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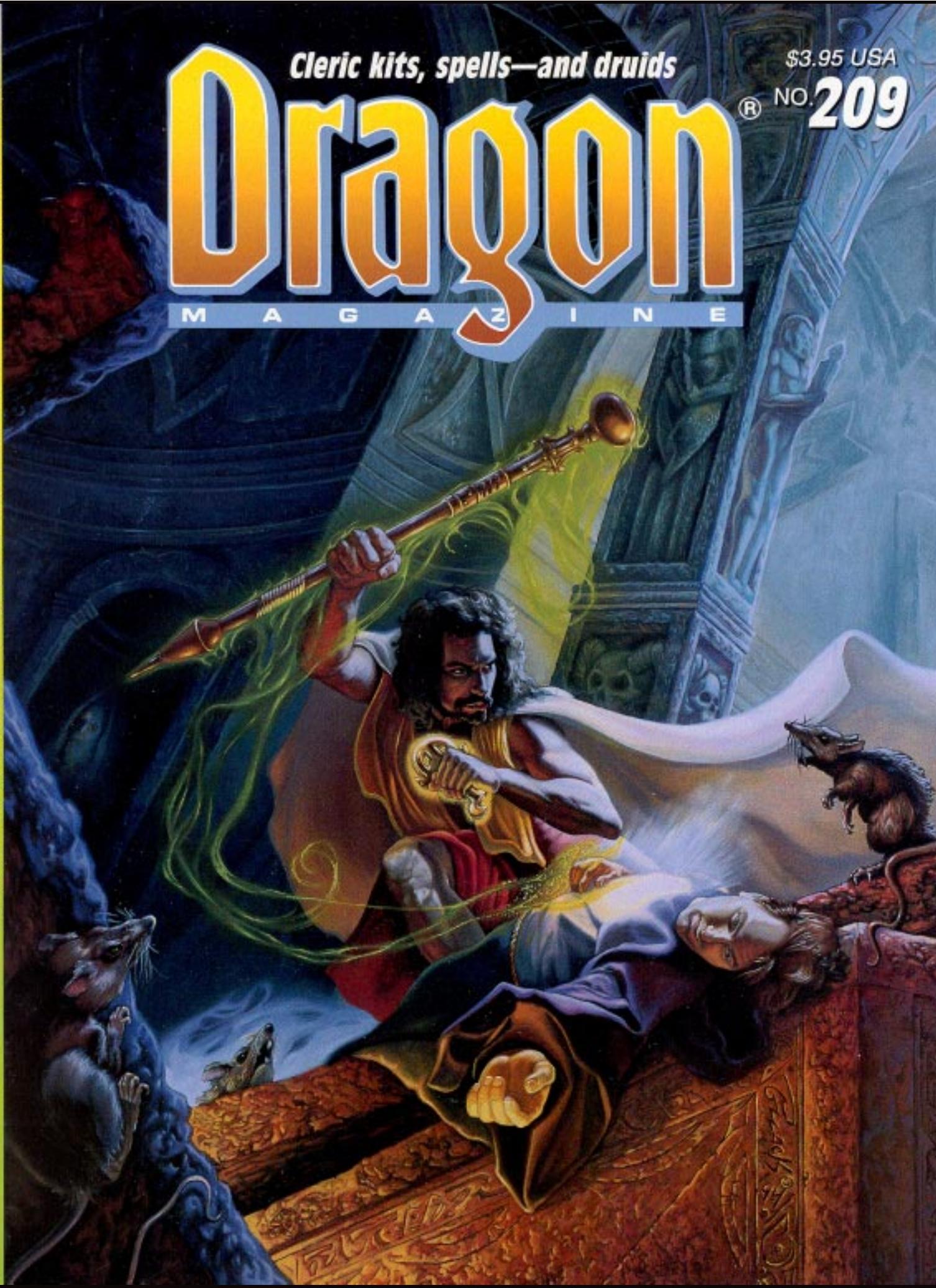
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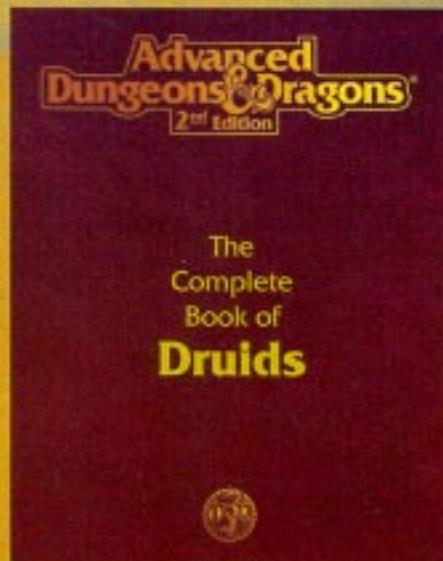
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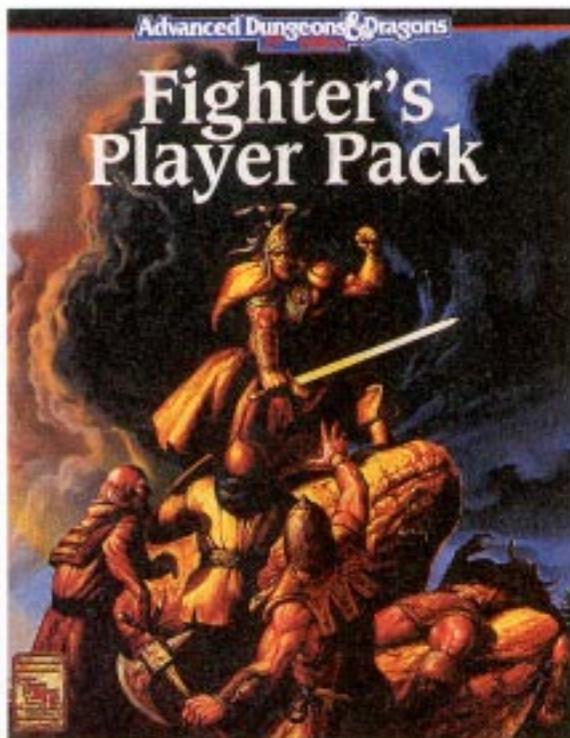
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COVER

This month's cover painting is the second from artist Alan Pollack this year. He also was the culprit responsible for the cover of issue #204, our April's Fool's issue. This painting reveals Alan's more serious, dramatic side as a cleric leans over to aid a fallen comrade, much to the chagrin of the rats nearby who had other plans for the man.

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L e t t e r s

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. If you wish your letter to be published, you must sign it. We will not publish anonymous letters. We will withhold your name if you request it,

Can I get paid for this?

Dear Dragon,

I'm a junior in high school, and I've started to consider my options after I graduate. My father introduced me to the D&D® game when I was eight years old. Since then, gaming has become my favorite hobby.

I'm wondering if it is possible for someone like me to get a job at TSR. If so, I would strongly consider this option. Being able to work with RPGs for a living would be great. Can you provide me with some information regarding this possibility?

Michael Sullivan
Blandford MA

I hate to sound pessimistic, Michael, but the odds are against any one person reading this magazine someday earning a living in this industry. As TSR's Jim Ward commented in these pages several years back, there are more people employed as astronauts in the U.S. Space Program than there are full-time game designers. My best advice to you is to find a mainstream career path that interests you and pursue that. Get some real-world job skills.

That said, there are a few people making a living in this line of work. You needn't be an English or Journalism major to get a job, but you do need to have a strong grasp of the English language. You need to be able to write clearly and concisely. You must understand spelling, syntax, and grammar: You must be able to meet deadlines. (They do call them that for a reason.)

Another option exists that you may not be familiar with. Most companies use freelance writers and editors—people who have real jobs and work for the companies in their free time. Most gaming magazines (DRAGON Magazine included) work the same way. Send an SASE for our Writers' Guidelines if you're interested. As in many things in life, Michael, hope and strive for the best possible outcome, but be prepared for the worst.

—Dale

Lost worlds II

Dear Dragon

I've heard that TSR is not publishing any more DRAGONLANCE® products. Is this true?

Jeff Eidsor
Kalamazoo MI

No, that most certainly is not true. Paging through TSR's 1994 catalog, I find eight products for the DRAGONLANCE campaign. Highlights include: the Villains series' three novels this year; DRAGONLANCE Classics, Volume III that collects and updates the original DRAGONLANCE modules for the AD&D® 2nd Edition game; and a new book trilogy the Defenders of Magic novels by Mary Kirchoff, will see two books published this year. (The first volume, Night of the Eye already is available, and the next installment, The Medusa Plague will be on sale this fall.)

As long as I'm on the topic, let me clarify an earlier statement made on this page in issue #203 under the letter titled "Lost Worlds?". The letter concerned the lack of SPELLJAMMER® and GREYHAWK® products in 1994. In my response to the letter, I instructed gamers who were unhappy with the situation to write to Tim Brown, director of Product Research & Development here at TSR. Nowhere did I state or intend to intimate that the decision to cease support of these lines was Tim Brown's. It was not. Anyone who came to that conclusion misinterpreted my point in listing Tim's name. As the head of PR&D, Tim is the logical person to write to with any comments you may have regarding TSR's game products. It's part of Tim's job to focus the game lines of TSR in a direction that is both preferable to the majority of TSR's consumers and that is profitable for TSR, Inc. Tim is one of my oldest friends here at TSR, and neither I nor the staff of DRAGON Magazine ever intended to cause him additional stress or consternation.

For those who are still interested in these settings, there is a way for them to live on in game campaigns for a long time, but that is up to you, the gamers.

The GREYHAWK campaign is a vast setting that has undergone massive upheavals recently. See the From the Ashes boxed set for details. There are enough adventure ideas in that product alone to keep a campaign going for years.

The SPELLJAMMER setting literally is limitless. Exploring the depths of fantasy space need not ever end. New crystal spheres, strange worlds, and undiscovered regions of the phlogiston need only to be invented to be enjoyed.

In addition, both of these lines will continue to receive support in the pages of DRAGON Magazine—as long as people keep writing fun,

exciting articles about them. If you want to keep these settings alive, play them, explore their boundaries, and invest your imagination in them. Then get our Writers' Guidelines and start writing about these settings so others can enjoy these worlds too.

—Dale

"You broke it!"

Dear Dragon,

A few weeks ago I purchased a copy of the Complete Book of Humanoids and the book has fallen out of its cover already. What am I supposed to do now?

Lori Wilson
Medford OR

Anyone who purchases a TSR product that clearly is defective in some way (bad binding, misprinting, water stains, etc.) can contact the Mail Order Hobby Shop here at TSR. A similar procedure applies if you purchase a TSR boxed set with missing component(s). Write to the Hobby Shop at P.O. Box 756 (or 201 Sheridan Springs Rd.), Lake Geneva WI 53147, tell them what you think you're missing, and they'll send you whatever you may need. Do be polite when you write; accidents can happen in the printing, binding, or assembly processes, and it's not the fault of the folks in the Hobby Shop.

—Dale

Gamers eating healthy food?

Dear Dragon,

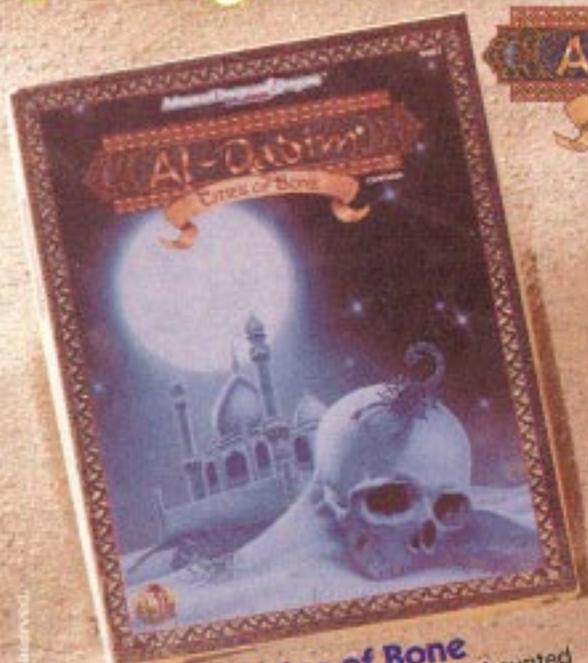
I'm compiling an "adventurers' cook book" of healthy alternatives to the high-fat and high-calorie foods most folks munch on during game sessions. It will include snacks, beverages, main dishes, and desserts as well as gaming tips, anecdotes, trivia, etc.

I need more contributors and more recipes—all contributors will be given credit for their work. Submissions should be sent to the address listed below. Thanks.

Leslie A. King
c/o Fortress Figures
P.O. Box 66
Jonesboro IN 46938

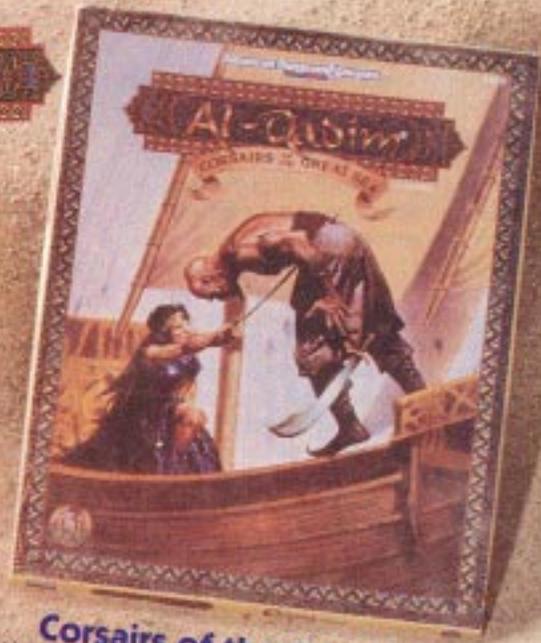
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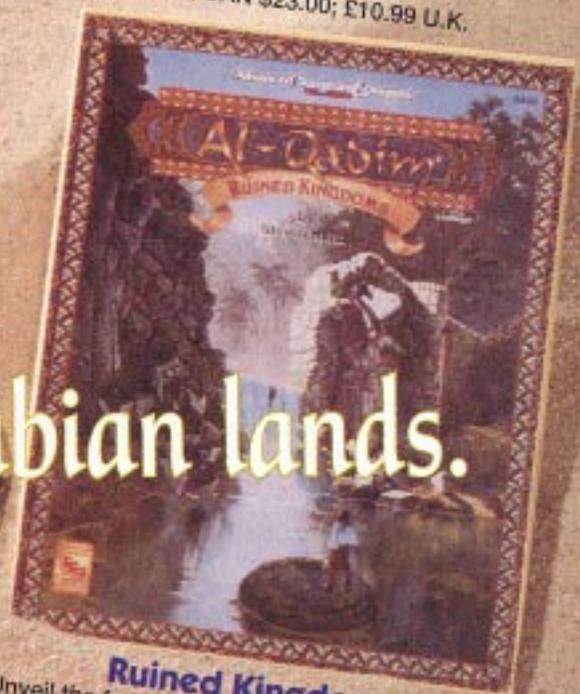
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I learned my lesson, three times over

My wife and I recently did something we had never done before—the sort of event I refer to as a Significant Life Episode. A few days after it was over, I thought back and realized that a Significant Life Episode in the real world is a lot like the experience every player or group of players goes through during a role-playing game adventure. Characters are coming up against situations that they may never have encountered before, and players have to do their best to anticipate the unexpected.

In such cases, players and their characters succeed by applying some basic axioms that every player learns early in his gaming career—rules on the order of “Look both ways before crossing the street,” and stuff like that.

These rules work just as well in real life, especially during a Significant Life Episode when you don’t have any past experience to draw upon. I’m going to tell you a short version of our latest Episode, just to show you how three basic RPG axioms can help you in real life—if you apply them.

1. When you enter unfamiliar territory, get the lay of the land as soon as possible.

After driving for two days and something like 800 miles to reach a U.S. Army post to attend our daughter’s graduation from basic training, we pulled up to the front gate of the post at about 3 P.M. This left us around an hour before we could pick up the new soldier in the family and be with her for a while on the last night before graduation.

Now we knew how to get to the base so the next thing we did was turn the car around and head back into civilian country to find a hotel room.

An hour later we had a room and were back at the front gate, just in time to make our 4 P.M. rendezvous. All we had to do was find her barracks—which couldn’t take more than a couple of minutes, right? Wrong.

We started cruising the streets and rubbernecking, looking for helpful signs like “This Way to Barracks” or “Parents Turn Here.” No such luck. We did find Burger King (which came in handy later) and we did see a sign that told us the way to the Commissary, but we couldn’t locate the building we had to get to first of all.

Finally, after a long twenty minutes of back-and-forthing on side streets, we chanced upon a row of buildings that looked too much like barracks to be anything else. We found the one with the little sign out front that identified our daughter’s company and platoon, and after fish-

ing around some more for a place to park the car (there was a big parking lot nearby, but it was on a street we hadn’t driven on yet) we rushed in to find her.

So, okay, maybe we should have come into the base the first time we got here and learned right away how to get to the barracks. But all’s well that ends well, right?

2. Don’t assume that just because it isn’t happening to you, it isn’t happening.

In a well-designed RPG adventure, events are taking place all around the PCs in places out of their sight and earshot, so that when they come on the scene they’re liable to find themselves in the middle of something they had no idea was going on. So it is in real life. . . .

We were shown into the reception room of the barracks about 20 minutes after we were supposed to have shown up—and as we found out a minute later, it’s a good thing we got there when we did.

The first words out of our soldier’s mouth were, “I was afraid you weren’t coming.”

“Why would you think that?” we asked. “You knew we’d be here; we just got a little behind schedule.”

She went on to explain that while we were motoring around the base, she was getting deeper and deeper in trouble with her drill sergeant. While we were frantically but slowly traversing the streets and straining to read the signs, the sergeant was starting to get, shall we say, skeptical about whether we ever intended to show up. And if we had been a few minutes farther behind schedule than we were, we would have arrived at the barracks to find our soldier engaged in, shall we say, activity totally unrelated to enjoying a reunion with one’s parents.

“If we had any idea this was going on, we would have gotten here sooner,” I said, at the same time having no idea how we could have done that. (Well, I did have an idea, but it was too late to go back to 3 P.M. and start over.)

3. If you ask a stranger for information and you have no reason to suspect he’s lying, then figure he’s telling you the truth.

Graduation day dawned gray and gloomy, and a part of me was glad for that. You see, the deal was that if it was raining at 9 A.M., the ceremony would be held indoors, in a place where parents couldn’t get in because there wasn’t enough seating to hold everyone. Then we would pick up our soldier back at her

barracks afterward—and I *knew* how to get to the barracks.

But I didn’t know how to get to the field where the outdoor ceremony would be held, so I silently prayed for rain even though it would mean missing the pagentry we had driven 800 miles to see.

The air was wet enough to wash our car with, but it didn’t rain, so at a little past 8:30 we once again passed the front gate and descended into the maze.

“There are some people marching,” I said, pointing out the obvious. “Let’s follow them.”

“They have guns,” my more observant wife observed. “I don’t think they’re headed for graduation.”

“Okay, so let’s follow this car from Kansas and see where he goes.”

The car from Kansas was apparently going. . . back to Kansas. When we got close enough to see the main gate ahead of us, we decided to turn around. A few turns later we came upon a helpful-looking gentleman about to get into his car. We asked him how to get to the field, and he told us to just go to Burger King and take a left.

“O - kay,” I said triumphantly. “I can get to Burger King all by myself!”

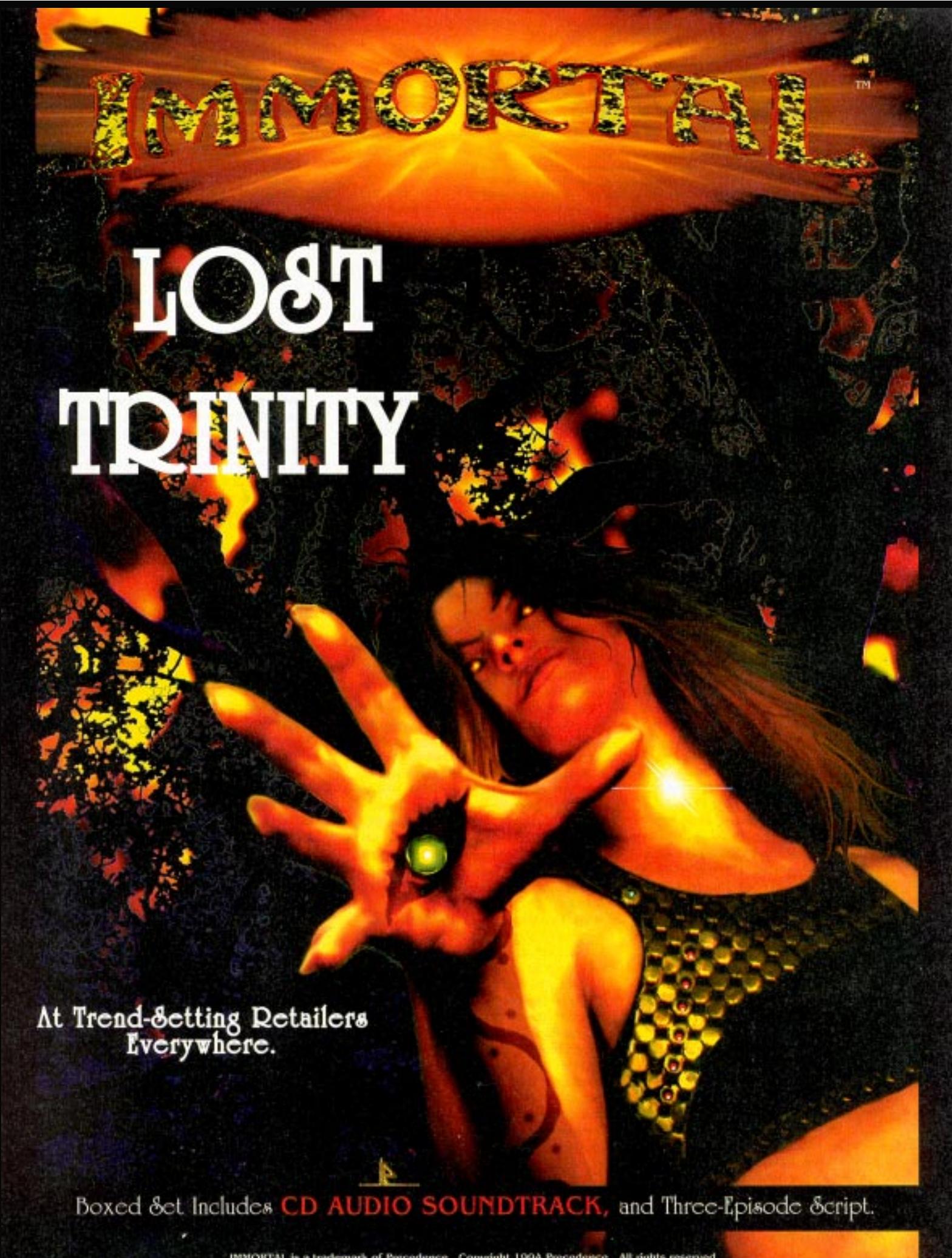
I got there, I turned left, and I drove for what seemed like a very long time. “That guy must have left out a turn,” I grumbled. “There’s nothing out here but open space.”

It was now about 8:55, and I was on the verge of doubling back and getting lost again when I realized that open space is probably a great place to put a field. Fifteen seconds later I came to an intersection with a stream of cars going through it from left to right. I know they didn’t turn left at Burger King, but I had a pretty good idea where they were headed. So I tucked the car into the procession, and a minute later we were being waved into a parking place within running distance of the field.

We got there on time, thanks to a guy I almost decided not to believe. And thereby a third axiom was proven true, and a pair of proud parents got to see their daughter fulfill one of her dreams. Maybe we didn’t get a big award in real-life experience points for sound judgment and coolness under pressure, but there are some things in life that experience points can’t measure.



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Dropping like flies

by Steve Winter

I worked my way through college. That's not easy, especially since college students generally don't have much in the way of marketable skills. I held a lot of different jobs: lawn mower, ice packer, grave digger, camp counselor, warehouse grunt, photographer, darkroom assistant, and salesman, to name a few.

In 1977, as a college freshman, I was selling cameras part-time in a department store. Retail sales is a thankless, dreary job, so break time was a big deal. Between the camera department and the break room lay the toy department. I would stroll through the toy aisles, checking out all the keen stuff along the way. Typically I got to the "employees' lounge" (a windowless cell with a broken couch and a stained Mr. Coffee machine) with just about enough of my 15-minute break left to get back to the camera department.

But one particular shelf of that toy department kept grabbing my attention. It held a short row of poorly-displayed games from The Avalon Hill Game Company: *Panzerblitz**, *Panzer Leader**, *Stalin-grad**, *Afrika Korps**, and others. I had no idea what the games were like, but I read the backs of those boxes until they appeared whole in my sleep. Finally, having tantalized myself long enough, I bought a nifty-looking thing called *Third Reich**.

I learned to swim at a young age in a structured class at the YMCA with a certified teacher. We started with the basics of floating, dunking, and bobbing, and worked our way up. Nonetheless, I have a pretty good idea what it feels like to be tossed into deep water with no preparation. The *Third Reich* rule book looked like an encyclopedia to me. After three evenings of page-flipping, cross-referencing, eye-bugging frustration, I began to suspect that the disclaimer on the back of the box (some teaser about "for experienced wargamers only") wasn't just marketing hype.

The game went back to the store and got exchanged for a copy of *Russian Campaign**. The rules were shorter, there were fewer types of pieces, and it was easier to see what you were supposed to do.

After clearing the initial hurdles, I had a new hobby and several more war games soon sat on my shelf next to *Russian Campaign*. Then in 1978 I packed them up and

moved to Ames, Iowa, to attend Iowa State University. One of the first things I did, of course, was look for a job to support my self. Being a journalism major, I landed a position as a copy editor on the *Iowa State Daily* (which, besides being a college paper, is one of the largest daily newspapers in Iowa—I.S.U. is a big school). The first piece of copy dropped on my desk was classified ads. Nestled among them was an ad for the "Iowa State Gamers' Club. Meetings every Saturday afternoon, 1 P.M. in Carver Hall. Board games, war games, role-playing games. Newcomers welcome."

What I found when I walked into Carver Hall that Saturday was a world of gaming whose existence I never even suspected. There were war games like *Russian Campaign*, but—whoa, steady now—Avalon Hill wasn't the only company making them! Initials dazzled my eyes: SPI, FGU, GDW, and an outfit called TSR. I wasn't sure why they all went by three initials, but it seemed to be a common theme.

Unfortunately, I couldn't get anyone to play *Russian Campaign* because they were all sitting at a long table by the blackboard. A very energetic grad student with a shaggy beard and a t-shirt proclaiming "E = mc²" seemed to be the focus of every one's attention. He was striding from person to person, sometimes pausing to roll dice behind a cardboard screen, sometimes sketching rooms and corridors on the blackboard. I had no idea what they were doing, but they were certainly having fun.

The first person I asked told me that they were playing the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game. The blank look on my face must have tipped him off that I had no idea what he was talking about, because he then added, "The rules are in that box over there." While everyone else played I pawed through the box, trying to arrange what I found into some sort of meaningful pattern. It was fruitless.

But I did find a slim booklet titled *Metamorphosis Alpha*. It looked interesting and, unlike everything else in that box, appeared to be self-contained, so I started reading. After reading only a few pages, one of the club members told me he was about to start a GAMMA WORLD® game, which was just like *MA*, and I was welcome to play. Being young and incautious,

I said yes.

It's hard to imagine a more perfect GAMMA WORLD character than the one I rolled up. He had doubled speed and a mental mutation that let him double his speed again. Using all four arms he could attack sixteen times per round. The first thing he found while prowling through the ruins was a case of vibroblades, shimmering swords capable of cutting through anything but a force field. The second was a case of torc grenades, little bombs capable of disintegrating anything but a force field.

I felt like a titan.

When he rounded a corner minutes later and came face-to-face with a rusty little robot, I just sneered. Three torc grenades (I had a whole case, after all) exploded at its feet. Mysteriously, it dropped unscathed into the smoking three-meter crater that had just opened beneath it. I was undaunted. Wasn't my character the angel of death? With vibroblades whirling he leaped to the attack, an unopposable fury of destruction, the footman of the Apocalypse.

Sixteen vicious slashes that could have toppled a skyscraper bounced off that gadget's force field. I sat there with my jaw hanging, the sour taste of carpet lint on my tongue. The referee described how the little tube on the robot's shoulder swiveled round and pointed right at me. Six micromissiles blew mutant tatters all over Terra Gamma.

I've never had another GAMMA WORLD character as slick, or as short-lived, as that first one. But I still think back fondly to the two years I spent gaming with the club at I.S.U.: Biggsy (famed for his rantings about dice), Corbin (the grad student DM, who always filled his dungeons with phase spiders), Commander Thor (of the Asgard Space Navy—that's a person, not a character), Peter McNabb (who introduced me to miniatures gaming and who I still see at cons once or twice a year), Scott (our games pusher), and Mike (the only person I ever lured into a full campaign game of *Freedom in the Galaxy*). Much has changed in the 15 years since then, but some things always stay the same: my GAMMA WORLD PCs still drop like flies.

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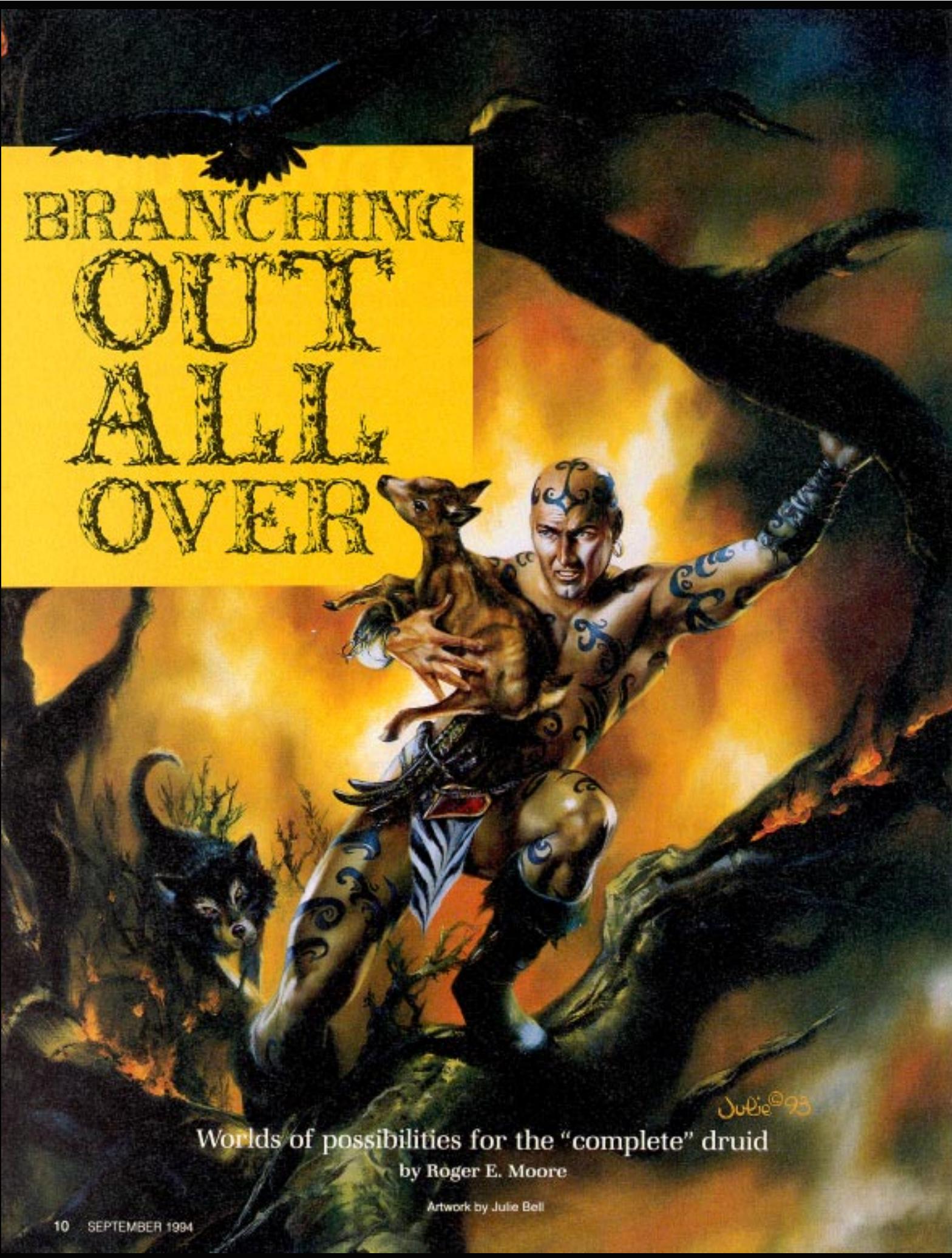
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BRANCHING
OUT
ALL
OVER

Worlds of possibilities for the "complete" druid

by Roger E. Moore

Artwork by Julie Bell

This September, *The Complete Druid's Handbook* will hit your game store's shelves. Anyone who loves role-playing these nature priests will have a field day with this product, which greatly expands the powers, abilities, and roles of druids in many AD&D® game campaigns.

The handbook presents a new system for categorizing druids by branches—that is, by the zoogeographic realms they inhabit. Arctic druids inhabit frigid tundras, jungle druids live in tropical rain forests, desert druids wander scrub and semidesert regions, and so on. There are even gray druids who oversee the ecology of the vast hidden regions of the Underdark. Each branch has differing powers and skills to meet the needs of its environment, but all druids work toward the common goals and purposes outlined in the book,

This article offers more information on the established druidic branches, naming specific regions on TSR campaign worlds where each branch of druids can be found (as well as some official druidic gods for those worlds). Additionally, players are offered a variety of ideas on new spells that their druids can develop for each branch. Druids of any branch should be able to make use of their environment to battle their opponents, as well as gain magic that aids them in surviving harsh weather and moving across difficult terrain.

Campaign deities

Each of the three major AD&D campaign worlds (Oerth, Krynn, and Toril) has at least one god who oversees the druids of that world. However, other AD&D game worlds have few or no druids at all.

The LANKHMAR™ setting, for instance, lacks druids (as well as all clerics). The COUNCIL OF WYRMS™ lands, in the Isles of Io's Blood setting, also have no native druids. In the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign, the eastern realm of Kara-Tur and southern realm of the AL-QADIM® campaign have no known druids, as also is the case in Taladas in the DRAGONLANCE® campaign. The DARK SUN® world does have druids, but they are of a very peculiar nature, have no branches, and worship no gods. (See the DARK

SUN boxed set's *Rules Book*, pages 31-32, for details.) A few unlucky druids inhabit the demiplane of the RAVENLOFT® setting, but their control over the wildlife of that land is poor at best, and their lives are consequently harsh, short, and filled with the dangers of the undead, lycanthropy, madness, and evil seduction. Finally, the worlds of the SPELLJAMMER® setting offer a wealth of environments, but many are completely unsuitable for normal wildlife (fire worlds, for instance).

DRAGONLANCE campaign (Ansalon only): Druids did not reappear on Krynn until after the War of the Lance, and so are few in number and still in the process of establishing themselves in postwar campaigns. Chislev is the druids' only deity. (Priests of Habbakuk are merely good-aligned clerics, possibly having minor druidic powers.) Information on Chislev and her followers appears in: *Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home*, page 23; *DRAGONLANCE Adventures*, page 45; *World Book of Ansalon*, page 123, from the *Tales of the Lance* boxed set; and *Player's Guide to the DRAGONLANCE Campaign*, page 87.

FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign (western Faerun only): Druids are long known across the world of Toril. Chauntea, Eldath, and Silvanus are the major druids' gods; minor druidic deities appear in other places, such as in the jungles of Chult. Mielikki, though favorably inclined toward druids, has only good-aligned clerics as followers. Information on these deities and their clergy appears in *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures*, pages 4, 15-39; *Running the Realms*, pages 45-64, from the 1993 FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign boxed set; and the accessory FR2 *Moonshae*, pages 7, 21-28.

WORLD OF GREYHAWK® campaign (Flanaess only): Beory and Obad-Hai, the latter also known as "The Shalm," are the major gods of the druids here. Further information on these two gods (particularly Obad-Hai) and their religions appears in DRAGON® issue #69, pages 29-30; *A Guide to the WORLD OF GREYHAWK Fantasy Setting*, pages 62-64 and 72-73, and the *Glossography*, pages 37-38 and 44-45, in

the 1983 *WORLD OF GREYHAWK* boxed set; and *Atlas of the Flanaess*, pages 80-96, and the "Powers of Greyhawk" card, in the *From the Ashes* boxed set. Little is known at this time about the rest of the world of Oerth or its gods.

Other gods: The 2nd Edition *Legends & Lore* tome provides numerous other deities for druids in the Celtic pantheon, though the Greek goddess Artemis (page 112) also is available. The original AD&D game's DEITIES & DEMIGODS™ Cyclopaedia added the Sumerian goddess Ki (page 126) to the list. The presence of player-character centaur druids in *The Complete Book of Humanoids* suggests that Skerrit the Forester is a druidic god for that race (see *Monster Mythology*, page 123). Finally, if druidic halflings are allowed in play as they were in the original AD&D game, then Sheela Peryroyl should be their deity. (See *Monster Mythology*, page 40; after all, I had created her in 1981 to give halflings their own druidic deity!)

Branch details

Each branch from *The Complete Druid's Handbook* is given extra detail below. "Earth regions" names those places on our world having environments matching those inhabited by each druidic branch. Comparison of this kind gives gamers ideas on personalizing druids from each region. (For example, jungle druids could be patterned after inhabitants of the Amazon rain forest, the Congo, or southeast Asia, and the wildlife would differ between similar regions as well.) "Campaign worlds" names places on the three major AD&D game worlds where each branch would be found. Finally, "Spell ideas" gives just that—ideas that players and DMs can use to create new druid spells of varying levels and capabilities. (No specific spells are given because the statistics for them could vary greatly, depending on the use to which they could be put in different campaigns and by druids of different levels. You must do your own research!)

Abbreviations used in the category "Campaign worlds" include the following:

DL = DRAGONLANCE campaign. Map references are from *The Atlas of the DRAGONLANCE World*, and refer only to Ansalon after the Cataclysm (see in particular pages xvi-xvii and 154-155).

FR = FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign. Map references are from *The Atlas of the FORGOTTEN REALMS World*, and refer only to the Western Realms unless otherwise noted.

WG = WORLD OF GREYHAWK campaign. Map references are from the booklets and maps in the *From the Ashes* boxed set, and refer only to the postwar Flanaess.

Arctic druid

Earth regions: Greenland, northern Canada, Alaska, Siberia, Scandinavia, Antarctica.

Campaign worlds: DL: Icewall Glacier and the southern plains up to 100 miles north of it; FR: north polar ice cap, Pelvuria (the Great Glacier); WG: Blackmoor, Cold Marshes, Thillonian Peninsula (on which lies the Corusk Mountains).

Spell ideas: A spell that would melt snow, ice, or permafrost around an opponent's feet and then refreeze it would be invaluable—rather like a cold-weather *rock to mud* spell. A fountain of warm water could be made to spout from icy ground to provide drink for weary travelers or thaw frostbitten extremities. A spell could simulate skiing, allowing fast downhill or overland movement, and another spell could allow companions on a trip to move over deep snow at a fast rate, as if wearing snowshoes. (The druid can do this anyway at 3rd level and beyond.) Spells could permit safe, trackless movement over ice-covered surfaces, thin ice, hidden crevasses, and avalanche-prone slopes. Speaking of avalanches, a spell also could allow a druid to withstand or ride out an avalanche on a steep slope—or allow the druid to create an avalanche to destroy hated foes. A high-level spell might even cause a glacier to speed its movement, or an iceberg to melt rapidly.

A look through the wizard's spell lists reveals some interesting possibilities. Arctic druid spells could temporarily create magical igloos for shelter from bad weather (as per *Leomund's secure shelter*), conjure sturdy caribou as mounts or pack animals (as per *mount*), summon wolves or dogs as guards and companions (as per *Mordenkainen's faithful hound*), or enchanted kayaks or dog sleds with unusual powers (as per *chariot of Sustarre*). Friendly ice para-elementals could be summoned and controlled (as per *conjure elemental*). Icicles could be enchanted and used as darts or daggers with special bonuses (as per *enchanted weapon*). Snow itself could be flung at enemies and turn to icy needles (as per *magic missile*).

Dog sleds have long been used in arctic travel in the real world, and arctic druids have every reason to use nonmagical ones as well. A special class of spells might deal only with sled dogs and the loads they pull, granting the dogs nourishment, rest, and strength while lightening their load.

An arctic druid surely would know how to make snowshoes, and might create magical snowshoes that allow rapid movement. Magical skis, clothing, kayaks, harpoons, knives, and sleds also are suggested.

Desert druid

Earth regions: Sahara and Great Arabian Deserts (north Africa and Arabian peninsula), Kalahari Desert (southern Africa), Gobi Desert (south-central Asia), Thar Desert (northwestern India), southwestern U.S. and western Mexico, western Argentina, Great Australian Desert (central Australia).

Campaign worlds: DL: various areas immediately north and west of Khalkist Mountains, from northern Estwilde south to Khur; FR: Anauroch (the Great Desert), Raurin (the Dust Desert), Quoya Desert; WG: Bright Desert, Sea of Dust.

Spell ideas: Two things are uppermost in the mind of anyone in a desert: getting water and getting shade. These are the most obvious foci for new spells, but sometimes it's amazing how the obvious things get overlooked. Minor spells can lead the user to the nearest sources of water and shade with ease. Spells can create variable amounts and forms of water, such as a spray of water from a fingertip to cool mounts and companions, a pool of water from which to drink, a jet of water to clean large objects like mounts or buildings, or even an underground pool to feed surface crops. Spells also can create shade with ease, either by causing the growth of trees and cacti, by blocking sunlight with sheets of dark matter, perhaps in the shape of tall vegetation, or by adjusting the weather to make normal clouds and cool breezes form.

The wildlife of scrub, semideserts, chaparral, dust bowls, wastelands, and true deserts can be brought into the druid's service. A rattlesnake could be made to do sentry duty, watching for intruders. A coyote clan could send yipping messages across the sands, warning of trouble. Birds could bring news of water (and vultures already note the presence of death). In extreme conditions, cacti could be made to hurl their spines at enemies or strike out with their branches. Swarms of scorpions, fire ants, poisonous snakes or lizards, tarantulas, and wasps would drive away small armies of foes such as orcs.

As noted elsewhere for other environments, spells that enable a druid or his companions to find food also are a help. A spell might make every part of a normally inedible plant nourishing, or cause a refreshing drinkable liquid to be found inside a small cactus (which is magically healed after everyone has drunk from it). And there's always a use for a spell that lets people go without food or drink for days, like a camel.

Then, too, the worst characteristics of the desert can serve the druid's purposes. Spells can briefly enhance the heat, sunlight, and dryness in certain desert areas, keeping trespassers out or harming foes who are destroying the druid's charges. Oases can suddenly be made to dry up, forcing bandits to move out of the area. Heatstroke, severe sunburn, dehydration, delirium, and confusing mirages all can be brought on by the proper spells and conditions, to a hard-pressed druid's advantage. Consider the effects of a spell that briefly focuses the sun's rays, causing flammable materials to catch fire.

Sandy deserts are often plagued by sandstorms, which a druid must not only contend with but also find ways to use to his benefit. A spell could enable a druid to

walk through the worst sandstorm without effect, with full vision, movement, and breathing. A wind-generating spell could whip up a dust devil, sand tornado, or giant sandstorm in only a moment's time.

Finally, spells that enable swift movement across desert wastes (through the air, across the ground, or even under the ground like a burrowing animal) are of great help. Burrowing spells could help a druid uncover ruins buried in sand, or help him escape certain predators or enemies. A spell might allow the druid to imitate the roadrunner, running swiftly over even loose, hot sand.

Gray druid

Earth regions: Limestone karst regions of central midwestern U.S. (Kentucky, Indiana, Tennessee, Virginia, etc.), southwestern U.S. (New Mexico), and central Europe (Germany, Hungary, etc.).

Campaign worlds: DL: various caverns and buried pre-Cataclysm cities, such as Xak Tsaroth (before it was destroyed by the Companions of the Lance); FR: the Underdark, the network of caverns and tunnels extending from the Savage North south to the Shaar and Great Rift (particularly the Endless Caverns of the High Forest, the Underground River of the High Moor, Waterdeep's Undermountain, and the caverns leading to drow cities such as Menzoberranzan); WG: the unnamed caverns and tunnels beneath the Crystallist Mountains and Hellfurnaces, leading to the Vault of the Drow and the Sunless Sea.

Spell ideas: If you've been lucky enough to visit a real limestone cave, such as Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, you will recall several important features of the underground world: It's dark, it's cold, and you're surrounded by rock. A gray druid will need magical assistance in this unusual world.

New spells could grant a druid and her companions warmth, though this problem could be taken care of easily with a little extra clothing. Movement through caves, however, is more of a problem. Spells could allow for perfect climbing ability, movement across or through water (limestone caves often have frigid subterranean rivers or lakes in them), solid footing over loose or slippery rocks, and the ability to fit through small openings, which are also common in caves. At high levels, a druid could move through rock itself, or even hide in it for short periods of time.

Infravision, the ability to see heat radiation, could be granted or boosted by magic. Ultrasonic "vision" using the druids sense of hearing also could reliably map a way through a dark tunnel. A spell might allow a druid to touch a rock wall and immediately sense all tunnels and passages within a certain range. Light-enhancing vision could turn a hall filled with faintly luminescent mushrooms into a room as bright as day. Spells also could cause plants or rocks to glow (your basic *light*

spell), though at higher levels perhaps the light will be visible only to the druid!

Different forms of the locate object spell could come into play here, such as spells detecting the quickest way out, or leading to a lost explorer. Spells also could grant a gray druid the ability to detect slopes, direction, and so forth as a dwarf or gnome. Weaknesses in rocky corridors could be sensed, allowing a druid the chance to avoid a potential cave-in. More powerful spells could let the druid adjust the rock itself, preventing rock falls, shoring up weak columns in caves, and otherwise avoiding potential disaster.

Though caves in our world are not heavily populated, this is not true in fantasy worlds. A gray druid's allies could include many forms of dangerous fungi, giant insects, and other monsters. Picture the sorts of things a gray druid could do with a small army of slimes and oozes, for instance, if his cave was attacked by a squad of gnolls. Earth elementals and creatures composed of stone would be obvious and valuable allies in any event; galeb duhr, crysmals, bowlers, and such, along with deep dwellers like myconids, could make all the difference in a tight situation.

The one thing that a gray druid won't have to worry about will be human settlers who need help with their agriculture. Well, on the other hand, there are cave men, drow, svirfneblin, and other beings, and they might need help with fungus farms or rothe herds. The druid might be asked to cure injured animals, ensure a pest-free crop of edible fungus, or perform any number of other services that his aboveground brethren normally do.

Forest druid (temperate)

Earth regions: Most of Europe, eastern U.S., western China and Japan (Honshu), many Caribbean islands, southwestern and northeastern India, much of New Zealand.

Campaign worlds: DL: numerous forests throughout Ansalon (particularly in Goodlund, Silvanesti, Lemish, Hylo, Qualinesti, southwestern Sancrist Isle, and western Southern Ergoth); FR: numerous forests throughout the Western Flanaess (Chondalwood, High Forest, Tethir, Mir, Myth Drannor, etc.); WG: numerous forests throughout Flanaess (Adri, Dim, Gamburg, Grandwood, Gnarley, Vesve, Welkwood, etc.).

