

-----===== **The NET.PLOTS.BOOK** =====
Volume IV
Compiled by Phil Scadden

Editors Note:

Here at last is volume 4, the latest attempt to keep GM's supplied with inspiration. It contains plot and scenarios for mostly fantasy RPGs but at last I have some cyper plots. (Now for some more horror and space adventures for Vol 5). Plots have been presented in no particular order - if it isnt written for your genre, try thinking of translating the core idea. I have made only minimal changes (spelling and removal of trademarks etc. of a certain gaming company) to the material as received. I hope everyone finds this enjoyable and useful.

The book includes a very large appendix of ideas for starting out campaigns. (seems to be the theme for this volume). Should be no excuse for the tired old "you meet these people in a bar" hack.

Authorship of individual plots have been accredited individually with email addresses. Author attribution is at the top of each plot. Authors appreciate feedback - if you use any of these try telling the author how you did. **IT MAY WELL ENCOURAGE THEM TO CONTRIBUTE MORE PLOTS TO THE NEXT VOLUME.**

Finally, my thanks to all who submitted these plots. You make the net.*.books possible. Of course my mail box is now open for contributions to vol 5...

Phil Scadden *P.Scadden@GNS.CRI.NZ* 7/3/95

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From: mtaylor@tartarus.uwa.edu.au

Players are zapped to new low-magic fantasy world minus their memory and anything metal they were carrying (If you are a kindly GM give magic stuff a save to make the trip) and sporting a few new wounds (Its fun to describe their injuries). In this new world they are poor, ill-equipped, injured, they don't speak the language(s), their spells don't seem to work as well and nobody likes the way they smell or they way they look ("Why's that short guy got pointy ears?").

I ran this adventure by starting them in a cavern that looked like the start of an underground temple complex and stuck a cave-in at the entrance to the complex. I then suggested their last memories involved ransacking an underground temple of some kind. This accomplished a few important things:

- An immediate goal - getting past the cave-in.

- An explanation of their injuries - they'd been set upon by temple nasties.
- Some additional intrigue - the players didn't realize they in a new world until a few hours into the game.
- A justification of their teleportation - temples always have weird, nasty, magic traps in them.
- Most importantly a reason to get out in the society of the new world - to get men and equipment to get past the cave-in.
- Finally an excuse for a traditional dungeon bash when they'd done the hard role-playing stuff.

Once they were past the cave-in I gave the players a fun time exploring the temple complex as a reward. In short order they found an ancient magic artifact and an idol that looked familiar. They united the two and wham-bam they were back in the real-world -- in the middle of the fight they had fled from in the first place :)

The reason I made the new world low-magic was to short circuit magical short-cuts. The cave-in, the language barrier and other fun stuff could have been circumnavigated by the right spells.

Run correctly this can be a really hard adventure, going into a new world with little to no resources and little recourse to magic will really stretch your players inventiveness.

Grishnak the Merciless

From: bryce@canal.aero.org (Bryce Harrington)

This encounter was designed for a group of 4-8 low-mid level characters of The encounter is intended to be challenging and to scare the pants off the PCs. If they feel too cocky, they may not complete the adventure, or may complete it too soon.

If the party includes a psionicist with the psionic blast power then the part will have a much easier time with the encounter than otherwise, so you may want to 1) disable the psionicist's power somehow, 2) beef up Grishnak's immunity to psionics, 3) cheat on the power rolls. If nothing else, impose the -7 penalty for trying to contact a monster, even though a hill giant may still qualify as a humanoid.

If this adventure is too easy for the party, change the giant type to a stone or fire giant. This *will* change the flavor of the encounter a bit. One way to toughen up the encounter without changing the flavor is to give the giant some helpers. A dozen goblins or orcs hanging around might slow the party enough for Grishnak to get in a few good blows. Give him a couple of ogres, too, and the party may have some difficulties. For a very high level party, you may want to beef up Grishnak as a specialized fighter with a high strength, high skills, and very high damage resistance.

It would work best if one of the party members is a dwarf; for a low level party, spell casters or psionicists are a must.

I. RUMORS

Before starting the first encounter, it is important to build up a little fear and respect in the PCs. Make them realize how tough this giant is by rumors of its atrocities. Here are some rumors which I used in my campaign:

- The town of Inglesham was attacked by The Giant on Middenmonth 8th. Death tolls vary depending on the teller, but at least two score of citizens found their way to Grishnak's belly. Inglesham is shaken by the event, to say the least, and is offering a huge bounty on Grishnak's head. Some say that the King himself will lead his forces to defeat the brute, others wonder why their protector has not stepped forth to protect them.
- A young rag-a-muffin boy has been asking in the city of Sherborne for an organization known as The Giant Killers. The boy says that his entire family was eaten by a Giant named Grishnak the Horrible. His desire for revenge is so strong that he will do anything for the organization if they help him.

[Note: The PCs had just recently decided to name themselves Unar's Hammer, but had mistakenly spread several earlier names about, like Unar's Giant Foes and such. The townspeople were a little confused as to exactly what this virtually unknown band's name was.]

II. TANK

"Around noon you stop at a stream for lunch and a short rest. You've only been there for a few minutes when you hear: " MEE MIE MO MORPH, Me thinks me smell a Dwarf! I'll grind his bones to make me bread, but first, let's go and bash 'is 'ead! <THUMP> <THUMP> <THUMP>. Twisting your heads in all directions you finally spot the source of the echoes as a tall humanoid shape on the top of a hillock several hundred yards away flings his fist forward to release a huge boulder. Looking around quickly for a place to hide you see a rocky hill on the south side of the stream. Across, on the north bank, is a thick and gnarled stand of trees and shrubbery. Upstream perhaps a hundred yards is a jumble of rocks the stream flows through."

Ask each player to write down what they do individually. Then have everyone reveal their plans and move their characters appropriately. The rock will come crashing down where the PCs were. Make a to hit roll against anyone still there.

If the players are stupid enough to attack, then they should suffer the consequences:

Grishnak the Merciless.

Grishnak is really nothing more than a semi-tough hill giant. He's been ravishing the countryside and causing lots of local trouble.

Mediocre armour, (Many hides sewn together with chain mail, shields, and metal plates); Good damage resistance; Weapons are: Fist, Club, or Rocks - range 2-200 yards); Will also try to Grab.

Grishnak is selfish and cunning. He terrorises the local villagers (and eats them, that's especially annoying to the villagers). He is oddly simian and barbaric in appearance, with overly long arms, stooped shoulders, and a low forehead. He is about 16' tall and weighs in at 4500 lbs. His skin color is a dark tan; his hair and eyes are black as coal.

Grishnak carries a bag containing:

- 3 big rocks (2' dia boulders)
- 1 Metal truck with 6lb copper, 10lb silver, 23 crown and a dwarven gauntlet (copper, worth 100 gp)
- 3 Children's toys - toy horse, wooden soldier, and a wooden dragon, 1 short sword, blood stained, but not rusty at all

Ideally, the PCs will run for the rocks. Grishnak will close, saying, "Grishnak, now don't squish food with rocks." At the last minute, just before the giant gets to the characters, he will suddenly stand up straight and sniff: "Hmm, Grishnak smell pigs. Mmm, pork!" Grishnak will then stride off across rough terrain quickly outdistancing the PCs.

Wait a few sessions before throwing this next encounter at them. The PCs should hear a few of rumors about the monster's depredation's. Perhaps have some offers of rewards be offered to them for the creature's death. Here are some of the rumors I gave out:

- The giant killing specialists known as Unar's Giant Foes are offered a job to assassinate Grishnak the Merciless by a group of merchants in Caer Shert. Grishnak has destroyed several villages in the Caer Shert region. The organization is asked to report to The Benevolent Protectorate Order of Grain Merchants in the city of Caer Shert.
- A band of ex-soldiers known as the Troll's Nightmare were found dead in the fields near the base of the Castle Oncliff. They had apparently been stepped on by Grishnak.
- The town of Inglesham was attacked by The Giant on Middenmonth 8th. Death tolls vary depending on the teller, but at least two score of citizens found their way to Grishnak's belly. Inglesham is shaken by the event, to say the least, and is offering a huge bounty on Grishnak's head. Some say that the King himself will lead his forces to defeat the brute, others wonder why their protector has not stepped forth to protect them.

III. OOPTHS!

"There seems to be some kind of obstruction in the road ahead of you and you approach it with caution. Your stomach knots in horror at the gruesomeness of the scene: To one side of the road are the crushed remnants of a gypsy wagon. A horse still wearing its bridle and harness lays dead on the opposite side of the path, and by the way its ribs have been caved in and by the way the creature's intestines have exploded from its abdomen you figure that it must have been squeezed to death.

"Littering the whole area around the wagon are pools of blood and assorted human body parts, and the way the skin has been torn and lacerated from the bones, you realize that they had been physically wrenched from the bodies to which they once belonged.

"Huge, 3' long footprints have left indentations several inches deep in the seemingly hard packed soil of the path. Several nearby trees have been completely uprooted. A pile of boulders and a tree trunk, strangely stripped clean of bark and branches, and well rounded on one end, lays a ways off near the woods to the left. You make out the tracks of a single wagon leading off to that forest, multiple trails of blood revealing the wagon's horrid cargo. Between the ruts are a single set of 3' long foot prints. The prints do not look to be more than an hour or two old."

