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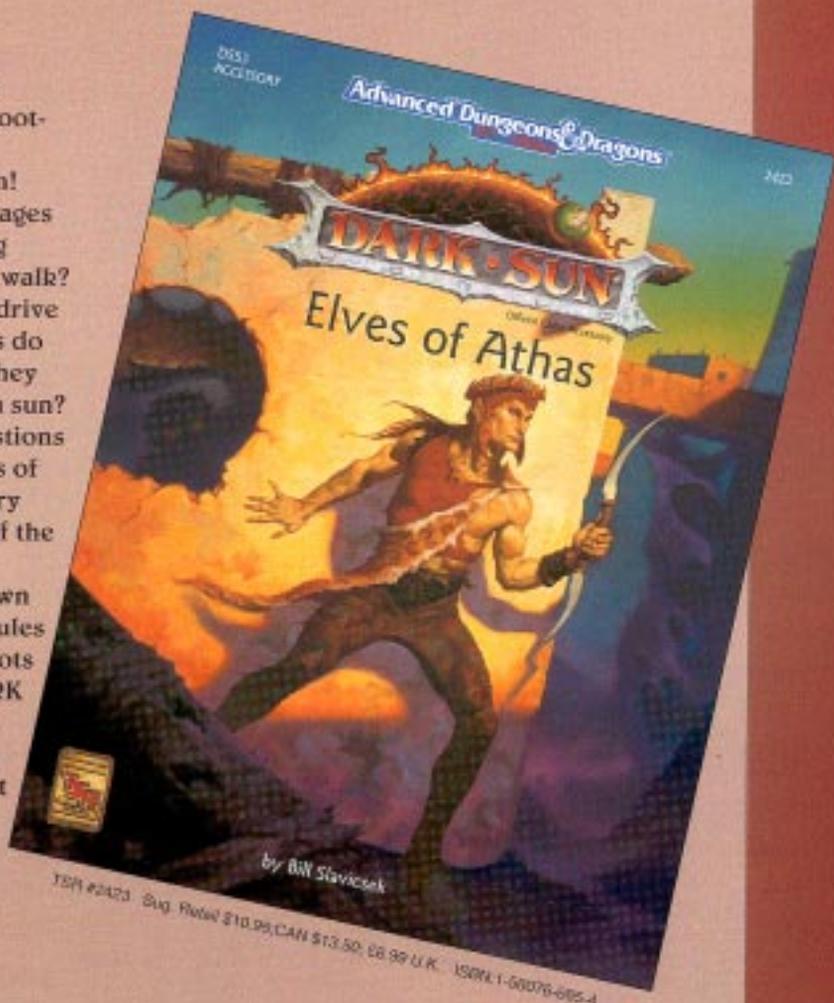
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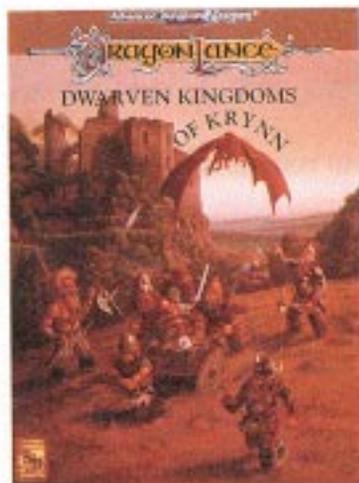
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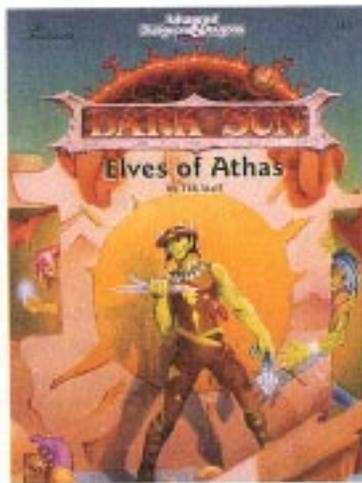


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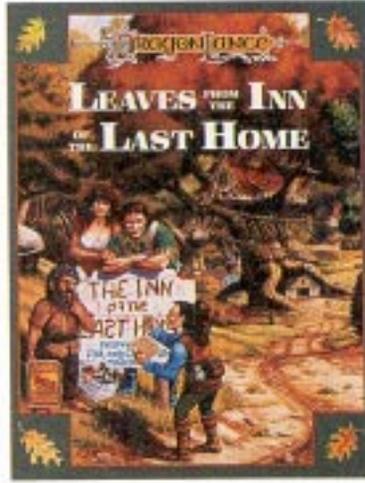


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Brian Thomsen

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Kim Mohan

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*Fiction editor*  
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*U.K. correspondent  
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Wendy Mottaz

*Editorial Contributions*  
Roger E. Moore  
Janis Wells Lisa Neuberger



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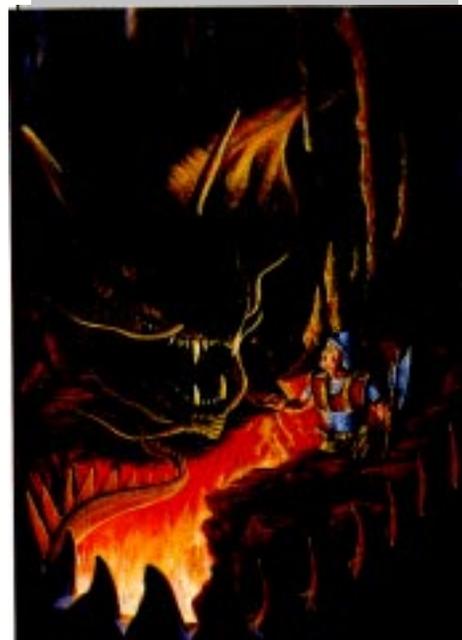
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### COVER

Those of you who attended the 1993 GEN CON® game fair in Milwaukee, Wis., may have recognized this month's cover painting by Dana Knutson. This painting first appeared in the GEN CON Art Show, and perfectly illustrates the function of all monsters in role-playing games—getting in the faces of the PCs.

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# L E T T E R S

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.

## Role reversal

Dear Dragon,

I write to inform you that a historical moment in gaming has arrived. A few weeks ago, in a reversal of a classic role-playing situation, my sister took her somewhat confused and bewildered *boyfriend* to a gaming session—a sign of hope, perhaps, that now both genders can be equally baffled by the arcane complexities of the game.

In addition, congratulations to Liz Holliday for an incredible short story in issue #196.

Adrian Czajkowski  
Woodhall Spa, Lincs, U.K.

*We celebrate your sister's boyfriend's good fortune to have met someone with such obvious creativity, intelligence, and good taste.*

## Whither Rillifane?

Dear Dragon,

On page 18 of DMGR4 *Monster Mythology*, it is stated that the elven god Rillifane Rallathil is described in the chapter on sylvan gods. However, I could not find information concerning Rillifane anywhere in the book. Could you perhaps send me the missing stats and information?

John Moore  
Bamberg, Germany

*You're in luck—we published the statistics for Rillifane in issue #191 ("The Elven Pantheon—Completed!") by Carl Sargent.*

## When in Rome...

Dear Dragon,

I'd like to know if TSR has produced any campaigns based on Roman culture. If it has, for which edition of the AD&D® game is it made and where could I get it? If there are any players who play or run this type of campaign, please write I'm interested in starting up a Roman campaign, myself.

Jameson D. Gragg  
1994 West 122nd Terrace  
Olathe KS 66061

*Funny you should ask. HRS The Glory of Rome, a campaign sourcebook and historical reference for the AD&D 2nd Edition game, goes on sale this month. David Pulver was the designer. You should also get a copy of DRAGON issue #133 for information on the gods of the Roman Empire ("The Imperial Gods," by Eric Oppen), designed for the AD&D 1st Edition game.*

*You seem to have a pretty deep interest in a Roman Empire campaign, so I further suggest that you get a copy of the GURPS\* game supplement GURPS Imperial Rome, which contains much material of use to any game system set up in this period. GURPS Imperial Rome is available from Steve Jackson Games, P.O. 18957, Austin TX 78760; or call: (512) 447-7866.*

## All addressed up

Dear Dragon,

I saw the letter of Lisandro Gaertner in DRAGON issue #193, in which he asked for the addresses of some companies that produce role-playing games. Please publish the addresses, if you have them, of the following companies: White Wolf, TSR, Mayfair Games, and the company that produced the TIMELORDS\* game. I look forward to hearing from you, and thank you in advance.

Uira' Maira Resende  
Belo Horizonte, Brazil

*Here you go: White Wolf, 4598 Stonegate Industrial Blvd., Stone Mountain GA 30083; TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147; and, Mayfair Games, 5641 West Howard, Niles IL 60174. The TIMELORDS\* game is by Blacksburg Technical Research Center, 1925 Airy Circle, Richmond VA 23233.*

## Collectable colors

Dear Dragon,

When I was reading this books on RPGs, I ran across the "ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® coloring album," published in 1979. Is there any way I could get it today?

Josh Wells  
No address

*I must admit that even I haven't heard of this particular product, which I suspect was licensed to another publishing company. It's difficult at times to know exactly what TSR has produced in the past, as we don't have catalogs from that time. I would suggest posting a notice in your local hobby stores. Good luck.*

## Where'd it go?

Dear Dragon,

In Roger Moore's editorial for issue #195, Mr. Moore mentions a company called the Judges' Guild. He writes that it is now "extinct," and I was wondering if anyone knows exactly what happened to them. If they were taken over, I would very much like to know how to contact them. I have one of their products, *Verbosh*, which has formed the backbone of a D&D®, then an AD&D, campaign setting for years. Now it is rather dog-eared and needs replacing with a new copy. If the quality of *Verbosh* is anything to go by, I would also like to look at some of the other items Judges' Guild produced.

Timothy P. L. Barnes  
Ely, Cambridgeshire, U.K.

*When Judges' Guild went under, for whatever reasons, the rights to five of its products were purchased by Lou Zocchi of Gamescience (1512-30th Avenue, Gulfport MS 39501). Among these was the marvelous wa-hoo module, Tegel Manor (the very same place I wrote about in my editorial in issue #195). You can write to Gamescience for more information, or call: (601) 863-0215. 📧*

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

## Errata

In "Two Years of ORIGINS™ Awards," in DRAGON® issue #197, we neglected to add a correction sent to us by the ORIGINS Awards committee. There was actually a tie for Best Graphic Presentation of an RPG, Adventure, or Supplement for 1992. The other product in the tie was the CALL OF CTHULHU: CTHULHU FOR PRESIDENT\* kit, produced by Chaosium, Inc. (artists: Charlie Krank and Les Brooks). Our apologies and congratulations go out to Chaosium.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons  
2<sup>nd</sup> Edition  
GAME

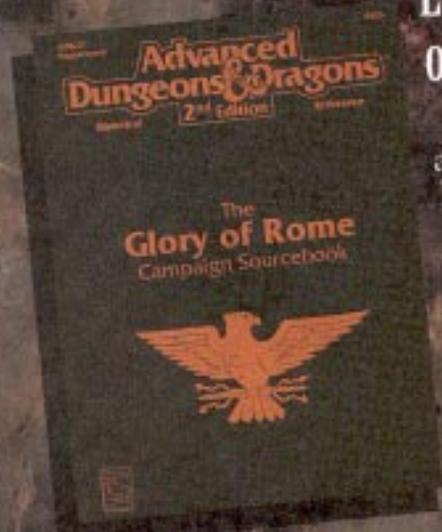
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**New From TSR!**



## The unexpected happened: Farewell!

In my editorial two months ago, I said that in real life, the unexpected happens: Adventures start out heading in one direction and end up going somewhere else entirely. This seems to have occurred between the time I wrote those words and the time I'm writing these in early September, because the unexpected has indeed taken place, and I'm part of it.

I'm leaving my position as editor of DRAGON® Magazine to take a new job in the Games division of TSR, Inc. An opportunity appeared there to become the product group leader for all AD&D® game core material. This is my last editorial.

I am excited about my new work and look forward to it, but I am a little sad, too. I've been the editor of DRAGON Magazine for seven years (that's 85 issues, from #115 to #199) and was on staff for over 10 years (126 issues, from issue #75 to #200, the last issue I will have worked on). I was first published in DRAGON issue #33 (January 1980) and had read it regularly since issue #20 (November 1978). Somewhere I have a tattered copy of issue #3 (October 1976), containing the rules for creating half-orc characters, with which I greatly annoyed other players in my very first gaming group at Ft. Bragg, N.C., in 1977. DRAGON Magazine has been in my life for a very long time, and I've loved every moment of it.

One thing I've liked about being the editor has been my ability to get so many other people's ideas into print. I used to write for DRAGON Magazine, but many other gamers had exciting ideas that were as good as or better than mine, and finding those gamers and getting their views out to hundreds of thousands of other gamers has been a pleasure. I confess I've also enjoyed writing my editorials and will

miss that opportunity, but it's time to pass the torch to others.

I've greatly loved my work, and I hope that you have enjoyed reading this magazine as much as the Periodicals staff and I have enjoyed putting it together. Your support has carried this magazine to its 200th—issue and it will carry it to the 300th issue and beyond as well, to new worlds of excitement.

### Acknowledgements

I've been blessed over the years with an abundance of excellent friends and co-workers, and I feel obliged to single out a few from whom I learned some particularly important things:

From all those who gamed with me before I came to TSR, I learned the joys of role-playing. I owe a particular debt of thanks to everyone with whom I gamed at Ft. Bragg, for they taught me all the basics of role-playing (my subsequent excesses and errors were not their fault). For their outstanding support and friendship, I am also indebted to Al and Feliet at the Hobbit Hobby Shop, Fayetteville, NC., which remains in my heart as the best little hobby shop in the whole wide world. Please drop by there soon and tell them I said hi.

From Georgia Stewart, I got the encouragement to try a radical life change: dumping graduate school and going to work for TSR. It worked (this episode was recounted in the introduction I wrote for *The Art of DRAGON® Magazine*).

From Kim Mohan, the unusually tall and dignified editor of DRAGON Magazine when I arrived, I learned two important lessons: 1) Always check the accuracy of material that's being quoted word for word, because no one ever gets it right (and, sure enough, they don't); and 2)

Never stoop to the level of your opposition. This second lesson has saved me countless time from severe embarrassment and worse over the years, and I am grateful for it.

From Patrick Price, who was the editor for AMAZING® Stories when I arrived, I learned a considerable amount about editing, as well as one important lesson: People are not thankful enough for what they have.

From Barbara Young, I learned that even chaotic persons can become organized, an amazing lesson that did a lot to improve my life in general.

From Margaret Weis and Karen and Vince Streif, I learned that some of my friends were just as capable of cheerfully tormenting me as I was them.

From this magazine's publishers and the TSR Legal department, I learned that an excess of caution is rarely a bad thing for an editor.

And from Gail Levine, I learned to push myself a little more. And a little more. And a little more than that.

Thanks to you all, and thanks to you, who read these words now, for making this the wonderful magazine that it is. You are the best.



Roger Moore

# Farewell ROGAR OF VICTORIA

NO "oops"  
Sorry #.#.#.#  
I'll miss them all,  
GOOD LUCK!  
Jacey

Good luck and  
good hunting!  
Wolfgang

THANKS FOR  
EVERYTHING!  
GOOD LUCK!  
D.V.



~~they~~  
Were we great or what?

Good Luck!  
Janet

Gone, but still  
around. We know  
where to find you!  
Do a good job or they'll  
send you back!  
Barbara

WORKING WITH  
YOU GUYS WAS  
SO MUCH FUN!  
SOMETIMES FELT  
GUILTY GETTING  
A PAYCHECK!  
GOOD LUCK  
IN YOUR NEW  
POSITIONS!  
Lynn

# IN CYBERSTRIKE, ALL BEGINNERS WILL BE TREATED FAIRLY. AND THEN DESTROYED.

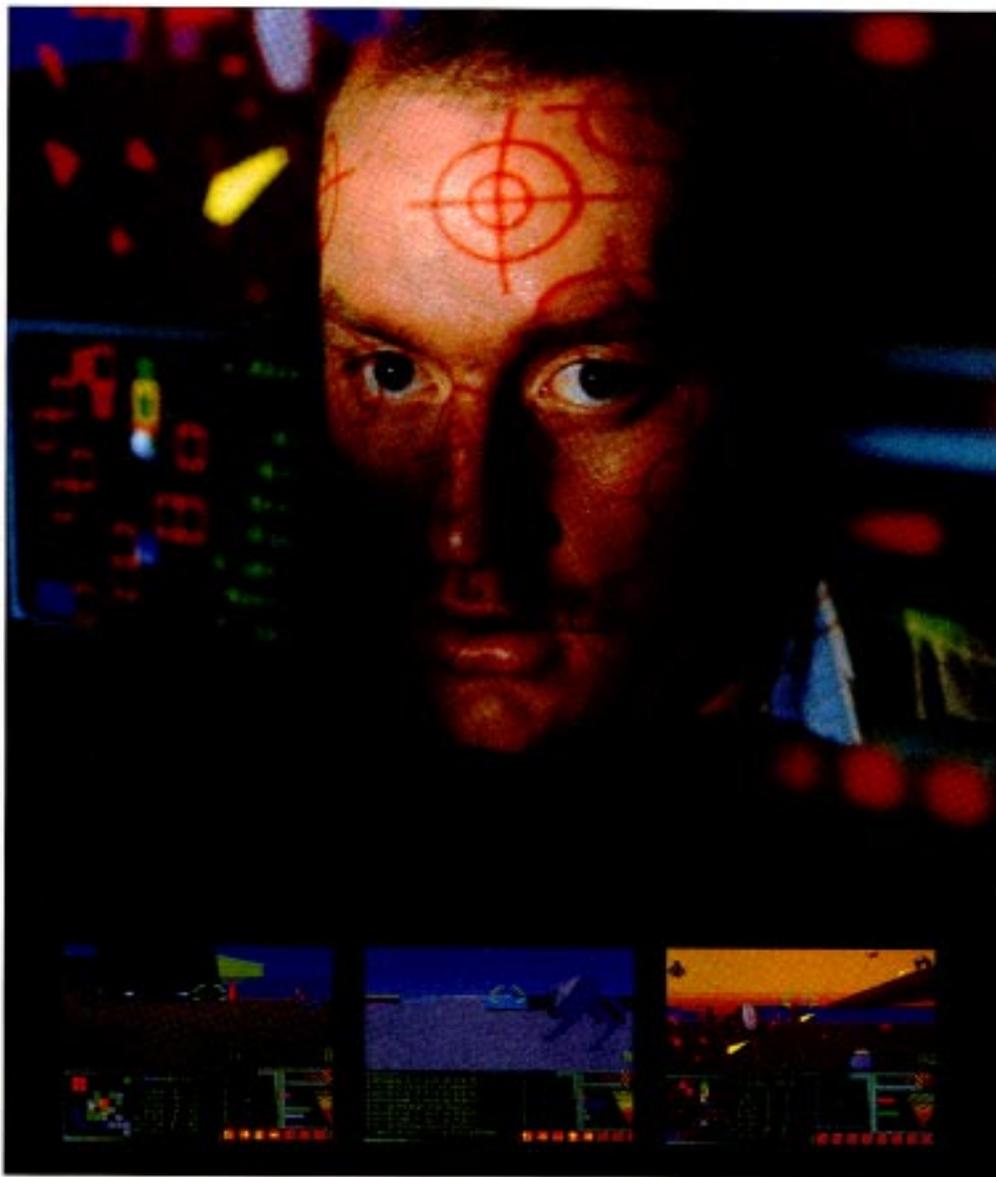
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**SIMUTRONICS**  
MULTIMEDIA

# There's no escape from monsters



Artwork by Scott Rosema

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# Opening the Book of Beasts

by David Howery

Artwork by Terry Dykstra



# Everything you've ever wanted to know about monsters from the medieval point of view!

One of the most popular features in DRAGON® Magazine is the Ecology series, which describes various AD&D® and D&D® game monsters in great detail. Each monster is given a history that makes it seem like a part of the natural world. Many of these articles are presented as the notes, lectures, and reminiscences of sages and other learned men.

But, in the real medieval world of Europe, the "learned men" of the time were actually incredibly ignorant about the real habits of animals. It was difficult for them to observe animals in Europe, much less those of faraway lands. A great deal of myth and folklore thus grew up around certain animals and was presented as solemn fact by educated men. This article presents some of this folklore from the Middle Ages that was considered fact. In addition, some European monsters from medieval lore are presented here.

The main source of written knowledge of medieval animal lore is from a bestiary, a "book of beasts." These books were written by several authors, and rarely did one man write a whole book. Each bestiary consisted of lists of real and fabulous animals and their habits. The root source of bestiaries was a now-lost Greek treatise on beasts called *Physiologus*.

Many bestiaries were written by cloistered clergymen, which led to bestiaries being filled with religious notes; many beasts' habits are ascribed to religious rather than natural reasons. On the positive side, many copies of bestiaries have been preserved to the modern day in monasteries. The most famous bestiary was preserved for centuries at Cambridge, and a translation by T. H. White is available in most bookstores.

## Animals

Due to the difficulty of travel during the Middle Ages, observation of animals in the wild was infrequent and hard to carry out. These myths seem absurd to modern men, but they were considered fact by nearly all at the time.

The information given here from medieval sources is all actually untrue, and most of it should be so even in a fantasy game. (The very earthy medieval scribes wrote much detailed lore about animals' mating and bathroom habits, none of which is repeated here.) Even a fantasy world must run on some laws, and those of fantasy nature should generally be the same as those of the real world. Of course, the DM is free to create some weird alternate world where all this folklore is 100% true; to fantasy game players, who are much more knowledgeable of nature than medieval men, this would be an odd world indeed.

*Antelope:* The antelope is so timid that hunters can never approach it. It has long, saw-edged horns that can cut down trees. When it goes to take a drink from a river, the horns get entangled in herecine brush. Once caught, the beast bellows loudly, which attracts hunters.

*Bear:* A cub is born as a shapeless pulp, and the mother must lick the cub into shape. A bear's jaws are weak. When ill, a bear is cured by eating either the mullein plant or ants. Males and females lair together through the winter, in separate chambers of the cave. Bears die from eating the mandrake plant.

*Boa:* This snake feeds by clinging to the udder of a cow.

*Bull:* Some bulls have a hide so thick it can repel every weapon. Others are a type of unicorn animal, having only one horn and solid (not cloven) hooves. These are so fierce that when captured they go mindless with rage.

*Camel:* The camel is wise and lives for 100 years. If sold to a stranger, it becomes ill with disgust.

*Cat:* Some cats, particularly black ones, serve as familiars for witches in the cause of evil. Cats' eyes are so sharp, they pierce the darkness with beams of light.

*Crab:* This crafty crustacean loves to feed on oysters, but must first get through the shell. It waits until the oyster opens on its own, then inserts a pebble into the valve to prevent it from closing.

*Dog:* The dog is the wisest of animals, for only it can recognize its own name. It cannot live without men. The tongues of puppies can be made into a salve that heals internal injuries.

*Dolphin:* This is a kind of fish. One species lives in tropical rivers and has a saw-edged dorsal fin used to slice through the bellies of crocodiles.

*Eagle:* When this bird grows old, it rejuvenates itself by first flying so high that the sun singes its wings, then dipping itself three times in a fountain. It is spartan with its young, abandoning them if they show signs of weakness or are unable to gaze fearlessly at the sun.

*Eel:* These fish are born from mud. One species, the lamprey, can mate with vipers.

*Elephant:* This beast has a vast memory. It gives birth only once and lives for 300 years. An elephant may conceive only beneath the mandragora tree, and birthing is done in lakes. During the birth, the male watches from the shore, killing any bull or serpent that passes by. Elephants are afraid of mice. One out of 13 elephants is a small blessed animal with extraordinary strength; nothing evil can approach it, alive or dead. If trained for war, an elephant can collect the wounded. It leads lost men to familiar paths. An elephant sleeps upright, leaning on trees, so

hunters who wish to catch it use saws to cut partly through a favored tree, so that the elephant breaks it and falls. There is a species of dragon that preys on elephants. A unicorn can kill an elephant by stabbing the latter's stomach.

*Flea:* This tiny pest can live on dust, needing nothing else for food.

*Fox:* Crafty and cunning, a fox never moves in a straight line. When hungry, it plays dead and lets its tongue hang out. When birds see this and fly down to sit on the corpse, the fox eats them.

*Frog:* If a frog is placed in a lump of food and fed to a dog, the dog never barks again.

*Goat:* A male goat is so hot, its blood can melt stone and metal.

*Goose:* Some geese are born from barnacles.

*Hawk:* This bird treats its young harshly to make them hardy as adults. The young are beaten out of the nest to fend for themselves, and the adults do not feed the young.

*Hedgehog:* This slow creature brings food back to its lair by impaling fruit, especially grapes, on its spines as it passes through fields.

*Horse:* At birth, a part of the foals placenta makes a love charm. A horse weeps at its master's death. Its virility is weakened when its mane is cut.

*Hyena:* This beast was originally created by the crossbreeding of a dog and large cat. It lives in tombs and devours the dead. Its spine is so rigid, it is unable to turn its head to look to the rear. A hyena can mimic human voices and lure men into ambush. Hunting dogs lose their voices if they cross a hyena's shadow. There is a stone in a hyena's eyes that allows men to see the future. If a hyena walks around a victim three times, the prey is paralyzed. A hyena may mate with a lioness, which gives birth to a leucrotta. A hyena may change sex at will.

*Ibex:* This animal can hurl itself off a mountain and land on its horns, unharmed by the fall.

*Insects:* Most of these animals are born from wood, earth, or corpses; they are never born from eggs. Bees are born from the carcasses of cows, hornets from horses, and wasps from burros. Some species, such as bees and ants, have large armies and kings. Many are able to consume nothing but air, dust, or water.

*Jay:* Some of these noisy birds have feathers that glow in the dark.

*Leopard:* This is not a natural animal. Instead, there is an animal called the pard, which looks much like the leopard, except that the spots are different. A leopard is a cross between a pard and a lioness. Three days after it has eaten, the breath of the leopard is very sweet. While all natural

creatures like this smell, dragons are afraid of it. Leopards have young only once, since the babies' claws scar the womb.

**Lion:** The lion is the prince of animals. It walks on mountaintops so that the scent of hunters reaches up to it. It sleeps with its eyes open. Cubs are born in threes, but born dead. After three days, the male breathes on their faces, and the cubs come to life. The lion ignores men, unless it is wounded; it is compassionate and spares the lives of women and children. It eats sparingly, only on alternate dates, and never to excess. The lion also eats carefully and avoids carrion. When sick, it eats monkeys to cure itself. It is afraid of white roosters. There is a small creature of unknown shape called the *leontophont*, which is deadly to lions if eaten. If the body is burned and the ashes of a leontophont scattered over meat, this bait will kill lions. Thus, lions pursue and kill leontophonts on sight, using only their paws in the slaying.

**Monkey:** The monkey is wise about elemental matters and celebrates wildly during the new moon. When a monkey gives birth to twins, one is loved and carried in its hands, and one is hated and carried on its back. Thus, when pursued, the monkey is forced to abandon the loved twin in its hands, so it can climb to safety.

**Mouse:** The mouse is generated from damp soil. Its liver waxes and wanes with the moon.

**Mullet:** The flesh of this fish can be prepared and eaten to cure excessive lust and alcoholism.

**Newt:** This amphibian is the enemy of scorpions, which are scared into a dazed stupor at the sight of a newt.

**Onager:** This wild burro knows what day the equinox is, and it brays once per hour on that day.

**Ostrich:** This giant bird has feet like a camel. It lays eggs only in June, when certain stars are visible. The ostrich does not care for its young and abandons the nest after laying eggs.

**Pelican:** This ugly bird kills its young when they are nearly grown. Three days later, the mother pierces her breast and lets her blood flow over the young, which brings them back to life.

**Remora:** This fish can hold onto a ship so strongly it can bring the vessel to a stop.

**Snake:** This reptile is born from the spine of a dead man. It is slimy and can live if only the head and two inches of body survive. A snake dies if it swallows the spittle of a fasting man.

**Spider:** A spider lives on air alone, needing no food.

**Stag:** This large deer is an enemy to all serpents. When ill, a stag sucks snakes into its nostrils to cure itself. If a stag is wounded by arrows, the dittany plant cures it. The stag enjoys the music of pipes. When moving in herds, stags travel in a line, with each resting its head on the

haunch ahead of it. The right antler is good for healing men or repelling snakes. It is possible to gain immortality by eating venison over many years.

**Tiger:** This is the most courageous of beasts. If its cubs are stolen, a tigress can unerringly track the thief. However, it is easy to distract her by tossing glass balls in her path.

**Toad:** A toad can create a basilisk or cockatrice by nesting on a hen's egg. Semi-precious stones form in the heads of toads.

**Turtle:** Ships move more slowly if they carry the right foot of a tortoise on board. Turtles make themselves temporarily immune to snake venom by eating marjoram.

**Viper:** The young of these venomous snakes are born by bursting through the mother's side, killing her in the process. The female kills the male in the act of mating. Males are so filled with lust that they mate with lampreys.

**Vulture:** This ugliest of birds reproduces by parthenogenesis—the females conceive without males. They each live up to 100 years.

**Weasel:** These animals excel at medicine and can bring their dead young back to life. Young are born through the ear or mouth.

**Whale:** These are considered to be fish so large that they can be mistaken for islands. When people land on a whale's back, the whale dives into the sea, drowning those people. Whales feed by opening their mouths and emitting a sweet smell that attracts fish. When its mouth is full, the whale swallows the fish.

**Wolf:** Rapacious and greedy, wolves can live on earth and air alone. Their necks cannot turn their heads around to face the rear. They give birth only in May during thunderstorms. Their eyes shine like lamps at night, and any man who sees them is stricken dumb with fear. If the man beats two stones together, his speech returns. If a man sees a wolf first, the wolf is paralyzed with fright.

**Worms:** Like insects, these are born from wood or corpses, and can live on earth or air alone.

While this folklore seems absurd to us, it was considered fact by the learned men of the day, the "sages" of Europe. While AD&D game *players* may know much of modern zoology, AD&D game *characters* may know very little. This may affect play in several ways. Imagine a group of heroes consulting a sage on how to deal with marauding lions, only to be solemnly told that lions are scared of white roosters; now imagine their fate if they accept this advice. The DM should feel free to drop these myths into play at appropriate times, as "facts" that all civilized folk know.

Oddly enough, those who know the real truth about animal habits are those who are the least scholarly: barbarians, druids, rangers, hunters, and herdsman. These have the most opportunities to observe animals in the wild and thus know fact

from myth. On the other hand, heroes from an urban background are likely to believe the myths given here.

## Monsters

While monsters are a vital part of the AD&D and D&D games, surprisingly few are taken from western European folklore, which is odd for a game based on mythical Europe. Instead, monsters have been plundered from the myths of ancient Greece, Scandinavia, the Orient, and numerous fantasy novels, as well as many invented just for the game. Several monsters from bestiaries were not included in the AD&D game but are featured below. In addition, some monsters included in the AD&D game are also discussed below, as their descriptions in bestiaries differ from those in the game.

**Caladrius:** This is a small white bird (1-2 hp, MV 24) that has the singular power to prophecy death in men. If a sick man moves in sight of the bird, he learns his fate by its response. If the bird turns its back on him, the man is doomed to die. If the bird faces the man, then flies up into the air, the man is instantly cured. The DM can handle this situation according to the circumstances—the caladrius is not infallible.

**Calopus:** This is a hound-sized predator that looks much like a puma, except that it has two serrated horns. The calopus can either claw and bite, or attack with its horns.

**Dragon:** The bestiary version of this reptile differs from the game version in that it is a giant winged serpent rather than a giant winged lizard. It has a crest and a weak bite, but its tail can deliver a powerful clubbing blow. This dragon kills by constriction, like a python. The dragon is large enough to constrict elephants. When it flies, the air around it in a 10' radius becomes superheated; all within the radius take the damage noted in the dragon's statistics table. Note that once the dragon lands, the air around it becomes normal in temperature. Dragons are not harmed by any heat, magical or natural. Age categories given in the table are the same as those under "Dragon" in the *Monstrous Manual*.

**Hydrus:** This is a large water snake that lives in tropical rivers. Treat it as a normal constrictor snake (as per the *Monstrous Manual* or MC1, the first *Monstrous Compendium*), except that it has a poisonous bite (save vs. poison or die). The hydrus is an enemy of crocodiles. It creeps up on those that are sleeping and slips between their jaws. The hydrus then destroys the crocodile's internal organs, slaying it.

**Monoceros:** This is a relative of the unicorn, but it is not a good magical creature. The monoceros has a horselike body, the feet of an elephant, the tail of a stag, and a 4' horn in the middle of its head. It has a horrible howl that frightens horses and oxen, but it is an herbivore. The horn, straight and spiraled, is needle sharp. The

monoceros refuses to be captured alive; if it is somehow taken, it kills all who approach it and refuses to eat, eventually dying of starvation.

*Orc, sea:* This is no relation to the ugly humanoid of game and Tolkien fame. It is a huge sea monster that vaguely resembles a crocodile. It has a ridged back, clawed limbs, and a long, tapered tail. Like a crocodile, the sea orc can strike with its tail (4-24 hp damage). The sea orc never hesitates to attack any ship it encounters. One of these monsters is featured in the legends of Charlemagne, and was defeated by the hero Rogero.

*Parandrus:* This creature is identical to the normal AD&D game stag (as per MC4), except that it can change colors to blend in with its background. If unmoving, the parandrus can be seen only by those able to see *invisible* objects.

*Sea beasts:* These are counterparts to land animals. Thus, there are sea bears, sea elephants, sea tigers, etc. They are identical to the land animals except that they have flippers instead of legs (MV statistics are the same) and can breathe water.

*Sea bishop/Sea monk:* These fish-men are clerics of the sea. They have scales, fish tails, and gills. The sea bishop has a high peaked head that resembles a clerical ceremony cap. Both have loose folds of skin that resemble robes. A sea monk casts spells as a cleric of levels 1-6 (1d6), and a sea bishop casts spells as a cleric of levels 7-10 (1d4 + 6).

*Serra:* This giant fish has great sail-like fins and a serrated ridge of bone on its head. On the surface, the serra spreads its fins and catches the wind like a sail, moving at a speed of 36. Once it catches a ship, it dives underneath and saws a hole in the hull with its ridged head. It can inflict 2-5 hull points per round. Once the ship sinks, the serra attacks swimmers in the water.

*Snake:* In addition to the normal poisonous snakes known to men, there are several monstrous asps with unusual poisons. The *dipsas* kills by a poison that causes extreme thirst; death comes in 1-6 rounds if a save vs. poison fails. The *emorrori's* poison kills by causing the veins to collapse and blood to sweat through the skin; death comes in 1-4 rounds. The *hypnale's* poison first puts the victim to sleep; death comes in 3-6 rounds. The *prester snake's* poison is so virulent that the mouth of the snake steams continuously. The poison kills in two rounds by causing the victim's body to swell. The *seps* has a poison that dissolves bone; anyone killed by it must first be given a *regeneration* spell before he can be raised from the dead. The worst of the asps is the *spectaficus*, whose poison must be saved against with a -2 penalty. A victim who fails dies in one round and begins decomposing immediately. If a *cure disease* and *neutralize poison* are cast on the body within five rounds of death, the victim has normal chances to be raised from the dead.

	<b>Calopus</b>	<b>Monoceros</b>
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate woods	Temperate meadows
FREQUENCY:	Very rare	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary	Family
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night	Day
DIET:	Carnivore	Herbivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)	Low (5-7)
TREASURE:	Nil	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1	1-3
ARMOR CLASS:	6	4
MOVEMENT:	15	20
HIT DICE:	3	6
THAC0:	17	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3	3
DAMAGE PER ATTACK:	1d3/1d3/1d6	1d5/1d8/1d10
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Rear claws for 1d4/1d4	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Surprised on a 1	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	M	L
MORALE:	Average (B-10)	Fearless (20)
XP VALUE:	175	270

	<b>Sea orc</b>	<b>Sea bishop (sea monk)</b>
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Salt water	Salt water
FREQUENCY:	Very rare	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary	Clan
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any	Any
DIET:	Carnivore	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)	Low to Genius (5-18)
TREASURE:	Nil	R (0)
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral evil	Any
NO. APPEARING:	1	1-10
ARMOR CLASS:	2	4 (5)
MOVEMENT:	SW15	9,sw12
HIT DICE:	15	7-10 (1-6)
THAC0:	5	15 (19)
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3	1
DAMAGE PER ATTACK:	1d10/1d10/3dB	By weapon type
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil	Spells
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	G (40' long)	M
MORALE:	Elite (14)	14 (11)
XP VALUE:	4,000	See below
<b>Sea bishop XP values</b>		
1 HD:	65	6 HD: 650
2 HD:	120	7 HD: 975
3 HD:	175	8 HD: 1,400
4 HD:	270	9 HD: 2,000
5 HD:	420	10 HD: 3,000

Otherwise, the chance for success is halved.

*Syren:* This is a flying poisonous snake. Treat it as a normal poisonous snake (as per MC1) except that it has wings (MV 25). Its venom is so deadly that anyone bitten dies the same round, unless a saving throw vs. poison is successful.

*Yale:* This herbivore looks much like an antelope with very long, slim horns. It is black, with a tail like an elephant and

jowls like a boar. The horns are not fixed, and the yale can swivel them around its body to attack opponents on either side of it or ahead (a previous version of this beast appeared in DRAGON issue #101, page 55).

The monsters below are already in the AD&D and D&D games, but the bestiary descriptions differ from the game descriptions.

	Serra	Yale
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Salt water	Temperate woods
FREQUENCY:	Very rare	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary	Herd
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any	Day
DIET:	Carnivore	Herbivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Nil	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1	1-12
ARMOR CLASS:	3	7
MOVEMENT:	Sw 24	24
HIT DICE:	12	3
THACO:	9	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1	2
DAMAGE PER ATTACK:	4d4	1d8/1d8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	G (30' long)	L
MORALE:	Elite (14)	Average (10)
XP VALUE:	3,000	120

*Basilisk:* This beast causes death, not petrification, with its gaze.

*Leucrotta:* This animal is faster than any other animal.

*Manticore:* The bestiary version has no wings and has a poisonous stinging tail, like a scorpion.

*Phoenix:* Some of these birds prefer to nest in cinnamon trees.

*Satyr:* This is considered to be a type of monkey.

*Unicorn:* This animal is only the size of a kid (a young goat).

The new monster descriptions given here are deliberately vague to keep them a mvstery to the players. The DM can create further specific details as desired.

### Dragon, bestiary

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Tropical regions	HIT DICE:	12 (base; see table)
FREQUENCY:	Very rare	THACO:	9
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary	NO. OF ATTACKS:	1 bite or 1 tail
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any	DAMAGE PER ATTACK:	1d8 or 2d6
DIET:	Carnivore	SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Constriction, heat aura
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (8-9)	SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
TREASURE:	See table	MAGIC RESISTANCE:	See table
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral evil	SIZE:	G (50' base)
NO. APPEARING:	1	MORALE:	Fanatic (17-18)
ARMOR CLASS:	-2 (base; see table)	XP VALUE:	See table
MOVEMENT:	9, Fl 30(C), Jp 3		

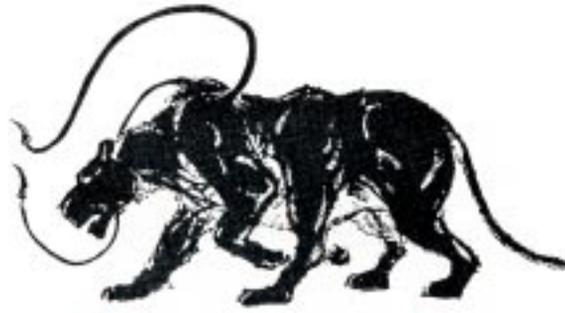
### Bestiary Dragon table

Age	Body length (in feet, plus tail)	Armor class	Heat aura (dmg/rd)	Constriction (dmg/rd)	Magic resistance	Treasure type	XP value
1	2-12	1	2d10 + 1	1d4	nil	nil	1,400
2	13-24	0	4d10 + 2	1d6	nil	nil	2,000
3	25-42	- 1	6d10 + 3	1d8	nil	nil	3,000
4	43-62	- 2	8d10 + 4	1d10	nil	E	6,000
5	63-80	- 3	10d10 + 5	1d12	30%	E,O,S	8,000
6	81-100	- 4	12d10 + 6	2d8	35%	E,O,S	9,000
7	101-118	- 5	14d10 + 7	2d10	40%	E,O,S	10,000
8	119-138	- 6	16d10 + 8	2d12	45%	E,O,S × 2	
9	139-156	- 7	18d10 + 9	3d10	50%	E,O,S × 2	
10	157-166	- 8	20d10 + 10	3d12	55%	E,O,S × 2	
11	167-174	- 9	22d10 + 11	4d10	60%	E,O,S × 3	
12	175-186	-10	24d10 + 12	4d12	65%	E,O,S × 3	

Ω







# Crude, But Effective

Simple tactics for humanoids

by Derek Jensen

Artwork by Tom Dow



Late one night, pondering the lackluster combat performance of a few goblins during that evening's game session, I set about looking for a better way to play them. I pondered their brutish demeanor, their lack of strategic insight, and their simplistic approaches to problems, searching resolutely for the method by which they could be seen in all their fearsome glory. Then, with the crack of thunder, it hit me. It hit me hard—in the back of the head.

The room began to spin and grow dark. An odor reminiscent of a barn in need of a good mucking out assaulted my nostrils. A low, guttural voice growled, "You got food?" Finding myself flat on the floor, I looked up to see a tall, thick-limbed fellow with a heavy brow, a flat, rust-red face, and a gold ring in his nose staring down at me. He wore red wool robes accessorized with simple gold jewelry and a fine fox-trimmed cloak encrusted with mud along its hem, as were his heavy, common boots. His staff was five feet long, finely carved, and decorated with fur and colorful feathers.

I sat up carefully, rubbing the base of my aching skull. "Say again?" I replied, feigning nonchalance.

"Do you got any food?" the fellow croaked slowly, twisting his thick tongue to pronounce each word. He had a nasty underbite, but it showed off his fangs nicely.

"Who are you?" I asked, trying to stand. With that simple question, I was introduced to an invaluable source of information on intelligent humanoids, for this was none other than the great hobgoblin shaman, Elmonster. It seems Elmonster stumbled through a dimensional rift he mistook for the cave of a friendly ogress. He would return to his own world soon enough (by means of his wondrous *staff of mighty enchantments and nosering of etherealness*), but for now, the wise warrior-philosopher took a seat in my least comfortable chair and belched loudly as I handed him some cold fried chicken left over from the game. I had many questions for him.

"What you want to know?" Elmonster mumbled between bites.

"All about humanoids—goblins and orcs and such . . ."

"And hobgoblins?" Elmonster asked, straightening with pride.

"And hobgoblins, yes," I said. "How is it they thrive? How do they defend themselves? Besides by force of arms, I mean. Aren't adventurers usually so much . . . more . . . powerful?"

"Ah," Elmonster smiled, bits of chicken clinging to his massive canines. "You think we are weak. You think we are stupid! You think we cannot keep day-dwellers from hacking and alakazamming us into tiny red bits! You do not know fierce hobgoblins." In a moment, Elmonster was cheerily providing answers to all my questions on the methods and tactics of humanoid tribes. I'm sure only a few were outright lies.

## Introduction to destruction

Too often in AD&D® or D&LD® game adventures, the Dungeon Master, needing a brief but bloody encounter, creates a group of orcs or goblins, arms them with little more than short swords, and sets them down squarely in front of an oncoming party of adventurers. Worse, in the confusion of dice-rolling, the DM neglects the self-preservation instincts of these monsters and suddenly finds their numbers cut down to one or two who are forced to turn and flee, usually to be brought down by a volley of arrows. While this scenario is not entirely unreasonable if the party has been stealthy and if the monsters have a reason to fight to the death, it happens far too often to be believable.

Such creatures as kobolds, goblins, orcs, and hobgoblins may seem so weak and stupid as to be nothing more than sword fodder for DMs, but they do have a realm of expertise, and that is in staying alive. After all, humanoids have survived hundreds, even thousands of years of warfare with other races. Properly played, they are strong, tenacious, and cunning creatures, as worthy of a party's fear as any beholder (well, *almost* as worthy).

Humanoid tactics are, for the most part, simple but effective enough to keep them from being wiped out. Humanoids use two primary tactics—patrols and ambushes. They also use two secondary stratagems—traps and tricks. Finally, many humanoids develop a mish-mash of other ideas and basic rules of thumb. These tactics are also general enough to work for other groups of intelligent creatures—such as bandits, jermlaine, and wererats—if adapted to their particular habitats.

When preparing an adventure centered on a humanoid tribal lair, concentrate on the same subjects the creatures themselves concentrate on. Start with a population of humanoids and a rough map of the lair, creating the lair from the inside out (internal defenses first, outriders or scouts last). Then the *adventure* should be created from the adventurers' point of view—from the outside in (scouts first, tricks and traps last). This gives the DM a better feel for the internal structure of a tribe, allowing for a more interesting, colorful, dangerous, and realistic portrayal of the humanoids.

Also, in the fair's-fair category, the DM must decide how smart these humanoids really are. Monster intelligence is listed in the *Monstrous Compendium* by comparison to human intelligence. Humanoids with "average" intelligence should be played as smart as average humans. Among those creatures, as among humans, there are intellectuals and entrepreneurs, and these humanoids will usually (but not always) be the shamans and leaders.

## Call out the guards

It is important to remember that most humanoid races exist in a constant state of

war. Nearly all intelligent humanoids should have scouts and patrols roaming outside their fortresses and guards posted inside. The first line of defense for any militaristic group, scouts and patrols provide a precious time lag between discovery of an enemy and all-out combat. This is still the simplest, cheapest, and most reliable alarm system.

Roaming scouts should be lightly armed and armored, and moving fast. Most scouts patrol in pairs or trios, staying together and reporting any unusual finds. Their main purpose is to raise the alarm in case of attack as early as possible. More sophisticated humanoids may train scouts (and perhaps patrols, as well) to lead invaders into a pre-arranged ambush. However, scouts should engage in combat only if it becomes unavoidable, withdrawing at the first opportunity.

Patrols should confine themselves to territory the tribe controls without dispute (unlike the stealthy scouts). The methods of most patrol troops is to spread out, cover a lot of ground, and report anything out of the ordinary. Their job is to detect invaders early and stop them quickly. They should be heavily armed and armored, and often accompanied by dogs, wolves, wild pigs, or other animals with superior senses (this helps to foil such otherwise highly effective spells as *invisibility*). Patrols should consist of a dozen or so hardy warriors and should engage strong invaders only long enough for a runner (usually a noncombatant) to get a head start toward alerting the rest of the tribe. The patrol should then withdraw quickly, scattering if necessary to discourage pursuit and confound attempts to locate the camp.

Guards, on the contrary, will usually fight to the death, for their purpose is to hinder invasion of the camp or dungeon for as long as possible. The longer it takes invading adventurers to reach the inner chambers of the lair, the better the chances that reinforcements can ready themselves for battle and the chieftain can escape out a secret exit with the tribal treasure. If the chieftain decides to flee, the rest of the tribe will go immediately after him, treasure-bearers first, then noncombatants and regular warriors. The guards will bring up the rear.

This sort of discipline cannot be expected from chaotic humanoids, but lawful races (especially hobgoblins) should be able to maintain fairly good discipline. Of course, even many lawful races may have some trouble getting guards to stand fast in the face of great numbers or powerful magic. Discipline does not necessarily imply a lot of planning. Goblins won't coordinate patrols with scouts so well that a pair of disguised dwarves couldn't be mistaken for returning scouts (at least at first).

The ambush is one of the most effective—and therefore most enduring—of military tactics. It is simple to plan,

relatively easy to carry out, and nearly foolproof (an important consideration in this case). Even when an ambush goes awry, the ambushers can usually slink away into the underbrush. Ambushes almost never end with those being ambushed slaughtering the force that set the ambush.

Lawful humanoids are likely to set up permanent ambushes, where a dozen or so well-armed, well-armored beefeaters (or elfeaters, as the case may be) will always be posted. These are most likely outside a lair, but may be found inside also, if the conditions are right. The ambushers must be armed primarily with missile weapons to take advantage of their positions. Slings are good for goblins and kobolds, javelins for lizard men, short bows for orcs, and long bows (with sheaf arrows) for frogs and hobgoblins. With a dozen archers, each firing two arrows per round and doing 1d8 points of damage per hit, a hobgoblin ambush should be enough to terrify the bravest adventurers.

The ambush site should be chosen for several advantages. Things to look for in an ambush site are proximity to the likely path of invasion, height above the path, inaccessibility from the path, opportunities for cover and concealment, and opportunities for retreat.