Spell ideas: Well, actually, the spells that druids already have are quite suited to temperate forests. It would not be unreasonable, however, to invent new lines of spells derived from the various properties of the specific plants and animals in this environment: night vision of an owl, distance vision of a hawk, speed of a deer, musk of a skunk, claws of a bear, etc. (This was done in "Arcane Lore," in DRAGON issue #132, for example.)

It also would be interesting to develop spells or spell variations that reflect the

changing seasons. Flower blossoms in spring, thick green growth in summer, dead leaves in fall, and snow in winter all could be used in different spells, each available only during a certain time of year. For example, a druid could develop a low-level springtime spell that has all the flowers and blossoms in a certain area open and display their colors; another spring spell could cause seeds to sprout and be protected from frost. An autumn spell could help fruits and other crops to ripen without spoiling, improving the last harvest.

Forest druid (cold)

Earth regions: Scandinavia, Siberia (northern Russia), Alaska, northern Canada, Pacific Northwest (Canada, U.S.).

Campaign worlds: DL: no major cold forests known; FR: forests of the Savage North and Icewind Dale; WG: Burneal Forest, forests along Thillonian Peninsula (Forlorn, Hraak, Spikey, Timberway, etc.).

Spell ideas: Most obviously, spells that provide shelter from the frigid weather are most critically needed, particularly spells offering safety, vision, and movement during the worst of blizzards. A second reading of the spell ideas for arctic druids is greatly encouraged here.

The growing season in cold forests is very short, and a druid who could bless a crop to withstand cold weather and grow more quickly would find great favor among the few inhabitants of these lands. Spells permitting better hunting (for both human and carnivorous animals) also would be greatly appreciated.

Cold forests are almost completely made up of conifers, which suggests some interesting spells and powers. Could pine needles be made into magical missiles, or could a pine tree lash out at enemies with needle-covered branches? Could a pine cone be turned into a grenade, or be made to grow a new pine tree in mere minutes? Could magical clothing, bedding, or shelters be created from masses of dead pine needles? Could the druid develop a burrowing spell to escape bad weather? Could the druid cast a spell to make conifer needles and cones nourishing, given the lack of animal foods in these areas?

Herbivores in cold forests often migrate southward as the weather grows worse and the great snows begin, returning in the springtime. Spells assisting travel would then be of great help to a druid who follows those herds. Wolves, caribou, bears, and other animals could be brought into the druids service; reindeer could be ridden or pull sleds. Would dryads and treants have coniferlike qualities, using these in alliance with druids? The DM knows best.

Jungle druid

Earth regions: Amazon River basin (equatorial South America), Central America, some Caribbean islands, central Africa, southeast Asia, Sri Lanka, many Asian

Pacific islands (New Guinea, Borneo, Philippines, Sumatra, etc.).

Campaign worlds: DL: coasts and islands of far eastern Ansalon around the Blood Sea of Istar; FR: Chult (entire peninsula) and forests throughout the Shining South (the Black Jungles, the Forest of Amlar, Lluirwood, etc.); WG: Amedio Jungle, Hepmonaland.

Spell ideas: Jungles are the richest areas of life in existence, and in real life we are only now beginning to appreciate just how valuable and diverse the life in tropical forests is. Anyone seriously interested in playing a jungle druid should read about some of the current literature about the Amazon jungles that seems to be all the rage. Many spell ideas can be gleaned from this material.

Movement through a jungle would be greatly enhanced by spells allowing brachiation (swinging from tree limb to limb using hands), flight, and climbing. Swinging on vines like Tarzan also comes to mind, and spells could enhance even this by ensuring a constant supply of vines (or vines that swung on their own). Running spells that let the user move tirelessly over rough ground, shallow water, thick foliage, and so on would be quite handy.

The complete riot of plant growth in a jungle is a boon to any druid. Spells causing plant growth to block trails, vines to entangle foes, and roots to trip pursuers would put a crimp in the plans of any army. Flowers could emit perfumes to put victims to sleep, and woodland trails could appear, change, and disappear at random to confuse intruders. Carnivorous plants, with a little camouflage, can do great harm to any force of foes. The plant life, however, is an impediment to vision over long distances, and it also hides potential foes. A wise druid will develop spells allowing him to see hidden foes and to basically see through trees to detect creatures far away.

Animal life in jungles consists largely of insects, which have their own uses (see the notes for swamp druids for some ideas here, adding in exciting creatures like army ants). Jungles also provide shelter for deer, leopards, monkeys, wild pigs, boas, and a mad profusion of birds, all of which have their uses. The sorts of dryads, treants, and other tree-related life forms one might find in a jungle are worth considering as valuable allies. And the monsters that inhabit jungles are found in plenty: giant scorpions, giant spiders, giant ants, carnivorous apes, etc. These would make excellent guards or helpers.

Jungles are so rich in foods that there isn't much point in having spells that help a druid find more of it. Food sources are literally everywhere. However, jungles are innately hostile to traditional agriculture, which requires cleared ground. Inhabitants of a jungle could have orchards, of course, and they also could raise small domesticated animals in pens, such as goats, chickens, or pigs, which would eat

local leaves, seeds, and fruits. Rare is the jungle druid asked to help with any farming needs, but the need might be there, and the usual services that plains druids provide might be provided, if the druid deems it fit to do so.

Mountain druid

Earth regions: Rockies (western North America), Andes (west-coast South America), Himalayas/Karakoram (northern India, southern China, Tibet, Nepal), Alps (central Europe), Great Rift Valley range (eastern Africa), Pyrenees (Spain), Caucasus (southern Russia, Georgia), and other ranges of at least a mile altitude.

Campaign worlds: DL: Khalkist Mts., Kharolis Mts., Northern Ergoth spine, Southern Ergoth spine, northeastern San-crist Isle, Vingard Mts., Garnet Mts., Dargaard Mts., Worldscap Mts.; FR: The titanic Yehimal (dividing Western and Eastern Realms), and various smaller ranges (Dragonspine Mts., Galena Mts., Greyspeak Mts., Orsraun Mts., the Spine of the World, etc.); WG: Barrier Peaks-Sulhaut-Crystalmists-Hellfurnaces-Jotens chain, Corusk-Griff-Rakers chain, Yatil Mts., Lortmil Mts.

Spell ideas: Certain spell ideas for arctic and cold-forest druids would work well in cold alpine terrain, particularly those providing/warmth and shelter from bad weather. Movement-related spells that allow for climbing, skiing, leaping and jumping, falling and landing softly, flight, gliding, levitation, and merely walking over loose snow are invaluable. Weather-control spells would also be handy.

Alpine wildlife can be used as guards, mounts, or companions. Giant goats can be ridden; bears, mountain lions, and wolves can protect territory from intruders (wolf howls carry far and thus make excellent warning signals); and sylphs could give advice and friendship. However, there are many winged monsters who could serve a mountain druid, too, as steeds or allies: pegasi, griffons, hippogriffs, dragons, harpies, and manticores (the latter two, though unpleasant, might have their uses and might be talked into helping with mutually beneficial projects).

Elemental spirits of the air and earth (and monsters whose natures are aerial or earthly) suggest themselves to a mountain druid's use, at higher levels of play. Air and earth elementals, wind walkers, bowlers, galeb duhr, crysmals, and the like could be of immense help in spotting foes and destroying large enemy forces. Even if a low-level druid cannot summon elemental creatures, he could offer his services or wealth to tempt creatures into service; he might have spells that would heal or aid such potential allies and bring them into his long-range plans.

Plains druid

Earth regions: Savanna, veldt, and grasslands of sub-Saharan Africa, north and south of rain forest; steppes and

grasslands of central Asia, from the Black Sea to eastern China; Great Plains and prairie of central U.S.; pampas of eastern Argentina; savannas of Australia.

Campaign worlds: DL: vast regions of Ansalon, particularly in Northern Ergoth, Solamnia, Nordmaar, Abanasinia, and the Plains of Dust; FR: vast regions of the Western Realms, particularly the Shaar, Eastern Shaar, the plains between Amn and Turmish, the Endless Waste, and the Plain of Horses; WG: vast regions of the Flanaess, particularly the Plains of the Paynims, the Dry Steppes, and most of Nyronnd, the Great Kingdom, Keoland, Yeomanry, Furyondy, Shield Lands, etc.

Spell ideas: The one aspect of the plains that makes them different from all other regions is that with the proper climate they can be perfect for large-scale agricultural crops, herding, and civilized settlement. A plains druid cannot ignore this possibility, particularly if her territory lies in the path of an expanding nation, and she should take human or other settlers into account when assessing her prairie domain.

Agricultural benefits that a druid can bring to a settled area are enormous. A druid can cure crop and cattle diseases, cast spells to grant higher crop yields and more births among animals, predict weather (and change it if necessary), conduct ceremonies to usher in new seasons, bless planting and harvests, and more. A druid who plays upon this can reap great benefits in ensuring that settled plains retain much of their "natural" character.

With or without settlements, however, there are many opportunities for a druid to develop spells special to a steppe or prairie. Seasonal spells, like those for temperate forest druids, always are appropriate if the climate is right. The flat quality of the plains allows long-distance vision, but a druid always could improve it with eaglelike telescopic sight, or enhanced night vision like that of an owl. Fast movement over the plains, by magical running or flight, is an excellent idea. The grasses common to all plains can be used to slow or entangle foes, or to hide allies. Many herd and grazing animals dwell on the plains, and these easily can serve a druid as mounts, pack animals, sentries, and companions. Remember that centaurs have druids among their kind, and these stalwarts might be among the best allies a plains druid could ever hope for.

Swamp druid

Earth regions: Atlantic and Gulf coasts of U.S. (especially Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina).

Campaign worlds: DL: the Great Moors of Nordmaar; FR: the Ama River basin (northern part of Eastern Realms) and many assorted swamps and marshes across the Western Realms (Mere of Dead Men, Marsh of Chelimer, Vast Swamp, Lizard Marsh, Farsea Marshes, etc.); WG: Vast Swamp and an assortment of lesser

swamps and marshes across the Flanaese (Gnatmarsh, Hool Marshes, Lone Heath, Mistmarsh, Troll Fens, etc.).

Spell ideas: Swamps are unhealthy places for most people, first because of the diseases transmitted by insects like mosquitoes, and second because of the crocodiles, snakes, and other carnivores that thrive on the rich wildlife in the wetlands (particularly humans who can't run away quickly enough to escape). A swamp druid spells can make all the difference between life and death.

If diseases are used in a campaign, swamps should be terrible breeding grounds for all sorts of plagues such as yellow fever and malaria. A swamp druid should thus gain spells that allow her to make companions temporarily immune to disease or cure diseases they manage to get. She might even make magical potions that effectively inoculate the drinker and make him immune to swamp diseases (perhaps after getting a mild case of the disease, or some other minor sacrifice).

Just as important would be the druid's control over the abundant insect life of a swamp. A swarm of blood-drinking mosquitoes could drain the life from a horde of goblins bent on catching a druid, incidentally infecting the goblins with diseases that the survivors will carry back to their lair—with predictable effects. Stinging, biting, and poisonous insects can be called into play in massive flying or crawling formations.

Movement through a swamp is difficult at best, thanks to water-soaked ground, twisting creeks and rivers, deep pools, and so forth (not to mention the carnivores). A druid can use spells to create boats, propel boats quickly over water, allow people to swim at fast speeds, permit underwater breathing, or even allow people to walk on water itself. The druid can use magic to walk or run over boggy ground without slowing.

Animal and plant allies are many in a swamp. Vines can entangle or strangle. Snakes can bite or constrict. Algae and algoids can slow or stop boats, which shambling mounds can then bash to pieces. Birds can watch from the air while a battle is in progress, carrying messages and scouting for the enemy. Herons and cranes have stabbing beaks, and could fall upon an enemy from trees or out of tall rushes. We've already covered insects, and crocodiles and alligators can finish off foes who try to flee from a losing battle.

Conclusion

DMs and players alike are encouraged to read up on these environments to find out what new tricks druids could pull out of their mistletoe pouches. This not only increases the druid's preparedness, but it greatly enhances the flavor of the campaign to know the terrain and wildlife of a region, and how it can be best put to use in keeping Nature strong.

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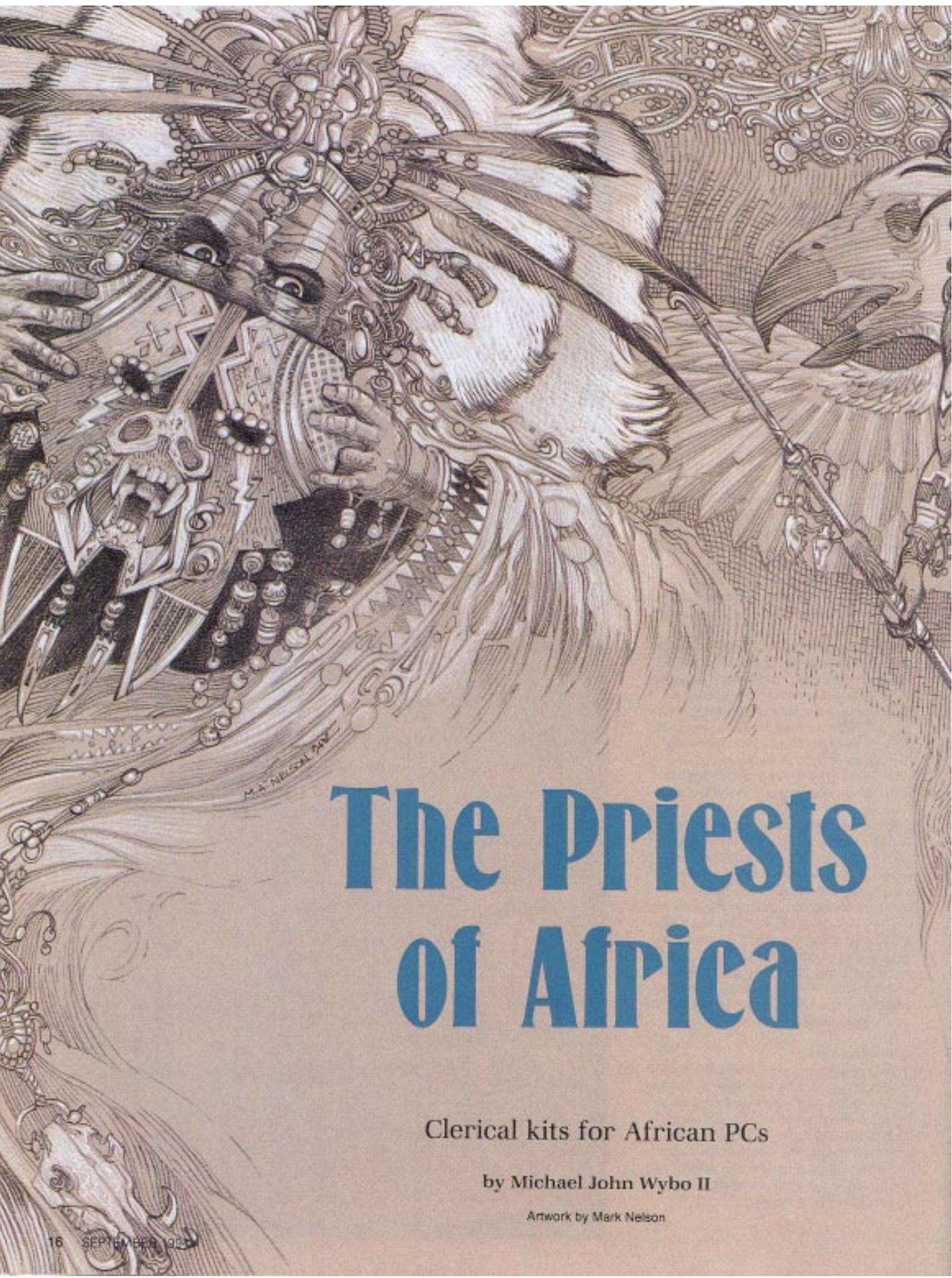
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The Priests of Africa

Clerical kits for African PCs

by Michael John Wybo II

Artwork by Mark Nelson



Africa is a huge continent, home to vastly diverse populations and cultures. Each tribe of Africa has its own religion and pantheon of gods. The list of gods is staggering. There are, however, many threads that draw all the varied tribes of Africa together regardless of belief.

The first link is that the existence and use of magic is paired inextricably to worship of the gods. Those who use magic without the guidance and permission of the gods are taking their souls into their own hands. This is due not only to the laws of the gods (they consider it an insult to partake of their power without honoring them or asking their permission), but also to the nature of

magic that is outside the god's protection (which by default indicates that it was granted by demons or evil spirits).

The second link is that other than the gods, the spirits of animals, plants, the elements, nature, the dead, ancestors, and even places and objects also must be worshiped and are worshiped in much the same way regardless of tribe, religion, or racial background.

This article deals mainly with that part of African religion that can be deemed common to all the tribes from the Sahara and the Kalahari to the Serengeti plain and from the jungles of the Congo to the Atlas Mountains.

Animal priestess

Description: The animal priestesses are members of different orders that worship the spirit aspects of animal archetypes. Each aspect may have good and bad aspects and so there are good and evil priestesses of the same animal aspect. These priestesses care for the spiritual well-being (or temporal power if evil) of their people. They provide advice to leaders and commoners alike. The spirits of the animal archetypes are, in legend, the servants of gods both evil and good. They are messengers of the gods and convey the gods' will to their servants on earth. They tell their priestesses why a certain man has fallen on evil luck and what he can do to atone for the sin that has brought upon him the disfavor of the gods.

Role: In a game campaign, the animal priestess can act as the advisor of a war band or party as to the suitability of their actions in the eyes of the gods. They are able to protect others from the wrath of the servants of their spirit archetypes. Each priestess serves a different archetype. Examples include crocodile, lion, cobra, spider and bat priestesses, etc.

Weapon proficiencies: *Required:* none; *Recommended:* club, dagger, spear, sling.

Nonweapon proficiencies: *Required:* Weather sense, Observation; *Recommended:* Direction sense, Religion, Spellcraft, Astrology, Navigation, Alertness, Seamstress/tailor, Singing, Dancing, Healing, Herbalism.

Spells: All, Divination, Animal, Combat, Healing, Protection, Summoning, plus spells from the mage's school of Divination as cleric spells of equal level.

Special benefits: At 1st level, the ability to cast Divination spells as cleric spells of equal level (as above); at 3rd level, the ability to speak with animal of species chosen as archetype at will; at 5th level, the ability to *charm* animals of species chosen as archetype, up to 1 HD of animal per level of the priestess per day with saving throws allowed to negate them as per the *charm person/mammal* spell; at 7th level, the ability to *shapechange* into the species chosen as archetype as per the druidic ability; at 9th level, the ability to summon up to 1 HD of archetype creature/level of the priestess per day. If the creature has more hit dice than the priestess has levels, she may not summon one until her level equals the hit dice of the animal. The creatures serve until dismissed, slain, or 10 turns have elapsed.

Special hindrances: 1) She may never harm an animal of the type chosen as her, archetype unless it is in self defense and no other nondamaging options are available. If she harms such a creature in the above manner she must atone for her sins in a manner decided by the DM. If she kills such an animal without just cause, i.e., she did have another alternative, she loses her spellcasting ability and powers

permanently; 2) She may not wear armor or carry a shield.

Kongo witch doctor

Description: Kongo witch doctors are the clerics and specialty priests of Africa. Each is devoted to a particular god as his patron. They may worship the other gods of Africa but their patron is of prime importance to them and receives special respect and worship.

Kongo witch doctors who have no patron worship the gods in a general way. They still cast spells but may not be specialty priests or cast as many spells as a witch doctor who holds some patron sacred.

Role: All witch doctors differ from their western cousins. Undead do not play such a role in African culture as they do in other cultures. A witch doctor is a healer, a bringer of rain, and a protector to his community and party. He uses his powers to serve others in a manner similar to the service he gives his gods.

Weapon proficiencies: *Required:* none; *Recommended:* short bow, club, spear (these are for the generalist witch doctor only, individual specialty priests will have their own requirements and recommendations).

Nonweapon proficiencies: *Required:* Healing, Religion; *Recommended:* Herbalism, Weather sense, Singing, Dancing, Carpentry.

Spells: *Generalists:* Healing, Necromantic, Guardian, Protection, Weather (specialty priests will have their own spheres of influence).

Special benefits: 1) Purifying ground: By dancing a sacred dance wearing a hideous demon mask, the witch doctor may protect a village from encroachment by evil creatures and spirits. This protection lasts until the next season when it must be renewed, the time of the renewal is a time of great rejoicing and sacrificing by the people of the village. This ceremony takes one turn and requires singing and dancing by the witch doctor. If not performed in a village a *circle of protection, 50' radius* is formed. All evil beings or spirits must save vs. spells to enter the warded area. This saving throw is at a - 1 penalty if the witch doctor had either the Singing or Dancing proficiency and a - 2 penalty if he had both. Other modifiers accrue if the witch doctor's patron or the gods in general are pleased or displeased with the actions of the villagers or those within the circle. Holy symbols for witch doctors are various masks worn to cast their spells, The verbal components for their spells are always singing or chanting and the somatic components are always dancing.

Special hindrances: 1) Witch doctors may wear no armor nor may they carry shields.

Legba

Description: The legbas are the priests of the elements. The priests are known as Abu-legbas, Keyan-legbas, Heddy-legbas, and Damon-legbas (air, earth, fire, and water priests respectively). The legbas are mostly concerned with learning the magic of their legba (element) but they also are charged by the spirits of the elements with the protection of the element in question and the creatures who rely upon it and with maintaining a balance between the four elements. Legbas usually are on good terms with one another and cooperate with one another to keep the evil elemental spirits, who have rebelled against their patrons, from amassing too much personal power and thus upsetting the balance of the elements. All legbas must be true neutral in alignment.

Role: The legbas are masters of their element and the creatures who rely upon it. Thus, abu-legbas are the masters of air and flying creatures, keyan-legbas are masters of the earth and the tunnelling creatures, heddy-legbas are masters of fire and creatures of the desert, and damon-legbas are masters of the water and aquatic creatures.

Weapon proficiencies: *Required:* short bow (abu-legbas), stone hammer (keyan-legbas), torch (heddy-legbas), trident (damon-legbas); *Recommended:* spear, sling, dagger (abu-legbas); footman's pick, stone dagger, stone spear (keyan-legbas); short bow with pitch soaked arrows, whip worked with a spice similar to pepper that causes them to sting like fire (+ 1 to damage and must be reapplied each day), greek fire, oil (heddy-legbas); spear, net, dagger (damon-legbas).

Nonweapon proficiencies: *Required:* Weather sense (abu-legbas); Direction sense (keyan-legbas); Fire-starting (heddy-legbas); Swimming (damon-legbas); *Recommended:* Bowyer/fletcher, Hunting, Set snares, Tumbling, Juggling (abu-legbas); Tracking, Agriculture, Herbalism, Set snares, Engineering, Stone masonry (keyan-legbas); Cooking, Brewing, Survival, Desert, Signalling (heddy-legbas); Navigation, Seamanship, Small boat use, Fishing, Carpentry (damon-legbas).

Spells: *Abu-legbas:* All, Animal, Divination, Elemental (air), Protection, Summoning, Weather, Astral; *Keyan-legbas:* All, Animal, Creation, Divination, Elemental (earth), Guardian, Plant, Summoning; *Heddy-legbas:* All, Animal, Combat, Divination, Elemental (fire), Protection, Summoning, Sun; *Damon-legbas:* All, Animal, Creation, Divination, Elemental (water), Protection, Summoning, Weather.

Special benefits: At 1st level, cast all elemental mage spells of the legba chosen as cleric spells of equal level; At 6th level, *speak with birds* (abu-legbas), *speak with burrowing creatures* (keyan-legbas), *speak with desert animals* (heddy-legbas), *speak with sea creatures* (damon-legbas); at 8th level, control up to 1 HD/2 levels of the



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legba of the creatures specified above per day. Saving throws allowed to avoid the effect as per *charm person/mammal*; at 10th level, summon up to 1 HD/2 levels of the legba of the creatures specified above per day. They serve the legba until dismissed, slain, or one turn has elapsed. The material components for the spells of the legbas are a sacrificed white dove or chicken (abu-legba), a piece of precious metal or gemstone used in the casting (keyan-legba), a pure white or deep red candle used up at a rate of one candle per turn of spell duration or a maximum of 10 spells (heddy-legbas), and a vial of pure and blessed water (used in the casting), a sea shell (used in the casting) or a pearl (also used in the casting).

Special hindrances: No armor or shields are allowed.

Obeah-man

Description: An obeah-man is a priest of the spirits that are inherent in all things. They seek to use, appease, and learn the lore of these spirits in order to achieve their goals.

Role: An obeah-man is a master of the undead, especially zombies and other unnatural life, as well as a medium to speak with the natural spirits of the land. He is a healer and a destroyer depending upon his alignment. He both serves and is served by the spirits—letting them inhabit dead bodies, protecting them, and in return receiving aid and instruction from them.

Weapon proficiencies: Required: none; *Recommended:* blowgun, dagger, knife, sickle, short sword, whip.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Required: Herbalism; *Recommended:* Cooking, Brewing, Musical instrument, Drums, Dancing, Artistic ability, Spellcraft.

Spells: All, Astral, Charm, Divination, Healing, Necromantic, Protection, Summoning.

Special benefits: 1) cast all Necromantic mage spells as cleric spells of the same level. 2) Create voodoo doll as per the savage kit ability in the *Complete Wizard's Handbook*. 3) Turn or command undead as per the cleric abilities, both of these are gained regardless of the alignment of the obeah-man. 4) The *create protective talisman* power as per the savage wizard kit.

Special hindrances: 1) Obeah-men may not wear armor or carry shields. 2) Obeah-men must sacrifice one large animal to the spirits equal to their new level at each level increase. Thus a 3rd-level obeah-man would have to sacrifice four healthy cows or similar large animals upon progression to 4th level.

Poro

Description: Poro are priests who revere the dead and draw upon the experience of their dead ancestors to guide them through life. They usually serve a village as advisor but many poro merely honor their own distinguished ancestry.

Role: Poro are by far the weakest of the priests. They have great stores of wisdom and lore, however, which their ancestors have bequeathed them and as such are highly respected for their advice and knowledge.

Weapon proficiencies: Required: none; *Recommended:* any which the DM and the character's culture allow.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Required: Ancient history, Local history (see "Special benefits" below); *Recommended:* Local history, Religion, Spellcraft.

Spells: All, Charm, Divination, Guardian, Protection, Healing, Necromantic.

Special benefits: 1) The poro start out by rolling percentile dice for their Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores in a manner similar to fighters with 18 strength. This number is added to the scores and every level thereafter a further 2d10 are rolled and added to these percentile scores. When the percentile scores reach or exceed 100, a point is added to the ability and the excess is applied to the new ability score.

For example: a character has a 15/96 wisdom. He gains a level and rolls 2d10. The result is 14 points. The new score for wisdom is 16/10 (96 +4 for 100 to 16, then the remainder of 14 which is 10 added to the 16 for 16/10). These abilities may be increased to a maximum of 19 each through this method; 2) The poro has a chance of knowing the lore about a person, place, or thing when encountered. The average of the poro's Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma is checked against the roll of a d20. If the roll is less than the average, then the poro knows the properties, history, and identity of the object, thing, or person. The poro must study the subject closely for one full turn before this can be achieved; 3) The poro receives six starting nonweapon proficiency slots at first level, and gains one additional slot for every two levels gained thereafter.

Special hindrances: 1) The poro may wear no armor and may not carry a shield; 2) The poro must meditate for two hours each day in addition to what he needs to pray for spells and rest. This meditation must be performed at the same time each day and if not performed, he acts as if one level lower in all respects until the meditation is performed. This loss is cumulative, so that if three nights of meditation are missed, the character acts at three levels below his level until he meditates; two levels lower until he meditates a second time; and one level lower until he can meditate a third time.

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Uncover these ancient, powerful clerical spells in your campaign

Since the Time of Troubles on the world of Toril, many new magics have appeared in the hands of the priests of various faiths. Even reports of ancient magic—lost in ages past—magic more powerful than any seen today surface from time to time.

Learn now of three powerful and ancient clerical spells that were lost long ago from the face of Faerun. Although these spells were created by members of specific churches on the world of Toril, it is quite likely that similar churches of other worlds such as Oerth have also researched these spells or their equivalents.

by Michel Francois

Artwork by Karl Waller

Long-Lost Priestly

Merge with nature (Alteration, Necromancy)

Spheres: Charm, Necromantic, Plant

Level: 6 Components: V,S,M

Range: 0 CT: 1 hour

Duration: Perm. Save: Special

Area of Effect: Caster

This spell allows a druidess or female cleric to avoid old age and death by transforming into another state of being, more closely tied with nature, providing a life expectancy and health far beyond mortal range.

Upon casting this spell, the caster links herself with a tree and unites with it so that she actually becomes a dryad (as in the MONSTROUS MANUAL™ book), losing her spell-casting and other class abilities in the process, but getting all a dryad's powers in their stead. As this spell is not reversible, it is used rarely and only by high-level individuals willing to leave this world and relinquish their positions to a new generation.

Successful use of this spell requires a tree willing to accept the dryad-to-be (which can be learned by a *speak with plants* spell), as well as the presence of two willing assistants of the same church as the caster, and of course the caster's holy symbol. At the end of the ceremony, the caster must pass a system shock roll or die. If any of the above-listed conditions are not met, this roll is penalized by -10% for every missing requirement.

History: This spell was initially restricted to the high priestess of Sune, who used it to avoid the shame of being cast out of the faith when old age would strike as well as to retain a certain youth and charm.

Its ritual eventually was passed to several members of various druidic faiths who began using it as well. This state of being

came to an end when the Grand Druid Qwieriaec denounced it as an heresy misleading likely candidates off the path of the Hierophant. Thus all druidic faiths on Toril had to abandon its use and the clergy of Sune had to do likewise to avoid religious conflict with the then powerful druidic organizations. Few, if any, remember it in current-day Faerun.

Adventure ideas: In order to fight the resurgence of a great and ancient evil, the PCs could need to track a priestess from ages past who fought that evil in her time and knows its weaknesses. The PCs would thus have to enter the dark and ancient forest where she mysteriously disappeared long ago, and suffer there the pranks of the faerie beings there. Creatures with darker purposes also could roam the forest, perhaps searching for the PCs or the priestess in order to silence her forever. The PCs would search until they save the life of a forest creature, thus gaining the inhabitants' trust and the possibility to meet with the priestess.

This would be a good way to use many of the rarely used but quite interesting faerie monsters.

Another possible plot would make the PCs the discoverers of an ancient cache of druidic magical scrolls (including this spell), triggering magical alarms in druidic circles across the world, and in turn alerting several vain priestesses and wizards in the PCs' whereabouts. The PCs will then find themselves wanted by several opponents, all hoping to wrest the scrolls away from them.

Roots of the assassin (Conjuration)

Spheres: Summoning, Plant

Level: 6 Components: V,S,M

Range: 10 yds. CT: 2 rounds

Duration: 1 turn Save: None

Area of Effect: 5 yds./caster level

Magicks

This dark and evil spell calls into existence long, slimy, black roots of foul look and manner. These plant things will grow from any surface the spell was cast on with astonishing speed and attempt to strangle the poor soul(s) who triggered the spell by rolling themselves around the neck of their victim. These roots attack collectively as a priest of the same level as the caster.

The caster of this spell chooses exactly what condition will trigger it; it can be of any complexity, e.g., "Kill only Tallfellow halflings wearing magical black leather armor with a red rose painted on their left shoulders" except that the spell can't know the name of a being nor can it be set off by undead or plantlike creatures. This spell creates 1d100 tiny roots per square yard, any of which is sufficient to strangle a human-sized opponent. Each of them can project itself up to five yards in order to attack.

Potential victims thus have to fight several hundred roots originating from several square yards of surface. When called into being, they don't make more noise than a leaf falling from a tree, so only individuals with an exceptional sense of hearing would deny the roots a -4 bonus to surprise rolls.

Entrapped victims can hold their breath a number of rounds equal to 1/3 their Constitution score, beyond they must make a

Constitution check every round with a -2 cumulative penalty or perish (allow characters with the Swimming proficiency an additional delay of one round).

Individuals ensnared by this spell can attempt to sever the roots that strangle them. The mass of roots is AC 6 but only slashing weapons will have any effect against the roots, and if the trapped victim uses any weapon larger than a dagger, she will suffer a -3 penalty to her attack rolls against the roots. Slashing weapons sever five times their damage roll in roots and area-effect damaging spells also will destroy that many roots.

Characters attacking from outside the area of effect will not suffer any penalty when attacking the roots, but they also are in danger since roots can turn in response to the attack. The most common way to use this spell is to cast it at a mandatory passage point of the intended target (for example above the bed of a king).

History: This spell was created by priests of the foul god Moander when their power was at their zenith. Their excessive use of it was one of the many reasons for which the elves of Myth Drannor sought to end their rule.

Today, after the unsuccessful attempt by cultists to bring Moander back to the world, it is feared that the Zhentarim discovered an unholy book of prayers belonging to the now-dead priestess Mo-

gion containing several dark spells, including this one. If this rumor is true, it won't be long before they attempt to use it for their own dark plans. Of course, should Moander still be alive, there is always a risk of this spell resurfacing some day.

Adventure ideas: Escaped Moanderites from FRC2 Curse of the Azure Bonds could attempt to harass your heroes using this spell, or you could send your PCs in a frantic race against the Zhentarim culminating in them infiltrating and escaping Darkhold before the book can be given to Fzoul Chembryl.

Resplendence of renewed youth

(Alteration, Necromancy)
Spheres: Necromantic, Healing
Level: 7 Components: V,S
Range: Touch CT: 1 hour
Duration: 1 year Save: None
Area of Effect: 1 creature

This very powerful spell allows creatures affected to tap into their spiritual strengths in order to bring their bodies back to their peak strength of youth for one year. Presumably this means that their bodies will return to the shape they had when the recipient was around 25 years of age. Afterward, the body returns to the state it would have normally. The spell heavily drains the body of the recipient, and so adds 1d10 + 3 years to the recipient's true age. This spell functions only on characters having shown exceptional wisdom and piety during their lives, and then only if they have an exceptional focus that their current condition prevents them from completing. Casting a quest spell is thus mandatory before attempting this spell. Dropping this *quest* means forfeiting all advantages of the *resplendence* spell.

Recipients of this spell lose all the negative aspects of old age, such as lost hit points, levels, or ability points and so on, as well as gaining immunity to all diseases and restoration of any previously lost Charisma points for the duration of the spell only. This is due to the aura of self-confidence that the character inspires to onlookers. A character can benefit from this spell once in his lifetime only.

History: This spell is one of the secrets of the church of Tyr and they use it sparingly, and only when they need the help of a great hero to placate great sufferings caused by evil tyrants. It is rumored that the church of Sune has many times tried to learn the secret of this rare and powerful spell.

Adventure ideas: Old, wise, and powerful PCs could benefit from the effect of this spell (such as a paladin going to war against a red wizards army). However, since PCs rarely are so old as to need this spell, sending them on a *quest* as champions of an aging NPC to determine whether this NPC is worthy enough to receive this spell could be a more plausible way to introduce it in your campaign.

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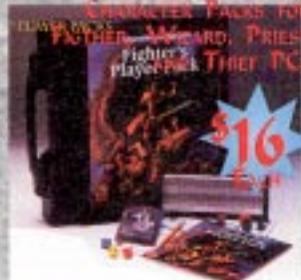
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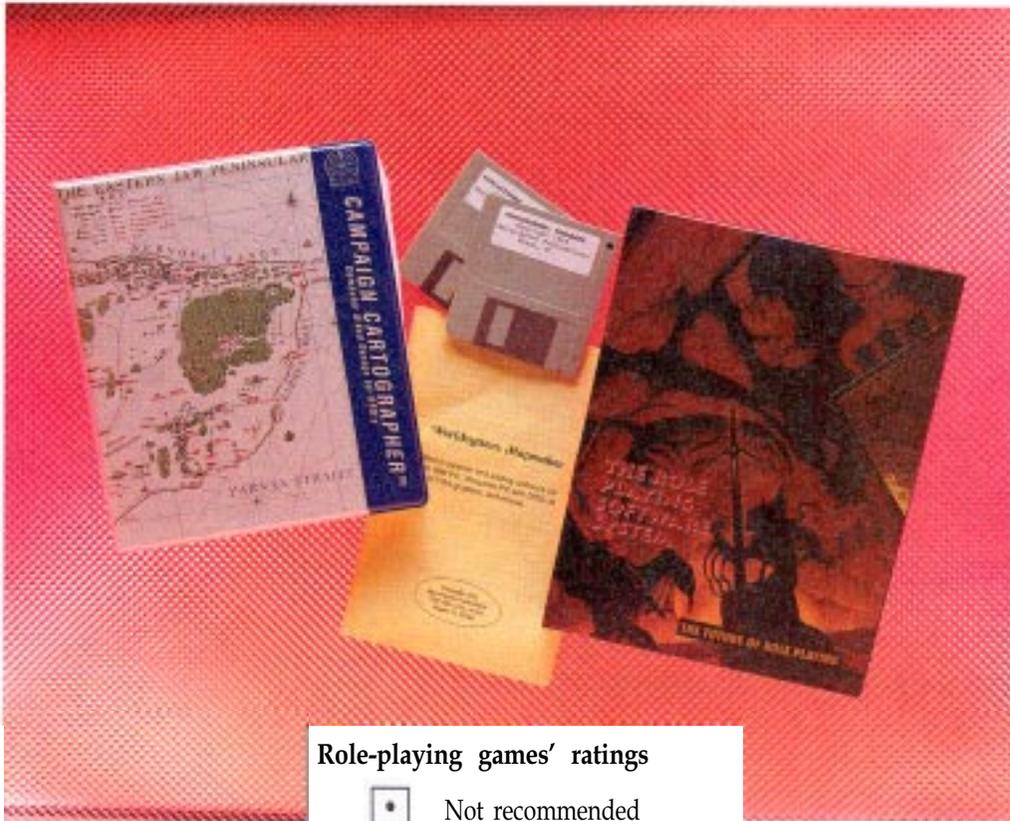
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ROLE-PLAYING reviews

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PC²: PCs in your PC



Role-playing games' ratings

- Not recommended
- Poor, but may be useful
- Fair
- good
- Excellent
- The best

Some months ago, an ad for a new type of game-related software caught my eye. It promised to help GMs run a paper-game campaign. Suspecting that it wouldn't be reviewed in the computer-game column (after all, it wasn't really a game), I checked into the possibility of covering it in this column—given its usefulness to GMs of paper games. The idea was met with enthusiasm, and I began looking for similar products, to create a themed review. As I watched over the next several months, ads for other such programs began to appear. It seemed as if the idea of campaign-managing software was coming of age. (Or maybe I was just noticing for the first time.) Having collected a few, I give you this "PC²" column.

Before turning to the reviews proper, however, I have a promise to keep. Last month, I talked a bit about my belief that game reviewers ought to actually play the games they review. All too often, I think, review articles are simply a reviewer's first impressions upon reading a product, often colored by emotional motivations toward the publisher or creator. But a game can surprise even the most experienced of reviewers. Sometimes a concept or rule that seems wonderful when read turns out to be "saggy" in play, and at other times an idea that seems "iffy" at first turns out to be great fun when put to the test. Steve Jackson—one of the most respected game designers on the planet—made this point some years ago in a series of game design articles in *SPACE GAMER** magazine, and I've certainly found it true in my own review of products.

Coincidentally, my very first published piece in the game hobby was a capsule review in *SPACE GAMER* magazine. The magazine required capsule reviews to be no more than 200 words in length, in a strict, four-paragraph format. According to its writers' guidelines, the four paragraphs were each to answer a question from the following list, in order: 1) What's the product about?; 2) What's good about it? (find something); 3) What's bad about it? (find something); and 4) What's your recommendation about buying it?

I have found that four-step approach so helpful that I still follow it today—though I use about five times the number of words per product, and treat each question with more than one paragraph. (Only once have I varied from the format, and then only to switch the order of good and bad around, because the product was so poor.) In particular, I think the injunction to find something both good and bad in each product adds veracity to a review, making reviewers consider the merits of products that don't immediately excite them, and keeping them from being blind to the flaws of products they love.

GOLDTREE ENGINE* program



City campaign software
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If you have never taken part in a fantasy city campaign, you are definitely missing something. As the old TV series used to say, "There are a million stories in the naked city. . . ." and they parade past the player characters like a smorgasbord of adventure. Assuming the GM has the wherewithal to run multiple possible stories at the drop of a hat, the possibilities are endless. As far as players are concerned, any of the NPCs strolling by or populating the buildings lining it could lead to a different adventure, and that open-endedness makes the milieu all the more believable and exciting.

As a matter of fact, the single best fantasy campaign I ever ran was set in a city, and my biggest problem turned out to be getting the PCs even to consider setting foot outside the city walls. I had at hand all the tools necessary for success: a well-keyed city map, a thorough index of the city's buildings and citizenry, and a solid source of random encounters. The city map and index belonged to the *FREE CITY OF CARSE** book (then by Midkemia Press, and later republished by Chaosium, Inc.), and the random encounters were provided by the *CITIES** book (by those same companies).

As a city, Carse had a solid sense of veracity to it, and finding any particular business type within its walls was easy, given the book's index. As for the *CITIES* book, it was a wonder of organization and inventiveness, with a main encounter table arranged by: 1) region of the city, 2) main streets versus back streets, and 3) time of day. Each entry then directed the GM to a second, minor table, where the actual details of an encounter were generated. As a result of the combination of established information and random encounters, players repeatedly commented that they felt entirely free to follow their whims within the setting, yet I wasn't overwhelmed by the workload of portraying the entire population of a city. Obviously, those two books together were excellent.

The *GOLDTREE ENGINE* software goes even farther in making city adventuring both open-ended for players and a breeze for the GM. It puts a city full of buildings, streets, inhabitants, and history into a

computer database, and makes them all accessible through numerous point-and-click search functions. It also adds in a means of randomly generating not just NPCs wandering by, but also special events occurring as your PCs walk the streets, and even the city's weather. On top of that, it includes windows for the GM to organize commonly used game rules and tables, and a GM journal for keeping track of specific events in the PCs' adventures, by date, location, name, and even length of encounter. What's more, it includes indices of every character in the city (adding new ones as the GM invents them), every magical item (by owner and location), and every building (by name, map-key number, business type, and neighborhood), again accessible through various different search functions, so that the GM can find any single item, character, or building with ease. And as icing on the cake, the program includes a random number generator, so the GM doesn't even have to carry dice. The *GOLDTREE ENGINE* program comes packaged with a sample city—the *KINGSPPOINT** software—but there are other cities available separately.

The things this program can do are amazing. Let me illustrate by describing an example play session I ran with my daughters recently. The girls decided to play elves and half-elves who had just arrived in the city of Kingspoint, one to gain a bit more experience as a fighter, and the others to accompany her for the heck of it. As GM, I decided to run the adventure using a simple RPG—the rules from the front of an old *MIDDLE EARTH QUEST** solo adventure, to be exact. With the *GOLDTREE ENGINE* program up and running on my notebook computer (the software requires at least a 286 with CGA, 640K RAM, 4MB hard drive space, and DOS 3.1), I clicked the mouse pointer on "Information" (which also can be accessed by the F3 key) in the menu bar at the top of the screen. From the choices there, I clicked on "Change RPG" and typed in a MEQ character sheet format while the girls were generating their characters with pencil and paper. Once they were finished, I clicked on a blank line in the player window, which brought up a copy of the PC template I had just created, and I entered the stats for the first of their characters. The other two characters were entered just as quickly on templates of their own. Now they were all in the program's memory.

Having decided that the characters had come to town by ship and were arriving at roughly 10 P.M., I clicked on "Util" (also available as F2) and chose "Set Time/Date/Speed of Time," then set the clock to that hour and made sure it was running at a one-to-one ratio with real time. Clicking on

"Map" (also available as Alt-M) I brought up the overall city map, and I moved the pointer to the N54 section, that being part of the city's harbor, where the PCs' ship would be arriving.

This accomplished, the program put me back to the main screen, where the weather window told me that it was hot and foggy, with absolutely no wind. I described to my daughters the eery fog lying along the water—causing sounds to echo strangely—the grunting of the crew at the oars (no wind, remember) as they propelled the ship toward the harbor, and the cursing of the ship's captain as he steered the vessel through the reefs, guided by bonfires burning atop the cliffs behind the shore. (The "Building Description" window that came up upon first accessing the N54 map section told me about the cliffs, and I had read about the bonfires earlier, while exploring the program on my own.)

Once the boat had docked, the PCs debarked and wandered about the wharf, in the fog, then asked directions to the city proper from a man unloading cargo. From him, they learned that they could either climb a stairway up the cliff face or purchase a ride to the top in one of the cargo nets. (Again, the "Building Description" window had spoken of huge cranes atop the cliff, for bringing cargo and passengers up to the city.) One of the PCs took a stairway; the others rode a net. I had a great time describing to the girls the lurching ride up through the fog, culminating in a sudden view of the rain-damp, torch-lit city as their net rose above the mists.

Once atop the cliff, the characters took a glance around and discovered a number of warehouses, with a couple of shady characters lounging about the area. (This information came from accessing the map again, using the right mouse button to click on various buildings for a quick idea of what was nearby, then checking the "Visible Life" window of the main screen to see any NPCs were standing about.)

Suddenly, the weather window changed. The temperature was still hot, but a bit of wind had risen, and the clouds let loose a downpour. When I described the sudden rain to the girls, one of them suggested breaking into a warehouse for shelter and a place to sleep, but the other two poo-hooped that idea (afraid their characters might be caught and arrested), and said that their characters were looking for the nearest local to ask for directions to an inn. At about that time, a mounted guardsman rode by (i.e., appeared in the "Visible Life" window), and the PCs flagged him down for help.

When I clicked on the guardsman, the program brought up a basic character information template, which revealed that he was a temporary character (not one of the city's named ones) and was an elf. I decided that he was on his way home from his rounds, and that faced with a female elf and two half-elves brand-new to the city, he would take pity on them and

help get them settled for the night. Quickly, I invented a name for the NPC (thereby making him a permanent addition to the city), and had him lead the PCs to a tavern for some mulled wine. Clicking on the "Move" option (also available as F4), and choosing the "Business Type" heading from the list that resulted, I typed in "Tavern," which put me at the top of the list of taverns in the whole city, in the "T" section of the overall business listing. Scrolling down the list revealed, several taverns within a few blocks, identified by name and quality. I chose one, answered "yes" when the program asked if the party should be moved there, and advanced the clock to account for the time spent traveling. The girls spent a few minutes role-playing their encounters in the tavern (again, "Visible Life"), then asked about getting a room somewhere. Another access of the "Move" option sent their characters to a nearby "Inn" of good quality, where the guardsman took his leave of them. When the PCs asked where they could find him tomorrow, I used the program to identify the nearest guard station and typed his name into its employee list, thereby tying him to that location in the program.

As the PCs were renting a room at the inn, the program brought up a random event. According to the window that popped up on screen, a ghost appeared to the fighter character and said, "Beware the catacombs." In my description to the appropriate daughter, I modified the event to a voice whispering at her character's back (I could have as easily ignored the event entirely), then used the GM journal to log the occurrence (accessible by clicking on the menu bar, typing Alt-Q, or punching F9), creating another permanent NPC in the process. This character, I decided, was a fighter who used to rent the room, and who now haunted it, after having died in the catacombs. Now, whenever the PCs are back at the inn, he may appear as a random NPC, leading to further adventures.

This quick example of play barely scratches the surface of things possible with the GOLDTREE ENGINE software, though it does demonstrate how easily the GM can use it to maneuver about the city and keep track of characters and events. It also shows how much of a spur to creativity the program is, without dictating to the GM. Obviously, I'm extremely impressed with it.

