

Fantasy Seeds

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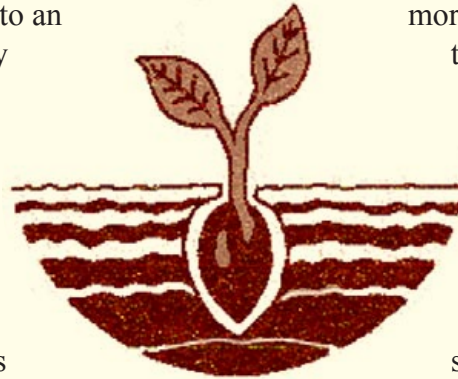
Introduction

Welcome to Seeds and to this first product in the new line by Expeditious Retreat Press. Seeds are story ideas, plot ideas, creature ideas, adventure hooks, anything that can grow into an enjoyable gaming experience. Each seed is small (only a paragraph or two at most) and each Seed product will be small as well (only four to five pages), but just like their namesakes, they have great potential when provided with the right environment.

Fantasy Seeds is roughly four pages packed with adventure ideas suitable for fantasy gaming. We're also collecting seeds for three other genres (horror, supers, modern) and there will be future Seeds in these categories. We've gathered this first bunch of seeds through a paid open submissions call at Enworld and RPGnet, but we hope that you'll be inclined to send us your seed ideas for perusal and possible inclusion in future Seeds products. We'd love a continual series of Seeds created by the very people who enjoy reading them the most.

So drop by the Expeditious Retreat website, checkout our submission guidelines to find out more about the process, and then send us your seeds. Hopefully you'll soon be reading the latest Seed containing your successful seeds. Whew! Enough with the alliteration already, on to the fun! And like always, the first one's for free...

Joseph Browning & Suzi Yee



During a nautical adventure, the PCs catch sight of a clutch of small, but very dangerous creatures sunning themselves on a coral reef. The PCs are in no immediate danger, as the creatures are more concerned with catching enough sea gulls to feed their brood than with them. However, the creatures make valuable familiars or are worth something as spell components. Does greed win out over common sense, as the treacherous currents make the reef more dangerous than the creatures that call it home?

Despite mounting evidence that he's growing senile in his old age, a once great paladin is gathering troops for a crusade to a distant, savage land to fight a rising threat that no one is sure actually exists.

The successful conquest of a neighboring kingdom pushes all the monsters and bandits from that land directly into the PCs path as they struggle to complete their mission.

A kingdom's laws change overnight, allowing duels to the death to settle matters of honor. Long simmering rivalries burst to the surface, and duel and counter duel lead to bloody feuds, and eventually to civil war, unless the PCs can calm the situation.

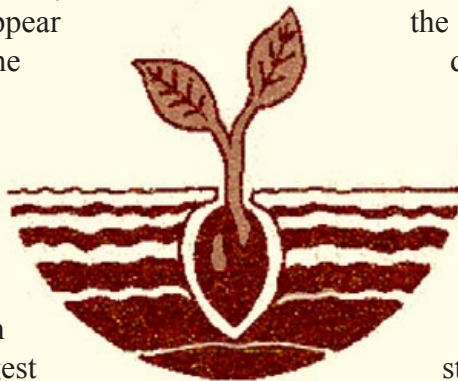
The party finds itself in the middle of a generations-old war between two pixie clans.

Philosopher's Flies begin plaguing local temples and universities. These tiny fairies feed on ambient wisdom and their swarms multiply in the presence of great thinkers. They're harmless, but annoying, constantly chattering to each other, misquoting great truths, and making any secretive movements impossible. Also, they're very hard to get rid of, as your most intellectual PCs are just about to discover.

Random, but necessary pieces of the PCs' mundane gear (minor spell components, sharpening stones, quill pens, etc) disappear while they camp. Investigating, the PCs discover that the thieves are "adventuring heroes" from a microscopic demiplane, and their quest for trinkets is as important to their world as the PCs own quests in their world.

It's revealed that the dominant, good-aligned church in the PCs' region has a vault filled with many evil and dangerous artifacts under the largest cathedral in the area. Whenever possible, these evil artifacts are destroyed, but those too dangerous or durable are stored here for safekeeping. In the name of security, the church is willing to kill even members of the faithful who discover the existence of the vault.