Grishnak, as the players should well be aware, has struck. A gypsy caravan has been raided and its members carried off. It is expected that the players will investigate. The path to Grishnak is 3 miles:

"You hesitantly enter the forest, but move fairly quickly, as a wide path has been cleared already. You wonder how the wagon could possibly have made it through the rough terrain.

"Proceeding through the forest you gradually come to an area where the ground raises into rocky hills and cliffs. You stop suddenly as the smell of burned hair and bone assaults your nose, followed by the pitiful sounds of sobbing humans. A deep voice booms out, "Grishnak say shut up! Food people giving Grishnak sore ears!" The screaming crescendos and then suddenly stops. You appraise the surrounding terrain. To the right of the trail is a 30' high raised hill, to your left the ground is more level. The sounds of a babbling brook come to you from your left. The path continues ahead of you and then turns to the right at a point where the rocky hill comes to an end. You think that Grishnak is right on the other side of the hill."

The players can climb the cliff and view Grishnak from above if they are quiet. They will be able to see that Grishnak has made a bonfire right below the hill. There is a cave in the hill at this point and Grishnak occasionally goes into it to get something. To one side of the fire, not far from the cave entrance, is the battered remains of the wagon, and inside of it are the limp (though living) bodies of 16 gypsies. A small pile of gypsy heads can be seen next to the wagon. The gypsies seem to be in a state of shock.

Grishnak is stupid, but not dumb. If attacked, he will defend himself fairly well, but unfortunately he has not left himself a cache of rocks nearby, and left his club at the scene of the crime to be able to pull the wagon back. Grishnak will try to flee if he takes over 1/2 his hit points in damage.

Here are some things for Grishnak to say:

- "Where Grishnak club? Stoopid Grishnak lost club when took roly box."
- "Where Grishnak rocks? No rocks? Oh, yeah, Grishnak empty bag for food people."

IV. THE BATTLE

My PCs defeated the giant through a great plan, which took them 3-4 hours to put together (no kidding!) The cleric cast silence, light, and heat metal on the giant, in that order. As soon as the silence was on the giant, the metabolic psionist snuck in to the giant's cave and attempted to use double pain. Unfortunately the giant woke up at that point and the fight was on. The light successfully blinded the giant, and with the silence as well, it was mighty difficult for him to hit anyone (I think the only damage came from the giant randomly backing into the fighter). Most of the damage came from the fighter's blows and the cleric's heat metal spell. The thief/psionist kept failing to strike the giant with double pain, at least until the very end.

The giant finally fell and the party was, to say the least, very excited. They cut the giant's head off and proceeded to carry it through the towns Grishnak had terrorised.

V. EPILOGUE

There had been such a build up to the giant encounter that I felt there had to be some sort of major rewards. Rather than simply giving out treasure, I awarded fame. The party went around and collected bounties, and as they travelled they were accepted as heroes throughout the lands. Here are some of the rumors that the PCs received following their defeat of Grishnak:

- Word of the exploits of Unar's Hammer has reached the Humber coast and the cities of Yartshire and Sherborne. The tales of the defeat of Grishnak the merciless are second only to the stories of Gipin's defeat of Navagoras the Magnificent.
- A group calling themselves "Heros of the Dark Fist" has claimed responsibility for the defeat of Grishnak the Merciless. They say that Unar's Hammer had accosted them after their defeat of the giant, while they were still weak, and stole the giant's head. They proved their claims by showing they had possession of Grishnak's hands and feet.

THE BROKEN IDOL

From: loren@hops.wharton.upenn.edu (Loren Miller)

This plot assumes that player characters are members of an extended family, or clan, and all live in the same castle/villa/manse. My campaign is a RuneQuest campaign set in Carmania, which is a cold and snowy land that was the heart of a splendid ancient empire conquered and kept by warfare, and is now the heart of a growing merchant network.

Strange ship docks at the clan village, word is sent to the clan to pick up Farwalker, the chief's half-brother and wandering-merchant/ capitalist-oppressor-pig who has been gone for many years. He is sick, very cold, and is clutching something in his hands. His hands cannot be pried apart without breaking his fingers, something the chief (in my campaign his nickname was Stoneface, but the PCs called him "chief") would be very upset about.

Chief installs his brother in a sickroom, and appoints a PC to watch him, alternating with other family members. A rivalry would be a good thing to encourage here, because it makes the rest of the plot possible.

Word comes that someone has been killed in the village. PCs are sent to investigate. Discover several brutal murders. Chase the murderer around, path leads to the clan house/castle/villa/manse.

While the PCs are out of the room, the rival searches through uncle Farwalker's clothes and finds something, half of an ivory idol, and removes it to his rooms. Then he comes back, pretending nothing has happened. In the meantime, the murderer has snuck into the sickroom, put out the lights, and is killing uncle Farwalker as the rival walks in and lights a candle to see what's going on. The murderer is a yeti or some other huge, hairy, tough humanoid (in my campaign it is a snow troll from the glaciers) which was looking for an idol that Farwalker took.

The PCs come in about the same time that the rival is being ripped up by the murderer and join the battle. What happens after this is up to you, but the PCs will probably discover the half idol, should interrogate the rival, may want to find where the idol came from, may want to return it, and may have to deal with more attempts to recover the idol. And... the idol might be cursed, or blessed, or an ingredient in a world-shattering magical ritual.

From: P.Scadden@gns.cri.nz (Phil Scadden, esteemed editor of net.plot.books)

Ever enjoy "The Borrowers" as a child? Consider the possibilities of suddenly shrinking the players to say 15 to 40 cm. Cats, dogs, rats become serious monsters, a 3 foot wall becomes a major obstacle. To get back to normal size they need say a potion found only on a high shelf. Make this a test of ingenuity with utilising ordinary objects. Any genre will do!

From: colin@aol.net (Colin Steele)

A CP2020 scenario follows.

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1. My name stays on it.
2. No profit is made from redistribution or modification.

This is not meant to be a fully fleshed-out adventure. There are many gaping holes, that you, the GM, are gonna have to fill. My intention was to create a framework which was sufficiently fleshed out to be useful, but flexible enough to be adapted to your campaign.

Thanks, and enjoy.

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Jericho Jones

Rocko, a small-time fixer known to one party member, contacts the party with a "favor" to ask. He has a client, Malachi Jones, who needs to have his son returned to him. To emphasize the "favor" appeal, make one of the characters, preferably a nomad, somehow owe a favor to Malachi Jones. If the characters are stupid enough to do this as a "favor", Rocko pockets a big wad of cash. If the characters are smart, Rocko makes them the real offer. His client offers 10,000 eb for the return of Jericho Jones, the son of Malachi Jones, the chief of the Jones Tribe. Jericho is hiding out in Sky Mesa, with the tribe of nomads living in the area.

The characters accept the job, and travel to Sky Mesa. They arrive in the middle of a firefight. The tribe of nomads living in Sky Mesa is getting the shit kicked out of 'em by the local wastelanders, the Fury. Jericho is nowhere to be seen. If the characters look *specifically* at the Fury's tactics, they'll notice that the Fury is being semi-methodical, as if looking for someone. The characters join in on the side of the Sky Mesa tribe, of course, and eventually chase off the Fury. Again, if the characters are being careful and keeping their eyes open, they'll see part of the Fury's gang hop in an AV-4. (An extremely odd possession for a wastelander gang.) But, the AV-4 has no markings, and it speeds off into the night before the characters can do anything more. The rest of the Fury takes off in cyberbikes.

The massacre is a sight. Women and children are just so much lunch meat. Many RV's and trailers are ablaze. If the characters are helpful, offering medical aid, etc., they will be taken to see Jericho. Play the massacre up for maximum compassion effect.

The characters meet Jericho. Jericho explains that he and his father, Malachi, had a huge falling out last year, and Jericho has been at Sky Mesa ever since. Jericho was trying to prove to his father that Kruger Bioprime, a mid-size multinational, is bad news. It's obvious that Jericho is a righteous dude. He cares about people, and is trying to create a better life for the people of Sky Mesa. In fact, he's the de facto leader of the Sky Mesa tribe.

You ask, "Why is Jericho down on Kruger, when Kruger Bioprime has been downright friendly with the Jones Tribe?" As part of a "multicultural activism campaign" to "improve the public's perception of Kruger Bioprime", they have been helping the Jones Tribe fight to regain some land titles to property in Salt Lick.

Jericho never bought the corp's bullshit. He has always suspected something more sinister, but hasn't been able to prove anything. To boot, the corp has been winning some of the court battles, and the Jones Tribe now has legal rights to some property in Salt Lick. That makes it even harder for Jericho to talk sense to Malachi.

Jericho lays the cards on the table. He asks the characters to help him find the dirt on Kruger. If the characters are of the mind just to collect their money, Jericho will outbid his father - offering to double their fee. Of course, he's full of it. The Sky Mesa tribe can only pay about 1/2 of the 10,000 eb the characters were originally offered for the job. But anyhow, Jericho'll play both on the characters pocket book sense, and on their sense of justice. And, he adds, if they can indeed turn the tables on Kruger Bioprime, the Sky Mesa tribe will "owe them".