Problems with the product are relatively few, and those that do exist are minor. For example, the user's guide is less than perfect, partly because its airy layout makes its information difficult to grasp at a glance, and partly because its text continually "preaches to the converted," telling the buyer over and over how great the program is. In my opinion, by the time users are reading page 36, they've already bought the product and just want to know how to use thing, not be told yet again

how useless "hundreds" of other city products can be, and about the "rapidity, flexibility, and potential for growth" of the GOLDTREE ENGINE software. Fortunately, the program itself is so user-friendly that the book need be used only infrequently. On the other hand, it would be nice to be told somewhere that most of the windows in the program can be scrolled through and sized like those in the MICROSOFT WINDOWS program. It took me some time to discover that fact. And it's sad that the fact that the right mouse button brings up basic information on a site without leaving the map is effectively buried in the book, where it is easily overlooked or forgotten. I also wish that the dice function could be brought up from anywhere in the program, rather than merely from the main screen (though it is automatically brought up when an encounter calls for a chance of something in particular happening, such as a PC recognizing a criminal depicted on a Wanted poster). It would be nice, for instance, to access an NPC's character sheet to find a particular stat, roll the dice, and enter any effects right on the sheet, without having to go back to the main screen in the interim. Also, I have yet to find a way to turn off the random reactions generated on the PC sheets. Apparently, the function is a carry-over from the NPC sheets, but it shouldn't apply to PCs. Finally, as for the city of Kingspoint itself, some users will find its nature a bit too dark for their taste, with too much vomitus, urine, and guano, and too many tawdry "working women." I certainly have to tone those things down when gaming with my children, and I wish it were as easy for a GM to change the encounter lists as it is to change character templates.

But given all the functions it performs, the GOLDTREE ENGINE program is amazing. It does all the dirty work, leaving the GM free to role-play. For city campaigning, there simply is no better GM aid. I look forward to picking up other products in the line. Currently, there is one other city available, and graphics files will soon follow, some of building illustrations and floor plans (the KINGSPPOINT software currently has three, as a sample of things to come), and others of character illustrations. Both allow GMs to assign details to specific locations and characters as they see fit. I can hardly wait.

WORLDSYSTEM: MAPMAKER* program



World campaign software
IBM & compatibles (640K, hard drive,
VGA, and mouse minimum; 486 recom-
mended)
Morningstar Publications \$40.00
7907 NW 53 St., #202
Miami FL 33166

The WORLDSYSTEM: MAPMAKER software provides the GM with a way of mapping entire solar systems from scratch, from planetary level, to continent, to re-

gion, to city, to individual building floor plans (including 3-D views of buildings, if desired). At each level, clicking the cursor on a specific area of the map brings up a smaller scale map of that area. Various types of notes can be kept at each level, details of the area's history, military forces, religions, and other organizations, all accessed by their own icon, as well as more general information about each map, such as details of its traversal by a party of PCs. Sets of random encounters and random weather (by season) also can be established for each map individually. Not surprisingly, the program includes a dice-rolling function, a very intuitive, pictorial one. The program comes with the WORLDSYSTEM: CENTERWORLD* software included, which provides a sample planet, Centerworld, to begin play with.

There is a lot to be applauded about the WORLDSYSTEM software. For one thing, it is extremely flexible. GMs who like to run campaigns as a series of loosely connected adventures can do so, using the program simply to create maps specific to each adventure. Later, if desired, those maps can be tied to particular areas of a campaign map. On the other hand, GMs who like to begin a campaign by designing a continent or world for its setting can easily do so, adding detailed maps of specific areas as the player characters travel to those regions. Further, each map's weather and random encounter files are completely under the GM's control. Events and weather details show up only when the GM clicks on their respective icons at the bottom of the screen; but more significantly, the contents of the files can be established by the GM, line by line, allowing the files to be tailored to the GM's desires for the particular map. (Note that if there are no entries, no icon shows up for that map.) It is also worth mentioning that, while elements of the software have a fantasy feel, the program is easily adaptable to science-fiction campaigns as well.

The manner in which the program is set up is fairly simple. Upon opening the program, the user is faced with main-screen series of "buttons," labeled in order as follows: Worldsystem, World Tree, Mapmaker, Text Editor, Illustration Editor, Encounter Editor, Weather Editor, Create New World, Files, and Exit. Left-clicking (or pressing "Return"—the two are synonymous in the program) on any of the on-screen selections brings up that part of the program.

The Worldsystem function is intended to be used during role-playing sessions. Here, a map is shown with a menu bar at the bottom of the screen. Left-clicking on an area of the map brings up the smaller-scale map for that region, if there is any. Right-clicking (synonymous with pressing the space bar) on an area brings up general information for that region. Right-clicking on the menu bar brings up general information for the overall map. But the primary purpose of the menu bar

is to hold a series of icons to be left-clicked for specific functions. Beginning at the left of the bar, just after a map scale there is a sort of diamond-shaped icon that moves the program back one step, to the next-larger map (world to solar system, for instance, or building to city). Next, there is a disk icon, which opens a utility window. From that window, the current weather season can be changed, a notepad can be accessed for the current map, or exit can be made to the main screen menu once again. After the disk is a sword representing random encounters, then a cloud symbol for weather, a page symbol for history, a flag for military information, a priest for details of religions on this map, a key for organizations, and finally the dice icons. The dice icons symbolize a d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, d20, and d100. Also, there is an icon of two stacked blocks for rolling two dice at once, and another of three stacked blocks for rolling three at once. If neither of these is outlined, the program simply rolls one of whichever die is left-clicked.

The World Tree function brings up virtually the same map as the Worldsystem function, but with boxes marking each named area. Rather than detailing each command on this screen's menu bar, let me summarize. On this screen, the GM can mark new areas and delete old ones, create new map names and delete old ones, tie names to specific areas, or change existing names.

The Mapmaker function allows new maps to be created or old ones modified. The user chooses a map name from a directory, and the appropriate map fills the screen. If there is no map for that name, a blank screen arises, for creation of a new one. Actually drawing the map can be done freehand (by left-clicking on the "Freehand" command) or with the use of "Utilities," which include symbols for mountains, hills, and trees, multiple color choices, geometric shapes, text entry at various angles, and even 3-D pieces for buildings, sizeable by the GM. (With the choices here, a GM even could draw simple scenes, if desired.) As a mapping utility, the software is a bit on the simple side, and maps made with it reflect that fact, but in this case simple also means easy to use. As part of an overall campaign package, the Mapmaker function is just about the right level of sophistication.

The Text Editor allows creation and editing of the information files that show up under the Worldsystem function, so that GMs can tailor details of history, religion, etc. for particular regions. (From the Worldsystem screen itself, notes under these headings cannot be modified; only information on the notepad can be changed within that function.) The text processor is limited but appropriately functional. For example, it allows cursor movement one letter at a time, one word at a time, or one page at a time, delete erases forward and backspace erases

backward, text can be block copied/deleted/pasted, and the function keys allow for a number of special characters useful in RPGs.

The Illustration Editor provides for creation and modification of symbols such as flags and coats of arms that can be tied to particular text files. Strangely, drawing here is much different from drawing in the Mapmaker function. I get the feeling that the Illustration Editor doesn't get much use.

The Encounter Editor lets a GM add, subtract, or change encounter lists map by map. This is an impressive part of the overall program. The types of encounters possible within it are entirely up to the GM. By block copying particular ones, the GM modifies the odds of their occurrence, and preset tables of "standard encounters" can be included as one heading in a particular list, making it easy for the GM to quickly create encounter files that, while being similar, have specialized variations.

In contrast, the Weather Editor is restrictive. The GM must choose from preset lists of weather types, and movement on the screen is a bit tedious, requiring use of the tab and escape keys rather than the mouse. (Users with monochrome screens should be warned that color changes on most of this screen are invisible in monochrome, adding to the difficulty.) Still, the mix of weather types is entirely in the GM's hands, making weather unique to each map.

The Create New World "button" lets a GM start a new world from scratch. Before doing this, the Files "button" should be left-clicked, to create a new subdirectory for the world.

While the WORLDSYSTEM: MAPMAKER program is quite flexible, and fairly easy to use, it does have a few minor problems. Operation of most of the program is intuitive, but there are exceptions. For example, to add a new map, the user must first choose or create a name from the World Tree function, then go to the Mapmaker function and select that name. But the process isn't immediately obvious from perusing the program or the manual. Similarly, only by experimenting with the software can a user discover how to line up elements in a 3-D illustration, and the first few efforts can be quite frustrating. (Hint: Use the arrow keys, measuring distance by counting the number of times a key is struck.) Such things the manual simply doesn't explain. But perhaps the most significant criticism of the program is that it doesn't provide a way to print out maps once they are drawn. A user who wants a hard copy will have to print them from DOS somehow.

Still, what the WORLDSYSTEM: MAPMAKER program sets out to do, it does nicely. It allows the GM to create reams of interlinked maps with relative ease, storing them for easy access on a hard drive, rather than as loose sheets in some huge paper folder. And by "fancying up" those

maps with individual information files, plus random encounters and weather, it makes the world seem vital and living. Also, though I haven't said it thus far, creating maps with the program is definitely fun. I think the software well worth the price.

As a final note, let me point out that there are a few expansion sets available for the program. The WORLDSYSTEM: CENTERWORLD software is available apart from the WORLDSYSTEM: MAPMAKER program, though why anyone would want it separately I can't imagine. The Centerworld disk comes packaged with a TELSPAR & CITY EXPANSION disk for \$24.95, providing a world to play within, but no means of modifying it. There also is THE ELVES: SYLVANI & THE GREEN EMPIRE disk available for \$12.95, providing maps and information on another portion of Centerworld. And there is a simple character-creation program available as well, the CHARACTERSYSTEM software. It adds another "button" on the WORLDSYSTEM: MAPMAKER main screen, which allows the GM to create character templates and randomly generate characters, with modifications tied to particular regions of the world. Interestingly enough, this piece of software has a printout option included.

CAMPAIGN CARTOGRAPHER* **program**

Mapping software

IBM & compatibles (PC, AT, PS/2 or compatible, CGA, DOS 4.0, 1.4 MB floppy drive, and mouse or other pointing device minimum; hard drive, co-processor, and printer recommended)

ProFantasy Software Ltd.

available in the U.S. from:

RPG International

\$69.95

A division of ISOMEDIA

2509 152nd Ave. NE, Suite A

Redmond WA 98502

(800) 468-3939



For GMs who just want to draw maps, this is certainly the program to have. Essentially, it is a CAD (Computer Assisted Design) program, specially modified to include fantasy-oriented map symbols.

The maps this program can produce are excellent, equivalent to the best in professionally published game materials. Besides allowing the user various types of line and geometrical shape commands, from which intricate coastlines, rivers, political boundaries, or even cities and buildings can be drawn, the program also includes a multitude of map symbols, from volcanoes to Viking ships, from woods to whirlpools, all sizeable on command. There also is a wide range of text fonts included, allowing the user to make individual maps even more distinctive.

With this program, maps can be built in layers, which means that the exact same continental outline (for instance) can be used for a geographical map, a political

map, a road map, or whatever, ensuring that they all match up exactly. Background grids also are available during drawing, with an optional "snap on" function—that reshapes lines as they are drawn, to lock them to the grid points—and dimensions also can be entered by angle and distance, or by Cartesian coordinates (x/y). Zoom commands allow the user to focus in on small areas for greater detail, or to pull back to make sure that map edges align with other maps in a set. Individual elements can be done in any of 16 different colors, assuming the user has a color printer to take advantage of the fact. Maps also print in black and white, of course.

Most program commands are available by drop menu, text entry, and hot-key combinations, to make things as easy as possible for the user. The program book also is very well organized and written, further aiding easy use. Most of the book consists of step-by-step tutorials, to smoothly guide the user to familiarity with the program.

If there are any problems with the software, I haven't found them yet (except for the annoying fact that the copy protection requires you to keep a key disk in your floppy drive). But considering just how big and wide-ranging the program is, that isn't surprising. The manual itself is 334 pages, and there are a number of functions I have not yet tried.

Actually, that size in itself may be a problem for some GMs. For those who like to invest multiple hours into creating detailed maps for their campaigns, and who have the hardware to take advantage of the program, the CAMPAIGN CARTOGRAPHER software allows them to create, store, modify, and copy maps more beautiful than they could have hoped before. But for GMs with limited time to spend, the program may just be too much. The CAMPAIGN CARTOGRAPHER software is sort of like a limousine of mapping programs, and some people might be better served with a rough-and-ready truck. On the other hand, this limousine isn't that expensive, and playing with its multitude of "buttons" and "switches" is a lot of fun.

Short & sweet

Amberzine, (Phage Press, P.O. Box 519, Detroit MI 48231-0519, \$10 single issue, \$40 five-issue subscription).

Articles in this magazine range from campaign journals to comic strips, essays on running the AMBER DICELESS ROLE-PLAYING* game, and short stories (including a piece by Roger Zelazny in issue #6). The magazine is an entertaining read, and a great source of ideas for AMBER campaigns. But it is contractually limited to a print run of 1,000 copies each issue, and subscription numbers are near that total, so those interested should not hesitate to contact Phage Press at the above address for information.

Shadow Knight, (by Erick Wujcik, Phage Press, P.O. Box 519, Detroit MI 48231-0519,

\$23.95).

A 256-page source book for the AMBER game, this product adds rules for characters, places, items, and concepts from Zelazny's "Merlin cycle" of Amber novels, as well as further fleshing out information for AMBER campaigns in general. Referees of the role-playing game will find the information quite valuable. As a nice added touch, the book contains plot summaries of all the Amber novels, for those GMs who begin to forget who did what to whom and when.

Stick Figure Gladiators, (Storm Press, P.O. Box 266, Arlington Heights IL 60006-0266, \$n/a).

From the publishers of the SUN AND STORM* dark fantasy role-playing game comes this delightfully silly little beer-and-pretzels game. Contestants sketch out a stick figure, give it a ludicrous name, and send it out into the arena. Limbs can be hacked off and regenerated; only a head or torso shot is lethal (and there's always the "flatlander" rule to defend against them). The game comes in a resealable plastic bag, with a rules sheet, character sheets, two dice, and pencils (already sharpened).

SPACE SHUTTLE* game, (by Dave Skorupski, address n/a, \$7) In terms of presentation and tone, this game reminds me of Flying Buffalo's NUCLEAR WAR* card game, though its humor isn't quite as dark. Players take on the roles of various corporations all competing to replace NASA as the nation's space organization. But the path to the stars is fraught with perils—some random and some caused by rival corporations. This is one of those light, entertaining games that can be played two or three times at a sitting, allowing more than one player to win a game. It may be a bit too random for some tastes, but I enjoy it.

Last Frontier: The Vesuvius Incident game, (by Neal Sofge and Michael Wasson, Fat Messiah Games, P.O. Box 341136, Los Angeles CA 90034, \$10.00).

LT. TVI is a solitaire board game in a 6" x 9" plastic bag, covering an *Aliens*-style infestation of an orbiting lab ship. With slick illustration and graphic design, the product is in many ways reminiscent of some of the best "microgames" from Metagaming's heyday and the early years of Steve Jackson Games. Some players will find the turn sequence to be too complicated, but the rules are well written, and the map is well designed. Fans of the company's earlier SHAPESHIFTERS* game are certain to like this product.

Ω

* indicates a product produced by a company other than TSR, Inc.

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DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE.

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OR SO SMART THAT ONE

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WELCOME TO

KROMOSOME

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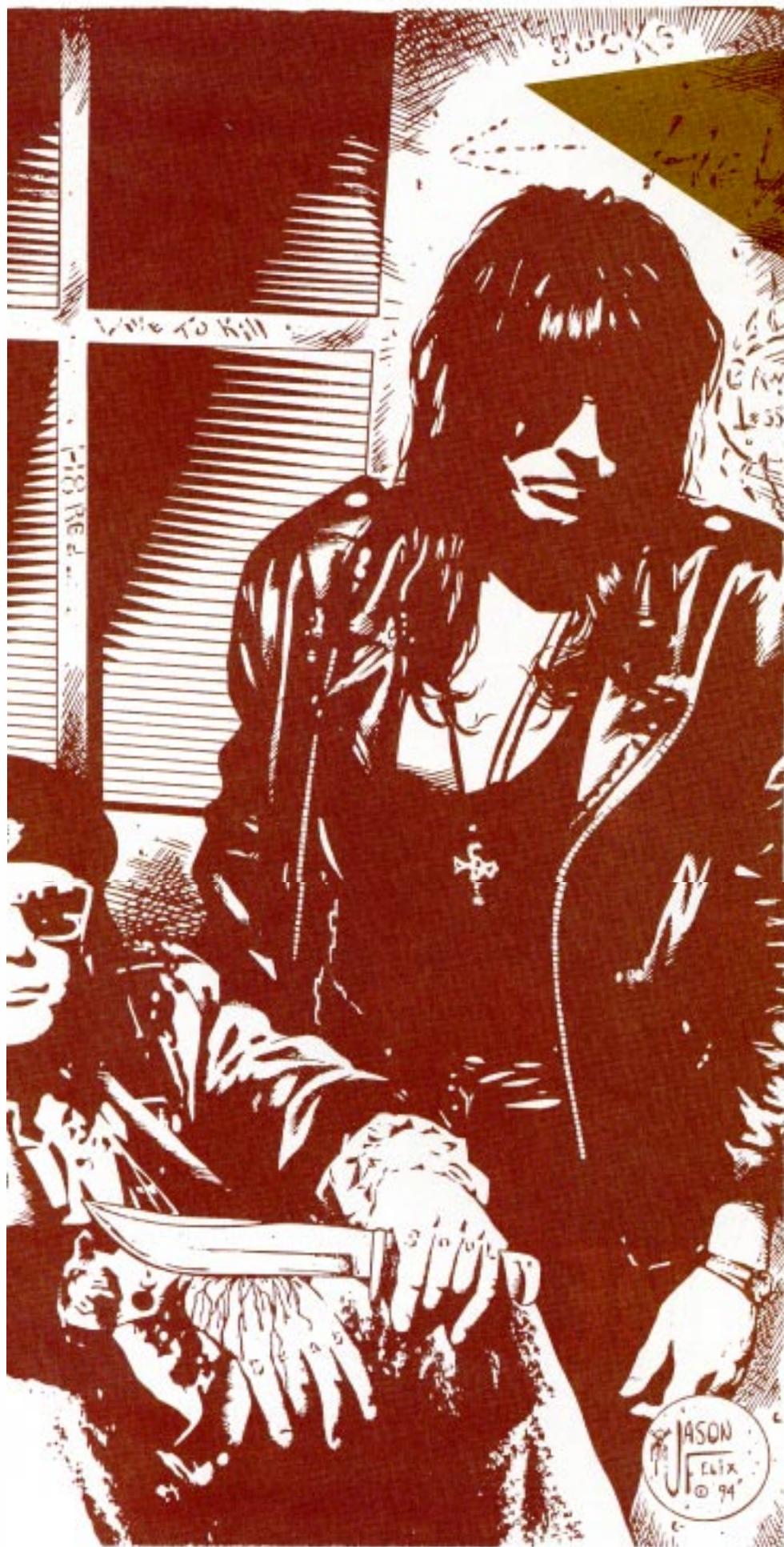
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the In
The darkest Net site

Never show your edge.
Nobody's so tough,
smart, or rich that he
can't be taken down.

by Wolfgang "Biopunk" Baur

Artwork by Jason Felix

What is essential is invisible to the eye.
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

The *Kromosome* universe for the AMAZING ENGINE® game presents a dark future setting of genetic engineering run amok and a worldwide Net that functions organically. The biopunk player characters of the *Kromosome* setting all begin the game with their choice of genetic enhancements—they'll do anything to get an edge over the competition. The Netrunners of the *Kromosome* universe operate in teams of specialists to overcome the dangers inherent in a Net that sometimes fights back. . . dangers that a smart 'runner can learn about at an illegal infohaven called the Invisible Sun.

The Invisible Sun is home to the brilliant, the deranged, and the bizarre. A few of its lurkers and barflies are provided here, but hundreds of other characters just as grotesque flood through the electronic doorway every day. The digital doors of the Invisible Sun never close, and the deals and betrayals never stop.

invisible sun

in the Kromosome setting

The Invisible Sun

The Invisible Sun (IS) is a combination database, social club, college of crime, and house of worship. Though it never advertises its presence, it is an open secret for any well-connected Netrunner. The IS isn't a physical place, but its fans spend more time in the IS than off-line, because it is the central clearinghouse for Net information. It reports on virtual personalities, Net possession, AIs, rogue programs, and other cutting-edge Net tech and gossip. Half the visitors are byteheads, and the other half are slumming power players. AIs are said to visit incognito from time to time, though this might just be a rumor to attract more business. Though half the information there is sheer conjecture, the other half is priceless for any serious Netrunner looking to become a VP, burn an AI, or take control of Net zombies. Lessons learned at the Invisible Sun can save your character's life.

Security

Physically located in an abandoned warehouse in Ulan Baator, the machinery for the IS is overseen by a dedicated staff of hormone-locked Chinese drones (the worker caste of the Chinese provinces) and is guarded by Net zombies. Contingency plans call for moving the IS hardware and rebooting the software and data in the event of any attack or seizure; the whole site is configured so that it can be core-wiped in three minutes flat. The crucial data is downloaded to the back-up site once each hour. So far, the Invisible Sun has been transferred once, in its early days. The authorities didn't try again after the IS retaliated with carefully coordinated and crippling electronic strikes against the Chinese air-defense system. As a result, no one gets IS information for free. Only organizations with resource level 12 or higher can afford access to the base, and even then Invisible Sun screens its corporate clients to keep out those who have nothing to contribute. Individuals with skills are allowed cheap access in exchange for teaching newcomers the ropes and sharing some of their techniques with other pros.

The Club

In cyberspace, the Invisible Sun looks like a "mass of black walls and floor, mirrored ceiling, and dim purplish UV lights. One wall is nothing but a series of boxes for posting notices and leaving scrolls (VR representations of programs) for others. These post boxes can be sealed so that they can be opened only by one or more specific Netrunners; they are sealed to everyone else, though a few rumors say that the owner of the Invisible Sun runs everything put in the boxes through his filters, searching for keywords. Word on the street doesn't agree on what those keywords are, though there are lots of "official" lists; probably the lists are just rumors.

The contents of sealed boxes are protected by DeathIce, a specialty of the Invisible Sun that inflicts 4d6 points of Mind damage on anyone tampering with it. No one has found a way to crack it yet, but the code for this piece of electronic wizardry would be worth a fortune to the right buyer.

Two gateways lead from the Invisible Sun club to the BlackNet and the Crossroads. Access to these areas is controlled by Net cadres, expert 'runners who report to the owner of the Invisible Sun. If they say a Netrunner can't go in, he can't go in, and DeathIce will keep him out if he tries.

The owner

The Invisible Sun is not a charity. It is run as a business, with fees that start at ridiculous and go to outrageous (resource levels 11-14). It charges these fees because it has the freshest data, the tightest security, and the most safety features of any Net node in the world, and because its owner is a greedy man. The IS has been able to fend off electronic attacks by nations and megacorps, and has managed to keep its real location a tightly-guarded secret. Most people think the database Node is somewhere in low Earth orbit.

Despite the security surrounding the Invisible Sun itself, the proprietor is rather well-known to the IS's clientele, though he travels under many different names. The owner often goes by the names Huang Phong Wei, Michael Wei, or Michael Phong, but his real identity is believed to be Xian Lee, a hormone-locked drone. On the Net everyone calls him "Mephisto." Xian is short, about 1.3 meters, and has clear skin, dark brown eyes, and black hair cropped close to his head.

Like all drones, Xian is sterile; he never entered adolescence. He has never forgiven his nation for the extreme measures

it took, and has seized every opportunity for his revenge on the world. Because he is a drone, he fears nothing and willingly alters his body with extensive bioengineering. Because of the toll those extensive genemods have taken on his immune system, he rarely leaves the sterile environment of his security compound in Beijing, preferring to conduct almost all of his transactions over the Net. Rumor has it that he employs an entire research complex devoted to reversing the hormone lock that he hates so much, and he runs the Invisible Sun as a sort of amusing sideline to his larger interests.

VR post, full parity, zero echo, full filter
Sector: EC, Node: Berlin, User: Reinhard
18: 31: 56, 7.13.44

>>>Any genemod can tell you that the hormone lock is irreversible after the age of one, My bet: He's working on becoming a virtual personality, avoiding the problem of being trapped in his body altogether by jumping into the Net. Some people who should know say it's already happened; his public appearances are all a sham using actors and voice modulation.>>>

Xian "Mephistopheles" Li

F: 52 L: 61 Ps: 55 C: 29
R: 87 I: 45 W: 34 Pos: 43
Stam: 13 Body: 31 Mind: 55 Immun: 18

Skills: Electronics (61), Firearms (45), Hacking (34), Infighting (55), Pistols (87), Programming (61), Netrunning (66), Chinese (61), English (61), Japanese (61), Russian (61), Stock Manipulation (43)

Genemods: adrenal, brainjack, heightened immunity, hormone lock, razortooth, steroid pump, venom

Xian is one vicious s.o.b. Whispers on the Net say he has killed everyone who ever crossed him, and his jacked-up reflexes and body make it a believable story. He presents himself on the Net either as a horrific digital devil, complete with painstakingly programmed smoke and flames, or as a bizarre cross between a human and a hyena, with a crest of bristles that looks like a mohawk.

VR surf, zero parity, full echo, full filter
Sector: EC, Node: London, User: Anonymous
06: 34: 49, 2.9.44

>>>Listen up newbie, Mephisto's look ain't a pose. Xian is a heartless, cold-blooded-but you didn't hear it from me.>>>

DA post, zero parity, zero echo, zero filter
Sector: PAC. Node: Invisible Sun, User: Mephistopheles
21: 08: 19, 2.9.44

>>>Those who speak lies must be punished to preserve public order. I'm coming for you, Londoner.>>>

The BlackNet

Of all the bases on the Net, the BlackNet is the least theoretical and the most streetwise—a sort of University of Hacking. It is a smaller, more exclusive portion of the Invisible Sun than the outer regions. In addition to instruction in quasilegal and illegal computer techniques, it functions as a general information exchange, closely overseen by Diamond Jones, the overseer of the BlackNet sectors of the Invisible Sun. Codeheads and Net worshippers share the site with hackers and corporate spies. Though in theory anyone who pays can enter the database, in practice real or suspected agents of the megacorps are hunted like dogs. Paranoia runs deep among the 'runners who need the latest updates from the BlackNet.

The BlackNet also teaches and encourages bombers, hackers, codebreakers, and electronic spies, because Xian likes it that way. It's more than just a matter of creating a corps of people loyal to him, the BlackNet serves the greater purpose of training 'runners willing and able to defend the IS node from attacks, buyouts, and subversion from elsewhere on the Net or in the world. Even those underground 'runners who haven't learned their tricks from Xian's house respect him. His enemies in Pacifica fear him.

The Crossroads

The third sector of the Invisible Sun is for the bizarre religions that have successfully made the leap onto the Net, primarily Voudoun but also Buddhism and to a lesser extent, Taoism. Voudoun worshippers from St. Dominique often stop by for the celebration of rites, since the Invisible Sun includes an electronic house of worship run by Marie-Claire Benedikt, "Ruby" to her friends. Ruby is a mambo, a voodoo priestess dedicated to Legba, the messenger of the voodoo gods. Unlike most 'runners, Ruby doesn't think that Xian is a backstabbing bastard; she claims that Xian is simply one of the chosen of Baron Samedi, the voodoo death-figure. Her help has been useful to Xian many times and her flattery is largely sincere, so he tolerates her beliefs.

Stories say that when the AIs cruise the Net, they come to the Crossroads. Some believe it; some things the rumor's just Ruby's way of drumming up business.

Marie-Claire "Ruby" Benedikt

F: 32 L: 71 Ps: 63 C: 44
R: 28 I: 55 W: 34 Pos: 23
Stam: 8 Body: 16 Mind: 63 Immun: 27

Skills: Meditation (63), Netrunning (107), Precognition (63), Creole (71), English (71), French (71), Religion (71), Bluff (44), ZombieMaker (81)

Genemods: brainjack, machine empath

Marie-Claire is pushing 80 years old, but her minds still sharp as a razor. Her congregation consists of followers of voudoun

throughout the Caribbean, Brazil, New York, Miami, and New Orleans; they revere her as a mambo, a female priestess. Less well-known is that fact that Ruby is the proud mother of the ZombieMaker program, and the world's greatest expert in its use. Xian had to trade heavy favors to give her the machine empath genemod (so she can make the best possible use of her program), and in return she promised him access to the ZombieMaker program. She has taught him the basics but is still holding out on the details. Xian hopes to learn the rest before Marie-Claire dies; he doesn't know that she has already created a paper will instructing him where to find the rest of the information he seeks.

Net zombies

Net zombies are the half-rotting remains of what were once ordinary Netrunners. Zombies are created when a 'runner is brain-burned during Net combat, or when filters fail and the living Net turns the poor 'runner into a pawn of the AIs. Rumor has it that a Zombiemaker program also exists, and as usual, rumor is right.

Zombies cannot use any of the Learning-based skills they had in life, including all languages other than their native tongue; the skills are burnt out by the zombification process. Net zombies retain all other skills, though they have almost no motivation except for a crude instinct for self-preservation and a fear of fire. Zombies left alone for too long starve and rot.

Net zombie

F: 75 L: 20 P: 23 C: 15
R: 40 I: 37 W: 50 P: 11
Stam: 19 Body: 23 Mind: 23 Immun: 49

Skills: Vary, but usually programmed to include Infighting, Brawling, or Running. All Net zombies gain Endurance at no cost

Genemods: Brainjack, other mods vary

Net zombies live relatively short lives; they don't survive more than a few months if no one looks after them, and most of them need frequent cleaning, feeding, and medication. Their will to live usually is crushed by the zombification process, so their bodies don't outlive their minds by much. Most Net zombies die within six months.

Download and overload

The Invisible Sun is the best place on the Net to pick up some cutting-edge (and often bug-ridden) software. The most famous and most successful black-market vendor for new code is a deceptively friendly blond who calls herself Samantha ("Sam" to just about everyone). On the Net, she appears as a slinky dominatrix surrounded by a shifting halo of four orbiting moons. Each of the moons seems to go through its own phases when dealing with her customers—some say that when the moons are a sort of digital mood ring.

When the moons are all new, Sam's in a foul mood. When the moons are full, Sam's feeling friendly.

Sam has been successful at the Invisible Sun because she always has the latest code and she never misrepresents anything she sells: if it's dangerous, Sam will tell you so. That hasn't stopped Netburned or crashed customers from trying to find her and take it out of her hide. So far, no one's been able to find her anywhere other than the Net.

The reason no one has found Sam's base of operations is that many of them have made a common assumption; Sam isn't a woman. Sam is a virtual transvestite, a man who poses as a woman on the Net. He lives in Tallinn, the independent city on the Baltic where the whole world comes to deal, but he gets most of his goods through intermediaries.

Grigori "Sam" Yevchenko

F: 57 L: 52 P: 32 C: 44
R: 60 I: 47 W: 27 P: 35
Stam: 14 Body: 22 Mind: 32 Immun: 43

Skills: Black Market (44), Bribery (35), Data Forgery (47), Disguise (52), Firearms (47), Infighting (57), Longarms (60), Luck (32), Netrunning (57), Obscure Reference (47), Social Engineering (44)

Genemods: Brainjack, melaskin

Sam's programs tend to have obvious illegal applications. A few of the programs that she commonly sells at the Invisible Sun are listed below.

Kickstart

The kickstart program allows attacks to happen from a standstill with a sequence of preprogrammed moves; it also can be used for automated defenses. Kickstart allows an inactive, unattended, or just unguarded system to protect itself while other defenses are brought up to speed. In most respects, it acts as a shadow of the 'runner who programs its attacks, using his Psyche instead of his Netrunning skill to determine the success of attacks. Interface and processor bonuses still apply. Kickstart never has the initiative.

However, Kickstart programs are much more predictable than humans are, and if an attacker rolls a critical success of 1-4, he has figured out the pattern behind the autodefenses. After that round, the attacker can strike at the program's most vulnerable moments: he automatically succeeds and inflicts maximum damage with all future attacks.

Matrushka

Like a set of nesting dolls, the Matrushka program protects Netrunners during Net combat. It protects the 'runners computer from external attack by hiding the actions of the core processors within infinitely nested subloops. Like the layers of an onion, if an attack cracks through one

layer of defenses, the next layer is ready and waiting, and—unlike a real onion—the layers of this electronic onion never end. Matrushka programs reduce damage by five points from every incoming attack every round; this reduction is cumulative with certain secondary defense programs. Matrushka can be run simultaneously with Encryption, Neural Overlay, or Partition defenses.

Tripwire

The tripwire program triggers a response to certain log-ons and certain forms of Net traffic; it's a poor man's watchdog program. For instance, it can set off an attack program when a specified Netrunner goes on-line at a particular node, or it can set off a Tracker program when a certain database is illegally accessed. It lurks, waiting for just the right target; it sets off traps, alarms, and data taps without requiring the constant oversight of a human Netrunner.

ZombieMaker

This rare and difficult program slowly bleeds through a 'runner's protective filters and reprograms their brain from the inside out, using a brainjack as the vector of the attack. It cannot affect 'runners using A/N or VR interfaces without a brainjack. To succeed, the user must make a difficult skill check; if it fails, there is no effect. If it succeeds, the target will be zombified unless it successfully resists the attack.

To resist, the target is entitled to a single Mind roll, using the target's current Mind points. Netrunners using a secondary defense—such as Neural Overlay or Encryption—are entitled to a + 5 bonus to the Mind roll.

Because of the attack's dependance on the target's current mental state, the attacker often uses traditional Net combat to soften up the target before using the ZombieMaker. Even if the resistance roll succeeds, the victim must immediately pull the plug on that Net run or risk a second attack the following round.

New Programs

Name	RL	DL	Crash
Kickstart	6	Easy	-
Matrushka	8	Easy	9
Tripwire	5	-	-
ZombieMaker	14	Difficult	7

Expanded Net combat grid

This table replaces table 21 in the *Kromosome* rules. The new programs are listed in italics type.

Electronic whispers

The Invisible Sun is a hotbed of rumors, propaganda, and lies on everything from sound files, video, and straight text. Believe the following at your own risk:

* Net sightings are a popular pastime, something like a cross between stalking celebrities and bird watching. Recent Net sightings includes the chief of a New Orleans crew in an amazing sequins-and-feathers program (some 'runners are impressed with the commercially-viable programming behind the colorful icon, others see the potential espionage uses of such an electronic disguise); the President of the West African Union was recently seen shifting funds to an offshore bank in Cuba, leading to a governmental crisis in that new power bloc; and another rogue Elvis program was seen in the Toyko node, complete with an accurate, movable representation of Graceland reconstructed from archival files. The whole rogue Elvis may be an odd AI joke, or it may be the work of obsessed fan—or both.

* More serious are the recent deaths due to crashed weather radar systems; several cargo ships and LTA craft have been lost at sea when the Net links between tracking systems went down just before major storms. In a similar vein, the terrorists of the Catalan Liberation Front have learned to crash the airport radar in the EC; five LTA flights crashed over Madrid before the group claimed responsibility and new safeguards were put in place.

* Computer theft is up in most regions of the southeastern Chinese seaboard, Japan, and the western United States. Most of the thefts are unauthorized transfers from unlocked accounts. The destination has been tracked to the Isle of Man, but no farther.

* Word on the Net is that Allison Wonderland is looking for a crack team of digital archaeologists: hardware honchos who can decrypt old formats, rebuild archaic machines to recover old data. Most of the old data is junk, but the promise of a few gems is enough to keep people coming back. Some say that Allison has a particular target in mind, one rich in blackmail possibilities.

Kromosome slang

A/N: Alphanumeric or keyboard access to the Net.

DA: Direct access to the Net; the technical term for a brainjack.

EC: European Community.

Houngan: A male priest of voodoo.

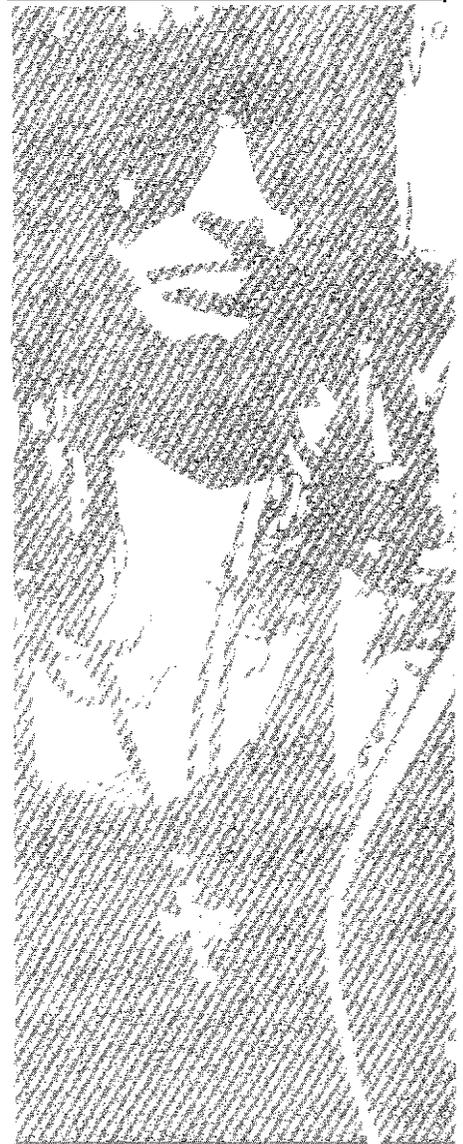
LTA: Lighter than air.

Mambo: A female priest of voodoo.

NAFTZ: North American Free Trade Zone.

Tag: A Net nickname, from the gang tradition of "tagging" walls and subways.

VR: Virtual reality.



New Combat Grid

Name	Copy	Neohermetic	Fragment	Matrushka	Purge	Rescale
Antibody	1d4	0	1d4	1d4	0	1d4
DeRes	4d8	0	3d10	2d10	3d8	2d8
Feedback	5d6	0	4d8	3d8	3d6	2d6
Infiltration	5d8	0	5d6	3d10	4d8	3d8
Jammer	3d6	0	2d8	2d10	2d6	Burn
Logic Maze	1 pt	0	1 pt	0	1 pt	1 pt
Macrophage	6d6	1d4/5d6	0	1d4/1d4	1d4/4d6	2d4/3d6
Parasite	2d6	Drain	Burn	3d4	2d4	Burn
White Noise	3d8	0	3d8	Burn	2d8	2d4
<i>ZombieMaker</i>	Zombie	Burn	Zombie	Zombie	Zombie	Burn



New for Palladium's Heroes Unlimited™

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Wayne Breaux, with Kevin Siembieda, presents superhero action on a cosmic scale with **Aliens Unlimited**.

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- An evil alien empire and other villains.
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- All artwork and designs by Wayne Breaux.
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Forum

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I feel compelled to respond to the paladins' conduct dilemma, covered in "Forum," presented in issues #187, #198, and #204. What rekindled this urge to write was an episode of "Prisoners of Gravity." This particular episode, "Commander Rick," discussed the dichotomy of a Batman and Judge Dredd crossover.

In a nutshell, Batman can't tolerate Dredd because he follows the law to the letter (in other words, Dredd is a fascist). Dredd can't tolerate Batman because he is a vigilante.

My character (lawful good) was recently involved in a campaign in which a neutral good NPC had drained my *moonblade* and totally absorbed it. I reasoned that to save the destiny of the elven race I would have to kill him. My DM stated that, "This is not something a lawful-good character would do." I argued that such a selfless act (well aware of the consequences) is the kind of sacrifice a lawful-good character would make! My inevitable alignment change and possible damnation, versus the livelihood of an entire race of elves. For me the choice was clear.

As for bandaging the enemy, I don't think so! My lawful-good character lives by certain codes.

1. Purge evil from the land.
2. Liberate the oppressed.
3. Defend the Innocent.

It's all well and good to take someone to be tried for his crimes but sometimes it's just

not practical. I don't mean to imply that if your PCs are too tired, they kill their prisoners. But common sense should prevail. My PC wouldn't "gut" a pick-pocket, just teach her a painful lesson. However, an anti-paladin is a difficult, story!

As covered in issue #198 some social orders require the extinguishing of evil. I wholeheartedly agree. My character will always pursue the course of "justice." Sometimes "justice" and "the law" are two different things entirely! I usually don't include the class paladin in any of my PCs because it conjures up an impression of Dudley DoRight or some "holier than thou" PC. Usually what you believe a paladin to be is different than what your DM believes you ought play. Being a lawful-good character is more than just following rules, sometimes you have to do what is right regardless of how it effects you personally!

My best advice to end this dilemma: set up your paladin's codes, then discuss them with your DM. A personal set of codes will distinguish a PC from an NPC. Since your DM is the powers that be, make sure you both agree with your codes of conduct, that way there shouldn't be any conflict!

B. Johnson
Detroit MI

I totally agree with Christopher Hunter's comments on paladins. The class is unfairly treated in virtually every campaign I have played in. One DM flatly refused to let a paladin take any kit except the cavalier.

He points out that the paladins are not cavaliers and should not have to treat people rudely. True enough—but cavaliers should not have to, either. The Code of Chivalry is far off-base in this respect.

In Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, Sir Ector eulogizes Sir Lancelot when he finds his grave: "And thou were the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in hall among ladies."

Malory is writing epic fantasy, but the polite knight was not limited to it. Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales* describes a knight as "mEEK as a maid" and as never having spoken rudely to anyone in his life.

The provisions in the Code of Chivalry about demanding respect and refusing to deal with the ignoble are unjustifiable.

True, many a cavalier would act like that, and the DM may deem such class-conscious behavior as acceptable in cavaliers. It should not be mandatory.

Mary Catelli
Poughkeepsie NY

Several FORUM letters in issue #204 discuss the paladin. One premise common to all those letters is that all paladins must act in the same way. Another frequent assertion is that the rules of our society (the society of the U.S., for a lot of gamers) are the correct point of reference, and that the actions of a paladin should be judged according to these laws.

While we could discuss the numerous correct ways to play a paladin (and other alignments) from here to eternity, I won't do it. I have my own beliefs concerning this issue—how to judge goodness and lawfulness (which may change even in the same world), what aspect is more important to a paladin, and so on—it is more important, in my opinion, to make the paladins playable and enjoyable characters, no matter what the restrictions on their behavior are.

Because every action of the paladin is being scrutinized by the DM, it would be a good idea for the DM to outline his expectations from the paladin before the start of the game. The player and the DM should discuss the actions of the paladin in common situations, and guidelines for her general behavior. Without this, the paladin's player has no way of knowing how to play the paladin correctly. It may be that a player will decide not to play the paladin once he hears the opinion of the DM. It's much better to find this out at the beginning of the game, rather than after several sessions.

It's practically impossible to cover all the expectations from a paladin beforehand, though. Complete rules can take years to formulate, and even then there usually are some loopholes. Often it's possible to judge situations not covered by the guidelines by following the spirit of the law, yet sometimes the paladin will have a genuine problem. The worst kind of problem is when the player and the DM interpret things differently. While the DM always has the last word, it's better to discuss the

situation. A player doesn't like to be told to change his character in the middle of the game.

Since the paladin is such a special character, in that her alignment is so important, it may be useful to give her some guidance. For example, the paladin might be required to visit her church occasionally, to tell of her actions, and to ask for judgment. This would be a good time to refine the rules. Still, the paladin should not be severely punished for every minor violation of a law she didn't know about, because this eventually could make her afraid of making moral decisions and therefore ineffective.

But probably the most important tip to the DM is this—don't make the paladin feel foolish. If the belief of the paladin is that there's good in everyone, and that enemies' lives should be spared, don't have all these enemies come back to haunt the paladin. Don't punish the paladin for not following a code that doesn't really work. A paladin, unless she is a fool, will come to realize that this is not the way things work out in the world, and will most likely relinquish her paladinhood voluntarily. This should not happen in the AD&D® game. (Play the AMBER* game if you like changing the way characters—and players—view the world.)

If you, the DM, have a paladin character in your game, let her see that her work is occasionally rewarded. This will give her the power to continue in her vocation. Have her meet a bad guy she has set free in the past who is now atoning for his years of evil. Let her feel that her god really works in mysterious ways toward the goal she believes in. It can be far more effective to reward good behavior than to punish an appropriate one.

Eyal Teler
Jerusalem, ISRAEL

The paladin class isn't more powerful than the ranger class. Paladins have more powers, but they also have more restrictions. Rangers are better fighters because they can use two weapons at once. They also gain a free Tracking proficiency. A paladin's holy sword ability is useless unless a paladin has a holy sword. A paladin can lay on hands only once per day. The biggest restriction of all is being overlooked. It is nearly impossible to create a paladin, and it is merely difficult to create a ranger. The chances that a 17 or 18 is rolled for Charisma is extremely low.

The suggestion that rangers be granted access to elemental and weather spells brings up another order of business. Clerical spells are granted by the gods. We are becoming too generic. Each god grants spells that have to do with his own sphere of influence. The Ranger is no "average" cleric. The weapons (and sometimes armor) available have to be changed to what each god allows. While many gods allow plate mail and a mace, the goddess of peace might allow only a quarterstaff.

Every cleric should be a specialist cleric.

Finally, every god should have paladins. Rangers could be considered the paladins of nature. They are very similar. The paladins in the *Player's Handbook* would be the paladins of a lawful-good god, like the god of justice. There was a card in the 1992 set of AD&D™ trading cards that illustrates this: a neutral-good paladin.

Please print my full address.

Steve Fletcher
510-C West Harbison Rd.
Pittsburgh PA

The idea of wizards specializing in different fields of sorcery is a fine one. It adds variety to the game. The wizard class is finally fleshed out a little, making it more interesting and fun to play. The AD&D 2nd Edition game took a necessary first step. However, there are a few flaws in the system.

Specialists are defined as those wizards who dedicate most of their time to practicing a certain school of spells. Because of this specialization, the wizard gains bonuses in his field. These bonuses are to be expected. It stands to reason that any specialist is more knowledgeable in his field than a "general practitioner" mage. It would also stand to reason that, due to his neglect of other fields, he would be somewhat limited in all other schools of sorcery.

In the current rules, the specialist is denied access to his "opposite field" of study. This is foolish because the "opposite field" has no real relation to the specialist's field. These "opposite fields" seem to have been created solely to find some way to reflect a specialist's limited knowledge outside his field.

Not only does the "opposite field" idea seem unrealistic, but there are other ways in which this system fails to get the desired "specialist" effect. For example: I've seen a necromancer memorize a horde of *fireball* spells and walk through a module like a howitzer. He memorized only one or two necromancer spells per level. Granted he was denied any illusionist spells, but it hardly mattered. Does this show any of that dedication to a field? One can comment that the necromancer was just run improperly. The player explained that the party was low on firepower and that *animate dead* spells weren't going to cut it. Not only did it ruin the mood of the module, but the hint of mystery inherent in the word "necromancer" was all but shattered. The icing on the cake was having the *Player's Handbook* thrust in my face.

The following proposal is an expansion on the ideas in the current AD&D rules. The bonuses provided for a specialist in the rules work just fine. The problem is creating a reasonable limitation for specialists. Denying a wizard a certain field does not show specialization. The idea that a wizard is *unable* to learn certain spells because he specializes in another field just makes no sense. The specialization should be shown by the spells that he puts into

his spell book, and therefore the ones that he will continually memorize. In order to receive the bonuses of his field, I require any specialists to practice his field over all others. This is done by making at least half of the wizard's spells per level be from his special field. He can put spells from *any* other field in his book, but out of 18 possible 1st level spells, nine will be necromantic spells. This ensures that at least most of the time, a necromancer will be casting necromantic spells.

