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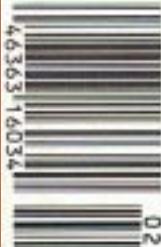
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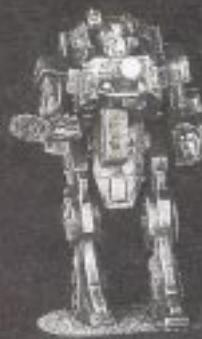
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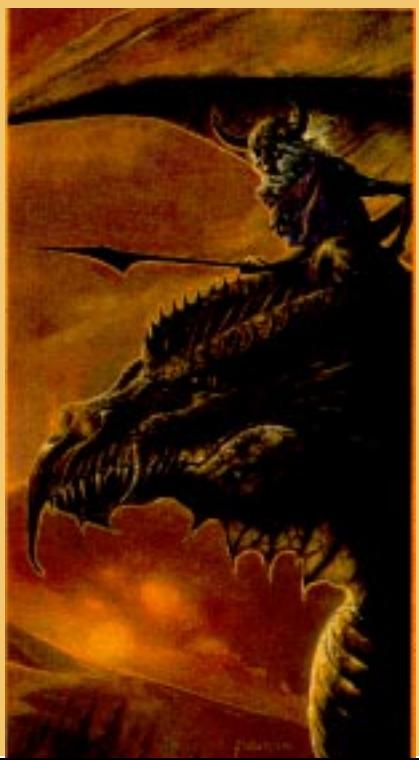
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CONTENTS

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS

- 11** **The Art of Making War:**
How you win can be more important than winning itself.
- 12** **Warrior Kings and Empire Builders** — Eileen Lucas
Those at the top of the political mountain should watch their footing (and their allies).
- 16** **The Making of a Paladin** — Eric Oppen
Paladins are made, not born, and the best are made over a lifetime.
- 18** **All in the Family** — Thomas M. Kane
Heraldry adds a lot more to your campaign than fancy shields.
- 30** **For King and Country** — Dan Salas
You're in the army now, and it's a whole new game campaign!
- 42** **How to Win Wars and Influence People** — Thomas XI. Kane
Knowing when *not* to fight is just as important as knowing when you should.

OTHER FEATURES

- 9** **The Game Wizards** — James M. Ward
A look at the Angry Mother Syndrome and how it affects the games we make.
- 53** **Role-playing Reviews** — Ken Rolston
What do Victorian Martians, cyberpunk elves, and mind-flayer space raiders have in common?
- 64** **Raistlin and the Knight of Solamnia** — fiction by Margaret Weis and 'Racy Hickman'
The knight's pride was not all he had left, but it alone would kill him—and many others as well.
- 76** **The Role of Computers** — Hartley, Patricia, and Kirk Lesser
One of Titan's cities has disappeared, and a stranded astronaut is the only one who can find it.
- 88** **Novel Ideas** — Will Larson
Meet three new books and their authors in our most "novel" column!
- 90** **The Voyage of the Princess Ark** — Bruce A. Heard
The flying ship finds an abandoned civilization—and the reasons for its destruction.
- 100** **"Who Was That Masked Android?"** — Marcus L. Rowland
If you think a pair of glasses will protect your super hero's identity, guess again!

DEPARTMENTS

- 5 Letters**
6 Sage Advice
8 Editorial
- 10 Forum**
84 Convention Calendar
96 Dragonmirth
- 98 TSR Previews**
102 Gamers Guide

COVER

Bob Eggleton's cover painting for this issue shows that one of the Four Horsemen has traded his horse for a dragon—"The War Dragon," in fact, is the name of the portrait. Death seems to like his rather intriguing mount. Obviously, he will be able to travel much farther and much more rapidly now on his errands. One still hopes that he will be forced someday to acquire a riding snail.

LETTERS

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

On mudslinging

Dear Dragon:

I usually find your periodical enlightening, and I read the letters to the editor and "Forum" first. But after I read Michael Henits's letter in issue # 151's "Forum," my copy almost went in the garbage. I feel that that letter had no place in a periodical that is supposed to promote RPGs. When the RPG community should be trying to improve its image, we allow a minority to determine how the public views us. How many parents have read Michael's letter and kept their children from playing? How many new players have read that letter and decided to quit playing?

I realize that you (the editor), in keeping with the ideal of a free press, do not want to resort to censorship of the letters to "Forum." But does Michael's letter really belong in your magazine? In issue #113, page 6, you specifically state: "We won't print letters that, in our opinion, don't make sense or are abusive, insulting, or overly sarcastic in tone." Does not Michael's letter fall into this area? If not, what does it take to be unacceptable for printing?

I believe that it is not only the editor's responsibility but also the writer's responsibility to present an idea without regressing to mudslinging and name-calling.

Mike J. Walters
Mason City IA

Selecting letters for "Forum" is an interesting task. I run most of the letters that I get that seem suitable for "Forum" though I do not run them all. I discard letters that are boring, redundant, or incomprehensible (either badly written or just really off the wall—and some of the latter I'll run anyway for fun). Second-guessing the readers' interests is always tricky; but that's what I'm paid for.

If a letter contains some comments that might be personally insulting to a particular individual, then I either edit out the comments or discard the letter, whichever is more worth doing. I generally like to keep a polite magazine—but I also like an interesting magazine, one that catches the readers' attention.

That's where the letter from Michael Henits, Eric M. Paulson, and Gregory H. Graham came in. Yes, the comment about the personalities and habits of AD&D® game players was insulting, though it wasn't directed at anyone in particular. But the rest of the letter expressed some opinions that seemed fairly important to me, and after some thought I decided to let even the nuisance comments stand. I recall thinking

something on the order of: "This ought to get the readers all stirred up!" Judging from the mail, I was correct in that assumption.

I would venture to say that not a single parent or gamer ditched role-playing in his or her house because of that letter. I don't agree with everything I get for "Forum," but I feel that all of the letters we have run in that column have made positive contributions to the gaming field (even the letters on whether or not mages should wear armor, or whether dragons or adventurers are more powerful). If nothing else, they show that gamers still love gaming.

At any rate, I don't make a habit out of running letters that call the players of a certain game "weenies." But I do look for material that expresses valid points and problems in gaming: game snobbery, public misperceptions of gaming, campaign balancing, better ways of playing and refereeing games, etc. And as I said before, I look for material that I feel will make the magazine more interesting to read. I'm like a kender (as perhaps we all are) in that I hate being bored. It never hurts to occasionally throw a salamander into the woodpile.

No contest

Dear Dragon:

The thing that we've been waiting for here at HQ is a contest, such as designing a scenario, writing a tournament, even designing a game. Nobody's asking for 50% of your stock, a \$10,000,000 cash prize, or a partnership with TSR. We're just looking for a challenge. The prize should promote gaming overall, such as a paid trip to a major gaming convention, some products, or maybe even a lifetime subscription to DRAGON Magazine or DUNGEON® Adventures. RPGA™ Network single-person or club memberships would also bring submissions and subscriptions pouring in.

Alex Iwanow, President
Polyhedron Challengers
East Brunswick NJ

When asked why DUNGEON Adventures has never run a module-design contest, editor Barbara Young replied that in a sense, submitting modules to the magazine was in itself a contest. If your module "wins" by being accepted, you receive a check from TSR, Inc., and tens of thousands of gamers across the world will read and use your adventure. Why did DUNGEON Adventures need a contest?

The same is true for DRAGON Magazine, though our "contest" is concerned with writing the best articles and creating the best artwork possible. If you "win," your material is paid for and becomes known in gaming circles the world over. (Well, we don't pay for "Forum" and "Letters" pieces, but you still get the fame.)

True, getting a one-of-a-kind prize is a nice thing. But you can't have very many winners that way. Getting printed in this magazine is a challenge in itself—and one in which you, Alex, have succeeded.

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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 3LD, United Kingdom.

The spells and abilities of magic-users and illusionists in the AD&D® 1st Edition game are explored this month. All references to the *Dungeon Masters Guide* and *Players Handbook* in this article are to the 1st Edition versions of those volumes. In all cases, the information in the AD&D 2nd Edition volumes takes precedence where there is a contradiction between those rules and this column.

Spells

Will a creature under a *fear* effect return attacks made upon it?

A creature affected by *fear* ignores any attacks made upon it unless it is cornered

and cannot flee. The creature fights at no penalty, although it might still drop items it carries (see the *PHB*, page 76). If the creature is in flight, attacks upon it are made against its rear armor class (no dexterity or shield bonuses).

Can a *lightning bolt* spell be cast vertically or at right angles to the caster, or must it be cast in line with the caster?

A *lightning bolt* spell must be cast so that the bolt is in line with the caster and his target. The bolt may be cast in any direction, including straight up, as space permits.

How do you handle the effects of a *stinking cloud* spell? How can any creature move out of the cloud if it is rendered helpless?

A successful save vs. poison indicates that the creature moves out of the cloud immediately and is helpless for a full round afterward. A failed save indicates that the creature is helpless for 2-5 rounds before leaving the cloud, remaining help-

less for one round after it emerges.

Can a creature's throat or mouth be sealed with a *hold portal* or *wizard lock* spell?

No. A closure to be sealed by a *hold portal* or *wizard lock* spell must be of wood, metal, or stone.

Does the caster of a *dispel magic* spell have to check to see if his own spells are dispelled? Will a *minor globe of invulnerability* prevent a *dispel magic* spell from working?

A *dispel magic* spell automatically works on the caster's own spells; a die roll is required to determine its success on all other magics. The two *globe of invulnerability* spells can be dispelled; note also that they are visible. If any *globe of invulnerability* is dispelled, then all other magical effects in the *dispel magic* spell's area of effect are subject to its effects. If a *globe of invulnerability* is not dispelled, it protects all magic effects within its area of effect. There are some spells that cannot



Illustration by Richard Bennett

be dispelled; *anti-magic shell* and *wall of force* are two examples.

I don't understand what the area of the first-level illusionist spell *phantasmal force* should be.

The base area for a *phantasmal force* spell is four (scale) square inches, meaning 10' × 40' (400 square feet) or any set of dimensions not exceeding 400 square feet. The area increases by one (scale) square inch (100 square feet) per level.

What is the area of a cone of cold spell?

The cone is ½" wide at its origin, 2" wide at its terminus, and ½" long per level of the caster. As noted in the previous question, these are scale inches, such that 1" = 10'. Thus, the cone is 5' wide at its origin, 20' wide at its terminus, and 5' long per level of its caster.

Can unseen servants fly? How fast do they move?

Unseen servants may move in all three dimensions at a rate of 12") subject to the spell's 3" radius. Thus a *servant* can move along with its caster at normal walking speeds.

Can a spell-caster still cast spells if he is polymorphed or reincarnated?

Yes, probably. *Polymorph self* allows spell-casting if the new form has prehensile digits and is capable of speech. Note, however, that all equipment carried *polymorphs* with the caster, so spell components won't always be available. If a *polymorph other* spell was used, the victim might "lose" his components as above, and he will lose all memories and abilities if he assumes the mentality of his new form. What happens when a character is *reincarnated* is up to the DM. Generally, the character can still use his professional skills if his new form will physically allow it, although further advancement is not always possible.

When a Mordenkainen's disjunction spell is cast, how do you determine the effects on magical items? Will an anti-magic shell or wall of force keep the effects of the disjunction out? What if only part of a spell's area of effect overlaps the area of the disjunction?

Items in the possession of the spell-caster are immune to the spell's effects. Items in the possession of other creatures gain their possessors' saving throws vs. spells, with all adjustments. Items that are by themselves can be *disjoined* using the *dispel magic* spell's system (comparing the caster's level vs. the level at which the magical item was created). Potions and scrolls are treated as if created by 8th-level magic-users; permanent magical items are treated as if created by 12th-level magic-users.

If any portion of a spell's area of effect overlaps the area of the *disjunction*, the entire spell is *disjoined*. A *wall of force* can be so *disjoined*, and it will have no effect on the *disjunction* spell. Treat the chance for *disjoining* an *anti-magic shell* as that for an artifact, but with no chance for attracting the attention of a powerful being (see *Unearthed Arcana*, page 65). If an *anti-magic shell* is unaffected, it protects all magic within its area; if the *anti-magic shell* is *disjoined*, all magical spells, effects, and items within the area of the *disjunction* are subject to its effects.

How do you determine the effect of a sleep spell on a group of mixed creature types?

This is up to the DM. He may rule that weaker creatures are affected first, or he may allow the caster to choose whether the more powerful creatures or the weaker creatures are affected first. He may also rule that creatures closest to the center of the spell's area of effect are affected first. The DM can choose any of these methods as long as he uses the same method all of the time.

If weaker creatures are affected first, the DM should roll to see how many of them are put to sleep and apply the effects. If all of the weaker creatures were put to sleep by the spell, and if the number of potential victims rolled was greater than the number actually affected, the DM may then take half of that difference (dropping fractions) and apply that to the next most powerful group of victims. For example, a magic-user faces a group of six 1-1-HD creatures, two 1-HD creatures, and one 3-HD creature. The DM rolls 4d4 and gets a 10. The six 1-1-HD creatures fall asleep, leaving a difference of 4. Half of 4 is two, so the two 1-HD creatures fall asleep, leaving the 3-HD creature unaffected. In another example, the magic-user faces four 1-HD creatures and one 4 + 1-HD creature. The DM rolls 2d4 and gets a 5. Four 1-HD creatures fall asleep; the difference is 1, but nothing remains after 1 is reduced by half and all fractions are dropped. Even if the result of the 2d4 roll had been an 8, the 4 + 1-HD creature would not be affected ($8 - 4 = 4$, $\frac{1}{2} \times 4 = 2$, but no monsters were present in the 2 + 1 to 3-HD category). The PC should not have everything his own way!

How does an anti-magic shell work? Does it destroy any spell with which it comes in contact? Can the caster cast spells through the anti-magic shell?

An *anti-magic shell* negates all magic within its area of effect. The caster's spells (which originate within the shell) are also negated, although they may remain after the shell's duration expires if their own durations are long enough. Note also that the shell causes magical items within its area of effect to cease functioning. In any case, the shell does not function like a

dispel magic spell. Magical items are not destroyed by the shell; they merely cease to function while within it. If their duration permits, magical effects will still function when they are taken away from the shell or when the shell's duration expires. For example, a *continual light* spell cast upon a rock will be negated only as long as that rock is within the shell; the *continual light* spell functions normally afterward. If part of a magical effect's area extends into the shell, only the portion within the shell is negated; the effect functions normally outside the shell. However, if a spell with an instantaneous duration is cast so that its center is within the radius of the shell, the spell is completely negated. For example, if a *fireball* were cast so that it would detonate inside an *anti-magic shell*, there would be no effect. If a *fireball* were cast so that it would detonate outside the *shell*, however, only the portion of the *fireball* crossing into the shell would be negated.

Will a haste spell double the movement rate of a character with a fly spell or broom of flying? Will it double the movement rate of a character who is under the effect of a potion of speed?

Haste spells do not increase the movement rate of a *fly* spell or of a conveyance, such as a *broom* or *carpet of flying*. *Haste* will double the speed of other creature-affecting magics such as a potion of *speed* or *boots of speed*. Two or more *haste* spells are not cumulative. Remember that *haste* and potions of *speed* cause magical aging.

Isn't the seventh-level illusionist spell weird overpowered? A spell that is capable of producing Hades or Hastur is a bit unfair.

It is unlikely that Hades or Hastur will be conjured by a *weird* spell, as deities of this power are almost never the personal nemeses of mere mortals. (Of course, if the spell were cast at a deity-class creature, it might produce such opponents.) If the spell is cast against an orc, it's likely to produce a hobgoblin or a gnoll at most. It is up to the DM to adjudicate any use of this spell reasonably and fairly (see *Unearthed Arcana*, page 71).

Is there a chance that a magic missile will miss its target?

No; a *magic missile* always hit its target unless it is protected by certain magics (*shield* spell or a *brooch of shielding*, to name a few).

Will a stoneskin spell protect a creature from the hailstones produced by an ice storm spell?

An *ice storm* will affect a creature protected by a *stoneskin* spell. Although the hailstones are projectiles of sorts, they are a magical attack just as are *magic missiles*.

Continued on page 94

EDITORIAL

Bye-bye, WWIII

A few weeks ago, Zeb Cook wandered into my office and told me that the Berlin Wall was coming down. I had been to both West and East Berlin in 1979 while I was in the Army, and I was staggered by the news. The world was miraculously made a better and brighter place—or so I certainly hoped.

Shortly after that, I had a slightly twisted thought: This was probably *bad* news for all of the post-holocaust, nukes & mutants RPGs on the market. The rise of democracy and freedom across Eastern Europe makes it unlikely that we'll see those white mushrooms rise over our home towns in the near future. And that does take some of the thrill out of playing World War III games. I had to admit that hand-to-hand combat with a four-armed alligator over a box of stale Puppie Yummies in the radioactive sewers of New York now seemed a little less believable.

In his editorial in GDW's *Challenge Magazine*, issue #41, Timothy Brown correctly pointed out that "a peaceful world is a boring world—from a role-playing point of view." I would personally never want to be within a light-year of a *real* nuclear exchange, but the *idea* has lots of entertainment value. Conflict and adventure are key elements in any role-playing scenario, and few modern-era events can dish out conflict and adventure like a nuclear war. Many gaming companies saw that and played up on it.

Looking back, it is interesting to see a sort of progression in the overall themes presented by post-holocaust role-playing games. We had TSR's GAMMA WORLD® game, which presented the aftermath as a fun (if deadly) sort of world full of mutants, robots, savages, and oddball bits of high technology. Steve Jackson Games' CAR WARS® system and other post-nuke survivalist games dropped a lot of the less "realistic" elements and made the world a little more grim (though still exciting). Then came GDW's TWILIGHT: 2000™ game, which washed away the sugar and gave you a black portrait of everything gone completely to hell. Away went the cheerful hacking and slashing as barbarians looted the Death Machine's lair. Now you had overheated machine guns, starving and screaming survivors, and cities full of burning bodies. It was World War III—the real thing, this time. I remember a peculiar sense of loss as I thumbed through one of the TWILIGHT: 2000 booklets and read the litany of nuclear targets across America. Atomic war was afterward a lot less amusing for me as a gaming idea.

Illustration by Timothy Truman



The themes of the post-holocaust games probably reflected the changes in public opinion on nuclear war. Not many people ever really cared for the idea, but the longer we all lived with the Bomb, the less enthusiasm we had for it. Movies like *The Day After* and *Testament* certainly showed that. And now it seems that the collapse of the old order in Europe has given those nightmares a final kick in the head (again, so we hope).

This certainly does *not* deal a death blow to modern-era role-playing, of course. Espionage games are quite intact, as real-life spying is a busier business than ever. The future is not wholly secure, as the cyberpunk games so easily show. There are lots of believable bad things left to come for our gaming enjoyment.

But if we must say good-bye to the Third World War in our games, let's at least pause for a moment and remember what those games taught us, if they taught us anything: A real atomic war would give us conflict and adventure to last all our lives.

But our lives would be very short, and we wouldn't much enjoy them.

Here's to all future worlds of role-playing. May they all be filled with danger and excitement—and may they never see the light of reality.

Last note: Ah, you're wondering why my editorial is here instead of on page 5 as usual. The post office has asked us to move the magazine's "fine print" (that column you were accustomed to seeing on the first page of "Forum") to the front of the magazine. We have happily complied—and this is the result. I hope you'll have the patience to look for my editorial in the future, even if it moves around a bit.

WATCH FOR US SOON!



The Game Wizards

Angry Mothers From Heck (and what we do about them)

by James M. Ward

Avoiding the Angry Mother Syndrome is something that I talk about quite often at TSR, Inc. Simply put, if a topic will anger the normally calm, caring mother of a gamer, we aren't interested in addressing that topic in any of our game products. Yes, I know that our company sells adventures full of swordsmen slashing their way through armies, with foul, smelly monsters waiting everywhere to crunch and eat player characters of every description. But I also know that there are clear differences between fighting for its own sake and fighting for a good cause. The "good cause" part is largely what role-playing is and should be all about.

I would like for all of you to think back on the best times you ever had in role-playing. Every gamer should have at least one adventure that really stands out in his mind. You remember when you finished a big quest, did almost everything right, and the treasure was in your character's arms and sparkling in your mind's eye. In almost all of these cases there was an honorable, public-spirited, or life-saving goal at stake. That goal is the essence of what TSR wants to foster in its role-playing products. Sure, each product should be lots of fun to play and involve high adventure, but each product also has to have certain elements that any gamer's mother in this or any other universe would smile at. These qualities must be present in each gamer's role-playing to foster the "right stuff."

Here is a case to illustrate this point. Ever since the *Monster Manual* came out in 1977, TSR has gotten a letter or two of complaint each week. All too often, such letters were from people who objected to the mention of demons and devils in that game book. One letter each week since the late 1970s adds up to a lot of letters, and I thought a lot about those angry moms. When the AD&D® 2nd Edition rules came out, I had the designers and editors delete all mention of demons and devils. The game still has lots of tough monsters, but we now have a few more pleased moms as well. I know there are many of you out there who are saying to yourselves, "Well, I am going to use demons and devils in my game no matter what TSR does!" That's fine with us. Free choice is one of the positive aspects of role-playing.

Avoiding the Angry Mother Syndrome has become a good, basic guideline for all of the designers and editors at TSR, Inc. But this concept also sets up a whole series

of other guidelines to which all of TSR's products must adhere in one way or another. We'll cover them briefly here so that you can see where we are coming from when we design our products.

TSR prides itself on the quality of the covers and interior art presented in every product. The male and female figures shown are heroic and good looking, and would get either G or PG movie ratings. Our artwork serves to promote the image of high adventure in our games, but it doesn't deal in blood and gore. That isn't the image we want to project. A painting of a hero about to hew at a monster with his shining broad sword is just as effective (if not more so) as a painting showing the

several forms. Your peers, the other players in the game, will always appreciate actions that help their characters. Tricking a monster or getting safely past a dangerous obstacle is one of the highest forms of role-playing and well thought of by all. In long campaigns, the materials to fight evil cost a lot of money. When you have found and saved enough gold pieces, you can purchase supplies to fight monsters—and, eventually, you might have enough to build your own castle or tower.

Adventure is the concept that keeps our fans coming back to TSR's modules, time after time. What exactly are those characters doing in those dark dungeons and magical forests? Gamers usually start out with the same pattern to their adventuring: They want to hack some monsters and get some treasure. The more treasure that gamers get, the more they enjoy the game. But anyone with any intelligence at all (and 99.9% of all role-players have a great deal of intelligence, which is why they enjoy role-playing) finds that hacking and slashing becomes boring very quickly.

TSR has produced its share of hack-and-slash dungeons, but since the late 1970s much more time has been spent on the "saving the princess" idea. "Saving the princess" takes on many forms (in most cases it doesn't even involve a princess), but the concept is almost always the same. Each module creates a situation in which the PCs have a goal worthy of their talents. TSR's products have used hundreds of goals of this sort, such as actually saving a princess, curing silver dragons of a terrible disease, and protecting small towns from raiding giants. Those who play in these modules like heroic goals. They like the challenge of doing something tough; they like to receive rewards for helping others out; and they like to feel good about their characters after these PCs accomplish something useful.

If anything is accomplished by this article, I would like for all readers to be able to point to it as a policy statement of TSR, Inc. This company is interested in presenting material that promotes all of the qualities that parents want their children to have as those children grow up.

The bottom line for TSR's role-playing products is that we believe that role-playing has many positive effects on the role-players themselves. Those benefits are put into our games on purpose. We care about our products and want as few angry moms as possible.



monster's guts being splattered messily about the room.

Another consideration is the level of violence that goes on during an adventure. Fighting the forces of evil often involves combating monsters and evil humans. But combat itself should be secondary to the goals of the adventure. Role-playing is based on the use of imagination; if you can defeat a monster without a fight, you are a better player than if you wade in and fight the monster with your sword and shield. Using your wits is much more rewarding than using muscles alone.

Rewards in a role-playing game take

FORUM

"Forum" welcomes your comments and opinions on role-playing games. In the United States and Canada, write to: Forum, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Forum, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We ask that material submitted to "Forum" be either neatly written by hand or typed with a fresh ribbon and clean keys so we can read and understand your comments.

By now, several letters have appeared in "Forum" on village clerics and their usefulness (or lack of it). I also have a few points on the subject that I would like to make, and this seems to be the right time.

The cleric has, up to now, been the in-between class of the AD&D® game: the armored spell-caster. Though he learns and casts spells, his armor and weapons are the same as those fighters use (the fighter has only a better selection). There are no nonmagical weapons that a cleric could use that a fighter could not.

This shouldn't be the case. Ideally, the cleric is an agent of a Power who delegates certain earthly tasks to the cleric and grants him powers with which to perform those tasks. Unlike the mage, the cleric does not charge himself with power to perform certain tasks; he asks his patron Power to perform them instead. He is like a king's reeve, doing things in the king's name. His spell level is more an indicator of how often the Power will grant his wishes.

There are three things that a DM might try to make the cleric more realistic:

1. Allow the cleric to choose his spells at the time of casting. I have seen this variation used with mages to good effect, without affecting game balance. This variation would go far to make the priest a separate brand of spell-caster. This also makes more sense for the cleric, as he is asking for something to be done by the Power. The Power (DM) can then decide whether or not to allow the spell. It makes sense that the Power might not want to have the cleric use his spells to the Power's detriment. Under the old system, the Power just hands out spells. If a cleric violates alignment, his punishment comes after the fact. This way, the Power can prevent undesirable actions.

2. Give out special abilities for hierarchical rank as well as level. Druids have always had this option, receiving abilities at certain levels. I suggest that abilities be given out as a cleric advances within his church's hierarchy as well. This is to counteract the accusation that the village priest would be of no use to the village. Despite his level, the priest would have a small parish of his own and would therefore have a higher rank than the wandering adventurer. Giving the priest the ability to, say, heal a believer of 1-8 hp damage, once per day, would make him more realistic and useful to his parish. The patriarch of a temple would have the ability to end a plague as well. None of these abilities would be available to the PC until he decides to settle down and stop adventuring.

3. I've always had this thing about clerical scrolls. If you were Bast, would you want a scroll you gave to your high priest 100 years ago (which he then transferred to a scroll) to be

used on your worshipers by a priest of Set? I don't believe Powers would allow their spells to be stored for use by any cleric who comes along. That includes miscellaneous magic, rods, and staves as well.

To replace them, I would provide the cleric with favors. For example, the cleric could have a dream in which her Power would appear and say, "I am well pleased with you, my daughter! Receive this gift of my favor." Thereafter, the cleric's own staff acts as a *rod of resurrection* or whatever item the DM chooses. If the staff is stolen, it becomes an ordinary stick again, while the next staff the cleric picks up acts as the original one did. This could be used for any current clerical item. There would be a set number of uses per item, and incorrect use of the item would result in a loss of all its power.

James R. Collier
Georgetown, Ontario

I'm writing this letter in response to the several letters in issue #151 concerning the D&D® and AD&D systems. I have been involved with D&D games for nine years (eight as a DM), and also with AD&D games for three years. Of the two, I am partial to the D&D system. As was pointed out, it was using "imagination roles" long before the AD&D 2nd Edition game.

Most of my opinion on the subject was said in the three or four letters printed, but there are a few things that need mentioning. As Mr. D'Amico said, the D&D game does have fewer spells, a smaller monster selection, and fewer classes than the AD&D game. That is all true, but it can be easily alleviated. Having experience in both systems, I found that using information and rules from one in the other was not only easy but was also a good way to throw in the occasional plot twist needed to add that element of surprise. There are a lot of things that can't be converted simply because of the always present balance of power. To handle the monster problem, I simply bought a *Monster Manual*, and with a little time had increased the amount of monsters—not that it was needed after I had gotten all of the D&D rules. With the classes, as with just about everything else, I used the basis of what all RPGs are made of: imagination. With a little time, imagination, and an idea of what would unbalance a campaign, you easily convert any AD&D rule into a simplified D&D "guideline."

All in all, I must say that I enjoy playing both systems) no matter how they are run. No matter what the rules are, it is still the imagination of the players that make these games appealing.

Charles Bingham
Hazelton ID

Recently I ran an adventure at a fairly large gaming convention. It was a fairly straightforward AD&D scenario that involved six characters of a variety of classes. In one portion of the adventure, the party was ambushed in an alley by a band of thugs and assassins. The party was making fairly good headway through the throng of villains when the evil band's leader—a mage—descended upon the characters while using a *levitation* spell. The party's mage had a cast a *stinking cloud* down the alley's only visible entrance. This was a good bit of strategy on the

part of the player running the mage. He not only cut off the only escape route for the attackers in the alley, but he also closed off the possibility of more attackers entering the fray, for at least a little while. Good job, mage!

As said, the evil band's leader saw the cloud coming and "floated" over the cloud, coming down into the melee below. He chose as his initial target the good party's mage. He cast a *magic missile* spell, causing the mage to lose about half of his hit points. After this, a fighter in the party threw a hand axe at the evil spell-caster. I role-played it so that the evil mage seemed to turn his attention to the fighter as he began to cast another spell. In the next round, initiatives were rolled and at the appropriate segment I told the mage PC that he had been hit by another string of *magic missiles* for 15 hp damage. "Where did these come from?" the player of the mage yelled. I said, "From the hovering mage who is now laughing with an evil smirk on his face." The player protested my playing of this situation, as his mage was at -2 hp and therefore unconscious, as per my standing rules for the event. He claimed that it was silly that the mage was looking at one target during the time he was casting a spell, then turned and let loose the string of missiles at another target—namely him!

Was this silly of me? I say no. Was it a dirty trick? Certainly! Remember, I was playing an evil NPC, probably the most horrifying and potentially dangerous threat in an AD&D game. If played properly, the evil NPC or monster is *supposed* to pull dirty tricks and do dirty deeds. This is the meat and potatoes of an evil NPC, and I am sure that if the player himself had thought to pull a similar stunt on the bandits and thugs he was facing, he would have (as was the case with his *stinking cloud*) and would have been proud of himself.

The point I am trying to get across is that players should not be so ready to chew out the DM if he role-plays evil NPCs or monsters well. I did not break any game rules. I simply used the most damaging and dangerous tool available to any and all DMs: strategy. This is the same weapon that players can and should use each time there is an encounter in a scenario.

I could not believe how disheartened and angry my tactic made the player who played the mage PC. He was ready to walk out of the game, I am sure. And yes, I fully accept that I (playing the evil mage) did a very nasty thing indeed by seeing to it that the target got what I wanted to give to him—a good dose of damage and pain!

Players, beware! We DMs have every right to be nasty and relentless when we play evil NPCs or creatures. If we didn't do so, you would be facing mindless hoards of easy targets, and while this may be great for attaining experience points, it does little to enhance the actual role-playing experience for all concerned.

Let me close by saying that the player who ran the mage saved the day toward the end of the adventure. He was a spirited player who was willing to try to see my way of DMing, and while he did not agree with many of my rulings, he did help the event be fun and challenging for myself and the other players as well.

Michael Griffith
Wind Gap PA

I would like to comment on Toby Myers' statement in issue #151 on true-neutral characters and the letters of various people on chaotic-evil characters. The nine alignments are there to be chosen; if one particular class doesn't fit

Continued on page 28

The Art of Making War



Illustration by Timothy Truman

Warrior Kings and Empire Builders

Borrow from history to support your kingdom

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As soon as a player character acquires henchmen, he becomes, to some degree, a ruler—that is, he is responsible for subordinates. As the PC continues to climb in level and gain control over more subordinates, he can acquire titles such as Sir, Lord, and Commander. But what happens when the PC reaches a really high level and becomes responsible for a fief, domain, province, or kingdom? This article makes suggestions for dealing with those PCs who have reached rulership status and wish to continue their careers.

There are as many kinds of rulers as there are rulers, and there are almost as many forms of government. A ruler may be a king, an emperor, a military dictator, or a member of a ruling triumvirate. His power might be absolute or shared with some other governing body.

Many rulers in role-playing games will come from the ranks of the fighter class. Throughout the development of civilization until modern times, emperors and kings were often warriors before they became rulers, and many continued to lead troops into battle long after they attained power. For individuals who wish to play rulers, this means that prowess as a military leader will be an important characteristic.

Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar was such a ruler. Although his rise to power began in the realm of politics, he realized the value of military strength and a show of force. In 60 B.C., he joined with Pompey and Crassus, two other Roman leaders, and together they formed a government known as the First Triumvirate. In conjunction with the Senate, these three men controlled the affairs within the growing boundaries of Roman territory.

This form of government presents some very interesting possibilities in a role-playing campaign. Where there are three or more powerful characters, they might consider forming such a triumvirate or shared-power government, perhaps dividing territory among themselves for ease of governing. As in the case mentioned, all three rulers might be military leaders, but you could also have a situation in which one might be the chief magician in the

land, one the head of the main religious organization, and one from a military background. As they might discover, this sort of government can only be successful when the parties involved work in harmony. The chances of three ambitious personalities remaining in harmony for very long are probably slim. The intrigue and conspiracy that is likely to develop might not make for domestic peace but should set the stage for interesting role-playing.

Continuing to follow the career of Julius Caesar, we see that he was a shrewd manipulator of people and events, characteristics that would be beneficial to a ruling PC. Caesar was too ambitious to be satisfied with being a member of a trio of rulers for very long. Once he'd decided to become the most powerful man in Rome, he left that city for nine years, leading his troops into almost constant battle. Thanks to his military genius and the discipline of his troops, he achieved almost constant success. When in Rome itself, he often stationed his troops nearby—a not-so-subtle reminder of the power that he wielded. When out conquering territory "for the glory of Rome," he made sure that he was also accumulating glory for Caesar.

All during his political career, Caesar remained a warrior ruler. He was very interested in the mechanics of war and was ruthless in the execution of his plans. His trademark on the battlefield was a brilliant red cloak; PCs may enjoy creating distinctive symbols of their own, if they do not fear attacks by their enemies.

While conquering Egypt, Caesar met Cleopatra. The Egyptian princess was only about 20 when they met; by some accounts she was very beautiful, by others merely very charming but skilled at using what looks she had to her advantage. For a player who wants to role-play a female ruler, she makes an interesting model—every bit a match for a Caesar-type ruler. Cleopatra had at least one of her Egyptian husbands killed for being in the way of her political ambitions. Both Caesar and Cleopatra claimed to be descendants of gods (he Venus and she Isis), which could tie in nicely with a campaign.

After the deaths of the other two members of the Triumvirate, Caesar was the

undisputed leader of Rome. He conquered Gaul, Egypt, and much of North Africa during his rise to power, and the Senate conferred upon him more titles than any other Roman had ever held. With all his military victories and the wealth that accompanied them, Caesar was treated even better than a king and was practically deified. And he was as arrogant and authoritarian as one might expect under the circumstances. In *The Horizon Book of Ancient Rome*, Robert Payne noted that Caesar could select his own army commanders, create his own colonies, extend the republic's frontiers when it suited his purposes, and use the treasures of conquered peoples for his own ends. Given the Gallic levies that he meant to raise, he knew that soon he would have more power, treasure, and soldiers than any Roman before him.

But life is tough at the top, and the PC ruler will have his share of problems. Caesar suffered from bouts of illness that some now suspect might have been epileptic attacks. Such human frailties make a PC ruler a well-rounded and more lifelike character. Also, as Caesar's power continued to grow seemingly without bounds, friends and enemies alike began to plot his death. NPCs run by the game master (or even other PCs!) might be involved in such scheming. Any PC ruler ought to keep careful watch on the appropriate omens—and above all, beware the Ides of March.

Charlemagne

Another example of a warrior ruler is Charlemagne, king of the Franks, who ruled some 800 years after the death of Caesar. Like Caesar, his ability to lead troops into battle was fundamental to his rise to power. Although he had on his side the fact that his father had been king, there were also other rulers in the territory he came to govern, and his military strength was a major factor in his becoming in effect a "king of kings." He continued to make his presence felt on the battlefield throughout his lifetime.

In A.D. 768, the 26-year-old Charles (later known as Charles the Great, or Charlemagne) was anointed successor to his father, King Pepin. He was raised bodily up on a shield by several of his subjects,

symbolizing that he would be expected to lead his people into battle. Throughout his reign, Charlemagne liked to think of himself as "protector" of the Franks. It is noted by Mary R. Price and Margaret Howell, in *A Portrait of Europe, A.D. 300-1300*, that Charlemagne made war almost continually during the 46 years he ruled. It is known that he ordered and often led no fewer than 60 military expeditions.

But not all of Charlemagne's time was spent in battle. He was a good swimmer and chose for his main castle a site near hot springs, so that he could enjoy a swim as often as possible. He was also very fond of the hunt and frequently organized large hunting parties. PC rulers who have such hobbies will make more interesting characters, providing DMs with ideas for special encounters and adventures for them.

Charlemagne traveled frequently throughout his realm to see that his orders were executed and his subjects were loyal. Although a ruler has representatives to help him with this, it is said that where the hand of the master cannot be felt, affairs do not go well. PC rulers should bear this in mind, and DMs should take ruler visibility into consideration when determining the atmosphere of the land.

The most successful historical rulers understood the importance of morale and majesty. Personal dignity and outward trappings that create the appearance of invulnerability are a great help to a ruler. Charlemagne carried a beautiful gold-hilted sword and scabbard into battle which, like Caesar's red cloak, inspired the troops around him. Like the throne of the biblical Solomon, Charlemagne's throne rested at the top of a short flight of stairs, adding to the aura of imperialism. However, he dressed much like a commoner; giving the impression of accessibility. Striking such a balance might be a good thing for a PC ruler to attempt; though he'll want to command the respect of his subjects, he'll also need their help.

Allies and foes

Whether those who surround the PC ruler are PCs or NPCs, they will have important roles to play. While the king may have the final word on most decisions, if he's smart he'll exercise that power tactfully. He needs generals, advisors, and other allies, and his life will be much easier if he allows them to participate in meaningful ways.

Some of the people who deal with a ruler are rulers themselves—either lesser, greater, or equal in status. At the beginning of his political career, Caesar had to deal with fellow Romans Crassus and Pompey as equals. Later, when he was undisputed ruler, he dealt with rulers of other lands (such as Cleopatra) as equals. For Charlemagne, heads of noble families in Frankland were lesser rulers with whom he had contact, while the head of the Roman Empire in Constantinople was a fellow ruler, and the Pope, as head of the

Christian Church, was also seen as being of equal status.

The Pope was a very important person in the life of Charlemagne. Whatever the religion of your campaign, its leaders can become critical to the ruler's success. Some kings might want to bind church and state by making themselves head of both. Others may need to deal more respectfully with powerful priests and deities.

Caesar claimed to be a descendant of a god, and Charlemagne believed himself to be God-sponsored. Either way, if you are the ruler, it helps to have the church on your side. Of course, the local church leader might also be another PC!

