-3rd level it does 1-4 points of damage +1 pt per level of caster.

At 4th-6th level it does 2-8 points of damage +2 pts per level of caster.

At 7th-9th level it does 3-12 points of damage + 3 pts per level of caster.

At 10th-12th level it does 4-16 points of damage +4 pts per level of caster.

At 13th-15th level it does 5-20 points of damage +5 pts per level of caster.

At 16th and up it does 6-36 pts of damage +6 pts per level of caster.

This spell is a purely defense incantation. If the priest attempts to run at a monster or creature not attacking him, the spell will do no damage to it. If the priest attempts to strike a creature, the spell will not cover the priest's weapon. It also has no effect on range attacks, or projectile weapons.

Name: Comet Level: 4 Sphere: Astral, Elemental Fire

Components: V,S,M

Range: 70 ft

Casting Time: 5 segments

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: ½

Area of effect: One Target

This spell calls a Flaming missile which will strike at one creature within the spells range. The ball of flaming poisonous gasses will ignite all combustible substances on the target, and will affect the target by doing 5-30 pts of damage, and causing a save vs poison or unconsciousness will occur. Creatures immune to poison, or that do not require air, will not be affected by that aspect of the prayer.

Name: Heat Lightning Level: 6 Sphere: Astral, Elemental Fire

Components: VSM

Range: Sight

Casting Time: 7 Segments

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: none(special)

Area of effect: One target

A bolt of flaming lightning is drawn from the sky, and unerringly strikes a target creature. This bolt will cause all non magical metal to fuse, and will inflict 5-50 points of damage. All flammable substances will ignite, and all magical combustible substances will have to make a save vs. magical fire or be similarly ignited and destroyed. Further, this spell will affect magical metal if a save vs. magical lightning at +1 per 'Plus' or ability is failed. Thus a +1 sword would have a +1 bonus, but a vorpal Sword would have a +3 for its enchantment, and an additional +3 for Vorpal abilities. (DM's digression)

Name: Chill of the Night Level:3 Sphere: Astral, Elemental Air

Components: VSM

Range: 70 ft

Casting Time: 3 seg

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: 1/2

Area of effect: cone spreading from caster at 30x to 90x's

This spell creates a wave of rolling Blackness which consists of Cold and Vacuum. It will kill all normal vegetation, and do double damage to all magical or animated vegetation. The damage is 2-8 pts from chill, and another 2-8 points from the vacuum conditions.

Name: Stars Shine Level: 1 Sphere: Astral, Creations

Components: V,M

Range: 70 ft

Casting Time: 1 seg

Duration: 1 turn

Saving Throw: neg

Area of effect: 1-4 creatures

This is a powerful version of Light. When cast the Star's eyes glow and beams of light issue from his eyes to the targets eyes. If the saving throw is unsuccessful, the target is blinded for 1 turn.

These spells are only useable by Stars and Paladins of Celestian. Only one of each of these spells can be prayed for at a time.

Still plugging along on these Goofy Gods.

Deathleaf3

I don't care if you want to play a War Cleric of Pelor, THEY DONT EXIST!!!

Subj: Re:Celestian 2

Date: 7/28/96 12:19:01 AM

From: BRaines000

In continuing with his "Far wanderer" idea, how about those who explore the planes? (Does PlaneScape have some of character class or something for them?)

Subj: Celestian Seasonings

Date: 7/28/96 12:49:55 AM

From: JohnH10337

A couple thoughts... In "The Complete Spacefarer's Handbook," Celestian is one of the few Powers able to grant spells just about anywhere because of his sphere of influence. Certainly this would be a major reason for there not being too many of his clerics on Oerth -- a lot of them are busy exploring the crystal spheres and other planes of existence! And let's not forget that Celestian's brother, Fharlanghn (sp???) only has Oerth as his area of influence, so there would be additional balance in that.

JohnH

GREY IN THE HAWK (What really makes Greyhawk, Greyhawk)
--

This article is somehow the continuation of the article written by Roger Moore and Tamerlain in folder #13, and could be labeled in the category Best of the "Best of".

Subj: Grey in the Hawk1

Date: 7/26/96 9:44:41 PM

From: NiteScreed

What does it mean for a product or adventure or even an entirely new creation to be suitably "Greyhawk?" Since Skip Williams, posting as Caged Crow, first asked this question in a snotty little post, to Tony Bryant, posting as Kid Cohiba in the What I'd Like to See from TSR folder, condemning the line as a failure without understanding it, this gauntlet has lain in the dust at our collective feet. I intend to pick it up.

