

d12 Monthly is a helpful resource for fantasy roleplayers.

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Unless otherwise mentioned, all articles are written by Russ at YUMDM.

The Halloween 2023 Issue

Halloween again!

Well, this time I have stayed away from Undead and put together a bunch of articles on various other scary and macabre topics.

Halloween is a great time to mix it up and have a one-shot outside of your usual campaign play.

Or, you could simply incorporate a Halloween-themed night into your campaign world, and then use that to keep your players on their toes.

Whatever you do, make Spooktober something to remember. And, as always, happy gaming!

- Russ from YUMDM https://yumdm.com/ https://twitter.com/yum_dm

About Me

I have been roleplaying for over 30 years and DMing for most of those. I have played over 50 different roleplaying games, but my first love is fantasy - it's like coming home.

Other TTRPGs I like: WEG D6 Star Wars, Feng Shui RPG, & Warhammer FRP.

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... for making this zine as good as it is.

Want to join this team and support the zine? I have a Patreon account: https://www.patreon.com/yumdm (Tiers are available to receive a physical copy).

The Art of Fear Crafting Atmosphere



Halloween is the perfect time to add a spine-tingling, eerie atmosphere to your fantasy campaign.

Here, we delve into the techniques and tips to help you craft a bone-chilling atmosphere that will leave a lasting impression.

Setting the Stage: Descriptive Narration

One of the most potent tools at your disposal as a DM is your descriptive narration.

Paint vivid mental images for your players that engage their senses.

Describe the gloomy, moonlit forest where shadows move mysteriously, the creaking and echoing of a decrepit mansion's doors, or the icy touch of an otherworldly presence. Encourage your players to use their senses, asking what they see, hear, and smell in the environment.

Music and Soundscapes: Haunting Ambiance

The right soundtrack can dramatically enhance the atmosphere.

Compile a playlist of eerie and atmospheric music, mixing in sounds like rustling leaves, distant howls, or ominous whispers.

Platforms like *Syrinscape* offer ready-made soundscapes tailored to various settings, making it easy to immerse players in your Halloween game.

Lighting and Visual Aids: Dim the Lights

Consider adjusting the lighting in your gaming space to match the mood.

Dimming the lights or using candles can create a sense of intimacy and tension.

Use visual aids like maps and images to enhance the players' immersion.

Display eerie artwork or show images of NPCs and monsters to make encounters more vivid.

Role-Playing & Characterization: Embrace the Spooky

Encourage your players to embrace their characters' fear.

Fear can be a powerful role-playing tool.

Encourage character development by exploring how fear affects each character differently.

Is the brave knight shaken by eerie whispers, or does the rogue find solace in the shadows?

Pacing and Suspense: Slow Buildup

Fear is often most effective when it's allowed to build gradually.

Introduce subtle, unexplained phenomena at first—a distant, chilling laugh or a fleeting shadow in the periphery.

Let the sense of dread grow as your players uncover more about the mystery.

Pacing is key; a slow buildup of tension can lead to a more satisfying climax.

Editor's Tip: Watch John Carpenter's Halloween, Prince of Darkness, The Fog, or many other John Carpenter films - he is the master of subtle build up.

Unique Monsters and Challenges: Unearthly Horrors

Select or create monsters and challenges that suit the Halloween theme.



Creatures like ghosts, vampires, and lycanthropes can add a spooky element to your campaign.

Consider giving these creatures unique abilities that amplify the fear factor. For example, a ghost that can possess objects or people, or a vampire that can manipulate shadows.

See articles *Transition Vamp* and *Teaching*An Old Undead New Tricks in Issue 6
(Undead), or the article Creepers in issue 17
(Halloween 2022) of d12 Monthly for ideas around this concept.

Moral Ambiguity: Ethical Dilemmas

Fear isn't just about monsters and haunted places; it's also about the unknown and the choices it forces upon us.

Introduce ethical dilemmas and moral ambiguity into your storyline.

What happens when the line between good and evil becomes blurred? Players will fear not just external threats but the decisions they must make.



Haunted Lore: Backstories and Legends

Create a rich backstory for the haunted location or the creature haunting your players.

Develop legends, myths, and local lore that immerse the players in the world.

Sharing these stories can help build anticipation and fear. Let your players uncover these tales piece by piece, adding to the suspense.