Mike Delmonico
Albuquerque NM

I greatly enjoyed the article, "Getting Back to Nature," by Jon Pickens, in DRAGON issue #205. I strongly agree with the purpose of the article, to modify the priest spheres to bring back the original and proper nature of the druid class, however, I disagree with the means by which this purpose is pursued in the article.

Two possible notions direct the development of priestly spheres: principle and practice. The directing notion of principle regards the theoretical bases or specific magical nature of particular spells; the magical principle behind the means and effects of the spell. This notion is similar to the schools of magic in wizard spells.

The directing notion of practice regards which particular spells would tend to be used as a group by particular characters. Relative to the notion of principle, the notion of practice directs the changes proposed in the article primarily, and to me, excessively. The proposed addition of the spells *slow poison*, *remove paralysis*, *neutralize poison*, and *dispel evil* to the necromantic sphere, for the reason that evil necromancer NPCs need their reversed forms, represents a plain example of the directing notion of practice in the article.

This notion of practice simplifies the description of the spells of new priest-hoods, decreasing the amount of writing needed to describe which spells may be used by the priests. However, it has many disadvantages. While the classic necromancer priesthood, for example, may be described easily, many subtle variations on the classic necromantic priesthood may be devised by individual DMs. In this case, many special notes must be added in the necromantic priesthood description to indicate what spells are available, thus making the practical change in the necromantic sphere proposed in the article and cited above for naught.

Moreover, the creation of such nonstandard necromantic priest-hoods could be discouraged by the existence of a sphere that contains the core spells that necromancers are supposed to have, i.e., the impression given by the modified necromantic sphere proposed in the article. Following the directing notion of practice ultimately would result in a separate sphere for each priesthood, with all the spells needed by the priests in that priest-

hood contained within that sphere. In addition, particular priesthood types having their core spells grouped within a sphere seems to me much less erudite or elegant than the priesthood drawing on many groups of spells from different spheres to produce its priestly nature. (Similarly, I much prefer describing biology as drawing from the disciplines of physics, chemistry, and philosophy rather than defining the physics, chemistry, and philosophy that is used in biology as biology.)

I realize that following my directing notion of principle to its extreme would result in spheres with little usefulness in the game, thus resulting in spheres merely being words used to describe the particular deity's powers and primary interests, thus in effect eliminating the concept of spell spheres entirely. But I think this should be considered. Priest spells would thus just be listed by level, with each priesthood having its own spell list. This would encourage rather than discourage the placement of particular spells at different particular spell levels as in the AD&D 2nd Edition game. In this way, each priesthood would in effect be perfect. This would require more work, but would encourage variety, creativity, and newness, make priesthoods more interesting, and, as just stated, provide for perfect spell availability for each priesthood.

I also have two ideas regarding the mountebank kit in the article, "The Even More Complete Psionicist" from issue #200. Shouldn't a character with the non-weapon proficiency Spellcraft be more likely to identify a psionicist pretending to be a spell-caster for what he is, perhaps on an automatic proficiency roll?

Second, would it not be reasonable, with all the details existing with regard to psionics and psionicists, to introduce a non-weapon proficiency similar to *spellcraft* but regarding psionics instead? Perhaps this new proficiency would enable a character trained in it to identify a mountebank for what he is.

Jean-Philippe Suter
Randolph NJ

This letter discusses the spell selection of necromancers. The *Complete Wizard's Handbook* describes the high-level spells of the necromancer as "extremely potent," able to make the "mightiest opponents tremble!" Come on—they are less effective than the sixth-level *death* spell, which doesn't even allow a saving throw. I'll discuss each spell level, to provide some suggestions to make high-level necromancers worthy of the name. I hope this letter helps address a little imbalance.

In the *PHB*, there are two seventh-level spells, *control undead* and *finger of death*. The effects of these spells are powerful, but only if the saving throw is failed. This is my point, as saving throws for the necromancer's opponents would generally be quite high, and these spells have virtually no effect for successful saving throws.

What I propose for *control undead* is the following: for undead of more than three hit dice, there is a penalty to the saving throw according to how many undead are controlled already. This would be +5 if no undead are already controlled, down to +0 for the sixth undead (if it has more than 3 HD)—this would be cumulative with the necromancer's existing +1 penalty. Next, *finger of death*: the damage from making a successful saving throw should be increased to 8d6 points of damage, the same as the equivalent seventh-level priest spell *destruction*. In addition, *destruction* has a saving-throw penalty of +4, but the spell requires a touch to be effective. This same option could be allowed to the specialist necromancer, too, but the +4 penalty would not apply for ranged use of the spell.

There is only one eighth-level necromantic spell, *clone*. This means that the necromancer would have to take that spell as his extra spell. No spell-caster would normally memorize that spell, unless there was a specific use planned for it. Thus, I propose an additional eighth-level necromantic spell, called *create undarkenbeast*. This is essentially an improvement upon the fourth-level spell *create darken beast*, outlined in MC3 and DUNGEON® Adventures issue #34. The difference in the spell is as follows. The spell takes one turn to cast, and must be cast on dead animals. The altered animals are now undead versions of darkenbeasts, so they gain the usual undead immunities to spells: *sleep*, *charm*, holding/paralyzing spells, poisons, and cold-based spells. Vials of holy water inflict 2d4 points of damage upon striking. Undarkenbeasts are turned as a mummy. In addition, the casting of the spell opens a link between the beasts and the Negative Material plane. Because of this, magical weapons are required to hit an undarkenbeast, and a hit from one of these creatures temporarily drains one level or hit die from the victim for 2-8 hours. See the next paragraph for the effects of this. Undarkenbeasts are otherwise the same as basic darkenbeasts, but if enough time passes, then the creatures begin to rot, as zombies do. This has no game effect but to make their appearance more disgusting.

Energy drain is relatively weak as a ninth-level spell. There is no saving throw, true, but the target loses only two hit dice or levels. The necromancer has had to work his way up to 18th level to be able to do that! Gosh. The spell as it is should be made a seventh-level spell, as it would then be comparable to the seventh-level priest spell *energy drain*. As a seventh-level spell, it would be called *energy drain I*. The ninth-level necromancy spell would become *energy drain II*. The difference is that a target would lose one level per two of the spell-caster, plus 1d4; but, a saving throw is allowed, with success indicating half level loss, rounding up. Note, that with both spells, the level drain is temporary, not permanent, for a duration of 2-8 turns (or hours, depending upon the DM's

taste). A target reduced to 0 levels/Hit Dice is unconscious until the levels/Hit Dice return. A target reduced below 0 levels/Hit Dice is dead (and can be animated as a jujuzombie). Only saving-throw scores and maximum/current hit points totals are affected by this level loss—i.e., skills, spells, spell-casting abilities and combat abilities are not lost. Maximum and current hit points are reduced by a number equal to the number of levels lost, times the name level hit-point gain, plus Constitution bonus if applicable; for NPCs with Hit Dice, two hit points are lost per level drained. For example, an 18th-level necromancer casts *energy drain II* at Dumas, a 15th-level fighter with 16 Constitution. The DM rolls a 2 on the d4, meaning that Dumas would lose 11 levels, or six if the saving throw is made. The name level hit-point gain for a fighter is three. If Dumas made the saving throw, then he would temporarily make saving throws as a 9th-level fighter, and his maximum and current hit point total would be reduced by 18. If Dumas had failed his saving throw, he would make saving throws as a 4th-level fighter, and temporarily lose $11 \times 3 + 2 = 35$ hit points. In both cases, Dumas would still fight as a 15th-level fighter. Note that the *restoration* and *wish* spells can cancel the effects of this spell.

Julian Neale
Cheshire, ENGLAND

Eric Burns' letter in DRAGON issue #200 on the use of *magic jar* as an alternative to lichdom was interesting. Although he brings up many good points on the spell's benefits, there also are many reasons why the *magic jar* spell is not a good alternative to other forms of longevity or immortality.

1. According to the *PHB* (page 169) once cast, the caster can attack only life forces within a 10'-per-level radius. This could be a severe limitation depending on the campaign. If the caster were carrying the receptacle on the body of the current host, and that host died in a remote location, it could be years before another life force comes along. Years spent in a receptacle could tax a mage's sanity.

2. The spell does not permit the caster to determine the exact type of creature or its position; only relative strengths can be determined. This could cause a mage to take over the life force of a prisoner in chains, a powerful yet diseased or insane individual or a creature without the correct vocal cords to cast spells the caster knows. See the adventure "Nine-Tenths of the Law" in DUNGEON Adventures #26 for an example of this type of occurrence.

3. The spell is blocked by *protection from evil* spells and similar protection magics.

4. A life force must fail its saving throw in order to be taken over. The more intelligent the life force the greater the chance the spell may not succeed.

5. The life force taken over does not immediately know the language or spells of the host. This, coupled with any clumsi-

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ness or inefficiencies the caster may experience in its new body, and the fact that the host may have no spell components available when first attacked, could quickly mean the death of the caster in a hostile environment where actions come before questions. A game in which role-playing is emphasized could have interesting results.

6. The caster can switch back and forth to his receptacle only if within 10' per level range of the object. If the caster must shift back to his own body at any time, the spell ends and must be cast again before the benefits of the magic jar can be used.

7. If the caster's current host dies outside the range of the receptacle, the host and the caster both die.

8. A simple and common third-level spell, dispel magic, can end the spell's effects easily. Who knows what may happen in campaigns where dead-magic and wild magic areas are used.

9. Finally, I would assume that the caster must invest in elaborate and expensive procedures to protect the caster's original body and the receptacle.

Although the magic jar spell is a very useful and dangerous spell for mid-level mages, it has a number of limitations that probably render it undesirable for eternal life. Mages seeking methods to extend their careers beyond their natural life-spans would do better to seek lichdom or other forms of immortality or agelessness. *Magic jar* has too many constraints.

Donald R. MacLean
Columbia MD

I would like to comment on two of the letters in the FORUM in issue #200. First, the letter from Jeremiah Coleman, regarding library materials that are "permanently checked out." All I can say is that this is a *huge* problem, and a real pain in the neck to many. I know of no other hobby whose followers behave like this; it gives a very bad impression to others, and we don't need that!

Secondly, Eric Burns' letter regarding the *magic jar* spell: I don't think it can be used the way Eric suggests. Unless I've misread the description, the caster *first* puts his life force into the gem (or what-have-you) and then *second* "leaps" out, into another creature, in order to control it; apparently the creature's life force *remains in its body*; you don't force "... some poor peasant's life force into a gem." If it were otherwise, the creature wouldn't get a saving throw to regain control every so often. With that saving throw, the takeover will be temporary, although it could turn out to be for a long time. Add the fact that the caster, while in the gem, can't tell what kind of animal he is about to take over, and it becomes clear that this is not a good way to keep switching bodies and gain immortality.

Christopher Davis
Fall City WA

After years of DMing, I am now blessed with a plethora of individuals finally willing to game master. As a result, I am enthralled with the simple pleasure of showing up every week unburdened by a large quantity of preparation. Through several campaigns my fellow players and I were always bickering amongst ourselves concerning our seeming inability to accomplish major campaign goals—or minor ones for that matter—how ironic, with a group of mostly chaotic, scheming PCs. There was plenty of interparty conflict and intrigue, but little else. Our sessions lacked luster and the campaigns inevitably faltered (we were unable to get a group past 6th-7th level). I considered a hiatus from the game and even quitting the hobby altogether.

Then, one day, I responded to an ad at a local gaming shop to play in a campaign with some complete strangers in a nearby town. I'm glad I did, not so much for the campaign's fun and value, but simply for the resultant comparison between the two groups.

I seriously recommend this to anyone, if it's possible, and here's why:

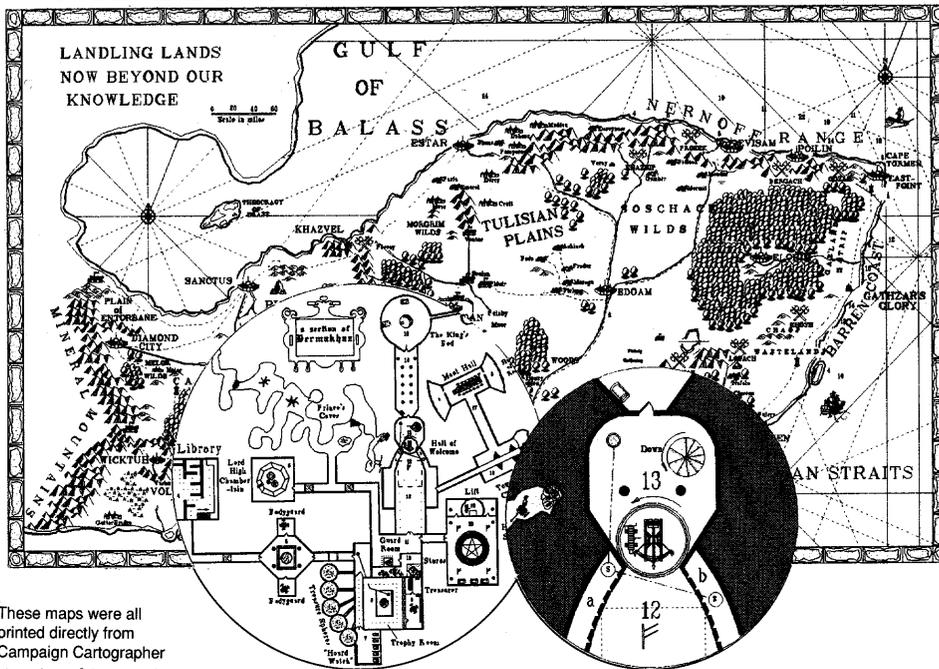
My old group consisted of six or seven university students, all approximately my same age and experience. The new group was much smaller and had older players. There were only two other players besides myself and the DM, one of whom was a throwback all the way to the D&D® game's white box. I prepared myself for some intense, high-quality role-playing, but what I got was just the opposite. The experience was proportionate to what Joel Patton claims in issue #200, "Maturity in this sense, has very little, if anything, to do with age or wisdom." To explain, the DM, who claimed years of experience was brutally inconsistent and was generally unwilling to speak in character for longer than a sentence. Even worse was the throwback, who was a loud-mouthed jerk who refused to let me or the other player get a word in edge-wise (and this other player was the DM's wife). The whole session was one big inside joke between the DM and this goofball. To comment on the adventure, I was a 7th-level fighter and my biggest challenge all evening was killing two orcs, for which effort I received two magical rings! We were playing a store-bought module written for 1st- to 3rd-level characters, which the DM never thought to alter except perhaps adding extra treasure.

I returned to my regular campaign enlightened. This single bad experience put the university campaign into a marvelous context and subsequently, our next session was awesome. Having played with the same group for over three years, it finally became apparent to me that game quality is like everything else that might be judged: relative.

Doug Ironside
Midland, Ontario

Ω

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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) 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.).

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Important: DRAGON® Magazine no longer publishes phone numbers for conventions. Publishing incorrect numbers is always possible and is a nuisance to both the caller and those receiving the misdirected call. Be certain that any address given is complete and correct.

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.

NORMAN CONQUEST 5, Sep. 9-11 OK

This convention will be held at the O. U. Student Union in Norman, Okla. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA® Network events. Registration: \$9/weekend or \$4/day on site. Write to: Room 215-A, OMU, 900 Asp Ave., Norman OK 73019.

SHORECON '94, Sep. 9-11 NJ

This convention will be held at the Sheraton Eatontown Hotel and Conference Center in Eatontown, NJ. Guests include Jim Hlavaty, Len Kaminski, and Jeff Menges. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a game auction, a charity raffle, dances, seminars, signings, and movies. Registration: \$15 preregistered; \$20 on site. Write to: Multigenre Inc., 142 South St., Unit 9C, Red Bank NJ 07701-2502; or e-mail at: acd@hotmail.att.com.

MAELSTROM 1.75, Sep. 10 NE

This convention will be held at the City Campus Building in Lincoln, Nebr. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$5. Write to: MAELSTROM 1.75, c/o Chris Dekalb, 6015 Huntington, Lincoln NE 68507.

MAGIC* TOURNAMENT '94, Sep. 10 MA

This tournament will be held at the Workers' Assistance Center in Cambridge, Mass. Events include games, trading, and a card auction. Registration: \$5. Write to: Brian Reddington-Wilde, 46 Highland St., Reading MA 01867.

ANDCON '94, Sep. 15-18 OH

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Independence in Independence, Ohio. Guests include Jean Rabe and Darwin Bromley. Events include role-playing, board, and minia-

tures games. Other activities include RPGA Network events, computer gaming, and an auction. Registration: \$19.95/weekend. Daily and visitor passes available. Write to: Andon Unlimited, P.O. Box 3100, Kent OH 44240.

TACTICON '94, Sep. 16-18 CO

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

WOLF-CON IV, Sep. 16-18 MS

This convention will be held on University of Miss.-Starkville campus. Guests include Simon Hawke. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, an art show, and movies. Registration: \$25. Write to: WOLF-CON IV, P.O. Box 5342, MSU, MS 39762-5342.

AMERICON '94, Sep. 17-18 NJ

This convention will be held at the Clayton American Legion Hall in Clayton, N.J. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an art show, an auction, and a charity tournament. Registration: \$12 on site. Most game fees are \$2. Dealers and GMs are welcome. Write to: AMERICON, c/o Carl "Thunder," P.O. Box 125, Mullica Hill, NJ 08062.

GAMEQUEST '94, Sep. 17 OH

This convention will be held at the Stevenson Center on the campus of Ohio University-Chillicothe. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include the introduction of two new games, dealers, and an auction. Registration: \$5. Send an SASE to: Lonnie Hall, 25315 Moccasin Rd., Amanda OH 43102.

COGCON II, Sep. 23-25 MO

This convention will be held at the Miner Rec. Building on the campus of the University of Missouri in Rolla, Mo. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA events and a figure-miniatures-painting contest. GMs are welcome. Registration: \$10. Write to: GEAR, P.O. Box 1939, Rolla MO 65401; or e-mail: gear@albert.nuc.umn.edu.

FIELDS OF HONOR III, Sep. 23-25 IA

This convention will be held at Howard Johnson Hotel and Convention Center in Urbandale, Iowa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA Network events. Registration: \$10. Write to: FIELDS OF HONOR, c/o Comics +, 6501 Douglas Ave., Urbandale IA 50322.

FOX CON '94, Sep. 23-25 IL

This convention will be held at the Larsen Middle School in Elgin, Ill. Events include role-

- ♦ indicates an Australian convention.
- * indicates a Canadian convention.
- indicates a European convention.

playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, anime, and a silent auction. Send an SASE to: Mike Woodward, 636 Center St., Elgin IL 60120.

KALIEDOSCOPE '94, Sep. 23-25 VA

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Lynchburg, Vir. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$20 on site. Write to: LSFA, 300 Harrison St., Lynchburg VA 24504.

HIGHLAND VII, Sep. 24-25 TN

This convention will be held at the Hooper Eblen Center at Tennessee Tech in Cookeville, Tenn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include panels, demos, painting contests, an art show, and dealers. Registration: \$5 plus tournament fees. Write to: Alpha Psi Phi, TTU Box 5226, Cookeville TN 38505; or e-mail: wfl4468@tntech.edu.

KENNEL CON '94, Sep. 24-25 HI

This convention will be held at the U.S.O. at Fort DeRussy, Waikiki, Hawaii. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include anime. Registration: \$3, plus small game fees. Write to: KENNEL CON, c/o Eric Kline, P.O. Box 90182, Honolulu HI 96835-0182.

LEGENDS-ATLANTA, Sep. 24 GA

This convention will be held at Days Inn North in Marietta, Ga. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers. Registration: \$2. Write to: Legends Ent. Group Inc., 514 Broad St., Rome GA 30161.

WHITE SHIELD '94, Sep. 24 ID

This convention will be held at the Basque Center in Boise, Idaho. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, an auction, and war gaming. Registration: \$8. Write to: WHITE SHIELD GAME CON, P.O. Box 8955, Boise ID 83707.

DIRE CONSEQUENCES II Sep. 30-Oct. 2 CT

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson in Plainville, Conn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA Network events, an auction, and open gaming. Registration: \$15, plus \$2 per game. Write to: DIRE CONSEQUENCES, P.O. Box 251, Bristol CT 06011-0251.

TOLCON XII, Sep. 30-Oct. 2 OH

This gaming convention will be held at University of Toledo-Scott Park campus. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include auctions, demos, painting contests, open gaming, movies, and dealers. Send an SASE to: TOLCON XII, 2115 N. Reynolds Rd., Toledo OH 43615, Attn.: Dave & Brenda.

LEGENDS-CHATTANOOGA, Oct. 1 TN

This SF/gaming/comics convention will be held at the Holiday Inn-Chattanooga. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers. Registration: \$2. Write to: Legends Ent. Group Inc., 514 Broad St., Rome GA 30161.

MARMALADE DOG GAMEFEST '94 Oct. 1-2 MI

This convention will be held in the Bernhard Center on the campus of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Mich. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, dealers, seminars, open gaming, and RPGA Network events. Registration: \$10/weekend or \$6/day preregistered; \$12 or \$7 on site. Write to: MARMALADE DOG, c/o W. Mich. Gamers' Guild, Western Mich. Univ., Faunce 2420, Mailbox #47, Kalamazoo MI 49008; or e-mail: scgamers@wmich.edu.

ORGANIZED KAHN-FUSION '94 Oct. 1-2 PA

This board-game convention (formerly called P.E.W. KAHN U) will be held at the West Enola Fire Hall in Enola, Pa. Events include board, war, and miniatures games. Other activities include many train games, a regional Ancients tournament, dealers, and open gaming. Registration fees vary. Write to: M. Foner's Games Only Emporium, 200 3rd St., New Cumberland PA 17070.

QUAD CON '94, Oct. 7-9 IA

This convention will be held at the Palmer Alumni Auditorium in Davenport, Iowa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a miniatures-painting contest, and an auction. Registration: \$15 preregistered; \$20 on site. Send a long SASE (with two stamps) to: QUAD CON, The Game Emporium, 3213 23rd Ave., Moline IL 61265.

ARTYCON VI, Oct. 8-10 OK

This convention will be held at the Caisson Activity Center in Fort Sill, Okla. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include card games. Registration: \$5/day on site. Write to: Orval c/o The Game Shack, 2114 Ft. Sill Blvd., Lawton OK 73507.

CON ON THE RIVER '94, Oct. 8-9 MN

This convention will be held in Kryzko Commons on the Winona State University campus in Winona, Minn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$8/weekend preregistered or \$10 on site. Single-day rates available. Write to: CON ON THE RIVER, P.O. Box 751, Winona MN 55987.

SUPERIOR CON II, Oct. 8-9 MI

This convention will be held at the Cislser Center of Lake Superior State University in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. Guests include Dr. James T. Moody and Randy Asplund-Faith. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an art show, movies, contests, and card games. Registration: \$5/day or \$8/weekend preregistered; \$8/day or \$16/weekend, plus \$2/game on site. Dealers and GMs welcome. Write to: SUPERIOR CON, c/o Lee Allen, 400 Cedar St. #6, S.S. Marie MI 49783.

CONTACT 12, Oct. 14-16 IN

This SF&F/gaming convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Evansville, Ind. Guests include Dr. Bill Breuer, Ray Van Tilburg, and Tom Prusa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, an art show, a hospitality suite, and panels. Registration: \$22. Write to: CONTACT 12, P.O. Box 3894, Evansville IN 47737.

ICON 19, Oct. 14-16 IA

This SF convention will be held at the Best Western Westfield Inn in Coralville, Iowa. Guests include Gregory Frost and Joe Haldeman. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a masquerade, panels, and an art show. Registration: \$25 before Sep. 30; \$30 on site. One-day rates and children's rates available. Write to: ICON, P.O. Box 525, Iowa City IA 52244-0525.

NECRONOMICON XIII, Oct. 14-16 FL

This convention will be held at the Airport Holiday Inn in Tampa, Fla. Guests include George R. R. Martin and Timothy Zahn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include panels, videos, workshops, a charity auction, and an art show and auction. Registration: \$25/weekend or \$10/day. Write to: NECRONOMICON XIII, PO. Box 2076, Riverview FL 33569.

TACTICONN '94, Oct. 14-16 CT

This convention will be held at the Ramada Crown Plaza in Stamford, Conn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include numerous tournaments. Registration: \$15 preregistered; \$20 on site. Send an SASE to: Gaming Guild, c/o Jim Wiley, 100 Hoyt St. #2C, Stamford CT 06905.

TOTALLY TUBULAR CON II Oct. 14-16 CA

This convention will be held at the Days Inn in Fullerton, Cal. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA Network events. Registration: \$20; preregistration will be very limited. Write to: TOTALLY TUBULAR CON, P.O. Box 18791, Anaheim Hills CA 92817-18791; or e-mail at: partdragon@aol.com.

SIBCON '94, Oct. 15 PA

This convention will be held at Lutheran Youth & Family Services in Zeliempole, Pa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA Network events and dealers. Registration: \$5 before Sep. 30; \$7 thereafter. Send an SASE to: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler PA 16003.

BAY GAMES '94, Oct. 21-23 MD

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in College Park, Md. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA Network events. Registration: \$15/weekend preregistered; \$20/weekend or \$15/day on site. Write to: BAY GAMES, P.O. Box 91, Beltsville MD 20704-0091.

NOTJUSTANOTHERCON '94 Oct. 21-23 MA

This convention will be held at the Lincoln Campus Center at the University of Mass., in Amherst. Guests include M.S. Sterling and Courtney Skinner. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include panels, seminars, anime, and an art show and auction. Registration: \$19/weekend or \$10/day on site. Write to: NOTJUSTANOTHERCON, RSO 16, UMass, Amherst MA 01003; or e-mail: amshey@twain.ucs.edu.

Wizards' Gathering V, Oct. 21-23 MA

This convention will be held at the Days Inn in Fall River, Mass. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$20/weekend. One and two-day rates available. Early-bird and group discounts also are available.

ble. Write to: SMAGS, P.O. Box 6295, Fall River MA 02724.

KETTERING GAME CON XI, Oct. 22-23 OH

This convention will be held at the Charles I. Lathrem Senior Center in Kettering, Ohio. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include computer games and a game auction. Registration: \$2/day. Write to: Bob Von Gruenigen, 804 Willowdale Ave., Kettering OH 45429.

GRANDE MASQUERADE '94

Oct. 28-30 GA

This horror convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Central in Atlanta, Ga. Events include role-playing games, literary guests, dealers, films, and an art show and auction. Registration: \$30 on site. Write (and make checks payable) to: Night Owl Prod., 4598 Stonegate Industrial Blvd., Stone Mountain GA 30083.

NUKECON IV, Oct. 28-29 NE

This convention will be held at the Midlands Community Center in Papillion, Nebr. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include several tournaments. Registration: \$7 preregistered; \$12 on site. Write to: NUKECON, c/o Stephanie Murphy, 13115 Josephine Circle, Omaha NE 68138.

GRAVAL CON '94, Oct. 29-30 MI

This convention will be held at Grand Valley State University's Kirkhof Center in Allendale, Mich. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include costume and painted-miniatures contests. Registration: \$3/day or \$5/weekend; free to GMs and

students with valid IDs. Write to: Grand Valley State Univ., GRAVAL CON, 221 Johnson, L.C.1, Allendale MI 49401.

U-CON '94, Nov. 3-5 MI

This convention will be held at the University of Michigan Union in Ann Arbor, Mich. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include seminars and RPGA™ Network events. Registration: \$9/week-end or \$6/day preregistered; \$12 or \$8 on site. Write to: U-CON, P.O. Box 4491 Ann Arbor MI 48106-4491.

ADVENTURE GAMEFEST '94, Nov. 4-6 OR

This convention will be held at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, Ore. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a game auction, door prizes, and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$15/weekend. Write to: Adventure Games Northwest, 6517 NE Alberta, Portland OR 97218.

CONQUEST OF SANTA MARIA

Nov. 4-6 CA

This convention will be held at Santa Maria Inn in Santa Maria, Calif. Guests include Richard Garfield, Mike Stackpole, Liz Danforth, and Tom Jolly. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, films, and demos. Registration: \$28 on site. Write to: CONQUEST OF ST. MARIA, P.O. Box 1854, Santa Maria CA 93456-1854.

FANTASY QUEST '94, Nov. 5 KY

This convention will be held at the Owensboro Executive Inn-Rivermount in Owensboro, Ky. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, an auction, and door prizes. Registration: \$5. Write to: FANTASY QUEST, c/o Larry Hedden, P.O. Box 283, Fordville KY 42343.

RUCON V, Nov. 5-6 PA

This convention will be held at Lock Haven University in Lock Haven, Pa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include monster-design contests and dealers. Registration: \$10 preregistered; \$15 on site. Send an SASE to: RUCON, Parsons Union Bldg., LHU, Lock Haven PA 17745.

WAR!ZONE CENTRAL '94, Nov. 11-13 FL

This convention will be held at Holiday Inn-Main Gate at Universal Studios in Orlando, Fla. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a flea market, an auction, and open gaming. Registration: \$15/weekend before Oct. 28; \$19/weekend or \$7/day on site. Write to: WAR!ZONE CENTRAL, c/o Wolf Ent., PO. Box 1256 DeLand FL 32721-1256.

PENTACON X, Nov. 12-13 IN

This convention will be held at Grand Wayne Center in Fort Wayne, Ind. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include computer and war games. GMs are welcome. Write to: Steve & Linda Smith, 836 Himes St., Huntington IN 46750.

SAGA 3, Nov. 12 LA

This gaming-only convention will be held at Howard Johnson Hotel in Metairie, La. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include cash-prize tournaments, and open gaming. Registration: \$10. Write to: SAGA 3, 800 Sena Dr., Metairie LA 70005.

IMMACULATE CONVENTION '94

Nov. 13

This convention will be held at the Chelsea Old Town Hall in Chelsea, London, England. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers and a figure-painting competition. Registration: £3 preregistered; £4 on site. Write (and make checks payable) to: Killjoy, Ltd., Dep't. DR, P.O. box 425, Kingston, Surrey, ENGLAND KT2 7ZD.

EYECON '94, Nov. 18-20

This convention will be held at the Emporium in London, Ontario. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$15 (Canadian) preregistered; \$20 on site. Write to: The Emporium, 123 King St., London, Ontario, CANADA N6A 1C3.

SHAUNCON IX, Nov. 18-20 MO

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson Central in Kansas City, Mo. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA Network events, a charity auction, dealers, and seminars. Write to: SHAUNCON IX, P.O. Box 7457, Kansas City MO 64116-0157.

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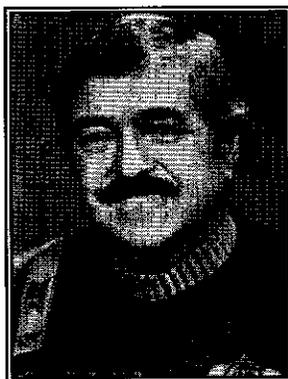
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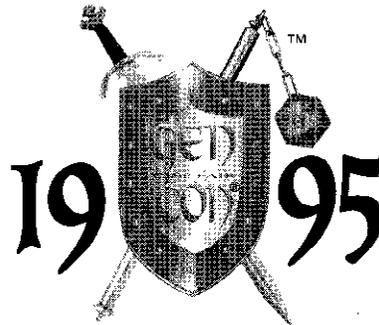
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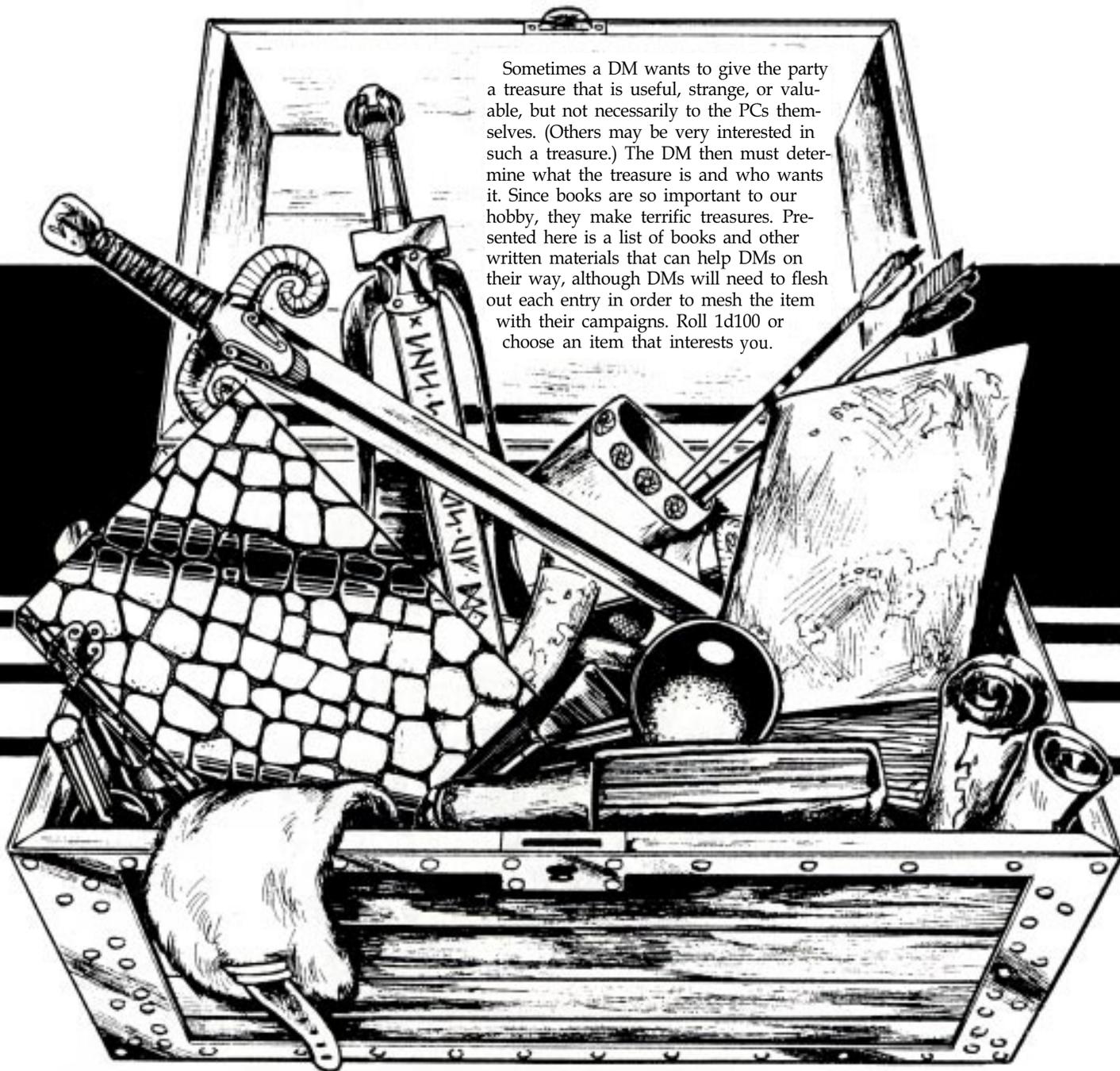


Ex Libris

Books make wonderful treasures

by James R. Collier

Sometimes a DM wants to give the party a treasure that is useful, strange, or valuable, but not necessarily to the PCs themselves. (Others may be very interested in such a treasure.) The DM then must determine what the treasure is and who wants it. Since books are so important to our hobby, they make terrific treasures. Presented here is a list of books and other written materials that can help DMs on their way, although DMs will need to flesh out each entry in order to mesh the item with their campaigns. Roll 1d100 or choose an item that interests you.



01-05: A book on the magical uses for the body parts and fluids of a single magical creature, e.g., a chimera, cockatrice, etc. There is a 50% chance of 1d6 lists of ingredients for potions (possibly alternative recipes for the same one—DM's choice), and only a 10% chance for a single complete formula.

06-11: A calendar. Roll 1d6 for type:

—1-2: A religious calendar, noting all celebrations and holy days.

—3-5: An astrological calendar, noting days that are lucky for certain activities.

—6: A secular calendar, noting local fairs and tournaments.

12-20: A book on the nature and habitat of a single monster—the equivalent of a DRAGON® Magazine "Ecology" article. The book will have 4d6 illustrations, which will include anatomical drawings, close-ups of teeth and claws, and alternative forms, e.g., dragon eggs, giant ant larvae, queens, and pupae, etc.

21-30: A book on the nature and habitats of a group of related monsters—the different kinds of giant beetles, for instance. Same as the previous entry, but the book will be a lot thicker.

31: A booby trap. The pages are covered with *dust of sneezing and choking*.

32-35: A translating dictionary, such as a Common/Elvish and Elvish/Common dictionary. Any two languages can be used. Be creative.



36-40: A book on the history of a powerful magical item—who has owned it, its reputed powers, curses, and location. Although PCs will not be able to determine the number of charges left (if the item uses charges), they also might receive a clue as to whether it could be recharged.

41-44: A book of phrases for bandits. How to say things like "Give me your valuables!" in 12 languages.

45-48: A book written in code, with notes in the margins by those who have tried to decode it. The book radiates abjuration magic, but cannot be read with a

read magic spell.

49-60: A false book. The pages have been glued together and the centers cut out, creating a secret compartment. The compartment contains (roll 1d8):

—1-3: A stone tablet covered with dwarven runes.

—4: A clay tablet covered with strange symbols.

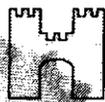
—5-7: A damaged book, missing covers or pages, and generally falling apart.

—8: A scroll (nonmagical).

61: A picture book, without printing of any sort. The pages depict a wizard making gestures. A mage will recognize some of them as somatic components for different spells within a single school of magic—DM's choice. Only a high-level mage will recognize all of the gestures—they depict all spells from first to ninth level in that school that require somatic components. The book will not teach any spells, but may allow a character to recognize when someone is casting one (30% plus 5% per point of Intelligence).

62-65: A book that unfolds into a single sheet. The sheet contains a large-scale plan of the mosaic pattern inlaid on the floor of the main hall in an ancient, large, and famous nearby building. Arrows point to three particular stones in the pattern.

66-75: A compilation of all known legends and information on a famous pirate captain of three centuries ago. It will



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include 1d4 lists of possible locations for his massive treasure hoard, all of which are in the PCs' area, and 1d6 lists of probable contents, all of them quite long, detailing fabulous treasures.

76: A set of book covers only—a programmed illusion plays on the covers' interior, displaying a recreation of a famous incident.

77-80: A book on the ceremonial outfits worn by a prominent priesthood.

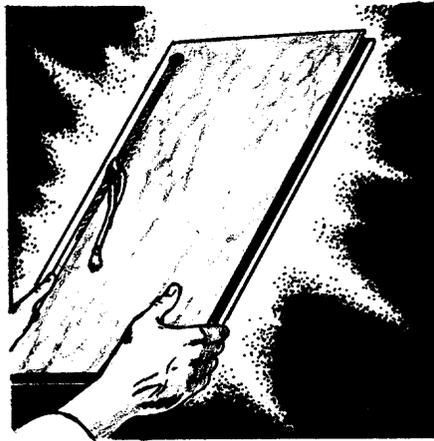
81-85: A cookbook on the safe preparation of cockatrice.

86: A talking book. This was the inventory list from the storehouse of a now defunct magical college. The pages, made of beaten brass, are blank. *Magic mouths* are programmed to speak whenever that page's subject is spoken, e.g., "wand of fire on shelf 7." Each page contains the command words for a magical item.

87-90: A phrase book, used to teach yourself a language. Use of this book allows fluency in half the normal time, without tutoring.

91-95: A book on heraldry, displaying the coats of arms of all nobles in a nearby kingdom, along with the livery worn by their men-at-arms, servants, and family.

96: A student's textbook covering five years of research into the creation of a *potion of dexterity*. This will speed up



research on such a potion by 50%. A successful potion will give the imbiber a Dexterity of 18 until it wears off.

97-99: A map detailing a nearby wilderness. The center of the map displays a small clearing with a circle of standing stones. Hand-written inside the circle of stone is the word "gate." Where this gate leads is up to the DM, but possibilities include the SPELLJAMMER®, RAVENLOFT®, or PLANESCAPE™ settings.

100: A book containing the true name and history of a local VIP, possibly a rival

of the PCs. There is a 50% chance that it identifies the person as a criminal guilty of an offense punishable by death; the rest of the time, it identifies the person as a lost noblewoman, kidnapped as a child and unaware of her true identity. There is a 1% chance that it will identify the person as a *polymorphed* creature—say, a dragon in human form. Unless, of course, you planned it that way.

Ω



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New animal stocks for the GAMMA WORLD® game

by Kerry Jordan

Artwork by Grandville, courtesy of Dover Publications, Inc.

For those people who enjoy the 4th Edition of the GAMMA WORLD® game as much as I do, I have created several new base animal stocks from which mutated-animal characters can be created. These new animals will add more excitement to a

GAMMA WORLD campaign.

Each of the new animal stocks listed below follows the format used in the GAMMA WORLD rule book, with one exception: these stocks include role-playing notes. These notes can cause some

interesting situations in any campaign or adventure, but they are purely optional. GMs are free to modify any of this information; what works in my campaign may not work in others.

New base animal stocks

Ant

PS 12, DX 6, CN 7

Ants can bite for 1d6 damage. An ant's exoskeleton is AC 14. Ants also have the *multiple limbs (legs)* mutation. Their base speed is 12 (even if walking upright), and they may burrow through earth at a speed of 3.

Role-playing notes: Ants generally are hard workers and tend to stick with a mission until it has been completed. Once an ant has made up his mind, there is usually no way to change it.

Butterfly

PS 5, DX 7, CN 6

Butterflies have *heightened CH* and *multiple limbs (legs)* mutations. Their base speed is 6 (even if walking upright). They also have wings, which have a flying base speed of 15.

Role-playing notes: Usually, butterflies are very preoccupied with their looks. To them, one's appearance means everything. They tend to avoid fighting because it can be so messy.

Cat, domestic

PS 6, DX 12, CN 6

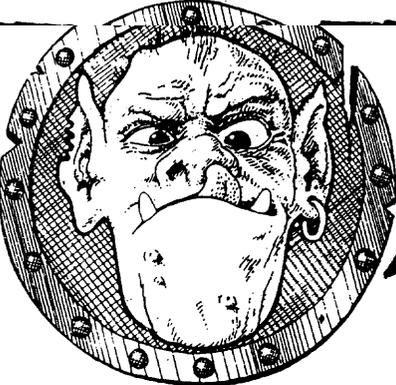
Cats may use a claw/claw/bite attack routine for 1d2/1d2/1d4 damage. Their base speed is 16 (11 bipedally). They have *heightened balance*, *heightened hearing*, and *night vision* as mutations.

Role-playing notes: Although there are many different types of domestic cats, they all share certain similar characteristics. Every cat is slightly nervous and tends to jump at the slightest sound. Additionally, cats generally suffer from hypertension, which prevents them from being still for very long. Cats also are very curious and tend to be the first to try out new artifacts.





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Dog

PS 9, DX 10, CN 7
Dogs may bite for 1d6 damage. They have the *heightened smell* and *heightened hearing* mutations. Their base speed is 18 (12 bipedally).

Role-playing notes: Although there are many different types of dogs, they all share certain similar characteristics. All dogs tend to be very loyal; once a dog has made a friend, it is a friend for life. Dogs also are very protective and will protect their friends to the best of their abilities.

Dolphin

PS 7, DX 10, CN 9
Mutated dolphins are assumed to be adapted for living on land. When swimming underwater, dolphins can ram an opponent for 1d8 damage. Their base land speed is 7 (walking upright), but they swim at a speed of 12. They have *sonar* (underwater only), *heightened hearing*, and *diminished smell* (D) as the mutations. They also can hold their breath for 12 rounds.

Role-playing notes: Dolphins are generally fun-loving and enjoy any type of game. Because of this, many people believe that dolphins are naive; this is not true, they simply like having fun.

Dragonfly

PS 6, DX 10, CN 7
A dragonfly may bite for 1d6 damage.

They have *multiple limbs (legs)* and *heightened vision* as mutations. They also have *wings*, which allow them to fly at a speed of 26. Unfortunately, a dragonfly's legs are not made for walking, although they can be used for grasping objects.

Role-playing notes: All dragonflies tend to suffer from nervous hypertension. They usually talk very fast and will dart about even if trying to remain hovering in one spot.

Flea

PS 5, DX 5, CN 6

Fleas may bite for 1d4 damage, draining one point of blood per round automatically after a successful hit. These abilities are needed because a flea needs six points of blood in place of daily food and water. A flea's exoskeleton is AC 12. Fleas can also leap 100 meters forward and 10 meters high (70/7 meters bipedally), which, if used in attacking an opponent, causes an additional 1d6 damage to the normal bite damage. Not only this, but fleas have *multiple limbs (legs)* as a mutation. Their legs are stronger than the rest of their body and have a base PS of 9. Their base speed is 4 (6 bipedally).

Role-playing notes: Fleas are generally considered to have "bad attitudes." They tend to be gruff and rude to strangers, and act only slightly better to their friends. (Well, you might be grumpy too if you had to go through life as a giant mutant flea.)



Fly

PS 5, DX 10, CN 5

A fly has *multiple limbs (legs)* as a mutation. It also has *wings* (flight speed 27). A fly's climbing attempts are one difficulty rating easier than normal. Their base speed is 6 (even if walking upright).

Role-playing notes: As a rule, flies are considered by others to be undesirable, and are even considered disgusting by some people. Flies seem to prefer filth to cleanliness. They tend to have gear that is tarnished and grungy, which is just the way they like it. Even though this preference keeps most people at a distance, there is an up side; they are never bothered by thieves (unless the thieves are flies themselves).

Killer whale

PS 8, DX 8, CN 10

Mutated killer whales are assumed to be adapted for dwelling on land. Killer whales may bite for 1d12 damage. Their base speed is 7 (walking upright), although they swim at a speed of 10. Killer whales also can hold their breath for 12 rounds.

Role-playing notes: Killer whales can be considered the "muscle" of any GAMMA WORLD adventuring group. Most are not very bright and generally leave strategies to the leaders of the group; they simply follow orders. In fact, following orders is what killer whales excel at; they are known for single-mindedly following a mission until it is accomplished.

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Leopard

PS 16, DX 12, CN 11

Leopards may claw/claw/bite for 1d6/1d6/1d8 damage. They have heightened *smell* and *night vision* as mutations. Their base speed is 17 (11 bipedally).

Role-playing notes: All leopards have excellent stealth skills. There are many stories in which a mutated leopard will leave his party on the pretense of "scouting ahead" in order to circle around the group and surprise someone in the party from above or behind as a joke. They also are very cunning, and can plan devious traps. A leopard will begin a frontal assault on an enemy only if all other plans have been tried.

Lion

PS 17, DX 10, CN 13

Lions can claw/claw/bite for 1d5/1d5/1d10 damage. They have *heightened smell* and *night vision* as their mutations. Their base speed is 15 (10 bipedally).

Role-playing notes: Lions are known for being the most prideful animals on Gamma Terra. They do not necessarily look down upon other animals, they just believe that they have better skills than others. If a lion is a member of a party, he will try to become the leader of the party; it is a matter of principle. Lions always can be goaded into contests; their pride does not allow them to turn down a challenge.

Lizard

PS 3, DX 11, CN 5

Lizards have no natural attack, although they do have the *regeneration* mutation. Their base speed is 12 (8 bipedally).

Role-playing notes: Because lizards generally have low PS and CN, they avoid fights at all costs. In fact, if a fight erupts, they are usually the first to scamper away. They do not consider themselves cowards, they simply know that they cannot last long in a fight, so they consider it better to run away and fight another day in a more important battle. Most lizard adventurers seek artifacts that increase their fighting abilities so that they will have better odds in combat.

Owl

PS 3, DX 10, CN 5

Owls may claw/claw/bite for 1d4/1d4/1d2 damage. They have *wings*, but with a flying base speed of 28. Their base land speed is 4 (even if walking upright). They have *night vision* and *nocturnal* (D) as mutations.

