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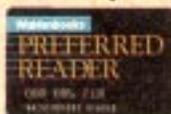


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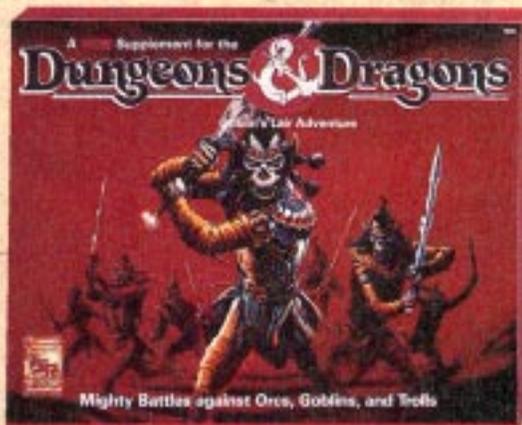
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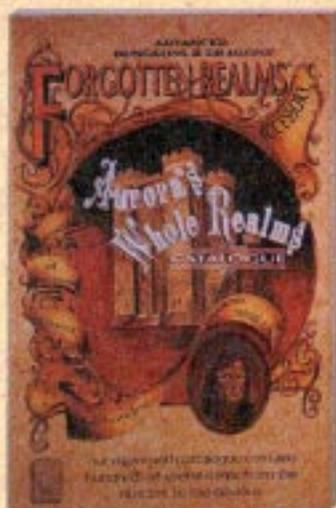


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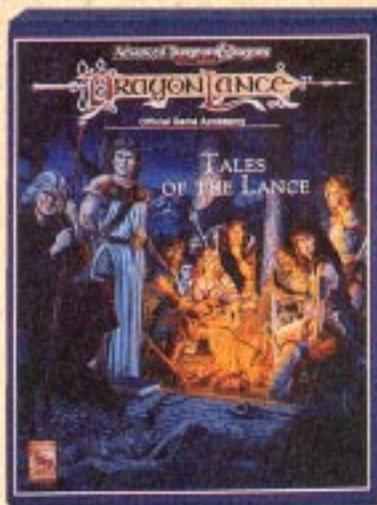
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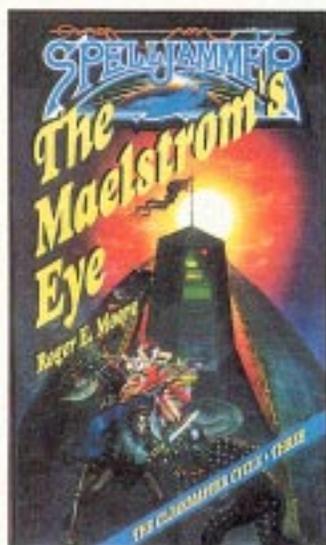
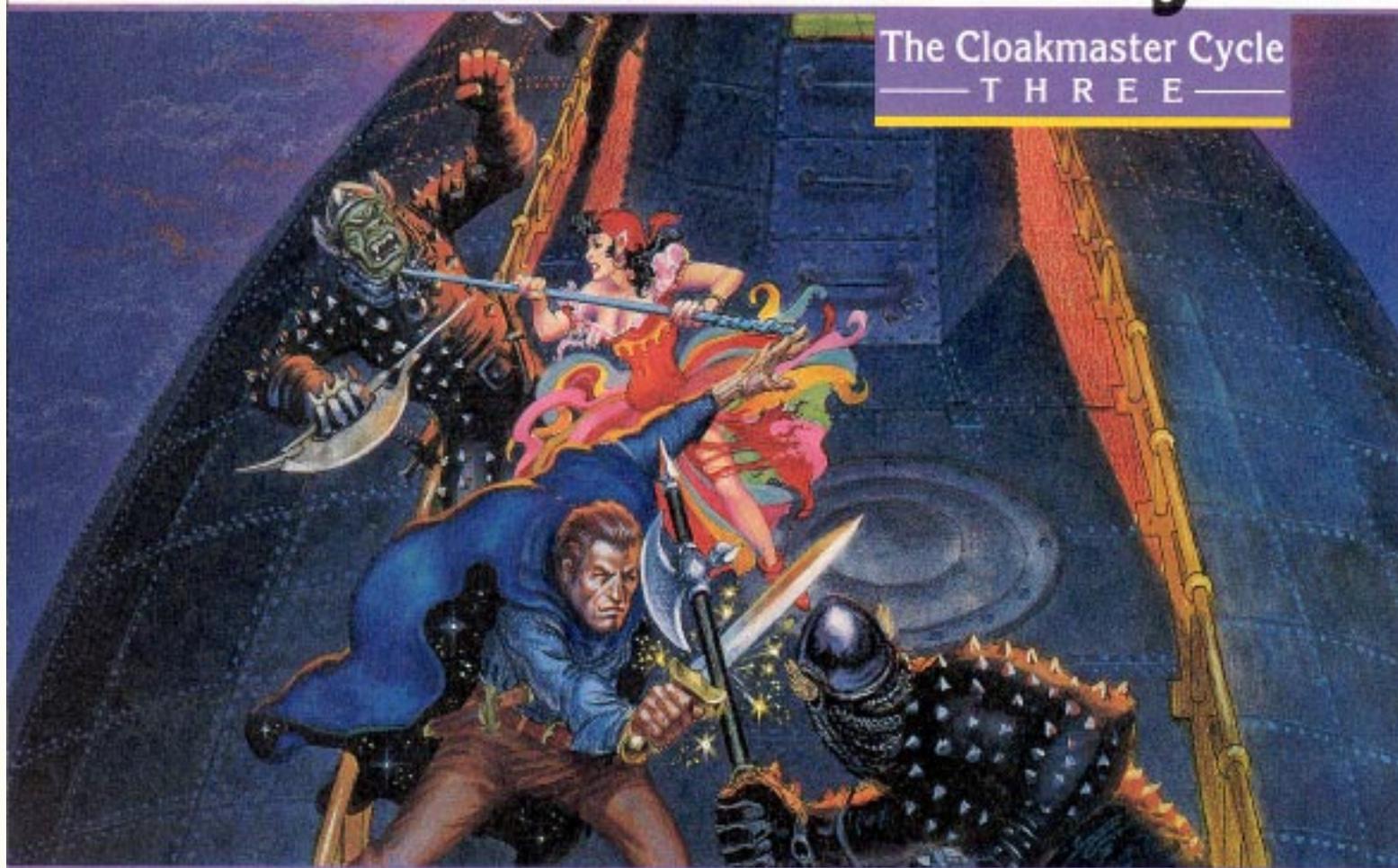




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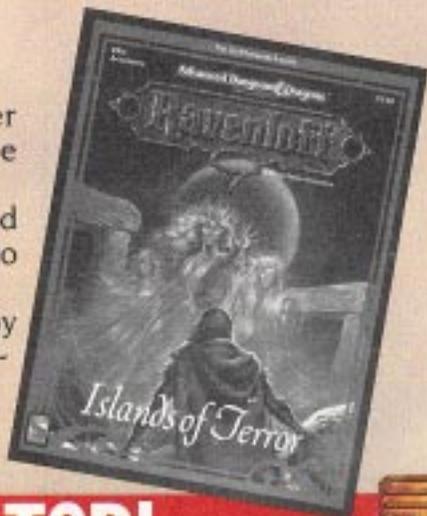
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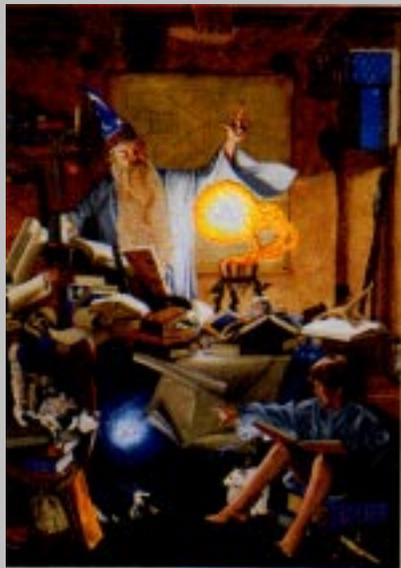
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COVER

If you like hunting for odd little things in cover paintings, Robin Wood's cover is a gem. False teeth for a skull, a gumball machine, a phone book, and Robin Wood's name are all woven into the picture, as are Robin's husband Michael, son Tony, and cat Bridie. The picture's name: "Never Set the Cat on Fire."

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.

Errata-NOT!

After we ran the letter on "DARK SUN™ errata" in DRAGON issue #178, we received a letter from Timothy B. Brown, a games editor here at TSR, Inc. and the coordinator of the DARK SUN setting materials we produce. We present his letter below:

Dear Dragon,

After reading the letter in DRAGON issue #178 regarding the frequency of rare spells in my article, "Random Magic for Organized Minds," in issue #173, I feel I must respond.

Hold on, there! Let's look again before we drop the frequency of rare spells to 5%. The writer's calculations are accurate, but his conclusions are flawed. In fact, he touched upon the flaw in his letter, stating correctly that "each individual spell in the "Rare" list is much more common than any single "Uncommon" spell." The key word is *individual*; as in the letter's example, a wizard is slightly more likely to know *water breathing* (a rare spell) than he is to know *blink* (an uncommon spell), but he will know more uncommon spells than rare spells. Take, for example, a wizard with 100 third-level spells (a butch wizard indeed!). Statistically he should have 75 from the common list, 15 from uncommon, and 10 from the rare spells list.

The frequency table given with the article is identical to that given for the Random Spell Lists in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures hardbound. If we apply the "DARK SUN errata" letter's logic there, we find that the percentage chances per *individual* spells given there are roughly identical for uncommon and rare spells, and in some cases greater for individual rare spells than for individual uncommon spells. An oversight? No. Here, too, a wizard has more chance of having an uncommon spell than a rare spell; only the exact nature of the spell is subject to the seemingly inaccurate percentages that are cited.

Further, note the ramifications of reducing the rare percentage chance to 5%. By reducing the percentage chance by half, rare spells become virtually nonexistent, which was not my original intent at all. There are no butch wizards with 100 third-level spells. In fact, most of the wizards encountered in a game will have three or fewer, but we'll go with three for mid- to high-level wizards (up to 12th) as an average. With a 10% chance for rare spells, roughly every tenth spell rolled will be rare; for every three wizards encountered, one of them will have one rare

spell. By reducing the frequency to 5%, roughly every twentieth spell rolled will be rare, which means you'll have to sift through seven or more wizards to find just one with a rare third-level spell. In all the DARK SUN adventures written to date, there aren't seven mid- to high-level wizards to encounter.

A great deal of thought went into this list and into the Random Spell Lists in the FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures hardbound on which it was based, and into the *Monstrous Compendium* frequency system on which that was based. The numbers get very tricky, but I'll stand by the original Spell Frequency Table as written; use it if you ever want to run into wizards with rare spells.

Timothy B. Brown
TSR, Inc.

Praise fiction!

Dear Dragon,

Why is it that there are *no* letters praising the magnificent short stories in each issue and their authors? In my opinion, the stories deserve as many compliments as the informational articles, if not more! I hope there is no intention of doing away with the stories to make room for more of the glory-hogging information articles.

I hope that if this letter sees print, there will be a change. Readers should give some credit to this magazine's short-story authors. They are one of the reasons I subscribe!

Mathew W. Hurd
Utica NY

Credit also goes to fiction editor Barbara G. Young and editorial assistant (slush-pile reader) Wolfgang H. Baur, who select and edit the fiction you see in our magazine.

DM's dilemma: A solution?

Dear Dragon,

I am writing concerning the letter in issue #177 ("DM's dilemma: Fee or free?"). I have a suggestion for the author of that letter. Why not submit it DUNGEON® Adventures for publication? The price DUNGEON Adventures pays for a single module should be more than enough to pay for the expenses that may occur during the creating and playing of the adventure. The module being submitted to DUNGEON Adventures would have been playtested by your AD&D game group, making it that much better. If enough DMs submitted good-quality adventures that were originally created for private groups but were modified for the magazine, there might be enough modules for DUNGEON Adventures to become a monthly.

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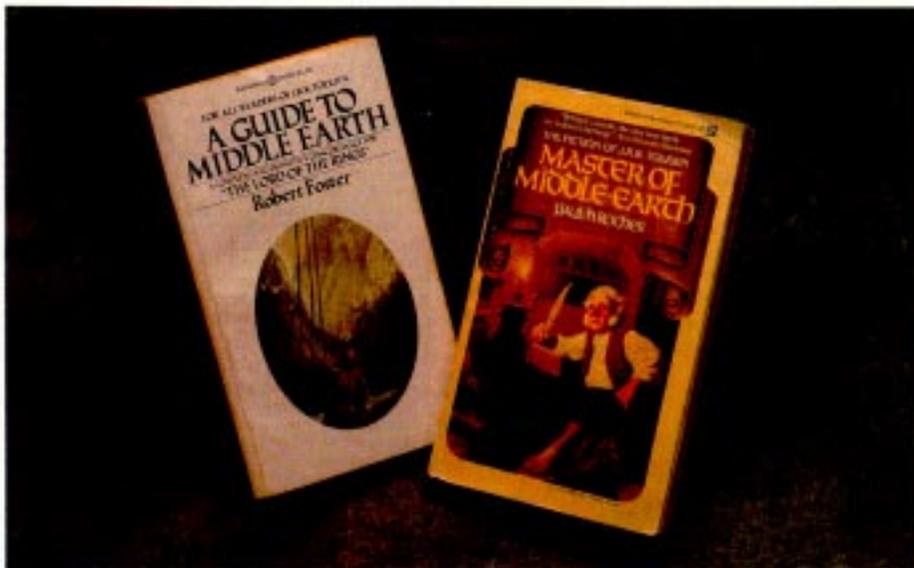
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Continued on page 100



Those who pull the strings

Like many other fantasy role-players, my enthusiasm for the hobby was primed by reading J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. The breadth and life of this epic tale impressed me as no other fantasy writing ever has. To this day, I still recall the excitement I felt as I turned the pages and read of the adventures of hobbits, dwarves, elves, and men.

It wasn't for years after that, however, that I appreciated the greater depth of Tolkien's masterpiece. About 1977, I purchased a paperback book by Paul H. Kocher, entitled *Master of Middle-earth: The Fiction of J. R. R. Tolkien*. Later, I found *A Guide to Middle-earth*, by Robert Foster, which gave encyclopedic entries on all the characters and places in the saga. These two books, as the saying goes, opened my eyes, and rereading them also changed my perception of how to structure role-playing campaigns.

In his careful analysis of the world of Bilbo and Frodo Baggins, Kocher reveals the background events that gave birth to the more immediate adventures of the Fellowship of the Ring. The ancient war between the elves and the evil Morgoth over the *Silmarilli*, the forging of the Three Rings of Power and the taking of the One Ring by Sauron, the plotting of the Valar and the wizards, the treachery of Saruman, the growing power of humanity, and the passing of the nonhuman races into exile or extinction all influenced the adventure that sweeps into Frodo Bag-

gins's home.

Kocher's chapter on Sauron, the major evil being in the epic, caught my attention. For the first time, I saw how the plots and plans of Sauron so greatly affected the events in the tale, and how even the smallest actions of the smallest beings were related to (and had an impact on) his behind-the-scenes machinations. Indeed, as a TSR co-worker has pointed out, *The Lord of the Rings* is named for Sauron, who never personally appears in the epic, but he is indeed the center around which the tale's events revolve.

Opposing or assisting Sauron are others who work undercover. There are the wizards, the greatest among them being Gandalf and Saruman, each of whom has carefully built up networks of allies and agents across Middle-earth to further their ends toward good and evil, respectively. There is Aragorn, who has risked much of his adult life in tireless secret battles against Sauron's minions when he is not spying upon the same. And there is Elrond, who calls together the Council that determines the fate of all the free peoples of Middle-earth. Their roles are not at once obvious to the hobbits who find themselves mired in a most dangerous adventure, though the nature of the quest itself is set by the deeds of the mighty. The outcome of the adventure, however, depends entirely upon the hobbits' ability to resist evil and take the necessary actions to bring about Sauron's fall by destroying

the One Ring.

Further details on these characters appear in Robert Foster's book. The entry on Gandalf is especially enlightening, as it provides enormous detail on exactly what Gandalf was up to all those times in the epic when he disappeared. You come away impressed with the awesome power of intelligent covert action, and with the strange way in which a single adventure can influence the future of an entire world (the journey to Lonely Mountain, for example, also spawned the finding of the One Ring in Gollum's cave by Bilbo Baggins).

Very well, then, but what does all this have to do with fantasy role-playing games?

Most adventures in any fantasy campaign take place in a chaotic and unimportant political environment. This king or that mayor want the adventurers to kill this dragon or that orc tribe, and rarely does any one quest have anything to do with the quest that follows it. Granted, not all adventures need be so interwoven that a hero can get no relaxation from them with a mindless or amusing side trek. But a sense of greater purpose and depth-of-destiny, if you will-is missing. The grand conflict between two opposing forces makes *The Lord of the Rings* what it is, and a similar theme can be found in the best of role-playing epics, such as TSR's DRAGONLANCE® saga and some of the world-spanning CALL OF CTHULHU* adventures from Chaosium, Inc. Examine each game saga and you will find prime movers at the back of them all, people and creatures whose schemes guide the fate of the known world. The AD&D® campaign adventures GDQ1-7 *Queen of the Spiders* and A1-4 *Scourge of the Slavelords* echo this concept, with Lolth and the Inner Council, respectively, guiding events until the heroes enter the picture.

Applying this to a role-playing game is not as difficult as you might think. A game master can have an extremely enjoyable evening or two making up such prime movers and how their conflicting goals drive the game campaign forward from one thrilling adventure to the next. Many sorts of adventures can be tied into this plot line, and the players will slowly come to see the forces that bind their heroes' world together—or threaten to tear it apart.

As an example of a campaign-level, adventure-driving string-puller, let's create a very unlikely hero for an AD&D game: Ozwaldo D. Eminaddi. His game statistics aren't really very important, but for the sake of completeness, here they are: AL LG; AC 10; MV 6; middle-aged zero-level halfling; hp 2; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg nil (unarmed); I 19, W 19, other statistics unremarkable; ML 17; no spells or psionics. Obviously, except for his mental characteristics, Oz isn't impressive at all. I picture him as looking very much like the Hildebrandt brothers' painting of the elderly Bilbo Baggins, which appears on the cover of the paperback edition of Kocher's *Master of Middle-earth* (it was originally from the 1976 J. R. R. Tolkien calendar from Ballantine Books). Ozwaldo, as he will be developed here, is going to be the most important prime mover in our hypothetical game campaign, if not one of the most important in his whole world.

An unarmed zero-level halfling? You bet.

Oz, as he is known to his few close acquaintances, lives by himself in a small burrow-cottage in a peaceful halfling village near a mountain range. An only child who lived with his mother until she died recently, Ozwaldo is a bookish introvert who is polite but cool and reserved. Other halflings see him as a grumpy old cuss with mysterious ways. They know he collects books and maps, writes lots of letters to foreign places, tends a small and beautiful flower garden behind his home, and sometimes has odd beings drop by at night—"odd" in this case referring to humans, dwarves, elves, and other non-halflings. Oz is left much to himself, and he seems to prefer it that way.

What the other halflings and nearly all the rest of the world fail to see is astounding. A brilliant thinker with a fiery curiosity and a tigerlike tenacity, Ozwaldo has, over the course of many years, built up a sizeable library of information on his world. Early in his life, he listened to the reports of passing adventurers and deduced that hobgoblin activity in the local mountains was on the rise, with some kind of definite purpose behind it. Letters quietly written to various sages, wizards, and lords in the vicinity won him a few allies who were willing to listen to his theories and explore the lairs of the hobgoblin forces. Ozwaldo's beliefs were proven correct, but his involvement in sparking the numerous raids into the mountains by adventuring groups has never been revealed, largely at his own request (although arrogant fame-seekers are happy to forget mention of his name in their public speeches).

Ozwaldo is motivated to ensure the safety of his people, but he has lately become concerned with the fate of all civilization on his world. In studying the reports and letters he has received from his friends afar, he has deduced that aid is sometimes being given to evil forces from a source not of his world. In fact, he re-

cently discovered references to spelljamming magic, and he has realized that the local hobgoblins might very well be supported by spacegoing orcs—in reality the scro, who are involved in the second Unhuman War against the elven Imperial Fleet, as detailed in the modules *SJS1 Goblins' Return* and *SJQ1 Heart of the Enemy*. He further (correctly) suspects that the space orcs are using his world as a spelljamming base, and that if the local hobgoblins gain even one spelljammer, they could cause enormous trouble.

Acting on his deductions, Ozwaldo has been subtly urging that more action be taken against the hobgoblins. His carefully worded letters to local political leaders make off-handed references to rumors of monsters and treasures that he believes are in the mountains (if he feels simple greed will do the trick). He is almost always rewarded with news later that heroic adventurers acting under the orders of Lord So-and-so have won a mighty victory against the hobgoblins of such-and-such a place. Desiring no reward of any kind from his deeds, Ozwaldo has continued to pass along information to those he believes will accomplish the higher purpose of saving his world from an invasion from wilderness—which no one, not even most adventurers, would truly believe was happening.

Ozwaldo has only a small staff of helpers, and he works mostly through intermediaries. Several wizards, sages, and others who have benefitted from his advice have become close friends of his, and they are becoming very concerned about this brilliant halfling's fate. They fear that one day someone with an evil streak will discover his secret, and that person won't be well disposed toward Ozwaldo at all. They have decided to protect their guiding ally by having their own spies monitor his village and the roads leading into it, watching for any threat. Ozwaldo has discovered this, of course, and though he considers it silly he tolerates it, as he knows the extra guards will also protect his fellow villagers.

How do the player characters get involved? Perhaps some of their earlier adventures were sparked when a letter from Ozwaldo or an ally of his informed a local magistrate of a nearby threat, and the magistrate hired the PCs to deal with it. Perhaps a rumor that Ozwaldo deliberately started was the one that got the PCs interested in a certain old ruined castle where hobgoblins have been seen. Perhaps the PCs were hired to guard a caravan carrying yet more books and reports to Ozwaldo's village (these are picked up by the local postmaster and delivered later), or the PCs find information that eventually makes its way to Ozwaldo himself, which will in turn spark another set of adventures. They might be hired to bring back physical evidence or a captive to support some of Ozwaldo's theories, the evidence to be turned over to a wizard

who can properly study them (but won't discuss their significance with just any adventurers who ask). In time, the PCs will be hired by a powerful wizard to defend Ozwaldo if his secret is finally revealed. They might even meet Ozwaldo by accident and never know him for who he really is!

In any event, the PCs will not learn of Ozwaldo's effect on their lives and deeds for many adventures to come. Slowly, however, they can assemble bits and pieces of information to realize that someone is behind this seemingly unrelated series of adventuring raids, someone who is manipulating events toward some larger goal that the heroes cannot now know. In time, the PCs might even meet Ozwaldo himself at a council that he calls, to be launched into a brief SPELLJAMMER™ campaign, battling hordes of scro aboard their giant derelict waystation elsewhere in their crystal sphere.

Surely there are others who, like Ozwaldo, work best out of sight. Aside from his spies and sorcerous allies, we can't forget about the leader of the scro, a powerful war priest who has terrible plans for this world but who is finding many of his schemes being thwarted by an unknown agency that he is determined to destroy.

Presto—a campaign is born, one that can support many sorts of adventures and can ultimately lead to a save-the-world scenario that will please the most jaded world-saving hero. It might not be *The Lord of the Rings*, but it will do very well.

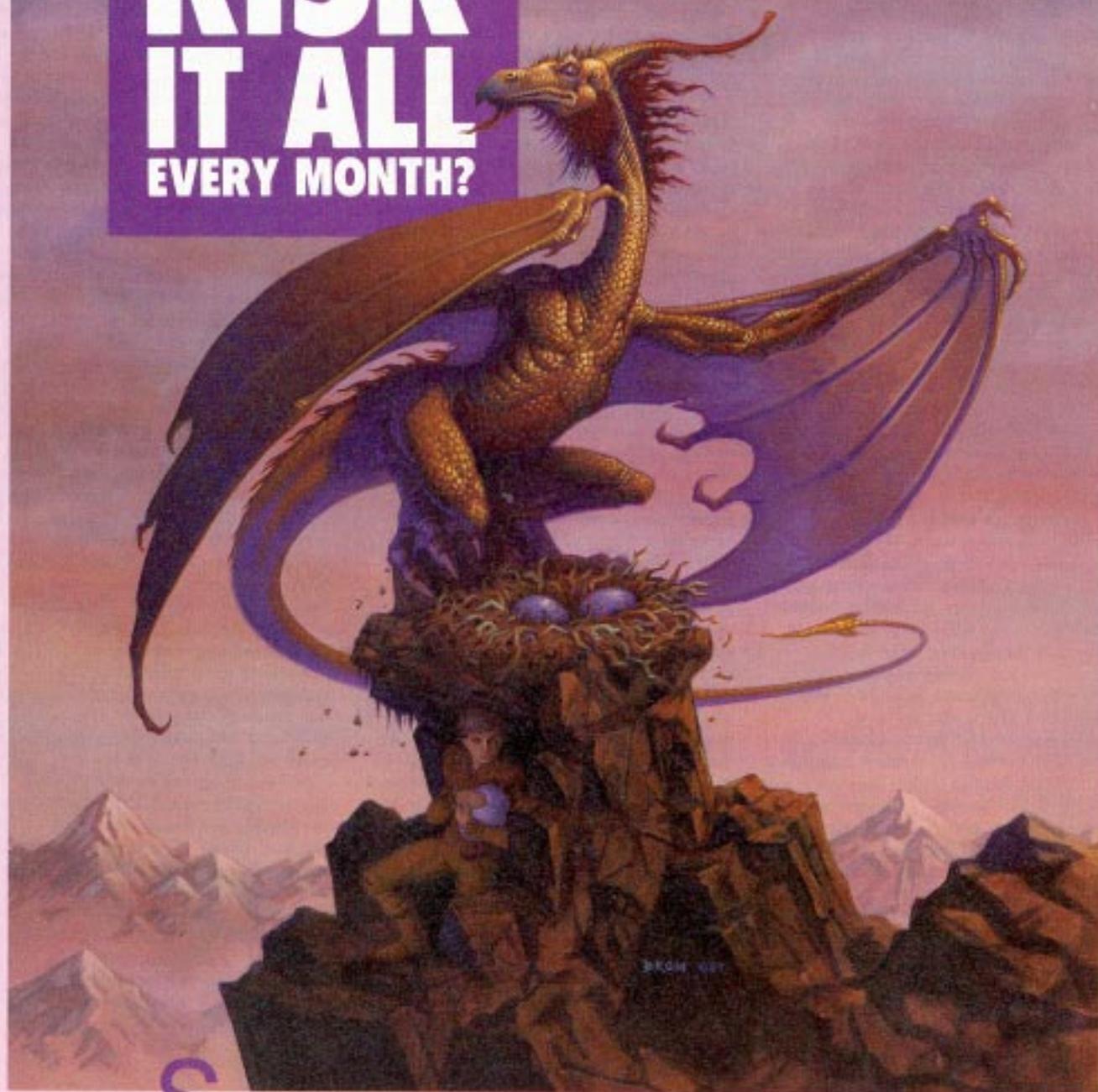
Who are the prime movers for good and evil in your campaign? A little work now will produce a wonderful bounty of adventure later, and your world will be all the more real and enjoyable for it.

(My thanks go out to John Rateliff, a devout Tolkienist and TSR co-worker, for his insights and assistance. He also points out that those wishing to see what strategic considerations Gandalf was making when the wizard started the events leading to the adventure at Lonely Mountain (i.e., *The Hobbit*) should read "The Quest of Erebor," from *Unfinished Tales*, by J. R. R. Tolkien. This is wizardly plotting at its best—and not a thread of it visible at first to the hobbit caught in the web!)



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The Secrets of Gaming Sorcery

Artwork by Robh Ruppel



Crimson fire lit the battlefield then we warriors charged, pell-mell, straight into the scorched flank of the enemy I laid about me right and left, felling the scorched ogre-kin. After our first flush of success, the fighting grew desperate indeed, for our enemies had the advantage in both size and numbers. But no ogre could touch the sorceress, Morgana. Time and time again, her incantations rang over the din of the battle. Each cry brought down another volley of death upon the foes – and that was what sustained us: the power of her magic and the regular, reassuring staccato of her voice.



Magic sets the pace of a fantasy battle. The firepower of magic alone qualifies wizards as the artillery of their world. To use the jargon of the 20th-century military, a sorcerer also performs the tasks of logistics, reconnaissance, strength multiplication, and fire suppression. Therefore, wizards, more than any other character class, need a grasp of the principles of war.

This article describes the strategy and tactics of magic. Unless the Dungeon Master routinely intervenes in battles, players who use wise tactics can expect more

Sorcery & Strategy

by Thomas M. Kane
Artwork by Fred Fields

Magical tactics on the fantasy-game battlefield

victories. Furthermore, DMs themselves can use these ideas for nonplayer-character magicians. The use of opponents who are low in level but quick of mind demands intelligent planning from the players as well. Although individual examples refer to the AD&D® game rules, these maxims apply well to other fantasy RPGs, especially the D&D® game.

Maxims of magic

Principles of battle always sound simple. However, as the strategist Carl von Clausewitz once said, in war the simplest things are difficult. The chaos that reigns when a typical party of adventurers attempts to coordinate any battle plan should illustrate this point. Therefore, the best advice on tactics does not consist of arcane revelations or elaborate plans for every contingency. It consists of quick reminders about what makes a plan work. The following maxims of magic provide such reminders for wizards.

Maxim #1: The aim is to disarm the enemy. Battle is not primarily about killing the enemy; battle is about keeping the enemy from killing you. There is a direct connection between damage caused and damage received, because the more

wounds one suffers, the fewer one can inflict in return. Therefore, anything that reduces the foe's ability to fight contributes to the battle. In a protracted battle, a *grease* spell that disarms a giant has more effect than a *fireball* that merely causes the giant damage. The warriors in the party can hack away hit points. Save spells for more surgical attacks.

Maxim #2: The best offense is a good defense. Defensive spells have two advantages over offensive enchantments. First, they always work. Whereas most attack spells allow saving throws, magicians casting defensive magic enjoy the luxury of willing targets. Second, most defensive spells last for a prolonged duration, while the hottest *fireball* burns but once. Note that *stoneskin* and *armor* last forever until used. Any wizard who begins an expedition without using both spells as liberally as possible deserves whatever he gets.

One should never scorn protective sorcery as the resort of a coward. As mentioned above, something that reduces the enemy's ability to cause damage is as useful as something that actively harms the foe. Even if a sorcerer does nothing beyond fortifying himself and absorbing

enemy blows, he has drawn those attacks away from other targets in his party. Once a wizard neutralizes enemy attacks, warriors can cut down the foe.

Personal-enhancement spells share all the advantages of defensive magic. Enchantments such as *strength* and *haste* also involve willing targets and last for prolonged periods of time. Some game systems contain far more spells of this nature, making magical augmentation of fighters one of a wizard's primary roles. One prime example would be FASA's SHADOWRUN* game where spells such as Increase Attribute +4, Armor, or Combat Sense can make an ordinary warrior superhuman (and it is always to one's advantage to make one's allies superhuman).

In some circumstances, a magician can avoid attacking altogether. *Charmed* and *summoned* creatures can provide offensive firepower, while the wizard can devote his spells to augmenting allies. Those who favor this strategy should consider the possibility of remaining *invisible* throughout a battle; a clerical *sanctuary* would be valuable as well.

Despite the value of defensive and augmentation spells, wizards need not use

them to the point of obsession. Against inferior opponents, wizards should not waste these precious resources. When the party contains a number of warriors, wizards can sometimes count on destroying their foes without taking damage anyway. In these cases, one should use offensive sorcery to bring the battle to a rapid decision.

Maxim #3: Know the enemy. Wizards have any number of ways to gather reconnaissance. They should use them aggressively because magicians, more than any other class, cannot afford to let their enemies take them by surprise. A warrior is always ready for combat, but magicians need time-time to cast defensive spells, time to clear friendly forces out of the way of their *fireballs*, time to ready scrolls, components, and similar items. Wizards must also know what they will be fighting, because spells that devastate one sort of enemy may have no effect at all on another. A *death* spell can destroy armies of orcs, but it is worthless against undead.

Intelligent wizards use friends, spies, and rumors to gather intelligence about the foe. Those lucky enough to possess *crystal balls* or other long-range scrying magic use it carefully. When actually on an expedition, the prudent spell-caster travels behind a screen of scouts. A familiar can often serve as a discreet spy, especially if invisible. *Wizard eye* and *clairvoyance* function as alternatives in hazardous situations. Finally, wizards can armor themselves against a treacherous blow. *Stoneskin* spells, *cloaks of displacement*, *bracers of defense*, and so on soften the blow of an ambush.

Maxim #4: Set the tempo. One can think of a battle as having three phases. In the first, both sides probe the other, assessing the nature of the fight. Suddenly, one or both sides abandon caution and hurl themselves into the fight. This brings on the second phase, the phase of resolution. Here, the enemies fight with all the firepower at their disposal until one side or the other suffers irreparable harm. Finally comes pursuit, where the winning side presses success into whatever victory it can. One can win a fight only in the second phase, but every portion of the battle can become a debacle.

Sorcerers, with their firepower and reconnaissance abilities, can often set the timing for a battle. They must develop a sense for the tempo most suited to their side's strategy. Rash fighters commit themselves to melee at once and often pay an awful price. However, too much caution merely gives the enemy time to strike a fatal blow. Ideally, a wizard's reconnaissance gives friendly forces the intelligence information they need to develop a winning plan before the enemy does. Then, the wizard can precipitate the combat phase by launching devastating spells.

The blast of offensive magic changes both the physical and psychological tone of the battle. With any luck, deadly spells

cripple their targets and upset the enemy's plan. The survivors must react to the wizard or die. Furthermore, the discharge of magic almost inevitably rallies one's own side for a charge. Once spells start flying, few warriors can resist their lust for combat.

In the final stage of a battle, magicians may wish to save their spells. However, all warriors must take care that victory does not slip from their grasp. A final volley of spells may prevent beaten enemies from escaping alive. When the party's goals are more complex than simply exterminating the enemy, a wizard can use *forget*, *charm person*, *polymorph other*, or *mass suggestion* on surviving foes.

Maxim #5: Choose your target and choose your weapon. Since wizards avoid the chaos of melee, they usually enjoy the luxury of choosing their targets. Use this freedom wisely. As always, a wizard's goal is to neutralize the maximum amount of enemy firepower as fast as possible. One must achieve a balance between striking the most dangerous opponents and the most vulnerable ones.

On general principle, wizards should concentrate their first attacks on those most likely to succumb. One does more damage by killing warriors than by wounding their leader. The truth of this becomes obvious when one considers that in the AD&D combat system, wounds have no effect on a character's ability to fight. *Fireball*, the favorite tactic of countless wizards, does a beautiful job of clearing away weak forces.

In many cases, the enemy has a few unusually powerful forces. Obviously, one should destroy them as quickly as one can. When deciding which spells to memorize, reserve a few for neutralizing powerful individual opponents. When choosing these spells, it becomes more important than ever to pick sorcery that does something other than merely drain hit points, because such powerful victims can usually survive their wounds. One must also remember that such a powerful opponent is likely to pass an unmodified saving throw.

Often, low-level spells can hurt powerful opponents as much as stronger ones. *Spook* involves a saving-throw penalty and, when successful, immediately removes the foe from combat. As noted before, *grease* can deprive the strongest giant of his club. *Magic missile* causes only damage but hits automatically, offering a sure way to disrupt a hostile wizard's spell.

When choosing a target, wizards should pay attention to what their comrades can do. There may be a danger that only spells can counter, and an enemy wizard protected by warriors would be one obvious example. Obviously, a sorcerer should concentrate on destroying such a threat.

In less clear-cut cases, a wizard must make decisions which, whether the other adventurers realize it or not, shape the party's strategy for the rest of the battle.

Does the wizard assist faltering party members? Or does he help powerful fighters achieve a quick kill? The first strategy may save weaker fighters from ruin, but the latter improves the chances for a sharp victory. In some cases, helping the strong win the battle is the quickest way to help the weak. Furthermore, in this situation, the personalities of the wizard and the party must play a role. Wizards must resolve these dilemmas on their own.

Maxim #6: Know your strategy. To exercise any strategy whatsoever, a wizard must memorize the needed spells in advance. Furthermore, since few battles end in a single round, one must have enough spells to sustain a plan throughout several turns. It is often wise to have one or two standard battle tactics and concentrate exclusively on them. Those who memorize too many unusual spells risk being unable to effectively use any of them. It is equally true that one must be able to modify one's tactics for unusual situations. Wizards must find a balance between diffusion and dogmatism.

Sample spell lists

The following section shows the spells routinely memorized by three sample NPCs. They provide an example of the principles in action. Each one carries a mix of defensive, offensive, and special spells designed for use in combination for maximum effect.

Nuanda (4th-level mage): *magic missile* (× 3); *flaming sphere*, *mirror image*.

With the few spells available at 4th level, Nuanda has no room for frivolous magic. She carries one powerful defensive spell, *mirror image*. With luck, it can prevent an enemy from hitting her and disrupting any of her other spells. The relatively long duration of *mirror image* means that one casting should last through an ordinary battle unless Nuanda suffers an inordinate number of attacks.

For offensive magic, Nuanda carries two spells. *Flaming sphere* can wreak havoc against a massed group of enemies. *Magic missile* does a respectable amount of certain damage. Also, by having plenty of *magic missiles* available, Nuanda insures her ability to support a protracted combat.

Cybelline (5th-level enchantress): *charm person* (×2), *color spray*, *hypnotism*, *spook*; *alter self ESP*, *Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter*; *hold person*, *wraithform*.

Cybelline's study as a specialist gives her more spells per level than a 5th-level generalist mage enjoys. Therefore, she can afford to memorize enough spells for two different fundamental strategies. These allow her to function either in urban environments or against monsters in the countryside.

In an adventure of social intrigue, Cybelline attempts to meet her opponents on friendly terms. Her high charisma and gentle manners make her welcome in almost any circle, while her varied non-

weapon proficiencies allow her to assume a number of different identities. If necessary, she can use *alter self* for a perfect disguise. Once Cybelline meets her targets, she may *charm* or *hypnotize* them. Alternatively, she may use *ESP* and a few carefully worded remarks to learn whatever information her victims know. She can infiltrate guarded areas using *wraithform*.

During more rugged expeditions, Cybelline can adapt her spells for open battle. *Hold person* is an effective combat spell, and Cybelline's victims suffer a -1 on their saving throws. By casting this spell on a single opponent, she can inflict a -3 saving-throw penalty. *Spook*, *color spray* and *Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter* have similar effects. Cybelline can use *ESP* as a reconnaissance spell, to sense presences behind doors, in darkened rooms, etc.

Undead and similar creatures are immune to most of Cybelline's spells. Against those creatures, she must rely on *wraithform* to avoid attack.

Cybelline does not routinely memorize many defensive spells. Her skills at infiltration take their place. For combat adventures, she owns *bracers of AC 4* and has a high dexterity. In an emergency, she can escape battle under *wraithform*.

Khalif (10th-level mage): *magic missile* (× 3), *spook*; *mirror image* (× 2), *invisibility*, *spectral hand*; *slow* (× 2), *vampiric touch*; *improved invisibility*, *phantasmal killer*; *monster summoning III*; *summon shadow*.

Khalif can cast enough spells to make himself invulnerable against weak opponents. He knows *armor* and *stoneskin*, and casts both before any expedition. With judicious use of *invisibility* and *mirror image*, he can make his other defensive spells last through many days of normal adventuring. Therefore, he need not memorize them regularly.

Khalif also has an owl familiar named Pallas. Pallas performs nearly constant scouting duty after dark. Khalif sometimes coaxes the bird aloft during daylight with special treats. The wizard takes care to keep Pallas armored with *stoneskin*. In some circumstances, Khalif turns Pallas *invisible* as well.

Khalif likes to attack from ambush, ideally without the foe ever knowing of his existence. He keeps himself *invisible* for as much of the time as possible. This allows him to avoid enemy attention while he casts *mirror image*, brings his *spectral hand* into existence, and takes up a position for a rear attack. Unseen *mirror images* are useless, but when Khalif breaks his *invisibility* by attacking, he is glad to have them. Khalif can also conjure shadows or monsters while remaining *invisible*, and he lets them do the fighting.

Phantasmal killer makes an effective tool for Khalif's ambushes. This attack can kill even a powerful opponent. Surprised victims suffer a saving-throw penalty, and even those who survive the attack may

have to knock themselves unconscious to be saved. *Phantasmal killer* also has the advantage of not firing any visible missile to reveal Khalif's position—although, sadly, it does end his *invisibility* spell.

Few ambushes can resolve the entire battle. Therefore, Khalif carries a number of straightforward combat spells. By using *spectral hand* and *vampiric touch* in his initial ambush, he can fortify himself for later blows. *Slow* hamstring the enemy, allowing Khalif, his summoned monsters, and his comrades enough breathing room to cope with the foes. The -4 penalty on saves against *slow* allows it to work on Khalif's opposition. Khalif memorizes *spook* for the same reason. At his level, victims suffer a -5 penalty to save.

Magic missile gives Khalif simple firepower. With four missiles doing 2-5 hp damage each with no saving throw, he can inflict an average of 14 hp damage per spell. By comparison, *fireball* does only 3½ points more if the enemy makes his saving throw, and Khalif's opponents are usually powerful enough to make that save.

Khalif's normal spell list lacks area-effect artillery spells. He could, of course, memorize those enchantments if he had them in his spell books and saw a definite need for them. At his level, he might also have a magical item to replace this sorcery. He could find a *wand of fire* quite helpful. He would also enjoy some of the quirkier

magical items, to give him unexpected powers for his ambushes. The abilities to fly, change shape or create illusions would all be useful.

Conclusion

What applies to ADD game wizards applies to any game featuring magic. FASA's SHADOWRUN game, for instance, lavishly rewards the magician who attends to personal enhancement and suppression of selected targets. The Houses Flambeau and Tylatus of White Wolf's ARS MAGICA* game probably study tactics assiduously.

The suggestions in this article describe the framework of magical strategy. Implementing these suggestions is both a science and an art. The science lies in learning what game rules (and individual DMs) allow. The art lies in timing and combinations: A master of sorcery has favorite spell tactics, but never uses them quite the same way twice; the reasons include tactical details, personal preference, or great political or social reasons in the game. One must learn when to use speed and when to use caution, when to use stealth and when to use force. Ω

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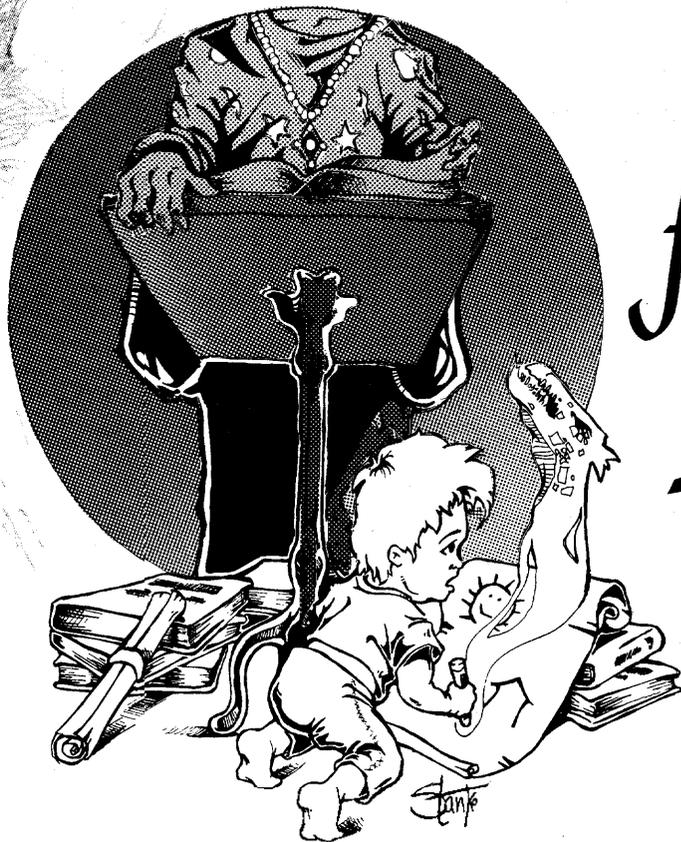


Another visit from you-know-who
with four more you-know-what

Pages from the Mages

by Ed Greenwood

Artwork by Dan Burr



When the moon is high and the weather clear, it's a pleasure to take a quiet stroll around the grounds of what I call "the estate" before retiring to bed. One spring night recently I was enjoying such a walk when I noticed something odd in the garden. Clearly outlined by the moonlight was a figure standing in the asparagus bed. I peered, then approached. Sure enough, it was Elminster.

"Well met," I bowed to him gravely. He chuckled.

"Thou art learning," he told me dryly. "Never show surprise if ye can help it."

He stepped carefully out onto the garden path and led the way toward the house.

"Been busy?" he asked as we went in, waving his staff at one of the cats in greeting (she recoiled in recognition and politely fled).

"As always," I replied, ushering him up the stairs to the study.

"Good," he replied, gravitating to his favorite armchair and lighting his pipe with a snap of his fingers. "'Tis good to hear that someone else has too little time in his grasp."

Wordlessly, I passed him a decanter and

turned on the tape recorder. His eyebrows rose. "Ahead of me, are ye? Ah, well, yes—'tis more magic I've come to tell ye about."

"I confess I'd guessed that," I told him gravely, settling myself amid stacks of scrawled, as yet unused notes from the great archmage's earlier visits and wondering if I'd ever in my life have the time to use even half of them. He soon began to give me details of another four books of magic, which follow.

Galadaster's Orizon

Appearance: Two circular, bucklerlike cover plates of polished electrum, four handwidths across and having rolled edges, make this tome resemble a gigantic coin from a distance. The cover-plates are joined by a spiral wire hinge. Between them, wired to the hinge, are six pages: circular frames of stretched vellum, each bearing the runes of and directions for one spell. The frames are varnished and smooth-carved whistlcanes that resembles bamboo.

History and description: Galadaster was a famous mage of what is now Amn in

the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, who made his name long ago by his daring explorations of the wilder lands of the Sword Coast North. With a party of adventuring companions, Galadaster fought many orcs, elves, and horrific monsters, always returning to his isolated tower with gold and magical riches. Often, his companions did not return with him.

A hundred years or more the mage passed in this way, never seeming to age much. Rivals and would-be apprentices alike he dealt with coldly and efficiently. Galadaster's hawklike face was seldom seen in the lands around his abode, and ever-more-powerful enchanted guardians ensured his privacy. When he encountered other mages, he took what he wanted of their magic and mercilessly, tirelessly, destroyed them, letting none escape. Then off he would go on another adventure.

Neighboring wizards grew ever more fearful, and at length began to work against Galadaster, poisoning the game, flora, and the very air around the mage's tower. Only in his absence the wizards worked, patiently and stealthily. Years



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passed—as did several of the wizards, at Galadaster’s hands—and there came a time when the lone tower fell silent and Galadaster came forth no more.

Emboldened, the wizards gathered and talked each other into courage enough to investigate the tower. They braved fiendish traps and vicious guardian monsters to find—Galadaster waiting for them, a hideously discolored and bloated lich. Galadaster coldly set about ensuring that none of the wizards would leave the tower alive. As he slew them, the remaining wizards grew so desperate that they called upon all their allies, servants, and powers. The tower of Galadaster toppled amid many explosions, but the wizards perished anyway. Galadaster survived, walking away west to the Nelanther (Pirate Isles), where he is said to dwell still, ageless and terrible in his power.

The *Orizon*, a trifle in Galadaster’s eyes, is all that survived the ruin of his tower. A workbook in which the young Galadaster copied spells in his travels, it contains only six spells, as follows: *spider climb*, *fire-staff*, *slumberward*, *web*, *Geirdorn’s grappling grasp*, and *Morgannaver’s sting*. The spells of *spider climb* and *web* are well-known, but the other four spells are rare indeed. Where Galadaster gained them is unknown; they may survive in the spell books of other mages of the North.

The *Orizon* was stolen from a mage in Crimmor some 90 winters ago. Its present whereabouts are unknown. Details of the rare spells in the *Orizon* are given here, from the *Bibliamagus* of Thelonn Bedelzar of Crimmor, an apprentice permitted to view the work when it was held by the archmage Elthong of Crimmor.

Firestaff (Evocation)

Level: 2 Comp.: V,S,M
Range: 0 CT: 2
Duration: 1 rd./lvl. Save: None
Area of Effect: Special

By means of this spell, a spell-caster can cause balls of blue flame to come into being at both ends of a nonmagical staff, pole, log, club, or tree limb. The object must be of wood and have two discernible ends; it is not consumed or altered by the spell or the spells flames. The wizard cannot choose to cause only one end of the staff to be alight, and he cannot extinguish the flames at will; the spell must be allowed to expire or a *dispel magic* must be used.

The burning staff does 1d6 hp damage, plus 2d4 hp flame damage, per blow (the staff is considered a magical weapon for determining what creatures it can hit, but it has no to-hit bonuses). The staff can be wielded by creatures other than the caster and can ignite flammable materials as well as being used as a weapon. The material components of this spell are a piece of phosphorous or a flame of any sort, the wooden object to be used, and a pinch of iron filings.