Now if the characters just want to bag Jericho, fine. Let 'em. They'll have no problem bringing him in to 'ole Pop. They'll collect their fee, and head off into the sunset. What they won't know is that the Sky Mesa tribe springs Jericho from incarceration in the Jones tribe. Much later, they'll read in the news about what Kruger Bioprime is really doing in Salt Lick.

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The Real Fax

Kruger Bioprime **is** bad news. They've got Malachi Jones on the payroll, keeping him quiet and rich, while they wrestle deeds out of the legal system and into Malachi's hands. Don't even ask what they're doing to the unwitting members of the Jones tribe.

The story goes something like this: With some serious hush money, Kruger convinced Malachi to let them build a secret R&D/training base on one of the parcels of land. The base was completed over a year ago and code-named Cadence Canyon. The original purpose of the base was lost when a violent internal coup put Katherine Washington in power at Kruger. A smart Kruger exec, by the name of Charles Marsh, was bucking to get a promotion to associate VP, and took over as the Candence Canyon project leader. He realized that Cadence is in the middle of nowhere, and has a more or less captive population. It's perfect for dumping hazardous waste, new product testing, covert op training, you name it! Mr. Marsh sent several memos around to this effect, which is perfect dirt for Jericho to dig up. If he can.

Kruger planned to use the Jones tribe for product testing/op training, and they've made good on the plan, so far. Malachi doesn't know it, but Kruger has already been testing a new virus on a small segment of the Joneses. The virus hasn't broken out yet, but it's a new form of anthrax which cannot live in soil. (Perfect for military applications!) About 10% of the tribe is infected. Kruger plans to try out their cure on 1/2 of the infected 10%, and let the other half die to see how effective the virus is. (Kruger doesn't know it yet, but their manufacturing process is for shit, and this is the only run of the virus that will be useful. It'll take them about another year to produce a second batch.)

Although Malachi doesn't know about the virus, he suspects something might be up. Kruger knows this, and when Malachi reaches the breaking point, which they know he will, they'll waste him. Then, according to some keen legalese, the deeds revert to Kruger. Imagine that! Then, Kruger can do whatever they please with the Jones tribe.

Through their two moles in the Jones tribe, Kruger learned that Jericho was trying to dis 'em. Wanting to protect their investment, Kruger ordered Malachi to "lean" on the Sky Mesa tribe. So, Malachi hired the Fury. Big mistake. The Fury was too cybered up and psychoed out for Malachi to control. Plus, their leader is kinda greedy. So, when Kruger asked them to go ahead and waste Jericho, for 10,000 eb, they didn't think twice. They took it upon themselves to **wipe out** the Sky Mesa tribe, and put Jericho's head on a stick in front of their leader's tent. Malachi realized his mistake, and, wanting to save his son, hired the characters to kidnap him. He doesn't know that the Fury are playing both ends against the middle.

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Diggin'

So, the characters team up with Jericho Jones! Now the fun starts. They've got to get some dirt on Kruger, ASAP. In the previous episode, the characters got hired to find Jericho and return him to Malachi Jones. They landed in a firefight between the Fury and the Sky Mesa tribe. Little did they know that the Fury were in the pay of Kruger Bioprime *and* Malachi Jones. Kinda ironic, huh?

The Fury are planning another raid on Sky Mesa, and have some scouts observing the movements of the tribe. If the characters move Jericho, the Fury will know about it, and will attack at the first opportune moment. Otherwise, they'll stage an attack on the Sky Mesa camp the night following.

Perceptive characters will know that a) they Fury were using an AV-4, and b) they were hunting for someone. If the characters make a point of it, one of the Sky Mesa bunch will volunteer a few digital photos of the AV-4, taken during the raid. The characters may decide to analyze these. Another clue: if there are any bodies of Furies, perceptive characters who make a couple skill checks will find out that the Furies are sporting some keen *new* cyberware. Finally, if there are any living Furies, they might be interrogated to reveal some useful clues.

All of the clues will point the characters back towards a particular fixer in Night City. From that fixer, they'll be able to make the connection to Kruger Bioprime.

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A Thousand Words

The photo analysis will yield a vehicle ID number - but only after some serious skill checks, time and cash. The characters can try it themselves, using Photo&Film skill a program called DigiDesigner Pro, and 8 hours. Or, they can call in some contacts to have it done, for about 2000 eb. Once they locate the contact and upload the photos, it'll take 2 hours. If they use a contact, success is guaranteed (but don't tell them this).

The vehicle ID can be tracked down to a AV-4 reported stolen from a Kruger Bioprime branch office in Night City six months ago. Included in the NCPD files concerning the case are some interesting clues. The case notes indicate that at the scene of the crime, investigators found the tag symbol of the gang known as the Icemen. No gang members could be apprehended for questioning, so the lead was never properly pursued. In addition, a pattern of vehicle theft was developing, though not necessarily correlated with the Icemen. AVs and expensive cars were disappearing at a fairly high rate, for about 3 months around the time that this particular AV-4 was stolen.

The next step for the characters might be to find and question some Icemen. This should be fairly difficult. The Icemen are a small gang whose primary reason for existence is to supply the members with enough cash to support their drug of choice - ice. Ice is a little-know, highly addictive hallucinogen. The users can be easily identified by one of the drug's side effects - the

user's skin temperature is significantly lower than normal. With some street deal and some luck, they might be able to hook up with Frost, the leader, and chief junkie, of the Icemen. From her, the characters might be able to find out that Micky hired the Icemen to do most of the vehicle theft, including the AV-4 in question. Then again, Frost might just decide that the Icemen need to have some fun, and jam on the characters heads! GM's discretion on this one.

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Furious

If there were any of the Fury still alive, the characters might want to squeeze a little information out of them. None of the 'dorphed out Furies is going to be of much value, but each successful Interrogation/Intimidation/whatever skill check (average difficulty - +15) will yield one of the following clues:

1. Zap was in Night City two weekends ago.
2. A bunch of Furies got treated to lots of shiny new cybergear at a place called Rael's in Night City.
3. Zap stole the AV while he was in Night City.
4. Zap and part of the gang did a road trip to Salt Lick three weeks ago. While there, Zap said he had business to take care of and left for a couple of days.
5. Zap says we're supposed to kill Jericho Jones.
6. Zap's input, Jet, broke up with him last week and moved to Night City.

Clue #1 can be used to search police records to find that a person matching Zap's description was picked up on disturbing the peace charges in a Night City club called the Rainbow Nights. The characters might be able to find out from a savvy waitress that Zap was seen talking biz in the corner with Micky the fixer.

Clue #6 can be used to track down Jet, and find out from her that Zap got a big wad of cash from "some fixer" to "waste Jericho Jones".

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Bright Lights

If the characters check out the cyberware on the dead Furies, and make an average (+15) CyberTech skill check, they'll determine that it's of local manufacture, and find out its serial number. They can chase that down by either making the right connections (for 200 eb and an average Streetwise or easy Streetdeal skill check) or by an difficult CyberTech skill check. The designer is Rael Sanchez, a Night City ripperdoc operating out of Rael's Bodysculpting and Tattoo. (p. 98 in Night City).

Time to head into the city! Note that the Fury is too dense to report the characters' movements to Kruger Bioprime. Their laced-out brains are filled with only one thought - ultraviolence on Jericho Jones.

If the characters pay a visit to Rael's Bodysculpting, and make an average (+15) notice skill check, they'll see that Rael has some concealed security cameras. If they grease Rael's palm enough, or intimidate, or whatever, he'll let them take a peek at the footage taken when the Furies came to visit. After about 2 hours of watching the Furies bounce around the clinic, harass other customers, and have black cyberware installed, they'll catch Zap, the Furies' leader, say to Rael, "Good thing Micky gave us cash!" Hmm.

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You're So Fine

Characters who are fixers and are familiar with Night City will automatically have heard of Micky. Characters with Streewise skill will recognize her name on a successful skill check of average difficulty. Micky is a fairly well-known edgerunner who works primarily out of a dingy gym on the edge of the Zone.

To get info from Micky our heroes will either have to pay, bully, or hack her data system. It'll take some serious finagling to see Micky, in any case. If Jericho is with the characters, she'll take off and order her bodyguards to kill Jericho. If not, she'll demand 12,000 eb for the information. She can be bargained down as far as 5,000 eb. Or, the characters can try to intimidate/persuade/fast talk/seduce/interrogate. But, she's one tough cookie, and her bodyguards won't take kindly to interrogation or intimidation.

The characters could also try to wrest the data from Micky's data systems.

One way or another, the characters find out from Micky that Charles Marsh hired her to deal with the Fury. (Jericho's fears are indeed true!) Micky has done other work for Mr. Marsh and Kruger Bioprime, including the vehicle roundup carried out by the Icemen. Furthermore, she knows that Charles is working on some sort of secret base. She doesn't know where. She'll even reveal that Malachi Jones is paying the Fury to lean on the Sky Mesa tribe. Micky thinks this is a truly amusing state of affairs.

Jericho's reaction to the information Micky provides is a mixed one. Jericho is outraged at the news that his own father hired the wastelanders to rough up the Sky Mesa tribe. He also doesn't understand why. Jericho is properly justified, and not unsurprised when he learns that Kruger Bioprime is trying to kill him. It only hardens his resolve to make Malachi see the light.

The real question is, do the characters think their job is done? If the characters are of a mind to teach Kruger a lesson, then just push on.

