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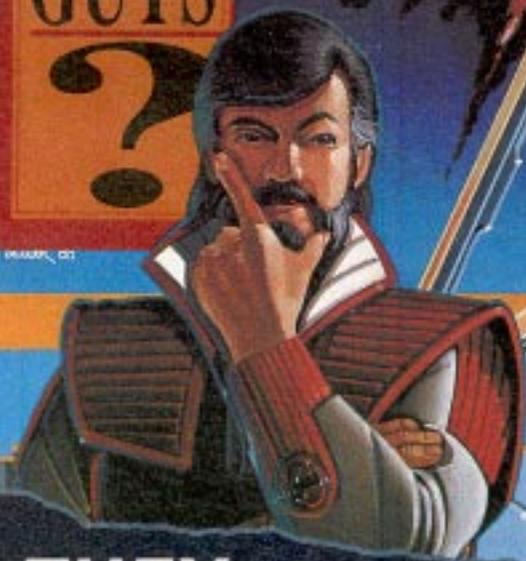


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COVER

With the right DM in the cockpit, your fantasy campaign can go anywhere — as Denis Beauvais shows us in his cover painting for this issue: "Firepower." The cockpit, by the way, is that of an F-18, as accurate as we're allowed to show.

LETTERS

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LD, United Kingdom.

Fixing the errors

Dear Dragon:

I was reading Dougal Demokopoliss's article on spectators [issue #139] when I discovered an error. If a spectator was summoned and was, say, 950 years old, and agreed to guard a treasure, it would die before the end of its servitude. Wouldn't a spectator between 900 and 999 years old be immune to the *monster summoning V spell*?

Rob West
Lexington OH

Given the intent of the article, it appears that spectators that are about to die (and thereby reproduce) are immune to the effects of the summoning spell. Thus, spectators that are 1-898 years old are the only ones that can be summoned, since they can serve for 101 years and still have a year left to rest before "the change" comes at 1,000 years.

Dear Dragon:

I found what I think are two errors in issue #139. The first is in the article "Lords and Legends," page 17. At the beginning of the description of Eelix, it says that "Eelix the Wizard was born Felix Furley." Did he change his name? The second mistake is on page 33. It says [regarding the spell *change form*], "The acid will cause no damage to the recipient of the spell, unless he successfully makes his saving throw." Why make the recipient of the spell have a punishment for *making* his save?

Darin Woolpert
Walnut Creek CA

Eelix did indeed change his name, according to the author's original manuscript. The second problem you referenced is on page 34, and yes, the recipient does take damage only if he makes his saving throw. In order for the spell to function and change the recipient into another creature, a vial of acid with powdered gemstones is broken upon the recipient. If the spell functions normally (i.e., if the recipient fails his saving throw against it), the acid does no damage to him. Considering that this spell could be a very effective (if slow-acting) attack spell — for example, permanently turning a 9th-level paladin into a 1/2-HD kobold — then the damage suffered by making the saving throw and suffering the effects of the acid (which cannot now be used in the spell) are minor, indeed.

Dear Dragon:

I have two questions regarding the metalmaster monster in "The Dragon's Bestiary" (issue #139). First, when the creature is attracting metal, what is the chance of an armored character being pulled into its "blade barrier" of orbiting metal? Second, if the barrier only orbits around the metalmaster, can overhead attacks be made without penalty?

Paul West
Woodstock VT

Judging from the text, the metalmaster will avoid drawing metal-armored opponents toward it, to keep it safe from attacks. Instead, it repels such characters as described on page 72. If the metalmaster wanted to pull a character closer, the DM should use the rules for repulsion and simply reverse the effects. In other words, an attracted character could not resist the magnetic effects of the metalmaster unless the character made a strength check each round on 1d20; failure means the character is pulled 5-10' closer to the monster, depending on how much metal the character has on his person.

If a character attacked the metalmaster from above, reduce the damage suffered from flying metallic debris by half (i.e., 2d6 hp damage, or 1d6 hp damage if a dexterity check is made on 1d20 at +4 on the die roll). Some debris will still pass above the creature on wild orbits.

Dear Dragon:

In issue #141, on pages 16-17 [in "The Dragon's Bestiary"], you mismatched the monster names with the pictures. As far as I can make out, the "caiveh" is really a jor, the "jor" is a diurge, and the "diurge" is a caiveh.

Conrad Schnakenberg
East Moriches NY

Many readers pointed out this error, but you were the first.

Dear Dragon:

In issue #141, on page 39, in Table 3, you have the maximum strength [of kobold and xvart characters] as 15. How can this be the maximum when you roll 3d6 and subtract 1? Shouldn't this figure be 17?

Brian Early
Oak Ridge TN

If the strength score for such a character is greater than 15 after subtracting 1 from the 3d6 roll, the score should be reduced to 15. The subtraction of 1 from the die roll simply lowers the average strength of the characters created by this system. If a 3d6 roll of 3 is made, the score remains 3.

Scum

(but good scum)

We've received a number of letters for "Forum" lately on the topic of evil player characters. You either like them or hate them, and there isn't a lot of middle ground on this topic. Some gamers who like to play evil PCs mention me by name, pointing out that I wrote an article on how to run an evil-PC campaign some years ago (DRAGON® issue #45, pages 60-61: "How to have a good time being evil").

So, am I in favor of evil PCs?

Well, yes and no. I am in favor of playing evil PCs if the gamers involved like to do it and they enjoy themselves without hurting anything. I am not in favor of it if the gamers use their characters' alignments to justify disrupting the game and destroying the pleasure that others take in playing it.

The usual way in which evil PCs (and many neutral and good PCs) are used to ruin a game is by killing off other people's player characters. This tactic makes people drop out of the game at blinding speed. What fun is it to drive over to a friend's house just to be frustrated for an evening? It was for this reason that assassin characters were cut out of the AD&D® 2nd Edition rules to begin with (issue #121, page 13). People who like bumping off other people's characters have a maturity problem. (I've done it myself, once, and I should know.)

As "How to have a good time being evil" pointed out: "Everyone needs to be aware that unless some kind of trust can be formed among the players in AD&D or any other role-playing game, the game quickly falls apart. Who wants to get involved if you keep getting stabbed in the back all the time? . . . If you plan on counting on your fellow adventurers in a crunch, regardless of your alignment, you'll have to treat them with respect."

In short, even evil characters have to stick together. Such characters can have their own plots and counterplots, but these are best kept to a nonlethal level that does not disrupt the game. I recall some entertaining adventures in which PC halfling thieves happily stole the rest of the group (and each other) blind. Evil PCs should find similar ways to channel their rivalries into activities

Continued on page 98

FORUM

"Forum" welcomes your comments and opinions on role-playing games. In the United States and Canada, write to: Forum, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Forum, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We ask that material submitted to "Forum" be either neatly written by hand or typed with a fresh ribbon and clean keys so we can read and understand your comments.

Adventurers can be attacked by groups of identical archers, with each arrow hit doing 1d6 damage. Often the groups are large, and rolling dice for each arrow gets boring. Here is a way to quickly approximate the damage from volleys of arrows. Figure the number of arrows directed toward a character and calculate the 1d20 roll needed to hit that character. Then roll once to hit, modifying "to hit" and damage rolls on this table.

Minimum required to hit	"To hit" and damage roll adjustments
20	+ 1 per 6 arrows
19	+ 1 per 3 arrows
18	+ 1 per 2 arrows
17	+2 per 3 arrows
16-12	+ 1 per arrow
13-11	+3 per 2 arrows
10-8	+2 per arrow
7-6	+5 per 2 arrows
5-3	+3 per arrow
2-1	+ 7 per 2 arrows

Obviously, a separate calculation will be required before rolling for each individual character. At the referee's discretion, rolling a natural 1 for the archers means that no arrow hit. The approximations in the table are derived using grammar-school arithmetic. This kind of table is also applicable to a variety of other gaming situations.

Ed Friedlander
Kansas City KS

I have been an avid D&D® game player for a little over five years now, and I am concerned about the future of the D&D game. No, not the AD&D game, the original game. Even though players of the AD&D game number more than the players of the D&D game, there is still a wide audience. I have heard remarks like "D&D is for babies." Unfortunately, most players are not willing to give the D&D game a chance. Granted, it is *much* simpler than the AD&D game, but it is still an excellent system. Many DMs play a mixture of the two; this is fine (I do this myself), but they don't recognize the D&D game as a separate system. Right now, I'd like to add some points which I think make the D&D game better.

First, the combat system is a heck of a lot easier. It doesn't have weapon speed factors, weights which affect the swing, and so on. You just use the normal combat system without all

the added extras. Next are the characters. [The D&D game has] all the basic classes, but there is no dual-class rule; you are one class and one class only. Fantasy heroes didn't train half their lives as fighters and then become magic-users; it was just impossible. The spell system is exactly the same, except that there aren't as many spells to choose from. Finally, there is the role-playing aspect of the game; there is a whole set of rules on running a large-scale campaign in the Companion Set. The mechanics of the game are simple, so the emphasis is on role-playing.

I hope that I have made it clear that the D&D game is worth your while to play. It is a startling difference for both DMs and players alike. I hope that, you give the D&D game a try

Bob Tarantino
Etobicoke, Ontario

I very much enjoyed "The Long Arm of the Law" by Dan Howard (issue #136). This article excels in showing how law enforcement can be readily handled in a role-playing situation. However, the author did not include the effects that magic can have on such situations, particularly *ESP* and *detect lie* spells (or their equivalent magical devices: *crystal ball of ESP* or *telepathy*, *helm of telepathy*, *medallion of ESP*, *mirror of mental prowess*, *ring of truth*, etc.). This brief note examines the impact of magic on the four phases of a criminal justice system: detection, apprehension, trial, and punishment.

Generally, detection does not require the use of magic. Missing property, smashed taverns, and dead bodies all are indications of a crime. Yet certain crimes are not so easy to detect, like missing persons, embezzlement, and treason. In the case of missing persons, family, friends, and acquaintances are generally questioned. *ESP* and *detect lie* would determine the veracity of their statements. These two spells would also allow business and governments to periodically ensure the honesty and loyalty of all persons in positions of trust.

Apprehension of suspected criminals and reluctant witnesses may be aided by any type of *crystal ball*, if the viewer has some knowledge of the person sought. *ESP* and *detect lie* could be used on anyone who might have knowledge of the suspect's whereabouts. For major crimes, *commune* and *contact other planes* might be employed.

The trial phase is where magic makes the greatest change in the criminal justice system. Without magic, a judge or justice must weigh the evidence of the various witnesses to determine guilt or innocence. With *ESP* and *detect lie*, the veracity of all evidence is known. The purpose of the trial is to determine motivation and what, if any, punishment is appropriate.

From the information gained at the trial, the punishment can be made more appropriate to both the crime and the motivation. The use of the *gas* spell (and possibly the *quest* spell) can allow for very creative punishments. "The court finds that Robert the Bold accidentally killed John the Smith. Robert the Bold is *gased* to

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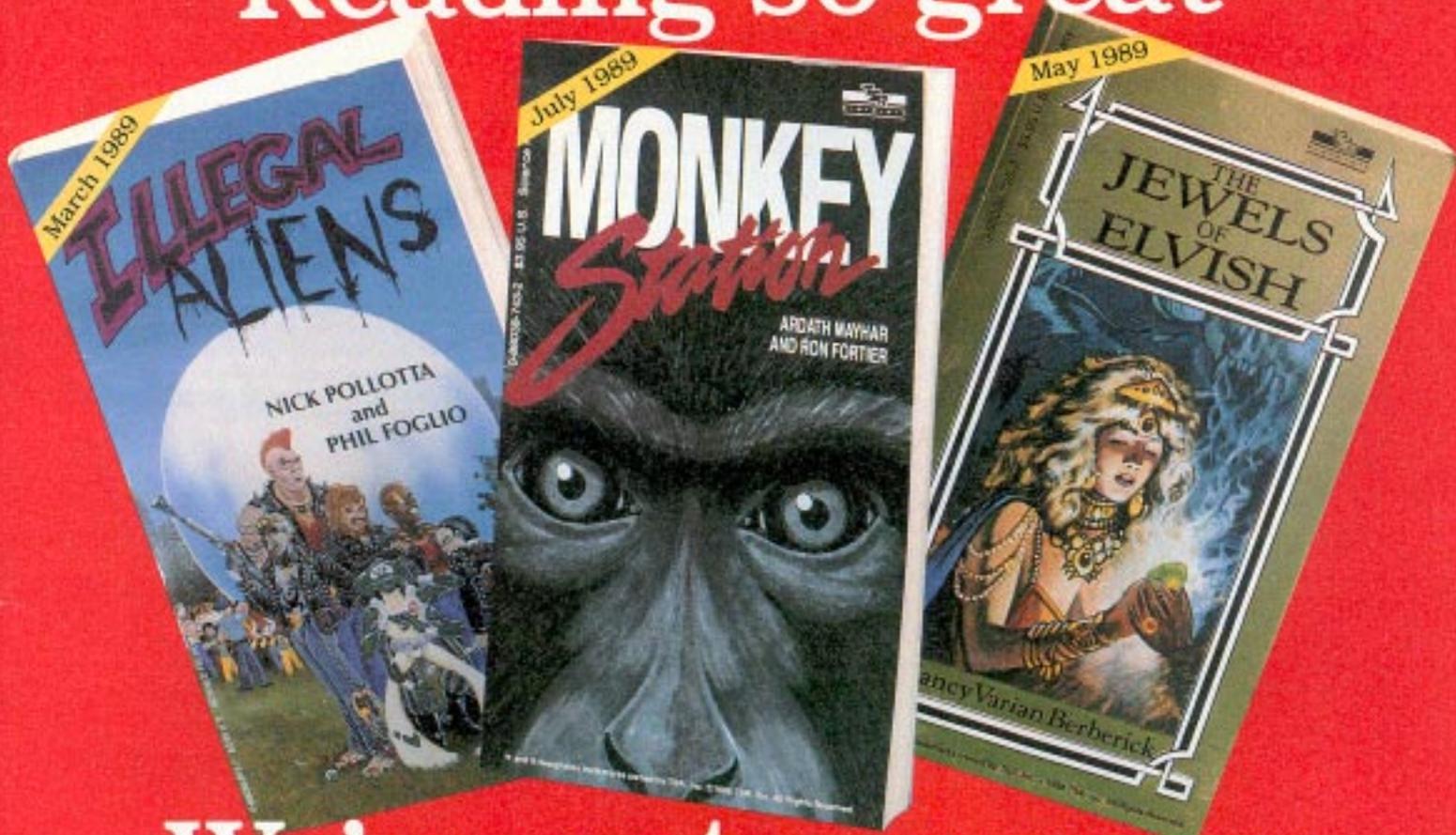
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support the family of John the Smith for five years or die." Let the punishment fit the crime.

Once before in "Forum" (issue #98), I wrote a similar note on the importance of including the reality of magic in the discussion of any AD&D game society. My final words then apply equally well now: "Magic makes things different."

Thomas W. Gossard
Davis CA

[Mr. Howard replies:]

Upon looking back, I could almost kick myself. [Mr. Gossard is] quite right about the influence of magic on law enforcement. However, magic-use in law enforcement has limited application due to certain legal complications, [the main one being that] the unlawful use of magic is a crime in itself. Without the consent of the recipient or the proper legal authorization, a magic-user can be arrested and charged with assault. Magical assault is on a par with physical assault; magic-users cannot be allowed to enspell people on a whim. Hence, the authorities in a society must be prudent in their use of magic to avoid charges of unusual force or violation of rights.

The second complication is rights. In every good-aligned society, a citizen has a right to be free from magical influence. Law enforcement offices cannot sprinkle healthy doses of *detect lie* spells on all their witnesses without someone getting angry. In addition, people do not enjoy being the recipients of spells, especially if they are witnesses trying to help, and as a result, they may decide not to cooperate with local authorities for personal reasons. In this way, the use of magic may hinder rather than help investigations.

These revelations inhibit the use of magic in the detection phase. To use an *ESP* or *detect lie* spell, the government must have some sort of "probable cause!" Basically, there must be a reason to suspect a person in order to warrant an *ESP* spell. Simply being in a position of trust is not enough justification for a government magic-user to enspell you.

In the apprehension phase, magic can assist the location of the criminal through the use of scrying devices. Of course, these devices are not infallible, and there is a chance of not locating the person (see the *Dungeon Masters Guide*, page 141, "Crystal Ball"). In addition, the location might not be identified by examining it through most devices; it is simply seen. Spells have similar chances for failure.

And who said magic-users were reliable anyway? Magic-users, as government employees, are still susceptible to political power plays and manipulations. The value of the evidence collected by a magic-user is only as trustworthy as the magic-user himself. An unscrupulous magic-user can cast spells that masquerade as other spells, creating false results. One good illusionist could break the scales of justice in a city for years to come.

In the trial phase, magical evidence (if legal) should be weighed by the court just as other evidence is. To send a person to jail merely on the results of a few magical tests would send every barrister in the city into a fury. A modern-day comparison: How would you like to be sent to jail for something you said under the influence of sodium pentathol?

As for sentencing, the punishment is ultimately up to the DM. Most crimes are considered to be crimes against the state anyway. The responsibility for enforcing the law ultimately falls on the society. Nothing is cut-and-dried.

Daniel W. Howard
Manhattan Beach CA

Although I agree with Mr. McNeill's comments (issue #134) that harpies could come from meteorites or trees, his argument fails in at least two points. The first is his linking the AD&D game world to primitive societies. The second is his assumption that an electron microscope is needed for a knowledge of genetics.

Certainly most societies in the AD&D game are less advanced technologically than the majority of societies in this world. This does not make them primitive. Most campaigns focus on societies comparable to those in medieval Europe, with some extending as far forward as renaissance Europe and others extending back to the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Few center around the hunter-gatherer cultures, which are referred to as primitive societies. Even these societies stick to this foraging pattern not because they are ignorant, but because there is no need to change; food is abundant and there is plenty of leisure time. The cultures of Egypt, Greece, and Rome were highly advanced, with impressive achievements in agriculture, architecture, mathematics, science, and philosophy.

The ancient Greeks' scientific achievements were hindered not so much by the lack of electron microscopes as by their penchant for theorizing without regard for testing their many hypotheses: This had more to do with their cultural background than their technological level. The medieval Europeans (who had a different cultural heritage) were able to make tremendous technological advances using the same basic ideas and concepts of the ancients. The difference was not in their intelligence but in their mindset. As for primitive societies not knowing "anything about reproduction," this is ridiculous. Hunter-gatherer societies have at least a basic understanding of both plant and animal reproduction. To suggest that the "more advanced" agricultural societies have no knowledge of reproduction is even more absurd. Further, an understanding of genetics does not require a microscope of any sort, much less an electron microscope. Mendelian genetics was developed simply by observing and conducting breeding experiments with garden peas, experiments that required no tool more advanced than a pair of scissors.

Even though microscopes were not needed, this does not mean that they were not available, nor that AD&D game sages must limit themselves to magnifying glasses. While the electron microscope was not invented until the 1930s, compound microscopes were in use by the late 16th century and lenses were developed by the 14th century. Moreover, fantasy sages have the advantage of magic. Any society that is capable of creating *eyes of minute seeing* or of developing myriad information-gathering and detection spells should surely be able to unravel the mysteries of where harpies come from. Even disregarding information-gathering spells, enough magical items and spells exist for plane-traveling that a sage could come to this world and gain "an awful lot of modern knowledge" even if an electron microscope would not function in the AD&D game universe.

Timothy Koneval
Normal IL

I am writing concerning the topic of alignments in the AD&D game. I feel that not only are evil characters going to lose status in the AD&D 2nd Edition game, but that they are already inferior. Sure, there are assassins, poisons, and reversed clerical spells, but there are paladins, healing, and magical items of holy power. How many +5 *un* holy avengers do you

know of? A party with any evil character is probably not going to be favored by any good or even neutral cleric, and a party cannot live on potions of *healing* alone. (This brings up the role of the cleric as a battle medic, but that is another matter altogether.) The character classes open to evil characters are also limited by the exclusion of rangers, druids, and paladins; level for level, they are as powerful (if not moreso) than any assassin I know of.

Next, the complaint that most of the monsters in the game are evil makes no sense whatsoever. This is so for a very simple reason, and that is that evil monsters are by far the most versatile. If you have a party of good or even neutral characters, it is going to fight evil by virtue of alignment. However, if you have an evil party, it will fight your monsters because of the nature of evil. If you were to have a majority of good monsters, good parties would be out of luck, and you might as well call it the "Friend Folio" instead of FIEND FOLIO® tome.

K. B. LaBaw
Ridgecrest CA

In issue #138, Sean Jump complains that the rules favor good-aligned PCs over those with an evil alignment. As the AD&D game and RPGs in general have grown from relative obscurity by serving the merest fringes of society, blossoming into the recreational giants they now are, they have drawn a lot of fire from many different groups. TSR, Inc., in an effort to stem some of the criticism aimed at it (as the producer of the most widely played RPG) has made certain changes in the wording and balancing of the AD&D game rules. One such change was the balancing of the scales against evil-aligned characters.

I have been a player for quite a few years now in a campaign that we simply refer to as "the evils," because all of the player characters are of one evil alignment or another. I play an evil paladin who suffers none of the penalties described in the AD&D game volumes, and let me assure you, he's no pansy! I created this character with the campaign's DM by changing the rules to allow greater excitement and a type of fun that this sort of game variant allows. It has certainly been no cakewalk for my antipaladin, but it sure has been a barrel of laughs! Granted, I would never dream of bringing this player into another DM's campaign or to a tournament, but then again, who cares? I can always start a new character! So Sean, if you really want to play an evil character, my advice is to go ahead, but some of the most powerful creatures in gaming will be out to turn you from your evil ways, one way or another.

John C. Tiedemann
Baldwin NY

I chose this time to write to "Forum" because of the letter by Sean Jump in issue #138. He made a few good points as to why players should be allowed to have evil characters. I would like to expand upon his work.

As a DM, my adventures are very demanding on the intellect of the player. I have long since discarded the hack-and-slash element of play to make room for more problem solving and refined killing. After seven or eight hours of play, half of my party has headaches and the other half have drawn their swords and are killing each other to reduce actual stress. Hence, I created the evil characters.

Every four or five games, I get out the notebook full of evil PCs, of all classes, and let thief players have a breather from having to be good. Soon enough, the band of deadly foes marches

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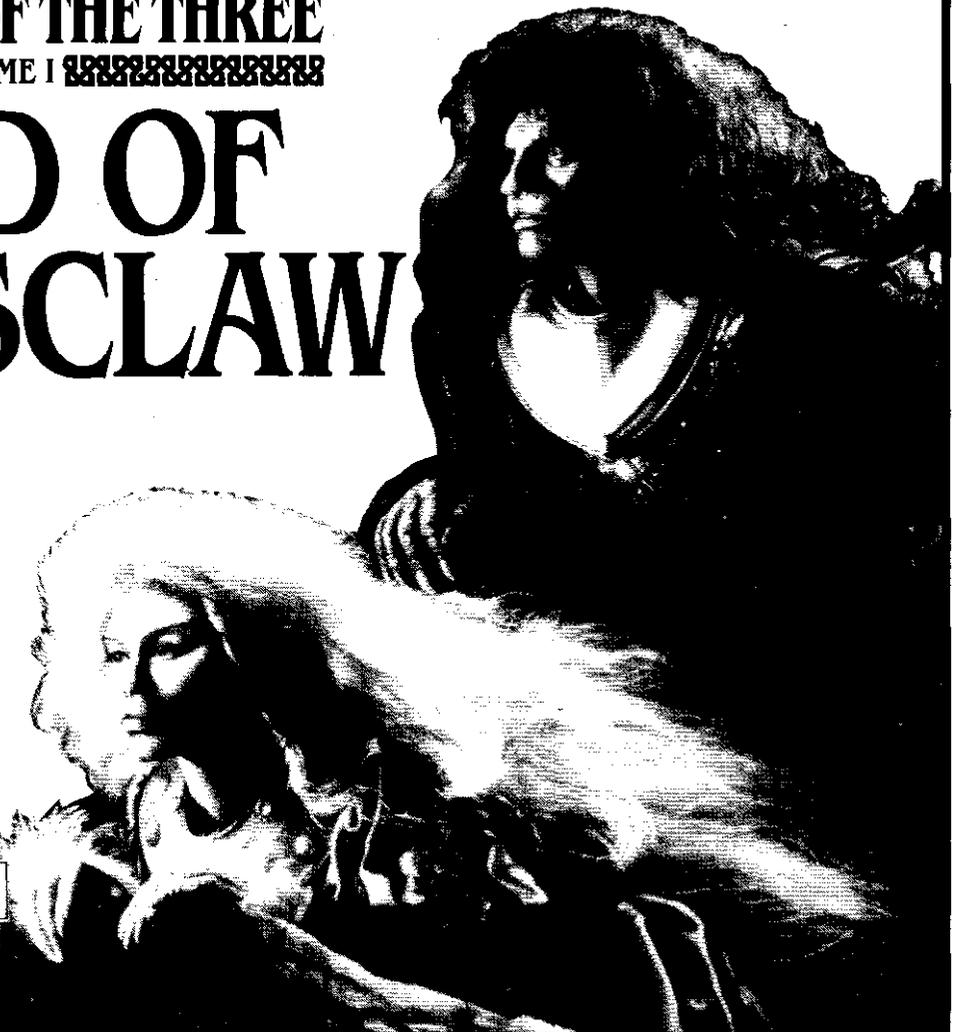
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upon some defenseless town to lay waste to another society. I am forever providing the foes with opportune times to destroy and do generally nasty things.

These evil adventures are a source of release from all the strain of being good. It allows the players to partake of the spoils that they usually see their archfoes lounging in. None of my friends are evil, but yet they find elation in not always having to be heroic and daring. The element of fantasy provides them with a place to channel real-world frustrations as well.

Christopher E. Brogan
North Andover MA

For those DMs looking for a new twist, a friend of mine once suggested what he called "Reversal AD&D." That is, the players hand their characters to the DM and each is allowed a choice of monster of appropriate level (with the DM's general discretion) to name, develop a background on, and present in a dungeon. Your experienced characters are somewhere in the dungeon, and your group of monsters will either have to work together or make alliances with other creatures to work against your characters. It's important that the DM doesn't harm the actual characters — just the copies of the PCs' statistics.

Darren Hennessey
Tampa FL

Concerning Sean Jump's letter in issue #138, I am also from Corbin, Kent., and it is true that many people down here seem to prefer evil characters.

Originally, there was one main role-playing group in Corbin, which in its prime had over 200 regularly playing members (quite large for a town of 8,000). There were at least a dozen GMs, myself included, and a plethora of games being played, ranging from the AD&D game to Hero Games' CHAMPIONS™ and FGU's SPACE OPERA™ games. Everything was going well; we had even developed a measure of acceptance in the community (which is very hard to do in a conservative, semirural setting). Things changed, however. It started with a few new members of the club who wished to play evil characters. It went all right for a while, the evil characters doing their best to conceal their alignments from their fellow party members. Such is part of the fun of role-playing.

Suddenly, though, their attitudes changed. The good and neutral-aligned characters began dropping like flies in a sealed jar. Almost all of the nonevil characters (and their players) disappeared from the campaigns, followed soon thereafter by the DMs. They tried to play other games, but the "evils" followed, due to a rule in the group's charter that a GM could not exclude a player due to the player's actions in a different campaign or under another GM. If these (literal) character assassinations had been a part of normal game play, maybe it wouldn't have been so bad; however, the majority of the killing was to "get even" for real or imagined (mostly imagined) slights by other players. Things got worse.

Soon the group dropped from 200 members into two groups of about 20 each. The first was primarily good-aligned but was mostly made up of GMs. The second was made up of the players who only played evil PCs. The first group collapsed as there were not enough players to go around between the GMs (there were two players per GM). The latter group fragmented further due to the backstabbing that went on in those campaigns. The Hobby Center, the only gaming store for 50 miles, went out of business from lack of support. This finally put the good-

aligned group down for the count because the store had been the sole provider of regular gaming space in town, as the GMs (who were mostly adults) lived too far apart to have the games at their residences. All that was left was the occasional surviving evil campaign (whose membership changed weekly) and my own group, three persons strong. Soon, my group too went by the wayside for a while, due to college.

The moral of my story is simple: All evil characters do for a campaign or group is lead to the game's destruction. Tracy Hickman and Margaret Weis weren't just whistling Dixie when they said in the DRAGONLANCE® books that "evil turns in upon itself." Read the "Sorcerer's Scroll" columns by Gary Gygax, reprinted in *The Best of DRAGON Magazine*, vol. II. The AD&D and D&D games were originally created as a battlefield of Good vs. Evil, with the opposition to the players being Evil!

The evil-character rules were at first mostly guidelines for creating evenly matched foes for good and neutral characters. The reason that creatures such as Orcus don't have champions is because the champion (by his alignment's nature) would eventually try to supplant his master. Evil clerics, by nature, are usually too selfish to use healing spells on others, anyway. Any person even slightly familiar with the AD&D game's alignment system should be aware of that!

Finally, it is the people who run and play in evil campaigns who have given role-playing games (especially AD&D games) their bad reputation. Five years ago, people thought that anyone who played D&D games was a devil worshiper. Three years ago, we had almost eliminated that myth. Now it is back to the way it was five years ago. In my experience as a 21-year-old with four years of college and DMing under my belt, the only thing evil PCs do is destroy what all players have strived for for years — public acceptance.

Stanley Bundy
Corbin KY

There has been much debate over a spell-bonus system for magic-users. Instead of extra spells for the magic-user, similar to the cleric's bonus for high wisdom, I suggest giving magic-users with high intelligence more memory. This allows the magic-user to memorize more spells than he can cast each day. For example, a 1st level magic-user can cast one spell, but if he has a high intelligence, he can memorize one or two extra spells. The magic-user may memorize *sleep*, *charm person*, and *magic missile*, but could only cast one of them [each day]. This makes the magic-user more useful, but will not unbalance the game like a spell-point system would.

I agree and disagree with Jason Greff (issue #133) on the issue of memorization. He is right that removing the memorization rules would be drastic, but Raistlin from the DRAGONLANCE saga is a poor example. Those books were based on the AD&D game rules. Raistlin forgot his spells because the rules say so. I do think the memorization rules are a little strict, so I suggest that a magic-user should only have to go over his spells each morning. Committing spells to memory every morning should not be required. Magic-users do, as Steve Shewchuk pointed out in issue #128, become too tired after their last spell to cast another.

I agree with Tim Lieberg's suggestion (issue #134) to start magic-users at 2nd level. After all, experience should not be given out for monster slaying and treasure finding only. For magic-

users, it also comes from researching and, as Ed Kruse pointed out in issue #134, casting spells usefully. To balance this, I suggest giving out only half experience to magic-users for killing monsters, unless they use spells to do so.

Lastly, I would like to share my opinion of multiclassing involving magic-users. I do not allow magic-user multiclassing above 4th level. My reasoning is that they must devote their time to studying the higher arts. The only possible exception would be the magic-user/thief class, and that mix would have to be limited in maximum level, thieving abilities, and spell-casting abilities.

Eric Sonnestuhl
Olympia WA

Recently, readers have been sending in letters trying to change the magic-user character. Some wish to make it better in combat situations by allowing the use of armor, more diverse weaponry, spell bonuses, etc. Each letter has its own merits, which I won't debate here.

The one thing few realize or suggest changing is the minimum/maximum number of spells known per spell level due to intelligence. Currently, there are 40 official spells of 1st level alone. Magic-users with maximum normal intelligence are restricted to a maximum of 18 of these spells. Meanwhile, clerics and druids of the lowest minimum wisdom are able to receive any of their spells with no restrictions whatsoever. I suggest dropping the minimum/maximum values altogether. Is game balance really upset if a magic-user can learn all spells of his class? He is still restricted to casting X number per day due to his level.

In my own campaign, following an example found in FR4 *The Magister*, I have divided all magic-user spells into three different categories: common-knowledge spells, rare spells, and unique spells.

Common-knowledge spells are ones that are either not overly powerful for their levels, or have been around so long that every mage knows of them. These are the easiest spells to find and learn, and consequently are cheaper economically.

Rare spells are the "named" spells (various Bigby's hand spells, etc.), which also include some common spells that have different casting results than normal due to some obscure wizard's research. Though many of these spells' effects are well known, few mages will give away the secrets of casting these spells unless offered a hefty price, usually involving the trading of magical items and more spells.

Unique spells are primarily those that I have personally decided should or would not be in the hands of ordinary mages. They can only be found in certain books, tomes, scrolls, etc., and are very hard to find (and thus are not well known).

Using a system like this, it sometimes costs the character more than it's worth to gain the use of rare or unique spells. The characters will generally find it less costly to invent their own spells. The character can then make himself rich by selling the knowledge to other mages, or defend himself from those who seek to steal the knowledge.

Incidentally, in my campaign, there are close to 900 magic-user spells, ranging from lowly cantrips to ninth-level spells. These spells come from the various hardcover books, as well as from magazine articles, descriptions of my own, and the inventions of others.

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by Skip Williams

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This month, "Sage Advice" visits Krynn, the world of the AD&D® game's DRAGONLANCE® saga. The abbreviation DLA stands for the AD&D® game's DRAGONLANCE Adventures tome.

Where can I get the addresses of Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman?

You can write to Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman c/o TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147. We will forward your letters to them.

When will DRAGONLANCE Tales II be coming out?

To my knowledge, there will be no book series called DRAGONLANCE Tales II. The second and third DRAGONLANCE Tales volumes (*Kender, Gully Dwarves*, and *Gnomes and Love and War*) are already out, as are three DRAGONLANCE Heroes novels (*The Legend of Huma, Stormblade, and Weasel's Luck*).

How do you pronounce Raistlin?

Raistlin is pronounced RAIST-lin. The first syllable rhymes with "waist" and the second with "bin."

How many DRAGONLANCE modules are there, and how many more are planned?

There are currently 16 DRAGONLANCE modules in the original series in print (DL1 through DL16). A new module series is scheduled for release in 1989 (DLE1 through DLE3), with a boxed set called *Time of the Dragon* (about the side of Krynn opposite Ansalon) planned as well.

How many provinces are there in Solamnia? Several maps published in the various DRAGONLANCE products differ on this point.

The Atlas of the DRAGONLANCE World by Karen Wynn Fonstad (TSR product #8448, \$15.95) shows six provinces on pages 94-95: Solamnia, the Plains of Solamnia, Southlund (which includes the city of Caergoth), Coastlund, Throt, and an unnamed province containing the city of Lemish and the Southern Darkwoods.

How could Tanis, a half-elven fighter, attain 12th level? The DLA says half-elven fighters can only reach 9th level.

Ninth level is normally the limit for half-elven fighters on Krynn. But, since Krynn is an AD&D game world, single-classed demi-humans can exceed their class level limit by two (*Unearthed Arcana*, page 8). Where Tanis got his extra level is anybody's guess, but the fact that he attained 12th level is not surprising considering his pivotal role in the War of the Lance and the time he spent in the presence of Paladine himself (in the guise of Fizban).

When will the DRAGONLANCE trilogies come out in hardback? How much will they cost?

Hardcover collector's editions of the DRAGONLANCE Chronicles are available now (TSR product #8320). This edition contains all three books in the trilogy and costs \$16.95 (£9.95 in the U.K.).

Can Dargonesti elves be PCs?

No. This race almost never ventures out of the ocean depths.

How can such races as Dimernesti elves, irda, and mountain dwarves become paladins when the *Players Handbook* clearly states that only humans may?

The *Players Handbook* does not consider what is possible on Krynn. Undoubtedly, if such characters were to leave Krynn, they would revert to being cavaliers or fighters, depending on their races.

Can a cleric from the Holy Orders of the Stars cast both clerical and druidical spells, or does each deity have both clerics and druids?

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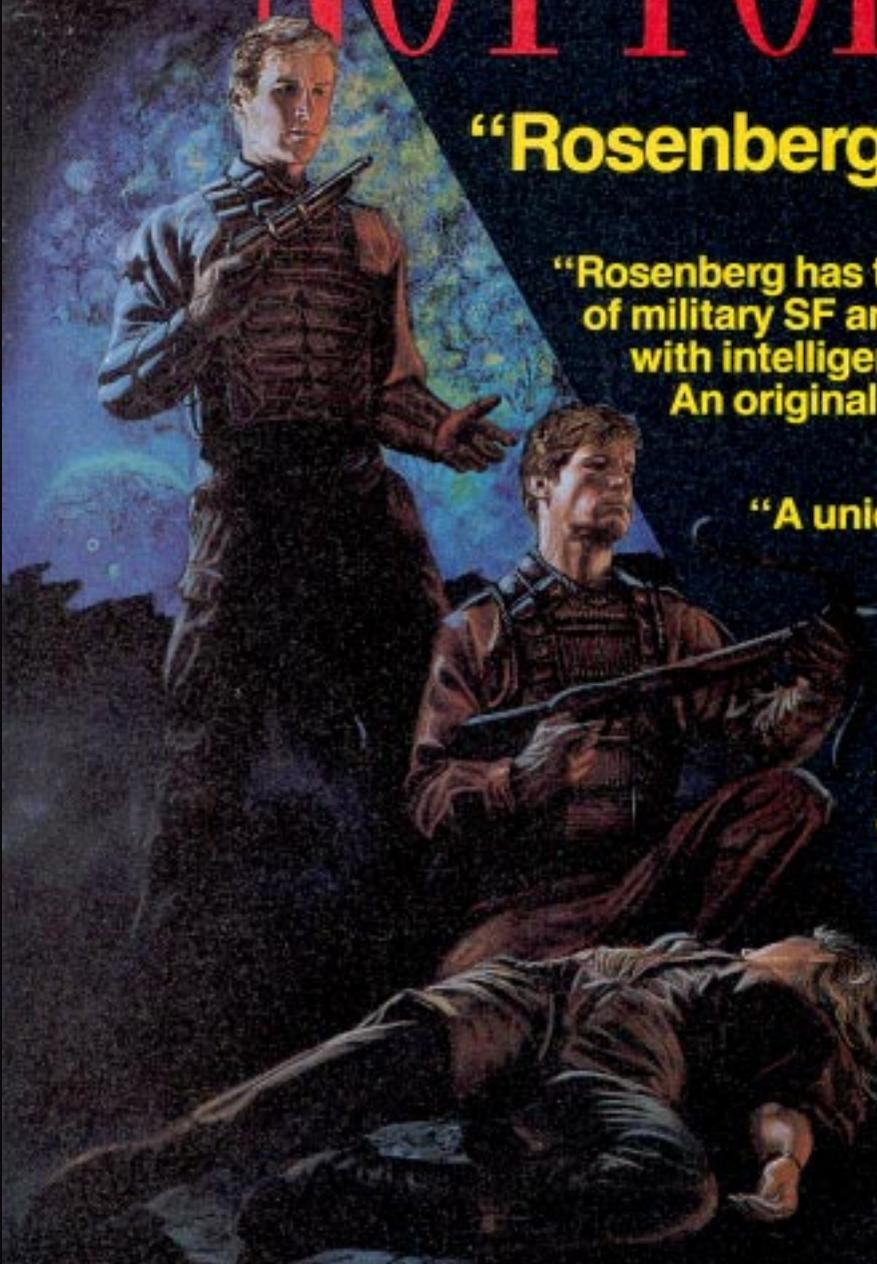
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Krynn has no druids (except heathens). A cleric of the Holy Orders of the Stars can cast any spell within his deity's sphere (DLA, pages 41-42 and 120-125).

Can a PC on Krynn opt to become an illusionist? Can a Wizard of High Sorcery cast both illusionist and magic-user spells?

All illusionists on Krynn are renegades (DLA, pages 13 and 36). A Wizard of High Sorcery can cast spells from any sphere of magic allowed to his order (DLA, pages 35-36 and 126-127), illusions included.

Why can't wizards of the Black Robes cast evocation spells such as fireball and lightning bolt? Weren't these spells included in the AD&D game to compensate for the magic-user's lack of melee ability?

The order of the Black Robes simply does not teach evocation spells. To compensate for this, wizards of the Black Robes advance faster than the other orders. Also, do not sell the Black Robes short — their spell selection, though not flashy, includes some potent magic.

How could Raistlin, a wizard of the Black Robes, cast lightning bolt, an evocation spell?

Raistlin was a wizard who broke all sorts of rules and retained his position in the Black Robes only through sheer power. He was intentionally created to *not* conform to all of the AD&D rules on magic-users — only most of them.

How do DMs play the effects of Raistlin's vision? Are there specific game effects? Is he, for example, unable to determine if a log or stool is safe to sit on because he sees everything in a state of decay?

Raistlin's vision has no specific game effects. Raistlin sees the effects of time on living things; this accounts for his cynicism. Logs and stools are not alive, so Raistlin's perceptions of them are unaffected. Raistlin's perceptions of anything long-lived, such as elves or trees, are hardly affected.

I have been trying to locate DRAGONLANCE game material for some time. I have visited several stores whose owners claim that it is no longer to be had.

All DRAGONLANCE products are still in print. If your local hobby or book store does not carry them, you can get them from the TSR Mail Order Hobby Shop in the U.S. or from TSR Ltd in the U.K. Just write for your free catalog. The addresses to use are on the first page of "Forum" in the publisher's column.

Where can I get the official DRAGONLANCE miniature figures?
TSR, Inc. once produced official DRAGONLANCE miniature figures, but

now Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc. has the license for them (see "Through the Looking Glass" in this issue). For more information, write to: Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc., 5938 Carthage Court, Cincinnati OH 45212; or call: (800) 543-0272 toll-free.

Wizards who change orders lose two levels of experience. If a wizard of 4th level or less opts to change orders, he will become a student wizard. In such cases, does the wizard have to undergo a new Test of High Sorcery, or is he automatically accepted by his new order? What about wizards who are reduced below 3rd level by energy-draining undead?

Since Tests of High Sorcery are grueling, life-threatening affairs, it is reasonable to assume that no wizard who has proved himself once will be asked to undergo a new test, the matter in which he lost his experience level not withstanding.

I have just finished reading the two DRAGONLANCE trilogies. I cannot find the Staff of Magius in the Dungeon Masters Guide or Unearthed Arcana. Also, how does the time-travel spell work?

The *Staff of Magius* appears in DLA, page 97. The proper name for the time-travel spell is *timereaver*. It is described on page 38 of DLA.

What is the range of an Orb of Dragonkind? Module DL8 says it can call evil dragons in a radius of 111 miles, but DL6 says the radius is 10-40 miles.

An *Orb of Dragonkind* calls evil dragons within $1d4 \times 10$ miles.

Since death knights are a form of lich, is Lord Soth immune to normal weapons as lichs are? Can Lord Soth summon demons as noted in the FIEND FOLIO® tome?

Death knights, including Lord Soth, are affected by normal weapons. Lord Soth has never been known to summon demons. Perhaps his ability to control Soth's Legions (see module DL8) replaces this ability, or perhaps Soth simply disdains the use of demonic aid.

In the BATTLESYSTEM™ game portion of DL8 *Dragons of War*, each cavalry unit in the unit roster is given a two-part movement rate. What do these numbers mean? The damage listings for most of the evil army are shown as "Spec"; is the DM free to assign weapons to these units?

The number before the slash is the cavalry unit's base move. The number after the slash is the unit's charge move. The draconian units do damage according to the type of draconian concerned; see DL8, page 27. The human cavalry units

(and their leaders) are armed with long swords. The human archer units are armed with long bows and long swords,

Is Paladine Bahamut? Is Takhisis Tiamat?

Yes and no. Paladine and Takhisis are the avatars or incarnations of Bahamut and Tiamat in the Krynn universe. They each have special powers within this setting. Slaying Bahamut or Tiamat in another universe will not affect Paladine or Takhisis, and vice versa.

In DRAGON issue #98, "The dragons of Krynn" said that Takhisis fled to the Abyss, but not the one which is home to all demonkind. Which part of the Abyss did Takhisis flee to? Where do the other gods of Krynn live?