Proximity is essential. If the invaders enter the area by a different route, the

entire ambush is foiled; hence many humanoids use lures and clear trails to encourage invaders toward the ambush. Fighting from the high ground gives the attackers a better view and longer ranges with their missile weapons. Setting up a crossfire (attacking from two or more sides) without the attackers hitting each other is another advantage of height. Inaccessibility is most necessary when the ambushers are weak close-combat fighters. If the terrain prevents those being ambushed from closing to melee, then the ambushers have a better chance of surviving the encounter. Likewise, cover and concealment make it less likely that the ambushers will be hit from afar. If retreat becomes necessary, a quick and easy escape route will surely mean the difference between living and dying. The ambushers will also want to limit the opportunities of their victims to withdraw or seek cover.

One example of an ideal ambush spot would be a pair of overgrown ledges atop rocky slopes that flank a path through a hilly woodland. The ambushers can attack from above (gaining +1 to attack rolls, see *DMG*, p. 52) and from opposite sides. The crossfire allows some attacks at shield-bearing characters on their unshielded sides. Characters with missile weapons also could be attacked from behind. The loose-gravel slopes (and arrows in the back) discourage scaling them. Rocks and

vegetation on the ledge provide cover and concealment (about a +3 bonus to ambushers' armor class).

Other good spots for an ambush are bridges and narrow ravines (where escape is easily limited), river fords and dungeon pools (where victims can be caught while waist-deep), and bluffs and rock outcroppings (which provide high, inaccessible perches for snipers).

The more intelligent and industrious humanoids could enhance our example ambush site by blocking the path just beyond the site or by setting a rockslide trap to hinder the invaders' retreat. That way, an invading force stopping to deal with the problem is trapped. Other nasty surprises include covered pits dug on either side of the trail, and camouflaged nets laid out near the trail or hung above in the trees.

If the ambushers can arrange for the site to be dark, as in a night attack or an ambush in a large cavern, they gain the advantage of being effectively invisible by staying out of the range of torchlight. This is especially advantageous for humanoids because most of them have infravision, and any adventurers with infravision will be limited by the torches of their companions. Imagine creeping into a large, echoing cavern, your torches spilling their flickering light for a few meager yards all around, when suddenly the darkness in all directions erupts with fierce shrieks and wild war whoops as the air is filled with stones and arrows.

### Step into our parlor

Ambushes are traps of one sort—especially if the victims are purposefully lured to the site—but most humanoids will employ a wide variety of other, less extravagant traps. Kobolds are probably the real experts at trap-building, being the weakest of the common humanoids ("Traps are the teeth of little monsters," Elmonster says.), but most humanoids should be familiar with the common ones.

Humanoid-fashioned traps naturally will be simple. They could be built with little or no reliance upon magic, which is so rare and precious to humanoids (as far as I am able to determine, Elmonster himself is only 8th level).

The purpose of humanoid-fashioned traps usually will be to disable intruders (slowing the intrusion), kill them (weakening it), or capture them (for use as slaves or hostages). Unlike some other trap-builders, humanoids don't mind the messes made by traps that kill. ("The gruesomer, the better," Elmonster reckons. "It keeps the rest on their toes.")

There are numerous well-known variations on the humble pit trap, net trap, and deadfall, and hundreds of simple traps of different sorts. A few of Elmonster's examples should serve to stimulate the imagination of any DM strapped for ideas.

A covered pit is filled with water. The

**ORKIE MEGA STORE!**

GRUNT GRUNT, BELCH BELCH, BURPBURPSNORE!  
 IT'S THE ORKIE MEGA STORE!  
 AT 4 OLD CROWN, WINDSOR RD.  
 SLOUGH, BERKS!  
 AND ORKIE SHOPPE IS STILL AT  
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victim's fall triggers a trap door to slide closed over him, trapping the victim in the pit (possibly under the water).

A deep refuse pit near the likely path the invaders will take is camouflaged or covered. The filth is inhabited by rot grubs.

The large, fancy carpet at the entrance to the chieftain's hall is rigged to gather up those standing on it as a net. Cutting the rope beside the chieftain's throne triggers the trap.

A covered pit dumps its victim onto a net in a chamber on the level below, a net that is easily gathered and dragged into the guard post just beyond.

Breaking open the chieftain's treasure chest breaks a glass vial inside and spills its contents—contact poison—all over the tribal treasure.

When creating traps of your own, decide what the purpose of the trap is (what nasty event should befall the victims) and how that purpose can be fulfilled effectively. Then consider how the victims will fall into the trap: think of lures to entice the victims, camouflage to fool them, and prods to goad them. To place a trap, decide where intruders are likely to go and what they are likely to do. But keep in mind the day-to-day activity of the place—a camouflaged pit right near the entrance to the orc lair is likely to catch a lot of innocent little orclings before it snares any “stinking gnomish thieves.”

Be sure to consider what resources are available to the builders (mental, physical, magical, and material). If the orcs aren't smart enough or strong enough, or if they don't have the right materials to build a revolving-room trap, then it isn't going to get built unless the chieftain is chummy with a cheap contractor.

Tricks are used to gain a temporary advantage over intruders, and so require quick action. All humanoids have a few standard tricks, but since they usually lose out in any battle of wits, not all their tricks will be tricky enough to fool or hinder adventurers. The products of such minds include taking cover behind furniture, throwing dust or flour to cloud vision, tripping and overbearing, back-stabbing, and pretending to surrender (or to be dead). Smarter creatures will have a few more elaborate surprises up their sleeves. Several of Elmonster's favorites should illustrate the point.

The ceiling at the entrance to a corridor (one that has guard posts at both ends) hides a weighted trap door that drops down into the corridor, separating some adventurers from the rest of the party and cutting off their escape.

A narrow passageway has murder holes in its ceiling and arrow slits in its walls so defenders can fire on invaders passing through it. Spears stuck through a few of the holes and slits at either end provide a method of containing the victims.

A shallow pool hides guards that do not need air (zombies, for example), who attack to overbear and drown their victims.

A troop patrolling the area includes a creature (an ogre or worg, for example) capable of carrying away one of the intruders (for use as a hostage), or even a small member of the tribe to carry away some of the party's packs, dropped weapons, etc.

A small fire fills some of the tunnels with smoke, reducing many invaders' vision. In general, humanoids can stand a greater degree of pollution in their air and water than humans or demihumans.

A shaman or tribal counselor appears (with gifts) to talk peace. Meanwhile, an elite force is preparing a sneak attack. A spell or magical item provides a quick escape. (This is Elmonster's “very most favorite” trick.)

When formulating your own tricks, imagine what advantage could be gained over intruders, keeping in mind the strengths of those doing the tricking. Depriving intruders of something they rely on is a good start, as is changing the environment to one they are not accustomed to. Humanoids are nasty scrappers, full of dirty tricks, and are willing to use them. They should have a few favorite tricks that can be used in a variety of situations, and one or two that are useful in unusual situations.

### More tricky tactics

This category is a list of tactical ideas and rules of thumb, some well known and some oft-forgotten. Only the ones of par-

ticular use to Dungeon Masters are included (taken from Elmonster's own *Little Black Manual of Ambushes, Sneak Attacks, Dirty Fighting, and Elf Recipes*), so such gems as “Mercy breeds contempt” and “Eating enemies makes a war pay for itself” will have to wait for another time.

### Safety in hordes

Although numbers are generally mistrusted by those who consider subtraction a *nonweapon proficiency*, the fact is that the greater the number of creatures there are on one side, the better chance that side has of winning. All humanoids, small ones especially, should live in large groups and practice mass attacks. Few adventurers can deal with six spear-wielding goblins attacking simultaneously, three archers firing over the heads of their compatriots, and a dozen more waiting to take the place of those who fall. Remember, a goblin lair is home to as many as *four hundred* regular warriors.

### Know your enemy

Knowing the number and capabilities of intruders allows sensible decisions. Are there more than twenty? Fewer than ten? The difference may mean fighting or fleeing. Knowing who and where the spellcasters are could mean the difference between a quick victory and a long, bloody battle. Unless the alarm has already been raised, an ambush or other attack will not begin until a runner has been sent to alert the rest of the tribe as to the invaders' numbers and make-up.

A patrol is stuck attacking whoever is in front, but ambushers can target creatures



who are the most dangerous to them: archers and wizards. Heavily armored fighters and clerics wielding swords and maces may be hard to bring down, but it will be a lot easier when they are the only targets left. To ambushers, they present no threat. If those fighters and clerics decide to protect the mages and thieves with their bodies, they will all have to stand still (waiving their Dexterity bonuses).

### The right tool for the right job

Most humanoids are excellent miners but poor smiths; consequently, most of their armament will be pillaged booty. Smaller humanoids will possess the smaller weapons and armor of demi-humans, while larger humanoids should naturally wield the weapons taken from their larger victims—long swords, battle axes, and even the occasional bastard sword or two-handed sword. (Elmonster claims that hobgoblins never use such “children’s weapons” as short swords and hand axes.) Pole arms make especially good sense for humanoids. They are easy to make (just strap an axe or a dagger to a pole) and are effective when used by masses of troops. Masses of troops are one thing humanoids have lots of.

### Divide and conquer

Separating a force into two parts usually means that one part no longer has an effective leader. Depriving a force of its leader or spell-casters probably will send the rest home to pout. That barrel-chested fighter who always goes first is tough, but how tough will he be when a portcullis slams down and he suddenly finds himself alone with the chieftain’s elite personal halbardier guard?

### An orc’s home is his castle

Designing static defenses (for encampments and dungeons) is of particular importance to humanoids, who are always being besieged in their homes. Useful physical impediments include not merely higher ground and gravel slopes (as in the ambush example above), but palisades, ditches, bodies of water, and open pits outside, and slippery stone floors, overturned tables, stacked-up chests, trip wires, dead ends, and low or narrow passageways inside. Goblins and kobolds should use their small size to its best advantage when designing tunnel complexes.

### Drill, drill, drill

Good plans and the efficient execution of them is paramount. Defenders who do not know what they are going to do in case of attack are throwing away the main advantage of being a defender. Most warlike humanoids are lawful, and lawful creatures make plans. All militaristic encampments should have plans for defense that include how many are on duty where and at what times, what reinforcements can be made available and when, and what areas the defenders should try to confine the

intruders to. Planning complicated defenses without being partial to the monsters or the party is difficult. One method that helps is to plan the defenses against a different party (a defunct PC party or a party of NPCs), the idea being that the tribe has encountered adventurers before, just not the PCs.

### Hit hard, then run away

In a fair fight, defenders of any sort are almost always outmatched by their attackers. At least, the attackers think so, or they would never have left home. Hit-and-run tactics are easy to plan and can weaken an invading force to the extent that it never reaches the defenses. A large hit-and-run force can overwhelm the invading force briefly and have a chance to break it up.

### Hit them when they’re not looking

While large hit-and-run attacks are most effective, small hit-and-run raids can keep up the harassment by following the invaders and making a single sniping attack when the moment is ripe. One arrow in the mage’s back or in the wounded ranger can make a difference. A group of two or three humanoids can make such an attack (from different sides) and then scatter before the party knows what hit them. Perfect moments are when the invaders stop to eat or sleep, put down their weapons to gather treasure, and venture into the woods to gather up their lost arrows.

### Never let them catch their breath

Potions of healing have to be drunk, and cure *light wounds* spells have to be cast. Constant harassment will go a long way toward limiting these and other, less-important actions—such as treasure-

gathering, decision-making, eating, sleeping, and spell-studying. Enough harassment to discourage treasure-gathering is by itself enough to send most adventurers packing.

### Get someone else to do your dirty work

“Everybody else’s warriors are expendable,” Elmonster remarks. Just as humanoids tend to ignore the inhumanity of slave-labor (they *are* inhuman, after all), they care little if their allies get slaughtered in stopping the invasion. Big humanoids may bully or trick smaller ones into acting as a first line of defense. And, big or small, all of them will try to find large, ferocious monsters that are dumber than they are to attack invaders first. Small, ferocious monsters and very small, poisonous monsters can be put to good use.

### Blame it on the other guy

If there is no one else to do your dirty work, you can always *blame* someone else. Goblins know most humans and demi-humans can’t tell one goblin from another, or even a goblin from a kobold. Goblins aren’t above stealing a few colorfully-emblazoned shields and banners while they prepare for the big raid. Properly done, it could shift the wrath of the town to a rival tribe—or even a rival race—when the townsfolk hire a company of adventurers. (“What? You were attacked by *halfings*?! Are you sure, m’Lord Mayor? Hair on their toes and everything, huh? Well, I guess you were attacked by halfings. Banners of the militia of Dumplingshire, eh? Where exactly is this Dumplingshire?”)



### Do as you're told

A tribe of cunning and vicious humanoids should be terrifying enough by now, but give them a good leader and you can throw all aforementioned limitations down the tribal commode. A strong, intelligent leader can give a tribe drive and purpose. Traps will be improved, ambushes more elaborate, tricks cleverer, and discipline tighter.

The vision of an evil, manipulative wizard acting as the "power behind the throne" is classic, and for good reason. There are many ways for even a low-level wizard (or an evil cleric) to gain a great deal of influence over a substantial portion of a humanoid tribe. There is magic not just to charm, but also to impress and scare humanoids into service. A wizard backing a tribe of humanoids is a wicked combination, for the wizard can provide the mind and magic that the tribe lacks, and the tribe can provide the numbers and muscle that the wizard needs. (Elmonster waxes metaphorical when he says, "Wizard got brains; we got heads.")

Of course, spell-casters aren't the only ones who can gain influence over humanoids. An intelligent monster could likewise influence with its special abilities or impress with its cruelty or debauchery. ("Wow, this guy really knows how to throw a raiding party!") Good monsters to use as leaders include lamias, dopple-

gangers, evil nagas, medusae, wereboars, lizard kings, and the bigger, more intelligent cousins of the humanoids in question (hobgoblins, orogs, flinds, and advanced lizard men).

### Head for the hills

Most warlike humanoids are evil, and evil creatures tend to be cowardly, even if they are well disciplined (they just act cowardly *together*). When things go against them, they usually fall back. They may flee altogether if a spell-caster gets particularly pyrotechnic. (Elmonster's proverb is, "See a wizard, run away. Live to loot another day.")

It turns out, however, that fleeing for your life in the face of certain destruction is not a bad stratagem. Since smaller humanoids often end up running away, they should often succeed in getting away. A tribe should be familiar with the terrain in its territory and all its nooks, crannies, caves, crevices, fox dens, and briar patches. In rocky hills, an entire tribe could scatter and be swallowed up by the terrain, only to emerge a few weeks later when the invaders have gone back to their fields and farms. In a natural cave complex, the tribe—or its survivors—could retreat so far under the earth that only dwarves would try to root them out.

### If you can't beat them, join them

Lastly, evil is evil. It means a creature is only interested in his own life and *maybe* the lives of those closest to him. If the enemy is strong and there is simply no way to get away, the only thing left to do may be to give up. Small humanoids in particular should beg for mercy (mostly whining), sob shamelessly (mostly faking), kiss feet (mostly slobbering), offer servitude (mostly thieving), blurt secrets (mostly lying), and generally deny accountability. ("Look, I'm only a cook. I got this trick knee, you see: an old pillaging injury—you know how it is. I haven't even *touched* a spear in *months*. But listen, I make a *fabulous* frog fricassee.") Of course, the first moment an opportunity for escape presents itself, it's, "So long, sucker."

"Well, me gotta go," said Elmonster after downing the last of the chicken-bones and all. He continued after a thunderous belch that roused me from my note-taking. "Me gotta meet up with Ursula (the ogress, I presume), or me be in big trouble." He rose, straightened his robes, rubbed his nosering, and waved his staff. Elmonster stepped through the hole that appeared in the air, then turned and menacingly pointed a clawed forefinger at me and said, "You go now and tell other day-dwellers how fierce hobgoblins really is, or I come back. You hear?"

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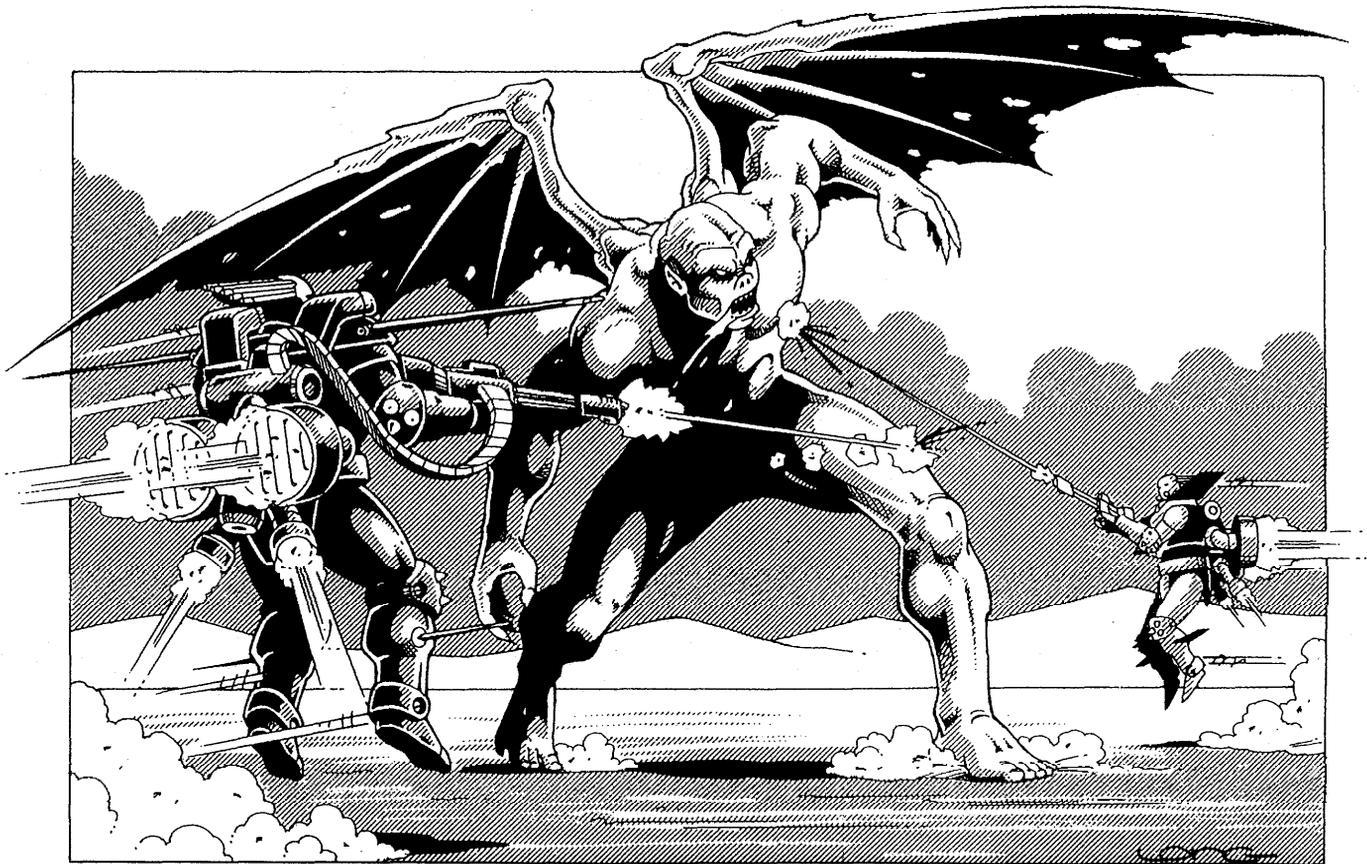
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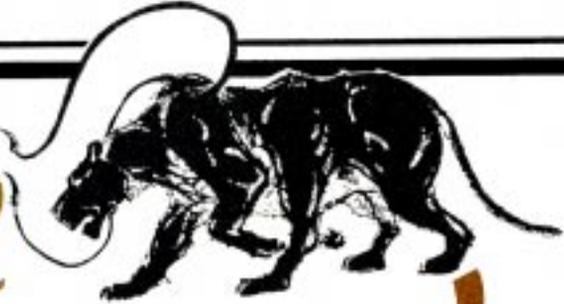
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# The Dragon's Bestiary

Those terrible trolls

by Alec Baclawski

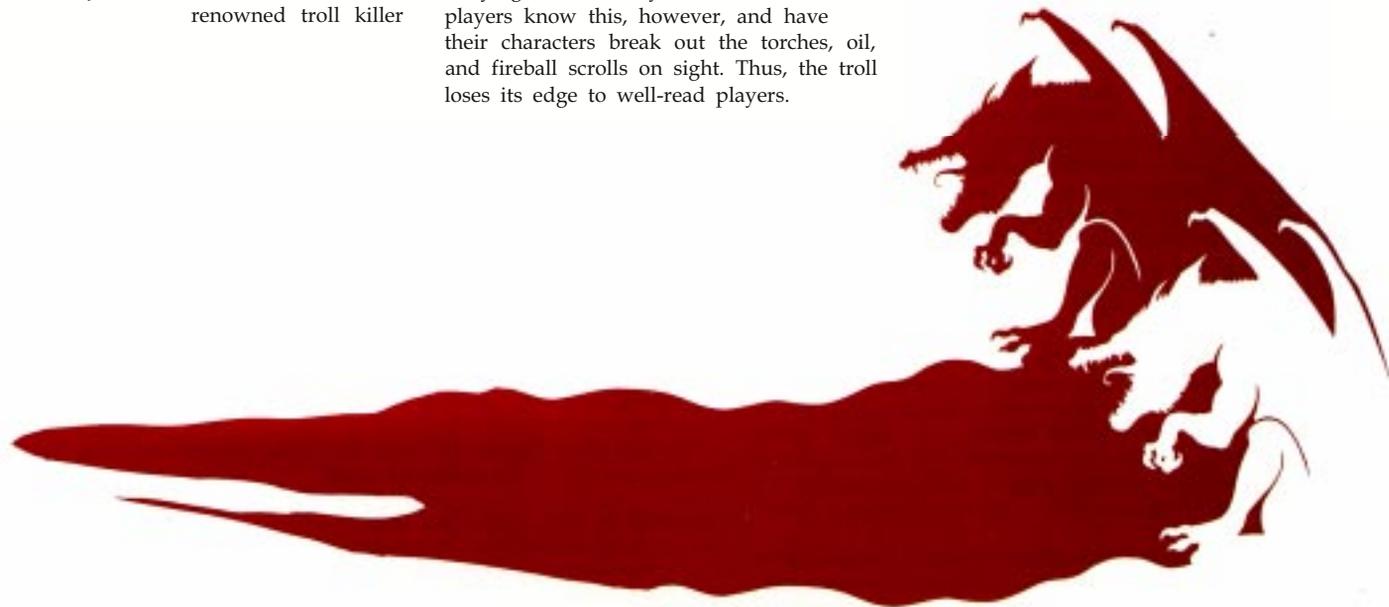
Artwork by Mark Nelson

"Trolls: Powerful humanoids who live only to hunt and kill, craving the flesh of the goodly races above all others. Not very bright, but cruel and possessing a cunning hunting instinct, trolls are hellish foes indeed."

—From the journal of Arvas Flamesword,  
renowned troll killer

For their hit dice, trolls are probably the toughest monster the DM can unleash. Only fire, acid, ingenuity, or luck gives the PCs any hope of defeating the beasts. Without nearby acid pools (and we all know how rare those are), the job of destroying trolls usually falls to fire. Most players know this, however, and have their characters break out the torches, oil, and fireball scrolls on sight. Thus, the troll loses its edge to well-read players.

Included are several new troll species. Though many have standard trollish weaknesses, their strange powers or appearances will keep the players guessing about just what their characters are facing.



CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Sub-arctic to sub-tropical land
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Pack
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi-(2-4)
TREASURE:	Q (½)
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic neutral
NO. APPEARING:	4-24 (4d6)
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVEMENT:	15
HIT DICE:	3+3
THACO:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d4 +4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Lockbite, disease
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Regeneration
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M
MORALE:	Elite (13)
XP VALUE:	Pup: 175 Adult: 420 Pack leader: 975

A trollhound looks like a large, ugly worg or dire wolf with black pits for eyes. Most trollhounds stand between 4' and 6' at the shoulder and bulge with thick muscles and tendons. The skin of a trollhound is a vile mix of violet, gray, and green flesh with patches of coarse, spiky black or gray hair. The lips, tongue, and teeth of trollhounds are inky black. They always smell of waste, death, and decay. Trollhounds possess infravision to 60'.

**Combat:** Trollhounds are vicious canines that prefer to strike a pack, if possible. They charge as a chaotic mass, biting and tearing any opponent they can reach. On a natural attack roll of 20, the trollhound has locked its jaws upon an opponent's limb (see Bite Table). During such a "lockbite," the hound causes damage automatically on each successive round until it is removed or the victim dies. The hound's jaws are quite strong and can't be pried open while the canine is conscious. If it is killed or knocked unconscious for at least one full round the jaws may be forced apart.

A trollhound's teeth aren't the only danger in its bite. Ten percent of all trollhounds carry a nonmagical disease of the DM's choice. When a trollhound bites a foe, there is a 1% chance per point of damage of infecting the victim. During a lockbite, this chance rises to 2% per point of damage. In both cases, the chance to be infected is non-cumulative.

Like other trolls, trollhounds regenerate. They regenerate one hit point per round beginning the round immediately after being wounded. They cannot regenerate fire or acid damage. If they do suffer damage from such attacks and survive, they heal incredibly fast; six hit points per day regardless of their level of activity.

Trollhounds have very keen senses and are excellent hunters. An average hound can track its quarry as well as a 3rd-level ranger, but as a pack, they track as well as a 6th-level ranger. An exceptional pack leader (see below) can track as well as a 9th-level ranger, and so does the pack as long as it leads. Though determined in their pursuit of prey, food dropped in their path will often (95% chance) distract the hounds.

**Habitat/Society:** In the wild, trollhounds form close-knit, familial packs. The pack stakes out a large territory and roams it constantly, looking for prey. Trollhounds keep several burrows and lairs in their territory, and retreat to the closest when sunrise nears. Trollhounds hate the day, and will not venture out under the sun's light if they have a choice. Sunlight and *continual light* spells hurt a trollhound's eyes and it fights with a -1 penalty on attack and damage rolls and armor class.

Among themselves, trollhounds are never violent, because of an instinctive sense of hierarchy. By scent, trollhounds can tell which



of them is stronger and thus secure their places in the pack. The strongest always leads. This is even true between packs, the weaker of the two backing down and retreating after it has scented the other pack.

If a pack of trollhounds numbers ten or more, there is a 25% chance that the pack has an exceptional leader. Such a pack leader has 5+3 hit dice, is +2 to damage rolls, has Low intelligence (5-7), and is tracks as a 9th-level ranger. These leaders are thankfully rare, as their higher intellect allows them to lead their packs with rudimentary tactics that often catch militiamen and adventurers off guard.

Trollhounds also have a great affinity for trolls, and can often be found in their company. In any lair of four or more trolls, there is a 30% chance that a small pack (2d4 hounds) will be present. They act as watchdogs and sentries during the day, and then join their humanoid brethren to hunt when night falls.

All treasure found with trollhounds is incidental. It is either loose coins or gems in their gut, or a former victim's equipment that was brought to a den on the body.

**Ecology:** Trollhounds are fearless, ravenous canines that prey upon anything they can catch. They prefer live prey over carrion. Trollhounds often have at least one human or demihuman settlement in their territory, equating the two-legs with the docile livestock that always accompanies them.

Trollhound females are the larger gender and are often, though not always, pack leaders. Females give birth to 1 or 2 pups every two or three years. Pups are born with 1 +1 HD, are -4 to damage, but can run and hunt five days after birth. In two weeks, if they have survived their first hunts, they can track as well as an adult. Every six months, a pup gains 1 +1 HD and +2 to damage until its stats equal an adult's. Trollhounds can live up to 30 years before their regenerative powers fail and they are devoured by the pack.

Trollhound blood is useful in minor magics and potions concerned with healing and curing or causing disease.

#### Trollhound Bite table (Roll 1d41)

- 1 Weapon arm: No attack possible with that arm.
- 2 Shield arm: No shield bonus if applicable, -1 AC penalty.
- 3-4 Leg (either): Movement reduced by ½, -2 AC penalty.

# Phaze troll

DRAGON® issue #199

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any land/subterranean
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Tribe
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Average to High (8-14)
TREASURE:	Q (D)
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	1-3
ARMOR CLASS:	3
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	5 + 8
T H A C O :	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d4+2 (x2)/1d6+2
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Regeneration
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (5')
MORALE:	Champion (16)
XP VALUE:	975
	Psionicist: 2,000

Phaze trolls appear as normal trolls in most regards. However, they are only slightly more than half as tall as a true troll and their frames are thick with corded muscle. Unlike their bigger cousins, phaze trolls always stand upright and have high foreheads, similar to the more intelligent races. The skin of a phaze troll is stiff and leathery, and is covered in tough, knobby lumps. The skin ranges from deep blue to violet to black in color, while the troll's mass of unkempt hair is blue or purple.

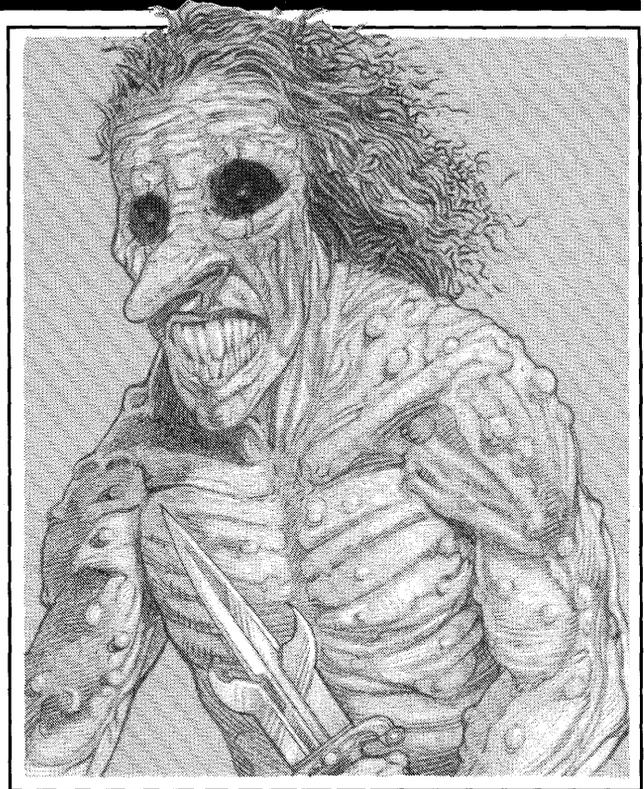
Phaze trolls seem made for the night and the Underdark, possessing superior infravision (120'). Due to their short stature, they only have a 35% chance to successfully scale any surface.

**Combat:** Though not very tall, phaze trolls are exceptionally strong and possess sharp claws and teeth. Phaze trolls strike with their clawed hands and fang-filled mouth. They are agile enough to direct each attack at a different opponent. Knowing that their natural attacks aren't as devastating as those of true trolls, phaze trolls often use weapons, preferring pole arms and other two-handed weapons. When a phaze troll uses a weapon, it gets a +4 bonus to damage. It cannot use any of its natural attacks when wielding a weapon.

Phaze trolls possess some unusual powers that are often helpful in the midst of battle. First, a phaze troll is able to dimensionally shift itself, much like the *dimension door* spell. Unlike the spell, however, the phaze troll is never disoriented after transport. The troll is also able to cause *mirror images* of itself to appear as if it had cast the spell of the same name. Both of these powers are innate and may be used at will, one at a time, once per round. Each power may be used a maximum of four times a day at the 6th level of ability.

Like all trolls, phaze trolls enjoy the ability of regeneration. They regenerate three hit points per round, starting three rounds after being wounded, but are unable to regenerate fire or acid damage. Because of their stockier build, phaze troll limbs aren't easily severed. If cut off by *vorpal swords* or *swords of sharpness*, however, the limbs will continue to fight and then rejoin the body after combat, if possible.

**Habitat/Society:** Phaze trolls are aberrations, mutants born of normal trolls who spent much time in areas of raw magical energy or strong Underdark radiations. These radiations are known to be the reasons for a phaze troll's powers and enhanced intellect. Sages are puzzled, though, as to why only di-



*mension door* and *mirror image* powers manifested.

Because of their rarity, phaze trolls don't gather as a race, instead remaining part of the troll tribe into which they were born. Due to their powers and intelligence, they often lead their tribes. Usually, it is an uneasy partnership between the phaze troll and the largest female troll shaman. Phaze trolls are at a disadvantage in such pairings, as they are incapable of magic. Some, however, can use psionics as a psionicist of up to 3rd level. Such psionicist phaze trolls usually have powers from the disciplines of Psychokinesis, Psychometabolism, and Telepathy.

Phaze troll genders are equal in size, strength, and intelligence. Eighty percent of phaze trolls are sterile and cannot reproduce. This is good, for when phaze trolls successfully mate, they breed true. Phaze trolls reach maturity very quickly, and can live for up to 150 years.

**Ecology:** Phaze trolls are always hungry, and will eat whatever meat presents itself. Phaze trolls are a scourge wherever they exist, depleting the local area of wildlife and threatening the good races with daring raids on the outposts of civilization.

Their blood is valuable in the making of healing and mind-affecting magics, while their bones are helpful in fashioning magical items dealing with dimensional travel and illusions.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any subterranean
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary/tribe
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)
TREASURE:	Q (D)
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	2
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	8 + 1
THAC0:	13
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d4+5 (x2)/1d8+5
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Regeneration, see below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (9')
MORALE:	Champion (16)
XP VALUE:	6,000

Gray trolls are tall and gangly, and look much like normal trolls. Their gray or gray-brown skin is dry and flaky, like old parchment. The unruly mass of hair on the gray troll's head is gray or white. Deep in the sunken pits that are its eye sockets dance cold blue pinpoints of light.

Gray trolls possess excellent infravision, out to 150'. They are also able climbers (75% climbing chance).

**Combat:** Gray trolls are ferocious in battle, ripping into anything near them with their claw/claw/bite routine. Gray trolls are able to direct these attacks against up to three opponents. The gray troll's saliva is highly toxic, and is delivered every time it successfully bites an opponent. The poison has an onset time of 20 minutes. The victim must then save vs. poison. If successful, there is no further effect. If failed, the victim slips into a coma, and will not awaken unless the poison is neutralized. After 36 hours, the victim must save again, but this time at a -2 penalty. If successful, the victim suffers 2d6 points of damage and then wakes from the coma. If unsuccessful, the victim dies. Gray trolls prefer their natural attacks above all others, never using weapons or missiles.

Thrice per week, a gray troll may assume *gaseous form* for no more than six rounds per use. It takes one full round to assume or exit *gaseous form*. This time does not count against the duration of the power. While changing, the troll can't defend itself, but once in *gaseous form*, it is immune to all but magical weapons and spells. While in *gaseous form*, the troll must remain within 5' of the ground and can move at twice its normal speed.

Gray trolls are extraordinary regenerators, regaining six hit points per round, beginning on the fourth round after being wounded. Gray trolls also are totally immune to damage by acid, cold, and electrical attacks. However, fire damage cannot be regenerated, and because of its dry, paper-like skin, a gray troll takes double damage from fire attacks. They hate fire so much they will attack anyone bearing it, in hopes of extinguishing it as quickly as possible.

Thanks to its lanky, emaciated form, a gray troll's limbs are easily severed (on a natural attack roll of 18 to 20) by edged weapons. Severed limbs will fight for up to five rounds after being cut off. If the battle ends before five rounds elapse, the limbs will rejoin the body. If not, the severed limb crumbles to dust.

Sunlight, like fire, is deadly to a gray troll. A gray troll will never willingly enter sunlight, but, if forced, will desperately try to flee and find a dark shelter, attacking anything in its way. While in sun-



light, a gray troll fights as if blinded (-4 penalty on attacks, saves, and AC), and is "burned" by the sunlight for five hit points of damage (which cannot be regenerated) every round. If brought to zero hit points while in sunlight, a gray troll's body shrivels and crumbles into black and gray ashes, forever dead. Light other than sunlight has no effect on gray trolls.

Gray trolls are always ravenous and are distracted from pursuit by food dropped in their path 75% of the time.

**Habitat/Society:** Gray trolls are normal trolls that reached their present state by being totally level drained, usually by some form of undead. By processes not fully understood, the rush of negative energy from the attacker reacts strangely with the troll's natural regenerative ability. Less than 5% of trolls so drained of life energy react in this odd way; the rest simply die. Once drained, the troll lapses into a coma for 24 hours, during which time it isn't adversely affected by sunlight. When it awakens, it has become a gray troll, and all commensurate abilities and weaknesses are gained at that moment. It is not undead, however. As a gray troll, the beast has gained a strange link to the Negative Material plane. Due to this connection, a gray troll is rendered sterile and loses any spell-casting powers that it may have possessed. It lives for 25 to 75 years before it crumbles to dust.

After transforming, most gray trolls become solitary wanderers of the Underdark, full of hate and hunger, recklessly attacking any creatures they meet. Occasionally, they will find their old tribe or a new troll tribe, and gain leadership of it.

**Ecology:** Gray trolls attack, kill, and eat any creature they come across. Gray trolls live only to feed and destroy. Though they may seem to possess undead-like abilities, they are alive, and cannot be turned or controlled by clerics.

The dust of a gray troll is useful in healing and resistance magics (acid, cold, electricity) and can bring quite a hefty price due to its extreme rarity.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Mountains/subterranean
FREQUENCY	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Group
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	<b>Any</b>
DIET:	Carnivore/Petrivore (rocks)
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)
TREASURE:	Q (E)
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	2-8 (2d4)
ARMOR CLASS:	0
MOVEMENT:	10
HIT DICE:	10+2
THACO:	11
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d6+6 (x2)/2d4+6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Regeneration, see below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (11' +)
MORALE:	Fanatic (18)
XP VALUE:	7,000
	Shaman: 9,000

Stone trolls are horrendous creatures, towering over most of their kin. They have sunken eye sockets, massive claws, a fang-filled mouth, and a nasty disposition. Stone trolls are completely hairless. Their skin is hard, rocky, and is colored to provide camouflage in their natural habitat. Stone trolls gain this coloration by ingesting rocks and stones common to their territory, assimilating the minerals into their skin. Because of this coloration, they have a 75% chance of remaining unseen by casual observation when against a rocky background, and can attack by surprise with a -3 penalty to the victim's surprise roll.

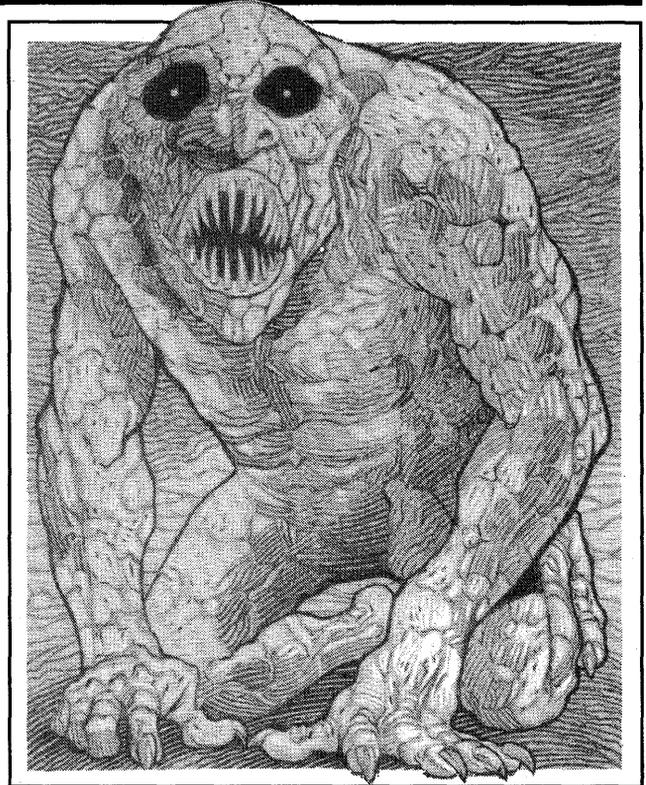
Due to their rock-hard claws, they are able to successfully scale any stone or earth surface. Because metal blunts their claws and wood splinters beneath their claws, stone trolls have only a 35% chance of climbing such surfaces. Stone trolls possess infravision out to 30'.

**Combat:** Stone trolls rip apart their opponents by attacking with their devastating claws and fangs. They aren't as agile as other trolls, though, and can only spread their three attacks between two opponents. They never use hand-held weapons, seeing them as weak alternatives to their own armament.

On the other hand, they thoroughly enjoy pulverizing enemies with thrown boulders. A stone troll can throw two stones per round up to 35 yards away for 2d8 damage each.

Its highly mineral nature makes a stone troll a slow regenerator, but it is also very difficult to hurt. They regenerate one hit point per round beginning on the second round after being wounded. Due to their rocky skin, they suffer half damage from all edged weapons and their limbs aren't easily severed. If cut off with a *vorpil blade* or *sword of sharpness*, the limb dies immediately, but the body will continue to fight, even headless, as long as it has one attack. If the head and both arms are lost, the torso attempts to flee. Stone trolls are immune to all rock-affecting spells and take half damage from fire/heat, cold, and electrical attacks and may regenerate all such damage. Wounds from acid-based attacks cannot be regenerated. If a stone troll is struck by both fire/heat and cold attacks in a single round, it takes double normal damage (no save) from the second attack and must make a save vs. paralyzation at -3. If it fails, its rocky body shatters due to the extreme temperature shifts, forever dead. Even if it does save and survives, the damage from the two attacks cannot be regenerated.

Like all trolls, stone trolls are always hungry, and stone trolls



are distracted (60% chance by food dropped by fleeing prey).

**Habitat/Society:** Stone trolls prefer living in caves, in the mountains, or on rocky plateaus. Their "lair" are often right out in the open as sunlight doesn't bother them. They often curl up in a boulder-like shape whenever tired, sleeping wherever they might be.

They gather into tribes led by the most powerful male. Stone troll males are the larger, stronger gender, but only females have the skills to become shamans. Such shamans may reach 7th level with the following spheres: Charm, combat, divination, elemental (earth only), sun, and weather. The chieftain is often advised by, and mated to, the strongest shaman.

Stone trolls aren't very prolific, the females giving birth to a single whelp every ten years. The young mature in about twenty years. Stone trolls can live in excess of 500 years.

Because of their rocky nature, stone trolls can subsist by eating stones, gems, and other minerals. Though not appetizing, it is nourishing and helps them develop their concealing coloration. They prefer live prey, though any meat is fair game.

Stone trolls consider all other beings prey, and never ally themselves with other groups for power. They attack most creatures for hunger and sport, but attack rock trolls (see DRAGON® issue #141) out of sheer hatred. They consider rock trolls to be perversions of their race, while rock trolls see stone trolls as inferior, ugly versions of themselves. Their hatred is so great that the two species will never join forces, even if attacked by a common enemy.

**Ecology:** Stone trolls are the top predator in their territories and eat anything they can catch. Eventually, their unending hunger depletes the wildlife of their rocky home, and they are forced to raid the civilized lands for a few months if they desire fresh meat. Luckily, these raids are as rare as the stone trolls themselves.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any volcanic land
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Tribe
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Average to Very (9-12)
TREASURE:	P, Q (F or G)
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	2-8 (2d4)
ARMOR CLASS:	3
MOVEMENT:	12, Sw12
HIT DICE:	12+4
THACO:	9
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2d4+6 (x2)/2d6+6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Regeneration, see below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (12'+)
MORALE:	Fanatic (18)
XP VALUE:	7,000
	Shaman: 9,000



A fire troll is a tall, thick-limbed humanoid with smooth, blood-red skin. Within its sunken sockets, its eyes glow a fierce yellow, and its hair is a tangled mass of vibrant oranges and yellows. Its claws and teeth are long, razor sharp, and as dark as fire-blackened steel. A fire troll runs in a stoop, but can keep pace with most other bipeds.

As they spend much of their time wading in magma, fire trolls are very good swimmers. They are very good at climbing the walls of their volcanic caverns, with a 90% chance to climb any surface. Because of their extremely hot habitat, fire trolls do not possess infravision. Their eyes are very sensitive, though. As long as there is any illumination, a fire troll can see 300'.

**Combat:** Fire trolls are amazingly agile and strike with a lightning fast claw/claw/bite routine that they can direct at up to three different opponents. In fact, they are so agile that despite their bulk, fire trolls can contort their bodies to pass through openings as small as 2' in diameter in one round if no other action is taken. Fire trolls never use weapons, much preferring to kill foes with their bare hands and sharp fangs. The one exception is that fire trolls who are in or near a magma pool sometimes throw magma globs at nearby opponents. A fire troll can throw two magma globs per round up to 20 yards away. Each glob does 1d2 points of impact damage and 2d10 points of fire damage. All items worn by a character hit by a glob must immediately save vs. normal fire or be set alight by the molten rock.

Fire trolls are more intelligent than most of their kin, and have become experts at setting ambushes and traps. One of their favorite methods of ambush is to submerge themselves in a magma pool, then leap out as their target approaches. Not only do victims have a -4 penalty to their surprise check, but any characters within 20' must save vs. paralysis at +2 or be hit by 1d3 magma globs as described above.

Fire trolls normally regenerate three hit points per round starting three rounds after being wounded. If a fire troll is in an area of high heat, but not immersed in flame or another hot substance, it regenerates five hit points per round starting on the second round after being wounded. If a fire troll is immersed in magma or a similar exceptionally hot liquid or is struck by a fire attack (red dragon's breath, fireball, etc.) that engulfs at least half its body, it regenerates 10 hit points in that round and for as many rounds as it is so immersed or engulfed. In all cases, the troll only uses one rate of regeneration per round; either 3, 5, or 10 hit points. Fire- and acid-based attacks have no harmful effects upon fire trolls. Electrical damage, however, cannot be regenerated. Cold damage is a special case. Fire trolls take double damage from cold-based attacks, but can regenerate the damage. If a troll is brought to zero or fewer hit points by cold attacks, it falls stiffly to the ground, apparently lifeless. In fact, it will "thaw" in 3d4 rounds and begin to regenerate. If struck for 20 points of physical damage or 10 points of electrical damage before it thaws, the troll's body will shatter, leaving the beast forever dead.

A fire troll's thick limbs are not easily severed by edged weapons. If

chopped off by *vorpal* or *sharpness* weapons, the limbs will fight until the end of combat and then attempt to reattach to the body. Severed pieces will die in two hours if they cannot reach the largest remaining portion of the troll.

The mauve blood of these humanoids is extremely corrosive to metal, but has no effect on wood, flesh, or stone. Any metal weapon that draws blood from a fire troll must save vs. acid at -1 or simply melt away.

Fire trolls, though always hungry, are never deterred by food dropped in their path by fleeing prey.

**Habitat/Society:** Fire trolls live in volcanically active regions, rarely choosing to enter the colder, civilized lands. They are often found in volcanic areas in the Underdark, preying on the races of the Deepearth.

They form into small familial tribes, and these often fight amongst themselves, though almost never to the death thanks to their ability to regenerate. Males are the dominant gender, though there are no visible differences between the sexes in size, strength, or intelligence. Males are simply more cruel and hateful. Males establish leadership by combat. The chieftain leads hunts, devises tactics, traps, and ambushes, and gets first pick of food, loot, and mates. Only females, however, can wield magic, and as such command a position only slightly lower than the chieftain. There is rarely more than one shaman in a group of fire trolls, and she is usually advisor and mate to the chieftain. Shamans can cast spells up to 12th level from the following spheres: All, Chaos, Combat, Divination, Elemental (fire, earth), Necromantic and Sun. Five percent of shamans are actually witch doctors who can reach 8th/4th level mage/priest.

Fire troll females give birth to a single troll every eight years or so. Young have half normal hit dice and mature in eight to ten years. Fire trolls can live for up to 600 years.

**Ecology:** Fire trolls are the top predators of their sparsely inhabited environment, and can go for months without food. Fire trolls often prey on giant striders and fire newts, and some enjoy feasting on the occasional fire giant. Fire trolls who live in the Underdark consider *svirfneblin* and *drow* flesh to be delicacies well worth the chase through the colder tunnels.

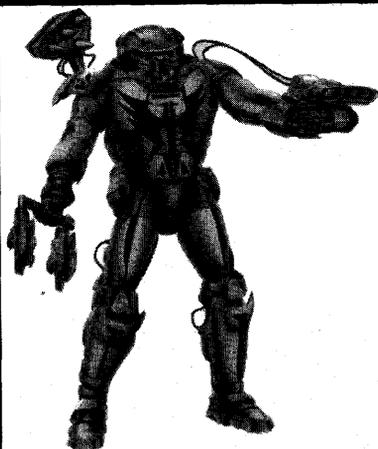
The blood of fire trolls is useful in fire and acid magics and is also prized by thieves' guilds for its metal-eating properties.

Ω

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niya surveyed the crowded taproom with a growing sense of satisfaction. Her merchant-patron had sent her to meet a middle-aged swordsman, but no one in the room remotely fit that description. For once, the great merchant-lord Arbasian-kor was not

going to have things his way.

"Seeker?"

Niya turned to face the young man who had spoken.

"Yes, I'm a Seeker. And you are . . . ?"

"Kel the Younger," he said.