Role-playing notes: Although owls usually have no more intelligence than anyone else, they tend to act as if they do. Even if an owl has no idea what an item is or does, he may act as if he does know and simply does not wish to tell, or he will simply make up information about the item.



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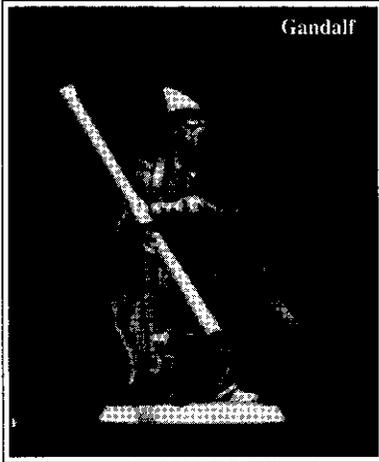
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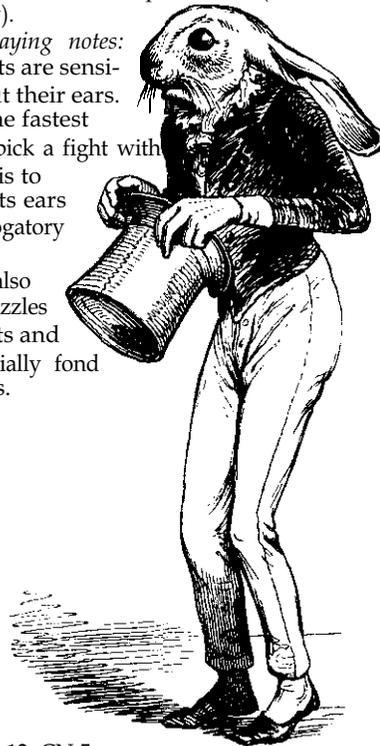
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Rabbit

PS 5, DX 13, CN 4

Rabbits can jump five meters forward and one meter up. They also have *heightened hearing* and *heightened smell* as mutations. Their base speed is 21 (14 bipedally).

Role-playing notes: All rabbits are sensitive about their ears. One of the fastest ways to pick a fight with a rabbit is to refer to its ears in a derogatory manner. Rabbits also enjoy puzzles of all sorts and are especially fond of riddles.



Rat

PS 7, DX 12, CN 5

Rats can bite for 1d6 damage. They also have the *night vision* mutation. Their base speed is 14 (9 bipedally).

Role-playing notes: Most rats are generally untrustworthy, although they can be trusted somewhat if someone is bigger than they are. Once a rat decides that he wants something, he will use even treachery and double-dealing to get it. Because of the way they treat others, most rats are highly paranoid and trust no one. They usually only have friends for as long as it is convenient.

Scorpion

PS 7, DX 7, CN 7

A scorpion may claw/claw for 1d6/1d6 damage and sting for 1d4 damage, plus any damage caused by its 1d4 +2 Intensity poison. A scorpion's exoskeleton is AC 13. A scorpion also has the *multiple limbs (legs)* mutation. Its base speed is 10 (even if walking upright).

Role-playing notes: Scorpions tend to have a cynical view of life; they question the slightest amount of kindness from a person. In fact, they seem to be happier when they are cheated outright by a person; it proves that their view of life is correct. This cynical view gives most scorpions a depressing personality.

Snail

PS 1, DX 2, CN 3

Snails have *total carapace* and *regeneration* as their mutations. They are vegetarians and receive all their required

nourishment from vegetation. Their base speed is 4. Because of their shells, they have no "walking upright" position.

Role-playing notes: If killer whales are considered the "muscle" in a party, then snails must be considered the "thinkers." Everything a snail does is well and fully thought out. To them, there is no such thing as spontaneity.

Wolverine

PS 12, DX 12, CN 8

Wolverines may claw/claw/bite for 1d6/1d6/1d8 damage. Every wolverine has *heightened smell* as a mutation. Their base speed is 10 (7 bipedally). There is also a 5% chance each round of battle that a wolverine will go berserk. When berserk, a wolverine must attack with its claws and bite until all opponents are defeated. During this time, the wolverine has five additional HPs added temporarily to its HP total and a temporary +3 added to its MD, but since it is too maddened to feel pain, the GM secretly keeps track of the character's HP total. To calm down, a wolverine character must make a MS check with a Challenging difficulty rating (5).

Role-playing notes: Wolverines are totally unpredictable; in fact, most people consider them to be crazy. When someone offers a wolverine his hand, the wolverine may shake it or try to rip it off. Wolverines give no quarter in battle and expect none. Although most people consider wolves to be "loners," this is not true; wolverines are the true "loners." Their unpredictable behavior keeps others at a distance (for good reason).



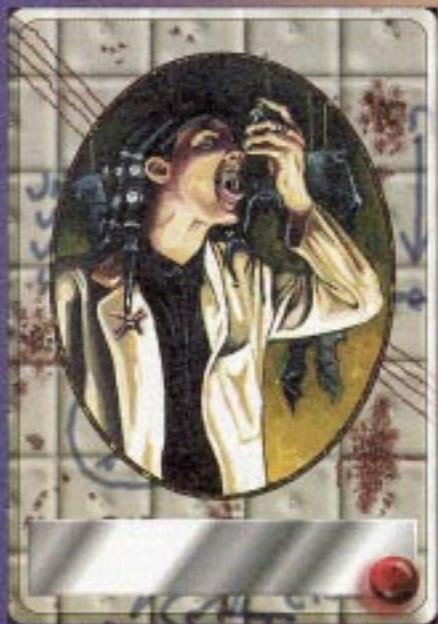


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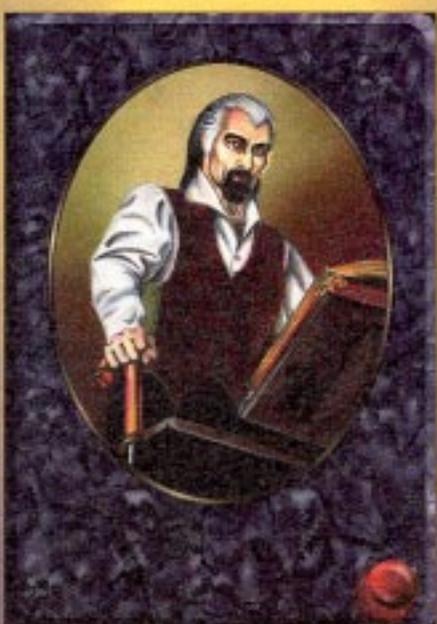


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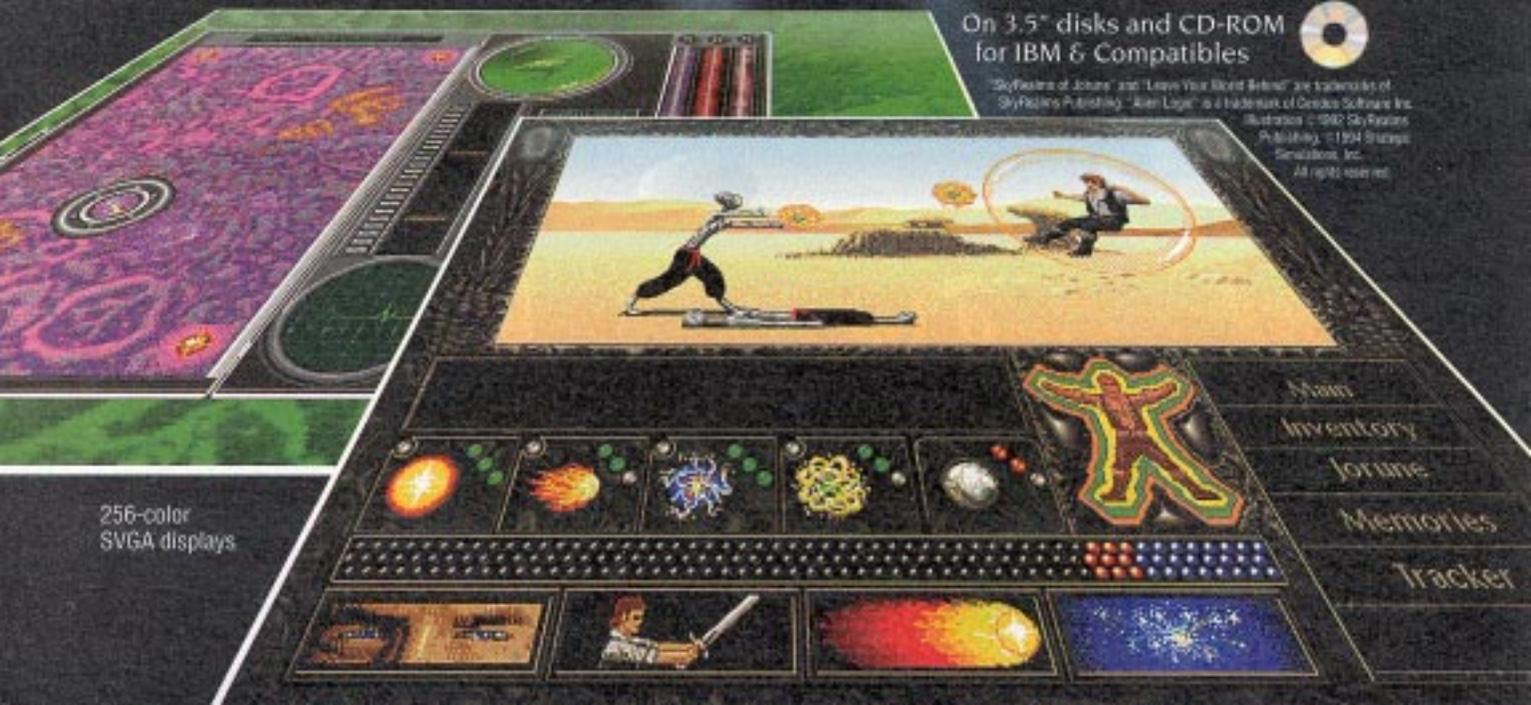


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The future of computer gaming: A humble prediction



feel that multiplayer computer games will become much more common. Only a year ago, the industry wisdom was that modem or network games were unprofitable. The success of Doom and similar games has exploded that myth for all time. We can expect to see many more games that are at their best when played with another human being. Just as playing the D&D® game with a batch of your friends usually is more fun than sitting alone in your room playing a solo game, so multiplayer computer games can be much more interesting than the typical model.

Some companies are working on multiplayer games that have many, many more participants than are usually supported nowadays. I confidently expect to see games played over the InterNet with thousands of players simultaneously. Perhaps some of these will be true role-playing games, in which every character you meet will be another player, whether he be a sorcerer, warrior, king, or monster. To form an adventuring party, you still may go to the tavern, but you'd actually have to recruit a group from among the other players present. If marauding Vikings invade, they'll be other players, too, with their own motivations, goals, and plans. If you decide that you need hirelings, once more, you'll need to talk to folks to do it. That sounds pretty fun to me.

So far, paper games are more fun than computer games because it's more fun to play with a human than it is to play with a machine. Once you're able to interact with a variety of humans via machine, computer games may start to catch up with, though perhaps never surpass, paper games.

Computer games' ratings

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



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Reviews

INHERIT THE EARTH

IBM

Dreamers Guild for
New World Computing

Director: Talin

Producer: Walter Hochbrueckner

Screenplay: Robert Leh

Game and world design: Talin, Robert
McNally, Carolly Hauksdottir

I really wanted to like this game. The concept was neat, the design team obviously dedicated and sincere, and the opening plot set up a batch of interesting problems for the hero. But as I played the game, tiny problems loomed ever larger.

This is an adventure game taking place many years in the future, after humanity has completely disappeared. Before departing the Earth, *Homo sapiens* bio-engineered a number of animal species, giving them hands, erect posture, and full intelligence. The hero of *Inherit the Earth* is a fox. His two companions are a boar and an elk. They are not exactly his friends—instead, it is their job to keep an eye on him while he tries to fulfill his mission. As the game progresses, the three get friendlier until they become pals.

The game uses a "point and click" interface, like most adventure games nowadays. You select the desired action, move your cursor over the object you wish to

affect, and click on it. It is sometimes quite difficult to perform an action, even with such a simple process. At one point I was attempting to give an object to some capering rabbit-people, and was exceedingly frustrated. I had to click on "Give," then on the object to give, then on the rabbit. If I missed my last click, or didn't get the first two choices selected before the rabbit physically left the screen, I had to start all over again.

The screens are detailed, with trees, houses, and beast-men everywhere. When a number of other beings appear at once, the action moves unconscionably slowly. Since sometimes you have to wander over a very large expanse of land before you get to where you're headed, this is a pain in the behind.

The game is unforgiving in a manner I thought had gone out with the old Infocom games. I found myself playing the same stupid mind games with it, trying dozens of different actions with the same object in a vain attempt to accomplish the action that I *knew* was possible.

Overall, I had fun despite the frustrations and annoyances. The basically good quality of the game was marred by the minor problems the design team left in. I see this type of problem very often in computer games—the designer comes up with a fine idea, then doesn't bother to fix some minor aspect of play that pretty

much ends up spoiling the entire thing. It's like eating a delicious salad, with only a few tiny pieces of dung—the pieces ruin everything.

EQUINOX

SuperNintendo

* * *
Sony Imagesoft

Equinox is a puzzle game cloaked in a role-playing disguise. You wander around a landscape, enter ancient dungeons, and battle demons and ghosts. Your character can hurl weapons and learn to cast a variety of spells. Nonetheless, the main thrust of your activities are puzzle-solving.

The game has two parts. When you are above ground, you wander the landscape, which is dotted with villages and trees. Trolls drop from clouds above, and occasional wells give rise to killer bats. When you defeat one of these two types of "wandering monsters," you either receive extra life or magic power, depending upon whether you conquered a troll or bat. The villages of the various countries you are required to explore are merely entries to the underworld, where most of the action takes place.

There are seven different lands, each with increasingly more puzzles and dungeons to solve. You are prevented from traveling between lands at the game's start by sinister ghosts who block the bridges. By slaying a land's "boss" monster, his ghost vanishes, and you can traverse the appropriate bridge to the new land.

Once you've entered one of the many dungeons, the layout and screen utterly change. You must make your way through a variety of "rooms." These rooms are frequently more than a single screen in size, and each presents some puzzle for the player to handle. Some puzzles are trivial, others quite hard. A number of times I felt completely stumped, and pondered deeply on the game for what felt like hours. In the end, I was always able to figure out what I was supposed to do, but it took a lot of trial and error before my victories.

You have multiple lives, but if you're killed, you must start a room over again. Once you've solved a room, you can generally do it again in minimal time, but there's little need to do so, because each time you exit a dungeon the game is saved on your behalf.

The monsters kill you with a single touch, so you don't fight them so much as solve them. Most monsters move in preset patterns, so you can predict their movements and hurl your missiles appropriately. A few monsters move more-or-less randomly, and they prove much more difficult to handle, especially as they generally can take a huge number of hits. The demon knights can be hit only from behind, and some of them take 12 or more blows before they're killed, so you can spend a very long time offing them. You must kill every single monster in a room,

or when you return, they're all back in action. Leave just one single wounded monster and it's no good. You must kill them *all*. I guess it made the game easier to save.

The boss monsters initially appear to be dreadful horrors, but I soon learned that they, too, follow programmed movements (spiced up with a little randomness), and so once I figured them out, I was able to deal with them, too.

The puzzles are fun, the game is colorful, and I recommend *Equinox* to anyone who likes games like *Lemmings* or *Humans*. It doesn't look like *Lemmings*, but it's really the same type of game, under the skin.

CASTLEVANIA IV

Super Nintendo

* * *
Nintendo

Castlevania IV is not a new game, but I thought I'd review it anyway, since some of our readers may not be familiar with it. It's based on the *Castlevania* series (no surprise there), and has a horror theme with a basically arcade-play style.

The old Nintendo *Castlevania* was a lot like a role-playing game—you talked to townsfolk, purchased goodies, and solved little mysteries, all interspersed with long periods of hot arcade action in which you whipped various nasty monsters to death.

Alas, the SuperNintendo version has taken a giant step backward, for now the game retains no traces of the original role-playing elements. It is purely a programmed arcade game, and suffers for it.

In my humble opinion, many types of games can include traces of role-playing and be the stronger for it. If *Zelda* were purely a game of fighting weird monsters, it wouldn't have a one-tenth the appeal it has now. Even a pure strategy title like *Civilization* has touches of role-playing—the various national leaders each have a different personality, and behave quite differently. If you treat Frederick the Great in exactly the same manner as you treat Shaka the Zulu King you'll have serious trouble in *Civilization*. If that's not role-playing, I don't know what is. Anyway, I'll get down off my soapbox. I just wanted to say that I feel that *Castlevania* is the worse for losing its role-playing element.

That said, the arcade element of *Castlevania IV* is still pretty good. The monsters are just as nasty as ever, and your whip (ridiculous as the concept is) even more amazingly effective. If you like arcade games and don't mind the horrific theme or are even attracted to it, you could do a heck of a lot worse.

SERF CITY

IBM

* * *
Blue Byte for SSI

Producer: Thomas Hertzler

Product manager: Stefan Piasecki

Programming & conception: Volker

Wertich

Graphics: Christoph Werner

Serf City is a strategy game based in a Middle Ages that never was. It resembles *Railroad Tycoon* as much as anything else of my experience, and is clearly intended to join the ranks of "Sandbox God" games such as *SimCity* and *Civilization*.

You rule over a group of serfs that come in twenty different flavors, ranging from lumberjacks to pig farmers. There also are five degrees of knights, termed for some reason "serf knights," an oxymoron if I ever heard one. The only function of knights is to fight, either in defense of your own buildings or in attempts to conquer an opponent's turf.

You start out with nothing and have to build a castle from scratch. Ultimately, you hope to have a thriving city with warehouses, mills, and foundries, but at first you have nothing. You need to build roads between the various buildings you create so that your lemming-like serfs can make their way from point to point. The serfs are incredibly stupid, so you need to make the roads as easy to follow as possible. I've often seen them scratching their heads and puzzling over a complicated bend in the road. To recruit a serf, you need to select him from a simple menu. Knights always start out at the lowest degree of valor and must be increased in toughness via training (though, peculiarly, not through experience).

You can play with another person, but not via modem, which is a bit of a pain. (You have to use the same computer while you're playing.) You are able to modify almost every detail of the world you're playing, and save the worlds you've created.

Normally you are faced by a number of computer opponents, with varying personalities. Not only do the computer foes have distinctive traits (such as lust for money or cowardice) but you also can vary their intelligence on a simple scale. Hence, instead of just an aggressive foe, you can have a *stupidly* aggressive foe!

I enjoyed this game, and I'll probably be playing it over the months to come. It's no *SimCity*, but it was inexpensive and easy to get into.

Alas, this is the final "Eye of the Monitor" column that Sandy Petersen will be writing for DRAGON® Magazine. Other commitments have drained away his time from working on this column. We've been honored to print Sandy's column for the last year, and his presence will be missed. Have no fear however DRAGON Magazine will continue to cover the field of electronic gaming, so come back next month to see what we got for you!

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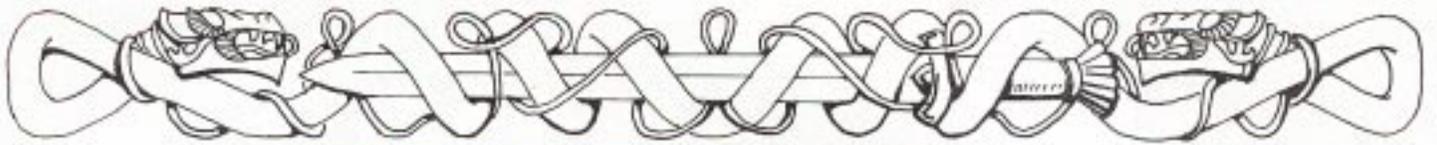
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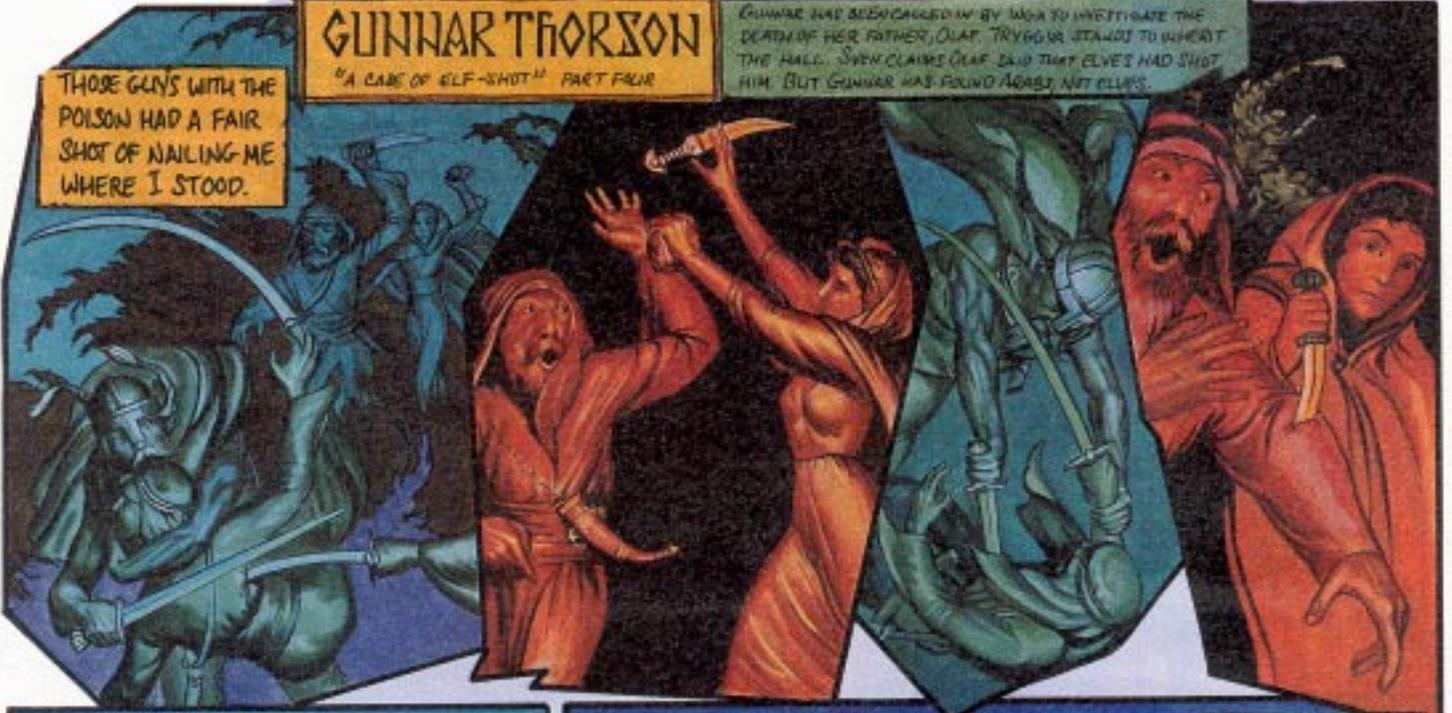


GUNNAR THORSON

"A CASE OF ELF-SHOT" PART FOUR

GUNNAR HAD BEEN CALLED IN BY WEN TO INVESTIGATE THE DEATH OF HER FATHER, OLAF. TRYGGVA STANDED TO INHERIT THE HALL. SVEN CLAIMED OLAF SAID THAT ELVES HAD SHOT HIM. BUT GUNNAR WAS FINDING ARABS, NOT ELVES.

THOSE GUYS WITH THE POISON HAD A FAIR SHOT OF NAILING ME WHERE I STOOD.



IT WAS ROXY. WHAT A GAL.

THE COCK CROWED IN THE DARK FOUR TIMES.

SO I SAID TO MYSELF, "I'D BETTER GO CHECK ON GUNNAR."

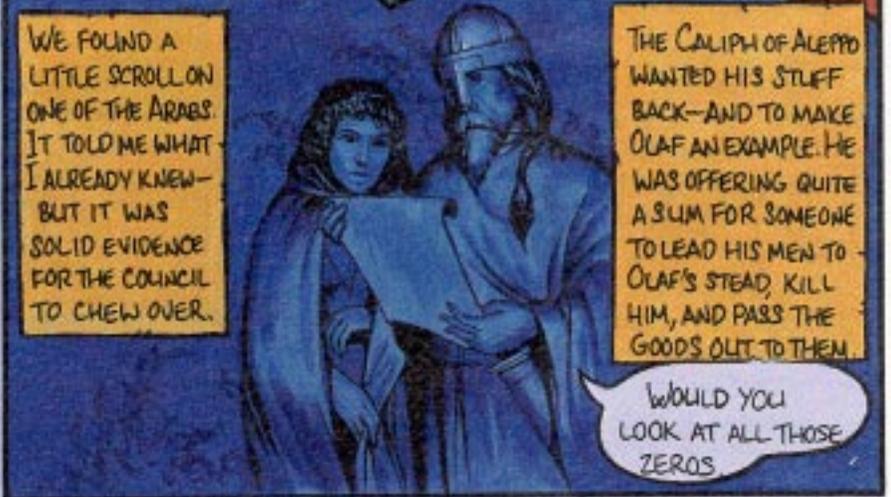
ROXY SURE KNEW HOW TO READ HER ORACLES AND I WAS MIGHTY GLAD OF THAT.



WE FOUND A LITTLE SCROLL ON ONE OF THE ARABS. IT TOLD ME WHAT I ALREADY KNEW—BUT IT WAS SOLID EVIDENCE FOR THE COUNCIL TO CHEW OVER.

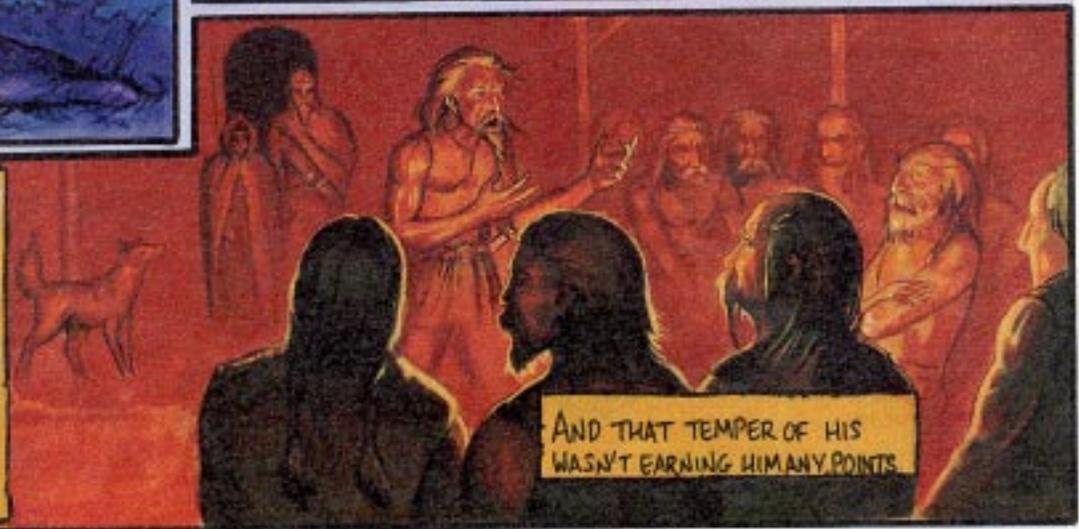
THE CALIPH OF ALEPPO WANTED HIS STUFF BACK—AND TO MAKE OLAF AN EXAMPLE. HE WAS OFFERING QUITE A SUM FOR SOMEONE TO LEAD HIS MEN TO OLAF'S STEAD, KILL HIM, AND PASS THE GOODS OUT TO THEM.

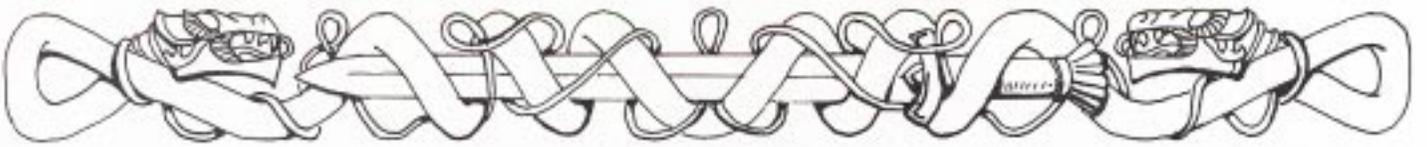
WOULD YOU LOOK AT ALL THOSE ZEROS.



BACK AT THE HALL, THE COUNCIL HAD ALREADY GATHERED. THINGS SEEMED TO BE GOING SVEN'S WAY. THE POISON IN THE MEAD WASN'T HELPING TRYGGVA'S CASE ANY—EVERYONE KNEW HE DRANK NOTHING BUT ALE.

AND THAT TEMPER OF HIS WASN'T EARNING HIM ANY POINTS.





SVEN LOOKED PRETTY SMUG—UNTIL HE SAW ME WALK INTO THE ROOM.

ANY ELVES, GUNNAR?

NO, BUT THERE ARE SOME DEAD ARABS OUT IN THE WOODS. THEY WERE WAITING FOR SOME WELL-TRAVELLED FELLOW TO GIVE THEM SOME THINGS TO TAKE BACK TO ALEPPO.

WELL, ROLF, YOU READ ARABIC—

SVEN DIDN'T LIKE WHAT HE'D HEARD.

RAAGH

THE COUNCIL CAME TO ORDER SOON ENOUGH. AND TRYGGVA SAW THINGS IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT.

GUNNAR THORSON, I SPOKE TO YOU BEFORE IN AN ILL MANNER, AND NOW I REGRET IT. YOU'VE DONE A GOOD THING FOR ME TODAY.

IT'S ALL PART OF THE JOB.

I WAS GLAD I'D SOLVED THIS ONE LAST CASE FOR OLAF. INGA'S ALL EYES FOR HER COUSIN NOW, AND KNOWING HIS ONLY KID WAS HAPPY WOULD LET HIM LAUGH OFF THE HOURS IN VALHALLA. AS FOR SVEN, HE'S CALLING IN THE CHURCH TO DEFEND HIM. THEY'LL GIVE HIM A FAIR CHANCE—TRIAL BY FIRE. BUT FRANKLY, I THINK HE'S GONNA FRY.

GUNNAR THORSON: A CASE OF ELF-ROOT PARTS 1, 2, 3 AND 4. ART: COPYRIGHT © 1987, 1994 MANUI & ADAMS.



1,001 Faces of Undeath

Give your DARK SUN® setting undead these special powers

by Theron Martin

Artwork by Tom Baxa

Undead beings in all fantasy worlds come in a wide variety of forms. In the world of Athas, though, each undead is a unique entity. A person fighting a zombie in one section of ruins might encounter another zombie in a different section that has completely different attack forms, defenses, and vulnerabilities. Some ideas concerning the construction of Athasian undead have been given in the DARK SUN® rule books and the article "A Letter From the Wanderer" by Troy Denning, in DRAGON® issue #173. This article is intended to serve as a supplement for these sources by offering a listing of the most common powers among Athasian undead. Although this material is oriented for the DARK SUN setting, it can be used to create new and different undead types for other campaign worlds as well.

Types of undead

On Athas, undead may be of any humanoid race, although undead of the player character races are most common. (Some stories claim that undead versions of non-humanoid creatures do exist, though these are rare.) Undead exist in one of two states: corporeal or incorporeal. Corporeal undead have some tangible, physical form. This could be a completely intact body, a skeleton, or just an animated skull. Undead in this state can affect physical objects as a living being does, and can be harmed by all normal methods (unless they have special defenses, of course).

Incorporeal undead either have no physical form remaining or have forsaken their

physical form upon their transition to undead status. They normally appear as transparent, insubstantial representations of their appearance in life, although some incorporeal undead have been known to appear in amorphous or gaseous forms. Undead in this state can move through solid objects and pass through any barrier not protected by magic or lined with lead or gold. This ability does not automatically make them immune to physical attacks, however. Any object struck or thrown at an incorporeal undead with intent to harm can inflict damage, as can all forms of magical and psionic attacks and even the life-draining effects of defiler magic. Some Athasian scholars speculate that this may be possible because the life force required to animate the undead spirit is still vulnerable to harm, though no one knows for sure. Some incorporeal undead wear items (usually suits of armor) that retain their physical existence despite the undead's intangible state.

Undead creation

In general, undead should be created as regular NPCs, although the time, method, and circumstances of the NPC's death (and whatever effect these factors have on the NPC's personality) also must be determined and described. The corporeality (or lack thereof) of the undead must then be chosen, as must the category of Athasian undead, if the undead is to belong to one of the standard types. Once these factors have been determined, the undead's special powers must be chosen.

To determine the number of powers that the undead has, roll 1d8 and add the following modifiers:

-2 if the undead was 1st-2nd level in life.

+ 6 if the undead was 6th-9th level in life.

+ 12 if the undead was 10th level or higher in life.

+ 1 per two levels over 14 in life (i.e., + 1 for levels 15-16).

+ 2 for levels 17-28 etc.

- 1 if the NPC's death resulted from natural causes.

+ 1 if the NPC's death was unusually violent. (Note: a death in a normal combat is not considered "unusually violent.")

All modifiers are cumulative. Once the number of powers has been calculated, roll on Table 1. The result determines the number of powers the undead possesses. The DM now has the option of choosing appropriate powers from Tables 3-5 or rolling them randomly. In the latter case, roll on Table 2 to determine the kinds of powers the undead has, then roll on the appropriate tables to determine the exact powers. If random generation is used, reroll any time a roll results in the undead possessing contradictory powers (for example, Nauseous Stench and Immunity to Detection).

Starred entries on the power tables indicate powers that are described in the following text. Unless otherwise noted, all powers are usable at will, and any power that duplicates a spell is usable either at the undead's level or hit dice (for the rest

of the text, "level" and "hit dice" may be used interchangeably) or at the minimum level necessary to cast that spell, whichever is greater. Most touch-based powers are triggered by willful contact by the undead, which in combat requires a successful attack roll. In most cases, powers that are rolled a second time are doubled in intensity, frequency, duration, or area of effect, at the DM's option. For example, a doubled Cold Touch power would inflict 4d4 points of damage, while a doubled detection power would have two cumulative rolls for range. Some powers have special effects if doubled or rolled a second time, and some powers cannot be doubled or rolled again. These powers are noted as such in the specific descriptions in the following text. Entries marked "DM choice" allow the DM to choose a power from the same table or insert a power of the DM's creation into the table.

In addition to the special powers of general, offensive, or defensive nature, some undead may have special vulnerabilities as well. These should be created by the DM as necessary; literary sources concerning undead and AD&D® game monster listings offer many possibilities, or the DM could make some up. Due to the special nature of the DARK SUN setting, Athasian undead are less likely than their counterparts on other worlds to have vulnerabilities to sunlight or elemental extremes (such as intense heat). Athasian undead would be much more likely to have vulnerabilities to iron or water, however, and vulnerabilities in the forms of territorial restrictions are common. As a general rule, a vulnerability always outweighs any power when the two come into conflict.

General powers

Flight: The undead can fly at a movement rate determined by the following chart, at maneuverability class B.

Table 1: Number of powers

1d10 roll	# of powers
0 or less	None
1-3	1
4-7	2
8-10	3
11-13	4
14-16	5
17-18	6
19-20	7
21-22	8
23-24	9
25+	10

Table 2: Power types

1d100 roll	Type of power
01-30	General power
31-60	Offensive power
61-90	Defensive power
91-00	Vulnerability (chosen by DM)

1d20 roll	Movement rate
1-3	12
4-7	15
8-12	18
13-17	24
18-20	30

Limited range teleportation: The undead can perform the equivalent of a *dimension door* spell at will, except that it can relocate into a solid object only if incorporeal at the time.

Unlimited range teleportation: Twice per day the undead can *teleport without error*, as the wizard spell.

Detect magic or Detect psionics: The undead can detect any magic or psionic power used within a range determined by a roll on Table #6.

Special tracking: Once the undead has focused on a target familiar to itself, it can unerringly track that target over any distance; it can even track a target onto another plane 50% of the time, if the undead also can perform extraplanar travel. Only magic and psionic powers that prevent the target from being scried can hinder this power.

Detect presence: The undead can detect the presence of a particular substance or race within a range determined by a roll on Table 6. A vague impression of the amount of substance or number of the race present can be determined ("one,"

"a few," or "many," for example). The type of substance or race must be determined at the time the power is chosen; additional rolls on this result either increases the detection range or allows additional substances or races to be detected.

Create illusion: The undead can generate illusions with both visual and audible components at a range of up to 120'. The illusion can be maintained as long as the undead does not break its concentration. This ability can be used three times per day.

Generate darkness: The undead can generate a 10' radius area of magical *darkness* around itself or any target up to 20 yards away.

Increased Strength or Dexterity: The undead's natural Strength or Dexterity is increased by four points. These results cannot be repeated or doubled.

Ambulatory body parts: The undead's body parts can function independently of each other if detached from the body. Unattached body parts retain all attack forms, psionic abilities, and magical abilities particular to that body part (e.g. a severed head would retain psionic abilities and a bite attack, while a severed arm would retain its claw attack). They also retain any physical, magical, and psionic traits not keyed to a specific body part (such as flying). Detached heads and arms have a movement rate of 1, while individual detached arms and legs have ¼ of the creature's normal movement rate. Detached legs, arms, and head each account for 10% of the undead's hit point, while the torso retains 50% of the undead's hit points. Spells requiring verbal components only may be cast by the head, while spells requiring somatic components may be cast only if the arms are within 5' of the head. Since the undead's soul controls the body even if the head is destroyed, each detached part must be destroyed separately.

This power is often found in combination with the Regeneration power. The undead must be corporeal to use this power. If this result is doubled or chosen a second time, the undead may detach and reattach its body parts at will.

Doppelganger effect: Similar to a doppelganger, the undead can perfectly mimic the voice and appearance of any humanoid of the same size class as the undead. This power is rarely found in undead of size classes other than Medium.

Increased psionic ability: The undead's psionic ability is increased by four levels, to a maximum of 20th level. If the undead formerly had no psionic powers, then it gains psionic ability equivalent to a 4th-level psionist.

Rot living material: The presence of the undead is anathema to all life. Any living material touched by the undead immediately rots and becomes useless. If used against a living creature, the undead's touch causes 2d4 points of damage that only can be cured by magical means. If used against a *tree of life*, the undead's touch causes 2d4 points of damage per

Table 3: General powers

1d100 roll	Power
01-07	*Flight
08-11	Levitation (as spell)
12-14	Blink (as spell)
15-17	*Limited range teleportation
18-19	*Unlimited range teleportation
20-22	Telekinesis (as spell)
23-26	*Detect magic use
27-30	*Detect psionic use
31-35	*Detect life
36-39	*Special tracking
40-43	*Detect presence
44-45	Animate dead (as spell; 3/day)
46-50	Audible glamor (as spell)
51-54	*Create illusion
55-57	Invisibility (as spell)
58-59	Polymorph self (as spell; 3/day)
60-62	*Generate darkness
63-67	*Increased strength
68-70	*Increased dexterity
71-73	*Ambulatory body parts
74-76	*Doppelganger effect
77-78	*Increased psionic ability
79-83	Become corporeal/incorporeal
84-87	*Rot living material
88-91	*Putrefying touch
92-95	DM choice
96-98	Roll again, doubling next power rolled
99-00	Roll twice more

round of contact. This is not the same as the life-draining effects of defiler spells, because living material can grow again in the affected area upon the undead's departure. No undead possessing this power will be found in the Forest Ridge (the halflings are very careful about tracking down and destroying undead with this power).

Putrefying touch: Contact with the undead destroys purity and freshness. Any food or drink touched by the undead is affected by the equivalent of a *putrefying food and drink* spell, although magical foods and liquids have a 50% chance to resist this effect. The undead may affect up to one cubic foot (about 7.5 gallons) of food or drink by a touch, and up to 1,000 cubic feet (a 10' x 10' x 10' area, or about 7,500 gallons) by full immersion. This power will never be found in combination with the Dehydration Touch power.

Offensive powers

Table 4: Offensive powers
1d100 roll Power

01-04	*Additional physical attack form
05-06	*Acid touch
07-10	Cold touch (2d4 damage)
11-12	Shocking touch (2d4 damage)
13-15	Superheated touch (2d4 damage)
16-18	*Dehydration touch
19-20	Poison touch (as <i>poison</i> spell)
21-22	Withering touch (as <i>staff of withering</i>)
23-24	Aging touch (10d4 years)
25-27	*Disease touch
28-29	*Blinding touch
30-31	*Inflict insanity
32-34	*Mummy rot
35-39	*Paralysis
40-42	*Life disruption
43-45	*Drain ability score
46	*Soul drain
47-49	Energy drain (one level/HD per touch)
50-52	*Vampiric drain
53-54	*Teleport victim
55-57	*Fatal foresight
58-60	*Curse
61-63	*Aging appearance
64	*Guilt stare
65-69	*Fear
70-71	Charm gaze (as <i>charm monster</i> spell)
72-73	*Death gaze
74-75	*Death cry
76-78	*Nauseous stench
79-81	*Possession
82-85	*Minor spell abilities
86-87	*Major spell abilities
88-90	*Superheated blast
91-92	*Breath weapon
93-96	DM choice
97-99	Roll again, doubling power
00	Roll twice

Additional physical attack forms: The transformation to undead status gives the undead jagged claws and a sharp-toothed bite that are capable of inflicting damage. The undead can make two unarmed claw attacks and one bite attack (or one armed attack and one bite attack) per round. Damage inflicted is dependent on size class (consult the following chart):

Size	Claw damage	Bite damage
S	1-3	1-2
M	1-4	1-3
L	1-6	1-6
H	2-8	2-12
G	3-12	3-18

Claw damage is modified by any applicable Strength bonuses. This result cannot be doubled or chosen twice, nor can it be chosen for undead that naturally have claw and bite attacks (such as thri-kreen).

Dehydration touch: The undead's touch drains a victim of some of its bodily fluids. The victim suffers instant dehydration, resulting in the loss of 1-4 points of Constitution per round of contact. Losses are temporary, and can be restored through normal rehydration (see *DARK SUN Rule Book*, p. 85-86). Victims reduced to a Constitution below 3 by this power are slain. This power is most common among those who have died from dehydration.

Disease touch: Any contact between the undead and victim inflicts a debilitating viral infection on the victim, unless a saving throw vs. poison is made. The infection takes effect in 1-6 turns and causes the loss of one hit point per turn and one point each of Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution per day until the victim is rendered unconscious or has an ability score reduced to below 3, at which point the victim dies, Recovery requires 5d4 days of complete rest. No curative spell other than *cure disease* will affect the victim. The exact type of disease and its visible effects are left to the DM. This power cannot be doubled or chosen again.

Blinding touch: The undead's touch blinds a victim for 2-5 turns unless a saving throw vs. spells is made. Additional touches have cumulative durations. If this result is doubled or chosen again, the blindness is permanent. This effect may be removed by a *cure blindness* spell or its equivalent.

Inflict insanity: The undead's touch renders its victims insane unless they make a saving throw vs. spells with a -2 penalty. Affected individuals are unable to cast spells of any sort for 2-5 turns. (Treat as a *confusion* spell with no chance for acting in a nonconfused manner.) Alternative effects, such as intense paranoia, catatonia, or maniacal rage, can be used at the DM's discretion. Additional touches



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have cumulative durations. If this result is doubled or chosen again, the insanity is permanent. This effect may only be cured by a *heal* spell or its equivalent.

Mummy rot: The undead's touch inflicts its victims with a rotting disease that becomes fatal in 1-6 months. Each month the victim permanently loses two points of Charisma, and wounds heal at only 10% of the normal rate. Magical regeneration restores lost damage, but does not otherwise affect the course of the disease. No other form of magical or psionic healing except cure *disease* or its equivalent will affect the victim. This power cannot be doubled or chosen again.

Paralysis: This power may affect victims on sight or on contact; determine this when the power is chosen. In the former case, victims are so terrified by the sight of the undead that they become paralyzed with fear; victims with levels equal to or greater than those of the undead are unaffected, however. In the latter case, the undead's touch paralyzes its victims, with additional touches having cumulative durations. In both cases, a saving throw vs. paralyzation is allowed, and the paralysis lasts for 1d2 rounds plus the undead's level or hit dice. If this power is doubled or chosen again, the undead could possess both forms of this power instead of doubling the duration.

Life disruption: This power is usable only by incorporeal undead, and is most common among racked spirits. When the undead passes part or all of its form through a living creature, the victim's life force is disrupted, stunning the victim for 2d4 rounds unless a saving throw vs. death magic is made. For purpose of this attack, only Dexterity and magical bonuses apply to the victim's natural armor class.

Drain ability score: On a successful touch, the undead temporarily drains two points from one of its victim's ability scores (determine which one at the time the power is chosen). Losses last for 2-5 turns, and additional touches have cumulative effects. If this result is doubled or chosen a second time, one ability score can be drained of four points or two scores can be drained two points each.

Soul drain: This terrible and greatly feared power is extremely rare, and is never found in undead of less than 10th level. The undead's touch causes a victim's life force and soul to be drawn out of its body and consumed, irrevocably killing the victim (a wish notwithstanding). The remaining body collapses into dust 2-5 rounds later, and cannot be animated or spoken with via *speak with dead* spells. Victims with five or fewer levels have no saving throw against this effect, while victims with greater levels are allowed a saving throw vs. spells at a -4 penalty. Magic resistance is not effective against this power, but an *amulet of life protection* will completely protect the victim. The undead can choose not to use this power. This result cannot be doubled or chosen again.

Vampiric drain: The undead's touch permanently drains 2d4 hit points from its victim. These losses can be recovered only by a *restoration* spell, which will restore up to 12 hit points per use. If this result is double or chosen again, the undead adds any drained hit points to its own hit point total (with 2-5 turn duration).

Teleport victim: The undead's touch instantly *teleports* a victim 1d100 miles in a random direction. A saving throw vs. spells to avoid this effect is allowed only if the victim is aware of the effect and is actively resisting it. This power cannot be doubled or chosen again, and cannot be found in combination with the Special Tracking power. No undead whose primary purpose is to seek out and kill its victims will possess this power.

Fatal foresight: This rare power can be possessed only by undead that suffered unusually violent deaths. Any direct contact with the undead causes the victim to suffer intense, realistic visions of her own doom. If the victim is immune to fear or a saving throw vs. spells is made, there is no lasting effect. If the saving throw is failed, there is no immediate effect, although the victim will be shaken by the visions. The next time (and only the next time) a life-or-death situation arises, though, the victim becomes *paralyzed* with fear and remains so until removed from the triggering situation (such as a life-threatening combat or a violent sandstorm, for example).

Curse: The undead's touch places a curse on any victim that fails a saving throw vs. spells. The curse typically takes the form of an incredible streak of bad luck: all die rolls are at a -1/+1 or 5% penalty (as appropriate), spells are miscast 15% of the time, and in general anything that can go wrong for the victim will go wrong. The DM is free to create other types of curses, but no curse should be directly fatal and all curses last for one day per level of the undead. The effects of additional curses are cumulative. This result cannot be doubled or chosen again.

Aging appearance: The undead's appearance is so horrific that any humanoid (thri-kreen included) seeing it must save vs. spells or age 10 years. This power is commonly found in combination with the Aging Touch power.

Guilt stare: This potent power is extremely rare. Any undead possessing it must be of at least 8th level or possess at least 8 HD, have not less than Average (9+) intelligence, and be of a nonevil alignment. The Penance Stare is a gaze attack activated by eye contact between the undead and a victim at a range of 10' or less. Victims are allowed a saving throw vs. spells to avoid the undead's gaze only if they are actively attempting to avoid the undead's gaze. If eye contact is made, the victim instantly feels all the pain and suffering that she has inflicted on others. Affected individuals are incapacitated for 3d6 rounds by the intensity of these feelings. At the DM's discretion, some victims

may receive adjustments to the duration due to their alignment and occupation (for example, an evil slave trader might have a +6 adjustment, while a good-aligned pacifist might have a -4 adjustment. Minimum duration is one round in any case.