<cont'd>

Date: 7/26/96 9:46:22 PM

From: NiteScreed

Criteria No. 1 Applied Internal Historic Consistency

Greyhawk has a strong internal sense of history that is consistently applied in all "Greyhawk" products or creations. However, not every product published under the name "Greyhawk" meets this criterion.

Greyhawk is a storied realm. Its seminal figures, good and ill, are interwoven throughout the setting. It has a defined history that strongly influences the present and future of the setting. Greyhawk's history is not a footnote but an integral part of the setting that must be understood to truly comprehend the relationships among men, nations and even gods. True "Greyhawk" products or creations build on this history, incorporate it and develop

it. The best such products or creations leave enough open ends to allow for further such development. More mediocre products attempt closure of every loose thread.

<cont'd>

Date: 7/26/96 9:47:29 PM

From: NiteScreed

Criteria No. 2 Player Resolution of Critical Events

The seminal events in Greyhawk's current history and development are all presented such that the players may not only take part but play a leading role.

Player's could fight the Greyhawk Wars. Players defeated the hordes of the Temple of Elemental Evil. Players defeated Lolth. Players turned the tide as Iuz aced Vecna.

In the Forgotten Realms, for example, Ao decrees an event and the players get to clean up in the aftermath. Cyric destroys Zhentil Keep offstage and the players get to delve into the ruins. Gods die to be replaced by mortals and the players watch. Elminster sends players on a mission but ultimately keeps from them the greater goal the mission serves.

When you play in Greyhawk, you join in the weaving of a tapestry of which you are a vital part. Greyhawk is about your story in the context of Greyhawk's story. Roleplaying in Greyhawk involves playing your part in the longest running AD&D campaign in existence. It is bigger than you are but you can become as great as it is. That is the essence of Greyhawk's history. It enfolds, informs and connects every part of the setting and all who play there of any length of time.

<cont'd>

Date: 7/26/96 9:48:36 PM

From: NiteScreed

Criteria No. 3 NPCs Reward More Often Than They Advise or Direct

NPC's in Greyhawk are not godlike figures who direct the course of events upon which your character is washed like the tide. Neither do they persistently show up to advise you. They may do both but more often they serve as the measuring stick against which your character's performance can be judged and serve to reward your character by recognizing their accomplishments or otherwise admitting your character into their august company.

The Circle of Eight are aloof. They do not want to be your buddy. Neither do they have a laundry list of chores or you to perform. Rather, in Greyhawk you will find adventure without such NPCs suggesting it.

In the Forgotten Realms, for example, Elminster is famous for sending characters on their way. The Harpers do the same. Ultimately, Elminster or the Harpers play the directing role and may indeed appear to steal the show or otherwise claim ultimate victory.

In Greyhawk, YOU are the hero, without assistance from the likes of the Circle of Eight and without them acting as a safety net. You can go your own way, in fact, without them ever troubling you. This cannot be so simply said in settings such as the Forgotten Realms and has not a little to do with Criteria No. 2 (Player Resolution of Critical Events in Greyhawk vs. NPC Resolution of Critical Events in FR).

<cont'd>

Date: 7/26/96 9:49:46 PM

From: NiteScreed

Criteria No. 4 Persistent Personified Evil

Evil in Greyhawk is persistent. It is halted, checked or imprisoned but it is not defeated with finality for all time. The triumph over evil is a relative thing, ultimately transitory.

Evil in Greyhawk is personified. Evil has faces and names attached to it that ring down through the setting's history. It is not an evil that pops up purely to give the players something to strive against and defeat before moving on to the next evil that similarly appears out of relative nowhere.

Vecna, Iuz, Lolth, Tharizdun, the Scarlet Brotherhood, Aerdi, Kas, even Turrosh Mak, all met this criterion. They are highly personified forces that spring from the settings specific history. By comparison, evil in the Forgotten Realms is of the pop-up variety save for the Red Wizards and Zhentim. Menaces appear from nowhere or with on the spot histories that never before appeared in the setting.

Greyhawk allows for this type of toaster villainy but it also established from the first villains of a historic character that transcend the needs of the adventure of the moment.

