



*Volume 01 Issue 03 October 2008*

Hello again, it has been a while since previous issue of Bite Marks released. Suffice to say that life and other projects get priority over this labor of love. But with help of fans, we will try to get it back into regular schedule.

Note: Each author and artist retains the sole right to their work. Sanguine Production does not own them. Please contact individual owner for inquiry.

A word of warning: I'm not an editor. Authors are doing their best to keep their articles and story error free. But we do apology if we miss something.

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### Art Credits

#### **Bitemark Banner**

by Blue Kabuto

([www.bluekabuto.com](http://www.bluekabuto.com))

#### **Artwork on page 8**

by Sean Fitzgerald

([abcxyz1914@yahoo.com](mailto:abcxyz1914@yahoo.com))

## Bite Mark FAQs

- **What to we want to see in Bite Mark**

Core Contents

- Ironclaw article (rule, NPC stat or background info)
- Jadeclaw article (rule, NPC stat or background info)
- Short fiction (can be IC, JC, UY, AI)
- Adventure (can be IC, JC, UY, AI)
- 4 - 8 illustrations

Optional Contents

- Mondevelle (sp?) article (rule, NPC stat or background info)
- Usagi Yojimbo article (rule, NPC stat or background info)
- Albedo (rule, NPC stat or background info)
- Other setting

- **How long does it need to be or do you want it to be?**

It can be as long as you like. Generally, I reserve 6 - 8 pages (12 pt, 2 column) per article, unless it is an adventure, then we will try to squeeze it in. But if your page count is more than that, we can always break it down into sections to be printed in future issues.

- **Can it also be in multiple parts?**

Yes.

- **Am I under a contract with you all?**

No. You are the copyright owner of your article. Since BiteMark is a freezine, each author retains the ownership of their works. However, later on, if we want to use your articles in future Sanguine supplements, we will negotiate a contract per article.

- **If so how much are we talking?**

Not much, a labor of love, a pat in the back, and a bragging right are all we can offer :(

- **Does the article need to be Sanguine Product specific or can it deal with any RPG material out on the market to date.**

It has to relating to Sanguine Product specific. It can be part of...

- ◇ Ironclaw
- ◇ Jadeclaw
- ◇ Albedo
- ◇ Usagi Yojimbo
- ◇ fan-based Claw System (steampunk, camelot, modern, star, etc.)

- Feel free to email additional questions to **marketing@sanguine.com**

### Schedule for Bite Mark 4

**1/22/09** — Article submission  
deadline

**2/22/09** — Bite Mark 4 release  
date

# THE SLEEPING LADY

By Matt Trepal (trepalm@gmail.com )

## First of Three Part Series

The whole gobber started like any other, with me and Tom sitting at our table, listening. There was a gent from the New Town with us, talking. A young feller, he was, but we dealt plenty with those types. Physickers, usually, or surgeons, the kind what need subjects to study before they open up a live person. They can't get what they need in the usual way, so they come to chaps like me and Tom to get it for them. We're quiet, we charge reasonable, and we know what we're doing.

This one, though, he seemed to have different ideas about how we should run our business. A slight Red Fox who called himself Rudolf, he started by trying to "make our acquaintance," as he put it, though there weren't no way he'd ever tip his fancy feathered cap to either of us if we bumped into him in the Market Plaza. But you can't never be friends with a patron. Ain't none of us in this for fun, so there ain't no need to pretend.

I'd snuffled him up when he first approached, like I do to anyone who talks of hiring me and Tom, but while he had the spiced crispness of any other Fox, and he worked to cover that with some small splash of fancy cologne, there were even then something else. Beneath the mint-water, and beneath the Fox, there lay a sharpness that was new to me. It weren't just that I'd never met him, as every soul got a different scent, yet theirs is also like others of their own kind. This chap smelled like his own Fox, as he should, but he also smelled like something else, that I couldn't

place. He were a different fellow, no doubt, but I couldn't place just how.

Otherwise, he seemed as another young doctor in training. He wore a fine shirt under his rough dark cloak, with ruffles and an open collar, and expensive-looking leather breeches. His face was fine and elegant, more suited for a girl, in my reckoning, and his russet fur was sleek and clean, standing out in the sputtering lamps of the taproom and particularly when put against the ragged black-and-white pelts of me and Tom. His fingers were as slender and delicate as the rest of him, very like a good doctor's, and I've seen enough of the real thing in my trade to know that his rings were true gold.

Quite a standout in this part of Triskellian, that's the truth. When I told him he shouldn't walk through the Old Town like that, as it was courting trouble, he only smiled. "I do appreciate your concern," he said, "but I assure you that I am in no danger."

"Oh?" I asked. "You got a foil under that blanket? Throwing knives? A pistol?" I didn't see none of those things, but the cloak was big, and might hide all manner of pockets and pouches.

He didn't answer straight, just chuckled. "I can protect myself."

I shrugged. If he wanted to stay in the Old Town permanent-like, that were none of my business. I crossed my arms and leaned back

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in my chair, which creaked, reminding me that I weren't as slim as I'd once been. I weren't never as lanky as Tom, true, but my bulk has kept some of these talks from getting out of hand. This one struck me as teetering on the edge. "Do you understand what I need?" Rudolf was saying.

thing. I couldn't d"Course we understand," Tom told him, curtly. "We know what we're doing. Don't we, Bert? We done this stuff plenty!"

"We know what we're doing," I agreed. "But you got some particular requirements, here. You sure you need them?"

"If I didn't need them, I wouldn't have included them," Rudolf replied coldly. "You get paid to rob graves. Don't try to tell me you have standards."

"We supply a product people like you demand, my lord," I told him bluntly. "One what they can't get in the Market. We don't never take nothing from the site but the prize." Maybe he wanted to make us think he was our friend, telling us his name and buying us drinks, but even if we ain't, that's no reason to abuse the men you want to hire, neither. And I always make the patrons buy us drinks, whether they want to or not.

"Usually," Tom said with a grin. That's always the lad's problem. He got a strong back, but sometimes he don't know when to keep his muzzle shut. I snorted and frowned at him, and he shrunk back in his chair and stared down into his mug.

"What he means is 'almost never,'" I told Rudolph as I sat back up. It's true, sometimes

resurrectionism don't pay quite enough to keep a man in beer and beans, and if a trinket or two gets carried away along with the main package, well, the previous owner ain't gonna miss it none, anyhow.

Not that Rudolf seemed to care. "What you do to or with the corpses you pull out of the Potter's field is your own business," he said, leaning in over steepled fingers. "But in this instance you will follow my instructions precisely."

"The more instructions you got," I said, "the more you pay, that's all. You do that, everything's fine."

"This isn't that hard," Rudolf scoffed, sitting back into the booth along the wall. "You should be able to--"

"If it ain't that hard," I interrupted, "then you can do the work your own self. If you don't cotton with that, pay our fee."

Rudolf grimaced, rolled his eyes, and then leaned back in toward the table. "How much?"

This is always the tricky part. Give a price too high, the patron might pass. Give a price too low, and you ain't making up for the risk you're taking. "Like I said, you got some particular requirements, and you want them followed exactly. This trip is to the necropolis, not one of the common yards. Those rich families what can afford space there get touchy about having the site opened, especially if they've built a shed, so the place is patrolled."

"Shed?" Rudolf asked, cocking one eyebrow with the question. "The families who bury their dead in the necropolis may build lots of structures there, but none of them are sheds."

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“It’s polite talk,” Tom told him. “Lots of patrons are shy about talking directly about this.”

“Aye. And talking openly about robbing graves can draw the Constabulary. This ain’t legal, remember. So, the grave is ‘the site,’ and the body is ‘the prize,’ and a ‘shed’ is anything built to keep a prize above-ground.”

“Like a mausoleum or tomb?” Rudolf asked.

I nodded. “So, if there’s a shed to open, that’ll add to the work.”

“That won’t be necessary,” the Fox said, “this one’s in the ground.”

“Well, you just saved yourself some, then. So, you got a specific order, which means we have to find it, which means we’ll be inside for some while, which means more of a chance for a patrol to find us. All told, I reckon it’ll be about...” I did some ciphering in my head, and counted on my fingers. “Call it eighteen denarii for the both of us. More if we carry the prize any more than a league. Four as a gift to the Constabulary, and six up front.” I thought it was high, master craftsman wages for both of us, but not too high. This would be a touchy job, after all. Tom was watching me watch Rudolf, waiting for a yea or nay.