This is a difficult question to answer, since Krynn's exact position in the planes is unclear. According to TSR's Jeff Grubb, the term Abyss, when used on Krynn, refers to the lower outer planes in general. Thus, Takhisis could have gone just about anywhere. If you are using a planar set-up similar to the one detailed in the *Manual of the Planes*, the first layer of Hell is the obvious choice for Takhisis since she is an incarnation of Tiamat. Paladine's Dome of Creation is located on the Deep Ethereal (*Manual of the Planes*, page 11). Being a powerful lawful-good deity, Paladine probably also maintains a residence somewhere in the Seven Heavens and, being an incarnation of Bahamut, probably has a residence in the elemental plane of Air. Other Krynn deities probably maintain residences on the outer planes that match their alignments, with additional residences on planes that match their spheres of influence. Gilean, for example, probably has residences on the Concordant Opposition, the Deep Ethereal (the Hidden Vale), and the Astral planes.

The rules say Silvanesti elves can be paladins but not cavaliers. Surely this is an error.

No error. The Silvanesti, as a people, are extremists. No Silvanesti with an inclination to become a cavalier would be anything but a paladin.

In module DL2 *Dragons of Flame*, the party begins the adventure at the spot marked "X" — but there is no such mark on the area map. Also, where is chamber #30 on the Sla-Mori map?

The party begins the adventure in the mountains on the east edge of the map, due east of Que-Kiri. Chamber #30 is the unnumbered chamber just north of location #28 on the Sla-Mori map.

In encounter #93 in module DL3 *Dragons of Hope*, part of the treasure is a map showing the route
Continued on page 98

View from the Top:



Dungeon Masters and campaign creation

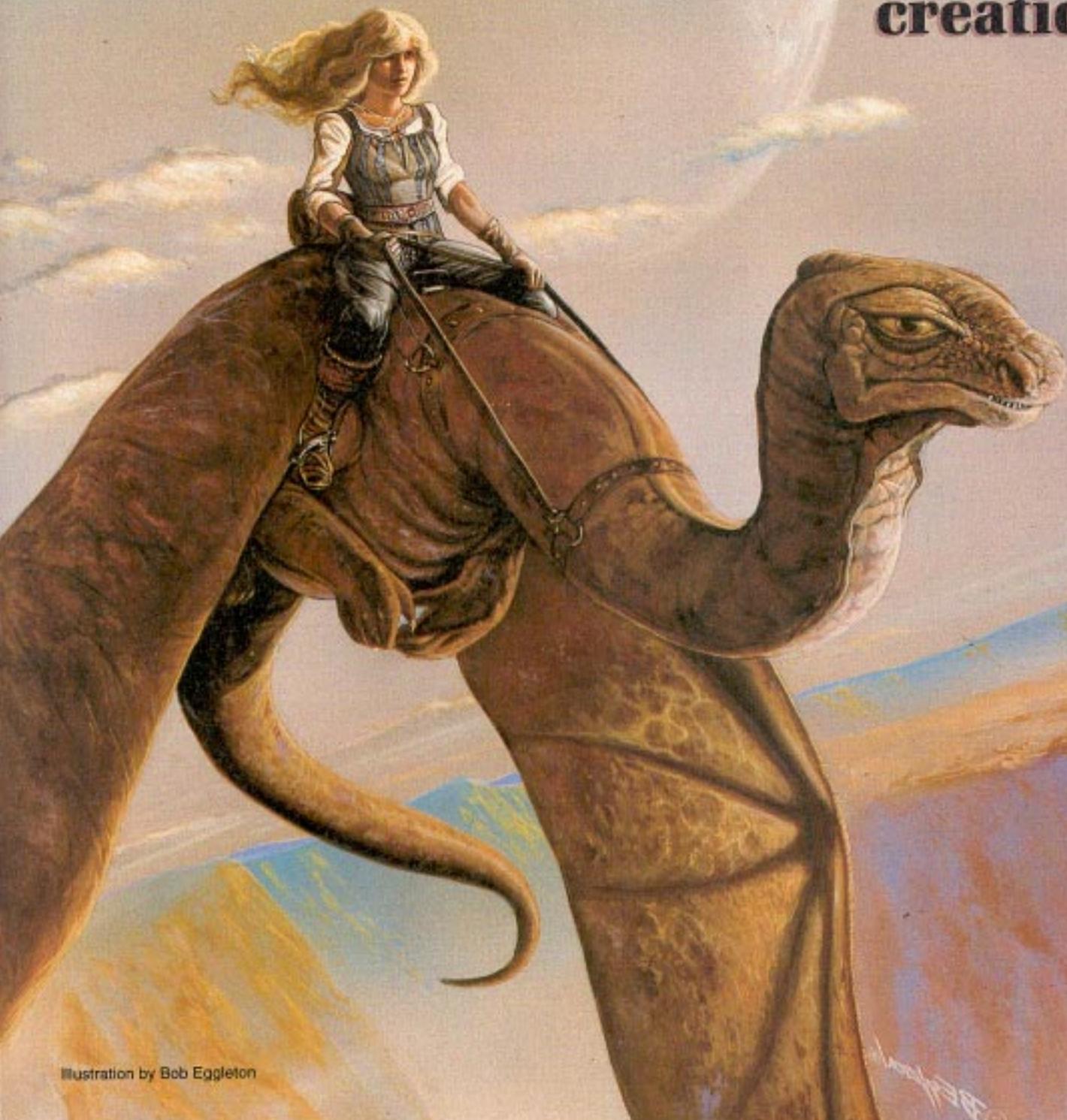


Illustration by Bob Eggleton



by Russell Drouillard

... And Nobody Knows But You

Background detail for
fantasy-campaign PCs



Imagine that an alien from a distant planet is visiting with you for a month. Although it speaks perfect English and understands the basic laws of Western civilization, it knows next to nothing about those tiny bits of knowledge you have acquired in your lifetime. Everything you take for granted, from the side of the road on which you drive to cordial ways of addressing people, must be taught to this being. The alien is a rapid learner, though, and listens as you quickly point out many items of interest: Rainbows are reflections of raindrops in the sunlight; diamonds, the hardest and most precious stone known to man, can cut glass; chirpings heard at night are from crickets scraping their wings together; and four-leaf clovers are associated with good luck. As the days pass, you're astonished at how much knowledge exists. By the time the month ends, you realize you've hardly scratched the surface of what you know.

This example illustrates an aspect of fantasy role-playing hardly touched upon by most gamers. In most FRPG campaigns, the player characters are the aliens, the outsiders visiting a new world — their own! Here they will discover untold new races, cultures, religions, languages, flora, fauna, and uncountable items that appear much like those of our world, yet are so different. Unfortunately, most Dungeon Masters abandon such rich detail and fail to realize how unique their worlds are.

Just as we know so much about our own planet, so do the inhabitants of your realm understand the natural laws and social conformities of their world. Farmers recognize tell-tale signs in clouds and animal reactions for weather predictions, elves know which wild berries are safe to eat, and fighters remember the best prices in town for armor. The most important knowledge, however, is that possessed by the PCs. In your world of dragons and knights, these characters are the only footholds your players have in understanding the myriad natural laws you have devised or assumed exist. Some characters may know about legends or survival skills, others the herbal ingredients to make healing elixirs. However you as a DM decide to create and distribute such knowledge, each character is sure to have unique knowledge of the world.

The result of using this specialized character knowledge is the creation of a PC that is suddenly better defined, and more lifelike in your campaign. Given the presence of such knowledge, the PC is gifted with far more personality than one composed entirely of numbers and abilities. Unless you decide otherwise, no two characters will possess the same knowledge, further enhancing each one's individuality. With their own storehouses of information, each character becomes all the more real in the player's mind.

Specialized character knowledge also strengthens your campaigns with realism. Having already handed out information

sheets to the players, imagine this scene in your adventure: A low-level party finds a cave on the side of a shrub-covered hill. From inside the dark cavern, slobbering and crunching noises are heard. Thinking it to be a wild animal, the PCs prepare to attack when the druid in the party stops them. Pointing to a nondescript bush, he explains that such bushes are normally blooming with poisonous red berries. This one is stripped bare. As the players exchange worried glances, the druid continues with his exclusive character knowledge. Only trolls can stomach such deadly berries, and a stripped bloodberry bush is a sure sign that a troll is nearby. With that, the nervous party unanimously agrees to explore elsewhere.

Though no combat was joined, this scene can be just as exciting as any melee encounter. As in real life, the players must remember what information they possess and when to share it. Passing a private note to the druids player with the same information moments before finding the cave would have spoiled the purpose of the encounter. The troll cave was designed to be avoided by the weak party and to display the importance of specialized knowledge. It will become apparent to the players quite soon just how vital the information you have supplied them can be.

Character-knowledge sheets

Before you write out lists of knowledge for the PCs, you must at least know the races and classes that make up the party. These two factors are the prime influences over what knowledge any character possesses. Elves certainly know more about nature and forests than dwarves who live beneath the stony earth, while thieves understand knot-making better than rune-reading magic-users. When possible, copy down as much information about the characters as possible, even going so far as to photocopy all the character sheets. The more facts and statistics you have, the more refined and customized each page of information becomes.

The first portion of a character-knowledge page should include a brief history of the character, as developed by the player (with your approval) or by you (with the player's approval), with a sentence or two about the PC's parents. Establish his social standing (lower, middle, or upper class) and any lineage important to your campaign. For example, if the warriors of your civilized nations proudly proclaim their father's and father's father's deeds, then bestow a couple of memorable names on the lineage of the PC if he is a fighter. Continue with a few notes describing the character's life, even going so far as to explain why he chose his particular class. Don't become engrossed in a long-winded history, however, as you'll be wasting your time and boring the player when he reads it. A simple paragraph or two is perfect, as this creates roots for the character and gives him purpose and reason.

Follow with notes on the character's mentor, an important NPC all too often ignored in role-playing. A mentor is both friend and teacher, and should be described with a spark of personality to accent the character. I often describe a special bond between instructor and student, telling about the extra attention that the mentor paid to the character and, in turn, the disciplined study displayed by the character. Occasionally, I pass on a mentor's experienced knowledge, such as the recollection that the only mithral armor in the realm lies far to the north in a dragon's lair, or that the city guards of a certain city are corrupt and easily bribed. Childhood friends and family are rarely, if ever, used in role-playing, but a mentor is someone that a PC may return to over and over again. Give him the same respect and individuality you would give to any of your own characters.

The final part is the essence of these character-information sheets. Here you list all those bits of knowledge you think this character would know if he was a real person. Write about his knowledge of sailing or stargazing, rune-reading or metal-crafting. A character may know a fantastic legend about a mountain of treasure in a fiery volcano, or that a terrible sea serpent lives in a deceptively tranquil lake. Cover all those aspects that make your world unique: art, languages, herbs, legends, magic, religion, culture, and superstitions, to name only a few. As you develop and create these bits of information, you'll not only see the characters deepen with personality, you'll watch your own world grow with new details and realism.

The following sections detail how races and character classes influence character knowledge. Each is based on my own interpretation of the race or class from the various rule books, and serves as a foundation on which knowledge sheets are based. These descriptions are only stock outlines, and each DM should customize them to his own campaign.

Racial knowledge

Dwarves: Because of their inbred love for mountains and hills, dwarves are apt to know not only the region where they grew up like the backs of their hands, but also the surrounding countryside with fair accuracy. Dwarves are rugged individuals, and some have the ability to detect the reliability of weapons and other goods in addition to their skills at underground observation. Some have skills in blacksmithing, others in surviving in barren mountains and hills (finding fresh water, edible roots, etc.). Of course, all dwarves know the importance of their beards and spend a good part of each morning grooming and trimming these symbols of pride and honor.

Elves: Most elves are lithe creatures living in secluded regions across the land. The sylvan elves are sure to know survival

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skills in the forest as well as how to identify many plants and animals. They may imitate bird calls to signal other elves or leave constructed signs (such as crossed twigs) for other elves to read. Because of their long lives and love of nature, elves understand the basics of weather forecasting and long-term weather cycles, such as seasonal storms, changing tides, or temperature fluctuations every few years. However, although elves live hundreds of years, they are a secluded people and know little of civilized human history.

Gnomes: Although physically similar to dwarves, surface gnomes rarely live underground, finding otherwise uninhabited wooded hills to serve as homes for their clans. Often possessing great senses of humor, gnomes may have slightly ridiculous names or partake in silly traditions. Many know practical jokes and how to gather irritating dyes and powders from plants and animals. Gnomes also love gems and crystals, and possess either the skills to cut gems or estimate their worth.

Half-elves: Whether these beings are accepted or shunned in your campaign, half-elves are a rare stock of character due to the vast differences in life styles between humans and elves. For those half-elves in your party, decide in which racial culture the character was raised and assign knowledge accordingly. Chances are, however, prejudice will result in a character not as well rounded in knowledge as others of either the elven or human race.

Humans: Because of humanity's ability to live in nearly every climate and geographical region, it is impossible to list all the various skills humans can have. Even a simple analysis of our own world should suggest many ideas. Tropical inhabitants know skills in fishing, sailing, and rope working; those in colder climates understand ways to utilize every piece of hunted animal for food, weapons, or art. Those who live in cities know the best shops to buy various goods, while country folk know many of nature's ways. Peasants probably live lives centered on family ties, simple cooking, traditions, and hard work. Wealthy people usually center on worldly goods, entertainment, fine food, and politics. Common sense is the best determinant for detailing human knowledge.

Halflings: A quiet race, halflings have many skills centered on the betterment of their own lifestyles. Cooking, art, literature, craftsmanship — halflings share many skills with those most talented of the other races. Although they do not possess the survival skills of elves and dwarves, halflings do have a knack for fine weapon crafting, object identification, and tool construction. The halfling lifestyle is open-ended, and many of their skills are determined by the campaign's nature.

Character-class knowledge

Cavaliers and paladins: Holy fighters, these pious individuals operate under

strict codes of chivalry. (A complete European chivalric code is outlined in *Unearthed Arcana*, though any of it can be modified for your campaign.) Cavaliers and paladins are heroic figures to their respective kingdoms and may often be called upon by kings or mentors to fulfill great tasks. They are celebrity-like figures in the public eye, especially when they reach higher levels, and even a tiny loss of honor is greatly damaging to their reputations and self-respect. As for adventuring skills, these holy warriors have little. They know well the politics and codes of their societies and what their proper places are in protecting their kings, but they generally know little about the wilderness.

Clerics: The skills of a cleric are more likely to center on the magical side than on the fighting side. Clerics know the best places to find spell components and ingredients (either in nature or shops) and know which wild herbs or fruits cure wounds or poisons. Because clerics have such strong bonds with their deities, they recognize subtle omens in answer to their prayers or feel the evil in opposing temples before anyone else does. As magicians who can heal, the skills of a cleric are sure to enhance his life-preserving abilities.

Druids: Druids are well attuned to nature and all of its manifestations. They are sure to know simple weather prediction, the identification of plants (as edible, poisonous, spell ingredients, etc.), identify nonmagical animals, and perhaps survive in the wilderness without difficulty. However, as great as their outdoor skills are, they should be deficient indoors and underground. They have no understanding of crafted items and are of little help in cities and towns. Druids have skills involving the earth, sky, plants, and animals, but little else.

Fighters, barbarians, and rangers: Fighters possess great ability and knowledge concerning weapons and armor. Some can fashion crude weapons from stone, branches, and rope, while others can repair their own equipment with the proper tools. Fighters may also know rope-knotting, trap-laying, and how to recognize the craftsmanship of tools. Barbarians share these same skills, as well as having survival skills of their own. Rangers also share these fighter skills, though to a lesser degree, but should also have abilities that enhance their unique tracking abilities. They may recognize animal footprints; bird feathers, and other natural markings. Some rangers make use of every part of a killed animal, while others know efficient, practical ways of hunting.

Magic-users and illusionists: Though different in spell abilities, magic-users and illusionists share much in common in character knowledge. Both understand the importance of fresh spell components and know where (and sometimes when) to find the best places for their ingredients. Due to their high intelligence, magic-users and illusionists are sure to know great lore

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concerning magical items, ruined castles, enchanted tombs, and other points of interest. Because they are the weakest in melee, some of these magicians may know evasive tactics or bargaining techniques to escape from foes — tidbits such as: orcs despise cold water, or ogres love fresh deer meat. As a rare bit of knowledge, some magic-users may know certain, special spells that kill particular monsters instantly. Provide this knowledge with plenty of forethought, however.

Thieves, thief-acrobats, and assassins: These unscrupulous individuals are sure to have knowledge in some of the more contemptible occupational areas. They have a great understanding of their cities' layouts, including roof tops, allies, shops, sewers, and guard posts, along with knowledge of typical crowd activities, which gangs and powerful characters control certain "turfs," and where to buy and sell stolen goods. Some PCs may have exclusive knowledge in the behind-the-scenes politics of a kingdom, while others can manipulate ropes, needles, and other tools to perform unusual and useful acts. These characters have few, if any, wilderness survival skills, but their street wisdom makes them vital in any city adventure.

Monks: One of the rarer character classes, monks are well-disciplined individuals. Much like the monks of our own history, they have some knowledge of botany, astronomy, chemistry, and other earthy sciences. In return for their studious knowledge, however, monks live without worldly possessions and luxuries. They seek inner peace and harmony that cannot be reached from wealth and status.

Bards: As entertainers who double as adventurers, bards are sure to be skillful at delighting audiences. Bards know simple magic tricks with cards, coins, and handkerchiefs, various recipes for mixing drinks, funny songs and riotous jokes, and important ballads and myths. However, because bards are created after attaining levels as fighters and thieves, they are not spontaneously enlightened with this character knowledge. They pick up these abili-

ties only when they actually become bards, either through watching crowd-pleasers or through private instruction.

Integrating knowledge

Other factors shape the knowledge of characters. Wealth allows rich people to focus on life's luxuries and arts; lack of wealth forces poor people to concentrate on life's necessities. Generally, nonhuman races are more immune to the social effects of wealth within their own clans or tribes, but caste systems, prejudices, and poor living conditions have the same effect. Typically, males dominate the ruling classes and have more opportunities than females with regard to gaining power and position in society (especially human society), but there is no reason why you cannot turn the tables and create a society governed by women, or one with equal rights for both sexes.

The following is a character-knowledge sheet created for an elven magic-user PC:

Lithadean Mooncloud

Female elven magic-user

History: You were born and raised in the Sealden Forest, the largest stronghold of Forest Elves on the continent. Your parents, both fine artists, encouraged you to enter their profession, but you resisted. The arcane lore of magic-use enticed you into a profession commonly dominated by males. Although you received jests and ridicule from your fellow students, you prospered in your training and study, and graduated at the top of your class. Shortly thereafter, you became an assistant under the wizard Ediana who had just returned to Sealdin after years of adventuring. The two of you developed a bond of great friendship, and he taught you everything he knew about the art of sorcery. It soon became obvious that you held knowledge superior to that of your peers, but as Ediana always said, "Wise ones don't preach; they listen." You held your tongue during boasting sessions and, as you realize in retrospect, became a better and more respected person because of it. Now Ediana has instructed you to explore the

world, and fill your mind with experience and knowledge. He does not expect your return for another five years.

Character knowledge: (The following is known only to this character.) Ediana taught you the ancient magic-user script Felveron. It is no longer used today, but in ages past it was the hidden code of all great magic-users, inscribed on books, tombs, and chests.

As an elf, you can create a special marker (such as torn leaves or piled stones) that conveys a simple message to other elves. Signs for danger, safety and help are all common messages. These markers, based on the amount of time you have to make them, are nearly indistinguishable from their surroundings.

When the moon is new and the stars are hidden by clouds, the eerie white light seen in some marshes comes from magical spider moss. When eaten shortly after being picked, spider moss cures wounds and restores health.

Legends say that the Hall of Elven Kings, a grand tomb now far beneath the ocean waves, has locked within its walls the only *staff of the magi* known to exist. One can only guess the magicks that guard such a powerful treasure.

Of course, such a compilation of knowledge could go on forever. You could easily write pages of lore about the PC's culture, commonly known legends, and reported magical properties of plants, but confine yourself to just a few points of interest. The purpose of these sheets is to establish the realism of that PC and your campaign, not to bury your player with trivia.

Putting knowledge to use

As you design these knowledge sheets, remember that they are useless unless you, as the Dungeon Master, make an effort to utilize them in your campaign. The adventures you make (or modify from packaged modules) should incorporate the information you are giving the players. If you provide one player with knowledge that deer with silver antlers can sniff out magical items from great distances, or that roses growing in the shade of holy temples cure poison, then let such marvels be found. The best way to integrate information like this is to determine the basics of your next adventure, deciding primarily on its purpose and location (forest, city, etc.). Now list on the knowledge sheets items that would help characters in this adventure to cross over obstacles or gain insight into completing the quest. For example, you decide to have the party stumble upon a strange temple and explore the edifice. Give one character knowledge of this legendary temple "with blood-red gates and grinning statues that howl when the wind passes by them." Inside, another character deftly fashions a rope, bridge to cross a dank pit, as a third character mentions that the crystal shards



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around the chamber are caused by the touch of a rare breed of rust monster. Later, a fourth character provides a bit of history about an enigmatic glyph on the sanctuary alter, while another warns about the beautiful but poisonous flowers in the temple's courtyard.

Designing character knowledge sheets and adventures together involves considerably more planning than the average dungeon requires. But the results are well worth the effort. When characters can enlighten or warn the rest of the party without any cues from the Dungeon Master, the whole role-playing environment is suddenly enhanced and given the depth of realism that no other element can give.

Not only is it a good idea to photocopy your players' character sheets, but copy their information sheets, too. This allows you to customize adventures to the PCs' classes, races, levels, and knowledge. Occasionally collect the original knowledge sheets and add more items, writing some information on "up-and-coming" adventures and "general knowledge" that can be applied at any time. Also add bits of information that serve no immediate purpose; this keeps the players from thinking that every time you update their sheets, they should expect to use all of their new knowledge in the next adventure. If need be, these "red herrings" can easily be incorporated into future adventures, but it

never hurts to have a couple bits of knowledge that never seem to get used.

As you distribute these knowledge sheets to your players for the first time, gently encourage them *not* to share all of their information with each other. You can provide "common knowledge" during the game for everyone on knowledge that all characters would have. Of course, this doesn't mean character knowledge should *never* be shared, either! Rather, players should share their knowledge when and if the time is appropriate. If a player chooses not to divulge knowledge at an appropriate time, fine. If the party suffers because of that player's selfishness, he must suffer the wrath of the other players — a terrible fate indeed!

Depending on the knowledge you provide, some players may find a long-term goal to strive for. For instance, the elf outlined earlier was told about the *staff of the magi* in an underwater tomb. She may decide she wants that staff, and during the course of her adventuring she decides to gather information and clues from NPCs and other sources about this tomb, all unbeknownst to the rest of the party. It is easy to see how you can motivate your players with far-reaching goals for their higher levels.

The result of your creative effort in these knowledge sheets will be instantly noticed. Suddenly your player's characters

will have depth, purpose, intelligence, and uniqueness. They will pay more attention to details and, most importantly, better role-play their characters as they share and interact with the knowledge. Soon your campaign will take on a whole new dimension of realism as you spread knowledge and motivation to your players. Ω

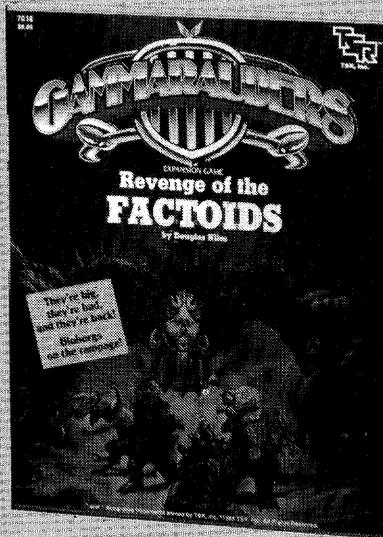
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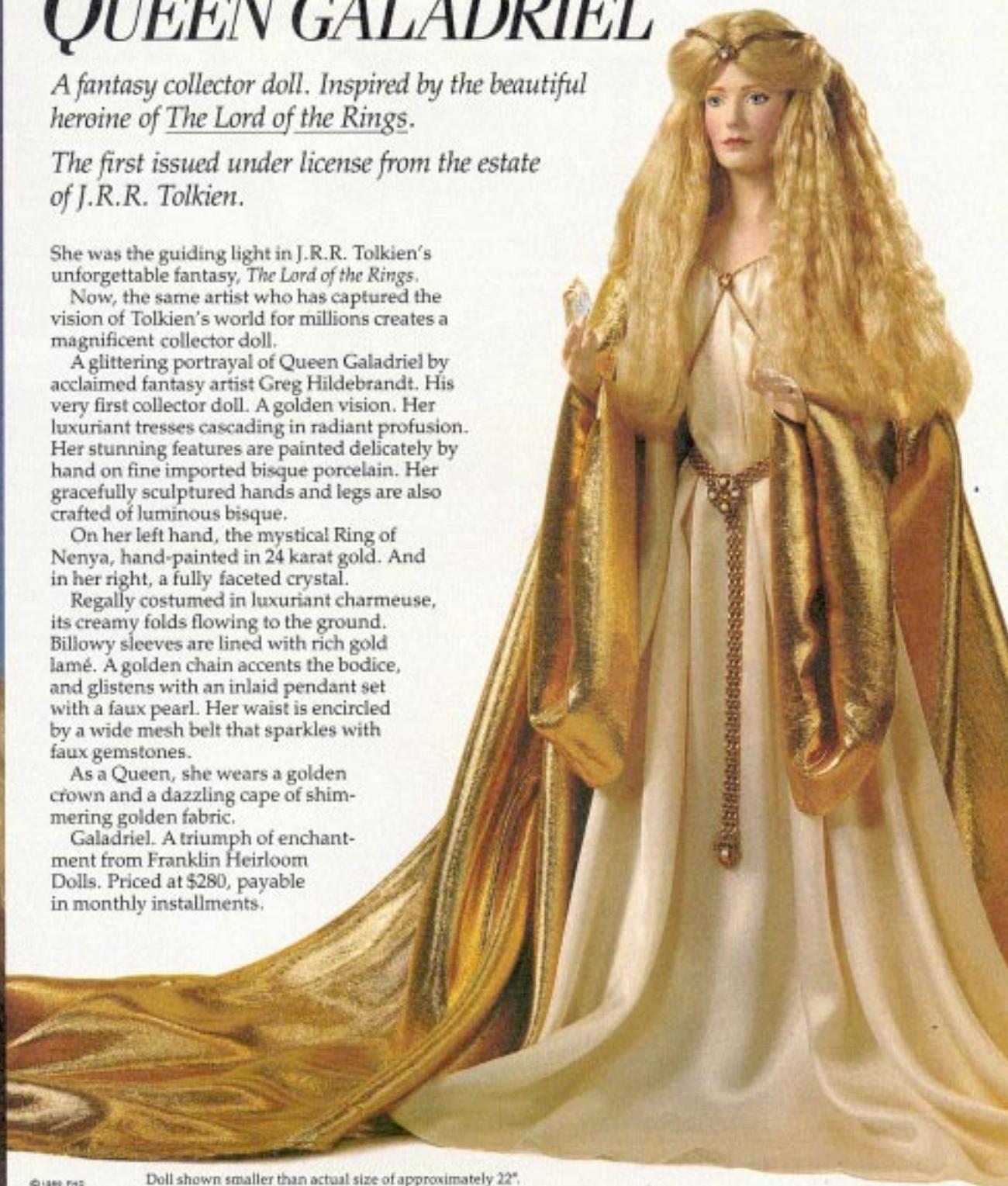
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by Eileen Lucas

Out of the Textbook, Into the Game

Building your
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People, places, and events: The DM is constantly being challenged to come up with new and exciting entries in all three of these categories. When the DM's imagination begins to run dry, centuries full of possibilities are as readily available as the nearest historical reference, whether it be a history text, an encyclopedia, or a historical novel. All you need to do is take what you know about a particular person or event in history and employ it to create believable and exciting characters and settings in your campaign. NPCs come alive as fantasy recreations of historical figures, and background information provided for adventurers becomes more logical if based on detail gathered from historical research.

Using history doesn't mean being a slave to it. Historical settings can be used as jumping-off places which you can tailor and embellish as you see fit. After all, this is fantasy role-playing we're talking about, not historical simulation.

The most obvious period of historical interest to AD&D® game players is, of course, the Middle Ages, since that is the era upon which most campaigns are based. Study of that time can provide many interesting details to broaden a role-playing game. The Crusades, the Black Death, and the Hundred Years War are a few examples of events which can provide ideas for campaigns.

But you are not limited to the people and events of Medieval Europe when creating your game world. Many historical situations such as revolution and civil war can be treated as generic concepts. The causes, characters, emotions, and effects of such conflicts can easily be integrated by a historical-minded DM into *any* time frame.

For example, perhaps you know a lot about the American Civil War. At first glance, it might not seem an appropriate setting for a D&D® or AD&D game event, but a closer look reveals an infinite number of possibilities. Instead of bringing your characters to 19th-century Virginia, you can bring much of that setting to your campaign world. Suppose you have a kingdom in which the seeds of civil disorder have been sown. By extracting the useful information from what you've learned about the American Civil War, such as the political, social, and economic divisions within the society, you can flesh out your campaign background with interesting and realistic details. Take your favorite politicians and generals and create NPCs inspired by some of their more outstanding characteristics.

And what about running a revolution? Might not a kingdom in your campaign be ripe for an overthrow of its present government? The French Revolution provides an excellent historical example of a revolt of peasantry against the ruling class.

This article takes these two historical events — the American Civil War and the French Revolution — and shows how they can be tailored to fit into an AD&D campaign. If these two particular events don't interest you, consult the list at the end of this article for other ideas on how to use history to enrich your role-playing or to simply draw upon the historical people, places, and events in which you are most interested.

The American Civil War

A civil war occurs when one part of a country decides to do battle with the rest of the nation. That part of the country may be struggling with another for control of the whole or (as in the case of the American Civil War) that part may want to secede and become a nation of its own. There may be natural or evolved differences between the inhabitants of the original state and the rebellious part which make peaceful coexistence between them difficult or impossible. Differences in species are examples of natural differences; differences in ways of making a



living or religious beliefs are examples of evolved differences.

The causes of war are generally complex and interconnected, and the American Civil War was no exception. The areas of difference which led the North and South into armed conflict included: nationalistic sentiments vs. localism and states' rights; emancipation vs. slavery; the needs of an industrial economy vs. those of an agrarian economy; and an urban, diverse culture vs. a rural, conservative culture.

These differences could appear between two areas of your campaign world as well. For example, suppose you have a kingdom which is largely mountainous to the north and has heavily forested plains to the south. Most of the population to the north is made up of dwarves, with scattered settlements of humans, halflings, and gnomes. The major northern occupations are mining and craftsmanship, with many good-size towns and population centers there. The southern part of the kingdom, on the other hand, is mostly settled by elves who live in small bands in the forests.

Now, let's say that valuable ore is discovered underground in the southern part of the kingdom. The dwarves want to see this ore mined so that the kingdom will prosper. But this would mean cutting down large sections of forest, something the elves are dead set against. The elves decide to secede, to make a separate king-

dom out of their part of the present kingdom, so that their forests can be protected. The dwarves refuse to let this potential wealth slip from their hands. Both sides realize that only by force can they achieve their conflicting aims.

Thus the stage is set for civil war. You can see that this example has taken some liberties with history. I've used what I know about a civil war which actually occurred to create a fantasy situation for civil war in my campaign world. Whatever the grounds for dissension, the rifts between the two sections will grow until the one feeling the most threatened either tries to secede or attacks the other.

In the case of the American Civil War, hindsight reveals some specific events that led to the outbreak of war, such as the words and actions of extremists on both sides, the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860, and finally the firing on Fort Sumter. Continuing with our example, the DM could arrange such dramatic events to raise the tension in our fantasy kingdom. Suppose a community of dwarves in the foothills between the two territories chops down all the trees in its vicinity, an act that also involves the "accidental" death of an elf. Then a king comes to power whose sympathies tend toward the dwarves. In desperation, the scattered communities of elves band together, preparing to fight to keep their trees — and the war begins.

Ulysses Stoneblaster

Military Leader of the Dwarves of the North

AC 1; MV 6"; F10; hp 54; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 17, I 14, W 17, D 14, C 14, Ch 15; AL LN; *chain mail* +4, *short sword* +3, *hand axe* +2.

Stoneblaster is a veteran of many battles, with a highly successful field record and the ability to learn from mistakes, both his own and others'. He is a wily, crafty maneuverer. Although somewhat crotchety in nature, he is much respected by those who serve under him. His fondness for powerful spirits is well known, but so are his courage and sense of duty.

Rolwynn Leafsong

Military Leader of the Elves of the South

AC -2; MV 9"; Cav8; hp 60; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 15, I 16, W 16, D 17, C 17, Ch 18, AL LG; *field plate* +1, *long sword* +4, *long bow* +2.

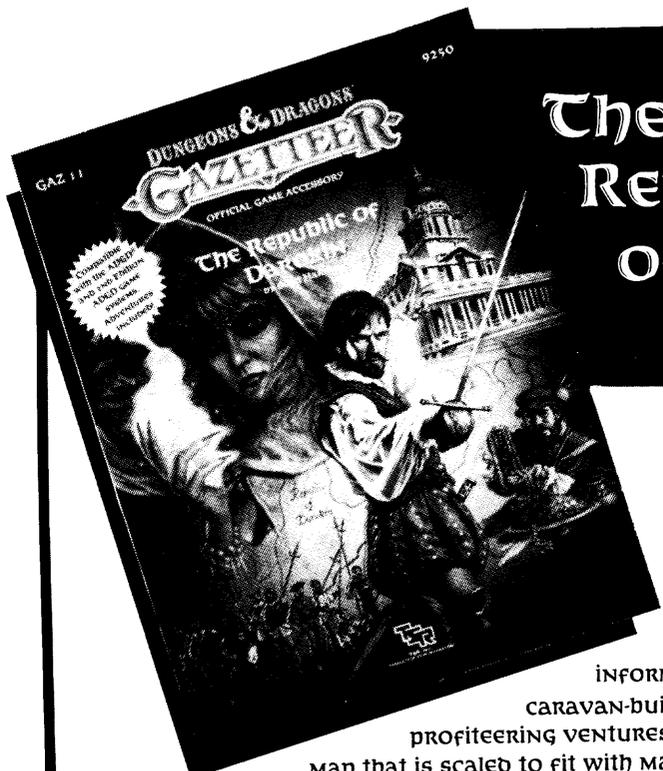
Leafsong comes from a long line of noble elves. He has served his people as a statesman and champion of justice, and now as a military leader. He is much beloved for his kindness and gentle ways, but he can also be dynamic and courageous in the face of the enemy.

It is beyond the scope of this article to go into all the leaders and battles of the Civil War in depth. There is a great deal of documentation on this subject, however, and you can study it and use what you can in your campaign. Have fun and be creative. The boxed section herein describes two possible leaders of our fantasy civil war, each obviously modeled after actual historical figures.

In 1865, the South more or less accepted its defeat, and the American Civil War was over. In your fantasy setting, things could turn out differently. A provisional government might try to rule the south from hiding, with elven commando raids making the activities of the dwarven victors difficult or impossible in that area.

In the disarmed and vanquished South, desperate economic conditions prevailed as a natural consequence of war and because of Reconstructionist policies. The process of picking up the pieces in a war-torn land is difficult indeed and presents many possibilities for good role-playing. Evil elves could arise to dominate sections of our previously good-controlled south; barbarians, perhaps having been hired as mercenaries by one side or the other, might refuse to put down their arms and end the fight; widespread looting and raiding could occur; and so on.

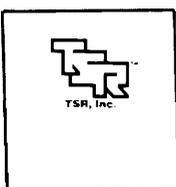
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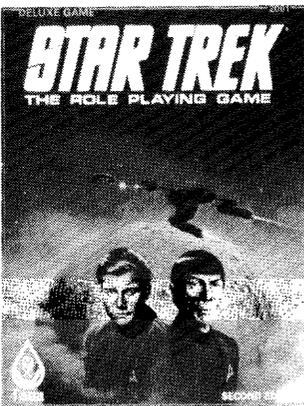
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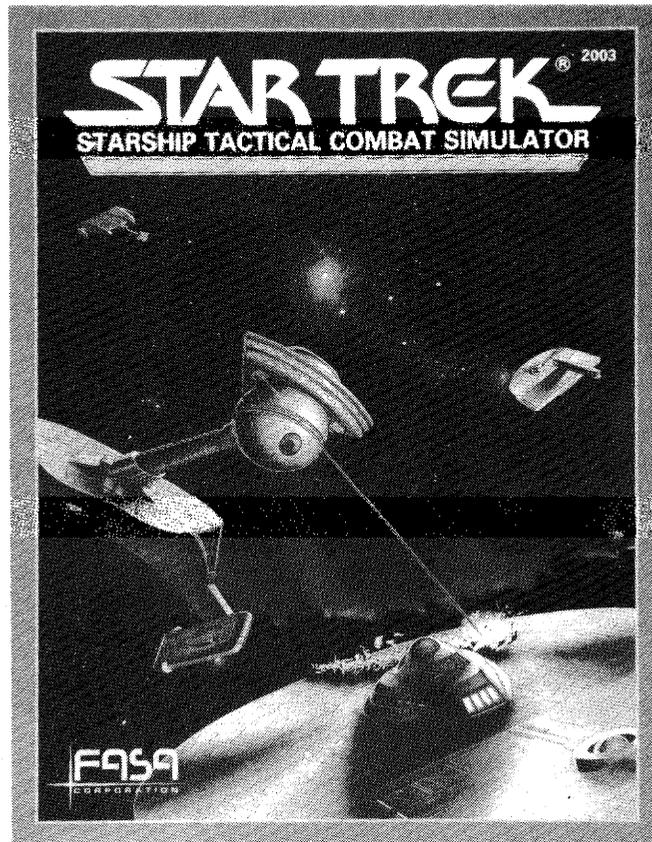
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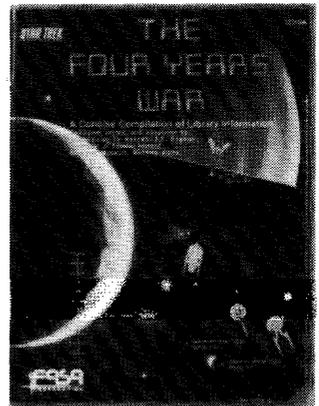
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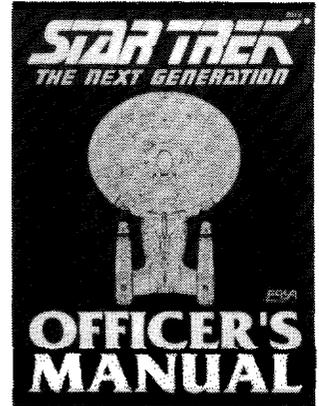
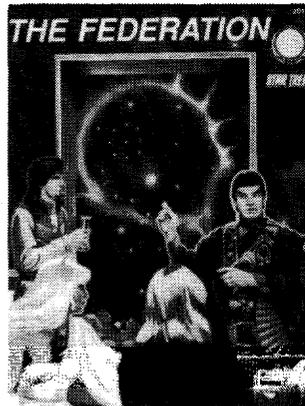
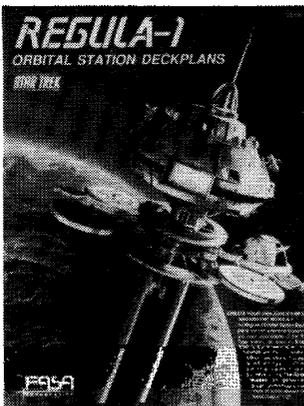
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and well-armed victors from looking for new territory to conquer? Many observers were surprised that the victorious Union Army was so quickly and thoroughly disbanded after the American Civil War. Perhaps your victor will be more empire-conscious. Once again, the lessons of history are there to guide you, but don't be afraid to ask yourself: "What if?"

The French Revolution

A revolution, as opposed to a civil war, occurs when one faction within a kingdom tries to overthrow the present ruling body with the aim of taking control of that kingdom itself. The causes of revolution are many but often involve a struggle against injustice and inequalities, and a yearning for freedom or a better way of life. Revolutions don't start overnight. They build up over time, with their causes gradually working into a vicious circle that leads more certainly to conflict the longer the circle builds. For example: The testing of old, oppressive laws leads to harsher enforcement of those laws, which produces victims (now martyrs for the cause), which leads to increased sympathy for the cause, which leads to paranoia on the part of those in control and even harsher methods of enforcement, which all eventually leads to armed conflict.

You could study either the American or the Russian Revolution and come up with entirely different sets of circumstances and personalities to incorporate into your campaign. But for a revolution which struggles against the bonds of feudalism, the French Revolution of 1789 is a good place to start.

The beginning of the end for the French kings arose in the form of absolute monarchy, which superseded many of the tenets of feudalism. In feudalism, the ruler owed as much to his subjects and vassals as they to him. Under the absolutism of Louis XIV, the monarch was the God King and owed nothing to anyone.

Then the democratic philosophies came along, asking questions like "Why should a few men be allowed to rule a great multitude?" and "Why should the mass of mankind lead lives full of labor and sorrow?" The answers to these questions called for doing away with the old ways. Philosophers and statesmen spoke out and wrote books to poke holes in the theories of the so-called "natural order" which held the system of absolute monarchy in place. This questioning of royalty, the church, and the aristocracy spread among more and more people until the whole archaic system was struck down.

This would provide a good role-playing opportunity for any characters in your campaign. Have them promote a questioning attitude which will be noticed by both the ruling class and the common folk. If the powers that be harass the PCs, take full advantage of this for "the martyr syndrome." In any event, more and more people may take heed of the characters'

words, and more followers to the cause can be gathered.

But it takes more than questions and speeches to start a revolution. In 18th-century France, as in most other revolutionary situations, a combination of factors coincided to produce rebellion. There was a political crisis (the near-bankruptcy of the state) occurring simultaneously with an economic crisis (poor agricultural output in relation to population). This combination produced a poverty-stricken populace that took to the streets hungry and poorly clothed, and a government that was unwilling and unable to help them. In the face of such a situation, coupled with inept leadership on the part of the government, revolution became almost an inevitable response.

Using history as a guide, here are the personality profiles of some of the major participants in a fantasy-world revolution (you can choose the races and statistics as appropriate to your campaign):

The King: Although he feels a sense of responsibility toward his people, the weak-willed and awkward king is unable to stick to a decision and is easily swayed by advice, both good and bad.

The Queen: Gracious and regal in manner, the queen's policy of favoritism makes her highly popular with some factions and equally unpopular with others. The people despise her for her extravagant spending on frivolous luxuries and gambling, and they blame her for the kingdom's sorry economic state and for their own poverty.

Leader of the Nobles: A good man of aristocratic background, this leader is very well educated and cultured. A bit of a philosopher, he tries hard to convince the king that it would be better to acquiesce to some of the demands of the nobles than to face the wrath of the people.

Leader of the People: An uneducated peasant, either male or female, this person has a simple, direct manner of speaking that can incite the emotions of huge crowds. With nothing to lose but lives of misery, the people are encouraged by him to overthrow all in authority and set up a new regime controlled by the commoners.

The French Revolution went through many stages as it attempted to reconcile the conflicting needs of the citizenry, both upper and lower classes, with the needs of the state. While the nobles merely wanted to make the king more accountable to them, the leaders of the common man envisioned a new political structure altogether, one more democratic in nature. Thus you have a revolution which moved from an attempt at constitutional monarchy (as opposed to the absolute monarchy of previous kings), to the Jacobin Reign of Terror (mob rule), to the Empire of Napoleon. Again, it is beyond the scope of this article to give a complete history of the events of the French Revolution, but there are many good books on the subject which provide the historical-minded DM with ideas for running such a revolution in his

campaign.