Another important person with whom the king must deal is the head of the government bureaucracy. This person will relieve the ruler of having to make some

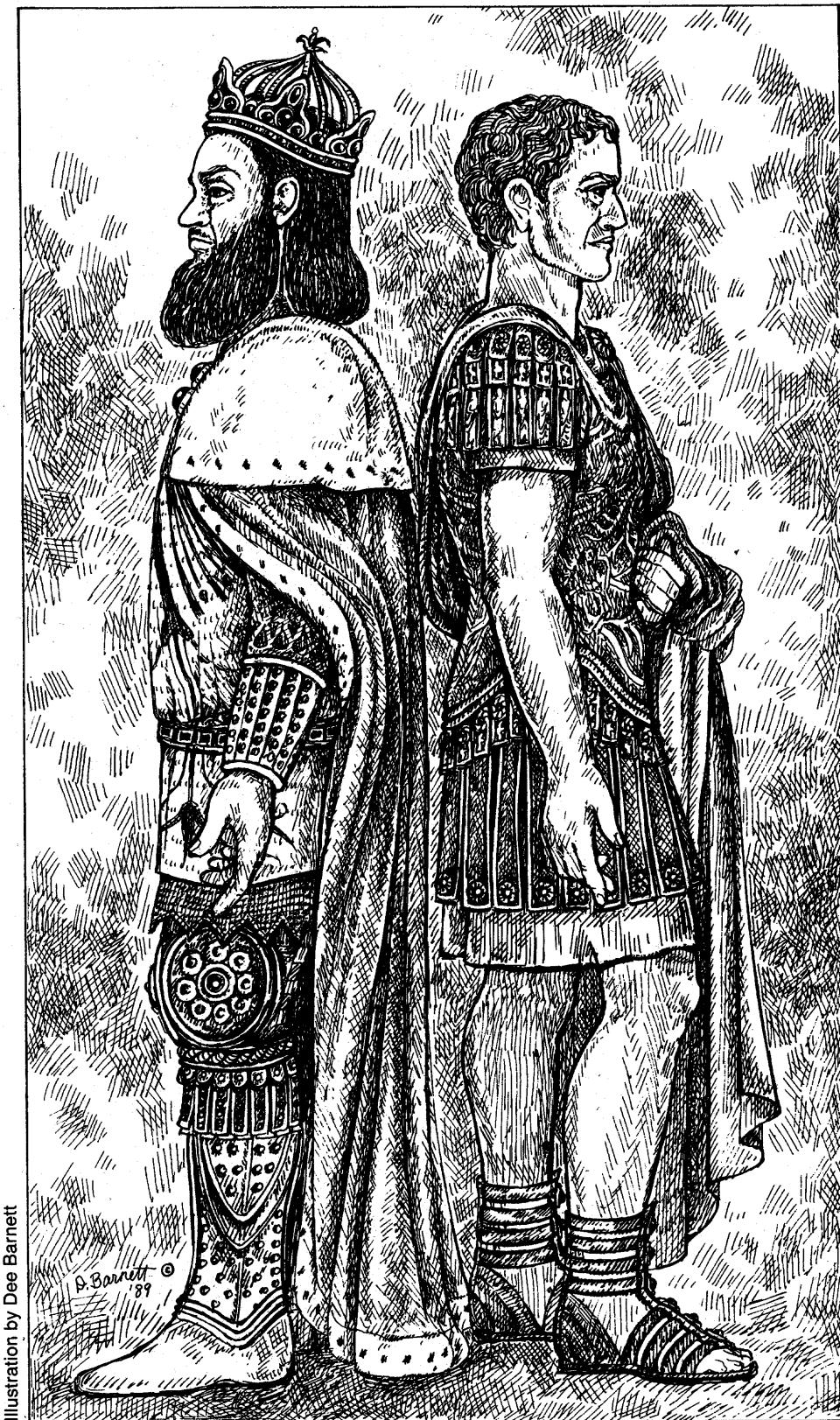


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of the decisions regarding the day-to-day running of the court and the realm. This person's job is so important, in fact, that the king must beware that this individual doesn't become so powerful as to actually become the de facto ruler. Charlemagne's family came to power in this way. Using the position of mayor of the palace, his family gradually usurped the king's power and finally declared that they should have the title of king since they were doing the job. An ambitious and shrewd PC in this position can be both an asset and a liability to the king.

Then, of course, there will be other military men in the king's entourage. Whether this takes the form of a general in charge of all the king's army, or several lords who command their own forces, the king must depend on these individuals to bring troops to the battlefield in time of need. Again, in the hands of good role-players, these PCs could be either friends or foes of the ruler.

And there will be important men of magic as well. Caesar relied heavily on the words of soothsayers, consulting them before battles and on other important occasions. Even Charlemagne studied the magic of the Franks and the Saxons.

Other NPCs or roles for part-time or new players might include members of the nobility, abbots and clerics, philosophers and sages, and foreign dignitaries. A bard might be fun to have around, too, singing and telling tales of the warrior king's exploits. Such characters can start out in supporting roles, gradually becoming more important as their players wish.

Wars rarely end

Winning a war is one thing. Warrior kings will soon find that keeping what they've won is another. King Pepin, Charlemagne's father, learned that it can be very difficult to subjugate formerly independent peoples. Each spring, Pepin's army marched into Aquitaine in what is now southwestern France, burning, pillaging, wreaking havoc, and soundly defeating the Aquitanians in battle. But the leader of the rebel forces, Duke Waifar, managed to escape year after year, hiding out until Pepin's army pulled out and went home for the winter. Then, in the spring, he would reunite his forces, and Pepin would have to come and put down the rebellion again. This went on until Pepin managed to have the duke assassinated. Without the duke, Pepin's son was able to see that the Aquitanians remained subjugated—which was a good thing, because Charlemagne's main problems lay to the northeast. It was the Saxons of what is now Germany who didn't want to bow to his rule. Charlemagne was ruthless and thorough in his determination to keep Saxony under his thumb, very nearly wiping out the Saxons with his policy of "convert or die."

Whether fighting a border war or invading a neighboring territory, the warrior

king must consider the natural advantages that lie on the side of his enemy. The invaded peoples will be fighting to save their freedom and their homeland, which may be a unifying force for otherwise divisive factions. Homeland armies can be more easily supplied than those of the invader, and they can be adept at guerilla fighting or "hit and run" tactics.

On the other hand, a powerful warrior may have such advantages as great numbers of troops at his disposal and greater resources of money and arms. And not all conquered peoples refuse to be subjugated. In some areas, especially among rural peasantry, the average person won't care who rules him as long as he is basically left alone. Charlemagne made it a policy to keep out of the local affairs of annexed lands as much as possible (except, of course, in places like Saxony, where there was a great deal of hostility toward him). In this way, he hoped to create an "overlord" relationship, otherwise preserving the status quo.

Colonization was promoted by both Caesar and Charlemagne as a way to keep acquired lands under control. Troops were often given parcels of land in conquered territory, and other individuals were encouraged to establish homesteads in newly annexed lands to build a base of loyal subjects there.

Keeping busy

As warrior kings and empire builders, PC rulers will be busy characters. Besides waging war against foreign enemies, they might have to put down rebellions within their realms. Perhaps there will be a slave uprising in the capitol, or local citizens may revolt after seeing their country drained by warfare (if victories don't outnumber defeats). Other kings might invade a PC's land, forcing him to take defensive action. Like Richard the Lion-Hearted of England, the PC ruler might decide to set out on a crusade or quest. What kinds of problems will he face when he returns? And when he's not busy fighting, there will be many domestic concerns and administrative duties for the PC ruler to resolve as well. He may find it necessary to attend festivals and deal with such local problems as urban overcrowding, ineffective farming practices, or local government reform. How involved the players get in these sorts of details will depend upon the type of campaign.

The warrior king should be good at other things besides fighting. Caesar was a skilled orator and writer, keeping clear and concise notes of his travels through foreign lands. Charlemagne was an avid hunter, a concerned family man, and a promoter of education. The more detailed the character, the more fun the role will

be to play.

Though a rulership campaign may be centered on one particular PC, there is room for many more to join the game. Whether fellow players are other rulers or subordinates of the warrior king, there should be plenty to keep everyone busy and entertained.

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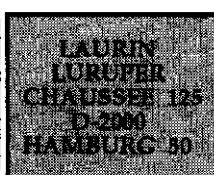
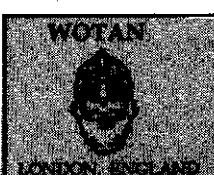
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The Making of a Paladin

Being good is not easy—nor is it enough

by Eric Oppen

Paladins are a favorite character class in AD&D® games, and some players prefer playing paladins to any other kind of character. However, many players and DMs alike take little time to figure out what makes paladins tick. Too often, paladins are played as though they were ordinary fighters with a few special powers—but they're not. Paladins are the product of years of training and education, with a fanatical purpose in life equalled only by certain priests.

Gaming groups may use the paladin of the 1st Edition Players Handbook, the paladin-cavalier of *Unearthed Arcana*, or the revised paladin of the 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*. It may be assumed that lawful-good religions with heavily aristocratic congregations produce paladin-cavaliers as detailed in *Unearthed Arcana*. Other religions with less aristocratic pretensions, or those based in areas where cavaliers and the feudal system are not known, have their paladins-to-be trained by ordinary fighters, producing paladins as detailed in either of the other two sources. All of these characters may be considered true paladins, though the paladin-cavalier has a much harder time in training and should therefore be rarer than the "common" paladin.

Getting started

In areas having lawful-good religions that produce paladins, the children of the congregations are constantly observed and evaluated by the clerics in charge of the local temples. This scrutiny serves several purposes, one of which is to identify potential candidates for paladin training. The qualities sought are strength, bodily vigor, intelligence, curiosity, an adventuresome spirit, and unforced, natural piety. The children themselves are often (though not always) unaware of this constant evaluation. Some of the tasks children are set in these temples are designed to give the clergy a clear idea of the potential of the children performing them.

The children selected as potential paladins are usually 10-13 years old. Their parents are asked to allow those children to learn to serve their religion in a special capacity. To realize this opportunity, the children will be given training at a church-run facility, at no expense to the parents. Since selection for this sort of training is an honor, the parents do not usually object. In fact, if the child's services are needed at home, the church will often pay

the parents the equivalent of any money the child could bring in. The prospect of getting a new paladin for the faith is easily worth reimbursing the parents for the money the child could have earned.

Along with the candidates for clerical training, the paladin trainees are brought to special schools, often set away from major cities but in safe territory. These schools are usually held in monasteries or castles owned by the religious order that will be training them, with the school governed by retired paladins or clerics. Here, the future paladins and clerics study holy writings, learn relevant lessons from history, memorize the doctrine and organizational structure of their church, and exercise hard. The regime is austere, with half the day devoted to exercises and the other half to study. Prayer, of course, punctuates the day and night alike.

At age 15, the courses of the future paladins and clerics diverge. The proto-paladins are introduced to weapons training and must devote a great share of their time in mastering the weapons preferred by their church's paladins. Proto-clerics concentrate on the basics of spell-casting; their own weapons classes are of less importance than the paladins'.

Weapons training for paladins does not take up all of the students' time. Classes in schoolroom subjects now build heavily on topics of use to future foes of Evil. Low-level undead such as skeletons and zombies are created and introduced, to show the future paladins the strengths and weaknesses of such monsters, as well as to accustom the students to the sight of corpses and skeletons staggering about under their own power. (The creation of such undead for learning purposes is one of the few times that lawful-good clerics may justify such actions. The clerics need to get permission from their deities first, and they should also have the permission of those whose bodies are to be made into such undead, using *speak with dead* spells.) Intensive study goes to the lifestyles and habits of the various evil humanoids, as well as what is known of the evil religions that have dealings in the area. The whole subject of Evil is dissected thoroughly, with particular attention to the weak points in the existing evil coalitions and any other knowledge that might help a paladin defeat them.

During and after his training, the paladin-to-be must pass certain tests. These tests offer temptations to break the

rules of the church, to show cowardice, and to cooperate with evil. If the tests are failed, the candidate is rarely given a second chance, often being sent away to be no more than an ordinary fighter or cavalier. If the tests are passed, the paladin takes vows of fidelity and allegiance to his church and its teachings, swears eternal enmity toward evil, and affirms that he will protect those who cannot protect themselves. Oath-taking is a solemn ceremony, often lasting several days. Once the ceremony is over, the new paladins are ready to assume their duties.

Swords of the church

What many players forget about paladins is that they are representatives of their churches and religions just as clerics are. Clerics are usually trained in weapons that are not as effective as swords or pole arms, while paladins are able to use almost any sort of weapon. If fighting clerics are a church's shield, paladins are its sword.

After years of intensive training, many paladins yearn to do more than merely stand guard against evil. These paladins take the offensive to keep evil forces off balance and unable to attack in turn. Aggressive paladins go adventuring for long periods of time, and the church usually takes the attitude that their elite fighters are improving their skills and dealing with their foes at the same time. The loss of a paladin is never good news to a church, but since most such religions believe that dying for the faith ensures a blissful afterlife, the loss is not entirely bad news.

Since a paladin is a walking reminder of his religion, he must obey its tenets strictly and do penance for any deviation. His church, as outlined by the DM, demands much of him, even in his personal life.

Some time ago, there was a minor controversy about whether and whom paladins could marry. The answers vary according to the teachings of the churches involved, but since most of them do not have the taboos of medieval Christianity, generalizations from the legends of Charlemagne's court should not apply. Some lawful-good religions that worship fertility deities, particularly those operating in areas where humans are threatened by sheer numbers of evil enemies, might not only allow marriage but require it. Others, for the sake of ensuring that their

Continued on page 93

All in the Family

Heraldry, politics, and feudalism in fantasy campaigns

by Thomas M. Kane

The busy pillagers could pick and choose,
After the battle, what they best could use;
And so befell that in a heap they found,
Pierced through with many a bloody,
grievous wound,
Two young knights lying together side by
side....
Not fully quick nor fully dead they were
But by their coats of arms and by their
gear
The heralds readily could tell withal
That they were of the Theban blood royal,
And that they of two sisters had been
born.
Out of the heap the spoilers had them torn
And carried gently to the tent.

Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Knight's Tale"

Those two Thebans faced many more dangers in Chaucer's tale, but for the moment they were saved by their heraldry. In a feudal world, family achieve-

ments are far more than colorful symbols. A coat of arms indicates the bearer's entire legal identity: rights, honor, and power. The complex rivalries of chivalry and descendancy created a cadre of scholars who dominated all contests of prestige or diplomacy. These were the heralds, and they can profoundly influence the career—and indeed the life—of a fantasy adventurer.

The heraldic establishment

Most nobles appoint experts in heraldry to serve them as officers of arms. An officer usually inherits his position from his father, but a ruler may appoint anyone he chooses to this station. The officer of arms serves as an envoy, an expert on heraldic matters, a propagandist, a communications officer, and a counter of corpses after a battle. He can be identified by his decorated smock, which is called a

tabard.

The king or queen of a realm chooses the most brilliant and loyal officers of arms from the land to form a college of heralds. This bureaucracy wields incredible power in a feudal world. Any commoner who aspires to nobility must apply for a grant of arms from the college of heralds; in this way, the college appoints a land's government. Furthermore, whenever two nobles merge their estates, they must join their coats of arms, too, and the college of heralds regulates all such alterations. The college can thus indirectly veto a noble's military alliances—and even marriages.

A typical college would include three kings of arms, who are served by a body of six heralds and four assistants called pursuivants. These ranks are assigned by seniority and last until the herald resigns, dies, or angers the crown. Most colleges of heralds own a fortress, where they defend their genealogical records and documents. When the college of heralds deliberates a case, the kings of arms can overrule heralds, and they outrank pursuivants. The college of heralds usually follows directions from the king or queen of the country. In matters of little political weight, the college will usually approve any legitimate request. If the DM does not know how the college will decide a case, have the character who wants something from the court roll against his heraldic law proficiency (described later in this article). Characters without this proficiency cannot influence the college to do anything unusual. This system may be modified for PCs who make exceptionally convincing speeches, and any character may hire a counselor with more knowledge of heraldic law to argue before the college.

It may be interesting to let PCs become officers of arms or members of the college of heralds. These ranks make interesting rewards for successful quests. They confer great prestige, but do not require full-time work and have no effect on game balance. Better yet, DMs will find many chances to plunge PC-heralds into devious intrigues, as nobles vie for honors and try to disgrace their foes.

Heraldic proficiencies

Most of a herald's abilities involve legal powers and simple skills, not complex training. Rather than treating heralds as a separate NPC class, one can list the arts of



Illustrations by Dee Barnett

February 23, 1990

**The day was like the blackest night,
submerged beneath dark clouds and rumbling thunder.
Soon the storm would hit. And the storm had a name ...**

**"There are always possibilities, my sergeant
told me. But he never had his possibilities
torn away like wings from a fly."**

**— Quin Sebastian
Soldier of Fortune**

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heraldry as nonweapon proficiencies; if the DM permits, PCs may study them. NPC heralds may be zero-level craftsmen, as described in the *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide*, page 24, or members of a character class. Hiring an NPC herald costs 200 gp per month. The primary heraldic skills are noted in Table 1, and they require one proficiency slot each. These skills have their own uses, and some must be used to design or alter a coat of arms.

Blazoning: A blazon is a formula describing exactly what a certain heraldic device looks like. Characters with this proficiency can reconstruct a coat of arms from its written description or encode an image in blazon form. This skill must be used to perform several other heraldic arts.

Boasting: Heralds use this seeming simple skill to proclaim their lords ancestry and triumphs. By making a successful boast, a herald can improve the morale of one unit of troops by 5% (one point under 1st or 2nd Edition BATTLESYSTEM™ miniature rules). A boast can also impress other nobles in diplomatic missions. When a herald successfully boasts for his liege, give the noble a +10% on reaction rolls. One cannot use boasting without a history proficiency that applies to the noble who is the subject of the boast. A person who studies both boasting and family history can boast effectively for himself.

Differencing: Since there may be thousands of shields in use in a campaign world, distinguishing between them requires great skill. To understand differencing, a character needs the blazon proficiency; records of arms are kept in this written code, and characters need access to the college of heralds library to use this proficiency properly. Without a library, penalize differencing checks by an additional modifier of +3. A successful differencing check lets a character identify a given achievement and its bearer. Once a differencing check has succeeded on an insignia, the herald can always recognize that particular insignia.

Draftsmanship: This skill is used to physically draw the coat of arms. It is most useful when combined with a blazoning proficiency, since the character can then create a perfect achievement from written records. Without blazoning, the draftsman must work from a perfect copy of the achievement and is penalized by a +2 modifier on the dice roll. Draftsmanship requires a set of paints and brushes, as well as the shield or other materials to be emblazoned. If the color "or" (gold) is to be used, a jeweler must be employed to apply gold leaf.

History: This proficiency allows a character to understand the genealogy and great deeds of a certain noble family. A separate proficiency slot must be used for each family studied, although this skill applies even to very distant relatives of the same house. History can be used as a minor, nonmagical form of *legend lore*,

which is useful only for researching ancestors of the appropriate family. The character must make a successful roll to learn accurate information, modified by +1 for every 100 years old or 100 miles distant the subject of research is.

Heraldic law: A character uses this proficiency to understand the nuances of custom and law that govern heraldry.

Heraldic law not only controls heraldry but also regulates jousts and lethal duels. Whenever a character requests a special favor from the college of heralds or is summoned before a court of chivalry, the heraldic law skill becomes vital. Characters who do not have it may hire NPC lawyers to argue for them.

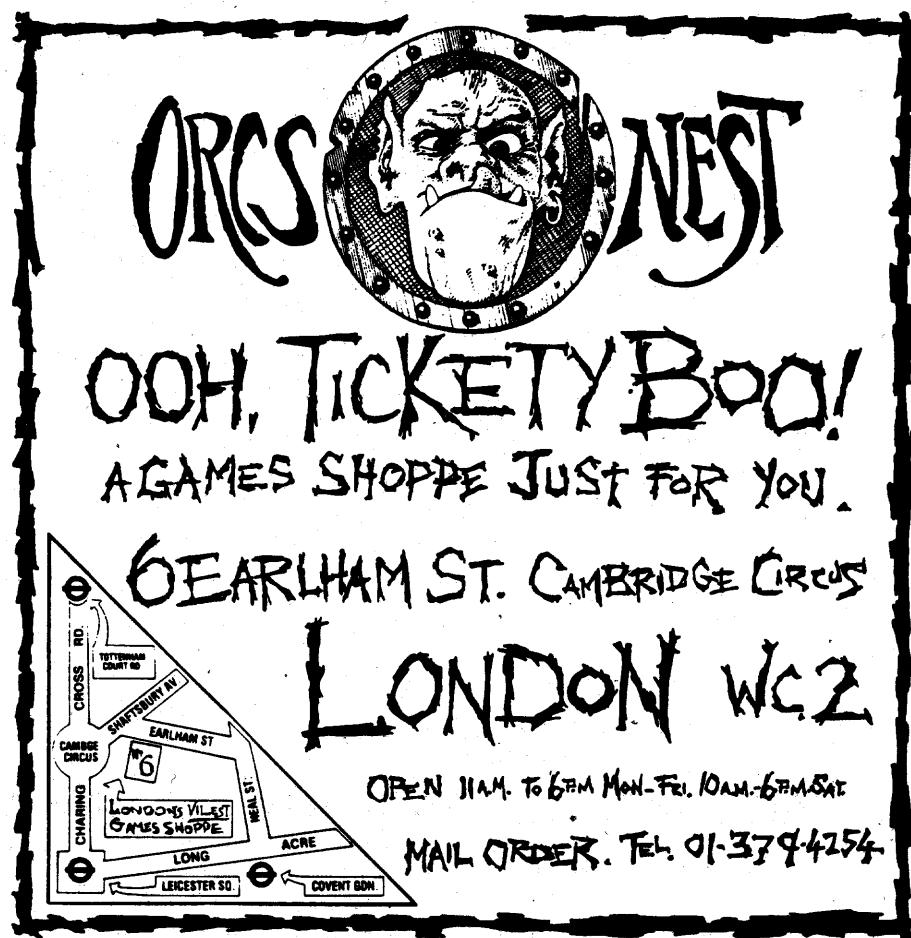
Revelations: Coats of arms reveal a myriad of details about their owners, and this skill lets a character learn them. A character who makes a successful revelations check can learn about any of the following features of an arms-bearer: alliances, marriages, conditions of birth (rank of family and order of birth), disgraces, magnitude of political authority (offices held, size of lands, etc.), and triumphs. This includes any major exploits of the arms-bearer or his ancestors. For game purposes, it lets heralds roughly determine a character's experience level.

Signaling: Heralds play a vital role in war. A shouting army commander cannot be heard on a battlefield, so orders must be broadcast to the units with flags,

drums, and shrill horns. A herald with this proficiency can communicate over a distance of one mile, or as far away as banners can be seen, whichever is greater. The *Wilderness Survival Guide* has rules for range of visibility on pages 72-75. Obviously, big banners can be seen from far away, so many kings regulate the size of their vassals' standards to hinder rebellion. In the BATTLESYSTEM rules, it is easiest to simply assume that signaling always works, unless there is some interference such as an imposter herald or bad weather. However, when an army is being raised in the campaign world, each brigade commander or army commander must find someone with the signaling proficiency. Signaling might also be useful during any standard adventure.

The heraldic privilege

To receive a coat of arms, a character must either be born into nobility or perform a special service for the crown. If the social status table from page 82 of *Unearthed Arcana* is used, all members of the upper classes automatically own an achievement, and the middle to upper-middle classes have a 30% chance of owning arms. Any zero-level cavalier from the AD&D 1st Edition game who lacks a coat of arms will certainly apply for one. Without arms, the warrior might gain a cavalier's fighting skills, but he can never demand a knight's hospitality or training



to raise ability scores.

All legitimate children receive their father's arms. Parents must pass their arms on, even to disinherited children, and all heirs are forced to display either their father's shield or none at all. The only alteration children may make is a mark of cadence that lets them be recognized in battle. After an arms-bearer dies, his eldest son abolishes all differencing

and carries the father's shield. Bastards may inherit their fathers' arms if they prove paternity. Otherwise, an illegitimate child is either denied any noble rank at all or is allowed to design a completely new coat of arms. The college of heralds decides what armory that offspring may wear.

There is no harm in letting players whose characters inherit arms decide

what their shields looks like, but the DM may design any features that might affect the game. PCs might have ancestral dis-honors to overcome or reputations to maintain. One could run an interesting campaign in which all the PCs are children of the same noble family. This gives them a legitimate reason to adventure together, as well as network of friends and enemies. It also motivates PCs to follow certain character classes. The heirs, the elder children, will strive for military glory, while younger PCs may seek power in magic or the clergy.

Designing the achievement

Any commoner who aspires to the noble classes must apply to the college of heralds for a grant of arms. Then the aspirant must perform some heroic service for the crown to become worthy of heraldry. When the character finally becomes an arms-bearer, he will have to create the shield. Designing a new coat of arms requires the help of experts with proficiencies in blazoning, heraldic law, revelations, and differencing. One of the participants must have studied the history of the arms-bearer's family, and since few people study commoner's ancestors, the new noble house may have to train its own heralds. A draftsmanship proficiency is needed to draw the arms.

One of the heralds overseeing the new shield must roll against his heraldic law proficiency, and if this check fails, the shield will be flawed in one of two ways. There is a 70% chance that the shield will merely be poorly designed, resulting in confusion and ridicule whenever it is examined by someone with a proficiency in differencing, revelations, heraldic law, or blazoning. A 30% chance exists that an illegal shield insults some other person. At the DM's option, this can result in a blood feud or dispute of arms (as follows).

A differencing check must also be made for the new coat of arms. If it fails, the new achievement duplicates another family's emblem. Subtract the number of points by which the check failed from 20. This number, multiplied by 10, equals the number of miles away that the bearer of identical arms lives. For example, a PC cavalier creates a new coat of arms, and his herald, who has an intelligence of 10, rolls a 13, modified to 15. Fifty miles away, an NPC cavalier carries an identical achievement. If this PC travels 50 miles, he may meet this "double" and be accused of copying arms.

A coat of arms can be altered to reward or punish the arms-bearer. A king can honor a truly glorious act by having the college of heralds design an augmentation for the hero. This is an extra symbol that the heroic arms-bearer may incorporate into his coat of arms. No one may revoke a grant of arms altogether, but the college can condemn arms-bearers to carry "rebatements" over their insignia. A rebated





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shield is a disgrace, and any character who carries one will be jeered away from most civilized tournaments and castles. After four generations, the heir to rebated arms may petition the college of heralds to revoke this punishment. The offenses that warrant these rebatements include:

General dishonor: delve. This is a tiny square with concave sides that represents a shovelful of dirt, thrown at the dishonored person.

Desertion from battle: reversed inescutcheon. This looks like a tiny upside-down shield.

Deliberately lying to a commander: a wavy line, colored chestnut (tenne).

Killing a prisoner: a downward arc, called point champion.

Failing to fulfill an oath: a diagonal line from the shields center to one side.

Licentiousness: a tall, thin rectangle (gusset) on the dexter (right side).

Drunkenness: a tall, thin rectangle (gusset) on the sinister (left side).

Characters can never voluntarily alter their shields except for the following reasons. Whenever two estates are joined, for reasons of marriage or military alliance, the two owners must marshall their shields and display sections of each other's armory. The husband might simply adopt one charge from his wife's shield, in a procedure called composing, or the two might use dimidiation and cut their shields

in half diagonally, then join the two (no matter how odd they look together). Children do not marshall their arms to reflect actions of their parents. While the parents are alive, all children bear their father's original, unmarshalled shield. Once a father dies, his heirs quarter their shields and display their father's arms in one corner, with their mother's in another. A coat of arms is allowed to have more than four "quarters." Since both the father and mother have probably quartered their armory too, official coats-of-arms often accumulate hundreds of individual shields over the generations, although warriors usually bear only the most glorious selection of their literal shield, the one that is carried into battle. Marshalling requires a charter from the college of heralds and all the proficiency rolls needed to create a new shield. After a war, the victor may adopt sections from the vanquished lord's arms as trophies. This also requires permission and proficiency checks.

Disputes of arms

Conflicts arise when two coats-of-arms look alike or seem to cast aspersions on each other. When two arms-bearers disagree, they can either fight a duel or submit the case to a court of chivalry. Most nobles sponsor such a court to prevent their knights from killing each other and because they collect any fines the court

imposes. A court of chivalry consists of three judges: a marshall, a constable, and an officer of arms. Courts of chivalry not only decide questions of heraldry but may judge any other disputes of honor.

When the court of chivalry makes a decision, the DM should decide if one side is clearly wrong or if an argument can be made either way. When an argument is possible, have the two debaters roll against their proficiencies in heraldic law until at least one fails. No character can impress such a court without this proficiency. Of course, characters may hire more knowledgeable heralds to act as lawyers. If a PC takes part in a dispute and the player makes an exceptionally logical speech, the DM may opt to give him some sort of bonus. The first debater to fail a roll loses the case and is forced to alter his coat of arms. It is quite possible for both parties to lose and have to change! A court of chivalry could also be corrupt, which might lead to an interesting adventure.

Characters who lose cases before the court of chivalry must pay fines or be imprisoned until someone pays for their release. The exact amount depends on the dishonor of the infraction. A fee for accidentally duplicating some distant noble's shield might be only 100 gp. However, the court might demand 10,000 gold coins from a common-born forger who wore a fake coat of arms as a disguise. The college of heralds may overturn any decision of a court of chivalry.

The heraldic field

DMs and players may use as much or as little detail as they want when simulating coats of arms. A few common terms and heraldic devices have been listed here for those who want to know what their achievements look like. You might also consult Lewis Pulsipher's article, "Understanding Armory," in DRAGON® issue #53. The primary design of a coat of arms is emblazoned on a shield, but an entire coat of arms often includes drawings of helmets, wreaths, crests, surcoats, scrolls with mottoes, animal supporters, and other decorations. Only nobles carry coats-of-arms on their shields. Their elite retainers have blank shields, but they do wear badges with their lord's crest and dress in a livery of certain trademark colors.

Heraldic symbols have some relationship to the family that they represent, epitomizing virtues that the household cherishes or great deeds its members have performed. Some meanings seem obvious, but others are less so. Dolphins imply speed, diligence, and compassion; boars indicate aloof independence. Pentagrams indicate wizardry; constellations imply that the house is the subject of a certain prophecy; an acorn indicates the god Thor; a crown with radiating spikes, like the one on the Statue of Liberty, means contact with elves; and a red oriflamme



(banner) proclaims that the gods themselves have aided that noble house. Plants each have some significance. Trees signify fruitfulness and fertility; the fir implies royalty; cypress and pine indicate death; and oaks express military virtue and fortitude. Grapes and vines represent joy; roses express youth and beauty; violets and pansies both mean piety or charity; and sunflowers indicate virtuous behavior.

Arms-bearers indicate their social rank with the image of a crown. Mere knights employ a circlet with three pearls above it; patricians use a coronet between two pearls; and members of the baronial class employ crowns amid larger numbers of pearls, the number depending on their power. A naval crown, of three ships in a circle with masts between them, indicates service on the ocean, and gryphons indicate observant vigilance. Only the royal family may use lions in its armory. Certain blazons are intended as puns or jokes. A knight named Sir Cox might bear a rooster on his shield, and a lord who tended to drunkenness might have a bottle in his achievement.

Heraldic terms

Players who are truly interested in heraldry should consult the books listed in the bibliography, where they will find countless examples of shields along with the complete laws governing inheritance,

marshalling, and cadence. To visualize these symbols, you will need to understand heraldic directions. These terms assume that one wears the shield on the left arm; under those circumstances, dexter is right, and sinister is left. To an enemy facing a shield, or to an artist drawing it, these directions are reversed. The shield's center is called "fess," its bottom is "base," and its top is "chief." Thus, a heraldic shield can be divided into nine parts, with three vertical coordinates and three horizontal ones.

Heralds also use a complex system of coloring summarized in Table 2. Tincture may never rest on tincture, nor metal on metal, nor fur on fur. Furs are always drawn in patterns over another color. Vair looks like a field of tiny bells, and ermine appears to be a series of tiny arrowheads, with three dots forming a triangle over each one. Vair can be used in "T" shapes, and this is called "crutch."

Exotic heraldry

The *Oriental Adventures* book lists heraldry as a court proficiency. This one entry replaces all the heraldic proficiencies listed in this article except for signaling and draftsmanship, since heraldry is one of the few arts that involve more intricacy and courtesy in the west than the Orient. Oriental blazons were round and worn on clothing, not shields. An Oriental coat of arms appears once on the

back of a jacket, on each sleeve, and twice on the chest. Historical Oriental heraldry, which is called *mons*, was practiced only in Japan. DMs who base their Oriental adventures in Kara-Tur might rule that only Kozakura and Wa recognize heraldry. The other Oriental nations would consider it meaningless and slightly barbaric.

Like *gajin*, Orientals receive the right to display heraldry for distinguished service, and counterfeiting arms is a severe crime. However, there is no Oriental equivalent of the college of heralds, and arms are as likely to indicate civilian work as military prowess. Samurai had no monopoly on *mons*. Instead, a noble warrior expressed his status with his *kabuto* (helmet), and these sculpted headpieces often became quite bizarre. Powerful daimyos decorated their helms with great collections of statues, masks, and false rabbit ears. This last symbol indicated longevity, due to the Oriental belief that the dark maria on the moon depict a rabbit compounding elixirs of immortality.

Orientals often used extremely abstract symbols, but their insignia usually had some meaning. During the period when Christianity was illegal in Japan, Christian arms-bearers developed many ways to hide crosses in their *mons*. If religious conflict is important in an Oriental campaign, players may consult the *Legends & Lore* book for symbols to disguise.

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Table 1
Heraldic Proficiencies Table

Proficiency	Ability	Dice modifier
Blazoning	Intelligence	+1
Boasting	Charisma	+3
Differencing	Intelligence	+2
Draftsmanship	Dexterity	0
History	Intelligence	0
Heraldic law	Intelligence	-1
Revelations	Intelligence	0
Signaling	Wisdom	-2

Another form of heraldry was practiced by amirs in ancient Islam. The Saracens did not have a heraldic system like that in Europe or Japan, but they did employ family symbols. These could be bounded by almost any shape, including circles, octagons, squares, diamonds, and ovals. Almost all of these symbols were quite explicit in their meaning: a scribe might display a pen box, while the royal cup-bearer might carry the picture of a drinking glass. When two achievements had to be distinguished, each family would add new devices to their symbol. In a fantasy world, the DM might create any number of variant heraldic systems for different cultures. This can create interesting cultural clashes. What will gajin cavaliers think of samurai who wear bunny ears?

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Table 2
Heraldic Coloring

Tinctures

Azure	blue
Gules	red
Purpure	purple
Sable	black
Sanguine	mulberry
Tenne	chestnut
Vert	green

Metals

Argent	silver
Or	gold

Furs

Ermine	white
Vair	light blue

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Forum

Continued from page 10

into someone's role-playing style, no rule says he has to use it. We use both the true-neutral and chaotic-evil alignments in our campaign, although our campaign is admittedly rather unique. Our DM composes her own adventures in the DRAGONLANCE® world. Our characters are five kender. [Oh, my God.]

My character is a true-neutral cleric of Gilean. We interpret the true-neutral alignment to mean that a true-neutral character can take a broad view; thus, if one side won a battle, the character would try to see that the other side wins the next battle. He also might try to balance his own life out, acting either good or evil, chaotic or lawful at different times. Instead of seeming to be of no alignment, a true-neutral character understands and supports all alignments. It's still a hard alignment to play, and it isn't for everybody.

Our chaotic-evil character is actually only half kender. Her father was a crazed dark-elf mage, and she is also a mage. She doesn't betray her friends because they are just that: friends. She's out for herself, but one of her main goals is to have fun. She doesn't leave when the going gets rough because she doesn't fear anything. We occasionally have problems when one of our other characters borrows spell components from the mage, but for us it is one of the joys of role-playing.

Amy M. Traub
Shaker Heights OH

It is interesting to look at the change that has occurred within the gaming community as a whole. I am a very active game master for a comics/game shop in my area and thus have a wide perspective on the types of role-playing games that are being purchased and by whom they are being played. I can remember my first encounter with the role-playing game, about six years ago. Two neighbors initiated me to the AD&D system, teaching the rudiments of the game to me and encouraging me to explore. Almost immediately I purchased the D&D Basic Set and immersed myself in the books. I smile as I remember my attempts to DM my first game, a flurry of dice and monsters. We didn't play anything close to the real game, but it was exhilarating fun. As my small group and I grew up, our tastes evolved and changed, we came into the realms of AD&D games. For a long time I refused to play anything else, but when the

game seemed exhausted of possibilities, someone introduced me to the STAR FRONTIERS® game.

From that point onward, I was afflicted with a hunger for new games. I tried everything that fell into my 10 greedy fingers. At one point (and less than two years ago!) I was juggling five full-fledged campaigns in five different games. Now I have settled into a much easier playing style: two campaigns in two systems at a time. I have run games at conventions and have garnered more than my share of compliments.

I must say that no longer am I witness to long-running campaigns with intense character development. In the last few years, I have seen the decline of "role-playing" and the rise of "role assumption." Rather than being confined to my regular groups, I have seen this "role assumption" in a multitude of weekly meetings and through correspondence, I have been told of groups across the country that have fallen into this rut.

"Role assumption" is akin to surface acting. Though the two get the job done, they are mutations of the original art. I watch people who assume roles without playing them, and invariably I find the player talking in a deep, funny voice and portraying the worst stereotype of race and class. For example, I can count four irascible dwarves, two haughty and aloof elves, and a mischievous halfling in one fantasy setting I run. It is not to say that my players do not portray their characters well, but not one of them is different from any other. It can get ridiculous when all the dwarves lose their temper at the same thing and in perfect unison—ridiculous and quite unbelievable. To role-play is to create a unique personality from a framework and to bring that personality to life. To "role assume" is to touch upon a stock personality and to dance around any real feeling that the character may have.

The question has been raised by others: Why is role assumption becoming common? Is it because players (and game masters) have lost sight of the purpose that they started with? Or is it that the care that a good group puts into the game has been replaced with greed for the reward? I say that neither holds true, but both have something to do with the answer. I believe that role assumption is first and foremost a sign of the times. As we, the gamers, grow older and come into new and larger responsibilities, the time we have available to delve into the worlds of our imagination becomes scarce. With the lack of time to play comes the lack of opportunity to develop a character. Those who wish to play as close to the times of old as possible try

to juggle the task of role-playing with the number of hours allotted to the game. It is not entirely wrong to say that the purpose has been obscured (not necessarily lost) in a flurry of activity. The game master must create a well-structured plot with proper mechanics and atmosphere. The players must keep track of where their PCs are and where the PCs are going, but these are basics and most of us know them. It is when the time needed to play is less than the time available that these tasks become chores and not pleasurable. Invariably, stressed-out players become anxious for the final encounter to the point that they no longer enjoy the journey along the way. In these circumstances, can one be blamed for foregoing the development of his character when the prospect of not meeting again until everyone's schedule coincides looms at the end of the session?

