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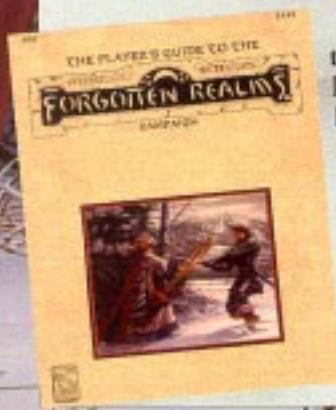
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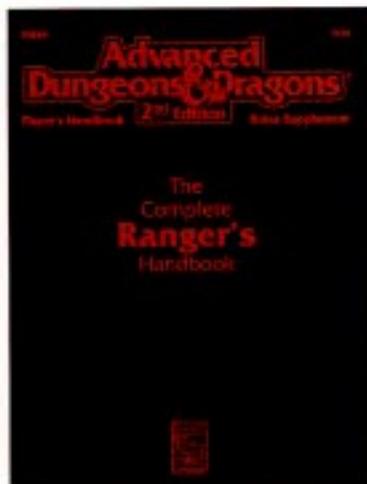
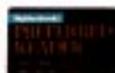


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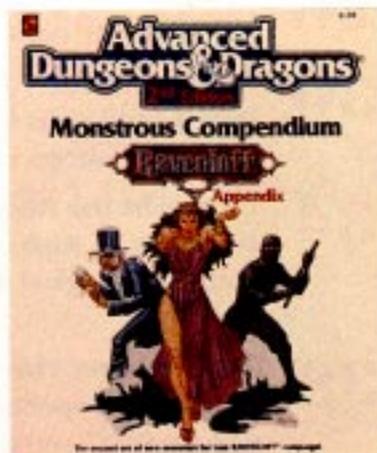
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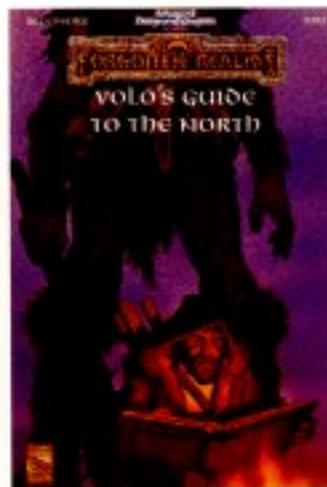
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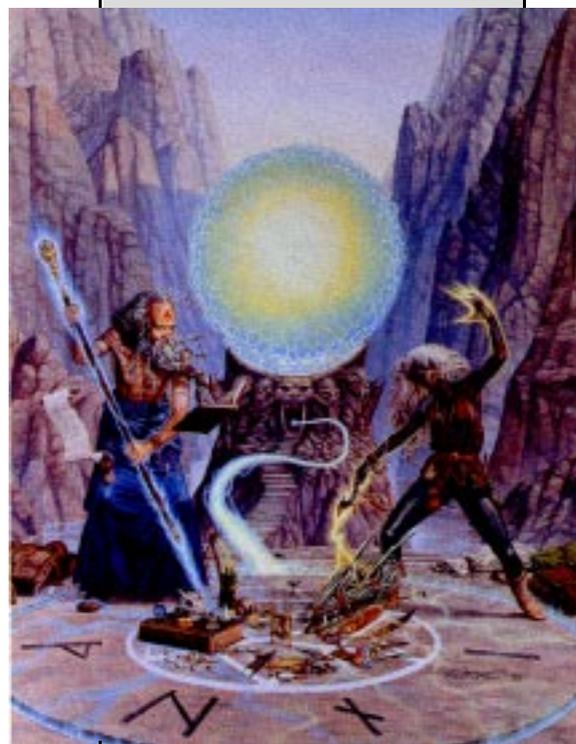
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## COVER

Our awesome cover, in honor of this milestone issue, was brought to you by the efforts of many people. The artist, of course, was Larry Elmore. He worked with our Art Director, Larry Smith, to see that the hologram would fit right into the artwork. The hologram itself was arranged by Larry Smith, Roger Moore, and Dave Hoeke of TSR's purchasing department. The dragon in the hologram is derived from one of Jeff Easley's red dragons. How'd we get the glowing eyes and flaming breath weapon? Magic, of course.

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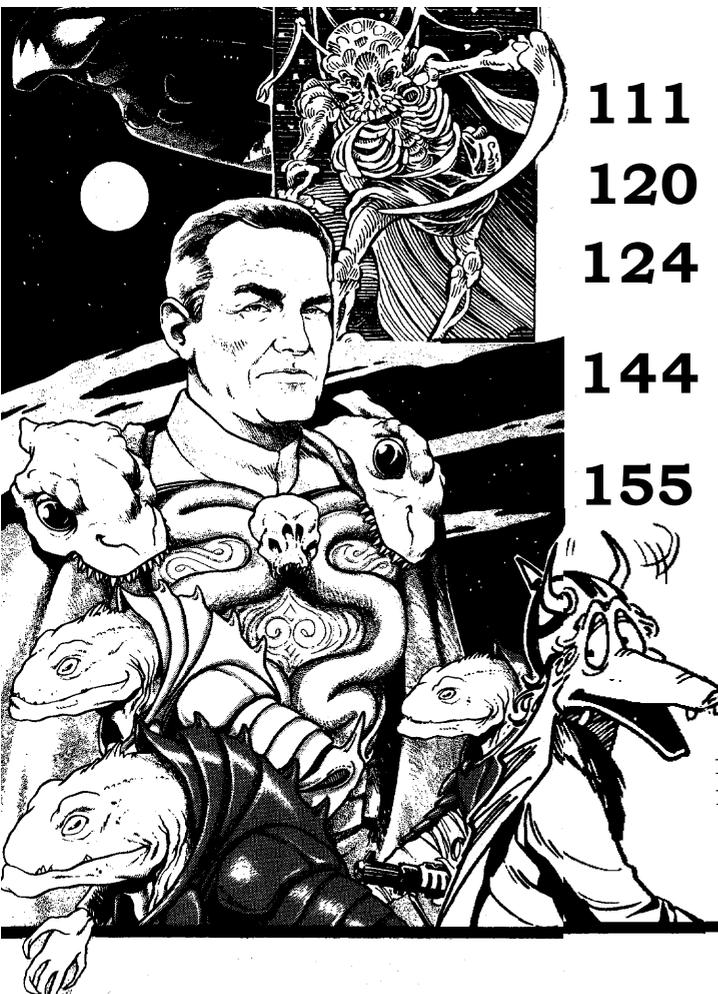
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Kim Mohan, Editor

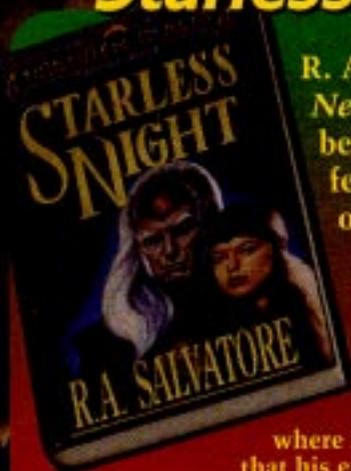
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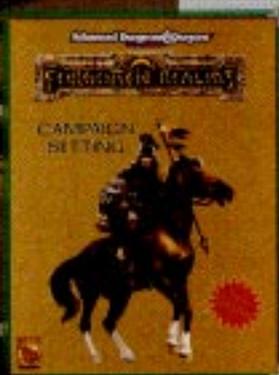
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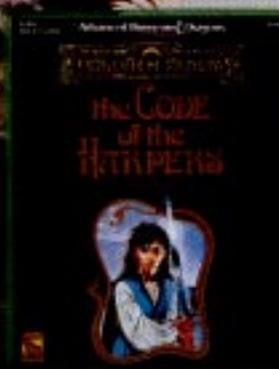
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# Letters

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

## A reviewer reviewed

Dear Dragon,

Allen Varney's review of I.C.E./Hero Games *Dark Champions: Heroes of Vengeance* for the CHAMPIONS\* game in DRAGON issue #197 made me uneasy, but I was hard-pressed to work out just why. In the end, I decided it was the editorial decisions behind it that concerned me.

Mr. Varney spent more than half his review discussing not the product, but the ethics of the "psycho-hero" phenomenon it represents. In case I'm misunderstood, I should say that I admire and enjoy Mr. Varney's writing, and I read his opinions with interest. They were carefully thought out and well expressed. Yet I felt that by the time I had finished the review, I knew more about Mr. Varney than I did about *Dark Champions*. Surely the purpose of a review is to discuss the product, rather than any issues it may raise? To warn buyers that a product may contain "adult" material is one thing. To make a meal of the moral issues is another.

I would suggest that your readers might expect to see reviews in your review column, and editorializing in editorials and Forum.

Tim Harford  
Oxford UK

Allen Varney replies:

Mr. Harford discusses both the specific review of *Dark Champions* and reviews in general. If my comments on homicidal super-heroes appeared irrelevant to *Dark Champions*, that piece failed and I apologize. I did not mean to thrust myself forward at the supplement's cost. However, the failure of that particular review does not imply that feature reviews should avoid editorial comment.

Every game or supplement exists in a design context, a lineage of predecessors. A recent example: The HACKER\* card game from Steve Jackson Games obviously derives heavily from Jackson's earlier, and superior, ILLUMINATI\* game. Mentioning this in a review serves the buyer. It may let him form an accurate preliminary opinion of the HACKER game based on his view of the ILLUMINATE game, or perhaps it alerts him to a better game he hadn't known about. But if a larger context also applies to the game, a responsible review should inform the buyer in the same way.

"The purpose of a review is to discuss the

product, rather than any issues it may raise." When a work's context includes social issues as well as design matters, an informed decision to buy depends on awareness of context and consequences. The brutality of *Dark Champions* reflects a powerful and lucrative trend in our society, one that a buyer might, on reflection, dislike supporting. A good review promotes such reflection. However, an obvious danger lies in voicing opinions so stridently that the reader loses sight of the work under discussion. I evidently made this misstep in my *Dark Champions* review, and I'll look sharp to avoid repeating the mistake.

Allen Varney

## Author! Author!

Dear Dragon

I've recently uncovered an old character of mine, and I've run into a problem. I've had the character for six years, he traveled the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting, and he acquired several magical items that I can't find in any TSR publication or supplement (including both volumes of the *Magic Encyclopedia*). The items include, but are not limited to: Alberich's Sword of Invincibility, Alberich's Ring of Strength, Alberich's Tarnkappe Cloak of Invisibility, a Gleipner Ribbon a Jacinth of Power, Eira's Amulet, a Pouch of Kusa grass, and a Cat's Eye of Power. Do you know where these items can be located?

Jonathan Fox  
Huntingdon Valley PA

The staff has been unable to come up with any TSR source for these items, but Wolfgang "The Well-Read" Baur recognized the name Alberich. Alberich was the king of the dwarves in the Scandinavian Seigfried legend, and he possessed a magical sword, ring, and cloak. Also, "Gliepner" is very similar to Sleipner, the eight-legged horse of the god Odin from Norse mythology. We suggest you pursue mythological (or fantasy fiction) sources for the other items. Most libraries and bookstores have mythology sections. Any readers with further information are encouraged to write.

## Too many youngsters?

Dear Dragon,

I'm an avid gamer and have been for more than 10 years. I'm 20 years old, and I game with people who are 25-35 years old. Recently, our DM invited two new neighbors to game with us. They are 11- and 12-year-old girls. While I cannot say that the game totally fell apart it has had some problems

since the girls started playing.

Now, a 10-year-old girl wants to join our group since the 12-year-old told her all about the game. Our DM is considering letting her join us. I would rather not see any more youngsters join the group as there are too many now. Has anyone else had this problem? If so, how did you deal with it?

Andrew M. Curtis  
Manchester NH

Changes often occur in a campaign whenever novice players join a gaming group, regardless of the players' ages. Be patient. Once the girls get up to speed, things should settle down. If you're still concerned, however, talk to the DM. Perhaps one of the concerned players can run a separate game for the younger players, or for the older folks who are uncomfortable playing with the young gamers. For advice on integrating novice gamers into an established campaign, see "Breaking Them In," by Neil McGarry in DRAGON issue #194 and this issue's "Forum."

## Play by mail, please

Dear Dragon,

After reading "Perils & Postage" and "By Mail or by Modem?" in DRAGON issue #197, I became very interested in taking part in a play-by-mail game. I would like to know if there is any way I could contact a group playing such a game. Please write if you can help.

Shayne Power  
19 Caladenia St.  
Greenwood WA 6024  
AUSTRALIA

There you go, Shayne. Since the two articles mentioned by Shayne have generated quite a bit of interest, perhaps a brave gamer somewhere will volunteer to serve as a clearing house for people interested in playing or running a play-by-mail or on-line game.

## Oops!

Two art credits were left out of issue #199. John Stanko was responsible for the theme-section graphic that appeared on pages 10, 16, and 23, and Michael Scott was the artist for the *Known World Grimoire* art on page 42. We apologize for these omissions.

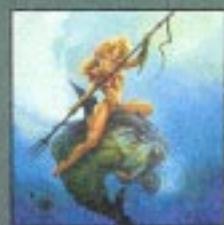
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# E d i t o r i a l

## DRAGON® Magazine: Past and present

It was fourteen years and five months ago that I first walked into the editorial offices of *The Dragon*. I remember it like it was only fourteen years ago.

"What can we do for you?" This, spoken out of a cloud of pipe smoke, from the person who looked like the editor. (A marvelous deduction on my part, since he was the only person I could see.)

"Well, um, my name is Kim Mohan. I

have experience as an editor, and I was wondering if you could use some help." After nine years in the newspaper business, I was ready for something different. Little did I know just how *different* the next seven years were going to be.

Tim Kask, that pipe-smoking editor, didn't slam the door on my foot. What he did was to give me an armload of manuscripts to take home and work with—a proficiency

test, job application and trial-by-fire all rolled into one. I brought them back after the weekend, each one festooned with the arcane squiggles by which editors communicate among themselves. To make a somewhat longer story a little shorter, Tim looked at my work and *Saw That It Was Good*, and with an almost total lack of fanfare I was welcomed into the kingdom. Starting with issue #29 (September 1979), I was on the staff of *The Dragon*.



I occupied the bottom rung of a very short ladder, beneath Tim and the assistant editor, Gary Jaquet, who, in his alter ego of "Jake," was also our circulation manager. Actually, I shared the rung with a young chap from England, John Baillie, about whom I'm sorry to say I don't remember much. He was here on some sort of short-term temporary arrangement, so that bottom rung didn't stay crowded for too long.

My first desk was a corner of a cafeteria table in a room also occupied by Jake (who had a real desk), one chamber removed from the front entrance. In the front room was Tim's desk—at least, I assume there was a desk under all those papers and books—a couple of chairs for the occasional visitors, and Tim's aquarium. These lavish quarters accounted for about one-half of the ground floor of a dilapidated gray frame house at 723 Williams St., in Lake Geneva, also known as the TSR Periodicals World Headquarters. In earlier times, this house contained *all* of TSR Hobbies, but by now (the autumn of 1979) the company had grown so much that a seven-room house just wasn't enough.

It wasn't much, but it was ours, and it was a joy to come to work every day. Not just because we played darts a lot, and Tim had great taste in music, but because I was doing something that I quickly grew to love, and very early on I got the idea that *The Dragon* was headed for great things. That turned out to be one of the few hunches I had in this career that came true.

Quick cut to issue #36, April 1980. Tim and John have both moved on, and now the editorial ladder is only two rungs tall. The magazine is getting bigger all the time, in page-count and circulation, and Jake and I are hustling to keep everything happening on schedule. We now have a company theme song, "Money" by Pink Floyd, which we play at least a couple times a day, but we don't have much time for darts anymore.

Thirteen issues later, we are a downright juggernaut. Jake has been kicked upstairs to Publisher, and I—for the first time—have been endowed with the title of Editor-in-Chief. The masthead now includes nine full-time staff members and a couple of guys named Moore and Greenwood as contributing editors. Does anybody know what happened to those two?

That issue, #49, was a quantum leap in one other way: we went out and got Tim Hildebrandt to do our cover art. Some of the other cover artists from the early days (such as Dean Morrissey and Phil Foglio) have gone on to greater glory, but this was the first time DRAGON® Magazine had ever used a cover by someone who was already Famous. Our next cover coup came three issues later, when a Boris Vallejo piece appeared on #52. (I have one autographed, in a very safe place, and no, you can't buy it.)

We were on a roll. The D&D® and AD&D® games were being played by hundreds of thousands of people, and for a big fraction of those players and DMs, DRAGON Magazine was a must-have every month. If there was ever a time when it was not the largest-selling magazine of its kind, that time was in the distant past. By the middle of 1981, the magazine had become popular beyond my wildest dreams.

The people who made the magazine were popular, too. The GEN CON® Game Fair every year was a great time, because after eleven-plus months of slaving away in our gray house (which we were beginning to outgrow), we got to come out and be celebrities. I didn't take the job because I thought I'd be signing autographs and seeing copies of issue #1 sell for outrageous prices, but being famous for four days a year helped us get through the pressure and the occasional drudgery of getting magazines out on time. The company we worked for really appreciated us doing our jobs. It was a fair deal, really: we publish on time, we get paid on time. But it was that much easier to stay motivated because we knew lots of folks were depending on us to give them a magazine every month that was at least as good as last month's.

During my first go-round as Editor-in-Chief, I tried never to forget our readers and always to respect them. As the hobby of role-playing games got larger and more widespread, it also got more sophisticated, and we were always challenged to keep the articles in the magazine on the threshold of what was happening. Producing DRAGON Magazine was never just a way to make a living; it was a job that demanded our best. I tried to impress that on the other people we brought in as staff members—not that it was ever difficult to get them thinking the same way.

As of issue #75 (July 1983), the editorial and production staff included five people, three of whom proved how good they are by going on to greater accomplishments within TSR. There was Pat Price, who later became the editor of AMAZING® Stories; Mary Kirchoff, who ran TSR's Book Department for a while and is known today as a best-selling author; and some guy named Moore, who had just been hired to occupy the bottom rung of the DRAGON Magazine ladder.

The story of how Roger and I got together—literally—has become legendary in the annals of TSR (or at least in my mind). He had been doing a lot of writing for the magazine, for a lot of years, and I knew he knew his stuff. I also knew he was fresh out of the Army and might, just might, be willing to interview for a vacancy on the staff. So he flew into O'Hare Airport (in a plane, I presume), and I was there to pick him up and bring him to Lake Geneva. As I peered out over the crowd arriving at Gate K-whatever, I didn't

see anyone who matched the description of Roger Moore that I had conjured up in my head. As the crowd got thinner and thinner, I started to feel nervous. Did he miss the plane? Was he spirited away by an employee of a rival game company impersonating me? Should I have been searching for someone I thought looked like James Bond?

Then I felt a tap on my shoulder—the lower part of my shoulder, actually. I whirled around and immediately realized my mistake was searching straight out at eye level; not everyone is six-two (make that six-four with my boots on, and they're always on).

"Are you Kim?"

"Yeah. Are you Roger?"

And so it began. Hiring the little scamp was pretty much a formality, because—unlike the situation I was in when I first walked in the door—I knew what Roger could do. Plus, I've heard it said that (relatively) short people have (relatively) a lot of energy, so I had a hunch he'd fit right in. And that turned out to be the second time in my career that I had a hunch that came true.

Take it away, Rog . . .

My side of the story of how I got to TSR was fairly well recounted in the introduction I wrote for *The Art of DRAGON® Magazine* some years ago. I came on staff at a time when the groundwork for much of TSR's future was being laid down—and it was happening at this very magazine.

Ed Greenwood's articles, most of which tied in with his homegrown "Forgotten Realms" campaign, became more numerous in these pages after I came on-board. Larry Elmore's "SnarfQuest" strip began in issue #75, the same one in which I was first listed as part of the editorial staff. The vast Outer Planes were being mapped out in detail, and the "Ecology" series that Kim had started in issue #72 was turning paper monsters into complex and believable creations. New cover artists like Denis Beauvais made their first appearances (Denis began with issue #78—still a favorite of mine). The topic of what was "official" and what was not was then in full heat, and the magazine offered many guidelines for gamers on how to handle confusing game concepts such as psionics, magic resistance, and castle maintenance. It was quite an exciting time.

As for me, I shared an office with another staff member and, with great fear and trepidation, began to figure out how to use the computer's word-processing system. I typed everything on a regular typewriter at first, but was swayed to reason by Kim and other seasoned veterans of the editorial front. We changed word-processing systems a few years ago, which again caused me great mental anguish (I am not really as technologically inclined as some of my cyber-colleagues).

I have many pleasant memories. Issue

#83, in addition to starting the marvelous fantasy-chesspiece covers of Denis Beauvais, included my Baba Yaga's Hut module, which I understand has destroyed a pleasingly large number of player characters. The ARES™ Section of the magazine was lots of fun to edit, as I have a personal fondness for science-fiction role-playing games. We put a cut-out castle in issue #86, an adventure set in Asgard in #90, and Robin Woods first cover painting for us in #97. Jeff Grubb began the very popular "MARVEL®-Phile" feature in #88. In the background, the monumental DRAGONLANCE® project began, with the first short stories appearing in issues #83 and #85.

Speaking of stories, one of the most popular ones we ever ran appeared in issue #97: "Catacomb," by Henry Melton. Many people wrote to us and asked if the Catacomb on-line computer game described in the story was real; it wasn't, but that hardly dimmed the powerful response the tale generated.

Issue #100 had lots of nice touches. Kim arranged for a sharp embossed cover from 3-D paper wizard Dennis Kauth, one of the very few photographic covers we've ever used. We had fantasy chess, Elminster, the druid-ranger, and an exciting module in which the heroes were exposed to the wonders of modern London.

Things sailed along after #100 for a little over a year. We ran articles on gully dwarves, centaurs, paladins, rangers, atom bombs, dwarven beards, female superheroes, dinosaurs, witches, and our "ultimate" article index (now woefully out of date). Keith Parkinson and Daniel Horne joined the ranks of our cover artists, and "The Role of Computers" made its debut. TSR also decided to start a new magazine, which, after a prolonged name-choosing process, was called DUNGEON® Adventures (the name had been suggested for years by many different people at TSR and elsewhere as a logical one). I was put in charge of the new magazine, and our first issue was an instant, smash, incredible success. It was the fall of 1985.

Then, suddenly, Kim left TSR.

Kim was very much the heart and soul of this magazine. Everything that it had become was due to his work, and every month he put in uncounted hours evenings and weekends preparing it for its next deadline. I recall thinking that he worked far too hard. How could one magazine be that much work?

Kim was gone, and suddenly I was the editor of both DRAGON Magazine and DUNGEON Adventures. Within two days of Kim's leaving, I knew exactly why he'd spent so much time with the magazine—the job demanded it. I worked 60 or more hours a week for months after. Eventually, I was given the chance to hire on a new editor for DUNGEON Adventures, and my first pick was someone I remembered from the Games division—a clever, intelli-

gent, and exacting editor named Barbara Young. Armed with marvelous senses of organization and humor, she soon took DUNGEON Adventures off my hands and left me free to wrestle with the larger magazine. In fact, she became the only staff member who would last through the massive and continuous staff changes the magazine underwent in the months and years that followed until Dale and Larry appeared.

The basic formula for DRAGON Magazine's direction and contents, as set down by Kim, worked fine. We added a few changes of our own. With issue #115, we started our theme issues, grouping a small selection of articles as each issue's centerpiece (I confess that the idea came from Kim, too, as he had done this on occasion). The review columns were refined and expanded. The "Sage Advice" and "Bazaar of the Bazaar" columns were restarted, as were the "April Fools" articles.

The highlights of the next few years are best briefly covered. The last photographic cover we had was #116, a shot of a red-dragon model built by Peter Botsis. Articles on the AD&D® 2nd Edition game began with a "Game Wizards" column in issue #118 by David "Zeb" Cook, who terrified thousands of gamers by speculating on which character classes to kill off in the revised game. A cut-out Japanese castle appeared in #121; the remarkably popular Clay-O-Rama game (by "Zeb" Cook) in #125; a real-life Viking board game in #128; and Bruce Heard's comic "OrcWars" game in #132. We had wonderful posters (now discontinued, however, due to postal regulations). Perhaps our most popular issue ever, which sold out completely and cannot now be found anywhere that I know of, was issue #148, with artist George Barr's beautiful rendition of the deck of many things.

I've always enjoyed humorous articles, and one of my personal favorites was "U 2 KAN ERN BIG BUX!" in issue #128. Thanks to Roger Raupp, then our art director, I became known as Rogar of Mooraa; the little pictures he drew of me for #128 came to grace many magazines in the following years. I also liked Gregg Sharp's "The Last Word" in issue #129, which spawned some follow-ups in the letters column. Every April (and sometimes October or November) would bring a new batch of silly letters. But best of all was the appearance of Yamara and crew, starting in issue #132, by Barbara Manui and Chris Adams. (I recently found that I first mentioned giant hamsters in #132, too, in my editorial.)

Carol Heyer joined our cover-artist ranks with "Frog Prince," her painting for issue #139 that won an award from the Society of Children's Book Writers. Other new cover artists included Donald Clavette, Charles Vess, Bob Eggleton, Ned Dameron, Jeff Easley, Gerald Brom, Fred Fields, and Robh Ruppel. (The last four should sound

familiar because they now work at TSR.) Great artists from earlier times kept right on painting, too—Elmore, Parkinson, Beauvais, Holloway, Wood, Horne, and others.

The real world intruded on our magazine world at times. My son's birth announcement appeared in issue #101—I'll let you find the page number. I caught mononucleosis in the fall of 1988, and issue #140 came out with very little help from the bedridden editor; even today, the contents of that particular issue seem completely unfamiliar to me. Pat Price, who headed our department, left for other pastures, taking with him his insights into life and his shrieks of dismay at the bad fiction he would read (Barbara took over his fiction-reading duties). Larry Elmore left for his (and my) native Kentucky, and "SnarfQuest" ended with issue #145. Then, there was Operation Desert Storm. Many of the issues produced at that time were edited while I listened to war reports on my desk-top radio. Many of my Army friends were involved in the fighting. They all came home alive and well.

Dale "Captain Argyle" Donovan was hired in September 1989 after we looked over his resume and saw that he wore funny socks (a critical hiring point at TSR, where some game designers forget their socks when they came to work). Dale's editing test looked great, he was an extrovert, and he knew gaming inside and out. The rest is history. The same may be said for Larry Smith's appearance in 1990 as our art director. He didn't wear funny socks, but he had a color sense that made the magazine look very nice indeed, and he owned a Chinese restaurant. We hired him right away.

Life rolled on. Jim Ward's "Game Wizards" column in issue #154 drew hundreds of pieces of mail, as did Michael Stackpole's guest editorial in issue #171. "Dino Wars," a game dear to our hearts, was published in #166; Bruce Heard's "Voyage of the Princess Ark" began in #153 and supported the D&D® game for years; and Steve Sullivan's long-playing "Twilight Empire" comic began in #156.

From about 1991 to now, all the issues I've worked on begin to blur together. It becomes harder to recall when certain articles appeared, or what was going on when the magazine was being put together. African adventures, calendar posters, giant space hamsters, the DARK SUN® campaign, more trading cards, more Elmore and Holloway and Wood and Jaquays cover art, Robh's silverized cover of Diesel (TSR cartographer Dave LaForce) having his pocket picked, new columns starting, old columns ending—I can't keep track of it anymore. Senile at 38. Happens to the best of us.

One of the best side effects of editing this magazine has been that I've met the most wonderful people. Fantasy author Mickey Zucker Reichert ("The Ulfjarl's

Stone," in issue #141) became a close friend. Many people I'd met and gamed with in the Army got back in touch with me after seeing my name here (hi, guys—sorry I haven't written in a while). And I got to read lots of great stuff.

What article or story did I like best, out of all that I helped see print? I suffer from the common editor's block of believing that everything I've ever published was great. But if I had to pick a real winner, it would have to be Peni R. Griffin's short story, "The Waiting Woman," from issue #159. It was the most romantic work we've ever published, and thus perhaps the least like reality, but it never lost its power to move me. If I worked here for 10 years just for that story to have been published, it was worth it.

Over to you, Dale. . .

My personal history with DRAGON Magazine goes back to issue #50, the first copy I ever bought. I had just begun playing the D&D game, and found the magazine to be a terrific resource for someone just starting out. I haven't checked lately, but I believe I have every magazine since that fifth-anniversary issue.

My professional relationship didn't begin until some 100 issues later. I had graduated from college at the end of 1988, and was seriously frustrated with the staggering lack of interest the corporations of America had showed in me by March 1989. So, simply to ensure my continued mental health, I took a few nights off from the cover-letter drudgery and sent off resumes to several places that I thought would be fun to work at. One of those places was DRAGON Magazine. As I mailed the envelopes, I told myself, "You're never going to hear from any of these people, so just forget you ever sent these out."

I did forget about them—until the day Roger Moore called and asked if I wanted to interview for a position with the magazine. We set up an interview for the next day. At my "it-pays-the-bills-until-I-get-a-real-job" job, I told them the happy news and asked for the time off. At first they said, "What?" Then they said, "No." At first I said, "What?" Then I said, "I quit." I went to the interview the following day. The rest is history, right? Wrong. I didn't get the job.

That's right, I didn't get the job. Some one named Anne Brown did (but more about *her* later). "Oh well," I told myself, "it was a fluke. It'll never happen again. Forget about it." I did.

Until three months later, when Roger called again and asked if I wanted another interview. You see, Anne Brown was transferring to the Games Division, and Roger needed a new assistant. This time, I kept my mouth shut about the interview at my new "it-pay-the-bills" job until after Roger displayed his keen senses of editorial judgment and personnel savvy by offering me the job. Not being a total idiot, I accepted.

I was shown the ropes by Roger, Barbara Young, and Anne Brown. Anne showed a complete neophyte exactly what an assistant editor was supposed to do. She also was the first friend I made at TSR. Thanks for everything, Anne.

Roger has recounted most of the magazine's recent history, so I'll skip to the present. Allow me first to formally (albeit belatedly) welcome our new computer-game reviewer, Mr. Sandy Petersen, to the pages of DRAGON Magazine. Sandy has been designing games (both role-playing and computer systems) for over a decade, and we're proud to have him on-board. If you missed Sandy's own introduction, check out issue #197.

Since Rogar—I mean Roger's transfer to the AD&D game Product-Group-Leader position, Kim was promoted to Editor-in-Chief of the Periodicals Department (e.g., DRAGON Magazine, DUNGEON Adventures, and Kim's own AMAZING® Stories) after returning to TSR a few years back. We've taken to calling him "Papa Smurf" (well, he does have a beard). Our Associate Publisher (and Kim's boss) is Brian Thomsen, who also heads TSR's terrific Book Department. (Our typesetter Tracey Isler was recently married, too.) Congratulations, one and all!

Everybody else is still around, although you may have noticed two new names on the masthead under the obscure title,

"Editorial Contributions." The two ladies listed there, Janis Wells and Lisa Neuberger, are the AMAZING Stories editorial staff. They, among others such as Angelika Lokotz who helped out with the typesetting for issue #199, volunteered to help keep us on schedule. I want to thank them and everyone who has helped me get DRAGON Magazine through what I've been calling "Issue #200 hell." This issue never would have happened without a lot of people pitching in when it was needed. Thanks, folks.

That's DRAGON Magazine from past to present. I invite you to come along as we take the magazine into the future.

*H. Moran*  
*Roger Moore*  
*Dale A. Donovan*

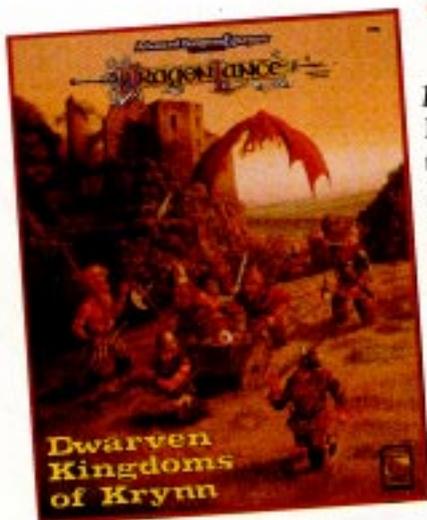
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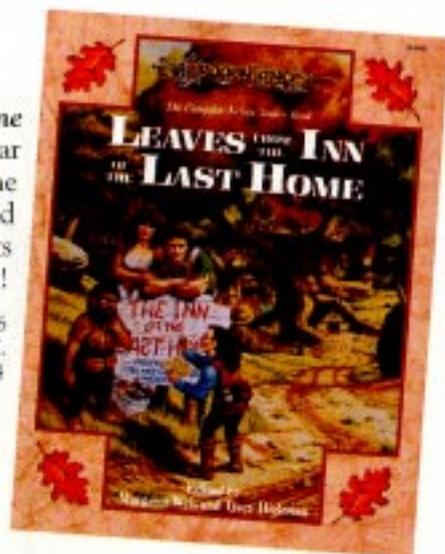
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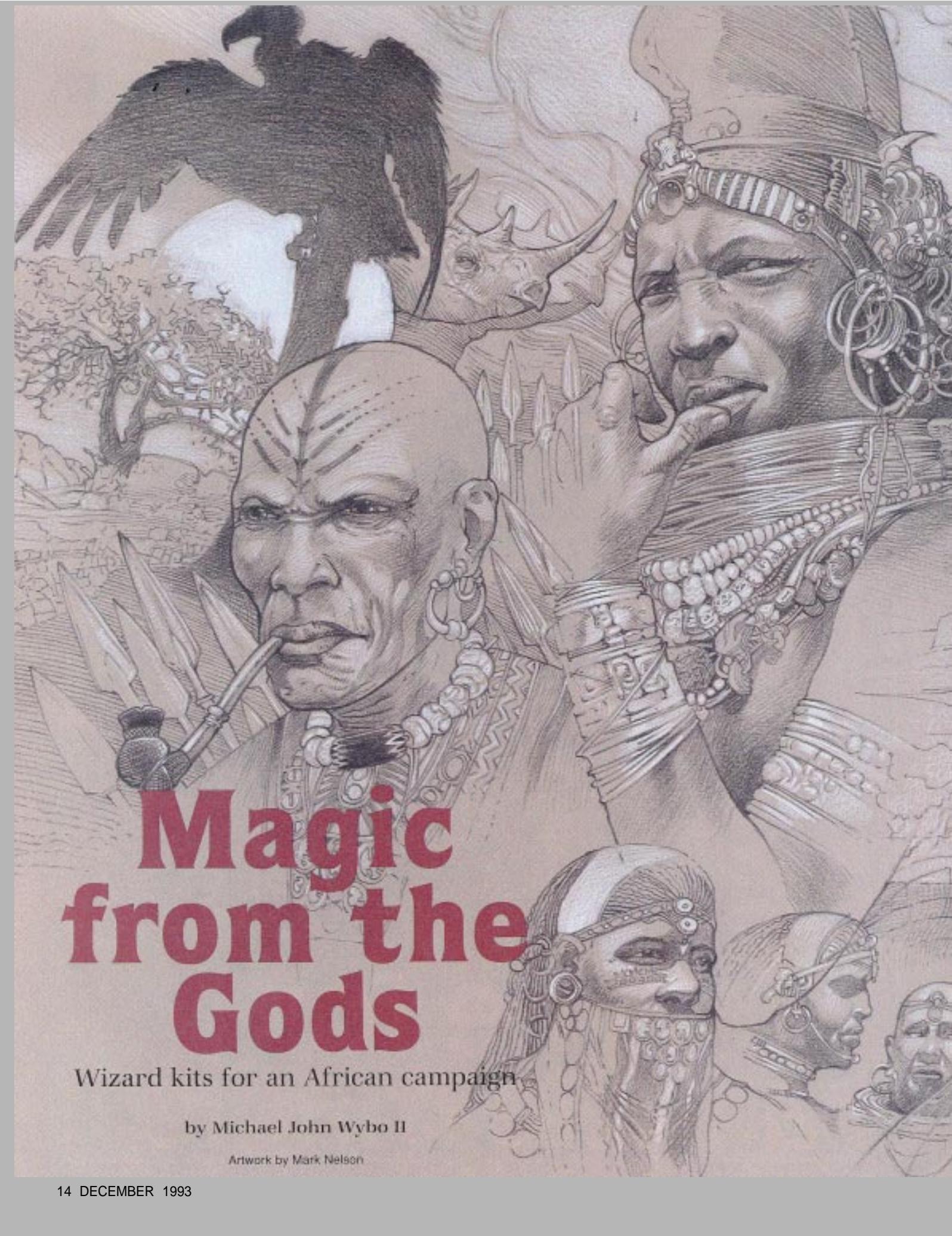


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# Time for a little magic

Artwork by Robin Wood



# Magic from the Gods

Wizard kits for an African campaign

by Michael John Wybo II

Artwork by Mark Nelson

Magic in Africa is all but inseparable from the gods. Magic is a gift from the gods, themselves. Because of this close relationship, the mage kits described here bear some similarities to cleric characters. Each of the kits below has access to some priest spells. In all cases, the mages must abide by the listed range, duration, components, etc., listed under those priest spells. In all other respects, treat the priest spells merely

as more spell options for the African wizard. For example, for each priest spell the mage wishes to learn, she must make her "Chance to know" percentage roll, but, if successful, she need not worry about the priest's "Chance of failure" percentage for low Wisdom scores regardless of the wizard's Wisdom score.

In Africa, there can be no magic without either the will of the gods or some other, more malign power. The main difference between wizards and priests lies in what purpose the gods intend when they bestow their magic. Priests further the worship of their deity, but wizards are granted spells for practical and social purposes. This subtle distinction is common in the folklore of the huge and mysterious continent called Africa.

### **Baule diviner**

**Description:** The diviners of Baule are advisers to the city dwellers and nobles of Africa. They read omens that are revealed through the four classical elements (air, earth, fire, and water) by the mysterious entity known as Fate. They dress in red, sleeveless wraps and shave their heads. They wear gold bangles and neck rings.

**Role:** The Baule diviners worship Fate and do not seek to change her will. They advise their patrons on how they have incurred Fate's displeasure, but diviners seldom tell a patron the future, except in the most vague riddles or analogies.

**Weapon proficiencies:** *Required:* None; *Recommended:* dagger, staff.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Required:* Astrology, astronomy (from "Learn Something New Every Day" in DRAGON® issue #169), observation (see the *Complete Thief's Handbook* or *CTH*); *Recommended:* animal lore, direction sense, tracking, weather sense.



**Spells:** All Baule diviners are specialty wizards of the school of greater divination. As such, Baule diviners cannot use spells of the Conjunction/Summoning school. However, they may cast any clerical elemental spell (see the *Tome of Magic* for details).

**Special benefits:** Baule diviners enjoy a +1 bonus to reaction rolls with all city dwellers due to the respect given their great wisdom.

**Special hindrances:** None.

**Note:** Due to their worship of Fate, wizards using this kit also may appear in the AL-QADIM® campaign setting.

## Bokor (Sorcerer)

**Description:** A Bokor is an evil sorcerer who uses dangerous magic without the aid of the gods' wisdom. The Bokor learn spells and are granted the power to cast them by the Orish-Nla, the evil denizens of the underworld (fiends, in the parlance of the AD&D® game). Their magic is unpredictable and despised by their countrymen. This kit is most appropriate for NPCs. Bokor serve as excellent villains in an African campaign.

**Role:** The Bokor is hunted by his countrymen, not out of hatred but because they fear the wrath of the Zande witch women (see below) whose sole purpose is to destroy the Bokor. The Bokor are homeless wanderers, who study their art to gain power.

**Weapon proficiencies:** *Required:* None; *Recommended:* spear, dagger, bow.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Required:* spellcraft; *Recommended:* alertness (from the *CTH*), cooking, direction sense, fire building, hunting, endurance, tracking, set snares.

**Spells:** All Bokor are wild mages and gain all associated abilities. (See the *Tome of Magic* for rules on wild mages.) They may never cast any elemental spells, as the elements themselves abhor the art of the Bokor. Bokor can cast spells from the Chaos clerical sphere, however.

**Special benefits:** The Bokor are harder than most wizards, so they use six-sided dice as hit dice instead of four-sided dice.

**Special hindrances:** Because the gods have turned away from the Bokor, these mages suffer several disadvantages:

1. The curse of changing form. Every day, the Bokor must roll on a table to determine what form he takes that day. The table is different for each Bokor, and it includes the Bokor's true form plus random forms rolled on the mages' *reincarnation* spell table (*PH*, p. 181). A Bokor has a number of forms equal to his level plus one.

At the DM's discretion, some entries may be omitted or replaced with beings appropriate to her African campaign. Some distinguishing feature (chosen by the player) is common to all forms. For instance, a 3rd-level Bokor would have to roll 1d4 each day. On a roll of 1, he would maintain his true form, but rolls of 2

through 4 could correspond to groll, kobold, and troll forms respectively. He might have a white streak of hair in all forms.

The Bokor can speak and cast spells in all forms. In other respects, this curse acts as a *polymorph* spell.

2. The curse of refusal. Death has refused to allow the Bokor entry to the realm of the dead, so all Bokor become undead upon their deaths. The exact form that an undead Bokor assumes depends on the level that the Bokor attained in life. Convert the character's level to hit dice and consult the table for turning undead for the appropriate form. For example, a 6th-level Bokor would become a ghastr or wraith when he dies. If the Bokor is 12th level or higher when he dies (the "Special" category on the table), the character becomes an Orish-Nla (an African demon resembling a shadow fiend). The Bokor loses his spell-casting abilities upon death, unless the undead form taken is normally capable of casting spells.

Despite the character's new status, the curse of changing form is still in effect. As a result, the undead character may be a skeletal, zombie, or ghostly troll, orc, etc., on any given day. The character retains his undead abilities and immunities in any form. The DM is advised to make the undead character an NPC, if the Bokor is not one already.

The other disadvantages are oriented to role-playing, rather than mechanics. The Bokor are constantly hunted by the Zande witch women. If a Bokor's true profession is known, the Bokor suffer a -2 penalty on all reaction rolls.

## Houngan

**Description:** The houngan are worshippers of the masculine side to the spirit world (animus). Mages who take this kit are almost exclusively male. Like their female counterparts, the mambo, the houngan are primarily concerned with the lore and appeasement of their aspect of the spirit world. They appease the angry, hostile, aggressive, and sometimes destructive natures of the spirits. They will promote a war if that is what a spirit wants and there is no other way to avoid it, or if the houngan, for their own purposes, desire it and can convince their followers that it is the spirits' will. Of course, such deception depends on the houngan's alignment.

**Role:** Some Houngan protect their communities from the spirits. Others use their positions to further their own standing at the expense of the community. The citizens often put up with this because the houngan stand between them and the full fury of the spirits.

**Weapon proficiencies:** *Required:* None; *Recommended:* Spear, club, mace, dagger.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Required:* None; *Recommended:* Bowyer/fletcher, endurance, weaponsmithing.

**Spells:** All houngan are necromancers and have all the benefits and hindrances of that specialization, including being barred from using spells of the Illusion and Enchantment/Charm schools. Houngan also can cast spells from the Necromancy clerical sphere.

**Special benefits:** The Houngan may use proficiencies from the warrior group without spending extra slots.

**Special hindrances:** The Houngan must sacrifice the value of one large domestic animal to the spirits per level each time the Houngan increases a level.

## Mambo

**Description:** The mambo is the female equivalent of the houngan. The mambo worship the feminine side of the spirit world (anima) and are almost always female. They draw on the compromising, persuasive, healing, but often deceitful aspect of the spirits to protect their community or foster their own ends.

**Role:** The mambo are the wise women of the community. Where the houngan might council war, the mambo would more likely council diplomacy or guile. They are a calming influence on the hotblooded members of their communities.

**Weapon proficiencies:** *Required:* None; *Recommended:* Dagger, staff, sling.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Required:* None; *Recommended:* Artistic ability, cooking, dancing, musical instrument, singing, weaving.

**Spells:** Like the houngan, the mambo is a necromancer specialist mage and also can cast Necromantic priest spells.

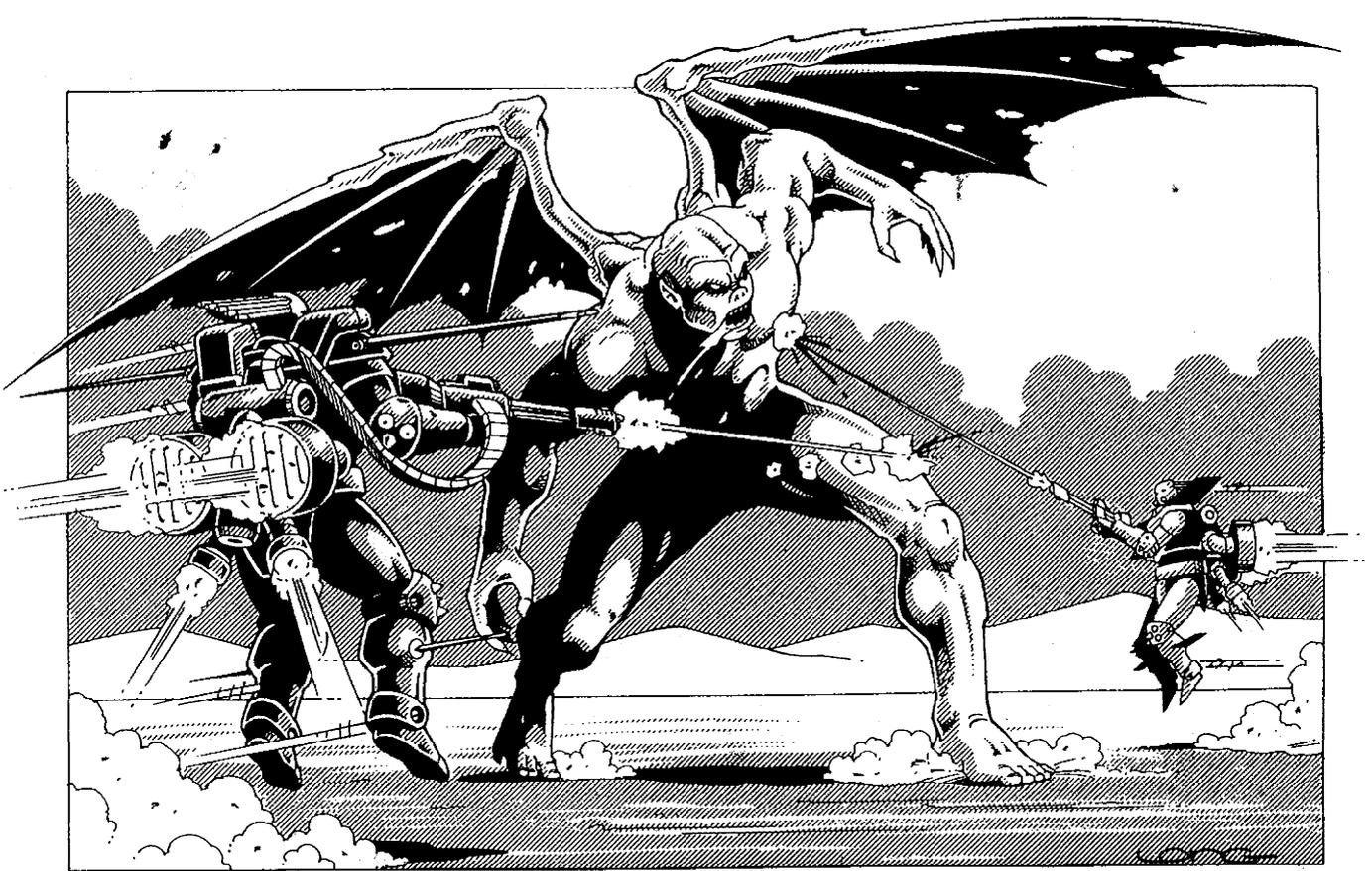
**Special benefits:** The mambo may attempt to *charm* up to one-half her level in hit dice of males (rounded down) each day as per the *charm* person spell. Individuals must be *charmed* one at a time, and each subject must possess Average Intelligence or better (8+) for this ability to work. Each *charming* attempt takes one full turn.

**Special hindrances:** Like the Houngan, a Mambo must sacrifice the value of one large domestic animal per level each time she advances a level.

## Zande witch woman

**Description:** The Zande witch women are of fearsome aspect, their teeth and lips dyed with blood-red berry juice. The witch women are individuals called by the gods to search out and punish heresy, in particular the heresy of the Bokor. They hunt down and kill any Bokor they meet. They can be extremely harsh in their punishment of villages and individuals who harbor these fugitives, even if it was done unknowingly. Zande witch women are more common in the lands of the pygmies of the central African jungles than elsewhere, but can be found in all the nations of Africa.

Witch women are often accompanied by male warriors. These warriors are charged with slaying the bokor's undead



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form after the witch woman has killed its mortal form. DMs may devise their own African warrior kit for these warriors, or they may adapt the Benin Hunter kit from "Real Warriors Ride Elephants!" in DRAGON issue #195. In this case, the hunter's "species foe" (as the ranger's ability) is undead.

**Role:** The Zande witches often are hated as the Bokor they hunt. They are considered by many a punishment by the gods for the heresy of the Bokor. The general populace is so frightened of the witches that most usually cooperate with them out of fear of retribution. Many witches have been killed by angry villagers whose crops were destroyed by a witch's curse, however. The witches sometimes use their power and the fear that they are held in to further their own selfish and ambitious ends, but killing Bokor is always their first priority. They are the harbingers of justice and vengeance. Zande witch women are always female and must be lawful, though they may be good, neutral, or evil.

**Weapon proficiencies:** *Required:* Short sword; *Recommended:* Spear, bow, sling.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Required:* Herbalism; *Recommended:* Cooking, brewing, healing, intimidation, observation (see the *CTH* for these two proficiencies).

**Spells:** Witches are specialists of the school of enchantment and have all of the corresponding abilities and hindrances, including being barred from the Invocation/Evocation and Necromancy. Zande witch women also can cast spells from the clerical Combat sphere.

**Special benefits:** Witches may cast a curse on Bokor or other heretics, and those who give them succor. In an African context, other heretics include spellcasters from lands outside Africa, or priests of gods not native to the African setting. This curse can include withering crops, either of the Bokor's curses, or a *sign of interdiction*. The *sign of interdiction* is a specialized wizard mark that functions as the spell except that the mark is clearly visible. It cannot be removed, not even by *dispel magic*. The sign of interdiction declares that the wearer is a heretic (a - 2 penalty to reaction rolls). The victim is always allowed a saving throw against death magic to avoid a Witch woman's curse.

Witches may bond with their warrior companions. This bond may be created only once in a witch's lifetime. It allows two-way empathic knowledge (both members of the bond can tell if the other is hurt, dying, enraged, etc.), the ability to use the other's senses once per day for 1d10 turns, and the ability of the witch to lay a compulsion on the warrior once per day with no saving throw as per the *suggestion* spell.

The warrior gains one additional hit point per level and gains + 2 to attack and damage rolls when defending his bond-mate. Both

parties must be willing participants to form the bond, but once formed it can never be broken. If the warrior dies, the witch suffers as if she had lost a familiar.

If either bond-mate is wounded while the sense-link is in use, they both suffer the damage, and they must both make saving throws against paralysis. If both make the saving throw, the sensory link can be maintained. If either party fails, the link is severed. In other circumstances, the sensory link may be broken only by mutual assent or by the elapse of the link's duration. Thereafter, the link can not be established for 24 hours.

**Special hindrances:** Witches generate a great deal of respect and thus they have a + 1 to all positive reactions; however, they also generate a great deal of fear and so all negative reactions suffer a - 1 penalty. These modifiers are applied by the DM after he makes the reaction roll, but before he reveals its results. This holds true regardless of the witch's alignment.

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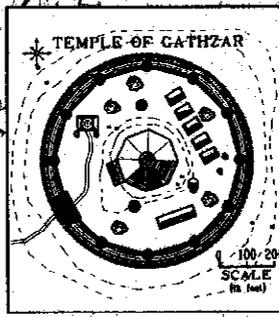
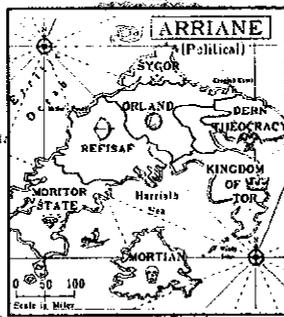
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# The Wizards Three

Once more the three

by Ed Greenwood

Artwork by Dan Burr

As I was lighting the fire in the study that night, I suddenly felt the weight of watching eyes. I lifted my head and caught sight of two eyes staring out of the flames at me. As I recoiled, a mouth appeared below the eyes to grin at me.

It was Elminster, of course.

I sighed and backed away, beckoning him into the room. The Old Mage rose up through the floor like a ship moving inexorably down a canal, and strode out of the flames past me, sniffing. "Is that coffee?"

I nodded, and held out the breastplate of my armor for him to help with; I'd no wish for Mordenkainen or Dalamar to find me there when they arrived. Elminster grinned at me as the unseen hands he'd conjured up laced and buckled and adjusted, and the armor speedily encased me. "Ye look a mite testy tonight."

I sighed, and gestured at the flames he'd appeared out of. "As I get older, El, I find my fondness for surprises is fading."

The Old Mage raised his eyebrows and

my helm at once. "I fear ye're definitely not archmage material."

I raised my own eyebrows, just before the helm came down over them. It smelled of old oil and rust, as usual. "How often are archmages surprised, given all they know?"

Elminster chuckled. "Not often enough. Mages who start trying to avoid surprises seldom advance much farther in Art. They become too cautious, and lose the burning hunger for magic that warms the heart of all true wizards."

I coughed, importantly.

He smiled. "Aye, that did sound pompous." As his magic lifted me gently onto the hooks on the wall where I was wont to spend such evenings, he added, "Ye'd be surprised just how often even old, long-bearded archmages know astonishment."

Those words soon proved prophetic.

Elminster barely had settled down in his accustomed seat, steaming coffee mug in hand, when the stone chimney wall beside.

the fireplace sparkled and flashed, Out of the stones where the twinkling lights danced strode Mordenkainen, Lord Mage of Greyhawk.

He made straight for his chair, but as he passed me turned his head slightly and gave me a wink.

In the darkness inside the armor, a cold sweat broke over me. I swallowed hard. Well, now at least I knew who'd lowered my visor last time. More than that: I was still alive—at least, so far.

"Well met," Elminster said. "Coffee?"

Mordenkainen leaned forward, sniffed; and shook his head. The Old Mage waved a hand, and a decanter of wine sailed out of the shadowed far end of the study to halt at Mordenkainen's elbow, accompanied by a pair of glasses.

Mordenkainen poured, and extended one glass towards Elminster, who shook his head and nodded at the third, empty chair. "Dal's thirsty, and I doubt he'll be any fonder of this coffee than ye,"

Mordenkainen turned to look at the empty chair just as a sudden explosion of swirling motes announced the arrival of Dalamar, looking cross.

"Can't anyone fool ye, Old Mage?" the elf inquired, taking the glass with a polite nod to Mordenkainen.

"Aye," the Old Mage replied dryly, "but most are ladies I want to be fooled by."

Dalamar sighed.

Mordenkainen looked at him. "How long have you been here?"

"Long enough to sit down before you came through the wall," the elf replied smoothly. "With the stink of spell-battle all over you, I notice."

Mordenkainen stiffened, and then nodded slowly. We all saw one of his fists clench.

"Gloomy times on Oerth, it seems."

Elminster said, green sparks drifting lazily up from his pipe. "How goes it with you?"

Mordenkainen looked into the depths of his drink for a moment and then said softly, "I watch and wait, as always."

"While men and orcs carve each other up all over Oerik, as always," Elminster added.

Mordenkainen gave him a long, expressionless look. Then, slowly, he nodded. "I see no end to war on Oerth, even with so much death this last time. It's a matter of betting among my more cynical colleagues, just how soon the swords'll be swung again."

"Given thy known distaste for joining armies and hurling land-shattering spells," Elminster said, puffing more smoke towards the ceiling, "would ye like any battle spells?"

Mordenkainen looked up at him. "I never thought you'd dare to make that offer so openly here, given who we are."

Elminster shrugged. "War finds even the doorsteps of archmages—and I think we can trust each other enough, now, to talk of such magics." He looked at Dalamar, "Am I right?"

The Master of the Conclave of all the wizards of Krynn nodded and opened his robe. "I expected this subject to come up sooner, Old Mage. This far from home, I am never unprepared for battle." On the inner side of the robe were an array of ivory plaques; Dalamar's slim fingers touched one, and it instantly became an array of rolled-up scrolls, splayed like a bunch of flowers.

The elf's face split in a sudden grin. "Spells, anyone?"

There were chuckles. "Let's play at this as if at cards," Mordenkainen suggested, and set down his glass. A scroll suddenly appeared in his hand. He turned to Elminster. "Yours, Old Mage?"

Elminster made a beckoning gesture at the ceiling, and a moment later a scroll fell out of nowhere onto the table. He unrolled it, revealing identical parchment pages, and passed them out. "This one's called *slowspell*: I think ye'll see why."

"Mine is *shadow bolt*," said Dalamar, passing out his own scrolls.

"And mine is—ahem — *Mordenkainen's involuntary wizardry*" Mordenkainen added. "It forces a memorized spell out of the mind of an enemy wizard, and visits its effects on him."

Roth of the other wizards winced, and Dalamar's face lost some of its color. "You can do that?" he asked softly. "What mage—of any world—can stand against you?"

Mordenkainen held up a hand. "It can unleash only a random spell. No amount of research, over the last twelve winters, has allowed me to influence what spell it seizes, in any way."

Dalamar rolled his eyes. "Thank the various divine ones who govern magic for that," he said. He shuddered, and then said briskly, "My spell is far less powerful, but probably more useful, from day to day. It's a blasting bolt that hampers the target even after you harm it."

Elminster nodded, "Mine is a defensive magic, against spell-casters. It delays a spell from taking effect—for a very short time!"

Dalamar raised his eyebrows. "Useful, but I think Mordenkainen wins the first round. Have you something a little more powerful to offer, Old Mage?"

Elminster nodded, and waved an empty hand. A moment later, it held a sculpted crystal swan, which promptly melted away, its wings turning into two identical parchment scrolls. He proffered them with a flourish. "This one is called *bloodstars*, and is rather more spectacular,"

"Ah, good," said the elven mage, unrolling his eagerly.

Mordenkainen took his with a frown. "Ground-shaking explosive magics may awe foes," he commented, "but they're often less effective than less powerful, but *sneakier* spells."

Elminster nodded. "There's a saying—in this world, surprisingly—Always remember to pillage before you burn."

Mordenkainen chuckled. "Wise barbarians, these."

He looked at Dalamar, but the elven mage merely shrugged. "Most sneaking spells work very well, but in only a few situations. Raw power, on the other hand, can blast through many obstacles, and so serve a wielder more often."

"Sloppy," Mordenkainen snorted.

"Wasteful," Elminster sighed. Then they both grinned at Dalamar, who had stiffened. He'd leaned forward, obviously about to ridicule their pompous reactions. He looked coldly at them both for a long moment, then closed his mouth, sat back, and shook his head. I saw his mouth crook in amusement.

"Can we agree, great lords," he said delicately, "that styles of spell-battle do involve personal preferences—and can engender neverending arguments?"

"We can," the two men said in grave chorus, and Mordenkainen handed out another pair of scrolls.

"This one's for use against undead," he said, "and is known as *Bonebind*."

Elminster let the scroll float in the air in front of his nose, and scanned it thoughtfully. "Hmmm," he said slowly, "this will be very useful in a little project I'm planning." His gaze slid sideways. "And thy spell, Master of the Conclave?"

Dalamar looked back at him suspiciously, but could find no sarcasm or derision in the Old Mage's expression or tone, and after a long moment answered, "Again, nothing subtle. Rather, something tried and true: *acid bolts*."

The table and the air above it were now quite crowded with scrolls. Through the drifting airborne parchment came a trio of slowly-floating plates, drifting in from the kitchen. Dalamar warily surveyed the one that settled to the table in front of him.

"What's this?"

"Cold lasagna," Elminster replied. "A specialty of this world."

"Made by your, ah, hidden apprentice?" Mordenkainen asked. His eyes flickered towards me (I quaked inside the armor, trying not to make it rattle) and then flashed away again.

"Oh, I wouldn't call him that," Elminster said smoothly. "Let us call him a scholar, A friend of his made this, I believe, a man who holds the office of lawyer."

"'Lawyer'? What's a lawyer?" Dalamar asked.

"An agent for thieves and the like, widely used in this world to keep folk from using their swords. They fence with words, not blades," Elminster replied. Mordenkainen grunted around a forkful of lasagna, "If I know anything about such envoys, most of them doubtless will soon be bigger thieves than those they represent."

"Your sight is keen," Elminster agreed in dry tones.

"Whatever his crimes," Dalamar put in, "he makes good lasagna." He turned another plaque into scrolls, and held them out.

"And this time?" Elminster asked.

Dalamar flushed (his lips and the tips of his ears turned red). "Ah, *acid storm*."