Other ideas

These are just two examples of how history provides ideas for fantasy campaigns. Many more possibilities suggest themselves as well. For example, if you want to develop a situation ripe for a military coup, study the events which occurred in Grenada, Haiti, and Central and South America in this decade alone. For an example of an emperor with world-conquering ambitions, look up Alexander the Great or Napoleon Bonaparte. For a strong and effective queen model, check out Elizabeth I of England or Catherine the Great of Russia. The possibilities are as endless as the pages of history.

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by Thomas Kane

Telling It Like It Is

Keeping your campaign believable and thrilling

What do players want? Players want to be challenged and stirred to heroism. Players want to be thrilled by scenes of might and beauty. Players want to feel love and grief, triumph and terror — at a comfortable distance, of course. One person — you, the game master — must plan and present an adventure that produces all these effects. To do this, you will find the advice of writers, playwrights, actors, orators, and storytellers indispensable.

Adventure structure

Ancient Greek playwrights listed the elements of drama as: action, plot, character, thought, diction, spectacle, and music. In a role-playing adventure, action is the most important of these features. Action does not always mean combat; it means that both players and their characters have things to say and do. Simply rolling dice or choosing between two doors is not enough — the PCs need to make informed decisions. As the GM, you cultivate action using the plot of your adventure. Like any storyteller, you should plan a plot in four stages: opening, development, climax, and denouement.

The excitement should start as soon as play begins. PCs should not arrive until the dramatic parts of an adventure begin — have NPCs “set the stage” first. Use as little introduction as possible: Simply explain what the party needs to do and then start the game. If an adventure needs a detailed background, the background can be explained in early encounters. Players seldom listen to a spoken paragraph of data, but they become highly inquisitive when talking with NPCs or

snooping through documents. Adventures should always open with a specific quest. Defining this goal at the start spares the PCs a period of aimless wandering while players try to read your mind. (Of course, PCs might decide to follow completely new goals halfway through the adventure.)

Several obstacles should separate the PCs from their major opponents. Any minor adventures should remain unified and consistent, but unique and challenging, too. Most PCs are easily distracted, so almost everything that happens should pertain to the adventure. A variety of encounters that require different solutions is best. The encounters should mix familiar, realistic situations with wildly exciting ones, so players can empathize with their characters and use that empathy to experience the adventure. You should also base encounters on previous events in the campaign, to insure that everything the PCs do has appropriate rewards or punishments. When things happen randomly, the players have no incentive to plan or to role-play.

During the adventure’s development, several outbursts of combat or other fast-paced activity are needed. PCs will probably learn secrets, punish enemies, make

discoveries, and be surprised by the unexpected. Most developmental encounters contain hints about future events. If you plan to have something particularly unbelievable occur later on, prepare the PCs for it with early encounters. The longer an adventure lasts, the more earthshaking its conflicts need to be. As tension rises, you can create suspense by refusing to reveal some vital piece of information that would affect everything the PCs do — if they only knew about it.

Then comes the climax. The PCs have passed lesser encounters and finally confront the object of their quest. Here they resolve the adventure and either succeed or fail in reaching their goals. In the climax, PCs learn the nature of the foe they have been struggling against. The foe and the danger produced by him should be greater than the PCs had formerly assumed.

The adventure ends with a short period of denouement that ties up any substories created during development and lets PCs reassess themselves. You can also introduce the background for the next adventure at this point.

When PCs invent a workable new strategy, they should be rewarded. Plots should



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contain enough alternatives so that independent thinking cannot ruin the adventure. You can control an adventure by using natural restriction — if there is only one tunnel into a lair, PCs will meet whatever is at the end of it.

People-making

The elements of drama support each other. Just as plot creates action, so do characters generate plot, and so does thought produce characters. NPCs should have their own adventures, which just happen to coincide with the PCs' adventures. Remember that PCs do not usually spend enough time with any one NPC to learn much about him. You should emphasize one trait in each NPC so that the players can see what makes that character different from all others. Try to pick these traits from real people, not other characters; this helps you avoid a series of wise wizards and brave fighters (with one coward for variety). Also, choose personalities that affect the game. For example, nobody cares what an NPC's favorite color is, but if a gate guard despises bribery, it matters.

Telling the players

Since few GMs use music, both final elements of drama depend entirely on your public performance. You generate diction by speaking for NPCs, and you create spectacle by stimulating the players' imaginations. To make players listen, give them some minor signal that the game is beginning, perhaps rolling a die or arranging miniatures. Do not shout or use other violent means of getting attention, because this makes players concentrate on you, not on the adventure. It also helps to start with a stirring introductory sentence, ideally one that will provoke action, describe the scenario's theme, and relate somehow to previous adventures, thus creating the illusion of ongoing life.

Your voice creates an entire world for players, so effective speech is worth working on. The game should be played in a quiet area where your words will have full effect and quell extraneous conversations. Speak in short, direct statements with a logical sequence, and emphasize the important word in each sentence. One can easily pick out quotations and slogans in a clear speech. Pronounce each part of a word without dividing it into subwords, and project your voice forcefully. Some people's voices tend to rise or drop away during long sentences; if you do this, mark your module's text, noting places to correct faltering speech. Never give players a chance to stop listening. Change game events, sentence lengths, and the tone of your voice frequently. If describing something complex, begin with a preview, then

explain your subject, and end by summarizing it, so the players hear everything several times in different contexts.

You can develop a pleasant voice by improving your resonance and pitch. To test your resonance, pronounce a long "ahhh," and pinch your nostrils shut near the bottom of your nose. This should not modify the sound, and you should not feel vibrations. After this, say "mmmmm." When you close your nostrils now, the sound should stop. To find the ideal pitch for your voice, plug your ears and hum the musical scale. The pitch that sounds the loudest denotes the level at which your voice will be the most clear.

Most speakers talk at a rate of 130-150 words per minute. This speed is usually easy to listen to, and it can be used to plan a length for your delivery. When you take a breath, make sure that your pause builds interest, not interrupts it. A dramatic pause says something in itself; it comes when the audience knows (or dreads) what you would have said, had you not paused.

Describe it!

Describing something as a GM is like selling model kits; you want to give players materials, not a finished scene. Let the players imagine things the way they want them to look. Do not plod through long analyses of everything the PCs see. To paraphrase Josh Billings: It's good to talk a lot so long as you don't use many words. Another trap to avoid is affected, overdramatic voice tones. Describe things in explicit, direct sentences, and substitute action for adjectives whenever possible. Have things happen which illustrate what you are saying. For example, instead of saying, "The monster has sharp claws," show the monster tearing raw meat with those claws. Not only does this make a stronger impression, but it lets you give other hints simultaneously — if the monster has raw meat, it must have killed something. . . .

As Sherlock Holmes said, "To see is not enough." Everybody knows that a dragon is big. You need to say things that the players do not know, things that might be obvious only to somebody who has actually seen a dragon. Even if you have never seen a dragon yourself, study dragonlike things, such as lizards and furnaces. Write down many more bits of information than you actually plan to use, then pick the most vivid ones during play.

When you want to give out trivial details for atmosphere, mix them with vital facts. If the PCs suspect a guardsman shoving through a riot is really a disguised pick-pocket at work, they will listen carefully to your description of that NPC, taking in minor as well as major details. The GM also needs to consider which realistic details improve the game and which ones

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do not. In a heroic duel, the players want to see flashing blades, not writhing victims. However, if PCs insist on attacking innocent people, their players should not escape the anguish caused.

Players need to trust what the GM tells them if the campaign world is to become real to them. Describe things accurately. Even when you want to mislead PCs, tell the truth — but in a way that allows the data to be misinterpreted. Also remember that it is much easier for players to believe in a consistent campaign world if the world obeys its own laws. Try to choose names and details that fit your setting, possibly modeling them on actual cultures and places. If one NPC is named Jacques, you need a logical reason to call his father Moonlight-Bearclaw. Avoid jarring changes in genre too, such as having flying saucers visit an otherwise naturalistic medieval world. If your campaign is founded on hard science fiction, make that clear from the beginning. For the same reason, do not use “canned” jokes in your modules. Humor needs a reason for existence (like everything else).

Time your descriptions carefully. Use long sentences and slow, calm tones to imply serenity, then talk in rapid short sentences when things become exciting. To produce terror, speak slowly, with long descriptions of everyday events. Then shift to rapid action — “It SPRINGS!” In

times of extreme excitement, talk faster and faster, and just as the tension reaches a peak, pause — then deliver the coup de grace.

A GM can use props to make a scene more graphic, to help PCs remember it, or to clarify a complex description. Most GMs have experimented with maps, drawing, written treasure lists, etc. You might also create sound effects, either playing them with a tape recorder or producing them behind your screen. For examples, clapping coconut shells sound like a galloping horse, dried peas rattling in a pan simulate hail, and cellophane crackles like a fiery inferno. The important thing to avoid with audiovisual devices is making them more interesting than your adventure. Use props *after* you describe things verbally, and don't let them delay combat or other game events.

Being someone else

One sentence from an NPC can replace paragraphs of description. Not only do NPCs purposely tell things to PCs, but characters' moods and appearances can reveal histories, emotions, and struggles among people. NPCs should reveal these things through tone, physical behavior, pauses, and words with hidden meanings — not Shakespearean speeches. Have your

NPCs talk in concise, pointed sentences. A character can communicate almost anything with voice tone. Consider the implications of the following sentences:

“She is dead!”

“She is? . . . Dead?”

“She is *dead!*”

“She is dead?”

“She . . . is dead.”

Some actors can use vocal tones to engage in complex conversations — while reciting the alphabet.

An NPC responds to PCs in three stages: sensation (noticing something), perception (making plans), and attack (reacting). When playing an NPC, consider how you would notice, plan, and react if you were that person. Also remember how the NPC thinks. People from different cultures (especially nonhumans) might have completely foreign attitudes about things we take for granted. For example, in ancient Byzantium, people considered the maiming of criminals to be an act of mercy because it gave the criminals both a chance and a reason to repent.

NPCs will certainly talk naturally, and you can easily simulate this by using contractions and reasonably modern speech. However, NPCs should not speak slang which clearly comes from a different world, like saying “Hot jets!” in a fantasy campaign. Imaginative GMs can easily invent their own cliches for fantasy environments. When you imitate emotional NPCs, be careful not to portray a stereotype — try to actually feel what your character does and let the tones come naturally. Actors empathize with characters by reading poetry or imagining scenes which evoke appropriate emotions. You can also try making appropriate faces; according to the James-Lange psychological theory, moods are partially created by facial expressions.

GMs should make their own observations about portraying characters. Try some of these actors' tricks. If an NPC is under some sort of strain, you might lift a heavy book or merely tense your muscles while playing that role. High-pitched voices indicate fury or wild emotion, while deep sounds convey complex feelings. To portray strength, talk with a deep, resonant voice, and have weak characters speak in squeaky, sharp tones. A character's age can be indicated by vocal flexibility; younger people quickly move from one tone to another, while old characters sound more stable. When an NPC talks in a foreign language, you might simulate that with an accent, if the PCs can still understand the NPC.

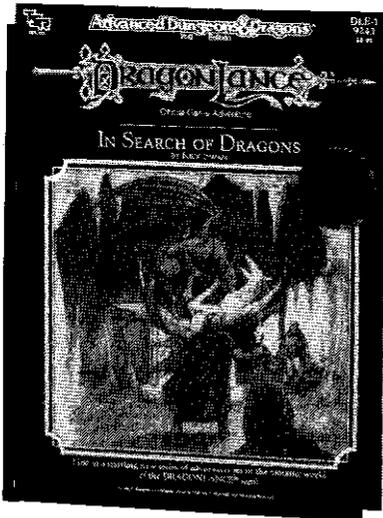
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choose the exact words as you go along. As GM, you should always carefully read a module before playing in it, until you understand what is happening and how you plan to convey that to the players. Short script outlines, organized on a series of index cards, can help you remember points you want to make. You can also pick a few key words which sum up the descriptions you want to give, such as "Ruined Castle: crumbling brick, ivy, rusted gate." Mark any effects you want to produce, noting pauses, voice tone, etc. When you must read a long piece of text aloud, listen to yourself and try to form groups of words with appropriate pauses, bringing out a rhythm.

Making players play

A GM is not only a writer, actor, orator, and so forth; a GM is a police officer. You must keep the players listening to you, at peace with one another, and having fun, too. It is easiest to keep control when the players also want things to run smoothly. Make it obvious that you plan to have fun. Never apologize for minor imperfections; give titillating hints to make players anxious to play. People will look at you if they see you looking at them, so maintain eye contact. Do not constantly stare at one person; shift your gaze from player to

player. Since most distractions develop during delays, start playing as soon as possible, end when the adventure is over, and try not to waste time searching for obscure rules. You can copy important data into the module's text.

It is as important for a GM to listen well as it is to speak effectively. Think about what the players tell you their characters are doing and consider how these actions affect your adventure's plot. Since you cannot respond to everything the players say, attempt to pick out the most important parts. Make it clear which player you are listening to, and do not let anybody interrupt. Even if someone wants to do something completely impractical, avoid embarrassing the player — but never do a PC favors, either. Respond to nonverbal suggestions, too. When players enjoy something, prolong it. If they are bored, hurry to the next encounter. Fidgeting seldom means that people dislike your adventure — it usually indicates that one certain player needs attention.

Almost every adventuring party suffers internal disputes. When one player is clearly right, you might offer friendly support, but do not join fights yourself. Unless characters actually kill each other, you do not usually need to settle disputes between PCs, as opposed to players. GMs can even use friendly conflicts to build intrigue by having NPCs support one rival PC or the other. When the two players carry some personal grievance into the game, you can either ignore it or ask them to stop. It is almost impossible to mediate real disputes by inserting allegories into your fictional game, so don't even try.

Finally...

Do not let any guidelines, even these, obstruct your game. Use only those guidelines that help you. The most important task for a GM is to have fun. This is more than a platitude. The players can tell if you enjoy something, and if the GM dislikes an adventure, they will too. Pick an adventure you wish your character would have, and run it with zest. Ω

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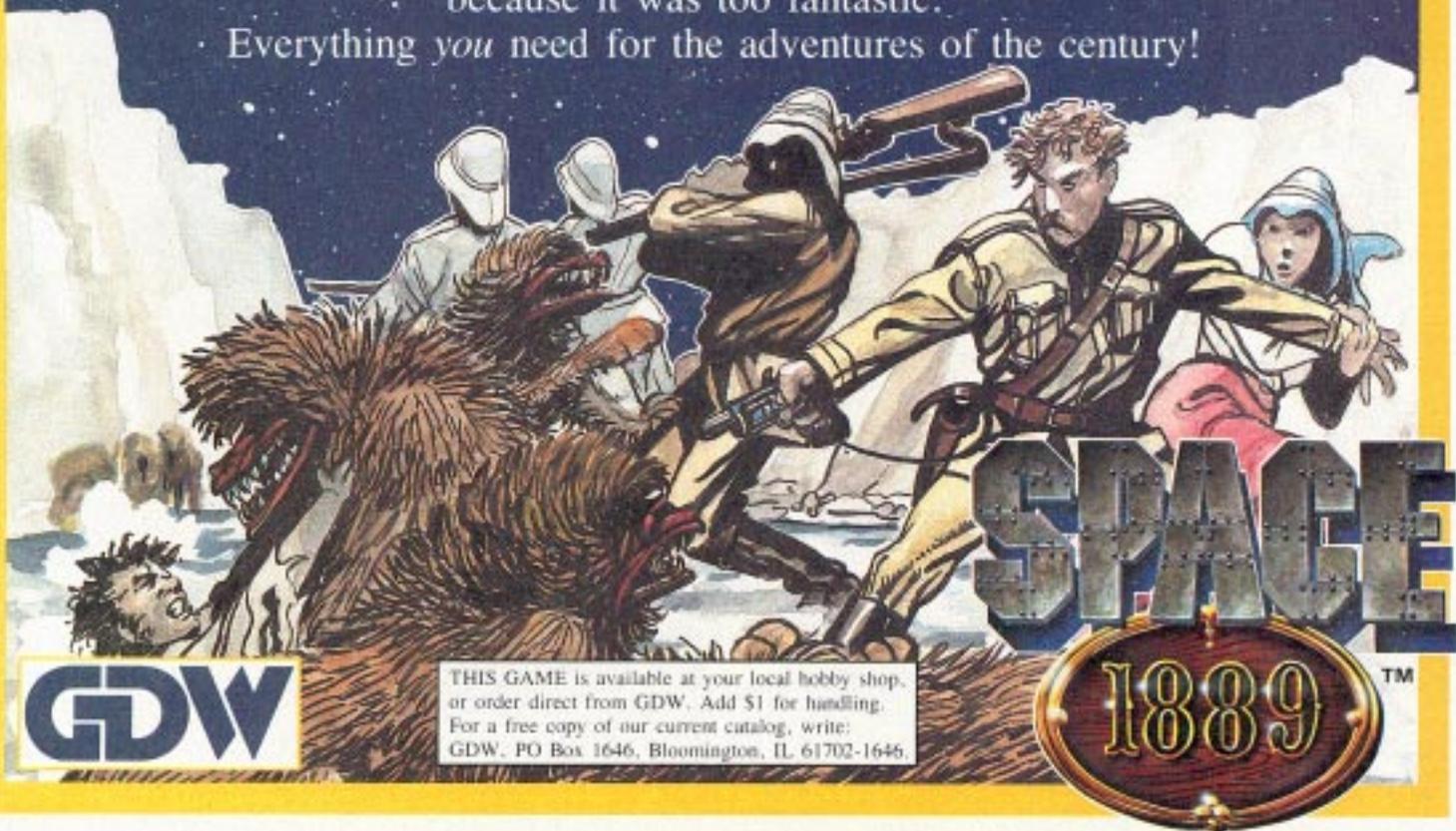
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by Paul Hancock

The Highs and Lows of Fantasy

Heroism, not realism,
is the name of the game

The AD&D® game has had many imitators, but it is still one of the only fantasy role-playing games (FRPGs) on the market that deserves to be called a "heroic fantasy" game. Consider the combat system, for example. It is unique in that it is abstract, designed to complement your imagination but not replace it. There are no hit-location tables or critical hits as in other FRPG systems. Furthermore, the melee round is a full minute long and includes dozens of swings, feints, and maneuvers. Not surprisingly, players often complain that this isn't realistic, but they have missed the point. The AD&D game is not meant to be realistic at all; it is meant to be heroic. That the fundamental philosophy behind the game—the spirit and intent of the rules. What's more, realism and heroism are often directly opposed to each other.

As Gary Gygax points out in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 9: "As a realistic simulation of things from the realm of make-believe . . . [the AD&D game] can be deemed only a dismal failure." He then adds: "Those who desire to create and populate imaginary worlds with larger-than-life heroes and villains will hopefully find this system to their taste." This philosophy differentiates the AD&D game from most other FRPGs and is one of the reasons for its continuing popularity.

For years, there has been a trend



Illustrations by Ned Dameron

toward realism in the AD&D game. In this magazine and others, most of the articles attempt to make the AD&D game more realistic. Two recent additions to the official rules, *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide* and *Wilderness Survival Guide*, are attempts at realistic simulation.

Does this mean that the realists are violating the spirit of the rules? Of course not. The AD&D game is constantly evolving. It now seems that there are two very different styles of play: the heroic style, often called "high fantasy," and the realistic style, often called "low fantasy." In playing the AD&D game, the DM must interpret the rules in different ways depending on the style he uses. Using the example of the abstract combat system, it is often useful in low-fantasy campaigns to more fully develop the rules in this aspect, adding initiative modifiers, hit locations, etc. This has been done in many campaigns. In high fantasy, of course, such additions would be unnecessary and even harmful.

It is not sacrilegious to change some of the rules. The important thing is the spirit of the rules, which depends entirely on what style of play you and your players prefer. This style of play determines how a game world is developed and what goals the characters have. These days, there is an overwhelming emphasis on low fantasy; many new players and DMs are led to believe this is the only way to play the game. This is a shame, because a lot of

people want to be larger-than-life heroes when they start playing. When they find out this is not allowed, they quit in disgust.

High fantasy

*But at the last the King
grew weary, and Morgoth
bore down his shield upon
him. . . . [The King] stumbled
and fell backward before the
feet of Morgoth; and Morgoth
set his left foot upon his
neck. . . . Yet with his last and
desperate stroke Fingolfin
hewed the foot with Ringil,
and the blood gushed forth
black and smoking and filled
the pits of Grond.*

*Thus died Fingolfin, High
King of the Noldor, most
proud and valiant of the
Elven-kings of old.*

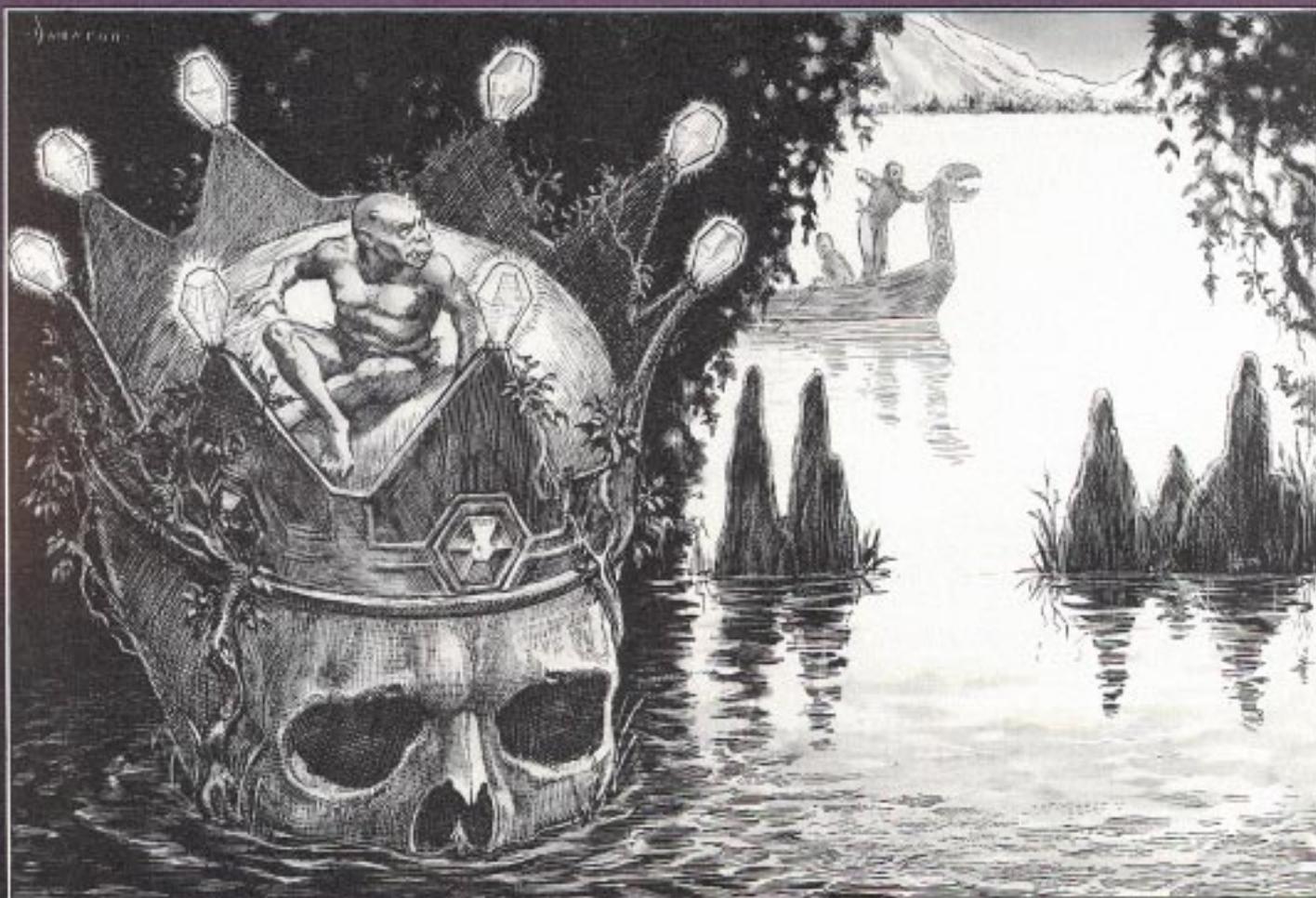
The Silmarillion
J. R. R. Tolkien

The key to high fantasy is its unusual and dramatic nature; it makes no attempt to copy real life. Realism isn't everything,

especially in a game that's supposed to provide us with escapist entertainment. For example, who needs a scientifically accurate system to calculate falling damage? A hero is protected by magic power in the form of hit points. If he falls 100' and lives, so be it—it just proves he's a hero. We can't compare a hero to a normal human being. Besides, is there any reason why the laws of reality must apply in a world of fantasy? To a great extent, scientific realism is out of place in high fantasy because it leaves no room for the fantastic and incredible deeds a hero must accomplish if he is to be heroic.

In high fantasy, the game world need not make sense in our terms. In fact, there are some things which should not make sense. Magic, for instance, is by nature mysterious; otherwise, it's just another humdrum aspect of science. High fantasy must appeal to our sense of wonder, not to our common sense.

More than any other form of role-playing, high fantasy takes us completely away from the mundane world. Anything that reminds us of the gritty details of everyday life is best avoided. Thus, internal consistency must take a back seat to atmosphere. This does not mean that a high-fantasy setting must be two-dimensional. It means the DM must be sure not to destroy the mythical, mysterious quality of the setting with needless, boring detail.

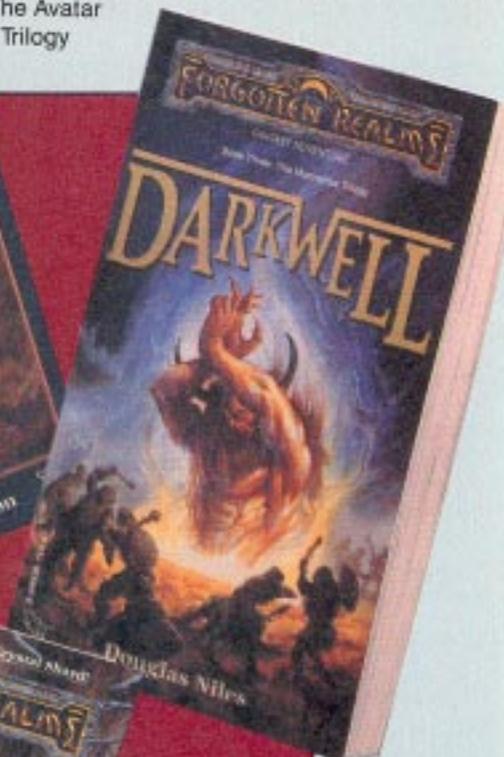
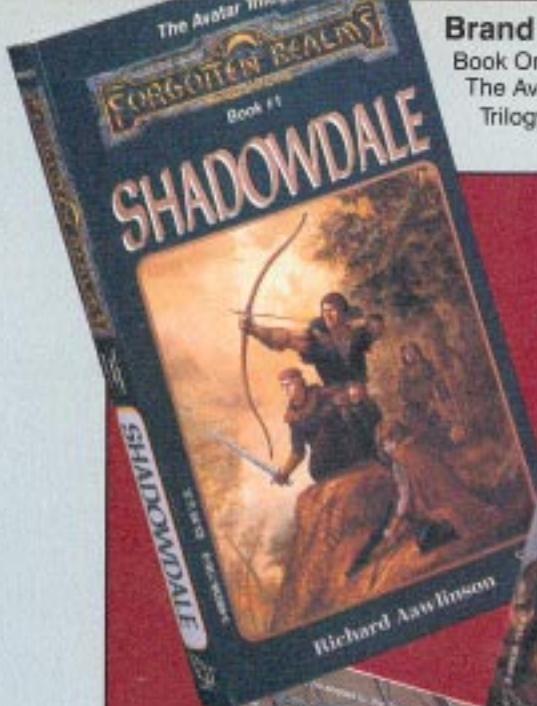




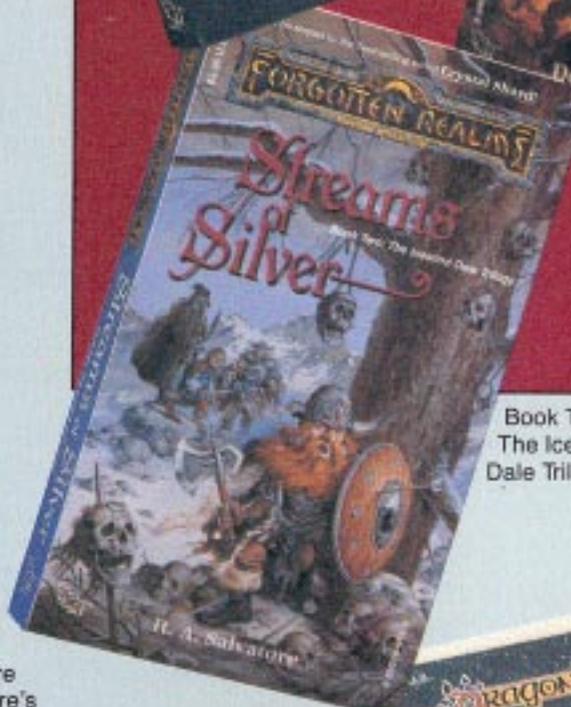
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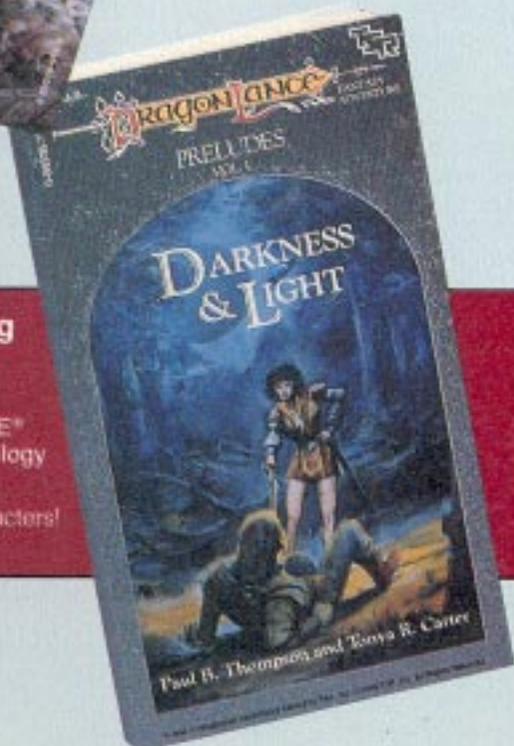
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We all have a sense of wonder somewhere within us. Why else are we playing FRPGs? Like any other skill, this is developed by practice. The greatest challenge in high fantasy is maintaining a suspension of disbelief. As we get older, we tend to become more skeptical, more willing to make up elaborate explanations for all the campaign's mysteries. This is not a good idea in a high-fantasy campaign, in which we must feel more than think.

Are you suited for high fantasy? If the ordinary details of everyday life in your game world do not interest you, if you dream of doing glorious, dramatic, and perilous deeds, and if you enjoy letting your imagination run wild (to the extent that you sometimes go beyond the bounds of common sense), then this gaming style is for you.

If you want to create a high-fantasy campaign, you might consider the suggestions given below. They are only general guidelines, and you may alter them or ignore them entirely, as long as you are careful to maintain game balance. Remember: In high fantasy, you should never hesitate to bend a rule if it helps you obtain a dramatic effect.

Campaign goals: The basis of any successful campaign is a clearly defined purpose; otherwise, the players wander around aimlessly, bored and confused. In both high and low fantasy, the greatest goal (besides having fun) is to accumulate experience points, thereby rising in level. It should be obvious that how one arrives at this goal is as important as the goal itself. This is where high and low fantasy differ. While low fantasy is essentially money-oriented, high fantasy stresses glorious, heroic deeds. Paradoxically, the AD&D game rules, which were originally intended to reflect the high-fantasy style, place an overwhelming value on money. Practically all experience points are gained in this manner, and you have to raise huge sums of money to advance in level. It's no small wonder that most characters are primarily interested in treasure and not in heroic deeds. There's little to gain in fighting a huge dragon single-handedly, thereby rescuing your comrades, if the rules don't reward that kind of thing.

To allow the characters to be more heroic, it is advisable to lower experience-point awards for treasure (perhaps 1/2 xp per gold piece) and raise awards for slaying monsters proportionately. Especially heroic deeds should be rewarded as well. For example, holding off a dragon under desperate circumstances might merit up to one-half the experience points normally gained by killing the thing. Remember that being heroic isn't being stupid; never hesitate to penalize a player who doesn't bother to think, no matter how dramatic he is. The line between bravery and stupidity is a fine one — something only the DM can decide.

To further limit the value of money, lower or eliminate the monetary cost of

gaining experience levels. It is very likely that heroes will teach themselves for no cost. They are, after all, among the highest-level mortals in their worlds, so they aren't likely to find a suitable teacher anyway. Alternatively, you might allow them to find some sort of instructor, but insist that they pay by performing some quest or other service.

In all cases, players should understand that some products or services worth having cannot be bought for any price; they must be won through great and perilous deeds. As a DM, you must place the emphasis on the means, not the end. A hero rescues maidens and slays dragons not for any material reward, but for the sheer glory of his actions and the prestige which follows. As his fame and reputation spread, he will be greeted with awe by normal mortals. Songs will be sung in his honor, and epic poems will be composed about his exploits. He will literally become a legend in his own time. Not surprisingly, this is quite an ego boost for the average player. As a result, it can be a more desirable goal than piles of coins could ever be.

Dominant conflicts: Heroic deeds necessitate stupendous dangers. It is difficult to sustain interest in a high-fantasy campaign when the characters do not have a suitably grand purpose on which to focus. This can be as simple as a fundamental conflict between Good and Evil or Law and Chaos (this is already built into the game to a certain extent), or as complex as desperate war with malevolent forces that threaten to engulf civilization. Quests are ideally suited for heroic characters. Depending on the campaign, even the gods themselves may be actively involved — something which would soon unbalance a low-fantasy campaign.

Fate plays an important role in high fantasy. Heroes are often channeled down predetermined paths, and while they have the responsibility to determine the outcomes of individual encounters, the overall scheme of things is set beforehand. This might be undesirable in low fantasy, where free will (or the illusion thereof) is important. In high fantasy, however, the characters are often the earthly representatives of some higher power. As such, they have grave responsibilities and are not free to determine their own destinies. In the long run, a hero has a sense of importance and purpose that a more conventional character doesn't have.

High-level heroes: A high-fantasy campaign is suited for small numbers of players. Heroes don't want to share their glory with others, and single combat obviously lends itself to heroism. Because of their tendency to be solitary and because of their heroic (i.e., unusual) nature, these characters must have a high experience level in order to survive. In fact, it is often wise to start new characters at high level, say 10th level or so. By definition, heroic deeds are fantastic and incredible, and low-level characters just aren't equipped

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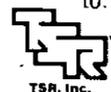


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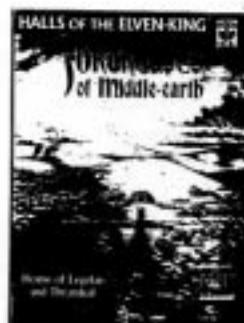
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to do something of this nature without getting killed.

Tragic flaws: Let's face it — perfect characters or situations are boring. A hero is assumed to be better than most mortals, and he should have high ability scores to reflect that fact. Nevertheless, a flaw or two will invariably make a character more interesting. Perhaps, like Moorcock's Elric, the character is sickly and weak without the magical healing effects of his sword. Perhaps he committed some terrible deed in the past and is tormented by his conscience. Perhaps, like Conan, he knows his fate but is powerless to avoid it. The possibilities are endless.

Alignment adherence: Heroes aren't known for their moral and ethical flexibility. Typically, they are pure and single-minded with regard to their alignments. Thus, characters that have extreme alignments are especially suited for high fantasy. The paladin, for example, makes a great hero in high fantasy, though he tends to be too pure and righteous for a low-fantasy campaign. Alignments must also reflect the central conflict of the campaign. In a setting where there is a struggle between good and evil, a lawful-neutral character would be ineffectual except as a mediator — and where's the glory in that? Whatever the character's alignment, he should stick to it at all times, and the DM should be strict when graphing alignments.

It has been pointed out by some that the alignment system is unrealistic, and some DMs have dropped it entirely from their games. However, heroes are not supposed to represent real people. In a way, they are simply manifestations of an ethos — a fundamental, primal force. Heroes are the creation of the mind. As such, they represent ideals that no mere mortal could possibly live up to. Part of the fun of high fantasy is leaving your mortality behind.

Heroic atmosphere: High fantasy is essentially dramatic; it deals with the incredible and fantastic, not the commonplace. In order to convey the wonder and drama of the campaign, the DM must counter the players' natural skepticism. This suspension of disbelief may be produced in a number of ways.

Heroism implies something exceptional or unusual. If players become too accustomed to something, it ceases to be exceptional or unusual, thus defeating the purpose of high fantasy. The DM must exercise moderation when giving the players things which they consider important and valuable. For example, many successful adventures culminate with the discovery of a great treasure — a dragon's hoard or such. In high fantasy, this treasure is not just valuable because it will materially aid the characters, but because it is impressive and awe-inspiring, thus contributing to the heroic atmosphere of the game. But something's value is directly related to its scarcity. If you regularly throw mounds of treasure in the charac-

ters' direction, they begin to take it for granted — and that's not conducive to heroism. Keep the characters unaccustomed to large sums of money; only when they are habituated to the simple lives of average heroes will they be impressed by wagonloads of gold and jewels. In the words of Gary Gygax (*DMG*, page 93): "What is gotten cheaply is often held in contempt."

What happens to all this money once the characters have it? The rules attempt to get rid of excess money by imposing huge costs on training for level advancement. This is not a good approach in high fantasy because it creates an overwhelming demand for treasure that is soon the character's sole aim in life. Instead, the importance of treasure should be limited, except perhaps as a way to get experience points. How one gets rid of excess treasure largely depends on the character's situation. If he belongs to an organization (a temple, for example), he will probably donate most of his wealth to that organization. If he is the king of some great nation, the money will be swallowed up by the royal treasury, perhaps to be spent on the raising of an army to further the character's goals. In the case of most dragon hoards, the treasure may rightfully belong to some other deserving group and should be returned to them (except, perhaps, for a few choice items). In each of these cases,

the money is well spent. Not only are the characters increasing their fame and reputations, but they are actively furthering their goals in regard to the dominant conflict of the campaign.

Heroes usually fight against overwhelming odds. Often at the brink of doom, they seem to escape at the last instant. This, of course, is simulated in the AD&D game by using saving throws. Saving throws, however, do not apply in every situation. For example, suppose there is a hero who fights an epic battle with a huge dragon. He acquits himself admirably, but the tide of battle goes against him and he is forced back into a corner, with no escape from the great wyrm's fiery breath. Facing certain death, the hero mutters a prayer to his patron deity and hurls his sword at the dragon's breast with all his might. The projectile whistles through the air, turning end over end. . . . Does the blade fly true and bury itself in the monster's black heart? If the character tried this tactic before, of course not — he is doomed. On the other hand, let us say it was a truly inspired act; why shouldn't it work?

The fact is heroes are frequently capable of actions that are outside the scope of the rules. Most heroic deeds are once-only events; no character could make a career of killing dragons with lobbed swords. The essence of heroism is that it is unusual, inspired, and unexpected. Still, heroism



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should not be used to justify thoughtless, unnecessary risk. If the character does not deserve a heroic escape, the DM should allow him to meet his doom — dramatically, of course.

Alternatively, characters can use devices such as luck points (described in the Conan (CB) series of AD&D game modules) or hero points (see DRAGON® issue #118, "A Hero's Reward"). Each character has a certain number of such points. Every time the character states he is using a luck point, for example, he can automatically make a saving throw or perform another dramatic action. Of course, if he uses these points up, his luck runs out and he suffers the consequences the next time he is in a life-threatening situation.

In high fantasy, atmosphere is more important than substance. Heroism is unusual and fantastic; the DM must milk every situation for dramatic effect. In high fantasy, we can put ourselves in the shoes of Odysseus, Perseus, Cu Chulainn, Beowulf, King Arthur, Elric, Conan, and sundry other heroes of myth and literature, doing glorious and noble deeds in the midst of great conflict and tragedy. High fantasy is the stuff of which legends are made!

Low fantasy

Where others might be content with modest gains, Jubal continued to amass his fortune with fanatic intensity. He had learned a dear lesson while glaring through hate-slitted eyes at the crowds who cheered his gory pit victories. . . . Money-and Power, not skill and courage, were what determined one's standing in the social order of men.

"The Price of Doing Business"

Robert Lynn Asprin

For most players, the AD&D game is no longer a game of heroic fantasy. In many ways, a low-fantasy campaign is not so much an escape from reality as it is an extension of it. If you accept a few basic things like magic, the world makes perfect sense; it could exist. The DM strives to give the setting depth and consistency through the development of economics, ecology, politics, climate, and a host of other details. Depending on the campaign, even the minute details of life can be simulated. For example, a character might spend a considerable proportion of his playing time just buying things — provisions, equipment, weapons, and such — and haggling with an endless series of merchants, usurers, fences, collectors of magical and rare items, and many others. This may seem trivial compared to the heroic deeds of high fantasy. However, part of the fun of low fantasy is the continued interaction of the characters with normal people. Everything may be on a less-ambitious scale than high fantasy, but that does not mean that low fantasy is any less fun. Many players prefer low fantasy because it is more down-to-earth and less cut-and-dried than high fantasy.

In low fantasy, the characters are essentially human beings (or demihuman beings), with all their attendant faults and weaknesses. In a world where there is no absolute distinction between right and wrong, the DM should allow some leeway with regard to alignments. Even characters like paladins can be allowed to be more morally flexible — just as the righteous knights of the Middle Ages were flexible in their interpretation of good and evil. This is not to say that characters are more cynical or self-centered than normal. There is plenty of room in low fantasy for courage and noble deeds. The characters are merely more human than high-fantasy heroes — and are thus more believable.

Because this campaign requires depth and internal consistency to make it believable, the DM must be prepared to put in a considerable amount of work. If you enjoy creating campaign material for its own sake — just for the satisfaction of seeing

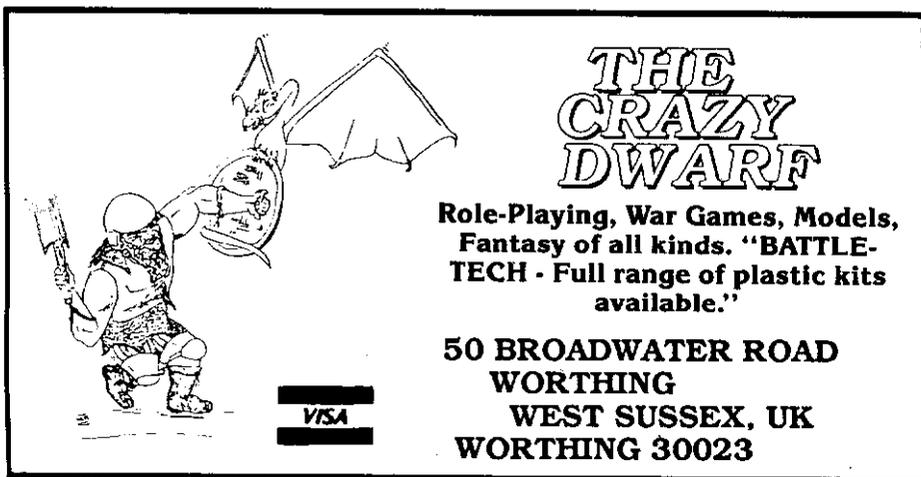
your world come alive as your players interact with it — and you add details to the campaign that few players would ever be likely to know or even care about, then you are probably a low-fantasy DM. As a player, if you are a practical sort of person and you prefer the devious and uncertain challenges of real life to the more straightforward world of heroic fantasy, then you are probably suited for low fantasy. The following guidelines will help you set up a low-fantasy campaign.