During their manhood ceremonies, the boys of a certain tribe prove their toughness with a series of brutal stick fights. Fights are to unconsciousness, and the scars gained are considered badges of honor. While passing through, the PCs are invited to watch (or if they really impress the tribe) to participate.



The players come to a small village only to find everyone in a panic. The townsfolk are in an uproar because their prized possession, the Gem of Azaria has been broken. The gem gave the town access to mysterious and wondrous powers, thereby providing the town with protection from general evils.

A seemingly worthless trinket that the PCs find is actually the key to a massive gate to an infernal plane. Agents of both good and evil forces hunt the party for the key but determining who is what is not a simple affair.

During a common underground dungeon crawl, an earthquake rattles the surrounding region. The party is not seriously injured, but the way back is hopelessly caved in, making any mapping done to this point utterly useless. The characters must now travel deeper into the caverns, hoping to find another passage leading to the outside world. Due to the earthquake, creature activity has increased in the cavern system, increasing the chance for wandering encounters. Pit traps and other pressure-sensitive traps may be set off or exposed, leading characters to believe formerly dangerous areas are now safe. However, structural damage may cause collapsing floors, walls, and/or ceilings at any point along the way, if the characters do not progress carefully. And there is always the chance of aftershocks...

A minor artifact has been removed from its hiding place, where it has remained for many years. One of the player characters is instantly aware of this fact, as the item was once in the possession of an ancestor of his (a fact not immediately known to the character) who hid it to keep it from falling into the wrong hands. The character feels compelled to find the item and hide it again. During the journey to locate the item, the character encounters other distant relatives, some he may know, some he may not, who are also under the same compulsion. No one knows exactly what the item is, but they will know in what direction it lies and when they are getting close to it

and will be able to identify it instantly on sight. If the item is now in the hands of someone who will use it for just reasons, the characters may have to find an alternative solution if they wish to take away the item and hide it again. The item has a powerful curse on it that affects those who keep it in their possession or use it for an extended period.

While traveling through a seldom-traveled part of the country, the PC's come across the remains of a caravan. The caravan appears to have come under siege by some unknown force and succumbed to their attackers. The caravan bears the markings of a rather well known band of explorers. The attack has recently happened and there is evidence that the attackers took prisoners. There are tracks leading away from the attack in the direction of nearby hills.

As the PC's approach a small village along the way to their next stop, they notice that there are not the normal sounds that should be coming from the village. No dogs barking, no children playing loudly, no sounds of machinery not even insects in the background. Once inside the village, the PC's find the townsfolk dead from an illness. Every one shows varying signs of sickness, and makeshift labs have been assembled with local fauna and other chemicals. Whatever has caused the town's sickness has not dissipated and is still highly contagious. Each hour the party stays in the village, a Fortitude Save is required. Failure of the Fortitude Save means that the party member has caught the illness as well.

The party awakens (this includes the whole party, even if there was a nightly watch as they mysteriously fell asleep) to find the campfire going and an old man sitting next to it. The old man is a powerful arch mage sent to warn the party about a growing evil in the mountains. An evil so old, nothing remains from the time of its creation. However, there is an artifact that might be able to force the evil back into slumber. The old man is familiar to one of the party members. However, they are

supposed to be the same age. After proving to the party who he really is, the old man tells them of a cave not far from here where he went into the cave a man, but emerged a frail, shadow of his former self.

The Blood Fountain

Deep in the heart of the Blisterwood Forest lies the Blood Fountain. Drinking of the fount's enchanted blood confers great strength and fortitude, but abuse of the fountain leads to a corrupting disease that inexorably turns one to evil. Many years ago, the Uisel, an order of elf paladins, destroyed the evil cult that protected the Blood Fountain, but were unable to destroy the artifact itself. Instead, they placed a permanent garrison there and destroyed all record of the fount, or so they hoped.

The party discovers the sole remaining reference to the Blood Fountain, a map, a message or simply a reference in a large codex of arcane knowledge. Further investigation reveals a suspicious lack of any other information about the Blood Fountain and raises the ire of the Uisel. Confronting the order is only the first hurdle: over the years, the garrison posted at the Blood Fountain has fallen under its evil sway and have come under the control of Pavest, a lich and former member of the evil cult that protected the fount. Pavest has great plans, the first stage of which involves creating an evil army fueled by the Blood Fountain. He is cunning, powerful, and not about to let the PCs get in the way of his vengeance against the Uisel or his domination of the kingdom.