"I've heard of, but not encountered that one," mentioned Elminster. [*Editor's Note: This spell is detailed in the Tome of Magic.*]

The elfen mage nodded, and took a large forkful of lasagna, frowned, made a gesture, and there was a sudden sizzle and a waft of the aroma of delicious lasagna drifted across the room. My stomach growled, but luckily Dalamar chose that moment to say, "I was right—it is better hot."

Elminster shrugged. "Like blasting spells are to a mage, sometimes."

Dalamar raised an eyebrow. "Does that mean you've a blasting spell to share?"

Elminster nodded. "Ye could call it that. 'Tis known as a *tempestcone*."

Mordenkainen looked interested. "Oh? I've something a little more pedestrian called *lightning storm*."

Dalamar chuckled. "Only one of us would call such a spell 'pedestrian.'" Then his face froze and he made a sudden gesture. Motes of light swirled around the fork on his plate, and then died away.

"What befalls?" Mordenkainen asked sharply, as the elf drew hastily back from the table.

"My fork!" Dalamar said, voice tight. "It looked at me!"

"And the magic you cast?"

"Repulsed," the drow said tensely, "which requires great magical power!"

"No living thing can enter this place without my leave," Elminster said slowly, alarm in his own eyes.

Mordenkainen looked at him, and then back at the fork. "So whom did you give leave to enter?" Without waiting for a reply, he murmured something under his breath and opened his hands.

The fork glowed, but nothing else seemed to happen, and the radiance slowly faded.

Dalamar chanted something, and light leaped and flashed from his fingers. The fork was outlined in fire, but seemed unharmed, even as the lasagna beside it vanished in smoke and ashes, and the plate beneath it flew apart with a sharp crack.

"Not a fan of lasagna?" Elminster asked, raising an eyebrow.

"No more destructive magic, please," Mordenkainen put in firmly, "until we know what we face here." He turned to Elminster and added very quietly, "You know who this is, don't you?"

"Aye," Elminster said quietly. "I believe I do."

Dalamar paused, one hand raised to hurl another killing spell. "Well?"

"Don't cast that spell," Elminster replied softly, "if you would live."

The fork rose smoothly from the table, floated sideways to hang beside Elminster's face, grew silver lips that kissed his cheek, and then lengthened toward the floor with frightening speed.

Dalamar hissed, moved his hands rapidly, and then stopped, staring.

The swirling silver beside Elminster coalesced into a fire-eyed woman whose long silver hair curled around her shoulders with a life of its own. She wore dark robes, and stood tall and slim at Elminster's arm.

Mordenkainen bowed. "The Simbul, Queen of Aglarond, I presume?"

"I am. Well met, Mordenkainen of Oerth."

The Lord Mage of Greyhawk inclined his head. "The pleasure is shared, great lady."

"Well met, Master of the Conclave," the Simbul said almost challengingly, to Dalamar.

The elf stared at her, fury in his eyes. "How long have you spied on us?"

The Queen of Aglarond raised one shoulder in a shrug. "I don't know if I approve of such secret meetings, and the magical knowledge that may be spilled inadvertently in them," the Simbul said softly, looking around at them.

"It is not your place, lady, to approve or disapprove," Dalamar said coldly, and the rings on his hands winked in unison.

Mordenkainen turned swiftly to him, and said in a voice of cold iron, "Work no magic, if you would live."

Dalamar drew back. His eyes darkened as he asked carefully, "Are you threatening me?"

"No," said the mage of Greyhawk, in a voice whose silky menace matched his own, "I'm trying to keep you alive, Dalamar. This lady mage can overmatch you easily. I believe she could best any two of us, in open spell-battle."

Dalamar stared at him, and then back at the Simbul. "Is every mage in Faerun more powerful than the Master of the Conclave?" he protested, sounding like a small, petulant boy who's just been told he can't have a toy that he'd assumed was his.

"No, lad. Just enough that ye dare not misbehave. Good advice to any mage, come to think of it." The Old Mage's eyes twinkled. "Now sit ye down, have a drink, and put thy nose back into joint."

"A very good idea," the Simbul agreed softly.

Dalamar glared around at them all, and then shrugged. Mordenkainen uttered a snort that sounded suspiciously like a stifled chuckle and sat down.

"So, Witch-Queen," Dalamar said coldly, "are you planning on joining—or spying on—every one of our gatherings, from now on?"

The Simbul met his eyes, and held them with her own. Silence fell, and time passed while I trembled in the armor, sweat running off the end of my nose. Then Dalamar shivered, his skin decidedly pale, and looked away.

"No," the Simbul said simply. She flashed a wicked grin and added, "Not now you've repeatedly put me in your mouth."

Dalamar paled still more, and involuntarily clapped a hand over his mouth. She'd had endless chances to work magic

on him from within—or prepare him for some future doom.

The Simbul leaned forward, and said quietly, "You have my word, Dalamar, that I intend no ill toward you, and did not intend to intrude here. I used a spell to take me to Elminster, and found myself warded out to the kitchen, so, of course, I came in to see why. I won't intrude again." She looked all around the study, stopping almost imperceptibly when her eyes swept across mine (inside the armor, I gulped), and added, "Unless you ask me to. Since you seem to be trading spells, I'll leave one."

She blew the astonished Dalamar a kiss, and snapped her fingers. A dainty, ribbon-tied scroll appeared between them, and then was blown in the elf's direction. The Simbul turned to Elminster and murmured, "Later, Old Mage," and melted into empty air without haste or sound.

Mordenkainen shook his head with an amused air, reached for his glass, and looked at Dalamar.

The Master of the Conclave had unrolled the parchment. He looked up from it with amazement and a little fear in his face, and said, "It's called *Alamanther's return*. It allows the caster to duplicate the effects of any spell he's just seen cast—without knowing the spell."

"See *meteor swarm*, cast *meteor swarm*?" Mordenkainen inquired, eyebrow arched.

Elminster nodded. "Life as a mage grows more and more dangerous with each passing day," he told the ceiling. His pipe drifted down from it to his mouth, but thankfully, the ceiling did not answer.

## For your campaign

After the get-together just recounted, I managed to get enough information out of Elminster to relay relevant AD&D® game details of the wizard spells discussed before you, to wit:

### Shadow bolt (Evocation)

Level: 2                      Components: V,S  
Range: 5 yds./level      CT: 2  
Duration: Instant        Save: Special  
Area of Effect: One creature

This spell creates a bolt of gray, shadowy force that leaps from the caster to a target creature. If the target is within range and visible to the caster as casting is completed, the bolt cannot miss. If not, the bolt is wasted. If another creature deliberately blunders into the bolt, it suffers the spell's full effects; the bolt vanishes after it strikes a living creature.

Any being struck by a *shadow bolt* must make a saving throw. If it fails, the victim suffers 1d6 points of damage plus 1 point per level of the caster. On the round after the bolt hits, the victim is wracked by pain and suffers a -1 penalty on Armor Class, saving throws, attack rolls, and ability checks. After that round elapses, the spell's effects end.

If the saving throw succeeds, the target takes only 1d4 hp damage total, and does not suffer from the pain effects.

#### **Slowspell** (Alteration)

Level: 2 Components: V,S,M  
Range: 0 CT: 2  
Duration: Special Save: None  
Area of Effect: Special

This spell can affect an area centered on the caster, another creature, or a stationary area itself. Whether this area is stationary or can move with the caster must be determined during casting. If used to affect an area, *slowspell* protects a sphere of 10' radius per level of the caster.

A *slowspell* causes spells cast at a protected being or area to be delayed in taking effect, depending on the level of the mage who cast the *slowspell*. The magic won't take effect for one round if the caster is 8th level or less, for two rounds if the caster is 9-12th level, or for three rounds if the caster is 13th level or greater. A powerful caster can choose during casting to shorten the delay. (A 13th-level wizard can choose to cause only a one-round delay, for example.) The delay can't be lengthened beyond three rounds by any known means. A *slowspell* has no effect on magic cast or wielded by the being it protects, but if cast on an area, a *slowspell* affects all magic in that area, from any source.

Once cast, a *slowspell* remains ready indefinitely. It is activated by contact with appropriate magic. When activated, the *slowspell* delays the spell that triggered it and all others it contacts until its duration runs out. A *slowspell* lasts for one round per level of the caster, or two rounds after coming into contact with a *dispel magic* spell, whichever occurs first. A *slowspell* cannot be made permanent. Casting this spell requires any faceted gemstone (which is consumed in the casting).

#### **Acid bolts** (Evocation)

Level: 4 Components: V,S  
Range: 60 yds. CT: 4  
+ 10 yds./level Save: None  
Duration: Instant.  
Area of Effect: Up to two creatures

This spell summons two teardrops of flesh-corrosive force that dart forth from the caster's hands to strike their targets unerringly.

Each target must be a single creature that the caster can see and distinguish from others during casting, though a bolt will follow a fleeing target out of the caster's view. It will dodge around obstacles and other creatures, even those who move to intercept it. The caster cannot aim the bolt at specific body parts, areas, or carried items.

Any being struck by an acid bolt suffers 4d4 points of damage. Undead and nonliving objects (even wood and cloth) are unaffected by an acid bolt.

#### **Mordenkainen's involuntary wizardry** (Enchantment/Charm, Necromancy)

Level: 5 Components: V,S  
Range: 60 yds. CT: 5  
+ 10 yds./level Save: Special  
Duration: Instant.  
Area of Effect: One spell-casting creature

This spell forces a single, randomly-chosen spell from the mind of a single spell-casting being. Without the target doing any casting (or the use of any material components), the spell takes full normal effect on the target being; if this is impossible due to the nature of the spell, the target being takes one point of damage per spell level (for instance, *warp wood*, a second-level spell, does two points of damage), and the spell is lost. The target gets a saving throw vs. spell with a -3 penalty to avoid all effects; if this succeeds, the *involuntary wizardry* has no effect, and is wasted. It is also wasted if cast on a being that can't cast spells. *Mordenkainen's involuntary wizardry* can't trigger the use of a magical item.

#### **Bonebind** (Necromancy)

Level: 6 Components: V,S,M  
Range: 10 yds./level CT: 6  
Duration: 1 rd. Save: Special  
per level  
Area of Effect: One undead/level

This spell requires a bone from any creature, held in the caster's hand. It can affect only undead.

The effects of a *bonebind* are automatic on all chosen undead of 7HD or less with corporeal forms. Such undead are curled into a ball (if more than one undead is affected, they are all gathered into one tightly-packed sphere) and held helpless, immobile and with their special abilities in stasis, until the spell expires or the caster frees them by an act of will. Typically, this "boneball" is rolled off a cliff, into an obstacle or fire, or conveyed into the midst of foes, whereupon the caster ends the magic, freeing the undead to fight.

Against incorporeal undead and all undead of 8HD or more who don't turn as "Special," a *bonebind* acts only as a *slow spell*.

*Bonebind* also has additional effects against certain types of undead. When cast on a vampire, it forces the vampire into corporeal form and traps it in that form for the spell's duration (so that it must remain solid, visible, and can't fly). A *bonebind* spell prevents a banshee from wailing while the spell is in effect, and protects the caster from the aging effects of seeing a ghost. In the latter case, the spell makes the caster glow with a white radiance, but has no effect on the ghost or other undead present. To be effective against aging, it must be cast within one turn after sighting the ghost.

Corporeal undead of 7HD or less get no

saving throw against a *bonebind*. Incorporeal undead and ail undead of 8HD or more save vs. spell with a -1 penalty, but are allowed a saving throw every second round after the spell contacts them.

Whenever one succeeds, they break free of the spell. Liches and vampires are especially susceptible to *bonebind* spells, and save with a -3 penalty (every second round until free, as above). "Special" undead are immune to *bonebind* spells.

#### **Bloodstars** (Evocation)

Level: 7 Components: V,S,M  
Range: 0 CT: 7  
Duration: 1 rd. Save: None  
per level  
Area of Effect: Special

This spell creates seven star-shaped, spiked fields of whirling, sparkling force from seven drops of the caster's blood. These *bloodstars* move about (MV Fl 22, MC: A) in response to the caster's will. All seven can attack separate targets, although a *bloodstar* can't move more than 90' away from its caster.

A *bloodstar* strikes targets at THAC0 4, and its razor-sharp points of force slash through all armor and nonmagical barriers to inflict 4d4 points of damage. (Due to the "energy aura" exuded by a striking *bloodstar*, a single being can suffer damage from only one *bloodstar* in one round.)

Once a particular *bloodstar* has drawn blood, the caster can make it explode on any subsequent round, dealing 3d6 hp of damage to all creatures within 10'. The caster is immune to all effects of his own *bloodstars*, which pass through him as though he does not exist. A wizard can grapple with a foe, hold him in one place, and bring already-existing *bloodstars* slashing through them both, harming only his foe.

#### **Lightning storm** (Evocation)

Level: 8 Components: V,S,M  
Range: 40 yds. CT: 9  
+ 10 yds./level Save: ½  
Duration: 1 round  
Area of Effect: 70'-diameter sphere

This spell creates electrical discharges within a spherical area. Bolts of lightning leap repeatedly about within this area, regardless of the presence or location of metal, water, or other conductors. All beings within this area take 6d12 points of damage (unless immune to electrical damage), and all items must make a saving throw against electricity. The magic prevents lightning from travelling along conductive paths out of spell range; a man in full armor and a bather in a moat, both just outside the spells area of effect, will be unharmed.

The caster of a *lightning storm* is unharmed by the spell (even if he stands in the center of the storm) or by any other electrical attacks or effects during the spell's duration. The material components

include a shard of glass, a scrap of fur, a piece of silver, and a flint.

**Alamantier's return** (Alteration, Evocation)

Level: 9 Components: V,S  
Range: 60 yds. CT: 4  
+ 10 yds./level Save: Special  
Duration: Special  
Area of Effect: Special

This spell allows the caster to duplicate the effects of any one spell he has ever seen cast—even if he does not know how to cast the spell, lacks the necessary material components, and is ignorant of even the spells name. The duplicated effect cannot be a magical-item discharge, psionic effect, natural spell-like power, or a priest spell. The damage, extent, and duration of the duplicate spell match exactly those of a chosen casting that the caster saw. The target of the spell is up to the caster; it need not duplicate that of the observed casting.

A return can't be used to duplicate any spell available to the caster. A spell that was cast once from a scroll, which then faded, isn't "available," but any spell studied, copied into a spellbook, or researched by the caster would be considered "available," even if the spellbook is presently inaccessible and the spell isn't memorized. (This prevents a mage from using a *return* to forever duplicate the high-damage effects of an especially

successful *fireball* or other favorite spell.)

The name of this spell comes from the mage who devised it, Alamantier of Aglarond, and his habit of using it to hurl nasty spells used on him right back at those who cast them.

**Tempestcone** (Alteration, Evocation)

Level: 9 Components: VS  
Range: 0 CT: 9  
Duration: 1 rd. Save: None  
Area of Effect: One creature

This spell creates a shadowy, upright cone of force surrounding the caster or one creature touched by the caster. The cone comes to a point a few feet above the recipient's head, and extends to the floor (or, if the caster is flying, falling, or otherwise removed from a solid surface, to just below the lowest part of the caster's body). The *tempestcone* moves with the caster, and seems to be a faintly-shrieking, tumultuous chaos of whirling winds and shadowy clouds (hence its name). Its only effect is to "drink" all magic coming into contact with it (including magical-item charges and spells cast by the caster it is protecting), and transforms them into *magic missiles*.

The caster is unharmed by the whirling cone of winds (and is unaffected by all incoming spell effects); the *magic missiles* created by a *tempestcone* whirl around

the cone until hurled unerringly at targets within 140' by the being enveloped by the cone. The protected creature can hurl the missiles even if it isn't a spell-caster; a mental command is all that is needed. The missiles are identical in all respects to a *magic missile* spell.

A *tempestcone* creates two *magic missiles* per spell level absorbed, each doing 1d4 + 1 hp damage and flying unerringly at MV Fl 24 (MC: A). If the projectiles pass more than 140' from the cone, or are unused when the spell expires, they fade away harmlessly. Magical-item discharges for which no spell equivalent exists are considered sixth level for purposes of generating *magic missiles*.

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# DEATH ANGELS

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# The Color of Magic

Specialized spells for D&D® game spellcasters

by Dan Joyce

Artwork by Ken Widing

Life for a low-level NPC spellcaster in the D&D® game can be nasty, brutish, and short—as Unwin the Seer is about to find out. His career as a villain is looking good. He’s charmed six ogres in as many days and has made quite a splash in caravan-robbing circles.

Now he sits playing cards with his ogre buddies, happy in the knowledge that the main door to his hall is bolted shut. His happiness lasts about two minutes.

CRASH! The door swings inward, the lock broken. Three humans enter; the two in front are armed and armored, and the one behind them wears robes and a pointy hat. Adventurers!

The ogres grab their clubs. Unwin leaps to his feet, scattering cards everywhere, and begins to chant and gesture with obvious arcane intent. A shimmering arrow appears in the air and darts toward the adventurers. Oxbrain the Hero is hit square in the chest. He does not seem to care.

“Surrender or die!” shouts Unwin. “There’s more where that came from.”

“Rubbish,” sneers Oxbrain, lifting his spear. “You’ve shot your bolt. Eat this, low-

level scum!” He turns and whispers to Xeno the Enchanter, “Magic missile? I thought this guy was tough!”

Oxbrain hurls his spear. Unwin catches it in the chest and dies instantly. His ogres soon follow. The game is over.

D&D game magic doesn’t always have the mystique it deserves. It is simple and it works, but there are only a certain number of spells, and experienced players can recognize them instantly. When they have seen one magic missile, they have seen them all. When they know what one Enchanter could do, they know what all Enchanters could do. Magic-users cease to be men of mystery and become instead merely grades of heavy artillery in pointy hats.

It is even worse at lower levels, where there are fewer options. The average 1st-level magic-user is a sleep spell on legs. Players just will not respect such characters unless you can recreate a sense of mystery and a world in which every magic-user can do something different.

This looks like a plea to create separate spell lists for every magic-user. It is not—

quite. The existing D&D spells from the *D&D Cyclopeda* cover most magical effects already. "New" spells are often just minor variations of old ones. *Bardolph's electromagnetic barrier* sounds novel, but if it measures 20' x 60', prevents the passage of creatures with fewer than four hit dice, and does 1-6 points of damage to all others, then it's not very different from a *wall of fire* or *wall of ice*. At least, it's not very different in terms of game mechanics. In terms of game atmosphere (how the players perceive it), it could be very different indeed!

This is the key to creating hundreds of new spells to suit any kind of spell-caster: make cosmetic changes to existing spells. Describe spells differently. *Magic missile* need not be a shimmering arrow. It could be a telekinetic fist, a jet of flame, or a steel pin stuck into a voodoo doll. The game mechanics remain the same. All that changes is how these effects are brought about. Hence, a *magic missile* variant will still do 2-7 points of damage, with a range of 150' and a duration of one round. A *shield* spell still grants a saving throw. As for the rest, use your imagination. Maybe Maximus the Black casts *magic missile* by momentarily enchanting his dagger, then making a pass at a distant enemy with it. A cut, doing 2-7 points of damage, opens up on Maximus' enemy, mirroring the swipe Maximus made with his dagger.

When you redefine how spells work, you may need to make some additional, minor changes for the sake of consistency. Maximus the Black, for instance, will always need a dagger or some other sharp implement with which to cast his version of *magic missile*. Such changes require careful thought from the DM and ought not to affect the overall power of the spell too greatly.

The benefit of this method is that there is no danger of upsetting the game balance. All the spell *effects* have been extensively playtested already. Redefining the causes just adds color, individuality, and panache.

Spells can also be styled so that they are in keeping with the overall conception of the character. As an example, take Illfrith the Ice Queen, a 5th-level magic-user NPC who lives in the DM's "Northern Wastes" campaign. Ordinarily, she would not be able to use any "ice magic" until she reached 7th level (*wall of ice*). Yet she can cast *fireball* at 5th level. By describing her spells differently, however, she becomes a real Mistress of Ice Magic.

Here are Illfrith's spells, with descriptive notes. Unless stated otherwise, all the effects remain the same as the original spell (damage, range, duration, saving throws, etc.).

#### First level

*Magic missile*. Illfrith conjures an icicle out of thin air, then hurls it.

*Shield*. Her skin becomes the bluish-white color of a glacier. Intense heat, as from a

fire-based spell or large, open bonfire or furnace within 10' negates this spell.

#### Second level

*Knock*. Illfrith freezes any lock or bar on the affected portal, causing it to become brittle and shatter with the first use of force.

*Web*. Instead of sticky strands, a layer of ice forms over the area affected, immobilizing all within. The ice can be physically broken or melted with fire (standard 1-6 points of damage in the latter case to any characters touched by the flames).

#### Third level

*Fireball*. Illfrith creates a zone of intense cold (Fimbul-winter) in an area corresponding to a *fireball's* standard area of effect. The duration is one round.

If you work backward from the effects to the cause, you will find that standard D&D spells can be transformed almost infinitely. So long as the power of a spell is not increased, anything goes. You can even change the name if it suits you. The D&D game is about imagination. Use it, and bring back mystical magic. (See the assorted NPCs at the end of this article for further ideas.)

### That all-important panache

Let's continue the action from the introductory scenario. After the ogres are dispatched, a lone adventurer heads back for town. At the Guttled Goblin Tavern, the singed survivor swears at his flint and tinder. Xeno the Enchanter has had a hard day down in the dungeon. Thanks to him, half-a-dozen ogres, a magic-user, two close friends, and a room full of expensive furnishings are now only piles of hot ash. But producing 33,529 cubic feet of white-hot flame takes a lot out of a man, and he is gasping for a good smoke to relax. Unfortunately, he cannot raise a spark to light his pipe.

Magic is powerful stuff, and casting even a first-level spell presumably requires a lot of physical or mental effort. No one ought to be able to cast *fireballs* indefinitely.

The problem arises at the lower end of the magical scale. There are no spells less powerful than those of first level—no cantrips, no minor prestidigitations. A Warlock may be able to *fly* and turn *invisible*, but he still has to cook his own breakfast. Xeno the Enchanter can conjure a *fireball* by waving his arms about, but he cannot light his pipe by snapping his fingers.

Magic-users need a bit more panache than this. In one sense they are only human—even a Necromancer has to use the garderobe—but they are also a breed apart. A magic-user who lowers himself to plebeian levels does a lot of harm to his image, and this illusion of power is one of his greatest assets. To maintain this image, the magic-user ought to be able to do ordinary things in an extraordinary way. Xeno should be able to light his pipe like that—SNAP! He could probably poach his

eggs without a campfire, too.

Don't go overboard. A good rule of thumb is to allow magic-users to do magically only what they can already do by normal means. The idea is to enhance the atmosphere of the game, not the power of the magic-user. No effect as powerful as even a first-level spell should be allowed.

To prevent players doing "just anything" with these subsidiary powers, and also for the sake of consistency, all magical effects should reflect the spells that the magic-user already knows. Xeno, incinerator extraordinaire, can dispense with flint and tinder to light his pipe. Corvus the Conjuror (who knows *levitate*, *floating disc*, and his own version of *magic missile*: *telekinetic fist*) can shuffle cards with psychokinesis. Maximus the Black, who knows *death spell*, can kill small harmless animals like mice merely by stroking them (he's not bothered by flies or mosquitoes, either, as they die upon touching his flesh).

It is worth repeating that these effects are only for atmosphere. They should not be useful in combat. Tantalus the Beguiler (who knows *charm person*) can probably haggle a good price on a new horse, but if he is jumped in a dark alley and cannot bluff his assailant, he must resort to his dagger. Supernatural panache is a useful thing to have, but it is not a suit of armor.

The following sections depict a number of idiosyncratic NPCs and their special spell lists. Only the magical aspects of the NPCs are covered here. DMs should feel free to flesh out the NPCs' personalities, history, and motivations. Alternative spell names are given in parentheses, although the effects are the same as the original spell unless otherwise noted.

### Grimfang

Grimfang is a 3rd-level goblin magic-user, the shaman of a small tribe that uses spiders of varying sizes as guards, mounts, and totem animals. All her spells have an arachnid theme.

#### First level

*Shield (Chitin)*. Grimfang's skin turns into tough, articulated chitin for the duration of the spell, giving her a spiderlike appearance.

*Sleep (Spiderbite)*. Range: Nil. Duration: Special. Grimfang can inject sleep-inducing poison by biting. This requires a roll to hit in combat. She can put 2d8 hit dice worth of creatures to sleep for 4-16 turns (determine the duration secretly when the spell is cast). Any creature bitten that has over 4 + 1 hit dice, or more hit dice than Grimfang has hit dice worth of poison remaining, is unaffected (the magic-user still loses the relevant hit dice worth of poison, however). Any unused poison disappears when the magic-user falls asleep or loses consciousness. Grimfang's bite does no physical damage. The victim of this spell is affected as per the standard version of this spell: sleep for 4-16 turns, no saving throw.

**Second level**

*Web.* Standard spell.

**Blackthorn**

Blackthorn is a 5th-level elf whose spells are tied to the earth, plants, and his natural archery ability. He rarely leaves the forest in which he is so effective.

**First level**

*Magic missile (Arrow-s trike).* This spell enchants an ordinary arrow, which must then be fired from a bow within one round. The arrow hits automatically. Range and damage are those of the spell, not the normal arrow.

*Ventriloquism (Whispering leaves).* Blackthorn's spell is a reversed version of the original. It must be cast on a plant or tree. If Blackthorn remains within 60' of the enchanted plant, he can hear any sound made near it as if he were there.

**Second level**

*Invisibility (Camouflage).* Blackthorn's skin and clothing take on the exact hue of the background scenery. In dense vegetation, this works as a normal *invisibility* spell. In areas lacking such cover, Blackthorn can insure invisibility only if he remains still. Sudden movements will give his presence away.

*Web (Ensnare).* The effect is caused by trees, bushes, roots, creepers, and even

grass twining around the victim. The spell must be cast in an area where such greenery exists.

**Third level**

*Lightning bolt (Heartseeker).* This spell affects only one target. This spell is cast on an arrow, which must be fired from a bow within one turn. The arrow unflinchingly strikes any target within range (180'). Damage is 1d6 points of damage per level, with a save for half damage. The enchanted arrow always strikes a vital spot.

**Imran**

A 7th-level magic-user, Imran belongs to the Order of Secret Flame, a group of magicians who specialize in fire magicks.

**First level**

*Darkness (Smokescreen).* This is a reversed version of the first-level spell, *light*. Smokescreen must be cast in the vicinity of fire, and it cannot be cast on a creature. It causes impenetrable smoke to stream forth from the flame, and this persists until the spell ends.

*Sleep (Smother).* Range: 20'. The spell must be cast in the vicinity of fire. It causes translucent green smoke to issue from the flames. All who inhale the smoke (except the caster) suffer the usual effects of a *sleep* spell. Note the reduced range.

*Magic missile (Firefinger).* A jet of flame

shoots from Imran's fingertips, with standard effects. Highly flammable objects will ignite if struck directly.

**Second level**

*Continual light (Eternal flame).* Range: Nil. When cast on any inanimate object, this spell creates a small fire that gives off as much heat as a torch, but which has the brilliance of a *continual light* spell. The eternal flame will not consume the object it is cast on, but it will ignite anything else that touches it, just like a normal flame. The *eternal flame* spell can be quenched only by immersion in water or by magical means. Any fire that the spell's flame starts can be put out normally, however. This spell cannot be cast on a creature.

*Mirror image (Smoke shadows).* This spell surrounds Imran with a 5' radius of semi-opaque smoke, in which 2-5 shadowy images appear. These are indistinguishable from Imran and move as he moves. Imran can see through the smoke normally.

**Third level**

*Clairvoyance (Firegazing).* To cast this spell, Imran must stare into a flame of some kind.

*Fireball.* Standard spell.

**Fourth level**

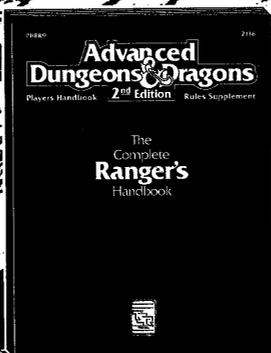
*Wall of fire.* Standard spell.

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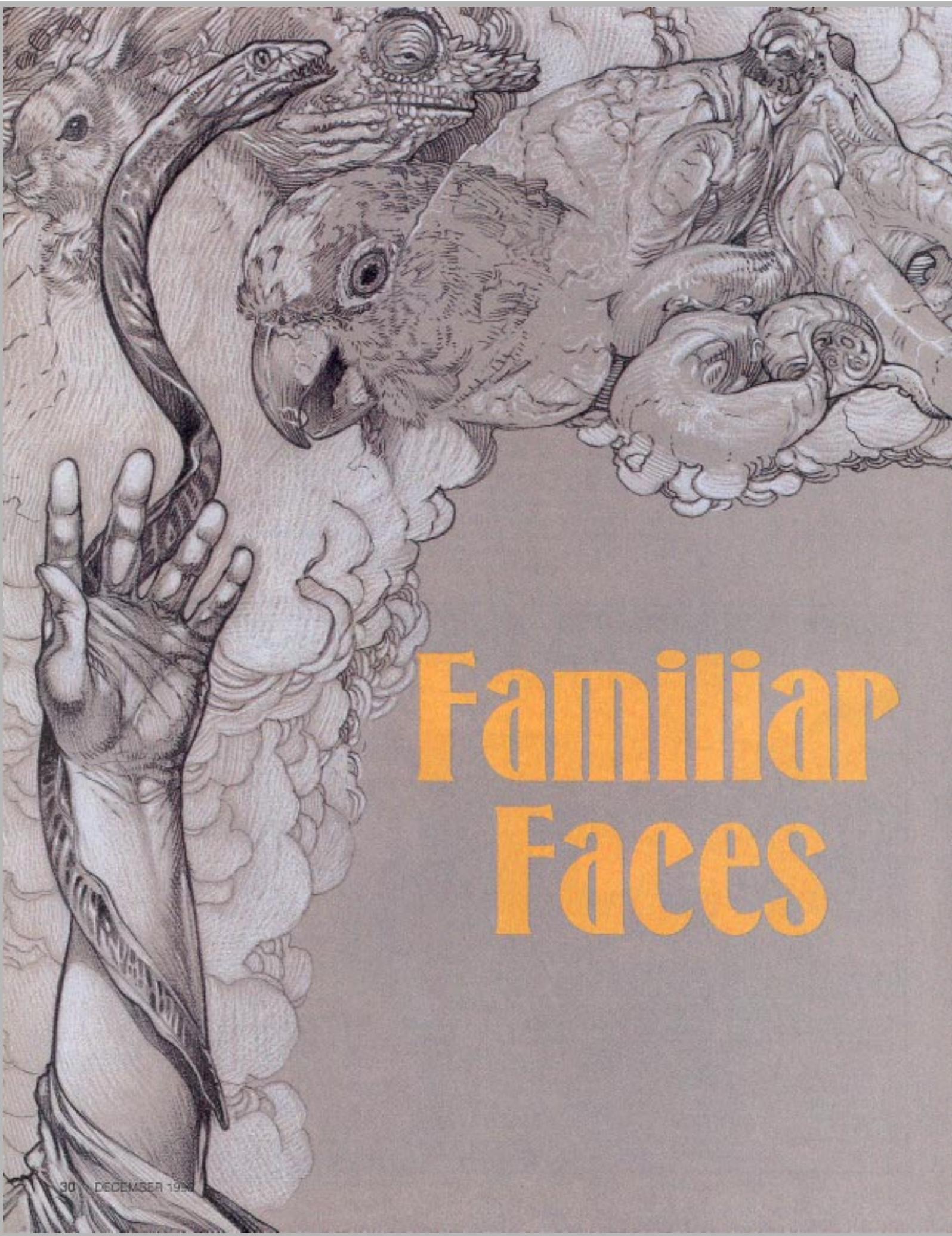
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# Familiar Faces



## An AD&D® game wizard's best friend just got better

by David Howery

Artwork by Mark Nelson

The *find familiar* spell in the AD&D® 2nd Edition game is well described in the *Player's Handbook* (page 134), but the familiars available are limited to six small creatures. The *Monstrous Compendium* and *Monstrous Manual* contain numerous small animals that could serve equally well as familiars. Because the AD&D game thrives on variety and the list of familiars can be greatly expanded, this article presents new tables of familiars for player-character and nonplayer-character wizards. It also provides new tables to provide familiars for several types of non-human mages.

Each familiar is linked to its mage, as

noted in the spell description. Whenever a *find familiar* spell is cast, roll 1d20 to determine if a familiar is available. A familiar is within spell range only on a roll of 1-15.

If a familiar is available, roll 1d100 to find the type available and consult Table 1. Most of the creatures listed here are described in the *Monstrous Manual* (MM) or *Monstrous Compendium* (MC, with appendix number). Those marked with an asterisk (\*) have the standard familiar statistics: AC 7, 2-4 hp + 1 hp/mage's level, Dmg nil. Some animals include a variety of separate species with similar game statistics, listed by the creature's name. The DM may substitute these alternates to add color to

the campaign. If a result is a poor match in the DM's campaign due to climate, setting, or DM preference, roll again.

Some humanoids may cast wizard spells and thus have access to the *find familiar* spell. However, they should not gain the innocuous creatures available to PC mages. A humanoid needs a familiar that will impress his fellows; cats and crows would be eaten. Table 2 lists a number of small nasty creatures to serve as a humanoids familiar.

The ecology of the underground worlds limits what creatures are available to the mages there, such as drow. Table 3 gives a list of suitable Underdark creatures, some of which are described in earlier tables.

Some sea elves and other aquatic peoples can become mages. Appropriate creatures for these mages' familiars are given in Table 4. All underwater creatures can sense what is disturbing the water around them, due to sensory organs in their skin. They can detect kicking, swimming, thrashing, and explosions, even if unable to see them, and their hearing is very acute.

As mages grow in power, they sometimes outlast their first familiars and summon others. Because they are more powerful when they summon second familiars, mages can sometimes command the services of special familiars. Special familiars are intelligent creatures with low magic resistance that serve only mages of 10th or greater level. If the die roll indicates that a familiar is available, the mage has a chance of summoning a special familiar equal to his level (10th level minimum). Otherwise, roll on Table 1 as normal. The type of special familiars gained depends on the mages' alignment:

CG: Faerie dragon, young (MM, MC3)  
 NG: Pseudodragon (MM, MC1)  
 LG: Brownie (MM, MC1)  
 LN: Mongrelman, 1 HD (MM, MC2)  
 N: Brownie-buckawn (MC5)  
 CN: Sprite-atomie (MM, MC5)  
 LE: Imp (MM, MC1)  
 NE: Jermlaine (MM, MC2)  
 CE: Quasit (MM, MC1)

All special familiars impart the following bonuses to their mages as long as the mage and familiar remain within a mile of each other:

- The mage can cast spells as if he were one level higher.
- The familiar has a telepathic link with its mage, whose senses are sharpened to the same level as his familiar's.
- The mage receives the benefit of magic resistance equal to his familiar (if any).

If a special familiar is ever slain, the mage loses four levels and one point of Constitution. Because summoning a special familiar requires voluntarily investing the familiar with part of the caster's life energy, the *restoration* spell has no effect on the caster when these levels are lost.

**Table 1: Familiars**

1d100 Result (source):	benefits for wizard; common traits
34-40	Cat, domestic (MM, "Cat, small"): acute night vision, hearing, and sense of smell; playful, silent, curious, languorous, fierce when cornered, distracted by tiny moving creatures, friendly, easily trained
41-42	Cat, wild (MM, "Cat, small") (margay, ocelot, bobcat, lynx): acute night vision, hearing, and sense of smell; as for domestic cat, but much more wary and less social
43-44	Deer, mouse*: acute hearing, vision, and sense of smell; timid, swift, shy, wary, lives in the tropics
45-50	Dog, wild (MM) (bushdog, coyote, dingo, dhole): acute hearing and sense of smell; very social, loyal, easily trained, very alert, prone to bark at danger
51-55	Ferret (MM, "Mammal, small"): acute hearing and sense of smell; intensely curious, constantly moving, distracted easily, tires easily
56-58	Fox (MM, "Mammal, small") (red, gray, kit, silver, arctic): acute hearing and sense of smell; cautious, sly, silent, opportunistic
59-60	Jackal (MM, "Mammal"): acute hearing and sense of smell; cautious, timid, opportunistic, loyal, <i>not</i> as cowardly as is commonly thought
61-65	Monkey (MM, "Mammal, small") (capuchin, spider, rhesus, howler): acute hearing; curious, playful, greedy, prone to tantrums, intelligent, easily trained, dexterous paws, some have prehensile tails, arboreal
66-70	Opossum*: acute sense of smell, nocturnal, torpid by day, omnivorous, arboreal, hunts poisonous snakes
71-75	Otter (MM, "Mammal, small"): acute hearing and vision; very playful, social, aquatic, carnivore very easily distracted
76-80	Rabbit (MM, "Mammal, small"): acute hearing and vision; timid, swift, alert, prolific, some are social, some burrow
81-85	Raccoon (MM, "Mammal, small"): acute hearing and sense of smell adaptable, opportunistic, dexterous paws, very playful, curious, social, easy to train
86-90	Rat, wood (MM): acute hearing and sense of smell; curious, very active, collects shiny objects, nocturnal
91-95	Skunk (MM, "Mammal"): acute sense of smell; confident, calm, peaceful, plodding, clean when not spraying enemies
96-00	Squirrel (MM, "Mammal, small"): acute hearing and vision; very active, quarrelsome, noisy, arboreal, curious
<i>Amphibians and reptiles</i>	
1	Bullfrog*: wide-angle vision; aggressive, hungry, cannot tolerate extreme heat or cold, must be kept moist
2	Chameleon*: independent eye movement; slow, torpid, camouflage coloring, prehensile tail, long muscular tongue
3	<i>Compsognathus</i> (MC3, "Dinosaur"): acute vision; alert, active, distracted by small prey
4	<i>Euparkeria</i> (MC3, "Dinosaur"): acute vision; active, constantly hunting for small prey
5	Iguana*: acute sense of smell; torpid, vegetarian, cannot tolerate extreme heat or cold
6	Snake, garter*: acute sense of smell; silent, shy, hunts for small prey
7	Toad*: wide-angle vision; lazy, slow, must stay moist, cannot tolerate extreme heat or cold
<i>Birds</i>	
8-12	Crow/Raven (MM, "Bird"): acute vision; very literal minded, can be trained to talk, distracted by shiny objects, hates owls
13-15	Hawk (MM, "Bird"): acute long-distance vision; alert, fierce, aggressive, distracted by small ground animals
16-18	Falcon (MM, "Bird"): acute long-distance vision; very alert, easily trained, swift flier, fierce in defense, distracted by small rodents and birds
19-21	Owl (MM, "Bird"): acute night vision, acute hearing; silent flier, nocturnal, wise and calm, fierce in defense
22-23	Parrot*: acute vision; intelligent, friendly, can be trained to talk, very dexterous claws, vegetarian
24-25	Rhea (MM, "Bird"): acute vision; timid, vegetarian, flightless, prefers to live in groups
<i>Mammals</i>	
26-27	Armadillo*: acute sense of smell; insectivore, burrower, constantly searching for food, prefers to evade danger
28-30	Badger (MC2): acute vision and sense of smell; carnivorous, burrower, aggressive, quick tempered, courageous
31-33	Bat, common (MM) (brown, pipistrel, fruit, fishing): echolocation "radar" allows it to navigate in total darkness (wizard must whistle softly to do the same); social, nocturnal, insectivore, elusive

**Table 2: Humanoid Mage Familiars**

1d10	Result (source): benefits for mage; common habits and traits
1	Bat, vampire (MM): echolocation radar to navigate in total darkness (mage must whistle softly to do the same); feeds on blood, disease carrier
2	Bloodhawk (MM, "Bird"): acute long-distance vision, aggressive, not easily trained, rapacious
3	Centipede, huge (MM): silent movement, 90% ability; mindless, hungry, poisonous, likes the dark
4	Rat, common (MM): acute hearing and sense of smell; adaptable, opportunistic, omnivorous, disease carrier, aggressive
5	Rat, giant (MM): acute hearing and sense of smell; as for the common rat, but far more aggressive
6	Scorpion, large (MM): silent movement, 90% ability; mindless and aggressive hunter, poisonous
7	Spider, large (MM): silent movement, 90% ability; cunning, poisonous, aggressive
8	Stirge (MM): acute infravision and sense of smell; very aggressive, feeds on blood, disease carrier
9	Vulture (MM, "Bird"): acute long distance vision, opportunistic, cautious, carrion feeder, ugly
10	Weasel (MM, "Mammal"): acute hearing and sense of smell; aggressive, bad tempered, irritable, smelly, vicious, very active, voracious killer

**Table 3: Familiars for Underdark Mages**

1d10	Result (source): benefits for mage; common habits and traits
1-2	Bat, common (MM) (brown, pipistrel, fruit, fishing): echolocation "radar" allows it to navigate in total darkness (wizard must whistle softly to do the same); social, nocturnal, insectivore, elusive
3	Beetle, fire (MM): acute sense of smell; aggressive, nocturnal
4	Buribur (MC3): acute night vision; docile, quiet
5	Centipede, huge (MM): silent movement, 90% ability; mindless, hungry, poisonous, likes the dark
6	Lizard, small*: can climb walls with 90% ability; prone to sit still with sudden bursts of speed, eats bugs and grubs, solitary
7	Myconid (MM, 1 HD): acute sense of smell; passive, nonviolent, silent
8	Rat, giant (MM): acute hearing and sense of smell; as per the common rat, but far more aggressive
9	Spider, large (MM): silent movement, 90% ability; cunning, poisonous, aggressive
10	Stirge (MM): acute infravision and sense of smell; very aggressive, feeds on blood, disease carrier

**Table 4: Familiars for Sea Mages**

1d8	Result (source): benefits for mage; common habits and traits
1	Barracuda (MM, "Fish," 1 HD) acute, wide-angle vision; fast, aggressive, vicious
2	Eel, weed (MM, "Fish") wide-angle vision; poisonous, torpid, prefers to lie camouflaged
3-4	Fish, small*: (parrotfish, cod, mackerel, etc.): wide-angle vision; cautious, curious, prone to flee
5	Lobster*: wide-angle vision; alert, fast backward motion, can hold small objects with pincers
6	Octopus, small*: wide-angle vision; relatively intelligent, dexterous arms, carnivorous, shoots ink cloud
7	Sea horse (MM, "Fish") wide-angle vision; alert, shy, agile, clever
8	Stingray (MM, "Fish") wide-angle vision; torpid, poisonous, irritable



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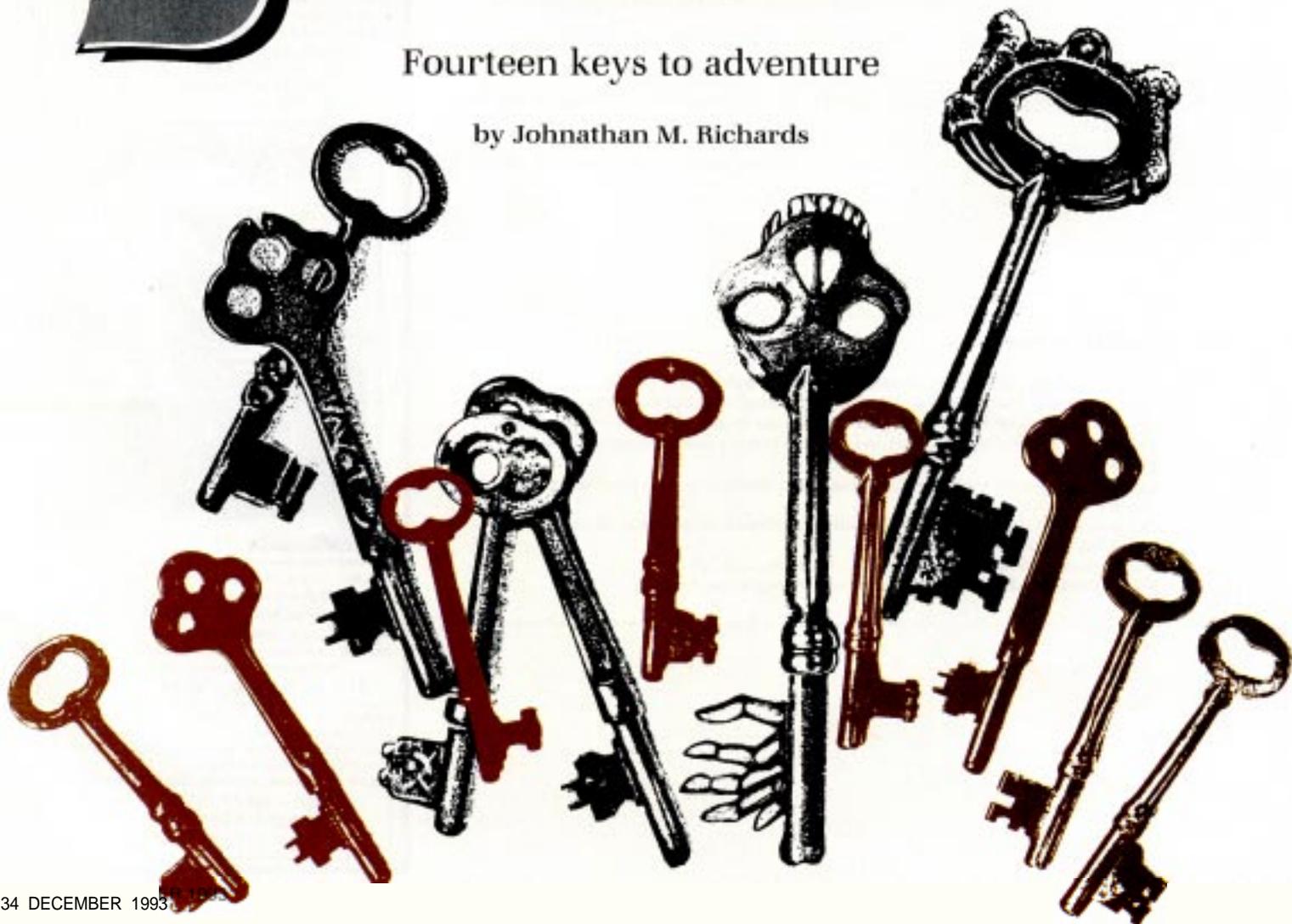
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# BAZAAR of the BIZARRE

Fourteen keys to adventure

by Johnathan M. Richards



Not all magical treasures are as flashy as a *vorpal sword* or a *staff of the magi*. Some of the most interesting and useful magical items are ordinary objects endowed with strange and wonderful powers. Presented in this article are fourteen magical keys, each about the size of the palm of your hand. While their powers vary, they are used in one of two ways: Either worn on a chain around the neck, or held in the hand and turned, as if in an invisible lock. The keys are generally found singly, but a lucky adventurer may happen upon several different keys together on a keyring. Unless otherwise specified, magical keys may be used by any character class.

After each key's description is listed its experience-point value. Bear in mind, however, that simply using these (or any) magical items does not earn the user experience points; only those characters who create such items earn the experience-point awards listed. The creation process for each key is left to player-character (PC) research and the discretion of the Dungeon Master (DM).

### Key of inquiry

This key is used to "unlock" the resistance of a person who is resisting questioning, forcing the subject to give truthful answers to three questions. It is used by holding it up to the subject's forehead and making a one-quarter turn to the right. The subject does not have to be willing to undergo the interrogation, but he must be unable to avoid the key's touch (bound or otherwise restrained by his interrogators; the key cannot be used in melee). No saving throw is allowed; the subject must truthfully answer the next three questions directed to him. The key can be used only once per day, and will affect a given subject one time only. Note that the key does not provide understanding or translation if the subject responds in a language or manner that is unintelligible to the questioners. Law-enforcement authorities such as constables, magistrates, and judges value these keys very highly.

**XP:500**

### Map key

A *map key* can be used to gain new information from a map. The key must be held to the map in question and turned. At

the DM's discretion, one heretofore hidden feature will appear on the map—perhaps the location of a hidden room, a secret door, or the fact that a hallway is trapped. In any case, the key's wielder has no control over what will be revealed. Only a feature known to the maker of the map will be revealed—that is, if the adventurers are following a map drawn by the dwarves who dug the tunnel system they are in, any one feature known by the dwarves could appear. On the other hand, if the *map key* is applied to the map that the party is drawing up as they explore a newly-discovered cave network, nothing new will be revealed, as the party members themselves do not know any hidden features about the caves. A *map key* can be used only once on any given map. Such a key would be very useful when the PCs are questing for a hidden location. Gaining a *map key* could be the object of a quest in itself.

**XP: 1,500**

### Courier keys

These keys are created in pairs, although only rarely will both keys of a set be found together. With one of these keys, a message of up to 100 words can be "locked" (implanted) into an intelligent creature's mind—the message will be forgotten by the recipient, and will be inaccessible by such means as *ESP*, *hypnotism*, and the like. Only by the use of either of the two keys in the set can the message be "unlocked" and revealed by its carrier, *Courier keys* are most often used to send messages so secret that there can be no risk of interception. Only one message may be planted into a particular mind at a time. Both locking and unlocking the message is done by touching the key to the messenger's forehead and turning it. The PCs may encounter these keys, or even have a message "locked" into one of the PC's minds, in the course of service to their leader, ruler, or patron.

**XP: 1,000 per set**

### Keys of reunion

Also made in sets of two, either of these keys will point in the direction that the other key lies when held in the hand. *Keys of reunion* can be useful if a party splits up in the course of an adventure, enabling

the PCs to find each other again. Similarly, one key can be left at home and one carried by the adventures, providing an easy means of finding the way back home. The keys cease to work if they are on different planes of existence. The PCs could hire by the owner of one key of a set to find the bearer of the other key. That bearer could be a lost love, a missing relative, or a rival who stole some of the patron's property, taking the key without knowing its purpose.

**XP: 5,000 per set**

### Saddle key

By means of this key, which must be touched to the saddle and turned to activate or deactivate the key's power, the wearer can "lock" herself onto a saddle when riding a mount of any kind. While "locked in," any situation that normally might cause the rider to fall from the saddle (being hit in combat, striking a tree limb, the mount tries to buck her off, etc.) does not cause her to do so. This key would be a godsend to a character who just can't master riding, or one who rides a difficult or unusual mount (such as a mount capable of flight).

**XP: 500**

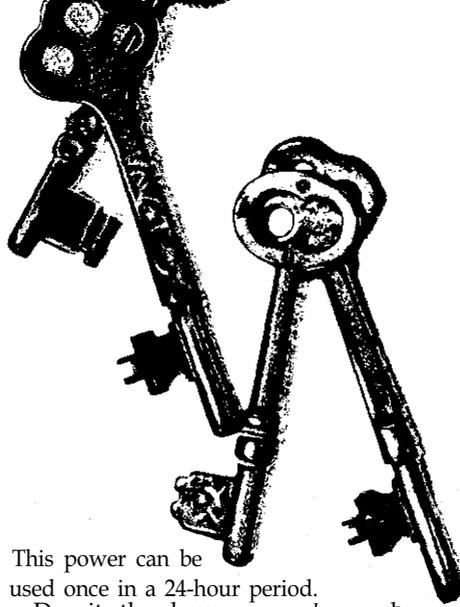
### Shapeshifter key

This key can be used to "lock" a shapeshifter into its present form, preventing it from changing shape for 12 hours, subject to a saving throw vs. polymorph. To creatures such as doppelgangers and true lycanthropes, this is a nuisance, but to those afflicted with the disease of lycanthropy (those who change shape involuntarily), being prevented from changing causes great pain (and the loss of 10-40% of their current hit points each night the change is prevented). The key is used by touching the shapeshifter with its tip and turning it, but it cannot be used on oneself; thus, a paladin cursed to become a werewolf on the night of a full moon must have an ally who will use the key on him. Note that the key does not cure the disease, it only prevents the shapechanging. A dispel magic spell can cancel the effects of a *shapeshifter key*. The effects of the key are treated as if cast by a 6th-level wizard. Lycanthrope or doppelganger hunters would find this key most helpful in preventing their quarry from changing shape in order to escape.

**XP: 2,000**

### Grave key

This key has two powers, and is valued by different characters for different reasons. If a grave key is inserted into the dirt of a burial site and turned, the remains buried there will rise out of the grave site and obey the wielder of the key (one zombie or skeleton, depending on the state of decomposition—DM's determination). Note that using the grave key in this fashion is an evil act, and may affect the player-character's alignment and class standing.



This power can be used once in a 24-hour period.

Despite the above, a *grave key* can be useful to nonevil characters, as it will open sealed coffins, crypts, tombs, and the like (provided there is no magic involved in the sealing—a *wizard locked coffin*, for example). This can be a useful device in the hands of a vampire hunter, or those seeking to hunt down and destroy other forms of undead.

**XP: 6,000**

### Key of silence

A *key of silence* "locks" the vocal organs of one creature, subject to a saving throw vs. paralysis. The key must strike the victim, as in combat, with a normal attack roll being made. Once the victim has been silenced, the key will not work again until the victim's voice has been "unlocked." This can be done only with the key, or by using a dispel magic spell cast against the key's sixth-level magic. (Note that if a wizard's voice is locked, he'll need another spell-caster to cast the spell on him.) A *key of silence* can affect only one victim at a time. This key is of obvious usefulness against spell-casters.

**XP: 4,000**

### Spider key

When held in the hand, this key allows safe passage through a web, be it natural or magical. (The strands of the web part and reform as the key's wielder passes through them.) Further, if the key is touched to a person suffering from the poison of a spider and turned, the poison damage is "locked out" until it can be dealt with (by means of a *neutralize poison* spell, etc.). The poisoned creature must have the key's power applied to him within one turn of being bitten. While the *spider key* is being used to "lock out" poison damage, it cannot be used to pass through webs. This key would be in high demand in those areas where many dangerous spiders live (the Underdark, etc.).

**XP: 3,000**

### Key of storage

This key, when held and turned, creates a shimmering door the size of a school or

sports locker, which in turn opens to reveal an extradimensional space 5' tall, 2' wide, and 2' deep. This space can be used to store extra armor, weapons, treasure, and the like. However, other items of an extradimensional nature (*portable holes*, *bags of holding*, etc.) cannot be placed inside the storage area. Due to the physical laws inherent in the space accessed by the key, these items simply cannot enter the storage area. The space is closed by shutting the door and removing the key. The storage space can be accessed regardless of location; that is, the storage space is attuned to the key, not the location where the key was last used.

**XP: 5,000**

### Rogue's key

A *rogue's key*, when touched to a lock, causes the outer casing of the lock to become transparent. This greatly aids the rogue in performing his lockpicking skills, adding a 15% bonus to his chances of success (subject to a maximum chance of 99%). Note that this key only works on locks; it cannot turn an entire chest transparent in order to see what's inside it. A *rogue's key* is usable only by a rogue character.

**XP: 1,000**

### Key of translation

This key can be used to "unlock" a language barrier. It must be worn around the neck in order to be effective. The key has the ability to translate one language being spoken into one understandable by the wearer. When created, the key is not attuned to any particular language; rather, it is activated at will by the wearer when she hears a language being spoken that she doesn't understand. Once activated, the key will translate only that one language. The key does not grant its wearer the ability to speak, read, or write the language it is translating.

**XP: 1,000**

### Dowsing key

When placed into the ground and turned, this key will "unlock" any underground water present at that location. The amount of water provided is up to the local conditions and the DM, but ranges from about one pint in the desert, to four gallons under optimal conditions. A *dowsing key* can be used three times a day.

**XP: 1,000**

### Wizard's key

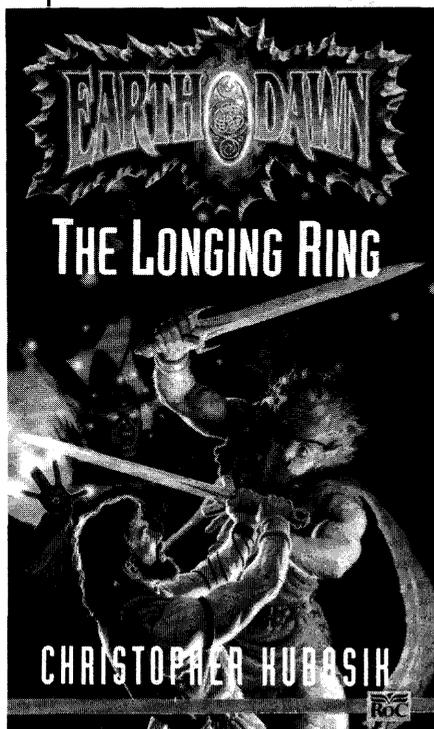
This key, worn on a chain around the neck, can be used only by members of the wizard class. It grants a bonus of +10% to a wizard's chance of learning a new spell (see Table 4 in the *Player's Handbook*, page 16). The key must be worn for one full month before its power manifests.

**XP: 5,000**

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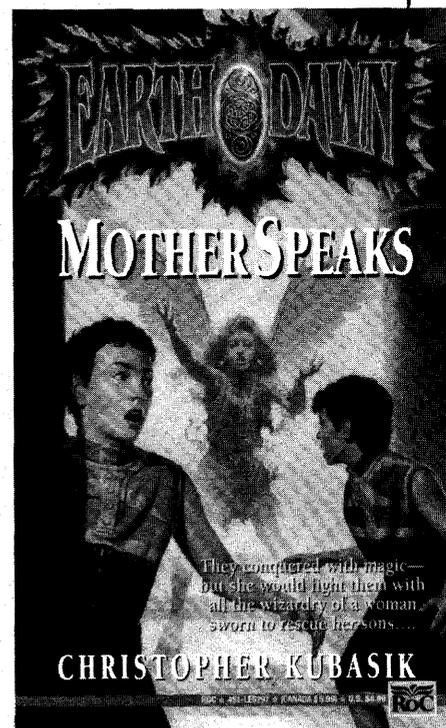
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# ARCAINE



## The Spells of Naz

by Rich Stump

Artwork by John Warner

Nazralte GrynClithe (Naz) was born to human parents of mixed Suloise and Oeridean stock in the isolated realm of Celene in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting. Although it is widely believed that Naz has some elven blood in him, he did not get along well with the elves in his native land. This fact, combined with a thirst for knowledge and a curiosity that would drive him to the corners of the known worlds, spurred Naz to seek his fortune outside Celene.

Naz roamed far and wide over the lands of Oerth. Along with his wanderlust, Naz felt a burning need to push back the boundaries of magical theory, especially those regarding the elemental planes and their magics. Naz's drive for knowledge made him quite an experimenter; his tinkering with the elemental and quasi-elemental forces destroyed not only his labs, but neighboring buildings, on several occasions.

Naz kept records of his wanderings and his experiment's results. These records he condensed to one volume: *Oerthmagik*. All that is known about *Oerthmagik* is that it's a large 12" x 9" x 3" tome bound in bronze and covered with gorgon hide. Inscribed upon the hide in Common are the title of the work and its original author, Nazralte G.C.

Inside are details of some of the most intensive research undertaken by Naz. The first 40 pages are full of notes and hypotheses about the Elemental Planes of Fire and Water, and the Para-Elemental Plane of Ice and the Quasi-Elemental Plane of Light-

ning. (In game terms, these notes provide a reader with knowledge of the best ways to survive trips to these planes—see the *Manual of the Planes* for specific information.) Following these pages are recipes for the creation of potions of *fire breath* and *healing*. The last 70 pages of *Oerthmagik* relate the spells that Naz successfully researched, including several of his own manufacture. Written upon these pages are the following spells: *flaming sphere*, *frostfire*, *lightning bolt*, *proficiency*, *bands of ice*, *stoneskin*, *wizard eye*, *lightning curtain*, *lightning-cloak*, *vanish*, *deathshroud*, and *meteor swarm*. The spells that Naz created are outlined as follows:

### **Frostfire** (Alteration)

Level: 2

Range: 10 yds./level

Duration: 2 turns/  
level

Area of Effect: Special

Components:

V,S,M

CT: 2

Save: Special

Through the use of the *frostfire* spell, the wizard is able to change the normally hot radiance of fires to a cold radiance. Two effects may be produced through the use of this spell. The first is a total absence of heat radiation (c.f. *light* spell); the flame will continue to burn and give off light, but no heat is produced. The second category causes the flames to burn cold, and they will inflict frost damage to anyone who comes into contact with them. For example, a torch normally causes 1-3 points of heat damage. If the cold version

of the spell is cast upon the torch, it will now inflict 1-3 points of cold damage to anyone struck by the torch. The flames subjected to this spell become tinged with blue for the duration of the spell.

As a rule, the wizard can affect an amount of flame equal to one torch or four candles for every level that she possesses. For the purposes of this spell, a small campfire is considered to be equal to three torches, a bonfire equal to six, and a *wall of fire*, eight. If fire under the effect of a *frostfire* spell goes out, the effects of the spell cease immediately.

As a last option, this spell may be cast upon a fire-dwelling or fire-using creature such as an efreet, fire elemental, etc. The being is allowed a saving throw; success indicates that the spell has no effect, but a failed saving throw causes the victim to suffer 2d4 hit points of damage. Only one creature can be affected by this use of the spell.