<cont'd>

Date: 7/26/96 9:51:16 PM
From: NiteScreed
Posted on: America Online

Criteria No. 5 Villainous Variety

Villainy in Greyhawk runs the gambit from the cosmic menace of Tharizdun, to the planar peril of Lolth, to the cambion menace of Iuz, to the purely moral menace of Turrosh Mak. There is variety in the villainy. Villainy in Greyhawk is like a box of chocolates from Hell; you never know for sure what you are going to get (Best Example: The Giant Series). Greyhawk's villains do not announce themselves; you have to figure it out.

Compare villainy in the Forgotten Realms. The variety isn't there. You have scads of godly villains. The Red Wizards. The Zhents. It is feast or famine. And FR villains have signature trademarks that all but announce who you are facing, unless of course it is an evil toaster pastry.

Villains in Greyhawk will also turn on each other, the Iuz vs. Vecna conflict being perhaps the most famous. In other settings, villains are villains, identified by their clearly visible placards, sandwich signs or more "subtly" their black attire. You can count on them to always do the wrong thing.

Greyhawk keeps you guessing. Like a good Call of Cthulthu adventure.

<cont'd>

Date: 7/26/96 9:52:21 PM
From: NiteScreed

Criteria No. 6 Heroism With a Price

Greyhawk's heroes rarely slay the evil wizard, who will trouble the land no more, to the full voiced cheers of the crowd. Best Iuz and you are marked. He will be back but you will have to deal with a likely enraged Zuggotomy in the meanwhile. Greyhawk's villains don't exist in a vacuum and neither do Greyhawk's heroes. Everything is linked.

Heroism has a meaning within the setting that makes it more than a solitary act echoing in the vastness. It attracts attention, good and ill. It is immediate and brings a notoriety that other settings can only talk about. Notables exist to recognize your accomplishments and to measure you against themselves and the foe you defeated. And, they will have likely played little or no role in your victory. Evil too takes your measure for darker reasons.

This criterion can best be seen in the breach. The interconnection of people and places and the loose ends creates this effect, though few published adventures use it to motivate future adventures. The revised supermodule series provides the greatest opportunity on this score.

<cont'd>

Date: 7/26/96 9:53:27 PM

From: NiteScreed

Criteria No. 7 Militant Neutrality

On Oerth, the forces of neutrality are arguably at least as powerful as those of good and evil and certainly as active.

Iquander alone has accurately defined this characteristic of Greyhawk and I acknowledge his work. Greyhawk is not concerned with the triumph of good over evil. The very nature of the evils loose on Oerth makes such triumphs fleeting at best. Greyhawk endures evil and circumvents it. It does not defeat it.

Evil forces, of course, will attempt to conquer Oerth. And just as certainly they will be opposed by forces who will seek to banish evil from the world. Neither will succeed. Neither in the long history of Oerth has ever succeeded. Good and evil are well enough matched that outcomes are never certain and always close calls one way or the other.

Moreover, evil on Oerth is not monolithic. Various demon lords and ladies contend with each other. Iuz battles Vecna. Kas seeks Vecna's destruction. Iuz feuds with his mother and father. Evil beings are true to no one save themselves.

Perhaps accounting for all of this, Oerth has strong and active neutrally aligned forces, working to preserve a balance between good and evil. While hardly organized, these forces nonetheless manage to be quite effective. The Circle of Eight, mighty wizards all, seeks a middle path. Istus, the divine Lady of Fate, tests all but favors none. Druids are a quiet but ever present presence. Indeed, many of Greyhawk's deities reflect a distinct neutral bent.

Compare Toril. Evil is overmatched by Elminster, the Seven Sisters (good aligned minions of the goddess of magic), the Harpers, the Lords of Waterdeep and activist gods. Evil is on the run and kept that way. It has but few strong holds and is highly transient, rarely surviving long enough to present more than a temporary challenge. Good triumphs on Toril. The dragon is slain, never to rise. The horror you never heard of before yesterday is laid to rest. The bad gods are thrown down!

The differences could not be more striking. Greyhawk is about struggle against evenly matched and long standing opponents. FR is about victory over transient and overmatched opponents.

<cont'd>

Date: 7/26/96 9:54:46 PM

From: NiteScreed

Criteria No. 8 Personal Magics

Greyhawk is not a low fantasy setting save by comparison to settings on magical overload. Birthright is a low fantasy setting. The Forgotten Realms is a high fantasy setting. Greyhawk falls in between.