Slumberward (Abjuration)

Level: 2 Comp.: V,S
Range: Touch CT: 2
Duration: 2 rds./lvl. Save: None
Area of Effect: 1 creature

This spell protects one creature against drowsiness and similar conditions caused by magic. Unconsciousness, stunning (however caused), and all forms of *sleep* cannot occur or have any effect upon the protected being, who also gains a +1 bonus on saving throws against *charm*, suggestion, command, *hold* and similar will-force magicks and spell-like natural powers. The caster may use this spell on himself or others.

Geirdorn’s grappling grasp

(Evocation)

Level: 4 Comp.: V,S,M
Range: 10’/lvl. CT: 4
Duration: 2 rds./lvl. Save: None
Area of Effect: Special

This magic brings into being a hand-shaped force, invisible to all but the caster, that can be used to grapple objects and even certain spell effects. Only the caster can direct the hand, which is twice the size of the caster’s own left hand. Directing *Geirdorn’s grappling grasp* precludes spell-casting; if such is undertaken, the magical hand merely hangs motionless until concentrated upon again or until the spell expires (control can be assumed and neglected several times, if desired). This hand can move through the air as rapidly as the caster normally moves. The hand can grip but not strike: it cannot even touch living matter, but it can grasp parapets, locks, keys, levers, weapons, etc. with the same strength as the caster. Small objects can be carried about. The hand cannot manipulate things with any delicacy, but it can slow or prevent their movement for one round. Weapons cannot be wielded by the spell force, but the hand can act against any nonliving enemy’s weapon so as to cause a -2 to-hit penalty.

The primary use of this spell is to combat the various *Bigby’s hand* spells. This spell can lessen the damage dealt by the *Bigby’s hand* spells by 1d4 + 1 hp. If a *Bigby’s hand* spell causes no damage, *Geirdorn’s grappling grasp* will keep the former from taking effect for one round. The material component of this spell is a glove or a human finger bone.

Morgannaver’s sting (Necromancy)

Level: 5 Comp.: V,S
Range: Touch CT: 5
Duration: Perm. Save: Special
Area of Effect: Special

This spell enables the caster to drain 3d4 hp from any single creature. The creature must be touched within three rounds of the spell being cast (a successful attack roll is required), or the spell is lost. If the caster begins casting another spell before touching another being, the spell will also be lost. The first touched being is affected, regardless of the caster’s intentions. The

touched victim saves vs. spells. If the saving throw is successful, the hit-point loss is lessened to 1d6 + 1, and the caster gains no hit points. If the save fails, the caster gains the 3d4 hp drained from the victim as healing energy, and the victim is wracked by intense pain for 1-3 rounds. The victim will suffer a penalty of +2 on his armor class and attack rolls during this time, and he is unable to cast spells or perform other activities requiring concentration. *Morgannaver’s sting* does not confer extra hit points upon the caster; if the caster is at full hit points or becomes fully healed, excess hit points drained by the spell are simply lost and cannot be applied to damage suffered on the following round. Lost hit points can be regained by normal rest or mundane or magical curative means.

The Arcanabula of Jume

Appearance: This is a rectangular tome, three handwidths across by five in height, of translucent sheets of polished rock crystal. The sheets are clasped separately to two heavy brass rings and are cut with characters of Ruathlek (the “secret language” of illusionists). Some of the runes are inlaid with colored pastes in ruby red, emerald green, and silver.

History and description: An arcanabula in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting is an illusionist’s workbook or traveling spell book, as opposed to the more complete spell tomes kept in secret by almost all spell-casters. Most arcanabulas are nondescript, although illusionists in the Realms have shown a talent for making their books look like something else—such as a musical instrument, a gaming board, a belt of linked metal plates, and so on.

The *Arcanabula* in question is uncommonly ornate and formal (as well as unusually beautiful). Assembled by the female mage Jume, who lived in Baldur’s Gate several hundred winters ago, the *Arcanabula* has unusual protective magicks upon it. It acts as a *ring of spell turning* with respect to magic of any sort cast either upon it or so as to include it in the area of effect. It cannot be shattered. From time to time (a 6% noncumulative chance checked once every 60 days), the book *teleports* to a random locale in the Realms, regardless of magical barriers, prisons, safeguards, and the like. All we know of Jume today is that she was fat, good-humored, and quite clever in her devising of unique illusionist spells. She was not a specialist in illusions, and the term ‘arcanabula’ is thus not precisely correct when applied to this tome. Nonetheless, it has come down to present-day Realms lore by that name.

The *Arcanabula* contains four of Jume’s own magicks as well as more widely known spells. Its 22 pages have the following contents: a front cover bearing Jume’s rune; a back cover that radiates a very faint silvery glow (which presumably bears most of the protective spells on the

tome), and 20 pages between that are either blank or bear one spell each. The contents of the pages are as follows: *audible glamor*, *change self*, *gaze reflection*, *dark mirror* (a unique spell), *hypnotic pattern*, *magic mouth*, *misdirection*, *dispel magic*, *non-detection*, *phantom steed*, *spectral force*, *shadow monsters*, *shadow hand* (a unique spell), *shadow magic*, *prismatic eye* (a unique spell), *shadow gauntlet* (a unique spell), *true seeing*, and three blank pages.

Dark mirror (Abjuration, Alteration)

Level: 2 Comp.: V,S,M
Range: 10'/lvl. CT: 2
Duration: 1 rd./lvl. Save: Special
Area of Effect: Globe with radius of 10'/lvl.

This spell enables the caster to instantly negate magical *darkness* (including *continual darkness*) or reflect it back upon its caster. It can alternatively be used to allow the caster to see perfectly within or through normal or magical darkness. Which effect the spell will have must be chosen during casting and cannot be altered later. No saving throws apply to this spell, except when *darkness* is to be reflected back specifically upon a source creature or item. In this case, a successful save causes the *darkness* to pass out of existence; failure means that it is successfully reflected back upon its source. Note that if the caster of *dark mirror* chooses to reflect *darkness* back at its original source area, but not upon a specific thing or being, no save is allowed even if the thing or being is within the area at the time (a mobile being can then leave the dark area behind). Once cast, *dark mirror* remains in effect and can either prevent the formation of or reflect back multiple *darkness* effects (even several in the same round) until the spell expires. The material components of this spell are a small mirror and a candle, which need not be lit.

Shadow hand (Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 5 Comp.: V,S
Range: 10'/lvl. CT: 5
Duration: 1 rd./lvl. Save: Special
Area of Effect: Special

A *shadow hand* is a human hand-shaped coalescence of force that appears in mid-air. It is shadowy or smoky in appearance, and translucent, but its size, initial location, handedness (left or right), and luminosity (ranging from nothing to a *faerie fire* equivalent) are all chosen during casting and may not be altered later. A *shadow hand* moves as the caster wills, but continual concentration is not required to maintain it, and the caster can perform other spell-casting. It can serve to point the way or indicate items of interest (such as concealed doors), warn away intruders, or engage in combat. A *shadow hand* cannot be dispelled by physical attacks, nor can it carry weight or affect spell-casting.

This spell can slow to half speed any opponents of less than 1,000 lbs. weight

trying to push past it, moving to block different opponents as desired. Only one opponent per round can be so affected, but if the *shadow hand* is operating in a narrow tunnel or passage, slowing the foremost of a group of creatures will impede those behind it. A *shadow hand* strikes opponents only when so directed by its caster (i.e., the caster can physically fight in the same round but cannot cast a spell). An attack roll is required, the *shadow hand* having the same THAC0 as the caster. Its strike does 1 hp damage to targets who fail a save vs. spells, and no damage to those whose saving throw is successful. A *shadow hand* can attack once for every three levels of the caster in any one round, but it has no appreciable force (i.e., an opponent cannot be pushed off-balance, nor can breakables be shattered). Its attack, damage, and ability to slow those trying to pass it are all due to its effect on the nervous systems of its opponents; thus, it has no effect against the undead, golems (except the flesh golem), mechanical or enchanted monsters, creatures from the Outer Planes, or living beings having no nervous systems (oozes, slimes, nonsentient plants, etc.).

Prismatic eye (Alteration, Evocation)

Level: 6 Comp.: V,S,M
Range: 10'/lvl. CT: 1 round
Duration: 1 rd./lvl. Save: None
Area of Effect: Special

This magic creates a visible orb resembling a human eye (or *wizard eye*) that floats above one shoulder of the caster. The caster can turn the eye and cause it to move (at a maximum rate of 16) up to the limits of the spell range, and he can see through it as well as employing his own normal vision. The eye has 20' infravision, and normal vision up to 60' in good light.

In the round in which it appears (the round after casting) and once every four rounds thereafter, a *prismatic eye* can emit a beam of clashing colors equal in effect to a *color spray*. The beam is straight, not fan-shaped, and an attack roll using the caster's base THAC0 is required to strike a target. The beam can affect only one creature. If it misses or the caster does not cause the eye to emit a ray, the power is lost for another four rounds. Instead of a *color spray*, a *prismatic eye* can be willed by the caster to emit *light* as per the wizard spell, centered on itself. The intensity is controlled by the caster but cannot be so bright as to blind; it lasts for only two rounds. The *color spray* beam of a *prismatic eye* will strike unconscious (for 2d4 rounds) creatures of up to six hit dice or levels. It blinds creatures with 7-8 levels or hit dice for 1d4 rounds, and stuns more powerful targets (as per *power word, stun*) for one round. All creatures with at least six levels or hit dice are entitled to a saving throw vs. spells; if successful, the result is always a +1 on the victim initiative due to stunning (enough to ruin spell-casting, or delay or

spoil a missile attack).

If attacked, the eye is AC 3 and has 9 hp. The material components of this spell are an eyeball (dried or preserved) from any sort of creature, and a polished, rainbow-hued slice of abalone, oyster, or tortoise shell.

Shadow gauntlet (Evocation, Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 6 Comp.: V,S
Range: 10'/lvl. CT: 1 round
Duration: 1 rd./lvl. Save: Special
Area of Effect: Special

A *shadow gauntlet* is a more powerful version of a *shadow hand* (q.v.) that can wield weapons, snatch at items, or act as a shield for the caster or other creatures. Like *shadow hand*, the *shadow gauntlet* appears in midair, moving as the caster wills, and may range in size from human to giant (12' long), varying in luminosity from dark to the equivalent of *faerie fire*. These specifics, as well as handedness (right or left) and the location of the initial appearance of a *shadow gauntlet* are determined during casting and cannot be changed thereafter. A *shadow gauntlet* appears as a gleaming, silvery metal gauntlet. The caster need not concentrate upon this spell to maintain its existence, but he cannot cast a spell in any round in which the gauntlet is shifted to a new target or makes a direct attack.

In a given round, a *shadow gauntlet* can hamper one creature, slowing it to half its movement rate and temporarily decreasing its armor class by one point, as well as causing any attacks the victim makes to be at a -2 penalty to hit and ruining all of the victim's spell-casting, except verbal-only spells (magical items can still be activated). The gauntlet can instead wield a weapon, striking once per round using the caster's THAC0. Magical weapons can be employed by a *shadow gauntlet*, but it cannot activate magical items. It can strike weaponless once for every three experience levels of its caster in a round (normal attack rolls apply). All weaponless attacks in a given round must be directed at a single target, who is allowed a saving throw against each. If failed, the target sustains 2 hp damage; if successful, no damage is suffered.

A gauntlet can also snatch at items held by others. It lacks the strength or solidity to dislodge anything from any grasp, but it can foil *telekinesis* and hamper enemy weapons as described above. It can carry objects weighing up to 1 lb. (e.g., a key, ring, or a gem) for up to two rounds. Free or laden, a gauntlet has a movement of up to 24. A *shadow gauntlet* can also be interposed between a specific creature (the caster or a being the caster can see) and foes attacking him. (Note that someone striking from a side not currently protected by the gauntlet has his attacks determined normally.) The *shadow gauntlet* adds +1 to all saving throws or ability checks against attacks hitting the one so

protected, and it absorbs 1-2 hp damage from all attacks, physical or magical, that do manage to strike the protected being. The gauntlet can absorb as many hit points in this manner as its caster has before being destroyed. A gauntlet has AC 2 (AC 4 if acting as a shield).

A *shadow gauntlet* can perform only one of the functions described here during a round. If its caster does not concentrate on it, it will continue to perform the last function it was directed to do, moving about as necessary. This does not apply to attacks, however; inattention will cause a previously attacking *shadow gauntlet* to hang motionless in midair until control is reapplied. If a caster falls unconscious, his spell ceases its actions; if the caster dies, the gauntlet silently vanishes. If a caster goes insane, the gauntlet wildly attacks random living beings within range, at double speed (six attacks per round, three at one target, three at another).

Laeral's Libram

Appearance: The *Libram's* covers are two circular plates of polished blue-sheen electrum, joined at one edge with a ring that also binds seven parchment pages to the plates. The electrum discs have a clasp opposite the ring, worked in the shape of a moon with an arc of stars around it, to hold them closed. The parchment pages are circular and touched with "silvergilt" all around their edges.

History and description: Laeral is a famous adventuress of the Sword Coast North, who was apprenticed to Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun of Waterdeep, and she still aids him in Blackstaff Tower as his companion and lover. Once leader of the adventuring group known as The Nine, Laeral fell under the influence of The Crown of Horns for a time (see the FORGOTTEN REALMS sourcebook FR5, *The Savage Frontier*). Rescued by Khelben and the High Lady Alustriel of Silverymoon, Laeral created a *simulacrum* of herself that she placed in the Stronghold of the Nine to deceive treasure-seekers. Freed from both her reputation and responsibilities, Laeral has again become the gentle, merry girl she used to be 20 winters ago.

Lost in her recent madness, however, was her *Libram*, a small traveling "handy-book" of her favorite spells. It has only seven pages, each bearing a single spell. Their contents are as follows: *feather fall*, *magic missile*, *spider climb*, *forcewave*, *Laeral's aqueous column*, *Jhanifer's deliquescence*, and *blackstaff*. The last four spells in the *Libram* are all rare and are described hereafter. The aqueous column is a spell created by Laeral herself (as part of her training under Khelben), and *blackstaff* is one of the more powerful spells devised by Khelben himself. Jhanifer was a sorceress of the long-ago North, a friend (some say lover) of Ahghairon, the Founder of Waterdeep. None know what became of her.

Forcewave (Abjuration, Evocation)

Level: 2 Comp.: V,S,M
Range: 10'/lvl. CT: 2
Duration: 1 rd. Save: Special
Area of Effect: 1 creature

This spell enables a wizard to hamper the activities of a single creature for one round. A wave of translucent, silent, colorless force, visually resembling an ocean wave breaking on a beach, comes into being in front of the caster and sweeps toward a target creature. The caster must point to, name, or concentrate upon the intended target during the casting. The wave rushes toward the target with a movement rate of 30. It has no effect on nonliving objects or any creature but the intended target.

If the target creature is within range, the *forcewave* strikes it—no saving throw to avoid. The target is allowed a save vs. spells to determine the *forcewave's* effects, however. If the save is successful, the creature suffers 1 hp impact damage and is thrown off-balance; a running or charging creature, or one on a narrow bridge or high place, must then make a dexterity check on 1d20 to avoid falling. If the target fails its saving throw, it suffers 2-5 hp impact damage, is *repulsed* (forced away from the caster) by 10', has any ongoing spell-casting ruined, and can make only missile attacks on the round in which it is struck. A dexterity check must be made to avoid falling (at -1 if the target creature is small, weak, surprised, or precariously situated). Ethereal beings cannot be affected by a *forcewave*, but a being employing *blink* or a *displacement* effect that shifts rapidly from one plane to another can be affected by this spell. The material components of this spell are a small piece of rope or string and a drop of water, spittle, or a tear.

Laeral's aqueous column (Alteration, Evocation)

Level: 4 Comp.: V,S,M
Range: 10'/lvl. CT: 2 rounds
Duration: 10 rnds./lvl.
Save: None
Area of Effect: 10'-diam. cylinder,
10' long/lvl.

By means of this spell, a mage can transmute the air in a particular area into water; a free-standing cylindrical volume 10' in diameter can be created. It will be pure water, either fresh or salty as the caster decrees in casting, and will circulate freely within itself, drawing oxygen into itself to support marine life inside it. The water is held in a cylindrical shape by the spell's dweomer, the cylinder expanding lengthwise with increasing areas of effect, 10' per level of the caster. Multiple spells (cast by the same being or by several spellcasters) can be used to extend the cylinder even further. The column can run horizontally, vertically, at an angle, or even make turns as desired in the casting, but once established its location cannot change.

Creatures and objects can pass freely through the cylinder of water without spilling water or disturbing the stability of the column, but creatures not able to breathe in water are not empowered to do so by this spell. This spell is often used to introduce marine creatures into an otherwise "dry" environment for purposes of imprisonment, conferences, or transportation. The cylinders are usually vertical and may connect with other bodies of water, such as sewers beneath buildings or the sea beneath a ship. At the spells expiration, the water simply vanishes; marine creatures can thus be stranded. Varying water pressures are equalized by the magic so as to harm neither creatures in the column nor structures entered by the column (a column connected to the sea from a cellar will not then cause the sea to flood the cellar). The material components of this spell are a hair from any sort of creature and a drop of water, spittle, dew, juice, sap, or a tear.

Jhanifer's deliquescence (Alteration)

Level: 5 Comp.: V,S,M
Range: Touch CT: 1 round
Duration: Perm. Save: Special
Area of Effect: 10 cu. feet/lvl.

This spell enables a wizard to instantly melt ice, frozen liquids, and other substances that freeze within 10° of water's freezing point (32° F). Such melting does not involve heat, steam, or the consumption of fuel. A *wall of ice*, for instance, could be turned into water that falls to the ground, and a frozen lock or sleigh runner could be freed. Repeated applications of this spell have been known to turn solids into liquid form, and 10 *deliquescence* spells equal the effects of *transmute rock to mud*. The details of this use of the spell are little known and poorly understood. (The DM should sharply limit the combat effectiveness of dissolving solids, although a mage could use the spell repeatedly to escape from a stone-walled cell.)

Animated or enchanted stone creatures, such as stone golems, receive a saving throw vs. spells equal to the saving throw (at the time) of the being who enchanted them, as do all stone or other solid objects bearing a dweomer. If successful, that application of the spell does not affect them and is entirely wasted. Living creatures, even if stony, are unaffected by this spell. The material components of this spell are a tiny piece of amber and a piece of ice.

Blackstaff (Alteration, Evocation)

Level: 8 Comp.: V,S,M
Range: 0 CT: 1 round
Duration: 1 rd./lvl. Save: Special
Area of Effect: Special

This is the famous spell that gave its creator, the archmage Khelben Arunsun of Waterdeep, his nickname. The magic causes any nonmagical staff, club, piece of wood, or pole arm held by the caster to shimmer with a black, crawling radiance.

A *blackstaff* weapon has the following properties:

—It can never harm the caster or any other beings touching the staff during the casting of the spell.

—It strikes as a +4 magical weapon to hit (no damage bonus).

—Its touch drains 1 hp automatically (the target gets a saving throw vs. death magic to avoid having this loss being permanent, unrecoverable except by use of a *wish*), plus 1d8 hp normal damage, regardless of the weapon's size and shape.

—Its touch acts as a *dispel magic* spell (at the caster's level) on all magical barriers, weapons, or effects, at all times; the wielder cannot turn this power on and off.

—Its touch causes mental damage, as follows:

1d100 Effect

- 01-45 Target unaffected
46-65 Target *confused* (as per the wizard spell *confusion*) for 1d4 rounds
66-75 Target *stunned* (as per a *symbol of stunning*) for 1-3 rounds
76-85 Target affected by *fear* (as per the spell) for 1-2 rounds
86-95 Target affected by *repulsion*
96-00 Target affected by *feeblemind*

—Its touch causes any spell-casting being to forget one memorized spell or be unable to use one natural spell-like power for two rounds (if a choice exists, determine which spell or ability at random; save vs. paralyzation to avoid this effect entirely).

—Its touch causes beings possessing psionic skills or wild talents to be psionically "scrambled" (unable to use any powers except defenses) for 1d4 rounds.

—It absorbs magic cast upon it, without consequence, and is apparently unaffected by any magic except a *wish*, which can negate it.

The *blackstaff* may be wielded by any creature able to use a pole arm who can withstand (or is immune to) its effects. A *blackstaff* will prevent spell-casting by any being who is contact with it during a given round. It can therefore be used to ruin enemy spell-casting with a successful attack. (It cannot be easily thrown and resists *telekinesis* and similar movements as it does almost all other magic.) At the spell's expiration, the material component (the staff) is instantly and completely consumed.

Tasso's Arcanabula

Appearance: This volume is a tall, thin book (two handwidths across by six high) of black-edged parchment pages bound between thin boards of duskwood, covered with mauve-dyed pseudodragon-hide. The tome has 16 pages.

History and description: **Tasso** is an infamous illusionist active in the Inner Sea lands of the FORGOTTEN REALMS world. The leader of a band of thieves and adven-

turers, the All-Seeing Eye, Tasso robbed many a royal treasury and temple vault in Chessenta, Mulhorand, and the independent cities of the Vilhon and the Near South. He became the eagerly sought target of many hired bounty-hunters and assassins, and he survived many spectacular battles as he escaped one ambush after another. About four winters ago, Tasso vanished, either fleeing to another plane or being slain by a killer who was luckier or more persistent than the rest. An early casualty of raiding bounty-hunters, *Tasso's Arcanabula* (spell workbook) was seized from his cave abode near Star mantle and presented to the patron of the bounty-hunters, the Marcrowne of Turmish. It was soon stolen from the Marcrowne's palace vaults, and its present whereabouts are unknown,

From the accounts of Sleem, Court Wizard to the Marcrowne, we have the following record of the volume's contents, one spell to a page: *audible glamer*, *change self*, *dancing lights*, *phantasmal force*, *Tasso's shriek* (a unique spell), *detect magic*, *invisibility*, *magic mouth*, *misdirection*, *dimension door*, *fear*, *illusionary wall*, *shadow bolt* (a rare spell), *shadow skeleton* (a unique spell), *permanent illusion*, and *chromatic blade* (a rare spell). All unique and rare spells are detailed hereafter.

Tasso's shriek (Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 1 Comp.: V
Range: 10'/1vl. CT: 1
Duration: 1 rd./1vl. Save: Special
Area of Effect: Hearing range

This specialized form of an *audible glamer* spell is released by the caster with only minimal utterance. Thus, casting it is all but silent, untraceable, and requires a minimum of concentration (enabling it to be cast during melee or when the caster is in pain, constrained, or the like). The magic causes a shrieking, crying, shouting, or other verbal utterance. The spell-caster must emit all of these sounds while memorizing (not casting) the spell, and he cannot subsequently alter them. Once cast, the sounds cannot be ended before the spell expiration. The sounds carried by this magic are limited to those produced by the caster's voice (although mimicry is possible), and are typically used to produce shouted warnings or cries to suggest a fight or attack "offstage," or the presence of unseen intruders, so as to distract opponents of the caster.

Shadow bolt (Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 3 Comp.: V,S
Range: 10'/1vl. CT: 1 round
Duration: 1-2 rds. Save: Special
Area of Effect: 1 creature

By means of this spell, the caster brings into being a semi-real phantasm of an onrushing missile. The large, gray teardrop-shaped illusory projectile can be made to glow with a *faerie* fire-like radiance of any hue the caster desires; it appears behind the caster and rushes at any

one creature the caster concentrates upon. (The caster must be able to see the target as the spell is cast, but need not name or visibly indicate the target.) The projectile will begin as a tiny, silent mote that rapidly grows in size with a frightening, increasing moan of rushing air, so that it appears to have come from a great distance at great speed (a *shadow bolt* actually travels at a movement rate of 26). It can swerve to follow the target (as a *magic missile* does) even if the target *teleports* or otherwise escapes the caster's view. Any other creature struck by the moving *bolt* en route to its target will suffer its effects instead—and if the target shifts to another plane of existence, the *bolt* will return to strike at its caster. A *shadow bolt* can otherwise be affected only by magical barriers, not by spells or physical attacks. It does 1d8 damage, plus one point per level of the caster. If disbelieved (the target makes a successful save vs. spells) a *bolt* will do only half damage. (Note that a being unfamiliar with the details of magical illusions who encounters a *shadow bolt* for the first time will have no reason to disbelieve such an attack!)

A *shadow bolt* strikes in the round following casting—unless the target shifts out of range, in which case it will travel for a second round to strike (or return upon the caster). A *shadow bolt* will *teleport* or *dimension door* to follow its target if the target does so, but if the target does so twice (i.e., evades the *bolt* for the full two rounds), the *shadow bolt* will dissipate harmlessly. The strike of a *shadow bolt* is a considerable blow; the victim must make a strength check to avoid falling, and if fragile items are carried, make a successful dexterity check to protect such items (otherwise, they must make saving throws vs. crushing blow to escape damage from the character's fall).

Shadow skeleton (Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 4 Comp.: V,S,M
Range: 90' CT: 4
Duration: 1 rd. + 1
rd./1vl. Save: None
Area of Effect: Special

This spell allows the caster to create semi-real phantasms of human, demihuman, or humanoid skeletons. All the skeletons created by a single *shadow skeleton* spell must be of the same type. One skeletal image per level of the caster can be created; the caster can choose to create fewer images, but such a decision does not result in stronger skeletons. *Shadow skeletons* cannot grasp, carry, or wield solid objects such as weapons. They appear smoky and vague in outline, of ivory or bloody hue, and may have any configuration (split skulls, missing limbs, etc.) the caster wishes. The skeletal images are silent and cannot be turned, dispelled, or affected by heat, fire, or cold; they are under the control of the caster just as a priest controls skeletons animated by use of *animate dead*. *Shadow skeletons* have

these statistics: AC 6; MV 14; 2 hp each; #ATT 1; Dmg 1d4. They can be equipped with illusory clothes and weapons, so as to appear from a distance as living guards or servants. The spell cannot, however, be worked to give the illusion of life or flesh.

Shadow skeletons vanish at the spells expiration or upon the death or unconsciousness of the caster. Solid matter, including living creatures, can pass through *shadow skeletons* without resistance. All living creatures who come into direct contact with a *shadow skeleton* must save vs. spells at +2 or be stunned for one round. Such contact does not harm or dispel a *shadow skeleton*, but it does permit a living creature to charge through a skeleton.

The material component of this spell is a piece of bone. It serves as a focal point for the spell-caster's concentration and is not consumed or altered by the magic.

Chromatic blade (Alteration)
Level: 7 Comp.: V,S,M
Range: 0 CT: 1 round
Duration: 1 rd./lvl. Save: None
Area of Effect: Special

This spell creates a shimmering blade of constantly changing hue, of needle-width and magical sharpness. It can be wielded by any creature, although the caster can will the blade out of existence when he chooses. The blade is considered a +2

magical weapon for attack purposes (no damage bonus), weighs nothing, and makes no sound upon impact. Its touch does 2d6 hp damage and can sever extremities as a *sword of sharpness* does.

The bearer of a *chromatic blade* receives a +3 bonus to saving throws vs. *color spray* attacks, and the blade's attack can destroy one globe of a *prismatic sphere* or one layer of a *prismatic wall* upon contact, without harm to the wielder. Similarly, a *prismatic spray* is scattered upon contact with such a blade. A *chromatic blade* glows with a bright, gleaming radiance equivalent in illumination effects to a *faerie fire* at all times, regardless of the caster's or bearer's wishes. The color of this glow changes continually and is uncontrollable.

A *chromatic blade* can be destroyed by a *dispel magic*, *disintegrate*, or properly worded *limited wish*. It cannot be physically damaged in any way (although it can be parried or blocked like a normal, physical blade). A *chromatic blade* is not affected by changes in light or darkness (mundane or magical) or magnetic effects, and it cannot be mentally wielded or influenced from a distance, except for the caster willing it out of existence. It is safe to touch a *chromatic blade* only at its hilt or guard; the magical blade itself is all edges, and even its lightest touch will cause harm.

An illusionist or other spell-caster can wield a *chromatic blade* without nonproficiency or class penalties. The material component of this spell is an edged metal weapon of any size and quality, which is consumed in the spell-casting. Ω

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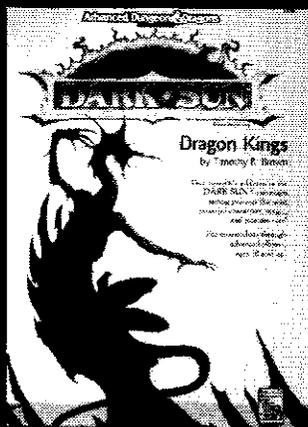
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That's Certainly Un-Familiar!

Improve the abilities of your wizard's favorite pet

by Len Carpenter

Artwork by Peter Clarke





One small but worthy change made in the AD&D® game 2nd Edition rules can be seen in the first-level wizard spell *find familiar*. The current spell better defines the capabilities of familiars and adds new features to improve a familiar's ability to survive in a campaign. The revision of *find familiar* now makes the familiar more viable as a continuing NPC in a campaign, a constant companion to a wizard from the start of an adventuring career to retirement at a ripe old age.

Also beneficial to a campaign would be a system to allow the familiar's capabilities to increase and its personality to grow as the campaign progresses. The animal companions of fantasy and myth display a surprising range of abilities and talents, from magical powers and useful skills to benevolent wisdom. With a little work, the AD&D game, too, can reflect the imaginative touches that make animal companions such unique and engaging characters.

This article proposes a new spell series

to broaden the special abilities of familiars. These *familiar enhancer* spells, ranging from the second to ninth level, enable a wizard to add new powers and faculties to his familiar. As the wizard rises in level, the familiar grows more intelligent and capable of keeping pace with the expanding power of the wizard and increasing challenge in the campaign.

Whatever new powers the Dungeon Master chooses to bestow upon familiars must be tailored to the needs of game balance. The familiar mustn't be permitted to become the wizard's answer to the warrior's intelligent magical sword. Wizards already possess enough spells and magical items of offensive power without the familiar becoming yet another piece of firepower for wizards to exploit.

The new powers conferred upon familiars should be weighted on the side of defensive and miscellaneous functions. Additional abjuration powers can improve the familiar's chances of surviving in a campaign that grows ever more dangerous. New powers of divination, alteration, illusion, and summoning magic can enhance the familiar's role as a spy, scout, or advisor, enabling the familiar to do things its wizard often cannot do for himself and making the familiar a useful addition to the party. Any offensive powers the DM permits familiars to acquire should be subtle in nature and require some creativity, rather than the flash and fury of evocation and necromancy magic.

Familiar enhancer I-VIII

(Alteration, Enchantment)

Level: 2-9

Range: 10'

Components: V,S,M

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 72 hours

Area of Effect: The caster's familiar

Saving Throw: None

Table I

1d100 Special power

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 01-05 | The familiar can call into existence and control one glowing sphere of light, as described under the spell, dancing lights. This power can be used twice per day, each use having a duration of two rounds per level of the familiar's wizard. |
| 06-20 | The familiar can <i>detect magic</i> twice per day. While the familiar can judge the intensity of magic detected, it cannot discern the type of magic noted, as familiars are generally unschooled in the many varieties of magic. |
| 21-25 | The familiar can use <i>feather fall</i> twice each day. |
| 26-30 | The familiar can <i>jump</i> up to three times per day. Each <i>jump</i> has a duration of only one round. |
| 31-40 | The familiar can <i>pass without trace</i> once per day, with a duration of five rounds per level of the familiar's wizard. |
| 41-60 | The familiar can use <i>protection from evil</i> on itself if the familiar's wizard is not evil in alignment, or <i>protection from good</i> if its wizard is evil. This power can be used once per day with a duration of two rounds per level of the familiar's wizard. |
| 61-75 | The familiar can <i>speak with animals</i> (as per the priest spell) twice per day, provided that the animal spoken with is of the same general family as the familiar. A black cat could <i>speak</i> with any feline, an owl or hawk could <i>speak</i> with any bird of prey, a toad could chat with any other toadlike amphibian, and so on. (I know this stretches true taxonomic classification, but let's not nit-pick.) The familiar can question and gain answers from an animal spoken with, but it cannot obtain a favor or exact some service, because this power confers no magical influence over the animal. |
| 76-80 | The familiar can <i>spider climb</i> once per day. |
| 81-95 | The familiar can call upon the aid of an <i>unseen servant</i> . An <i>unseen servant</i> can be summoned no more than once each day and will serve the familiar for up to three turns plus one turn per level of the familiar's wizard. |
| 96-00 | The familiar can detect one type of metal, mineral, vegetable, or other substance, such as gold, iron, coal, diamond, catnip, wild berries, or eucalyptus (as the DM chooses). The familiar detects the substance if it is within a 30' radius of the familiar. This power can be used three times per day, with each use lasting one turn. At the DM's option, the familiar may develop an obsessive interest in the given substance. The familiar may desire to collect the substance to the exclusion of other materials or forms of wealth, and may search for the substance it covets at inopportune times. |

Table II

1d100 Special power

01-10	The familiar can use <i>blur</i> on itself once per day.
11-20	The familiar can affect its appearance in a way similar to the spell <i>change self</i> . The familiar can change its appearance with regard to its fur, feather, or skin color, can mold body features in subtle ways, or can alter its size by up to 25%, but it must retain its own essential animal form. A black cat familiar might make itself look like a smaller Siamese cat or a larger wild cat. A screech owl might conceal its species by changing the color of its feathers or the shape of its head. A weasel might give itself snow-white fur to blend in with a winter environment or dark fur to be less conspicuous at night. This power can be used once per day.
21-25	The familiar can use <i>comprehend languages</i> once per day. This power does not permit the familiar to read a written message unless the familiar has at least an intelligence of 10.
26-35	The familiar can <i>detect evil</i> once per day.
36-45	The familiar can <i>detect invisibility</i> once each day.
46-50	The familiar can <i>grease</i> a surface once per day.
51-60	The familiar can use the power of <i>protection from cantrips</i> on itself once per day, with a maximum duration of 24 hours.
61-75	The familiar can <i>speak with animals</i> of the same biological class as the familiar twice per day. A cat or weasel familiar could speak with any mammal, a toad with any amphibian, a hawk or owl with any bird, or a snake with any reptile. This power, again, confers no magical influence over the behavior of the animal spoken with.
76-80	The familiar gains the power to detect all concealed or secret doors within a 10-yard radius about the familiar for a period of one round, similar in function to the <i>wand of secret door and trap location</i> except that traps cannot be located. The familiar can use this power twice per day.
81-85	The familiar becomes endowed with a keen sense of direction, enabling it to identify true north with a 90% chance of accuracy. This power can be used any number of times. If the familiar incorrectly identifies south, east, or west as "north" (roll 1d6 to find the wrongly identified direction: 1-2 = south, 3-4 = east, 5-6 = west) on a failed 1d100 roll even once, the familiar will continue to identify the wrong direction as "north" for the rest of the day.
86-00	The familiar becomes able to blend in with its surroundings with a 90% chance of success as if the familiar were wearing a <i>ring of chameleon power</i> . The familiar, however, is unable to mimic the appearance of another living creature as detailed under the ring's second function. This ability can be used once per day with a duration of two rounds per level of the familiar's wizard.

The spells in this series each vary in effect and the cost of the chief material component with increasing spell level, but they remain similar in all other respects. When a wizard is ready to cast one of these spells, the wizard and familiar must go into-seclusion together for 72 hours. They must stay within 10' of each other throughout this time or the spell will be ruined.

The wizard must first light a brazier and use it to periodically burn herbs, gums, and spices throughout the spell's duration. In addition, the wizard must keep near his person a gem-encrusted statuette of solid gold depicting the familiar. The value of this statuette is 1,000 gp multiplied by the spell level; thus, the statuette for the second-level *familiar enhancer I* spell costs 2,000 gp, while the material component for the ninth-level version costs 9,000 gp. The statuette is repeatedly anointed with heated oils containing a bit of the fur, feathers, skin, or claws of the familiar. After the spell is cast, the familiar and wizard must both rest for an additional 72 hours to recover from the strain inflicted by the spell-casting.

Once a particular version in the *familiar enhancer* series is cast, the same spell can never again be memorized and cast by the wizard. If a *familiar enhancer* is ruined during its casting, the same spell version cannot be memorized and cast again. Only the power of a full *wish* can enable a wizard to use the same *enhancer* spell a

second time if the first casting was spoiled.

The *familiar enhancer* spells must be cast in successive order from the second-level version to the ninth-level spell. Thus, *familiar enhancer III* cannot be cast before *familiar enhancer II* has been cast. If any *familiar enhancer* version is cast out of order or an *enhancer* in the series is skipped over, then the most recently cast *enhancer* will not take effect. Again, the same *enhancer* version cannot be memorized a second time without the aid of a *wish*.

When a *familiar enhancer* is cast, the familiar receives one or more special benefits or abilities specified in the spell description or generated from one of five tables of magical powers. The eight versions in the *enhancer* series are described here, followed by the five tables of powers.

Familiar enhancer I

Level: 2

With the casting of this first *enhancer*, the bond between familiar and wizard grows stronger. The familiar's intellect improves when this spell is cast, rising into the low intelligence range of 4 + (1-3). The familiar can now think in the wizard's native tongue and can communicate in words and simple sentences with its wizard through the empathic link they share.

The familiar develops a personality that seems almost human or demihuman in character, possessing specific traits, likes, dislikes, opinions, habits, and foibles. Table

70 on pages 114-115 of the 2nd Edition *Dungeon Masters Guide* can prove helpful when the DM needs to detail the characteristics of an NPC familiar.

The general animal qualities of the familiar's species are not lost, however, but are expanded upon as the familiar's personality matures. A black cat familiar might grow into a sensualist with discriminating and expensive tastes in food and creature comforts, a crow might become a collector of gaudy gemstones and jewelry, and an otter might develop a frolicsome personality combining a short attention span for serious matters with a love for playful pranks.

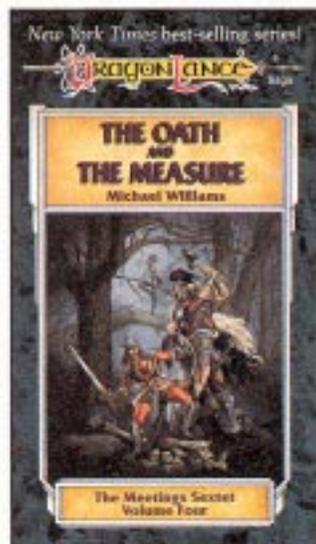
The familiar also takes on the alignment view and attitudes of its wizard, but not to as strong a degree. A familiar will always retain a leaning toward the true-neutral alignment as a holdover from its simple animal origin. If the wizard should sometime undergo a radical alignment change, such as from neutral good to neutral evil, then the familiar for its own safety could be compelled to forsake its wizard. Protected by the wizard's original deity, the familiar does not suffer the loss of hit points or any special abilities while it remains separated from its wizard until the crisis passes. The changed wizard, of course, loses all special benefits bestowed by the familiar's presence until the familiar returns.

Finally, the familiar gains one special power from Table I.



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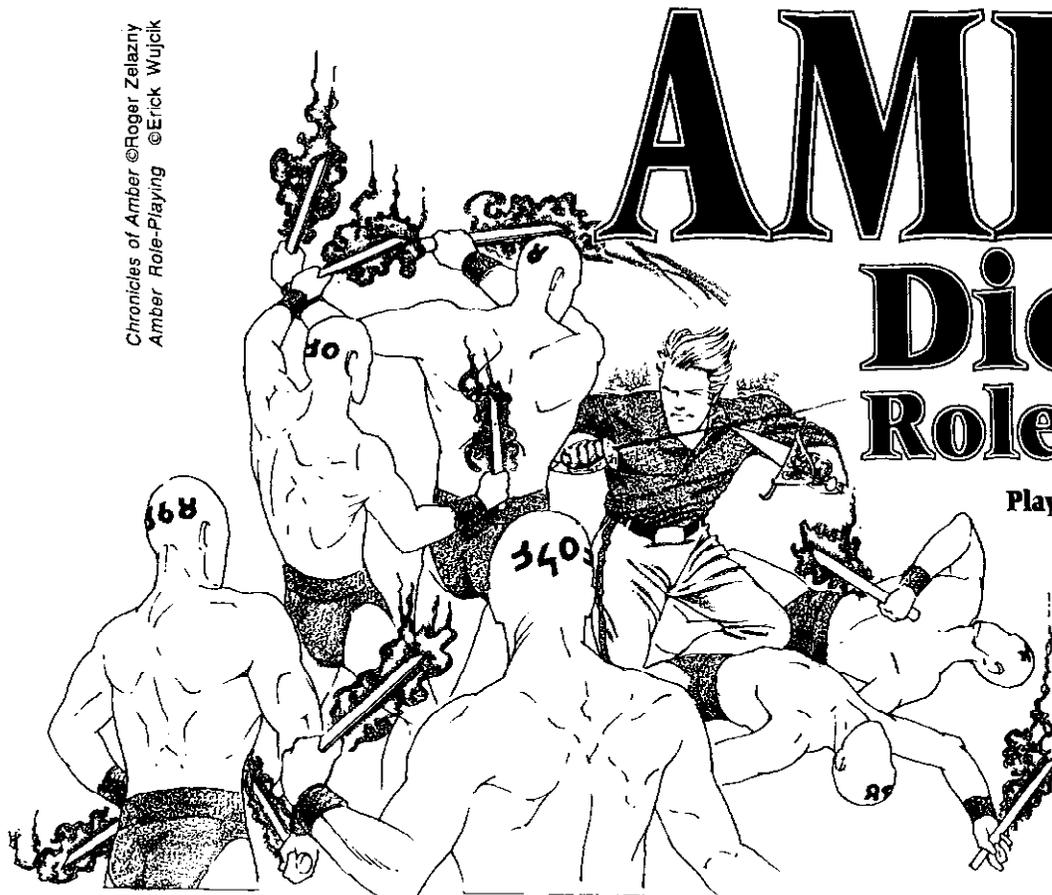


Table III**1d100 Special power**

- 01-10 Once per-day, the familiar can change its appearance in a manner similar to the effect of the spell *alter self*. The familiar can assume the form of only those animals the DM permits to become familiars in the campaign. A crow familiar might choose to appear as a cat, owl, or toad, but not as a minimal, hyena, or imp if the DM forbids these creatures from becoming familiars.
- 11-20 The familiar can charm animals (as described under the priest spell, charm person or mammal) once per week, provided the animal to be swayed is of the same general family as the familiar. A black cat familiar could *charm* a fellow feline but not a canine or rodent. Up to 1 HD of animals for every two levels of the familiar's wizard can be *charmed*, so a hawk familiar to a 10th-level wizard could affect up to 5 HD of birds of prey. The *charmed* animals will be under the familiar's influence for one turn per level of the familiar's wizard.
- 21-25 Once per day, the familiar can *fly* by sprouting a pair of wings from its back, gaining all the flight capabilities bestowed by the spell. If the familiar could already fly, its speed is increased by half again as much; thus, MV 12 becomes MV 18, MV 18 becomes MV 27, MV 24 becomes MV 36, etc.
- 26-40 The familiar can either use the power of *invisibility* on itself (50%) or use *knock* (50%), once per day.
- 41-50 The familiar can create mirror images of itself once per day.
- 51-65 The familiar can *speak with animals* of any nonmagical species up to three times each day.
- 66-70 The familiar can use the power of *water breathing* on itself once per week.
- 71-80 The familiar can locate the presence of any hostile creature within a 30-yard radius, similar to the function of a *wand of enemy detection*. This sense can be employed once per day with a duration of one turn.
- 81-85 Twice per day for a duration of one round per use, the familiar can detect any traps—but not secret or concealed doors—within a 10-yard radius sphere, comparable to the second function of a *wand of secret door and trap location*.
- 86-95 The familiar's intellect is permanently raised into the highly intelligent range of intelligence of 12 + (1-2).
- 96-00 The familiar permanently acquires the ability to speak in a normal human voice and can converse in any language that the familiar knows.

Table IV**1d100 Special power**

- 01-10 The familiar can *blink* once per day.
- 11-20 The familiar can *charm* animals of the same biological class as the familiar, as described under the *charm* power in Table III. A toad familiar to a 14th-level mage could *charm* up to 7 HD of fellow amphibian creatures, while a weasel familiar could *charm* mammals. This power can be used once per week with a duration of two turns per level of the familiar's wizard.
- 21-25 The familiar can *delude* others regarding its alignment once per day. The new alignment assumed by the familiar can even come from a creature of animal intelligence, so the familiar could assume the neutral alignment of a common animal and conceal its status as a familiar.
- 26-35 Once per day, the familiar can use *hold animal* against creatures of the same general family as the familiar itself (as detailed under the priest spell). A cat familiar could *hold* a pair of lions with this power, and a snake familiar could keep immobile 1-4 boa constrictors or cobras.
- 36-45 The familiar can use *item* once per week. Only inanimate, nonliving matter can be affected with this power. The familiar cannot alter an object in the possession of another, nor can another creature carry an object that was shrunk by the familiar (the spell is dispelled if the object is touched). The sole use for this power is to enable the familiar to carry an object normally too large for the familiar's size and strength.
- 46-55 The familiar can use *protection from normal missiles* on itself once per week.
- 56-65 Once per week, the familiar can *summon* animals of the same species as the familiar, similar in effect to the spell *monster summoning I*. Up to one such animal for every two levels of the familiar's wizard will appear.
- 66-70 The familiar can use the power of tongues once per day, assuming the familiar is capable of human speech; if not, reroll this ability.
- 71-80 The familiar can attain *wraithform* once per week.
- 81-85 If the familiar is capable of human speech, it can use the gift of *glibness* as described under *the potion of glibness*. This power can be used once per week with a duration of one round for every level of the familiar's wizard. If the familiar is not capable of human speech, reroll this ability.
- 86-95 The familiar's intellect rises into the exceptionally intelligent range with an intelligence of 14 + (1-2). The familiar is also treated as if having a wisdom of 15, so the familiar receives a +1 bonus to saving throws vs. magical attacks that affect the familiar's mind.
- 96-00 The familiar gains the power to *polymorph* itself into a human or demihuman form. Only one such form can be assumed by the familiar, and the DM must decide the details of the familiar's humanlike appearance (e.g., race, sex, height, weight, hair type, eye color, apparent age, distinguishing features) when this power is bestowed. The familiar retains its current hit-point total and innate intelligence when it *polymorphs*, but is otherwise treated as a normal person with AC 10, a base land-movement rate normal for that race, and average values in all other characteristics. After assuming the form of a person, the familiar loses all the special abilities and sensory powers of its animal form, such as the hawk's power of flight or the toad's wide-angle vision. Because its enhanced senses are lost when in the form of a person, the familiar no longer grants its wizard the +1 bonus to surprise die rolls. The familiar can change into humanlike form once per day and can maintain this form for two turns per level of the familiar's wizard.



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Table V

1d100 Special power

- 01-10 The familiar can *charm* any normal, nonmagical animal of any biological class. Up to 1 HD of animals can be *charmed* for every two levels of the familiar's wizard. This power can be used once per week and remains in effect for two turns per level of the familiar's wizard.
- 11-20 The familiar can use the power to *dimension door* once per week. Up to 200 lbs. of living or nonliving matter in the familiar's grip (claws, mouth, etc.) can be transported along with it.
- 21-35 Once per day, the familiar can use *hold animal* against creatures of the same biological class as the familiar (as per the priest spell, *hold animal*).
- 36-45 The familiar can attain a state of *improved invisibility* once per day.
- 46-55 The familiar can use *stoneskin* once per month.
- 56-70 Once per week, the familiar can *summon* animals of the same general family as the familiar, in a fashion similar to the *monster summoning* spells. No more than 1d6 animals will arrive to serve the familiar, and each animal can possess no more than 3 HD. A black cat familiar could *summon* cheetahs, for example, but not tigers.
- 71-75 Once per day, the familiar can use a limited form of *telekinesis*. The familiar can move a weight of up to 25 lbs. at a rate of 10' per round for the duration of this power (as per the spell). The familiar can *telekinetically* manipulate an object such as a rope, lever, or key, as well. The familiar, however, can never expend all the power's energy in a single round as wizards can.
- 76-80 The familiar, if capable of speech, gains vocal powers similar to those conferred by the *philter of persuasiveness*. The familiar receives a +5 bonus to reaction rolls (assume the familiar has a charisma of 11 for such rolls). The familiar can also make one *suggestion* when this power is in effect. This power can be called upon once per day with a duration of one round per level of the familiar's wizard. If the familiar is not capable of speech, reroll this ability.
- 81-90 The familiar attains a genius-level intellect of intelligence 16 + (1-2). The familiar is also handled as if possessing a wisdom of 16, giving the familiar a +2 saving throw bonus vs. magical attacks affecting the mind.
- 91-00 The familiar can *polymorph* itself into an animal of the same general family as the familiar. The familiar gains the natural armor class of the new form, along with the form's physical movement rate and attack routine. The size of the animal form assumed cannot exceed roughly 10 times the weight of the familiar's normal form. A 15-lb. black cat could assume the form of, say, a 150-lb. leopard, but not that of a 600-lb. tiger. The familiar retains its own hit points, attack rolls, saving throws, and mental abilities in its new form, but cannot use any familiar special power that is not a permanent endowment usable all the time. Only the form of a natural animal can be assumed, not that of an unnatural monster. No more than one animal form can be assumed for each use of this power. This power can be employed once per week with a duration of one turn per level of the familiar's wizard.

