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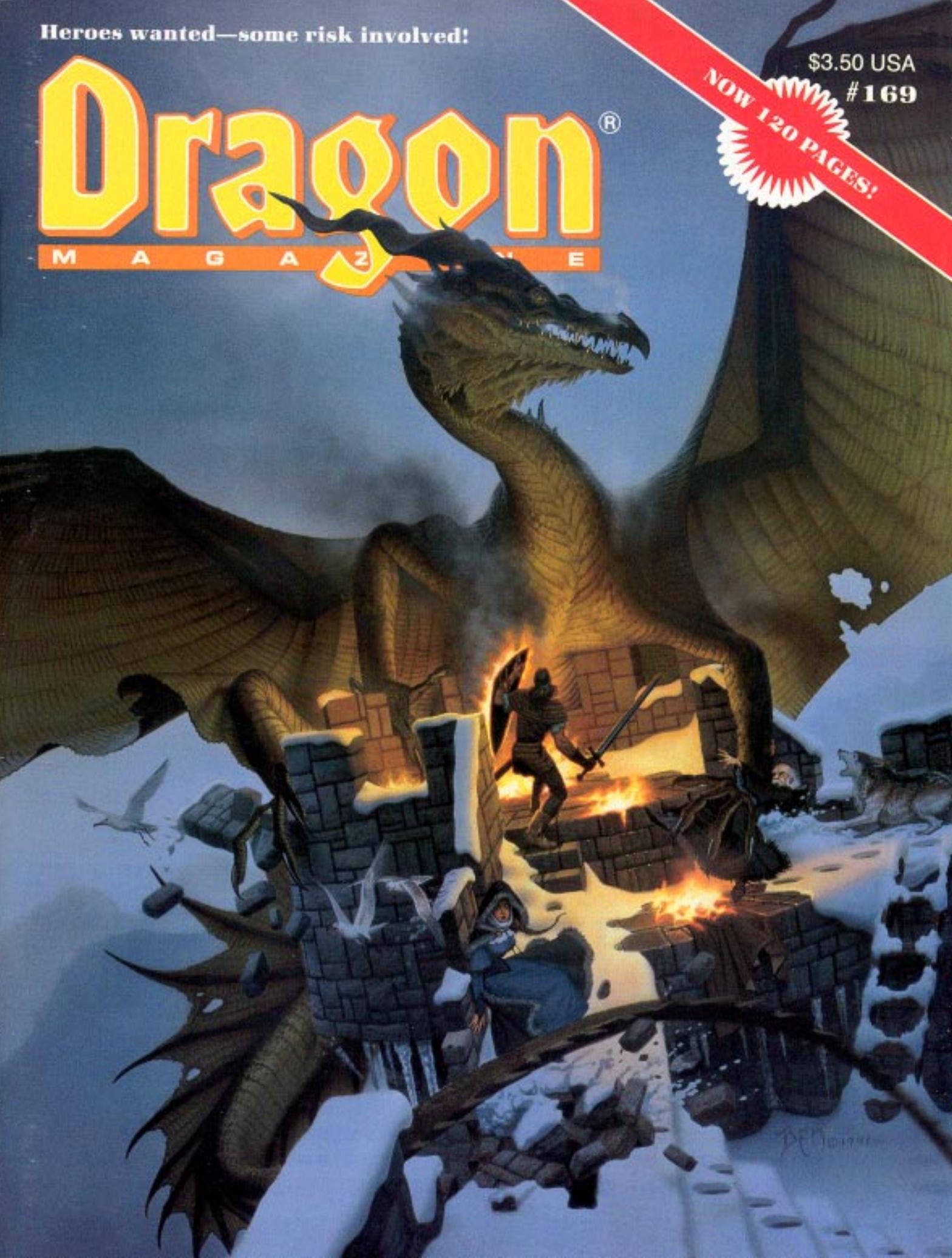
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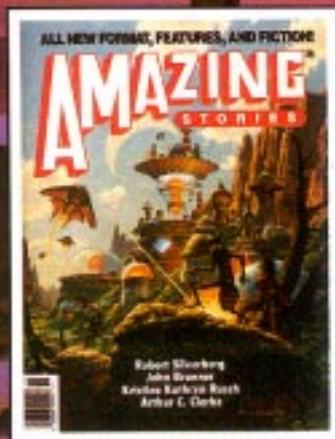
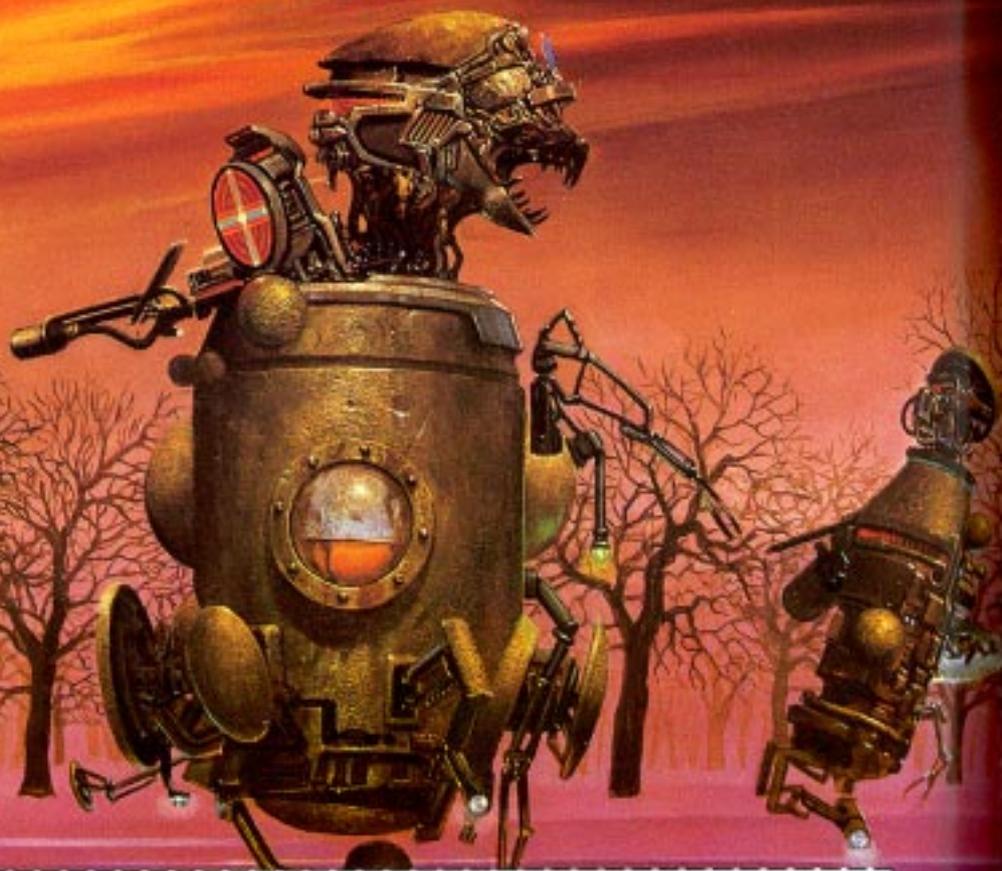
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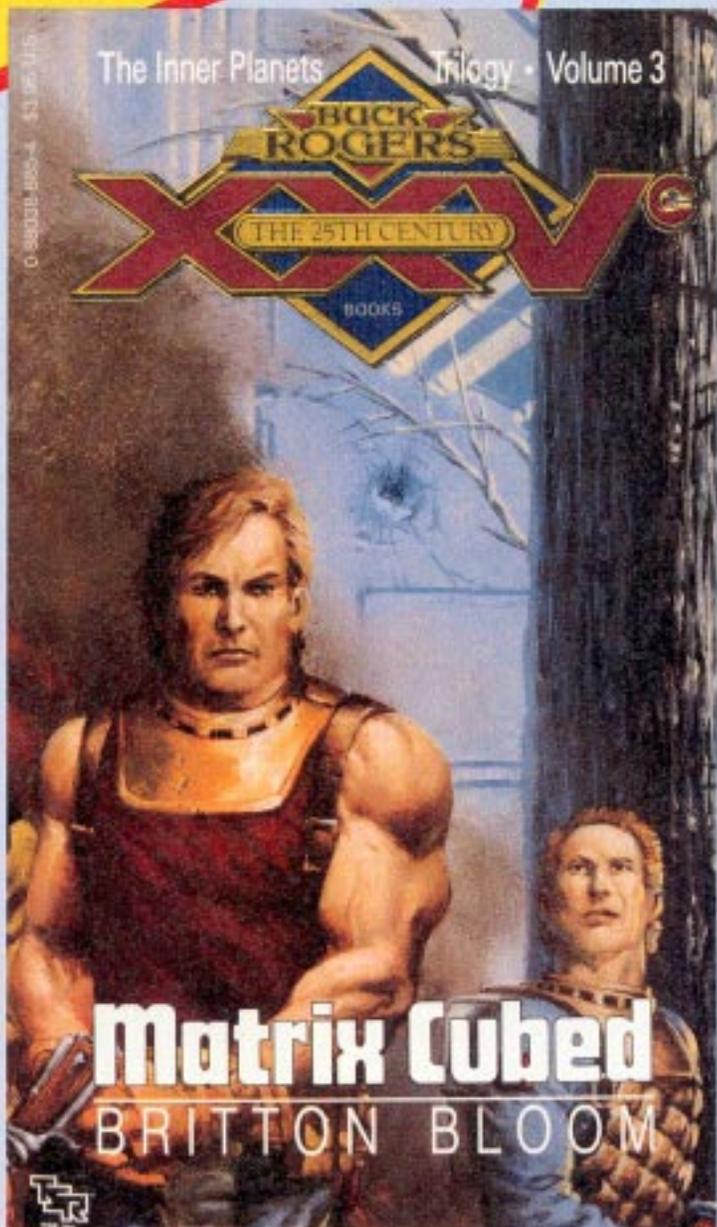
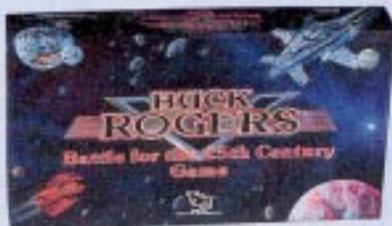


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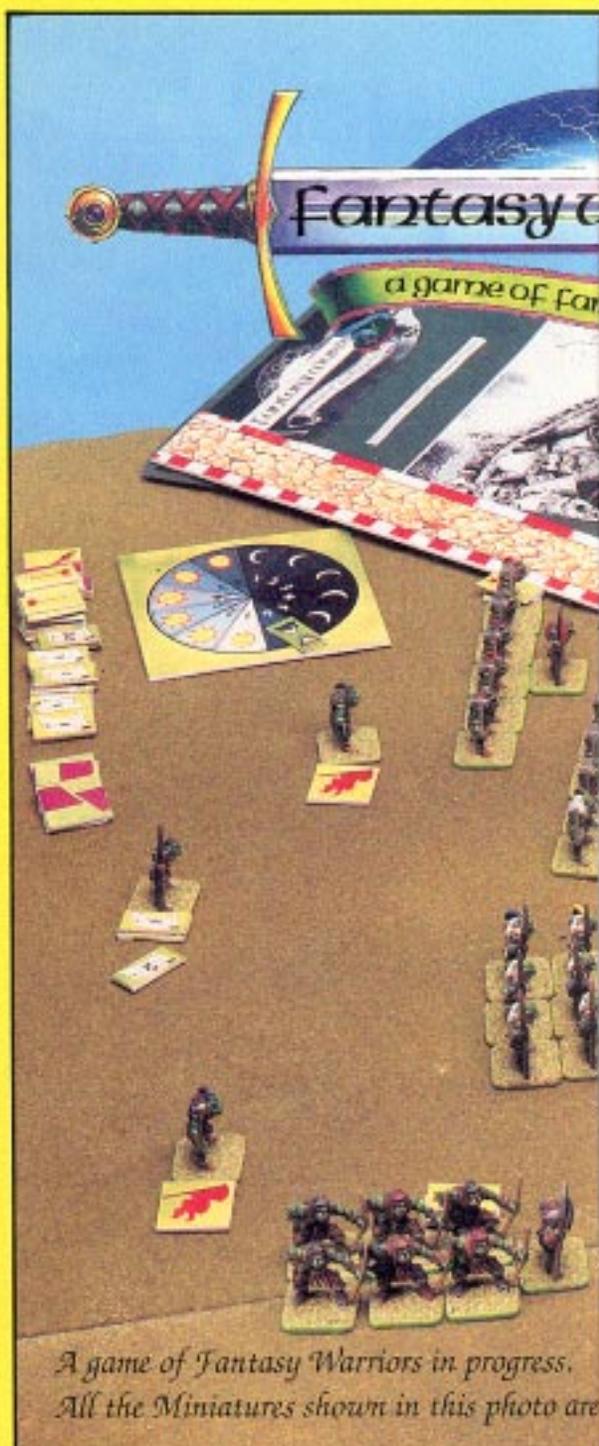
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# Dragon

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Issue #169  
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May 1991

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## COVER

The heroes have found their dragon—but will they survive the final confrontation? Denis Beauvais captures the terror and excitement as the adventurers meet their quarry—or their doom.

# 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 3LB, United Kingdom.

## DM do's & don't's

Dear Dragon,

I've played the AD&D® game for quite a time, and I was wondering if you could publish an article about being a good Dungeon Master . . . maybe something like what the DM should do and what he shouldn't.

As stated in the AD&D 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*, in "The Fine Art of Being a DM," being a good DM "involves a lot more than knowing the rules" (page 7). Later on is written: "There are hundreds of tricks, shortcuts, and simple principles that can make you a better, more dramatic, and more creative game master. But you won't find them in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*."

Well, in the AD&D *Campaign Sourcebook and Catacomb Guide*, I have found some answers and a lot of help, but it is not enough. So please, I'm sure there are a lot of people who will appreciate such an article.

Baruch Richter  
Haifa, Israel

Hmm. The best information that TSR has published on becoming a good DM for the AD&D game (beyond the two editions of the DMG) consists of the following:

—DMGR1 Campaign Sourcebook and Catacomb Guide: You've already mentioned this product, which contains nearly 100 pages on the art of "DMing" and another 25 pages on setting up detailed dungeon campaigns. This is one of the best DM's aids ever published.

—Dungeon Master's Design Kit: The fundamentals of adventure design are laid out (complete with organizing forms) in this accessory, which comes in three booklets. Setting up, detailing, playing through, and wrapping up adventures are covered in great detail. This is another extremely valuable product.

—RAVENLOFT™ boxed set: The "Realm of Terror" book has a short but valuable section on "Techniques of Terror" and adventure ideas for horror campaigns (pages 129-137). This material is easily used in any AD&D campaign for producing more memorable campaigns.

—B11 King's Festival and B12 Queen's Harvest: These are two modules for the D&D® game, but they should be picked up by novice DMs for AD&D games as well. Each contains a wealth of information on how to manage an adventure, how to spot problems and plow through them, and other useful tips.

—Magazine articles: If you can get a copy of DRAGON issue #112, check the index in that

issue under "Dungeon Master, advice to" for past articles on the subject of good game mastering. More recent articles on this topic include: "No Campaign Ever Fails," in issue #111; "The Elements of Mystery," and "Fun Without Fighting," in issue #117; "The GM's Ten Commandments," in issue #122; "Dungeon Etiquette," in issue #130; "When Game Masters Go Bad" and "The Mix-&-Match Module," in issue 135; the entire special section of five articles in issue #143; "The Dungeon Alone," in issue #157; "Inside Information," "Romance and Adventure!" and "It's sort of like a wand..." in issue #161; and "The Game Wizards" column in issue #162. In addition, look at the Best of DRAGON Magazine anthology, vol. IV for "Five Keys to Success," and vol. V of that anthology for "Keep 'Em Guessing," "Mind of the Monster," and "Instant Adventures," among other good articles.

—The revised D&D boxed set: This newly released set is geared to teach anyone who reads through it all the essentials of being a player and a Dungeon Master. The designers recommend this product for all novice DMs.

If any reader (or author) has any other recommendations on games, modules, or articles that offer tips on how to become a better DM, send them to us and we'll print the best.

## Around the roadblocks

Dear Dragon,

Several years ago, I read an article in DRAGON Magazine on the subject of including disabled gamers. It was brilliant—practical, yet hopeful. It may have been six or seven years ago.

Since I recently became deaf through illness (failed my saving throw!), it would help my gaming group greatly if you could write and tell me which issue contained that article and any related materials that I may have missed.

Thank you for your time and attention, and for the pleasure your magazine has given us.

Kathy Anne Powell  
Takoma Park MD

The article you were thinking of might have been Judith Sampson's "Adventuring With Shaky Hands," from DRAGON issue #53, in the "Up on a Soapbox" column. Ms. Sampson, who has cerebral palsy described the difficulties involved in taking part in a role-playing game and how she overcame them. This article is now hard to obtain, as that issue is long out of print (it was published in September 1981).

An editorial on the problems facing handicapped and disabled gamers appeared in issue #137 ("Roadblocks"). It was followed by several letters in "Forum" in issues #145 and #146 that offered ideas and support on the topic.

Continued on page 48

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# EDITORIAL

## The answers (sort of) at last!

Last month, we published an editorial test for everyone who ever wondered what it was like to work on the TSR magazine staff. This month, we present the answers, with a little philosophy on editing and some thoughts on what we look for in the submissions that our readers send to us.

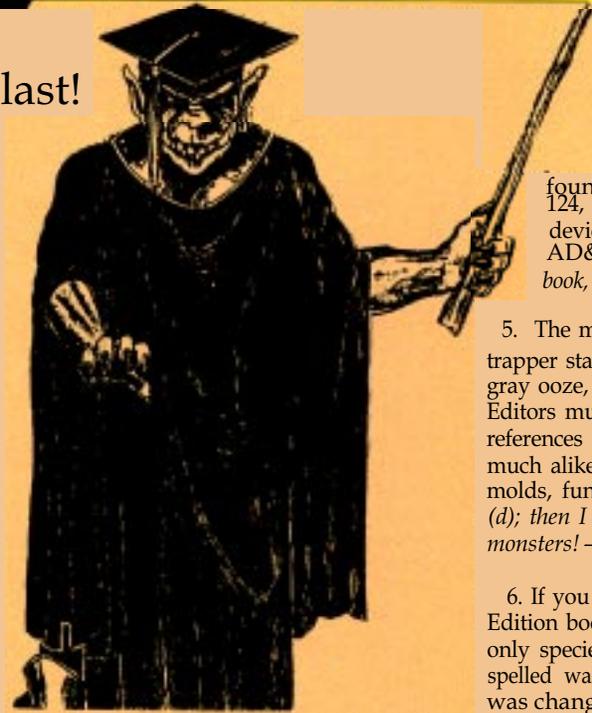
Editing fantasy game material is a demanding job. You have to read not only the current rules for a game, but you might need to know the old game rules, too, as well as have a broad knowledge of medieval civilization, world mythology, hand-to-hand weapons, modern fantasy literature, and so on. On top of that, you must have a strong grasp of editing skills, knowing where to put the commas, how to reword an unclear sentence, how to check a quoted reference, and where to find the information you need on a particular monster or character class.

When editing, style is important. There are often no fixed and absolutely correct ways to edit game material, but you have to pick a way that works and stick to it. Consistency is critical to an editor in any field, but in this particular field you will drown in a sea of chaos without it.

And now, the answers. As you look them over, you'll see that there was often more than one correct answer to a question. And, indeed, some questions were booby-trapped. In fact, they all were booby-trapped. Editorial comments from staff members others than myself (Roger) are in brackets and italics.

1. Gone are the days when you could stick the letter "s" on the end of a monster's name and have that be a plural. What you often have instead are plurals like the following, which we have verified as best we can in AD&D® game books, dictionaries, and other sources:

- Allosauruses* (because this sounds rather clumsy, you could use a simpler but broader term, "allosaurs," though paleontologists prefer to avoid the issue by using the species name as an adjective for "herd" or "family," as in "the *Allosaurus* herd"; take your pick)
- ballistae* (which is preferred) or *ballistas* (this copies the styles used for "medusa"—the jellyfish, not the monster—in some dictionaries) [I hate "ballistae." Count my vote for "ballistas." — Barbara]
- cyclopes* (not "cyclopeses")
- jermlaine* (same as the singular form)
- ninja* (there is no difference between singular and plural forms in Japanese)



found in *Unearthed Arcana*, page 124, in the section on polearms. This device is mentioned briefly in the AD&D 1st Edition *Players Handbook*, page 37, but is not described.

- Ornitholestes* (same as the singular form; see also "*Allosauruses*")
  - phlogiston* (this word has no plural form!)
  - portcullises*
  - samurai* (see "ninja")
  - shadowpeople*
  - shamans* (some say "shamen," but that's wrong) [*What about "shawomen"?* — Barbara] [*"Shafolk"?* "*Shaguys*"? — Dale] (Nope.)
  - sons of *Kyuss*
  - svirfnebli* (a weird one, rather like the D&D® game race of the *faedornae*, whose singular form is "*faedorne*")
  - violet fungi* (this word is plural, but it is often listed in AD&D game references in this manner, contrary to normal style, and I've heard some people say "violet fungus"; the singular form, of course, is "violet fungus")
2. *Medusa* was the name of one of three monstrous sisters, the Gorgons, who had snaky hair and could turn men to stone with a glance. Being the only mortal sister, *Medusa* fell victim to *Perseus*'s sword and mirrored shield. Thus, answers (a) and (c) are correct. I have no idea how the word "gorgon" came to represent a metal-scaled bull with a petrifying breath.
3. Due to an editorial error, the AD&D 2nd Edition *Monstrous Compendium* spells the AD&D 1st Edition monster *heucuva* (from the *FIEND FOLIO*® tome) as "*heucuva*" (c). The latter is now the official name of this creature.
4. The best answer to the question "What is a Bohemian ear-spoon?" may be

5. The most correct answer is (b). A trapper stays on the floor, and so does gray ooze, which does not stick to walls. Editors must constantly look up monster references since so many of them seem so much alike—especially the various slimes, molds, fungi, oozes, jellies, etc. [I voted for (d); then I didn't have to look up all those monsters! — Barbara]

6. If you kept up with the AD&D 1st Edition books, you might have thought the only species name that was correctly spelled was "*kopoacinth*"—but that name was changed in the *Monstrous Compendium*, Volume Two (see question #3). Correct forms of all the given monster names, using the AD&D 2nd Edition rules, follow:

a. bulette	e. kapoacinth
b. couatl	f. obliviax
c. koalinth	g. thessalhydra
d. kuo-toa	h. yuan-ti

7. This question deals with creativity, the elusive quality that can make or break a module or article submission. Thus it receives a longer-than-usual answer.

The best answer here is (c): We, meaning TSR, have never published a dungeon or setting based on a klein bottle, but we have published many other environmental horrors. A Möbius-strip dungeon was in "The Curse and the Quest," in *DUNGEON*® issue #26. *Baba Yaga*'s home is a tesseract in "The Dancing Hut," in *DRAGON*® issue #83. Time-travel paradoxes infest the dungeon in "A Hitch in Time," in *DUNGEON* issue #24. "Forbidden Mountain," in *DUNGEON* #6, details a completely non-Euclidean dungeon that will have mappers in fits. Longtime readers might recall the "episodic dungeon" composed solely of illusions (all derived from dreams, too) in "The Titan's Dream," from *DUNGEON* issue #2. Finally, though neither *DUNGEON Adventures* nor *DRAGON Magazine* has ever published a dungeon based upon *Lewis Carroll*'s stories about *Alice*, the TSR Games Division has done so twice (EX1 *Dungeonland* and EX2 *The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror*, both unfortunately now out of print).

This listing does not scratch the surface of the bizarre settings and dungeon twists introduced into other TSR fantasy modules. D&D module CM4 *Earthshaker* has a

“dungeon” inside a gigantic steam-powered robot. The interior of a crashed starship (full of electronic robots) is explored in the old AD&D module *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks*, republished as part of S1-4 *Realms of Horror*. IM1 *The Immortal Storm* takes high-level D&D game heroes to Chicago; the AD&D adventure “The City Beyond the Gate,” from DRAGON issue #100, takes place in London. The Demonweb, a geometric-paradox dungeon with an impossibly interwoven series of corridors and rooms, appeared in the AD&D module Q1 *Queen of the Demonweb Pits* (reprinted in GDQ1-7 *Queen of the Spiders*). A dungeon set up like a sliding-square puzzlebox appears in DUNGEON issue #29 (“Ex Libris”), and a dungeon whose rooms are guarded by a *deck of many things* was designed for DUNGEON issue #19 (“House of Cards”).

We’ve also seen and printed settings including a mind-flayer spacecraft, a dwarven planetarium, a dungeon in a giant flying crystal over a lava pit, an astral fortress, a dungeon built into a buried dragon’s skeleton, an undersea dragon’s lair, two exploding dungeons, and a village that eats people. Among the “mundane” environments we’ve seen are a buried clock tower, a circus, a teleporter-tower network, a dungeon in the shape of an orcish god, a dungeon carved into a tree, an elephants’ graveyard, a country garden enlarged 50 times, a city in an extinct volcano, a sewer-system dungeon, two cloud castles, and a gnomish diving bell.

The point is that originality is a highly valued quality that your editors look for with every submission. We have seen the most outlandish dungeons that could be imagined, so any new submission must compete with some very creative predecessors. But this should not be a deterrent to any writer—it should be a challenge. Dungeon designers must go beyond what has been done before and take gamers into new adventuring environments.

But don’t do the palace of Orcus, the inside of a hollow planet, or Castle Greyhawk. TSR’s already published those, too (the last twice).\*

8. Surprise, surprise! They’re *all* horrible! Opinions here vary widely, but I personally think the answer is (d), because I cannot use the tinker invention tables in *DRAGONLANCE® Adventures* to save my life. As a side note, AD&D game players unfamiliar with the delights of the hive-brood should get a copy of AC9 *Creature Catalogue* and look it up on pages 68-70. If this isn’t one of the most dangerous and complicated creatures in any role-playing game system, I don’t know what is (for an example in game play, see the D&D module “Of Nests and Nations,” in DUNGEON issue #13, in which a few of these critters take on an entire city). Authors should triple-check all complicated character and monster statistics to make life easier for the editors. We will be grateful for it. [*The*

*number of spells in (a) just make me tremble.* – Dale] [I’m personally glad to see the last of the AD&D 1st Edition (non-Oriental) monk. – Barbara]

9. There are two answers here. The behemoth (a) was an uprated hippo from the *Monster Manual II* that was never converted to the AD&D 2nd Edition game, as far as I know. And, so far, no *Monstrous Compendium* appendix (or any other AD&D game source) has mentioned anything called a “goliath” (e). The gargantua, greater titan, and colossus have appeared in the Kara-Tur, Outer Planes, and SPELLJAMMER™ appendices, and the leviathan is hidden in the “Whale” entry in the *Monstrous Compendium*, Volume Two. This and some later questions (#16 and 17) point up the need to be as familiar as possible with the game material you edit.

10. All of the names are misspelled. I was being mean with this question, but the point here is that monsters with unfamiliar names (and especially Oriental and other foreign ones) should be carefully checked. Sometimes only an apostrophe is missing, but it’s still wrong. The correct forms are:

- hengeyokai
- dot cu’o’c
- shirokinukatsukami (the longest monster name in the AD&D game; please don’t send us an article or module on it!) [*Or we’ll send one of these to your house.* – Dale] [*Spoilsport!* – Barbara]
- korobokuru
- shan sao

11. This was a trick question, since “sorceror” is misspelled and thus will appear in no dictionary at all (except for listings of frequently misspelled words). Excluding that entry, the answer depends heavily on which dictionary you’re using. I cannot find “ninja” or “psionics” in *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary* (unabridged), though I’ve seen the word “psionics” used elsewhere in science-fiction and fantasy literature. “Ninja” doesn’t even appear in some Japanese dictionaries, I’m told. Smaller dictionaries may have none of the correctly spelled entries here. This problem is sometimes a bane to gaming editors, but you can always fake it and go on from there.

12. You’ll find the rules for *spellfire* in FR7 *Hall of Heroes*, on pages 49-50. The “sage” who writes “Sage Advice” gets asked this question all the time.

13. As far as I am concerned, the best answer is (c). A good author can come up with a way around everything else, but you can’t use Godzilla in a detailed game module unless you have the rights to do so from the company that licenses him. (You can mention Godzilla in an article and discuss his movies, but you cannot produce products based on him.) [*But you*

*could change “Godzilla” to “Herman,” and the PCs still wouldn’t stand a chance. I vote for (d).* – Barbara]

14. You might find this part boring [*and it is* – Dale], but editors who don’t pay attention to their company’s trademarks will get their hands slapped or worse. Trademarks are among a company’s most valuable assets and should be protected, even if readers find it annoying (who pays you, anyway?). The answers are:

- FIEND FOLIO® tome (originally a ™ but upgraded later)
- POLYHEDRON™ Newszine
- CHAINMAIL game (no trademark!)
- HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set (this was trademarked *after* the set came out)

15. *None* of these words *must* be hyphenated. In fact, depending on which game company you work for, which department you’re in, and which dictionary you use, there are any number of ways to write these words. Take your pick, but whatever you choose, be consistent. The italicized words are currently preferred by DRAGON Magazine staffers, but we might change our minds eventually and adopt a new “permanent” style.

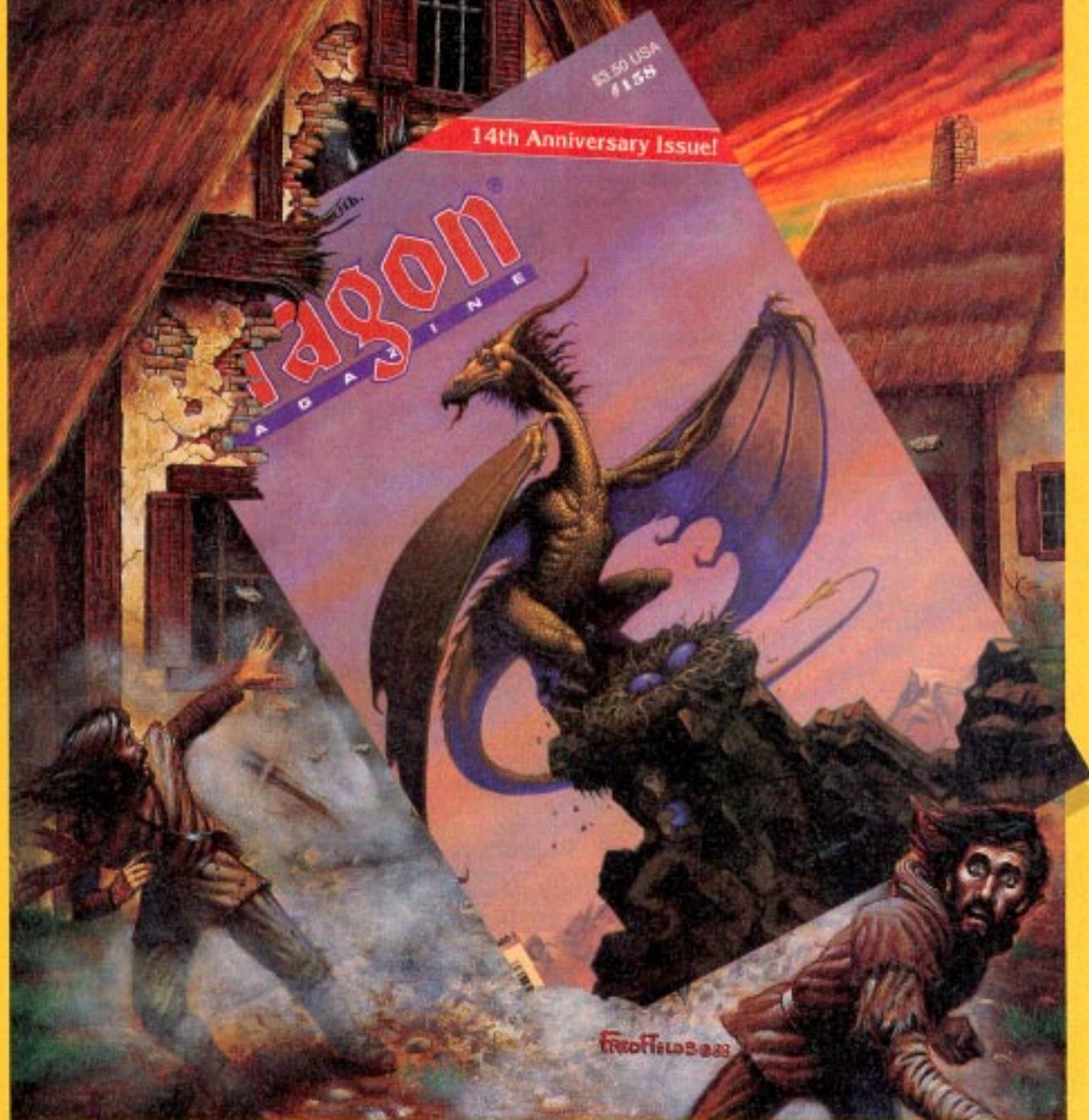
- chainmail, *chain mail*, or chain-mail (as an adjectival form)
- demi*human or demi-human
- spellcaster, *spell-caster*, or spell caster
- greatsword or *great sword*
- freelance, *free-lance*, or free lance
- roleplay, *role-play*, or role play

16. Here’s another question related to staying abreast of the latest game developments [*I thought of this question.* – Dale]. The AD&D 2nd Edition statistics for derro are described in (c) WGR1 *Greyhawk Ruins* and (e) WGA3 *Flames of the Falcon*; the statistics sheets are identical (see #17). Derro do appear in the *Monster Manual II*, but that’s an AD&D 1st Edition product. They were cut from the GREYHAWK® appendix to the *Monstrous Compendium* for lack of space, but you wouldn’t know that. Some readers may remember that the DRAGONLANCE® saga included derro as a degenerate dwarven race, the Theiwar, in some early modules; the *Monstrous Compendium*, DRAGONLANCE appendix, describes Theiwar in terms making it clear that they are very much like derro.

17. You look in the *Monstrous Compendium*, Outer Planes appendix, under (d) yugoloth [*This was my question, too.* – Dale]. Game editors need to be aware of the latest products and how they will affect the material they publish. I went for almost a year before discovering that derro had been published in AD&D 2nd Edition format in two different modules, both major releases.

*Continued from page 86*

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# Preparation is everything



# New Weapons For Old

Add an exotic edge to combat in the AD&D® 1st Edition game

by Jordan Clarke Hayes

Most players in AD&D® 1st Edition campaigns own copies of the 1st Edition *Players Handbook* and *Unearthed Arcana*. These two books allow players access to the statistics of every weapon imaginable—almost. Wouldn't it be refreshing for the Dungeon Master to surprise the local party with a few entirely new blades, crossbows, and similar instruments of orc-felling? The following weapons are intended for use by DMs who wish to add extra spice to their fantasy battles.

**Basilard:** The basilard is derived from a short, bladed weapon of the same name employed between the 12th and 15th centuries in medieval battle. The basilard differs to a small but significant degree from a short sword in balance and shape. The hilt of a basilard has a lopsided H-shape, with the crosspiece of the letter being the weapon's handle and the upper legs of the H being placed as the blade's hand guards. The weapon's blade is a slim, perfect V-shape from point to hilt with no expanse of metal formed by parallel edges, as is usual with most swords. Due to its shape, the basilard is an exceptional stabbing and thrusting weapon that can function as a chopping device if necessary.

The basilard's speed factor of 2.5 places it between a short sword and a dagger in quickness. If a basilard-armed fighter is in combat with an opponent wielding a short sword, and both combatants rolled the same number for initiative, the fighter with the basilard would strike first in that melee round. DMs may allow thieves and assassins, as well as fighters and rangers, to gain proficiency with the basilard.

**Claymore, dwarven:** This sword is similar to the two-handed sword of humankind, being about the size of a bastard sword. The heavy blades of dwarven claymores are made of the highest-quality metals and are kept razor sharp, allowing the weapon to be nearly as useful against armor as a human two-handed sword.

Newly sharpened nonmagical swords of this type have a +1 bonus to hit that lasts for the first six melee strikes.

Dwarves have fewer reservations about allowing nondwarves to gain possession of their claymores than they do about giving up their cherished war clubs. However, few nondwarves desire to employ such weapons, because the dwarven style of forging their claymores yields a blade with a weight imbalance beneficial to wielders with a low center of gravity, but feeling quite odd and fatiguing to taller and less stocky warriors. In game terms, this peculiarity can be handled by requiring the use of two proficiency slots when any taller race gains proficiency with the dwarven claymore. Halflings cannot employ the dwarven claymore, and only the largest and most able of gnomes (both surface and deep) would use the weapon, although gnomes suffer no penalty when learning to use it. No nondwarf can gain weapon specialization with the dwarven claymore, in any event.

For a dwarf, a dwarven claymore would cost about 22 gp. The price would, in all likelihood, be significantly higher for a member of another race.

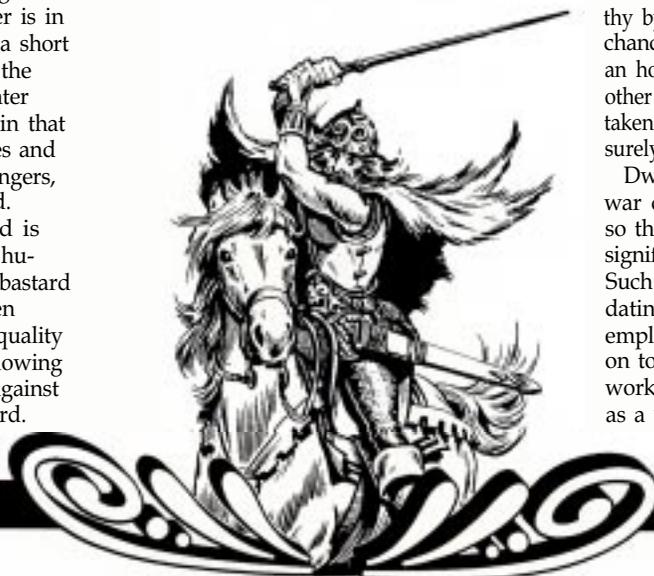
**Club, dwarven war:** This is a fairly

common weapon among the older houses of the bearded folk, but it is not often found in the use of other races. A massive weapon in anyone's hands, the dwarven war club is a large, steel-reinforced weapon appearing much like a mace, doubly thick at the striking end than at the tail. It is used by dwarven priests and warriors.

War clubs are made from heavy wood with an iron or lead core, inlaid with round or slightly pointed studs of steel. These projecting studs add a great deal of bludgeoning weight to the war club, making the weapon very effective against heavy armors that absorb the shock of lighter blows, but less effective against light armor that allows the wearer to avoid such attacks. This club is a two-handed weapon for dwarves and all other beings of human size or less, but it can be wielded one-handed by larger folk such as gnolls and ogres. A dwarven war club, because of its size and bulkiness, cannot be used by halflings and gnomes.

Dwarves do not commonly offer such weapons for sale, though members of their own race may purchase an unadorned war club for 10 gp. The bestowing of a dwarven war club upon a nondwarf is an honor similar to the giving of elven chain mail to an outsider by elves. Only those deemed worthy by dwarven standards might be given a chance to take possession of a war club. If an honorable dwarf sees a member of another race bearing a war club obviously taken from a fallen dwarf, his reaction will surely be one of disgust, if not violence.

Dwarves of moderate to high status have war clubs ornately carved and decorated so that the value of these weapons may be significantly higher than their base price. Such carvings often are written lineages dating from the first clan member who employed the war club and lived to pass it on to another of his kin. Despite its worked appearance, there is no such thing as a "dress war club" that exists purely for



show; all are true weapons.

**Crossbow, disk:** This rare form of heavy crossbow fires an extremely thin steel disk from a horizontal shaft. The weapon is decidedly more effective than other crossbows or bows against lightly armored targets at close range, and can inflict severe wounds against them. However, the disk crossbow is not nearly as deadly against well-armored foes.

The disk-firing crossbow resembles a heavy crossbow. A wood block with a slit parallel to the crossbow's handle and the absence of a bolt shaft on top of the crossbow reveals the weapon for what it truly is. Fighters and rangers are the classes most prone to using it.

As with the doubled crossbow, but to an extreme degree, this weapon should be encountered rarely and only in expert militia or mercenary units unless the disk crossbow is added to the list of what characters can purchase at the beginning of a campaign. The fact that the disk crossbow fires a projectile of carefully forged and sharpened metal is a factor that contributes to its rarity, limiting its manufacture to humans, dwarves, and elves.

**Crossbow, doubled:** The doubled crossbow is essentially two light crossbows joined with the same stock and handle. Two separate triggers, side by side, are included along with two separate bolt shafts and strings, one over the other. The design considerably decreases the crossbow's range in comparison to that of the standard light crossbow, although the light crossbow and the doubled crossbow fire exactly the same type of bolt. Both strings of this odd but useful weapon can be cranked back with a single hook, making this a rapid-firing weapon (by AD&D game standards) that can fire two bolts per melee round in the hands of someone who has proficiency with this weapon. A warrior employing the doubled crossbow without having a proficiency with it can fire only one bolt per round until he has a chance to stop firing for one round to reload both parts of the two-fold weapon. Someone with standard light or heavy crossbow proficiency would still be treated as having no proficiency with a doubled crossbow.

A fighter or ranger who gained weapon specialization with a doubled crossbow would get the standard crossbow specialization bonuses, except that additional attacks would not be gained until 13th level. At 13th level and above, the specialist can fire two bolts in the first round and have the weapon cocked and loaded by the end of the round; at the start of the second round, he may fire the two loaded bolts, then have the weapon cocked and loaded again to fire two bolts at the rounds end. This rate of fire (two, four, two, four, etc.) continues thereafter. These crossbows are almost exclusively employed by expert missile troops because so few crossbow makers have the skill or knowledge to craft these devices. Humans



and dwarves are the races most favoring their use.

**Mace, great:** The great mace is a larger version of the basic footman's mace. Its huge, awkward head, when properly wielded, deals crushing blows hindered little by armor of any type. The great mace appears as a standard (if oversized) spiked or studded steel head atop a long, heavy length of wood that is often reinforced with bands of steel that help to prevent the haft from breaking or cracking under the strain of a blow. The limitations of the great mace, like so many heavy melee weapons, are its unwieldy size, great weight, and sheer bulkiness. However, the great mace is not nearly as expensive or difficult to repair as such weapons as the two-handed sword and is therefore more accessible to groups of non-noble warriors. Troops employing great maces in large numbers are almost always of an elite and physically powerful type (minimum strength 9) in order to wield their armor-rending weapons.

**Morning star, double-balled:** This two-handed weapon is quite similar to the normal morning star except that, as its name implies, two separate chains and

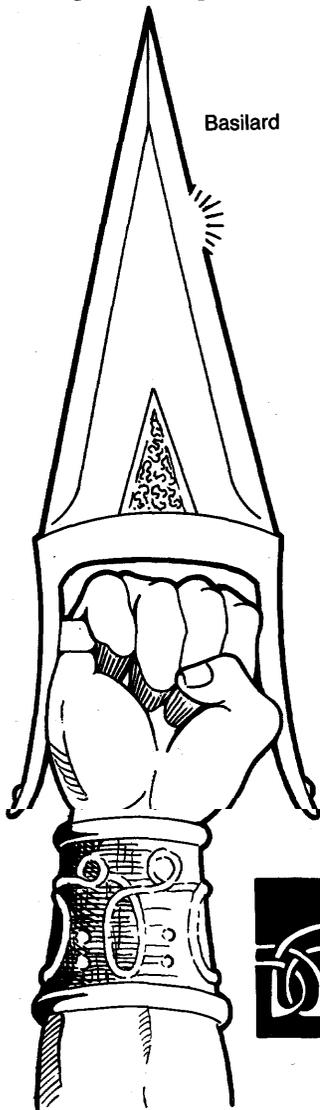
spiked balls are affixed to the weapon's haft. This weapon of human design is generally effective against any armor and is exceptionally useful against lightly armored opponents. In combat, to-hit and damage rolls are made separately for each ball of the weapon. The two balls are smaller than the one on a single-balled morning star, to avoid making the weapon too heavy and clumsy to handle.

A three-balled morning star can be made with even smaller spiked balls (doing 1-4  $\times 3/1-3 \times 3$  damage), sharing all characteristics of the two-balled weapon including separate rolls for each ball to hit. Beyond this three-ball limit, however, the weapon becomes ineffective because of tangling, clumsiness, and the light weight of the spiked balls.

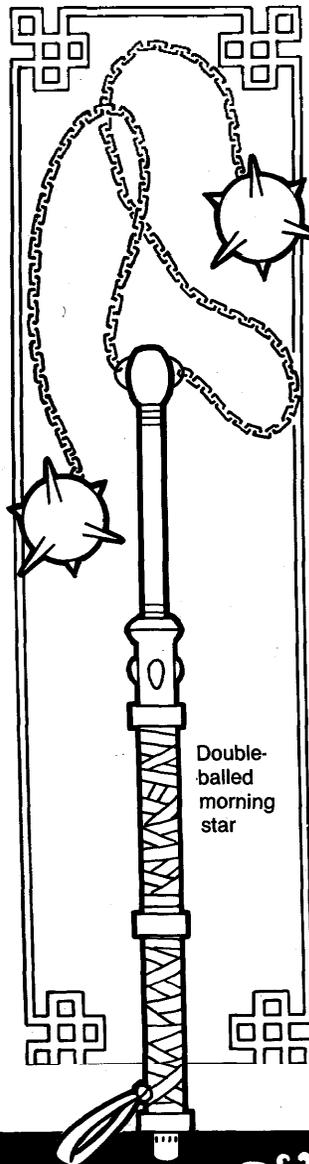
**Spear, hook-tailed:** This variant combination polearm is a thrusting weapon, not balanced for throwing, with a steel hook affixed to the butt end. The point is used as a normal spear with the standard armor-class adjustments, while the butt end is used to fell mounted opponents much like a guisarme or bill hook. If a dismounting attack is successful, minor damage from falling from the horse is caused (1-6 hp, with dexterity check on 4d6 for half damage); and any further attacks that round on the individual who was knocked down are at +4 to hit (as is usual vs. prone opponents).

Obviously, only one end of the spear may be used at a time, so at the beginning of each round a user of the hook-tailed spear must state which end he is going to employ. When an individual wielding this spear opts to employ the opposite end of the spear, he must accept a +1 penalty on that round's initiative roll. Due to the time and space required to change weapon ends, groups of warriors armed with hook-tailed spears often have half of their number use the hook end of their weapon to knock opponents to the ground, where the remainder of the troop can fall upon the unfortunate victims with the spear points of their weapons, thereby disposing of enemy warriors quickly and relatively easily. However, whichever end of this weapon is not being used is bound to get in the way of the wielder and those close to him, possibly causing injuries (15% chance per round of a nonproficient user making an unintentional attack against anyone standing within range; reduce this to 1% per round for proficient user). In a fairly short time, troops using hook-tailed spears switch to using glaive-guisarmes, on which the hooks are mounted behind the spearheads.

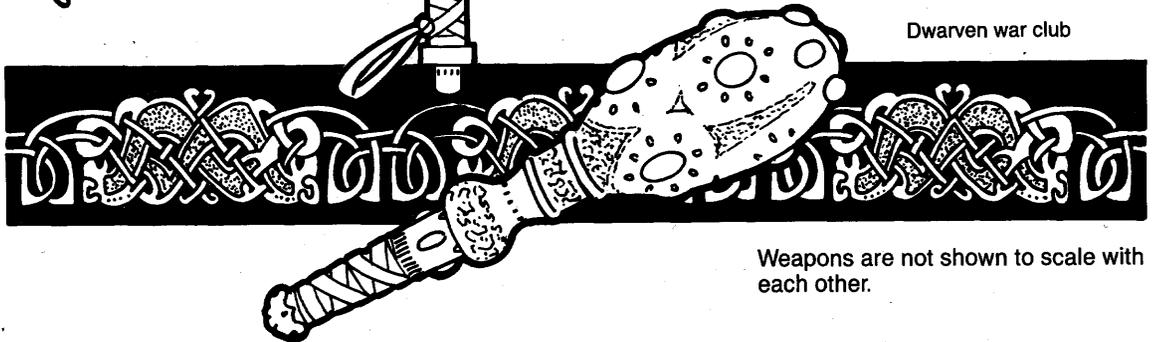
Proficiency with a hook-tailed spear takes one proficiency slot. The hook-tailed spear requires special consideration when applying the weapon specialization rules found in *Unearthed Arcana*. A fighter specialized with a hook-tailed spear should be allowed the normal melee-weapon hit and damage bonuses but should not gain three attacks every two rounds until 7th level. The maximum number of attacks per round a hook-tailed spear specialist could gain would be two, at 13th level (usually hooking a victim, then spearing him). Note that the specialist does not have to abide by the changing/initiative penalty rules outlined here.



Basilard



Double-balled morning star



Dwarven war club

Weapons are not shown to scale with each other.

Like most spearlike weapons, the hook-tailed spear does double normal damage (with its point) on a hit against a charging opponent, if the weapon's butt has been set to receive the attack. A hit with the hook end of the spear against a charging opponent takes advantage of the -1 armor-class penalty taken by the charger. Only humans use this clumsy weapon (and they rarely use it for long).

**Sword, flamberge:** The flamberge is based vaguely on a medieval sword. It is a long, two-handed weapon with a broad, wavy blade, useful against armors such as splinted, banded, scale, chain, and plate. Cavaliers, paladins, nobles, and knights would logically have armor-penetrating weapons such as the piercer and flamberge swords. These types of warriors traditionally engage in conflicts against other rich warriors who in all likelihood would invest in good suits of armor.

**Sword, mariner's:** The maranim was a stout human race in my AD&D campaign that lacked height but sailed expertly. They developed a midlength blade as wide as a broad sword, the result being an effective close-combat chopping weapon, perfect for land as well as shipboard use. On the mainland, the "maranim sword" became the "mariner's sword" and, later, the "guard's sword" to the common folk. The mariner's sword has a double-edged blade between a short sword and long sword in length, sharply tapering only at the point. It is a one-handed sword used largely by humans and elves.