Fear: The appearance of the undead is so horrifying that anyone seeing it must make a saving throw vs. spells or flee in panic for 2d6 rounds. Creatures within 10' of the undead must make a saving throw each round.

Death gaze: Any individual meeting the gaze of the undead must save vs. death magic or die. This power has a range of 30 feet and is usable once per day.

Death cry: This potent power is usable twice per day, and is activated by the anguished cry or wail of the undead. Any creature within 30' of the undead when it uses this power must save vs. death magic or die. Creatures unable to hear the cry are immune to this power's effects. (Rumor claims that some undead have a psionic version of this power that only affects psychic individuals within a 60' radius. Undead with this variant power are, at best, extremely rare.)

Nauseous stench: The undead exudes a carrion stench in a 10' radius. All who fail a saving throw vs. poison are affected by retching and nausea for as long as they stay in the area of effect. Affected individuals attack and make saving throws at a -2 penalty. Only undead with a corporeal form can have this power.

Possession: This power can be used only by incorporeal undead. The undead can possess any creature within 10' per level of the undead, as the wizard spell *magic jar*. This power can be used at will, but if it fails against one creature, the undead cannot make another attempt against that creature for 24 hours.

Minor spell abilities: The undead can innately use a specific wizard spell of levels 1-5 or priest spell of levels 1-4. The spell can be assigned or chosen at random by the DM, but cannot be one which already has a similar or exact representation in these tables. The spell does not necessarily have to be a harmful one; there is no reason why an undead couldn't have a benign power of this type. As a rule, any spell that can have a damaging or adverse affect on an opponent, or any spell that summons another creature, is usable three times per day. All other spells are usable at will or are permanent in duration. The spell contact other plane cannot be chosen for this power, and a *spectral hand* spell can transfer all touch attacks except Soul Drain.

Major spell abilities: The undead can innately use a specific wizard spell of levels 6-9 or priest spell of levels 5-7. The spell can be chosen or determined randomly, but cannot duplicate a power on these tables and cannot be a spell that affects only extraplanar creatures. The following spells are ineligible for this power: *binding*, *demand*, *contingency*,

enchant an item, simulacrum, vision, permanency, succor, atonement, commune, magic font, word of recall, and holy word. Frequency of use is left to the DM, but as a rule 6th-level wizard spells and 5th-level priest spells are usable three times per day, 7th-level wizard spells and 6th-level priest spells are usable twice per day, 8th-level wizard spells and 7th-level priest spells are usable once per day, and 9th-level wizard spells are usable not more than once per day. The *wish* spell, if allowed, should be usable not more than once per week, and can only be used to grant the wish of another.

Superheated blast: Three times per day the undead can generate a blast of superheated air affecting a cone-shaped area 30' long, 5' wide at its origin, and 15' wide at its end. All creatures in the area of effect take 6d6 points of damage (save vs. dragon breath for half damage), and all creatures of Large or smaller size class must make a saving throw vs. petrification or be knocked off their feet. This power can be used only by undead that died in, or currently inhabit, a desert area.

Breath weapon: Three times per day the undead can breathe fire, acid, cold, or chlorine gas (DM's choice) into a 10' cubic area immediately in front of itself. Each kind of breath weapon inflicts 1d6 damage per level of the undead, to a maximum of 12d6, with a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon reducing damage by half

Defensive powers

Immunity to psionics: The undead cannot be affected by any form of psionics. This power is incompatible with any level of functional psionic ability, including wild talents.

Immunity to mind-affecting spells: The undead is unaffected by *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, *fear*, and similar spells that affect the mind, and has a +4 bonus on saving throws vs. illusions. This power is by far most common among "mindless" undead.

Immunity to turning: The undead cannot be turned or controlled by priests or an *amulet vs. undead*. Undead with this power are either very powerful (12 + levels or HD) or are associated with a specific locale.

Immunity to element: The undead cannot be affected by any natural or magic-based attack specific to one of the four elements (earth, fire, air, or water in descending order of frequency). This power also grants immunity to attacks from an elemental of the appropriate type. If this result is doubled or chosen again, the undead is immune to an additional element.

Immunity to bane: The undead cannot be harmed by any agency that has previously been responsible for its death by destruction. This includes immunity to poison or a type of weapon, physical attack form, magic-based attack (for example, cold-based, illusions, clerical *cause wounds* spells, etc.), nonmagical innate

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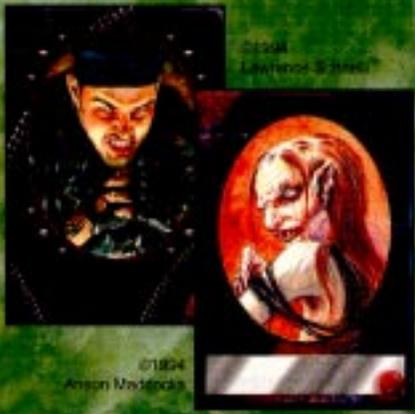
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ability or psionic discipline. In cases where the cause of death is not one of these, the DM should determine an appropriate immunity (for example, an undead killed by being pushed off a cliff might be immune to blunt weapons and other forms of crushing damage). Alternatively, the undead can be immune to any form of harm from the race of the creature that originally killed it. This power can be possessed only by undead that did not die of natural causes. Its effect is cumulative if the undead was killed or destroyed more than once, or if two different agencies were simultaneously responsible for its death (for example, a flaming sword).

Immunity to detection: The undead can be seen, but cannot be detected in any other way. It has no scent, makes no sound (unless it speaks), and is immune to all forms of magical and psionic detection; the undead can be affected by other types of magic and psionics, though. The undead also cannot be tracked or followed by any means. Creatures unable to see an undead with this power have double the normal attack penalties against it.

Half damage from specific attack form: The undead only takes half damage from a particular attack form (no damage if a saving throw is made, where applicable). If this result is doubled or chosen again, the undead either takes ¼ damage from one attack form or ½ damage from two attack forms. Consult the following table:

Half-damage chart

01-07 Metal weapons	59-65 Fire
08-14 Silver weapons	66-74 Cold
15-25 Organic-based weapons	75-81 Electricity
16-27 Piercing weapons	82-87 Acid
28-39 Slashing weapons	88-93 Poison
40-51 Blunt weapons	94-96 Holy water
52-58 Unarmed physical attacks	97-00 <i>Magic missile</i>

Reflect magic: This power is equivalent to a *ring of spell turning*, with one exception: magic from devices is turned as well. The undead can drop this effect if it chooses.

Reflect psionics: The undead has a 5% chance per level (to a maximum of 90%) to reflect back on its source any psionic effect directed at the undead. Psionic powers with area effects that are not specifically aimed at the undead cannot be reflected. Unlike with the Reflect Magic power, either all or none of the effect is reflected. If this result is double or chosen again, the undead has a +25% bonus to its reflection chance.

Reflect physical attacks: All physical attacks directed at the undead have a 5% chance per level of the undead (to a maximum of 75%) of being reflected back on the attacker. The reflection roll should be made first; if it fails, roll the attack normally. Otherwise, the attacker must roll to attack its own AC and will inflict normal

damage upon itself. This applies both to melee and missile attacks (although the missile must have enough range to return to its source for it to have a chance of hitting its source). If this result is rolled a second time, the undead has a +25% bonus to its reflection chance.

Immolation: The undead can, at will, cause a sheath of flame to surround itself. Anyone within 5' of the undead while it immolates suffers 2d6 points of fire damage per round (save vs. spells for half damage), and all combustible items within range catch fire. The undead is immune to damage from its own immolation and has a +4 saving throw against other forms of fire damage.

Reform: Undead with this power reform after 2d12 hours if destroyed. If not destroyed, severed bony parts can be reattached and all damage suffered is recovered within 12 hours. Even *disintegration* or burning the undead's body is not proof against this power, as the ashes or dust can still reform into its physical form (although it takes double the normal length of time). If the physical remains are scattered over a wide area, the undead reforms in an incorporeal form. The undead can be permanently destroyed only by three methods: 1. destroying the soul of the undead, 2. using a *wish* spell, or 3.) using a magical weapon specifically enchanted to combat undead (e.g., a sword with a Special Purpose to destroy undead) to inflict the fatal blow. Some effects, such as a *trap the soul* spell, can delay indefinitely the undead's reformation.

Regeneration: The undead regenerates very quickly, and can reattach or replace lost limbs. All forms of damage can be regenerated. If incorporeal, the undead will cease regeneration if destroyed. If corporeal, the undead continues to regenerate even after being destroyed. This can be stopped only by completely destroying the physical remains or scattering them over a wide area. Roll on the following table to determine the regeneration rate; doubling this result or choosing it again has a cumulative effect on the regeneration rate, to a maximum of 5 hp/round.

1d20 roll	Regeneration rate	Restore lost limb
1-3	1 hp/turn	1 week
4-5	2 hp/turn	3 days
6-7	3 hp/turn	1 day
8-9	1 hp/2 rounds	6 hours
10-15	1 hp/round	3 hours
16-17	2 hp/round	1 hour
18-19	3 hplround	3 turns
20	5 hp/round	1 turn

References

Although some of the powers listed in this article are original creations, many are derived from AD&D game monster listings. Others are adapted from comic books, fiction, and various stories from legend and mythology also have influenced some of the powers provided in this

article. In addition, the following two sources were referenced extensively for all parts of the article:

Denning, Troy, "A Letter From the Wanderer," DRAGON* Magazine #173 September 1991: pages 19-22.

Ghosts. Alexandra, Virginia: Time-Life, 1985. *The Enchanted World* series.

Table 5: Defensive powers 1d100 rollPower

01-04	Immunity to blunt weapons
05-08	Immunity to piercing/slashing weapons
09-11	*Immunity to psionics
12-15	*Immunity to mind-affecting spells
16-18	*Immunity to turning
19-21	*Immunity to element
22-24	Immunity to spell school/sphere (choose one)
25-27	*Immunity to bane
28-30	*Immunity to detection
31-34	Harmed only by silver or magical weapons
35-37	Harmed only by magical weapons
38-40	Harmed only by silver weapons
41-43	Harmed only by metal weapons
44-47	Harmed only by organic-based weapons
48-49	Harmed only by normal weapons
50-55	*Half damage from specific attack
56-58	Magic resistance (5%/level, 90% maximum)
59-61	Psionic resistance (5%/level, 90% maximum)
62-64	*Reflect magic
65-67	*Reflect psionics
68-70	*Reflect physical attacks
71-72	*Immolation
73-76	*Reform
77-83	Improved armor class (+4 bonus)
84-86	*Regeneration
87-89	Assume gaseous form (as potion)
90-93	DM choice
94-96	Roll again, doubling power
97	Roll twice
98-00	Vulnerability

Table 6: Power range chart 1d20 roll Range

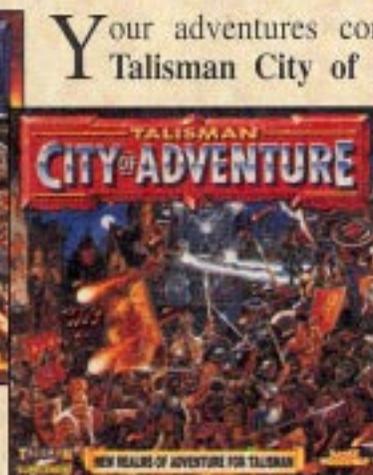
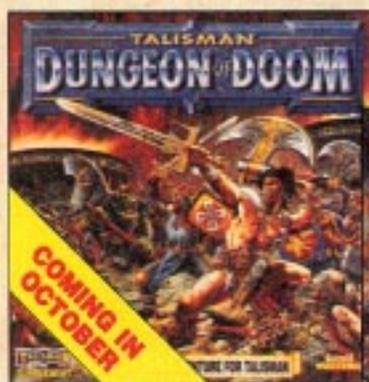
1-3	60 yards
4-11	120 yards
12-14	240 yards
15-16	440 yards (¼ mile)
17-18	880 yards (½ mile)
19-20	1,760 yards (1 mile)

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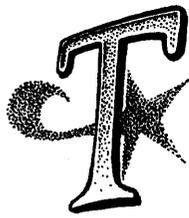
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he raven was the first to go.

It snapped to attention on Black Kath's shoulder like a soldier receiving an order, then lifted its wings and flapped away into the quickening woods, sounding a cry too much like a human voice.

"Done! Done! Done!"

Black Kath took a firmer grip on the reins and stopped her small wagon. The horse was already getting restless. "Bone Tapper, you return this instant!"

Of course the raven did no such thing. Its cries turned to echoes that quickly faded. Black Kath listened to the silence and realized there was no chance to reach her home now. She was out of time. She slapped the reins once and pulled the wagon off into a small clearing where the spring grass was just coming in. The bushes lining the cart trail closed in behind her just in time. In another moment the cart horse's outline grew indistinct, then shimmered, then changed. Something that was no longer a horse slipped out of the harness that no longer fit and slithered off into the woods. Black Kath did not bother to call after it.

What Power Holds, Weakness Frees.

One of the first great Laws of Power. Black Kath had long thought it a paradox, but it actually made perfect sense. Here was the proof.

Sodded prince fouled up everything.

The babe had decided to be difficult getting itself born, so naturally Black Kath had been sent for. And she came, for all that her time was short, because there was no arguing with kings, and babes who would be king. The mother nearly bled dry from the womb twice, and all the royal oaf could think to ask was, "Is it a boy?"

Yes, Majesty, it sodding well is. A fine, fat, suckling boy. And yes – if you ever get around to asking – your lady will live. Thank you exceedingly for my fee, but I really must run off home and die now.

Well, it hadn't gone exactly like that, and many things went well thought but equally well unsaid, which is the way of most of life. Not a Law of Power but true enough as such things went, right up to the end.

Which is almost here.

The witch gingerly lowered herself from the cart before the first spasm hit. She managed to collapse with her back to a nearby oak before the second wave of pain nearly washed her away. She sank to a sitting position on the soft grass as the covered cart began to hum like a choir preparing for song. The cart, with its red and gold gypsy markings, did not change; it was one of the few things that served Black Kath in its own nature. It was just a cart. Only now it spilled forth horrors like Pandora's box. Some could be called animals by courtesy; others couldn't aspire to a name. But whatever they were, one by one they were loosing themselves from their shackles and fleeing into the woods until the witch felt herself almost alone.

Enjoy it while you may, Darlings. You're still not free.

"Your servants have departed, Mistress."

A squat little man stood before Black Kath. His features were broad and ugly, his back stooped, his arms thick and long.

What Power Holds

by Richard Parks

Illustrations by Larry Smith

"All except you, Treedle. Well, don't hang about. You won't have much time."

"I know," he said, and began to change. His back straightened, his legs lengthened, his features refined and reformed into those of a tall, broad man with curly red hair.

Black Kath smiled. "You understand even this? Well, I'm not surprised. You're rather clever as slaves go. Cleverer than I am, this day. I should never have answered the summons."

"A servant knows a command when he hears one, Mistress."

"And you would call me a slave?" The witch smiled. "Well, it's true enough in its way. And close to a Law of Power," Black Kath said, wincing at a new pain. "Not quite, but close. Off with you, then. Be free as long as you can."

Treedle hesitated. "Is there anything I can do for you, Mistress?"

Black Kath didn't answer for several long moments. "My death frees all who have obligation to me until Marta claims her birthright. I thought you understood that. You are, your own man until my daughter finds you. Go."

"I'm my own man now, as you say. And as my own man I repeat, is there anything I can do for you?"

Black Kath felt the black tide rising within her, fought it back as she turned over the spark of a notion in her mind. Death waited while Treedle waited. Finally Black Kath smiled. "Marta is young. There is much she doesn't understand. Lean close, Treedle. Perhaps there *is* something you can do for me."

Treedle listened and Black Kath spoke until the tide of pain rose again and would not wait for either of them.

"Greetings to the house."

By late afternoon Treedle stood on the cart road where it passed a small farmstead. The cottage was small but well built. There were signs of recent neglect—thatch that needed mending, a split post on the windlass at the well—that seemed out of place. After a few moments, a woman opened the door. She was small, and her dark hair was gathered in a pale blue kerchief. She wore a dress of the same cloth. She might be handsome; it was hard to be sure through the weariness Treedle saw in her face. She stood against the door frame, one hand out of sight. Treedle thought he saw movement in the darkness behind her but couldn't be sure.

"Greetings, stranger," she said.

"I've had a long day's walking, Mistress. Could I trouble you for a drink of water?"

She smiled faintly. "Easily given, but not easily done. I'm afraid you'll have to haul up the bucket yourself."

"Little enough to ask." He stepped through the gate and then lowered the bucket on its rope and pulled it up full. He drank from the dipper, watching the woman from the corner of his eye. He could see the haft of the woman's ax partially hidden by the door and smiled to himself. She was kind enough to a stranger, but no fool. "There's plenty left in the bucket, if you've no mind to waste it."

"That I have not. Jacky, fetch the basin."

Treedle heard footsteps from the house, and a small boy

appeared at the door beside the woman. Treedle guessed him to be about nine, give or take. His hair was as dark as his mother's. He stepped out past her and brought the basin, and if he was afraid of the stranger he didn't show it. Treedle emptied the bucket into the basin, and the boy carried it back to the cottage with slow, careful steps.

"I saw a marker for a village down the road. Is it far from here?"

"Wittanplace," she said. "Not too far."

Treedle smiled. "I was born near Averdale. We used to come to Wittanplace for the fair, years ago. Do they still have it?"

The woman's dark eyes seemed to lose a little of their hard edge. "Every autumn after harvest. How long since you've been home?"

Treedle smiled, and told the understated truth. "Too long. I doubt anyone will remember me. My name is Matthew Jerson. Everyone called me Treedle."

She frowned. "Odd name. And I don't know any Jersons."

"As I said, a long time."

"What's a Treedle?" asked the boy before his mother could shush him.

"By my grandmother, it's the old way of saying 'treedle.' Something that does useful work without complaining. She said it was my only virtue, and I dare say she was right. Still, you look as if you could use some useful work done for you."

The suspicion was back on the woman's face. "We have friends who help out as they can."

"Who have their own land and families to tend, I wager," Treedle said. "Especially this time of year. Still, I'm sure I could find something in Wittanplace."

"I'm sure you could . . ." She paused, and the struggle was clear on her face. Fear, suspicion, and need were waging battle royal. Treedle waited.

"We can't pay you," she said finally.

"Food and a place to sleep tonight sound like excellent wages to me just now. And I do good work; you'll see."

Need won the battle. "I am so tired of lifting that infernal bucket. All right. If you fix the windlass, I'll give you supper and a place in the barn for tonight. After that, we'll see."

"Done."

"Jacky, fetch the tools."

There was no wood handy to replace the split post. Fortunately, it had split from the augur hole up to the top of the post rather than down, and the windlass had been set a bit high for either the child's or the mother's reach anyway. Treedle took the windlass apart and evened up the posts with the bow saw, then marked them for the augur. Jacky watched him openly, perched on the stone fence.

"How long since your Da died, Jacky?" Treedle asked as the wood curls from the augur piled up at his feet.

"Last summer. He took sick with the water fever. The barber bled him but it didn't help . . ." Jacky stopped himself and looked at Treedle. "How did you know about Da?"

"A man who builds a home like this and has a wife like your Ma and a son like you"—the augur struck a knot-

hole and Treedle paused to give a little more twist to the crosspiece — “doesn’t just leave. Besides, I read it in your mother’s face.”

The boy frowned. “That’s silly. You can’t read a face.”

The augur point nibbled through the opposite face of the post. Treedle moved it to the other side long enough to clean up the hole and went to the other post. “Faces are easier than books. I can read yours, if you’d like.”

The boy’s face went stony. “What does it say?”

Treedle smiled. “At the moment, nothing. A few minutes ago it told me there was something you wanted to talk to me about. Man to man, I think. Was I wrong?” He worked the augur as he waited for Jacky to answer.

“It’s about the ox,” said Jacky at last.

“Hmmm.” Treedle kept working the augur.

“We share it with John Dare and his family. My Da helped him buy it, and they took turns for the plowing. Then Da died.”

“And he keeps the ox to himself now?”

Jacky drew himself up on the fence. “He wouldn’t do that. But John’s fields are bigger than ours and now that his Da is getting on, he has all he can manage alone. And . . . and I’m too small. Another year, Ma says. Maybe two. Ma and I can do the planting, but we need someone to do the plowing *now*.”

“It’s a hard thing to be responsible for so much so soon, Jacky. It’s not a sin to need help now and then.”

Jacky took a breath. “I want to hire you.”

Treedle kept his face as serious as the boy’s. “Have you talked to your Ma about this?”

He shook his head, looking solemn. “I’m my father’s son. It’s my place to see that the plowing and sowing gets done. We can’t pay you money now, but Ma said we have food and a place to sleep, and *I* say when the harvest is in you’ll have a share of what we sell at the market. A full share.”

Treedle nodded, equally solemn. “A fine offer. Let me think on it.” Treedle finished the new mount and set to putting the windlass in place. Another few minutes and the bucket was spinning merrily toward the water below. “Try the crank now.”

Jacky hopped down from the fence and worked the crank vigorously. The bucket rose easily from the well, brimming with water. “I knew you could fix it,” he said. “I’ve watched you. You handle tools like Da, and I think you know how to do lots of things. Will you work for me?”

“I don’t know how long I can stay, Jacky, and that’s the honest truth,” Treedle said. “But if your Ma has no strong objection, I’ll stay as long as I can.”

Treedle took the boy’s offered hand and they shook on it as men do.

What Power Holds, Weakness Frees.

Marta stood in the clearing with her mother’s abandoned cart. The new grass had already covered the wheel marks coming in, and the spring flowers were grown to the height of the wheel hubs. Marta seemed a creature of spring herself, gathered with those of her kind in the clearing. Her long hair was like corn silk tinged with sunrise. She looked young, as young as Black Kath had looked

old. Neither was the whole truth, and there was more to age than time.

Marta was a full witch now, and heiress of all the debts owed her mother. Her grief was real but done, and her fascination with her mother’s flowering grave had more to do with understanding than loss. Marta gauged her mother’s grave against the only Law of Power she knew, and every time the measure came out wrong.

There should be no grave.

Her mother’s death would have freed her bondservants; surely none of them would have paid her this courtesy. And if a passing farmer or such had done so, why was the cart still here? At least they would have taken it for safe-keeping or salvage. Yet here it was, and here the grave was, and one or the other should not be. It was something she didn’t understand, and by the Laws of Power that was a very dangerous thing. One who controlled power had to understand it, else it was as like to control her. Or worse.

There is no one now to teach me, Mother. I can only do as I know to do.

Marta looked at the sun. It was low in the sky but not yet at the treetops. There was a little time yet.

“Bone Tapper, oldest. Tie binds strongest. I sing to you. Now sing to me.”

Reluctantly, and from deep in the forest, there came an answer like a cry of despair. Marta smiled and followed the sound, leaving the clearing as she slipped through the woods as nimbly as a doe. Now and then she repeated her chant to give direction until the sound was quite loud.

“What was your trouble?” she asked then.

The voice answered out of a grove of aspen. “Murder.”

“And what was Mother’s promise?”

“To hide me from the noose.” The voice sounded more raucous with every moment, as if the throat that bore it changed and shriveled by the moment.

“And was it done?”

“She made me a raven!”

“And was it done?” Marta repeated, an edge creeping into her voice.

“It was.” The voice was a harsh sigh.

“What do you owe Kath and her own?”

“My life.”

“And what will repay that?”

“My life.”

“So shall it be. Come, then.”

A figure that was almost like a man stepped through the ghostly trees, then it was less like a man and hopped along the ground, then at last nothing like a man as it flapped slowly through the growing darkness on broad black wings. The creature called Bone Tapper alit on Marta’s left shoulder.

“You will serve me as you did my mother,” she said.

“As you become your mother,” replied the raven, and the sound it made then was as much like a laugh as a raven could manage. Marta clamped a hand over its beak, looked straight into its beady black eyes, and smiled a smile like honey dripping with poison.

“Tonight you will hold your tongue while you still have one. Tomorrow you will help me find the others.”

• • •

"My name is Gennifyr."

It was the second day of plowing. Jacky's mother, bringing Treedle a cold drink from the repaired well, brought her name with her.

"Thank you Gennifyr. It's a lovely name."

She looked around the field rather than look at him. The earth where the plow broke it apart was dark and rich; the smell was heady. "It's going well," she said.

Treedle nodded, patient as a stone. "The worst of it should be over by evening. I'll be able to help you and Jacky with the sewing tomorrow." He waited for what he sensed would follow.

Silence. Then, "Who's chasing you, Treedle? Have you done something wrong?"

He smiled "How did you know?"

"I've watched you," she said frankly. "You were made to be in one place and live your life as part of it. A man like you is not rootless without cause."

"I see all of Jacky is not from his father, fine man he doubtless was."

Gennifyr smiled too. "He was. Now answer my question."

Treedle sighed. "I've done many things wrong, Gennifyr, but I've harmed only myself, and what follows me seeks only me. I'm no danger to you or your son. I'd like you to believe that, because I would really hate to leave sooner than need be."

"I would hate that too," she said, and left him there without time or reason to speak further.

Bone Tapper perched on a branch well away from the cave's mouth. "Here's your cart horse," he said sullenly. "In there."

Marta stood at the edge of the pines where they ringed the cavern entrance. Traces of charcoal and scorched earth showed that the approach to the cave had not always been so clear.

"How do you know?"

"It was his home long ago. Where else would he go? I have served."

Which Marta already knew to mean he would speak no more on the matter unless ordered. Marta was getting tired of giving orders for every little thing that needed doing. It was draining, and just then she felt very drained.

Were all Mother's servants as stubborn? No wonder she always looked so beaten.

Marta took a close grip on her thoughts, reined them in, made them serve her for the task at hand like anything else that was hers by right. That was always what mattered; best not to forget. She strode out of the wood shadow like a queen before court, the sun finding red and gold sparks in her hair.

"What was your trouble?" she demanded of the darkness beyond the cave entrance.

There came a low hiss, then a wisp of steam appeared out of the darkness. "There are deer in the woods. My treasures are at my feet. Let me stay."

"By birthright and the Laws of Power, you belong to me, Yssara. I will have what is mine."

Another hiss, this time followed by a jet of flame. "I want to stay!"

"What you want does not matter."

"Not now. One day, Black Kath's daughter, you will find things very different."

Marta drew herself to her full height, though it was not so very much. "You will not threaten me."

A low chuckle came that was like the fall of embers. " 'What Power Holds, Weakness Frees.' The first Law of Power. Only the first, and to my memory the only one she taught you. But did you learn it? I wonder."

Marta took a deep breath. "What was your trouble?" Slowly, because there was no choice, Yssara answered. "Greed."

When the ritual was done, Marta led what was now a cart horse back toward the clearing. She'd won, as she knew she must, but it didn't feel like a victory. She was tired, and even if she had the right of power over the creature, she certainly didn't feel powerful. Marta had too much sense of things beyond her understanding, and visions beyond her sight. She felt . . . limited. Yssara was right; she only knew one Law of Power, and it seemed to speak more of limits than power. Just then she was almost grateful for those limits, because the creature beside her moved slowly, every step begrudged, ears flat and nostrils flaring.

Will it always be like this?

Weary as she was, Marta kept a firm grip on the reins, and she was careful not to give the beast any slack at all.

That night Treedle bathed off the sweat and dust in the cold stream that ran between the house and the first field. When he returned to the barn, Gennifyr was there waiting for him. She was wearing a dress he had not seen before, and her hair was unbound. It was the first time he had seen that, too. He rather liked it.

"I believe what you said about not being dangerous, Treedle," she said. "I've come to talk to you about staying on. With Jacky and me, I mean."

"It may be that you've come to talk to me about staying, but that's not the only reason you're here," Treedle said. "We could have the whole of the matter with a little work. Shall we try?"

Gennifyr reddened slightly. "How dare you!"

"Speak the plain truth, you mean? Then what would you have between us, Gennifyr, if not that?"

She didn't look at him. "Why did I come, then?"

"I think you sought to trade what you have for what you need. Only you're not quite sure what either of those is yet."

She met his gaze steadily. "Not sure? Treedle, I've borne three live children, buried two of them and my husband in the bargain. Say what you will of my judgment, I'm no callow girl."

"And I'm no blushing boy, but I'll say fair that the coin I spent to lose that state didn't purchase very much. How about you, Gennifyr? Do you understand any of it any better now?"

Gennifyr smiled a little sadly. "No."

Treedle smiled, too. "There's truth. Here's mine: By noon tomorrow I may have to leave, Gennifyr. That's neither threat nor entreaty. It's just what I know."

"I'm not very happy with either of our truths," she said.

He shrugged. "It may not seem so now, but between a man and a woman, it's usually the best place to begin."

"There's your hob. Plowing."

"So I see." Marta stood behind the windrow separating one field from another.

"So take him back and let's be gone."

Marta was still watching Treedle. "Are you in a hurry, Bone Tapper?"

The raven glared at her with its beady black eyes. "You are not? It's been 'Bone Tapper, find my horse' and 'Bone Tapper, find my cook' and 'Bone Tapper, tell me where my hobgoblin slave has gone off to.' All of them, with hardly any rest, and now you stare. He's a man now, and what of it? So was I before you sang your mother's song to me. Sing it now. Have done, and back to witchery with all that your mother owned."

"Not all. She knew more than one Law of Power. She only taught me one. Where are the others?"

"Laws of Power have to be earned to be understood. Even I know this. You only earned one, Mistress. Have you forgotten?"

Marta had not. The trials of her first lessons still disturbed her sleep now and again. "You've chosen a fine time to find your tongue," was all she said.

"Because now my words trouble you where my silence troubled you before," the raven said. "Even a slave finds pleasure where he can."

"Enjoy it while it lasts, Bone Tapper. The cost may be dear."

Bone Tapper apparently thought better of it, since he said nothing else for a time. Marta just watched the man plowing the field, looking almost as stolid and content as the ox, though the day was sweltering and the sweat soaked his body. She watched as the day lengthened. She watched while a boy and then later a woman brought Treedle water, tarried briefly, then left again. She watched, and the only thing beside the weariness readable on her face was a frown that deepened until it overwhelmed all else, even the weariness there.

"Why?" she asked aloud.

Bone Tapper cocked its head and eyed her quizzically. "I don't understand," he said, finally annoyed enough to speak again.

"Neither do I," Marta said. "I wonder what it will cost me to find out."

Marta emerged from the windrow and strode purposely toward her mother's slave. Treedle calmly finished the final row and then waited for her there.

"What was your trouble?"

"Grief, Marta," he answered. There was no surprise, no fear showing on his face. He seemed to be waiting.

"And what was Mother's promise?"

"That my grandmother would not die of the red fever. And before you bother to ask, yes, the promise was kept. She died of plague instead, a month later. I recognize my debt, Marta. Impose your rights and let's be gone, if we must."

Marta hesitated. "I want to know something first."

Treedle shrugged. "When I am your hob, you can ask what you will."

Marta looked grim. "I can ask. But my power over my servants doesn't extend to all things."

"Is that so? Why do you think that is?" He sounded like innocence itself. Marta was young, but she was not a fool.

"I don't know," she said. "But I think you do." Marta worked her will. Treedle was a hob again. He looked up at her with big brown eyes set in a squat, ugly face, but otherwise nothing had changed. He still seemed to be waiting.

"This is a reminder, Treedle. I could command you to follow me now," she said, "and I swear my yoke is lighter than the one you've found here. Why, Treedle? Why do you who toiled for so many years for my mother spend your short freedom toiling for others? Was it simply for food? Or the woman?"

"It's your time, Marta. Spend it guessing if you will. Or lose patience and haul us all off to be to you as we were to your mother. Or . . ." He didn't finish.

"Or?"

"Or answer my questions first. Your choice."

"Ask," Marta said.

"Why did your mother have so many servants?"

"Because all debts must be paid, and not everyone had gold to pay. You didn't."

He shrugged. "Certainly not true of Yssara. But Black Kath transformed each of us into something she needed, rather than let us serve her as we were. Bone Tapper, to replace her failing eyes. Me, to serve better than her aging arms. Yssara, to be her legs. Now then, tell me why we should serve you as we did her?"

"I . . ." Marta stopped. And her constant frown smoothed into amazement. "You shouldn't."

Treedle grinned broadly. "Your mother said you were a bit slow, but not deadly so. I see she was right."

Marta looked at him as if she were seeing him for the first time in her life. "It was you, Treedle. You buried her."

"Yes."

"Why?" she asked again, and Treedle heard all the questions rolled into one: Black Kath's grave, the plowing, everything.

Treedle leaned forward and beckoned. Marta leaned close and he whispered the answer. "Because all that," he said, "was my choice."

Marta stared. "That's it? That's the sum of it? What she could not command, you did of your own will?" She didn't speak for a moment, and when she did there was wonder in her voice. "That is the sum of it. I've been an idiot."

Treedle the hob grinned ear to ear, which in a hob is something to see. " 'What Cannot Be Taken, Can Be Given.' A Law of Power, Marta. Your mother's last gift, but she could not give it. You had to earn it, and I agreed to help."

Marta nodded. "Clever, Mother," she said softly. Then she smiled again. "And clever Treedle. Your freedom served me better than your obedience ever could. Your debt is paid."

Treedle stood as a man again, and there was nothing more to say.

● ● ●

"I want a real horse."

Marta stood with Yssara outside the entrance to his cave. He looked at her with as much astonishment as a horse can show, but only briefly. He started quickly for the opening, and Marta grinned.

"Not as easily as that. You still owe a debt."

A horse's throat and lips are not well suited for human speech, but he managed. "What do you want?"

"You will bring me gold from your trove to the value of twelve crowns. I said I want a real horse and I meant it. A good horse. You're going to buy your freedom."

"Twelve?" Yssara looked ill. "Not six? Or even five?"

"Twelve," repeated Marta. "Or do you really want to pull that cart for another fifty years?"

"Done for twelve," said Yssara hastily and disappeared into the cave.

Bone Tapper flitted down from the trees to perch on her shoulder. "You know," he said, "I'm really quite a clever thief. I could buy my freedom too."

Marta looked at the raven, and she smiled a deceptively sweet smile. "I don't want gold from you."

"What then? There must be something."

"There is. You're going to be a better servant. You're going to carry out my wishes cheerfully, give me counsel when I ask, and in sum be much more pleasant company."

"Why should I do this?"

"Because I'll make you this bargain: For every year you manage as I say, I will count three against your debt. What I cannot command, you will give: your cheerful obedience. What you cannot command, I will give: time. Perhaps even enough to salvage some of your own wretched life, if you learn enough of wisdom to strive for. What is your answer?"

He hesitated, but his answer was firm. "Done."

Marta had never seen a raven smile. but she could have sworn he was trying.

When Gennifyr and Jacky brought their seed to the fields, Treedle was there waiting for them.

"I was afraid you'd be gone," she said.

"So was I," Treedle said, "but I think now I can stay, if you want me."

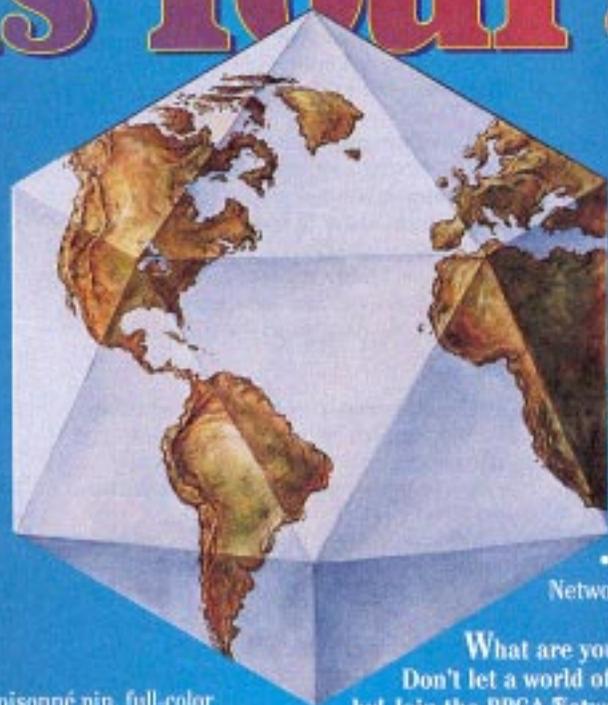
"I... we do."

Jacky looked at them both, and if he understood more than he said, they never knew. Ω



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Sage Advice

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We are no longer able to make personal replies; please send no SASEs with your questions (SASEs are being returned with writer's guidelines for the magazine).

This month, the sage looks into particulars on various settings for the AD&D® game, considers the limitations of *crystal balls* and considers a few fine points from the new SPELLFIRE™ game.

If all petitioners' (from the PLANESCAPE™ setting) memories of the past have been wiped completely away, how can *Speak with Dead* spells have any effect on them, assuming the they are questioned about their past lives? What happens to the petitioner if she is *resurrected* or *reincarnated*?

I don't know why anyone would try *Speak with Dead* on a petitioner. A petitioner is alive, and if you want to speak with one you just walk up and say "Hi." If, on the other hand, one were to find a petitioner's mortal remains, one can use *Speak with Dead* on them and get a normal result, provided that the creature has not been dead longer than the spell allows. A *Speak with Dead* spell doesn't give the caster a hotline to the petitioner (as you point out, that would be useless). Instead, *Speak with Dead* is a divination spell that allows the caster to learn things that a particular dead creature knew in life. Exactly how this works is unrevealed, but it a pretty good bet that petitioners have nothing to do with the process. In any case, just because a petitioner has no knowledge about its past life doesn't mean that her knowledge is irrevocably lost.

Raise Dead, *Resurrection*, and *Reincarnation* spells also function without regard to petitioners. If one of these spells is used successfully, the subject creature is restored to life. If the creature's spirit already has re-formed into a petitioner, there is no effect on the spell or its results, but it's a pretty good bet that the petitioner vanishes when the creature returns to life.

What are the racial adjustments for githzerai thieves?

There are none.

According to the *Player's Guide to the Planes* (page 21), members of the Fated receive double proficiency slots. Does this apply to both non-weapon and weapon proficiencies?

Judging from the material on page 21, I suggest that you double only the character's nonweapon proficiency slots.

***Sigil and Beyond* makes it pretty clear that powers (gods) can't enter Sigil in their true forms. Can powers enter Sigil in avatar form?**

Powers do not enter Sigil in *any* form. They can send in their proxies, however.

The character record sheets from the COUNCIL OF WYRMS™ boxed set have space for a dragon character's wingspan. How is a dragon's wing span calculated?

A dragon's body is about one-third as wide as it is long, and its wingspan is twice its width; see page 11 in the *Adventures* book.

When increasing a dragon character's Strength score due to level advancement, when do you stop? Can the score be increased past the original roll?

A dragon's Strength score stops increasing when the score reaches the racial maximum or the dragon reaches the great wurm age category. The initial roll determines the dragon's Strength score at the mature adult stage, not the dragon's maximum Strength score.

Exactly how much area does a scrying device such as a *crystal ball* or a *magic mirror* spell show? Does a character using a scrying device learn enough about the subject's location to *teleport* to the subject's location?

Although the item description does not mention it, a *crystal ball* (and spells that duplicate its effects) creates an invisible sensor that provides a sort of magical peephole through which the user views his subject. When a creature detects the scrying, it detects this sensor. When a *dispel magic* spell is used to disrupt scry-

ing, the sensor is the spell's target. The sensor always appears in a location that gives an unobstructed view of the subject. The DM can decide how far away from the subject the sensor will be, but it should be close enough to allow the viewer to see details, say 5-30' distant. Assume the view is similar to a closely focused photograph; the viewer can see the subject and any creature or object in its immediate vicinity. The view behind the subject is murky and indistinct. If the DM allows, the viewer can move the sensor, but each change should require a roll for success (I recommend a minimum 5% chance for failure when moving the sensor).

The viewer can *teleport* to the creature's location, provided that the creature is in a location where teleporting works; a creature on another plane, for example, is unreachable by means of the 5th level *teleport* spell. If the viewer has never seen the subject's location before, treat the area as "viewed once." If the viewer makes a special effort to study the location and spends at least five minutes looking at it, treat the area as "seen casually." If the viewer scrys the same area repeatedly over a period of weeks or months, the area can be treated as "studied carefully" or "very familiar."

Can humanoids other than giant-kin (firbolgs and voadkyn) use giant-kin weapons? If so, which ones?

Judging from the discussion of giant-kin weapons on page 112 of the *Complete Book of Humanoids*, I'm inclined to suggest that any humanoid character who is subject to a penalty when using size S or M weapons (see page 111) should be allowed to use giant-kin weapons. Getting such weapons might be easier said than done, however.

Do PC satyrs get 50% magic resistance as listed in the *Monstrous Compendium*®?

No.

Can a character using a non-magical shield or a nonmagical weapon parry an attack from a monster than can be harmed only by magical weapons?

Yes. Although some AD&D game systems for parrying blows require a successful attack roll against the opponent, a parry

does not harm the opponent directly. The object is to put a weapon or shield between the defender and the attack to block or deflect blows, this action is not subject to weapon immunities of any kind.

SPELLFIRE card questions

The answers given here are official.

What is an unprotected realm?

A realm is unprotected if it is being attacked by another player and has no intrinsic level (no number in its realm icon) and the realm's owner does not commit a champion to its defense. This could happen because there are no champions in the owner's hand or pool, or because the owner chooses not to defend against the attack.

Suppose a player has two realms in play and the first realm is razed. Can a third realm be played in the third row, where the unrazed realm in the second row protects it, or do all previous rows in realms formation have to be filled before realms can be added to the newest row?

The third realm card must be played in the second row, where it is vulnerable to attack. A single card must occupy the "apex" in the formation before any other realms can be laid down, and the second

row must be full before any cards can be added to the third row.

What happens when a player winds up with a hand of more than eight cards during somebody else's turn?

Having more than eight cards is not a problem during other people's turns. If, for example, you get a spoils of victory extra card during your attack phase you still must get down to the eight-card maximum in step five. But if you get a spoils of victory card, or several spoils of victory cards, during other players' turns you don't have to worry about exceeding the eight-card limit until step five of your own turn.

Can a realm defend itself with spells if it is not a realm that counts as its own champion?

No, there must be a defending champion.

When is it good to have a card in your hand and not in the pool? Is the pool a second hand?

The pool is used to show champions in play, along with artifacts and magical items attached to them. The cards in the pool aren't part of your hand and don't count toward maximum hand of eight cards in your hand. It is always a good idea to keep one champion in your hand in case of emer-

gencies, but when you are reaching your eight-card limit always move any champions you are holding into your pool—you'll have to reveal what you have but that's better than discarding champions before you get any use from them.

Is there a limit to the number of cards that can be played into the pool?

No. Pools can hold any number of champions and the magical items and artifacts attached to champions.



Voice your opinion and make it count!
 What issues are most important to the role-playing hobby? What solutions have you found for problems in our favorite game? Turn to this issue's "Forum" and see what others think—then tell us what you think!

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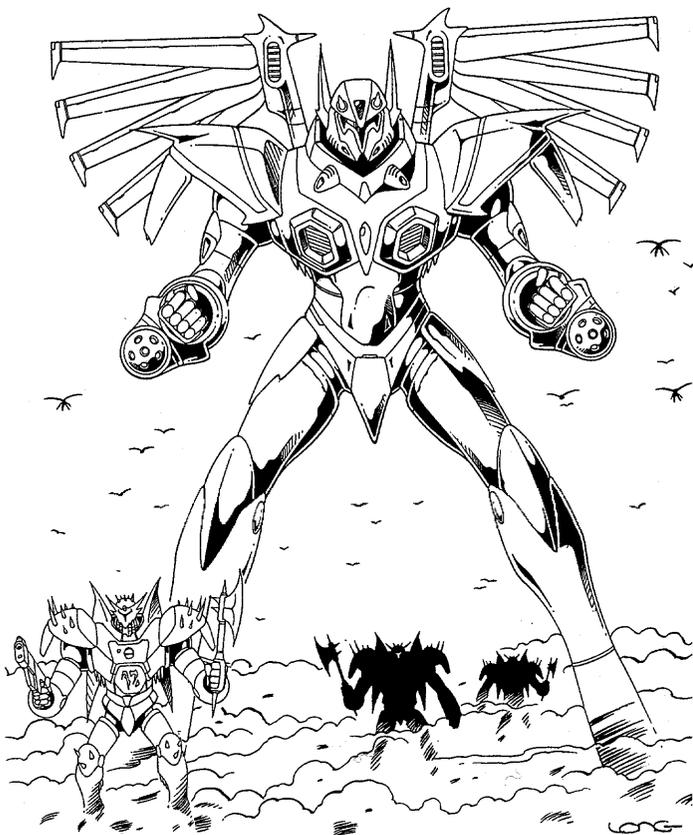
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The Dragon's Bestiary

The golem workshop

by Don Webb

Artwork by Terry Dykstra

One of the creatures truly dear to the heart of any DM is the golem. You don't have to feed them, you don't have to worry about their motivations, and they are willing to work for nothing. They can make a truly terrifying monster—not subject to reason nor misled by illusions. They can pursue through the worst terrains. They neither eat nor sleep. Unfortunately, golems are often used as simple animated traps with no build-up, and—alas—no payoff either for the imaginations or emotions of the players. A creature that takes so much time and money to produce should provide enjoyment through many sessions and be worth its weight in pure atmosphere.

The golem as a figure for vengeance has a long and distinguished career in literature. Interested DMs may wish to seek out some of the roots of this terrible archetype in Gustav Meyrink's *The Golem* (1906), whose atmospheric description of



Prague can tell you how to make a fantasy city really evocative and memorable: "Moxton's Master" by Ambrose Bierce, can show how to turn an evening's light entertainment (chess) into deadly serious business; and of course the *creme de la creme*, Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*, or *The Modern Prometheus* (1816). What makes these figures scary is their singleness of purpose. Humans (and most other denizens of a fantasy campaign) have a variety of motives: love, greed, hope for fame, etc., and a variety of activities to perform: eating, sleeping, etc. But the golem has one function and no distractions. To make golems effective in the imagination of your players, you must let the players know that the golem is on their trail. When their character is taking a rest, eating at the inn, etc. *It's out there*. Like an effective horror movie, don't let the characters have a good look at it until it's too late.

Offered here are three golems for your approval. Their function is to be a memorable monster. They are *extremely tough*. It should be a tremendous and memorable adventure to destroy these monstrous machines of annihilation. As such, they should be used sparingly, but such creatures can have many plot uses. Players should have ample warning that these creatures are on their trail, and not ever be surprised by their appearance. Like the golem of legend and literature, these creatures should be played for all their atmospheric worth.

For example, an almost Lovecraftian scenario suggests itself. A group of characters visit one of their home towns. A player finds great-grand uncle Skaigone's diary. It seems that Skaigone, a benevolent if minor wizard, had at one time been apprenticed to the evil wizard Balthegior. As he helped Balthegior create a Phantom Flyer, he discovered the error of his ways and fled the dark wizard's tower seeking thereafter only the path of the light. A few days after reading the diary, one member of the party hears a flapping of great bat wings just after sunset. A search is made, but nothing is discovered. Then a few nights later, a Phantom Flyer attacks. It seems that Balthegior (now enjoying his demi-lichhood) had left instructions that details of his life be forgotten. When the hapless character read the words, the Phantom Flyer awakened and sought to kill the character and take the diary back to what remains of his master.