Familiar enhancer II

Level: 3
 The casting of this *enhancer* causes the familiar's intelligence to rise into the average range of 7 + (1-3). The familiar can now learn to communicate in other languages with patient tutoring by the wizard, up to the maximum number of languages permitted by the familiar's intelligence. The wizard's native tongue, however, remains the language in which the familiar communicates with those of its own species. The acquisition of certain special powers may enable a familiar to learn languages from someone other than its wizard.
 The familiar gains one more special power with the casting of this spell, as determined by a dice roll.

1d100	Special power
01-80	One from Table I
81-00	One from Table II

Familiar enhancer III

Level: 4
 The familiar's intellect improves yet again into the very intelligent range of intelligence of 10 + (1-2). The familiar can now be tutored to read languages as well as communicate them through the empathic link with its wizard.
 The familiar also acquires another special power as decided by dice roll.

1d100	Special power
01-60	One from Table I
61-00	One from Table II

Familiar enhancer IV

Level: 5
 From *familiar enhancer IV* through *enhancer VIII*, an intelligence gain is no longer automatic. However, one or more special powers are obtained with each *enhancer* version cast, as noted.

1d100	Special power
01-30	One from Table I
31-80	One from Table II
81-00	One from Table III

Familiar enhancer V

Level: 6	
1d100	Special power
01-20	Two from Table I
21-40	Two from Table II
41-80	One from Table III
81-00	One from Table IV

Familiar enhancer VI

Level: 7	
1d100	Special power
01-20	Two from Table II
21-50	One from Table III
51-80	One from Table IV
81-00	One from Table V

Familiar enhancer VII

Level: 8	
1d100	Special power
01-30	One from Table III
31-70	One from Table IV
71-00	One from Table V

Familiar enhancer VIII

Level: 9	
1d100	Special power
01-20	Two from Table III
21-50	One from Table IV
51-00	One from Table V

Tables I-V describe the special powers that the *familiar enhancer* spells can bestow upon familiars. Spell-like powers are assumed to have the same characteristics as the wizard spells of the same name. Where the power mimics the effects of a spell, the familiar is treated as being equal in experience level to its wizard when determining the range, area of effect, duration, or other aspects of the power, unless otherwise noted. These powers, unlike spells, are used by the familiar only; they cannot be placed or cast upon others. Most familiar powers are limited in the number of times per day or week they can be used, while a few are permanent benefits usable all the time.

Continued on page 88



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the BAZAAR of the BIZARRIe

by Chris Hind

Two items of power from the land of Kara-Tur

Dragon bones

Dragon bones (or *oracle bones*, as they are sometimes called) are commonly sold in most apothecaries across Kara-Tur for the relatively low price of 1-6 tael each. However, nearly all of these items are surely fakes, perhaps animal bones or fragments of turtle shells. True *dragon bones* are the polished and enchanted shoulder blades of Oriental dragons, and they would never be sold so cheaply if properly recognized. One of these enchanted bones can aid a shukenja's casting of divination spells. Theoretically, the dragon's spirit travels between the diviner and a divinity, ensuring an accurate response through its ties with the Celestial Palace. The process involves scratching a question into the surface of the *dragon bone* with a sharp stylus, then carving a groove next to the query. The next step involves touching the groove with a red-hot point that causes a maze of cracks to spread across the bone's surface. By interpreting the length and pattern of the cracks, a shukenja learns the answer to his question.

A *dragon bone* adds 10% to the success of *augury*, doubles the duration of *find the path*, allows *know history* to be cast at twice-normal distance, adds +1 to rolls on the *omen* Results Table, and is suggested as a material component in powerful *divination* spells (to which it adds 10% to the *chances* of success). The complex process involved in utilizing a *dragon bone* takes one turn, which replaces the casting time for all of the above spells. Using this

item in casting a spell does not always cause the bone to vanish, be destroyed, or become useless; it may be used a number of times equal to twice the age category of the dragon from which it came (roll 1d12 for random determination). Bones from older dragons have large surface areas on which to carve questions. If a *dragon bone* is found as part of a hoard, it may have already been used in previous divinations (DMs discretion; 1-4 suggested).

A shukenja of 10th-level or higher may enchant a *dragon bone* if he has access to a deceased Oriental dragon's skeleton. Since the requisite bones are taken from a dragon's shoulder blades, a shukenja may create two *dragon bones* from each dragon. The bones must be cleaned, stained with exotic oils (the ingredients for which cost 20 ch'ien), and polished. Since an Oriental dragon's bones are magical by their very nature, the final enchantment requires but a single casting of *holy symbol*. The chance that the enchantment "holds" is equal to 70%, plus 1% per level of the caster; the DM should roll this secretly, with 90% being the maximum chance of success. An unsuccessful enchantment results in a worthless item or—on an enchantment roll of 00—*cursed dragon bones*. A *cursed dragon bone* functions identically to its correctly enchanted counterpart but provides false answers—sometimes (10% chance) a warped version of the truth, often (80% of the time) a complete opposite to the correct answer.

XP Value: 500

Celestial Fury

Many years ago, fierce tempests and fires ignited by lightning ravished the province administered by daimyo Hoshi Katahiro. The daimyo's advisers, all respected shukenjas, soon divined that Nature was not to blame, but a powerful dragon of unknown type. Some of these wise men suggested that the creature was an abomination; others believed it was born of primal chaos before Kara-Tur was formed. All the advisers agreed to name it Celestial Fury.

Yet daimyo Hoshi did not want to categorize the scourge of his province; he wanted to destroy it. He commissioned the famed Chigatta—recluse, artisan, and master of mystic arts—to construct a weapon that might under the dragon's spirit as well as cleave its scaled body. Chigatta's labors resulted in the finest katana imaginable, dubbed Celestial Fury after the beast it was fashioned to destroy, and enchanted with the power of flight. With this weapon, Hoshi sought his province's bane among the storm clouds. Shouts and roars resounded through the heavens for days, and forked fire lit up the nights. At long last, Hoshi destroyed the dragon's body and trapped its spirit within his sword, merging the two Celestial Furies and imposing order over chaos. To finalize his victory, Hoshi had Chigatta fashion a scabbard from the dragon's hide and embed its magic pearl in the hilt.

Yet the dragon had its revenge. Hoshi was skilled in battle but weak of will. Celestial Fury's spirit took control of

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Hoshi, forcing him to slay Chigatta and then slay himself. The katana subsequently disappeared (most likely, Hoshi's grieving family discarded the traitorous weapon) and has perhaps changed many hands in the years since.

Celestial Fury is a katana of excellent construction—a flexible but unbreakable blade of razor sharpness, a hilt covered with comfortable leather, and a huge pearl fixed at its end. The magical characters for “celestial fury” are inscribed on the blade, which glows pale violet and crackles with electricity when drawn (5' radius illumination). The sword is sheathed in a scabbard of dragon hide, the slate-gray scales of which constantly flash with streaks of silver, blue and violet.

Only chaotic-good, chaotic-neutral, or chaotic-evil individuals may safely handle Celestial Fury; others receive an electrical shock for 9 hp damage each round they touch it. On compatibly aligned characters, Celestial Fury bestows complete immunity to all forms of lightning—mundane and magical—and protects him and his possessions from wetness due to fog or rainfall (even during a hurricane) but not immersion.

Each time Celestial Fury is drawn, thunder and lightning explode from the scab-

bard, causing everyone within 10' to save vs. wands twice—once to prevent blindness for 1d4 rounds, the second time deafness lasting 2d6 rounds. The wielder is immune to these effects, and characters who take suitable precautions (e.g., who do not look at the wielder or who stop their ears with cotton) save at +5. Celestial Fury is a +3 magical weapon with the following additional powers:

—*Storm gathering*: Once drawn, Celestial Fury and its wielder are constantly surrounded by foul weather for a two-mile radius, despite the environment's natural tendency. This power has an effect similar to the sixth-level *shukenja* spell *control weather* except that the weather only gets worse—precipitation moves toward cloudiness, winds become stronger, temperature is unaffected. This effect cannot be *dispelled*, though an *anti-magic shell* will stop it.

—*Booming thunder*: Each and every successful strike on an opponent causes a deafening boom. While of lesser intensity than the sound resulting from Celestial Fury being drawn, the thunder is sufficiently violent to stun an opponent for one round unless he saves vs. spells.

—*Shocking blow*: Three times per day, the wielder may designate a given strike as

a *shocking blow* before the attack die is rolled. A successful hit causes an additional 20 hp electrical damage. If the blow misses *and* the opponent wears metallic armor, a second attack roll against AC 10 is made; a hit signifies the opponent takes 10 hp damage from arcing electricity. Opponents in nonmetallic armor must be struck for this power to work. Once called, the blow counts as one usage of *shocking blow*, whether or not it succeeds.

—*Lightning strike*: Once per day, Celestial Fury may release a *lightning bolt* at a target within 240 yards, causing 10d6 hp damage.

Flight: This power operates for four hours per day, at Mv 18 and maneuverability class B.

Celestial Fury is a sentient weapon (intelligence 12, ego 9) of chaotic-neutral alignment. It communicates its desires through semi-empathy. Its thoughts revolve around causing foul weather and mindless exhibitions of power. It also seeks vengeance against the descendants of Daimyo Hoshi and Chigatta.

XP Value: 3,000

Ω



Artwork by Jim Holloway

Wrong Turn on the Highway to Hell!

Well, here we are again, lost in the Game Zone. That makes three times this trip. What was it that guy in the bright red star said? "Go past Uranus and take the next left," right? Or was it left? Hmm. If we just had a map, we wouldn't be stuck out here in the Styx. And Zee Bob shouldn't be driving. Ya know he's got a lead foot. Come to think of it, he's got a lead head, too. Besides, his eyesight ain't so good. Whatever. I sure could use a bathroom right about now, though. Hey, Zee Bob, what's the sign up there say? The Flirting Vagabond? What the hey. I got no problem with sailors' bars.



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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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GAMES DAY '92, May 10 WI

This convention will be held in the Shorewood American Legion Northshore Post #331 in Shorewood, Wis. Activities include games, a silent auction, food, and door prizes. Judges are welcome. Registration: \$3. Write to: Napoleon's, 3948 N. Maryland Ave., Shorewood WI 53202.

BLOODSUCKING CONTRAPTION '92 May 15-17 MI

This SF convention will be held at the Airport Radisson hotel in Detroit, Mich. Guests include Nick Pollota and Bob & Ann Passovoy. Registration: \$20. Write to: CONTRAPTION, P.O. Box 2285, Ann Arbor MI 48106; or call (313)334-4191.

CONDUIT 2, May 18-17 UT

This SF&F/gaming convention will be held at the Quality Inn in Salt Lake City, Utah. Guests include Roger Zelazny, Mike Stackpole, Liz Danforth, and Eric Wujcik. Activities include a masquerade, art and short-story contests, films, seminars, and open gaming. Registration: \$20/weekend before April 30; \$24/weekend at the door. Write to: CONDUIT 2, c/o Dave Powell, 2566 Blaine Ave., Salt Lake City UT 84108; or call: (801)467-9517.

OASIS V, May 16-17 FL

This convention will be held at the Ramada Inn, Altamonte Springs in Altamonte, Fla. Guests include Michael Bishop, Holly Bird, Ann & Kendall Morris, and Andre Norton. Activities include a costume contest, a dealers' room, an art show and auction, a con suite, open and tournament gaming, videos, and panels. Registration: \$20. Dealers are welcome. Make checks payable to OASFIS. Write to: OASFIS, P.O. Box 616469, Orlando FL 32861-6469.

DIXIE TREK '92, May 17-19 GA

This convention will be held at the Sheraton Century Center hotel in Atlanta, Ga. Guests include actors Denise Crosby and Jonathan Harris, and musician John Serrie. Activities include an exhibit concourse and dealers' room, model and model design workshops, an art show and print shop, a con suite, a video room, and gaming. Registration: \$27 before May 7; \$30 at the door. RPGA™ Network and club discounts are available. Write to: DIXIE TREK, Box 464351, Lawrenceville GA 30244; or call: (404) 925-2813.

GAMESCAUCUS II, May 22-25 CA

Presented by Trigaming Associates, this convention will be held at the Oakland Airport Hilton in Oakland, Calif. Events include an RPGA™ AD&D® tournament, plus AD&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU*, CHAMPIONS*, GURPS*, DIPLOMACY*, AXIS & ALLIES*, WAR-HAMMER*, ROLEMASTER*, STAR WARS*, CIVILIZATION*, and TALISMAN* games. Other activities include a dealers' room, a painting contest, a PBM room, a flea market, and 24-hour

movies. Registration: \$25/weekend preregistered, or \$30/weekend at the door; GMs pay \$10/weekend. Make checks payable to Trigaming Associates. Write to: Trigaming Assoc., P.O. Box 4867, Walnut Creek CA 94596-0867; or call Larry or Mike at: (510) 798-7152 Saturday afternoons.

GAMEX '92, May 22-25 CA

This convention will be held at the Airport Hyatt hotel in Los Angeles, Calif. Events include all types of family, board, strategy, and adventure gaming. Other activities include a flea market, an auction, and a dealers' area. Write to: STRATEGICON, P.O. Box 3849, Torrance CA 90510-3849; or call: (310) 326-9440.

ONCE UPON A CON, May 22-24 CO

This convention, presented by the IFGS, will be held at the Holiday Inn in Northglenn, Colo. Activities include a video room, a trivia contest, a costume ball and contest, a dealers' room, an art room and auction, and a con suite. Registration: \$18. Write to: IFGS CON '92, P.O. Box 100840, Denver CO 80250; or call Collin at: (303) 665-4082.

KETTERING GAME CONVENTION VI May 23-24 OH

This convention will be held at the Charles I. Lathrem Senior Center in Kettering, Ohio. Events include FRPGs, board and miniatures games, an RPGA™ Network tournament, and computer games. Other activities include a 16-player World War II "Soldier" computer game. Registration: \$2/day. Write to: Bob Von Gruenigen, 804 Willowdale Ave., Kettering OH 45429; or call: (513) 298-3224.

SPRING GAMES '92, May 23 *

Organized by AQJS, this convention will be held at John F. Kennedy school in Montreal, Quebec. Events include AD&D® and other role-playing, board, and war games, plus an art show. Registration: \$12 Canadian before May 15; higher thereafter. Write to: Quebec Gamer's Assoc., C.P. 63, succ M, Montreal, Quebec, CANADA, H1V 3L6; or call Christine at: (514) 596-0115.

DER SÜDWEST-CON '92, May 28-31 ⊙

This convention will be held in Karlsruhe, Germany. Events include board, role-playing, PBM, and tabletop games, with exhibitions and championship tournaments. Write to: Winni Dörge-Heller, Goldlackweg 6, D-7500 Karlsruhe 51, GERMANY 0721/888978; or to: Reinhard Müller, Willi-Andreas-Allee 3, D-7500 Karlsruhe 1, GERMANY

NASHCON '92, May 29-31 TN

This convention, hosted by the HMGS-Midsouth and Games Extraordinaire, will be held at the Music City Rodeway Inn in Nashville, Tenn. Events include miniatures tournaments, plus role-playing and board games. Other activities include a dealers' room, a game auction, FigFair, and Waterpistol Waterloo. Registration: \$15. Write to: NASHCON, c/o 2713 Lebanon Pike, Nashville TN 27314; or call: (615) 883-4800.

BEER AND PRETZELS III, May 30-31 ⊙

This convention will be held at the Town Hall in Burton on Trent, Staffs, England. Events include board, role-playing, and tabletop gaming. Other activities include a dealers' area. Dealers are welcome. Registration: £3/day or £5/weekend preregistered; £3.50/day or £6/weekend at the door. Write to: Spirit Games, 98 Station St., Burton on Trent, Staffs, UNITED KINGDOM DE14 1BT.

GLASSCON '92, May 30-31 NJ

This convention will be held on the campus of Glassboro State College in Glassboro, N.J. Events include RPGA™ Network AD&D® tournaments, plus AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, KINGMAKER®, DIPLOMACY®, and GURPS® games. Other activities include board and war games and a dealers' area. Registration: \$10/weekend preregistered, or \$7/Sat. and \$5/Sun. Preregistered (fees at the door will be higher). Events costs are \$1/time slot. Write to: GLASSCON, P.O. Box 58, Wind Gap PA 18091-0058. Proceeds will go to the Center for Exceptional Children at Glassboro State College.

MIGSCON XIII, May 30-31 *

This historical gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Hamilton, Ontario. Events include WRG®, DBA®, ASL®, and BATTLETECH® games. Other activities include Napoleonic, Ancients, and American Civil War games. Write to: MIGSCON, c/o Apt. #8, 142 Caroline St. S., Hamilton, Ontario, CANADA LSP 3K9; or call Brian at: (416) 525-7730.

LAGACON 14, June 6 PA

This convention will be held at the Fraternal Order of Eagles Hall, 116 N 8th St., Lebanon, Pa. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, and ASL® tournaments; MERC: 2000®, AXIS & ALLIES®, TWILIGHT 2000®, and SUPREMACY® games; beginners' games; and a dealers' area. Ask about group discounts. Write to: Lebanon Area Gamers' Assoc., 806 Cumberland St., Lebanon PA 17042; or call: (717) 274-8706 weeknights or Saturdays.

TANELORN '92, June 6-8 ♦

This convention will be held at the Robertson Gardens Convention Centre in Robertson, Brisbane, Queensland. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, TALISMAN®, SPACE CRUSADE®, DIPLOMACY®, and CYBERPUNK® games, with Napoleonic, food, and RPG sessions in individual rooms. Write to: Club Tanelorn, GPO Box 2148, Brisbane, Queensland 4001, AUSTRALIA; or call: 0011-61-7-209-7336.

MOBI-CON '92, June 12-14 AL

This SF&F/gaming convention will be held at the Days Inn in Mobile, Ala. Proceeds will benefit the Penelope House shelter for abused women and children. Guests include Margaret Weis and comics artists. Activities include writing workshops, an art show and auction, miniatures painting, a dealers' room, a costume contest, seminars, videos, and gaming. Registration: \$13.50/weekend before June 1; \$16/weekend at the door. Single-day rates vary. Write to: MOBI-CON INC., P.O. Box 161257, Mobile AL 36616.

ST. JOSEPH VALLEY GAMERS CON '92 June 12-13 IN

This convention will be held at the IUSB campus in South Bend, Ind. Events include an RPGA™ tournament and role-playing, board, and historical- and fantasy-miniatures games. Other activities include demo games, a flea market, a dealers' area, raffles, contests, and door prizes. For more information and costs, send an SASE to: St. Joseph Valley Gamers, 121 W. Colfax, South Bend IN 46601.

CONFIGURATION III, June 13-14 OK

This convention will be held at the Days Inn in Tulsa, Okla. Events include AD&D®, D&D®, BATTLETECH®, CHAMPIONS®, VAMPIRE®, SHADOWRUN®, and STAR TREK® tournaments, with board-game tournaments, historical miniatures games, open gaming, and a video room.

Registration: \$4/weekend preregistered; \$7/weekend at the door. Write to: CONFIGURATION, 3617 E. 24th St., Tulsa OK 74115; or call Mike at: (918) 836-8008.

MADISON GAMES DAY IV, June 14 WI

This gaming convention will be held at the Quality Inn South in Madison, Wis. Events include RPGs, war games, miniatures battles, and a games auction. Other activities include a dealers' area. Dealers are welcome. Registration: \$5, with no game fees. Write to: Pegasus Games, 6640 Odana Rd., Madison WI 53719; or call: (608) 833-GAME.

ORGANIZED KHAN-FUSION IV June 20-21 PA

This convention will be held at the Embers in Carlisle, Pa. Activities include AD&D® games, a railroad tournament, dealers, a miniatures-painting contest, and over 50 gaming events. Registration fees vary from \$6-10. Write to: M. Foner's Games Only Emporium, 200 Third St., New Cumberland PA 17070; or call: (717) 774-6676.

ARCON 8, June 26-28 ☉

This convention will be held in the Vilhelm Bjerknes building of the University of Oslo in Oslo, Norway. Events include AD&D® championship tournaments, with CALL OF CTHULHU®, MERP®, PARANOIA®, ROLEMASTER®, RUNE-QUEST®, SHADOWRUN®, TORC®, and WAR-HAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY® games. Other activities include board-game tournaments, a miniatures-painting competition, WWII miniatures games, and movies. Registration: NOK 125 by IMO until June 13; NOK 175 at the door. Write to: ARCON, P.O. Box 46, Blindem, N-0314 Oslo, NORWAY; or call Geir Aalberg at: +47-2-56-39-45.

LEGACY '92, June 26-28 TX

This convention will be held at the Comfort Inn Convention Center in Arlington, Texas. Events include the MechForce Southwest Regional BATTLETECH® tournament, gaming, speakers, miniatures-painting contests, a movie room, a dealers' area, and an auction. Special hotel rates are available. Registration: \$10/weekend preregistered. Write to: LEGACY '92, 1604 Canfield No. 1107, Ft. Worth TX 76120; or call our 24-hour hotline: (214) 601-9032 and enter 6552#.

POLYCON X, June 26-28 CA

This gaming convention will be held at the Embassy Suites hotel, in San Luis Obispo, Calif. Guests include Loyd Blankenship, Tom Dowd, Scott Haring, and Mike Stackpole. Activities include game showcases, seminars, games, a writers' workshop, an art gallery, an auction, and a miniatures-painting contest. For more information and costs, write to: P.O. Box 4526, San Luis Obispo CA 93403.

CAPITAL CON VIII, June 27-28 IL

This convention will be held at the Prairie Capital Convention Center in Springfield, Ill. Activities include RPGA™ Network tournaments; role-playing, board, computer, and miniatures games; a miniatures-painting contest; and a game auction. Registration: \$10/weekend, including game costs. Write to: CAPITAL CON VIII, c/o Tom Lawrence, 2557 Somerton Rd., Springfield IL 62702.

GALAXY FAIR '92/ARTCON IV July 2-5 TX

This convention will be held at the Sheraton Park Central hotel in Dallas, Texas. Guests

include Diane Duane, Alan Gutierrez, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, David Cherry, P.N. Elrod, Bill Fawcett, Jody Lynn Nye, and Robert Asprin. Activities include a short-story contest, a masquerade, an art show, writers' and artists' workshops, seminars, and exhibits. Registration: \$25 preregistered, or \$30 at the door. Write to: GALAXY FAIR, P.O. Box 150471, Arlington TX 76015-6471; or call: (817) 467-0681.

ATLANTICON '92, July 3-6 MD

This gaming convention, presented by ADF, Inc., will be held on the University of Maryland campus in College Park, Md. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$16/weekend preregistered; \$22/weekend or \$10/day at the door. Write to: ADF Inc., P.O. Box 91, Beltsville MD 20704-0091; or call: (301) 345-1858.

KINGCON '92, July 3-5 OH

Hosted by the Royal Gaming Society of Dayton, this convention will be held at the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio. Events include RPGA™ tournaments, with AD&D®, GURPS®, PENDRAGON®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, RUNE-QUEST®, PARANOIA®, and ROLEMASTER® games. Other activities include DIPLOMACY®, STRATEGO®, TALISMAN®, AXIS & ALLIES®, and BATTLETECH® games, plus historical, fantasy, and SF miniatures games. Registration: \$10 preregistered, \$15 at the door. Write to: P.O. Box 31174, Dayton OH 45431; or call: (513) 223-8973.

ALOHACON '92, July 4 HI

This convention will be held at Webster Hall on the campus of the University of Hawaii. Events include role-playing and war games. For more information and costs, send an SASE to: Jim Haynes, 720 Morton Dr. #117, Honolulu HI 96819.

DRAGON CON '92, July 17-19 GA

This convention will be held at the Atlanta Hilton and Towers in Atlanta, Georgia. Guests include Raymond E. Feist, George R.R. Martin, Forrest J. Ackerman, L. Sprague de Camp, Margaret Weis, Tracy Hickman, Phil Foglio, Ralph Bakshi, Denis Beauvais, Robert Anton Wilson, Dr. Timothy Leary, John Byrne, Chris Claremont, Lynn Abbey, Richard Garriott, and Erick Wujick. Activities include every sort of gaming, with panels, seminars, a writers' workshop, an art show and print shop, anime, videos, dances, robot battles, demos, costumes, a hospitality suite, and consignment game auctions. Registration: \$30/weekend before June 15; \$35/weekend at the door (RPGA™ Network discounts available). Send a long SASE to: DRAGON CON '92, P.O. Box 47696, Atlanta GA 30362-0696; or call our 24-hour information line at: (404) 925-2813.

ECONOMYCON VI, July 17-19 AZ

This convention will be held at the Campus Village West Shopping Center in Phoenix, Ariz. GMs: Come and run your board, miniatures, or role-playing game. Prizes will be awarded to the best referees. Other activities include a miniatures-painting contest and door prizes. Registration: Free. Call the Roaming Panther Game Company at: (602) 820-2083 or (602) 547-0239.

MEMPHIS FANTASY CON '92 July 17-19 TN

This convention will be held at the downtown Radisson hotel in Memphis, Tenn. Guests include Walter Jon Williams, Steven Brust, and Bart Sears. Activities include an art room, a dealers' room, an art auction, a costume contest, and gaming. For more information and costs, write



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This gaming/comics convention will be held at the Palace Station hotel in Las Vegas, Nev. Events include AD&D®, STAR WARS*, and DC HEROES* games. Guests include Greg Gorden, Mike Grell, and Mike Nystull. Convention proceeds will benefit the Special Olympics. Registration: \$18. Write to: VEGASCON, 4210 Chatham Cr. #1, Las Vegas NV 89119; or call: (702) 733-7470.

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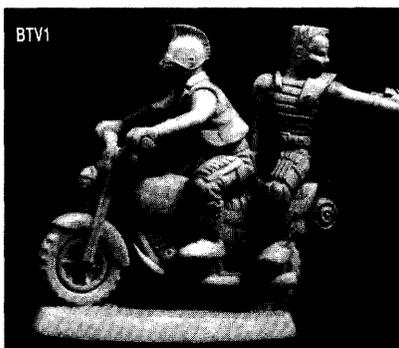
This convention will be held at the Skyline hotel in downtown Ottawa, Ontario. Events include a wide variety of role-playing, miniatures, and board games. Other activities include an auction, dealers, movies, and 24-hour gaming. Family discounts are available. For more information and costs, write to: CANGAMES, P.O. Box 3358, Station D, Ottawa, Ontario, CANADA K1P 6H8.

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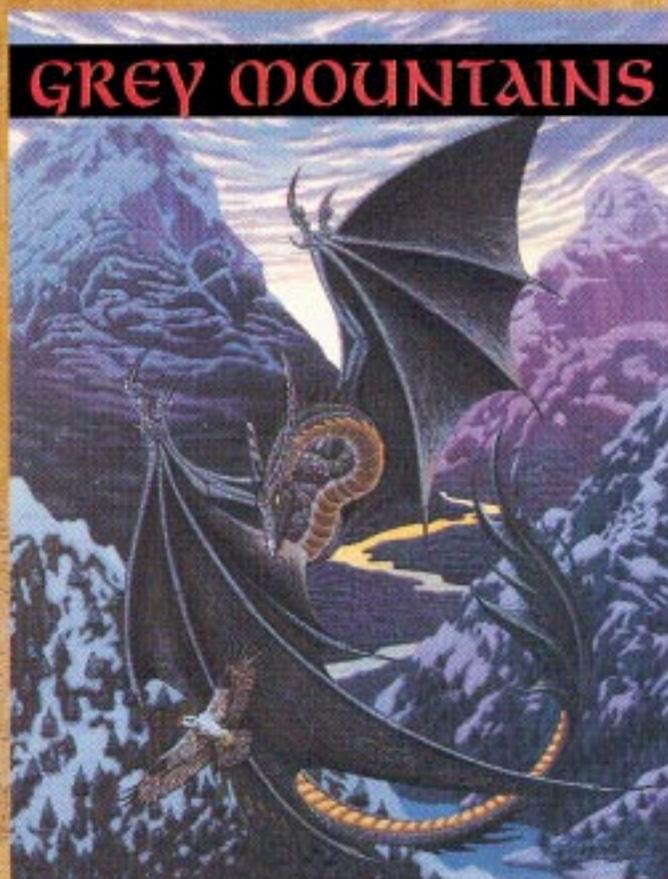
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PRINCE HALDEMAR OF HAAKEN
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Imperial Explorer, etc. etc.

Nyxmir 24, AY 2001: After Raman's return from beyond, I decided to quietly drop Xerdon at the gates of Leominster during the night. I then ordered the Princess Ark back to Malburn Castle, where she was made visible again, 300' above a lighthouse. Xerdon would announce my visit at the palace. I hoped that everything would work out well.

Nyxmir 25: A Vilaverdan warship sailed by and attempted to attack our vessel. Its ballistae could not reach us, and soon our foe made for the open sea. This

short episode surprised me. Here was a foreign warship openly hostile to a visiting ship from a neutral power within waters under Bellayne's control. Even so, the vessel came and went with total impunity, like a privateer.

Nyxmir 26: Xerdon returned from Leominster alone, riding a curious creature that was part horse and part cat. He bore news from the queen. He could not meet her directly, but her advisor told Xerdon I was invited to a hunting party tomorrow, at the palace of Uxington.

Xerdon felt a certain suspicion of us on the part of the rakasta establishment, but the hunting party seemed legitimate, since many at the court were chatting about it when he arrived. It was an event, planned weeks ago, that no self-respecting noblecat at the court would miss. I accepted the invitation and steered northwest, inland, toward the royal palace.

Nyxmir 27: We arrived late in the morning. Many noblecats, the queen, and her retinue had arrived the day before. Rakasta ladies played with wool balls on the front yard, and noblecats took lazy strolls in the palace's many gardens, watching the birds in the trees. Others quietly catnapped near the fountains, purring in the warm sun or casually playing with the fishes. An occasional guard patrolled the area. The atmosphere was very relaxed.

I came with Myojo in hopes that his presence would ease the suspicions I expected from the queen. Soon after our arrival, we were shown to our quarters. Hunting horns echoed through the hallways early in the afternoon, and everyone gathered in front of the palace. Servants held the mounts while noblecats climbed onto their saddles. At last, the queen appeared with her guards. Hunters brought the dogs, then played a hunting song on



Artwork by Terry Dykstra



D. J. ...

great brass horns. Everyone was ready.

The queen rode up to me. "We are pleased to see you among us, Prince," she said, then glanced at Myojo for a moment and frowned. She then looked back at me and added with a smile, "We hope you will enjoy the hunt. The fox has been found."

She then rode toward the other noblecats, and everyone lined up with her. That's when I heard a low hiss nearby. Myojo and I turned around and faced an unexpected problem. There, riding a large sabre-tooth tiger, was a visibly angry rakasta dressed in every way like Myojo. This was no Bellaynish noblecat. It seemed we had just encountered an envoy, perhaps an ambassador from Myojo's homeland, the moon Myoshima. And he obviously recognized Myojo, who was now regarded as a traitor by his people.

The hunting horns bellowed again, and the dogs were released. Everyone rushed after the pack. An old rakasta noblecat, whom I was later told was Duke Purceval of Pawcester, rode at my side for some time. "Her Majesty is in a joyful mood again!" he said, laughing. "Today she decided to hunt the fox. This is meant as a joking insult to the King of Renardy."

"How so?" I asked.

"King Louis's symbol is the fox!" he answered. "This is a bit unexpected, though. Her Majesty usually does this when a Renardois ambassador comes on a visit, but I don't see any lupin among us."

Avoiding this latest topic, I asked, "What do you normally hunt?"

The duke turned and gave me a blank stare. "Well, what else? The giant rat! They infest Uxington Woods. That's why the palace was built here."

Of course. Why did I even bother to ask? The hunt went on until I discovered Myojo no longer rode behind me. The Myoshiman envoy was also missing. After riding around the woods with the duke, I finally found them, facing each other with swords poised for a duel. Neither of them paid any heed to my words. The last thing I wanted was to lose Myojo or create a diplomatic incident at the queen's palace. As I considered what magic would stop them both, the queen rode up to the scene.

"It seems we arrived just in time. Now, now, gentlecats. We do not wish to see violence on such a nice day. And we do not permit duels in Bellayne," said she.

"Your Majesty," answered the Myoshiman envoy, "This wretched individual is a traitor in Myoshima. This is a question of family honor. Allowing him to go freely in your kingdom would be an insult to our emperor."

The queen looked at me with inquisitive eyes. I intervened, "My guard Myojo has acted wisely and bravely in a difficult situation. He has remained an obedient and faithful servant of Imperial Alphatia. I see no need for retribution, Your Majesty."

The queen was clearly embarrassed and couldn't make a decision either way. "Well,

then," she declared, "You must resolve your quarrel in a civilized manner. It is our wish that you compete in the upcoming Tatterham-Glenswych Derby. He who arrives before the other will decide who must leave."

The brass horns sounded in the distance. "Your Majesty," said the old duke, "we mustn't miss the quarry."

"Very well. Carry on, Milords!"

Nyxmir 28: Tatterham lay just a stone's throw from Uxington Palace. A great crowd occupied the center of Tatterham before the race, and many chariots with those strange cat-horse creatures cluttered the streets. Admirers asked questions of their favorite drivers and placed wagers. Every charioteer bore a banner representing his master, including representatives from every dominion of Bellayne as well as Vilaverdians, Texeirans, elves from the Barony of Savaria, turtles from Dunwick, Avarican bards, and participants from Slagovich, Gargona, and faraway Yavdlom. The queen's team arrived, resplendent with its six-mount turn-out and a red-and-gold chariot.

Our rival, the Myoshiman envoy, arrived just as we applied to enter the race. The whole thing had been organized by the Leominster Tymes, a guild of minstrels interested in creating a new sensation in the kingdom, some sort of traditional event that would take place every year. The grand prize was 500 pounds of gold and a seat at the queen's banquet.

Our first difficulty was to find a chariot and suitable mounts—or so I thought, until a minstrel walked up to us and proposed an arrangement. He represented the Theeds Royal Heralds, a rival of the Tymes. He could make a chariot available provided that we would take him with us on the race. He would act as a storyteller extraordinaire, observing all that happened during our journey in order to later entertain those people who couldn't come themselves (the guilds were not permitted to join the race on their own).

We later received an invitation from the duke of Pawcester to stay at his palace for the night, where we briefly ran into the Myoshiman envoy. Myojo later explained the envoy belonged to the Kitahara clan, which was related to the Myoshiman emperor. The envoy certainly knew all about the history behind Myojo and his defection to a human's service, and our meeting was cold beyond what little formalities were exchanged.

Amphimir 1: We found Puttsworth, our minstrel from the Theeds Heralds, and our chariot. The latter had been freshly painted with the Haaken colors, to which Puttsworth had added those of his guild. I wasn't enthused about the clashing and somewhat disrespectful result, but it was a bit late to do anything about it. All participants had gathered at the starting line by early in the afternoon.

We saw Kitahara, his Myoshiman bodyguard, and another rakasta whom Putts-

worth described as a lowlife working for the Oldsbury Sun, a rival guild. The bodyguard was arguing vehemently with the "lowlife" about the sun symbol painted over Kitahara's clan colors on their chariot. The envoy was not amused, and I sympathized with him.

Horns echoed in the streets; the race was about to begin. The crowd massed along the route, forming dangerously narrow passages for the chariots. At last, the Tymes official waved the starting flag. The crowd cheered. With wild cries, the charioteers urged their chariots lurched forward and raced en masse down Tatterham's main avenue before separating into smaller groups to take the side streets. Fortunately, Puttsworth proved an excellent guide.

Soon, we reached the fields outside the town. Puttsworth opted for a northern route through Uxington Woods. It was a dangerous passage because of the giant rats, but it was otherwise shorter than the trip through Wallingford and Theeds. I noticed Kitahara's chariot several hundred yards ahead of us. He, too, had chosen the forest route. This would be a tight race.

Before long, we heard shouts ahead. The Myoshiman team had run into a large pack of giant rats. All three rakastas were tearing through the rodents with their swords, but it was certain the rats would soon get the upper hand if we did not intervene. Surprised, both Puttsworth and Myojo gazed at me when I decided to help our rivals out. But they followed my lead and drew their weapons, and soon the squeaking, crawling mass was reduced to cat food.

With the battle done, Kitahara grunted and bowed briefly. With a haughty expression on his face, he motioned us to pull ahead, his way of being thankful. As we drove away, Puttsworth murmured (practicing for later recital; I thought), "And so, in the name of fair play, the noble prince of Alphatia came to the help of his rival, perhaps at the cost of his own victory. In response to this gesture, Lord Kitahara stepped aside to show his gratitude. The race went on."

Rather than doing all that in the name of fair play, I was hoping to gain an edge on Kitahara. He owed us one now. Perhaps this could help defuse our dispute. I had no quarrel with Myoshima, and neither did Myojo. He had not meant to betray his masters by becoming my bodyguard and friend.

We reached the village of Rockburn later that night, where we rested.

Amphimir 2: We left Rockburn early. Late in the day, we finally reached Oldsbury. All would have been fine except that a band of ruffians grabbed our mounts and attempted to push us off the chariot.

As we fought, Puttsworth shouted these were supporters of the Oldsbury Sun who were going a bit too far to ensure their team's victory. Kitahara arrived about then and brought his chariot to a halt. The

lowlife riding with him vehemently exhorted the Myoshiman envoy to move along, but he just stood there, coldly looking at the supporters. They quickly got the message and let go of our chariot.

I guess Kitahara was simply returning our previous day's favor, a debt of honor. Well, then, I could only show the same attitude and motioned him to go on ahead of us. He lifted an eyebrow, grunted haughtily, and rode away with his team without a word or a smile. Nevertheless, I began to understand how to deal with this Myoshiman. He was all honor.

"I say! I can't believe this! How could you?" argued Puttsworth.

"My dear sir, courtesy goes both ways. Bellayne is, after all, the land of sportsmanship—isn't it?" I said.

"Oh . . . well, never mind," he answered.

Amphimir 3: We were still riding our chariot after nightfall when rain began to pour. Soaked and exhausted from our journey, we finally stopped at an old tavern just past Bromstow. Several chariots were stopped at the front, left there by other competitors who had decided to rest, too.

The old tavern was a large, abandoned structure at the edge of a dark wood. It had a dozen rooms on the upper floor and a single large room on the ground floor. Water leaked through the rotten thatch. Between cobwebs, dust, and darkness, the place bore a sinister look. Rumors had warned of the existence of many haunted mansions in Bellayne, indicating something odd about this kingdom.

An Avarican bard roasted a hunk of wild boar in the fireplace, while a Gargonan chariot driver played his lute. Several people later moved upstairs while their teammates remained in the main room. Our small group began to wind down, quietly keeping a close watch on each other as the fire dimmed to crackling embers. Lightning soon flashed outside, and the wind howled as a thunderstorm rocked the night. A window shutter began to rattle. The wooden ceiling creaked. I had difficulty falling asleep, my gaze wandering the room.

Then I noticed Myojo's sudden attentiveness. He opened his eyes wide, his ears pointed up. Other rakastas copied him, staring at something in the air near the chandelier. The Avarican, the Gargonan, and I looked at each other. Our daggers slowly came out.

Kitahara's lowlife then leaped onto the table, evidently trying to reach some invisible creature. Whatever it was came near Myojo, who tried to paw it. Kitahara's bodyguard then sprinted across the room, almost running into the front door when he slipped on the wet tiles. Puttsworth, poised to leap with an expression of utter excitement on his feline face, suddenly trapped something on the floor with his paws.

I threw aside my blanket and moved in close to see . . . a fly. A fly?

Puttsworth then noticed all three of us humans watching him. "Oh. Sorry," he said. He released the fly, which pitifully crawled away for its life, and returned to his spot near the fireplace. Myojo looked away, innocently licking at his paw. The other rakastas looked as if nothing at all had happened.

Cats. I should have known.

Amphimir 4: Thanks to Puttsworth's guidance, we avoided Norchester altogether and cut overland toward the Felfolk trail. This allowed us to catch up with the derby's leaders. We reached Felfolk just after nightfall; this was a small village, with a few hundred people at most. All of us ended up at Felfolk's sole tavern. No leaky roofs this time, and at least we had some decent, warm food. The innkeeper served beer, cider, port, and tea, with milk for the younger rakastas. We enjoyed a far more relaxed atmosphere for dinner than at the "haunted" cottage.

The Earl of Penwick had thoughtfully sent men-at-arms from Norchester to ensure the safety of the derby participants and their mounts. This relieved us of the need to watch the chariot and allowed a good night's rest. The final stretch of the race would take place the next day, so we would have to get up early. Everyone wandered back to their rooms or to a spot near the fire in the main room.

Half-asleep in the middle of the night, I blinked and saw Myojo sit up and watch something intently. "Leave that fly alone, Myojo," I muttered.

He slowly unsheathed his sword, which lay by his bedside. "No, Haaken-San. No fly. Someone creeping in hallway." he breathed. We both got up at once.

He tip-toed to the door, with me close behind, and opened slowly it a crack. Right across the hallway, three rakastas wearing dark outfits and red steel claws were furtively entering Kitahara's room. Myojo gazed at me for a moment, and I motioned him to go in. He quickly nodded and went after the nocturnal visitors—who turned and saw him, their blades drawn.

Almost instantly, the sound of the fight awoke the inn's patrons. It was brutally fast, with the three intruders against the two Myoshimans and Myojo. Kitahara's bodyguard was badly wounded, but Myojo's intervention undoubtedly prevented Kitahara's death. Before I could get off a spell, the three intruders were dead, and Myojo and Kitahara were tending to the bodyguard.

The constabulary arrived almost immediately afterward. The sergeant examined the aggressors and declared these were outcast rakastas, probably spies, from Leãoça, a Vilaverdan colony to the south. These three were wanted in Bellayne for a previous assassination. Why they attempted to eliminate Kitahara? I suspected Vilaverde's ties to the Heldannic Knights had something to do with this. After all, Heldann and Myoshima were not exactly

friends.

Myojo had earned some respect from the envoy. Kitahara would not show it—he couldn't—but I knew Myojo had scored points. The envoy bowed slightly and returned to his quarters. No other event interrupted the night.

Amphimir 5: By sunrise, our chariots had already begun the last part of the race, thundering down the trail toward Glenswych. It was a wild dash to get the lead. Chickens, geese, and other small and unwary farm animals were mercilessly trampled on the road. Peaceful peasants turned into a furious mob when a hay wagon was run off the road into a muddy pond by the wild chariot horde racing down the road. Whips cracked with growling rage as the town drew nearer.

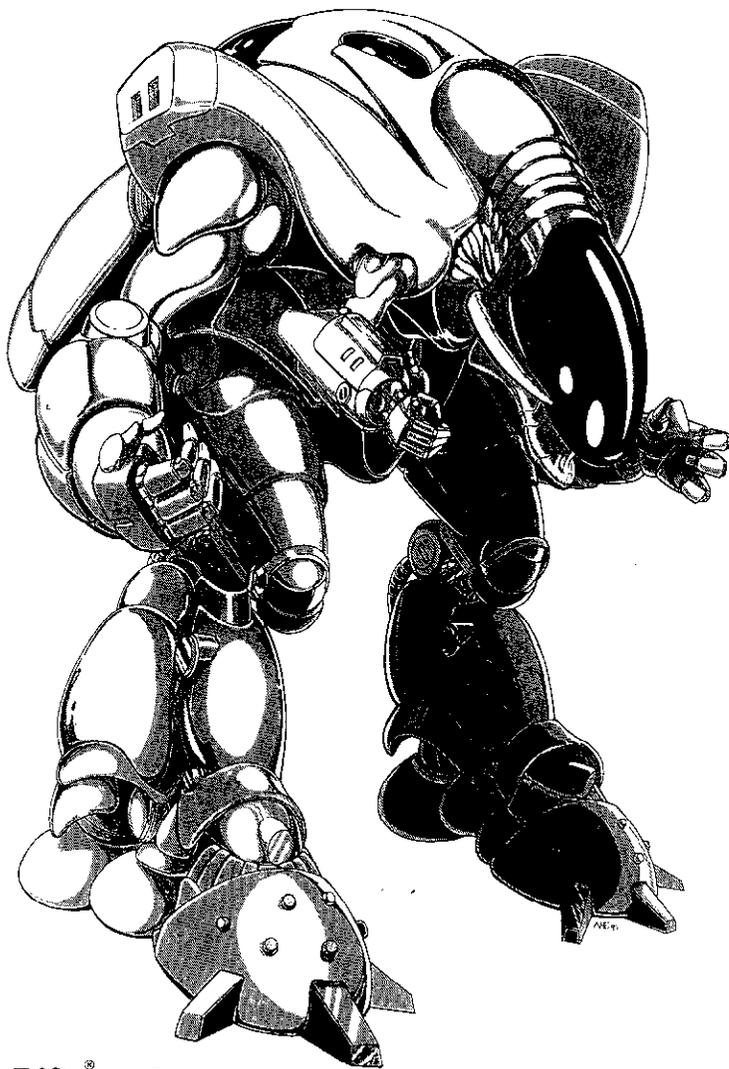
On the last mile, the turtle team cut ahead of my chariot, sending it off on a side path. Before we could get back on the track, our mounts bolted toward a small farm. Thinking we had found a short cut toward Glenswych, Kitahara steered after us.

Our wagon flew over a bump in the path, knocking us all off balance. Out of our control, our mounts then headed into a series of large coops, flinging into the air thousands of mice! We were crashing through a large mouse farm, ruining months-worth of the breeding and rearing of fat market mice. A few yards from us, Kitahara's chariot created its own wave of destruction, ruining hundreds more of the fragile cages. In the wake of the horrendous pandemonium, Puttsworth grabbed a terrified mouse that clutched his sleeve. "I say—a Glenswych mouse. What a treat! I'll save it for later." He stuffed the hapless farm rodent into his pouch.

The good news was that we did indeed open a short cut to Glenswych. The bad news was that Kitahara's chariot took the lead. A few hundred yards away was the finish line. Puttsworth, in sudden fury, whipped his mounts in hopes of catching up with Kitahara. I could hear Kitahara's lowlife exhorting his mounts just as rudely. The rest of the pack appeared around a corner just behind us, skidding on the street's cobblestones and madly jockeying for third place.

Suddenly, a bump on the street crushed a wheel on Kitahara's chariot. It skidded wildly, sending the lowlife hurling into the packed crowd. Kitahara hung on desperately to his uncontrolled chariot. As our chariot rushed past, Myojo grabbed the envoy and pulled him free just before the latter's vehicle slammed sideways into a building and was smashed to kindling. The crowd went wild as we flew past the finish line.

The queen's trumpet sounded the end of the race. Supporters of both the Theeds Heralds and the Oldsbury Sun carried all four of us on their shoulders. It seemed both our teams had won! Kitahara briefly gazed at me, rather embarrassed. The crowd transported us all the way to the



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queen's stand, in front of the Abbey of Kittings.

"Well, then," she declared solemnly, "we do hereby pronounce both the honorable teams of Alphatia and Myoshima the winners of the derby! Both parties are therefore summoned to the royal banquet this night."

Nice—but this did not resolve our problem. None of us had lost, and so no one could expel the other from Bellayne. I wondered how the queen would solve our little dilemma.

The Leominster Tymes provided Kitahara and I with 250 pounds of gold each. We donated our prizes to the "mouse farmer" on Kittings Road whose livelihood had been so totally ruined as a result of our crazed passage. The crowd applauded, and we were carried to the lord bishop's residence.

The banquet was served later. I cared little for the boiled slice of "stuffed giant rat stomach Uxington," a delicacy in Bellayne. The typical social conversations that could be expected at a royal banquet seemed to go on forever. I caught Puttsworth casually toying with his farm mouse between two courses. The local conversation on our side of the table came to a halt when all the noble rakastas begun staring at the appetizing rodent, hoping it would perhaps run away—toward them. Puttsworth noticed my disapproving look. "Oh—so sorry," he said, pocketing the animal.

Shortly afterward, the queen raised her hand. "The time has now come to solve a quarrel." The banquet's hurly-burly died out in the background, everyone now staring at both Kitahara and I. "Fate has decided to make both of you the winners of this race. Gentleman and gentlecat, the choice is now yours. You may both leave at once and never return to Bellayne, or both remain at peace in our kingdom. We shall not tolerate any foreign quarrel within our land. You both have proven your courage and your honor in this memorable race. In our eyes, you are both worthy of our royal respect and welcome."

Rakasta noblecats sitting at the table muttered for a moment, nodding their approval of the queen's approach. It was the only possible decision. Lord Kitahara then stood up and curtly announced, "The presence in Bellayne of the Lord of Haaken is acceptable to us." He bowed ever so slightly in my direction—and in Myojo's, which was most amazing. This meant personal respect from a lord toward a member of lower social standing. By Myoshiman standards, this was almost unheard of.

It was my turn to repay the courtesy. "It was an honor and a pleasure to race by the side of Lord Kitahara's courageous team, and we, the representatives of Her Imperial Majesty of Alphatia, hope that our journey remains a sign of friendly sportsmanship for all. We are satisfied with Lord Kitahara's decision and wish

him a pleasant stay in beautiful Bellayne."

Old Duke Purceval raised his cup, "Here! Here! To the victors!"

