

The Scarsinvale Saga

Conemur iterum

October, 2023 A.T.

Undead General of the 'Empress' Restored to Hideous Half-Life

An effort undertaken to by the Jarr'loc knights, an order formed to oppose the machinations of the undead 'Empress' proved a disastrous failure last month. Instead of destroying a bodily component that serves the Empress as a spirit hold, the ritual instead freed one of her Generals.

Although the exact powers of this general are unknown, he appears to be a powerful undead capable of creating other undead. Immune to most forms of

damage excepting blessed weapons, the General has successfully overtaken a nearby town of Riverwood, and seems determined to convert much of its living population into undead creatures.

So far these undead creatures have taken the form of immensely strong and durable zombies, with an added feature; until their heart is extracted and crushed by someone who has personal strength equivalent to that granted by the Giant

Strength spell, they will continue to rise, even if cut to pieces.

It seems likely that this so-named General will remain a threat until forcibly destroyed, no small task even with the powerful forces arrayed against him.

The *Saga* would herein editorialize that it may be worth investigating for further weaknesses, but that there may not be any others; best of luck to our heroic adventurers!

Guild Arcane Guildmaster Restored to Full Life

A separate attempt to destroy one of the 'boxes' holding the Empress to this life nearly ended in disaster.

Guildmaster Mae was successful in undoing the magic that held the box together using a powerful arcane toolset. However, the spirit within proved too powerful, and nearly overcame Mae's own personality entirely. With quick thinking, the Guildmaster was able to balance this out with a reagent that she had at hand.

Left half-undead by the

unique combination of magical effects, a combination of efforts between the Guild Arcane in Scarsinvale and Yorik, as well as the dedicated efforts of Wren the Lifebringer, these effects were reversed. Although troubled by the experience, it appears that the Guildmaster has made a full recovery.

The *Saga* commends the Guild Arcane for their continued efforts to experiment and find new ways to resolve the unique mystical challenges that seem to be arising more and more often lately.

Scarsinvale Approached For Alliance

Other nearby towns have begun to look to Scarsinvale for a future ally and trading partner.

Pushing forward the town's effort to establish itself as a legitimate city state, the appearance of envoys from nearby communities is a very positive sign that these efforts are being taken seriously. In order to be truly independent, mutual defence and trade will have to be established, for those products and services that Scarsinvale cannot provide for itself.

Unfortunately, these

positive signs have been marred by the murder of the mayor of Riverwood.

One of the more zealous advocates for alliances with Scarsinvale, the mayor of Riverwood was cut down by bandits, likely in an effort to prevent such mutual aid from becoming a reality.

The *Saga* suggests that bringing these murderers to justice may be another strong step on the way to showing that the free towns of the Broken Reach will not be intimidated by thugs and bullies.

Better Know a Neighbour: Kellskagg

Knowing the people who make up your neighbours and allies can make all the difference. In the interests of furthering this, the Saga sat down with Kellskagg of Scarsinvale.

Saga: Just for our readers, could I ask for your name and a little about yourself?

Kellskagg: Course. The names Kellskagg. I'm a dwarf living in the Broken Reach. My brother's and I settled in Scarsinvale after leaving Hammerfrost close to three years ago now in an expedition to establish a new mountain home. We travelled for close to a year before dropping our arses down here and calling it done.

I'm an armoursmith by trade, but I've taken up maces often enough to defend the town from what wants us harm, may as well call myself something of a warrior to boot.

Mostly I work in town at the forge or support the local Hammerfrost refugees.

I try to support my fellow townsfolk though, much as I can.

Saga: Great! So what brought you to Scarsinvale specifically?

Kellskagg: At first, mostly exhaustion and the palisade. Feels like we were chased over half of Atha's face by whatever critter wanted a piece of us. Ghouls, wolves, bandits, and necromancers to name a few. It might not be charitable but I don't think we were prepared for what the reach had become after the war.

We found a walled settlement called Scarsinvale and decided this was a good place to live and die as any. Course then we got to talking to the locals. They were willing to fight to defend their piece of land and I figure that spoke to us. It was just the kinda piss and vinegar we needed to reignite the fire in our bellies!"

Saga: Do you have any advice for anyone coming to Scarsinvale?

Horoscopes

should go astray. You will have to take violent action this month – there is no escaping it. But violence may take many forms, and not all of them are found in the fury of the melee. Your lucky number is four.