Personalized Horror: Player Backstories

Incorporate elements from your players' character backstories to personalise the horror.

A long-lost sibling, a haunted family estate, or a vengeful spirit tied to a character's past can provide players with a deeply immersive and terrifying experience.

Consequences and Choices: Fear as a Catalyst

Fear should have consequences.

Characters who succumb to fear might suffer temporary penalties or disadvantages.

However, fear can also drive them to make heroic choices. Use fear as a catalyst for character growth and development.

Final Thoughts

Remember, the art of fear is not about scaring your players out of their wits, but about immersing them in a world where the unknown is truly unsettling.

Let the terror begin!

The Fear Mechanic

It's one thing to scare the players, but translating that to their characters - in game terms - can be a little trickier.

What follows is a simple mechanic you can use when you want to represent a character being as scared as their player.

Fear Level

To start with, each character has a Fear Level, which is initially set to 0. This may increase over time.

Fear Triggers

Create a list of fear triggers. This could be certain frightening monsters, exploring ghastly places, or witnessing gruesome scenes. These will depend on the campaign you are running. Each trigger increases the Fear Level by one.

Fear Test

When a character encounters a fear trigger, their Fear Level increases by one, and the player rolls a D6 and compares this to their Fear Level. If the dice roll is *lower* than the Fear Level, then that character suffers a fear condition, which stack with each failed check.

Fear Conditions

The first time a creature suffers a fear condition, they are Shaken. The second time, they are Frightened. The third and final time, they are Panicked.

Conditions will last while the source of the fear is still present, plus 10 minutes.

Shaken

A shaken character takes a -2 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks.

Frightened

A frightened creature goes last in initiative, and has a penalty of -4 to all attacks and damage.

Panicked

A panicked creature freaks out – they still have the choice of whether to flee or freeze, however.

If they flee, the creature must use any means at their disposal to escape, this includes special abilities, spells and magic items.

If they freeze they cannot move and cannot take any actions.

Fear Management

Characters can lower their fear level by using various in-game mechanisms, such as:

- → Certain potions & herbal concoctions made for calming
- → Companions with the skill can make a successful Heal check
- → Successfully confronting and defeating the source of fear
- → Sleeping it off

All of the above will reduce one level of fear (or more, at the GM's discretion).



The Traveller Has Come Are They Friend or Foe?



Rumours and stories talk of a strange traveller who only appears on Halloween night, but who travels from place to place. It is said, only a fool or one of evil heart deals with The Traveller.

Whenever The Traveller appears (which happens in a random place on Halloween night), choose what The Traveller has to offer.

The Truth of the The Traveller

Simply put, no-one knows.

Some sages believe The Traveller is a deity, or just the essence of an old god. Other theories place The Traveller as one of the rumoured Immortals that ruled the early civilisations before the gods arrived. But all of these are just theories.

The Traveller's Appearance

The Traveller can take on any appearance it wants. It can look like a generic member of any race, or a particular individual - even someone the character knows.

Attacking The Traveller

Combat with The Traveller is futile and will end badly for any who tries it. The Traveller will simply disappear and leave the attacker with a deadly curse.

Traveller Encounter

The Traveller can appear for a myriad of reasons in your own campaign world.
Listed below are ideas on how you can use The Traveller, but this list isn't exhaustive.

Time Distortion

People who meet The Traveller lose track of time, experiencing days as if they were mere minutes or vice versa. This leaves them disoriented and uncertain of how long they spent in the traveller's presence. However, spending this time with The Traveller will answer one question they desire to know.

Cryptic Riddles

The Traveller is known for posing cryptic riddles or questions that challenge the minds of those they meet. Solving these riddles might grant insight or reveal hidden truths. Getting them wrong may mean a curse.

Gifts of the Unusual

The Traveller is known to bestow unusual and otherworldly gifts upon those they

encounter. These gifts can vary from enchanted trinkets to seemingly ordinary items with extraordinary properties.

Prophetic Visions

Meeting The Traveller may trigger vivid visions of possible futures. These visions can serve as warnings, guidance, or simply enigmatic glimpses into the unknown.

Temporary Transformation

Some individuals who cross paths with The Traveller undergo temporary physical or psychological transformations, gaining unique abilities or insights for a limited time.