What distinguishes magic in Greyhawk is that it is highly personalized. Look at the spells. Mordenkain's this. Nystul's that. Otiluke's the other. Magic is personalized by any wizard not of the hedge variety. Look at the artifacts for still more proof. What Birthright strives to achieve sparingly, Greyhawk has already accomplished in fair profusion. Spells have a history as due magic items. While there are +1 swords of no certain fame, many are the items with specific histories. Look at the Greyhawk Adventures hardback.

Similarly magical instruction in Greyhawk is personal. Greyhawk does not know great guilds of wizards but flourishes with a developed system of apprenticeships. One need but look at the Circle of Eight to see this. They, with one, possibly two, exceptions, belong to no guild of mages, and they that do belong do so as patrons at best and more probably as figureheads. Neither can the Circle itself be considered a guild. This mighty example and the utter lack of a single magical guild of any note, fairly well makes the case.

I will at a later point post more directly on this subject as I found the article in the Oerth Journal about wizardly organizations purest fantasy, out of keeping with the available information on magic in Greyhawk, though the article was still interesting for all that.

<cont'd>

Date: 7/26/96 9:56:17 PM
From: NiteScreed

These then are the eight traits that define the Greyhawk feel. Most critical are 1st (Applied Internal Historic Consistency), 4th (Persistent Personified Evil) and 7th (Militant Neutrality) points. At the barest minimum to be considered truly "Greyhawk" a product or creation must adhere to these three criteria. Better products or creations adhere to progressively more of these criteria.

Without doing a full dress analysis of From the Ashes, I think we can see that it utterly fails to adhere to the 7th criterion. FtA throws neutrality out the window in favor of paring off goods and evils in a Flaneass tilted wildly toward evil. Furondy/Nyrond is paired off with Iuz. Aerdi is paired off with Nyron. Keoland is paired off with the Scarlet Brotherhood/Pomarj. While overall, evil is clearly ascendant. This sort of dark fantasy, whatever its merits otherwise, defies the tradition of active neutrality that defined Greyhawk beforehand. That about half all WoG players rejected FtA supports this hypothesis. FtA's designers, to include the Greyhawk Wars, were ignorant, willfully or otherwise, of the setting in which they worked. The resulting products while technically proficient, even well done on their own merits, were sadly lacking in that Greyhawk feel. Of course, some would choose to ignore this, finding the change "bracing," others with duller senses wouldn't even notice.

In any event, now we have a list of what puts the Grey in the Hawk. This list is by no means exclusive. I may have overlooked something and I know some listed criteria are of lesser note than others or mere permutations. However, I think overall the list can stand up to close scrutiny. Have at it.

NightScreed

Subj: Re:Grey in the Hawk
Date: 7/28/96 2:29:31 AM
From: Iquander

Let it be said that there is no one on AOL who can get to the point like Nitescreed. While I have often found myself at the receiving end of that point, I must say that his "Putting the Grey in Hawk" posts are perhaps the most definitive posts I've seen on the subject (as, I believe, were his "maturity" posts ages ago).

A while back, Roger Moore, while still filtering his posts through Rob Repp, wrote up a short list about the commonalities of the various Greyhawk adventures. His list was functional, but as it was limited in scope (dealing with only the modules he could remember at the time--and let me say that Roger has become quite a guru on Greyhawk since then) and ultimately failed to really capture the full essence of a Greyhawk campaign.

Nitescreed, my friend, you've done it.

It's funny, because I know Sam's been clamoring for this type of discussion for the last few folders, and it's been on my mind, as well. I think part of what was so frustrating about the topic is that most of us know what makes a Greyhawk campaign special to us, but because we are so close to it, we have difficulty putting it to paper, so to speak.

I agree with everything but two paragraphs in Screed's posts (more on that later). More specifically, I'm glad that someone else has picked out the overwhelming emphasis of neutrality on Oerik, and on the planet itself. I'll get to FtA in a minute, but I will say now that I think leaving the Quasi-Deities out of that product was a mistake for precisely this reason. They, more than anyone else, act as the sort of "keepers of the neutral flame," and while I think a notion of "The Balance" as an actual Oerth-wide organization (a la New Infinities) is a bit simplistic, the Quasi Deities are, or should be, very real forces in a Greyhawk campaign.

And now to my only point of contention: Magic Guilds. We could argue that Gyax had a different view of the Guild of Wizardry and the Society of Magi than was presented in "City of Greyhawk" (and, having read all of his related fiction, I think it's probably fair to say that he did), but I don't think that guilds or organizations take away anything from a Greyhawk campaign.