Of course, Jericho feels that this is just tip of the iceberg, and that they should try to push a bit further. He'll try his best to persuade them to do so, and if he can't he'll vow to "do it on his own" if he has to. Once again, the GM should play this up for maximum compassion/anti-establishment/potential-monetary-gain effect. If the characters bag out, fine. Jericho promises to send his brother to pay them (which he'll do, but only with 5,000 eb.) They'll read about the battle that Jericho, the Joneses, and the Sky Mesa tribe fight against the Kruger ops at Cadence Canyon.

If the characters want to continue, then Jericho decides it's time to tell Malachi. He'll travel home to Salt Lick, and meet his father, who is overjoyed to see him. They'll go have a heart-to-heart. Since Malachi doesn't know that the characters are working for Jericho, unless they told him, he'll credit the characters' accounts with 10,000 eb. If they don't have an account, he'll surreptitiously slip 'em the cash. Either way, they won't find out about it until after the next episode in the adventure.

Malachi and Jericho will emerge a couple of hours later, and call an emergency meeting. The Sky Mesa tribe will travel down to Salt Lick to join in.

.....

The War Council

The chiefs of the Jones tribe and the Sky Mesa tribe have decided to let the cat out of the bag. Malachi will announce, with great shame, the whole story about Kruger to the tribes. He tells them about the secret base, and about his suspicions. Jericho tells them about the Kruger connection to the Fury attacks. The tribes are incensed!

A quick vote is taken by the tribes, and the decision is unanimous - they must rid Salt Lick of Kruger Bioprime. They begin to draw up their plans to do so.

Malachi takes the characters aside, and thanks them for returning his son. He tells them about their payment, and tells them, gravely, that he is forever in their debt for saving his son. He informs them that they are not obligated to join in the battle against the Cadence Canyon base. He offers them a car to return them to Night City, turns on his heel, and leaves.

Now, what kind of people are the characters? Here's the real test. Do they leave the battered tribes to fight alone against the sinister Kruger Bioprime? They might. In fact, it's really good theatrics if they do, and then have second thoughts, and come screaming back into the middle of the firefight at Cadence Canyon, just in time to turn the tide against the highly trained Kruger ops.

But, if they don't, that's OK too. They'll read about the horrendous battle at the podunk town of Salt Lick, and the allegations of the Jones tribe that they were used as guinea pigs. Jericho will call them three days later from a hospital bed, and tell them that their payment is on the way. He also tells them that the tribes discovered that the corp had infected some tribe members with the virus, and that they had gotten the cure from a lab in the base. He thanks them, and hangs up. The next day, an AV-4 - the same one that the Fury was using - shows up, and a Sky Mesa nomad hands 'em the keys.

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Cadence Canyon

The Jones and Sky Mesa tribes may have some difficulty in their attack, because the Kruger facility is well guarded. Cadence Canyon is at the end of a dirt road, off of what used to be highway 145. Highway 145 winds out of Salt Lick to the north, towards the foothills. It's a

narrow, two lane asphalt road badly in need of repair. Boulders, rocky outcroppings, and bare earth surround the base, and the only cover is a few scraggly trees and bushes.

The tribes plan to attack at 1 AM. The Jones's weatherman predicts it will be a moonless night, so the nomads may be able to surprise the guards and effect a successful breakin. Jericho will lead a hand-picked band of Sky Mesa nomads in a stealthy rear attack, while Malachi will take a much larger group and use them in a frontal assault.

There are 6 guards, 2 "Section 7's" (highly trained security ops), a research team of 9, 4 administrative personnel, and 2 executives at Cadence Canyon. A fairly sophisticated electronic surveillance network monitors the facility at all times, which the nomads will have to defeat or circumvent in order to get in.

It is a two-floor facility, with the labs on the ground floor, and the offices on the second floor. There is an AV pad on the roof, and the security team makes regular patrols in the AV (about every hour and a half).

The rest of the details are up to the GM...

[Editors note: Character sheets and other detail for this plot can be found in Appendix 2. It has been separated in interests of readability.]

From: reaux@csgrad.cs.vt.edu (Ray A Reaux)

Tired of your old campaign? Are the PCs getting somewhat institutionalized, with no new challenged. Do you want to create a new campaign world, but still retain the old PCs. These are suggestions for switching campaigns gracefully, but also spectacularly. The idea is to give a reason and background for the shift, and make it something more than "Bob, the game master is tired of his old campaign, so he said that we found a cubic gate and want to go plane hopping."

In order to switch campaigns, "kill" the PCs. Actually put them in a no-win situation where they will all die. Remember, you want ALL the players DEAD! Leaving one or two alive can cause problems since he or she may want to resurrect the dead PCs. Also, do not arbitrarily kill them, make them go out with a BANG, not a whimper. It is kind of unheroic to be told "Well John, you were walking in a dark ally, and some assassin snuck up behind you and stuck a knife in you. You're dead."

[In my campaign, I had the PCs fight an entire wagon train of vampires and attendant werewolves. However, the PCs, being their normal perverse selves, almost destroyed the vampires. They tracked the wagon train back to the nasties' lair, which had an entire village of vampire and werewolves. Even high level characters will be overwhelmed by an entire village of vampires and werewolves, and the characters did destroy a lot of them in a knock-down drag out fight, and they went out with a BANG.]

The idea of course is not to destroy the PCs but to give an imaginative way to shift campaign worlds. So introduce several NPCs before they go to their doom, and have one of them be a disguised demigod on a recruiting mission. It would be great if the NPC is introduced early, (not as a demigod but as someone of moderate competence but not overshadowing the PC), the rationale being that he or she is scouting the PCs' abilities. When a PC dies, the NPC demigod collects their spirit/soul.

The follow-up campaign can start on a different plane or, as in my campaign, sometime in the future. It is up to them to learn about the new world that they are in, and the stranger the world from what they know, the more interesting it will be for them to explore. This is a good opportunity to "retune" the PCs, that is adapt their possessions to the new campaign by removing unwanted items.

[I started with the same PCs finding themselves naked on top of a butte. They saw two bodies near by, an unconscious man, and a summoning circle. They later found out that they have been summoned by the three into their future to either redeem or destroy their people. Turns out an evil force called the Blood God had convinced humans to wipe out most of the other races, and had then enslaved the humans, all but one nation of "good" humans. The old gods were no longer worshipped, and forgotten.]

If you shift them into a campaign setting into the future, you can tantalize the PCs with things familiar from their time. For instance:

[The PCs discovered that there was a "Tomb of Heroes" built just after their "death" and dedicated to them for their heroic services in the past campaign.]

History can also provide interesting side plots such as trying to get information about what happened to their people, or even how to regain what they have lost. For instance, to regain their favorite magic items, they might have to look in old dusty tomes to find it, and once they do, how do they get it back from whoever owns it now, if anyone. And their magic items may now have history, after all would it not be interesting to know that the that their +3 longsword named Brightwind was used in the Orc Campaign and is now known by the Orcs as Crouch Splitter. You can also have the magic items change, gaining/losing powers. Or else, as in my campaign:

[The PCs went to the Tomb, where each found their best magic item from past with a special supplemental power thrown in by the demigods so that they could meet their god-ordained test. Along similar lines, they found that an old NPC they knew, a dragon, was now the granddaddy of all dragons and the only good dragon left alive.]

Prophecies and old histories work well. And what is written is never the same as what actually occurred. You could have fun with the effects of distortions on historical recollections. "Hmm, is that the church I established. Their interpretation of my writings was never what I intended, I guess I have to set them straight." Or perhaps their battles have been exaggerated out of proportion by minstrels. " Hey, he's singing about me when I held the pass at Dragon's Beak. Did I really hold it against 50 trolls by myself, I thought there were only 7, and I thought you were there Uruk."

If you are prophecy minded, the PCs might have to unravel prophecies to figure out why they are where they are. And if you do time translation, since it is into the future, you don't have to worry about paradoxes.

[The PCs had to wade through old books of history they found in the Tomb of heroes and tomb of kings to find out that their reason for being there was to be judged by the gods. They found clues in old folk songs which spoke of them and their deeds, as well as what the gods had inspired prophetic bards to compose. They had to look at prophecies from the Red Book of Calcasan the Mad, an ancient prophet who lived after the PCs time, and was known for his convoluted, but always correct prophecies.]

If you use this campaign shifting method, you need an epic villain, something other than that nest of werewolves to kill. A quest format may be appropriate where everything leads up to a final confrontation.

[In my campaign, the PCs were up against the Blood God who was an ancient elf who had disguised himself as a human to lead the humans to destruction. He wanted revenge because humans had destroyed his wife and nation in ages past. The PC's eventually got to the Blood God, after wading through giants, dragons, and his ogre legions, but was at a dilemma as to what to do with this elf, the last of his race. They chose to kill him instead of showing mercy. The major gods judged humans as flawed and rabid, with no capacity for mercy, and decided to destroy the world and remake it.]

This led to another, more spectacular way of changing campaigns.

[In my campaign, several of the lesser gods, including the one who had chose them, sided with the humans and took the most worthy of them with them through a tunnel of light to another plane. So began a third campaign, the exploration of a new world, rebuilding of a civilisation, and the evolution of the PCs into demigod hood.]