Likewise, young Rudolf sat watching me for a stretch, some expression I didn’t recognize playing at his lips, his eyes sharp and bright. The moments stretched on and Tom began to fidget, flicking that big bushy striped tail of his where it rose behind his chair. I was glad my own stub of a tail was hidden by my tunic and my own chair, for it were twitching just as fierce. For his part, Rudolf’s

tail lay curled beside him on the bench, smooth and motionless. He seemed to be pondering whether to pay us our fee, or whether to reach calmly across the table and pluck out my eyes. Suddenly it come to me that while on the outside he looked the part of a freewheeling dandy, his own eyes were deep. Deep as wells, or graves. He had ideas, that much were certain, and I got to wondering what he needed this specific body for, since there ain’t been nobody I worked for who ever wanted such a ream up no good reasons for doing so, myself, and all the bad reasons were out of the sort of stories my Mam would tell us kits to keep us in at night. Curses, and the restless dead, and the like. But I never seen a grave that ain’t been opened by a spade and mattock only, nor a body in a coffin that’s good for much beyond lying still.

For all that, I was about to make our excuses and pull Tom out into the street when Rudolf finished what debate he was having in his own mind. “All right,” he said, without a hint of what he might’ve really been thinking. “Nine each for both of you, and four more for expenses. I’ve arranged for a place of deposit near to the necropolis, so you won’t get cartage.” He reached down to his belt and retrieved a purse of green-dyed leather, drawn tight with a red cord. Scribed across the pouch in gold were symbols unlike any letters I ever seen.

Opening the bag, he proceeded to place three small silver coins onto the table in front of me, and three in front of Tom. “And your advance. When do we get started?”

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“We?” Tom growled, his right eye narrowed near as tight as the lid that drooped over his empty left socket. “Bert, what’s he mean by ‘we’?”

“Quite right, Tom,” I said, putting a hint of growl into my own voice. “We know what we’re doing, my lord, and we do it best by ourselves. The more people traipsing about the necropolis, the more likely we’ll get a patrol. And that would be bad for everyone involved.” Just thinking about a patrol made the tips of my fingers itch something terrible, and I drummed them against the tabletop to distract myself.

Rudolf tapped his own finger on the table as he spoke, the click of his claw on the varnished wood beating a counterpoint to the thumping of my own, which I quickly ended. “My money, my rules, remember? I have instructions of my own, and they include ensuring that all goes as it should. Therefore, I insist on supervising the entire operation from beginning to end. If you refuse this, then I’ll take my six denarii back.”

Tom had already swept up his advance, and was looking from Rudolf to me in defiance, but I could smell the faintest hint of his spray, a sharp reek that Tom tended to let out when uneasy, even though his tail stayed low. I’m sure Rudolf caught it, as well. Not a good card player, Tom. I sighed. “I want you to know I don’t like it,” I told the Fox. “But you’re right, you’re paying. Meet us by the Old Tower two nights hence, and be there at dusk, so we’ll have plenty of time to get out there and do the work.”

Rudolf smiled so graciously, then, as though he’d been granted some great favor by me. Maybe he had, as I’d never taken a patron on a dig before, and I’d already promised myself to never do so again. “Two nights, dusk, at the Old Tower. Agreed.” Rudolf stood, indicating he was finished with us. “Good night, gentlemen.” I scooped up my own coins and backed away from the table to make room for him to exit.

Tom was already at the rail, and old Janesz had come out of the back room to pull him another mug. “Drinking your coin away already?” I teased him.

“Aye,” my friend and partner replied as the Otter set his drink at his elbow. “I reckon I’m a-gonna need it.”

“Aye,” I muttered, leaning back against the bar and nodding to the barkeep for a mug of my own. “Aye.”

#

Three evenings later Rudolf, Tom, and I were on the road north from Triskellian, the sunset of this early Harvest evening striping the ragged clouds red, black, and purple. We had easy passage through the West Gate after we showed our appreciation to the Constables on duty, as expected. Harald was an old hand at this game, and our tokens kept him in the plum brandy he liked too much.

Tom toted our gear, spades and mattocks, a prybar, and a hooded lantern, all wrapped up in a tarpaulin, with poles to help us tote off the prize. I walked beside him, and Rudolf kept ahead of the two of us. There weren’t much talk. Normally, Tom and I would chat

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and jest along the way to the site, but having the Fox along with us put us out of the mood.

The moon had yet to rise, and you could smell the turning of the year, the hint of cold to come down from the sharp peaks of the Rothos, but you knew that it were some time off, yet, and summer hadn't quite hied herself away. All in all, it were a good night for a resurrection. The soil would be dry, the waxing moon would rise late to give us just that little bit of light, which would let us douse the lantern, and we would have near on nine hours of full dark, plenty of time to complete the deed.

The bells of Dunwasser College sounded out behind us some time before we reached the necropolis, and told me we'd hiked north for more than an hour, and by then it were full-on dark. Surrounded by a wall some thirty hands high and built from light-colored stone, the cemetery was guarded by a small gatehouse in the western wall that watched the road, and a tower rose at the northwestern corner. Inside, the site were something like fifteen acres of statues, tombs, graves, cenotaphs, and other memorials. There were even a mausoleum to some family so old their name ain't known about Triskellian no more, as the well-placed of the Rinaldi lands had been doing their burying here for a good long while. In the common graveyards east of the city the bodies are buried nearly atop one another, marked at best by simple stones. In the necropolis, though, it can seem as crowded as the Old Town, what with narrow avenues between marble and granite constructs. Still, there's space for a few stands of trees, winding paths, and even a small pond.

Our first concern was getting in. "There's guards," I reminded Rudolf as we stopped just south of the gate, along the road from Triskellian. "The rich don't appreciate having their long sleeps disturbed." But by the same token, folks — especially rich folks — don't care to live near cemeteries, and that held for the necropolis. I could see the twinkling lights of a manor house to the west, but there weren't no way they could see us.

"What, then?" the Fox asked. "You don't plan to walk through the gate."

Tom chuckled. "We'll go around," he said. "They only got two or three men on patrol."

Rudolf glared at Tom. "Around?"

I waved at the wall. "This place is big, and there's a copse along the north wall where we can climb over. We just have to make sure the guards are somewheres else."

"Lead on, then," Rudolf said, gesturing for me to take the lead.

The necropolis is about twelve chains square, and we had six chains to go until we were past the gatehouse. The gate were closed, naturally, but there were a window looking onto the road. Light shone through it, but we could all see the curtains were drawn to keep out the oncoming winter, and there weren't nobody peeking out to see who might be passing. "They ain't worried about folks coming in through the gate," I told Rudolf, "as those sorts ring the bell and ask." We ambled on by without no notice.

"What about the tower?" Our patron was eyeing it critically, and if this had been even the walls of a manor house, he

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might have had reason. Three stories tall with what looked like arrow-slits, the tower could command a fine view of the road, and the entire necropolis besides.

“It’s an ossuary,” I explained, “and filled with naught but bones. Noble families who aint’ got nothing left but their names can get interred there.” A thought struck me. “Your prize ain’t one of those types, is it?”

“Hardly. As I told you, we’ll be digging what I need out of the ground.” Then he strode past the tower as if he’d never had a concern about it, and rounded the corner.

Ten chains down the north wall stood the copse of trees, giving cover to climb the wall. Tom went first, keeping his cloak wrapped tight and his hood low over his face to hide the white patches on his cheeks as he sought out the patrol. He clung to the tree while poking his head over the top, and I could see him scan the necropolis, slowly turning his head from one side to the other. He then leaned farther forward and looked along the base of the wall.

“Naught that I can see, nor hear” he reported, and scrambled to the top of the wall, keeping hunched on his knees. “The light’s still on in the guard house, though.” He gestured down for the gear, which Rudolf and I hoisted up to him. Setting it to one side, he reached back to help Rudolf.

“Go quick,” I told him. “We can’t spend much time on the wall. The moon’s rising,” I pointed out, “and even with the clouds you can be seen if you stand up there. When you’re up I’ll follow.” Rudolf nodded, and lifted himself up the trunk of the tree before reaching for Tom’s hands.

It weren’t no trouble for Tom to help Rudolf atop the wall, but then the young Fox ignored my advice and my warnings and stood up tall, making himself clear to anyone who might be looking. He was looking down into the ne-



cropolis, and made a curious sound back in his throat, like he’d been surprised by something he’d actually expected.

“Down, ya daft numpty!” Tom hissed, and tugged on the Fox’s cloak. Rudolf regained his wits and quickly moved to crouch down beside Tom, but in doing so

knocked up against our equipment and sent it skewing while he lurched against the Skunk. As the pair fought to keep their balance I watched as the tarpaulin-wrapped bundle teetered on the lip of the wall and then pitched down into the necropolis. From my side of the wall I could hear the clash and rattle of the tools as they spilled out of the wrap and against the wall and nearby tombs.