The Arrow (Apr 29th – May 27th)

The truth that you seek is best found by speaking truth yourself; like calls to like. When you open yourself to hear it from others, the truth will reveal itself. Do not be deceived by those who would endanger you for their own petty profits; stand firm to your principles.

The Stone (May 28th – Jun 25th)

A promise made is a debt unpaid! Seek to clear your ledger before taking on new commitments. The touch of wild magic will alter your life in ways that you cannot predictably imagine at this point; be careful around the mystical and the strange, or heed the consequences.

The Coin (June 26th – July 28th)

Plant more than you harvest; some for the land, and some as seed for the next season. Without something set aside, the coming planting season will be brief and both figuratively and literally fruitless. You will be asked a riddle this month, though you may not recognize it as a puzzle when first you hear it.

The Spade (July 29th – Aug 30th)

Consider that there are forms of strength beyond force of arms this month. You will encounter those who will benefit by limiting your scope of imagination; do not let the whims of those who would undo you limit your potential. You are more powerful than they.

Kellskagg: Watch your back, come in numbers, make sure you have healing be it a physician or a few healing tinctures. The roads are better than they were but it's still dangerous out here.

Having dealt with the old Lycan Clan, Zorii, our vampire problem, a slate of bandits and illegal bounty hunters I can say it's safer, but I wouldn't call it safe if you catch my drift.

If you wanna make fast friends then train a craft before you arrive, we're trying to make Scarsinvale a centre of industry and being able to support yourself outta the gate is important.

Oh, and keep an open mind. Scarsinvale is the new frontier, we're all a little weird out here but we all want the best for each other. Together we'll make Scarsinvale great!

Saga: Thanks for your time!

Kellskagg: You're welcome!

The Blade (Aug 31st – Sept 27th)

The scythe too, has a blade; so too the Spade. The tools that plant and harvest are as much weapons as the sword and spear; do not miss them simply because their stature is more humble. An opportunity will knock: choose if you shall answer, but choose wisely and with care.

The Mask (Sept 28th – October 31st)

There is a looming precipice: an opportunity to change not merely your own fate, but those of all those around you. The stakes may be higher than you even realize at this moment, but giving them voice gives them power. When the right moment comes, do what you need to. There will not be another.

The Shield (Nov 1st – Nov 29th)

Do not give up anything that you cannot live without. You cannot guarantee that it will return to you, even if the need is dire. Everything else, consider to be fungible; not necessarily something that you must sell, but the trading of which may benefit you in ways that keeping does not.

The Hearth (Nov 30th – Dec 30th)

Darkness gathers. From the safe places, the storm's rage seems impressive but unthreatening; from within, it offers neither recourse nor respite. If you are within, give shelter to those that you can; if you are without, take shelter where it is offered. Some storms can be fought, and others merely endured; know which one surrounds you.

The future is an unknown country. However, ideas and visions of the future may stem from information of the present; your decisions help to make the world you live in tomorrow. To that end, we have published a generalized horoscope for each of the Calendar Birth Signs, and hope that it will serve to amuse and enlighten. Horoscopes provided by Seer Oren Freedman.

The Shroud (Dec 31st – Jan 28th)

Our dreams can teach us lessons we are ill-prepared to hear when fully waking. Listen to the world that might be, and you will find your map to get there, if that is what you wish. A stranger bearing a sword will make you an offer – be wary.

The Harp (Jan 29th – Feb 27th)

The same hands that mend wounds can make wounds. Listen to the wisdom of **The Shield**, but remember that this is only their perspective; what you learn from them will naturally be applied differently in your own life, if you choose to heed their warning.

The Fount (Feb 28th – Mar 30th)

Do not let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Sometimes, the best thing that you can do is to find a plan that works for now, and solve the new problems it causes as they arise. Remember that though there is no wisdom at the bottom of a bottle, those who seek it there often think themselves wise.

The Dice (Mar 31st – Apr 28th)

Consider the direction you face before you loose an arrow – who else might end up in the path of that wayward bolt, if it

Editorial: Terror's Breach

They named it Terror's Breach as if terror was a thing that was sealed away.

The gods are not, in the aspects of reality that they represent, good nor evil. Certainly, mortals perceive them to be so; there are some faiths that a society cannot let grow unchecked and still survive as a society. And there are certain unsavoury sorts that are drawn to the specific sorts of power that specific gods offer to them.