The Dead Lover

Dower is a simple priest of a good-aligned god. He is the spiritual leader of a small community in the highlands, an area ruled by the towering Castle Calier and the debauched Lady Luxana Porine. Recently, trouble has come to Dower and his people. Strange beasts roam the roads at night: pitch black horses that race like the wind, huge swarms of bats and packs of sleek, white wolves. Dower himself has fallen ill. His nights are restless and he can be heard crying out in



his sleep, but no one can wake him until dawn. His waking hours are spent in a haggard state and he often lapses into incoherent mumbling. Meanwhile, raucous debaucheries in Castle Calier continue unabated.

Lady Porine is a powerful vampire who delights in corrupting moral men like Dower. She has dominated him for some weeks now and at night uses an enhanced nightmare spell to trouble his soul further. In his nightmares, Dower is a powerful noble in a distant land where he lives a decadent life of evil with his lover, a disguised Luxana.

The Beast of Erinton

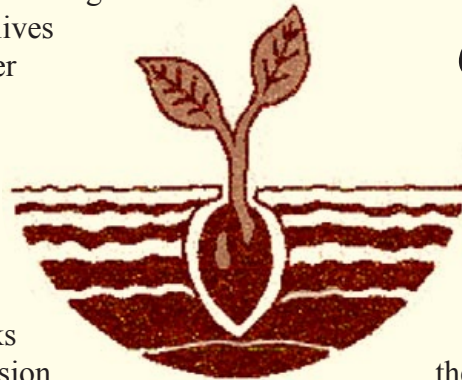
A terrible beast is killing commoners and peasants in the city of Erinton. For some time the attacks went unnoticed, but one month ago the mayor's daughter, Isa Horun, was slain while visiting the ill in the Low Quarters. Now, the entire city lives in fear, and the beast continues to elude the Silver Palm, the city's guards. There are only a handful of survivors, and their reports are vague or conflicting, but it is apparent that the beast is some kind of wolf.

The beast is actually a fiendish dire wolf, but it is only a tool. A powerful summoner, Yarl Colum, controls the dire wolf. Yarl leads a cult opposed to the mayor's rule of Erinton. The Bloody Maw seeks to use the wolf in order to spread fear and dissension amongst the people of Erinton and eventually to overthrow Mayor Horun and the Silver Palm. Their ranks include a number of evil clerics and rogues along with several nobles, the Mayor's sister Kalyne and Gerar Fost, the Silver Palm's second-in-command.

Traitorous Designs

King Alcair is dying. The disease appears to be magical, but not even the most powerful casters in the realm can cure him. The King's steward, the cleric Kyle Waln, has received an oracular vision from his deity that the King can only be cured by the Tears of Twilight. The message is vague, but Waln has not hesitated to send out scores of the King's best men to search for these Tears, whatever they may be.

In the meantime, the kingdom's defenses are greatly weakened, and the neighboring nation of Palurn quietly prepares for war. They expect a swift victory, for Kyle Waln is their own agent. Long years of careful planning, espionage and magical research have placed the Waln family in good standing with the Alcair dynasty, unquestioningly under the evil sway of Palurn, and in possession of an artifact which is slowly killing King Alcair. This is the seed for a series of adventures. The party is one of those sent out by Kyle Waln. Their quest is harrowing but fruitless. Along the kingdom's border, they witness the forming Palurian army, and must escape with this intelligence. The news is reported to Kyle Waln, of course, and he attempts to have the PCs assassinated. The PCs must expose the traitor and avert the coming war.



Corruption

A ravaging dire bear, usually a creature of the deep forest, attacks the hamlet of Japic. A corrupted wound found on its corpse explains the bear's unusual behavior. Only the dwarves that live in the mountains beyond the forest have such weapons as to cause the wound. The PCs traverse the forest to find the dwarves expanding their territory at a furious pace, clear-cutting the forest below their mountain in order to fuel their expansion. The dwarves have found a particularly rich vein of mithral and are excited about the discovery. But precious ore is not the only thing they have found. Their furious mining has awoken dire creatures in the depths of the mountain; murderous beasts that begin to attack the dwarves. Worse, the stubborn dwarves are unwilling to admit their troubles and under the sway of a vengeful aranea sorcerer, the dwarf council rebuffs the party.