Despite Kitahara's continued relative coldness, this turned out to be a memorable banquet. At last, I had managed to speak with the queen about warranties for future Alphatian tradesmen when a certain farm mouse—newly escaped—interrupted our conversation, scampering across the long banquet table. I dare say Her Majesty got somewhat distracted and even took a few royal stabs at the runaway rodent. A hail of forks followed immediately, all the way down the table, until the poor thing leaped from the table and disappeared into a hole in the wall. After giving Puttsworth a very stern look, I managed to regain the queen's attention.

Our mission was soon over. We had discovered first hand the beauty and character of Bellayne. A message was sent to the *Princess Ark*, summoning her to Kittings. We were on our way a few days later. Without a doubt, that Puttsworth fellow would have a few interesting stories to tell his compatriots after our departure. Perhaps I should have asked for a fee.

To be continued...

The Kingdom of Bellayne

Bellayne— Capital: Leominster (pop.: 71,300—mostly rakastas, humans, some demi-humans and turtles); ruler: Queen Catherine I "The Lioness," daughter of the late King Lionel I of Dorsythe (queen's domain includes the communities of Chanssea, Chatsworth, and Bromstow); patron: Pax Bellanica.

The original people of Bellayne were rakastas. Like their eastern neighbor and rival Renardy, Bellayne folk were pushed back toward the coast by the invading goblins of the steppes. A great tribe of savage rakastas eventually settled that region and established what is now modern Bellayne. In time, a feudal system was created with a king who was served by a strong clergy and many proud noblecats and knights.

Many rakasta tribes still roam the vast Yazak steppes. The people of Bellayne view these warriors as brave and skillful, but nevertheless savage. When a nomadic tribe faces great hardship, Bellayne always offers solace and protection as long as the tribe settles inside the kingdom and adopts its "civilized" ways. Very often, this means relocation to the forest of Wyndham that Queen Catherine I, the present monarch, plans to deforest some day in favor of farming. Unfortunately, the fierce people of Wyndham, hunters and foresters at heart, oppose the plan and have revolted many times against the monarchs autocratic rule. Wyndham is often thought of as a dangerous bandit haven by the common Bellaynish folk.

So far, the Bellaynish have succeeded in keeping the goblins at bay. An organized defense of its land and a disciplined, loyal

citizenry have allowed Bellayne to prosper.

Lupins and rakastas competed in the past for territorial control of the Yazak steppes, their common ancestral lands. Although presently at peace with the Kingdom of Renardy, the two nations have remained somewhat suspicious of each other. It is because of the mutual goblin threat in the north that both nations have remained at peace. Over the years, the Bellaynish have developed a taste for Renardois wines, which the latter trade for Bellayne's excellent wools, tea, liquors, and coal. A community of dwarves has successfully established itself in Bellayne after an explorer discovered "black rock" deposits in Penwick. They found the rocks could burn for a very long time, and thus begun to mine the deposits for a profit. The coal became particularly useful in metal working.

Perhaps the greatest innovation of the Bellaynish came from their traditional entertainment. Bellayne harbors a series of illustrious companies of heralds. These are guilds of minstrels whose goal is each to witness amazing and spectacular events in Bellayne and in the world, then travel the countryside to relate these stories to the common folk. For this, the minstrels developed a special magic inspired by the wizards' *phantasmal force* spell. Depending on their skill and experience, the minstrels can create images and sounds to depict what they have witnessed. The better the minstrel, the better the pictures and sound, and the more pictures that can be remembered. A true master can even animate the images to a degree.

The common folk rely on the guilds to entertain them and keep tabs on the world. Depending on the whim of a minstrel and the importance of a story, guilds can charge quite a bit of gold to give the news. Several guilds now compete for the best stories to tell; among the greater guilds are the Leominster Tymes, the Oldsbury Sun, and the Theeds Royal Heralds. The guilds seek new talent among the younger Bellaynish folk, educate them in the arts, and finance expeditions and other exciting endeavors. In return, the professional minstrels pay a large portion of their income to the guilds.

These guilds are so eager to make the news they will often organize spectacular events or send some of their best minstrels on amazing adventures across the world. One of the most exciting events these days has been to send minstrels to explore the "savage" lands in the southern continent. Another activity of the guilds is to handwrite illuminated manuscripts and sell them to the nobility in Bellayne and other kingdoms.

Bellayne developed land trade with Renardy and other kingdoms with the "help" of Vilaverdan sea traders. Vilaverde established a colony south of Bellayne, its goal to control naval access to Theeds more than anything else. Queen Catherine views Vilaverde's colony of Terra Leãoça

Coat of Arms of the Savage Coast



(pronounced: lea-ON-Sa) as a mixed blessing. The Vilaverdan quasi-monopoly of sea trade in the region is costly at best for Bellayne.

Vilaverde maintains a strong military presence at the Rock of the Cats, a very large fortress and port of Leãoça that includes Torreón swordsmen and rakasta outcasts. Bellaynish rakastas show outstanding seamanship, but sarcastic Vilaverdians contend that this is due entirely to the rakastas' strong dislike of water and the amazing ingenuity they show to avoid sinking into it! Indeed, very few rakastas master swimming skills, but rakastas still remain without peer when it comes to fishing.

Dominions of Her Majesty

Duchy of Pawcester— Capital: Tatterham (pop.: 13,700, rakastas, humans, elves); ruler: Lord Purceval "The Iron Clawed," son of Sir Hume-Archibald Whitwell; typical NPC: rakasta knight; patron: Belbion.

Earldom of Penwick— Capital: Norchester (pop.: 12,800, rakastas, dwarves, halflings); ruler: Lord Mortimer "The Defiant," son of Sir Edward Hillsborough; typical NPC: rakasta coal miner; patron: Kagyar.

Earldom of Theeds— Capital: Theeds-upon-Blythe (pop.: 52,400, rakastas, humans, elves, halflings); ruler: Lord Rodney "The Intrepid," son of Sir Winston Gladworthy; typical NPC: rakasta merchant or fisherman; patron: Felidae.

Viscounty of Furfield— Capital: Oldsbury-upon-Blythe (pop.: 32,600, rakasta, humans, elves, halflings); ruler: Lady Meghan "The Gaunt," daughter of Sir Melville Purringstoke; typical NPC: rich rakasta farmers; patron: Pax Bellanica.

Bishopric of Kittings— Capital: Glenswych (pop.: 8,500, mostly rakastas); ruler: Sir Humphrey "The Exalted," son of Sir Jasper Cockerfield; typical NPC: rakasta war clerics; patron: Belbion.

Forest Marches of Wyndham— Capital: none (population is mostly rakastas, some elves); ruler: none; typical NPC: free-spirited forester, hunter, or elite longbow archer; patron: Tawnia.

Patrons of Bellayne

Pax Bellanica: Also known as Tarastia, Pax Bellanica is the patron of rakasta justice and peace. It is often in her name and in Belbion's that the rakasta people mount holy crusades against the goblins.

Tawnia: Tawnia's sphere governs the people of the forests in general, rakasta and elves most commonly. Also known as Ordana, she defends hunters, archers, and druids.

Felidae: Felidae (a.k.a. Calitha) has a sphere that covers oceans, travelers, adventurers, good fortune, and merchants. She's an Immortal common to both rakastas and elves.

Belbion: Belbion represents pride, honor, war, conquests, and the superiority

of one's way. She's a favorite of warriors and those who believe the rakasta culture to be naturally better than any other. Some call her Vanya.

Kagyar: This "foreign" dwarven Immortal was primarily followed by dwarves in Penwick and northern Furfield; its following then grew among rakasta coal miners working with the dwarves. Being the only male in the rakasta pantheon, he became a favorite among "macho" rakasta males with an axe to grind against the stuffy Bellayne philosophic establishment.

Lupin & rakasta PCs

Lupins can be played using normal human character classes (including druids, paladins, mystics, etc.). Each starts with 2 HD at first level, using the type of dice corresponding to the chosen character class, and a one-time penalty of -2,000 XP that must be overcome before any of the class abilities can be used. The lupin suffers a permanent 30% experience penalty (rounded up to the nearest 100) on all experience points gained thereafter during adventures. For example, a 1st-level magic-using lupin gains an extra 1d4 hp in addition to his initial 2 HD when reaching 2nd level; he must have first gained 2,000 XP to qualify as an apprentice, then 3,600 XP (-30% penalty = 2,500 XP) for 2nd level.

Lupins are limited to an Intelligence and Wisdom of 17 and must respect all limitations that are normally part of the chosen human class. They have no level limitation; Constitution adjustments apply only once per class level up to ninth level. Lupins fight and save as their chosen character classes or as 2 HD monsters, whichever offers the best score.

Lupins have the ability to use their superior perception sense (a combination of smell, hearing, and lupins' instinct) that allows them to *detect invisible* within a 10' radius. Their sense of smell enables them to track down prey. An Intelligence check is required each hour of active tracking (penalize the check three points if the scent is a day old, and one extra point for each day thereafter). On a successful Intelligence check, a lupin can recognize the smell of a creature or individual met once before (werewolves are automatically recognized). Although the sense of smell is treated as an innate skill for lupins, it can be improved as if it were a learned skill (see *Rules Cyclopeda*, page 86). Lupins also have infravision, with hearing comparable to that of a thief of the same level. Lupins can be surprised only on a roll of 1 on 1d6. If allowed in a campaign, all the special abilities described in this paragraph should be extended to normal lupin monsters.

Rakastas can be played exactly like lupins, except the experience-point penalty should be raised to 2,200. The rakastas have perceptive senses nearly as good as the lupins, and so can *detect invisible* objects within a 10' radius. They also have *infravision* and the ability to hear (listen-

ing at doors, etc.) as a thief of the same level. Their sense of smell isn't very sharp, so rakastas do not have the lupins' tracking ability. Rakastas have increased Dexterity (+2 when the character is created, up to a maximum Dexterity of 18). Rakasta PCs retain the use of their natural claw/claw/bite routine in combat (1-2/1-2/1-4) or can use one weapon other than war claws (a single attack).

War claws

Rakasta warriors, especially nomads from the Yazak Steppes, use war claws. These are steel claws that increase the damage of natural claws to 1d4 hp each; they cost 12 gp each (or 120 gp if silvered), with an encumbrance of 20 cn each. Increase the base damage of *red steel* claws by +2 points each; these cost 36 gp each but have half the encumbrance. For details, see the War Claws Weapon Mastery Table.

Rakasta land strider

This is a breed of mount created by Bellaynish wizards, because normal horses usually become skittish in the presence of rakastas. Land striders are half-lion (front), half-horse (rear), and stand about the size of a normal horse. They are in every respect similar to hippogriffs, except they have no wings and cannot fly. Land striders are natural enemies of hippogriffs. Rakasta knights generally prefer striders because they are fast. Unlike traditional sabre-tooth tigers, striders can be fitted with common cavalry barding and they allow the use of heavy cavalry lances as well.

Letters

Will there be an Isle of Dread adventure in the Thanegioth Archipelago for the *Rules Cyclopeda*? If so, will it detail the rakastas as player characters?

Nothing prevents you from playing the current Isle of Dread module (X1) with the Rules Cyclopeda, as we haven't changed the rules. Otherwise, we have no immediate plans to create a Thanegioth adventure. Notes on rakasta PCs are given in this issue's column.

I've been able to read a few tantalizing hints about dirigibles in the D&D and AD&D® games. Can you tell me in which issue, if ever, you gave game statistics for airships? By "airships," I mean the mostly nonmagical kind like those used by the gnomes of the floating island of Oostdok in DRAGON® issue #162.

Well, since you're asking:

Small airship: cost: 20,000 gp; crew: 1 gnome engineer; marines: 5 gnomes and their gear (no space for cargo); capacity: 5,000 cn; MV 120 miles/day or 180'/round; hull points: 20-40; AC 9.

Great airship: cost: 200,000 gp; crew: 5 gnome engineers; marines: 50 gnomes and their gear (no space for cargo); capaci-

War Claws Weapon Mastery Table

	Mastery	Damage	Defense	Special
[P=M]	Basic	1d4	-	No off-hand penalty Double damage* (20)
	Skilled	1d6	M: + 1AC/2	No off-hand penalty Double damage* (19-20)
	Expert	1d8	M: + 2AC/3	No off-hand penalty Double damage* (18-20)
	Master	P: 1d10 + 1 S: 1d8+1	M: + 3AC13	No off-hand penalty Double damage* (17-20)
	Gd Master	P: 1d12+2 S: 1d10+	M: + 4AC14	No off-hand penalty

[P = M]: Primary target is either a monster using natural attacks (claws, bites for example) or an opponent caught with a missile weapon in his hands

P: Primary target

S: Secondary target (opponents with hand-held weapons like swords and daggers)

M: AC bonus to the war claws' user against attacks from monsters or from opponents using missile weapons

AC/#: Number of times the AC bonus can be used each round

*: Double damage (with unmodified required hit scores given in parenthesis) only applies to unarmored opponents

Note: Don't forget to apply the Hit Roll bonuses from the table on page 76 of the D&D *Rules Cyclopedia*. Double damage and off-hand penalties are both explained on page 80 of the same book. The war claws can neither be used with a shield nor thrown. They usually come in a set of two. Both war claws should be used in order to benefit from all the advantages listed in the weapon mastery table.

ty: 50,000 cn; MV 80 miles/day or 120'/round; hull points: 70-90; AC 9.

Fly safely

It seems to me that the practice of giving an experience bonus to characters with higher ability scores is rather unfair. If my character has been plagued with a series of low scores, why should he also suffer from this nagging rule?

I agree that this seems like an all-or-nothing rule. It would be more logical if it worked the other way around, since characters with low ability scores must work harder than those with high scores to achieve the same results. The harder they labor, the more experience they gain. Here is a change you could bring to the fighter's balance of experience bonus/penalties:

Strength	Bonus/Penalty
3-5	+10%
6-8	+5%
9-12	nil
13-15	-5%
16-18	-10%

A 20% bonus or penalty seemed rather excessive either way and was altered in this example. Other than strictly for role-playing fun, having a real wimp as a character now gets a bit more attractive in the long term. (Think of the movie, *Revenge of the Nerds*.) You can easily follow the same idea for other character classes.

Are there plans to create psionics for the D&D game?

No. This goes beyond the scope of a game that is supposed to remain simpler than the AD&D game. Just adapt the AD&D rules if you want psionics in your D&D game.

We have been playing the new D&D

boxed set for a few months, and our characters have reached 5th level. What do we do next?

The next step is to get a copy of the D&D *Rules Cyclopedia*. It has all the rules you need to keep playing up to 36th level. If you can't find it where you are, you can purchase a copy from TSR's Mail Order Hobby Shop. To get a free catalog, write to: The Mail Order Hobby Shop, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.

I really like DRAGON Magazine. I would subscribe if there were more D&D material. Even an article on how to convert AD&D game material to the D&D game would help.

It is a bit late for the magazine to publish an article like that one. The D&D *Rules Cyclopedia* has already covered the topic of game conversion in great detail, and it would be redundant to present the information again in the magazine. Please remember the magazine can only publish material it receives from its contributors—and that's you. If you don't send it, they can't publish it. If you have some article ideas, send an SASE to: *Writer's Guidelines*, DRAGON Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.

In the June-December 1987 issue of the TSR *Worlds* newsletter, a basic/expert set adventure called BX1 *The Islandia Campaign* was mentioned as an upcoming new product. I also heard of a DA5 *City of Blackmoor*. What happened to these products, and will there be any other material on the Blackmoor Campaign?

Unfortunately, for various reasons we could not publish these two products. There are no immediate plans to revive or revise the old Blackmoor campaign series. We have been receiving mail inquiries about this series from our readers in the

past. If you are interested in seeing new material published on the Blackmoor campaign, please send us your letters. This is one of the ways we can tell what your preferences are. Write to: Bruce A. Heard, c/o TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.

I noticed that several Alphatian kingdoms were missing their descriptions in the *Dawn of the Emperors* boxed set. They appear on the poster maps, but they aren't described in the books. Was this an error?

Because of space considerations, we couldn't publish the actual descriptions of all the minor kingdoms that make up Alphatia. The two empires of Thyatis and Alphatia do represent a great surface to cover. More later on this.

In GAZ3 *The Principalities of Glantri*, there is a wealth of arcane secrets to be had. Until now, the bulk of my players were Glantrian mages, and one of the pressing reasons for visiting far off Alphatia is the knowledge that empire supposedly possesses.

I say "supposedly" because, despite fascinating rules on dealing with the enchantment of large objects, there is scant else. It would seem that, after 2,000 years of magecraft, Alphatian wizards would have come up with some surprising innovations in magic-use. My players are due for a surprise when they travel thousands of miles only to discover that Alphatia has only barely accomplished more than Glantri, that has been in existence for less than 200 years.

Indeed. GAZ3 had the advantage of having a small surface to cover and a whole 96 pages (and tiny type size) to do so. *Dawn of the Emperors* had to deal with two large empires (and standard type

size). There simply wasn't room enough for all the goodies. The empire of Thyatis seems to have been covered in reasonable detail, but Alpathia would have required more on the subject on magic, which would have had to come in addition to everything else. This doesn't mean Alpathian wizards are magical nitwits.

Obviously, there is a craving among our readers for neat, new magic in any case, especially Alpathian. We are looking at the idea of a new accessory on Alpathia, specifically, but it'll be some time before it happens. In the meantime, a good article on D&D game magic in general (or one specific to Alpathia) would surely catch our editors attention. Your submissions are welcome and needed. By the way, true Glantrians descend from the Followers of Fire, a group in existence a bout 2,000 years ago.

Who are the ancestors of the Sindians, the Yannifey, and the Alatians?

Sindians, like Ethengarians and the people of Atruaghin, all are related to some degree to the ancient Oltecs. The Alatians were Neathar. Of course, the original Alatians were deported when the Alpathians took over their lands. The Alatians were probably sent to populate and develop the Yannivey Islands and Qeodhar. True Alatians are probably extinct by now. As for the Yannifey, they form a mixed race of all the people who ended up in these cold islands, including Alpathians, Antalians, Neathar, and who knows what else.

It would be appreciated if you didn't grab names from an atlas, as shown on TM2. Many of the names in the Province of Redstone are Irish places names, and their real meanings are totally different. They are the English versions of Irish names, and you obviously don't know their real meaning.

Mea culpa (pardon my Latin). We wanted to have an area that "sounded" Irish—which it did—but it seems those names weren't such a good choice after all. Let's assume these names were perverted by the Thyatians. We'll try to do a better job next time. Until then, anyone out there fluent in Kurdish?

What languages are spoken in the Northern Reaches?

Later dialects of the ancestral Antalians are spoken there. Two very similar dialects exist in the Northern Reaches: Vestlander (which retained about 30% of its old Antalian roots) and Ostlander (about 45%). A host of more-or-less distant derivatives have spread into various regions like Eusdrian and the northern barbarian tongues (35% old Antalian and 25% ancient Neathar). True Antalian is spoken in the Hollow World. Use these percentages as guidelines for linguistic checks. Roll once for each language to establish the

status of unknown dialects. If both checks succeed, routine communication is possible. Modern Vestlander and Ostlander are compatible (no check needed). Modern Vestlander, although a rather curt version with an ever-so-slight dwarven twang, is spoken in Soderfiord. Heldannic Knights speak a more guttural Vestlander with many idioms and expressions that are literal translations from Hattian.

Where can I find the calendar and dating system you use in this column?

The Alpathian calendar is in the Dawn of the Emperors set (the Thyatis and Alpathia boxed set). Other than the different month names, it is identical to the calendar used in all Gazetteers. The year 2001 AY is the same as 1001 AC used by all other Known World nations. Nyxmír 18, 2001 AY is the same as Nuwmont 18, 1001.

Will all the old modules work with the Rules Cyclopeda, especially Companion and Master adventures?

Yes. The Rules Cyclopeda has all of these rules.

What is happening to Alpathia these days?

Nothing at present, but be prepared for a major upheaval with the Wrath of the Immortals set (due out this summer). Did you know that the Immortals began quarreling over certain magical secrets several years ago already? Tension is mounting, and both Immortals and their clerics are getting restless. Wrath of the Immortals will unveil the whole story.

You mentioned that the Entry Level D&D products will bear different icons to indicate if they are adventure modules, common supplements, or rules and special accessories. What can be expected in these categories?

Modules with the icons have begun to hit the shelves; they each bear a dragon icon inside a shield at the bottom right of the front cover. Similar products should come in the future with either castle icons for 3-D accessories or crossed swords for more conventional accessories (new monsters, background settings, etc.).

The new map segments appearing in your column lead many people to hope for the publication of at least one new D&D Trail Map of the area west of Glantri and Atruaghin. The Heldann Freeholds Gazetteer is eagerly awaited, as are the appearances of Wendar and Norwold. I hope there won't be any major "clangers" like the mix-up over the Viper and Tiger Clans in GAZ14.

Sorry, no new Trail Maps will be produced anytime soon. We plan for the Heldannic Knights to make their appearance in 1993 in a new Gazetteer that will be part of a new (bigger? better?) series. More later on this.

The two best bits of news relate to the "Poor Wizards Almanac" and the D&D novels—they both sound great and I look forward to a new TSR catalog with release dates. Would it be possible to collect the "Princess Ark" columns from DRAGON Magazine into one publication?

Our trade catalog is already out. You might find a copy to browse through at your hobby store. If our plans hold together we should indeed see a boxed release on the Princess Ark in 1993. It's a bit early to expand upon its contents, however

The spell levels listed on page 26 of the Rules Cyclopeda are slightly different from the ones in the boxed set and in the Gazetteers. Which ones are correct?

Technically, the latest release take precedence over older products. In the case of the Gazetteers, it remains a question of personal preference or game balance for the setting. Looks like a DM call.

The 1st paragraph of chapter 8 in the Rules Cyclopeda (page 102) says that a character cannot move and attack in the same round. This is the same rule from the new D&D boxed set (and the other boxes published previously). But the statement at the top of page 103 under Movement contradicts page 102 by saying that a character may move his full encounter speed and still make his attack during the same round! I think the latter rule is better (it makes more sense, is less clumsy, and is easier to use in situations like retreat, pursuit and evasion). Which one is correct?

Page 102 has the correct rule. Thanks for catching the glitch. I would tend to agree with you, however The second rule works better. Again, this is your choice.

The fighter class description in the Rules Cyclopeda and the Companion set both say that only traveling fighters (those who don't rule dominions) can become knights. However, GAZ1 and Dawn of the Emperors tell of "landed knights" or "kord knights." Not only that, but knighthood can be given to almost every class! Which rules do we go by: Gazetteers or core rules?

When all else fails, always go by core rules. Gazetteers present alternative settings; because of that, they often break core rules. Gazetteers are entirely optional. GAZ1 and Dawn of the Emperors use knighthood more like a historical title rather than the narrowly defined game term (medieval Europe did have landed knights.) Beware of the nasty term "rules." What you call rules should only be regarded as guidelines to help you manage your campaign and have fun. No one will come after you if you decide to play the game one way or the other.

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More Magic for Beginners

by Gregory W. Detwiler

Artwork by Robert Klasnich

Wonderful widgets that won't overpower your campaign



Back in DRAGON® issue #149 was an article of mine ("Magic for Beginners") that described new magical items eminently suited for use by low-level player characters, with no risk of unbalancing the game while giving them something better than ordinary weapons and protective gear. Time marches on, and packed into this article is an even bigger pile of magical gear that is an improvement over mundane equipment, but not such an improvement that it unbalances the game.

Items of proficiency and specialization

In order to use something properly, whether a weapon or a tool, you have to learn how to use it *most* of the time. However, a clever wizard can get around this by creating magical weapons and enchanted items that magically impart skill in their use to the owner, but only when he is using those specific items. If a poor fighter doesn't know how to use any sword but a short sword (the only type he could afford when he was starting out), a *broad sword of proficiency* that he finds will be perfectly usable by him as if he had training in broad swords. However, if he finds another broad sword (whether magical or mundane) and tries to use it, he will fight with the standard nonproficiency penalty. Note that in the case of *weapons of proficiency*, there are no attack or damage bonuses; the fighter can merely use them competently in battle even though he has no training with that weapon type.

These weapons are mainly useful for increasing a character's combat ability, but all standard weapons restrictions still apply (a wizard cannot use a *broad sword of proficiency*). Since so many people complain about how helpless a 1st-level mage is, for instance, a *staff or dagger of proficiency* would effectively double the number of weapons he could use. If a

fighter discovers too late that he should have invested in a missile weapon instead of specializing in melee weapons (or if he simply couldn't afford a bow), a *bow of proficiency* would give him the missile capability of an ordinary fighter who was trained as an archer. Naturally, the owners of such weapons would have to take very good care of them; once those magical items are gone, so goes the PCs' ability to use such weapons, at least until training time comes around. The same goes with noncombat gear such as thieves' tools, musical instruments, and riding gear, unless such skills are assumed to come with the class. *Items of proficiency* earn their makers 50 XP each.

Now for boosting things up a little bit. *Weapons of specialization* behave the same as those of *proficiency*, but they act in the owner's hand as if he had training in weapon specialization, as opposed to mere proficiency. Unlike *items of proficiency*, only weapons may be enchanted for *specialization*. Only single-class fighters can use *weapons of specialization*. Unlike *weapons of proficiency*, these weapons do give attack and damage bonuses, but these bonuses are granted to the user and are not inherent in the weapon; thus they will not be effective against creatures that can be struck only by enchanted weaponry. Remember, too, that the specialization bonus only comes with that particular weapon; skill in using all weapons of that type in the specialization mode does not come from mere possession and use of that one item. A *weapon of specialization* earns its creator 100 XP.

Rumors tell of magical gauntlets that impart proficiency or specialization with any weapon when worn. *Gauntlets of proficiency* or *specialization* would certainly be valuable, particularly to someone with a large arsenal of magical weapons. If the DM is very stingy with such weapons, *gauntlets of proficiency* may be introduced to the party. *Gauntlets of specialization*, however, can well cost you the campaign unless you are extremely careful with them. Creating a set of such gauntlets is worth 500 XP or 1,000 XP, respectively.

Weapons of enchantment

These magical weapons possess a dweomer that allows them to penetrate the magical defenses of creatures that can be struck only by enchanted weapons. No bonuses for attacks or damage occur; such a weapon has the same chance to hit a highly magical monster as an ordinary weapon has to hit a plain, flesh-and-blood creature, doing as much damage as a plain weapon would.

Missile weapons are a bit different. While actual *missiles of enchantment* (bolts, arrows, sling bullets, etc.) are the same as melee weapons, *bows*, *crossbows*, and *slings of enchantment* cast a magical aura on any mundane ammunition they are loaded with (no bonuses for using *missiles* and *bows of enchantment* together).

Looking back, I see that I've already introduced *crossbows of enchantment* back in issue #127 in the "Bazaar of the Bizarre." For all *weapons of enchantment*, the XP cost is that of a regular +1 version of that weapon type, or whatever other official magical weapon exists of that type that is of low value. These weapons do not lose their abilities when taken to other planes, and the missile launchers can provide their owners with a virtually unlimited supply of "magical" missiles. Just remember that the damage done is the same as for ordinary weapons. The magic doesn't add to the weapon's attack capabilities; it negates the monster's defensive capabilities.

Miniature/polymorphed gear

These two classes go together because both provide precisely the same benefits. Miniaturized items are shrunken mundane items, now the size of a bit of jewelry or the patches in a *robe of useful items*. When the appropriate command word is spoken, they grow into full-sized, non-magical weapons, armor, etc. This gives PCs the ability to smuggle weapons and armor into restricted areas, which can be particularly useful in urban adventures. The items are no heavier than 1 gp when small (the dweomer affects weight as well as size), increasing in weight when they expand. This is also useful when the PCs climb vertical surfaces or when encumbrance is an issue. An ogre can chase a small knot of unarmed "peasants" and temporarily lose sight of them, only to discover when he catches up that he is now facing a ring of heavily armed and armored foes. The potential for PC and NPC ambushes is obvious. *Miniature items* are worth 50 XP.

Polymorphed items usually come in three basic types: a brooch that turns into a suit of armor, a ring that turns into a shield, and a gem or wand that turns into a weapon, giving the same advantages of lightness and surprise capability as *miniature weapons* and *armor* do. With an *armor brooch* or *shield ring*, the armor or shield is already being worn properly upon use of the command word, whereas *miniature armor* grown large must still be donned normally. In issue #149, I had devised illusory items of this nature, but these are the real thing, more useful in battle and also making those illusory items more believable (and hence more useful themselves) by their very existence.

Most *polymorphed devices* produce only one weapon or armor type (long sword, spiked buckler, plate mail, etc.). The XP award for creating one is 100 XP. If an *armor brooch* or *weapon wand* can become a mundane copy of any sort of weapon or suit of armor desired, the award for creation is 500 XP. Unlike their illusory counterparts, the missile-capable melee weapons conjured up here can be thrown.

Illusory missiles

Here are illusory missiles of various types to complement the *illusory weapons* and *armor* given back in DRAGON #149. First are *illusory sticks and stones*. These are tiny things, totally useless in battle normally. When the command word is spoken, however, a faintly visible magical field surrounds them, stretching them out to the proportions of regular javelins, arrows, or sling bullets. Although the field does no damage itself, it is substantial enough to enable the missile to be handled and used with a bow, sling, or spear thrower. If your enemy sees this coming at him, he'll probably assume the worst and take damage equivalent to that of an ordinary missile, but it's all show. These devices are only usable once. They are worth 10 XP to their creator.

More potent and permanent are *illusory missile launchers*. These are bows, slings, or other missile launchers are given special magical treatments by high-level illusionists. They can be used as normal missile launchers with no bonuses, but if the user merely prepares the weapon for firing without fitting in a missile, an illusory missile of whatever type is appropriate for that launcher will be conjured up. When the owner "fires" the weapon, the illusory missile will travel to its target as noted above, and any thinking enemy who believes the illusion will take damage equal to that from a normal missile (save vs. spells with wisdom bonuses otherwise). As with all illusions, these will be useless against unthinking opponents such as golems and undead. As consolation, they give their users an unlimited supply of "ammunition" against normal flesh-and-blood foes. The creation award is 1,000 XP.

Continual torch

Everyone has had trouble with torches burning out or going out when dropped. If you want to spare a player character this problem but don't want to give him a *wand of illumination*, the *continual torch* is the answer. This is an enchanted torch whose flame will never go out. Though often a vital advantage in dungeon fighting, it can be inconvenient if you are trying to hide the light. Because of the magic that powers it, the *continual torch* needs no oxygen and can operate equally well underwater or in a vacuum. It also gives off nothing in the way of smoke. As to what makes it different from a *wand of illumination*, the light it sheds is no more than that of an ordinary torch (15' radius). The flame can burn what it touches, like ordinary fire, so the torch may be used as a weapon in the same manner as a normal torch (treat as nonmagical fire). Enchanted monsters will not be harmed unless they are specifically vulnerable to fire. The *torch* is worth 1,000 XP.

Weapons of illumination

While we're still on the subject of magical lighting devices, consider *weapons of*

illumination. Everyone knows how most magical swords shed light in addition to their combat bonuses. Since this can be an unfair advantage at very low levels, *weapons of illumination* are a good substitute. These come in three basic types:

Lesser weapons of illumination operate using a fixed number of charges, like wands. When a charge is expended, the weapon glows like a normal magical sword (5' radius) for the same length of time as a *wand of illumination* but has no combat bonuses. These weapons have 8-16 charges and cannot be recharged. For making one, the creator should receive 500 XP.

Greater weapons of illumination need no charges. They glow on command, just as their lesser counterparts do, but this power may be used indefinitely. Again, they have no combat bonuses. Their award for creation is 1,000 XP each.

Alternating weapons of illumination can serve either as +1 weapons or glowing weapons, but not both at the same time. A simple command word switches dweomers instantly, presenting many owners with a cruel dilemma. If the weapon is a PC's only means of light in a dungeon fight, he may have to choose between seeing what he fights and having greater combat ability. If a creature that can be struck only by +1 or better weapons attacks a character who does not have the Blind-Fighting proficiency, said character is in serious trouble. The weapon's dweomer is permanent; the thing is worth 2,000 XP to its creator. All melee weapon types are eligible to become all types of *weapons of illumination*.

Hammer & spikes of silence

Thieves everywhere consider these items to be lifesavers. Unlike the usual hammers and spikes that make Thor's own racket when used on a wall, these items operate in absolute silence. They do not necessarily go together as a set. The hammer makes no noise, even if it is employed in pounding in ordinary spikes. Likewise, the spikes (found in lots of 1-8) make no noise no matter what is being used to pound them in. The *hammer of silence* is worth 500 XP, while all the *spikes* are worth 100 XP.

Magical-item equivalency

This continues the power-reduction idea for normal magical weapons begun with *weapons of illumination*. Some magical weapons have minor powers besides their usual combat bonuses and light-shedding abilities. Give the PCs weapons that have these minor powers but no combat bonuses. For powers that are already represented by magical items, like *feather falling* or *free action*, make the weapon's XP value equal to that of said item. True, a normal opponent can be killed by a weapon and not by a ring or the like, but a weapon is clumsier to handle, particularly if it must be held in the hand and not just carried in a scabbard in order for the special power to work. This option is up to the individual DM. I leave to your imagination the picture of a frustrated fighter maneuvering his *glaive-guisarme of invisibility* through an orc-filled dungeon without knocking something over.

Armor to relax in

This is a collection of armor types that fighters and clerics can wear with greater ease than the usual "off-the-rack" stuff.

Note in advance that none of the armor types to be discussed give any greater protection in combat than ordinary armor; they're just easier to wear.

Armor of comfort is as comfortable to wear as ordinary clothing, and it may be slept in with no problems. For someone adventuring in the wilderness and camping out where an attack can come at any time, this comes close to being the ultimate low-level lifesaver. A suit of mundane armor that you already have on is far superior to +5 armor that you don't have time to don before the nocturnal raiders of your choice are in the middle of the camp. *Armor of comfort* gives 500 XP to its creator.

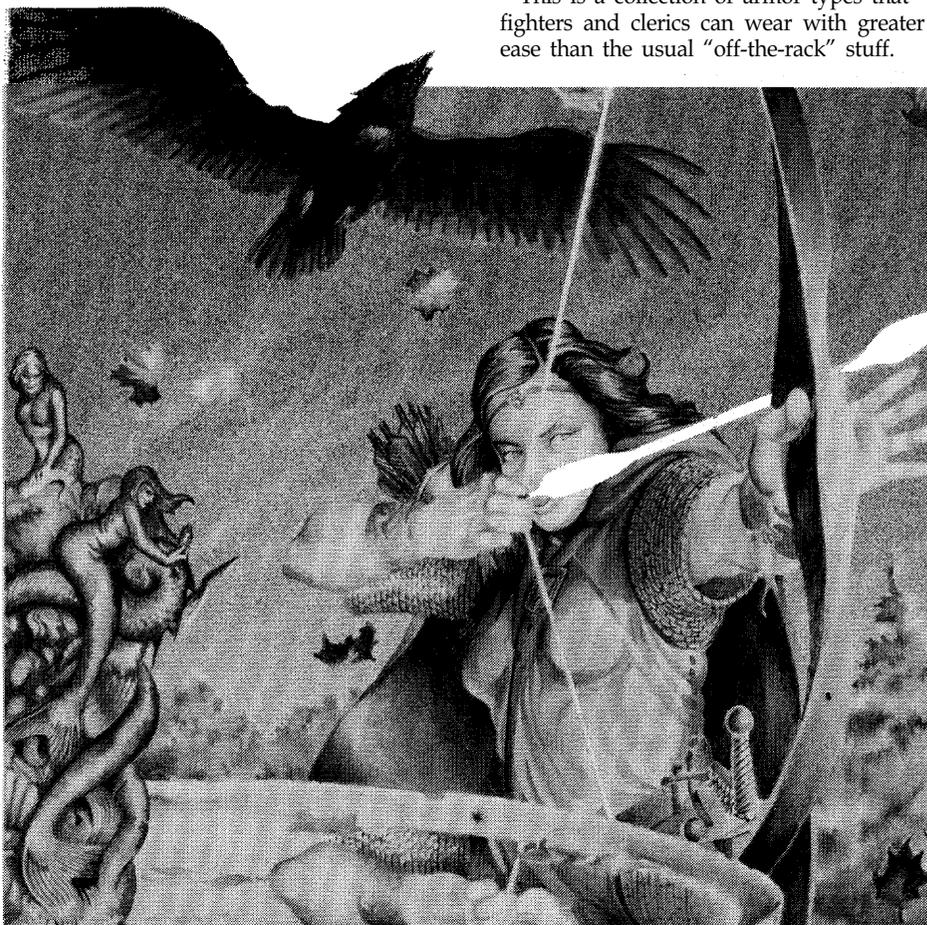
Armor of warmth may be worn without any discomfort due to heat, and enables its wearer to operate in the hottest of natural environments (70-150° F) as well as in a temperate climate, while *armor of coolness* does the same in a cold natural environment (-40 to 20° F). Note that the temperatures must be due to the weather and not to any attack by fire, magic, or monstrous abilities; the *armor* does not give *fire* or *frost resistance*. At the DM's option, the armor can give protection against the natural environments of the elemental plane of Fire or the para-elemental plane of Ice. The same goes for *armor of temperature control*, which combines the powers of the previous two. *Armor of warmth* or *coolness* gives 250 XP to its creator. *Armor of temperature control* gives 500 XP to its maker. Remember no extra protection is given in combat.

Sleeping bags

The *sleeping bag of armor nullification* is a good substitute for the various kinds of armor that can be slept in. The powerful magic of this bag enables anyone wearing any suit of armor of any type to sleep in it as though he were unarmored. As with the special types of armor mentioned earlier, this enables adventurers camping out in the wilderness to avoid being attacked in the middle of the night before they can don their armor. The only problem is that if the enemy attacks before you can get out of the bag, you will be AC 10, as this bag totally nullifies any armor in it. In some circles, this is considered a borderline "cursed" item. The *sleeping bag of armor nullification* is worth 1,000 XP to its maker.

Low-weight equipment

For thieves, mountain climbers, fast scouts, etc., these items are extremely useful. Weight and encumbrance may be reduced by half (rounding down) or eliminated altogether when these weapons and armor are used instead of ordinary ones. No additional advantages are given in combat, though they do count as magical for attack purposes against certain monsters. *Low-weight weapons* and *armor* give 10 XP each to the maker, while the *weightless* versions award 20 XP.



Aquatic items

Ideal gear for the fledgling underwater adventurer, these are weapons and suits of armor that are +1 only underwater. After all, since the PCs will be out of their element underwater, they may need advantages that they would not need on dry land, their home territory, and also a place where they may use fire and all spells normally. *Aquatic weapons* and *armor* cost half as much as their normal +1 counterparts. Note that *free action* is not included in their powers, so an *aquatic long sword* +1 will still be difficult to swing undersea. The DM may provide these weapons and armor with *free action* ability (only while underwater, of course) for an XP value equal to that of a normal +1 weapon or suit of armor.

Hilts of conjuring

These are plain sword hilts, ax or mace handles, or polearm hafts without their bladed heads. When the appropriate command word is spoken, the head or blade of the desired weapon will magically appear from the hilt, handle, or haft, doing the same amount of damage as a regular weapon of its type. No magical bonuses to hit or damage are granted, though the weapon counts as magical for attack purposes against certain monsters. Sword hilts can project any type of sword blade requested; handles can be used for hand

axes, horseman's weapons like small maces, or for battle axes and footman's weapons; any type of polearm head can appear on a *haft of conjuring*. Each type of item of this sort may be used three times a day. If not "turned off" by another command word, an item appearing will last for a full 24-hour day. The XP value to makers is 100 XP.

Racial items

Racial weapons and *armor* (the latter including rings and other protective devices) are +1, but only when being used by a member of the race that created them. While it is possible, of course, for humans to make magical items of this sort, their main purpose should be to add more interest in the demihuman and humanoid races. Because these items are not so versatile as regular magical items, even a relatively weak humanoid tribal shaman or witch doctor could make one with a great deal of effort. When the owner fights a foe of another race, he will always have the satisfaction that a victorious foe won't get the same advantage from his magical item that he did. As for beefing up humanoid foes without upsetting game balance, you could equip an entire tribe of orcs with *orcish chain mail* +1 and *orcish scimitars* +1; if the heroes win anyway, they won't be able to use one bit of the magical stuff that gave them so much

trouble. The award for creating such items is 150 XP each.

Bladehammers & piercing

Aside from immunities to fire, magic, and nonmagical weaponry, some monsters have at least partial immunity to edged or blunt weaponry. This is where *bladehammers* and *piercing head weapons* come in. The former are otherwise ordinary edged or piercing weapons that can hit monsters such as skeletons that have partial or full immunity to normal weapons of that type, doing normal damage. The latter are smashing weapons like maces that can hit and do normal damage to monsters that are normally immune to blunt weapons. Note that this does not apply to creatures of either type (such as stone golems) that can only be struck by magical weapons. *Bladehammers* and *piercing head weapons* are worth 500 XP each to their makers.

I hope this second collection of low-level magical items will be useful to PCs and DMs alike, increasing the variety of magical items in the game without causing the players to advance too fast. It's better than leaving a *sword* +5 and *armor of etherealness* in the local orcs' lair. ☉

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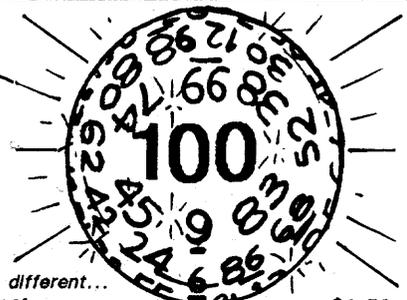
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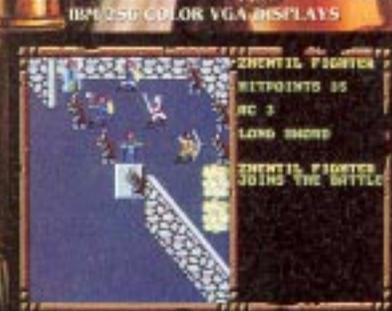
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THE ROLE OF Computers

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If you love clues, you'll love this column

Welcome to our almost-annual "Mostly Hints" column. We hope these hints prompt you to consider the welfare of other gamers. After all, we are in the business of game enjoyment, and hints and tips from readers who have confronted difficult game situations allow us all to thoroughly enjoy our games. If you wish to answer a H.E.L.P. question or have a general tip that you think will aid others, send your postcard or letter to the address at the conclusion of this column. Be sure to indicate which computer version your hints apply to, as versions for some computers do differ. Thanks, all, for your continued interest and feedback on "The Role of Computers."

KnightLine

If you own a Super NES system, we'd like to plug a new book we've co-authored with Steven Schwartz. It's called *Com-*

pute's Guide to the Super NES. The book details the real mechanics of the games, with screen shots displaying how to perform some of the strategies the book describes. It's also full of explicit hints, tips, and game secrets to help you master the challenging games of the Super NES.

Electronic Arts is getting into CD-ROM products in a big way. The company is expanding its studio organization with the pur-

pose of creating new entertainment software categories, including educational entertainments, or "edutainments," and informational entertainments, or "infotainments."

Inline Design, a publisher of Macintosh games, recently moved to new offices at: 308 Main Street, Lakeville CT 06039-1204. Its telephone number is (203)435-4995.

Sierra has redesigned *Quest for Glory*. Not only is the adventure to be offered with full VGA support, but the animation is based on true-model rendering.

Atari has decided to extend its special deluxe value package. The bundle includes the color, portable Lynx system, the Com-Lynx communications cable, six batteries, a carrying pouch, and the California Games cart. The price is \$129.99, with the basic Lynx system continuing to sell for \$99.99. The company is now also selling a sunshield for \$4.99 and a battery pack for \$14.99 that gives you 30 hours of play. You

Computer games' ratings

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

can also find a new Atari Lynx forum on CompuServe; just type GO LYNX.

H.E.L.P.

Richard Greene of Maple Hill, N.C., is having one heck of a time with *BATTLE-TECH: The Crescent Hawk's Inception*. "As I write this letter, I have two Mech-Warriors, one Technician, and one Doctor. I have invested millions of credits. I have also located the Star League cache, Father's Phoenix Hawk L.A.M., and all of the color-coded keys for the doors. I have attempted 47 different lines of communication to Hesperus II in order to receive liberation from the planet. All of this has become very trying, and I don't know what to do next. Please help!"

John Swendsen of Brooklyn, N.Y., has a simple request: "Does anyone know what to do with the keys in *Wasteland*, PC/MS-DOS version?"

Some additional *Wasteland* questions have been received. Bryan Schroeder of Highland, Ind., asks, "What are you supposed to do after destroying Base Cochise? Also, how do you destroy the monster in Finster's Mind Maze? Is there a rank higher than Command Cadet? Finally, what is the Grazer Bat Fetish used for?"

We receive many hints that relate how to duplicate items for characters in fantasy role-playing games (FRPGs). However, none have been more succinctly written than the letter we received from Douglas Thurman of Honolulu, Hawaii. He writes specifically about SSI's games:

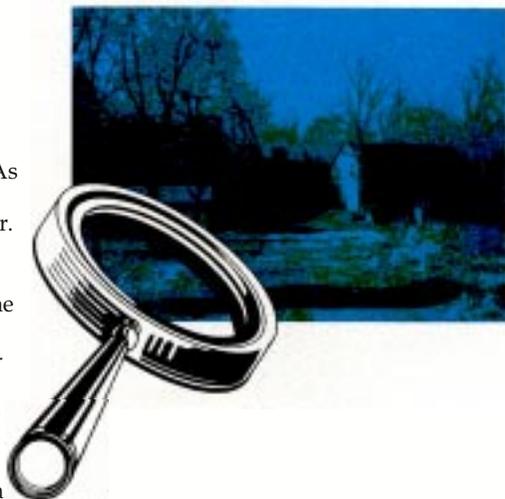
"What is the one thing all players wish they had when playing AD&D® games? Magic for everyone! In completing *Pools of Darkness*, all my characters had an AC of at least -20, and all possessed duplicate wands and weapons and all the Arrows +4 they could carry. This is how I managed this process:

"When you find a good item you want more of, find a training hall or the opening screen of the game, then save your game (just in case the following hints don't work on your computer!).

"Create a fighter with 18/00 strength and name him anything, as long as you can remember that name. Remove one character from your party and add your new fighter. Give the fighter the magical items you wish copied, then remove him from the party.

"Add the fighter again and dump the items in his inventory to other characters. Remove him when you are done. When you are asked if you want to overwrite the character, answer No. The game then asks you for a new name to save the fighter under—I name him "1" so I can speed up the process.

"Continue in this fashion for any and all items in any of the games except *Pool of Radiance*, in which you need two separate disks to accomplish this feat. Just make certain you don't overwrite the original fighter file by overwriting him when you only take some of his stuff! By the middle



of the game, you should have enough firepower to defeat anything that comes your way!"

In answer to the plea from Ryan Leathers regarding SSI's *DragonStrike*, published in issue #178, Neil Bly from Magrath, Alberta, comes to the rescue. "When you start out, fly to the island. Don't worry about the boats. When you reach the island, don't bother fighting the first dragon right then, because it really won't do you any good. Once you are completely above the island, charge the dragons. Try to take the dragons on one by one. To defeat each dragon, use your paralyzation gas on them. Stay as close to the ground as you can so that when you paralyze the enemy, they will crash.

"If you get any enemies on your tail, wait until they fire their breath weapons. Then, quickly turn around and charge them, avoiding their breath. (By the way, this particular strategy works well on all levels!) Keep doing this, and you should be able to complete the mission once you've defeated all the dragons. Good luck!"

Last year, in issue #172, we published some clues from Theron Martin and Marvin Rush dealing with *BATTLETECH II*. Robert T. Wahl of Browns Mill, N.J., has some additional hints to make regarding to their tips. "Their clues work well, except their last hint proved less than adequate for me, so I found an alternative. The scenario is the second mission on Luthien, after the ammo carriers have been escorted to safety. Martin and Rust suggest evading the Clan 'Mechs until reinforcements arrive. I've found that hiding works better. Move Jason's 'Mech a short distance northward (I went from L20 to F80) behind a mountain and shut down. Jason's 'Mech is the important one to hide; the rest of his lance and any remaining lances can hide elsewhere. If you're out of the Clan 'Mechs' line of sight and shut down, they won't come after you. When the Kurita assault lance comes, have them Stop in place. The Clan lances should be just sitting in place. When the call comes to move to the transport site, move the assault lance at running speed first to get the enemy's attention, then move Jason's

'Mech. He should reach the site before any firing takes place, and his is the only 'Mech necessary to finish the scenario (though the Kurita lance commander must remain alive!)."

Reviews

Warbirds	**** ½
Shanghai	*****
Block Out	*****
Ishido	*****

Atari

Atari Lynx versions Prices n/a

Atari has fulfilled its promise. These are just four of the exciting new cartridges for the portable Lynx unit. Three of the four are conversions from popular computer games, while the fourth is a great simulation.

Warbirds allows the player to become a World War I pilot. To shoot down enemy planes, you are given a variety of options including unlimited ammunition and changing the amount of damage your aircraft can take before it explodes. Five scenarios are available that have you fly against one to three enemy pilots whose skill levels vary from newcomer to ace. The flight controls are easy to learn, and the user can look ahead, behind, above, and to the left or right of his plane. *Warbirds* doesn't allow the player to complete unrealistic maneuvers, and the effects of stalls and turns are handled quite well. The one feature that sold us is the unit's ability to link up with three other people, each player flying a separate plane. Each player has a first-person perspective of the game, a very addicting mode of play, especially when you have four people sneaking around the sky trying to destroy each other's planes.