Surely, entire learning institutions based upon schools of magic is a tad extreme, but I do not think it so odd that a number of mages would come together to share secrets and socialize. Remember that this is still a very regional thing (especially with the article in the Oerth Journal which was one of my favorites to date), and is nothing like the continent-wide "Order of High Sorcery" of Krynn.

I think your point that there are members of the Circle of Eight unassociated with a guild is well made, and should serve as a model for the development of guilds across the Flanaess, should a DM choose to invent such things.

Finally, based upon your criteria, I am forced to agree that, in many ways, From the Ashes is a failure. Whoever posted that a dualistic approach was necessary from the minute they decided to turn the whole thing into a board game is entirely correct, and I think this was an unfortunate development. Carl wasn't left with much and, in hindsight; he probably could have done much better at reconciling the Wars material with the way Greyhawk used to be. Still, his source material shines as some of the better RPG products I have read and, though I have never run a post-Wars campaign, I have found more use from those books than I have of most others.

I think, Nitescreed, that your criteria should be used as a measuring stick for all future Greyhawk creations.

Bravo.

Iquander

Subj: Oerth Invaded by Evil
Date: 7/28/96 10:11:03 PM
From: TSR Roger

One other of NiteScreed's points, about personified evil, echoes a point that was made earlier in this board, I no longer remember by whom, that Oerth is a world under constant and steady attack by monstrous forces of evil from other planes. I would emphasize this point since so many of the adventures for GH are responses to events being manipulated off-screen (and off-plane) by divine or extraplanar evil powers. I would also point out that the concept of traveling through gates or traveling to other worlds is frequently a feature of the Greyhawk campaign, and such travel is often necessary in order to resolve a crisis endangering Oerth. Roger

Subj: Those 8 Greyhawk Criteria
Date: 7/30/96 4:15:05 PM
From: TSR Roger

After downloading NiteScreed's eight distinctive criteria for an authentic Greyhawk campaign, I studied them and compared them to some of the published adventures and accessories. I very strongly agree with some of these criteria, but some do seem a bit weak. This topic is a very important one, so the following comments are posted here to incite more discussion. I can post only a few notes at a time because of other projects I have in the fire (and because my hard drive is about to crash, darnit).

1. Applied Internal Historic Consistency

This point is essential in developing material for any published campaign world, but is even more critical for the Greyhawk campaign as it is not regularly supported by the company. Game events should spring logically from past events in the history of Flanaess; if the established history, personalities, events, countries, and so forth are ignored, the campaign material loses all flavor and will fail to attract knowledgeable gamers. A corollary is that running a Greyhawk campaign requires considerable research on the part of the DM, who must have a clear working familiarity with all game materials that that DM considers relevant to the campaign. This implies that the DM should make an effort to locate, examine, and evaluate all published Greyhawk materials whenever possible in search of new bits to flesh out the world. In short, a Greyhawk campaign means lots of hard work for the DM.

Do published adventures and other materials for the Greyhawk campaign have internal historic consistency? This point is hotly debated here, and if the 1983 World of Greyhawk boxed set is used as the baseline for historic consistency, my answer is yes--but not always. On the good side, some materials are extraordinarily good in this department; I rate WGR4 <Vecna Lives!> very highly, as it expands logically upon previously established

material and adds new material that fits well with the old. (I have heard that the WGR4 version of Verbobonc does not entirely match that found in WG8 <Fate of Istus>, but otherwise it works well.)

Other adventures have their faults and high points. C1 <The Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan> expands greatly on the Amedio Jungle's past, but it implies that there is only one moon around Oerth, not two, and never states that the adventure is set in the Flanaess. The "Alice" modules, EX1 and EX2, have barely any connection to Oerth except for the appearance of Murlynd, a Flanaess quasi-deity (whose description in EX2 does not match that given for him elsewhere, and who does not have much to do with Oerth lately anyway, though he did help attack Iuz). S1 <Tomb of Horrors> and S2 <White Plume Mountain> have only loose connections to the past history of the Flanaess; Acererak and Keraptis appear to be more "pop-up villains" than widely known evil beings alluded to in other early materials such as Orcus, Iuz, Demogorgon, and Vecna, and the place in history of the former two is subject to debate, going only by early references.