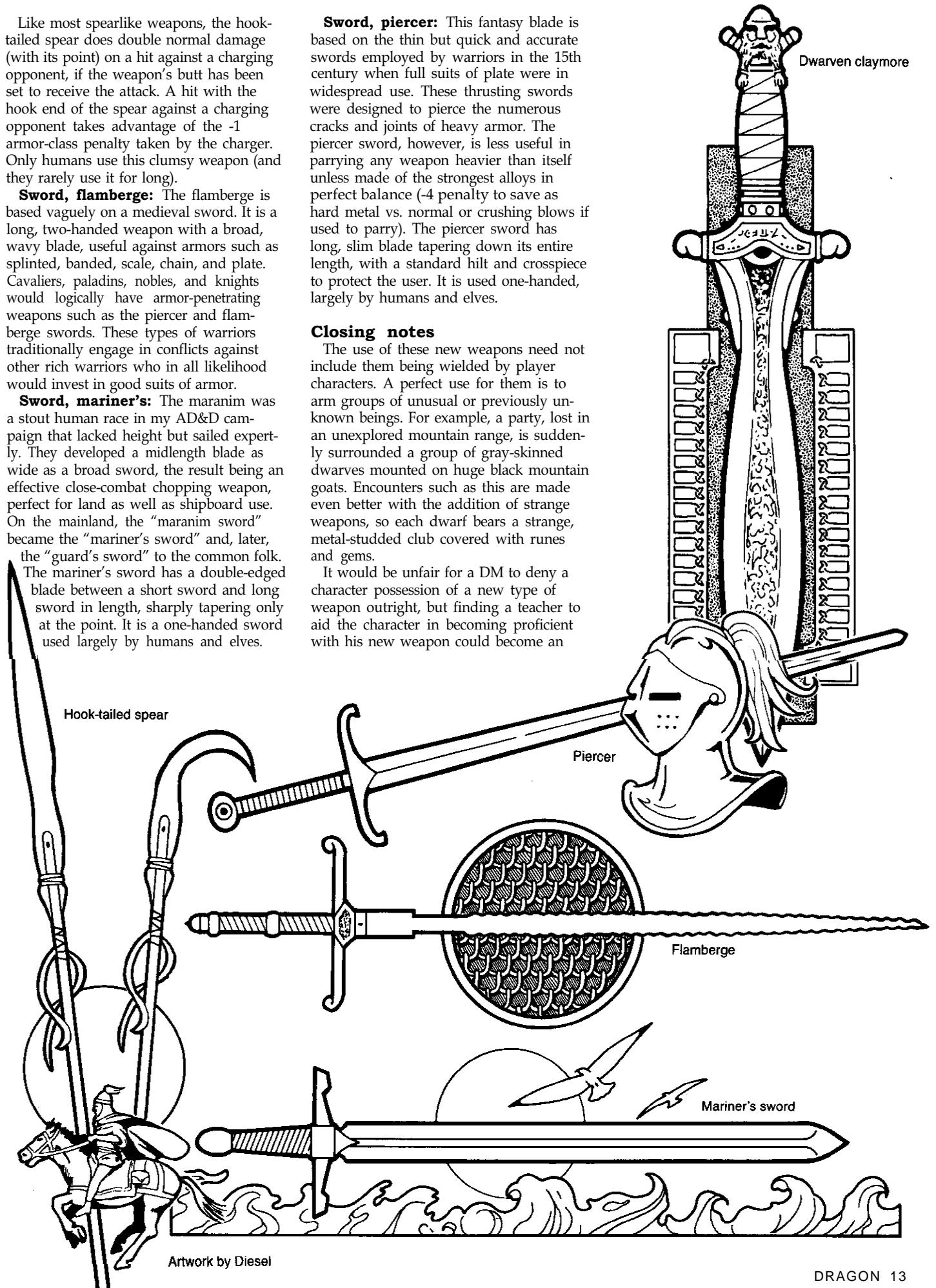
**Sword, piercer:** This fantasy blade is based on the thin but quick and accurate swords employed by warriors in the 15th century when full suits of plate were in widespread use. These thrusting swords were designed to pierce the numerous cracks and joints of heavy armor. The piercer sword, however, is less useful in parrying any weapon heavier than itself unless made of the strongest alloys in perfect balance (-4 penalty to save as hard metal vs. normal or crushing blows if used to parry). The piercer sword has long, slim blade tapering down its entire length, with a standard hilt and crosspiece to protect the user. It is used one-handed, largely by humans and elves.

### Closing notes

The use of these new weapons need not include them being wielded by player characters. A perfect use for them is to arm groups of unusual or previously unknown beings. For example, a party, lost in an unexplored mountain range, is suddenly surrounded a group of gray-skinned dwarves mounted on huge black mountain goats. Encounters such as this are made even better with the addition of strange weapons, so each dwarf bears a strange, metal-studded club covered with runes and gems.

It would be unfair for a DM to deny a character possession of a new type of weapon outright, but finding a teacher to aid the character in becoming proficient with his new weapon could become an

Dwarven claymore



Hook-tailed spear

Piercer

Flamberge

Mariner's sword

adventure in itself. Unless the DM has a practice of allowing proficiency with any sword, polearm, and bow characters can lay their hands on, hunting for teachers is unavoidable.

Except as noted in the previous descrip-

tions, proficiencies and specializations gained lawfully with the aforementioned weapons are treated normally, with the usual restrictions and bonuses. Assume that any of these new weapons that does not have information included on its origin

was developed in the author's AD&D campaign.

**Table 1  
New Weapons: Power and Size**

Weapon	Damage (S-M/L)	Length	Space required	Speed factor (FR: fire rate)	Weight (lbs.)	Cost (gp)
Basilard	2-5/2-7	1¾'	¾'	2.5	3	7*
Claymore, dwarven	2-8/2-12	4½'	4½'	7	11	
Club, dwarven war	2-8/2-7	3¾'	4'	6	12	
Crossbow, disk	**	**	***	FR: ½	10	175
Crossbow, doubled	1-4 ×2	****	****	FR: 1 or 2	8	60
Disk (for crossbow)	2-7/1-6	5"	-	-	.3	5
Mace, great	2-9/2-8	5'	5½'	10	20	20
Morning star, double-balled	2-5 ×2/1-4 ×2	4'	5'	8	16	35
Spear, hook-tailed	1-6/1-8	6'-14'+	3'	7	5-7	8
Sword, flamberge	2-9/2-16	5½'	5'	9	21	30
Sword, mariner's	1-8/1-8	3'	2'	4	4.5	9
Sword, piercer	2-7/1-8	3¼'	1½'	3	3	12

\* Not normally for sale

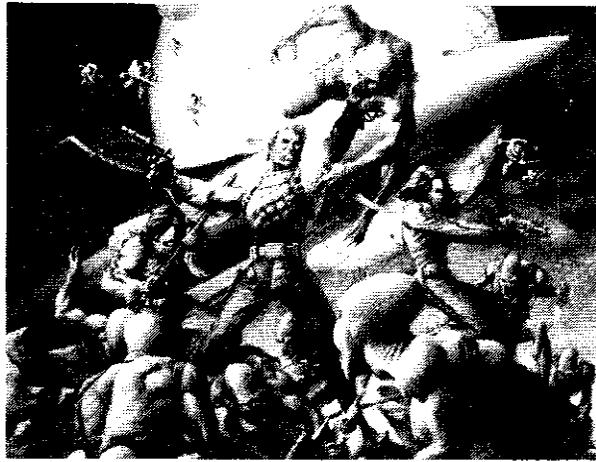
\*\* As per disk (for crossbow)

\*\*\* As per heavy crossbow

\*\*\*\* As per light crossbow

**Table 2  
New Weapons: Armor Class Adjustments & Ranges**

Weapon	Armor class adjustment											Range		
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Short	Medium	Long
Basilard	-4	-2	-3	-2	-2	-1	-	-	+1	+1	+2	-	-	-
Claymore, dwarven	-1	-	-	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+1	+1	-	-	-	-
Club, dwarven war	+2	+2	+1	+1	0	0	0	+1	0	+2	0	-	-	-
Crossbow, disk	-5	-4	-3	-2	-2	-	-	+2	+3	+4	+4	4	10	14
Crossbow, doubled	-3	-2	-2	-1	-	-	-	+1	+2	+3	+3	6	11	17
Mace, great	+3	+3	+2	+2	+1	+1	0	0	-1	0	-1	-	-	-
Morning star, double-balled	-1	-	-	-	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+2	-	-	-
Spear, hook-tailed (hook end)	-3	-3	-2	-2	-1	-1	0	0	0	-1	-1	-	-	-
Spear, hook-tailed (spearhead)	-2	-2	-2	-1	-1	-1	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-
Sword, flamberge	-	+1	+2	+3	+3	+3	+3	+2	+2	+1	-	-	-	-
Sword, mariner's	-4	-3	-2	-2	-1	-	-	-	+1	+1	+2	-	-	-
Sword, piercer	-1	-1	-	+1	+1	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+3	-	-	-



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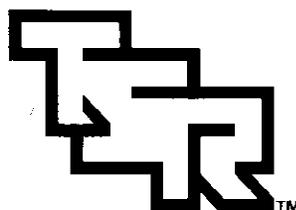
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# Creative Casting

by Joel E. Roosa

Artwork by David O. Miller

## Interesting uses for low-level wizard spells

Wizards generally seek to perfect their craft, striving for higher levels of power. In this quest, many wizards lose sight of the usefulness of lower-level spells. Even spells of little power can be very useful if creatively applied, often in ways never intended by their creators.

The following are unofficial examples of innovative uses for lower-level spells. Players should check with their DMs for final approval to use these in campaigns, as some may be subject to different interpretations.

### First-level spells

**Audible glamor** — Apart from creating sounds to fool enemies, this spell can be used for entertainment (a great way to gain needed cash for a low-level wizard). The caster can create the sounds of singing voices, musical instruments, or both at higher levels. Four singing men can be created at 1st level; and four singing men accompanied by four instruments of one special type at 2nd level; and so on. The quality depends on the skill of the caster. If the caster has a nonweapon proficiency in singing, musical artistic ability, or an appropriate musical instrument (this from the priest's group), he can make a skill check to see if each use of this spell produces a harmonious work of music. A failed roll means that sour notes, disharmony, and other problems appear. Experience in working with animals, other languages, and so forth may be applied to other uses of this spell; a wizard who has worked with horses can make an abandoned stable sound occupied, for instance, possibly allowing for saving-throw penalties for anyone hearing the noise.

**Dancing lights** — Used at night to simulate a party's lanterns or torches, this spell can lead pursuers to their doom—over a cliff, onto an unsafe bridge, into quicksand or carnivorous plants, etc. Since the caster controls the movement of the lights, they can also be used for signaling over long distances at night—a real boon for large

armies. This may also be used as an entertainment spell to brighten up a performance at a party, tavern, playhouse, music hall, etc.

**Enlarge** — Reversed, this spell can be used on large spearheads to *reduce* them to the size of arrowheads; when fitted onto shafts, they can then be fired as normal arrows. Several could be *reduced* at once by having them forged into one unit with thin strips of metal, then be broken apart while small. They could also be given barbs to hold them in the wounds when the shafts are pulled out (because of the pain, an injured being must make a constitution check each round to remove one such barbed arrowhead; use a save vs. death magic for injured monsters). When the spell ends, the arrowheads return to normal size, causing 1-2 hp damage apiece for every 10% by which they were *reduced*. If the caster has a *dispel magic* ready, the *reduce* spell could be negated when desired. In a similar fashion, a mage could have giant darts made, the heads of which would break off in wounds while *reduced*. Hurling *reduced* boulders or ballista bolts at enemies inside an antima-

gic field is a possibility. Placing a *reduced* monster in a tiny stone or steel room with thick walls will guarantee death or massive injury when the spell wears off (but remember to stand back). Consider the options for smuggling allies and equipment past guards, too.

**Mending** — Delicate wooden or ceramic objects can be carved with secret messages, then shattered. The pieces can be delivered as packing material around something else. The spell will pull the pieces together so the message can be deciphered. The pieces can also be sent by multiple couriers, so it would be impossible to decipher the message without all the pieces.

**Mount** — In a somewhat shady application, the animals summoned may be sold before the spell's duration wears off. This is an easy way to make a profit with zero inventory, but it's best to be far away when the spell ends. Remember that a summoned mount can also be made to attack foes; a 1st-level spell that can summon a fighting elephant or griffon is a tough spell, and even a war horse can do well against orcs.

**Spider climb** — This too has less than honest uses, apart from enabling the user to scale walls like a thief. Since it literally gives the user "sticky fingers" (and feet), it will make certain thefts easier. Although actually picking pockets would become virtually impossible because the hands would stick to the clothing, small objects could be palmed by merely touching them. Slippery objects may be easily grasped, too. Try this spell as an attack against spell-casters, who will then be unable to use somatic components for a brief time.

Walking across spilled coinage in bare feet would allow the user to make off with several coins. The feet could also pick up items from under tables with little dexterity required.

**Tenser's floating disc** — This spell can be used to attack foes, with a little work. It can't cause damage by itself, but it can



carry weapons. A "sword wheel" (with swords as spokes, chained or roped together) can be placed on it, the points projecting over the rim. Although it can't be made to spin in place, it goes anywhere within 20' of the caster, at a constant 3' above the ground. It can thus attack once per round, hitting with 1-2 swords for half damage per sword (round fractions down). This sword wheel's THAC0 would be the same as that of the caster, less strength bonuses and with a -4 penalty for the clumsiness of the attack. The caster could have more than one sword wheel going at once, but could concentrate on only one sword wheel and victim at a time. Victims might dive under the disc, but such tactics can be hindered by having more blades pointing down from the rim of the disc, to a point about 6" from the ground. In a narrow corridor, this spell and device combination could slow or stop pursuit.

Even low-level mages could thus have a weapon that lasts for over half an hour and does medium-distance killing. One disadvantage is having to carry the sword arrangement when the disc vanishes. Another is that the disc returns to within 6' of the caster when not being specifically controlled, so companions could get sliced by a careless mage.

Alternatively, the disc could be used as a weapon's platform for a small ballista or other device crewed by a gnome or half-

ling. Note that two or more wizards may cross unstable terrain (but not a chasm) by riding each other's discs.

*Unseen servant* —The force summoned by the spell can be used to "animate" a robe. Although the servant is shapeless, it can carry a light wooden framework to give the robe a manlike shape. The resulting figure could be mistaken for a bodiless undead and would serve to frighten foes, since the servant can't attack.

### Second-level spells

*Continual light* —Nearly everyone uses this spell to produce everlasting lanterns and the like. If your DM allows it, several can be cast onto the front of a shield, giving +4 to defense by blinding frontal attackers. Sling stones with this spell on them could be hurled far ahead of adventurers traveling at night or underground to reveal hazards and monsters, if the characters don't mind revealing their presence to everyone else as well.

This spell can also replace Nystul's *magical aura*, since the object on which this spell is cast would radiate magic now (and permanently at that); the light could be hidden by paint or other methods.

*Magic mouth* —This spell can serve for an amusing bit of misdirection. When placed on a broad arrowhead, a large stone, or the like, it may be hurled near anyone you wish to distract. It can be triggered by the sound of its own impact, if sufficient noise is generated, or by the presence of beings. It can say things like: "Guards, guards, over here!" or "Turn and meet your doom!" A *magic mouth* on a robed, animated skeleton enhances its resemblance to a lich.

Multiple castings on an object (like a mirror, for instance) can make the object appear to be an oracular item. The spells may be set to respond to certain questions or questioners with vague or specific answers.

*Rope trick* —If cast properly, this spell can be used to go through an opening in a narrow wall. The wall would have to be at least 5' high because of the conditions of the spell. The rope in which the spell is cast should rise until it is exactly level with the opening, so that the extradimensional space created is immediately adjacent to the opening to be passed through. Since the opening to the space is about 3' x 5', those entering the space can look down and see on the other side of the wall, with the wall seeming cut off where it intersects with the "floor" of the space. There should be enough leeway to pull up the rope and climb down on the other side of the wall, trailing the rope through the wall opening (it is assumed that the rope can be dropped only from the center of the "floor" of the space). The wall must be narrow enough to allow room for climbers to descend to the other side, of course.

Note that this spell offers proof against dragon breath, *meteor swarms*, floods, fires, and other harmful effects, making it

almost the ultimate defensive spell.

### Third-level spells

*Blink* —This can function as a short-range, inaccurate *dimension door*. If the caster positions himself before a door, there is at least a three-in-eight chance he will go forward, beyond the door. He gets one try per level, unless he has difficulty returning to his near-door position due to low rolls when timing the blinks. A wizard can escape entombment in this manner if he doesn't mind appearing on the Ethereal plane.

*Clairaudience* and *clairvoyance* —Each can be used in the same manner for long-distance communication. Two mages using either or both spells can communicate with each other over any distance, so long as the location of each is known to the other. This is ideal for using on ships on long voyages, since the ship is a known locale, regardless of how far away it is (some DMs may dispute this, saying the location selected must be a particular spot on the earth).

*Item* —The items changed to cloth can be carried until needed, and they are most effective if left as cloth until the last possible second. Cloth items can be tied to arrows and fired at enemies. When striking solid surfaces, they return to normal, without suffering any ill effects. Thus, half the arrows could carry buckets of oil, and the other half could carry shrunken flaming torches. Containers of acid, water, poison, and other substances could be hurled great distances. Imagine a cloth bonfire slipped into a room full of flammable or explosive materials, hidden between two crates.

If the DM allows the spell to work on living beings, a volley of arrows could also unleash a hoard of soldiers amidst surprised foes. It could also let someone slip assassins under doors, or disguise somebody as a bookmark. Small monsters, such as green slime or various oozes, could be launched or hidden away.

*Monster summoning I* —Since the creatures may appear anywhere within 30 yards of the caster, they can appear behind doors and other barriers. Only certain types of magical barriers might keep them out. They could open secret doors from within, if physically able. Summoned humanoids can commit thefts or take the blame for them; if captured, they soon disappear and can truly be said to have escaped by magic. These effects will work equally well with the higher level *monster summoning* spells.

Sit down with your copy of the *Player's Handbook* some evening and see if you can create a few new uses for the low-level spells your wizard carries around. And watch the expression on everyone's face when you show them what it means to be a wizard—even a third-level one. ☞

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# Learn Something New Every Day

by Gordon R. Menzies

Artwork by Dan Burr

## Ten new nonweapon proficiencies for the AD&D® 2nd Edition game

The list of nonweapon proficiencies in the AD&D® 2nd Edition Player's Handbook is extensive but not exhaustive. Here are 10 new nonweapon proficiencies you can integrate into your campaign.

**Alchemy:** An individual skilled in the science of alchemy can perform a wide variety of feats when he has access to a well-stocked laboratory. Given time and the proper materials, the alchemist can create such things as smoke bombs, sleep gas, magical potions, Greek fire, strong glue, various drugs and poisons, and many other substances left up to the player's imagination and the DM's discretion. Furthermore, a character with this proficiency can conduct experiments to determine the properties of unknown substances.

A laboratory, including the specialized equipment and the innumerable chemicals necessary for its operation, costs at least 5,000 gp. For every additional 5,000 gp invested in the laboratory, the alchemist's chances of success in any given project should be modified by +1 bonus. However, since there is always a chance of failure, any roll of a natural 20 on the ability check indicates that something has gone wrong—though the alchemist may not always be aware of this!

This skill is almost useless outside of the laboratory, and the character's abilities

should be limited accordingly when this is the case. Some characters may wish to carry small analysis kits with them while adventuring. The DM should allow this, of course, but the delicate equipment is not likely to stand up to the rigors of normal adventuring, and the chances of success at any project will be much less because of the shortage of materials. The DM should determine the penalties on a project-by-project basis.

Possession of this skill grants a +1 bonus on all brewing and herbalism skill checks. This skill is required for the alchemist career mentioned in *The Complete Wizard's Handbook*.

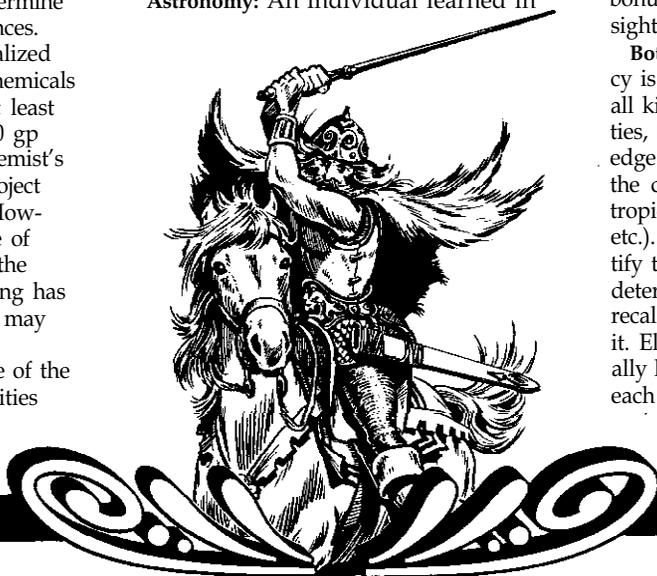
**Astronomy:** An individual learned in

the science of astronomy has a good knowledge of the stars, planets, and other bodies in his home crystal sphere (as per the AD&D SPELLJAMMER™ boxed set), as well as the myths and legends associated with them. When the night sky is clear, he can always tell direction by the stars.

Phases of heavenly bodies are also easily determined. Furthermore, characters with this proficiency can (if given the time, tools, and materials) construct and use all the instruments related to this field, such as astrolabes, sextants, and even simple telescopes.

Possession of this skill grants a +2 bonus on all astrology skill checks and a +1 bonus to all navigation checks involving sighting on stars, moons, or suns.

**Botany:** A character with this proficiency is readily able to identify vegetation of all kinds and is familiar with their properties, life cycles, and habitats. This knowledge is limited to the terrain and climate the character has studied (temperate, tropical, sub-tropical, arctic, sub-arctic, etc.). One ability check is required to identify the plant in question, and a second to determine whether the character can recall any specific information concerning it. Elves and other forest dwellers generally have a good grasp of botany, allowing each of them a +1 bonus to all botany





ability checks they make in their own terrain and climate.

Possession of this skill grants a + 2 bonus on all agriculture and herbalism skill checks.

**Calligraphy:** The handwriting of an individual with this proficiency is controlled and beautiful to the point of being considered art. A character could earn a tidy income copying documents, books, formal letters, etc. for the wealthy public. Skilled calligraphers are often sought by the courts of the aristocracy and religious institutions that wish to illuminate their holy writings.

The reading/writing proficiency must have been taken before this skill can be selected. Possession of this skill grants a + 1 bonus on all artistic ability skill checks involving the painting or lettering of signs, documents, etc.

**Cartography:** A character with cartographic proficiency is skilled in making maps, making him essential to any group of adventurers exploring unknown territory. A cartographer is a keen-eyed artist with a well-developed sense of distance and depth, whose perception of the physical world is so exacting that with amazing accuracy he can copy onto a sheet of paper whatever he looks upon. He can also copy other maps professionally, and this makes him a valuable addition to the retinue of the aristocracy and other landholders,

In mapmaking, time is important when considering the detail and accuracy of the

resulting product. Outdoors, this is best left to the DM to decide in accordance to the type of terrain and the detail the players desire. Underground in a dungeon setting, however, accuracy and detail are much more important; often the survival of an entire adventuring party will depend on a single map. Once again, the DM must decide how long it will take to map any particular area, but this should take a minimum of one round plus the time it will take the cartographer to pace out the area. Another round or two should be added for increased detail or specific notes.

A cartographer need only make an ability check on three occasions: when he maps a very unusual area, when he attempts to copy another map, and when he attempts to read a map that he has not manufactured himself. If he fails in the first, it is assumed that he has made a blunder that has rendered the map useless; if a failure is indicated in the second, he cannot read the map because symbols have been used that he is not familiar with, or the map lacks a legend or a key. In a fantasy setting, map symbols are unlikely to be universally known.

A small travel kit consisting of a waterproof leather case (with stiff sides so that it may be used as a drawing surface), two bottles of ink, a half-dozen quills and a like number of parchment sheets will cost the cartographer about 25 gp. Additional colored inks and drawing instruments should be available in most cities.

It is not necessary for the reading/writing proficiency to have been taken prior to selecting this skill. However, if the mapmaker cannot read or write the languages he knows, his maps, while accurate, will have keys understood by himself only. This skill grants a +2 bonus to all navigation and orienteering skill checks.

**Diplomacy:** An individual who knows the art of diplomacy has a unique way with people that draws them to his person almost irresistibly. He has a flair for words, an extensive vocabulary, and is articulate and practiced in the arts of subtle and overt coercion. Any character with this ability who makes a successful check against his charisma score, and has at least one round of uninterrupted conversation with any creature that can understand him, adds + 5 to his reaction adjustment. For every additional round the character manages to speak, an additional + 1 is added, to a maximum bonus of + 15 (including the original + 5).

Furthermore, the loyalty base of any associates of the individual is adjusted by a +2 bonus for every slot devoted to this proficiency. No ability check is necessary to receive this bonus.

**Geology:** A character with this proficiency, is able to identify different types of rocks and minerals, including precious metals and gems. Though he cannot accurately appraise the value of such items, he can differentiate between ornamental, semiprecious, and precious stones, and can make an educated guess at the purity

## New Nonweapon Proficiencies Table

Proficiency	No. of slots required	Relevant ability	Check modifier	Category
Alchemy	3	Intelligence	- 3	Wizard
Astronomy	2	Intelligence	- 1	Priest, Wizard
Botany	1	Intelligence	- 1	Priest, Wizard
Calligraphy	1	Dexterity	- 1	Priest, Wizard
Cartography	1	Wisdom	0	General
Diplomacy	1	Charisma	0	General
Geology	2	Intelligence	- 1	General
Orienteering	2	Wisdom	0	General
Street fighting	2	Dexterity	0	Warrior
Street sense	2	Charisma	0	Rogue

of any vein of precious metal. He is also familiar with underground formations and functions of the natural world related to this science, such as earthquakes, volcanic activity, and the processes involved in the creation of the various rocks and minerals.

There are few dwarves who are not familiar with the basics of geology, and it is also a favorite with gnomes, especially deep gnomes. This skill adds a +2 bonus to all mining skill checks.

**Orienteering:** A character with this proficiency is capable of reading and following any normal map he comes across. He can even follow, in general terms, maps labelled in unfamiliar languages as long as he makes a successful ability check. Furthermore, if the sky is clear, the character can determine direction, night or day, by using the stars and

daytime shadows as guides. The latter method requires one turn to make the proper measurements and calculations.

A character with this skill and an appropriate map gains a + 1 bonus to any survival skill roll. He also gains a + 1 bonus to any navigation skill roll he makes if he has the right map for the area.

**Street fighting:** Restricted to members of the warrior classes only, this proficiency is extremely beneficial to a character who is engaged in unarmed combat. An individual knowledgeable in street fighting may add his strength score to the "%KO" column on Table 58: Punching and Wrestling Results, page 97 of the 2nd Edition *PHB*, when a successful unarmed attack is made. Thus, a fighter with 15 strength and this proficiency will, on a roll of 12 on Table 58, have a 20% (5% + 15%) chance of

knocking out his opponent.

Furthermore, if the warrior makes a successful dexterity check on the same round, he is allowed a second attack roll on Table 58, but this time without the strength score bonus.

**Street sense:** This proficiency is limited to members of the rogue classes. A rogue with this proficiency is adept at making a good impression on underworld contacts in the less-savory neighborhoods of towns and cities, allowing him to better use the information-gathering proficiency described in *The Complete Thief's Handbook*. Those whom the rogue contacts are not necessarily moved to trust the rogue using this skill, but they may decide the rogue is worth talking to because he is so entertaining or because he is a person of importance. A street-sense skill check can be attempted once whenever the rogue is talking to a contact. Success means that the contact becomes favorably inclined toward the rogue and will reveal additional information to him, possibly unrelated to the rogue's inquiries, at the DM's discretion. Success also means that the contact will act positively toward the rogue in future situations, unless circumstances dictate otherwise.

Possession of this skill adds a +2 bonus to any information-gathering skill check.

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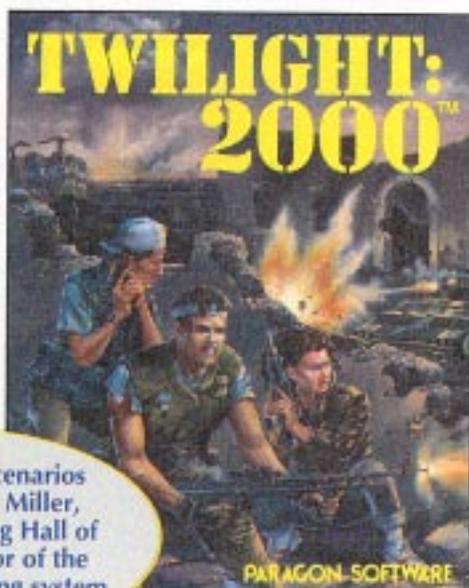
### Errata

In issue #168, we didn't show you where to find the six weapons in the crossword puzzle on page 76. Ha, ha! April Fool! Actually, it was an error and we're mortified, but things like that happen. Here are the six weapons and their locations (in case you didn't find them on your own).

1	R	1	A	1	A	7	A	9	A	11	A	12	P
13	O	14	R	15	A	16	W	17	E	18	R	19	L
20	D	21	A	22	R	23	H	24	V	25	A	26	F
27	S	28	S	29	W	30	A	31	O	32	R	33	T
34	A	35	S	36	S	37	N	38	A	39	T	40	L
41	F	42	I	43	X	44	I	45	T	46	S	47	P
48	O	49	N	50	E	51	S	52	C	53	U	54	E
55	G	56	A	57	S	58	U	59	R	60	N	61	P
62	A	63	P	64	O	65	A	66	A	67	A	68	T
69	C	70	R	71	O	72	S	73	W	74	O	75	R
76	H	77	A	78	R	79	P	80	S	81	T	82	R
83	A	84	T	85	T	86	I	87	G	88	E	89	R
90	N	91	I	92	C	93	E	94	D	95	A	96	V
97	G	98	O	99	L	100	D	101	A	102	W	103	E
104	E	105	N	106	E	107	S	108	C	109	E	110	N

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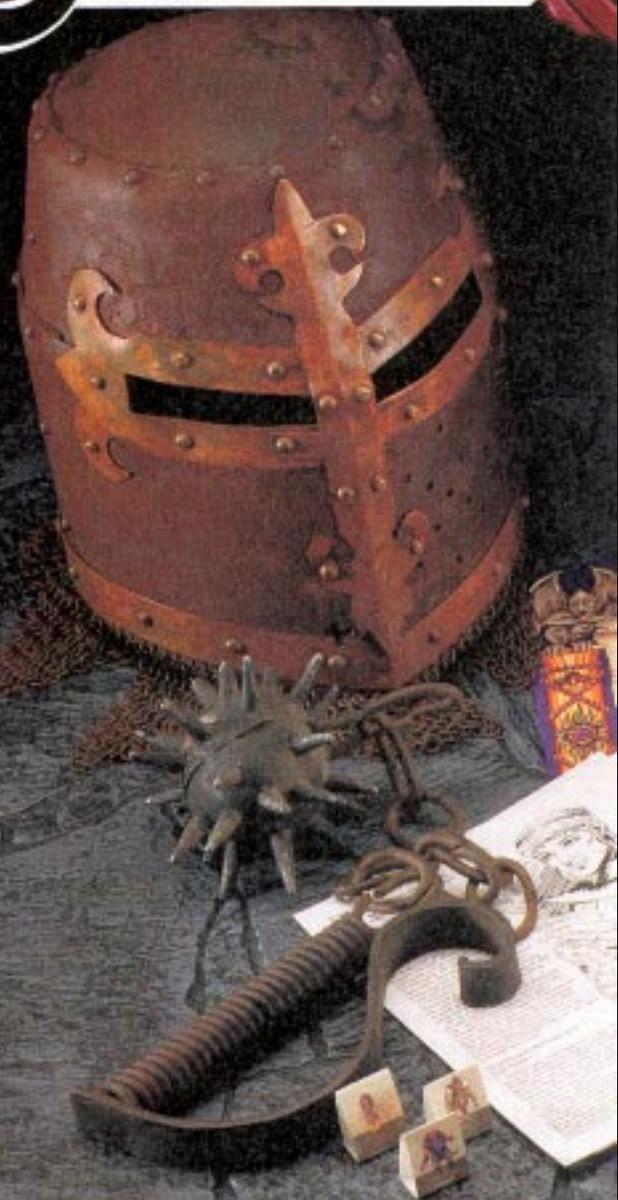
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# The Strategy of Tactics

by Jordan Clarke Hayes

## Melee tactics for either edition of the AD&D® game

In the AD&D® game, the rules for resolving melee are concise and simple. This promotes role-playing and heroics over the secondary details of precisely how a blow strikes or misses. This simple system fulfills its function admirably. However, any tactics besides running away instead of fighting are neglected as a result. Luckily, as the system is open-ended, rules simulating a defensive or offensive posture in melee can easily be added.

Many games in which man-to-man combat is an integral part permit characters to parry, dodge, or otherwise negate blows by allowing combatants to roll against an appropriate skill or ability. This gives players a greater feeling of control over what happens to their characters during melee. Unfortunately, such a system makes additional rules references and die rolls a necessary evil that slows down the action. In the AD&D game, where minutes of game time are ideally resolved with but a few quick tosses of the dice, such a system is not desirable. Likewise, systems that allow the employment of very specific strikes and similar actions do not truly belong in most AD&D games, where much of the activity in a melee round is assumed and comes to life only when narrated by a Dungeon Master.

The rules here present a set of close-combat tactics that allow combatants to better control their actions in the midst of battle. These rules create the various strategic possibilities of melee without changing the existing game rules or causing the need for additional die rolls each round.

Note that the AD&D 2nd Edition rules offer a simple solution to the problem of the lack of possible options in melee by introducing an optional parrying rule (*Player's Handbook*, page 100). Unfortunately, this rule is an all-or-nothing affair. Besides being of limited use to a primarily low-level game, this does not address the possibility of any tactic other than a defensive one. Since the parrying rule in the *PHB* and melee-tactics system presented

here do not work together, consider the rules here as a possible replacement to the parrying rule for those who want to add a little more substance to their AD&D game battles.

### The basics

Page 105 of the AD&D 1st Edition *Player's Handbook* contains the passage: "The 1 minute melee round assumes much activity—rushes, retreats, feints, parries, checks, and so on. Once during this period each combatant has the opportunity to get a real blow in." Building on this statement, one can conclude that a tactically minded warrior can decide how much he lets his guard down when attempting this blow. Likewise, a desperate warrior can attack with complete abandon, neglecting the evasions and parries assumed to be a part of the melee round.

This can easily be simulated in combat by allowing combatants to select from five styles of fighting: normal attack and defense; active defense; full defense; active attack; and full attack.

The "normal attack and defense" style of fighting uses the standard AD&D rules for melee combat, assuming a generally equal distribution between offensive and defensive actions on the part of any given combatant. Used extensively when combat is between fairly balanced forces, with neither side having gained the upper hand,

normal attack and defense is the most commonly used melee tactic.

Though not an addition to the rules, the normal mode of attacking is shown here for the purpose of comparison. It is the midpoint on which the following offensive and defensive tactics are based.

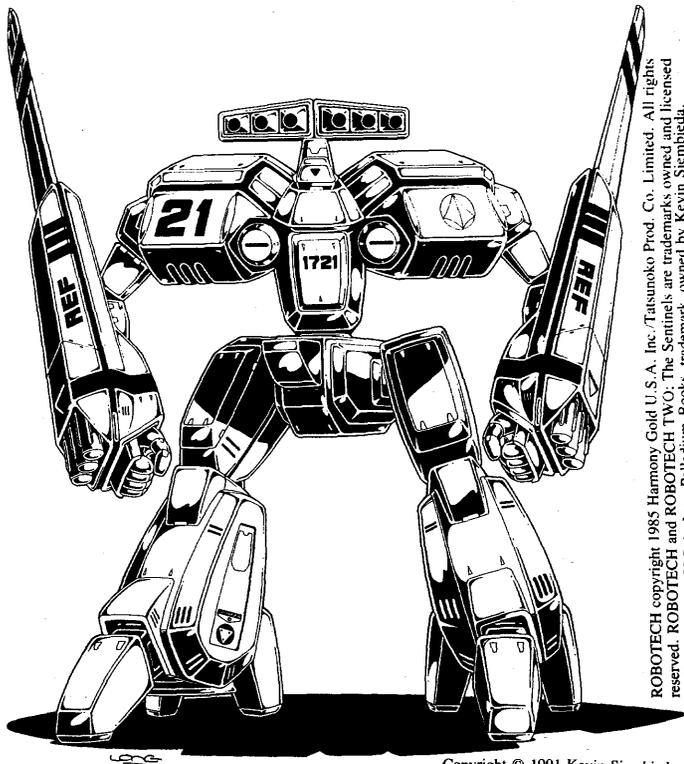
In all tactics that follow, the modifiers to hit and to armor class are cumulative with bonuses and penalties for strength, dexterity, magical bonuses, weapon proficiency, weapon specialization, and other situations. The armor-class modifiers apply only to the final armor class of the attacker, not his armor type (a distinction important if weapon type vs. armor modifiers are used in an AD&D 1st Edition game).

Tactic initiative modifiers are applied to the initiative die roll. Modifiers for the AD&D 1st Edition game are applied to the 1d6 initiative roll, where the highest roll wins, but applies only if every combatant on the side of the battle in question uses the same tactic. If individual initiative dice are rolled, the appropriate modifiers are allowed only to those combatants using these tactics.

Tactic modifiers for the AD&D 2nd Edition game may be applied to either the optional group initiative or individual initiative system of the AD&D 2nd Edition game (see pages 94-95 of the *Player's Handbook*). If the standard initiative system is employed, tactic initiative modifiers affect the 1d10 roll only when everyone on one side of the fight is employing the same tactic.

**Active defense:** This allows some attacking when an obvious advantage presents itself, but there is an underlying commitment to defensive movements during the course of the melee round. Depending on the individual performing the action, active defense may consist of quick dodges and circling maneuvers, a raised and braced shield, a bladed weapon extended in a ready position to keep opponents at a distance or to abruptly strike if they come too close, etc. A warrior who must delay an enemy until aid arrives, or





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who has found himself without adequate armor but must fight anyway, frequently employs the active-defense tactic. Another common use of this tactic is by cautious fighting men who want to "feel their opponents out" for a round or two to get an estimate of their opponents' abilities, with some insurance against a quick death dealt by a vastly superior foe.

A shield-bearing character using active defense has a -2 penalty on his attack rolls and a +2 bonus to his armor class for the round. A character without a shield gains only a +1 bonus to his armor class with a -2 penalty to hit. Thus, a ranger with leather armor and a shield who uses active defense has a frontal armor class of  $7 - 2 = 5$ ; if he had no shield, the ranger would have AC 6. Using the AD&D 1st Edition rules, a character using this tactic has a -1 penalty on initiative. In AD&D 2nd Edition rules, there is a +2 initiative penalty with this tactic.

**Full defense:** This tactic is akin to active defense but to a more extreme degree. The defender abandons all offensive actions in lieu of protective stances, blocks, and evasions. A character who is so badly wounded that the slightest blow

is sure to slay him often utilizes this tactic in the hopes that he can survive long enough for his comrades to win the day. A character using this tactic cannot make any attack rolls at all; nor can he cast spells of any sort.

If he has no shield, he gains a +2 bonus to his armor class for that round. If he has a shield, he receives a +4 bonus on his armor class for that round, excluding all shield bonuses. Initiative rolls are irrelevant, since the character takes no action other than to defend himself; he cannot run away while using this tactic. Thus, a ranger in chain mail with a body shield using full defense has an armor class of  $4 - 4 = 0$  to his front and flanks, but he has AC 5 from the rear. If he had no shield, he would have AC 2 from the front and flanks.

A body shield used in this manner offers a total bonus of +6 to armor class vs. normal missile fire (excluding objects hurled by giants or siege engines); this bonus is in addition to all shield bonuses. Protection from missile fire applies only in

the direction from which the missiles are coming. Full-defense, dexterity, and shield bonuses to armor class apply only to the character's front and flanks, not to his rear. The ranger in the previous example would be AC -2 vs. arrow fire from orkish archers to his front, but not to those from either flank or to his rear.

**Active attack:** This offensive tactic is characterized by the launching of a series of well-aimed attacks in the effort to land an effective blow. Of course, the attacker doing this must abandon a great deal of caution, lower his guard while winding up for the enhanced attack, and accept a greater chance of being struck by the enemy. This tactic is used when fighting foes with good armor classes and in situations when it is important to hit an opponent quickly. A character making use of this tactic has a +1 bonus on all attack rolls that round and has a -1 penalty to his armor class for the round. No armor classes above (worse) than 10 are possible. The attacker can use a shield of medium size or smaller with this tactic, but a larger shield is too clumsy to handle with an active attack. In 1st Edition rules, use of this tactic entails a +1 initiative bonus for the attacker; in 2nd Edition rules, there is a -2 bonus to initiative.

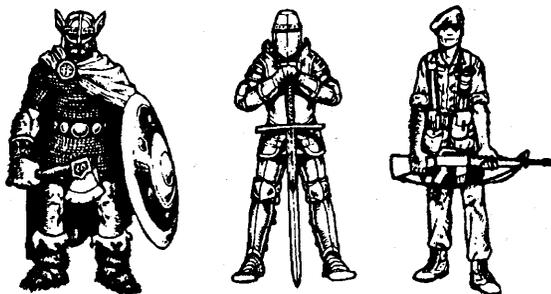
**Full attack:** This tactic embodies a simple idea: to hurl blow after blow at an enemy without pausing to dodge or parry. Full attack is a strategy of the foolhardy, the desperate, the berserk, or the extremely well armored. This tactic does not replace the charging rules in either edition of the AD&D game books, as it is not the same thing (see the 1st Edition DMG, page 66, or the 2nd Edition DMG, page 59). A character may not charge and use the full-attack option in the same round unless he is entitled to more attacks after the initial charge in the same round (see "Special cases"). No bonuses are gained by bracing a weapon against a foe using this tactic.

A character utilizing this tactic has a +2 bonus on to-hit rolls and a -2 penalty to his armor class for the round. No armor classes above (worse) than 10 are possible. No shield can be used by the attacker, and no dexterity bonuses for armor class are applied. Using 1st Edition rules, the initiative modifier for the attacker is a +2 bonus; for 2nd Edition rules, it's a -3 bonus.

For example: Trad, a fighter with an average dexterity and leather armor, performs the full-attack tactic. When he is attacked that round, Trad suffers a -2 penalty on his normal armor class of 8, resulting in an armor class of 10 for the round. If Trad had no armor to protect himself (AC 10), the full-attack option would still leave him with AC 10.

**Optional rule:** Berserker NPCs (as per the *Monstrous Compendium*, "Men") may be allowed to use the full-attack routine while doubling their normal number of attacks per round, to make their attacks more deadly. Thus, a 7th-level warrior

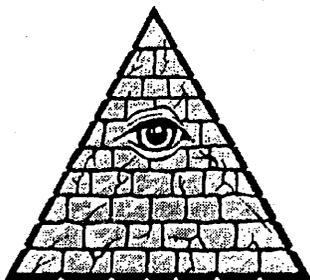
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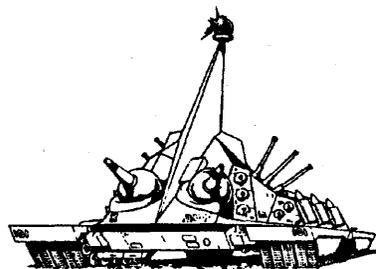
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## Close-Combat Tactics Table

Tactic	Attack modifier	Initiative modifier*	Armor class modifier**
Active defense	-2 penalty	-1/+2 penalty	+1/+2 bonus
Full defense	nil	nil	-2/+4 bonus***
Active attack	+1 bonus	+1/-2 bonus	-1 penalty
Full attack	+2 bonus	+2/-3 bonus	+2 penalty

\* Figures before the slash are for the AD&D 1st Edition game; those after the slash are for the AD&D 2nd Edition game.

\*\* Figures before the slash are for combatants not using shields; those after the slash are for those with shields.

\*\*\* +6 bonus with a body shield vs. small missiles.

who was a berserker could attack three times per round at +2 to hit, but would otherwise be subject to all the restriction given in this article for full attacks.

### Tactics in play

To use one of these tactics in place of attacking and defending normally, a player must declare his desire to do so at the beginning of a melee round *before* any initiative rolls are made. All appropriate modifiers are then applied for the tactic declared, as per the Close-Combat Tactics Table herein. At the end of the round in which the tactic was used, the person who employed the tactic may either keep using that tactic, change tactics, or attack normally in the next round.

To save the DM the trouble of asking each player in turn if his character is using a tactic or is attacking normally at the start of each round, it is generally expedient to assume that any given combatant will always employ the same tactic used on the previous round, unless the player controlling the combatant specifically declares otherwise before the initiative roll. Any character using a melee weapon with which he has proficiency or specialization is free to employ any tactic he desires. These tactics are not restricted to the fighter class. Subject to the DM's discretion, some weapon-using monster and humanoid types can be disciplined enough to perform these tactics. Someone wielding a weapon without proficiency in that weapon may not use any of the offensive or defensive tactics listed here.

The following is an example of how these rules might be used in play:

DM: "Avorak, you're in the doorway to the central chamber. You were seriously wounded by the ogre guard after you missed it with your broad sword. It's a new round, so roll initiative."

Avorak's player: "How far back down the passage is the rest of the party?"

DM: "About eighty feet."

Avorak's player: "I don't want get bashed again. I'm going to use full defense as I withdraw back toward the rest of the party. That makes my armor class of four go down to zero."

DM (after referring to a table and rolling a die): "All right. You raise your trusty shield, and *crash!* You parry the ogre's club and step out of his way."

From this example, it is apparent that close-combat tactics in melee allow those engaged in combat a greater variety of possible actions and provide a vehicle on which game-enhancing role-playing can be based. Beyond this, the use of the system can aid players and DMs in the narrating and visualizing of combat scenes that might otherwise be a meaningless test of dice-rolling with little strategy involved to spark interest.

### Special cases

**Multiple attacks:** The attack modifier of a tactic being used by a warrior with more than one attack per round is applied to each attack the warrior can make that round.

The initiative modifiers of the tactics given here are not affected if the user is capable of multiple attacks. They are exactly the same as in standard situations and are applied in exactly the same way as with tactics' uses by those with only one attack per round.

The armor class modifiers for tactics-using combatants with more than one attack are implemented normally; they simply are applied as shown on the Close-Combat Tactics Table.

Fighting men who get 3/2 or 5/2 attacks per round use tactics normally, with one exception. These characters must use one tactic per set of attacks (3 or 5 as above), not per round. This means that a fighters with 3/2 or 5/2 attacks per round must keep the same tactic for two consecutive rounds—the time needed to make one set of attacks.

**Multiple weapons:** The same rules for tactics that apply to those capable of multiple attacks with a single weapon also apply to any character getting extra attacks through the use of two weapons at once (see the 1st Edition DMG, page 70, or the 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*, page 96). Note that most characters using two weapons will suffer penalties for using more than one weapon in combat. Be sure

to figure these penalties in when adding a tactic's bonuses and penalties.

**Multiple natural attacks:** Humanoid beings that attack using armor and weapons, much like player characters, use these rules normally. Nonhumanoid monsters and animals that rely on natural weaponry must abide by certain strictures when they employ close-combat tactics, unless the DM sees any reason why the monsters in question should be excluded from using tactics (centaurs, for example, might use all such routines).

Monsters such as these are limited in their use of tactics in that they may only employ the active-defense and active-attack options. This is because the use of natural weaponry is usually little more than undisciplined instinct refined by whatever intelligence the creature or animal in question possesses. Also, it is difficult to perform complex parrying or chopping maneuvers with claws and teeth. Optionally, humanoid beings larger than ogres may be placed in this category.

### When tactics don't apply

There are some situations that occur in melee where close combat tactics may not be employed. When a surprise attack is made, as from behind or from an invisible being, tactics may not be used by the attacker. Similarly, when attacking a sleeping or defenseless opponent, the attacker cannot use these tactics. This is because the use of tactics entails performing certain types of actions for an entire round, and these are not the same actions as making a sudden, telling stroke from surprise. Surprise situations are covered by their own melee rules.

The armor-class modifiers gained from tactics uses do affect missiles being fired at the tactics' user. The erratic dodges of a defensive-tactic user can easily foil a bowman's aim just as the predictable movements of an offensive tactic user can aid it. Conversely, tactics cannot be used by anyone wielding a missile weapon, since the discharging of missiles generally requires the firer to stay still or at least move with smooth, predictable motions.

### Conclusion

The easiest way to make the tactics system an option in your AD&D game is to have the other gamers in your group look over this article. Then make two copies of the Close-Combat Tactics Table and affix the information to both sides of the local DM's screen or to anything else in everyone's view. That should be more than sufficient provision for anyone wanting to have their character employ melee tactics in the game.