“In!” I called up. “Get inside!” I didn’t wait to see whether they’d heard me, but humped my own self up the tree and onto the wall. By the time I got there Tom and Rudolf were already down the other side, but I could

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also see that there were two figures moving around outside the guard house, a Stag and what looked to be a Weasel peering around under the light of a single lantern the Stag held high on a staff. I couldn't see no weapons, but they had them. That's the point of guards, after all. I lay breathless atop the wall, covered in my own dark coat and my cap clamped down low and tight, as I waited for the guards to make a decision. They did that soon enough. Sound does funny things in the necropolis, bouncing around off all the stone and echoing through the narrow lanes, and it can seem to come from any corner of the place but from where it really is. As the guards turned to their right, southwards, I grunted my relief and slid off the wall to hang by my fingers.

"Clear," Tom whispered, and I dropped the rest of the way down to the base of the wall. I kept to my crouch, and looked around for the other two. Tom was hunkered behind the statue of an angelic Doe that faced into the necropolis, and he had the shovels and mat-tocks. Rudolf was sprawled behind a sarcophagus clutching the tarp, bundling the rest of the equipment. He looked to have taken a spill on landing, as his cloak was askew and his shirt were torn at the throat. The poles were behind me, so I took them up and made my way in a crouching run to the shelter of a larger obelisk, one that would allow all three of us to sit unseen.

"I saw two guards come out, but they went south," I told them. "We got some time." Then I turned on Rudolf.

"Holloise's Teats, man!" I snarled. "What did you think you was doing, standing up

there all proud and tall like? You think this is a picnic? A stroll through a garden? I told you I didn't want you along, that Tom and I work best by ourselves. And I told you to be quick! If you want this to work, if you want to stay clear of the Don's gaol, you got to do what I tell you! Understand?" The Fox was noticeably shaken, though whether from the near fall or from my scolding, I couldn't tell.

"Right," he said meekly, staring at a point somewheres about four paces directly behind my eyes. Then he refocused, his visage clear and his voice strong. "My apologies, gentlemen. You're right, I brought you for your expertise, therefore if I am to succeed I must heed it." He closed his eyes and shook his head, as if to clear it. "I was a little surprised, frankly, at the size of the necropolis. We've got our work cut out for us."

"Ain't you been here before?" I asked.

He shook his head again. "No, I grew up in a manor along the Skirfane River," he said. "There's a family crypt in the chapel, but I've never seen anything like this, before."

"Quite a sight, eh?" Tom ribbed him.

"Obviously. We need to find the right grave, now, and I'm afraid it will be a greater challenge than I'd anticipated."

I cocked my head and raised an eyebrow at that. "What sort of challenge were you expecting? How hard did you think this was going to be?"

"This is a... kind of test...." Rudolf said, and had the manners to look embarrassed. "I don't have a precise location, merely a description of the site that I'm supposed to decipher."

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Tom and I gaped at our patron for some moments. “A test?” Tom asked in disbelief. “What in the world for?”

“Who would give you a test like this?”

Rudolf had regained some of his aristocratic airs, though, and wouldn't answer our questions. “None of that matters to you,” he told us. “You're getting paid to get me what I need. What I do with it is my own concern, and you'll remember that. Now, let's find the site.”

“Fine,” I muttered. “But let's get away from the walls. The guards headed south, first, but they'll make the circuit, and we need to be away from here before they arrive.” I led them both, all cradling our equipment and again in a crouching run, deeper into the necropolis. We zig-zagged our way through the tight lanes of the cemetery, passing the marble and granite manors of the high-born dead while the slivered moon picked out the occasional detail of these tombs. Here, the family name “Pepreto.” There, the pediment carvings of a great flotilla of many-oared galleons. Over yonder, a line of marble busts topping a sarcophagus, stern Rams watching over their interred lineage. The closeness of the tombs forced us to keep mostly to the lanes, but I led Tom and Rudolf between them when I could squeeze myself through the gaps. We settled on a patch of grass smothered in the shadows between four large memorials, well off the pathways. The only way the guards would find us here would be to actually stumble upon us.

We collected the gear back into the tarpaulin, and settled with our backs against one of the memorials. “What's your description?” I

asked Rudolf. “We'll all need to think on it to get this done quickly.”

“I agree,” said Rudolf. “I had to memorize it, so that there would be no written directions for someone else to find and follow.” Then he recited the description he'd been given:

**Beneath great iron wings over-arching,  
Beneath fell stone-cut princes marching.  
Here the sleeping lady waits.**

**Beside black still waters cold and deeping,  
Beside white-clad thorny vines a-creeping.  
Here the waiting lady sleeps.**

“That ain't a description,” Tom exclaimed. “It's a bloody riddle!”

Rudolf frowned back at him. “I told you it's a test,” he said sharply. “And it doesn't matter to you, in any event.”

“True, it's a riddle,” I told Tom, “but it sounds pretty plain, as well. There's a pond to the west, and I figure that's what ‘still waters cold and deeping’ means. We'll go there first, and see what we can find.”

Both Tom and Rudolf nodded their agreement and we set off to the west. I figured we'd spent at least an hour mucking about with the wall and the guards. That gave us about seven hours till sunrise, say six until we had to leave. We had to work fast.

*To be continue*

# An Adventure to Campaign

By

Michael J. Simmons  
(ithiaca@gmail.com )

An Adventure is an Adventure is an Adventure, until you slip in the clues of things that make it a campaign. What makes it so? Imagination along with Knowledge can make it more. In Sanguines campaigns like IronClaw, JadeClaw, Albedo and Usagi Yojimbo there is a host of characters, who can be used to make the campaign world more interesting. Also there is the need to ask questions, like **Who, What, Why**. These questions, the characters (NPC) and the player characters can be a way to make a one night adventure into a long term campaign.

Let us take a look at the adventure in the IronClaw base book, The Closing of the City Gates. It is a simple one-night adventure. Nice and neat with out any muss or fuss. Go out and get the bad guy bring him back for trial. Woot !!! pass out the XP and lets go. But what if we go further and start asking some of the questions raised in the previous paragraph; also use some of our imagination and knowledge.

**KNOWLEDGE**, we know the city of Triskellian is wanted by any of the five major houses in Calabria plus any number of the Minor houses and at current control of the city is in the hands of the merchants guild who thinks they should have the same status as the Nobel Houses.

**IMAGINATION**, now what would one of these groups or even a couple of them do to gain control of Triskellian so that they can consolidate there power base with out losing anything. This way the other Houses lose the Diamond of Calabria.

**WHY**, would they do this, we know Triskellian is the city of cities in Calabria. To own Triskellian you nearly own Calabria. Given the cities unique size and location it is impossible to take in a conventional assault of arms so something else needs to be done. Something subtle so control of the city will slide from one group to another.

**WHO**, really will depend on what you are planning in your individual campaign and how you want to plan on things, for the sake of simplicity thought we will use House Rinaldi as our bad guys for this purpose. Through a host of spies, contact and intermediaries they have managed to buy up all the debt of one House Pianocollina, and then they destroyed that house leaving on a few survivors left to tell the tale. Now our young Badger prince comes home to seeing his family home destroyed and his family massacred. Of course word gets to him as to which house is responsible.

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So our young badger prince goes off and starts gathering thieves and murders to his banner. He starts on his ambitious campaign to overthrow the Nobel Houses. Now this is where it gets interesting what if Tassobianco was captured in quite before our heroes come on the scene by House Rinaldi and they show him evidence that the family debts were actually the cause of the Merchants Guild. House Rinaldi offers to restore his Houses Honor if he can lead an overthrow of the merchants guild by his banditry.

*'So we are agreed then Prince Tassobianco Pianocollina, you will attack any and all caravans that come to Triskellian; and when the Merchants have fallen and given us control of Triskellian back. Your families homes and honor will be restored with you as the head of your new house.'* The young badger prince looked on with both anger, contempt and a bit of fear in his eyes at the elder vixen of House Rinaldi who stood looking down at him as he knelt on the stone floor in the dungeon of Rinaldi.

*'Yes it is agreed.'* He said with reluctance but vowing in silently that if it was the last thing he would do, he would take this creature with him to the gallows should he be caught a second time.

Now we have a campaign that goes from a one-shot adventure to a campaign complete with intrigue, double cross's and mayhem. When our Noble heroes arrive on the scene, Tassobianco has now been raiding indiscriminately the Guilds are up in arms about the loss of merchandise and the Noble Houses are starting to make their own political inroads on Triskellian by exclaiming how the merchants

cannot protect the innocent travelers on the road to Triskellian.