The material components for this spell are a piece of ivory and a pinch of soot if the heatless version of the spell is cast. If the cold version is used, a piece of ice and a clear crystal of at least 10 gp value are required.

#### **Proficiency** (Alteration)

Level: 3 Components: V,S,M  
Range: Touch CT: 3  
Duration: One hour/ Save: None  
level  
Area of Effect: One creature

Upon casting this spell, the wizard magically empowers himself or another individual to use one or more weapons that he is not proficient with. The affected individual will be able to use the weapon(s) in combat without nonproficiency penalties of any kind for the duration of the spell. The base number of weapons that *proficiency* is gained is one, and one extra weapon can be gained for every three levels above fifth that the wizard possesses, i.e., an 8th-level mage can empower a creature with two *proficiencies*. The *proficiencies* cannot be split among different individuals.

Care must be taken when allotting a weapon proficiency for use; if a cleric who worships a god of peace suddenly gains *proficiency* with a two-handed sword, he may have some atoning to do.

Because the spell only grants a nominal degree of skill with a weapon, it cannot be used to augment the abilities of a character who is already proficient with a weapon. Thus, a fighter who can already use a long sword cannot have his skill with the weapon improved to "specialized" through the use of this spell. The material components for the *proficiency* spell are a bit of fleece and a miniature bronze weapon or weapons of the type that the spell's recipient will gain proficiency in.

#### **Bands of ice** (Evocation)

Level: 4 Components: V,S,M  
Range: 10 yards/level CT: 3  
Duration: Special Save: Neg.  
Area of Effect: One creature

When this spell is cast, the wizard is able to trap a chosen victim in thick *bands of ice*. The spell-caster can create bands sufficient to hold a creature 1' tall for every level that she possesses, e.g., a 10th-level spell-caster may capture any being of 10' height or less. If the affected being is very broad, such as an umber hulk, add 1' or 2' to its effective height for the purposes of determining who or what the wizard can capture.

The victim immediately receives a saving throw to determine the effectiveness of the *bands of ice*. If the save is successful, the ice is brittle and easily broken, allowing the creature to escape in one combat round. Otherwise, the being is trapped for at least one turn. Once a turn has passed, the victim is allowed a bend bars/lift gates roll to determine if the ice has melted to the point where the creature can escape. If the roll is successful, the creature breaks free of the ice and is no longer effected by the spell. The normal duration of the *bands of ice* is two turns. If the spell is cast in a cold environment (40°F or lower), the duration is doubled to four turns, and if the surroundings are very cold (0°F or below), the duration is increased to six turns (one hour).

Applying a torch to the bands will shorten the duration by one round for each round that heat is applied. Magical fires such as a *fireball* will melt the ice, but the trapped being will be injured in the process.

Creatures trapped within the *bands of ice* suffer 1d6 points of frost damage each turn the ice encircles them. Cold-dwelling creatures do not receive any damage, while fire-dwelling beings suffer double damage. The extra damage suffered by heat-based creatures is offset by the monster's body heat, which will cause the ice to melt twice as fast, halving the spell's effective duration.

The material components for this spell are several chain links made of nickel, a piece of iron in the shape of a hoop, and a bit of snow.

#### **Lightning curtain** (Evocation)

Level: 5 Components: V,S,M  
Range: 60 yards CT: 5  
Duration: Special Save: Special  
Area of Effect: 20 sq.feet/level

When this spell is cast, a crackling, shimmering plane of electrical force will come into being. Anyone passing through the *lightning curtain* will suffer 2d8 points of damage plus one point for every level that the spell-caster possesses. If the individual passing through the curtain is wearing metal armor or carrying conductive objects (swords, iron spikes, etc.) of at least

40 gp weight, the damage inflicted by the *lightning curtain* will be increased to 3d8 points plus one point per level of the wizard. No saving throw is allowed for creatures who pass through the curtain, and touching the curtain with a metal object has the same effect as if that person had walked through the curtain.

The lightning curtain is also attracted to nearby metal objects; anyone wearing or carrying such an item will be "sparked" by the wall if she approaches to within 5' of the electrical plane. Such a "spark" inflicts 1d8 points of damage upon the unlucky victim. The wizard who creates the *lightning curtain* can cause it to part for him alone, and the lightning curtain will not "spark" him during this time.

The lightning curtain is fairly transparent, allowing persons on opposite sides of it to see each other. In addition, the glow of the lightning is sufficient to illuminate the area on either side of it up to a distance of 10'. Spells and missiles may be cast through the *lightning curtain*, but all missiles must successfully save versus electricity or be destroyed. The *lightning curtain* will not hinder any spells except for electrical attacks, which it will absorb.

The *lightning curtain* will persist for as long as the wizard concentrates upon it, or for two rounds plus one round per level if concentration is not maintained. The material components necessary for the spell are a piece of amber, a bit of fur, and a square of fine velvet.

#### **Lightningcloak** (Alteration/Evocation)

Level: 6 Components: V,S,M  
Range: 0 CT: 1 round  
Duration: Special Save: Special  
Area of Effect: The caster

Upon casting this spell, a shimmering aura of lightning surrounds the wizard. This lightning produces a crackling sound that is audible at a 5' range, and in dark areas the *lightningcloak* will outline the spell-caster as if a *faerie fire* spell had been cast upon her.

Under the effects of the *lightningcloak*, the wizard is a giant battery capable of discharging lightning bolts as she sees fit. The maximum damage of these bolts is 1d6 damage for each level of the wizard, and she can discharge the bolts at the rate of one per round. The amount of damage caused by each bolt can be varied by the spell-caster, i.e., a 12th-level wizard can cast two 6-dice bolts, four 3-dice bolts, a 9-dice bolt and three 1-die bolts, or any combination that adds to 12 dice. Saving throws are allowed against these bolts, with success indicating that the victim suffers half damage.

The *lightningcloak* also protects the wizard from the effects of electricity and electrical attacks. These attacks are absorbed with no harm to the wizard up to a maximum of 8 points of absorption per level of the spell-caster (e.g., 80 points for a 10th-level mage).

However, the spell will end if the *lightningcloak* absorbs its full capacity of electrical damage. In addition, anyone who attempts to touch a *lightningcloaked* mage will be shocked for 1d6 points of damage. If a metal object (such as a metal weapon) is the touching agent, the maximum of six points of damage will be sustained by the attacker. No saving throws apply against this property of the *lightningcloak*.

The *lightningcloak* spell will end when all its lightning bolts have been used or if it absorbs its maximum capacity of electrical damage as noted. Otherwise, the duration of the *lightningcloak* spell is one turn plus one round for each level of the wizard.

The material components for this spell include powdered amber and rose quartz (100 gp total value), a bit of phosphorous, and a finely woven cloak of no less than 500 gp value. The cloak must be worn for the spell to take effect, but the cloak may be re-used for subsequent castings of the spell.

#### Deathshroud (Necromantic)

Level: 8                      Components: V,S,M  
 Range: Touch                CT: 8  
 Duration: Special          Save: Neg.  
 Area of Effect: 1 creature/2 levels of the caster

By casting this spell, the wizard draws upon the Negative Material plane and

surrounds himself with a shroud of negative power. While the spell-caster suffers no ill effects from this magical energy, it may have dire consequences for anyone who comes into contact with him.

To activate the deadly power of this spell, the wizard must touch his victim by successfully rolling an attack roll against his target. Any creature touched must immediately make a saving throw versus death magic with a -4 penalty. If the roll is successful, the victim is unharmed. If the save is failed, a black haze will form about the victim, draining 20% of his current hit points each round until the unlucky individual dies at the end of the fifth round. The *deathshroud* also protects the wizard; anyone who touches the spell-caster or attempts to strike him with any hand-held object or weapon must make a saving throw versus death magic at normal chances or be affected by the *deathshroud* in the same manner.

The following spells remove the *deathshroud* from an affected individual: *cure critical wounds*, *heal*, *limited wish*, *wish*, or a successful *dispel magic* spell. As a last possibility, if the afflicted individual is somehow able to reach the Positive Material plane within five rounds, the negative energy of the spell will be destroyed and the victim will be saved. Once a being has successfully saved against the effects of a particular *deathshroud*, that being cannot be affected

again during that spells duration.

The *deathshroud* remains in effect until the wizard has attacked or been attacked by a number of creatures equal to one-half of his level (round down), or the spell's duration of two rounds per level of the wizard has elapsed. Creatures from the Outer Planes and undead beings are not affected by this spell; if an undead creature is attacked with a *deathshroud*, it immediately gains 1HD and the wizard must save against death magic or suffer the effects of the spell himself.

In order to cast this spell, the spell-caster must have the following material components available: a mixture of crushed black opal and diamond (worth 5,000 gp), dust from either a vampire or lich, and a piece of smoky quartz.

The current location of Naz and his tome are unknown. Speculation is that Naz fell or was lost on one of his extra-planar journeys. As *Oerthmagik* was not among the belongings Naz left behind, he either took it with him, or it has been stolen since Naz's disappearance. Most believe the fate of the man and the book to be linked somehow. Adventurers, especially mages, are advised to remain cognizant of the missing wizard and his spellbook.

Ω

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# THE WHISTLING SKELETON

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BY ED GREENWOOD

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A different sort of “follow the leader” game.

Artwork by P. L. Wolf

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*Ed is the creator of The FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting and the author of many TSR modules and accessories, including the “super-dungeon” boxed set, The Ruins of Undermountain.*

The “Whistling Skeleton” is a short AD&D® game scenario that is set anywhere on an overland road in the northern heartlands of the Forgotten Realms, but can readily be placed in any campaign world that features brigands, open use of magic, and overland travel. It is intended as a challenge for 4-6 player characters of levels 3-5 (about 20 total levels). If the adventuring party is stronger or weaker, the DM should adjust the spells and levels of the antagonists accordingly.

This light encounter can be used to lead PCs into another adventure, especially if it looks like they’ll march right past a dungeon or ruined castle that the DM very much wants them to explore. Just have this encounter occur near the interesting feature; when the brigands retreat toward it, the PCs should be drawn along.

## Musical Bones

At night (or in gathering dusk or the gloom of an approaching storm), when traveling PCs are alone on the road, they hear a cheery whistling from behind them. Its source, a human skeleton, strolls out from between the nearby trees or other cover and saunters past the PCs.

The whistling skeleton says nothing. As it goes by, still whistling, it turns its head to look at the PCs, and nods and waves unconcernedly. It carries a scythe over one shoulder and something small and gleaming (gems or coins perhaps?) in its other hand.

If pursued, the skeleton runs away, seeming to float over obstacles and uneven ground. If attacked, it swings its scythe viciously once at the foremost attacker (or, if several PCs are within reach, at any who are casting spells or wearing wizard’s robes or priestly vestments), then falls apart in a shower of bones. The skull, spine, and the arm holding the treasure fly on rapidly in the direction the skeleton has been heading, toward cover nearby.

The first being to touch or be touched by the scythe must save vs. spells at - 3 or be affected by a *hold person* spell (wizard-type).

The skeleton cannot be turned, commanded, or dispelled.

### For the Dungeon Master

The skeleton is not undead; it's a human skeleton animated by three evil apprentice wizards acting together (see "How It's Done"). The apprentices recently fled their master, Sumbra the Mystical, when they realized his experimentation to become a lich was soon going to involve their deaths. Penniless and needing to lay low, the apprentices fell in with brigands and are using the skeleton ruse, cobbled together out of spells they were taught, to lure travelers into ambushes.

PCs following the skeleton will, of course, run right into an ambush. The apprentices are after any scrolls, spell books, and wizardly magical items they can gain. The brigands merely want the PCs' money, food, equipment, and lives, in no particular order.

Any PC spell-caster or magical item-wielder who reveals his magic in the fighting but escapes being held by the scythe will be attacked from behind by the brigands' lookout.

### How It's Done

First, the apprentices got themselves a human skeleton (it involved a graveyard and several shovels), washed it, and assembled it, employing mending spells to fuse bone assemblies together (the ribs and spine, each leg, and the arms). Once they had an intact, suitably impressive skeleton, they borrowed a scythe. The farmer who had rightful custody of it won't be looking for them, or anyone, ever again.

Then they prepared their ambush, in a spot where trees stand thick and close to the road, and a path runs parallel to the road for a short way.

When the brigands' lookout signaled the approach of the PCs, the apprentice Ratharr cast a spelltouch spell (see sidebar) on the scythe. Aldegund, the most powerful of the three apprentices, then cast a hold person spell on the scythe so that the hold spell would be unleashed on the next living being to touch or be touched by the implement.

Aldegund then used the ring of telekinesis he wears (stolen from Sumbra) on the bones, raising the skeleton up into a walking posture. He's had a lot of practice at this and is very good at making the skeleton look like it's actually walking

and looking around at things nearby.

Ratharr scuttled through the trees to where the brigands lay in wait. His unseen servant spell was ready to snatch the skull and the handful of gems (actually just colored glass) out of reach if a dispel magic spell or physical attacks destroyed the skeleton.

The least learned of the three apprentices, Belaerzyn, added a ventriloquism spell for the whistling, and the skeletal lure was complete.

When the PCs encounter the skeleton, Aldegund moves along the hidden path to keep the skeleton within range of his ring. Ratharr runs with him, ready to use the unseen servant if the PCs seem about to overwhelm the skeleton before they can be lured into the ambush.

Aldegund: AL CE; AC 8; MV 12; W5; hp 18; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 12, D 16, C 16, I 17, W 14, Ch 15; ML 14; XP 975; two daggers; belt pouch with 4 gp, 2 sp, and 16 cp; ring of telekinesis; potion of extra-healing (3d8 + 3 hp restored, or three 1d8-hp quaffs); scroll of spells identify, sleep, spider climb, detect invisibility, know alignment, web. Spells: chill touch, magic missile, shocking grasp, sleep; Agannazor's scorchers (if the DM lacks the FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures sourcebook, substitute ESP or another spell), invisibility; hold person (used).

Aldegund is tall, thin, and impressive-looking, with dark twinkling eyes, a beaky nose, a high forehead, and a habitual expression of cool, superior amusement. He is an ice-calm bluffer who will remain out of the fight if possible, casting his spells from afar. Aldegund will make haste to escape if the PCs prevail in the encounter.

Ratharr: AL NE; AC 7; MV 12; W3; hp 11; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 13, D 17, C 11, I 16, W 12, Ch 16; ML 12; XP 270; two daggers; belt pouch with 2 gp, 4 sp, and 9 cp; nonmagical brass ring; potion of healing (2d4 + 2 hp restored); scroll of spells spider climb, ESP locate object, spectral hand, and web. Spells: magic missile, unseen servant (used); spelltouch (used; see sidebar).

Ratharr is a good-looking, rakish, curly bearded man of easy jests and a long, alert memory.

Belaerzyn: AL CE; AC 7; MV 12; W2; hp 8; THAC0 20 (+1 to attack rolls due to strength); #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 17, D 17, C 17, I 15, W 10, Ch 11; ML 18; XP 120; dagger; quarterstaff, belt

pouch with 3 gp, 6 sp, and 7 cp. Spells: burning hands, ventriloquism (used).

Belaerzyn is a chubby, lazy, scheming, scraggly bearded man of sloppy dress (patched, food-stained robes) and prodigious

### Spelltouch (Enchantment) Second-Level Spell

Range: Touch

Components: V,S,M

Duration: Special

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: One item (of less weight and volume than the caster's body)

Saving Throw: None

This spell, cast on a nonliving item, allows another spell (priestly or wizardly magic of third level or less) cast on it in the following round to remain dormant until the item touches a target creature. The caster of the spelltouch can specify what race and sex, or type (undead, summoned, living, avian, etc.) of creature will trigger or be affected by the second spell. The second spell (which need not be known to or be castable by the caster of the spelltouch) is unleashed by contact between the item and the triggering creature but need not be a spell that affects only that creature.

For example, a gem set into a throne could unleash a fireball spell when triggered by the touch of a guard. ("A living human male" or "female" can be specified, but not "a wizard" or "the king.")

The caster of a spelltouch can (during casting) specify a single type of being as immune to the spell, as well as specifying what sort of being will trigger the spell. An immune being in the unleashed spell's area of effect gains a +4 bonus to any saving throws. If the enchanted item is touched by an immune being, either the second spell is not triggered by that touch, or the being escapes all harm from the spell (whichever is specified by the spelltouch-caster).

The material components of this spell are a pinch of powdered gemstone (of any type and value) and a pinch of the ash left by any fire created or augmented by a spell, combined with a drop of water and touched to the item during the casting.

gious appetite. He is fearless in a fight, exulting in battle.

The three wizards have hidden the one spell book they managed to steal from Sumbral in nearby trees, beneath a falling-rock trap. (If this trap is not detected, each PC must make a dexterity check or be struck for 2d4 +2 hp damage. If the trap is detected, avoidance is automatic.) Any escaping apprentice will head straight for this spell book. It contains all spells listed for the apprentices plus any other spells the DM desires. *Spelltouch* is actually a very old spell, from the lost wizards' realm of Netheril, which the wizard Sumbral learned in his younger days while adventuring.

### The Brigands

The outlaws are led by Yathruin, a veteran Calishite mercenary who wears a ring of spell turning and swings a mean scimitar. His lieutenant is the lookout, Rilithinn, who is up in a tree. He will descend to stealthily attack PCs from behind.

**Yathruin:** AL NE; AC 3; MV 6; F5; hp 27; THAC0 16; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; see above, or 1-4 hp per dagger, two carried); S 14, D 17, C 16, I 13, W 11, Ch 16; ML 14; XP 175; scimitar; two daggers; brigandine armor; pouch with 6 pp, 9 gp, 4 ep, 7 sp, and 12 cp. Yathruin's specialization with the scimitar gives him +1 to hit, three attacks every two rounds, and 1d8 + 2 hp damage per strike.

**Rilithinn:** AL CE; AC 4; MV 12; T4; hp 21; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 14, D 18, C 16, I 14, W 10, Ch 12; ML 12; XP 120; leather armor; long sword; two daggers (+4 to hit, backstab for double damage); pouch with 2 pp, 6 gp, 4 ep, 4 sp, and 2 cp.

Amaristee is a human female thief of some beauty who wears a rich (stolen) gown. She lies amid the brigands, tied hand and foot with bonds that have been partially cut through so she can break them. Hidden daggers strapped to her arms and legs have been coated with sleep-venom (save vs. poison or fall asleep for 1-4 turns, onset time 1-2 rounds).

Amaristee cries out for rescue if the PCs seem to be getting the upper hand, then tries to knife those who aid her. (She automatically hits any PC who is trying to lift and carry her, or who is trying to untie her bonds.)

Amaristee has three daggers; each carries enough venom to affect the first two beings she strikes. The venom can also affect the apprentices and the other brigands, but Amaristee herself is immune to it. Anyone who saves against one venom attack is immune to the venom for the entire encounter.

**Amaristee:** AL NE; AC 10; MV 12; T2; hp 9; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (plus sleep poison on daggers); statistics unremarkable; XP 120; three daggers; pouch with 8 gp, 2 ep, 3 sp, 5 cp.

**Outlaws (5):** AL any evil; AC 8; MV 12; F2 (x 2), F1 (x 3); THAC0 19 (x 2), 20 (x 3); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; statistics unremarkable; XP 35 (F2), 15 (F1); long sword; dagger; each has 1-4 gp, 1-6 sp, 2-12 cp in a pouch.

The number and strength of the brigands should be changed to reflect the strength of the PC party. If overpowered, Amaristee will bargain for her freedom with directions to the lair of the strange spiders whose venom coats her weapons. At the DM's option, her directions could lead the PCs into another adventure.

### An End That's Merely A Beginning

If one of the apprentices dies in the encounter, he manages to gasp out a few last words: "Sumbral, avenge us! Albrinarra!"

Any of the other apprentices able to speak at this time will echo this last word (even if they are not close enough to have been able to hear their fellow apprentice utter it). The word seems to roll and echo loudly in the air.

A round after the word is first, spoken, the wizard Sumbral will give a sign that he has heard (by means of a spell he cast long ago, to enable his apprentices to contact him from afar). A tiny mote of cold white fire appears in mid-air. It spins and grows larger, coalescing into two eyes and a mouth: floating flames that roughly outline a human-like face.

This face silently moves around to look at all of the PCs but takes no other action. Its flames are harmless illusions, and it cannot be affected by spells or physical attacks. After a few rounds of inspection, the face fades away. It reappears from time to time thereafter, silently watching, to unsettle the PCs at times of danger or tension.

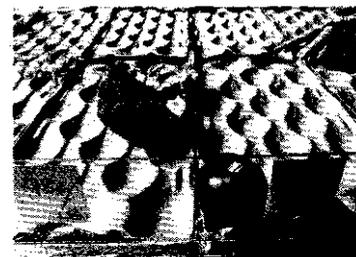
Sumbral will take no other action

unless the PCs blunder into his lair. He cares nothing for the fate of his disloyal apprentices. If the PCs come to him, however, they should face a stiff fight.

If the PCs question an apprentice about Sumbral or the word "Albrinarra," the apprentice will babble about "Sumbral . . . our master . . . richest mage in these lands. His magic mighty enough to slay you all like so many squashed ants," and the location of Sumbral's hold. As far as the apprentice knows, this is all true; these answers will not change if a speak with dead spell or similar magical means are used to compel the apprentice to utter the truth.

Perhaps the PCs will be foolish enough to investigate the mage's lair. Sumbral (who may well be a lich by the time the PCs get there) will work the apprentices' revenge for them . . . or perhaps the PCs will destroy the master who planned to betray his students. Ω

## Food Fight Erupts in Neighborhood Supermarket



Carrots, broccoli, and fresh fruit flew into grocery carts as **The Great American Food Fight Against Cancer** broke out in area supermarkets.

Consumers are reacting to studies showing that foods high in fiber and low in fat may help reduce cancer risk.

One mother was seen throwing carrots into her bag. "Snacks for the kids," she said. "This food fight is pretty exciting," said one produce manager, "and there's nothing to clean up!"

The American Cancer Society, sponsor of the Food Fight, has more information. Call 1-800-ACS-2345. And, be on the lookout for Community Crusade volunteers armed with shopping lists.



Public Service Message

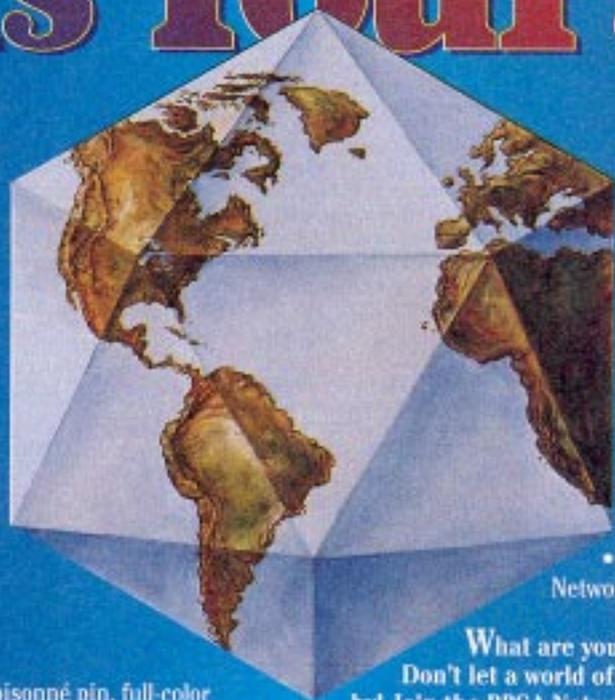
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# Convention Calendar

## 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.).

**Important:** DRAGON® Magazine no longer will publish telephone numbers for conventions. Publishing incorrect numbers is always possible and is an annoyance to both the caller and those receiving the misdirected call. Also, be certain that any address given is correct and complete.

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 also might 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.

\* 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.

### 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.

### EVECON 11, Dec. 31-Jan. 2, 1994 VA

This convention will be held at the Double-Tree Inn in Crystal City, Va. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, dancing, music, workshops, and open gaming. Registration: \$30 at the door. Write to: EVECON 11, 1607 Thomas Rd., Ft. Washington MD 20744.

### 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.

### WINTER FANTASY™ Convention '94 WI Jan. 7-9

This convention will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Milwaukee, Wis. Guests include Bruce Nesmith, Bill Slavicek, 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. Write to: David Cheng, 313 E. 85th St., Apt. 2C, New York NY 10028.

### WINTERCON '94, Jan. 15 MI

This convention will be held at the Lincoln Park Kennedy Recreation Center in Detroit, Mich. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include games for youngsters, a used-game auction, and open gaming. Registration: \$10 at the door. Write to: WINTERCON, P.O. Box 656, Wyandotte MI 48192.

### MARMALADE DOG GAMEFEST '94 MI Jan. 15-16

This convention will be held at the Bernhard Center on the campus of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Mich. Guests include Troy Denning. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include painted-miniature and costume contests, an SF&F film festival, and dealers. Registration: \$10/weekend or \$6/day preregistered; or \$12/weekend or \$7/day at the door. Write to: MARMALADE DOG, c/o W. Mich. Gamers' Guild, Western Michigan Univ., Faunce 2420, Box 47, Kalamazoo MI 49008.

### DUNDRACON XVIII, Feb. 18-21 CA

This convention will be held at the Marriott hotel in San Ramon, Calif. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a painting contest, computer games, a flea market, and dealers. Registration varies. Write to: DUNDRACON XVIII, 385 Palm Ave., Oakland CA 94610.

### GENGHIS CON XV, Feb 18-20 CO

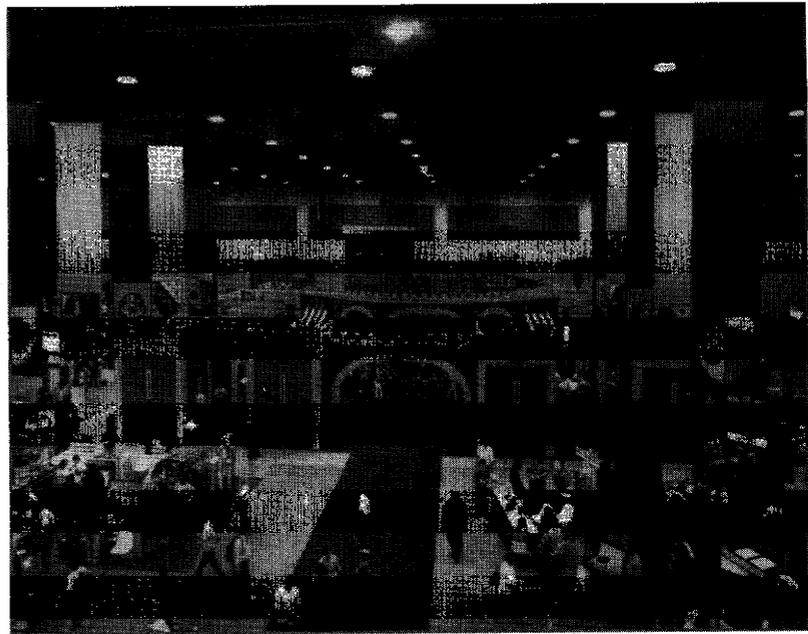
This convention will be held at the Marriott Southeast in Denver, Colo. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA™ Network events, auctions, and dealers. Registration: \$15. Write to: Denver Gamers' Assoc., P.O. Box 440058, Aurora CO 80044.

### JAXCON '94, Feb. 18-20 FL

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn at Baymeadows in Jacksonville, Fla. Events include role-playing, board, and miniature's games. Other activities include door prizes, a painted-miniatures contest, a flea market, and dealers. Registration: \$22/weekend. Single-day rates vary. Write to: JAXCON, P.O. Box 4423, Dep't. M, Jacksonville FL 32201.

- ❖ indicates an Australian convention.
- \* indicates a Canadian convention.
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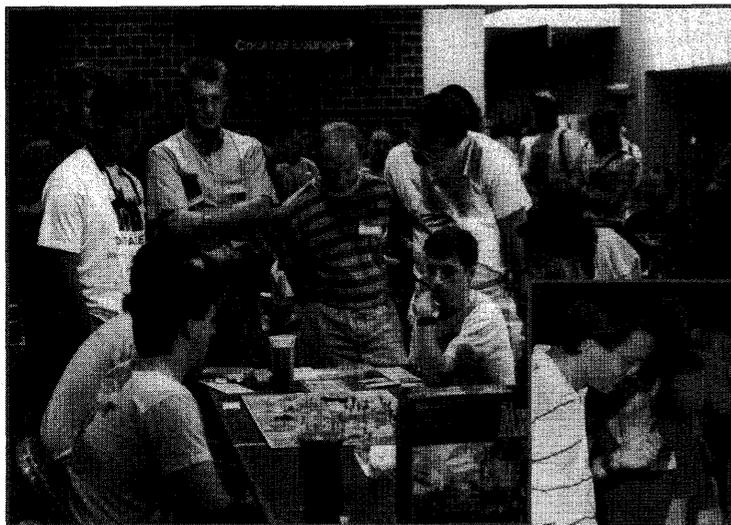
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**WINTER WAR XXI, Feb. 18-20 IL**

This convention will be held at the Chancellor hotel in Champaign, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include auctions, dealers, and open gaming. Registration: \$6/weekend or \$3/day. Send an SASE to: Donald McKinney, 986 Pomona Dr., Champaign IL 61821.

**EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN '94, Feb. 25-27 IL**

This convention will be held in the Renaissance and Roman rooms of Southern Illinois University's Student Center in Carbondale, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include miniatures and art contests, an auction, and guest speakers. Registration: \$10 preregistered; \$12 at the door. Send an SASE to: Strategic Games Society, Office of Student Development, 3rd Floor Student Center, S.I.U., Carbondale IL 62901-4425.

**RADCON 1B, Feb. 25-27 WA**

This convention will be held at the Best Western Tower Inn in Richland, Wash. Guests include V. E. Mitchell, "Kev" Brockschmidt, Don Segna, and Glen Allison. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include anime and SF movies, an art show, dealers, and gaming. Registration: \$15. Write to: RADCON 1B, 2527 W. Kennewick Ave., #162, Kennewick WA 99336.

**PAINTING CONTEST/GAME DAY, Feb. 26 IN**

This convention will be held at Metalcraft Miniatures and More in Elwood, Ind. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a painting demo, a raffle, and war games. Registration: Free. Send a long SASE to: Leslie A. King, Metalcraft Miniatures, P.O. Box 6, 926 N. 9th St., Elwood IN 46036.

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# Santa's Hidden Helpers

A holiday puzzle filled with small surprises

by Raymond C. Young

In the spirit of the holidays, we bring you a gift straight from Santa's workshop. Keep that source in mind when you fill in the solutions to the clues below. Some may not seem to fit in the space allowed, but remember that those who make the gifts (not to mention crossword puzzles) don't take up much room at all.

## Across

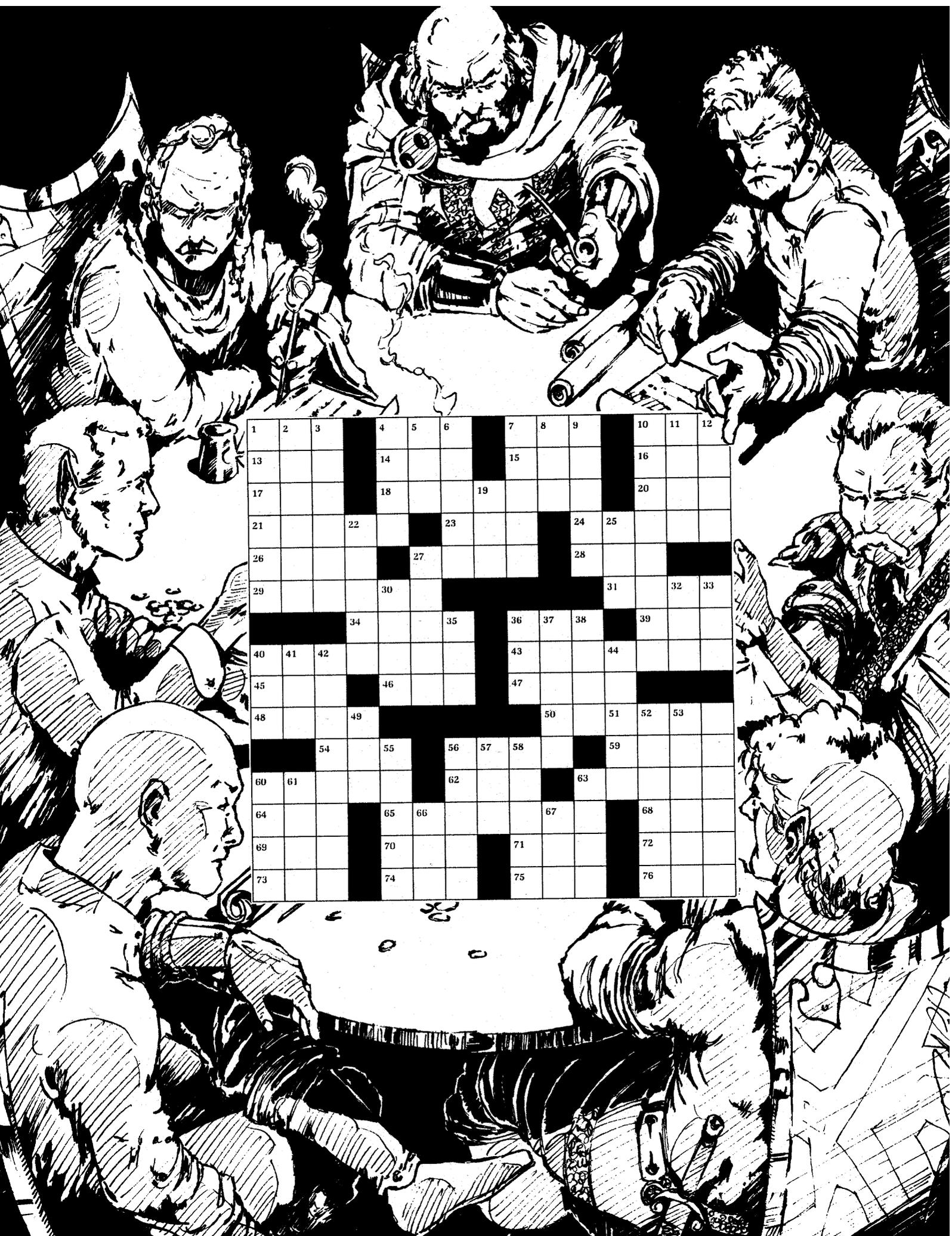
1. \_\_\_\_\_ a *Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra film).
4. \_\_\_\_\_'az (enemy of the haun in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting).
7. Fast jet: abbr.
10. \_\_\_\_\_'thrang (DARK SUN® creatures prized for rope-making).
13. Highest point.
14. Electric swimmer.
15. Rare form of WORLD OF GREYHAWK® world's aspis.
16. Not him.
17. 901, to Julius Caesar.
18. Wizard's disguise spell.
20. Robust tavern drink.
21. 24 across is one.
23. \_\_\_\_\_standstill (blocked).
24. Laurana's lover.
26. Suffix for kitchen.
27. Dull color of wool garments.
28. Bear's attack.
29. SPELLJAMMER® setting's Uspo riders.
31. A *helm of brilliance* has 100 of these.
34. Suffix for switch.
36. Donkey's kin.
39. Shan \_\_\_\_\_(Kara-Tur's friends of tigers).
40. Written a second map.

41. One scoop of dirt.
43. Cotton gin inventor Whitney.
46. \_\_\_\_\_ acid arrow spell.
47. One animal form of Hengeyokai.
48. Pest found in poor lodging rooms.
50. Scribes.
54. Mineral spring or sauna.
56. Mount Nevermind is on Sancrist \_\_\_\_\_.
59. Shakujo \_\_\_\_\_(Oriental spear).
60. Grope.
62. Greek letter after *pi*.
63. Baseball's Hank.
64. Real bird similar to #61 down.
65. One make of cars, fit to a T
68. One, in French.
69. Before, on old tongues.
70. Bump \_\_\_\_\_—log.
71. Rare type of gnome.
72. " \_\_\_\_\_ for tat."
73. \_\_\_\_\_ Noric (SPELLJAMMER setting's plasmoid).
74. Good computer games have high- \_\_\_\_\_graphics.
75. City roads: abbr.
76. \_\_\_\_\_the magic word.

## Down

1. Suffered poison ivy.
2. A fruit thrown at bad performers.
3. A mess caused by clumsy brewers.
4. Dargonesti of Krynn waters.
5. Norse goddess of death.
6. Cleric's shrine.
7. Sand creature of the DARK SUN setting.
8. Message for help: abbr.

9. Last day of Christmas.
10. Spell similar to #18 across.
11. \_\_\_\_\_copter
12. Athena's rival (war god).
19. When a vehicle will arrive: abbr.
22. Not as many.
25. Summer month: abbr.
27. Lolth's follower.
30. Composer Khachaturian (sounds like one male sheep).
32. Kara-Tur javelin.
33. Earth's star.
35. Come- \_\_\_\_\_(a merchant's shouts to passersby).
36. Quasi-elemental plane.
37. Third-level priest's spell, *stone* \_\_\_\_\_
38. Hurting from strain.
40. Synonym for "game master": abbr.
41. Sharp turn.
42. What big trucks run on.
44. "Heaven of Pearls."
49. Mail organization for military.
51. Nirvana's servants of stone.
52. Elysium's plane of Sumeria.
53. Highest possible number from rolling 7d12 + d6.
55. Splint mail, e.g.
56. High ogres in the DRAGONLANCE® setting.
57. Place to store tomes.
58. Weavers' devices.
60. Horse's fodder.
61. Ostrich-like avian from the DRAGONLANCE saga.
63. Does sums.
66. Number of eyes on a cyclops.
67. A giant scavenger.



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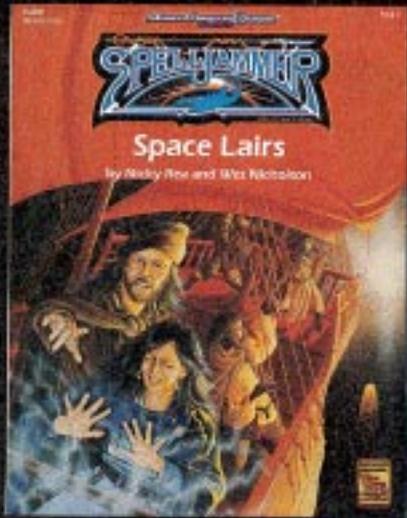
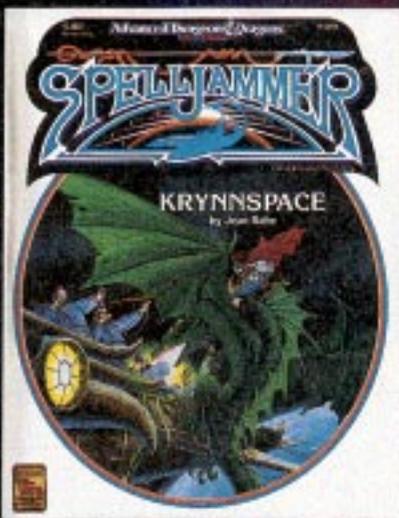
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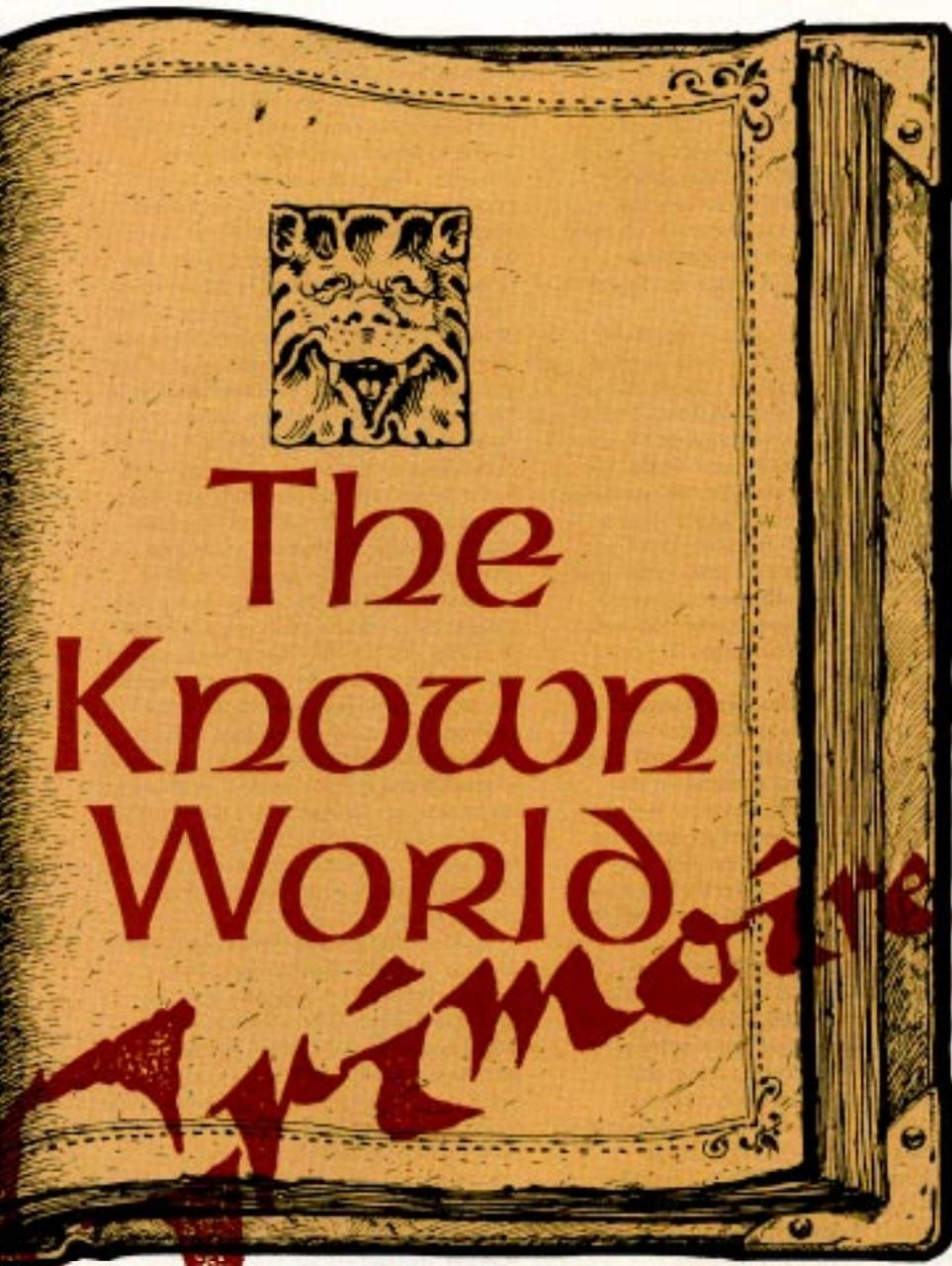
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## Lords of the skies

by Bruce A. Heard

*This is the final installment of the Known World Grimoire. I'd like to thank all the readers of this column, and its predecessor, The Voyage of the Princess Ark, for all their support and letters. With the MYSTARA™ setting being published as an AD&D® campaign world in 1994, there will be a lot more products for fans of the Known World and beyond, obviating the need for this column. Keep an eye out for details on the new MYSTARA products in the pages of this magazine in the new year. The first MYSTARA product, a deluxe boxed set featuring the kingdom of Karameikos (designed by Jeff Grubb), will be on sale in August, 1994.*

This month, we take one last peek at the mysteries hidden in Raman Nabonidus' library. They lead us to the Arm of the Immortals where we'll discover clues on races that rule the skies, as well as the answer to what happened to the ancient Nimmurians centuries ago. The accounts given in the first part of this column can be used as legends, rumors, and other bits of information to leave on the path of PCs adventuring in the MYSTARA campaign setting.

*Captain's log of the Tritao, entered by Dom Iago*

"The stars have gone mad! Of this, am I now certain. For thirty years I have sailed from the Western Sea to the far-flung Eastern Sea of Dawn. Never before had the stars failed me.

"Yet, the Lights of the Immortals treacherously led my crew to a horrible demise at the hands of the Sea-Plague tribe, on the Orc's Head Peninsula. The orcs torched my ship, plundered my treasures, and devoured my crew. Attracted by rumors of booty, rival orcs raided the Sea-Plague camp, allowing my escape by night. Hanging onto the trunk of a fallen coconut tree, I drifted for days. A Vilaverdan ship finally fished me out of the sea, as I teetered on the brink of death from exposure and lack of water.

"Not once, but thrice have I attempted to find a site for a new settlement on the lands west of the Strait of Yalu. Yet, three times have the stars betrayed me in this endeavor! I'm told the orcs call this new land the Arm of the Immortals. Perhaps it is. Perhaps the Immortals wish not the presence of civilization there. Perhaps is it their way of telling us mortals to stay away.

"But such is the fate of explorers to keep trying. Glory and wealth is my guide! My right is the sword and will of my lord, Bartolomeu of Texeiras! I, Dom Iago, as long as I live, shall endeavor to raise his banner high over the western shores. To hell with the stars!"

*Letter to Lord Bartolomeu, from the Governor of Porto Maldicao*

"My lord, Your Highness,

"I believe I've found clues to why the orcs call this place the Arm of the Immortals. Settlers from our outpost of Mato Grande have begun clearing the forests and fighting back the orcs of the western shores. While burning down one of their camps, a settler found an ivory tusk, crudely hollowed out, protecting an ancient roll of painted leather.

"It seemed the orcs painted figures with wings on their backs and light glowing from their chests. They are represented over a starry field, shooting arrows down at orcish warriors. The symbols on the sides alluded to fiends of the night, messengers of the Immortals.

"I suspect this is the stuff of legends, mere stories of orcish mythology. If these creatures do exist, we've never seen them, my lord. This, however, might explain why this land bears such a name. I ordered expeditions to explore farther west. Only one returned. Very high, impassable mountains divided the land as far north and south as they could see. They named it the Great Immortal's Shield. Monsters infested its foothills, and I fear the other expeditions have fallen prey to them. No flying creatures were seen there, however.

"I will order further expeditions after the monsoon rains, in search of passage

through the Shield. I suspect untold wealth and mysteries to be found on the other side.

"Most Sincerely Yours,  
Dom Iago,  
Governor of Porto Maldicao"

**Elven tome of ancestry, excerpt translated by Sir Naduk-Sim**

"The old tribe of Ee'ar strayed, centuries ago, far to the west in search of a land where no one would find them. Their dangerous exodus across the vast territories of Davania had destroyed the best of their tribe, and the survivors longed for peace and prosperity. They claimed as theirs a land of high, desolate mountains where no foe could reach them.

"So high were these peaks that a lone hunter named Aeryl sighted a wondrous spire sitting amid the golden clouds of sunset. To her amazement, Aeryl discovered she could tread upon the very substance of these clouds. Soon, winds blew the clouds away from the mountain peak that Aeryl had left, taking her and the magical spire higher into the evening sky.

"For days, she heard voices and laughter, but she could see no one. The sky was getting colder and Aeryl found it increasingly hard to breathe. The voices mocked and taunted the lonely elf until she passed out from exhaustion.

"Someone there took pity on Aeryl and brought her back to her senses. Food and magical warmth were provided. In time, the voices grew more friendly and Aeryl began to understand them. She learned she had entered the Realm of Faerie, the Kingdom of the Air.

"By touching them, Aeryl made out the shapes of her invisible companions, halfling-sized people with dwarvish noses and beards, pointy ears, and gossamer wings. She learned their traditions and history. In time, she learned to listen to her faerie friends, and feel their breeze and smell their scent. She could perceive and recognize each of them as clearly as if she could see them.

"She lived a long time in Faerie, so long that wings began to grow on her back. Such was the magical effect of the realm. Aeryl had grown homesick, though, and the wise ones among the faeries could feel her quiet pain. She had learned all she could from her faerie friends, and thus returned to the mountains.

"Her kin welcomed her back—they had thought her dead, or perhaps taken away by the griffons. They marvelled at her beautiful wings, and there was no end to their questions. She eventually married and, to everyone's surprise, her offspring also had wings. Whatever magic flowed in her veins, it extended to her descendants as well. Centuries after her death, all the tribe bore her wings, and in her memory, the Ee'ar gave her name to their mountain kingdom."

**Golden tablets, a story from a Gombar-**

*ian merchant*

"I thought it was my worst luck since I inherited my father's business. I had purchased bundles of northern furs hoping to trade them back to the warriors of Zyxl in exchange for a handful of their strange gems. Alas, their galley never saw the docks of Dogon, and I was stuck with rolls of furs no one in Gombar would want. Worse yet, I feared they might rot in the Strait of Tangor's warm climate.

"I had to find a cold place to sell these furs, quickly. Each grain of sand flowing through the hourglass was a speck of gold vanishing from my ancestral trove. I decided to head toward the mountains. I knew that a race of elves lived there, in the icy reaches of their peaks. So far, we Gombarians had left them alone. They'd always shunned our offers in the past. What a pity. They will always be a puny and weak race, for without wealth, one can never earn the knowledge and power that make great civilizations. Clearly, they are no threat to Gombar.

"After weeks of wandering through the tortuous mountains, a pack of griffons attacked my pack mules. Several fell into the precipice, a few escaped down the narrow mountain path, but most fell prey to the griffons. I was forced to sever the rope that held them together, lest the entire caravan be lost. Nevertheless, I was ruined. Only the head mule remained—the one I was leading.

"My food was gone, and so was my traveling gear. The last mule eventually died from the cold, and I owed my survival to that very last bundle of northern furs. Almost insane from hunger and exhaustion, I stumbled upon a grassy plateau hidden within a ring of vertiginous peaks. Its grass grew so high that it reached my shoulders. There, I found a bush covered with dark berries and devoured them to the last. I then fell to the ground and rested.

"I was brutally awakened when someone kicked me in the back. Several elves were aiming their bows at me. I thought for an instant they were taller than I since the grass only reached their waist. As I shook myself out of my slumber, I saw they were hovering. These elves had large, feathered wings on their backs. It took them little time to cast hunting nets upon me and drag me to their city.

"It was a place of wonders, where tall, slender towers overlooked the grassy valley. I saw no sign of great wealth, yet elegance and refinement prevailed in their architecture. The abodes hung from icy ledges and cliffs, with a multitude of walkways gracefully arching from one to another. Snow packed what little ground supported the fragile abodes, with icicles adding their own artistic touch to the city. Clearly, the place was built for aerial creatures, since I could see no doors at ground level and no railing on the walkways. Portals opened halfway up the towers with often little more than a balcony or a

perch at their doorsteps.

"I was brought to a leader, a tall and gaunt elf with a white and gold surcoat, and long silver hair. I was accused of pilfering food from the elves' hunting grounds. (They considered the large grassy valley lying below to be theirs). I apologized as best as I could and explained my predicament. The leader wasn't impressed. I had the feeling he knew of my caravan's fate. He disliked the great bulk of my ogre-kin body compared with that of his folk, and had me kneel to even out our stances. Then he ordered what little fur I had salvaged from my caravan taken away, and had a basket of elven food and beverage given to me as payment. It all had a dreadful taste, but I did not show my disgust. Instead, I mustered what I hoped would be a friendly smile and showed gratitude. At least I was alive.

"Soon thereafter, the elven leader summoned giant eagles. I was once again imprisoned in a net and flown back toward the Gombarian border. As we approached the last of the mountain ridges, a flock of griffons dove upon the eagles. A fierce battle ensued during which my eagle was wounded and quickly landed. With sticks, rocks, and my bare hands, I drove off one of the attacking griffons. The others then flew away. As a souvenir I kept a handful of giant feathers and a piece of broken griffon beak.

"As I returned home days later, I met a sage, or perhaps a missionary, from the Temple of Sumag. Seeing the unusual basket and large feathers sticking out, he asked about what I carried. My story intrigued him and gave me a very good price for the elven food and the feathers, much more than what the furs and the mules had been worth. This had turned out to be a profitable venture after all!"

**Carved pebbles, from an unknown Sokhtar warrior**

**I.** "At last, my brethren, we've won! We've captured the Great Ziggurat of Er-Nimmur intact with all its treasures and secrets. By the time our warriors reached the main hall, only a few priests were left to defend it. They died quickly and without honor, like cattle. Hail the power of Menlil, for Gilmun is ours at last!

**II.** "The Nimmurians have fled before the might of our stings. They've abandoned their sacred city of Er. They are nowhere to be found. Scouts have reported many tracks leading west, toward the sea. Our victorious army is moving after them. Our northern and southern hordes have taken all the coastal cities and destroyed their ships. It is clear the Nimmurian fugitives are trapped. Their bloated bodies will make good hatching flesh for our broods.

**III.** "The tracks led to a cliff, south of Ekiddu. The reef below forbade any ship to come close. Yet, the tracks ended at that cliff. There also were footprints among those of the Nimmurians, left by the soft

boots of some smaller humanlike creatures. They seemed to come from nowhere. There is no other sign than some large, white feathers scattered in the bushes. The Nimmurians are gone.

#### **Clay tablets, signed by King Eshu of Er-Nimmur**

I. "The end is near. Our last forces are collapsing before the massive onslaught of the Sokhtar. Once our brothers, they have betrayed our friendship and treacherously attacked our nation. They know our way of fighting and the way into our cities. Several have already fallen. Some surrendered, but the Sokhtars massacred all their citizens.

II. "Our messenger has accomplished his mission. Praise Idu, for our distant friends, the Ee'ar, have accepted our plea for help. Blessed be the rulers of the mountain peaks! This night, we will evacuate our people. We shall fly past the city walls after moonfall, and then march south of Ekiddu. The sacred runes have been removed and magical *simulacra* left behind at the Ziggurat of Er. They will lure the besieging Sokhtars into the city after our departure.

III. "The journey across the Strait of Yalu is one beyond our ability. The wings of the Nimmurians are strong indeed, but not enough to cross the strait. The Ee'ar have met us at the cliff with their giant eagles. The majestic birds hold huge nets that those of us whose wings become exhausted can use to rest. To ease our flight, I shall summon a mighty wind in the name of Idu. If such is our fate, in a day we shall rest in the arms of the Immortals."

#### **Encrypted porcelain vases, from a Suma'an missionary**

"... The black Eshunite berrywine still burned my throat when I finally could speak again. Wiping a tear blurring my sight, I managed to whisper a coarse thank you. The Eshunite priest smiled and replied, "You are blessed in the Heart of Idu, wise one."

"For all the years I spent in Eshu, I never quite fathomed the kindness and mystery of its people. They stand tall and strong, seeing eye-to-eye with the most powerful ogre-kin of Suma'a and Gombar. Yet, they remain gentle and reserved.

"The Great Temple of Sumag had sent me and my servants to investigate clues I had recently gathered about the land of the elves. After losing our way in the labyrinthine mountain passes, we reached Eshu instead, a land of winged minotaurs. I founded a small mission there, at the outskirts of the town of Masur.

At first, the Eshunites observed our intrusion into their secluded realm with great suspicion. Over the years, however, the Eshunites' attitude toward our mission became more relaxed. One day a terrible earthquake rocked the Kingdom of Eshu and the walls of my mission collapsed,

killing several of my servants and trapping me under the rubble. The Eshunites promptly rescued everyone they could, providing food and healing our wounds. As soon as we appeared to be out of danger, however, the Eshunites resumed their usual distant attitude.

"I once befriended a young one who found my bald head amusing. An elder farmer who, one day, noticed our growing friendship, approached the young one and uttered a single word, 'Nimmur!' From that day on, the young one remained as kind and polite as ever, yet aloof like all his kin. I never found out what that word meant, nor why the Eshunites were so reserved with foreigners. I suspect some great tragedy struck their forefathers, and since that time, the Eshunites have never fully trusted foreigners regardless of time spent among them. I am certain, the word 'Nimmur' must allude to this tragedy.

"Many years later, I still had made no progress in promoting the philosophies of Sumag. Even after helping put an end to a disastrous epidemic in the region, all I earned was kind gratitude indeed, but no spiritual inroads among Eshunites. I then dismissed my servants and went to Sardon. I had to see for myself this temple in the Eshunite capital that could so well prevent my best efforts.

"Everyone in Sardon seemed to know who I was before I arrived. There was no enmity there. It happened to be a holiday and many Eshunites were streaming to the open courtyard before their main temple, a place consecrated to the philosophies of the Immortal, Idu. The Priest-King was making an appearance there. I came close enough and, to my amazement, discovered he was very different from the Eshunites. The Priest-King had a human head and the body of a winged-bull.

"The crowd of followers kneeled and bowed before him as he quietly watched them. By chance perhaps, I met his gaze. It was like a punch in the stomach. It felt like he could see through me, like I had known him for a very long time. It took all the strength and wisdom from my years at the Temple of Sumag to preserve the faith that had always guided me in the past.

"I must have appeared visibly shaken, for one of the Eshunite priests came down the temple's steps and handed me a bottle of that strong berrywine. It was strong enough to clear the storm of thoughts echoing in my mind and help me regain my composure. I realized then that the Priest-King was gone and that most of the followers had already left the temple's courtyard. To this day, I am still convinced I had indeed seen a herald of Idu.

"I returned to Sumag and informed the Great Temple of my encounter. Perhaps one day I shall return to the land of Eshu. I am pleased that no enmity separates the ogre-kin of Suma'a and the sons of Idu. Eshu is a noble and powerful kingdom. Suma'a and Gombar will respect its ancestral wish for seclusion."

#### **DM's information**

The Arm of the Immortals is a mountain range with high peaks dotting most of its length. The eastern side of Great Immortal's Shield presents an almost impassable chain of cliffs and unscalable mountain ridges. Because of the Shield's height, many of the low-altitude clouds remain trapped on its eastern side, causing an abundance of vegetation to grow on the lowlands. Swamps and mosquito-infested, marshy jungles almost forbid exploration and settlement of the eastern coast. The Shield gradually loses altitude on its western side, until its foothills reach the coast on the Strait of Tangor. The western coast is a bit cooler and drier, with lands more suitable for civilized settlement.

Because of the height of the Shield and the difficulty of traveling such a forbidding terrain, many of the creatures living in the mountains are flying creatures. The more common ones include griffons, chimeras, pegasi, giant eagles, manticores, and hippogriffs. Other kingdoms might exist farther north and south of the area shown on the map, among which could be harpies, pegataurs, sphinxes, and D&D game versions of the AD&D® game's kenkus and aaracokras. This *Grimoire* focuses on winged-elves (adapted from the Avariell presented in *The Complete Book of Elves* for the AD&D game and DRAGON® Magazine issue #51) and winged-minotaurs (originally introduced in the April 1993 *Grimoire*, DRAGON issue #192).

#### **The Kingdom of Aeryl**

Aeryl—Capital: Ithuinn (Pop.: 12,100 winged-elves; some pegataurs); Army: 12 Wings; Ruler: Enerin II "The Gaunt," oldest son of Syronid I. Royal lands include the hexes adjacent to Ithuinn (see map). Family domain include the city of Mythror and adjacent hexes. Patron: Ilsundal.

Aeryl lies among some of the highest peaks of the Neandern Mountains. It consists of four clans and royal lands belonging to the throne of Aeryl, which together surround a grassy plateau called Oethrûn. The plateau is part of a commonwealth available to all subjects of the kingdom. It is both a garden and hunting grounds for the Ee'ar, the greatest source of food in their kingdom. The elves maintain a careful balance between the hunting or gathering and the tending of wildlife there to avoid straining Oethrûn's fragile ecology. Because of this and their need to remain flightworthy, Ee'ar never consume more food than is necessary for their health. An overweight Ee'ar is unheard of.

After the Ee'ar claimed this part of the Arm of the Immortals, they established a series of clans under a king. Royal responsibility remains in the defense of the nation against monsters and invaders. (The Ee'ar will not look kindly upon any uninvited incursions of foreigners into what amounts to their backyard.) King Enerin is also the clan leader of Mythror, which he



Cartography by John Knecht

Scale: One Hex equals 24 Miles

rules from Ithuinn. His present task is to waylay the Texeiran explorers of Porto Maldicao who are searching for a way to get across the Great Immortal's Shield. These are seen as loud, greedy, overfed wastrels who will eventually cause some trouble to the quiet kingdom of Aeryl.

### Ee'ar PCs

The Ee'ar look very much like common elves, except for the very large, feathered wings on their backs. An single Ee'ar's wing spreads out almost 30% longer than the elf's entire body length. When folded, Ee'ar wings stretch from their heels to several inches above their heads. They obviously cannot be concealed, other than by magic.

The Ee'ar have adapted to the cold environment of their high mountains, wearing no more than light, down-lined fur tunics, soft leather boots, and thick tights. If caught in a severe storm, Ee'ar can kneel in rocky recesses and protect their bodies with their wings. It takes months of discomfort for an Ee'ar to get used to the warmth and humidity of the lowlands, especially in tropical regions.