Memory Alteration

The Traveller may alter or enhance the memories of those they meet, allowing them to relive cherished moments or forget painful experiences.

Haunting Melodies

The Traveller is said to play ethereal and haunting melodies on a mysterious musical instrument, captivating listeners and evoking powerful emotions.

This can cause those listening to change their viewpoint on an important topic.

Shapeshifting

In some tales, The Traveller possesses the ability to change their appearance, assuming the guise of a familiar figure from the past or a symbolic character from folklore.

This may allow The Traveller to convince someone to follow some course of action.

Guidance to the Unknown

Meeting The Traveller can lead individuals on a path to discovery and adventure, guiding them towards hidden locations, lost treasures, or forgotten knowledge.

Ephemeral Companionship

The Traveller may offer companionship for a single night, sharing stories, wisdom, and experiences before disappearing without a trace, leaving those they've met forever changed.

Single or Regular Visits

The GM can use The Traveller for a single session, one-off game, or have The Traveller appear regularly.

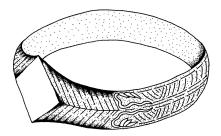
A Single Occurrence: Have The Traveller appear for a single session on Halloween night (or your campaign world's equivalent).

One-Off Session: Instead of your usual campaign, use The Traveller in a one-off game session on, or around, Halloween.

Regular: Have The Traveller become a regular in your campaigns, helping or hindering the PCs - similar to Q in *Star Trek: Next Generation.*



I Put It On... Cursed Items



There are many cursed items laying in treasure piles, or hidden away in vaults, waiting to be discovered by the unwary and greedy.

None of these items can be removed once worn, except by powerful magics.

Sorcerer's Robes of Eternal Chill

The wearer is constantly enveloped in an icy aura that freezes nearby water sources, extinguishes fires, and chills the air around them within 30-ft, making it unbearable for any companions.

Amulet of Misfortune

The wearer experiences a never-ending streak of bad luck, from slipping on banana peels to being caught in unexpected rainstorms. Their chances of success in any endeavour plummet.

Whenever, the wearer rolls a die for any action, the GM (Misfortune incarnate) rolls another - whichever die is lower is used for the roll.

Ring of Vampiric Thirst

Once this ring is placed on a finger, it grants the wearer a thirst for blood, making them crave the taste! Failure to quench this hunger results in relentless weakness and anaemia.

If the wearer does not feed on blood once per day (enough that is contained in a medium-size dog), they will start to suffer fatigue.

Shadow Cloak of Haunting Whispers

The cloak is inhabited by vengeful spirits who whisper maddening secrets to the wearer. Over time, these relentless voices erode the wearer's sanity.

Each week, the wearer must make a WIS check (save) with a cumulative -2 penalty per week. If they fail, they gain an insanity point. Once they reach 5 points, they lose their sanity forever.

Cursed Crown of Hubris

The wearer becomes insufferably arrogant and believes themselves to be invincible. They are compelled to take increasingly reckless risks, leading to their downfall.

In game terms, the wearer should take increasingly rash actions inside, and out of, combat.

Siren's Locket

The locket emits an enchanting melody that lures the wearer towards dangerous situations or treacherous locations. They become oblivious to the perils they face.

The wearer will take on any task, no matter how treacherous.



Rapier of the Eternal Duelist

Each time the wearer is slighted in any way, the rapier compels its owner to challenge the person to a fatal duel. The owner cannot sheathe the sword until they are defeated, or until it claims the life of another.

Medusa's Gaze Medallion

The wearer's gaze petrifies any living being they make eye contact with, turning them into stone statues. Controlling

this curse is impossible, leading to isolation and despair.

Fool's Earrings of Compulsive Honesty

The wearer is compelled to speak the unvarnished, hurtful truth at all times, causing rifts in relationships and offending allies, as well as divulging their own secrets unintentionally.

Specter's Cloak

The cloak binds the wearer to the ethereal plane, causing them to phase in and out of

reality unpredictably. This makes them vulnerable to both physical and magical attacks.

This is a random event and can cause the character to phase in and out at inappropriate times. Any time they roll a natural 1 on any die, the phase effect happens, lasting D20 minutes.