I think that the solution to the problem lies in the group's desire to play. If the players and game master truly want to see a rich campaign develop and prosper, then they will make the point of making time to play. I suppose that there is no great harm in role assumption, yet when I reflect on my attempts to DM my first game—well, as Mr. McCartney says, how I long for yesterday.

Jim O'Brien.
Leominster MA

While trying to select some nonweapon proficiencies for my PCs and NPCs, I hit upon an idea for the attainment of additional nonweapon proficiencies. Allow a character an additional proficiency slot if he spends a percentage—say 25%—of his next level's experience-point range toward that slot.

For example, a 3rd-level fighter with 6,000 xp desires an additional proficiency slot for a nonweapon proficiency (NWP). The experience-point range for a 4th-level fighter is 8,000 to 18,000; 18,000 - 8,000 gives a 10,000-point range, and 25% of 10,000 is 2,500. So if this 3rd-level fighter gains 4,000 xp on an adventure, he can allocate 2,500 xp for his NWP and 1,500 xp toward his next level (so he now has 7,500 xp). The 3rd-level fighter would still remain a 3rd-level fighter, just short of 4th level. He would, however, have an additional NWP slot.

The DM may want to limit the number of NWPs attainable through this method. I would suggest the limit be a maximum of one "bonus" NWP slot per level attained. Some may want to require 20%, 33%, 50%, or more of the current or the next level's experience points in order to gain an additional NWP.

This approach allows for greater flexibility in character cultivation. What do you think? Refinements are welcome.

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The illustration shows a woman with dark hair, wearing a long pink dress with a ruffled hem and black shoes. She is holding a black telephone receiver to her ear with a surprised or excited expression. Behind her is a display board for the game. The display includes several red and yellow map tiles showing complex, branching paths. To the right of the maps, text reads "49 Map Tiles", "98 Event Cards", and "10 Character Cards". Below the maps, there are several cards with illustrations and text, including one that says "New Game Every Time!". At the bottom of the display, the text "Who Knows What Dangers Lurk Within?" is written in a stylized font.



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For King and Country

A call to arms—and a new sort of campaign

by Dan Salas

From the top of the wooden tower, Lieutenant Thoran Ormgar could barely see the rest of the camp through the smoke and the night's dark shroud. What he did see was not cheerful: burning tents, fallen soldiers, and dark wet stains on the snowy ground. As he watched, many tall, grim shapes began to appear at the edges of the darkness in the battlefield below.

"You see them?" Thoran said without turning to face the four men who surrounded the catapult next to him.

"Aye, sir," answered the sergeant there.

"Loose!" Thoran barked. The sergeant raised his hand, an artilleryman yanked back the lever, and the weapon's 8'-long arm swung up. The small boulder flew out of sight toward the humanoid shapes below. After a moment, there were muffled cries of pain. Two of those shapes no longer stood. Thoran grinned.

Even before the missile hit, the artillery crew began to crank down the wheel that drew the catapult's arm. As they did this, their sergeant moved to stand beside Thoran. Both men scanned the shapes that still moved in the camp below.

"How long before we can expect reinforcements?" the sergeant asked, using a deep, steady voice so as not to sound afraid.

"Soon," Thoran said flatly—but not soon enough, he thought. *This border fort is too deep in the wilderness, and if I hadn't protested its construction, I might not have been assigned to command it.* However, he maintained a hard, stern expression. He glanced toward a nearby tower, where a huge fire blazed at the top, and said, "The signal will reach the Second Brigade in two hours. By then the whole border will be on alert."

The sergeant's voice raised in pitch slightly, revealing his true concern. "What about us?"

Thoran sighed, considering how to answer. At last he said, "I've fought ogres before. They're a fierce bunch, but not indestructible. Loose!"

Instinctively, the sergeant raised his hand toward his crew, and another boulder sailed into the darkness. More cries, another gap opened. This time the lieutenant did not grin.

"Thirty infantry in the tower," Thoran said, "and twenty ogres in the camp. That's a fair siege."

"I'd rather fight it out," the sergeant said in a grim voice.

Thoran turned, his eyes gleaming as he

touched the hilt of his long sword. "Good. I hate sieges. You might just get your promotion when this is all done."

The sergeant grunted, as if amused. "And you?"

"A field medal . . . or a funeral with full honors."

"Then we've saved the border."

"Yes." Thoran drew his razor-sharp blade from its sheath and studied the silvery edge. Then he turned a hard gaze on the sergeant. "Now let's save ourselves."

"Aye, sir."

As the sergeant went back to his crew and ordered another shot, Thoran looked down on the camp again. His brow was wet and his heart beat faster than he would have liked—signs of tension before a battle. He knew that such signs would disappear in the fury of combat. Then he pushed away such time-wasting thoughts and began to form an attack plan. His hand clutched the grip of the sword so hard that the knuckles turned white, but he never noticed it.

In the medieval world of the AD&D® game, armies are a vital ingredient to any successful nation. Borders must be watched, cities must be patrolled, bandits must be conquered, and invaders must be repelled. Even lawful-good governments need troops to deal with enemies, who often gather in large numbers that cannot be stopped by anything less than a large, organized band of warriors.

In history, fighting became a full-time profession when there was a division of labor among the members of society. Farmers grew food, merchants traded and transported goods, and soldiers fought battles. This article explains the lifestyles of these professional soldiers, and provides tips for Dungeon Masters on handling player characters who enlist.

For the purposes of this article, the word "army" describes a sizable organization of fighters sworn to serve a particular government, with a strict hierarchy of leaders and common soldiers. It does not mean a large, unorganized band of warriors such as a barbarian horde, nor does it mean the knightly orders followed by cavaliers. The best example of such an army is that of ancient Rome, on which much of this article is based. DMs may, of course, develop their own army structures and rules, but they should consider these guidelines carefully.

Recruitment and training

Volunteers for military service are interviewed at a military headquarters or office, one of which is usually found at every major city in a kingdom. An officer questions each recruit to determine his alignment, and the chance of acceptance is 100% unless the volunteer is obviously not a fighter or cavalier; clerics and monks are accepted only 25% of the time, druids and magic-users (including illusionists) only 10%, and thieves only 5% of the time. Of course, the volunteer may disguise himself or attempt to pass a 4d6 charisma check to fool the interviewer. Note that clerics, magic-users, and illusionists may be hired to help the army, but not as part of the regular troops.

After the interview, the recruit is checked by a doctor (or 20% chance by a cleric) to see that he is physically fit. The recruit must meet the minimum ability requirements of the fighter class (strength 9, constitution 7) and have no obvious diseases or physical handicaps.

After acceptance into the military, each recruit swears on oath that he will be loyal to his superiors and the government which he serves, and will be honest and brave at all times. After a short ceremony which includes a prayer to a war god (Mars, Anhur, Hachiman, or whomever), the recruit signs his name to a legal document indicating the date, the place of enlistment, and the length of enlistment (typically five, 10, or 25 years). The recruit is also given a permanent mark on the upper arm, either by tattooing or branding, which displays the man's name, date of enlistment, and the insignia of the army or kingdom he is to serve.

Next, the recruits are transported to a military base or training camp. There, each new soldier is assigned to a type of troops such as one of the following: archery, artillery, cavalry, heavy cavalry, heavy infantry, light infantry, mounted archery, navy, etc. Some nations may use all of these types of troops, while most use only a handful of them, as influenced by the terrain.

For example, a government in heavily wooded lands will support an army of light infantry and cavalry, with only limited missile use. Hills and mountains favor light infantry, while plains and deserts favor fast, light cavalry, preferably with long bows. Naturally, any nation bordering on a large body of water will support

warships, especially if hostile neighbors are across those waters.

As an option, the Dungeon Master may allow a recruit to volunteer for a certain type of troops. At this point, the recruit's qualifications are important. For example, a youth who has spent most of his life at sea will usually be allowed into the navy.

A volunteer for cavalry must pass a test of horsemanship by riding a speeding horse, wielding a weapon from the saddle, and dodging obstacles; only one riding proficiency check must be passed, though the recruit only gets two tries. A volunteer for heavy cavalry must have the minimum ability scores of 12 strength and 11 constitution, and he must pass the horsemanship test.

To volunteer for archery, a recruit must hit a man-size target at long range. The target has an effective armor class of 3, and the recruit gets only three shots. To enter a mounted archery unit, a volunteer must pass both the horsemanship and the archery tests.

Anyone who volunteers for artillery duty will not be allowed to enter an artillery unit, because artillerists are often considered to be laborers more than fighters. To volunteer for such duty may be a sign of fear of combat.

After the decision for the unit type is made, the recruits are put through several weeks of basic training, which includes

long marches, weapon training, riding practice (for cavalry units), and drills on battlefield tactics.

The soldiers receive proficiencies as necessary, such as horsemanship, artillery weapon use, and hand-held weapon use. Note that cavalry units tend to use spears or lances for charging and scimitars for slashing, while infantry units tend to use spears for throwing, swords, and sometimes pikes. The new recruits receive the minimum proficiencies necessary for operation in their units. If no proficiency slots are available, then the next slots that would normally be available during class-level increases are used up.

At the end of training, the soldiers receive 500 xp (not applicable to field experience points—fxp—described later) and the bonuses of +1 strength (or +10% for fighters with 18 strength) and +1 constitution. These ability increases cannot exceed racial maximums. Then the soldiers are given armor and weapons suited to their unit, and sent into the world to perform their duties.

A soldier's duties

After training, the new soldiers are assigned to duties according to the needs of their kingdom. Use either Table 1A, 1B, or 1C; Table 1A is for a kingdom with no serious military conflicts, Table 1B is for a kingdom with minor conflicts (i.e., limited warfare, skirmishes, small border wars, etc.), and Table 1C is for a kingdom involved in a full-scale war.

These tables have the following cumulative modifiers:

- 30% for characters in their first year of service;
- +1% per previous year of service;
- +5% per field medal (explained later);
- +10% per previous successful special mission.

Check each soldier's assignment at the beginning of each new year of service or when his last assignment ends. Also check again if the kingdom's situation (no warfare, minor warfare, or major warfare) changes, such as if a border skirmish turns into a major conflict with another kingdom, or if a major war ends in peace.

For the sake of the game, the DM should make only one assignment check for all of the PCs. This keeps the PCs together as a group so they can still play the game together, and it also makes the DM's job easier. However, each modifier listed is then taken as an average; for example, three PCs with two previous years of service each receive a +2% bonus, not +6%. Also, one field medal in a group of five PCs causes a +1% bonus (from 5 divided by 5), not +5%.

The assignments are designed to generalize the tasks ahead, and they ignore such menial duties as kitchen duty, latrine cleaning, weapons oiling, and armor scrubbing. Each assignment is explained below.

Campaigning: This duty means service in a unit involved in open warfare. The PCs are individuals in a massive group which marches, camps, and combats the enemy on the battlefield. The D&D® Companion Set's War Machine or the BATTLESYSTEM™ miniatures rules may be needed. However, the DM can simply use his own wisdom to determine the outcome of a battle by considering the strengths and weaknesses of each army, the abilities of the commanders and troops, morale, tactics, surprise, and other factors. If this last system is used, then the PCs will be involved in round-by-round melee combat while the rest of the battle rages around them, its events chosen by the Dungeon Master.

Construction: The PCs are assigned to help build or repair forts, castles, city walls, stone-paved roads, bridges, or whatever else is needed by the kingdom. Their group is equipped and treated like regular soldiers, though combat is rare. Engineers and officers oversee all operations.

Construction assignments last for six months in kingdoms with no warfare, or one month for kingdoms in minor warfare. At the end of each half-year of construction duty, each PC has a 10% of gaining a bonus of +1 strength (or +10% for those with 18 strength) and a 10% chance of gaining a +1 constitution, to racial maximums.

Garrison duty: Reserved as a reward for experienced troops, this assignment indicates guard duty at a fort or castle. When the military base stands beside a city or town, then the garrison troops also patrol these places, acting as police forces. Garrison soldiers do a lot of training, guarding, and patrolling. They might see occasional small-scale combat (such as skirmishes with bandits, brawling civilians, and wandering monsters), but they see major conflicts only when under siege.

Patrolling: This duty involves traveling within the kingdom and dealing with trouble wherever needed. Patrols may camp in the field or at a military base, but they do not usually stay in any one area for more than one week unless they are needed. Light cavalry and mounted archers are the most common troops assigned to this duty. Patrols may be as small as 20-50 soldiers in areas where no real trouble is expected, or up to 500 soldiers in areas where small-scale battles are likely.

Raiding: This duty involves lightning-fast attacks to gather food, loot, or prisoners. Only light infantry and mounted archers are assigned to this duty (all others reroll for assignment). Average troop size is 50 horsemen, and these soldiers base themselves in the protection of a military fort or campaigning army. Scouts gather information about the target and its defenses before each raid, so that raiding troops need only get to the target, overcome its defenses, gather what is wanted, and

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return home before enemy troops catch them.

Raiding assignments last for one month, during which time 2d4 +2 attacks are made. Afterward, the characters reroll for their assignment.

Scouting: Troops who scout will patrol outside of the kingdom's borders, in enemy territory and in wilderness lands. Scouts are equipped and mounted as are raiders, though scouts travel in fewer numbers for the sake of speed. The purpose of a scouting mission is to gather information on wandering monsters, enemy activities, and other dangers, then return home. Scouts are expected to fight only in self-defense. Characters assigned to scouting troops are also part of a large military group, either one campaigning or in garrison duty.

Special missions: For proven veterans only, this assignment may take from a few days to many months to complete. The main purpose of each mission is to benefit the kingdom, its people, and its army, not to indulge the soldiers in destruction and treasure hunts. Rules may be nonexistent ("anything goes") or many, depending on the mission's goals and its complexity.

Military organization

A civilized army is organized into groups of specific sizes, commanded by officers. PCs should be placed in the same group but will still be under the orders of an

NPC officer, usually a harsh, battle-hardened sergeant at first. PCs may learn to hate their sergeant, but they should also respect him, especially when he smashes a PC's nose with one punch (and they discover his strength bonuses), and when his combat experience leads them out of a tight situation (such as an ambush by orcs, or an enemy maneuver that leaves them surrounded on the battlefield).

A large army contains at least one of each of the following groups: a squad (10 soldiers), a half-century (five squads, or 50 soldiers), a century (10 squads or 100 soldiers), a brigade (five centuries, or 500 soldiers), and a legion (10 brigades, or 5,000 soldiers).

Types of officers are listed on Table 2. Fighter class levels are listed for each type of officer. The officers' rank in the 1st Edition (1985) BATTLESYSTEM supplement, page 8, is listed in the fourth column. Lastly, the group commanded by each officer is listed, as well as the composition of each group.

In addition to soldiers, every brigade maintains a group of tradesmen who are exempt from the menial duties of the soldiers. These tradesmen include engineers, blacksmiths, armorers, weapon-smiths, leatherworkers, bowyers, and fletchers. Medics with healing proficiency are also needed, and spell-casters (clerics, magic-users, and illusionists) are a rare but well-appreciated addition to any army.

Rangers may be temporarily hired as scouts. Finally, minstrels (and, very rarely, a bard) may be included for inspiring songs and moral support.

The life of a medieval soldier can be summed up in two ways: life on the march, and life at the fort.

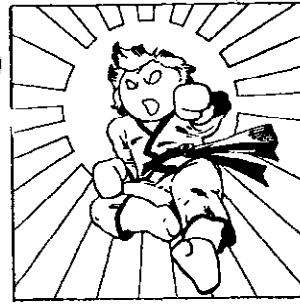
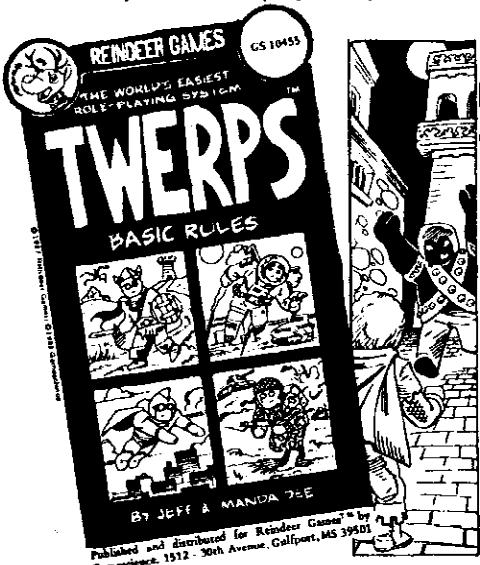
Life on the march

This description refers to troops who are continuously moving, especially armies on campaign who send out scouting parties and sometimes raiders. Such troops regularly march by daylight and make camp at night.

The marches cover an amount of ground determined on page 58 of the 1st Edition *Dungeon Masters Guide*, pages 122-125 in the 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*, or page 120 in the 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*. Use the movement rate of the slowest members of the group, so that if light cavalry is traveling with heavy infantry, then the infantry determines the movement rate. Troops on the march carry at least an average burden, since each man must carry his own armor, weapons, supplies, and building equipment for the night's camp.

Marching troops travel in defensive formations, usually in a column no more than 20 men wide, to conceal their numbers. Scouts watch for danger far ahead and to the sides. Cavalry and archers usually lead the column as well as guard

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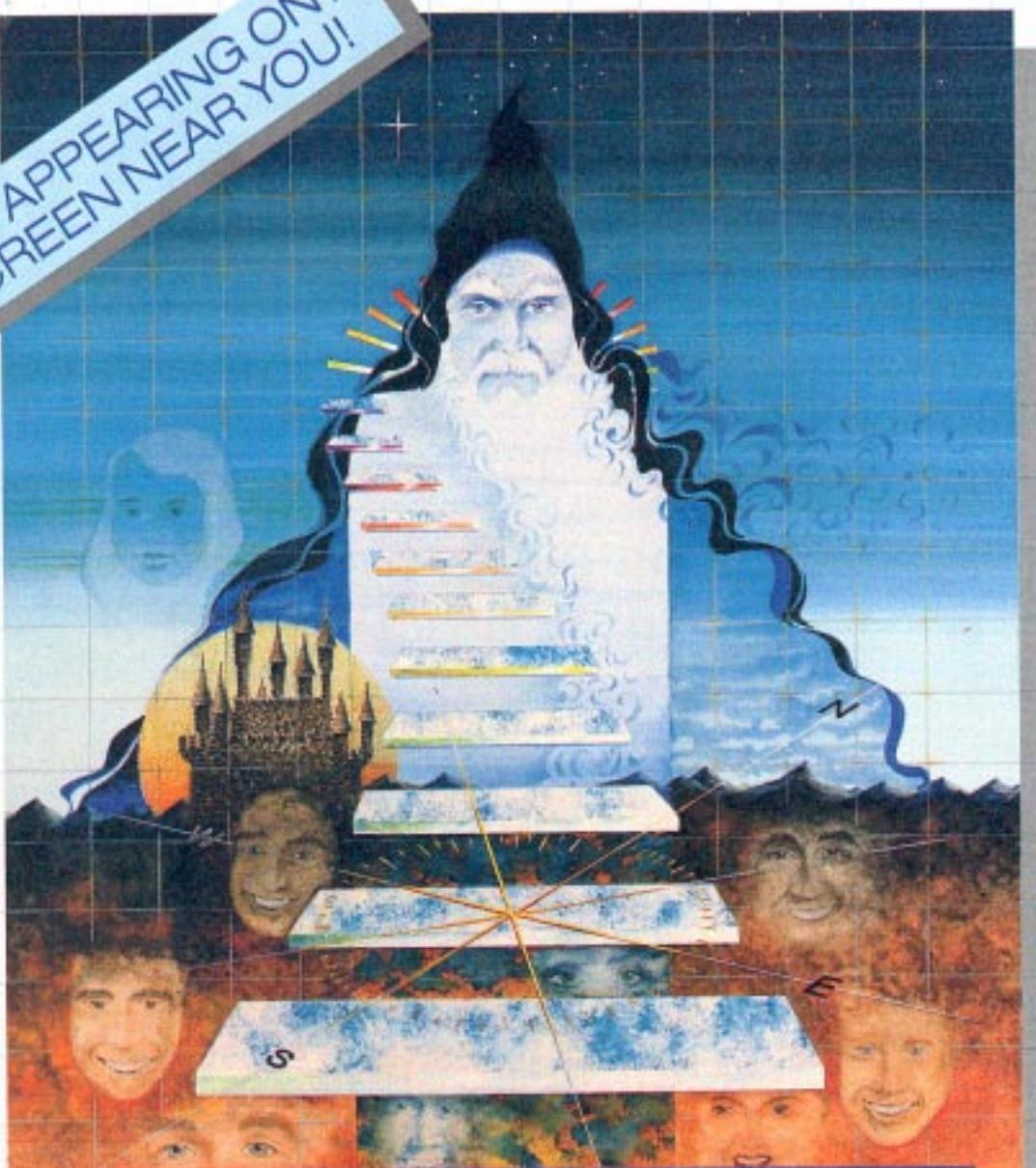
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its rear. At the center of the column are the infantrymen, the tradesmen, and the mules that carry extra supplies (including one tent per squad) and pull the siege engines. The highest-ranking officers remain toward the front of the column and are mounted on horses, camels, or whatever is appropriate. Also at the front are drummers and trumpeters who relay messages from the upper officers to other officers throughout the column.

A forced march increases the efficiency of the march but wearis the troops. A forced march increases the distance traveled in one day by 50%, or allows an army to move its normal distance in five hours rather than the normal eight hours. For each day of a forced march, NPC foot soldiers suffer a penalty of -2 to hit and damage. The maximum number of forced marches allowable in a row is four, when the NPC foot soldiers are at -8 to hit and damage. At that time, they begin to collapse from exhaustion and suffer low

morale, while the cavalry's mounts will also be exhausted. Foot soldiers raise their attack modifiers back to normal by +2 for each day of a normal march, or by 100% for one whole day of rest.

A forced march affects walking PCs similarly, though a PC may make a constitution check each day to avoid the combat penalties. These ability checks are made at +3 per previous check, and the PC recovers in the same way as the other foot soldiers.

At the end of the day's march, the soldiers spend a couple of hours building a camp. Normally, half of them work while the others stand guard. The ancient Romans first dug a square trench that surrounded the entire camp. They piled the dirt into a rampart beside the trench, then built a stockade of logs (when wood was abundant) or merely set sharp stakes into the top of the earth wall. Other variations were possible, though simplicity and speed of construction were desired, especially in

hostile territory. After the outer wall was completed, the Romans set up their tents, tended to the animals, ate, and rested.

At least 20% of the troops should stand guard while the rest sleep. In the morning, the soldiers break down the camp and prepare for the next day's march, leaving only the trench, the soil rampart, and unwanted garbage behind them.

Combat may be rare, occasional, or frequent, depending on the circumstances and the DM's judgment. Certainly, wandering monsters, bandits, and enemy soldiers will occupy most of the campaigning army's fighting experiences.

Life at the fort

This description applies to troops in garrison duty, those doing construction, and those who patrol, raid, or scout from a military base. Life for these troops centers around the fort or castle, though they need not spend most of their time within its walls.



Illustration by Jim Holloway

Menial duties occupy much of the time spent inside the fort. Soldiers clean their equipment, cook, wash floors, shovel manure from the stables, and groom the animals. Those assigned to construction duty may work on repairing the fort's wooden or stone structures, or may work on projects outside the fort. Also, soldiers stand guard on the walls and at important doors (e.g., the main gates, officers' quarters, the armory, the granary, etc.).

If there is a town or city next to the fort, the troops might patrol these civilian areas, stop crimes, and detain offenders. Thus the city guard and watchmen might be soldiers stationed in a nearby fortress. The government also uses soldiers as bodyguards for important officials and nobles, as riot police, and as guards for city gates, granaries, law courts, and other such places.

Off-duty soldiers spend a lot of time gambling, possibly playing the games described on pages 215-216 of the 1st Edition *DMG*. If the fort is next to a town or city, then soldiers will be found at taverns, brothels, bath houses, gambling dens, and other businesses designed to drain the silver pieces from their pockets. Brawls involving soldiers are not appreciated by the officers in command of those soldiers, nor by the businesses themselves.

Off-duty PCs can get into town and city adventures which have nothing to do with their military life. However, illegal activities will draw serious penalties from the PCs' officers.

The troops also train each day. They march in circles around the fort and through the surrounding countryside, then practice battlefield drills and hand-to-hand combat.

The most exciting form of training, however, is the war game, which is held once a month or more. In the war game, the commanding officer of the garrison divides his troops into equal forces and pits them against each other on a battlefield. Clubs take the place of arrows, spears, and swords, and casualties are noted by the red paint left by these clubs. These small-scale battles are taken very seriously by the soldiers, since normal experience points and field experience points (detailed later) are gained from war games as if from real battles.

Who's in charge?

During battles and other events, the personalities of the officers have serious effects on how well the army operates. This section deals with the leadership ability of the senior officer who is in command of the PCs' group. The DM should secretly record the personalities of the leaders of both sides of the conflict, and let the PCs draw their own conclusions.

Wisdom is a very important aspect of leadership. For the commander in question, roll 4d6 and drop the lowest roll. His wisdom score is also modified (but not

beyond racial limits) as follows: + 1 for captains, + 2 for colonels, and + 3 for generals.

The officer may have one or two leadership weaknesses, as determined by Table 4. The 1d8 roll is modified by the NPC's wisdom-based magical-attack adjustment. Each weakness is then determined by Table 5, whose results are explained below.

Cowardice means too much care for one's own life, leading to a hesitancy to act offensively and take advantage of opportunities. It can cause more waiting and retreats than should be expected.

Compassion means caring too much for the lives of others, with similar results as from cowardice. The commander may act foolishly to rescue hostages or save civilians, or may refuse to engage in battle for fear of "unnecessary loss of lives."

A quick temper is a tendency to react violently and irrationally toward anything that causes anger. The officer may launch an attack because of the enemy's insults or their offensive acts.

Recklessness indicates a tendency to act courageously but without thinking. The commander may launch an attack at the first sight of the enemy, not considering that other troops might be hiding to attack him. A reckless commander tends to forget one or two important factors (weather, terrain, troop strength, tactics, etc.) in his impatience to attack.

Pride indicates the officer is too aware of his own self-image, and he acts irrationally when that image is threatened. His pattern of behavior is similar to that of a quick-tempered man. Insults and humiliation tend to draw him to attack, even at his own disadvantage. He may also refuse to retreat or call for reinforcements when such things are necessary.

Table 6 determines the severity of each weakness, with a saving throw noted. Each time the NPC commander faces a situation that would appeal to his weakness, he must pass the saving throw or act on that weakness.

The DM can hint at the commander's weaknesses off the battlefield but should not make the hints too obvious. For exam-

ple, severe punishments for minor rule-breaking may indicate a quick-tempered officer, while no punishments may indicate cowardice or compassion. Also, too many forced marches may show the commander to be reckless ("They'll be all right. Don't worry about it!") or overly proud ("They're my boys. They can take it.").

If the commander's actions have disastrous results, and if his weakness is the obvious reason, then he may face serious punishments, especially demotion or dangerous assignments. Then the PCs get a new leader whose secret weaknesses (if any) will be revealed to them only at the worst times.

Field experience points

When a character's position in an army is considered, only experience points gained in service to that army should be considered. These points are called field experience points, and they are recorded separately from normal experience points that count toward class-level advancement.

Experience points for slain opponents and monsters may count toward both field experience points and normal experience points, but only if those points were gained in service to the army. For example, if a PC kills a maximum-hit-point frost giant that is attacking his lords castle, then the PC adds 3,426 points to his field experience points, and 3,426 points to his normal experience points. However, if the same character gains 850 experience points in a tavern brawl, then he adds those points to his normal experience points but not his field experience points.

Field experience points count toward military rank, which will be detailed later.

Rules and punishments

From the start of his career, every soldier is made aware of the rules of the military. Crimes are obvious and need no lengthy explanations: theft, duelling in a lethal manner, sleeping on guard duty, lying, murder, corruption, disobedience, cowardice, treason, desertion, and conspiracy are some examples. In general, anything that harms the army, its system, its government, or the people of that gov-

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ernment is considered illegal.

Sometimes a trial is used if the offender might be innocent. However, only major crimes require this, and lesser offenses (such as sleeping on guard duty) need only the word of the offender's superior officer to be taken as truth.

The severity of each crime should influence the severity of the punishments. Note that officers receive harsher punishments because they are expected to provide examples to their men, and bad examples are not appreciated. However, officers are exempt from certain punishments if such punishments reduce the respect given to the officers by the troops; an unrespected leader is a useless leader.

Some of the punishments follow, in order of severity. Also, each punishment inflicted is accompanied by a loss of field experience points but not normal class experience points.

Unpleasant duties (25 fpx lost per week). The offender is ordered to perform tasks usually reserved for new recruits, such as latrine cleaning, kitchen service, and horse manure shoveling, for 1-8 weeks. Officers are excluded from such duties.

Pay loss (150 fpx lost). The offender forfeits 1-3 months pay. This is the most common penalty given to officers, since it does not cause them to be humiliated in front of their men.

Flagging (500 fpx lost). The offender is tied to a post and whipped by his immediate superior. Typical numbers of lashes are five, 10, or 20, causing a total of 2-5 hp damage. After flagging, the victim must pass a constitution check (at +2 per five lashes received) or be weak (half strength and dexterity scores) for 24 hours. Officers are exempt from flagging.

Gantlet of clubs (100 or 500 fpx lost). Sentenced only by violent or harsh officers, the gantlet is a narrow lane lined by 10 soldiers on either sides. The offender (who wears no armor) must run through the lane while each soldier swings a club at him. Successful hits inflict 1-6 hp damage. If the victim is knocked unconscious, he loses 500 fpx, and a medic moves in to keep him alive. If the victim passes through the gantlet without falling, he

only loses 100 fpx because he gains respect from the soldiers and officers. Officers are exempt from this punishment.

Dragging (100 or 500 fpx lost). A ruthless punishment, dragging requires that the offender be tied to the saddle of a horse and must run behind it for three hours. The victim must make three constitution checks, one for each hour, at +2 per previous check. Failure means that he is dragged along the ground, taking 1-4 hp damage per hour of dragging. Three successful ability checks indicates that the offender remains running after three hours, and he loses only 100 fpx instead of 500. Afterward, the offender is weak (half strength and dexterity scores) for 24 hours. If the offender breaks the rope or attacks the horseman, he is flogged (or worse). Officers are exempt from dragging.

Unpleasant/Dangerous assignments (1,000 fpx lost). The victim of this punishment is usually either a common soldier who has proven himself to be incurably troublesome, or an officer who has greatly angered his superiors. Typical penalty assignments are garrison duty in a rebellious town, border duty near a wilderness full of hostile barbarians, scouting in an area overflowing with orcs, and patrolling a mosquito-infested swamp or sun-scorched desert. The assignments are meant to punish the offender, not kill him.

Demotion (variable fpx loss). This penalty is reserved for an officer who has proven himself too corrupt or incompetent to perform his duties at his present level of responsibility. Demotion must be approved by at least three officers who have higher rank than the one to be punished, so that the whims of a rival officer do not ruin another soldier's career. The demoted officer drops up to three levels in rank, depending on the severity of the offense, and loses enough field experience points to put him at the minimum amount needed for that rank (see Table 3).

Execution. This punishment is usually given to those guilty of murder, conspiracy, desertion, or treason. The death may be slow or fast, depending on the typical alignment of the country. Hangings and beheadings are the most common forms of

execution, while more elaborate and cruel methods are less common. If the offender escapes, then he loses all field experience points for that kingdom and becomes a wanted outlaw.

Rewards

The first awards given to a soldiers is his monthly pay, as determined on page 29 of the 1st Edition DMG or page 108 of the 2nd Edition DMG. New recruits receive four months' pay at the start, then get paid at the end of each month of service. Pay advances and loans are not given.

Officers receive better pay. A sergeant gets 10 times the amount paid to the troops he commands, while a lieutenant and a captain get 100 gp per level. A colonel or a general receives 600 gp per month, plus 50 gp per level above 6th.

Field medals are awarded for courage and victory in battle. These medals come in many forms, but most resemble jewelry. Examples of field medals are listed below, along with field experience-point awards.

—A silver medallion to be worn about the neck, given to a soldier who risks his own life to save another's (250 fpx).

—A small silver dagger to be strapped to the upper arm, given to a soldier who kills 10 opponents in one day (250 fpx).

—A silver cross to be hung on the breast armor, given to a soldier who kills an officer of the opposing army (300 fpx).

—A gold medallion to be hung on the breast armor, given to an officer who wins a field battle against 1:2 odds or worse, or who resists a siege at 1:5 odds or worse (1,000 fpx for sergeants, 5,000 for lieutenants, 20,000 for captains, 100,000 for colonels, and 200,000 for generals).

—A silver star for the chest, given to an officer who destroys a large force of bandits, stops a large riot, or ends a large peasant rebellion; a good-aligned government will require that the officer also avoided a slaughter of civilians (500 fpx for sergeants, 2,500 for lieutenants, 10,000 for captains, 50,000 for colonels, and 100,000 for generals).

—A gold disc (with sword insignia) to be hung about the neck, given to each member of a scouting party who fought courageously to return to his army group and report information that helped to avert a military defeat (500 fpx).

—A gold star to be pinned to the breast armor, given to a soldier who performed exceedingly well during a special mission, at great risk to his own life (1,000 fpx).

Another type of award is a favorable assignment, such as raiding duty (for violent or adventurous soldiers) or garrison duty in a wealthy city.

Loot taken in raids and conquests should be transported immediately to the royal treasury, and any soldier (especially an officer) who steals from this loot risks severe punishments. Note that spies and informers are usually present to report such thefts.

However, looting has its rewards in field

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experience points, and the points are divided as follows: The leader of the group that conducted the raid takes 15% of the total experience points to be awarded, his immediate superior officer takes 10%, any lesser officers involved divide up another 25%, and the common soldiers split the remaining 50%.

For example, if a lieutenant destroys an evil temple and delivers 5,000 gp to his king from the temple, then he receives 750 fxp, his captain receives 500 fxp, his five sergeants receive 1,250 fxp (or 250 each), and the 50 soldiers with him receive 2,500 fxp (or 50 each).

Retirement is the final reward of service. At the end of his term of service, the soldier receives an amount of gold equal to one year's pay for each five years of service completed. The retired soldier may also buy his armor and weapons from the army at - 2% the normal price per year of service. If he leaves the army then reenlists, his position will have been filled and he will have to wait for an opening to apply for a position at his old rank; his chance of success is determined as with a soldier seeking promotion (detailed later) but with a +20% bonus. Another benefit of retirement may be citizenship in the kingdom that the soldier served.

Promotions

Promotion serves to elevate soldiers into higher levels of command, in order to fill new positions or to replace those who leave old positions (either by death, demotion, injury, retirement, etc.). It may help the DM to know how many officers are in the army, and this number can be found by dividing the entire number of soldiers by the number commanded by each type of officer (as shown on Table 2). For example, the City of Rel Astra in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting can raise around 9,500 troops, including levies and militia but not navy; therefore, its full army has two generals, 19 colonels, 95 captains, 190 lieutenants, and 950 sergeants.

As a rule, any organized army should have at least one general and two colonels, though these officers may have to command less than their maximum number of

soldiers because of the army's size.

Table 3 lists the officer ranks, minimum field experience points necessary for those ranks, and the percent chance that there will be an opening for that position. Note that kingdoms are rated as being involved in no warfare, minor warfare, or major warfare.

Once an opening exists, the soldier must apply for promotion to his superior officer. The chance of success is 0%, with the following modifiers:

- + 1% per intelligence, wisdom, and charisma point;
- + 5% per silver field medal;
- + 10% per gold field medal;
- + 10% per previous attempt to reach the same rank;
- 25% if intelligence score is below 10;
- 25% if wisdom score is below 10;
- 25% if charisma score is below 10; and
- 20% for would-be sergeants, colonels, and generals (because of the number of applicants).

After promotion, the officer might remain at his present assignment or be transferred to a new assignment (DM's option). However, it is likely that the officer's superiors may want to test his abilities by giving him a dangerous assignment, such as campaigning, scouting, or raiding.

Note that if an officer loses the minimum field experience points for his rank, he does not drop in rank unless he is officially demoted.

A high-born character may attempt to enter the military as an officer rather than a common soldier. A character of the upper middle class may enter as a lieutenant, a character of the lower upper class may enter as a captain, a character of the middle upper class may enter as a colonel, and a character of the upper upper class may enter as a general. There must be an opening in the rank sought, at which time the character applies to a high-ranking military officer for acceptance. To be accepted, the character needs a letter of recommendation by his father (if the father holds the same rank the character seeks, in the same army) or by an officer one rank higher. The base chance of ac-

ceptance is 0%, with the following cumulative modifiers:

- + 1% per intelligence and wisdom point;
- + 2% per fighter or cavalier level;
- + 15% if father is in lower-upper class;
- + 30% if father is in middle-upper class;
- + 50% if father is in upper-upper class;
- 30% if the character has no living parents; and

- 20% if the character's parents are unmarried.

Also add or subtract the character's charisma reaction adjustments to the chance of acceptance. If the attempt fails, the character can only enter the army as a common soldier. If the attempt succeeds, the character must still go through basic training and take assignments like the rest of the soldiers, but receives enough field experience points (not normal experience points) to put him at the minimum amount required for the rank he receives.

Why Enlist?

The Dungeon Master may have trouble convincing the players to enlist their characters in an army, especially if they are of medium or high levels and have a lot of magical items and treasure to lose. However, there are several methods to entice PCs to enlist. It should be remembered that the PCs will be more enthused and cooperative if they enlist by their own will, rather than being forced into military service. Also, lower-level PCs are easier to convince. Try the following suggestions:

1. If the PCs desire power, glory, and military strength, then the DM should point out that a career in an organized army can offer all of these things.

2. The DM's campaign setting could be plunged into warfare, the land overrun by armies, scouting parties, and military patrols. The PCs might witness a major battle or two, be chased by a column of heavy cavalry, or threatened by 50 arrows hitting the ground in front of them; soon they may begin to feel helpless against the brigades they encounter. The DM should let them know that joining one army may be better than running from all of them.

3. The PCs could have a hostile encounter with a patrol or scouting party, preferably one in which the PCs start the trouble. The wrath of an entire army comes down on them, and they become fugitives hunted by a seemingly endless supply of professional warriors. The answer? Join an opposing army and add a few thousand companions to the fight!

4. The DM could mention that a PC can gain great military strength to conquer another kingdom or overthrow the government by moving up through the army's ranks.

5. To enter a hostile land whose borders are heavily guarded, the PCs can join an army that plans to invade that land. Note that this might have been Frodo Baggins's only option if he hadn't known of Mordor's secret entrance. Another version of

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this method is for the adventure's villain to command a great army, and the PCs may need to join the army that plans to attack the villain, unless the PCs want to stand alone against 1,500 heavy cavalry and 3,000 light infantry!