Ee'ar commonly fight with weapons of 60 cn. encumbrance or less. They gain a +1 on attack rolls with normal swords and one of their clan's hunting weapons (pick one of the following: lasso, net, bolas, blowgun, or spear). Ee'ar can use short bows without penalty (but no bonus, either) and generally avoid bulky weapons like the long bow or two-handed weapons. They do not wear armor or shields.

As with all flying creatures, they must land after losing 50% or more of their hit points. They cannot fly at all if they lose more than 75% of their hit points. They suffer an extra 1d6 points of damage per round if their wings are exposed to flames. The wings keep burning until the Ee'ar has lost more than 75% of its hit points or until someone helps the victim, with a blanket to smother the fire, a *gust of wind* spell (in the AD&D game) to blow it out, or water to extinguish it.

Recovering from fire damage takes a week for each 10% damage to the Ee'ar's total hit points. For example, a 40-hp Ee'ar suffered 32 points of fire damage. A total of eight weeks will be needed to heal the wings (32/4 = 8). *Cure wounds* spells only cure the wounds, but do not regrow feathers; a *heal* spell is required for feathers to regrow. As an option, the hit-point bonus for high Constitution scores can be used to reduce the number of days per week of healing. For example, if the wounded Ee'ar mentioned above had a 17 Constitution, the 8 weeks healing time would be shorter by 16 days (bonus of 2 × 8 weeks = 16 days) in the D&D game, or 24 days in the AD&D game (3 × 8 = 24 assuming an elven "fighter" class).

In D&D game terms, Ee'ar have a 2(b) maneuverability when flying, and an air speed of 80 yards per round (level flight), or approximately 20 yards climbing and

double-speed diving. Ee'ar can carry up to 500 cn. plus 50 cn. per point of Strength and fly without penalty. Above that, their speed and maneuverability drop to 40 and 2(c). The maximum weight Ee'ar can carry and still maintain flight capability is 500 cn. plus 100 cn. per point of Strength.

Ee'ar must make a Constitution check for every hour of flight. If they fail, they must land and rest a half-hour for each two hours of previous flight. Their Constitution checks are subject to a penalty of -1 for each 500 cn. (or fraction of) carried in flight beyond the first 500. However, if favorable winds are present (like updrafts in the mountains, or a strong sea breeze), Ee'ar can simply glide, in which case they benefit from a +4 bonus to their Constitution checks. In other words, Ee'ar with Constitutions of 16 + could conceivably fly "forever"—that is as long as winds are favorable! They suffer a further penalty to their Constitution checks, of -1 per 5,000 ft. of altitude, above the first 5,000. Ee'ar cannot fly above 20,000 ft.

Wings are AC9 (minus any Dexterity bonus). Wings cannot be hit by a frontal attack, unless the attacker is taller than the PC. If a *flank* attack misses but is still good enough to hit the wings' AC, then the wings are hit. A *back* attack is always done against the wings.

As with the AD&D game's Avariel, Ee'ar are subject to *claustrophobia* when confined to closed environments like dungeons. They must make a Wisdom check at the end of each day in a dungeon environment or become temporarily insane. Insanity can be cured with *heal* or *cure disease* spells. The fourth missed check during one stay in such an environment causes permanent insanity that cannot be cured by any means short of a *limited wish* or *wish* spell.

The Ee'ar have developed a variant of the *continual light* spell. The spell allows the magical light to be turned on or off at will, or to flicker at a specific rate. All adults have such a spell-cast on their chest. Originally, Aeryl taught the Ee'ar how to use flickering lights to communicate with the Kingdom of Faerie. The Ee'ar began using the lights to communicate among each other during the night or to blind and frighten nocturnal monsters. Each family within a clan has a specific blinking rate that identifies them to other clans. It is their version of heraldry. Lately, King Enerin has instructed his scouts to use their magical lights to imitate certain stars and fool sea explorers to sail farther away from the Ee'ar homeland. This has caused several ships to run aground in dangerous, orc-infested regions.

Ee'ar can be used as player characters. They function as standard elves, except for the limitations given earlier, plus a 15% penalty to all gained experience.

### Armies of Aeryl

Aeryl troops serve on a voluntary basis

for one year every 20 years (5% of the whole adult population at any time). Clan nobility commands their troops. Armies break down into battle *wings* of 50 troops and five giant eagles, which then break down into hunting *wards* of 5-10 troops and a giant eagle. The capital has 12 such wings. The other four cities rely on another eight *wings* each, for a total of 2,200 Ee'ar warriors and 220 giant eagles. For 50 troops, five commanding nobles ride the giant eagles and hold a short bow and a normal sword; 20 fight with the clan weapon of their city, the remaining 25 fight with normal swords.

### The Ee'ar pantheon

The Ee'ar can be of any alignment. Various immortals of elven origins are honored in Aeryl, under local names, including Ilsundal, Mealiden Starwatcher, and Eyrindul. "Clerics" of Aeryl are in fact standard Ee'ar elves with *ceremony* and *law & justice* skills. They cannot turn undead and only gain the abilities listed below (also see *Wrath of the Immortals*, Book 1, about clerical special abilities).

**The Guide** (Ilsundal): He is the chief Immortal patron of the Ee'ar. He incarnates peace and serenity. The Ee'ar believe it was his will that led them to the high mountains and requires the Ee'ar to live there in quiet seclusion from the rest of the world. At 1st level, his clerics gain the *awareness* special ability of the mystic character class.

**The Guardian** (Mealiden Starwatcher): Mealiden is the one who protects Ilsundal. For the Ee'ar, this makes him the patron of war and the defender of Aeryl. His clerics gain the special ability to use short bows with a +1 bonus to their attack rolls, as well as the *blind shooting* skill. These clerics are the ones who provide the Ee'ar with their special *continual light* spells.

**The Adventurer** (Eyrindul): He represents everything that Ilsundal doesn't, freedom in particular. He is an inquisitive maverick who breaks the rules to unveil secrets. Those with a particular interest in new magic, the ones curious about the world beyond the mountains (like Ee'ar scouts), or those who do not fit the traditional Ee'ar cultural often become his followers; His clerics gain an additional escape skill and a flat 10% chance to dispel *hold person*, *hold portal*, *en tangle*, *web* and *warp wood* spells within 1d6 rounds if used to restrain or imprison them, in addition to any applicable saving throws.

### The Kingdom of Eshu

Eshu—Capital: Sardon (Pop.: 11,200 winged-minotaurs and some visitors from Gombar and Suma'a); Royal Army: 12 Storms; Ruler: Priest-King Gildesh II, Herald of Idu. Patron: Idu.

The land of the winged-minotaurs occupies a vast plateau similar to Aeryl's Oethrún. It is a grassland sloping down toward a northern bottleneck, the Gildesh

Pass. Eshunite rivers drain toward the pass, eventually forming a very high waterfall at the eastern edge of the Great Shield of the Immortals. High mountains surround the heart-shaped kingdom, preventing neighboring populations from reaching Eshu.

The Eshunites are a race of farmers and soldiers who live simply. They grow crops in the rich soil, hunt the boar and the deer in the occasional woodlands, and fish their rivers. They build villages, cities, temples, and fortresses much like human communities do elsewhere.

Although the Eshunites have wings, they are primarily land-dwellers. Their bodies are covered with a very short fur ranging from black to light brown. Their feathered wings range from black to white, including various shades of blue-gray.

They were created when a herald of Idu, Gildesh, rendered a great service to his patron. As a reward, Idu—also known as Ixion elsewhere—created a race of followers with some of Gildesh's features, which he could rule in Idu's name. Gildesh was a shedu, a winged-bull with a human head. For practical reasons, Idu decided to create Gildesh's followers with a winged-humanoid body and the head of bull. Thus was born the first winged-minotaur. These were creatures of exalted goodness who lived to serve Gildesh—the *defender* in their language—and further the ideals of Idu—the *sun*. Centuries later, Gildesh had enough followers to found Nimmur—the *homeland*.

Over the centuries, envoys of chaotic Immortals quietly influenced some of Gildesh's followers. They introduced greed and violence to the Nimmurians. One of those who listened to the entropic envoys, a warrior called Minoides, eventually betrayed Gildesh over some holy treasure and "killed" him. In his death, Gildesh *cursed* his heretical murderer, Minoides, and his treacherous lackeys who then fled Nimmur. The curse caused the chaotic ones eventually to lose their wings. They became the evil minotaurs more commonly found elsewhere in the MYSTARA setting. Aided by their entropic supporters, however, they became physically stronger and better able to spread their kind compared with the peaceful Nimmurians. So far, these chaotic minotaurs have been incapable of establishing a great nation. They now remain scattered in darkness, among the ruins and dungeons of the world.

Gildesh wasn't truly killed, but merely banned to an outer plane as the result of his mortal body's death. Idu asked him to give his followers time learn on their own the lessons of life on Mystara. Gildesh agreed and it was then decided he could return to Nimmur, but only every third century. It was during Gildesh's absence that the chaotic Sokhtar manscorpions arrived and later betrayed the Nimmurians (see DRAGON issue #192 for details about the Sokhtars). The winged-

minotaurs were forced to flee and, with the help of the Ee'ar, relocated to a vast plateau hidden in the mountains.

The Ee'ar, as they explored their surroundings in the years that followed their own arrival on the Arm of the Immortal, had heard of the distant Nimmurians described as winged-people like themselves. Intrigued, they sent scouts to observe the early Nimmurian kingdom. They discovered how peaceful these Nimmurians were. They established contact and the two nations became distant friends. When the Nimmurians called for help during the Sokhtar invasion, the Ee'ar were prompt to offer their aid in relocating them to the Arm of the Immortal. They led them to what would later become the Eshunite plateau. It was infested with monsters that the Ee'ar could not eradicate alone, but with their Nimmurian friends, they could finally clear this land. The Ee'ar were perfectly content to have a close but friendly neighbor, especially as they observed ogres settling the Arm of the Immortal's western coast. The Nimmurians were ecstatic about their new, secluded land where they could honor their Immortal patron, Idu, and their spiritual leader, Gildesh, now in his second incarnation.

The kingdom was named after the priest-king, Eshu, who ruled ancient Nimmur at the time of the winged-minotaur's flight to the Arm of the Immortal. Upon pacifying the northern end of the plateau, he had the great fortress of "Gildesh" built to hold its entrance. He died several years later, at the Battle of Urduk, when several hordes of orcs attempted to find a way onto the plateau. Idu's herald returned ten years ago and is now ruling for another mortal's lifetime.

#### Gildesh\*

Sphere:	Energy
Status:	Immortal Monster
Power Points:	600
Anti-Magic:	50%
Armor Class:	- 1
Hit Dice:	22 *****
Hit Points:	120
Move:	240'/(80' Flying 360'(120' [3b])
Attacks:	2 hooves or 2 wings or spells
Damage:	3d6 x 2 (hooves) or 2d6 x 2 (wings) or by spell
Save As:	IM8
Morale:	12
Treasure Type:	N/A
Intelligence:	20
Alignment:	Lawful
XP Value:	25,250 (2PP)

Gildesh was the monster ruler of a race of magical creatures, the shedus, on another plane. He has grown beyond this role to become the personal servant of Ixion. He now has the Immortal abilities to make aura and power attacks, communicate telepathically, cast spells, and turn

undead as a 36-level cleric. He also has the power to cause double-damage on swoop attacks, and use all detection abilities of dwarves and elves (sliding walls, sloping corridors, secret doors, infravision, etc.). A +2 or better magical weapon is required to hit Gildesh. Gildesh is also immune to all mortal spells levels 1-3 and to normal poison.

Gildesh stands about 7' tall and has the ability to modify his appearance to look as if he were growing old over the years. His body is the purest white and his wings bear silvery feathers. After a lifetime on Mystara (about 50 years), Gildesh vanishes for three centuries.

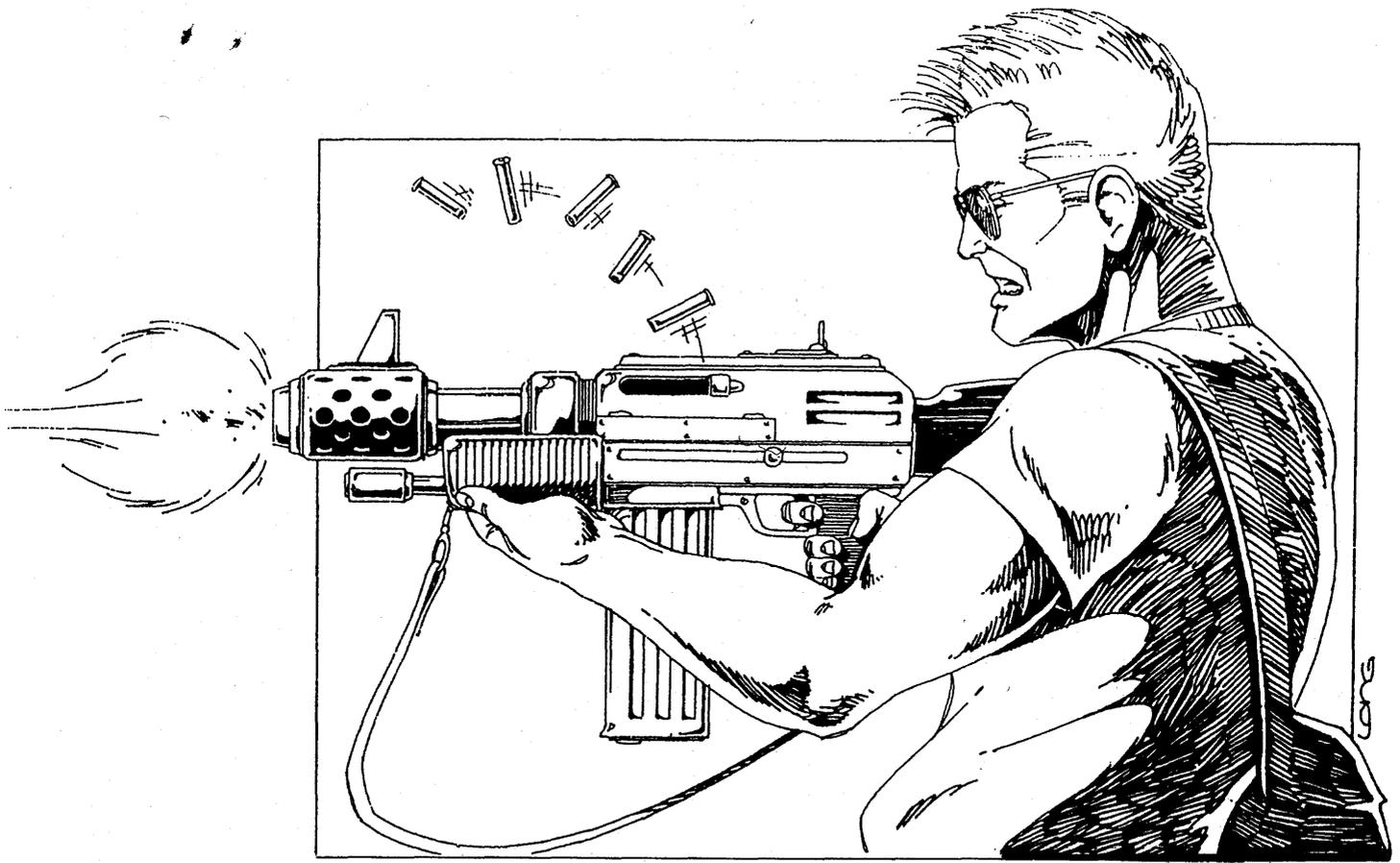
#### Eshu PCs

Winged-minotaurs can be used as player characters. They can either be clerics or fighters, and must be lawful. A 20% penalty must be applied to their experience tables. They get a +2 to their initial Strength scores (up to 18 maximum), and a -2 to their Dexterity. A minimum Strength and Constitution of 14 are required, regardless of the chosen class. Although they are smaller and lighter than normal minotaurs (6'-7' tall), these characters should never be started at less than 4th level of experience in any class. In other words, such a character could be brought into an already existing party of 4th-level PCs. It could not be created for use with a party of standard 1st-level characters.

Winged-minotaurs can fight with weapons of 120 cn. encumbrance or less when flying. They do not use bows under any circumstances. Crossbows can be used in flight, but must be reloaded on the ground. Winged-minotaurs prefer fighting on foot (they have a -2 penalty on attack rolls when flying). They can use any other weapon allowed by their chosen class when not flying. They also can use their horns to gore an opponent for 1d4 + 1 points of damage.

They may wear armor specially made for their winged-bodies, but do not use shields. Their armor generally costs and weighs twice the normal amounts. They have a natural armor class of 6. Addition of body armor of AC6 or worse does not improve the winged-minotaur's natural AC. For armor of AC5 or better, use the AC rating of the armor worn. Their wings have the same armor class, etc., as the Ee'ar above.

Damage to flying creatures applies normally, as well as recovery from fire damage (as explained earlier for the Ee'ar). Winged-minotaurs have a 2(c) maneuverability when flying and an air speed of 60 yards per round (level flight), or approximately 10 yards climbing and double-speed diving. They can carry up to 2,000 cn. plus 100 cn. per point of Strength and still fly without penalty. Above that number, their speed and maneuverability drop to 30 and 1(c). The maximum weight a winged-minotaur can carry and maintain



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flight capability is 2,000 cn. plus 200 cn. per point of Strength.

The winged-minotaurs are much heavier than their Ee'ar counterparts. They must make a Constitution check for every turn of continuous flight. Their Constitution checks are subject to the same bonuses and penalties as for the Ee'ar, except for the penalty on weight (-1 for every 1,000 cn. carried). Winged-minotaurs cannot fly above 10,000 ft., but they could glide from that altitude if needed. Winged-minotaurs do not suffer from *claustrophobia* as Ee'ar do.

### Armies of Eshu

The organization of Eshu's armies is similar to the one in present Nimmur, since the armies of ancient Nimmur and its town defenses served as the model for the later Sokhtar forces (see DRAGON issue #192 for details).

For 100 Eshunite troops, 10 ride pegasi-pulled war-chariots (with four black pegasi, a driver, and a warrior for each magically-enhanced chariot; heavy crossbow, heavy javelins, and leather armor), 20 are heavy crossbowmen with battle axe and scale mail, 20 are heavy infantry with lamellar (banded) armor and Nimmurian poleaxe, and 50 are light infantry with leather armor and halberd.

Armies break down into battle *storms* of 100 troops, in turn splitting into tactical

*warbolts* of 20 troops or five chariots. Sardon has 12 *storms*. Erdu and Gildesh have six *storms* each, Masur and Enveh another three each, for a total of 3,000 winged-minotaurs and 150 chariots.

### The Eshunite pantheon

The Eshunites are essentially followers of Idu/Ixion, which is what they were created to be. Their goal is to retake Nimmur and return the Sokhtars to darkness. Clerics of Idu can cast a druidic *produce fire* spell twice per day. They also receive a +1 to their rolls when trying to Turn Undead. These are special powers, not spells (see *Wrath of the Immortals*, Book 1, page 29). Their worst enemies after the Sokhtars are the common minotaurs.

### The neighboring lands

Texeirans have begun to settle the eastern coast. So far, they have been preoccupied with the marauding orcs in the area. Occasionally, they send parties westward to try to find a pass through the Great Shield of the Immortals. The elves have done their best to cause the expeditions to fail (from horses and mules "running away" during the night, to all out attacks when the Ee'ar think they can prevent anyone from escaping). They still try to confuse the crews of ships sailing at night toward the human colony, using their *continual light* spells. This has earned the

colonial port its gloomy name of Port Malediction.

The Western Orclands are territories held by humanoid populations that expanded westward from the Orc's Head Peninsula. Since the Battle of Urduk with the winged-minotaurs, they have given up trying to get through the mountains. The arrival of the human settlers in the north, and constant pressure to submit from Pyre, the dragon ruling the orcs of the peninsula (see DRAGON issue 195), have kept these orcs busy enough.

The two nations on the other side of the Great Immortals Shield have been settled by a race of civilized demi-ogres (mixed human Tanagoro blood) from Tangor. Their kingdoms are made up of merchant-principalities more interested in sea trade than overland exploration. They know of the strait between the southern end of the Arm of the Immortals and Davania that leads to the Western Sea. They haven't settled it because they think only savage nations exist beyond.

Ω

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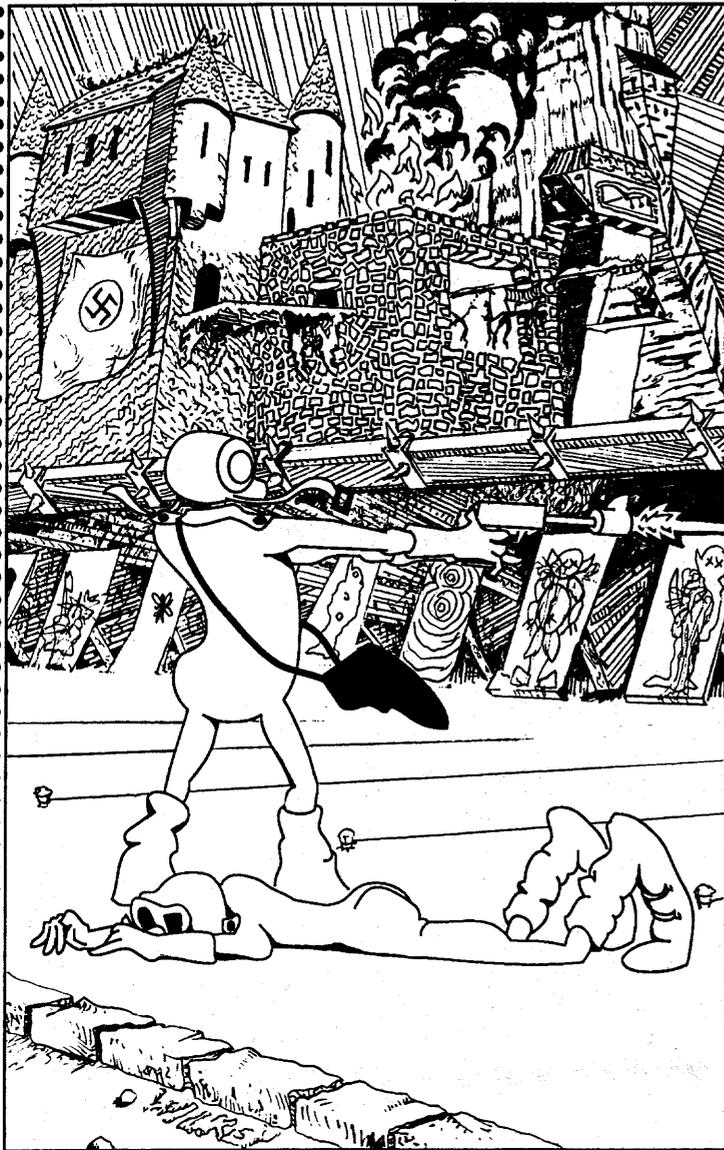
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WHIT PUBLICATIONS PRESENTS:

# RALPH BAKSHI'S WIZARDS

# Fritz & Max



## Fritz, the reluctant martyr

STR 9 INT 8 DEX 10 CHA 8  
 PER 10 CON 7 SIZ 10 WP 7  
 MGT 10 DB +0 SPI 8 MR 11  
 RS 10 REC 7 SP 24 HP 9

Skills: Small Arms: 5, Melee: 7, Guile: 9, Stall: 10, Gambling: 10, Stamina: 9, Concealment: 14, Technomancy: 2, Social: 11

Traits: Cowardice, Tough, Drug Addiction (you name it, he's tried it), Laziness, No Pain Tolerance, Paranoia, Weak Stomach

Fritz is a mild-mannered substance abuser from Scorch-1. Like all good citizens he enlisted in the military after all of his mock medical exemptions were proven false. Fritz is the meeker of the two in the twisted relationship of Fritz and Max. Fritz prefers to hide in combat situations, so that he can conserve his strength to be fresh when the enemy reinforcements arrive.

## Max, the melodramatic avenger

STR 9 INT 8 DEX 10 CHA 8  
 PER 10 CON 7 SIZ 10 WP 7  
 MGT 10 DB +0 SPI 8 MR 11  
 RS 10 REC 7 SP 24 HP 9

Skills: Small Arms: 8, Melee: 6, Guile: 12, Stall: 10, Torture: 6, Stamina: 9, Tactics: 8, Technomancy: 3, Quick Draw: 13, Oratory: 15 (minimum 3 CT of melodramatic drivel)

Traits: Battle Rage, Delusions, Inattentive, Drug Addiction (who knows what he's been smoking), Honor (Max will avenge the death of a friend, no matter what the cost)

Max is...well he is a low mutant, and he is sort of disturbed, and he, well...he carries a big gun with a lot of ammo. In combat Max will always elect to use his weapon on full auto, without exception. If he does not have an automatic weapon, he will just go home.

These two low mutants are totally loyal to the mutant cause. This should not be confused with what Blackwolf considers the mutant cause; it is instead the cause to work as hard as you possibly can to avoid hard work. Fritz and Max are members of the same unit and, although Max appears to enjoy his work as a professional soldier more than the lethargic Fritz, both are not even close to officer material.

The sado-masochistic relationship of Fritz and Max began in basic training several years ago. It was the third attempt at boot camp for both of the pseudo-soldiers and their final chance at making it into the military. At the request of another mutant, Fritz had gone to the target range to retrieve a box of hand grenades that had been left behind earlier that day. The shooting range happened to be the hangout of Max, who often stuck around to improve his aim on faerie-shaped targets. While emptying a clip from a sub-machinegun into one of the targets, Max accidentally shot Fritz (somewhere around 11 times). While Fritz was recuperating in the local bar, Max goaded him into gambling away his complete life savings (two or three Scotch Marks) and then conned him out of his next check at pay call later that week.

The two managed to make it out of basic training, soon afterwards adopting the popular phrase 'the third time's the charm' as their personal mottos, and were assigned to the same unit. The two have had quite successful careers for low mutants, having survived over six encounters with faerie units (note that this does not include the three 'accidental' encounters with other militant mutants that Max unintentionally inspired or the thirteen that they ran away from or the seven that they were too drunk to attend or...well you get the picture).

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# Ibriam

THIS IS TRULY  
HOW THINGS  
HAPPENED.

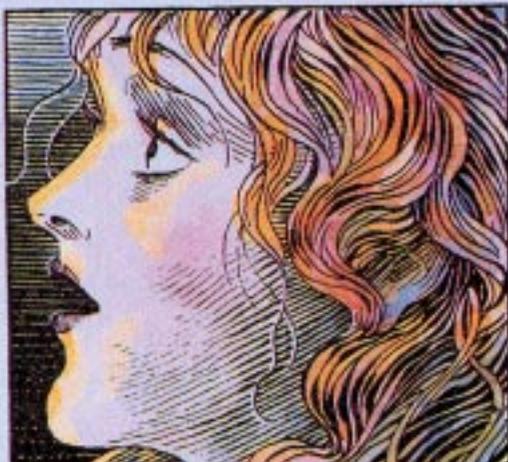
HER NAME WAS JENNIFER BUT EVERYONE  
CALLED HER JEN. SHE WAS A NATIVE OF A  
PLACE CALLED WESTELAND,  
A NATION OF FARMERS AND  
WOODSMEN HUGGING THE  
SHORES OF THE STARBRIGHT SEA.

STORY  
JEFF GRUBB

# X

ART  
BOB LESSL  
COLOR  
CATHY LESSL

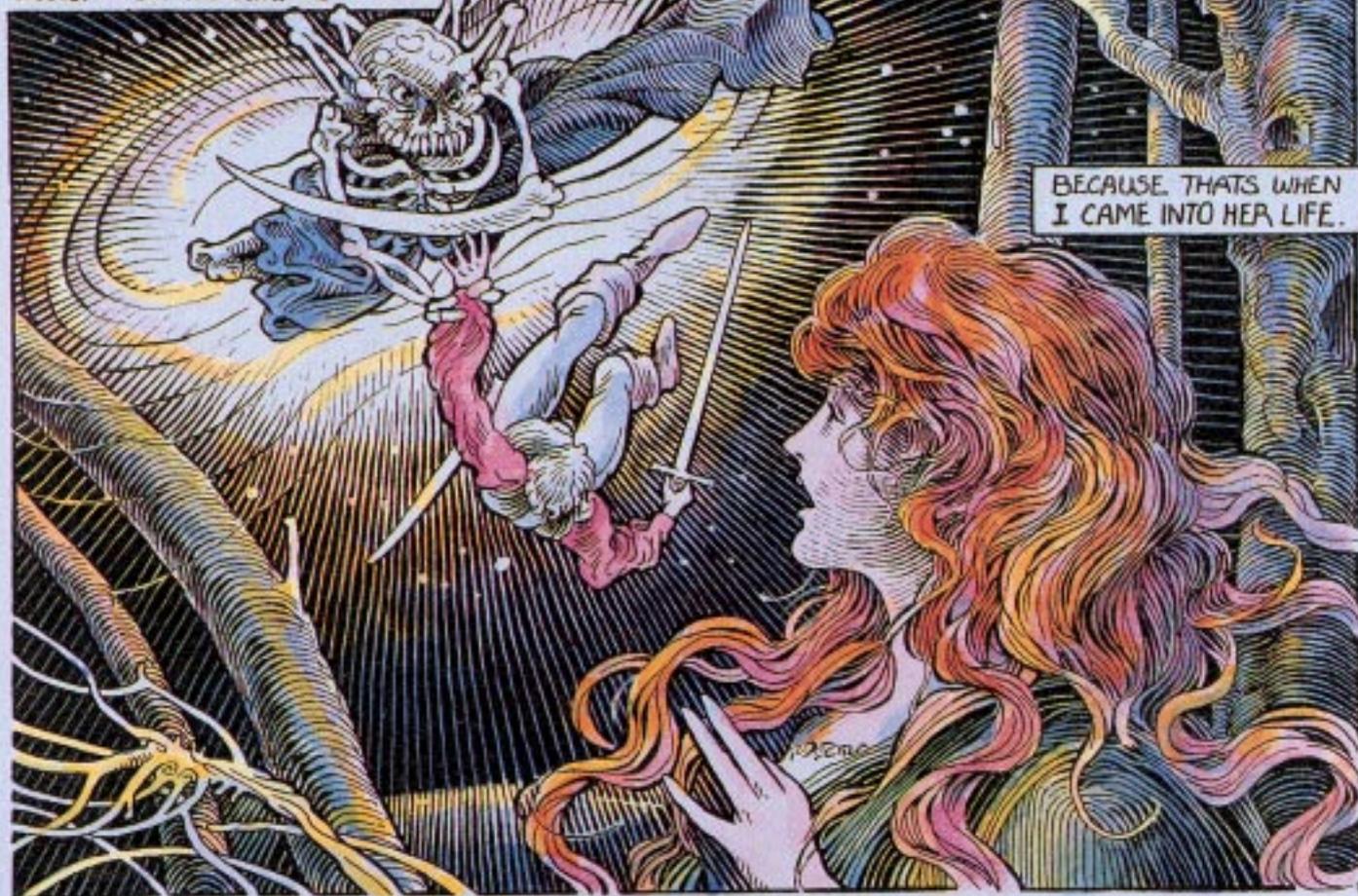
CHAPTER I  
ARRIVAL (HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER)



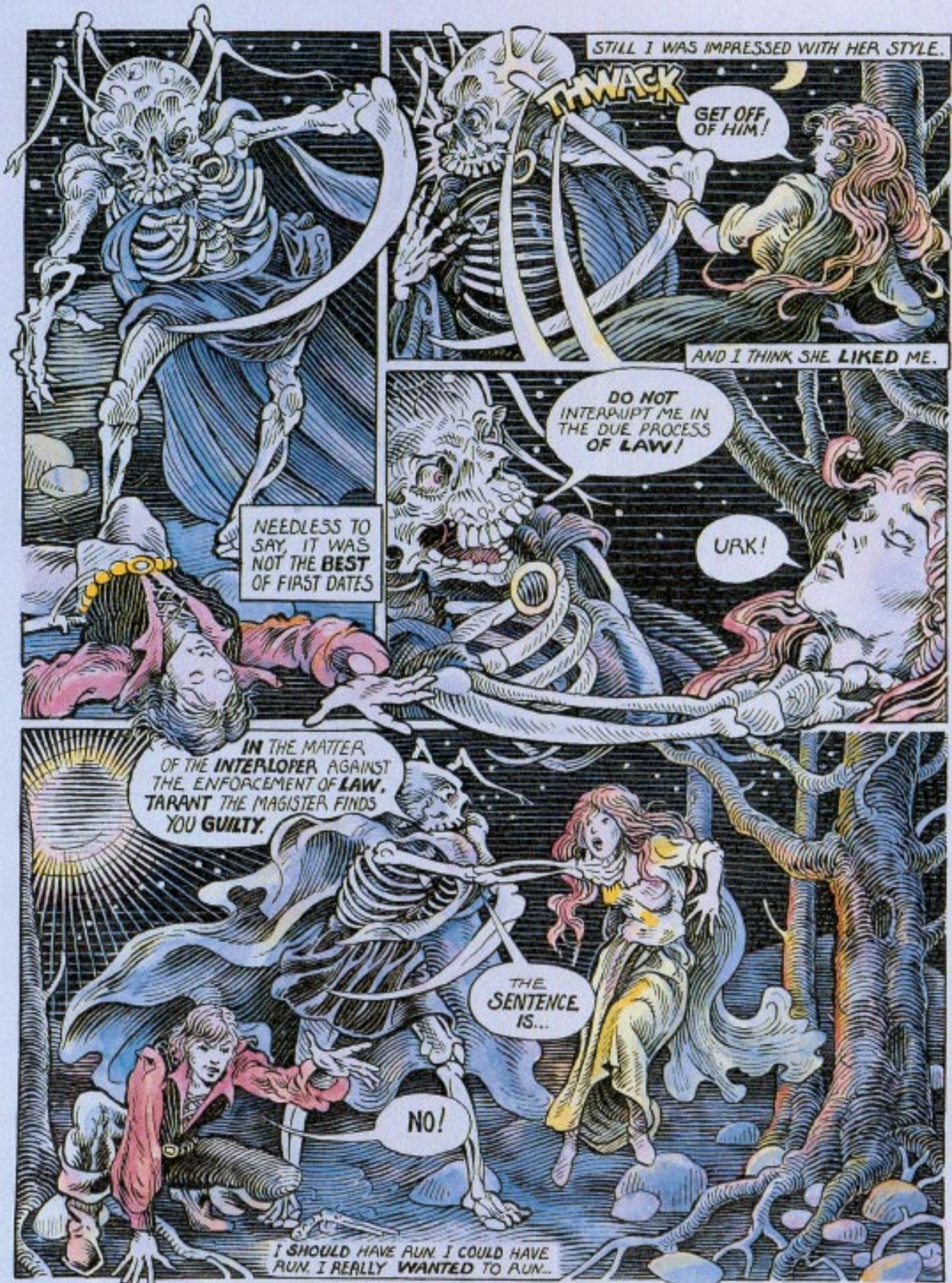
I DIDN'T KNOW IT AT THE TIME, BUT HER BIGGEST WORRY OF THE MOMENT  
WAS WHICH OF TWO SUITORS TO GO TO THE HARVEST DANCE WITH.

# SWHURRRR

WHAT SHE DIDN'T KNOW WAS THAT SHE  
WOULDN'T GET THE CHANCE TO DECIDE.



BECAUSE THATS WHEN  
I CAME INTO HER LIFE.



STILL I WAS IMPRESSED WITH HER STYLE.

**THWACK**

GET OFF OF HIM!

AND I THINK SHE LIKED ME.

DO NOT INTERRUPT ME IN THE DUE PROCESS OF LAW!

URK!

NEEDLESS TO SAY, IT WAS NOT THE BEST OF FIRST DATES

IN THE MATTER OF THE INTERLOPER, AGAINST THE ENFORCEMENT OF LAW, TARANT THE MAGISTER FINDS YOU GUILTY.

THE SENTENCE IS...

NO!

I SHOULD HAVE RUN. I COULD HAVE RUN. I REALLY WANTED TO RUN...



IM THE ONE YOU HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO RULE AGAINST. YOU NEED TO CLEAR MY CASE FROM THE DOCKET FIAT

BUT I ALWAYS WAS A SUCKER FOR A DAMSEL IN DISTRESS



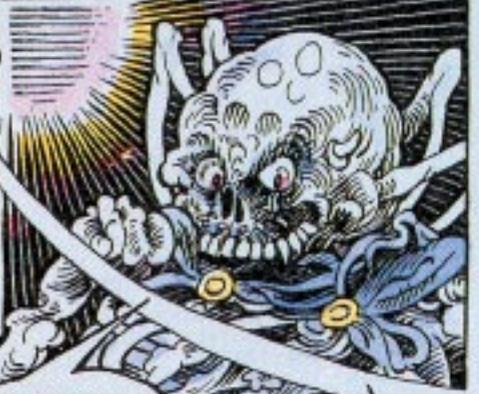
VERY WELL, UNTIL JUDGEMENT IS RENDERED AGAINST YOU...



HER CASE IS HELD OVER



NOOO!



NOW IN THE MATTER OF ACE BLOODRUNNER, RENEGADE...

THE SENTENCE IS DEATH.



YEAH

I HAD DEFINITELY HAD BETTER FIAT DATES

TO BE CONTINUED...

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# Making the Most of a Module

by Lisa Stevens

Running a role-playing game requires the expenditure of a great deal of time. One way to decrease the amount of preparation time is to use published adventures. Don't think this alleviates the need for any preparation on your part though, for you must learn to use modules properly before they can become a truly useful tool in your role-playing campaign.

Published scenarios have many positive aspects that can help a novice GM. First, most modules are written by professionals, people who make their living crafting materials for role-playing games. These veterans have created a lot of scenarios in their time

and have learned what works and what doesn't. They also have a firm grasp on the game system and thus can highlight interesting aspects that might be unique to a particular game. Also, the work of these pros can demonstrate how to make your own adventures better. In addition, published adventures offer you the use of an adventure that was created with significant time and effort, and which probably will be more intricate and detailed than anything you could invent in the limited time you have between gaming sessions. The companies that make role-playing games have the time and money to include useful extras such as detailed maps,

player handouts, and even three-dimensional buildings to use with miniature figures.

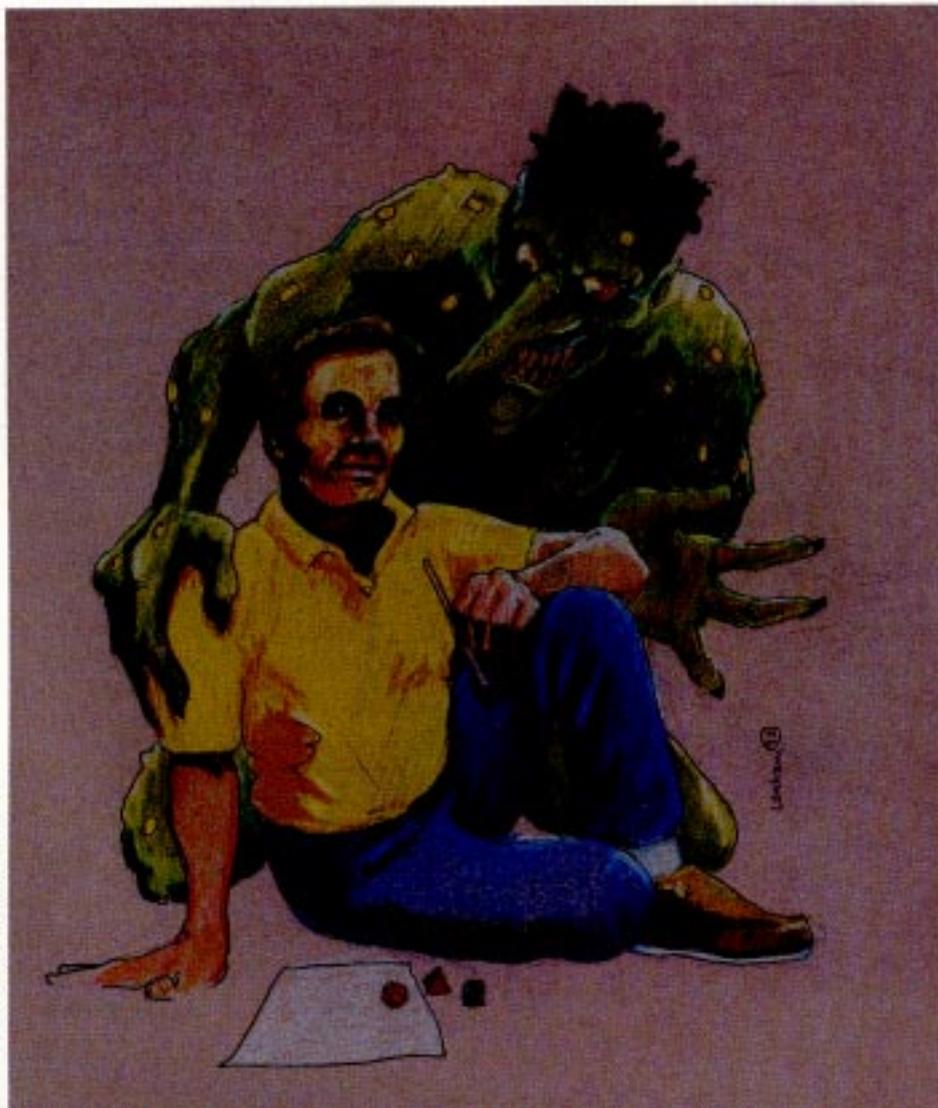
So you're sold on published scenarios now, are you? Well, let me offer a word of warning—there's more to using a published adventure than just sitting down, reading it through once, and getting your gaming group together. Just like writing your own scenario, the use of a published scenario requires a fair amount of work. The end result will be many game sessions of fine play.

Before you play a published adventure, you need to do the following things: Organize the contents, tailor the scenario to suit your world, adjust the scenario to fit your characters, and be prepared for alternative story lines that the scenario doesn't address. To illustrate these points, I am going to use the TSR module, T1-4 *The Temple of Elemental Evil*, which I ran for my AD&D® game when it was released.

## Organizing the contents

Organization: This word is a cornerstone of being a game master, but becomes even more important when using a published scenario. Many published adventures do some of this work for you, giving you lists of the monsters used and player handouts to help certain sections run more smoothly. However, you still need to have a firm grasp on where to find information, and how the different NPCs and the different sections of the story relate to each other. If you have to flip constantly through the adventure looking for the relevant facts, you aren't properly organized and your game will suffer.

When you write your own adventure, you become intimately familiar with your creation. When you use a published scenario, you need to learn a lot about it. To do this, organization is the key. Make notes and photocopies of important sections or reference sheets, so you can have all the useful information at your fingertips. Also, make lists of the encounters in the scenario and include any relevant statistics such as armor classes and hit points. Refresh your memory by rereading any sections of the game's rules that a particular encounter will emphasize (such as underwater combat) and make notes



Artwork by Stephen Lanham

for your use in game-play. In short, if there is something you think you might have to look up during the game, do the research beforehand and save game-time for the game. By doing this, you familiarize yourself with the scenario and this helps it to run more smoothly.

When preparing to run *The Temple of Elemental Evil*, I listed every creature and humanoid that appears in the module. One of the important pieces of information in the module is the affiliation each being has with the elemental sects. By listing all the beings belonging to a given elemental sect and where the relevant information can be found in the module, I worked out their defense strategies ahead of time. This way, I was prepared in case my adventurers decided to barge into the temple

instead of using stealth. This roster also proved beneficial when the players stepped outside the bounds of the published adventure, as you shall see below.

Another useful step I took with *Temple* was the detailing of the various treasure hoards. Many times modules will list treasure like: "400 gp, three 100-gp gems, four 500-gp gems and two pieces of jewelry worth 2,000 gp and 5,000 gp respectively." In my notes for the module, I named the gems (an aquamarine, a large carnelian, and a pearl), thus giving more depth to the treasure hoards. The jewelry was also detailed, making each piece unique.

Another important step I took that the module didn't cover was a timetable for the plans of the leaders of the temple. Remember that a module is set in a living,

thriving area, whether that setting is a dungeon or a city. Events are going to take place on their own, regardless of the PCs' actions. Exactly what happens might change based on the characters' actions, but *something* will happen.

### Tailoring the adventure

You now need to tailor the scenario to your game world. Many times, if you are using the same game world as the publishers of the scenario, the changes should be minor, but even in the campaigns that try to stay as close as possible to the original campaign, changes will need to be made. If Lord Beauregard died in an unexpected accident in your campaign, he cannot appear to warn the characters of some impending doom—even if the published module says he does. In your world, Lord Beauregard doesn't exist anymore. Whoever replaced him in his position as Lord will have to take over the responsibilities the module ascribes to Beauregard. If his successor is vastly different than the deceased Lord, then the whole tone and outcome of the adventure could be radically altered.

These are things that you need to think about before running the scenario. As you read through the module, make notes on places where things need to be changed and think about the effects those changes will have on the adventure. By doing this, you'll be better prepared for whatever happens when your players go traipsing through the scenario.

Thankfully for me, *Temple* takes place in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting, which was the campaign I was running at the time. However, I still needed to make some minor additions and changes.

I tied the plots of the temple to those of the greater forces in the GREYHAWK setting, connecting the temple with the Slave Lords and Lolth's plots, as well as those of Iuz and Scarlet Brotherhood. Having all these factions active within the temple made the plot seem much more encompassing, and provided the added advantage of giving the characters leads into other GREYHAWK modules.

### Adjusting to fit the characters

You also have to remember to adjust the adventure to fit your characters. If your party has a paladin who refuses to adventure with evil characters, having an assassin approach the party within a job offer would be a poor choice. The person who wrote the adventure has no idea what kind of characters you want to run through the scenario. If something in the story causes a problem with your characters, change it.

Also, make sure that the opposition isn't too tough or too weak to challenge your players. In your world, blue dragons may be able to toast your PCs, whereas in most worlds, they would be an even match for characters of their skill level. Again, these are things that only you can judge since



Artwork by Phil Longmeier

you are the only one who knows your campaign's characters.

It's also fun to tie parts of a character's past into the scenario. This makes the adventure come to life, as an old nemesis confronts the party again. You often can find spots in the published scenario where the addition of someone or something out of the character's past will make the scenario that much more believable. Use this trick. Your players will never forget it.

In my game, one of the PCs was a paladin of Heironious named Repticestor. In the module, there is an imprisoned Furyondian noble, who I decided was related to Repticestor. If the valiant paladin were to free the imprisoned noble, both he and his family would gain much prestige and honor in the court of the king of Furyondy. This addition added some spice to the module, making it personal for the characters.

### Preparing alternative story lines

As you read through the adventure, make notes to yourself on areas where the PCs might deviate from the story as outlined in the scenario and spend some time fleshing out those areas, just in case. Then, if your PCs do deviate from the path the adventure's author delineated, you'll be prepared. Preparing these potential deviations makes the adventure that much

more realistic if the PCs do take the adventure off its main track. In our own lives, we are confronted by events daily that cause us to deviate from our plans, but we deal with them and return to our initial intentions. Preparing for these departures will add more flavor and greater realism to the published adventure's plot.

I decided that the village of Nulb, which is near the temple, would become more of a factor in my campaign. As it turned out, it was, though in ways I could never have expected. I had detailed who lived where in the village and if they were connected to the temple or not. When the monk PC's *ring of shooting stars* got out of hand and destroyed most of the town, I was able to deal with it because I had prepared in advance. The monk not only took upon himself the task of putting back together the lives of those people whose homes he destroyed, but he also decided to rebuild the town.

Another plot deviation that had larger ramifications occurred when the paladin decided he wanted to find his war horse before the party finished destroying the temple. So, as the group went in search of Repticestor's war horse, the temple itself was rebuilding from the losses inflicted upon it by the PCs. When the group finally made it back, the temple had come out of hiding, had fortified itself, and its armies had swelled. Using the roster of creatures

I had made earlier, I was able to augment the troops as needed, and my timeline helped me determine which alliances had been made. Thus, I knew the composition of some of the new troops. *The Temple of Elemental Evil* ended up being one grand BATTLESYSTEM® game rather than the covert infiltration scenario it was meant to be. This only occurred because the PCs deviated from the plot. If I hadn't been organized, this might have thrown me for a loop.

### Conclusion

By following these simple rules, you can make the most of published adventures, and your world will seem much more detailed and real. [Editor's Note: Apply these guidelines when reading the *DUNGEON® Adventures* module, "The Whistling Skeleton," in this magazine.] Published scenarios can be a boon to the time-crunched GM, but they shouldn't be used as an excuse for not putting time into next weeks game session. If used in that way, even the best modules can fail, and the players will feel cheated. Remember to organize the scenario, tailor it to your world and your characters, and prepare for alternative story lines, and you will be well on your way to a successful, exciting adventure.

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# Save the *Lands of Lore*

Many computer-game players don't realize just how prevalent game piracy is, and how much it affects the thoughts and strategies of the companies that produce these games.

Several years ago, *Dungeonmaster* was the hottest game around for the Atari ST machine. I am given to understand that it sold around 40,000 copies in its year of release, which was pretty spectacular for an ST game, even then. I spoke to a major game discount house, and they told me that this game outsold all their other games, even hot items like *F-15 Strike Eagle*, which was available on many more platforms. Certainly every ST owner I knew had this game.

Soon thereafter I visited France, where I met a fellow who belonged to a computer-game pirates club. Each member of the club was expected to "crack" one game's copy protection a month, and share the broken game with the other club members. *Dungeonmaster* possessed an extremely cryptic form of graphics compression, which made it difficult to copy the disk. Even the members of the pirates club (steeped in sin as they were) went out and purchased legal copies of *Dungeonmaster* — except for the club president. With him, it was a matter of honor to break the game. He worked on it every evening for nearly a month. He broke it, of course. No game is invulnerable. The effort was clearly not worth the prize. After all, the game cost only \$40, and he spent over 100 hours laboring to crack it.

When I learned of the virtual immunity of this game to piracy, it explained a lot about its high sales. It sold six to seven times more than other hot ST games. This led me inexorably to the conclusion that many ST games were pirated six to seven times as often as they were purchased, a deplorable state of affairs. The ST users, both honest and piratical, have long since paid the price for these sins—their computer no longer exists. Software designers felt that it was a waste of time to produce games for a machine on which they would just be ripped off.

While the IBM market is probably not quite as subject to piracy as was the ST, most people in the industry I've talked to believe that at least as many games are pirated as sold, and probably many more.

Why should you care? You shouldn't, unless you play computer games. Computer-game companies are increasingly turning to cartridge games for their income, since that's where the money lies. Cartridges are impossible to pirate casually, and this is a significant factor in the company's decision. Without any piracy whatsoever, computer games would sell two to three times as many copies each, bringing their overall sales up into the range of cartridge games. Game compan-



©1993 by Sandy Petersen



*Lands of Lore* (Westwood)

ies would put a lot more emphasis on computer games and correspondingly less on cartridges.

I like cartridge games. However, my favorite games are all computer games, because the most complex strategy and role-playing games (and the best graphics) are on computers, which have immensely more power than any cartridge machine.

In addition, most cartridge games are scaled for younger users, with too much speed and too little brainpower required.

Help save computer games. Don't pirate games.

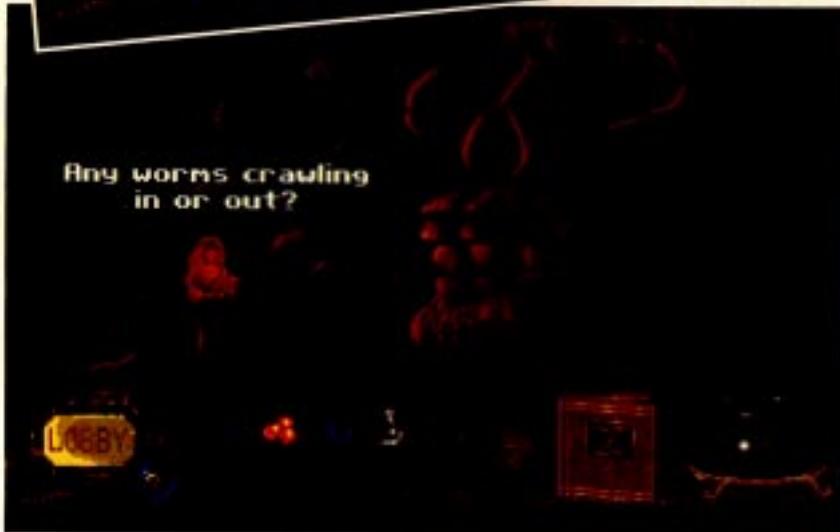
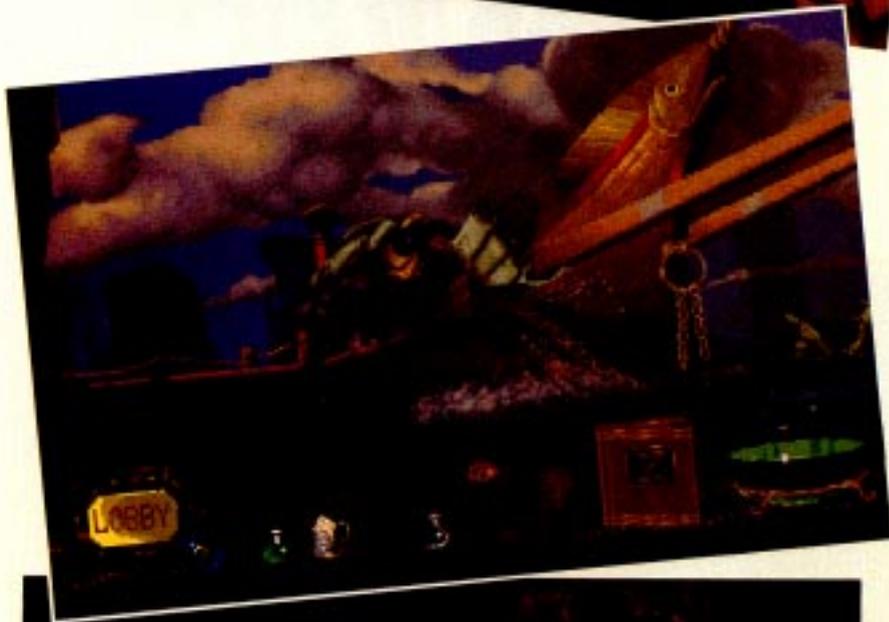
## Reviews

**LANDS OF LORE: The Throne of Chaos** \*\*\*\*  
 IBM 386, VGA Westwood Associates  
 Designers: William Alan Crum, Philip W. Gorrow  
 Lead programmer: Philip W. Gorrow  
 Lead artist: Rick Parks

Westwood Associates is best known for

### Computer games' ratings

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



Lands of Lore (Westwood)

its fine *Eye of the Beholder* games done for SSI. Actually, Westwood did the first and second *Eye* games—*Eye III* was done by SSI alone. Recently, Westwood has struck out on its own with *Lands of Lore: The Throne of Chaos*, which they intend to be the first in a series of games.

Briefly, an evil witch, Scotia, threatens to take over the lands of good King Richard, assisted by the usual army of assorted monsters. You are the hero whose exploits may save the day. At the game's start, you have four characters from which to choose your hero. Each of the three basic

player types is represented (rogue, fighter, magician), plus one who is a balanced version of all three. As the game progresses, you pick up and lose allies, so you usually control at least two characters.

*Lands of Lore* obviously owes a great deal to its predecessors. It looks and plays a lot like *Eye of the Beholder*: You wander down dark dungeon corridors or forest paths, encounter and kill monsters. The screen image is from the party's viewpoint, in what is increasingly becoming the industry standard (q.v. *Might And Magic*, *Wizardry*, *Ultima Underground*, *Wolfenstein 3-D*, etc.) Occasionally you have special encounters, in which the whole viewscreen changes to a set picture. You can click on various parts of the image and get messages or clues.

The game teems with little puzzles. Some of the puzzles are pathetically easy, while others are reasonably difficult. None are tooth-gnashingly hard. Every time I felt I was stumped, a few minutes of thinking or wandering around the map would give me the answer. Nobly, the game provides you with an automapper (the "magic atlas"), so as you wander about, the map automatically grows with you. It even marks key positions on the map for you, which is nice. You can't put your own marks on the map, though.

The interface isn't bad. A mouse is essential to play this game, though I recommend using the keyboard for movement. The faces of your party members are visible under the main view. Their images change all the time; they wince, sleep, look surprised, cheerful, etc. When something important happens, the characters themselves talk to you, and you see the images' faces and lips move. Clicking on someone's face brings up a screen showing that person's equipment, weapons, and statistics. The worst part of the interface is your inventory, which is a single line at the bottom of the screen that takes forever to scroll through. After an hour or two of play, the inventory gets quite jumbled, and it can be quite hard to find things. It's a pain in the derriere to organize the inventory, too. Still, it's a small drawback to a generally good game.

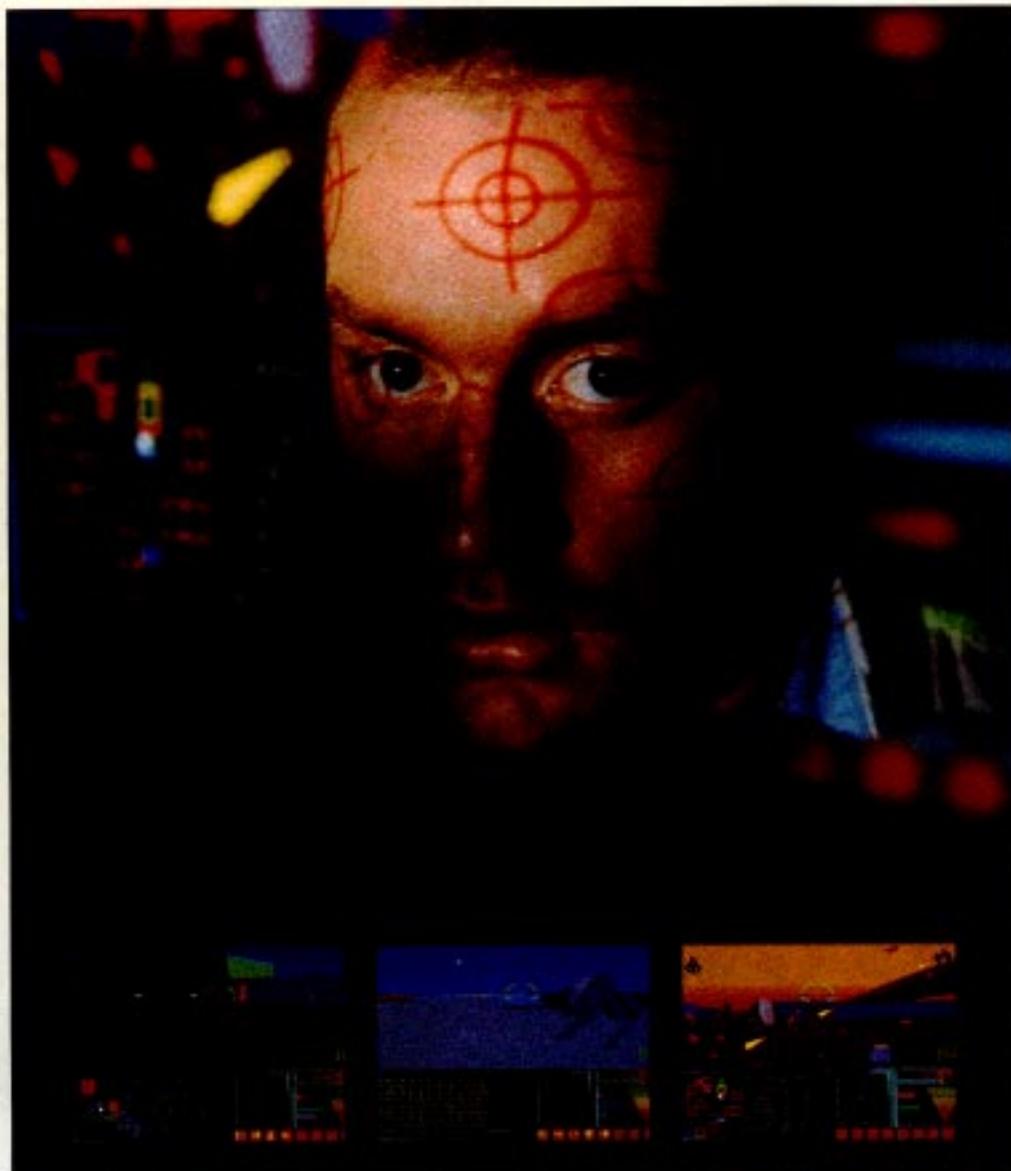
Each party member has two buttons next to his image, one for physical combat and one for casting spells. Pressing the physical combat button attacks foes in front of you, using the weapon in hand. Bows and crossbows are easy to use—you are assumed to have arrows if you've got the bow, so you don't need to purchase arrows or (thank heaven!) gather up arrows after the battle. Unfortunately, you *do* have to gather up thrown weapons and rocks after use. In the screen's corner is a scroll containing a list of your spells, on which one spell is always highlighted. When you select the spell-casting button, you also automatically select the highlighted spell, and can cast it at a level of I to IV, if you've got enough magic points. Spell-casting never fails, but an experi-

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**SIMULTRONICS**  
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Lands of Lore (Westwood)

enced caster has many more magic points. Everyone in the party knows the same spells, but you usually have your magicians cast the spells anyway. The spells generally produce exciting graphics, making them quite fun to cast, and different strength levels of the same spell are also shown differently.