Campaign goals: In low fantasy, the characters measure their successes mainly by how much treasure they amass. The money earned helps pay for their training when they gain experience levels, and magical treasures make them more powerful. Thus, every adventure should have some material reward. However, so that the characters do not become overly rich and powerful, one must carefully limit the amount of treasure in each adventure. Monstrous dragon hoards with wagon-loads of gold and gems might be the stuff of high fantasy, but it will send low-fantasy campaigns down the proverbial tubes. The players' interests will be held only as long as they remain hungry for more money and power. There is an abundance of good advice on how to avoid the Monty Haul trap, and it is not the intent of this article to further belabor the point.

Low-level characters: As characters rise toward high experience levels, there inevitably comes a point where they are so powerful that the conventional goals of the campaign become meaningless. As beginning characters, everything they wanted was connected in some way with money and power — that is, the characters never had enough money to buy everything they wanted and were not powerful enough to take it by force. Their prime objective then was to rise in wealth and power so they could obtain the things they wanted. At high levels, though, they can buy or take just about anything they please. Consequently, these early goals become meaningless.

Part of the fun of low fantasy is the extensive interaction of normal NPCs with the player characters. But there is no reason to bargain with a merchant if you can buy his entire store, and it isn't necessary to bribe a guard to let you into a castle if you can smash a hole through the wall and march right in. At high levels, you can lay waste to the carefully balanced setting and leave all the DM's work and care in smoking ruins. In these cases, there's no challenge to everyday life anymore — and everyday life is an important aspect of low fantasy.

High-fantasy heroes can handle their utter superiority to normal people; they have greater goals to consider. In low fantasy, however, characters are integral parts of an intricate, extensive design. They may become powerful, but never to the extent that the world revolves around them. When the characters rise past mid-



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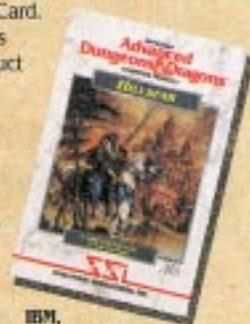
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level, a choice must be made: Either begin again with new characters, or change styles to accommodate high fantasy gaming (a process described later).

Realistic atmosphere: While the virtue of high fantasy is its simplicity, a low-fantasy campaign must be less abstract. In some campaigns, for example, a more complicated combat system is helpful. Heroes may fight by the round, but many characters, especially assassins and thieves, often don't have that long; realistic combat is often quick and deadly. There are other elements of the AD&D game which are perfect for the high-fantasy style but are inadequate for low fantasy. Luckily, most of these have been developed more fully in articles in this and other magazines.

Realism can be taken too far; it should never interfere with playability. Players generally find it easier in low fantasy to identify with the world and with their own characters if they find the campaign is based on the laws of reality. They will not be impressed if the campaign is so realistic that the DM must spend minutes of valuable game time trying to resolve the most straightforward actions. As many have observed, if we aren't careful, the AD&D game will drown in its own rules.

Flexible alignments: Thieves, assassins, and other characters who are known for their flexibility in regard to morals and ethics are perfect for low fantasy. On the

other hand, characters with extreme alignments might have problems if they are forced to stick to rigid codes of behavior. Alignment works well in high fantasy, where we assume that Good, Evil, Law, and Chaos exist in an absolute sense. In low fantasy, this might seem contrived and unrealistic. The DM should interpret alignments as general tendencies, not as tangible forces. It might be possible, in fact, to do away with alignments completely (as Paul Suttie suggested in "For king and country," back in DRAGON issue #101).

Which is better?

It would be unreasonable to believe that low fantasy is necessarily better than high fantasy because it is more realistic. Many people like to leave the world completely behind them when they play a fantasy role-playing game. For these people, so-called realism actually detracts from their enjoyment of the game.

Of course, some people are of a more practical temperament and prefer a low-fantasy campaign. In any case, it should be clear by now that there is no one way to play the AD&D game. Both approaches are perfectly satisfactory. A DM's style of play should follow the natural inclinations of the DM and the majority of his players. Too many campaigns fail because they try to be all things to all people.

It is possible to have a campaign which starts as low fantasy and, as the characters rise in level, changes to high fantasy. In my own experience, this is not a good idea because most DMs and players prefer only one style of play. That's not to say it isn't possible, however.

As the characters rise through the mid-levels (7th to 11th, depending on the campaign), the conventional low-fantasy goals become meaningless; buying things is no problem and the characters get the idea that the world revolves around them. At this point, they start becoming bored — after all, they are rich, powerful, and have risen to name level. What more is there?

At this point, the DM must change the characters' goals. Follow the suggestions explained under the "High fantasy" sub-heading. If you don't have a dominant conflict, get one so the characters have a new clearly defined goal. Also, change your emphasis from materialism (what the PCs get) to action (what they do and how they do it). The players may at first complain about the scarcity of treasure, but it is no longer necessary for them to have money to go up levels. Also, when they do get a choice item of treasure, it will be greatly appreciated. Make the characters feel special. After all, by now they're probably famous (or infamous) in the adventuring area.

However you decide to approach the game, there are certain things you should always keep in mind:

Don't overdo it: Game balance is all-important. Whatever the players are after, don't give it away — make them work for

it. As long as the players have a worthwhile goal, they will be interested in the campaign. By the same token, don't be too stingy either.

Don't be bullied: Many experienced gamers tend to look down on unrealistic campaigns, which they feel will sooner or later degenerate into Monty Haul games. This is not always true. If you enjoy high fantasy, stick with it; it can be just as exciting, challenging, and playable as low fantasy. The AD&D game is a game of the imagination, and no one can tell you how to use your imagination. Of course, if low fantasy is your thing and you are willing to put in a little time and work, that's fine too. Choose the style that appeals to you and most of your players. Doing so will give you a good head start to an enjoyable and exciting campaign.

Every rule has its exception: If something fits into your campaign even though someone says it shouldn't belong in that style, that's all well and good. Your campaign is your own; it should have its own special flavor.

As a final note, you may want to read literature or explore role-playing aids which reflect the style of play in which you are interested. This may help you with ideas for adventures or serve to stimulate your imagination. A brief list follows, classified by style.

High fantasy: The Conan series, by Robert E. Howard; the Elric of Melnibone, Hawkmoon, and Erekoze series, by Michael Moorcock; *The Silmarillion*, by J. R. R. Tolkien; *Dilvish the Damned*, by Roger Zelazny; and the Conan (CB) series of AD&D game modules.

Low fantasy: The Thieves' World series, edited by Robert Lynn Asprin; *Saga of Old City*, by E. Gary Gygax; the Harn fantasy world (Columbia Games), by N. Robin Crossby; and the Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser series, by Fritz Leiber. Ω

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To Be Continued...

*Epic themes for
fantasy game
campaigns*

by Thomas Kane



In tales that really mattered . . . folk seem to have just landed in them — their paths were laid that way.

The Two Towers, J. R. R. Tolkien

In AD&D® games, the DM must be sure that the PCs' paths are "laid that way." Campaigns need a theme, a saga that demands continuing heroics. You can begin the game with such a plot or else bring one into an existing campaign. There are many times of daring and excitement in history from which a DM might borrow while creating a campaign.

Getting started

All campaigns need a conflict to keep the PCs struggling. The conflict should affect vast portions of society so that the PCs cannot simply get what they want and end the game. Each adventure needs a specific goal, but the greater struggle must go on. AD&D campaigns should occur amid inexorable social changes, situations which force the PCs to resist historical trends or exploit them. One period in history which might make a fertile campaign is the fall of the Middle Ages' feudal system.

Feudalism depended on two social groups: the nobility and the peasants. There were a few merchants, shopkeepers, and yeoman farmers, but they were insignificant. Almost all people in a feudal society were peasants who owned no land and worked on a noble's farm. The landlords were usually legal rulers, but even when some other government administered justice, lords had absolute power over their serfs because lords owned the land. Most of what a peasant grew went to the landowner, and the lords word was law.

Nobles were not like modern dictators. A baron lived by the code of chivalry, obeying a duty to support his peasants. People believed that everybody had a station in life, and all places were equally worthy. Nobles were not always rich, and they did not usually feel superior to their peasants. Landlords considered themselves above crass greed. A prosperous noble might cast a throne of gold, but he would not invest his money for profit. The role of a lord was to govern his subjects, and the role of a peasant was to feed his lord. Neither could exist without the other. The fact that serfs lived in poverty, completely controlled by the nobles they fed,

was ignored.

In 1349, the Black Death devastated Europe [see "*The End of the World*," in *DRAGON®* issue #138]. This ruin made living people valuable. Nobles lost their serfs; artisans could no longer hire workers; generals found their armies gone; and the church needed new priests. Workers could now demand high wages. Serfs on a fiefdom toiled constantly, and their crops were taxed away, but elsewhere they were free and could earn amazing sums of money as laborers. Peasants could not legally abandon their lord, yet many fled despite dreadful punishments.

Nobles could no longer farm their land except with hired workers who had fled from some other lord. To pay these laborers, the nobles needed money and so had to rent their property for cash. Businessmen, many of whom had recently been serfs, were glad to lease farmland, but they did not grow food crops which required many expensive workers and sold for low prices. They wanted something they could sell for a profit — wool. One shepherd could tend hundreds of sheep; therefore, merchants converted the manors to pastures.

"These are the days when sheep eat men," lamented a writer in that time. Sheep merchants evicted the peasants who had remained with their barons. The few workers who had invested in wool became rich; the rest starved. As the years after the plague went by, wool became more valuable and labor less so. The masses of workers, who owned no land and served no noble, wandered the roads looking for work. They were not wanted in cities, and the Church could not support them.

The wandering poor lost contact with society. On a noble's estate, people had a lasting culture; what someone did one day was remembered the next. There was also the lords baliff, and in cities, there were guards and watchmen. But on the highways there was no law, and there was no way to survive except by stealing.

If this had happened in a role-playing game, the PCs could not simply kill some evil perpetrator and restore things to normal. To rescue the old manors or find occupations for the hordes of dispossessed, PCs would have to conduct a long series of projects — a campaign. Of course, some parties might like these changes. They might raise sheep or recruit homeless serfs for some project of their own. An economic crisis can create businesses like thieves' guilds and adventuring services. If the DM wants a mercenary atmosphere of dungeon-looting and hired killers, social upheavals make a believable background and could be introduced into a campaign that has already been started. Perhaps the PCs themselves caused the problem. In an isolated area, evicting even a few peasants might upset the social order.

The DM can make adventures more spontaneous by picking PCs that have an interest in the campaign's conflict. If the fall of feudalism is the setting, the PCs

could be serfs who begin adventuring when they are thrust from their land. Or their first quest might be to escape the manor and become high-paid laborers. Or the PCs might be the children of nobles and must find money to keep their ancestral lands. In none of these cases does the DM need to have NPCs hire the PCs as adventurers, but he still knows what quests they will undertake. This allows the DM to carefully plan each adventure while letting the PCs think that they make all the decisions.

The PCs should come from a group that suffers or benefits strongly from whatever is happening in the DM's world. What historical or fictional figures would have been fun to play as PCs? What made them do what they did? In the era of decaying feudalism, Henry VIII and Cardinal Wolsey would both have been interesting PCs. Wolsey's parents came from the lower classes, but by taking advantage of social confusion, he became a priest, then a Cardinal, and finally a powerful advisor to the King of England. By taking Wolsey's advice) Henry also rose in society, increasing the power of his crown over weakened barons. However, the King could not produce a male heir to carry on these projects. The rest is history. By giving PCs backgrounds and desires, the DM has them write the history of their world.

The DM should work with the players to invent motivations for PCs and decide why they are working together. This might simply be because the characters need each other's help to achieve their goals. They also might be appointed to their jobs; perhaps they are all the children of the same noble family or have been hired as scouts for an army. Most players prefer to "roll up" their own characters. The DM should let them do that, but he can color the characters with suggestions about their preadventuring lives and goals. Almost all players enjoy getting backgrounds that place their characters in the DM's world, especially if the histories include useful information, friendships, or heirlooms.

There are two mistakes to avoid when trying to give PCs natural reasons to adventure. One: Never make decisions for a player's character. People play role-playing games so *they* can have adventures, not so the DM can. Start adventures by warning the PCs about impending events which should inspire an adventure, but let the party decide what to do. NPCs might give PCs advice, but do not give the advice to players as the DM. If the PCs fail to take action, they must endure the consequences, which should also make an exciting adventure. Two: Avoid basing a whole campaign on one particular character. If that person dies, it could ruin the game. The victim will have to return somehow — and that makes everyone fear death less. It also ruins a chance for dramatic role-playing, where survivors grieve over a lost companion. Instead, give all the PCs a reason to lead adventures. If one character dies, someone will take his

place. The player of the dead character can roll up a new PC.

One thing leads to . . .

Each time the characters complete an adventure, they change the campaign, and every change should inspire future adventures. When a DM picks a campaign setting, he should make general plans for the milieu's future so that it is always in turmoil. As the campaign becomes more complex, each character will mature, too, gaining regrets, memories, hopes, and dreams.

Wars make stirring campaigns. They let PCs lead hosts into battle, make daring strikes deep in enemy territory, or even yearn for peace. Best of all, wars can spawn complications which last for centuries. Many fantasy battles are fought to destroy some vast, evil menace, but the real adventuring might come *after* a Dark Lord has fallen. If several forces have united to defeat this enemy, how will they divide the foe's lands? What will they do to prevent future wars? Will their alliances break down or strengthen? The victors may not trust their old allies. Examine the peace settlements after the Napoleonic Wars or either World War to see how this process can spark future conflicts. An axiom of diplomacy says, "It is better to be strong after a war than before it."

The Thirty Years War would have made an excellent fantasy campaign. It lasted for roughly the duration of an adventurer's career, and its repercussions still affect us almost 400 years later. In the Middle Ages, wars were limited. Nobles believed that they ruled by the gift of God and that every fiefdom was holy. Lords "never overthrew other nobles, as this would question their own right to rule. Rulers might quarrel over territory; children might fight over inheritance; but no lord would destroy his enemy.

Patriotism did not exist in the Middle Ages. Peasants were as happy to have one ruler as another, and nobles needed every serf to farm. It would be foolish to draft peasants into armies — such an army would starve. Only nobles and warriors

fought, and except for those within the war zone, common people were unaffected by combat. They barely knew who won and who lost. A spirit of honor and chivalry ruled the military.

In 1618, a new form of war emerged. Common people *would* fight for religion, and in the 1600s, Protestantism grew constantly though the Catholic Church viewed it as heresy. Homeless serfs were still numerous from the ravages of the sheep merchants. They sought a cause, and their numbers could form vast armies. At this time, nearly 1,000 fiefdoms made up the area of modern-day Germany, and they allied themselves with larger empires in their struggles against one another. Catholic lords joined with the Austrian Hapsburgs, the Italians, the Dutch, and the Spanish. Protestant nobles allied with England, Denmark, France (which was not Protestant), and Sweden. Europe split itself into two great factions, each containing hundreds of tiny members and several great ones. Religious quarrels inspired the soldiers; every citizen took arms. The fuse was lit when Ferdinand, Prince of the Austrian Hapsburgs, sent emissaries to a nobleman in Prague with an unwelcome message. The noble hurled Ferdinand's ambassador into a heap of manure.

This incited the Thirty Years War. One out of every four Europeans was killed. Foes were impaled on poles and carried as battle standards. People were burned alive en masse. Alliances shifted and broke. Countries were invaded by one force after another. Peasants were forcibly converted to one doctrine, then back again. No stable arrangement could be found. When one side began to win, some of its allies would defect to the loser. The minuscule German States did not dare let an alliance seize Europe, because such a power could crush them all. While the petty dukedoms existed, war could not end.

In 1649, alliance leaders forged the Peace of Westphalia. The Peace eliminated 600 German manors, which meant that there were fewer allies to switch sides. This treaty went further and ended the entire system of sovereign lords. The generals of

the Thirty Years War divided Europe into gigantic nation-states: Brandenburg-Prussia, France, Belgium, England, the Netherlands, Russia, and so on. Before then, a landed noble was completely independent, owing feudal obligations to a king, but controlling his own army and justice. Now lords were but citizens, subject to the law like any peasant.

In a fantasy game, a campaign could begin with the PCs in a purely feudal world. They might serve a lord or migrate from estate to estate, participating in minor squabbles. As the characters grow more powerful, their world becomes dangerous. With nine alignments, racial struggles between elves and orcs, and several hundred deities in *Legends & Lore*, many causes could galvanize an AD&D game world. The PCs must choose a side or retreat to less civilized areas (but even the most remote lands may join the war). For years the PCs will fight or try to escape fighting. Then, later in the game, the world changes. The characters have reached a level where many PCs build their own castles and become rulers, but the familiar manors have vanished. PCs who own land have not become all-powerful — rather, they face new responsibilities as servants of a great nation-state. A fantasy equivalent of the Peace of Westphalia can preserve game balance.

An age of discovery

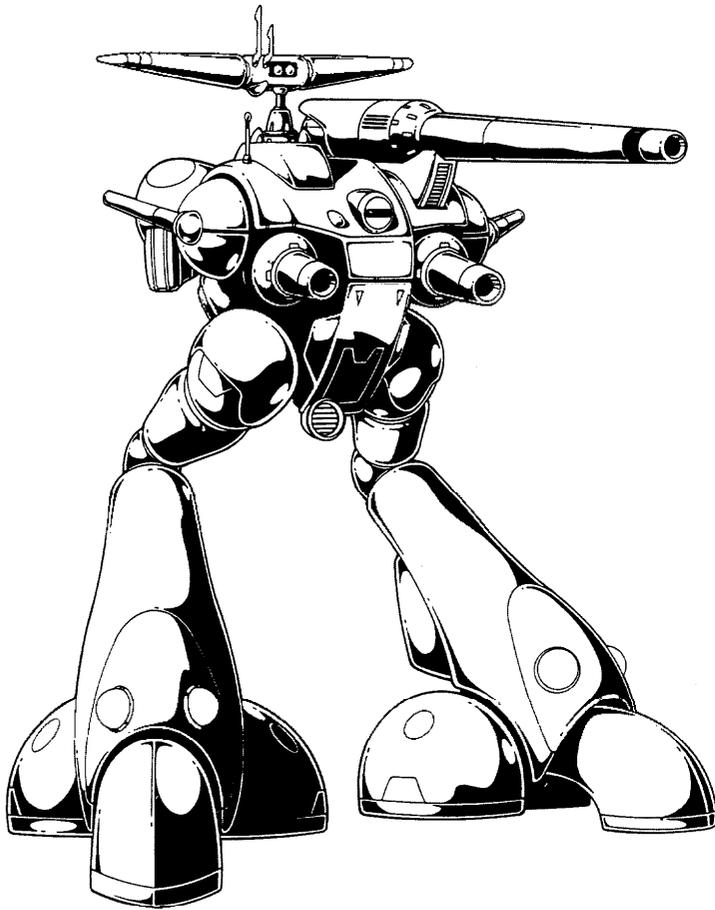
Exploring the unknown moves many campaigns. Most fantasy worlds contain magnificent tracts of unclaimed land, and other planes offer yet more territory to explore. An Underdark, as described in the *Dungeonmaster's Survival Guide*, might serve as the New World for PCs. On the other hand, fell creatures could emerge from the Underdark to explore surface lands, perhaps conquering the surface only to emerge and rule at night, but fleeing before daybreak.

Columbus's well-known voyages can inspire a milieu. When people realized that Columbus had found a new continent instead of reaching Asia, Spain claimed the entire hemisphere. This terrified other nations. Many of the intrigues surrounding Henry VIII began as attempts to neutralize Spain's new influence. At this time, the last Moors fled Spain, and an Inquisition raged across Iberia. Then a new disease came to Europe — syphilis. Herbs which were reputed to cure it became priceless; but they were imported from the East. Merchants were forced to pass first through Spain's Catholic Inquisition, then through Moslem nations that furiously opposed all Christianity, and finally across great deserts, all in search of the precious herbs.

In a fantasy world based on Columbus's Spain, the PCs might begin as explorer-adventurers, driving enemies from their homelands. When the PCs have some experience and all the enemies are defeated, their conquests lead them to a New

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World. This thrusts the party into politics. Now the characters must pacify other nations that are jealous of their new conquests, and they have to deal with the inquisitions at home. Perhaps PCs zealously hunt for victims, or maybe the party's foes accuse them of heresy. Finally, a new disease strikes. Now the PCs return to their old roles as wandering swashbucklers and smuggle precious herbs and medicines from Oriental lands.

Many AD&D game worlds are based on Viking mythology. The Norsemen also discovered the new world of America, which they called Vinland. Archeologists speculate that a religious ritual brought the Norsemen to the New World. Viking sailors threw wooden statues of deities into the water and followed wherever the statues washed. Some statues may have gone to the Americas by floating along the West Greenland Drift. Most Viking colonists were convicts. Under Norse justice, a criminal could be declared an outlaw and cast out of his homeland. An outlaw had no legal protection, so if he was robbed or killed, the assailant would not be punished. These outlaws often fled to the New World, and a few exiles or would-be kings came with them. Then the climate changed, and the Little Ice Age settled on the northern sea. No Viking settlements survived as the frigid summers starved the settlers. In AD&D games, PCs might be

driven to the New World or else pursue old enemies there. Or they might be the equivalent of American Indians, meeting strangers from an unknown continent. Perhaps the PCs are the only survivors of an ice age, trapped by ice on a vast, unsettled hemisphere.

Often, a "New World" is somebody else's "Old World." European colonists seized Africa, both Americas, and the Pacific Islands, but Western civilization was not always the aggressor. Barbarian tribes conquered Europe after the fall of Rome. It is worth noting that some of these same barbarians — the Mongols — were a grievous threat to China, then Asia's most advanced power. PCs might explore a new dominion or face enslavement by ruthless colonists. Imaginative DMs will think of many responses of the locals to the invaders. For example, when Westerners began to meddle with China, the Imperial Son of Heaven invited more to come. He felt that Chinese society was so superior to anything the barbarians knew that their colonists would leave, ashamed. "Many have conquered the Middle Kingdom," he said, "and none have left unchanged."

A milieu might be inspired by some new technological or magical invention. Military innovations might change everything in a fantasy world. In our actual Middle Ages, Charlemagne invented the entire feudal system to support his armored

cavalry. Later, the use of pike formations and long bows helped destroy knights — and their society. A rapidly firing magical weapon could pin armies into trenches, prolonging a war for years, the way the machine-gun did in World War I. Inventions like the printing press or some sort of magical traveling device might have dramatic effects on philosophy and mores in a fantasy world. Another impetus for adventures might be a natural disaster. What if the PCs' homelands slowly flood, become volcanic, or dry into a desert? Useful land becomes scarce, people fight over what remains, and eventually the entire culture changes.

Politics might keep PCs adventuring. The Greek city-states and Caesar's overthrow of the Senate can inspire some DMs. If a king dies without an heir, his land will be thrown into chaos. Actions by deities also can start campaigns, causing prophecies, holy wars, or long quests for purity. What if the official priesthood has become corrupt, and PC clerics or paladins receive a quest to restore the church? The idea of an inquisition was mentioned earlier, and it fits into many campaigns. Such purges need not involve religion, since racial pogroms and searches for political radicals work in a similar way. The number of possible themes for campaigns, like the number of possible AD&D adventures, is infinite.

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Someone else's baby

Almost every DM uses some prewritten adventures. Few of us have time to write a new module every time we play a game, and an occasional change keeps adventures from becoming predictable. As you have certainly heard before, prewritten modules need to be adapted for each specific world. When using a module, you should look through it for encounters to connect, exorbitant treasures to eliminate, and so on. Then you can decide where to set it in your campaign world and why your PCs should care. Usually, introductions to adventures need the most revision. You should find a reason for your PCs to undertake the adventure. Examine previous events in the campaign and find a way to make the PCs want to adventure. Change the endangered kingdom to the one where your characters live. Make the NPCs into people that your PCs love or hate.

Writing the campaign

Inventing a campaign world is quite similar to writing an individual adventure. First, you should pick a conflict and a group of potential PCs that would be forced to adventure in that struggle. Almost any important event can start a campaign. Many campaigns involve at least some of the following factors: social changes, politics, economics, natural disasters, discoveries, religious events, and wars. After you have picked a theme, draw a map of the area where the campaign will occur and develop any special ideas you have; such as new artifacts or special monster alliances. The *Wilderness Survival Guide* explains how to design a continent. Finally, you should make a rough outline of major events that will occur during the PCs' lives. Feel free to revise this future history at any time if something becomes inappropriate or if you have better ideas. Nothing needs to be true until you tell the players. Your best ideas will probably come long after the campaign has begun.

When you are planning your world's future, consider how the PCs will develop. First, the players need to decide what their characters are like and need to learn about their world. Their early adventures should introduce them to important NPCs and give each character some ties to the campaign world. Some PCs might find special magical items; one could fall in love with the baron's daughter. The early adventures are a way to explain your campaign to PCs without boring lectures. They should also show the players what sort of campaign you plan to run. If you want a campaign of heroic battles, give them someone to fight. If you want PCs to make clever plots and intrigues, start the campaign with a mystery. These early quests are like teaching people to swim: You want them to get wet but not drown.

After the PCs understand their plight, focus on one part of your theme. Your

campaign will probably develop several mega-adventures, each one composed of many quests. Each one should climax with a mighty adventure that resolves some important dispute. The PCs will try to solve various problems, only to learn that those issues are merely part of a greater struggle.

These mega-adventures should gradually come closer and closer to the campaign's real conflicts. Finally, just as each mega-adventure had a climax, you can have one magnificent scenario which involves everything in the whole campaign. This will probably resolve the main conflict of your world. Then you must start a new milieu with a new crisis. If you wish, you can keep the same world and PCs. Simply invent a new theme, preferably based on the old conflict.

Great solutions often lay seeds for newer conflicts. If there had been no French Revolution, Napoleon could never have conquered Europe; without the Napoleonic Wars, none of the revolution and reaction of Victorian Europe would have occurred. Sometimes, a period without major conflicts cannot be avoided — or may actually be desirable as a reward to PCs for quelling their world's flux. You should rush through these periods, ignoring rolls for random events and other distractions.

DMs who base fantasy campaigns on history can find an almost endless supply of background material. For example, the details in this article on the end of feudalism came from volume one of *Naked to Mine Enemies*, by Charles W. Ferguson. Anton DePorte's *Europe Between the Superpowers* describes the politics between the Soviet Union and United States after World War II. You can find a perfect model for PCs in Columbus' time by reading James Street's novel, *The Velvet Doublet*. If you are interested in a broad view of world history, you might try *The World, An Illustrated History*, edited by Geoffrey Parker.

The DM does not have to make up everything in a campaign, as the PCs will help too. The five D&D® game sets show how most campaigns develop. As Basic characters, PCs are buffeted by every force, but once they reach Expert level, they can defend themselves. Companion-level characters are strong, masters of their own fates, and when PCs reach the Master's set, they can influence the world. Immortals make history with their every move, but even they must go adventuring. A Chinese curse says, "May you live in interesting times." All PCs should be so cursed.

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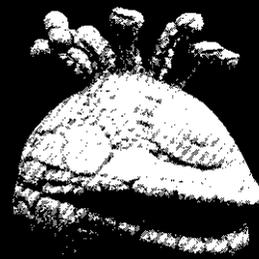
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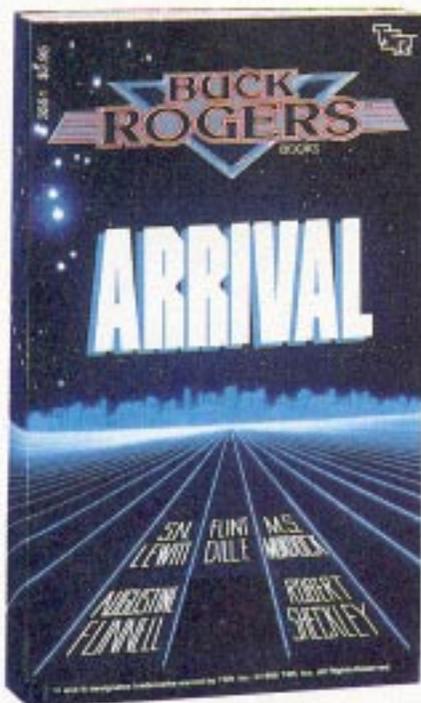
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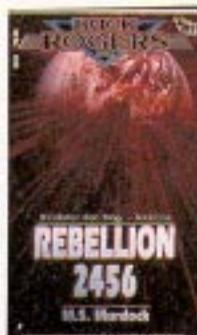
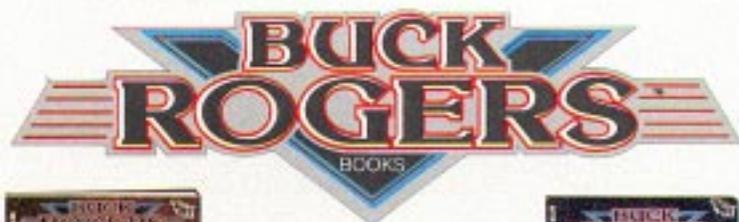
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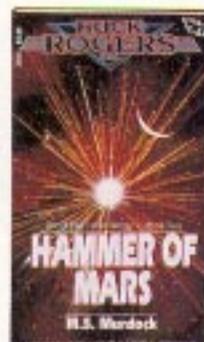
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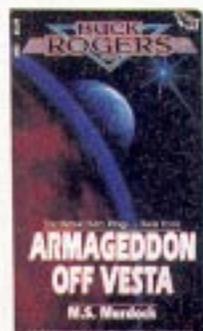
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broached the subject at last, feeling safe, as she had just read my latest poem and smiled and cried and loved it.

"I," she said, and a tiny pause told me there was something she decided not to say, "would love to. I love you.

But you'll have to speak with my father before I may accept."

This struck me as odd. Sashanna had never relied much on her father, nor had she respected his opinion on many things. I did not respect his opinion on any subject.

The next morning brought me a messenger with an appointment to meet Valmadda. I acknowledged, tipped the messenger, and dressed.

A sparrow chirped with trepidation. I whistled agreement. It came to my windowsill to examine me. I chirped a greeting. It whistled delight and flew.

Valmadda met me in the gardens behind the temple. He shook my hand high up on the wrist in the manly way of warriors and hunters. I tried to offer an acceptably firm grip in response.

A slight turn of his head as he released me told me I had not succeeded.

I tried to remember the perfect and eloquent wording I had found in which to couch my request. I had been up half the night composing the phrases, and I was quite pleased with them. My hesitation, though brief, was too long.

"Sashanna told me of your proposal," Valmadda said. "I wish to tell you openly that I have no objection to this thing at a personal level. She tells me she loves you, and from what is said in town I have come to believe that you love her as well. I think a marriage between you could prove lasting and blessed."

I paused now, my timing thrown. Valmadda had himself spoken eloquently. Disarmingly so for one of his ilk. And while he had said nothing dissuasive or contrary, I could feel that there was something yet to come. Nor was I mistaken.

"However, Lloran, there is a Glymm family tradition that must be upheld. One for which I am afraid you will not qualify without a trial."

"A trial?" I asked before I'd framed the thought. "For what?"

"A trial of courage and strength." He blew air between his teeth slowly, as if to relieve some inner pressure. "A trial of battle."

He allowed a moment for his words to resound within me. Then he went on.

"Every man who marries into our tree must first prove himself a man of heroic nature. As you know, I served in the Troll Wars under my father's command. My grandfather once single-handedly defended this town against three profiteering giants. And the tradition goes back for at least ten generations beyond that.

"Before Meerlam was allowed to marry my sister Delongia, he was put through a trial. Also my Uncle Preylah before he married Hale. Do you understand?"

I understood his words. The implications astounded me.

The Other Option

by Dylan Brody

Illustrations by George Barr

This family had always been known for its heroics. I had known that and had thought about the sorts of discomfort this might cause me in joining it. Ultimately, I had decided that, to spend the remainder of my life in the company and the arms of the woman I loved, it would be worth the small inconvenience of becoming related to people I could never view as equals and who could never view me as one in return.

But to realize that the family's reputation had been maintained through deliberate and meticulous effort altered my whole view.

Moreso, the fact that I was being asked to become one of them in deed before I could become one of them in title.

I was angry. I was shocked. I was disillusioned. I was deeply offended. I was in love with Sashanna.

I asked, "Whom do I have to fight?"

"Whatever we can round up in time," he replied.

"When would you like to be tried?"

"Tomorrow," I stated.

"Tomorrow?"

I nodded.

"Won't you want to get in shape first? Train? Meet with some hunters? Some slayers? Learn something of the crafts you'll need?"

"Tomorrow."

He nodded.

My thinking was as follows: Valmadda had said "whatever" rather than "whomever." This meant he would be putting me up against one of the great beasts. I also remembered something about Meerlam having been a dragon slayer, which suggested that the dragon had been his trial. I hoped that by setting so near a deadline I could maximize my chances of drawing a feeble opponent. Perhaps in only one day, the best they would be able to find would be a winged rodent, overgrown to look vaguely like a dragon. Or perhaps a little manticores, easy to catch before it reached aggressive adulthood.

My thinking by the time I was alone with Sashanna had changed considerably.

"We can run away," I pled with her. "Tonight. Forget the tradition. We'll start a new family. Come away with me."

"My Aunt Delongia warned me you would say this."

"And?"

"She said I must be strong. Help you through your fear. Not agree to run. Not let you run."

"Why? Come on. It won't be running away. It'll be running toward something. A new life."

"I can't do that, Lloran. You know that."

"I know I could be killed tomorrow."

She said nothing.

"Wouldn't that mean anything to you?"

"It would mean that you had not earned the right to wed me."

I felt anger rise in me and thought to walk away then. But working against the impulse was the memory of her softness against me. The smell of her hair drifted to me, and the twin stars that danced within her eyes reminded me that she had read my words and understood my work.

"The poetry means nothing?" I cursed myself for the

near crack in my voice. "Only killing an animal means something?"

There was pain in her eyes as she looked at me now, and I knew she believed her next words to be truth. "It will make us both stronger. I know you're frightened. I am too. There's a great deal we are both to learn from this. I can feel it."

I remembered a night slightly warmer than this one. I had promised always to trust her feelings as much as my own, or as nearly so as I could manage. She had scolded me for this last as a disclaimer. I defended it, saying that I would never promise her that which I could not hope to fulfill. Then she had kissed me.

And she kissed me now. Then said, "I know you can do it," and she walked me back to the main road before we went our ways.

As the sun was rising, I was surprised to find myself still in town, awake in time, and walking toward the site of my upcoming trial.

I had not known that the arena could be used for private functions, but it was known that the Glymm family had connections with the provincial lord as well as certain other lords in nearby areas.

I entered the arena and found that Sashanna's family had already gathered on the green. It had not occurred to me to invite my family. I was glad.

I walked to Valmadda as boldly as I could and initiated a warrior's shake. I got it wrong, but his correction seemed to be an approval. That bothered me somehow.

In addition to the family, I discovered the town recorder present, as well as a few other minor officials. I supposed they were there to verify the feat, though it is possible they had just come to watch.

One of the many distant cousins, a man with a woolly beard and a scarlet face, offered me some strong wine. Taking the flask, I drew frowns from other family members and approval from a few. I quaffed.

After a quick explanation of the procedure, the town recorder led the entire group into the stands. Once all the onlookers were safe and settled, the recorder shouted for the release of the beast.

Two of the town guards — there were always town guards around the arena — cranked open a chute gate at the far end of the green.

Once it was open, there was a pause. Then some movement in the shadows beyond the gate. The beast emerged.

My chest constricted. My legs trembled.

Oddly, I wondered if my fear was apparent from the stands. I decided the beast was pulling too much focus for anyone to notice.

The eagle's head looked angry in the sharp crest of its beak. When it spread its wings, the span was at least thrice my height. Rippling under golden fur, the muscles of a cow-sized lion bunched nervously.

I backed away a few steps as it emerged.

I didn't even notice its claws, then. It was really the beak that terrified me.

I had climbed the northern mountains in my youth. I had seen the eagles there. I had learned their ways and their various calls. I had seen them prey on small animals. They used their beaks powerfully: rending, tearing,

piercing.

My vision locked on that beak and would not break free.

It took a feline step toward me, the cat's tail twitching, the eagle's eyes gleaming.

I realized that I had not yet drawn the battle sword with which Valmadda had supplied me. I was vaguely distressed to realize that my hand and arm were conspiratorially refusing to do so now.

The frozen terror of nightmare gripped me waking. I took in the size of the beast before me like a scientist: estimating its mass in numb horror, pacing the rate of its massive approach against the steady rhythm of my over-pounding heart.

A voice spoke within me. "Men have done this," it told me. "The gryphon can be killed," it said. A brief image of spurting blood weakened my knees. I pushed the thought from my mind. I decided to take one thing at a time. I forced my hand to move toward the sword.

I knew that I was within range if it chose to swat at me with its paws. My hand was beginning to move.

The creature tensed its muscly haunches.

My hand was almost past my belt buckle.

Rearing back, towering on its hind legs, the beast showed me its underbelly. This was my opportunity, but I could not snap into action. Only swiftness conquers size, and I was without swiftness, without feeling, detached now even from my own intellect.

My inner voice was without words of reassurance. This monster would pierce and tear and rend me, and then it would eat me because I was a poet and had no place doing battle with it.

The voice within me found new words. Useless words. My own mind, filled with self-hatred and resentment, was composing the words of my epitaph.

The gryphon threw back its head and screamed, and fear left me.

I knew the scream. It was an eagle's head. It had an eagle's mind. It was an eagle's scream. Louder, yes, but one I knew well. It was not a scream of anger. It was not a scream of hunger.

The gryphon screamed in confusion and despair. This was the scream of an eagle trapped. Or falling from battle, broken, knowing its wings will not save it.

I abandoned the effort to draw my sword. My back straightened. My right arm rose gently. The crowd watching grew tense.

I opened my throat as I offered my palm. I spread my arms and called in the tones of a mother eagle comforting her frightened nestlings.

The gryphon screamed again.

I called to it again.

It cocked its head and cawed questioningly.

I cried out. The volume was painful to my human throat. I screamed mother's comfort, catching at my opponent's heart, calming its terror.

Cooing, the gryphon bent its neck and pecked at the ground. I moved toward it, shrieking a promise that we would find food. That there was some nearby.

It raised its head and looked at me. I slowly moved toward it, screeching compassion the while.

When I drew near, it shied away, but I cooed at it, and at last the gryphon pressed its huge feathered head against my chest. The force of its affection nearly knocked me from my feet.

For a few moments I scratched the beast cooing in its tickly ears. Then, grabbing a handful of feathers and comforting it continuously, I led the gryphon over to the stands where the observers were.

I expected cheers. I had accomplished the impossible. I had passed the test.

Sashanna's family traded uncomfortable glances. Valmadda whispered with the town recorder. Then the recorder spoke to me, loud enough for the crowd to hear.

"While we are not accustomed to the methods employed, it is merely the deed that is required by the traditional contract."

For a moment I was filled with joy. Sashanna was to be my bride. All was to be well.

He went on. "All that remains, Lloran, suitor to Sashanna Glymm, is that you slay the beast you have tamed."

I shuddered at the words. "I cannot!" I shouted back. The gryphon became nervous at the sound of my voice speaking the human tongue. I cooed at it again, and the gryphon calmed at once.

"It should be easy now," the recorder told me. "You have its trust."

I looked to Sashanna and caught her bright eyes, excited by the scene, urging me on.

Valmadda offered only a tight nod.

I turned and faced the gryphon, my newfound friend. The beast turned its head to center me in one of its coal black eyes.

I patted it once on the leonine shoulder, then leapt astride its broad golden back.

I screamed the eagle's scream of open skies. He responded at once to the suggestion.

Powerful wings jolted us into the air with a gigantic push. Two more beats and we were well away, above the town and gliding free in bonded camaraderie.

As we passed over Valmadda's home, I dropped the sword he'd given me, deeply hoping it might break something he treasured. Ω

The heat is blistering, sweat pours down your back as you sit in full armour on your fretting war horse. It's five hours after dawn and the enemy still hasn't appeared.

Then you hear faint chanting "Allahu Akbar. Allahu Akbar". Dust billows up and hangs in the still desert air.

Quite suddenly, over the ridge the armies of Saladin appear. rank upon rank, waves of colour, harsh reflections, armoured knights like yourself, horse archers even now wheeling and fitting arrows to bow strings, ranks of Nubian spearsmen advancing at the trot.

But for a few minutes you have them where you want them; downhill, off balance and unprepared.

Your commander, Gerard of Rideford, turns in his saddle.

"Couch lances, prepare to charge" His eye sweeps along the line. He raises his lance. "We fight for Christ!"

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Robinson



Raf Pappas's Red Dragon
Airborne sculpting for gaming



Through the Looking Glass

*A good workman
never blames his tools*

©1989 by Robert Bigelow

60 MARCH 1989

This month's column picks up the process of cleaning, tooling, and painting miniatures started in DRAGON® issue #138. After selecting the area in which you wish to work on miniatures and preparing it for use (see issue #140), you are ready to go to the next steps: gathering tools and preparing the model or figure for painting.

Tools come in a variety of different shapes and types, each having its own unique use. This seems like a basic statement, but its true import isn't apparent until you find that you don't have the tool you need and you attempt to improvise. Depending on your wisdom and dexterity, you may get away with doing things wrong, but all too often you end up ruining your miniature.

Let's go through a list of tools and discuss prices so you can budget your purchases. The following list is arranged in order of the importance of the tools needed for miniatures work.

Wood or other thick working surface: This is by far the most important of any of the tools you will need for doing miniatures. Wherever you work, there are bound to be occasional accidents. A separate workspace saves you from ruining a valuable piece of furniture (such as a desk or table) and incurring the wrath of a parent or spouse.

A good recommendation is to use a piece of wood about ½"-1" thick by 12" wide by 18" long. Find wood with one smoothly sanded side, or you may wind up getting splinters every time you work. On the rough side of the wood, apply a layer of felt or some other thick cloth, using white glue to hold the piece securely. Don't saturate the cloth with the glue, as it will make the cloth surface hard. Let the wood piece dry for 48 hours before using it. The felt will prevent the work board from scratching tables. If you have access to a router, you can put several small indentations about ½" wide by 7" long on the far right or left edge of the board (depending on whether you are right or left handed) and at the board's top for holding tools while you work.

This board should cost well under \$10 to make and will save hours of trouble. Scrap wood can be purchased cheaply from lumber yards, and felt or heavy cloth is available from most fabric shops.

Knives or knife set: Knives are the most versatile tool in the miniatures inventory, especially for the enthusiast working on a tight budget. Proper care and handling of a knife allows you to remove a miniature from its molding sprue (the metal extruding from the miniature which is invariably left by the molding process) and trim light flash (mold overflow) from the small holes and angles on a figure. Having a variety of shaped blades allows you to modify figures by making cuts in crucial places. These modifications might include taking a small notch from the inside of an elbow or knee, to allow you to bend a miniature's limb. Knives are also used to widen the slots in plastic bases so that figures using

them may stand more firmly. You can even use the tip of a #11 blade to make very small holes in a figure.

When working with knives, it is important to remember several things. First, always use a knife that feels comfortable in your hand. In most cases, a trip to the hobby shop will enable you to find a knife that fits well. You should never, for any reason, cut toward a part of your body (either your trunk, your hand, or whatever); knives can slip. Always cover your knives when they are not in use, and put them away when you are through using them. Pets, brothers, sisters, parents, or spouses can cut themselves easily on uncovered knives. Even those of us who should know better sometimes need to remind ourselves of this. Make cuts or remove metal in small, even strokes; don't slash. If an action with a knife is difficult to perform, then don't do it! If such an action is that difficult, it's probably the wrong thing to do in the first place.

As a shopper and a store owner, I can tell you that knives are often cheaper in sets. Individual handles run from \$4 to \$12 each, and sets usually run from \$7 to \$50, but sets usually include more than one handle and blade. At least try to get a #2 handle and #11 blades.