Interestingly, WG11 <Puppets>, which is not well liked by some posters here, has no internal historic inconsistencies that I can find. It is a retrofit from two RPGA Network tournaments, but the retrofit was a good one, IMHO. It is a pre-Greyhawk Wars module, not a world-shaking adventure but a good one, with numerous accurate references to the cities, countries, and gods of the Flanaess--probably more than can be found in S1 or S2 combined. The internal framework of WG11 is consistent and logical as well. (This module has other praiseworthy elements that I will note later.)

The four "Aquaria" R-series modules from TSR are connected to Oerth only through a historical section in the fourth module, R4, but the connection is reasonable. Aquaria, judging from its monsters, character classes, communities, and so forth, is a standard AD&D campaign region but could use a closer fit to the Flanaess. I would have liked to have seen more on the gods/religions of Aquaria & stronger cultural and ethnic notes.

Subj: <Puppets> and <Vecna Lives!>
Date: 7/30/96 9:32:57 PM
From: TSR Roger

In an earlier posting, I mentioned that WG11 <Puppets> has something to commend it. Actually, it fits many of the criteria NiteScreed mentioned for good Greyhawk material besides #1 (historic consistency).

#2: Players are indeed allowed to resolve critical events....

#3:without annoying interference by well-meaning NPCs who frustrate the PCs' moves.

#4: <Puppets> has several types of villains with distinct personalities and styles of evil. Compare the evil leprechaun (ignore his silly name and focus on what he does) and the puppet master, two of the major foes here. Low-key, low-level foes. Nicely done. True, these two foes have not appeared before, but they both have full potential to reappear later and become major trouble.

#5: Oh, I covered this in #4. Sorry.

#6: This is easy to institute in this module, as the PCs have arrived at Dyvers and can gain reputations (and enemies) quite easily.

#7: Given the nature of some of the NPCs and PCs here, this could be covered as well (militant neutrality). The point might be debatable, but neutrality does appear here in good shape.

#8: Personal magics: Yup, <Puppets> has them. Check out the suggested PCs. Each one of the three spellcasters either learned spells from a parent (mother or father) or as an apprentice. Ta-dah.

As for <Vecna Lives!>, with regards to #2 (PCs resolve crises), consider that this is one of the few, if not the only, module in which the mere act of a PC deciding to help an enemy (here, Vecna) causes the end of the world. Well, not the complete end, but close enough: Vecna wins, becomes a greater god, and begins trashing the Flanaess all because YOUR CHARACTER said it was okay. Takes your breath away! Winning and losing are indeed up to the PCs, who can even interfere in the fight between Vecna and Iuz! (Not that the PCs would WANT to get involved....) Roger

WIZARDS (How to become one ?)
--

Subj: Of Wizardly Ways
Date: 7/28/96 4:05:32 PM
From: NiteScreed

As has been ably pointed out there are three sure ways to become a Wizard.

- 1) You may attend a magical college or apprentice to a guild of wizards;
- 2) You may apprentice to a practicing wizard individually;
- 3) You may teach yourself.

One must conclude that the easiest way to become a wizard is too attend a college or apprentice to a guild with all its resources. As a practicing wizard will have resources sufficient to his or her own needs but less than those of a college or guild, apprenticeship to a practicing wizard must be accounted the next simplest method of becoming a wizard oneself. The most laborious method would be self-study for one must not only make do without instruction but assemble all necessary supplies oneself.

Conversely, one must conclude that the earliest wizards were self-taught, there being no one to teach them. They in turn taught apprentices, who among themselves or with their masters formed colleges or guilds. This raises an interesting question. Which is most responsible for the development of increasingly sophisticated magic - the individual or the group?

In Greyhawk, the absence of many sorcerous guilds of any note and the abundant evidence of highly idiosyncratic spells developed by individual wizards suggests that it is the individual who is more responsible for the development of the magical arts. While it is no great feat to name Greyhawk's wizards of note, one is hard pressed to name any guilds of even a fraction of such fame. Even the much vaunted Circle of Eight is just that, a circle, not a guild.

What emerges then is a picture of highly personal magical instruction between master and apprentice. What guilds exist do so more in the breach and in all ways seem inferior to individual instruction in terms of power, both magical and mundane. One might even go so far as to say that on the evidence, wizard guilds in Greyhawk are for mediocre wizards of no special talent, who must band together to achieve much of anything. The real talent is apprenticed to wizards of note.