I saw few bugs in the game. Westwood has released an upgrade, so if you do have

any problems, you can contact them. There are a couple of places where the game's designers failed to predict the havoc that a clever player could wreak on their plans. For instance, one area had a monster that you are supposed to kill before you can penetrate deeper into the dungeon. However, I was able to lure the monster away and dodge around him to get into the area he defended. Later on, I

met someone in the dungeon, and when he asked me about the monster, my characters told him that the monster was dead (presumably because the game assumed the monster must be dead, if I was here in the dungeon).

Another minor flaw in the game is a feature that some players may view as a benefit. Little items are strewn all over the map, hidden in hollow logs, tree stumps, nests, rock crevices, etc. Therefore, you feel compelled to stop and check almost every single wall tile you walk past. I didn't have the patience to do this, so I probably missed a bunch of little power-ups that more anal-retentive players obtained. Personally, I am irked, rather than impressed, by such behavior on the game's part, since it makes me do something dull in order to better myself in play—namely, check all the walls. I'd rather do fun stuff all the time. I had to get that off my chest; now back to the review.

The game does not have particularly advanced technology and is not amazingly more advanced than other games of its ilk. Still, it's a good solid game, a lot of fun to play. The graphics are good and quite varied. When walking through the woods or swamps, you see a wide variety of trees and plants, and the monsters are detailed and look good. Unfortunately, it is usually too dark to see the monsters to their best advantage. What you can see looks great,

# NEVER WALK ALONE



## Game tips

1. When you need an item from your inventory, but monsters are nearby, first click on someone's face to pause the game. Then scroll through your inventory without fear of interruption.

2. Read the manual carefully and heed its advice about what weapons and what magic to use against specific monsters (i.e., blunt weapons vs. orcs, and so on). If a monster is new to you, try out a variety of weapons; the weapon delivering the biggest splashes of blood is probably the right one to use.

3. The giant slug who guards the Urbish mines can be killed. You just need the right item.

4. If you're brave enough to tough it out, an effective way to fight a lot of monsters is to select Heal for your spell, and then go at it hammer-and-tongs with your weapons. When a party member gets too near unconsciousness, quickly Heal him and keep fighting until the monsters are gone. Usually, you can Heal your party faster than the monsters can damage you. This technique isn't as effective against monsters that do a great deal of damage per blow.

5. If someone is poisoned and you have no Ginseng, find a quiet place and let him drop into complete unconsciousness. Then Heal him; the poison will be purged from his system.

6. When using thrown weapons, make sure that you've highlighted the party member you want to throw the missile, and not some random stumblebum. The easiest way to assure yourself of success here is to throw your weapons right after you've had the desired person cast a spell or make a normal attack. Even more important, make sure you've highlighted the right guy when picking a lock!

## DANGEROUS DAVE

IBM compatibles, EGA \*\*  
Gamer's Edge  
Programming: Nolan Martin  
Art: Jerry Jones, Carol Ludden  
Design: Greg Malone

This is a side-scrolling game that supports only EGA-level graphics, a fact I was astounded by for a 1993 release. What can the authors be thinking of? The game isn't bad, it just seems primitive.

You control a lethal redneck who must travel through different arenas slaughtering horrendous creatures in an effort to reach the evil Dr. Nemesis. The threats to your existence vary widely, from giant spiders and dogs to slowly-dripping toxic waste and spiked fences (that kill you only if you fall on them). Any touch from one of the dangers instantly kills you, producing a spot animation of the ghastly event,

with as much gore as 16 colors permits. Different threats produce different spot animations and provide most of the game's humor.

The designers appear to have ignored any need to balance the game's levels. The first level is extremely hard, while the second is pathetically easy. I suspect the game underwent little playtesting.

There's little that this game offers that isn't better done on Super Nintendo or Sega. Still, it's one of the few passable IBM arcades available, and might deserve a glance for just that reason.

## MONSTER BASH I, II, and III

IBM compatibles \*\*\*  
Programming & design: Frank Maddin  
Art: 'Manda Dee  
Animation: Jeff Dickens  
Producer: George Broussard

These are more EGA side-strollers, but at least these possess good animation and graphics. You play a kid who has taken it upon himself to free all the dogs and cats imprisoned by the Bad Guys. The villains you must destroy are a huge variety of icky monsters, ranging from severed (but mobile) hands to green zombies, exploding demon heads, werewolves, and hellishimps. When you destroy a monster with your trusty slingshot, it explodes into gory fragments of flesh and bone. Fortunately,

# The Shadow of YSERBIUS

## Look What Sierra Brought Home!



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—QuestBusters

Strategy Plus calls *The Shadow of Yserbius* "a champion among multiplayer fantasy games." And now the champ comes home in a deluxe single-player edition, offering the same intrigue that has already mesmerized over 50,000 on-line players. Sierra's packed *Yserbius* with two additional features no other FRP can offer: *The Fates of Twinion*, the long-

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You'll build your character by completing quests, acquiring spells, and gaining experience. Then you can import your character into a multiplayer environment where you can face the challenge alone or form your own band of heroes.

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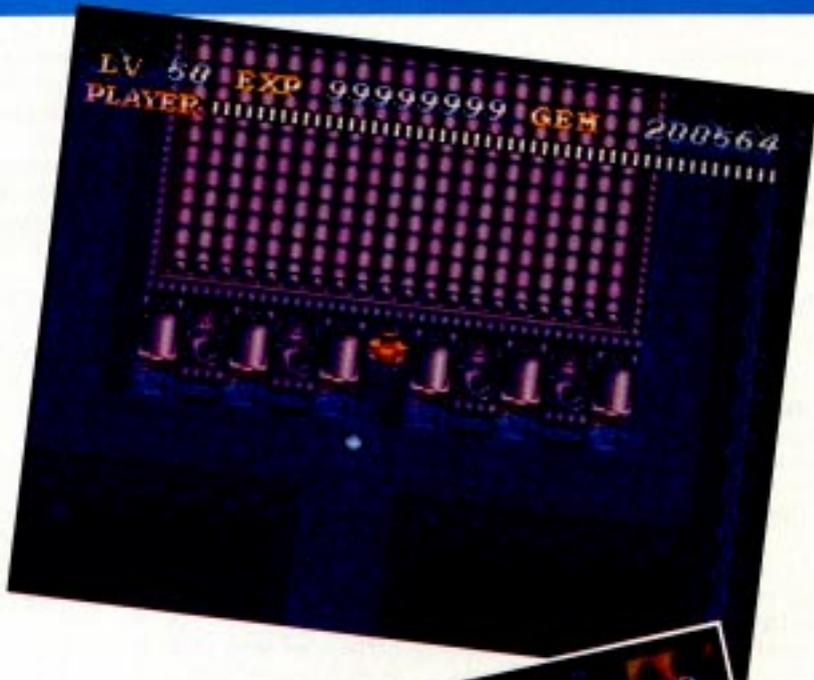
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adventurers. Explore

a shadowy kingdom  
and be back in time  
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evening's play.



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Soul blazer (Enix)

when you yourself are killed, there is no violence.

The game suffers from less-than-optimal design. Pixel-perfect jumping is necessary in some spots, and the designers force you to perform tedious crawling in areas where it should not be necessary. If you're interested in IBM arcade action, however, you could do worse.

### SOUL BLAZER

\*\*\*

Super Nintendo

Enix

Scenario: Tomoyoshi Myazaki

Programmer & director: Masaya Hashimoto

Producer: Yasuyuki Sone

One of Nintendo's least endearing traits (particularly to a game designer) is a tendency to leave the names of the production team off the game box, and provide no credits in the game except at the very end, ensuring that such credits are difficult to access. Anyway, the names of the entire team are right in the manual of *Soul Blazer*. Well done, Enix.

*Soul Blazer* has one of the most bizarre concepts behind any game in my experience. Basically, all the world's inhabitants have been taken by the villain and their souls have been captured within monster lairs. You are an angel who has come down from Heaven to travel the world and free these trapped souls. To do this, you must destroy the monster lairs. The lairs themselves rather resemble the monster generators of *Gauntlet* in the way they operate, except that they do not produce an infinite supply of baddies. Instead, when the lair has produced a certain number, it shuts down. In addition, there are a few random monsters scattered here and there. These are not tied to any lair, but look quite different from the "lair" monsters, so there is no confusion between the two types.

The game utilizes a top-down view much like those of the *Zelda* games. A glowing sphere constantly orbits your character, and you can cast spells from this sphere. Of course, skill is involved, since you have to time your spells to coincide with the sphere's orbit or you'll miss the bad guys. Each time you kill a bad guy, you collect one or more objects called gems (though they look like little gold nuggets) that are used to power your magic. The levels you must pass through contain traps such as spring-loaded spears, conveyor belts, flaming braziers that spew fire at you, and spiked floors.

*Soul Blazer* is a very linear game. Each time you destroy a lair, a pathway opens to another lair, or another lair appears, or a creature is released that can tell you how to get to the next stage, or a chest is exposed containing some item needed for you to progress further. You have little choice as to where you will go next, or what your next task will be. In this respect, *Soul Blazer* is a little more like a conventional arcade than a role-playing game.

# More Than a Graphics Game, More Than a Simple Utility or RPG System

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## KINGSPPOINT: THE SOFTWARE

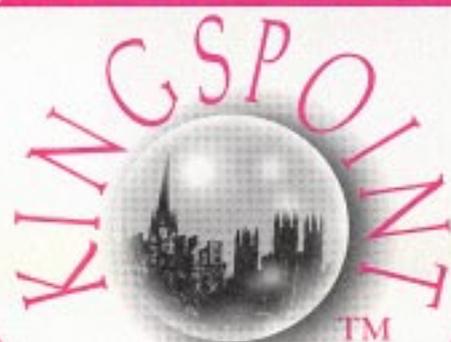
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- User defined game templates available for all characters, histories, etc.
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- Free copy of The Kingspoint Chronicle
- Free technical support

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- DOS 3.1 and higher
- 286 and up
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- Mouse (For maps only)



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Soul blazer (Enix)

As you free the souls trapped within the lairs, you gradually build up small villages and towns that you can visit to obtain needed items, to talk to the inhabitants, and so forth. These inhabitants include tulips, goats, mermaids, and all kinds of strange entities. Many make humorous remarks even as they help you, and there's nothing wrong with that.

The game has a battery back-up save, and you can hold up to four games in it. The game does not end when you're killed, but you do lose all the gems you had collected up to that point. For this reason, it's wise to save periodically, even before you're ready to stop playing.

The controls for the game are less than ideal. It took me some time to get used to the way the buttons were used, since they are not intuitive and are used for different purposes depending on which button has been pushed first.

The game design is a bit sloppy in its details. For instance, one of the first people you release is a shop owner who thenceforth gives you a free medicinal herb whenever you ask for one. Later on, you release a goat who shows you where you can get one medicinal herb. What's the point, when you have a never-ending supply available? Another example is the fact that it's not clear you're about to face the monsters' leader until the moment you do so, when it's too late to go back and obtain needed supplies. So you die and must start over again without any gems.

This isn't the best role-playing game out there, but it's far from the worst. Certainly the quirky concept behind it is worth a look.

#### Game tip

Keep track of how many experience points you need to advance to the next level. When you're nearing the target number, find a monster lair near the edge of an area and battle the monsters there,

being careful not to kill them all. Then leave the area and return. The monster lair will have regenerated fully, and you can kill its inhabitants again. Repeat the process until your level goes up, then slaughter all the monsters in that lair and move on.

#### Holiday gift guide

It's the holiday season, and games spring to mind as possible gifts, especially if you're a computer-game aficionado. Here are some suggestions that I think will please almost any gamer:

**Budget buys:** If you're one of the many Americans suffering from the flaccid economy, but you still want to buy a computer game for a friend, I advise you to buy an older game. You might consider one of the classic *Ultima* series, with the exception of the newest entry in the line, *Ultima VII*, which I feel is slow-moving, pompous, and flat. Any of the other *Ultimas* are still fun. In fact, the ancient *Ultima III* is possibly the most enjoyable role-playing game ever made. Unless your friend is a technology freak who demands the fanciest possible graphics and sound for his machine, it's worth considering these long-whiskered products. The creaky old *Dungeonmaster* is inexpensive, too, and just as much fun as when first released back in 1987.

**CD-ROM:** If you have a friend or relative who is among the lucky few to own a CD-ROM drive, Trilobyte's *Seventh Guest* might be a good choice. This game possesses excellent graphics and sound, and is one of the few good horror games available. It is rather gruesome and bloody, so it may not be for everybody. It's got keen spooks, an interesting plot, and a lot of neat scenes to show your friends. The most telling complaint I've ever heard about this game was: "You get so interested watching the little scenes that you forget you have to progress with the game, which sometimes makes you lose." My feel-

ing is that any game can get me so interested in the secondary events that I forget about the main purpose of playing the game is remarkably fascinating.

Unfortunately, *Seventh Guest's* violence renders it unsuitable for many people. I also recommend Lucasfilm's CD-ROM version of *Day of the Tentacle* without reservations.

**Sega:** The Sega game of choice has to be *Mortal Kombat*. This is also available on Super Nintendo, but the violence has been toned down a great deal on the latter system, so half the entire purpose behind playing such a game is torpedoed.

**Super Nintendo:** There's no doubt about the quality of *Zelda*. Alas, there's little point in buying this game, because any Super Nintendo owner worth his salt already owns it and has probably played through it. For my money, the neatest new release is *Mario Classics*, which is a release of the three old Super Mario Brothers games, formerly found only on the regular Nintendo machine. The art has been upgraded to match Super Nintendo standards, but the games play the same, and all three of them are on the same cartridge. There are actually four games on the cartridge, because a fourth Super Mario game was released in Japan but not in America. When you play the "extra" game, you can see why they didn't bother to release it for us. Japanese players must have a lower tolerance for stinky games. In any case, the other three games are as much fun as ever, and it's neat to have them for the Super Nintendo.

**Computer Games:** The best strategy game out there is still MicroProse's aging *Civilization* available on both Macintosh and IBM platforms. Of all the games I saw produced during my five years at MicroProse, *Civilization* was the only one that the professional playtesters kept playing for fun after the project was completed. (Normally, a playtester is heartily sick of a game—even a good game—after spending several hundred hours on it.)

Fortunately for computer role-playing gamers, a lot of interesting games are coming out this year. Here are some tentative role-playing recommendations: Raven Software's *Shadowcaster*, produced by Electronic Arts, is worth a peek. At least, it boasts highly interesting graphics, and your main character's ability to shapeshift is pretty doggone keen. I've only seen some graphic screens from Origin Systems' *Ultima VIII*, but they're stupendous. This game almost certainly will be a blockbuster, and with any luck will wipe the sour memories of its predecessor from gaming fans nationwide. MicroProse's *Bloodnet*, set in a near-future dystopia where cybernetic vampires prey on the living, has such a quirky background that it's bound to be fun. I also recommend Westwood's *Lands of Lore* (reviewed above).

Good gaming and happy holidays!

# G A M E S O F I M A G I N A T I O N

BY JAMES M. WARD AND TIMOTHY BROWN

**O**ver the past several years TSR's game plan has been to provide exciting games to current gamers while adding new players with the *AdventureVision*<sup>™</sup> game format. The year 1994 represents a

keystone year for gaming. TSR is introducing audio CD adventuring along with the introduction of *two* new worlds — one is a broad-based medieval world for new and experienced gamers, the other is for veterans. For the first time ever, TSR is releasing its 1994 Product Schedule (see the preceding insert) to DRAGON<sup>®</sup> Magazine readers and gamers at the same time it is released to TSR's book and hobby store customers. Role-playing has attracted millions of fans, and we at TSR are very proud of our role in originating the phenomenon and supporting it over the years.

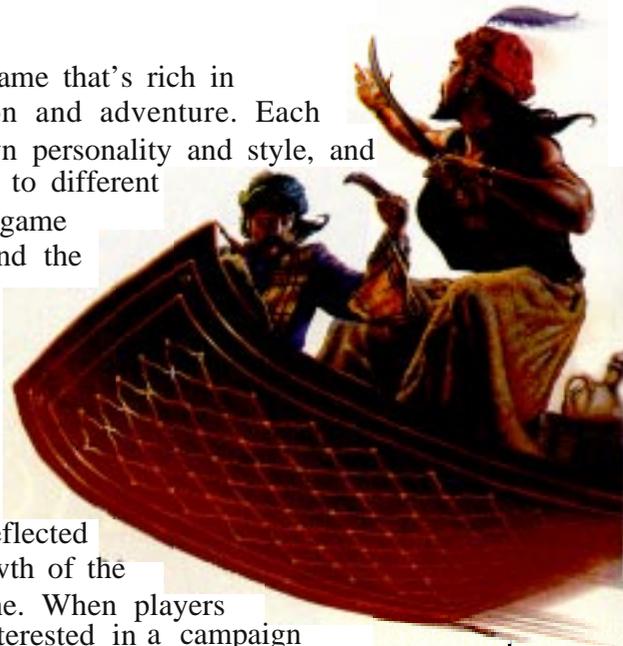
The evolution of the hobby has been a give-and-take process. We learn

more about what role-players find useful and enjoy with every product we publish. Feedback from our customers has given us the experience necessary to guarantee that TSR's products are the finest in the industry.

In the following pages, TSR presents its own brands of role-playing fun. Most of the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game system trademarks are old friends to millions of players. Each trademark represents a campaign world, a place to

play the game that's rich in imagination and adventure. Each has its own personality and style, and so appeals to different groups of game players. And the worlds are dynamic; they're forever changing and growing, which is reflected in the growth of the product line. When players become interested in a campaign world they want to know about its cultures, monsters, and important characters, and additional products make that possible. Players want more than just one evening's adventure. They want to respond to happenings around them and such actions are part of what is necessary to make a world a living, breathing thing.

You may think you know all of the AD&D® campaign worlds, but pay close attention — TSR has a couple of surprises in store for AD&D game players in 1994. And we're very excited about branching beyond fantasy with our multigenre AMAZING ENGINE™ System line, a chance for you to explore a wider range of role-playing situations.



# AN ENTIRE SYSTEM FOR EPIC ADVENTURE

The AD&D® game system features a line of rules products both for players and for the DUNGEON MASTER™. The AD&D system presents epic fantasy adventure that cannot be limited to a single world – all the campaign worlds that follow, with the exception of the AMAZING ENGINE™ system, use AD&D system rules. Of course, as the greatest fantasy role-playing system ever devised, the AD&D game has also become the perfect springboard for those gamers who want to create their own adventure worlds. Creating continents, castles, monsters, and magical items is grand fun for those who have the time and the inclination.

The core of the AD&D System has traditionally been the DUNGEON MASTER™ Guide and the Player's Handbook, which together present the complete AD&D game in all its great detail. However, in May 1994,

beginning players will be able to purchase First Quest: The Introduction to ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game which features all the entry-level rules, as well as an audio CD with helpful tips, thrilling audio adventures, and inspiring sound effects – to get new players started.

The logo for AD&D 2nd Edition, featuring the letters 'AD&D' in a large, bold font with a small '2nd Edition' text below it, all enclosed in a blue rectangular border.

## FOR THE PLAYER (BEGINNING)

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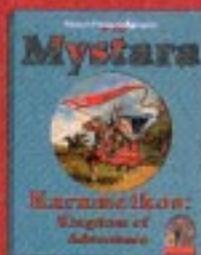
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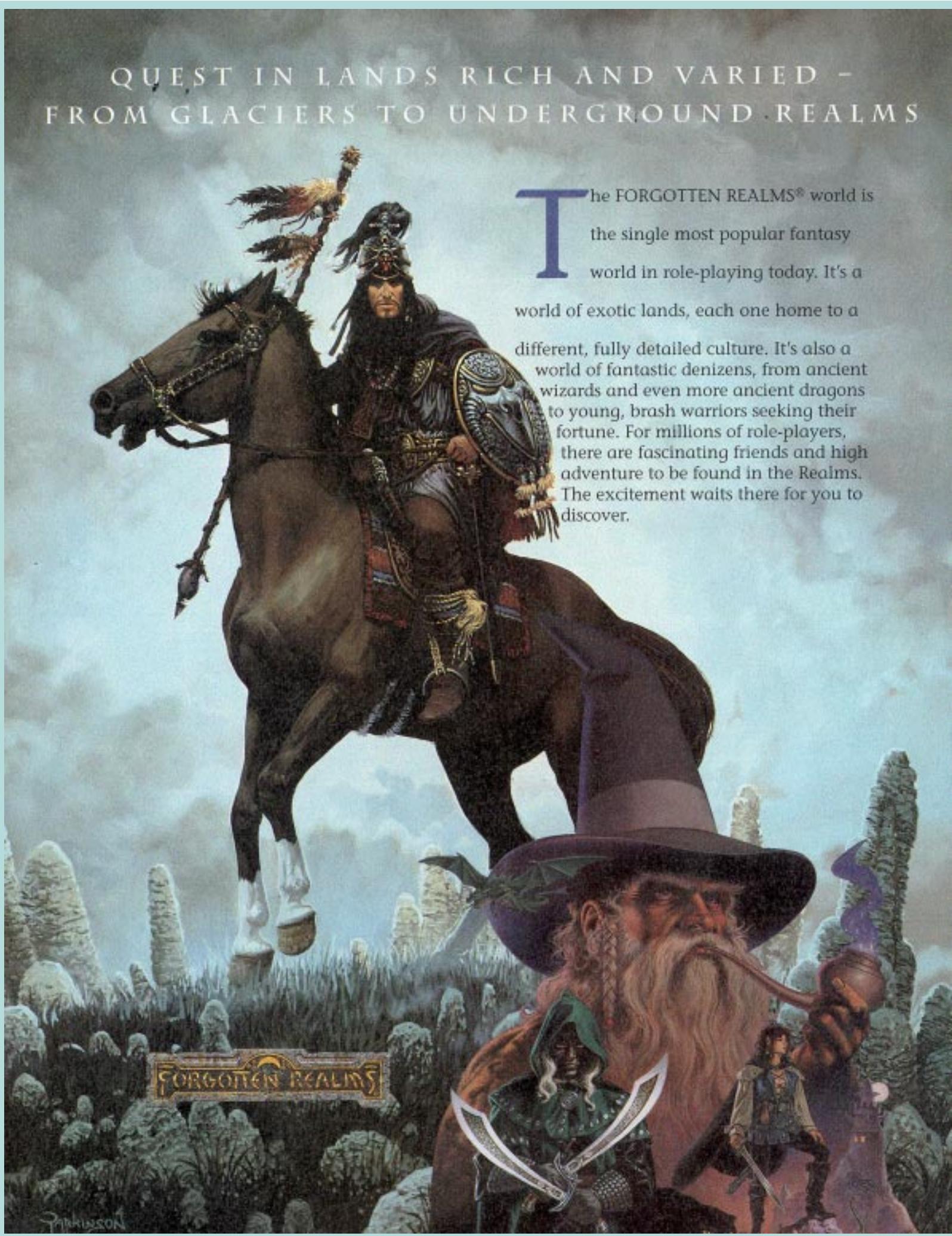


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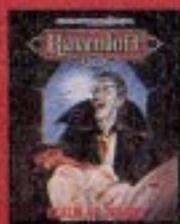


# Ravenloft

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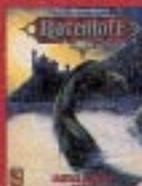
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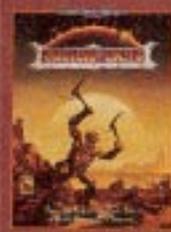
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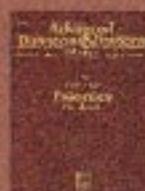
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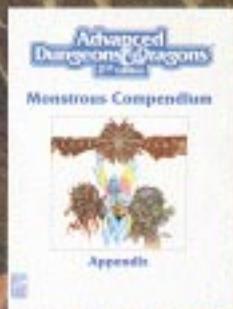
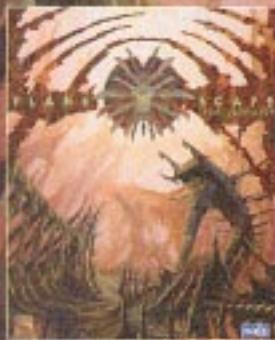
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## ENGINE

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# The Even More Complete Psionist

Kits for the adventurer whose favorite weapon is his mind

by Jon Winter

Artwork by Karen L. Wann

The character kit, first appearing in the *Complete Fighter's Handbook*, was intended to broaden the versatility of the AD&D® game's character classes. Each kit represents a different way of seeing the classes described in the *Player's Handbook* by making small alterations to their basic structure. Most grant bonus nonweapon proficiencies and special benefits available only to characters of that kit, balancing these with hindrances. The family of kits was later expanded to include thieves, priests, wizards, and bards with the *Complete Handbook* series. For more psionist kits, see "Open Your Mind," in *DRAGON*® issue #191.

This article presents additional character kits for psionist player characters (PCs). Before introducing them to a game world, the DM should read through the whole article and decide which kits will be allowed, as some may be inappropriate for the campaign. The format of each kit here is almost identical to that found in the *Complete Handbooks*. A few new headings have been added, specifically for psionists:

**Chosen disciplines:** The psionist *must* choose the discipline listed under "Required" as his initial starting discipline. If none are listed, the player may select any in the "Recommended" section, possibly choosing one of his own if the DM allows it.

**Sciences/Devotions:** Psionic powers listed in the "Required" section *must* be chosen by the PC, and the psionist should try to gain as many of the "Recommended" powers as he can, as quickly as possible.

In addition, some nonweapon proficiencies are footnoted in the text. The footnotes are given here:

- <sup>1</sup> indicates a proficiency detailed in the *Castle Guide*, page 23.
- <sup>2</sup> indicates a proficiency detailed in *DRAGON*® issue #169, in the article "Learn Something New Every Day."
- <sup>3</sup> indicates a proficiency detailed in the *Complete Thief's Handbook*.
- <sup>4</sup> indicates a proficiency detailed in the *Complete Psionics Handbook*.
- <sup>5</sup> indicates an optional new proficiency detailed here in the "New Proficiencies" section.

**Other notes:** All ability requirements for kits are above and beyond the standard requirements of the psionist character class (Constitution 11, Intelligence 12, and Wisdom 15).

If the DM is using secondary skills instead of proficiencies, any of the kits is supported equally well by any secondary skill.

## Mountebank

**Description:** Mountebanks are psionists who use their psychic powers to pass themselves off as mages or priests. They are sometimes failed wizards or clerics who have discovered the hidden psychic potential that prevented them from excelling at their chosen career, and at other times people eager to exploit their talent for things psionic by using trickery.

In areas where psionics are outlawed and suspected psionists burned, mountebanks are forced to pretend to be wizards in order to practice their powers without fear of reprisal. They try to avoid direct confrontation with real wizards or priests in order to minimize the chances of discovery, and are usually very reluctant to display their talents in front of such an audience.



**Role:** In many lands, psionics are viewed as akin to witchcraft, despite the fact that they are in no way related. Even in areas where wizardly magic is not feared, psionics are still seen as inherently evil. This is perhaps because there are very few magical spells that provide protection from psychic powers, and the use of psionics is so secretive and easily con-



cealed. Mountebanks tend to pose as the more accepted members of society; they can make some money selling "spells" (real or not) to willing customers, and save their skins at the same time.

**Chosen disciplines:** Required—any one of psychokinetic, psychometabolic, or psychoportive. Recommended—other "required" disciplines.

**Sciences/Devotions:** Required—none. Recommended—psionic powers that could be confused with spells (e.g., Create Object, Detonate, Disintegrate, Telekinesis, Animate Object, Control Flames, Control Wind, and Levitation are just a few examples from the psychokinetic discipline).

**Weapon proficiencies:** As for normal psionist.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Bonus:* none. *Recommended:* bribery<sup>1</sup>, diplomacy<sup>2</sup>, disguise, etiquette, fast-talking<sup>3</sup>, forgery, healing, herbalism, hypnosis<sup>4</sup>, languages (modern), pharmacy<sup>5</sup>, sleight of hand<sup>6</sup>.

**Equipment:** Any mountebank valuing his life will have false holy symbols and magical components at hand to fool would-be psionist-hunters.

**Special benefits:** The major benefit of being a mountebank psionist is the freedom to practice forbidden powers in an intolerant land without being fried, impaled, or beheaded. Mountebanks are also permitted to purchase any of the "recommended" proficiencies above at their normal listed costs.

**Special hindrances:** Mountebanks are hated by most "normal" (i.e., secretive) psionists, who see them as traitors to the "Way." They can also get into trouble with local churches if they masquerade as priests. Such trouble tends to be permanently damaging to the mountebanks' health.

**Races:** Mountebanks are mostly human, although psionists of other races may also elect to don the mountebanks facade.

## Crystallite

**Description:** Whereas many psionists use their "energy nexus" to focus their psychic powers, the crystallite uses a material object (usually a pure, clear, quartz crystal) as a collection vessel for their psionic strength. Crystallites are typically creatures with an affinity for the earth and gemstones, like dwarves or gnomes.

Leading dwarven psionists claim that they are able to draw "latent psychic potential" from their crystal foci in much the same way that a priest uses his holy symbol to draw power from his patron deity. Most human psionists dismiss this as "insane dwarven gibberish," but a few enlightened humans have learned to use crystal foci and swear by their effectiveness. It is rumored that svirfneblin psychics also benefit from crystals, and hushed whispers fearfully claim that there are illithid crystallites of great power. There are no minimum attributes necessary to be a crystallite.

**Role:** Crystallites function in much the same way as normal psionists—in fact, in dwarven society the crystallites outnumber other types of psionists. In human society, crystallites tend to be branded even by other psionists as "freaks" or "frauds." (Some psionists say that crystallites can actually "talk" to their own personal crystal—this rumor has neither been confirmed nor denied by true crystallites.)

**Chosen disciplines:** Required—either psychokinetic or metapsionics. Recommended—the other of the two, or psychometabolic.

**Sciences/Devotions:** Required—none. Recommended—Empower, Magnify, Prolong, Psionic Inflation, Receptacle.

**Weapon proficiencies:** Any allowable to psionists.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Bonus—*none. Recommended—harness subconscious<sup>1</sup>, meditative focus<sup>2</sup>, and any others appropriate to the character's background (see also the list of dwarven "crafts" proficiencies in the *Complete Book of Dwarves* if the crystallite is dwarven.)

**Equipment:** The crystallite must possess an uncut pure quartz crystal of 200–500 gp value, which he uses to focus his psychic energy. It takes about one month of constant contact for a psionist to attune to a new crystal if his old one is damaged or lost. At the end of this time, there is a 70% chance (+2% per level of the psionist) that the attunement has been successful; otherwise, the process must be restarted with another crystal.

**Special benefits:** Crystallites are able to tap the psychic energies of their crystals and consequently can master more powerful psionic powers. They gain a +1 bonus on all Wisdom power checks and may attempt psionic sciences or devotions one level before the listed prerequisite level (if any). These bonuses apply only to psionic powers when the crystal is used as a focus.

**Special hindrances:** Crystallites are rarely able to focus their power as well as other psionists if they are without their crystals. When they do not have crystals to use as foci, *all* of their psionic sciences scores suffer from a -4 penalty, and all devotions from a -2 penalty.

**Races:** Crystallites are most commonly dwarves or gnomes, but may also be human. It is unknown whether halflings have the same natural ability to use focal crystals, and it is highly unlikely that elves can harness their potential, although there are rumors in psionic circles of elves using amber gemstones (fossilized tree resin) as foci.

## Dowser

**Description:** The dowser, or diviner, is a psionist devoted to searching for lost objects or answers to questions, much like the wizardly diviner. The principal tool of divination is the dowsing rod, a stick that gently tugs in the direction of the item searched for.

**Role:** The dowser can often be hired by individuals to hunt for a missing person or item, or locate hidden natural resources like gemstones, gold veins, or water. Most people are sufficiently ignorant of psionics to confuse dowsing with other forms of magical or clerical divination, so dowsers can usually operate safely in psionist-hostile areas.

**Chosen disciplines:** *Required*—clairsentience. *Recommended*—psychokinetic.

**Sciences/Devotions:** *Required*—Dowse (free; see below for details). *Recommended*—Know Direction, Know Location, Object Reading, Radial Navigation, Sensitivity to Psychic Impressions.

**Weapon proficiencies:** Any allowable to psionists.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Bonus*—water divining<sup>5</sup>. *Recommended*—cartography<sup>2</sup>, direction sense, orienteering<sup>2</sup>, navigation, tracking.

**Equipment:** The dowser must possess a divining rod, a Y-shaped stick made of willow. It must have grown into its shape naturally and fallen off the tree by itself; carved or cut rods have no inherent psychic potential. If the dowser loses his divining rod, a new one must be found and an attuning process, similar to that of the crystallite, must begin as the psionist becomes familiar with his new rods psychic structure.

**Special benefits:** When using his divining rod, the psionist gains a bonus psionic power unavailable to all other psionists. It is called Dowse, and it allows the psionist to set his rod to guide the way to a hidden item. To work at maximum effectiveness, the rod itself must have actually come into contact with the item (or something of similar structure) being sought. If the psionist is looking for a friend's stolen *long sword* +2 his rod must have touched the sword before; if a vein of gold is being sought, the rod must be touched to raw, unworked gold (unworked materials have different psychic structures to the same worked substances). If the item or something similar is not available, the power check has a -1 to -5 penalty; the DM decides the exact penalty based on the rarity and size of the item (bigger items are easier to locate).

The maximum range of the dowsing depends on the substances between the dowser and the object; a recommended maximum is 5-10 miles for normal terrain.

One round must be spent preparing to use Dowse, which costs 1 PSP to initiate and costs a further 1 PSP per turn employed. The rod gently tugs the psionist in the direction of the object. If he does not hold the rod with both hands, it ceases to function.

**Special hindrances:** Because the dowser's psionic skill lies mainly in the field of divination, he receives a -1 penalty on all psychometabolic or psychoportive power scores.

**Races:** Any race may be a dowser,

although human, half-elven, elven, and halfling characters seem to suit this kit better; dwarves and gnomes have less of an affinity with wood than surface-dwellers. Psionists from areas with little or no wood (deserts, the DARK SUN® world, etc.) may have developed alternatives, perhaps Y-shaped bones or dried cactus.

## Empath

**Description:** Empaths, also sometimes called "sympaths," have an incredible ability to sense emotions. Some leading sages in psionics believe that such sensitive empathy is a natural ability, perhaps a benign genetic throwback from a prehuman race or a new sense appearing among all peoples. Empaths are able to pick up the emotions of many creatures as easily as smelling a scent, but they are also far more vulnerable to psionic attack than other psionists because their minds are naturally more open. They must have a strong personality to be able to control their own emotions and mind, possessing a minimum Charisma of 14.

**Role:** Empaths make excellent advisors and negotiators; they can sense what the other being is feeling and cater to those demands. They can warn of possible danger and use their other considerable psionic talents to protect themselves by influencing the reactions of others. Clearly, empaths could easily abuse their advantage over others—and there is many a tale of once-good empaths betraying their lord and dominating him from the sidelines. The thought is chilling but all too possible.

**Chosen disciplines:** *Required*—telepathy. *Recommended*—clairsentience.

**Sciences/Devotions:** *Required*—Empathy (free; see below), ESP, Probe, Telepathic Projection. *Recommended*—Awe, Conceal Thoughts, Contact, Danger Sense, Domination, Ejection, Identity Penetration, Life Detection, Mass Domination, Mindlink, Phobia Amplification, Post-Hypnotic Suggestion, Psychic Impersonation, Send Thoughts, Sensitivity to Psychic Impressions, Switch Personality, Ultrablast.

**Weapon proficiencies:** Any allowed to psionists.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Bonus*—body language<sup>5</sup>. *Recommended*—animal training, animal handling, bribery<sup>1</sup>, etiquette, hypnosis<sup>4</sup>, information gathering<sup>3</sup>, languages (modern), reading lips.

**Equipment:** The empath has no specific equipment needs.

**Special benefits:** An empath can sense emotions without expending PSPs on a successful power check (Wis at +2). A failed check results in no information being obtained or misleading information (DM's choice). Contact is still needed to sense the emotions of other psionists. The empath also gains the ability to use Identity Penetration at Wisdom 0 and Life Detection at Intelligence 0, if these powers are known.

**Special hindrances:** Due to this openness of the empath's mind, he is more vulnerable to psionic interference and attack. His power score is Wis -2 to use Conceal Thoughts. He receives a -2 on saves vs. the psionic powers of Inflict Pain, Phobia Amplification, Domination, Mass Domination, Ultrablast, and Probe (the DM may rule that other psionic powers and some spells are included in this also).

Synaptic Static causes 1d3 hp damage per round, all psionic power rolls being at -2 while under its influence. Finally, intelligent psionic creatures may find the empath's naturally open mind an attractive temptation to infiltrate. Attacks from such creatures are at +2, and the empath receives a -2 penalty on saving throws against them.

**Races:** Any race of psionist may be an empath. All elven or half-elven empaths have their innate resistance to *charm* and sleep spells reduced by half.

## Manipulator

**Description:** The manipulator is an expert at the manipulation of physical objects—bending bars with the mind, softening metal, and shattering stone. He commonly uses his skills to steal money or other valuables, in the same way as a thief but often more effectively. If caught, however, he might face a double penalty—not just theft, but the use of forbidden powers. Manipulators deal with the manipulation of physical objects—a physically exhausting brand of psionics—and therefore must possess a minimum Constitution of 13.

**Role:** The manipulator may become a thief, using his powers to attempt things that normal thieves could never manage, or he might join a circus. Manipulators also make excellent adventurers, for their varied powers can be useful for either scouting or combat.

**Chosen disciplines:** *Required*—psychokinesis. *Recommended*—psychometabolic, psychoportive.

**Sciences/Devotions:** *Required*—Molecular Manipulation, Soften. *Recommended*—Ballistic Attack, Body Equilibrium, Catfall, Chameleon Power, Detonate, Dimensional Door, Disintegrate, Ectoplasmic Form, Heightened Senses, Immovability, Levitation, Metamorphosis, Molecular Rearrangement, Project Force, Reduction, Shadow Form, Telekinesis, Teleport.

**Weapon proficiencies:** Any weapons available to psionists. Easily concealable weapons are doubly useful if the manipulator intends to become a thief.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Bonus*—none. *Recommended*—appraising, camouflage<sup>5</sup>, disguise, fast-talking<sup>3</sup>, harness subconscious<sup>4</sup>, looting<sup>3</sup>, meditative focus<sup>4</sup>, sleight of hand<sup>5</sup>, tightrope walking, tumbling.

**Equipment:** Manipulators often carry with them rudimentary sets of thieves' tools, more for show than practical use—in some people's minds, being a thief is less

of a crime than being a psionist.

**Special benefits:** A manipulator may learn rogue nonweapon proficiencies as if he were a thief (i.e., at normal cost). At 4th level, he gains a 25% ability to open locks by psionic force. This chance goes up to 29% when the psionist has attained level six, 33% at level eight, and so on, gaining 4% per two levels. This reflects the psionist's natural expertise for moving things by mental force. An attempt to open a lock drains 2 PSPs; and the same skill can be used to tug at purse strings, etc. (The DM must adjudicate such attempts on a case-by-case basis).

Due to his great experience and aptitude with manipulative telekinesis, a manipulator receives a +2 bonus on both Molecular Manipulation and Soften psionic power scores.

**Special hindrances:** Because their particular brand of psionics is so kinetic-oriented, manipulators find it difficult to master the telepathic and clairsentience areas of psionics, which use a different part of the mind. They receive a -1 penalty on all power scores in both of these disciplines.

**Races:** Manipulators may be of any race, although humans, half-elves, and halflings seem to be the most appropriate.

### Psychic surgeon

**Description:** A psychic surgeon uses his natural psionic talent to aid other people. He might try to help others to unleash their own psychic potential, operate on the mentally disturbed, or use hypnosis to influence others. Most psychic surgeons are fascinated by the way minds and spirits work; many are as knowledgeable as sages in the fields of human behavior, faith, and the pursuit of wisdom. Psychic surgeons must be of good or neutral alignments; evil psionists are too selfish to want to help others. They must have a strong personality to be able to shape and mold the minds of others, and must therefore have a minimum Charisma of 13.

**Role:** Psychic surgeons may function as sages, providing their possibly illegal psionic services only to those who need or can pay for them. Others may act as healers, trying to help the possessed, sick, or wounded to recover to health. This may be done for religious, moral, or monetary reasons.

**Chosen disciplines:** *Required*—telepathic, metapsionic or clairsentience. *Recommended*—others of the three.

**Sciences/Devotions:** *Required*—Contact, Psychic Surgery (although both cannot be chosen at first, they should both be learned as soon as possible).

*Recommended*—Absorb Disease, Aura Alteration, Aura Sight, Biofeedback, Cell Adjustment, Complete Healing, Daydream, Dream Travel, Empathy, ESP, False Sensory Input, Incarnation Awareness, Lend Health, Mind Over Body, Mindlink, Mindwipe, Phobia Amplification, Post-

Hypnotic Suggestion, Probe, Psionic Sense, Psychic Impersonation, Split Personality, Suspend Animation, Switch Personality, Telepathy, Truthhear.

**Weapon proficiencies:** Any allowable to psionists.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Bonus*—hypnosis<sup>4</sup>. *Recommended*—body language<sup>5</sup>, diplomacy<sup>2</sup>, etiquette, harness subconscious<sup>4</sup>, healing herbalism, languages (modern), meditative focus<sup>4</sup>, pharmacy<sup>7</sup>.

**Equipment:** Psychic surgeons have no special equipment requirements.

**Special benefits:** The psychic surgeon is far more adept at Psychic Surgery than most other psionists. His power score is Wis - 2 instead of Wis - 5; and those he operates on have a +2% chance of possessing a wild talent. He also uses the nonweapon proficiency hypnosis at Charisma 0.

**Special hindrances:** None.

**Races:** Any race of psionist may become a psychic surgeon.

### Spiritualist

**Description:** The spiritualist is a psionist interested in death and the afterlife; these play a major part in his own life. Spiritualists often attempt to contact the spirits of deceased beings and have a strange fascination with the undead. They are also able to sense spirits and presences around them; some are able to control these spirits, too.

Spiritualists tend to be mysterious and ambiguous, preferring to dress in long, concealing robes rather than more modern styles, and speak in riddles, verse, or roundabout phrases.

**Role:** Spiritualists are often contacted for divination purposes. Their expertise in occult spirit summoning is widely known, and many common folk bolt their doors and bar their shutters at the mere passing of a spiritualist. Spiritualists are treated in much the same way as necromancers and witches; indeed, many spiritualists are of an evil alignment.

**Chosen disciplines:** *Required*—none. *Recommended*—clairsentience, psychokinetic, psychometabolic, telepathy.

**Sciences/Devotions:** *Required*—Spirit Sense. *Recommended*—Animate Shadow, Awe, Cause Decay, Cell Adjustment, Death Field, Double Pain, Ectoplasmic Form, False Sensory Input, Incarnation Awareness, Life Detection, Life Draining, Project Force, Psychic Clone, Psychic Drain, Psychic Messenger, Retrospection, Sensitivity to Psychic Impressions, Shadow-Form, Stasis Field, Suspend Animation, Synaptic Static, Wrench.

**Weapon proficiencies:** Same as psionist.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Bonus*—seance<sup>5</sup>. *Recommended*—ancient history, astrology, disguise, fortune telling<sup>3</sup>, healing, observation<sup>3</sup>, religion.

**Equipment:** Spiritualists must have mystic equipment like candles, tarot cards, and Ouija boards, and they often carry a

crystal ball (magical or otherwise) around with them for effect. As stated before, they also love flowing, mysterious robes; any armor they wear is kept hidden underneath these.

**Special benefits:** Because of their strong links with the dead, spiritualists gain a +2 bonus on all seance proficiency checks. Secondly, they have the ability to *speak with dead* once per week per five levels, as per the third-level priest spell.

**Special hindrances:** Common people tend to be very suspicious and nervous while around spiritualists. The few who are not terrified witless of "tanar'i worship" perceive occult divination as a dangerous waste of time. Thus, spiritualists receive a -5 reaction penalty when dealing with such superstitious people.

Even in civilized, enlightened areas, such as Waterdeep, Cormyr, or Sembia in the Realms, spiritualists are looked upon in the same light as necromancers, and such PCs may find themselves being chased around by peasants intent on burning them!

**Races:** Spiritualist characters may only be human or half-elves; other races are not suited for this rather sinister kit.

### New proficiencies

#### Body Language (psionist)

1 slot Ability: Wis -2

A character with the body language proficiency is able to interpret subtle changes in the behavior of another creature that give away its moods and attitudes. Sitting posture, vocal tone, gesticulations, facial movements, and expressions all contribute to this. This skill is effective only on beings of the same race as the user or a closely related race—e.g., a human could not read a dragon's body language. Only intelligent (Int 5+) beings can "read" like this, and the reader must be able to see the subject's body.

On a successful secret check, the reader can judge the general mood of the subject—happy, scared, depressed, etc. A failed check reveals another mood (DM's choice). If he concentrates, the reader can also tell whether the subject is lying or not. This requires a check at an additional -4 penalty, and the player must actually announce he is doing this; it is not automatic.

#### Camouflage (rogue, warrior, psionist)

1 slot Ability: Int 0

An individual with this skill is an expert at outdoor camouflage. Using natural substances (grass, mud, sticks, etc.), he can attempt to blend himself and his companions into the undergrowth. This takes about a turn per person to carry out and is effective only as long as the characters are still and silent. It can be useful for hiding from attackers or as an ambush weapon, granting up to a +4 bonus to surprise others. Buildings can also be

camouflaged, taking about two hours to hide a small cottage, although they require maintenance about every week to repair and replace the disguise.

On a successful check, the character has become effectively invisible to all those more than 30' away, so long as he remains still. Individuals passing closer than 30' are likely to spot something amiss unless the check was passed easily (five or more below the number required). Nobody can be fooled if within 10' of the hidden character. Note that camouflage works only for normal visual sightings; creatures with excellent senses of smell or who can detect heat radiation (infravision) are not affected. Camouflage is successful only in areas with moderate to heavy vegetation; the DM should use common sense.

### Pharmacy (priest, wizard)

1 slot Ability: Int 0

This skill allows the character to preserve medicinal herbs and chemicals and prepare medicines from both natural and inorganic ingredients. On a successful pharmacy check, the pharmacist can create a medicine to cure certain ailments (the DM should assign a +3 to -10 modifier, depending on the severity and rarity of the disease) using herbs and chemicals. A failed check either does nothing or has nonlethal side effects (DM choice), but a check of 20 results in poisoning!

### Seance (psionicist)

2 slots Ability: Cha -2

A character with the seance proficiency knows the methods used to contact spirits, deities, or extraplanar powers. Using ouija boards, pyromancy (divination by candles), tarot cards, etc., the PC can ask questions of these powers as if using a speak *with dead* spell (no body required, and no time limit given).

Before beginning the contact, the character must prepare himself for half an hour, making sure the area has no spirits around to confuse readings. Contact with the dead can be established if a successful check is made; a failed roll reveals nothing. If the roll was more than 10 under the number needed, a specific spirit can be contacted. A roll of four or more above the needed number (or a 20) reveals incor-

rect information—a malevolent spirit, etc.

The psionicist can ask questions of these spirits, but the spirits are not obliged to answer. If annoyed, the spirit can sever the link at will. The character may ask 1-3 questions, plus one for every slot above two spent on this proficiency. Contact may not be made more than once per day and is unadvisable more than twice a week. The dead hate being disturbed, and some may take revenge.

However, even the dead are not omniscient, and mistakes can be made, as noted in the Seance Results Table.

### Sleight of Hand (rogue, psionicist)

1 slot Ability: Dex -2

A rogue with the sleight of hand proficiency is highly trained in the art of legerdemain. She can, with a flick of her wrists, cause coins and other small objects to vanish up her sleeve, and she can perform many other hand-is-quicker-than-the-eye tricks. This manifests itself as a +30% bonus to the thief's pick-pockets chances, rolled whenever this skill is used (this roll for the purposes of performing sleight of hand only, *not* picking pockets). Characters without thief abilities who take this proficiency gain a sleight of hand skill (similar to thief skills) at a base chance of success of 40% (modified as for a thief for Dexterity, armor, and race). Easy tricks may be granted a bonus of up to +50%.

### Water Divining (psionicist)

1 slot Ability: Wis -2

A character with the water divining proficiency is able to pinpoint accurately the location of possible sources of water, using a Y-shaped willow stick. The stick is grasped by two of its arms, and the other arm pulls the diviner toward the largest source of water within a mile. If such a source does not exist, the diviner may still feel false vibrations, if the DM wishes.

The DM must make the proficiency check secretly; failure reveals nothing, and a roll of more than four above the needed number misleads the diviner.

The water found is not necessarily potable, and the one-mile range means that water divining is rarely effective on small islands, as the diviner is usually led toward the sea. This proficiency can be used only

on the character's home plane.

Notes: DMs running a DARK SUN campaign may decide to raise the cost of this proficiency to two slots or even forbid its use altogether. The water divining proficiency can find only water, not objects or people as the Dowse skill can. Ω



### Seance Results Table

1d100	Force contacted	Correctness: general question	Correctness: specific question
01-40	Spirit, Intelligence 11 -	70%	20%
41-60	Spirit, Intelligence 12-14	80%	30%
61-70	Spirit, Intelligence 15-17	90%	40%
71-75	Spirit, Intelligence 18 +	95%	50%
76-80	Outer-planar creature	98%	60%
81-99	Malevolent spirit	*	*
00	Deity **	100%	90%

\* Always gives plausible, incorrect answer.

\*\* Deities hate to be bothered, and will ignore or punish most of those who annoy them unless the gods are especially merciful or the questions directly concern them.

# ELEMENTAL DICE

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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 takes a long look at magic, magical items, and spell-casters in the AD&D® game. In addition, one question and the "Pantheon of the Month" that was cut for space reasons from "Sage Advice" in DRAGON issue #199 are also presented here.

**A character in my campaign has been forcibly sent to the Astral plane after a *dimension door* spell failed. Can the character survive on the plane? Can he escape from the plane? If so, how long will it take for him to get back?**

The Astral plane is not a toxic or inherently hostile environment, so getting sent there is not fatal in and of itself. On the other hand, there are plenty of astral monsters and other hazards, so your errant traveler still could be in trouble.

Whether the character can return to the Prime Material plane is up to the DM. Generally, travel between planes is not possible except by magical means. If the character has no such means at hand, the DM can construct an adventure for the character that allows for some chance of escape; perhaps the character can find a natural portal between the planes or strike a deal with a passing creature that has planar-traveling abilities. You can get more detailed information on the Astral plane in the PLANESCAPE™ *Adventures* boxed set, which will be released in April, 1994.

**What happens to a dual-classed character if the level of his original class is suddenly boosted so that it matches or exceeds the level in his current class? For example, a 6th-level fighter/7th-level mage would normally be free to use his warrior and wizard abilities without penalty because his mage level exceeds his fighter level. If the character reads a *manual of puissant skill at arms* and becomes a 7th-level fighter, what**

**happens? Does the character have to go back to choosing which class he will use for each adventure until he reaches 8th level as a mage?**

Judging from the text on page 45 of the *PH*, it's pretty clear to me that the character has to go back to choosing which class to use again, just as he would if he were to lose a level to an energy drain and become a 6th-level mage.

It would be entirely reasonable for the DM to rule that the character cannot benefit from the manual at all. The text on page 45 says that a dual-classed character never can gain experience in a class once it has been abandoned in favor of another class. The only exception to this is that a character can replace levels that are lost somehow.

Considering the rarity and power of magical books, I don't think the campaign would suffer if the manual worked; the character is not actually devoting any time or energy to studying the old class—he's just the recipient of a big power dump. The DM, however, would not be violating the spirit of the rules by not allowing it; there's no compelling reason to automatically assume the character can retain or utilize what the book grants.

**Can characters carrying around a *mirror of retention* use it to "film" their adventures? Can the mirror be used to capture short "takes" as long as the total recording time doesn't exceed the mirror's capacity of 24 hours? Can the mirror be used to capture sunlight to provide illumination and confound undead? Can the mirror be used to copy maps or scrolls?**

A *mirror of retention* (from the *Tome of Magic*, page 140) must be hung in a room no larger than 50' square and commanded before it will function. If the *mirror* is removed from the wall, it stops recording. It can be played back anywhere, however. I suppose a party could carry a *mirror of retention* from place to place in a dungeon or large building, and use it to take snapshots, but remember that it doesn't work unless it is hung in a room that does not exceed the size limit. The party could hang it on a wall and use it to record an encounter in a chamber, but if the PCs are carrying the *mirror* during an encounter it records nothing.

A *mirror of retention* can record sunlight streaming into a room, but the image played back on the *mirror* is just that, an image. The recorded sunlight has no effect on undead and the light the mirror sheds during playback is very faint, no brighter than a television screen in a dark room. The playback could be used as a weak

light source in a pinch, but a character couldn't see very much with it.

If the *mirror* is properly hung and operated, it could record a map or other piece of mundane writing—provided the room where the *mirror* is hung has sufficient light for reading at the time of recording. The *mirror* also could record a superficial image of a magical scroll, but such images are useless; they cannot be used to cast any spells inscribed on the scroll or to add the spells to a spell book; it takes the original scroll—in its entirety—to produce its magical effects. Note that if the image in the *mirror* were usable, then the writing on the scroll would fade as soon as it was recorded. Subsequently, if the image is read or copied from the *mirror* it fades away, too. A scroll can be used only once, and player characters cannot get around this limitation easily, and certainly not through a *mirror of retention*.

**What happens when a *mirror image* spell is cast in very close quarters; that is, when a six-foot radius is not available for the extra images to shift around in? Will a *fireball*, *dragon breath*, or other area effect dispel a *mirror image*?**

Nothing special happens when the spell is cast in close quarters. A *mirror image* spell not only creates multiple images, but considerable distortion as well. In this case, the distortion is probably just a little stronger than normal. Provided the caster is free to move, attacks against the caster still have a chance to be misdirected. On the other hand, if the caster has his head on a chopping block, a *mirror image* spell isn't going to make the headsman miss. Barring this kind of situation—one where it is clear to the DM that the attacker knows exactly where the caster is—a *mirror image* works normally.

*Mirror images* are dispelled only by melee or missile attacks, or by a *dispel magic* effect. Other kinds of magical effects do nothing to a *mirror image*. Note that an *anti-magic* shell would cause every *mirror image* in its area of effect to wink out, but only for as long as the images remain within the area of effect.

**Exactly how many spells does a dragon know at each age level? Can they change their spells each day like a wizard or a priest can? Can a dragon acquire new spells like a wizard can?**

The table included with each dragon's description gives the number of spells a dragon can know. This number varies with the type of dragon and its age category. A dragon's repertoire of spells is fixed and cannot be changed or expanded.

Gold dragons are the sole exception to this in the core AD&D game rules—they actually keep spell books. The DM is free to decide how gold dragons go about getting new spells, but I suggest you use the normal spell acquisition and research rules for wizards. The *Council of Wyrms* boxed set, which will be released in June, 1994 will contain lots of new material on dragons, including dragon spell-casters.

**What happens when a character wears two items that bestow magic resistance, say an amulet of magic resistance and a robe of the archmagi?**

This is up to the DM, but I strongly recommend that only the most powerful item functions. In other words, if the character in your example had an *amulet of magic resistance*, 20% along with the *robe of the archmagi*, which grants 5% magic resistance, the character still would have only a 20% magic resistance (from the ring). I recommend that you apply this rule even for naturally magic resistant creatures such as drow or tanar’ri. Magic resistance in the AD&D 2nd Edition game is a powerful ability, and once the DM lets it get out of hand, your game balance probably will go right out the window.

If you’re playing the AD&D 1st Edition game, where magic resistance is adjusted according to the level of the caster and a magic-resistant creature can’t necessarily walk around causing magical effects to collapse, you can afford to be a little more lenient. Even then, be careful. High-level games give you a little more breathing room; at low level, magic resistance in the original game is even more formidable that it is in the current game. If you decide to make magic resistance cumulative in your original AD&D campaign, you still should not allow magic resistance to accumulate if it comes from similar sources. A drow wearing a *robe of the archmagi* could add the 5% to her natural magic resistance, and wizard could add the values of a *robe of the archmagi* and an *amulet of magic resistance*. No character, however should be able to wear two *amulets of magic resistance* and add their effects together, only the most powerful *amulet* should function.

**How is the wizard’s chance to hit an opponent determined when he casts a fireball or a lightning bolt? What about things like dragon breath?**

Unless the spells description says otherwise, all area effects hit automatically. The spell-caster decides where the effect will originate (within the limits of the spell) and the DM decides who or what is within the area of effect. Other area effects, such as dragon breath, work exactly the same way. In the case of dragon breath, the dragon “aims” the breath weapon as it wishes and anything caught in it must save vs. the effect. There are several other

forms of attack that don’t require attack rolls, such as gaze weapons and mental attacks. Note that while such attacks always “hit” they don’t always work; most of these attacks allow a saving throw that negates or reduces the effect.

**How does a priest or cleric character create holy water?**

According to *The Complete Priests Handbook*, three priests (or clerics) of the same faith of at least 2nd level must get together in a temple dedicated to their deity and pray for a full hour. At the end of the hour, they must cast *create water*, *protection from evil*, and *purify food and drink*. This process creates a half gallon of holy water (16 four-ounce vials). Any extra water from the *create water* spell must be channeled off before the ritual is complete, or the DM can assume that the extra water simply disappears during the ritual. For every two priests added to the group, an additional half gallon of holy water can be created, up to a maximum of four gallons of holy water at one time. I strongly suggest that you require holy water to be held in specially *blessed* vials (cost 2-5 gp each). You might also require an expensive font and basin (value 100-10,000 gp, depending on capacity) to hold the holy water while it’s being created and dispensed into vials. If the DM wants more control over who creates holy water and when, it wouldn’t be unreasonable to add extra spells to the ritual. I’d suggest *chant*, (to be maintained the whole time) *bless*, *prayer* and possibly *combine*. The required vials can be *blessed* in a similar ritual, which is required to make the *blessing* permanent.

**Does a character lose a point of Constitution if he dies while wearing a ring of regeneration? Does the “Hovering on Death’s Door” optional rule affect this situation?**

This is entirely up to the DM. I suggest that regeneration not reduce Constitution or require a resurrection-survival roll. A regenerating creature never truly dies, though it can be incapacitated by a grievous injury. Once the character drops to zero or fewer hit points, however, the character is unconscious or incapacitated even if the “Hovering on Deaths Door” rule is in use. Note that a character hovering on deaths door does not actually die until he reaches - 10 hit points; if the DM has decided that regenerating back from death would reduce the character’s Constitution score, the point is not lost unless death actually occurs.

**Do clerics and priests automatically know how to pray for all their spells, or do they have to learn how to pray for certain spells?**

Any priest, including clerics and druids, knows how to pray for spells—this inherent knowledge is part of what makes the character a priest. The priest might have

to undergo training as she advances in levels, but this is an optional rule (see *DMG*, page 49) and should apply to all classes if a campaign uses it. Note that priests can invent or acquire entirely new spells in much the same way as wizards can. In this case, the priest must spend time and money discovering and learning the new prayers.

**How long do the various prismatic wall effects produced by a wand of conjuration last? How can these walls be dispelled? How long does the curtain of blackness effect last?**

The *prismatic wall* lasts six turns, just as though created by a 6th-level caster. These walls can be negated only by the appropriate counter spell, see the *prismatic wall* description in the *PH*, pages 191-192. I suggest you give the *curtain of blackness* a duration of six turns.

**What kind of barriers can stop a wall of fire spell? For example, if a ring-shaped wall is cast next to a tower, will the ring pass through the tower? If not, will the whole spell collapse?**

Unless the DM wants to encourage some truly egregious abuse of this spell, I suggest that any solid barrier stops a *wall of fire* or similar spell. In this case, unless the tower wall as an opening at least 20’ tall to admit the *wall of fire*, the effect stops when it encounters the tower. I don’t think it’s reasonable to have the whole spell collapse, but the DM might force to spell-caster to reduce the radius until the *wall of fire* fits in the space available, or to use the sheet version of the spell arranged in a ring; this version has a total area that is less than one tenth of the ring’s area. Or, the DM can just rule that there is a gap in the ring where it intersects the tower.

**Can a flaming sphere be cast in the air above a creature? Since the sphere is soft and spongy, how fast would it fall? If the sphere encounters a magic-resistant creature, what happens if the creature makes its magic-resistance roll? How big an area does the sphere illuminate?**

There’s nothing in the spell description that leads me to believe that a *flaming sphere* has to be cast on the ground. If cast in the air, it would fall straight down at its normal movement rate (30’ a round) until it strikes the ground; if the *sphere’s* duration hasn’t expired before it hits the ground, it begins rolling in the direction the caster was pointing at the time of casting.