Niya scrutinized his face for any trace of mockery or humor but could find neither. Still, he could not be who he claimed. Kel the Younger, hero of the Shadow Wars, had to be in his late forties at the very least.

*Look beyond appearances*, she told herself, calling up the first corollary of truthreading. She sensed no deception in him, and his tunic did bear the emblem of the Haldaran knighthood. But it didn't make sense.

"Am I addressing the right Seeker?" he asked as she continued to stare. "The message I received was very general."

Niya nodded. "I am sent to offer Kel the Younger a commission from the merchant-lord Arbasian-kor."

"Shall we, then?" He nodded toward an empty table in the corner.

Niya studied his walk, his bearing, as she followed him across the room. He bore the stamp of youth convincingly.

"Now," he said when they were seated, "who of the Truth Guild do I have the honor of addressing?"

"Niya-car, Seeker First Rank."

The youth frowned and studied her with startlingly green eyes. "You are young to be First Rank," he finally said.

The situation was ironic. Niya was well aware that her age of score-and-three made her young for her rank. She was used to having to prove herself time and time again. Now, faced with someone younger than expected, her first inclination was to doubt his identity as hers was constantly doubted. It was a different experience being the older one – if Kel was, in fact, as young as he appeared. There was something she could not pinpoint that made him seem far older than he looked.

"At least I come by my youth naturally," she replied, closely watching for a reaction. From the flicker of doubt that crossed the youth's face, she thought she had hit close to the mark.

Kel promptly changed the subject. "And the commission?"

Niya sighed, closed her eyes, and began the message, repeating it word for word, inflection for inflection, as Arbasian-kor had delivered it to her:

"Noble sir. I, Arbasian-kor, merchant and elder of this city, do tender unto Kel the Younger a commission which no true hero can with honor ignore. It is a matter of life and death in which my own person has been vilely threatened by agents of anarchy. Upon your oath of honor, I call upon you to aid me through this crisis."

She opened her eyes and waited.

"I see," Kel said tightly.

# One-Eyed Death

by Jonathan Shipley

*Illustrations by Terry Dykstra*

He didn't look pleased, and with good reason. The offer was laced with phrases designed to take the decision out of his hands. His Haldaran training made refusing a call to honor all but impossible. She herself had researched that fact for the merchant. Even sending the message via a Truthseeker was part of the calculated effect. It made Niya despise the part she was obligated to play.

"I am not at liberty to undertake any obligations at this time," he said with a firm shake of his head. "But I will speak with your merchant and give what advice I can. Any patron of the Truth Guild deserves at least that much."

Niya had her own opinions on that. Her experiences in the service of Arbasian-kor were less than pleasant. She had already requested the Motherhouse not to renew her obligation to him and was merely serving out her present contract.

"Your presence alone will give my employer hope," she answered neutrally. "Allow me to escort you to his house-holding."

When they reached the residence near the top of the hill, Niya was mercifully excused from the initial audience. The subtle way the merchant blended truth and lies into almost-truth was an affront to her truthsense that often brought on headaches. So she had told the Motherhouse. The constant double-dealing had made a mockery of her presence in the household, but she regretted missing the moment of Kel's refusal. For once, Arbasian-kor was to be denied.

Then Kel sought her out among the scrolls of the scriptorium.

"It seems," he told her, "that your merchant-lord is determined to be guarded by a hero of reputation. I have decided to accept this short commission despite my other duties."

Niya felt a rising tide of bitterness. One more time he had won. She wondered what had changed Kel's mind. He had given her an excuse, but not a reason. That much she could clearly read. "And?" she prompted.

Kel brushed a hand through his auburn hair. "And I feel an obligation."

Still not the reason. "He's well practiced in the art of obligating," she said more bitterly than she intended. "But you did not hunt me out merely to tell me your decision."

"No, Seeker. I desire your help with this matter. A tour of the building, background on the principals involved—unless, of course, you have some objection."

That brought a thin smile to her lips. "No objection," she said. "I have been instructed by my employer to extend my fullest cooperation." If Kel asked the right questions, he might discover early the measure of man he was dealing with.

She led him through the front reception rooms of the residence, the rooms she usually avoided. Everything was overdone-heavy furnishings, silk hangings, thick incense on the air. Even Arbasian-kor was overdone, a mountain of fat in a brocade robe.

They came upon the merchant and his like-named son in the parlor. "He's coming for me," wailed Arbasian-kor, dropping the scroll he was reading as soon as they entered. "He has sworn my life shall end with the Feast of

Liperca, and he is always one to keep his word. I need protection. A hero's protection."

Niya watched impassively. Another of her patron's well-rehearsed shows.

"One-Eye, One-Eye," groaned the merchant with near believable anguish. He picked up a red silk scarf and shook it frantically. "Obdalah the One-Eyed and Terrible."

"Calm yourself, Father," urged a younger but only slightly slimmer version of Arbasian-kor. "Come sit in the garden and let the mercenary do his job." He shot Kel a sharp look and herded his moaning father out of the room.

Kel glowered after them. "I'm not a mercenary," he muttered. "The very word offends."

"Be glad your commission is only short term," she said.

He turned toward Niya. "Tell me about Obdalah the One-Eyed and Terrible. A bandit? Or a tax collector, perhaps?"

"An assassin," she corrected.

"Professional?"

Niya shook her head. "Very unprofessional, very successful. He strikes down the wealthy but doesn't seem to be a paid killer. No one knows how or why he selects his victims, but he always warns them beforehand with a red scarf. No one has escaped his hand so far."

"And this Feast of Liperca?" asked Kel, inspecting the room with a practiced eye. "Too many windows," he muttered.

"This evening," she answered.

His attention snapped back to her. "This evening? I'm expected to devise a defense in a mere hour or so?"

"Arbasian-kor can be a demanding employer. But the house was designed with an inner sanctum. That should make your job easier." She led the way to the second story.

"These northern merchants are all alike," said Kel as they reached the top of the stairs. "Ruthless in business but helpless in the face of physical danger. He's banking on my reputation to protect him, you know."

"I doubt that a successful assassin can be so easily frightened," replied Niya. "And there has been some speculation that Obdalah One-Eye might not be one man but a group of assassins who act in concert."

"Oh? Tell me more of this speculation."

"It is only one local theory to explain the assassin's continued success. His reputation is nearly as formidable as your own."

"Fame is fleet of foot," snorted Kel. "Last time I was in the city, there was no famous local assassin, and next time he will be long forgotten."

*Interesting timeframe*, thought Niya. The archives said that Obdalah had been active for a good quarter of a century. She tugged open a heavy oaken door. "This is the suite," she said. "The merchant-lord is planning to hide here during the Feast."

Kel brushed passed her, disappeared into the second room, and returned, nodding his approval. "Yes. Two windowless chambers with one easily guarded entrance. Unless One-Eye is an army, he is out of luck. Take me back to the merchant."

Niya turned back toward the corridor and almost bumped into an old scrubwoman who had followed them

into the room.

"What are you doing here, Old Mother?" demanded Kel.

The scrubwoman gave a harsh laugh. "Any fool can see that I am about to scrub the tiles. Even with death upon him, his lordship is fastidious. Oh yes, always so fastidious. It would not do for him to be killed on a dirty floor. If your Mightiness wants me to go, I'll not be objecting. But I can't picture either you or the lady-truthsayer down on your knees finishing my work for me." She laughed again.

Kel looked annoyed. "The lady is a Seeker of the First Rank and you will pay her the respect due her position."

"It isn't important," interrupted Niya. From the moment of her arrival last month, the old woman had been impossible. "You carry on your inspection," Niya told Kel. "I'll stay here and guard the empty room against the wiles of Old Birgit. Better her company than others in the household."

Kel shot her a warning look, then retreated with a formal bow.

"No humor in that one," cackled the scrubwoman. "Surprising how the great heroes never have any humor to them. They're all so wooden you'd think they came from the same tree. What's this one's name?"

"Kel the Younger."

"Oh, the darling of the Shadow Wars. Well, he certainly lives up to his name, doesn't he? Looks like a cub on his first adventure. Might as well be, for all the good he'll do here."

"You think the assassination will succeed?" asked Niya.

Old Birgit sat up on her heels. "They say Obdalah always finishes what he starts. Never failed yet, and your fresh-faced warrior won't do better than any of the others."

"You sound almost glad."

"The likes of Arbasian-kor are proper pickings for Obdalah. His lordship's a greedy pig who's caused more than his share of grief hereabouts. He deserves the red scarf, all right."

Niya's suspicions flared. "You're very free with your opinions. How do you know I won't report this to your master?"

"Cause I have eyes. I see what you think of your lord-patron. You ought to be jumping up and down that Obdalah is rendering his services after your precious guild sold you down the river."

"What do you mean?" demanded Niya.

"You think your Motherhouse didn't know the measure of Arbasian-kor before the contract went out? You really think they weighed that as carefully as his gold? They'll renew for another year, just mark my words."

Niya found her fists clenched tight. "I don't find your view of the guild very flattering," she snapped. The Elders would never do that to her.

"But do you find it to be true? That's the real question. A Seeker will question everything in the world except her precious guild. But maybe you should be asking some questions about your own high-handed ways before turning Obdalah over to the hangman."

"Dealing with the assassin is Kel's responsibility. I merely observe."

"For a Seeker that's enough," cackled the woman.

"Maybe even too much. The fancy heroes never stop Obdalah, but you with your First Rank eyes could be his undoing." Her eyes narrowed to mere slits. "Unless you temper your Truth to allow his Justice."

"This is absurd. I will listen to no more." Niya turned abruptly and left the room.

She ran into Kel and the two Arbasians in the gallery.

"Seeker, is it true?" gushed Arbasian-kor. "Has our young hero come up with a workable plan?"

Niya found this act as detestable as his fear-and-trembling routine earlier. "He approves the inner rooms as safest," she replied coolly. "I'm not sure that constitutes a plan."

The merchant waved the remark aside but his son gave her a studied look. She caught a quick impression of nervousness and . . . eagerness?

Kel dropped back a moment. "You said you'd stay with the old woman."

"She needs a muzzle, not a watchdog. Justice, indeed."

"Pardon?"

"Nothing. I'll go back and watch her."

"And you'd do better not to show your disgust so openly," Kel added when he was sure they were out of the merchant's earshot.

Niya sighed. "You're right. I should keep my emotions off my face. I shall try to retain a more neutral aspect until this is over."

"You sound as if you expect this one-eyed assassin to succeed," snorted Kel. "He's only a local ruffian. I've handled hundreds of them in my time."

Niya eyed him curiously. "Indeed, hundreds? And when exactly was 'your time'?"

An odd expression flickered across Kel's face, then resolved itself into a lopsided smile. "You're the Seeker. You tell me. I was merely pointing out I have ample experience to deal with Obdalah, no matter what his tricks. I shall quickly set this situation aright."

"Then perhaps you'd best abandon the affair now. Saving the merchant's skin is hardly setting the situation aright."

"Not the typical Seeker-patron relationship," said Kel with a lift of an eyebrow. "Arbasian-kor truly disgusts you."

"And truly intimidates you," she shot back. "You obviously find this commission distasteful, yet you accepted it."

"Sometimes our choices are decreed, not chosen," he answered tightly. He looked off down the corridor. "It becomes more obvious with age that . . ." He stopped midsentence and shook his head. "I'll be downstairs inspecting the outer doors."

Niya watched him retreat down the hall and wondered about fat merchants strong-arming celebrated heroes.

Immediately after dinner, Arbasian-kor sequestered himself within the prepared rooms, posting a half-dozen household guards in the corridor outside and Kel inside. Niya joined them for one last inspection.

The merchant walked into the inner bedroom and broke into near convulsions. "Look at this room!" he wailed. "It's filthy. Filthy!"

"The floor's been scrubbed," Niya offered flatly. She had no patience with Arbasian-kor's fetish for cleanliness.

"Not to my requirements," snarled the merchant. "I'll have that hag of a scrubwoman flogged for her negligence."

Knowing Old Birgit's sympathies, Niya assumed it was no accident. The drudge had contrived to make him thoroughly miserable through his hours of confinement.

"I will not stay in this room," announced the merchant when neither Kel nor Niya moved. He marched toward the door. "It is inhumanly filthy-fit only as a pigsty!"

"There is nowhere else as safe in the house," objected Kel. "A bit of dust isn't worth this commotion." Niya could imagine that the war veteran had a different definition of 'inhumanly filthy.'

The merchant paused. "Then make this room habitable enough to use," he demanded. "I cannot stay here otherwise."

"I'm a warrior," retorted Kel. "I agreed to guard your life, not scrub your floor."

"You've done worse in your time," began the merchant, but seeing something dangerous in Kel's expression, fell silent. Niya soaked up the exchange curiously.

"Haul the drudge back here, then," ordered Arbasian-kor. "She deserves no rest when there's work left undone."

Kel dispatched one of the guards, and in due time Old Birgit arrived.

"Hold!" ordered Kel as she tried to push past him into the chamber. He began to search her.

"What are you trying to do, rip my clothes off?" screeched the woman, dropping her pail with a clang.

Niya pushed Kel aside. "I'll verify that this is no stranger in disguise" — it was definitely Old Birgit emanating her usual bitterness — "And if she is to be searched, I'll do it." Kel shrugged his consent.

It was the work of a short moment. There was only one pocket in the woman's apron and few hiding places elsewhere. The threadbare skirt and shawl barely covered the woman's bony form, let alone a concealed weapon. And no red silk scarf.

"Get on with it, woman," ordered Arbasian-kor impatiently. "I cannot abide this filth for another moment. I'll wait outside."

"And walk into the hands of your would-be murderer?" Kel snorted. "Someone who knew your habits could be expecting just such a move."

"If your lordship's so perturbed by my honest labor, I'll do the bedchamber first and you can sleep ill the sooner," suggested the scrubwoman. Niya noted the sarcastic overtone that the others seemed to miss.

"I'm perturbed, woman, by your *lack* of honest labor," the merchant shouted back. "Yes, do the inner chamber so I can find some respite."

The old woman seemed interminably slow. Even before she had completely finished the bedchamber, Arbasian-kor was shooing her out, ready to retire. That in itself was a relief. Niya and Kel were more than ready to be rid of his overbearing presence.

"Can't the rest of this wait until morning?" demanded Kel impatiently as the scrubwoman attacked the main chamber floor.

"His lordship called me in to clean, so I'll clean. The honorable merchant's wishes come before the honorable warrior's."

Niya raised an eyebrow at Kel. "You've been extremely edgy for a warrior who has no fear of a local ruffian." He whirled, ready for an argument. Niya suddenly found that she regretted her words. "I'm sorry," she said quickly. "That was petty of me."

"No," he answered. "You merely speak the truth. And I respect your guild standing."

A welter of uncomfortable emotions swept through Niya. Old Birgit's earlier remarks were once again in her ears. The fact that the questions refused to fade was something of an answer in itself.

"I think I'll return to my quarters now," she said slowly. "You can certainly guard the merchant better than any Seeker."

Kel looked surprised. Evidently he thought she was staying. "I prefer not to unbolt the door until morning," he answered.

"Well, I'm not planning on spending the night here," interrupted Old Birgit's harsh voice. "I'm back to my own bed!"

"Sorry, Old Mother," Kel said. "The door stays bolted for the night. I suggest you find a comfortable corner."

It was Niya's turn to be surprised. She wanted to argue but could sense Kel's resolve. She made her way across the room to a padded bench.

The scrubwoman followed and sat down beside her. "You and your warrior really make a pair," she told Niya in an undertone. "Both a little blind, you know."

"Another lecture about false truths?" sighed Niya. "I'm too weary to take up the argument at this hour."

"Hah! You're weary after I do all the scrubbing. What am I if not bone-tired? At least the floor is clean for Obdalah."

"You still expect him to come? It's only a few hours till dawn."

"He'll come when you least expect him," nodded the woman.

"But Kel and the guards *are* expecting him," Niya insisted. She felt an odd compulsion to argue the point, perhaps because she herself cared so little whether her employer lived or died. "They've taken all possible precautions."

"But do they use their eyes?" cackled the woman. "Or are they more blind than one-eyed Obdalah? The Seeker sees, but only what she wants to. Will she be as blind as the rest?" She curled up and closed her eyes, still chuckling under her breath.

Niya found herself too tense to sleep. She watched Old Birgit. She watched the walls. She watched Kel standing, sword unsheathed, in the doorway of the inner chamber. His eyes, reflected in the flickering candlelight, looked green as a cat's.

The hours dragged by, but there was no sound, no movement anywhere in the chamber. Then someone began pounding on the outer door.

"Open up, mercenary," ordered the younger Arbasian. "It's dawn."

Kel nodded at Niya. "Unbolt the door."

The merchant's son pushed his way inside as soon as she had released the bolt, and headed directly to the bedchamber.



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"Out of my way," he snapped at Kel. "For good or ill, your service is done."

Kel sheathed his sword and stepped aside. "As milord commands," he said, not bothering to mask the sarcasm in his voice. He was halfway to the outer door when the shout from the bedroom caught him.

"Foul murder! My father is dead!"

"Strangulation," announced the younger Arbasian, now the only Arbasian, with no apparent grief. His glance kept returning to the red silk scarf around his father's neck. "Done very efficiently, giving my honorable father no chance to cry out. Definitely the work of an expert." He gave Kel a sharp glance. "Our assassin must be someone well versed in the art of killing."

Kel stared defiantly back. Old Birgit beside him fidgeted. Niya shifted uncomfortably at the direction of the accusations.

"The last time I saw the honorable merchant he was alive," stated Kel. "I had no part in his death. The Seeker can verify the truth in my words."

"Kel the Younger speaks the truth," Niya murmured, sinking into full truth-trance to augment her impressions.

"Can the drudge say the same?" demanded the son. "She was also here all night."

Niya tensed. She hated these official readings of guilt or innocence. Especially guilt.

"I didn't strangle him," the woman said.

The attention shifted to Niya. "Old Birgit speaks the truth," she said slowly. But just barely the truth. She was

picking up something hidden behind the words.

Kel looked a bit taken aback. She watched him move across the bedchamber for a closer look at the murdered merchant.

"Well, someone killed him," persisted the young Arbasian. "And there were only three people inside the suite. The Seeker shouldn't be so quick to exonerate her companions, not when her own motives are suspect. My honorable father's death releases her from a disputed contract."

He's *desperate for a scapegoat*, Niya realized, still truthreading. *If I don't name a murderer, he will.*

Stalling for time, she approached the bed to examine the body. Kel moved aside, but not before she noticed where his attention had been focused. She looked immediately at the dead man's face and at first saw nothing unusual. Then she realized what that meant. The cause of death wasn't strangulation at all. The lack of bloating and bruising indicated Arbasian-kor had already been dead when the scarf was knotted around his neck. And then there was the hint of discoloration around the lips, often a symptom of the subtler and deadlier nightshades.

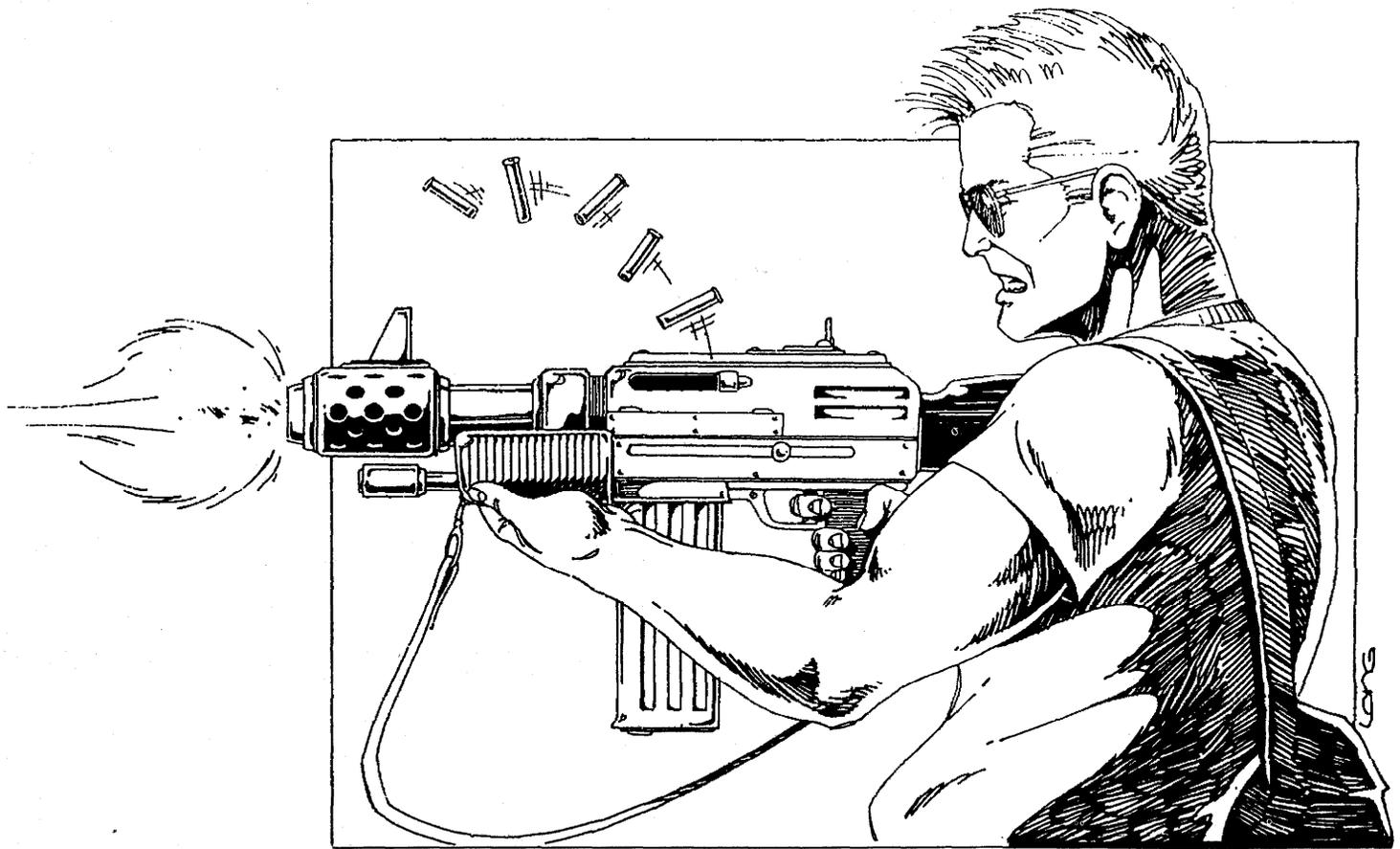
She turned, looked for some confirmation in Kel's expression. He chose to be inscrutable.

"Well, Seeker?" demanded the young merchant. "Who is guilty here?"

Niya closed her eyes and let the impressions she had gathered roll through her mind. Only one pattern made sense, one that could be the death of all three of them.

"I can only state the obvious," she said softly. "The





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style is distinctly Obdalah One-Eye's. The red scarf is its own witness."

Arbasian frowned as he mulled the pronouncement over. "Perhaps so," he said finally. "So be it."

He dismissed the guards and strode from the room. Niya followed.

A moment later, Kel caught up with her and pulled her aside. "You know more about this than you are saying."

Niya shrugged. "An honor by no means unique to me." "You're protecting the killer."

The irony was humorous-almost. "I thought I was protecting the innocent," she said with a wry smile.

"That makes no sense." After a moment, he offered, "The scarf had nothing to do with it, you know."

"I know," Niya nodded.

"Which makes all the testimony about strangulation meaningless. The scrubwoman," he said with a decisive nod. "Working in league with Obdalah. I still don't know when she tied the scarf, but it was only a feint anyway. Apparently Obdalah does his best work in the kitchen." He waited for a reaction.

"Well?" Kel prompted when Niya remained silent.

"It's over, and if the full truth be known, this is one commission I'm glad I failed. The man was a maggot. But I want to know how it was done under my nose. Was the

scrubwoman Obdalah's accomplice?"

"The scrubwoman wasn't the killer," answered Niya.

"You're baiting me, Seeker," persisted Kel. "What do you know? Your guild oath requires you to answer."

"That oath is at the moment rather strained. I have much to discuss with my seniors when I return to the Mother-house. Until then, I shall keep my answers to myself."

Anyway, she couldn't be sure about Obdalah the Terrible. A myth perpetuated by an old drudge who gave the scales of justice an occasional nudge? Maybe. But Old Birgit wasn't the killer—not this time, at least. There was only one person who had a moment alone with the already dead Arbasian-kor.

And poison had never been Obdalah's style. Belladonna usually traveled in much higher social circles. It probably wasn't the first time a greedy heir turned a red scarf into a golden opportunity.

Niya looked back at Kel. Dissatisfaction was evident in his too-young face.

"If I knew what coin would persuade you," he said, "I would offer it. I will not rest easily until I have an explanation."

Niya thought about that as they continued down the corridor. Finally she asked, "Exactly how old is Kel the Younger?"

Ω

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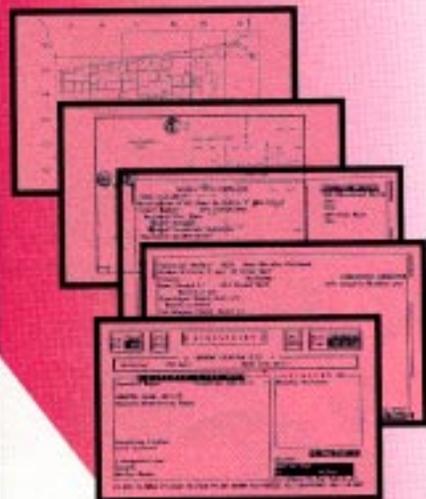
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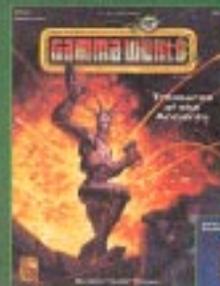


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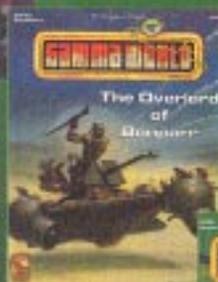
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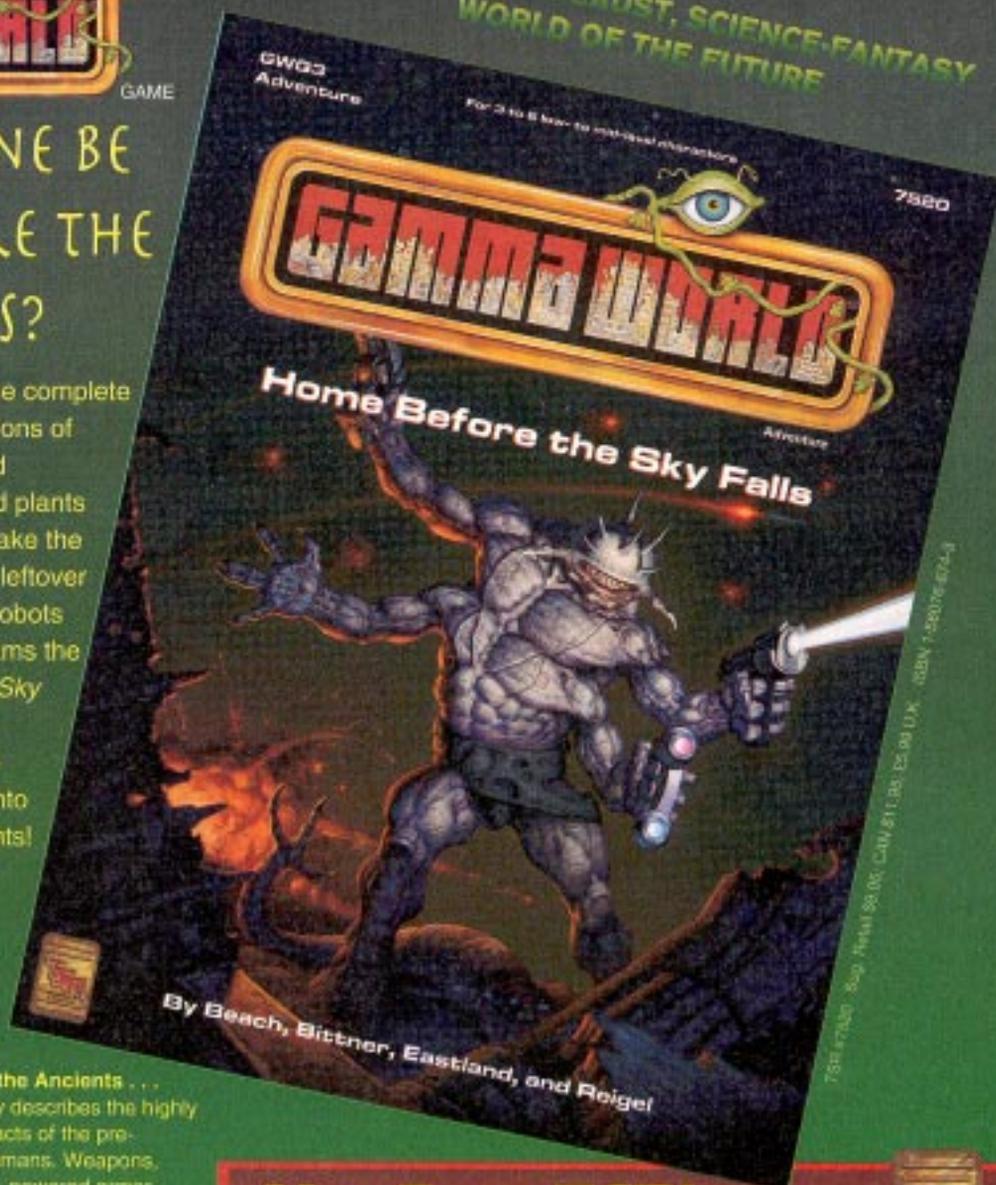
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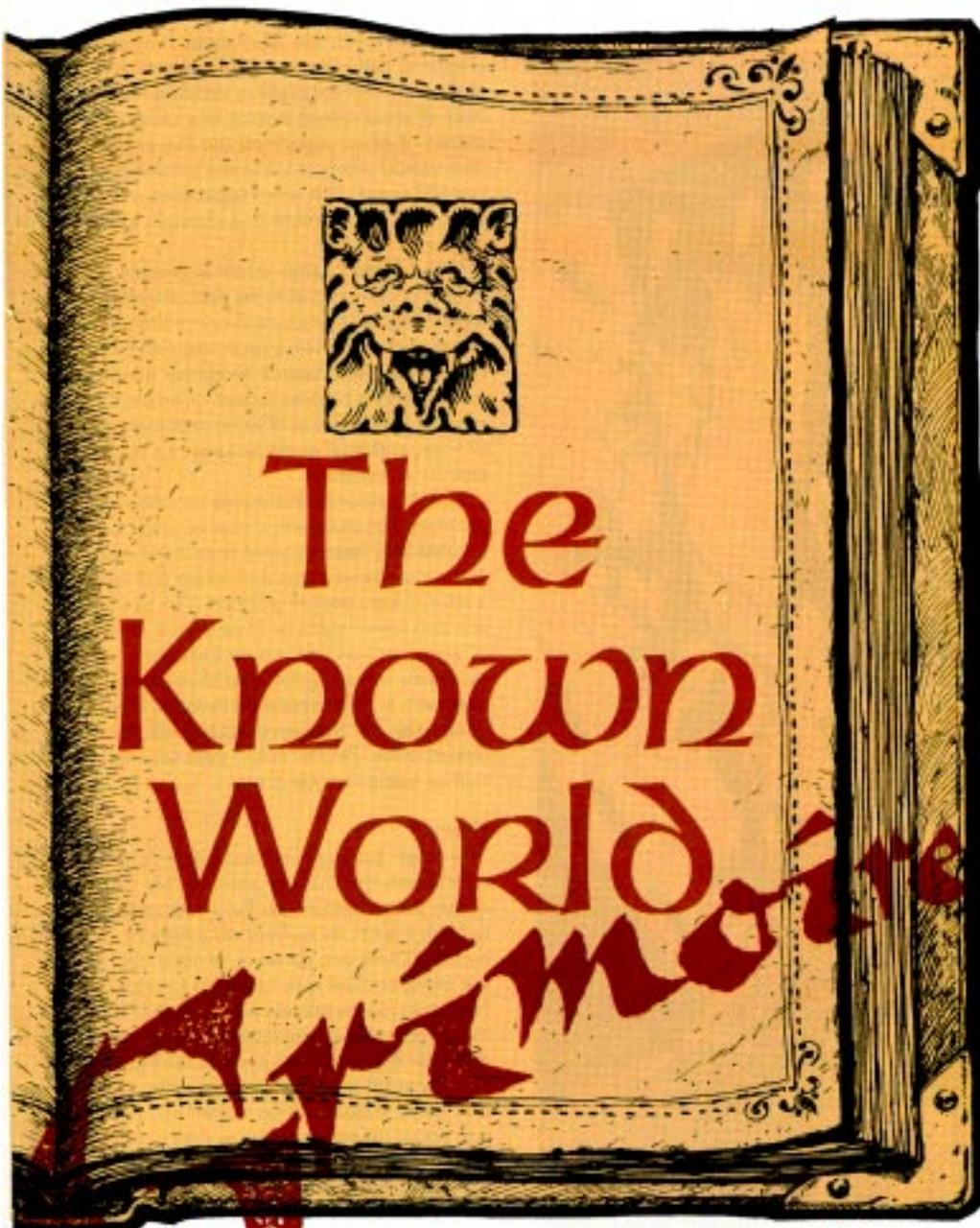
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## Fantastic heraldry

by Bruce A. Heard

*This feature offers information and suggestions on the D&D® game and its products. The reader is welcome to send questions, suggestions, or criticisms on the game or on the material published here.*

*We can't promise that all letters will be answered in this column, but they all will get our attention.*

Heraldry has always been an intriguing part of fantasy-game worlds. Who hasn't created a long-lasting knight or established a kingdom without eventually sketching out a few coats of arms? Some players use heraldry simply to add color to a campaign; others go to great lengths to learn about the rules and styles of medieval coats of arms. Heraldry is flexible enough

to be incorporated into fantasy gaming, but in general, its primary purpose in gaming remains simply to produce colorful shields.

Heraldry is too dynamic to limit it to that! We've created dragon-slaying knights, legendary wizards, and mighty rulers. Why not expand heraldry to better reflect the fantasy aspect of our game? This article is not about the rules and styles of heraldry. With a bit of research in your favorite library, you should find ample resource material. Instead, this article provides some ideas on how to tie aspects of heraldry into the game.

### Colors & alignments

The original purpose of coats of arms

was to enable everyone on a battlefield to identify each other easily. Warriors galloping on their war horses wore armor and helms, and thus were hard to recognize. Their shields became the ideal area to display "family colors." The designs started out as very simple patterns, using one or two colors or a symbol.

In the game, we could push the logic as far as linking the alignments of the original coat-of-arms' owners to the colors on their coats of arms. The original bearers might have wanted to display the ethos of their clan, tribe, family, etc. In European history, of course, it wasn't acceptable to behave openly in an evil or chaotic fashion. Thus, the colors themselves had no link with anyone's philosophy.

This needn't be true in fantasy gaming. Naturally, player characters aren't encouraged to behave negatively; it is their job to defeat evil. However, NPCs may want to clearly show their way of thinking. For example, in a campaign featuring numerous evil monarchs and monstrous warlords, these "bad guys" would have no problem flying banners with appropriately evil-looking symbols! This approach is a natural one for chaotic worlds where many different people (or creatures) with different attitudes and beliefs have established defensible power bases.

DMs give their villains bad attitudes, so why not give them appropriate coats of arms? ("I'm the King of the Skull-Crusher goblins! So, I've got a crushed skull on my black banner! Care to discuss it, human?") Creating coats of arms for major foes sets the tone of an encounter or of a whole campaign. Likewise, the "good guys" might also want to make a statement of their own and proudly raise their banners of justice and goodness!

Here's a way to link colors on the coats of arms with both the D&D game and the AD&D® game. Before jumping into this topic, I need to bring up at least one of the fundamentals of heraldry. There are three sorts of "tinctures": metals, colors, and furs. Metals include gold, (often replaced with yellow) and silver (often replaced with white). Colors include black, blue, purple, red, green, and orange (or brown). Furs will be discussed later.

One rule of heraldry forbids the use of two colors or two metals next to each other. A color should be used to separate two metals, or vice-versa. For example, a coat of arms should not be blue and red only. It would need gold or silver to separate the two colors. This rule came into being because adjacent colors or metals are difficult to differentiate in the midst of battle. Keep this in mind if you decide to follow this rule. This isn't history, it's a game, and each DM should decide for himself.

Colors can indicate alignment tendencies (good, evil, law, chaos, neutrality). Metals could serve as a way of measuring the intensity of these tendencies, as follows:

As shown in the Color-alignment chart,



coats of arms in the D&D game have a choice of two colors to represent each alignment. For example, a red-and-black coat of arms would belong to a chaotic owner. If silver separated the two colors, that would mean a moderate tendency toward chaos. If it were separated with gold, that would refer to a strongly chaotic owner.

In the AD&D game, there is greater subtlety. The coat of arms just described would belong to a chaotic-evil owner. If the coat of arms were blue and silver only, this would then mean a tendency toward good without respect to law or chaos (i.e., neutral good). Coats of arms using green, orange, and gold could belong to a druidic clan (true neutral).

AD&D game combinations can get complicated. For example: a coat of arms is divided into four squares separated with gold. The upper right and lower left have a silver/blue checker pattern. The upper left and lower right bear only red. A coat of arms such as this would indicate a tendency toward good (the blue/silver checker), with a strong inclination toward chaos (the red bordered with gold). The coat-of-arms' bearer could then be identified as being chaotic good.

### Furs

Heraldic furs are stylized patterns derived from the coats of animals, not the actual pelts themselves. Furs are used in heraldry with, or instead of, colors or metals. These are patterns *ermine* (depicting black ermine tails fastened to white fur), *ermine* (white on black), *ermineois* (black on yellow), *pean* (yellow on black), and *vair* (blue bells on a white background representing gray squirrel fur). The rule that color should not be placed on color nor metal on metal does not apply to furs. You could have a coat of arms with natural fur and a stripe of ermine, for example. The use of furs in gaming heraldry is optional.

Furs do not refer to alignments like colors and metals. Instead, you can link them to the status of the owner of the coat of arms. See the Heraldic-fur chart for details.

As the chart shows, the fur used on a character's coat of arms can change over time. Here are two examples on how to use furs through the life of a character. Mara starts as a 1st-level fighter who gains her coat of arms as the result of an act of bravery during a battle. She's allowed the use of natural fur. At 6th level, the king permits her to change from natural fur to *vair*. At 9th level, the king makes her a knight and grants her a domain, permitting her to change from *vair* to *pean* (or else adding an element of *pean* on her present coat of arms to show Mara's common heritage).

Stonefist, a 5th-level fighter, inherits the estate of his father, a marquis. He'd have to bear *pean*. At 6th level, he might be permitted by the king to bear *ermineois*,

due to his level (i.e., his heroic deeds). The example given earlier of a coat of arms with natural fur to which was added a stripe of ermine might belong to someone who started out as a barbarian and then became a king or an emperor (such as Thincol of Thyatis).

### Partitions

A coat of arms can be split many ways to bear different color combinations representing clans, tribes, families, orders, guilds, towns, dominions, and kingdoms. It can happen that coats of arms represent several different items with apparently incompatible color combinations. In this case, each partition should be considered separately. For example, consider the case of a town that's become the protectorate of a powerful order of knights. Its coat of arms would bear the town's original arms and those of the order. The town might bear colors of moderate neutrality (or moderate lawful-neutrality for the AD&D game) while the order of knights would display colors of strong lawfulness (perhaps lawful goodness for the AD&D game).

### Fantasy history

Bear in mind how far back a particular coat of arms goes. If it was recently created, then the colors on the coat of arms might be true to its present owner's alignment. If this is the coat of arms of a very old family, uncertainties can crop up about the present owner, who could be of a radically different alignment than the coat of arms indicates.

DMs can use this to preserve an element of confusion in a campaign. This is particularly useful in the case of the felonious noble who's conspiring to usurp the royal throne. His great-great-great-grandfather might have been a heroic paladin-type, but the current bearer of the coat of arms might be a dark, treacherous man, a pawn of Entropy playing the role of a righteous knight only to fool his prey!

You might allow a system within your campaign by which owners could modify their coats of arms. Formal guilds of heralds accredited by the monarchs could be established in each kingdom. This would make sense in areas where law is a dominant factor, or in civilized lands where the use of coats of arms needs to be controlled (settings inspired by medieval Europe). The right to bear or modify a coat of arms could be granted by the ruler only, following general rules enforced by the local guild of heralds.

Modifying one's coat of arms could be a totally trivial issue elsewhere, a right freely granted to all who possess a coat of arms. (This is probably so for humanoids and other lawless powers, for example).

### Symbols

When a coat of arms is created, think about the background of its original owner. The coat of arms is likely to give a clue

about the original owner's life or the circumstances that led to the granting of the arms. For example, if a warrior defeated a red dragon and was rewarded with a family coat of arms, the coat of arms would be likely to show a dragon or at least have a clue referring to that epic battle. This is where symbols come into play.

Symbols can be linked to some historical event. They could also be part of a riddle or pun—a knight by the name of Drachenfels (dragon rock) would probably want to have a dragon atop a rock; Stonefist could use a gray, stony fist. Symbols can refer to something important about the owner of the coat of arms. For example, the coat of arms of a free city might bear an open city gate, signifying a neutral, open city. Some symbols could be limited to certain character classes (and races in the AD&D game). For example, a sword would be found only in the coat of arms of a fighter (if the original owner of the coat of arms was a fighter); a dagger or a lockpick would indicate a thief; a holy symbol would belong to a cleric; and a wand or staff would signify a wizard.

Symbols used in this way may not necessarily be linked with the owner's alignment. Showing a black dragon on a coat of arms could refer either to the owner's evil disposition or to the fact that the original owner gained his coat of arms by defeating a black dragon. Professional guilds of heralds become useful at this point in keeping track of the original meanings of the coats of arms. For AD&D game PCs, heraldry could then become a nonweapon proficiency required to interpret an unusual or foreign coat of arms.

### Acquiring a coat of arms

In a fantasy game, anyone could acquire coat of arms. In a chaotic or primitive environment, each individual picks whatever strike her fancy, as long as she doesn't offend someone bigger and nastier. In a lawful setting, however, some remarkable achievement would be needed for the granting of a coat of arms, regardless of the character's class, gender, or race. A warrior could defeat a monster, a wizard could provide an unusual enchantment to help the community, a cleric could retrieve some stolen artifact, a thief could unveil some treacherous plan by a rival of the king, etc. The militia of a city could unexpectedly intervene in a battle and save the day—whatever is enough to deserve a reward from a king. This doesn't imply the beneficiary is ennobled, but simply that the recipient has been rewarded.

At this point, coats of arms become a status symbol in addition to providing a form of identity on a battlefield. The right of chaotic overlords to bear coats of arms or the legitimacy of their heraldic elements will seem highly questionable in a lawful area. Likewise, the refusal of a monarch to allow a vassal to update a coat of arms will be seen as an offense and

could spark a long-lasting feud. This might happen when a monarch dislikes a vassal.

Coats of arms can appear on many different items. Warriors and clerics may be allowed to bear theirs on shields, tabards, or banners. Wizards or thieves may prefer less conspicuous items, such as rings or medallions.

### Arcane heraldry

The next step in gaming heraldry is to add magical properties to coats of arms. There are two reasons for this. The first is to provide a way to ensure a coat of arms is legitimate and is borne by its rightful owners. The second reason is to give an actual game value to heraldry, bestowing it with some magical powers. The latter also brings heraldry closer to our fantasy settings.

Should you allow coats of arms to become magical, then guilds of heralds become crucial. These heralds are specialists who, for a fee and a legitimate edict from a king, create a magical coat of arms. These heralds also have the ability to tell whether a particular item bearing a coat of arms is magical or not.

The initial role of the herald is to design the coat of arms. The owner can then have its design reproduced on whatever is desirable. For a fee, the coat of arms can be made magical. If so, *all* items bearing the coat of arms gain the potential of producing some magical effect, with the following conditions:

1. The magical effect can be called upon only by the owner or rightful heir of the coat of arms (other relatives and usurpers cannot make use of the effect). For a town, the rightful user would be the mayor; for a military order, the Grand Master; for a guild, the Guild Master; for a kingdom, the ruling monarch.

2. The effect can happen only under a very specific set of conditions linked to the history of the item and its owner. For example, a knight who gained his coat of arms by slaying a huge red dragon would be able to call upon the coat of arms' magical effects only in a similar situation.

3. The magical power has to be relevant to the situation. In the example above, the knight might have a +1 to attack rolls vs. red dragons, or *fire resistance* (as the ring), etc. The DM should determine the nature of the effect and its potency.

4. The effect should be triggered only when the owner utters his legitimate *cri-de-guerre* (a war cry or a motto). It can be whispered for wizards or thieves. It must be shouted for combat-oriented characters and clerics. The owner must touch or hit the item to activate it.

5. Finally, the effect may increase or decrease in strength the noble rank of the owner. A warrior who inherits a coat of arms from a relative might not trigger as spectacular a magical effect as a king!

As a guideline for magical "pluses," see the Magical-effects chart. (Using this chart, an untitled D&D fighter who reached 26th

level would receive the same bonuses as a "monarch" of any character level):

This combat bonus does count as a magical weapon when fighting monsters immune to ordinary weapons. If protection is more appropriate than a combat bonus, use these "pluses" as AC bonuses instead.

The magical effect does not have to be related to combat or to a specific type of weapon. Instead, it could relate to the coat of arms in a manner unrelated to combat. Refer to the game's spell or magical-items lists for inspiration. In this case, the effect has to be carefully designed to remain balanced with the combat bonuses suggested above.

Compare a warrior's +1 to attack rolls to the magical effect gained by a wizard from his coat of arms. The entire magical effect from a wizard's coat of arms might lie in something as innocuous as a spectral candle that lights in the dark. The same effect, after the mage attains the rank of king, might grow to become a single *fireball*. Again, these powers should be designed in accordance with what the PC accomplished to obtain the coat of arms. Perhaps a greater achievement demands a greater magical effect.

There is also the case of partitioned shields with multiple coats of arms. It is conceivable that a truly powerful dignitary might have access to several magical effects. Consider the example of a king with

a shield bearing his family arms (if he is the present head of the family), the kingdom's arms (since he's the king), the arms of a military order (if he is their Grand Master), and finally the arms of the temple (if he's the high priest). This would be one mighty shield indeed!

At the very least, these effects should be minor special effects that influence and enhance the role-playing of PCs and NPCs. These magical quirks also form another level of detail that sets apart a handful of characters with the same character classes and backgrounds. Heroes and villains might want to emulate their ancestors' illustrious achievements, thus actively seeking out the same odd or dangerous situations in which these deeds originally took place. If so, this could be an opportunity for heroes to modify or increase the magical effects of their coats of arms. Players might pay a bit more attention to the backgrounds of their characters and develop them more than usual.

### Sample symbols

This section provides suggestions for symbols, their interpretations, and magical powers they might provide. Again, use this as a guide or a source of ideas. If a symbol is needed for reasons other than those listed below, feel free to change or adapt the list below.

In general, give a character the combat-

related effect for the appropriate type of creature defeated to gain their coat of arms. If the coat of arms was gained by other means, the effects listed below may be more appropriate. Spell-like effects are cast at 15th level of experience. Unless the effects are permanent (such as regaining hit points via healing), effects last only for the duration of the encounter in which the effect was triggered. For effects with a numerical range (+1 to +5, for example), the progression is identical to that on the Magical-effects chart.

**Lion:** The lion is a symbol of authority. It often is used by royal families and is perceived as a rival of the eagle. The presence of this magical symbol causes a -1 to -5 penalty on Morale Checks for all foes within a 60' radius. A monarch's *cri-de-guerre* causes foes within the same radius to make a saving throw vs. dragon breath or flee for one turn.

**Eagle:** This symbol is often attributed to families connected with an emperor, and is considered to be the rival of the lion. The eagle represents courage. Make the owner's Morale Checks and those of her followers and companions within a 60' radius at +1 to +5. A monarch is also immune to fear.

**Basilisk:** This creature is the symbol of a mysterious character or monster. Opponents make their initiative rolls with a -1 to -5 penalty within a 60' radius. A monarch gains the basilisk's petrifying gaze for one round.

**Bear:** This is the sign of a rugged being. The bearer makes Constitution checks at +1 to +5. A monarch is also immune to natural and magical cold.

**Beholder:** Also known as the evil watcher, this is the sign of one who observes or who tricks others. The bearer saves vs. spells at +1 to +5. A monarch's eyes project a 60' *anti-magic* ray for one round.

**Boar:** One who is stubborn may end up with the boar as a symbol. The owner saves against charm spell effects at +1 to +5. A monarch is immune to all mind-controlling magical effects (*charm, sleep, hold, etc.*)

**Bow or arrows:** Often attributed to elves, hunters, or those who are skillful in archery, this magical symbol confers a +1 to +5 bonus on attack rolls with one type of bow. A monarch gains the power of *slaying* (as the sword) a specific creature type on a natural attack roll of 20.