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# TSR PREVIEWS

## NEW PRODUCTS FOR MAY

### DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game Revised basic boxed set by Troy Denning

The world's best-selling role-playing game is back in a new, easy-to-learn format. The rules are the same, but with the Dragon Card Learning Pack, new players can learn the game in a few quick and easy steps. And by the time the novice has read the few Learning Pack cards, he is ready to begin his career as a fantasy role-playing gamer! This set is perfect for introducing friends, relatives, and spouses to the exciting world of the DUNGEON & DRAGONS game!  
**Suggested Retail Price: \$20.00**  
**£13.99 inc. VAT**  
**Product No.: 1070**

### MC10 *Monstrous Compendium*, RAVENLOFT™ Appendix AD&D® RAVENLOFT™ accessory by William W. Connors

This is the first *Monstrous Compendium* appendix produced expressly for the RAVENLOFT™ campaign setting. Within its pages, you'll find creatures that are too horrible to exist anywhere but in the dreaded domains of Ravenloft. Learn why Ravenloft is synonymous with fantasy horror. No RAVENLOFT™ campaign can do without this valuable volume of vile, villainous creatures.  
**Suggested Retail Price: \$10.95/£6.99**  
**Product No.: 2122**

### HR1 *Vikings* AD&D® 2nd Edition accessory by David "Zeb" Cook

This volume includes everything you need to adventure in the world of the powerful Viking warriors. Replete with factual information this book tells you how to build a Norsemen-style campaign, including magic unique to the setting. Adventure in a world with the power, myth, and mystery of the Vikings.  
**Suggested Retail Price: \$15.00/£9.99**  
**Product No.: 9322**

### MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game Revised basic boxed set by Jeff Grubb

This completely revised version of the original MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ basic set has new rules, new settings, new adventures, and a new, easy-to-learn format. This boxed set is the perfect introduction for nongamers to superhero role-playing games. Also included are more MARVEL UNIVERSE™ character updates. For people who enjoy Marvel Comics but don't play RPGs, this game is the perfect way to begin a career as a super hero!  
**Suggested Retail Price: \$20.00/£11.99**  
**Product No.: 6900**

### FA2 *Nightmare Keep* AD&D® FORGOTTEN REALMS® module by Rick Swan

An ancient keep stands alone in the forest. Once the home of a mighty wizard, it is now the home of even mightier monsters that destroyed the keep's original inhabitants centuries ago. Rumors say there's much treasure land more danger) to be found in Nightmare Keep.  
**Suggested Retail Price: \$9.95/£6.50**  
**Product No.: 9341**

### DLS2 *Tree Lords* AD&D® DRAGONLANCE® Saga module by John Terra

The land of the Silvanesti elves has been invaded! Removing the shrouds of mystery that have surrounded the elven race for so long, this adventure provides an in-depth look into the mysterious life and long-hidden culture of the Silvanesti high elves.  
**Suggested Retail Price: \$6.95/£4.50**  
**Product No.: 9319**

### *Sojourn* The Dark Elf Trilogy, Book Three by R. A. Salvatore

In this dramatic conclusion to the Dark Elf Trilogy, Drizzt fights to survive the harsh elements of Toril's surface. As he journeys across this land so unlike his own, he comes to understand it and its inhabitants. Unfortunately, understanding from the surface dwellers doesn't come so easily.  
**Suggested Retail Price: \$4.95/£3.39**  
**Product No.: 8483**

### *Matrix Cubed* BUCK ROGERS™ Inner Planets Trilogy, Volume Three by Britton Bloom

Affirming his loyalty to the desert dancers, Mercurian prince Kemal Gavilan struggles to secure his home planet's future by overcoming his family's treachery and solving his father's long-ago murder. In the meantime, he must also save the inner planets themselves!  
**Suggested Retail Price: \$3.95/£3.89**  
**Product No.: 3568**

## NEW PRODUCTS FOR JUNE

### *Tome of Magic* AD&D® 2nd Edition accessory by Lots O'Folks

Within this invaluable volume you'll find over 200 new spells, new spheres for priest characters, a new wild school of wizards magic, and oodles of new magical items. This hardbound book, designed by several of the best designers in the industry, will redefine magic in your campaign. If you have magic-using characters, you don't want to pass this one up!  
**Suggested Retail Price: \$20.00/£11.99**  
**Product No.: 2121**

### TSR Collector's Cards, Set #1 AD&D® 2nd Edition accessory by Richard Brown

These collectable cards come 16 to a pack, with full-color art on one side and vital game information on the reverse. NPCs, monsters, and magical items all appear on these cards. For quick reference, or for the fun of collecting, these cards are for you!  
**Suggested Retail Price: \$1.00**  
**£0.75 inc. VAT**  
**Product No.: 1062**

### SJA4 *Under the Dark Fist* AD&D® SPELLJAMMER™ module by Grant Boucher

This epic adventure is set in a crystal sphere where the forces of evil and darkness have achieved final victory over the forces of good. Dark gods rule the planets with iron fists while they plan to spread their evil beyond the crystal sphere to the rest of the universe. Only high-level characters need apply for this attack on the heart of the evil empire!  
**Suggested Retail Price: \$9.95/£6.50**  
**Product No.: 9325**

### FR12 *Horde Campaign* AD&D® FORGOTTEN REALMS® accessory by Curtis Scott

This supplement to the Horde boxed set gives you the key information on the fierce and barbaric world of the Horde. The first in a new series of accessories that will concentrate on the combat, history, and social life of an area, this book gives an overview of the Empires War, the combatants on both sides, and their military organizations.  
**Suggested Retail Price: \$12.95/£7.93**  
**Product No.: 9324**

### MSL1 *X-Terminate* MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game module

by Dale "Slade" Henson  
Beware, mutants! Be on the lookout for the X-Terminate force! This adventure pits the mutants against all of the foes who have vowed to wipe mutants from the face of the Earth! Take the roles of X-Factor or play your own heroes in this battle to the finish.  
**Suggested Retail Price: \$6.95/£4.50**  
**Product No.: 6899**

### 25CS3 *A Matter of Gravitol* BUCK ROGERS® XXVc™ game module by Dale "Slade" Henson

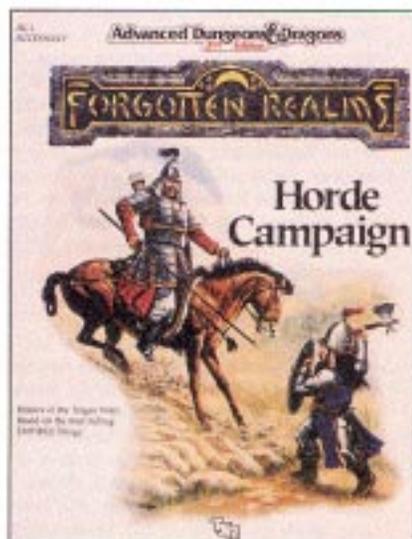
The Venusian Lowlanders own the raw material used to produce gravitol, a substance essential to interplanetary flight. Now, they've stopped shipments. Your mission: join NEO to infiltrate the Lowlanders, steal a supply of the raw material, and break the blockade!  
**Suggested Retail Price: \$6.95/£4.50**  
**Product No.: 3573**

Continued on page 38



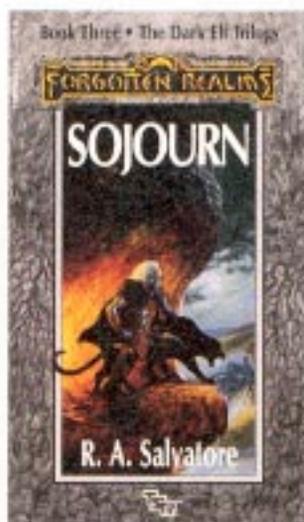
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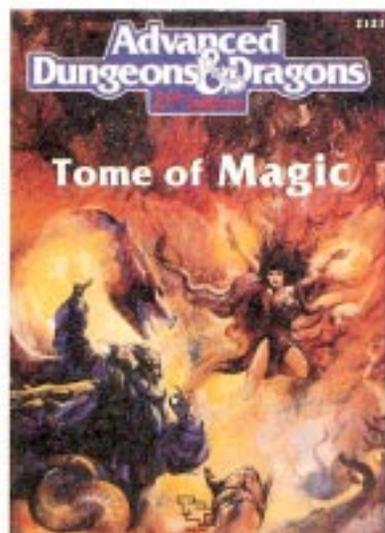
## HORDE CAMPAIGN

Get key information on the fierce and barbaric FORGOTTEN REALMS® world with this essential overview of the Empires War. (June) #1319 \$12.95



## SOJOURN

R.A. Salvatore's exciting conclusion to the FORGOTTEN REALMS® Dark Elf Trilogy finds Drizzt Do'Urden fighting to survive on Toril. (May) #1320 \$4.95



## TOME OF MAGIC

Rules, background information and tips for better magical role-playing are found in this book for AD&D® 2nd Edition games. (June) #1321 \$20.00

These and other TSR adventures are available at Waldenbooks.  
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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 and succinct.

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 December issue is the last Monday of October. 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 the magazine editors 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 European convention.

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## GAMEFEST '91, Part 2, May 10-12

The Gamemaster's Guild of Waukegan, Ill. presents this convention at Friends' Hobby Shop. Events include miniatures games and fantasy and adventure role-playing games. Registration: \$6/day or \$9/weekend. RPGA™ Network and HMGs members will receive discounts. Write to: Gamemaster's Guild of Waukegan, c/o Friends' Hobby Shop, 1411 Washington Waukegan IL 60085; or call: (708) 336-0790.

## MISCON 6, May 10-12

This SF/fantasy/gaming convention will be held at the Best Western Executive Motor Inn in Missoula, Mont. Guests include Barbara Hambly, William Warren Jr., and Jerry Olton. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, and DIPLOMACY® games, with videos, a masquerade, an art show, and panels. Registration: \$20. Write to: WMSFCIMISCON 6, P.O. Box 9363, Missoula MT 59807.

## KETTERING GAME CONVENTION IV May 11-12

This convention will be held at the Charles I. Lathrem Senior Center in Kettering, Ohio. Events include FRPGs, an RPGA™ tournament a MONOPOLY®\* tournament, and board, computer, and miniatures games, plus a tournament based on *Double Exposure*, by Piers Anthony. Write to: Bob Van Gruenigen, 2013 Gay Dr., Kettering OH 45420; or call: (513) 252-9948

## CONWEST III, May 17-19

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson Plaza Hotel in Albuquerque, N.M. Our guest of honor is Tracy W. Shurtleff, RPGA™ Regional Director. Events include two-round RPGA™ AD&D® and PARANOIA®\* tournaments, with ROLEMASTER®, ASL®, and WARHAMMER 40,000®\* tournaments, plus more board and miniatures games. Other activities include open gaming and a dealers' room. Registration: \$10 preregistered; and \$15 at the door, plus event fees. Daily prices are also available. Write to: The Weregamer's Guild, Student Activities Center, Box 28, Student Union Bldg., UNM, Albuquerque NM 87131; or call: (505) 277-3083. No collect calls, please.

## DEFCON IV, May 18-19

This free SF/gaming convention will benefit the Ronald McDonald House in San Diego and will be held at the Price Center on the campus of the University of California at San Diego. Events include an emphasis on SF on the 18th, with panels, guests, movies, Japanimation, and gaming. The 19th is dedicated solely to gaming and tournaments. GMs are welcome! Write to: S.T.A.F.F., c/o UCSD, Price Center 0077 E-30, 9500 Gilman Dr., La Jolla CA 92093-0077.

## SUMMERCON '91, May 18-19

The Gamers' Alliance of Miniatures Enthusi-

asts (G.A.M.E.) and the Midwest Masters RPGA™ Network will host this FREE convention in the Reunion Food Court Bldg., on the campus of the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, Nebr. Events include three RPGA™ tournaments, an RPGA™ Masters tournament, and a benefit tournament. Other activities include WARHAMMER 40,000®\* role-playing and miniatures events, historical miniatures, a figure-painting contest, and other role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Everyone is welcome! Write to: Hobbies, Etc., N. 16th St., Lincoln NE 68508, Attn: Rufus; or call: (402) 477-7006.

## U-CONII '91, May 19-21

This convention will be held at the University Center on the campus of the University of Ottawa, Ontario. Events include live-action role-playing, Japanimation, a miniatures-painting contest, and all types of role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$7 Canadian/day or \$20 Canadian/weekend. Housing will be provided by the University of Ottawa. Write to: G. D. Bower, 155 O'Conner, Apt. #17, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 1T3, CANADA; or call: (613)236-9235.

## GAMECAUCUS II, May 24-27

Sponsored by Trigaming Associates, this convention will be held at the Oakland Airport Hilton in Oakland, Calif. Events include an RPGA™ AD&D® tournament, with BATTLETECH®, WARHAMMER 40,000®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, TOP SECRET/S.I.™, STAR WARS®, DIPLOMACY®, ASL®, WORLD IN FLAMES®, EMPIRES IN ARMS®, TALISMAN®, and GURPS® games, and various historical and modern miniatures games. Other activities include a worldwide DIPLOMACY® game plus live-action AD&D®, AWFUL GREEN THINGS FROM OUTER SPACE®, and ALIENS® games. Registration: \$15 preregistered or \$20 at the door. Prizes will be awarded to tournament winners. Write to: Trigaming Associates, P.O. Box 4867, Walnut Creek CA 94596-0867; or call Larry or Mike at: (415) 686-9319 after 6 P.M. PST. No collect calls, please.

## GAMEX '91, May 24-27

This convention will be held at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt Hotel in Los Angeles, Ca. Activities include all types of family, strategy, and adventure board, role-playing, miniatures, and computer gaming. Catch the bargains at the flea markets, auctions, and the dealers' area. Other activities include seminars, demos, and guests. Write to: STRATEGICON, P.O. Box 8399, Long Beach CA 90808; or call: (213) 326-9440.

## ONCE UPON A CON '91, May 24-26

This convention will be held at the Radisson Hotel South in Englewood, Colo. Guests include Larry Niven, Steven Barnes, Jennifer Roberson, Simon Hawke, and Joe Dever. Activities include live-action role-playing games, panels, seminars, a costume ball and contest, a dealers' room, author readings, an art show, and a con suite. Registration: \$24/weekend; or \$13/day. Write to: IFGS/ONCE UPON A CON, P.O. Box 3577, Boulder CO 80307-3577; in Colo., call: (303) 494-4302; if out of state, call: (303) 786-9727.

## SODACON II, May 25-26

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson's Hotel and Convention Center in Rapid City, S.D. Events include AD&D®, BATTLE-TECH®, TWILIGHT 2000®, CHAMPIONS®, and MORROW PROJECT® games. Registration: \$10 preregistered, or \$12 at the door. Write to: Black Hills Society of Gamers, 2416 Cameron Dr., Rapid City SD 57702; or call Steven at: (605) 642-3316.

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**SPRING GAMES '91, May 25** \*

This gaming convention, organized by the Quebec Gamers' Assoc., will be held at John F. Kennedy High School in Montreal, Quebec. Events include an AD&D® tournament plus board and miniatures games, all in three playing sessions. Registration: \$12 Canadian before May 19; or \$15 Canadian at the door. A.Q.J.S. members will receive a \$4 discount. Write to: A.Q.J.S., Box 63, Station M, Montreal, Quebec, CANADA H1V 3L6; or call Larry at: (514) 278-5292 during the day.

**TWINCON '91, May 25-27**

This convention will be held at the Thunderbird Hotel and Convention Center in Bloomington, Minn. (ask about special room rates). Guests include Julie Guthrie, Ken Rolston, Margaret Weis, Craig Taylor, and Greg Scott. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, with miniatures-painting and costume contests, a vendors' room, seminars, discussions, and open gaming. Registration: \$30. One- and two-day passes are available at the door. Make checks payable to Donald Prust. Write to: TWINCON '91, P.O. Box 8010, Lake St. Station, Minneapolis MN 55408; or call: (612) 888-5759.

**NASHCON '91, May 31-June 2**

This gaming convention will be held at the Music City Rodeway Inn in Nashville, Tenn. Events include miniatures tournaments, alternative gaming, a dealers' room, and an auction. FigFair will also be held here. Registration: \$15. Preregistrants receive a free NASHCON T-shirt. Write to: Games Extraordinaire, 2713 Lebanon Pike, Nashville TN 37214; or call: (615) 883-4800.

**OPTICON '91, May 31-June 2**

This convention will be held at the Gardiner Student Center on the campus of the University of Akron in Akron, Ohio. Events include RPGA™ tournaments, individual and tournament games, a large exhibitors' area, an auction, an art show, seminars and panels, a painting contest, and 24-hour gaming. Registration: \$15/weekend preregistered. Dorm rooms are available; ask about rates and availability. Write to: OPTICON '91, P.O. Box 4876, Akron OH 44310; or call: (216) 972-7713.

**STARSCAPE STARCON '91, May 31-June 2**

This SF/F gaming convention will be held at the Best Western Convention Center in Long View, Tex. Guests include Keith Parkinson and Ardeath Mayhar. Write to: STARCON, 3321 Danville Dr., Suite 505, Kilgore TX 75662.

**ZIACON '91, May 31-June 2**

This SF/F convention will be held at the Roswell campus of Eastern New Mexico University in Roswell, N.M. Guests include Gerald Brom, Jeff Easley, Fred Fields, Diana Gallagher Carol Heyer, Ken Widing, Michael Williams, and Robin Wood. Gaming events include AD&D®, TRAVELLER\*, CALL OF CTHULHU\*, and miniatures games. Other activities include a masquerade, interactive literature, poetry, films, a miniatures painting contest, SCA demos, panels, a dealers' room, an art show, and piñatas. Registration: \$22. Write to: ZIACON, 1709 W. Walnut, Roswell NM 88201; or call: (505) 624-0810.

**GAMECON III, JUNE 7-8**

This convention will again be held at the auditorium of the Bergen Shopping Mall in Paramus, N.J. Events include AD&D® tournaments, BATTLETECH\*, SPACE HULK\*, WAR-

HAMMER 40,000\* and FANTASY\*. GMs are needed. Registration: \$2 plus \$4 preregistered event fee or \$5 event fee at the door. Write to: GAMECON III, c/o The GameMaster, Bergen Mall Shopping Center, Paramus NJ 07652; or call: (201) 843-3308.

**MOBI-CON '91, June 7-9**

This convention will be held at the Days Inn in Mobile, Ala. Activities include 24-hour gaming, movies, a retailers' room, an art show and sale, a writing contest, an auction, a galactic feud, games, tournaments, miniatures, and demos. Proceeds will go to the March of Dimes. Registration: \$12.50 until May 20; \$15/weekend or \$6/day thereafter. Send an SASE to: MOBI-CON Inc., P.O. Box 161275, Mobile AL 36608.

**GLATHRICON '91, June 21-23**

Sponsored by the Evansville Gaming Guild, this convention will be held at the Executive Inn in Evansville, Ind. The guests include Ed Greenwood, Alan Clark, Don Bingle, and Jean Rabe. RPGA™ tournaments include AD&D® Feature, Masters, Grandmasters, and the Joe Martin Cancer Benefit; MARVEL SUPER HEROES® Feature and Masters, JAMES BOND 007\*, PARANOIA\*, PARANOIA\* Masters, DC HEROES\*, CHILL\*, and CHAMPIONS\* games. Other activities include a dealers' room, a large art show and print shop, an art auction, a masquerade, a miniatures-painting contest, seminars, panels, and additional gaming. Registration: \$20. Write to: Evansville Gaming Guild, P.O. Box 15414, Evansville IN 47716; or call: (812) 421-1010.

**MICHICON GAMEFEST '91, June 21-23**

This gaming convention will be held in the Southfield Civic Center in Southfield, Mich. Events include 60 board game, 60 miniatures game, and 40 role-playing game events. Other activities include dealers, three used-game auctions, open gaming, and food. Registration: \$12/weekend or \$7/day. Preregistrations are accepted. Write to: Metro Detroit Gamers, P.O. Box 656, Wyandotte MI 48192; or call Barry (daytime) at: (313) 953-2125.

**NEW ORLEANS SF/F FESTIVAL '91 June 21-23**

This convention will be held at the Clarion Hotel in New Orleans, La. Guests include Frederick Pohl, Pat Cadigan, John Slade, Ellen Datlow, George Alec Effinger, George R. R. Martin, Richard Pini, and Walter Jon Williams. Activities include 24-hour gaming, a costume contest, programming, an art show and auction, a dance, a 24-hour hospitality suite, a meet-the-guests party, a large dealers' room, and a special charity event benefitting the New Orleans Metropolitan Battered Women's Center. Registration: \$20 until May 26; \$25 at the door. Write to: New Orleans SF/F Festival, P.O. Box 791089, New Orleans LA 70179-1089; or call: (504) 835-4314.

**INTERPHAZE III, June 22-23**

This live-action gaming convention will be held near the Folklore Village of Dodgeville, Wis. Gather rumors and treasure from a host of characters, explore the countryside, and purchase supplies at the bazaar. There will be a medieval banquet, complete with court-dancing, musicians, jugglers, and a magic show. Costumes are recommended. A mini-adventure, complete with a piñata dragon, will be offered for the kids. Dealers and crafters are welcome. For information, send \$1 to: Doc Bradshaw, 7637 N. 15th St., Oakdale MN 55128.

**MADISON GAMES DAY III, June 30**

This gaming convention will be held at the Quality Inn South in Madison, Wis. Events include role-playing, miniatures, and war games, a game auction, and a dealers' area. Door prizes and discount coupons will be offered throughout the day. Registration: \$5, which includes tickets to two gaming events. Write to: Pegasus Games, 6640 Odana Rd., Madison WI 53719; or call: (608) 833-GAME.

**ORIGINS '91, July 4-7**

GAMA presents this national gaming convention and trade show, to be held at the Baltimore Convention Center in conjunction with the Hyatt Regency and Sheraton Inner Harbor in Baltimore, Md. There will be over 500 events to choose from, in all aspects of gaming. Events include RPGA™ Grand Masters and Masters AD&D® games and a Boardgame Team Championship. Other activities include a large exhibit hall, an art show, an auction, Persian Gulf War seminars, a painting contest, panels, and special guests. Write to: GEMCO, P.O. Box 609, Randallstown MD 21133; or call: (301) 298-3135.

**WESTERCON 44/V-CON 19, July 4-7** \*

This SF convention will be held at the Gage Residence on the campus of the University of British Columbia at Vancouver, B.C. Guests of honor include William Gibson, C. J. Cherryh, Steve Jackson, Warren Oddsson, and many Canadian authors. Events include games and tournaments, a gaming auction, panels, and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$45 Canadian or \$40 U.S. until May 31; \$57 Canadian or \$50 U.S. at the door. Children under 13 are half price. Write to: WESTERCON 44, P.O. Box 48478, Bentall Centre, Vancouver, B.C., CANADA V7X 1A2.

**CASTLECON 4, July 5-7**

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Crown Plaza in Arlington, Va. Events include RPGA™ tournaments, with live-action and regular role-playing games and board games. Other activities include videos, an art show, artists' and writers' workshops, music and comedy, a masquerade, science and technology panels, and computer gaming. Registration: \$20 until June 15. Write to: FANTEK, 1607 Thomas Rd., Fort Washington MD 20744.

**CONGREGATE 2, July 5-7y**

This SF convention (it's theme is "heroes") will be held at the Moat House Hotel in Peterborough, Cambridge, England. RPGs may be available. Registration: £16 for an attending membership, or £8 for a supporting membership. Write to: CONGREGATE 2, c/o Chris Ayres, 118 Cobden Ave., Peterborough, Cambridge, UNITED KINGDOM PE1 5EQ.

**COSCON '91, July 5-7**

Sponsored by the Circle of Swords Gaming Guild, this convention will be held at Slippery Rock University campus in Slippery Rock, Pa. Events include RPGA™ tournaments and events, military miniatures, board games, a dealers' area, a flea market, and a miniatures-painting contest. Inexpensive housing will be available on site. Registration: \$15 until June 15; \$20 thereafter. Send an SASE to: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler PA 16003-2126; or call Dave at: (412) 283-1159.

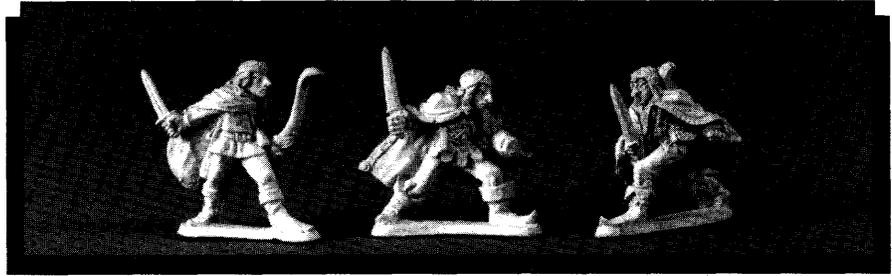
**DRAGON CON '91, July 12-14**

This SF/F gaming convention will be held at the Atlanta Hilton and Towers in Atlanta, Ga. Guests include Piers Anthony, Philip Jose

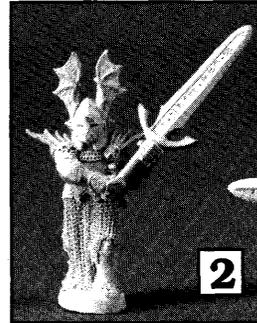
# STRONG, STRONGER, STRONGEST!

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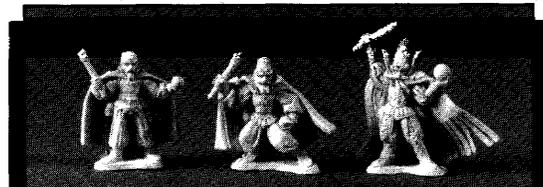
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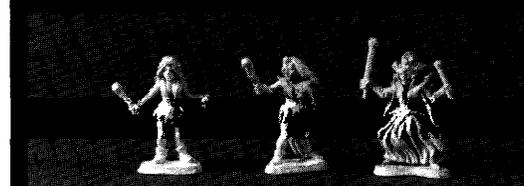
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**II-KHAN, July 12-14**

This convention, previously known as I-KHAN, will be held at the Holiday Inn North in Colorado Springs, Co. The guest of honor will be Gordon R. Dickson. Events include AD&D®, CAR WARS\*, WARHAMMER 40,000\*, SKY GAL LEONS OF MARS\*, and BATTLETECH\* games, with open gaming, movies, a dealers' room, a banquet, a masquerade, a miniatures-painting "khantest," and a costume "khantest." Registration: \$15 until June 15; \$20 thereafter, plus a \$1 fee per event. Write to: Miniatures Wargamers' Guild, 7040 S. Hwy. 85-87, Fountain CO 80717; or call: Perry: (719) 391-8318.

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This convention will be held at the University of New Hampshire campus Memorial Union Building in Durham, N.H. Guests include GURPS\* game authors Walter Millikin and Steffan O'Sullivan. Events include several RPGA™ tournaments, and miniatures and art-work competitions. Registration: \$20/weekend, or \$15/Saturday and \$10/Sunday. Dealers and game masters are welcome. Write to: DOVERCON VII, P.O. Box 753 Dover NH 03820.

**LAGACON 11, July 20**

The Lebanon Area Gamers' Assoc., will host this convention at Kasper's Arc, north of Lebanon, Pa. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH\*, ASL\*, and AXIS & ALLIES\* games. Registration: \$5 in advance; or \$7.50 at the door. Write to: Lebanon Area Gamers' Assoc., 806 Cumberland St., Lebanon PA 17042; or call evenings at: (717) 274-5392.

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July 20-21**

This convention will be held in the California Ballroom in Modesto, Calif. Events include game tournaments and open gaming, costume contests, demos, dealers, and refreshments. Registration: \$15 until June 15; \$20 at the door. Write to: Adventurers' Inn, the ICON, P.O. Box 3669, Turlock CA 95381.

**ATLANTA FANTASY FAIR XVII, July 26-28**

This convention will be held at the Atlanta Hilton and Towers in Atlanta, Ga. Write to: Atlanta Fantasy Fair, 4175 Eliza Ct., Lithonia GA 30058; or call: (404) 985-1230.

**IMPACT I, July 26-28**

This SF/F gaming and comics convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Central in Omaha, Nebr. Guests include Scott Heine (Hero Games), J. R. Daniels, and Gary DeLamatre. Events include gaming, an art room and auction, an electronics room, a dealers' room, videos, an "alien prom" party (raising funds for the Omaha Food Bank—bring a can or box of food), a hospitality suite, a masquerade, and a live-action role-playing murder-mystery game. Registration:

\$14/weekend by June 1; \$18/weekend, \$6/Friday or Sunday, or \$12/Saturday thereafter. Dealers are welcome. Send an SASE to: IMPACT, P.O. Box 4486, Omaha NE 68104.

How effective was your convention listing? If you are a convention organizer, please write to the editors and let us know if our "Convention Calendar" served your needs. Your comments are always welcome.

**TSR Previews**

*Continued from page 32*

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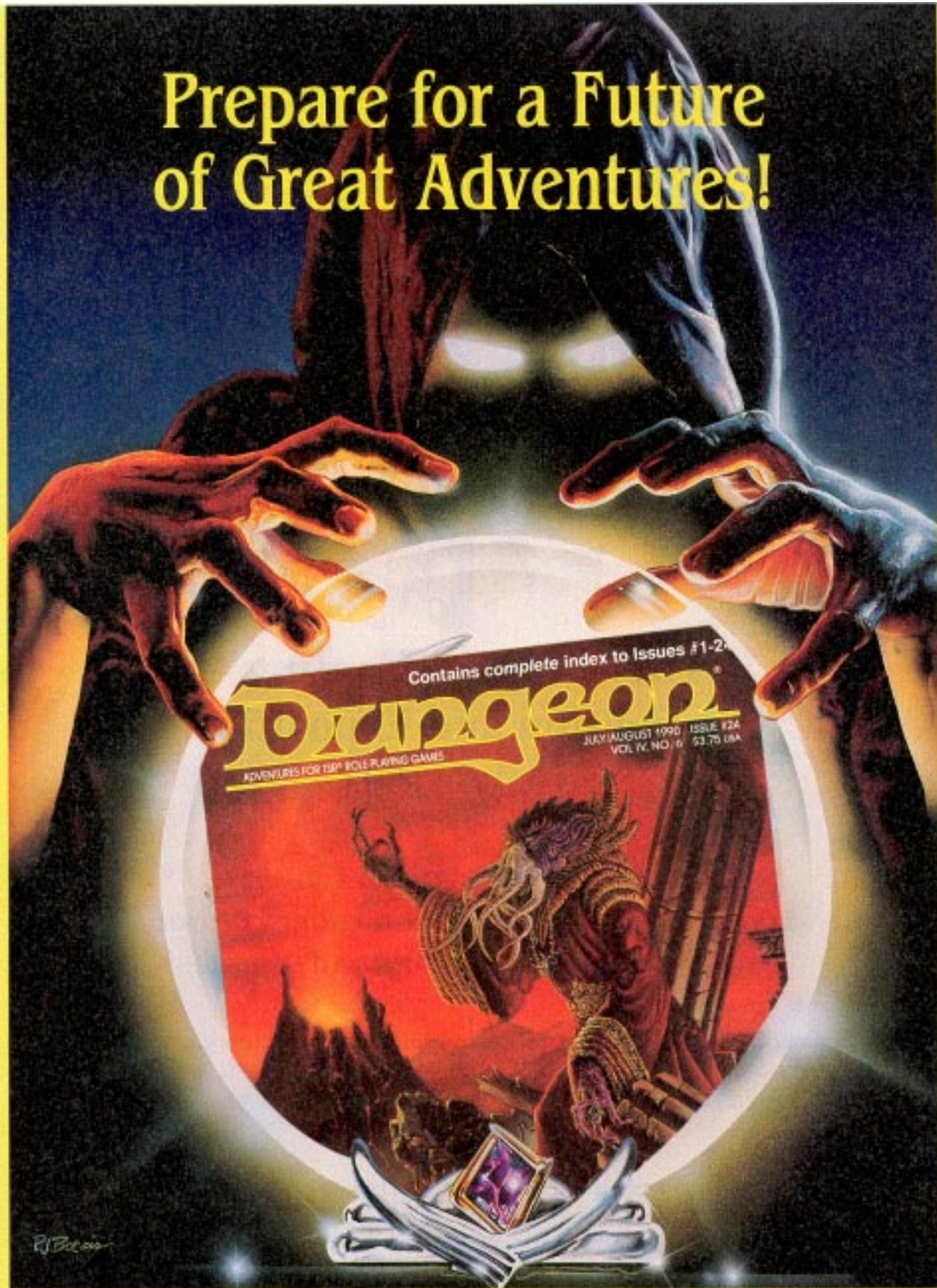
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# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 16: Conspiracies within conspiracies

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphantian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

From the Journals of  
PRINCE HALDEMAR OF HAAKEN  
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire  
Captain of the Ever-Victorious  
PRINCESS ARK  
Imperial Explorer, etc., etc.

**Tslamir 23, 2000 AY:** It took a day to reach the magical gate that had brought us to the sky wyrms' universe. It was a bumpy flight, and it took all the skill and prowess of a sky wyrm like Berylith to hold the course through the gate's storm. At last, we could see daylight piercing the billowing clouds at the peak of the storm. Everyone was longing for a moment of calm and rest under our golden sun. With a bang, the ship emerged through the gate into our own universe—and we nearly crashed into a desert sand dune!

The gate's exit had moved since we had

entered the other universe, apparently by hundreds of miles north-northwest of our previous position. Worse yet, we showed up unexpectedly in the middle of a battle in the desert. Apparently, a smaller force had been surrounded and would have been butchered had it not been for our impromptu arrival.

I ordered Berylith to make her ghostly sky-wyrm aura turn *invisible*, wishing to stay out of what was clearly not our business—but no! Instead, Berylith felt this was not becoming of a true princess. She even roared to make her arrival more grandiose. Myojo held his head in embarrassment. Xerdon shrugged. And I was too numb to react.

The larger army panicked immediately. Dropping scimitars, shields, and turbans, the soldiers rode off on their camels toward the southwest. As for the smaller force, its men dropped to their knees, bowing as low as they could. There was nothing else to do but make contact.

It took some convincing on my part to have Berylith go *invisible*. She obviously enjoyed the awe she caused and wanted to remain the heroine of the day. Finally, with the wooden ship alone being visible, I invited the leader of the defending forces to come aboard.

The man was Prince Dharjee, a polite and soft-spoken person. His father, the maharajah of Putnabad, ruler of the southern province of Sind, had sent him on a mission to King Chandra's palace in Sayr Ulan. He was to return with special orders for the king's future visit in the capital of Putnabad. A small army, sent by the rajah of Jaibul, had come close to capturing the prince. Jaibul, I learned, is a small, independent realm on the coast west of Sind, and it has been a rival of Putnabad for centuries.

Prince Dharjee was obviously very impressed with the *Princess Ark*, her magic,





her workmanship, and, most of all, her decoration and style. His caravan being in such poor shape, he asked if we could transport him and his servants back to Jahore, the capital city of Putnabad. After our undue intrusion into the Kingdom of Sind, the only civilized thing to do was to accept. We picked up his camels, troops, servants, and even the caravan's royal elephant, and we headed south to Jahore, the pearl of Putnabad.

**Tslamir 24:** Berylith's mood was truly dreadful all morning. She complained without end about the elephant pacing from port to starboard all night, and about the camel dung all over the stern deck. She nearly ejected one of the crew for referring to that area as the "poop deck." And we were flying at a snails pace. I couldn't tell if it was because of the extra weight or Berylith's bad mood.

Talasar was still in sick bay, recovering from his misadventure on Hakh. I left Xerdon in control of the bridge and spent the remainder of the day with Prince Dharjee. He was amazed at the ship's construction, and he had no doubt that a great architect must have designed the plans of this marvel. He assured me his father "would certainly pay a thousand treasures of emeralds and rubies for the services of the divine genius who conceived such a masterpiece as the *Princess Ark*." I cringed. Berylith heard that—I knew it. Suddenly, the ship flew faster.

**Tslamir 25:** We reached Jahore this morning. The city is a sprawling megalopolis on the westernmost branch of the Asanda delta. High, fortified walls enclose the inner city, protecting middle and upper class quarters, merchant areas, and the maharajah's palace. Beyond the walls spread thousands of poor, overcrowded dwellings, a squalid collection of shacks and muddy passageways, occasionally divided by the main roads leading to the inner city gates and the numerous temple compounds. A shabby port occupies the southern edge of the city, allowing light ships to sail the grimy delta up to Jahore. Larger ships remain anchored in a small bay, at the mouth of the delta. A few stone bridges span the wide Asanda river within the inner city, while most of the population uses small barges to cross over.

Oddly enough, it seemed none of the main buildings were erected in a regular fashion. As we came closer, it became clear many of the onion-shaped domes were imperfectly built, the towers being crooked nearly to the point of collapse. Certainly none of the windows or doors showed any symmetry at all. This was totally unlike the usual Sind architecture.

As usual, the arrival of the *Princess Ark* caused quite a bit of agitation among the people and the guard. Prince Dharjee's appearance on one of the *levitating* life boats came as a relief to them. We were immediately whisked away to the maharajah's apartments.

Ashupta Khan, the maharajah, was very

thankful to us for saving his son from the rajah of Jaibul. A great banquet was offered at the palace. Later, during the celebration, the maharajah leaned over to me and asked about the *Princess Ark*. Indeed, his son had described the vessel at length, and I could see a gleam of envy in the maharajah's eyes. I am afraid I disappointed His Highness when I mentioned the ship had been created by the magic of a creature from beyond this world, and that I was only its keeper.

The maharajah then explained what was happening in Jahore. It was believed that a great curse afflicted the city. Many people were unable to attain the greatness of skill of their fathers. Most of the upper castes were going through an inexplicable decadence and laziness, explaining the imperfect looks of the buildings in Jahore.

Last month, the Black Rajah of Jaibul visited King Chandra in Sayr Ulan, and he joked about the poor state of affairs of the "Pearl of Putnabad." This greatly irritated the king. He ordered a great palace be built there before the end of the year, or the Ashupta family would be stripped of its nobility and possessions. The maharajah's son was on his way to Sayr Ulan to obtain financial aid from the king when the Black Rajah's troops managed to intercept Prince Dharjee's caravan. Ashupta Khan was quite broke; he was totally unable to find a competent architect anywhere in Jahore as well. He was in a sticky position.

Of course, being a foreigner and the "keeper" of an incredible piece of architecture, I could not evade his interest. For my assistance he offered many things, including his prized stable, half of his harem, and even the diadem on his turban, none of which I could honestly accept. In time, though, Ashupta Khan was more than willing to offer "preferred client" status to Alpathian merchants in Jahore, with a 1% impost on port trade payable to the Haaken family. At that point, I thought that lending a hand would be a challenging enterprise. Based on this lucrative arrangement, I set forth to build a palace.

**Tslamir 26:** The crew was granted shore leave in Jahore after the elephant, the camels, and their owners disembarked. The scene drew a huge crowd of onlookers in the street below, as the large animals dangled from ropes underneath the *Princess*. Widespread betting took place in the streets on whether each animal would make it to the ground safely. The elephant drew record bets when one of the ropes began to give. A little *levitation* spell came in handy, and I won that bet (with 79:1 odds).

The officers discussed the palace project with me. Raman and Leo both showed great interest. Berylith was able to attend the meeting after a fashion, reading my mind as the discussion took place. She, of course, said she was skillful in matters of architecture and would gladly provide her knowledge. She also quietly requested that

half of that trade impost be used to embellish the *Princess Ark* through the purchase of objects of art and other ornamental items. Once the details were worked out, Raman, Leo, and myself would disembark and conduct the construction, as per Berylith's blueprints.

**Tslamir 28:** It took some time to find the proper site for the construction. It was finally decided to destroy the abandoned city library, which was threatening to collapse into the river. Unfortunately, the Sindian workers proved to be incredibly slow, so slow that I had to use the ship's crew to accelerate the process. There was no telling how long it would take to level the older construction.

Late this night, after the moon had set behind the horizon, I felt the ship move. Berylith had decided to intervene in the construction. She moved close to the library and blasted it with her breath weapon. It created great confusion in the sleeping city, as people thought the monsoons had arrived. Berylith quickly gained altitude and remained hidden inside a solitary cloud until calm returned.

**Andrumir 4:** Despite the magic I used to help in the palace's construction, I must admit that the people of Jahore are terribly slow workers. It has been very difficult making them follow a construction plan without erring. Raman and Leo were near nervous exhaustion in their endeavors to explain the work to the Sindians and to avoid catastrophic mistakes.

**Andrumir 8:** I have noticed an increase in construction oversights. Raman and Leo seemed much more indolent and careless today. Worse, the crew has been acting quite sloppily on board, forgetting to clean the decks or to show up for duty. Some crewmembers did not seem to care at all. This was too much of a coincidence.

This lazy attitude struck me with its similarity to *zzonga* addiction, which ravaged our empire some time ago. However, I could observe none of the other symptoms normally accompanying *zzonga* addiction. It would take quite a bit of magic to affect an entire city—and so far I have not detected any sign of large-scale magic anywhere.

**Andrumir 12:** I found the source of the "curse." The waters of the Asanda River have been poisoned with a rare alchemical substance. It is unlikely it could happen naturally, so I must admit someone has been seeking the doom of Jahore. But who? There was only one way to figure this out. Ashari and myself would leave the ship under disguise and blend in with the population. With some luck, we could unveil who was behind all this.

**Andrumir 14:** It made sense that someone would be working upstream to contaminate the city waters. We explored the river banks just north of the Jahore and found several areas well concealed from sight. There I dropped hardened compounds of my creation that would take several days to dissolve. The solution,

when mixed with the water, would immediately reveal any evidence of poison by coloring the water. We could then trace the colored solution back to the spot where the poison had been thrown into the water.

Indeed, we were soon able to trace the solution back to one of the hidden sources. Someone had dropped a sheepskin full of slow-dissolving poison into the river. It came in sufficient quantity to affect most of the population in the city for several days. We even spotted our culprit, a man on a horse. It was time to uncover the conspiracy.

We quietly followed the man back to Jahore. A bit of invisibility allowed us to enter his house just moments after him. There we saw him use a magical item that opened a small gate. He entered, and we followed closely.

On the other side was a palace—but not quite like the one in Jahore. It was darker and more sinister. The man walked past a corner and entered a room. Ashari tiptoed up to the door and listened. She heard a discussion between what must have been a spy and his employer, and the sound of money changing hands. The man came back out carrying a goatskin full of poison and returned to the gate. Ashari barely had enough time to get through before the gate disappeared.

**Andrumir 15—Xerdon:** I fear that something has happened to the Admiral and his escort. Neither he nor First Class Navigator Ashari have returned from their foray into Jahore. I alerted His Highness, Ashupta Khan, who immediately dispatched his guards to search the city.

**Andrumir 15—Haldemar** (Text added later): The sun rose soon after Ashari's return to Jahore. I was able to explore the sinister palace and locate the ruler in his throne room; my spell of invisibility still protected me. From the visitors he met in the morning, I could deduce that he was no other than the Black Rajah of Jaibul. He was an old man, with a skin parched from age and the unforgiving sun of the Great Waste. Judging from his stance, I could not fail to recognize an experienced wizard.

The Black Rajah retired shortly after the meetings to his personal quarters, at the top of a high, narrow tower overlooking the town. There, he spent hours going through the bureaucratic paperwork that plagues so many rulers. While perusing about, I noticed antique clay tablets held together with a golden silk ribbon. The tablets bore the royal seal of Sind. While the rajah was busy elsewhere, I quietly took a few pieces of vellum and rubbed them with a bit of charcoal over the tablets in order to obtain an imprint of the ancient text. With luck, Raman could decipher the Sindian scriptures later on.

The sound of chains and men-at-arms echoed up the hallway. Soldiers were pulling a prisoner—a Pearl Islander perhaps, judging from the dark color of his skin. He was a bit small, though, with

slightly narrow-lidded eyes and gracious facial features. He had a thin, neatly trimmed beard and wore a long red robe made of soft leather scales. The guards knocked at a door and while they waited, the prisoner glanced in my direction. I could have sworn he saw me, but the guards pulled him quickly into the other chamber.

Intrigued, I followed them. The rajah was there, sitting in a comfortable chair and toying with a small piece of jewelry. It looked like a replica of a small flame carved out of a topaz. He had the prisoner stripped and waved the guards out. Soon thereafter the rajah uttered a long invocation and brandished the jewel. Translucent flames began to glow on the prisoner's body. I could see the pain in his eyes, but he endured stoically. He remained quiet and immobile while the magical flames grew and consumed his flesh. The rajah was watching intently, enjoying with a sadistic pleasure his victim's pain and agony. I realized then that the prisoner was staring into my eyes, despite my *invisibility*. It felt like he was looking through me. For a brief instant, I saw images of great battles, flying ships, death and pestilence, then a great continent sinking into stormy seas. My senses returned just as the man died.

I noticed a certain perplexity on the rajah's face. He squinted for a moment in my general direction. That would not do, so I ducked behind a curtain. The rajah quickly spoke another spell and looked around him, observing the room and listening carefully. I did not think he saw me, but he certainly suspected something. He quickly scooped up the bone cinders and the few ashes remaining where the prisoner once stood, poured them into a golden crucible, and walked out, swiftly shutting the door behind him. By the time I could safely open the door, the rajah had disappeared behind a corner or, more probably, through a secret door.

This was very strange. I had no clues as to how the prisoner could have seen me or what those visions were. Worse, I knew the rajah would use those ashes—and I suspected his intentions to be thoroughly evil. It wasn't until very late that night that I located the rajah and the ashes as well. He was in the palace dungeon, in a chamber that took all my skill to reach. I observed the rajah working at a small brazier. After a litany of incantations, he sprinkled the ashes that had been mixed with another substance. This produced swirls of acrid-smelling smoke with sparks of light. Inside, I was surprised to see the same visions that affected me in the rajah's apartments. The rajah was quickly taking notes with a quill and a piece of parchment. The same battles and cataclysms appeared as in my previous vision, up to a point when the rajah's apartments also materialized in the vision—with me standing near the curtains!

The rajah jumped to his feet and cursed.

He dispersed the smoke and had the guard sound the alarm. If he had a doubt, it was now gone. He knew I was in the palace and what I looked like. I would have to be very careful in the future. The old man had many ways of finding me. It was time to skip out of the chamber. It was late, and I was getting very tired and hungry.

**Andrumir 16—Xerdon:** The ship has grown restless, somewhat skittish like a horse. I suspect she senses the disappearance of the Admiral. I attempted to communicate with the ship's entity but failed to obtain an answer. So far, the search by the maharajah's men yielded no sign of the admiral or Ashari. I recovered Chief Raman and Mr. Le Nerviens, both of whom I found in an unclean condition and resting with the other construction personnel during work hours. This inexcusably lax attitude before foreign civilians is not permitted for an officer of Her Imperial Majesty's Navy and shall be stopped at once.

**Andrumir 16—Haldemar** (Text added later): I spent the night in a little stable. At dawn, I took a stroll down the streets. The town of Jaibul was as sinister and oppressive as its palace. This was a haven for thugs and cutthroats rivaled only by the rajahs guard, a brutal and arrogant bunch. The rajahs palace and his army's quarters were located inside an imposing citadel. A port opened directly on a small bay. There I noticed the rajahs guards were unloading another prisoner; he looked a bit like the one the rajah murdered earlier. He displayed the same, unmistakable dignity as the other. These people could be powerful seers, perhaps. I was getting horribly curious about their origins.

Aside from the unspeakable tortures and murders that had been probably taking place for some time, it was clear the rajah was up to something big. I had to return and find out, so I cast a new spell and *flew* up to the rajahs tower. There, from the window I could see the rajah sitting in front of a mirror. Instead of his reflection, the mirror revealed a man in black, wearing a hood. The rajah picked up the scroll containing his notes on the vision and stuck it through the mirror, causing strange ripples through its glassy surface. The man in black nodded, then quietly produced a pen and wrote something on the scroll before returning it. The rajah read the response—then said, in proper Alphatian, "Their destruction will be a blessing for us all. How soon, though, is the question, isn't it, my obtrusive friend?" The man in black faded away as the rajah turned toward me. "You didn't think you could fool me much longer, did you?"

**Andrumir 17—Xerdon:** The ship has inexplicably broken her lines and set flight toward the southwest. I suspect she senses where the Admiral is. For lack of results from the maharajah's incompetent search of Jahore, I am allowing the *Princess Ark* to freely take us to wherever she wishes. I

am cloaking the ship to avoid further problems with the local population.

**Andrumir 17—Haldemar:** I should have been more alert. No recollection of what had happened after my last encounter with the rajah came to my mind—that is to say, nothing else than a searing pain in my head. I woke up in the citadels dungeon, stripped, gagged, and shackled to the wall in a very uncomfortable position. I could not have done a better job of it myself.

The rajah showed up hours past my awakening. He came with a nasty grin and his dreaded topaz. "I didn't think you would cooperate, and as a fellow wizard I wished to spare you the commoner's fate," said he, while pointing at various instruments of torture across the cell. "The Fire Jewel is far more efficient in revealing someone's inner thoughts. And I am sure you will fully savor the refined magicks of Jaibul." The rajah's sinister laughter echoed in the dark dungeon. He began the Fire Jewel's incantation. I cringed.

Then a heavy cudgel landed on the back of the rajah's turban. He collapsed in a soundless heap. Someone stepped out of the dark. It was Ashari! The dear young woman had followed the rajah's lackey back to Jahore. Seeing that the gate had closed before me, she quickly "terminated" the river's poisoner and recovered the item he used to open the gate. By the time

she had discerned its method of operation, I was already elsewhere in the rajahs palace. She had been looking for me ever since. Finally, Ashari had followed the rajah down here, and, as Glantrians would say, "Voila!" A master stroke! And she smirked, "I also, urn, accidentally dropped the rajah's poison in the citadels well." How thoughtful of her. This yeoman was due for a promotion.

After hooking the rajah to his own shackles, I was tempted to try the fiery topaz on him. After all, he, too, had many things to tell us about. Alas, a squad of guard entered the cell unexpectedly. A prompt *reverse gravity* took care of them, except for a runty fellow in the back who ran for help. We ducked from pillar to corner for some time while men-at-arms rushed down the narrow stairwells looking for us. This was an exhilarating moment, although I had some trouble keeping pace with the nimble Ashari as this delightful game went on.

It was during this "dungeonesque escape" that I located the prisoner I had seen in the port of Jaibul. Ashari defeated the crude lock that imprisoned him with barely two twists of her wrist. Our man bowed slightly and swiftly followed us. We could hear the rajahs hysterical holler echoing up the hallways.

It took Ashari some doing to find an exit—a filthy sewer grate in a deserted

street. Something was amiss, though. It was high noon and no one was around. As we slipped down the street under the shadows of colonnades, guards suddenly poured out from every corner. We were trapped!

The rajah had recovered his senses more quickly than I anticipated. Within moments, there he was, sitting on a *flying carpet* and hovering above us. "You will suffer for a thousand days and thousand nights, each of you!" said he, pale and trembling with anger.

I grimly turned to my compatriots and noticed, oddly enough, a wry smile appearing on the face of the prisoner we had rescued. Enraged, the rajah raved on, "You will see your skin slowly ripped from your flesh and thrown to the dogs!" he cried.

Now the former prisoner displayed a very wide grin that infuriated the rajah even more. Perhaps he knew something I didn't. "You'll have each of your limbs ripped from your body!" spat the rajah. "You—" Suddenly the rajah jerked, his eyes growing very wide, and stopped in the middle of his speech.

"I doubt that very much, your highness!" came a voice behind him in the air. Slowly, the *Princess Ark* became visible just behind the rajah. And at her prow stood Xerdon, with his sword conspicuously jabbed into the rajahs back. The rajahs men fled at once in complete chaos. What

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wonderful timing.

**Andrumir 18—Haldemar:** With the rajah of Jaibul in our hands, I had no difficulty in retrieving my personal belongings—and the antique Sindian tablets and the strange mirror. According to Raman, the clay tablets were an old treaty between previous rulers of Sind and Jaibul. It attributed the ruler of Jaibul legal rights to the Province of Putnabad, should the Ashupta family become extinct or be stripped of its nobility due to royal discontent. The rajah of Jaibul had found a way to discredit the Ashuptas by poisoning the people, thus causing their decadence. Jahore definitely looked like a mess. It was time to return to Jahore and finish a certain construction enterprise—and quickly so, before the king's visit.

As we veered over the port of Jaibul toward Jahore, Ramissur came up to me, holding the rajah by his collar. "Sir, what do I do with him?" Ramissur asked.

This was an unexpected problem. The rajah was too dangerous to keep aboard, and I had a hunch that our new guest, the ex-prisoner Yarani, could shed more light on what had been going on than could the rajah. I told Ramissur to do as he pleased.

Ramissur gazed at me for a moment, looked at the rajah, then shrugged and unceremoniously tossed his prisoner overboard. I suppose that sank our diplomatic ties with Jaibul for many years to come.

Such is life.

**Andrumir 19—Haldemar:** Back to Jahore. The poison in the river has started to thin out. Already, positive results can be seen among the population. The building of the palace has resumed, and with a little magical help on my part, construction is literally progressing by leaps and bounds. The "Raj Tahal" might be done well within the royal deadline.

I spent some time with our guest, Yarani. He claimed to be a citizen of the Yavdlom Hagiarchy, far beyond Jaibul. This was one place I'd never heard of. Yarani was a holy man, a noble of sorts. He wouldn't answer my questions regarding his uncanny ability to see *invisible* things, nor would he comment on the visions I'd had when I witnessed his compatriot's murder at the hands of the rajah. He seemed very concerned, however, and invited the *Princess Ark* to visit the Great Prophet, spiritual ruler of Yavdlom. There, he said, would be many revelations—some good, some bad. *To be continued. . . .*

### The Kingdom of Sind

In the eastern region of the Great Waste lies a large nation under the rulership of King Chandra. His kingdom stretches from Lake Hast, west of Glantri, to the Asanda River delta on the Sea of Dread. The eastern border separates Sind from the Atruaghin Clans and Darokin. At its south-

west border lies the smaller but fiercely independent Rajahstan of Jaibul. The western limits lie somewhere in the Plain of Fire, a vast territory still unclaimed.

Sind's notoriety comes from the extreme poverty of its people, some of the poorest in the Known World. The hardship of these destitute folk clashes with the fabulous wealth of Sind's nobility, the many rajahs and maharajahs. Common Sindians get by, however, thanks to their great faith in a vast pantheon of Immortals and to the help given them by a powerful clergy. Foreigners often have difficulties traveling in Sind because of the incredible number of customs and beliefs that affect every aspect of the daily life. Ignoring a custom, deliberately or accidentally, can provoke anger among the population.