Fear – the power and inclination to wield fear as a weapon – is one such. The tyrant holds it forth, to quell uprising in its nascency. The bully rules by fear. These we oppose, because to succumb is to succumb to the bad intention behind it.

But fear is with us. It gives us the sense to flee when overcome, and the sense to fight when fleeing would be worse. Courage is fear that is fortified with the steel of the

Necessary; not ignored, but not allowed to bar needful action.

Terror's Breach is – by the god whose holiday it is – to be the day that our fears overcome us.

But let us not give it that strength.

Do not ignore your fear; that gives it power should it become impossible to ignore. Rather, discover what it is that you desire most, and do not let your fear stand in your way. This is how you survive it.

- Oren D'vann, Editor.

Matters of Faith

Holy Days Just Past

October 6th: Dreamer's Wake (Bard)

The servants of Bard commemorate this day as the day that Bard returned to the world. The goddess of stories and dreams, Bard's servants often mark this as a day of rest, or a day to tell tales, both tall and true. Most importantly, it is observed as a day when anything, even outlandish things usually only found in fairy stories, can happen. Join friends in telling stories of times past or dreams yet to be realized.

October 15th: Harvest Song (Arkady)

The celebration of Harvest song is a celebration of the beauty of autumn, and the joys shared at the harvest. Harvest song traditionally notes the changing of the colours of the leaves, and is celebrated with a large feast. Primping and preening before the feast, and donations to Arkady are traditional.

\Forthcoming Holy Days

October 31st: Terror's Breach (Kazzok)

Often considered to be one of the most dangerous times of year, Breach is a celebration among the followers of Kazzok of the horrors that can be found within the world. Frequently, priests of Kazzok meaning to spread mayhem and discord in their communities, will summon forth infernal monsters to besiege communities. Everyone else; be wary, and be careful! Be mindful of what tales of despair you choose to believe.

November 5th: Curtain's Watch (Clovis)

The holy day of Clovis is often marked in the lakes region with an all-night bonfire, feasting, and a vigil around locations touched with dark magic. These vigils are in place to help stave off any lingering horrors from Breach – and to ensure that the Clovite new year begins on a more positive note.

A Message of Faith

It can be frustrating at times to discover that what you have been doing is, if not based on a lie, then based on incomplete information. Sometimes it feels as if you're spinning your wheels, or worse, that you would be better off having done nothing at all.

The truth is, if we could begin all enterprises with the clarity born of hindsight that time and experience ultimately provides, we might have made different choices. But we have to hope that our actions, done in good faith and with the best of intentions, will reflect that good intention.

In essence, we have to make the best of the knowledge we have.

Once we have learned if our efforts were successful or even helpful, we can then move to amend any harms that ill-conceived ideas began. We do not benefit from self-recrimination.

Thinking Above Your Weight Class

While Scarsinvale and its denizens have never shied away from a fight, there are times when the world throws at the townsfolk more than they can ably manage.

With this in mind, it behooves us to plan, to think, and to act in conjunction with preparation. When facing off against the mindless undead, remember that unless controlled by a greater undead being or spellcaster, they do not think or plan, making them susceptible to simple traps – even a trip wire or barrier pit can make

a difference for someone fleeing for their lives!

Running into a fight can be laudable when the costs are well weighted, but Yorik's greatest victories have come when we have used sense and reason in conjunction with our martial might. If, for instance, we sought to inconvenience a bonelord that we did not have the capacity to banish, severing its limbs will not allow it to generate a new body, but will severely hamper such a beast.

Adventurers, explorers, and heroes are at our strongest when we best leverage our advantages. Take what you know, and use it to keep the enemy wrong-footed. For intelligent foes, hurl insults, jokes, anything that they might not expect; a demon that has fallen to its knees laughing is likely to lose a fight as surely as one that has been mortally wounded.

Remember that you have friends and allies, and work together.

*Bozo the Jester's
"Scent of the Circus" Perfume
"When something smells funny, let it be you."*

Community Board

This section is reserved for information about the community, and may include unverified information as well as community events.

*

The *Saga* is calling for donations to be raised in support of the Hammerfrost refugees. Offering up aid and succor to these refugees will help to show Scarsinvale's

character on the international stage, and also prove a chance to do real good.

*

Small porcelain frogs are being left in prominent places around the region. With no real information to go on, theories include that they are good luck, bad luck, an omen of death, cursed, a sign of the will of the gods, and that someone bought too many porcelain frogs.