Back on the ground, the other three games are a group of highly successful computer games converted to the Lynx machine. The first one is *Shanghai*, a tile-moving puzzle game that could best be described as the Orient's solitaire. Two players can link up to cooperate or challenge each other on a puzzle. The graphics for the Lynx are detailed enough to help the player despite the small screen size. The music quickly becomes repetitive, but it can be turned off. This game is surprisingly addictive, and you can find yourself spending 15 minutes to complete a game.

Block Out is probably one of the better Tetris-type games available, even rivalling the original. The Lynx offers detailed graphics for a highly addictive game. The perspective looks down at a pit with grid walls. The object is to set blocks of different sizes and shapes into the bottom of the well without filling up the pit. Completely covering a level with blocks makes them disappear. The game moves faster as you proceed, allowing less time to maneuver the blocks properly. Sooner or later, the blocks reach the top of the pit to end the game. The difference between this game

Y, and Z planes. The game includes many options such as altering the pit's length, width, and depth; setting the speed of the rotation; and even allowing beginners to play with a less complicated set of blocks until the controls and the concept of the game can be grasped. *Block Out* is a fun game that will keep the *Tetris* freaks in your family occupied for hours on end.

Ishido is the last of the computer conversions, and it, too, is an addictive game using stones of different colors and patterns. The object is to place the stones on the board, creating as many matches as possible. Options include a timer and a two-player mode (on the same Lynx) that offers cooperative, tournament, and challenge modes. The graphics are not too detailed, nor is the music especially memorable, but they don't need to be because the playability makes this game fun. Once again, this would make a great gift for someone who is a strategy aficionado.

Danger Zone (Top Gun)

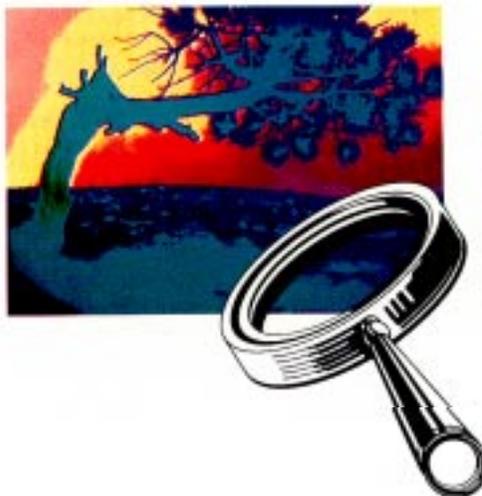
Konami
PC/MS-DOS version \$49.95

Here's your chance to fly with training instructors and compete against 12 other classmates to see who is the best of the best. Two gamers can even fly simultaneously, thanks to a split screen. This game seems to have everything except decent flying graphics and sound (we had VGA graphics and Soundblaster equipment). The backgrounds and planes have very little detail even at the highest detail setting. The engine sounds from the Soundblaster were a cross between radio static and a hair dryer. This game has a few promising moments, but the lack of high-quality graphics and the annoying sound outweigh them. If you want a fairly good, two-player flight simulator without having to purchase a second computer, *Danger Zone* might be your ticket. Otherwise, there are better combat flight simulators on the market to handle your flying desires.

Clue corner

Actraiser for the Super NES

This tip has been tested with both the original and professional modes of the game, although it is more useful in the latter version. In Act II of Mirahna, you can gain additional lives. You come to a pit with a series of blocks bridging it; jump across them to the right, and you find a ledge containing a 1-Up. Drop down and avoid the spikes below, then enter the door to your right. Dodge the dropping spikes until some ledges lead you down, then head to your left. A series of rotating platforms circle over another pit. Fall down the center of these ledges and get



the second 1-Up. Jump on the spikes until you die. Now, repeat the process. Although somewhat slow and tedious, this trick saved me when I encountered the incredibly tough end boss of the professional mode.

Joey Hebert
Bangor ME

Cadash (Working Designs, Super NES)

You can find the Amulet of Dragon by jumping into the "wall" to the right of the rope, just to the right and above the dog in the Nightmare Caves. This amulet will give you 65,535 gold pieces.

Working Designs

Curse of the Azure Bonds (SSI, Macintosh)

1. Beholders do not have +4 Long Swords. I've played this game and won it a couple of times and I haven't found a long sword over +2.

2. So far, I haven't found any girdle other than a Girdle of Dwarvenkind.

3. This might be just a glitch in my game, but I've found that if you are either in a training hall or at the start of the game after you have just opened the game file, and you press the J key, a computer message appears that states, "Error Training On." When that happens, you can advance your characters to any level you want, even above 11th level (with respect to hit points only).

Marty Gleason
Countryside IL

Death Knights of Krynn (SSI, all versions)

1. Just northeast of the High Clerist's Tower, you will find a small farming village. Destroy the meteor and you will obtain some valuable magical items.

2. Northeast of Kalamon, by the ocean, you will find a shipwreck with Banded Mail +3 and other valuable goodies. Remember, nothing in this game comes cheap, so be prepared!

3. South of Turef and a little to the west is a small fairy village being attacked by the forces of evil. Save the village, and you will be well rewarded.

DragonStrike (SSI, all versions)

1. Your first encounter with red dragons will be fatal unless you concentrate on dodging Fireballs. There are too many dragons to worry about attacking directly.

2. Stay low to the ground to blast the cliff outposts. Slow down until your dragon's breath weapon is fully powered, then fly low once again. Attack the gas spores (they are not beholders) from a distance.

3. Avoid flying directly over ships!

4. Don't forget to destroy the Draconian ships.

Chris Mitchell
Yokota, Japan

Dragon Wars (Interplay, Commodore 64)

1. One method of building stats to a playable level is to play the game until you have all of your NPC slots filled. Save the game and start over. Go west to the Low Magic store and obtain one mage Flame scroll. Go northwest and sacrifice the scroll to Irkalla. Enter the underworld and go to Irkalla's building, then step out over the chasm next to the river. Each character receives five points. Save and repeat until you are satisfied.

2. While using the clue above, you can also create a party of druids. Just south of Irkalla's building are steps up to the Enchanted Forest where you can wrestle Enkidu.

3. The Magic Quiver is in the Phoebean Dungeon; the Gatlin Bow is in the Kingshome Dungeon. I believe Jae Brock's clue in issue #172 had this clue reversed.

4. When you meet the pirates, go through the wrong door and fight them. You need what's behind the door to get to the lost islands.

5. If you use the Tri-cross, be sure to keep the Dead Bolt, as it can be recharged. If you use the Archer's Bow, you can restock the Grey Arrows by returning to the bridge guard house between Phoebus and Lansk, but be sure to have a lockpick skill of at least 5 to defeat the alarm trap.

6. The most powerful weapon is the Freedom Sword, especially after the Universal God gives it the power of casting Inferno. Use the sword when the god asks for a sign.

7. Pine branches can cast Beast Call. Use Mushrooms to feed Nergal.

8. You can get to the underground in Lansk by bribing the correct official with 500 gold.

Bill Wilson
Traverse City MI

Elvira II (Accolade)

1. Mosquitos aren't a big threat—simply bust them in the head with your dagger.

2. Poltergeists love to play with children's things.

3. Vicious fish are not immune to poison. Check out the stuck pages of a book and find someone willing to help mix this stuff

something in the meat locker.

4. If you are particularly overburdened with inventory, we found that turning stuff into spells really lightens your load and enables you to pack quite a wallop.

5. Refrain from using those great spells Holy Blast and Telekinesis while you're in the Catacombs, no matter how tempted you might be!

The Lessers

Eye of the Beholder (SSI, all versions)

The following tips work best with a single-class cleric and mage, or a multi-classed cleric/mage or fighter/cleric/mage. In order for this to work, your mage must be able to cast both the Lightning Bolt and Fireball spells, and he should be 7th level. A Wand of Lightning or Wand of Fireballs would be very handy.

1. Go down to Level 6, the kenku level, and find the three-by-three square room with two doors. One door is in the north, and the other is in the south. On both the east and west walls are three small holes. Darts shoot out from them when the trap is triggered. In the center of this room is a circular trigger. Once you have found this room, kill the kenkus (if any), then close both doors. Save the game now!

2. Have your mage memorize as many Lightning Bolt spells as possible. Then have him face the wall and cast a Lightning Bolt. The idea here is to eventually kill all of your characters except for your best mage and cleric. Don't worry if your cleric isn't high enough to cast a Raise Dead spell. He'll be able to cast it in no time, and his constitution won't decrease by one. Make certain the character you want to kill is in the front row and also in the same column as the mage. If the target character is still not dead after the mage casts all of his Lightning Bolts, use the Wand of Lightning or Fireballs to finish that character off.

3. After the character is dead, swap the dead character with another character that you want to kill off. Bring the new character to the front row and repeat this process until only your best mage and cleric remain alive.

4. Go to the center of the room and face south. Walk back and forth across the trap to trigger it, and you'll hear many clicks. Keep moving one step forward and one step back until you've heard about 40 clicks.

5. Memorize all the Fireballs and any other offensive spells possible. Then rest and save the game. (As you come back to this step later, make sure you know what your characters' target experience points are, and save the game just before they gain a level. This way, if you are not satisfied with the hit points they get, you can load the saved game and try again.)

6. Open the south door, and you should see three to seven kenkus. They are worth 3,600 XP each (three times the XP of a party of six). After killing them, close the door and

time you do this, you gain about 14,400 XP. Gain as many levels as you wish, then Resurrect your dead characters.

Brian Young
Honolulu HI

1. Pick up all bones; they can be resurrected by the dwarven cleric on level four, and they will become NPCs.

2. Be careful when dealing with doors on level four. Some of them open into the spider lair. If you don't have it mapped, you could wind up poisoned or killed. The best way to spot if the doors are one-way doors is to look at the other side of the door for a circle. If the circle is there, your best bet is to shut the door.

Daniel Schorr
APO New York

1. To complete the special quest on the first level, put a dagger on the shelf after you have taken the scrolls of Armor and Bless. When you retrieve it, it will be magical and very strong; it will kill most creatures of this level with one strike.

2. Xanathar can be a deadly foe, especially if you don't have the Wand of Silvias. If you don't have this item, he can still be defeated by this process:

a) Open the door to his chamber and listen to what he has to say, then choose "attack" and retreat immediately or else you will be greatly wounded, or even killed;

b) Retreat backward about three spaces and step on a pressure plate that closes the door to his chamber;

c) Give your two strongest weapons to your best fighters and put them in the front ranks;

d) Open the door again and step forward. Xanathar will be wandering back and forth, but will not attack you yet.

For the next part, I suggest using the cursor keys for movement and the mouse for fighting, as you can accomplish both much faster.

e) When Xanathar is directly in front of you, step forward, have a fighter swing his sword, and retreat to the pressure plate to close the door. Repeat this several times until Xanathar is defeated. If you are very fast, you can get a swing in with both fighters before retreating!

Brian Guilbault
Royal Oak MI

1. Beholder Bonuses—Level 9: In the room where one can change gems into jewelled keys, throw any key at a wall with the message reading, "It is written, the key lies on the other side." You will be able to retrieve the key and obtain three Orbs of Power.

2. Get high strength stats (16 or above) for your two front-row PCs. Always keep the two best melee weapons and two short swords in their hands. Yes, shields will go to waste, and yes, the PCs will receive penalties should they not be of ranger

offset most of the penalties.

3. Upon spotting a mind flayer on level 11, retreat around a corner, then wait. The illithid will eventually appear, facing away from you. Four blows by melee weapons should slay the mind flayer before it can utilize its powerful, paralyzing psionic attack.

Yuuta Sasahi
Toronto, Ontario

Gateway to the Savage Frontier (SSI, all versions)

1. When you are sent back to Yartar to destroy the kraken base, don't get discouraged if you can't find it, because they will find you when you least expect it!

2. In the city of Llorckh, be prepared for a large battle before entering any taverns.

3. In the city of Ascore, you must find the Wand of Defoliation before accepting Vaalgamon's challenge.

4. The best strategy for defeating the shambling mounds is a combination of Stinking Clouds and the Wand of Defoliation.

Resse B. Jones
Brigham City UT

Les Manley in: Lost in L.A. (Accolade, all versions)

1. To get into Lou's entrance, give the boyz a bandanna. But, make certain you've talked to Blade first!

2. Blade's real name is Peacechild.

3. To get rid of the zombie bimbo girls, try flashing your K-Mart card.

The Lessers

Might and Magic I (New World Computing, all versions)

1. The hardest thing to find was the ruby whistle. Zam and Zom's clues hint that it is located at C1 15,15, but something has to be done before it appears. Keep checking that location throughout the game; it'll be there sooner or later!

2. If you decide to exchange gold for experience points, I suggest giving all of your gold to your sorcerer, because his higher-level spells come in handy when you first start out.

3. The High Clerics of the South are located in the Dungeon Ruins under Dragadune, on the third level at 12,0.

4. To get to the room at the center of the circular passage in the legendary Castle Doom, use your Jump spell often and keep track of which spaces have teleports so that you can avoid them.

5. When the Succubus Queen is discovered, all males are automatically paralyzed. The more females in your party, the better your chance of escaping.

Jeff Ciarniello
Poland OH

Might and Magic II (New World Computing, Macintosh version)

1. Don't worry about low ability scores. From days 140 until 170, you can find the circus in B2 at 14,4. If you know where to

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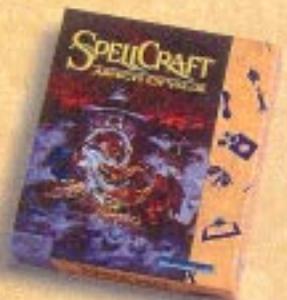
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find the crazy old man and the Inner Limits, your group can get all 100s for ability scores with a little persistence.

2. Although you might think a character must go alone to complete his task, a robber can accompany him. Five robbers can be created to go with your character to act as fodder.

3. Try bringing a character with Linguist skill to C3 at 0,7 to find a friend's name.

4. You can't be burned by lava if you're above it.

5. Rumor has it that Mist Warriors can actually make their swords dance.

6. When in the past, Protection from Elements can be the savior of many an adventurer. Also, avoid Element Hydras.

7. Air and Earth Elementals can be a great source of experience and weapons for level 19+ characters.

Nathaniel Levy
Upper Montclair NJ

Might and Magic III (New World Computing, all versions)

1. When starting the game, don't be afraid to go outside. Don't stray too far, and don't forget about Mr. Wizard at Level One.

2. Make sure to travel around all of the swamp lands; the talking skulls can provide very important information.

3. In my experience, while hand-to-hand combat is good, spell-casting is much better. I would suggest that the spell-casting fighters (paladin, ranger, and archer) are much more useful, especially later, than the "pure fighters" such as the knight, barbarian, and ninja.

4. Get the Gold Keycard (you need fantastic strength to break glass) to enter the pyramids. You'll find more clues and answers inside than anywhere else.

5. To enter Castle Whiteshield, your heroes must be Crusaders. You can get this "skill" for all of your characters in the old Moo Cult temple, but watch out for pits.

6. The order of difficulty for towns is: Fountain Head, Bay Watch, Waldabar, Swamp Town, Blistering Heights. You will have to fight monsters in all of the towns, so don't go to a new town unless you're ready. Also, the dangers in the surrounding area correspond to those in the towns. It's best to go to Blistering Heights when Swamp Town can no longer train you. Outside Blistering Heights, make certain you have fire protection, as every step can be painful. Don't stray too far—major devils, demons, and hydras abound.

7. Obsidian appears to be the best material for weaponry, while diamond or obsidian materials are the best for armor.

8. The following are mirror key words that are useful: Home-Fountain Head; Seadog—Bay Watch; Freeman—Waldabar; Doomed—Swamp Town; Redhot—Blistering Heights; Fire—fire island; Air—large ice island; Earth—desert island; Water—swamp land.

Marc Evensen
Encino CA

1. You can visit the arena at any mirror portal to pick up those last few experience points necessary to gain a level.

2. Don't be afraid to drink from the wells.

3. You will pick up many valuable weapons and items if two of your characters obtain the mountaineering skill and move through all of the mountains.

4. "Joabary" is the password to the dungeon of Whiteshield.

5. The missing brother is Epsilon.

6. Seek several Ultimate Power Orbs in the Cathedral of Carnage.

7. In the cathedral, if you use the key, the moose becomes weeds. The field deactivation code is JVC.

8. Drink from the cups, but watch out for the hangover!

9. When you finally get the orbs, give them to a king for 1,000,000 experience each. However, the king gives you only 1,000,000, no matter how many orbs you present to him simultaneously. To collect the most experience, give the king one orb at a time for 1,000,000 each time.

10. The word for Castle Blackwind is "ten."

11. The word for Castle Greywind is "circle."

Ken Holst
Eugene OR

1. Take the equipment from the pre-rolled characters and give it to your own characters.

2. It is probably easier for starting characters to fight the orcs and goblins outside the city, instead of the moose-rats inside.

3. Equip as many characters as possible with bows.

4. Seek out Kranion in Fountain Head, as he starts your first quest.

5. There is an orc outpost on the other side of the western mountains.

6. Don't face the priest of Moo until one of your spell-casters learns Protection From the Elements.

7. It is best to explore south to Baywatch before exploring to the east of Fountain Head.

8. There are lots of undead in Baywatch. Be sure to look in the pits.

9. Look for Brother Alpha. Cast Levitation when venturing into the caverns below Baywatch.

10. Get Path Finding as soon as you have the funds.

11. There is a secret chest in the Warlock Hills.

12. Be sure to get all of the skills that you can buy in Evil Eye Forest.

13. Be sure to go to Mount Keystone.

14. Be cautious before searching the huts in Thorn Blossom Orchard.

15. The ninja in Waldabar are easy to beat, but be sure to use the fountains and wells.

Bob Tarantino
Etobicoke, Canada

Wasteland (Electronic Arts, all versions)

1. Select your beginning skills carefully. Some of the skills that have little or no use in the game include knife fighting, pugilism, knife throwing, acrobatics, gambling, confidence, sleight of hand, forgery, bureaucracy, cryptography, and metallurgy.

2. Some of the more important, must-have skills include climbing, swimming, clip pistol, perception, assault rifle/SMG, AT weapon, picklock, medic, doctor, and energy weapons.

3. When your characters advance a level, make sure to add at least one skill point to that character's I.Q., as this allows you to obtain more skill points and thus more skills. Try to have a 23 I.Q. by the time everyone reaches Vegas.

4. Some passwords in the game are as follows: MUERTE—courthouse in Quartz; CRETIN—black market in Darwin Village; BIRD—Fat Freddy's in Vegas; KESTREL/CRUMB—Faran Brygo in Vegas; EINSTEIN—Temple in Vegas; REDHAWK—Savage Village; and PROTEUS—Finster's Chambers.

5. To complete the Checkerboard Test at the Temple of Blood in Needles, do the following: Enter, go north once, west four, north twice, east five times, south once, east twice, north four times, west twice, south once, west four times, north twice, east twice, then answer "30."

6. Before entering Vegas, make certain to strengthen your party with some NPCs. Some of the better NPCs and their locations include: Ace—outlaw hideout in Quartz; Christina: downtown Needles; Mad Dog Fargo and Metal Maniac—Gilva Tavern in Darwin village; Covenant—jail in Vegas.

7. When your party is at the final level in Base Cochine, as you are nearing the end of the game, make sure you have four keys and that you know how to use the Disband command.

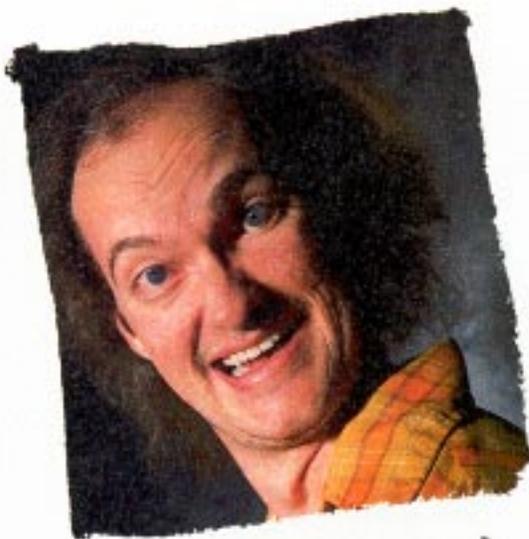
Patrick Desmarais
Jaffrey NH

Well, that's it for this month. Send your hints and tips to: The Lessers, 521 Czerny Street, Tracy CA 95376, U.S.A. No calls, please! And don't forget to look for *Compute's Guide to the Super NES* at your favorite bookseller. Additionally, we are about to write the definitive book on Macintosh gaming. You'll be the first to hear about when and where it'll be available. Until next month, game on!





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Homebody HEROES

What happens to “adventurers” who don’t go adventuring?

by Len Carpenter

Artwork by Dan Burr

An important though rarely discussed nonplayer character in both D&D® and AD&D® games is the nonadventuring “classed” character, particularly the spell-casting priest or wizard who lives a settled, sedentary existence without ever experiencing the perils of wilderness treks or dungeon expeditions. Not every priest and wizard in a campaign world pursues a life of adventure. Many prefer to establish themselves in one place to worship in a monastery, research spells in a lonely tower, or serve a local community. Because such NPCs lack the broad range of experiences known to adventuring characters, these sedentary priests and wizards must be handled differently from the daring adventurers run by players or the seasoned NPC heroes and villains accustomed to the hardships and dangers of a life of travel and exploration.

Sedentary spell-casters

Not all wizard and priest characters follow the adventuring life, earning their experience points by battling monsters and looting treasure hoards. Many prefer a more settled existence as a full-time member of an established temple or school of magic. They earn their experience points slowly but surely by researching spells, creating magical items, or casting spells to fulfill the day-to-day aims and

needs of their temple or school.

Parish priests: While some priests work to achieve the ambitions of their religion by making war upon the foes of their patron deity and performing heroic feats, many members of the clergy serve other functions. They reside with a local temple to serve the faithful on a daily basis and conduct the proper ceremonies on religious holidays. Others live as cloistered monks to preserve their church’s teachings and knowledge and to regularly meditate on their deity’s divine purpose and wisdom. Some travel the roads of civilized lands to spread their views and visions from town to town or visit sacred shrines on eternal pilgrimage.

Clerics who forego the path of the warrior-priest believe their role in life lies in performing less spectacular and celebrated, but nonetheless essential, acts to serve their deity. Such priests operate charitable institutions—orphanges, hospitals, retirement homes, or hostels that shelter weary pilgrims who pay homage at the local holy shrine. Charismatic priests spend day after day in busy marketplaces, extolling the virtues of their religion to all who will listen. Learned and insightful priests act as advisors to the faithful, providing recommendations on international relations or offering marital counseling to commoners. Dedicated priests dwell

among the poor to heal their illnesses, fill their bellies, celebrate their births, lament their deaths, educate their young, sanctify their marriages, and exorcise their evils. A caring priesthood will try to provide many social services a government is unable or unwilling to finance.

The majority of clerics may never achieve glory and renown by undertaking the perilous quests that are the meat and drink of the warrior-priest, yet these sedentary priests serve the faithful nevertheless. While these priests may lack the martial prowess and courageous heart of the holy crusader, they ultimately prove more necessary to the societies of a campaign world through their daily involvement in the lives of humans or demihumans.

By performing a broad range of deeds aimed at helping the faithful and furthering the ideals of his religion, we assume that the priest who dedicates decades of his life to the less glamorous works of a priesthood can advance to very high levels of experience and attain ever greater positions of authority within his temple. The prelate of a sea god who blesses ships before each voyage, the cleric of a goddess of healing who daily ministers to the sick and injured, and the priestess of an agriculture deity who travels the countryside to insure the prosperity of yeomen

farmers all earn their experience points through unexciting yet worthy pursuits. A dollop of experience points earned every day can reap just as great a reward as the occasional heap of points acquired from intermittent adventures.

Metropolitan mages: Many wizards never pursue the rapid but risky path to power followed by adventuring mages. Instead, they progress along the slow but steady road to success by attending school regularly, serving a lengthy apprenticeship, studying tomes long into the night, researching new spells, or creating magical items for sale or personal use.

Experience points often come more slowly to the abjurer or enchantress who completes goals less exciting than those achieved by the adventuring wizard, but at least the homebody spell-caster stands a better chance of dying in his bed after a long and fruitful life than the thrill-seeker who trades *fireballs* and *death fogs* with evil necromancers. The sorceress who secludes herself in patient study or the mage who plays an active social and political role in the service of his guild can become as skilled a spellbinder as the adventurer who snatches what bits of arcane knowledge she can between dungeon expeditions.

Penalties of a quiet life

While the parish priest and professorial

wizard can ultimately achieve experience levels as high as those attained by their more adventurous fellows, the character who stays safely at home cannot claim to be as skilled in his class's abilities as the warrior-priest or adventuring wizard.

Sedentary NPCs seldom engage in melee with strange monsters, cast spells in the face of enemy missile fire and spells, make saving throws to avoid life-threatening events, or use other character skills under enormous pressure and stress. Hence, nonadventuring priests and wizards should be given certain limitations or penalties to their capabilities and skills to reflect their inexperience in the art of adventuring. For example, a high-ranking cleric from a peaceful metropolitan temple might never have laid eyes on a real supernatural monster; he shouldn't be as adept at turning undead beings as a warrior-priest who's destroyed more wights than a halfling's had hot dinners. And suppose an illusionist who has never known a moment more stressful than casting a programmed *illusion* for the grand duke at court is surprised by a raiding party of hobgoblins on her way to town from the duke's hunting lodge. She might well panic and blow her casting of a *wraithform* spell in an encounter that an adventuring wizard would treat as no more than an amusing diversion.

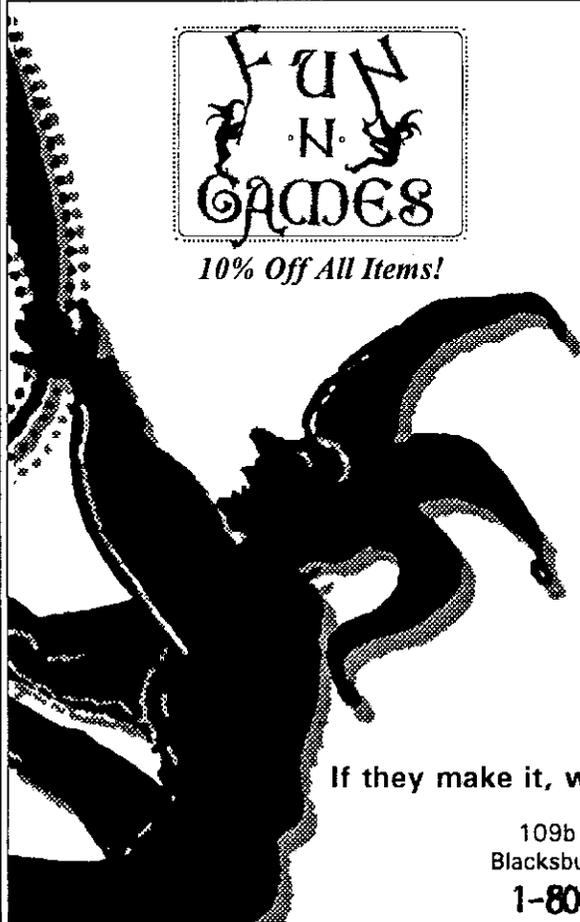
To start off, an NPC's limited life experi-

ence can be expressed in the form of personality traits assigned when the Dungeon Master creates the character. An NPC wizard may prove a coward in the face of real danger, lacking morale and showing incompetence in the act of self-defense. An enchanter might remain steady when confronted by mundane perils but express wailing despair at the sight of undead beings. A cloistered abbess on her first holy mission may be so overly eager to prove herself as to make mistakes in melee or spell phrasing that a cool professional routinely avoids. A haughty patriarch of many years' experience in royal courts, with their flatterers and sycophants, might be confident in his spiritual powers to the point of foolhardiness, believing even a half-hearted effort on his part is more than a match for any opposition. Developing a well-detailed personality profile and background for an NPC before the character is brought into the campaign can later provide invaluable guidance when the DM must know how the character should react or perform during an adventure situation.

The most obvious penalty to impose on a nonadventuring NPC lies with the character's morale. Depending on his current state of fear or unsteadiness, the character may suffer a -1 to -5 penalty to his morale rating. This modifier may be treated as a permanent penalty that applies in all stressful situations if the character lacks overall adventuring experience or is generally undependable. The DM might instead handle the penalty as a situational modifier that applies only when the character's particular fear comes to the fore, such as when an invoker with an irrational fear of spiders encounters a party of driders.

The morale penalty can be reduced or even eliminated with time, as the character gets used to the unusual perils of the adventuring life. The penalty may diminish at the rate of one point for every 1d4 weeks of further adventuring. For example, a sedentary priest's overall -3 morale penalty falls to -2 after three weeks, to -1 after another two weeks, and disappears entirely as the priest is seasoned by an additional four weeks of campaigning. A specific phobia can be harder to treat and will likely take twice as long to reduce by habituation as a general morale penalty.

A sedentary spell-caster might also risk spell failure when placed under unaccustomed stress. This chance of failure should vary from 5% to 25%, depending on the degree to which the spell-caster feels fearful or excited. This chance is cumulative with an already existing chance of spell failure, such as for a priest with a low wisdom score or when a spell-caster casts a spell from a scroll that is too high in level for the caster to use (see page 145 of the AD&D 2nd Edition DMG). As with the morale penalty, this chance of spell failure may be reduced by 5% increments for every 1d4 weeks of campaigning.



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As another option, a nonadventuring character could stand a reduced chance of success when using a character ability, class skill, or nonweapon proficiency during a moment of great pressure. A penalty of -5% to -25% may be imposed on a skill use that requires a percentile-dice roll, or a -1 to -5 modifier may be applied to the base chance of success when rolling an ability or proficiency check. For example, a priest with a dexterity of 15 must roll a normal dexterity check to safely cross a rope bridge over a wind-swept chasm. The priest is still a little green and lacks steadiness in a tense situation, so he suffers a general -2 penalty. His chance of crossing without trouble is now $15 - 2 = 13$ or less. The priest requires another 2d4 weeks of active adventuring to remove this penalty.

A priest who has rarely encountered the undead or other special creatures will not have an influence over the undead as effective as that of a cleric who routinely confronts these creatures. The priest who has spent his entire career dealing with mundane problems might lack confidence in his power over the undead or become shaken in the presence of such unnatural evil, proving himself an unsteady and untested mortal vessel for the channeling of his deity's divine wrath against the undead. Thus, an inexperienced priest might be treated as being 1-3 levels lower

than his actual level when he attempts to turn undead. The reduction depends on the priest's own number of encounters with undead and his current state of anxiety and morale. This reduction diminishes gradually as the priest becomes inured to encounters with undead and gains confidence in his spiritual power. The priest's effective level for making turning attempts should rise by a level for every 1d6 encounters with undead until the priest can turn undead at his actual experience level.

An NPC who has little experience in life-or-death melee encounters will not fight as well as one who has fought time and again for his life throughout an adventuring career. A priest or wizard might be considered to be two to five levels lower than his actual level when determining his base THACO number, to better depict the NPC who lacks martial prowess or is out of shape. This penalty, unfortunately, is a permanent limitation that remains in effect even if the character gains additional levels through earnest adventure. A crash course in the fighting arts cannot enable a character who has led a sedentary life to close the gap with adventuring characters who are months or years ahead in fighting experience.

In a similar vein, priests and wizards who have lived in ease and comfort will not have acquired the number of hit points earned by active adventurers. A

somewhat active priest will have earned only 1d6 hp per level up through 9th level, while a truly idle or slothful priest will have gained only 1d4 hp at each level until 9th. At 10th level and above, all sedentary priests will acquire only one additional hit point per level, not the two points per level earned by adventuring priests. A sedentary wizard will have gained only 1-3 or even 1-2 hp per level up through 10th level, and have earned one additional hit point for every other level gained above 10th—at 12th level, 14th level, and so on. The normal hit-point adjustment for constitution score still applies to sedentary wizards and priests, of course. A character who gives up his sedentary lifestyle to become an active adventurer will gain hit points normally starting at the first additional experience level attained with experience points earned through diligent adventure.

Warriors & rogues

There is really no analog to the sedentary priest or wizard among the warrior or rogue classes. Most DMs find it difficult to conceive of a fighter or a thief who has advanced to high levels without having gone through many challenges and risks in life. A soldier who seldom fights cannot possibly earn enough experience points to advance many levels as a fighter, regardless of how successfully he performs in

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other aspects of his career. A 12th-level ranger who hasn't fought many opponents or campaigned for several seasons in war against the enemies of his empress lacks credibility. A thief who has rarely been challenged to use her roguish skills in hazardous or difficult circumstances might become guildmistress through guile and political acumen but shouldn't warrant a high experience level to go with her exalted title.

This doesn't mean, however, all NPC warriors and rogues are the equals of PC adventurers in all respects. A shield-maiden who has campaigned only against human and humanoid foes may lose her nerve when she confronts an extraplanar fiend for the first time. A halfling thief who has spent all his life in the same city working as a security expert and private investigator, encountering the same familiar faces day after day, may not be fully prepared when hired to infiltrate the Fortress of the Seven Slaadi.

As with priests and wizards, NPC warriors and rogues who have lived within limited horizons can possess personality traits that reflect a provincial view: a distrust of new peoples, a naivety that renders a gullible NPC vulnerable among opportunistic strangers, an ignorance of other cultures that results in breaches of custom or etiquette, a false sense of bravado in unfamiliar situations, or a strong

curiosity that inspires a sense of wanderlust and a propensity to rush incautiously into new encounters.

A morale penalty may often be appropriate for NPC warriors and rogues when they are thrust into an encounter with the unusual or unknown, or when a particular fear rises to the surface. In addition, a penalty to the chance of success with an ability, skill, or proficiency might apply during unaccustomed pressure.

An NPC fighter or thief should not have his fighting level and THACO value penalized, since melee plays such an important part in the lives of nearly all such characters. The NPC might have his hit points trimmed back, however, to better represent a character whose melee experience doesn't measure up to that of the average adventurer. A city-bound fighter whose combat experience is limited to formalized fencing instruction and sporting one-on-one matches might have earned only 1d8 hp per level, for example, and a thief who is such a subtle and careful con artist that she seldom needs to fight for her life might have acquired only 1d4 hp at each level.

The above restrictions should rarely if ever apply to NPC paladins, rangers, bards, and most other warriors and rogues, as such characters are generally too worldly and are exposed to too broad a range of experiences for them to suffer

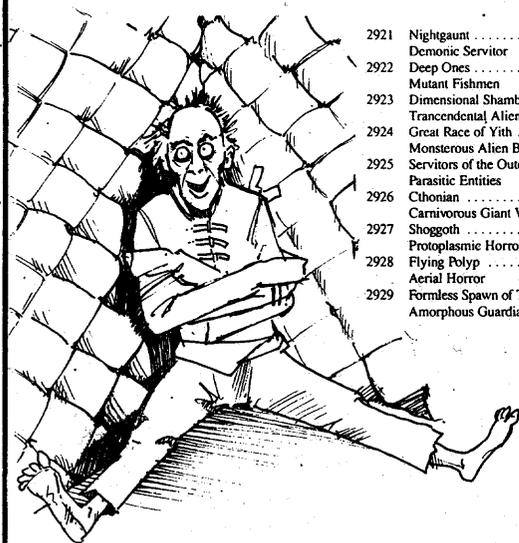
provincialism. A paladin who panics when fighting unusual foes or a bard whose skills fail him under the pressure of a novel encounter will not survive a life of adventure and hazardous missions, and he will be forced to retire from his profession before advancing far above 1st level.

While sedentary NPCs seldom play a big part in a campaign of high adventure, they could make up a sizable portion of a world's populace. On those occasions when a cleric from a quiet parish or a professional wizard sheltered in a city's College of Magic is thrust into an unplanned adventure, it's important to consider how these sedentary characters differ from active adventurers. The adventuring priest and wizard characters described in the rule books do not represent all spell-users in an AD&D world, only an elite minority. The characteristics and attributes of the silent majority deserve some attention, too.

[Articles on related topics include: "Leomund's Tiny Hut: The Cloistered Cleric," on nonadventuring clerics, in issue #68 (reprinted in the Best of DRAGON® Magazine anthology, volume 4); "The Mystic College," about magical academies, in issue #123; and "Hot Night in the Old Town," about adventures for stay-at-home clerics, in issue #180.]

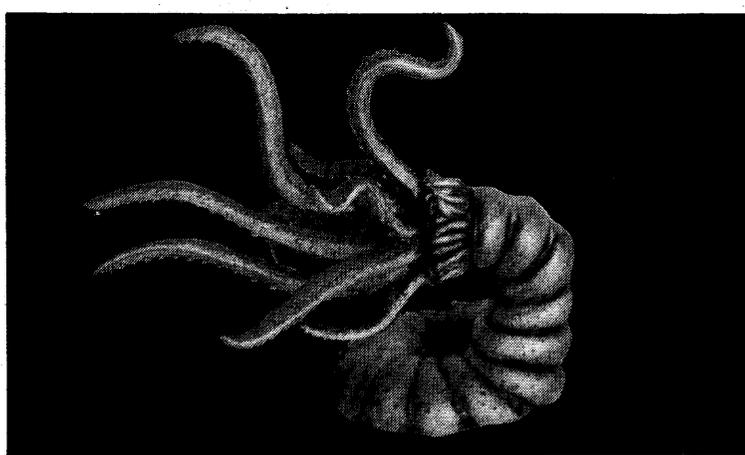
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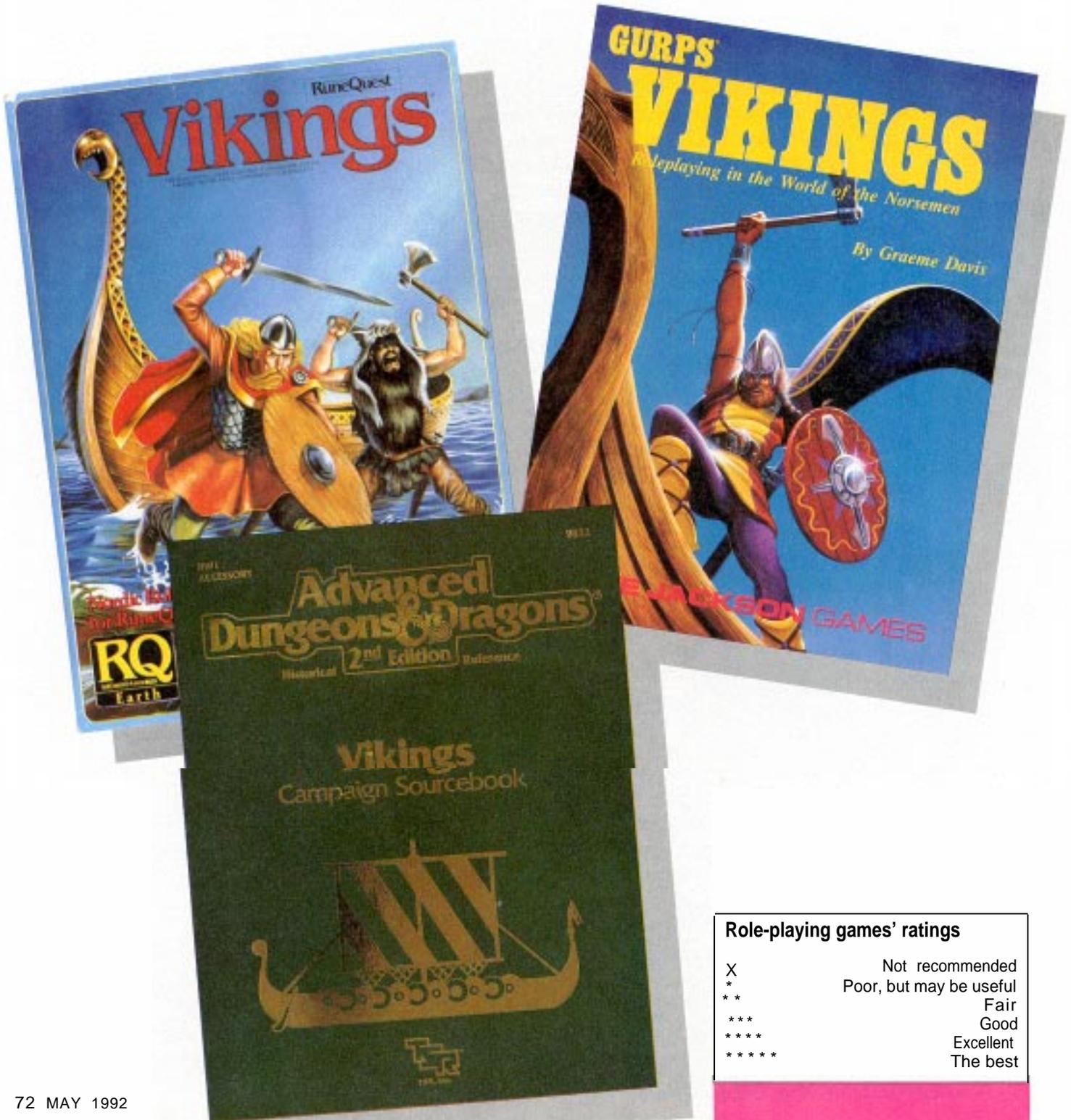


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Role-playing reviews

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Role-playing games' ratings

- X Not recommended
- * Poor, but may be useful
- ** Fair
- *** Good
- **** Excellent
- ***** The best

Adventures in the world of the Vikings

Vikings! Savage rogues of the sea, men and women as bloodthirsty as they were brave. Warriors adorned in gaudy chain mail and huge horned helmets, sailing their majestic dragon-ships under the watchful gaze of the mighty Odin on their way to plunder and pillage helpless coastal villages. If you listen closely, you can almost hear the slap of the oars against the choppy waves, the strains of a Wagnerian opera wafting through rumbling clouds, the clanking swords of brawny warriors engaged in mock battle, anxious for the real thing.

At least that's the legend. Truth to tell, the Vikings were a rather civilized bunch, no more inclined to savagery than any of their Scandinavian contemporaries, generally preferring to explore and trade rather than pillage and plunder. Dragon-ships were rarely part of a Viking fleet, merchants were as common as pirates, and the colorful gods and goddesses of Norse mythology ultimately took a back seat to Christianity. Chain mail was bulky and impractical, and a Viking was about as likely to wear a horned helmet as a Shriner's fez.

However, game designers have never let a few facts stand in the way of a good time. With their liberal mix of history and folklore (and a little Hollywood thrown in for good measure), the campaign guides considered this month will never be mistaken for textbooks, but they all provide absorbing alternatives to traditional European-based fantasy settings. And players who are baffled by the exotic cultures of, say, Oriental role-playing games shouldn't have much trouble acclimating themselves to the barbaric, sword-swinging world of the Viking. Even Conan would feel right at home on the deck of a dragon-ship.

The differences between the three volumes described below are mainly matters of emphasis. The Avalon Hill Game Company version, for instance, stresses the fantasy elements inherent in the Viking legends, while the Steve Jackson Games approach encourages a more realistic campaign. The sourcebook that's best for you depends less on your preferred game rules (for the most part, the ideas in all three volumes can be adapted to any system) than on whether your campaign style is strictly historical, whimsical as per *The Mighty Thor* comics, or somewhere between. Strap on your horned helmet, and let's have a look.

Vikings: Nordic Role-playing for the RUNEQUEST* game *****

RUNEQUEST campaign supplement
Boxed set with 38-page Players Book, 30-page Gamemaster Book, 46-page Sce-

narios Book, 20-page Vikings Digest, 15" × 22" map sheet, character sheets
The Avalon Hill Game Company \$21
Design: Sandy Petersen, Greg Stafford, and Ken Rolston
Editing: Charlie Krank
Illustrations and graphics: Tom Sullivan and Charlie Krank
Cover: Steve Purcell

Though this RUNEQUEST game supplement is several years old, it's still the one to beat—a thoroughly entertaining treatment of Viking culture, light on the historical clutter that makes so many campaign guides a drag to read. It's beautifully packaged and elegantly written, no surprise considering the talent involved; Greg Stafford was one of the designers of the original RUNEQUEST set, Sandy Petersen was responsible for the classic CALL OF CTHULHU* game, and Ken Rolston had a hand in the PARANOIA* game, along with enough RPG adventures to fill a shelf.

Setting: Both the Players Book and the Gamemaster Book include informative sections on the history and culture of Scania, the homeworld of the RUNEQUEST Viking that roughly corresponds to Scandinavia. Though much is made of Scania's relationships with other nations (for instance, three pages are devoted to the Viking influence on everyone from the Saxons of England to the Arabs of Serkland), most of the information is community-based, focusing on the daily life in small, self-supporting Viking villages. RUNEQUEST game Vikings in a typical campaign might as well be living in a bubble, oblivious as they are to the goings-on in the outside world; as far as the Vikings know, Atlantis may be thriving under the ocean to the south, while their neighbors to the north may be under siege by an invasion of intergalactic dinosaurs. This "Alternate Earth" concept can make for some mighty interesting campaigns, as it not only allows for but actively encourages anachronisms, magic-use, and even alien races, giving the game master unlimited freedom to shape the campaign world as he sees fit.

A typical Viking village consists of about two dozen buildings occupied by a handful of close-knit families. The glue that binds the village is the regular community meeting called the *thing* (pronounced "ting"). The *thing's* agenda covers everything from religious rituals to trade arbitrations, but its most interesting features, from an RPG standpoint, are the legal hearings. These involve the judgment of a dozen lawyer-like elders (called doomsmen), accompanied by commentary from observing citizenry (called *wapentake*), which is expressed as a clashing of spears against shields. Testimony is assigned a numerical "oath-worth" depending on the status of

the witness; a low-ranking carl may have an oath-worth of only 1, while a revered rig jarl's oath-worth may be as high as 16. The higher the total oath-worths, the more likely a case will be tried and settled fairly. Winners of a case are obligated to claim their own compensation, a situation that may result in the hiring of mercenaries (such as the player characters) to collect a judgment from a gang of thieves or a notorious murderer. Equally fascinating are the sections on Nordic shamanism (practitioners include the revered *volvas*, experts at divination and trance songs), social hierarchy (ranging from the powerful *jarl* noblemen to the lowly *thrall* slaves), and dueling (featuring *einvi* free-for-alls and more formal bouts called *holmanga*).

Characters: Vikings are essentially harder versions of normal RUNEQUEST characters, with bonuses to their Strength and Size statistics. Only humans may be Vikings, a curious restriction considering the anything-goes approach of the rest of the design, though I don't think a campaign would collapse if the GM allowed elven or dwarven Vikings.

Homelands, occupations, and family sizes are determined randomly. There are a handful of new skills (lawspeaking, ice skating, skiing) and a dozen character types, among them farmers, scalds (professional entertainers), and godi (Norse priests). Owing to the magic-intensive RUNEQUEST system, all character types have access to spells; spell-casting fishermen may be as common as conventional wizards in a Viking village. Personality traits are discussed at length; bloodthirsty players will be happy to know that this game's Vikings are not only loyal and brave but may also be viciously cruel, prone to slaughtering the unarmed and engaging in random acts of violence.

Fantasy: Magic is based on traditional Norse religion. Deities are assigned to two general categories. The Aesir are the more prominent, a family of powerful ruling gods including Odin, Thor, and Heimdall, the guardian of the Rainbow Bridge that links the gods' heavenly home to Alternate Earth. Opposite the Aesir are the darker and more unpredictable Vanir, including Njord, the elder god of sailing, and Freyr, the purveyor of fertility. With this rich mythology to draw upon, the spells and techniques relevant to Viking magic-users are disappointingly skimpy. The cult descriptions are cursory and dull, and there are less than a dozen new divine spells (a predictable bunch at that, including *true sword*, which increases the damage from the affected weapon, and *become wolf*, a routine lycanthropy incantation). Norse runes, which ought to be the cornerstone of any Viking magic system, particularly in a game titled "RUNEQUEST," are dismissed

in a few paragraphs.

In contrast, the new monsters that comprise the bulk of the Gamemaster Book are a treat. It's unlikely that even the most jaded players have experienced the like of the dverge (gnarled dwarves spawned from maggots) or the bush grandmothers (moss-covered imps that beg food from travelers), which are interspersed with the more mundane but no less intriguing swan maidens (shape-shifting beauties in search of human husbands) and valkyries (haglike messengers of death). Though many of the monsters are underdeveloped—the bush grandmother entry comprises only a single paragraph of description—an imaginative GM will still find a lot to work with.

Campaigning: Here's where the supplement really shines. The Scenarios Book offers intelligent suggestions for staging Viking adventures, along with a detailed campaign outline comprised of six linked scenarios, generically titled "Hunt," "Thing," "Raid," "Gone Viking," "Trade," and "Thule," the latter referring to a legendary realm somewhere north of Britain. Each scenario features an intriguing cast of characters (whose statistics are provided in the Vikings Digest book), clever adventure hooks, and compelling subplots. The scenarios may be arranged in a variety of ways to create campaigns of various lengths, emphasizing design elements of the GM's choice. For instance, a campaign might begin with a "Hunt" to introduce the players to Viking combat techniques, continue with a "Thing" scenario to acquaint them with village social life, proceed to a "Raid" from a neighboring tribe, return to another "Thing" scenario for an encounter with the legal system, then climax with a high-seas "Gone Viking" scenario before wrapping up with another "Thing." It's an ingenious, sophisticated approach to campaign design, though admittedly best suited for experienced GMs who are capable of devising their own bridges between scenarios and are able to role-play the NPCs convincingly enough to motivate the PCs from one scenario to the next.