So **WHAT**, do the Merchants do, they start hiring adventurers and White Shields to protect their goods. Also to apprehend this bandit so that they can bring control of the city back under their paws. So now we have everything laid up at least as an outline. Though now you ask how do we make it so our characters know that there is something up.

Well that in and of it self is also simple. We leave some clues in gossip, rumors and other things. Rumors in general are always fun to deal with, as they can make your adventure come to life with the goings on in a city, town or village. Who knows where a story may go with just a simple rumor.

*'I heard it from one of the servants, Me Lord so truth it is, it was while she was entraining the lord of the house; she claims that she had overheard the fox lords speaking of using this Badger prince fellow to overthrow the Merchants.'*

There is also for those players who like to play detective or have a high observation, spot capabilities about the equipment used by the bad guys. Maybe the equipment is to neat, to clean or to rich.

*'Hey Fritz' came a call to the adventurer fox from his Shield Mate Free (another fox) 'What do you make of the gear of these bandits.' Fritz saunters over to take a look, seeing that his partner was right and the gear was to polished and kept clean. Also something was bothering him about the way the bandits where to well prepared for the attack. Their tactics where surprisingly well thought out.*

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## An Adventure to Campaign

*(Continued from page 12)*

For those characters who are tactically minded what about the tactics used by our villains. Maybe they are too well planned out, and the fact that the attacks are orderly and not a patch job like most bandits.

Even after Tassobianco's capture what if he spills his guts, will the party be inclined to believe him. I mean after all he has killed a lot of folks so far and that is not inclined to bring much mercy from party members (unless one is the ultimate Goody-To-Shoes). They could end still leaving the adventure hanging, however what if Tassobianco has a letter or something in his diary that pointed to his initial capture and imprisonment by House Rinaldi and then the subsequent deal struck.

*'Please you must believe me...' begged Tassobianco 'Why should we... you killed innocent merchants and farmers and craftsmen who were trying to make a living. Where was your mercy then?' replied Ithiaca the horse priest to Tassobianco. 'They were not people, they were parasites where was there mercy when my family was unjustly seized twenty generations of land belonging to the Pianocollina family and my father unjustly driven from our home penniless and broke to the point that he fell on his own sword and is buried in an unmarked, unblest grave. Besides Priest I have proof that House Rinaldi was behind these attacks...*

So if they do bring Tassobianco back into the City they now have to protect him from not only the City Guard some of whom may be under the employ of House Rinaldi, but also Assassins hired by that same house. Until they can get him in front of a jury of the Mer-

chants who cannot try him do to his Noble House status.

But let us move on to another realm let us see about Albedo now here the intrigue can get really interesting because you have the ConFed, the ILR, The Net, EDF and Homeguards all working along with the various people, business and clans all jockeying for positions of power and authority. This Universe is set also for a lot of espionage and wheels within wheels thinking and planning. By using the same formula from before in Ironclaw, but now on a Galactic scale we open up a whole universe of possibilities.

As an Example, let us use Commander Darhnatha (feline type from the planet Dornthantii) who enlists into the EDF and is approached by an ambitious group of EDF officers who believe in personal privilege outweighs the rights of the average citizen. Our Young Commander is then contacted by The Net an Autonomous AI program who starts to tell him of this secret cabal of officers and officials. Thus setting up your scenario and all you may have needed to do with that is set up a simple one-shot scenario in which the character and his friends are reporting in for duty somewhere to help with local Homeguards forces in quelling an insurrection.

*'So let me see if I understand you correctly. I help you in suppressing some files with the use of this little program. In doing so we are able to watch over these 'progressive elements' ourselves in effect be able to stop them before they can cause any harm.' replied Darhnatha to the EDF officer across the table from him. 'Yes Commander, that is all it would take, we fear*

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*(Continued from page 13)*

*that some of these 'progressive elements' will be taking action soon. Nodding his head Darhnatha rose, 'Understood Colonel, rest assured I will help in any way I can.'*

*Later...*

*'So I take it you heard the conversation.' Darhnatha spoke to the wall mounted computer kiosk. 'Yes it is disturbing, this Cabal is moving faster than even I anticipated, they seem to think that there is another group acting against them.' replied The Net.*

*'There is you know, you have me working against them and I am sure that you have contacted others.' The silence was the only reply Darhnatha heard from The Net.*

I think you see the potential in asking yourself a few questions and seeing what fits with what? In a sense you are writing an outline to a story for your players to play in and work in. You provide the meat of the idea they do the rest. The trick is to keep them going with little clues and ideas so that they soon will make any adventure into a campaign with duplicitous NPC's, ambitious nobles, the power hungry or just those whom wish to try to take over the world. Honestly any of the current crop of games would work from IronClaw to JadeClaw to Albedo and Usagi Yojimbo.

Let us move on to JadeClaw the basic premise applies here to who, what, why, Knowledge and Imagination can lead to fun. JadeClaw basically sets it self to this thinking already in the Adventure, The Silent Village & The Infernal Device, as a Governor and the Imperial court are soon to be bumping heads with the players caught in the middle. So once again who is pushing or pulling

things behind the scene. Or as a real sneaky if you wanted to introduce your characters to the world of JadeClaw (as you have been playing IronClaw specifically).

We can go back to Closing the City Gates adventure and show the subtle machinations of the Jade throne as Prince Tassobianco is manipulated and the various states of Zhongguo now start making their own plans to move on the Barbarians of the East who dare to intrude upon The Twelve houses. Or even one of the twelve houses is making these plans in order to take over and corner a market that is profitable to them.

*'Excellent that young fool of a badger will bring down those eastern barbarians and when I present the news of the turmoil with the Eastern Barbarians and how we need to bring them under the beneficent control of our House and that of the Imperial Throne. We will control the trade routes and markets and then make our own bid to the imperial throne.' mused the Tiger Duke of the State of Yen.*

For the moment as I have no gear for Usagi Yojimbo, I cannot reference on it. But for those of you who do you can apply these methods to the NPC's and also to your PC's and have fun all the same with it.

You can always think wheels within wheels Who benefits? What is the Goal? How is that goal to be accomplished? Why does this need to happen? Ultimately you as the Game host have to literally become a "Conspiracy Theorist" in order to thwart your player characters by giving them problems that deal with moral, ethical and ambiguous

*(Continued on page 15)*

## An Adventure to Campaign

(Continued from page 14)

questions that need to be dealt with or ignored by the party. In this you elevate your one-shot to something that is epic and sweeping.

**BM03\_Adventure\_to\_Campaign.odf** will be available for download at Yahoo newsgroup:

<http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/ironclaw/files/Bite%20Mark/Issue%2003/>

An example of Adventure to Campaign worksheet is on page 28. The file,

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Expanding Adventure to Campaign Worksheet	
<b>Knowledge: Which group of NPCs have major stake on the Outcome of This Adventure</b>	
	Group 1
	Group 2
	Group 3
	Group 4
	Group 5
<b>Why</b>	would they gain out of this?
	Group 1
	Group 2
	Group 3
	Group 4
	Group 5
<b>Who</b>	(a name, a race, and a class should be sufficient for now)
	is the key person in each group?
	Group 1
	Group 2
	Group 3
	Group 4
	Group 5
<b>What</b>	are they going to do about it based on players' action?
	Group 1
	Group 2
	Group 3
	Group 4
	Group 5

# The Giant Rat of Sumatra

By Marvin E. Fuller

**Arthur's Note:** If someone wants to contact me, here is my email address, [CyberCorn.Entropic@gmail.com](mailto:CyberCorn.Entropic@gmail.com). If someone wants to look at my website, it's Roadstripe Gallimaufry at <http://www.freewebs.com/roadstripe/index.htm>, which includes a handful of other stories written by me. Lastly, if anyone wants to look at more of my artwork, my gallery is on Side 7 at <http://www.side7.com/cgi-bin/S7SDB/Display.pl?act=gallery&aid=4797>.

Thank you for your consideration.

My seasick stomach shimmied in tune with the bobbing of the waves, reminding me that I'm not cut out to be a sailor.

Cheery despite the foul temper of their Wolf boss urging them onwards, the team of four Porcupines muscled the boat through the undulating waves with hearty pulls at the oars. A young, ill-at-ease Squirrel named Quincy sat beside me, his bushy tail flicking nervously, while his large, dark eyes occasionally darted towards the ominous bulk of our goal, the *Duchess of the Quistonsee*, an apparently crewless merchantman drifting on her anchor.

I felt a more immediate concern than the *Duchess* or those in the boat with me. I swore my innards lurched and reeled with malicious glee, making me grateful I hadn't eaten breakfast this morning. Heaving a meal over the side of the boat would have cost me what little dignity I had left.