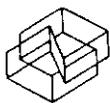
**Centaur:** These are hardy and tenacious creatures, and are often the symbol of woodland beings, foresters, and hunters. The bearer can run for 1-5 turns without fatigue. A monarch gains 10 temporary hit points in addition to the character's normal total. These hit points are the first lost when suffering damage.

**Clover:** This is the lucky charm. The clover confers a +1 to +5 bonus to dice rolls related

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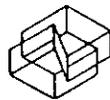
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**ahead** of the **game**

### Color-alignment chart

Tincture	D&D game	AD&D game
Blue	Law	Good
Black	Chaos	Evil
Purple	Law	Law
Red	Chaos	Chaos
Green	Neutral (law vs. chaos)	Neutral (law vs. chaos)
Orange	Neutral (law vs. chaos)	Neutral (good vs. evil)
Silver	Moderate intensity	Moderate intensity
Gold	Strong intensity	Strong intensity

### Heraldic-fur chart

Furs	Level	Status
Natural	1-5	Untitled nobility
Vair*	5+	Untitled nobility
Peau	1-5	Knight or better
Erminois	6-10	Count
Ermines	11+	Duke or Archduke
Ermine *	Any	Royalty

(\*) Vair comes in various patterns (counter-vair, vair-in-pale, vair-en-point, vairy of four tinctures). You could easily rank these in ascending order of levels. Royalty always uses Ermine, regardless of level.

### Magical-effects chart

Title	D&D game level	AD&D game level	Game effect
Untitled	1-5	1-4	+1 bonus to attacks vs. a specific foe
Baron	6-10	5-8	+2 as above
Count	11-15	9-12	+3 as above
Marquis	16-20	13-16	+4 as above
Duke/Archduke*	21-25	17-20	+5 as above
Monarch	26+	21+	+5 & special power vs. a specific foe

(\*) Note that a duke is generally the vassal of a king while an archduke is the vassal of an emperor.

to gambling. A monarch can make an ability check appropriate to the situation to avoid an attack or escape an event that would otherwise prove fatal.

**Displacer beast:** This is the sign of a trickster or a master of illusion. The bearer gains a +1 to +5 AC bonus against missile attacks. A monarch gains one *mirror image*, as the spell of the same name.

**Dolphin:** This is a symbol for the adventurous, especially those connected to the sea. A dolphin confers a +1 to +5 bonus to dice rolls related to navigation. A monarch can *predict weather* as the spell of the same name.

**Dragon:** This is the sign of magical power. Nonspell-casting bearers gain a +1 to +5 to their saving throws vs. spells; spell-casting owners cause a -1 to -5 penalty to their victims' saving throws vs. spells. A monarch gains immunity to the breath weapon of the dragon type shown in the coat of arms.

**Fish:** This is the sign of peace. It confers a +1 to +5 bonus to dice rolls related to persuasion or negotiation. A monarch gets a *sanctuary* effect, as the spell of the same name, with a -5 penalty to opponents' saving throws.

**Fleur de lis:** This is an ancient symbol of royalty, equal to the lion in status. It is also associated with purity. This confers on a good-aligned owner a +1 to +5 AC bonus against one type of evil foe. A monarch gains a *protection from evil 10'* radius effect, as the spell of the same name, with a -5 penalty to saving throws against this effect. There are no gains for neutral or evil owners.

**Fox:** This is a symbol for a cunning, quick-witted person. This symbol allows to bearer to make Intelligence checks with a +1 to +5 bonus during life-threatening situations. A monarch can *detect evil*, as the spell of the same name.

**Goat or ram:** Characters with an impulsive, unpredictable attitude could be associated with the ram. Opponents suffer a -1 to -5 penalty on surprise rolls. A monarch inflicts maximum damage with her first attack that hits.

**Griffon:** This is a sign of strength (and an odd mixture of the eagle and lion symbols, perhaps a rebel). This magical symbol confers a +1 to +5 bonus to Strength checks. A monarch can *fly*, as the spell.

**Hammer:** This is a symbol often associated with dwarves and craftsmen. It con-

fers a +1 to +5 AC bonus vs. melee weapons. A monarch can *call lightning*, as the spell.

**Harpy:** This symbol allows its bearer the ability to cause a -1 to -5 AC penalty to foes within a 60' radius when the bearer is singing. A monarch gains a *charm monster* effect, as the spell, when he sings.

**Heart:** This denotes someone with a long-lasting quest or someone who is true and just. It confers a +1 to +5 bonus on attack rolls in combat specifically related to the bearer's quest. A monarch gains a *find the path* effect, as the spell.

**Hell hound:** This is the symbol of those who have seen death and returned. The hell hound is a guardian of the dead. This symbol allows a saving throw vs. death magic with a +1 to +5 bonus when the beneficiary's hit points drop below 1. If successful, the symbol's bearer awakens 1-4 hours later with 1 hp, provided the body has not been destroyed. A monarch can *speak with the dead*, as the spell.

**Horse:** This is the symbol of freedom and pride. The horse symbol confers a +1 to +5 AC bonus when fighting on horseback. A monarch gains a +3 bonus to attack and damage when charging on horseback.

**Hydra:** This signifies someone with multiple identities, purposes, or lives. It heals 1d4 to 5d4 hit points if the beneficiary is reduced to fewer than 1 hp. A monarch gains the ability of *merging*, as the magical potion of the same name.

**Manscorpion:** This is a sign of alertness and treachery. It confers a +1 to +5 bonus to initiative rolls. A monarch inflicts maximum damage on successful attacks from behind a foe.

**Manticore:** This creature refers to secrecy, mysteries, and mysticism. The symbol confers a +1 to +5 bonus on attack rolls with crossbows. A monarch gains a *dreamspeech* effect, as the magical potion of the same name.

**Panther:** The heraldic panther, a mythical, fire-breathing creature, looks like a wingless griffon with a dragon head. This symbol confers the ability to cause +1 to +5 bonus points of damage with fire-based attacks (oil, breath-weapon, spell, etc.). A monarch can summon from the coat of arms a 30-hp amber golem in the shape of the heraldic panther. (See *Rules Cyclopedia*, page 180, for information on amber golems.) The golem appears within 1d4 rounds. If not destroyed, the panther fades away at the end of the encounter.

**Pegasus:** It is often used by those who have travelled far or live in places close to the sky. This symbol grants both a mount and the riding bearer a +1 to +5 AC bonuses when engaged in airborne combat. A monarch gains a *fly* effect, as the spell.

**Phoenix:** This is the symbol of magnificence or rebirth. It confers a +1 to +5 saving throw bonus against fire attacks. If killed by a fire-based attack, a monarch will rise from his ashes 2d4 days later, as

the *raise* dead spell (effect is automatic).

**Raven:** This is the symbol of a messenger with dark tidings or a cursed family. The raven confers on the bearer the ability to warn companions of an impending attack from a specific monster type or foe 1-5 rounds ahead of time. The beneficiary must first utter his motto, when allowed by the situation, from which point the "warning" ability remains in effect for a day or until it is triggered. A monarch gains a *clairvoyance* effect, as per the spell of the same name.

**Salamander, fire:** It is a symbol of magical power, and provides the owner a +1 to +5 saving throw bonus against all fire-based attacks. A monarch gains immunity to all fire-based attacks.

**Ship:** This symbol alludes to travelers or masters of the sea. It confers a +1 to +5 bonus attack rolls when fighting at sea. A monarch gains a *control winds* effect, as the spell.

**Snake:** The snake is either the symbol of a healer or of treachery. A snake symbol grants a +1 to +5 saving throw bonus against poison. A monarch gains a cure *serious wounds* effect, as the spell.

**Stag:** It is a sign of strength and pride with mystical links with nature, and confers a +1 to +5 AC bonus in a forest. A monarch can summon a 30 hp actaeon within 1d4 rounds when in a forest. If not destroyed, the creature disappears at the

end of the encounter.

**Star:** This is the symbol of dreams and secrets. This symbol confers a +1 to +5 saving throw bonus against all mind-affecting spells (*sleep, charm, hold, fear, etc.*) A monarch can become *ethereal*, as per the potion.

**Tree:** This is a symbol often used by druids, elves, or those connected with woodland beings. Confers the ability to speak with 1-5 creature types native of the forest. A monarch can *transport through plants*, as the spell.

**Troll:** This is the symbol of a truly monstrous or evil owner. It confers the ability to reduce nonfire or nonacid damage by -1 to -5 once per round. A monarch can *regenerate* severed limbs within 1d4 days.

**Tyger:** The heraldic tyger, a rare, mythical creature, looks like a lion with an eagle head. A tyger symbol confers the ability to take half-damage (rounded up) from 1-5 nonmagical weapon attacks per round. A monarch can be *hasted*, as the spell.

**Unicorn:** This symbol alludes to elven ideals, and causes opponents within a 60' radius of the bearer to suffer a -1 to -5 penalty on attack rolls with missile weapons or on saving throws. A monarch can *dimension door*, as the spell.

**Weapons:** These various symbols allude to warriors in general or those with mer-

cenary backgrounds. Any of these magical symbols grants a +1 to +5 bonus on damage rolls with the illustrated weapon. A monarch gains a *wounding* effect on the first successful attack, as per the magical weapon.

**Wolf:** This symbol is often attributed to a brutal, cold-hearted being. This symbol also could refer to lycanthropic history. It confers a *sanctuary* effect, as the spell, against lycanthropes or against those whose goal is specifically to destroy lycanthropes (as appropriate), with a -1 to -5 saving throw penalty against the *sanctuary*. A monarch can summon 1d6 normal wolves within 1d4 rounds when in the wilderness. If not destroyed, the wolves disappear at the end of the encounter.

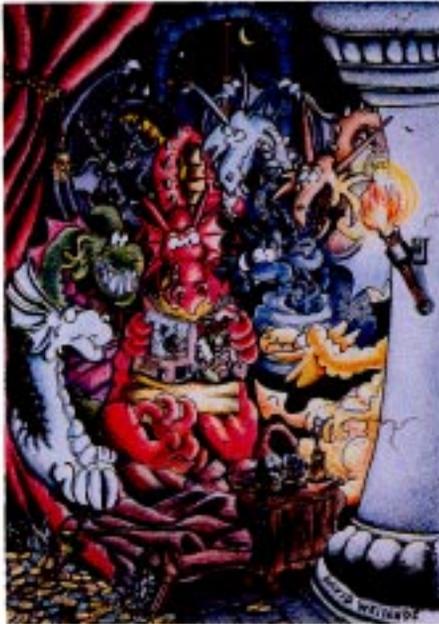
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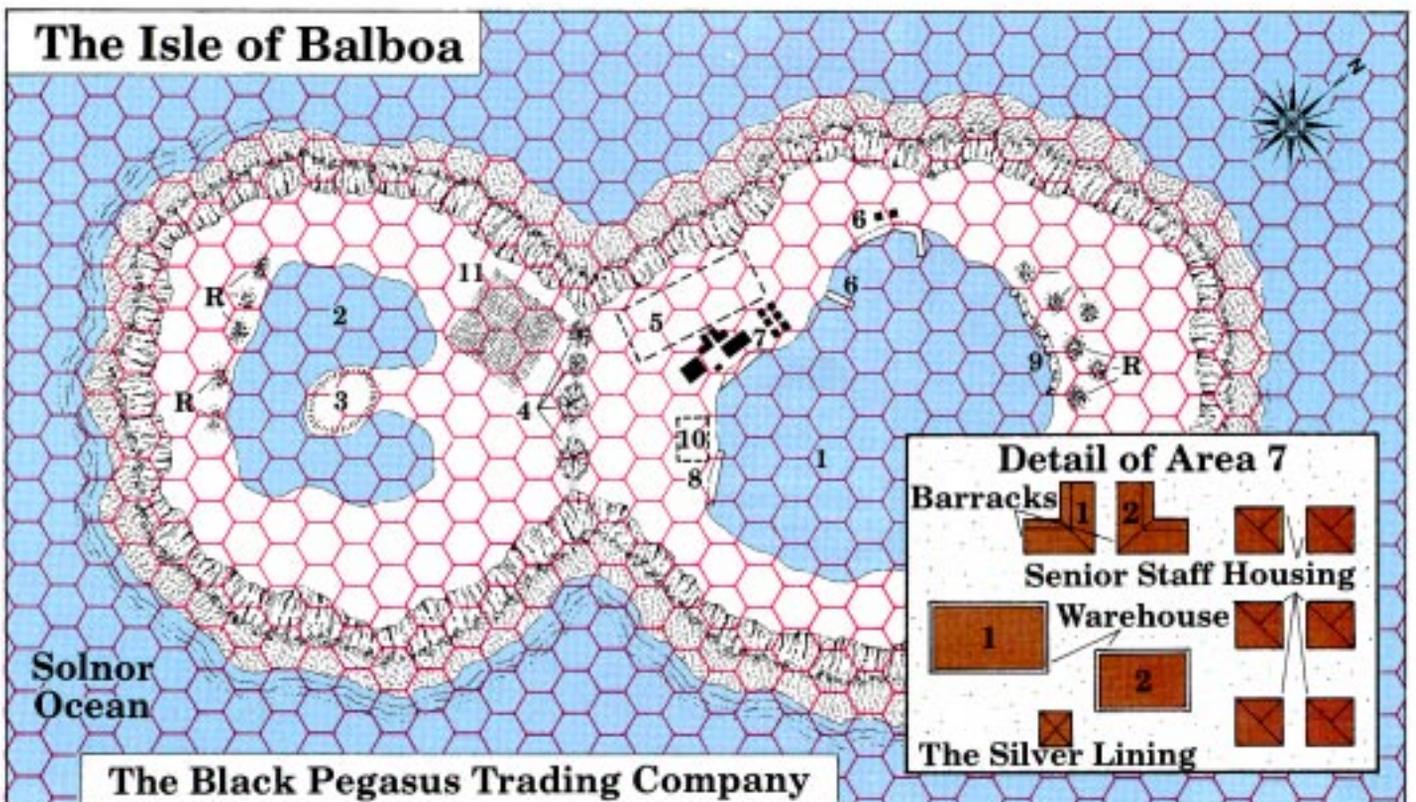


The Black Pegasus Trading Co.

by David Montgomery and Jim Milner

Artwork by Paul Jaquays

Cartography by Steve Beck



As DMs and players, we were tremendously excited about the SPELLJAMMER® campaign setting from the moment we discovered it. We bought all the books, compendiums, and accessories and loved it even more. The problem was that we did not want to give up our land-based adventures and start all over, and most methods of discovering Arcane Space made us choose one over the other. We needed integration. The Black Pegasus Trading Company is a secret society of spelljamming merchants living on an otherwise standard campaign world. Basically neutral in alignment, the characters of the company allow the DM the option to use them in any manner, as appropriate to circumstances and PC alignments. These characters serve equally well as nemeses, allies, or merely as catalysts for further adventures.

**Note:** Because we love the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting, we set our version of the company on that world, Oerth. However, in the event that a DM prefers a different campaign world, the names can be changed with ease. For those using the GREYHAWK world, we provide links to the latest events occurring there.

## Overview

At a glance, the concept of spelljamming seem's quite foreign to the typical dungeon delver, and rightly so. But, it can expand the campaign and the characters to their outer limits. Adding the SPELLJAMMER campaign to your own world is a natural progression for high-level characters. The problem lies in integrating the two disparate settings into a manageable campaign for the DM. By gradually introducing spelljamming vessels masquerading as typical merchantmen galleons, the DM can control the flow of information to the player characters, allowing them to "discover" what is going on in their campaign on their own.

## Setting

If a person traveled three degrees North of East from the mouth of the Trask River (in what was the Great Kingdom) for a distance of 630 miles, she would discover an island. This island is completely ringed by imposing cliffs. Rising nearly vertical, these cliffs range in height from 450'-1,375' high. Seen from above, the shape of the island appears as two linked ovals of unequal size. This island was created by the merging of undersea volcanoes that underwent a period of extensive seismic activity ages ago. When seismic activity ended and the volcanoes collapsed, they left behind a ring of jagged peaks and two deep valleys. Time and weather served to fill the valleys with substantial quantities of rain, thereby creating two extremely deep lakes. Deep subterranean tunnels, left by the volcanoes, allowed water and sealife to enter the lakes, resulting in slightly brackish water.

Although favored by generally mild and

overcast weather, the island is in a region of treacherous currents and sudden hurricanes. This, combined with the sheer walls and low cloud-cover, makes the island quite difficult to locate, much less explore.

This island on Oerth has been the home to occasional bands of spelljammers during the last few centuries. While it has no official name, its current denizens refer to the island as Balboa. The company forcibly took possession of the island four years ago by annihilating the Balboa Brothers Bazaar in a massive battle using aerial assaults, magical hurricanes, and treachery. They have held it ever since.

## Characters

The Black Pegasus Trading Company is controlled by a close-knit group of four adventurers, known as "the board of directors." These four individuals have been friends and business associates for several years. They occasionally adventured together prior to deciding to go into business as partners. Erthoron, an elven mage/thief, and Re'lumph "Lumpy" Garlock, a hairfoot halfling thief founded this organization with just two spelljamming galleons, and were quite successful. Rounding out the board are the Peldebrocks, a married human couple. Belthalion is a powerful wizardess, while her husband, Valgulman, is a dual-classed fighter/mage. The Peldebrocks managed to commandeer a squidship, and became buccaneers and mercenaries. When Lumpy and Erthoron heard what their old companions, the Peldebrocks, were doing, they decided to investigate. Soon, they got together for a few mutually successful joint missions. One stormy night in Rel Mord they decided to join forces. Between Re'lumph's business sense and the military genius of the Peldebrocks, the company grew by leaps and boarding parties.

No member of the board or any member of the crew is evil; most are true neutral or a variation. The board's motivation stems from self-interest; they have a genuine desire to have it all. They are not simply greedy, but are driven to attain power and influence also. Not immoral, but simply amoral, they care for themselves, their crew, and little else. In a battle where sides must be chosen, they choose good; not because of altruism, but because good is more expedient and better for commerce in the long run. If taking sides can be avoided, they willingly serve all factions while never betraying any to the opposition. Honor is not unknown, but it is a code defined by each individual. In fact, the Peldebrocks honor to the death any commitment made by either of them. Lumpy and Erthoron are a little more flexible on that issue, but between them, they wring every copper piece from any deal, and ensure there are no loopholes, unless they are in the company's favor.

Seldom do any of the board appear in public undisguised. Only if the problem demands personal handling will they go in

person, and never more than two members are together in an unsecured position. In the current suspicious environment in the Flanaess, such caution is not unwarranted.

**Re'lumph "Lumpy" Garlock** (half-ling): AC -1; MV 9; T15; hp 75; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; S 14, I 16, W 12, D 18, C 17, Ch 18; ML 17; AL N; *leather armor +5, ring of elemental command-air; wand of secret door & trap location, 4 packets of dust of disappearance, dagger +2, Longtooth*. Re'lumph looks quite the dandy, dressed in silks and other finery. His long, auburn hair is always in the latest style, and often topped by a colorful, plumed hat. His eyes are dark brown, yet they twinkle with mischief and merriment. Only 3' 1" tall, he has the affectation of wearing heeled boots at formal occasions, lifting him to a lofty 3' 4".

Lumpy grew up as the rebellious second son of wealthy merchants, and even though he hated his family's business, he inherited the gift of good business sense. After achieving success as a thief, he went into Wildspace and wasted no time setting up a front operation as a merchant. Over the years, he and Erthoron pulled off a great number of heists and scams. He takes great pride in the inventory of rare and powerful magical items stored in the vault on the hammership.

Lumpy is a business genius, and a master of turning a profit, illicit or legitimate. He plays a crucial role in the planning of both heists and trading missions. There are more of the latter, as they return a slightly lower profit but at a *much* reduced risk of loss. Generally, Re'lumph serves as the voice of the company and the chief negotiator when dealing with powerful contacts or business associates. If there were an actual head of the company it would be Re'lumph, but he declines that title, since he desires the full cooperation he receives from his colleagues.

**Erthoron Erskine** (elf): AC 3; MV 12; M11/T12; hp 47; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; S 9, I 18, W 15, D 16, C 14, Ch 11; ML 17; AL N; Spells: 4/4/4/3/3; *robe of the archmagi (gray), ring of spell storing, wand of lightning, hat of disguise, dagger +3*. Erthoron is tall for an elf at 5' 5" with a very pale complexion, deep green eyes, and hair black as night. His taste in clothing runs to dark colors and the finest fabrics, and he always wears a voluminous black cloak. He was once mistaken for a vampire on a darkened street in the City of Greyhawk. Erthoron at one time held the rank of Ship's Wizard First Class in the Elven Armada. He soon became disillusioned, however. One day as he searched Lumpy's ship, he took a bribe and overlooked the contraband he found there. Shortly thereafter, he resigned and joined the halfling and his fledgling business. Rarely smiling or speaking, he is known for his refusal to drink alcohol and his keen intellect. Thanks to his military training, Erthoron has excellent piloting and combat skills with spelljamming vessels.

Thievery remains his passion, though.

Erthoron plays the most roles of any board member. He serves as chief astrologer and helmsman, and assists in the training of the company mages when necessary. Like Lumpy, he engineers many of the heists. Often the two perform both the planning and execution as a team.

**Belthalion Peldebrock** (human): AC 1; MV 12; M 14; hp 52; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 5-8; S 10; I 18, W 14, D 16, C 16, Ch 15; ML 17; AL LN; Spells: 6/6/6/5/5/3/2; *staff of the magi, cloak of protection +5, ring of wizardry* (doubles third-level spells), *dagger of throwing +4*. Belthalion is an Invoker specialist mage, and her bonus invocation/evocation spells are included in the list above. The extra spells she receives from *ring of wizardry* are not included.

A very attractive woman, Belthalion stands 5' 10" tall, with red hair and green eyes. However, she cares only for those close to her, and is indifferent to others. She has written a number of virulent variations to more common spells, and achieved fame by inventing new and interesting uses for spells. Specializing in all forms of fire-based spells, she especially enjoys ship-to-ship combat. One of her aliases is "Torch." She is logical and calculating.

Belthalion's role in the company includes control of all magical resources. She coordinates all magical battle plans and is a rigid taskmaster in the training of all her combat mages. For the business efforts, she provides legal counsel, since she knows most laws and statutes of the Flanaess, and her magical skills assist her in obtaining the truth from contacts.

**Valgulman Peldebrock**(human): AC 0; MV 12; F7/M9; hp 85; THAC0 14; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon plus strength bonus; S 18/77 (+2/+4), I 17, W 11, D 16, C 17, Ch 16; ML 17; AL LN; Spells: 4/3/3/2/1; *bracers AC 2, +5 defender bastard sword, axe of hurling +3, ring of human influence, decanter of endless water, wand of polymorphing*. Valgulman is a great bear of a man standing 6' 4" tall with a huge mane of blond hair and a long beard, both worn in braids. He appears to be a typical barbarian, and commonly takes advantage of that stereotype, since few guess he is a mage. He is known for his meticulous attention to detail. Valgulman is the military genius of the group, both when airborne and on the surface (land or sea).

Valgulman makes complete battle plans for all scenarios the company undertakes. While he can't personally control every unit, he uses rigorous training to mold the units into an effective force. Valgulman also makes use of the company's many contacts around the Flanaess to gather information, military or mercantile, that the company can use to its advantage.

The remainder of the company, known simply as "the crew," is an assortment of humans, elves, and halflings. There are

exceptions, such as a small company of giff warriors, a half-dozen advanced lizard men, and a spacesea giant serving as head construction engineer.

One of the lizard men is a thief named Rhumbonihaz. He is worthy of mention, since he regularly accompanies one of the trading parties, posing as a "normal" lizard man fighter named Drooler. Many mistake him for a simple bodyguard. This enables him to be a superb spy, since people underestimate him. "Drooler" behaves impolitely, grunts and slurs when speaking, and has an annoying habit of mindlessly gazing at people who are talking, while drops of spittle dribble off his chin.

**Rhumbonihaz/Drooler** (advanced lizard man): AC 5; MV 6; Sw 12; T6; hp 38; THAC0 18, #AT 3 or 1; Dmg 1-2/1-2/1-6 or by weapon (backstab  $\times 3$ ); S 17 ( +1/ +1), I 13, W 10, D 17, C 16, Ch 06; ML 15; AL LN; PP 35%, OL 65%, FT 45%, MS 75%, HS 50%, DN 30%, CW 95%; *shadowcloak* (additional 25% to HS%), *long sword +2, helm of comprehending languages and reading magic*. Rhumbonihaz is one of Valgulman's henchmen and is unflinchingly loyal to him. While not a leader yet, he is one of the most trusted individuals in the lower ranks of the company. Rhumbonihaz likely will achieve the rank of leader by the time he reaches 8th level. When assigned to especially important missions, Rhumbonihaz borrows powerful magical items from the company's inventory, tailored to his needs. On occasion he has had in his possession a *ring of elemental command-air*, and a *fates card* (from a *deck of many things*). He is one of Valgulman's most capable agents.

Another notable company member is Feldspar Meldmud, the spacesea giant responsible for the design and construction of the company's facilities on Balboa Island as well as general maintenance of the company's spelljamming fleet.

**Feldspar Meldmud** (spacesea giant): AC 0; MV 12; HD 14 + 1d4; hp 98; THAC0 7; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (2-12 + 8); SA hurling rocks for 3-30, spells; SD spells; ML 17; AL N; MC 7; *ring of elemental command-earth, stone club +3*. As an elder giant with spell-casting ability, Feldspar has the following special abilities: *stone shape, stone tell* and *transmute rock to mud* all once per day at 5th level of ability, and has also spell-casting abilities of a 3rd-level wizard (2/1). His most common spell choices are *phantasmal force, shocking grasp*, and *invisibility*.

The board-members' personal henchmen, a loyal and capable lot, provide leadership for the crew. The numbers and details of the crew are left to each DM to determine.

### Isle of Balboa

The company aims to establish a secure headquarters facility on Balboa. At this time, the shipyards and repair docks are completed, as are two large warehouses and assorted housing. A large area has

been cleared to act as a landing field to the west of what will become a company town. Presently, this town consists of laid-out roadways and building lots, except for those buildings already mentioned, and a public house, "The Silver Lining." The giant, Feldspar Meldmud, faces the task of creating an underground stronghold. This stronghold will be large enough to hold the living quarters of the board, the company vaults, some council chambers, and the control center where all company operations can be monitored. It is being designed to survive an attack similar to the one that turned the island over to the company. Only a minimal amount of construction has occurred on the stronghold thus far. Feldspar is out on a special mission, recruiting miners and stonemasons from various communities to aid in this project. The plans include the possibility of a special chamber, extending into the depths of the landing lake, roofed with transparent crystal. The agricultural fields cultivated by the previous denizens now produce small amounts of food and trade crops (such as pipeweed). The company also plans a smoke-powder factory here.

Among the minor holdings of the company, there exists various warehouses and trade offices in the free city of Greyhawk, Rel Mord in Nyronde, Bastro in the Hold of Stonefist, Zeif in the Sultanate of Zeif, Monmurg in the Hold of the Sea Princes, and in the free city of Rel Astra. The company also owns several smaller businesses of all types across the Flanaess. Each DM can add pre-existing enterprises from her own campaign to the company's empire.

### Vessels

The company owns a small armada of spelljamming craft. Currently its fleet consists of one hammership (in orbit), two viperships (docked at Balboa), five galleons (two docked, three deployed), three blades (in orbit), and two wreckboats (one docked and one in orbit). Two more viperships and a wreckboat are under construction, but are not yet near completion. The galleons bear *minor helms*, while all other ships sport *major helms*. All galleons deployed by the company carry various sets of registration documents and trade agreements, allowing them to operate legally in most waters and ports on Oerth. Each ship is equipped with a *mirror of mental prowess* somewhere in the officers' quarters. These mirrors act as a means of transportation between ships, and the scrying function comes in handy too. The only ships without such a device will be those newly acquired or those considered disposable. In the event of a ship's loss, destruction (or removal) of these mirrors is part of the scuttling routine. There is also a mirror on Balboa.

The hammership serves as a mothership and a main battle platform. The company keeps it in stationary orbit above Balboa at an altitude of 15 miles. Viperships are the favored vessels in Wildspace and in com-

bat. The blades accompany the hammer-ship, functioning as tugs or escorts. Finally, the wreckboats see use as small freighters or inland scouting vessels.

The company sails into foreign ports to trade in their converted galleons, flying away when out of sight. Currently, the three deployed galleons reside in harbor in the Sultanate of Zeif, Glot of the Ice Barbarians, and in the Hold of the Sea Princes. The team in Zeif is trading a load of rare wood from the Olman Islands for gems. In Glot, the company carries on routine trading for cured meats to sell to the starving masses of the central Flanaess. The other crew covertly spies on the Scarlet Brotherhood's organization in Monmurg, seeking a likely point of infiltration (more on the company's relationship with the Brotherhood later). Rhumbonihaz accompanies the group in Monmurg.

### Operations

The company's primary objective is to maintain the company and see it grow. If necessary, however, they always choose to lose holdings before personnel, since they value trusted crew members far more than material possessions. Items can be replaced, but the loss of loyal and talented employees leaves gaps that are not so easily filled.

Whenever possible, the company maintains maximum profit margins through the

use of spelljamming, their competitive edge. The only drawback to this operation is the necessity for absolute secrecy, both of the spelljamming capabilities and of the location of their base, since any knowledge revealed is an advantage lost. This need for secrecy is linked not only to their profits, but to their general principles of neutrality, and the belief that if spelljammer technology were to fall into the wrong hands, balance would be lost.

Taking advantage of the speed of spelljamming vessels, the company ships fly almost directly into the port, within no more than two days sailing distance, even less if weather conditions grant cover for their arrival. This allows them to get their goods to favorable markets well before their land-borne competition. By docking in Rel Mord and getting a steal on a common product, then five days later trading it for the finest silks in the Sultanate of Zeif, they profit heavily. During the recent wars in the Flanaess, the company responded to needs in Nyronnd, Iuz, the Great Kingdom, and the Hold of the Sea Princes, all on the same day! In a few battles, members of the company actually provided supplies to *all* sides. The *mirrors of mental prowess* carried on each ship allow the company teams to relay critical information, such as pricing and demand. While the company avoided price gouging during the wars, they did make healthy

profits, and the company earned a few favors from some of the most powerful leaders of the Flanaess.

Occasionally, the company attacks unescorted merchant ships of the Scarlet Brotherhood, since this group's tendency toward commercial espionage has impinged on the company's profits more than once in the past. This raiding increases the company's fleet while simultaneously reducing competition. This only occurs when there is virtually no chance of discovery. For more on this, see the "Scenarios" section below.

While almost any profitable venture interests the company, they specifically target certain enterprises that promise stable, long-term returns. So far, their only ongoing trade missions are supplying weaponry to Sunndi, and importing Ullish war horses to Nyronnd. Before the fall of Onnwal, the company also supplied the army there. Now, however, Sunndi takes the majority of all weapons and armor that the company handles, providing fine gems and the purest platinum in return. While the Peldebriocks maintain a dwarven-run smithy in Irongate, the company deems the situation there too risky to attempt any imports. A caravan line in Ull transports war horses and assorted exotic items to the harbor at Zeif, where galleons wait to ship them to Nyronnd (and, occasionally, the City of Greyhawk). As outr-



geous as the prices for the horses are, the company easily comes out ahead by dealing with nobles and adventurers desperate to purchase superior mounts before hostilities begin anew.

In addition to huge advantages when dealing with the planetary economy, there also are the off-planet and out-of-sphere markets where, for example, bat guano might command a king's ransom. The number one rule of mercantilism is "one man's garbage is another's gold." Asteroid strongholds in Greyspace provide great quantities of the high-quality weaponry and armor that is so scarce in the post-war

central Flanaess. In the future, the company plans to funnel all weapons profits into smoke-powder production, which in turn will bring an excellent return from associates in Realspace. Finally, for clients with extremely deep pockets, the company offers the services of off-world mercenaries. These troops could be an elite giff squad (although they would sorely miss their smoke powder), mind flayers with heavy weaponry, or even gnome cavalry mounted on carnivorous giant space hamsters.

## Scenarios

This section provides one dozen scenarios that DMs may use to develop adventures involving the company. Feel free to add, change, or ignore these ideas as appropriate to each campaign.

### 1. Hijacked

The characters took passage on a merchant ship from Rel Astra, bound for Ratik (or other suitable locales). On the second day of the journey, a sudden squall hits the ship. Lightning bolts strike all the masts, yet no one is seriously injured. The captain commands that all hands abandon ship and row for the coastline. The storm and the lightning were actually magical attacks against the ship by members of the company. They need another ship, and intend to salvage this one. If the characters insist on trying to save the ship, they will come into conflict with the company recovery team. Also, if they delay heading for land while in the lifeboat, the party may spot two viperships and a wreckboat descending from the clouds.

### 2. Murder

The PCs witness a pair of thieves backstab a sailor and drag him into an alley to rob him. If the characters rush to his aid, they scare away the thieves, only to discover that the sailor is already dead and the thieves escaped with his purse. He was a crew member of the company. The party will find favor with the company if the PCs try to locate the slain sailor's ship. If the PCs do not pursue the thieves or don't attempt to find the sailor's ship, other witnesses will place them at the scene of the crime. The party must now deal with the local law, and the rest of the ship's crew, who could seek revenge.

### 3. Reconnaissance

The characters catch Rhumbonihaz escaping down a rope from the roof of a nobleman's house. He broke in to obtain some important trade papers for the company (including lists of prices, sources of "discount" merchandise, buyers of expensive specialty items, officials and guards that can be bought, and assorted blackmail information). Having found what he sought, he is returning to his ship. The characters may detain him, follow him, ignore him, or even attempt to slay him. If skillfully followed, Rhumbonihaz leads them to a company officer who may be willing to negotiate to maintain secrecy. If the party steals the papers, they either can use the information to further their own ends, or sell it to other merchants or to the company. The company will respond to their actions as appropriate.

### 4. Stowaways

The characters need to get out of town fast and stow away on a galleon operated by the company. It completed its mission and is returning to Balboa with a cargo of



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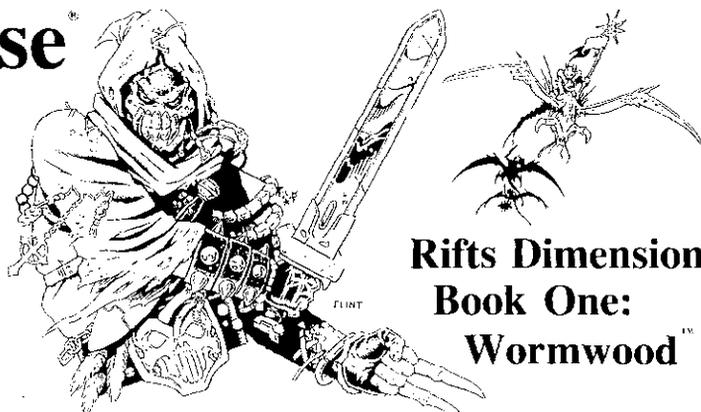
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foodstuffs. The crew discovers the stow-aways while the galleon is airborne. Resolving this scenario depends on the PCs' actions and the players' role-playing skill. (Imagine walking the plank at 30,000 feet.)

## 5. Recruited

The company is on a recruiting drive. They are looking for a few hardy people to strengthen their caravans between Ull and Zeif, so PCs can sign up for mercenary duties. Company representatives require a few wizards and several fighter types. The company is developing a large market for Ullish war horses. Characters can expect to encounter harsh desert life and raids by nomadic bandits and rival trade organizations. Surviving members of a successful caravan troupe may have the opportunity to become full crew members. New members of the crew face intense scrutiny and testing before they learn the secrets of the company. Spellcasters go through even more examinations, but are in much higher demand, and can advance through the ranks quickly.

## 6. Phantom ship

Aboard ship on a clear midnight watch, one of the characters spots what appears to be a sailing ship silhouetted against the moon. None believe his tale. The next day, a heavily loaded galleon that the party's much faster caravel left behind days ago comes into view, stolidly plowing through the rough seas ahead. The galleon, of course, belongs to the company.

## 7. Discovery

While adventuring high in the mountains, the characters sight a galleon in a small alpine lake. Closer inspection reveals a group of merchants accompanied by a giant, trading with a settlement of dwarves. The company may not take kindly to being discovered where no sailor has gone before.

## 8. Infiltration

One Raliman Erlen approaches the party in a River Quarter inn in the City of Greyhawk and convinces them to infiltrate a rival merchant organization. He is actually Ulrik Nessarion, a prominent member of the Scarlet Brotherhood, and is trying to discover information about the company. Concerned because the company appears to be unduly successful, he intends to use any intelligence for the Brotherhood's gain. Raliman arranges for the party to serve as mercenaries on a company galleon, so they can spy on the crew and their trading missions. Unknown to all, however, the ship is sailing on a daring raid deep into the domain of Iuz. The company expects hostilities, so the galleon carries many warriors and spellcasters, but few trade goods. The objective of the expedition is to meet with a small group of company "specialists" involved in a major heist, in order to transport the goods to a safe harbor. In the early stages, the mis-

sion seems a routine run on the Nyr Dyv, but days later the PCs awaken on a disguised ship heading up the Ritensa river. In the middle of the night, at a spot in the river close to Molag, they rendezvous with a wreckboat and relieve it of its extremely bulky and heavy cargo. The characters are there as hired muscle, both as cargo handlers and as combatants, and will not be learn any company secrets unless the mission faces imminent danger of failure. However, if the situation calls for extreme measures, the crew will fly the galleon to safety.

If the characters gain any information, they must decide whether to report back to Raliman, ally with the company, or apply the intelligence for personal gain. Additionally, the company knows who employed the characters (as Raliman, not as Ulrik) and suspects possible ties to the Scarlet Brotherhood. The crew will act in accordance to the characters' actions either by feeding misinformation or investigating the PCs for possible employment as crew members (and double agents to a suspected Scarlet Brotherhood agent).

## 9. Rescued

The characters' ship drifts into a whirlpool (or falls prey to sea serpents, etc.) far from shore. Suddenly, an amazing flying ship descends from the clouds and offers rescue. The price is the ship the PCs ride on for the lives of everyone aboard. If the ship's crew and the PCs agree to this, the flying galleon frees their ship and tows it to a deserted island located along a major shipping lane. There, the company ship's crew takes possession of the ship and makes each survivor swear secrecy on how they came to reach the island, leaving the party to await rescue.

## 10. Space warp

Deep in a dungeon, the characters discover a strange, shallow pool. Ten feet deep and 15' across, the pool is fed by a gushing font a mere 20' away, yet the pool never overflows. The pool hides a spatial warp at its bottom that leads to the floor of the landing lake on Balboa, approximately 150' below the surface there. The company will not appreciate intruders popping up in the middle of their secret base. However, if this is handled diplomatically, the group may be allowed to join the company or make an alliance under a vow of secrecy.

## 11. Recovery

The company lost a team of 12 when Iuz took Admundfort. Valgulman's informants tell him only five members of the team remain alive. The company approaches the PCs to undertake a mission to rescue the missing crew members. The company prefers to use outsiders for rescue attempts, knowing that if the attempt is unsuccessful, the company has not lost additional employees. A possibility exists for further adventures dealing with join-

ing the company or the vengeance of Iuz.

## 12. Salvage

The company crash-landed a ship full of treasure in a shallow lagoon. The PCs discover the wreckage and try to salvage it, but the company has no intention of letting them get away with it. They discover the characters before salvaging can begin, and attack with a vipership and a wreckboat. Characters can stand and fight, retreat, or attempt to negotiate. While combat likely won't favor the party, a spirited defense could lead to a truce while the board of directors considers how to deal with their formidable opponents. After all, as businessmen they must consider their profit/loss ratio. Survivors of such a scenario might emerge with lucrative trade agreements.

## Conclusion

This group provides many options for enterprising DMs. The Black Pegasus Trading Company can act as antagonist, protagonist, catalyst, or merely an evening's adventurous diversion. There also are many other ways in which the addition of spelljamming vessels can spice up a campaign. For example, a spelljamming ship would be the perfect vessel for a group bent on purging the world of evil dragons; after all, why should dragons hold the upper hand due to an ability to fly? Imagine the havoc a mercenary company could wreak when capable of striking without warning at the very heart of an enemy stronghold. How about a small ship of thieves, heisting their way across the world in the best getaway vehicle ever designed? Even the scholarly could benefit from easy access to remote and seemingly inaccessible locales, where important discoveries await. Or, a madcap group of treasure-hunting characters could scour a planet for dungeons to delve and princesses to rescue. The possibilities are as limitless as the number of crystal spheres in the phlogiston. Good sailing!

Ω





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## Investigate the chocobo forest, a shareware labyrinth, and the purple tentacle

Eight years ago, it was next to impossible to do a realistically violent game. Today, graphics and sound capabilities have improved significantly, and products such as *Night Trap* and *Waxworks* show us the potential for exceedingly gory software. While erotic software has remained primitive (at best), it, too, may make an appearance some day. I know an expert graphic-adventure programmer who was approached by a porn merchant wanting his help to do a hard-core sex game. At the moment, however, sex software is not a serious threat.

However, video violence is on the rise. For instance, *Mortal Kombat*, has some notorious gore. My favorite is Sub-Zero's death move, in which he rips the entire spinal column out of his defeated opponent. As a fan of the horror genre, I kind of like violence in a good cause, which brings me to a quandary. I don't want software banned, since this means someone else is choosing what I can experience. On the other hand, many games are purchased by minors, and I certainly don't want *my* children using certain types of software. The solution seems obvious to me—a rating system, like the movies boast. Such a system is on the way.

Sega of America has announced that it intends to assign ratings to its games. At the moment, the plan is for three ratings: GA for general audiences, MA-13 for mature audiences (parental discretion advised), and MA-17 (adults only). I applaud Sega's actions.

Nintendo, on the other hand, keeping with its historically oppressive and reactionary outlook, has openly attacked Sega for this move, boasting that Nintendo will never allow extreme violence in any of its games, inferring Sega's moral degeneracy.

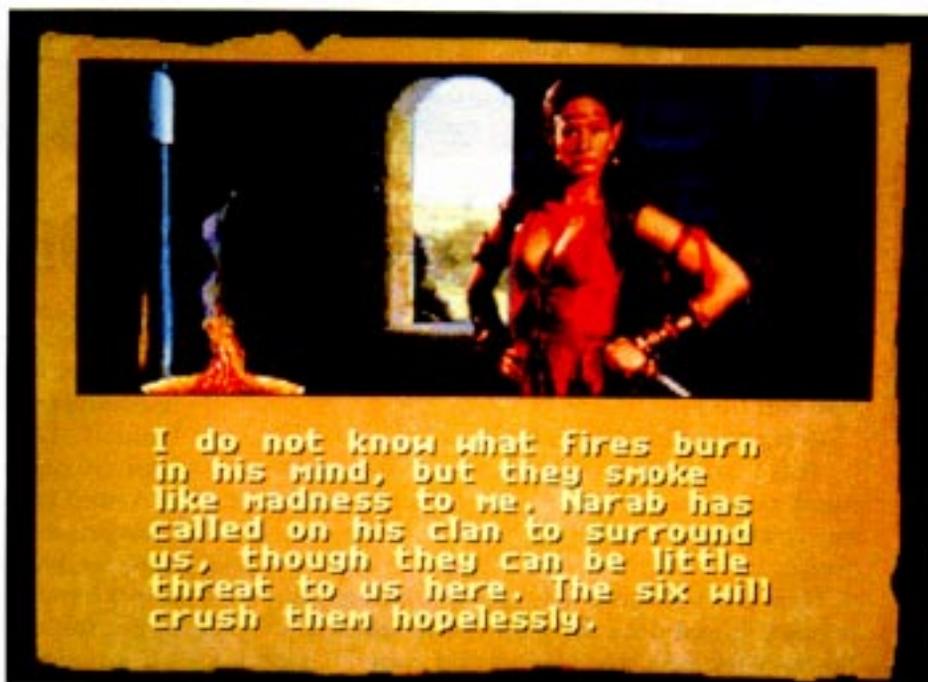
The fact is, Nintendo is being hypocritical. *Wolfenstein 3-D* and *Mortal Kombat* are violent games—when you shoot the Nazis, blood spouts. For the SNES version of *Wolfenstein*, the blood must be taken out. You're still shooting people and leaving them dead on the floor, there's just no blood. In addition, the guard dogs are replaced with giant rats. Apparently it's not okay to shoot dogs (though you still shoot people).

None of this would matter too much if Nintendo actually had ethical convictions behind its policies. But they don't—the SNES versions of *Wolfenstein* to be released in Japan and Europe still have all the blood-and-guts of the PC version. So Nintendo is only censoring its products in the United States. In light of this, Nintendo's attack on Sega is truly puerile.



# EYE OF THE MONITOR

©1993 by Sandy Petersen



*Betrayal at Krondor* (Dynamix)

### Reviews

#### FINAL FANTASY II

\*\*\*\*

Super Nintendo, Square Soft Inc.

"Glorious, stirring sight!" murmured Toad "The poetry of motion! The real way to travel! The only way to travel!"

Here today—in next week tomorrow!  
Villages skipped, towns and cities  
jumped—always somebody else's horizons!  
O bliss! O poop-poop! O my! O my!"

Kenneth Grahame  
*The Wind in the Willows*

### Computer games' ratings

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

This game immediately tickled my fancy as it possesses the most oxymoronic title I've seen. *Final Fantasy II* is technically a sequel to the much less well-known *Final Fantasy* game. *Final Fantasy II* is one of the more popular role-playing titles available for the Super Nintendo, and comparisons with the renowned *Legend of Zelda* are natural.



## Close encounters nightly.

For the cold reaches of space, there's an awful lot of chummy people here.

That's because Federation II isn't one of those shoot-the-ship computer games. This is a universe full of people. Real people, online, working with other real people in real time: busily building their fortunes, planets...nay, empires. And they'd love to throw some work your way so you can do the same.

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The game's combat system reminded me of the old SSI *Phantasia* games. As you wander across an empty landscape, suddenly the screen explodes with a rather annoying sound and you find yourself in a rather stylized view of combat with your characters on one side of the screen facing the monster(s). As combat progresses, the game asks you what you want your characters to do for each round. Once you select your desired action, the character performs it some time later. The monsters keep fighting on their own internal schedule, so if you dawdle too long over one of your character's choices, it can cost you dearly. I must admit I didn't care for the combat system. Its only real advantage was that the extremely ritualized nature of battle made it possible for the artists to provide stupendous graphics for the monsters and a wide variety of effects for the magic spells. Every spell has a different on-screen effect, often quite impressive.

In general though, the graphics are nothing to write home about. They are inferior to the older *Legend of Zelda* and did little for me. On the other hand, the music was great. *Final Fantasy II* has a number of songs, almost all of which I liked a lot. Every city has its own song—I liked Mysidia's music best, though the Chocobo and lunar themes were very amusing. Even the different dungeons have their own background music. *Zelda's* music, while carefully crafted not to be annoying, at no point impressed me. Square Soft is to be commended. What their game lacks in graphics, it more than makes up for in sound. I actually found myself late in the game returning to areas I'd visited earlier just to hear the background music again.

The manual helpfully runs the player through the first third of the game, allowing you to learn the game without confusion. While I praise this, it led to the unfortunate result of my carefully following only the prescribed path, without any side trips. As a result, I didn't go wandering and thus didn't find a Chocobo forest (for example) until far into the game, when it was too late to do me much good. As a result, I recommend that you go poking around where you're not supposed to at every opportunity.

The game had plenty of depth—it went on and on. Several times I thought that I had at last reached the climactic moment, but after my victory and awards, the game continued: I'd only slain a secondary villain on my quest. There must be dozens of pages of dialogue in the game. The infamous "Slay Fozzie" syndrome of killing the bad wizard was stabbed in the back in this game, though I won't explain just how, because it might spoil part of the surprise for readers.

Another area in which *Final Fantasy II* excels is in its difficulty. At every point in the game, you are facing enemies that are just about right for you. You sweat through every fight, and when you meet

the boss monsters, they nearly beat you every time. This is good, for I've played many a game in which the party gets so tough by adventuring that they can trash the game's grossest monsters with ease. The *Ultima* series is a major offender in this respect.

You save several games, and get to see an image of your party before deciding if you want to load a particular game. This is pretty good for a Nintendo game. You can't load a game in play, though—you have to wait until you're all killed or reset the machine.

You zip around the world a lot in this game. There are many ways to travel: by boat, airship, hovercraft, riding the Chocobo birds, or even in a spaceship.