Treat the *sphere* as an in-place effect when adjudicating magic resistance. That is, the *sphere* collapses if the magic-resistance roll succeeds. Note that there are several in-place spells that actually are mobile, including *protection from evil*, which moves with the recipient, and some of the *wall* spells, which can be pushed

over or dropped on creatures.

The DM has to decide theatrical details such as how much light a *flaming sphere* sheds. The impression I get from the description is that the ball looks a lot like a big, glowing coal. It shows up pretty well in the dark—and really screws up infravision—but it doesn't shed much light at all, maybe enough to show vague detail within about six inches of the sphere.

In WGR5 *Iuz the Evil*, the words "celbit" and "jebli" are applied to tribes of orcs in the land of Iuz, but didn't an earlier WORLD OF GREYHAWK® products use these names in a different manner?

Actually, there are no authoritative definitions for either of these names in print anywhere (at least none I know about). Nevertheless, these words are Flan names for two humanoid races: "Celbit" is the Flan word for kobold and "jebli" is the Flan word for goblin. Here is a more complete list of Flan names, courtesy of reader Gene Weigel of Albany, N.Y.:

Orc: Euroz  
Goblin: Jebli  
Ogre: Eiger  
Gnoll: Kell  
Kobold: Celbit  
Hobgoblin: High Jebli  
Elf: Olve

**Dwarf:** Dwur  
**Halfling:** Hobniz  
**Gnome:** Noniz

Gene gleaned these names from the original *WORLD OF GREYHAWK* boxed set (TSR product #1015).

#### Pantheons of the Month

These are unofficial suggestions for using the optional spheres of priest spells from the *Tome of Magic* with the deities of the Celtic and the Chinese pantheons in *Legends & Lore*:

#### Celtic pantheon

**Lugh:** Major: War, Travelers; Minor: None.  
**Oghma:** Major: Wards; Minor: Time, Thought.  
**Goibhniu:** Major: Time; Minor: Wards.  
**Daghdha:** Major: Time; Minor: Thought, Wards.  
**Manannan mac Lir:** Major: Time; Minor: Travelers.  
**Arawn:** Major: Time; Minor: Chaos.  
**Morrigan:** Major: War; Minor: Chaos.  
**Diancecht:** Major: Wards; Minor: Travelers.  
**Math Mathonwy:** Major: Thought; Minor: Time.  
**Belenus:** Major: Time; Minor: Travelers.  
**Brigantia:** Major: Time; Minor: Wards.

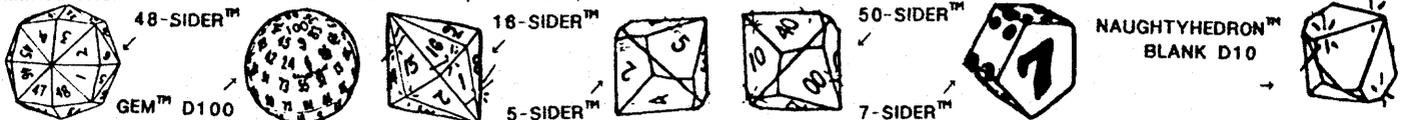
#### Chinese pantheon

**Shang-ti:** Major: Law, Thought; Minor: War, Wards.  
**Kuan-ti:** Major: War, Wards; Minor: Time, Thought.  
**Yen-Wang-Yeh:** Major: Law; Minor: Time, Wards.  
**Fu Hsing:** Major: Chaos; Minor: Time, Travelers.  
**Chung Kuel:** Major: Numbers; Minor: Thought, Time.  
**Liu:** Major: Time; Minor: Wards.  
**Lu Hsing:** Major: Law; Minor: Wards.  
**Shou Hsing:** Major: Time; Minor: Chaos.  
**Kuan Yin:** Major: Wards; Minor: Travelers.  
**Chih-Nii:** Major: Numbers; Minor: Thought.  
**Lei Kung:** Major: Law; Minor: War.  
**Sung Chiang:** Major: Time; Minor: Wards.  
**Lao Tzu:** Major: Thought; Minor: None.  
**K'ung Fu-tzu:** Major: Law; Minor: None.  
**The Dragon Kings:** These deities grant no spells.  
**Ch'eng Huang:** These local deities might grant minor access to any one of the following spheres: Time, Travelers, or Wards.

Ω

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On the borderland between terror and madness, dreams and death, there is a reality beyond the senses. Dreams and illusion can shape matter. Horror can twist bodies and bring insanity into physical reality. This is the world of Kult.

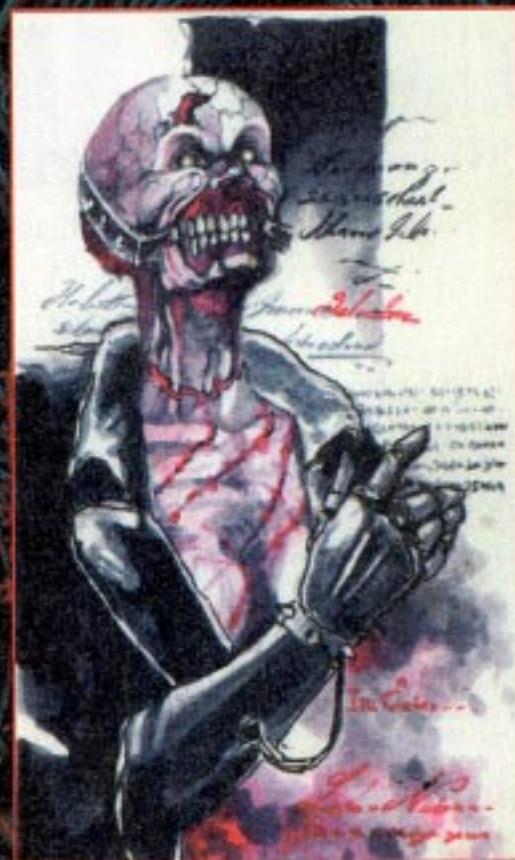
Not long ago there was a firm order of nature. But the Demiurge has abandoned his children and disappeared out into the darkness. In his absence his servants—the Archons and their minions—struggle to maintain mankind's imprisonment. But there are those who would release us into certain madness. In the cities, where all truths are equal, they forget the old boundaries between evil and good.

**Kult** is a role-playing game set in the world of large cities at the end of the 20th century. It is a world where human wickedness is mingled with terrors from other parts of reality.

But in the game, human darkness is not all that threatens. The evil that humans do corrodes the boundaries of

reality and admits creatures from the other side. Our dreams assume physical form and pursue us into the daylight.

The characters of the game can be seekers of truth, perhaps motivated by a desire to regain a forgotten past, or to have revenge, or by simple curiosity. They aren't pure-hearted crusaders against evil. Rather, we should think of



A Nepharite; they are the torturers. Sometimes their unhealing wounds are held closed with clamps or wire. They dress in garments of steel, plastic or leather.

them as lost souls who need to slay their own demons in order to have peace. Terrors from childhood rise up and assume physical forms. Horror is created inside us. In this game, the heroes are forced to go into darkness, perhaps into death—only to discover that there is no end. For the characters of Kult, Death is only a beginning.

Look for *Fallen Angels*, a supplement set in New York City, Coming in November!



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# MINION MATTERS

Choreographing your campaign's thugs

by Sean Patrick Fannon

Artwork by David Day

*"At last, heroes, I have you within my grasp," the evil mastermind cackled madly as the adventurers looked around wildly for the exits that had just disappeared.*

*"You dared enter my domain, my very lair! Now know the folly of opposing me—my minions will destroy you!" With that, a large opening appeared in the wall opposite the heroes, and out from it spewed dozens of the evil leaders servants, armed to the teeth and ready to do battle!*

Many a game master (GM) has faced the challenge of running just such a fight scene. The battle with untold numbers of bad guys, each one far less capable than the average player character (PC), is a staple of almost every genre of heroic adventure games. From the small army of orcs or goblins in fantasy to the imperial soldiers of the space opera, the situation is the same. What these faceless hordes lack in individual skill they make up for in sheer numbers.

A GM must find ways to set up and run such battles without turning his entire

adventure session into little more than a hack-and-slash miniatures battle.

## Setting up

Running such situations *does* work best when miniatures are used (or at least some sort of physical representation of the principals involved). You can use miniatures for the minions that are easily distinguishable from the PCs' figures. Some easy solutions are to use painted miniatures for PCs and unpainted ones for the bad guys. If you can obtain plastic miniatures for your minions, you can reserve the metal



figures for PCs and major villains or other important nonplayer characters (NPCs). Some GMs use cardboard stand-up figures to represent the minions while other figures are used for the central characters. For those without miniatures, plastic pieces from other games, especially common board games, can be used in various ways. Special playing pieces can be used for the PCs while dice, cardboard chits, or even chess pieces can be used for the minions.

Once you have decided upon representations, you have the difficulty of tracking what exactly is happening to whom. Most GMs allow the players to track the damage their own characters suffer in the course of a battle, while the GM tracks what happens to the NPCs. When dealing with minions, however, it can be a monumental task to keep track of each goblin or stormtrooper. There are two ways to deal with this.

The first method is to assign a small portion of the opposing forces to each of your players for purposes of tabulating damage and conditions. For example, if you have five players facing off with twenty goblins, you can ask each player to track the damage done to four of the goblins (preferably, the ones the player's character is closest to or interacting with). This has the value of saving you some bookkeeping hassles so you can concentrate on the goblins' strategy and role-playing possibilities during the battle (more on this later).

Unfortunately, this method also takes away a lot of the excitement for some players. Placing too many of the mechanics of a battle in front of the players can put them in "war gamer" mode, where all the players worry about is numbers, not role-playing their PCs.

I recommend minion markers. Take blank index cards and cut them into small squares. You also can raid one of those old war games you never play any more and use the chits. In either case, take enough markers for all your minions, and just write numbers on them. I have discovered that it works best to write numbers, like 1-10, a few times over.

Sometimes you will use two or more "sets" of minions, such as a group of orcs, another group of goblins, and maybe a third group of hobgoblins. Once you've created this pile of markers, you'll want to place them in some sort of container (such as a plastic bag or old film canister). Having multiple copies of the numbers you'll most use will make it easier to find those numbers when you're digging through your minion-marker pile.

These little markers are to be placed next to the figures you are using for the masses of bad guys you've just unleashed on your hapless players. On a sheet of paper, you should have listed the basic combat stats for each type of minion you are using. Establish a pattern for listing this information and stick to it—this will make your life easy if you use the same

system consistently, allowing you to quickly reference the information you need.

Now write down the numbers of the minions involved. If you're using twenty hired guns in a Western scenario, all with the same basic statistics, write down 1-20. Next to each number, write down how much damage that minion can take. When you place representations on the board of these minions, place a "minion marker" next to each one (in this case, 1-20). Each minion on the board now has a corresponding number on your statistics sheet. Whenever someone attacks that particular minion, you can easily track how much damage he has taken and what condition he's in. For simplicity, the numbered chits can be used to represent the minions themselves.

### Running the battle

Whenever you move one of the minions, you should move the numbered chit too. That way, even if a PC changes location during a battle and fights a new minion, you still know what condition each individual is in.

Using this simple system, you can maintain the excitement of a battle with your PCs ("When is this guy going to drop?") and keep life simple for yourself. By simplifying the mechanics of running such battles, you can devote more energy to making the minions act with personalities,

attitudes, courage, cowardice, and goals of their own. You might decide that Minion #3 is a real bully who will take advantage of a fallen foe, while Minion #7 is a coward at heart who will run as soon as he takes damage. You could decide Minion #13 turns out to be a real leader, and in the middle of a rout, she rallies some of the troops to her. Giving the minions numbers allows you to individualize in more ways than just the amount of damage they take; it allows you to individualize the characters to any degree you wish.

Another trick is to allow minor combat differences between the minions. For example, about half of the enemy soldiers inside the bunker that the heroes are storming will have grenades. You can decide that all even-numbered minions have them. To get slightly more complex, you could say all even-numbered have grenades, while all numbers divisible by three are sergeants and therefore have keys to all the security doors in the complex. Every fifth minion is an officer and has some top-secret papers.

However you run your villainous minions, remember you're running a role-playing game and try not to bog down in the numbers too much. Your players will enjoy the faster pace and sense of excitement over the drudgery of a mechanics-heavy battle. They'll have more fun and so will you. Ω

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# NOVEL

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## A brief history of the TSR Book Dep't.

by Will Larson and Eric Severson

### Beginnings

Like most book publishers' rise to success, TSR's was a process of beginning, getting established, and gaining maturity—a process that took it from next-to-nowhere to the best-seller list of the New York Times in just ten years.

TSR's first efforts at book production were both humble and filled with immediate success. Best known for its DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® role-playing game system, TSR first delved into the non-gaming market with a hybrid of both game and book products in 1982. From the mind of a talented TSR advertising manager with some time on her hands (Rose Estes) sprang the first ENDLESS QUEST® (EQ) books.

Much to everyone's surprise, sales of the EQ books took off like a rocket, according to James Ward, TSR veteran and former head of the department. "For a while there, the bookstores couldn't get enough of them," said Ward.

The first six EQ books sold millions of copies, and subsequent print runs were in the hundred-thousands. Put simply, the EQ books were extremely popular. "We got more mail about them than about the D&D® game," says Ward.

Eventually, TSR management recognized that the EQ-book phenomenon was likely to prove a fad. There also was growing competition in the field. The company embarked on a program of diversification, to become a leader of not only role-playing games but best-selling books as well.

An "education department" was formed to produce books that would find their market by reaching reluctant young readers. In 1982 and 1983, Ward, Estes, and editor Jean Black developed classroom modules for teachers, but "when we started trying to sell them, we discovered it was a whole new world," said Ward, "a different kind of distribution system and a different kind of sales system from what we were used to," and management felt the market just wasn't strong enough to continue those pursuits. Interestingly enough, the department continued to be known as the education department for the first several years of its existence, even though its only products were consumer books.

Perhaps the most important milestone in TSR's march toward becoming a leading book publisher was signing Random House on as TSR's major distributor in 1982, and, as a result, the books received wide distribution.

### Getting established

A large part of becoming established as a book publisher involves diversification, which TSR did with great enthusiasm in the mid-1980s.

EQ print runs began to shrink in 1983, and other games were mined for EQ titles. Rose Estes wrote TSR's first non-D&D book, *Rose of Washington Square*, and Jean Black wrote *Villains of Voltturnus*, based on the STAR FRONTIERS® game.

FANTASY FOREST™ Books (D&D pick-a-path books aimed at younger readers) were launched in 1983. Ten of these books were published through 1984, including one written by three editors in a little less than a week.

Competition between publishers of interactive fiction (eventually there were at least nine) began to heat up as more companies jumped on the gamebook bandwagon. TSR's print runs continued to shrink, and the need to diversify became increasingly clear in order to survive amid the competition.

The romance field was looked at briefly for interactive fiction because of impressive sales of Harlequin and Silhouette romances, prompting TSR to produce four

HEARTQUEST interactive romances.

The search for authors was difficult. They were either game players with little writing experience or writers with little game-playing experience. An exception was Morris Simon (a.k.a. Madeline Simon), who wrote two HEARTQUEST books and went on to write many EQ books and their successors, the SUPER ENDLESS QUEST and AD&D™ Adventure Gamebooks.

Simon was both a talented writer with a grasp of the nature of games and a professor of cultural anthropology, which lent his stories a human emphasis. He quickly became the department's prize author.

At about this time, Harold Johnson distributed a huge resource tome for the new DRAGONLANCE® world. It was the most detailed, highly imaginative world that TSR had ever created, with great heroes, nasty villains, a fully developed world, and a wealth of material for game and book ideas. From this immediately sprang the DRAGONLANCE role-playing game rulebooks and modules.

Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman, who, backed by several game designers and editors, had written and played the game, sold management on an idea: novels based



on the DRAGONLANCE game. This was a first, since, up to now, all book products had been gamebooks. It was a tough sell to management, but a successful one.

In late 1983, these efforts yielded *Dragons of Autumn Twilight*, the first book in the Chronicles Trilogy. Interestingly, the authors spent their own time preparing and binding copies to be sent out for review, also a first for TSR.

Sales of *Dragons of Autumn Twilight* were not spectacular at first, but then favorable reviews began appearing, and news spread by word of mouth. By spring 1985, sales had taken off and TSR had another hit.

Throughout 1985, TSR continued to publish EQ books, and, though the books were still profitable, the print runs continued to drop. The company's main thrust still was diversification, especially in the science fiction field. ONE-ON-ONE® books, gamebooks with separate books for each of two players, became popular for a time; Weis and Hickman completed the DRAGONLANCE Chronicles Trilogy; and a D&D cartoon show was launched (followed by six EQ books in 1985 and 1986).

In anticipation of the success of a Steven Spielberg-produced AMAZING® Stories TV show, TSR came out with a variety of support products. Isaac Asimov and Martin H. Greenberg selected stories from back issues for the book *Sixty Years of the Best Science Fiction*, and TSR produced AMAZING Stories pick-a-path books also.

Gamebooks were far from dead, however. The company also published CRIMSON CRYSTAL™ books. The unique part about these was that clues were hidden in the red-and-blue line artwork. Red acetate screens came with the books and filtered out the red, revealing the clues. Only two of these books were published.

*The Art of the D&D Game, Game Buyer's Price Guide*, and the first of two Gord books by Gary Gygax were also published.

Despite these various attempts, nothing other than DRAGONLANCE books really set the world on fire. TSR then asked Weis and Hickman to write *Time of the Twins*, the first book in the Legends Trilogy.

EQ books eventually were replaced with SUPER EQ books (and later became AD&D Adventure Gamebooks). Editor Will Larson, with Harold Johnson's help, was responsible for inventing a working game system for the line. He condensed Harold's thirty single-spaced pages of rules down to a character-card insert and six pages of rules.

The DRAGONLANCE Legends Trilogy was concluded in 1986 and consumed by an eager public.

In 1987, TSR published three AMAZING™ Science-Fiction Anthologies, edited by Martin Greenberg.

The EQ line was suspended in 1987 after thirty-six titles. During their production, these and other gamebooks had provided ample training ground for several of to-

day's established novel writers, including Douglas Niles, Mary Kirchoff, James M. Ward, Jeff Grubb, Kate Novak, Roger E. Moore, Margaret Weis, and Tracy Hickman. However, this was not the end of TSR's interactive fiction. TSR copublished (with Steve Jackson Games) six CAR WARS\* books and began a licensing agreement with Marvel Comics, which yielded eight gamebooks through 1988.

The third and fourth GREYHAWK novels (those following Gygax's two Gord books) were written by Rose Estes, beginning a brief series by her.

TSR elaborated on the interactive fiction idea with oversized, intricate gamebooks called CATACOMBS® books. These contained hundreds of short entries and elaborate art clues.

The DRAGONLANCE book *Leaves From the Inn of the Last Home*, full of recipes, runes, essays, songs, proverbs, and artifacts, was published in 1987. It was reprinted this year due to popular demand. Two other support products produced were *Art of the DRAGONLANCE Saga* and the *Atlas of the DRAGONLANCE World*.

A milestone of 1987 came when TSR bought Ed Greenwood's magnum opus campaign, the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. Coincidentally, Douglas Niles had been working with staff members of TSR's European counterpart, TSR Ltd., on a collaborative book project, which was transferred to the FORGOTTEN REALMS world as the novel *Darkwalker on Moonshae*, Book One in the Moonshae Trilogy and the first of many novels to appear in that setting.

Also in 1987, after eleven books, the ONE-ON-ONE line was concluded.

Four WINDWALKER Books, independent fantasy novels not set in TSR's game worlds, were produced in 1987. These were the antecedents of what later became the TSR® Books line. One of these books, *Bimbos of the Death Sun*, by Sharyn McCrumb, went on to win the Edgar Allen Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America.

TSR continued to diversify through 1987. In that year, it delved into contemporary military gamebooks with four SNIPER! books; Martin H. Greenberg edited a single-volume anthology of horror stories entitled *Cinemonsters*, filled with short stories that had become well-known horror movies; four LAZER TAG\* books were produced in conjunction with light-beam-emitting toy guns and targets; and artist Larry Elmore penned *SNARFQUEST: The Book*, a compendium of a comic strip that first appeared in DRAGON® Magazine.

## Maturity

By 1988, TSR had entered a stage of maturity as a publishing house. It was the first year that novels outnumbered gamebooks. The SNIPER! books were phased out. The contract for Marvel gamebooks ended.

As a part of its maturing, TSR reintro-

duced the science-fiction hero Buck Rogers, with the oversized hardcover anthology *BUCK ROGERS®: The First 60 Years*, edited by TSR's president, Lorraine Williams, and later, two series of novels.

Another milestone in 1988 was R. A. Salvatore's first novel, *The Crystal Shard*, Book One in the Icewind Dale Trilogy. With that book, Salvatore began his career with TSR. The third book in the series, *The Halfling's Gem*, found a place on the *New York Times* Best-seller list, where Salvatore's subsequent titles were to appear time and time again.

Calendars, atlases, art books and more continued to be published by TSR, but the novel now was the vanguard of TSR's book efforts.

While DRAGONLANCE books continued to be a strong part of TSR's list, the FORGOTTEN REALMS novels really took on prominence in 1990, with five series in progress at the same time.

In 1992, TSR's latest hit was its debut hardcover novel, *The Legacy*, by R. A. Salvatore. This opened the door for subsequent hardcovers in the FORGOTTEN REALMS, DRAGONLANCE, and RAVENLOFT® settings.

Early successes, along with the dedication of a fine editorial staff and direction of former managing editor Mary Kirchoff, helped propel TSR on a course of numerous series set in many worlds. TSR's place among publishers of fantasy novels (the vast majority of which reside in New York City) was secure.

## The future

In at least one respect, 1994 will bring TSR's book interests full circle, with the reintroduction of six new ENDLESS QUEST books, plus a fantastic lineup of novels and anthologies (to be outlined in upcoming installments of this column).

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The writers wish to thank James Ward for valuable insights into the early history of the department.

Ω

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# Role-playing reviews



### Role-playing games' ratings

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

# First-class fantasy adventures

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In my years in the game business, I've written just about everything from rule-books to ad copy; some good, some okay, some I intend to buy back as soon as I win the Iowa Lottery. By far, the hardest assignments have been adventures, and I suspect most designers would agree. I'm not talking about "adventure seeds," those dinky page-or-less plot summaries that competent designers can churn out in their sleep. Nor am I referring to the recycled-since-the-dawn-of-time generic scenarios that boil down to Find the Magical Gizmo or Solve the Cheesy Puzzle. I'm talking about intelligently plotted, fully developed adventures as engrossing as good fiction stories.

What makes role-playing adventures so hard to write? A designer has to deal with the traditional elements of fiction, like characterization, subtext, and setting, but that's only for starters. She also has to anticipate a myriad of player-character actions and consider how those actions will affect the plot. She has to lay out a number of paths to the climax and guess which ones the PCs are most likely to follow. All the while, she must maintain the illusion that the players are shaping the story, not her. No wonder good adventures are as scarce as love ballads on *Metallica* albums.

In quest of the perfect role-playing experience, I rounded up a stack of about 30 fantasy adventures, weeded out the losers and the snoozers, then spent a good chunk of the summer leading my regular playtesters through the best dozen. A vote at the end of each session determined if a particular adventure would be abandoned or pursued to the end. A few were ditched after a single afternoon. Some started out promising, then succumbed to saggy plots or anti-climatic climaxes. Here are the survivors.

## **DRAGON MOUNTAIN™ set ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game supplement**

Three 64-page books, six 32" × 21" map sheets, eight monster sheets (in *Monstrous Compendium* format), 12 reference cards, 14 player-handout sheets, cardstock counter sheet, 24 plastic bases, boxed

TSR, Inc. \$30  
Design: Paul Arden Lidberg and Colin McComb  
Editing and additional design: Thomas M. Reid

*Illustrations:* Tony DiTerlizzi, Larry Elmore, and Jeff Easley  
*Cover:* Paul Jaquays

Dungeon-crawlers will think they've died and gone to heaven when they visit DRAGON MOUNTAIN, a city-sized labyrinth that revitalizes the AD&D® game's hoariest conventions. It's a funhouse of foul-tempered monsters and convoluted traps, designed for characters with the stamina of Greek gods and an appetite for abuse. Best of all, it boasts one of the nastiest, sneakiest surprises I've ever seen in a fantasy adventure. I won't spill the beans, but I'll give you a hint: The surprise involves one of the game's most underused and underappreciated adversaries—hundreds of them, in fact.

A project this ambitious deserves a lavish package, and the designers deliver in spades. The box includes six poster-sized maps, which may be a record for an RPG adventure. Half are tactical displays of village and battlefield settings, the rest detail the three-level sprawl of the mountain's interior. Six cardstock mini-maps show self-contained sections of the mountain that can be attached to the poster maps at various locations or, for DMs who like their dungeons lean and mean, simply set aside. The new *Monstrous Compendium* pages showcase several gruesome opponents, such as the gnasher (a wolverine throat-cutter with a fondness for red meat) and the brain spider (who liquifies nervous systems then slurps them like soda pop). The documents, diagrams, and other player handouts are fun, but the execution is so-so—is the handwriting on the letters *suggested* to look the same?

Paul Lidberg and Colin McComb opt for clean, no-frill prose, making it easy for the DM to track the serpentine plot. Every encounter makes sense, quite an accomplishment for a dungeon this size. I wish the editor had pruned more of the flab from the staging notes: "The DM may be challenged by this section, as the players undoubtedly will think of a number of different ways to defeat Lord Clavius." Well, *duhh* . . .

Book One, written by Lidberg, outlines the search for a map to Dragon Mountain, a plane-shifting construct that appears in a random location every couple of decades, and a magical item that will improve the party's chance of survival once they get inside. The hunt takes the PCs to a variety of interesting sites, such as crypt of dancing wights and a snake-infested swamp, for an engaging mix of investigative and

combat encounters. The PCs acquire key information in imaginative ways: A tattoo on a barmaid's thigh turns out to be a crucial section of the map; an enchanted basilisk nudges the party in the right direction with a hypnotic suggestion. A cast of eccentric NPCs makes for lively role-playing. Lidberg brings his guest stars to life with quirky behavior (a tone-deaf minstrel insists on performing screechy recitals) and sharp dialogue. (A dim-witted bandit warns: "No, I don't tink you understand. I'm holdin' all the cards in dis hand.")

Too many NPCs, however, remain cardboard cutouts, with more attention paid to their physical traits than their personalities. If we knew as much about their motivations as their eye color, Book One would've been more memorable. As the PCs drift from one lead to the next, the obstacles become increasingly contrived ("Before I tell you of Dragon Mountain and the sundered amulet, you must go into the swamp and defeat the hydra."). This isn't so much a problem with the writing as with the structure itself; Book One is all prologue, and prologues shouldn't take up a third of the adventure. A 16-page Book One, spotlighting the cleverest encounters and the strongest NPCs, would've sufficed.

Thankfully, the main event is worth the wait as Books Two and Three, both by McComb, lead us through a delightfully sadistic maze of traps, ambushes, and (literal) dead ends. My PCs—a seasoned band of high-level warriors and mages—were beaten, stomped, burned, stabbed, smothered, and crushed, and they enjoyed every brutalizing minute. The quality of the encounters, of course, makes or breaks a dungeon crawl, and DRAGON MOUNTAIN boasts a rich selection. (Thanks, I suspect, to the "concept" contributors, which looks to include everybody and his brother at TSR.) DRAGON MOUNTAIN makes expert use of layered encounters, where the PCs must deal with two or more perils simultaneously. For instance, an entrance chamber threatens the party with a lowering ceiling as well as a family of poisonous spiders. Investigating a trash dump requires the PCs to wade through a waist-deep muck pool, fight off a swarm of insects, and confront an angry otyugh—all at the same time. Ingenious physical traps include a moldy silo/conveyor belt/grain-bin combination, a *reversed gravity* corridor with a paper ceiling and a spike-filled chimney, and a complex tube snare enchanted with *reduce*

and *enlarge* spells. Between whackings, the party can marvel at a doll-sized tavern, a replica of an elven forest, and other bizarre landmarks.

The adventure concludes with a journey through some foggy ruins that leads to the home of the landlord (the gal on the cover—and that's not the surprise mentioned earlier). A couple of preliminary bouts, including a nail-biter with a monster resembling a boulder-spewing tree, precede the inevitable showdown with the Queen of the Mountain. Sadly, it's somewhat of a letdown, dribbling away in unconvincing parley and an inconclusive climax. I think McComb just ran out of room; he needed another half-dozen pages or so to wrap it up in style.

**Evaluation:** DRAGON MOUNTAIN demands more of players, especially newcomers, than they may be willing to give. The relentless assault, particularly in Book Three, can become oppressive if the DM doesn't give the party a few lucky breaks. Serious-minded players may scoff at the cartoonish embellishments; this is a dungeon stocked with greased slides and bad guys called Kneebiters. The presentation has a few ragged edges: underdeveloped encounters (no attack routine for the ottyugh in the muck pool), sketchy DM tips (he's told to have an NPC "simply twist the [party's] words around to bring a polite meaning to anything they say . . ." but he's not told *how*), and a too-long Book One. But, even at it's shakiest, DRAGON MOUNTAIN rarely fails to thrill. It's a testament to the skill of the designers that they can bring a smile to your face while they're knocking your teeth out.

## Shadows on the Borderland

RUNEQUEST game

supplement

\*\*\*\*

One 80-page book, one 24-page reference book, two 17" × 11" map sheets, one 11" × 8" map sheet

The Avalon Hill Game Company \$19

Design: Michael Dawson, Ken Rolston, and Jon Quaiife

Additional design: Paul Jaquays, Sandy Petersen, Greg Stafford, and Martin Crim

Editing and development: Ken Rolston

Illustrations: John Snyder and John Bridges

Cover: Roger Raupp

## Dorastor: Land of Doom

RUNEQUEST game supplement \*\*\*

One 128-page book, one 16-page reference book, one 17" × 11" mapsheet

The Avalon Hill Game Company \$25

Design: Sandy Petersen, Ken Rolston, and Greg Stafford

Additional design: Troy Bankert, Ken Kaufer, Oliver Jovanovic, Finula McCaul, and Paul Reilly

Editing and development: Ken Rolston

Illustrations: John Snyder and Merle Insinga

Cover: Linda Michaels

Under the guidance of Ken Rolston, the RENEQUEST\* game has recaptured much of its original glory. Focused supplements like *River of Cradles* and *Sun County* (reviewed in DRAGON® issue #188) built on the game's strengths (the rich mythology of Glorantha, story-driven campaigns) while avoiding misfires of the past (tepid AD&D retreats, such as the *Monster Coliseum* and *Haunted Ruins* packages).

*Shadows on the Borderland* is a pinnacle of sorts, the best entry to date in the refurbished RENEQUEST line. A trio of loosely linked scenarios set in and around Sun County and the Grantlands, *Shadows* lacks the epic sweep of DRAGON MOUNTAIN, substituting intimacy for spectacle. Where DRAGON MOUNTAIN dazzles with special effects, *Shadows* charms with sparkling plots and characters.

Like its predecessors, *Shadows* benefits from a top-notch presentation. Crisp writing and merciless editing result in text that's easy to follow and a joy to read. The scenarios feature concise story summaries, multiple options for easing the PCs into the action, and thoughtful staging advice. The graphics, never RENEQUEST's strong suit, range from acceptable (the functional but lifeless maps) to ho-hum (redundant illustrations of NPCs standing and staring). A pullout section includes player handouts, NPC profiles, and player-response cards that cleverly handle minor encounters. The players read the pertinent card (a description of a scantily-dressed woman with a crying child), ponder their reaction (do you speak with her?), circle their response (yes or no), then return it to the referee.

The book opens with Michael Dawson's "Gaumata's Vision," a slick combination of fantasy and horror that could give Chaosium's creepiest CALL OF CTHULHU\* game scenario a run for its money. Intended for RENEQUEST novices, but best suited for mature players comfortable with investigative role-playing, "Gaumata" offers an engaging mystery set in the miserable village of Black Rock. The PCs learn Black Rock's grim history while interviewing the resident thugs and deviants. A series of disturbing images—hex marks on hut rafters, female children with the same name, a holy woman with tattooed tears—foreshadow the village's chilling secret. The climatic revelations should leave all but the most jaded players shaken and thoroughly satisfied.

At first glance, "Dyskund Caverns," an exploration of a tunnel network in the Dyskund Valley, appears to be just another dungeon crawl. Designer Ken Rolston has more on his mind than traps and treasure, though. He uses the dungeon format to chart the background and development of a powerful cult, offering subtle observations about the nature of religion in a primitive culture. The dungeon itself is a dazzler, an inventive construct of evocative locales (a chamber floor strewn with rock salt to discourage dragonsnails) and

clever magic (*martyr rubies* that compel peaceful negotiations). A few ambiguous encounters, such as a nursery for monsters, have no apparent purpose other than to make the PCs, gasp. The stabs at humor ("The Shrine has terrible temple defenses. No one knows what they are, not even the designer.") are not only unnecessary but intrusive. Otherwise, it's a stellar performance.

Jon Quaiife's "A Tale to Tell" uses the rumor of a lost shrine to entice the PCs across a perilous wasteland. The party sightsees at Devil's Knob, fights off giant birds at Condor Crag, and battles rock lizards at the Gates of Dusk Canyon. The shrine honors a chaotic god fond of severed heads, which should give you an idea of what waits inside. The scenario stresses AD&D-style action, with ample opportunity for bloody combat. While not as ambitious as the previous two entries, "A Tale to Tell" makes a nice change of pace for brain-weary players.

The end of "A Tale to Tell" serves as an introduction to the follow-up supplement, *Dorastor: Land of Doom*. Set in the frontier borderlands of First-Age Glorantha's cosmopolitan center, *Dorastor* describes a land rife with outrageous monsters, cutthroat brigands, and scheming mages. In other words, it's your typical fantasy world. What distinguishes *Dorastor* from the competition are its arresting details: a race of intelligent spiders that communicate by scent, a nourishing meat biscuit that regenerates itself, a sign on a haunted fort that warns, "Do not go past the ghost skeleton." Other highlights include a scholarly history of the area, an entertaining campaign outline, and a run-down of important places, such as the Tower of Lead and Dorasta Shrine. Still, despite the overall quality, *Dorastor* is a comedown from *Shadows*. Routine encounters clutter the campaign outline, and a tedious chapter of monster descriptions consumes more than a third of the book.

**Evaluation:** Both *Shadows on the Borderland* and *Dorastor: Land of Doom* aim at the high IQ-end of the RPG market. Both are challenging, intense, state-of-the-art sourcebooks. It's too bad the game's still stuck in the Stone Age. Where RENEQUEST's integration of mechanics and background once seemed innovative, even revolutionary, it now seems old hat, especially in light of such intriguing new products as White Wolfs MAGE: THE ASCENSION\* game (to be reviewed here in the near future). RENEQUEST needs an overhaul, particularly the clunky combat rules. Over the last couple years, the supplements have overshadowed the game. If that trend continues, I don't see how RENEQUEST can survive.

## The Spectre King

PENDRAGON game

supplement

\*\*\* 1/2

128-page softcover book

Chaosium Inc.

\$19

*Design:* Martin Bourne, Peter Corless,  
Mike Dawson, Garry Fay, Mike Manolakes,  
and Sam Shirley

*Editing:* Sam Shirley

*Illustrations:* Arnie Swekel, Jaime Lombardo,  
and Ron Hill

*Cover:* Stephen King

*The Spectre King*, my choice for best role-playing adventure of 1992 not only failed to nab the ORIGINS™ award, it wasn't even nominated. (Based on the copyright date, I assume it was eligible.) It couldn't be because of a Chaosium boycott; *Blood Brothers II* for the CALL OF CTHULHU game was on the list. It couldn't be because of the PENDRAGON\* game's low profile; Flying Buffalo's *Grimtooth's Dungeon of Doom* got the nod, and Grimtooth is not exactly a household name. The omission of *The Spectre King* will have to remain one of life's little mysteries, like why Mickey Mouse has four fingers or why Arnold Schwarzenegger is the world's biggest movie star. (See this month's "Short and Sweet" section for a look at the ORIGINS winner.)

For role-players with a passion for sophisticated fantasy, who've outgrown dungeon crawls and treasure grabs, *The Spectre King* offers a collection of six inspired scenarios as delectable as a box of Swiss chocolates. A skillful mix of legend and literature (designer Peter Corless cites Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* as source material), *The Spectre King* perfectly captures the grandeur of feudal Britain in the days of King Arthur. The designers seem as knowledgeable of the era as Ph.D. candidates, bringing it to life with vivid observations and rich settings. Innkeepers announce the presence of honored guests by hanging banners and shields from the windows. A manor house serves honey-glazed chicken with pine nuts for dinner. While squires parade embroidered tapestries, gold-embossed pillows, and other tournament prizes through a banquet hall, knights pound their dagger pommels on tables in approval. Marvelous stuff.

But it's the masterful writing that pushes *The Spectre King* over the top. Consider this warning from King Eifion about a troublesome ghost plaguing the environs of Castle Conisbrough (written by Peter Corless): "Whence this fearsome apparition came from, we know not. And yet it hath stalked Conisbrough for these twelve months past. It yields to no sword blow, nor do prayers stay its wrath." Notice how the single word *prayers* speaks volumes about the level of desperation, the extent of the threat, and the nature of the society.

Supernatural themes are effectively exploited in Corless' "Spectre King" and Mike Dawson's "Ghost Knight." Corless enlivens a straightforward fight-the-ghost premise with a strong cast and a tense honor conflict that forces the PCs to juggle combat and etiquette proficiencies. Dispatching the spectre requires the execu-

tion of a difficult ritual; my players failed miserably but had a great time trying. "Ghost Knight" is actually two scenarios in one. The first involves a heart-stopping interruption at a tournament. (Don't let your players see the illustration on page 71.) The second takes place a year later (!) at a manor terrorized by a vicious spirit, climaxing with a battle in the moonlit ruins of an ancient castle.

While not intended as such, Garry Fay and Sam Shirley's "The Helmed Knight" makes a nice interlude between the two sections of "Ghost Knight." A classic romance, "The Helmed Knight" features a tormented warrior cursed with a hideous face, preventing him from proposing marriage to the woman he loves. The PCs' intervention on the knight's behalf draws them into a web of courtly intrigue. Fay and Shirley milk the scenario for every ounce of melodrama, but keep it edgy with cynical co-stars and a grisly finale.

Mike Dawson's "Grand Tourney of Logres" is less a developed adventure than an outline for staging a medieval tournament. Dawson's tournament is anything but ordinary however, combining elegant mechanics for jousting matches, team melees, and personal challenges with engaging subplots and delightful NPCs. Sir Edern, an errant knight from Cirencester, is noted for his skill with a sword and abhorrence of public speaking. An heiress named Lady Glimthis has trouble attracting suitors due to rumors that her wealthy father is too stingy to come up with a dowry. Unusual competitors include foreign knights from Ireland and Rome, and "mystery knights" who keep their identities concealed because of shady pasts and questionable allegiances. Random-event tables add spice with unexpected challenges for the PCs (from Andalusian Knights to the Retinue of King Claudas) and complications on the battlefield (two teams attack yours at the same time, everybody on the other side gangs up on you while your team routs).

The quality dips a bit in "Werewolf," by Mike Manolakes, and "Horned Boar," by Martin Bourne. "Werewolf" begins with a hunt for an extraordinary wolf that behaves like a domesticated dog. The wolf isn't as interesting as the snooty aristocrats in the supporting cast, and the wolf's secrets don't amount to much. "Horned Boar" runs the PCs through a gauntlet of encounters with a damsel in distress, a robber baron, and a king-sized swine. Though well-presented, "Werewolf" and "Boar" lack the creative flourishes that make the rest of the book so compelling.

**Evaluation:** If you've yet to experience the PENDRAGON system, you're missing one of the hobby's most satisfying games. Exquisitely crafted and bursting with possibilities, *The Spectre King* is an ideal place to launch a campaign.

### Short and sweet

*GURPS\* Cyberpunk Adventures*, by

David L. Pulver, Jak Koke, and Timothy Keating. Steve Jackson Games, \$17. This 1992 Origins™ award-winner for Best Role-Playing Adventure offers three solidly-plotted scenarios drenched in high-tech grunge. "The Medusa Sanction" opens the book with a bang, dropping the characters into a head-spinning tangle of industrial espionage, radical politics, and biological warfare. "The Jericho Blackout" uses the badlands of central Montana as a backdrop for a confrontation with cybernetic street gangs. "Jigsaw Incomplete" deals with the ramifications of reality-altering technology gone awry. All boast smart premises and breakneck pacing, with "Medusa" in particular a near-flawless blend of science fiction and sleaze. Too often, though, the designers struggle with methods for feeding information to the PCs, relying on such hokey devices as a fortuitous computer printout (some 700 words long) and a tape-recorded confession ("Okay, you want me to tell you how I got the canister . . ."). The pedestrian illustrations and dull maps pale before those of, say, FASA's SHADOWRUN\* game supplements. Techno-illiterates may need a translator to make sense of passages like: "A braintape contains 100 gigabytes of data; however, only about 2% of this (on average) is needed to create a functional skill chip." One of 1992's best? No question. *The best?* Nahh . . .

The DRAGON STRIKE™ game, by Bruce Nesmith and Andria Hayday. TSR, Inc., \$35. If this doesn't lure your kid brother into the hobby, it probably can't be done. Perhaps the most lavishly packaged, user-friendliest introduction to role-playing ever published, the DRAGON STRIKE game presents the basics in an innovative board-game format. The rules cast players in the roles of dwarves, thieves, and other fantasy archetypes. Each player receives a card representing his character, which shows ratings for Armor Class, Speed, Attack Strength, and special abilities (such as Finding Secret Passages and Disarming Traps). A clip attached to the side of the card keeps track of the character's Hit Points. The Dragon Master—the DRAGON STRIKE equivalent of a Dungeon Master—prepares a session by selecting a mission from the Adventure Book, locates the indicated markers and cards, then responds with monsters, traps, and treasures as the characters wander around the colorful map board. A typical mission, which must be completed within a fixed number of turns, finds the party searching for Grunt the Giant or a missing ring.

The Dragon Master controls the actions of the monsters and NPCs. To resolve combat, the DM compares the Attack Strength to the target's Armor Class; if the Attack Roll is higher, the target loses one Hit Point. Equally simple rules cover spell-casting, feats of strength, and flying. The much-touted (and unfairly criticized) videotape accomplishes exactly what it's sup-

posed to: Define role-playing for those who wouldn't know a saving throw from a savings bond. What distinguishes the DRAGON STRIKE game from other fantasy board games is, of course, the emphasis on verbal interaction. This may be nothing new to veteran gamers, but for novices, the effect is startling. It's as if pawns on a chessboard started talking back. After a few rounds of DRAGON STRIKE's "Role-playing Lite," I suspect most players will be salivating for the real thing.

*Corporate Shadowfiles*, by Nigel D. Findley. FASA Corporation, \$18. Some sourcebooks are too long for their own good. This reference for the SHADOW-RUN\* game examines 21st-Century megacorporations in lengthy, often excruciating detail. Much of the information would be at home in an economics textbook: "Property acquired by the corporation belongs to the corporation rather than the shareholders, and the shareholders are not liable for corporate debts. If the corporation goes bankrupt, creditors cannot attempt to recoup lost funds from the assets of individual shareholders." The commentary is alternately perceptive ("Prevent any individual or bloc from owning or controlling a majority of shares, or stop them from exercising their votes, and you can keep them from controlling the Corp.") and juvenile ("Frag you and the hog you rode

in on."). Business majors may enjoy sifting through 140-plus pages of this, but others probably will find it excessive.

The TWERPS\* game, by Jeff and 'Manda Dee; *Metaphysical Ninja Maniac Chainsaw Vitamin Junkies* by Jon Hancock; *M. E. C. H. I.-Tech*, by Niels Erickson, Norman F. Morin Jr., Brian Rayburn, and Michael Scott Kurtick; *Twisted Tales of Terror* by Matthew W. Kirkhart, Brian Schomburg, and Niels Erickson. Reindeer Games/Gamescience, \$3 each. So maybe it's a joke, but it's a *great* joke. Billed as "The Worlds Easiest Role-Playing System," the TWERPS game gets remarkable mileage out of a single statistic (Strength, determined by the roll of a 10-sided die). Opponents make attacks by tossing dice and adding their Strengths; if the attacker's roll exceeds the defender's, the defender loses a variable number of Strength Points. To resolve pretty much every other action, the referee assigns a Difficulty Level from 1 to 10 and the affected character rolls his Strength to check for success. Considering its limits, TWERPS works surprisingly well. Even more surprising are the number of supplements it's spawned: eleven and counting. The latest batch are inspired by other games. *Metaphysical Ninja Maniac Chainsaw Vitamin Junkies* takes its cue from Steve Jackson Games' CAR WARS\* game, *M. E. C. H. I.-T. E. C. H.* parodies FASA's BATTLE-

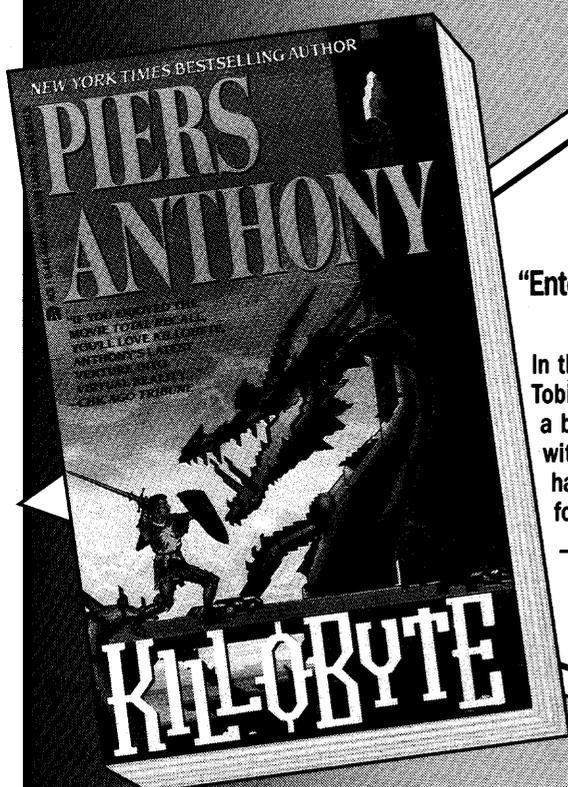
TECH\* game, and *Twisted Tales of Terror* has overtones of the CALL OF CTHULHU game. Each comes with equipment lists, character professions, scenario suggestions, cutout playing pieces, and a teeny 10-sided die. The modestly-packaged supplements provide reasonable play value for those prepared to endure awful puns, such as an NPC named Dr. Gardner Sprinkler, and a Bipedal Armored Tactical Tank pilot known as B.A.T.T. Man. This is recommended for fans of the blissfully silly. (For information, write: Gamescience, 1512 30th Ave., Gulfport MS 39501.)

*Rick Swan has designed or edited more than 40 role-playing products, and has written game reviews for nearly a decade. You can contact him at 2620 30th St., Des Moines IA 50310. A self-addressed stamped envelope increases the chance of a response.*

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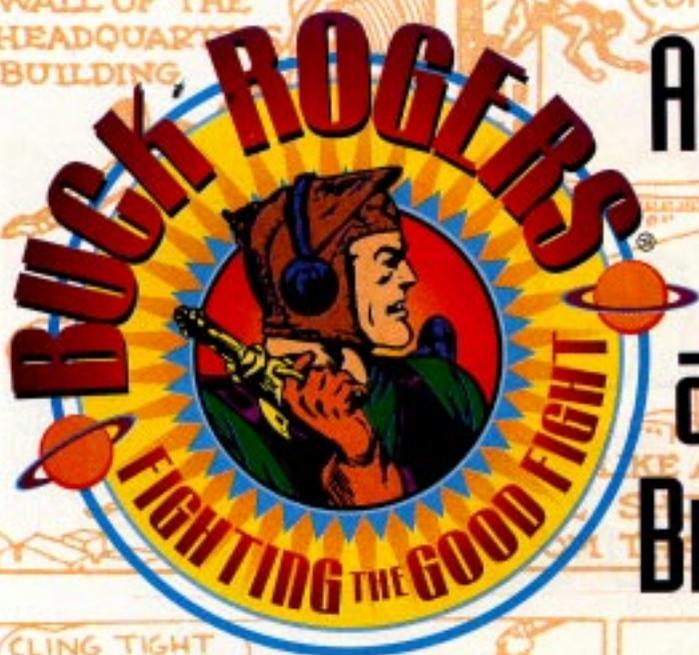
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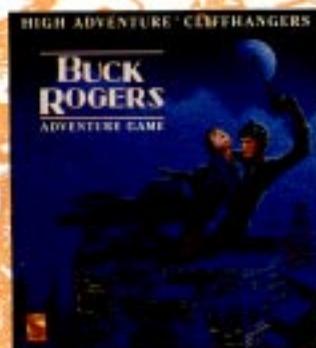
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WARNED OF MY APPROACH,  
OM-KA-ZORIL MARSHALLED HIS  
MIGHTY ARMY, WHO SPREAD OUT IN FANLIKE  
FORMATION AS THEY CAME TOWARD ME

I SAW  
THEM AS  
I EMERGED  
FROM THE TREES  
AND CAME IN SIGHT  
OF THE LABORATORY.

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Photography by Charles Kohl

## Famous & forgotten board games

©1993 by Allen Varney

"Man, where is that guy? Here we are, four gamers ready to play, and we have to sit on our hands while the gamemaster drives in from who knows where, Biloxi or Kankakee or Saskatoon. Wait, was that him on the phone just now? Did he say an hour? Great. Just great. Now what do we do? We don't have a whole day for The Avalon Hill Game Company's CIVILIZATION\* game, and we don't remember all the rules to those war games stacked on the shelf. But we wanna play!"

Has this ever happened to you? Of course it has. You want a social game: four or more players, simple rules, fast pace, two hours (or less!) playing time, lots of interaction, and—how to put it?—a convivial spirit.

Sure, you could play Avalon Hills DIPLOMACY\* game (glaring down at the board, nostrils flared, voices edgy and precise, each betrayal a knife stroke, cocksure victors gloating over sullen victims, brusque exits afterward), but you do all want to stay on speaking terms. So you look for cheer and high spirits, a game you can play with the TV going in the background.

You don't have to pull out MONOPOLY\* or RISK\*. Our own hobby offers many excellent social board games, both well known and obscure. Look for these classics and should-have-been classics.

### Celebrities

Almost every newly minted gamer soon learns about most of these famous games. They're all in print and widely available, often with expansion sets and shelves of industry awards. In alphabetical order, they are:

#### The ACQUIRE\* game by Sid Sackson

3M Bookshelf Games; The Avalon Hill Game Company, 1976

Supposedly a game of hotel acquisitions and mergers, this is actually a superb abstract game of strategy and capital. Placing tiles on a plastic board, players try to create, enlarge, and merge chains, then buy and sell stock in them. At the end, the richest player wins. Terse, minimalist rules produce fascinating strategies. Expect to spend several games just developing an idea of what you're doing, let alone developing hotel empires. An early masterpiece from Sackson, game historian and one of the great designers of our time.

#### The COSMIC ENCOUNTER\* game by the Future Pastimes design team of Bill Eberle, Jack Kittredge, Bill Norton, and Peter Olotka, with Ned Horn

Eon Products, 1977; West End Games, 1987; Mayfair Games, 1991

This abstract, freewheeling contest between alien races for cosmic domination

is my favorite game, and I gushed all over the wonderful new Mayfair edition in issue #175 of DRAGON® Magazine. Each player gets the power to break the rules in one unique way, as well as frequent chances to take center stage and guide the game. Play is unpredictable, even downright random, but never arbitrary. With dozens of powers and many special cards, replay value becomes practically infinite. Play the COSMIC ENCOUNTER game once and you'll never again feel a need to play the RISK game.

Mayfair's *More Cosmic Encounter* expansion set offers many terrific powers (and some terribly unbalanced ones) plus new cards and forgettable rules additions like *Lucre* and *Moons*.

#### The EMPIRE BUILDER\* game by Darwin P. Bromley and Bill Fawcett

Mayfair Games, 1988

As high-rolling railroad barons of the late 19th century, players build rail lines across America by connecting points with crayons on an erasable map, then contract for and deliver cargo to earn money to build more lines to deliver more cargo. One of the purest embodiments of capitalism in game form since MONOPOLY, the EMPIRE BUILDER game rewards careful strategy and offers lots of replay value.

Die-hards can build more empires with companion games covering North America

and Japan. Some say the European version, the EURORAILS\* game, offers more strategic depth than its progenitor (at half again the price). Mayfair also offers the unrelated 1835\* board game and the EXPRESS\* card game, making it almost a one-stop publisher for train buffs.

#### **The ILLUMINATI\* game**

by Steve Jackson

Steve Jackson Games, 1982

This brilliant card-and-token game, Jackson's best design, lets you conquer the world without firing a shot. Your secret conspiracy does have to spend millions, though, and face off against rival conspiracies for control of the CIA, PTA, Trilateral Commission, Cocaine Smugglers, Boy Sprouts, and many other pillars of society. Each group is a card; you literally arrange the cards in a power structure, and their income chips flow freely to your central Illuminati group. Ingenious and satirical, the ILLUMINATI game fosters good-humored paranoia and dramatic struggles. "Okay, the Mafia, aided by the Gnomes of Zurich and the Orbital Mind Control Lasers, will try to take over the Congressional Wives. . . ."

#### **The NUCLEAR WAR\* game**

by Douglas Malewicki

Self-published, 1965; Flying Buffalo, 1979

It's a sin for a multi-player design to throw out a player before the game is over, but in this venerable game, that's the whole point. Your hand of cards is an arsenal of warheads, antiballistic missiles, viral plagues, spies, and propaganda bulletins. Tensions build as you try to lure rival players' population to your nation with propaganda. Paranoia inevitably triumphs and the missiles fly. Spin the spinner to find your bomb's yield, expressed in millions of casualties. Retaliatory strikes from beyond the grave usually ensure that no one wins—certainly a realistic end for this black-humored contemporary of *Dr. Strangelove*.

The 1983 companion, the NUCLEAR ESCALATION\* game, is essential. A long-awaited third set, the NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION\* game, appeared at last year's GEN CON® game fair.

#### **The TALISMAN\* game**

by Robert Harris

Games Workshop, 1983

It's a race game, with pieces moving around a track. It's a fantasy game, with classes and races and magical items. It's a quest through the Cursed Glade and the Werewolves' Den for the talisman that lets you enter the Valley of Fire to gain the Crown of Command. Mainly, it's a nutty romp that calls for lots of luck, a laid-back attitude, and tolerance for getting turned into a toad. You won't believe how often this game toadifies you. Along with the COSMIC ENCOUNTER game, the TALISMAN game is this list's best choice for

nongamers. Warning: TALISMAN games can go on much longer than the others on this list.

Games Workshop has released six TALISMAN expansion sets with typically high production values, uneven play values, and typical Workshop prices—the basic game and all six expansions together run you over \$140.

#### **Neglected masterpieces**

These games were done in by bad marketing, uncommercial topics, or maybe the wrong phase of the moon—who really knows why one game succeeds and another fails? These social games bombed on the market, but not as designs. If you can find these gems by mail order, at convention auctions, in large hobby shops, or maybe on the back shelf of your own closet, call your gaming group together. You are in for a treat!

#### **The BORDERLANDS\* game**

by Future Pastimes

Eon Products, 1982

The Future Pastimes team wanted the virtues of the DIPLOMACY game, but with no written commands, no need to leave the table, and just four players. They succeeded superbly with the BORDERLANDS game, a gripping contest of strategy, diplomacy, logistics, and resource management. Players on an abstract continent conquer territories, gather and trade materials, and build weapons, boats, and cities; the first player to build or conquer three cities wins.

Intense and suspenseful, a BORDERLANDS game last 45 minutes to an hour, making it less grueling (and less dangerous to friendships!) than the DIPLOMACY game. The two- and three-player games are also good, and two expansion sets (unfortunately scarce) add new rules and pieces for fifth and sixth players. This game found new life when the designers moved into computer software and adapted it as *Lords of Conquest*.

#### **The DUNE\* game**

by Future Pastimes

The Avalon Hill Game Company, 1979

Avalon Hill commissioned the COSMIC ENCOUNTER game's designers to produce this CE-lookalike game based on Frank Herbert's famous science-fiction novel. The subtle design captures the wheels-within-wheels intrigue of the book, even using neat "combat wheels" as a visual pun. Tokens, individual character powers, and alliance rules make CE players feel right at home. Unique flavor comes with the movement rules, combat strategies, and chances that your leaders will turn traitor. Don't bother with the unbalanced advanced rules that Avalon Hill foisted on the clean basic design.

Avalon Hill released two Future Pastimes expansion sets in 1984, *The Duel* and *Spice Harvest*, trying to capitalize on the David

Lynch film of *Dune*. *The Duel* expands individual combat between leaders, some say to the point of tedium. *Spice Harvest* allows flexibility in starting positions.

#### **The JUNTA\* game**

by Vincent Tsao

Creative Wargames Workshops, 1979; revised by Ben Grossman and Eric Goldberg, West End Games, 1985

*Hola, señor!* Here in La Republica de las Bananas, we love our President. Each year, he parcels out foreign-aid money to us, his loyal generals, officers, and minister of internal security. If El Presidente keeps too much money for himself, we loyal followers assassinate him, or maybe we stage a coup if we feel like it. Then we form a junta, shoot someone, and elect everyone (or their heirs) to new offices. We all take turns being President in this game. President, General, who cares? We win by having the most money in our Swiss bank accounts!

Do you like casual corruption, hilarious doubletalk, and soldiers who can't shoot straight? We got them all. *Muy bien*, I think!

#### **The KREMLIN\* game**

by Urs Hostettler and Stefan Hosli

Avalon Hill, 1988

Avalon Hill's in-house designs aren't usually great, but the company shows excellent taste in its American editions of foreign games. The CIVILIZATION game leads the pack, but this satiric Swedish design from the early days of *glasnost* holds its own. Each player secretly allocates Influence Points to guide a troupe of aging *apparatchiks* (Igor Doberman, Nikolai Shootemdedsky, Boris Badenuff, etc.) up through the Politburo ranks. Members purge, investigate, blackmail, exile, and even infect one another, but almost everything they do ages them. Players try to promote a chosen leader to Party Chief and get him to wave from the rostrum at three annual Loyalty Parades before he goes to Siberia or dies of old age. Man, do these guys die like flies! Even post-Gorbachev, the KREMLIN game makes for backbiting, double-crossing fun, and Avalon Hill's advanced rules work well. (Expect to set a house rule on use of Intrigue cards, though.)

The company offers a "Revolutionary" variant by mail order that replaces the parody characters with Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, and other historical originals,

#### **The STAR TRADERS\* game**

by David Ladyman

Steve Jackson Games, 1987

The designer loved railroad games, so he translated them into space. Published under an irrelevant license from *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, the STAR TRADERS game sends your merchant spaceship along "jump lines" to planets like Asimov, Niven, Babel, and

Jackpot, with cargos like robots, dream machines, serving androids (from the planet Jeeves), mutant repellent, or now and then an Imperial ambassador. Each player has a special power, an ever-growing network of planetary stations, and Trader's Luck cards that can inflict calamities on rivals. Build up money and prestige to claim the Imperial Mission that lets you win.

A capricious but intriguing game, the STAR TRADERS game is the best (after the ILLUMINATI game) of SJ Games' many attempts to break into mass-market board gaming.

### The TALES OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS\* game

by Eric Goldberg

West End Games, 1989

In the TALES OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS game, each player wanders the Arabian desert alone, having Sinbad-style adventures using the 1400 paragraphs of the Book of Tales. Along the way you gain and lose "statuses" like Ensorcelled, Imprisoned, On Pilgrimage, and Sex-Changed; gadgets like the Ebony Horse and Celestial Planisphere (which lets you destroy a city); and Destiny and Story Points. When you earn enough points, or become a Sultan, return to Baghdad and win.

The rules are a bit clunky, and there's little interaction, but the real fun lies in watching your friends join Bedouin tribes, fight a roc, or get sex-changed. If your group thinks fast and likes theater, you'll have a good loud time with this storytelling game. Advanced rules add strategy and double the playing time. Alone among these games, the ARABIAN NIGHTS game also works well solitaire.

### The WIZ-WAR\* game

by Tom Jolly

Jolly Games, 1985; Chessex, 1993

At many conventions over the years, I saw numerous gamers moving crude counters over a seedy-looking little dungeon board made of four tacky geomorphic rectangles. Two to four players, playing wizards out to steal each other's treasure, each held a hand of cards that were badly photocopied on thin cardstock. Rules printed in shabby dot-matrix, a feeble box cover, a stupid name, and not even a designer listed—yech. Then a friend who knew about this game finally persuaded me to play. It's a kick, it's a hoot, it's a blast!