From stehman@onyx.southwind.net (Jeff Stehman)

[Editor's note. What was written below was not intended for the net.plot.book but as a kind of follow up on Jeff's great net stories about Sutekh and Adaz now happily married and living in the temple. The plot idea at end is a great one and after talking with Jeff, decided that this was as good a way to present it as any! Hope you find such housing for your PCs]

Now, Sutekh tries to be a reasonable man. Understanding that living on the grounds of a temple in the boondocks is not his wife's idea of paradise, he agreed to quit his job and move to a city. He even went so far as to allow her to make most of the arrangements for the move, hire the servants, etc.

He finds out, belatedly, that they are moving into a huge mansion they could not reasonably be expected to afford. How are they managing this, he asks. It's being given to us, Adaz replies.

Why, he inquires. We promised to renovate the house and raise the standards of the neighborhood, she replies. Oh, I see; and how, might I ask, are we going to do that? Don't worry, she answers, it will only be a few days work-- maybe a few nights, too. Blink, blink. Are there undead in this house?

Got it in one. It seems ancestors of some rather well-to-do family have not been resting in peace. Many of them meddled in dark arts and set themselves up as protectors of their own crypts. Over the years, this trickled down to those who had nothing to do with light arts, much less dark arts. The current heir is understandably a little upset, as he would be hoping for a little peace and quiet upon his death. In order to break the curse, a new family must take up permanent residence in the house. Naturally, no one is that stupid, except Sutekh's wife. The heir claims that the undead don't bother anyone as long as their personal space is not violated. (Over the years their personal space has grown to encompass most of the house.) Undead, however, are a rather touchy subject from Sutekh. He recently had the crap beat out of him by one vampire, spent five weeks in an infirmary, and then got bitten by another vampire. The heir promises that there are no vampires in the family, but he is rather vague on what all is in there. Oh, a variety of things, he says. Wee.

Adaz has apparently already taken the time to clear a wing of the house for living space, while Sutekh is expected to take care of the rest of the house. (Notice that he hasn't actually volunteered for anything yet, nor been offered a choice.) At least she has been kind enough for an old clerical friend to help in this endeavour, but she sees this as an ideal opportunity for her husband. You see, while staying at the temple, any time he was called upon by king and country to use his talents as a spy, he was gone for two weeks to two months. (Phantom Steed is his best spell; cuts travel time *way* down.) And that was two or three times a year. Inconvenient when one has a three year old son whose growth one would like to witness. But now that is all a thing of the past. When he gets the irresistible urge to fill his hand with steel, he need only walk down the hall!

Yes, that's right, it's an adventurers dream home. What are you up to today dear? I was thinking about flushing that wight out of the west wing. Okay, but try not to be late for lunch. Heck, there's even treasure in those crypts.

Anyone want to buy a house *real* cheap?

From: John_Hays@Brown.Edu (John Hays)

The curse of an ancient evil Wizard King of an extinct, or nearly so, race*, placed with his dying breath against the Human, Dwarven, and Elvan races begins to rise after several centuries. A wizard, who was but a young boy at the final battle has finally determined the location of the Wizard King's lab. Due to his advancing age and the dangers involved he needs a party of adventures to retrieve the papers of the long dead King, so he can determine the nature of the curse, and plan to defeat it.

* The race was a race of Changelings, capable of assuming the form and specific appearance of any humanoid. The Wizard King planned to have the Dwarves and Elves annihilate by having his race attack the two in the others' appearances. The Elves and Dwarves became so entangled in the war, that they couldn't see what was happening until the humans made them listen and see what was happening. Then the three races joined forces to eradicate the changelings.

From: alaric@abwillms.demon.co.uk (Alaric B. Williams)

Netrunner PC is asked by journalist to intercept terms of treaty/declaration of war due to be sent from enemy HQ to Whitehouse. PC is to hack into communications node in the middle of the Pacific, set up a filter for that message, and basically sit and wait for it. Simple enough.

However, while waiting, with a puff of error messages, a shocked looking NPC materialises in the Node. He was connected through to his girlfriend on holiday somewhere when the line broke up and he appeared here. He knows little about comms and is mostly shocked. When the PC tells him to send a hangup code, which should clear the problem, it doesn't seem to work. Just brings up cryptic error messages that give slight clue:

'NODE #2342876123@NORTHPOLE - Invalid security access block, request packet denied'

Typical computer gibberish. Anyway, the message duly turns up, and the PC flits off to sell it to his journalist, who will publish it long before the official release date, getting tonnes of money.

Anyway, a couple of missions later, the same NPC who was in the Node is found in the PC's house - sitting in the lounge when the PC gets home. He is a mostly cybernetic type, who head butted a speeding bullet a few years ago, and has lost most of his personality. He is a programmed killing machine under the control of a secret nation on the North Pole.

Anyway, he is very obtuse in talking, and sounds kinda mechanical and flat. Answering all the PC's questions, although not very usefully, he takes the PC outside to a small unmarked van. Any attempts at attack he will simply dodge with unbelievable speed, thanks to his super hi-tech cyberware. If necessary, he will pick up and carry the PC. But he will not hurt them.

When he gets them to the truck, inside is a powerful microwave transmitter and a weird gadget, which is a very advanced network access device - it scans in your entire molecular structure, converting you to energy in the process. As you are actually in there rather than having senses fed back to your brain through cables, the interaction quality is superb, plus the fact that you can be rematerialised at another similar doorway.

This doorway leads to an assembly hall at the North Pole nation, who are a secret society trying to sort out the screwed up economic state of the planet for purely moral reasons. They have several underground bases, and are alleviated of the problems of cold arctic conditions by having everything exist in computers. They only materialise in the real world to fix things and perform

assassinations etc. in the real world. They have good motives, but will kill, lie, and cheat to reach them.

Anyway, their interest with the PC is what was he doing intercepting that treaty? They are suspicious that if they have successfully kept an entire nation secret by keeping it solely in a few kilos of computer, another group might, possibly intent upon world dictatorship, and they suspect the PC of being an agent.

Which basically leaves the PC with a few choices:

1. Work out a way of convincing them of his purely monetary motives for taking the data
2. Try and escape, possibly to alert world governments of the secret nation if they are vindictive
3. While doing one of the above, stumble across a REAL other secret nation devoted to world power!!!
4. Join the secret nation and get some cool software/cyberware, becoming one of their real world operatives

From: Nils_Jeppe@digital.fido.de (Nils Jeppe)

One neat plot idea I have for a Cyberpunk(tm) game, but haven't tried yet, is that the players have to uncover the UFO Conspiracy: The U.S. government, in alliance with some other nations and large corporation's, has made a secret treaty with an alien race from Zeta Reticuli. The aliens offer the humans technology; in exchange, they are allowed to abduct people and cattle and to perform experiments on them, use women to implant alien foetuses (sp?), etc. The government is trying to cover up this, of course, so the players will have all kinds of fun with government, cooperation and later on, alien agents. The scenario would include interviewing abductees, examining landing sites, or perhaps even a crash site, breaking into corp/government data bases (to unearth secret information), infiltrating military bases, and so on. It would probably work best as a Cyber style games (or even Lovecraft Mythos games); and perhaps shouldn't be fashioned into your existing long term campaign, because it has a VERY large impact on your world. Should be a cool one-shot or short term campaign. PS, to get ideas I would recommend getting onto the various UFO related newsgroups/echoes on the various networks.

From: mark.green@almac.co.uk (Mark Green)

1. A small village named Stonemire is plagued by a series of sheep killings during winter. A fair has stopped nearby whilst the mountain passes are frozen. A friendly Troll living underneath a nearby bridge is arrested for the killings. A Bugbear has moved into a nearby deserted Watchtower and when vanquished has been feeding sheep remains to his guard dog. However, the true killer is a werewolf travelling with the fair/circus. A final fight takes place in an old windmill. I involved a sub-plot about a local Swanmay living beneath a waterfall and a Kobold

bandit group camped out on the nearby frozen lake. The winter effects (icicles collapsing in the swanmay's lair, the frozen lake combat, the effects of snow on tracking) play a large part in this scenario, which was paced for two start-up characters. They must trade some maps found at the Kobold camp to their local Sage in exchange for the loan of silver weapons to defeat the Werewolf. They find out about this necessity in a book on Shapechangers in the Study of a Zombie at the graveyard. Other plots abound in this sleepy village!

2. A Palafitte (Large wooden construction on stilts) sits out on a lake. It was the Temple of an alchemist, and is shaped as a large cross. Each of the four wings has an "elemental" theme; Earth, Air, Fire and Water. The central Tower cannot be entered until a special elemental treasure has been collected from each of the four quarters. The Palafitte is filled with Manikins, animated human dummies who attack slowly, are highly armoured, but have "strings" which can be severed. The central tower contains floating globes which are the remnants of the soul of the old alchemist, and cast spells at the party. This adventure was run for five startup characters.

From: graemea@iaccess.za (Graeme Adamson) with Karl Kauffman,

BLUE VELVET: Scenario: The PCs have been transported to Earth, circa 1995, either on a quest, or mysteriously for an unknown reason. They cannot leave until they have recovered a plane travelling artefact (the Blue Velvet Orb), which is located at the top of the Post Office tower in London (or city of your choice), and used it at a particular location at a particular time (the artefact will guide them there as the time approaches).