Boots of Plodding Steps

These boots make every step feel like a great effort, causing severe fatigue and reducing the wearer's speed.

The wearer cannot run, and moves only at half their normal speed. And even this causes one level of fatigue for each hour travelled.

It is said that Horseshoes of Plodding Steps also exist.

Witch's Hat of Hexing Whispers

The hat compels the wearer to utter malicious hexes and curses to those who challenge or disagree with them. This can lead to accidental harm to friends and allies as well as attracting the attention of authorities.

Each time anyone disagrees or challenges the wearer, the wearer casts the equivalent of a *Bestow Curse* spell on them.

Phantom Gloves of Thieving

The gloves instil an insatiable urge to steal, causing the wearer to compulsively steal valuable items from friends, allies, and

even strangers, resulting in isolation and mistrust.

The wearer must make a WIS check (save) each time they see an item of value. If they fail, they try to steal it within the next hour.

Shifting Sandals of Lost Time

Wearing these sandals causes the wearer to experience time at an erratic pace, making them age rapidly or regress to a childlike state, on each new day.

Whenever the wearer awakes after a long sleep, roll a D6: if the number is odd, multiply it by 10 and reduce the character's age by this amount; if the number is even, then multiply it by 10 and add it to the character's age. If the character is reduced to 0 or less, they cease to exist until another 24 hours has passed, when they roll again.

Harrowing Tunic of Regret

This tunic forces the wearer to relive their most regrettable and traumatic memories, causing mental anguish and distraction during critical moments.

Each time the wearer rolls a natural 1 in combat, they will suffer a flashback which will consume them for D4 rounds.

Boots of the Voiceless

These boots render the wearer mute, unable to speak or communicate.



Items Most Foul Even More Damned Items

Items, after being used long enough or for an extraordinarily heinous or holy event, will take on the characteristics of what it was used for. Listed below are eight such items.

Bloodbane Seeker



This powerful wooden stake once vanquished a powerful and long-living vampire and now has the following powers:

- → Vampire Tracking: The stake possesses the ability to track other vampires who were made from the master that was killed by it. It emits a faint magical aura when in the presence of a vampire with the same bloodline.
- → Immunity to Vampiric
 Influence: Anyone carrying this
 stake gains immunity to the
 mind-control or charm abilities
 of vampires.
- → Enhanced Damage Against
 Vampires: The wooden stake
 inflicts significantly more
 damage on any vampires or their
 kin, causing 2D12 damage on a
 successful attack.

Ashes of the Fallen Divine



This small, sealed bottle contains the ashes of a long-dead deity.

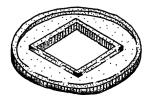
It grants certain powers to those who have it on their person:

→ Divine

Guidance: The bottle grants the possessor divine guidance or visions, allowing them to gain insights into future events or understand ancient prophecies.

→ **Divine Intervention:** In times of great need, the bottle enables the possessor to call upon the residual divine power of the dead god for assistance, allowing them to re-roll one die roll. However, each time they do this, there is a 50% chance the bottle will disappear (appearing in another random place in your world).

Luckweaver's Token

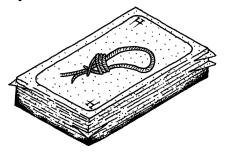


This coin was once possessed by the deity of luck and fate themselves! It was given to

a high priest who lost it in a high stakes poker game, and it has never been seen since. It gives the owner the following power:

→ Luck Manipulation: The owner may re-roll one failed roll in each encounter, but must accept the result of the new roll. However, each time this option is taken, the GM gets to re-roll one successful roll the owner makes in the same (or next) encounter.

Wyrdbound Deck



Each time someone draws a card from this never-ending deck of cards, roll a D6. If it's an even number, they have an automatic success on their next check, but someone close to them (either emotionally or physically) will have the opposite fate - automatically failing the check. If it's odd, the reverse happens.



Carnival of Horrors



In the heart of the mediaeval period, amid the age of knights, castles, and chivalry, thrives a world of enchantment and mystique that transport commoners and nobles alike into realms of wonderment.

These are the fabled travelling carnivals.

A place where ordinary folk can immerse themselves in a fantastical tapestry of mirth, mystery, and merriment.