Only the Wolf seemed unsympathetic to my plight, snapping his teeth at the Porcupines, at Quincy, even at the waves with a viciousness born of suppressed fear rather than malice. Too busy rowing the boat, the Porcupines gave me little more than a few sympathetic glances and the occasional reassuring word about getting my

sea legs. Quincy took the time to briskly massage the ring and pinkie fingers of both of my paws, especially near the pinkies' knuckles. Helloise help me, it actually worked, quashing the seasickness down to something I could manage. Had Quincy been of a female bent, I might have asked him to marry me, race difference be damned.

Quincy's ministrations also provided us with a practical benefit. Of the people in the boat, only one knew how to slay monsters – me, Rafferty Gilfane, a Wolf-Dog witch hunter of uncertain pedigree and very certain talent.

How did I end up seasick in a boat? The priests call Helloise our Savior, but I think She is also a trickster. It didn't surprise me that my pursuit of an Ombrist necromancer brought me to Port Spar, one of the two important seaports here in Bisclavret lands. The Ombrist proved to be typically uncooperative, keeping undercover and forcing me to stay in town longer than I wanted to.

I don't like Port Spar. Twenty or so years ago, the late Duke Tremaine de Bisclavret lowered fees and taxes in his seaports in an attempt to divert foreign trade from the city of Triskellian. Instead, his typically questionable reform resulted in an increase in crimi-

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nals in Port Spar, from pirates and slavers to the nigh-mythical Invisible Guild. Today, Port Spar walks a knife's edge between rampant lawlessness and the authorities' ruthless efforts to keep order. I didn't appreciate the Ombrist for bringing me to this cesspit.

While I sniffed around for clues to my quarry, the *Duchess of the Quistonsee* dropped her anchor out in the middle of the harbor and ignored the hails of the suspicious harbor patrol. A boarding party investigated, only to vanish mysteriously. The harbor patrol followed up with a boarding party full of Wolves ready for trouble. They would have shared the same fate had not one of the Wolves thrown himself overboard. Badly mauled, he babbled to his rescuers about “monster giant Rats” before dying of shock and blood loss. Unwilling to risk the spooked harbor patrol towing one of their prize ships out to sea and sinking it, the owners of the *Duchess*, a company called Gloria-Scott Shipping, sent an agent to hire me. With no progress to speak of in finding the Ombrist, I agreed to take the job.

At first, the job sounded easy enough. Find the monsters and kill them, my usual fare. I became a witch hunter because I wanted to make a difference in the world, to prove that this Wolf-Dog could stand up to any pure-blooded Bis-clavret Wolf. I thrilled at the thought that I could help beat back the forces of darkness and make my bit of the world safer for honest citizens. I loved the idea of laughing in the faces of those who enjoyed hurting others via the dark arts. I enjoyed battling sorcery-born monsters seeking to harm innocents.

I didn't count on getting green about the gills on the way out to the *Duchess*. Perhaps Helloise wanted to remind me not to get too cocky.

Unfortunately, with the seasickness ebbing, another worry of mine tramped to the forefront of my thoughts. I don't like the dangers I fight chewing up and spitting out bystanders, especially someone who had so kindly eased my queasy belly. The Porcupines and the cranky Wolf would stay in the boat, which relieved my mind tremendously. However, as I lacked the skill to clamber onto the ship myself, I needed Quincy to climb up one of the lines trailing the ship and throw down a ladder for me, thereby putting him at risk. I silently vowed I'd get him out of there safely.

The Porcupines paused near one of the lines, interrupting my worry before the seasickness could court it like a desperate old maid. The Wolf reached out with a boat hook and snagged the line.

“Get your lazy tail up there,” he snapped, passing the rope to Quincy. The Squirrel took it with an anxious tail quiver.

“Hold on,” I placed a paw on Quincy's shoulder. “If you see so much as a whisker of anything scary, get yourself out of there. Leave any rodents of unusual size to me.”

“Listen, mutt, he'll do his job, whether he likes it or not,” the Wolf growled, tossing in a few choice expletives. “You! Get your fat rodent tail up there and throw down the bloody ladder!” The Wolf glared at Quincy, daring him to complain, but the Squirrel only gave something resembling a nod – or an attempt at a seizure. I couldn't fault his shaky

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nerves. The anticipation before meeting a monster would jangle even the most stalwart warrior's nerves.

“Your job doesn't include getting killed,” I said, ignoring the Wolf's snort. Quincy gulped, nodded again, then zipped up the line with an enviable skill and speed only a Squirrel could pull off, reaching the ship in mere seconds. The Porcupines rowed us over to the side of the ship where Quincy soon slipped down a rope ladder with wooden rungs.

I made a last minute check of my stuff – sword, dagger, chain mail under my shirt, oilcloth bag, head, feet, tail. I looked as ready as I would ever be. Taking a deep breath to tamp down the faint nausea still pooled in the pit of my stomach, I mounted the ladder. I had a job to do.

I'm not very familiar with ships. I couldn't tell if sending Quincy up to bring down the ladder counted as standard operating procedure or something improvised to help baby-sit a landlubber like me. I did know it smelled wrong. The ladder should still have been dangling down after the survivor of the previous boarding party had fled the ship. Who had pulled it back up?

I found Quincy waiting for me at the top, unharmed but shaking like a leaf in a windstorm. His head jerked around as if he expected to see hordes of monstrous giant Rats burst through the deck at any moment. His tail danced and flicked so frantically I bet it would have jumped ship and ran all the way

back to the docks had it not been attached to Quincy's rear end.

“The c-c-captain's c-cabin's over th-there,” Quincy squeaked through his chattering teeth, pointing more or less towards a door set underneath a higher deck at the aft end of the ship.

“Great,” I checked over the side of the ship for the boat. “Could you tell your friends we're all right? I have something important I need to do.”

“Yeah,” Quincy's head spasmed in another nod. He nudged past me and leaned over to wave at his comrades, giving me the perfect opportunity to seize him by the collar and the seat of his pants and throw him overboard. Quincy squealed as he plunged into the water.

I didn't waste time congratulating myself in making sure Quincy had missed the boat, instead whirling around and yanking my sword from its scabbard. The giant Rats couldn't have missed Quincy's scream. I could feel my heart thunder in my chest as I carefully made my way

to the captain's cabin.

Whatever influence had been keeping the Ombrist from poking his nose out from hiding must have been affecting the giant Rats too. I reached one set of the stairs leading up to the higher deck, but saw nothing more than an occasional blood stain. My sword at the ready, I edged over towards the door Quincy had pointed out. I shot a quick glance around the ship's deck, my ears perked for the slightest sound of claws scraping wood or bodies

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slithering to attack while my nose strained for the merest whiff of foul monster body odor.

A fast peek at the door revealed I needn't bother going for the handle. Someone had bitten the handle off the door, gnawing huge gashes in the wood in the process. It looked like the work of infuriated Rats, only much bigger.

I nudged the door, but someone had shoved something against it. I closed my eyes to pre-adjust them for the dim lighting in the cabin and waited for several seconds, focusing all my attention through my other senses in case a giant Rat decided now would be a good time to introduce itself. I also took the time to gather my wizardly senses, drawing up energy from inside myself and readying it to mold into spells.

Because our profession required us to face off against wizards and monsters, we witch hunters needed a basic understanding of magic. Many of us opted to learn some of the easier spells for a little bit more of an edge against our foes, but such cross-training came at a cost. We couldn't sling swords or spells as effectively as a warrior or a wizard. To counterbalance that, we did learn to be more adaptable and more capable of switching between different types of attacks.

My strength lay in Elementalism, the most basic and easiest to learn of the magical disciplines. I knew some Theurgy, better known as white magic, but only enough to scare the undead and to worry necromancers. Against other types of magic, I relied on quick wits and quicker footwork.

As I stood there with my eyes closed, I noticed the seasickness lying low in my stomach,

perhaps frightened by its apparently insane host ready to fling himself at horrible, body-mangling danger. I almost laughed at it, but instead twirled around and rammed my shoulder into the door, shoving it open about halfway. I opened an eye and squeezed my tall frame through, my sword poking about, ready to skewer anything unfriendly. The foul stink of death, blood, and filthy bodies assaulted my nose, but nothing tried to beat up the rest of me. How disappointing. If this kept up, I might swear the giant Rats didn't exist.

With a paw over my overpowered nose, I blinked open my other eye and searched the cabin with my eyes and ears, easily picking out the large body lying on the bed. A check behind the door for anything hiding there revealed only a small chest pressed against the door. I listened hard, but I heard no sounds of breathing. I opened up my wizardly senses and scried for white or black magic spells, but found nothing I could recognize, either because it happened too long ago or because I lacked the sensitivity to detect anything. I warily walked over to the bed and peered down at the biggest rodent I had ever laid eyes upon.