In a role-playing game, the party sticks together through thick and thin. It is rare for the group to split up, because of the difficulties it causes the gamemaster and players. This is even more the case in computer role-playing games. If one of your party members dies, you reload a saved game, bringing her back to life, and keep playing. But in a good novel or movie, this isn't the case. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the Fellowship doesn't stay together throughout. At the time of Boromir's betrayal, the Fellowship is shattered for good—Gandalf and Boromir are dead, two hobbits are kidnapped by orcs, two hobbits are striking out on their own, and the remaining three Fellowship members try to run down the kidnapping orcs. In *The Man in the Iron Mask*, a famous adventure, the four friends (the three musketeers and D'Artagnan), never act together as a group at any point in the entire book!

Of course, computer role-playing games that have only one party member (yourself) avoid this problem. But *Final Fantasy II* has attempted to address this. In this game, party members join your group, then leave it for their own private reasons. One fellow even betrays the rest of the party! Others sacrifice themselves, dying in various heroic ways for the good of the quest. (My favorite is the guy who jumped into a volcanic crater with explosives tied around his waist—what a guy!) As the quest progresses, you find your girlfriend, are forced to leave her, then she gets sick—you get the idea. It's as if you are following the storyline of a fantasy novel rather than playing a role-playing game. Of course, you are forced to follow the game's lead (there's no way you can avoid being betrayed, for instance), but in a conventional computer game, you must go through the dungeons in order anyway, so I regard this as a small loss.

Because of the possibility of losing and the fact that the characters often spoke up for themselves, I got much more attached to my party in *Final Fantasy II* than in any other computer game I've played. The NPCs were certainly two-dimensional, but they were a big step up from the one-dimensional characters normally plaguing the role-playing computer game player.

I commend Square Soft, and look forward with great anticipation to *Final Fantasy III*.

#### Game tips

1. Head south from the first castle to find the Chocobo forest. You'll be glad you did.
2. Whenever you obtain, or wish to purchase a new weapon or piece of armor, check out the statistics in the back of your manual to make sure you're getting the best weapon or armor possible. Except in special cases, don't worry about the special effect of a weapon or armor.
3. Tents are as good as cabins until you're at 30th or 40th level.
4. Use Peep each time you meet a new monster.
5. In cities, look for secret doors everywhere, and look in every pot. You're sure to find some items laying around.

#### KEN'S LABYRINTH

IBM PC, Epic Megagames

Programming and design: Ken Silverman

Art: Mikko Iho, Ken Silverman, and

Andrew Cotter

"So wise so young, they say, do never live long."

Wm. Shakespeare, *Richard III*

This is a shareware game reputedly written by a 17-year-old computer prodigy. Like most games written nowadays, it needs at least a 386 machine with VGA graphics. It supports a reasonable assortment of sound boards.

The vast majority of new shareware products are now trilogies, and *Ken's Labyrinth* is no exception. The first game is free (or nearly so, if you get it from a distributor), but you must register and pay for the other two.

*Ken's Labyrinth* is a lot like *Wolfenstein* in look and feel, though not in game-play. The premise is that you are stuck in an alien maze, somewhere inside of which is your kidnapped dog, Sparky. As you progress through the maze, you must battle floating heads, spiders, little robots that look like berserk R2D2 units, huge muscular monsters, and 8-balls. It's all from a player's eye view. Your initial weapon appears to be thrown hunks of meat, though later on you can get sunbursts (that bounce off the walls). Soda machines (that provide a variety of useful objects), slot machines, and working water fountains are laying around the maze for your perusal and possible use. There are also apples, first-aid kits, and pennies, all of which can be handy, too.

It's easy enough to get into the game. Just load up and do a quick read-through on Help. Because of the game's peculiar setting, you'll probably make an error or two the first time through (I certainly did).

The game is clearly influenced by *Wolfenstein*, and that's perfectly reasonable—I liked *Wolfenstein* a lot, and it's only logical to expect imitators. Unfortunately,



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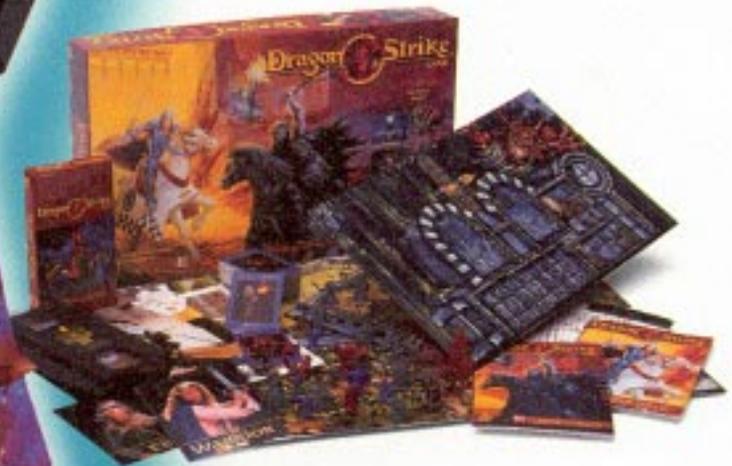


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*Ken's Labyrinth* has a number of amateurish design flaws that hurt the game-play. For instance, I found it extremely difficult to find the secret passages Ken claims to have placed all over his labyrinth. There are a number of special items that go completely unexplained. I have found a purple potion and gray cloak, which when picked up, were added to my inventory, but I have no idea what they're supposed to do for me. Eventually, they went away. The Help page only gives a list of game controls (that you cannot customize), and fails to explain the objects in the game at all. This is a serious omission—of what use is Help if it does not explain such things.

The worst feature is the fact that the monsters can get "on top" of you, where they dish out tons of damage, but you can't see them. This is incredibly frustrating, since all you can do is shoot blindly or run away at top speed, hoping you'll out-distance the monster, then turn around and blast him before he gets you. This is inexcusable. It's even worse that this is no rare event, but the monsters strive valiantly to achieve this position, so it was clearly desired by the game's designer. This feature, all by itself, would have ruined this game in my estimation. It means that game combat is not fun, but a chore.

The programming is well done, but there are a number of peculiar, seemingly purposeless features, such as the ability to "Stand Tall" which raises eye level (thus screwing up a number of the sprite images), but changes nothing in game-play.

The art is amateurish and simple. The colors chosen for the walls, for instance, are garishly irritating. The monstrous spiders are ludicrous. On the other hand, when you pass over an apple, the core remains behind—a humorous touch that works. Many parts of the game display an impish humor I found appealing, but the game as whole still frustrated and irritated me. It is a pity to see so much potential good going to waste because of a few flaws.

Clearly, Ken Silverman is a talented young man, but this game was designed by a 17-year-old and it shows. Still, it's free. I would recommend it only if you're absolutely crazed for another game like *Wolfenstein*.

## BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR

IBM PC, Dynamix

*Designer & director:* John Cutter

*Lead programmer:* Nels Bruckner

*Art director:* Mike McHugh

*Lead production artist:* Mark Vearrier

*Quality assurance manager:* Forrest Walker

*Original score:* Jan Paul Moorhead

"What makes men happy is liking what they are forced to do."

Claude Adrien HelvEtius

My first experience with *Betrayal at Krondor* was inauspicious. Upon trying to



*Betrayal at Krondor* (Dynamix)

load the game, I got a blank screen and a message, "insufficient memory." So I restarted my computer with a minimal configuration (not even a mouse) and got the same result. My computer's total memory is eight megabytes, sufficient for most games. I tried to call Sierra's technical support, but got only busy signals. Finally, I made a boot disk and was able to load the game, but I cannot help but feel put-upon. Using a boot disk is a hindrance to any game. Unfortunately, I fear that future games are going to require this more and more, as they stretch the boundaries of the machines they run on.

*Betrayal at Krondor* is a classically styled role-playing game, set in the universe of Raymond Feist's *Riftwar* novels, which I have never read. No doubt the game would hold greater attraction for fans of the series, so if you are a Raymond Feist junkie you may derive greater enjoyment from this game than I did.

Almost all the character images are digitized photographs. Nothing is inherently wrong with this, but I wish that they had used an artist to touch up the photos after they were scanned into the computer. All the images seem a little blurry. Moving around in the world is very slow. I did pick the maximum detail possible, but my computer is a fast 486! Even with this computer, the game seemed slow. By choosing lesser detail, I could speed up the game significantly, but I felt as though I was cheating myself by seeing less than everything possible. To be fair, I did eventually get used to the leisurely pace of the game.

In the past, Dynamix has been known for its fine simulations such as *A-10* and *Red Baron*. *Betrayal at Krondor*, though a role-playing game, has much of the feel of a simulation, with both the strengths and weaknesses this implies.

You wander through a 3-D world, full of



fine-looking trees, occasional houses, barns, and cornfields, and other such items. The dungeons are also 3-D, with well-rendered stone walls.

Every fight is tough to win, and you must camp out for several days afterward in order to heal. This isn't particularly fun, but at least it's realistic. Be careful to save frequently, because every once in a while you simply have bad luck in a fight, and someone (or everyone) is critically injured. You'll need to reload saved games often. There are lots of little discarded treasures scattered along your way, so you'll want to poke into every corner. Every hollow tree stump and abandoned house may hold something valuable. In addition, there are plenty of little plots along the way. Almost every village has some quest you can try to conquer.

Nonetheless, I was mind-numbingly frustrated with this game. One tale of woe should be sufficient as a word to the wise. In one town, I was asked to bring the local lord six suits of armor. I proceeded to head out and slay six bad guys (at great personal risk), fix up their armor, and haul it back to the lord. He told me not to come back until I had six suits of armor. I was left holding the bag. I suspect this was a simple bug, though I suppose it's possible that because my armor wasn't in perfect condition, he was simply choosing this indirect way of telling me so. This was not an isolated example. Almost every quest I

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went on, I either had insufficient data to solve, or once solved, the game did not recognize this fact and refrained from giving me any reward.

The designers, in a hare-brained attempt to make the game more realistic, have made the game hardly any fun at all. You must constantly be polishing your armor, keeping your swords sharp, inspecting any food you find to make sure it's not spoiled or poisoned, replacing your crossbow's bowstrings, and continually engaging in other such dull maintenance activities. In a sense, it is an accountant's look at the Middle Ages.

Some may enjoy this game for the fine 3-D world you play in, and the rather entertaining plot. More power to you.

#### DAY OF THE TENTACLE

\*\*\*\*

IBM PC, Lucasfilm

*Created and designed by:* Dave Grossman, Tim Schafer

*Programmed by:* Gwen Musengwa, Judith Lucero, Jonathan Ackley, Ron Baldwin

*Lead artist:* Peter Chan

*Music and sound:* Clint Bajakian, Peter

McConnell, Michael Z. Land

*Lead tester:* Jo Ashburn

*Day of the Tentacle* is a humorous graphic adventure. It is a sort of sequel to Lucasfilm's *Maniac Mansion*, and the earlier game is included in this one. (To play it, you must find Weird Ed's computer and actually boot up the game within the game!)

The graphics are in a stupendous cartoony style, and the music and sound effects are also excellent, if you are one of the fortunate few blessed with a sound card. On the CD-ROM version, every line spoken by the characters is digitized, which makes for quite an experience.

The evil Purple Tentacle plots to take over the world, and Bernard, along with his two roommates, Hoagie and Laverne, must try to stop him. Unfortunately, in the opening sequence Hoagie gets sent two hundred years into the past, while Laverne is stuck 200 years in the future. They must get back together again to save the world from Purple Tentacle.

The dialogue is hilarious and the game had me laughing out loud on several occasions. The tasks you must perform to win are typical for graphic adventures, but always quite funny. In most cases, it's possible to figure out what to do ahead of time simply by using your skull, so the game isn't just a matter of trying every single item on every single other item, although if your brain hurts too much (as mine did on several occasions) you may be reduced to trying this. Still, when a selection works, it's obvious in retrospect.

The interface is easy to use. Simply click on the command you wish to use, then click on the object to be used. If you don't select a command, a mouse left-click is always "walk to," while the right-click is a default command varying with the object



*Day of the Tentacle* (Lucasfilm)



selected (usually "look at," but not always).

I hesitate to say too much about the game itself, for fear I'll spoil some part of it for would-be players. If you like graphic adventures, this is one of the best. If you don't normally like graphic adventures, you'll probably like this one. If you hate graphic adventures, you'll hate this one, too, but get a friend to buy it, so you can see the opening sequence on his machine.

There is one problem with the game. It's too short. I don't mean that just because I liked it and wanted it to go on. It was too short compared with other graphic adventures I've played. An earlier Lucasfilm graphic adventure, *Loom*, was also much too short. Perhaps when a game is such tour-de-force in graphics (as was *Loom*, too), the company feels it can't expend a more money or time on the game. A longer game would, of course, require more art and sound. Still, I felt cheated somehow when I finished the game. I'd thought there would be more, and there wasn't. In a way, this is a sideways compliment of the game. I'd have been happy to pay \$20 more for the game if it could be twice as

long as a result (remember, twice as long for the game does not mean anywhere near twice as many graphics).

Go, Lucasfilm! Do this again, but do make the next game longer!

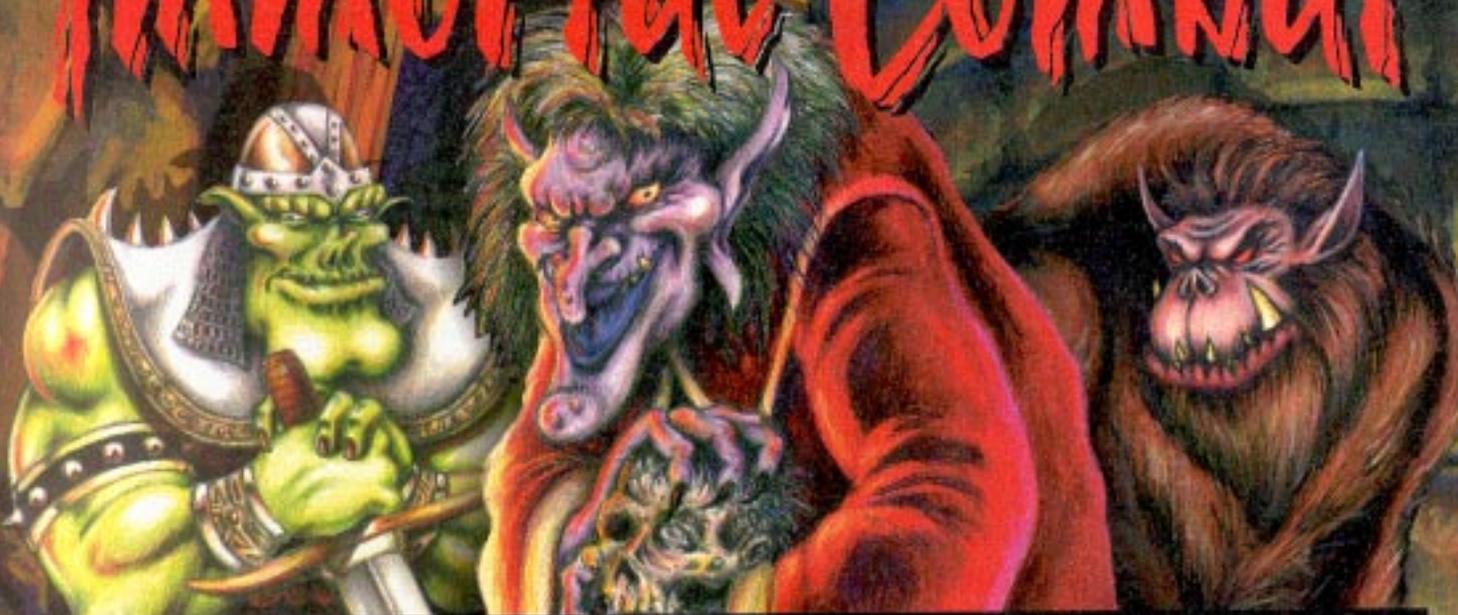


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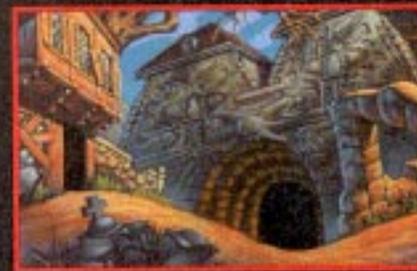
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# Role-playing reviews

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Photography by Charles Kohl

## Role-playing games' ratings

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

“I’ve got a *good* feeling about this. . . .”

It’s 1993. Why are we still playing West End Games’ STAR WARS\* game? It’s been 16 years since the original film, ten years since *Return of the Jedi*, and nine since the dismal *Ewok Adventure* TV movie, the last gasp of the official series. In the meantime, a host of film-related games have come and gone, among them the INDIANA JONES\* game by TSR, Mayfair’s BATMAN\* game, and FASA’s STAR TREK\* game.

So why did the STAR WARS system thrive where the others fell by the wayside? Marketing savvy, a favorable licensing arrangement, and perseverance all helped. But the main reason, I think, was that West End zeroed in on what made the films so appealing in the first place, then focused their products accordingly. Despite the ray guns and weird aliens, the *Star Wars* films weren’t science fiction at all, but a mosaic of fairy tales, comic books, war stories, and Saturday afternoon serials. The action came so fast and furious, and the effects were so visually dazzling, who cared if the robots talked like English butlers or the starships *whooshed* through soundless space?

By emphasizing the genre hodgepodge and sidestepping hard science, West End came up with a game that offered something to players of all persuasions. SF gamers got lightsabers and droids. Militarists got air wars and tank battles. (A tank’s a tank, even if it walks on legs.) There were Jedi Knights for super hero fans, and intrigue on a galactic scale for espionage aficionados. And for fantasy role-players, there was the Force (magic by any other name), and Yoda (a gnome if I’ve ever seen one). It was a remarkable effort, courtesy of Greg Costikyan, Curtis Smith, Ken Rolston, Eric Goldberg, Paul Murphy, Bill Slavicek, and Stephen Crane. (For more about the first generation of STAR WARS products, see DRAGON® issues #131 and #155.)

But after six years and a mountain of supplements, the STAR WARS game seemed to be reaching a creative dead end. The adventures were becoming routine, the sourcebooks repetitive. The system itself had sprung a few leaks, none of them major, but frustrating for players demanding precision. The game was due for an overhaul.

Rather than revisit the movies, West End wisely turned to Timothy Zahn’s novels for inspiration. Zahn’s books –*Heir to the Empire*, *Dark Force Rising*, and *The Last Command*, published by Bantam Books— not only breathed new life into the STAR WARS mythos but revitalized the game as well. I don’t want to spoil the fun for anyone who hasn’t read the novels, but suffice it to say, the power structure has been reshuffled and the galaxy opened up.

In the New Republic—the name given to the Zahn-inspired product line, set five years after the Battle of Endor—players are encouraged to explore an array of fresh settings, characters, and plot threads. No longer limited by the events of the films, referees are given remarkable freedom to reshape the galaxy just about any way they like. As a film fan and sentimental fool, I’ll always have a soft spot for the old STAR WARS products. But as a role-player who lusts for all the options he can get, I’m crazy about the new stuff.

### Second Edition STAR WARS\* game

176-page hardcover book  
West End Games \$25

*Design:* Bill Smith with Stephen Crane, Greg Farshtey, Greg Gorden, Bill Slavicek, and Ed Stark

*Editing:* Ed Stark

*Graphics:* John Paul Lona with Stephen Crane and Cathleen Hunter

*Illustrations:* John Paul Lona, Allen Nunis, and Mike Vilardi

*Cover:* Lucasfilm, Ltd.

First Edition STAR WARS (hereafter, SW I) was a delight, an inspired design that perfectly captured the spectacle and humor of the films. Even those who dismissed the STAR WARS films as old hat had to be disarmed by the game’s breezy approach. Who could resist a rulebook that included a two-page color ad for Galaxy Tours? (“Your four-week fantasy voyage begins on the remote, romantic desert world of Tatooine. . .”).

Aside from a few nips and tucks, Second Edition STAR WARS (SW II) serves up more of the same. The notable differences:

**It’s bigger.** SW I runs 144 pages, SW II has swollen to 176. There’s not much all-new material; for the most part, the old material has been reorganized and expanded. For instance, SW I features eight color plates, SW II has a dozen (including goofy ads for BioTech Artificial Intelligence and a concert by Sy Snootles and the Max Rebo Band).

**It covers more ground.** While SW I pretty much confined players to the time frame in the film trilogy, SW II concentrates on adventures occurring after the fall of the Empire (depicted in *Return of the Jedi*). Referees can base their campaigns on the events in the Zahn novels or create their own history. For traditionalists, the flexible SW II rules also allow for campaigns set in the era of the films.

**It’s better written.** Well, maybe not *better* exactly, but it’s certainly *friendlier*. Compare, for example, the explanations of character templates. From SW I: “There

are 24 character templates, printed on pages 123 through 138. Each describes a character who fits the *Star Wars* universe. It provides basic information for the character—the numbers you use when the character does something in the game—as well as background material. . . .” From SW II: “A character template is only an outline—a description of a *type* of person—so you’ll have to decide some things about her before you begin to play. The template gives the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the character, but most of these elements can be changed if they aren’t quite who you want to play. . . .” The leisurely style of SW II makes unfamiliar concepts easier to digest, vital for newcomers to the hobby who need all the reassurance they can get. Old timers may find the approach tedious, even juvenile, but they can skip the hand-holding and get right to the rules.

Rock solid to begin with, the SW I rules didn’t need much fiddling, and they survived the trip to SW II more or less intact. The template system, the game’s best feature, allows for instant character generation. Players choose their characters from a collection of stereotypes common to the *Star Wars* universe, such as Ewok Warrior, Gambler, and Wookie First Mate. The templates come complete with personality profiles, equipment packs, and a sample quote (Bounty Hunter: “He’d better not die. He’s worth a lot to me alive.”)

The templates also include ratings for six core attributes (Dexterity, Knowledge, Mechanical, Perception, Strength, and Technical) expressed as six-sided dice. The higher the number of dice, the stronger the attribute; for instance, the Ewok Warrior’s 2d6 Knowledge rating means he’s a dullard compared to the 5d6 Knowledge Cynical Scout. Each attribute rating also serves as a default value for a set of related skills. Knowledge Skills include Languages and Survival; a Cynical Scout has a better chance of surviving a monster-infested swamp than an Ewok.

After selecting a template, the player may adjust his character’s personality, add a few lines of physical description, and improve the PC’s abilities by splitting up 7d6 and adding one or two dice to any of his skills; an Ewok’s Languages skill might be boosted to 3d6, his Survival to 4d6, leaving 4d6 to distribute elsewhere.

Oddly, in one of the few instances where the original provided more for the money than the sequel, SW I had 24 templates, while SW II offered only 16. Gone are the Armchair Historian, the Mon Calamari, and the Pirate, admittedly expendable but still appealing; perhaps they’ll pop up in a future supplement.

But while the number of templates may

have shrunk, the number of skills has snowballed. To SW I's approximately 40 skills, SW II adds about three dozen, among them Archaic Guns, Business, and Armor Repair. As in SW I, an SW II character resolves an action by rolling the indicated number of dice for the relevant skill. He compares the result to the difficulty level set by the referee. Succeeding in a Very Easy task requires a roll of 5 or less, a Heroic task takes at least 31 (gulp!). Fussbudget referees may add difficulty modifiers if they like, but the rules correctly discourage this practice as a drag on the game's rip-roaring pace.

In critical situations, characters can call on the Force. By spending a Force Point, a PC temporarily doubles the die value of a particular skill; a 2d6 Survival skill becomes a 4d6 skill for one round or as long as it takes to complete a single task. While all SW I characters began with a single Force Point, certain SW II templates supply two. The extra-point advantage of these "Force Sensitive" types—such as the Young Jedi and the Alien Force Student—tends to be offset by lower attribute ratings. But it's an inconsequential difference in the long run, as any character can replenish his Force-Point supply by performing heroic actions.

A character lacking Force Points may call upon the Dark Side to save his neck, acquiring a Dark Side Point in the process. If he continues to accumulate Dark Side Points, he risks succumbing to evil and behaving like a bad guy until he repents. A more playable—and more elegant-option awards Dark Side PCs to the referee, who uses them as NPC villains from then on. The loopyest concept in the films, the Force receives a refreshingly straightforward treatment here—and it's still a lot of fun.

Combat follows the same general procedure as skill resolution, with characters making Shots and Dodges by rolling dice and comparing the results to the appropriate Difficulty Ratings. Armor, cover, and surprise may affect the outcome, though as elsewhere, nitpicking detail is discouraged. A chapter devoted to space travel simulates starship combat and interstellar travel with simple but satisfying rules. SW II uses a slightly different vehicle movement system than SW I, substituting numerical movement ratings (such as 2 and 7) for the old die-based speed codes (1D + 1 and 3D + 2). Conversion tables in the appendix show SW I players how to adapt their old vehicles. It's worth the effort; the new system makes it much easier to compute distances and travel times.

Flaws? There are a few. The lack of an index makes it hard to find specific rules. While familiarity with the Zahn novels isn't mandatory, the plot references scattered through the text may baffle the uninitiated. The handful of plot hooks give only a vague idea of what goes into a campaign. And what happened to the solo adventure from SW I?

**Evaluation:** Hardnosed players may

find the setting a little too corny, the characters a little too resilient. But they're supposed to be that way. *Star Wars*, the movie, elevated cartoon melodrama to high art, and STAR WARS, the game, follows suit. Anyone with even a passing interest in space opera, action-intensive RPGs, or, of course, Luke Skywalker and company should snap this up.

**Heir to the Empire Sourcebook** \* \* \* \*

144-page softcover book  
West End Games \$18  
Design: Bill Slavicsek  
Editing and development: Bill Smith  
Graphics: Stephen Crane and John Paul Lona  
Illustrations: Allen Nunis with Xeno Beckwith and Paul Daly  
Cover: Tom Jung

**Dark Force Rising Sourcebook** \* \* \*

144-page softcover book  
West End Games \$18  
Design: Bill Slavicsek  
Editing and development: Bill Smith  
Graphics: Stephen Crane and John Paul Lona  
Illustrations: Rob Caswell, John Paul Lona, and Mike Nielsen with Dana Knutson and Mike Vilardi  
Cover: Tom Jung

**Dark Empire Sourcebook** \* \* \*\*

126-page hardcover book with 16-page color insert  
West End Games \$25  
Design: Michael Allen Horne with Carol Hutchings  
Editing and development: Bill Smith  
Graphics: John Paul Lona  
Illustrations: Dave Dorman and Cam Kennedy  
Cover: Dave Dorman

With the meager amount of background in the Second Edition rulebook, I don't know how anyone other than Zahn himself could put together a credible New Republic campaign. These handsome sourcebooks—covering two of the three Zahn novels, with a comic book-related volume to tide us over until the trilogy wraps up—fill in the gaps for curious players and confused referees. All adhere to SW II standards, except for the first, *Heir to the Empire*, which slipped out before the Second Edition rules took effect. But since the sourcebooks minimize rules and statistics, all it takes is a few Speed Code conversions to send you on your way.

Essentially an essay collection, *Heir to the Empire* covers the characters, aliens, and settings introduced in the first novel of the trilogy. The opening chapter of the sourcebook gives an excellent overview of the Republic, beginning with the rise of President Palpatine and the early struggles

of the Resistance through the structuring of the Alliance Civil Government. Designer Bill Slavicsek presents status reports on Borsk Fey'lya, Mon Mothma (less robust since the Battle of Endor, but still feisty), and their comrades on the Inner Council. We're also re-introduced to old friends such as Han Solo (now a special operative of the Inner Council), Leia Organa Solo (mastering the lightsaber and the Force as a student of Luke), and Chewbacca (waiting to become the nanny for Han and Leia's yet-to-be-born twin offspring). Separate chapters address the history and major characters of the "Remnants of the Empire" (with updates on Grand Admiral Thrawn and the Stormtroopers) and the "Fringe" (the galactic back alleys between the New Republic and the Empire, home to rogues like Lando Calrissian). Slavicsek sorts it all into logical chunks, enabling the reader to untangle the complex relationships with ease. These chapters make an indispensable base for staging original adventures, even for players intimately familiar with the novel.

Less crucial, but still informative, are chapters on the Force, alien races, and planets. The discussion of the Force often belabors the obvious ("It is two sides of a single coin, a part of the natural order. It is with everyone, always, waiting patiently to be called upon. . ."), but once past the puffery, Slavicsek offers some interesting combat applications. Desperate Jedi, for example, can swallow hard and accept a Dark Side Point for the privilege of using *Force lightning* to zap opponents with energy bolts. The "Planets" chapter furnishes a glimpse at several intriguing worlds, such as Bimmisaari, covered by asaari trees, whose leaves sway of their own accord. But because each entry consists of only a few paragraphs, the chapter suggests more than it actually reveals; the planets deserve their own book. Likewise, the "Aliens" chapter needs more space to explain the Elomin, artistic humanoids with four horns on their heads, and the predatory Noghri, ruthless assassins who locate their targets by smell.

Since he didn't have room to adequately develop the planets and aliens, I wish Slavicsek would've set them aside and used the pages for an adventure or campaign outline. It's possible to recreate scenes from the novel using this material, but I would've preferred a collection of original scenarios or more tips on how to design them myself. It's a frustrating omission in an otherwise superb sourcebook.

*Dark Force Rising* follows the same approach as *Heir to the Empire*, perhaps a little too closely. It shares the format of its predecessor, right down to a virtually identical table of contents. Again, the background summaries are informative and enlightening, particularly the profiles of General Madine, Captain Virgilio, and the rest of the cast. And as in *Heir*, Slavicsek demonstrates a remarkable knack for sifting the significant from the trivial,

deftly shaping the STAR WARS mythos into compact essays.

But again, the slim chapters on planets and aliens aren't much use, and again, the absence of a developed adventure or campaign outline leaves referees out on a limb. Worse, there's an annoying information overlap with *Heir to the Empire*. Do we need the stats for Luke Skywalker a second time? More watery musings on the Force? And perhaps because it's based on the middle book of a trilogy, much of *Dark Force Rising* feels tentative and inclusive; there doesn't seem to be enough quality material to justify a 144-page book.

While waiting for the inevitable *Last Command* sourcebook, impatient players can mark time with *Dark Empire*, based on the Dark Horse Comics series by writer Tom Veitch and artist Cam Kennedy. Not officially part of the New Republic line, the *Dark Empire* events occur roughly a year after the events in the Zahn novels; the sourcebook more or less takes up where the comics leave off. I think I'm not too familiar with the comics, and the sourcebook introduction is less than crystal clear. To avoid confusion in the Swan house, I've declared that all adventures based on *Dark Empire* will take place in an alternate universe.

If, like me, you're remiss in your comics reading, rest assured that the *Dark Empire* sourcebook provides enough background

information to make the post-Zahn era understandable and playable. Once more, the die-hards of the Empire are up to no good, the rebel-types are facing hopeless odds, and the galaxy is verging on collapse. And once more, the sourcebook follows in the footsteps of *Heir to the Empire*, with chapters devoted to New Republic history, the Force, and another set of planets. The same criticisms apply to *Dark Empire* as to *Dark Force Rising*: too skimpy in spots, too much overlap. (Luke's stats show up again, as does another flabby overview of the Force.) But designer Michael Allen Horne enlivens the dreary sections by packing them with imaginative sidebars. Included are a transcript of the Academy expulsion proceedings against Cadet Mako Spince, an excerpt from Palpatine's *Book of Anger* describing the origin of Force Storms, and an eyewitness account of a brutal attack on Coruscant. Competently written and liberally illustrated with artwork from the comics, *Dark Empire* makes an engaging side trip for players on vacation from the New Republic.

**Evaluation:** I think consumers would've been better served if West End had waited until all three Zahn novels had been published, then produced a single sourcebook covering the entire trilogy. But nobody asked me, so we'll make do with this somewhat overstuffed series. *Heir to*

*the Empire* should be considered a core component of the New Republic line; it's to Second Edition STAR WARS\* as the FORGOTTEN REALMS® boxed set is to the AD&D® game. After that, proceed with caution. STAR WARS fanatics will get their money's worth with *Dark Force Rising* and *Dark Empire*, but players on a budget can probably get along without either.

### The Politics of Contraband \* \*

64-page softcover book  
West End Games \$10  
Design: Paul Arden Lidberg, Brian J. Murphy, Gary Haynes, William Olmesdahl, and Eric S. Trautmann  
Editing and development: Bill Smith  
Graphics: John Paul Lona  
Illustrations: Tim Eldred  
Cover: Lucasfilm, Ltd.

### Twin Stars of Kira \*\*\*

96-page softcover book  
West End Games \$15  
Design: Stephen Crane, Dave Marron, John Terra, Richard Clark, Barbara Clark, Janelle Keberle, Michael Horne, Todd Quigley, Ed Stark, Bill Smith, and Stewart Warley  
Editing and development: Greg Farshtey  
Graphics: Cathleen Hunter  
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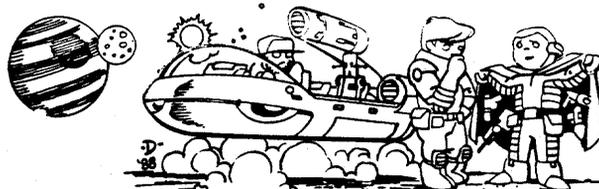
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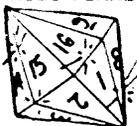
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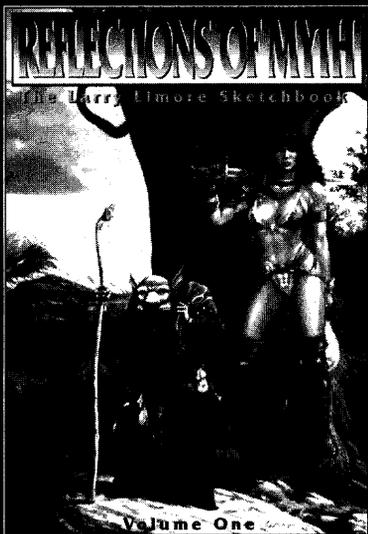
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## Supernova

96-page softcover book  
West End Games \$15  
Design: Bill Olmesdahl, Stewart V. Werley,  
Brian Murphy, Steven H. Lorenz, and  
Ivan Garczynski  
Editing and development: Greg Farshtey  
Graphics: Cathleen Hunter  
Illustrations: Paul Daly  
Cover: Lucasfilm, Ltd.

SW I adventures took their cues from the movies, with plots that whizzed along like roller coasters, often at the expense of logic and character development. SW II adventures also crackle with activity; referees are encouraged to "fade out" when the story lulls, then "fade in" when the action picks up. The designers aren't above an occasional coincidence or opportune discovery to nudge the PCs in the right direction, but it's all in the name of a good time, and certainly true to the spirit of the source material. Many scenarios begin with scripted dialog for the players to read aloud. It's a clever method for setting the stage, although I sometimes feel like an idiot when reciting my lines. (First Character: "We've really earned this break. I think we should go kick back a few beverages and plot our next actions." Second Character: "Why don't we just wait for fate to rear its ugly head again. Seems to happen all the time to us.")

The initial New Republic offerings are collections of short adventures, which have the advantage of showcasing a variety of styles but also require designers to develop a handful of concepts in a few pages. *The Politics of Contraband*, an anthology of smuggler-based scenarios, misses more than it hits, due to flat characters (corrupt officials, grizzled pilots), ordinary plots (breaking-and-enterings, escort missions), and dull settings (enough already with the exotic barrooms). The best of the bunch, Eric Trautmann's "Easy Money" manages some thrills, thanks to an ornery monster resembling a cross between a crocodile and a mud puddle. But so-so editing and development sink even the most promising ideas. Typos abound: "The character [sic] have just delivered a cargo," "... four starfighters are headed straight you [sic] in attack posture [sic]." The luxury liner featured in "The Art of Betrayal" needs a detailed blueprint. Staging advice runs along the lines of "This battle should be tense and dramatic. . ."

*Twin Stars of Kira* fares better, boasting a sharper design team and a stronger premise. The seven adventures take place along the Harrin and Enarc trade routes, a section of space broad enough to accommodate space pirates, a secret Imperial base, and an intergalactic zoo. Dave Maron's "The Package" opens the book with a bang, featuring a brief but memorable encounter with an alien fuzball who hires the PCs to pick up and deliver a bundle of mysterious crates. Michael Horne's *For a Few Kilotons More* puts an

interesting twist on the New Republic setting, while Todd Quigley's *Treasure Hunt* neatly combines lowbrow humor, nail-biting combat, and annoying aliens. Though the quality of the adventures takes a dip near the end, the keepers easily outnumber the clinkers.

Technically, the *Supernova* collection isn't part of the New Republic line. But it's too good to pass up (and a veteran referee ought to be able to adapt the adventures to any era without breaking a sweat). Grimmer than the usual STAR WARS fare, *Supernova* takes place in Demophon, a system threatened by a sun about to explode. The adventures focus on the various crises faced by a population on the brink of extinction. "Infiltration," by Stewart Werley, poses a tough ethical question as the PCs weigh the fate of a cargo of political refugees. Ivan Garczynski's "The Evacuation of Jatee" presents a tense stand-off on a mining planetoid with snaky aliens slithering in the background. In Bill Olmesdahl's "The Beginning of the End," the PCs must track down a Rebel spy on a planet besieged by looters and low-lives. While some encounters may be too dangerous for newcomers-inexperienced PCs will have a tough time surviving "The Beginning of the End" - and the bleak subtext may be jarring, this is an exceptional collection, made to order for STAR WARS players who've had their fill of whimsy.

**Evaluation:** West End has yet to produce a New Republic adventure that scales the heights of SW I's *Tatooine Manhunt* or *Scavenger Hunt*. And I'm still waiting for the book-length adventures, since it takes an epic to do justice to the source material. Meanwhile, SW II players can get their feet wet with any of these anthologies; *Twin Stars of Kira* makes a good choice for first-timers, *Supernova* for sophisticates. Consider them appetizers for the main course yet to come.

## Short and sweet

While we're at it, let's run down the first batch of Second Edition STAR WARS accessories, none essential, but all worth a look.

*Wanted by Cracken* (West End Games, \$15), designed by Louis J. Prospero with Greg Farshtey and Bill Smith, collects about 50 ready-to-go villains suitable for wreaking havoc in published adventures (as guest stars) or original scenarios (as featured players). The profiles, allegedly written by New Republic General Airen Cracken, provide complete statistics, personality notes, and in some instances combat strategies and bases of operations. While more variety would've been welcome—every other page seems to feature a scavenger or pirate—several of these bad apples are memorably rotten. Grello Farnor, a renegade trader from Alderaan, blows up cargo ships for fun, while the axe-wielding Stalrus, a Riorian mass murderer, makes Darth Vader look like Mother Teresa. *Wanted by Cracken* is

fairly useless for campaigns set in the time period of the films, since the villains derive from the Zahn trilogy and don't translate well to other eras. New Republic referees, however, should find the book to be a handy source of ideas.

John Terra's *Planets of the Galaxy: Volume Two* (West End Games, \$13) continues in the same vein as the previous volume, compiling data about several unusual planets. The entries include geographic details (supplemented by stark but functional maps), descriptions of the native races, and—new to this volume—a "System Datafile" that represents information available in the ship's computer. (Visitors to Ergeshui are warned to use breathing apparatus to survive the Type III atmosphere.) Terra supplies a generous amount of role-playing tips, adventure ideas, and, best of all, inventive aliens. The Ee, for instance, resemble tan earthworms who use their mental powers to weave threads of metal into solar-powered machines. If I could only afford a single STAR WARS accessory, I'd spring for this one.

Like its predecessors, the *Galaxy Guide 8: Scouts* (West End Games, \$15) discusses at length a single facet of the STAR WARS universe, this time the intrepid explorers who seek out unknown planets and make first contact with whatever happens to be crawling around. Designers Bill Olmesdahl and Bill Smith devote an interesting chapter to ship design and also come up with an okay adventure about a barren world of warrior monks. But overall, it's a disappointing effort. The chapter on scout bases barely fills two pages, the guidelines for creating alien species lean too heavily on die-rolls, and the gamemastering tips favor generalities over specifics. (Is the table for random adventure themes—Survival, Exploration/Survey, and so on—intended for the imagination impaired?) Skip this one.

Finally, the *Second Edition Gamemaster Screen* (West End Games, \$10) gathers all the relevant charts from the rulebook and displays them on four two-panel fold-outs. For good measure, Bill Olmesdahl adds 48 pages of helpful advice for creating various types of adventures, such as mysteries and quests. Like all screens, this is recommended mainly for referees too inept to make their own or too lazy to update the first version. For those who don't plan to buy a copy, note that the next to last panel contains a correction for page 175 of the Second Edition rules: the base Dexterity for the Young Jedi should be 3D, not 2D. You're welcome.

Rick Swan has worked as a rock musician, suicide intervention counselor, and newspaper publisher. He now writes full-time. Contact him at 2620 30th Street, Des Moines, IA 50310. A self-addressed stamped envelope increases the chance of a response.

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Rider's Hobby	Grand Rapids	MI	Games People Play	W. Valley City	UT
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# Romancing *the* Stoneskin



# “Forum” readers respond to the “stoneskin threat” in AD&D® games

Compiled by the editors

***In response to Robert J. Letts’ “Forum” letter in DRAGON® issue #189, in which he described the difficulties his AD&D® campaign was experiencing because of the use of one spell by the player characters, a large volume of mail was received at our offices. Readers from around the world came up with comments and solutions to the problem. We’ve assembled some of the most interesting letters here; we hope Dungeon Masters everywhere will find much of use here for their campaigns.***

***To reiterate, the player characters in Letts’ group included two 7th-level wizards, each of whom had access to the stoneskin spell. As a result of their over-use of this spell, the whole PC group became indestructible, shrugging off attacks by bandits and drow warriors alike.***

***The responses we received struck us as especially clever and varied. Often a point was restated by other writers, who added twists to it or expanded it, giving yet more options. And, as one writer pointed out, the suggestions given here can be used to control situations in which other spells are overused or abused. This is a rich article indeed!***

***We congratulate everyone who responded. Robert Letts asked for opinions, comments, and solutions, and here they are:***

This letter extends to Robert J. Letts a few possible solutions to his campaign’s *stoneskin* problem.

First, I assume that the offending PC wizards are not transmuters, and therefore unable to memorize more than one *stoneskin* at a time. Further, let’s assume an average party size of six members. Spending 40 minutes to memorize the spell, then, each wizard would have to spend 120 minutes of game time to protect each PC with *stoneskin*.

A lot can happen in two hours; if the party’s rest period is interrupted, obviously not everyone will gain the spell’s invulnerability benefit. If either of the wizards is incapacitated, there will be few or no *stoneskins* for anyone.

Since the party seems to cast multiple *stoneskin* spells only during rest periods, steps should be taken to insure that the PCs rest less often. As the party’s need for rest is often presented by waning hit points or a lack of low-level spells, supplying the PCs with a few potions of *healing* or low-level spell scrolls might remove their need to stop frequently. Of course, if the party is racing against the clock during a particular quest, it might not have the time to rest at all.

Chipping away at the spell’s protective value by attrition is a valid option, but the party need not be attacked by “hordes of bandits” for this

to work. The spell description simply states that immunity against attacks “by cut, blow, projectile, or the like” is provided. The last category—“or the like”—is subject to interpretation. For example, falling damage could be included, as could being hit by a rockfall, a torrent of large hailstones, or a mechanical trap.

Since any attack cuts away at the spell’s duration, the DM has tremendous latitude in this respect. Some creatures—behir, carrion crawlers, chimerae, trolls, and sahuagin, for example—will quickly negate the *stoneskin* through their multiple attacks per round. A vampire cactus or needleman will dispel a *stoneskin* just as fast.

Throwing ineffective attacks against PCs with *stoneskins* is just as viable an option. Imagine a party of *stoneskinned* PCs being ambushed by kobolds with blowguns; it won’t be long before the *stoneskins* fade. Then the DM can usher in the drow warriors or undead warrior lords. The PCs will quickly realize, to their chagrin, that the *stoneskins* were wasted.

Beyond the above, there are other, more manipulative solutions, though DMs are encouraged to adopt the following methods with care—they are bound to cause dissent, since each necessitates a retroactive ruling.

The spell’s duration may be changed to two rounds per level of the caster, regardless of whether the recipient is attacked or not, for example. This would also prevent every member in the party from receiving *stoneskin*, since the spell’s duration would expire before a wizard could memorize and re-cast it.

If the campaign makes use of the optional material component rules for spell-casting, it may be necessary for the powdered diamond used in *stoneskin* to have a minimum value—say, 500-1,000 gp or more. Unless the PCs are loaded with cash, no more *stoneskin* for everyone.

Another option is to reduce the number of attacks the *stoneskin* will negate. As the rules read, *stoneskin* is effective against 1d4 attacks, plus one attack per two levels of the caster. A reasonable benefit reduction rule might be to ignore the variable 1d4 attacks or the one attack per two caster levels.

Of course, a character protected by *stoneskin* might also have to deal with inconvenient side effects. It may be that *stoneskinned* skin is heavy and rigid, providing protection at the cost of restricted movement or a lowered Dexterity. Movement rates might be cut by one-third, and Dexterity scores could be lowered by 1d3. Rogues with *stoneskin* would therefore receive penalties to their thieving abilities, and no Jumping, Mountaineering, Running, Tightrope Walking, or Tumbling nonweapon proficiencies could be attempted by any class.

It may even be that the PCs, who have been so frequently altered by the *stoneskin*, have cultivated some physiological immunity to the spell’s temporary protection in exchange for some permanent effect. This may be a tad extreme, but it could happen (after all, people can develop immunity to a certain poison by ingesting small quantities of the toxin frequently). In

game terms, this immunity might cause the *stoneskin* to be ineffective, but the would-be recipient might enjoy a permanent +1 or +2 AC bonus (still making him vulnerable to attack, but giving him a bonus nonetheless).

The above suggestions are just that—suggestions. They haven’t been playtested, nor do they necessarily reflect the style of Letts’ individual campaign. But, like any other aspect of the game, *stoneskin* must mesh with the campaign’s unique balance. If this is not the case, the DM is free to implement any plausible contingency to reestablish campaign balance, so long as it is consistent, fair, and reasonable to the players.

Erin D. Smale  
Hellertown PA

I am writing in response to Robert J. Letts’ letter in issue #189. . . . At any rate, here are some flaws with this [*stoneskin*] tactic that you, as the DM, should be able to exploit:

1. *Stoneskin* does not work against magic. Every magical attack against a creature affected by *stoneskin* not only has its full normal effect (the *Player’s Handbook*, page 163, states that “magical attacks from such spells as *fireball*, *magic missile*, *lightning bolt*, and so forth have their normal effects.”), but eliminates one of the creature’s protected attacks! *Magic missile* spells from high-level casters are excellent, because each individual missile eliminates one protected attack. The PCs might not laugh so hard at drow if their precious *stoneskin* protection is eroded away by volleys of *magic missiles* from the drow fighter/mages. Note also that any creature with the spellcraft nonweapon proficiency (including any NPC wizard) will recognize the effect of a *stoneskin* spell as soon as he sees swords and arrows bouncing off his enemies, and that person will know how to deal with it.

2. *Stoneskin* is a fourth-level spell. These PCs are seventh-level, which means that in the worst case (if both are specialist transmuters), they can cast only four *stoneskin* spells during a given rest period. I doubt that there are only four people in the party, so likely everyone cannot have a *stoneskin* spell “refreshed” at every rest period. Be sure to enforce this. Since it is likely that the wizards are both mages or other specialists, it is probable that only two *stoneskin* spells can be cast in a given rest period, intensifying this problem. Further, if the wizards insist on always taking *stoneskin* as their fourth-level spells, they are losing the opportunity to memorize and cast other fourth-level spells. Imagine your glee as you hear this exchange:

Priest: “I pick up the unholy book of Myrkul and read it.”

Fighter: “You idiot!”

DM: “He seems to be suffering from some sort of acute and horrible magical disease!”

Fighter: “Quick! Cast remove curse!”

Mages (in unison): “Uh oh.”

I think you get the point. I would also like to point out that page 81 of the *PH* states that in order to memorize spells, “a wizard must have a

clear head gained from a restful night's sleep." A person can only have eight hours (or one night) of "restful sleep" in any given 24 hours, so a wizard can memorize spells only once a day. While you did not say anything, I suspect your players have been abusing this rule by "recharging" and casting multiple *stoneskin* spells. If so, enforce this rule rigidly.

3. Who says they should get so many *rest periods*? It sounds like you're allowing them to rest after every major encounter, rememorize spells and replace their *stoneskin* spells. Just because the PCs unroll their sleeping bags doesn't mean they should have a restful night's sleep. Wandering monsters can wreak havoc with the best-laid plans, and any night in which a wizard must wake up and engage in serious combat should not count as "restful."

4. Any attack at all reduces the affected creature's resistance by one. This occurs "regardless of attack rolls" (PH, page 163), so every attack against an affected character whittles away his protection, even if it would have missed normally. Some monsters get three or more attacks a round, which can degrade this spell's effectiveness substantially.

5. The spell protects only against attacks by "cut, blow, projectile, or the like." Acid, burning oil, cold, and electricity work perfectly normally against a protected creature and eliminate attacks, too! Most importantly, those drow with the poison-tipped crossbow bolts still represent a grave threat: if the poison works as a contact poison, any bolt that hits will deliver a normal poison attack. For that matter, the spell gives only "virtual immunity" to weapon attacks. It would be reasonable to say that while a poisoned bolt does not do any hit-point damage, it still leaves a tiny scratch or cut, through which the poison can enter the bloodstream.

