

NPC's

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War Cry

I've been going through my notes and taking a little stroll down memory lane lately and thought I'd share some of my stuff with the community. Several years ago I ran a very successful campaign that lasted over three years real time about 12-15 years in game time. The only campaign that ran to a very epic and final ending, much like a good book. Most of my notes are on various NPC's, ranging all over the spectrum in motive and inclination. Some are pretty basic, others complicated, and a few are along the "WTF was he thinking?" line.

Y'all are more than welcome to steal, borrow, warp, twist, destroy, comment, critique, or whatever else suits your fancy. Feel free to ask any questions, post your ideas or alterations, or your own favorite NPC's. I am not posting any write-ups or character sheets, just the basic idea behind a character, how I used him, and maybe some background.

OK, with that out of the way, on to.....

Corporal Hobbs

Full name, Corporal Buford T. Hobbs. The primary focus of Hobbs was to make a character that did bad things in the name of good. His entire personality and play revolved around 3 disads - super patriot, extremely efficient, and "the ends ALWAYS justifies the means". In the campaign, despite his low title, Hobbs was a major player in his neck of the woods. He never flinched at doing what had to be done to ensure the survival of his people. If given the choice of doing nothing meant his nation and people would die out completely in 100 years or personally killing 90% of the population so the other 10% could live and his nation remain strong for 1000 years, he would do the latter and never bat an eye. And he did many similar things in the course of the game. To make him stand out, for some odd reason I gave him an outrageous and slow southern drawl. As far as appearance, Hobbs was tall and lean, with a surprisingly muscular build hidden under his chain armor. He had a shock of wild blond hair and a deeply tanned face marked with a sharp nose. I placed his age somewhere around the late 30s to early 40s.

He was first introduced to the PC's when they traveled into his lands and entered his city. The PC's were in the region to stop one of the Dead Gods, Earthshaker, but they were too late. They did manage to enter the city mere days before Earthshaker and his army of ogres, trolls, and giants arrived and laid siege to it. Adventurers being the hardy and combat ready type, they were immediately pressed into service. Refusal meant a stay in the dungeon, a stay that would be brief, as Hobbs had ordered the dungeons emptied and the mass executions of these "undesirables". Through the course of the siege and game play, Hobbs would go on to order the deaths of anyone who could not contribute to the cause and survival of the city. Beggars, the old, sick, and infirm, orphans, and many others disappeared in great numbers. Some he led to believe were being led to safety out of the city, but these usually ended up in the hands of the besiegers as sport or food (the middle men with whom Hobbs was dealing were supplying him with foodstuffs in exchange for the refugees). Others he simply had killed and butchered to supplement the dwindling food supplies of the city.

Those who were capable of fighting were pressed into military service and others with needed and valuable skills were also utilized. After some time it was apparent that there was no hope and Hobbs began planning for the eventual fall and destruction of his city and people. By a stroke of fortune, a small fleet of ships arrived from an allied nation to relieve and bolster the defenses. Seizing the opportunity to save his people, Hobbs commandeered the fleet, loaded the ships with supplies and his own people (hand picked for their skills and good health) and sent them off to find safe haven away from the war. A few days later he would assemble his own elite guard, the Gryphon Legion, the rest of the army and any and all men capable of fighting, and attacked the besieging army. The PC's killed Earthshaker and used the confusion of battle to flee. Hobbs would live and turn up later.

I loved this character as much as my players hated him. And by gawd, did they despise this man. He actually fit the mold perfectly of what I wanted to achieve - an NPC that was invaluable to the PC's, one they would hate and want to kill, but know that doing so would cause more harm than good.

Puck

the not-so-magic dragon

This is one of those characters that was supposed to be a minor humor relief and it grew into something so much more. I tried to run him as a wide-eyed excited youth out to see the world and make a name for himself. Puck was not the typical dragon. He wasn't massively huge, imbued with mighty magical power, or secreted away in some ruins demanding a sacrificial maiden from the neighboring kingdom. Heck, Puck couldn't even breathe fire and was still trying to master the finer points of flying, or more accurately, landing without causing massive collateral damage. He was a rather young dragon, still fresh out of the nest. Eager, excitable, and with a curiosity that could've killed a hundred cats a hundred times over, the first encounter between the PC's and Puck was very amusing - to me, at least.

The brave PC's were traveling through a wild and woolly wilderness near some mountains when their lives took a turn for the weird. They heard a mighty flap of wings and a strong voice overhead.

Peering up through the leafy canopy of the forest, they saw a small dragon rapidly descending on them. There was a mad panic as people scattered all over drawing weapons and preparing spells. As Puck came rushing down upon them he was yelling out dire warnings to the PC's "OH OH! Downdraft! This can't be good. Here we go, here we go! OH NO! LOOK OUT BELOW!" And with that a dragon came crashing through the foliage, smashed into the earth, and skidded through the forest, snapping small trees into kindling and kicking up a massive cloud of leaves and dust. *cough cough* "Whoa! Didja see me? Wasn't that soooo cool? Lookit what I did to all those trees! AWESOME! Hey, my name's Puck, and I'm a dragon! Well, not really a dragon, not yet anyway. I still gotta find a dangerous lair, put together my hoard, and slay a mighty hero. THEN I'll be real dragon." Here I had him pause and look the group over through squinty eyes. "Nope, no real heroes here. Not yet anyway. I'll have to eat you later. Anyways, I gotta get goin'. The barbarians to the north are looting and pillaging all over the place burning down villages and killing everything! AINT IT GREAT? They're leaving food EVERYWHERE!" Puck pointed to a poor pack mule that got caught in his crash landing. "You gonna eat that? No? Didn't think so. Thanks!" He hopped over to the dead mule, wrapped his talons around it, and took off. "Whoa whoa, gotta compensate, OK.....AND OFF I GO!"

And that's the basic gist of Puck. There were a few more encounters between the PC's and the dragon, and all of them were...interesting. They actually gave Puck directions to where he could find a remote and sinister lair and possibly find a hoard too. Then there was the discussion on breath weapons that ended with Puck hocking a loogie on the Dwarf. "Nope, my breath weapon aint water" Or when the PC's wanted to get from one place to another quickly and asked to hitch a ride on Puck. That did not end well. And once the PC's started to make names for themselves, Puck would ask them to fight so he could kill them and become a real dragon finally. Puck did manage to kill a great hero,

and several of his companions. After bragging about how great the fight was, showing off his really kewl battle scars, and accepting the praise and compliments of the PC's, he turned to the Dwarf and said "Oh, by the way, sorry about your kin."

The players did get to see Puck become a full-fledged dragon and when he died at the end of the campaign, two of the PLAYERS started to cry! I actually had a NPC that the players liked so much they really shed a tear when he perished. How cool is that?!