I had seen big members of the rodent races before, usually standing in Merced Dale to be sold into slavery. The biggest rodent I had personally ran across had been a stoic Capybara, her tiny ears not quite reaching my shoulder. Otherwise, Porcupines such as those back at the boat counted as the tallest I usually encountered.

This giant Rat looked nothing like them. It reminded me of one of the usual sort of Rats living throughout the island of Calabria, only

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bulked up to something more my size. From the huge, furless tail sprouting from its massive rump to the notched and mutilated ears on its head, the giant Rat looked like one *ugly* son of a female *burindent*. Even in death, corded muscles and tough-looking sinews bulged under mangy gray fur matted with grime and blood. Paws as big as those of a full-grown Gorilla's hands came equipped with some nasty-looking claws encrusted with more blood. Yellowed incisors a Bat could use as daggers stabbed out from its jaw. The tattered remains of some sort of cloth encircled its hips preserving what little modesty it had left. Gashes and cuts along its body, including some made very recently, revealed it had seen some unpleasant times within the past few weeks. From the looks of things, I guessed the boarding parties had given as good as they got.

“You need a bath,” I remarked, but the giant Rat answered me with the silence of death.

I felt letdown. I had hoped I would run across a live monster Rat, if only so that I could feel as if I had earned my pay.

I may be overconfident when it comes to fighting bad guys, but I didn't get this far by borrowing trouble. Since no giant Rats intended to accommodate me, I sought out my secondary objectives, the captain's log and any charts I could scrounge up that might reveal what the *Duchess* had been doing while

out to sea. I found the charts scattered across the deck, with two lying on a table, pinned under a triangular instrument I didn't recognize. I checked the charts on the table and found it curious they displayed the coastline along Bisclavret lands. As I rolled up all the charts, I discovered the captain's log lying underneath them. Stuffing the logbook and the charts in my oilskin bag, I securely tied the bag closed and slung it over my shoulder. With a foot, I pushed aside the small chest. From the lightness of the chest, I suspected the idea had been more to keep the door closed than to keep anyone out. With my sword out in case I ran across another giant Rat, I walked out of the cabin.

And came face-to-ugly face with another giant Rat.



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We stared at each other for a split second, the monster Rat as dumbfounded as me. Then it screeched, slashing its claws at my face. I ducked and jabbed my sword at its belly, dropping my bag without letting go of it. Handicapped by the ache of my eyes adjusting to the bright sunlight, I missed as the giant Rat leaped back with an angry hiss.

“Howdy, neighbor!” I edged away from the door, trying to buy some time. “Mind if I borrow a cup of — yowch!” Faster than I expected, the rat lashed out at me, catching me on the sword arm. I leaped back, thumping my shoulder against the bulkhead and yanking my paw free of my bag. I barely kept from dropping my sword as I scrambled back. The

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giant Rat snapped its huge choppers at me and scurried into the cabin.

“Does this mean you're out of sugar, too?” I knew a cue when I saw one. Sheathing my sword and grabbing my bag, I dashed for the side of the ship. An earsplitting wail persuaded me to forget about the ladder. With a cry of “Gardylloo!”, I jumped ship.

I came up spluttering, my paw desperately gripping the strings of my bag. Treading water as best as I could, I tried to swim over to the boat. The Porcupines met me partway, taking the bag and helping me scramble into the boat. A gasp from Quincy made me ignore the throbbing, stinging pain in my wounded arm and look up.

The monster Rat crouched on the *Duchess'* railing, its hideous muzzle contorted into a fierce snarl and its madly bulging eyes glinting red in the sunlight. I could see it bore several wounds like those of its dead companion. I ignored the Wolf's muttered prayer to Helloise and the Porcupine's grunts as they threw themselves into rowing away from the *Duchess* as fast as they could, instead wracking my brains on how to get it into the water. Perhaps I could test the theory I had come up with concerning the giant Rats.

“Hey, Ugly!” I yelled at it, remembering an insult I once heard from an angry bar patron. “I met your mother on the street at the nunnery!”

It serenaded us with another shriek worthy of a boiling teakettle. The giant Rat leaped at us, its powerful legs launching it through the air. Thanks to the Porcupines' heroic rowing, it missed the boat by a couple of feet and slammed into the water, drenching us with its splash.

The giant Rat swam up to the boat with amazing quickness and tried to climb over the side. An oar whacked it on the head, treating us to an annoyed hiss that sent shivers down our spines. The Porcupine swung the oar for another smack, but the monster Rat caught it in its teeth and swiftly chewed the paddle end to pieces. The Porcupine wrenched his oar free and stared at the tooth-mangled end in mute shock.

I tore the boat hook out of the stunned Wolf's paw and stabbed it into one and then the other of those humongous paws gripping the side of the boat. The giant Rat hissed again as I menaced it with the boat hook, forcing it away from the boat. I could almost see it figuring out how best to slip by me and tear out my throat.

With a cackle that made Quincy flinch, I shouted a few words, using them to focus my mind and mold an Air Elementalism spell, directing energy from within me through the boat hook and towards the giant Rat. Electricity popped and sizzled, and a miniature lightning bolt sparked out of the metal point of the boat hook, zapping into the giant Rat's nose with a thunderous *crack!* The monster Rat convulsed and sank below the waves.

We waited for a few minutes, the Porcupines putting some distance between us and where the giant Rat went down, but our erstwhile opponent never came back up.

Once Quincy calmed down enough to bandage my wounded arm, we returned to the *Duchess* to check for any remaining monster Rats. I found the corpses of three others down in the hold, lying among a pile of gnawed bones

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and the partly chewed remains of the missing members of the boarding parties. Once I convinced myself that the giant Rats had departed the land of the living some time ago, I got out of there as quickly as I could.

As soon as the others came aboard, the Wolf signaled shore for help in docking the ship. Realizing I no longer exposed it to immediate danger, my seasickness roared back with a vengeance barely moderated by the massage I'd learned from Quincy. When the *Duchess of the Quistonsee* finally docked, I got off as soon as I could, taking the captain's log with me. I spent the next hour seated at a table in one of Port Spar's more trustworthy taverns, waiting for my stomach to settle enough for me to eat.

"Good afternoon, Mycroft," I greeted my contact with Gloria-Scott Shipping without glancing up from the last entry in the logbook. "Sorry about taking the book, but I needed to confirm something before I gave it to you."

"Good afternoon, Mister Gilfane," the Wolf took a stool across from me, a guarded tone in his voice. "Did you find anything enlightening?"

"Plenty," I finally looked up at him. "Turns out the captain had a few unwilling 'passengers' onboard." I studied Mycroft for a moment, but the Wolf didn't so much as bat an ear at the thought of one of his company's ships hauling slaves. I sighed and rubbed at an eye. Seeing nothing to be gained by yammering on about the injustices of slavery, I frowned at the logbook.

"Anyway, these 'passengers'," I peered at one of the last entries in the book, trying to

make out the handwriting, but this attempt told me no more about the race of the "passengers" or where they came from than previous ones, "they happened to be under the protection of someone called Sumatra, their shaman from what I gather. When the *Duchess* was a day out from – Tejam? Taiam? – this Sumatra appeared before the crew of the *Duchess* and demanded the release of his people. Naturally, the captain tried to throw him in irons, but Sumatra placed a curse upon the crew – specifically on the Rats."

"You mean," Mycroft's eyes widened. "Those monsters were *our people*?"

"Yes," I nodded. "Sumatra turned them into ogres or whatever these foreigners call such monsters. When he wrote this last entry, the captain didn't believe Sumatra. I imagine he would now."

"Our crew," Mycroft mumbled, stunned.

"Part of the dangers of enslaving foreigners," I couldn't resist the jab. I hurried on before Mycroft could rally himself. "I figured something like that had happened. You see, the giant Rats acted too much like sailors. *Someone* sailed the ship into harbor. *Someone* pulled up the ladder the other boarding parties used. *Someone* knew how to use the right charts to get to Port Spar. The way I figure it, Sumatra turned the Rats into monsters not just so they could kill the rest of the crew, but so that they could sail the ship for him."

"Couldn't some of the other crew have survived?" wondered Mycroft, still trying to take the tragedy in. "Maybe they sailed the ship?"

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“Sorry,” I shook my head. “All I found of the rest of the crew were bones long since gnawed clean. Quincy did tell me one of the *Duchess'* boats was gone. That could have been because of any surviving crew abandoning ship or, more likely, because of Sumatra and his people leaving when the Rats got them home.”

“And then they sailed all the way back here?” Mycroft wiped a paw over his gray-furred forehead.