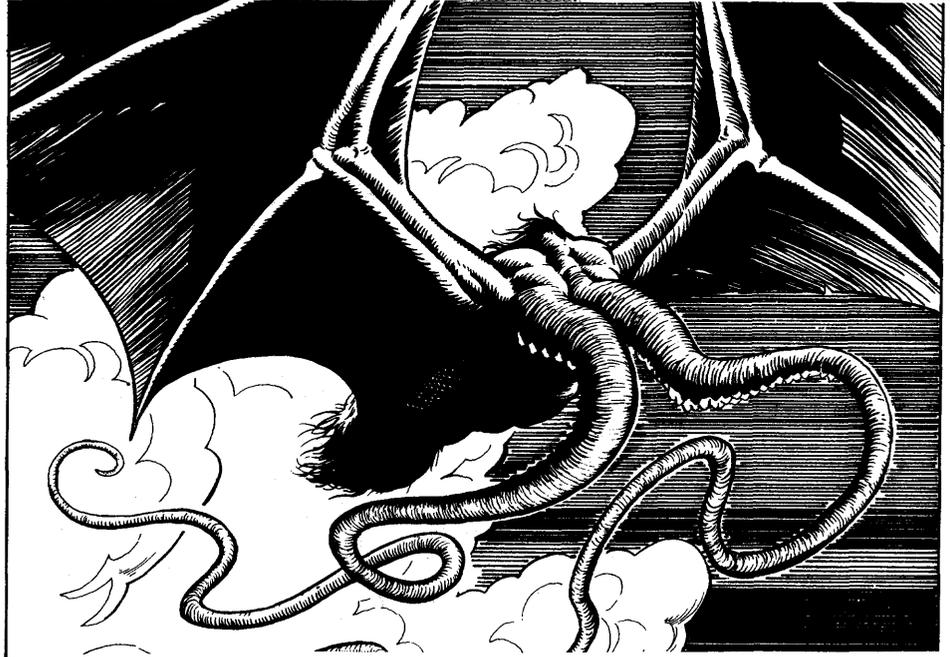
Likewise, the Brass Minotaur can come into play as a long-term menace. Picture this. The characters have destroyed the alchemical lab of Conseen the vampire. Just before she flees as a bat, she swears to make them pay. Be sure the characters don't find her well-hidden coffin. Months after they have forgotten her, have one of them spot a brazen figure gleaming in the sunset. Tell the player that his character senses something ominous in the far-off glint of bronze. Then in the next village they visit let them hear tales of the strange

brass creature crashing its way through the countryside. When it is time for the final conflict to occur, have a *magic mouth* appear on the golem and Conseen's voice say, "I have you now!" Then the golem and one party member disappear (see below for the abilities of the Brass Minotaur). I assure that you will have begun a tale that the players will repeat to their friends for years afterward.

Remember that if the characters do

defeat the makers of these monstrous machines, they will find the notes on making them. Such *manuals of golem construction* should fetch a lot of gold because of the rarity of the creatures. That is, if some other powerful wizard doesn't try to obtain it in a nefarious manner.

I hope you have fun with my little pets, and remember to make the most of your monsters.



The Brass Minotaur

DRAGON #209

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CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	None
INTELLIGENCE:	Non-(0)
TREASURE:	Nil (See below)
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	8
HIT DICE:	18 (80 hit points)
THAC0:	3
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	3-30 plus wounding
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	See below
SIZE:	Large (12' tall)
MORALE:	Fearless (20)
XP VALUE:	17,000

A terrible instrument of vengeance is the Brass Minotaur, first created by Relnar the Just to avenge the death of his wife (slain during the desecration of a temple of Athena). Although Relnar quickly recalled his lady from death, he was mightily angered by the massacre of the priestess and the pillaging of the sacred grounds. Once he had constructed this mannequin, he used a *wish* spell to place it just outside the temple grounds the night of the tragedy. It was commanded to follow and slay the three-score barbarian attackers. By the next moon, even before Relnar was fully started on the enchanting of this creature, the *Minotaur* was again reported at the temple site, standing guard over the surviving Daughters of Athena until the temple was rebuilt. (Such paradoxes are to be expected when wizards bend time to their will.)

Some few magicians have since discovered Relnar's techniques. First they must enchant a battle axe of the type that makes wounds that do not close and that will not heal except by natural means (a *battle axe of wounding*). The end of the hilt is capped with a flawless gem of a size not easily hidden in a closed fist. Once this creature's weapon is ready, the wizard begins the preparation of the golem. The wizard must obtain a perfect minotaur skeleton, and three handfuls of powdered diamond for hardness, and the ores to create brass. Heat the ores until molten, sprinkle in the diamond dust, then pour the liquid metals over the minotaur skeleton. As the brass takes the place of the minotaur's flesh, the wizard must complete the transformation by casting *strength*, *polymorph any object*, and *geas* on the monster; *trap the soul* and *maze* on the jewel in the hilt of the battle axe the Minotaur is holding; and finish with a *wish* to bind the creation together.

This golem requires five months of construction time by a wizard of 20th or higher level at a cost of 100,000 gold pieces. The Minotaur has a strength of 25 and can do two points of structural damage per round.

Combat: The Brass Minotaur is first and foremost a stalking instrument of vengeance. It almost always remains in a passive state until a triggering event (e.g., the violation of a shrine) awakens it to action. It then seeks out its victim relentlessly. It fights to defend itself while seeking out its victim, but will not use its special *maze* ability. If after it has used its *maze*, it is severely damaged, it will go off and spend time entering and leaving the *maze* until it has gained its lost hit points.



Once each day this hunter can *trap* an opponent's soul (standard attack roll by a 20th-level creature required) in the gem in the haft of its *battle axe of wounding*. Once trapped, the foe is within a *maze* spell. The Minotaur, unaffected by the bewildering *maze*, can follow at will into the extra-dimensional space to dispose of that individual. Once the trapped creature either is destroyed or escapes (by making the appropriate saving throw against a *maze* spell) the Minotaur can elect to remain within the *maze* and track a party as though in the Prime Material plane. Once the Minotaur leaves the gem, it must trap another soul to create the extra-dimensional space. Each time the Minotaur enters the extra-dimensional *maze* (a maximum of once per day) it regains 10-60% of any damage it has sustained.

The Brass Minotaur can be struck only by magical weapons of +3 or greater enchantment, Lesser weapons do no damage and have a 10% chance of shattering. The only magic that affects the Brass Minotaur is the spell *find the path*.

If the spell is cast upon the area where the Minotaur disappeared with a victim, the Minotaur and whoever else is in the maze is automatically returned to the Prime Material plane. If the spell is cast directly onto the Minotaur, the golem has a chance to save against spell; failure means destruction.

At the DM's discretion the *battle axe of wounding* may be removed from a defeated golem.

Habitat/Society: Brass Minotaurs exist to fulfill one goal. They wait with absolute patience to fulfill their mission. If their goal has become unobtainable—for example, they were created to guard a temple that no longer exists—they lose their enchantment as does the battle axe each carries.

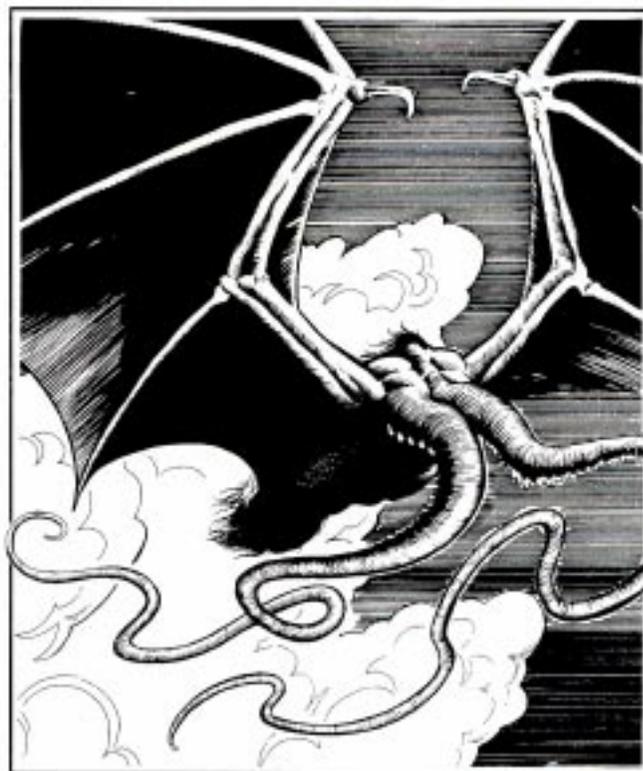
Ecology: As artificial constructs, Brass Minotaurs play no role in any ecology. They exist to fulfill a particular vengeance.

Phantom Flyer

DRAGON® #209

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CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	None
INTELLIGENCE:	Highly (13-14)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral (see below)
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NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	6
MOVEMENT:	3/24 Fl (C)
HIT DICE:	11 (50 hit points)
THACO:	9
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2-16 x 2
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	See below
SIZE:	Large (18' wingspan); see below
MORALE:	Fanatic (19)
XP VALUE:	8,000



This creation offers swift and discreet service in the realms of the night. It can hide from prying eyes during the day until the disappearance of the hateful light. To create such a faithful servant, the wizard needs two large mirrors, enough molten silver to fill a large chalice, the pinions of a vrock, and enough fresh spider silk to cover the pinions twice. The wizard must set the mirrors exactly eleven paces apart, facing each other squarely. She places the pinions and the silk between the mirrors, with the chalice of molten silver directly before her, between her and the wing materials. Onto this area, the wizard casts *continual darkness*, *Evard's black tentacles*, *forget, fly, wish, disintegrate*, and *geas*. What will be left is the mere reflection of a creature, the victory of imagination over solidity; that, and the silver whistle that controls it. The shimmering beast has a wing span of 20' and two tentacles of a similar length. This black beauty flies fully silently, twice as swift as most dragons, and it can carry two fully-equipped human-sized creatures on its back. If need arises, the Flyer can lift a draft horse in its tentacles, or it can carry messages and retrieve property or people.

This golem requires three months of construction time by a wizard of 18th or higher level; it costs 90,000 gold pieces. The Phantom Flyer has the strength of an iron golem and can do one point of structural damage per round. The Phantom Flyer is seen only as two wings, a horselike back, and two black tentacles. It is controlled by whoever possesses the silver whistle. (If the whistle should become lost, the Flyer will simply lurk in a shadow near it until someone finds and sounds the whistle.) This whistle shows a faint dweomer.

Combat: Any type of light spell successfully cast onto this golem pinpoints its position. Fire or cold-based spells do no harm. A +3 or better magical weapon is required to damage this creation. A *darkness* spell cast upon the golem restores 1-8 hit points of damage; a *continual darkness*, 3-17 points.

The Flyer is comfortable only in darkness; in torchlight or less, it is 90% undetectable.

During daylight, the Flyer must remain hidden. A shadow of any size can conceal the Phantom Flyer, whether on the ground or under an object. If noticed in this form, the flyer seems to be a particularly dark shadow. While hiding in shadows this way, it can neither attack nor fly, but it can flow through existing shadows at its flying rate as long as an uninterrupted path exists. Only *truesight* reveals the golem in this form, but if magic is

detected for in its area, a faint dweomer is evident.

The rapid flight and ability to hide make the Phantom Flyer an excellent carrier of messages. They also are quite useful spies. For example, the Wizard Yage Tomas sends a Phantom Flyer out to spy on Ralph the paladin's party. It hides in the shadow of Flikka the war horse and overhears all the party's conversation during the day. At nightfall, Yage Tomas blows the whistle and the Phantom Flyer flies back to the wizard and repeats the conversation verbatim. The wizard either can use the Phantom Flyer then to transport him to the scene or tell it to go and fetch a party member to the wizard's black tower for who knows what eldritch treatment. The usefulness of this construct depends on the intelligence of the owner of the whistle.

Habitat/Society: As long as the whistle exists, the Phantom Flyer is the devoted servant of its master. Should the whistle be destroyed, the Phantom Flyer will fly off to the Plane of Shadow. They may occasionally be encountered in dark underworld settings, with their only desire being to destroy light sources.

Ecology: As an artificial construct, the Phantom Flyer takes no part in any ecology save to destroy.

The Burning Man

DRAGON #209

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CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	None
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi-
TREASURE:	None
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral Evil
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NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	14 (60 hit points)
THACO:	7
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2-16 x 2
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	See below
SIZE:	Large (18' tall)
MORALE:	Variable (see below)
XP VALUE:	10,000

The Burning Man was first researched for the human/troll wars of Utar the Cruel. Utar, knowing the grievous damage that fire dealt to trolls, ordered the wizard Tukah to construct a vast fire machine to lay waste to a troll army. Tukah began by fashioning a giant man-shaped wicker container, which he filled with pitch. On this form the wizard cast burning *sphere*, true name, *fire shield*, *wish*, and *geas*. Tukah caused the creation to wail with a fearsome keening, an attack that the golem can use once per day. Anyone hearing this terrible keening is struck with *fear*. Any victim has the same chance of escaping this terror as he has of evading a dragon's breath (save vs. breath weapon to avoid).

The Burning Man appears as a humanoid figure of glowing red coals covered in white-hot cinders. When it strikes with its fists, burning cinders fall from its body to the body of its foe; there they remain and continue to burn until washed away. Each successful blow covers its opponent in more cinders. Unless this victim is magically protected from fire, the pain of the cinders scorching his flesh also lessens his physical abilities.

Although this is a mighty creation and a powerful servant, extreme care and long thought should be taken before deciding to create one. The fiery nature of this creation fills it with a lust to burn and destroy—even its maker. It is compelled to obedience, but only to the letter of the command. It seeks to pervert the spirit of any command and is for most uses unreliable. Utar was finally defeated by a band of trolls when he was ambushed with only a Burning Man as guard. Utar commanded his construct to attack the trolls; the golem did so, then stood by as a troll ended the life of the Cruel—after all he had been commanded to attack trolls, not protect Utar. After Utar's demise, the construct was seen to seek the lower parts of the stronghold that led to the secret places of the earth. No doubt somewhere it still burns, hidden where bright light and green things no longer remind it of its unnatural condition.

This golem requires three months of construction time by a wizard of 14th or higher level; it costs 60,000 gold pieces. The Burning Man has the same strength as a flesh golem and can do one point of structural damage each three rounds.

Combat: An assailant has little chance against this creature. The Burning Man is impervious to magical attacks based on fire or lightning. The spell *quench fire* extinguishes the cinders and reduces the golem's armor class to AC 6; this lasts one round per experience level of the caster. A +2 or better magical weapon is needed to damage this construct. A Burning Man regenerates at



the rate of one point each turn. Once hacked to pieces, this golem can be kept from regenerating only by mixing the ashes with *holy water*: When totally destroyed, each fragment of the golem will flash into a brightly burning flame and collapse into ash. This ash, though, can very slowly repair damage to itself, reforming completely from a mere speck unless each ash pile is mixed with *holy water* and scattered. From the merest dust to full form it returns in a months time.

The terrible keening is a weapon that can be used once each day. Any creature within 80' of the golem must save versus breath weapon or be affected with *fear*, as by the wand of the same name. When this creation attacks with its powerful fists, each successful strike showers its opponent with glowing cinders. In addition to the buffeting damage, these cinders continue to burn for one point of damage per round for each shower of cinders until doused with water or earth. Unless magically protected from fire, any opponent so covered will also be affected as though by a *symbol of pain* for 2-20 minutes. Such effects are not cumulative except for damage; the maximum Dexterity penalty is -2, but an opponent struck twice would continue taking an additional two points of damage per round until doused.

These crude, unintelligent creatures attack almost without strategy. They are best used on the battlefield where their awesome presence can do the most good as they wade into masses of troops. They will usually use their *keening* ability two rounds after a combat starts. They are too stupid to be affected by illusions, and have no sense of self preservation. Because of the heat they generate, it is rare to find any of them put to use in a noncombat role.

When they are engaged in a task (see below) their Morale is very great (Fearless 20). When they have broken the control from their lords, their Morale is normal (Steady 12), but all of their actions are based on their own desires.

Habitat/Society: Burning Men become progressively harder to control, so their creators try to command them as little as possible. Each time the wizard issues a command to the Burning Man, the Burning Man has a 5% (cumulative) chance of breaking free. Thus Utar the Cruel would issue a command to, "Kill trolls!" and leave the rest to the Burning Man and there would be a 5% chance that the creature would disobey. If Utar had issued a second command, "Kill orcs!" the Burning Man would have a 10% chance to break free. If that attempt failed, the Burning Man would spend the rest of its days happily killing orcs, until it was destroyed or its maker tried another command.

If the Burning Man breaks free, its first objective is to destroy its maker. After this is accomplished, it will seek out a place to hide away from all green, growing things. As long as its cave or ruin is undisturbed, it remains there peacefully smoldering. If someone disturbs it, it will seek to drive the interloper away—or failing that, kill him.

Ecology: Free Burning Men will clear a cave or ruin of any living thing larger than a mouse. They are not bothered by the presence of undead or other golems. Burning Men who are not free are play no role in any ecology except to destroy.

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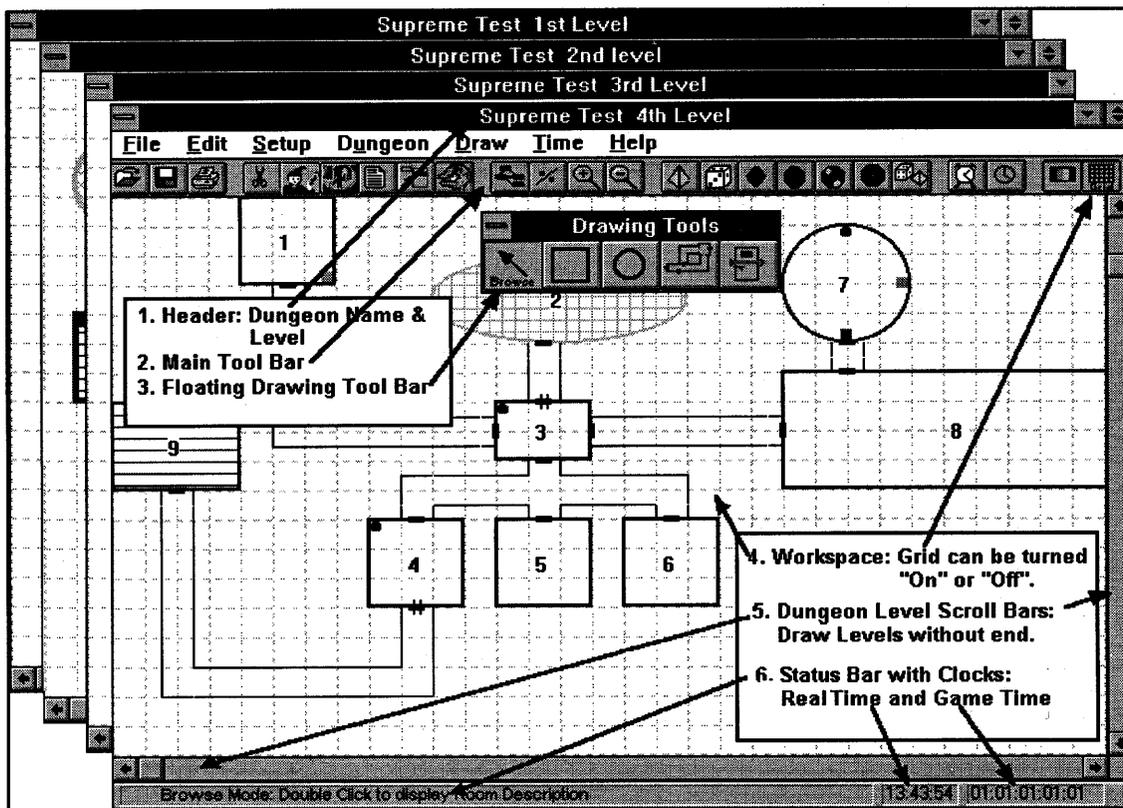
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RUMBLINGS

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Lead Story:

1993 ORIGINS* Award Winners

Below are the products that were awarded the ORIGINS Awards for 1993 calendar-year releases. We'd like to congratulate all the winners. We'd also like to acknowledge the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design and everyone who voted for DRAGON Magazine. Thanks!

BEST HISTORICAL FIGURE SERIES: *Medievals 15 mm* from Soldiers & Swords. Sculptor: Robert Perez.

BEST FANTASY OR SCIENCE-FICTION FIGURE SERIES: *AD&D® game series* from Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc. Sculptors: Dennis Mize, James Johnson, Geoffrey Valley, David Summers, Jeffrey Wilhelm, and Richard Kerr.

BEST VEHICULAR FIGURE SERIES: *BATTLETECH* series* from Ral Partha Ent. Sculptors: David Summers, James Johnson, Richard Kerr, and Jeffrey Wilhelm.

BEST ACCESSORY SERIES: *Destiny Deck* from Stellar Games. Designers: Dennis McKiernan and Peter Busch.

BEST MINIATURES RULES: *WAR-HAMMER 40,000*, 2nd Edition game* from Games Workshop. Designers: Rick Priestly and Andy Chambers.

BEST ROLE-PLAYING RULES: *TRAVELER: THE NEW ERA* game* from Games Designers' Workshop. Designers: Frank Chadwick and David Nilsen.

BEST ROLE-PLAYING ADVENTURE: *DRAGON MOUNTAIN® adventure* from TSR, Inc. Designers: Colin McComb, Paul Arden Lidberg, Thomas M. Reid, *et al.*

BEST ROLE-PLAYING SUPPLEMENT:

GURPS VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE** book from Steve Jackson Games. Designer: Jeff Koke.

BEST GRAPHIC PRESENTATION OF A ROLE-PLAYING GAME, ADVENTURE, OR SUPPLEMENT: *UNDERGROUND* game* from Mayfair Games. Graphics: Mari Paz Cabardo.

BEST PRE-20TH CENTURY BOARD GAME: *HISTORY OF THE WORLD* game* from the Avalon Hill Game Co. Designers: The Ragnar Bros.; Developer: Don Greenwood.

BEST MODERN-DAY BOARD GAME: *HACKER II game* from SJG. Designer: Steve Jackson.

BEST FANTASY OR SF BOARD GAME: *MAGIC: THE GATHERING* game* from Wizards of the Coast. Designer: Richard Garfield.

BEST GRAPHIC PRESENTATION OF A BOARD GAME: *MAGIC: THE GATHERING game* from WotC. Graphics: Jesper Myfors.

BEST PLAY-BY-MAIL GAME: *Illuminati game* from Flying Buffalo, Inc. Designer: Draper Kauffman.

BEST FANTASY OR SF COMPUTER GAME: *X-Wing* from LucasArts. Designers: Larry Holland and Edward Kilham.

BEST MILITARY OR STRATEGY COMPUTER GAME: *Seven Cities of Gold- Commemorative Edition* from Electronic Arts. Original Designers: Bill & Dan Buntzen. Updated version designer: Michael Kosaka. Producer: Chris Wilson.

BEST PROFESSIONAL GAMING MAGAZINE: *DRAGON® Magazine* from TSR, Inc. Editors: Roger E. Moore, Kim Mohan, and Dale A. Donovan.

BEST AMATEUR GAMING MAGAZINE: *Berg's Review of Games*. Editor: Richard Berg.

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES (PRODUCTS): *ACE OF ACES* game* from Nova Games. Designer: Al Leonardi. Rules:

Douglas Kaufman. Illustrations: Jerry Redding.

DIPLOMACY game* from Avalon Hill. Designer: Allan Calhamer.

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES (PEOPLE): Don Featherstone and Michael A. Stackpole.

VAMPIRE* 90210

Aaron Spelling and White Wolf Games Studio are discussing producing a pilot TV show, set in Los Angeles and based on the *VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE** storytelling game. A meeting has already set the ball rolling. Projected time slot: after the *X-Files*, of course.

Also in the we'll-believe-it-when-we-see-it stage, GDW, Inc. and Anders International have signed an agreement to produce a TV series based on the *SPACE: 1889** setting, GDW's way-cool role-playing game of adventure in a more civilized time.

Cooler than the X-Dudes

Capcom's "Tower of Doom" D&D® arcade game is setting records for the company, with its side-scrolling interface and group-oriented action. Capcom expected to place the D&D arcade game in a thousand arcades; its already in 10,000 and earning rave reviews. Says artist Tony DiTerlizzi, "I blew all my quarters on it, just to see the art. It's like the *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* tome come to life." DiTerlizzi and friends were last seen battling their way toward the red dragon's lair.

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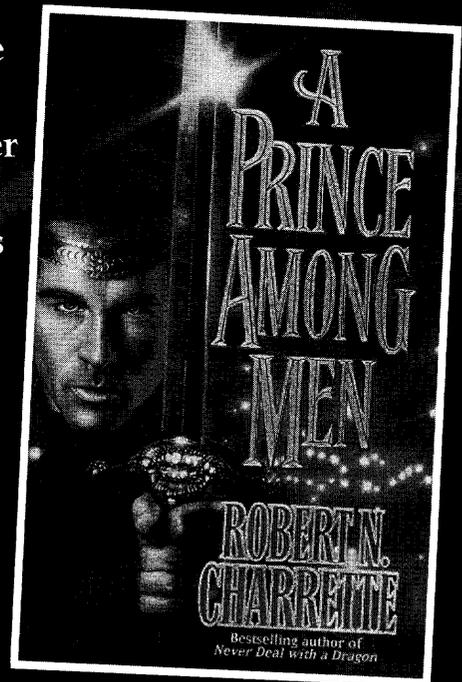
King Arthur is Back...

and Doing Battle in the 21ST CENTURY.

Robert N. Charrette, the bestselling author of *Never Deal with a Dragon* and the *Shadowrun*™ series, begins an exciting new trilogy in which technology and magic collide when a merciless struggle for supremacy threatens to destroy the world.

In *A Prince Among Men*, the series' first book, King Arthur is awakened from a centuries-long sleep to wage war against the elfin magic that is preying upon the high-tech world of the not-too-distant future.

Caught in the middle of this maelstrom is a renegade dreamer who, unsure where his loyalty lies, holds the power to decide the outcome.



AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD

The Game Wizards

Ed Greenwood's *Crown of Fire* and *Elminster: The Making of a Mage*

by Rob King

If Ed Greenwood had been a fictional character in a book I was reviewing I'd tell the author to "study characterization: this Greenwood guy is too complex and contradictory to believe he is real."

Well, guess what, folks, he's real.

Still, I wouldn't change my comment: Ed is too complex and contradictory for most people to believe. He's a lascivious cherub with the mind of a gnome and the loping frame of Sasquatch. He writes more than enough text to fill a book in half the time it takes other novelists. He ranks with Zeb Cook and Jeff Grubb among the most prolific of TSR's designers, and yet he works in a library in Canada. He has a beard that would qualify him to join ZZ Top, but still looks boyish. He created the AD&D® game's most popular setting before the AD&D game even existed. He combines the character traits of Elminster, Maynard Krebs, the Simbul, Ernest Hemingway, Robin Williams, Buckminster Fuller, Barney Phylfe, Barney the Dinosaur, Barney Rubble, Borneo's Wild Men, Artzybasheff, Einstein, and *Homo sapiens Neanderthal*. Fiercely gentle. Stubbornly flexible. Oddly likeable. Ed is a decent rogue, a scandalous gentleman, a cunning crackpot a Canadian author of the great American novel.

Which brings us to Ed's latest and greatest literary venture, the hardcover novel *Elminster: the Making of a Mage* (due out in December). The setting is Toril, of course, though in a former age—the time of Myth Drannor and the Stag King of Athalantar. The protagonist is Elminster, an unwitting boy-prince whose parents are slain by the new rulers of Athalantar, who seek to stamp out all the remnants of the former royal line. The plot is familiar, showing the bootheel of evil crushing one too few orphans, thus leaving Elminster alive to grow up and bring down his oppressors. It is a very old story. Moses had a similarly inauspicious beginning and a similarly difficult slavery to endure. Oedipus, too, survived infanticide to slay his father. And just as Moses was destined to become the veiled and unapproachable pillar of a new tabernacle, and Oedipus was destined to become the tragic blind king of a tragic blind land, Elminster's



destiny is unique. The shepherd boy Elminster grows up to become an ancient, sober yet capricious wizard, who rules nothing but his tiny, slumping stone tower in the tiny backwater village of Shadowdale, but in truth rules all of Toril and countless other worlds overlaid with it.

Do these contradictions seem familiar? You're catching on.

To describe Elminster at this point may seem redundant since it'll be just about the same as describing Ed. That fact is fitting, since the former is a linguistic manifestation of the latter. Even so, Elminster's got a bit more Einstein and a bit less Robin Williams in him.

Like Merlin, Elminster is ancient, but somehow seems to be growing younger as he ages. It gets weirder. Though Elminster ceaselessly and tirelessly rescues the hapless and helpless of Toril, the sign posted on the path to his tower reads, "No Trespassing. Violators should notify next of kin. Have a pleasant day." He holds the power of the spheres but prefers performing sleight of hand for children. . . . Yeah, yeah, we get it—take one extreme attribute and pair it with its exact opposite and you've got Elminster, right?

Not quite. For all his ineffability, Elminster is no Sybil. Complex, yes, contradictory, yes, but when you read the character he comes alive—you almost can smell pipesmoke. There is a lot more here than a jumble of conflicting adjectives. There is a person who, in 1975, stepped fully formed into Ed's as-yet little-formed world and took it over. And took over the life of Ed and his wife Jennie in their farmhouse in Ontario. And took over the lives of countless thousands of others in their various digs in Wichita and Joliet and Cambridge and Phoenix and Paris and Moscow and Saskatoon.

That was the greatest challenge of writing (and editing) *Elminster: The Making of a Mage*. What we had to produce was a fictional biography of a character who no longer had the grace or sense to remain fictional. Elminster lives. Any book that professes to tell how Elminster came to live would have to be damn good or be a damn flop. The book had to show how an amazing and indescribable hero became amazing and indescribable. Put simply, it had to make a shepherd boy into an ancient archmage. The word *make* is used advisedly. So was the word *indescribable*.

Having worked with Ed on his most recent novel, *Crown of Fire*, I knew from the get-go on *Elminster* that Ed's forte was thrilling action, wild characters, fantastic magic, tremendous explosions, and just overall wa-Whooooo! These things, fine as they are, tend to make character growth difficult; just like Pantera has been proven to kill geraniums, fast-paced action with an enormous barrage of pyrotechnics tends to stunt the growth of characters. My job (why I get paid the big bucks) was to make sure *Elminster* would show a true making of Elminster, on the one hand, and

would yet be the wet-and-wild flume ride Ed always delivers.

Contradictions abound.

Well, not to pat myself on the back, but I did . . . make sure, that is. It was Ed who did the real work, and I just nodded happily at the end product. The final draft of *Elminster* has all the genius of Greenwood action with all the genius of Greenwood characterization. Yes, it's good. Quite good. Damn good.

But you won't know that until December, will you? What a rude columnist I've been. Let's talk about another Greenwood book you might have already read: *Crown of Fire*.

Though some might think the title *Crown of Fire* is a subtle play on words, intimating that the divine gift of spellfire has somehow elevated the main character Shandril to the stature of nobility, these people would miss the point. Fire, itself, is the point. And if you like fire like I like fire (heh heh, heh heh—fire's cool!), you'll like *Crown of Fire*. There's lots of fire and explosions. How many people did Bruce Willis kill off in that second *Die Hard* flick? A mere 250? Pah. Get that pantywaist out of the way and let a real woman do the work.

That's right. A *real* woman. Shandril. Those readers who've met Shandril in the novel, *Spellfire*, know her as an orphan lass who unwittingly gained the ability to absorb magic and shoot it out her fingertips as flame . . . rather like Heidi with a bazooka. Those Zhentarim magelings who met Shandril in *Crown of Fire* know her as the orphan lass who made them have to paint eyebrows on their faces every morning. Let's put it this way: Do you think if Heidi had a bazooka, her grandpa would have any more trouble with goat poachers? Of course not. A bazooka solves a multitude of problems for an adolescent orphan girl in a world largely ruled by (for that matter, largely created by) males. Of course, a multitude of other problems are likely to arise from the bazooka's own muzzle. That's what *Crown of Fire* is about, the girl with the fiery gun and all the problems they get into and out of together.

As I have said before and will say again, *Crown* does everything it does well. It continues the saga of Shandril, it stuns the imagination with its special effects, it delights the reader with a cast of off-beat characters, it even gets a chance to show the Old Mage doing what he does best (blip about and blast things). It's *Die Hard II* and *Lethal Weapon II* with more action and fewer dorky one-liners.

And, just like the shepherd-boy orphan, Shandril has a lot of growing up to do. She does grow up in *Crown of Fire*. Death threats and constant barrages of magical and mundane missiles tend to make one mature in a hurry. I'd be selling the book short if I mentioned only the fantastic magic, the blistering battles, and the non-stop adventure. By the end of the book,

Shandril has grown, for that which did not kill her only made her stronger.

So, whaddaya want? You want action and explosions, we got action and explosions. You want pensive character development, we got that, too. You want a hero, a heroine, a villain, a villainess—we got all that stuff. Paperback? Hardcover? Yeah, baby. And all of it in only two books, *Crown of Fire* and *Elminster: Making of a Mage*, both of them out this year and both great American novels by a great Canadian novelist.

Surely articles like this must go to Ed's head. Surely, too, proceeds from books like this must go to his bank (of course the Canadian government gets a bit, too). Is Ed likely to quit his library job to work full-time on novels?

I doubt it. Ready for another contradiction? In the words of Sue Weinlein, "You can take the boy out of the library, but you can't take the library out of the boy."

Stuff that in your pipe and smoke it, Old Mage!

Ω



LOOKING FOR MORE GAMERS?

You may think you'd have to travel to another planet to find a game convention. Finding friends who are also gamers can be a problem, too. Put your scoutsuit away and turn to the Convention Calendar in this magazine. There may be a game convention closer to your home than you'd think — and conventions are a great place to find friends who share your interests. Whether you like board-games, role-playing games, miniature wargames, or just browsing around, a game convention can be all you've hoped for. Plan to attend one soon.



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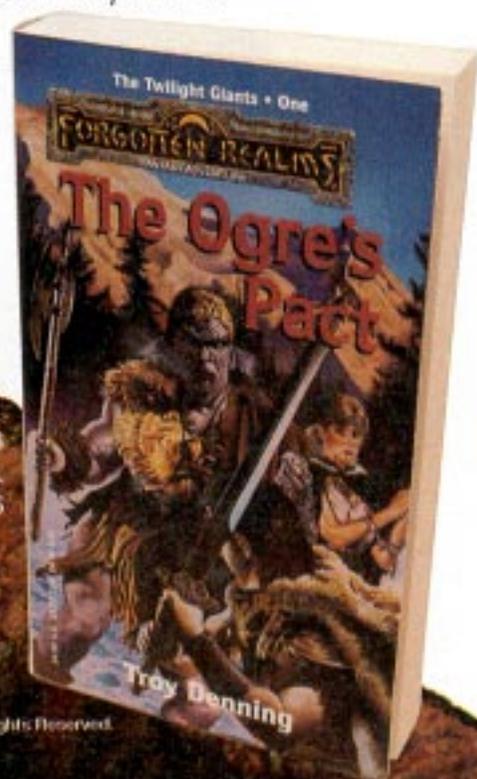
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Classics revisited

WEIRD TALES FROM SHAKESPEARE

Katharine Kerr & Martin H.

Greenberg, eds.

DAW 0-88677-605-8 \$4.99

Suppose Romeo had died before meeting Juliet—or that someone had rescued the star-crossed lovers from their own suicides. Imagine King Lear as the ultimate software crash in a university's computer system—or as a spider queen in the midst of a magical web. Contemplate the fireworks should Titania, queen of Faerie, find herself tempted to abandon Oberon in favor of a certain gentleman called Prospero.

Twisting literary classics in unexpected directions is a long-standing tradition among gamers and prose storytellers alike, and the material from which these *Weird Tales From Shakespeare* are drawn could hardly be more classic. The results are as diverse as the Bard's original plays, from history to tragedy to comedy and beyond.

By and large, the collection's light-toned tales are the most accessible. Teresa Edgerton's "Titania or The Celestial Bed" wryly mixes seduction, alchemy, and academic satire, while Mike Resnick skewers Hollywood in a story about a frighteningly plausible pairing of Richards. Dennis McKiernan presents two short scenes from "Act 0" of *Hamlet*, consisting of a sardonic soliloquy from theatrical history's most famous skull. Most sophisticated of the volume's humorists, however, is Esther Friesner, who not only gets away with turning the Bard's bloodiest tragedy into a musical comedy, but wraps a sharp first-contact story around the idea.

Devotees of English history and Shakespearean trivia also will be well satisfied. Bill Daniel's opening "Playbill" and Gregory Feeley's "Aweary of the Sun" both venture knowledgeably into the crowded milieu of Elizabethan theater. Of the books more serious pieces, Feeley's perhaps most seamlessly incorporates magical themes into its historical setting. The other contender for that honor is "Ancient Magics, Ancient Hope," in which Josepha Sherman sets "Owen Glendower" of *Henry IV, Part 1* in conflict with the legendary Merlin.

Direct retellings of the plays meet with mixed success. The two most exotic are the previously mentioned recastings of *King Lear*: "Queen Lyr," Mark Kreighbaum's arachnid entry is very densely written, yet surprisingly approachable on its own merits, and no one in the collection matches Kreighbaum's blend of sharp suspense and vivid imagery. Jack Oakley's cyberspace yarn requires a good working knowledge of *Lear*, and doesn't quite reconcile its dark and comic elements. Other plays revisited include *Romeo & Juliet* (twice: Lawrence Schimel's version is quick and incisive, while Kevin A. Murphy's is a touch heavy-handed with its wit) and *Hamlet* (smoothly told from his mother's viewpoint by Kate Daniel).

Another recurring theme concerns Shakespeare's source of inspiration, though neither Diana Paxson's tale of a one-eyed Norse visitor nor Laura Re-

snick's, of a Muse from Greek myth, quite fit their settings. Best of this group is Charles de Lint's "A Tempest In Her Eyes," which omits Shakespeare, but offers a sympathetic modern-day substitute and a bittersweet Puck in a tale that does touch the right heartstrings.

The canon of *Weird Tales From Shakespeare*, like old Will's own, has bright stars and dim. Though it's a cousin to the recent wave of "alternate history" anthologies, Kerr and Greenberg have made this collection uniquely approachable. There's a sense of playfulness and delight about this book that complements the classical air without overwhelming it, and anyone who's ever seen (or stolen from) a Shakespeare play should find much to like within its pages.

MORDENHEIM

Chet Williamson

TSR 1-56076-852-5 \$4.95

The RAVENLOFT® line of horror novels is taking on a decidedly literary bent these days. Chet Williamson's spare Gothic homage to the Frankenstein story is the second RAVENLOFT book in a row to rework one of the genre's major classics. The trouble is that while Williamson's novel is eerily effective as a Gothic and a revisitation of the Shelley story, it fits very badly into the game setting.

Dr. Victor Mordenheim is not merely a scientist, but a scientist obsessed by rationality. Not surprisingly, this makes him a superb researcher, but it also gives him a supreme disdain for all things magical. In itself, this wouldn't be a problem, but the trouble is that Williamson doesn't merely omit magic from Dr. Mordenheim's thinking. There is, in fact, very little evidence of magical practice in the entire novel; the only true wizard in its pages dies almost immediately. Though his spell book survives, one character acquires a case of lycanthropy, and there's an obligatory Vistani curse, we have no sense that magic is truly a part of the milieu Dr. Mordenheim inhabits, and that's simply not consistent with the RAVENLOFT setting we know.

The result is a disquieting inconsistency that severely undercuts the central problem Williamson gives Dr. Mordenheim: how to restore his beloved Elise to life and health. One doesn't expect healing or resurrection magics to work as effectively in this setting as they would outside the dark domains, but *Mordenheim* gives no sign of knowing that such magic even exists—and save for that one dead necromancer, a Vistani wise-woman, and a single far-away cleric, there are no recognizable priests or spell-casters practicing anywhere in Williamson's setting.

One can well imagine Dr. Mordenheim refusing to consult with wizards or priests on a cure for Elise, but the fact that there are no such folk for him to consult makes this a very odd, discordant part of the game setting. The puzzled reader is left to

wonder why ordinary healing spells can't restore Elise's battered body, and why Dr. Mordenheim's scientific investigations haven't granted him a more complete mastery of magic-like powers. (This latter is especially puzzling; in an AD&D® game setting such as this, the laws of physics necessarily include magical effects, such that rigorous research of the kind Dr. Mordenheim pursues ought to yield as much magical knowledge as non-magical.)

What's most frustrating of all about this is that, as a free-standing Gothic horror yarn, *Mordenheim* is generally quite well told. Dr. Mordenheim's obsession, the creature Adam's oddly honorable amorality, the atmosphere of dark gloom—all are developed with spare, precise skill. Williamson also creates several subtle contrasts of relationship in his tale: novice spiritualists Friedrich and Hilda share a gentle love quite unlike the bond between Dr. Mordenheim and Elise, and Hilda interacts with Adam much differently than does his creator. And though much of the novel is told in flashback, the shifts in time and place are effectively handled.

On its own, then, Williamson has written a book that devotees of Frankenstein and Gothic fiction should find well worth a look. But as an addition to the lore of the RAVENLOFT setting, *Mordenheim* just isn't credible, at least not without explanations about the peculiar absence of magic that the text simply doesn't provide.

CALEDON OF THE MISTS

Deborah Turner Harris

Ace 0-441-00029-0 \$5.50

The young woman on the cover of *Caledon of the Mists* is wearing a rather bewildered expression, as if she's not quite sure where she is or what she's doing. And well she might wonder, for Deborah Turner Harris' new novel is a very peculiar amalgamation of folklore and thinly imagined fantasy.

As one might expect from the other two characters in the cover illustration, the real-world history is all Scottish. There are scraps of authentic Scottish verse, kilts aplenty, and even an analogue to the legendary Stone of Scone. But Harris doesn't set her book in historical Scotland; instead, we're presented with an alternate realm, with "Caledon" replacing Scotland and "Beringar" standing in for England to the south. Offstage to the west, where Ireland would be on our own map, Harris puts a land called Feylara, said to be thick with intrigue and magic.

Out of Feylara, as the novel opens, comes Bonnie Prince Charlie—er, Prince Duncan Dunladry, returned from a twenty-year exile to spearhead a bid for Caledonian independence from Beringar. Not surprisingly, the lords of Beringar fail to look kindly on the prospect, and call on mystic forces to strike Duncan down before the rebellion can properly begin. The gambit succeeds in killing the prince, but fails to quench the revolt, as Duncan's

Feyan-trained sister Mhairi assumes command of the Scottish—urn, Caledonian forces.

As one gathers from the preceding description, the great difficulty with all this is that the book can't decide whether it wants to be a historical adventure or a whole-hearted tale of heroic high fantasy. As written, it tries to fit into both molds at once, and ultimately succeeds in occupying neither one. There's enough authentic Scottish content in Harris's *Caledon* that it might as well be Scotland, yet too much of the plot relies on invented detail—the pet demons of Beringar's Clavian Brotherhood, the exotic mysticism of the Feyans, and the strange Mists of the title—to make a pure Scottish setting practical. Yet the thorough Scottishness of the characters and culture makes the story's nonhistorical elements appear oddly striking and out of place.

It's a pity, because Harris has a reasonable command of character development and a good eye for the nuances of tactical warfare. But the magic in *Caledon of the Mists* is pale and sparsely sketched. We see next to nothing of Feya at first hand, the Mists are left unexplained until the final pages, and the Clavians are a religious order with no discernible religion behind them. As epic fantasy, there just isn't enough development behind the magic to make the novel persuasive. Pale or not, though, the magical elements are integral to the novel's agenda, and as a result the book also doesn't work as parallel history. Unlike Katherine Kurtz's *Gwynedd*, for example, there's no sense that *Caledon's* reality diverged straightforwardly from our own somewhere in the dim past.

Harris's sense of culture is strong enough that she could have written a solid, entertaining fantasy set in such a semi-real Scotland. Instead, what she's created is a hybrid tale that's neither plausible enough to pass as unrecorded history nor inventive enough to pass as a work of the imagination.

MOTHER OF STORMS

John Barnes

Tor 0-312-85560-5 \$22.95

Between the recent resurgence of fast-paced but technically implausible space opera, and modern SF's increasingly open focus on political and social commentary, it's fast becoming something of a challenge to find credible science in one's science fiction. John Barnes' new novel, however, is a welcome step in the opposite direction. *Mother of Storms* manages to be technically fascinating without sacrificing its considerable entertainment value.

The "mother of storms" of the title is the great-granddaddy of all hurricanes, created in the wake of a nuclear explosion in the North Pacific. Enough methane gets kicked into the atmosphere, goes the premise, that a mild greenhouse effect occurs and temperatures worldwide rise by a few degrees. That's enough to cause

one significant ecological change: contrary to present weather patterns, hurricanes no longer fold up and die the way they used to. Instead, they just get bigger—and spin off smaller copies of themselves, which also get bigger. So while the oceans are rising just enough to be inconvenient, the hurricanes are wreaking havoc on an unprecedented scale. It is not, for example, a good time to be vacationing on the Mexican coast.

The Mexican coast, however, is just where "Synthi Venture" happens to be at the moment. "Synthi," a.k.a. Mary Ann Waterhouse, is a sort of futuristic soap-opera star. In the mid-21st century of Barnes' novel, TV networks have crossbred with on-line computer services and perfected a form of virtual reality; audiences can literally get into the heads of the performers and feel what they feel on an emotional level. Perhaps not surprisingly, this has made "XV" the ultimate sex-entertainment pastime as well as a unique news vehicle. One can, for instance, experience exactly what it's like to shoot down an enemy aircraft or rescue a child from a burning building—as long as the pilot or rescuer is wired into the network.

Synthi/Mary Ann's transition from sex object to worldwide conscience is just one strand of Barnes' multi-threaded plot. There's also political intrigue, as a successful financier makes a bid to monopolize crucial technology before the rest of the world sees the need for it. There's crusading journalism, as a reporter working without XV's benefit discovers exactly what's being done (and not being done) about the hurricanes. Finally, there's the scientific counterpunch, as a pair of widely separated experts engineer a plan to skip a comet across the Earth's atmosphere as you'd skip a rock across a lake.

Barnes makes the weather lore remarkably easy to follow, with an amiable prose style that gives the premise an unnerving plausibility. His characters are likewise both engaging and complex, with no clear and unrelieved villains in the lot. (This last is no small feat, considering that one of the players is the power behind a series of brutal sex killings—in which the victims were hooked up to XV equipment.) And though Barnes pulls no punches in describing the explicit experiences possible through XV the results are somehow neither prurient nor clinical.

Mother of Storms is science fiction in the most classic sense of the term: a carefully reasoned and developed story in which scientific speculation is the keynote. But it's also lively, thought-provoking reading that owes as much to today's SF trends as it does to the genre's founding tenets. As such, it's a rare book, and an especially welcome one.

A LOGICAL MAGICIAN

Robert Weinberg

Ace 0-441-00059-2 \$4.99

Applying the rules of logic and the con-

sistency of a scientific outlook to the mechanics of magic isn't a new idea; Randall Garrett's Lord Darcy stories and the Harold Shea adventures by Fletcher Pratt and L. Sprague de Camp have both made use of the premise. Now Robert Weinberg follows in the footsteps of both series, bringing his own brand of logical magic to modern-day Chicago.

Weinberg openly acknowledges his tale's literary ancestry; a knowledge of fantasy fiction proves to be a job qualification for Jack Collins, who visits "Ambrose Investments" after seeing an ad for a job requiring both his college-trained mathematical abilities and his expertise in genre literature. What the ad doesn't mention is that he'll be working for Merlin the Magician, who is presently making his living by keeping a crystal ball trained on the financial markets.