Captain Hendrick

the dwarf bounty hunter

Captain Hendrick was the hunted for one of the PC's, One-Eye the Dwarf mercenary. One Eye fled his dwarven homelands when he learned he was to be the groom in an arranged marriage between his clan and another. After his initial introduction to his bride to be, he grabbed his armor, axe, and crossbow and fled his hold. Captain Hendrick belonged to a third clan that was not involved with the crisis, a clan that has a well deserved reputation for tracking and bagging it's quarry, only this time, it was a fellow dwarf. Collecting a hefty sum for his services, Captain Hendrick gathered his hardy followers and set out to find and return the wayward One-Eye.

I gave Hendrick a rather gregarious and friendly personality, always polite, cheerful, and generous. He had a soft spot for children and was always doling out lemon drops, cookies, and other sweets to any kids - extra portions to those who knew where he could find a black bearded one-eyed dwarf. As an outsider traveling through foreign lands, he was very careful not to offend locals, and his generous gifts of silver and gold let him operate however he wished most of the time. He was not out to kill, but he had no qualms about maiming any of the other PC's who got in his way. He made his first appearance in the very first adventure. I started out the PC's in the middle of a city that had a massive army of orcs bearing down on it. They had about a day to sort things out - stay and fight or run, basically. One Eye, who was busy dodging Captain Hendrick, decided to stay and offered his services to the city's defenses. Upon learning of this, Hendrick immediately sold the services of his own band to the militia, and requested assignment to the same unit as One-Eye. "After all, my dear lad, one dwarf is enough to take 100 orcs, but a dozen hardy dwarves with noble blood? This wall will not fall." It was great fun watching the player sweat this one out. Eventually, the gates were breached and orcs poured into the city. In the confusion, One Eye managed to give Hendrick the slip, but on his way out of the city he passed another PC, the two hooked up, and attempted to make good their escape, only to continually stop and slaughter orcs who were having a bit of fun with the local population. Several other PC's managed to join and they formed their own little warrior group, fighting its way out. They made it to the river that cuts through the city, and where about to swim/wade out, when a chilling sight caught their eyes. A nearby orphanage was on fire and orcs were having sport with the fleeing children. Hendrick showed up in time to see the rescue. Instead of seizing the opportunity to apprehend his weary and wounded target, he let him go and continued the work of saving the children.

Hendrick had a few more encounters with the PC's. When the PC's won a tournament and the prize was the "honor" of slaying the fell and terrible giant that was terrorizing the north, Captain Hendrick and his men actually traveled with them, only to stand on the sidelines and watch while the PC's fought the giant. As the giant had several snacks (children) imprisoned in his tower, Hendrick once again let them go while he made arrangements for the care of the orphans. One-Eye was actually in chains and on his way back to his dreaded marriage at one point, but Hendrick freed him when faced with a dilemma of his own.

Sadly, Hendrick and his men would perish shortly after that when they had the misfortune of running into a dragon on a quest of his own. IME, dwarves are usually run as rough and tumble types. I went out of my way to give Hendrick a likable personality and a true heart of gold.

Pagan Oldcastle

servant of the Dead God, Conniver

Another hunted; Pagan was a dark elf warrior/wizard who did a very good job of making the PC's lives absolutely miserable. She was a hot and sultry woman, who used her charms and body as much as her spear and saber, if not more, to get what she wanted. And what she wanted was the PC's. She was a master of the surprise attack and ambush, an expert kidnapper, and all around user and abuser. You didn't know Pagan and her cronies were around until you suddenly found yourself staring down at multiple crossbow bolts sticking out of your shield, or worse, yourself. As a hunted, she did an excellent job of messing with the PC's, but there was more to it than that. She was also a servant of one of the Dead Gods, and as such, her duty was to ensure the success of her resurrected deity, by any means necessary. This also meant that even though she and her warriors were after the PC's, they also secretly aided them behind the scenes if such action meant thwarting the plans of the other Dead Gods. I sometimes used her as a means of steering the group in the direction they needed to go. She was a nympho with no morals or conscience, a selfish, arrogant brute who treated those around her as tools. My goal with this character was to sow a little tension in the group, to kind of mix up the dynamics and see how they handled personal problems among themselves.

PC's - "We really don't want to travel north - there are really, really bad things up there. What's to the south, mister GM?"

GM - "Pagan and her followers. You can see the glint of sunlight on their weapons and armor off in the distance"

PC's "What are we waiting for - North it is!"

No one encounter really stands out. She was often friendly and invited herself into their midst. This more often than not ended with one of the PC's being seduced and sleeping with her. And each time it was a different character. She would profess her love for one, and then sneak off to sleep with another, keeping the ruse going with multiple people at once. Once she got tired of this game, she and her current victim were "accidentally" discovered in a compromising position by another PC whom she was "in love" with. Wow. Did that get interesting, and the players seemed to love it. One minute they are discussing how despicable and vile she is and how they are going to get revenge for how she has been using them, then a day later fist fights are breaking out among them over who she really loves and wants to be with. After the group finally worked Pagan out of their system, she developed a new and more sinister tactic to satisfy her carnal desires. She and her dark elves would ambush the PC's and in the midst of the fight, kidnap whatever character had the misfortune of being the first to go unconscious. She would return the poor man a few days later, completely healthy and relatively unharmed, but undeniably exhausted. Pagan eventually tired of this sport too, and upped her wickedness another level. She started using hit and run tactics, gradually weakening the group and getting them to expend whatever healing magic they had. Then she would move in with a full force assault. Sometimes she was beaten back, and sometimes she would win. When she won, things got really ugly. With several of the PC's and friendly NPC's hurt so bad that their BOD scores were in the negatives, she would offer to use her magic to heal people, but only if her chosen victim agreed to be her plaything for the night. Refusal meant death for whatever person was within reach of her spear. IIRC, an NPC and a PC died this way. I didn't do this very often. It really isn't all that pleasant and requires a mature and willing group of players. Much later in the campaign she would brutally murder a pair of NPC's who were very good friends of the PC's - and she made sure they had an unobstructed view and could do nothing about it.

However, I think the absolute strangest thing about this whole character is the bizarre fact that the players never actually tried very hard to stop her, and that she and one of the PC's got married at the end of the campaign! Near the end, she and the dark elves switched sides, fighting alongside the dwarves against the armies of the Dead Gods.

Disclaimer: Pagan is oriented around a theme that should not be taken lightly in a game. I am a firm believer that there are some things you just don't do to PC's, and forced sex is one of them. Pagan was a cooperative NPC, her actions and possible consequences were discussed before anything actually happened and the players were given the power to dictate and veto any of her actions. I made sure there was player consent and never forced the issue. If I thought they were the least bit hesitant or uneasy, I would nix it, even if the player had agreed.