6. In *Oriental Adventures* lands (especially Wa and Kozakura), bushi PCs may

join a daimyo's army to prove their worthiness on the battlefield and achieve samurai status (note that such an achievement includes a bonus of + 10 honor points). In Wa, where weapons are restricted to professional soldiers, the army also provides freedom to use a variety of weapons.

Table 1A
Military Duties: No Warfare

1d100 (plus modifiers) Duty	
up to 10	construction
11-40	patrolling
41-60	scouting
61-70	raiding
71-100	garrison duty
101+	special mission

Table 1B
Military Duties: Minor Warfare

1d100 (plus modifiers) Duty	
up to 50	campaigning
51-70	patrolling
71-80	scouting
81-85	raiding
86-90	construction
91-100	garrison duty
101+	special mission

Table 1C
Military Duties: Major Warfare

1d100 (plus modifiers) Duty	
up to 65	campaigning
66-80	patrolling
81-85	scouting
86-100	garrison duty
101+	special mission

Military adventures

Service in a medieval army may seem restricting, but there are many opportunities for adventures. Some suggestions are listed below, categorized by assignment.

Campaign: The PCs' group is ordered to capture a castle. After a fierce battle, the PCs and their squad attack the sorcerer's tower, during which they encounter magical traps, monsters, and a mid-level magic-user and his henchmen. In other adventures, the PCs' squad may be ordered to chase after an enemy squad that is shadowing the army, capture intelligent monsters in their lairs for questioning, or clear a dungeon of monsters and hostile characters.

Construction: Adventures during building projects are rare but not impossible. The PCs may dig into a lair of monsters or fall into a cavern complex full of them. Wandering monsters, hostile natives, or enemy soldiers might show up at the construction sight of a border fort. Also, the PCs may get trouble from the prisoners (such as criminals, evil spell-casters, or caged monsters) of the building they are repairing.

Garrison duty: Guarding an important place is dangerous when sword-wielding or spell-casting NPCs are determined to get past the guards. If the garrison troops also patrol a town or city, then there may be powerful criminals (especially a thieves' guild) to challenge. The most action, however, occurs if an enemy army surrounds

the garrison and attempts to pound its way into the castle.

Patrolling: Many encounters are possible in the countryside, such as those with wandering monsters, bandits, and adventurers. The patrol might find a village which needs protection from hostile forces, or may need to rescue a damsel from an orc-infested cave. Any threat that appears suddenly within a kingdom's borders may first be discovered by a patrol, and there may be no time to call for reinforcements.

Raiding: Attacks on villages and caravans outside the kingdom provide obvious

Continued on page 95

Table 4
Officers: Number of Weaknesses

1d8	Weaknesses
1	two
2-4	one
5-8	none

Table 5
Officers: Types of Weaknesses

1d20	Weakness
1-4	cowardice
5-8	compassion
9-12	quick temper
13-14	recklessness
15-20	pride

Table 6
Officers: Level of Weaknesses

1d6	Level	1d20 saving
		throw
1-3	slight	16+
4-5	moderate	12+
6	extreme	6+

Table 2
Military Officers

Officer	Fighter level	BATTLESYSTEM™ supplement rank *	Command group	Number of soldiers
Sergeant	1	-	squad	10
Lieutenant	2-4	unit commander	half-century	50
Captain	5-6	unit commander	century	100
Colonel	7-8	brigade commander	brigade	500
General	9+	army commander	legion	5,000+

* The 2nd Edition (1989) BATTLESYSTEM rules uses a different system of command, detailed on pages 58-59 of that booklet.

Table 3
Chances For Promotion

Rank	Required field xp	No warfare	Minor warfare	Major warfare
Sergeant	500	80%/month	50%/week	95%/week
Lieutenant	2,000	40%/month	30%/week	60%/week
Captain	18,000	20%/month	30%/month	20%/week
Colonel	70,000	10%/month	20%/month	30%/month
General	250,000	10%/year	5%/month	15%/month



Illustration by Joseph Pillsbury

How to Win Wars and Influence People

Lead your miniatures armies to fame and victory

by Thomas M. Kane

To His Most Potent Ruler, King Beogard, from General Seros, Captain of the Host:

The war has begun, oh King. Horns blare throughout the streets, and strong men flock to the rolling drums. Your proud vassals strut in their suits of steel, and eager peasants trail behind and cheer. This is what you dreamed of when you vowed to fight until the last goblin of the Crushing Foot tribe lay slain. Today we share in a pageant of iron and glory, followed by a feast. Tomorrow you will see none of it. Your troops will trudge, and those long files will ooze into the blackened fields, their members thinking of nothing but rest and food. Your tactics, not these celebrations, will bring victory or defeat. Now you must lead your land to victory in battle—and back to peace again.

The essence of military strategy is to attack enemies in their weakest spots, when they are least prepared, using as much force as possible. One wins wars by avoiding fair fights. It is not merely luck that gives one side advantages in terrain, weather, or stronger troops. The mustering, supplying, budgeting, indoctrinating, and marching that come before a battle require as much skill as combat itself, and they can give a clever strategist the victory before any blows have been struck.

With the introduction of the BATTLESYSTEM™ supplement in 1985, and its rerelease for the AD&D® 2nd Edition game in 1989, both players and DMs can now fight organized fantasy battles. The PCs should use all of their skills in fighting, and DMs should account for the effects of prebattle strategy. Since the BATTLESYSTEM rules contain only scant information on logistics and recruiting, this article presents variant rules as well as strategic advice useful in many fantasy role-playing games.

Unless otherwise noted, all references to the BATTLESYSTEM rules in this article are for the 1st Edition version; footnotes have been added for 2nd Edition rules comments. References to other AD&D 1st and 2nd Edition rule books are included.

Preparations

Your strategy must reflect the troops

you can muster, the equipment they can buy, and the countryside where they will fight. Some feudal rulers depended on heavy cavalry, since a king's noble vassals would never wield cowardly bows or dishonor themselves by fighting on foot. Only yeomen will serve as archers or trained infantry, and these free, land-owning farmers barely exist on most manors. A noble cannot conscript his serfs; if peasants are taken from their farms, they will not be able to grow food, and both the lord and his army will starve. The opposite is true when defending the homeland; the entire population can fight in a militia and (if near their homes) can tend their fields.

If PCs insist on conscripting peasants, the DM can simulate the resulting eco-

Victory can never come fast enough for the winner, and defeat can never be delayed long enough to satisfy the loser.

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*

nomic collapse by raising all prices. Figure out what percentage of the working population has been drafted, multiply it by a roll of 1d4, then add 100 to obtain the percent amount of inflation caused. Thus, if half the peasantry is taken and the DM rolls a 2, all prices double ($(50 \times 2) + 100 = 200$). The DM may choose to omit the die roll and select a result. Overpopulated cities can spare a large percentage of their people, while tiny wilderness colonies need everyone they have. The DM should also note that peasant troops will have the very lowest morale ratings and combat abilities. This effectively simulates medieval conditions in which infantry would seldom face mounted knights, and in which civilians were often unaffected by fighting.

In more populated lands where mercenaries are common, you can design an army of your choosing. It is also possible to recruit auxiliary troops from neutral fiefdoms. However, an army composed of foreigners is unwieldy. This has been known since ancient times, when Machiavelli wrote, "[Mercenaries and auxiliaries are] disunited, ambitious, without

discipline, faithless, bold among friends, cowardly among enemies; they have no fear of God, and keep no faith with men. . . . In peace, you are despoiled by them, and in war, by the enemy." Clever DMs will role-play mercenaries this way, having them demand higher pay at the least convenient times (such as during battles).

The DM should decide exactly what troops can be found in any given adventure. In a typical feudal world, roughly 5% of the population belongs to the noble class, and only young noblemen perform honorable military service. The middle class makes up another 5% of the population, but its skilled craftsmen and merchants will probably be indispensable for supplying an army (as detailed elsewhere) and cannot be wasted as soldiers. You may consult the article, "Armies From the Ground Up," in DRAGON® issue #125, for more information on raising troops.

Natural dangers

The harsher the landscape and weather, the simpler your maneuvers must be. While troops struggle to survive the elements, they cannot fight the enemy. Armies simply must avoid hazardous terrain. One brave adventurer might risk a 10% chance of illness, but can a commander let 10% of his soldiers fall ill? When you must fight in dangerous terrain, strive to rest your troops and force the enemy to take any risks. The defender usually has a great advantage in rough landscapes, because he can wait in safety while the invader must labor through the wilderness to attack. Defenders can also use impassable terrain as extra guards that protect areas without troops.

DMs can use the BATTLESYSTEM rules for magic (rule 14.0) to convert effects from the *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide* and *Wilderness Survival Guide* into BATTLESYSTEM terms. Ability checks and other such rolls can be treated like saving throws vs. spells, where one save is made for each figure.¹ To speed the rolling of dice, use the optional BATTLESYSTEM rule 14.3 that states "have one less than the saving throw number of figures fail automatically for each multiple of 20 figures." For example, if each figure must roll an 8

or higher on 1d20 to save, and 20 figures are affected, then 7 (8-1) figures fail. This averaging rule can be adapted to rolls on other dice. For example, in a mass ability check (assuming that the average soldier has ability scores of 12), eight out of every 20 figures fail the roll. This figure is derived by subtracting the number of results that indicate success from the total number of possible rolls (20 - 12 = 8).

Remember that disease kills more soldiers than enemies ever will. Do not tire your soldiers; find them clean shelters to sleep in, not filthy camps. The DM may calculate the percent chance of a character becoming sick or infested with parasites, using the rules on pages 13-14 of the 1st Edition *Dungeon Masters Guide*. This equals the percent of soldiers afflicted. When a PC has a 3% chance of contracting a disease, three out of every hundred soldiers get it. In a camp, without magical aid, 15% of all sick warriors die, and the rest recover after one month. During a march, all diseased soldiers either die or abandon the army.

When terrain paralyzes normal armies, elite forces become nearly invincible. They can pounce, then escape into the wilderness with impunity. AD&D game players

have both *Monster Manuals*, the FIEND FOLIO® tome, and the *Monstrous Compendiums* from which to choose special troops, as well as all the different supplemental monsters and character classes that exist. Elven archers in dark woods, lizard men in swamps, airborne hippogriffs, treeborne kech, insect swarms, and treant-controlled forests are only samples of what you could use.

Supply

Crushing military budgets are no recent phenomena. In 300 B.C., military strategist Sun Tzu said, "In operations of war, when

The best strategy is to be very strong.

Carl von Clausewitz, On War

one thousand fast four-horse chariots, one thousand heavy chariots, and one thousand mail-clad soldiers are deployed . . . the cost will amount to one thousand pieces of gold a day." This money is spent on weapons, pay, and—most desperately important of all—food. A war will drain excess money from PCs very quickly. However, the DM should consider the size of NPC budgets, too, and give the PCs a

chance to win by surviving for longer than their foe can afford to fight.

Most of an army's expenses can be found in the AD&D rules. Rates of pay for mercenaries appear on page 30 of the 1st Edition *DMG* or page 108 of the 2nd Edition *DMG*. Armor and weapon prices are given in either edition of the *Player's Handbook* and in *Unearthed Arcana*. Noble knights have their own weapons and armor, but the commander must buy equipment for other troops. Furthermore, new weapons will constantly be needed. Casualties recovered after a lost battle (BATTLESYSTEM rule 16.12) have always been stripped, and 10% of all other troops lose their equipment each month. A PC's army may forage weapons from defeated enemies, but this will seldom provide enough arms of the right type. The 1st Edition *DMG*, pages 29-30, and the 2nd Edition *PHB*, page 65, show how fast new weapons can be made. Remember that an army also needs blacksmiths and armorers for routine maintenance, and these characters won't be available for making new weapons (see pages 29-30 of the 1st Edition *DMG*). The DM may decide how many artisans can be found in a given area. Katherine Kerr's article, "An Army Travels



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On Its Stomach" (DRAGON issue #94), has invaluable information on logistics.

The obvious objective in logistic strategy is to spend as little as possible while making war expensive for the enemy. Captured supplies are doubly precious, for they both sustain your army and help deplete the enemy. Traditionally, victims of invasion try to outlast their enemies in prolonged campaigns, but there is no reason why attackers cannot win by threatening their victims into bankrupting itself. Guerrilla insurgents often succeed simply because it is so expensive to destroy them. Every general soon sees why Machiavelli measured the strength of his enemies by the amount of provisions they had stored, not the size of their armies.

Marches

Even after your army is built, your plots are laid, and your supplies purchased, the enemy may still be far away. Your army must travel, and marches are chaotic affairs in which stragglers die and disciplined troops drift into slogging mobs. The 1st Edition DMG shows the movement penalties for huge armies on page 29; see also the 2nd Edition PHB, page 120, and the 2nd Edition D&D, pages 122-125. Since the entire army marches so slowly, you should divide it into small parties and have each one travel separately from the others. The art of planning a march lies in coordinating the times when each group will use each road so that they all arrive at the battle simultaneously.

When you reach the battleground, it will take hours to organize marchers into orderly brigades. Fortunately, the enemy will be at least as disorganized as you are. Until Frederick the Great developed the cadence step, marching armies were no more than mobs. Normally, scouts would report approaching enemies long before the battle, and both sides would stop to organize themselves. If a marching army blunders up to an organized enemy, it must rally each figure separately, using BATTLESYSTEM rules 6.0-6.4; units that contain unrallied figures must fight in mob formation (rule 2.10)³. If a commander attempts to travel with units in battle formation, the army can move only half its usual number of miles per day. In such noncombat treks, troops will sustain their formations for one turn per discipline point. Afterward, the army must stop to rally each figure or else assume mob formation.

Since marching armies need so much time to organize themselves, you can always refuse battle. A primitive commander never needs to suffer casualties if he is willing to surrender territory, unless the attacker completely surrounds his entire army. Therefore, never fight unless you like the terrain. Defenders should seek out rough ground, and attackers should try to bypass them. Choosing a battlefield is like an auction in which each side tries to outbid the other in paying

space and time for tactical advantage. You can defend any fortification you choose when the enemy is rash enough to attack you in it. Or, if the foe is timid, you can prolong the pursuit until your enemy has abandoned everything worth defending. This tactic works best in tabletop games with lots of space and great variation in terrain.

Strategy

Even if you win every fight, you will lose the war if the enemy can afford its losses more easily than you. For example, in the American Civil War, General Grant usually suffered more casualties than General Lee, but he could replace soldiers and the Confederates could not. This is the difference between strategy and tactics. Strategy is deciding, in general terms, what will defeat the enemy; tactics is doing it. Only

When campaigning, be as unfathomable as the clouds, move like a thunderbolt. . . . Be seen in the east, and attack from the west. Make a noise in the north and strike from the south.

Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

strategy can bring victory, but only tactics can make strategy succeed. No single formula will apply to every plan, but the typical requirements of strategy can be summed up these principles of war.

Select an objective: You cannot have a coherent strategy unless you know what you plan to accomplish. Small objectives should lead to greater ones, so that every skirmish propels you toward victory. There are two common objectives for minor battles: to destroy enemy forces, and to acquire territory. In an entire war, the objective will be the capture of your foe's economic and political resources. If an enemy depends on the wealth of a capital city, seize it. When one leader masterminds the enemy force, then capture, disable, or kill him. The DM should remember this principle, too, and know what effects various victories might have.

Will the foe's army be able to fight after it loses its leader? Can the enemy continue without his capital city?

Sun Tzu, the Oriental strategist, listed a useful series of priorities for attack. In order of importance, they are:

1. Enemy plans. Pin down units that are essential to the foe's strategy, and capture ground over which enemies must travel. Sun Tzu said that to "win one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To win a battle without fighting is the pinnacle of skill."

2. Hostile alliances. Create dissension and mistrust, and make the war so costly for your foe's allies that they desert. Whenever possible, separate enemy units from each other.

3. Enemy troops. If you cannot disable the enemy army, you will have to destroy it. Direct combat wastes lives and equipment, but it is often unavoidable.

4. Enemy cities and fortresses. Sieges require enormous expenditures of resources, time, and soldiers. Attack strong places only when you have no alternative.

Fight offensively: You cannot let your enemy decide how the battle is to be fought, nor can you trust foes to defeat themselves. Take action and resolve the battle as rapidly as possible. The longer the battle takes, the more things can go wrong. In the course of an entire military campaign, fighting is so expensive that a ruler must end the war quickly to avoid ruin. Many generals misunderstand the principle of the offensive. It does not mean that one should recklessly attack, because entrenched defenders have a great tactical advantage. What this principle means is that one should not be content to let a battle drag on; you must constantly press for victory. When enemies retreat, pursue them.

Concentrate your forces: You can never have too many troops at the decisive point, even if you have to weaken yourself in other places becoming strong. If you try to fight everywhere, you will not be able to win anywhere. Keep your forces together and concentrate them on one objective.

Be mobile: Fast troops can easily fulfill the other principles of war. Always main-

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tain routes where you can advance, withdraw or bring in reinforcements, and never burden troops with excessive armor. Strike with many units, not one mammoth one. This way, you can distribute your forces between battles in exactly the proportion you desire. Try to give your army a convex shape with internal lines of communication, so that the distance across your army is shorter than the distance around it. This way, your troops can shuttle from one front to another faster than the enemy can surround them. Friendly soldiers can go straight, while foes must travel around your whole formation.

Use an economy of force: Rare is the fight when you can choose only one objective, so you must use as much force as possible against your primary objective, and as little as possible against the others. Deploy every unit that you have. All reserves should eventually be used.

Cooperate: Your forces must fight on the same side. Have your commanders understand each others' plans, and balance each unit's weaknesses with their strengths. For example, pikemen can keep cavalry away while archers fire. Horsemen can sweep behind the foe to cut off its retreat while infantry advances. If you have several players each playing a commander, they must all agree on one plan, instead of each pursuing a separate one.

Be secure: Never assume that a plan is so effective that it cannot fail. You should

always begin a battle with reserves and escape routes. Make sure that your army can keep enemies from going around it and attacking its rear.

Surprise: There is no limit to the victories you can win with surprise, because (by definition) a surprise involves some attack that the enemy is unprepared to counter. Two sorts of surprise exist: strategic surprise, and tactical surprise. Strategic surprise consists of following an unexpected plan, moving to places that the enemy did not think to defend, and attacking foes that are preoccupied. A tactical surprise is an actual ambush. You achieve this effect by hiding soldiers in thick brush or using certain magical spells either to make things invisible or to disguise them as unremarkable objects.

Use simple plans: Every time an army attacks, it might lose vital units. Whenever troops march, enemies can block them. The fewer stages a plan contains, the more likely it is to succeed. Often it is best to wait until the battle has begun to formulate your strategy. After a few engagements, you will see where you are strong and where the enemy is weak, and what sort of thrust could bring victory.

Use intelligence (the information-gathering sort): Your best plans will fail if you misjudge your enemy, but a clever spy can undo the strongest foe. Miniatures games, like the BATTLESYSTEM rules, present extremely realistic, intelligence problems; enemy commanders can see each others' figures and make rough estimates about their strength, but the actual details appear only on hidden unit rosters. DMs can create role-playing adventures for PC spies, in which they learn secret data about the enemy. This information could be details of enemy units, secret ambush plans, or battle strategies that the DM will follow. You can also use many probing techniques to scout during the battle itself. Wizards, skirmishers, and fast cavalry make the best scouts. Use magical attacks to gauge morale, and use swift raids followed by retreat to reveal all other combat statistics. Of course, when the enemy is much stronger than your scouts, be sure to have archers or other support troops nearby to hinder pursuit.

Orders of battle

When your armies actually meet, you must array your troops for the fight. Your battle line should be jagged so that when enemies approach it they can quickly be surrounded. Make sure that different units can support each other and that all soldiers can move either forward or back. Place archers near the center of your line where they can fire on as much of the battlefield as possible. Strong cavalry also belongs near the middle of your army, while weak horsemen should go on either flank or in the rear. This way, the stronger units are closest to any important fights, while the lighter cavalry remains free to scout or fight in flanking skirmishes.

Never start all your troops on the front line. You need reserves to counter unforeseen attacks and to deliver a series of fresh attacks against vital objectives.

In some battles you may have several units of nearly useless troops. You might want to place slow, weak forces at the front where they can absorb the first attack. Once you see where the blows are falling, you can concentrate your strong troops against the most dangerous enemy. If you employ this policy, be sure that you do not place the strong warriors directly behind sacrificial units, because if fleeing troops pass through braver units, they can incite the stronger ones to rout, too (see BATTLESYSTEM rule 7.15⁴). You can also use weak troops to build an oblique order of battle, in which your army forms a diagonal line; poor troops are deep in friendly territory, and stronger warriors are advanced far ahead of the others. The strong side pushes the enemy back and squeezes it against the weaker units.

Each type of unit has its own uses and should be deployed so as to take advantage of them. Cavalry favors sweeping maneuvers in flat terrain. It can scout far ahead of infantry, screen attacks, or charge through enemy positions. Missile troops are most likely to win a battle in impassable terrain where they can force the enemy to plod through their fire. Swamps, rows of obstacles, and what the BATTLESYSTEM rules call "rough" terrain⁵ let missiles wreak their worst harm, since these landscapes not only slow the enemy but force it into open formation, encouraging routs. Archers can also devastate units plodding uphill toward them. Long-range missile duels can become slow, so you should have other troops ready to pulver-

War is like unto fire, those who cannot put aside weapons are themselves consumed by them.

Wang, 300 B.C., commenting on Sun Tzu's *The Art Of War*

ize the enemy after your archers have weakened it. Otherwise, the foe may develop a counterattack. Infantry can only attack adjacent enemies and usually has a slow movement rate. Use foot soldiers in defense and to doggedly fight nearby enemies. Since cavalry usually causes much more damage than infantry, footmen should always be defended with pikes, missile weapons, or rough terrain.

Offense

The goal of offensive maneuvers is to surround the enemy. When you strike from many sides at once, you can sever the foe's lines of retreat and reinforcement while concentrating your strength on the victim. The most common way to encircle a foe is the single envelopment, in which you attack the enemy's front, then snake uncommitted units around the battle to fall on the foe's side. When you have more

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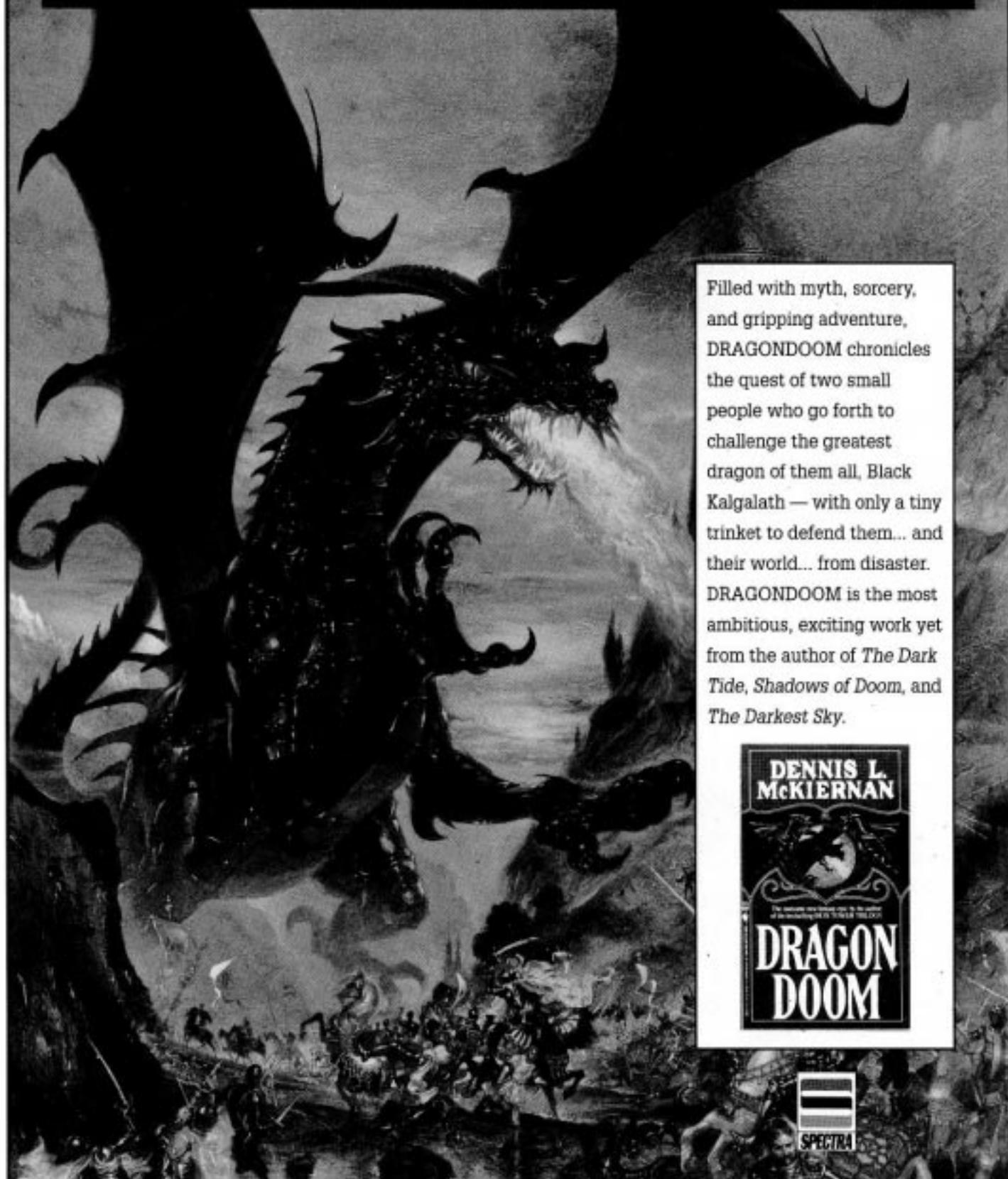
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troops than the foe, you can attempt a double envelopment and send arms around both enemy flanks. Exotic troops can surround the foe in even more imaginative ways. You can use magic to *teleport* behind the enemy or have griffon-mounted knights attack from the sky.

Another way to envelop the enemy is with a turning maneuver. This involves forming your troops into a line, then swinging them in a circle by advancing one side and withdrawing the other. While foes pursue retreating units, your line wraps around them. The danger in a turning maneuver is that your troops will become separated. For this reason, attempt it only when you have superior numbers. You can also surround an enemy with the defensive-offensive maneuver. Here, you form a line and wait for the enemy to attack. As the foe charges, you withdraw the line's center and let your foe advance deep into friendly territory. Then your retreat ends, and both of your flanks envelop the attacker. This maneuver risks both territory and soldiers but can completely trap an enemy.

Instead of surrounding the enemy line, you could break through it. Infiltrators, shock troops, or magical blasts might disrupt the foe's formation. Once you have penetrated an enemy line, your soldiers can pour through the gap, divide the enemy force into several parts, and envelop each one. This tactic works well when the enemy has spread too few troops over a

large area. Units in open or skirmish formation can be routed easily, opening holes for a breakthrough.

When you have no alternative but a frontal attack, build two small groups of "shock units" and drive back the enemy's sides. Then the enemy will have to retreat his entire line—sacrificing any units that cannot escape—or allow his center to bulge out. You can besiege this bulge and destroy it. If the enemy tries this tactic against your line, you must quickly send countershock troops to defend yourself. A commander in BATTLESYSTEM rules has a great advantage in choosing shock troops that real generals lack, because high-level characters in AD&D games are far stronger than inexperienced ones. One can design a unit of 10th-level fighters and know that it is roughly 10 times as strong as a normal force of its size.

Psychological warfare

Even the most stunning victories seldom destroy more than 30% of the enemy host. Battles are lost when soldiers panic and flee. Therefore, concentrate terrifying attacks on troops known to have low morale. The BATTLESYSTEM rules on page 7 (tables 4 and 5)⁶ show situations that make units rout, and you can study these lists to learn ways of scaring the foe. For example, you can mix powerful physical attacks with magical ones, so that when the victim loses half its figures, it must check morale twice. Once units do

indicates that they listen to the enemy. Thus, the same system applies when the PCs indoctrinate their own army as when they whisper to the foe.

Propaganda can modify morale by 1-3 points (5-15%). As a DM, choose the exact value by deciding how much the message would affect you. Personal exhortations from Thor will impress troops more than a rumor about pay raises. Propaganda should capture the spirit of existing rumors and sayings, because intellectual arguments based on pure logic seldom convince mass armies (or anyone else). When indoctrinating your own troops, keep their thoughts on hatred, comradeship, and potential loot. Enemy troops seldom change sides completely, but they can tire of hardship and be persuaded that their incompetent generals no longer deserve any loyalty.

At the DM's option, certain events can act as propaganda. For example, if the PCs scorn existing codes of chivalry, their own troops may be less loyal, while the foe will be encouraged. Many an army has deserted because of bad news from home or has been spurred on to heroism by reports of enemy atrocities.

The morale of leaders is as important as that of troops. A clever actor can often accomplish things no strategist ever could, because if you look strong where you are weak, and weak where you are strong, the enemy's strategy will be the opposite of what it should be. You can often provoke rash action by a sudden attack. When you retreat meekly, the enemy will usually relax its defenses as its leaders become overconfident. Illusion spells can simulate almost any degree of strength or weakness you desire. If you look helpless where you are mighty, the foe may ruin itself in hopeless attacks; when you make a devastating attack, the enemy may become too dispirited to resist, even though it could. But beware! If your defenses are pure bluff and the enemy realizes it, you will be annihilated.

Terrain, weather, etc.

One uses the elements to complicate battle. Defenders should take positions directly behind rough terrain, so that enemies have to march through the bad territory to reach them. Forests and other difficult landscapes insure that the attackers arrive in open formation, and they prevent cavalry charges. High ground is very easy to defend, and it lets units on hilltops fire missiles over allies ahead of them without using indirect fire (the WSG has complete rules for visibility on pages 72-75, as does the 2nd Edition PHB, pages 117-118). For these reasons, attackers should capture or avoid hills. One can often lure foes from the protection of rough terrain by exposing weak units as bait. Once enemies have abandoned their positions to attack, they must cross the rough ground themselves to return.

Infiltrations and ambushes can win



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entire wars. Hide your troops whenever possible and be wary of areas you cannot survey. The best way to defend a wooded, concealed area is to place troops in front of it to keep enemies out. Then, if your defenders are attacked, they can retreat into cover.

Exploit rough ground by controlling defiles. The term "defile" indicates any constricted area, including bridges, canyons, underground tunnels, city streets, mountain passes, roads through forests, and any other features that squeeze large forces into thin columns. In a defile, only the few troops in front can fight. This makes small units almost as powerful as big ones, because the only advantage a numerous force has in a defile is its large reserve. Avoid attacking defiles; instead, try to surround them and fire missiles in from all sides. Constricted areas make heroes and elite troops invaluable, because these warriors take up little room but can fight far more effectively than ordinary soldiers. The DSG has rules for extreme defiles on page 34.

Every defender loves rivers. They force the attacker to seep across tiny bridges, or build boats and risk being devastated by missile fire as they row. However, rivers prevent counterattacks as efficiently as attacks. If you wish to engage the enemy, let half of the foes cross the river, then attack them while the other half is still crossing. Once the whole enemy force has crossed, a river has no value except to block retreat. Attackers should try to destroy river defenders with missile fire or else bypass them. Once attackers have crossed a river, the defender must avoid being outmaneuvered and driven into the water.

Weather affects a battle only when one side depends on inordinately fast movement or missile fire. Try to accommodate weather in your plans while forcing enemies to fight when their favorite tactics are hampered. Darkness and fog allow startling raids. However, the attacker is as likely to be surprised as the defender, so night attacks work best when the enemy suffers disarray or panic. You can also use darkness to escape a stronger foe when only great daring can save you.

Defense

If you have an effective defense, the enemy will certainly try to go around it. You can use this fact to goad foes through dangerous terrain or into the range of missile fire. If your defense is bypassed, you have four options: splitting your forces to defend the new area as well; attacking the foe's flank; blocking supply lines; and bypassing the bypasser to make a swift counterattack. Splitting your defenders lacks imagination and weakens you everywhere, but it also carries fewer risks than the other tactics. Blocking supply lines can only work if the invaders must march for many days. The two sorts of counterattacks are glorious when they

succeed but leave you undefended.

Sooner or later, your troops will face a retreat. Use cavalry to protect fleeing or routing units, so that the latter will remain unmolested and can be rallied. When you retreat, move back slowly, doing more fighting than running, and use your reserves to reinforce withdrawing troops, deterring pursuit. In a single battle, the best hope for withdrawing units is to lead pursuers into traps or strategically unimportant areas. In a complete war, you can often win simply by delaying the attacker until its money and food have been spent.

Guerilla warfare

When you employ guerillas or adventuring parties, or when winter disbands your armies, you will have to use insurgent warfare. Guerilla bands depend on mobility, concealment, and rough terrain. They fight only when they have some overwhelming advantage, and they concentrate on supplies and isolated units, never

There has never been a state which profited from protracted war.

Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

giving the enemy a chance to rest. Since guerilla units cannot afford casualties, they should disperse and run whenever the enemy stands to fight them. A tiny band cannot defeat an army. Guerillas must cooperate with friendly armies or inspire the people to rise up in masses. As an insurgent, woo such allies constantly but do not let them infiltrate your leadership. An elite nucleus of guerilla leaders not only keeps traitors from learning too much, it inspires the people to greater deeds.

After you've won

In a small battle, a general may leap from one objective to a greater one, extracting as much victory as possible from each fight. However, wars have to end. Your army can only defeat other armies, not peoples or ideas. You can never afford an army as big as a whole population, and if the price of surrender is death, the

enemy will never give in. When you plan a war, the strategy must be designed to make it easier for the enemy to concede whatever you want than to fight. Therefore, avoid enraged the enemy, since in the end you must reach a compromise.

Only the DM can decide what will make the party's enemies surrender, or what terms they will give defeated PCs. Antoine Jomini listed six reasons to fight a war: to defend or claim certain rights; to protect mercantile interests; to maintain the balance of power; to propagate beliefs; to acquire territory; to gratify a mania for glory. Clausewitz expressed this more concisely in his aphorism, "War is but the continuation of policy by other means." BATTLESYSTEM game clashes cannot be divorced from the complete AD&D campaign, and unless the PCs can negotiate a lasting peace, they (and their players) may be worn down by unending wars. This search for peace is one of the primary ways in which role-playing military adventures differs from ordinary war games. Those brave enough to fight wars must be wise enough to end them.

Footnotes

[Kim Mohan, who edited the 2nd Edition BATTLESYSTEM rule book, contributed a number of notes on this article that may be of interest to those using these new rules. His comments are paraphrased as follows.]

1. The 2nd Edition BATTLESYSTEM rules do not provide for saving throws or similar mechanics. The new game is designed to be played without a DM (though a DM may arbitrate various problems in a game, such as losses due to disease, starvation, routing, etc.). The new rules are designed for playing out scenarios that do not last for extended periods of time, lasting at most a day or two of game time. Long-lasting battles would make more use of many of the rules in this article, however, as long as the players are willing to invest the time and materials to play them.

2. The 2nd Edition BATTLESYSTEM rules do not allow for casualty recovery as

Continued on page 95

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Role-playing Reviews

The barriers go down at the genre border crossings

©1990 by Ken Rolston

Fantasy: Conan. Beautiful heroines in chain mail bikinis. Old guys wearing pointy caps and moon-covered robes, carrying staffs and tossing fireballs. Orcs. Little guys stuffing themselves with chow and smoking pipeweed.

Science fiction: Ray guns. Space suits. Bug-eyed monsters. Asteroid bases and primitive planets with dinosaurs. Big old spaceships with coruscating energy shields flashing through the spectrum as they overload from powerful beam-weapon attacks. Galaxy-spanning empires full of smugglers, space pirates, plucky rebels, and sinister Imperial cruisers.

Everyone *knows* you'll never find space ships and galactic empires in fantasy adventures, right? And everyone *knows* you'll never find wizards and hobbits in science fiction, right?

A distinguishing feature of action-adventure genre fiction and role-playing games is the universal acceptance of certain conventional features of plot, character, setting, and theme. Westerns have saloons, six-guns, and show-downs on Main Street, Fantasy narratives have old wizards, mighty-thewed barbarians, green-skinned bad guys with long tusks, and magical jewelry. The science-fiction

genre really has a variety of self-defined sub-genres, each of which has its own conventions (e.g., space opera, time-travel and alternate history, and the cyberpunk near-future dystopias).

Normally, everybody cheerfully and unconsciously honors the conventions of the various genres, avoiding the introduction of features from one genre into another. Why? The concise, oversimplified answer is that it's what folk are most comfortable with. I mean, Gandalf with an AK-47 just doesn't feel right.

But now and then someone playful and irresponsible decides to stir together little

bits from different genres. Most of the time such experiments attract little attention. They may be briefly diverting and amusing, but after the novelty wears off, the audience wants to get back to the meat-and-potatoes of solid genre stuff.

But occasionally such cross-genre experiments are welcomed and accepted by fiction and role-playing audiences. Such success is usually dependent on two conditions: a sluggish, jaded market weary of conventional products and eager for novelty; and distinctive, exceptional qualities in the cross-genre products themselves.

A couple of years ago, Games Workshop had a big hit with its cross-genre science-fantasy universe of the WARHAMMER™ 40,000 game. GW handed automatic weapons and rocket launchers to some orks, stuck pointy-eared elves in fancy space suits, let daemons suck the souls from some guys in power armor, and was on its way to a very solid commercial success. The WARHAMMER 40,000 system was not a role-playing game, but it did appeal to a substantial portion of the science-fiction and fantasy audience, and it suggested that other similar experiments might be welcomed by a role-playing audience.

Here we review three recent experiments in cross-genre role-playing game systems and campaign universes. I found each of them exciting and original, inspiring me with personal fantasies of the adventures and campaigns I'd love to run in these settings. And coming at a time when most current products of the established genres seem a little stale and predictable, I wholeheartedly recommend them to role-players looking for new and offbeat mechanics and adventure ideas.

SPACE: 1889™ game

216-page hardbound book
Game Designers' Workshop \$30.00
Design: Frank Chadwick

The SPACE: 1889 game is set in a near-past alternate history of Earth. Europeans are taking up the white man's burden in Africa and Asia in the settings of *Zulu Dawn* and Stanley and Livingston, and England's Victorian economic and military empire extends to the far-flung outposts of Flashman, "The Man Who Would Be King," and "The Jewel in the Crown." But to this historical era we add the science-fantasy conventions of Tom Swift and Jules Verne. In this 1870, Thomas Edison demonstrated the basic principles of space flight through the ether, and in this 1889, aircraft and space travel are no more exotic than zeppelins and arctic explorations. There are extensive colonies on Mars and Venus, and limited exploration and exploitation of Mercury and the moon.