File sets: Although file sets rate high in degree of importance, they are also some of the most expensive tools on any list. When you purchase a file set, make sure it is a set of "needle" or small hobby files. Some hardware stores will try to sell you full-sized files; these only hinder rather than help you. Swiss needle files usually come in sets of three or more, and they include a flat file (flat on both sides), a half-round file, and either a round or a triangular file. These files come with or without handles, but I recommend that you purchase the handle, as the file ends tend to be sharp and rough on the hands. Always tell the clerk at the store that you are purchasing sets to use with metal. Some hobby files are meant to be used on wood only; these quickly become useless when used on lead.

Once again, care should be taken when using a file. Files usually work on the outward cut only (check with your hobby store to see which way specific files work). Running a file back and forth will dull the file unless it is designed to be used in both directions. Files usually have sharp ends, so all work should be made in motions away from the body. Rules for covering and storing knives apply here as well. One should always have a stiff piece of scrap cloth or a file cleaner to clean metal filings off the file after each use.

Files perform many of the functions that the knife does; most often, a file is the tool of choice in place of the knife. You can neatly flatten or remove detail without the worry-of incorrectly cutting the miniature or yourself, flash can be removed quickly but carefully, and expert modelers can use a file to change facial expressions (and

even hairstyles in some cases). As you can see, files are very valuable tools to own.

Clipper or side-cutting pliers: Although this tool has limited usage, it can save you from cuts, bruises, and hours spent using a file. Clippers are primarily used to separate figures from the molding sprue. For example, clippers are particularly handy in working with Games Workshop's Space Marines figures, in which each of the component parts is held by a molding sprue. By placing a pair of side-cutting pliers next to the part to be separated, a modeler can gently remove it, thereby leaving a small nub which can be cleared up by using a file or knife. These small pliers range in price from \$7 to \$11 at hobby stores, but they may be purchased at many hardware stores for less. Be sure to test the set at hardware stores; make sure the clipper works smoothly, and be sure the cutting edge is made of hard metal and isn't just plated.

Pin vise or drill-chuck adaptor and bits: This handy tool set has one important purpose in life: It makes holes. Holes play a part in constructing larger models such as dragons and giants. In these cases, a small hole can be drilled in each half of a divided miniature, and the two halves can then be connected by a small piece of heavy wire stock or a very small nail. This provides added strength to the bond and frequently makes the difference between a display model and a figure used only for gaming. The extra rods so used strengthen droopy wings and necks, and act as support to allow movement and handling.

Drills can be used with files on character hands or fists to allow weapon changes to fit a store-bought character. For example, to change a figure's handheld weapon from a sword to a bow, cut off the weapon at the top and bottom of the fist, using side-cutting pliers. Use the twist drill to carefully drill out the previous weapon's remains until you have a small hole drilled completely through the fist. Use a small round file to clean out the hole, leaving enough metal for suitable detail on the hand. Insert the new weapon, glue it in place, and let it dry.

If you are starting out, it may be best to just get the pin vise or the drill-chuck adaptor. The minidrills are nice, but until you know more about what you are doing, you can ruin a model quickly with them. Pin vises are slower, but they allow more exactness in handling and don't break drill bits frequently. Besides, at between \$4 and \$8, pin vises are much cheaper than drills, which cost from \$8 to \$20.

Drill bits are sized by number, with the larger numbers indicating smaller bits. Generally, bit sets come in groups of 9 to 20 per package, all in different sizes. Replacement bits are available on a single-size basis. My recommendation is to pick up a drill-stand set, which has a marked holder and 20 bits in the .61 to .80 range, then purchase another set in the .45 to .60 range. These two sets will run from \$36 to

\$40 but give you the range needed to fit any of your modeling needs.

The major virtue required with these bits is patience. If you attempt to drill too quickly or if you flex the bit while drilling, there is a good chance you will break the bit. Doing the job slowly not only saves wear and tear on the bits, but enhances your chance of doing the job correctly.

Magnifiers: Many modelers argue that magnifiers are a waste of time and money, as objects on a normal figure can be seen easily. Today, however, miniatures companies are in serious competition to produce figures with large amounts of obvious and not-so-obvious detail. The careful painting of these exquisite details is what makes the difference between a good model and a showpiece.

Magnifiers allow you to clearly see even the smallest detail, thereby allowing you to paint around that detail or highlight it as desired. Magnifiers can enlarge an image by up to four times its normal size and let you see places that you've missed. Most of all, using a magnifier saves wear and tear on your eyes and helps prevent headaches due to squinting or concentrating on very small objects.

Magnifiers come in many forms, including those that can be worn on your head or over your glasses. Magnifying lenses come with self-standing platforms or small lights that can be held in your hand. One of the most useful magnifiers is a positional magnifying glass with one or two movable clamps (alligator clips). These clamps hold the figure steady, leaving your hands free to work on the miniature. There are no safety concerns with magnifiers, except for an awareness of the possibility of breaking the glass.

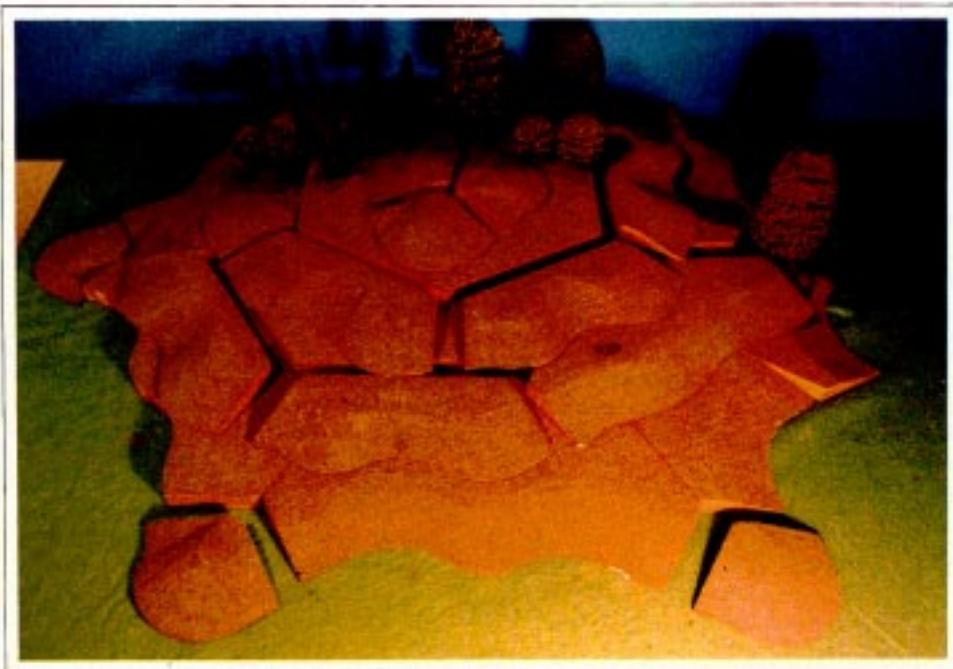
Miniatures holders or clamps: Fingers have a habit of getting in the way when working with miniatures. When you least expect it, fingers slip or brush against wet paint and damage the work you've done. Much of this potential damage can be avoided by using a clamp or hemostat. These aids allow you to hold objects with steady pressure and to control movement without handling the miniature. These clamps may be purchased at your local hobby or surgical supply store.

By far, the best miniature holder is the Extra-Hands. This holder may be adjusted while you work but still provides a solid, steady surface. The holder sits on the table, allowing you to move about and thereby eliminating many problems due to shaky hands. When used with the magnifiers and a small brush, this tool allows you to paint the tiniest of details.

As you can see, tools play an important part in working with miniatures. As each of us strives to produce the perfect paint job; it becomes common sense to use all the resources available. If you have questions on how to do things or on what tools to use, talk to your local hobby-store owner. In most cases, he will take the time to help you make the right choices.



Greenfield Garrisons' Walled Outpost: Good for any era.



Geo-Hex Terrain: The best in battlefield real estate.

Reviews

Miniature-figure ratings

*	Poor
**	Below average
***	Average
****	Above average
*****	Excellent

Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc. —
5938 Carthage Court
Cincinnati OH 45212

Red Dragon of Krynn
Ral Partha 10-500

One of the most popular and widely read fantasy series is the DRAGONLANCE® series. Its success and the interest of its readers led to a huge following for the modules and assorted accessories, as people attempted to bring their characters into the world of Krynn and recreate the roles of the heroes. The books, the atlas, and the heroic figures are all available, but something has always been missing — the bad guys.

Enter the first of the DRAGONLANCE saga's bad guys. The *Red Dragon of Krynn* is an awesomely detailed dragon. The box art primes you for the model; on the cover, the dragon swoops down in attack mode with its rider using a deadly lance. When you open the box, the materials

provide the same sense of awe and pleasure. The leathery wings of this model measure 5" from shoulder joint to wing tip, and the body is about 8½" from the nose to the tail (which is one of the separate parts). Scale detail is excellent, with spinal ridges just jagged enough to be believable. There is a single saddle on the dragon, with a hole drilled to accommodate the rider's lance. The rider's detail is consistent and blends in perfectly.

Assembly for this miniature is well described in simple, easy-to-understand picture instructions. Detailed written instructions are on the reverse side of the page, along with recommended and required tools for assembly.

The keys to finishing this model are practice and a close and careful adherence to the directions. Failure to cut the pegs as instructed will give your model a disjointed and sloppy appearance. You must take your time with this figure. Each assembly step should be completely dry before you go on to the next step. I attempted, after trimming the parts, to assemble the dragon quickly for a photo session. The figure fell apart even after using glue which normally works well under these conditions. This is not a design fault, but rather one of weight applied across small surface areas at the connecting points. These small surfaces are necessary, however, for the miniature to maintain its proper proportions.

The only problem I can find with this miniature concerns Ral Partha's instructions to assemble it as a flying model. The second time I assembled the model, I took my time and followed the directions to a T. The dragon remained airborne overnight. When I returned to reopen my store, however, the wire used to suspend the model had broken and the dragon had fallen. To allow for the weight of this model, I recommend drilling the hole for the wire slightly bigger and deeper, and I suggest using a thick wire.

I highly recommend this miniature. Ral Partha has once again lived up to its reputation for quality miniatures and has presented an excellent example of its high standards. It also deserves a hearty "well done" for including the free quick-painting primer for those people who haven't painted before. This figure is \$15.

Chessex

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large figure cases are presented as an alternative.

These large figure cases from Chessex measure 17¼" long × 7½" wide × 2½" tall. They are made of polypropylene, a hard, impact-resistant plastic with a fair amount of flexibility. The case is made of simulated leather or vinyl with a sough finish that makes it easy to hold. There is a flat surface on the lid especially made for labels.

The box is hinged by two pieces of molded flex-plastic that connect the lid to the box proper. This could be the one weak spot in an otherwise good product, as I have seen these types of joints rip after extended use. The case is held closed by a pair of latches with a built-in childproof hook that is almost adultproof as well, leaving you with the idea that you don't have to worry about the case opening on its own.

Both cases have two levels of thick foam, with a thin level of foam to cover them. The cases differ only in the number and sizes of compartments (cut-outs) available. Case #2580 has room for 80 standard 25mm figures, with spaces big enough in a couple of spots to fit horses or mules. Case #2581 has 54 spots made to fit large fantasy game monsters (giant-size and smaller) or BATTLETECH® game figures. There is room in this case for all your figures.

Although I highly recommend these figure cases, I have a couple of suggestions which may make using them even easier. If you live in a cold climate and you leave one of these cases outside overnight (guess who did), let the case warm up before you try to open it, or else you will crack the case. Another suggestion is to keep the square foam pieces that come out of the figure spaces. By cutting these pieces, you can mold them around your figures and give the figures better support, thus protecting swords, wings, etc. One more thing you can do is to glue the foam piece with the cut-outs to the thin piece of foam below it. This prevents figures from sliding to one end of the case if the case tips over. These cases list for \$20.

Greenfield Garrisons

2814 Inman
Ferndale MI 48220

GG 2435 *Walled Outpost* ****

Greenfield Garrisons's latest introduction to the hobby audience is its new 25mm *Walled Outpost*. This outpost can be used in either a fantasy or a historical setting as a road guardpost, frontier station, or a convenient place to gather a party.

The model is made of the same lightweight, injection-molded foam material as Greenfield Garrisons' large castle reviewed in issue #140, pages 68-70. This material deserves further mention because you can paint it with regular water-based or oil-based paints without having the material dissolve, as does styrofoam. The outpost measures 6" × 6½" × 1½" tall at the

surrounding wall. The construction is molded to show a brick or formed-stone wall with a stucco or mud covering. Cracks are molded throughout the outer finish to simulate that broken covering giving way to aged brick. The covering also shows the swirls and finishes that would be present from applying the covering to the surface.

Entry to the outpost is through a molded door (unfortunately closed). The door is high enough to allow a 25mm figure to enter, or a 25mm horse (provided it has no rider). There is a building to the right of the gate, with outside stairs leading to the roof (a fighting platform) or to a door which leads to the watchtower that comes with the kit.

Constructing this piece is easy for almost anyone. There is some mold flash, but most of it can be easily removed with light tools. The dowels that support the watchtower roof came cut in my review version, but they are uncut in both kits present in the shop. The picture instructions included with the kit are simple to understand, and the only complaint I have is that they don't specify the length of dowel used in the roof support. To resolve this, carefully measure all eight supports before you begin cutting.

I would hate to be assigned to this post, as there is little protection (except in the tower) and the walls are, in scale, only 8½' + tall. Some friends and I have made alterations to this outpost so it can be used as either a 15mm or 25mm structure.

I recommend buying this structure; I think you'll have fun with it in games of almost any type or era. Greenfield Garrisons's *Walled Outpost* has great potential. This kit is \$15.

Geo-Hex

528 NE Hancock Street
Portland OR 97222

Geo-Hex Terrain

Basic, Small Hill, and Large Hill Sets

The terrain and land features of an area are a vital part of fantasy and historical games. Caves, trees, streams, roads, and so forth are difficult to visualize in your mind, but most gamers are reluctant to use or build the props needed to illustrate these important points. In the past, it has been necessary to spend large amounts of time, money, and patience to build scenery to bring an area to life, but many gamers never use the same scenery again. Specific confrontations often require a one-use-only board that is frequently thrown away or played on again and again until no one can stand it any more.

Now comes Geo-Hex. *Geo-Hex Terrain* is a variable scenery system designed to allow the average player to model almost any battlefield or area they wish. Pieces available range from sheer cliff sides to gently sloping terrain. Each piece is two-sided; one side has either a 1" - or 2" -wide road, and the other side has unbroken

color. Hex-shaped pieces are 12" × 13½" wide, while the smaller pieces vary greatly to accommodate different designs.

The material is made of lightweight styrofoam and is available in either green or desert finishes. The finish on the grass pieces looks like Woodland Scenics' grass, but uses a good adhesive that makes the grass finish difficult to rub off. Roads are textured in appearance and vary from piece to piece.

Unfortunately, while this material is extremely light, it also does not wear well with heavy usage. The Basic Set, which covers a 4' × 8' table, comes in three very bulky boxes. The material also stains permanently when exposed to fluid spills.

Even with these disadvantages, I still recommend this product in the strongest terms possible. I have bought large amounts of it. Geo-Hex donated some of this product for the miniatures gaming demonstrations at the 1988 GEN CON®/ORIGINS™ games fair, and I purchased more to expand the gaming area to 6' × 16'. Starting with this month, you may also see it as a background for some of the review shots, with trees in scale so you can compare the size relationships.

This is a product with good potential for convention gaming. The terrain contributes greatly to any game, and the finish lends a professional look. The price range is \$34 and up.

TAG Industries

316 Main Street
Castalia OH 44824

Children of the Nile

NL 109, Sphinxes with Serpent and Human Head

***1/2

NL 114, Egyptian Gods: Ra and Bast

TAG Industries has released another series of miniatures based on a particular historical culture. This section covers Egyptian mythology and includes the gods held sacred by the "Children of the Nile."

The two packs used in this review are representative of the different types of characters available to the miniature enthusiast. The Egyptian gods are cast in action poses and are accoutered with the symbols and dress of that place and era. The fierce scowl and open beak of TAG Industries's hawk-headed Ra corresponds to most interpretations of this unrelenting and unforgiving Egyptian deity. Similarly, Bast is cast with the head of a cat, which signifies the religious belief that felines were sacred; the rest of her body is humanoid. Sphinxes of ancient Egypt were portrayed as having different combinations of bodies and heads, and this pack contains two frequently mentioned types.

The body detail on the sphinxes is a bit plain, but it depicts the lines and gracefulness accurately. The scales on the cobra head are sharp, as is the overall head detail (though it is slightly exaggerated). The details on both sphinxes give the impression of muscular activity and great

strength.

The detail on the clothing of the gods is also very good. Unlike the Norse gods described in issue #140's column, these gods wear beautiful and intricately designed clothes and gowns, ornamented with jewelry and breastplates. Likewise, their hair is worn in a fashion specific to that era. These figures show those details well, though not as well as I would like.

Another contributing factor to the high recommendation given to this series is the number of items available in the line. With some doubling of packs and a few modifications to figures (such as guards and merchants), you could fill an entire campaign or have figures to play the AD&D® game's *Desert of Desolation* modules (13-5). You can even use a chariot, as one is available with this line.

Open your frontiers and play off-country campaigns. This is one of those figure series that is made to encourage campaign use. Prices for these figures are \$2.50 and up.

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Realms of Chaos

GWS 3201, Warriors of Chaos
GWS 3203, Champions of Chaos

Games Workshop increases its line of evil characters for both the WARHAMMER™ and WARHAMMER 40,000 games with the release of its new *Realms of Chaos* figures. These figures are meant to be used with its new book, *Realms of Chaos*, but the figures make tempting targets even without the book statistics.

The samples for review were split between figures suitable for WARHAMMER Fantasy and those for WARHAMMER 40,000 games. Pack 3201 is basically a WARHAMMER 40,000 pack with what looks like two cyborgs and a gentleman in space armor carrying a very large blaster. Both cyborgs have chainsaws either built into or held by their left hands. Both carry blasters, but it is here that the similarity ends. One cyborg wears only half a suit of armor and shows obvious signs of grafting. The other cyborg appears to wear full armor and has leering skulls on its shoulders. All three figures in this pack have good to excellent detail and a minimum of flash. All three look believable as space nasties.

In Pack 3202, Champions of Chaos, the figures are armed with a wide variety of medieval and primitive weapons. These five troops bear strong resemblances to well-known nasties. The variety of weapons they hold stretch from a mace to a near scimitar. This gang has the same good



TAG Industries' *Children of the Nile*: Two of many gods.



Games Workshop's *Warriors of Chaos*: Born to be bad.

detail as the other figures, but they have a bit more flash. The figures did have to be trimmed (particularly in the bent parts of the arms) before they could be primed. This might have been a prerelease batch, as the other group of *Realms of Chaos* figures at my store exhibit none of these problems.

My only worry about the last group of figures is their resemblance to demons in their classic, pictured sense. The five figures have cloven hooves, and several

have either a goat's head, a bare skull, or Skaven (rat-man) appearance. Carefully go through the packs and find fighters not resembling demons if you wish to avoid problems with relatives who might object to them.

In all, these are well-detailed sets, and the figures are of the highest quality. If my reservations regarding the appearance of these figures do not bother you, then enjoy them. Prices for *Realms of Chaos* figures range from \$3.50 to \$5.95. Ω

by David Edward Martin

The Marvel[®]-Phile

Back from Earth-S: the Redeemers™ (Part 2)

This month, we return to Earth-S (which we last visited in issue #141) and examine three other members of the supergroup that fought the Squadron Supreme for the fate of their world. These three freedom-fighters had less-than-heroic beginnings, however, and were once troublesome villains in their own right. Once the Squadron Supreme began its program of brainwashing criminals, these three fled to an alternate Earth — the Marvel Universe Earth — but were soon recruited by the leader of the Redeemers, Nighthawk, in the coming battle against Nighthawk's former allies in the Squadron. Fight they did — but only two of the three survived.

MINK™ Real name unrevealed

F EX (20) Health: 66
A RM (30)
S TY (6) Karma: 36
E GD (10)
R GD (10) Resources: GD (10)
I EX (20)
P TY (6) Popularity: 2

POWERS: None.

EQUIPMENT: Mink's normal costume consists of calf-high boots, a leotard, and a mink tunic. The tunic is slightly padded to give her Poor protection from physical attacks. The tunic also gives her torso Poor protection from the cold, but her bare legs and low-cut costume otherwise negate this protection.

Claws: Mink originally wore large metallic bracelets on each wrist. When she jerked her hand downward in a specific manner, three large steel claws (Remarkable material strength; Excellent edged damage) popped out. The claws retracted with a different hand movement. The bracelets were later incorporated directly into her Mink-Stink cannisters.

Mink-Stink: Cannisters around Mink's forearms contain a nauseating perfume of Excellent potency. When she jerks her hand upward in a specific manner, the gas jets out over two areas to form an ochre cloud. Victims within this zone must make an Endurance FEAT or suffer incapacitating nausea. A successful FEAT enables the victim to fight at -1CS. The ochre color temporarily blinds a victim for two turns (Fighting reduced by -3CS). The cannisters provide Excellent protection against

any attacks aimed at her arms. Mink is immune to the nauseating effects of her Mink-Stink.

SKILLS: Mink is a peerless cat-burglar. She has Amazing criminal skills, as well as Excellent acrobatic, acting, and disguise skills. She has a Remarkable knowledge of gemology and can accurately appraise the value of any gem or jewelry. She has an Excellent knowledge of chemistry, a skill she uses to modify her chemical weaponry.

HISTORY: Mink was one of Nighthawk's oldest and most glamorous adversaries. Originally a spoiled rich girl, she was an heiress who turned to crime because she craved excitement. Crime also fueled her considerable ego; she felt naturally superior to those she so easily preyed upon.

Mink was primarily a jewel thief and cat burglar. Although her claws give her deadly combat skills, she preferred not to kill but rather to maim (after all, how can a dead man remember the Mink defeated him?). She maintains her preference for the finer things in life, especially jewelry, and still mingles with the well-to-do. She can often be found in expensive restaurants and haunts of the very rich, which remind her of her past (she was also able to scout out targets for future heists).

When the Squadron Supreme announced its Utopia Program, Mink realized her probable fate was eventual capture and reprogramming by the Behavior Modification Machine. She joined forces with two other longtime foes of Nighthawk (Remnant and Pinball), then sought out Master Menace (see "The Marvel-Phile," issue #141). They were sent to the Marvel Earth where, coincidentally, Nighthawk had come seeking help. After a brief battle for old-times' sake, Mink agreed to join Nighthawk. During the six months she worked alongside Nighthawk, her attitude toward him changed. She felt "real" and felt that she was finally accomplishing something meaningful. Then, too, even when they were foes, Mink was physically attracted to Nighthawk. By the time of the Redeemers' battle with the Squadron Supreme, they were well on the way to becoming lovers. But during the final battle with the Squadron Supreme, Foxfire killed Nighthawk. Enraged over his death, Mink broke her normal aversion to killing and gored Foxfire, who died shortly thereafter.

FUTURE ADVENTURES: Mink's future actions are unclear. Because of Nighthawk's effect on her, it is unlikely she would return to her previous lifestyle as an elegant burglar. She may adopt a crime-fighting life in Nighthawk's memory. Quite possibly she might combine the two paths and become an apparent outlaw secretly working on the side of the law.

During her brief foray on Marvel Earth, she encountered Captain America (Steve

Rogers) and felt she could trust him. She also thought he was attractive. If Mink should travel to Marvel Earth, she may seek out whoever wears the Captain America uniform. Should Steve Rogers discover her presence, he may come looking for her, if for no other reason than to find out what happened duping the crisis on Earth-S.

PINBALL™

Real name unrevealed

F TY (6) Health: 32
A GD (10)
S TY (6) Karma: 56
E GD (10)
R EX (20) Resources: PR (4)
I TY (6)
P RM (30) Popularity: 0

POWERS: None.

EQUIPMENT

Inflatable suit: By pulling a neck cord, Pinball could inflate his suit to become a human pinball 7' in diameter. Partial inflation took two seconds; in this form, he

resembled an incredibly obese man with stumpy arms and legs. He was normally able to move at a slow waddling speed and had Good Body Armor at this point. Full inflation took five seconds; in this form, his arms and legs withdrew completely into the sphere, his head was locked in place, and he gained full use of the suit's abilities. Deflation occurred automatically if the suit was punctured. He could voluntarily vent the suit completely in 10 rounds. Capsules stored within the suit provided the volatile, nonflammable gas for inflation; Pinball's suit had room for six capsules. A pocket held a patch kit to repair punctures or leaks. Repairs took 10 minutes for each leak.

Within the fully inflated sphere, Pinball was able to shift his weight enough to rotate the sphere and travel at Poor speed (30 MPH). He accelerated at 2 MPH per turn. Steering was difficult at best; he could shift only 10° per turn. Rebounding against an immovable object automatically changed his direction. A Green Agility FEAT enabled him to choose a specific direction; otherwise he simply vectored off in an uncontrolled flight. When rolling against a human target, Pinball did Excellent stunning damage to anyone who

failed an Agility FEAT.

While inflated, his suit provided him with Good protection against physical attacks. Special padding could deflect normal police ammunition. He could survive falls of up to five stories by bouncing. Subsequent rebounds each decreased his speed by 5 MPH. Unfortunately, Pinball could not control the direction of these rebounds and he was in danger of receiving a head injury unless he could make a Yellow Agility FEAT with each bounce. His suit would bounce 1-6 times per story fallen, with one bounce per turn, even after his speed was reduced to zero.

SKILLS: Pinball was naturally resistant to vertigo and dizziness. He had Good Reason in the field of inflation devices and had Excellent acrobatic skills, although these talents applied only to his control of his inflatable suit.

HISTORY: Pinball was one of Nighthawks' more bizarre foes. He was an obese man who was frequently mocked because of his ball-like body ("We don't want you to play, we just wanna use you for a ball!"). An inspired bit of inflatable engineering gave him the means to avenge himself



against society ("No more will I be mocked as a 'rubber ball.' Instead, I shall wreak terror as . . . THE PINBALL!"). Unfortunately, Pinball was still a jerk whose career was limited by his single gimmick. He was rejected by the Institute of Evil and was in near-retirement when the Squadron Supreme took over Earth-S. Pinball sought out his only friend, Remnant, another of Nighthawks foes. When Nighthawk recruited Remnant for the Redeemers, Pinball went along because he knew he was no match for the Squadron.

During the final battle with the Squadron Supreme, Pinball was knocked out by the Whizzer. The blow also inflated his suit. When Blue Eagle's wings were rendered powerless by Lamprey, Blue Eagle spotted Pinball and thought that the inflatable suit might cushion his fall. He was wrong. The crash proved fatal to both characters; Pinball died without regaining consciousness.

FUTURE ADVENTURES: Pinball is d-e-a-d and is thus unlikely to have any more adventures, unless someone is tacky enough to make him into a zombie. Pinball was probably buried in his costume, but other copies of the suit may exist. As Pinballs only friend, Remnant may know of such duplicates' locations. Duplicates may be hidden in the Redeemers' lair as well. Should a duplicate inflatable suit be found, a new adventurer may take on the fearsome identity of . . . the Pinball!

REMNANT™

Real name unrevealed

F TY (6) Health: 24
 A TY (6)
 S TY (6) Karma: 36
 E TY (6)
 R GD (10) Resources: TY (6)
 I TY (6)
 P EX (20) Popularity: 0

POWERS: Remnant has no obvious natural powers, but he may have unconscious magical or super powers. If magical, consider his powers to be forms of Enchantment specifically oriented toward manipulating cloth. If treated as super powers, consider them forms of Matter Control and Power Creation, again specifically directed toward manipulating his special cloth.

EQUIPMENT

Magical fabric: This multipurpose fabric is the key to Remnant's powers. It is a maroon cloth of possibly infinite supply. The fabric has the potential to develop one of a variety of powers. By choosing a length of fabric, then cutting and sewing it into shape, Remnant can cause that piece to have a specific power. Evidently the cloth responds to Remnant's mental com-

mands (see "Powers"). It is not known how wide a variety of effects Remnant can gain with his cloth, but he is extremely ingenious. Past examples of his special cloth include:

* *Flying carpets* — These are various rugs able to carry different passenger loads. A one-passenger rug flies at Poor airspeed (60 MPH). Two- to four-passenger rugs travel at Feeble airspeed (30 MPH). Larger rugs travel at proportionally slower speeds. The rugs are controlled by Remnant's mental commands.

* *Concussion grenades* — These are napkin-size swatches thrown a maximum of one area. They do Good stunning damage to everyone within a 10' radius (or within one area).

* *Incendiaries* — These are napkin-size swatches thrown up to one area and doing Good fire damage.

* *Bindings* — Each binding is a 20' strip of cloth that ensnares a target with Excellent Strength.

* *Cages* — These are nonflying rugs that can surround 1-4 victims in a bundle of Excellent material strength.

* *Punchers* — These are napkin-size swatches thrown up to one area. Each does the equivalent of an Excellent blow to a single target.

* *Whips* — These are 6' strips that are used like normal whips. They strike for Poor damage. If they strike a target, an Agility FEAT twists them around the target for one turn. This permits Remnant to pull people over to him, yank weapons from opponents, and so on.

Players may create additional cloth weapons by means of Power Stunts.

Bottomless pocket: This is a pocket dimension sewn into the left leg of Remnant's costume. The exact size of the pocket is unknown. Remnant can store his supply of magic fabric here, as well as previously sewn items and more mundane materials. Searching the pocket and removing the desired item takes 1-4 turns. The bottomless pocket may in some way be similar to Shaman's medicine pouch. If so, turning his pocket inside-out may have disastrous consequences.

HISTORY: Remnant was a longtime foe of Nighthawk. He is an eccentric man with a bizarre appearance, and considers himself an amiable, society-mocking lunatic. He disliked the newer, more savage super villains of the now-disbanded Institute of Evil and prefers the company of established, "gentler" villains like Pinball and Mink. How he came by his magic cloth and bottomless pocket remains a mystery; they may be magical or scientific in nature. Regardless, Remnant used his tools to maintain a profitable, albeit illegal, lifestyle.

Remnant was bright enough to realize that society was turning against him in a very serious way when the Utopia Program began. He almost welcomed Night-

hawks offer to join the Redeemers; besides, he didn't really have any other option. Remnant was a valuable member of the Redeemers, especially when providing resources like transportation and costumes (Redstone's suit, for example, is made from magical fabric).

Note that Remnant has a preference for places and targets whose names or natures are somehow related to cloth. For example: The Magic Carpet disco might be his hangout; a rare Persian rug possible booty; or banker Steven Tweed a kidnap victim.

FUTURE ADVENTURES: Remnant's future plans could go in any direction. With the disbanding of the Squadron Supreme, he could reenter his moderately criminal lifestyle. On the other hand, his disgust at the more violent super villains like Lamprey might well turn him toward superheroics of his own unique style. In such a case, he might possibly ally himself with Mink. Like Mink, Remnant met Captain America (Rogers) during his brief sojourn on Marvel Earth. If seeking help, he would look for whomever was in the Captain America uniform. Ω

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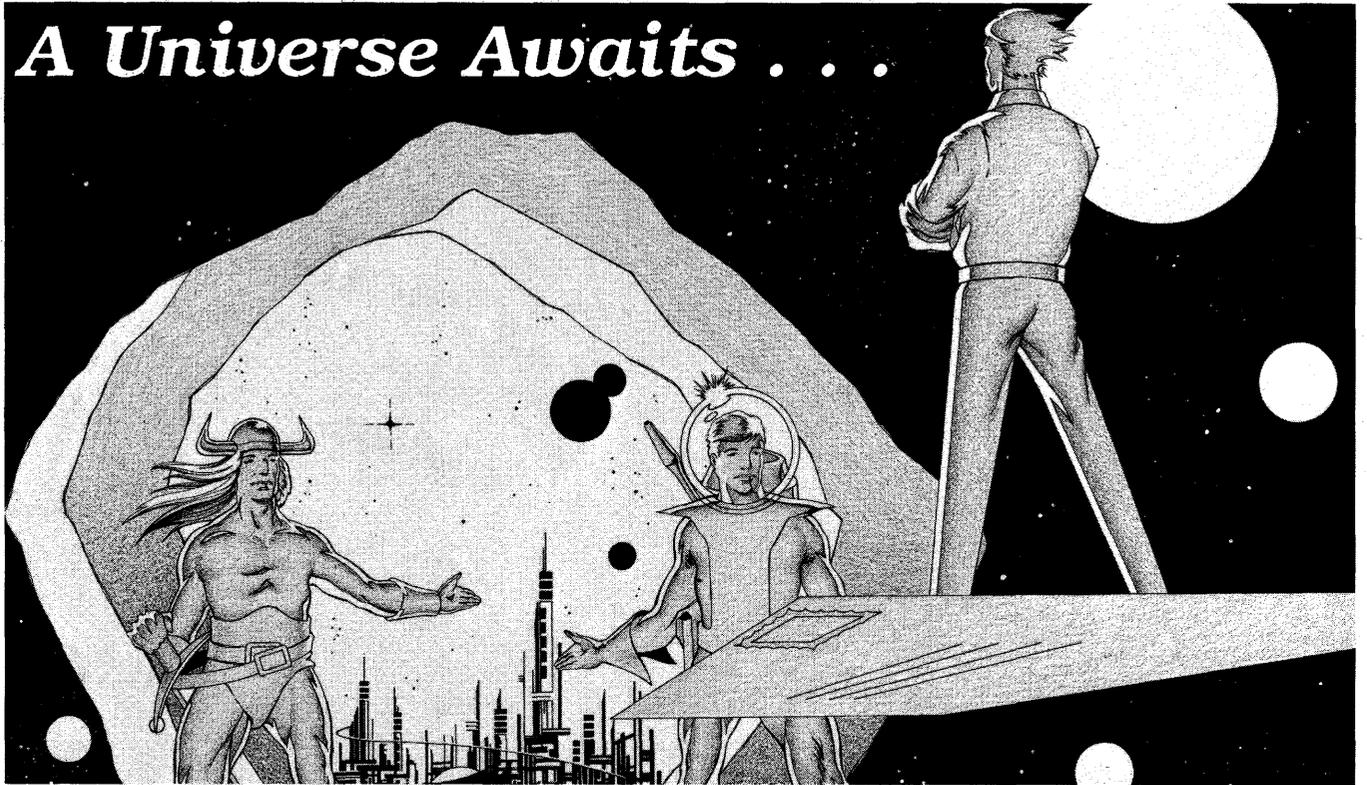
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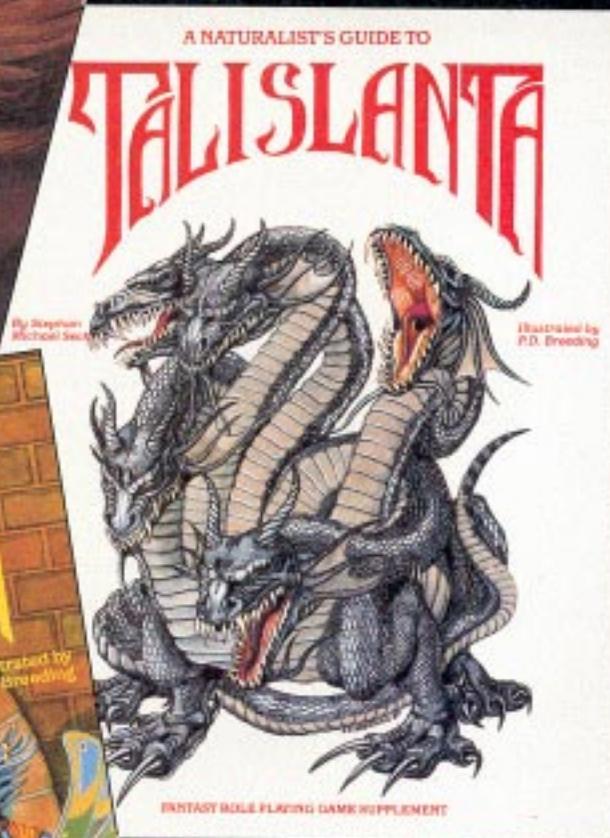
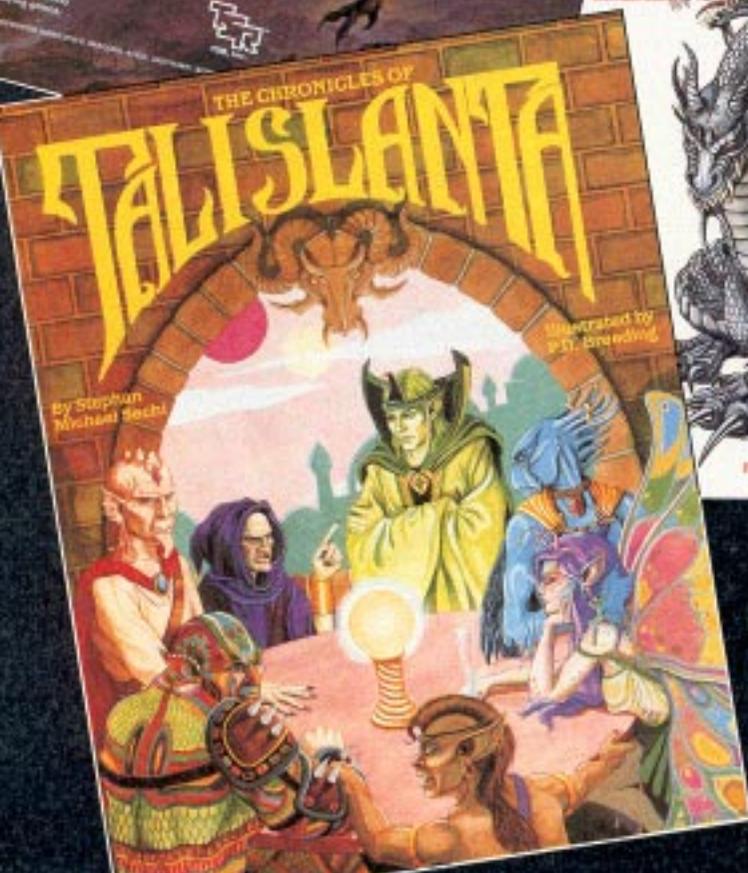
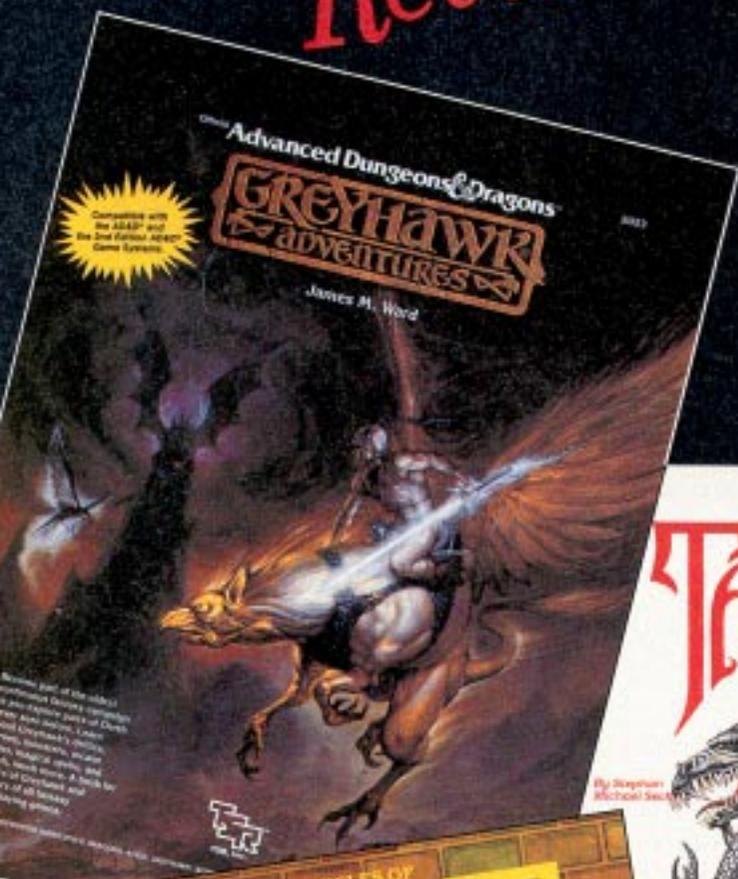
Role-playing Reviews

Lands of excitement — old and new

Fantasy campaign settings continue to flourish as new worlds become available and established ones gain additional support. This month, we look at *GREYHAWK® Adventures*, a new supplement for one of the oldest FRPG campaign settings in existence, and at the world of Talislanta, a relative newcomer to the

campaign scene that shows considerable promise and depth. Both settings are aimed at experienced role-players who have logged substantial hours in their pursuit of role-playing excitement and who are already familiar with the mechanics of role-playing games. As expected, these products place little emphasis on providing staging hints or on showing GMs

how to handle the provided information. Instead, they provide solid role-playing background. While *GREYHAWK Adventures* is aimed at AD&D® game players, the world of Talislanta combines a unique and intriguing setting with an easy-to-use and flexible game system. Without further ado, let's check out the old and the new.



GREYHAWK® *Adventures*

AD&D® hardcover rule book
TSR, Inc.

\$15.00

Design: James M. Ward

Additional design: Daniel Salas, Skip Williams, Nigel D. Findley, Thomas Kane, Stephen Innis, Len Carpenter, and Eric Oppen

Editing and coordination: Warren Spector

Editing: Anne Browne, Karen Boomgard, Steve Winter, Mike Breault, Scott Haring, and Jon Pickens

Special developmental work: Jon Pickens

Cover illustration: Jeff Easley

To place *GREYHAWK Adventures* in perspective, a quick look at the history of the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® fantasy setting is in order. The WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting had already been in existence for quite a few years before it first saw publication in 1980. As the house campaign setting developed by Gary Gygax (the designer of the AD&D game), it was the place where many of the rules for the AD&D game were first conceived and put into practice. Snippets of this setting had already appeared in such classic adventures as the G1-3 Giants series, the D1-3 Drow series, and Q1 *Queen of the Demonweb Pits* module. These brief insights made the setting an eagerly awaited addition to the AD&D game. Yet when it finally arrived, the first edition of the WORLD OF GREYHAWK set was disappointing. Consisting of a 32-page booklet, two large color maps, and a folder depicting the coats-of-arms of the major states, this edition was a little thin (there is only so much information you can cram into a 32-page booklet, particularly when covering such a large area).

Make no mistake, the WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting is big. The land mass covered in the first edition is less than a quarter of the landmass of Oerth, the true name of Greyhawk's world. Rather than detailing the entire world, this setting concentrates on the eastern part of the continent of Oerik, but this is a large area in itself, containing approximately 60 states and a wide diversity of geographical conditions. With so much area to cover, it was no surprise that the product gave only the most basic descriptions of each state. In fact, DMs were expected to elaborate on these areas in order to make them an integral part of their own individual campaigns. Also, numerous projects were planned to add further depth and detail to the setting but, for various reasons, many of these projects never appeared. Instead, 1983 saw the publication of the second edition of the WORLD OF GREYHAWK set.

The second edition was much larger than the first and addressed itself to making the WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting a more detailed and vibrant place. Consisting of two large color maps and two booklets with a combined page count of 128, the second edition included first-edition material on Oerth's history, com-

mon languages, calendars, political divisions, and geographical features. In addition, it contained essays on the major religions and details on the worshipers and clerics of the deities, a detailed weather-generation system, and information on racial characteristics, economics, encounter tables, adventure outlines, and some very powerful NPCs. Some of this information had originally appeared in the pages of DRAGON Magazine, but now it was all in one place.

The lands of Greyhawk had finally arrived. Yet instead of becoming the setting for all AD&D adventures and supplements published by TSR, the WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting became reserved for the personal use of Gary Gygax — a situation which led to only sporadic releases of modules in the WG series. Gamers were promised lots of things; a supplement on the City of Greyhawk was one of them, but six years later it still hasn't appeared. Who knows? With the departure of Gary Gygax from TSR, this long-awaited city may yet see the light of day. [It is scheduled for release this July as a boxed set.]