Nestled within the vibrant tapestry of nomadic life, these travelling extravaganzas bring a sense of marvel to cities, towns and villages, transforming mundane streets or village greens into bustling thoroughfares of fascination.

At the heart of these spectacles are a myriad of sights, sounds, and sensations that continue to captivate the imagination.

But sometimes, these carnivals turn into twisted and macabre versions of themselves.

Macabre Delights Carnival Dark & Macabre

The carnival can have many different exhibits - some harmless, others deadly.

Below is a list of the more macabre exhibits you can add as the PCs move around the carnival.

Cursed Curiosities Exhibition

A tent filled with cursed artefacts and haunted relics, each with a chilling story. From possessed mirrors to malevolent dolls, visitors are invited to witness the eerie power these items hold.

See articles *I Put It On...* and *Items Most Foul* in this issue for items that could be found here.

The Witches' Coven

A dark corner of the carnival where sinister-looking "witches" perform unsettling rituals and offer mysterious potions. Guests can peer into crystal balls, receive ominous tarot readings, and witness eerie spellcasting.

These can be as real or as fake as you want to make them. Are they even real witches? Or perhaps something else?

The Torture Chamber Spectacle

A disturbing reenactment of medieval torture methods that's meant to shock and terrify. Attendees can watch "actors" portray gruesome scenes involving iron maidens, stretching racks, and other horrifying devices.

Are they just actors, or are these real victims?



The Haunted Menagerie

A section featuring a collection of supernatural creatures and monstrous oddities. From werewolves and vampires to ghouls and chimaeras, this area showcases creatures that haunt the darkest corners of folklore.

Choose some creepy and dangerous creatures for this exhibit.

The Abyssal Circus

A troupe of performers with a sinister twist. Acrobats dangle over a pit of darkness, fire-breathers exhale blue flames that hint at the otherworldly, and contortionists twist their bodies in unnatural ways.

The Mysterious Maze of Mirrors

A mirror maze that distorts reflections, creating an unsettling experience where attendees might glimpse sinister versions of themselves or eerie figures lurking in the corners.

The PCs may even end up fighting distorted images of themselves.

The Ghostly Puppet Theatre

A puppet show with marionettes that come to life, telling eerie tales of ghosts, curses, and tragic fates. The puppets' movements are uncanny and their stories are hauntingly captivating.

Cursed Carousel Ride

A twisted carousel that features ghostly steeds and chariots. As it spins, the horses appear to morph into skeletal forms, and haunting music plays in the background.

The Hall of Shadows

A labyrinthine maze of dark corridors, where eerie sounds, ghostly apparitions, and hidden frights lurk around every corner. This interactive attraction tests visitors' bravery as they navigate the unknown.



It's Just A Game... Right? Carnival Games

A series of macabre games for PCs to play to occupy their time. Each game costs 2SP to play. Games of skill require various rolls listed under each game.

Games of Skill

Archery Tournament

Participants use a longbow to test their marksmanship by shooting arrows at a row of gruesome targets. Bloodied heads line a makeshift fence for contestants to aim at. Accuracy is key, and the closer an archer gets to the eyes of the target, the better their prize. Use normal ranged combat rules, but include a -8 penalty to hit an eye.

Jousting Ring Toss

In this game, players attempt to toss a ring onto the tip of a broken, bloodied jousting lance stuck into the ground. The lance is fixed in place, and achieving a successful ring toss requires precision and control. A difficult test against Dexterity for success (DC 20 or Roll under half your DEX).

Knife Throwing Contest

Brave souls can try their hand at knife throwing. Participants aim to hit a target on a spinning wheel without hitting the "volunteer" tied to it. This game requires a steady hand and nerves of steel. *Use normal ranged combat rules, but include a -4 penalty not to hit the volunteer.*

Games of Chance

Wheel of Fortune

A large wheel with various sections is spun by players. Each section has a different prize or outcome, such as winning some macabre prizes. Roll a D12 and consult the **Macabre Prizes** table.



Dicey Dice Roll

Players roll a set of mediaeval-style dice onto a marked board (a D20). Depending on where the dice land, players win or lose. If they roll a Nat 1, the die itself comes to life and attacks the roller. Use the **Macabre Prizes** table for any prizes won.