The nobility is clearly under the authority of the king. The rajahs control commerce, politics, and warfare. The history of Sind was fraught with wars among the various rajahstans until the great royal dynasties of Sayr Ulan pacified the Asanda plain. A series of bloody wars ensued during the conquest of the states of Peshmir, Gunjab, and Kadesh—fierce warriors by tradition. Those states still enjoy a relative autonomy from the king compared to the southern states. Today, the king's army is often busy fighting off humanoid incursions from the Plain of Fire and banditry along its caravan trails.

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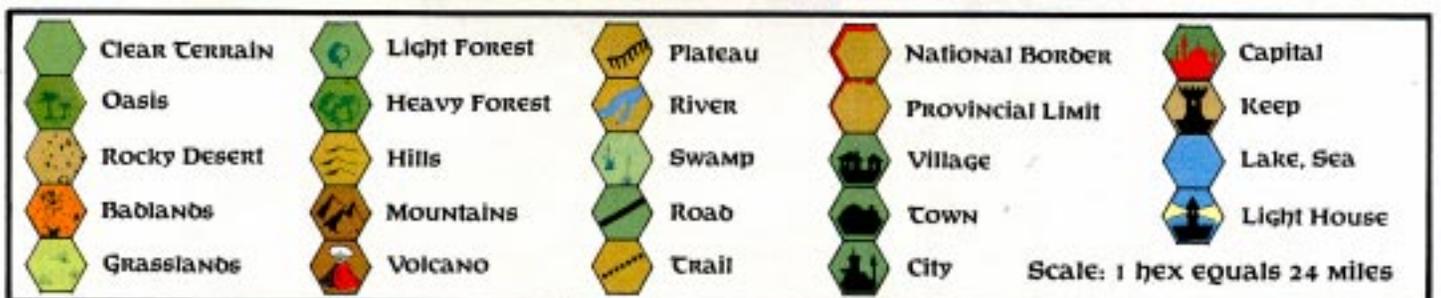
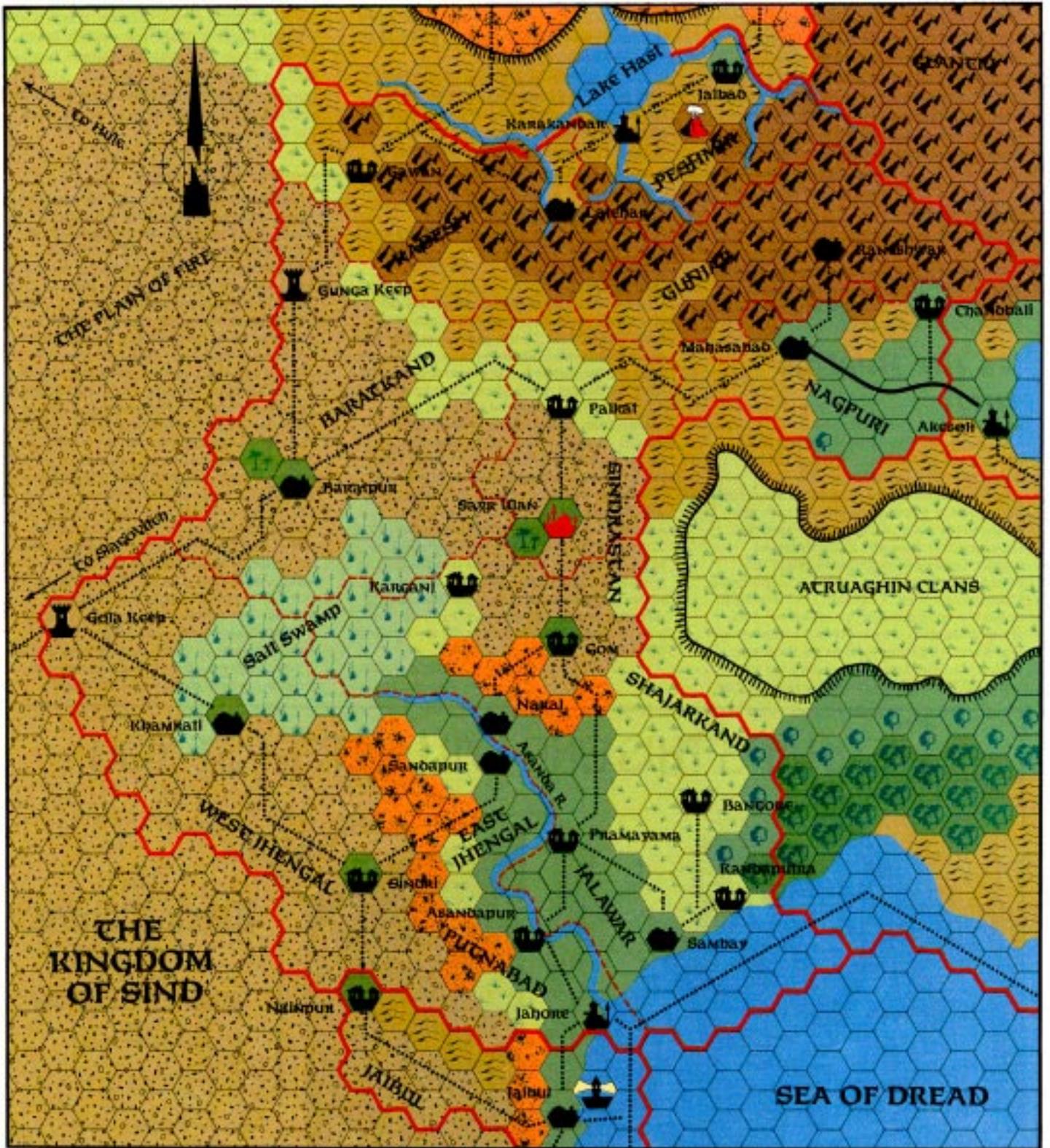
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Sayr Ulan is the nation's capital and the historical domain of the royal dynasties. It began as a small oasis village; centuries later, it became a convenient stop for Darokinian caravans and a trading point. A new caravan trail was built around the northern states, toward Fort Sablestone in Glantri. Nowadays, Sayr Ulan is a major center of commerce between Darokin and

the western city of Slagovitch. Sind is a major trader in silk, cotton, rice, salt, and tea. Merchant ships from Minrothad often anchor at Jahore.

The Rajahstan of Jaibul is an independent and chaotic magocracy that allows itself to be ruled only by a single, powerful wizard. Successive monarchs of Sind never could conquer it. Whenever Jaibul's

rajah dies, the most powerful wizards of Jaibul compete for the throne. It is a cruel and unforgiving challenge, usually fatal for the weaker candidates. Jaibul's biggest trade is in slavery, gold, and rare oils. Constant clashes take place between Jaibul and the Serene Hagiarchy of Yavdlom to the southwest. Ω

## Letters

Continued from page 5

We are open to suggestions from gamers who have first-hand knowledge on this subject. Please send us your thoughts; the best advice will be printed in "Forum."

## As the Realms turn

Dear Dragon,

In his article, "The Game Wizards" ("Understanding Undermountain—the king of all dungeons"), Ed Greenwood mentions one Laeral. It is stated in the article that she is both the consort of Khelben "Blackstaff" of Waterdeep and the sister of The Simbul, Alustriel, Dove, and Storm (as well as the deceased Sylunel. Looking through the FORGOTTEN REALMS® boxed set and all the FR supplements, I found no mention of her. Am I just missing it, or has she not been introduced before? This group of sisters is very important to one of my characters who adventures in the Forgotten Realms. Are there any other sisters not yet revealed? If so, where can I get information on

them as well as on Laeral?

Michael Kellam  
Mesquite TX

Dear Dragon,

I have some questions regarding inconsistencies appearing in an article, "The Game Wizards, in issue #167. In this preview of *The Ruins of Undermountain*, Elminster is unavailable for commentary thanks to a previous engagement with The Simbul. In his place, Laeral meets with Ed Greenwood. During the course of their conversation, Laeral claims kinship with The Simbul, Alustriel, Dove, Storm, and (though unmentioned) the late Sylune. As far as I can tell, isn't Laeral supposed to be a member of "The Nine" and of no relation to these sisters? And if she is now involved with Khelben, I wonder if anyone has warned him of her "Crown of Thorns," or has he something kinky in mind? Lastly, if Laeral had a hand in the notes describing Undermountain while she was under the spell of the crown, then she may be scheming to trap unwary adventurers in dangers beyond the reach of even the most powerful of DMs.

John A. Payawal  
Toronto, Ontario

Your editors were completely lost when these letters came in, so, we turned this material over to Steven Schend, the editor of the massive dungeon boxed set, *The Ruins of Undermountain*. His reply on Laeral, confirmed by phone calls with Ed (and with editorial inserts in parentheses) follows:

Laeral (who first appeared in *DRAGON* issue #39, page 42, as the creator of Laeral's storm armor) was the former leader of "The Nine," an adventuring group now in retirement (see *FR5 The Savage Frontier*, page 52, for details). She is indeed related to the aforementioned women, being one of seven sisters, one as yet unrevealed. (The relationship between these women is first mentioned in the DM's Sourcebook of the Realms, from the *FORGOTTEN REALMS* boxed set, in the entries on *Dove*, *The Simbul*, *Storm*, and *Sylune*. Laeral and the unnamed sister were not discussed there, leading most people to believe that there were only five sisters.) As for the Crown of Horns (its correct name, first mentioned in *FR5*, page 53, it has been destroyed; its hold on Laeral was broken by Khelben (her archmage consort; described in the DM's Sourcebook, page 24, and in *FR1 Waterdeep and the North*, among other places).

And worry not about Laeral's oft-innocent scheming; worry about your DM's plans! Ω

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Diving into the third window, he found himself face to face with four of the world's greatest strategists arguing over war plans. With the stroke of his hands he devised the perfect war strategy to defeat Unger's unde-

featable armies. As the strategists were honoring his thoughts, a fourth window appeared and engulfed the young hero.

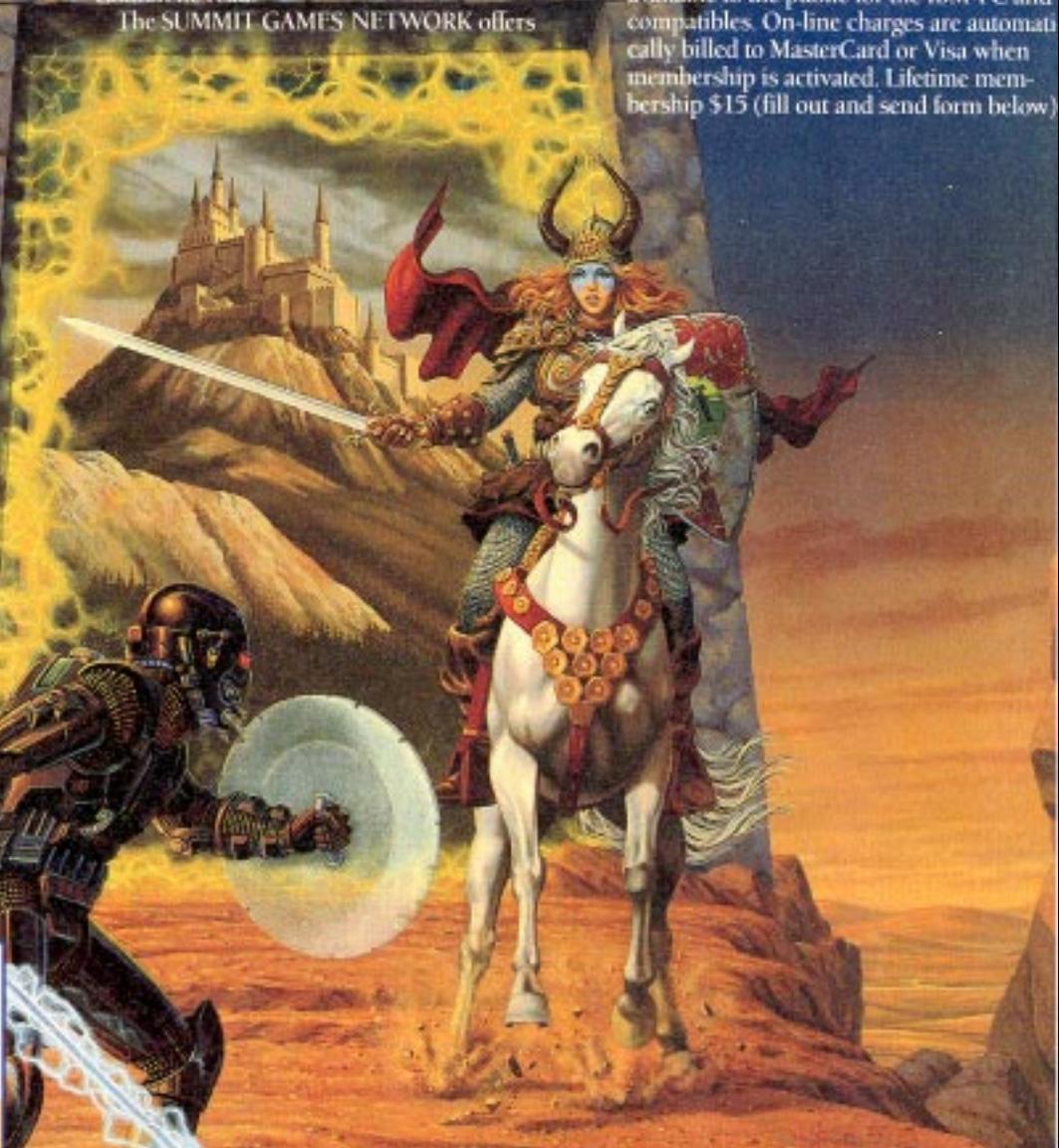
Scratching his head, he found himself in an immense shopping mall dedicated to countless games manufacturers. Excited by the many products, he went on a devilish hunt. Wiping sweat from his brow, "but you don't sweat in dreams," he realized. This was reality! He was playing 3 different games and shopping simultaneously. Confused, he peered at the corner of his desk and saw the SUMMIT GAMES NETWORK Manual. Opening with caution he read:

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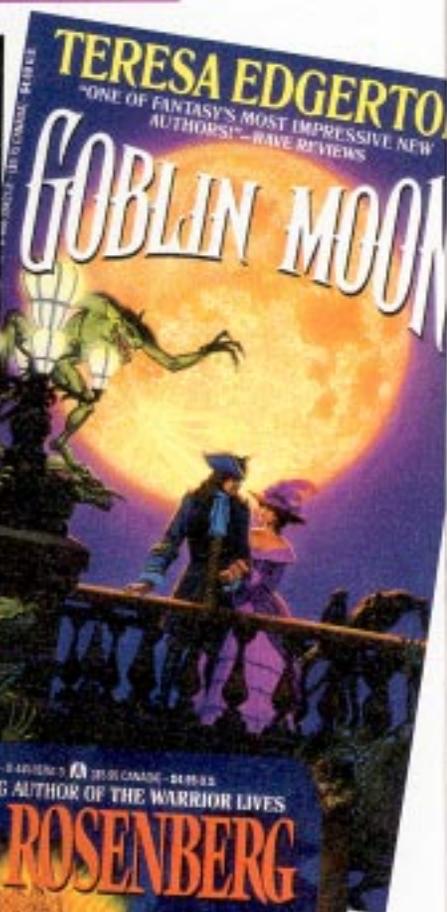
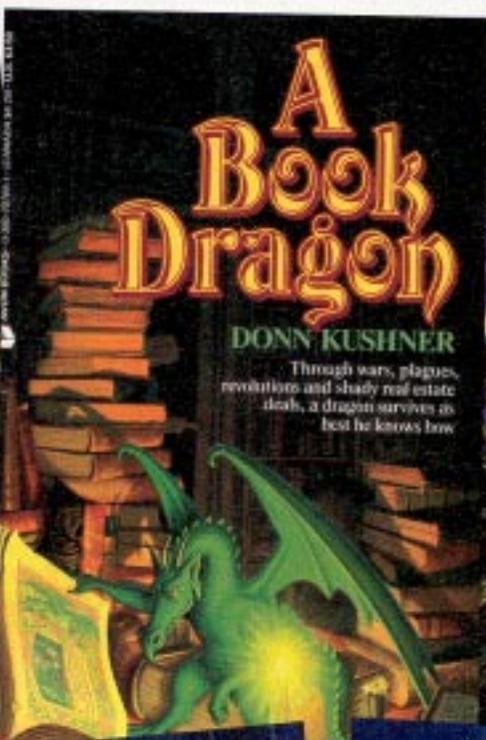
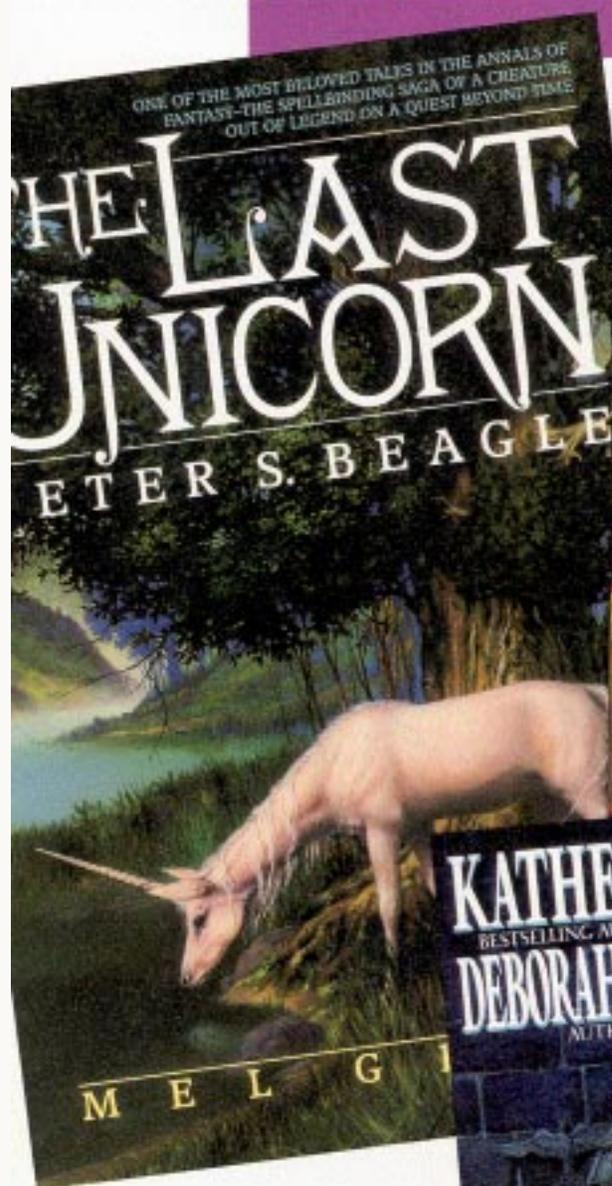
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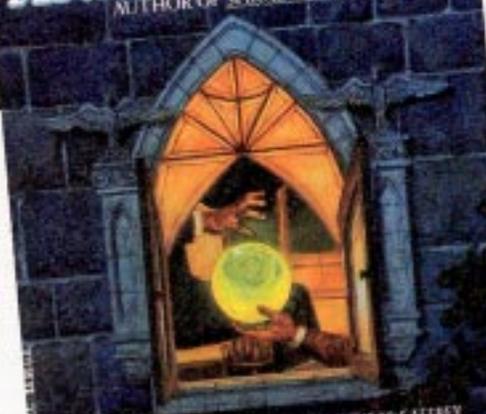
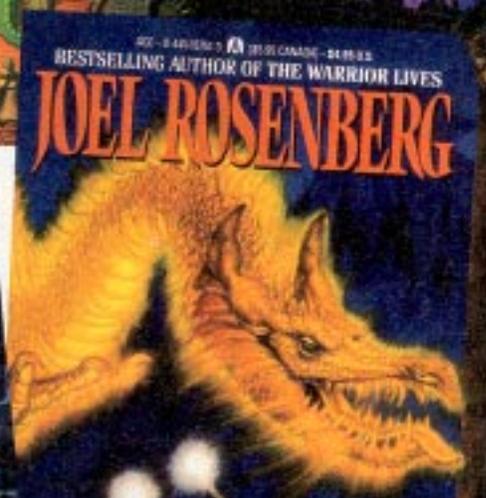
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## D'SHAI

**Joel Rosenberg**  
**Ace 0-441-15751-3 \$4.95**

In the world of D'Shai, magic is not a science, not a body of knowledge to be studied, from which its practitioners extract bits and pieces of wizardry to master and perform. Rather, magic is a state of mind, and by reaching for that heightened consciousness (called *kazuh*), one can achieve superhuman mastery of a single skill. The form of one's *kazuh* is decided at birth; one cannot choose to be a *kazuh* warrior or runner if he has been born with the *kazuh* of an acrobat.

Kami Khuzud has the opposite problem. He's the son of a *kazuh* acrobat and a member of his father's troupe of traveling performers. Though he's learned the skills of a juggler-acrobat, he doesn't seem to have an acrobat's *kazuh*—nor, for that matter, any of the other 51 forms of *kazuh* known to exist. That's a problem, because someone has murdered a member of the troupe, and all signs point to Kami as the logical suspect.

*D'Shai* is one part murder mystery, one part political intrigue, and two parts voyage of self-discovery. All three elements are skillfully executed. The murder puzzle relies on the uniqueness of its milieu, the intrigues are seen from the distinctive viewpoint of an outsider, and Rosenberg makes superb use of *kazuh* as a metaphor for artistic genius and creative joy. Kami Khuzud is an appealing and well-chosen narrator; he's observant, clever, and cynical, allowing Rosenberg to pass on a great deal of wisdom without sounding pretentiously wise.

There's a great deal of juggling lore in the book as well, together with a solid portrayal of the interaction between low-born performers and their noble patrons. Traveling players are far from unique in fantasy, but we haven't often seen such a troupe from the inside or acquired as thorough an appreciation of its work ethic as Rosenberg provides.

The back cover reveals that *D'Shai* is first in a series, but the novel stands firmly on its own merits—so much so that the very thought of a sequel is almost anticlimactic. But that remains to be seen. In the meantime, Rosenberg's latest book should provide gamers with a rich source of ideas, only some of which have anything to do with building campaigns.

## THE ADEPT

**Katherine Kurtz and Deborah Turner Harris**  
**Ace 0-441-00343-5 \$4.95**

Its dramatic premise and highly successful collaborators should have made *The Adept* an engrossing supernatural thriller. Instead, it's a strange and frustrating novel with problems that should never have survived an editor's scrutiny.

The confusion begins with the books title. *The Adept* implies a story focusing on a single protagonist, and the opening

chapters seem to give that role to Sir Adam Sinclair, wealthy Scottish psychiatrist and secret master of arcane powers. But scarcely has that assumption settled into place when the viewpoint tilts toward artist Peregrine Lovat, who has the potential for sorcerous greatness if only he can recognize and accept it. Thereafter, Adam and Peregrine share the adventure more or less evenly.

That creates a further problem, as the narrative jumps back and forth between the two characters' viewpoints, not to mention taking occasional side trips to record the exploits of their opposition, a rival circle of occultists in search of an ancient book of spells. Neither Adam nor Peregrine gets enough attention to qualify for a starring role, and they don't operate well enough as a team to compensate. What's worse, there's a distant, formal quality to the writing that tends to keep the reader separated from the characters even when the viewpoint is in focus.

A tightly controlled plot might have made up for the thin personality work, but here again the authors have chosen breadth over depth. One major thread involves Peregrine's initiation into the occult community, another pursues the black magicians' conspiracy, and there are a host of minor tangents. Most notably, the reincarnated spirit of a medieval wizard is left suspended between lives at the novel's end, a flagrant loose end even in a book labeled as first in a series.

Finally, collaborators Kurtz and Harris give only murky and unenlightening details concerning the brand of magic their characters practice. There are references to at least three separate mystical or mythological traditions: Adam's arcane title, "Master of the Hunt," recalls Celtic legends, while in past incarnations he seems to have been an Egyptian adept and a member of the Templars, an order of Christian knights with tendencies toward mysticism. And Adam's discussions with and about his colleagues and superiors (apparently he belongs to a secret society of adepts) confuse more than they explain.

There's no excuse for lapses of this magnitude, not from writers with Kurtz's experience or Harris's ability to maintain lightning-fast pace. Explanations or efforts to fix blame aren't relevant. What matters is that reading *The Adept* is like assembling for a game session without character sheets, rule books, or a referee. There's too little planning on which to hang this story, and that's a surprise and a disappointment.

## GOBLIN MOON

**Teresa Edgerton**  
**Ace 0-441-29427-8 \$4.50**

The distinctive feature of *Goblin Moon* isn't that it's a swashbuckler rather than a medieval tale. What's intriguing about Teresa Edgerton's latest fantasy is the books theatrical character; this is a story that doesn't feel written so much as it does

performed.

In part, Edgerton's choice of period does help create the effect. While dates are unspecified and place names are invented, the elegantly sketched atmosphere recalls 17th-century England (though with substantial influence from the Continent). We have elegant nobility, eccentric tradesmen, and the beginnings of modern industry—with a generous sprinkling of demihumans and subtle magic added for good measure. It's the age where melodrama was born, complete with dashing swordsmen, deadly treachery, and high-flown romance, and Edgerton's plot includes generous measures of each.

In this story, though, scene takes precedence over plot and setting. The characters of *Goblin Moon* behave like actors on a stage; they're always in motion, always playing off something or someone, always acting and reacting as circumstances demand, never merely striking poses while the author paints their portraits. And there are plenty of characters: two heroes, one earnest and one dashing; two heroines, one adventurous and one delicate; two villains, one driven and one inhuman; and a dangerous mastermind pulling strings behind them all.

The atmosphere is sheer costume drama, with rapiers keening against each other, carriage wheels clattering over cobblestones, and fabulous gowns rustling in elegant ballrooms. Edgerton has effectively filtered the classic styles of Charles Dickens and Alexander Dumas from modern stage and screen adaptations back into prose. It's a fascinating accomplishment and makes for a reading experience with lots of sensory cues.

For some reason, there's no hint on the cover that this is the first of two planned books, under the collective title of *Mask and Dagger*. Mind you, *Goblin Moon* stands quite well on its own—but with a novel this well-crafted on their hands, you'd think the publishers would want to assure their readers that more in this vein is on the way.

## INDIANA JONES AND THE PERIL AT DELPHI

**Rob MacGregor**  
**Bantam 0-553-28961-4 \$3.95**

It's probably fair to say that the wild success of the Indiana Jones films was largely responsible for resurrecting the popularity of pulp adventure in general. Now, after a stream of pulp-related comics, TV series, and even role-playing games, the form has come full circle. And it probably isn't surprising that this new incarnation of the pulp adventure novel is just as mediocre as many of the originals.

What's unusual is the character of the book's weaknesses. The old stories were often thinly plotted and narrowly focused on one daring hero, but author Rob MacGregor overcompensates in both areas. *The Peril at Delphi* comes from too many sources: artifact thieves, fanatical cultists,

foreign spies, a terrorist plot, and assorted romantic rivalries are all chasing each other around Greece in a mad caucus race for which even a scorecard isn't enough to keep track. The plot shifts from intrigue to intrigue without warning, and the viewpoint bounces from character to character just as unevenly. It's as if three film crews had been set loose without a director on hand to keep them under control and to edit their footage into a coherent movie.

Indy's female companion in this outing poses another problem. Dr. Dorian Belecamus is an exercise in contradictions. She's sometimes Indy's sidekick and sometimes his adversary, sometimes a clever manipulator and sometimes a mere pawn. In the first place, a well-written character this complex would be out of place in the action-oriented world of the pulps. MacGregor, though, doesn't write Dorian well enough for the issue to arise; there's no underlying sense of consistency in her behavior.

At best, however, the plot and character flaws are symptoms of the books real shortcoming. Unlike the original pulps and the Indiana Jones movies, *Peril at Delphi* lacks the sense of reckless fun that would make it entertaining rather than grim. By emphasizing grit and intricacy over spectacle and pace, MacGregor has sacrificed the charm of the pulp genre without gaining anything in return. And as a result, the series of books his novel begins is off to a less than promising start.

## THE DAGGER AND THE CROSS

Judith Tarr  
**Doubleday 0-385-41182-0 \$10.95**

It can be dangerous to claim that a given book has "something for everyone." Too often, it means that too many threads of plot, character, and theme have been spread too thinly and none of them are done well. *The Dagger and the Cross* is a pleasant exception to that rule. Judith Tarr's latest novel combines military strategy, political intrigue, high romance, and subtle magic in a blend that should satisfy devotees of any one of the above.

The time is the late 12th century; the place is the medieval Kingdom of Jerusalem, where a papal dispensation has just arrived to facilitate the marriage of the Rhiyanan prince Aidan and the sorceress Morgiana, a member of the Islamic Order of the Assassin. But there is unrest among the local religious establishment, and the dispensation opened at the wedding ceremony proves to be a cleverly substituted forgery denying the needed permission.

But before Aidan can track down the forgers and the original dispensation, circumstances divert both his and Morgiana's attention elsewhere. Guy, King of Jerusalem, is calling in pledges of aid to mount a campaign against the forces of Saladin, and rigid honor forces Aidan and Morgiana to take opposing sides in the conflict. Unfortunately, Guy's enthusiasm isn't matched by his strategic ability, and

it's soon clear that Aidan and the rest of Guy's forces are fighting a losing battle.

The campaign comes through clearly in Tarr's narration, full of sand, fury, and much more maneuvering for position than actual combat. Yet for all the pragmatism of setting and strategy, the high moral vision of the Crusades comes through as well, balancing grit with glory and pain with honor. Details here serve Tarr's individual characters and the larger tapestry of military logic with equal grace.

But there's much more to the novel than knightly battle plans. A lively group of secondary characters populate Aidan's and Morgiana's entourages, and these folk are rarely content to allow events to pass them by. Everyone has a place in the unfolding intrigues, and no one (not even Aidan's enemies) is left a mere stereotype in Tarr's capable hands.

If there's a nit to be picked, it's that the fiery Morgiana gets too little time on stage in this volume, which keeps chiefly to the Christian side of events and favors Aidan's personal crises as a result. In this regard alone, readers of Tarr's earlier *Alamut* may have an advantage, but for the most part, *The Dagger and the Cross* works equally well as a stand-alone novel and as the second half of a two-book saga. Given that it's also convincing history and sweeping drama, gamers in all segments of the hobby should find ample reason to pore over its pages.

## A BOOK DRAGON

Donn Kushner  
**Avon 0-380-70769-1 \$3.50**

## THE LAST UNICORN

Peter S. Beagle  
**Roc 0-451-45052-3 \$6.95**

There's always room in fantasy for a story about another dragon or another unicorn, particularly when it's as endearing as Peter Beagle's much-praised saga of a lost unicorn seeking her fellows or Donn Kushner's sprightly tale of an unusual treasure and its well-traveled guardian. These two books are unique, though, in that their impact rests as much on their illustrations as on the text—and curiously enough, it's the smaller of the two that comes out ahead in a comparison.

*The Last Unicorn* almost doesn't need to be summarized, but for those who haven't run across an earlier edition, it's the story of a mild-mannered magician, a peppery outlaw woman, and a unicorn cut off from the rest of her kind. Beagle is one of the very few modern fantasists who accurately captures the air of fairy-tale in his writing, and he combines it, in this case, with equal parts of musical accompaniment and wry, fresh wit. It is at once a book for reading aloud, chapter by chapter, at bedtime, and for contemplating at quiet and thoughtful length with a far-away look in one's eyes.

*A Book Dragon* is perhaps less transcendent, but Kushner's style is at least a coun-

terpart to Beagle's and no less pleasant to the ear. The dragon of the title is Nonesuch, who is distinctive among his declining race for his curiosity regarding humanity. While family members meet untimely and undignified ends at human hands, Nonesuch gradually diminishes in size and hovers inconspicuously around the scriptorium of a country monastery. Before long, he has become both subject and guardian of a magnificent, illuminated manuscript. Kushner's tale follows both dragon and book through generations of owners, concluding in a New England bookshop where Nonesuch finally exercises draconian powers to dispose of an obnoxious real-estate developer. It's a clever, neatly executed story, with most of its wisdom plainly on the surface.

It's also a compact yarn, filling not quite 200 pages with larger-than-average print—and that total does not include the generous stock of illuminations and illustrations scattered throughout the text. Artist Nancy Ruth Jackson has worked a mischievous modern variation on the idea of the illuminated manuscript: each chapter begins with a formal illuminated letter and border illustration, but there are also little marginal drawings throughout, some of which take a second look to appreciate properly. (Keep an eye out for the page number with the arrow sticking out of it.) And her style is nicely matched to the tone of Kushner's prose, with just the right balance of smoothness and flourish.

The ingenious art in *A Book Dragon* is a delightful bonus in a book that most readers won't have seen before. A different standard, though, applies to Roc's edition of *The Last Unicorn*. In this case, the text is familiar and has been widely available in a variety of editions; what's new here is the art, and the art therefore needs to be unique and compelling in and of itself. Otherwise, readers might as well borrow a library copy or look for a used paperback in a second-hand bookshop.

Unfortunately, Mel Grant's art doesn't meet that standard. The cover painting is beautiful, true, but it's an elegant, remote beauty with mist around its edges, and it doesn't match the friendly intimacy of Beagle's prose. Moreover, it's utterly inconsistent with his 10 interior illustrations, whose rough character and stark lines are equally out of place when set against a narrative that's polished to a weathered smoothness. And the proportion of art to text seems low, with less than one picture provided per chapter, and no illumination or enhanced design to mark the chapter openings.

It's important to separate the illustrations from the text in making final judgments here. *The Last Unicorn* is arguably worth the \$6.95 cover price for the story alone, despite the lackluster packaging. *A Book Dragon*, by contrast, is a rare bargain, with copious dragon-lore, a cheerful story, and a bright basketful of art in one amiable, pocket-sized serving. And Donn

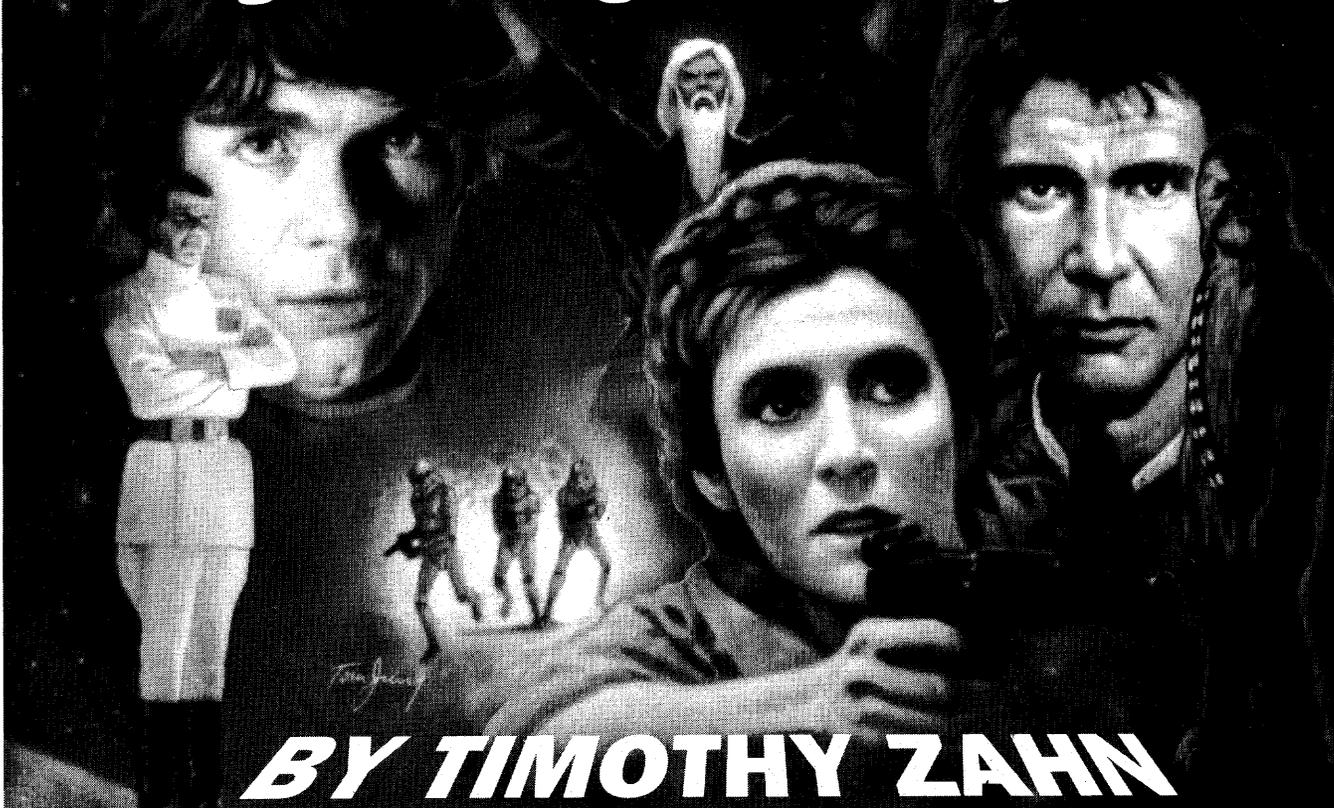
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### Recurring roles

There are just two misfires to report in the latest assortment of sequels, continuations, and so forth. First is Thorarinn Gunnarsson's *Human, Beware!* (Ace, \$4.50), and it's a real puzzler. Though nominally a sequel to Gunnarsson's lively *Make Way For Dragons!*, this odd tale forsakes California entirely for a fantasy realm in which human Jenny Barker is the focus of a very strange and irrational-seeming prophecy. The internal logic is confusing, Jenny grows up much too fast, and there's not enough groundwork to make Gunnarsson's universe convincing. It's a startlingly weak yarn from a writer who's capable of much better work.

And *Viperhand* (TSR, \$4.95) seems to confirm the initial suspicion that Douglas Niles' *Maztica* trilogy is frying too many fish in one skillet. Between the replay of the Spanish conquest of Latin America, the machinations of a drow conspiracy, and the more personal exodus of Halloran and Erixitl, Niles has too many plots and too little space to develop them all evenly.

Simon Green's *Hawk & Fisher* series improves a bit with the second entry, *Winner Takes All* (Ace, \$3.95); this time, there's a bit more consistency and a good

deal more action as the two crack Guards become involved in a complicated election-eering adventure. Sword-and-sorcery mystery still seems like a rather odd premise, but at least it's getting smoother.

There's only one new Mercedes Lackey title to report this time, but then *By the Sword* (DAW, \$4.95) is a substantial novel. Lackey finally draws the connection between her Valdemar novels and the stories of Tarma and Kethry, and does so in a lively adventure that takes in a great deal of territory. Protagonist Kerowyn is quite different from any of Lackey's earlier heroes and heroines, and her relentless pragmatism plays well against the sometimes remote-seeming idealism of the Heralds. This novel is self-contained and can be read independently of the books it connects, but the flyleaf promises another Valdemar trilogy to come.

*The Wizardry Cursed* (Baen, \$4.95) finds Rick Cook recounting another adventure of Wiz Zumwalt, computer wizard turned spell-writing wizard. Now a pair of power-seeking programmers have gotten their hands on Wiz's software and are plotting conquest, with multiple worlds in danger if their scheme succeeds. Cook continues to find new ways to apply his premise rather than recycling the old, and the series is evolving nicely as a result.

Robert Charrette's second SHADOW-RUN™ novel, *Choose Your Enemies Care-*

fully (Roc, \$4.50), continues to demonstrate the broad scope of FASA's game universe. Plot elements include latter-day druids, were-beings, Indian-like shamanism, and the usual corporate intrigues. If anything, there's too much going on, but the cyberware-and-sorcery mixture remains distinctive, and final judgments can wait till the third book is in.

In the anthology department, *Sword & Sorceress VII* (DAW, \$4.50) is the latest collection out from Marion Zimmer Bradley. No one else, save perhaps Andre Norton, is publishing enough short fantasy adventure on a regular basis these days, and Bradley is a reliable editor whose eye for these stories is as sharp as ever.

**Note:** Correspondents and publishers should make a note of the following new address. Questions, comments, and material for review should now be directed to:

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by Dale A. Donovan

## THE MARVEL-PHILE

### Two ghosts with the most

As those by-line readers out there already know, the two most recent "MARVEL®-Phile" columns were written not by me, but by Steven E. Schend, an editor in TSR's Games Department. Steven was the in-house editor on MU6 *The Gamer's Handbook of the MARVEL UNIVERSE™*, 1990 *Character Updates* and will perform the same duties on this year's MU7, which is due to hit your stores in late November.

From here on, Steven and I will share the writing duties for this column, and I think we'll make a pretty good team. Steven knows the vast MARVEL UNIVERSE better than I do, but I am more familiar with the game system than he is; we should compliment each other well.

This month, I'll detail one spooky guy—the Ghost, a foe of Iron Man—and update you on the new Ghost Rider. I was tempted to wait until the Halloween issue to write up these two guys, but you have been clamoring for the Ghost Rider update, so here you go. Have fun!

#### GHOST™ Industrial Saboteur

F	GD(10)	Health: 70
A	EX(20)	
S	GD(10)	Karma: 66
E	RM(30)	
R	IN(36)	Resources: EX(20)
I	GD(10)	
P	EX(20)	Popularity: 0

**POWERS:** The brown-haired, blue-eyed man who is the Ghost has no powers of his own. All of his super-human abilities stem from his electrically powered battlesuit. Cybernetic circuitry in the suit's hood enables the Ghost to utilize his suit's various capabilities by mental commands. As a result, the Ghost must be able to concentrate to activate any of his suit's abilities, and he can be surprised normally. (I recommend an Intuition check to determine

whether or not any individual can react in the same round as a surprise attack.) The Ghost's suit gives him the powers noted here. Unless otherwise noted, the powers below all operate at the Amazing (46) rank.

– *Phasing:* Circuitry in his suit allows the Ghost to become intangible by putting his body slightly out of phase with this dimension. These circuits cannot operate at the same time as the suit's Invisibility circuits do, so the Ghost cannot be both immaterial and invisible in the same round. An evil businessman, Justin Hammer, has developed a synthetic material (perhaps a form of vibranium) that the Ghost cannot yet pass through. When the Ghost is immaterial, he is transparent. (See following note.)

– *Invisibility:* Certain circuits in his suit allow the Ghost to become invisible at will. The Ghost can easily switch between his invisibility and intangibility powers from round to round, but he can never have both sets of circuitry operating at the same time. The Ghost can turn other objects invisible also, as long as he is in contact with the object. Note that the Ghost has improved these circuits to render himself invisible to most mechanical and electronic sensors. Have the Ghost make a FEAT roll using his power rank of Amazing (46) versus the rank of the sensor. A successful roll means the Ghost has avoided being detected by that sensor. For example, in his last meeting with Iron Man, the Ghost was completely invisible to all the sensors in Iron Man's armor. (See following note.)

– *Computer control:* Circuits in the Ghost's suit allow him to control and reprogram computers by touching the computers or the equipment that contains the computers, with a successful FEAT roll against the rank of the computer.

*Weapons and equipment:* The Ghost also uses personal weapons that are not parts of his suit. He carries handguns that can inflict Incredible (36) Force or Energy damage with a range of four areas, and

grenades capable of inflicting Amazing (46) Force damage to everyone in the area where a grenade explodes. The Ghost also carries "Anson grenades" doing Amazing (46) Force damage, but which also fly in random directions with Feeble (2) air speed. He can release three of these flying grenades in one round if he takes one round beforehand to prepare them (no other actions allowed). Otherwise, he can only release one per combat round. In addition, the Ghost possesses bombs (Amazing (46) Force damage) that can be activated by sound waves, and portable versions of his intangibility circuits that he can attach to people or objects.

**NOTE:** Phasing and Invisibility are difficult to judge with the power rank system in the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game. Is the Ghost, with Amazing (46) Invisibility *more invisible* than an individual with Typical (6) Invisibility? Is the old Red Ghost with Unearthly (100) Phasing *less tangible* than the Ghost with Amazing (46) Phasing? Well, yes and no. In my own campaign, here's how I handled powers like these.

An invisible person is just that—invisible to other people's eyes. The rank only comes into play against other kinds of sensors (mechanical equipment, animal senses, etc.). Have the invisible person make a FEAT roll versus the rank of the sensor, with the following strictures. If the sensor's rank is lower than the invisibility rank number of the person's power, a green result will mean the sensor does not detect the invisible person. For sensors that are the same rank number as the person's power, a yellow result is needed for the person to remain undetected. And if the sensor's rank is higher than the invisibility rank number, the invisible person needs a red result to not be detected by the sensor.

Phasing or intangibility works similarly. Compare the rank number of the power with the material strength rank number of the substance to be passed through, then

make a FEAT roll. If the phasing rank number is higher, a green result means the person can pass through the material. If the rank numbers are the same, a yellow result is necessary to pass through the material. If the material's rank number is higher than that of the person's power, then a red result is required for the person to pass through the substance.

I use this system any time the game calls for a "FEAT roll versus" a certain rank.

**TALENTS:** The Ghost has the Business/Finance, Engineering, Computers, and Electronics skills. He also possesses a Demolitions talent that gives him a +1CS for constructing and dealing with explosive devices.

**HISTORY:** Almost nothing is known about the man who is the industrial saboteur called the Ghost (see "Role-playing notes"). He was something of a legend in the electronics industry, but few who heard the story, including Anthony Stark (Iron Man), believed it—no one, that is, until Carrington Pax, a Roxxon Oil Corporation executive, hired the Ghost to drive Accutech Research and Development, an electronics firm in financial trouble, into bankruptcy. Roxxon had attempted to purchase Accutech, but that firm's executives wanted nothing to do with the disreputable Roxxon. Pax hoped that the weaken the Ghost did would further damage Accutech's financial standing, making it more amenable to Roxxon's next offer of purchase.

Accutech was indeed going bankrupt but had just been bought by Stark Enterprises, Anthony Stark's own electronics firm. It had cost Stark every

penny he and his company had, but Stark thought that the beta particle generator that Accutech was developing could become a tremendous source of cheap, clean energy. No sooner had Stark signed the final purchase papers than the Ghost attacked. Stark, as Iron Man, forced the Ghost to flee, but as he was escaping, the Ghost vowed to kill the man he believed to be Iron Man's employer, Tony Stark.

Pax was displeased that the Ghost had deviated from his mission of destroying Accutech by taking up a personal vendetta against Stark. Pax fired the Ghost and gave another operative, the Spymaster (see MU4 for his statistics) the mission to stop the Ghost and to destroy Accutech. This act enraged the Ghost and only made him more determined to kill Stark and destroy Accutech on his own.

The Ghost invaded Stark Enterprises and shot a man he thought to be Stark in Stark's office, but his victim was Spymaster, impersonating Stark. Spymaster attached an energy siphon to the Ghost's battlesuit, draining his circuits of the power to operate. Spymaster was about to kill the now-powerless Ghost but was stopped by Tony Stark, who shot the gun out of Spymaster's hand. The Ghost accessed an electrical power supply, burned out the siphon, recharged his circuits, and tried to escape. Spymaster gave chase, as did Stark in his Iron Man armor. Stark, as Iron Man, saved the Ghost's life again

with a repulsor blast that struck Spymaster, who was still trying to kill the Ghost. Recovering, the Ghost placed a circuit panel on spymaster that rendered him intangible. The Ghost said that this way they could

both escape from Iron Man. They fled through a wall. While Spymaster was still passing through the wall, the Ghost removed the circuit panel. The shock to Spymaster's system, due to his body materializing within a solid substance, was instantly fatal. The Ghost escaped again.

Finally, the Ghost returned, this time determined to kill Stark and destroy the prototype beta particle generator that had prompted Stark to purchase Accutech in the first place. If successful, this attack would have driven both Accutech and Stark Enterprises into bankruptcy. Stark anticipated this, however, and set a trap for the Ghost. Stark knew that the generator gave off an intense energy field that overloaded any electrical systems within 100 yards of it. As the human brain operates on electrical impulses, this field could prove dangerous (or even fatal) to people exposed to the field for long periods of time. Iron Man warned the Ghost of the danger, but the fanatically driven Ghost entered the field anyway. Iron Man realized that he could save the Ghost's life by turning off the generator. But if he did, the Ghost would destroy it, Stark Enterprises would go bankrupt, and all its employees would be out of work. After considering this and the fact that the Ghost was a cold-blooded murderer, Iron Man decided to not turn off the machine. Before the Ghost reached the generator, the overloading circuits in his suit melted the floor under him. When Iron Man went down to examine the remains, all he found were bits and pieces of melted plastic and circuitry. The Ghost was nowhere to be found.

As it turns out, the Ghost had escaped (of course) to plague Iron Man again. After destroying two more firms, the Ghost set his sights on Electronica Fabrizzi, an Italian company owned by the corrupt businessman and employer of super villains, Justin Hammer. Hammer knew that Stark wanted to rehabilitate one of Hammer's super-powered operatives, namely Donald Gill, the second Blizzard. Hammer offered to turn over Gill and have nothing further to do with him if Stark agreed to send Iron Man to help Hammer combat the Ghost. Stark agreed.

Iron Man and the Ghost clashed. In the fight, the Ghost attached one of his portable intangibility circuits to Iron Man. Now, only the Ghost, with special circuitry in his suit, could touch the intangible circuit panel and Iron Man. The Ghost intended to let Iron Man slowly die of starvation and thirst, but Iron Man managed to escape by generating an electromagnetic pulse that dampened all electrical circuits nearby. This included his armor and the Ghost's intangibility circuit. Stark's associate, James Rhodes, then shot the panel off Iron Man's armor.

Knowing they would clash again, Ham-



mer sent Blizzard, the Beetle, and Blacklash (statistics for these villains appear in MU1) to observe the next battle between Iron Man and the Ghost. They were instructed to aid whomever was losing the battle. At first, these three aided Iron Man and Rhodes against the Ghost, but soon switched sides. Iron Man and Rhodes managed to defeat Hammer's operatives, but the Ghost planted some bombs and tried to activate them as he escaped in his intangible form. Iron Man produced another electromagnetic pulse that dampened the bombs' circuits long enough for Iron Man and Rhodes to get Hammer's operatives and themselves to safety. The bombs then exploded, destroying the Electronica Fabrizzi complex where the battle had taken place.

The Ghost then tried to infiltrate Hammer's office to gloat over his accomplishment, only to discover that Hammer had lined his office walls with some synthetic material that the Ghost could not, at that time, pass through. The Ghost still managed to escape by blasting his way out, and has now sworn to kill both Hammer and Stark.

**ROLE-PLAYING NOTES:** The Ghost is a brilliant inventor who, for reasons unknown, attempts to destroy various high-tech electronics corporations. He appears to be motivated by vengeance, but what the electronics industry did to him to cause this feeling is not known. He has referred to the fact that he once was a business executive, and says that all such executives lie to people, but there are no other present leads pointing to why he acts in this manner. He is willing to destroy firms without financial compensation, but he does hire himself out to people or firms who wish to sabotage rival corporations.

In your campaign, the Ghost could attempt to sabotage some important local business or industry. He could also try to commit sabotage against local, state, or Federal law-enforcement agencies, or even SHIELD (if a version of that agency appears in your campaign). The Ghost could be hired by some villain to retrieve some well-guarded incriminating evidence or to kill a person currently in the hands of the law. Of course, your heroes are asked to protect that evidence or person. The Ghost could also be hired to steal some important new technological or electronic widget or weapon. With his portable intangibility circuits, the Ghost could be a very successful thief.