Evaluation: What makes this the best of the currently available Viking supplements is that it strives for neither completeness nor realism. Both the historical and fantasy elements were chosen for their applicability to role-playing adventures, period. Of course, players interested in pure history may find this approach hard to swallow, but the intention here is to entertain, not to educate; anyone who bases a term paper on the information in these books deserves the grade he gets. This offers pure, engaging fun and, despite the rather superficial magic section, is a first-rate fantasy campaign set.

Vikings Campaign Sourcebook ***
AD&D® 2nd Edition campaign supplement
96-page softcover book, 28" × 19" map
sheet
TSR, Inc. \$15

Design: David Cook
Illustrations: Ned Dameron

I don't care what the title says—this is not so much a campaign sourcebook as it is an AD&D® rules expansion. Unlike the radical reworking of the AD&D game's systems presented in the gone-but-not-forgotten *Oriental Adventures* tome (also by Cook and, for my money, the meatiest campaign setting that TSR has ever produced), this Vikings book is a user-friendly variant, easily digested by DMs and players alike. Though not quite the "new role-playing experience" it aspires to be, there's plenty of interesting material to enliven an already existing campaign.

Setting: This book begins with a brief chapter on Viking history and ends with chapters on Viking culture and geopolitics. Though the chapters do little to integrate history and fantasy, together they serve as an informative overview from which the DM may develop his own setting. The introduction promises help with adapting Viking culture to the FORGOTTEN REALMS®, WORLD OF GREYHAWK®, and DRAGONLANCE® settings, but either I missed this section or it got lost somewhere along the way. Regardless, not much adaptation is required; Vikings as presented here could exist comfortably in just about any unexplored area on Krynn or Oerth without straining the players' credibility.

Characters: Most of the AD&D game's Vikings are human; however, to distinguish them from human characters in other AD&D products, the book introduces the concept of Gifts, special talents bestowed by the *Norns* (Fates) at birth. If a player chooses to play a human character, he rolls on the Character Gifts Table; there's a 60% chance that he'll receive a permanent penalty or bonus. Penalties include Bad Luck (an automatic -1 on all die rolls made with a particular type of die, such as d6, d8, d10, or d20) and Ugly (a -2 on his charisma). Bonuses range from Courage (a +1 on all saving throws vs. fear-based attacks) to Seer (the ability to attempt predictions along the lines a *divination* spell).

Vikings who aren't human are probably trollborn, a new racial type exclusive to this supplement. Trollborn are a repulsive combination of human and troll, with exceptional strength, constitution, and intelligence scores, but lower than average wisdom and charisma. They are denied Gifts but are endowed with infravision. Otherwise, trollborn are essentially humans with bad attitudes, a good choice for those with a flair for role-playing antisocial characters.

Cultural restrictions forbid the use of certain character classes. Specifically, Vikings can't be paladins, clerics, druids, or wizards. Fighters, rangers, thieves, bards, and specialist mages are allowed, with minor restrictions; for instance, Viking thieves lack the abilities to open

locks and find and remove traps (because locks and traps are mostly unknown in this interpretation of Viking society), while the only available specialist mages are Conjurers, Diviners, Enchanters, Illusionists, and Necromancers.

To balance these restrictions, two new character classes are introduced, both quite appealing and among the books best features. The first is the berserker, a hot-tempered warrior given to spontaneous bursts of rage. After spending a round working himself into a frenzy, and assuming he makes a successful saving throw vs. death magic, the berserker gains a temporary +2 strength bonus, two extra hit points per level, an increase in armor class, and a +2 to his saving throws vs. charms and mental-based attacks. These bonuses persist so long as the berserker directs his rage against a particular enemy, limited to a number of rounds equal to his constitution score. When the rage subsides, the berserker must make another successful saving throw vs. death magic or become exhausted, resulting in a substantial loss of strength until he's had time to rest. At higher levels, the berserker acquires the ability to shape-change into a wolf or cave bear, and he can also leave his body to travel unlimited distances in the spirit form of a raven, bull, or other animal.

The second new class is the runecaster, a magic-wielding warrior with the ability to carve intricate runic designs on inanimate objects, imbuing them with a startling variety of powers. A 1st-level runecaster begins the game knowing two runes, chosen by the DM. He has the opportunity to learn a new rune each time he advances to a new level, following a procedure similar to that of a wizard learning a new spell. Once learned, a rune may be used an unlimited number of times per day, though each use requires 15 + 1d20 minutes of planning, carving, and activating, along with a successful wisdom check. An impressive variety of powers are available to the runecaster, among them the *catch-rune* (etched in the palm of a glove, it allows the wearer to catch spears, axes, and other weapons thrown at him), the *speech-rune* (an amulet that prevents the enemies of the wearer from defaming, spreading lies about, or otherwise speaking evil of him), and the *quench-rune* (this enables a piece of wood to extinguish any fire up to the size of an entire building). It's an excellent addition to the AD&D magic rules and, ironically, much better realized than the rune system in the RUNEQUEST supplement.

Fantasy: In addition to rune magic, fantasy elements include a well-chosen selection of new magical items. Among them are the *riding stick*, which functions both as a *club* +2 and a means of transportation, and the *bottomless drinking horn* for the Viking who's chronically short of mead. There's also a chapter full of new monsters. Most of the new mon-

sters are essentially subspecies of already existing AD&D creatures—the linnorm is a type of wingless dragon, while the havmand is basically a merman with a beard—but a few originals are also included, such as the thursir, a grouchy giant with a penchant for beating people over their heads with trees. Though there are only a few paragraphs of description per entry, DMs can stage encounters with the Viking creatures by referring to their designated counterparts in the *Monstrous Compendium* supplements for the necessary statistics and tactics.

Campaigning: Sadly, there's no material comparable to the RUNEQUEST supplement's Scenarios Book. Adventure hooks suggest themselves in the chapter on Viking culture, but there are no specific outlines. To get a Viking campaign off the ground, the DM will have to rely on his own imagination, consult one of the reference books in the suggested reading list, or borrow ideas from another game supplement.

Evaluation: Another chapter or two would've pushed this book over the top; notable by their absence are sections on Viking ships and sea travel, Norse mythology (we're referred instead to the 2nd Edition *Legends and Lore* book), and adventure design. The historical aspects are better presented than those in the RUNEQUEST supplement, but a game featuring trollborn and berserker warriors can't be taken seriously as a historical simulation. As a set of rule variants, however, it delivers the goods, particularly for AD&D game players who can't get enough new character classes and magic systems.

GURPS* Vikings ***
 GURPS campaign supplement
 126-page softcover book
 Steve Jackson Games \$17
Design: Graeme Davis
Editing: Steve Jackson
Illustrations: Topper Helmers, with Don Arburn, Carl Anderson, Denis Loubet, and Doug Shuler
Cover: John Zeleznik

This GURPS game supplement offers something for Vikings of every persuasion. No less than six different campaign styles are examined, including Thoughtful Historic (no magic, stressing nonviolent role-playing), Thoughtful Fantastic (real history with a few modest supernatural elements), Thoughtful Mythic (active Norse gods in an otherwise realistic setting), Action Historical (savage Vikings with no magic), Action Fantastic (standard fantasy setting, familiar to most AD&D game players), and Action Mythic (PC participation in conflicts between the gods). I'm not sure how helpful it is to subdivide the genre to this extent; if Erik zaps Ivar with a magical club during a peaceful trade expedition, does that shift the style from Thoughtful Historic to Action Fantastic, and if so, how does knowing that help structure a campaign?

Still, it's better to bite off more than you can chew than to merely nibble around the edges, and whatever its shortcomings, GURPS *Vikings* is undeniably ambitious.

Setting: The chapters covering Viking history pack an enormous amount of information into a relatively few pages, emphasizing many intriguing facets of culture and economics overlooked in the previously mentioned supplements. Included are floor plans of longhouses and ring-forts, details of Viking funeral ceremonies, and even the annual income of a crewman on a dragon-ship. Dozens of sidebars illustrate topics as diverse as combat training and Norse riddle-games, and feature colorful anecdotes from King Godfred of Denmark and other notables. The emphasis on factual material encourages role-playing in actual historical settings. With effort, it's possible to stage a campaign in the era and locale of the GM's choice.

Characters: With only three new skills (gaming, skaldic lore, and skating) and two new advantages/disadvantages (shapeshifting and wyrd, the latter of which simulates an irresistible force that pushes the affected character to a predetermined fate), there's little to distinguish Vikings from other low-tech GURPS game warriors. The section outlining character types isn't particularly inspiring; for instance, the berserker is described as a warrior "outside the mainstream of Viking society" who has "considerable skill with an axe or sword and shield" — a pretty dull guy compared to the teeth-gnashing, bloodlusting berserker in the TSR supplement. Though the characters aren't flashy, they're sound and reasonably complete.

Fantasy: For the most part, magic is underplayed. Aside from a few interesting shapeshifting variants, there are no new spells to speak of. Players looking for a rune magic system are directed to the GURPS Magic* book. A brief discussion of a few new magical items, such as Thor's hammer and Odin's spear, rounds out this disappointing section.

The religion chapter stresses the historical and literary elements of Norse mythology more than the role-playing implications; a GM wondering how Baldur or Sif might interact with a shipload of Viking explorers is pretty much on his own. More successful is the new monster roster, a good mix of the ordinary (dogs, horse, pigs) and the unusual (valkyries, trolls, and a frightening specimen of Norse undead called the *d r a u g r*).

Campaigning: Tips and rough outlines for designing scenarios in all six styles are presented in the campaign chapter, while the adventures chapter features a number of specific story lines that the GM can combine and develop as he wishes. Generally, the realistic styles—that is, the Thoughtful Historic and Action Historic—are more convincing than those based in fantasy, owing to the focus of the material elsewhere in the book. The Home Fires

campaign outline is particularly good, involving the quest for employment from a local jarl that stylishly introduces the players to the nuances of the Viking social system. On the other hand, the Troll Wars campaign is a generic monster bash that does little to exploit the setting; the Viking characters could just as well be Oriental mercenaries or enchanted Iowa farmers.

Evaluation: This is the thinking person's guide to Vikings. Novices may be overwhelmed by the amount of detail, and the shallow treatment of fantasy may discourage players who are less interested in mastering the Norse legal system than in hacking up sea monsters. But for mounting a strict historical campaign, GURPS Vikings is the book of choice.

Short and sweet

Screening the screens: Consisting of a few cardboard panels and a handful of tables copied directly from the rule books, referee screens are arguably the worst buy in gaming. Anybody with a photocopier, a pair of scissors, and a bottle of glue can put together a customized screen in an hour or two, so there's little incentive to spring for the authorized version unless you're a compulsive collector or just plain lazy.

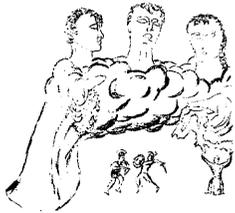
To keep the customers coming, publishers have taken to packaging a variety of bonuses with their official screens. It's been an applaudable trend, since the bonus goodies are usually more useful—and more fun—than the screens themselves. Here's a look at five different approaches from five different companies.

The most common screen bonuses are ready-to-play adventures, such as the 16-pager bundled with the VAMPIRE* game's *Storyteller's Screen* (White Wolf, \$8). An author who prefaces his vampire adventure with a Dostoyevsky epigram either has a sense of humor or a bad case of pretentiousness; alas, while Andrew Greenberg's "Blood at Dawn" has more than its share of gory moments, it struggles too hard to establish a creepy atmosphere, and the result is as silly as it is scary. The plot, featuring a contest for a prime hunting ground overseen by a mysterious nightclub dancer, is briskly paced, but it requires more than a little nudging from the referee to steer the PCs in the right direction. However, it's an acceptable introductory adventure, and considered with the screen-three black-and-white panels crammed with more than 20 charts and tables it is not a bad value as these things go.

The SPELLJAMMER™ AD&D® game *Dungeon Master's Screen* (TSR, Inc., \$9) includes a set of fold-up game counters, another common bonus. The eight pages of colorful, perforated counters are intended to replace the rather dreary set that came in the original SPELLJAMMER boxed set. They're nicely rendered by TSR graphics maestro, Diesel, with detachable tentacles for the squid ships and cute little

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claws for the scorpions. For the terminally inept, a full page of illustrated instructions explains how to put them together. The three-panel screen, designed by J. Paul LaFountain and Steven E. Schend, offers a good selection of ship statistics and space-combat modifiers, but since the AD&D rules are required in addition to those in the SPELLJAMMER set, DMs will probably need more than the tables provided here to adjudicate a game.

The CHAMPIONS* game's Gamemaster's Screen (Hero Games/ICE, \$12) also features a set of fold-up counters: a large sheet of generic good guys and bad guys, along the lines of the "Cardboard Heroes" series published a while back by Steve Jackson Games. Additionally, there's a 46-page play-aid booklet and a helpful collection of character-creation sheets, combat-record sheets, and even guest lists for your superhero stronghold, all suitable for photocopying. A 14-page summary does a commendable job of streamlining the excruciatingly detailed character creation procedure that's stopped many a potential CHAMPIONS game player dead in his tracks, at least in my house. The four-panel screen (with two panels including information on both sides) lists the many modifiers and maneuvers relevant to the meticulous CHAMPIONS combat system. This is an excellent package assembled by Hero Games' stalwarts Rob Bell, George MacDonald, Chad Brinkley, Aaron Allston, Coleman Charlton, and John Brunkhart.

The four-panel (two single-sided, two double-sided) screen in the STAR WARS* game's *Gamemaster Kit* (West End Games, \$12) comes wrapped around 64 pages of printed material, the centerpiece of which is an eight-episode adventure set in the chaotic Trax Sector. Written by Bill Smith and Ed Stark, the adventure stresses action over role-playing, perfect for beginning Star Warriors who get antsy if they go too long without blowing something up. The screen is the best-looking of the five considered here, artfully arranged and highlighted in white and orange for easy reference. Among the more than two dozen tables are both the obvious (Force Powers, Weapon Chart) and the esoteric (Astrogation Difficulty, Grenade Scatter). It's a good buy for harried GMs.

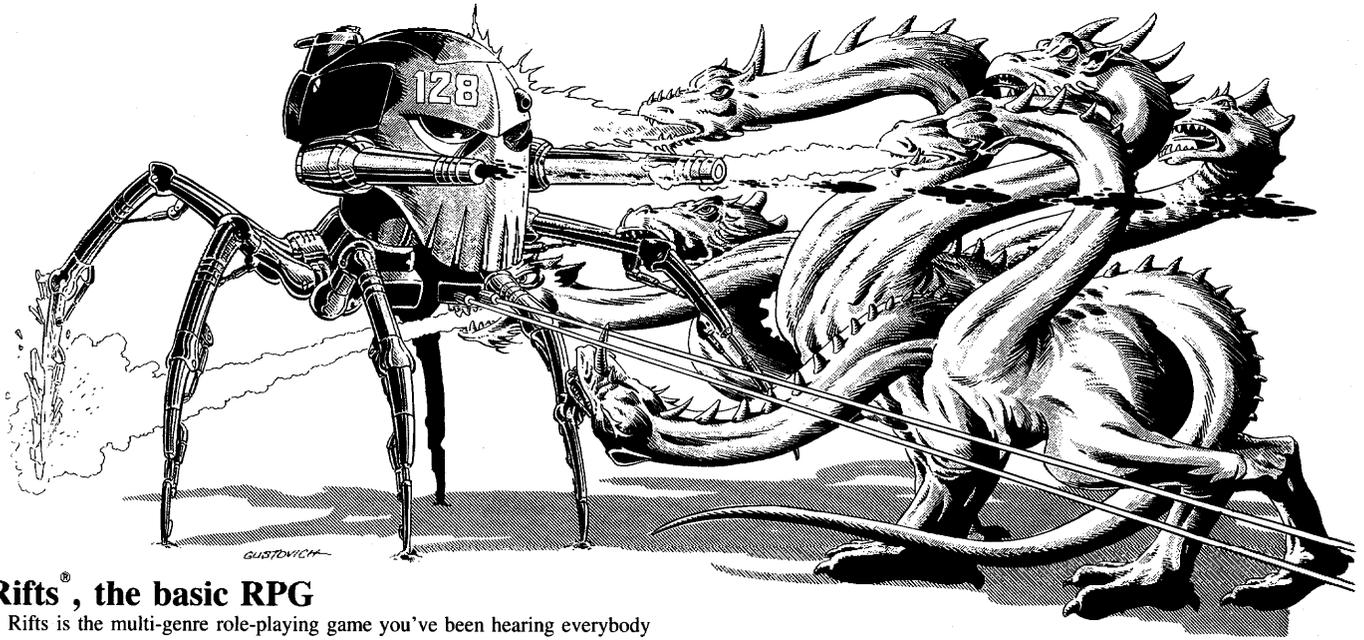
Chaosium had a garage sale and called it the *Keeper's Kit* (Chaosium Inc., \$15). It's a collection of CALL OF CTHULHU* game odds and ends not unlike the *Miskatonic University Graduate Kit* from a few years ago, this time packaged with a four-panel Keeper's screen. Among the items, most of dubious utility, are a Miskatonic note pad (a less-than-generous seven pages thick), a Miskatonic window sticker, a Mythos book cover, a promotional poster (mine's for the *Masks of Nyarlathotep* supplement), and another bunch of blank character sheets. But there's a delightful surprise hidden among the clutter: an eight-page scenario titled "The Dead-Man Stomp" by Mark Morrison and L. N. Isinwyll that's perhaps

the best short adventure Chaosium's ever published. Set in the jazz clubs of the 1920s, it's an exceptional design, featuring a haunted trumpet, a cameo by Louis Armstrong, and even a bit of pathos along with the usual shocks. As for the screen, it's adequate but nothing special. I made a better one myself.

Objective Raids, by Jeffrey Layton. FASA Corporation, \$15. BATTLETECH* game aficionados have an insatiable appetite for detail, as evidenced by the lavish attention paid to every screw and circuit of the robotic monstrosities populating the BATTLETECH universe. *Objective Raids* is more fodder for the fanatic, a thick directory of the military installations and industrial output of the hundreds of planets comprising the border of the Clan Occupation Zone. Narrative elements are all but nonexistent, and the tone is as dry as a Defense Department press release, but the amount of information is staggering. The entry for Shiro III, for instance, lists all the defenses for Irian BattleMechs and Grumman Amalgamated, along with more than two dozen on-site industrial components, including the Hermes 240 Fusion Engine and the GuideRite Laser Coordination Link Tracking System. The eyes of the uninitiated will begin to glaze by the time they reach page 20 (with only 172 to go!), but that's what separates mere mortals from hardcore BATTLETECH game players. This is nonessential but nonetheless impressive.

Vampire Kingdoms, by Kevin Siembieda. Palladium Books, \$15. Bloodsuckers to the left, bloodsuckers to the right-nope, it's not a lawyers' convention, but the cities of South and Central America, now a haven for vampires in the world of the RIFTS* game. Siembieda attempts the ultimate vampiric sourcebook and largely succeeds, thanks to a unifying concept postulating a civilization consisting of nothing but undead—in particular, master vampires (the dominating big shots), secondary vampires (traditional Dracula-types), and wild vampires (maniacal killers with poor hygiene). The details of vampire culture are lovingly and imaginatively explored, as are guidelines for refereeing vampiric characters. The book loses steam in the second half, a detour into mutant gangs and circus freaks that dilutes the impact of the central concept rather than complementing it. Though Siembieda apologizes for the absence of adventure hooks, they'd have been more welcome than the lengthy NPC descriptions. Still, this is quite an achievement and a fascinating read. Ω

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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.

Two years ago, we presented a three-part series in "Forum" on the attacks being made upon role-playing games and our readers reactions to the situation (issues #160-162). We continue our look at the problem with this column. Interested readers may also consult the editorials in issues #125, 134, 151, 158, and 171 for further commentary.

I have just finished reading the "Forum" of DRAGON issue #160. This whole "Forum" was based on the so-called bad influence and bad publicity that the DUNGEON & DRAGONS® game has received. I feel that it is about time I write and express my thoughts on this issue.

First, let me introduce myself and give you my background. I am currently a high-school graduate, soon to be going to Johns Hopkins University to major in computer science. I have been playing D&D® and AD&D® games since I was about 10. My brother introduced me to the game. He is now working on his Masters degree in biomedical engineering at the University of Southern California. In high school, I was on the soccer and track teams and in numerous school organizations. My grades have all been very good (hence being accepted to Johns Hopkins), and I like to read a lot, especially science fiction.

Not only do I play AD&D games a lot, I also listen to rock music like a regular teenager. I listen to many groups such as Led Zeppelin, Metallica, Rush, and Jimi Hendrix. To me, my family, and my friends, I am a normal person with diverse interests, not some freak who is going to kill others, or a manic depressive who is going to commit suicide. Though I cannot honestly say I am a devout Roman Catholic like my father, I still believe there is a God and certainly do not practice satanism or human sacrifice.

I hope that by reading this introduction, you, the reader, see that I am a normal person with regular problems like everyone else, none caused by AD&D games (or the music I listen to, or the books I read, or my friends). I feel that I have a bright future ahead of me that could not have been without my experience with D&D

and AD&D games.

Since I was young when I started playing, it was difficult for me. Yet I learned a lot, from the vocabulary in all the various handbooks to calculating to see if I hit a monster. Let me tell you it wasn't easy, because my brother made me do it all. I did the basic stuff, as well as thinking of strategies, puzzling through hints, and taking chances to keep my characters alive, and I still had fun in the game.

Later, I became a DM and found that to be even harder. Here you virtually have to write a book, but still allow for all the diverse decisions the PCs make. It works not only on your imagination but on your reasoning abilities. One has to make sure all the different factors of the game are balanced. Most of all, I had to make sure my brother had fun while I had fun. Looking back now, I see that it also brought my brother and I closer together (whether he realizes this or not).

Now, on to other things about the games not specifically concerning me. In the "Forum" letters I read, the people mentioned "experts" who had figures or cases that proved that D&D and AD&D games were a bad influence. Well, I think that is a big crock. One person quoted another magazine to say D&D games makes kids have no interest in school, become careless with their homework, and bypass eating, among other things. The same happens to adults [it was said], but they ignore work and family. I hate to break it to you folks, but doesn't watching football do similar things? The father and his friends sit around the TV, drink beer, and ignore others (except to yell to the wife to get some more beer). I'm not saying that every family is like that (mine isn't) nor that all families have problems like that, but some do, just like some people who play D&D and AD&D games do. You can't blame it on the game, just as you can't blame things on sports, beer, music, or the books we read. The problem is the people; they need help and love from family and friends. That is the answer to any problem.

I've tried to say a lot in as short a space as possible. I have no idea if this letter will be published anywhere, but I had to have my say. If any of it is confusing, do some research on the subject. I first learned how to research from creating my own campaign, way before I learned it in school. Anyway, I hope whoever reads this is not insulted and will try to see things from all angles. Thank you for your time and for your greater understanding about role-playing games, not just the D&D and AD&D games.

Ralph deGennaro
Canton NY

Although I live in Australia, I have been a dedicated AD&D player for nine years now. I see very few, if any, letters from fellow Australians published in your excellent magazine. However, after reading the "Forum" of issue #160, I felt the need to express our viewpoint on attacks made on our game.

We tend to follow your news a great deal. Whenever you experience a media "earthquake," we experience the aftershock. Our combined media have created immense ill-will within the community against role-players. We have been slammed by church officials and called satanists and devil-worshippers. Propaganda-drenched critics suggest that we are suicidal and a menace to society. As a result, in many areas we rarely admit to playing AD&D games for fear of the backlash.

I cannot see the basis for these slanderous assaults. Our AD&D game sessions consist of seven or eight guys and girls getting together and having a great time. There is no devil-worshipping, no physical violence, and absolutely no hint of suicidal mania. The AD&D game is as about as threatening to society and the individual as a friendly game of cards or snooker.

It is a sad state of affairs indeed when leading media spokespeople and church officials have the audacity to attack an enjoyable and safe pastime publicly. Have these people nothing better to do with their time and influence than jump at ghosts that do not even exist?

Shane F. Cameron
Carlingford, NSW, Australia

I have been playing role-playing games for four years now and have loved every minute of it. About two years ago, a friend and I would play every week for about two hours. I don't go to church and I'm not very religious, but he was. One day, he told me he did not want to play. When I asked him why not, he started telling me about how the games have to do with satanism. He told me that his aunt brought a video tape that explained that people who play DUNGEON & DRAGONS games worship the devil, drink blood, and do all kinds of sick stuff like that. He said his aunt took the tape home, so I never got to see it. I have heard people talk about that before, but I can't believe people could think that about a game.

I lost a good friend two years ago, and I will never find anyone like him again, so I am writing to DRAGON Magazine to ask what to say to these kinds of people.

John McCord
No address given

A trip to the local supermarket may not be expected to have infuriating results, but mine did. While passing through the frozen foods section, I encountered a turntable rack upon which were several magazines and romance novels. Among these, however, was a copy of a book, a supposed "expose" of satanism, entitled *Devil on the Run*. The book connected witchcraft and black magic with teen suicide, and D&D, AD&D, and other fantasy role-playing games to witchcraft and black magic!

Why can't this man and others like him look for the real causes of teen suicide, which is a very definite problem today, instead of blaming dark magic, which doesn't even exist, and FRPGs, which have been proven to be more helpful than detrimental?

Third, linking teen suicide to witchcraft is unfounded, and linking D&D games to witchcraft is, too. D&D games, the third link on a nonexistent chain, shouldn't be connected to this nonsense, but it is. The author of that book probably knew less than nothing about role-playing. . . . What's wrong with society? Aaargh!

Brian Phillips
Ponca City OK

As a player, parent, and preacher, I feel qualified to speak from three different viewpoints on the "demons" controversy in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. [See "*The Game Wizards*" in issue #154 and the editorial in issue #1.57 for details.]

As a player, I believe that demons should remain available for those who want to use them. The Dungeon Master and players should decide on the inclusion of demons. Participants should observe the rule that modern religious beliefs are to be avoided and remember that the purpose of the D&D game is to have fun, not offend people. Remember that some people believe that demons are real and feel that including them in a game trivializes a serious and dangerous subject at the very least. However, I do not believe that having demons available in D&D games is any more dangerous than having them in Milton's *Paradise Lost* or Marlowe's *Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*.

As a parent, I can understand the concerns of angry moms and dads. Stories about satanic cult groups would be enough to scare anyone. Newspaper accounts usually mention that someone in these cults played AD&D games as if the game were a contributing factor to violence and crime. Also, movies and TV shows inspired by the tragic story of James Dallas Egbert make fantasy role-playing games look like a highway to hell. Some people, either by ignorance or on purpose, like to play up this imagined connection between D&D games and the destruction of the young. The controversy reminds me of Dr. Frederick Wetham's charge that comic books caused juvenile delinquency. D&D game players need to keep this in mind when defending or presenting the game. Parents also have a responsibility to inform themselves accurately about D&D games before they begin to evaluate the game. Children do not like being criticized and accused of things that are just not true. The worst problem I heard connected with D&D games is that kids get obsessed with the game to the exclusion of all else. However, I have noticed that a similar obsession with sports is called "school spirit" and is never a source of concern. Besides, if a person starts to live in a fantasy world, the problem is usually with his reality.

The big problem with a lot of families is that parents take too little time and interest in their children. It's easier to blame AD&D games [for

problems] than to get involved with their families. Also, John Warwick Montgomery said fundamentalists tend to have a generally negative reaction to "the world-separate from it! These kinds of reactions usually produce the very evils they try to stop. Ignoring drugs and illicit sex leaves children uninformed and vulnerable to these very temptations (*Principalities and Powers*, page 158). Actually our family has found D&D games to be a better source of entertainment and togetherness than an evening watching TV

Also, I have found that fundamentalists are very inconsistent when they try to root paganism out of their lives. One friend told me that he would never let his son play D&D games because he did not want his son to end up like the kid in Rona Jaffe's *Mazes and Monsters*. Knowing my friend to be a sports fanatic, I decided to have a little fun and said, "Then you should not let him play Little League. After all, you don't want him to end up like Pete Rose, do you?"

Another friend told me that D&D games should be outlawed because 95 people have died in the last decade playing them. I asked him if he believed soccer should be outlawed because 95 people were killed in one afternoon at a soccer game in Sheffield, England, last year. I also told him about the pagan origins of soccer. In ancient Egypt, ball games were played as a religious ritual, the round ball representing the sun god. Also, soccer, rugby, and football originated from a game English boys played in 1050 A.D. They kicked around a cow bladder they pretended was the severed head of a Viking, their worst enemy. I pointed out the part severed heads played in Attic mythology, like the tathlum, or in Norse mythology, like Mimir's head. My friend was not at all amused when I suggested he march on the athletic field of our local Christian college with a placard reading, "Soccer is satanic!"

Still another friend said that the D&D game was dangerous because merely playing the game could involve the occult spirits behind the wizards spells. I replied that to really be safe he should give up sports. The pagan Greeks organized sports to honor the Olympian gods. Also, each sport had its own patron god, like Castor and Pollux, the patron gods of boxing. Now, if you live in Indiana you know that the state religion is basketball, also known as Hoosier Hysteria. When someone goes on about the occult in D&D games, I point out that basketball is very similar to the Mayan game of *tlachtlitli*. The twin heroes Hunahpu and Xbalanque defeated the Lords of the Underworld at *tlachtlitli* and gained great power over the gods by their victory. When my friend tried to ridicule the idea that demons were behind basketball, I replied that it was no more silly than his belief that demons were behind D&D games. I guess their forms of pagan entertainment are okay, but mine are all wrong.

As a preacher, I am concerned not so much about D&D games as I am about the willingness of Christians to accept all this kookishness about Satan. Someone who claims to be an ex-satanist priest has an automatic audience in some Christian circles. As a result of this preaching about how the Church of Satan is going to take over the world, some people have attempted suicide and even tried to make suicide pacts with their families. When some serious research exposed one man's history of mental instability and fraudulent claims, this ex-high priest of the Church of Satan was, that they could even reach into the Pentagon and FBI and alter his history. A lot of people unquestioningly accept-

ed this explanation! This sort of gullibility is more dangerous than D&D games are supposed to be.

I would suggest that TSR expand its line of modules and produce games that would interest Christians. The works of J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis are respected by many Christians and have been turned into role-playing games by I.C.E. TSR could develop modules based on other Christian characters and literature. For example, Solomon Kane, the puritan adventurer, could easily be incorporated into role-playing games. Also, Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* could become a new game series. Steven Lawhead's *Dragon King* series is a modern example of Christian fantasy. Any Dungeon Master could develop the above examples into exciting fantasy adventures. If TSR added these kinds of games to its present line, it could convince some Christians that D&D games are not a tool of the Devil and reach a new audience.

William Michael Kelly
Winona Lake IN

[Editor's note: In 1984, Adventure Learning Systems, Inc. produced the *DRAGONRAID* game, a Christian-oriented role-playing game. In a phone conversation with a representative from that company I learned that the game was generally unsuccessful in combating the image of RPGs held by those who already opposed those games. The game is now out of print.]

I am 14 years old and have played AD&D games for a few years and have DM'ed occasionally. I would like to congratulate DRAGON Magazine for being superb, but that is not the reason why I wrote to "Forum": I wrote this letter because I'm disgusted by the narrow-mindedness of the people of my town and church concerning AD&D or any other role-playing games. People condemn players and call them satanists, people who have never seen this game played but have heard rumors of death or demonic possession supposedly caused by role-playing. I try to defend the AD&D game by explaining how it is played, but it is like speaking to a brick wall. They honestly don't want to hear. I've invited them to attend a gaming session to observe, but they don't want to get involved. I think that they themselves are afraid. The public library won't carry role-playing books because another library that carried such materials was picketed.

What I want to know is this: Why is it that when these people hear about the AD&D game, they think "occult"? What makes them believe that it is satanic? I could understand this concern if a person confused the game with reality or became obsessed, but that person would have had problems to begin with. Why can't they see that this game is merely entertainment, no more harmful than dreaming or story-telling? What can I say to them? What happened to give such a good hobby such an awful reputation?

I'd really like to see an article on how people came up with such ridiculous tales about deaths supposedly caused by AD&D games and about how to deal with such people. If anything, I could show the article to my parents. Then perhaps they'd understand that role-playing is not corrupting me.

Casey Leah Williams
Vienna WV

I recently saw a segment of the *700 Club* that dismayed and outraged me. In this particular segment, the host was interviewing a young man who had just become a Christian. This young man had been an avid player of the

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. He blamed the game for causing him to think about killing his parents and giving him a megalomaniacal complex. The program went on to condemn role-playing and the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game for warping the minds of those who got involved in these activities, and the show also accused D&D games of being an introduction into the occult. I do not begrudge the fact that this person gave up role-playing, or even the fact that this person chose to become a Christian. That was his right. What outrages me is the fact that he chose to blame role-playing, and specifically the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game, for all his problems. Role-playing games per se do not cause suicides or other personality problems, Nor does this harmless pastime serve as an introduction into the occult. The people who have these problems are going to have these problems regardless of whether they get involved in role-playing.

I have been role-playing for 10 years, with the vast majority of this time spent as a DM for the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS@ game. I have a job, am a 4.0 student at a fine college, and am not into the occult. I have encountered dozens of fellow role-players of many ages and races and both sexes. Some were good role-players, and some were bad. They all have one thing in common: Not one of them ever performed aberrant acts because of their involvement in role-playing. There are some that are involved in the occult, but they were into the occult before they began role-playing.

Role-playing is a harmless pastime that can be shared by people from all walks of life. Role-playing does not promote the occult or encourage aberrant behavior in real life. Those who get carried away with these games do so because they choose to. Role-playing games, like anything else, can be abused if not used properly. It is time that the role-playing community stood up and spoke out against this type of defamation. If not, the next target may be you or I instead of the harmless game we enjoy.

Walter Roberts
Georgetown SC

[From a letter dated December 7, 1990:] While sitting in Saudi Arabia as part of Operation Desert Shield, I have been reading with interest the ongoing debate involving role-playing games and certain religious fringe groups. I'd like to express my views on the subject and give some advice on how to handle people who would degrade our hobby.

I am a veteran DM and player with over 10 years of gaming experience, and I am a devout Southern Baptist. I have never felt my faith being questioned when I play (and I've played all alignments and character classes, including assassins). This is easy to do when you play for pure pleasure and keep in mind that role-playing games are games. I think that part of the problem with these religious groups is that they refuse to believe that the AD&D game is a game just like Parker Brothers' MONOPOLY game, chess, or basketball. They really don't understand the idea of a game played in the imaginations of its players, a game that doesn't end and in which everyone "wins!"

I am the only person in my six-member family (including both parents) to graduate from high school, and the only person in my family to graduate from college. I have AD&D games to thank for much of that. I was introduced to gaming when I was 16, when my friends and I discovered the AD&D game. At the time, I was a fairly withdrawn underachiever. Through gaming, I learned that any obstacle can be

overcome through some very simple principles: teamwork, faith in friends, faith in your own abilities, perseverance, and dedication. These principles were buried behind piles of discarded soda cans and empty potato chip bags, and I learned them while surrounded by loyal friends who faced creatures that would make Arnold Schwarzenegger run in fear. In the meantime, my "normal" peers spent their weekends getting drunk, getting high, and taking part in other "normal" activities. By playing this "dangerous" game, my friends and I became adults. Our parents worried about us, and our high-school principal and teachers feared for our sanity, just like what is happening to many of you today.

What became of my group? The paladin is now a professional Army officer and veteran of the Panama invasion. The fighter/magic-user owns his own business. The ranger is now a successful attorney. We're well-adjusted adults who learned that nothing is impossible once you've kicked the snot out of the demi-lich Acererak from [the AD&D module] *The Tomb of Horrors*.

Finally, I'd like my fellow gamers to not judge these [critics] too harshly. Most Christians are well-meaning, open-minded people. Many just do not have the facts about RPGs and are led to believe (wrongly) that RPGs are more than a form of entertainment. If you can rationally explain your reasons for gaming and present RPGs to them in the light of commonly known games, you will find most of them accept gaming as entertainment. Explain it to your minister or school principal. Prove to them that gaming makes you a better person. Who knows? You might find a new player or two in the process!

ILT Bob MacKey
Somewhere in Saudi Arabia

I'm not an avid reader of DRAGON Magazine, but when I see an interesting one, I pick it up. Anyway, I've been playing the AD&D game for three years now, and I'm growing quite disturbed by the number of people who "bash" RPGs. My husband is stationed at Fort Lewis, Washington, and most of our good friends are gamers. The Army is probably one of the most demanding employers around, and many active duty personnel (especially single soldiers far away from home) engage in RPGs. It gives them a chance to get away and forget about their problems. When my husband goes to the field for months at a time, he takes his dice. It puts him at ease for a little while.

What I'm trying to say is that people need to vent their frustrations and get away from them. Gaming gives you a chance to be what you've always wanted to be but never had the guts to really try. There are bad apples in every bunch. We're not all crazy and suicidal! I personally can't seem to play anything but paladins. I'd like to be that good and understanding myself. But it's hard to be lawful in a world so chaotic. So, parents (I'm one myself), play it with your kids. Don't knock it till you've tried it. I'll play with my daughter, and I hope she is better for the experience.

Tammy Coppa
Fort Lewis WA

I am a gun owner, role-playing gamer, sometimes war gamer, reader of *Playboy* and other magazines banned from 7-11, science-fiction reader, and a Christian. Sound unlikely? Well, I think that most people do not fit neatly into the categories and groupings pollsters and politicians play to.

YOU are now experiencing a little of the reality of the fight I and my friends have been waging

for years in defense of our constitutional rights. Your problem (and mine) is that our enemies, and even some of our supposed "friends," are separating the Bill of Rights into acceptable and unacceptable rights instead of reading it as it was written-as an indivisible whole (suggested reading: *The Federalist Papers and the Anti-Federalist Papers*).

I would say that writing letters to the editors of your local newspaper is perhaps the best way to gain favorable attention. There are, of course, certain guidelines that should be followed. The following is a rephrased and shortened version of a letter to the editor written by David B. Kopel, appearing in the September 14, 1990, issue of *Gun Week*:

1. K.I.S.S.-Keep It Simple, 'Sam. Short letters are more likely to be published; 100 words or less is a good guide. One or two ideas can be communicated, being about as much as the average reader can grasp while on his coffee break.

2. Type-Good idea, especially if your handwriting is like mine.

3. Use clarity-Express your opinion in a forceful manner. This is where we should shine.

4. Avoid prejudice-Don't show any sort of prejudice. If you *do* have extreme opinions, *don't* put them into writing, as it might come back to haunt you. Don't make personal attacks on opponents. We're fighting the sin, not the sinners.

5. Concentrate-Emphasize the positive. Don't wander all over the map with side issues.

6. Use diplomacy-A talent or skill in some game systems, diplomacy is essential in the real world. If a news story makes an erroneous statement, offer to "clarify" a point. Don't be stamped into a blazing attack on a person or group.

7. Single out-Send your letter to one local paper at a time. Editors like to have an exclusive, so put a P.S. at the bottom making that point. Wait about 10-12 days, and if they haven't used it by then, you may feel free to send your message elsewhere.

8. Patience-If you have your letter published, wait at least a month before sending another one. "Letters to the editor" columns are a community forum; other people have a right to be heard.

9. Telephone-Your telephone number and address should appear at the top of your letter, so the paper may call to confirm your letter before printing.

10. Use a hook-You should have some sort of local or national news story to respond to. Choose something that is current to grab the readers' interest.

When I read the article referred to above, then saw the "Forum" for issue #161, I decided that I had to do something to put my money where my mouth is about role-playing games. If these guidelines help even one gamer get a letter published, I will feel that I have been of service to the hobby as a whole.

Whether you like guns or not, you have to admit that the gun owners of the U.S. have become a very powerful political force. I believe that gamers are going to have to adapt to the changing situation and adopt some of the former's tactics. Become an issue-oriented voter if you can vote, and be a persuasive letter-writer (if you can't vote yet). The battle is unending, expensive, and political. It's a dirty business, but if we don't fight for what we believe in, we deserve to lose it.

Curry A. Mosher
Wellsboro PA



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The ROLE of BOOKS

A vampire in your condominium
and the Devil's horse in your back yard

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step forward toward a new kind of "urban faerie" setting as well as a story that's hard to put down. Yet there's something missing from *Born to Run* that keeps it from reaching the top of its class.

What's missing isn't plot, because there's enough going on in this book to keep a TV series in scripts for at least a year. What's especially impressive is that though the viewpoint moves back and forth between three major protagonists, the lead villainess, and several secondary players, the novel never feels as if it's out of control. Despite the widely scattered cast, in fact, events feed smoothly into each other with just one notable breach of plausibility involving two otherwise unconnected characters who have the same contact in the Savannah police department.

Nor is it fuzziness of detail. *Born to Run* is nothing if not vivid, whether the scene is teenage runaway Tania's scruffy little shared apartment, a rural Georgia night where an old man and a young race-car driver can talk about life (never mind that

one is a mage and the other a ghost), a high-tech auto plant where a retired metallurgist is given the strangest challenge of his career, or faerie itself, where the black sheep of elvenkind plot pornographic movies as well as vengeance on their more benign cousins. And when it comes to designing unique modern-day magical artillery, the hardware in these pages is twice as wickedly ingenious as anything you've ever seen in a D&D® game wizards catalog.

For the most part, what's missing isn't characterization, either. There's Sam Kelly, who hasn't seen the Fair Folk since childhood but isn't fazed when they ask him to help design cars without using iron and steel parts. There's Tania, who's escaped a smothering family life only to find that the streets are no kinder and often far more dangerous. There's Ross Canfield, who has only just realized he's a ghost and promptly begins making up for lost time in more ways than one. And there's Tannim, whose passion for fast cars is equaled only by his passion for magic-and his skill with both.

But that's the human cast, and *Born to Run* is only partially about humans. Tannim and Sam's employers are elves adapting to modern civilization; while Lackey and Dixon sketch the dynamics of that tricky pursuit as skillfully as they outline the rest of the plot, the elves themselves don't come across as markedly different from their mortal associates. They may be long-lived and possessed of powers and homelands inaccessible to humanity, but they are remarkably humanlike in the ways they think and act, no more unusual in mind or outlook than a community of Amish folk or a band of '60s hippies.

Is it fair to complain about something the novel is not when it does so well on so many other fronts? Perhaps not, but one

BORN TO RUN

Mercedes Lackey & Larry Dixon

Baen 0-671-72110-0 \$4.99

There's a lot to like about this first novel in another new series, this one collaborative. As a rapid-fire adventure full of exotic cars, all-too-real street culture, and diabolically inventive magical melees, it's a

of the appeals of "urban faerie" settings is the interaction of the unknown world and its denizens with our own environment, and it's frustrating to find that quality lacking here. But if *Born to Run* doesn't quite capture the slightly surreal mystique of faerie riders racing beneath a full moon, it's still got the tightly controlled energy and lean contours of an expertly tuned Mustang Mach 1 like Tannim's. Don't be surprised if you hear a "Vroom!" when you pop the cover.

ESCAPE FROM LOKI

Philip José Farmer
Bantam Falcon 0-553-29093-2 \$4.50

PYTHON ISLE

Kenneth Robeson
Bantam Falcon 0-553-29357-5 \$4.50

If Doc Savage isn't the definitive pulp hero, he's certainly one of the most durable, and these two novels mark the beginning of a new round of adventures for the Man of Bronze. Yet neither Philip José Farmer's tale of Doc's origins, nor Doc's first new adventure from Will Murray (who takes over the Kenneth Robeson pseudonym from its late creator, Lester Dent) succeed in capturing the spirit of the old pulp adventures.

In Farmer's case, the results appear to be deliberate. To give Doc Savage a proper origin story, Farmer adopts a World War I setting in which Doc and his future associates are thrown together when their assorted military activities lead to their capture and imprisonment by a German scientist who's doing mysterious weapons research. There's little pyrotechnic adventure here; rather, Farmer combines a straightforward war story with a cursory look at Doc's coming of age. The result is strong on atmosphere, but weak on plot and surprisingly thin on character development; the narrative recounts moments of intellectual and emotional insight as bluntly as it describes conditions in Baron von Hessel's prison camp, nicknamed Loki.

Will Murray's *Python Isle* does a better job of mining pulp traditions in a story involving a lost-island civilization, several sets of unscrupulous treasure hunters, and a series of chases leading halfway around the world. Murray efficiently juggles the elements of mysticism, science fiction, and crime-busting characteristic of Doc's exploits, and he stages several dramatic captures and escapes in the course of the adventure.

But Murray loses more points for inept writing than he gains for clever plot ideas. The prose in *Python Isle* is almost too clumsy to be believed, full of overlong sentences, awkward verb constructions, words that simply don't fit, and characters who bellow, squeak, exclaim, boom, and wail far more often than they simply say something.

The combined results are little short of disastrous for fans of the pulp-hero genre.

The Farmer story is acceptable reading but doesn't offer much to be mined for game-campaign ideas, while the useful scenery and staging in Murray's offering can be obtained only at the cost of wading through startling amounts of unappealing narration.

That's a shame, because the original Doc Savage tales are a clear if subconscious part of the foundation on which modern role-playing games are built. More than most other pulp series, those early novels drew their appeal from team efforts and a sense of constant battle-readiness. Neither Farmer nor Murray captures the essential Savage spirit, leaving gamers interested in borrowing from Doc Savage mythology the increasingly difficult chore of tracking down copies of the original books.

HORSE FANTASTIC

edited by Martin H. Greenberg
& Rosalind M. Greenberg
DAW 0-88677-04-3 \$4.50

The combination of horses and magic apparently postdates the average AD&D® campaign; of the 17 tales in *Horse Fantastic*, 11 are set in the present day, one is a Biblical fable, and just five are heroic fantasy. But even if this anthology isn't a gamer's idea-mine, it's still a remarkably effective and surprisingly diverse collection of stories about horses and the people who live with and care for them.

A number of the writers are familiar favorites: historical fantasist Judith Tarr, sword-and-sorcery novelist Jennifer Roberson, Elizabeth Moon of the Paksenarrion trilogy, and prolific storytellers Mike Resnick and Mercedes Lackey. Except for Lackey, whose contribution is a brisk vignette about a character in her *Heralds of Valdemar* series, most of these veterans offer stories outside their usual boundaries.

Tarr, herself a horsewoman, draws a clear-eyed portrait of a small riding school and its unexpected secret. Roberson's tale abandons epic adventure for a dark-edged peek at the rodeo circuit. Josepha Sherman's story trades the Slavic setting of her two previous novels for a New York race-track and a ghostly predawn ride. Though one of Mary Stanton's two contributions keeps the mythology developed in *The Heavenly Horse from the Outermost West*, it trades that books contemporary setting for a much older milieu, while Stanton's second piece is a quick setup for a science-fictional punch line.

Of the lesser-known authors, Lee Barwood and Barbara Delaplace stand out with well-characterized stories about solitary women and their unusual equine associates, one a spirit trapped in a statue and the other a seemingly orphaned pegasus. Though the plots are similar, the executions are a study in contrasts: Barwood's tale is moody and mysterious, while Delaplace handles hers with a light, wry touch. Mike Resnick and Mickey Zucker Reichert display equal diversity in the collection's two deal-with-the-devil

yarns. Resnick's brief anecdote is good for a laconic chuckle, where Reichert instills a gradually building desperation in her longer entry. Charles Ingrid's "The Phantom Watch" is the collection's one skillfully told nod to pure sword-and-sorcery.

An interest in horsemanship is probably an asset for readers of this anthology, but it's hardly a prerequisite. What *Horse Fantastic* does best is to demonstrate that there's no one right approach to a subject, and it takes only an interest in good storytelling to appreciate the books ample merits.

TOM SWIFT #6: AQUATECH WARRIORS

Victor Appleton
Archway 0-671-67828-0 \$2.99

TOM SWIFT #7: MOONSTALKER

Victor Appleton
Archway 0-671-75645-1 \$2.99

At first glance, Tom Swift looks like the longest-lived teenage adventure hero in the business, with adventures dating back well into the early part of this century. In fact, he's the only hero of that period who actually grew up; the Tom Swift of the current series is the original Tom's grandson. This latest round of Swiftian tales continues the cycle's twin traditions of fast-paced action and exotic-yet-plausible science-fictional gadgetry.

Both *Aquatech Warriors* and *Moonstalker* get points for not straying too far into rubber science. In the former book, the lead inventions are a streamlined and enhanced deep-sea diving suit and an assortment of exotic submersibles; there's also a laser wristwatch, but it's there more for flavor than anything else. The novel gets especially good marks for *not* giving any of these gadgets plot-busting powers; it opens with a test of the laser watch going wrong. A flaw in the diving-suit design nearly gets Tom killed, and a rescue involving one of the submersibles finds Tom's sister, Sandra, deliberately taking the craft beyond its designed stress limits.

Moonstalker gets less of its plot from Swiftian inventions but compensates by showcasing a plausible NASA space-shuttle mission. We get to see Tom going through a condensed astronaut-training program, then follow the title spacecraft into orbit, where it's promptly marooned through the machinations of an elusive saboteur. The eventual reversal of fortunes highlights Tom's ability to think on his feet and take advantage of existing resources rather than pulling electronic rabbits out of the author's hat.