While the WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting languished, TSR's adventure modules became generic for a time. The UK, N, and I series of modules contained sufficient background to run the adventures but lacked cohesive world settings. The success of the DRAGONLANCE® series of modules and books also pushed aside the WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting as TSR concentrated on expanding and defining the world of Krynn. But all was not quiet on the Greyhawk front. In 1985, six years after the release of T1 *The Village of Hommellet*, the epic module T1-4 *The Temple of Elemental Evil* was published. In 1986, this was followed by two revised-format collections of earlier WORLD OF GREYHAWK modules: A1-4 *Scourge of the Slavelords* and GDQ1-7 *Queen of the Spiders*. Together, the T1-4, A1-4, and GDQ1-7 adventures formed an epic campaign which kept the WORLD OF GREYHAWK alive and well. The release of GREYHAWK® novels, the first two written by Gary Gygax and the rest by Rose Estes, further added to the supply of Greyhawk material. The WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting is now experiencing a role-playing rebirth.

WG7 *Castle Greyhawk* appeared in January last year (see "Short and sweet" in "Role-playing Reviews," DRAGON® issue #136) and, in response to requests from Greyhawk fans, TSR has released *GREYHAWK Adventures*. With the history of this long-running campaign setting out of the way, it's time to examine *GREYHAWK Adventures*.

Presentation: *GREYHAWK Adventures* is a 128-page hardcover book, the thirteenth one to date for the AD&D game. As *GREYHAWK Adventures* has been designed to be compatible with the AD&D 2nd Edition game, it has the distinction of being the book most likely to survive when the new edition of the AD&D game

arrives later this year.

As a sourcebook which further elaborates on an existing world, *GREYHAWK Adventures* is a collection of independent sections with little in the way of crossover between each one. The writing style reflects the large number of contributors involved, with the tone varying from lively and evocative to dry and rules-orientated, with the emphasis on mechanics.

While it is aimed primarily at WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting fans, players of AD&D game campaigns set in other worlds will find much to interest them in *GREYHAWK Adventures*. New spells, magical items, and monsters are all usable in other campaign settings. The descriptions of NPCs and of Greyhawk's deities and clerics can easily act as templates for similar deities and characters in other campaigns. The adventures and the section on zero-level characters are fairly universal.

Less likely to be of interest to non-Greyhawk campaign players are the essays describing the geography of Oerth, but here again these can serve as a source of inspiration. *GREYHAWK Adventures* has something in it for everyone, but its wide diversity of topics tends to dilute its overall impact and usefulness.

Deities and clerics: The religions of the WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting were one of the second edition's greatest strengths, and in *GREYHAWK Adventures* they receive further useful elaboration. We are first introduced to the concept of avatars — low-powered physical manifestations of the various deities. These supernatural beings can be encountered wandering in such places as the streets of the City of Greyhawk. After a run-in with an avatar, any hack-and-slash party is sure to think twice before attacking a lone NPC; that harmless old man may not be all he appears. Each avatar receives a portion of a deity's power and is sent to the Prime Material plane to carry out the deity's wishes. The descriptions of the avatars' forms vary from colorful to little more than notes on the avatar's clothing and weapons. This section is useful as far as it goes, but it would have benefited by describing the things that avatars do and providing motivations for why a particular deity would send an avatar to Oerth in the first place.

The second edition of this setting made various special powers available to clerics depending on the deity worshipped. These powers helped to differentiate clerics and gave them distinct flavors. Certain deities even granted the use of edged weapons to their clerics, and the process of making clerics more individualized is continued in *GREYHAWK Adventures*. Clerics are now defined by their alignments, the color and type of their robes and ceremonial gear, and by the extra experience points they require (if any) for the use of special powers granted by their deities. Details are given on the types of weapons they

must use, including compulsory weapon proficiencies for 1st-level clerics. The types of spells a cleric may employ (an optional rule in the AD&D 2nd Edition game) are indicated together with any special powers or spells. Most of this information is readily accessible, but the rules on spheres are not very clear and will only come to light when the AD&D 2nd Edition game arrives.

While the descriptions do a good job of defining clerics in game terms, they are very loose when it comes to detailing clerics' religious beliefs. Personally, I would like to have seen more information on how clerics should conduct themselves in the pursuit of their deities' aims and more information detailing the myths and legends associated with the deities. Nevertheless, this section does a good job of differentiating clerics by providing them with individual powers.

Monsters: Fans of new monsters will find some useful critters here. Again, we get an insight into how the AD&D 2nd Edition game is likely to be presented. Each monster is classified as in the existing *Monster Manuals*, but with additional information provided on its habitat terrain type (city, hills, swamp, desert, etc.), organization (tribal, solitary, pack, etc.), active times (night, day, any, etc.), diet, reaction modifier (used for determining a monster's initial reaction), THACO, and morale. The new morale rules are a great improvement on the old, involved, and often convoluted system. Morale is rated from 1-20, as is done in the BATTLESYSTEM™ supplement, and is checked by rolling 2d10.

The "Monsters of Greyhawk" section is neatly laid out with all the essential information presented in a tabulated form. When you're looking for a particular monster for an adventure, a quick glance at the entry will tell you whether it's likely to fit the bill. If it does, then you can read through the text to find its appearance, combat tactics and abilities, habitat/society, and its niche in the food chain.

Hall of heroes: Here are detailed descriptions of some of the key non-player characters active in the world of Oerth. Some of the most powerful and influential characters of the setting are put under the spotlight, including the City of Greyhawk's Lord Mayor, Constable of the City, Captain-General of the Watch, and the heads of the Thieves and Assassins Guilds. We are also introduced to the mysterious Jaran Kri-meeah, the Mage of the Vale; Jaran's henchwoman, Tysiln San; two members of the Scarlet Brotherhood of evil monks; and a few other champions and mages from elsewhere on Oerth. The descriptions are well presented, with each character's motivations and outlook being clearly given along with a physical description and combat abilities. These NPCs are useful as foes and patrons.

Magical spells and items: Anyone looking for new magical goodies will enjoy

this part of *GREYHAWK Adventures*. One hundred and six new spells drawn from the spell books of such notables as Bigby, Mordenkainen, Nystul, Tenser, and Rary are presented here. You'll find valuable additions to each mage's specialty: lots of new spells concerning hands, fists, and digits from Bigby; new ways to improve memory and spell-casting abilities from Rary; and spells to enhance any fighter's combat abilities, courtesy of Tenser.

A fair bit of thought has gone into designing the magical items so that they are more than just a bunch of magical effects contained in devices. Each one comes with a background that neatly ties it into the campaign setting. DMs will find good material here for starting quests, and each player will appreciate his PC's magical items more if he knows where they've been and who killed whom to get them. A wand isn't just a wand; instead, PCs can lay their hands on such famous items as the *dark wand of the Sulhaut Mountains* or the *wand of the Suloise* — names to conjure with (ahem) and items with a history. Think about it: Wouldn't you rather wield the *Equalizer of Gran March* than just another *sword +1*?

Geography of Oerth: There's far more valuable material here than just bland descriptions of various geographical locations. What you get is a number of adventure outlines which show the kind of encounters that PCs entering different geographical areas are likely to experience. The information on each area acts as a spur to the imagination and comes complete with notes for DMs to show how the featured locations can be turned into vibrant adventure settings.

The adventures: Six adventures are provided here, but they are little more than outlines for DMs to fill in. No maps are provided, though they would have been very useful. A wide range of topics is covered. Two are for zero-level characters struggling to work up to 1st level (see "Zero-level characters"). The other adventures include a dive to a sunken ship to recover treasure, entry into the Valley of the Mage, a rescue mission set in a house, and an evening's entertainment in a gambling house.

The adventures are only connected to each other in as much as they take place in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting, and they are basically short one-offs which could be set almost anywhere. I can't help feeling that this section would have been put to better use if it had contained adventures with a more epic flavor or even acted as leads into such epics. Adventures in which PCs become caught up in great events which determine the future of Oerth would have made far better use of the campaign background and would have stamped the adventures with a distinctive flavor. Even so, as a source of ideas, the included adventures are fine as far as they go. It's a pity that

they don't go even further.

Zero-level characters: Hey! Tired of high-level types running riot across your world? Then maybe you need zero-level characters! This system for fledgling characters allows PCs to grow into their character-class roles and gives them special abilities not normally associated with a character class.

While the idea is appealing, I found the amount of record keeping and number crunching off-putting. It is also not a system that lends itself to gaming groups who enjoy lots of combat. Zero-level adventures are more suited to role-playing encounters and problem-solving. For those willing to put up with the paperwork, zero-level PCs are certainly intriguing as they let players have a greater influence on how their characters turn out than is available using any random-generation method.

Evaluation: *GREYHAWK Adventures* attempts to be many things to many people. Assuming this is its aim, it succeeds admirably, for everyone who looks at it will find something of interest. However, considered as a whole, it is less successful. Even hardened fans of the WORLD OF GREYHAWK fantasy setting may be disappointed as *GREYHAWK Adventures* adds little to the background of Oerth, instead providing useful add-ons and enhancements. More in-depth looks at the individual countries of Oerth and more epic-style adventures would have made *GREYHAWK Adventures* more vibrant and exciting.

Don't get me wrong — *GREYHAWK Adventures* includes some very good material, and it's a useful purchase for those of you looking for new spells, magical items, ways to make clerics more interesting, and for inspiration in the adventure department. It's just that I cannot shake the feeling that *GREYHAWK Adventures* has spread itself too thin.

The Chronicles of Talislanta
Bard Games \$12.00
Design: Stephen Michael Sechi
Illustrations: P. D. Breeding-Black
116-page perfect-bound book

The Talislantan Handbook
Bard Games \$9.95
Design: Stephen Michael Sechi
Illustrations: P. D. Breeding-Black
88-page perfect-bound book

A Naturalist's Guide To Talislanta
Bard Games \$12.00
Design: Stephen Michael Sechi
Illustrations: P.D. Breeding-Black
118-page perfect-bound book

Talislanta Sorcerer's Guide
Bard Games \$12.00
Design: Stephen Michael Sechi
Cover illustration: P. D. Breeding-Black
Illustrations: P. D. Breeding-Black and Patty Sechi
104-page perfect-bound book

The vast majority of fantasy settings borrow liberally from the works of J. R. R. Tolkien; dwarves, elves, hobbits, and orcs can all usually be found in the pages of fantasy role-playing games. Indeed, most fantasy worlds bear more than a passing resemblance to Tolkien's Middle-earth. After all, Tolkien's masterly descriptions in *The Lord of the Rings* helped to define the lifestyles and cultures of the races that populate our fantasy gaming worlds. But not all campaign worlds look to Tolkien for their ideas. One world which is distinctly different is Talislanta.

The world of Talislanta is the creation of Stephen Michael Sechi, who chose to draw his inspiration from the works of Hugo- and Nebula-award winning fantasy and science-fiction author Jack Vance. Even though Vance's works had a great influence on the design of Talislanta, Stephen Sechi has not simply set out to recreate the settings of Vance's novels. He has instead captured Vance's tone and used it to good effect in creating a world which is strange, exotic, and quirky. This is not the first time that Jack Vance has provided inspiration for game designers; Gary Gygax used Vance's magic system (as presented in the Dying Earth novel series) to good effect in the D&D® and AD&D games. But Talislanta is not so much based on Vance's rationales for his worlds but on his descriptions of strange and alien societies.

Vance is not the only writer to have made his mark upon Talislanta. H. P. Lovecraft's "Dreamquest of Unknown Kadath," Marco Polo's "Travels," and Sir Richard Burton's collection of the "Arabian Nights" have all been cited by Stephen Sechi as having played their part in inspiring the creation of Talislanta. With sources like these, you can expect something out of the ordinary, and Talislanta is certainly that.

Presentation: Talislanta game material is currently available in four perfect-bound books: *The Chronicles of Talislanta*, *The Talislantan Handbook*, *A Naturalist's Guide Talislanta*, and the *Talislanta Sorcerer's Guide*. The books are impressively illustrated by P. D. Breeding-Black (joined by Patty Sechi for the *Sorcerer's Guide*). The art is visually appealing and does an excellent job of conveying the atmosphere, places, and peoples of Talislanta. A flick through any of the four books reveals that Talislanta is special.

The Chronicles: In this book, we follow the wizard Tamerlin as he journeys through the world of Talislanta.

... Through a veil of blue mist did I first behold Talislanta: dreamlike and surreal, as if suffused in amberglow. At once it became my goal to investigate and explore this radiant new world, to unearth its ancient mysteries, to marvel at its myriad colors. And so I embarked upon a journey that would take me through many lands and across thousands of miles. All manner of strange sights did I encounter along the way: Seas of ice, firefalls, lakes like polished green glass, and mountains of black basalt.

The lands of Talislanta are home to all manner of strange and intriguing cultures and races: the Phantasians, who distill the essence of dreams and sell it to those rich enough to afford it; the crystal-gazing Xanadasian Savants, who are the self-appointed chroniclers of Talislantan history; the amphibious Imrian slave traders; the Mirin of L'Haan, who dwell in crystalline ice castles and are renowned as great artificers. Talislanta contains many other cultures ranging from the highly civilized and decadent to the savage and brutal.

Tamerlin's account of his travels is lively and informative. We get to see how he interacted with the various peoples, and how, using his cunning and skill, he escaped more than one dreadful fate and avoided others by sheer luck. *The Chronicles of Talislanta* is not a collection of entries to be dutifully plowed through in order to learn about this fabulous land. Instead, it's fun to read and very colorful. Written as a guidebook rather than as a rulebook, it's usable with any fantasy system.

The Talislantan Handbook: Whereas *The Chronicles of Talislanta* introduces us to the world of Talislanta, *The Talislantan Handbook* is concerned with presenting the Talislantan game system and providing role-playing information for players and GMs. The Talislantan system is very streamlined and easy to use. You'll find no

detailed charts for combat, critical hits, or — for that matter — any other complicated rules. All game mechanics are handled by rolling 1d20, adding any applicable modifiers, and comparing your score to the Action Table. The Action Table consists of three columns: Combat, Magic, and one combining Skill and Attribute tests. If you're engaged in combat, you roll on the Combat column; when you're casting a spell, you roll on the Magic column; and so forth. The results vary from mishaps to superior successes, with normal failures and successes lying in between.

When using the tables, you tell the GM what you hope to achieve. He then informs you of any modifiers you need to take into account, then you roll. It's quick, easy, and quite elegant in its simplicity. And, as it covers everything you are likely to attempt in a game session, you have no need to keep track of any complicated rules. In short, it lets you get on with the role-playing with a minimum of fuss. As the system is very simple, the GM is required to respond by providing dramatic accounts of your actions. Anyone with any experience of role-playing games will not find this a problem, as the results can easily be extrapolated from the type of action attempted.

Character creation is also very simple. There are over 80 different character types, each one defined by race, national-

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ity, skills, special abilities, equipment, and background. Simply pick which type of character you want to play, then customize it by increasing one attribute by three points, decreasing one attribute by one point, and by choosing an additional skill for your character. How does this actually work in practice?

Say I'm going to be a Thaecian Enchanter. Looking at the description, I see that my character is between 6' and 6'6" tall, weighs 100-160 lbs., and has silvery skin, deep blue hair, distinctive features, and a slender physique. His attributes are listed as Intelligence +3, Charisma +3, and Perception +3. His other attributes are rated at zero. This means that whenever he checks against his Int, Chr, or Per, I roll 1d20 and add 3; and if he uses any skill based on these abilities, he receives a bonus as well.

I decide that he's going to be smart, so I add 3 to his Intelligence, making it +6. I've also got to deduct 1 point, so he'll be slightly weaker than normal (-1 to Strength). He starts with some skills which are determined by whether he has a city, village, wilderness, or nomadic background. As a Thaecian Enchanter, he also has a variety of magical skills. I take the gambling skill as his additional skill, and he's almost ready to enter play. The character description tells me what equipment and wealth he starts with, and also gives a brief description of his personality: "Thaecians are devout pleasure seekers who shun hard work in favor of more pleasant pastimes. They are enamored of magic, and are partial to Thaecian nectar, a drink noted for its exotic favor and exhilarating properties." To find out more about his culture, I need only check out the entry in *The Chronicles of Talislanta*. Now I've got a well-detailed character and enough background information to make playing the part of a Thaecian Enchanter fun.

Skills: Skills are divided into these general types: common abilities, combat, magical/alchemical, performing, scholarly, thieving, trades and crafts, wilderness, and special abilities. Initially each skill is rated at +1, plus or minus any bonuses or penalties for relevant attribute ratings. Characters can improve existing skills and learn new skills by spending experience points. Experience points are also used to increase a character's level of ability, with rises in level bringing additional hit points and improving a character's skill ratings. Experience points are awarded in small amounts, and as most characters need only 25 points, there is very little book-keeping required.

The remainder of the handbook concerns itself with providing weapon and armor statistics, and basic equipment prices and weights. It also provides some nifty tables for determining a character's past history, contacts, and enemies. The Talislantan calendar, a glossary of Talislantan terms, a weather-generation system,

an adventure, and some very brief adventure ideas round out the book.

There is lot crammed into this book, but it is also fairly complete, providing you have access to *A Naturalist's Guide and to The Chronicles of Talislanta* to put it all in perspective and provide monsters for the PCs to deal with. The simple rule system means that large numbers of pages do not need to be dedicated to explaining and clarifying rules. The only real drawback is the burden the system places on the GM in determining modifiers and situations. More help and examples would have made the game system easier to use for GMs not used to improvisation. Help and examples would also have shown how to build color and atmosphere into a gaming session.

A Naturalist's Guide: This is effectively a *Monster Manual* for Talislanta, with brief descriptions of the deities worshiped by its various cultures and races. All of the creatures and plants discussed are accompanied by illustrations which add greatly to the atmosphere of the work. This book will also be of interest to anyone looking for new creatures to use in other game systems.

Sorcerer's Guide: This work elaborates on the magic system presented in *The Talislantan Handbook* by describing new spells, ancient and powerful books of magic, and enchanted items, with entries on magical and alchemical research. If your PC is serious about magic, he should enroll at the Lyceum Arcanum, the foremost institute of magic in Talislanta. There he can choose from a wide range of courses, from Basic Alchemical Techniques all the way up to such advanced studies as Sorceries of the Forgotten Age.

The Sorcerer's Guide also looks at Talislanta's magical races, the Omniverse (the dimensions of which Talislanta forms only one part), and the beings which dwell in the Omniverse. To provide an insight into what life for a Talislantan wizard would be like, a short story has been included. The story moves along at a good pace and makes good reading.

The Sorcerer's Guide is a useful addition to the Talislanta series, but it is not essential as magic is adequately covered in *The Talislantan Handbook*. However, it is a valuable sourcebook to anyone interested in studying the magic of Talislanta and its associated planes of existence.

Evaluation: If you're looking for something out of the ordinary in your fantasy gaming, then Talislanta is definitely worth a look. Travel the skies in a Phantasian windship, or simply lose yourself in hours of enjoyable role-playing exploring Talislanta's myriad cultures. Some may find the Talislantan game system thin on rules and mechanics, but it does an admirable job of handling all kinds of tests without-interrupting the flow of the game. With only a few rules to learn, you can concentrate on role-playing rather than rule-playing. Don't overlook Talislanta just

because you're don't want to abandon your existing game system, as its background is easily convertible to other games.

Short and sweet

MEKTON II game, by Mike Pondsmith. R. Talsorian Games Inc., \$12.00. Danger, romance, and giant robot combat? You're sure all these fit together? Yep. From the designer of the TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE™ game comes the MEKTON II game. Based on Japanese cartoon shows, the MEKTON II game casts the player characters as pilots of huge, awe-inspiring metal constructs. But this is more than just an exercise in mass destruction; true to the genre, the player characters have mysterious pasts, families, and loved ones to protect. The game employs a neat rule system and easy-to-generate player character backgrounds which make the heroes more than just the operators of killing machines. Power up the mecha and roll, but don't forget — you've got a date tonight.

GAZ7 The Northern Reaches, by Ken Rolston. TSR Inc., \$8.95. On the eastern seaboard of the D&D game's Known World lie the Viking kingdoms of Soderfjord, Vestland, and Ostland. This 96-page pack introduces these cultures in a highly entertaining and informative manner. Join your guides Helfdan Halftroll, Onund Tolundmire, Saru the Serpent, and Dwalinn the Dwarf as they take you on a tour of the Northern Reaches. *The Northern Reaches* is packed with adventure ideas, an epic campaign outline, details of the nonhuman races who share these wild Viking lands, and a look at a new system of clerical magic: runes. It even includes a complete 3-D card village which can be assembled and used as the setting for two of the detailed adventures. With its solid role-playing excitement and easy to digest background, this Gazetteer belongs in every D&D game collection.

THE WILLOW GAME, by Greg Costikyan. Tor Books, \$19.95. In this board game for six players, the four good players must keep the baby, Elora Danan, out of the clutches of the two evil players. It has been foretold that Elora Danan will one day destroy the evil Queen Bavmorda unless the baby is found and brought to Nockmaar Castle. The evil players have to accomplish their aims quickly or else the forces of good will grow too powerful for them to defeat easily. Beautifully illustrated and great fun to play, this game is based on the Lucasfilm production of the same name. The only drawback with the game is that it is not really suited to being played by less than six players; it's possible, but players then have to handle multiple characters. For maximum enjoyment, grab another five players before spending a few hours in the world of Willow. Ω

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Phlan-tastic adventures at the *Pool of Radiance*

In an unusual step, this month we feature the review of only one adventure game. We feel the first true AD&D® game for computer gamers requires this column's full attention.

Strategic Simulations, Inc.
(distributed by Electronic Arts)
1046 North Rengstorff Avenue
Mountain View CA 94043-1716
(415) 964-1353

Pool of Radiance * * * * ½
Commodore 64/128 version \$39.95
MS-DOS (Tandy 4000) version \$49.95

The following is taken from the journals of Aessopp, a human magic-user:

"These writings are for those who follow me. They discuss basic information, hints, warnings, and enlightenments that may provide that extra bit of data needed to conclude a successful adventure. I have experienced the terrors of numerous

adventure programs — some worthy of that genre, others not. But never before has such an environment existed as this one: a world based upon the authentic ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game rules.

"Enough chat. Our last battle with a large force of hobgoblins and orcs has left me bereft of spells. I need several hours — perhaps days — of rest. There are spell memorizations I must accomplish, and I need to inscribe new spells into my spell book before our party can once again attempt to clear the slums. The wounds we have received and the death of a comrade will seem less severe when we gain the 500-gp reward offered by the City Clerk for this accomplishment. Unfortunately, it appears that the slums go on forever.

"It may sound as though we have been unsuccessful, but we haven't. Our party consists of Lord Hart, Ironsmyth (our

dwarven fighter), Footsore (our halfling thief), Lady Patricia (our cleric), Ellwylly (our jack-of-all-trades), and myself. We have already managed to clear Sokol Keep on Thorn Island. Fortunately, we had amassed a small fortune in gold and platinum pieces prior to taking the boat to the island. This money enabled us to purchase the silver weaponry we needed to defeat the gangs of undead that inhabited that dread place.

"There are many places of note within Phlan. When characters have earned enough gold to purchase training to their next levels, they must visit the training areas. Characters of each class take a different door into the area; once through the portal, each character is examined and advanced if 1,000 gp are in hand.

"There are also three temples within Phlan, each possessing the restorative power so hungrily sought by those who are wounded, poisoned, or afflicted in some manner. The temples even have the power to fully restore deceased comrades! The price of this restoration is high, but what value can one place on the life of a friend? The temples are dedicated to a variety of gods. Not surprisingly, one can find shopkeepers within Phlan who might sell specific holy items for each temple's worshipers — items that can be worn by adventurers. These sales are worth your investigation.

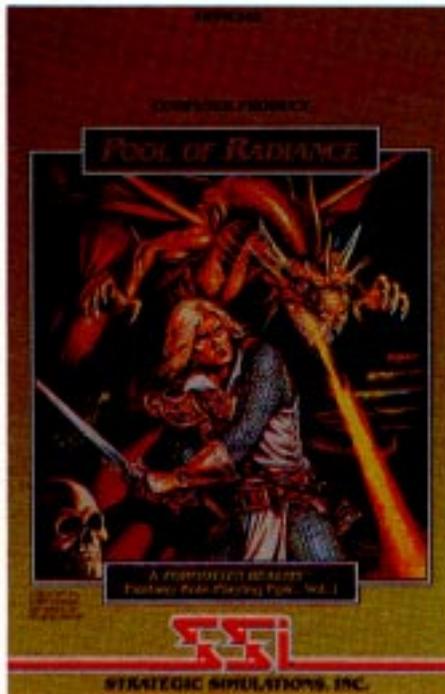
"Other businesses include a jewelry shop that sells some surprising items, and several retailers who can provide all manner of things, from the most basic arms and armor to advanced weaponry. The locations of all shops should be recorded, for sales of your treasures to these retailers will enhance your fortunes.

"You'll soon locate the gateway to the slums, the nesting place of the evil creatures that the City Council wishes eradicated. A city park and several taverns are also present, as well as the latter's attendant rumors. Parties with little experience might wish to avoid these drinking halls, as fights among patrons are common, and few patrons are as lowly in stature as a beginning party.

"Pay close attention to the warrants offered by the City Clerk. Read well the proclamations found fastened to the halls within the City Hall. Each offers an interesting bit of information that can aid your party in its cause. These coded clues are deciphered by using the Adventurer's Journal included in the game. Listen to each NPC encounter. Several citizens of Phlan (and those from beyond) offer valuable items of knowledge, ranging from information on a sudden invasion of undead to details on places where gems are rumored to be hidden. You should also use your own mapping skills during every turn within the adventure to keep track of your current location.

"What lies ahead for our group? Through the deciphering of rumors, mapping, and other skills, we have learned

Pool of Radiance
The first true AD&D®
computer game
from SSI.



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that beyond the slums lie areas that include Podol Plaza, Valjevo Castle, Kuto's Well, and more. Certainly, if we survive to collect the reward for clearing the slums, there are hundreds of exhausting hours of adventure ahead.

"The two NPCs we hired at the dueling grounds have signaled they are ready to move onward. My spells, as well as Lady Patricia's and Ellwylly's, have been memorized. Ironsmyth has readied his heavy crossbow, and Lord Hart has spent most of the evening sharpening his two-handed sword. We're off for a final assault on the slums. We can only hope our reward will be the continuation of life itself!"

Aessopp and his companions have been our software adventure testers for nearly a decade, through a variety of software entertainment offerings. This group has been deeply involved in both the MS-DOS and C64/128 versions of *Pool of Radiance*, a computerized FORGOTTEN REALMS™ adventure. The scenario was written by TSR designers and coded by the crack programmers at Strategic Simulations, Inc. *Pool of Radiance* falls into the must-buy category for avid AD&D game players, as it is the first offering that truly follows AD&D game rules.

You create your own save-game disks, assuring character continuation no matter what might happen to your PCs during the game. If you have an MS-DOS machine (such as our Tandy 4000), you can copy the game to your hard-disk drive. When you save a game, simply select a storage area from Game A to Game J, and wait for the program to save your current game status. One warning: When using the installation program included for MS-DOS machines, you must have the patience of Job. SSI has packed so much code onto three disks that the program had to be compressed. Uncompressing the code took nearly 30 minutes. However, we can happily say that the final product is more than worth this timely effort. If you are gaming on a C64/128 computer, you must have a separate save-game disk.

What a great fantasy role-playing game *Pool of Radiance* is! It plays truer to the AD&D game rules than any software adventure we have yet experienced. Only a few minor differences exist in the creation of your characters, which is normally accomplished by using multisided dice. In *Pool of Radiance*, you tell the program whether or not you want a character created for you, and you decide whether or not to keep the statistics that the computer generates.

Our testing on the C64/128 version required 207 such rolls to create an acceptable human fighter with an 18 strength. (Granted, there were many opportunities for a character to possess 17s as its primary characteristic, but we wanted to see how many rolls would be required for an "optimum" character). Our second fighter, a dwarf, needed only six



Pool of Radiance: Lizardmen hiss threats in MS-DOS.



Pool of Radiance: Goblins make poor conversationalists.

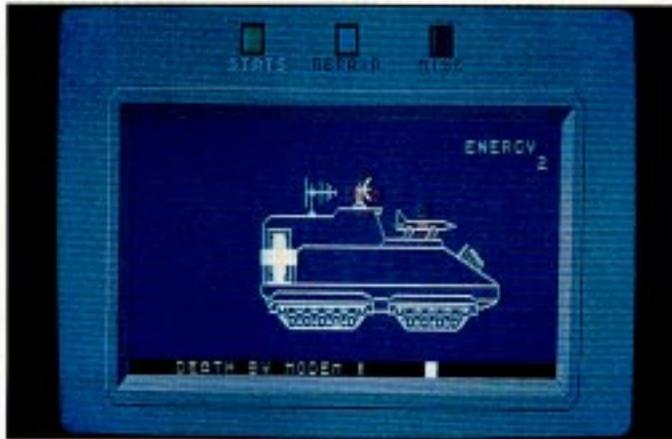


Pool of Radiance: An adventure begins on the C64/128.

Mars Saga: Journey across the red prison planet.



Modem Wars: An electronic arsenal.



rolls to get an 18 as its primary characteristic; our halfling thief required 110; the magic-user required 50; the cleric required 73; and a cleric/magic-user/fighter with acceptable attributes in all prime requisites required 350. The number of rolls required with the MS-DOS version were about half these numbers.

We required strong characters right away in order to enter the game and quickly build up experience points and hit points, allowing us to investigate as many areas as possible. Missing during character creation are your rolls for the initial number of gold pieces owned and languages known. The gold-piece figure is automatically assigned by the computer to your character, and it appears as though language does not become much of a problem as long as your intelligence is above median range. So far, we haven't run into any one or anything that didn't understand the common, orc, hobgoblin, dwarven, or elven tongue.

Encounters seem to be based on the encounter tables in TSR's AD&D game manuals. Even the countenances of those that confronted our party looked as though they had jumped from the pages of the *Monster Manual*.

Phlan is quite a settlement, having risen from the ashes, so to speak. Located on the northern shore of Moonsea (known earlier as the Dragon Sea) within the Forgotten Realms, Phlan is situated between

Zhentil Keep and Melvaunt. The civilized area of the city possesses just about every sort of shop needed to outfit a party of stalwart characters. Don't worry about shopping around — prices are constant from one shop to another within Phlan. Two quests immediately available to new adventuring parties require the clearing of specific geographic locations (known as blocks) that lie beyond the city's civilized area. One of the blocks is in the slums of Phlan; the other is in Sokol Keep. These quests are designed to allow starting parties to build up experience points, but not without plans of action. You'll lose several parties before you realize exactly what is needed to clear each area.

Successful combat earns your characters the right to search captives, the lame, and the dead for whatever they might possess (as in a regular AD&D game). Our PCs took everything they could get their hands on. Items such as weapons and armor were then sold at the stores in Phlan so that enough gold and platinum pieces could be accumulated to buy the silver weaponry and armor required for our assault on Sokol Keep. With the turning ability of our cleric and a keen edge to our silver weapons, the undead there melted away like butter on hot toast. Getting enough money to purchase these special items is not easy, though. It takes many one-encounter forays into the slums to build up the contents of your purses.

The only negative aspect of the C64/128 version of *Pool Of Radiance* is the technology of the computer itself. The C64/128 is notoriously slow. Due to the large number of disk accesses required for the various scenes and activities throughout the game, and due to the agonizingly slow disk reads, the game tends to bog down, especially during lengthy combats where the computer must manage numerous enemies. Casting a spell can also lead one to prolonged yawning while waiting for various screens to appear; the screens allow you to decide who will cast what spell on whom. Strategic Simulations does have a software-based fastloader utility integrated into the game; without this aid, the game would become nearly unplayable. The MS-DOS version, certainly our favorite format, is extremely fast — so much so that in order to catch on-screen messages, we had to slow the game operation down. We enjoyed the Enhanced Graphics Adapter (EGA) graphics mode and found ourselves playing at twice the speed of the C64/126 version.

We advise you to rush out to your local dealer and buy *Pool Of Radiance*! We also recommend you buy the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign set and FR4 *The Magister* (a FORGOTTEN REALMS accessory sold by TSR) to further your enjoyment of this world of enchantment and adventure. All AD&D game players will appreciate *Pool of Radiance's* attention to detail, its forthrightness in adhering to all applicable AD&D game rules, and the hundreds of hours of game play incorporated into the different scenarios within the Forgotten Realms. You will receive enormous value for your dollar, for the Forgotten Realms stretches far beyond Phlan. Adventure, excitement, advanced programming, animated graphics, puzzles — all can be found in *Pool Of Radiance*. This is truly Strategic Simulation's flagship product and will undoubtedly bring thousands of computer enthusiasts into the adventure-filled worlds of TSR.

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San Francisco CA 94107
(415) 957-0886

Antic has launched several new entertainment offerings. The first is *Star Quake*, an arcade-style adventure game for the Atari ST that takes place in deep space and offers 500 action-packed screens, 30 on-screen colors, beautiful animation, and fast play. The player's mission is to repair the very fabric of the universe by replacing the nine core elements inside a rogue planet that has gone out of control. Pyramids, space locks, antigravity lifts, and secret passages are encountered as the player travels through a maze of caverns to make or break the mission. The price for this game is \$29.95.

A new game for the Amiga is *Pioneer*

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Plague, in which the player's mission is to stop an out-of-control, self-replicating, terraforming robotic spaceship from invading and destroying other planets as it heads toward Earth. The price is \$39.95.

Two other entertainment-related offerings include *STOS*, the ultimate game-writing machine, and *STAC*, a new graphic-illustration adventure creator. The former is the ideal game-writing program for the Atari ST, having an easy-to-use interface and 320 commands that suit any user level. Three games, *Zoltar*, *Bullet Train*, and *Orbit*, are included, plus a sprite editor, room designer, character set and icon editor, music editor, a screen compactor, and *STOS Basic*. The price is \$59.95. The latter product, *STAC*, features a quick-start file, a demo adventure, character fonts, *STAC*, and a complete 150K adventure and slide show of sample adventure screens. With *STAC*, gamers are able to produce professionally illustrated, top quality, graphic-adventure games. The price is \$69.95.

Electronic Arts

1820 Gateway Drive
San Mateo CA 94404
(415) 571-7171

Dan Bunten's *Modem Wars* is the first game designed specifically for modems. This is an action-packed grudge match between two opponents, either human or computer, that tests players' strategic skills at seven different levels of battle. It takes the concentration of a speed-chess game and combines the unpredictable action situations of Milton Bradley's *BATTLESHIP* board game. Players see only their units and the enemy units they've spotted on the horizon. Players set their troops and artillery prior to battle, but once the confrontation begins, the unexpected should be expected, as enemy Riders come out of nowhere, Grunts are on blitz orders, and a Spy may spot your ComCent and promptly blow it away. Dan Bunten designed *M.U.L.E.* and *Seven Cities Of Gold*. The price for *Modem Wars* is \$34.95.

The third new offering is *Mars Saga*, a science-fiction role-playing game. The time is 2055 A.D. Earth has sent its worst convicts to Mars to mine the planet's mineral wealth. The environment is cold and hostile, and the weather is even worse. You must learn to survive on this prison planet, and you'd better learn quick. You create and control characters to explore the planet, increasing their abilities, wealth, and intelligence along the way. The goal is to find out what happened to the city of Proscenium, which has fallen as silent as the Martian desert sands. Success depends on savvy, combat tactics, strategy, and using your character's skills to your best advantage. The price is \$34.95.

A newly released Arcadia arcade game is *Sidewinder*, the home-computer version of the popular coin-operated shoot-'em-up. The action begins after the Federation and Leviathan galactic empires face one

another in a standoff. Suddenly, a monstrous enemy ship appears out of nowhere. You've volunteered to guide your ship to the alien space cruiser and destroy it. There are six scenarios and three-dimensional scrolling graphics. The price is \$39.99 for MS-DOS machines.

Epyx, Inc.

600 Galveston Drive
P.O. Box 8020
Redwood City CA 94063
(415) 366-0606

Epyx introduces *The Legend Of Blacksilver*, the new adventure title in the company's Masters Collection line of software for the advanced game player. Blacksilver, a sinister substance capable of emptying oceans and cracking the very surface of the Earth, has been discovered by treacherous Baron Taragas. Corrupted by the malevolent mineral, the Baron seeks to rule the world by submerging the land of Thalen and raising another continent, which he intends to populate with creatures created from his own vile mind. The Baron has kidnapped the King and is holding him hostage. Princess Aylea needs one warrior to do what many have failed to accomplish: rescue the King and save Thalen and its persecuted people. Heroes are up against terrifying odds and journey to ancient castles to acquire important clues and useful items. Vast wealth can be found, but only at great cost.

There are 16 different towns in this game. As a player's rank increases, he can add advanced magic spells. This game is presented from the first-person perspective, and three-dimensional effects put gamers right in the heart of Thalen. The game comes with a full-color map and position stickers. Currently, *The Legend of Blacksilver* has been released for the C64/128 at a price of \$39.95. The Apple II and IBM versions will be released later this year. The latter system offerings will be priced at \$49.95:

Interplay Productions

1575 Corporate Drive
Costa Mesa CA 92626
(714) 549-2411

Interplay Productions has been awarded the Best Computer Adventure Award by *Video Games and Computer Entertainment* magazine. The prize-winning game, *Neuromancer*, is based on the award-winning cyberpunk novel by William Gibson. *Neuromancer* combines adventure, intrigue, intellect, and acquired skills that you use to hack your way through the future. *Neuromancer* places you in the run-down world of Chiba City, which you must explore in order to meet up with hackers like yourself. As a cowboy, you can tap your consciousness into a database. This electronic universe, known as Cyberspace, ties together all other computer networks. Each computer system has different defenses; your task is to break their Intrusive Countermeasure

Electronics (ICE) systems. The game is currently released for the Apple II family and the C64/128; versions for the Commodore Amiga and MS-DOS machines are coming.

Konami, Inc.

815 Mittel Drive
Wood Dale IL 60191
(312) 595-1443

Konami has released several new video games. The first is *Castlevania II - Simon's Quest*. Count Dracula remains powerful even beyond the grave, and his curse haunts this adventure. To restore peace, your only hope is to discover and destroy the Count's body, piece by piece. This gruesome quest takes the player back to Transylvania to the Count's eerie castle. Your search for clues to the whereabouts of the Count's hidden remains takes you through a maze of mansions, graveyards, and dark, haunted forests.

Also from Konami is *Defender of the Crown*, a game that takes players into a world of chivalry, gallantry, and fantasy. It's a time of war as you, a brave Saxon knight, prepare to battle the evil Norman forces and save Britain. But all wars require careful planning. Before you wage your first battle, you must test your wits to raise the money, gather the weapons, and build the armies necessary to overpower your foes. The game will be released this spring.

Mindscape Inc.

3444 Dundee Road
Northbrook IL 60062
(312) 480-7667

Mindscape introduces *Deja Vu II: Lost in Las Vegas*, the newest interactive graphic-adventure game from the creators of *Deja Vu*, *Uninvited*, and *Shadowgate*. The notorious mobster Tony Malone is after you. If you don't come up with \$100,000 in the next seven days, you may be trying on a pair of cement shoes. The odds are definitely against the player. For the Apple Macintosh, the price is \$49.95. Other versions are expected for the Atari ST, Commodore Amiga, Apple IIGS, and MS-DOS machines at the same price.

Paragon Software Corp.

(distributed by MicroProse)
600 Rugh Street, Suite A
Greensburg PA 15601
(412) 838-1166

Paragon has signed an exclusive agreement with Marvel Comics to create a series of games featuring some of the greatest comic-book characters of all time. The first release in the Marvel Comics series will be an exciting, fast-paced, interactive comic and arcade adventure entitled *Spider-Man and Captain America in Dr. Doom's Revenge*. The background plot, conveyed through a comic book, has Dr. Doom mastermind the theft of a U.S. nuclear missile in a twisted revenge against all those who ended his evil

CHAOS IN THE CARIBBEAN

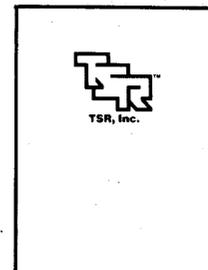
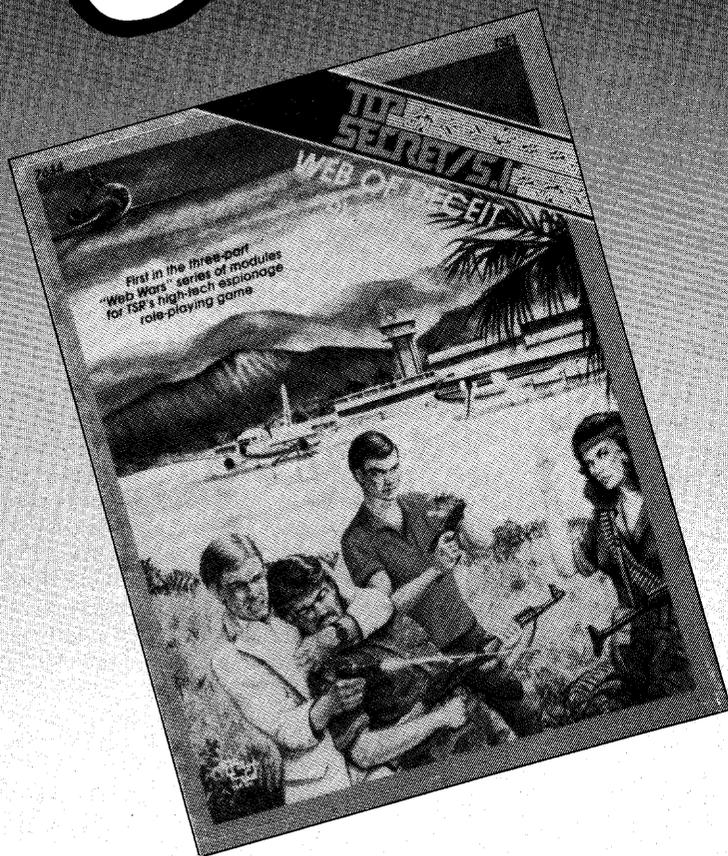
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designs years earlier. This game will initially be released for the C64/128 and MS-DOS micros. Future projects will revolve around the X-Men and the Punisher.

Newly released is *Guardians of Infinity: To Save Kennedy*, a highly advanced strategic text adventure for MS-DOS machines. Two years in development, this game features a new, natural language parser that allows communication as if the player were holding real conversations. This is an adventure that challenges the mind. The year is 2087, and the time continuum is unraveling by the hour, threatening to destroy the planet Earth. Only one man can save time: temporal physicist Adam Cooper. Cooper and his partner trace the cause of the time crisis to the events of November 22, 1963: the assassination of

President John F. Kennedy, a tragedy that should never have occurred in the normal course of history. The player assumes the identity of Adam Cooper and journeys back to 1963 to prevent the assassination.

Psygnosis Limited

First Floor
Port of Liverpool Building
Liverpool L3 1BY
United Kingdom
Int'l.: 44-51-236-8818

Psygnosis has released a simultaneous, two-player, collaborative arcade game entitled *Captain Fizz Meets the Blaster-Trons*. This game was allegedly so addictive that the company had to ban employees from playing it at the office in order to make the offering's release deadline. You simply cannot win this game without planning a strategy, watching your partner's back, and even (when the chips are down) sacrificing your own life so that your fellow player may go on to serve the noble cause. If the attitude is taken that it's every player for himself, the Blaster-Trons will finish you off in no time. The game is available for the Commodore Amiga and the Atari ST.

SEGA of America, Inc.

(distributed by Tonka Corporation)
573 Forbes Boulevard
South San Francisco CA 94080
(800) USA-SEGA (toll free, outside Calif.)
(415) 742-9300 (within Calif.)

Headlining this year's schedule is *Altered Beast*. The player assumes the role of a centurion warrior called up from the grave to rescue the daughter of Zeus. By defeating enemies, the player gets power-up atoms which gives him the ability to transform into a wolf man, dragon, bear man, and tiger man. Each shape has special, supernatural powers. Another new SEGA game is *R-Type*, a licensed title with a deep-space, science-fiction theme. The company claims that this game has phenomenal graphics, sound, and playability.