6. Turnabout is fair play. NPC wizards are just as likely to use the spell on all of their companions before a large battle. Also, if the party's opponents realize that the PCs are using this spell, the NPCs need only concentrate all of their attacks on one person. This quickly overcomes the spell and can lead to serious injuries. Once that character is out of the way, the NPCs move on to the next PC, and so on.

7. One arrow is one attack. You mentioned that "surprise attacks by marauding brigands are cynically giggled at" by your players. Forty bandits with short bows can eliminate all of the protection on five individuals protected by *stoneskin*, and injure or kill each of them, in one round. Remember, even arrows that miss take away a level of protection, and 40 archers can shoot 80 arrows in one round. They won't be laughing once you turn the PCs into pin cushions!

8. News travels quickly. As the PCs use this tactic for a long time period, other people will learn of it. Intelligent monsters will prepare for your group, if they know the group is approaching. Other parties will emulate the tactic, resulting in more encounters with bulletproof NPCs. Honorable people such as knights, paladins, and some priests may well feel that this sort of conduct is cowardly, and might refuse to associate with the characters. In fact, if any of the PCs are paladins, knights, priests, or followers of a god who values honor (e.g., Tyr, Torm, and Helm) or has another reason for not liking the constant use of the spell (e.g., Ilmater or Tempus), you may consider penalizing the PCs' experience awards if they do not refuse the spell except in dire emergencies.

I hope this letter helps you keep these troublesome players in line.

Scott Isaacs  
Calgary, Alberta

This is in response to Robert J. Letts' "Forum" letter. Two general groups of solutions present themselves. Rather than restrict a player's freedom of action, both would change the mechanics of the spell itself.

First, restrictions can be placed on how the spell works. For example, make the spell non-permanent, losing one immunity every four hours (thus becoming useless after about one day). Or, set a limit to the damage that can be absorbed; perhaps really powerful attacks also use up multiple immunities.

However, the second solution is, in my opinion, by far the better (and by far the least arbitrary). Simply break out a copy of the *Unearthed Arcana* (page 57) and use the AD&D 1st Edition game's *stoneskin*, which only stops one attack or attack routine (like a claw/claw/bite). If your half-dozen or so players are then beset by a half-dozen or so trolls, everyone has about one round of comparative safety. More so than presently, the 1st Edition version of this spell is exactly what it's supposed to be: an edge, and little more. Best of luck.

Jason Papadopoulos  
Olney MD

Mr. Letts' letter (issue #189) really opened my eyes to the innate problems with the use of the *stoneskin* spell. After reading it, I went through the Player's Handbook, and noted that other spells (such as invisibility and *armor*) could also be misused in this way, though not as flagrantly as the *stoneskin* spell. Here are solutions I have come up with for this problem:

1. Simply assign a limited duration to the spell in question (maybe it was changed during the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign's Avatar crisis, or another magical catastrophe).

2. According to the spell description, diamond dust is needed as a component. It seems that the PCs have been using up diamonds at a great rate. This should be jacking up the price of diamonds considerably—two, five, or even 10 times the original cost. And what if the mines supplying diamonds were shut down or taken over by a force from the Underdark, a dwarven rebellion, or a wizard needing great amounts of the precious stone for an experiment? The PCs must try to regain control of these mines, while carefully hoarding what little diamond dust they still possess.

3. If these tactics don't work, say that only a mage has the proper training to hold the magical energy of a spell for any great length of time. Any other character who has the same long-term spell cast on him each day for more than a week undergoes some sort of physical discomfort. Maybe the character's skin turns gray or loses Dexterity as his joints stiffen due to the influences of the *stoneskin*. Maybe that thief who keeps receiving *invisibility* spells starts to blink in and out of visibility, causing problems interacting with those he meets ("That little rogue just tried to turn himself invisible! Grab him!")

Daniel Harms  
Somerset KY

In issue #189, Robert J. Letts mentioned some problems he is having with the spell *stoneskin* in his campaign and asked for solutions. In my own campaign, I have had similar difficulties, which I dealt with as follows:

1. I charge the PCs 1,000 gp to 5,000 gp for the material component per casting.

2. The first time the spell is cast on someone, it provides the listed number of protections from physical attacks (i.e., 1d4 + 1 per two levels of the caster). Additional castings, however, provide only one such protection each.

3. The spell is intended to protect against attacks only and provides no protection vs. spells, fire, acid, other non-combat-based damage (e.g., from falling, being caught in an avalanche, etc.), undead special attacks (paralysis, level draining, etc.), or anything similar to any of the above. The PCs still lose a protection each time something of the sort happens, perhaps several if (for example) the PCs are hit by several falling rocks.

4. In my campaign, we use a critical attack table for natural 20 rolls. Each critical attack eliminates 2-4 *stoneskin* protections; if it takes four of them off, the PC takes damage as well, in spite of the *stoneskin* protections.

5. Magical weapons and the like do damage equal to the magical damage bonus of the weapon at the very least, even to *stoneskin* protected individuals.

This is how I've dealt with the unbalancing aspects of the spell. It doesn't matter if the core rules don't say anything about these rules; after all, it says on page 7 of the AD&D 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide* to "break the rules . . . if doing so improves your game." And don't forget the DM's motto: "My world, my way."

Mae Tanner  
Juneau AK

In reply to the Forum letter by Robert J. Letts (DRAGON issue #189): Don't worry, Robert! Your adept and inventive wizards can be subjugated.

The spell *stoneskin* is from the school of alteration, and wizards who cast too many alteration spells are subject to a number of debilitating afflictions. These afflictions can be found in *The Complete Wizard's Handbook* (PHBR 4, pages 109-112). Often the sting from one of these afflictions will turn a wizard's head and keep him from casting his spells habitually.

Also, *stoneskin* spells require two of the hardest spell components to acquire. Diamond dust, although rare, can be found in most dungeon treasure chests. Granite dust is not as easily found. Only a few mountain chains in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting contain this valuable substance. Because the rock is so hard, it must be quarried by giants, and giants can be difficult to deal with (better a hoard of giants than a marauding band of brigands to curtail a wizard looking for one of his most important spell components). I suggest the mountain chain between Eastern Shaar and Raurin (as per the FORGOTTEN REALMS *Atlas*, pages 10-11). In this part of the Realms, the region and its people can be very harsh. This area also holds some of Abeir-Toril's oldest history and greatest ancient secrets (as per the *Old Empires* setting). It's a magnificent place for a campaign.

If these two problem-solvers do not work out for you, it is time for old reliable: Mystra, goddess of magic, who sends an avatar to investigate the wizards' misuse of the protection sphere. A *feeblesmind* spell, cast along with a *permanency* spell, can generate one explosive campaign. This teaches the wizard that spells come from more than straight science.

I hope this may help to solve your dilemma. Well met.

"The Baron"  
Boynton Beach FL

Have the PCs' opponents use some tactics. Even the dimmest creatures change tactics (or at least retreat) when they see attacks have no effect. As small as kobolds are, I figure eight could surround and attack each of your PCs at once. Or what about a horde of normal rats? Smarter creatures use their heads. Giants throw rocks before engaging in melee. Humans, demihumans, and humanoids alike nearly always use

spellcraft and ranged weapons before melee whenever possible.

A dragon might use its breath, grab a PC or two, then drop him from 1,000' up, or whip up a really nasty wind storm with its wings. Think of it: wings capable of lifting a dragon, used instead to propel sand, glass, rock, or even its own treasure. That would exhaust the *stoneskin* spell, still inflict damage, blind your PCs, knock them back a few feet, and be a proper introduction to one of the most destructive forces in the universe—an angry dragon.

Also, use more mental puzzles — *stoneskin* won't help the PCs solve a mystery.

Jason A. Goode  
No address

The financial gap: Are the wizards paying the cost of the diamond dust out of their own funds? Are the other characters reimbursing the wizards for the cost of the diamond dust? How much income do the PCs have each game year? Don't the jewelers or the apothecaries ever run out of diamond dust?

Our campaign settled on the value of a pinch of diamond dust needed for the *stoneskin* spell as 1,000 gp, after comparing this spell to the *wall of force* spell, which needs a pinch of diamond dust worth 5,000 gp. *Aurora's Whole Realms Catalog* gave a suggested price of 150 gp for a 1/8th-carat diamond, so a crushed 7/8th-carat diamond would provide enough dust for one *stoneskin*.

If Mr. Letts' players insist on casting this spell willy-nilly, perhaps they should find a diamond mine, work it, and try to hold it against all comers.

Are none of the opponents able to cast spells such as *charm person*, *charm monster*, *hold person*, or *hold monster* at the party? Is none of the opposition able to cast a *dispel magic* spell? Are none of the monsters able to cast a slow spell against the party or a *haste* spell on those monsters who do melee combat against the PCs?

Some monster attacks are unaffected by the *stoneskin* spell:

1. the gaze attack of a vampire, medusa, or basilisk;
3. the fear effect of a mummy;
4. the shock of seeing a ghost;
5. the *magic jar* attempt by a ghost;
6. the stench of a ghastr or troglodyte;
7. the song of a harpy; and
8. the breath of a dragon.

The alternative spells gap: If these players are using *stoneskin* as their major fourth-level spell, then Mr. Letts should equip any eligible monster with the *minor globe of invulnerability* spell. With this spell, the monsters can rain spells upon the party while the party's spells bounce off the globe.

In conclusion, it is no big deal if players try to overuse the *stoneskin* spell, because the following three events will happen:

1. They will bankrupt themselves and thus be unable to afford casting *stoneskin*;
2. The local thieves will loot their diamond-dust stockpile or the caravan with the new diamond-dust shipment; or
3. The weak monsters will be replaced by smarter, more cunning monsters who will fight, retreat, regroup, return, and trash the party.

Thomas B. Knoedler  
Springfield IL

Even with a lack of magic powers, this spell can be overcome. Brigands could use lassos and hooked or tarred nets to entangle the party. Poisonous gases or contact poison would render the party unconscious.

A devious solution would be to have one or

more of the nonmagic-using PCs feel a stiffening sensation while the spell is in effect. After a few more castings of *stoneskin* on this person, he would be turned to stone. Any subsequent castings on him (once he is restored to flesh) would petrify the character again. Your explanation, if you felt you *had* to give one, would be that a build-up of residual magical radiation from the excessive castings had an adverse effect on the person's DNA.

Mark Macedo  
Fresno CA

According to the *Wilderness Survival Guide*, hail will remove all *stoneskins*, so the debris from a cave-in should do likewise. Going by this logic, a cat-o-nine-tails will no doubt hit a character several times, each hit counting as one physical attack and removing one *stoneskin*. Monsters may carry darts (three attacks per round when thrown) for the specific purpose of removing *stoneskins*. My players promptly invented "anti-stoneskin" pouches full of pebbles which mimic these effects.

To give my "single, final, most powerful undead guardian" a chance (and he's usually very large, too), I have ruled that any physical attack which hits half the character's body takes away half the *stoneskins*, and any attack which hits more than half of the character's body takes them ALL away (but inflicts no damage). Thus, my huge guardian's fist will take out half the *stoneskins*, and a fall from several feet in the air will take away all the character's *stoneskins* (unless he landed on his feet).

Michael Tresca  
No address

I read the letter about the party with *stoneskins* with a bit of amusement. I made the mistake once of putting my players up against a party of NPCs that were equipped with that spell. It was probably one of my greatest mistakes. Having found what a fantastic defensive spell *stoneskin* was, my adventurers immediately sought it out and stockpiled on components. My campaigns have not been the same since.

As was pointed out, once a party is equipped with this spell, normal attacks are initially easily ignored. I have had to develop a number of ways to deal with this spell in order to prevent it from causing my campaigns to become lopsided.

First off, I feel that if this spell is available to the group, don't try to take it away. If the party doesn't have it yet, you don't have to make it available. This is easy if the group is in a remote area where spells are hard to come by. If your group gets to a city where spells are easily found, you may want to make it difficult but not impossible to find the *stoneskin* spell. When the PCs do get hold of it, you need to make some adjustments to your battle tactics to compensate for this.

The first thing that I did to even things out in my campaigns was to increase the number of monsters appearing in random encounters. This works especially well with smaller creatures such as giant ants, rats, spiders, and the like. With creatures such as these, I would often double the amount appearing. Be careful not to overdo it, though. You're not trying to kill the PCs off; just make the battles more exciting. You may want to start off by increasing the number of opponents gradually to see what your group can handle. Sooner or later, you will find the point at which the battle becomes serious enough that the *stoneskins* now appear a necessity and not a luxury.

When working with larger monsters and increasing the number appearing is unreasonable,

I recommend increasing the number of hit points the creatures have. I have all my AD&D game information on computer and use the computer as my combat sheet. I have it set to calculate the monster's hit points by taking the number of hit dice and multiplying it by eight. Any pluses a creature has are added to each hit die, so that a 5+5-HD creature would have 65 hp. I know that at first this may sound a bit unreasonable, but I have found that with the changes made in the AD&D 2nd Edition game, fighters are more powerful and have considerably more bonuses to their attacks than in the AD&D 1st Edition game. Any party equipped with *stoneskins* that has two or more fighters specialized in any one fighting style and any single weapon can inflict a tremendous amount of damage in a single round (even if the fighters have no bonuses from Strength).

Rick Hood  
Fresno CA

As stated in the spell description, the spell makes the mage immune to all physical attacks. This includes any/all touch spells that require a to-hit roll. During combat, friendly clerics trying to touch a protected PC with a healing spell (hit AC 10 to touch) should miss, and the *stoneskin* should block one less attack.

If a protected PC is currently casting a spell and is attacked, we still make a to-hit roll. If the PC would have normally been hit without the *stoneskin*, the attack still does no damage, but interrupts the spell-caster and ruins the spell.

John Gartner III  
Gaithersburg MD

While [in the *Realms*] a dead magic zone usually can be detected by the headaches that spell-casters get, wild magic zones give no warning at all. You might want to be real careful where you camp out when you cast those *stoneskins*. You can either use the table provided in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures* book, or you can make up something insidious and irreversible on your own.

The most evil stroke of all: *Stoneskin* does not protect items carried or clothing worn from the ravages of outside forces. The name of the spell is "stone skin," after all. Your party might survive falling off the cliff or being crushed by large stones, and they might walk through a non-magical conflagration with impunity, but that doesn't mean that their gear will make it. Specifically, I direct your attention to the Item saving throw table. You may not want to kill your characters, but you can certainly make them wish they were dead.

Peter B. Sears  
Lexington KY

Nowhere in the rules does it say that attacks on a *stoneskin*-protected creature have to be successful in order to count against the 1d4-plus-one-per-two-levels limit. On the contrary, according to the description of the spell, "[a]n attacking griffon would reduce the protection by three each round." This seems to imply that attacks do not have to hit in order to reduce protection from *stoneskin*, which is in fact the ruling in the campaigns that I know of. However, if you're feeling nice, you could rule that any *stoneskin*-reducing attacks should hit AC 10 (modified for Dexterity and magic) in order to get rid of the protection.

Soren Thustrup  
Copenhagen, Denmark

Even after the PCs are victorious in battle, you can arrange it so they don't have enough time to rest and regain the *stoneskin* spell between

encounters. A sense of urgency can be integrated into the campaign by using any number of plot devices which force the players to think and act rather than merely rely on their characters' spells. A good example of this may be found in TSR's AD&D® module C1 *The Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan*. In this particular adventure, the players have a limited amount of time to find their way out of a ruin before they become asphyxiated by a poisonous gas.

Timothy J. Pudoff  
La Mesa CA

Attrition is probably one of your best options. A person specialized in darts, for example, could take out a *stoneskin* in two rounds (if he wins surprise, he might even live to tell about it). A pit trap (with spikes) might do the job, or a spear or darts trap. Have an evil character throw a vial of acid at your PCs (the vital counts as a physical blow, and the acid causes damage!).

J. R. Katzman  
Bristol CT

Let me say first off that I have had exactly the same problem as Robert J. Letts, not only with *stoneskin* but also with several other aspects of the AD&D game. I think it is a matter of individuality whether certain things will work or not within the confines of your campaign. I stay with the philosophy that has been presented since the beginning of AD&D gaming: these rules are *guidelines* and should be changed if they will work better another way. I have had trouble not only with spells, but also with other rules, and my group and I have changed them and fleshed them out until we felt comfortable with them. (Actually, as DM, it was quite often what I felt comfortable with. For example, with the *stoneskin* spell, I reduced it so that it worked only on the caster and deflected only one attack for every three levels of the wizard. My players were less than overjoyed.)

Scott Brownlee  
Regina, Saskatchewan

Weaken the spell for each extra time it is cast. For example, the first time it is cast it covers 4-7 attacks; the next time, 2-3 attacks, and the last time, 1-2 or whatever suits you. You could also disallow mages to memorize the spell multiple times, throw in enemy mages with the spell, making it less effective, or modify the spell to suit your needs, perhaps changing the spell's effects to lowering armor class or enemy THAC0. Finally, you could simply eliminate the spell from your campaign. I'm sure your players will whine, but you are the final authority.

Nathaniel Deily  
Delmar NY

In response to Mr. Letts' comments about the fourth-level spell *stoneskin* in issue #189, a slight modification of spell rules may solve your problem. In the campaign in which I play, *stoneskin* can affect only the caster. *Stoneskin other*, a rare and much sought after sixth-level spell, functions as the *stoneskin* described in the *PH*.

Lev Osherovich  
Walnut Creek CA

I would like to address Robert J. Letts' problem of PC mages' overuse of protective spells, such as *stoneskin*. I have run across the same problem and have found what I believe to be a fair solution. Any mage (or priest) employing a spell of extended duration may not recast that spell again until the duration of the first has expired. Therefore, it prevents the repeated casting of spells such as *stoneskin*, *glyph of*

*warding*, and others. Of course, characters are free to buy scrolls which have no such restrictions, but scrolls do cost time and money.

Alfredo M. Cunha  
No address

Our party also experienced this problem, and we agreed on a limiting rule. The *stoneskin* spell still works as given in the *Player's Handbook*, but with the following limitation: It is in effect until it has blocked the number of attacks as specified, or for a period of 24 hours, whichever comes first.

The effect of this is the mage must memorize a *stoneskin* spell as one of his daily spells, to maintain a *stoneskin* in effect. This limits the number that can be in the party at any one time. The mage will most likely save the spell for himself, as mages tend to be the most vulnerable to melee attack. The spell is still useful and powerful, but the limits on it seem to work to balance things out.

Roger Rhodes  
North Kingstown RI

Really nasty opponents in search of a more permanent solution may want to corner the market on diamond dust, focus their attack on certain traveling spell books, or lay a level-draining attack or two on certain wizards. (Afterward, the victims might not be able to relearn the spell. This sounds like the work of a frustrated and vindictive game master. But if the party has been living long and happily off these stony skins, it can also be described as the work of a frustrated and vindictive Worthy Opponent in Toril. You could even describe it as a visit from the far reaches of the Realms by a mercenary adventurer who makes a specialty of melting stony skins.

Alan Lauderdale  
Englewood NJ

Remember this: You can *never* overuse any form of anti-magic spells or items. *Dispel magic*, *Mordenkainen's disjunction*, dispelling fields, etc. are a DM's best (and often, only) friends. One of your players told you that the two wizards are not stupid. Well, neither are the party's opponents. When faced with a group of adventurers that are magic-happy, the bad guys will use anti-magic magic to excess.

Jay Knium  
Corpus Christi TX

According to the description of the spell, certain magical attacks have normal effect. Try using spell-casters as enemy NPCs. (Rakshasa work great, as they are immune to all spells under eighth level. Let one cast a *fireball* at point-blank range and walk away unscathed!). Even a couple of low- to mid-level clerics would have little trouble dispatching characters protected by *stoneskin*.

S. Morgan  
Overland Park KS

Never, ever underestimate the power of psionics to screw up magic. If your campaign allows psionics, almost any attack available to the psionicist will render *stoneskin* (and many other abjuration spells) laughable. Chemical Simulation, Life Drain, Molecular Agitation, all telepathy (including Psychic Crush, which does real damage)—all of these and more pass through *stoneskin* undiminished. If your campaign doesn't use psionics, maybe it's time to start.

Sean Miner  
College Point NY

Remember that PCs should have no way of knowing the number of attacks blocked by each casting [*because of the 1d4 roll*]. You, as DM, should roll the number and keep track of it yourself. The *stoneskin* spell is a powerful tool for players, but can be kept in balance if planned for.

Paul Wriener  
Guilford CT

Allow bookworms to find the mage's spell book. This idea would allow you to have the mage find a new spell book. In this new book, conveniently forget to include the *stoneskin* spell.

Wade Hoover  
Emporia KS

Another way to combat *stoneskin* abuse is to introduce *stoneskin-effective* magical items. With all those wizards running around with all those *stoneskins*, someone must have come up with a magical item that can penetrate the spell. Farfetched? "[M]agical attacks from such spells as . . . *magic missile* . . . and so forth have their normal effects" (page 163, *PH*, *stoneskin* spell description). The spell description goes on to state that a magical attack reduces the protection: "[F]our magic missiles would count as four attacks." A "frozen" *magic missile* shaped into a crossbow bolt and fired from a crossbow would ruin the *stoneskin's* day. I also made a nasty weapon called Magebane. It is a barbed dagger that penetrated *stoneskins* and casts *silence* in a 5' radius when unsheathed. For added fun, I made the dagger unremovable until the *stoneskin* is dispelled or its protection used up.

William S. Hickey  
Pescadero CA

While it is not stated under the spells description, it can be argued that *stoneskin* has a visible effect. In my campaign, that particular spell turns the skin of the recipient a dark gray. This is almost universally recognizable by intelligent beings. It causes penalties to reaction rolls and the like. I also make that spell illegal in cities and towns. After all, the watch would like to be able to effectively combat potential law-breakers.

Aaron R. Smith  
Chico CA

Simply don't award experience for the encounters involving the use of *stoneskin*: none is gained, as the PCs hardly break into a sweat during fights.

Develop a counter-spell, if you want, to balance things out, or even enchanted weapons *specifically* against *stoneskin* warriors. After all, outlaws always evolve faster than the law.

No name given

Granite is naturally radioactive. If the PC mages handle the stuff over a long period of time, then all sorts of problems could start occurring—like rashes, illnesses, or mutation.

David Goodwin  
Petersfield, Hants, U.K.

Have you ever thought of dropping your group through a dimensional gateway to a world that doesn't have magic? You don't have to keep them there, but maybe they would start to use their minds instead of relying on that spell.

Michael T. Scott  
Front Royal VA

Ω

# Macross II™

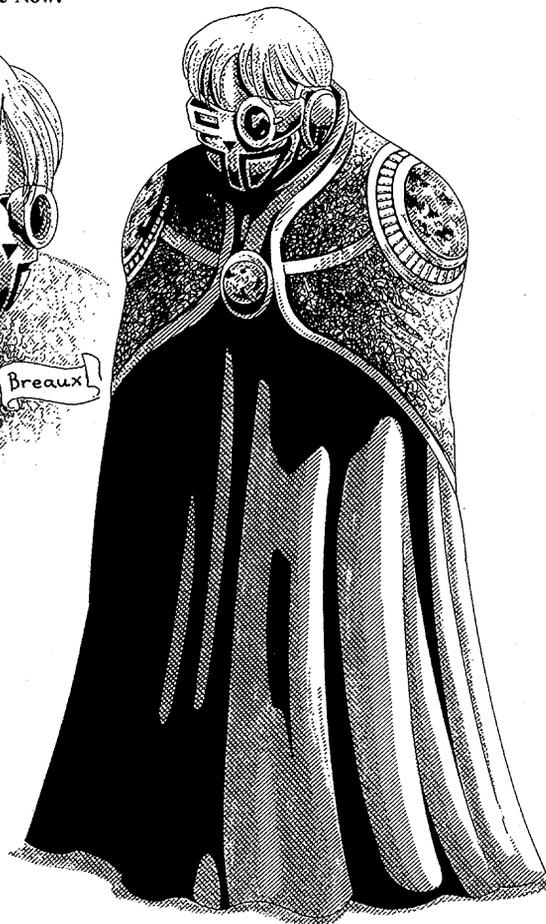
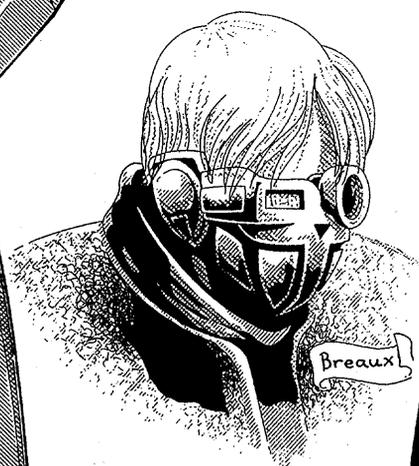
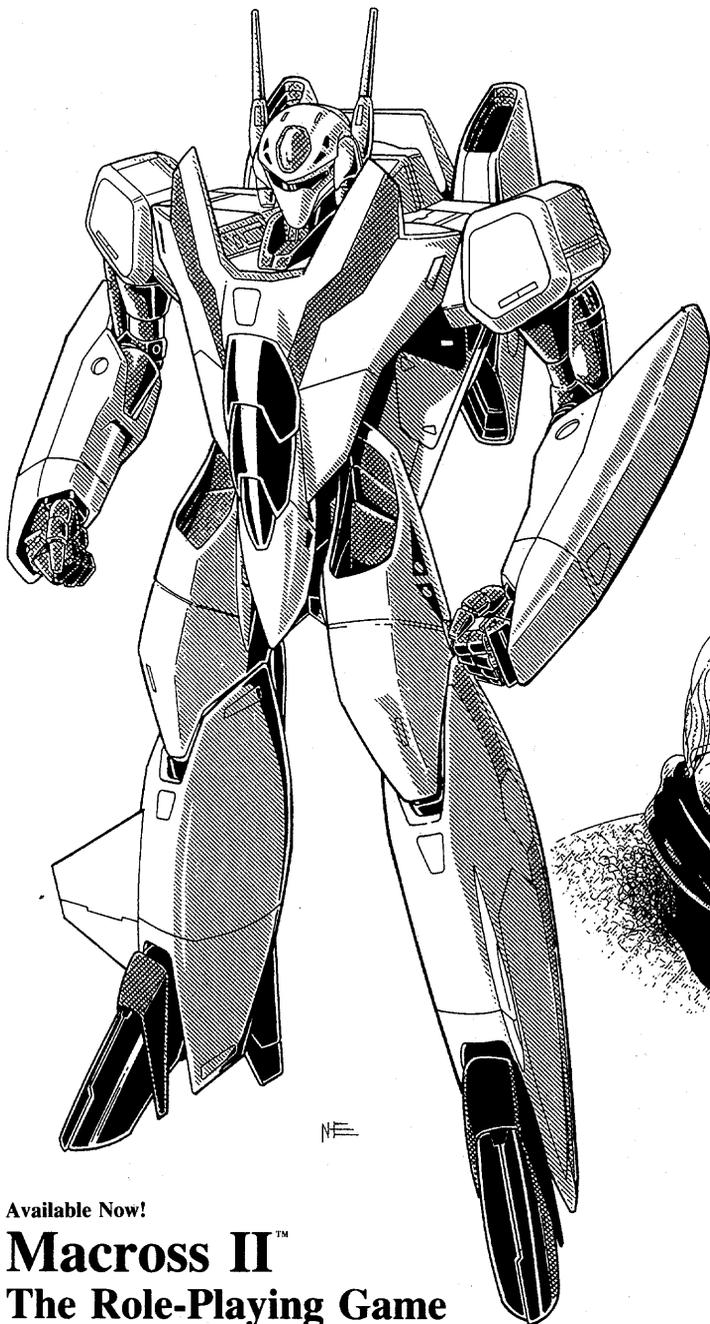
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# Dunklezahn: the mass-media dragon of FASA's SHADOWRUN® world

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>>>>[Information dissemination being the soul of the Shadowland electronic network, it falls to me as its local controller to post information of interest and watch the fur fly. The following profile is excerpted and abridged from the far-too-hip-for-its-own-good online edition of the infozine *Meta Trends* (January 2054). Some of the information presented in the article has been disputed by various sources. Believe it at your own risk. As always, electronic readers of this file are invited to post their own comments and observations. Believe them at your own risk as well.]

—Captain Chaos 08:21:51/2-23-54

If dragons are beasts of legend, why is it that modern Man can periodically flip a cable channel and find one alternately babbling good-naturedly on some fascinating (to him) facet of human society or having an equally good-natured chat with a celebrity of the moment? Why is it that a dragon, once the bane of Saint George, the near-consumer of darling/annoying Bilbo, and the quarry of knights-gallant has his own talk show? The answer, very simply, is ratings and power.

>>>>[Yeah, when a great dragon asks for his own trideo show, are you gonna be the one to tell him no?]

—X-VP 02:13:1312-25-54

To understand Dunklezahn even somewhat, one must look back to his first appearance. The dragon's arrival in Denver on January 27, 2012, only weeks after the first appearance of others of its kind, was

notable not only for his examination and inspection of that steel-and-concrete sprawl, but for the exuberance he displayed in doing so. The handful of dragons seen to that date had been aloof, elusive, and the subject of fevered and often reactionary public and media debate. Suddenly, there was this great beast of mythology utterly and completely *fascinated* by the concept and workings of a simple automobile. The impact was tremendous.

Quickly, the great media machine sprang into action. While the military tried to seal up the area around Cherry Creek Lake where the great dragon snoozed, reporters from all over the globe battled for an interview with him. The winner was then-neophyte and local second-string, early-evening weekend anchorwoman Holly Brighton. Through not without some technical hitches, the resulting interview, 12 hours and 16 minutes of mind-boggling questions and answers, give and take, banter and blather, between the quasi-intellectual Brighton and the towering dragon Dunklezahn gave humanity its first real clues to the breadth and depth of the Awakening. The kicker was that Dunklezahn, amazed and befuddled at the world in which he had awakened, was still savvy enough to insist on an above-the-line cut of the profits from the sale of the interview tapes. It is estimated that those sales alone netted the dragon over \$13 million dollars, tax-free.

It was also at that time that Dunklezahn began his association with the first of his three "interpreters." Though the dragon was able to quickly learn to communicate in English (with the assistance of magic, he explained), getting his comments recorded onto videotape proved a tremendous task. Dragons, it was discovered, do not "speak" in the way that humans do, expelling air across a constantly changing landscape of tongue, teeth, and lip, but instead through a "thought-voice" clearly understandable by all those to whom the dragon chooses to speak. Unfortunately, microphones are immune to thought-speak.

The solution was found in a local Denver resident, a young black man named John Timmons, who agreed to "speak" for the dragon and relate the words spoken into his head. Together, the unearthly presence of the dragon and the carefully modulated words of the young divinity student captured the imagination of millions. Many sociologists today agree that were it not for the powerful but calming presence of Dunklezahn in the early days of the Awakening, mankind's reaction to the changes to the world and humanity itself might have been far more traumatic.

Dunklezahn maintained an informational-business relationship with Holly Brighton until her retirement from media in 2042, and he allowed her exclusive access for that time. The dragon gave Brighton status and respectability, and she in turn gave him humanity. Timmons remained the voice of the dragon in the media and in public. In

return, Timmons' own words became a major voice in Post-Awakened North American Protestantism, where he preached tolerance and clear-mindedness against a tide of religious reactionism. The exact relationship between the three has been hotly argued, but what is clear is that the three needed and used each other to achieve their individual goals. Brighton and Timmons both wanted notoriety for their own reasons. And Dunklezahn the dragon, like a great mythological Willy Loman, simply wanted to be liked.

Timmons' relationship with the dragon ended in 2022 when he was killed by an assassin with connections to the burgeoning anti-metahuman movement. Police were unable to question the killer because he made the mistake of taking his shot in the presence of Dunklezahn. The dragon, eyewitnesses reported, reduced the gunman to his "component flaming atoms" with a glance. Critics of the dragon were harsh, questioning why with all his power Dunklezahn had been unable to stop the assassination from occurring. Normally verbose, Dunklezahn remains silent on the matter.

>>>>>[Of course he has; he arranged for the head-shot. Timmons, though he'd been a valuable mouthpiece, was starting to feel his real power as part of the chaotic Post-Awakened Protestant Church. Word is that he was preparing to end his relationship with the dragon and reveal all.]

—Gossip Hound 08:22:09/2-24-54

>>>>>[This is a fraggin' *great dragon* we're talking about! First off, you don't think he could have kept Timmons quiet if he'd wanted to? (Assuming there was a reason in the first place.) Second, if you're one of the most powerful magical beings on the face of the planet, why rely on some goon with a cheap hunting rifle? Timmons nearly survived, you know.]

—Untouchable 11:28:42/3-1-54

>>>>>[What, dragons don't know healing magic??]

—Doctor Dave 10:19:27/3-5-54

Dunklezahn remained without a "voice" until 2028 (resulting in some bizarre one-sided interviews between Holly Brighton and the dragon.) In the spring of that year, the dragon began using a young woman named Terri Ann Riberio. Riberio, like Brighton, was a neophyte reporter when "discovered" by the dragon. A perky and personable "voice" for the dragon, Riberio proved popular enough even without Dunklezahn that she moved on to a somewhat successful, if not noteworthy, acting career in 2039.

>>>>>[It's also interesting to note that Riberio has to date refused, despite offers of tremendous sums of money, to create a tell-all program about her years with the dragon, let alone be interviewed about the subject. Integrity, or something else?]

—Publisher 03:17:15/2-26-54

>>>>>[Yeah, fear of getting on a great dragon's drek list. Makes sense to me.]

—Carnival Barker 10:27:50/3-1 -54

>>>>>[Ah, but such a manuscript does exist, I understand. Riberio keeps it as insurance. If she dies "oddy," it goes public. A fairly common and usually successful insurance technique. Of course, should Dunklezahn find it. . . .]

—Winner 12:01:57/3-1-54

During the five years prior to that, Dunklezahn had begun spending vast sums to create his current "lair"—a sprawling retreat on the shores of Lake Louise in the Athabaskan Council, southwest of Edmonton. It serves not only as a tourist attraction and high-technology entertainment resort, but as the dragon's personal feudal domain. Though the legal basis for Dunklezahn's claim to the land is still unclear, there is little doubt that the great dragon is lord and king over all he surveys. (And, considering the phenomenal destructive power displayed by the great eastern dragon Aden when it razed Teheran in 2020, it is doubtful that anyone in the Athabaskan Council has ever seriously considered attempting to reclaim the land, let alone collect taxes.)

The Lake Louise resort is known not only for its quasi-medieval splendor, but for the incredibly sophisticated virtual reality (VR) technology available there. Guests can participate in incredible adventures, witness stunning real and imagined vistas, and generally risk life and limb without leaving the comfort of their recliner. The resort's technology is operated by VisionQuest, the former Ares Macrotechnology VR lab purchased by Dunklezahn in 2037. Today, the continually advancing technology of the VisionQuest hardware is considered state-of-the-art for a direct-feed VR experience. The dragon himself seems fascinated by the concept of virtual reality, its applications and implications. Dragons, he is quoted as saying, have a unique understanding of reality, and anything that claims to create or define reality is of great interest to him.

>>>>>[I've heard that Dunklezahn himself has attempted a direct neural-tap VR feed with no success. Guess he's stuck using those stupid archaic helmets and gloves. Quite an image, eh?]

—Bowman 07:26:30/3-1-54

>>>>>[VisionQuest is very aggressive about maintaining its technological lead. I understand it's about to begin another expansion and will be looking to increase its staff. Since the wiz-kings with the real skill are as protected as an orbital banking system, you can expect some rather violent recruiting. High on this list: Dr. Michael Denaris of Fuchi, Dr. Ellen Brand Koch of Renra-ku, and Dr. Estaban Wallech of Brilliant Genesis.]

—Insider 10:18:51/3-4-54

The dragon's current "voice" is one Nadja Daviar, an Eastern European elven beauty with a mesmerizing voice and no personal history on record. She has held that position since 2039 and reigns over the Lake Louise resort like its queen. Holly Brighton, who resides in retirement at the resort and still wields considerable power within the dragon's sphere of influence, is frequently at odds with Daviar. Brighton's greatest influ-

ence seems to be over Dunklezahn's periodic talk-commentary trideo program "Wyrn Talk."

>>>>[It's been continually reported that Daviar has some connection to the Polish intelligence community, though no information beyond that has ever surfaced. I'll bet that Brighton would pay mucho dinero for that kind of paydata.]  
—Ex-Pat 03:02:09/3-12-54

The dragon began the semi-annual program the year following Brighton's retirement from media and has produced over two dozen editions of the program. Topics range from trite celebrity interviews and profiles to frighteningly insightful commentary on culture and society. The dragon's current program is overdue, and word from

the production studio is that Dunklezahn remains undecided about its scope or subject. However, no one on the production staff even knows the topics the great dragon is considering. Regardless, the choice and result will undoubtedly be fascinating on some level, as well as a ratings bonanza.

>>>>[I'm on the production staff for "Wyrn Talk" (yes, you could see my name on the credits if you knew where to look) and "undecided" is an understatement for the Big D's (as he's referred to in the studio) state of mind these days. Angst-ridden is more like it. At the heart of who and what Dunklezahn is is his fascination with humanity, specifically human interaction. He's amazed by how we relate to each other, or don't. The whole VR setup in Lake Louise is designed so that he can observe people reacting to things

and each other. What's got him upset (though that may be too strong a word for a dragon) is that he knows something he thinks everyone (read: humanity) should know about. Why doesn't he just say? I don't know. Will he say? I don't know either.]

—More Than Best Boy 07:17:16/3-10-64

>>>>[Maybe he's silent because others don't think humanity is ready to know everything and have warned him against it. If so, just who out there is powerful enough to tell a great dragon what to do? Think about it-it'll keep you up at night.]

—Frosty 05:10:12/3-12-54

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### Dunklezahn (SHADOWRUN® game statistics)

Body: 22/12

Quickness: 11 × 3

Strength: 48

Initiative: 9 +2D6

Attack Code: 16D, + 3 Reach

Areas of Knowledge: Magic, Media, Technology

Powers: Enhanced Senses (wide-band hearing, low-light vision, thermal sense), Hardened Armor, Influence

Description: Dunklezahn is a silver- and blue-scaled great western dragon (*Draco sapiens (occidentalis)*), approximately 48 meters long including a 17-meter tail. He stands just under 3 meters in height at the shoulder and has a wingspan in excess of 30 meters. His weight has been estimated at approximately 2,000 kilograms.

Charisma: 10

Intelligence: 9

Willpower: 12

Threat Rating: 10

Level of Initiation: 12 +

Essence: 12

Magic: 20

Reaction: 9

Type of Magic: 'shamanic'

(Note: This information is an approximation based on casual observation and limited secondary intelligence.)

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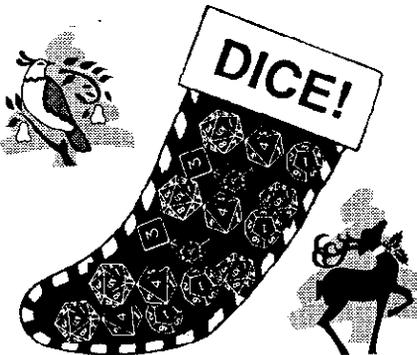
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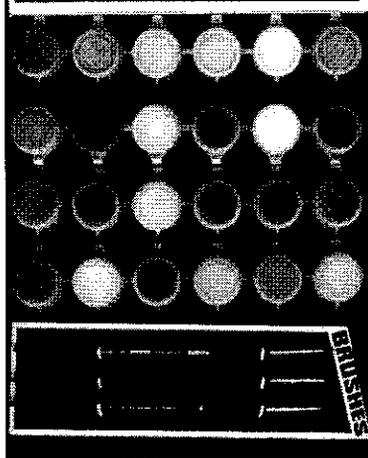
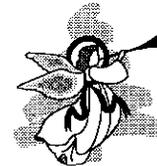
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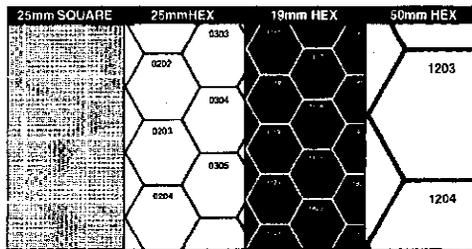
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# CONVENTION CALENDAR

## Convention Calendar Policies

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

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short 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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### CONSTELLATION XII, Nov. 12-14 AL

This convention will be held at the Huntsville Hilton in Huntsville, Ala. Guests include Jim Baen, Julius Schwartz, and David O. Miller. Activities include dealers and an art auction. Registration: \$25. Write to: CONSTELLATION XII, P.O. Box 4857, Huntsville AL 35815-4857.

### DEFCON VI, Nov. 12-14 NJ

This convention will be held at the Ramada Inn at Raritan Center in Edison, N.J. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an auction. Registration: \$15 preregistered; \$20 at the door. Single-day rates are available. Write to: DEFCON, 16 Grove St., Somerset NJ 08873; or call Tanya, evenings, at: (908) 418-7946.

### HEXAGON '93, Nov. 12-14 NC

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Airport in Greensboro, N.C. Events include role-playing, board, war, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers and clay-o-rama. Write to: SF3, HEXAGON, Box 4, EUC, UNC-G, Greensboro NC 27412; or call: (919)334-3159.

### SAN DIEGO GAME CON X, Nov. 12-14 CA

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson-Harborview in San Diego, Calif. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$15 before Oct. 31. Write to: SDGC, 4409 Mission Ave., #J208, Oceanside CA 92057; or call: (619)599-9619.

### SCI-CON 15, Nov. 12-14 VA

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Executive Center in Virginia Beach, Va. Guests include Timothy Zahn and Darrell K. Sweet. Events include panels, videos, a costume contest, an art show, and gaming. Registration: \$25 at the door. Send an SASE to: SCI-CON 15, P.O. Box 9434, Hampton VA 23670.

### LOST IN KENTUCKY CON '93 Nov. 13-14 KY

This convention will be held at the Murray State University Curris Center in Murray, Ky. Events include roleplaying, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include movies, a game auction, plus art and miniatures contests. Registration: \$8/weekend or \$4/day preregistered; \$10/weekend or \$5/day at the door. Send an SASE to: 113 North 7th, Murray KY 42071-2024.

### PENTAGON IX, Nov. 13-14 IN

This convention will be held at the Grand Wayne

Center in Ft. Wayne, Ind. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, contests, a flea market, and door prizes. Registration: \$10 preregistered. Write to: Steve & Linda Smith, 836 Himes, Huntington IN 46750; or call: (219)356-4209.

### CONTRARY '93, Nov. 19-21 MA

This convention will be held at the Ramada hotel in West Springfield, Mass. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include guests, demos, and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$20 at the door. Write to: CONTRARY '93, 626 N. Main St., East Longmeadow MA 01028; or call: (413) 731-7237.

### RECON IV, Nov. 19-21 CO

This convention will be held at the Radisson Inn North in Colorado Springs, Colo. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a painting contest, and a games raffle. Registration: \$13/weekend preregistered; \$15/weekend at the door, or \$7/day. Write to: Mark Surber, 6614 Provincial Dr., Fountain CO 80817; or call: (719) 392-3920.

### SHAUNCON VII, Nov. 19-21 MO

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson's in Kansas City, MO. Guests include Torn Dowd. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a painted-miniatures contest, and seminars. Dealers are welcome. Write to: Role-players Guild of Kansas City, c/o SHAUNCON, P.O. Box 7457, Kansas City MO 64116; or call: (816)455-5020.

### SOONERCON 9, Nov. 19-21 OK

This SF&F/gaming convention will be held at both the Central Plaza and Trade Winds hotels in Oklahoma City, Okla. Guests include Steven Brust, Tim Hildebrandt, Ed Greenwood, and Jean Rabe. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, videos, seminars, a masquerade, and a dance. Write to: SOONERCON, P.O. Box 1701, Bethany OK 73008-0701.

### DRAGON'S DREAM GAME FAIR Nov. 20 MI

This convention will be held at the Elks club in St. Joseph, Mich. Guests include Michelle Shirey Crean. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$8 preregistered; \$10 at the door, plus \$2/game. Send an SASE to: James Wilber, 69393 Oak St., Oak Park, Benton Harbor MI 49022.

### ELLIS CON V, Nov. 20 CT

This convention will be held in the cafeteria of H. H. Ellis Tech School in Danielson, Conn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include movies and prizes. Registration: \$5. Call (203) 774-8511, ext. 115.

### GOBBLECON 2, Nov. 20 PA

This convention will be held at the Easton Inn in Easton, Pa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a raffle, a painted-miniatures contest, and door prizes. Registration: \$10 at the door; plus game tickets. Send an SASE to: Michael Griffith, 118 S. Broadway, Wind Gap PA 18091; or call: (215) 863-5178.

### SAGA 2, Nov. 20-21 LA

This gaming convention will be held at the

Howard Johnson's in Metairie, La. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, open gaming, and a dance. Registration: \$15. Write to: SAGA 2, 800 Sena Dr., Metairie LA 70005; or call: (504) 833-6359. No collect calls, please.

**KETTERING GAME CON IX, Nov. 27-28 OH**

This convention will be held at the Charles I. Lathrem Senior Center in Kettering, Ohio. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include computer games and a games auction. Registration: \$2/day. Write to: Bob Von Gruenigen, 804 Willowdale Ave., Kettering OH 45429; or call: (513) 298-3224.

**SARASOTA-MANATEE FANTASY FAIR '93 Nov. 28 FL**

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn-Airport in Sarasota, Fla. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include comics and SE. Write to: Time Machine II, 5748 14th St., Bradenton FL 34207; or call: (813) 758-3684.

**HISTORICAL MILITARY OPEN, Dec. 4-5 NC**

This convention will be held at Pope AFB, N.C. Events include board and miniatures games. Registration: \$1 for military and DOD personnel and their dependents; \$2 for others. Write to: HISTORICAL MILITARY OPEN, 101 Dundee Lane, Spring Lake NC 28390; or call Steve at: (919) 497-3596.

**WARPD CON IV, Dec. 4 NJ**

This convention will be held at Drew University in Madison, N.J. Guests include Jeff Zitomer,

John Siminoff, and Dave Frank. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a miniatures-painting contest, an auction, anime, a raffle, and door prizes. Registration: \$3. Write to: Mike Kogan, P.O. Box 802 cm#HOL309, Madison NJ 07940; or call: (201)408-4499.

**EARTHCON I, Dec. 18-19 CT**

This EARTHDAWN\* convention will be held at the Days Inn in Meriden, Conn. Events are highlighted by the new EARTHDAWN\* game. Other activities include other FASA games. Registration: \$15/weekend or \$10/day preregistered; \$17/weekend or \$11/day at the door. Write to: EARTHCON, 863 E. Main St., Meriden CT 06450; or call: (203) 237-7445.

**EVECON 11, Dec. 31-Jan. 2, 1994 VA**

This convention will be held at the Double-Tree Inn in Crystal City, Vir. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, dancing, music, workshops, and open gaming. Registration: \$25 until Dec. 11; \$30 at the door. Write to: EVECON 11, 1607 Thomas Rd., Ft. Washington MD 20744; or call Bruce at: (301) 292-5231.

**GALICON '94, Jan. 7 OH**

This convention will be held at Galion Train and Hobby in Galion, Ohio. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include miniatures-painting and costume contests. Registration: \$2, plus a small event fee. Write to: Galion Gamers' Guild, 123 Harding Way E., Galion OH 44833; or call: (419) 468-5047.

**WINTER FANTASY™ Convention '94 Jan. 7-9 WI**

This convention will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Milwaukee, Wis. Guests include Bruce Nesmith, Bill Slavicsek, and James Lowder. Events include role-playing, board, miniatures, and war games, seminars, a Sunday breakfast buffet, and more. Registration: \$15 before Nov. 30, \$20 at the door. Write to WINTER FANTASY, RPGA® Network, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

**RUNEQUEST\* CON '94, Jan. 14-16 MD**

This convention will be held at the Columbia Inn in Baltimore, Md. Guests include Greg Stafford, Sandy Petersen, Ken Rolston, Michael O'Brien, and David Hall. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include seminars and an auction. Registration: \$30/weekend. Write to: David Cheng, 313 E. 85th St., Apt. 2C, New York NY 10028; or call: (212) 472-7752.

Important: To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that your notice was received. You might also send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please avoid sending convention notices by fax, as this method has not proved to be reliable.