Jim Bob

farmboy with dreams of glory

"Howdy! How's y'all doin'? M'name's Jamelus Mibobiros, but most folk jist call me Jim Bob. I got seven bruthers an' three sisters, but theys all back on th' farm. My maw don't be needin me no more, so I joined up with the King's Men. Yessirree, Ah'm a soldier now. Ya see this here? This usedta be mah daddy's sword. He was a soldier too. Why, Ah remember th'day they came to asked mah daddy to go off soldierin'. I weren't but knee high to a cockatrice than. You shoulda seen him! Pa, he jist kinda straightened up real slow like, looked up in the sky, and started cryin'. First and only time any of us ever seen pa do that. Than he kinda bowed his head down and follered them other soldiers off. He was prayin' to the gods, no doubt, proud to be doin' his duty to the King 'n all. He came back a few years later, dressed in some ol' farmers tunic w'this here sword all bundled up in rags 'n such. Ah think it's magical. Why else would pa curse it as he buried it out back b'hind the barn? We got on well after'n all that fer a spell, what with all mah bruthers an' farmwork an' whatnot. But my daddy, he musta been a great hero or sumthin', cuz them there soldier fellers came back an' took pa off agin, this time in chains! Who'd a thunk it? Mah daddy's a berzerker!"

Ahem. Now that I got all that out of my system, on with JimBob, the wannabe warrior. If you managed to struggle through the above, I'm sure you've managed to figure out he hero-worships his father, eager for honor and glory, hopelessly optimistic, and dumb as a box of rocks. His motivation is simple – be a great hero, just like daddy. JimBob was a rather simple NPC that was a real blast to play. He's just a country bumpkin with a sword and he has no clue how to use it; no WF's, no levels, not even a decent Dex. Pathetic by all accounts. He was from the same land as Hobbs (whom JimBob also held in high esteem) and did indeed serve in the defense of that very same city. The PC's loved this guy and went out of their way to make sure at least one of the warrior types was around him, especially if there was fighting going on. And that's the only reason JimBob lived as long as he did. The first three assaults on the city naturally had the PC's in the middle of the mess, and JimBob was right there with them, swinging and missing. His first actual combat hit was a headshot – to the Dwarf One-Eye, a PC. Otherwise, JimBob was wildly swinging his sword around until the enemy dropped him, and in all three fights, JimBob was laid low. If it wasn't for the healing magic of one of the PC's, JimBob would've died in all three. His warrior career was off to a rocky start. By the time he got involved in his fourth combat, JimBob had a little experience, but was still nowhere near the caliber of those around him, yet he succeeded where others had failed. Earthshaker's pit trolls had managed to breach the city, digging a tunnel under the walls that came up near the royal palace. One of the PC's had managed to discern what was going on, gathered the other PC's and a few NPCs, and abandoned their posts to try and stop it. The ensuing battle was grim and ugly, with casualties mounting on both sides. The trolls were steadily forcing their way into the palace proper, their mission to kill the king and his family. At this point through some ungodly lucky dice rolls (I rolled my dice in the open for this campaign) JimBob managed to hack the leg of off one troll, then turned and beheaded another, before a troll-hammer sent him flying across the courtyard with many broken bones and near death. Both of these were the bodyguards of Harkon the Cleaver, the warlord of the pit trolls. Stunned silence surrounded the table, which was broken by wild cheering and many high fives. The players were celebrating the

“feat” of an NPC. Definitely a Kewl Game Moment. A parley was called, a temporary truce was reached between the trolls and PC’s, and all would live to fight another day. (JimBob was personally awarded a medal by his idol, Hobbs, for his actions in this fight). JimBob’s most heroic deed came later in the campaign and would save the lives of the entire PC party, but it is directly tied to another NPC, Mountain Jack.

Mountain Jack

the bitter guide

Yet another NPC that loosely tied in with the siege at Hobb’s home city. As none of the PC’s had any viable wilderness or survival skills, they got in the habit of hiring out for scouts and guides to take them from point A to point B. Enter Mountain Jack. He knew his homelands as well as the back of his hand, though his real skills were his ability to make a trail disappear, hide a camp, or make it very difficult to follow him and his charges. He was somewhere in his 40’s or 50’s, with long hair and a full beard, both of which were once a rich blond but now mostly gray. His preferred weapons were a hand axe and long knife, complimented by a short bow. Mountain Jack was modeled heavily on the movie character of Hawkeye from “Last of the Mohicans”; just tack on a couple of decades.

Mountain Jack hated civilization, and did his best to avoid settlements of any size. His first encounter with the PC’s was deep in the wilderness, helping the group run and hide from Pagan and her dark elf warriors. He successfully brought them to the capital of his kingdom and would have happily returned to his beloved countryside if a Dead God and his army hadn’t of shown up. A PC and Mountain Jack were the two characters that took it upon themselves to look after JimBob. Though a capable fighter, he rarely engaged in combat, but served more as a lookout and scout. Pressed into military service like the others, he followed orders, but to the bare minimum. He talked little, but when he did, only the foolish ignored his words. The PC’s were scared of Mountain Jack for some reason, and I think it has to do with one small scene in particular. Most of the characters and PC’s were barracked in the same garrison, and being under siege, water was for drinking. Baths were very rare, and used as a reward for jobs done exceptionally well. The nasty fight with the pit trolls at the palace earned the PC’s and Mountain Jack a trip to the bathhouse. While there, they noticed that Mountain Jack was heavily scarred, especially across the back and around the neck and wrists. When asked, the only reply they got was “Dungeon’s will do that to a man.” When the city fell, Mountain Jack led the PC’s away after they had slain the Dead God Earthshaker. He was skilled enough to get them through the enemy army and into the relative safety of the hills. Until Pagan and her war band showed up. There was a desperate dash for safety, but the PC’s horses were nowhere near as fresh as the dark elves mounts, and it was painfully obvious that they would be overcome by over 50 bloodthirsty elves and a psychotic warrior mage. Something stirred in JimBob (whom the PC’s had brought along), and he brought his horse to a halt. “This is mah home. Ah aint leavin’” and with that he rode his horse to the bottom of the hill, drew his sword, and waited. Seeing this, Mountain Jack turned to the others and told them to go while they still had half a prayer. He and JimBob would hold them as long as they could. There was a bit of arguing, as Mountain Jack was the only one who knew the area, but it was to no avail. He gave them the last of his cold, steely glances and simply stated, “I’m not leaving my son to die alone” and rode off after JimBob.

Instead of riding off, the PC’s just sat there and watched the ensuing battle unfold. The two made a brave charge at the dark elves, Mountain Jack using his bow to cover JimBob. Several fell from his arrows and under JimBob’s sword. Caught off guard and getting their butts handed to them, they were about to break off until Pagan joined the fray. Mountain Jack’s death was quick and gruesome as she used her magic to stun him, levitate him, and drop him on her spear. With several quick strokes from her saber, she cut the body off her spear and fought JimBob. He made a fight of it and even wounded her, but he was no match. She prolonged the fight as long as she could, knowing the PC’s were on a

hill watching. After rendering JimBob helpless with numerous well-placed cuts and stabs, she waited for him to fall to his knees before she cut off his head and kicked the corpse over, leaving her spear still impaled in his side. She let the PC's go.