Campaign setting: The conceptualization and visualization of this alternate history is the most endearing feature of the SPACE: 1889 game. The space voyaging ether flyers are steel-gray rivets-and-plates steam gunboats of the air, and the Martian

cloudships are the nimble, graceful aerial sailboats of an ancient noble culture in eclipse. The mile-wide canals and soaring spires of the ancient Martians are dwarfed by the encroaching deserts of a dying planet. The Canal Martian culture is a proud and tragic vestige of a former high civilization. The savage and barbaric Martians of the remote plateaus guard the great treasure of Mars—the remarkable liftwood trees which counteract the pull of gravity. Rare minerals in the soil and the exotic climate of the plateau produce both the unique properties of liftwood and the High Martians' lifting glands which permit them to soar like birds. And just as Mars is older than Earth, and represents a technological future past its prime, Venus is a world of Earths youth, a lush, primeval tropical jungle inhabited by dinosaurs and lizardmen.

The text and graphics treatments of this alternate history are evocative and effective. The maps of the active and abandoned canals of Mars feature Latinate place names appropriate to the tone of ancient cultures. The explanations and diagrams of the canals are simple and matter-of-fact, but on a grand scale. The three major Martian cultures of the civilized Canal Martians, the barbaric Hill Martians, and the savage High Martians are simply but distinctly contrasted, each presenting its own opportunities for various styles of role-playing adventures. The historical summaries of the colonization of Mars and Venus are admirably concise, coherent, and suggestive, unlike all-too-many fantasy supplements which mistake a sprawling flood of detail for an effective introduction to an imaginary history. The game is a pleasure to skim and read, a tribute to the GDW's lean and careful writing, editing, graphic design, and presentation.

Mechanics: Attributes and skills are rated from 1 to 6, indicating the number of six-sided dice one throws when attempting a task. The more difficult the task, the higher the score that must be rolled to succeed (for example, an easy task has a target score of 4, a formidable task a target score of 16, an impossible task a target score of 20). This is the basic event resolution system.

Another more elaborate system is used for combat, in which the attacker attempts to roll equal to or below his 1-6 skill rating on at least one of one or more six-sided dice. In melee, the number of six-siders rolled is determined by the type of weapon (for example, a knife rolls 5d6, while an axe rolls 2d6). Melee weapons vary in their reach, potential to wound, and difficulty to block. In missile combat, the attacker rolls six-siders equal to the number of shots or missiles he has fired. In both melee and missile combat, a target gets a saving throw to avoid injury, with modifiers for various circumstances, such as when blocking in melee or when behind cover in missile combat. Characters

may also dodge, increasing an attacker's target score by one.

The basic event resolution system based on the rated abilities and skills is fast and simple, similar to West End Games' STAR WARS® system but with the addition of a concept called "cascade skills," in which possession of one skill within a group of skills implies a significant but reduced rating in the other skills of the group (a character with a rating of 2 in rifle marksmanship is also rated at 1 in pistols and bows, rather than rated at 0 because he doesn't have those specific skills).

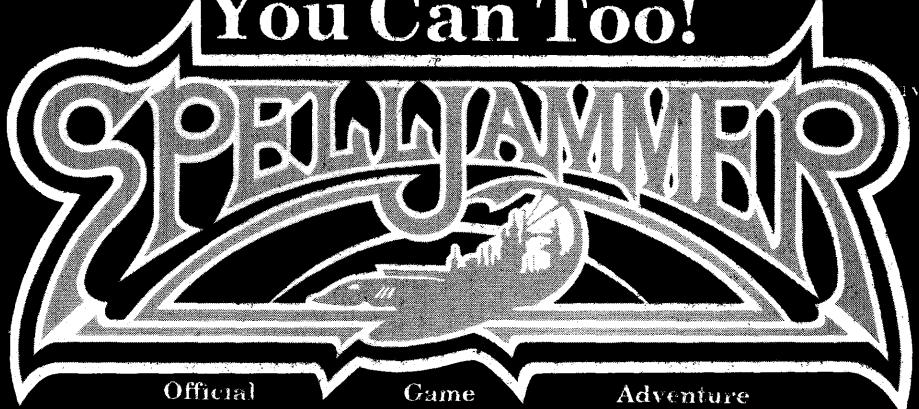
The combat system is somewhat more complicated—a bit more involved than in TSR's AD&D® game, but less so than in Steve Jackson Games' GURPS® system—but its features are quite suitable for its own dramatic and gaming purposes. The scale of combat (two yards per tiny graph paper square) doesn't encourage tedious attention to tactical maneuver, and the pace and flow of combat has a nice feel. Most PCs will collapse unconscious long before they might die from wounds, therefore facilitating script rescues. The menu of tactical options is adequate to a full expression of the setting's dramatic style; a British officer can hold off a slew of savages with pistol and sabre. Provision is made for carnage with machine guns, grapeshot, and shrapnel, but I'm sure those would normally be reserved for villainous NPCs. Combat with critters is handled nicely, with fearsome beasts distinctly more vulnerable and likely to run when wounded, but still dangerous in encounters, and provided with 12 dramatically correct attack forms like fangs, claws, and tentacles. Even with its various features and complications, melee and missile combat shouldn't take a GM long to master.

The SPACE: 1889 game includes six pages of rules covering most of the features of its tactical airship system, the SKY GALLEONS OF MARS board game (sold separately). It is possible, but silly, to make your own maps and counters to use these rules, but this section is an effective introduction to the board game itself. Boarding actions between airships would be wonderful set pieces for role-playing combats, with a handful of riflemen led by a 'British officer (sabre and revolver in hand) repelling hordes of barbaric boarders.'

Rules for player-character invention of Jules Verne- and Tom Swift-style Victorian high-tech marvels are also provided. The framework here is solid, though as with any open-ended invitation to player ingenuity, a dignified restraint on the part of players and GM is necessary to avoid abuses.

GM staging: The SPACE: 1889 game provides the GM with a full kit. The treatment of stock NPCs is fine and flavorful. The introductory adventure, a trip to Luna, is compact, complete, and simple in outline, but open to problem solving, combat, and posturing for a variety of PC roles. The flavor of the basic narrative and

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the creature, alien, and villain encounters are perfectly suited to the SPACE: 1889 milieu, and the blessed economy of NPC stats and mechanics detail provided is quite promising to GMs who love to improvise adventures off the cuff or with a minimum of preparation.

Evaluation: This game is a wonderful campaign setting for action-adventure role-playing. On one hand there is an abundance of unexplored wilderness with aliens, natural hazards, and ancient civilizations to loot. On the other hand there are inscrutable aliens to analyze, barbaric aliens to bash, and plenty of venal, sly, and sinister humans to scheme with or against according to the shining or tarnished ideals of the PCs. The tone of the materials and presentation is clear and concise, sharp and appropriate. Anglophilic is rampant and affectionate, paying tribute to a romantic image of the Victorian British culture—at times exploitative, mercenary, and racist, but loyal to Britain and its genteel aspirations, and at least more dignified and honorable than the other European nations competing for domination of the inner Solar System. The mechanics are relatively simple and fast-paced, not too difficult to master, and detailed enough to suit the dramatic requirements of the setting. Best of all is the imaginative access to the history of the

Victorian Age, and the abundant adventuring potential of the canals and deserts of Mars and the steaming jungles of Venus. For me, the SPACE: 1889 game was pure pleasure. It comes with my unreserved recommendation. I suspect the setting will not be to everyone's taste, but for those who find its central concepts intriguing, I'm sure they'll find the execution quite satisfactory.

SHADOWRUN™ game

216-page hardbound book
FASA Corporation \$28.00
Design: Bob Charrette, Paul Hume, and
Tom Dowd

The SHADOWRUN campaign setting is a cyberpunkish 21st century minus the spaceflight and plus a major, uncyberpunkish twist—the Awakening of Magic, the appearance of dragons in skies, and the spontaneous manifestation of previously unexpressed genetic traits, producing new exotic species of humans known as elves, dwarves, orks, and trolls. The eclipse of national governments by multinational corporations, the enhancement of human senses, reactions, memory, and processing by cybernetic hardware fast-paced, not too difficult to master, and analogue universe of Cyberspace and the

Matrix will be familiar genre conventions to readers of cyberpunk novels like *Neuromancer* and *Hardwired*. Cyberpunk itself is a relatively young and vigorous sub-genre of science-fiction role-playing, best represented by the award-winning CYBERPUNK game by R. Talsorian Games (see DRAGON® issue #149, "Role-Playing Reviews"). But SHADOWRUN cheerfully raids beyond the boundaries of cyberpunk genre into the trappings of fantasy role-playing.

Campaign setting: The SHADOWRUN campaign background material is much less detailed and developed than that of the SPACE: 1889 game. The broad outlines are there, and the elements and themes are more than sufficient to stir the GM's creative juices, but GMs looking for campaign material are going to have to wait for the supplements.

The borrowings from the fantasy role-playing genre come in three areas: character races, monsters, and magic. Each of these is given a distinctive twist to suit it to the cyberpunk setting.

The metahuman races—elf, dwarf, ork, and troll—are as significant for the nuances they lend to character roles as for the game benefits they enjoy. Orks and trolls are lovably dumb and durable, and elves are quick and charming; I suspect the greatest virtues of the metahuman races are the convenient handles they provide for role-playing characterization. But for those folks looking for game benefits, the real place to look is in wired reflexes, skillwires, dermal plating, and the other exotic combat biotech for sale in the 21st century.

The fantasy monsters (or "awakened beings") are only introduced in outline in the SHADOWRUN game book, but beings like ghouls, nagas, shapeshifters, vampires, and great dragons have real potential for strong cannon fodder, archvillain, and inscrutable alien ally roles in adventures and campaigns. For example, the intelligence and spell-casting ability of nagas may qualify the species as sentient, according to a suit pending before the United Nations; the suit also calls for sanctions against nations and corporations that employ nagas, on the grounds of involuntary servitude. And the Great Dragon Dunkelzahn, an affable monstrosity that has kindly granted interviews with media representatives, now resides in a former Canadian national park, which it administers as a sort of medieval theme park.

The most admirable fantasy feature of this game is its rich, full-featured, and imaginative implementation of role-playing magic. On the down side, it is exceptionally dice- and modifier-happy, and is conceptually and mechanically hard for a new GM to master for smooth, confident adventure design and session management. On the up side, it covers a broader range of narrative and mythic magics with dramatically appropriate mechanics than I've seen in any other role-playing game.



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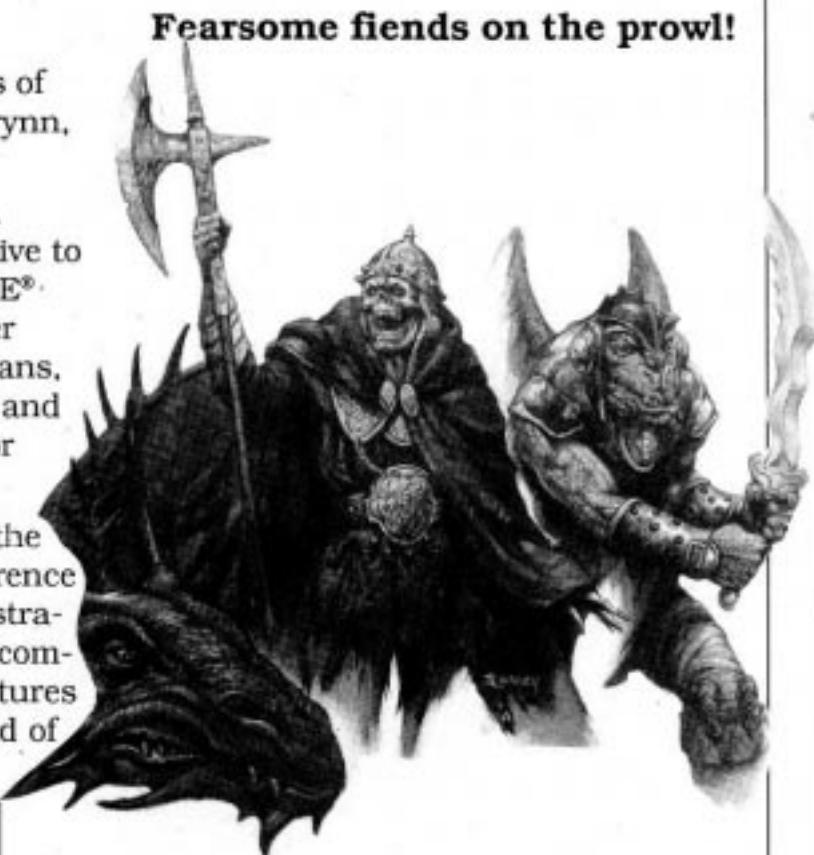


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This is a most impressive treatment of fantasy magic. There are actually two basic systems, one for the Shamanistic Tradition, drawing power from nature and emotion, the other for the Hermetic Tradition, the familiar spell, ritual, and incantation magics of fantasy role-playing. The narrative trappings of both systems are atmospheric and persuasive.

Though the mechanics offer a somewhat bewildering array of details and features, the basic concepts are relatively simple. Particularly noteworthy are the systems for astral combat, ritual castings, and remote sendings. Spell offense and defense are well-served; plausible magical duels between sorcerers might work with this system, as they manifestly do not in other fantasy systems, with the possible exception of the complex and cumbersome system used by Hero Games' FANTASY HERO game. A sorcerer can even fight the personified presence of a spell; that is, a sorcerer can, in a way, grapple in melee with a spell when in astral space. There is a risk of failure and a risk of personal exhaustion, and even injury and death when pushing one's spell-casting abilities to the limit. The list of spells is relatively short, but the range of spell effects is nonetheless surprisingly broad and comprehensive. I'm a long-time student of the various expressions of magic in role-

playing games, and the SHADOWRUN system offers most of the features I look for, and then some.

Mechanics: The SHADOWRUN game systems are sprawling, inelegant, incoherent, original, intuitive, and dramatically appropriate. On one hand, I admire the flavor and imagination of the various systems; on the other hand, I would not look forward to mastering them for the presentation of a SHADOWRUN adventure. Fortunately, the rules presentation is fairly clear. Terms are well-defined, examples are used constantly to reinforce and illustrate game principles and flavor, and each element of the mechanics has its own satisfyingly intuitive appeal. However, the overall bulk of detail and systems is confusing; it's certainly not the sort of thing you run after a single read-through.

The basic concept involves a success test—rolling a number of six-siders equal to the PC's rating in a skill or attribute. The idea is to get a score on one or more of those six-siders equal to or better than a target number, which could be anything from a 2 for a simple task to a 10 or more for an impossible task. How do you get a number greater than six on a six-sided die, you ask? Well, when you roll a six, you roll that die again and add it to the six; if you roll another six, you keep rolling until you stop rolling sixes, then you add the total.

Further, if you achieve your target number on only one of the handful of six-siders you roll, you have just barely succeeded. The more successes you achieve (e.g., the more six-siders rolled for scores equal to or greater than the target number), the higher your level of success, which may be interpreted in a number of ways according to circumstances.

Even further, many success tests are resisted; that is, the prospective victim gets to roll his dice to reduce the attacker's level of success. Even further than that, PCs have various dice pools (e.g., defense pool, dodge pool, magic pool), discretionary dice they can add once per turn to various dice tosses. And I haven't even begun to list all the modifier tables and the myriad specific target numbers associated with various tasks. There's going to be a lot of dice bouncing and cross-referencing in the old town tonight, fellows.

What about SHADOWRUN game combat? Well, I'm not quite sure. First, the rules aren't quite explicit about whether NPCs get to use dice pools like the PCs do. If they do, combats will last longer, and weedy PCs are going to take more heat. Further, when wired combatants are involved, nonwired folk should just crawl under a desk and wait until the smoke clears. Unenhanced folk haven't got much of a chance against the cyber-charged

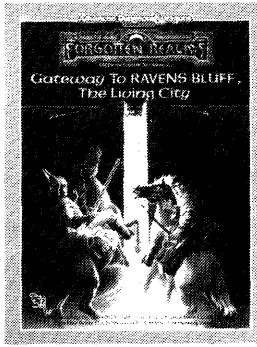
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fighter types. Even further, it seems that when formidable wired-types come up against one another, combats will be longer and inconclusive, since wired folks with dice pools have some serious ability to avoid damage. On the other hand, with the deadly weaponry of the 21st century, lightweight combat types caught in a crossfire are goners.

A lot is going to depend on the GM's shrewd assessment of the balance between PC and NPC abilities—something that will come only through game session experience, since this game's unfamiliar systems don't provide intuitive handles for game balance like the linear curves of 1d20 or 1d100 resolution systems or the bell curve of the GURPS game's 3d6 system. The SHADOWRUN game does have a mechanically and philosophically flexible attitude toward PC death. Until a GM gets a sense of the flow and balance of combat, he may need to rely on readily available biotechnology and flexible scripting to keep the PCs alive for the next session.

I'm very ambivalent about SHADOWRUN mechanics. Although the setting and narrative trappings of the game are intriguing, I find the profusion of unfamiliar mechanics and the number and variety of features they attempt to represent discouraging. And yet, each of the individual system elements is appealing and intuitively satisfying; I suspect that with a little more patience and the cooperative interest of a group of like-minded gamers, getting used to the game wouldn't be a gloomy prospect.

PCs and NPCs: Here is one of the great strengths of the SHADOWRUN game. The PC archetypes are a group of ready-to-run PCs along the lines of the PC templates provided in the STAR WARS game. A quick review of these archetypes is a perfect introduction to the tone and flavor of the campaign. The characters are sharply and cunningly characterized with excellent color illustrations, brief introductory monologues, and lists skills, cyberware, contacts, and gear that effectively suggest the roles these characters would play in an adventure. The game also offers two methods of custom-designing PCs—one a fast-and-dirty modification of existing archetypes, the other a more systematic build-from-scratch procedure.

The inclusion of contacts as an essential part of a PC's resources is a crucial feature for a cyberpunk role-playing setting. In cyberpunk literature and gaming, whom you know may often count for more than your wits or your gun. In fact, the addition of contacts to a PC's resources is a good idea for any science-fiction or fantasy role-playing game with an urban setting; an important element of problem-solving in such a campaign is knowing to whom you go for information or help, and how to persuade that person to cooperate. The SHADOWRUN Contacts chapter is a model of effective presentation of potential NPC allies, informants, and opponents.

The short monologues, colorful quotes (e.g., the Dwarven Technician: "Now ain't that sweet! Them furriers sure like to make their circuits small"; or the Company Man: "You're being an annoyance to somebody important, chummer. I've been asked to resolve the matter"), and gritty illustrations provide a solid cast of character actors to ornament the setting and stimulate the charming PC-NPC dialogues one savors in the best role-playing sessions.

The Matrix: The game's treatment of cyberspace is simple and dramatic, with lots of tasty detail and gaming potential. Unfortunately, Matrix-running is properly a solo activity rather than a team-of-characters procedure, and I'm concerned about the prospect of other players sitting around twiddling their thumbs while one netrunner works his own form of magic in the cyberspace. Still, this is more an adventure design and management problem for the GM than a game design flaw.

Introductory adventure: The introductory adventure is no more than a combat encounter—a free-for-all shoot-out in a convenience store; it's like an *Animal House* food fight with automatic weapons. The humorous tone of the explicit systems for explosive spraying of foodstuffs struck by shotgun blasts is a bit too lighthearted and zany when one considers the implied explosive spraying of body fluids when citizens are struck by shotgun blasts. This departure from the gritty, realistic, ironic, but never zany tone of the rest of the book is jarring, and the adventure exploits neither the distinctive cyberpunk features nor fantasy trappings of the rest of the SHADOWRUN game; as such, it is a poor showcase for the game's considerable virtues.

Presentation: This is one of those books that grabs you as soon as you crack the cover. The illustrations and color plates do an excellent job of conveying the tone and texture of the SHADOWRUN universe at a glance, and the Archetypes and Contacts chapters, with their sharply characterized depictions, snappy dialog tags, and simple skills and trappings lists, are effective imaginative entries into the settings. The examples throughout illustrating systems and rules are flavorful and dramatic. The rules presentation is clean and unambiguous, despite the bulk and variety of unfamiliar concepts introduced.

Evaluation: The SHADOWRUN campaign setting is an adorable and surprisingly coherent amalgam of cyberpunk, sorcerers and shamans, and teeth-chattering automatic weapons fire. The PC roles are meaty and offbeat, with interesting interplays between elements from the cyberpunk and fantasy genre traditions. The systems—well, they're clever and as cute as puppies, but there sure are a lot of them, and plenty of detailed modifiers and circumstances to consider, and folks sure have a lot of dice to roll and choices to make during a single game turn. The presentation is first-class—flashy and

expressive, but clean, explicit, and readable. The themes and adventure opportunities will appeal to cyberpunk fans, and some elements (like the Matrix system and the NPC contacts) will be valuable supplements to current cyberpunk campaigns. The SHADOWRUN game is impressive, exciting, and entertaining; I'll be looking forward to campaign and adventure supplements with considerable enthusiasm.

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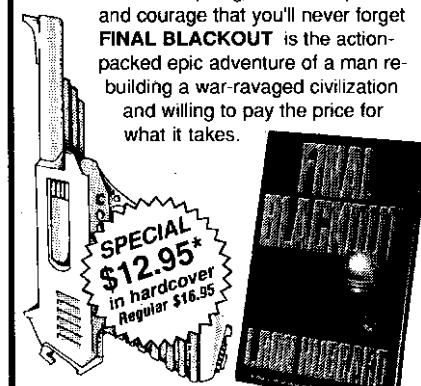
Design: Jeff Grubb

The color cover of the Concordance of Arcane Space, one of the two 96-page books included in the boxed SPELLJAMMER package, is the perfect visual precis of the epic themes of the SPELLJAMMER role-playing universe. In the background are the blackness of the void, pinpoint stars, and the vast concentric swirl of a spiral galaxy. In the middle background floats one of the sailing ships of SPELLJAMMER space—a combination of a Greek war galley, Jules Verne's Nautilus, and a mammoth exotic tropical fish. In the foreground stands a swashbuckling, eye-patched fantasy pirate with a green-and-

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gold treasure chest on one shoulder. At his feet lies a wounded mind flayer (one of those lovely octopus-mouthed guys with the bulging braincases), peering regretfully at his nautiloid-shaped gold watch dangling from the point of the star buccaneer's sword (see illustration below).

Elves, dwarves, and wizards loot and pillage the sea lanes of the stars. Huge asteroids, dwarven star-citadels, and titanic fantasy starships, conveniently honeycombed with passages and teeming with boojum horrors and sinister slavers sail through space. Starship-to-starship fleet actions see 250'-long squid ships bombard, ram, grapple, and board the chambered-nautiloid cruisers of the illithid races. Now you can sail from solar system to solar system along the great currents of phlogiston C'mon, lads! Buckle on your breastplate, grab your *wand of shooting stars*, and let's go plunder the plenum!

Campaign setting: The basis of interplanetary travel is the spelljammer helm ("helm" as in rudder, not armored helmet). Just take any spell-caster (wizard or priest), sit him on a spelljammer helm, and you can zip around from planet to planet like Buck Rogers. A mysterious race called the Arcane, the sole manufacturer and distributor of spelljammer helms, is in no hurry to open retail outlets on every backwater planet in the universe, which is why the PCs in your campaign have never heard of spelljamming before now.

The PCs in your campaign also don't know anything about outer space. There are two kinds of outer space, you see. One is "wildspace," which is a little bit like the outer space you science-fiction fans know about—that is, a vacuum with a bunch of planets, asteroids, and stars zooming around in circles. The physics of wildspace is a bit different than you might expect. For example, gravity comes in only two sizes—none and normal (e.g., Earth gravity). It also is "an accommodating force in that its directions seems to be 'that which is most convenient.'" For planet-sized bodies, gravity is directed toward the center of the object. For fairly big objects (about 25' long) like spacecraft and enormous creatures, gravity is directed toward a flat plane running through the object's long axis—that is, parallel to the deck of a space galleon, so PCs can stand on the decks and swagger and shoot arrows and board other space galleons and stuff. (Incidentally, they could equally well stand on the bottom of the space craft, which they don't, for practical reasons well explained in the text.)

The second kind of outer space is the "phlogiston," which is a big ocean of a unique element that is neither air, fire, water, or earth. Zillions of vast crystal spheres float around in the phlogiston like bubbles in Perrier water. The phlogiston ocean has big currents, just like a real ocean that greatly facilitate swift spelljam-

ming voyages between crystal spheres. Within these crystal spheres are the various regions of wildspace, including the various semi-normal solar systems you'd expect in outer space, but also lots of not-normal-at-all solar systems with a planet at the center, or with square or trapezoidal planets, or with planets that move in square or triangular orbits, and so on. Each crystal sphere is a solid, ceramic-like shell with a radius about twice as large as the radius of the orbit of the outermost celestial body in the system (yes, a ceramic sphere with twice the radius of the orbit of Pluto). Something as vast and weird and magical as crystal spheres could only have been created by gods, and only they know why, and they're not telling.

Role-playing mechanics: There are all kinds of interesting details about breathing in space, temperatures in space, magic-use in space, combat in zero gravity, and the catastrophic effects of fire in the flammable medium of phlogiston. The physics is cheap-and-cheerful, tailor-made for swashbuckling AD&D fantasy action, with original and simple concepts that are also enormously flexible, with an appealing internal fantasy logic. The systems for designing starships and for celestial navigation are simple and playable. The visual displays representing planetary systems for design and space travel are particularly practical and clever; these large fold-out maps with counters make it possible to graphically depict the orbits of a system's planets and to track the movement of starships among those planets.

Board-game mechanics: The boxed set includes mechanics, counters, ship displays, and a map display for tactical engagements among spelljamming craft. The mechanics are explicitly designed to supplement role-playing, not as a stand-alone board game, and as such are suitably simple and informal. Maneuvering is grossly simplified, as it should be, though the fairly detailed rules for fleeing off the display and for pursuit of vessels leaving the display is a shrewd feature. Long-range combat is permitted with ballistas, catapults, bombards, and jettisons, an array of small antipersonnel catapults. (No, you are not permitted to ask any interesting questions about how catapult trajectories work in the zany SPELLJAMMER gravity.) Close combat (i.e., combat with other vessels in the same hex) includes the use of spells and bows, crossbows, and other personal missile weapons. Also included in close combat are provisions for ramming, grappling, and boarding. The critical-hit system for damage to starships is colorful and decisive. A very simple and gross mass-combat system is suggested for resolution of boarding actions, but I suspect that GM staging is a wiser scheme for handling such engagements. The starship mechanics, display, and counters will comfortably handle small engagements, particularly long-range shoot-outs and evasion and pursuit situa-



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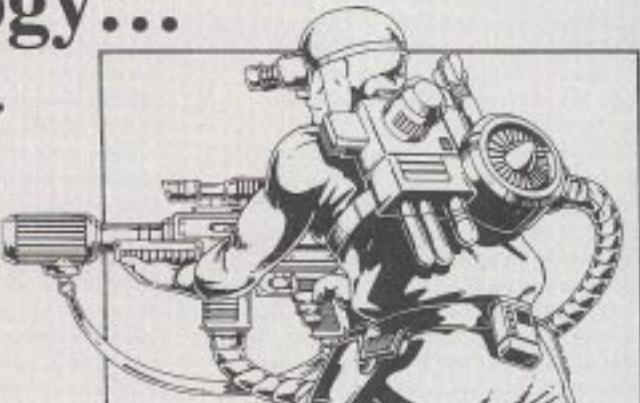
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tions, but there's just no way to quickly and cleanly handle boarding actions at this scale. And it is a gesture of the purest optimism to include the huge elven Armada and the asteroid-sized dwarven Citadel in the counter mix.

The niftiest bits of the tactical engagement systems are the 8½" × 11" card-stock displays for 11 types of spelljammer ships. On one side of each display is a lovely color illustration of one of the standard classes of spelljammer starship—the Neogi Deathspider, the Oriental Dragonship, the mind flayers' Nautiloid, the elven Man-o-War, the Hammership, and the Squidship—with a reference summary of tactical combat features. On the reverse of the display are deck plans with map keys for the ship—ideal for role-playing adventures.

Adventures in space: The adventure and campaign potential for SPELLJAMMER games can only be measured in tons. The design includes all the elements needed to support a galaxy-sized multi-verse fantasy campaign. Most of the old favorite good-guy races are represented. The elves are the largest political and military presence in space; they've just completed a remarkably successful extermination of interstellar orcs and goblins throughout the known universe. Dwarves lumber around in huge spacefaring asteroids, honeycombed with tunnels, and their abandoned fortresses are just the thing to find full of loot and bloodthirsty sessile grogs. The lizard man race graduates to a tarnished first-class status of lovably savage and uncouth barbarism, and they are available as PCs. Tinker gnomes (the obsessively gadget-happy gnomes of the DRAGONLANCE® campaign setting) provide the cosmic comic relief, with starship technology reminiscent of the "Completely Safe and Reliable" R&D Department in West End Games' PARANOIA™ system.

The bad guys are swell, too. Two old favorites, the beholder and the mind flayer, win starring roles as intergalactic menaces, and a new race, the neogi, makes its appearance. The neogi are a nasty slaver race with the physical appearance of a cross between a wolf spider and a moray eel. Each neogi individual is guarded by his personal umber hulk slave. The mind flayers are evil, brain-sucking horrors who have polished up their social skills sufficiently to present a dubiously neutral facade to trading partners as they secretly scheme toward the day when all intelligent races will be their vassals and brain-food. The beholders, with their abundant magical powers, are perhaps the most formidable warrior race of the universe, but fortunately they are too busy slaughtering one another to present a big threat to other spacefaring races.

The SPELLJAMMER set also includes new interstellar races, some of which may serve as alien encounters and potential allies, like the dracon (a centauroid race

with a dragon-headed humanoid torso grafted to a mini-brontosaurus body and legs) and the giff (humanoid hippopotamus mercenaries with an enthusiasm for gunpowder weapons). New creatures include kindori (space whales), krajen (giant spacefaring squid), and radiant dragons (a proud and intelligent race of really big dragon-snakes hundreds of feet long).

The SPELLJAMMER set provides excellent practical advice and GM staging devices for introducing standard AD&D characters to spelljamming and for developing adventures and campaigns exploiting the set's role-playing features. The list of religious, military, political, and economic organizations with special interests in space provides the GM with a menu of narrative elements to weave into a campaign, and provides PCs with familiar social institutions to help define their personal roles and with potential resources and conflicts for role-playing diplomacy. The spacefaring races with their cultural objectives and obsessions furnish the epic themes required for a satisfying large-scale campaign.

The SPELLJAMMER set is suitable for several basic models of role-playing adventuring. One is the classic look-for-loot and bash-monsters while doing-more-or-less-good-deeds model. There are plenty of opportunities for this sort of action—abandoned and derelict spelljammer ships, dwarven citadels, asteroid bases, and so forth—and plenty of good guys and bad guys to encounter. Trading and piracy are good central economic structures for adventure, with lots of wilderness travel encounters and guaranteed potential for diplomacy and combat with other races. Mercenary service provides employment for combat-skilled PCs who want to see the universe and kill a subset of it for decent wages. Diplomacy and intrigue are excellent possibilities in the well-developed stewpot of racial and political conflicts. And for those in search of the unknown, the SPELLJAMMER universe is an open-ended invitation to exploration, with innumerable alien worlds to visit.

The planetary systems containing the three official TSR AD&D campaign world settings (Krynn of the DRAGONLANCE® saga, Toril of the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ setting, and Oerth of the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting) are described, with charts of relative planetary distances and travel times, and reports on the major celestial bodies in each system. These treatments are clear models and inspirations for a GM who wishes to design his own planetary systems. Greyspace (the system of Oerth) is geocentric, with Oerth at the center of the system and with the sun and other planets orbiting Oerth. Greyspace also boasts some of the most exotic celestial body types, such as elongated, flat, and irregular worlds, as well as asteroid belts and cluster formations.

The set also contains color fold-out maps of the *Spelljammer*, a colossal manta-ray-

shaped starship a quarter-mile long and a half-mile from wing tip to wing tip, and the Rock of Bral, an asteroid merchant and pirate port. The *Spelljammer* starship is an enigmatic legendary artifact of the spaceways; who knows what might be found in the castles and passages of this mysterious *Flying Dutchman*? (This is a do-it-yourself enigma, GM.) Since many adventurers and sages have visited this ship, seeking its secrets, at the very least one can loot the bodies of those who died testing its defenses. The Rock of Bral is designed as a suitable jumping-off site and homeworld for beginning SPELLJAMMER adventurers. Apart from the map and some notes on historical background and various districts, the Rock of Bral is also a GM do-it-yourself project, but the scale, themes, and personalities suggested are a solid starting point for the ambitious GM.

Evaluation: The SPACE: 1889 and SHADOWRUN games are original and exciting, but they are likely to appeal to more experienced, sophisticated role-players. Both require mastery of unfamiliar game systems; historical and near-future settings make more demands on game systems and coherent campaign design; and neither springs from a fountain of action-adventure genre literature.

But the SPELLJAMMER set is part of the AD&D game. Few new mechanics need to be mastered, and they're based on ever-so-familiar AD&D system conventions. The SPELLJAMMER universe is just as tolerant of bizarre and blithely illogical campaign settings as most AD&D universes have always been. And, though the adventure settings, bogus technology, physics, and some of the monsters and races are unfamiliar, at the heart of the set are the ever-so-familiar leading characters of the fantasy role-playing genre—fighters, magic-users, clerics, thieves, halflings, elves, dwarfs, and so on. In fact, in the introductory stages of a SPELLJAMMER campaign, the GM needn't even master all the SPELLJAMMER mechanics until the PCs manage to get hold of their own starship with spelljamming technology.

The SPELLJAMMER set is a perfect evolution of the big, flexible, open-ended, and fun-loving elements of AD&D role-playing adventure. There's loads of action and loot, mystery and intrigue here for PCs, and a universe full of fantastic worlds, starships, and aliens to be populated by the fevered dreams of fiendish GMs. Just look at the floor plans of the various starships and the implications of asteroids honeycombed with tunnels and filled with mysterious artifacts and alien monsters, and you'll see the perfect rationale for Dungeons in Space. The tone, objectives, and spirit are just right for its audience and purpose. The presentation is colorful and wonderfully imaginative—one look at the starship illustrations on the ship display cards, and I was ready to play. The rules and game concepts are simple, open-ended, and unpretentious, in keeping

with the best traditions of AD&D role-playing, and remarkably comprehensive without intimidating in volume and detail. And the box is heavy and filled with neat, pretty stuff.

The SPELLJAMMER set is a gloriously silly idea executed with spirit and imagination. It makes me want to dust off my ancient AD&D PCs and spend a couple years before the mast, treading the decks with my trusty companions, sailing the ether oceans in search of high adventure and a couple armloads of plus-one swords.

Oh. I almost forgot. There's this really neat space-drive called a furnace. Guess what it burns for fuel? Magical items! And magical artifacts! Finally, a practical use for the *rod of seven parts* and the *talisman of pure good* I've been carrying around all these years! Couldn't you just die?

Short and sweet

Scavenger Hunt, by Brad Freeman. West End Games, \$10.00. This adventure supplement for West End Games' STAR WARS system is a masterpiece of GM staging. The two featured alien races are competing cultures specializing in the scavenging and artistic appreciation of space garbage. Particularly endearing are the Squib, lovably characterized in charming monologue read-alouds throughout the adventure: "So, dealers of abridged decks, we of Lofty Squib greet you in the name of universal buddy-buddiness, irrespective of

differences in stations, no less." Both the Squib and the Ugor as noble contenders for the refuse of the stars are light-spirited and amusing, a virtue in its own right, but the clever and elaborate presentation of the language and culture of these aliens is a reminder of the lamentably weak characterization of alien and monstrous races in the bulk of science-fiction and fantasy role-playing. *Scavenger Hunt* is by far the best STAR WARS supplement I've seen and is highly recommended.

PC1 *Tall Tales of the Wee Folk*, by John Nephew. TSR, Inc., \$9.99. This well-written and imaginative D&D® supplement provides rules for playing brownies, centaurs, dryads, fauns, hsaio, leprechauns, pixies, pookas, sidhe, treants, wood imps, and woodrakes as PCs. The treatments of these beings as PCs are remarkably faithful to the tone and dignity of their fairy sources, and the adventures featuring these character types are original and satisfying. This supplement is highly recommended for D&D and AD&D game players and may be a pleasant surprise for any sophisticated role-players interested in the traditions and legends of fairie.

Hardwired, by Walter John Williams. R. Talsorian Games, Inc., \$12.00. This sourcebook for R. Talsorian's CYBERPUNK system is written by the author of the cyberspunk

novel of the same name. The sourcebook is a treatment of the novel's setting and is true to the novel's tone and style. The adventures exploit themes, characters, multinational archvillains, and narrative threads from the novel, all to very good effect. A compelling and expressive evocation of a cyberpunk campaign setting, *Hardwired* is good reading, and the adventures are first class. Ω

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t was a chill night for spring, undoubtedly the reason there were so many people in the inn. The inn wasn't accustomed to such crowds. In fact, it wasn't accustomed to any crowds, for the inn was new, so new that it still smelled of fresh-hewn wood and paint instead of stale ale and yesterday's stew. Called "Three Sheets," after a popular drinking song of the time, the inn was located in—. But where it was located doesn't matter. The inn was destroyed five years later in the Dragon Wars.

But it would be some time yet before the Queen of Darkness plunged the world into what she hoped would be eternal night. Already, however, in these years just prior to the war, her evil shadow was spreading. Goblins had always been a problem in this realm, but suddenly what had been small bands of raiders who struck isolated farms had grown into armies attacking villages.

"What's His Lordship offering?" queried a mage clad in red robes who occupied a booth—the one nearest the fire and the most comfortable in the crowded inn—alone. No one thought of joining him. Though the mage was sickly in appearance, with a hacking cough that nearly bent him double, those who had served with him in previous campaigns whispered that he was quick to anger and quicker with his spells.

"Standard rate—two pieces of steel a week and a bounty on goblin ears. I signed us up." The man responding was a large, burly warrior who sat down opposite his questioner. Shedding his plain, undecorated cloak in the heat of the room, the warrior revealed hard-muscled arms the size of tree trunks and a chest like a bull's. He unbuckled from around his waist a swordbelt, laying on the table near at hand a sword with every appearance of having been well and skillfully used.

"When do we get our pay?"

"After we drive out the goblins. He'll make us earn it first."

"Of course," said the mage, "and he won't be out any cash to those who die. What took you so long?"

"The town is packed! Every mercenary on this side of Ansalon is here, not to mention horse traders, camp followers, swordmakers, and every kender not currently behind bars. We'll be lucky to find a place in a field to spread our blankets this night."

"Hullo, Caramon!" called out a leather-armor-clad man, coming over to the table and clapping the warrior on the back. "Mind if I share your booth?" he asked, starting to sit down. "It's standing room only in this place. This your twin I've heard so much about? Introduce us."

The mage lifted his head and fixed his gaze upon the stranger.