Compare this to places such as Toril. Who are their Great Wizards? Why Elminster comes to mind, of course! But what has he done? What spells bear his name? What stamp has he left upon his chosen vocation? In all ways, he is inferior to but the least of the Circle of Eight. Yet, he must be accounted a Mighty Mage. Certainly, he did not become so on his own merit, for there is no evidence of such. He must have had a good teacher and proved an apt pupil. Thus, while competent, even able, he is no innovator but a mere practitioner.

But let us lift our eyes from Shadowdale. What other wizards command our attention? There is Khelben. While of less notoriety than Elminster, he is arguably of more note as a wizard. He has authored spells in some appreciable manner. And beyond Khelben? Few wizards of but passing mention, though the inhabitants of Toril must be acknowledged as having a disconcerting habit of achieving an all too frequently easy divinity.

This positive paucity of wizards of any sure stature suggests that Toril does not use a system of magical instruction like that practiced to such effect in the Flaneass. Indeed, guilds on a monumental scale seem in vogue. Halruua and Thay providing two elephantine examples. By the same token, Toril's wizards seem extremely reliant upon scavenged knowledge, dredged up from this ruined civilization or that. At least, their forebears seem to have had some idea of what they were doing. In all other respects, the wizards of Faerun must be accounted a mediocre lot, standing on the shoulders of giants.

This, I suggest, tend to prove my hypothesis that guilds are more for nere'do well wizards.

NightScreed

Subj: The Radical Alternative

Date: 7/28/96 4:12:41 PM

From: NiteScreed

Yet, we do not hear much of apprentices, even after they ostensibly should have become masters in their own right. To whom was Mordenkainen apprenticed? From whence did Tenser learn his first spell? And indeed, what of these wizards who seem to spring from nowhere to challenge stalwart heroes bent on seeing justice done? It is almost as if they were made up for the occasion. Drawn from some pool of interchangeable and usually faceless villains with abilities just great enough to pose an interesting challenge. Boccob it seems, in such

eventuality, must have subcontracted with Ralishaz to provide appropriate opponents. I suggest that there is another answer.

I suggest that some individuals are born with a talent for magic. Not merely characteristics sufficient to take up wizardly ways but a positively inborn magic. More than an affinity, this Talent is magic itself that merely awaits release. The mind of such a person would intuitively grasp magic concepts and principles upon first exposure. These wizardly prodigies would possess some faculty or turn of mind outside anything that we would normally attribute to humanity, demi-humanity or humanoid physiology or mental attributes. They would be more akin to those monsters with inborn magical abilities, yet with an ability to shape and form their latent abilities and to learn new expressions of their gift well beyond the reach of any known monster.

Might not such a Gift explain self-taught wizards capable of seemingly stunning advances and explain why, not only Greyhawk has no wizards guilds of any note, but we hear so little of apprentices ?

NightScreed

Subj: Of Societies Sorcerous
Date: 7/28/96 4:26:01 PM
From: NiteScreed

While I enjoyed Gary Holian's article on sorcerous societies, in my own games I find a well developed apprenticeship network makes for more fascinating roleplaying as would be apprentices jockey for attention then engage in magical gossiping and sniping once apprenticed, both within their own wizard's circle and with rival circles. When I say rival, however, I do not mean any animosity necessarily, merely a competitiveness born of wanting to believe that your apprenticeship is better than another. However, violent rivalries do exist as well, of course.

Such early relationships will greatly affect later relationships as apprentices become journeymen and eventually masters in their own right. Wizards size each other up by who they were apprenticed too in addition to their own accomplishments. Former apprentices under the same wizard may find themselves on opposite sides of an issue or conflict. This makes matters far more personal that if they had merely learned in the same school with many more students. Apprentices may have scrubbed floors together and bonded with a closeness not readily duplicated in a more formal academic setting. By the same token, early rivalries may now play out in wizardly feuds, perhaps over generations and with the fate of kingdoms in the balance.

While convenient, even interesting, sorcerous societies lack this highly personal aspect that I find increases roleplaying possibilities. My first level wizards are almost always apprenticed. You really don't think they'd survive long on their own do you? Apprenticeship ends at between 3rd and 5th level (kind of like a 1st Ed. Bard - slow or fast). Journeymen status extends from 3rd or 5th level to 7th or 9th level. Master status is conferred thereafter.

By comparison, school taught wizards graduate at 5th level. They universally regard themselves as "masters" as if launching a fireball was the mark of wizardry. There is a considerable rivalry between such "masters" and journeymen or apprentice wizards, the former looking down on the later.