Melvin

the holy warrior

Probably one of the strangest NPC's to ever grace a game I've run, and he is based largely on my very first character in the hero system. The name has varied from campaign to campaign (Melvin, Herman, Hubert, and Jethro come to mind) but his overall background, personality, and context remained largely the same.

Melvin is saddled with a major problem and he doesn't even know it - he's dead. Or more precisely, undead. He was cursed, or maybe that's blessed, with undeath by his patron deity to serve as an eternal guardian at a temple that housed a powerful artifact. Through the centuries, kingdoms rose and fell, conquerors came and went, and the temple fell out of use, forgotten by the world. Until of course, a bunch of PC's uncover some very old texts and scrolls that hint at the truth and set off to find the temple and recover said artifact before the bad guys can. They managed to find the temple and set about exploring the sacred shrine and noted a few things that were a bit unusual. The grounds were immaculate, the buildings well kept and relatively clean, and there was no sign of any life. Exploring further, they soon hear chanting coming from the main temple and cautiously approach. The inside of the temple was dimly lit and in the far end was a skeletal figure dressed in rich robes, bedecked with jewels and a golden crown, kneeling before an altar with his arms outstretched, obviously praying to some deity. Our brave heroes readied weapons and spells and proceeded to sneak up on this ungodly liche, when the paladin stepped forward and issued a bold challenge to this evil being. Slowly the dread undead lord rose and approached the holy warrior. Stopping a mere foot from the paladin, the skeleton reached out with one bony hand and spoke, "Hi! I'm Melvin. Got any beeeeeeeeeer? Hehehehehe!" *snort*

Being alone for centuries in a remote location, Melvin had gotten bored and spent his time entertaining himself with the temple's treasury, oftentimes wearing much of the treasure on his person or sorting, cataloguing, and organizing it. The PC's managed to convince Melvin that they were not agents of the Dead Gods and he relented to let them leave with his charge - on the condition that he come along also. After all, he had been entrusted by his god to its safekeeping, and until he was told otherwise by his church or god, he was still bound by those oaths. So for a few gaming sessions, the poor PC's had to deal with an undead monk with a serious drinking problem. The problem being no matter how much he drank, he couldn't get drunk.

Tulio

lost and confused

I honestly don't see the appeal of this NPC, but for some odd reason the group latched on to him. Lowlife and all around scumbag, Tulio would gladly sell out anyone for enough money to cover his next fix - and he often did. First encounter with Tulio was less than pleasant for the PC's as he was the one who had sold them out to a bunch of lunatic murderous cultist - after he had been hired by the PC's as a guide through the seedier parts of town. The PC's manage to defeat the cultists, escape, and do a little digging on their own, learning some info that leads them back to Tulio. Bent on vengeance, they seek him out, corner him, and then LISTEN to his pathetic sob story. Yup, they not

only let him live, but pretty much drafted him into their fold, reasoning that he has good street skills and useful contacts. Tulio was only too eager and agreed to help (after all, they didn't make good on their threats to kill him) and became their street level informant and guide. Off course, Tulio certainly did not reform, and sold out his "friends" on several more occasions. Some of it was pretty obvious, but no one did anything about it. And to make it worse (or IMO, humorous) Tulio would often ask for and receive payment from the same PC's he betrayed on a regular basis for his "leads" and "bailing them out" of trouble. He couldn't keep any of the gold or silver he bilked the PC's out of, spending all of his cash on drugs and women. And when Tulio was wasted, he often slipped up and talked freely of his misdeeds at the PC's expense. His street skills and contacts were non-existent. He had a reputation as a snitch and sellout and that is what led to all the PC's troubles.

Bad Guy "Hey, Tulio is it? I hear ya hang with a one-eyed dwarf and his friends. Arrange for them to be at the Dusky Duck Inn by the riverfront at sunset and this purse of silver is yours."

Tulio "Sure, man. No problem"

And from here Tulio would make up a story, telling the PC's what they wanted to hear. Rinse and repeat.

He would meet an unfortunate end at the hands of a crime lord (his disads finally caught up to him). This NPC really had no redeeming qualities and was supposed to be a throwaway for a one shot, but because of the players, he stayed around far longer than he should have. Give a GM enough rope, he's gonna use it.

Spittlefang, the filth assassin

hunted

Spittlefang was the collaboration of myself and the player who had him as his hunted. He was a skaven (ratman) assassin who had been sent out to murder one of his own, the PC Slashtooth, a skaven assassin who was fascinated by the man-things and their world above the skaven Under Empire and trying to fit in to this "new" world. Clad in tattered and dirty rags over which he wore a billowing and ragged cloak, Spittlefang was a grotesque creature with matted brown fur and broken yellow fangs bared in a perpetual sneer. He was vile and evil to the extreme, killing randomly to spread fear and terror wherever he went. He had numerous blades hidden about himself and many were poisoned. His favorite weapon was a short sword he had taken off a mighty hero he had slain some years before and this was his only possession that was kept immaculate. It was not enough for Spittlefang to just kill his target. He had to let his victims know who was coming after them and that death would be slow and painful. It was important for him to taunt and instill fear before he attacked. Something as simple as a visit in the dead of night and a softly spoken "I smell your fear" was enough to get the message across. His favorite trick was to kill and eat a human child and leave the corpse where the group could find it - an omen that he was about to strike. He was fully capable of taking on the entire group, but only did so once to illustrate the point that there was little they could do to stop him. He carved them up pretty bad using hit and run tactics, leaving all but Slashtooth a bloody mess in dire need of a cure for the poison running through their veins. This left Slashtooth with the fun choice of fighting Spittlefang or letting his nemesis go so he could get help for his friends. There were numerous fights between the two ratman and all were awesome to play and watch. The drama and hatred between these two characters was enjoyable for the whole group. Most of the fights had both Slashtooth and Spittlefang beaten to a bloody pulp, with Spittlefang holding the advantage. Usually the timely arrival of the rest of the party saved Slashtooth's life. The two combats that did go heavily in favor of Slashtooth, Spittlefang managed to escape with the use of magic, creating a cloud of smoke to facilitate his getaway. The facial expressions on the players' faces were priceless when they knew Slashtooth was involved in a scenario. Eyes would pop out of skulls, jaws would drop, and sweat would bead up on their foreheads as they furiously planned on how to deal with him. I must be

sadistic, cuz I loved seeing them like that. Most of the time, he never made a direct appearance, only leaving a token of his presence to remind them that he was always nearby. Usually these tokens were a mutilated animal left in the path, one of his numerous poisoned daggers stuck in a tree, or a whisper in the night - "I own the dark". Spittlefang however, was finally slain by Slashtooth in one of the most exciting one-on-one fights I have ever had the pleasure of being a part of. The fight raged back and forth as the two traded blows, pulling out all the stops. Both made maximum use of their surroundings, employing furniture, tapestries, and mundane pieces of equipment as impromptu distractions and weapons. Broken and bloody, Slashtooth was finally knocked to the ground and disarmed by his hated foe. Sensing victory, Spittlefang wound up for a haymaker to cleave Slashtooth's head from his shoulders. Here the player pulled his final trick, using his tail to draw a sword he never used but kept hidden under his cloak and strapped to his back. With one blow, Spittlefang was dropped, his severed head still cackling with mad laughter at the anticipation of a blow that would never land.