Golden eyes with pupils the shape of an hour-glass glittered in the shadows of the red hood. The light in the inn glinted off golden skin. Near at hand stood a wooden staff—obviously and ominously magical—topped by a multifaceted crystal clutched in a dragon's claw. Gulping, the man rose quickly to his feet and, with a hasty farewell to Caramon, took his ale to a distant corner of the common room.

Raistlin and the Knight of Solamnia

by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman

Illustrations by Larry Elmore

"He looked at me as if he saw me on my deathbed!" muttered the man to more congenial companions.

"It's going to be a cold night tonight, Raist," said the warrior to his brother in a low voice when the two were alone. "It smells like snow in the air. You shouldn't sleep outside."

"And where would you have me sleep, Caramon?" asked the mage in a soft, sneering voice. "In a hole in the ground, like a rabbit, for that is all we can afford." He broke off in a fit of coughing that left him breathless.

His twin gazed at him anxiously. Pulling a coin from a shabby purse he wore at his belt, Caramon held it up. "We have this, Raist. You could sleep here tonight and the next night."

"And what would we do for food in the interim, my brother? We won't get paid for a fortnight, at least."

Caramon lowered his voice and, leaning across the table, grasped hold of his brother's arm to draw him near. "I could snare us something, if need be."

"You'd be the one to end up in a snare, you fool!" The mage jerked away from his brother's touch. "The lord's men are all over the woods, hunting for poachers with only slightly less enthusiasm than they're hunting for goblins. No, we'll return to camp tonight. Don't fuss over me. You know how I hate it, I'll be fine. I've slept in worse places."

Raistlin began to cough again, the spasms shaking his frail body until it seemed he must split apart. Pulling out a cloth, he pressed it over his mouth. Those who glanced over in concern saw that, when the mage withdrew the cloth, it was covered with blood.

"Fix me my drink!" he ordered Caramon, his lips forming the words for he had momentarily lost the power of speech. Collapsing in a corner, he closed his eyes and concentrated on drawing breath. Those near could hear the air whistle in his lungs.

Caramon, peered through the crowd, attempting to find the barmaid, and shouted for boiling water. Raistlin slid a pouch across the table toward his brother, who picked it up and carefully measured out some of its contents into a mug. The inn's proprietor himself came bustling over with the hot water in a steaming kettle. He was just about to pour when a sudden shouting rose up around the door.

"Hey, there! Get out you little vermin! No kender allowed!" cried several of the guests.

"Kender!" Kettle in hand, the proprietor ran off in a panic.

"Hey!" shouted Caramon after the flurried innkeeper in exasperation, "you forgot our water!"

"But I tell you I have friends here!" A shrill voice rose up from the doorway. "Where? Why?" — there was a moment's pause — "there! Hi, Caramon! Remember me?"

"Name of the Abyss!" muttered Caramon, hunching up his big shoulders and ducking his head.

A short figure, about the height and stature of a twelve-year old human, with the face of a man of twenty and the wide-eyed innocent expression of a babe of three, was pointing gleefully at the booth of the warrior and his brother. The figure was clad in a bright green tunic and orange striped hose. A long tassel of hair was twisted round his head and hung down his back. Numerous

pouches containing "the possessions of everyone who had been unfortunate to cross his path hung from his belt.

"You're answerable for him, then," said the proprietor grimly, marching the kender across the room, one hand gripping the slight shoulders firmly. There was a wild scramble as men stuffed their purses inside their shirts, down their pants, or wherever else they thought their valuables might be safe from a kender's light and nimble fingers.

"Hey! Our water!" Caramon made a grab for the innkeeper but got a handful of kender instead.

"Earwig Lockpicker," said the kender, holding out his hand politely. "Friend of Tasslehoff Burrfoot's. We met at the Inn of the Last Home. I couldn't stay long. There was that misunderstanding over the horse. I told them I didn't steal it. I can't think how it came to follow me."

"Maybe because you were holding firmly onto the reins?" suggested Caramon.

"Do you think so? Because I—Ouch!"

"Drop it!" said Raistlin, his thin hand closing tightly over the kender's wrist.

"Oh," said Earwig meekly, releasing the pouch that had been lying on the table and was now making its way into the kender's pocket. "Is that yours?"

The mage cast a piercing, infuriated glare at his brother, who flushed and shrugged uncomfortably. "I'll get that water for you, Raist. Right now. Uh, Innkeeper!"

"Well, look over there!" said the kender, squirming around in his seat to face the front door as it closed behind a small group of travelers. "I followed those people into town. You can't imagine," he said in an indignant whisper that carried clearly across the room, "how rude that man is! He should have thanked me for finding his dagger, instead of—"

"Greetings, sir. Greetings, my lady." The proprietor bobbed and bowed officially. The heavily cloaked man and woman were, to all appearances, well dressed. "You'll be wanting a room, no doubt, and then dinner. There's hay in the stable for your horses."

"We'll be wanting nothing," said the man in a harsh voice. He was carrying a young boy in his arms and, as he spoke, he eased the child to the floor, then flexed his arms as though they ached. "Nothing except a seat by your fire. We wouldn't have come in except that my lady-wife is not feeling well."

"Not well?" The innkeeper, backing up, held out a dish cloth in front of him as a sort of shield and eyed them askance. "Not the plague?"

"No, no!" said the woman in a low, cultivated voice.

"I am not ill. I am just tired and chilled to the bone, that is all." Reaching out her hand, she drew her son near.

"We have walked a great distance."

"Walked!" muttered the innkeeper, not liking the sound of that. He looked more closely at the family's dress. Several of the men standing around the fire moved to one side. Others hurried to draw up a bench, and the overworked barmaid, ignoring her waiting customers, put her arm around the woman and helped her to a seat. The woman sank down limply.

"You're white as a ghost, milady," said the barmaid.

"Let me bring you a posset of honey and brandywine."

"No," said the man, moving to stand by his wife, the child clinging closely to his father. "We have no money to pay for it."

"Tut, tut. Talk of money later," said the barmaid briskly. "Call it my treat."

"We'll not take charity!" The man's voice rose to a angry shout.

The boy shrank close to his mother, who glanced at her husband, then lowered her eyes. "Thank you for your kind offer," she said to the barmaid, "but I need nothing. I'm feeling much better already."

The proprietor, stalking his guests, noted that by fire-light their clothes were not nearly so fine as they had first seemed. The man's cloak was frayed at the hem and travel worn and stained with mud. The woman's dress was clean and neat but many times mended. The boy, who appeared to be about five or six, was clad in shirt and trousers that had obviously once been his father's, cut down to fit his small, thin frame. The proprietor was about to hint broadly that only those who spent money in his inn had a right to his fire when he was distracted by a scream from inside the kitchen.

"Where's that kender?" the innkeeper cried in alarm.

"Right here!" shouted Earwig eagerly, raising his hand and waving. "Do you want me?"

The proprietor cast him a baleful glance, then fled.

"Humpf," said Caramon in an undertone, his eyes on the woman. She had shoved the hood of her cloak back with a weary hand, revealing a pale, thin face once beautiful, now anxious and worn with care and fatigue. Her arm stole around her son, who was gazing up at her in concern, and she hugged the boy close. "I wonder when the last time was those two had anything to eat," Caramon muttered.

"I can ask them," offered Earwig helpfully. "Hey, lady, when—Ulp!"

Caramon clamped his hand over the kender's mouth.

"It's no concern of yours, my brother," snapped Raistlin irritably. "Get that imbecile innkeeper back here with the hot water!" He began to cough again.

Caramon released the wriggling kender (who had actually been silent for as long as three minutes on account of having no breath left with which to talk) and heaved his great bulk to his feet, peering over the heads of the crowd for the proprietor. Smoke was rolling out from under the kitchen door.

"I think he's going to be a while, Raist," said Caramon solemnly. "I'll get the barmaid."

He tried to catch the barmaid's eye, but she was hovering over the woman.

"I'll go and fix you a nice cup of tarbean tea; milady. No. It's all right. There's no charge for tarbean tea in this inn. Is there?" she said, flashing a threatening look at the other customers.

"No. No charge. None," chorused the men in response.

The cloaked and booted man frowned, but swallowed whatever words he might have wanted to say.

"Hey, over here!" Caramon shouted, but the barmaid was still standing in front of the woman, twisting her apron in her hands.

"Milady," she began hesitantly, in a low voice, "I've been speaking to cook. We're that busy tonight, we're shorthanded. It would be a gift of charity, milady, if you could help us out. It'd be worth a night's lodging and a meal."

The woman cast a swift and pleading glance up at her husband.

"Uh, oh," muttered Caramon and eased himself back into his seat.

Her husband's face was livid. "No wife of a Knight of Solamnia will work in an inn! We'll all three starve and go to our graves first!"

All talking and bantering and laughter ceased in the inn, the silence falling gradually as word circulated. All eyes went to the man. Hot blood flooded to his cheeks. He had obviously not meant to reveal such a thing about himself. His hand went to his smooth-shaven upper lip and it seemed to those watching that they could almost see the long, flowing mustaches that marked a Knight of Solamnia. It was not unusual that he had shaved them off. For long centuries the Order had stood for justice and law on Krynn. Now the knights were hated and reviled, blamed for bringing down the wrath of the gods. What calamity had forced this knight and his family to flee their homeland without money and barely the clothes on their backs? The crowd didn't know and most of them didn't care. The proprietor now wasn't the only one who wanted the knight and his family gone.

"Come along, Aileen," said the knight gruffly. He put his hand on his wife's shoulder. "We'll not stay in this place. Not when they cater to the likes of that!" His narrowed eyes went to Raistlin, to the red robes that proclaimed him a wizard and the magical staff that stood by his side. The knight turned stiffly to the barmaid. "I understand the lord of this realm seeks men to fight the goblins. If you could tell me where to find him—"

"He's seeking fighters," sang out a man in a far corner of the common room. "Not pretty boys dressed up in fancy iron suits."

"Ho, you're wrong, Nathan," called out another. "I hear His Lordship's lookin' for someone to lead a regiment—a regiment of gully dwarves!"

There was appreciative laughter. The knight choked with fury, his hand went to the hilt of his sword. His wife laid a gentle hand restrainingly on his arm. "No, Gawain," she murmured, starting to rise to her feet. "We will go. Come."

"Stay put, milady. And as for you . . ." The barmaid glared at the boisterous crowd. "Shut your mouths or that'll be the last cold beer I draw for anyone in this inn tonight."

Quelled by this awful threat, the men quieted. Putting her arm around the woman, the barmaid looked up at the knight. "You'll find His Lordship in the sheriffs hall, about a mile down the street. Go tend to your business, Sir Knight, and let your lady-wife and the boy rest. There's a lot of rough men there," she added, seeing the knight about to refuse. "It's no fit place for your child."

The proprietor came hurrying up. He would have liked dearly to throw all three out of his inn, but he could see that the crowd was siding with his barmaid in favor of the

woman. Having just put out a grease fire in the kitchen, the last thing he needed was a riot.

"Go, Sir Knight, will you, please?" pleaded the innkeeper in a low voice. "We'll take good care of your lady."

The knight seemingly had no choice. Gnawing his lip, he gave an ungracious assent. "Galeth, watch over your mother. And speak no word to anyone." Glancing meaningfully at the mage, the knight drew his cloak around his shoulders, cast his hood over his face, and stalked out of the inn.

"His Lordship'll have nothing to do with a Knight of Solamnia," prophesied Caramon. "Half the army would quit if he hired him. What did he look at you like that for, Raist? You didn't say anything."

"The knights have no love for magic. It's something they can neither control nor understand. And now, my brother, the hot water! Or are you going to watch me die here in this wretched inn?"

"Oh, uh, sure, Raist." Caramon stood up and began searching the crowd for the barmaid.

"I'll go!" Earwig leaped to his feet and skipped out of reach to disappear into the crowd.

Talk and laughter resumed. The proprietor was arguing over the tab with two of his patrons. The barmaid had disappeared back into the kitchen. The knight's wife, overcome by weariness, lay down upon the bench. The boy stood protectively near her, his hand on her arm. But his gaze strayed to the red-robed magic-user.

Raistlin cast a swift glance at his brother. Seeing Caramon preoccupied in attempting to capture the barmaid's attention, the mage made a slight, beckoning gesture with his hand.

Nothing appears as sweet as fruit we are forbidden to eat. The boy's eyes widened. He looked around to see if the mage meant someone else, then looked back at Raistlin, who repeated the gesture. The boy tugged gently at his mother's sleeve.

"Here, now. Let your ma sleep," scolded the barmaid, hustling past, a tray of mugs in her hands. "Be good for a few moments, and when I come back I'll bring you a treat." She vanished into the crowd.

"Hey, there! Barmaid!" Caramon was waving his arms and bellowing like a bull.

Raistlin cast him an irritated glance, then turned back to the boy.

Slowly, drawn by irresistible curiosity and fascination, the child left his mother's side and crept over to stand near the mage.

"Can you really do magic?" he asked, round eyed with wonder.

"Here, there!" Caramon, seeing the kid apparently bothering his brother, tried to shoo him away. "Go on back to your ma."

"Caramon, shut up," said Raistlin softly. He turned his golden-eyed gaze on the boy. "Is your name Galeth?"

"Yes, sir. I was named after my grandfather. He was a knight. I'm going to be a knight, too."

Caramon grinned at his brother. "Reminds you of Sturm, doesn't he? These knights, they're all daft," he added, making the mistake that most adults make in thinking that children, because they are small, have no feelings.

The boy flared up like dry tinder cast in the fire. "My father's not daft! He's a great man!" Galeth flushed, realizing perhaps that his father hadn't seemed all that great. "It's just that he's worried about my mother. He and I can do without food, we're men. But my mother . . ." His lower lip began to tremble, his eyes filled with tears.

"Galeth," said Raistlin, casting Caramon a glance that sent the big man back to shouting for the barmaid, "Would you like to see some magic?"

The boy, too awed to speak, nodded.

"Then bring me your mother's purse."

"Her purse is empty, sir," said the boy. Even though young, he was old enough to understand that this was a shameful thing, and his cheeks flushed.

"Bring it to me," said Raistlin in his soft, whispering voice.

Galeth stood a moment, undecided, torn between what he knew he should be doing and what he longed to do. Temptation proved too strong for six years. Turning, he ran back to his mother and gently, without disturbing her rest, slipped her purse from the pocket of her gown. He brought it back and handed it to Raistlin, who took it in his long-lingered, delicate hands and studied it carefully. It was a small leather bag embroidered with golden thread, such as fine ladies use to carry their jewels. If this one had ever had jewels in it, they had long since been sold to buy food and clothing.

The mage turned the purse inside-out and shook it. It was lined with silk and was, as the boy said, pitifully empty. Then, shrugging, Raistlin handed it back to the boy. Galeth accepted it hesitantly. Where was the magic? He began to droop a little in disappointment.

"And so you are going to be a knight like your father," said Raistlin.

"Yes!" The boy blinked back his tears.

"Since when, then, does a future knight tell a lie?"

"I didn't lie, sir!" Galeth flushed, "That's a wicked thing!"

"But you said the purse was empty. Look inside."

Startled, the boy opened the leather bag. Whistling in astonishment, he pulled out a coin; then gazed at Raistlin in delight.

"Go put the purse back, quietly now," said the mage. "And not a word to anyone about where the coin came from, or the spell will be broken!"

"Yes, sir!" said Galeth solemnly. Scurrying back, he slipped 'his mother's purse into her pocket with a stealthy skill that would have made a kender proud. Squatting down next to his mother on the floor, he began to chew on a piece of candied ginger the barmaid tossed to him, pausing every now and then to share a conspiratorial grin with the mage.

"That's all well and good," grunted Caramon, leaning on 'the table, "but what do we do now for food for the next week?"

"Something will turn up," said Raistlin calmly. Raising his frail hand, he made a weak gesture and the barmaid hurried to his side.

The soft glow of twilight darkened to night. The inn became even more crowded, hot, and noisy. The knight's

wife slept through the turmoil, her exhaustion so apparent that many looked upon her with pitying eyes and muttered that she deserved a better fate. The boy fell asleep, too, curled up on the floor at his mother's feet. He never stirred when Caramon lifted him in his strong arms and tucked him near his mother. Earwig returned and sat down next to Caramon. Flushed and happy, he emptied out his bulging pouches onto the table and began to happily sort their contents, keeping up a nonstop, one-sided conversation at the same time.

After two hours, Sir Gawain returned. Each man in the inn who saw him enter nudged a neighbor into silence so that all were quiet and watching him attentively as he stepped into the common room.

"Where's my son?" he demanded, staring around darkly.

"Right here, safe and warm and sound asleep," answered the barmaid, pointing out the slumbering child. "We haven't made off with him, if that's what you're thinking."

The knight had grace enough to look ashamed. "I'm sorry," Gawain said gruffly, "and I thank you for your kindness."

"Knight or barmaid, death takes us all alike. At least we can help one another through life. I'll wake your lady."

"No," said Gawain and put out his hand to stop her. "Let her sleep. I want to ask you"—he turned to the proprietor—"if she and my son can stay the night. I will have money to pay you in the morning," he added stiffly.

"You will?" The proprietor stared at him suspiciously. "His Lordship hired you?"

"No," answered the knight. "It seems he has all the fighters he needs to handle the goblins."

An audible sigh whispered through the room. "Told you so," said Caramon to his brother.

"Shut up, you fool!" Raistlin returned sharply. "I'm interested to know where he's planning to find money this night."

"His Lordship says that there is a woodland not far from here, and in that woodland is a fortress that is of no use to him or to anyone because there is a curse laid upon it. Only—"

"A cursed fortress? Where? What kind of curse?" demanded an excited Earwig, scrambling up onto the table to get a better view."

"The Maiden's Curse," called out several in answer. "The fortress is called Death's Keep. No one who has entered it has ever returned."

"Death's Keep!" breathed the kender, misty-eyed with rapture. "What a wonderful-sounding place!"

"A true Knight of Solamnia may enter and return. According to His Lordship, it takes a true knight to lift the curse. I plan to go there and, with the help of Paladine, perform this deed."

"I'll come wi—" Earwig was offering magnanimously, when Caramon yanked the kender's feet out from underneath him, sending the green-clad figure sprawling face-first on the floor.

"His Lordship has promised to reward me well," concluded Gawain, ignoring the crash and the kender's wail of protest.

"Uh, huh," sneered the proprietor, "And who's going to pay your family's bill if you don't return, Sir True Knight? You're not the first of your kind to go up there, and I've never seen a one come back!"

Nods and low voices in the crowd affirmed this.

"His Lordship has promised to provide for them if I fail," answered Gawain in a calm and steady voice.

"His Lordship? Oh, that's quite all right then," said the proprietor, happy once more. "And my best wishes to you, Sir Knight. I'll personally escort the lady and your boy—a fine child, if I may say so—to their room."

"Wait just a minute," said the barmaid, ducking beneath the proprietor's elbow and coming to stand in front of the knight. "Where's the mage who'll be going with you to Death's Keep?"

"No mage accompanies me," answered Gawain, frowning. "Now, if there is nothing further you want of me, I must leave." He looked down at his sleeping wife and, with a gentle hand, reached out to touch her hair. Fearing it would waken her, however, he drew back. "Good-bye, Aileen. I hope you can understand." Turning swiftly, he started to leave, but the proprietor grabbed his elbow.

"No mage! But didn't His Lordship tell you? It takes a knight and a mage to lift the Maiden's Curse! For it was because of a knight and a mage that the curse was placed on the keep."

"And a kender!" Earwig shouted, scrambling to his feet. "I'm positive I heard that it takes a knight and a mage and a kender!"

"His Lordship mentioned some legend about a knight and a mage," said Gawain scornfully. "But a true knight with faith in his god needs the help of no other being on Krynn."

Freeing himself of the proprietor's plucking hand, the knight started toward the door.

"Are you truly so eager to throw away your life, Sir Knight?" The sibilant whisper cut through the hubbub in the inn, bringing with it a deathlike silence. "Do you truly believe that your wife and son will be better off when you are dead?"

The knight stopped. His shoulders stiffened, his body trembled. He did not turn, but glanced back at the mage over his shoulder. "His Lordship promised. They will have food and a roof over their heads. I can buy them that, at least."

"And so, with a cry of 'My Honor is My Life' you rush off to certain defeat when, by bending that proud neck and allowing me to accompany you, you have a chance to achieve victory. How typical of you all," said Raistlin with an unpleasant smile. "No wonder your Order has fallen into ruin."

Gawain's face flushed in anger at this insult. His hand went to his sword. Caramon, growling, reached for his own sword.

"Put away your weapons," snapped Raistlin. "You are a young man, Sir Knight. Fortune has not been kind to you. It is obvious that you value your life, but, being desperate, you know no other way to escape your misfortune with honor." His lip twisted as he said the last word. "I have offered to help. Will you kill me for that?"

Gawain's hand tightened around the sword's hilt.

"Is it true that a knight and a mage are needed to lift the curse?" he asked of those in the inn. ("And a kender!" piped up a shrill voice indignantly)

"Oh, yes. Truly," averred everyone around him.

"Have there been any who have tried it?"

At this the men in the inn glanced at each other and then looked at the ceiling or the floor or the walls or stared into their mugs.

"A few," said someone.

"How few?" asked Caramon, seeing that his brother was in earnest about accompanying the knight.

"Twenty, thirty maybe."

"Twenty or thirty! And none of them ever came back? Did you hear that, Raist? Twenty or thirty and none of them ever came back!" Caramon said emphatically.

"I heard." Using his staff to support him, Raistlin rose from the booth.

"So did I!" said Earwig, dancing with excitement.

"And we're still going, aren't we," Caramon said gloomily, buckling his swordbelt around his waist. "Some of us, that is. Not you, Nosepicker."

"Nosepicker!" Hearing this foul corruption of a name long honored among kender, Earwig was momentarily paralyzed with shock and forgot to dodge Caramon's large hand. Catching hold of the kender by the long ponytail, the big warrior skillfully tied him by the hair to one of the inn's support posts.

"Why is it you're doing this, mage?" asked Gawain suspiciously as Raistlin walked slowly across the room.

"Yeah, Raist, why is it we're doing this?" Caramon shot out of the corner of his mouth.

"For the money, of course," said Raistlin coolly. "What other reason would there be?"

The crowd in the inn was on its feet, clamoring in excitement, calling out directions and advice and laying wagers on whether the adventurers would return. Earwig, tied fast, screamed and pleaded and begged and nearly yanked his hair out by the roots trying to free himself.

"The name's Lockpicker!" he shrieked indignantly.

It was only the barmaid who saw Raistlin's frail hand very gently ruffle the sleeping child's hair in passing.

Half the patrons of the inn accompanied them down an old, disused path to the fringes of a thick forest. Here, beneath ancient trees that seemed ill-disposed to have, their rest disturbed, the crowd bid them good fortune.

"Do you need torches?" one of the men shouted.

"No," answered Raistlin. "Shiruk," he said softly, and the crystal ball on top of his staff burst into bright, beaming light.

The crowd gasped in appreciative awe. The knight glanced at the glowing staff askance.

"I will take a torch. I will not walk in any light that has darkness as its source."

The crowd bid them farewell, then turned back to the inn to await the outcome. Odds were running high in favor of Death's Keep living up to its name. The wager seemed such a sure thing; in fact, that Raistlin had some difficulty in persuading Caramon not to bet against themselves.

Torch in hand, the knight started down the path. Raistlin and his brother walked some paces behind, for the young knight walked so swiftly that the frail mage could not keep up.

"So much," said Raistlin, leaning on his staff, "for the courtesy of the knights."

Gawain instantly halted and waited, stony-faced, for them to catch up.

"Not only courtesy but just plain good sense to keep together in a forest as dark and gloomy as this one," stated Caramon, "Did you hear something?"

The three listened, holding their breaths. Tree leaves rustled, a twig snapped. Knight and warrior put hand to weapon. Raistlin slid his hand inside his pouch, grasping a handful of sand and calling to mind words of a sleep spell.

"Here I am!" cried a shrill voice cheerfully. A small, green and orange figure burst into the light. "Sorry I'm late," said Earwig. "My hair got caught in the booth." He exhibited half of what had once been a long tassel. "I had to cut myself loose!"

"With my dagger!" said Caramon, snatching it away.

"Is that one yours? Isn't that odd. I could have sworn I had one just like it!"

Sir Gawain came to a halt, scowling. "It is bad enough I must travel in the company of a magic-user—"

"I know," said Earwig, nodding sympathetically. "We'll just have to make the best of it, won't we?"

"Ah, let the little fellow come along," said Caramon, feeling remorseful when he looked at what had once been the kender's jaunty top-knot. "He might come in handy if we're attacked."

Gawain hesitated, but it was obvious that the only way to get rid of the kender would be to slice him in two, and though the Oath and the Measure didn't specifically ban a knight from murdering kender, it didn't exactly encourage it, either.

"Attack!" he snorted. "We are in no danger" —the knight resumed his pace, Earwig skipping along beside him— "until we reach the keep. At least so His Lordship told me."

"And what else did His Lordship tell you?" Raistlin asked, coughing.

Gawain glared at him dourly, obviously wondering of what use this sickly mage would be to him.

"He told me the tale of the Maiden's Curse. A long time ago, before the Cataclysm, a wizard of the red robes —such as yourself— stole away a young woman from her father's castle and carried her to this keep. A knight, the young woman's betrothed, discovered the abduction and followed after to rescue her. He caught up with the mage and his victim in the keep in this forest.

"The wizard, furious at having his evil plans thwarted, called upon the Queen of Darkness to destroy the knight. The knight, in his turn, called for Paladine to come to his aid. The forces unleashed in the ensuing battle were so powerful that they not only destroyed the wizard and the knight, but they have, even after death, continued to drag others into their conflict."

"And you wouldn't let me make that bet!" said Caramon reproachfully to his brother.

Raistlin did not appear to hear him. He was, seemingly, lost in thought.

"Well," said Gawain abruptly, "and what do you think of that tale?"

"I think that, like most legends, it has outgrown the truth," answered Raistlin. "A wizard of the red robes, for example, would not call upon the Queen of Darkness for aid. That is something only wizards of the black robes may do."

"It seems to me," said Gawain grimly, "that your kind dabbles in darkness no matter what color robes they wear—the fox cloaking himself in sheep's wool, so the saying goes."

"Yeah," retorted Caramon angrily. "And I've heard a few sayings myself about your kind, Sir Kettle-head. One goes—"

"That will do, my brother," remonstrated Raistlin, his thin fingers closing firmly over Caramon's arm. "Save your breath for what lies ahead."

The group continued on in a silence that was tense and smoldering.

"What happened to the maiden?" Earwig asked suddenly. All three started, having forgotten, in their preoccupation, the kender's presence.

"What?" growled Gawain.

"The maiden. What happened to her? After all, it's called the Maiden's Curse."

"Yes, it is," said Raistlin. "An interesting point."

"Is it?" Earwig jumped up and down gleefully, scattering the contents of his pouches across the path and nearly tripping Caramon. "I came up with an interesting point!"

"I don't see why it's called the Maiden's Curse, except that she was the innocent victim," answered the knight as an afterthought.

"Ah," said Earwig with a gusty sigh. "An innocent victim. I know what that feels like!"

The three continued on their way. The walking was easy, the path through the forest was smooth and straight. Too smooth and too straight, according to Caramon, who maintained that it seemed bound and determined to deliver them to their doom as swiftly as possible. Several hours after midnight, they arrived at the fortress known as, Death's Keep.

Its stone facade glimmered grayish white in the lambent light of the stars and a pale, thin silver moon. Massive and stalwart, the keep had been designed for function, not beauty. It was square, with a tower at each corner for the lookouts. A wall connecting the towers surrounded a structure whose main purpose had probably been to house troops. Large wooden doors, banded with steel, permitted entrance and egress.

But no soldiers had come here in a long, long time. The battlements were crumbling and in some places had completely fallen down. The walls were split by gigantic cracks, perhaps caused by the Cataclysm, perhaps by the supposed magical battle that had been fought within. One of the towers had collapsed in upon itself, as had the roof of the central building, for they could see the skeletal out-

line of broken beams showing up black against the myriad glistening stars.

"The keep is deserted," said Caramon, staring at it in disgust. "There's no one here, magical or otherwise. I'm surprised those jokers back at the inn didn't send us out here with a bag and tell us to stand in the middle of the path yelling, 'here, snipe!'"

"That will be the task I set for you, my bumbling brother!" Raistlin began to cough, but stifled the sound in his sleeve. "Death's Keep is not deserted! I hear voices plainly—or I could if you would silence yours!"

"I, too, hear someone calling out!" said Gawain, awed. "A knight of my Order is trapped in there, and he shouts for help!" The knight, sword in hand, bolted forward. "I'm coming!" he shouted.

"Me, too!" cried Earwig, leaping in a circle around Raistlin. "I hear voices! I'm positive I hear voices! What are they saying to you? Do you want to know what they're saying to me? 'Another round of ale!' That's what I hear them calling out."

"Wait!" Raistlin reached to grasp the knight, but Gawain was running swiftly toward huge double wooden doors. Once this gate would have been closed, locked fast against any foe. Now it stood ominously open. "He's an imbecile! Go after him, Caramon! Don't let him do anything until I get there!"

"Another round of ale?" Caramon gazed blankly at his brother.

"You blithering dunderhead!" Raistlin hissed through clenched teeth. He pointed a trembling finger at the keep. "I hear a voice calling to me, and I recognize it as coming from one of my own kind! It is the voice of a mage! I think I am beginning to understand what is going on. Go after him, Caramon! Knock him down, sit on him if that is all you can do to hold him, but you must prevent Gawain from offering his sword to the knight!"

"Knight? What? Oh, all right, Raist! I'm going. No need to look at me like that. C'mon, Nosepicker."

Earwig's topknot bobbed indignantly. "That's Lock—. Oh, never mind! Hey, wait up!"

Caramon, followed by the jubilant kender, dashed off after the knight, but he was late in starting and Gawain had already rushed headlong into the keep. Reaching the wooden doors, Caramon hesitated before entering and cast an uneasy glance back at his brother.

Raistlin, leaning on his staff, was walking as fast as he could, coughing with nearly every step until it seemed he must drop. Still, he kept going, and he even managed to lift his staff and angrily gesture with it to Caramon, commanding him to enter the keep without delay.

Earwig had already darted inside. Discovering he was alone, he turned around and dashed back. "Aren't you coming? It's wonderfully dark and spooky in here. And you know what?" The kender sighed in ecstasy. "I really am beginning to hear voices! They want me to come and help them fight! Just think of that! Can I borrow your dagger?"

"No!" Caramon snarled. He could hear the voices now.

"My cause is just! All know that wizards are foul creatures, spawned of darkness. For the pride and honor of our Order of the Sword, join with me!"

"My cause is just! All know the knights hide behind their armor, using their might to bully and threaten those weaker than themselves. For the pride and honor of our Order of the Red Robes, join with me!"

Caramon was beginning to get the uncomfortable feeling that the keep wasn't as deserted as he'd first thought. Reluctantly, wishing his brother were at his side, he entered the keep. The big warrior wasn't afraid of anything in this world that was made of flesh and blood. These eerie voices had a cold, hollow sound that unnerved him. It was as if they were shouting to him from the bottom of a grave.

He and the kender entered a long passage leading from the outer wall to the inner hall. The corridor was adorned with various defensive mechanisms for dealing with an invading enemy. He could see starlight through arrow slits lining the cracked stone walls. Bereft of his brother's lighted staff and the knight's torch, Caramon was forced to grope his way through the darkness, following the flickering flame shining ahead of him, and he nearly bashed his head on an iron portcullis that had been partially lowered from the ceiling.

"Which side do you want to be on?" Earwig asked eagerly, tugging at Caramon's hand to drag him forward. "I think I'd like to be a knight, but then I've wanted to be a mage, too. I don't suppose your brother would let me borrow his staff—"

"Hush!" ordered Caramon harshly, his voice cracking in his dry throat.

The corridor was coming to an end. He could see, beyond him, that it opened into a great, wide hall. Sir Gawain was standing right in front of him, holding the torch high and shouting out words in a language the big warrior didn't understand but guessed to be Solamnic.

The clamoring of the voices was louder. Caramon felt them tugging him in both directions. But another voice, a voice within him, was stronger. This voice was his brother's, a voice he loved and trusted, and he remembered what it had said.

You must prevent Gawain from offering his sword to the knight!

"Stay here," he told Earwig firmly, placing his hand on the kender's shoulder. "You promise?"

"I promise," said Earwig, impressed by Caramon's pale and solemn face.

"Good." Turning, Caramon continued down the corridor.

"What's happening?" Earwig writhed with frustration. "I can't see a thing from here. But I promised. I know! He didn't mean me to say *here*, in this one spot. He just meant me to stay here—in the keep!" Happily, the kender crept forward, Caramon's dagger (which he had appropriated) in his hand.

"Oh, my!" breathed Earwig, coming up behind the big warrior. "Caramon, can you see what I see?"

Caramon could. On one side of the hall, their bodies encased in shining armor, their hands grasping swords, stood a troop of knights. On the other side stood an army of wizards, their robes fluttering around them as if stirred by a hot wind. The knights and the wizards had turned their faces toward 'the strangers who had entered, and Caramon saw in horror that each one of them was a rotting corpse.

A knight materialized in front of his troops. This knight, too, was dead. The marks of his numerous wounds could be seen plainly on his body. Fear swept over Caramon, and he shrank back against the wall, but the knight paid no attention either to him or the transfixed kender standing by his side. The fixed and staring eyes of the corpse looked straight at Gawain.

"Fellow knight, I call upon you, by the Oath and the Measure, to come to my aid against my enemy."

The dead knight gestured and there appeared, standing some distance from him, a wizard clad in red robes that were torn and stained black with blood. The wizard, too, was dead and had, it seemed from his wounds, died most horribly.

Earwig started forward. "I'll fight on your side if you'll teach me how to cast spells!"

Caramon, caught hold of the kender by the scruff of his neck, lifted him off his feet, and tossed him backward. Slamming into the wall, the kender slid down to the floor where he spent an entertaining few moments attempting to breathe. Caramon reached out a shaking hand toward the right.

"Gawain, let's get out of—"

The knight thrust Caramon's hand aside and, kneeling on one knee, started to lay his sword at the knight's feet. "I will come to your aid, Sir Knight!"

"Caramon, stop him!" The hissing whisper slid over stone and through shadow. "Stop him or we ourselves are doomed!"

"No!" said the dead knight, his fiery eyes seeming to see Caramon for the first time. "Join my fight! Or are you a coward?"

"Coward!" Caramon glowered. "No man dares call me—"

"Listen to me, my brother!" Raistlin commanded.

"For my sake, if for no other, or I will be lost, too!"

Caramon cast a fearful look at the dead wizard, saw the mage's empty eyes fixed on Raistlin. The dead knight was leaning down to lift Gawain's sword. Lurching forward on stiff legs, Caramon kicked the weapon with his foot and sent it spinning across the stone floor.

The dead knight howled in rage. Gawain, furious, jumped up, and Caramon, with a desperate lunge, managed to grab hold of the knight by the shoulders. Gawain whirled around and struck at him with his bare hands. The legion of dead knights clattered their swords against their shields, the wizards raised their hollow voices in a cheer that grew louder when Raistlin entered the room.

"What an interesting experience," said Earwig, feeling to see if any ribs were cracked. Finding himself in one piece, he rose to his feet and looked to see what was going on. "My goodness, someone's lost a sword. I'll just go pick it up."

"Wizard of the Red Robes!" The dead were shouting at Raistlin. "Join us in our fight!"

Caramon caught a glimpse of his brother's face from the corner of his eye. Tense and excited, Raistlin was staring at the wizards, a fierce, eager light in his golden eyes.

"Raist! No!" Caramon lost his hold on Gawain.

The knight clouted him on the jaw, sending the big warrior to the floor, and bounded after the sword, only to

find Earwig clutching it tightly, a look of radiant joy on his face that began to fade as the knight approached.

"Oh, no," said the kender firmly, clutching the sword to his bosom. "Finders keepers. You obviously didn't want this anymore."

"Raist! Don't listen to them!" Caramon staggered to his feet. *Too late*, he thought. His brother was walking toward the dead wizard, who was extending a bony hand toward the glowing staff.

The chill fingers were nearly touching it when Raistlin suddenly turned the staff horizontal and held it out before him. The crystal's light flared, the dead wizard sprang back from the frail barrier as though it had scalded him.

"I will not join your fight, for it is an eternal fight!" Raistlin raised his voice above the clamoring. "And one that can never be won."

At this, the dead ceased their calling. A brooding silence descended in the hall. Gawain ceased to threaten the kender and turned around. Earwig, suddenly losing interest in the sword, let it fall to the floor and hopped forward to see what was going on. Caramon rubbed his aching jaw and watched warily, ready to leap to his brother's defense.

Raistlin, leaning on his staff whose crystal seemed to shine more brightly in the chill darkness, walked forward until he stood in the center of the hall. He looked first at the knight—the rotting, decaying face beneath a battered helm, a bony hand clutching a rusting sword. The young mage turned his golden-eyed gaze to the wizard—red robes, torn and slashed by sword thrusts, covering a body that had for centuries been denied the peace of death.

Then Raistlin, lifting his head, stared up into the darkness. "I would talk with the maiden," he called.

The figure of a young woman materialized out of the night and came to stand before the mage. She was fair-haired and pretty, with an oval face, rich brown hair, and blue eyes that were bright and spirited. So lovely was she, and so warm and seemingly alive, that it took some moments before Caramon realized she was long-since dead.

"You are the one who called down the curse, are you not?" asked Raistlin.

"Yes," the maiden answered in a voice cold as the end of the world. "Which side do you choose, mage? Here stands pride"—she gestured toward the knight—"and here stands pride"—she gestured toward the mage.

"Which will you choose? Not that it much matters."

"I fight for neither," said Raistlin. "I do not choose pride. I choose," he paused, then said gently, "I choose love."

Darkness crashed down upon them with the weight and force of an avalanche, quenching even the magical light of the staff.

"Wow!" came the awed voice of the kender.

Caramon blinked and peered around, trying to see through the blackness that was thick and impenetrable as solid stone.

"Raistlin?" he called, panicked.

"I am here, my brother. Hush. Keep silent."

Feeling a hand grasp his shoulder, Caramon reached out and touched a warm human arm..

"Gawain?" he whispered.

"Yes," said the knight in strained tones. "What is happening? I don't trust that mage! He'll get us killed."

"So far it seems to me he's done a good job of keeping us alive," said Caramon grimly. "Look!"

"Shirak," said Raistlin and the crystal's light beamed brightly. Standing in front of Raistlin, illuminated by his staff, was the young woman.

"You have broken the curse, young mage," said the spirit. "Is there anything you would ask of me before I go to my long-awaited rest?"

"Tell us your story," said Raistlin. "According to the legend, the mage carried you off by force."

"Of course, that is what they have said, who never bothered to seek the truth!" said the spirit scornfully.