Start: They find themselves in a small room, and can hear a lot of noise behind the single door. Behind the door of this storeroom is a huge hall currently being used for a Fantasy Role-playing tournament. They will likely get comments about their great costumes, and will initially hear things coming from the 100 or so gaming tables like "Fireball! Hit the floor!". Feel free to embellish. If any trouble is caused, the police will be called by the organisers.

Problems:

1. Magic spells and effects have a 25% chance of failure; if a spell fails, there is a 70% chance of it doing something strange (like a Fireball becoming a burst of flowers), a 25% chance of it fizzling, and a 5% chance of it backfiring.
2. The Post Office tower is locked (mechanically and electronically) and guarded.
3. The PCs will speak English with a strange (noticeable) accent.
4. They will have to con some jewellers into accepting their gold/silver coins.
5. The appointed time is a week away, so they'll have to find lodging.
6. The appointed time and place: Wembley Football Stadium at kickoff time

of the FA Cup Final - in the centre of the soccer field (and the tickets are sold out).

7. All Earth items will disintegrate gradually after they leave.

8. All the usual problems you'd expect when a bunch of D&D adventurers go wandering around a modern day city.
9. Clerics cannot regain spells. They can however use their learnt spells (with no chance of failure, but they have to last a week).

This adventure was a classic in our campaign. The GM at the time is now playing a woman the characters met at a fencing tournament they stumbled onto, and who accompanied the party back. Some notable events: the paladin scored a critical hit on an opponent at the fencing tournament, apologised to the victim, who was badly winded, then did it again! (two twenties in a row from an 8th level paladin with 18-odd strength - he was disqualified). The party was arrested, and had to escape from Scotland Yard. The FA Cup Final was delayed slightly after a Fireball went off (giving us enough time to get to the centre of the field and go).

The Forgetful Queen

From: graemea@iaccess.za (Graeme Adamson)

This plot revolves around a low-level female PC. There can be other members in the party, but this plot focuses on her.

BACKGROUND: The female PC believes she is the daughter of some low-class rural folk in a small country. She is aware that she bears a resemblance to the current queen who is married to a young king. The queen disappears, believed kidnapped, and forces are mobilised to try to find the missing queen.

The PC, while adventuring in other lands, gets attacked several times by assassins (more than several; more like many), and discovers from one of them that they were hired to kill the queen by some of the nobles. This should happen a number of times, making the PC and her companions very annoyed. She is sure that she definitely isn't the queen. In an attempt to find out what's going on, she returns to her home country (still under attack from assassins).

There she is discovered by the local Thieves' Guild, and they fill her in on some of the details; namely: she is actually the queen, but was mind wiped by the king's Grand Vizier under orders from the king, after she discovered some of the king's nefarious dealings. She was given the memories of a rural woman with an uncanny resemblance to her, and switched with her to keep her in a safe place (ie. out in the country). Later he decided to kill her, so as to bring suspicion of treason upon some of the more powerful nobles, giving him the chance to eliminate them. The PC accidentally escaped though, and found herself adventuring, while the rural woman's body has now been found, and all believe it to be the queen, except some nobles, who want to kill the PC so as to be able to present two bodies and thwart the king's plot. The Thieves' Guild offer to help because of the instability the state of the country is causing to them.

They can smuggle the PC and her companions into the palace, where she can confront the king and his crony. During the fight (or whatever develops), the Vizier should get, to prevent him reversing the mind wipe. If the king is killed, the throne passes to her, or alternatively to the next male heir (GM's choice).



APPENDIX I HOW TO START A CAMPAIGN

A perennial favorite question on the net is ways to start a campaign. A recent incarnation of this was from Joshua Felsteiner (phr01ya@techunix.technion.ac.il) who wrote: [edited slightly] " Hi , I am a new GM who has formed a group. The problem is how to have the players start. I don't know how to tell the story of their arrival to the world! I mean how they met or born? or are they already formed as a grouped from the beginning and I should start from that point? I want to make it better than that. Any help?"

Here is collection of responses to this question and similar. Have fun.

From: btrosko@netaxs.com (Brian Trosko)

I stick the players alone in a room for 15 minutes to a half an hour at the start of the first session, and let them ad-lib it out. When I get back from the store, where I've bought munchies, they tell me, and I take that data and use it for adventure hooks. The only catch it, the players themselves have to be reasonable about it. It might work for you, but then again, it might not.

From: deadlock@hopi.dtcc.edu (Mike Masten)

The player characters could be childhood friends that decide they want to go out adventuring together before they settle into permanent jobs or something in their community.

They all could have known someone that was a mutual friend to them and this friend was killed/kidnapped/whatever. Therefore, they decide to help this friend in need or a relative of this friend if the mutual friend is dead.

From: P.Scadden@gns.cri.nz (Phil Scadden, esteemed editor of net.plot.books)

An obvious way to start a campaign, and a mechanism very like that of plots much loved by fantasy authors, is to simply announce as the party gather round that they have been transported as of now, as is and as dressed, straight into the fantasy world. This is probably best for shortish high fantasy campaigns, as no opportunity to role-play anyone other than themselves, but many players will enjoy this for a shorter period.

The extent to which they are exactly themselves can be varied. Within the fantasy world they might suddenly find they have special powers, items on them (eg pens, house keys, rings, etc) might be mighty items (as in Thomas Covenant series) in the new world. Can also have

transformations from skinny literature student to muscle-bound hulk with a innate sword-fighting skills. I'd stick with personalities and particularly their real knowledge being unaltered.

Language is special one. What I would do let them be aware that what they hear other people speak is a strange tongue but within themselves, they can understand the speech (except for words special to the fantasy setting that won't translate). Eg "Graco" might be a monster from the GM's drug-crazed imagination - they might get descriptions of Graco from NPC or find out the hard way but it wont translate. With a little practice, they will find they can speak back but not words that don't translate. Eg "semi-automatic rifle", "saltpeter", and "bidet" might be good words that fail translation!

A typical opening might be telling them, " the room suddenly fills with mist, and you feel the chill of an autumn night. Slowly the mist clears and you find yourselves together within a circle of standing stones below a bright night sky of strange stars. A eerie green fire licks at the standing stones but even as you watch it grows dim and dies. You are obviously in a high place, with deep valleys below you. Small clusters of flickering lights indicate these are inhabited. As you look around to try and get your bearings, you eyes are drawn to a dull light hanging over a mountain far away. Sometimes red, sometimes greenish, the light seems somehow unwholesome. You become aware of dark figures beyond the stone circle..."

Swinging this on players gathered to plan what do to and stopping the narrative at that point is probably best way to introduce it. Enough has been said to rouse the players curiosity. If they like the concept, you can get into gritty detail of deciding what changes to make in the transition (if any), high or low fantasy, assigning game values to their own characters, etc.

Some thoughts on character death needed. Players are playing themselves and are obviously likely to feel the world events somewhat more personally than playing a made up character. Re-introducing a PC in another character isnt quite the same either (but could be done, especially if the player didnt enjoy playing themself). One option is to have players body slowly turn to mist. To get the player back again should involve returning to gate, expending gross power, and some drawbacks for the player concerned.

High fantasy ("we have brought here to save the world") is probably best setting but only if player enjoy a little railroading. A much freer campaign could begin with hearing an NPC beyond the standing stones say: "Oh (expletive fails translation)! This isnt who we wanted!". They cant be sent back but arent going to be persuaded to save the world either.

The real fun in this campaign setting comes from players trying to use their 20th century knowlege and technology in the fantasy world. I wouldn't rule any technology out but would be very tough on adjudicating whether player efforts would work or not. Playing fair, they should not bring in knowlege from reference works that they didn't have in their memory at the moment the game started. (A good reason for making the start a surprise and then arguing for it). Ie they would have to know the formula for gunpowder etc. off top of their heads when the game started to attempt it. Of course, the GM can make life a little difficult without being obstructive with a little care about what is in the game world. Eg (on gunpowder again), saltpeter wont translate. Game world has never heard of it. Even if players knew the gunpowder formula, do they know

how to find or make potassium nitrate? Likewise, steel (as opposed to wrought iron) may not be a known technology. Do they really know enough engineering and metallurgy to create a furnace to produce it? Of course, GM needs to bone up a bit on medieval technology but since this is fantasy, only what the GM is comfortable with need be there. Consistency is the thing.

From: gruidlbw@garnet.cray.com (Brian W. Gruidl)

What I like to do is give my group a brief idea of what is in our world and let them create for themselves. I'm VERY open to their embellishing, but will not allow magic items, special powers, etc. I then talk to each player and "tweak" the character to fit into a certain area of the world. When we reach agreement, I let him (all men - SORRY) search out information about his region, politics, etc.

With respect to getting the group together, I have set up an Order of the Tree (historically significant), whose charter is to seek adventure. This gets rid of the uncomfortable "you meet in a bar" scenario.

From: guy.sbd-e@rx.xerox.com (Guy Robinson)

They are the children, relatives or apprentices of an former party of adventurers that have by and large retired or have been killed. It therefore becomes natural that they might be gathered to attempt a to form a second generation of that same party.

I would have the local survivors of the former party around to act as mentors, role models and the source of an occasional hand if your players' characters need to be rescued or ransomed. I would not make them too high level (4-8 perhaps) so their capabilities are notable rather than awe-inspiring.