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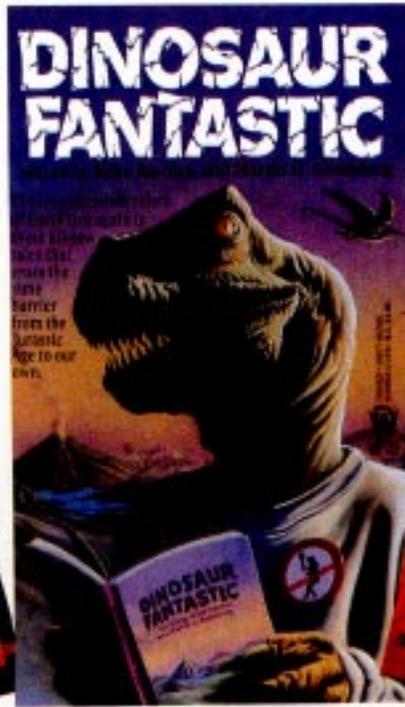
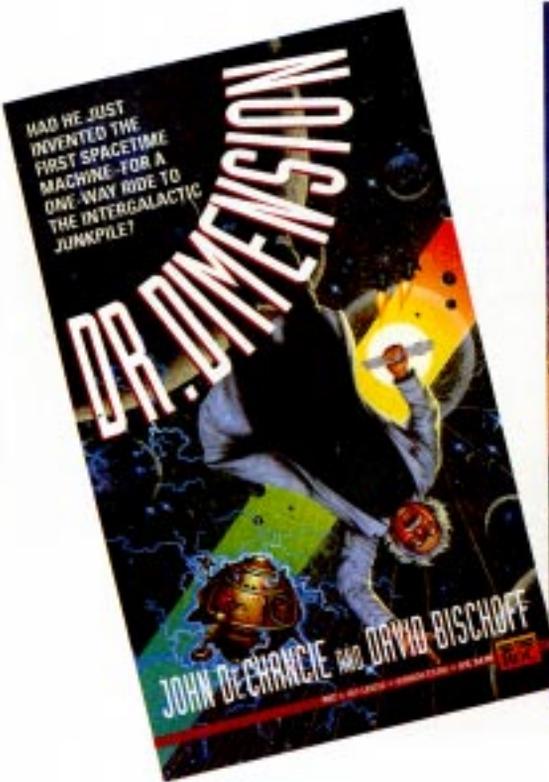
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Roger Zelazny, illustrations by Gaban Wilson

AvoNova 0-688-12508-5 \$18.00

I probably shouldn't admit this, but I've never been a great fan of Roger Zelazny's writing. The one time I tried to start reading his *Amber* series, I lost interest very early in the first book and never went back. But *A Night in the Lonesome October* caught my eye because I'm a Sherlock Holmes junkie, and now I may have to change my mind about Zelazny.

Not that *Night* is a Holmes novel, though the Great Detective plays a significant role in events. Rather, this is a dark comedy and several good-natured horror yarns

and a mystery story and an oblique romance and a MacGuffin hunt all squashed into a properly foggy and vaguely menacing Victorian landscape. (If you ran out of breath reading that last sentence, you get the idea.)

Our narrator is one Snuff, watchdog and diary-keeper to a certain gentleman named Jack, who's in London assembling the ingredients he needs to take part in a mysterious ritual set for Halloween night. But Jack isn't the only visitor preparing for the ceremony. Other players, each matched with an appropriate familiar, include a good doctor scouting graveyards for parts for his experimental man a reclusive count who sleeps in a crypt by day, a latter-day druid, a likeable American

with a penchant for howling at the moon, a mad Russian, and a classical witch. Figures of myth and legend themselves, come October's end they will meet to complete a game of ancient and arcane scope and determine whether or not to loose the Elder Gods (yes, *those* Elder Gods) on an unsuspecting world.

Zelazny chronicles the game's unfolding strategy with a lively, convincingly canine eye for detail and a cheerful nod to the vintage movies and books from which he's drawn his cast of creatures. There's melodramatic thrill and wry wit in generous proportions, and the dark and comic aspects of the tale complement each other with unusual aptness. The day-by-day diary entries make a good narrative de-

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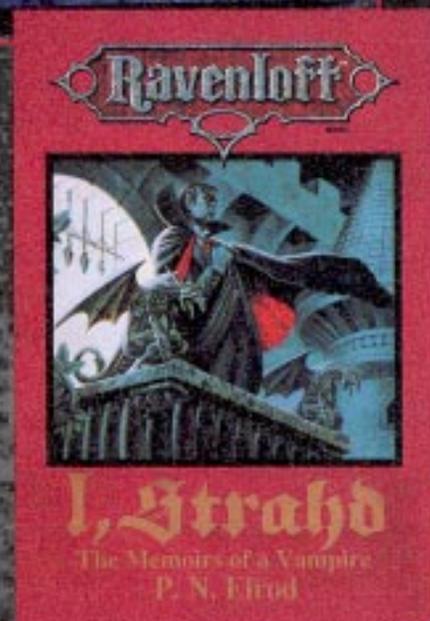
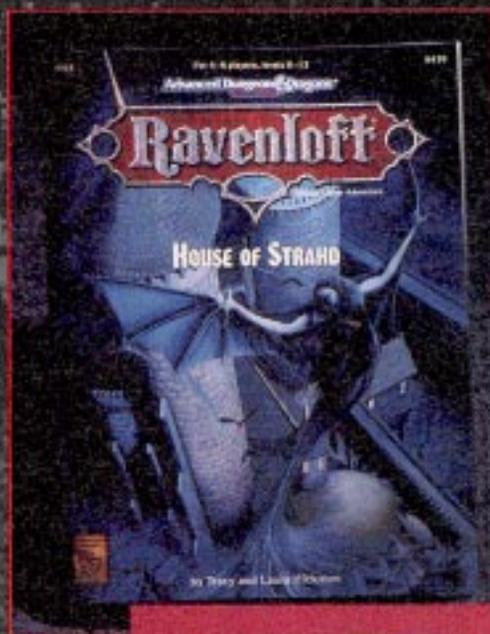
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vice, keeping the pace brisk while doling out plot twists with nail-biting leisure. The mind boggles a bit at the prospect of Jack the Ripper as a hero of sorts, but Zelazny pulls off the characterization with startling smoothness. The "Great Detective" also comes off well in his supporting role, appearing properly theatrical yet stopping well short of farce. Though the tone is often light, the players here aren't caricatures or shadows of their "real" selves.

The exceptions to that rule are Gahan Wilson's amusingly drawn illustrations, which mostly veer too far into cartoonland. Wilson's soft, rounded lines draw too little inspiration from Edward Gorey or Charles Addams, and his portraits of the players just don't match the weird blend of Edgar Allen Poe and Terry Pratchett that Zelazny creates in his prose.

If you have superhuman patience, buy *A Night in the Lonesome October* and save it for next year, to read at bedtime in one-day increments while ghostly winds blow and autumn leaves tap at your upstairs windows. It's exactly that sort of book, meant to be shared and savored and turned into tradition. If you're not that patient, buy it anyway and read it in one fell swoop; it will still be a heck of a lot of fun. And those who play Mayfair's CHILL\* or Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU\* games are liable to finish the novel with a dangerous glitter in their eyes.

## DR. DIMENSION

John deChancie and David Bischoff

Roc 0-451-45252-6 \$4.99

It's hard to be objective about humorous SF; that which one reader finds hysterical another may see as deadly dull. The trouble with *Dr. Dimension*, though, is bad taste of a slightly different kind. Authors John deChancie and David Bischoff, in trying to produce a send-up of old pulp fiction, have re-created the genuine article—and modern readers are more likely to be offended than amused.

The most blatant illustration of the point is the team's treatment of the two major female characters. Diane Derry is, as eccentric scientist Dr. Demetrios Demopoulos points out early on, "the beautiful lab assistant," and neither he nor the writers will allow anyone to forget it. Anytime she's onstage, there's a good deal of pointed leering in the direction of Diane's substantial cleavage. And though Dr. Vivian Vernon gets a graduate degree and is supposedly a brilliant scientist in her own right, she's played mostly as a leather-mistress. Both characters are written as sex objects, plain and simple, and the narrative revels in the stereotype.

It doesn't help that the rest of the cast is cut from the same cardboard. Troy Talbot is the dumb jock, Dr. D. is the wild-eyed scientist, and Geoffrey Wussman, Ph.D., is the crew member who gets co-opted by aliens. They're all equally one-dimensional and equally uninteresting. Instead of an

ensemble of daring adventurers, deChancie and Bischoff present a group of inept bumblerers who have to be handed plot twists every few pages in order to get anywhere.

That description of the plot is no exaggeration. Dr. D's space-time vehicle is literally mailed to him out of the blue in handy kit form. An alien benefactor pops out of nowhere to bail them out when the craft's first trip lands it in the middle of a battle. By pure luck, the cases of canned beans on board as food supplies turn out to be the ultimate starship fuel. A pair of super-scientific glasses turns up just when needed—and the obscure metal needed to craft an Ultimate Weapon is in ample supply in the form of loose starship conductor badges scattered on a storage room floor.

Besides a cluttered plot, the book also suffers from cluttered humor. There are a host of tired puns and wordplay-jokes, some very involved but none truly memorable. There are silent-film sight gags in the Three Stooges mold, a number of which show a decidedly cruel streak. One gets the feeling, for instance, that Dr. D. enjoys dropping cast iron on Troy's toe. And there's the relentless string of suggestive straight lines better suited to *Penthouse* than to the pulps. The various sorts of comedy clash rather than blending effectively, adding to the discordant tone of the narrative.

You can tell that *Dr. Dimension* is supposed to be an homage to SF's pulp days from a long sequence in the middle of the book, in which Dr. D. stumbles into a poker game between the leading writers and editors of the genre's early period. Even this, though, is more cynical than funny, and the assembled authors do nothing to help Dr. D. advance the plot. And of course, as a pulp serial, the book is required to end on a melodramatic cliffhanger, replete with bold type, nearly half a page of exclamation points, and a notice about "our next thrilling installment!"

Those in search of a genuinely thrilling pulp adventure will be better advised to see if there's a Flash Gordon serial available at their local video store.

## GALATEA IN 2-D

Aaron Allston

Baen 0-671-72182-8 \$4.99

DRAGON® Magazine's readers know Aaron Allston as a veteran game designer, not a novelist, though those who didn't blink may recall his *Web of Danger* (part of the short-lived "Double Agent" series of novels set in the world of *Top Secret/S.I.*). *Galatea in 2-D* draws in part on that background, but it's more than a tale hung on an ingenious gimmick; it's also a thoughtful look at a side of professional fantasy that gamers and readers often take for granted.

The gimmick is that fantasy artist Roger Simons can pull things out of his paintings and make them real, be they swords or

living fairy folk. His newfound talent, though, is neither unique nor initially rewarding. Instead, it makes him a target, as rival artist Kevin Matthews (who has the same ability) launches a vendetta against Roger that quickly escalates into all-out war.

But what easily might have been a pure chase-and-destroy adventure turns in Allston's hands into a quirky double romance and a solid personal odyssey as well. In the course of dealing with Kevin, Roger resolves an old family conflict and comes to terms with not one but two women, one a nymph from his paintbrush and the other a high school classmate. The characters are practical and the relationships utterly believable; one can imagine having sat next to Roger or Donna in English class. The magic of Roger's and Kevin's art is the book's one impressive wonder, and Allston does an admirable job of putting that magic into a setting that's otherwise eminently real.

At the same time, the nuances of the art-wizardry are worked out with a fine-tuned logic that betrays Allston's gaming heritage. For all its simplicity, the premise turns out to be extraordinarily versatile yet not over-powered. There are truly exotic effects possible through the magic, but the limits are also perceptively thought out. And the chapter-long final duel, played out at a convention art show, is one of the sharpest battle sequences you're likely to find, with a truly nasty stinger at the end.

The ending doesn't rule out a sequel, but *Galatea in 2-D* feels satisfyingly complete in itself. And though its heroes don't pull punches in a fight or shrink from difficult choices, the heart of its worldview is a wise romanticism that's a pleasure to encounter. For all that it's a light, quick read, this is a strikingly mature novel—and in fantasy, that's a rarity worth seeking out.

## POWERS THAT BE

Anne McCaffrey and Elizabeth Ann Scarborough

Del Rey 0-345-38173-4 \$20.00

In an age where "collaboration" often consists of a young and hungry author writing a book around a senior partner's idea, Del Rey has understandably made a point of explaining that *Powers That Be* is a true joint effort, "bounced back and forth down the hall" between the two writers at Anne McCaffrey's home in Ireland. But even traditional collaboration has its literary risks, and in this case what starts out as an intriguing SF yarn eventually succumbs to what looks suspiciously like a case of too much enthusiasm.

Petaybee (short for Planet, Terraformation B) is an Arctic world, just barely habitable by human standards and that only by virtue of expensive technological intervention. It's also a source of concern to the interstellar trading company that claims ownership of the planet. Rich mineral

deposits that show up on orbital scans seem not to exist when surface mining crews seek them out. Scattered reports suggest that someone has been doing unauthorized genetic engineering, creating animal species not approved for Petaybee by corporate higher-ups. Meanwhile, the colonists settled there by the company go quietly about the business of survival, politely assuring those who inquire that nothing is wrong.

McCaffrey and Scarborough do have an explanation for the mysteries, which reveals itself in tantalizing bits and pieces as the novel unfolds. But while Petaybee's secret is as exotic and potentially fascinating as one might wish, it leaves a number of logical puzzles in its wake. *Powers That Be* is billed as science fiction, but it ends up reading more like the sort of fantasy in which the rules of magic are what the authors want them to be at any given moment.

There's no plausible reason, for instance, for high-tech devices and industrial equipment to break down more often than normal—it happens merely because “that's how things are.” Similarly, the “unauthorized” genetic tweaking has no discernible rhyme or reason beyond being exotic. The plot certainly doesn't require unicorns, the genetic engineering on cats and dogs is equally unnecessary, and even with special help, the more complex alterations seem too rapidly achieved. The connection between the writers' idealized low-tech society and its supposed architect simply doesn't yield to logic.

The galaxy beyond Petaybee is also puzzling at times. The megacorporation that claims to own Petaybee (and refers to the colonists as its employees) seems oddly reluctant to take decisive action—yet there is little or no sense of a strong interstellar government beyond the corporate umbrella to cause such reluctance. The colonists' civil rights, if any, are left remarkably ambiguous as a result. And while there's prominent mention of “terrorist activity” elsewhere in the civilized galaxy, it's hard to tell who the supposed terrorists are acting to oppose.

Still, *Powers That Be* manages the trick of being enjoyable despite the lapses of logic. The mixed Irish-Inuit colonial society is cleverly imagined and full of likeable characters, though the Inuits exaggerate their historical claim to inventing the potlatch, an institution more often associated with tribes farther to the south. The book's concluding moments also raise intriguing prospects for the two planned sequels. As long as you don't mind the highly rubbery science, McCaffrey and Scarborough deliver an adventure that should please fans of the two popular writers' earlier books.

## DEATH COMES AS EPIPHANY

Sharan Newman

Tor 0-312-854 19-6 \$19.95

Like the Society for Creative Anachronism, a great deal of medieval fantasy portrays the Middle Ages “not as they were, but as they should have been,” with 20/20 hindsight and the modern sensibilities of our own era often implicit in the “spin” of a given literary or role-playing universe. It's refreshing every so often to view those times with a more authentically historical eye, and Sharan Newman's *Death Comes As Epiphany* does just that, providing both convincing scholarship and sweeping drama.

The setting is twelfth-century France, where the Catholic Church is building cathedrals and rooting out heretics with nearly equal enthusiasm. Young scholar Catherine LeVendeur becomes tangled in both aspects of this religious fervor when a manuscript she has copied is altered by other hands to appear heretical. Obeying secret instructions, she departs from the Convent of the Paraclete in seeming disgrace on a mission to find and recover the manuscript. Matters rapidly grow more complex, however, as Catherine is distracted from her search by a strange death, another student who is not what he seems, a decidedly unsaintly saint, and a shadowy conspiracy that reaches deep into her own family.

The style and tone of the prose is at once formal and accessible, conveying an assured sense of the period yet not sacrificing readability in the pursuit of scholarly realism. Catherine is appealing—and convincing—as a sheltered young woman caught between a love of knowledge and the proprieties of a society that prefers not to let her use it. The various Church figures are all persuasively pragmatic, though some are holy, some are cynical, and some are genuinely frightening. Additional cast members aptly illustrate the persistent stratification of medieval society even as they sometimes transcend it. Merchant, peasant, warrior, Jew: all these have their place, and all these have a stake in Catherine's quest.

Structurally, the novel combines elements of traditional romance with a murder puzzle and the hunt for the missing manuscript, but Newman's tale really doesn't fit neatly into any genre pigeonhole. It's history in two senses at once, both a tale of times past and an account that follows Catherine regardless of where her adventures take her. Though it is fantasy in no sense whatsoever, it shares a brand of idealism and impulsiveness that fantasy readers will find eminently familiar.

That makes *Death Comes As Epiphany* an unusual commodity: a novel with the literary values of serious fiction and the entertainment values of a lively costume drama, rather like a breakfast cereal that's supposed to be good for you but tastes good anyway. If you're looking for a book respectable enough to impress nongamers with your literary taste, yet exciting

enough to make you miss your bus stop, Newman's novel is a sure bet.

## DINOSAUR FANTASTIC

Mike Resnick and Martin H.

Greenberg, eds.

DAW 0-88677-566-3 \$4.99

By now, the *Jurassic Park* hype is dying down a bit, but dinosaurs are still a hot commercial commodity. *Dinosaur Fantastic* is a good deal more than a clever attempt to cash in on the popularity of the wild tyrannosaur; it's also a surprisingly diverse gathering of tales that mix practical dinosaur culture with some of the strangest ideas you've seen this side of the *National Enquirer*.

Actually, just four of the twenty-five stories in the book deal with “dinosaur civilization” as a predecessor of human culture. Of these, Katharine Kerr's “The Skull's Tale” is the freshest and most distinctively saurian, a short, brisk tale of territorial hierarchy. John Stith's “One Giant Step” is the other winner in this group, a barbed time-travel piece in which neither man nor dinosaur emerges on top.

Instead, the majority of the contributors resurrect dinosaurs into the modern world, sometimes as pets and sometimes as zoo exhibits. Kevin O'Donnell, Jr. and David Gerrold are the standouts in this group, with a pair of domestic yarns about couples who disagree about the merits of saurians as house pets. O'Donnell gets points for picking an otherwise obscure dinosaur and putting it in a wry, charming story with an upbeat ending, while Gerrold sticks to the good old tyrannosaurus and a conclusion appropriate to that beast's predatory instincts.

In the nifty-idea department, you can't beat the first and last tales in the book. Robert Sawyer's “Just Like Old Times” postulates a system by which the human mind can be linked with a past counterpart—and then explores the consequences of sending a serial killer's consciousness back into the brain of a tyrannosaur. And Roger MacBride Allen closes out the volume with the ultimate nutty-conspiracy yarn, in which solving the Kennedy assassinations and Jimmy Hoffa's murder is a mere sidelight to a plot that spans multiple histories and features some of the world's least likely allies. A strong runner-up is Dean Wesley Smith's “Cutting Down Fred,” though it's a dinosaur story only in the mind of the ancient oak tree that's the tale's title character. Another is Frank Robinson's “The Greatest Dying,” a much darker yet low-key tale that makes the disaster in *Jurassic Park* seem trivial by comparison.

In a group by itself is “Curren's Song,” a quiet and emotional story set in sixth-century Scotland. It's a Loch Ness Monster story that completely bypasses clichés in favor of strong characterization, and helps explain why author Laura Resnick won this year's John W. Campbell Award as SF's best new writer. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the anthology's one real disap-

pointment comes, atypically, from Mercedes Lackey and Larry Dixon, a quick tale of inept animal-rights extremists that tries too hard for comedy and ends up sounding surprisingly mean-spirited.

*Dinosaur Fantastic* is part of a loose series of theme anthologies covering fantastic creatures, though it may well be the most diverse of them. Editors Resnick and Greenberg have collected tales of past, present, and future that focus on not just on dinosaurs, but on the idea of dinosaurs. It's a subtle distinction, but it makes for fascinating reading.

### Recurring roles

While comics fans have been busy keeping track of multiple Supermen, dead and alive, *The Further Adventures of Wonder Woman* (Bantam, \$5.99) has slipped onto the stands with a singularly low profile. "New" is the operative word here; just one of the book's eight longish stories focuses on the character's first and most familiar supporting cast, so that those who haven't followed Princess Diana's adventures since the Lynda Carter television show went off the air are liable to find the background unfamiliar. Oddly, the best of the stories are from mystery writers Henry Slesar and Edward Wellen; otherwise, this is by far the weakest entry in the DC-superhero anthology series.

The strangest aspect of *All's Faire* (Faw-

cett Juniper, \$3.99) is the price, which seems extreme for a young-adult book just 87 pages long. But Pamela Service, as usual, provides an entertaining story, this time centered on teenage Kevin's adventures when he's abruptly yanked from a live medieval role-playing event into the genuine Middle Ages. It's lightweight fare for Service, but good fun nonetheless.

For a more introspective yarn, *The Wizard's Shadow* (Del Rey, \$4.99) may be the ticket. Susan Dexter returns to fantasy after a long hiatus with a small-scale story about a peddler, a minor royal court caught in complicated family intriguing, and a not-quite-dead shadow that can neither abandon the world nor dwell comfortably in it. The tone is different from Dexter's previous sword-and-sorcery tales, but it's well-executed and worth reading.

Another modest change of pace is Simon Hawke's *The Wizard of Camelot Questar*, (\$4.99), a prequel to his series of futuristic semi-Arthurian stories about a world where magic has replaced high tech. This is the story of just how magic came back to the world, with the help of the legendary wizard Merlin and ex-cop Tom Malory. Though there are light moments, this is less frenetic than the series that inspired it, and Hawke unfolds a reasonably plausible scenario with touches that underscore the difficulty of Merlin's efforts.

R. A. Salvatore's Cleric Quintet continues, meanwhile, with *The Fallen Fortress* (TSR, \$4.95), which seems almost like the final book in its series rather than the next-to-last volume. The focus is on young cleric Cadderly's long-delayed confrontation with Aballister, his father and chief adversary, and Salvatore brings a melodramatic flair and his usual lively battle-choreography to the proceedings. While there are more than enough loose ends left to occupy the final book, the series seems to have climaxed here.

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by Bob Murch

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# SAGE Advice

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We are no longer able to make personal replies; please send no SASEs with your questions (SASEs are being returned with writer's guidelines for the magazine).

This month, the sage looks at shields for lizard men, considers several things elvish, and ponders the fighting and spell-casting abilities of dragons.

## Can lizard-man PCs in the SPELLJAMMER® setting gain any armor-class benefits from using shields?

Yes. Generally speaking, a shield improves the user's armor class by one. Of course, the shield has to be large enough and strong enough to afford the user some protection; a titan who picks up a half-lizard's buckler cannot claim an armor-class adjustment. Also note that creatures such as lizard men cannot use just any type of armor. A lizard man gains no benefit from any suit of armor unless it provides better protection than its natural armor class of 5. For example, a lizard man wearing leather armor (AC 8) and using a shield would have an armor class of 4, the same as an unarmored lizard man using a shield.

## According to *Monster Mythology*, the elven deity Deep Sashelas has aquatic-elf shamans and specialty priests. I thought aquatic elves couldn't be spell-casters.

According to the aquatic-elf description in the *Monstrous Manual*, there are some worlds where aquatic elves cannot cast spells. On most worlds, however, aquatic elves have the same class and level restrictions as their land-dwelling cousins, which allows them to become powerful wizards and very respectable priests.

## The deities Lolth and Vhaerun are listed in both *Drow of the Underdark* and *Monster Mythology*. However, these books list different statistics for each of these deities. Which sets of statistics are correct?

In both cases, use the *Monster Mythology* information on the deities themselves and on their priests. *Monster Mythology* was published after *Drow of the Underdark* and represents an update. Note that the *Drow of the Underdark* material on the ethos, rituals, customs, equipment, etc., associated with each deity is still valid. Also note that deities use a variety of avatars, and that both Lolth and Vhaerun might send forth avatars conforming to either set of statistics, depending on the circumstances.

## Can the various trick how shots from *The Complete Book of Elves* be combined? I imagine not, unless it really was TSR's intention to create elven machine gunners, which is what could happen if characters could combine the double-arrow shot with the quick-draw. Also, can any elf do the trick shots or does a character have to spend a weapon proficiency on each one?

If you carefully read the double-arrow shot description (*CBE* page 73), you'll find that the archer can fire only one additional arrow in the round the archer took the double-arrow shot. This is an inherent limitation to the double-arrow trick, since it takes extra time to properly arrange the arrows on the bowstring. Note that only two arrows can be placed in the bow at once. Also, no archer can make two double-arrow shots in the same round without a *haste* spell or similar magic. I suppose the elf could declare a quick-draw in addition to a double-arrow, but since the elf still can use the bow only twice, he would incur the quick-draw "to hit" penalties for nothing. Otherwise, an elf can combine the other types of trick shots; just add up the modifiers. Of course, the elf needs to make special preparations to combine some kinds of shots. For example, an elf using a quick-draw from a hanging-

tree position wouldn't have enough arrows on hand to make her multiple shots without some sort of special equipment to keep the arrows in her quiver as she hangs upside down.

The various trick shots are optional rules, and the DM might not allow them in the campaign. If they are allowed, any elf who has a bow proficiency can use them—they are "free" racial abilities.

## I'm a little unclear about how to use the special powers of the spellfilcher kit from *Complete Book of Elves*, page 87. How does the kit's *detect magic* ability work? Also, the spellfilcher gets a level-based bonus to disarm magical traps. How do you determine what this bonus is when the character is multi-classed? Since the spellfilcher also can use *detect magic* once a day per level, how is that level determined?

The *detect magic* ability works just like the wizard spell of the same name; note the level-based duration and chance to identify the type of magic detected. The character's effective level when using either ability is the character's wizard level.

## The general material on dragons in the *Monstrous Manual* says that a dragon's combat modifier added to its age category gives its spell-caster level. However, the description of each type of dragon gives a base number for spell-caster level that is increased by the combat modifier. Which is correct? Also, I seem to remember reading somewhere that the combat modifier also applied to a dragon's THAC0. This makes sense, since a dragon surely would be able to attack more effectively as it grows older.

The level at which a dragon casts its spells and uses its special abilities is its combat modifier plus a fixed number that varies by subrace. You can find this number in the "Breath weapon/special abilities" section of each subrace's description. The reference to age categories in the general section is an editorial error.

A dragon's combat modifier does not apply to its THAC0. Several volumes of the *Monstrous Compendium*, however, contain a typographical error that says otherwise. This error is an artifact from the earliest drafts of the material on dragons for the AD&D 2nd edition game, and you should ignore it. While a dragon's combat prowess does improve as it ages, its adjusted hit dice take care of its improving THAC0; just apply the dragon's adjusted hit dice to table 39 in the *DMG*. For example, a hatching white dragon (HD 5) has a THAC0 of 15 and a very old white dragon (HD 16) has a THAC0 of 5.

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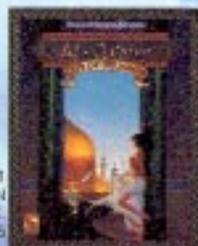
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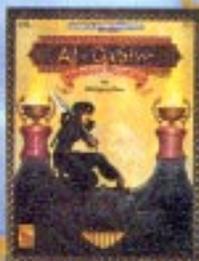


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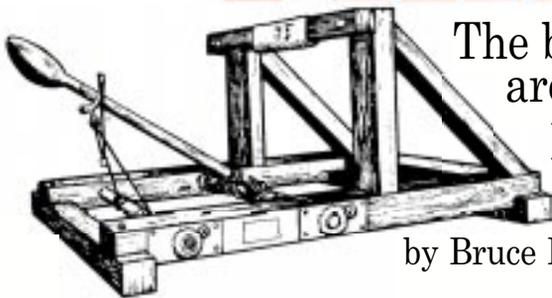
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# READY, AIM, FIRE!



The big guns  
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by Bruce Heard



We've received several letters in the past few months about weapon mastery charts for artillery. After some thought, it looked like an interesting idea, so we went a bit further and looked into gunpowder as well. Here are details for both mechanical artillery and actual cannons, and the way weapon mastery affects them.

Weapon mastery is always limited to a single type of artillery piece (ballistae, light catapults, heavy catapults, small bombardards, etc.). In general, the performance of an artillery piece lies with the experience of its crew. In order for weapon mastery skills to improve the effectiveness of an artillery piece, its crew must have superior skills and competent leadership. The crew usually consists of a chief artilleryman and several assistants. The initial effectiveness of the artillery piece should be based on the chief artilleryman's mastery. However, the remainder of the crew should have a mastery no less than two levels below that of their chief.

For example, a Grand Master artilleryman needs a complete crew of not less than Expert level of mastery. Should the latter not be true (the crew is incomplete, some of the assistants are inadequately trained, or the chief artilleryman is missing), then use the lowest level of mastery among the crew, minus one. In other words, if the

Expert assistants lose their Grand Master chief, that crew would then operate at a Skilled level. Also note that a crew and its chief can be reduced to an Unskilled level if at least one of the crew members lacks Basic training on the appropriate artillery piece.

Weapon mastery at an artillery piece grants the usual bonuses to Attack Rolls and the Despair Effect when maximum damage is inflicted (see *Rules Cyclopedica*, pages 76-77). Damage and special effects are listed in the individual weapon-mastery charts given in this article. Artillery pieces provide no defensive benefits in combat, at least in terms of traditional melee in the D&D game. Depending on its size or whether it is fitted with a mantlet, however, the artillery piece can conceivably provide some cover bonus against missile weapons, but this has nothing to do with weapon mastery per se. Finally, weapon mastery does not improve the fire rates and maximum ranges of artillery pieces.

## Oversized weapons

The statistics given are for artillery pieces built for human-sized artillerymen. For larger weapons (those used by giants, for example), add +1 to damage for each extra 1' above human size. Assume a

human to be in the "up-to-7'-tall" category. Catapults or ballistae made for 10'-tall humanoids get an extra +3 damage, for example, up to +15 for storm giants (22' tall).

Likewise, the building cost, encumbrance, HP, and weekly cost of ammunition for oversized weapons all increase +10% for each extra foot of intended "user size." A light catapult built for storm giants, for example, would then cost 375 gp to build (150 gp + 150%). It would have an encumbrance of 30,000 cn, 45 HP, and an ammo cost of 10,000 gp per week. The ranges of these weapons increase in a similar manner (rounding fractions up), but only for the intended users. Smaller users are assumed to be too weak to crank these machines up to their full potential.

Using an artillery piece that was built for a larger crew requires a penalty to hit of -1 per foot of difference, up to -5. Beyond this, the smaller user is assumed to be too small or too weak to operate the artillery piece at all. For example, humans might be able to operate a catapult or a ballista built for hill giants (12' tall) at -5 to hit, but not one for stone giants (14' tall) or for bigger creatures. Artillery pieces built for smaller users can be operated without penalty.

## Gunpowder in the MYSTARA™ setting

Gunpowder-using siege weapons-if allowed by your DM-would be a novelty in the Known World. If they existed, here's some background that could be used: An obscure cleric from the Heldannic Order, Brother Berthold Schwartz of Freiburg (now deceased), claimed to be the inventor of gunpowder. That cannot be proved since it appeared in various areas almost at the same time. Of course, this is reason enough for the kindly Heldannic bunch to feel that all the other nations have no right to use this holy weapon sent by Vanya! It would seem that gunpowder is a byproduct of the Great War between Thyatis and Alphatia.

The nations that have access to gunpowder could be Thyatis, Karameikos, the Heldannic Knights, Darokin, Rockhome, and faraway Ochalea. Glantri, of course, would probably seek to have every speck of this despicable, nonmagical black filth scoured from the surface of Mystara ("Peh! There isn't enough of this evil powder in King Stefen's *Mad Mary* to rival our Glantrian *fireballs!*").

Between these two extremes lie the "have-nots." Some don't really care or aren't wealthy enough for this kind of novelty (like Ierendi, Minrothad Guilds, Aengmor, Five Shires, Ethengar, Northern Reaches, Ylaruam, and Wendar), but might be able to acquire it if needed. A host of others are frothing at the mouth for the skills and secrets necessary to create the precious gunpowder and the weapons that utilize it. In the latter group would fall all humanoids, Hule, and most of the Isle of

Dawn nations. None of them would be above kidnapping, blackmail, and other treachery to acquire what they want.

Much like the style of the medieval world, Known World cannons would probably be delicately carved and painted in the bright heraldic colors of their own-

ers. Pennants would be added to identify the commanders. All this could be very colorful, except that gunpowder is still poorly understood in the MYSTARA setting. Its components, mixing techniques, and dosage vary from one alchemist to another.

### Ballista

	Mastery	Ranges	Damage	Defense	Special
P=L	Basic	100/200/300	1d10+6	—	—
	Skilled	110/210/300	1d12 + 7	—	Skewer (S)
	Expert	120/210/300	2d8+7	—	Skewer (S/M)
	Master	130/220/300	P: 3d6+7 S: 4d4+7	—	As above (S/M) + Death (S)
Gd. Master	140/220/300	P:3d8+8 S: 3d6+8	—	As above (S/M) + Death (S/M)	

P = L: Primary target includes large (L) creatures only.

P: Primary target.

S: Secondary target (all other targets).

S/M/L: Ranges—Short/Medium/Long.

Special effects: All special effects are limited to the specified ranges. Skewer: Unless the defender saves vs. death ray, the ballista's heavy bolt remains stuck in the defender! The defender must make a successful Strength check to remove it, or else the bolt inflicts another 1d6 points of damage each round the defender attempts to move. Death: Unless the defender saves vs. death ray, he is reduced to 0 hp.

### Springal (*heavy ballista*)

	Mastery	Ranges	Damage	Defense	Special
P=L	Basic	80/160/240	2d8+8	—	—
	Skilled	100/170/240	2d10+9	—	Skewer (S)
	Expert	120/180/240	2d12+10	—	Skewer (S/M)
	Master	140/190/240	P: 3d10+11 S: 3d8+11	—	As above (S/M) + Death (S)
Gd. Master	160/200/240	P: 3d12+12 S: 5d6+10	—	As above (S/M) + Death (S/M)	

Note: The springal is similar to the normal ballista, except it hurls heavy javelins rather than bolts. The difference lies in its greater size and hurling mechanism that relies on a vertical, wooden spring hitting the back of the javelin, rather than a crossbow-style device. Note that the springal only has a 90° field of fire (part of its firing mechanism can be rotated up to 45° left or right), compared to the ballista that has a full 360° field of fire. The springal's primary/secondary targets and special effects are the same as the ballista's. Check the *Weapon Table Supplement* later in this article for the remainder of this weapon's game statistics.

### Light catapult (*and onagers*)

	Mastery	Ranges	Damage	Defense	Special
P=L	Basic	200/250/300	1d8+8	—	—
	Skilled	210/260/300	1d10 + 9	—	Stun (S/M)
	Expert	220/260/300	2d6+9	—	Stun (all sizes)
	Master	230/270/300	P:2d8+10 S: 1d12+11	—	As above + Knockout (S/M)
Gd. Master	240/270/300	P: 2d10+12 S: 2d8 + 12	—	As above + Knockout (all sizes)	

P = L: Primary target includes large (L) creatures only.

P: Primary target.

S: Secondary target (all other targets).

S/M/L: Defender's size—Small/Medium/Large.

Special effects: Special effects are limited to the defender's relative size. Stun: Unless the defender saves vs. death ray, he is stunned. A stunned defender moves at one-third speed and cannot attack or cast spells. The defender also suffers a -2 penalty to Armor Class and saving throws (including saving throws against the catapult's possible Knockout effects). Knockout: Unless the defender saves vs. death ray, he is knocked unconscious for 1d100 rounds.

As far as artillery pieces are concerned, the defender's size is in relation to the attacker's. To keep it simple, anything half the size of the attacker (round up) is considered Small (S). It should be considered Large (L) if twice or more the size of the attacker (round up). Anything else is Medium (M). See "Oversized weapons" later in this article.

The big risk of using gunpowder is that it can backfire. Anytime an unmodified result of 1 or 2 is rolled when firing a siege weapon, the cannon explodes causing the indicated amount of damage for its Basic level of weapon mastery. Damage affects a radius of 20' for an iron pot, 30' for a serpentine, 60' for a bombard, and 90' for a great bombard (no save). The hand-gun explosion effect is explained separately under its own entry.

**General note on cannons:** The iron pot, serpentine, bombard, and great bombard are siege weapons comparable to catapults in terms of establishing their primary/secondary targets and special effects. Their minimum ranges are equal, to half their Basic short ranges. The cost of ammunition varies with the size of the bombard. Assuming that a pound of powder costs 5 gp, a single shot from an iron pot costs 10 gp, a serpentine shot costs 20 gp, 450 gp for a bombard, and 1,200 gp for a great bombard. A mason is needed on site to carve stones to fit exactly the caliber of the canon (every gun has a different caliber).

**Fire rates:** The firing rates are for siege situations, where artillerists properly clean their guns and allow ample time for cooling. In an emergency, siege weapons can fire faster, but catastrophic explosions would be more likely (on an unmodified result 1, 2, or 3 on an attack roll). In this case, a serpentine could fire as fast as a light catapult; a bombard could match a heavy catapult; a great bombard could fire as fast as a trebuchet. Weapon mastery never increases the firing rates of siege weapons, especially when gunpowder and overheated barrels are involved.

**Great bombards:** A great bombard should be a "unique" weapon, a one-of-a-kind in a kingdom. It belongs more to the realm of fantasy than history—but that's what we're here for! When referring to it, one should give it a proper name like "King Karameikos' *Mad Mary*" or "the Great Bombard of Freiburg," etc.

The one described in this article, a 20'-long cannon weighing at least 10 tons, shoots a huge, 1,200-pound boulder up to 500 yards, with an extravagant amount of powder for each shot (at least 240 pounds—no one said that big guns in the D&D game had to be efficient!) Other gargantuan bombards can be built to fire smaller projectiles up to a mile away, but at half damage (rounded down). After each shot, a cone-shaped area about 30-yards-long by 20-yards-wide immediately in front of the great bombard's mouth fills with a thick, black smoke that blocks normal sight. It takes three rounds to clear the air with a normal breeze.

The horrendous thunder of a great bombard can be heard 10 miles away, possibly frightening the enemy. In addition to its special Stun and Knockout effects, a

great bombard also requires one Morale Check per day from all enemy troops (of less than one full HD each or "level-zero" NPC) within its field of fire and range. The Morale Check is made at the moment of the first shot each day. Horses are particularly vulnerable to the thunderous detonation. They become skittish within a mile of the gun and remain so for a whole turn after the detonation (no cavalry charges, orderly lines, and timely maneuvers possible during that time).

Projectiles shot from a great bombard have an area of effect of 20' radius from the point of impact. All objects or creatures within that area of effect suffer 1d10 points of damage from flying debris (save vs. death ray for half damage).

The great bombard requires six large wagons to transport and 40-50 yokes of draft horses or oxen. This includes its supply of powder, balls, lifting apparatus, heavy timber pieces and trestles to hold the bombard, spare part, tools, accessories, crews, etc. In order to unload the massive gun and position it, up to 200 people are needed. Such huge devices can move only at the rate of 16 miles a day by road. As with most bombards, it is solidly tied to a bed of thick timber pieces to absorb the recoil. Beams and wedges are then needed to elevate and aim the bombard. The timber has to be repaired or replaced almost after every shot, and the bombard is then re-aimed before firing again.

**Missing a target:** When any artillery piece misses its target, use a conventional scatter diagram (a hex with its sides numbered 1-6) to see where the boulder actually hits. On a score of 1 on a d6, the boulder falls due north of the intended target. On a 2, it falls northeast, on a 3, southeast, etc. Subtract the number the attacker rolled (after modifications) from the score needed to hit the target, and multiply the result by five. The total indicates how many yards in the given direction the boulder misses its target.

If the projectile exceeds by 20 yards or more its maximum possible range as the result of a missed shot, assume the artillery crew somehow packed too much powder into the cannon! The chief artilleryist or the best crew member must make a skill check (Intelligence score +1 for each level of weapon mastery above Unskilled). If it fails, the cannon's barrel cracks and needs to be sent back to a master engineer for repair (a score of 20 always fails). Repair requires a full week (at the cost of one-quarter the original cost of the cannon). The cannon will blow up if used while damaged. Note that a cannon cannot hit itself or something behind its own position! If this happens, reroll the direction of the error. A projectile, however, could conceivably fall as little as a yard away from the cannon's muzzle as the result of a missed shot (to the vast relief and amusement of the enemy).

**Building cannons:** These novelties require the services of a specialized engineer. The engineer must have the proficiency skill to build cannons. The initial skill requires three slots. The skill is based

upon Intelligence with a -5 penalty. The cannon must be fired (usually in combat, by its artillery crew) to find out whether it was properly built. If the engineer had succeeded the skill roll, then the cannon

### Heavy catapult

	Mastery	Ranges	Damage	Defense	Special
P=L	Basic	250/320/400	1d10 + 10	—	—
	Skilled	270/330/400	1d12 + 12	—	Stun (S/M)
	Expert	290/340/400	2d8 + 12	—	Stun (all sizes)
	Master	310/350/400	P: 2d12 + 12 S: 2d10 + 12	—	As above + Knockout (S/M)
Gd. Master	330/360/400	P: 3d10+12 S: 4d6 + 10	—	As above + Knockout (all sizes)	

### Trebuchet

	Mastery	Ranges	Damage	Defense	Special
P=L	Basic	250/375/500	1d12 + 13	—	—
	Skilled	280/390/500	2d8 + 14	—	Stun (S/M)
	Expert	320/410/500	2d10 + 15	—	Stun (all sizes)
	Master	360/430/500	P: 2d12 + 16 S: 2d10 + 16	—	As above + Knockout (S/M)
Gd. Master	400/450/500	P: 5d6 + 16 S: 3d10 + 12	—	As above + Knockout (all sizes)	

Note: The heavy catapult and trebuchet are comparable to the light catapult in terms of establishing primary/secondary targets and special effects.

### Weapon Table supplement

Weapon	Cost (gp)	Enc. (cn)	AC	HP	Full crew	Fire Rate	Ammo. Cost/Week
Springal	100	12,000	4	18	5	1/4 Rds.	3,000
Hand Gun	50	100	—	—	(1)	113 Rds.	N/A
Iron Pot	500	5,000	0	18	4	1/Turn	2,800
Serpentine*	1,000	10,000	0	24	4	1/Turn	5,600
Bombard	2,500	80,000	-2	30	6	1/½Hr.	45,000
G. Bombard	5,000	200,000	-2	40	10	1/Hour	60,000

\* Add 100 gp if mounted on wheels (a two-wheel carriage). For another 20gp, a serpentine can be fitted with a small wooden mantlet to provide some overhead protection from missile weapons (arrows and crossbow bolts shot from long range). It is similar to a shield (AC +1) and protects the crew operating the serpentine.

### Hand gun (*couleuvrine-a'-main* or *hand-culverin*)

	Mastery	Ranges	Damage	Defense	Special
P=H	Basic	60/20/180	1d8+2	—	—
	Skilled	75/130/180	1d10+2	H: +1AC/*	Double damage on 2.0
	Expert	90/140/180	1d12 + 2	H: +2AC/*	Double damage on 19-20
	Master	105/150/180	P: 2d8 + 4 S: 1d12+4	H: +2AC/*	Double damage on 18-20
Gd. Master	120/160/180	P: 3d6 + 5 S: 2d6+5	H: +3AC/*	Double damage on 17-20	

P = H: Primary target is a foe attacking with either hand-held or hand-thrown weapons.  
S: Secondary target (monsters attacking with natural or missile weapons).

H: AC/\*: AC bonus and number of times this AC bonus can be used against attacks from primary targets (once during the round the weapon is fired).

**Note:** This weapon is only listed here for reference. It is not a siege weapon. This ancestor of the arquebus requires two hands to fire. It looks like a bulky, metal tube (1" caliber) at the end of a wooden staff that the gunner holds under the arm when shooting. A slow burning match or cord is needed to fire the weapon. It can fire every three rounds, requiring two full rounds to reload, during which the user must not be interrupted or wounded. Weapon mastery does not improve its rate of fire.

On an unmodified hit roll of 1, the hand gun backfires, causing 1d6 points of damage to the user. The ammunition consists of a fine black powder produced by an alchemist and properly sized stone bullets, adding up to 10 gp for 20 shots. It can be used only by a fighter.

*Double damage:* If the attacker rolls the indicated attack score without modifications, damage is doubled.

fires normally. If not, treat as if the artillery crew's hit roll was a 1 (i.e., the gun blows up). If the attack roll was indeed 1, double the damage from the explosion.

The engineer can build iron pots, serpentines, and veuglaires without any further penalty. Each one successfully built reduces the engineer's skill penalty by 1 at that specific type of cannon. For example, an engineer who's already built three functioning serpentines gets -2 instead of -5 the next time he builds a serpentine. Any successes beyond five are ignored for each particular type of can-

non. It takes a month to build an iron pot or small bombard.

The engineer can build full-sized bombards with an extra penalty of -5 to skill checks, in addition to any penalties he might still have with smaller artillery pieces (add all penalties existing for iron pots, serpentines, and veuglaires). As with smaller cannons, this penalty can be reduced by the number of full-size bombards successfully built. Bombards require two months for their construction.

Great bombards receive an extra -10 penalty to the skill check. This penalty can

never be reduced. Great bombards require six months for their construction. Full payment is generally required prior to construction. However, if a bombard blows up on the first attempt to use it, it is customary for the master engineer to repay a fine worth 20% of the whole construction fee.

**Gunpowder quality:** There are varying degrees of quality for gunpowder that are never apparent at the time of purchase. Poor gunpowder will misfire on a roll one greater than what would normally cause a hand gun or a siege weapon to explode. For example, on a roll of 3, a bombard with poor gunpowder would misfire.

Misfiring does not necessarily cause an explosion—instead nothing happens for 1d10 rounds. At the end of the indicated round, roll 1d6. On a 1-2, the weapon does indeed explode (as if an attack roll of 1 had been rolled). On a 3-4, the weapon fires normally. On a 5-6, the powder is bad and does not ignite at all. The weapon must be reloaded.

If the powder is of superior quality, the chance for explosion is reduced by one. A siege weapon thus would only explode on an attack roll of 1. In the case of the hand gun, replace the explosion with a misfire, as explained above.

One is likely to get poor-quality powder from an unscrupulous alchemist or from an abandoned armory. An old powder keg found in a dungeon will probably fall into his category. Powder from Ochalean alchemists is reputed to be excellent—although this could be nothing but rumor! Specialists known to produce such superior gunpowder often charge twice the regular price.

**War Machine effects:** Although expensive to build and not necessarily very efficient, cannons do have a greater value in the War Machine mass-combat system compared to traditional artillery. An iron pot gives a +6 to an army's BR, a serpentine or a veuglaire gives a +8 BR, a bombard a +12 BR, and a great bombard +16 BR.

At the end of each day, roll 1d20. On a score of 1, one or more cannons have exploded (2d10% of all cannons, rounded up). The destroyed cannons are chosen at random, and 1d4 crew members per destroyed cannons are permanently lost (includes the artillery chief on rolls of 4). With superior-quality gunpowder, only 1d10% of the cannons explode. With poor gunpowder, 3d10% of the cannons explode.

## Bibliography

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### Iron pot (*pot de fer*)

Mastery	Ranges	Damage	Defense	Special
P=L				
Basic	90/180/270	1d8+6	—	—
Skilled	110/190/270	1d10+7	—	Stun (S/M)
Expert	130/200/270	2d6+7	—	Stun (all sizes)
Master	150/210/270	P: 2d8+8	—	As above + Knockout (S/M)
		S: 1d12+9		
Gd. Master	180/220/270	P: 2d10+10	—	As above + Knockout
		S: 2d8+10		(all sizes)

This is an early version of the contemporary mortar weapon. It looks like a fat, vase-shaped cannon, almost wider than it is long (about 3' long). It fires a 20-pound projectile with two pounds of powder.

### Small bombard (*serpentine*)

Mastery	Ranges	Damage	Defense	Special
P=L				
Basic	120/240/360	2d4+7	—	—
Skilled	150/255/360	2d8+8	—	Stun (S/M)
Expert	180/270/360	3d6+9	—	Stun (all sizes)
Master	210/285/360	P: 2d10+11	—	As above + Knockout (S/M)
		S: 3d6+10		
Gd. Master	240/300/360	P: 3d8+12	—	As above + Knockout
		S: 3d6+11		(all sizes)

This is a small cannon, about 6' long with a 6" caliber, sometimes mounted on wheels. It shoots a 40-pound projectile with four pounds of powder. Intermediate cannons, like the medieval *veuglaires*, also existed, with an approximate length of 10' and a 10" caliber. The latter usually sat on a heavy set of timber to absorb its recoil. The veuglaire inflicts an extra +5 to damage at all levels of mastery. It has the same statistics as the serpentine, except for a price of 1,800 gp, an encumbrance of 15,000 gp, and an ammunition cost per week of siege reaching 20,000 gp.