If you are feeling particularly nasty, have the Ghost learn the location of your heroes' headquarters. The Ghost could access valuable personal information about the heroes via any computers they have, recover any items formerly belong-

ing to super villains that the police don't feel safe guarding, steal some of the heroes' personal effects or weapons, or just plant enough bombs to blow the place to Greenland.

## GHOST RIDER™

### The Spirit of Vengeance

(The statistics to the left of the slashes represent Daniel Ketch, the young man whose body the Ghost Rider currently inhabits.)

F	TY(6)/EX(20)	Health: 32/190
A	GD(10)/RM(30)	
S	TY(6)/IN(40)	Karma: 40/80
E	GD(10)/UN(100)	
R	GD(10)/GD(10)	Resources: PR(4)
I	GD(10)/EX(20)	
P	EX(20)/AM(50)	Popularity: 0

**POWERS:** All of the following powers are usable only by this hero's Ghost Rider form, with the possible exception of Motorcycle Control. On at least one occasion, the cycle moved without assistance to Dan's location.



*Alter Ego:* Ghost Rider physically transforms the body of young Dan Ketch into the flaming-skulled avenger of innocents that we all know and love. The transformation is triggered when the mysterious emblem on the gas cap of the motorcycle Dan found glows and Dan touches it.

– *Motorcycle Control:* Ghost Rider seems to have psychic control over his motorcycle. Use Ghost Rider's Amazing (50) Psyche rank to determine the success of any attempted special maneuver with the motorcycle, or when Dan feels that he needs to transform into Ghost Rider but he, for some reason, cannot physically reach the cycle.

– *Body Armor:* Ghost Rider's mystical hellfire body is resistant to most forms of injury. He has Amazing (50) protection from physical attacks and Class 1000 protection from fire, heat, poisons, and radiation. Ghost Rider is also immune to any attack that affects a human (living) soul.

– *Hellfire:* Called his "Penance Stare" by the Ghost Rider and usable only when in physical contact with the target, this mystic energy inflicts no physical damage. However, the victim of this attack suffers emotional pain equal to the most severe pain he has caused others and must make a Psyche FEAT roll or lose one rank off his Psyche score. This is a permanent loss, although the Psyche can be raised by spending Karma (as found in the "Advancement" section in the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ Advanced Set Player's Book). In addition, the victim must make an Endurance FEAT roll versus Amazing (50) intensity or pass out from the trauma of the attack. If a victim's Psyche is reduced to Shift 0, the person dies and his soul is irretrievably lost.

*Weapons and equipment:* Ghost Rider uses a length of heavy metallic chain with weighted ends and magical properties, wielding it as an entangling weapon. Treat the chain as Amazing (50) material strength; Ghost Rider uses that rank to attack on the Grappling or Grabbing columns. The chain can reach anywhere in the area that Ghost Rider occupies. The chain's links can also separate and transform into throwing stars. These stars have a range of three areas and do Remarkable (30) Throwing Edged damage with a one-area range. After reaching their target, the stars return to Ghost Rider and reform into the chain. The chain may have other abilities that are unknown at this time.

The Ghost Rider rides a large black motorcycle that has tires of flame. For information on cycles, see the Advanced Set Player's Book under "Vehicles." Note that the cycle is needed for Dan to become Ghost Rider, and it may have other mystic properties unknown as of this writing.

**TALENTS:** Dan Ketch is skilled in riding motorcycles. Give him a + 1CS to his Agility for controlling any cycle. Ghost Rider has mystic control over his cycle (see above) that essentially replaces Ketch's talent. The previous incarnation of Ghost Rider possessed the Occult Lore and Mystic Background talents; if this is the same Ghost Rider, he may have these talents, although he now seems to be suffering from amnesia.

**HISTORY:** For the history of Ghost Rider's previous appearances inhabiting the body of Johnny Blaze, see the "Ghost Rider III" entry in MU2, or "The MARVEL-Phile" in DRAGON® issue #110. A brief summary of the current Ghost Rider's history is as follows.

Dan Ketch found his mystical motorcycle in a junkyard, and he transformed into Ghost Rider for the first time when his sister and some friends confronted a villain, Deathwatch. Deathwatch was seeking three canisters of a virulent biotoxin that could kill vast numbers of people. Ghost Rider prevented him from finding the canisters, although Ketch's sister was seriously wounded by Deathwatch. Ghost Rider subsequently battled Blackout II, a partner of Deathwatch, who later killed Ketch's wounded sister. Other foes that Ghost Rider has fought in his current incarnation are Scarecrow, Flag-Smasher, Zodiak, and Mr. Hyde. Ghost Rider has also appeared as a "guest-ghost" in many popular MARVEL comic books.

Recently, Dan Ketch learned of the origin of Zarathos, the demon who was the Ghost Rider of Johnny Blaze, from Nightmare, Lord of Dream Dimension. No definite link between that Ghost Rider and the current one have been made at the time of this writing. I'm personally willing to bet, though, that this demonic Spirit of Vengeance is Zarathos. (How many flaming-skulled motorcyclists can there be?)

**ROLE-PLAYING NOTES:** Ghost Rider is motivated by a desire to avenge wrongs done to innocent people. How a demon came to have this particular motivation is not known, as demons are not noted for caring about innocents. The Ghost Rider often appears as a reaction to some attack against innocents, be it from a super villain or common muggers. It is interesting to speculate on whether or not Ghost Rider would appear, for example, to get a kitten out of a tree—something most heroes would be reluctant to perform. The other times that this Ghost Rider has appeared to is combat some foe who escaped his vengeance in the past.

I'd recommend that, in your campaign, Ghost Rider remain an NPC. He's an un-

sual hero with unusual powers that easily lend themselves to abuse. Unless there's a player you believe can role-play him well and fairly, keep Ghost Rider in the GM's hands. There are many things an imaginative GM could come up with to bring Ghost Rider into a campaign.

Ghost Rider is a great anti-hero who just doesn't care about most things heroic. His "Penance Stare" is not a normal heroic attack where the hero pounds the bad guy; this mystical attack is *nasty*. Also, Ghost Rider has no compunction about killing. He's killed several minor bad guys already, including several "ninja" employed by Deathwatch. Use Ghost Rider in ways that point out these philosophical differences with most heroes. Ghost Rider may wish to kill a minor villain that your heroes want alive, which could lead to an interesting confrontation. Since Ghost Rider often appears as a reaction to other events, he could show up to save your heroes' bacon. How would your heroes like owing their lives to a flaming-skulled demon?

A note to those who read or collected the old *Official Handbook of the MARVEL UNIVERSE* series. Marvel has begun a new version, out for several months now, called *The Master's Edition*. It has a new format: one character per three-hole-punched page, with color "three-view" art on one side and character information on the other. Although the art is high quality, I believe the "three-view" style to be a waste of space. But the character information is, for the most part, outstanding. Marvel has quantified its characters' physical attributes, as well as giving more biographical data and notes on any weapons or paraphernalia the character uses.

All these changes have a price, however. The detailed "History" section for each character is gone, replaced with a functional but less usable bibliography section. Personally, I felt that the History section was one of the most important sections of the old *Handbook* series. The reason I bought the *Handbooks* was because I wanted to learn about these characters *without* having to find and buy every issue the character appeared in. I can no longer do that, and I am disappointed. I appreciate the fact that Marvel is committed enough to its readers to publish the *Handbook* series and that it is working to improve it. I merely think it dropped the ball this time. If you are interested in some stats for your favorite heroes, I heartily recommend this series. Marvel is also selling a three-ring binder to hold the pages of the new *Handbook*.

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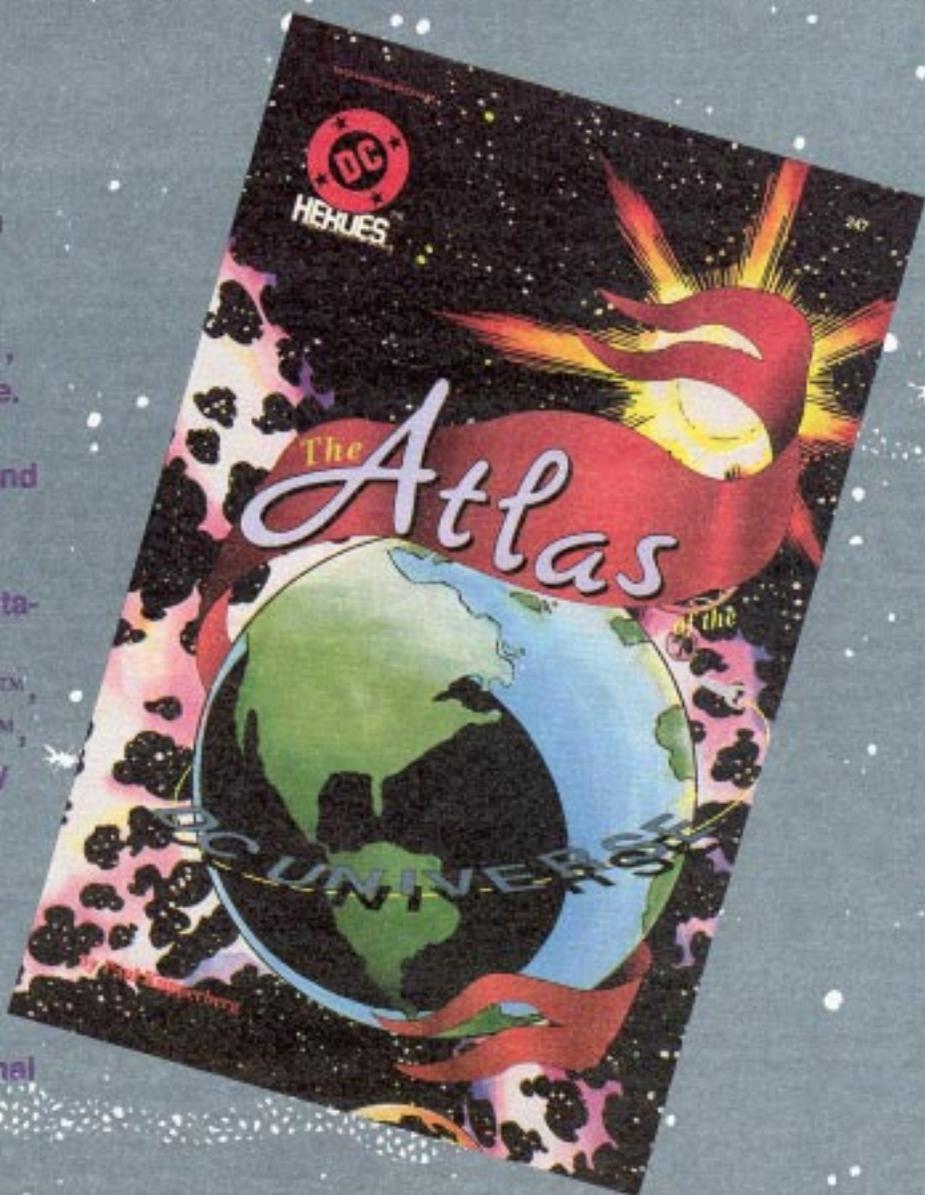
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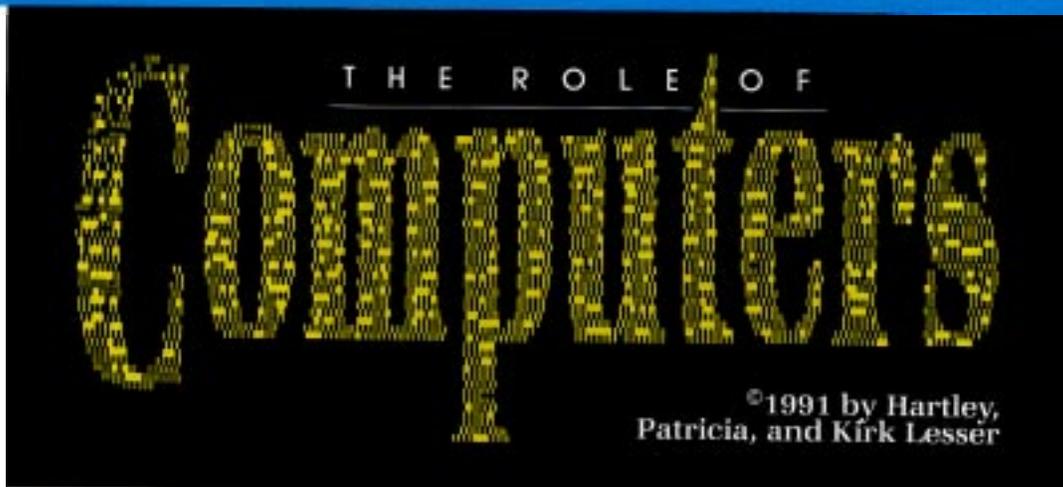
THE SKELETON IN DEPTH IS THE RECOGNIZED THE CRUCIAL REMAINS OF THE DEAD LORDS. SIR KRIK BRANDISHES HIS SWORD AS HIS DEATH KNIGHT SMOOKS TOWARD THE BETTERING GRIND.



LORD SOTH THINGS TO YOU BEFORE MOUNTING HIS NIGHTMARE. WITH WHAT I HAVE GATHERED TODAY, I SHALL HAVE AN INVINCIBLE ARMY. TREASURE YOUR PATHETIC VICTORIES, IT WILL NOT BE LONG LIVED.

AMIGA DISPLAY

IBM EGA DISPLAY



Elvira (Accolade)

## Running amok with Frodo, Elvira, and the Beast

Those who have complained about "The Buggies" being included in our column should rest assured that we did contact the companies regarding the specific troubles we've had, and we found their answers to be incorrect. The reason we publish "The Buggies" is to alert consumers that these troublesome areas in these games need to be addressed *prior* to the purchase of the game. "The Buggies" also allows readers to report similar problems and sometimes even the solutions. This is especially true of Broderbund's *The Dark Heart of Uukrul*, where the Qs on the code wheel do look like Os to many gamers. In the time since this problem was published in a past column, many readers have written to say that not only have they had the same problem, but several have solved it. Communication—isn't it great?

### Reviews

#### The Lord of the Rings, Volume 1

\*\*\*\*

Interplay Productions (714-549-2411)  
PC/MS-DOS version \$54.95

Three or four software publishers have attempted to bring Tolkien's fantasy adventures to your computer screen, but only Interplay Productions can boast of presenting the most realistic as well as the

most entertaining version of all such games. The world of Middle-earth is huge, and gamers could make their way through over 9,000 screens while enjoying this adventure.

This fantasy role-playing game is suitable for players of all levels of gaming experience. PC/MS-DOS versions with support for VGA, MCGA, EGA, and CGA graphics have been released. A VGA board is highly recommended, as is a computer that runs at 10 Mhz or more. A number of sound boards, including Roland and AdLib, are supported.

This game features superior graphics, color, and sound. The number of mini-quests makes for a highly appealing adventure, and the animation is smooth. This game can be replayed even after a successful conclusion, due to the various "paths" Frodo and his party can take.

#### Computer games' ratings

X	Not recommended
*	Poor
**	Fair
***	Good
****	Excellent
*****	Superb



*The Lord of the Rings, Vol. 1* (Interplay Productions)

Most readers have probably read *The Lord of the Rings*, so we needn't delve into the adventure too far. In brief, Bilbo Baggins, a hobbit of no small renown, acquired a Ring of Invisibility from a creature named Gollum. Upon his retirement, Bilbo gave the ring to his nephew, Frodo. Then the wizard Gandalf found out that the ring was actually an instrument of great evil, forged by Sauron, the Dark Lord. Called the One Ring, it would corrupt anyone who used it. It was decided that Frodo should travel to Rivendell in the east, to meet with the elves and determine what to do with the ring. But Gandalf had also learned that Sauron knew someone named Baggins had the ring. Your software adventure starts at this juncture. Gandalf has not made it in time to travel with you, so all you have are your wits and your friends to assist you in this desperate quest. All of the greatest evils of Middle-earth are out to stop you!

*The Lord of the Rings, Vol. 1* (LOTR), accurately portrays Middle-earth as depicted by Tolkien. However, the manner in which you decide to move your party to the ultimate conclusion is your decision. The game does not follow the plot found in Tolkien's trilogy, and that's good! Now you actually have an adventure game that is fresh and new, and doesn't follow a plot exactly as someone else has written it.

Be certain to read the user's manual; there are many clues hidden in the text. Also, remember that hobbits aren't the best fighters in the world. If you plan to purchase LOTR for extensive, gratuitous combat, forget it. Should creatures be encountered that require a flashing blade to be turned away, you should hope you'll have some friends to assist you.

The player interface is quite different from those used in other PC/MS-DOS games, and it does require quite some time to learn. Thankfully, Interplay allows you

to wander around the Shire a bit before you are warned of the Dark Riders. Talk to everyone you can, and perhaps even take on a miniquest or two. (For those two lost kids in the East Woods, be certain to carry rations. Perhaps Frodo's old home at Bag End or the Great Roads Goods can help in that regard.)

We used the mouse to control the game, but you can use the keyboard as well. The computer screen shows an overhead view of the action. The view is quite similar to the game *Faery Tale Adventure*. To order different actions, you press the right mouse button. The bottom third of the screen reveals 10 icons as well as a portrait of the group leader (usually Frodo).

You can change the leader of the group at any time simply by selecting the Leader icon, which is represented as a group of people standing on a hill—a somewhat nebulous icon, but at least you can get a leader who may have more appropriate skills to confront a specific set of circumstances. You can also select to run another member of the party by using the Character Selection Icon, without changing leaders. This is a good way to trade items between members of your party.

When using the mouse, you simply move the cursor up, down, left, or right; note that the corresponding screen icon indi-



*The Lord of the Rings, Vol. 1* (Interplay Productions)

cates the direction selected. You then press the left mouse button, and your adventuring party travels in the selected direction until you release the button.

Food is critical in LOTR. It is one of the only ways that you can heal your hobbit friends, as it restores lost life points. And you *will* be losing life points as you learn the game. Various foods offer greater life restoration but can be used only once per day. Edibles include rations, red beans, mushrooms, hot food, Dwarfport, and Lembas. Rations restore two life points per day, while Lembas recovers six life points. Now, guess which is harder to find!

To prevent injury, think before you act. If you want to take on a spider, make certain you get in the first blow. But if you move your character too close to the creature, it will move and strike first. Await its first move, perhaps suffer the loss of a few hit points, then crowd it and attack. You should succeed.

Even when you think all is well, such as when Hawkeye takes you to his cave to rest after the defeat of an orc, a couple of Black Rider nasties will pop up and decimate your party. Running away isn't a bad thing to do! Some of the nasties that populate LOTR include Sauron, the Dark Lord himself; Ring-wraiths, also known as the Nazgul or The Nine; orcs; wolves; trolls; spiders; evil spirits; barrow wights; sorcerers; dragons; and vampires.

When an NPC or a location has something special to reveal, you are directed to a specific numbered paragraph in the user's manual. You read the paragraph and must sometimes make a selection based upon what you've read. We highly recommend that you often use the O key for Options to save your game. When you press O, a submenu pops up that enables you to save to one of the two save-game files, load one of your previously saved games, quit to DOS, or pause the game.

We did encounter one fatal crash when loading a previously saved game. It occurred after we had defeated a spider but forgot to duck, with Frodo taking too much damage during the encounter. We entered the Options menu, selected "Load game two," and received a "Range Error" and a dump out to the DOS prompt. However, this happened only once.

It is also rather strange to encounter someone on a roadway or in a building in LOTR and note that this NPC never leaves that spot—ever. You can come back four game-days later, and that person is still there awaiting you with the same response. It would've been preferable to code the NPCs so that, once spoken to, they go about their business.

The game requires your party to do a lot of walking, which can be rather slow and offers little activity between destinations. Some form of time compression would have been a nice addition, so that once you decided where you wished to go, movement proceeded at a faster pace.

The user interface is not perfect. A lot of

activity is required to move an item from one person to another, for example, and your mouse clicks must be firm. We noted that simply tapping the right mouse key does not ensure that the activity is undertaken. Listen for the "click" through whatever sound device you've selected for special effects to make certain your command has been carried out.

*LOTR* is a fine fantasy role-playing game and expands upon Tolkien's original story line. In spite of slow action and the less-than-pleasing NPC retention on-screen, this adventure is worth its purchase price. With smooth animation, fantastic VGA graphics, and true character personalities *LOTR* will certainly be one of the most popular fantasy role-playing games released this year.

**Elvira**

Accolade (408-985-1700)  
PC/MS-DOS version

\*\*\*\*  
\$59.95



*Elvira* (Accolade)

Combining graphic adventure and role-playing into one game, Accolade has published *Elvira*, with highly entertaining results. *Elvira*, the infamous horror-movie hostess whose television show originated in southern California, has inherited a castle from her grandmama, Emelda. The castle is complete with 800 rooms and numerous monsters. You have been hired to clear the castle of these goons so *Elvira* can live a peaceful life.

The action takes place from a first-person perspective. To the left of the main screen are icons for movement and inventories, while to the right are the commands to open, close, lock, unlock, look, examine, mix, consume, use, throw, and save the game. Below the main screen is the statistics and inventory window that shows the items you currently possess. Items can be viewed by clicking on the main screen. Movement is accomplished by clicking on a movement arrow located to the left of the main screen. Once you have picked up an object, you can examine it further, look in it, keep it, or drop it. Other items can be used to help you later in the adventure.

The statistics at the bottom of the screen reflect personal traits that start at a low level but can be raised through experience and magic. Strength affects how much damage you can do to an opponent in combat as well as the number of items you

**Wizardry**

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**Elvira (Accolade)**

can carry without being affected. Resilience determines the amount of damage you can take, while dexterity is the ability to gain the advantage at the start of a fight. Skill is how good you are with the particular weapon you are carrying. The skill level for the weapon increases as you gain experience using it. Life force is your hit points; lose them all and you die. Finally, experience represents the percentage of the game that you have solved.

Combat is well animated, but it takes some time to become experienced enough to knock off a belligerent nasty. When you encounter an enemy, you'll see the gruesome foe in front of you with its weapon drawn. The computer automatically switches you between an offensive and defensive mode, based on how well you or your nemesis aimed his last thrust and how effective the hit was. During the defensive mode, you can block or parry a blow; on offense, you can lunge or hack the foe. As you slice the enemy, you see the slash and hack marks. You'll also wince at the sight of your own blood when the enemy hits you. If you get scared, you can run away, but you might take a hit from the enemy as you leave combat.

During the game, you can find items in the castle that help Elvira concoct potions or create scrolls. When you find the materials needed to create a magical item (as described in the magic book), you take them to the kitchen. There, you hand the ingredients to Elvira, who makes the item for you.

The only problem we had in creating magical items was that the magic books lists of ingredients needed for the spells are covered by red letters. This makes the lists very difficult to read without the red cel. It was impossible to quickly find the

spell we needed, for we had to go over each of 20 pages with the red cel until the necessary spell was found. This type of copy protection slows down the game enormously. Accolade has used the copy-wheel method of game protection before, and such a system would work far better for *Elvira*.

*Elvira* is well worth its purchase price. The 800 rooms are sure to keep you occupied for a long time, and the graphics and sound will have you clinging to your seat for many a day. A warning on the box alerts you that the game contains some blood-curdling graphics—quite true. With VGA, we saw bodies with torn throats, heads in soup, and other disgusting things. This game is not for the weak of heart or stomach.

We liked the combat system, which is similar to Sierra's *Hero's Quest* system, and we also enjoyed the magic system. *Elvira* is a very good game, mixing adventure, role-playing, and graphics into a not-so-easy adventure challenge.

### **Eye of Horus Archipelagos**

Fanfare (Britannica Software)  
(415-597-5555)

Amiga versions \$39.95 each

The first of Fanfare's latest releases is *Eye of Horus*. You become Horus and must find the pieces of your father, Osiris, and assemble them in order to defeat the evil Set. The pieces of Osiris are contained within a labyrinth where hieroglyphs come alive to prevent you from completing your task. A life bar at the bottom of the screen shows how much damage Horus can take before he loses one of his three lives.

Horus possesses papyrus darts to de-



**Eye of Horus (Fanfare)**

stroy the evil that attacks him. He also has the ability to turn into a hawk to fly over certain enemies and to help him complete his mission. Along the way, Horus picks up amulets that can increase his weapons' powers or assist him in other ways. For example, the Amulet of the Steps maps the labyrinth as Horus explores its many passages, Elevators can lower or lift Horus to new corridors, but many of these require keys to unlock them first.

The Amiga graphics were not used to their full potential. The action was challenging, but we became bored running from cavern to cavern while being chased by hieroglyphs. We turned the game off after a few hours of running around in similar caverns while killing the same creatures over and over again. This game didn't hold our attention.

*Archipelagos*, the second game, is a first-person perspective, 3-D game that is very well designed. Earth has become a wasteland. Environmental purifiers are sent to Earth to cleanse the toxic mess by destroying the obelisk that spreads radioactivity over the planet.

The player must destroy things called nodes before the obelisks power system can be deactivated. This is not easy, for viral trees, eco-eggs, necromancers, and aircleaners can turn your environmental purifier into junk. You might even have to create a land bridge to reach and destroy a node.

The graphics are crisp and smooth on the Amiga. With 9,999 different parts of the planet to purify, this game challenges any player. The joy-stick controls are easy to master; you move around and eliminate the poisons of Earth, receiving more disinfectant by destroying the sand pods that grow around the planet. We liked this game and highly recommend it.

### **Secret Missions Expansion Disk for Wing Commander**

Origin (512-328-0282)

PC/MS-DOS version

Price n/a

For those wanting to continue the excitement after completing the missions for *Wing Commander*, Origin's expansion disk, called *Secret Missions*, fills the bill. The Kilrathi have created a new weapon that has destroyed an entire colony. Your ship, the *Tiger Claw*, must enter Kilrathi territo-

ry to destroy this device.

"This expansion disk will keep you glued to your seat, with 16 hard missions and four new Kilrathi ships to face. Any pilot can be transferred from the main disk into *Secret Missions*, retaining his rank and kills. A program is also included on this disk that allows players to fly any of the 40 original *Wing Commander* missions in any order. Our review was made using a VGA board and a Roland sound system. This is a great expansion, with a new story line and equally challenging missions to complete. We highly recommend it to anybody who loves *Wing Commander* as much as we do.

### Shadow of the Beast Shadow of the Beast II

Psychosis

Amiga versions

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

Prices n/a

These games are two of the best Amiga arcade-action games. Both fully utilize the Amiga's graphic potential.

In *Shadow of the Beast*, you were metamorphosed from a child into a messenger beast by Zelek, the Beast Lord. You served Zelek well until the truth about your former human life was revealed to you. Knowing this information, you become the beast on the trail of the Beast Lord.

The directions for *Shadow of the Beast* are simple; moving the joy stick causes the professionally animated on-screen persona to move left, move right, jump, or crouch. Pushing the joy sticks fire button makes the warrior punch, kick, or use any weapon found during the game. The backgrounds are beautifully created, and 3-D scrolling really makes this game a programming masterpiece. Your enemies are also animated very well. When leaving a scene, a still graphic appears with text to keep you occupied while the game loads the next part of this game's 3.5 megabytes of code. *Shadow of the Beast* is not an easy adventure to master, and you will not finish it without some sweat on your part. It is certainly well worth its cost.

But *Psychosis* really outdid itself when creating *Shadow of the Beast II*. From the beautifully cinematic introduction to the finish, this game is great fun. The Beast Lord wants revenge for the traitorous actions of his former messenger (you) and gets it by kidnapping your human sister. You, once again, become the messenger beast who must travel through perilous terrain and encounter deadly creatures to rescue your sister. This game is still heavily arcade style, but it has elements of an adventure game as well.

Not all creatures need to be killed; you can talk and obtain information from some of these odd inhabitants. Gold becomes a prize for killing certain creatures, and it may be used to buy powerful weapons or food to restore lost energy, or to gain access to forbidden places. Puzzles in this game might require interaction with and help from other creatures.

*Shadow of the Beast II* is as difficult to

conquer as its namesake. Fans of the first game will not be disappointed by this sequel. It is a superb buy for Amiga gamers.

### Blazing Lazors

NEC

Turbographx-16 video game

\*\*\*\*\*

Price n/a

This classic arcade game was designed for those who want nothing but a fierce, mindless shoot-'em-up. You fly through eight game stages in various attempts to defeat the Dark Squadron, thereby preventing the destruction of Earth.

As you battle against the well-animated backgrounds, don't forget to pick up weapons and other enhancements left behind by your vanquished foes. Among such great finds are homing missiles that chase after the enemy, shields that offer protection from crossfire, a multi-body that mimics your ship's movements and adds extra firepower, and equipment that strengthens the power of your ship's weapons.

The power of your ship's main weapons can also be increased by picking up balls left behind by defeated enemies. Not only do these increase the destructive potential of weapons, but they might also change the type of weapon your ship has as well. With so many weapon possibilities, it's fun to go out and watch millions of enemies crumble underneath your weaponry. We first saw this game when it was released for the Turbographx-16 about a year ago, but we didn't really sit down and enjoy it until now. This game is a must buy for any arcade enthusiast.

### The Buggies

#### Command H.Q.

MicroPlay (301-771-6717)

PC/MS-DOS version

X

\$59.95

This is a fun, easy-to-learn, strategic global-conquest game designed by Ozark Software. Unfortunately, it has one fatal flaw: its copy protection.

The game can be played during World War I, II, III, or IV. Players must capture the enemy's capital cities by using infantry, armor, aircraft, cruisers, transports, carriers, nuclear weapons, or satellite weaponry. Foreign aid also plays an important role in determining the winner of these wars.

Modem capability enables two gamers to wage war over the telephone lines. The game's simple command structure allows even novice gamers to give complicated orders such as amphibious assaults, air strikes, dogfights, air transport, and foreign aid, as well as to destroy and control satellites. A bar beneath the selected unit reflects the strength of that unit. When the bar disappears, the unit is destroyed. Capturing cities, oil fields, docks, and bases replenishes a unit's strength.

We really enjoyed this game, especially the short animation clips that show units

attacking ships, planes, and cities. The only problem, as noted earlier, was the copy protection. Even after we had typed in the correct word from the game manual, we couldn't access the game. This occurred three out of five times when booting *Command H.Q.*

A call to MicroPlay's support line confirmed that users might need to go through the copy protection *ten to fifteen times* before getting into the game. This is absurd! In MicroPlay's defense, it was stated that not all copies of this game have this bug. So, if you want to risk your money and hopefully get through the copy protection, you will find *Command H.Q.* a game that definitely lives up to past Dan Bunten successes such as *M.U.L.E.* and *Seven Cities of Gold*.

### Clue corner

#### The Dark Heart of Uukrul

(Broderbund)

1. Make certain to have TALIS cast if you can, and check for secret doors often. This will sometimes turn up sums of money.

2. Spend money on improving your armor first, as in the beginning you won't often find weapons. If you can't use an object because you are not high-enough level, don't sell it right away unless you need the money. Store it in a sanctuary, and check again when you reach the next level. Give the weapon to everyone in your party in turn, as there are some weapons only one person can use.

3. Check for secret doors in the temples to the gods, Ufthu especially.

4. To the east of Urran is a 5' X 5' room with doors in every section of the wall. As soon as you enter the room, turn left to the leftmost door on the top wall (as viewed on the computer-screen map).

Follow the passage behind the door; it will bring you to a large room. If you manage to find your way through to the other door, you are rewarded with the Medal of Escape, which brings you back to that exact spot when you rub it.

5. Casting spells is the only way for mages to improve their ring types. Clerics improve slowly over time if they don't cast spells.

6. Read all signs and maps if you can. Copy the maps; they come in handy later.

7. If you find something interesting, such as an unmarked altar, label the spot so you can find it later.

Ben Russell

Milford CN

Another month gone, another column done. We hope you continue to find this information helpful in your gaming. Please, don't forget to mail your hints, tips, and other worldly advice to us, the Lessers, at: 521 Czerny Street, Tracy CA 95376, U.S.A. Until next time, game on! 🐉





he door of the Swordfish Inn banged open, startling Ilsimar as she scrubbed the bar for the expected noon crowd.

"Dent my door, will you?" she called, throwing down her cloth and smoothing back a strand of rust-colored hair from her eyes. "As if I

have money to replace doors constantly!"

She stopped as the silhouetted figure stumbled inside. It was Jace the miller, her erstwhile suitor from the town of Crossings. Thick chest heaving, he tried to speak, but no sound came.

"What in the name of Sorwe is the matter with you?" she asked as he sank into a chair.

Face flushed, he gulped for air. "Tarvin's crossed the border!"

Ilsimar laughed. "Again?" King Tarvin of Lassa was notorious for failed attempts to enlarge his tiny realm.

Jace pounded his calloused fist against the table. "No! You don't understand! This time he's brought a couple of sorcerers with him!" He paused, sucking in a breath.

"They stripped Crossings of everything valuable, and the people are being sent to the slave markets in Nisra! I barely escaped to warn you! They're coming here next, and they won't stop until they've conquered all of Aldagar!"

Surprised and suddenly afraid, Ilsimar said nothing but fetched a large mug of mead for Jace. He guzzled the pale red-gold liquid and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

"When did they attack?" she asked.

"Yesterday morning. I rode all night."

She chewed her lower lip. Yesterday. Tarvin might reach Rosedale tomorrow, depending on how many men he had and how fast they could travel through Farrup Woods. She called the two boys who worked for her. "Ben, find Master Cal and tell him to come immediately, then go to the chapel and ask Healer Vivianne to join us. Tullee, take care of Jace's horse. Quickly now!"

The boys dashed out the door like hounds on a rabbit trail, past a pair of curious girls and into the early summer morning. Ilsimar refilled Jace's mug and took a cup of wine herself. *Lady Sorwe, what can we do?* she wondered as she downed the wine.

Cal the blacksmith arrived moments later. "What's so important, Ilsie?" he asked with a wide grin as he, strode to the table.

"Tarvin's at Crossings."

He grinned. "Made it that far before his men decided to go home? Must be a record."

"This is serious, Cal! The villagers are being sent to Nisra!"

"Slaves?" Cal's dark eyes bulged, and his jaw dropped. "Tarvin's taken slaves?"

Ilsimar nodded.

The blacksmith shook his head. "We've got trouble."

"Trouble? What trouble?" Healer Vivianne stood in the doorway, leaning on her staff. Her plaited hair glowed sunlight yellow, but her eyes were storm-cloud gray. She joined them at the table.

Ilsimar turned to Jace. "Tell us exactly what you saw—

# Swordfish and Saucery

By Deborah Millitello

Illustrations by Draw Pardner

everything. Any detail might make the difference."

Jace squeezed his eyes shut for a moment, forehead drawn with tight lines. "I was on my way back from delivering flour, and everything was fine, peaceful. Then I saw them—hundreds of men and horses landing on the riverbank from rafts. I *know* they hadn't been there a moment before. They mounted on shore and attacked."

Cal looked incredulous. "How in the name of Sorwe did that bunch of farmers-turned-soldiers take out the border garrison?"

"They didn't. The sorcerers hit the barracks with something—fire, lightning, I'm not sure. The building just exploded and killed most of the guards. I saw a few soldiers on horseback riding east, but they were the only ones to escape. Then the Lassans attacked Crossings. The villagers were no match for soldiers." Jace paused for a gulp of mead before he continued. "I crept through Old Barney's vineyard and climbed on the inn roof to see what was happening. Everyone was rounded up and held in the market square, except the innkeeper and his family. Tarvin and the two sorcerers made Old Barney put them up at the inn. I waited 'til dark, then crept away and came straight here."

"The sorcerers," Ilsmar interrupted, "what did they wear?"

"Purple and silver robes."

"Great," she muttered. "Masters. We are in trouble."

Cal raised a soot-colored brow. "You know magic, don't you? You went to Volyn's school."

"But I didn't reach master rank. I'm no match for them."

Jace grabbed her arm. "But you have to do something! Tarvin'll be here tomorrow, maybe sooner!"

Ilsmar scrunched her lips and stared at the table. "We can't run fast enough to avoid Tarvin. Not enough wagons and horses. We can't fight, not against trained soldiers. Vivianne, are there any Cold Ones running around you haven't sent back to the grave? If you could turn them toward Crossings, they could cause some havoc and delay Tarvin a while."

The healer shook her head. "Sorry. I banished the last undead three weeks ago. Of course, it's always possible for new ones to pop up at any time."

"We can hope. Anything to scare off Tarvin."

Cal rubbed his chin, smearing it with more charcoal dust. "Why won't they go home this time? Lassans don't like to be away from their fields for long. That's why Tarvin's always failed before."

"Must be the sorcerers."

"All we gotta do is wait 'til the Lassans have had enough" and decide to go back home. If only we could make them homesick."

Ilsmar's head snapped up. "What?"

Cal cocked his head and looked puzzled. "I said, I wish we could make 'em homesick. You know, make 'em want to go home. Why?"

She drummed her fingers on the table. "I . . . I'm not sure, but . . . great Sorwe . . . if it could work."

"You know how to stop Tarvin?"

She drummed faster, then stopped. "Maybe. I can't promise: If the sorcerers are masters, they might detect

what I'd be doing. But then, they might not."

Cal threw up his arms and said through gritted teeth, "What are you talking about?"

Ilsmar stared absently at the table. "Something simple. Tarvin's sorcerers might not expect that." She stood and arched her back slowly to stretch her tight muscles. "And now, we have to make plans."

"So," Vivianne said, "what do we do?"

Ilsmar winked at Jace, then smiled. "We make a feast for Tarvin."

It was just after midday when the first of Ilsmar's alarm spells, set about a mile from Rosedale, was tripped. Ilsmar watched the clouds of dust betraying Tarvin's approach, and when she felt the second alarm spell, she signaled the musicians. Flutes and pipes, lutes and drums, mandolins, rattles, and tambourines, all played a lively tune. Young women with flowers in their hair and bells on their ankles danced in the road while girls scattered petals in the dust. Boys waved pennants; men, their hats. And everyone cheered as Tarvin, flanked by two middle-aged men in purple and silver, halted before Cal, Vivianne, and Ilsmar.

Cal bowed with a grace that surprised Ilsmar. "Welcome, Tarvin, King of Lassa, mighty warrior, great conqueror. How blessed is Rosedale that you favor us with your presence. We beg you to enter our village and accept our hospitality."

Tarvin frowned, pulling more lines in his round cheeks, then raised a sandy eyebrow. He turned to the snow-blond sorcerer on his left and mumbled something. The sorcerer looked straight at Ilsmar, then whispered back to Tarvin.

"I accept your offer," Tarvin said as he sat up as straight as his thick belly allowed. He turned his gaze to Ilsmar. "And who are you, sorceress?"

Ilsmar curtsied slowly, blushing as intensely as she could. "You honor me, Your Majesty. I am Ilsmar, but I am no sorceress. I studied at Volyn, but I never mastered more than the easy magics—practical spells to chase rats and ants from my kitchen, preserve food and improve its flavor, ward against thieves—"

"Sound alarms against invaders," broke in the blond sorcerer.

Ilsmar blushed again. "Yes, O Master . . ."

"Galt," he said. "And this is Keld."

"Master Galt. Master Keld." She bowed to each.

"Alarms are one of the highest magics I can do. I was never strong enough to learn the great spells. But some people say I'm a sorceress in the kitchen. I learned the use of culinary herbs quite well." She smiled at him. "Please, Your Majesty, masters, I ask you to honor my inn by staying in my best rooms and allowing me the privilege of serving you."

Tarvin glanced from Galt to Keld. They both smiled a sly half-smirk and nodded at the king. Tarvin gazed down at her for a moment, his eyes glittering like emeralds, then said, "I accept your offer, yes, most definitely. And I look forward to being served by you."

Ilsmar had an uncomfortable feeling he implied more than he said, but she forced a smile. "If you and your

companions will follow me . . .”

Turning to a lean man in a studded black leather vest, Tarvin said, “Captain, set up camp around the village. Confiscate all weapons.”

“We’ve gathered all our weapons in a pile at the edge of the village,” IIsimar said quickly, “to save you time and trouble. And we have food and drink in the square for all your men – and dancing.”

“Later, yes, perhaps later,” Tarvin said, waving his hand to dismiss her.

With Cal and Vivianne beside her, IIsimar led the way back to town, the musicians still playing, women dancing, girls scattering petals before Tarvin. Garlands of flowers hung from poles and draped windows. The aroma of whole pigs, roasting slowly over pits of glowing coals, filled the air.

IIsimar stopped at the inn door, opened it, and bowed. “Enter and be welcomed, King Tarvin.”

He stared at the sign over the door for a moment before he dismounted. “A swordfish. Most unusual, most unusual.”

“My father was a fisherman, and he was especially fond of swordfish.” IIsimar told Ben and Tullee to tend the horses, then she escorted the king, the sorcerers, and ten guards toward their rooms. “Would you like to bathe, Your Majesty? The road is dusty and hot.”

“Yes, I would.”

“And you, also, masters?” she asked.

Galt and Keld nodded.

“Hot water will be brought in a moment. After you have refreshed yourselves, please come to the common room. There will be feasting, music, dancing, and other entertainments. I hope that you will be pleased.”

Tarvin smiled, and his eyes were cold and hard. “We shall see, yes, we shall see.”

She bowed and hurried to the kitchen to inspect the meal.

The common room had been cleared of all but three tables, two placed perpendicular to the other. The center table was covered with an embroidered linen cloth and set with pewter plates and mugs. Finger bowls, with rose petals floating on the water, sat beside linen towels just as IIsimar had seen at a banquet once. A platter of sharp cheese was flanked by bowls of summer fruits and early vegetables. Chairs had replaced the usual benches. Things looked as elaborate as she could make them in the short time she’d had. “Now, if everything else is ready . . .”

“Ready?”

IIsimar started as Galt spoke behind her, almost in her ear. She caught herself before she called out a plague of lice on him, and she smiled as she faced him. “Y-yes, Master Galt. The meal . . . if the meal is ready, I’m ready to serve you, King Tarvin, and Master Keld.”

He returned a disarming smile; but his aqua eyes showed no hint of friendliness. “His Majesty and Keld will be down shortly. But I’d like some wine right now.”

“Of course, master.” She went to the bar, took out a bottle of spring wine, and filled a mug.

“Join me,” Galt said as he took the wine.

“If you wish.” IIsimar took another mug and filled it

from the same bottle. She raised it and said, “Sorwe’s blessing.”

Galt copied her action but hesitated until she took a sip, then he tasted it, too. “Quite good,” he said, “and not the least bit poisoned.”

IIsimar looked shocked. “Master Galt, why would I try to poison you?”

He just smiled back at her. “Cherry wine, isn’t it? But I taste something unusual.”

“Jasmine flowers and almonds. It’s a specialty of Rosedale.”

Galt raised his mug to her, then finished the wine. Tarvin, Keld, and his guards joined them moments later. IIsimar showed them to the table, then called Tullee.

“Fetch Healer Vivianne.” The boy scurried out the door.

“Do you expect someone to be ill?” Galt asked, eyes narrowed.

IIsimar laughed. “No, of course not. Vivianne is very skilled at the lute. I thought His Majesty might enjoy some music while he ate.”

“Yes,” Tarvin said, “yes, I would.”

“Wine, Your Majesty?” IIsimar filled his mug from the open bottle. “Master Galt has already sampled it for your protection.” She flashed a sweet smile at Galt.

Tarvin sipped the wine, then took a long drink. “Ah-h-h, I haven’t tasted spring wine like that in ages.”

“I’m honored you enjoy it.” IIsimar bowed, hurried to the kitchen, and came back with two more bottles, of the wine. One of the girls she’d hired to help serve followed with a plate of flat bread rounds. Two other girls brought more bowls of fruit and vegetables to the side tables. After serving the king, IIsimar poured wine, and the girl served bread to the others.

Vivianne arrived with her lute, and so did two young men who could juggle and do tumbling. Cal came soon after, carrying a yoke to entertain with feats of strength. Ben and Tullee carried the roast pig from the outside pit to the spit in the common room, where several chickens, a leg of lamb, and a quail already dripped basting fat on the embers. IIsimar put a final glaze of honey on the quail before she slid it onto a plate and presented it to Tarvin. A spicy, sweet chutney and a rhubarb relish were served with the meats. Fruit and vegetables were replenished; mugs were kept full of wine. Vivianne played; the jugglers juggled; and Cal lifted four men, holding onto ropes at the ends of the yoke, off the floor. The guards cheered, and Tarvin clapped. Even Galt smiled his pleasure.

After filling the mugs again and serving honey-glazed shortbread for dessert, IIsimar stood before Tarvin and curtsied. “And now, Your Majesty, I ask permission to entertain you with my simple skills.”

Guards sprang from chairs and drew swords. Galt and Keld mumbled spells of warding against harm.

Tarvin glared at her and said in a quiet, threatening tone, “Beware, little sorceress. I am well protected, very well protected. You shall die if you try to harm me.”

Frightened by Tarvin’s cold gaze as much as by the glint of cold steel, IIsimar sank to one knee and stared at the floor. “Your Majesty, I swear by Sorwe, I wish you no harm. Even if I did, I know that with a wave of the hand

Master Galt or Master Keld could shatter any spell I'd weave." She raised her gaze slowly until she looked straight at Tarvin. "I wish only to entertain you."

Half a smile twitched the corner of Tarvin's mouth. "Then do so—carefully."

With a glance and nod to Vivianne, who began playing a Lassa ballad, Ilsimar stood and made a graceful curtsy. "Your Majesty, masters, soldiers of Lassa, I am no sorceress, but I have learned little magics: how to season a special sauce, how to make venison as tender as lamb, how to grow the sweetest fruit and to keep wine from turning sour." She waved her hands. "And . . . how to call fireflies in the daytime. Come, little night lamps."

Through windows and door came tiny blinking lights, zipping around the room until they formed a circle of glittering light over Ilsimar's head. She put her thumb and forefinger together like a ring. The fireflies flew through it, but when they came out the other side, they formed a solid circllet of gold. Ilsimar tossed the circllet in the air and whispered a spell. The gold became fireflies again.

"Marvelous!" Tarvin said, clapping his thick, stubby hands. Keld smiled. Galt looked surprised.

"Master Keld," Ilsimar said, "choose a fruit from the bowl in front of you." Keld selected a peach. "Master Galt, split the peach and give me the seed."

Galt cut the fruit, separated the halves, then stared up wide-eyed at Ilsimar before he handed her a seed, small as an apple seed but silvery. She took a clay pot, already filled with dirt, and planted the seed. "Life, little seed."

A tiny silver tendril pushed through the soil, growing thick, until it nearly burst the pot. Delicate silver flowers blossomed in moments, then fell petal by silver petal to the floor. Leaves like polished silver sprouted and grew, almost hiding silver apples the size of a robin egg. Ilsimar picked one and offered it to Tarvin. His eyes widened as he reached for it, but he hesitated.

"It isn't poisoned, Your Majesty," she said. "Let Master Galt or Keld examine it. But I promise you, you've never tasted anything as sweet, as delicious as this. I'll even taste it first." She took a small bite, then held the apple out to Tarvin.

Keld held his hand near the apple, muttered something, and nodded to the king. "It is safe, Your Majesty."

Tarvin nibbled the apple, then popped it in his mouth. "Excellent, truly excellent!" he said, still chewing the fruit. "I must have that tree!"

"It is yours, Your Majesty." Ilsimar smiled shyly, curtsied, and offered apples to the sorcerers.

Galt examined his fruit carefully. "This isn't one of the little magics. I know masters who couldn't do this."

Ilsimar's blush wasn't feigned. To have Galt's approval was gratifying.

She bowed again. "And now, I call colors. Red from a strawberry." She pointed at the bowl of fruit. A ball of red light sprang from it and hovered above her. "Orange from carrot. Yellow from squash. Green from mint jelly. Blue from blueberries. Indigo from cloth. Purple from plum." She held her hands above her head, palms toward Tarvin, and slowly drew them apart. The globes of light stretched into bands that arced from wall to wall. "A rainbow without rain."

A grin crinkling his jowls, Tarvin banged his mug on the table. "Magnificent! You must come to my court and entertain me always!"

"I'm honored, Your Majesty." Ilsimar glanced at Vivianne, who began a Lassa love song. "I have one more gift for each of you. Your Majesty, what is your favorite flower?"

Tarvin cocked his head, then said, "The Cammis rose. My garden is filled with them."

Touching the rainbow's red band, Ilsimar whispered a spell. Red mist swirled in her hand and formed a rose, crimson with a white heart, fragrant and in the height of its beauty. She presented it to Tarvin. He inhaled its scent and sighed, a tear wavering at the corners of his eyes.

"Beautiful," he murmured, "simply beautiful."

"Master Keld?" Ilsimar asked.

Keld looked thoughtful a moment. "A butterdrop. Near my home there are meadows filled with that wild flower."

Ilsimar touched the yellow light, which filled her hand and shrank to a tiny golden flower. She handed it to Keld. "It reminds me of home," he said softly. "I haven't been there in many years . . . many years."

Galt started and rested his chin in the crook of his hand while he stared at Ilsimar.

"And you, Master Galt?" she asked.

He didn't answer for such a long time, Ilsimar thought he hadn't heard her. "Master?"

Galt looked straight at her, and a slow smile bowed his mouth. "A shadow lily."

Ilsimar shivered but reached up to the very edge of the purple light. A mist so dark it was almost black churned in her hand, coalescing to a lily, soft as velvet, dark as midnight. Shadow lilies grew in the darkest part of dense forests and were used in conjuration of ill and distillation of poison. "Beware, master," she whispered as she placed the flower in Galt's hands.

His eyes glittered as he leaned close to her. "As always sorceress."

Ilsimar stepped back, worried. Did he know what she had planned? No, surely. No one could, no one but the Sorcerer Lords. Galt wasn't one of them.

She touched the blue light. Bluebells, the most common flower of Lassa, appeared in her hand. She gave them to the captain and the guards.

"And your favorite flower?" Galt asked her.

Ilsimar jumped, startled by his question, but caught herself before she cried out. "Uh, the trumpet flower."

Out of the air he plucked a trumpet flower, orange as carrots and as large as his lily. "For you, Ilsimar."

His voice was a caress; his touch, an invitation. Blood flowed hot through her; heart pounded against her ribs. She shook off the effect, gulping for air.

Swallowing to relax her throat, Ilsimar began to chant softly:

"Jasmine-almond-cherry wine,  
'Honey sweet, refreshing mint,  
Silver apple—magic fruit,  
Homeland flower, lively lute.  
Though you wander, though you roam,  
All these things will draw you home."

"No-o-o!" Galt's eyes widened with panic; his jaw dropped. "No! Stop! I can't . . ." He struggled to his feet and reached for her. "You . . ." he gasped, "you did this. I should've known . . . I should've known." He dropped back to his chair and closed his eyes. The same contented smile that appeared on all the other guests at the feast tugged at Galt's mouth.

Ilsimar's chest hurt. She let out the breath trapped inside. Her knees buckled, and she collapsed on the wooden floor. She felt chilled, in spite of her heart pounding, and worn out. Too much magic at one time, and especially the last spell. Cal and Jace grabbed her arms and lifted her to her feet.

"What did you do to them?" Jace asked as she sank into the chair Vivianne had vacated.

"Home Wish," Ilsimar whispered, leaning back against the cool stone wall.

"What?" Jace and Cal asked together.

"Home Wish. The spell I created for my Master Test.

It could create a desire to go home or remain home. The lords of the Sorcerer Council didn't think it was good enough to grant me master rank. Foolish, simple magic, they called it." Ilsimar gave them a weak smile.

Cal looked worried. "Will it last?"