"And their words were fuel to the fire of my curse. The truth is that the mage and I loved each other. My father, a Knight of Solamnia, forbade me to marry a wizard. He betrothed me to another knight, one whom I did not love. The mage and I ran off together. I left of my own free will to be with the man I loved. The knight followed us and we fled to this place, knowing that it had long been abandoned. The mage and I could have escaped, but he said that, for his honor, he must turn and fight. For his honor," she repeated bitterly. Her blue eyes stared into the shadows of the hall as though she could see what had transpired there so long before. "Within these walls, he challenged the knight to battle and they fought—one with his sword, the other with his magic. They fought, for their honor!

"And I came to realize as I watched, helpless to prevent their quarrel, that neither loved me nearly so much as each loved his own misbegotten pride.

"When they were dead, I stood over their bodies and prayed to the gods that all men bound up in their own pride should come here and be held enthralled. Then I left this place and went forth into the world. I found a man who loved me truly enough to live for me, not die for me. I was blessed with a rich, full life, surrounded by love. After my death, my spirit returned to this place and has been here since, waiting for one who loved enough to ignore the voices"—her gaze went to Caramon—"and for one wise enough to break the spell.

"And now, young mage, you have freed them and you have freed me. I will go to my rest at the side of one who has waited patiently for me throughout the years. But first I would ask one thing of you. How was it that you saw and understood the truth?"

"I could say that, I had a shining example before my eyes," said Raistlin, with a sidelong glance at the knight. Sir Gawain flushed and bowed his head. The mage, smiling slightly, added, "But it would be more truthful to say that it was mostly due to the curiosity of a kender."

"Me!" gasped Earwig, struck by this revelation.

"That's me he's talking about! I did it! I lifted the curse! I told you it had to be a knight, a mage, and a kender!"

The young woman's image began to fade.

"Farewell," said Raistlin. "May your rest be undisturbed."

"Fare you well, young mage. I leave you with a warning. Very nearly you succumbed. Your wits and your will

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saved you. But unless you change, I foresee a time when this doom you have now avoided will drag you down at last."

The blue eyes closed, and were seen no more.

"Don't go!" wailed Earwig, rushing forward and grabbing at the empty air with his hands. "I've got so many questions! Have you been to the Abyss? What's it like being dead? Oh, please . . ."

Caramon came forward cautiously, his eyes on the place where the spirit had been, fearful that she might suddenly burst back to life. His big hand rested on his brother's shoulder.

"Raist," he said worriedly, "what did she mean by that last?"

"How should I know?" Raistlin snapped, pulling himself free of his brother's touch. He began to cough violently. "Go find wood to build a fire! Can't you see I'm freezing to death!"

"Sure, Raist," said Caramon gently. "C'mon and help, Earmite."

"Earwig," said the kender automatically, trudging after the big warrior. "Wait until Cousin Tas hears about this! Not even Uncle Trapspringer—the most famous kender of all time—ever ended a curse!"

Gawain remained standing in silence until Caramon and the kender had left the keep. Then, slowly, sword in hand, he approached the mage.

"I owe you my life," he said grudgingly, awkwardly. "By the Oath and the Measure, I owe you my allegiance."

He held the sword—hilt first—out to the mage. "What would you have me do?"

Raistlin drew a shuddering breath. He glanced at the sword and his thin lips twisted. "What would I have you do? Break your Oath. Burn your Measure. As the maiden said, live for those you love. A time of darkness is coming to the world, Sir Knight, and love could well be the only thing that will save us."

The knight's lips tightened, his face flushed. Raistlin stared at him, unmoving, and the expression on Gawain's face altered from anger to one of thoughtful consideration.

"Oh, and Sir Knight," added Raistlin coolly, "don't forget to give us our share of the reward."

Gawain unbuckled his sword belt and removed it from around his waist. "Take it all," he said, tossing sword and belt at the mage's feet. "I've found something of far greater value." Bowing stiffly, he turned and walked from the keep.

The red moon rose in the sky. Its eerie glow filtered through the crumbling walls of the ancient fortress, lighting the path. The mage remained standing in the empty hall. He could still feel, soft and silky beneath his fingers, the child's hair.

"Yes, Sir Knight, you have," said Raistlin. He stood a moment, thinking of the spirit's words. Then, shrugging, he tightened his grip on the magical staff. "Dulak," he said, and the light went out, leaving him to stand in darkness lit only by the rays of the red moon.

Ω



Reviews



Mines of Titan (Infocom)

Computer-game ratings

X	Not recommended
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***	Fair
****	Good
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Mines of Titan

PC/MS-DOS version \$44.95

It is our humble opinion that one of the better game-development companies around is Westwood Associates. It has managed to not only produce extremely high-quality game conversions to PC/MS-DOS machines but also to create original, action-filled, and well-programmed role-playing games. *Mines of Titan* is just such a game. Westwood created this extremely enjoyable science-fiction role-playing adventure game in association with Infocom.

Not only are the graphics very pleasing (another trait of Westwood influences), but the player interface is easy to learn. All action is menu-driven, and hierarchical menu structures lead gamers easily from one screen of commands to another. All commands are input through the use of the numeric keys on your PC/MS-DOS computer's keyboard. The screen display offers as much information as possible during play, and your characters are handled individually, allowing you to take advantage of each character's strengths and minimize weaknesses.

It is the 22nd century on Saturn's moon, Titan. Your party of characters must find out why no one can contact the city of Proscenium. This is accomplished by investigating each city on Titan as well as the satellite's surface — although the latter cannot be done until you purchase pressurized suits to protect you from the hostile environment.

Titan is controlled by Paramount Mining and is truly a "last frontier." It's advisable to take all propaganda spouted by Paramount with a grain of salt. The mining of a compressed hydrocarbon unique to Titan, called SOL-R-GARD, is the sole purpose of those who dwell on Titan. This material absorbs the intense radiation of solar flares, which it reemits as plain light. SOL-R-GARD is found in veins beneath the satellite's surface, which is fortunate as the mines also protect the miners from the nasty creatures that inhabit the surface of Titan: Crushers, Dust Worms, Sand Lions, Scorads, Thrashers, and Urchins. All want the nutrients and water content of human

THE ROLE OF Computers

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A city's in trouble — but first you have to find it



David Wolf: Secret Agent (Dynamix)

bodies and immediately sense a human presence on Titan's surface.

The adventure starts in a bar in the city of Primus. Primus was the first city constructed on Titan and is considered (by Paramount) to be 100% secure. The game includes detailed maps of all Titan's cities, as well as four mine maps. Follow them carefully when venturing forth and fill in missing details as you traverse the corridors and hallways of each city and mine.

You become Tom Jetland (you can rename this character). Having jettisoned a cargo load in space, you've now lost your ship and are stranded on Titan. You desperately need to earn money. One method is to become a bounty hunter. Another is to find out why the city of Proscenium's comlinks have gone down. Figure out the latter, and a handsome reward is yours. In the meantime, you've got to figure out a way to sustain your life, and that means taking on odd jobs that pop up.

You are initially assigned certain statistics (Might, Agility, Stamina, Wisdom, Education, and Charisma) and possess certain skills. Our first character was skilled in administration, blade combat, cudgel combat, handgun combat, and was streetwise. He was also assigned an age and a number of credits. Fortunately, a .22 pistol and a flak jacket were also part of his initial accouterments.

Each attribute is displayed on the character screen as a percentage on a horizontal bar chart. You can easily determine general percentages by looking at the filled bar in the assigned box. Starting skills are never much more than 10%. As you can guess, this means your character(s) must somehow improve skill ratings during the adventures.

You'll need help. When the game starts, you are in a lounge, and your first undertaking should be to recruit someone who can complement your skills with some unique ones of his own. We suggest that the first person you hire be a Marine skilled in things like automatic weaponry, so you can at least hold your own during encounters with thugs, beggars, razorbacks, and their friends. Make certain your first hireling also possesses enough credits to equip himself with a flak jacket and a weapon.

As you increase your weaponry skills, you can use more powerful weapons. For example, we finally acquired a rifle for our character. He started out firing a target rifle and was quite successful in downing low-class nasties in Primus. After a couple of training sessions, he moved up to a sport rifle and became even more deadly in combat.

When taking on adversaries, your computer screen asks if you wish tactical combat (in which you determine each move of your characters and how they are to use their weapons). You can also allow the computer to automatically run the combat for you. At first, let the computer run the show so you can see what's



M1 Tank Platoon (MicroProse)



Star Fleet II (Interstel)



Ghostbusters II (Activision)

needed.

Develop your characters slowly. Make certain their personal training and their weapons acquisition and training are foremost in your plans. Don't hire too many additional characters right away, as you won't have the cash to supply them with the necessary armor or weapons. You'll also attract greater crowds of adversaries. And keep in mind that your first quest is to recover an item on the surface of Titan; its location is known only to the nomads of the planet. These strange, humanoid individuals do not look favorably on humans, but sometimes they can be persuaded not to interfere with operations. The only way you're going to get to the surface is if you upgrade everyone's armor to a vac suit, the minimum protection that will allow you on the surface. But vac suits cost upward of 800 credits. Multiply that by the maximum possible number of characters in your party (six), and you can see you're going to need lots of money to equip everyone for your first venture outside.

If and when you do see the surface of Titan, rest assured you'll attract a lot of attention from the native beasties. They are quite hardy and require heavy weaponry for quick annihilation. That, along with the low skills nearly everyone possesses, means that only a fool will jump to the surface in hopes of retrieving the 4,000-credit reward for location of the lost item. Not only will he not be able to retrieve the item (mining skill will be needed), but the odds are the surface denizens will have you for dinner.

As you continue to build your characters to a point where you feel confident in their capabilities and credit levels, it would be good to hire additional characters. Any bar, lounge, or restaurant is a good place to seek candidates. You'll find folks from these careers: Army, Marines, Police, Underground, Mining, Medical, Scientists, and Merchants. Each time you spot a likely candidate, you can view his statistics to make certain they fit with others in your party. If you don't believe your current candidate is a fit, you can interview someone else. All candidates offer brief histories of their pasts, and all characters carry credits that can ultimately be of assistance to your party. Unfortunately, you cannot simply hire a character for his credits; you'll try to transfer the credits and be told that the person doesn't know you well enough yet! By the time he does know you well enough (usually after a few fights), you'll be reluctant to simply take that person's money and dump him at a bar somewhere.

Another great program asset is a computer network system that enables you to log on and read your mail, view classifieds, or (when your hacking skills have improved) view information meant for other folk. Fantastic clues are hidden in the computer network, so improve your pro-

gramming skill as soon as possible or hire someone with a good computer skill.

Two tips: First, sooner or later you're going to enter the university and find out that it has been attacked and a specimen bottle has been stolen. You'll note pink footprints on the ground. The university is located in the northern sector of Primus. During your wanderings around Primus, eventually you'll find yourself in the southwest sector of the city. If you're near a mine-shaft entrance, you'll note once again pink footprints leading north. Follow those footprints, and you're going to come across the culprit, for which a reward is offered. May we suggest that you not attempt to apprehend the culprit(s) until your characters are quite healthy and possess powerful weapons. Otherwise, your surprise arrest will lead to your immediate death! Those responsible for the theft are far above thug level. Second, should you hire someone with gambling skills—gamble, gamble, gamble! Kirk managed to win \$6,000 on his second attempt at slots! That was more than enough to not only immediately train his novice group of adventurers in their primary skills but to also equip them with more powerful weapons!

Mines of Titan is a great Infocom game, an example of how a company's tried and true text adventures have expanded to include well-conceived graphic and animation elements. With a smooth user interface, this adventure will require many hours of a gamer's time to complete. *Mines of Titan* is one of those few games that offers a high performance per dollar-value ratio. With onscreen mapping, the ability to save the game at any time you wish in any of five save-game slots, superb character creation, and multiple quests, this is a sure success story for Infocom. We hope that the company will decide to increase the number of formats for this game to include all of the major computer systems. Now we've got to return to Titan—after 46 hours of play, we've yet to complete our third quest!

Dynamix, Inc.

P.O. Box 11806
Eugene OR 97440-9988
(503) 687-8690

David Wolf: Secret Agent

Amazing graphics and animation cannot save this newest release from Dynamix from receiving a mediocre rating. The gamer becomes David Wolf, a secret agent who has to stop a criminal organization called Viper from using a stealth fighter to deliver a nuclear bomb to Washington, D.C. Players watch digitized graphics of actors unfold the James Bond-type story. Excellent animation and 3-D graphics enhance this cinematic game. The only problem is that the majority of the game is watching actors speak and go about their business. Players cannot select or influence the actors' dialogue, nor can they

select actions for the hero to try and complete. There are only six areas within the game where the player actually gets to use the keyboard or joystick.

Instructions in the game explain what each key command accomplishes. The graphics and animation are, again, fabulous. Unfortunately, the game's challenges can be overcome by selecting the easiest level of play. That way, a player can move past the dangers and see the finale.

The action scenes find the player flying a hang glider while shooting down enemy gliders, or racing on a highway while dueling with helicopters and cars with missiles, machine guns, and oil slicks. Another scene has the player trying to land on an enemy parachutist; in the next scene, the player has to land on top of a moving truck. The last action sequence finds the player flying a stealth fighter while shooting down jets with missiles and avoiding enemy attacks. The sequences provide for some fun, but then the movie continues and the user becomes inactive once again.

A VCR interface can be called up anytime by the player to set options such as the difficulty of the action sequences, the text speed at which the actors speak, and the detail of images on the screen. The interface also allows the players to skip right to the action by selecting an arcade scene from the interface, but doing this means that the player cannot see the actual film ending.

The minimal number of action scenes are quite a drawback. A mediocre score is possible only because of the advanced digitized graphics used in this "movie." We set the game's difficulty level at medium and were able to complete the entire game in just a couple of hours. Dynamix has tried something new by using actual actors digitized into a game. They should, however, have put more thought into the actual game concept rather than trying to make a movie. We have learned that future interactive releases do involve the player in far more action sequences.

MicroProse

180 Lakefront Drive
Hunt Valley MD 21030
(301) 771-1151

M1 Tank Platoon

PC/MS-DOS version \$69.95

This is, without doubt, the finest tank combat simulator ever created. MicroProse is to be highly commended for its research and programming efforts in bringing the most realistic tank simulator to any computer. Not only do you control four M1 tanks but all of the support units as well, such as mortar platoons, jet support, helicopter scouts, and infantry units. Nothing has been left out; MicroProse even includes a keyboard template to assist you in finding the correct commands for your tanks as a platoon or as individual units.

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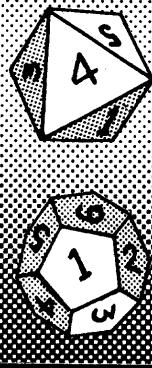
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There are two comprehensive tutorials that can teach you the basics of tank warfare in 1 to 1½ hours. You'll learn how to fire the different weapons systems on each tank, what the tank crew can accomplish, and how to set your tanks for best effect. On the gunnery range, you encounter a variety of static enemy units. You'll soon learn how powerful and maneuverable your tanks are, but don't become too confident. With both keyboard and joystick commands, you'll have to learn quickly how to move from various command screens to control all of the action.

When you graduate from the static and preliminary tutorial, you'll also find out that the enemy is as maneuverable and powerful as you are. You must think of deployment issues for your support personnel as well as your tanks. The key to success is to read the extremely interesting Technology and Tactics section of the 200-page operation manual. You'll learn about modern weaponry, tank design, and all-important tank tactics (e.g., if you fire HEAT rounds just over the crest of a hill where you're certain the enemy has positioned units, you can ensure knockout blows—if you're correct in your assumptions). Hiding behind wrecks is also a tactic worth employing. Just don't forget you're not the Lone Ranger—you've got an entire team to think about and plan operations for, from defense to offense. You'll learn how to attack an enemy's flank or concentrate an attack on its weakest link. Through the Map Board, where the entire battlefield can be seen and maneuvers are coordinated, you'll learn how to line up your forces to present the most efficient attacking force. You'll also learn how to defend your positions.

A complete glossary of tank specifications is included with *M1 Tank Platoon*. This is an extremely exciting and highly educational tank simulation for anyone who enjoys strategic games. We won our first battle by remembering the rules of engagement and by following the experiences learned in the simulation's tutorials. We ended up with a 99% efficiency rating and were able to promote four individuals and award two decorations to deserving personnel within our platoon. When you decorate an individual, his efficiency rating increases, making him an even more valuable member of the platoon.

With full 256-color support for VGA and MCGA graphics, and 16-color support for EGA and Tandy 16-color, *M1 Tank Platoon* also supports both Hercules and CGA graphics. We were impressed with the EGA 3-D graphics and can only imagine how fantastic this offering must be when running in VGA mode. With the variety of battle options available in the 16,000-acre battlefield, you'll never run out of scenarios. *M1 Tank Platoon* is a must for PC/MS-DOS gamers who enjoy either combat simulations or challenging environments where winning is based upon intelligent strategies.

Interstel Corporation

P.O. Box 57825
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(713) 486-4163

Star Fleet II: Krellan Commander

PC/MS-DOS version \$59.95

This science-fiction adventure has everything that makes for good space excitement—piloting, 10 types of starships, strategy, planetary invasions, ship-to-ship and fleet combat, a wide variety of missions, all manner of planetary targets, and seven difficulty levels and ranks. *Star Fleet II* is the sequel to *Star Fleet I* with quite a twist. This time, instead of becoming an Alliance pilot, you are a Krellan antagonist with the task of defeating the Alliance. Play is somewhat slow, however (especially when moving through the program's menu hierarchy), probably because this program is crunching too much data.

Another problem surfaced after 16 hours of play. After we had initiated a city-by-city bombardment of Star System 22A (named "WQJFU"), we returned to the main bridge to access our communications to demand the planet's surrender—and the program crashed! All of our data and hard work in meeting the orders from HQ went through the proverbial computing black hole. There was no way to recover from the crash as *Star Fleet II* could not find a data file it needed to either report or ingest the results of the planetary bombardment. We tried every key press known to the user's manual, to mankind, and to our PC. Nothing worked, so we shut down the computer. So, when the program tells you to alter your CONFIG.SYS file to read buffers = 10 and files = 10, do it! Save yourself the misery we placed ourselves in. Once we had changed the CONFIG.SYS file to the correct file and buffer size, *Star Fleet II* played perfectly.

Some of the menu selections also seem somewhat unnatural in their manners of access. The hierarchies just don't quite seem to fit, and the move from a planetary view back to a system or navigation view is extraordinarily slow. However, the amount of data being bandied about by the CPU and the onscreen graphics is enormous, so some speed is going to be lost unless you are running a new 80386 machine.

The amount of detail available to you is awe-inspiring. There is just not enough time in this short review to mention all of the capabilities you have as a Krellan pilot. Just be prepared for an enormous amount of navigation and action as you attempt to complete your missions within the ordered amount of time. So, get your surge suppressors on, boot up your IBM or clone, and get those Krellan craft out of their bays. It's time to go and conquer worlds and systems—and have fun while doing it!

News and new products

Activision (415-329-0800) has released several new products. The first new offering is called *Tongue of the FatMan*. Mondu-the-Fat is the undefeated champion and host of the Fight Palace, where the most ruthless lifeforms in the galaxy are pitted against each other to match their individual skills and tortuous weapons for great sums of money. You select one of the alien life forms to control, then it's off to Dr. Cadaver's Body Shop to purchase a variety of biotechnical weapons. Gambling bets are made with the WageMaker, a space-age bookie who sets the odds and has the inside scoop on each opponent. If players survive the outrageous characters in the fight, then they must take on the ultimate foe, Mondu-the-Fat. The game has been released for PC/MS-DOS computers for \$39.95.

Ghostbusters II has also been released for PC/MS-DOS computers by Activision. Composed of four disks, this title captures the most popular scenes from the movie that grossed more than \$100 million last summer. You take control of each of the Ghostbusters as they take on ghoul-dueling jobs to earn money to get them back in business. The price is \$44.95.

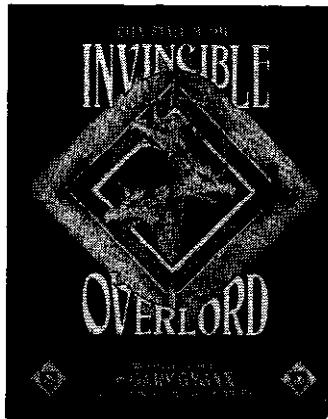
Atari Corporation (408-745-2000) has released three new coin-op hits for the Atari 7800 system. First comes *Commando*, in which you are a crack-shot commando with the fate of the world in your hands. Battling impossible odds, you must make your way to a fortress, negating heavy fire and rebel forces. The price is \$29.95. The second release for the 7800 is *Double Dragon*, from Activision. The Black Warriors have kidnapped Marian, your girlfriend. Your twin brother joins you as you take the enemy head-on. For one or two players, this game is priced at \$29.99. The third 7800 release, *Rampage*, is also from Activision. You become one of several monsters (George the Ape, Ralph the Wolf, or Lizzie the Lizard) and try to destroy cities, crunch concrete, trash trollies, or snack on soldiers. For one or two players, this game is \$29.99.

Broderbund Software (415-492-3178) has released *If It Moves, Shoot It!* an arcade/action game with dazzling graphics. For the PC/MS-DOS and Commodore Amiga computers, the price is \$29.95. This futuristic game pits the player against waves of bomb-spitting alien spaceships attacking in a bewildering array of patterns. The player must career wildly through the skies while attempting to blast the alien ships into oblivion. At various times during the game, the player can exchange weapons to gain extra firepower or a strategic advantage over the incoming aliens.

Electronic Arts (415-571-7171) has released *Sands of Fire*, a World War II tank simulation for the Apple Macintosh that recreates small-unit tank warfare in the North African desert. You can fight battles as either a British or American commander in any of six different theaters,

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City-State of the Invincible Overlord



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with each battle drawn from actual confrontations fought during the North African campaign. There are as many as 48 actual battle scenarios. The price is \$49.95.

Also from Electronic Arts is Strategic Studies Group's *Decisive Battles of the American Civil War, Volume Three: Wilderness to Nashville*. Released initially for PC/MS-DOS computers, this offering presents six battles from the final period of the Civil War. The battles of Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, Atlanta, Franklin, and Nashville are recreated in authentic detail and flavor. You face all of the problems that confronted commanders of those times. The price is \$39.95.

Mastertronic (714-833-8710) is now shipping *Obliterator* for PC/MS-DOS machines. The game, originally designed by Psygnosis, is an action-adventure game wherein the player takes on the role of Drak, last of the Obliterators. Drak is a genetically enhanced fighting machine, bio-engineered for otherwise impossible missions. You are called upon to single-handedly save the Federation from a gigantic alien spacecraft that has already destroyed the entire Federation fleet. The price is \$39.99.

Mastertronic is also shipping three new budget titles. They include: *Demon's Tomb* (\$14.99), a text/graphic adventure game with a powerful word parser; *Vegas Casino 2* (\$9.99), a gambling duo containing Craps and American Roulette; and *Time to Die* (\$14.99), a text/graphic mystery adventure game. These budget games are released for PC/MS-DOS and C64/128 computers.

MicroIllusions (818-360-3715) has introduced *Dr. Plummet's House of Flux*, a gravity game wherein the object is to progress through the levels by rescuing your comrades stranded in a surrealistic world of twisted physics and psychedelic graphics. There are 28 very different levels. The game is for Commodore Amiga gamers. Also from MicroIllusions for the Commodore Amiga is *The Jetsons: George Jetson and the Legend of Robotopia*. This is an interactive adventure that holds true to the look and feel of the original cartoon series. Digitized sound effects are included, and the story revolves around George Jetson's comical attempts to save his job. A third Microillusion offering is *Jonny Quest and the Splinter of Heaven*, the first episode of a three game mini-series. Though the trilogy will comprise an exciting, involved, mystery/adventure, each package is designed as a separate game. The first adventure takes Jonny Quest and the entire Quest team to the jungles of Guatemala. There they must investigate the mysterious disappearance of several Mayan artifacts, and discover there is more to this than simple thievery.

Origin (603-644-3360) has released *Knights of Legend* for Apple II gamers. This is a fantasy role-playing game with a comprehensive combat system. Players are surrounded by a meticulously crafted

world of strategy, action, and emotion where one can aim every blow, feel every wound, and where fatigue can be as lethal as a sword blow. You are on a journey through a medieval world of intriguing quests. There are over 30 towns and hamlets to explore while meeting hundreds of personalities. You can create as many as six companions to join your party, and you can customize their weapons and armor. You'll undertake 24 different quests and face a variety of terrifying foes. The price is \$49.95.

Sierra (209-683-4468) has combined role-playing and adventure to produce *Hero's Quest: So You Want To Be A Hero*. Set amid the thin air of Alpine peaks and lush meadows, the game begins in the mythical village of Spielburg, where after finishing a correspondence course in "How to be a Hero" you try to win the title of Hero by vanquishing a band of brigands. Combat is in the first-person view, and you can become either a thief, a fighter, or a magician. The game supports all graphics cards as well as the Ad Lib, IBM, IMF, CMS, Casio MT540/CT-460, Casio CSM-1, and Yamaha FB-01 synthesizers.

Strategic Simulations (408-737-6800) has released *Dragons of Flame*, the second AD&D® action game set in the TSR® DRAGONLANCE® game world. Lead the eight Companions of the Lance on an action-filled quest through the wilderness of the Elven Mosaic where they gain valuable allies: the mysterious elves of Qualinesti. The Companions must also ally with NPCs such as nomads and refugee townsfolk, then sneak through the caves of Sla-Mori and into the fortress of Pax Tharkas. Inside the fortress, the Companions must recover the sword Wyrmsslayer and free the slaves held there by the evil dragons and draconians. For PC/MS-DOS computers, the price is \$39.95. Versions for the C64/128, Commodore Amiga, and Atari ST are expected.

Clue corner

Might and Magic II (New World Comp.)

[This writer missed his sorcerers with level-nine spells when he transferred his Might and Magic I characters to Might and Magic II. Here's how he solved this problem.]

1. Your party must include at least one sorcerer with spell 3-4, and a robber; fill the remaining roster positions with rolled-up sorcerers. Be sure that two of your members have Mountaineering skills, which they can learn in Middlegate.

2. To complete this quest, you must free the good wizard Yekop (Pokey) and the evil wizard Wbmug (Gumby), then meet the Jurors of Mt. Farview for your reward. While in castles, take no chances. Run from all encounters, except for the Iron Wizards at the end of the doors. When you go through doors, go to the next wall of doors and select the next door in the pattern. If your best sorcerer goes down

or gets low on hit points, go back to Middlegate and start over. You will still have to pay to learn the better spells in each city at the Mages guild. Remember, if you rest you must fly home because you will lose your "walk on water" spell.

3. Before leaving Middlegate, enter the temple and pay to be blessed. Exit Middlegate, go north one, turn east across Ferry, and follow the road to the first south (right) turn. Go south five, east five, south one, and eat bark (this raises your spell points to 200 and your level to 9). Retrace your steps to Middlegate and take the portals to Atlantium. Check in at the inn. Exit town and walk west six to the Isle of the Ancients and enter the good castle (mountain) from the north.

4. At the good castle, enter through the first door and follow the hallway south and west to the door marked "Sorcerers Only," then go in. Select the doors in this order: 2, 2, 4, 6, 6, 12. Go right one, through that door. Follow the hallways through two more doors, then select doors A, D, F, and I; go left one through the door and fight the Iron Wizards. Follow the wall right, go around the corner to the door that reads "Deaths Door Way," and enter. Follow the wall left and answer "64." Follow the wall right and answer "32." Return to the middle change and receive a message. Retrace your steps out or run at your first encounter to get back to the stairs. Exit the castle, follow the narrow strip of island through the Neutral Zone to the evil castle, and go in.

5. At the evil castle, as in the good castle, follow the hallway north and east to the door and enter. Select doors 1, 3, 1, 3, 9, 11. Go right and through the door. Follow the hallway to door A, C, G, I, then left through the door to the Iron Wizard encounter. Follow the wall right to the door marked "Despair" and go in. Go left to the question and answer "23," right to another question and answer "46." Return to the middle chamber and receive the message. Retrace your steps out or run from the first encounter. Exit the castle and cast Fly 3,2 to Middlegate, if necessary, or fly to meet the Jurors at D,2.

6. When you arrive in D,2 at the Jurors of Mt. Farview, you are at 4,4. Go east three and south four, and receive the messages. Check to insure that you receive your 5,000,000 experience points and that the plus sign appears after your name.

Bruce Menard
Sandpoint ID

Phantasie I (SSI)

As you know, there are nine rings that must be found. Here are their locations: two in the Temple of the Dosnebian Clerics; one in Phantasie's Armoyr, three in J. R. Trolkin's Castle, and three in Bleeb's Dungeon. In order to win this adventure, you've got to slay the Dark Lord and obtain the Divine Spell.

No name given

Star Command (Electronic Arts)

Concerning your ship: Start off with an escort scout with hypervelocity rockets. Then SAVE your money and eventually buy a salamander class corvette. Equip the Salamander with a point defence turret, surface effect stasis shields, inertialless drives, four high-speed emission trackers with 12 reloads, two 500 KT nuclear missiles with six reloads, and 650 points of armor. This uses up all of the weight the ship can possess, but it works quite well.

Alan Teske
Princeton NJ

Ultima IV (Origin)

To find the Shepard, enter Magincia and go south before the bridge. To obtain powerful magic wands and magic bows, go south of Lock Lake or east of Trinsic to Buccaneer's Den. The Shrine of Humility is roughly south of Moonglow but is guarded by hordes of Daemons—lots of gold, but lots of blood, too! To get the balloon, X-it the Depths. At one of the Guild Shops, ask for "D" for a sextant; you'll need it. For easy Nightshade, go to the Shrine of Sacrifice.

Neil Reicher
Arlington Heights IL

Lastly, we made a cut-and-paste error in "The Beastie Knows Best," in DRAGON® issue #151. We should have awarded the Best Sports Simulation for the Macintosh to *Mean 18*, published and distributed by Accolade. We had mistakenly indicated that the award was given to *Jack Nicklaus's Greatest 18 Holes of Championship Golf*. As Accolade does not produce a Macintosh version—at least, not yet—we goofed!

Please don't forget to send in your hints and tips. Mail them to us at 179 Pebble Place, San Ramon CA 94583. Remember, the game you save may be your own! Until next month, game on!



Dragons of Flame (SSI)

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Commando (Atari)



Hero's Quest (Sierra)

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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, succinct, and under 150 words long.

The information given in the listing **must** include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address(es) and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed-announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. **No** call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

WARNING: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

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PUERTO RICO AT LAST, February 8-10

The first convention in the Caribbean will be held at the University of Puerto Rico Student Center. Events include AD&D® tournaments and single-round events, with STAR FRONTIERS®, CAR WARS®, MARVEL SUPER HEROES™, GAMMA WORLD®, TOP SECRET/S.I.™, STAR TREK*, D&D®, GURPS Roman Gladiators*, DC HEROES*, and miniatures games. Other events include an art contest, a miniatures exhibit, an auction, and a dice-rolling competition. All games will be played in Spanish! Registration: \$5. Write to: P.O. Box 22276, UPR Station, Rio Piedras PR 00931.

CONTINUITY 1990, February 9-11

This convention will be held at the Parliament House at 20th St., and 4th Avenue South, Birmingham, Ala. (formerly the Holiday Inn-Medical Center). The guests of honor will be Robert R. McCammon and Jennifer Roberson. Other guests include Buck and Juanita Coulson and Bill Bryer, as well as guest artists Larry Elmore, Doug Chaffee, Ruth Thompson, and Craig Brasfield. Events include an art show, a short fiction contest, miniatures contests, a suite with gaming, a masquerade, a video room, a dance, and Southern hospitality! Registration is \$20. Write to: CONTINUITY '90, c/o P.O. Box 55302, Birmingham AL 35255-0302.

JACKSONVILLE SKIRMISHES '90

February 9-11

SKIRMISHES presents this role-playing and war gaming convention at the Jacksonville Motel on the Riverwalk, 565 South Main Street, in Jacksonville, Fla. Room rates are \$52 for one to four persons. Events will include AD&D® game features, along with TRAVELLER*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, CAR WARS*, and SEEKRIEG* games. Other events will include board gaming, a KILLER* tournament, dealers, a miniatures-painting contest, demonstrations by the SCA, and many other role-playing and historical events. Hotel reservations may be made by calling: (904) 398-8800. Registration is \$18 for the entire weekend. Send your registration fee to receive a program booklet. Write to: SKIRMISHES, P.O. Box 2097, Winter Haven FL 33883; or call: (813) 293-7983.

BIG CON '90, February 10

This charity convention, organized by the Grand Edinburgh Adventuring Society in aid of Barnardos and local Edinburgh charities, will be held at the Mandela Centre, Bristo Square, Edinburgh. Events include RPGs, competition games, an auction, a computer section with a 19-player dungeon, live-action role-playing, and reenactment demonstrations. Registration: Donations accepted at the door. Write to: BIG CON '90, c/o Angus G. Rae, 27/5 Sciennes, Edinburgh EH9 1NH SCOTLAND.

* indicates a Canadian convention.

● indicates a European convention.

DUNDRACON XIV, February 16-18

This convention will be held at the Oakland Airport Hyatt, 455 Hegenberger Road, Oakland CA 94621 (mention our name for special rates). Events include over 120 sponsored games in a variety of formats—fantasy, modern, and science fiction. Plus seminars, board games, miniatures, a huge dealers' room, a flea market, a miniatures contest, SCA demonstrations and armor displays, and a lot of open gaming space. Registration is \$25 until Feb. 1; \$30 at the door for the whole convention, or \$15 for one day. Write to: DUNDRACON, 386 Alcatraz Avenue, Oakland CA 94618.

GENGHIS CON XI; February 16-18

Staged by the Denver Gamers Assoc., this con's activities include board games, role-playing, computer games, miniatures, auctions, and a miniatures-painting competition. Events include AD&D®, VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC*, CIVILIZATION*, KINGMAKER*, ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER*, BATTLETECH®, JOHNNY REB®, Napoleonics, COMBINED ARMS*, EMPIRE*, and PARANOIA* games, with RPGA™ tournaments, and the nationally known PUFFING BILLY* tournament, a railroad game competition. Registration is \$20 for the weekend. Write to: Denver Gamers' Assoc., P.O. Box 11369, Denver CO 80211; or call: (303) 433-3849.

ORCCON '90, February 16-19

This convention, held at the Los Angeles Hilton, will feature family, strategy and adventure board, role-playing, miniatures, and computer games. Don't miss the bargains at the flea markets, auctions, and exhibitor areas, or the seminars, demonstrations, and special guests. Write to: STRATEGICON, P.O. Box 8399, Long Beach CA 90808; or call: (213) 420-3675.

NOT-A-CON, TOO, February 23-25

"Too" is the second of its kind to be held by the Clemson University Adventurers' Guild. There will be a two-round AD&D® 2nd Edition tournament, a two-round CHAMPIONS* tournament, and a STAR WARS* tournament, with open gaming and (we hope) an organized fantasy art show. Costumes are encouraged. For more information, write to: Adventurers' Guild, Box 7979, Clemson University, Clemson SC 29632; or call John Jay Jacobs or Mark Stofega at: (803) 654-2103.

ROUNDCON V, February 23-25

The Round Table Gaming Society will hold this convention at the Tremont Motor Inn in Columbia, S.C. Events include multiple-round AD&D®, CHAMPIONS*, and CIVILIZATION* tournaments, with single-event RPGs of all kinds, miniatures events, a dealers' room, a video room, a miniatures-painting contest, board games, and rooms for open gaming. Registration: \$10 if postmarked before Feb. 15; \$12 at the door. Dealers welcome! Write to: The Round Table Gaming Society, University of South Carolina, P.O. Box 80018, Columbia SC 29225; or call: Trella Cherry at (803) 554-3557.

TOTAL CONFUSION, February 23-25

This convention will be held at the Sheraton Worcester Hotel and Conference Center in Worcester, Mass. Events include AD&D®, GURPS*, BATTLETECH®, DIPLOMACY*, and CAR WARS* games. Multiple and single round RPGA™ AD&D® tournaments will also be run. Guests include R. A. Salvatore, Verne Wetherolt, Jay Tummelson, and Steve Glimpse. Write to: TOTAL CONFUSION, P.O. Box 1463, Worcester MA 01607.

TOURNAMENT IN STONE '90

February 23-25 *

King Daniel O'Neill I presents the third in a series of theme tournaments held at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada. Events include a two-day AD&D® 2nd Edition game with an organizational meeting and kick-off party Friday night. Prizes will be awarded to the winning tournament party. Other events include game demos, including TALISMAN* and DUNGEONQUEST* games. Admission: \$8 at the door; tickets are limited! Write to: UAPGC, Box 46, SUB, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, CANADA T6G 2E1.

CHIMERA CON VI, March 2-4

After a year's absence, CHIMERA CON returns to the University of North Carolina's Carolina Union. Among the many guests are Paul B. Thompson and Tonya R. Carter. Gaming guest of honor is Rob Bell. An expanded gaming area will be open all weekend, along with Japanimation films/videos, an art show, comics, dealers, a computer room, the Outer Limits Cantina, panels and demonstrations, writers' workshops, and a costume contest. Special lodging rates are available. Registration is \$9 for one day, \$12 for two days, or \$15 for the entire weekend. Preregistration is \$12 for the weekend. Write to: CHIMERA CON VI, 625 Hinton James, UNC-CH, Chapel Hill NC 27514; or call: (919) 933-4703.

LEHICON II, March 2-4

The Lehigh Valley Gamers Assoc., will sponsor this convention at the Sheraton in Easton, Pa. Special room rates are available by mentioning the sponsors (children under 17 stay at the Sheraton for free when accompanied by an adult): A wide variety of RPGs, war games, and board games are planned, including AD&D® (including RPGA™), D&D®, CAR WARS*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, TRAVELLER*, BATTLETECH®, CALL OF CTHULHU*, CHAMPIONS*, and HARPOON* games. Many of the events will be tournaments with prizes for top players. Preregistration is \$15 for the weekend, or \$10 per day. Registration at the door is \$20 for the weekend, or \$12 per day. Daniel Horne is our scheduled guest of honor. All who attend will be eligible for door prizes. Write to: LEHICON II, P.O. Box 1864, Bethlehem PA 18016-1864.

WOLFCON III, March 2-4

WOLFCON is back for its third year in Arcadia University's Beveridge Arts Centre. Some of the participants are: the Fantasy Field Trip Society, the Dr. Who Society Prydonian Academy, the Monty Python Appreciation Society, and The Stranger the Better club. There will also be two movie rooms, work-shops, lectures and open gaming, along with movie, short story, costume and art competitions. Preregistration: \$10 Canadian until March 1, \$12 Canadian at the door. Write to: WOLFCON, Wolfville, N.S., CANADA B0P 1X0; or call: (902) 542-7133.