### Bombard

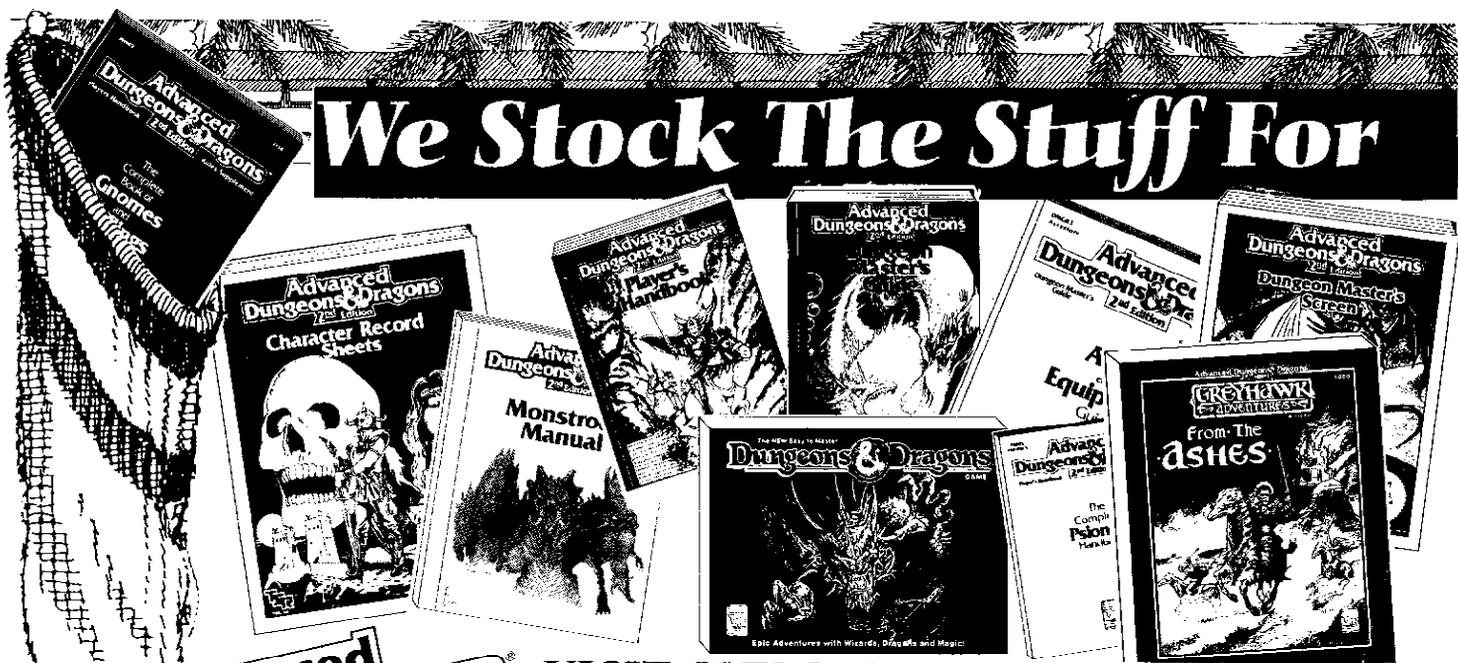
Mastery	Ranges	Damage	Defense	Special
P=L				
Basic	140/280/420	d12+13	—	—
Skilled	170/295/420	2d8+14	—	Stun (S/M)
Expert	200/310/420	2d10+15	—	Stun (all sizes)
Master	230/325/420	P: 2d12+16	—	As above + Knockout (S/M)
		S: 2d10+16		
Gd. Master	260/340/420	P: 5d6+16	—	As above + Knockout
		S: 3d10+12		(all sizes)

This is a large cannon, about 15' long, with a 20" calibre, capable of shooting a 300-pound projectile with 45 pounds of powder. It needs two wagons with eight horses/oxen to carry. At least 70 people are needed to load or unload the bombard from its carriage.

### Great bombard

Mastery	Ranges	Damage	Defense	Special
P=L				
Basic	200/400/600	3d8+10	—	—
Skilled	250/425/600	3d10+10	—	Stun (S/M)
Expert	300/450/600	4d8+12	—	Stun (all sizes)
Master	350/475/600	P: 4d10+14	—	As above + Knockout (S/M)
		S: 3d12+14		
Gd. Master	400/500/600	P: 4d12+16	—	As above + Knockout
		S: 3d12+16		(all sizes)

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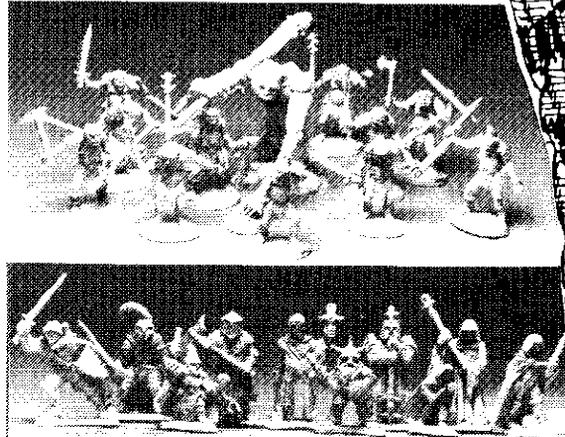
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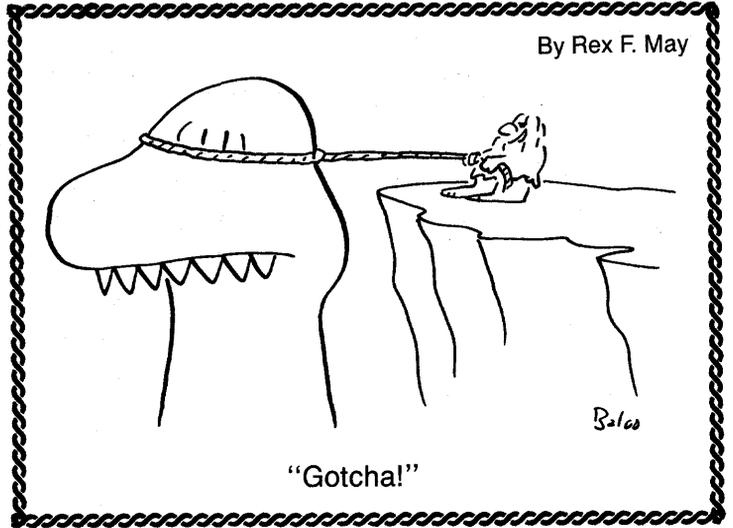
# DRAGONMIRTH

By Michael Ferman



"Trapped? . . . Sure, but hear that digging? Help is on the way!"

By Rex F. May



"Gotcha!"

Balas

## Yamapapa

SO, OGREK THINKS HE CAN BUY JOE OUT FROM UNDER ME, EH?

THAT LOATHSOME INVEIGLING, PRESUMPTUOUS LITTLE-LITTLE—

WHAT DOES HE DO FOR A LIVING, ANYWAY?

LOOK AT MOTHER, TIMMY.

ATTA BOY!

CAN YOU DO WHAT MOTHER DOES?

HIT THE POINT!

WELL, HE'S GONNA BE CALLED "OGREK THE UNBREATHING" IN A MINUTE!

I... I'M NOT SURE—

COME ALONG. MOTHER WILL TAKE IT SLOW.

WELL, FEA, SINCE YOU'VE BETRAYED YOUR FRIENDS TODAY, PERHAPS YOU CAN HELP ME BETRAY ONE OF MINE.

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ONCE YOU SEE HOW NORMAL IT IS, YOU'LL FEEL BETTER!

THANKS. I GUESS I NEED TO DEVELOP A MORE POSITIVE ATTITUDE ABOUT TREACHERY.

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SUBSEQUENTLY, ON THE OGREK FRONT...

PARDON ME— EXCUSE ME— GIANT VAMPIRIC FLIGHTLESS WINGED SQUIRREL, COMING THROUGH...

SO WOULD YOU SAY I HAD LIMITED DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY, OR DO I HAVE COMPLETE EXTRATERRITORIALITY WITHIN MY OWN PERSON?

DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOUR BIRTHDAY IS? YOU KNOW WHEN YOUR DEATHDAY IS?

WELL—WHAT IS IT? AH, NOT 'TIL YOUR BIRTHDAY.

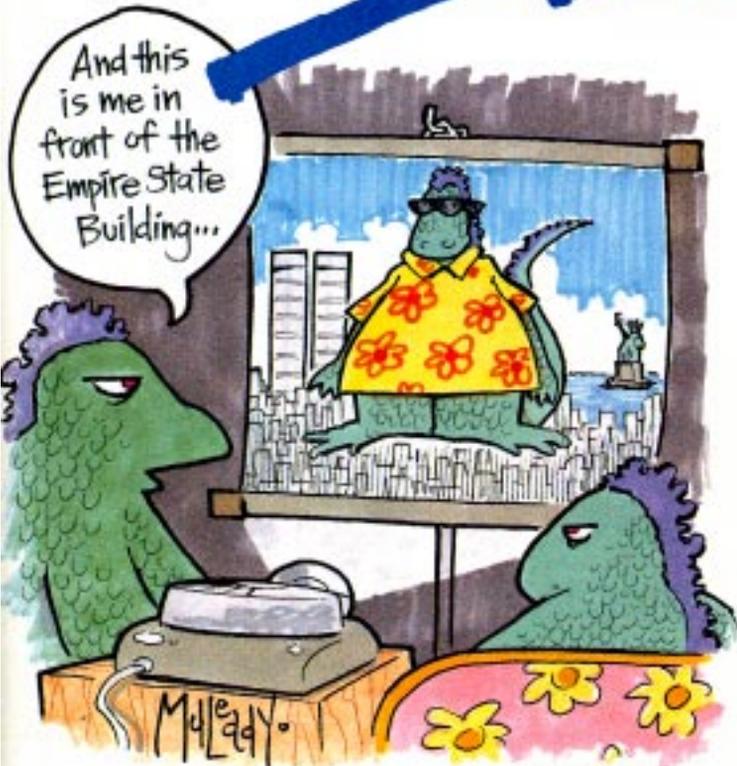
SON, I AM VERY PROUD OF YOU, BUT I FEEL I MUST FLY AHEAD AND DESTROY OGREK WHILE MY IRE IS UP!

OH, HELLO, PERSEPHONE. YOU WON'T BELIEVE WHAT I JUST BOUGHT!

YOUR BIRTHDAY IS TWO DAYS FROM NOW, AND YOU'VE BEEN SUCH A DELIGHTFUL OPPONENT, I'VE BOUGHT YOU A GIFT I'M SURE YOU'LL LIKE! IT WAS ALMOST MORE THAN I COULD AFFORD.

IS IT JOE? YOU BOUGHT ME JOE, DIDN'T YOU?!

MORE GOOD NEWS MOM! THERE'S A LADY OVER HERE WHO SAYS I SHOULD BE ABLE TO GLIDE!



By Bob Muleady



By Ted Judah



By Michael R. Wheal

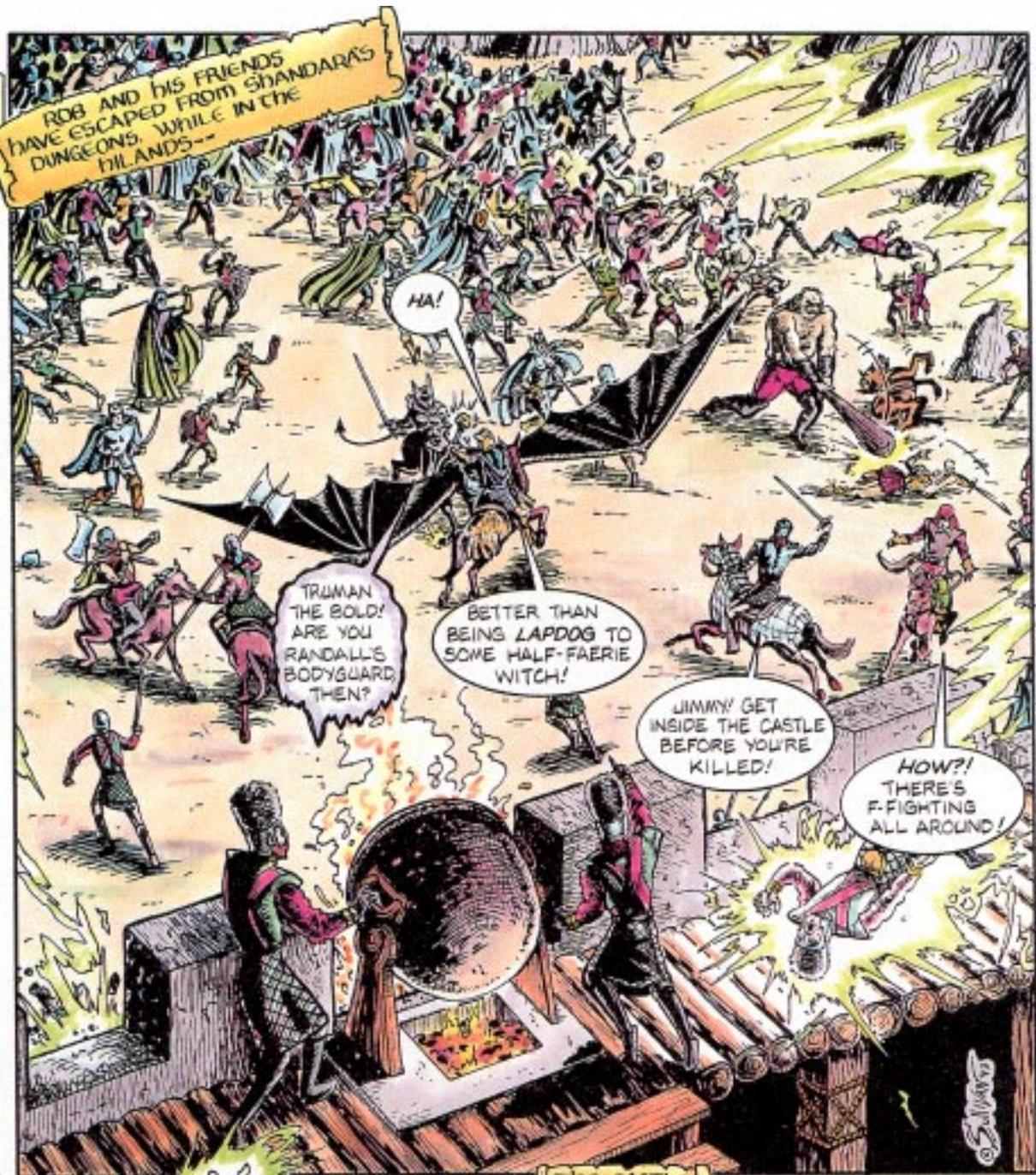
"Begging your pardon, sir, but I don't recall you ever owning a +5 giant slayer."



By Jerry Fuchs

"Don't look at me! How was I supposed to know it was an ent?"

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LETTERING Thom Zahler

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BECA! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

THIS IS A CRITICAL JUNCTURE! I MUST CONCENTRATE ON TRANSMITTING MY POWER! GO TO YOUR ROOM!

I WANT THE SCROLL! MOTHER, I'M GOING HOME WITH DAD!



THIS IS YOUR HOME!

HA! A HOME WITHOUT A PARENT! YOU'RE OFF STARTING WARS, GALAVANTING AROUND THE MULTIVERSE, ATTENDING TO YOUR PARAMOURS-- I HARDLY EVER SEE YOU!

LET HER GO, SANDY!

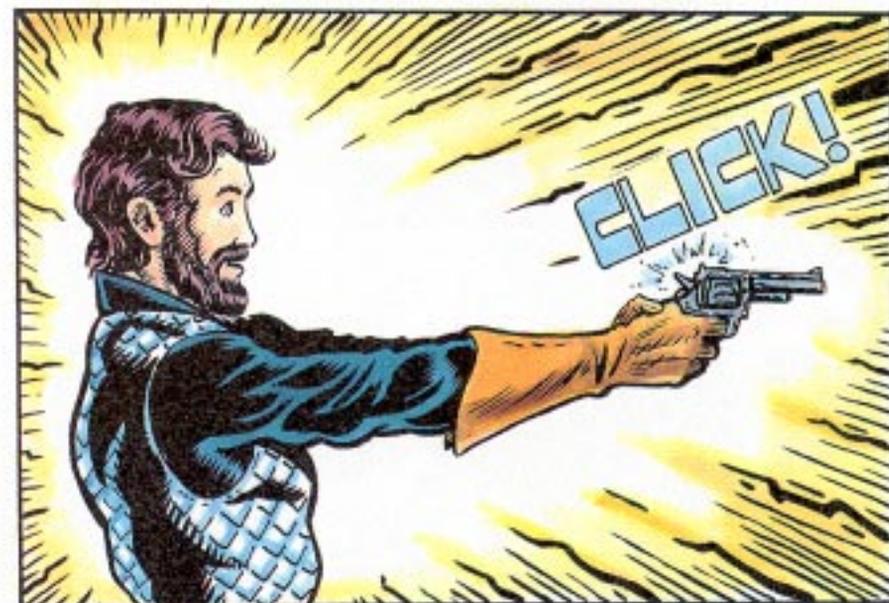
I'M MORE YOUR PRIZED POSSESSION THAN YOUR DAUGHTER!



I'M TAKING HER HOME.

# ROBINSON'S WAR

PART 44





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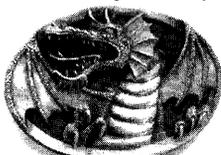


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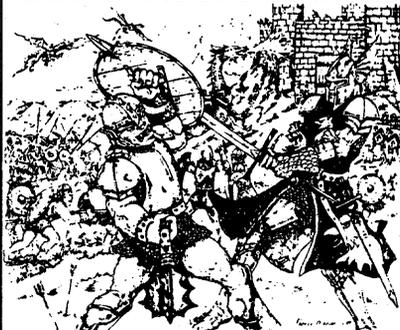
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After years of frustration with Oklahoma City metro area fandom, I have come to the conclusion that fantasy and war gaming don't benefit from their inclusion in science fiction conventions. Only gaming conventions and events will promote the hobby.

However, this conclusion is based solely on local evidence. I would very much like to know if this is the case nationwide, or if my frustration is only a local aberration? Please let me know what your readers think.

Jonathan Keepers  
El Reno OK

I have been playing off and on since the late 1970s. I keep meaning to write to you, but each letter turns into an article. Consequently, I am writing this letter to comment on an important point (the original reason I was going to write) and will send an article some other year.

I once worked in a factory where lead was part of the product, and blood tests were frequently run on the employees. Generally, the high lead count results came from the people who had less contact with the lead. People in daily contact took precautions: washed their hands before eating or smoking, kept hands away from mouth, rinsed mouth out before drinking, etc.

People handling unpainted figurines and then eating chips or whatever get no saving throw. Be aware, take care. Then there is no problem.

K. W. Brown  
Sicanous, British Columbia

I'd like to respond to Randy Jennings' letter concerning violence in role-playing games (DRAGON issue #190). Randy writes, "One thing I have found true in all cases is that the games revolve around violence." He's right; nearly all game systems published to date include combat systems for resolving conflicts through physical violence. But that doesn't necessarily mean game masters have to use the combat system in their own campaigns. While physical combat is often the easiest way out in a role-playing game (both for the player characters and for the game master), entire adventures and campaigns can play out without any character so much as

raising a fist.

One prime example of this is Willie Walsh's "Pearlman's Curiosity," published in DUNGEON® Adventure Issue #32. In his introduction, Willie writes, "The scenario favors investigation over the use of force, so PCs should be prepared to question NPCs, look for clues, and assemble them to figure out what is causing the problem." I ran my gaming group through this adventure with their usual characters—inveterate monster-slayers, every one of them—without a single attack die roll by either a PC or an NPC. And the players had a blast! Because the adventure isn't oriented around combat, it's easily converted to nearly any game system. (Although it was written for the AD&D® game, I ran that adventure with characters from Steve Jackson Games' GURPS\* system.)

The trick is to develop adventures and scenarios in which combat is not the only solution, or even in which combat would seriously jeopardize the party's success. Obviously, game systems with strong focuses on character abilities other than combat lend themselves to such campaigns more than games in which the characters' primary abilities involve fighting or casting spells. Randy mentioned the TOON\* game by Steve Jackson Games, but perhaps GURPS is closer to the mark. As a skill-based system, GURPS offers characters a lot of flexibility without demanding they specialize in violent skills. In fact, GURPS characters can be designed with built-in Pacifism—a vow or personal belief that restricts them to fighting only in self-defense, or even not at all.

Three GURPS supplements in particular offer campaigns in which the violence can easily be toned down. In *GURPS Ice Age*, campaigns can focus primarily on survival; cave men battling ferocious carnivores or hunting down massive pachyderms. (I know, that's violent too, but at least it's a form of Man Against Nature rather than Man Against Man.) Adventures can revolve around the quest for fire, or a search for a new home and new hunting grounds.

In *GURPS Bunnies & Burrows*, player characters are rabbits—real, honest-to-goodness bunnies with furry paws; not Rambo-style wampant wabbits with machine guns. Obviously, solutions to bunny problems don't often revolve around combat. (If you were a ten-pound bunny, what would you do if you saw a Rottweiler? Yes, yes, I know, the cover shows bunnies attacking the dog, but take a look *inside*, at the illustrations that capture the *real* flavor of the book.)

Perhaps Randy's looking for something like *GURPS Callahan's Crosstime Saloon*. Based on the stories by Spider Robinson, Callahan's Place is a setting for time travel, visitations by strange aliens, and friendly gatherings. Combat is typically fought with puns, not swords. Adventures revolve around problems solved with wits

rather than weapons.

I wish Randy the best of luck in the search for non-violent role-playing. Too often, game masters and players alike fall back on the old solution of "there's the bad guy—let's get 'im!"

Ann Dupuis  
Primary author,  
*GURPS Old West*

I am the Dungeon Master of a campaign set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. The campaign includes four players, but up until a few months ago we played on such an infrequent basis that most of our playing sessions were of the "hack-and-slash" variety—lacking both a detailed background or a desire for character development.

Now, however, our group has been able to meet on a more regular basis, necessitating a more developed campaign area. In addition, the hack-and-slash style of play has begun to recede. Most of the players have discovered that they enjoy role-playing their characters with greater depth.

Unfortunately, one of the players seems reluctant to give his character any depth at all. Personally, I have no objections to this, as he seems to enjoy this style of play.

However, my concern stems from the other players. While three of the players in the group are developing their characters' personalities through the campaign's subplots and their personal motivations, the hack-and-slash player is left out, content to count experience points and gold pieces. In short, three of the players have a great time by role-playing their characters' interactions with NPCs and each other, but the fourth player is ignored by the others since his character is two-dimensional.

I have asked the player if he might not prefer playing another class, another alignment, or another race with a different background. With a hint of anger, I'm afraid, I've even asked if he might not like to play a mindlessly violent fighter. But the player is content to maintain the status quo. Unfortunately, this is becoming a greater problem, since he's not only being left behind, but his hack-and-slash style is also working to the party's detriment.

For example, an NPC cleric adventuring with the party not too long ago demanded that he be paid in exchange for his healing services. At the time, the other PCs were paralyzed and low on hit points. Although the PCs had no other means of healing, the "hacker" chose not to even parley with the cleric, opting instead to attack, slaying the NPC outright. The paralyzed characters eventually "unfroze" to find that they had no means of healing for the rest of the adventure.

I would like to keep the campaign going as smoothly as possible; our present group has never really had the chance to enjoy an extended, consistent, and detailed campaign.

Further (for at least three of the players), the campaign is offering new and exciting role-playing challenges. But I am concerned that the group's conflicting styles of play will continue to cause greater problems in the sessions to come.

Any comments? I'd like to hear what advice you have to offer.

Name withheld by request  
Ω

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# Through the LOOKING Glass



©1993 by Robert Bigelow

Photographs by Mike Bethke



DRAGON LORDS\* game (Grenadier Models)

## 5700 DRAGON LORDS \* game \* \* \* \* ½

DRAGON LORDS is a miniatures game using dragon miniatures as combatants. The game is designed for two or more people and requires a solidly supported flat area to play. The box contains a number of components that include:

1. Six map sections measuring 9¾" × 15½". These maps show a variety of terrain features printed in color. Included are brush, trees, rocks, and small hills that are all overlaid by a hex grid. All map sections are interchangeable.
2. Four six-sided dice and six clear stands on hex bases. These come in plastic bags that should be saved to put the game's chits into after separation.
3. A counter-sheet with altitude and engagement markings for up to 10 dragons. These counters must be cut with a scissors or other sharp device, as they are not perforated. I also recommend that you photocopy and laminate the counters before cutting them. The counters are thick paper, but they could be damaged or lost.
4. A combat-reference sheet printed on both sides with all the tables needed to resolve most combat results. This should be copied and laminated also. Keep the original somewhere safe.
5. A rulebook that includes one copy of a two-sided player's sheet. The book is set up in a logical progression and is clearly indexed. The rules start with simple starting instructions and also contain advanced rules that work up to the game's full setting. There are premade dragons and a simple section on creating your own.

6. The pieces that will form six dragons and their riders. You must join the wings to the correct dragons by noting wing-size and body-type as shown in the illustrations. The drawings correctly match the bodies. The dragons vary in size from 33 mm to 53 mm and are in a variety of positions. The wings fit into grooves in the body. There are several with gaps that need to be filled to look good as the fit is not perfect.

A wizard with a comical hat and robes with symbols is holding a large wand. He

## Presenting a plethora of potential presents

I want to thank all of you who have called in support of my stance on the lead issue. I always enjoy talking to you, but I need to make a special request. The period of time from December through the first part of January is probably the worst time of the year to reach me. If you can avoid contacting me during this time, it would be appreciated.

I want to thank Sam White for the paint job on the Thunderbolt miniatures.

### Reviews

#### Grenadier Models, Inc.

P.O. Box 305  
Springfield PA 19064

#### Grenadier Models UK, Ltd.

25 Babbage Rd.  
Deeside, Clwyd, Wales  
UNITED KINGDOM CH5 2QB

#### Miniatures' product ratings

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

has a clear facial expression. There are two different knights in plate armor and helmets. An archer dressed as a medieval sergeant-at-arms has his bow cocked as if preparing to shoot, and a quiver on his back. The crossbowman is dressed in chain with his bow at the ready. The female is dressed as a barbarian and hoist a spear. All of them are on their knees as if at church. The imperfection in this group is that the dragon stands are too small for the holes and will require work. The dragons' scaly bodies, sharp spinal fins, and well-done faces required little clean up.

The game's mechanics are very simple almost like playing GDW's BLUE MAX\* game with dragons, riders, and magic. Set-up time is minimal and if you don't use the pregenerated sheets, the beginning value and options are included on two pages to speed set-up.

Movement starts by determining initiative. You then record your speed and altitude without your opponents' knowledge. You expose the information as you begin your movement. Movement is by hexes and is affected by the facing of your dragon and changes in direction. Acceleration and deceleration are both gradual, being affected by size and maneuverability. After movement, you log your rider's target and resolve his combat or the breath-weapon combat. Each rider has different skills and costs according to his combat impact. The five breath weapons, each causing different levels of damage. Your breath-weapon target is also hidden from your opponents so you can achieve surprise. There are range restrictions, and altitude plays a part as you cannot hit a target more than three steps distant from you. If you use a breath weapon, you cannot get into close combat.

If no breath weapon is used, close combat can occur. This is a simple roll to establish the winner but represents a down-and-dirty fight in which both parties take damage. To engage in close combat, you must be adjacent to your foe.

Combat is fast and facing is important. I recommend you use the ribbon as suggested. The game requires a high degree of strategy to outguess your opponent. Having played BLUE MAX, this game is easy. I felt that the one-on-one rule for dragon combat is a handicap in a multiple-dragon rumble. I also felt that the attacking dragon should have been given a slightly favorable modifier if he attacked from a hex facing other than head on, say a +1 bonus. The DRAGON LORDS game is a lot of fun. The game carries a \$34.95 price tag.



Damsel to Werewolf (Grenadier Models)



Undead Cavalry Command (Grenadier Models)

### 3103 Legends Set-Damsel to Werewolf \*\*\*\*\*

This three-piece set reveals the transformation from human to werewolf. The two humanoid figures are mounted on circular bases detailed with molded grass, leaves, and rocks. The oval base for the wolf is a molded rock hill. The set I have currently contains lead, but it is due for conversion shortly.

Figure #1, the human female, is dressed in a full-length robe from shoulder to bare feet. The right side of the dress is slit, the leg exposed. Her arms are bare, and the left arm is playing with her hair; the right is straight out with the hand open.

Figure #2 is a humanoid wolf, and is dressed the same as the female. The head is wolflike with open jaws and sharp teeth as it howls at the sky. The hands are almost paws, with long fingers and claws.

Figure 3 is a wolf measuring 26 mm long from jaw to rump. It is also howling at the sky. The pose is almost prim, its paws set and back slightly arched. Hair detail is good, and the ears are back in the correct position.

There no flash on my pieces, and the mold lines needed only minimal scraping. This is an excellent set for gaming purposes, as you can show the players what state their changing lycanthrope is in. The price is \$5.99 for three figures and well worth it.

### 51018 Undead Cavalry Command \*\*\*\*

This four-set group is scaled for 28 mm and consists of two horses and two riders. The horses are on narrow, minimally detailed oval bases. These figures are lead, but all Grenadier's figures are supposed to



Ghosts and Apparitions (Grenadier Models)



Vampires' Vault (Grenadier Models)

he converted to another substance by year's end.

Set #1 is of a robed being astride a rotting horse. The horse gallops full out despite strips of flesh peeling off and ribs showing through gaping holes. The saddle blanket is tattered and torn, but the reins are in good shape. The mane and tail are in good condition even if the legs aren't. Teeth are visible, and tufts of grass are molded with the hooves. There is a large amount of flash between the legs and on the belly and head. There are also bad mold lines that will take a lot of work to fix since they go through ribs and hair.

The rider had flash under the upraised right arm and more bad mold lines. A leering skull forms his head. His left arm holds the reins, and his left holds a serrated scimitar. A rotting robe with cowl

thrown back covers everything but the head, forearms, and high boots. It is difficult to tell the being's original race.

Set #2 has a steed being reigned in by its sergeant-at-arms rider. The horse has the most rot in its legs and head, and less in its main body. This horse shows clenched jaws; its mane and tail are intact and there is little flash, but the same pesky mold lines are present. The rider wears torn chain mail with his bones protruding through. His head is slightly flattened, and its splitting skin stretches as he screams defiance. Bony hands grip a two-handed sword at the ready. His wrinkled jerkin is ripped in front. Mold lines are bad along his left side, and there was flash along the sword and arm.

There is no standard bearer with this set, nor is there an immediately recogniz-

able leader figure. These figures might make good scouts or serve as a player-character encounter, but not a command set. Two sets sell for \$8.99.

#### 605 Ghosts and Apparitions \*\*\*\*\*

This set contains three pieces that can be used in either 25 or 28 mm scales. The figures are all mounted on undetailed oval bases and are made of lead at present,

Figure #1 is a form rising from the ground measuring 20 mm tall and spreading to 35 mm in length. No features appear except for two eyelike depressions in the center.

Figure #2 looks like a human ghost. Swirling mists molded into the lead barely cover skeletal arms and hands. The right hand reaches down toward the ground, and the left arm stretches upward. Interestingly, the left hand looks like it wears a puppet. There was light, almost unnoticeable flash in two spots.

Figure #3 has a clearly defined skull, hands, and hair. The figure rises up with both hands up in the air. On close observation you can see its ribs.

I highly recommend this set. These are some of the better ghost miniatures I have seen and are definitely worth \$5.99 per pack.

#### 613 Vampires' Vault \*\*\*\*\* 1/2

This set contains three pieces that could be used for either 25 mm or 28 mm gaming. The standing figures are each on a flat undecorated oval base; the other two figures require no bases. These figures are made out of lead for now.

Figure #1 is a female rising from a casket. She wears a long robe and belt. Her face is plain except for her fanged smile; her hair drops onto her shoulders, and her dress is low cut. The casket is wood-grained with simple swivel handles. A slight gap appears in places at the bottom of the casket where the sides are warped. The only cleaning needed was around the casket side on the mold line.

Figure #2 is a male vampire whose lower half is in a misty state. He wears a suit coat, vest, and tie. His right arm is still smokey, and his left hand is only forming. The face is drawn and the hair slicked back. The figure has an excessive amount of flash on the collar points and arms; the left shoulder has a mold line. The raised collar is very thick, and you'll probably want to trim it. You'll also need to clean some light flash from the smoke holes.

Figure #3 is of a slain vampire in a 10 mm x 30 mm rectangular casket. The left arm hangs over the edge, and the right arm grasps a wooden stake jammed into its chest. Scraps of clothes and shreds of hair cling to the bony mass. The skull has eyes and a set of fangs. The casket is smooth, and one handle is missing. There are only light mold lines on this miniature.

The misty vampire makes this almost a required set for a game master. This is the only figure of this type I know of, so the

set is worth its \$5.99 price tag.

## Black Dragon Pewter

2700 Range Road  
North Bellmore NY 11710

### 7166 Peg-Leg

\*\*\*\* 1/2

### 7167 Yohoho

\*\*\*\*

### 7171 One-Eyed Pete

\*\*\*\* 1/2

These three figures are part of a pirate band that can be purchased singly or as a group. The figures all have slightly different dimensions. They are mounted on round bases with surfaces made to resemble a sandy beach with bits of treasure strewn at their feet.

Peg-Leg is a typical pirate captain. His left leg is an exaggerated wood-grained peg. A long, ragged coat falls to his knees while well-defined ribs poke through the opening. His arms support a hook on the left and a cutlass on the right. His head is covered by a floppy hat with a wide, upward-tilted bill embossed with a skull and crossbones. Blood-red jewels fill his eye sockets while the mouth is open as in a scream.

Yohoho has little of his shirt left to cover his oversized spine and thin ribs. His left hand holds a bottle while the right holds a skull-marked cup. His huge-boned legs stretch from tattered pants. His boots droop on his feet, while a ragged bandanna wreathes his head. His bone structure just doesn't look right, however.

One-Eyed Pete looks like he just stepped out of a Robert Louis Stevenson book. The skeletal figure has a peg on the left leg and large bones on the right leg and foot. Tattered shorts hang on a small waist. Spine detail and rib separation are good. The way the figure was poured left flat spots on the wrinkles on the shirt's back that make it almost flat. An oversized pipe is clenched in his right hand while his left holds a crutch. A strangely shaped skeletal bird, probably a parrot, is tangled on his left shoulder.

These figures are perfect for gamers who enjoy playing pirates. These are neat stocking stuffers and worth the \$15.00 price tag for each figure.

## Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

656 E. McMillan  
Cincinnati OH 45206-1971

### 1031 Captive Audience

\*\*\* 1/2

Thunderbolt Mountain dioramas make good gifts for the painters in your life. This 25-mm scale lead-free kit is no exception. The kit consists of six pieces which need to be trimmed and assembled.

The base measures 74 mm x 49 mm and represents a tapered edge ending in a mosaic tiled floor. The central floor, with engraved triangles and edged in brick, leads to a raised floor surrounded by brick. The rest of the floor is brick squares. A number of details bring this floor to life and make it a challenge for a



Peg-Leg, Yohoho, and One-Eyed Pete (Black Dragon Pewter)

painter. There are three gems in the runway and the raised floor for the throne is surrounded by scrolls, jars, books, markers, and all the implements of a wizard. Careful painting shows that some page detail is evident. The throne sits on the raised area among the books and is mold-like an old chair. The wing-back chair has diamonds at each point of the X-design of the upholstery. The throne is simple

except for the huge intertwined serpents staring balefully into the room. Mouths, nostrils, and eyes are evident. There is also a brazier and a reading stand complete with book, although the bases have no pegs or holes. This makes it easy to modify your scene, but they don't stand as easily as you might like.

Two orcs act as escort for a very angry human fighter. The orcs are heavily mus-

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Captive Audience (Thunderbolt Mountain)



Packhorse (Metal Magic)



Wizard with Scroll (Metal Magic)



Staghound Mk I (Rafm)

and arms except for bracers. The orc on the fighter's left is dressed in overlapping plate armor from shoulders to groin, front and back. The orc on her right is wearing leather under metal shoulder protectors. Both orcs have helmets and both wear

wide belts. Both carry scimitars. The orcs' facial details are good. The female fighter has waist-length wavy hair crowned by a helm. Metal plates protect her shoulders, but the leather front is ripped to the bustline. Her legs are protected by metal leggings and the feet by sandals. Her facial

features are distorted by rage.

The last member of this set is an evil wizard. The wizard's high-necked robe falls to the floor among hundreds of tassels that form the hem. His full-length cape is held on by an ornate chain and jeweled clasp. His head is covered by a skullcap. His face is wrinkled and set into a sneer as he reaches into a spell pouch with his left hand and waves a flame-topped wand with his right.

This is an excellent set, but you will have to seriously trim the base, clean the light flash, and pay special attention to arm and body junctions. The detail of this piece makes it well worth the \$13.95 price. I wish they would make the wizard separately.

## Metal Magic

c/o Wargames

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### C1046b Animal (Packhorse) \*\*\*\*\*

Where does camp equipment come from at the end of the day? How is it that the adventurers who fought unencumbered all day suddenly have all the comforts of home? They have a packhorse!

This packhorse is made of lead and scaled for 25 mm. The base has a rough top representing a sand or dirt surface. The base has very little flash. The figure stands 30 mm tall and is 32 mm from nose to rump. The tack consists of a blanket, straps, and a bridle. The horse's mane and tail show individual hairs. The ears stand up. The eye detail is sharp and the mouth is open. Hair-crowned hooves plod through the dirt.

There are two bedrolls, two large bags, seven small bags, what looks like a tent, a water jug, and a quiver of arrows on the horse's back.

This horse should be a required miniature for parties. The detail is excellent and very little cleaning is needed. The figure is well worth the \$2.80 price tag per package. This one is highly recommended.

### C1003h Wizard with Scroll \*\*\*\*

Most wizard figures are cast striding along or throwing a spell. This 25-mm figure is molded of lead and has an undetailed circular base that fits into a square plastic base. The wizard is wearing a simple robe with slightly puffed shoulders and long sleeves. A belt supports a spell pouch and a small sack. He faces straight ahead as he reads the engraved scroll he holds in both hands. Long straight hair falls back to his shoulders and a trimmed beard and mustache frame a face locked in concentration.

This figure also could be a mayor or king reading a decree, or an adventurer

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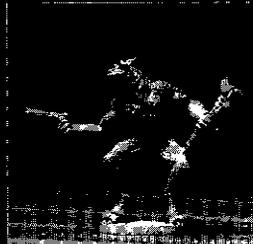
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Dark Elves with Crossbows (Ralpm)

reading a map. The worst thing about this figure is the mold line that runs exactly through the middle of the face. You need to take great care in removing the flash, or the soft metal may leave him with a pug nose like my figure. I recommend this figure for those with steady hands at \$1.79 per pack.

**FM Company, Inc.**

E a s t  
Cambridge, Ontario  
CANADA N1R 1P2

**6868 Staghound Mark I** \* \* \* \* 1/2

This vehicle comes as a 17-piece lead kit. The finished kit is scaled to 20 mm and is free standing. A very simple suspension system is included and the tires attach to

the axles. The hull needs the addition of the tool boxes and spare fuel tanks that both fit nicely into the holes in the side of the vehicle. Headlights and taillights are molded on. The turret consists of the main turret, a gun with face plate that glues to the turret, a periscope/light, and a machine gun.

What flash is present can be removed by rubbing a knife edge over the areas. The absence of assembly instructions is a sore spot, but the procedure is fairly obvious. I recommend this kit. It can be used for WWII squad actions or as a security vehicle in a TOP SECRET/S.I.™ or any "dark future" game, and is worth the \$12.00 price tag.

**3041 Dark Elves with Crossbows** \* \* \* \* 1/2

This set is scaled to 25 mm and represents the basic troops of the dark-elf society. The set is made of lead and contains two identical castings of male and one female with crossbows. The males are on an oval base with a rocky top, while the female is on a smooth rock face. All three have heavy crossbows that need trimming.

The two males are dressed in calf-length boots, groin and waist protectors, long gloves on the left arm and shoulder plates. A half-shirt of elven chain drops from under the neck-protector to the waist. There appears to be a mild mold fault on the left side of the face along the mold line.

The female dark elf is dressed in knee-high boots, with bare legs until you reach mid-thigh. A belt cinches a bikini bottom with a short sword on the right hip. An overlapping plate covers her from the neck to the bottom of her breasts. There is a chain mail shirt under the plate that stretches to the waist. A full quiver rests on her back as she holds her weapon at ease. The left side of her skull is slightly shaved and the rest of her long hair drops to the right.

The figures are nicely done, even if there are some slight flaws. The only problem is that you will need 10 packs to get up a couple of BATTLESYSTEM® units and their "keepers." These figures complement the Ral Partha figures and are worth the \$4.25 price tag.

If you need to get in touch with me during November, call me at (708) 336-0790 M,W,Th,F from 2-10P.M., or write to me c/o Friends' Hobby Shop, 1411 Washington St., Waukegan IL 60085.

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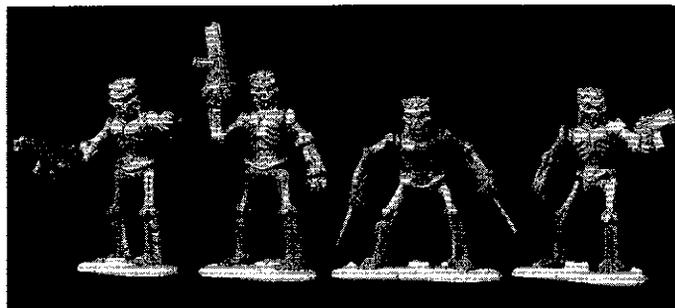
People who have seen advance copies of our Rifts miniatures are impressed. The quality is very good to excellent ... a great accomplishment for our first step into the world of metal miniatures. Soon Palladium will be running at full speed, releasing five or six blister packs every month (with the occasional pause to catch our breath). Here's what you can expect in the next few months.

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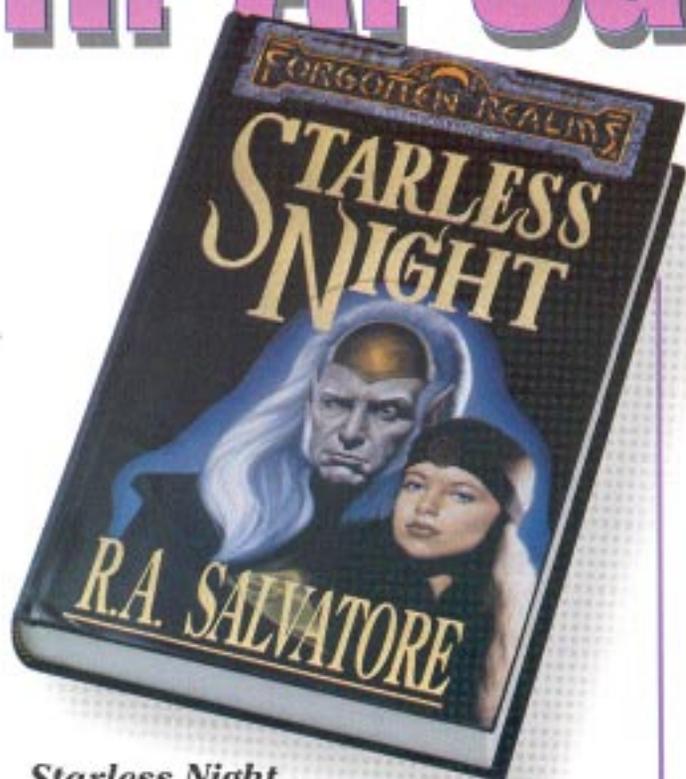
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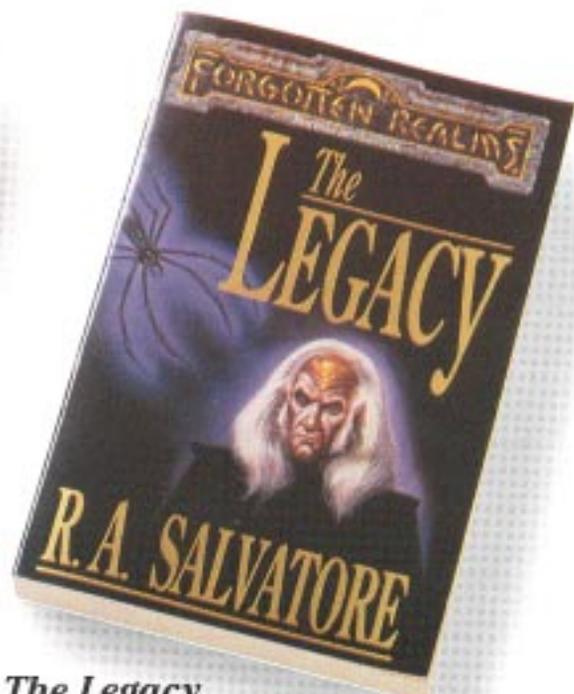


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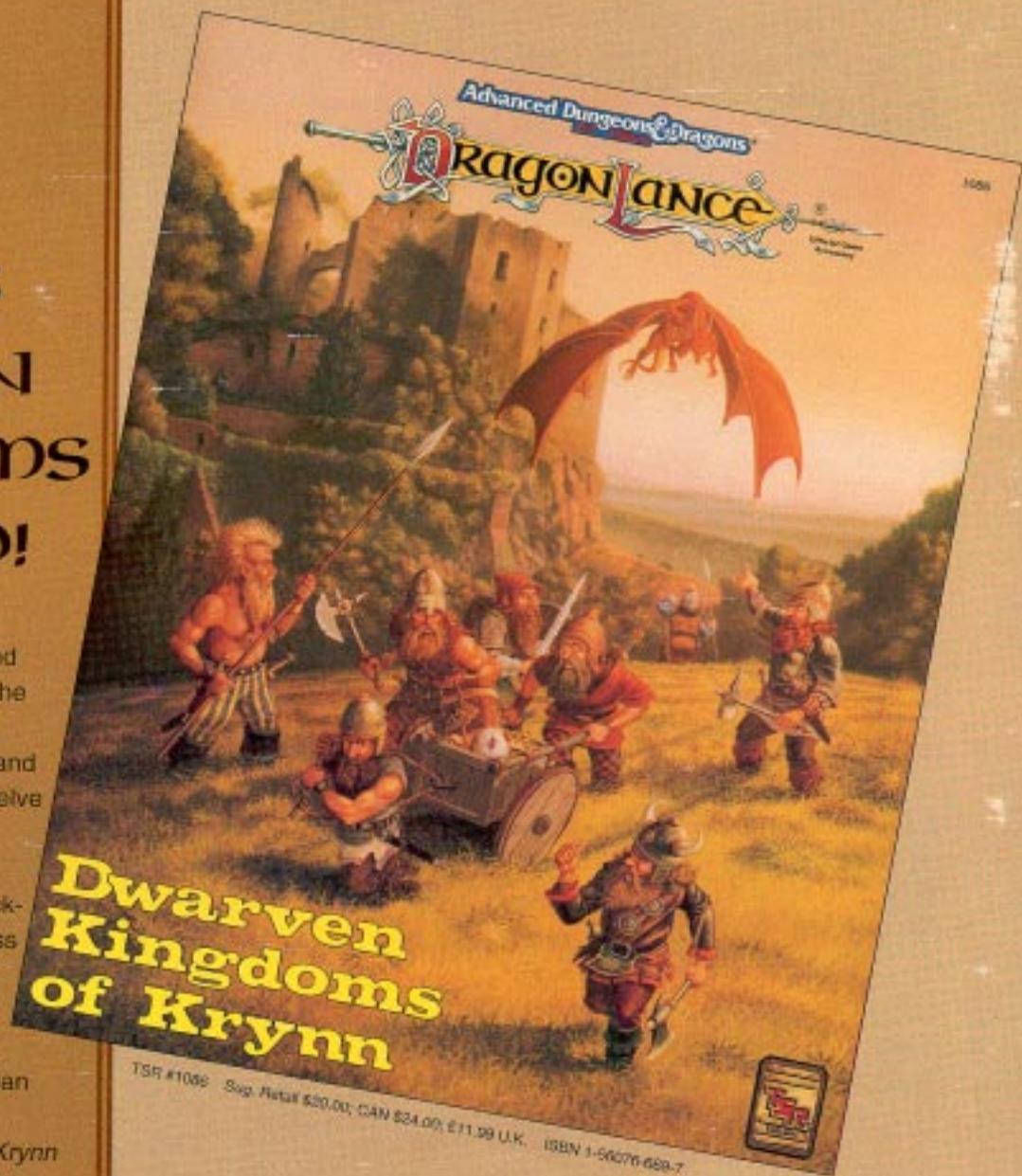
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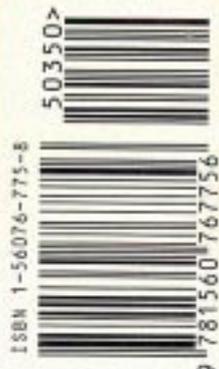


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