If there's a particular weak spot in this pair of novels, it's that they're a bit too much alike for their own good. Both books find Tom and his friends battling industrialists bent on world domination. That would ordinarily be cause to complain about repetitive plotting, but as "Victor Appleton" is a composite identity for a

host of writers working independently, the glitch is more accurately blamed on unfortunate scheduling than on authorial carelessness.

In fact, the Swift series is fairly well packaged for its kind. *Moonstalker* refers to further testing and development of an invention highlighted two books previously, and *Aquatech* Warriors brings back an archvillain introduced in the first book of the current sequence. The cover designs are smooth and crisp, though the artist badly needs to emphasize colors other than blue. Overall, readers in search of tightly plotted high-tech suspense could do far worse than to acquire a taste for Tom Swift.

DRAGON SEASON

Michael Cassutt

Tor 0-812-50392-9 \$4.99

We begin *Dragon Season* with a mystery: U.S. Air Force lieutenant Rick Walsh has just returned from an overseas assignment to find his girlfriend missing, leaving behind a month-old son and a puzzling videotape. Finding Maia merely substitutes one enigma for another—because she's from a universe next door to ours, and there's a dangerous connection between her disappearance and a top-secret missile project going on outside Tucson, Arizona.

What's eminently likeable about Michael Cassutt's narrative is that it takes this conventional premise and executes it with a sharp, common-sense eye for both the military mindset and the Southwestern setting. What's more, Cassutt doesn't graft an ordinary quest or a cardboard villain onto this plot. The focus stays on Rick, Maia, and baby Gus, whose great-grandfather just happens to be a god. Unfortunately, the gods powers are waning, and an ambitious political faction in Maia's world has taken advantage of that fact to launch a military campaign using technology stolen from our world.

The war effort itself, though, is really secondary to the resolution of Ricks relationship with Maia, which has been severely complicated by their abrupt immersion in Maia's home culture. Cassutt does a solid job of creating a society that's weirdly different while echoing elements of our own civilization, and the individual characterizations are equally polished blends of the alien and the familiar. Though the climax has its share of high-powered pyrotechnics, the dragons of the books title are mostly window-dressing on a story about commitments, ethics, and a choice of futures.

If that makes *Dragon Season* sound like heavy or intimidating reading, it shouldn't. The book is smoothly written and almost too low-key for its own good, to the extent that it could very nearly be described as science fiction rather than fantasy. (Thematically, you could also call it a techno-thriller, except that it doesn't have nearly enough sex and violence in it to qualify for that title.) Michael Cassutt has

accomplished the rare feat of writing a genre novel that turns most of the genre's conventions inside out without losing its readability. The only question remaining is what he's likely to do for an encore.

A MATTER OF TASTE

Fred Saberhagen

Tor 0-812-52575-2 \$3.99

At least a dozen different writers have produced tales of modern-day vampires, and at least half of them borrow directly from the Dracula legend. In that field, Fred Saberhagen's distinction is that no one else is as good at combining Dracula's memories of Renaissance history with the ingredients of a modern occult thriller. *A Matter of Taste* has both, in an amiably tense narrative that puts this series back at the top of its class.

The historical plot takes Vlad Drakulya (Saberhagen's spelling) to Rome, involving him in the alchemical and political intrigues of the legendary Borgias at the dawn of the 16th century. Meanwhile, someone in modern Chicago has taken an interest in "Matthew Maule," the name under which Dracula lives quietly in a perfectly ordinary high-rise condominium. Before long, it's clear that Dracula's enemy knows exactly who and what he is—but the purpose of his vendetta remains obscure until very late in the game.

Saberhagen has always had a good ear for Dracula's literary voice, and the vampire's narration of the historical chapters is as sharp as ever. The novel is no substitute for a full-fledged biography of the Borgia family, but it's a lively introduction that should send readers cheerfully off for more details about some of the deadliest and most devious plotters in all history.

The modern elements of the series have been less consistent, but Saberhagen has them well in hand this time out. Investigator Joe Keogh and his brother-in-law, John Southerland, are back from earlier books, and their familiarity with Dracula's history plays neatly against the uncertainty of John's fiance, Angie, who's just being introduced to "Uncle Matthew" when events suddenly erupt into crisis mode. And Dracula is not the only vampire in the case; his adversary, it seems, is also one of the undead. More than that—Valentine Kaiser very nearly manages to destroy the one-time Prince of Wallachia without so much as crossing his threshold.

Saberhagen is also skillful at turning bits of vampire lore into story points, and *A Matter of Taste* has a healthy dose of these. We are given a look at Dracula's awakening from death into undeath, find him using state-of-the-art technology to overcome his lack of a reflection, and see several demonstrations of the vampiric inability to enter a dwelling uninvited. But while Saberhagen is among the most generous of novelists in endowing his vampires with all their traditional powers, he avoids making them infallible, and the outcome of the adventure depends less on

occult ability than on good old-fashioned human cleverness.

The thorough treatment of vampiric abilities and the compactness of the modern plot thread should make this tale a valuable resource for players of any game in which the undead figure. But even those who don't have vampires looking over the shoulders of their player-characters should find the novel a lively, suspenseful yarn.

Recurring roles

A new rule of fantasy: If it's the second book of a two-part story from Barbara Hambly, look for the unusual. The *Magicians of Night* (Del Rey, \$5.99) takes a story that began in one of Hambly's crisp if traditional imaginary worlds and transfers the protagonist lock, stock, and spectacles into Nazi Germany in the early years of World War II. The result is a tale that's grim and desperate, yet inspiring. Better still, while it pulls no punches on atmosphere, it avoids the sin of overplaying an abstract moral agenda in favor of a relentless focus on the characters. This is one of Hambly's best.

Bardic Voices I: The Lark and the Wren (Baen, \$4.99) finds Mercedes Lackey beginning another entirely new series, this one concerning a world distinctly different from that of the Heralds of Valdemar. The political intrigues are more complex and less principled, for one thing, and there's a subtle weaving of very old Celtic material on the musical side of the plot. At the same time, though, there's almost too much story for the characters, to the extent that no crisis really lasts long enough for the reader to feel the danger properly. It's a good read and the change of emphasis is welcome, but it's just a touch too brisk.

Simon R. Green, meanwhile, brings readers a fifth tale of city guards Hawk and Fisher in *Guard Against Dishonor* (Ace, \$3.99), this time separating the husband-and-wife team when each is individually thought to have betrayed their positions of trust. This is one of the better entries in what's been an uneven series; where Green's plots have sometimes failed to mesh with the rough-and-tumble setting, the mix of torn loyalties and a magically enhanced drug scheme fits well on the rugged streets of Haven.

Meanwhile, Lawrence Watt-Evans presents a decidedly rural yarn in his loose series of Ethshar fantasies. In *The Blood of a Dragon* (Del Rey, \$4.99), a hunt for the title substance leads young Dumery far from his comfortable city home in search of an interesting apprenticeship. Find one he does, though not without considerable interference from the witch Teneria, hired by his parents to find him and bring him back. But it's not the apprenticeship he expects, and gamers who have always wondered where wizards' supplies came from will be intrigued by Watt-Evans's handling of the matter. Ω

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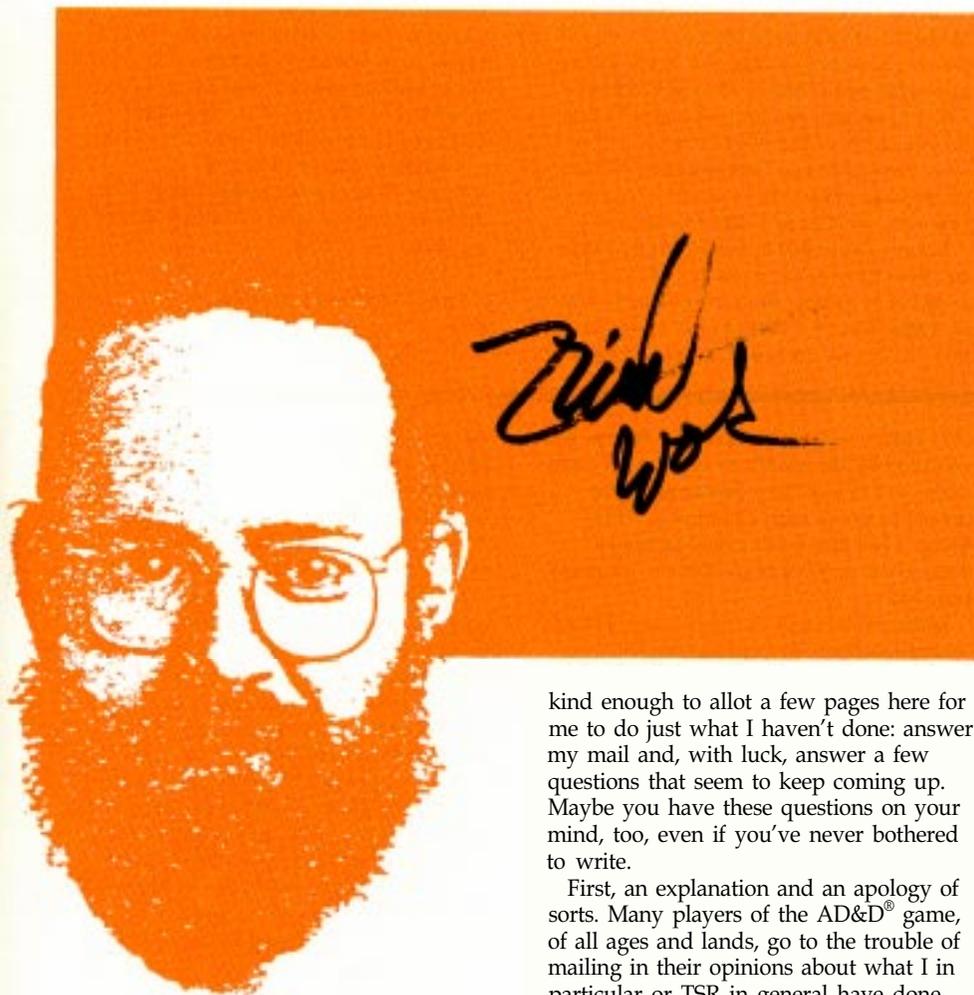
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The Game Wizards

Unanswered mail-answered at last!

by David "Zeb" Cook



I was cleaning out my office today-I being "Zeb" Cook, the game designer at TSR who is usually referred to as "older than dirt" (or, by now, probably older than fossilized stone). Anyway, I was cleaning out my office, and by the time I had moved around the stacks of paperbacks, magazines, newspapers, CDs, toy robots, and reference books, I had a fistful of letters, each read but unanswered. All this led me to two conclusions. One, my office is still a mess. Two, I'm terrible at answering mail. Fortunately, Roger Moore, the editor of this esteemed publication, was

kind enough to allot a few pages here for me to do just what I haven't done: answer my mail and, with luck, answer a few questions that seem to keep coming up. Maybe you have these questions on your mind, too, even if you've never bothered to write.

First, an explanation and an apology of sorts. Many players of the AD&D® game, of all ages and lands, go to the trouble of mailing in their opinions about what I in particular or TSR in general have done. Some letters are nicely complimentary, and others are not-but I read every one that is sent to me, even if I don't write an answer. Fortunately, the mail is not a deluge (it's only a few letters a week), or I'd never get any work done. As far as writing replies goes, my family and friends are lucky to get a letter once a year from me! I'm not a letter-writing kind of guy. Anyway, on to business.

Scott G. was one of several people who wrote with the observation that "there was no monster appendix" in the AD&D 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Yes,

this was intentionally left out. The topic of monsters continually expands and changes. When we did the 2nd Edition *DMG*, we had not written up all the monsters that now appear in the *Monstrous Compendium* appendices. In fact, we had no *Monstrous Compendium* at all at the time, so it was impossible to include a monster listing in the *DMG*. (If we had, how many gamers would have been upset once the *Monstrous Compendium* expanded that list?) We also never considered the material on monsters appropriate there; creatures deserve their own reference. Did we mean to cheat people? No-even before the AD&D 2nd Edition game was released, it was assumed that three books were that game's necessary core.

Of course, TSR hasn't stopped putting out expansions to and additional material for the AD&D game, and that leads to confusion about rules that contradict each other. Alan T wanted to know just why the rules for berserkers in the *Vikings Campaign Sourcebook* didn't match those in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*, and just how he should resolve it. Noel G. noticed that the description of the city of Verbobonc in the module *Vecna Lives!* didn't match that in the module *Fate of Istus*. Since I wrote *Vikings* and *Vecna Lives!*, I guess I'm sort of guilty.

In the case of the *Vikings Campaign Sourcebook*, there was no error. The *VCS* creates rules for a particular time, place, and mindset. Its berserker was created to match the details of Viking lore and leg end; *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* rules for berserkers were just "wrong" for the *VCS*. As for the city of Verbobonwell, what can I say. Oops. I missed the fact that Verbobonc had been described in *Fate of Istus*. (I still like my Verbobonc better.)

To avoid getting myself in that kind of trouble again, I have to answer several pleading letters from Domingo Q. with a straightforward "I haven't a clue." He wanted to know in what year (WORLD OF GREYHAWK® campaign time) several module adventures were supposed to take place-Temple of *Elemental Evil*, *Scourge*

of the *Slave Lords*, *Vecna Lives!*, etc. I could guess, but I'd almost certainly be wrong, so I won't. Modules seem to float in their own time-space continuum, bursting into existence just when your player characters are ready for them. Remember, all fantasy time is convenient.

In the vein of convenience, I hereby grant Dennis F. permission to make up whatever rules he feels like for his game. Not that he needs my permission or that I have any official authority in these matters, but he was kind enough to ask. (However, Dennis, remember that there might be good reasons why your players complain that things are not fair.) As for writing FORGOTTEN REALMS® and SPELLJAMMER™ novels, that is not up to me but to the esteemed editors of the book department at TSR.

The Brothers Apocalyptic (yes, that's how it's signed) bitterly take me to task about that same issue of freedom. (Like I said, everything both good and bad gets read.) First, I don't have "lackeys" and the other designers around here would whack me if I said otherwise. Second, I don't dictate what is or is not official in the AD&D 2nd Edition game, and I don't want to stifle anyone's imagination. There are a lot of people here with a lot of ideas and opinions, most of the time different from mine-but that's what makes things fun.

Do we really need an *Arms and Equip-*

ment Guide, the Brothers Apocalyptic demand? That's like asking if you "need" a particular television program. If you don't like the program, don't watch it. If you don't like a guide, don't use it. Nobody forces anybody to buy anything. The Brothers complain about the number of *Monstrous Compendium* appendices, but my only answer is not to buy them. Not every product is going to appeal to every person, so pick what you like and avoid the rest.

Jon E. is full of questions over a range of things. So, in the *Jeopardy* vein, the answers are: kite-flying (mostly two-line, for those who know) and cooking; for about 16 or 17 years; a few; yes; yes, of course; it's quite different and the first two adventures are sheer brilliance; gnomes; and "Oops." The questions, in no particular order, are: Have you ever played the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game before? Do you have any sayings for getting rid of powerful items? What are your hobbies? Are you on any production teams? What do you think of the new DARK SUN™ set? How long have you been playing? What sort of characters do you prefer? Have you ever written any adventures?

Innumerable folks, like Buddy B., want to know how to get a job at TSR, Inc. (or, as Mark W. put it, "how you became one of TSR's brass"). I don't know about brass, but I do know there's no magic formula or

course to become a game designer. We have hired ex-teachers (like me), fresh college graduates, ex-computer programmers, ex-reporters, ex-editors (hmm!), ex-sailors, and ex-designers from other game companies. Certainly clear and fast writing is a big plus, along with a knowledge of TSR games, but imagination and creativity are a must and that's something that just can't be taught. Even with all the right "qualifications" the odds are still very slim. There are only six designers who work full-time for TSR, so you can imagine the competition is rather fierce.

Ilya B. wonders where I get my ideas. I'm not really sure, but it does involve a lot of reading. Currently, my bookshelf here has things like an old Sears Roebuck catalog, a textbook on fossils, *Maneaters of India*, collections of Scandinavian folktales, several histories of England, a book of uniforms from the Renaissance, several sagas, some books on architecture, *The Junks and Sampans of the Yangtze*, and other stuff. Any one of these might be useful for an idea, floor plan, illustration, or monster. You never know.

Finally, "I was wondering if you'll be designing a third edition?" was the terrifying question of Jason S.

AAAAAAAHHHHHH!

Thanks for writing everyone-and keep it up. Ω

That's Certainly Un-Familiar!

Continued from page 28

A familiar should develop new capabilities gradually, not in dramatic leaps in power level. A familiar shouldn't jump suddenly from intelligence 12 to intelligence 18, but should see its intelligence rise in modest steps. A black cat familiar should be able to speak with other felines before learning to speak with all mammals and ultimately with all animals.

Similar powers gained in succession shouldn't be stacked atop one another, but should supplant lesser powers. The black

cat's ability to speak with other felines is replaced by the ability to speak with mammals, which is in turn replaced by the power to speak with all animals. This keeps a familiar from retaining lesser redundant powers as its abilities progress upward.

Specialist wizards can cause problems where familiars are concerned. Since abjurers cannot learn alteration spells and invokers and necromancers can never acquire enchantment spells, one or more of these specialists may be prevented from using spells of the *familiar enhancer* series. Diviners and invokers, prohibited from using conjuration/summoning spells, cannot even learn *find familiar*. To encour-

age greater involvement of familiars in play, the DM might bend the rules and exempt these spells from the usual prohibitions, permitting any specialist the chance to boast of having a kindly-or cruel-animal companion.

The DM can still forbid a familiar from gaining powers that too closely resemble those from a school of magic its wizard is barred from learning. A gnome illusionist's ferret familiar, for instance, would never receive any abjuration powers, in which case this ferret lacking such useful protective powers deserves special care when the DM assigns it powers if the animal is to survive the campaign's many perils.

Magical items, too, can help familiars play a more active role and can protect familiars from a hostile world, so the DM might consider adding a *leg band of protection +2*, a *falcon hood of regeneration*, or a *collar bell of opening* to an adventure's treasure hoard. The DM should review what special steps can be taken to better involve familiars at all levels of play. An animal companion that can hold its own in a grueling campaign will make for more memorable adventures, well worth the DM's extra work.

[Further information on familiars can be found in the following articles: "A Cast of Strange Familiars," in *DRAGON* issue #84 (minor correction appears in issue #85, page 4); "Familiars with a Special Use," in issue #86; "Dragons are Wizards' Best Friends," in issue #146; and "Getting Familiar" in issue #147.] Ω



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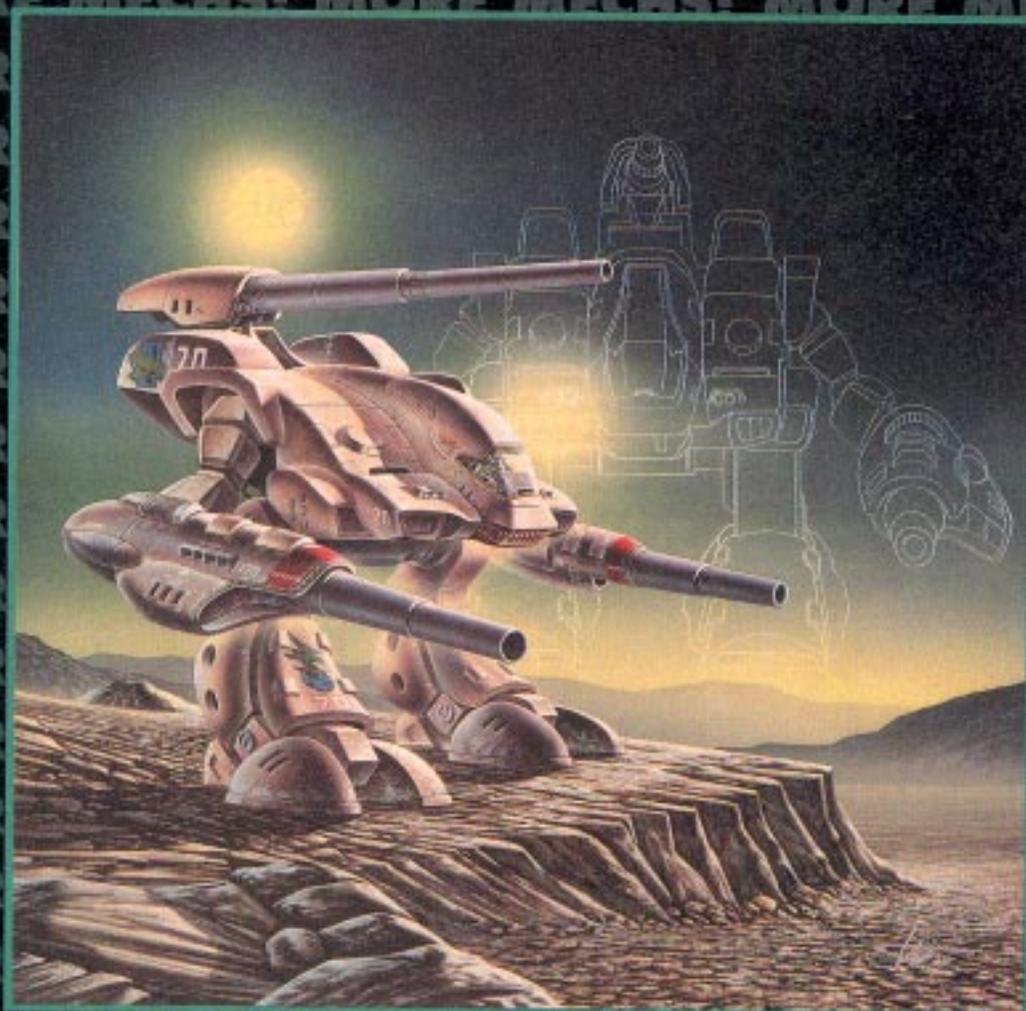
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A very Special Agent

by Tony Lee
Artwork by Gerald P. Sawyer

New advantages and disadvantages for the TOP SECRET/S.I.TM game

Before the revised edition of the TOP SECRET[®] game was published, Administrators were sometimes dogged by persistent players who wanted special abilities for their agents—those “please give my character something unique to make him better than the other characters” request that all GMs get. On rare occasions, the tavor

might be granted—for a price, of course. But other players, unfortunately, would find out soon enough and demand equal treatment. Players might not know why their agents are working for Orion or the CIA, how many luck points their agents have, or even who killed Laura Palmer, but they always know when the Admin cut a deal behind their backs.

Then came the revised TOP SECRET/

S.I.TM game, saving the day with character advantages and disadvantages. Not only was there now a way to dispense special abilities fairly, but weaknesses had to be taken to compensate! Countless Admins rejoiced, believing they’d heard the last of it—until someone, flipping through the rules book while creating a character one day, muttered to himself, “Gee, the advantage I want isn’t in here. I’d better give my



good buddy the Admin a call.”

No matter how many rules you pack into a game, someone is bound to ask for something that’s not there. As an Administrator, I have had to create new advantages and disadvantages to satisfy players and to fill my own needs for NPCs. I imagine other Admins have had to do the same, too. Some people think it’s no big deal, and they are right. In fact, besides listening patiently to the demands, determining the parameters of proposed advantages and disadvantages, outlining their obvious and intangible effects, filling in game-related details, ascertaining that no part is too potent or ineffectual, bargaining until the cost sounds reasonable, worrying how it can be taken advantage of, checking for any contradictions of the rules, soliciting promises to never exploit any unforeseen loophole, playtesting, more playtesting, and more worrying, it’s a snap.

Given below are new advantages and disadvantages for Admins and players alike to add to their games. For those of you who have wanted to drop weaknesses or pick up extra advantages for your character, note that after the advantages and disadvantages come rule suggestions and guidelines for doing just that.

Advantages

Combat Aptitude (3 or 6 points)

This advantage makes the agent more of a fighting machine, as he takes advantage of a natural affinity for certain forms of fighting. For three points, the agent may choose one of the three combat skill categories (ranged weapons, close-combat, or hand-to-hand combat fighting styles) and add 10 to die rolls for skills in that category. For six points, he adds 20 to those rolls.

Driving Ability (1,2, or 3 points)

Characters with this advantage pick up driving skills more easily than those without it. For each point purchased, an agent receives + 10 to his skill check.

Internal Clock (2 points)

With Internal Clock, an agent can almost always tell what time it is. Like Internal Compass, no roll is required if he has clues (the sun, moon, stars, etc.); otherwise, he needs an INT check to gauge the time. Changes of time zone or unconsciousness will rattle an agent’s mental clock until the agent learns the new time.

Piloting Ability (2 points)

The agent is naturally proficient with aircraft, and learning to pilot a new craft is rarely a problem. This advantage allows the player to add + 10 per level to his agent’s skill-check rolls after buying zero levels of piloting skills normally.

Survivalist (3 or 6 points)

This is the perfect advantage for outdoorsmen. Three points allows a character

to add + 10 to die rolls for First Aid, Fishing, Navigation, Tracking, and all Survival skills, after buying zero levels normally. This advantage also enhances the chance of survival in unfamiliar environments for which no skills are available, yielding a + 10 bonus to relevant rolls. For six points, the agent gains a +20 bonus to the rolls above.

Disadvantages

Manias (1,2, or 3 points)

The agent has an irrational compulsion or obsession that causes aberrant behaviors, like pyromania (a morbid fascination with fire that often drives its victims to commit arson for no other reason than to watch the flames) or dipsomania (which compels one to drink excessively whether it is wanted or not).

About once every adventure or two, the Admin should set up an encounter that can trigger the mania. A WIL roll is needed for the agent to control himself, but at - 10 for every point in the mania. For example, if the agent has two points of kleptomania, the compulsion to steal, he must make a -20 WIL roll to keep from trying to swipe objects, regardless of their value, when nobody is looking.

Mute (3 points)

The agent has lost the ability to speak or produce any vocalizations. He cannot communicate with others except through writing or sign language. This disadvantage prevents him from using verbal skills such as Mimicry and Ventriloquism.

Physical Handicap (3 or 6 points)

One of the agent’s limbs is permanently disabled, given three points. The player must roll ½ DEX or MOV for any action in which manual coordination is vital, such as tying a rope, dodging, juggling, diving for cover, running uphill, etc.

For six points, the disability extends to both arms or both legs. The agent cannot perform any manual action at all with impaired arms, and any movement with crippled legs other than a slow crawl is impossible without a wheelchair or crutches.

This disadvantage loses half its point value (rounded up) if the character supplants damaged appendages with functioning artificial replacements, as prosthetics are always less effective than the “original equipment.”

Poverty (2, 3, or 4 points)

This is the opposite of the Wealth advantage, a reversal of fortune that leaves the agent at the bottom of the economic ladder. He never has much money in his pocket because all of his income is either wasted on hedonistic pursuits or goes directly to paying off debts. Everything he owns is mediocre at best. The varying degrees of poverty are displayed in the

Poverty Table, which is similar to the table detailed in the Wealth advantage (*Player’s Guide*, page 20).

Secret (2 or 4 points)

The agent has a secret that, if revealed, can ruin him. This secret might even be one that the agent is not aware of! If he’s aware of it, he will go to great lengths to protect the secret, perhaps even to the point of sacrificing anything and anyone, including himself. The exact details of the secret must be worked out in advance between the player and the Admin, and points are given based on the potential damage of the secret can cause.

A two-point secret is something the agent wants to hide from friends and colleagues, something best left unmentioned to save himself. Being a double agent or having a double identity, having committed serious crimes (perhaps unwillingly), using illicit drugs, and having a lover who is a wanted criminal or a spy for an opposing agency all fall into this category.

Any secret worth four points is certain to bring catastrophe when revealed, dooming not only the agent but everyone around him as well. (Player characters should rarely have a secret of this level!) The details of four-point secrets usually depend on campaign circumstances. Let’s say that there’s a well-respected, filthy-rich family with a nasty skeleton in the closet (certain family members cheated on taxes and defrauded an organized crime syndicate to build the fortune), and bringing the secret out into the open will utterly destroy the family’s name and holdings, as well as endanger all who belong to the clan. It is sensible here to give every such family member the four-point secret.

If a secret is made public or no longer has any significance, the Admin might require the player to take another disadvantage of equal or greater value (one likely possibility is Traumatic Flashbacks to the time of the secret’s revelation).

Unthinking Loyalty (2 points)

The agent is so fanatically devoted to an organization that he will carry out all the agency’s commands and requests faithfully. Anytime he wishes to disobey an order, he must make a WIL roll, failure meaning that he will do exactly what he’s told to do. He can never betray the institution to which he owes his loyalty as long as he has this weakness.

New abilities

Since the rule book made no mention of how one can acquire new advantages or dump old disadvantages, players are presumably stuck forever with the ones they picked for their agents. Not only are characters deprived of any chance to develop new talents or overcome weaknesses, but there is actually little in reality to deter people from improving themselves.

Poverty Table

Points	Family status	Holdings	Allowance
2	struggling	old used car	500
3	poor	housing project	250
4	destitute	personal articles	100

There's no reason why Agent Smith can't train himself to use his off-hand. He could also gain enough confidence over the years to have Presence. And what if he finally erases Mr. Big, his "Enemy," for good?

Just how does one acquire new advantages or get rid of pesky weaknesses? Other games with similar rules on advantages and disadvantages permit changes like these by expenditure of experience points. We can thus use the TOP SECRET/S.I. game's equivalent: Fame & Fortune points.

I suggest Admins charge Fame & Fortune points equal to double the advantages and disadvantages costs: 2 F&F points to add a one-point advantage or neutralize a one-point disadvantage, 4 F&F for a two-pointer, and so on. It's also possible to raise or decrease the benefit or severity level of advantages and disadvantages by paying twice the level differential in F&F; e.g., upgrading a one-point "Athletic Ability" to

the two-point level will cost 2 F&F points, and cutting a serious four-point "Traumatic Flashback" down to a mild two-pointer will require 4 F&F. (These values can be adjusted to fit the campaign.)

As always, all changes are subject to the Admin's approval, and the Admin should bar any addition or deletion unbefitting the character's concept. To illustrate the point, let's borrow the title character of the TV series "McGyver." Good old Mac relies on ingenuity rather than .45 slugs because he has a hangup about using guns. He is, in fact, a man who's willing to find a less lethal solution to problems thanks to his Moral Qualm. While doubtlessly a disadvantage in game terms, that very reluctance is also the principal motivation behind that character's nonviolent theme. Without it, the concept is shot, as the character is no longer kept from using firearms and exerting the violence that comes with shooting, and we end up with another gun-toting action-adventure hero.

Another significant criterion to look for when changing advantages and disadvantages is consistency with both the character and campaign continuity. In other words, how the characters got his advantage or lost his disadvantage must make sense, and the change must fit into the game's story line. Usually, the players will provide explanations themselves, which can range from mundane (self-taught, professional counseling) to dramatic (winning the lottery, death of a relative). Sometimes the changes are necessitated or influenced by game results (scarred in combat, hypnotic suggestions).

In many cases, the requests for advantage or disadvantage changes can inspire game scenarios. With a dab of imagination, for example, the Admin can devise an adventure to specifically force a character to confront-and ultimately conquer-a personal phobia. To accommodate his wish of obtaining the Wealth advantage, how about sending the character on a Caribbean undersea treasure hunt or throwing him into a huge inheritance case against unscrupulous lawyers and relatives? A little creativity plus the willingness to explore possibilities are everything an Administrator needs to transform players' desires into original, exciting adventures.

Oh-and a little time off from all the suggestions for neat, new advantages and disadvantages would help, too. Ω

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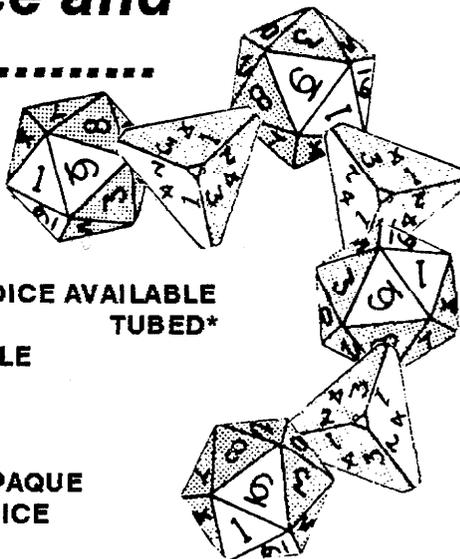
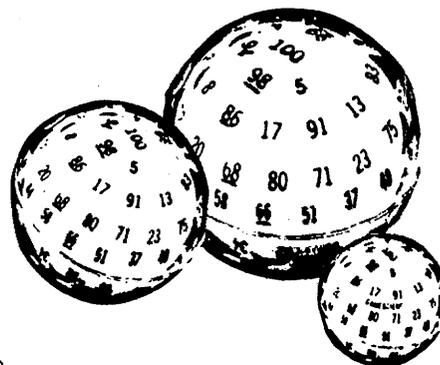
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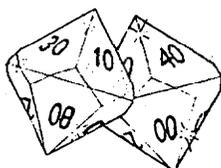


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by Steven E. Schend

THE MARVEL-PHILE

Everything Uatu™ know: the return of the colossal Bulletin Box



Well, it's been another hectic year in the MARVEL UNIVERSE™, and many more changes are taking place than your "MARVEL-Phile" scribes can keep up with. I've decided to clean my files of all my update notes and cover a whole slew of topics in one mega-Bulletin Box. This format is used when character changes are not important enough to merit either a full "MARVEL-Phile" column or a page in the *Gamer's Handbooks of the MARVEL UNIVERSE Updates* published by TSR, Inc. As we did last year in DRAGON® issue #168, we'll discuss overall team changes and news first, then turn our attention to individual figures on both sides of the law. And now, the news.

Team changes

Alpha Flight: Alpha Flight has gone through a number of membership and cosmetic changes in the past year. The entire membership of Alpha now wears uniforms for a more unified look. Of course, losing their luggage on their most recent jaunt to the United States saw Canada's heroes donning the colors of X-Factor.

The group has been restructured to better operate with the new Department H and its Canadian government contacts. Windshear is the Chief Administrator of Alpha, dealing with day-to-day operations. He and Puck are backup members of "Core Alpha," the front-line combat team of Guardian, Aurora, Northstar, Sasquatch, and Weapon Omega. Box and Diamond Lil are now married and have retired from Alpha. Shaman is still operating as an instructor for Beta Flight, and Talisman is still recuperating from injuries sustained while fighting the Master.

Avengers: The Avengers have had another rough year. Membership instability and bouts of interpersonal conflicts could soon have divisive effects on the performance of the Earth's premier fighting team. Many of the East Coast "Primary Team" have been noticeably absent from the Avengers' rank and file for months, so

many of the Reservists have seen action with the team. Current primary members are still led by Captain America and include the Black Knight, the Black Widow, Crystal, Hercules, Thor, and the Vision. The Reservists now include Captain Marvel, the Falcon, Quasar, Sersi, She-Hulk, and Spider-Man. Two probationary Avengers, Rage and the Sandman, have since left the group. Rage was relieved of his Avengers' status due to his age (14-year-old super heroes aren't eligible for Avengers' membership). The Sandman resigned his Avengers' status due to a mixup in communications with Captain America over stopping a weapons-smuggling operations. He is now a full-time member of Silver Sable's Wild Pack.

The Avengers' West Coast team has been a bit more stable after some tumultuous years. Soon after the raising of Demonica, Tigra, the Wasp, and Dr. Pym resigned from the Avengers, and Spider-Woman, Living Lightning, and USAgent were named as their replacements. The West Coast reserves now stand as Dr. Pym, Mockingbird, Tigra, and the Wasp. The chairmanship was also officially placed in Iron Man's hands, much to the chagrin of the former chairman, Hawkeye.

"Operation: Galactic Storm" has unified the Avengers into various teams for the express purpose of protecting the Earth and its sun from the excesses of the warring Kree and Shi'ar empires. The teams were assembled on the basis of their experience in space, technical know-how, and power levels. Their missions are to act as envoys to the respective interstellar empires and as protectors of Earth. The teams are as follows:

Earth Force: Dr. Pym, Wasp, Falcon, She-Hulk, Mockingbird, USAgent, Gilgamesh, Spider-Woman.

Kree envoys: Captain America, Iron Man, Goliath (Hawkeye), Hercules, Black Knight, Sersi, Crystal.

Shi'ar envoys: Captain Marvel, Scarlet Witch, Vision, Wonder Man, Starfox, Thor, Living Lightning.

Of the remaining Avengers, the Black Widow seems to be staying on hand at the New York HQ to coordinate efforts with the Earth Force and Quasar, whose duty it is to guard the stargates near the Sun. The entire scope and effect of this campaign are uncertain, but it's sure to be one of the most exciting Avengers' epics in years!

Brotherhood of Evil Mutants: The third incarnation of this mutant terrorist group has been formed by the Toad, and it includes Pyro, the Blob, Sauron, and Phantazia. It is also allied with Masque and his Morlocks, who are bent on revenge on Feral for abandoning her fellow Morlocks.

Excalibur: Finally, Britain's team of superhumans has come to the battle that it was created for! It was recently revealed that Roma was manipulating Captain Britain and the other members of Excalibur to

join together as a team for the purpose of battling certain impending evils surrounding Earth. They were recently joined by Cerise and Kylun, but the final battle against the sorcerer Necrom and the power of the Anti-Phoenix still looks grim. Cerise's power is Energy Solidification, Manipulation, and Generation at Amazing levels (for another hero with similar powers, look at Quasar). Kylun's power is minor-Sound Duplication of Incredible ability-compared to his Incredible Fighting ability and swordsmanship; Weapons Mastery gives him a +2CS with his two swords, with which he can disrupt up to Incredible magical energy.

Guardians of the Galaxy: The Guardians have now split into two teams. One is based on Earth and is led by Major Victory (see the entry "Astro, Major Vance"); its members include Charlie, Nikki, Yondu, and the newest member, Talon. They have focused their attentions on dismantling the organization of the Punishers, a group of Earth natives basing their dress and ethics on the 20th-century vigilante called the Punisher. This group was secretly under the control of the Brotherhood of the Badoon, and the Guardians are working to disrupt both Punisher and Badoon influences on Earth.

Martinex and Mainframe (the worldwide computer net that was once the Vision) are starting a new galactic-based team, with a wider range of responsibilities than the Guardians. This organization might be based around the 20th-century Avengers Bylaws. Hinted members include Replica and Firelord, but Martinex should have his Galactic Guardians up and running soon.

Character changes

As always, keep in mind a number of factors when reading the information herein. When anyone is reported dead or alive, we are simply stating the facts as they are reported to us. When we suggest probabilities for survival, we are simply judging some of the events with our prior knowledge of characters and history. Remember the ultimate rule of fictional death: If there's no body to discover, there's no guaranteed death. (It's not a hard-and-fast rule, but it does seem to hold true for many Marvel mutants!)

Deaths-Heroes:

Vindicator: The former leader of Alpha Flight, James MacDonald Hudson's recent return from the dead lasted less than a year. While half of Alpha Flight and the Avengers fought an alien invasion coordinated by the Consortium, Vindicator and the rest of the team were pressed into saving the Quirrl'n and Ganymede from Galactus and his herald, Nova. Vindicator managed to fight off the Quirrl'n's control of his mechanical side and consciously saved all his teammates and Ganymede by sacrificing his life to force Galactus away

from his intended meal.

Deaths-Villains:

Legion: The son of Charles Xavier and Gabrielle Haller died due to manipulations by the Shadow King. The multiple personalities of David Haller had fallen under the control of the Shadow King, and his body acted as the King's corporeal host on this plane. When the X-Men disrupted the Shadow King's power, the backlash from the King's death on the Astral Plane simultaneously wiped out David's mind, causing his death. Probability of survival: nil.

Magneto and his Acolytes: The mutant Master of Magnetism and his latest mutant followers were allegedly killed in the destruction of Asteroid M by an orbital Soviet laser. Probability of survival: high, due to Magneto's ability to manipulate energy and matter with his powers.

Pierce, Donald: Donald Pierce and his cyborg assassins, collectively known as the Reavers, were massacred by a number of Sentinels under the control of Fitzroy. Fitzroy used his assassination of Pierce as his membership initiation into the Upstarts. Probability of survival: nil.

Shadow King: Long thought dead after his defeat as Amahl Farouk by Charles Xavier, the Shadow King returned through the Astral Plane and possessed a number of hosts before finally being defeated by the combined efforts of the X-Men and X-Factor. Once his connections to the Earthly plane were severed, the Shadow King was destroyed on the Astral Plane by Xavier and his students, and his consciousness was dispersed. Probability of survival: questionable, since he survived an end such as this 20 years ago.

Resurrected-Heroes

Iron Fist: Daniel Rand is back from the dead after long months as a prisoner of the H'ylthri of K'un Lun. The "Iron Fist" that died was actually a H'ylthri doppelganger made to replace the hero and act as an agent for the plant creatures' invasion of Earth. Danny is now recuperating from his long captivity; all the meditation and energy of the Iron Fist has apparently cured him of his cancer.

Rasputin, Colonel Mikhail: His "death" actually a cover-up by the Soviet powers of the time, Mikhail did not perish in a spacecraft accident as was believed for years. He was instead sent through a black hole on Sakhalin Island as part of a Soviet exploratory team; he is the only survivor. He recently returned to Earth with the X-Men and his little brother, Colossus, and is recovering at the X-Men's mansion.

Swordsman: The erstwhile villain-cum-Avenger appears to have returned from beyond the grave. Little is known at this time for certain, other than he is wracked with great pain and knows everything the original Swordsman would know. Cloning has been ruled out, since all of the

Swordsman's skills were learned traits and cannot be duplicated by cellular reconstruction. The only facts known for certain are that he is accompanied by a woman known as Magdalene (who appears to have great affection for him) and is secretly backed by a mysterious and powerful man named Proctor.

Resurrected-Villains

Mystique: Mystique's death at the hands of Val Cooper many months ago was staged to sidetrack the Shadow King. Mystique defeated Cooper, placed her under Nick Fury's protection, and had herself hypnotized into believing that she was Val. With the assault on Muir Island, Mystique revealed her presence and killed one of the Shadow King's host bodies, temporarily disrupting his plans. Mystique is now a free agent after the dissolution of Freedom Force; she has not, however, returned to her former life of crime. Perhaps by next year, she will no longer be considered a villain.

Silvermane: The cybernetic crimelord, Silvio Manfredi (a.k.a. Silvermane), is still alive despite apparent stoppage of his life-support machinery by the vigilantes Cloak and Dagger. His recent battle with Spider-Man left him weak, but he escaped. It is assumed that he and many other crime-lords are planning his rise to power to take over the Kingpin's vacant overlordship of New York's underworld.

Terrax: Although reduced to little more than topsoil after his encounter with the New Warriors, the irradiated and cosmically powered rock that composed Terrax was reconstituted and melded with the body of Harmon Furmintz, the CEO of Genetech. Harmon, having failed to qualify for Project Rebirth (which spawned Captain America), sought to become the super hero he'd always wanted to be; unfortunately, the merging of Terrax's energy with his body apparently erased Furmintz's mind, leaving only Terrax the Terrible. With a little help from the Fantastic Four, the New Warriors managed to contain Terrax until the Silver Surfer could remove him from Earth. Terrax now resides on an uninhabited planet many light years from Earth; he is trapped there since his flight power is now gone.

Miscellaneous changes

Astro, Major Vance: Vance Astro, the 1000-year-old astronaut and Guardian of the Galaxy, had a degenerative skin condition that left him trapped in a reinforced suit for the past few years. Now, thanks to a number of spells and healing treatments from Krugarr and the Ancient One (Earth's Sorcerer Supreme and his mentor, Stephen Strange, respectively) and the help of Hollywood (the 20th century's Wonder Man), Vance is out of the suit and has restyled his costume to become Major Victory, the leader of the Earth-bound

Guardians contingent. His suit, styled after Captain America's, is of adamantium weave and provides him with Monstrous protection from physical and energy attacks; mental and magical attacks still affect him normally. He still wields Captain America's shield.

Aurora: Due to psychological torture by the villain Headlok, Aurora has returned to her original state of having two very strong personalities: Jeanne-Marie Beaubier, the stern, pious, and proper schoolteacher; and Aurora, the devil-may-care, hedonistic, and irresponsible super heroine. Despite her former distaste for Aurora's place in Alpha Flight, it was Jeanne-Marie who returned to the fold and offered her (their) services in Core Alpha.

Black Knight: The Black Knight has created an energy sword that should be safer both for his opponents and himself, considering the curse on his original Ebony Blade. The sword can slice through Remarkable or lesser materials, and it only stuns the nervous systems of living beings (roll on the Stun column versus Incredible Intensity Stun effect).

Dreadface: Encountered on a South Seas island by the Thing and the Human Torch, this alien stowaway on their crashed spaceship exhibited many of the characteristics of the alien costume now bonded with Edward Brock, a.k.a. Venom. If this alien is connected to the Venom alien, there is a high probability that it wasn't destroyed by an explosion on the island. It had previously possessed various animals and both the Human Torch and the Thing. Regardless of any connections to Venom, it would be safest to avoid this island.

Her: Her has returned to Earth. After causing much havoc in Ottawa resisting the Consortium with Alpha Flight and the Avengers, she sought out a perfect mate among the male superhumans of Earth. Her plans were thwarted by Quasar, though she still is quite attracted to the Earth-born Protector of the Universe and has been seen in his company quite often in the past weeks. She has also adopted a variation of a costume that Adam Warlock wore just before his "death" at the hands of Thanos.

Mandroids: The latest model of Mandroid armor in use by U.S. Government forces (including SHIELD and various U.S. allies) is a 15'-tall suit of armor with Body Armor, enhanced Strength, and Force Blasts all at Amazing rank or intensity. The new Mandroids were first seen in action in Trans-Sabal against the Hulk and the Pantheon.

Marvel Boy: Marvel Boy has been arrested and is currently being held in prison in his identity as Vance Astro. He is on trial for causing the death of his abusive father with his telekinetic powers.

Owl: For years, Leland Owlsley has been ingesting a serum that allowed him to glide like an owl; the long-term effects of this serum are now taking their toll on

him. He cannot walk without elaborate prosthetics on his legs. His eyes and ears, while as sensitive as an owl's, need prosthetics to focus them as well. His body has now adapted more fully to flying, adding additional air sacs to his lungs and hollowing his bones, and his neck even has additional vertebrae to allow him to turn his neck nearly 360° around. However, this transformation drove him mad, and he killed dozens of people trying to usurp the leadership of the underworld. His madness nearly cost him his own life as well until he was saved by Daredevil. The Owl is undergoing psychiatric treatment.

Power Pack: Power Pack is now reunited and back on Earth, and their powers have been exchanged for perhaps a final time, returning to their original state. Katie has her energy powers, Jack controls his density, Alex manipulates gravity, and Julie has her flight powers again. Alex's transformation into a Kymelian was a hoax; this was a simulacrum created by the Snarks, and Alex was their prisoner for that time.

Rhino: The Rhino's old suit was finally removed from his skin, and he now has a new suit supplied by Justin Hammer. It closely resembles his original suit, but has such modifications as a clear plastic shield over his eyes that disintegrates Spider-Man's webbing.

Speedfreak: Speedfreak is an assassin-for-hire currently working for an L.A. crimelord by the name of Lang. Speedfreak attacked an AIDS clinic benefit, nearly killing Jim Wilson and injuring Rick Jones before being stopped by the Hulk. Much of his power seems to be in his battlesuit, though his sheer tenacity, ferociousness, and manic behavior seem to be products of his addiction to the drug Snap. He moves at Shift X land speed due to his boot jets and has a limited flight speed of Good rank. His battlesuit also provides him with Remarkable Body Armor, Remarkable strength and damage blades, and a rocket-propelled Adamantium barb (Monstrous Edged Attacks damage) with a two-area range. Currently, Speedfreak and Lang are both in an L.A. jail awaiting trial for the attempted murders at the clinic.

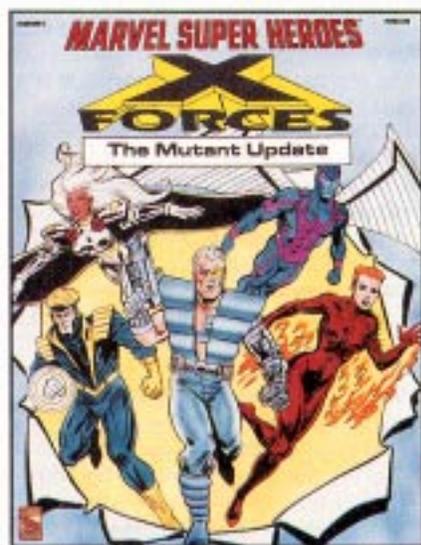
Vulture: Adrian Toomes is dying of cancer, which he contracted from his electromagnetic flying harness. Before he goes, he wants to balance the scales with those he dealt with in life. He has made numerous unsuccessful attempts to gain May Parker's forgiveness for his part in the death of Nathan Lubensky. A number of his other underworld contacts and various people connected to him have been killed. All he wants to do now is to kill Spider-Man before his own time runs out.

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NEW FROM TSR!

by Skip Williams

SAGE advice

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, PO. 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, we continue our look at some of the more unusual-and controversial-questions that our sage has received.