Bartamus

enchanter of the 4th circle

Bartamus was introduced as an "info dump", an NPC with knowledge about certain people and events that could prove beneficial to the group. The NPC itself was rather useless as far as skills go. He was an enchanter, but a weak one. His specialty however, did put him in a position of relative power. His job was to repair and keep the golems that guarded the Wizard's Isle in working order, particularly the iron golems. As these were hollow, Bartamus would work his magic on the inside of the magical machines so as to better preserve and protect the arcane inscriptions that made these beings possible. He had the fortune/misfortune of being inside model Obsidian 16 when the Archmage Kalifirius assassinated the wizard's council and proceeded to purge the islands of those who had not sworn themselves to him and his cause. Staying inside the golem and desperately clutching the "owners manual" Bartamus made good his escape from the island.

Bartamus had spent most of his life on the island, working on his charges, so had little experience or contact with the outside world. He was very short, often mistaken for a gnome, bespectacled, and bald save for a wispy ring of white hair and a short beard. He was always very cheerful, polite, and just a little bit intimidated by others. Whenever he saw someone whom he recognized and had shown him some kindness (all you had to do was talk to him) he would frantically wave and jump up and down until he got their attention. He would then walk up, shake hands, say "HI!" and walk away about his business.

One would think that walking around inside a huge iron golem with arms that terminated in massive maces would make him formidable in a fight. Not so. Bartamus couldn't hit the broadside of a barn, and on those rare occasions where a blow did land (only two or three times), he would flip open the golem's faceplate, poke his head out, and apologize profusely and once even went so far as to try to render first aid to the dark elf he had just pulverized - while everyone around him was fighting for their life. He was one of the NPCs who happened to be the target of the affections of Pagan Oldcastle, and when he returned to the PCs he was nothing but bruises and smiles. Hey, he was an 80-year-old virgin until then.

Tarkan the butcher

A fun NPC who was made out to be more than he really was. According to the history that the players had, Tarkan Dar'Arvudius was a dark elf noble whose propensity for cruelty and evil knew no bounds.

He led the Dark Elves to war on the Flatlanders over 500 years ago, laying waste to entire towns and populations. He was fickle, sparing one town because of the majestic beauty of the red banners flying over the buildings and slaughtering every man, woman, child, and beast in another and burning it to the ground because it blocked his view of a sunset. He was unpredictable, at best. He earned the title "The Butcher of Green Fields" after his army thoroughly defeated a host twice the size of his own. Disappointed at such a lopsided victory, he ordered the execution of every third man in his own army – including his eldest son and youngest daughter – and left those corpses to rot on the fields alongside the enemy. This proved to be the undoing of the historical Tarkan, as the dwarves had heard of his vile deeds and amassed an army of their own to meet him. Tarkan's army was crushed and the general himself captured.

Enter the PCs 500 years later as travelers and guest of the dwarven north kingdom. They had been led to believe that in his conquest of the northlands centuries ago, Tarkan had captured a relic of the Dead Gods and secreted it away before his own capture. Their intent was to negotiate with the dwarven king for some time to talk with Tarkan in the dungeons in an effort to learn his secret. Things did not go as planned, as the PC's soon found themselves embroiled in a murder mystery that involved a number of dwarves going insane. A major blunder by a PC ended up getting the poor character tossed in the dungeons, in the same cell as Tarkan – now himself nothing more than crazy nutjob from centuries of isolation. The rest of the PCs manage to rescue their comrade and escape with Tarkan in tow.

Only it wasn't Tarkan. He had been dead for over 200 years and the poor sap they were dragging along with them was a crazy mage who was locked up in the cell next to the "original". This guy was so far gone that he honestly believed he was Tarkan the Butcher, and did weird and crazy things to prove it. During the escape from the dwarven dungeons, he stopped long enough to attempt to eat an unconscious dwarf. (He was stopped). The PC's learned very quickly that "Tarkan" needed to be restrained, as on more than one occasion he had tried to stab someone with a knife he had stolen or would go "Hannibal Lectre" on them. IIRC, a PC lost an ear to this. He would often ramble about his glorious past and grand conquests, saying the most bizarre and cryptic things I could imagine, and the players would sit there, scribbling notes furiously, hoping not to miss any clues. Somehow they managed to find the artifact (giving credit to their clever interpretation of the imposter's clues). It was at this point that someone finally noticed that the Tarkan they had been dragging along for days wasn't the real thing – he wasn't even an elf, but a human. The poor lunatic was killed in the night by a PC assassin and the body buried. What followed was one of those "Huh?" moments. For some reason, the PC panicked and tried to cover his deed – by stealing a plow from a nearby farm (they were in a village) and plowing the ground where he hid the corpse. Hearing the noise, some of the other PCs woke up and went to investigate. I couldn't have planned for what happened next, only roll with it. The assassin then cooks up some story about this area being an ancient battlefield and that the bodies had been left here, still clad in their armor and valuables and he was using the plow in an attempt to turn up bodies so he could find any magical items or weapons that had been left. They bought it. Now I had a bunch of PCs going around the village, waking up farmers and giving them gold to borrow their horses and plows. The ENTIRE party was now plowing the area looking for treasure. Hell, I might as well go with it. The farmers were only too happy to let the PCs plow the fields, providing they didn't damage any already existing crops. This craziness went on for two weeks. I had some pity on them (or maybe I threw a few more logs on the fire) and let them find a handful of minor valuables, but nothing magical. Hey, they so wanted an ancient battlefield; I finally caved and played along.

Headley Bumbleweed

the wizard that wasn't

A strange NPC that grew out of absolutely nothing into something, well, not much really. Somewhere along the line, a couple of PCs ending up getting tossed in jail/dungeon overnight for a minor infraction. Not content with letting it go, the group dwelt on the incarcerated pair and I had to ad-lib. I threw some nobody in the cell with them, also for a minor offense. Tall, gangly, with long hair held back by a headband and a patch of scrubby stubble on the chin in a poor attempt to grow a proper beard, Headly Bumbleweed was introduced to the game. Inept does not describe this guy well enough. He had zilch for skills and I ran him as a brain dead stoner, even went so far as to actually make him one. Poor Headley Bumbleweed was a wizard, or I should say, an Illusionist, but with a slight problem. He was addicted to his spell ingredients.