“Yep,” I shut the logbook with a thump. “Either they got away from Sumatra, or he didn't care what happened to them once he finished with them. I'd say they came back here because they couldn't think of anywhere else to go. Two died on the way, and the boarding parties took care of two others. I finished off the last one. Those Rats of un-

usual size exist no more.” I pushed the logbook over to him.

“And that's it?” Mycroft pulled out a money pouch.

“Looks that way,” I shrugged. “Makes for an interesting tale to tell the grandpups, maybe.”

Mycroft gave me an odd look, as if he expected me to say something more, but passed over my payment without further comment. I swapped farewells with Mycroft, secretly hoping I wouldn't ever again ride a boat out on anything connected to the open sea.

An hour later, I learned the Ombrist had just sailed out to sea on a ship. If I wanted to catch him, I needed to do the same.

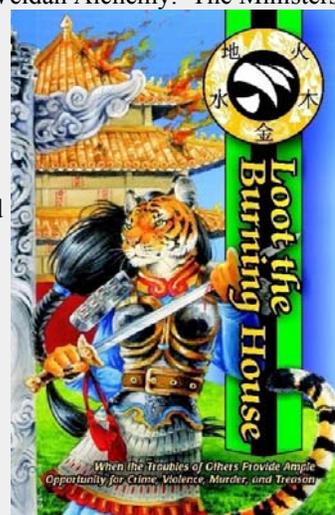
*Thank you, Helloise.*

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# Clans, Guilds, and Houses

By

Chuan Lin

The background settings of Jadeclaw and Ironclaw tended to emphasis on family, clan or household. Many political, mercantile, or nobility influences are gathered within a particular family or 2 – 3 closely knitted clans. But when it come down to character creation, there is no link that connected character to a particular family or clan. This is more apparent within Ironclaw than with Jadeclaw. In previous issue of Bite Mark, I have attempted to address the issue by written optional rules for character to generate her background information in Jadeclaw. Still, it is not enough because though we now have a more flash out character, we know of her history, we know of her family, but how does her family/clan/house/guild interact within the world of Iron/Jadeclaw? Do her family fortune rises or falls through her action or inaction? Does her family provide her any supports and vice versa? And more interesting, what happen when there is a conflict of interest between her family and the party she grouped with? Where does her loyalty lies? These, I believe, make an adventure more interesting to play.

In this article, I will use the word, *Family*, to also represents Clan, Guild and Houses rather than listing them out each time.

## **Family Creation**

There are 4 traits to any family. A player has 10 points to distribute among these 4 traits.

**Affluent** – indicates how wealthy is this family. In game term, this represents how much funding, a character can withdraw from his family per session when she is at the family's homebase.

To determine how much money are available for player character is to roll family affluent dice or her family rank dice (whichever is the smaller), the highest result is number of *bù-qían* available for her to withdraw. If she has either a Gift: Nobility or Gift: Wealth or the family belongs to merchant guild, the highest result is number of *jin-dao* available for her to withdraw. If she has both Gift: Nobility and Gift: Wealth, the highest result is number of *zhu-yù* available for her to withdraw.

If the highest number equals to the largest dice side, then it indicates that player's request can possibly exhaust the family revenue. This cause the Affluent trait to decrease by one. And once the Affluent trait is reduced to zero due to her request, she will lose the Gift: Wealth (if any) and gains Bad Reputation: Wastrel (-1). However, player character does have the option to accept or decline to use

**Body** – indicates how big is this family. Each level represents about 10 family members. In game term, a player character can call upon her family members to help out her cause. She rolls family's body dice or her family rank dice (whichever is the smaller) to

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## Clans, Guilds, and Houses

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shows how many family can be called upon to provide assistance. Every 10 family members lost can reduce Body level by one. When Body Level reduces to 0, this family no longer exist.

A good rule of thumb for family breakdown is 1-2-3-4. Ten percents of the family represent elderly or elite; twenty percents of the family represent paternal or master; thirty percents of the family represents siblings or journeyman; and forty percents of the family represents younglings or novices.

In additional, if a family has *Gift: Nobility*, the amount of points spent on this gift (times 10) equals to the number of guards employed to defend this family's **Domicile** (holdings) and personnel.

Example of a Family (Body = 4): It is composed of 4 family elders, 8 father or uncles; 12 brothers, sisters or cousins; and 16 nieces and nephews.

Example of a Guild (Body = 5): It is composed of 5 guild masters; 10 journeyman members; 15 novices members; and 20 servants, porters, or staff members.

Example of an Order (Body = 6): It is composed of 6 Knight Grand Master; 12 Knight Commanders; 18 Knight Bachelors; and 24 pages or men-at-arms.

Example of a Noble House (Body = 4, Gift: Nobility = 4): Setup is same as first example. In addition, there are 40 guards spread out to defend Noble House's **Domicile** and/or personnel.

**Clout** – indicates how much influences or connection that a family has within its domi-

cile-city. In game term, this represents how much soft-pressures that a family can exert in a social encounter. This can be used once per session per player character's domicile-city. She rolls family's clout dice or her family rank dice (whichever is the smaller) to shows how much family influences is exerted. Clout Trait can not be physically destroyed since it tied to Domicile trait. As long as the family established or maintained a domicile in a city, its Clout trait can come in to play.

**OPTION:** This option will create additional record keeping for players and game master alike. While physically, it is nearly unbeatable, it can be decreased through social mean. By using Skills: Fast-Talk, Local Knowledge, or Streetwise, one can create doubts or precarious about a family's Clout. Once per session, a successful skill roll against Clout trait, temporary reduces that family's Clout trait in that domicile-city by 1. And for every 4 sessions of successful rolls against Clout trait will permanently reduces it by 1. Therefore, it is in that family's best interest to actively seek out the agitator and to rectify the situation.

**Domicile** – indicates how many physical location that a family has. This is the physical manifestation of the family. For every points in Domicile Trait, a player character can select a city for its dwelling. Within that city, majority of people will know where's the family is located and its most famous members. In game term, player character can reside at the family domicile rather than at taverns or inns. This will reduce player expense and increase player safety. In addition, messages passed via domicile would travel faster if not

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safer. It also allows player characters to drop off equipments and valuables for safe keeping (unless the entire domicile is attacked) in lieu of banks.

To physically assault a domicile would require some planning from the game master and could be very well a mini-adventure by itself. And domicile tends to defend by members of the family that by attacking a domicile will have a direct effect on that family's Body trait.

It is possible for a family to have a 0 domicile trait. It means that the family has a wandering caravan like nomads. In a case, when a family's domicile trait is reduced to 0, it means that the family is banished or ostracized. It is forced to travel in a caravan.

### Allowable Gifts:

Like player character, a family can acquire social Gifts, social Flaws, and Special Traits.

*Belongings (1 - 4)* – Family belong to merchant (1 & 2 points) or tradesmen (3 & 4) class. As a merchant clan or guild, family may also take Flaws: Bad Reputation (merchant caste).

*Good Reputation (3)* – Receive bonus one rank when rolling Family's Clout trait dice.

*Hospitality (2)* – Pick another family which is in alliance with your family. You can request sanctuary at other family's domicile and has to provide assistance to members of other family when requested.

*Local Investiture [place name] (1)* – Your family is known to have connection with local government due to patronage to members within bureaucracy. Your family can influence local ministers decision.

*Nobility (1 – 7)* – Family belongs to nobility.

*Wealth (5)* – Family's wealth is considered to be of old money.

### Allowable Flaws:

*Bad Reputation [merchant caste] (-2):* When dealing people of authority that uses Family's Clout trait dice, roll twice and take the lower of the two.

*Duty (-3, -6):* Your family is a client member of another family. You are obligated to honor any reasonable (-3) or all (-6) requests from your patron family.

*Eerie (-4):* Nobody really wants to talk or associate with your family. All social rolls within domicile-city receives a penalty.

*Foe (-2, -4):* Pick another family which is in feud with your family. Members of opposing family will do their best to hinder or disgrace your family name (-2) or actively seek out to destroying you and your family (-4). A family may have up to 3 opposing feuding families.

*Poverty (-4):* Your Family is known to be poor. Any wealth gathered are redistribute back to outside. This may be a source of pride or family law. Any attempt to horde wealth is frown upon. Any attempt involving Family's Affluent die will require 2 rolls and take the worse result.

*Scofflaw (-3):* This is commonly referred politely as the Dark Path. Your Family willing if not already breaking laws throughout its existence. Any law enforcement members are obligated to arrest your family members. The bounty on your head is equaled to Family's Affluent, Body, Clout, Domicile and your Career traits in *jin-dao* coins.