If you adopt this I recommend you work out what ended the adventuring career of the original party and make up character sheets for them using the rule book guidelines on creating experienced characters. Perhaps there are some matters left over that will warrant the new party's attention at some later date.

You could have local landmarks bear signs of their experiences like the place where the houses that the vengeful dragon burned down but which were never rebuilt or the temple built around a fabulous altar stone brought back from an expedition.

From: jsrobins@silver.ucsf.edu (Jay S. Robinson)

I'm starting a campaign tonight with a group of new players and was mulling over the same question. I've come up with the idea that there used to be a fellow we'll call Bob. Now Bob had a lot of gold/treasure/ whatever and wanted it to be safe so he hid it/buried it/etc. and made a map. He then tore this map into x number of pieces and got rid of them. (He had x kids?) Anyway, after generations have gone by, the PC's find themselves in possession of the pieces of the map, or at least a few of them. Those pieces each contain enough info to get them to their home town, wherever you're starting them out at. (Let me guess, Shadowdale.) And if this sounds too bland, have some of the PC's not have parts of the map, but have vital knowledge to the missing pieces. There are plenty of ways to elaborate... Just an idea.

From: clwigda@gdwest.gd.com (Craig L Wigda)

1) the king summons several adventures for a mission (say 50) after a short question and answer session you are asked to enter the door to your right. And there is the party. Pick which characters are in the room in which order and give them some time to talk to each other. Then the king comes in a briefs them on their mission.

2) You are down and out on your luck or last party of adventures you worked with are all dead/retired/kicked you out (character picked one) and you are looking for a new group to adventure with because you are broke/have no home to go to/have yet to full fill some purpose (again each character picked one). After spending all day searching out clues to adventure or employment you return to your room at the inn to find a note with a strange item (in the adventure I ran it was a coin made of mithril). Note tells you to meet (location of GMs choice, mine was the bar so the employer could see them before talking to them, plus he started a fight in the bar to see how they handled themselves).

I used each of these so I could have characters that were moderately experienced but had not worked together. I hate it when I'm at a con and the GM says you are a party of adventures that have adventured together for x number of years. Then you all fight among your selves or do not act as a group.

From: robert_hall@vnet.ibm.com (Robert Hall)

You could just have them all be the subject of a monster summoning spell... :)

From: Daniel Romig

What i have done once or twice is to start the group in a dungeon. Don't tell them how they got there just say, you wake up in a 10x10 room and you see x strangers. Have everyone describe themselves and go from there. You can make the dungeon large or medium, you must however,

make it big enough so everyone has to work together to get out. This builds trust in the group, lets them get to know each other and that they can work really good as a team. When they get out, they can say "hey", "we did pretty good getting treasure, magic, whatever and maybe we should stick together"

This is good once in awhile but runs dry after the second or so time. I used this before and it worked out fine.

From: melchar@shakala.com (Barbara Haddad)

One option (that I find superior) is have them all come from the same town/city. Have a tavern where all the 'wrong' people hang out [rebels, artists] so that they will have a chance to drift together, meet each other and decide to go out together and adventure. You might have a lot of fun making their city of origin a fun place in and of itself -- have their families play parts -- you can referee it for several games -- AND then they'll always have a place to return to.....

.....and it helps settle in the player's mind that their PCs ARE rebels that the 'normal' people live in cities and _stay_ there...

From: Shuldrow@treehome.demon.co.uk (Chris Bourne)

If you have a campaign world/city/town which you've worked out in advance, you should be able to prepare a sheet or two of background info about major religions, a map of the general area showing major towns, that sort of stuff. Give this out while they are rolling up characters. It's something for the fast ones to read while they wait about :)

My favourite way of beginning an adventure is in jail - the party have all been arrested in a riot/bar brawl. They may not have been involved, but the watch just grabbed the nearest half dozen citizens and locked them up.

They can then be offered the standard approach by an influential stranger who can get them off the hook IF they perform this little service for them...

Unless your players have played in your world before, it isn't a bad idea to have an adventure which demands they travel right outside their own area, so you don't have to go into huge detail about their previous life history. Ideally you want an adventure which takes place somewhere NONE of the characters will ever have been before.

As for background, any players who don't want to work out great detailed backgrounds of their own can be told 'You are a dwarf from the mountains in the north'/'You ran away from your farming home and became a thief, because you didn't like your stepfather' etc. If the player

doesn't actively seek a detailed background, they will be happy with a minimal excuse for existing.

Those who do want a detailed background are capable of inventing their own as a rule. They will say things like 'Are there villages in the hills, I think my character lived on the edge of the wilderness learning to track and hunt' To which you reply 'Uh, yeah, there's a village called Hillfort that would do well. I expect your character hunted bighorn sheep, maybe wolves in the winter, that sort of thing. There will have been orc raids to deal with too...but only once every few years.' Then make a squiggle on the map for the player's village (which you just invented).

From mbartek@acs.ucalgary.ca (Michal Bartek)

1. Everyone meets in a bar and spontaneously decides to trust their lives with each other. (Heard this one before?)
 2. The campaign starts just after everyone has been kidnapped by an evil force. The characters **MUST** work together to save their skins.
 3. Some common goal (defeating evil group) draws them all together.
 4. The PCs are all relatives (brothers, cousins, etc.)
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From: jsavino@gate.net (Joe Savino)

The campaign I'm working on now begins with the PCs all being told, in an announcement by the king, that they'd been selected for the quest to kill the dragon. They're gonna be just announced as "the , ". (ie: the Cleric, Erasmus)... then, they are gathered together, by the king, and left alone for a bit in a meeting chamber... this'll give 'em some time to interact, and get a feel for each other.

From: orenalex@sunshine (Alex Oren)

In my current campaign I asked the players for a reason to get on certain ship enroute to the capital city.

Bad weather, angry gods, ship goes down.

PC's manage to get to some of the life boats, are washed ashore some unknown island and have to survive with virtually no equipment.

From: angelo@rice.edu (Angelo F Benedetto)

Whenever possible, and when a player seems interested, I try to run a _short_ mini-adventure for each character before the main campaign gets started. In this mini, you can set-up the character's reason for being an adventurer, this reason being shown by actual play as opposed to related background. I find it tends to make the player relate to the background more, since the events have been experienced rather than just described.

This method also works well for pairs of characters that already know each other. It also allows for the introduction of special items into the campaign. In this way, a character can start out with some item he/she _earned_ in an adventure, rather than was given as background. To me, this makes the item much more special. Also, it is guaranteed to go to the character of your choice, as opposed to the character of the party's choice, if that makes sense to you.

From: ujchoi@uxa.ecn.bgu.edu (Jason Choi)

-PC's are slaves of an evil, upstart empire. They have to cooperate in order to escape their present predicament. They could've been enslaved because their parents were unable to pay taxes, thus they were kidnapped by the soldiers of the emperor. They have to combine their abilities in order to devise a plan of escape.

-PC's are childhood friends living in a small hamlet or village. They've worked hard over the past few summers and have earned enough money to go travelling to the nearby Big city and follow their dreams and illusions of grandeur (Ie. want fame & fortune). Being a small town, they are given the blessings of the townsfolk (maybe a retired adventuring NPC actually lives in this town, gives the PC's some advice, and maybe a fine quality sword or a contact to reach once they arrive at the big city).

-The PC's are clones or simulacrum of Ancient Gods who are no more, either having been destroyed, banished, or forgotten about. The PC's of course have no Godlike powers, because they were made when the said God's were once mortal. They have been kept in temporal stasis in a deep underground crypt until someone finds them (a party of adventurers, a wizard, or even a Lich would be nice).The PC's have no recollection of who they are or how they came to be here, all they know is their names and have a deja vu about everything. Plus a strange sense of kinship with one another. As a substitute you can have them entombed in a iceberg or a glacier, and have northmen come across them to chip them out of the ice (this is the scenario I used once).

-For evil campaigns, I always find it useful to have good aligned PC's hire the evil PC's to fight off evil. Such as having the evil pc's in jail, the only way they can gain freedom is if they perform a task for the ruling council of the city or such. They can be ordered to track down an evil being even more evil than themselves. Or to explore a uncharted region of land and spy on the inhabitants. If the PC's gain freedom but refuse to carry out their orders, you can have the authorities after them, or bounty-hunter NPC's track them down everywhere they go. Another cruel element would be for the GM to have a wizard put a quest or geas spell on each PC.

-The PC's brethren, their clan, tribe, race, whatever, are stricken with poverty and are poor, near the brink of starvation & death. They have to adventure to:

1. Find a lost or stolen artefact of legend to bring peace & prosperity
2. As representatives of their clan, tribe, whatever, they have to restore honor, glory, and pride to their people by doing heroic deeds.
3. Perhaps find a new home for their people (Eg. Their race lives in a secluded valley. Their people are fearful & afraid to leave the comforts of their home, so the ruler charges the party to see what lies beyond their isolated homeland.)
4. The PC's must adventure to find weapons & food for their folk, to help in a battle against some oppressing force (an orc tribe, an evil empire, etc). They also take on the role as spies and assassins as they advance in level.