The paragraph in the PHB that describes the Artistic Ability non-weapon proficiency (page 57) says that the artistic character is "naturally accomplished in various forms of the arts." The description goes on to say that if the character fails a proficiency check, he "has created something aesthetically unpleasing or just plain bad." Being something of an artist myself, I can tell you that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. I think characters viewing the work should be the ones to make the proficiency check to determine if they can perceive some value in it. After all, if the character has natural talent, he would not waste time working on something inferior. In the case of an architect or engineer, I can see checking to see if the creative character produced a work with flaws, but in the case of a painter, sculptor, poet, or musician, what is good or bad should be relative to the individual or group sampling the work.

You're putting too much emphasis on the "naturally accomplished" phrase. The proficiency description's second sentence explains what being "natural accomplished" means: The character understands color, form, space, flow, tone, pitch, and rhythm. While these are the fundamental building blocks of artistic expression, not every character understands them to the same extent, and not every character can consistently translate this knowledge into a successful work of art. Everywhere, there are marginally talented

authors and artists who believe they'd be famous if only the public could appreciate them, but that's putting the cart before the horse. When an artist botches the job and produces a piece of junk, it's the artist who has failed, not the viewer.

I suppose a DM could assume that abstract art has made its appearance in the world. While it is true that only people who understand the "language" of such art can fully appreciate it, the artist still must successfully apply his knowledge to create a high-quality, aesthetically pleasing work. In this case, the viewer might indeed have to make an ability check to understand the work, but this does not free the artist from his obligation to do a good job in the first place.

I am so disgusted with all the good represented in the AD&D game. Why is there no place in any of the various worlds for evil characters? Even the RAVENLOFT™ setting doesn't really allow for evil player characters. The staff at TSR really needs to realize that the Demiplane of Dread is not the kind of place where paladins and their moms bring PCs glasses of cold milk and plates of warm brownies! The AD&D game's melodramatic theme has made me sick one too many times. Can we look forward to a change soon?

TSR's products assume the PCs will be the good guys, so you are mostly correct when you point out that there is no place in any of the published worlds for evil PCs. You're "almost" correct, because any AD&D game world needs evil nonplayer characters to provide threat and conflict for the PCs. Completely safe worlds are pretty boring, as you can't have heroic player characters without suitably nasty villains to oppose them.

I also assure you that nobody at TSR, Inc. believes that paladins in the RAVENLOFT setting have time to serve cookies and brownies. They're far too busy trying to keep the various lords from obliterating the innocent and snatching unsuspecting travelers off their home planes.

Your simplistic view of good people as superficial wimps is curiously similar to the attitude most 20th-century megalomaniacs have shown to the world. In the 1930s, the Fascists in Germany and Italy

and the Militarists in Japan had exactly this view of the western democracies. By 1945, however, everybody understood just how tough those democracies really were.

The struggle between good and evil is what drives the AD&D game. It is possible for the PCs to be the bad guys; however, TSR products assume the PCs will be good for several reasons. First, the game's basic structure requires PCs to work together as a group; each character class has inherent strengths and weaknesses that make them very well prepared to handle some situations but unprepared to handle other kinds of problems. The only way to overcome these gaps in capability is to work with other characters who have different sets of skills. The staff at TSR knows from experience that it is much easier-and a lot more fun-to put together an effective party of good and neutral characters than to try and hold together a group of evil characters.

A party of good characters will share a commitment to a common moral or ethical precept. Evil characters, on the other hand, tend to be concerned with preserving themselves. This concept of self varies with the character's actual alignment. The self could be an entity free to do exactly what it wants regardless of the larger consequences (chaotic evil); it could be, an entity uniquely qualified to survive the rigors of existence (neutral evil); or it could be a part of a larger structure that defines all existence (lawful evil). Nonetheless, each character's primary motivation is essentially selfish.

Consequently, the types of bonds that hold these groups together are vastly different. Good guys depend on friendship, trust, and altruism to keep themselves going. This helps keep campaigns going, too, since each player shares in the group's successes. Since role-playing is a social activity, it helps when all the players and their characters are at least civil to each other. Evil groups stay together mainly through intimidation and deceit. This tends to destroy campaigns because players get tired of being fooled or bullied. Success, if there is any at all, belongs only to the player who comes out on top in each session.

In the short term, both types of groups can get by; in the long term, good groups develop common goals and accomplish great things together. Evil groups stay focused on the short-term goal of survival

and don't get anywhere. If you do manage to reach a point of equilibrium where a powerful evil PC can control the other PCs, you'll find that the other players quickly will lose interest—nobody likes to play the fool or the doormat for long. Also, players can keep their game feelings separated from their real feelings for only so long. Sooner or later, the hostilities that arise between evil characters are going to arise between the players, and good-bye campaign. The only way I know to avoid this when your PCs are evil is to structure your games like skirmish war games, not heroic quests. This is fine if skirmish war games are what you want to play. You certainly could play a long-term campaign in the RAVENLOFT setting where each evil PC controls his own domain. Again, this type game of will become a long-term political and military campaign, not a role-playing campaign.

In a role-playing campaign, good guys tend to make a lot more interesting characters than bad guys. Bad guys don't struggle with the larger issues, and they remain unconcerned with the ethical implications of what they're doing. As a result, the player has less to think about and just plain less to do if he has an evil character. Bad guys don't last as long as good guys. When the party gets lost in the wilderness and food runs out, a good party pools its resources and tries to figure out how to feed everybody; a group of starving bad guys eventually begins stealing each other's food or even goes to work deciding how best to eat each other. The party infighting that arises among evil characters also increase the PC mortality rate. Not only will evil characters occasionally kill each other, but they often will allow their comrades to die unnecessarily. Such losses impair the group's ability to withstand further adversity. Of course, an evil character can disingenuously choose to use others to help him survive; however, this parasitic approach doesn't work in a role-playing campaign. If the character doesn't succumb to greed and turn predatory, the PCs he's taking advantage of eventually will notice what's really happening. In real life, people trapped in an evil person's orbit might not be able to break free, but players in a game always can just quit (and they often do).

An AD&D campaign with good PCs doesn't have to be melodramatic. Characters, at least occasionally, should have to labor long and hard to conclude an adventure. Along the way, they can face a few thorny ethical problems and be forced to choose between unpleasant alternatives. If the action in your games is sappy, it's because there's not enough creative energy going into the storytelling, not because the PCs are good. Be very careful when considering evil PCs. Many DMs, especially younger ones, don't have a clear idea of what evil is and what being evil costs. Evil, by definition, is that which causes ruin, injury, or pain. The good and

evil alignments in the AD&D game are not rival clubs or gangs. Good people stick together because they have a moral and ethical inclination to do so. Evil characters don't hang together. Unlike good characters, they don't have a common point of reference. They also don't have to observe proprieties or sacrifice their own desires for the sake of goodness. They pay for these privileges by losing the trust and confidence of their companions and the ability to trust others. To an evil being, everyone and everything is a potential enemy, even after a peaceable meeting.

Since good characters tend to promote healthy, long-running campaigns, and evil characters tend to break up gaming groups, you can expect TSR's products to continue casting the good guys at center stage. If you decide to ignore all of the foregoing and try evil PCs, I wish you luck. At worst, you'll give up the game in disgust. At best, you'll learn a little bit about what makes the game tick. Either way, you'll get an education.

The first sentence in the Concordance of Arcane Space in the SPELLJAMMER boxed set says, "Everything you know about space is wrong." Does this mean that characters can shout from ship to ship and still be heard if the ships' air envelopes aren't overlapping? Does this also mean that a ship moving at maximum speed in wildspace will stop immediately if the helmsman leaves the helm, inertia not withstanding?

Obviously, not everything you know about space is wrong. Sound does not carry through the void, and inertia, of a sort, still applies to spelljammers. Generally, if a helmsman vacates his post or becomes disabled, the spelljammer's SR falls to zero. Such a ship cannot change direction or speed and will continue to move in a straight line until either it is brought under control or it encounters a gravity well. Check out the "Power Sources" section of the *Concordance of Arcane Space* (pages 33-39, especially page 35) and the sections in Chapter 4 on movement (especially pages 55 and 60) for details.

During an argument about the rules, one of my friends said she called TSR, Inc. and was told both that the rules shouldn't be followed if they impede play and that you never should listen to a rules lawyer. Is this true?

I'm not surprised that one of my colleagues gave that kind of answer to your friend over the phone. Too many players and DMs spend their time and energy worrying about getting the rules "right" and not nearly enough time on telling an entertaining story, presenting and responding to intellectual challenges, and creating believable characters that players

care about. People who call TSR to settle local rules disputes deserve what they get. Like everything else in a well-run campaign, the DM and players can hurt the game by applying the rules too loosely or too stringently. Campaigns that ignore the rules quickly spin out of control; player characters get too much power or can't get enough power. Either case makes adventuring a futile exercise. Likewise, the DM and players cannot make intelligent game decisions unless they have some idea of what the results of some particular action will be. The rules are there as a tool for channeling the action in a creative and entertaining direction. On the other hand, the rules are supposed to promote play, not restrict it; a role-playing game is supposed to be a heroic adventure, not an exercise in legal argument.

Generally speaking, any rule is fine so long as it does not impede or disrupt play. When someone points out a different way of looking at the rules, the group ought to consider the following: Will doing things this way bring the game to a grinding halt? Does this new way of reading the rules grant a PC or monster a world-beating way to use a spell or bit of equipment? Is this particular choice of skills and equipment obviously superior to all other combinations of powers available in the game? Will this new rule place a PC or monster in the kind of ridiculous position that only a complete fool would get into? If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," consider another interpretation of the rules, at least until the current adventure is over.

Ω

Letters

Continued from page 5

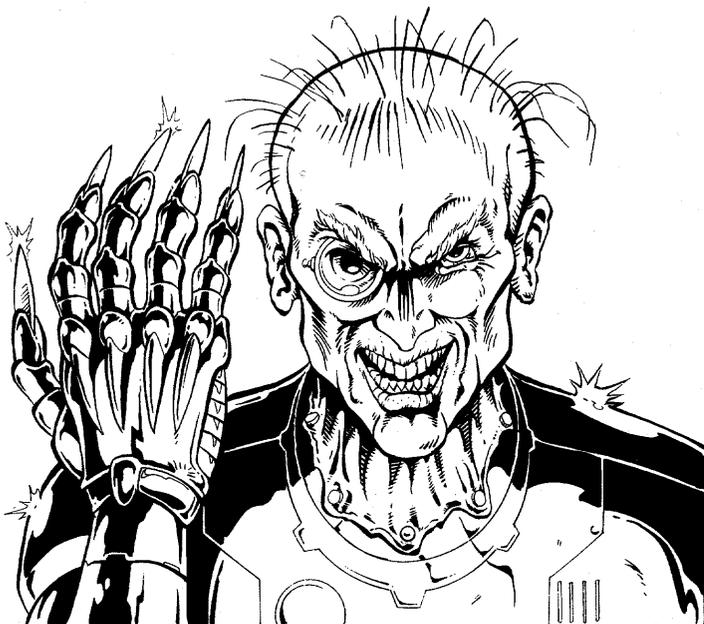
On another note, when is the next *Monstrous Compendium* binder coming out? It should have come out in volume 7 and maybe 11, but neither of these appendices have additional binders. I currently have to put my *Outer Planes* appendix in a normal binder because my two *Monstrous Compendium* binders are full. Perhaps special versions of existing volumes (7 and 11) could include one?

Beng Tan
Thornlie, Australia

Module designers who want to submit their adventures for publication in DUNGEON Adventures should send a self-addressed, stamped envelope with a note asking for our module guidelines to: Guidelines, DUNGEON Adventures, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147. You may include a brief description of the sort of module you would like to submit; do not send in your module without reading the guidelines, however

I'm having some trouble fitting all my monsters into the two binders on my desk at work, and I've succeeded only because I discarded all of the pretty insert art that came with them. At this time, no further binders are planned.

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- Super Villain teams and secret organizations (and how to create them).
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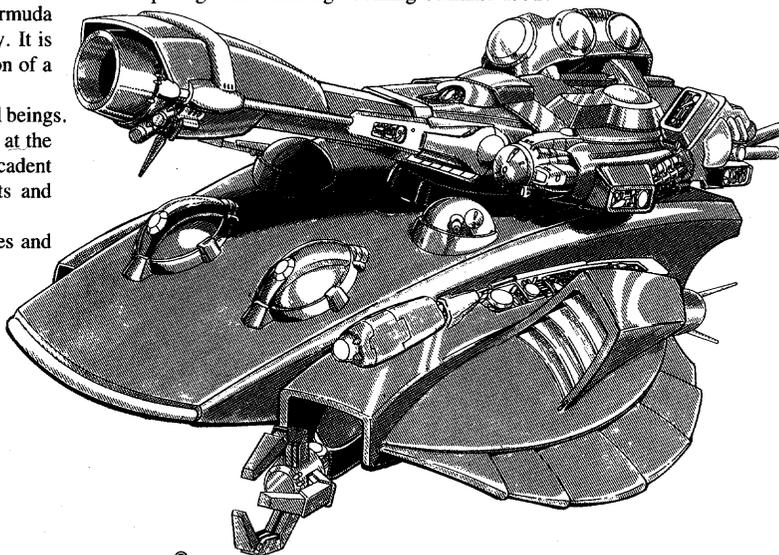
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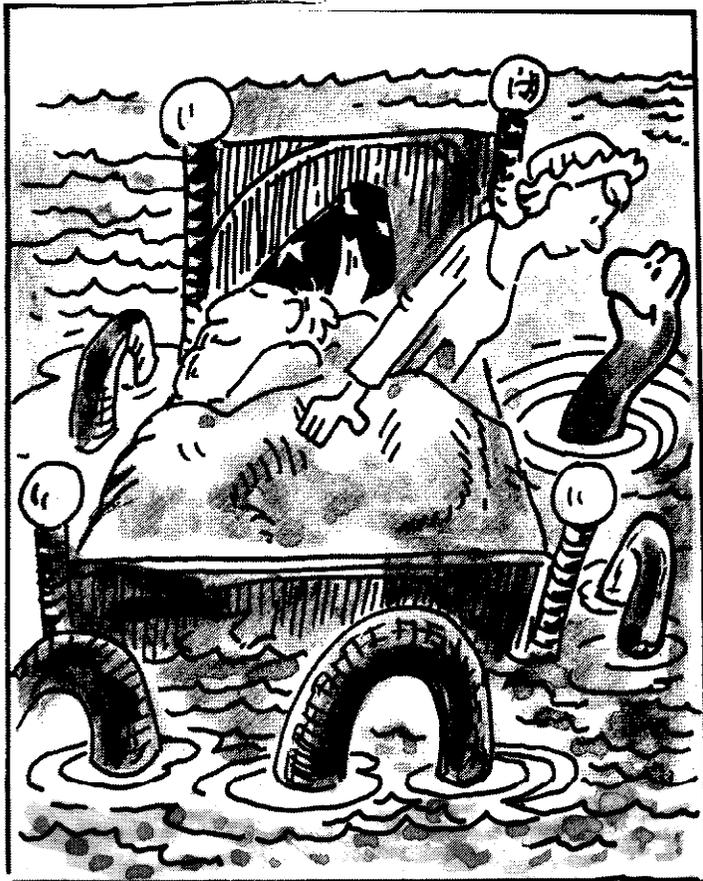
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"Me? Talk in my sleep? Nonsense!"

By Michael Ferman



By Leslie Seabolt

SCARLET 90

"Please, don't squeeze the shaman!"



By Aaron Williams

"What does a room cost for someone who could level this place without blinking?"



By Raymond Long & Jim Evangelisti

"I don't know. It seems like a waste of an enslavement spell to me."

BARBARA



By Barbara Manui & Chris Adams

THE TWELFTH EMPIRE™



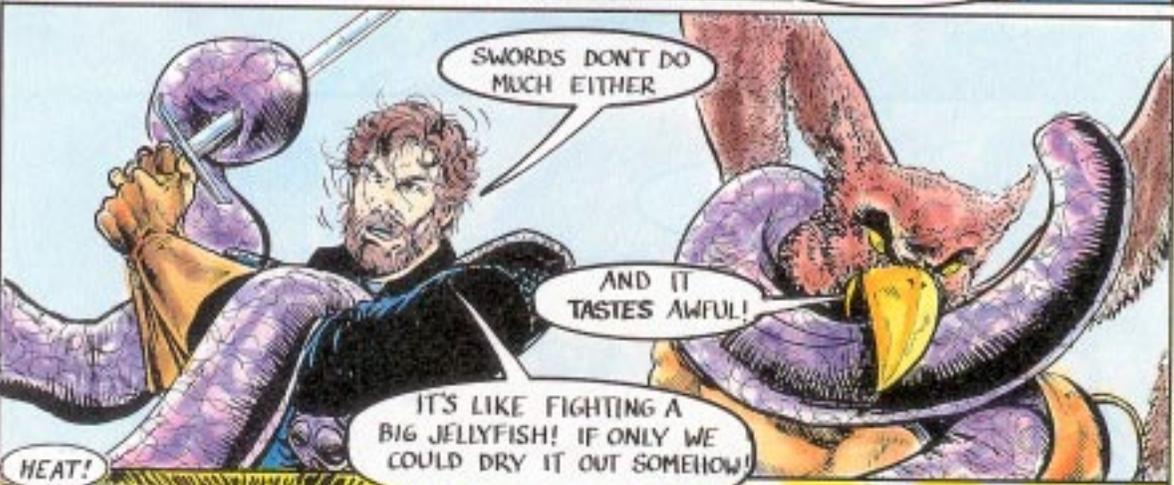


AAWK! LEGGO!



ARROWS AREN'T HURTING IT!

TRY SOMETHING ELSE!



SWORDS DON'T DO MUCH EITHER

AND IT TASTES AWFUL!

IT'S LIKE FIGHTING A BIG JELLYFISH! IF ONLY WE COULD DRY IT OUT SOMEHOW!



HEAT!
RIGHT!

KERING PANAS KUAT!



WHOA! WHO OPENED THE DOOR TO THE FORGE!

IT DOESN'T LIKE THE HEAT!

WRITING & COLORING
Stephen De Sullivan

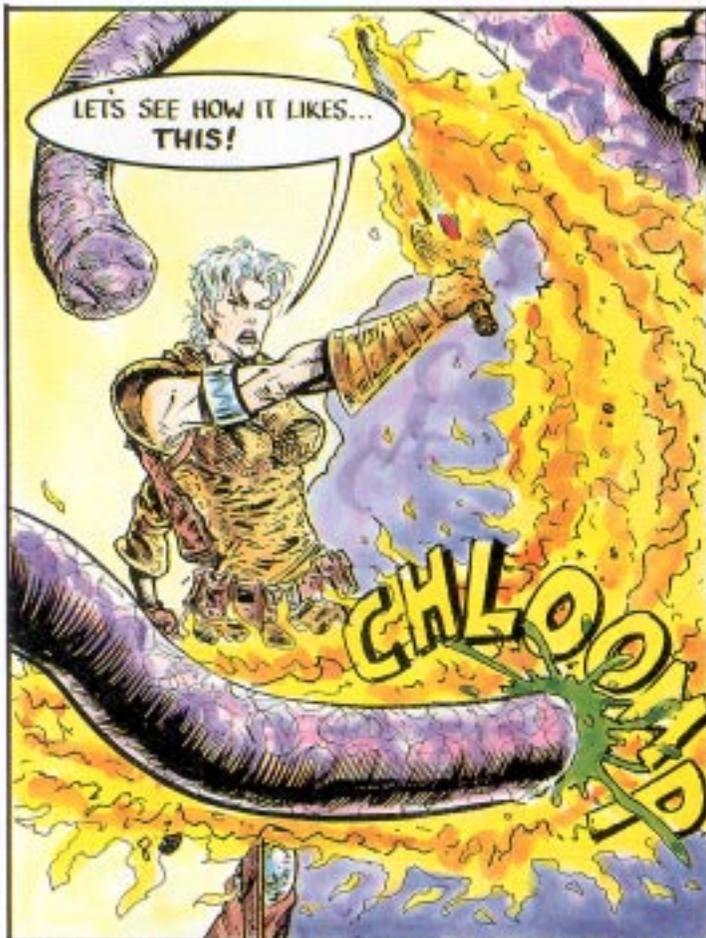
ART
John M. Hebert

LETTERING
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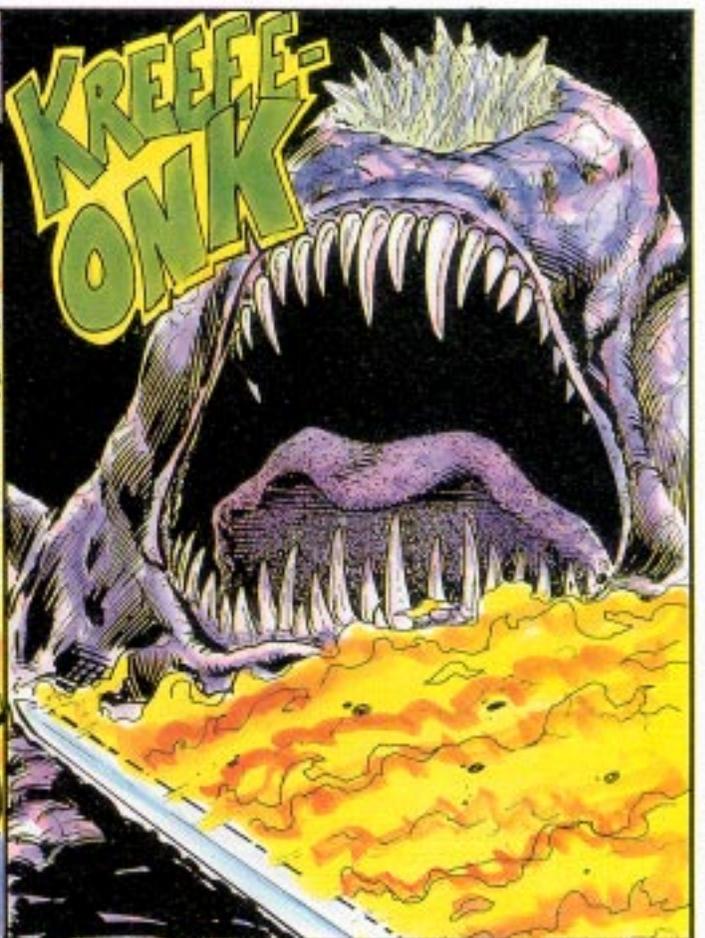
ROBINSON'S WAR

PART 26



LET'S SEE HOW IT LIKES... THIS!

CHLOO



KREEEE-ONK



BINGO! FIRE'S THE TRICK!

SAY...



ROB! WHERE'RE YOU GOING?

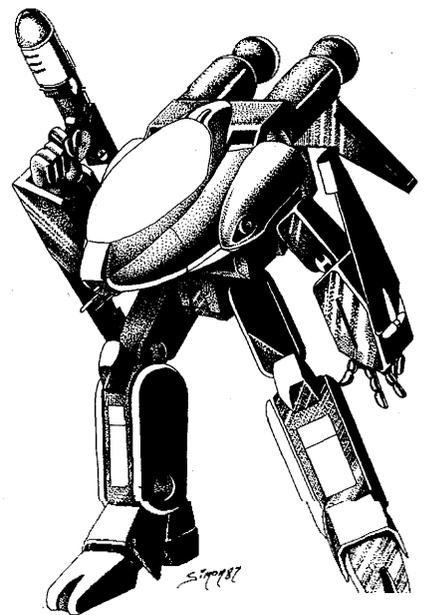
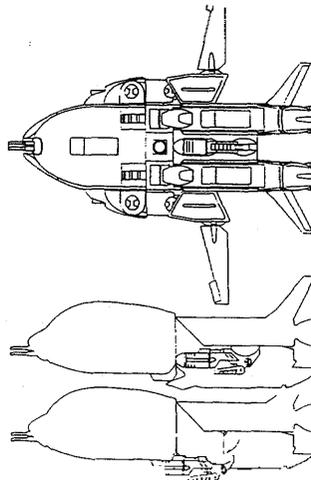
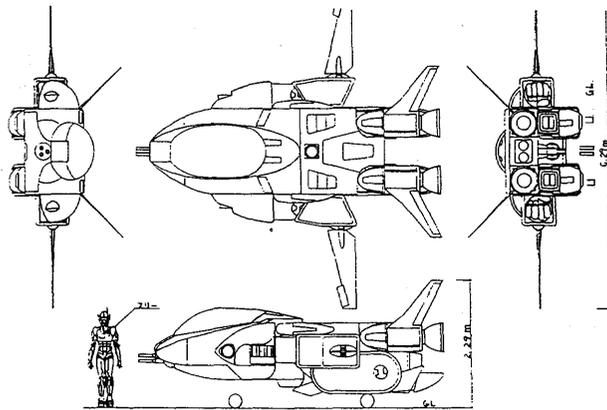
HOLD THE FORT! I'VE GOT AN IDEA!

HEY! THE FIGHT'S THIS WAY!

API SIHIR!

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Volume One, Volume Two, and Volume Three. Available now!

Volume Four: Episodes 46: **Star Dust**, 47: **Outsiders**, 48: **Dejavu**. Dana continues to exhibit a bit of empathy and psychic hunches and can not shake certain feelings about the captive bioroid pilot (Zor). **Available late February, 1992.**

Volume Five: Presents episodes 49: **A new Recruit**, 50: **Triumvirate**, and 51: **Clone Chamber**. It is decided to induct Zor into the army of the Southern Cross. A full scale assault is launched against the Masters. Zor, Dana and Bowie get closer to the secret of the **Robotech™ Masters** and protoculture. Plus epic space battles! **Available late March, 1992.**

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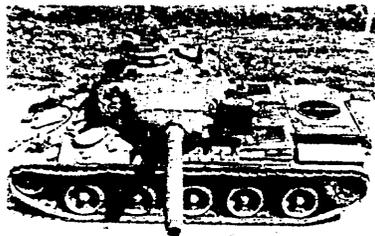
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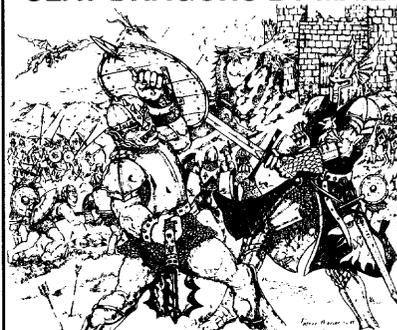
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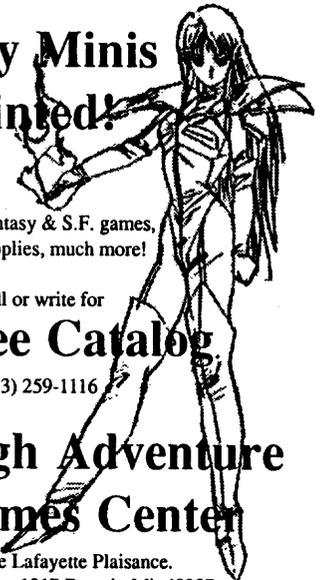
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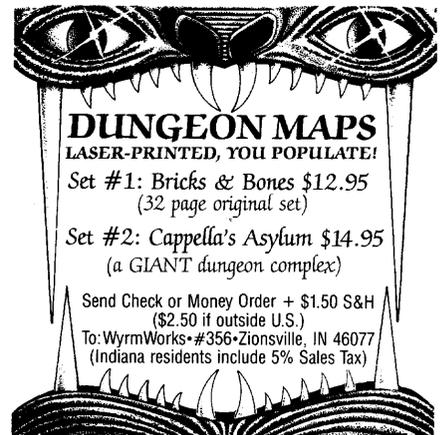
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Through the LOOKING Glass

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"Mother Love: Dragon on Nest" (Thunderbolt Mountain)

Prepare for some "miniature" summer fun

This month marks the unofficial beginning of the heavy summer gaming circuit. Conventions all over the country are increasing their miniatures gaming areas, and it looks like a good time to be playing tabletop miniatures games.

If there isn't a convention near you, don't despair. Many public libraries and park districts will be looking for projects for their clients during the summer. Use your time to prepare some carefully

planned scenarios for multiplayer combats that can be easily run by you and played

Miniatures' product ratings

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

by beginners. Most areas will be glad to give you room to run the games (especially for historical games), and you will have a chance to sell yourself and the hobby to the public. These games often bring you recognition and can build an opponent pool to rival a small convention or game fest. If you don't have enough figures to wage a multiplayer war, talk to your present gaming group to round up some troops. If you don't succeed at first, don't be disappointed. Frequently, people need to see things done several times before they will try it themselves. Make your game visually exciting, and you'll have better luck. You have little to lose and many new gaming friends to gain. If you need help figuring out how to run a small project like this, give me a call and I'll help as much as I can.

Reviews

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1016 "Mother Love: Dragon on Nest" ***** 1/2

In honor of Mother's Day, we proudly present a miniature that could be used as a present for that occasion. It is a piece that demonstrates the lengths to which a mother (in this case, a mother dragon) must go to keep her children fed, happy, and in good health. This piece is scaled in 25 mm and is formed from 16 pieces that require patient assembly.

The dragon draws immediate attention at first glance, but a wealth of detail makes the base the real gem in this kit. The base is roughly square, measuring 49 mm X 53 mm and up to 19 mm in height. It's molded to look like a nest on a mountain top, with boulders and rocks providing a basic framework for the nest itself. The nest walls are supplemented by the remains of many mundane items from adventurers, such as packs, shields, helmets, blankets, pots, and breastplates, all stacked carefully between the rocks to form a barrier to keep the active baby dragons confined. The nest itself is lined with a chain-mail mat that provides a final resting place for the skulls and chewed bones of the adventurers themselves.

This is also the home for three baby dragons, each of whom is sitting up with its wings and front legs tucked up, begging for the tidbit that their mother dangles above them. The mouths on the babies are all opened as far as they can go, and the babies look a lot like baby birds-except

that these birds have prominent tongues and sharp, visible teeth!

Dinner for the children is a 25-mm scale knight in full plate mail. His face, viewed through an open helm, appears twisted in horror. The mother dragon holds each of the knight's legs in her claws and appears ready to split the knight like a wishbone.

The dragon body is roughly 230 mm from snout to tail end, not including a tongue that lolls out another 20 mm. The dragon body has a wide, flat, reptilian head surrounded by an excellent scale structure and a mouth full of teeth. The head comes in three parts: the upper head, the lower jaw and part of the neck, and a piece of four spikes that fits behind the upper head. A ridge of spines follows the neck and continues along the back to end partway up the tail. The dragon's huge muscles bulge with power as she prepares to serve dinner to the kiddies. The studs in the bottom of the rear legs join to the holes in the feet molded on the base. The wings and tail stand almost straight up.

The fit on most of the parts was good, with some small gaps at a few locations. Our dragon's arms fit better and showed fewer gaps when placed closer to the chest than shown in the completed model on the box cover. The wings, neck, and were assembled using a pin vise and model railroad track nails (minus their heads) in order to improve the longevity and sturdiness of the model. This is not absolutely necessary, but it is recommended.

The few complaints about this model mostly personal prejudices, but they have been echoed by some members of our local gaming club. While the box picture depicts wings that seem to be thin-edged, the actual wings are thickly molded and absolutely straight, without the vein detail, folds, or leathery texture taken for granted in dragon wings. The flat, smooth texture and rigid-structured wing may be easier to mold, but they detract from model. Another detraction is the tail, which stands nearly vertical and looks stilted. A simple, gentle bend will solve problem, however.

This piece is a real gem and is very good either as an addition to a collection or as a present. It's recommended at \$29.95 for the 16-piece kit.

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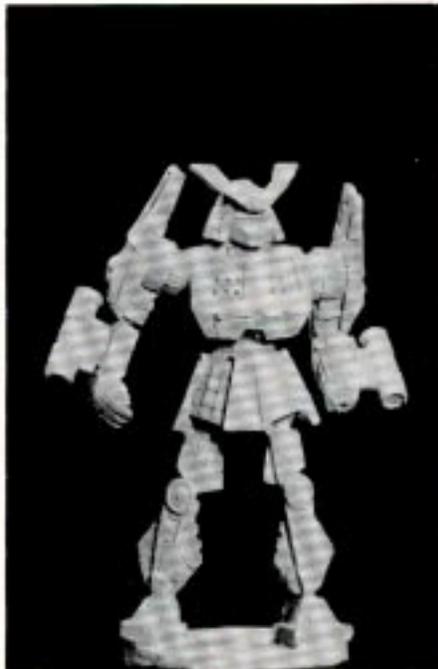
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20-810 HTM-27T Hatamoto Chi * * * * *

This month we review another 'Mech used in FASA's BATTLETECH* game. The Hatamoto Chi can be found on pages 186-



HTM-27T Hatamoto Chi (Ral Partha)



"Mother Love" (Thunderbolt Mountain)



Liches (Grenadier Models)

187 of FASA's *Technical Readout 3050*. This assault 'Mech weighs in at 80 tons. The miniature is 48 mm tall and just short of 30 mm wide at the shoulders, matching the book illustration but in a different pose. You will have to trim the tabs on the back radiators and the PPCs to get them to fit correctly. The figure is 5-7 mm scale (1 mm = 1-1/2') and is made of lead. There was no flash on this miniature, and the base was level.

This 'Mech looks like a samurai warrior in large scale (except for its weapons), and

I was tempted to get the samurai book from Osprey Books' Elite series and use its color illustrations as a painting guide. This figure is not necessarily recommended for use in BATTLETECH games as it seems slightly undergunned in stock form; you will have to modify the figure for the variants. Still, this figure is highly recommended for its unique appearance and is well worth the \$5.25 price tag.

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51010 Liches

* * * * * 1/2

This package contains figures based on the 30-mm scale. One is of a standing lich, measuring 33 mm to the eyes, and the other is a lich riding a nightmare (AD&D® game) or undead horse. The standing figure wears long robes, tattered at the hems and puffed out at the sleeves. A necklace of bone and a high collar behind his gaunt head are present as well. The exposed teeth are molded well, and the eye sockets look up in triumph. Skeletal hands call upon magical forces, the left being open and the right clutching a staff. Ornate skull carvings appear on his pouches and on a flask hanging on one of two wide belts. The standing figure could use a bigger base. The riding figure is identical to the standing one, except that the robe is tucked in and the wide skull mosaic hanging down the front of the robe is curled up and hidden. His left hand



Necromancers (Grenadier Models)



Great Orcs (Viking Forge)

is positioned to hold reins.

The horse shows no signs of decay except for the tattered barding by the saddle. It stands on three legs, with the front right in the high position. The mane is combed entirely to the right, and the tail is fluffed up. The only signs that the horse is undead are its deeply sunken eyes and nostrils.

Each figure would make a great general for a large force of undead, or the leader of a group of necromancers. If you want to use both of the figures together, use one as a leader and the other as a chief lieutenant. They're well recommended at \$5.95 per pack. Speaking of necromancers.

51007 Necromancers

**** ½

This pack contains five different necromancers, some of which can be used for 25-mm scale although they will appear

rather plump. All the figures have bases that are too small for them. I reviewed them while they were laid flat.

Figure #1 is 27-mm tall and appears to be undead. The figure wears a long robe and cowl that covers the drawn face, which has decayed spots and protruding eyeballs. The body is swathed in linen strips. He points with his right hand and gestures with his left as if calling someone. He resembles an animated mummy.

Figure #2 is a hunched-over old man with a Fu Manchu moustache, an angry face, and a receded hairline. He wears long robes that stretch to the ground with a bib in front. His left hand stretches out from a long sleeve, while his right hand clutches a staff of power covered by metal bracelets and topped by a crystal ball. A belt cinches the robe and supports pouches, containers, talismans, and medal-

ions. Since he has not a single skull on him, he could be used as an evil wizard.

Figure #3 is definitely a large-scale figure and stands 33-mm high. The figure is dressed foppishly in folded-over high boots, baggy pants, a long shirt with a wide belt, and a coat with pockets and baggy sleeves. He gestures with his right hand while his left holds out a skull-topped rod, a ring on one finger. His hat is a low cone with another skull facing forward. His skeletal sunken face seems to be screaming in agony.

Figure #4 reminds me of a voodoo priest wearing only a loincloth. Muscle detail on the figure is generally good but is uneven on the chest and stomach. A bracelet adorns the right hand, which clutches a staff with a crystal on top. The left hand holds a skull. The chest is covered by medallions and symbols of power. The bald figure's brow is knitted in concentration, and only a slight mold line is visible on his head. His only weapon is an ornate knife at his back, though there are containers around the knife. There was no flash on this figure.

Figure #5 could be death warmed over. The figure's clothing is rotting and tattered, stretched to the point of tearing. The figure is crouched, and its skeletal hand holds a staff supporting two heads, each attached to the staff by the hair and appearing to scream. The figure's bony face, with sunken eyes, stares out from under the edge of its extended hood; its sharp teeth are clearly visible.

I'm not so sure that these should be necromancers rather than actual undead. Most of these figures apparently put too much of their hearts into their work. This pack has real possibilities in the bigger scale, so it is highly recommended at \$5.95 per pack.

Viking Forge

1727 Theresa Lane
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5011 Great Orcs

**** ½

This rereleased set of lead miniatures consists of four figures rigged for combat. The orcs are scaled for 25 mm and have thin circular bases with minor flash on the bottoms that needs to be removed.

Figure #1 is an orc on his guard, with a jagged-tipped spear held vertically in his left hand and braced against the ground. The figure wears patched plates over chain mail, with small disks and metal plates over his joints. His feet are covered by armored, laced boots, and he wears a long cloth cape that touches the ground because the figure is crouched. A circular shield and a full helmet with a nose guard completes his suit. The hooked nose, pointed chin, and tusks prove that this is an orc.

Figure #2 has heavily muscled arms and chest, wearing ragged pants with chain mail armor and ragged shoes with straps.

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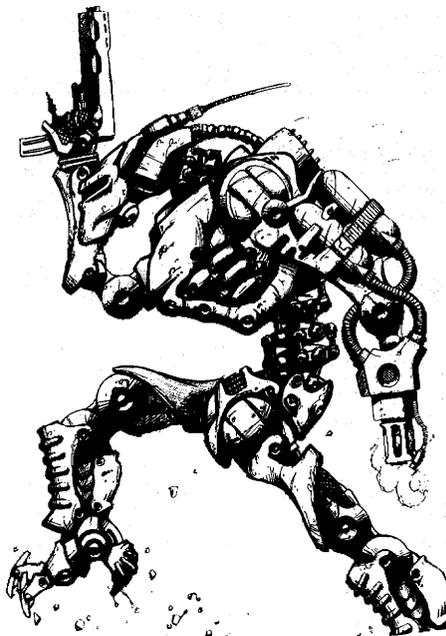
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Kryomek Warmaster (Stone Mountain)



Fomorian Sea Demons (Alternative Armies)

Straps cross his chest, attached to a hide cloak. The miniature has an axe in the right hand; the left hand holds a serrated short sword. The orc's face is twisted as if he had just bitten into a very sour lemon.

Figure #3 wears chain-mail pants and shirt. His right arm is covered by studded leather; the left is bare except for a spiked bracelet, and both hands clutch a huge, spiked mace on a metal pole. Wide belts at the waist and around the shoulder support a large circular shield that hangs on his left hip. His shoes are wrapped in rags. The face on this orc looks like that of an old crone; he has a long, sloped nose and obvious tusks. The hair is loose at the edges but tied into a topknot that flows to

the rear. There is little flash on this figure.

Figure #4 is dressed in a chain-mail shirt and ragged, patched pants covered by straps and pieces of armor. The shirt is cinched by a wide belt, and another wide belt secures a sword to his back. Both arms are bare except for bracelets, and the right hand clutches a badly nicked blade that rests on the ground. A studded, round, fur-lined shield is carried by his left hand. He wears a fur cloak. The hair is bound by a head band. Facial detail is good in spite of the fact that it is somewhat soft (I dropped the figure about an inch, and the nose crunched).

These miniatures are highly recommended and can be used either as com-

manders for orc units or as champions. The price for the set of four is \$5.

Stone Mountain Miniatures

PO. Box 594
Brownfield CO

FG 108 Kryomek Warmaster *****

The Kryomek series from Stone Mountain introduces more vicious enemies to the rolls of human-haters. Kryomeks love humans-on whole wheat or rye bread. They also combine human remains with aliens to form composite shock troops.

The figure shown here is a representative of a hive Warmaster. The figure comes in four parts and is for use with 25-mm or larger scales; it is made of a soft lead and is susceptible to extreme damage. It would be approximately 150-mm tall if uncoiled. The upper half of the body is snakelike, with ridged and scaly skin. The bottom half is made up of hundreds of tiny ridges and plates that help propel the creature. A ridged spine rises and spreads to form a hooded carapace on the head. The snake-like belly has a ribbed and sculptured exoskeleton and a wide chest cavity. A belt surrounds what could be a waist.

Each of this creature's two arms holds a weapon. The right arm looks almost human, but holds a sword with a snake grip and skull markings. The left hand holds a "bi-masic disruptor" that draws its power from the creature itself. The creature's head could be compared with the head of the monster from the movie *Alien*.

I highly recommend this miniature to anyone who plays an SF role-playing game, though it's a little expensive at \$6.99.

Alternative Armies

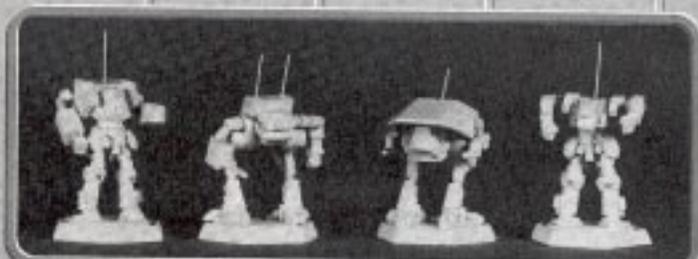
6 Parkway Ct.
Glaisdale Parkway, Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM NG8 4GN
(Available in the U.S. through Armory Distributors)

CM4 Fomorian Sea Demons ***** 1/2

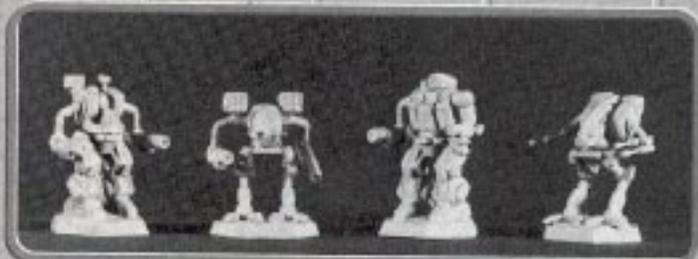
This two-piece kit is for use with the new larger-scale figures made by Grenadier, Games Workshop, and others. These sea demons do not currently have game statistics except in the FANTASY WARLORD* game by Folio Works. The figures are made of a more brittle lead than we generally use in this country; a crack formed in one raised pole arm when it was bent slightly.

Figure #1 appears to be some kind of champion. His legs are large and overly muscled with huge knots, with boots made of bark or coarse beast hide. His clothing includes loose-fitting chain mail that almost forms a tail behind him. Over this chain mail is an animal skin that encircles the creature. The back and front are bare except for areas covered by layered plate armor held on by straps. The figure's left shoulder is covered by overlapping shields

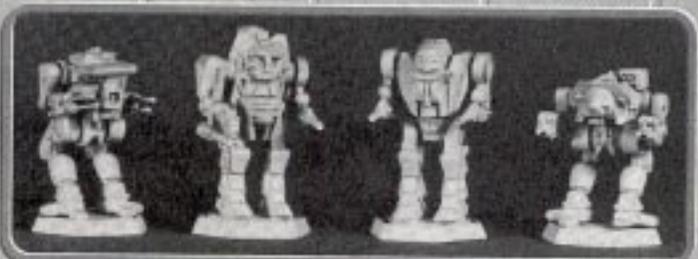
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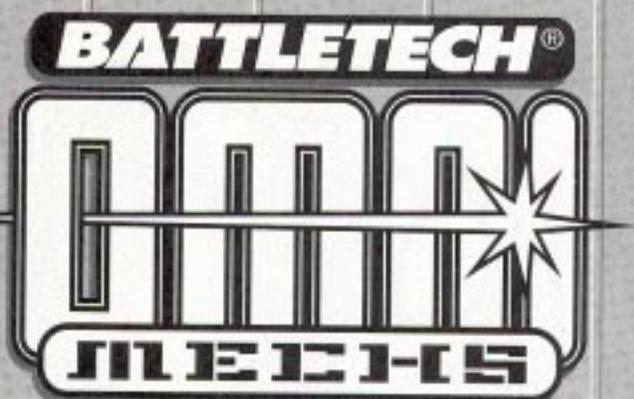


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Wizard with Book (Black Dragon)

Human skulls hang from his belt and other places. The sea demon's face looks like a cross between a troll, an elf, and an orc. Sharp fangs abound in its open mouth, but pointed ears and swept-back hair reinforce the elf image. The figure has fishlike eyes. At 45-mm tall, most characters will

think twice before messing with him.

Figure #2 is hunched in the sand, leaning against a pole arm stuck in the ground. Though it has bare feet, this monster's legs have thongs and straps on the ankles and thighs to support shin shielding. The arms are also bare, except for some wrappings. A bastard sword hangs in front of him. This figure's head looks much like those of the popular baddies from the movie, Gremlins. The rest of the figure is covered by cloth, with plate and chain over it. The sword, the top layer of armor, and the pole-arm blade are all carved with ornate runes and designs. The sword has tie-downs, and the pole arm's shaft is well detailed. This is one of the most intricate figures from this company. A shield is even included that covers the back and hooks onto a small peg at the bottom of his back plate. If you don't want to use the shield, simply cut off the peg.

These figures could be used as intelligent troll leaders in an AD&D® game or as part of a troll army in Games Workshop's WARHAMMER FANTASY* game. There was almost no flash, and no work was required other than trimming some rough spots. These figures are good, but I'm still not convinced that they are worth \$6.99 per pack of two.

Black Dragon Pewter

Unit 303
Bay Area Blvd.
Houston TX 77058
(note new address)

Black Dragon is introducing a set of smaller-scale figures that can be used as playing pieces as well as part of a pewter collection, thus giving you better value. Here is one piece in this collection.

1003 Wizard with Book

**** ½

This figure depicts a middle-aged mage on his quest for knowledge. The figure is tall and slender, measuring 34 mm tall at the eyes, and is dressed in long, flowing robes with fur-lined sleeves. A rope belt supports a chain with a skull medallion and a spell-component bag on his left hip. From a chain around his neck hangs a jewelled pendant with star and moon charms. In his left hand he holds a medium-sized tome complete with runes and bookmark. His right hand holds a jewel in a setting. His long beard falls to mid-chest, then drapes over his right shoulder. The wizard stares at the jewel in concentration.

The detail on the figure is better than most pewter pieces of this size, but not quite up to the quality of Ral Partha's lead figures. My major complaint about the figure is the engraving of the artist in the folds at the back of the robe, which deducts from the quality. The piece is recommended if you use the larger scales for your gaming. Given some of the prices for these larger-scale lead figures, \$10 for a pewter piece is not unreasonable.

That's it for this month. If you need to reach me, call Friends Hobby Shop at: (708) 336-0790 at the following times:

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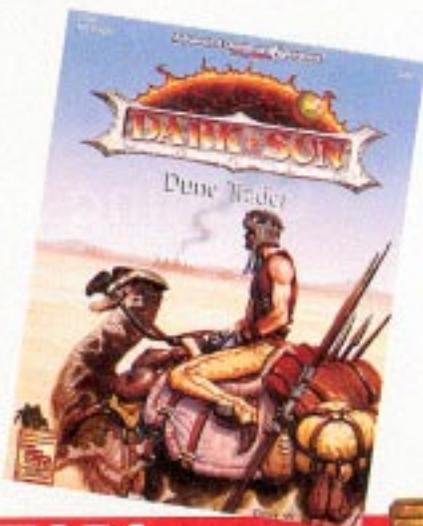
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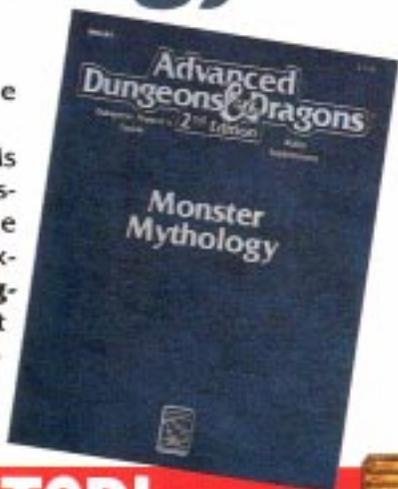
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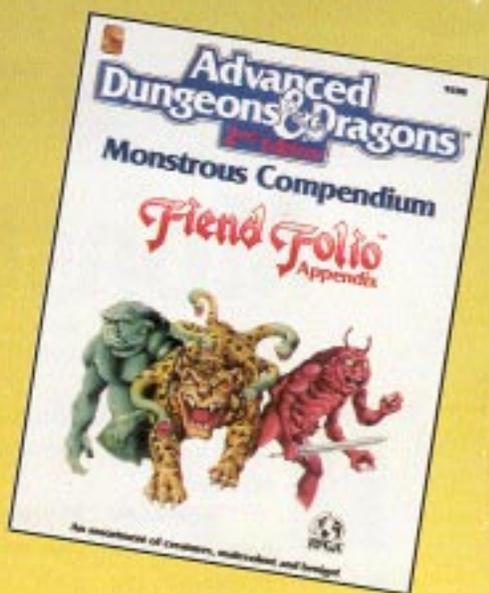
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