Sierra On-Line, Inc.

P.O. Box 485
Coarsegold CA 93614

(209) 683-4468

This company has introduced a radically different science-fiction adventure, *ManHunter: New York*. Features are provided that have never before been found in a Sierra 3-D animated adventure: windowing effects, split-screens, close-ups, and new programming that enables you to see more screens without changing disks. A new interface for *ManHunter* allows the player to view the action from first- and third-person viewpoints, and it requires virtually no typed commands to play. There are over 250 scenes, including realistic on-screen maps of New York City. *ManHunter* combines horror and humor in the tradition of Stephen King. You are placed in New York two years after an alien invasion and subsequent world takeover. As a detective (or manhunter), your goal is to track and monitor subversive human agitators. Currently for IBM micros, other versions are being developed for Atari ST, Apple IIGS, Macintosh, Apple II family, and Amiga. The price for the IBM version is \$49.95.

Sir-Tech Software, Inc.

P.O. Box 245
Charlestown Ogdensburg Mall
Ogdensburg NY 13669
(315) 393-6633

The fifth Wizardry scenario has been released in formats for Apple II and MS-DOS computers. *Wizardry V: Heart of the Maelstrom* has been released after 23 months of development work. Several new features are included in this scenario, which is *not* dependent upon any of the previous four Wizardry scenarios for game play. There are dozens of new spells, an asymmetrical maze, new graphics, interactive talking encounters, pools, hidden items, locked maze doors, and larger-than-life monster pictures. The price is \$49.95.

Also for Apple II and MS-DOS machines is another new adventure from Sir-Tech entitled *The Usurper: Mines of Qyntarr*. This is a lighthearted, text-based romp into magic and illusion, but with a serious purpose. The adventurer must overcome obstacles and uncover the concealed route to the long-lost Orb of Qyntarr. The Orb is said to hold the power needed to accomplish the adventurer's ultimate goal: toppling the evil King Aken to free the peoples of Qyntarr. The price is \$29.95.

Titus Software Corporation

20432 Corisco Street
Chatsworth CA 91311
(818) 709-3692

Just in from Titus Software is *Galactic Conqueror*. Located in the center of the galaxy is Gallion, the supreme headquarters of a stellar league that protects mankind. In a remote corner of the galaxy, the surveillance units of Gallion have detected what appears to be a small enemy invasion. Nobody knows how dangerous this invasion could be, but in order to protect

mankind, a defense must be launched immediately. As a Betadroid KAL, you are the only one to handle the last space fighter created by the stellar league: Thunder Cloud II. You must stop the invasion. The game is available for the Commodore Amiga, Atari ST, and MS-DOS machines for \$44.95.

Before we present our game hints, we would like to make note of a letter we received from Thomas Zuchowski of Clemmons, North Carolina. Tom publishes a small newsletter dedicated to the Eamon gaming environment. Eamon is a public domain role-playing system for the Apple II computer; it has been around for at least seven years. Some of the games are boring, but perhaps 50 or so of at least 165 adventure scenarios rival commercially produced text-adventure games.

The Eamon system has been through a number of major revisions over the past few years; the latest version is fast and powerful. Eamon adventures may be obtained from almost any Apple public-domain software distributor for only a few dollars per disk. This makes Eamon a worthwhile bargain. However, probably the best news about Eamon is that a complete set of tools is readily available to help gamers write their own adventures.

The Eamon Adventurer's Guild is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting Eamon and selling the public-domain Eamon disks. If you are interested in contacting Tom or in subscribing to his informative newsletter, you can write to the following address:

Tom Zuchowski
7625 Hawkhaven Drive
Clemmons NC 27012

Clue corner

Bard's Tale I (Interplay)

By following these simple steps, your characters can gain hit and spell points, as well as ability scores, quite easily. You must either have a specter mace or a mage with the 4th-level magician spell called Specter Touch. Step 1: Go to the Review Board and make certain everyone is trained to their highest levels. Step 2: If you have Specter Touch, go to the Party Attack option and cast the spell on a party member. If you do not have the spell but have the mace, attack a party member with it. In either case, make certain the screen states that you have drained a level from the attacked person. Step 3: Go back to the Review Board and train the drained character. Repeat these steps until you have the desired amount of HP, SP and Ability. Just be sure you don't damage your character below zero points!

Bruce Norman
Kingston, Ontario

The Legend of Blacksilver (Epyx)

There are some awfully stout doors that'll succumb to the wave of a feather. Search for the etherium for additional magical training. The island caverns contain a special ring. Don't speak to prisoners unless you pay the guard first. Prices differ in the various towns, but always go for the Superb weapons. Sneaking can sometimes access the singing crystal. The Eagle Temple lies to the northeast. Look for Beaverton on a spit. Make certain you are prepared for travel to Maelbane!

Hartley, Patricia, and Kirk Lesser

Pool of Radiance (SSI)

About halfway through your search of the slums, you'll come upon one particularly nasty assortment of goblins that are rather accurate with their bows! Allow them some rest before taking them to task. All may not be well near the Well. Until good old Norris has been dumped, ambush is the name of the game near a secret door. When you are making your way to the Nomad Camp, try to find a way through the trip wire quickly. If not, expect no aid in fighting off the kobold attack. As is true in life, respect for one's elders is worth a stand at the keep where the lizard folk reside. However, to get into their good graces, perhaps you should have set free a particular group of like types on Sorcerer's Island! An important word should have been given to you to get into the chieftain's good graces. In the northwest corner of Valjevo Castle, should you make entry during daylight, the giants may be lying down on the job.

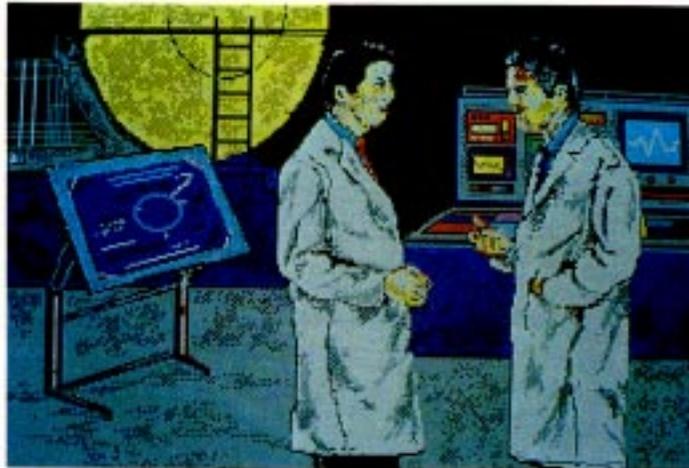
Hartley, Patricia, and Kirk Lesser

Ultima V (Origin)

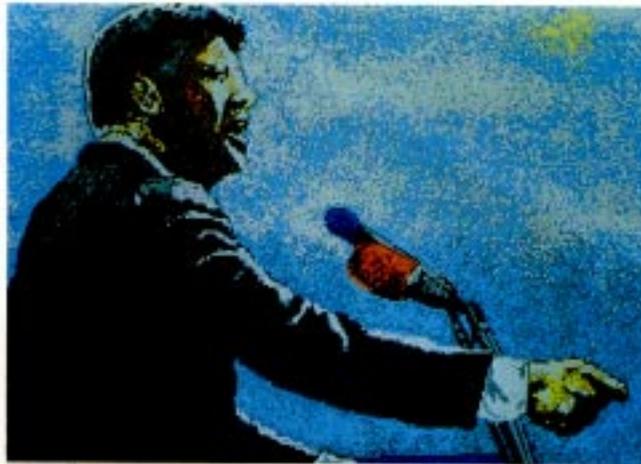
It seems that Mr. Hogan's letter in DRAGON® issue #140 drew at least two letters to our attention. They are from David Beals of Westport, Mass., and Adam Fields (no address). These hardcore gamers state that the best way to handle the Shadowlord and Shard destruction is to combine the operation by throwing the Shard into the flames when the Shadowlord stands upon it. A massive explosion follows, destroying both the Shard and the Shadowlord. This is a worthwhile tip, to be sure. Adam adds, "There is a free magic axe in Jhelom. Just search everything, making sure you don't 'leave anything out.'" David ends his letter: "To save Lord British from his unusual prison at the bottom of Doom, you *must* have the sandalwood box hidden in Lord British's chambers at his castle. The box is hidden behind a secret door that can only be opened by playing the song 'Stones' by Iolo on the harpsichord in the room."

Wishbringer (Infocom)

Put the blanket on the baby grue so he won't wake up. To get the platypus out of the hole, put the branch in the hole and pull the branch up. Dig in the "X" and blow it immediately. The gold coin is counterfeit; flip the second switch off. Get the



Guardians of Infinity:
a desperate meeting in 2087.



Guardians of Infinity:
November 22, 1963
— you are there.



Guardians of Infinity:
They had better be friendly.

broom, and leave the cat alone. Also, look behind the painting to get out of the castle. Be certain to read Corky's note after he leaves! Free the princess, too. Answer "yes" to *all* the questions in the library.

Chris Carmen
Oxford, Ohio

That's all for this issue. We would like to thank everyone for their letters. We also want to remind all that the 1989 Beastie Awards for best games of the year are

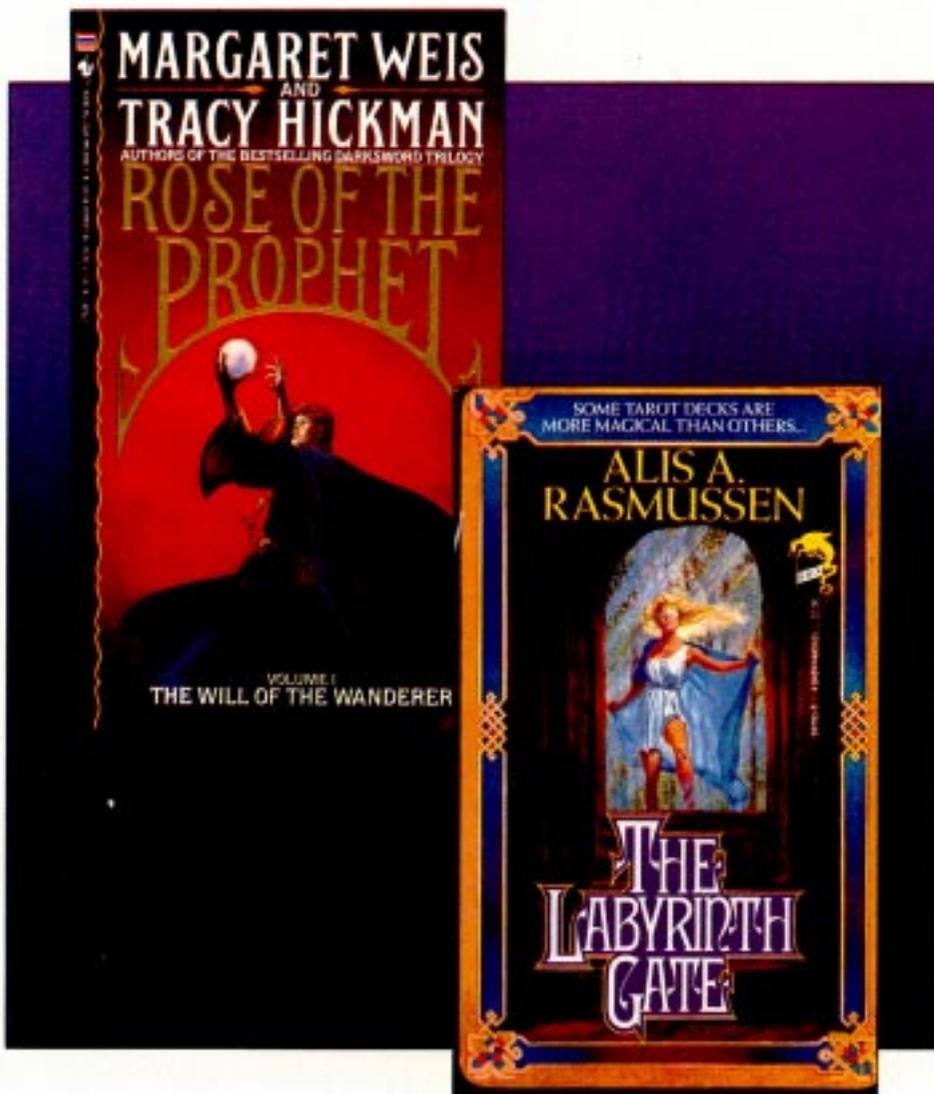
now in progress. The voting will end with the July issue (147) of DRAGON Magazine. If you'd like to vote for your favorite software game, please print your name, address, and the system version on a card or in a letter. Mail your ballot to us at the following address:

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Until next month, game on!



The Role of BOOKS



New worlds without number

THE DRAGONBONE CHAIR

Tad Williams
DAW 0-8099-0003-3 \$19.95

The Dragonbone Chair is large and intimidating. Its style is formal and literary. And it is the first volume of a trilogy ostentatiously labeled "Memory, Sorrow and Thorn." Authors who set out to write

self-capitalized Important Books usually create sleep-inducing paperweights instead, but Tad Williams has managed something else in this venture.

A comprehensive description of that "something else" is elusive. Several elements of Williams' sculpture are identifiable enough, but the overall design is

curiously obscure. Perhaps its most prominent feature is a unique richness of language — or more properly, of linguistics. Williams takes remarkable care with names and phrases, drawing on old roots from Saxon, Nordic, and Celtic tongues (and likely others I don't recognize). If the result isn't quite up to par with Tolkien's invention of an entire elvish language, it is at least a respectable second.

A similar aura of authenticity, or at least depth, shows in the books sense of history. While Williams avoids long lectures and expository dialogue, he nonetheless provides extensive background on the world of Osten Ard. The data comes in chips and shards, as characters explicitly and implicitly refer to the historical people and events that have shaped their social, political, and religious destinies. (For instance, the Christ-like figure of Usires is often mentioned, but we don't stop to read chapters from a Usirian Bible.)

Not surprisingly, Williams' principal characters emerge from all this as well-rounded, complex personalities. Simon, the scullery boy whose explorations of the vast Hayholt wander into arcane intrigues and counterplots, is the key example, initially wide-eyed but eventually compelling and compelled. His two closest friends, the scholar Dr. Morgenes and the sly traveler Binabik, display similar philosophies yet differ in approach. And the exiled Prince Josua is a revolutionary who is both driven and doubting.

The Dragonbone Chair is clearly meant to be compared to Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* — there are too many parallels between the works for the echoes not to be deliberate. It's at just that point, though, that the analysis begins to fail. Williams' extraordinary craftsmanship is not in question; what is uncertain is his artistic vision, and this time, "it's too early to tell" isn't a satisfying hedge. Future volumes of this epic could turn all too easily into Important Books.

The one safe prediction is that the sequence will succeed or fail on a grand scale. It may even do both — in which case opposing camps of readers will argue about it for years to come. And as yet, I really don't know which side I'm on.

THE LABYRINTH GATE

Alis A. Rasmussen
Baen 0-671-69793-6 \$3.50

Alis Rasmussen's first novel has an eclectic literary heritage. There are exploited children out of Charles Dickens, a research expedition in the Jules Verne tradition, a host of romances borrowed largely from 18th century English theater, beings and encounters inspired by Celtic myth, and a villainess worthy of the Brothers Grimm. The blend may sound far too strange to be appealing, but in fact, *The Labyrinth Gate* is a highly enjoyable tale with a remarkably coherent atmosphere.

Newlyweds Sanjay and Chryse Mukerji (his roots are in India; hers seem to be

Native American) arrive in Rasmussen's realm of Anglia via the unusual tarot deck someone has left as a wedding gift. But one card vanishes somewhere in transit, and without it, they can't get home. Luckily, local nobility comes to their aid in the form of Julian Haldane and his household, where the couple takes up residence as they adjust to their surroundings.

Two more major plots emerge as the adventure unfolds. One involves Anglia's reigning Regent, who secretly plans to dispose of the child Queen and take over the throne, while the other traces the eccentric Professor Farr and his daughters as Farr searches for a legendary lost city where mysterious treasure is said to rest. The treasure's supposed mystic powers attract the Regent and the Wizard Earl of Elen; it is also another sage's price for Sanjay's and Chryse's safe return home, and the professor wants it for its historical value.

A few strands are looser than others; an obscure plot point requires Chryse's rescue of several children from a factory that drains their life energy, but Rasmussen makes little use of the youngsters thereafter. And though the tarot deck at the tale's heart is apparently an important magical device, little time is spent exploring its uses and powers.

But if bits of plot sometimes slip from Rasmussen's grasp, it's because her fingers rest firmly on her characters' pulses. The various couples (some of whom are cleverly masked) treat the business of romance with refreshing diversity; Chryse and Sanjay especially unsettle Anglian society by having married for love. The forbidding Earl of Elen has several startling yet logical secrets. And even minor characters such as Aunt Laetitia and Princess Georgianna receive at least a few moments in the spotlight.

An appendix provides extensive notes on Rasmussen's imaginary tarot deck, which draws on Celtic symbols and forms at some variance with the more familiar patterns. But while gamers may find the deck of Gates an intriguing artifact and divining tool for characters to explore, the real merit of *The Labyrinth Gate* lies in its origins. Rasmussen is a refreshing writer, one who has clearly read a wide variety of literature and built her own unique vision on its foundations. That's a claim too few authors can make, and one to which more should aspire.

THE WILL OF THE WANDERER

Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman
Bantam Spectra 0-553-27638-7 \$4.50

I wanted to like *The Will of the Wanderer*; an Arabian Nights adventure told by skilled writers Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman is powerfully attractive. But despite a striking concept and the team's usual solid characterization, this first volume of their fourth trilogy is seriously and frustratingly flawed.

That's especially disappointing for gam-

ing audiences, since only gamers will fully appreciate the premise that the universe is shaped like a twenty-sided die. Each point of the die represents a particular virtue — Good, Evil, Patience, Intolerance, Reality, etc. — and each of the twenty sides represents the sphere of a God tied to three of the twelve nexus points. The system is well-defined and clever, leading logically to the crisis which arises when two Gods destroy each other. (One apparent copy-editing glitch: Both the God Promenthias and the Goddess Evren are described as deities of Goodness, Charity and Faith.)

Equally well-defined are the mortals and immortals drawn unknowingly into another deity's scheme to displace the remaining seventeen gods. Among them are Khardan and Zohra, offspring of opposing desert chieftains who are unwillingly joined in a marriage that may be more than political; Sond and Fedj, the chieftains' djinni and agents of yet another god; Mathew, a castaway sorcerer forced to masquerade as a woman in order to avoid execution; and Meryem, agent of a rival sultan sent to seduce Khardan into betraying both tribes.

The abundant cast and multileveled plot structure combine to create the novels' flaw. Weis and Hickman have handled each situation before, but not both at once. The first DRAGONLANCE® trilogy successfully balanced a large group of heroes by binding them all in the same quest, while the Darksworld novels featured a wide-ranging plot with a single character as its linchpin.

This time, several stories develop at once. Three or four mortal wars are brewing, the djinni have intrigues on their own planes, and something else may be transpiring among the Gods themselves. Few of the protagonists truly interact until late in the book, and even then no two characters have quite the same agenda. Readers can't effectively choose sides — there are too many sides, most of which seem "right" to some degree.

Weis and Hickman are also victims of bad timing, as *The Will of the Wanderer* is a late arrival in a sudden surge of Arabian Nights sagas. That lessens its distinctiveness and may prompt readers to view it more critically than they otherwise might. In the long run, that's good — it produces sharper readers and more skillful writers — but the present volume may suffer economically in the process.

EURYALE

Kara Dalkey
Ace 0-441-22336-2 \$3.50

DRAGON Magazine's "ecology" series of monster-related articles has become more and more sophisticated over time, such that the SF trade journal Locus occasionally reports them as short fiction. Kara Dalkey's latest novel is the next logical extension of that trend: a full-length tale of "the ecology of the medusa."

First, some definitions. In Greek myth,

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Medusa was a gorgon slain by the hero Perseus; her description corresponds to the AD&D® game's medusa. Dalkey's Euryale is Medusa's sister, another gorgon, who has migrated to imperial Rome in quest of a cure for her petrifying gaze. Neither is related to the AD&D game's gorgon, which is another creature entirely.

As she searches, Euryale encounters the Roman senator Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio Hispallus, the Chaldean philosopher-wizard Archidemus, and the Marsi witch Simaetha, and learns that Roman politics and obscure magic can be a dangerous mixture. Before the tale is done, Euryale's curse has touched all four lives and forced her to leave Rome.

The quietly written, moving narrative incorporates substantial quantities of valuable lore for gamers with interest in classical campaign settings. Besides extensive information on Euryale herself, readers will find a pragmatic, senator's-eye view of the city's politics neatly twined with descriptions of Roman religious practices (orthodox and otherwise). Hack-and-slash enthusiasts will find little excitement, but there is emotional intrigue in plenty.

A final aside: All three of Kara Dalkey's novels (*The Curse of Sagamore*, *The Nightingale*, and *Euryale*) have been discussed in this space. That surprised me when I noticed it, but what surprised me more was the diversity of the three books: a

comic adventure, a complex Japanese tale, and a quiet legend of imperial Rome. In an age of series and specialization, Dalkey is a writer of unusual strength and versatility. That's rare enough to be worth encouraging all by itself.

THE HORSEGIRL

Constance Ash

Ace 0-441-34275-2 \$3.50

Constance Ash creates a strange world in her first novel. The strongly feudal social and political structure suggests a medieval setting, but flintlock rifles and competing religious systems convey deep echoes of England's 17th-century Puritan era. Appropriately, *The Horsegirl* is a strange novel; while the writing is very good, the story's events and ideas are more unsettling than appealing.

There's no doubt that Ash is firmly in control of her story and language. The narrative captures readers quickly, skillfully using action and image to create atmosphere and propel the plot. Title character Glennys' transformation from peasant girl to horsemistress under wealthy Baron Fulk, and her struggle against diverse emotional and societal pressures, are told with power and style.

Despite her skill with language, however, Ash sends conflicting signals concerning a troubling yet critical plot point. The expertly stage-managed twist will startle readers, but should have been no surprise to Glennys. (Warning: Discussing the problem requires revealing the twist.)

The Horsegirl appears at first to be a straightforward coming-of-age tale. In fact, Ash's novel has enough complex psychological baggage to keep a closetful of Freudians busy for years. Its heart is a classic Oedipus triangle: Glennys, her peasant mother, and Baron Fulk, who is Glennys' mentor, lover, and father. Single-minded Reverend Tiescher adds another dimension, fueling a strong but underexplained religious conflict. But though Ash creates enormous subliminal tension, she firmly dodges the questions she raises and minimizes their impact.

Stranger still, the book's conclusion promises a sequel focused on "a world of glamour and intrigue." Ash may be a talented word-spinner, but she seems determined to write stories with split personalities. Until she can effectively focus her literary vision, gamers are best advised to look elsewhere for campaign ideas.

SPELL SINGERS

Alan Bard Newcomer, editor

DAW 0-88677-314-8 \$3.50

This was a small project that grew. The growth itself isn't surprising, given the authors involved. Marion Zimmer Bradley is an institution, and though Ru Emerson, Mercedes Lackey, and Jennifer Roberson are newcomers by comparison, each has gained a respectable following. Editor Alan Bard Newcomer's intent in assembling

their works was to showcase the work of his namesakes — bards and storytellers — and his collection aptly fulfills its goal.

In particular, Bradley's two stories (which concern the mage Lythande, once a traveler in Robert Asprin's *Thieves' World* series) carry a richly descriptive narrative rhythm, and Ru Emerson's contribution is logically less ornamental in style than her Nedao novels. By contrast, Lackey's two linked tales are almost too casually written and distant of viewpoint to convey the mood Newcomer seeks. All, though, are solidly plotted sword-and-sorcery adventures.

These adventures are mostly of novella or novelette length, allowing Newcomer's writers greater freedom than short fiction generally offers. Each handles the challenge differently: Lackey presents a pair of tales which combine to form a whole, while Roberson and Emerson choose plots that skillfully balance short-story compactness with a novel's richer detail. Bradley's two stories are the book's shortest, a fact likely dictated by the magazine markets in which they first appeared.

Editor Newcomer has chosen these stories well, and readers should be aware that this volume originally appeared, under the title *Bardic Voices One*, as a handsome limited-edition book from his own Hypatia Press imprint. Inquiries to Hypatia Press (86501 Central Rd., Eugene OR 97402, U.S.A.) should reveal if copies are still available; the quality craftsmanship and popular group of writers make the anthology a worthwhile collector's item, independent of the enjoyment gamers can derive from the reading.

FOOL ON THE HILL

Matt Ruff

Atlantic Monthly Press

0-87113-243-5 \$19.95

There are no fantasy gamers in *Fool on the Hill*, though you might expect them in a novel set on a university campus. At Matt Ruff's shadow version of Cornell University, they'd be redundant — the whole campus borders Faerie, and is populated by Shakespearean sprites, canine philosophers, ring-wielding Tolkien lovers, benign crusaders for various causes, and a storyteller in search of love.

Instead, there are stories within stories within stories. Some of them are romances: Aurora Smith's father hopes to find her an unconventional husband; a co-president of the reclusive and wondrous Tolkien House offers membership to a band of nonconformists in trade for an introduction to one of them; and star-crossed sprites rebuild a relationship tarnished after an unfortunate incident in a library display case.

Greek mythic elements, including a cosmic Storyteller (with a capital S), also have a place. So do tidbits of fairy tale, epic, and Shakespeare, as well as a host of other subtly acknowledged literary influences. At least half the major and minor plots operate on more than one level,

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some quite openly and others very subtly indeed. And Ruff gets away with the dangerous plot device of giving his characters Significant Names, because the names are invariably, perfect matches for the characters' personalities.

The overall atmosphere is one of wry humor and benign good will, but the frequently light tone can be deceptive; Ruff has an equally good eye for drama and danger, and he can conjure fear at appropriate moments. At its heart, though, *Fool on the Hill* is a novel about the power of dreams and the spirit, and about stories that aren't recorded on paper.

In that light, it's a book for every gamer who has ever fudged a die roll in a good cause, about a world that might very well be our own if we believe in it strongly enough. If Ruff, a 22-year-old first novelist, never publishes anything else, *Fool on the Hill* will undoubtedly become a cult favorite. If he keeps writing this well for another six or seven books, it may wind up as an out-and-out classic.

Recurring roles

An unexpected sequel highlights the lists this month. *House of Shards* (Tor, \$3.95), is Walter Jon Williams' second tale of Drake Maijstral, interstellar Allowed Burglar extraordinaire. This time, he's in competition with a rival both for ratings points and for the priceless Eltdown Shard, in a space-station setting updated from the old English country house. Williams, as before, provides a stylish adventure full of double reverses and debonair repartee. (Perhaps someone will buy the movie rights to this!)

Also a minor surprise is *Stairway to Forever* (Baen, \$3.50), beginning a new fantasy series by Robert Adams. This one may have possibilities despite a very slow start and a viewpoint some readers will undoubtedly consider chauvinistic. The plot concerns a passage to another world hidden beneath a Florida hillside, and the possibility that hero "Fitz" Fitzgilbert was born there, not here. Unlike Adams' *Castaways in Time* series, this one holds at least the promise of a solid ongoing plot.

No surprise at all is the latest anthology set in the City of Luck. *Liavek: Spells of Binding* (Ace, \$3.50) is notable both for several strong individual stories and for the threads crossing between them. A three-way collaboration draws several writers' characters together for a major climax, and two more authors describe the same play from different perspectives. Editors Will Shetterly and Emma Bull continue to put *Liavek* at the top of the shared-world lists, but may need new characters to populate future volumes.

In the middle volume department, David Eddings' *Demon Lord of Karanda* continues what is becoming an incredibly long chase sequence in his *Mallorleon* series. The writing remains solid if traditional, and a new character emerges as a foil and love interest for master trickster Silk.

Elsewhere, *The Crystal Keep* finds Sheila Gilluly gathering strength; the intimate air of her previous *Greenbriar Queen* remains, improved this time by better character definition and a more distinctive villain.

Finally, good news is out for devotees of Krynn and the Forgotten Realms. *Stormblade* (TSR, \$3.95) is Nancy Varian Berberick's skillfully told chapter of DRAGONLANCE history, populated with a solid cast of dwarves, a memorable minstrel, and a surprisingly distinctive kender. Jeff Grubb and Kate Novak, meanwhile, make *Azure Bonds* (TSR, \$3.95) an intricately plotted adventure set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ setting. Notable in the cast are an inspiringly nasty red dragon, a lizardman who isn't a lizardman, and enough villains to staff a minor war. Yet the tale is focused strongly on Alias, a swordswoman with a missing past and a very peculiar tattoo. Both are excellent tales from comparatively new writers. Where does TSR find these people?

Readers' roles

Many thanks to the readers (and writers) who have written in recent months; I appreciate the feedback and am familiar with many of the books mentioned. Keep the cards and letters coming!

Meanwhile, some general responses. First, reviews of older titles are unlikely,

even if well deserved, given the crowd of new material being published. Don't stop suggesting them, though; perhaps the editor would publish a short article focusing on "classic" works and readers' favorites, and you may alert me to watch for newer works by the same writers. Please remember to sign your note (and print your name also; I may mention some letters in this space, and I want to spell correspondents' names correctly). And while "alternate" forms of storytelling, such as TV programs and videotapes, appear rarely in this space at best, they may again pop up in "extra" articles from time to time. Ω

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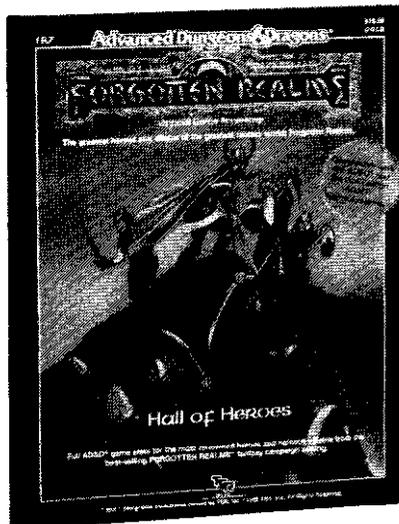
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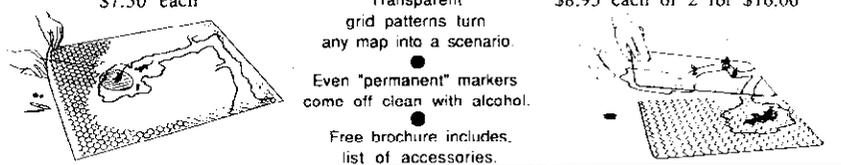
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CONVENTION CALENDAR

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines **must** be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short, succinct, and under 150 words long.

The information given in the listing **must** include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address(es) and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

WARNING: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the August issue is the last Monday of June. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to either Robin Jenkins or Roger E. Moore at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

❖ indicates an Australian convention.

* indicates a Canadian convention.

* indicates a product produced by a company other than TSR, Inc. Most product names are trademarks owned by the companies publishing those products. The use of the name of any product without mention of its trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status.

BASHCON '89, March 3-5

BASHCON '89 is the seventh gaming convention held by the University of Toledo's Benevolent Adventures Strategic Headquarters (UT-BASH). This event features an auction, a miniatures contest, movies, game exhibitors and dealers, an RPGA™ Network AD&D® tournament, and more than 130 role-playing, miniatures, and board-gaming events. The convention will be located in the Student Union, third floor, at the University of Toledo's Main Campus. The special guest of honor will be Poul Anderson. Send an SASE to: Student Activities Office, UT-BASH (BASHCON '89), 2801 West Bancroft Street, Toledo OH 43606-3390; or call: (419) 537-4654.

SIMCON XI: The New Beginning March 3-5

This convention will be held on the University of Rochester's River Campus in the Wilson Commons. Events will include role-playing tournaments, war gaming, miniatures, movies, demos, and a dealers' room for war-gaming, role-playing, miniatures, comics, and science-fiction fans. Registration fees are \$10. Write to: SIMCON X, P.O. Box 29142 River Station, Rochester NY 14627; or call: (716) 275-6186.

TOTAL CONFUSION, March 3-5

TOTAL CONFUSION will be held at the Sheraton Worcester Hotel and Convention Center. It will feature RPGA™ Network AD&D® tournaments, an RPGA™ Network GURPS® event, and other role-playing and board-gaming events. A costume competition and several seminars have been added to this year's schedule. Guests of honor include Verne Wetherholt, John Astell, and Brent Nosworthy. A dealers' room, a miniatures-painting contest, and benefit events are also planned. Costs are \$8 per day. Hotel convention rates are available. Write to: TOTAL CONFUSION, P.O. Box 306, Northbridge MA 01534-1302.

WOLFCON, March 3-5

Atlantic Canada's only science-fiction and fantasy convention in 1989 is taking over Acadia University's Beveridge Arts Centre for a three-day, multimedia extravaganza. All genres from Japanimation to horror and from cyberpunk to high fantasy will be covered. There will be competitions in AD&D®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, GURPS®, and other games, with short stories, films, costumes, and a live game. Events include medieval fighting, Kenny Syinide's House of Horror, lectures, workshops, a Fantasy Field Trip scenario playtesting, an art auction, lots of role-playing, board, and strategy games, and a host of other activities. Tickets are \$10 (Canadian) for the weekend, or \$5 (Canadian)

for a day pass. Send an SASE (or international reply coupon) to: WOLFCON, c/o Acadia Students Union, Wolfville, N.S., CANADA, B0P 1X0; or call Brian McGee at: (902) 542-7133.

GAME MASTER TOURNAMENT DAY, March 4

The Game Master presents this single-day event of role-playing and war-gaming competitions, open gaming, and miniatures contests. Events will be held in the Village Mall Auditorium, located in the lower level of the Bergen Mall Shopping Center in Paramus, N.J. Featured activities will include a single-round RPGA™ Network AD&D® tournament. Gaming will begin at 10 A.M. and will conclude at 6 P.M. Write to: The Game Master, Bergen Mall, Paramus NJ 07652; or phone: (201) 843-3308.

CALCON IV, March 10-12

This gaming convention will be held at the Sandman Inn in Calgary, Alberta. Events will feature a large variety of games, including an AD&D® tournament miniatures contests, guest speakers, and more. Send an SASE to: CALCON IV, P.O. Box 204, Station M, Calgary, Alberta, CANADA, T2P 2H6.

BATTLEDAY, March 11

Cosponsored by the Cincinnati Adventure Gamers and Wanna Play? The Game Store, this one-day affair will be held at Saints Peter and Paul Hall in Norwood (Cincinnati), Ohio. Events will include all-day gaming, a BATTLETECH® event, AD&D® games, miniatures events, and more. Write to: Wanna Play? The Game Store, 1555 Cedar Avenue, Cincinnati OH 45224; or call: (513) 542-3449.

METROMEET 3, March 11

This role-playing and war-gaming meet will be held in the Student Union I Building on George Mason University in Fairfax, Va. Sponsored by the Gamesmasters, the featured events will include AD&D® game BATTLETECH® tournaments. CHAMPIONS®, CAR WARS®, and other open gaming events will be featured. There will also be a dealers' room and a room for Japanimation. The event will take place from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M. Registration will be \$3 before March 1 and \$5 at the door. Write to: Gamesmasters, Student Organizations, George Mason University, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax VA 22030-4444; or call Ahsan Khan at: (703) 670-8539.

COAST CON XII, March 17-19

This science-fiction and fantasy convention will be held at the Gulf Coast Coliseum Convention Center in Biloxi, Miss., with accommodations at the Howard Johnson's (call (601) 388-6310 or (800) 654-2000 for reservations). Guest of honor is Joel Rosenberg, author of the Guardians of the Flame series. Other guests include: Steven Sechi, designer of *Talislanta* and *Atlantis*; P. D. Breeding-Black artist for *Talislanta*; and John Levene (Sgt. Benton on *Dr. Who*.) Events include an RPGA™ Network tournament,

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video rooms, a meet-the-guests party, a costume contest, folk singing, a charity auction, an art exhibit and auction, and a dealers' room. Registration is \$20. Write to: COAST CON, Inc., P.O. Box 1423, Biloxi MS 39533.

NEO-VENTION VIII, March 17-19

NEO-VENTION VIII will be held at the Gardner Student Center at the University of Akron in Akron, Ohio. Featured events include RPGA™ Network and miniatures events, a games auction, and more. Write to: UGS, University of Akron Gardner Student Center, Office #6, Akron OH 44325. Send a 25-cent stamp or SASE.

OWLCON X, March 17-19

Rice University's WARP and RSFAFA will hold this gaming convention at Rice University. Registration will take place in Sewall Hall. Events include RUNEQUEST*, PARANOIA*, CAR WARS*, TRAVELLER*, DIPLOMACY*, ILLUMINAT I*, CIVILIZATION*, BATTLETECH*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER*, and AD&D® tournaments, with open gaming and with prizes awarded in some events. Admission fees are \$10 for all three days before March 3, or \$12 at the door. One-day passes are \$4 for Friday or Sunday, and \$5 for Saturday. To preregister, send a check payable to RSFAFA. Write to: OWLCON Preregistration, P.O. Box 1892, Houston TX 77251.

ABBYTHON 7, March 18-19

The Abbyville Community Center in Abbyville, Kans., becomes a Guild Hall once again as the Abbython Adventure Guild hosts its seventh-annual 24-hour role-playing games marathon. New members are welcome. Best players will be awarded prizes for their efforts. Preregistration is \$6; admission is \$7 at the door. Send an SASE to: ABBYTHON, P.O. Box 96, Abbyville KS 67510.

GAME-A-THON 1989, March 24-26

The Santa Fe Springs Gamers Association will again sponsor this annual gaming convention in the Town Center Hall, 11711 Telegraph Road, Santa Fe Springs, Calif. The festivities commence at 5 P.M. on Friday and don't stop until 9 P.M. on Saturday. Events will include AD&D® and other role-playing games, board-game tournaments, fantasy and military miniatures battles, seminars, demonstrations, continuous movies, and a dealers' room. Preregistration is \$4 until March 17, or \$6 at the door. There are no separate event fees. Write to: The Santa Fe Springs Gamers Association, ATTN: GAME-A-THON 1989, P.O. Box 2434, Santa Fe Springs CA 90670; or call Callahan at: (213) 863-7893.

GAMES 89, March 24-27 ❖

This major Australian games convention will offer role-playing, war, computer, and other game events on a massive scale. Nongaming events include a formal dinner Saturday night (followed by other social events, such as cocktail parties, Easter egg hunts, etc.), show bags, films, lectures, and more. Convention fees are \$16 (Australian) for the weekend, or \$5 (Australian) per day. Write to: GAMES 89, P.O. Box 242, Lilydale, Victoria, 3140, AUSTRALIA; or call: (03) 726-7525.

BRUNTOWN, March 31-April 2 ❖

This gaming convention will be held in the ballroom of the Student Union Building of the University of New Brunswick in Fredricton, N.B., Canada. Special guest for this tournament will be Field Marshal Duhr, representing Supremacy Games, Inc. Scheduled events

include AD&D®, TALISMAN*, ROLEMASTER*, SQUAD LEADER*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, and BATTLETECH* tournaments. Other events include ROLLOUT*, SUPREMACY*, WARHAMMER*, THIRD REICH*, DIPLOMACY*, and PRIVATEERS & GENTLEMEN games. Preregistration is \$7 (Canadian), or \$8 (Canadian) at the door. Prizes will be awarded in several game categories. One-day memberships may be purchased at the door for \$4. Special events include a miniatures-painting contest, demonstrations by the Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc., as well as various seminars. Send an SASE to: A Collector's Dream, ATTN: Bob Tait, 51 York Street, 2nd Floor, Fredricton, New Brunswick, CANADA, E3B 3N4.

I-CON VIII, March 31-April 2

Held at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, Long Island, I-CON (Island Convention, not Iowa Convention) will have guests of honor including Frederik Pohl and E. Gary Gygax. Other guests include Joe Haldeman, Barry Longyear, Julius Schwartz, and the current Dr. Who, Sylvester McCoy. Gaming guests include Martin Wixted and Greg Costikyan. More guests are confirmed daily, and a *Star Trek* actor-guest is in the works. Featured events include speakers, movies, autograph sessions, and AD&D®, CHAMPIONS*, STAR WARS*, and DIPLOMACY* games. Game masters are welcome. Advance tickets are \$16 until March 17, or \$18 at the door. One-day passes are also available. Send an SASE to: I-CON VIII, P.O. Box 550, Stony Brook NY 11790.

MARCH FANTASY REVEL March 31-April 2

Come to the fourth-annual MARCH FANTASY REVEL at the Harborside Holiday Inn in Kenosha, Wis. Activities will include a war-gaming area, a silent used-game auction, a dealers' area, and role-playing events. Featured RPGA™ Network events include an AD&D® Grand Masters, AD&D® Masters, AD&D® Feature, TOP SECRET/S.I.™ Feature, and MARVEL SUPER HEROES® Feature tournaments. Other activities include workshops, a gamers' banquet (please make reservations early), and an RPGA™ Network members' meeting. Special guests include Harold Johnson, Jean Rabe, and Skip Williams. Fees are \$10 a day, or \$20 for the weekend. RPGA™ Network members receive a \$2 discount on registration. Write to: Keith Polster, 2432 Park Avenue, Apt. 6, West Bend WI 53095; or call: (414) 338-8498. Gamers may also contact: Janice Ours, P.O. Box 840, Silver Lake WI 53170; or call her at: (414) 889-8346.

STELLARCON XIV, March 31-April 2

This science-fiction, fantasy, and gaming convention will be held at the Elliott University Center on the University of North Carolina at Greensboro campus. This year's convention features authors Jean Lorrain and Allen Wold, and game designer Steve Jackson. Guests will conduct panels, lectures, and readings from new or soon-to-be-released works. In addition, there will be an RPGA™ Network AD&D® tournament, a CAR WARS* event, other game tournaments, a trivia contest, a costume contest, and an art contest with entries from convention patrons (no charge), and a dealers' room; films will also be shown. Preregistration runs until March 1. Admission prices until then are \$12 for the weekend, \$8 for two days, or \$5 for one day. After March 1, admission prices at the door are \$15 for the weekend, \$10 for two days, and \$8 for one day. Write to: SF³, Box 4, EUC, UNC Greensboro, Greensboro NC 27412.

TECHNICON 6, March 31-April 2

Sponsored by the Virginia Tech Science-Fiction and Fantasy Club (VTSFFC), this sixth-annual science-fiction, fantasy, and gaming convention will be held in the Donaldson Brown Center on the Virginia Tech campus in Blacksburg, Va. Guest of honor is John M. Ford, author of two *Star Trek* books and the PARANOIA* game module *Yellow Clearance Black Box Blues* (winner of the 1984 World Fantasy Award and the Charles Roberts award for best role-playing module). Fan guest of honor is Chip Livingston. Convention activities include three 24-hour video rooms, three tracks of continuous gaming, a dealers' room, panels, the TECHNICON play, computer gaming, a masquerade, science-fiction Jeopardy, a dance, parties, and more. Preregistration is \$12 for students and \$15 for others, if paid in advance. Otherwise, fees are \$15 for students and \$18 for others paying at the door. Write to: TECHNICON, P.O. Box 256, Blacksburg VA 24063-0256.

CHIMERACON 89 (LA CONVENTION DE LA CHIMERE 89) April 1-2 ❖

The Knights of the Imaginary bring you this gaming convention, which will be held at the University of Quebec in Trois-Rivieres. Among the activities planned for this fantastic weekend are: a video room, a costume party (with prizes for best costumes), computer games, real-life armored combat, a dealers' room, the Battle of the Three Rivers of Time, workshops, numerous contests, lectures, a royal fest, open gaming, and lots more. The costs for the weekend are \$4 for members of the Knights of the Imaginary and \$10 for nonmembers. Preregistration for nonmembers is \$6 if received before March 10. Write to: Daniel Gelin, 5565 Roland #1, Trois-Rivieres-Ouest, Quebec, CANADA, G8Z 4E7; or call Daniel at: (819) 378-9279. There are still a few tables left in the dealers' room; interested parties should contact Daniel Gelin.