With the advent of Breach, townsfolk are reminded to keep a weather eye out for anyone spreading alarm or despondency. This may be the work of a follower of Kazzok, looking to spread fear.

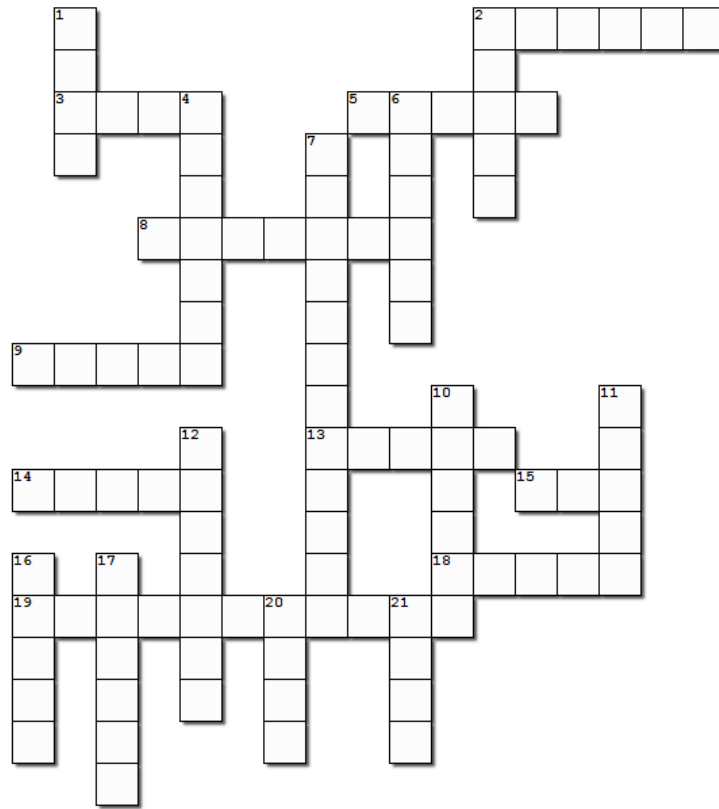
*

Portents: A two-headed lamb born in the Reach. A man whose beard was stark white, now growing bloody red.

The Saga is brought to you by our Generous Advertisers.
For the duration of the Hammerfrost Refugee Crisis, all proceeds from advertisements will go to the relief fund.
You know advertising works – because you saw it here!

If you have **news**, an **announcement**, a clever **contribution** or a piece of **art** you would like displayed, don't keep it to yourself! The *Saga* is happy to help you reach a broader audience!

Crossword



Across

2. An ale-house or bar.
 3. Fortune, good or bad.
 5. A long-bladed weapon.
 8. A mirror on a wall can _____ on things.
 9. To craft with steel or other metals.
 13. To investigate or ask nosy questions.
 14. A hyena-like humanoid.
 15. A bitter beer with high alcohol content.

18. A pole with a point.
 19. A spell for making a magical meal.

Down

1. As nights grow longer, the temp.
 2. Fire on the end of a stick.
 4. A wood that has the strength of steel.
 6. A time of ice and snow.
 7. The holiday, October 6th.
 10. An asshole assassin, locally, recently.

11. Transparent or translucent.
 12. Makes oils, compounds, some liquids.
 16. A spirit cursed to consume.
 17. Goddess of beauty.
 20. The weave of destiny.
 21. A tale of heroes and villains, north-word.

Riddles

Riddle 1:

I am the road leading to no return;
 Secret of life nobody wants to learn.
 What am I?

Answer 1: *htaeD*

Riddle 2:

I have four nearby brothers,
 And five nearby cousins too,
 But you will not see my distant kin
 While wearing still a shoe.

Answer 2: *regniF*

Riddle 3:

I turn as I am driven,
 And I stand on muddy banks,
 I grind your meal and make your steel,
 But never receive thanks.

Answer 3: *lehwretaw A*

Riddle 4:

It's only in Fiona's gaze,
 That you can see us right;
 We dot the skies with demon eyes,
 Illuminate the night.

Answer 4: *sratS*

Riddle 5:

Fill me full of Beldon's blessing,
 Then put me in Callis' care;
 I'll scream when I am ready,
 And your tea I will prepare.