You have this hand of spell cards, see? Play the cards to teleport, create thorn walls, shrink, cast lightning, read minds, move faster, pass through walls, increase the number of cards you can hold, rotate or move the board's rectangles, and so on. You can counteract all these effects, make them stronger or weaker, or do just about anything — if you have the right cards. Creative, savvy, elegant in its way, and utterly fearless in inventing bizarre effects, the game achieves a goofy charm.

### Object lessons

Multi-player board games are hard to design. I know—I tried one myself, with mediocre results (the GAMMARAUDERS™ game, TSR, 1987). While searching for the excellent designs above, I played just as many duds. Some of the failures highlight the unusual requirements of social board-game design. For instance:

*No knockouts.* In a two-player game, you try to drive your opponent out of the game. So in a multi-player game, you should drive everyone out, right? No. The victim of an early knockout must sit idly by, removed from the social network of the game. After several such purges, two equally strong survivors often settle into a tedious war of attrition while everyone else watches TV. (A game of MONOPOLY, anyone?) Most of the best social games, always excepting the NUCLEAR WAR game, carry all the players along straight to the finish.

*Balance.* Some say that multi-player games are inherently balanced, because lagging players can gang up on front-runners and keep them in line. Greg Costikyan wrote as much in the second issue of *The Gamer* magazine: "The intrinsics of any diplomatic game conspire to create a balance." I find the issue of balance more subtle.

Players who attack a front-runner face differing degrees of hardship. In the BORDERLANDS game it's tricky, in the ILLUMINATI game, a major challenge. But in SJG's recent computer-crime card game, the HACKER\* game, "narking" is almost as easy as making a phone call, and bringing down the game leader becomes a casual decision. Ideally, balance implies a certain degree of security for hard-won gains.

Also, balance is moot if the game allows one or two players to corner the market on some vital commodity. The forgotten ENTERPRISE-4 ENCOUNTER\* game from West End Games, a licensed *Star Trek* game by the Future Pastimes team, calls for players to collect one Starfleet crew member of each discipline—science, communications, security, and so on. But if one player secretly gains all available crew of a given discipline (not a hard task), the other players find victory frustratingly and inexplicably elusive.

*Individualized roles.* In a two-player game, you know who you are—you're the hero, facing your enemy. Against several opponents, this psychology weakens. Though individual roles aren't vital, it helps when a social game gives each player a unique identity—a particular game position, a special power, or just a name. The HACKER game misses a bet on this count, as does a 1980 Future Pastimes design, the QUIRKS\* game.

Eon Products published this "game of un-natural selection," right after the COSMIC ENCOUNTER game. What a letdown! Marvelous in conception, the QUIRKS game represents many biological traits on cards that can be ingeniously assembled

into carnivores, herbivores, and plants. (The recent Maxis computer game *SimLife* copies this idea.) As the climate changes, players replace cards in their creatures with traits better adapted (they hope!) to the environment. The first player to build well-adapted life forms of all three kinds wins.

Sounds great, but the QUIRKS game has a lot of problems. One big flaw, I think, is that it never identifies players with the animals they're evolving. Instead they're unspecified creature-makers who look down on these beasts and foliage from above. The QUIRKS game would involve me a lot more by evolving me—making me the creature who needs to emerge victorious in a niche. Deciding whether to eat plants or animals, or if I should ditch my wings in favor of an electric sting—that sounds like fun. (For a far better take on the same theme, see the recent Avalon Hill TYRANNO EX\* game, reviewed in DRAGON issue #194.)

Player-guided design. Some games are arbitrary: too many things in the game happen randomly, without player influence. If the events hold interest in themselves, this flaw won't kill the game. Witness the TALES OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS game, above. But take the ARKHAM HORROR\* game (Chaosium, 1987). In this board game based on the CALL OF CTHULHU\* horror RPG, players try to close the dimensional gates that threaten to overwhelm the spooky town of Arkham. They travel around town, enter shops and caves and churches, and roll a die to see what happens there. Maybe they find a weapon, or maybe a monster attacks. Maybe the players stop caring after a while.

Then there's the KINGS & THINGS\* game (West End Games/Games Workshop, 1986). Up to four players wander around a variable map of big cardboard hexagons, each with its own terrain and native beasts. Players who try just about anything must draw counters from a cup to see what they meet or get. Winners show great skill in counter-drawing and not much else.

Good board games don't rely on charts and counters, but on players. They are the best system a designer could want: fun, funny, infinitely variable (if not always balanced), and usually able to keep each other in line. A great game structures the players' interactions without pressure, leaving them flexible enough to show their singular twists of behavior. You learn not only the game, but also human nature. In a good board game, everybody wins.

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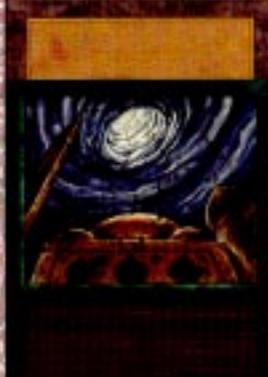
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# The *Galaxy Dragon* and crew from West End Games' STAR WARS: The RPG\*

©1993 by Bill Slavicsek

Artwork by Michael Vilardi

*DRAGON® Magazine's ongoing series of articles presenting dragons or dragonlike NPCs for other role-playing game systems continues with a double dose of dragons: a "dragon ship" and its draconic troopers.*

STAR WARS: The RPG\* is West End Games' epic space-fantasy game based on the most popular movie trilogy of all time. While bizarre creatures and alien species abound in that far-away galaxy, the true monsters come in the form of great ships of war and weapons of mass destruction. Star Destroyers, Death Stars, AT-AT walkers—these are the terrors that heroic Rebels and Jedi Knights like Luke Skywalker must meet in frantic combat. Unlike the knights of old, these heroes ride forth in X-wing starfighters and converted snowspeeders, armed with blasters and lightsabers instead of lances and swords.

One of the last weapons of terror commissioned by the Emperor prior to his demise at the Battle of Endor (the conflict depicted in the film *Return of the Jedi*) was the prototype Dragon-class Heavy Star Cruiser named the *Galaxy Dragon*.

## A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away

Emperor Palpatine ruled the Empire through threats and a terrible policy known as the Doctrine of Fear. The entire Imperial war machine was designed to instill fear in the member and subjugated worlds of the Galactic Empire. The crowning achievement of this policy was the original Death Star battle station. With its planet-destroying might, the Emperor was able to disband the Senate and give total control of the Empire's many star systems to his regional governors. After Luke Skywalker and the Rebel Alliance destroyed the Death Star at the Battle of Yavin, the Imperial Doctrine of Fear was carried on by the massive Imperial fleet, symbolized most notably by the wedge-shaped, kilometer-long Imperial-class Star Destroyers.

Even the Empire's ground forces were fashioned to provoke feelings of terror and dread in enemy troops and rebellious civilians. From the armored legions of stormtroopers to the beast-like AT-AT walkers, the Empire strived literally to scare its subjects into submission.

As the Galactic Civil War raged on, the Emperor demanded more and more frightening weapons of destruction. Nearly four years after the Empire's defeat at Yavin, on the eve of the Battle of Endor, the Emperor had many top-secret projects in the



works in remote sections of the galaxy. Each project was more terrible than the last, and all were designed to increase and strengthen the Emperor's stranglehold on the galaxy.

The Super-class Star Destroyer was already prowling the space lanes as the Alliance massed its armada in the Sullust system for its attack at Endor. The second Death Star was orbiting Endor's forest moon, its structure more than half complete and its weapons systems on-line. Elsewhere, teams of Imperial technicians labored to finish the rest of the Emperor's secret arsenal, including practical cloaking shields, more powerful probe droids, and the prototype for a new combat starship: the Dragon-class Heavy Cruiser.

While the Emperor was preparing to meet the Alliance fleet in Endor's system (as part of his plan to lure Luke Skywalker to the Dark Side and destroy the bulk of the Rebellion in one fell swoop), Moff Delurin supervised the final test run of the prototype Dragon Cruiser. It left the Imperial-controlled Kuat Drive Yards assembly line in the remote Karavis system and proceeded to the Sorella system's planet Miko. The Dragon Cruiser sped through hyperspace to crush Miko's troublesome inhabitants, green-skinned humanoids who refused to bow to the Emperor's will. Moff Delurin watched happily as his prototype starship lived up to its promise. Turbolaser batteries rained bolts of cohesive energy onto the world, and powerful concussion missiles hammered the cities until the Mikoans finally begged for peace. The only thing that could have ruined Delurin's day was the unthinkable—and the unthinkable happened.

The message came in over the Dragon Cruiser's comm unit. It was a coded holo transmission, its signal weak, its images broken and choppy. But the words came through loud and clear. "This is Captain Pellaon, commanding officer of the Star Destroyer *Chimaera*," the static-streaked holo image proclaimed with a shaky voice. "The Emperor is dead. I repeat, the Emperor is dead. The remnants of the Imperial fleet are currently retreating from the Endor system. The Rebellion has won this battle, but it has not won the war." The message ended with a call to regroup at a secure Imperial installation in the Core Worlds. Delurin would have none of that. With the Emperor dead, it was time for a new leader to step forward and grasp the reins of the Empire. Moff Delurin decided that he was that new leader. His flagship would be the Dragon Cruiser rumbling powerfully beneath his feet—his flagship, the *Galaxy Dragon*.

## Description

The *Galaxy Dragon* is a Heavy Cruiser combat starship of Imperial design and manufacture. Like the AT-AT walker, it was built to draw upon the primordial fears of the galaxy by suggesting the image of

some beast out of the collective nightmares of all humanoid species. The *Galaxy Dragon*, the only Heavy Cruiser of its kind, has a midnight-black hull that makes it nearly invisible against the vacuum of space. When Delurin wants to inspire terror in its opponents, exterior lights illuminate the hull, causing the *Galaxy Dragon* to glow evilly. It stretches ominously from its vaguely head-shaped bow to a length of 700 meters, ending in a multiple-gun tower emplacement that resembles a deadly tail. Hangar bays sit open on either side of the bow like great maws, ready to release a store of TIE fighters. The *Galaxy Dragon* carries two full squadrons (24 TIEs) for attack, reconnaissance, and patrol missions. All *Galaxy Dragon* TIEs have been refitted with shields (1D) for extra protection,

In the time since the Battle of Endor, the Empire has progressively lost power and territory to the growing New Republic (formed from the Alliance). Moff Delurin never returned to the Imperial fold. Instead, he declared himself to be Delurin, Warlord of Wild Space. With the *Galaxy Dragon* and a crew of loyal supporters, Warlord Delurin's first action was to conquer the planet Bormter. The planet, the fifth in the Svekk system, was one of the frontier areas of that portion of the galaxy designated as Wild Space. It possessed everything Delurin needed to establish a power base and supply point for his ship and crew. The Bormterrans, a reptiloid species of fierce though primitive fighters, became the source for Delurin's special dragon troopers. These soldiers are extremely loyal to Warlord Delurin, eager to fulfill his will in any way possible.

Warlord Delurin and his *Galaxy Dragon* are in conflict with the remnants of the Empire as often as with the forces of the New Republic. Though he hates the New Republic with a passion (in fact, he still refers to it as the Rebellion), he also believes that he is destined to be the ruler of



the Empire. Any Imperials who disagree with his beliefs are eliminated or marked for future elimination (as Delurin rarely attacks stronger opponents head on). He is currently content to carve out his own empire from the frontier systems of Wild Space—though he has his eyes on the Emperor's now-vacant throne and the capital system of Coruscant.

## Adventure hooks

Warlord Delurin and the *Galaxy Dragon* make wonderful recurring villains in a New Republic STAR WARS campaign. With a powerful ship and a small area of space to call his own, Delurin presents PCs with an enemy who isn't tied to the Imperials—something that will become increasingly important as the Battle of Endor slips further into history. Here are a few ways Delurin can come in conflict with PCs:

1. The *Galaxy Dragon* is always on the look-out for Rebel (New Republic) ships. In this scenario, a New Republic ship carrying an important diplomat is intercepted and damaged by the *Galaxy Dragon*. The ship crashes on a strange planet in the uncharted regions of Wild Space, with Warlord Delurin and his men close behind. New Republic PCs must locate the wreck and rescue the diplomat and his staff before the dragon troopers reach them.

2. The planet Miko is very close to joining the New Republic but as the deal is about to be finalized, the *Galaxy Dragon* arrives. The Mikoans, who faced the terrors of this warship once before, are paralyzed with fear. Only the New Republic diplomatic core and its team of special-operative PCs have any hope of driving off Warlord Delurin and his ship. This scenario can be approached in a number of ways. For example, the PCs could be selected to rally the Mikoans and convince them to defend



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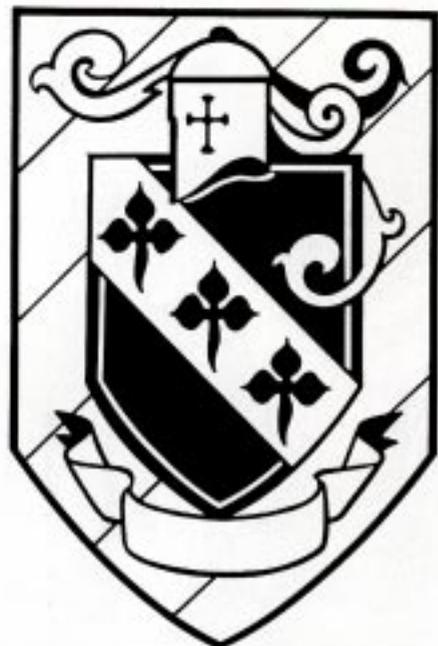
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n an ancient time, the beginning of the world . . .

I knew the four would come. My urgent plea had brought them. Whatever their motives—and, among this diverse group, I knew those motives

were mixed—they were here.

They were the best. The very best.

I stood in the door of the Bitter Ale Inn and, surveying them, my heart was easier than it had been in many, many days.

The four did not sit together. Of course, they didn't know each other, except perhaps by reputation. Each sat at his or her own table, eating and drinking quietly, not making a show of themselves. They didn't need to. They were the best. But though they said nothing with their mouths—using them for the bitter ale so famous in these parts—they were putting their eyes to work: sizing each other up, taking each other's measure. I was thankful to see that each seemed to like what he or she saw. I wanted no bad blood between members of this group.

Sitting at the very front of the inn, short in stature but large in courage, was Orin. The dwarf was renowned through these parts for his skill with his ax, but then so were most dwarves. His blade, Splithair, lay on the table before him, where he could keep both an eye and a loving hand on it. Orin's true talent lay beneath a mountain, as the saying went. He had traversed more dragon caves than any other dwarf who ever lived. And he had never once lost his way, either there or (more important) back out again. Many a treasure-hunter owed his life—and about a third of the treasure—to his guide, Orin Dark-Seer.

Seated near the dwarf, at the best table the Bitter Ale had to offer, was a woman of incredible beauty. Her hair was long and black as a moonless night; her eyes drank in men's souls like the dwarf was drinking ale. The tavern's regulars—a sorry lot of ne'er-do-wells—would have been nosing around her, their tongues hanging out, but for the marks on her clothes.

She was well dressed, don't mistake me. The cloth she wore was the finest, most expensive velvet in all the land. Its blue color gleamed in the firelight. It was the silver embroidery on the cuffs of her robes and around the hem that warned off the cheek-pinchers and kiss-snatchers. Pentagrams and stars and intertwined circles and suchlike. Cabalistic marks. Her beautiful eyes met mine, and I bowed to Ulanda the sorceress, come all the way from her fabled castle hidden in the Blue Mist forest.

Seated near the door—as near the door as he could get and still remain in the inn—was the one member of the four I knew well. I knew him because I was the one who had turned the key in his prison cell and set him free. He was thin and quick, with a mop of red hair and green, roguish eyes that had charmed many a widow out of her life savings and left her loving him for it. Those slender fingers of his could slide in and out of a pocket as fast as his knife could cut a purse from a belt. He was good, so good he wasn't often caught. Reynard Deft-Hand had made one small mistake. He'd tried to lift a purse from me.

# The Best

by Margaret Weis

*Illustrations by Dan Frazier*

Directly across the room from Reynard—dark balancing light in the scales of creation—was a man of noble bearing and stern countenance. The regulars left him alone, too, out of respect for his long and shining sword and the white surcoat he wore, marked with a rose. Eric of Truestone, Knight of the Rose, a holy paladin. I was as amazed to see him as I was pleased. I had sent my messengers to the High Clerist's Tower, begging the Knights for aid. I knew they would respond—they were honor-bound. But they had responded by sending me their best.

All four the best, the very best. I looked at them and I felt awed, humbled.

"You should be closing down for the night, Marian," I said, turning to the pretty lass who tended bar.

The four dragon-hunters looked at me, and not one of them moved. The regulars, on the other hand, took the hint; they quaffed their ale and left without a murmur. I hadn't been in these parts long—newly come to my job—and, of course, they'd put me to the test. I'd been forced to teach them to respect me. That had been a week ago and one of the men, so I heard, was still laid up. Several of the others winced and rubbed their cracked heads as they hurried past me, all politely wishing me good-night.

"I'll lock the door," I said to Marian.

She too left, also wishing me—with a saucy smile—good-night. I knew well she'd like to make my good night a better one, but I had business.

When she was gone, I shut and bolted the door. This clearly made Reynard nervous (he was already looking for another escape route), so I came quickly to the point.

"No need to ask why you're here. You've each come in response to my plea for help. I am Gondar, King Frederick's seneschal. I am the one who sent you the message. I thank you for your quick response and I welcome you . . . well, most of you"—I cast a stern glance at Reynard, who grinned—"to Fredericksborough."

Sir Eric rose and made me a courteous bow. Ulanda looked me over with her wonderful eyes. Orin grunted. Reynard was jingling coins in his pocket. The regulars would be out ale money tomorrow, I guessed.

"You all know why I sent for you," I continued. "At least, you know part of the reason. The part I could make public."

"Please be seated, Seneschal," said Ulanda, with a graceful gesture. "And tell us the part you couldn't make public."

The knight joined us, as did the dwarf. Reynard was going to, but Ulanda warned him off with a look. Not the least bit offended, he grinned again and leaned against the bar.

The four waited politely for me to go on.

"I tell you this in absolute confidentiality," I said, lowering my voice. "As you know, our good king Frederick has journeyed to the north on invitation from his half-brother, the Duke of Northampton. There were many in the court who advised His Majesty not to go. None of us trust the twisting, covetous duke. But His Majesty was ever a loving sibling, and north he went. Now our worst fears have been realized. The duke is holding the king hostage, demanding in ransom seven coffers filled with gold, nine coffers filled with silver, and twelve coffers filled with precious jewels."

"By the eye of Paladine, we should burn this duke's castle to the ground," said Eric of the Rose. His hand clenched over his sword's hilt.

"We would never see His Majesty alive again." I shook my head.

"This is not why you brought us here," growled Orin. "Not to rescue your king. He may be a good king, for all I know, but . . ." The dwarf shrugged.

"Yes, but you don't care whether a human king lives or dies, do you, Orin?" I said with a smile. "No reason you should. The dwarves have their own king."

"And there are some of us," said Ulanda softly, "who have no king at all."

I wondered if the rumors I'd heard about her were true, that she lured young men to her castle and kept them until she tired of them, then changed them into wolves, forced to guard her dwelling. At night, it was said, you could hear their howls of anguish. Looking into those lovely eyes, I found myself thinking, *It might just be worth it!*

I wrenched myself back to the business at hand.

"I have not told you the worst," I said. "I collected the ransom. This is a wealthy kingdom. The nobles dipped into their treasuries. Their lady wives sacrificed their jewels. The treasure was loaded into a wagon, ready to be sent north when . . ."

I cleared my throat, wished I had drawn myself a mug of ale. "A huge red dragon swept out of the sky, attacked the treasure caravan. I tried to stand and light, but"—my face burned in shame—"I've never known such paralyzing fear. The next thing I knew, I was face-first on the ground, shivering in terror. The guards fled in panic.

"The great dragon settled down on the King's Highway. It leisurely devoured the horses, then, lifting the wagon with all the treasure in its claws, the cursed beast flew away."

"Dragon-fear," said Orin, as one long experienced in such things.

"Though it has never happened to me, I've heard the dragon-fear can be devastating." Sir Eric rested his hand pityingly on mine. "It was foul magic that unmanned you, Seneschal. No need for shame."

"Foul magic," repeated Ulanda, casting the knight a dark look. I could see she was thinking what an excellent wolf he would make.

"I saw the treasure." Reynard heaved a gusty sigh. "It was a beautiful sight. And there must be more, lots more, in that dragon's lair."

"There is," said Orin. "Do you think yours is the only kingdom this dragon has robbed, Seneschal? My people were hauling a shipment of golden nuggets from our mines in the south when a red dragon—pull out my beard if it's not the same one—swooped out of the skies and made off with it!"

"Golden nuggets!" Reynard licked his lips. "How much were they worth, all told?"

Orin cast him a baleful glance. "Never you mind, Light-finger."

"The name is Deft-Hand," Reynard said, but the rest ignored him.

"I have received word from my sisters in the east," Ulanda was saying, "that this same dragon is responsible

for the theft of several of our coven's most powerful arcane artifacts. I would describe them to you, but they are very secret. And very dangerous, to the inexperienced," she added pointedly, for Reynard's sake.

"We too have suffered by this wyrm," said Eric grimly. "Our brethren to the west sent us as a gift a holy relic—a finger-bone of Vinus Solamnus. The dragon attacked the escort, slaughtered them to a man, carried away our artifact."

Ulanda laughed, made a face. "I don't believe it! What would the dragon want with a moldy old finger-bone?"

The knight's face hardened. "The finger-bone was encased in a diamond, big around as an apple. The diamond was carried in a chalice made of gold, encrusted with rubies and emeralds. The chalice was carried on a platter made of silver, set with a hundred sapphires."

"I thought you holy knights took vows of poverty," Reynard insinuated slyly. "Maybe I should start going to church again."

Eric rose majestically to his feet. Glaring at the thief, the knight drew his sword. Reynard sidled over behind me.

"Hold, Sir Knight," I said, standing. "The route to the dragon's lair leads up a sheer cliff with nary a hand- or foothold in sight."

The knight eyed Reynard's slender fingers and wiry body. Sheathing his sword, Eric sat back down.

"You've discovered the lair!" Reynard cried. He was trembling, so excited I feared he might hug me.

"Is this true, Seneschal?" Ulanda leaned near me. I could smell musk and spice. Her fingertips were cool on my hand. "Have you found the dragon's lair?"

"I pray to Paladine you have! Gladly would I leave this life, spend eternity in the blessed realm of my god, if I could have a chance to fight this wyrm!" Eric vowed. Lifting a sacred medallion he wore around his neck, he kissed it to seal his holy oath.

"I lost my king's ransom," I said. "I took a vow neither to eat nor to sleep until I had tracked the beast to its lair. Many weary days and nights I followed the trail: a shining coin fallen to the ground, a jewel spilled from the wagon. The trail led straight to a peak known as Black Mountain. A day I waited, patient, watching. I was rewarded. I saw the dragon leave its lair. I know how to get inside."

Reynard began to dance around the tavern, singing and snapping his long lingers. Eric of the Rose actually smiled. Orin Dark-Seer ran his thumb lovingly over his ax-blade. Ulanda kissed my cheek.

"You must come visit me some night, Seneschal, when this adventure is ended," she whispered.

The four of them and I spent the night in the inn and were up well before dawn to begin our journey.

Black Mountain loomed before us, its peak hidden by a perpetual cloud of gray smoke. The mountain is named for its shining black rock, belched up from the very bowels of the world. Sometimes the mountain still rumbles, just to remind us that it is alive, but none living could remember the last time it spewed flame.

We reached it by late afternoon. The sun's rays shone red on the cliff-face we would have to climb. By craning the neck, one could see the gaping dark hole that was the

entrance to the dragon's lair.

"Not a handhold in sight. By Paladine, you weren't exaggerating, Seneschal," said Eric, frowning as he ran his hand over the smooth black rock.

Reynard laughed. "Bah! I've climbed castle walls that were as smooth as milady's . . . well, let's just say they were smooth."

The thief looped a long length of rope over his shoulder. He started to add a bag full of spikes and a hammer, but I stopped him.

"The dragon might have returned. If so, the beast would hear you driving the spikes into the rock." I glanced upward. "The way is not far, just difficult. Once you make it, lower the rope down to us. We can climb it."

Reynard agreed. He studied the cliff-face a moment, all seriousness now, no sign of a grin. Then, to the amazement of all of us watching, he attached himself to the rock like a spider and began to climb.

I had known Reynard was good, but I must admit I had not known how good. I watched him crawl up that sheer cliff-face, digging his fingers into minute cracks, his feet scrabbling for purchase, hanging on sometimes by sheer effort of will alone. I was impressed. He was the best. No other man could have made it up that cliff.

"The gods are with us in our holy cause," said Eric reverently, watching Reynard crawl up the black rock like a lizard.

Ulanda stifled a yawn and covered her mouth with a dainty hand. Orin stomped around the foot of the cliff in impatience. I continued to watch Reynard, admiring his work. He reached the entrance to the cavern, disappeared inside. In a moment he came back out, indicated with a wave of his hand that all was safe.

Reynard lowered an end of the rope to us. Unfortunately, the rope he'd brought was far too short; we couldn't reach it. Orin began to curse loudly but Ulanda laughed, snapped her fingers, spoke a word. The rope shivered and suddenly it was exactly the right length.

Eric eyed the magicked rope dubiously, but it was his only way up. He grabbed hold of it. Then, appearing to think of something, he turned to the sorceress.

"My lady, I fear your delicate hands are not meant for climbing ropes, nor are you dressed for scaling mountains. If you will forgive me the liberty, I will carry you up the cliff."

"Carry me?" Ulanda stared at him, then she laughed again.

Eric stiffened, his face went rigid and cold. "Your pardon, my lady—"

"Forgive me, Sir Knight," Ulanda said smoothly. "But I am not a weak and helpless damsel. And it would be best if you remembered that. All of you."

So saying, Ulanda drew a lacy silken handkerchief from her pocket and spread it upon the ground. Placing her feet on the handkerchief, she spoke words that were like the sound of tinkling chimes. The handkerchief became hard as steel. It began to rise slowly into the air, bearing the sorceress with it.

Sir Eric's eyes widened. He made the sign against evil.

Ulanda floated calmly up the cliff face. Reynard was on hand to assist her with the landing at the mouth of the cave. The thief's eyes bugged out of his head. He was practically drooling. We could all hear his words.

"What a second-story man you'd make! Lady, I'll give you half. . . well, a fourth of my treasure for that scrap of cloth."

Ulanda picked up the steel platform and shook it in the air. Once again, the handkerchief was silk and lace. She placed it carefully in a pocket of her robes. The thief's eyes followed it all the way.

"It is not for sale," Ulanda said, and she shrugged. "You wouldn't find it of much value anyway. If anyone touches it, other than myself, the handkerchief will wrap itself around the unfortunate person's nose and mouth, and smother him to death."

She smiled at Reynard sweetly. He eyed her, decided she was telling the truth, gulped, and turned hastily away.

"May Paladine preserve me," Eric said dourly. Laying his hands on the rope, he started to climb.

He was strong, that knight. Encased in heavy plate armor and chain mail, his sword hanging from his side, he pulled himself up the cliff with ease. The dwarf was quick to follow, running up the rope nimbly. I took my time. It was nearly evening now, but the afternoon sun had warmed the rock. Hauling myself up that rope was hot work. I slipped once, giving myself the scare of a lifetime. But I managed to hang on, heaving a sigh of relief when Eric pulled me up over the ledge and into the cool shadows of the cavern.

"Where's the dwarf?" I asked, noticing only three of my companions were around.

"He went ahead to scout the way," said Eric.

I nodded, glad for the chance to rest. Reynard drew up the rope and hid it beneath a rock for use on the way back. I glanced around. All along the sides of the cavern, I could see marks left by the dragon's massive body scraping against the rock. We were examining these when Orin returned, his bearded face split in a wide smile.

"You are right, Seneschal. This is the way to the dragon's lair. And this proves it."

Orin held up his find to the light. It was a golden nugget. Reynard eyed it covetously, and I knew then and there it was going to cause trouble.

"This proves it!" Orin repeated, his eyes shining bright as the gold. "This is the beast's hole. We've got him! Got him now!"

Eric of the Rose, a grim look on his face, drew his sword and started for a huge tunnel leading off the cavern's entrance. Shocked, Orin caught hold of the knight, pulled him back.

"Are you daft, man?" the dwarf demanded. "Will you go walking in the dragon's front door? Why don't you just ring the bell, let him know we're here?"

"What other way is there?" Eric asked, nettled at Orin's superior tone.

"The back way," said the dwarf cunningly. "The secret way. All dragons keep a back exit, just in case. We'll use that."

"You're saying we have to climb round to the other side of this bloody mountain?" Reynard protested. "After all the work it took to get here?"

"Naw, Light-finger!" Orin scoffed. "We'll go *through* the mountain. Safer, easier. Follow me."

He headed for what looked to me like nothing more

than a crack in the wall. But, once we had all squeezed inside, we discovered a tunnel that led even deeper into the mountain.

"This place is blacker than the Dark Queen's heart," muttered Eric, as we took our first few tentative steps inside. Although he had spoken in a low voice, his words echoed alarmingly.

"Hush!" the dwarf growled. "What do you mean, dark? I can see perfectly."

"But we humans can't! Do we dare risk a light?" I whispered.

"We won't get far without one," Eric grumbled. He'd already nearly brained himself on a low hanging rock. "What about a torch?"

"Torches smoke. And it's rumored there're other things living in this mountain besides the dragon!" Reynard said ominously.

"Will this do?" asked Ulanda.

Removing a jeweled wand from her belt, she held it up. She spoke no word, but—as if offended by the darkness—the wand began to shine with a soft white light.

Orin shook his head over the frailty of humans and stomped off down the tunnel. We followed after.

The path led down and around and over and under and into and out of and up and sideways and across . . . a veritable maze. How Orin kept from getting lost or mixed up was beyond me. All of us had doubts (Reynard expressed his loudly), but Orin never wavered.

We soon lost track of time, wandering in the darkness beneath the mountain. I would guess that we ended up walking most of the night. Even if we had not found the coin, we would have sensed the dragon's presence, just by the smell. It wasn't heavy or rank, didn't set us gagging or choking. It was a scent, a breath, a hint of blood and sulphur, gold and iron. It wasn't pervasive, but drifted through the narrow corridors like the dust, teasing, taunting. Just when Ulanda complained breathlessly that she couldn't stand another moment in this "stuffy hole," Orin brought us to a halt. Grinning slyly, he looked around at us.

"This is it," he said.

"This is what?" Eric asked dubiously, staring at yet another crack in the wall. (We'd seen a lot of cracks!)

"The dragon's other entrance," said the dwarf.

Squeezing through the crack, we found ourselves in another tunnel, this one far larger than any we'd found yet. We couldn't see daylight, but we could smell fresh air, so we knew the tunnel connected with the outside. Ulanda held her wand up to the wall and there again were the marks made by the dragon's body. To clinch the matter, a few red scales glittered on the ground.

Orin Dark-Seer had done the impossible. He'd taken us clean through the mountain. The dwarf was pretty pleased with himself, but his pleasure was short-lived.

We stopped for a rest, to drink some water and eat a bite of food to keep up our energy. Ulanda was sitting beside me, telling me in a low voice of the wonders of her castle, when suddenly Orin sprang to his feet.

"Thief!" The dwarf howled. He leapt at Reynard. "Give it back!"

I was standing; so was Reynard, who managed to put me between himself and the enraged dwarf.

# Macross II™

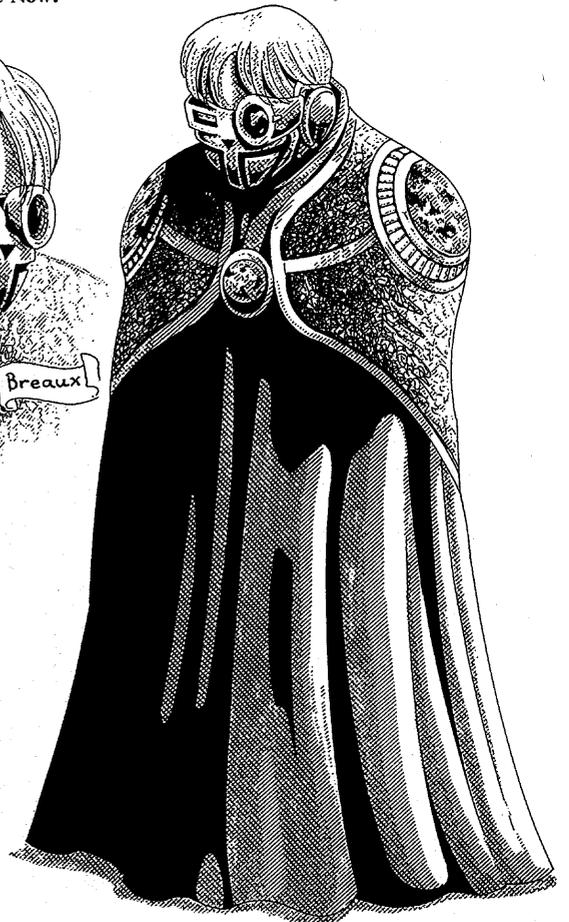
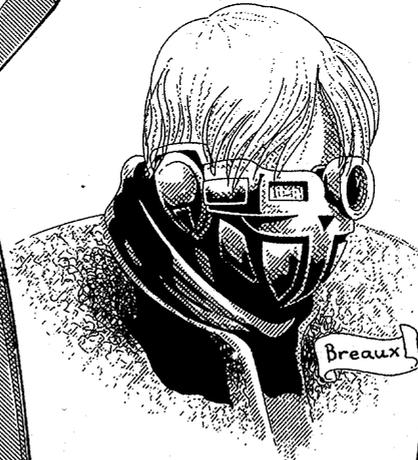
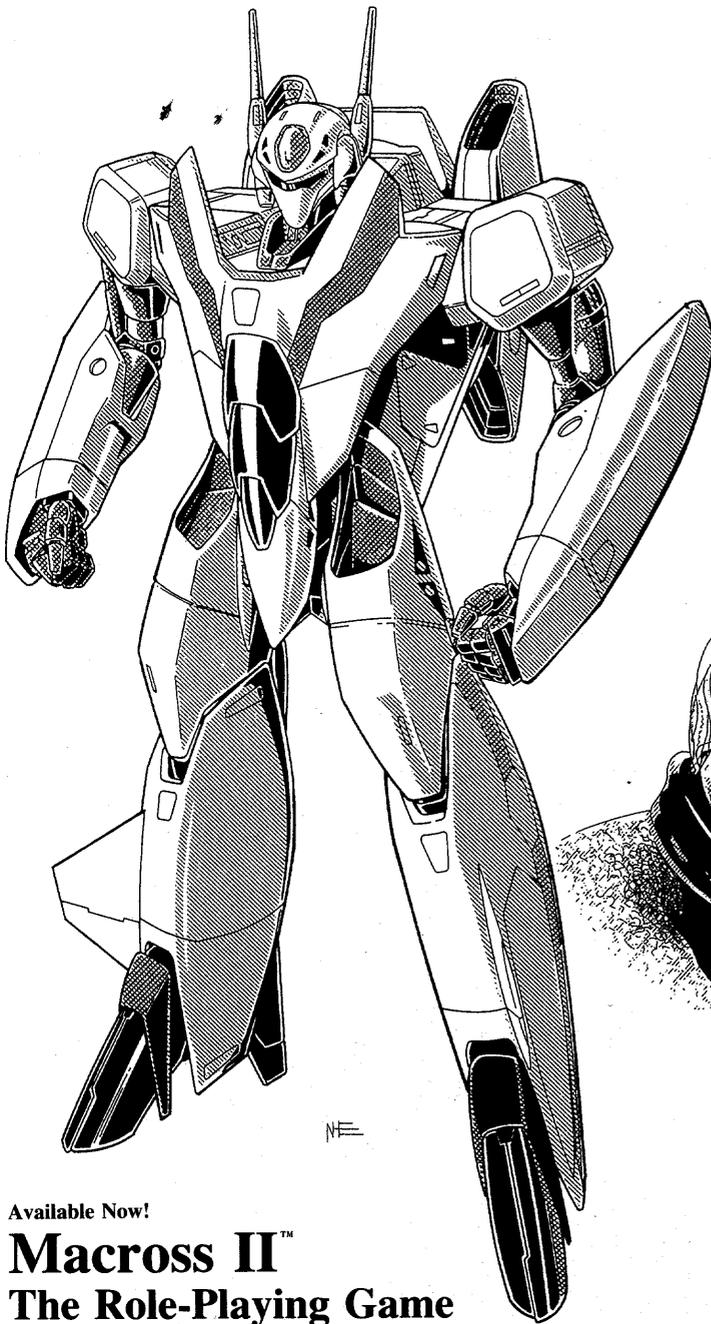
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"My gold nugget!" Orin shrieked.

"Share and share alike," Reynard said, bobbing this way and that to avoid the dwarf. "Finders keepers."

Orin began swinging that damn ax of his a bit too near my knees for comfort.

"Shut them up, Seneschal!" Eric ordered me, as if I were one of his foot-soldiers. "They'll bring the dragon down on us!"

"Fools! I'll put an end to this!" Ulanda reached her hand into a silken pouch she wore on her belt.

I think we may well have lost both thief and guide at that moment, but we suddenly had far greater problems.

"Orin! Behind you!" I shouted.

Seeing by the expression of sheer terror on my face that this was no trick, Orin whirled around.

A knight—or what had once been a knight—was walking toward us. His armor covered bone, not flesh. His helm rattled on a bare and bloodstained skull. He held a sword in his skeletal hand. Behind him, I saw what seemed an army of these horrors, though it was in reality only six or seven.

"I've heard tell of this!" Eric said, awed. "These were once living men who dared attack this dragon. The wyrm killed them and now forces their rotting corpses to serve him!"

"I'll put it out of its misery," Orin cried. Bounding forward, the dwarf struck at the undead warrior with his ax. The blade severed the knight's legs at the knees. The skeleton toppled. The dwarf laughed.

"No need to trouble yourselves over this lot," he told us. "Stand back."

The dwarf went after the second. But at that moment, the first skeleton picked up its bones, began putting itself back together! Within moments it was whole again. The skeleton brought its sword down on the dwarf's head. Fortunately for Orin, he was wearing a heavy steel helm. The sword did no damage, but the blow sent the dwarf reeling.

Ulanda already had her hand in her pouch. She drew out a noxious powder, tossed it onto the undead warrior nearest her. The skeleton went up in a whoosh of flame that nearly incinerated the thief, who had been attempting to lift a jeweled dagger from the undead warrior's belt. After that, Reynard very wisely took himself out of the way and watched the fight from a corner.

Eric of the Rose drew his sword, but he did not attack. Holding his blade by the hilt, he raised it in front of one of the walking skeletons. "I call on Paladine to free this noble knight of the curse that binds him to this wretched life."

The undead warrior dropped down in a pile of dust at the knight's feet. Orin, who had been exchanging blows with two corpses for some time and was now getting the worst of the battle, beat a strategic retreat. Ulanda with her magic and Eric with his faith took care of the remainder of the skeletal warriors.

I had drawn my sword but, seeing that my help wasn't needed, I watched in admiration. When the warriors were either reduced to dust or smoldering ash, the two returned. Ulanda's hair wasn't even mussed. Eric hadn't broken into a sweat.

"There are not another two in this land who could have done what you did," I said to them, and I meant it.





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"I am good at anything I undertake," Ulanda said. She wiped dust from her hands. "Very good," she added with a charming smile and a glance at me from beneath her long eyelashes.

"My god Paladine was with me," Eric said humbly.

The battered dwarf glowered. "Meaning to say my god Reorx wasn't?"

"The good knight means nothing of the sort." I was quick to end the argument. "Without you, Orin Dark-Seer, we would be food for the dragon right now. Why do you think the skeleton men attacked us? Because we are drawing too near the dragon's lair, and that is due entirely to your expertise. No other man in this land could have brought us this far safely, and we all know it."

At this, I glanced pointedly at Eric, who took the hint and bowed courteously, if a bit stiffly, to the dwarf. Ulanda rolled her lovely eyes, but muttered something gracious.

I gave Reynard a swift kick in the pants and the thief reluctantly handed over the golden nugget, which seemed to mean more to the dwarf than our words of praise. Orin thanked us all, of course, but his attention was on the gold. He examined it suspiciously, as if worried that Reynard might have tried to switch the real nugget with a fake. The dwarf bit down on it, polished it on his doublet. Finally certain the gold was real, Orin thrust it beneath his leather armor for safekeeping.

So absorbed was the dwarf in his gold that he didn't notice Reynard lifting his purse from behind. I did, but I took care not to mention it.

As I said, we were close to the dragon's lair.

We moved ahead, doubly cautious, keeping sharp watch for any foe. We were deep, deep inside the mountain now. It was silent. Too silent.

"You'd think we'd hear something," Eric whispered to me. "The dragon breathing, if nothing else. A beast that large would sound like a bellows down here."

"Perhaps he's not home," Reynard said.

"Or perhaps it means we've come to a dead end," said Ulanda icily.

Rounding a corner of the tunnel, we all stopped and stared. The sorceress was right. Ahead of us, blocking our path, was a solid rock wall.

Orin's cheeks flushed. He tugged on his beard, cast us all a sidelong glance. "This *must* be the way," he muttered, kicking disconsolately at the rock.

"We'll have to go back," Eric said grimly. "Paladine is teaching me a lesson. I should have faced the wyrm in honorable battle. None of this skulking about like a . . ."

"Thief?" Reynard said brightly. "Very well, Sir Knight, you can go back to the front door, if you want. I will sneak in by the window."

With this, Reynard closed his eyes and, flattening himself against the rock wall, he seemed to all appearances to be making love to it. His hands crawled over it, his fingers poking and prodding. He even whispered what sounded like cooing and coaxing words. Suddenly, with a triumphant grin, he placed his feet in two indentations in the bottom of the wall, put his hands in two cracks at the top, and pressed.

The rock wall shivered, then began to slide to one side! A shaft of reddish light beamed out. The thief jumped off the wall, waving his hand at the opening he'd created.

"A secret door," Orin said. "I knew it all along."

"You want to go around to the front now?" Reynard asked the knight slyly.

Eric glared at the thief, but he appeared to be having second thoughts about meeting the dragon face-to-face in an honorable fight. He drew his sword, waited for the wall to open completely so that we could see inside.

The light pouring out from the doorway was extremely bright. All of us blinked and rubbed our eyes, trying to adjust them to the sudden brilliance after the darkness of the tunnels. We waited, listening for the dragon. None of us had a doubt but that we had discovered the beast's dwelling place.

We heard nothing. All was deathly quiet.

"The dragon's not home!" Reynard rubbed his hands.

"Habbakuk is with me today!" He made a dash for the entrance, but Sir Eric's hand fell on his shoulder like doom.

"I will lead," he said. "It is my right."

Sword in hand, a prayer on his lips, the holy paladin walked into the dragon's lair.

Reynard crept right behind him. Orin, moving more cautiously, came after the thief. Ulanda had taken a curious-looking scroll from her belt. Holding it fast, she entered the lair behind the dwarf. I drew my dagger. Keeping watch behind me, I entered last.

The door began to rumble shut.

I halted. "We're going to be trapped in here!" I called out, as loudly as I dared.

The others paid no attention to me. They had discovered the dragon's treasure room.

The bright light's source was a pit of molten rock bubbling in a corner of the gigantic underground chamber. The floor of the cavern had been worn smooth by the rubbing of the dragon's enormous body. A great, glittering heap, tall as His Majesty's castle, was piled together on the cavern floor.

Gathered here was every beautiful, valuable, and precious object in the kingdom. Gold shone red in the fire-light, jewels of every color of the rainbow winked and sparkled. Silver reflected the smiles of the dragon-hunters. And, best of all, the cavern was uninhabited.

Sir Eric fell on his knees and began to pray.

Ulanda stared, open-mouthed.

Orin was weeping into his beard with joy.

But by now, the secret door had slammed shut. Not one of them noticed.

"The dragon's not home!" Reynard shrieked, and he made a dive for the treasure pile.

My treasure pile.

The thief began pawing through the gold.

My gold.

I walked up behind him.

"Never jump to conclusions," I said.

With my dagger, I gave him the death a thief deserves. I stabbed him in the back.

"I thought you should at least have a look," I said to him kindly, gesturing to my hoard. "Since you're the best."

Reynard died then— the most astonished-looking corpse I'd ever seen. I still don't think he'd quite figured things out.

But Ulanda had. She was smart, that sorceress. She guessed the truth immediately, if a bit late—even before I took off my ring of shape-shifting.

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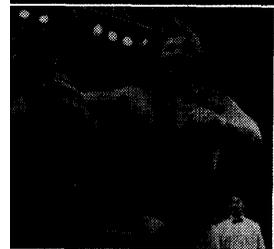
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tiny form, I could stretch out. My body grew, slowly taking on its original, immense red shape, almost filling the cavern. I held the ring up in front of her eyes.

"You were right," I told her, the jewel sparkling in what was now a claw. "Your coven did possess many powerful arcane objects. This is just one of them."

Ulanda stared at me in terror. She tried to use her scroll, but the dragon-fear was too much for her. The words of magic wouldn't come to her parched, pale lips.

She'd been sweet enough to invite me to spend the night, and so I did her a favor. I let her see, before she died, a demonstration of the magic now in my possession. Appropriately, it was one of my most prized artifacts—a necklace made out of magical wolfs teeth—that encircled her lovely neck and tore out her throat.

All this time, Orin Dark-Seer had been hacking at my hind leg with his ax. I let him get in a few licks. The dwarf hadn't been a bad sort, after all, and he'd done me a favor by showing me the weakness in my defenses. When he seemed likely to draw blood, however, I tired of the contest. Picking him up, I tossed him in the pool of molten lava. Eventually he'd become part of the mountain—a fitting end for a dwarf. I trust he appreciated it.

That left Sir Eric, who had wanted all along to meet me in honorable battle. I granted him his wish.

He faced me bravely, calling on Paladine to fight at his side.

Paladine must have busy with something else just then, for he didn't make an appearance.

Eric died in a blaze of glory.

Well, he died in a blaze.

I trust his soul went straight to Huma's breast, as the song says. It's my guess his god must have had some pretty fancy explaining to do.

They were dead now. All four.

I put out the fire, swept up the knight's ashes. Then I shoved the other two corpses out the secret door. The thief and the sorceress would take the place of the skeletal warriors I'd been forced to sacrifice to keep up appearances.

Crawling back to my treasure pile, I tidied up the gold a bit where the thief had disturbed it. Then I climbed on top, spread myself out, and burrowed deeply and luxuriously into the gold and silver and jewels. I extended my wings protectively over the treasure, even paused to admire the effect of the firelight shining on my red scales. I wrapped my long tail around the golden nuggets of the dwarves, stretched my body comfortably over the jewels of the Knights, and lay my head down on the magical treasures of the sorceress's coven.

I was tired, but satisfied. My plan had worked out wonderfully well. I had rid myself of them.

They'd been the best. The very best.

Sooner or later, separately or together, they would have come after me. And they might have caught me napping.

I settled myself onto the treasure more comfortably and closed my eyes. I'd earned my rest.

And I could sleep peacefully . . . now.

Ω

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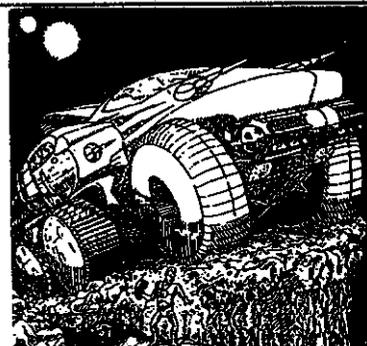
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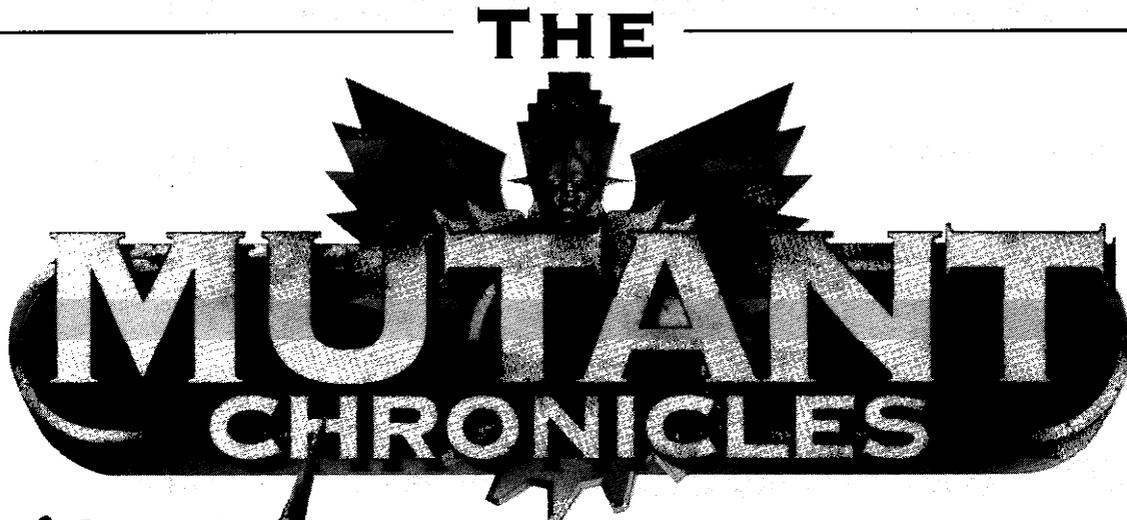
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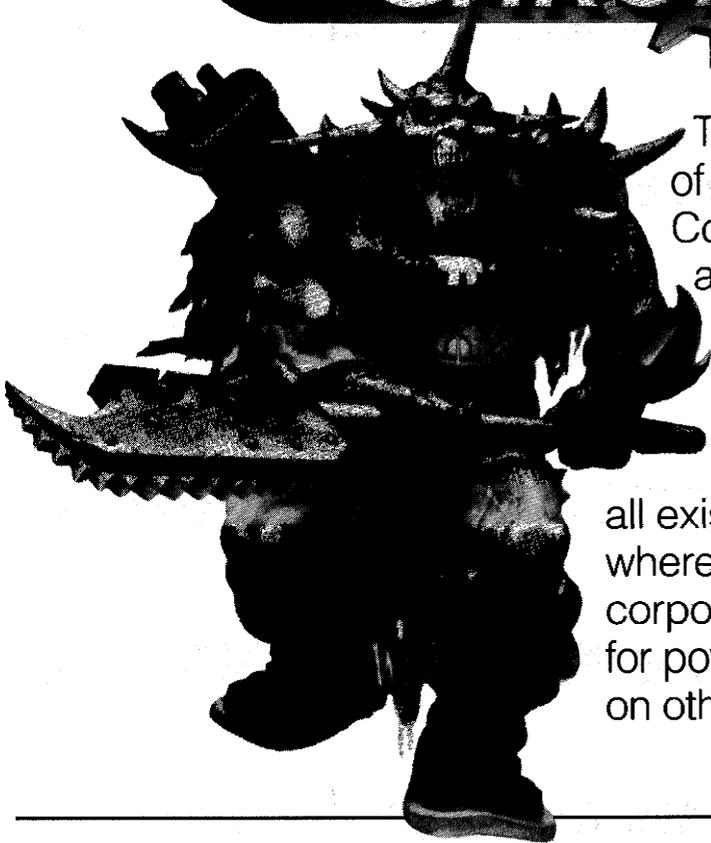
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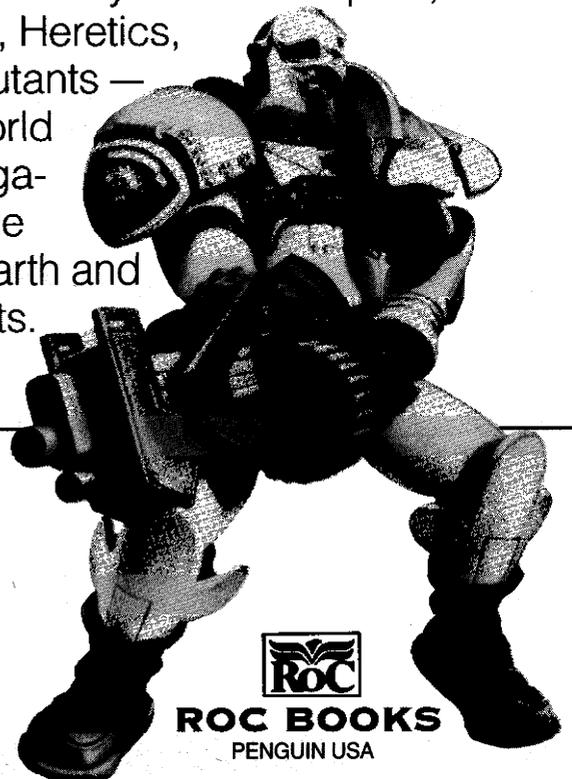
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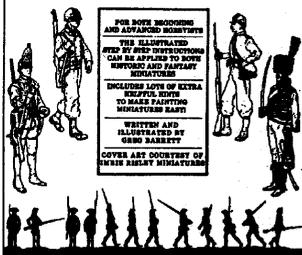
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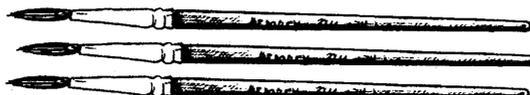
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I have been role-playing for over four years now, and since I moved to the U.S., I have been enjoying your magazine. I have played the D&D™ and AD&D® games in Colombia, my native country, and let me tell you that the D&D game is about the only role-playing game you can find there. It is surprising to see that TSR products are beginning to take a portion of the bookstores. I met people there who were interested in the game and I told them they should try it, and most of them did.

About two years ago, I found myself living in Argentina. I found a group of friends who were curious and I started running a game for them. I even created adventures for them, which they enjoyed. So as you see, my mind was focused on role-playing games.

Now I find myself in Bakersfield, California. I also find that people here think that role-playing is something for crazy people or for nerds. So I have had a hard time finding people to role-play with, but nonetheless I did. Now I face a second problem. Too many role-playing games have emerged and are competing against "the original game," as I call it. Some people think that FASA's BATTLETECH\* or SHADOWRUN\*, or Palladium's RIFTS\* game, for that matter, hold more excitement than the AD&D game. I, of course, disagree completely, but I am losing the battle. I am currently a senior in high school, but my efforts to get people interested in AD&D games are failing. It is my firm belief that there are other people out there who share my opinion and who would like to show the world that the AD&D game was meant to be the leading role-playing game and that no other will come close in comparison. I was wondering if you have any advice for people like me who want to revive the excitement of playing the AD&D game. Keep up the good work, for I think your magazine is great.

I would like to take this opportunity to salute Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman, for I have deeply enjoyed their writing. And a special thanks to Richard A. Knaak for writing *The Legend of Huma*, which is an outstanding novel.

Andres Zornosa  
Bakersfield CA

The "Forum" in DRAGON issue #193 was full of good advice. Each writer listed sound ways to overcome the various problems of gaming. It is true that the primary goal of any campaign should be for everyone involved to have fun. But the level on which they play depends on what type of people they are, and how mature they are as gamers.

Maturity in this sense has very little, if anything, to do with age or wisdom. Rather, it has to do with knowledge of the game system and the length of time one has been playing. From what I have observed in myself and my gaming friends, I have come to believe that everyone goes through a "Monty Haul" phase in gaming. My first D&D characters had scores that were through the roof. Some role-playing went on, but it wasn't very in-depth. I remember that my favorite mage had two or three *rods of wizardry*, and that my characters seemed to run across dragons just a little too often. But that was the type of game we enjoyed. The "Monty Haul" phase is a holdover from games like MONOPOLY\* or LIFE\*, in which the object is to win money and power. Some people enjoy playing power games. There is nothing wrong with this, but players tend to burn out relatively quickly.

After a year or two of playing this way, one of my close friends and I decided that we'd had enough. We moved to the AD&D system.

Now, after five years of role-playing, I feel that we have entered an entirely new phase. I usually play with only one other person. Because of this, because he and I do not "cheat," and because we generally have similar tastes, we were able to tailor the AD&D game to suit us perfectly.

To begin with, each of us plays only one character. We add NPCs when needed. We no longer roll ability scores; we simply chose them. Neither one of us is unreasonable enough to choose all 18s. Characters are little fun without *some* type of weakness. ("Why did it have to be snakes?") We've changed or added innumerable rules. We take turns being the DM. The campaign itself is a fairly high-powered mix of magic and technology. Note that even though the campaign is high powered, the adversaries our characters face are suitably tough. No dragons are slain in one round in our campaign.

Remember that these ideas are fairly drastic and would work best with trustworthy players and small groups. However, they can breathe life into a lackluster campaign, and energize players and DMs. I hope that you find this letter helpful.

Joel Patton  
Travelers Rest SC

A couple of suggestions to complement Neil McGarry's article, "Breaking Them In" about adding novice players to a gaming group (in DRAGON issue #194).

1. Rather than roll up a standard character, design one with the player. Explain the basics of your game world and tell the novice player she is going to play a character who would be a major character in a play or novel based on that world. Then have the player describe the sort of character she would like to play.

Usually, the novice's character description will be generic and vague. Use this as a guideline to build the new PC, keeping compatibility with your game world in mind. That means making the character fit in with the other PCs and your campaign, not just the rules as written in the book.

If need be, disregard random rolls and assign values for abilities and skills. Explain to the player that this method of character creation is extraordinary, and her next PC will be generated normally.

2. Run the new PC through a solo adventure or two, preferably before alignment is determined. A PC who is willing to torture a captured bandit for the location of previously stolen loot shouldn't take a good alignment. You get to see how the player behaves, without the complication of additional players. The player gets the chance to experience the game, learn what the character can and cannot do, etc., without ending up watching regular players do everything.

Avoid killing off the character before she is introduced to the regular players. The solo adventures should have defeatable villains and no poison, death traps, or death magic. The villain's goal should be to capture or incapacitate the character (allowing the PC a chance to escape), as the villain is under a "Do not kill" restriction (for example, an assassin who may kill only his primary target, who is not the PC, or a villain who is under the *geas* of a greater villain).

It is a good idea to introduce information to the new PC in the solo adventure that will be important to later group adventures. The character may encounter a key NPC during the solo adventure. When specific information is required later, the new PC knows something from this encounter that the rest of the group doesn't know, giving the new player the sense of having done something important for the game.

3. Provide the player with a general background of the campaign—a few typed sheets of major NPCs, local history and geography, a good map of the region—the sorts of things someone who grew up in the game world would know. Have the player devise a background for the character consistent with that material.

Decide how much knowledge the new character should have about the group. If the PCs have an undeservedly bad reputation in the homeland the new player chooses for her character, it might be advisable to keep the new character ignorant about the other PCs. The new character should not be predisposed to avoid or attack

the other PCs.

4. Give the new PC a mission that parallels that of the party. The stock situation where the new PC reads a notice in a tavern and signs on with the party is rather worn and highly manipulative. It puts the new PC in the position of being an employee of the other PCs.

Instead, try to give the new PC a personal reason for joining the mission. For example, the party is after an alchemical manuscript stolen by the evil wizard Rakcor the Black. In the introductory solo adventure, the new PC returned from a war to find her brother barely a day dead, murdered by slavers who took the man's wife and children. The PC finds and kills the murderer of her brother, and wins enough loot to purchase her sister-in-law and her children's freedom. The solo adventure ends with rescue of the other slaves held by the slavers.

Of course, the children were taken to serve in the household of a wizard known as Rakcor the Black, so the party and the new PC should be able to come to an understanding about their common goals.

5. Provide character sheets and keep a supply of dice handy. If you supply the player with dice, see that each type of die is color coded. It's a lot easier to separate the d8 from the d10s if the d8 is blue and the d10s are red (for percentiles, one red d10 can be opaque and the other clear). The player will get the hang of associating shape with number range soon enough.

Take the time to study the character background the PC gives, within reason. You may be able to run the character without any problems. But if you see any potential headaches, don't let that character in, or suggest the player make changes appropriate to your campaign. You

don't need a new player sulking or grumbling about what the character ought to have been able to do, and the player doesn't need to see the effort of months (perhaps years) of character development slapped around by what she sees as arbitrary decisions made by you.

The best way to handle this is to explain that new characters tend to have short lifespans, especially new characters played by novice players. Suggest that the player run a simple character to learn the rules first. Even people who desire to run a specific character to the exclusion of running any other characters won't object to a practice run first.

If the character dies early on, try a few other character classes or races. Often novice players can handle only one or two classes at first.

S. D. Anderson  
Norwalk CA

My local library is one of the few that carries DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® materials—at least it did. The library has an electronic catalog that gives the location of works. Of the fifteen or so titles under "Dungeons and Dragons," all were listed as overdue or missing.