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## **Ambitions:**

Every family existed for a reason, be it its survival, gathering of materials goods, or achieving some ideology. Ambition trait is setup with the inner most desire and expand to more open intents.

Example: **Ambitions:** ambition\_1, ambition\_2, ambition\_3

Here, ambition\_3 is the most secretive of a given family's goal; ambition\_1 is the widely known family's alignment. To find out a family's ambition(s), *Skill: Diplomacy, Psychology, or Streetwise* are the appropriate choices. In a static test, the base difficult dice is *Routine* (2d6), and increased the difficult level by number of ambition beyond ambition\_1. In a dynamic test, the opposing roll is equal to target's *Skill: Diplomacy, Psychology, or Streetwise* for ambition\_1; this contest of will has to repeat for each time for gaining knowledge of additional ambitions. Note, that target's family clan rank also determine the extend of his knowledge on family ambition. For instance, if a clan has listed 3 ambitions, and target NPC is rank 1 of that clan. Player character can only gain ambition\_1.

When there is a conflict of family Ambition, ambition\_1 is abandoned in favor of ambition\_2; and ambition\_n is upheld over ambition\_2 to ambition\_n-1.

## **Increase Family Trait**

As an active member of a family, it may be player character's interest to improve family status via increasing one if its traits. Other

than the fact that it ensures the survival of the family, it also improve the chances that the character can advance in rank among her kinsfolk or guild mates. This will require additional paperwork and notes taken between player and her game master.

Below are some suggested goals/objectives for getting experience points to improve a family trait. These goals must resulted in a domicile city for the family to take advantage of. For every completed objectives, she receives 1 – 4 experience points that put toward a family trait. This experience points gain do not count against what she would normally get through regular gaming session. And likewise, the family experience points can not be used for personal improvement and vice versa. Same as character's Self Improvement, when a family trait receives 20 experience points, its trait dice increases to next rank.

**Affluent** – Established a trade route; forged an alliance with another family; acquired land; married to an advantaged family or donated substantial amount of moneys for the family.

**Body** – Easier for guilds and orders than a kin clan, acquired servants, slaves, or men-at-arms. Have a named NPC joined your guild/orders. Have a named, but clanless NPC took on your family named. Be fruitful and multiply, you get more credited with your legit mate (or concubines) than one night stand.

**Clout** – Maintained and upheld your family name. Received recognition from NPC whose family has higher Clout than your family (granted, a public recognition worth more than a

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private recognition). Received recognition from NPCs with Master as part of their titles.

**Domicile** – Established a domicile in a new city. Participated in maintaining and support it during its growth (for the duration of gaining enough experience points to improve Domicile trait by one). Experience worths more if the new domicile is in a different state than rest of its holdings.

### ***Advance One's Position within a Family***

Given player character's nature, it is inevitably for her to seek out the top echelon of the family. For simplicity, a given family has 4 – 5 levels of hierarchy with starting ranking at one. Below are some of benefits of belonging to a family.

Family ranking determines how much player character knows about her family's goal or ambition. Each ranking indicates number of ambition she knows about. A higher level family member can overrule junior level family members.

A high level family member can request number of aids from the family equal to his current family ranking.

At the highest level, she will have a saying on which direction or ambition the family is headed toward. Once per campaign, a player character, who has achieved the highest ranking of a given family, can add, remove, modify that family's ambition.

Depend on the type of family, there are many ways to the top. Below are some of ideas.

Most ideal way is by **merit system**. Who ever contributed the most to the family should get top billing. But rarely does it work. For every twenty experience points contributed to the family, she should advance to next rank. Sadly, this is not commonly adopt in most Jadeclaw guilds and orders.

Most common way is by **birth order hierarchy**, that is, first come, first ascend. Seniority and traditions come before all else. In this case, player character rarely have the opportunity to move up the rank unless there is an opening. Even so, favoritism and back-end deals tended to be selection process than anything else. That being said, however, this may offer the most role-playing opportunity for player character to climb her way to the top. Here is what make up an interesting story or game session. She can choose to eliminate her oppositions through assassination; make bargains with the devils, or simply through her silver tongue. Using whatever the mean to success, she will not sit comfortably on her seat, but also need watch out from those below. This is most commonly adopt in Jadeclaw guilds, orders and clans.

Somewhere in between is **democratic system**. All promotions/demotions are voted on by the top ranking members. They may elect among them the spokesman of the family. This would give player plenty of chance to role-play and to do back room dealing. If player opt to go down violent path, this may not be as violent as those described under birth order hierarchy. This is in between of the merit system and the birth order hierarchy system.

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### Sample Family Design

**Gài Bang** – a clan created by beggars, for beggars, and to protect all beggars from those who loved to kick those down on their lucks. It does not have much in wealth nor does it have much influences with local community. Yet its numbers and domicile in every city made Gài Bang a valuable ally. It upheld honor and righteousness. Gài Bang accepted its lots in life with pride and often will go out of their way to help out destitute families who

experienced hardship in order to prevent them from breaking apart. It is one of few clans that advanced its members based on their merits. Each member carries a sack sling to his back. The number of patches on the sack indicates that person's ranking. Upon advanced to next level, the follow beggars spitted on the newly selected candidate to represent their *disgust* at his *success*. At rank above one, that beggar will have to travel to number of domiciles equal to his ranking. This would prevent him from making too much attachment toward any domiciles.

<b>Affluent:</b> 0	<b>Body:</b> 100	<b>Clout:</b> 5	<b>Domicile:</b> 50
<b>Gifts:</b> Good Reputation (righteousness)		<b>Flaws:</b> Poverty	
<b>Advancement:</b> Merit System			
<b>Ambitions:</b> Gài Bang, People, Zhou Dynasty			

**Dong Shang Temple** – a daoist temple established somewhere in Dong Shang mountain ranges within Sung State. It's origin can trace as far back as the union of Twelve Houses. There is always a key member or a small group of Dong Shang Temple involved during regime changed of the Twelve House. Currently, it is famous for Jinguizi (the head master, turtle), Xiaoxiong (master of martial art, red panda), Xuebao (warrior chained somewhere under Bai Guang Wall in Yen State,

snow leopard), and the Furious Five: Hunu (tigress), Xiaohou (monkey), Dailang (mantis), Xiaoqing (snake), and Zihe (crane). The last group are well known for their adventure throughout the land to rights the wrong. And the most interesting rumor of all is that it is the home of Jade Dragon Warrior School. Every 50 years, a worthy candidate will be selected to learn the Art of the Jade Dragon Warrior. That year is fast approaching.

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<b>Affluent:</b> 1	<b>Body:</b> 5	<b>Clout:</b> 1	<b>Domicile:</b> 1 (Dong Shang)
<b>Gifts:</b> Good Reputation (holy temple)		<b>Flaws:</b> Pacifism	
<b>Advancement:</b> Merit System – candidate has to be chosen by the head.			
<b>Ambitions:</b> People, Harmony			

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**House of Gui** – An elder noble house (baron) established since the formation of the Cheng State. An ambitious house, it has served the First Nobility of Cheng for centuries. It is headed by Venerable Baroness Gui Yong (rat) who ruled the household with iron glove. Nothing gets through without her approval.

Though she is upset with recent murder of the First Nobility, she began to rethink her option to whether to continue to uphold House of Zheng or start to advance House of Gui to the First Nobility status. For that, she began to send out enquirers to her own augury and allied noble houses.

<b>Affluent:</b> 5	<b>Body:</b> 3 (6, with guards)	<b>Clout:</b> 5	<b>Domicile:</b> 2 (Ru Nan, Xu Chang)
<b>Gifts:</b> Nobility – Baron (3), Wealth (5), Local Investiture (2): Ru Nan, Xu Chang		<b>Flaws:</b> Duty – State of Cheng	
<b>Advancement:</b> birth order hierarchy			
<b>Ambitions:</b> House of Zheng, State of Cheng, House of Gui			

## Conclusion

By established a family for which player characters belongs to, it helped them to be more immerse with campaign setting. It helps define player characters and how the world view them through their family. It also make a campaign feel more alive and that everything everyone does have a purposes and does not operate strictly in black and white. This article hopes to make the family creation process quick and efficient.

An example of Adventure to Campaign worksheet is on page 28. The file, **BM03\_Clans\_Guilds\_Houses.odf** will be available for download at Yahoo newsgroup:

<http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/ironclaw/files/Bite%20Mark/Issue%2003/>

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## Template

<b>Affluent:</b> _____	<b>Body:</b> _____	<b>Clout:</b> _____	<b>Domicile:</b> _____
<b>Gifts:</b>		<b>Flaws:</b>	
<b>Advancement:</b>			
<b>Ambitions:</b>			