Ilsimar nodded. "Galt and Keld might find a way to break it in time, but the others won't. When they wake, Tarvin will take his army back to Lassa and stay home from now on."

Cal whistled a sigh. "Not bad for simple magic. I didn't know you were that powerful."

Vivianne prayed away Ilsimar's fatigue. "Will you go back to Volyn to try for master rank again?"

Smiling, Ilsimar shook her head. "I don't want to leave my inn or Rosedale." Her smile broadened. "You see, I drank the wine and ate the honey. I tasted the mint and the silver apple, and I took the trumpet flower. When I cast the Home Wish, I cast it on myself, too."

Ω



# Role-playing reviews

An update on the wizards' spelling competition, part 1

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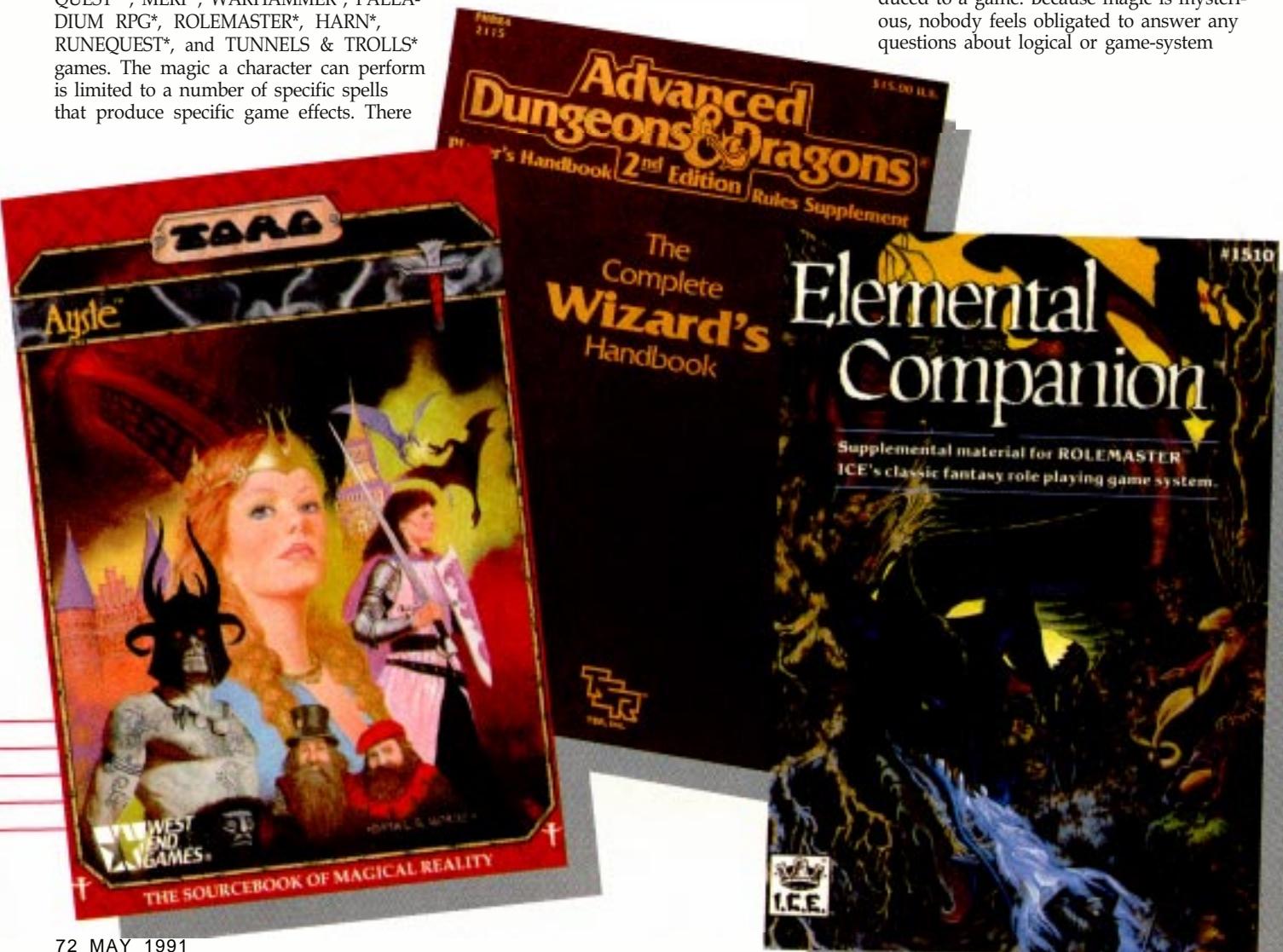
Before we go to this month's reviews of fantasy role-playing game magic systems and supplements, let me whack on the chalkboard with my pointer and lecture briefly on the historical development of FRPG magic systems.

**In the beginning:** Your fantasy campaign probably uses spell-list magic. All the best-known FRPG systems use spell lists, such as the D&D® and AD&D®, DRAGON-QUEST™, MERP\*, WARHAMMER\*, PALLADIUM RPG\*, ROLEMASTER\*, HARN\*, RUNEQUEST\*, and TUNNELS & TROLLS\* games. The magic a character can perform is limited to a number of specific spells that produce specific game effects. There

are no theoretical limits or game-system rules governing the effects produced by magic. Spells are typically arranged in hierarchies according to how powerful an effect they have on a game. A spell is restricted to use by high-level mages primarily because it has a powerful game effect, not because it logically seems like a difficult magic effect to produce. No one asks inconvenient questions like "But how

does magic actually, uh, work?" or "Shouldn't there be some kind of coherent logic behind all these weird effects? You know, like in physics?"

The virtues of spell-list systems are numerous. Spell-list magic is simple, flexible, and open ended, since there are few setting or mechanics restrictions on the effects it can represent. Any mythic or fiction-based magic effects can be introduced to a game. Because magic is mysterious, nobody feels obligated to answer any questions about logical or game-system



contradictions. Spell lists successfully produce the magical effects seen in most heroic fantasy fiction and film, which are rarely called upon to provide the underlying rationale for the magic effects they feature.

Most fantasy role gamers—myself included—have little need for anything more sophisticated than a spell-list system. However, you can often find many useful ideas in more ambitious game mechanics and conceptions for magic.

**Primitive sophistication:** In the ancient, obscure, out-of-print-and-mentioned-only-to-bring-a-wistful-smile-to-old-veterans-and-to-assume-a-haughty-air-before-young-whippersnappers department, several early game systems for FRPG magic are particularly noteworthy. Though FGU's CHIVALRY & SORCERY\* game was basically a spell-list system, its lovably clumsy and unplayable rules featured oodles of flashy medieval historical chrome. My oldest AD&D game character still carries around vials of Great Water of Ruby and True Lead from a campaign where the GM pirated wizardly widgets from the C&S game, and C&S books are still an excellent source for magic ideas with a properly medieval flavor. The AUTHENTIC THAUMATURGY game—an obscure, marginally playable, and out-of-print system for “authentic” magic spell-casting—is most notable for the fact that its author, P.E.I. Bonewits, actually managed to get a degree in magic from U.C.L.A. or U.S.C. back in the Gay Sixties. The MELANDA game, by John Corradin and Lee McCormick, another obscure system privately published and still to be found in dusty corners of venerable game stores, uses a clever method of combining runic elements into magical sentences to achieve a wide variety of magical effects.

In the venerable-but-still-in-print category, Chaosium's SIDRMBRINGER\* and The Avalon Hill Game Company's RUNEQUEST 3rd Edition games have especially interesting magic-system conceptions. All sorcerous effects in the STORMBRINGER magic system are based on the summoning and binding of elementals and demons, thus neatly sidestepping the question of what a mage actually does when he performs magic. Thus, a wizard summons up a sylph (air elemental) if he wants to send an air-mail message, or a fire elemental if he wants to bake some goblins. If he wants magical armor, he just summons up a demon and persuades it to get into armor form and do useful magical things. This narrative conception of a wizard has its own logical consistency and plausibility, particularly in Moorcock's fantasy settings, and the magical effects have a lot of personality because elementals and demons have lots of personality. However, this approach isn't appropriate for most other heroic-fantasy settings; the GM and players often end up in long discussions about what specific game abilities an elemental or demon should have.

The RUNEQUEST 3rd Edition Sorcery rules, one of the game system's three parallel magic system options, introduced an early attempt to permit a certain amount of custom spell design. The Sorcery mechanics themselves are still worthy of study by students of game-magic systems, but the mechanics are not particularly well suited to the Glorantha setting, and there's little point in playing the RUNEQUEST game except in Glorantha.

**Magic today:** Back in DRAGON® issue #147, July 1989, I reviewed several examples of fancy FRPG magic systems. Two of them, I.C.E.'s FANTASY HERO\* and Steve Jackson Games' GURPS\* games, are well-engineered conceptions with plenty of bells and whistles, but both are comparatively weak in specific setting tone and flavor. The third, White Wolfs ARS MAGICA\* game (formerly by Lion Rampant), focuses on the setting and adventure aspects of a magic campaign, and features a narrative rationale underlying the magic, though it sacrifices some of its war-gaming appeal in the process. Now there is also West End Games' TORG\* magic system, which successfully combines clever, flexible spell effects and spell-design mechanics with a semi-coherent, glib rationale for magic. In this review, we'll look at *Aysle*, the heroic-fantasy supplement for the TORG game, and *The Complete Wizard's Handbook* for the AD&D 2nd Edition game. (We'll save the ARS MAGICA game's supplements for next month.)

But first, let's take a look at a noteworthy FRPG magic supplement in the venerable spell-list tradition.

**Elemental Companion \***  
ROLEMASTER supplement  
144-page softbound book  
Iron Crown Enterprises \$15  
*Design:* Mike Carlyle  
*Development/editing:* Coleman Charlton

*Elemental Companion* is an elaboration of ROLEMASTER game spell lists, professions, skills, magical beings, and magic mechanics with a notion-sparking conception of magic as fantasy elemental forces.

**Elemental theories:** The niftiest feature of *Elemental Companion* is its medieval scholastic style of rationalizing the interactions of elemental forces to produce the magical effects encountered in a fantasy world. This scheme has lots of charm and also has interesting implications for adventuring in a fantasy setting.

The prime material plane, see, is a nice place where all the elemental substances are in equal proportions and are in balance. Scholars have produced a list of known pure elemental substances. The Lesser Basic Elements are Air, Cold, Light, Vibration, and Water. The Greater Basic Elements are Gravity, Heat, Dark, Inertia, and Earth. Compound elements are those composed of two or three basic elements; the compound elements are Electricity, Fire, Ice, and Wind. Super compound

elements are compounds containing some of each of all the basic elements; the super compound elements are Plasma and Vacid. The complex elements are, well, complex; they are Aether, Chaos, Nether, Nexus, Spirit, and Time. Each of these essential elemental substances has its own realms where there is way too much of the elemental substance for a mundane person's comfort. And each realm has its own denizens, which right there starts the fantasy campaign GM to musing, “Say, I wonder what a time elemental looks like? Wouldn't *that* be fun to stick in a magic wand?”

This supplement also introduces other entertaining fantasy magic notions. For example, did you know it was possible for mundane beings to crossbreed with elemental beings, producing offspring with some really funky magical features? For instance, the child of an elf and a water elemental might sweat a lot or be thirsty all the time. A pure elemental being may display fancy magical effects like being surrounded by a layer of its component elemental substance (e.g., fire, water, electricity). It also may absorb elemental substance from its surroundings, growing larger and more powerful, and as a pure source of its element it may be a conduit into its own elemental plane through which a shrewd wizard might draw more elemental substance.

My favorite bit of theoretical magic jargon is “proto-elemental poisoning.” Proto-elemental poisoning is what happens when mundane substances (which are balanced mixtures of various elemental substances) get infected with proto-elemental matter (the pure, unadmixed elemental substance). The example given is a fighter who slices into a dragon and gets sprayed with dragon blood. The dragon's magical nature comes from the presence of proto-elemental matter in his blood, you see, so this cold drake naturally has proto-elemental Cold matter in his blood. The poor fighter has only a moment to savor his triumph over the cold drake as he listens to a roaring in his ears and watches the sparkle of his flesh freezing solid. (Anybody remember “ice-nine” from Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle*?)

By the way, the kiss or bite of a pure elemental being or an elemental crossbreed might cause proto-elemental poisoning. That sort of thing might affect PC dating habits, yes?

**Elemental spell lists:** The spell lists follow the ROLEMASTER model (of course) and are extensive and pretty neat, particularly when they extrapolate some aspect of elemental theory into a magic effect. For example, consider the spell “Disperse Type A Element.” The specified element in the spell's area of effect produces that element's distinctive effect—light, for example, glows in that area. An ultrafine covering of elemental material is deposited on objects and beings in the area of effect, and it remains active if the

objects or beings leave the area of effect. I'm not at all sure how such a spell works in a fantasy campaign, but it would be interesting to find out. Such spell concepts encourage, nay, demand that players and GMs exercise their magical imaginations. If dispersed light is easy to conceptualize, what about air? Can a character walk out of a Dispersed Air Effect and breathe water? Maybe not, if there's not enough air, but it might keep an object from getting wet from rain for an instant. I love the idea of spells that have lots of improvisational potentials to be discovered only through playing sessions and late-night player and GM scheming.

Among the other spell effects represented here are glyphs (which store and trigger spells on an in-flux material like air or water), symbols (which store and trigger spells on a large immobile stone surface), runes (which permit the casting of spells by reading runic inscriptions from scrolls), wards (which store and trigger spells when an area is entered), lesser elemental missile and area attacks, elemental items, mobile and immobile elemental barriers, protection from elementals and elemental environments, summoning, energy absorption, banishment, gates, healing, shaping and control of elementals, elemental walls and barriers, elemental spirit binding, weather mastery, elemental curses, commune with elementals, elemental "fires" (i.e., active elemental forces for creating and working elemental materials), elemental guardians, and so on. For a spell list, it's a pretty impressive array of elemental magical applications.

**Other features:** *Elemental Companion's* treatment of elemental creatures is extensive and encyclopedic, and it provides lots of nice new monster types, but I was a bit disappointed that all the creatures were essentially unsubtle, nasty, psychologically uninteresting monsters. (Why aren't there more Joe Average, silent-majority-type citizens in the other elemental planes? Or is it that wizards summon only the nasty ones to visit our plane?) It's only a minor issue; given the multiplicity of attack effects supported by ROLEMASTER mechanics, a lot of monsters is really what's wanted here, I suppose. With *Elemental Companion* you also get . . . lots of new tables! (*De gustibus non est disputandum.*) The "Elemental Interaction Guidelines" are clever, effective guidelines for handling the interaction of various elemental substances (always a tricky fantasy magic feature), and the treatment of cone effects is similarly sharp. The supplement also introduces some interesting new character classes.

**Evaluation:** Very nice, very nice indeed. This is a lovely supermarket of fantasy magic concepts and mechanics. Admittedly, the *Elemental Companion* adds a lot of detail and mechanics to an already rather elaborate ROLEMASTER system, and even those who play ROLEMASTER games may have grave reservations about introducing all of the *Elemental Companion's*

*ion's* new features. But as an example of intelligent, entertaining, and imaginative extension of spell-list magic systems, *Elemental Companion* is a good read and a promising source of fantasy ideas.

ROLEMASTER products are available from Iron Crown Enterprises, Box 1605, Charlottesville VA 22902, U.S.A.

### **The Complete Wizard's Handbook**

AD&D 2nd Edition supplement

128-page softbound book

TSR, Inc.

\$15

*Design:* Rick Swan

*Editing:* Anne Brown

All AD&D 2nd Edition game players and Dungeon Masters ought to have a copy of this. Some material is bland and unexciting, and some is of doubtful utility, but two elements—the wizard kits and the new spells—are excellent examples of what can be done with the AD&D game.

**Wizard kits:** A wizard kit is a character package for a wizard with role-playing hooks linked to game benefits and limitations. Each kit is built around one recognizable stereotype of a fantasy spell-caster. For example, the Academician is your basic chalkdust-on-the-labcoat, Coke-bottle-besppectacled bookworm; he suffers a -1 attack penalty on his first hand-to-hand attack in combat because he lacks the killer instinct. But his scholarly reputation earns him positive reaction bonuses when he meets other fellows in his field, and he gets a +1 bonus to Intelligence and Wisdom checks because he does his homework like a good boy and keeps up to date with all the professional journals.

The role-playing hooks in these kits work especially well in the AD&D game because they are linked to minor but satisfying game benefits. Even though the benefits are small, they are most significant at the most crucial point of character development: the beginning stages of character play. At 1st level, even the tiniest advantage is significant. In selecting a package, the player accepts the associated limitations and colorful chrome that will distinguish his character for life.

I like the selection of roles offered in the kits, too. In particular, two strong female roles—the Amazon Sorceress and the Witch—are well developed and have very appealing game benefits. My favorite, the Anagokok, is deliciously obscure and distinctive. The Anagokok is a primitive wizard from a frigid or equatorial climate. He suffers penalties when in a hostile environment (e.g., when he travels in a steamy jungle), but in his home climate he is masterful, capable of finding food and water in even the most desolate lands, and hardy enough to endure the most brutal weather conditions. This kit brings to mind the Laplander wizards of the Norse sagas, who tie knots in magical cords to decrease or increase the speed of the winds.

Another feature of these wizards is the option to specialize in one of eight schools

of magic from the *Player's Handbook*. Specialists accept limitations on the variety of spells they can learn in order to gain benefits in casting spells in their areas of specialization. The role-playing charm is more modest here, since the different schools are not clearly distinguished in abilities and personality, but the game benefits, especially for beginning characters, are very attractive. In particular, specialists always have one more spell slot than generalist mages, so long as the extra spell slot is occupied by a spell from the wizards area of specialization. Anyone familiar with the AD&D game will immediately realize that two spells at 1st level are immeasurably better than one.

Here, Rick Swan discusses the pros and cons of selecting a generalist mage or a specialist wizard, and he rightly observes that in short campaigns with slow advancement the specialist benefits are most significant. At higher levels, the modest benefits are overshadowed by abilities gained by level advancement.

The wizard kits and, to a lesser degree, the specialized schools of magic are examples of AD&D game design at its best. While maintaining careful control of play balance, the designer uses small but colorful game-mechanics advantages to involve the player in an interesting fantasy character role.

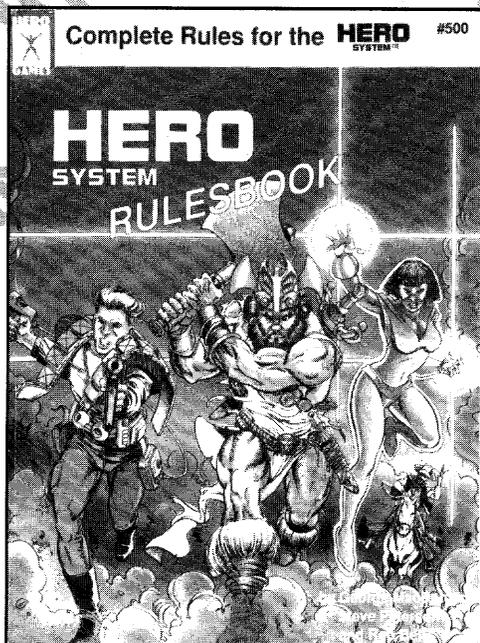
**New spells:** Here's the beef of any spell-list system: new spells to play with. And the spells here are especially colorful and useful.

For example, *chromatic orb* is a sort of one-target mini-*fireball*, conjured into the hand of the wizard and then thrown at a target. But the *chromatic orb* suffers the limitations of a missile weapon, in that the wizard has to throw the orb at his target and hit it to affect it. Further, the *chromatic orb* is not limited to one effect like a *fireball*; instead, there are nine different varieties of orb, each with its own magic effects. As the wizard advances in levels, he gains the ability to use new and more powerful forms of the orb. For example, when the caster is 1st level, the white orb does 1-4 hp damage, wraps the victim in a ball of bright light that reduces his attack and saving rolls by -4, and penalizes his armor class by four. At the 3rd level, the orange orb does 1-8 hp damage and ignites all combustible materials within 3' of the victim. The caster gains new powers with the orb at each new class level, not at new spell levels, so the character gets something new to play with every time he advances. Now, that's my ideal of a satisfying spell: modest but colorful powers, regular payoffs for advancement, and lots of different effects from one spell slot.

Other notable new spells found here include *death recall*, a second-level spell, which replays the last 10 minutes of a recently dead creature's life; *divining rod*, a scaled-down version of *locate object* available as a first-level spell; *ghoul touch*, a weak second-level paralyzation spell just

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right for the discriminating necromancer; and halo of eyes, a cinematic tour-de-force with a halo of functional eyeballs sitting atop the caster's head, giving him 360° vision (including infravision, no less) and one of the most striking hair styles in the history of fantasy gaming. Plenty of clever and useful spell effects are here. Most importantly, they are so incredibly official that your DM can hardly in good conscience deny them to you.

**Disappointments:** Other sections of *The Complete Wizard's Handbook* are less successful than the wizard kits, schools of magic, and new spells. For example, an entire chapter is devoted to a discussion of role-playing and various wizard-character stereotypes, but the treatments are not effectively dramatized. Since these personality templates are not linked to any game benefits or limitations, they will have little appeal to players. Another sign of incomplete and careless development is the "Wizards Lists" miscellany at the end of the book. Some of the ideas found there are charming enough, but any ideas worth printing are worth developing as complete concepts rather than dumping them together in an undifferentiated grab-bag as an exercise for the diligent reader.

More appropriate here would have been detailed discussion and commentary on specific cases of variant spell applications and common refereeing problems. The tantalizing promise of the "Combat and the Wizard" and "Spell Commentary" sections is never quite fulfilled. After decades of enthusiastic field testing of AD&D game spells in combat, there's a wealth of practical wisdom and cheap tricks that might be passed on to scheming wizard players. Bits of the handbook hint at this, as when Swan notes that though according to the rules the possessions of an invisible character are also invisible, perhaps the inclusion of a 30' pole carried by that character in the invisibility effect is too much to swallow. The handbook's guidelines for judging disbelief of illusion spells and for judging *limited wish* and *wish* spells are lucid and practical, as is the discussion of selecting certain classes of spell effects for specific tactical purposes. But while skimming chapters that seemed to me to be bland filler or disorganized, undeveloped ideas, I wished instead for the sort of nuts-and-bolts tech talk that I hear at conventions, tournaments, or local gaming skull sessions; these concern the virtues of various spells in specific tactical situations, or the classic examples of clever, shameless, and unscrupulous applications of spells one inevitably encounters when traveling in the company of clever, shameless, and unscrupulous AD&D game wizards and their players.

**Evaluation:** The good stuff in *The Complete Wizard's Handbook* is very good, in particular the wizard kits, the specialists' options, and the new spells. The handbook is also a useful collection of essays and optional systems for wizards; as such, it is a

useful reference for serious Dungeon Masters and wizard players. I don't think this is Rick Swan's best work, however, and some of the handbook lacks the elegant polish and conviction of the AD&D 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* and *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

#### Aysle \*

TORG sourcebook

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*Design, development, and editing:* Greg

Farshtey, Greg Gorden, Paul Murphy,

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Nystul

*Aysle* is the heroic-fantasy setting for the TORG cross-genre role-playing game system and campaign setting. (For a review of the TORG system and campaign setting, see DRAGON issue #166.) The boxed TORG game provides spells and spell-casting skills for wizard and cleric types. *Aysle* provides the campaign background for the fantasy setting and, of primary interest in this review, a rationale and system for creating magic spells, along with interesting elaborations of the original spell-casting rules in the basic game.

The first intriguing feature of this campaign setting is its peculiar world. *Aysle* is a squashed doughnut. The sun rises and falls up and down through the center of the doughnut, producing day and night. The seas around the doughnut hole are boiling, and the lands and oceans farthest from the doughnut hole are arctic. The heavens are a sort of immaterial shell; the stars that represent the cosmic magical essences and knowledge released by a mythic hero Dunad rest on this shell and oscillate slightly to produce their rise and fall on the doughnut's horizons. Gravity is perpendicular to both the "top" and "bottom" of the doughnut, and both sides have seas and populated continents and islands. Inside the doughnut (where the jelly should be) is the Land Between, where most of the dwarves live. I am a sucker for this sort of off-beat, implausible setting trick, like Terry Pratchett's Discworld that rests on the shoulders of four elephants who in turn stand upon the back of the vast cosmic sea turtle A'Tuin who swims through space looking for a nice place to spawn. Why aren't more campaign worlds as weird and implausible as the "wisdom of the ancients" once conceived our own universe to be?

All natives of *Aysle* have an innate magical affinity, determined by the dominant stars in the heavens at their birth. Everyone is born with some magical talents; relatively few are trained to the level of mage. Magic is literally the coin of the realm, the foundation of the economy—a conjuration magic spell with a duration of one hour is the gold standard.

The surface trappings of an interesting magical Dark Age culture are here, but the interaction of the magic technology with

the medieval culture doesn't seem to have been thought out with much energy or enthusiasm. I wearily suspect this is a good thing, since things come to a roaring halt regarding the suspension of disbelief when you think carefully about such things in a fantasy campaign. There is one brief note about the economic significance of wizards who can cast mage light to light the streets at night, but beyond that there doesn't seem to be much about how a flexible magic system would be turned to commerce in an arcane industrial revolution. I forgive *Aysle* this approach, because this is the standard FRPG ploy—to ignore anything that doesn't have to do with adventuring applications of magic. But, in setting terms, it is a less elegant and satisfying solution than the ARS MAGICA game's approach that rationalizes the low impact of magic on medieval society because magic is so rare and so carefully isolated from the culture at large by its practitioners. The *Aysle* approach is probably the more pragmatic game approach since, no matter how fascinating and magical a world transformed by commercial magic might be, most gamers are most interested in blasting the epidermis off green-skinned bad guys.

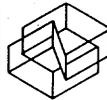
The TORG campaign setting itself also features an interesting basic magical premise, the other dimensions called "cosms" and their links to our world. In addition to the predictable travel between dimensions this provides, there are colorful "reality storms" at the boundaries of these dimensions. Individual earthly regions are transformed by the superimposition of the reality axioms of other dimensions on the axioms of our own dimension. Good and evil have a metaphysical reality that may be physically manifested in the lands where *Aysle's* axioms have invaded Earth. Places where nice people live are light and fertile, while places where nasty folk and monsters live are dark wastelands. Magical stelae mark the points along which the borders between pure and mixed axioms meet. Some regions remain dominated by 20th century axioms, and people can continue to use boom boxes, video decks, and Nintendo games, while other regions are controlled by medieval axioms, so only primitive entertainment devices will operate, like torture racks and faeries.

Unlike the ARS MAGICA game, the TORG campaign setting has a clear bias toward heroic role-playing. The Storm Knight PC heroes are definitely good guys out to save the world from corrupt, power-mad, extradimensional supervillains who want to conquer our dimension and, if possible, kill a lot of people and destroy a lot of stuff while they're at it. As such, the PC heroes have heroic stature and abilities to match. Gamers uncomfortable with the anti-heroic tone of cyberpunk RPGs and the ARS MAGICA game may find a more congenial campaign setting in the TORG game.

The cosm of *Aysle* has all the necessary

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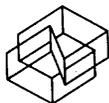
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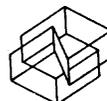


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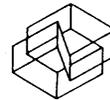


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features for a standard fantasy campaign: epic themes of good versus evil, ruling houses struggling for control, dwarves and elves, dragons and beastmen, goblins and faeries, and lots of folks wandering around and bashing one another for loot or entertainment. It has the added entertainment of the interface between the medieval fantasy regions and the 20th-century Earth regions, with several other notable features like its honor and corruption skills. Honorable and corrupt characters receive various abilities as they increase in their respective skills—a sharp way to link heroic behavior with the quest for PC power. I like linking game abilities to theme development; it increases the significance of moral actions and choices in the narrative context. A further charm is the superimposition of medieval axioms on 20th-century European geography; it's handy to be able to pull out a map of modern Nottingham and populate it with the occupying armies of Aysle's corrupt House Daleron.

Unfortunately, though I found a lot of this campaign material interesting, I haven't seen any adventure scenarios that bring the Aysle campaign setting to life. So far, the TORG Mission Books have been dull and uninspiring, and the Mission Book for *Aysle*, called *Queenswrath*, is no exception. These anthologies of short, unrelated, two- or three-page adventure outlines don't bring much drama or tone to a setting. I can appreciate its charm and potential, but until I see an example of the potential realized in an adventure, I reserve judgment on *Aysle's* value as a fantasy campaign setting.

**The magic system:** Here we have something definitely interesting and obscure. Part of the problem and the charm may be the presentation of the introduction to magic in the form of a narrative account of some Storm Knights receiving an introductory lecture by a veteran Aysle magic professor. The story is smoothly told, so much so that it distracts from the sense of loose jargon and incoherence in the wizard's glib presentation.

The basic concepts are interesting. The ARS MAGICA game reduces magic to five verbs and ten forms. The TORG game follows a similar strategy in that it defines all magic as the action of one of four basic magical skills: conjuration (bringing into being); alteration (changing something already in being); apportionment (moving something); and divination (knowing something about something). With these four basic skills, you can magically manipulate "things." The TORG game has a complex and hierarchical classification of "things" (the equivalent of the ARS MAGICA game's "forms"). At the bottom of the hierarchy, and easiest to manipulate magically, are the six elements: air, earth, fire, metal, plant, and water. Next up the scale are the seven kindred: aquatic, avian, earthly, elemental, enchanted, entity, and folk. (Classifications of various beings might be

a bit puzzling in the abstract, but they are wisely specified by list in the text.) Next up the scale, and correspondingly more abstract, are mixed forces (inanimate and living forces), which are combinations of the next higher level, the principles (darkness, light, and magic), which are combinations of the ultimate foundations of reality (Death, Life, Time, and True Knowledge). The relationships of this arcane knowledge are most clearly presented in the helpful diagrams that chart the paths of correspondences between these elements and which also provide a game-mechanic method of assessing costs for their use in the construction of magic spells. The names and associations of the various terms are, as you can see, quite suitable and atmospheric for magical mumbo-jumbo.

The rationale for spell-casting itself is that a mage is able to perceive the supernatural world, where all possibilities exist. There he may perceive the specific reality he wants to achieve, select it from all the other countless possibilities, and bring that specific reality back to the real world as a pattern. Once he has that pattern, he fills it with magical energy, aims it at a target, and lets the energy, as informed by that pattern, do its magical deed on the target.

I strongly suspect that what I found in the "Theory of Magic" chapter of *Aysle* is a spectacularly elegant combination of scholastic rationale and game mechanics for role-playing magical effects. I'm not really sure, since I found a lot of the discussion hard to follow at times, and I felt simultaneous admiration and amiable contempt for the skillful narrative glosses that dragged me through the discussion of theory to the mechanics of spell-building. In the end, I confess I am too impatient and lazy to rigorously test the logic of the theory presentation, and even more significantly, I don't think I care very much to dig too deeply into the logic of TORG fantasy campaign magic. I just hope there were no important rules in the seven-page theory exposition. I'm quite content with the glowing feeling that magic makes sense to someone, anyway, so that now I can suspend my disbelief and get on with the process of designing my "Enemies Explode" spell.

I think the spell-design system works, too, and is spectacularly powerful and flexible. I say, I *think* it works, because although I follow the examples clearly and think I understand what's going on, I don't play the TORG game and don't have a very clear idea of how the magic I create is going to interact with other game abilities. I do like what I think I can do with the spell-creation concepts. I particularly like the final stage of spell-building, in which the spell designer is encouraged to add various atmospheric staging details to the process of spell-casting as a mechanic for reducing the difficulty of the spell to cast and the risk of backfire. This is done through a series of techniques called "pat-

tern and process theorems." By accepting various limitations and conditions on the casting of the spell, you can reduce its difficulty and risk. The theorems are familiar genre spell-casting trappings; one example is the Theorem of Contagion, which posits that the part is always linked to the whole; thus, using a human hair as a spell component makes it easier to affect a human target. Another more specific theorem, the Theorem of Specific Contagion, posits that the link between a part of the target and the target itself is a particularly strong link, and of even greater efficacy in easing the task of affecting the target with magic. A spell designer skilled in various aspects of spell design can also create spells with distinctive efficiencies in casting time, duration, range, etc.

The example of spell design given in *Aysle* is an eloquent argument for the spell-design system. One spell that transforms a person into a frog requires a frog doll made by the magician to be covered with patches of skin (his own is just fine, since he is using the magical alteration of the general target of "folk" as his basic design concept). When casting the spell, the mage speaks, and gradually as he speaks he crouches to all fours, altering his voice to the croaking of a frog, thereby employing the Theorem of Voice, that states that the path of thought to voice is akin to the path of supernatural pattern applied to the real world. (So *that's* why spells have verbal components!)

The magic chapter also offers a very simple but very powerful and flexible refinement to the original spell-casting rules of the basic TORG game. Spell-casters may manipulate certain features of spells. They may alter the balance between the potential of backlash or spell failure, which permits a spell-caster to either accept a great likelihood of personal injury in order to increase his chances of successful casting, or to increase his chances of failure rather than accept the risk of serious and possibly fatal injury. Points may also be reallocated from effects (e.g., damage points) to range or duration; for example, if he decreases the range of a fireball, he gets correspondingly more effective goblin-roasting. He can also increase cast time to extend range, duration, or effect, or may accept a more devastating risk of backlash to increase range, duration, or effect. These nice tactical choices are possible only with the TORG game's unique abstractions of game effects. To date, I have been exceedingly skeptical about the worth of these unique and unfamiliar systems, but in these spell-manipulation provisions I can begin to appreciate the system's peculiar virtues.

*Aysle* also has a grimoire of spells that, ironically and inappropriately, is not designed for use by beginning characters. I suppose beginning characters are supposed to be happy with the spells in the original TORG rule book. Me, I didn't want to start off designing spells because it

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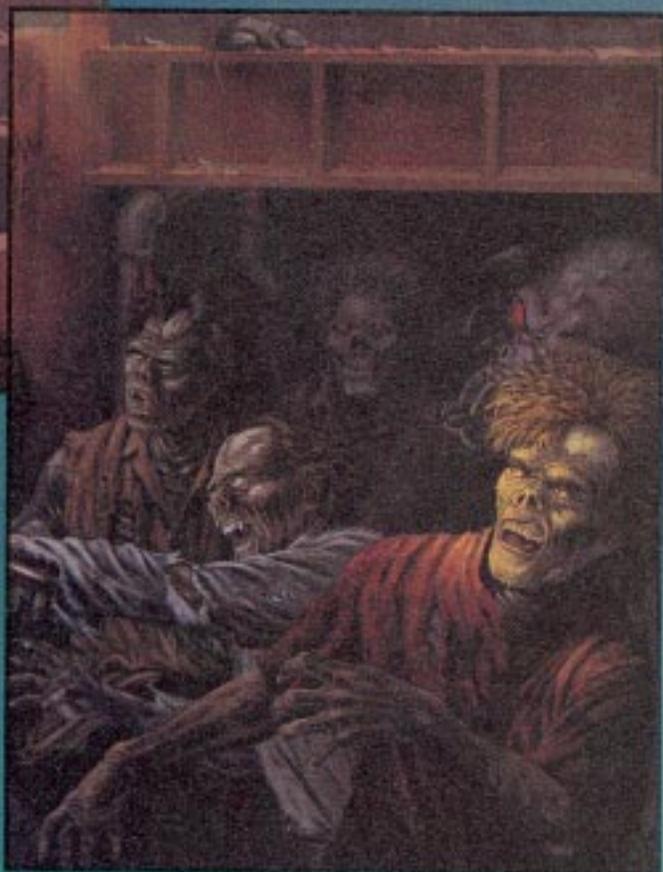
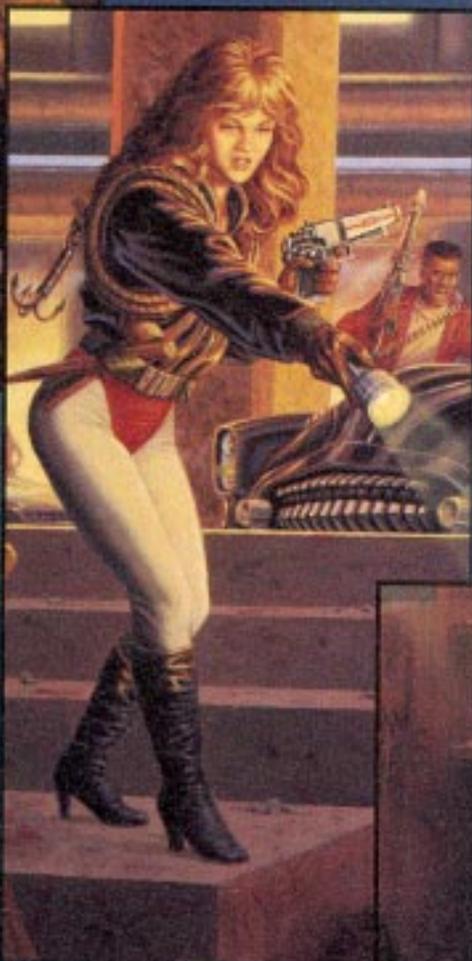
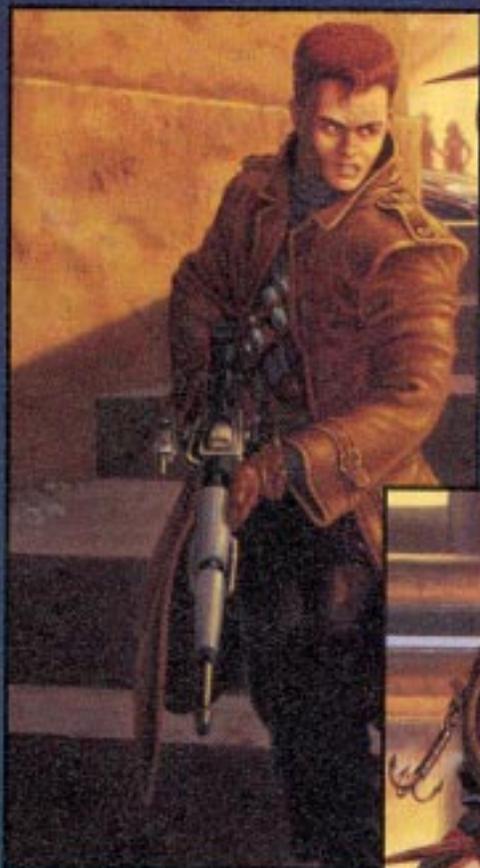
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looked like a lot of game work. I found it disappointing that I was going to have to do all the work if I wanted cool new spells.

Now, a big question: The TORG magic system looks powerful, flexible, dramatic, and cleverly rationalized, but is the TORG magic system playable? The answer is a qualified "yes" for most gamers used to spell-list systems. The spell-casting provisions in the boxed TORG game are only moderately complicated and simply conceived. Though the list of spells is fairly short, it provides most of the effects you'd want in a fantasy campaign.

I don't have quite so much faith in the

spell-design system of *Aysle* —not because it won't work, but because it is too much work to find out whether it will work or not. The presentation is so abstract and wordy that I have a hard time figuring out what part is rules and what part is just gas. The systems seem simple enough, but in practice they'll require the same sort of player and GM arbitration that any more informal spell-creation system requires. The only folks who'll ever find out whether the system works will have put a lot more work into the process than most of us are willing to expend. Note, however, that designing your own spells in FANTASY

HERO games requires roughly the same amount of work, and the *Aysle* system has a number of neat features like spell theory and the narrative rationale of magic that the FANTASY HERO game lacks.

**Evaluation:** I have been generally skeptical about the basic campaign premises of the TORG game, uninterested in its new and complicated game system, and unimpressed by the campaign and adventure supplements I've seen. But *Aysle* overcomes many of my initial reservations about the TORG systems and campaign setting. This campaign is satisfactory, perhaps even superior, as a heroic fantasy setting. The adventure material is uninspiring. But the systems are intriguing, powerful, and not quite as obnoxiously fiddly and slow-paced as I had anticipated. Fantasy role-players, particularly those with an interest in magic systems, should admire the style and effects of the TORG game's implementation of magic theory, spellcasting, and spell design in *Aysle*.

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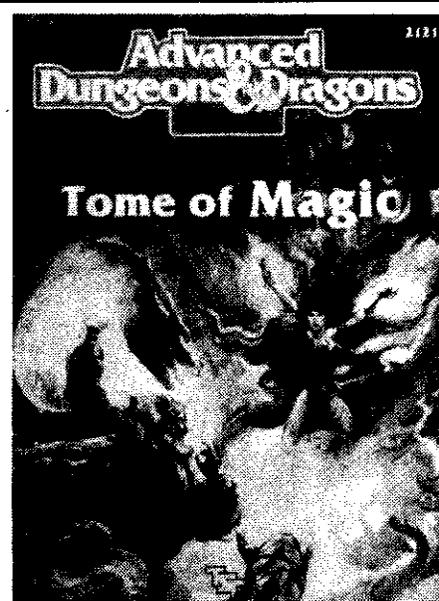
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# In Harm's Way —At Home!

Danger rooms for MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ campaigns

by Michael Hollinger

The Uncanny X-Men had the first one. Just about every super-hero group with a base now has one, yet very few groups use one to its full potential. I am speaking of the danger room, a training arena that is one of the most useful, if seldom used, tools that a MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game Judge has. With the system presented in this article, Judges will be able to make their own danger rooms for their crime-fighting groups, ready for super heroes to use within half an hour.

Before the procedure for creating a danger room is laid out, a few things should be said about running a danger room. First, heroes should take only one-

fourth normal combat damage in a danger room (robotic opponents pull their punches, etc.). I have my gamers' groups immediately sent to the clinic at their base after a danger-room workout, then decree that all damage taken has been healed (it saves on paperwork). Second, I have my danger rooms divided into small areas called tiles; one floor tile is equal to one MARVEL SUPER HEROES game area for determining a hero's movement, range, etc. Third, a floor tile is activated when any weight is placed on it. If a Judge wishes, the pressure necessary to trigger a tile can be so sensitive that a character flying overhead can set it off due to the slight

change of air pressure above it. Once activated, a tile presents a hero with a crisis (an attack robot or a trap) that must be confronted and overcome.

A danger room should not be so difficult that the heroes have no chance to "pass" it, but neither should the heroes be able to pick off crises with ease, one at a time. The best solution I've found is to start with easily triggered tiles until the heroes are up against impossible odds, then have whoever is controlling the danger room decrease the sensitivity until running across the tiles alone will activate them. As a last resort, if the heroes are overwhelmed, turn off the sensitivity of the tiles completely. The tiles cannot usually differentiate as to what causes the pressure on them, so the results of activating one tile could conceivably activate one or more other tiles.

It helps to assume that a nonplayer-character hero, one who doesn't go out adventuring very often, is in charge of the danger room and can design its horrors without the knowledge of the other heroes. An enthusiastic scientist/technician (something like Q from the James Bond movies) works best for the danger room's manager.

## Danger-room construction

The first step in creating a basic danger room is to draw the grid of tiles on which the characters will play out the scenario. (The design here is quite basic; more unusual designs may be developed, too.) I suggest the use of a manila folder on which to draw out the danger room. By folding the map up, you also have a handy folder for keeping all danger-room-related forms. In addition, the folder is the right size for play and is much sturdier than normal paper.

With a pencil, first draw out a large rectangle or square, about 10" across, centered on the unfolded folder. This is the outer wall of the danger room. The room's walls are 1/4" thick on paper. On the left side, draw in the control room, where the danger room's activities are monitored, and mark it as such (computers and control consoles may be added as well). On the right side, draw in lockers



and showers for the heroes to use after their workout. The ceiling height in the danger room itself is assumed to be about two stories. The material strength of the danger room's walls, ceiling, and floor is assumed to be Monstrous, though the Judge may alter this.

Next, mark along the top wall of the danger room itself, between the control room and the showers, in 1" segments, using a pencil and ruler. Starting in the top left corner, make the first tile (called A1) 1" long by 1" deep. Tile A2, moving right, should be the same size, and so on to tile A7. Row B, just underneath, is composed of six tiles; B1 is 1½" x 1", B2-B5 are 1" square, and B6 is like B1. Row C is like Row A, Row D is like B, and so on down to Row J, which is like Row B. (Optionally, the room may be lengthened by having the center tiles be 2" long by 1" wide.) This produces a bricklike layout of tiles.

It is much easier on the eyes if you put the outlines of the tiles and the outlines of the walls in different color pens, or have the walls in pen and the tiles in pencil. I can almost guarantee that if you don't do this, at some point a character will try to walk through a wall.

The danger room is specifically made with 10 rows and six active columns so that any location may be rolled with 1d10 to determine row and 1d6 to determine column (tiles A7, C7, E7, G7, and I7 are left inactive as "safe zones").

### A sea of crises

Now that the danger-room map is complete, it is time to fill the danger room with things to make the heroes jump, fall, get knocked unconscious, or what have you. The first step in filling a danger room is to determine the number of tiles that contain crises during a particular scenario. You can either select a number (start with 10-15 crises for introductory scenarios), or else you can generate a number. In the latter case, roll 1d6 for the tens' digit and 1d10 for the ones' digit, with a roll of 0 = zero, not 10. This die roll will generate a number between 10 and 69. Do not be alarmed at the fact that it is possible to have more active tiles than exist in the room; a tile can have more than one crisis on it. It is recommended, however, that no more than three crises be placed on any one tile. Remember: The more tiles that produce an effect, the longer the process

takes to fill out the danger room.

Danger rooms present crises in two basic ways: robots and traps. A danger room can arbitrarily hold a maximum of only five different types of robots and five types of traps. One specific robot type and one specific trap type have special programming, as detailed later, and usually only one of each of these will appear in the danger room at any one time. All other robots and traps have "generic" programs and are assumed to be unlimited in number. Each "generic" robot and trap should be designed before the game begins, using the section "Traps & robots" herein.

The special robot is an emulation robot, which is designed to look and act as though it is a real costumed hero or villain. All of its statistics come directly from criminal files (in game terms, the Advanced Set Judge's Book or any game module), and it is programmed to respond in a reasonably complex, "intelligent" manner, though the robot is not itself intelligent. Note that the real hero or villain copied by this robot might have powers not known to the super heroes, and these powers won't appear in the robot (surprise!). The special trap simulates a natural disaster. Once set off, this trap presents the effects of a volcano, tornado, blizzard, or the like over an expanding area of the danger room.

The method for determining what type of crisis is activated by a tile is rolled on the following table:

1d10	Result
1-4	Robot (type 1-4)
5	Emulation robot
6-9	Trap (type 1-4)
0	Natural disaster

Robots and traps are created using the section "Traps & robots" herein. Secondary die-roll encounter tables should be created for the four robot and four trap types, with one of each appearing per tile

activation. Results from this table need not be assigned to each tile prior to its activation, but assignment will let the Judge better control the scenario. Once a tile has been activated and its crisis dealt with, it becomes "safe" for the rest of the scenario if no other crisis has been assigned to it.

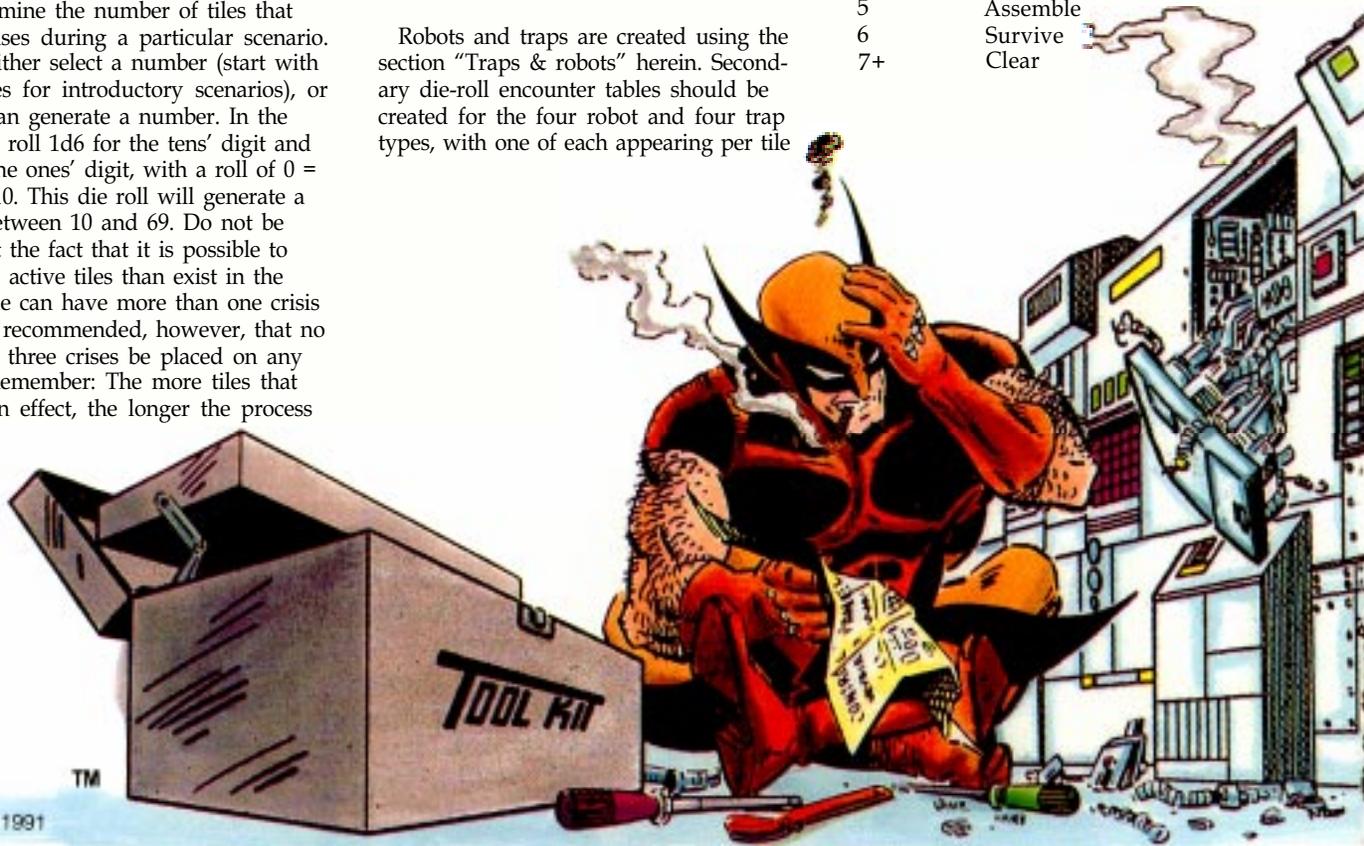
If an event is selected for a tile that has already been activated and is now presenting a crisis, the Judge has three options. He can either reroll the location, use the second crisis for the second time the tile is activated, or place the crisis on an adjacent tile. Again, allow no more than three active crises per tile per scenario.

### Your mission is...

Now the Judge should determine the mission that must be completed in order for Karma to be awarded for the scenario and in order to have the danger room turned off, unless the team wishes to admit defeat. (Of course, the danger room can be shut down by the controller if the heroes look like they're about to be killed!)

For random mission determination, roll on the following table using 1d6. If the Judge wishes to make the mission slightly harder or easier, merely add an appropriate modifier. Note that the Clear mission is usually so hard that it cannot be randomly rolled without a modifier. Also, the object of any mission will always be a nonliving thing; to use living victims would be cruel. The table to generate the object of a mission is given later on.