But Merlin doesn't need Jack for his Wall Street acumen. The ad also says "some risk involved," and no sooner has Jack finished the interview than a mysterious biker gang appears from nowhere to kidnap both Merlin and his daughter. An ancient demigod, it develops, has been unexpectedly summoned back into the world, and only Jack has the necessary combination of talents to defeat its plans for global domination. That is, if he can survive long enough to unravel the details of the demigods' planned power-enhancement ritual.

The tone of the narrative is somewhere between the light, humorous whimsy of the Shea stories and the crisper, slightly formal prose of the Lord Darcy tales. Weinberg's style is amiable, but though he doesn't pass up chances for comedy as they arise, he doesn't minimize the stakes or sacrifice his villains by making them unnecessarily bumbling. To the contrary, they're every bit as dangerous as Merlin's vision implies, and Weinberg's background as a horror writer comes through in the descriptions of summoning rituals and matters of demonology.

If there's a quibble to be made, it's that Weinberg relies a bit too heavily on the concept of "symbolic logic"—that an object's magical potential owes more to what it symbolizes than to its physical makeup. By the standards he develops in the latter part of the book, a case can be made that it ought to be difficult or impossible for magical beings to survive and prosper in the modern world. By then, though, Jack has already discovered the opposite to be true, with an impressive assortment of legendary creatures living all over Chicago. But there's room to argue both sides of that proposition, and as the ending clearly foreshadows a sequel, it's a point that can be deferred for later resolution without seriously damaging the plot.

Judged as funny fantasy, *A Logical Magician* would most likely be counted a bit thin; it's clever enough, but not the equal of, say, a Terry Pratchett or Esther Friesner yarn. But as a successor to the tales of rational magic developed by the

likes of Garrett and Pratt and de Camp, Weinberg's novel easily meets the standard set by its forebears.

WIZARD'S FIRST RULE

Terry Goodkind

Tor 0-312-85705-5 \$23.95

The bound galley of Terry Goodkind's *Wizard's First Rule* arrived with several strikes against it: glossy cover stock, an unusually enthusiastic testimonial quote, and jacket copy with favorable comparisons to Tolkien. These are usually signs of a series that will sell phenomenally well without actually being very good. But this time, the writing inside the glossy packaging is, if not in Tolkien's league, both commercial enough to join Robert Jordan and David Eddings on the best-seller lists and fresh enough to be more interesting than either.

The world Goodkind creates is actually more reminiscent of Terry Brooks' Shannara than it is of either Eddings' vast realms or Jordan's milieu of half-familiar legends. As with Brooks, the names are partly Earth-modern and partly invented—one family includes a Richard, a Michael, and a George, while other characters bear such names as Darken Rahl or Kahlan Amnell. Similarly, Goodkind imagines a landscape where magic, long out of favor after a devastating conflict, is abruptly returning to prominence. Goodkind's tale, though, has three crucial qualities missing from the Shannara stories.

The first is a knack for creating characters who are both archetypal and eminently human. This is an unusual feat: each of the four major players is driven by a single defining goal, yet the thematic focus doesn't prevent Goodkind from making them vulnerable, sympathetic people. Thus while Richard Cypher soon finds himself wearing the mantle of the Seeker of Truth (complete with a sword that is itself a cousin to Brooks' earlier invention), his actions and temperament are those of someone shaped by a well-lived life rather than the demands of an author's plot. And as truth defines Richard, so do other qualities define Richard's companions and enemies. Kahlan, a Confessor by training, is shaped by love, while Darken Rahl is driven by pure power and the wizard Zedd is the bearer of knowledge.

Second of Goodkind's virtues is that his world isn't cloned either from mythology or from a standard pseudomedieval template. There are no elves, dwarves, or halflings, but there are pockets of seemingly primitive culture and areas with not-quite-modern resonances, though nowhere does the technology move past the pre-industrial. The three loose kingdoms of Westland, the Midlands, and D'Hara form a landscape that rests on its own inventions and history, not borrowings from other people's novels or a set of legends raggedly modified to fit a new setting.

Third, and perhaps most significant, Goodkind neatly balances the stakes set by his plot between the cosmic and the personal. If Darken Rahl's schemes succeed, we're told, the world will more or less cease to exist—but at the same time, Richard and Kahlan's relentless quest to stop Rahl is as much a matter of fierce individual need as it is of high moral principle. And it's not just that they're in love with each other, though Goodkind also comes up with an intriguing method of complicating that aspect of their relationship.

The combination of skilled character work, reasonably fresh setting, and even-handed plot produces a story that readers should find distinctive and memorable, one that can't be as easily dismissed as, say, the latest installment of an Eddings saga. At the same time, though, Goodkind's tighter focus and wholly invented milieu set him in a category different from the high mythic epics of Tolkien or Tad Williams. Suffice to predict that *Wizard's First Rule* has all the ingredients to be a strong commercial success, and that Goodkind's name won't be joining the list of writers widely regarded to be more popular than they are good.

Recurring roles

This summer definitely has been the season of the strange anthology. Besides rewriting Shakespeare, SF and fantasy writers have been busy skewering tabloid journalism in *Alien Pregnant By Elvis*, (DAW, \$4.99), presided over by Esther Friesner & Martin H. Greenberg. Yet though there's plenty of far-out silliness in the volume (perhaps most notably typified by stories from both Mike and Laura Resnick), there's also more thoughtful material to be found.

It's also been a good season for vampires. M. C. Sumner, whose fiction has been seen in DRAGON® Magazine's pages, completes a chilling young-adult (YA) trilogy with *The Coach* (Harper, \$3.50), taking a slightly science-fictional approach to matters of vampirism. In a move unusual in the YA ranks, Sumner also gives his young hero and heroine virtually equal roles, setting the story apart from the typical female-driven romances commonly aimed at this audience. Meanwhile, *Death and the Maiden* (Ace, \$4.99) continues P. N. Elrod's Revolutionary War saga about Jonathan Barrett, whose family's problems are a good deal more immediately threatening than his undead status. As usual, Elrod displays a common-sense attitude toward her vampire that makes the story thoroughly readable.

Elsewhere in the ranks of continuing series, first contact in the StarBridge universe gets much more dangerous in *Silent Songs* (Ace, 4.99), where collaborators A. C. Crispin and Kathleen O'Malley introduce several new alien species to a previously contacted world, one of them almost pathologically warlike. Though the echoes of classic Andre Norton are still very much

in evidence, there's an edge to the conflict this time out that's darker and more personal.

Debra Doyle and James D. Macdonald ring down the curtain on their initial "Mageworlds" trilogy in *By Honor Betray'd* (Tor, \$4.99), though there are promises of additional novels to come. Like the first two books, this is space opera with a vengeance, complete with cliffhangers, space battles, double agents, mutinies, duels of honor, and unexpected reappearances. High adventure just doesn't get any higher than this, and swashbuckling doesn't get any more debonair.

Summer's end brings with it the latest books from the prolific Mercedes Lackey, and both new arrivals are both solid entries in established series. *Chrome Circle* (Baen, \$5.99) teams Lackey and Larry Dixon; it's the fourth "SERRATED Edge" novel and the second featuring Tannim, part-time race driver and full-time mage. This time, Tannim is being pursued by a mysterious (and alluring) female fox-spirit, but behind their rivalry is a much deadlier conflict involving Tannim's magical mentor and the fox-spirit's draconian father. If there were sufficient breathing space, one might boggle at the variety of inter-species romances contemplated here, but there isn't, so one merely speeds along and enjoys the ride.

Storm Warning (DAW, \$21.95), meanwhile, begins a new Valdemaran trilogy on the heels of the just-finished "Mage Winds" group. Unlike some writers whose series replay the same plots over and over, Lackey injects several new elements this time around. The protagonist is a young diplomatic aide from Karse, which is newly allied with Valdemar in an effort to hold off the formidable and ancient Eastern Empire, presently camped on both lands' eastern border. A whole new side of Valdemaran society emerges with the introduction of a sort of scientists' guild, whose talents become one of the keys to unraveling a magical threat even older than the Eastern Empire. (More intriguing yet, there are points of reference between this novel and *The Black Gryphon*, even though the two books are set nearly two millennia apart in time.)

Finally, Peter David has produced another expectation-shattering *Star Trek* opus in *Q-Squared* (Pocket, \$22.00). This one is a galaxy-spanning free-for-all in which Q—very reluctantly—finds himself recruiting Picard and company to save the universe from the plans of one Trelane, sometime Squire of Gothos, who also just happens to be Q's godson. There are cameo appearances by a number of familiar secondary players, and enough parallel plots to make a veritable cat's cradle. Add in David's ear for dialogue, and you have a *Trek* adventure that should keep fans chuckling on the edges of their seats.

Ω



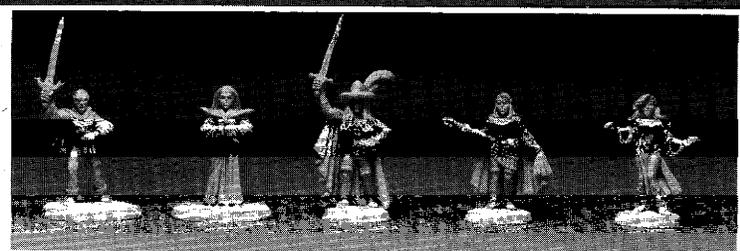
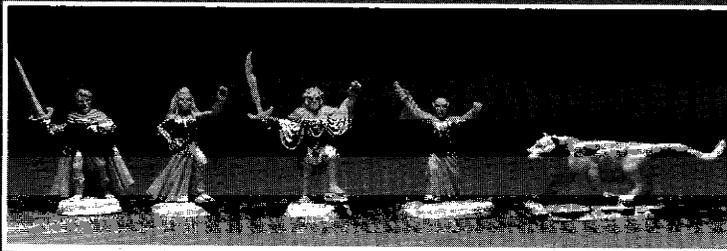
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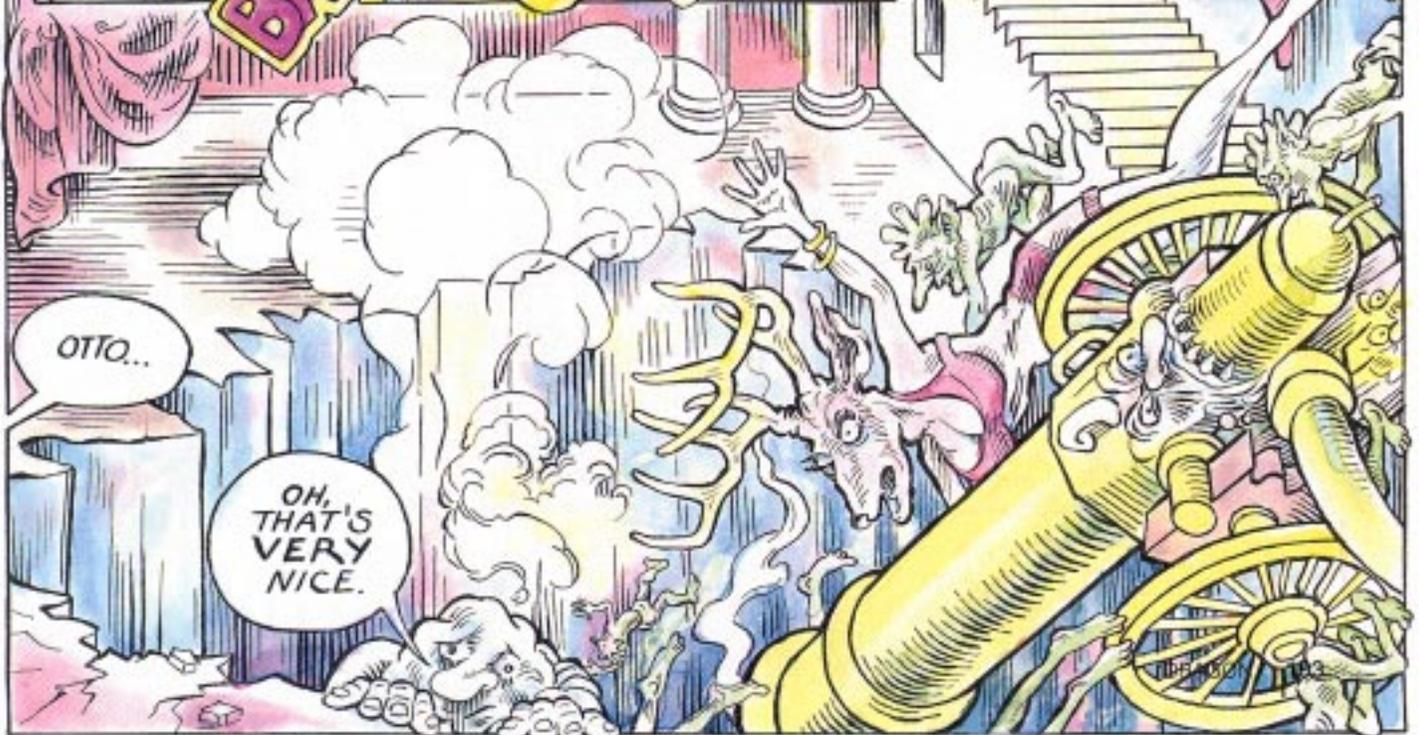
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TO JEN'S HOME, ONLY
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A PATH FOR THE
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AIM!



BADDOOM!

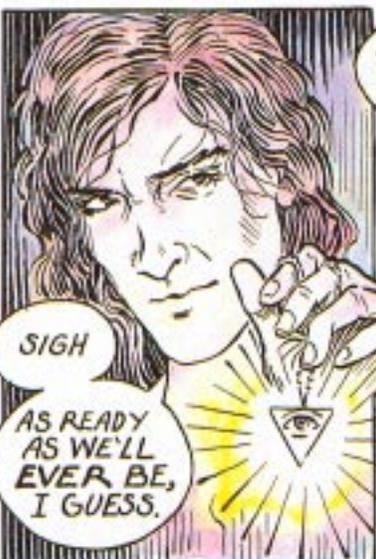






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GIRL TALK. ARE WE READY?



SIGH
AS READY AS WE'LL EVER BE, I GUESS.



REMEMBER, THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE..!



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HOME?

WHERE ARE THE PEOPLE?

YES THIS IS MY TOWN BUT...

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UH, JEN?



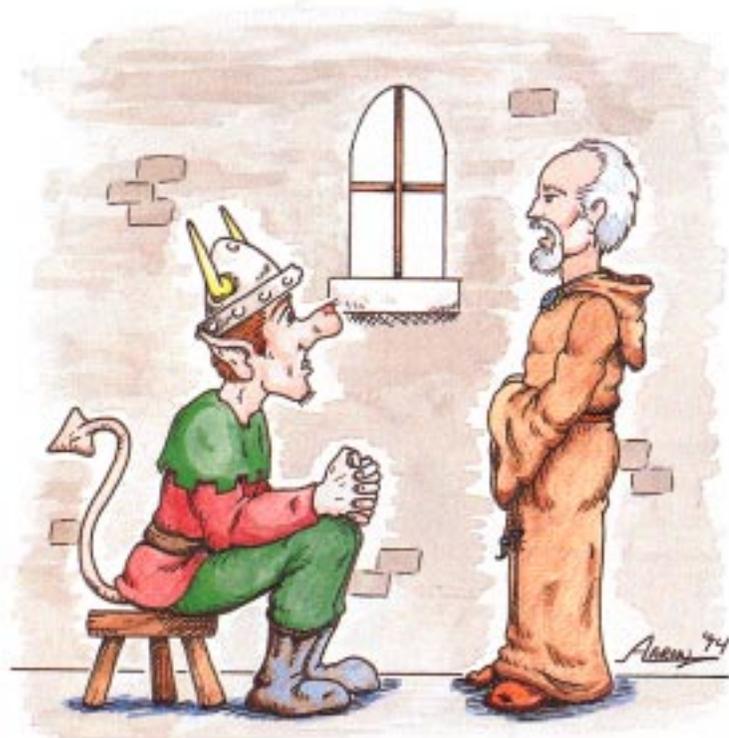
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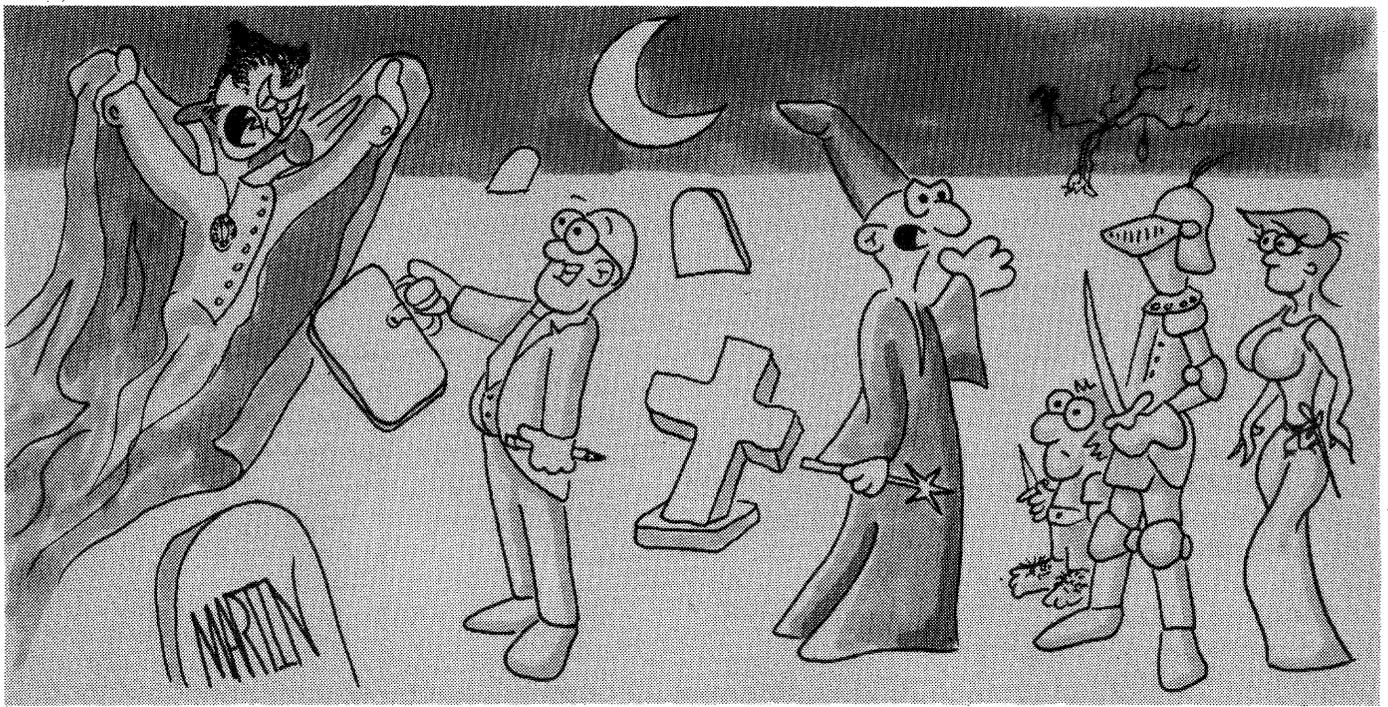
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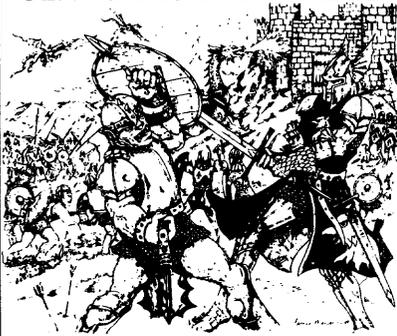
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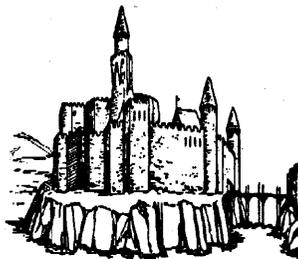
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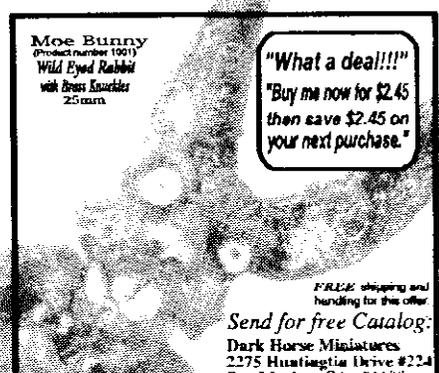
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THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS



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Photographs by Mike Bethke



Sleeping(?) Dragon (Grim Reaper Casting)

Plan ahead for winter

September heralds the last days of summer weather and the beginning of the autumn school or work grinds. As we settle back into our jobs or schools, the mellow laziness of the summer season still prevails and we seldom plan for the nasty weather of the coming winter. I propose that we do a little bit of planning and thereby add to our winter enjoyment this summer.

Most of us use water-based paints on our miniatures. This is a fairly safe process, easily done indoors in the dead of winter, without fear of fumes or illness from paint. I say "fairly safe," because the danger of fumes or flammable disasters

are still present with spray primers and sealers. Avoiding this is as easy as cleaning and priming a couple of figures each night of good weather during the rest of the summer, when you can ventilate your work area without getting chilled. By

Miniatures' product ratings

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

doing several different types of figures you will have a selection to fit almost any mood. Then you can take your time painting those already-primed figures during the long winter nights.

The other part of playing it safe is not using a spray sealer until you can once again ventilate your work area in the springtime. This is slightly more difficult, and requires "basing" your figures. Check the rules for a miniatures rules system, such as the BATTLESYSTEM® game, and see what size base your figure requires. Then cut a piece of balsa wood or artist's board to fit that size. Secure your figure to the base with a non-drying tacky cement, such as rubber cement (if you don't normally use bases) or with a hard-drying white glue (if you usually base your figures). Do not finish or landscape the top of the base, and by the unfinished base you will instantly know which of your painted figures still need to be sealed. If you pick up the figure only by the base, the paint will still be fresh and ready to seal come springtime; then simply paint the base and seal the whole thing at one time.

If you just can't wait to put on that coat of sealer, there are several water-based sealers on the market, many of which leave a strange but nontoxic odor in a closed room after extended use. They're not harmful, but they also don't seem to last as long. If you want to use these sealers, keep an eye on your figure's finish on areas that are handled frequently.

Reviews

Grim Reaper Casting

Clifton Industrial Center
Mill Rd. & N. Sycamore Ave.
Clifton Heights PA 19018

Sleeping(?) Dragon 1028 (lead), 5008 (lead-free)

Please note that Grim Reaper Casting, appearing in this column for the first time, a different company than Reaper Minia-

** *1/2

tures. The example of this figure received for review is made of a lead-free substance and scaled for 25 mm. This one-piece casting includes a pile of treasure that consists of a bent shield, a broken pot, a slightly flattened skull, a banded treasure chest and a blanket of coins. Lying on all this is a 140-mm long wingless dragon. The body is coiled and tucked as if the creature is at rest or asleep, but close inspection shows the eyes to be open.

The figure is interesting and has numerous possibilities, but is not a high-quality piece. The scales are mostly squared, but there are areas where separation is poor and the lines blur between the scales, body, and base. The metal has filled in areas that look as if they were sculpted to show differences. The miniature could easily be fixed by a really good paint job, and no cleanup or filing is needed. The lead figure is \$4.25, while the pewter is \$6.50.

Armored Giant * * * 1/2
#1025 (lead), #5025 (lead-free)

This is a 65-mm lead-free knight with several armor types. No face is visible through the slitted visor or the air holes on the sides of the helmet. The boots appear to go to mid-thigh and are a heavy leather with open backs. Chain mail is visible on much of the body when viewed from the rear. These pieces of chain are secured by straps and buckles. The majority of the suit is overlapping plate. The left arm is in two parts with a ball joint at the elbow. The ball joint fits well, but needs support while the adhesive is drying, even if you use an accelerator, because the shield tends to pull the arm down. The sword has a wavy blade, and my figure's sword was cracked.

The figure is not as detailed as other figures of this size. The plate separations are vague in the stomach area, and the visor edges are rough. The hands are padded, but the detail is weak. This is a figure that could be helped by a good paint job and some work spent on leveling the shield. The price is \$4.75 for lead or \$6.75 for lead-free, and may be slightly high for the quality. It does look considerably better after clean-up and priming.

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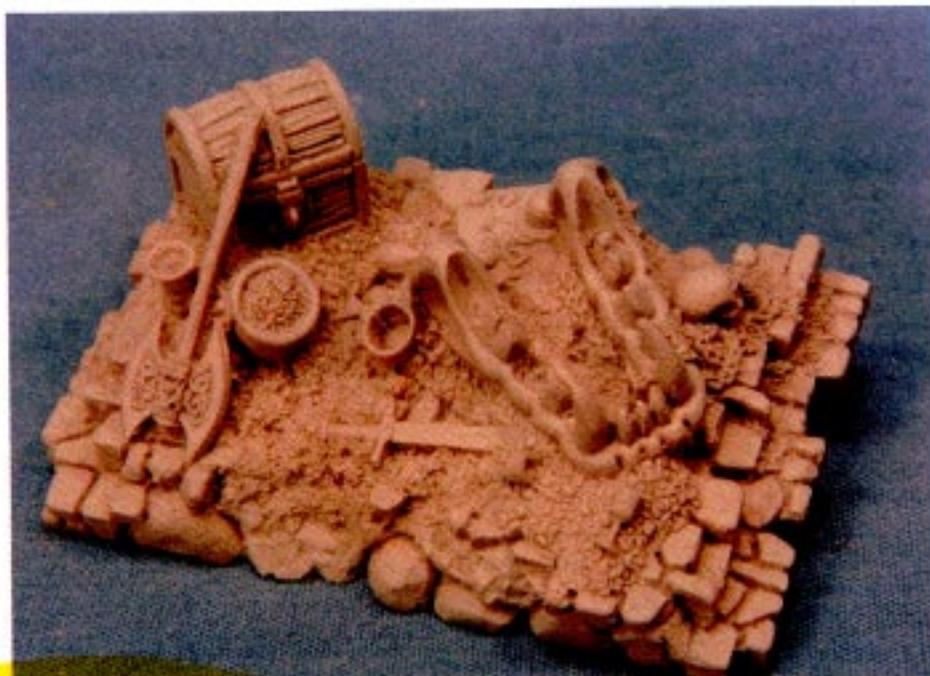
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#411 Coffins (Assortment) * * * *

This set of six coffins, scaled to 25 mm, is cast in lead-free luminite. Five of the coffins are of standard design while the sixth is a sarcophagus. Two of the coffins are "sealed" one-piece units complete with handles, one with a flat top and one with a



raised top. Both have a wood-grain textured surface, and both have a slight mold line in the side. The flat-topped sealed coffin has a slightly depressed top with a plate. The surface is slightly roughened and the wood grain is not as distinct as on the raised-top coffin, which is smooth and without blemishes.

One coffin is in a serious state of decay; a skull and part of the occupant's body are visible through openings in the splintered and sagging top. The handles are intact on the wood-grained sides, and the mold line runs along the grain. The skull has some hair and partial features. This one has no flash and would make an excellent addition to a graveyard diorama.

The two two-piece caskets are identical. The lids have a wood grain look and are slightly smaller than the outside casket dimensions. The sides also are wood grain and are not bothered by the mold line. The insides are rough-hewn and rough-looking in appearance as if it was more important to get the outside right for the sake of the mourners. There is some slight pitting on the inside of the coffin and on the lids, but nothing that seriously detracts from the figure.

The sarcophagus top and bottom line up together almost exactly. As with most vaults, the only real detail is on the top. Egyptian-type symbols and an open eye adorn the top, and a line of hieroglyphic panels stretches from the chest area to the foot area. Unfortunately, the detail on these panels is very shallow and you may want to etch them somewhat deeper before priming and painting.

I'm sure you could find many uses for this set in any of several systems. I recommend this set for diorama building and DMs alike. The price is \$7.00 per package.



Armored Giant (Grim reaper Casting)

#338 Pack Ponies * * * * 1/2

For characters traveling a long distance who want to take along a lot of useful stuff, some kind of carryall beast is essential. This set contains two pack ponies scaled for 25 mm and molded in luminite. It also contains a hoard of neat extras.

Pony #1 comes fully encumbered. He stands about 18 mm high x 31 mm long. He has a slight list to the left and a slight mold line along the back of his jaw. His mane lies to the right, and his nostrils are



Coffins Assortment (Grenadier)



Pack Ponies (Grenadier)

flared and his ears forward as if he is scared or angry. His load includes two bedrolls, a keg, several pouches and bags, and a piece of fur. All this rests on a saddle blanket and lines. The horse is just kind of plodding along with a bare swish of his tail. There was a very small amount of flash on the chest and front legs.

Pack pony #2 is very similar in posture and size and has the same facial features. This horse has a bobbed or clipped mane, and the tail is not being flicked. The horse has no load, only the pack frame, so you can use the other gear in the package to stock it for an adventure. The only thing wrong with this horse was the flash on the

front legs.

The pack loads in this set give you the opportunity to not only set up the pony, but to detail other accessories and animals. The loads all have one side "flat" and undetailed so it can lean against or be mounted to an item. There are two different quivers of arrows, a kettle with handle, a keg with wood sides, a wineskin, a bedroll, several sacks, a backpack that has tie-down areas and straps over the pockets, and a bundle of shields and weapons.

These bits of equipment could easily be "treasures" for characters to discover. Or, use this set to force players to plan what their characters will take along and how

their beasts of burden will be packed. I'm sure that you can find a number of different uses for these items. The whole pack is \$4.50 and well worth the price.

#412 Sacrificial Altar with Accessories

**** 1/2

This is an eight-piece diorama set that can add purpose to any group of heroic characters. The altar set is scaled for 25 mm and made of luminite. There is some assembly required on the altar. Both altar supports are hollow halves with the outside surface of each one resembling rough rock. The support for the upper end has a scowling moon overlaying an engraved star, while the lower support has no engraving but has a large slot that the stone hand and bowl fit into.

The altar top is smooth except for three blood channels that empty into a spout. The upper corners of the altar have manacles molded into the surface, while the lower edge ahead of the spout is decorated with the skulls of former victims. The spout is set so that it empties into the rough-hewn stone hand with visible talons supporting a deep stone bowl. There was virtually no flash on the set, except around one of the fingers on the hand-receptacle. My only complaint is that the supports weren't made complete with two sides to each one.

Naturally, the set includes an innocent victim. The figure is mounted on an oval base that contains a number of bones, a whip, and a skull. She is secured to a stake with thongs. She is dressed like a harem girl and her only decorations are a tooth necklace and rope belt. There is a look of panic on her face. Body detail is very good, except where it meets the stake; then it is slightly flat. Considering the circumstances, the figure is tastefully done.

Lighting is provided by a two-piece candle stand. The base is made of four very rough boards with ragged ends. On top of these boards sits a human skull. The boards have some flash and require some finishing work. The three candles are mounted in a tall metal holder, and tallow drips from the candles down the pole in an interesting design. My only gripe about these two pieces is that the base hole was bigger than the candle support and had to be filled in order to glue the pole in place.

The last piece in the set is a low altar with a ram sacrifice on it. The altar is a stone slab on an oval base of matching stone. The side behind the ram is a little rough, and there was a mold line on the base. The ram itself was well done.

I liked the set for its numerous possibilities, and I recommend it for those of you who use miniatures to beef up your game. The price is very reasonable at \$7.00.

1503 Trooper Tac Squad

**** 1/2

This pack consists of two figures sized to the larger 28 mm scale and cast in luminite. The figure supports and bases are of

the slotted type and are high, round, and plastic. Both figures are dressed in a standard uniform of high-topped boots, heavy slacks with strap and buckle armor at shin and boot, a long-sleeved shirt and full flak vests front and rear. Their wide belts support several clips, a holstered pistol on the right and a radio on the left. Both are armed with a heavy machine gun or bolt gun with either built-in light or an under-slung weapon system.

Trooper #1 has no helmet but is wearing a communications headset. His hair is short and his face is angular and taut as if he is concentrating. Even though his facial detail is not sharply defined, it should be easy to paint. He is advancing at the ready as if preparing to go around a corner.

Figure #2 is wearing a modified Fritz helmet with neck protection and a light source. The helmet is secured with a padded chin strap and supports a set of enhancer goggles. The expression on the face is almost neutral, and detail is very good. With his sleeves rolled up and his aggressive firing stance, you know he means business.

Both of these figures are multipurpose. They could be mercenaries, corporation security, police units, or an anti-terrorist squad. The poses on these figures are realistic, and the price is good. There were only three small pieces of flash, and the mold line is virtually nonexistent. I highly recommend these figures. My only wish is that more of the detail was better defined. The price for two figures is \$4.00.

1502 Robo Hunters **** 1/2

This pack contains two 28-mm scale figures cast in luminite with their plastic bases. One is dressed in a long, armored coat that drops from the shoulders to the top of the ankle. A data disk set hangs from a strap over his right shoulder and rests on the left side while a data cord runs across the back of the figure to a half-hidden scanner in the bulging right pocket of the coat. The figure has gaunt cheeks and a brooding expression that is slightly exaggerated, and his hair is done in "threads." He is carrying a heavy pistol with a sighting apparatus supported in his crossed arms. Even his shoulder epaulets hang heavy as he waits. There was an easily removed mold line on the left side and a bulge in the bottom of the coat where it would be hollow.

The other figure is dressed in a pair of sharply creased pants, a shirt and ascot, and an open button-down trenchcoat. The coat has no visible outside pockets, but comes equipped with a split tail joined by a clasp. The figure is supporting a heavy luger-type pistol using a shooter's grip. The features on the face are very blocky with sharp edges and remind me of Dick Tracy. His hair is slicked back, his ears are exposed, and a visor crosses his face. A data unit is strapped to a narrow belt and buckle and hangs on his left side. The only



Sacrificial Altar w/Accessories (Grenadier)



Robo-Hunters (Grenadier)

problems with this figure are the blockiness of the features and a pesky mold line that seems to emphasize all the creases.

I highly recommend this pack. The characters could be deckers or almost any of the different sub-types in a number of game systems. They can even serve as villains. The most important feature is the racial mix, something not seen often enough. The price is \$4.00 for two figures.

1904 Lightning Strike Buggy **** 1/2

This kit is scaled for larger-scale figures and consists of epoxy and lead castings. The body is over 80 mm long, 40 mm wide

and 43 mm tall on the wheels. Details on the one-piece epoxy body include an air ram scoop, heavy-duty front and rear shocks, twin ramjet engines mounted on the rear, side fuel compartments, a rear grille for engine cooling, and side hoses and instruments. The interior is hollow to the underdash and includes a box of supplies, a heavy machine gun with pole mount, one seat, and an aircraft-style steering wheel. The body is modeled after an army fast attack vehicle. The roll cage and driver protection armor is made out of lead molded to resemble planks and metal bars. The front bumper is lead



Lightning Strike Buggy (Grenadier)



Strike Helicopter (Grenadier)

molded to bar stock standard with ropes. The axles, differential, and tires all are lead with no flash, but there is a pesky mold line on the rear tires that will require work and patience.

This vehicle has no assembly instructions, and you have to guess exactly where the pieces go. The bumper is obvious, but the roll cage can go with the board in front or above. The bottom of the buggy must be smoothed for the axles to fit right, and I recommend that you center the axles by hand, then use epoxy.

I recommend this kit for a number of different reasons. It can fill a vehicle gap in games, and you can easily super-detail

this vehicle using plastic scrap and household debris, but most of all it fits from the present into the far future. Even with work, it has a lot of possibilities for the \$9.50 price tag.

1305 Strike Helicopter

This helicopter consists of an epoxy cabin/body with molded windshield, hatches, lights, turbojet engine assembly complete with gearing and hoses, and a large dispersal exhaust. Basic armament is a chaingun mounted on the left side when looking from the rear. The skids are lead, and their location is not marked on main body. They should go toward the rear of

the cabin just after the body curve for best balance. The rotor and tail assembly are lead and fit into a molded slot at a slightly forward tilt. There is a mold line on the rotor hub that is easily removed. The real "bear" on this kit is the rotor blades. The ends of the blades attached to the rotor head are slightly rounded, but there is little area to secure the blades. You will have to rig a support jig and use epoxy to get the figure to dry securely. You will also want to pin the piece if you intend on using it.

Even with these faults, the piece is worth the \$9.50 price tag. There are holes in the skid frames that allow other weapons to be mounted, or there is space on the hull. This vehicle/aircraft could belong to almost anyone and will definitely cause your players to look up instead of only ahead.

Lance & Laser Models Inc.

P.O. Box 14491
Columbus OH 43214

TORG* -018 Jazz Fighter

*** 1/2

This 25-mm preview figure is made of lead, but is currently available only in nonlead. The figure is mounted on a non-textured oval base. The Jazz Fighter is a well-endowed female wearing high-heeled, high-topped boots, and knee-length torn trousers with knee protectors. Above the waist she wears a fringed jacket with elbow and shoulder pads and a zippered front over a ridged halter top. She is armed with a pistol and laser sight in a firing position in her right hand. A set of claws on her left hand are every bit as menacing as Wolverine's claws. The left side of her head is bare and holds a cyber-jack whose cable snakes down to her chest. The rest of the hair is teased up and back to fall just below the shoulders. There is a lot of facial detail, but it is rough, as if it were surgically applied and slightly off kilter. Her expression is almost that of someone possessed.

There was no flash on this figure, and the mold line is well camouflaged. At first glance the figure seems rougher than it is. The shoes need work at the heel, but, if time is taken, it will paint up nicely. The figure is \$2.15 in nonlead form.

Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.

5938 Carthage Ct
Cincinnati OH 45212

Minifigs

1/5 Graham Road, Southampton
ENGLAND SO2 OAX

20-510 Corporate Security

This package contains four identically equipped troopers in two different postures plus an orc figure. All five are mounted on oval bases that have a tile pattern engraved on the top. The humans are wearing the modern equivalent of plate mail over pants held by belts and buckles. Joints are protected by circular

pivoting plates to allow for free movement. Square environmental tanks are anchored to the back, while communications and exterior controls are mounted on boxes on the chest. The heads are covered by complete helmets and visors. These helmets appear to have built-in lights, sound-enhancing speakers on the side, and communications gear. Their gloved hands clasp well-detailed Ares MP LMGs, while one team of two covers with weapon fire and the other two advance with guns at the ready. These figures stand just short of 30 mm from floor to helmet crest.

The orc has the same basic uniform as the human guards, but the similarity stops there. This figure has much more bulk and stands almost 34 mm tall. Besides the holstered pistol on the left hip, he is carrying an SMG in his right hand. The fact that he has almost half a dozen clips for the SMG on his belt is no indication of his intent to use it. His left hand is signaling to come on.

This is a nice generic set of figures that could be used in any of the future-genre games, not just FASA's SHADOWRUN* game. There was no flash and only a mildly annoying mold line on the orc. You're going to need a few packs of these guys for a pitched battle to defend a target site from any good group of characters. The five figures retail at \$7.95 a package.



Jazz Fighters (Lance & Laser)

20-500 Shadow Runners * * * * * (lead) * * * * 1/2 (Ralidium)

This set contains four 28-mm figures. Three figures are on oval bases that have textures ranging from grillwork through sidewalks to cobblestone. The last figure is

mounted on a circular base with engraved sidewalks. All are in action poses.

The first figure could be a body guard or a former company man/merc. He is dressed in knee-high boots and long puffed trousers. A coat with twin vents



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Corporate Security (Ral Partha)

and wide lapels covers an armored shirt and is cinched at the waist by a narrow belt and buckle. He is armed with a Predator 2 pistol in his right hand, and the left fist is clenched. A wide-brimmed hat shades a serious facial expression and

slightly sunken cheeks. A mold line runs along the front and back of the legs. This was easy to remove on the lead figures but more difficult to get rid of on the raldium figures without damaging the creases in the trousers.

The dwarf figure is running on bio-enhanced bravery and fighting with a laser crescent held in a striking position in his right fist. Short alpine boots and shorts frame a pair of bare legs; above the waist he wears a beaten and torn denim jacket joined by laces in the back and unbuttoned in front. A chest strap supports a well-hidden holster on the left side. Chains drop from his shoulders over his bare arms. His left arm has a watch, and his right wrist has a studded armband. His hair is cropped in a flattop. Face detail is excellent and clearly shows an enhanced eye and an expression of berserker rage.

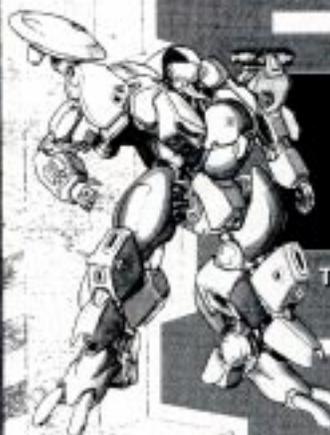
The third figure could be an elven mage or a gang member. He is dressed in knee-high cowboy boots, denim slacks with rear pockets, a wide belt with an engraved design, and a tee shirt. A jacket with shoulder protectors and long sleeves may conceal a smart link with the Ingram Smartgun in his right fist. The face is elven and angular and the pointed ears are obvious, but no data jack is visible. The figure had mold lines on the inside and outside of the legs and on the outside of the sleeve. The hardest part of the mold line to remove was in the wrinkles of the jacket. The lead figure required a sharp knife and a short work period, while the raldium required time and a file.

The last figure is a female shaman dressed completely in fringed buckskin



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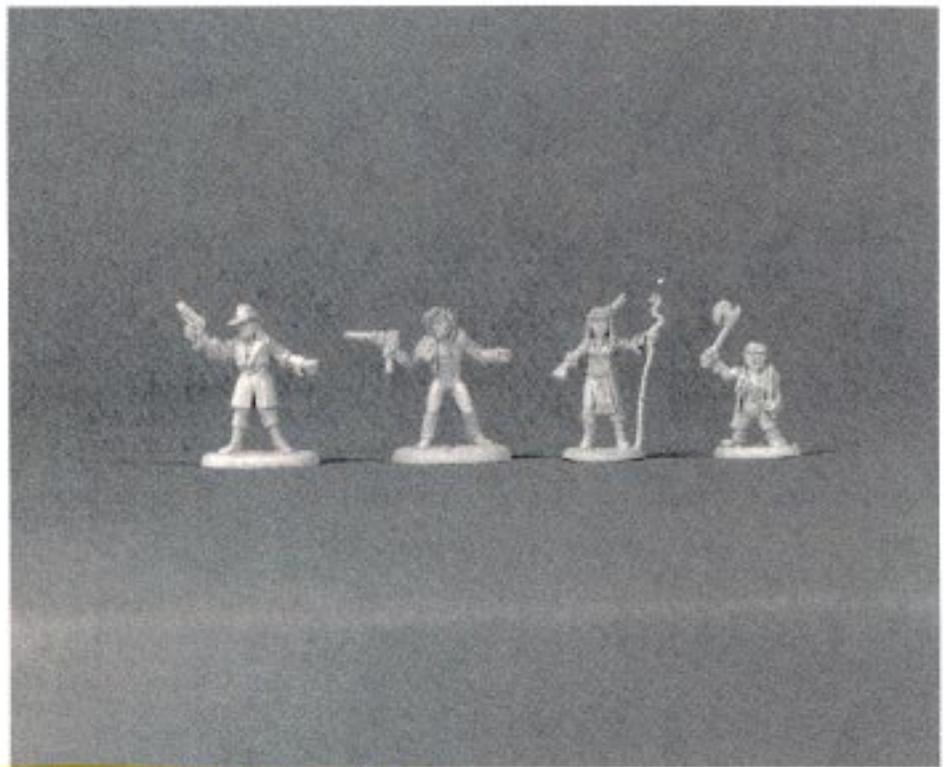
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except for the reed shield covering her stomach. Her waist is circled by a thin belt supporting three large component pouches. Her right hand is clenched into a fist while her left hand supports a totem staff. She is chanting, and her facial features are knitted in concentration. Her hair falls straight to the mid-back and two braids frame her face. Her hair is held by a laurel topped with an eagle feather. This figure had almost no mold lines on either type of casting.

This is a very basic set that is SHADOW-RUN-specific, but mostly worth the \$6.50 price tag. It also reminded me of why I prefer lead over the harder-to-work-with Ralidium.

If you have any questions or comments you can call me at (708) 336-0790 MWThFr 2-10 P.M. or SaSu 10 A.M.-5 P.M. or Write: C/O Friends Hobby Shop, 2411 Washington, Waukegan IL 60085. Thank you for your support.



Shadow Runners (Ral Partha)



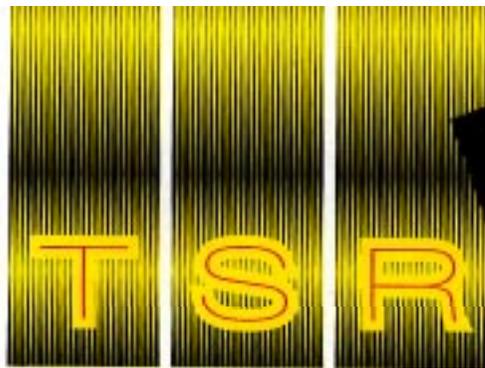
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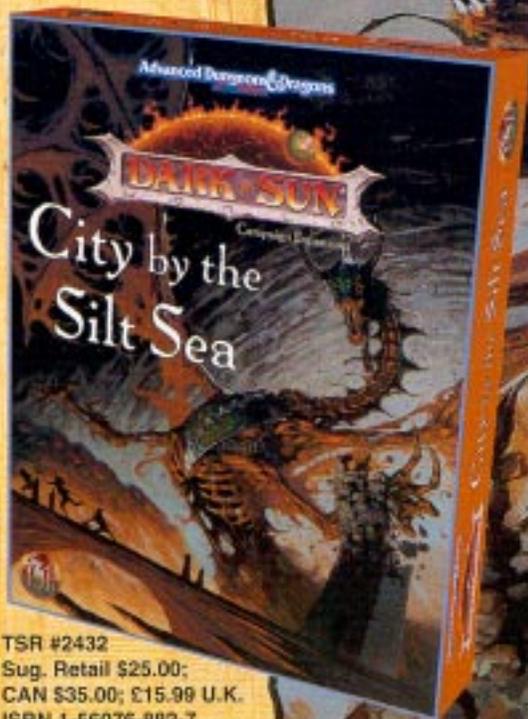
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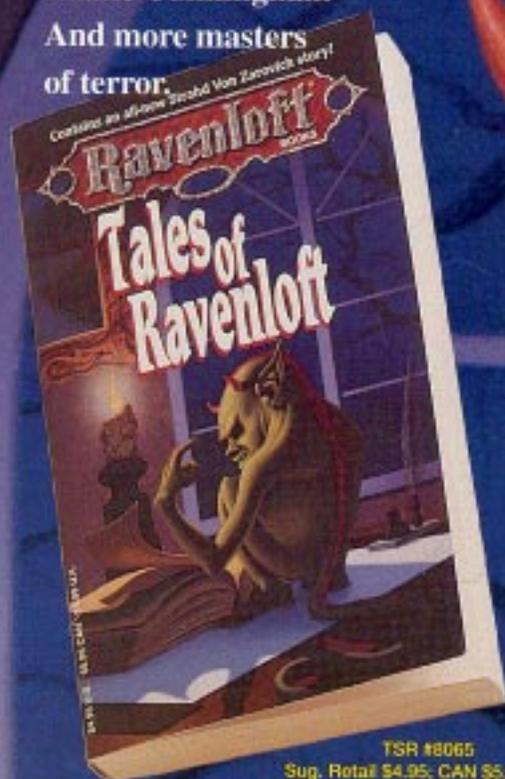
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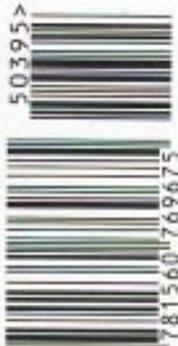
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