This is a very bad practice to follow. The library exists to provide enjoyment to all, not a select few. This also reflects very badly on everyone who plays the game.

Since nearly everyone who plays the AD&D game reads DRAGON Magazine at least occasionally, I felt this would be a good way to ask for this practice to cease. It is very difficult to get respect for our hobby if some people act irresponsibly.

Jeremiah Coleman  
Bremerton WA

Is it just me, or would no archmage in his right mind choose to become a lich? No archmage, at least, with access to the *magic jar* spell. Why become a rotting corpse that walks, talks, and casts spells when you can regain your youth by forcing some poor peasant's life force into a gem?

Better yet, why wouldn't a mage, as soon as he reaches 9th-level, *magic jar* into a 4th-level fighter (85% chance of success)? Or, if the mage doesn't value inconspicuousness, he could always find an ogre (giving a whole new meaning to the words "ogre mage").

If a mage is hurting for money, he could always *magic jar* into a rich merchant's son or maybe even a young noble or prince. Picky mages could "sculpt" their new bodies with a *polymorph* other spell before entering them. Mages who enjoy variety could switch bodies on a regular basis, their old bodies dying in mysterious accidents. More conservative mages would carefully choose their persona&looking for wealth and power, health, or inconspicuousness—and switching bodies only once every few decades. Even good-aligned mages could get into the act by taking the bodies of young murderers and villains after polymorphing their bodies into less-hated forms.

The *magic jar* spell lasts until the gem is destroyed, so if a mage keeps his *magic jar* gem safe, he wouldn't even have to worry about unnatural death. The mage's life force would revert to the gem, where he could possess another body.

Powerful mages would be immortal, leaping from body to body throughout time. Transmuters, illusionists, and enchanters would be rare, with most mages choosing a specialty allowing the acquisition of a *magic jar* spell. Archmages would not become liches in isolated towers, but merchants and young nobles in large cities, friendly peasants, and strong warriors.

If other DRAGON readers have any thoughts on how the *magic jar* or any other spell would affect an AD&D campaign world, I encourage them to write.

Eric Burns  
West Buxton ME

Les Bowman's letter in DRAGON issue #197's "Forum" about habitually tardy players is a problem that occasionally crops up in local campaigns. The following solution worked well. We had been having a situation in which certain players would show up late, sometimes as much as two hours for a weeknight game! However, this problem virtually disappeared after the DM started giving experience point bonuses for those who showed up on time. As I remember, players in their seats and ready to go at the appointed time got 100 XP/level added onto their totals at the end of the session. If the DM was late, all players present when he showed up got the bonus (the DM, after all, should set a good example). Players who habitually skipped or showed up late would soon find their characters falling behind in terms of level advancement. Most either changed their behavior or stopped coming entirely, and the campaign was much improved.

Jon Pickens  
TSR, Inc.  
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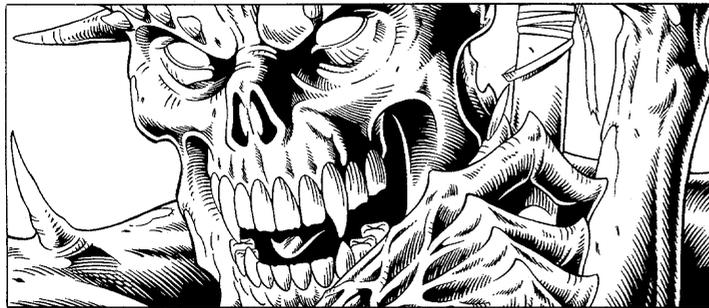
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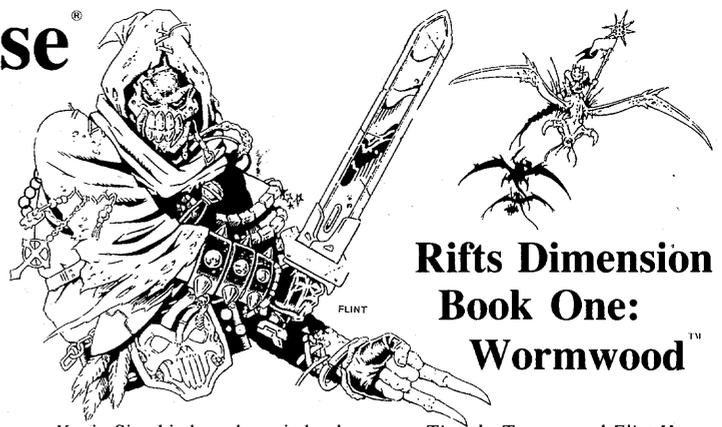
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# ELMINSTER'S notebook

## #1: Lord Kuldak Maurancz

Written by Ed Greenwood  
Artwork by Gary M. Williams

*We begin a new series of articles in this issue, courtesy of the Sage of Shadowdale, Elminster, and his Earthly associates (noted above). With permission of the Sage, we present some of the notes and observations he has made during his years of wandering the Realms. Dungeon Masters may make use of this material in designing short adventures for campaigns in any game world.*

### Lord Kuldak Maurancz

Cragmyr Keep is a crumbling fortified manor on a hill crest beside the Trade Way, a day's ride south of Beregost. It stands west of the road, within smell (if not sight) of the Sword Coast, where precipitous cliffs rise above jagged rocks. The keep is surrounded by the farming village of Cragmyr, home to about 340 people.

Cragmyr is a peaceful place, thanks to its general poverty and the vigilance of its farmers, who mount a continual boundary patrol. They grow broadleaf, thumbknuckles, greenneedles, and cabbages<sup>1</sup>. For their cooking pots, the farmers supplement the chickens they raise by slinging down gulls, dundoves, and other birds that settle on their crops. Most of Cragmyr's produce is bought by passing merchants for sale in Amn or to ship-captains calling at Baldur's Gate. The villagers dwell in low sod-walled homes. They own mules and a few small oxen.

But all is not pastoral tranquility. A shadow lies over Cragmyr. Their lord, Kuldak Maurancz, lost both his sons in orc raids some five summers ago<sup>2</sup>, and his keep is thought to be haunted by their restless souls.

When I visited Lord Maurancz, he was grim and tired, all life's fire seemingly gone out of him. Once known as Kuldak "the Lion," he led an adventuring band<sup>3</sup> that slew orcs and trolls by the score to make northern Amn the (relatively) safe place it is today. Now he's a stooped, wrinkled, weary old man.

Maurancz dwells alone in the keep; five servants see to his needs in daylight, but by night he sleeps in his upper tower room or rereads the accounts of adventures he wrote long ago. I dipped into

them: good, colorful stuff, though they'll disappoint those looking for "treasure hidden here" clues. Though Maurancz is still wealthy, much of his coin has been spent on the welfare of the folk of Cragmyr. He no doubt has a vault under the keep where his magical items lie (splendid enchanted armor, a *mace of disruption*, and a *sword of sharpness*, as I recall, plus some gewgaws that reports of the Lion's battle-valor didn't dwell on).

Locals think the souls of Maurancz's sons, Blaurdyr and Delttar, walk the halls and battlements of the keep by night. They've seen silent armored figures walking in the moonlight when they knew the lord was elsewhere.

As I suspected, these "ghostly warriors" are helmed horrors<sup>4</sup> under Maurancz's control. His warning ward<sup>5</sup> alerts him when intruders enter certain areas, and he ironically hinted that "magical defenses" prevent undead from entering the keep.

Maurancz is lonely but proud. He won't welcome any passing noble, minstrel, or rich merchant just to pass an evening if he doesn't like the look of the person. He can size up any newcomers while downing his customary evening sherry in The Old Plough, the village's only tavern.

I think he was a little in awe of me, but he made me welcome and served me fine old Calishite and Amnian wines, much better than the tongue-rinse they bottle these days. He was full of queries as to why this foe acted thus or that event befell, in his adventuring days. Happily, I was able to give him more answers than he'd hoped for; we were both well content with the evening's converse.

The bed he guided me to was cold and dusty (I fixed that with a minor cantrip and sent the same to his bedchamber), but no haunts or phantoms disturbed my rest. As I need no sleep, I spent the pleasant hours of darkness browsing his library of sword-swinging serials, unintentionally amusing Amnian almanacs, and even a few perfumed "meltheart" romances penned in Tethyr when such fripperies were popular among the proud, idle ladies of that now-fallen court. It would have been the height of discourtesy to wander

about the keep poking into things, though I could have broken or passed the wards without my host even noticing—but I saw no hauntings.

The dead are venerated in Cragmyr Keep, though. The scratched and dented armor of both sons, preserved as it came back from the field where they fell and held assembled and upright by magic, stands in the keep's great hall. The sons lie beneath the plinths on which the suits of armor stand, and paintings of them accompany their weapons on the wall behind. The plinths bear the dates of their births and deaths and flank a smaller stone. A life-sized painting of a woman adorns the wall behind it. Presumably, this is where the Lady Istel, their mother, lies buried. If the painting tells truth, she was a comely lass.

I bowed my head to her portrait and saw that this pleased Maurancz very much. Yet he did not speak of her, and I did not think it polite to ask.

When the moon was high that night, I felt the touch of my beloved's mind. Not wishing to disturb the wards and rouse my host, I used a spell to fly out my chamber window and head toward the sea. When The Simbul and I had spoken together about certain affairs of state that required my advice, I flew leisurely back through the moonlit air toward the keep, staff in hand.

I had almost reached the courtyard walls, below me, when a gentle voice saluted me from the empty air. It was a light but spirited female voice, touched by mischief, that thanked me for my visit and asked me if the talk in the tavern was true: Was I really the great mage Elminster?

Standing on empty air, I bowed and said, "I am, Lady. Whom do I have the pleasure—?"

Then I saw a faint shimmering in the air where moonlight caught a shadow that should not be there. We stood facing each other high above the ground, the cool night breeze sliding past us. "Istel Maurancz, good sir. Be welcome in my home," she said with quiet pride. Then she hesitated, and blurted out, "Tell me, if you will—how fares my lord?"

*Continued on page 166*

# LORD KULDAK MAURANTZ OF CRAGMUR KEEP

DRAWN FROM  
LIFE DURING  
MY VISIT

A RATHER SAD  
FIGURE OF A MAN,  
OLD AND TIRED.  
LORD MAURANTZ  
LOST BOTH OF HIS  
SONS IN THE ORC  
UPRISING SOME  
FIVE SEASONS  
AGO

CRAGMUR KEEP  
IS FALLING INTO  
RUIN AROUND HIM,  
AND LOCAL FOLKS  
ARE CONVINCED IT  
IS HAUNTED BY  
THE LORD'S TWO  
DEAD SONS.  
FEW WILL WORK  
FOR HIM NOW  
OR EVEN GO  
NEAR THE  
CRUMBLING  
KEEP.

LORD  
MAURANTZ  
STILL PUTS  
ON A  
BRAVE FACE  
AND GOES OUT  
AMONG HIS  
PEOPLE, BUT  
EVEN THE  
VAST WEALTH  
HE MADE IN  
HIS  
ADVENTURING  
DAYS BUYS HIM  
FEW FRIENDS  
THESE DAYS.

LOCAL FOLK  
MAY BE  
CORRECT:  
THE OLD  
KEEP IS  
HAUNTED—  
BUT NOT  
BY THE  
TWO SONS.

WITH BOTH SONS  
DEAD, LORD  
MAURANTZ  
HAS NO ONE  
ELSE TO CARRY  
ON THE FAMILY  
NAME.







**WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY**  
Stephen D. Sullivan  
**LETTERING**  
Thom Zahler

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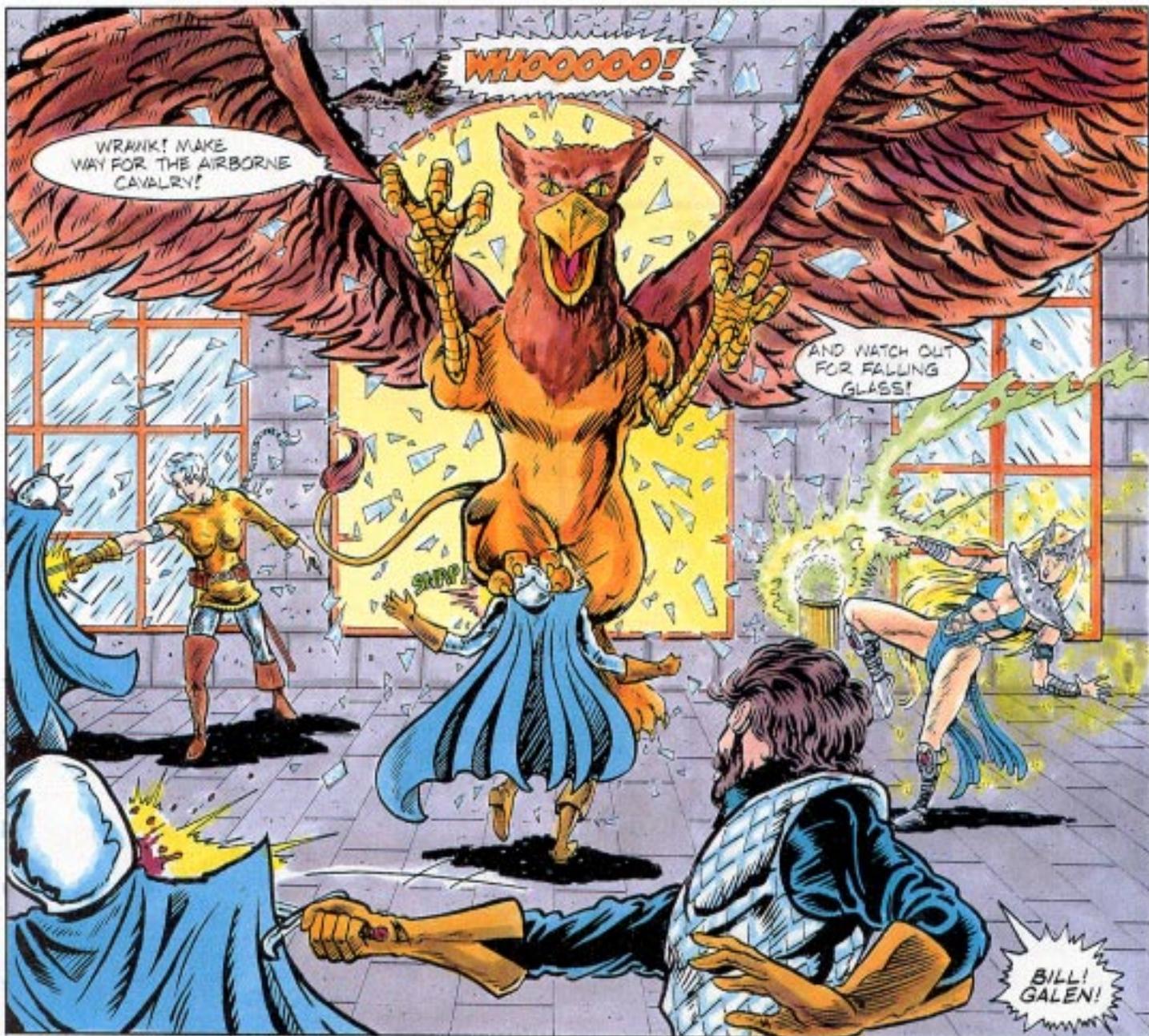
THE ISLANDS...



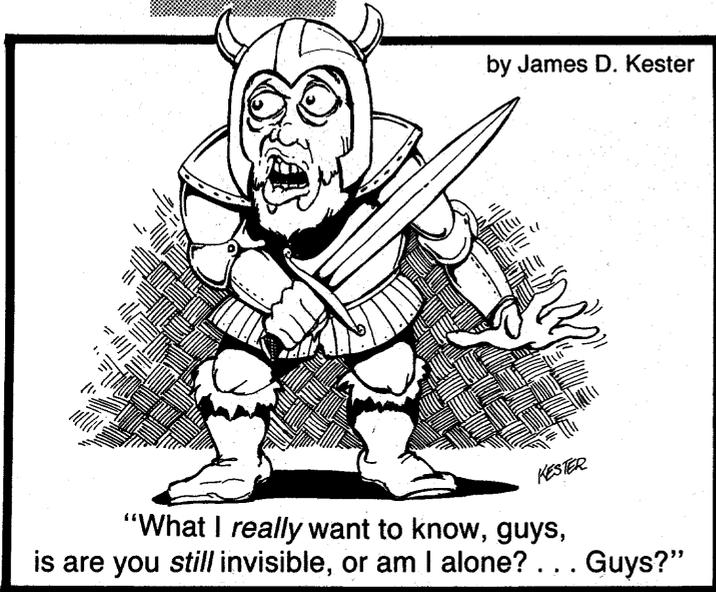
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PART 45





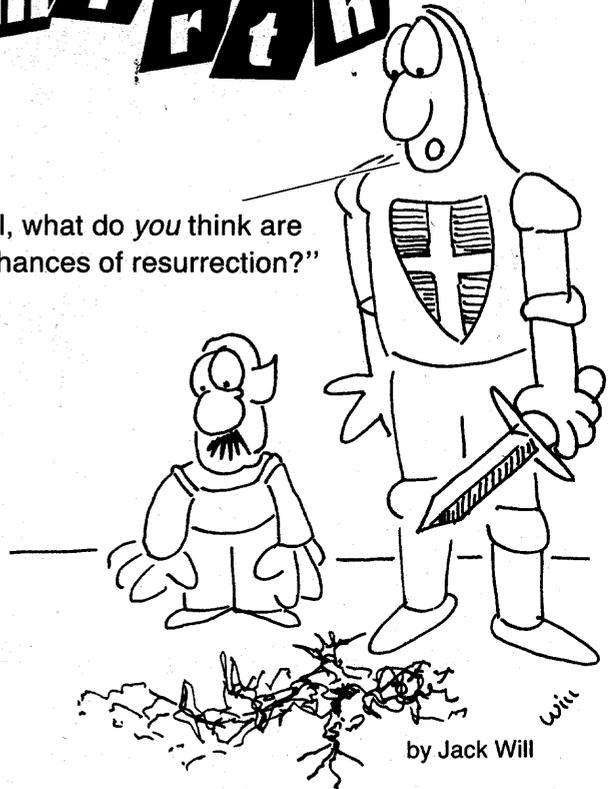
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by James D. Kester

"What I really want to know, guys, is are you *still* invisible, or am I alone? . . . Guys?"

"Well, what do you think are his chances of resurrection?"



by Jack Will

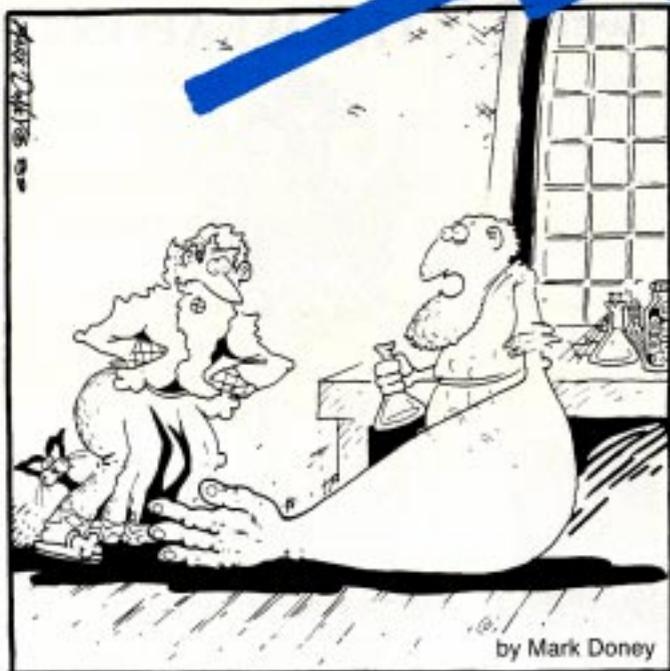
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Barbara Manui & Chris Adams



by Mark Doney

"That's the last time I use a generic growth potion!"



Hanson

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"... IT WAS DARK OUT... FOR ALL I KNEW IT COULD'VE BEEN A DRAGON!"



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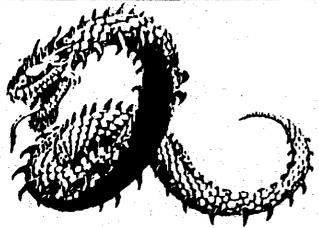
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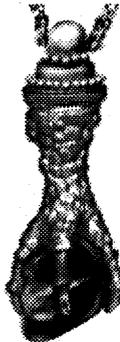
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# SNARFQUEST

BY LARRY ELMOORE

MY MY IT'S SUCH A BEAUTIFUL DAY.

CHIRP

TWEET TWEET

I THINK I'M GONNA TAKE A NICE, LONG, RESTFUL NAP.

AN HOUR LATER...

GAA! I CAN'T TAKE ALL OF THIS CHIRPING AND TWEETING!  
DON'T THESE BIRDS EVER SHUT UP!?

CHEEP CHIRP

TWEET TWEET

TWIDDER TWIDDER

I'VE HAD IT!! I'M GONNA PUT A CURSE ON THESE STUPID, PIN HEADED, FEATHER FLAPPIN', DUNG FLINGERS!

WAAK

SPOOP

SQUAK

FOREST DEEP WITH TREES SO TALL I PUT A CURSE UPON IT ALL, THAT EVERY BIRD WHO ENTERS IN, WILL NEVER SING HIS SONG AGAIN.

THROUGH THIS BLUE AND CLOUDLESS SKY I CURSE THE WINGS ON WHICH THEY FLY

POW

THESE SMALL BIRDS SO CUTE AND SWEET, NOW MUST WALK UPON THEIR FEET.

TO FLY AND SING THEY WILL FORGET, BUT I AM NOT FINISHED YET!

WHEN THEY ASK EACH OTHER, WHY? THEY WILL SPEAK AS YOU AND I.

ONE LAST CURSE I WILL BESTOW, TEN TIMES ITS HEIGHT EACH BIRD WILL GROW! 'S. THIS GOES FOR BATS TOO!



LIMP!

SPLAT!

SPLAT!



MAMA!

GAAK! Yell!

WHAT AM I DOIN' UP HERE?

HELP!

TWO MONTHS LATER

THESE WOODS ARE LOVELY, SNARF, BUT SOMETHING IS WRONG.

HOLD UP A MINUTE, SHHHH... LISTEN!

I DON'T HEAR ANYTHING...

THAT'S IT! NO BIRDS.

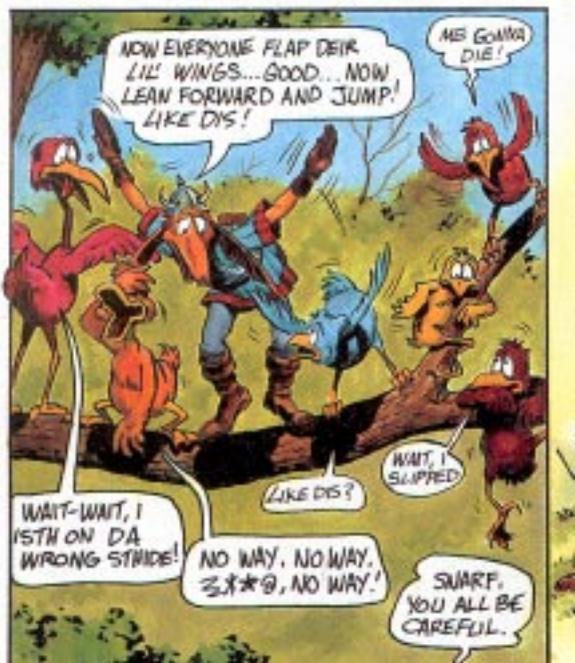
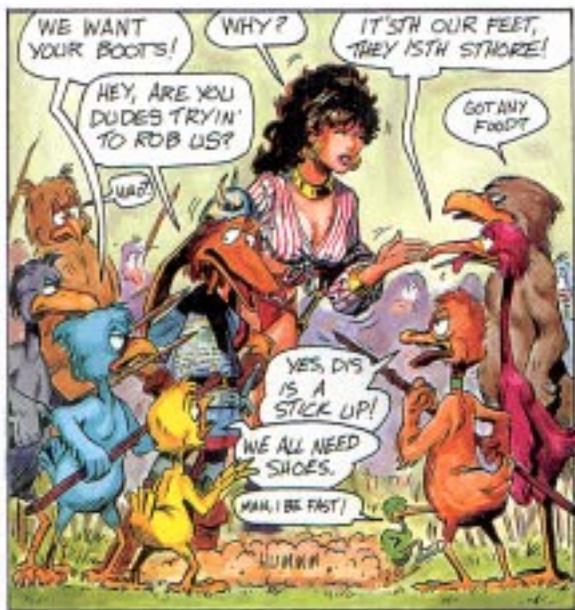
YOU'RE RIGHT, I HAVEN'T SEEN OR HEARD A BIRD ALL DAY.



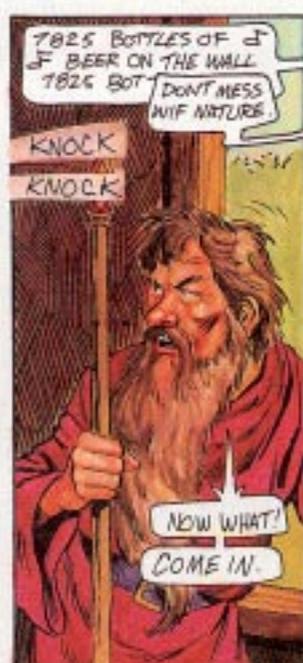
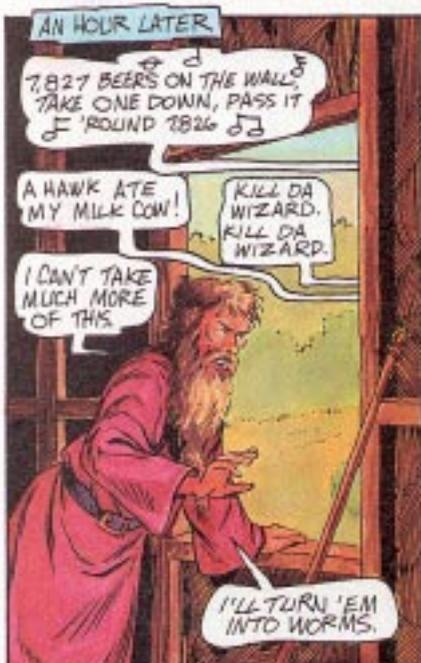
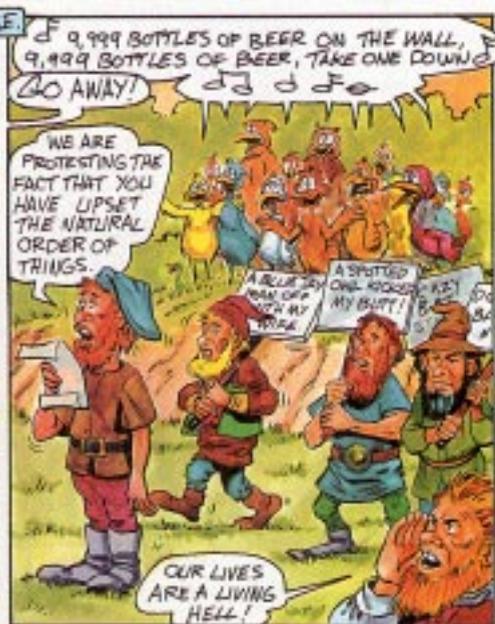
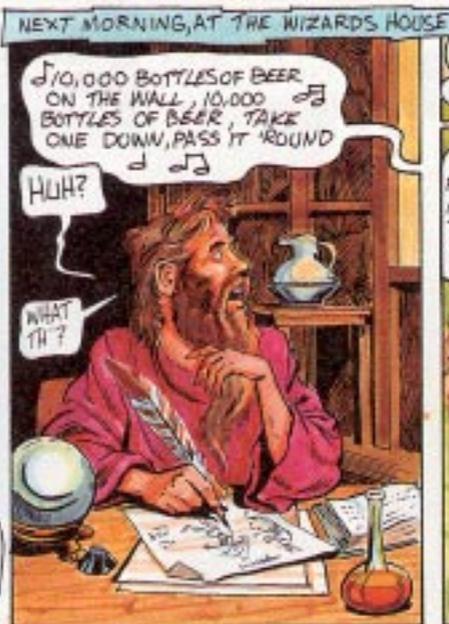
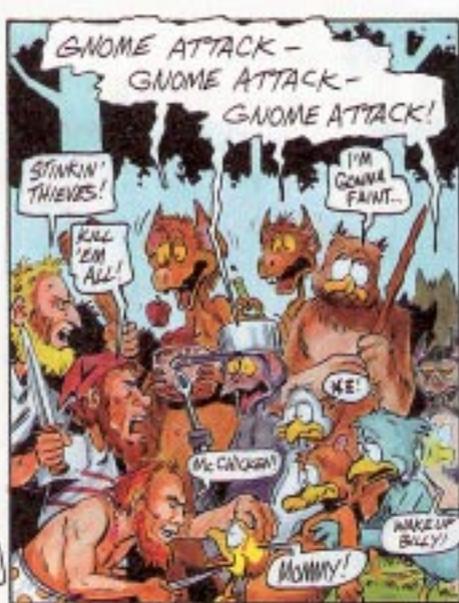
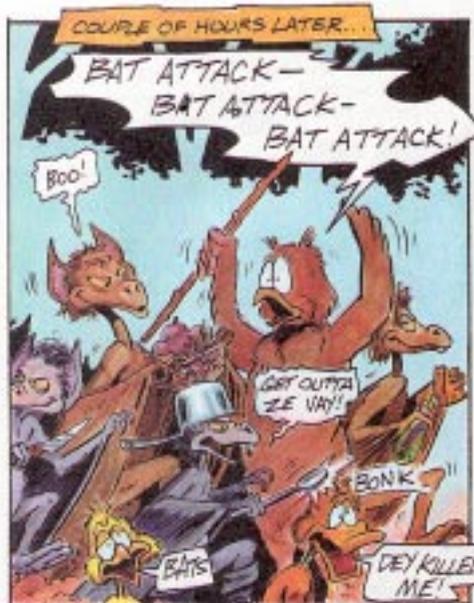
HURT? OH MY! HEH HEH...

EVERYBODY FREEZE! DON'T MOVE!

WHAT'S DIS?









SIT DOWN AND LISTEN, A FEW WEEKS AGO I WAS THROWING A PARTY,

I INVITED ALL MY VAMPIRE FRIENDS OVER BUT WHEN THEY WERE FLYING THROUGH A CERTAIN FOREST... POW! NOW THEY'RE ALL STUCK LIKE THIS!

WELL I ER. I DIDN'T. UH, THINK...

RIGHT, YOU DIDN'T THINK!

HEY DID I LOSE A FANG?  
NO.

WOE IS ME...



NOW, JUST WHAT DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD DO ABOUT THIS, MY SWEET MR. WIZARD...

DO YOU THINK THAT WE COULD... LIKE... PARTY... SAY, HERE!

PARRTY PARRTY PARRTY

TAKE ONE DA PASS IT USE

#30 DA WIZ!

OOPS!

YESSS WE PARTY, SLURP!

CHEE... EVERYONE LEAVE ME ALONE.



HELLO, ARE YOU DA WIZARD OF DEEP CREEK?

MAYBE... JUST WHO THE @\*%\* ARE YOU!

I, SIR, AM FROM DA N.W.C.B., DAT IS DA NATIONAL WIZARD CONTROL BOARD.

THE WHAT?

EEOOOO... ARE YOU IN TROUBLE NOW.

AH, WOW, YOU ARE IN IT DEEP, BUDDY.



I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THE N.W.C.B.!

THAT'S BECAUSE YOU LIVE WAY OUT HERE IN THE BOONDOCKS.

I HAVE HERE AN OFFICIAL COMPLAINT FILED AGAINST YOU. IT SAYS YOU HAVE FURTHWITH AND HITHER TO PERFORMED MAGIC CONTRARY TO DA LAWS OF NATURE...



OOOOHHH, WHAT FAVOR ARE YOU "O" POSITIVE OR "B" NEGATIVE?

MAN, ARE YOU PREPARED TO FACE THE FULL WRATH OF THE N.W.C.B.?

GAAA! STOP STOP PLEASE, I'M GOIN' CRAZY... I'LL DO ANYTHING!

REVERSE THE CURSE



LATER, IN THE CURSED FOREST...

IN THIS FOREST, WHICH I DID CURSE. NOW I PUT INTO REVERSE...

...AND DON'T BOTHER THE GNOMES... OKAY?

OKAY, THANKS, TEEBIE.

THANKS DUDE!

HEY YOU GUYS LEAVE DIS OL' WIZARD ALONE.

THANKS SMART



NOW!

BYE BYE.

CHIRP

QUACK



NEXT DAY...

SNARF, DON'T YOU THINK THE FINE THAT YOU CHARGED THAT OL' WIZARD WAS A LIL' HIGH?

MAN, MY HAIR IS A MESS!

NOW, HE WAS JUST GLAD TO GET RID OF US ALL!

OVER THE PAST TEN YEARS MANY PEOPLE HAVE ASK ME TO DO ANOTHER "SNARFQUEST". WELL I HOPE YOU HAVE ENJOYED READING THIS AS MUCH AS I HAVE DRAWING IT. THANKS. SANDRE

# Through the LOOKING Glass



©1993 by Robert Bigelow

Photographs by Mike Bethke



Starter Set (Mystic Molds)

## Holiday shopping guide, part two

Welcome to the December installment of the holiday guide to miniatures gifts. As part of my gift to you, I'm refraining from getting on the soapbox and will bring you just reviews. However, I do need to say "Goodbye" and "Thank you" to two of the people who have provided quite a number of painted figures for this column over the years. Chris Osburn and Sam White both will be leaving the area shortly. They will be sorely missed.

I want to thank everyone who painted figures for this column. I am grateful for the help. Now onto the reviews.

### Reviews

#### Mystic Molds

1565 SR 19  
Bacyrus OH 44820

#### 20-piece Starter Set

\*\*\*\*

Mystic Molds has produced a slightly different solution to the problem of layout for dungeon floors. This solution consists of hydrostone floor tiles molded to represent typical underground passageways. The set contains twenty tiles in 12 different designs. Most floor areas scale out at

10' x 10' and can be joined in a number of different ways. There are six hall sections, four small rooms or dead ends, four large areas or corridors, and the rest are sections with slots to add doors and to act as extenders. There are eight doors included with the set so there are actually 28 pieces. The doors are board construction with strap hinges molded in pewter.

The cracks are clear of fill and the rocks are well formed with visible separations. Individual sections fit together well, although the tops (e.g., the floors) do not always match. The low walls make it easy to move your miniatures, but difficult to surprise the players unless you keep opposing figures off the board until the PCs could see them. You can run the tiles in an endless loop movement (picking up the tile from the back and adding to the floor in front of the party) for regular gaming. In order to really do a large dungeon, you need several sets if you wish to avoid a lot of tile-movement time.

To be fair, this is the first of two separate sets. This set is designed for use as halls more than rooms. This set has some very good points. The price is very reasonable at \$12.95 and will allow you to purchase a couple of sets easily. The set has great potential for use as a diorama setting and is easy to work with and repair. It accepts paint well and can be sealed easily.

#### Heartbreaker Hobbies & Games

P.O. Box 105  
Folsom PA 19033

#### 9001 BLOOD BERETS game

\*\*\*\* 1/2

The BLOOD BERETS game is a dark-future miniatures game in which five different corporations and an unnamed dark force vie for control of the populated areas. The box set contains the following components:

Nine double-sided game boards, each measuring 250 mm x 168 mm and covered by 21-mm squares. Side one is a Venusian

#### Miniatures' product ratings

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

forest and the nine tiles are broken up into three subgroups of different bush layouts. Side two contains underground caves and passages that are done on a dark background with blue passages. This side also is divided into three groups of three different layouts. These differences, along with the use of some forest and caves in the same game can lead to a large number of different games and outcomes, beyond even the scenario in the book;

A tactical display map used for determining which side is in play and troop placement. The maps are all gloss-coated and printed on very heavy cardstock;

A 20-sided die for use in combat;

70 different counters that represent mines, traps, troop type and status, initiatives, and hidden movement including dummy units. The counters are all mounted on heavy cardstock.

The cards are equivalent to character sheets for each playing piece and detail all the needed attack and defense numbers. Weapon and weapon effects, with pictures and psych attacks are also covered. The cards represent Blood Beret, Dark Legion or a Bauhaus Corporation Squad. Although the Bauhaus Squad is not included in the game, they may be purchased separately;

A 32-page rulebook, with black-and-white illustrations. The book uses scenarios as well as instructions to teach the game. The rules are easy-to-understand and have a logical progression. The history of the world and "mood-setters" are set into sidebars.

The set also includes 16 plastic miniatures representing four different types of figures. The figures are scaled for the larger 28-mm scale favored by Games Workshop and Grenadier. The figures all have slot bottoms and square bases with slightly rough surfaces. The four types all have mold lines running around the sides and all should be trimmed. The figures consist of:

Eight Undead Legionnaires dressed in boots, rotting pants, and light armor, a helmet with visor, and various tubes and hoses. The faces are pulled back with eyes rolled up and teeth exposed. There is heavy armor on both shoulders. Each clenches a heavy bolter-type weapon in both bony hands. There is no flash on these figures;

Two Nepharik Overlords dressed in long pants, and wielding pikes clasped in their left hands and automatic blasters in their right hands. A bony spine is evident and three spikes jut out from his head and two from his chest. Each's face is an evil caricature of a human's. A pouch is supported by the sash and his clothes resemble priestly garments;

Two sergeants equipped with IR gear and a tool chests. Chainsaw swords and auto pistols provide defense while bandoliers of ammo are draped over their left shoulders. The armor is covered in skulls and has the Blood Berets emblem embossed on the arm shield;



**BLOOD BERETS\* game (Heartbreaker)**



**Rhino Conversion Kit (Epicast)**

Four soldiers with plain armor except for the Blood Berets insignia.

The game's combat system requires two rolls. You must roll to hit, and then roll to determine wounds. Everyone except the Overlords requires two wounds to kill. The Overlords require four. You draw your troop symbol to determine initiative. Movement is by designation and all actions are reflected by skills.

The game moves quickly and is easy to learn and teach. This is a good quick game with most of our battles taking under an hour. This set is well done and highly recommended, but a bit pricey at \$35.00.

### **Epicast USA**

Nicholas A. Tompkins  
1495 Quail Valley Run  
Oakley CA 94561-3425

### **Rhino Conversion Kit**

\*\*\*\*

The Rhino is a standard Imperial vehicle and the basic frame for a number of different conversions. This kit contains two pieces scaled to fit the standard Games Workshop Rhino. The pieces are made of epoxy and allow the modeler to convert the Rhino to a Whirlwind (from the WAR-HAMMER\* 40K vehicle book) or a Vindicator (from *White Dwarf* magazine). The cannon mounts on the front of the vehicle while the launchers attach to the top hatches.



TORG\* Vampires (Lance & Laser)

**Lance & Laser Models Inc.**

P.O. Box 14491  
Columbus OH 43214

**TORG 020 Female Vampire** \*\*\*\* ½  
**TORG 021 Male Vampire** \*\*\*\* ½

Christmas is not usually the time to cover vampires, but this is a set that I could not resist. The figures are 25-mm scale and are 23-mm tall. This means that they are slightly shorter than standard 25-mm figures. The figures are lead-free and are mounted on nondetailed oval bases. Both figures are clothed in outerwear fitting the late 1800s.

The female vampire is wearing night-wear from this period. Her feet, arms, and hands are bare except for two bracelets. The rest of her body is covered with a tassel-and-lace-trimmed nightdress. The nightdress has visible seams and is cinched at the waist by a braided belt and by a bow. The back and shoulders would be covered by the fringed shawl hanging from bent elbows. Facial detail is good, but the fangs are just a bit too evident, as is the look of anticipation.

The gentleman is dressed in creased pants, button-over shoes, and a knee-length coat with buttons. A multi-layer tie graces a double-breasted, button-down vest and a rose decorates one wide lapel. His hands are gloved and his left hand clutches the top of a walking stick. The courtesy of the old world is shown as he tips his hat at you and smiles a "toothy" grin. Facial detail is excellent including bushy eyebrows, porkchop sideburns, and a wide moustache. The nose is slightly longer than expected, as are the fangs.

These figures are excellent for early vampires. By removing the teeth or slightly reworking them, the figures are worth much more. The figures could then be used for GDW'S SPACE 1889\*, Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU\*, or TSR'S BOOT HILL® games. These figures are a good value at \$2.15.

**Palladium Books, Inc.**

12455 Universal Drive  
Taylor MI 48180

**8003 Coalition Troops #1** \*\*\*\* ½

I want to welcome Palladium to the ranks of the reviewed. The staff graciously provided me with all the RIFTS\* game material I needed to review their figures.

The Coalition set contains six pieces made of a lead-free metal manufactured by RAFM. The figures are scaled slightly bigger than 25 mm. Completed assemblies make two soldiers, a platoon leader, and an officer. All the figures have highly detailed oval bases with natural ground or pavement underfoot. The three enlisted members wear identical armor. The boots are thick-soled and the figures all have armored joints covered by round, spiked plates or thick bands. Legs and arms are



Phoenix Rising (Black Dragon Pewter)

The pieces are nice additions to a WAR HAMMER setting, but both pieces have slight flaws that need correcting. The gun barrel is pitted on the bottom and you should consider carefully drilling the barrel out more. The Games Workshop copyright symbol on the bottom of the back barrel system is obvious. The upper works were smooth on the surface and the back will require minimal work. The Whirlwind piece has quite a few small pits that make it look battle used. The copyright plaque is obvious in front. The vents are well done and the hatches have clean separations from the main body. The main failing is the visible warheads in the rocket tubes, several of which had pits or extra epoxy.

This kit will make a Rhino showpiece with some work. If you want special vehicles, then this kit is a very good deal at \$7.00. It would be easy to make a weapon swivel if you add a peg to the bottom of the launcher,

**Black Dragon Pewter**

2700 Range Road  
N. Bellmore NY 11710

**1060 Phoenix Rising** \*\*\*\* ½

Phoenix Rising is a pewter miniature of a common myth. A 34-mm bird with a red crystal heart rises from its fiery bed. This bed shows individual flames and serves as a base that is almost circular. The wings are vertical and rows of individual feathers with veining are clearly visible. The miniature has its beak open as if announcing its birth and the body is covered with a more scalelike covering. This piece had no flaws and is recommended as a good gift with its \$15.00 price tag.

joined to the upper torso by seals and the gloves are joined to the forearms. A belt is used to secure a variety of ammunition packets and containers, front and rear. Support belts for these crisscross on the front and are anchored to the powerpack on the back. The powerpack is 5-mm wide and 3-mm tall and includes a cooling fan knobs, and a visible housing. A spiked shoulder guard is on the left and a longer, smooth pad is on the right. The helmets have a vaguely discernable death's head shape that will have to be emphasized with painting. They have deep-set eyes and the platoon leader's helmet has a slightly jutting rear slope. The enlisted carry energy rifles while the platoon leader has a pistol. One soldier and the office come with separate weapons and hands that must be glued on. There is some flash on these figures and mold lines were obvious.

The officer has the same basic uniform as the soldiers, with some added features. His left boot has a knife strapped to the outside and he is wearing an extra layer of armor on his chest and abdomen. He is only carrying about half the pouches that the enlisted are wearing on their belts. He is pointing at a target while his weapon is still in the holster on his right side. The death's head is much more evident on his helmet, but the helmet is not as well done. This figure also suffers from mold lines.

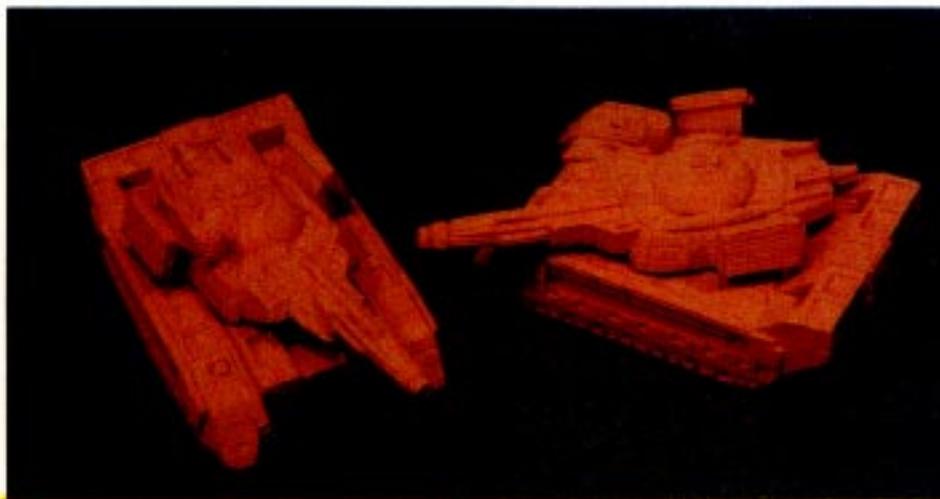
This set is usable as foot soldiers or police in other game systems. Outside of the few problems noted, the set is worth the price of \$5.95 per pack.

### 8001 Glitterboy Pack # 1 \*\* ½

I couldn't resist the temptation of putting a "Glitterboy" into a Christmas issue. The gold and silver coloring seemed particularly appropriate, and our RIFTS crew has been drooling over my copy. The problem is that the miniature does not hold up under close examination.

The miniature is scaled for 25-mm use and is made out of a lead-free substance. The package contains a suited pilot figure armed with an automatic rifle with scope resembling an M-16. The pilot figure is undersized for 25 mm, otherwise the figure matches almost exactly the illustration found on page 220 of the RIFTS rulebook. The face is smooth and has small amounts of detail. The head looks slightly wider than normal. The belt that anchors the shoulder harness will need a bit of putty as it doesn't quite reach the main strap. All the features have a slightly flat look to them.

The Glitterboy scout has a whole bunch of problems. The kit has four pieces consisting of the weapon with support and an arm, the main figure, the outer half of the engine and the ammo belt and casing. The assembly is difficult. The engine pack does not fit well and needs filling to square up. The arm peg needs to be trimmed and the hole opened slightly. The ammo belt does not line up well and trying to get it into



Rommel/Patton (Ral Partha)



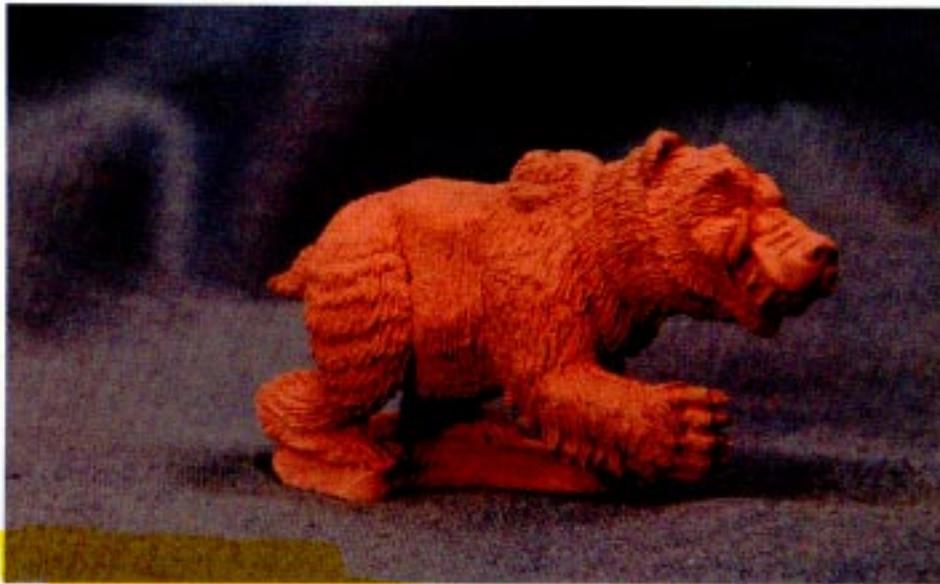
Mercury (Ral Partha)

position can cause the belt to break as you try to flex it. The suit is too big if it is supposed to be in scale with the pilot. On page 220 of the RIFTS rulebook, it shows the pilot's head in the suit's head and on page 222, it shows the pilot's knee inside the suit's knee. There is no way that the pilot could stretch between the two areas. (The suit is closer to 12 feet vs. the ten feet listed in the rulebook.) We almost had a fight in the club between our RIFTS player as to whether the gun was too short or wrong. The gun is correct piece-for-piece, but the perspective in the book and the hyperextension of the gun make it look wrong. The arm is not in a firing position and the brace is too long (see page 222). The rest of the suit matches up detail for detail but has lost something in the translation. Little details were fudged and the resulting miniature looks blocky as compared with the drawings.

While I can't recommend this miniature as a collector's item, it is a necessary piece for RIFTS. I hope this miniature will be improved upon later and produced more in-line with the book and other figure sets.

Glitterboy (Palladium)





Piasma (Ral Partha)



DRAGON MOUNTAIN™ set (Ral Partha)



DRAGON MOUNTAIN™ set (Ral Partha)

Cost of the kit is \$7.95 for a blister packed model.

### Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.

5938 Carthage Ct.  
Cincinnati OH 45212

### Minifigs

1/5 Graham Road, Southampton  
ENGLAND SO2 OAX

### 20-750 Rommel/Patton

\*\*\*\* ½

These miniatures comes two to a pack. These tanks measure 38 mm × 20 mm × 15 mm and have detachable turrets. The vehicles are made from a lead-free alloy. These miniatures are almost dead ringers for the picture on page 178 of FASA's BATTLETECH\* game's *Tech Readout 3025*, the only difference being some fine structure at the gun end. Side skirts are present, but so is a troubling mold line. Rear grillwork is also intersected by the mold line. These mold lines will require work and patience to remove.

This miniature has possibilities beyond the BATTLETECH game. For those who play FASA's STAR TREK RPG\*, the turret could easily be used as a scout, research, or light-cruiser miniature. It could be a spaceship in several other SF systems. In BATTLETECH, it would be an easy vehicle with which to assemble a very deadly lance. Replace one AC 20 with a gauss rifle, and two Pattons to chase off other vehicles or infantry using the flame-thrower and lasers. This versatility makes it worth the \$5.75 price tag.

### 20-813 Mercury

\*\*\*\* ½

The Mercury is a 20-ton 'mech that was designed for a reconnaissance role and introduced modular construction to the Inner Sphere. This miniature is 32 mm × 25 mm at the shoulders, and is a two-piece kit. The upper body and arms fit over the leg and engine assemblies. These pieces do not quite line up and either gap-filling cement or putty will be needed to smooth the body gaps and imperfections. The base is an undetailed oval with a center mold line. A mold line is visible on the legs and shoulders, but is easily fixed. With the exception of some gaps, it looks just like the illustration on page 16 of the *Tech Readout 2750*.

For those of you who want a fast reconnaissance 'mech and do not mind the loss of jump capability, the heavy armor makes this a recommended 'mech. The set comes one to a pack for \$4.00 and is recommended even with the needed filling.

### 20-532 Piasma (para-normal bear)

\*\*\*\* ½

What do you get when you combine a grizzly bear with a Mack truck? This 28-mm scale Ralidium bear looks like the answer to that riddle. The figure is 48 mm from head to tail and 25 mm from ground to mid-hump. Long, straight hair covers much of the body with short overlapping

# FEAR THE NIGHT!

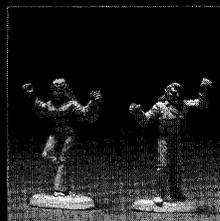
RAL PARTHA IS PROUD TO INTRODUCE TWO NEW LINES OF MINIATURES FOR WHITE WOLF GAME STUDIO.

## VAMPIRE

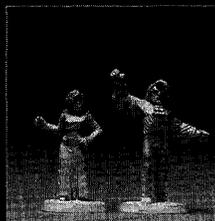
### The Masquerade™



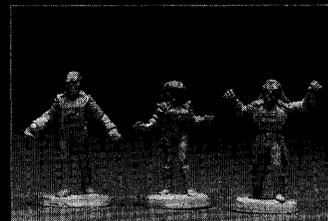
69-200 Brujah Vampire Pack



69-201 Gangrel Vampires



69-203 Ventrue Vampires



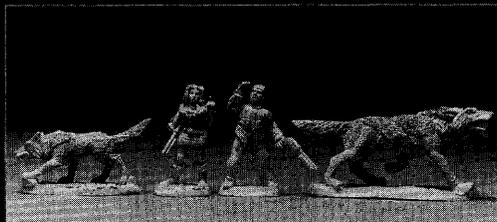
69-204 Sabbat Vampires

## WEREWOLF

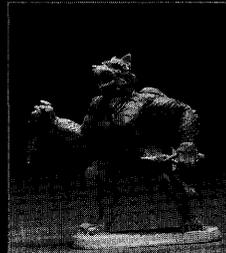
### The Apocalypse



69-001 Glasswalkers- Crinos form



69-003 Glasswalkers- Homid, Hispo, & Lupus forms



69-004 Silver Fangs- Crinos form



69-005 Silver Fangs-Glabro form - Male and Female

#### DUE IN MAY

- 69-001 Glasswalkers- Crinos form (1)
- 69-002 Glasswalkers- Male & Female Glabro form (2)
- 69-003 Glasswalkers- Homid, Hispo, & Lupus forms (4)
- 69-004 Silver Fangs- Crinos form (1)
- 69-005 Silver Fangs- Male & Female Glabro form (2)
- 69-006 Silver Fangs-Homid, Hispo & Lupus forms (4)

- \$3.00
- \$4.25
- \$7.00
- \$3.00
- \$4.25
- \$7.00

#### DUE IN JUNE

- 69-200 Brujah Vampire Pack (4)
- 69-201 Gangrel Vampires- Male & Female (2)
- 69-202 Tremere Vampires- Male & Female (2)
- 69-203 Ventrue Vampires- Male & Female (2)
- 69-204 Sabbat Vampires (3)
- 69-205 Vampire Hunters (3)

- \$7.00
- \$4.25
- \$4.25
- \$4.25
- \$5.50
- \$5.50

#### DUE IN JULY

- 69-007 Black Fury-Crinos, Hispo & Lupus forms (3) \$7.00
- 69-008 Black Fury-Female: Homid & Glabro form (2) \$4.25
- 69-009 Black Fury-Male: Homid and Glabro form (2) \$4.25
- 69-010 Black Spiral Dancers- Crinos, Hispo & Lupus forms (3) \$7.00
- 69-011 Black Spiral Dancers- Female Metis: Homid & Glabro (2) \$4.25
- 69-012 Black Spiral Dancers- Male Metis: Homid & Glabro (2) \$4.25

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Ral Partha miniatures are also available from...

United Kingdom: MINIFIGS- 1/5 Graham Road,  
Southampton, England, SO2 OAX

Canada: RAFM- 20 Park Hill Road East, Cambridge,  
Ontario, Canada, N1R1P2

France: JEUX DESCARTES- 1 rue du Colonel Pierre Avia,  
Paris Cedex 15, 75503 France

waves on the haunches and neck. Hair detail is excellent. The mold line runs down the raised spine and cuts through the stubby, furry tail. Pads and curved claws define the paws as potent weapons. The facial detail consists of a furled brow, snarling expression, wrinkled nose, and visible tusks. The bear is swiping at a target.

This piece could be used in AD&D® or GAMMA WORLD® games or any number of games as a mutated or magical predator. It's recommended at the price of \$4.95 per figure.

#### 10-514 DRAGON MOUNTAIN™ \*\*\*\*\*

The DRAGON MOUNTAIN miniatures set is designed to bring your AD&D game boxed set to life. The set contains 19 pieces that form 10 different miniatures of seven different types. The set is 25-mm scale and is made of Ralidium. All figures, except for the spiders, are based on top-detailed oval bases. The miniatures consist of the following types:

There are two brain spiders each consisting of two parts. The spider body is 37-mm long × 30-mm wide. The convoluted body looks like a brain. The legs are hairy and have three jointed segments with hard spikes for feet. The mandibles and eyes are clearly molded and visible, as is the mouth. The spiders have "graft weapons" ability and this is demonstrated by the sword attachment on one spider and the spear and shield attachment on the other. There was some flash on the legs, but it was easily cleaned and the parts fit well without filling. The legs are thicker than on the monster sheet;

A stone snake is molded on an extremely detailed base with a covering of large rocks and a number of small stones. The snake comes close to the maximum size for this creature, but I can't quote length with it being coiled. The mouth is open and fangs are visible as is the tongue. There was no flash on the miniature. The miniature closely follows the illustration and is anatomically correct and properly scaled;

The living steel figure is just under 30 mm in height and bears a serious resemblance to the T-1000 Terminator figure. The humanoid figure has two fingers on his left hand that form a pair of knives while his right arm forms a sword. The figure has many visible muscles that are very blocky. There was no flash on this character. As a secondary note, this figure could be used in super-hero games;

The noran miniature is 40-mm tall. The description matches the miniature exactly, even if the line illustration on the page matches neither. (The drawing shows three branches that the miniature could support. There are only two branches in the kit and the description states two branches.) The hole in the top does not go quite deep enough, but that is not a major problem. The eyes, nose, and mouth are evident among the bark and bark detail is

buy several of these trees separately and attach a couple more branches. This is a really nice figure;

The earth weird figure actually contains two separate creatures from the set. The first is a squeaker that is hiding behind a milepost marker. The figure would be just under 9-mm tall, but is crouched and peering over the stone as if looking to see if he was followed or is using the weird to play a joke. The weird is rising up from the ground like an earthen tornado bringing with it the rocks and ground molded onto the base. The weird almost matches the illustration except for the teeth and different head shape. This is a really nice model when painted well;

There are three ophidians in the set. All three have the long snakelike body and humanoid torso described in the monster sheet. The backs are ridged with small spiral ridges and all the ophidians are dressed in ragged pants. The two smaller members are armed with spears and curved swords and have necklaces with decorations. The larger ophidian has no decorations, but is winding up to strike with a really nasty two-handed sword. I wish that these figures came separately, as they would make a good support unit for my nagas;

The dragon is the least impressive part of the set. The finished miniature is a composite of six different pieces. The wingspan is 160 mm and the body and tail are about 150 mm long from tip to tip. The front leg does not fit well and seems to be at a really awkward angle. The wings are leathery and skin scales are fine. The dragon has a number of hairlike growths rather than the spiral plates and the horns look like ram horns. This dragon is not in scale if it is meant to be In-fyrana, although it is not a bad dragon and could be used for other adventures.

It is a pity that this set could not have contained all the denizens of the mountain. A separate set that would contain a more appropriate dragon would have nice, too. (For those who are interested, I recommend picking up a GEN CON® Game Fair Commemorative dragon if you can find it.) This set is still highly recommended and I hope they release some of the figures separately so more units could be made. The price for the set is \$29.95.

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## Elminster's Notebook

*Continued from page 145*

"Lonely, and yet well—not broken or sunk into debauch," I made reply. Then curiosity drove me on. "Lady, does he not know you?"

"I cannot pass the wards," she said, very faintly. So I made short work of that and found that enough was left of the Lady of Cragmyr Keep for me to feel the cold softness of her kiss.

It seems the castle is haunted after all, but I doubt Maurancz will mind, or be so lonely in the days ahead.

### Footnotes

1. To you, broadleaf is known as kale, thumbknuckles are brussels sprouts, and greenneedles are asparagus.

2. The strife was generally known as "The Uprising."

3. This was the Company of the Balefire Banners, usually known only as "the Baleflame" in later years. Its proud career ended with tough defeats against wood elves in the Wood of Sharp Teeth and a vampire in a ruin north of Nashkel. The survivors—still rich and powerful folk—retired and scattered across the Heartlands.

4. In the game terms, these magically animated guardians are detailed in the AD&D® module FA1 *Halls of the High King* and the revised boxed FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Set.

5. Wards—and the spell commonly used to create them—are described in that laughable tome of misdirection, *Volo's Guide to the North*. □



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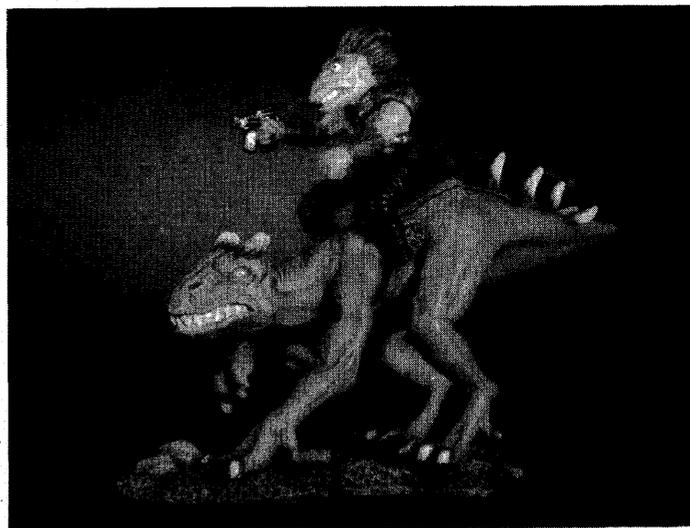
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