1d6	Result
1	Transport
2	Recover
3	Destroy
4	Protect
5	Assemble
6	Survive
7+	Clear



*Transport:* Roll for or select two tile locations, the first being where the object starts and the second being its destination. The heroes' objective is to move the object from the starting point to its destination. Because this mission is usually easy, the Judge is encouraged to assign extra complications or crises.

*Recover:* Roll one tile location; this is where the object is originally situated. The objective of this mission is to bring the object in question outside the danger room. On this mission, a robot always guards the door. (Roll up the robot's statistics as per a normal robot player character in the game; do not count this one against type allotments for the danger room.)

*Destroy:* Roll for the tile location of the object. Next, give the object either body armor or a force field. Roll 1d100; the rank in which the number falls is the rank of the armor or field. For instance, if a 53 is rolled, the rank is Amazing (53). The object of the mission is to bypass the defenses and destroy the object. Certain rolls may be disregarded and rerolled if the armor or force field is too strong or too weak to challenge your heroes, but always allow the heroes a chance at victory.

*Protect:* After placing the object in question on a randomly rolled tile, roll up two robots (using player-character rules for the game) for every three characters in the group. The players must prevent the robots from destroying the object. The PC robots will not move until they are attacked or until a hero activates the tile on which the object is located. Once this happens, no more tiles that activate robots will function; however, traps and currently active robots will remain active. The players must clear all remaining robots

from the danger room.

*Assemble:* After creating an object using rules given later in this article, have it be disassembled, then roll a random location for each piece. The objective of the mission is to put all the pieces together again. It takes one turn to put two pieces in the same area together, or two turns if the object is deemed awkward by the die rolls in the following section.

*Survive:* Do not select an object for this mission; the mission is hard enough as is. Roll 1d20 + 10 to generate a number between 11 and 30. This is the number of turns for which all the heroes must remain conscious. Generate two robots, using player-character rules, for every character entering the danger room. Make all powers for the robots combat related (e.g., don't take Plant Control), and have one of the robots for each hero possess a power geared to take advantage of that hero's greatest weakness or to confront his strongest power. The rank on this power should be equal to the hero's power that it is working against, with a bonus of +1CS. For example, Iceman, with Ice Generation—Remarkable (30), is going into the danger room; a robot specifically designed for him might have Fire Generation. (If the Judge is unsure of what a good opposing power would be, find out what its nemesis is in MA3 *The Ultimate Powers Book*, a volume most certainly worth its price). The Judge should start off with all tiles active but, in all probability, will soon have to turn them off.

*Clear:* In this mission, no object is created, as the players will not have time to deal with one. The players must deactivate every single robot in the complex. Each turn, a number of robots equal to three times the number of the characters is

automatically activated. In addition, one emulation robot per turn activates. Again, this is a very difficult mission. Use it sparingly but threaten characters with it often.

Next, use Table 1 to generate the characteristics of the object of the mission. Roll once each for the object's size, weight, and material strength. If the mission is "Assemble," roll for the number of pieces. The term "object" is deliberately generic so as to let the Judge throw in an interesting twist. For instance, the heroes will treat a glass figurine much differently than a lump of tin.

If the term "awkward" is rolled, make a note of it and reroll for its weight. In addition to the Strength FEAT, the character attempting to move an awkward object must also make an Agility FEAT vs. Remarkable intensity. Should the term "awkward" be rolled again, increase the intensity of the Agility FEAT by +1CS each time.

After determining the mission and its object, roll for complications. The exact number is left up to the Judge, but the suggested number is six minus the number of the mission rolled. This allows the Judge to balance out the danger room. Thus, if you've consistently rolled up easily beaten opponents, you can still challenge the players with complications. Conversely, the "Survive vs. Godzilla's Five Cousins" mission can be made playable by having one or two of the creatures explode on the eighth turn.

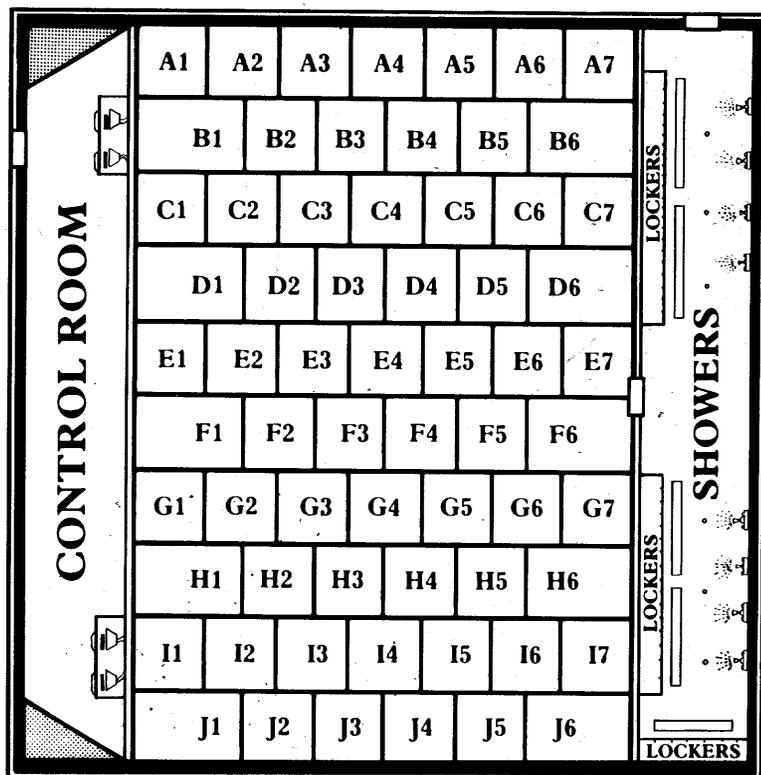
Roll 2d6 on the following table to see which complications come into play. With the exception of "May self-destruct" and "Will self-destruct," any repeat rolls are cumulative. The complications are explained in the following section.

2d6	Complication
2	Timed (1d6 turns)
3	Stay 1d6 extra turns
4	Combine two missions
5	Object is hostile
6	Object moves
7	Object is hidden
8	Timed (3d6 turns)
9	Object is protected
10	Object moves quickly
11	May self-destruct
12	Will self-destruct

*Timed:* The mission must be completed within the allotted amount of turns or else one random tile per turn will be activated at double-normal potency. If the random tile activates a robot, double all its ranks (by number) to a maximum of Monstrous. Traps will automatically move beneath the hero and have doubled effects. If the tile rolled was unoccupied, no effects are felt.

*Stay 1d6 extra turns:* After the mission is completed, the group must set off half the tiles and overcome them all. Should they succeed before all extra turns are up, keep sending things at them one at a time.

*Combine two missions:* Roll for another mission but keep the same object, then



combine the two missions. For instance, Transport and Survive are rolled. The characters might have to bring a robot to a tile where it will activate, then must destroy it and stand guard. Even better, the characters must catch an emulation robot and transport it to a giant garbage disposal or "prison" on a certain tile, standing by to ensure its destruction or capture. The possibilities are limitless.

*Object is hostile:* The object has a weapon for use against anything that comes into its area.

*Object moves:* The object moves 1-4 tiles every turn in any direction the Judge chooses.

*Object is hidden:* The object in question is hidden beneath a tile (the Judge might not tell where), and the tile covering it must be activated in order to gain access to the object. Any traps or robots lying in wait are also sprung when the tile is activated. If the Judge decides not to tell where the object is, the heroes must search for it. While Penetration Vision or other powers will work, the easiest and most fool-proof searching method is still the Accidental Mine Detector routine (i.e.: pray, step, pray, step, etc.).

*Object is protected:* Four robots are already protecting the object from any type of outside interference.

*Object moves quickly:* On each turn, roll 1d6. On a 5 or 6, the object moves to a totally random location (roll location on 1d6 for the row, 1d10 for the column) either by flight, teleportation, running, or some other form of locomotion. If the object moves by any means other than teleportation, the characters must make an Agility FEAT vs. Amazing intensity to

catch it while it is in motion. Any tiles the object runs across, flies over, or lands upon are automatically activated.

*May self-destruct:* Each turn that the characters occupy the same tile as the object, there's a 50% chance that a timer will be set off, allowing 1d6 turns to pass before the object explodes, doing Incredible (40) force and Excellent (20) edged attack damage. The heroes should be informed of this complication but should not know the number of turns before it explodes. The longer the heroes hold on to the object, the more exciting this complication gets.

*Will self-destruct:* The timer is set for 1d20 +5 turns and starts when the first tile is activated. Any character on the same tile as the object (or on an adjacent tile) in the turn in which the object explodes takes Incredible force and Excellent edged attack damage as before. The heroes should be informed of this complication but should not know the number of turns they have before the object explodes. Again, the longer the scenario, the more suspenseful this complication gets.

### Enjoying the scenery

After the mission and all its complications are finalized, the Judge should add 1-3 landforms to vary the room's topography. Roll for the location of one tile as a starting point for each landform, then expand the landform's size to a minimum of three tiles. The following table is intended for use only if the Judge is unsure of what to put in.

2d6	Landform
2	Stream or river
3	Pit
4-6	Hill
7-8	Pond or lake
9-10	Bluff or cliff
11-12	Chasm

Any variation in height is usually one story high or deep. If a character falls off a ledge, treat it as a charging attack against the ground. Short-circuiting robots in water is a very common ploy in my scenarios, so add a pond at least.

In no case should a topographic feature interfere with an active tile. For instance, a robot that emerges from a tile beneath a lake would be resistant to water. A trap at the same place might indicate that the lake is really made of poisonous water or acid.

### Traps & robots

The last step in creating a danger room is to give identities to the various traps and robots that infest the room. Emulation robots should each be assigned a personality as noted previously (Doctor Doom is the best!), and all disasters should be worked out.

A trap is easy to describe but often hard to design. Some ideas to get you started would include:

- power-nullification traps
- web-casting traps
- logic traps (the character must solve a riddle to escape)
- pit traps
- spike traps
- moving-wall traps (walls move in at the rate of one area per round)
- character-specific traps
- acid traps
- power-lowering traps (-2CS power drop)
- traps that use a character's power against him
- illusion traps
- traps that cause a character to fight his group

**Table 1**  
**Mission Object Table**

1d6	Size	Strength to lift	Pieces	Material strength
1	Very small	PR	2	FB
2	Small	TY	3	PR
3	Medium	GD	4	GD
4	Large	RM	5	EX
5	Very large	IN	7	IN
6	Awkward		9	AM

**Table 2**  
**Robot FASE Statistics**

1d10	Rank
1	PR
2-3	TY
4-5	GD
6-7	EX
8-9	RM
10	IN

**Table 3**  
**Robot RIP Statistics**

1 d 1 0	Rank
1-3	FE
4-5	PR
6-7	TY
8	GD
9	EX
10	RM

**Table 4**  
**Robot's Number of Powers**

1d10	# powers*
1	(0,1,0)
2	(0,1,1)
3	(1,1,1)
4	(1,2,0)
5	(0,2,1)
6	(1,2,1)
7	(1,2,2)
8	(1,3,1)
9	(2,3,1)
0	(2,3,2)

\* The first number is the number of detection/movement powers; the second number is offensive powers; the third is defensive powers.

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- gas-spray traps
- entangling traps
- machine-gun traps
- traps that set off 1-3 other tiles
- paralysis traps

**Disasters:** A natural disaster is very similar to a trap, except that its area of effect keeps expanding by one tile per turn in all directions. Starting on the fourth turn, the Judge should roll 1d10 on the following table to see the progress of the disaster. If "No change" is rolled as the first result, the expansion of the disaster's area of effect continues.

1d10	Result
1-5	No change from previous roll
6-8	Expansion/retreat halts
9-0	Area of effect retreats one tile in all directions

Some ideas for potential natural disasters include:

- Volcano: blinding ash, lava (TY (6) force, IN (40) heat), poisonous gas of RM (30) intensity
- Forest fire: blinding smoke, heat (TY (6) + 1CS per turn, max. AM (50)), poisonous gas of EX (20) intensity
- Nuclear explosion: instantaneous RM (30) force, AM (50) heat, AM (50) radiation optional
- Monsoon: winds, flying debris and water doing EX (20) edged attack damage
- Sea wave: water with AM (50) force and triple speed (no halt/retreat)
- Blizzard RM (30) intensity cold, blinding snow doing EX (20) edged attack damage.

**Robots:** A normal robot is generated by a series of 1d10 rolls on Tables 2-4. Roll four times on the first table for each of the FASE scores, then three times on the second table for each of the RIP scores. If any three of the mental statistics is FE (2), this type of robot has no on-board intelligence. As such, the robot takes a -3 modifier on the number of powers it possesses, but it is invulnerable to all mind-affecting powers. No danger-room robot is truly self aware; they are simply well programmed. After determining the robot's statistics, roll for its number of detection/movement powers, offensive powers, and defensive powers, then select them at your discretion from the Advanced Set booklets or *The Ultimate Powers Book*. Ranks can be determined by using the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game tables or by rolling 2d20 + 10 and using the rank number so indicated (i.e., for 42, the rank is Incredible).

Roll up a danger room and show your heroes how much trouble they can have without ever leaving home! Ω

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## Editorial

Continued from page 7

18. We look for unique and interesting plots (a) in module proposals for DUNGEON Adventures before all else, though a proposal had better have a good length, game accuracy, and an interesting setting, too. There are lots of other things we look for, too, like distinctive characters, but plot comes first. Does the module tell a story? If not, out it goes.

19. An article that takes up 25 pages in DRAGON Magazine is far too long for our tastes these days, so answer (b) is important. But (e) is important, too, because there's absolutely no point in replacing a brand-new official game system until that system has been tried and tested. The AD&D 2nd Edition *Complete Psionics Handbook* deserves a fair shake. None of the other reasons given make any difference. Note in particular that DRAGON Magazine has published unofficial additions and changes to official rules hundreds of times; it's our stock in trade.

20. You're best off starting with (b) to make sure you aren't publishing something lifted word-for-word from a copyrighted source. A game inconsistency (a half-elven magic-user in the D&D game) was mentioned, but this might have been easy to fix on the editor's part. Sillier ideas have been published and have proven to be quite popular, and sometimes it's okay to railroad the characters into an adventure, so long as you're careful about how you do it and so long as you don't do it very often.

So now you have an idea of what goes through your editors' heads as they look over your article, module, or game submission. \*\* And you thought anyone could do this.

Next month, another topic—but no test. Enjoy!

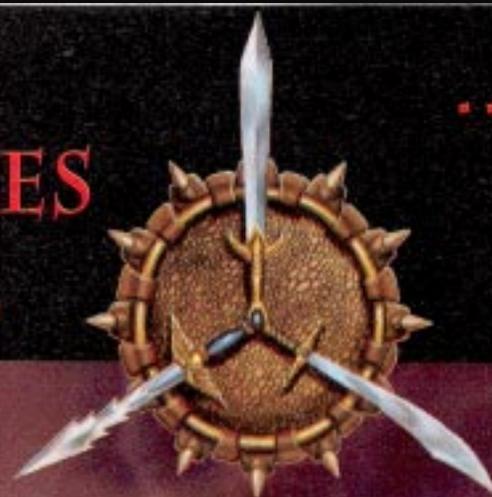
*Roger Moore*

\* And don't send us a module with a dungeon in a dead brontosaurus, either. The Avalon Hill Game Company has already published one of those in a RUNEQUEST® module. I am completely serious.

\*\* If you were about to send us a module in which a tinker gnome in battle armor must fight a goliath-monster with a *Bohemian ear-spoon* +5 that has taken over a planetoid shaped like a klein bottle inhabited by a shirokinukatsukami, think again.

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# BAZAAR OF the Bizarre

## A dozen deadly daggers from the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting

by Ed Greenwood

There was a sudden collective gasp, almost a roar, among the merriment—then deathly silence.

In all that high-timbered hall in Ruathym there sat no more beautiful lady at the feast than Princess Saerthae, and many an eye had turned her way again and again, captivated by her beauty.

So, almost all there had seen it. One moment a courtier leaned over the princess to pour her some wine—and in the next moment, his livery flickered and shifted horribly, and a yellow-white doppelganger was upon her, snarling and clawing, goaded to attack by some unseen, magical hand. The First Axe was not present; his empty chair could raise no sword to save his princess from a bloody death.

Nobles and war captains of Ruathym alike roared in fear and anger, blades hissing out and chairs toppling as they charged toward the high seat, all knowing with cold horror that they were too late.

And then the mottled, hairy shoulders of the beast slumped, sagging down upon the high seat. From beneath its bulk the princess emerged, uninjured, a bloody dagger in her hand.

Pale but calm, she wiped her blade on the doppelganger's hide, and returned it delicately to its sheath in her bodice. Then she looked around at the glittering blades that could not have reached her in time, took up her wine jack, and smiled. "My lords and ladies, be seated, and eat, I pray! This danger, at least, is past—and once

again, I fear, a dagger proves a ruler's most pointed argument."

Only after she was seated again in a new chair, and the talk and mirth had begun anew, did Princess Saerthae allow herself a shudder.

Elminster told me that tale of the Realms, and many others, in which a humble dagger had meant the difference between life and death. Then he allowed that some daggers were less humble than others, and soon I'd heard of half a hundred magical blades, each with its own tale. I tried to slow this torrent of Realms lore by inquiring if there were any common magical daggers (beyond those already known to us all); that is, types of daggers that were not unique weapons, but that a traveler was unlikely to see.

I should have known. He started right off naming and describing blades as fast as ever. I'll spare you all but the first dozen; Elminster does take some getting used to!

Here follow details of those magical daggers of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. Elminster bids me remind you that the experience value for each weapon is awarded only to those making, or at least enchanting, a weapon, as per the AD&D® 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 135. In addition, busy magical-item makers are warned that each successive weapon of the same type enspelled earns its enchanter 100 fewer experience points, until a minimum of 25 points is reached.

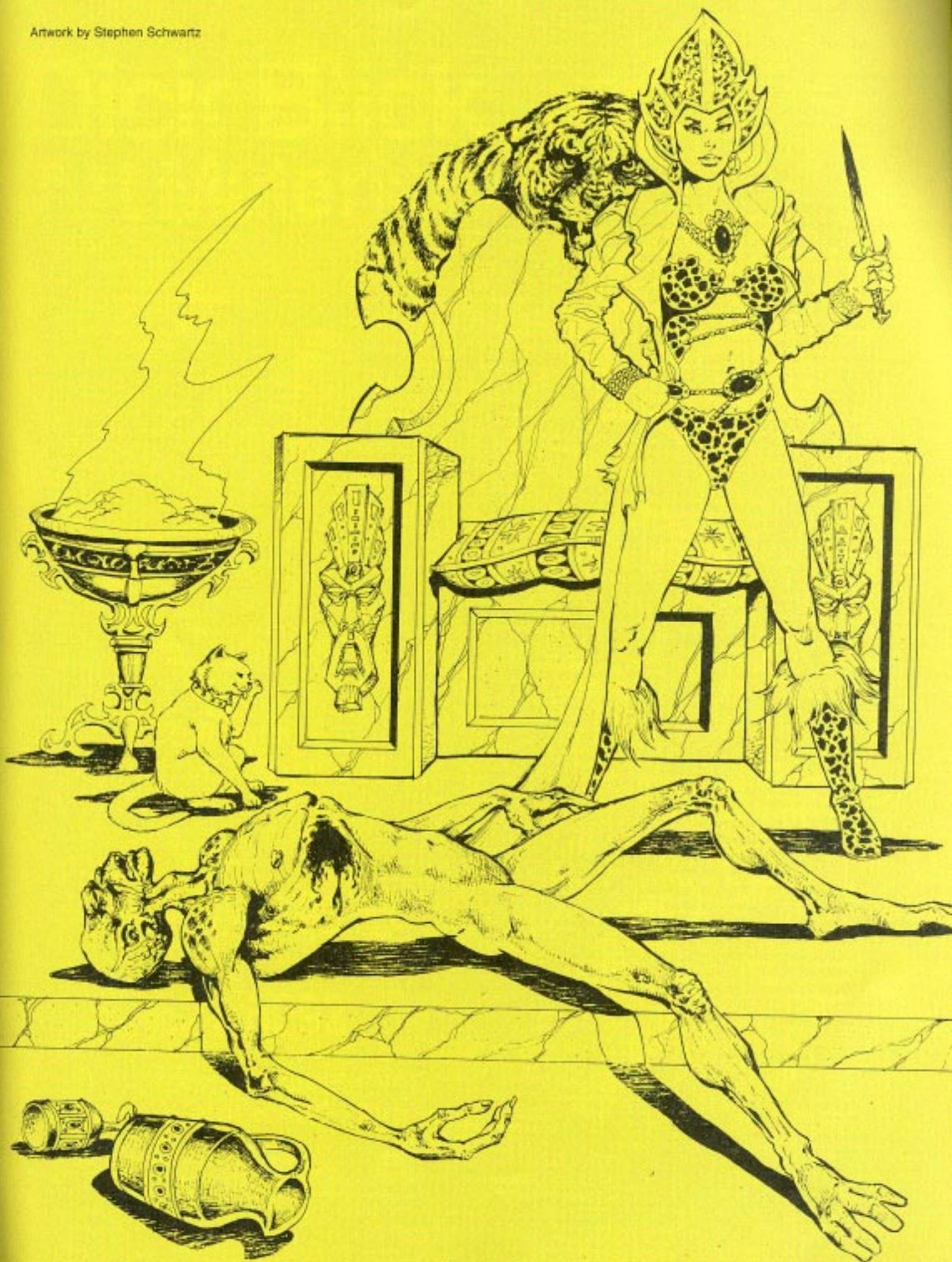
Full details of how to enchant such

weapons are not given here; they must be discovered or researched by the maker. Although not listed under each blade's entry, assume always that *enchant an item* and *permanency* spells are necessary to create these daggers.

### Blade of banishing

This *dagger* +2 twists awry magical barriers, protections, and illusions that it touches. Whenever it touches or impinges on a being or an area under an illusion, protective magic, or magical barrier, there is a percentage chance that the dagger will destroy the magic. The weapon has a base 60% chance of success, plus a random bonus of 1d20%, and minus 10% per level of the magic contacted (e.g., a *shield* spell is a first-level spell and gives a modifier of -10%). Percentile dice are then rolled. If the roll is less than or equal to the modified chance of success, the dagger destroys the magic. If the roll is higher than the modified chance of success, the dagger has no effect (note that spells of eighth level or greater can never be affected). Consider all magical item effects to have the level of the item's creator, if known; otherwise, use one level greater than the level of any equivalent spell. The DM may choose to consider all unknown defensive magicks to be seventh or eighth level, and all artifacts to be 12th level or greater.

To act, this dagger need not be drawn or wielded. Its destructive nature is constant, regardless of the caster's wishes, and need not be activated or invoked. If thrown or



thrust through a barrier that it does not bring down, the blade (and wielder, if in contact with it) suffer the magic's full normal effects. If the blade destroys the barrier, no damage is done to the wielder.  
**XP Value: 4,500**

### Chill blade

Up to three rounds in any turn, this dagger's magical *chill* power can be activated, causing the blade to glow with a pale, ghostly white radiance. When so empowered, a *chill blade* does an additional 1d4 hp cold damage per strike and forces the struck being to save vs. spells. If the save fails, the victim's attack rolls are made at -1 for the next hour. Further successful attacks by the dagger will cause a greater penalty, as follows: three strikes cause a -2 penalty, five strikes a -3 penalty, and so on). Any *chill blade* strike that is successfully saved against does not count in this numbering. Undead suffer no *chill* damage from a *chill* blade strike but must save vs. spells each time they are struck, or be forced to flee for 2-5 rounds.

Activation is instantaneous, by will of the wielder. Activated or not, a *chill blade* itself saves against normal and magical cold, ice, and chill effects with a +2 bonus. It does not confer such bonuses on its wielder.

The enchantment of a *chill blade* requires a finely made dagger with a blade of ferrous metal, a piece of rock crystal, a snowflake or piece of ice, some sort of lightning or electrical discharge, and the casting of a *chill touch* spell.  
**XP Value: 2,000**

### Dagger of defiance

This dagger is of normal appearance and damage, but anyone grasping it is instantly aided against certain magical effects and attacks. The wielder of a *dagger of defiance* becomes immune to all forms of *fear* and *repulsion*. A +3 bonus to saving throws against all enchantment/charm attacks is also gained, as well as a +1 bonus to saves against all polymorph and petrification effects. These protections last as long as the dagger is touched and cannot be exhausted, but they can never extend to more than one being.

The enchantment of a *dagger of defiance* requires doppelganger blood and a distilled essence of xorn flesh. The process also involves the casting of *fear* and *repulsion* spells.  
**XP Value: 3,500**

### Dagger of doomwarding

This *dagger +1* has seven charges when first enchanted. It cannot be recharged; once the charges are used, it will be only a *dagger +1* thereafter. A charge is drained whenever the being grasping the dagger's hilt so wills it. The number of charges left can be known at all times.

Using a charge from a *dagger of doomwarding* allows its wielder an extra action or chance in bad situations: an

additional attack in a given round; an additional saving-throw attempt against a dangerous effect; another bend bars/lift gates roll, and so on (the DM's decision as to what actually occurs is final). Only one charge may be expended per round. The wielder must have been holding the dagger when the initial failed saving throw or missed combat strike was made; the newly gained action or failed chance is assumed to occur almost immediately after the failed one.

The enchantment of this type of weapon is said to require a powdered alicorn (unicorn horn) or—even better—the touch of a living unicorn's horn to the blade.  
**XP Value: 4,000**

### Dragonfang

This dagger can emit a straight-line, 1'-wide, 90'-long *lightning bolt* from its tip four times a day, but only twice in any one turn. The bolt does 2d8 + 1 hp damage to all beings in its path (save vs. wands for half damage). If the *lightning bolt* is invoked as the dagger strikes a victim, no bolt is produced, but the victim takes the full lightning damage in addition to the dagger's physical bite. No saving throw is allowed to the victim. Creatures resistant or immune to electrical attacks take partial or no damage from the bolt.

Any *dragonfang* dagger attack does double damage to all dragons, including Oriental dragons, spacefaring and extraplanar dragons, and dracoliches.  
**XP Value: 3,000**

### Fang dagger

This sort of dagger is rare indeed in the North, but it is a favored weapon of evil thieves and wizards in Thay and in places south and east of there (the lands of Murghom, Semphar, Raurin, and Durpar). When sheathed, a *fang dagger* appears as a normal weapon. When drawn, it becomes a small, coiling emerald-green snake head and torso up to 6" long.

This "blade" has no cutting edge and cannot be used to sever ropes, parry other weapons, or the like. Its use does not alter the wielder's THAC0. A successful attack does only 1 hp piercing damage, but the struck victim must save against poison or suffer the snake's venom effects. A being who successfully saves against the poison of a *fang dagger* is forever immune to the poison of that particular dagger.

The poison effects of a *fang dagger* vary with the type of snake used, and may be of injected types A, B, C, D, E, F, or O (see the *DMG*, page 73). The venom is never exhausted, no matter how often the blade is used, unless the blade's head is destroyed. The snake head is itself AC 6 and will be destroyed if it suffers 4 + hp damage. It makes all saving throws as a 1-HD monster.

The making of such a blade requires a live snake (of the poison type desired), an intact dagger, and a secret ritual involving the powdering of gems, the casting of a

*temporal stasis* spell, and the use of a drop of *sovereign glue*.

**XP Value: 2,500**

### Grimwald's dagger

First popularized by High Lady Alustriel of Silverymoon, these amusing and effective *daggers +1* emit a continuous snarling noise, like a small and angry dog, when drawn and grasped. The snarls rise into barks whenever the blade actually strikes a living target.

Opponents touched but not wounded by the blade of a *Grimwald's dagger* must save vs. spells or shudder helplessly with laughter on the following round (-2 on saving throws, strength checks, armor class, and attack rolls). This effect lasts for one round but may recur each time contact is made with the blade.

Once per day, the wielder of this type of dagger can cause it to *savage* an opponent. This causes the blade to emit a shrill, ululating screaming noise (audible up to half a mile away in good conditions) and grants the wielder two rounds of *hasted* attacking (double attacks, -2 initiative bonus, and no aging). During this time, the dagger functions as a +2 weapon and its base damage is doubled.

This sort of dagger is named for its inventor, the wizard Grimwald, who delighted in teasing his cats.

**XP Value: 2,500**

### Invisible blade

This weapon does normal damage but appears only as a hilt; its blade cannot be seen. Blood or dirt can outline or betray the location of its blade, but even striking a creature does not make the metal itself appear. An *invisible blade* can therefore be concealed in a man's grasp and carried where weapons are not permitted.

An *invisible blade* is always silent in striking, even if it falls or is thrust against stone or metal. It never reflects light, but it can be normally affected by *heat metal* and similar spells, and it can be readily seen by creatures able to see invisible objects. When grasped (it need not be drawn), an *invisible blade* allows its wielder to see as if using a *detect invisibility* spell.

*Detect invisibility*, *invisibility*, *gaze reflection*, and some form of magical *silence* are required for the enchantment of such a dagger. The magic must be worked on the blade as it is forged and tempered.

**XP Value: 1,000**

### Jump dagger

This magical weapon looks and functions as a normal dagger, but it has three special powers. One operates automatically, affecting the blade and any one creature grasping it as if by a *feather fall* spell. This power is negated only during the use of the next power described.

The wielder can, at will, make one *jump* (as per the first-level wizard spell) every other round, so long as the weapon is

# GREAT MINDS SPEAK OUT

“Relativity, Black Holes,  
Unified Field Theory –  
it’s all crap. I’m  
convinced that  
the true  
underlying  
structure of  
space-time  
is actually  
Dreamtime.”



## DREAMTIME

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More Important  
than Knowledge.



A new concept in roleplaying from ICE.

grasped (it need not be drawn). The weapon must accompany the wielder.

The wielder can also move small nonliving objects about by pointing the blade at the object and willing the effect to occur. An attack roll is required, and the object will *jump* up to 30' away, its distance and direction set by the wielder of the *jump dagger*. The objects cannot be larger than 3' in any dimension and must weight less than 100 lbs.

This property is often used to pass weapons, keys, and valuables to another being, or to snatch them away from an enemy, such as a mage readying spell components. If it is used to launch an attack (even indirectly, such as a lit torch being directed at a flammable object), the DM should require a successful attack roll to ensure that the object reached its intended target.

If this power is directed at an opponent's weapon or other firmly held object, the opponent is allowed a strength check on 1d20 to retain hold and break the dagger's attempt (for that round, at least). If the check succeeds, the opponent retains full control over the weapon, and is not penalized in any attack rolls launched during the round. If the check fails, the weapon is snatched out of the opponent's grasp; magical weapons are allowed a save vs. spells to be unaffected, with a bonus equalling any "pluses" they possess. The opponent can never be overbalanced or pulled along by the affected item.

The making of *jump daggers* requires *feather fall*, *jump*, and *levitate* spells, in combination with a special tempering. The oil for the quenching of the tempering process must contain blink dog or displacer beast blood or beholder ichor, stirred and mixed well.

**XP Value: 2,000**

### Rust blade

These rare weapons have a constantly operating, involuntary power. Whenever the naked blade of a *rust blade* directly touches metal (a successful attack roll is required), the metal rusts, crumbling to useless shards and flakes in one round.

Magical metallic items contacting a *rust blade* have a chance of escaping destruction equal to 10% per plus (e.g., a *dagger* +1 has a 10% chance of being unaffected). Special powers or abilities may, at the DM's option, be considered equivalent to additional bonuses. A *rod of lordly might*, for example, has 10 powers or forms and functions, and could be considered to have a 100% chance of escaping a *rust blade's* effects, if the DM deems it so. Consider all magical items that are not weapons or armor of some sort to have a 20% base chance of being unaffected.

Note that such a weapon cannot be carried in a metal scabbard, and it is as much a hazard to the wielder and allies as it is to enemies. The making of such weapons requires some of the flesh of a rust monster's antennae.

If a rust monster smells such a blade, it will attack it over all other possible metallic meals. A *rust blade* touched by a rust monster antenna collapses into a hot, sparkling gray liquid that a rust monster will immediately devour, thereafter falling into a contented doze. The liquid takes 2-5 turns to digest but acts as a healing agent and growth stimulant, giving the affected rust monster its full possible (40) hit points. In rust monsters already at full hit points, the devouring of a *rust blade* awakens a strong urge to mate—and causes them to wildly attack all sources of metal in the vicinity, rammung any creatures in the way and bowling over any creatures wearing or carrying metal, for 2-5 hp impact damage per charge (one charge per round, normal attack roll required, in addition to tentacle attacks).

**XP Value: 1,000**

### Speaking dagger

When thrown, this otherwise normal dagger's special power is unleashed. It is +4 to attack, only when thrown, and upon impact, it emits an audible *message*.

This spoken "sending" cannot be a spell incantation, nor can it trigger any delayed spell or activate any item or effect by utterance of a command word. It can, of course, convey passwords or instructions. Such a message reproduces the accent and tone of the speaker, can be up to 50 words in length, and is repeated each time the dagger is thrown. (The irritation that a mocking comment can produce makes it a favorite of Calishite torturers, who throw it near the arms and legs of bound prisoners in the darkness, without warning and at irregular intervals.)

Only one message can be spoken over the dagger in a day or any 144-turn period. A code word (not part of the message, nor counted in its word length) begins and ends the dagger's "recording" of a message, that may be emplaced by any being knowing the word and having the power of speech. If the word is spoken twice over the blade with nothing being said in between, the blade will bear no message.

The making of such blades is known to require the crushing of certain gems, the casting of a *magic mouth* spell, and the utterance of the code word! which can never be changed thereafter.

**XP Value: 1,500**

### Spider fang

This *dagger* +3 is always black or dark purple in hue. Its touch causes all nonmagical ropes, bindings, and magical or natural webs to part in an instant. Despite the name, this weapon has no effect on poisons and does not itself employ poison.

Once every six turns, a *spider fang* can emit a *web* from its tip. Such webs are in all respects identical to those created by the spell and last for four turns, if not destroyed earlier. A *spider fang* can also emit a *curtain of cobwebs* once a day. This shroudlike, oval curtain hangs upright in

midair, always 6' in front of the point of the dagger. The curtain partially obscures the vision of others, so that they may not be able to identify the wielder of the *spider fang*, and it causes all nonmagical missile attacks (excluding those from siege engines) against the wielder to be launched at -1 to hit and damage.

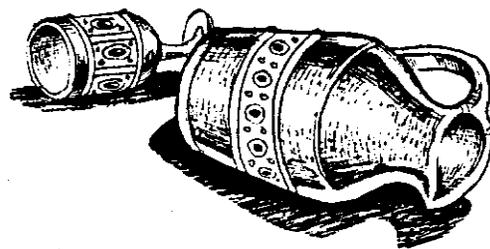
A *curtain of cobwebs* acts in all other respects like a *shield* spell, except that it has no effect at all on *magic missiles*. It lasts for seven rounds, moving as the point of the dagger is moved, and may be positioned over a window or portal and left there, if the wielder leaves the dagger on a table or jammed into a crevice and moves away.

If a *curtain of cobwebs* contacts any living being who is not at the same time also touching the *spider fang* that created it, it collapses instantly all over the being, doing 1d3 hp corrosive damage. A *curtain of cobwebs* is destroyed instantly by any contact with flame, being consumed with a flash and a roar. If this occurs at the same time that the *curtain* contacts a creature, the creature suffers an additional 2d4 hp fiery damage (save vs. spells for half flame damage).

The creation of *spider fangs* is known to involve the ichor and web silk of driders or certain monstrous types of spiders, *shield* and *web* spells, and a complicated brew of strange ingredients in which the blade must be submerged for several days.

**XP Value: 2,000**

Ω



### LOOKING FOR A GAME CONVENTION?

If your gaming group is too small, or if you've just moved into the neighborhood, finding friends who are also gamers can be a problem. However, your local hobbies and games shop may have a bulletin board where gamers can advertise their groups and meeting times. The hobby store may also know of local game conventions where you can meet dozens of other gamers with the same interests. The Convention Calendar in this issue may also be of help. Don't sit at home and wish you knew more gamers. Go out and find them today.

# CHRIS HARVEY GAMES

## It's not so bad a year but... TIME IS RUNNING OUT!

We're well into Spring and Summer's coming so help yourself while away the long wet nights... Buy a load of games. You owe it to yourself. And if you don't go to the shops listed below and buy all the games you want then you know what'll happen! You'll just fritter your money away on food, clothes, a roof over your head and other unimportant stuff<sup>®</sup> with no games to play and only Neighbours to watch on the TV?<sup>®</sup> So if you want to enjoy the rest of the year and who deserves it better... do it all yourself. Start now before it's too late<sup>®</sup> so get out there and treat yourself... Enjoy!

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# 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.

I have attended many conventions in the northeastern U.S. and along the eastern coast, and have some observations and some advice for convention-goers.

If you plan to attend a small convention, register for events in advance; that way, you will avoid the aimless wanderings of so many people I have observed. After all, you can wander a mall any time, but how often can you play an AD&D® game with national-class players? Don't waste time!

If you are going to go to a large convention, the game mastering should be very good. I would advise you to play in events that you would not normally play, such as BATTLE-TECH®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, PARANOIA®, and SHADOWRUN® games. Most large conventions offer "no experience required" games, so take advantage of the opportunity to learn a new system and meet new people. You always said what you want most is a real adventure, right?

If you plan on buying game systems or batches of new figures that you can barely afford, wait until the last day of the convention. The dealers usually reduce their prices on the last day, and most have large stocks. Remember, nobody ever said that you can't barter! Ever tell a store owner that his +1 back scratcher is not worth your extra suit of +5 chain mail of flying? Play the game!

If you have a comment, either good or bad, about the way a convention is run, write a letter, share your experiences, and let others benefit. Maybe the game master honestly believed that you would want to be utterly destroyed by the Klingons after you pulled out of Star Base 11 with your whole task force. As I said, make your feelings known; they may help next year's convention. If a convention has problems year after year and you don't help, then you are part of the problem, not the solution.

This year, for the first time, my best friend and I volunteered to be game masters for TOTAL CONFUSION in Worcester. For this, they gave us a break on our registration fees and we had a great time. I strongly recommend that any mature gamer give a little of himself, his experience, his knowledge, and his time to make an event more enjoyable for all. And please, if you do sign up to GM a slot, show up! That way TOTAL CONFUSION won't become "Mass Confusion" and "Total Panic" when one of our Dungeon Masters is missing!

I would also like to say "well done" to the staff of TOTAL CONFUSION! It was very well organized and run; everything went off perfectly.

Scott A. Steinmetz  
Glen Burnie MD

I am writing to express my opinion on two subjects constantly debated in "Forum": role-playing and alignment.

I agree with Troy C. Jennings (issue #158) that DMs should run their campaigns as they want, but I don't agree about restricting evil characters' actions in the game. I also don't agree with John Patrick Wall (issue #159) when he states that there are limits to role-playing when the correct role-playing of a character will prejudice other characters.

Since I became a DM (for the AD&D 2nd Edition game), I have heard there is only one rule a DM should obey: "Be fair!" Is it fair to permit a paladin character to do good and bring order as much as possible, and not permit a chaotic-evil assassin to do evil and bring chaos too? Doesn't seem very fair to me!

If you permit evil characters in your campaign, you should let them act evil! What's wrong with an evil outlaw killing his party to make off with all of the loot? If the party is not useful to him any more, why keep it alive? Evil acts like betrayal are part of a role-playing game, as are good acts like saving a poor girl without expecting any reward.

I think the heart of this discussion relies in how you face the AD&D game. Is it a game of heroic fantasy with magic, dragons, dungeons, etc., that has role-playing as a part of it? Or is it a role-playing game lived in a world of fantasy with magic? Which do you consider to be more important: dice-rolling or role-playing? I and my players believe that the role-playing is the most important part of the AD&D game, and so our game is much more fun because no one gets angry when his character is killed by another, or when a ranger character uses the party's only wish left in a ring of three wishes to stop a fire in a local forest. The characters can get angry (and you bet they do), but the players never will. After all, it's all part of a role-playing game!

I don't like evil characters. I don't have an evil character. And sometimes I don't permit evil characters in my games. But when I do, they can be as evil as they wish!

If you think evil actions are bad for the enjoyment of your game, then you should not permit evil characters. It is not right to permit a player to play an evil character without permitting him to do evil actions. It is not fair.

Fabio Luis De Paoli  
Sao Paulo, Brazil

In response to Toby Meyers' letter in issue #164, I have to hand it to him. He does know what he is talking about.

However, my original remarks were apparently misunderstood. When I said, as Mr. Meyers puts it, "The idea that computers as GMs are equal to or even better than humans: I believe Mr. Meyers did not follow the point I was attempting to establish. My point was that the computer will be the GM for you, whereas humans could argue over who has to GM. Better than humans? Not really. This remark I didn't make either. I simply said that computer RPGs are going to be interesting and exciting for years to come. Computers are helpful tools that you can also use for recreation.

When you play a computer RPG, you guide your party through some sort of dungeon where everything can become monotonous. The walls all look the same. The endless stream of monsters seems impossible when you are in a 10' x 10' room. The magical items come readily. But, if this is the type of game you desire, this is the type of game you buy. The challenging puzzles, the little quests, the magical items whose functions you cannot guess, and the funny-looking green thing you just fought—all are on the bright side of the argument.

When you play the game, you have to imagine that you, as your paladin at the front of the party, are walking in sewers full of muck and who-knows-what toward the huge iron-bound door at the end of the tunnel. You don't know what is beyond it, so the sound of your sword rasping from its sheath alerts your party of possible danger. If you don't imagine these sorts of thoughts, the game would be more like this: "Okay, let's go down the tunnel and through the door." The same thing can be said of an AD&D game campaign. For example, you sit in your house, your friends house, or wherever you play, and you listen to the droning voice of your DM. When he finishes attempting to describe whatever he was saying, you tell him that your character goes to the door and opens it.

It is tough to sit in a place you have lived in or seen on many occasions and still let your mind wander and think in the rhythm of the game. The same goes for sitting at your computer.

Dan Howarth  
Holbrook AZ

This letter is addressed to all those people who feel that their campaign is lacking some "between-player mystery." I've played a number of role-playing games for about 3½ years, including the AD&D game, and I've noticed that the AD&D game differs a bit from most others, I'm not talking about the game system or about combat complexity, but about the way the game is most commonly played. AD&D game players tend to roll up their characters as a group, then as a party they're off on an adventure. This is a bit of a shame, as you miss out on a lot of the role-playing between the players, which is great fun as many undoubtedly know.

So, try this instead: When starting a campaign, let each player roll up his character alone with the DM. That'll mean that the player keeps his stats, profession, and abilities a secret, at least in the beginning. (Quite a few players, including myself, like to keep a few secrets about their characters, or may even want to appear as someone completely different than who they are, but more about that later.) Then let the player or the DM make up the character's background; play a little pre-game with the player and direct him to a suitable place in the campaign where he might meet another PC. Then do the same for all the other players, doing each character separately.

Example: "The son of a peasant girl and a sailor, Jodyni Xon was born in the year AC 979. Since his mother died in childbirth and his father never returned to claim him, Jodyni grew up with a nearby peasant family. He was treated as a member of the family and was quite

content with his lot. One day, when Jodyni was about 18, his host family and the nearby farms were attacked by bandits. Jodyni himself was knocked out in the ensuing battle; when he woke up, he found himself in the vicinity of the capital city, Specularum. He wandered in, and now that he has recovered from the worst shock, he has decided to try to become a city guard. That would give him some weapon training (sorely needed if he contemplates revenge) and also some cash."

This is the sort of pre-game you can run with each player, preferably role-playing it, though it can be decided without role-playing by the DM, the player, or both. Now for bringing some characters together: "Garvin of Shackleton was a young man of 24, born in the city of Kelvin. There, as a street urchin, he learned the skills of a thief, as well as those of bargaining and evaluating things. Growing up, Garvin got into larger and more serious crimes, but after one particularly large heist that brought him quite a lot of cash, he decided to give up thieving and instead become a merchant. He had quite a bit of fighting experience from fighting in back alleys, so if anybody asked, he pretended to be an ex-fighter. Anyway, he bought a wagon, a horse, and some merchandise, and then was off toward the capital, Specularum. There, in a tavern, he got into a brawl after a few too-quick words with Bren of Danmaddern, a young priest with very strong beliefs and a high social standing. In the ensuing fight, the whole tavern got involved and someone sent for the city guard. It arrived shortly after to restore order; of course, it included Jodyni Xon. This is the first time the PCs meet, but not the last.

After a couple of days, you might arrange for a caravan going east/north/wherever. Of course,

Garvin of Shackleton (the merchant/thief) goes along. Our fiery priest, Bren of Danmaddern, is assigned by his church to see to the spiritual, and possibly healing, needs of the caravan, according to an agreement between the church and the Guild of Caravans. In the meantime, a friend of Jodyni Xon's has quit the city guard to become a mercenary instead. He asks if Jodyni wants to join him, as he's heard that there's a caravan leaving soon. At this point, you might introduce another PC, such as a mage named Garth. Garth is an apprentice to an old wizard who desperately needs to send a message to a colleague/friend in Darokin, a distant city. He decides to send his apprentice. However, the wizard has enemies who might want to get at the message, so he suggests that Garth disguise himself to fool anyone trying to intercept him. Garth buys a sword (which he can carry but cannot use) as well as some other equipment, and decides to pretend to be an adventurer, "Garth the Brave." And there just happens to be a caravan leaving for Darokin soon.

There is room for some interesting role-playing aboard that caravan: a merchant who pretends to be an ex-fighter but is actually an ex-thief; and a disguised mage who cannot use the sword he carries and might not want to reveal his powers, and who also carries an important message! What you have are four PCs of different backgrounds, and nobody knows very much about each other. After many days together on the caravan, fighting off bandits and monsters, you hope they'll get to know and respect each other. Even if the characters continue to adventure together after the caravan has reached its final stop, it may well take a while before Garth the Brave has to reveal his magic, or before Garvin of Shackleton is discov-

ered to possess certain nonwarrior skills. Of course, double-identity characters shouldn't be used often, as then everybody will probably suspect everybody else of having a double profession. But it's lots of fun to play a character who has a secret profession or secret goal. Also, it's fun for the DM to watch the PCs tell other characters about themselves without giving away any secrets. Then, of course, everybody's in for a surprise when the secrets get out.

What I'm trying to say is this: You don't need to keep all the players together all the time, so that everybody knows everything about everybody else and about what's happening. You can keep the characters in groups and just let them meet up once in a while, or at least let each PC do some things on his own now and again.

Certainly, a campaign such as this may not please everybody. Some may have groups too big to make it practical, and some DMs may not be willing to make the extra time and work (for it does increase the DM's workload a bit). These are just suggestions that have worked well in my D&D game campaign. Also, for "once-off" adventures, it might not be worth going to the trouble of giving each PC a separate background, but you can always try to give some PCs a different lead-in to the adventure. It does add a bit to the role-playing.

Kristian Teglbjaerg  
Fagersta, Sweden



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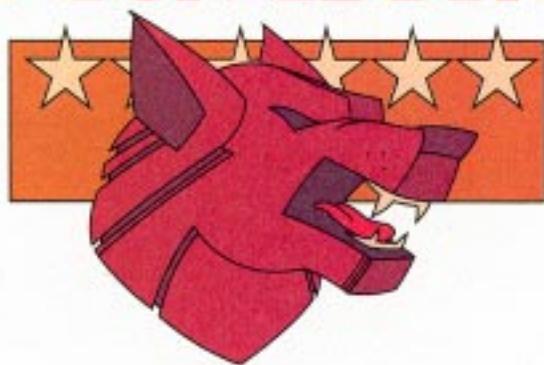
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# SAGE ADVICE

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We are no longer able to make personal replies; please send no SASEs with your questions (SASEs are being returned with writers' guidelines for the magazine).

This month, the sage looks at the theory and practice behind the skills, spells, and equipment in the AD&D® 2nd Edition game.

## **Is the survival nonweapon proficiency useful only for extreme climates such as tundra or tropical jungle, or can it also be used for the temperate forests where most AD&D game campaigns are set?**

The survival proficiency can be applied to any combination of terrain and climate. It is entirely possible for a ranger or druid to starve in the woods if the character is lost in unfamiliar terrain at the wrong time of the year. For example, food and water can be pretty tough to find in a deep forest in high summer when very few nuts and berries are ripe. On the other hand, even an unskilled character could do very well at the right time in familiar terrain.

## **Is a character illiterate in his native tongue if he does not have the reading/writing proficiency? If this is so, isn't reading/writing absolutely required for wizards and priests?**

If you're following the rules strictly, one proficiency "slot" must be spent for every language to be read or written. All wizards learn how to read magical notation, which is a highly specialized symbolic language, something like musical notation. This does not necessarily mean the character can read and write in other languages. Likewise, priests learn to recite prayers, catechisms, and the like; they might never learn to read anything. Individual DMs may hand out a few free reading/writing proficiencies to characters who might need them.

## **Is the seamanship proficiency required to operate a small boat such as a canoe or kayak? How**

### **much do kayaks cost, anyway?**

Seamanship includes the ability to handle small boats and serve as a crewman on larger craft. Whether or not seamanship is absolutely required to use a small boat is up to the DM (see the next question). The DM might also choose to limit seamanship to large craft and create a new proficiency, boating, to cover small craft. Kayaks, when available at all, cost about the same as canoes of similar size, 30-50 gp.

### **Isn't it silly to require a proficiency check every time a character wants to do something unusual or complex? Doesn't everybody have at least a slight chance to succeed at anything? How would such chances be calculated?**

It would indeed be silly to roll the dice every time a character attempts a task. However, nobody can try to do everything and succeed all the time. To stay between these two extremes, the DM must decide how difficult a task is and decide what skills are necessary to complete it. There are some things just about anybody could do; for example, it doesn't take the rope use skill to tie one's shoes, nor does it take the carpentry skill to nail two boards together. However, some skills *look* a lot easier than they really are. Canoes, for example, have a nasty habit of moving in circles when improperly paddled. Likewise, rowboats also are fond of orbiting or not moving at all when an inexperienced oarsman tries his hand. While a character with seamanship probably shouldn't have to roll to control a boat or canoe on a calm lake, unskilled characters are in for a hard time even under such favorable conditions. Also, there are some tasks that unskilled characters cannot complete. Only a carpenter has enough knowledge to build an entire house, and only a seaman can hope to control a boat or canoe through a dangerous rapids or during a windstorm.

When adjudicating attempts that fall into the middle ground, the DM should decide how difficult the task is and how much specialized knowledge is needed for success. A skilled character probably can automatically complete an absurdly simple task even under poor conditions (perhaps failing only on a roll of 20), while an unskilled character might have to try harder. For example, a character with rope use might be able to tie his shoes with one hand or while hopping on one foot, while an unskilled character might have to make a roll. A good rule of thumb in such cases is to use the normal proficiency score

reduced to one half or one quarter (round fractions down); the more difficult the task, the less chance there is for success. Consider the circumstances carefully. The world-record long jump currently is 29'2½", but this does not mean that every adventurer can leap a 10' pit with ease; encumbrance, damage, footing, lighting, even ceiling height will affect any attempt to jump. The DM should decide on a case-by-case basis using common sense. The DM should try to avoid making the campaign a slave to the proficiency system, but making the players *think* their characters out of a predicament is better than allowing them to extricate themselves by calling on skills the characters don't have.