When the duo was released, so was Headley, and they invited him to tag along because they could "always use another powerful spellcaster". Hoo boy. The misadventures with this schmuck were numerous. He poisoned the entire group one night when they let him tend the cooking pot. Always in an experimental mood, Headley dropped some 'shrooms into the stew. "But, they were like, such a groovy purple, man." Every time something important (or even unimportant) came up, Headley would chime in with his own such experience. "Like, Wow man. This reminds me of the time I had to fight some midget orcs over at Sword's Point. Man, that was sooooo bogus. I turned 'em into flying pigs, though. That was totally groovy, man". His magic was completely unreliable, but potent if he hadn't already consumed the needed spell components.

"Like you know, man, I could so totally own that dragon right now. I've got a groovy spell that can kick his blue and yellow butt."

"Headley, he's red. And it's not a dragon. It's a salamander."

"Oh. Right. Yeah man! I can so totally own his furry butt!" "Headley, its - by the gods! You're wasted! Um, what about a spell right now?"

"Sorry man. I smoked it last night."

Typical exchange with Headley when a fight was about to go down. Totally useless, but rather entertaining, for me at least.

Narglok the Black

Orc Warlord

A fun villain NPC for as long as he lasted. Narglok the Black was a captain of the Dead God Bonecrusher, charged with eliminating the meddlesome PC's. Big, strong, and with an intelligence on par with many great generals, Narglok was a force to be reckoned with. It's amazing what you can do with a basic orc write-up just by adding a little bit to intelligence, a decent tactics roll and loyal followers. He was the first major villain they encountered, leading the assault on a city in the first adventure of the campaign. Tired of watching countless orcs die in frontal assaults that lasted for over a day, he casually killed the army general and took command. Within hours the walls were breached and the orcs were taking the city. His own orders were to retrieve an artifact, and so he led his personal bodyguard through the city with singular determination, bent on his goal, which he achieved. His exit from the city was somewhat hampered by the PC's, and he lost an eye. The PCs would later make a risky and daring raid and steal this artifact from the orcs, and so would begin the pursuit of Narglok. With only a dozen warriors at his side, this was one bad orc. His second was a wiry orc warrior with a few martial arts and his advisor was a shaman, the rest were plain old as-is orcs. The first fight with Narglok and his war band scared the PC's senseless. Coordinating the orcs in his command, Narglok stomped the group into the ground with brutal efficiency, leaving one of the PC's dead, two NPCs dead, and the rest either unconscious or so beat up they couldn't fight any more, at the cost of only two of his orcs. Narglok took back the item stolen from him, stopping long enough to sneer over the bloody PC's. "Heroes? The halfling I had for lunch yesterday put up a better fight than this. You are not worthy of a sword arm." CHOP! And off comes a characters hand.

They would tangle again, and most of those fights would end as draws that would cost the PCs horses, gear, and other things. It was a small war of attrition, Naglok wearing them down and costing them both valuable time and equipment, always lamenting the fact that he was charged with dealing with a bunch of second-rate wannabe heroes, when he could be engaged in glorious warfare, burning cities and slaughtering hundreds of the soft manlings. The table was turned on Naglok, one night however, when one of his ambushes went horribly wrong and the party was able to capitalize on the orc warlord's misfortune. Another PC was slain as was another NPC, but most of the orcs were cut down. With his back against the wall and his two lieutenants dead, Narglok issued a challenge to the paladin. Both sides backed off as the two squared off. The dice were not kind to the paladin and very hot for the orc, and though both were beat up pretty bad, the PC was soon on the ground, bleeding profusely from numerous wounds. Raising his mace to deliver the deathblow, Narglok jerked and looked down to see a sword point sticking out of his chest. The character that had lost a hand earlier had buried his sword in the orc warlord's back. Cursing them roundly for their lack of honor by interfering in a duel, Narglok perished.

And he would return as a wraith, his spirit bent on vengeance. They were terrified of this guy alive, I just had to see how they would react if I brought him back as the undead.

Grub and Stinky

peas in a pod

Probably the most loved - and comical - NPCs from this campaign. The game was getting dark and depressing, so I interjected these two clowns to lighten the mood. They were a pair of goblins who were the best of friends. They were so inseparable that when one rose to power, the other only naturally followed suit. Their names pretty much were their defining features. Grub was always digging under rocks or pulling a worm out of his "yum-yum" pouch and Stinky, well, you had to make some rolls to stay in his presence for longer than 5 minutes, he was that ripe. Both of them always carried a sack of "Magic Sleeping Powder" (salt). Mentally, the two of them combined had the IQ of a gnat, and a dead one at that. I just ran them with an innocent and childlike mentality with a very dangerous bit of cunning thrown in.

The first encounter with the dastardly duo was at the ruins of an old and abandoned fortress, the last remnants of a ruined city from ages past. The PCs were following some leads and believed the ruins to hold a vast amount of treasure buried deep within its vaults, full of magical weapons, armor, and various other weapons. A nasty storm hurried the group on their way, and they were soon sheltering in the ruined gatehouse. Enter the "Greatest Mostest Sneakum Goblin Scout Bashiest Warrior Guys", Grub and Stinky. Turning themselves invisible by covering their eyes with their hands, the two crept up to the party; counting aloud how many steps it would take to reach them. "One, eleventeen, six, rook to b-4, seven! 'Kay Stinky, I'm gonna chop of pointy man's head! Um, scuse me, can I have that?" Grub is pointing at the sword in the warrior's hand. Needless to say, their plan did not work. They were further disappointed when the PCs would not let them stay and eat, er, guard the horses. Throwing salt on the pack animals while singing "Go to sleep, horsey, go to sleep" didn't help their argument much. The two soon had the bright idea of introducing the group to King Grobbo, Lord of the Refuse. The PCs began the dangerous quest into the bowels of the ruins to retrieve the great treasure and slay a mighty monster the goblins called "The Evil Snuffawhump", with Grub and Stinky being their guides, as these two are obviously the greatest scouts and warriors in all of goblinkind. The two little buggers led continual chants of "Chief Grobbo Great! Chief Grobbo Great!" every five minutes, making stealth impossible. The fight with the Snuffawhump was an embarrassment to the PCs and they left the ruined fortress vowing revenge. It did not take long. A few weeks after this debacle they met up with a young dragon, Puck, who was searching for a hoard of his own. The sly PCs gave Puck directions to the lair of the goblins, planning to return and slay Puck after he had killed

all the goblins and amassed the treasure in a central location. Grub and Stinky greeted Puck, and the duo immediately saw an opportunity. Flattering Puck as the "Great Dragon Sky God", they led him to their king, chanting "Chief Grobbo Tastes Great! Chief Grobbo Tastes Great!" And so began their meteoric rise to power, backed by a juvenile dragon. Yup, I'm an a\$\$.

