Inside this issue...

- FEATURED REVIEW: CENTURION
- SKULLDRAKES: A RACE FOR GURPS FANTASY
- THE ARROGANT GUIDE TO REVIEWING
- MEDICINAL RULES FOR GURPS
- 3 PAGES OF CAPSULES AND 14 PAGES OF NEWS
This will make the players stop and think, "Who's Lord Gorne? And why is he here? Did he slay the goblin to help us, or to beat us to the treasure?" You do not even need to have them necessarily meet Lord Gorne in this Quest, just set the stage for a later encounter.

What if the heroes come across a dwarf digging for gold in another remote passage? Could he somehow befriend the heroes? Perhaps he knows a secret that he will only reveal if they spend a few turns helping him dig, or transporting the gold back to the surface. Of course, you just know that there will be a band of ogres who cannot bear to see that happen... maybe that dwarf will share some special knowledge afterwards with his counterpart in the heroes' party about the location of the legendary Dwarven Battle Axe, lost for many centuries in the Lair of Fimirs.

You could also turn the first few "rooms" of a Quest into a small town on the border of Chaos. That way you could have perhaps the local merchant, who sells most but not all items from the armory, a doctor (I always use the zombie figure for this one -- hand me that scalpel, nurse!) who is willing to heal body points for a price, and maybe even a resident or two, who are none too happy about the heroes barging in on their supper after a hard day of work. Not every encounter needs to have life or death implications, after all. Adding a bit of comic relief can be a welcome change to any game, and HeroQuest is no exception.

Likewise, not every encounter is required to have significance relative to the goal of the Quest. If every single encounter is either combat or some vital message, players will start expecting you to just lead them by the nose through every Quest. Throw in a red herring or two. Maybe that warning on the wall about "beware of dragons" is a phony, intended to scare off dimwitted creatures. Perhaps the dwarf digging for gold does not want any help, and prefers his solitude, thank you kindly.

Add some non-combat encounters

Why does every new room or hallway need to contain a fight? Be creative when developing your Quests, and throw the players a curve ball every now and then. Perhaps the goblin they see in that corner hallway is dying or already dead, and carries a scroll with an important message for the heroes, like:

"I'm always one step ahead of you."
- Lord Gorne

Add plots or themes to your Quests

What if there is a feud going on between an orc clan and a Chaos Warrior outpost? Will the first orcs in a Quest attack the heroes, or try to enlist their help? This sort of change can definitely keep those sword-swinging barbarians on their toes! Naturally, you must be
ready to improvise a few quick conversations, and determine if the orcs are truly in need, or just setting up the heroes for a later trap.

Consider the advantage of adding a long-running plot to a few Quests. This is similar to the Witch Lord antagonist introduced in the core HeroQuest game. In the first adventure where he is encountered, he is invincible but sluggish; the heroes have no choice but to retreat! The next Quest is then centered around retrieving the Spirit Sword, which allows the heroes in a third Quest to return to the lair of the Witch Lord and defeat him in combat. Then Milton Bradley turns around and creates a supplement for the game called Return of the Witch Lord! What if you added a mystic portal that must be closed to stop the outpouring of Undead? In the first Quest, the heroes might need to fight off the horde of undead attacking a coastal village, and learn that there is a mountain pass where the undead seem to be coming from. In the second Quest, the heroes enter the mountain pass (which is really a Chaos outpost) and discover that a Chaos Warlock and a garoyo have joined forces to open the mystic portal. The warlock and garoyo might be in this second Quest, or the heroes might need to delve yet deeper into the dungeon to fight them and destroy the portal - a potential third Quest!

These longer-running plots can create ongoing goals for the heroes to pursue, and add a consistent atmosphere to your adventures. You might even find players suggesting their own desired actions after a Quest ("Now that we’ve defeated Gortagal, I think we should find that Fimir raiding party that’s headed for Wellspring."). which will help you as Zargon develop the next set of Quests for the heroes.

Who can resist the Recurring Villain?

Create a villainous Wizard, Chaos Warrior, and so on, complete with some special items or abilities, and have him do his best to foil the heroes’ Quests. You don’t have to use him in every adventure, and in most cases he should not even be the primary antagonist. Zargon is the epitome of the Recurring Villain. He is the mastermind behind every Quest, yet the heroes should never encounter him in an adventure. The goal here is to create a more tangible adversary that is occasionally behind a given Quest, often a nuisance, and always a challenge. Perhaps the four ogres in the Catacombs of Doom that the heroes just stumbled upon say, "Haman sends his greetings," with a wicked, half-toothed smile before they beat the stuffing out of the heroes. Maybe that Scroll of Summoning they just recovered from the treasure chest has Haman’s signature at the bottom. And, once in a while, Haman himself will appear as either a primary or secondary foe during the adventure.

When designing a recurring villain, allow him a surefire method of retreating, such as the Escape spell. It would be terrible if you spent an hour or more wracking your brain for the perfect adversary to spoil your heroes’ day, only to have him slain on their first encounter! There should be secret passages, cave-ins, summoned monsters, and anything else you can devise to ensure a grand escape from the jaws of defeat. A properly played recurring villain could even add a dash of humor to your Quests every now and then, as discussed in the first section of this article. Think of Saturday morning cartoon villains for examples of foes that return week after week to disrupt the heroes’ lives. It’s then up to you to determine just how many dashing escapes the recurring villain may make before he finally is defeated at the hands of the heroes.

I have provided here some creative suggestions for spicing up your HeroQuest adventures. The goal, once again, is not to merely increase the complexity of the HeroQuest mechanics or simply throw ever-tougher monsters against the heroes, but rather to open up some new avenues of adventure with non-combat encounters, long-running plots, and the fiendish recurring villains. Your HeroQuest adventures will never be the same, and your fellow players will thank you for it.

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