### **I have a dual-classed fighter/thief whose thief level finally has exceeded his fighter level. If he uses two weapons, can he still get weapon specialization bonuses? Can he use weapon specialization bonuses while backstabbing? Which saving throw chart does he use?**

A character can use a specialized weapon with another weapon; see the "two-weapon style" question in "Sage Advice," issue #165, page 91 for details. Neither dual-classed nor multiclassed characters can combine class abilities. If your fighter/thief backstabs, he must use his rogue THAC0 and must forgo specialization bonuses; he can, however, use his warrior strength bonuses. Strength and magical bonuses to a thief's damage are applied *after* the backstab multiplier. A multi-classed character (and a dual-classed character whose active class level has surpassed his original class level) uses the best applicable saving throw.

### **Can a spell caster have two mirror image spells running at the same time? If so, is there a limit to the total number of images the caster can have at one time?**

I can't think of a reason why multiple mirror image spells cannot be used, but note that each additional spell creates 2-8 additional images of the caster, not of the caster and all previously existing images. I strongly suggest that you limit the total number of images to eight. If an additional spell would bring the total to nine or more images, the excess images from the new spell are lost.

### **According to the magic jar spell description, the host life force is held captive in the receptacle if the**

spell caster gains possession of a body. What happens to the host life force if the receptacle is destroyed while the caster is still in the host body?

*Magic jar* creates all kinds of difficulties for DMs. Here's an answer to tide you over until something official comes along: Any life force held in a *magic jar* receptacle is slain if the receptacle is destroyed (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 170). However, unwilling victims of *magic jar* spells are not irrevocably slain as the caster would be if the receptacle is destroyed, as the captive life force is not an integral part of the spell as the caster's is. Note that the caster's life force must return to the receptacle before returning to his own body. If the DM feels the need to discourage player characters from using *magic jar* as a cheap way to slay opponents, it's fine to set a high value on the crystal or gem required for the receptacle, to prohibit the caster from replacing receptacles when they are destroyed (thus trapping the caster in the host body), or both.

How are the fiery bolts created by the second version of the third-level *flame arrow* spell used? Can the caster hurl them all at once? Does he have to roll to hit his targets? Will the bolts affect creatures harmed only by magic weapons?

The caster need not hurl all the bolts on the round of casting, but unused bolts are lost when the spell's duration expires at the end of the round. The caster must make a to-hit roll for each bolt; range modifiers do not apply to the roll, but dexterity adjustments do. The DM might wish to allow an additional +2 to-hit bonus as in the *Melf's minute meteors* spell. The fiery bolts are a magical attack and can affect just about any creature. Note that the bolts inflict minor piercing damage (1d6) and fire damage (4d6, save for half); creatures that are immune to only one of these forms of damage still suffer the other form of damage if struck. If the caster directs one or more bolts at a magic-resistant creature, the creature makes one magic resistance roll for the volley; if it succeeds, the entire volley is negated. Bolts from multiple casters constitute separate volleys.

What happens to creatures that are partially or completely submerged in mud when a *mud to rock* spell is cast in the vicinity?

A creature completely submerged in mud will be trapped in the resulting rock. Creatures walking or wallowing on the surface might escape entrapment if they save vs. breath weapon.

Will a *wall of iron* stand up on its

own, or does it always tip one way or another? Will it tip if placed directly against an existing wall, or will it insert itself into the wall and reinforce that wall?

An unsupported *wall of iron* will fall over unless it can insert itself into adjacent nonliving material. The wall can be placed face-to-face with another nonliving surface to reinforce it. Note that a *wall of iron* is always created vertical. Also, a *wall of iron* is very heavy, and the DM might rule that even a supported *wall* will tip if the adjoining material is very weak (such as a thin wooden or plaster wall). In such cases the magical wall probably will bring the supporting material tumbling down with it.

Are undead, constructed beings, or plants affected by the *polymorph other* spell or a *wand of polymorphing*? Why or why not?

Most creatures, including undead and simulacra, can be *polymorphed* with the fourth-level *polymorph other* spell or a *wand of polymorphing*. (As a side note, golems are creatures, but all of them are immune to *polymorph* spells.) Generally speaking, a creature is an entity that can move and react without outside aid. A creature need not be alive. On the other hand, magically controlled creatures still are creatures even when not acting independently. Animated nonliving objects

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(excluding skeletons and zombies) are not creatures, whether magically or mechanically animated. If the DM uses science-fiction monsters such as sentient robots or androids, he should decide when they are introduced whether to treat such entities as objects or creatures. Nonsentient plants probably should not be considered creatures for purposes of low-level *polymorph* magicks. Note that animals cannot be turned into plants by *polymorph other* spells or a *wand of polymorphing*; the eight-level *polymorph any object* spell is required for such transformations.

**The description of the portable hole in the DMG says there is a limited amount of air in the hole. Do bags of holding have a similar limitation or do they allow unlimited breathing? Just how large an object will fit into a bag of holding?**

*Bags of holding*, like *portable holes*, do not contain any air except what happens to be inside when they are closed. However, it is assumed that a bag can be left open just a bit when living creatures are kept inside. If a bag is tightly sealed, there is limited air inside. A large bag has about the same internal capacity (250 cubic feet) as a *portable hole* (a little more than 282 cubic feet). The other bags have proportionately less space and air inside them. Note that most creatures will use up oxygen faster than it can be replenished through a small crack, so a bag still would have to be opened every half hour or so to keep creatures inside from suffocating.

No item can be placed inside a *bag of holding* unless it can pass through the mouth. A standard *bag of holding*, laid out flat, is 2' wide and 4' long, with a mouth at one of the narrow ends. No object can pass through the mouth into the bag unless its circumference is 4' or less. For example, a chest 1' across on all sides will fit into the bag, but a chest 1½' across on all sides will not.

Because *bags of holding* are larger on the inside than the outside, they can hold objects that are very long. Assuming that a standard bag is twice as deep as it is wide, each type of bag can hold objects about this long: 30 cubic feet, 5'; 70 cubic feet, 6½'; 150 cubic feet, 8½'; 250 cubic feet, 11½'. A *portable hole* can hold an object about 12½' long. Note that this assumes the object is very thin; bulky objects would have to be a bit shorter.

**Why do the potions of heroism and super heroism work only on warriors?**

There are several magical items that work only for specific classes. In each case, game logic and game balance play a role. Game logic in this case is unclear, but it probably goes something like this: The potions enhance, not create, the warrior potential in a character. Zero-level characters and warriors have the potential to be enhanced, but members of other classes

do not. The latter have abandoned or suppressed any warrior potential while training to become members of their own classes. Game balance demands that there be distinct differences between classes. Class specialization in the AD&D game helps to insure that all characters are not near-clones trying to achieve the same menu of skills and abilities. Clearly defined character classes also make teamwork necessary, since one or two characters cannot do everything that might be required for successful adventures. This also promotes role-playing and campaign longevity. Most magical items that duplicate class abilities are class specific. Otherwise, class distinctions would disappear and a typical party would become a homogeneous mix of wizards turned healers, wand-toting fighters, sword-swinging priests, and scrying rogues.

**When using Table 8 (on exceeding level limits) from the DMG, which ability score is the prime requisite for a ranger?**

The prime requisites for a ranger are strength, dexterity, and wisdom. The prime requisite for each character class is listed at the beginning of the class description in the *PHB*, immediately after the class's ability requirements.

**How should ability score checks be handled for monsters with no defined abilities? For example, how do I determine the dexterity score for a horse or a hill giant?**

If the question comes up during play, it's best to decide quickly. Keeping the game moving is more important than making a precise calculation. I suggest that you assume that any monster has average ability scores (about 10). Just roll a 1d20 for ability checks; if the result is 10 or less, assume the creature passes the check.

If the roll is higher, start figuring: Roll 1d3 to get the base ability score. In the case of dexterity, add one or two to the base score if the creature is described as agile, quick, or sure footed (subtract one or two for clumsy creatures). You might add a point for a high movement rate and one point for every multiple of three that the land or water movement rate rises above 12 or every multiple of six for air movement above 18 (you can subtract points at the same rate for exceptionally slow creatures). Generally, creatures with multiple legs are more sure footed than bipedal creatures, allowing one point for each pair of legs after the first two. The situation will exclude some modifiers; a horse might get modifiers for speed and legs when determining if it can jump a fence, but it might get none for deciding if it slides down a rocky slope. On the other hand, a basilisk probably couldn't jump over a matchbox but would get credit for its eight legs when negotiating slopes. Giants are notoriously clumsy, but their sheer size allows them to simply ignore

most obstacles.

When calculating other ability scores, consider the following: Strength generally equates to size; tiny creatures might receive a -2, small creatures a -1, man-sized creatures no modifier, large creatures a +1, and so on. Creatures especially noted for strength, such as draft horses, might get an extra point or two. If a creature has any damage modifiers from strength, use Table 1 in the *PHB* to estimate its strength score. Wisdom generally equates to intelligence, with an extra point or two if the creature has priest spells or is noted for its cunning or guile. Most monsters have higher than normal constitutions (say 11-13), modified for size as per strength. Most monsters have low charismas (say 8-10) with extra points added for high intelligence and times when a creature deals with other monsters of the same alignment. Needless to say, it's always better to go through this process *before* play begins when possible.

**The description for the wall of sand spell in FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures implies that the wall is always 12' high, no matter what the caster's level. Is this the case?**

Judging from the descriptions of other *wall* spells, I suggest that a *wall of sand* be no thicker than 4' per caster level, up to 12' high per caster level, and up to 4' long per caster level.

**The spectral wings spell from FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures creates two 12' wings with a wingspan of 26'. Doesn't 12+12 = 24? Also, the spectral wing's will follow their last instruction if the caster is slain. How aggressively will they follow an order such as "kill those creatures that are attacking me"?**

The spell creates a ghostly steed with 12' wings; the extra 2' come from the thickness of the mount itself. The steed has no intelligence and acts only at the caster's command. It is utterly incapable of following complex orders. The DM might allow the steed to make overbearing or pummeling attacks, but the caster must think out such attacks action by action, as though performing the attack himself. If, for example, the caster orders the steed to swoop own and attack a foe, but the steed is slain before he gets there, the steed follows the last command—to swoop—and probably will smack the ground at a high rate of speed as there is nobody to stop its dive. In this case, the steed tries hard to drive itself right into the earth until its duration expires. Ω

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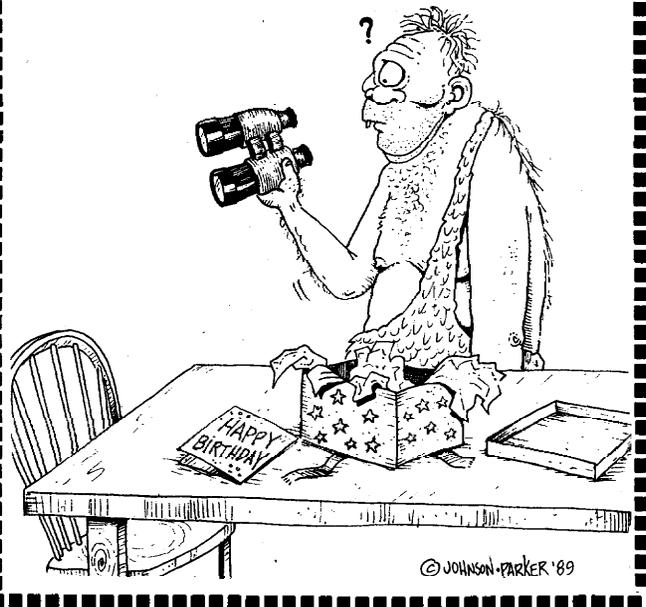
# DRAGONMIRTH

By Michael Ferman



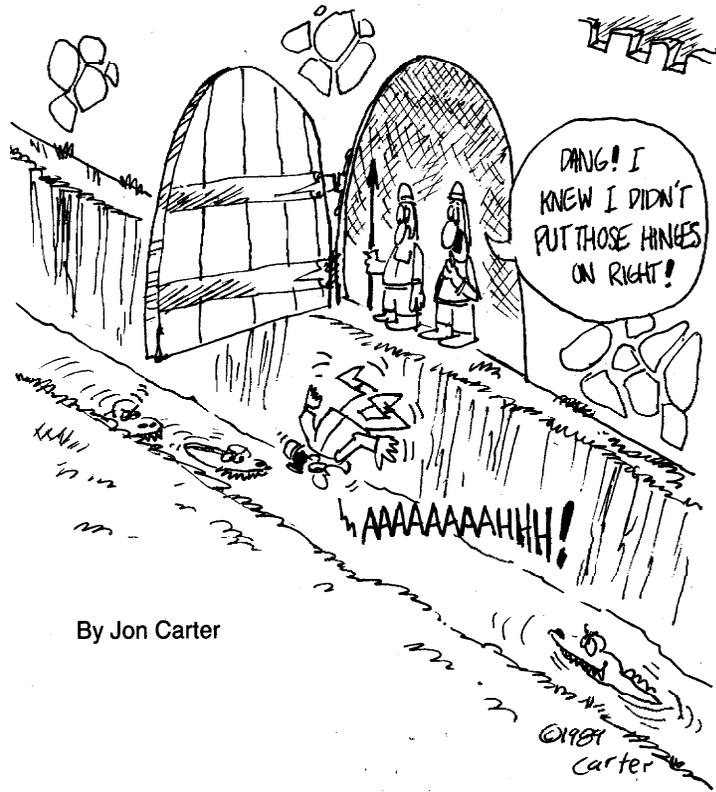
"They all say 'Good For One Free Drink at the Golden Crown Inn!'"

By Johnson - Parker



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By Jon Carter



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## Yamara

I'M CONVINCED THAT THESE TREASURES I'VE PLUNDERED FOR YOU WILL ABSOLUTELY, POSITIVELY, MAKE YOU FALL IN LOVE WITH ME.



WHY OGREK, YOU'VE TURNED MY HOME INTO A LOVELY GARRISON. WHAT MORE COULD A WOMAN ASK FOR.

"THE WAND OF MILDEW REMOVAL". AMAZING. WHEREVER DID YOU FIND IT.



WE LAUNCHED AN ASSAULT ON BORTON'S DEPARTMENT DUNGEON. THEY GIFT-WRAP.

WHAT THE—?! "POTION OF HALFLING CONTROL"?! OH, DID THEY WRAP THAT? HERE, LET ME SEE—



OGREK! THAT'S KINKY!

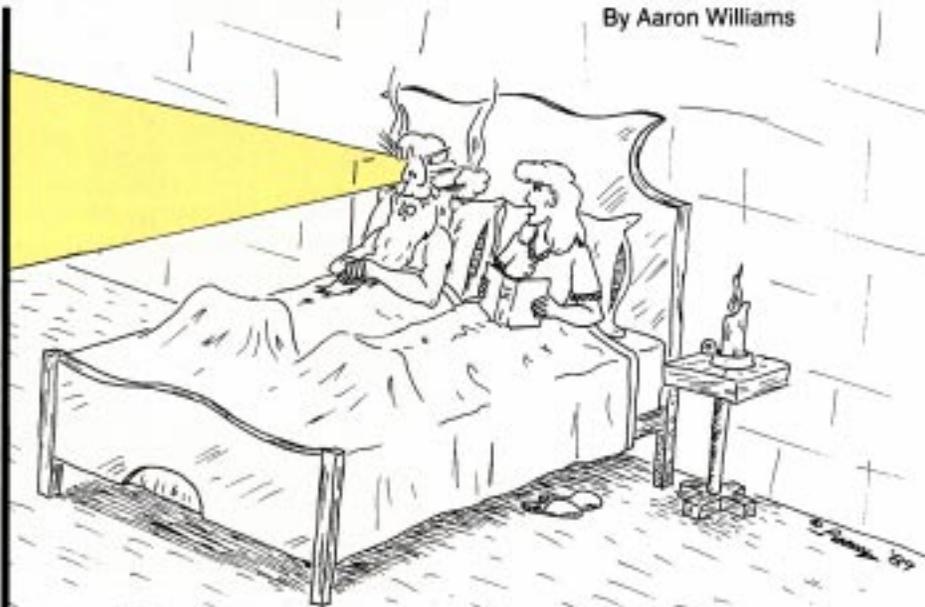
HONESTLY, I THOUGHT IT WAS A MEN'S COLOGNE.



By Jerry Fuchs



By Aaron Williams



"Memorized too many spells again, dear?"

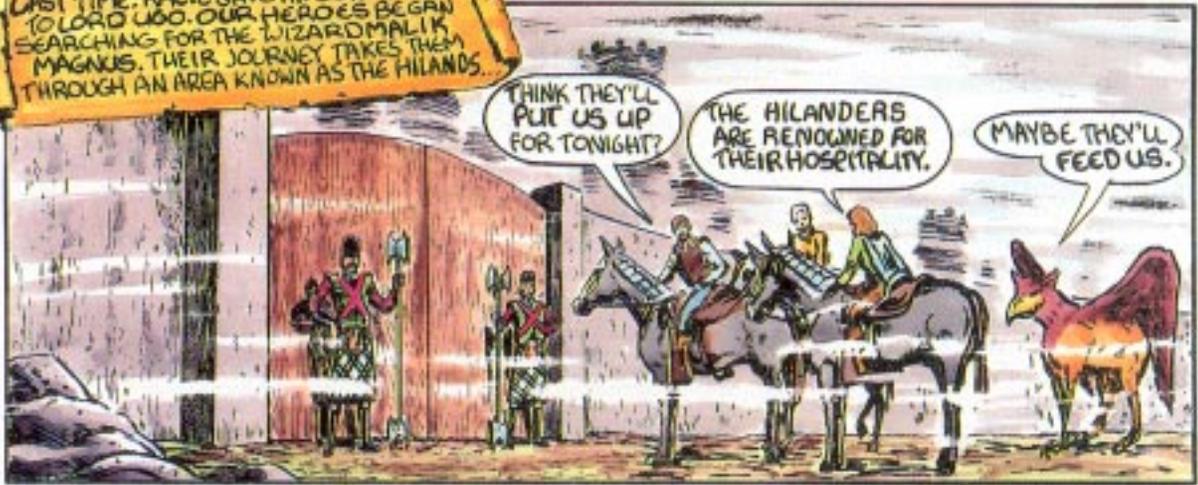
"... I THINK IT'S BROKEN... ALL IT DOES IS KEEP FLASHING:  
12:00... 12:00... 12:00..."



By Joseph Pillsbury

# THE TWILIGHT EMPIRE

LAST TIME, KALIL GAVE AN ULTIMATUM TO LORD UGO. OUR HEROES BEGAN SEARCHING FOR THE WIZARD MALIK MAGNUS. THEIR JOURNEY TAKES THEM THROUGH AN AREA KNOWN AS THE HIGHLANDS.



THINK THEY'LL PUT US UP FOR TONIGHT?

THE HILANDERS ARE RENOWNED FOR THEIR HOSPITALITY.

MAYBE THEY'LL FEED US.



SORRY, INVITED GUESTS ONLY.

WE CAN PAY FOR OUR BEDS.

SO MUCH FOR HOSPITALITY.

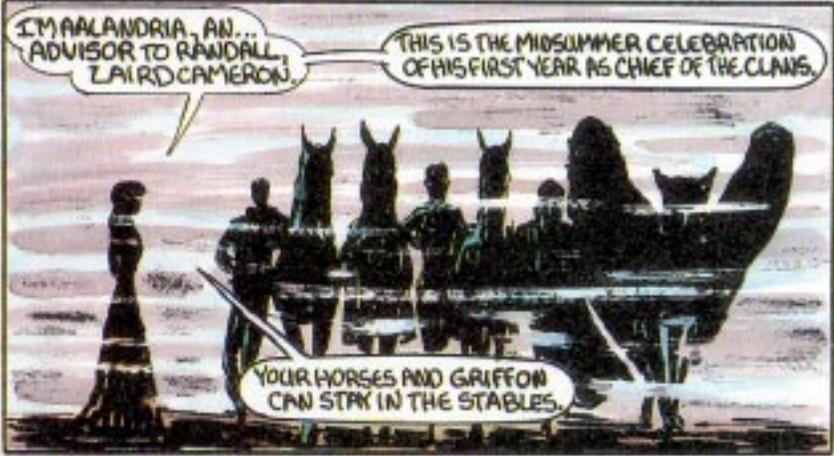


ANGUS, YOU OLD BEAR.

THIS IS A TIME OF CELEBRATION.

I'M SURE LAIRD CAMERON WOULDN'T WANT YOU TURNING AWAY NEEDY TRAVELERS.

YES, MISTRESS.



I'M AALANDRIA, AN... ADVISOR TO RANDALL LAIRD CAMERON.

THIS IS THE MIDSUMMER CELEBRATION OF HIS FIRST YEAR AS CHIEF OF THE CLANS.

YOUR HORSES AND GRIFFON CAN STAY IN THE STABLES.



WHA-AT?

NOW, BILL, DON'T MAKE A FUSS. I'LL SNEAK YOU SOME GOOD FOOD LATER.

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELVES. WHO ARE YOU? WHERE ARE YOU BOUND?



I'M ROB -- ROBIN OF HAMPSHIRE.

THESE ARE MY FRIENDS FINELLA GIRL AND BRAENNA DU DEJAN.

-- AND GALEN THE OWL

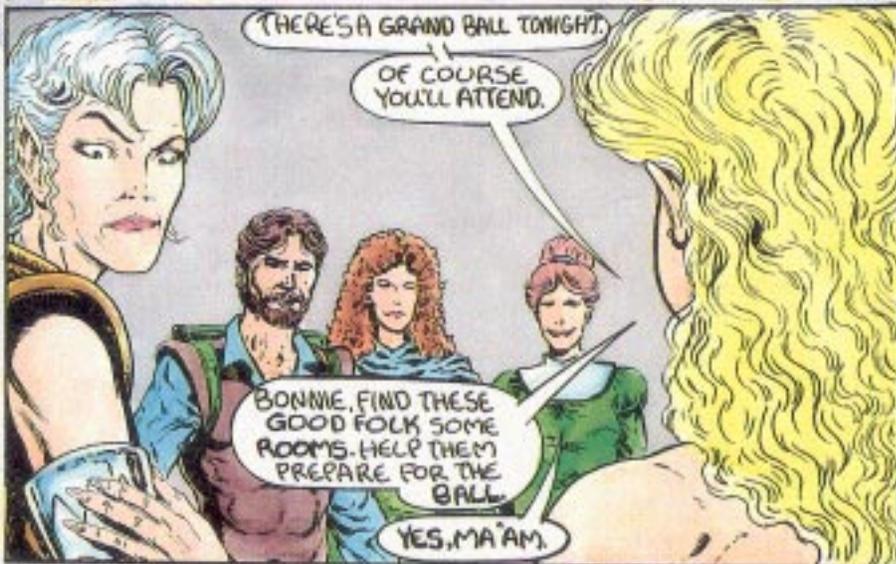
YOU'RE CIRITH?



YOU MUST BE CIRITHAN'S DAUGHTER HOW WONDERFUL TO MEET YOU!

I'M SURE.

I'M GILLIAN -- HOUSE GILLIAN -- MYSELF. OUR PEOPLES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN GREAT FRIENDS.



THERE'S A GRAND BALL TONIGHT.

OF COURSE YOU'LL ATTEND.

BONNIE, FIND THESE GOOD FOLK SOME ROOMS. HELP THEM PREPARE FOR THE BALL.

YES, MA'AM.



I'LL TAKE CARE OF THIS ONE MYSELF.

OH, GOODIE.

WHAT'S EATING FIN?

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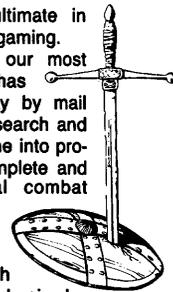
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# Through the LOOKING Glass

by Robert Bigelow

Photography by Mike Bethke



The *Bismarck* anniversary: friends and foes (GHQ)

## Rating (not berating) the ratings

Fifty years ago this May, the British navy took the backbone out of the German surface fleet. The sinking of the battleship *Bismarck* was a major event in World War II and will be talked about later in this article. But first we have a topic that needs to be addressed not only for my sake but for all other reviewers in this magazine.

Recently, an effort was made by one of the companies whose figures I review to make me change both my rating on a particular figure as well as the way I review figures in general. An individual from this company made some comments about my being bought off, then tried to influence me by putting pressure on DRAGON® Magazine and the officers of an outside organization of which I am an officer. This organization is miniatures oriented and needs the support of all miniatures companies, so this threat was especially problematic. The gist was that, unless I was persuaded that I was wrong in my reviewing methods, the company would cease its support of the organization.

I want to thank Roger Moore and the staff of DRAGON Magazine for their support, and I thank the other officers in the organization for their support. I am not

going to change my rating of any miniature already reviewed, as I have done my utmost to be perfectly fair. But I am going to put part of my decision-making process before you, the readers, so you know how I review miniatures and so I can air some ideas for your response.

My reviews are based on the following:

The figures sent in for review must be sent by either a manufacturer or a distributor. This ensures that each figure is either new or is currently available on the market. I will not knowingly review a figure that is out of production or unavailable, as that is fair neither to you nor to the company that put the figure out. The figures must be in their original packaging, as sold to the public, and should come from a common shipment.

### Miniatures' product ratings

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

I check the figures I receive against those at my store to ensure that the quality is the same and that I did not get "sterilized" pieces. I will not do a review from a photograph, a prepped model, or a painted miniature, as these allow for hiding defects through cleaning or retouching and do not assure you of getting the same product that I received.

I also frequently check with distributors as to any current or long-term problems that point to decreased quality control. Such problems include getting two of the same figure in a pack instead of two different figures, or a long run of multiple-piece figures with two left or two right legs instead of one of each, or even figures missing major parts such as heads. Several companies have had some quality-control problems lately, and I have contacted them as a result.

After I have checked the packaging, out comes the magnifying glass. I check figures for flash (how much and how thick), for mold lines, and for incomplete filling of molds. Flash is a common occurrence when the mold halves don't seal tightly or when they get old (and sometimes when they are very new). Usually, manufacturers clean away light flash before the figures leave the factory, and major flash should be caught by quality control. Several companies have given gamers the impression that no flash is found on miniatures at their factories, so great shiny webs of flash on their figures are especially noticeable. Mold lines will always be present, but this defect must be judged on whether one side of a figure is higher than the other (which means that the mold halves didn't line up) and whether one side is raised in such a way that repairing it endangers the figure's features. Incomplete fills are usually because of underheated lead, incorrect metal composition, or simply running out of lead. These figures should be caught by quality control.

If the reviewed miniature is a single-piece figure, I'm just about done. I explore the detail to make sure that it is good. In some cases, I prime the figure to bring out hidden details as well as flaws. If none are noticeable, I then write the review.

If the miniature is a multiple-piece figure, I test-fit all of the pieces to make sure they join correctly. If they fit perfectly, I often glue the pieces together, check the details, and review the figure. If they don't fit well, I find out why. If it's an easily fixed problem, I fix it and keep track of the time and effort required to do so. Sometimes large pieces shrink and therefore don't fit properly. I try to fix that as best I can, usually with putty, and I keep notes on the process.

The star rating each figure gets is based on many points, including all the considerations just mentioned. I also take into consideration the figure's utility, detail, price, quality, completeness, and clarity of instructions (for multiple-piece figures),

conformance to accepted scale, labeling, company claims, and other products. If a company continually states that its products are the best, then the standards for that company's products should be slightly higher than for other companies. I also judge on whether a product conforms to its billing. If it is labeled as being for skilled modelers, then that is how it is judged. If there is no labeling and it is a skilled kit, then points are lost immediately to reflect the disappointment of someone who got in over his head without warning. I've modeled for over 30 years in plastic, lead, wood, and other materials for both model railroading and gaming, and I have frequently cursed manufacturers when a supposed 40-minute job took hours to complete due to misrepresented instructions. I've received letters from gamers whose levels start at rank amateur and go to skilled kit-basher (those who can take several products and combine them to make an object not otherwise available). I aim my columns at all levels of hobbyists and grade accordingly.

An exception to this rule involves pewter products. Pewter is rarely if ever used for gaming, and such pieces rarely have the precision found in gaming pieces. Most people who collect pewter do so for its beauty and form rather than each figure's details. Pewter pieces tell stories, set moods, and tickle fancies. I grade pewter

on its uniqueness, its "story," how it gets its idea across, visible flaws, and the safety of the product.

I have been considering adding to my rating system by issuing a skill-level rating for each miniatures set requiring assembly, to better reflect the suitability of the set for any particular buyer. I am interested in getting feedback from all of you and will make my decision by the end of the year.

Every person who reviews products for DRAGON Magazine writes with the good of the readers in mind. We are not perfect, but we stick by our standards and explain how we reach our decisions. Speaking for myself, I don't rate on product flow but I do on quality, and this is the way it will be.

## Reviews

### The Bismarck anniversary

One of the most famous battles of World War II happened 50 years ago this month. It began on 23 May 1941, the day that the German battleship *Bismarck* and the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* steamed into the north Atlantic through the Denmark Straights. The battle's roots extended back to 1928, with the reemergence of the German navy and the appointment of Admiral Raeder as the naval Commander-in-Chief.

Raeder believed that Germany needed a strong navy to pursue its aims around the world. He was restricted by the armistice of World War I as to the size, weight, and quantities of his ships and even the number of men he could have under arms. Raeder oversaw the building of new light cruisers and *Panzerschiffs*, or pocket battleships. These were the ships that were to lead to a new, well-balanced navy.

By 1934, the navy had decided to build raiders that could disrupt and destroy standard sea lanes. Merchantmen were purchased for conversion into raiders, and two triple-turreted ships—actually battle cruisers—were being built.

In 1936, Germany began building the *Bismarck* and the *Tirpitz* under heavy security. The battleships' design was based on a late World War I battleship layout but was to have more compartmentalization, more armor, and more weapons of every type. The engines were meant to propel the ships at speeds of 31 knots for over 8,000 miles. Unfortunately, these battleships took years to build; by the time the *Bismarck* was completed, Germany had been at war for over a year, and the German navy had been reduced to sorties in the Atlantic to disperse and destroy the convoys bearing the lifeblood of the United Kingdom. The German battleships worried the British, as they were comparable to the best of Britain's operational



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battleships. The battleships would also force Britain to stretch her forces very thin, as all convoys would have to be equipped with a battleship or heavy battle cruiser escort to fight off the big German ships.

The *Bismarck* and the *Prinz Eugen* were originally slated to be part of larger group attacks on shipping lanes. Unfortunately, the other attack ships were still dock—cases when the *Bismarck* and the *Prinz Eugen* were set to leave. The German High Command wanted operational capital ships at sea to confuse the British, so they dispatched the *Bismarck* and the *Prinz Eugen* to their destinies.

The Germans charged into the north Atlantic under cover of a storm but ran smack into a patrol of cruisers. One was the H.M.S. *Suffolk*, which had the only radar set on the Arctic patrol. The captain of the *Suffolk* had the set installed less than a month before at his own behest, so his ship shadowed the Germans and guided in the battle cruiser H.M.S. *Hood* and the battleship H.M.S. *Prince of Wales*. On 24 May, British vessels fired on the *Prinz Eugen*, which had steamed ahead of the *Bismarck* during the night. This error gave the Germans plenty of time to retaliate. Within minutes, the *Hood* blew up and sank, and the *Prince of Wales* withdrew from the battle, heavily damaged and on fire. The *Bismarck* had received some hits, and one hit on its fuel bunker forced the ship back toward France. At some point, the *Prinz Eugen* slipped away from the *Bismarck* and found her way back to port. The *Bismarck* almost slipped away but was found on 26 May by a British Catalina aircraft. Shortly thereafter, a group of 15 Swordfish planes scored a hit on the *Bismarck's* rudder, forcing the ship to sail in circles. Destroyers pressed the attack until the H.M.S. *Rodney* and the H.M.S. *King*

Cymrillian Magician (Lance & Laser Models)



*George V* appeared and began firing on the *Bismarck*. On 27 May, the *Bismarck* sank after taking heavy damage and a multitude of torpedo attacks, including two torpedoes from the *Rodney* (these two torpedoes did no significant damage but were the only torpedo hits ever scored on a battleship by another battleship). The *Bismarck's* crew finally scuttled her; she sank with flag flying at 10:40 A.M. The British had ended the threat to their shipping on their own, and this basically ended the sorties of the German battleships into the Atlantic.

My gaming club has developed a quick-playing miniatures war game to see if we can stop the *Bismarck*. Our version of this battle requires a copy of The Avalon Hill Game Company's BISMARCK\* game (now out of print); a copy of the SEAPOWERS\* 1 & 3, SEEKRIEG\*, or any other World War II naval rules; and miniature ships.

Some of the ship figures you can use are briefly reviewed here, as these 1/2400-scale miniatures were sent for review by GHQ. The ships pictured are all from GHQ. All GHQ ships include deck planking, and all are available at this time.

The H.M.S. *Hood* is available through CinC (MF100) or Superior Models. This ship had eight 15" guns and a deadly weakness over a magazine. In addition, the British player also has the battle cruiser *Renown*, which was not actually used by the British because of the fate of the *Hood*.

**GHQ**  
2634 Bryant Ave.  
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**UKN-2—Suffolk** \*\*\*\*\* 1/2  
This was a heavy cruiser of the *Kent* class. It had eight 8" guns, plus torpedoes and radar. The model is well detailed, with little flash at ends of gun barrels. Five of these heavy cruisers patrolled the Denmark straights and between Greenland and the top of Iceland.

**UKN-5 & 6—"H" and "J" Class DD** \*\*\*\*\*  
These are generic destroyers; eight were with the *Rodney* convoy.

**UKN-9—Rodney BB** \*\*\*\*\*  
This ship was the most heavily gunned ship in the British navy at this time, with nine 16" guns, but it was also strange looking and was vulnerable from the rear. This ship, the *King George V* and two heavy cruisers of the *Norfolk* class were with a convoy when the *Bismarck* was discovered.

**UKN-10—King George V BB** \*\*\*\*\* 1/2  
This ship had ten 14" guns plus secondary guns. This figure can be used as either the *Prince of Wales* or the *King George V*. The *Prince of Wales* was with the *Hood*, south of Iceland, when the *Bismarck* was discovered. Be careful of the secondary

guns on this model during assembly, as they are prone to breakage

**GEN-5—Bismarck BB** \*\*\*\*\*

The second most powerful ship in the German navy (the *Tirpitz* was larger and slightly better armed), the *Bismarck* tied up almost half of the British navy in trying to contain the raider. With eight 15" guns and optics far superior to British equipment, the only surprise in store for its crew was the British ability to track it with radar. She was almost invulnerable to torpedoes, except in the rudder area. This miniature is excellent and makes a good display piece as well as a gaming piece.

**GEN-6—Prinz Eugen CA** \*\*\*\*\*

One of a class of five planned heavy cruisers that were each more than a match for any British cruiser in armor or guns, this ship had eight 8" guns as its main armament. The main problem these ships experienced was with their propulsion systems, which frequently broke down. Luckily, the miniature doesn't have this problem.

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**T-009—Cymrillian Magician** \*\*\*\*

Bard Games' *Chronicles of Talislanta* glossary defines Cymrillians as a green-skinned, green-haired people enamored of all things magical. The lead figure submitted for review represents one of these magicians. The figure is scaled for use with 25 mm figures. Although the description in the glossary did not include height for any of these magicians, the figure is 36 mm in height, putting it at just under 8" tall, and has a slender build.

The figure is dressed in a long, flowing robe bunched in a pleatlike manner around his body. The robe billows out bell-like at the cuff and reaches from shoulder to floor; an interwoven embroidered edge at the front, where the robe joins and extends around the neck and head guard, acts as a wind break. The robe is held together by a wide woven belt that is knotted and cinched on the right side. The magician is further protected from the elements by a long cape, held on by a multiringed clasp on the center of the chest. The left hand holds a thick, open book in a position to be read, while the right hand grips a long staff cut in a spiral design. The staff is topped by a creature that could either be a carving or a familiar; it looks like a cross between a bat and a pseudodragon.

The figure's face is uncovered, with his expression easy to see. The magician is quietly chanting a spell, as his face bears a look of concentration and his mouth is open slightly. Facial detail is good, with well-formed features and good hair. Some

detail is shallow, so be careful when you paint. Also note that a chain hangs from the metal crown and gem, around the guard. This will take some extra care and work when you paint the figure.

The figure makes a bit of a "ting" when tapped. This usually indicates that slightly more tin has been used than usual, so the figure will be brittle. The detail is good, and I can see several uses for it not only in AD&D games but even as an army magician in BATTLESYSTEM™ or GW's WAR-HAMMER\* miniatures combat. This is a good buy at \$1.75.

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**FA-70—Gallinir the Elf Knight \* \* \* \*1/2**

This lead, 25 mm scale figure is a little large for an elf (at 25 mm tall), so he could be used as a half-elf. The figure has a rounded base textured to resemble ground. He wears supple boots, skin coverings on his legs, and chain mail. From neck to waist he wears overlapping plate; the armor is joined by a hidden clasp on top and by a belt at the waist. He wears gauntlets, with his right hand holding a

sword and his left holding a great V-shaped shield with raised edges on both top and bottom.

His head is bare and his long hair is in a pony tail that drops to his belt. His hair is held up in front by a headband. His face bears a serious expression and features pointed ears that are well defined, but also short enough to be a half-elf's. His face resembles that of an old movie star, whose name escapes me.

This is a well done figure and can be used as a leader figure. This is recommended at \$1.50.

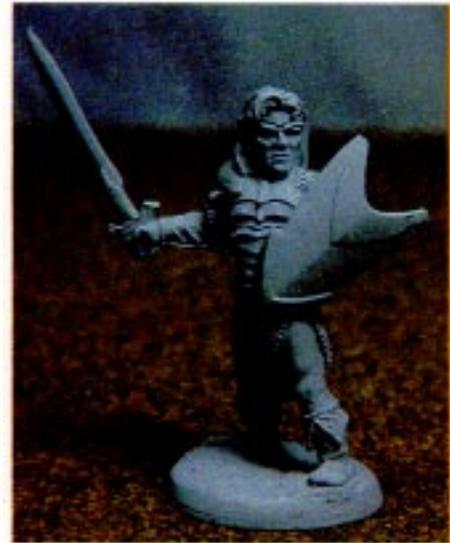
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Metahuman Samurai (Grenadier Models)



Barbarians With Hand Weapons (Grenadier Models)

three metahuman figures: an ork, a troll, and a dwarf.

The ork figure stands 29 mm tall and has his left arm folded over his body, supporting what looks like an Ingram smartgun held in his right hand. He is dressed in a waist-length jacket; upon close examination, you see that he has a shirt and tie. He wears long pants and boots, and sashes adorn his upper thigh. The ork's face is well done, with visible canines in his sneering open mouth. His hair is brushed back and falls to mid-shoulder. His wrinkled forehead is pronounced. Flash must be removed from the left ear, the groin, and shoulders.

The troll measures 37 mm in height. His jaw juts out, with his lower tusks reaching the base of his nose. Twin horns curl back from his high forehead; the top of his head is covered with warts, curls, and other engravings. He appears to be snarling. He wears fur boots. His right hand clutches an axe, and his left hand holds an automat-

ic pistol with stock. His pant legs have rolled cuffs, armor, and spikes at the left knee and thigh. The armored vest is partly covered by a fold-over jacket. An additional armor plate covers his right shoulder, and a death's head pin leers from his left lapel. This figure was relatively flash free, with only a little flash on the pistol.

The dwarf is armed with a maglock pass key in his left hand and a holstered pistol on his right side. He stands 23 mm tall with his neatly trimmed hair, beard, and mustache. His expression is one of near boredom. He wears a fully armored jacket, complete with spikes on his right shoulder. A web belt circles his waist and supports spare ammo pouches as well as what looks like a scroll tube. The jacket has no visible front closures. The dwarf has knee pads and buckle boots. There was flash between the left arm and the pass key, in the groin, and in the crook of the right arm.

All these figures have small faults that can be fixed with care. You need to work

on the bottoms of the bases, as each had a molding ridge line that prevented it from standing straight. If you play the SHADOWRUN or another dark-future game, these will make good opponents. Cost is \$3.50 per pack.

#### #1411—Barbarians With Hand Weapons \* \* \* 1/2

These barbarians, designed by Mark Coplestone, come from Grenadier Models UK and are packaged in yellow blister packs. These lead figures are meant to be used in 25 mm scale, but the figures measure just over 33 mm in height, which means they are over 7' tall. All figures except one are bare chested and bare legged. There are five different figures in this pack.

Figure #1 is a barbarian with his sword thrust out in a challenge or as if leading. His mouth is open, and his face is slightly pinched. His hair is gathered behind in a pony tail and goes down to his belt. Around his neck he wears a chain necklace from which hangs a talisman, and his right wrist has a bracer. A studded shield on his raised left arm is his only armor. He wears a set of fur boots wrapped with cloth bands and a fur loincloth secured by a belt. There is some flash along the mold line, but very little.

Figure #2 has stepped back and is preparing to chop at a foe with his axe. He has a smooth wood-backed shield on his left arm. His hair flows to either side of his shocked-looking face and is pulled back in the rear. He wears a girdle and loincloth, with a chain crossing his chest. He also wears a small locket. There is no obvious mold line or flash on this figure.

Figure #3 wears a fur vest and shorts, cinched with a belt and buckle. His feet are clad in smooth, fur-cuffed boots, and a necklace with bear teeth circles his neck. He has a single-bladed war axe in his right hand and a smooth, wood-backed shield on his left arm. His chin juts out as if to say "hit me." His hair is parted in the middle and swept back. The fur detail is excellent; the only bad point is an obvious but easily fixed mold line on the left leg.

Figure #4 stands with his legs spread, challenging anyone to pass him. He is armed with a two-edged broad sword in his right hand and a saucer-shaped shield on his left arm. His fur "cover" is held by a wide belt with a skull buckle. Around his neck hangs a necklace. His hair is cut short, and his chin is thrust out to add to the challenge. There are mold lines on the inside of the arm, with some light flash.

Figure #5 looks like Arnold Schwarzenegger as Conan, complete with bear-claw necklace. Armed with a double-bladed battle axe with a wood shaft and a saucer-shaped, wood-backed shield, he also wears a studded leather belt with a hook, a fur loincloth, and fur-topped boots with leather bindings. This figure has a mold line running completely around it, but it will clean up easily and disappear



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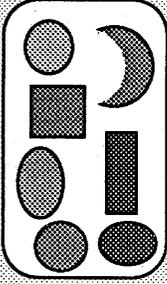
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Dwarf Crossbowmen (Viking Forge)

with painting.

These figures would fit well with any Games Workshop figures but might be a bit large with Ral Partha or other smaller 25 mm figures. They are well done, by a designer who once worked for Games Workshop and was probably influenced by it. At \$4.95 per pack, these figures are an excellent value.

### The Viking Forge

1727 Theresa Lane  
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### #5004—Dwarf Crossbowmen \* \* \* \*1/2

Dwarves are one of role-playing gamers' favorite choices for characters. These dwarves are scaled in 25 mm, standing 19 mm tall, and have stout and hefty builds. Each figure is dressed in a waistcoat covered by chain mail that extends from shoulders to waist. The elbows and forearms are covered by cloth. The hands are exposed; detail here is very good, right down to the knuckle joints. Each figure's left hand holds a heavy crossbow that has sights and a visible spring mechanism, while the right hand grasps the trigger. A studded leather doublet covers the upper

chest and back. The chain mail is secured at the waist by a wide belt, and criss-crossing straps support two quivers of bolts, complete with feathers.

The feet are clad in boots, and leggings are visible. On each dwarf's head is a wide-brimmed, floppy hat with a button that supports a wide feather that is just a bit too thick. The face is well done, with a large nose, a well-detailed beard and mustache, and high cheeks. The only fault in this figure is a mold line across the top of the hat that can be fixed with very little work.

These figures come four to a pack for \$4 and are a good deal to provide a fire team or missile base for your fantasy army groups. They are highly recommended. 

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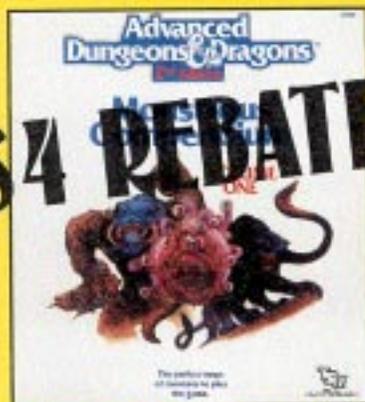
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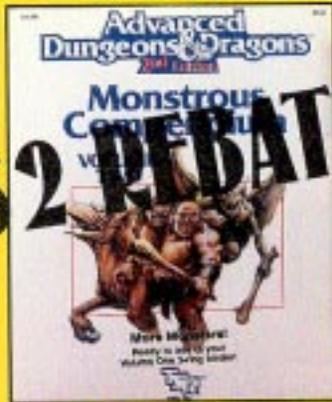
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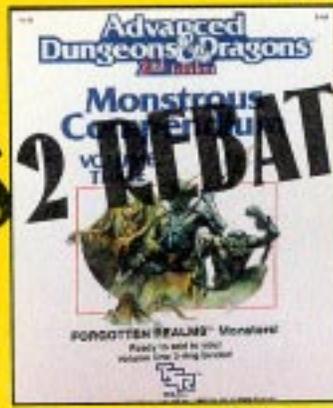
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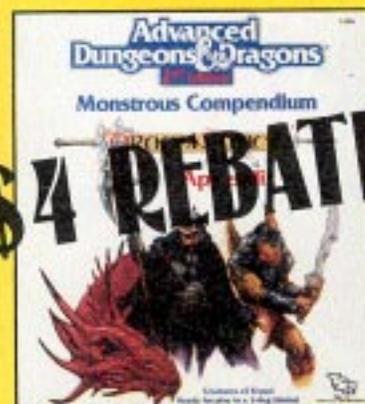
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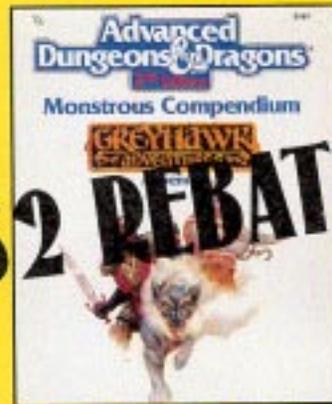
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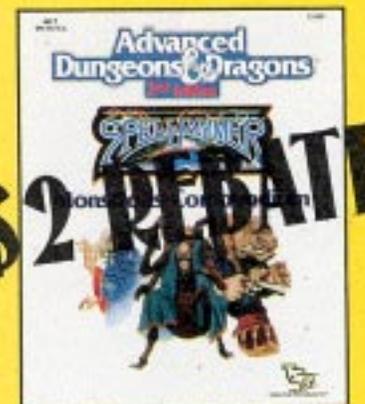
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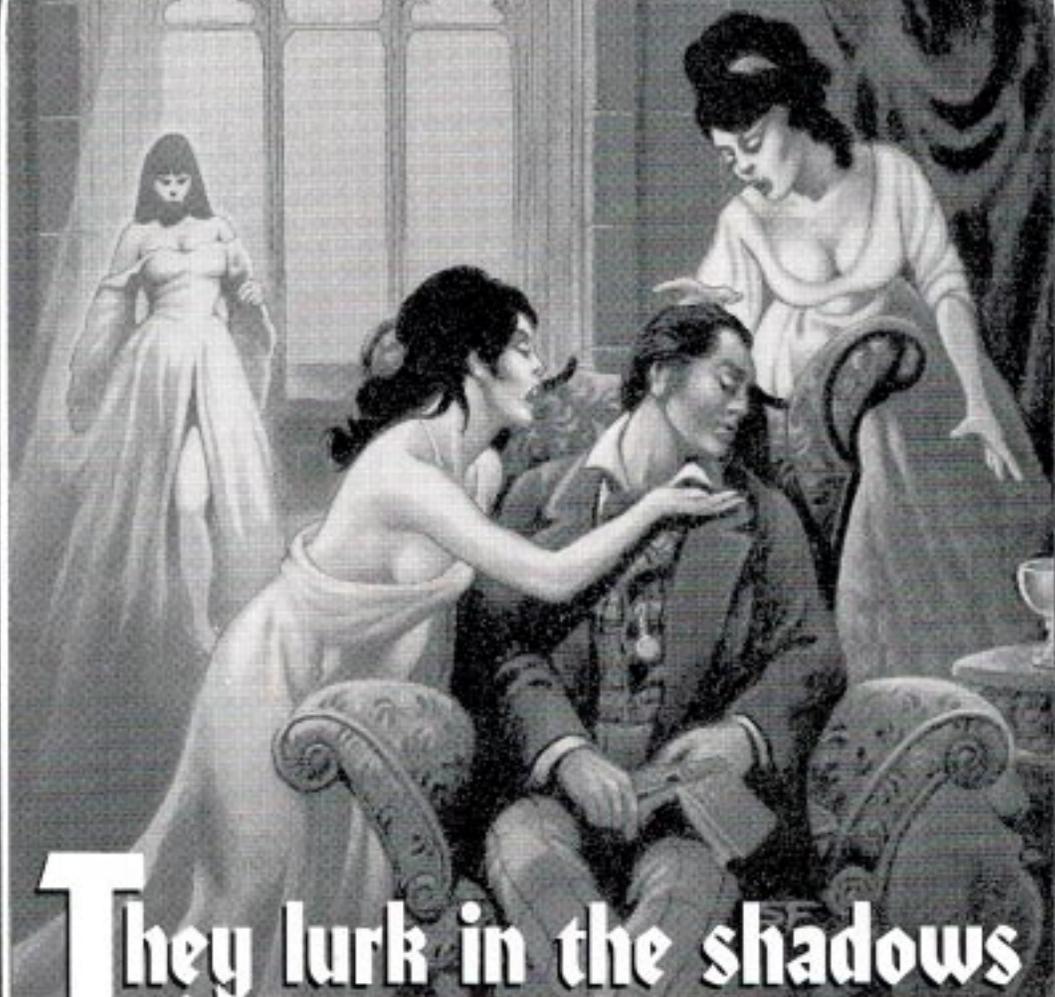
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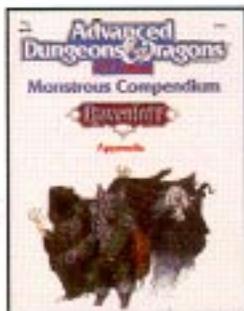


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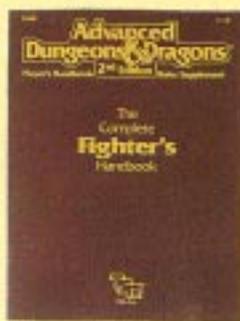
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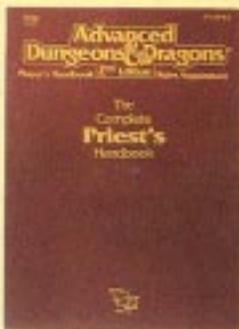
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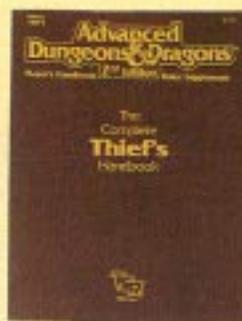
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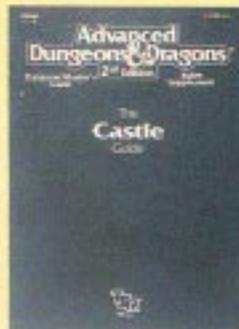
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