While somewhat more difficult to create such a wizardly network, rather than set sorcerous societies, I believe the end result in richer roleplaying of wizards justifies the effort.

NightScreed

PS - BTW, I do use both.

GUNS & FIREARMS

Subj: Roger's Guns 1
Date: 7/30/96 10:25:54 PM
From: Aria13

Wahoo! For most people I doubt that Roger Moore's article on magical firearms in Dragon No. 232 would qualify as a Greyhawk article but for me it does. As I was coincidentally noting earlier, I make extensive use of firearms in my WoG campaign giving it a frontier feel based on the movie Last of the Mohicans (Daniel Day Lewis version) and Orson Scott Card's Alvin Maker series. Just to be clear there are no Iroquois or French running around. The gnolls are my chief humanoid menace opposed by elves with long guns and what few humans survived the plague that the elves released on the Flaneass following the Greyhawk Wars and their immediate aftermath. But now, everyone can get in on the action!

I would, however, note just a few things. Roger's article deals with "magical" firearms. That is almost gilding the lily. Simple firearms and their evolution in form are quite powerful without being magicked. Then again, it would make sense that in a magical world, guns like everything else would be subject to being made into magic items. Still, be careful.

Basically, you have six levels of sophistication when dealing with firearms, short of truly modern weapons.

Matchlock weapons were the first and most primitive man portable firearms. They put a match into an often uncertain gunpowder and waited for a bang. They were dangerously unreliable and very slow to fire both because they were muzzle loaded and because pure black powder gunpowder does not explode immediately upon contact with the flame. You could also see, hear and smell a Matchlock coming. In my WoG campaign, humans have mastery of Matchlock weapons only, though the gnolls are not far behind.

Wheel locks were the next innovation, relying on a steel wheel to strike sparks into the still unreliable and slow burning powder. Their advantage over Matchlocks is that they are far more reliable. However, their complex design (comparable to clocks or watches) made them more fragile and difficult to produce. In my game, dwarves alone create Wheel locks.

Flintlocks are the final stage before the first truly modern firearms. They avoid the Matchlock's flame and the Wheel locks complexity by sparking steel and flint directly into the firing chamber. They are sturdy and reliable. Elves alone produce Flintlocks, as well as the following enhancements.

Rifling of a guns barrel through the formation of grooves makes for a longer and straighter trajectory. You get a longer, more accurate shot. Matchlocks, Wheel locks and early Flintlocks were all smooth bore weapons, less accurate than a rifled weapon.

Beach loading involves putting the shot and powder into the firing chamber from the breach, located in the rear of the gun, rather than ramming the load down the barrel. This makes loading much quicker.

Fulminating powder, using fulminate of mercury, vastly improves the rate of fire of a gun because as soon as the powder is lit it goes off. Early black powder that does not incorporate fulminate of mercury took a second or two to burn till explosion, giving your target a chance to react.

The best Elven long guns incorporate all of these features into a Flintlock, producing a truly formidable weapon capable of reliably piercing armor and doing aggravated damage at over 200 yards without any telltale warning signs before the first shot is fired. They are highly prized. Each is individually crafted and is as much a work of art as a weapon. They are not mass produced.

<cont'd>

Date: 7/30/96 10:28:10 PM
From: Aria13

However, even the finest such weapon cannot match a bow for rate of fire and like a bow, a gun is of limited utility in close melee, which is why most gun stocks are designed to double as clubs. This fact and their limited production, in all varieties, keeps them from dominating the game. It must be remembered that the firearm was developed before the industrial revolution but really only took off as the industrial revolution made mass production and machine tooling possible. In Greyhawk, there are no automates for producing gun parts. Each part must be hand crafted.

Similarly, magic has retarded the development of firearms. Firearms, while more common than magic items, cannot compare to a wand of fireballs/frost/lightening or even magic missiles. Firearms were developed in

Greyhawk by the elves as a cheaper defense against armored human knights. They were not intended to supplant, but to supplement, magical attacks. This is still their role. While there has been expansion of that role, it is highly limited for the reasons discussed above.

I highly recommend Roger's article and giving firearms ago. Finding a rationale to do so should not be difficult. Though EGG is on record as saying the gunpowder won't work in WoG, he violates his own rules with but the flimsiest excuses or rationales. It would be easy enough to come up with countervailing rationales that would allow gunpowder to work.