The final encounter with these two was at the Last Battle. The Dead Gods had besieged the last refuge of good, and taken the outer defenses. As they were preparing for their final assault, a vast army crested the ridge. Thousands upon thousands of goblins had shown up under the banner of Chief Grub and Magic Guy Stinky, all now worshippers of the Great Dragon Sky God, Puck. With the aid of their "god", the goblin host was able to fight its way to the dwarven fortress. With more pressing matters at hand, the dwarves set aside their age-old grudge. Besides, the goblin army was armed with magical weapons, armor, and devices from the hoard of their dragon-god, not to mention numbered in the thousands. Armed now with the Flying Chopping Thingy, Grub was a minor force to be reckoned with. The sword was animate and intelligent, whizzing about the battlefield separating heads from their shoulders, with a poor goblin clutching the hilt for dear life and screaming like a little girl. Armed with the powerful Boom Stick, Stinky was chucking lightning bolts left and right, cackling like a little kid with a bucket of high explosives. He had been denied the opportunity to make the gates bigger with his Boom Stick, so this was make-up fun for him. Grub would fall in battle, and his death so enraged Puck that the dragon slew one of the Dead Gods before he himself fell. Through tears and sobs, Stinky leveled the Dead God Limbhacker's entire army. With his bestest friend and god gone, Stinky led the Goblin host away as quickly as they had come, marching over the corpses of the army they had just slaughtered.

Blue Jogger

Malachite

Elven Trade Merchant

On the surface, Malachite is just a highly successful merchant. He always dresses nice, and has investments older than any non-elven character. There are two "tricks" that he does. One, he is unabashfully makes long-term low-risk plans (usually involving long-term weather patterns) which over decades has made him unbelievably wealthy for a non-noble. Usually, it finds a piece of worthless land for sell and seemingly overnight, they find that the land is now worth ten times as much. It is not an illusion, it really as if a lot of "sweat labor" was applied and made the land more suitable.

I was surprised at how effective he was. Since it was clear that he was doing something wrong, but they could figure out what. He is a big fan of iron-clad contracts and finding the most amazing loopholes in contract. (One was the use of skeletons since the workers had a debtor's obligation to pay off their bill even after death. And if the skeletons didn't work, the debt would go to the widows and orphans, and no one wanted that.)

Datorium

The Dark Mage

Datorium's magic was always a bit unusual, it peaked at the hour after Midnight and was weakest just after Noon. So, it was natural for this NPC to take all the night watches and to try to sleep during the

day. His large black cloak allowed him to glide and made him nearly invisible as soon as the sun set. He would glide from rooftop to rooftop at night. He also could see without night penalties, but bright light was painful to him. Yes, I patterned him after the Dark Knight.

His mission was simple, join the party and destroy from within. Unfortunately, his curse (love is always tragic) made him fall deeply in love with one of the female mages (who had a similar curse, could never love someone who was free to love her back). Occasionally, he would try to outwit the curse by snubbing her, not realizing that that made her love him more.

The party knew he was an NPC and probably a spy, but they didn't know how much his superiors tormented his sense of duty (to his guild) to find the truth about the party's shady dealings. He never broke any promises that he made, but he was very careful not to make any promises lightly and would occasionally throw in a carefully worded phrase, "I will never speak..." for secrets that he had to reveal telepathically or "never willingly reveal..." for secrets that he would have to be dominated to be revealed.

Of course, he died at High Noon with a carefully aimed arrow to the spine on one of the few times he wasn't wearing his cloak. Of course, by that point, it was a mercy killing.

About the only thing I didn't mention was that he trained in a place called Labyrinthine which was a very old tradition of mages. They were only three remaining mages at Labyrinthine (not counting Datorium). The eldest two were over hundred and barely mobile but far from senile and they were among the scariest ones. Rumor had it that their longevity was based on experimenting with either vampire or demonic blood. The youngest was nicknamed Junior and was in his 70s. The Labyrinthine had a leaky roof and the building had shifted over the years, giving it an even more bent and twisted appearance. (I had a one point planned to have the adventures adventure in Labyrinthine as a dungeon crawl all of its own).

So this is the background, the guys pulling Datorium's strings are older than dirt mages that can't leave the building. The PCs are all young upstarts mages which are incredibly lucky and gifted (of course, they're the PCs) and the bestest of friends. Datorium is the gothic outsider NPC.

Important unusual behavior.

1. Every midnight (those that manage to track him) notice that he seems to be casting some sort of communication spell right at Midnight (when his powers are at their peak). This is how he talks to the old guys who can't leave Labyrinthine.
2. Datorium loves to sleep in the hours where his magic is the weakest. However, since the PCs kept bothering him during that time, he learned to sleep any chance that he got, and learned to sleep sitting up. Rumors had it that he slept during his shift, but no one has managed to catch him doing that.
3. When something happens, always give both a reason why Datorium could do something and why he probably didn't. This adds to the paranoia greatly.
"Sure, Datorium has a spell that would allow him to do that. But that's during the time that he normally sleeps." "Datorium was the only one awake at that time, but that would make him the obvious suspect."
4. Datorium always get mysterious wounds that need healing. Datorium would claim that he was just an accident. (Occasionally, he'd forget his place and accidentally argue with the old mages.)

At the end, most of the PCs turned on each other (when the game ended and most of the players moved) Three mages of the original group survived and that became the basis of the sequel.

Enforcer84

Stupid Oaf

A wood golem given "sentience" by a PC miscast spell. Oaf referred to the PC as his "Mother" for his entire existence, the PC was male. Oaf loved his "little siblings" the trees. He could be a terror in combat. He followed the party for a while, but he was so glad to be alive and meet new beings. He was an annoyance in non combat scenes and a gift in combat. He eventually was ordered to serve a druidess as her bodyguard and stayed behind.

Much later the party returned and the Druidess had been slain and Oaf had been mostly destroyed, he clung to life and gave witness to what had transpired. He begged his "mother's" forgiveness in his failed mission and the whole party was quite somber. (and the players not happy with me) The Wizard who awakened him cast reincarnation in desperation (cleric not available) but Oaf didn't seem to respond.

He (much)later made an appearance as a Fey Guardian. Helped the PC's though they had no idea who he was. As they were leaving the fey court, he whispered, "Take care, Mother" to the old wizard.

The Heroes of Borean

This was a group of "Rival" adventurers for some early PC's. They were adventurers who were so raw and fresh from their home town that the PC's had to rescue them upon each of their early meetings. They were the "Heroes of Borean" in truth, during their first "adventure" they managed to find a forgotten treasure left behind by a group of bandits who had terrorized local villages before Borean even existed. That treasure helped the town recover from a serious drought. It also bought the young "Heroes" their ticket to the big city where they hired themselves out as adventurers. Eventually, the "sidekick" team novelty wore off and they began to grow. They and the PC's got along well; they're existence culminated in their destruction. The Heroes had been summoned home to Borean due to some emergency, that turned out to be a Dragon taking up residence. They contacted the PC's, feeling a little out of their element. The PC's arrived only to find that the Dragon had hired assassins to destroy the Heroes the town boasted of.

It was a sad adventure to be sure, but the PC's were quite "amped" at killing the assassins and the dragon.