Bagatelle Ball Toss

This game is similar to modern-day Plinko. Players drop a ball onto a pegboard, and it bounces off pegs, eventually landing in a slot at the bottom. Prizes correspond to the slot where the ball ends up. Use the **Macabre Prizes** table for prizes, using a D10, with 7-10 indicating no prize.

Table:	Macal	bre	Prizes
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Die	Prize			will give readers the chills
1	Haunted Dolls: Possessed or cursed dolls with eerie features that seem to move on their own		12	Coffin-Shaped Candles: Candl shaped like coffins to set the mood for a spooky night
2	Cryptkeeper's Coffin Coupons: Win a coupon for a free, personalised, mock burial		13	Protective Oils: See <i>Issue 0</i> of <i>d12 Monthly</i> for more information on these
	experience in a coffin	14	Ghoul-Infested Graveyard Maps: Maps leading to a	
3	Voodoo Charms: Small voodoo dolls or charms that come with a mysterious curse (just for fun,		14	mysterious, simulated graveya tour filled with lurking ghouls
	of course, or perhaps not)	15	Witch's Brew Ingredients: Bottles of coloured liquids with labels like "Eye of Newt" or "Bat Wing Extract"	
4	Black Widow Spider: A poisonous spider encased in a strange liquid. On full moons it			
	is able to leave its prison			Banshee's Lament Music Box music box that plays haunting
5	Zombie Brain Desert: A grotesque gelatin-like dessert	16	melodies reminiscent of a banshee's wail	
	shaped like a zombie brain for the brave at heart			Old Elixirs: Bottles containing enchanted liquid that has aged
6	Eyeball Collection: An assortment of realistic-looking eyeballs	17	(see <i>Issue 4</i> for more information on ageing potions	
	Ghostly Tarot Readings: Win a			Ghostly Lanterns: Lanterns the emit a ghostly glow when lit
7	tarot card reading from a spooky fortune teller with an eerie prediction	18	(this has a 50% chance of attracting a ghost each time it lit). Will light the Ethereal Plan	
	Freaky Taxidermy: Small, odd taxidermy creatures like			as well Demon Horns: Horned
8	two-headed rabbits or other mutant animals.		19	headbands or masks to give the wearer a demonic appearance
9	Cursed Artefacts: Mysterious items with a backstory of curses		If placed on the head, paladin will see the illusion of a demo	
	and hauntings	20	Medieval Torture Device Models: Miniature replicas of	
10	Possessed Jewellery: Creepy, possessed-looking jewellery like necklaces with eyeball pendants		medieval bloodied torture devices for those with a strong stomach	
11	Story Book: A book with			

haunted or cursed stories that

A Fractious Night Six Frightening Factions



Factions are a great source of roleplaying opportunity in your campaign, and here are six factions that have a macabre or evil bent.

The Coven of the Shrouded Moon

A secretive society of witches and warlocks who gather on Halloween night (or your campaign world's equivalent) to perform dark rituals.

They are rumoured to have the power to summon spectral creatures and manipulate the moon's phases to their advantage.

The Order of the Blood Moon

A vampiric cult that gains strength and revels in their dark powers during the nights leading up to Halloween.

They seek to spread their curse and dominate the living through blood rituals and shadowy alliances with other undead.

The Legion of the Restless Dead

An army of undead creatures led by a powerful necromancer.

During the Halloween season, they rise from their graves and launch attacks on the living, with the ultimate goal of expanding their ranks.

The Phantom Masquerade Society

A group of spectral nobles and ghoulish aristocrats who host a grand masquerade ball every Halloween.

They invite both the living and the undead to their eerie festivities, where secrets and treachery abound.

The Cult of the Pumpkin King

Devotees of a malevolent entity known as the Pumpkin King, this cult seeks to bring about a realm of eternal darkness and chaos.

They carve cursed pumpkins that come to life as malevolent minions on Halloween night.

The Shadow Thieves Guild

A criminal organisation that specialises in theft and assassination.

During the Halloween season, they become even more ruthless and brazen, using the cover of darkness and costumes to carry out their nefarious deeds.



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Next Month

For November, we take a trip off-world, to visit the various planes and demi-planes. So make sure you have your wits about you as the planes are not to be traversed lightly.



There will be articles on a new planar geography, a bunch of new demi-planes and how they can be created, how to travel between the planes, and much more!

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