CONNCON, April 1-2

Held at the Quality Inn in Danbury, Conn., this convention features role-playing, board-gaming, and miniatures events. Two RPGA™ Network tournaments will be held, one open to all players and one for members only. A benefit event will be held; proceeds will go to the American Heart Association. Preregistration is \$10 for the weekend, if paid in advance. Registration paid at the door is \$15. Write to: Hobby Center, 366 Main Street, Danbury CT 06810.

DU PAGE GAME CON, April 1

Come join the April Fool's Day festivities, to be held once again in the SRC Building at the College of Du Page on 22nd and Lambert in Glen Ellyn, Ill. Various role-playing, board, and miniatures game events are planned, including AD&D®, BATTLETECH*, ARENA OF DEATH*, CIVILIZATION*, SQUAD LEADER*, Napoleonic, and other games. Other attractions include a dealers' area, a silent auction, and prizes to be awarded in all events. Admission for the day is \$5; event tickets cost \$2 each. Send an SASE to: DU PAGE GAME CON, 6636 West 23rd Street, Basement Apt., Berwyn IL 60402; or call: (312) 749-1597.

GAME FAIRE '89, April 7-9

The 10th-annual GAME FAIRE convention will be held at the Spokane Falls Community College in Spokane, Wash. Events will run from Friday night through Sunday afternoon, and include game tournaments, microarmor and historical miniatures, a video room, dealers' tables, role-

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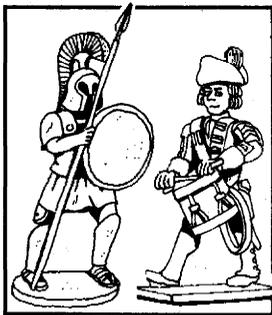


WARCON USA

THE FALL EVENT WILL BE KNOWN AS NOVAG-V

You are invited to join us for a major new international gaming convention event. The Northern Virginia Adventure Gamers (NOVAG) along with The Armory Museum of Military History and the Armory Guild members have combined forces to stage a pair of gaming weekends for April and again in November of 1989. The April convention will be WARCON USA and the November convention will be NOVAG-V

Building upon the success of WARCON ONE, held in Birmingham England last August we have adopted the format of our sister show, which is rather different from the normal wargaming con. We have created a whole weekend of interest for the wargamer, both experienced and novice alike. The inclusion of wargame associated entertainment, films, lectures, and displays makes WARCON USA a convention in the real sense of the word.



WARCON USA will have a distinguished list of guest speakers from England including Duncan Macfarlane editor of "Wargames Illustrated™", Ian Kay from "Irregular Miniatures™", Danny Boreham of "Battle Honours™", & Lars Edmon of "Prince August Miniatures™". With an equally impressive list of American Guests of Honor.

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WARCON USA - April 7, 8, & 9, 1989
NOVAG-V - November 24, 25, & 26 1989

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playing games, board games, family games, a games auction, and a demonstration by the local SCA. Registration for GAME FAIR '89 is \$10 prepaid or \$12 at the door. One-day memberships are available at \$5 for Friday or Sunday, or \$6 for Saturday. All profits go to the Wishing Star Foundation, a charity dedicated to helping children. Write to: Merlyn's, W 201 Riverside, Spokane WA 99201; or call: (509) 624-0957.

ROUNDICON IV, April 7-9

The Round Table Gaming Society will hold this gaming convention at the Russell House Student Union on the University of South Carolina campus. Events will include multiple-round AD&D® and CHAMPIONS* tournaments, single-event role-playing games of all types, miniatures events, a video room, a miniatures-painting contest, board games, and rooms for open gaming, with awards and door prizes. Preregistration is \$3 if postmarked before March 15; for confirmation of preregistration, please send an SASE. Write to: ROUNDICON IV USC Box 80018, Columbia SC 29225; or call: (803) 254-2601 or (803) 772-4784.

MOUNTAINTOP '89, April 8-9

This gaming convention will be held at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pa. Events include an AD&D® tournament, a games auction, and a swap meet. Board, role-playing, and computer games will also be played. Preregistration is \$8 before March 15; thereafter, registration is \$10. Send an SASE to: Earl Kinsley, U.C. Box 276, Lehigh University, Bethlehem PA 18015.

SCRYCON '89, April 8

Able adventurers are needed to regain lost shards of the Famous Crystal Monolith at SCRYCON '89, the seventh-annual one-day tournament sponsored by the seekers of the Crystal Monolith Gaming Club. This year's convention will be held at the Red Hook Methodist Church in Red Hook, N.Y. (approximately 60 miles south of Albany on Route 9). The tournament will consist of AD&D® tournaments, alternate games, miniatures-painting contests, and our popular used-game flea market. Admission is \$5 for the whole day. Send an SASE to: SCYRON '89, P.O. Box 896, Pleasant Valley NY 12569.

VALLEYCON II, April 8-9

Sponsored by the Northeast Wisconsin Game Players Association (GPA), this gaming convention will be held at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. All forms of gaming will be presented, including a 40' x 39' miniatures battle of the Assault on Hoth, strategic miniatures and board-game battles, and role-playing events ranging from the D&D® and AD&D® games to science-fiction games. Other events include a miniatures-painting contest, door prizes, and more. Ticket prices for game masters are \$3 plus \$2 per event entered in the convention for one day, or \$4.50 plus \$2 per event entered in the convention for two days. To preregister, send your name, address, telephone number, game system you wish to run, and the admission and entry fee (check or money order only) to: VALLEYCON Headquarters, 1211 Morris Avenue, Green Bay WI 54304. Game-master packets, and schedules are at the convention. Send an SASE to the address above, or call: Brian Severa at (414) 494-7313.

BAMACON III, April 14-16

This science-fiction, fantasy, and gaming convention will be held at the Econo-Lodge (formerly the Stagecoach Inn), located at 4810 Skyland Boulevard East in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Special guests include Hal Clement, Nancy Springer, Brad Strickland, Phil Foglio, Mary Hanson-Roberts, Allen Hammack, Dr. Maureen Kendrick, and many others. Featured events include author and artist panels, an art show and auction, a Friday night ice cream reception, an AD&D® game team tournament with \$210 in cash prizes, many other tournaments with prizes, filksinging, author readings, a Saturday night costume contest (with cash prizes), a masquerade ball (right after the contest), and an all-you-can-eat banquet (\$6, scheduled for Sunday at 10 A.M.). Preregistration is \$20, or \$25 at the door. Dealers' tables are \$40 (includes one free membership). Hotel rates are \$29.38 for one to four people (mention BAMACON III). Write to: BAMACON III, University of Alabama, P.O. Box 6542, Tuscaloosa AL 35486; or call: (205) 758-4577 or (205) 758-2186.

LEPRECON 15, April 14-16

LEPRECON is an art-oriented science-fiction and fantasy convention with a strong gaming focus. Events will be held at the Phoenix Hyatt Regency in sunny, downtown Phoenix, Ariz. Guests of honor are author Chelsea Quinn Yarbro and artist Richard Hescoc. Gaming events include AD&D® (Monster Mash and more), BATTLETECH*, microarmor, WAR-HAMMER* FANTASY BATTLE, GURPS*, STAR WARS*, and EMPIRE BUILDER* games. Other events include special workshops and panels, a miniatures-painting contest, a used-games auction, open gaming, plenty of check-out games, and more. Regular convention activities include an art show, a dealers' room, movies, Japanimation, computers, panels, parties, and other great stuff. Registration is \$25. Write to: LEPRECON, P.O. Box 26665, Tempe AZ 85282; for gaming information, write to: Don Harrington, 3505 East Campbell #14, Phoenix AZ 85018; or call: (602) 956-1344 (before 10 P.M. MST, please).

DEF-CON I, April 15-16

Sponsored by THE CLUB, this gaming convention will be held at the Howard Johnson's in Portage, Ind. (intersection of Route 20 and U.S. 249). Special events include group vs. group role-playing, and RPGA™ Network and computer tournaments. Other events include AD&D®, MARVEL SUPER HEROES®, CHILL*, TWILIGHT: 2000*, and BOOT HILL® games. Fees are \$3 preregistered, or \$5 at the door. Prices are from free to \$3 per game. Write to: David Machin, 719 Juniper Road, Valparaiso IN 46383; or call: (219) 759-2530.

GAMEMASTER '89, April 15

Boise, Idaho's favorite gaming convention will again be held in the Student Union Building of Boise State University. Featured games will include AD&D® games, MEGATRAVELLER*, CAR WARS*, WARHAMMER*, BATTLETECH*, GURPS*, STAR TREK*: The Role-Playing Game, STARFLEET BATTLES*, MARVEL SUPER HEROES®, and Zomax*. We will also have open gaming, miniatures contests, and an auction. Our guest of honor, Gary Thomas, will explain how to get your role-playing modules published. We will also have a *Star Trek* trivia competition. Registration will be \$5 at the door or \$4 if your preregistration is received before April 8. To preregister, or to obtain more information, write to: The Gamemaster's Guild, 4948 Kootenai, Suite 204, Boise ID 83705; or call the Gamemaster's Guild at: (208) 338-1410.

PLATTECON BETA, April 15-16

Sponsored by the Platteville Gaming Associa-

tion, this two-day convention will be held at the Student Center of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. Gaming events will begin at 9 A.M. and run until 9 P.M. on Saturday and will begin at 9 A.M. and run until 5 P.M. on Sunday. Our featured guest will be E. Gary Gygas. Special events include a LASER TAG* competition, a miniatures contest, and an RPGA™ Network AD&D® game tournament. Other game events will be announced at the door. Admission for both days is \$7 at the door, or \$5 if paid in advance. Send an SASE to: Platteville Gaming Association, P.O. Box 109, Platteville WI 53818.

AMIGOCON 4, April 21-23

This science-fiction, fantasy, and gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Sunland Park in El Paso, Tex. Melinda Snodgrass is author guest of honor, and Frank Kelly Freas is artist guest of honor. Other guests include Walter Jon Williams, Rick and Pati Cook, Jennifer Robertson, Mel White, and George Alec Effinger. Advance membership fees are \$12. Registrations purchased at the door are \$15 for all three days, or \$7.50 for one day. Write to: AMIGOCON 4, P.O. Box 3177, El Paso TX 79923.

CHATTANOOGA COMICS, CARDS, & COLLECTABLES SHOW, April 21-23

This semiannual collector's show will be held at the Eastgate Mall on Brainerd Road, just off I-75, in Chattanooga, Tenn. Show hours are 9 A.M. to 9 P.M. Friday and Saturday, and 11 A.M. to 6 P.M. Sunday. Guests will include representatives from Marvel Comics. Events will include: an AD&D® tournament (which begins Friday, with winners announced Sunday); an ongoing DRAGONLANCE® board game; video showings of *Star Trek Bloopers*, *The X-Men*, and more; an auction hosted by our own Freddy Krueger; and a costume contest Saturday night. Admission is free! The entire mall is the showroom area; it will include comic books, baseball cards, *Star Trek* and *Dr. Who* memorabilia, Japanese animation, gaming, and more. Dealer tables are \$100 each, or \$150 for two. Tables are 8' long. Write to: Amazing World of Fantasy, 2518-C Shorter Avenue, Rome GA 30161; or call: Dana Pinkard (show chairperson) at (404) 235-2179, or Patrick Swinford at (404)234-5309.

GALACTIC TREKFEST, April 21-23

This science-fiction and gaming convention will be held at the Henry VIII Hotel in St. Louis, Mo. Guests of honor include Richard Hatch, Merritt Butrick, Bill Mumy, and others. Special events include a banquet, open gaming, contests, costuming, regional science-fiction meetings, convention rooms, and dealers' tables. Weekend passes by preregistration are \$20; other passes are available by inquiry or may be purchased at the door. Over 33 events in all will be sponsored at this convention, including an acting class by Richard Hatch, all-night videos and gaming, and more. Write to: GALACTIC TREKFEST, 640 White Street, Belleville IL 62221; or call (618) 233-2404.

SALUTE '89, April 21-23

This gaming convention will be held at the Best Western King's Inn, 5411 Kingsway, Burnaby, B.C., Canada. Featured events will include table-top miniatures, board gaming, and fantasy role-playing. In addition, 7th-edition 15mm Ancients, SQUAD LEADER*, and D&D® game tournaments and a miniatures-painting contest will be held, along with trade stands and a swap meet. Write to: Barry Kemp, Convention Director, SALUTE '89, 5850 Rumble Street, Burnaby, B.C., CANADA V5J 2C4; or call: (604) 526-4463 or (604) 437-3038. ♪

DRAGONMIRTH

by A. J. Toos

by Bob Muleady



"What's 6,000 gp. divided by 4,297 hirelings?"

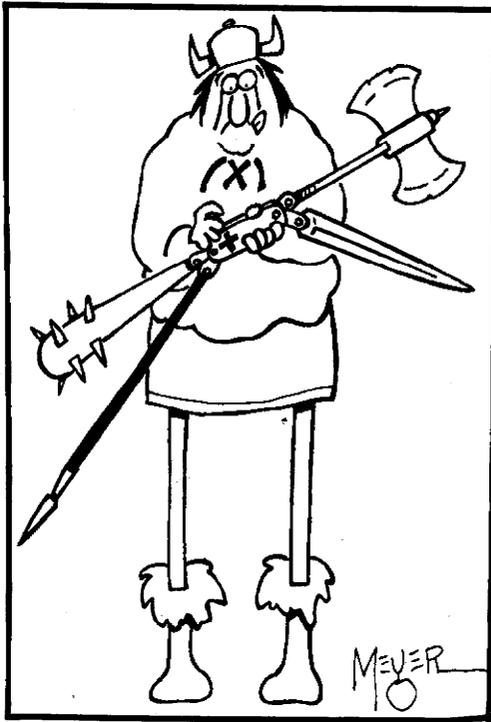
by Joseph T. Pillsbury



by Doug Clair



by Dwain Meyer



The Barbarian Army Knife



"Dragon? Why no . . . I haven't seen any dragon. But you two look very tasty . . . I mean tired. . . . Why don't you take a nap?"

YAMARA

by John Adams and Barbera Ward



Sage Advice

Continued from page 12

from Skullcap to Thorbardin, but no such map is included with the module. Similar information is given in DL4, but Thorbardin's location is not given. Where is Thorbardin in relation to Skullcap?

Thorbardin is about 10 miles (as the crow flies) south of Skullcap, in the mountains directly south of Skullcap's swamp.

I am having difficulty understanding the roles of the Primary PCs and Dreamshadow PCs in DL10 *Dragons of Dreams*. How many Dreamshadow PCs are there? Which tracks do they follow? Who controls the Dreamshadow PCs?

Each Primary PC follows a different track from every other Primary PC, accompanied by Dreamshadow replicas of his companions. Each player controls his Primary PC and all its Dreamshadow replicas in all tracks. The DM should not tell the players who is the Primary PC in each track.

In the spell summary on pages 126 and 127 of *DLA*, spells are listed by sphere. Some spheres are listed as combinations, such as Conjunction/Summoning. Does a wizard have to be able to use spells from both spheres in order to cast spells from such a combination sphere?

No. A wizard can cast the spell as long as at least one of the spheres is open to him. However, some spells are limited to one sphere of the combination. For example, the armor spell is strictly a conjunction; only a wizard who has the conjunction sphere open to him can cast an armor spell.

Does the user of an *Orb of Dragonkind* have to make a save each round he uses the *Orb*?

A save vs. *charm* spell is required each time a power is used, not merely once per round.

Do Solamnic knights have cavalier abilities?

Knights of Solamnia are cavaliers but do not gain the cavalier's weapon of choice bonuses until they become Knights of the Rose.

Are the abilities of each order of knights cumulative?

Yes. A Crown Knight retains his weapon specialization ability when he becomes a Sword Knight, and a Sword Knight keeps any spell earned when he becomes a Rose Knight (but he does earn more spells as a Rose Knight).

What exactly are the special profi-

ciencies in weapons and combat gained by a Rose Knight?

Rose Knights gain the cavalier's weapon of choice bonuses in addition to the Crown Knight's weapon specializations and Sword Knight's spells.

What happens when a Crown Knight of, say, 8th level opts to become a Sword Knight?

The Knight in question must petition a Nightly Council and complete the required quest, just as any other candidate. When he completes the quest, he receives three weapon and two non-weapon proficiencies, just as any other new Sword Knight. From this point on, he is treated just as any other 3rd-level Sword Knight, although he keeps his current hit points, saving throws, and combat ability. As he accumulates experience as a Sword Knight, he does not gain additional hit points or weapon proficiencies until he exceeds his Crown-Knight level, but he does begin getting spells when he reaches 6th level.

There seems to be some confusion over the range of ability scores for the tinker gnome in *DLA*. The rules on page 21 do not agree with the tables on page 117, and the tables on page 117 do not agree with each other.

A tinker gnome's ability scores must fall within the following ranges:

Ability	Min/Max
Strength	6/none
Intelligence	10/none*
Wisdom	none/12
Dexterity	12/none
Constitution	8/none
Charisma	none/none

* Tinker gnomes with an intelligence of 15 or greater gain 10% on earned experience.

Are the demi-humans of Krynn allowed to become multiclassed characters?

Yes; see "Arcana update, part 1," in *DRAGON* issue #103, for the multiclassed combinations allowed. Be sure to exclude combinations using classes prohibited by the racial descriptions in *DLA*.

The *DRAGONLANCE* rules say that gold has no value on Krynn, and say that steel replaces gold. What does this mean, and what is Krynn's monetary system?

For purposes of conversion, one Krynn steel piece (usually called an Emas) equals 2.2 AD&D game gold pieces. Krynn's two monetary systems are explained in detail on page 29 of module DL1 *Dragons of Despair*.

Exactly how many Towers of High Sorcery were there originally, and

where were they?

There were once five towers. Their locations were: Palanthus, Wayreth, Istar, Daltigoth, and the Ruins (*DLA*, page 29).

Why are PCs on Krynn limited to 18th level?

Krynn's deities remove characters from Krynn when the characters exceed 18th level (*DLA*, page 13).

Do Solinari, Nunitari, and Lunitari have clerics?

These deities are not part of the Holy Orders of the Stars and have no clerics. Ω

Editorial

Continued from page 2

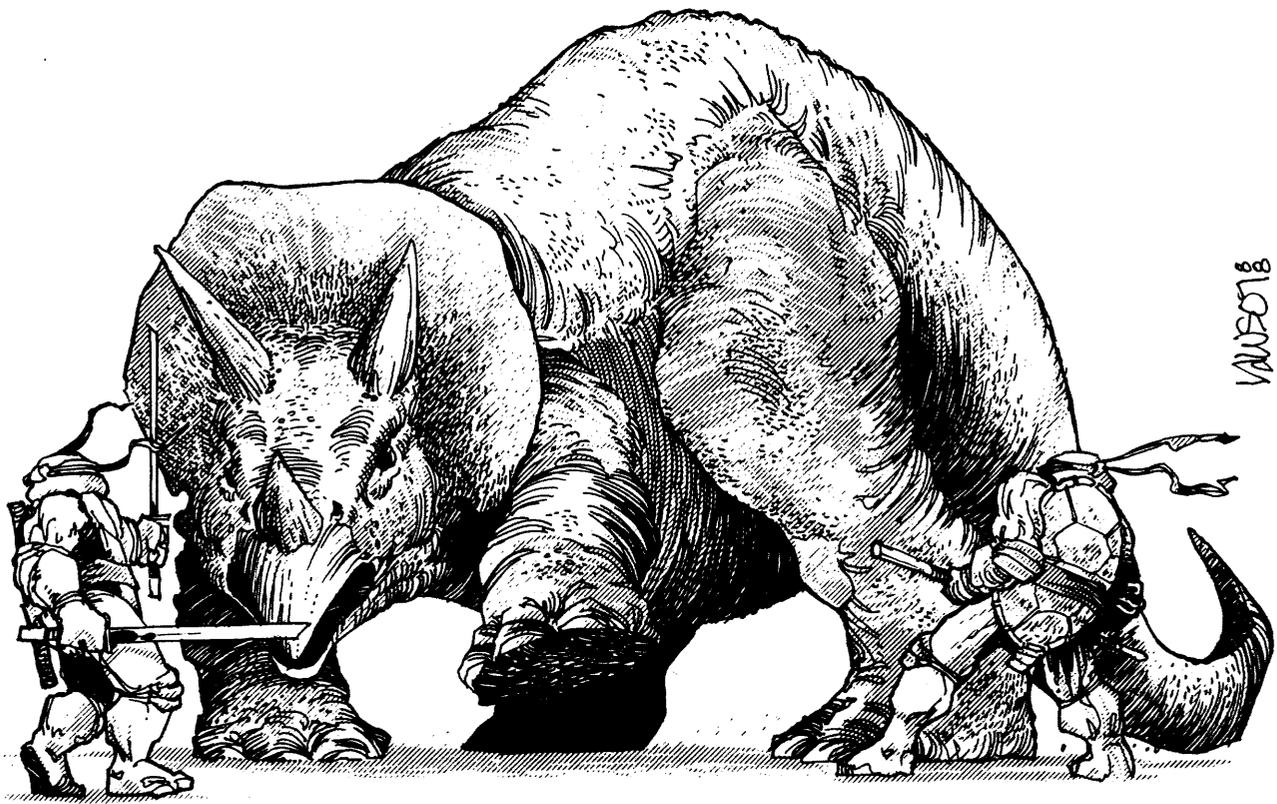
that keep the game going. (Some RPGs are constructed so that the PCs, evil or not, do not stick together; West End Games' *PARANOIA*TM game comes to mind. It uses clones to overcome the high turnover among PCs.)

The *PARANOIA* game and the recently released D&D[®] campaign pack *GAZ10 The Orcs of Thar* point out another way to keep evil-PC campaigns alive — run them as comic campaigns. The module "Monsterquest" from *DUNGEON*[®] issue #10 makes use of several evil but hilariously stupid characters. Who cares if you are evil, if you are being completely silly?

Those who want *serious* evil characters can still have a good campaign if they play with honor. It is important to avoid tastelessness and to promote a certain sense of reputation and integrity among the bad guys. The movie *The Wild Bunch* depicted a band of outlaws who stood up for one another even though it meant facing death (it also helped that they fought bandits who in some ways were far worse than they were).

Running an evil-PC game is a tricky affair, and not everyone is able to play by the special rules it involves. It can be nice not to be good all the time, as my article noted. But even when you're bad, being good about it helps.





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SNARFQUEST

67

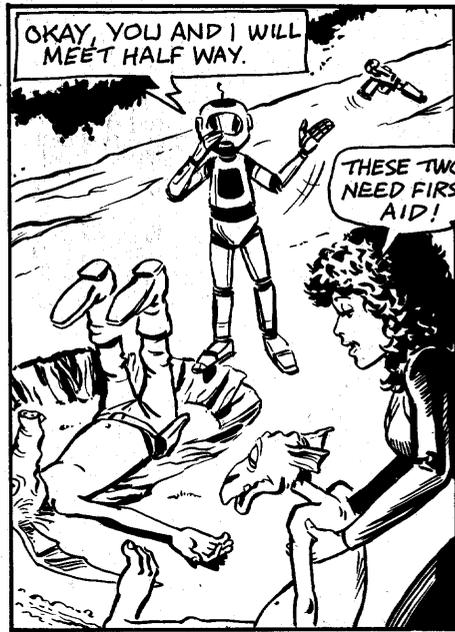
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EVERYBODY LAY DOWN THEIR DANG WEAPONS AN' WE'LL TALK THIS PROBLEM OUT!

IS POP DEAD?

I DON'T THINK SO!



OKAY, YOU AND I WILL MEET HALF WAY.

THESE TWO NEED FIRST AID!



NOW LISTEN, ROBOT, WE HAD MINED AND PANNED 453 POUNDS OF GOLD UP HERE IN THESE MOUNTAINS. TWO WEEKS AGO SOMEBODY STOLE OUR GOLD AND TRUCK WHILE WE WERE SLEEPING.

SO!

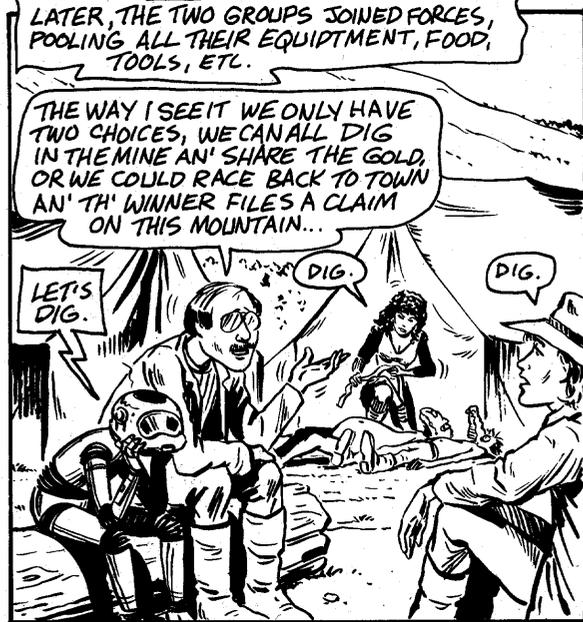
SO??? SO WE THINK THAT Y'ALL DID IT!



NOT US! WE AREN'T THIEVES... USUALLY.

WE FOUND OUR OWN GOLD... COME TO THINK OF IT, IT WAS ON THE TRUCK WHEN IT BLEW UP.

HA, SO WE ARE ALL BROKE!



LATER, THE TWO GROUPS JOINED FORCES, POOLING ALL THEIR EQUIPMENT, FOOD, TOOLS, ETC.

THE WAY I SEE IT WE ONLY HAVE TWO CHOICES, WE CAN ALL DIG IN THE MINE AN' SHARE THE GOLD, OR WE COULD RACE BACK TO TOWN AN' TH' WINNER FILES A CLAIM ON THIS MOUNTAIN...

LET'S DIG.

DIG.

DIG.



GOOD THING ALL MY CLOTHES WERE IN THE TENT, I'M GONNA CHANGE AND CLEAN UP.

HEY, LOOK, MITCH IS COMING AROUND!

OOOOHH... MY HEAD...



LATER. MAN, THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A GOOD FIGHT TO MAKE YA FEEL ALIVE... I FEEL GREAT.

YOU LOOK GREAT, MISS TELERIE.

SAY DIDSLY FIND EFFIM?

I DON'T KNOW, HE HASN'T COME BACK YET.

I NEED SOME PAIN KILLERS!



THAT NIGHT.

OH, SLY, DID YOU FIND EFFIM?

NOPE, I COULDN'T FIND ANY SIGN OF HIM.

THE EXPLOSION MUST HAVE SCARED THOSE LITTLE ROCK ROLLING GUYS AWAY ALSO.

SNARF AN' YER POP ARE STILL OUT COLD.

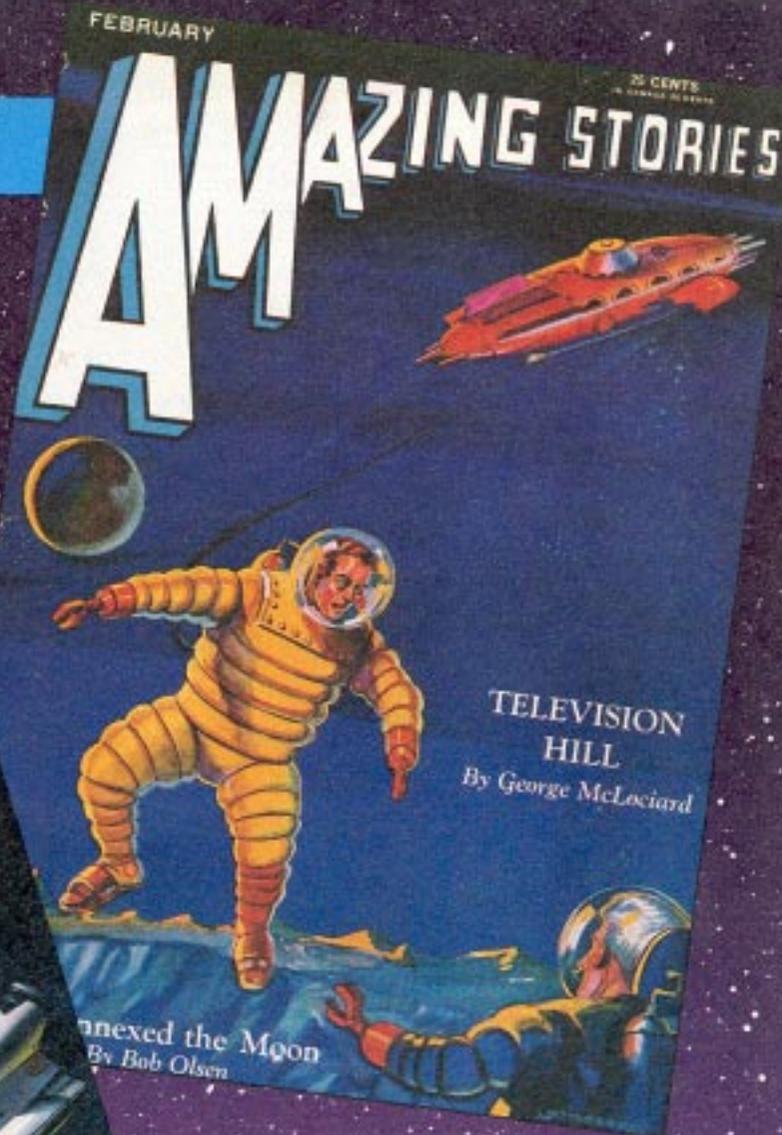
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HI, SNARF, HOW'RE YA FEELING?

BETTER... BUT TERRIBLE, DA TRUCK IS GONE, EFFIM IS LOST, DA LIL' ROCK ROLLERS ARE GONE AND ALL OF OUR @**@ GOLD IS GONE!

I BET WE MINED 250 POUNDS OF GOLD TODAY!

AND SLY IS GATHERING ALL THE TRUCK PARTS TO TRY AND BUILD A WAGON.



FOUR DAYS LATER.

HEY GUYS, ME AN' MY BUDDIES, HERE, NEED TO BE HEADIN' BACK TO TOWN. IF WE SPLIT DA GOLD DAT WE'VE ALREADY MINED, WE THINK OUR SHARE IS PLENTY FOR US.

BUT WE WANT TO MINE MORE GOLD.



THAT'S FINE WITH US, WE WILL EVEN FILE A CLAIM FOR YOU WHEN WE GET BACK TO TOWN.

WE HAVE ALL THE LEGAL PAPERS. WE'LL FILL THEM OUT, ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS TURN THEM IN.



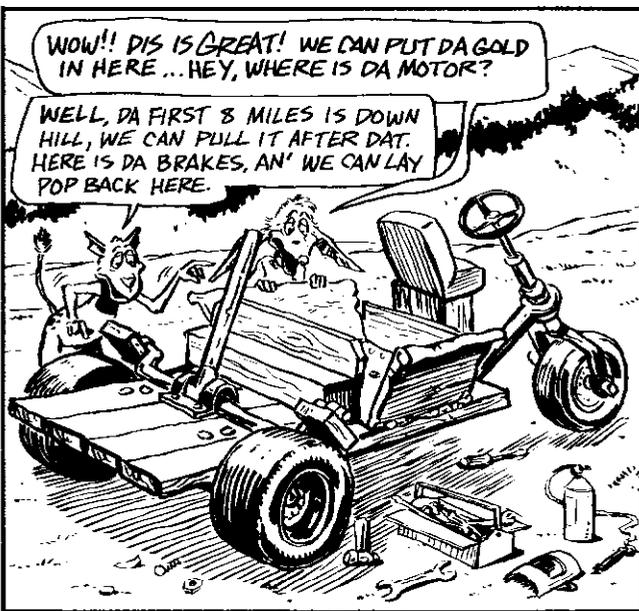
NEXT MORNING.

SNARF! WAKE UP! I WORKED ALL NIGHT AND FINISHED MAKIN' US A WAGON!

HUH? WHA...

COME WITH ME!

ZZZZ



WOW!! DIS IS GREAT! WE CAN PUT DA GOLD IN HERE... HEY, WHERE IS DA MOTOR?

WELL, DA FIRST 8 MILES IS DOWN HILL, WE CAN PULL IT AFTER DAT. HERE IS DA BRAKES, AN' WE CAN LAY POP BACK HERE.



LATER THEY WERE PACKED AND ABOUT READY TO LEAVE.

I'LL HIDE OUR GOLD WITHOUR TENT.

HERE ARE OUR CLAIM PAPERS.

HERE'S A RADIO, YA MIGHT CALL FOR HELP WHEN Y' GET FAR AWAY FROM OUR LOCATION.

GOOD LUCK

OKAY

WE WILL TELL YOUR COUSIN TO COME AND PICK YOU UP.

JUS' PUT 'IM IN DA BACK.



SO... THEY ARE OFF, LOADED WITH GOLD AND A LONG LONG WAY FROM TOWN.

BYE.

BYE. HOLD DA BRAKES!

BYE.



HOLD DOSE @**@ BRAKES!!

WE ARE! THEY'RE LOCKED UP!

WE ARE SLIDING.

SCREEEEEE

SCREEEEEE



HOLD 'EM! WE'RE COMIN' TO A BIG STEEP HILL.

@**@!

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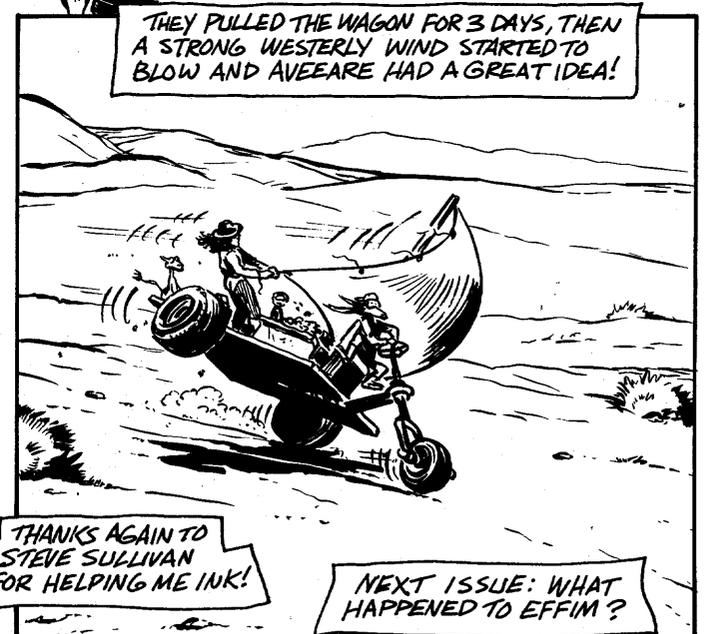
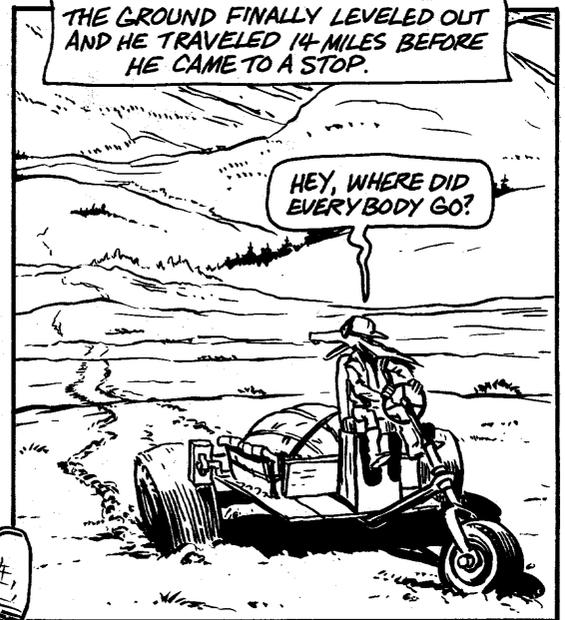
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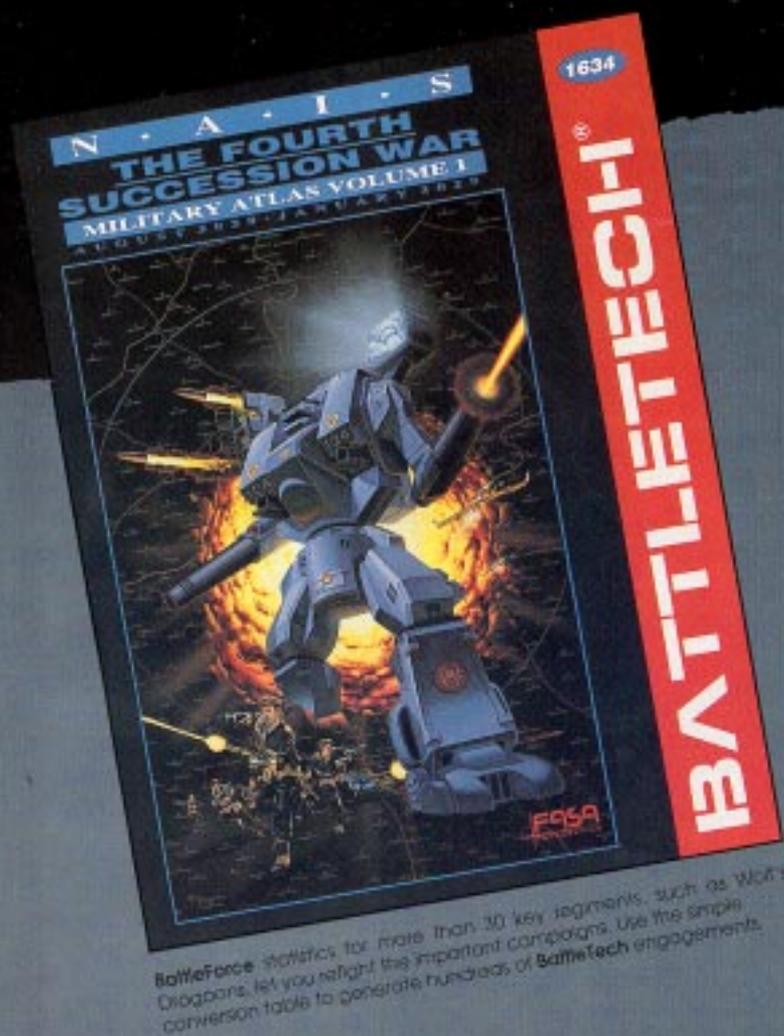
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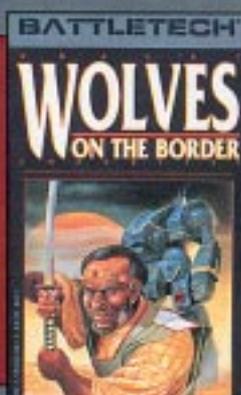
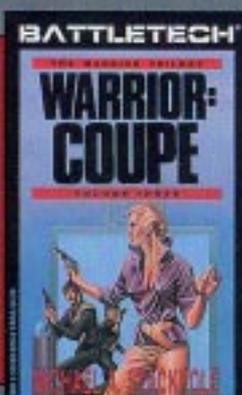
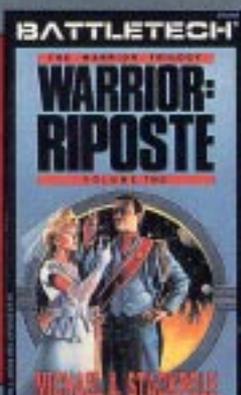
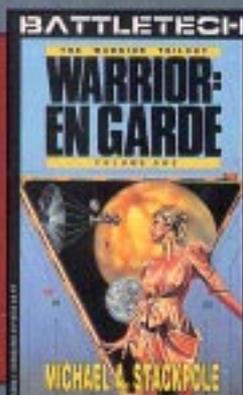
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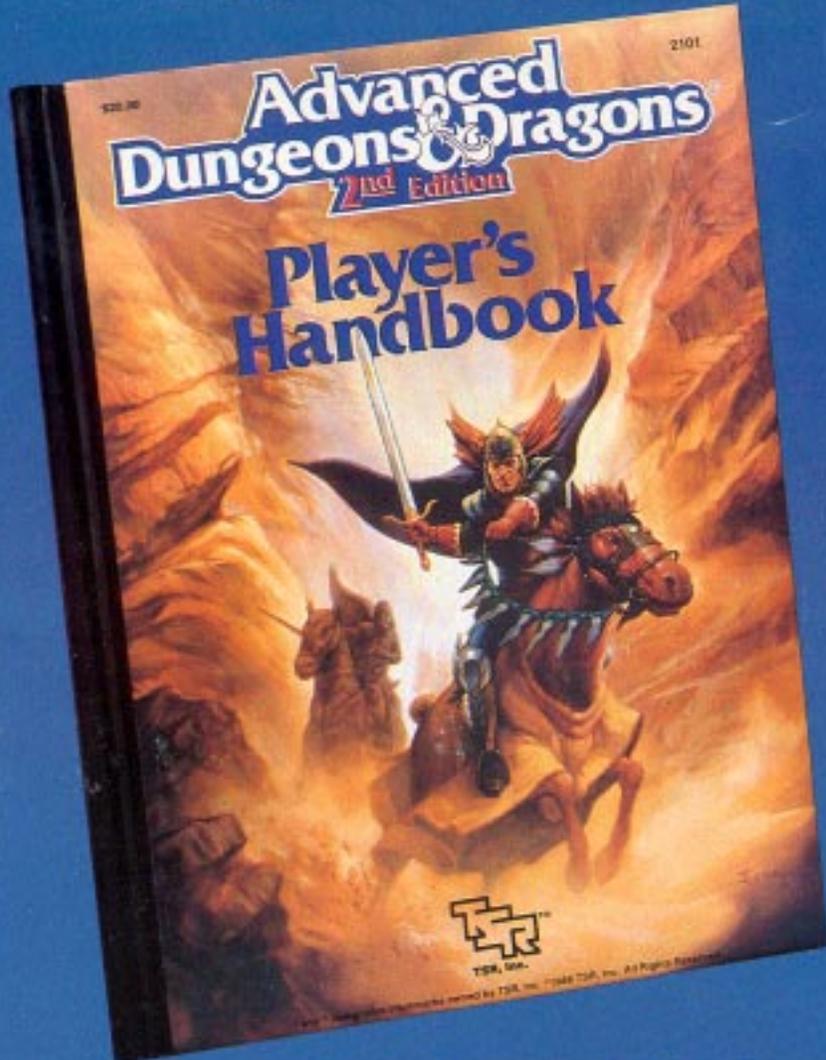


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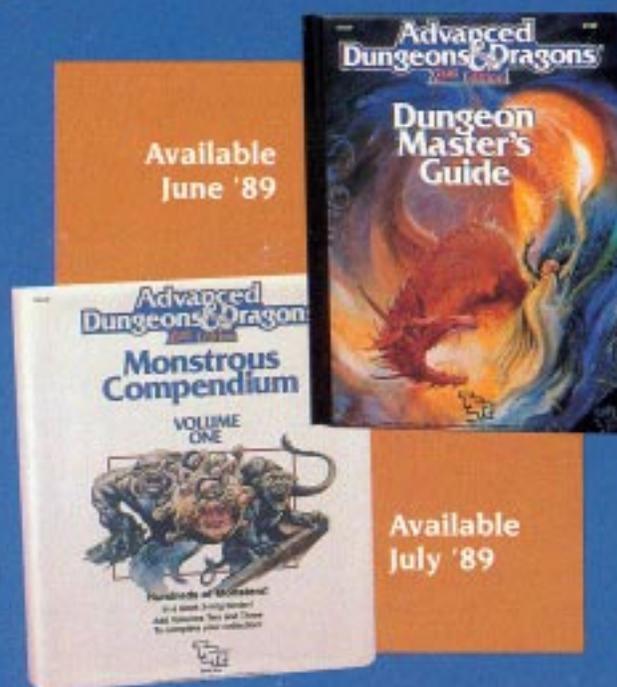
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