Thormere - Warrior

Ashua - Rogue

Thelm - Mage

Priss - Archer

Brother Walthus - Cleric

Lady Archanta Goldweir

Lady Archanta had two...er, well, four things going for her. She was an absolute beauty. Look up hawt in the dictionary and there she was. She also was so pure and naive that nothing ever got her down. She was a priestess of the goddess of love and beauty. She turned undead with the best of them and cured the sickly. She generally worked as a patron to the party, asking them to gather something or help some one. She was the highest ranking cleric in the area. She was also the half sister of the

Goddess herself. And not so naive as she would have you believe. For a long time she was something of a light hearted sex symbol, someone the PC's made bawdy jokes about and too but she never seemed to notice or get them. Finally, things went badly on an adventure and fallen hero turned instrument of evil followed the PC's back to their base town...the PC's were trying to warn their friends and allies, and the civilians in this town where they had been building their keep. Badass Warrior/Mage/Evil Guy moves quickly with his team of assassins, the fight ensues, PC's are getting battered about when, they feel the familiar warmth of Archanta's healing magic. Then they see her, gone is the goody goody, and standing in golden "hot" plate worn over her white robes, with a look that could pierce stone, she calls out her former lover.

Badass WMEG gets worried look on his face and hesitates. Archanta's challenge describes how he left her and how she watched him become evil, always praying to the Goddess of Love to help her reach him.

It was a very "Thor saves Frogman" for a moment, as the PC's realized that they had been flirting with a "Big Gun" all this time. But I was not to let the PC's get off that easy. One of BAWMEG's assassins struck from surprise and staggered her. This angered the players no end and it proved the turning point. Archanta was wounded but she quickly healed herself, she stood behind the PC's as they pressed forward towards her ex-boyfriend and when his henchmen began to fall he retreated. After this revelation two of the PC's began courting her. That was worth it's weight in gold.

Lord Archibald Twostars

"Archie", as the players called him was a fop. He was also the object lesson that "Badass" doesn't always win. A few of my players had a habit of mouthing off to authority figures, especially when they felt the figure in question couldn't defeat them in combat. Archibald was the eldest son of a Duke who had a good relationship with the adventurers. Archie, however, did not like them. He found them to be uncouth commoners. During a celebration of one sort one of the PC's a rough neck former soldier, called out and humiliated Archie. While everyone thought it was pretty funny (including the Duke), Archie was incensed and destroying the commoner who humiliated him became his obsession. Archie trained in combat and a few months later challenged the warrior to a duel and was soundly defeated. This snapped his sanity While the PC's adventured in nearby towns, cities, and dungeons, Archie began hiring brigands, mercenaries, assassins, and even monsters. He worked slowly and cautiously. He forced himself to be patient, and his plan required more capital than he had so he murdered his father and became Duke himself. He had the PC's framed for crimes and ordered their execution, he hounded them with assassins when they escaped to another region. Every once in a while, as long as the campaign ran, I had some minor or sometimes major, impediment for the PC's that could directly be linked to Archie. The Character in question never lived it down, his player was overjoyed for him to be such a cog in the campaign. So it worked out okay.

JackValhalla

Chip

Chip was a gargoyle, a winged humanoid, aggressively ugly and frighteningly omnivorous. But, he stood about 2'7" high. Gargoyles in this campaign have genetic memories, so he was a fully-functioning adult with hundreds of years of accumulated knowledge, just happened to have been hatched about two years before the PCs met him. The first time they met him he was a contact for information, they got the information with only a little weirdness about him eating the bark off a tree.

But, due to one boneheaded player and a couple of bad rolls, the players wound up in a really bad fight only a couple minutes after meeting the gargoyle. So, I needed an NPC to come to their rescue, and I didn't have one available. So, I used Chip. Just as the nine-foot-tall baleorc is about to bring his club crashing down to kill the most deserving of the PCs, Chip comes in, fast. Real fast. Terminal velocity, rather. Several seconds later, he “unfreezes” and comes wandering out of the crater, and says, “Did it work?” The PCs adopted him on the spot. He was their lookout, their helpmate, their mascot, and their artillery, all in one. He never did manage to get another lucky shot like that, but the PCs didn't care.

I hardly ever do stuff like that, I hate for NPCs to ever show up the PCs, so usually any NPC that has to stick around the party is really bland and uninteresting. I like contact NPCs to be interesting as hell, but I do best with villains. My specialty is the NPC that the PCs almost want to murder.

Curufea

The Seer

Possibly the most hated character in my campaign. Specifically introduced to the players because one of them hates prophecies. The NPC existed independant of this particular campaign though, and is part of the setting. The Seer and the Sorceress were twins born hundreds of years ago on the Western Shores. They are humans with a unique connection to the ubiquitous magic fields. Namely - The Seer is “outside magic” and the Sorceress is “inside magic”. All magic and magical effects are ignored by the Seer. The Sorceress is capable of all magic and magical effects. Both the brother and the sister can perceive magic, the warp and weave, the ebb and flow of all ley lines and magic use.

At one stage the Sorceress decided to become a God and began absorbing all the Ley Lines. The current Gods made an appeal to the Seer to talk to his sister and convince her not to. Since that time, the Sorceress has resided in The Sorcerer's Spire - the only location on the Western Shores that is devoid of magic (a previous tennant had a very bad experimental accident). The Seer has since become the best friend of all the Gods. This is due mainly to the nature of the Gods in the Western Shores - who are elevated magic users that “put on a face” and act the parts of the gods. The more magic you have - the more belief influences you. In the presence of the Seer, the gods can be themselves again. What distinguishes the Seer from other prophets? He is never ambiguous in his prophecies and is always direct. He uses plain language and is basically just “one of the guys”. He is unremarkable in appearance and looks just like the regular bloke you see down the pub. He is, however, immortal. Not only is he immune to magic, but mundane weapons have a habit of hitting a badge he decided to put on a week ago - or he bent over at just the right moment, or his attacker trips on a stone he had placed there last month. Failing that - the Gods themselves tend to protect their only confidant.

The Seers motivations are always personal. He makes friends with NPCs and tries to protect them. He doesn't care about major events, invasions or plagues. He cares about the guy he had a 2 week bender with 20 years ago, and makes sure the invasion/plague misses him. He leaves the change of major events up to the gods - but will occasionally help them out by talking to the PCs. On a side note - he generally knows everything about everything, including secrets. He will quite happily reveal PC secrets to other PCs. The Seer has an annoying habit of being around just when the PCs need to talk to him - usually eating, drinking or socialising.

On a side note - he was educated at a remote monastery that usually educates the new Gods when they take over from the old Gods (every few thousand years there is a trial process and the gods

change). That monastery has since been destroyed by the evil God candidate who didn't manage to get the job.

No one knows the name of the Seer, or the Sorceress. The Sorceress is famous and often the bad guy in horror stories told by parents, or preached about in church. No one, other than the odd PC or God, has heard of the Seer. He may occasionally motivate large events - but only peripherally.

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