Answer 5: *eltteK*

Riddle 6:

I may fell the strongest sword-arm,
 With a tremor of the heart,
 I give pause to righteous action,
 And your plan will shake apart.

Answer 6: *raeF*

Recipe of the Month: Eggs On Breach

A quick egg recipe that cooks quickly and has enough spice to keep out October's chill.

- O Freedman

Ingredients:

2 tbsp olive oil

2 large cloves of garlic, sliced

3 anchovy fillets, minced

Red-pepper flakes to taste.

2 14-ounce cans, diced tomatoes.

A generous amount roughly chopped Italian parsley and basil.

Grated Parmesan, measured by your heart.

6 eggs

Crusty bread for serving.

Add olive oil to a pan that can be covered, and heat to medium; when shimmering, add garlic, anchovy, and pepper flakes. Turn to medium-low, and simmer for about one minute.

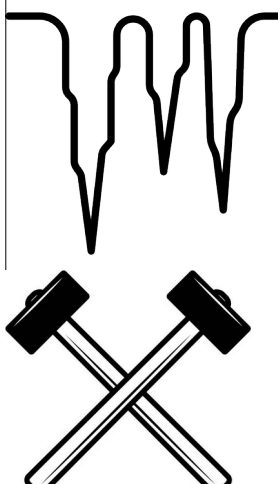
After the garlic turns golden brown at the edges, add in tomatoes, herbs, and additional pepper flakes or salt to taste. Simmer, squashing the tomato chunks with a spoon or masher until the tomatoes break down and thicken into a sauce, 20 to 25 minutes.

Using the back of a spoon,

make six divots in the sauce in the pan, and crack an egg into each divot. Cover the pan, and let cook until the eggs are set to taste, about two to three minutes for runny yolks.

(Be sure to cover the pan, or the eggs won't set correctly.)

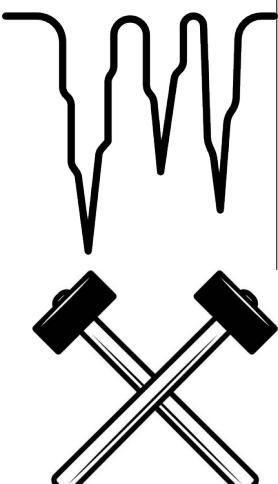
When the eggs are done, serve with crusty bread (toasted to preference), and you'll have a meal fit for a demonslayer!



Hammerfrost Needs You!

Food, equipment and your **good will** are required to take the fight to the undead body snatchers!

Contact Kellskagg of the Scarsinvale Dwarven Enclave for more details!



A Verse By Oren D'vann

The seasons swing, as wont to do,
The summer into autumn turn,
The coming of the Breach anew,
The stars in silent vigil burn.

How shall we stand against the night?
How will be countenance this Breach?
How will we win the coming fight,
And so protect the Broken Reach?

The truth is that we fight not for
The scanty glory found in war;
Or facing fears that rock to core,
The things that we in souls held store.

We fight to see the coming sun,
We fight to stand against the foe;
We fight so if our neighbours run,
They won't be routed by the foe.

There is no secret to this strife;
Or if there is, it's only this -
That you should keep your treasured life,
And bask in next-day's sunlit bliss.

We fight not for the story told;
But only this – yet to survive.
There is no treasure, silver, gold,
That matches this; but stay alive.

A Rogue's Monster Compendium

Yuurri, the Grinning Fox has obligingly agreed to share some of his experience in monster-fighting with the rest of us. A reprint from the Yorik Adventurer, March 2020

"If it exists: I've probably fought it before, and had my ass kicked by it too." -The Grinning Fox, Yuurri

Part 1 - Common Infernals: the unnecessary spice of Ariel's wildlife

Seeing as we've been inundated with infernals again, I figured I should put to ink some of the different, more typical breeds, of infernal and otherworldly boogie-things I've crossed swords with. An informed fighter is more likely to not die too quickly.

Hell-Spawned

Horribly twisted, maddened and despotic infernals, these little buggers tend to be summoned across the veil in packs. Due to the uncontrolled magickal energies that, literally, rip them from their own plane, their bodies and minds are terribly damaged in the process and fill them with an uncontrollable urge to inflict

pain upon everything around them.

All known weapon types affect them equally, and their claws, though occasionally infused with dark energies, are usually about as lethal as someone with a club. Swarming can make them more dangerous, but alone: fairly easily managed.