- The PC's are imprisoned in the city dungeons for quite some time (they can be, in this scenario, homeless street urchins). They spend a few years growing older in jail, where they meet and get to know each other (you can even have one of the PC's be a Guard). The ruling council/or ruler has need of several expendable people to do various tasks for them. They can pick all the party members and have them trained and outfitted (swords, spell components, etc) to:

1. Scout out unfamiliar, dangerous land in the name of the government. Perhaps explore possible trade routes for merchants of the city, or spy on the inhabitants of a forest, etc.
2. PC's are sent as spies to a neighboring kingdom, where they are given the name of a contact to look up. Once there, they find their contact near death at an alleyway, arrows studded into his back, in hot pursuit, just as he dies he hands the PC's something (in this case, a scroll tube full of parchment). The parchment scrolls can be the report of a nasty plot to assassinate some king or queen, a list of known spies in other lands, a list of strengths and weaknesses in the army, etc.
3. PC's are assigned tasks to perform and are given little or no information (I'm taking this idea from the movie-Point of no Return). They are simply given straight forward instructions such as "Kill this noble" or "give NPC X this note then walk away". Make their simple actions turn out to be profounding. Perhaps the note they have to give to "NPC X" is an invitation to a masquerade ball sponsored by the nobility of the city their in. And the ball is the staging area for an assassination attempt on the NPC's life, etc. The PC's might even find themselves in the roll of the assassins.
4. Players can be ordered to infiltrate various underground groups that secretly oppose the government in order to reveal the identities of the members that comprise such secret orders. Perhaps the rulers need to know if a thieves or assassins guild exists without their knowing it (and the ruler thus wishes to enlist their services as spies & assassins). It could be the parties job as well to set up a meeting between the ruler they are working for and the guild master. Even more insidious would be that the ruler is secretly setting up an ambush for the guild master without the PC's knowledge (which makes it look like the PC's did it, which the ruler may desire because they've outlived their usefulness). However, with some good roleplay the Players might be able to convince the guild's second-in- command of the truth of the matter and devise a rescue attempt to free their guild master.

From: jopp@ccs.carleton.ca (Jim Opp)

The most interesting start to a campaign I was involved with began with the GM having us roll up (and write an extensive history for) a high level adventuring party. The premise was that this was an old party heading for retirement, and our first chore was to pick successors who could continue the company. Our GM presented us with a list of 100 possible candidates (no, he didn't let us see the stats) and we had to design special tests and trials to weed out the top candidates. When we made our final picks, then the GM turned their stat sheets over to us (for better or worse... fortunately the thief didn't pick the absolute quickest hands, since that character only had low wisdom and gave us a specific time period which we decided what skills/abilities the veteran characters would teach the new apprentices. Then we spent the rest of the time as the new players, trying to make a name for ourselves and constantly running into old ghosts/old scores from the "past" of the original party.

It takes a while before the real "adventuring" starts, but in my opinion it was worth it! This campaign had the best group dynamics, because it was a real group exercise, rather than everybody showing up with "mature" characters who have extensive histories that are just waiting for that final piece to make their life complete.

From: bubonic@netcom.com (Jeffrey S. hanks)

1. Characters all begin after hometown is destroyed by fire caused by unknown attacker. They group together in hopes of finding out who attacked and killed all of their loved ones, and destroyed the only home that they ever knew. The characters would probably be out exploring ruins or caves when the attackers came so that they were not there.

2. Characters are on a ship off to some remote place when it shipwrecks and the characters are left on some deserted island to fend for themselves.

From: reaux@csgad.cs.vt.edu (Ray A Reaux)

I started a campaign where the PCs were people from the same home village, and all were young and inexperienced (1st level). The PCs were a magic user, a cleric, a fighter, a druid, a bard, and a ranger. Four PCs had families in the village, and the ranger had friends. The Mage and Cleric were brothers with the normal sibling rivalry. All were about the same age and were friends, or at least friendly to each other. The first game day was spent on light bantering and role-playing to develop the relationships among the characters.

Twenty miles from the village was the Darklands, a huge monster-infested region continuously enshrouded from the sun by darkness. The Darklands was the home of a malevolent intelligence

which had goblin armies to command. The goblins often raided the frontier villages for slaves. At the end of the first day of gaming, I had a large overwhelming force of goblins (about 60) raid the village. The PCs had to try to react from their daily chores to fight for their lives and family. All the PCs were knocked out (NOT KILLED, and they later woke to find carnage around them, and signs that some people, including family members and neighbors, had survived the massacre but were slaves of the goblins and were being taken into the Darklands. Every character except the ranger had a family member taken as captives. The Mage and Cleric had their mother and sister captured. The Mage's girlfriend had also been taken. The fighter had a brother captured. The ranger wanted revenge since his teacher and mentor had been killed by the goblins. Besides, his duty was to rescue and protect the people. The adventurers had to find useable supplies from the ruins of the village, and work together to pursue the goblins into the Darklands.

The adventurers pursued the goblins deep into the Darklands, fighting roving, hungry monsters until they came to the keep which was the destination of the goblin raiding party. The PCs had to find out how to get into the well-guarded keep and rescue their family. A frontal assault was out of the question, so they had to rely on stealth. They also had to contend with a "thin man" a low-level lich-like creature that was commanding the goblins, but who answered to the malevolence that inhabited the Darklands.

The PCs rescued their family and friends and 30 or so other odd slaves, and escorted them back out of the Darklands, while being pursued by the goblins. Once they got out of the Darklands, they had to find a place for the people. Some of the people that they had liberated had been slaves most of their lives and did not know how to care for themselves as free people. The adventurers had to get money to build a new village for them (the old village was destroyed, and was too close to the Darklands). They had to raise money to actually purchase land and get building materials. Since there was no convenient gold-laden dungeon laying around into which they could fall into, the players had to be creative and come up with their own money-making schemes. Their money making ventures included beast-catching and running a small travelling circus, of course with the encounters with brigands and other hazards of the road. Once they purchased the land, they had to clear it of some monsters, and also deal with the local Baron who demanded a tax to "protect" the village. The PCs later ran afoul of the Baron when they accidentally killed one of the Baron's men. They had to leave the village, but not until they had made sure the village was firmly established. The success of the campaign hinged on role-playing and real NPCs. These NPCs gave the PCs motivations for what they were trying to do. I gave the Mage and Cleric's mother and sister personalities. The mother was strong willed and became the village matriarch. The sister started openly dating the Fighter which brought out the brotherly protective instincts of the Mage and Cleric. The Mage's girlfriend made the Mage jealous by spending more time with the loud-mouthed boastful, but cowardly, obnoxious village jerk that the Mage, Cleric, and Fighter despised (they had grown up hating him). It was her ploy to get the Mage to quit stalling and marry her. The despised jerk had the gift of gab with women who thought he was the next best thing since the invention of baked bread. Even the Mage and Cleric's mother often took sides with him. I had several other women chasing the "heroic" Cleric and ranger, after all they needed husbands.

I had other NPCs help, since I generally add one or two adventuring NPCs to assist in the PCs with some skills that they do not have or as an avenue for me to provide suggestions or

information to the PCs. For instance, a grizzled mountain man they encountered and enlisted said, "Yes, I know about this creature. My grandpappie once told me about a hippogriff that he saw this Church Knight ride. He said that it was the dangest thing you could ever see. Bigger than a horse, and ..."

Remember that when you are creating campaign, pay as much detail to the environment as to the adventure. And by environment, I mean factors such as NPCs and local politics. They add spice and motivations for the PCs and bring out the role-playing in the players.

From: clwigda@gdwest.gd.com (Craig L Wigda)

The shipwreck has a lot of potential. Make the island large. Wild natives, smugglers, pirates, a small coast town (soon to be under attack). It throws the party together with a nice starting story line. It could also be setup such that the entire party is needed to capture a boat/ship and only (depending on the number of PCs) the player PCs are willing to sail on the ship.

I've done something similar to this. It was great fun. I also used the non-weapon proficiencies. Only one character had sailing/boating so the PCs made him captain. This was great fun, since that person got into the roll of trying to command characters that did not know anything about a boat.

Note, a lot of this also depends on the people you are going to have. Are they roll-playing, or hack and slash? Either way the island could be turned into either type of game with a limited amount of work.

From: jrah@space.honeywell.com (Jeff Hildebrand)

I just started running a PBEM and I told everyone to come up with characters in a small (~200 people) village on the edge of an Empire. Justify what you do there and you all know about each other because it's so small. Worked out pretty well.

In a game where I am playing, the GM set everyone up in a large city, basically separately. Then, one NPC that we all knew was murdered. We met at the funeral and found out that we each had one little piece of a puzzle because he had been asking each of us some pointed questions but didn't want anyone to know too much, so needed to ask many people.

From: galahad@leland.Stanford.EDU (Scott Compton)

Maybe just start them off all in a crowd of people watching a bard playing a song or something and the crowd is attacked by evil city guards that ban music playing in the city. You and the group fights back and escapes: the typical Robin Hood & gang scenario (outlaw bunch).

Or how about a council meeting... all characters represent some political force.

Or what about an 'invitation-only' party to some exotic tower out in the middle of a dead forest. The typical Dracula start... ;)

From: ronald@halls1.cc.monash.edu.au (Ronald Lawrence ROSSITER - Ron)

There is an article in Dragon #208, called 'Team Spirit', that could give you some ideas for party origins, customs and history. Also, another idea is to make the players come up with the origin/meeting of the party after they generate their characters (saves you from the work, as they know what they want...).

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