However, there is a small resistance, which entreats the PCs to help them. These insurgents are willing to bargain: they will slow their destruction of the forest if the party will rid their hearth of its corruption.

Liberators

Dissidents in the Gagash, a goblin tribe, want to leave and start their own clan, following a charismatic and non-violent seer. Their tyrannical chieftain, Wapak Spiderskewer, refuses their entreaties and punishes the dissidents incessantly. One cult member, Suza, manages to escape and entreats the party to liberate her fellows. Faced with the party's prowess and internal dissention, Wapak allows the dissidents to leave.

However, months ago, he planted a spy amongst the cultists. While the PCs escort the cultists to a new home, the spy helps scouts from the Gagash track the party's movements. Wapak leads a war party to the cults new home and attacks when he's certain the party has left. Again, Suza manages to escape the carnage and finds the PCs once more. Wapak, not content merely with punishing the dissidents, is now bent on vengeance and is creating alliances with several goblin tribes to hunt down the party.

Flight of the Gorgons

In the mountain valley of Harcor, a flight of harpies are corralling entire herds of gorgons. The flight is led by the harpy Ranger known simply as Piercing. Piercing has been a threat to the area for years, but has recently subjugated a flight of her own and now begins to further her ambitions to control the entire mountain range. There are few civilized settlements anywhere near Harcor, but a small tribe of unusually intelligent hill giants calls the mountain valley home.

The hill giants, once their trust is earned by the PCs, are powerful allies. However, Piercing's flight is becoming a true menace, especially now that she has found an ally in Turnoi, a juvenile red dragon. Together, Piercing and Turnoi have managed to create a few half-dragon gorgons and have mated themselves to produce a clutch of half-dragon harpies.

The Root of Evil

An evil druid is corrupting the treants of the forest. Olar is a disgruntled half-elf, denigrated by both of his parents' communities and finally cast out of his village for killing his brother. He spent long years in the depths of the forest, barely surviving.

When a kindly druid took Olar under his care, things seemed to turn around for the half-elf. However, evil had planted an undeniable seed in him, making Olar a difficult student. His druid patron finally sent Olar away.

Now, alone again and burning with anger, Olar uses his druidic abilities to wreak havoc on those who have wronged him. He has created a special salve that twists treants into wrathful machines of evil and has already directed his minions to destroy the grove of his former master. Now, Olar marches which his treants to the village that had exiled him. There will be no ransom or mercy.

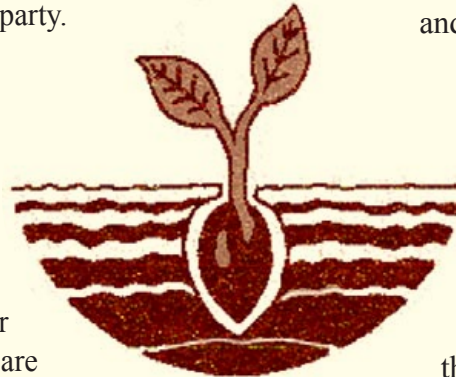
Cold Flame

A single centaur, wounded and confused, stumbles from the forest, mumbling only something about the living shadows and the cold flame. Even when his wounds are healed, he remains incoherent until his wisdom is restored.

Gerick's tribe lived peacefully alongside a tribe of wild elves for centuries. A month ago, the elf tribe suddenly disappeared with hardly a trace. Gerick led a small band of warriors to search for their long-time allies, and managed to track them to a ruined village at the forest's edge. But the elves were different: twisted by a foul enchantress, they captured and tortured Gerick and his companions.

The torture consisted of throwing the centaurs deep into the catacombs beneath the ruined village temple, where dwelt numerous undead horrors. Gerick's ravings allude to the shadows and allips that he encountered there, and their strength draining attacks.

Now, the enchantress and her subjugated minions hunt the rest of Gerick's tribe, hurling their captives into the catacombs and cruelly betting on how long they will survive. With the new influx of victims, the number of undead in the catacombs grows, and they have begun to wander outside, menacing the forest at large.



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