Imps

Another common infernal entity, these infernals have more resilient mentalities and are able to retain their personalities and wits when they come over. They also retain a great deal of their control over magickal forces, meaning that the common swordsperson will have a more difficult time dealing with them. They can slip between the veil to move themselves from where they stand to other nearby locations with ease, and can play upon a mortal's senses with considerable ease.

Be careful when it comes to over-sharing with imps, even when it comes to fighting styles: I've had the misfortune of making myself well known to at least 3 different imps now

who have a proclivity for showing up. While weapons blessed with unholy energies are less effective against imps, they are generally not very lethal with their claws. They are fast, however, and are especially good at worming their way into your minds with false promises or evoking deepest terrors, causing those without fortified mentalities to run in dread. Furthermore: their tails are barbed and drip with venom: any common antidote can cure the affliction, though I have seen one or two occasions where fecal-covered tails inflict far worse ails. Become fast friends with your local herbalist or a magical healer and you should emerge relatively unscathed.

Next Issue

Look forward to the follow-up report on the Lesser Infernals, which include such spookies as Night Hawks or the most dreaded of the Lesser Infernals: the Maines.

Stay advised, stay wary, and stay alive. Or, at the very least: make killing you more effort than it's worth. I speak from experience on this one.

Antagonists and Enemies: Dealing With a New Foe

There may come times when you have encountered a person or persons with obviously hostile intent. Although the usual rules of fighting and fleeing may come into effect, if you feel you are safe doing so, it can also be useful to learn more about your new prospective foe.

After all, only by knowing what an enemy wants can you thwart those ambitions, or predict their movements. Knowledge is power, it's true – but more importantly, it is a distinct utility that allows you to quickly square up an obvious foe.

Check for these signs when bracing a new organized group of enemies:

1. Check for any iconography or symbols in their garb or armour. These signs can often point to whether a new group of foes is religious, or if they align themselves with the colours of an extant nation or band. More obscure symbols may be more difficult to identify, but heraldry is often chosen with meaning.
2. Observe equipment for telltale signs of use and manufacture. Obviously the gold prize

for this is a maker's stamp or mark – large settlements will often have books recording these. However there are more subtle ways to discern facts about your opponent – if a technique for metal blacking isn't used locally, a smith may be able to tell you the nearest place that it's commonly practiced.

3. Listen to what they have to say! While foes will often be deceptive (having no strong reason not to be, admittedly), they will sometimes tell you what they want in the interests of getting it. It can even be useful to hear what you know will

be a lie; the kind of lies someone tells will often hint at the kind of truth that they're concealing.

4. Appraise gear, skill, and numbers. A well-organized and trained group with high-end gear has entirely different implications from ruffians who are using the best gear that can be scrounged.

5. Don't be afraid to retreat. Multiple encounters will often reveal more – but you need to survive to bring back this vital intelligence so that you can compare notes with your comrades.

Comic Strips



Learning Through Play: Games to Hone Adventuring Skills

It can be hard to save the region, fight evil fae, and still remember to take care of yourself. However, many of the skills needed by the adventuring community are mirrored in recreational leisure activities as well!

In this article, we will explore just a few.

Riddles: Understanding of riddles or 'kennings' (lit: an additional way of understanding something) can be useful to any adventurer.

First and foremost of course, there is the immediate utility of being able to solve riddles, often used as a way of leaving clues or as passwords for areas.

However, riddles are also useful for learning *lateral thinking*, a skill that encourages

you to view the same situation from multiple angles.

Having the ability to come up with more than one way to address an individual problem, is an invaluable skill for an adventurer.

Games of Bluffing:

Frequently involving cards, but sometimes involving other games of chance or skill, bluff-games teach the art of thinking without making it obvious that you are thinking.

Bluffing can be a very useful skill especially if you are in over your head in an encounter.

The best line in the world is useless however if the truth is spelled out all across your face; while lying is not generally a polite thing to do, these games

are a safe and fun way to practice a useful skill set without anyone getting upset. If it's a natural part of the game, then everyone knew what they were sitting down to do – and you can practice a fib that will someday save your life.

Knitting: Not a game per se, but definitely of use to an adventurer: in addition to being a good 'pick up and put down' pass-time that allows you to make something while you wait for the next rush of monster attacks, knitting helps with fine manipulation.

Surgeons and lockpickers alike take notice; someone with hand-made knitted socks may have a steady hand and good detail in their stitches!