CALCON V, March 9-11

Calgary, Alberta's largest gaming convention will be held at the Sandman Inn. Tournaments include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, GANGSTER HEAD-TO-HEAD*, TUNNELS AND TROLLS*, PARANOIA*, TOON*, DIPLOMACY*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, CAR WARS*, SYSTEM 7*, and SPACE: 1889* games. Special events include an auction, videos, a miniatures contest, artists, computer gaming, and playtesting. Demonstrations and the guest of honor are yet to be announced. Registration for the weekend is \$8

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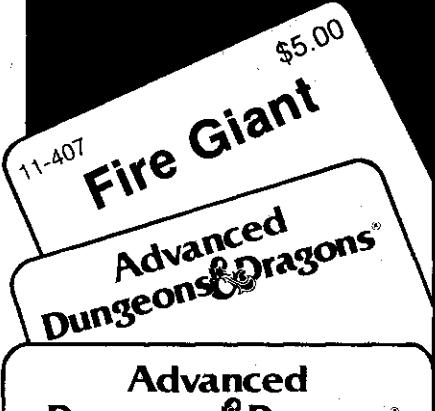
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until Feb. 28, \$12 at the door. Games costs vary from \$2 to \$5. Write to: CALCON V, Box 22206, Gulf Canada Square RPO, 401 Ninth Avenue SW, Calgary, Alberta, CANADA T2P-4J6; or call Paul Spenard at: (403) 276-9926.

OWLCON XI, March 9-11

Rice University's WARP and RSFAFA will hold this convention at Rice University. Tournaments will be held for RUNEQUEST*, PARANOIA*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, TRAVELLER*, DIPLOMACY*, ILLUMINATI*, CIVILIZATION*, BATTLETECH*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, ASL*, WORLD IN FLAMES*, and AD&D® games. Open gaming and other tournaments are also available. Prizes will be awarded for some tournaments. Registration will be held in Sewall Hall. Preregistration fees are \$10 for a three-day pass. Registration at the door will be \$12 for a three-day pass; \$4 for Friday or Sunday, and \$5 for Saturday. Write to: RSFAFA, OWLCON Pre-Registration, P.O. Box 1892, Houston TX 77251.

DARK ICE: MINICON '90, March 9-12

The University of Alaska-Anchorage Gaming Society will be holding its seventh semiannual convention in the Lucy Cuddy Center on the UAA campus. Events include a vast assortment of RPGs and board games, including an AD&D® 2nd Edition tournament, with GAMMA WORLD®, CAR WARS®, BATTLETECH®, WARHAMMER 40,000®, WARHAMMER FANTASY BATTLE®, TALISMAN®, DIPLOMACY®, and RISK® games. Other activities include a science-fiction and fantasy contest, a miniatures painting contest, two other contests, and open gaming. Registration: \$10 for three days; \$12 for three days or \$5 for one day at the door. Write to: DARK ICE: MINICON '90, P.O. Box 92897, Anchorage AK 99509-2897; or call: (907) 248-0414.

SCRYCON '90, March 10

Sponsored by the Seekers of the Crystal Monolith Gaming Club, this eighth annual one-day tournament will be held at Oakwood School, 515 South Road, Poughkeepsie NY. There will be AD&D® and other games, a miniatures contest, and a flea market. Preregistration is \$6, or \$8 at the door. Write to: SCRYCON '90, P.O. Box 896, Pleasant Valley NY 12569. Space is limited, so please preregister!

NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL BATTLETECH® CHAMPIONSHIPS, March 10-11

NOTE: This convention (previously listed as the NORTH AMERICAN BATTLETECH® CHAMPIONSHIPS) is a two-day event devoted solely to BATTLETECH® gaming. It will be held at the Gamemaster, 212 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington MA 02174. Prizes donated by FASA Corporation will be given to the top four Mech-Warriors. Open gaming will be available Friday night, March 9, for early arrivals. Call the Game-master at: (617) 641-1580.

CONTEST VII, March 16-18

Sponsored by the Tactical Simulation Society, CONTEST VII will be held at the Holiday Inn Holidome, 8181 E. Skelly Drive, Tulsa OK. Events will include 3-D D&D® games, a nonsanctioned IFGS Bar Game*, AD&D® 1st and 2nd Edition tournaments, and CHAMPIONS*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, SPACE 1889*, SKY GALLEONS OF MARS*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, RISK®, RUNEQUEST*, Napoleonic, WARHAMMER 40,000*, WARHAMMER FANTASY*, CYBER-PUNK*; and TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE* games, with a dealers' room, a computer room, a miniatures contest, a games auction, and open gaming. Registration is \$8 until March 1, or \$10

at the door. Send a SASE to: TSS/CONTEST VII, P.O. Box 4726, Tulsa OK 74159.

THE FIFTH BRITISH PBM CON

March 17

This showcase for the postal game hobby has moved to a much larger venue, the Old Horticultural Hall in Vincent Square, London SW1. The expanded event list includes trade stands and demonstrations, competition and participation RPGs, war games, computer games, modem and board games, and live-action role-playing. The guest of honor will be Joe Dever. Registration: advance tickets are £2 from the British PBM Assoc., £3 at the door. Write to: British PBM Assoc., 55 Eden Rd., London, UNITED KINGDOM E17 9JX; or call: 01-521-5814.

GUILD FEST '90, March 17-18

This convention will be held at the State University of New York at Binghamton. Events include CYBERPUNK*, SPELLJAMMER™, CAR WARS* or GURPS AUTODUEL*, PARANOIA*, and AD&D® games. A video room is also likely. Game masters are welcome! Registration: \$3 per day or \$5 for both days in advance; \$4 per day or \$7 for both at the door. Write to: Gamers' Guild, Box 2000, c/o SUNY-Binghamton, Binghamton NY 13901.

ONEONTACON '90, March 23-25

The Gamers' Guild of the State University College at Oneonta, N.Y., with funding from the Student Association, will host its first convention at the Hunt Student Union of the Oneonta State campus. Events will include SHADOWRUN*, MEGATRAVELLER*, CHAMPIONS*, AD&D®, STAR TREK®, and other RPGs, war games, and miniatures games. Other activities include a dealers' area, a figure painting contest, and open gaming. Write to: Gamers' Guild, c/o Student Assoc., State University College, Oneonta NY 13820.

UNIVERSICON IV, March 24

Brandeis University's fourth annual charity convention, sponsored by the Brandeis SF and Comic Book Club, has been moved to the newly constructed Hassenfeld Conference Center on the Brandeis campus in Waltham, Mass. Guests include George Takei, Mike Gold, and others. Events include tables for AD&D®, DC HEROES®, PARANOIA®, CAR WARS®, and TOON* games. Other activities include a movie room, a costume contest, a dealers' room and auction, panels, and the charity auction, with new games, original art, and more. This year's proceeds will be donated to Greenpeace. Registration: \$6 at the door. Write to: Jeff Zitomer, MB 1430, P.O. Box 9110, Waltham MA 02254-9110; or call: (617) 736-7192.

ABBYTHON 8, March 24-25

The Community Center in Abbyville, Kans., once again becomes the Guild Hall for the Abbython Adventure Guilds eighth annual 24-hour RPG marathon. New members are welcome, and the best players will be awarded prizes for their efforts. Admission is \$7. Write to: ABBYTHON, Box 96, Abbyville KS 67510.

Egyptian Campaign '90, March 24-25

This convention will be held at the Student Center of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. A wide variety of events are offered, including an RPGA™ AD&D® tournament, miniatures judging, and a games auction. Preregistration is \$8 for both days; one- and two-day passes are \$5 and \$10 at the door. Send a SASE to: S.I.U. Strategic Games Society, Office of

Student Development, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale IL 62901-4425; or call: John P. Hults at (618) 457-8846.

GRYPHCON '90, March 24-25 *

The University of Guelph Games Club will host this convention at the University Center, U of G, Guelph, Ontario, Canada. Events include AD&D® team tournament and individual competition, single round events, and numerous RPGs, board games, and chess. Other activities include an amateur art show, a miniatures competition, movies, and a game auction. Registration: \$7 per day or \$12 for the weekend by March 1; \$10 per day or \$18 for the weekend at the door. (All fees are in Canadian funds.) Write to: GRYPHCON '90, Box 63-0631, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, CANADA N1G 2W1; or call the Games Club at: (519) 824-4120.

KETTERING GAME CONVENTION

March 24-25

This convention will be held at the Rose E. Miller Recreation Center in Kettering, Ohio. Events include extensive board gaming, FRPGs, miniatures, a dealers' area, and a game auction. Admission is 50 cents per day for those 12 and under, \$2 per day for those 13 and over, or \$3 for both days. Write to: Bob Von Gruenigen, 2013 Gay Drive, Kettering OH 45420.

NOVA XV, March 24-25

This science-fiction and gaming convention will be held at the Oakland Center Building of Oakland University, Rochester, Mich. Guests include Lawrence Watt-Evans, Dave Ivy, and Tom Dow. Events include D&D®, CHAMPIONS*, GURPS*, STALKING THE NIGHT FANTASTIC*, BATTLETECH*, SHADOWRUN*, CYBERPUNK*, and CAR WARS* games. Other features include a vast hucksters' room, Japanimation, an art show, a masquerade ball, SCA demonstrations, and numerous panels. Registration at the door for a weekend pass is \$4.50, and a one-day ticket is \$2.50. Write to: NOVA XV, c/o Richard Tucholka, 235 W. Fairmont, Pontiac MI 48055.

COASTCON XIII, March 30-April 1

This convention will be held at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Coliseum and Convention Center in Biloxi, Miss. Guests include Joe W. Lansdale, Sandy Peterson, Robert Petitt, Walter Irwin, George Alec Effinger, Gregory Nicholl, and Sidney Williams. Events include gaming, a dance, an art show, an auction, filksinging, a dealers' room, movies, a costume contest, a live-action RPG, and a charity auction. Registration is \$15 until Feb. 1; or \$20 at the door. Write to: COASTCON XIII, P.O. Box 1423, Biloxi MS 39533.

I-CON IX, March 30-April 1

The East Coast's largest convention of sci-fi, fantasy, and science fact will be held on the campus of the State University of New York at Stony Brook on Long Island. Scheduled guests are Steve Jackson, Alan Dean Foster, Robert Bloch, C. J. Cherryh, David Kyle, Timothy Zahn, Patricia McKillip, Sam Moskowitz and many more. Events include an art show, print shop, dealers' room, two movie tracks, a writers' workshop, gaming, Japanimation, comics, media guests, science and tech speakers, artists, authors and editors, two video rooms, film previews, and slide shows! Registration: \$18 until March 15, or \$20 at the door. One-day passes are available at the door. Send a SASE to: I-CON IX, P.O. Box 550, New York NY 11790.

PENTECON '90, March 30-April 1

The Cornell Strategic Simulations Society is

sponsoring the 2nd annual PENTECON to be held at the Cornell campus in Ithaca, N.Y. Events include TITAN*, DIPLOMACY*, CAR WARS*, and AD&D® games, as well as many other RPGs and war games; a dealers' room, open gaming, and bridge are also offered. Preregistration is \$8. Write to: Cornell Strategic Simulations Society, c/o Peace Studies Program, 180 Urs Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca NY 14853.

CONNCON '90, March 31-April 1

This will be held at the Ramada Inn in Danbury, Conn. The guest of honor is Jean Rabe, RPGA™ Network Coordinator. Events include numerous RPGs, board games, miniatures battles, RPGA™ Masters and Grandmasters level events, a three-round tournament, a "members only" event, a benefit event, and more. Other activities include seminars on gaming, game mastering, a miniatures painting contest, a costume contest, and more. Registration: \$15, which includes three free games. Write to: CONNCON, P.O. Box 444, Sherman CT 06784.

COOKEVILLE COMIC AND GAME CON I

March 31-April 1

This convention will be held at the Tennessee National Guard Armory in Cookeville, Tenn. Events will include AD&D®, CHAMPIONS*, STAR TREK*, DC HEROES*, and other games. Prizes will be awarded. Vendors are welcome! Registration: \$6. Write to: Eric Webb, c/o Big D's Comics and Games, 323 N. Washington Ave., Cookeville TN 38570; or call: (615) 528-6070.

CONTRAPTION, April 6-8

This convention will be held at the Troy Hilton in Troy, Mich. The guest of honor is Barry B. Longyear. Registration is \$15 until Feb. 28, or \$20 after that and at the door. Dealers are welcome! Write to: CONTRAPTION, P.O. Box 2285, Ann Arbor MI 48106.

STELLARCON XV, April 6-8

This sci-fi/fantasy/horror convention will be held at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Featured are guest speakers, panels, discussions, and writers' workshops. Confirmed guests are Hal Clement, Dennis and Kristina Etchison, Sam Grainger, Joe Lansdale, Frederik Pohl, Richard and Janice Preston, and Allen Wold and others. Other activities include a dealers' room, art and costume contests, SCA, Japanimation, schlock theater, fan clubs, model displays, a cabaret, open gaming, and films. Registration \$10 per day, or \$25 for the weekend. Inquiries are now being accepted for the dealers' room, advertising in the convention program, and for additional sponsors. Write to: STELLARCON XV, Science Fiction Fantasy Society, P.O. Box 4, Elliot University Center, UNCG, Greensboro NC 27412.

DEF-CON II, April 7-8

"The Year After" will be held at the Howard Johnson's in Portage, Ind. Activities include AD&D® 1st and 2nd Edition, CHILL*, TWILIGHT! 2000*, MARVEL SUPER HEROES™, CYBERPUNK*, GURPS*, PARANOIA*, BATTLETECH*, CAR WARS*, and BLOODBOWL* games, with open gaming and miniatures and diorama contests. Prizes will be awarded. Registration is \$6 per day, or \$11 for both days; at the door, it will be \$7 for one day and \$13 for both. Write to: Dave Machin 713 Juniper Road, Valparaiso IN 46383; or call: (219) 759-2530.

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A new column from TSR's "other" department

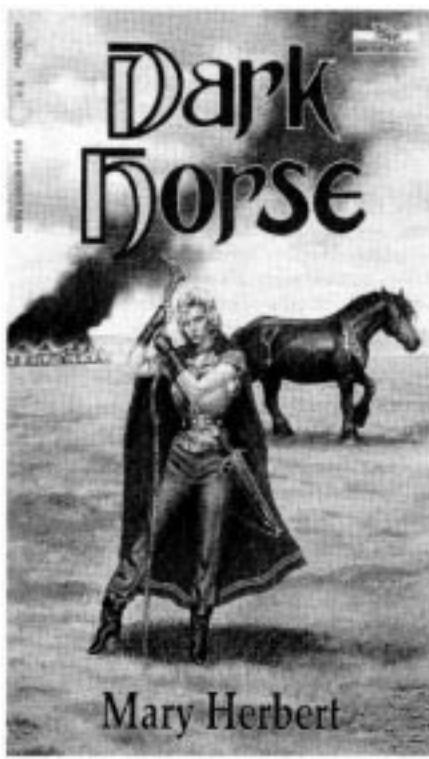
by Will Larson

Greetings, and congratulations at being among the very first readers of "Novel Ideas," a spanking-new bimonthly column in DRAGON® Magazine. Written by the TSR Book Department's editors (who are, after all, the only ones in possession of such nuggets of wisdom), this column will feature the latest news of what's brewing in the TSR book world, highlighting advance information on upcoming titles.

The big news in the Book Department these days, which has manager Mary Kirchoff all atwitter and editors Jim Lowder, Eric Severson, and yours truly walking tall, is the revelation in the February 1989 issue of *Locus* Magazine that TSR now ranks second in sales of science-fiction and fantasy books only to giant Ballantine. Considering the mastodonian proportions of some of the New York publishers included in the comparison, this announcement has our four-person, shirt-sleeve staff smiling broadly indeed.

While a good many of you are doubtless familiar with our best-selling DRAGONLANCE® and FORGOTTEN REALMSTM novels, there is another category of novels that many of you may not have discovered yet: TSR™ Books. With the exception of the GREYHAWK® titles, TSR Books have no tie-in with any of our game products. (This is not to say this may not happen at some future time, however; we've already published several that we think would make dandy games.) Rather, TSR Books represent the very best titles we can find in the areas of adult science fiction, fantasy, mystery, and horror. All are action-packed adventures in the finest

tradition of TSR products you have come to know. This issue's "Novel Ideas" features three highly promising TSR Books due out in 1990.



Dark Horse

February's release, by first-time novelist Mary Herbert, is *Dark Horse*. This richly layered fantasy is set in the unspecified past, in a society peopled by small tribal units with firmly established customs and taboos. Gabria, the young heroine, is orphaned when her entire tribe is massacred by a rival tribe. Disguised as a young man, she wins acceptance into a neighboring tribe and sets out to gain revenge.

Author Herbert cites science fiction, fantasy, and mysteries as her favorite book categories; Dick Francis, Anne McCaffrey, Piers Anthony, J. R. R. Tolkien, and C. S. Lewis are her favorite authors. She got her own start in writing when she won first prize in a high-school writing contest in Troy, Ohio. While in college, she studied at the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Oxford, England, where she says she did "nothing but write the whole time. It was incredible. I'd love to go back!"

Now at home in Conyers, Georgia, Mary tries to find time to write between chasing after two young children, whose background demands punctuated our telephone interview. "I try to write in the



Mary Herbert

afternoon when one is down for a nap and the other is settled in front of 'Sesame Street,' she said. "The trouble is, 'Sesame Street' just doesn't last long enough."

Of *Dark Horse*, she recalls: "I wrote the first draft of that book six years ago. It was the first full-length novel I ever tried. It started out as a short story, and I can't remember now exactly what the short story was going to be about, but it kept growing and growing until finally it became a full-length novel. It has been rewritten three times now, so it is truly a case of perseverance. I tried to make it as believable as possible. It's a combination of a lot of different cultures that I like — the tribes of the high steppes of Russia and the Irish clans. Actually, in a geographical sense, I relied heavily on parts of Wyoming, which are true steppes. A lot of this is based on Wyoming, since I've never been to Russia."



Warsprite

Warsprite, a science-fiction novel featuring two robots, one peaceful and sexy, the other evil and . . . well, evil, makes its appearance in April. The two robots, who are sworn enemies, are immediately separated upon their arrival on Earth. While the evil robot feeds his power, Delta, the peaceful one, must convince humans of both her harmlessness and the danger pre-



sented by her android brother. Eventually, the conflict is resolved in a tense showdown in radiation-filled caves beneath the Los Alamos nuclear testing grounds.

The mastermind behind these goings-on proves to be Jefferson P. Swycaffer, a fifth-generation Californian. This 32-year-old mathematics student at San Diego State University is also a collector of skulls, comic books, toy firearms, and role-playing games. "As a matter of fact," quips Jeff, "DRAGON Magazine was where I made my first professional sale. I've gotten along well with them for eleven years now. And I live in an apartment that hasn't got any view, since I've put up so many bookshelves, they've blocked off all the windows."

Of his other written works, Jeff states, "I've written fifteen books—mostly science fiction or fantasy, but one of them was a philosophical 'mainstream' novel—and published seven. *Warsprite* will be my eighth book to see professional print. My library runs to about 3,400 books, most of which I've read, and many of which I've read twice. I like reading books a second time. I've read Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* eight times, and I catch something new there every time."

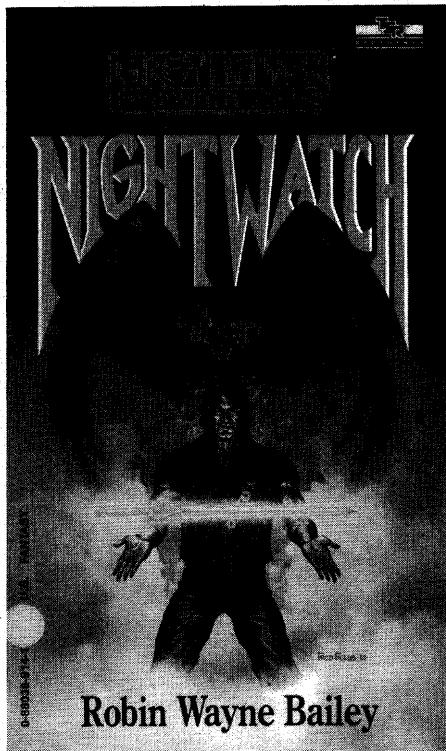
Jeff notes that Poul Anderson and Jack Vance have had a huge influence on his work. "I also like Cordwainer Smith's science fantasy very much. John T. Sladek and Alexei Panshin are both very witty, and Thomas Burnett Swann is a very poetic writer. My favorite book in all the world is *The Farthest Shore*, by Ursula K. LeGuin."

Swycaffer's views on science fiction versus fantasy: "That varies from day to day and from year to year. I try to change my reading habits fairly often, and I like to learn about new genres. I recently discovered the series of race-horse thriller novels by Dick Francis, and I spent a year devouring them: wonderful stuff! I prefer stories with some real philosophical meat, with a puzzle that the reader can at least give some thought to. Ursula LeGuin and Poul Anderson are among the best in this regard. You come away from their books with a lot to think about."

When asked if he had a "message," Jeff replied, "Well, my motto is 'I Approve, Without Reserve,' which is just to say that I think the world's a pretty nifty place. But my message would probably be something soppy and humanist, that the world is full of interesting riddles, and that we all ought to spend more time trying to learn about it."

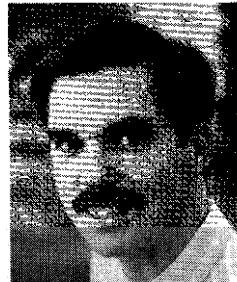
Nightwatch

In June 1990, *Nightwatch*; the eighth title in the GREYHAWK series, will appear on store shelves. Author Robin Bailey recalls the genesis of this exciting novel:



"I was not familiar with the GREYHAWK books when the people at TSR called me up and asked if I wanted to do one. I write for the Thieves' World series, and they had seen the work that I had done there, and they thought that what I was doing was compatible with the vision they had for Greyhawk. Anytime I do a project for another company, I always like to take a look at the project and see what other writers have done and then make sure that what I do stands apart from what's gone before. It's kind of an ego thing, I guess. The other GREYHAWK books sort of ranged around the world that Greyhawk is set in, and we decided that we wanted to do this one completely in the city of Greyhawk itself and really concentrate on the city. Then I needed to know what kinds of characters I could find to put there, and I thought, 'Well, I need an adventurous character because that's what I like to write.'

"At the same time, I had recently read Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, which had a monk who sort of plays the Sherlock Holmes detective roll, and not being above stealing a good idea, I decided I could have some kind of a mystery, moving back to the idea of blending genres, blending fantasy and horror. So I settled on the idea that the captain of the Night Watch would be the person most likely to have to solve any kind of a mystery that came up."



Robin Bailey

"I like to write at night. A lot of people have noticed that everything that happens in my books always seems to happen at night, so it just had to be the captain of the Night Watch. Then there had to be the element of magic involved, and so I knew that the crimes were going to have to involve magic. The book really fell together pretty clearly after that. I knew who my character was going to be, I knew where all the action was going to take place, and I knew that the murders were going to involve magic, all of which are the preludes to the invasion of the city by the traditional enemies of Greyhawk, the Horned Society."

Robin got his start in writing at a tender age. His first short story, a science-fiction piece, was published when he was 17 and in high school. During the next several years, he honed his skills in college creative-writing classes and sometimes tried his professors' patience because of his insistence on pursuing science fiction to the exclusion of other forms of writing.

In 1983 came his first published novel, *Frost*, a heroic fantasy, followed in rapid succession by two sequels, *Skullgate* (1984) and *Bloodsongs* (1985). This last year has seen the publication of *Enchanter* (Avon, 1988) and *Lake of Fire* (Bantam, 1989). Future offerings, besides *Nightwatch*, include an as yet untitled novel from Avon and the Brothers of the Dragon trilogy from New American Library.

A confirmed sports buff (he refers to himself as "kind of a jock"), Robin lists soccer, volleyball, bicycling, and travel as outside interests—when he has the time to pursue them. His traveling is often work related for research, but he enjoys squeezing in time to attend conventions. On such occasions, he says he's thrilled with "meeting the readers and the people who are involved with science fiction and fantasy these days. I've met a lot of really nice people, and I really enjoy that part of it."

When questioned about what he is most proud of, Robin replies, "When people write me notes, and I find that something that I have written or that one of my characters has done has touched them in some way, maybe affected them, too. I get really personally wound up in my characters. I used to refer to it as the Strasberg school of writing, because I sort of try to live out what they do, I guess. It's nice to get letters from readers and find out that something I have written has affected them in a positive way."

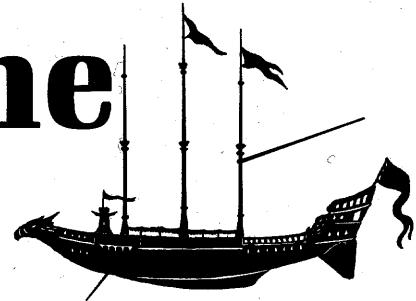
"I'm grateful for being able to do what I do right now. You'll find the real me in the books that I write and in my music."

Be sure to watch this space in two months for a discussion of what's new in FORGOTTEN REALMS books for 1990. Ω



Illustration by Jim Holloway

The Voyage of the Princess Ark



Part 2: Into the mountains, to meet with . . . doom

by Bruce A. Heard

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

from the Journals of
PRINCE HALDEMAR OF HAAKEN
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire
Captain of the Ever-Victorious
Princess Ark
Imperial Explorer, etc., etc.

Vertmir 7, 1965: After Cape Eriadna, the coast runs directly to the south. Another land lies to the east; the pattern in the clouds is quite clear about it. So far, it seems the old Nithian map is quite accurate. After pondering our course, I decided to head due east. Heavy clouds persisting in the south warned of violent weather; I feared the *Princess Ark* would hardly be able to climb above them. The eastern coast is no more than a few hundred miles away.

Vertmir 17, 1965: After reaching the western coastline at dawn, I decided to follow the coast to the north rather than penetrate this unknown land. The terrain is similar to the Jungle Coast, and so far no sign of population has been seen. By evening, we reached the northern end of the Isle of Cestia, which I named Cape Andor. Our choice is either to veer toward the isle to the northeast, or to follow the other side of Cestia, due south. Tonight I will consult the Auguries and make a decision. Which is the most interesting course?

Vertmir 18, 1965: At midnight, Talasar traced the circle around the mizzenmast, then inscribed the eight runes. The crew was silent, perfect in observing the ritual. The drummers, in trances, slowly beat the pace as the ship pivoted on its center, from starboard to port. The moon appeared late and low on the horizon. At the point where the shadow of the mast intersected with a rune, Talasar lifted his hand. The drummers and the ship stopped. It was the rune of Ice and Sun. So be it: Today we rested, but tomorrow we shall sail away from the coast to the northeast. So spoke the Immortal Razud.

Tslamir 8, 1965: Wise is the Immortal

Razud! His path has lead us to a strange island, which we discovered after following the coast for a few days. This island is a large one by our standards (and probably bigger than what the Thyatians call their "Known World"). To the west lies the Bellissarian Sea; to the east is an ocean unknown to us. We named this place the Isle of Oceania.

To the south of Oceania is a smaller island, 200 miles long. This rocky formation is the realm of sea birds and large lizards; its rocks are almost completely covered with their droppings. The birds feed on the fish, the lizards consume the birds' eggs and remains, and fish feast on the sludge washed from the rocks into the sea by the storms. I shall name this place Everfeed.

A few forests grow along the rare beaches of Oceania, but for the most part its mountains form jagged cliffs that drop straight into the sea. The reefs and shoals around Oceania would be deadly to seafaring vessels. The mountains rise over 20,000' in height. We discovered the abandoned ruins of two towns built on ledges above the sea. Their architecture is unknown, and time has washed away any inscriptions or paintings. Judging from several imposing buildings, this must once have been an advanced culture. No clue was found to tell us what may have happened to the "Oceanians."

In the morning, we'll explore a narrow mountain pass that opens over a small bay on the south side of the island. Through the pass flows a river that forms a high cataract plunging straight into the bay.

Tslamir 11, 1965: After days of trial and error, we are closer now to the center of the mountains. Many passes branched off the one from which we started, some forming a maze of jagged rocks and dizzying gorges, others ending in treacherous, impassable walls. Maneuvering out of these dead ends proved considerably more difficult than I had expected. The *Princess Ark* is a large ship and cannot climb above 10,000'. Several passes nearly reached that limit, one of them causing the ship to scrape her keel. The weather is much cooler here than near the coast. At sunset, we found another ruined town, this one quite huge and with a once-mighty

citadel. Still no clue was at hand as to the fate of the Oceanians. We anchored off several promontories to prevent the *Princess Ark* from swaying into the cliffs on the wind. Clouds formed around us, muffling every sound. Now for our sleep.

Tslamir 16, 1965: By the blessings of the Immortals, we yet live! The crew is exhausted from a difficult day. Visibility today was reduced to less than 30' – a mere fraction of the *Princess Ark*'s length. Late during the night of the 15th, Second Class Petty Officer Nadonosor reported that the watch was missing, along with a launch. The deck watch was young Tarias, the midshipman sent along with us by the House of Arrogansa for his education in the science of sky navigation. I immediately ordered Xerdon and his men to follow me to the ruins. If Tarias died, then so might I.

We found the launch on one of the old bastions, where Tarias's footprints led toward the citadel. The place was ghastly at night. Murmurs and whispers could be heard everywhere, but never could we find their source. Tracking the boy took time and skill on the part of Xerdon. At last, when it seemed we would never find the boy in this maze of collapsed houses, we reached an open-air temple. There, chained to an altar in the center, lay Tarias, staring blankly into the sky. Our midshipman was someone's sacrifice!

Yet we could see that he still lived – and we could see his unhuman captors, who sent the chill of fear through me. A ring of translucent beings knelt around the altar!

Instantly, Xerdon ordered his boltmen to blast the ghosts away. Screams of unearthly terror and pain shook the temple as the undead wisps were scattered like paper ash. Forward boltman Ramissur was the first to reach the midshipman, and he had nearly removed the rusty shackles when a swarm of shadowy apparitions swirled around him. The boltman was clearly dying! Fortunately, I could cast a magical light to relieve him. As expected, the shadows reeled back in terror from the illumination. We moved in and thought our battle over.

But as we rushed forward in the moment of our triumph, we discovered a terrifying presence that had remained

unseen. A huge, pitch-black dragon emerged from the dark, looming over the altar. Xerdon's men froze as it advanced, and I am afraid that I did the same.

But the dragon stayed its attack. To our astonishment, it said in perfect Alphatian, "You are trespassing on lands which ought to remain the domain of my kin and of the dead. You who are called Haldemar—you have a choice: take back the boy, or save your warrior. Make your derision now, and you may return to your ship unharmed. I shall keep the soul of he who remains."

I had no certainty that the wyrm would be true to its word, nor that it would not come after us again. Yet I could see a multitude of ghostly shapes and unspeakable abominations coming up the streets of the ruined city. We had run out of time. I made my choice. I had to save Tarias of Arrogansa; his family is a terrible enemy. With deep regrets, I pointed to the boy. As I did, Xerdon turned to me with flames of anger in his eyes. I fear I have lost a friend as well as a superior boltman. As we hurried away with the limp form of Tarias in our arms, the wyrm's thundering laughter echoed in the ruins.

We reached the ship with no further incident. Suspecting more trouble from the monster, I ordered watches with torches to the prow, then cast off. Very slowly, guided by the words of the

watches, the *Princess Ark* veered away from the ruins and moved down into the darkness of the gorge.

That wiley wyrm! It did not lie, for it let us reach our ship in safety—but it promised nothing more! The expected attack came swiftly. Three lesser dragons were seen on the approach, and they swooped upon us three times. Each time, their teeth, claws, and wings ripped a whole sail to shreds. Each time, Xerdon's boltmen braved the danger in defense of our ship, while the bosun exhorted his sailors to man the riggings at all costs. We could not afford to lose our sails here!

It was Talasar who saved the night. He later revealed that he sensed the nature of these dragons, which were clearly not of this world. Our priest of Razud had closed his eyes to better sense the presence of the wyrms. Then he cast his magic, and one of them, somewhere in the darkness, roared in pain and agony. It fell like a rock, and the sound of its bones crashing into the jagged ridges below echoed through the gorge. An insane, monstrous shriek rose from the citadel—and the *Princess Ark* lurched forward as if struck by a storm.

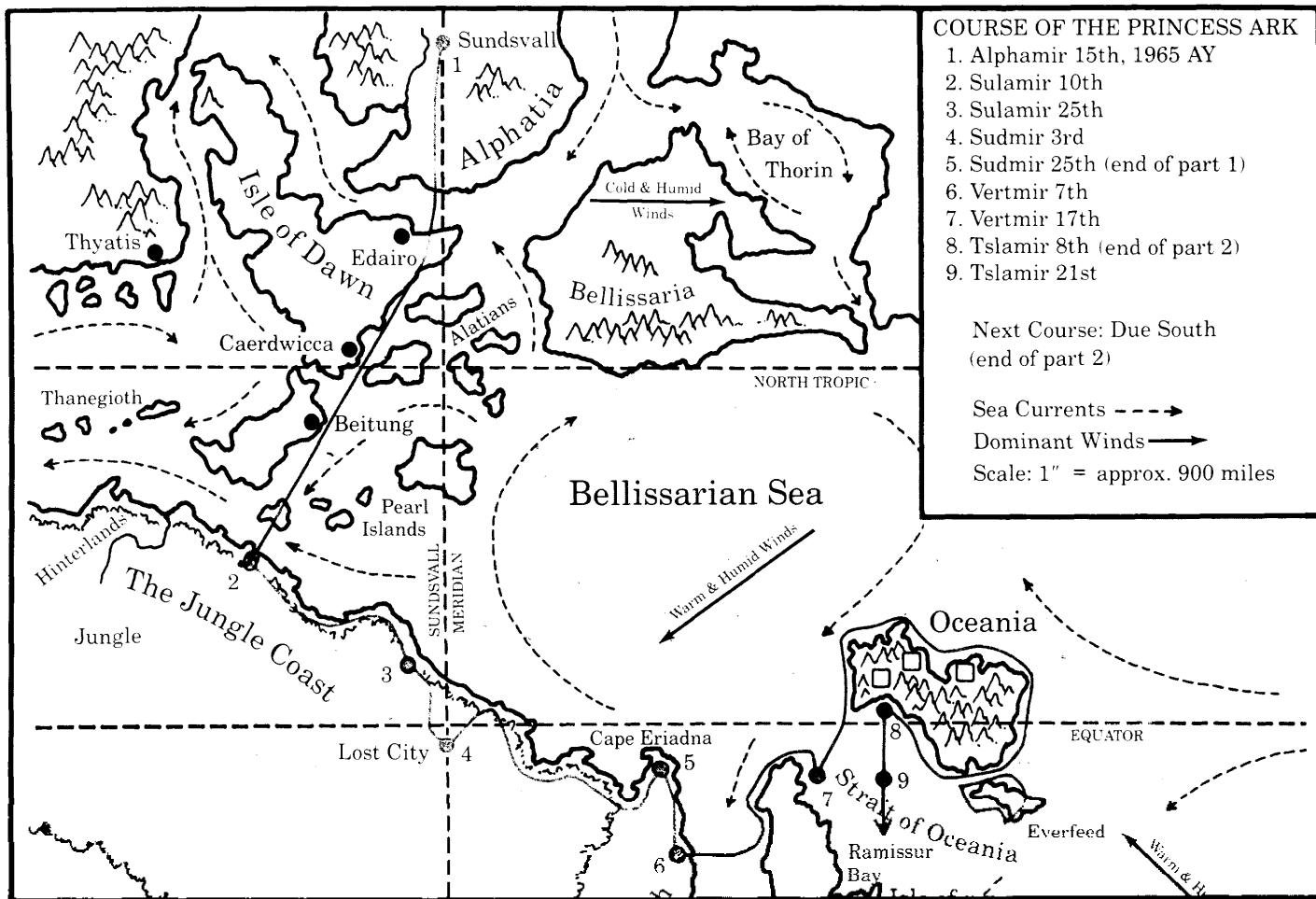
We do not know if the ship moved on her own or if she was lifted and thrust away by some enormous force. In any event, the sudden movement was enough to outdistance the wyrms, though only by

great luck did we avoid smashing into the rocks. We flew all night, and by this morning's dawn we had reached the cataract at the bay. The deck was a scene of utter carnage. The crew had suffered many wounds, though no deaths. However, the mountain passes are marked in our chart room. Someday I shall return, for if there are such powerful dragons, great treasures and magic must lie beyond. Alas, the fate of the Oceanians is now clear.

To be continued. . .

If you have already designed the areas covered by the flight of the *Princess Ark*, simply ignore the information given here (the skyship simply went by, assuming that these areas were already well known to the Alphatians). If you have any comments regarding this column or the D&D game's Known World as designed in the Gazetteers, please send your inquiries to Bruce Heard, D&D (Column, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147). We cannot guarantee that all letters will get answers, but they will certainly have our attention. Your input into the development of the D&D Known World is welcome.

See *Ship Flight* in
boxed area on
next page!



Ship Flight (Reversible)

Spell Level: 7 (Clerics only)

Range: 100-yard radius per level (see text)

Duration: Until dispelled or until destination is reached.

Effect: Guides to a destination or reveals the best course among several.

Alphatian clerics developed this spell primarily for use with their skyships. When the spell is cast, the caster must name a specific destination (which he need not have visited before) or direction (if the caster is merely exploring and wants to see the most interesting and unusual sights).

When cast, this spell ensures that all skyships within its range (including a single skyship or a whole fleet of them, and even including all aerial mounts and flying devices) will reach that destination or follow that course, barring complete disaster. (If a fleet is separated, the individual ships will arrive at the destination nonetheless.) The spell will function regardless of any helmsman's intervention. This spell can conveniently take the course deemed the safest, the shortest, the most scenic, etc., as requested by the caster and as set by the Immortals. (Of course, what an Immortal considers "safe" or "scenic" could prove dangerous anyway.)

Passengers on an enspelled ship who are unwilling to reach its destination must Save vs. Spells to recognize the ship's true course. To break the spell, a passenger must either successfully cast a *dispel magic* spell against the *ship flight* spell on the ship, or destroy that ship completely. The remaining alternative is to simply leave the ship.

This spell requires the drawing of a magical circle with eight runes around

the ship's mizzenmast after nightfall. If the sky is overcast, drummers must be used with the spell to ensure its success. The ship rotates around its central axis while the caster specifies the conditions of the spell, as previously described. The moon, planets, or stars will create a shadow of the mast, which slowly crosses over the runes. When the shadow reaches the proper rune, the latter flashes briefly and the circle disappears. The rune indicates the direction the ship should take. Only a *detect magic* spell reveals the presence of a *ship flight* spell.

The reversed form of this spell, *block ship flight*, must be cast at the highest point of a given location (a tower, a tree, a mountain peak, etc.). It prevents a skyship or equivalent airgoing vessel, such as a flying carpet or a mounted creature, from ever discovering the location guarded by the spell—unless a *ship flight* spell had already been cast on an incoming vessel. For example, a *block ship flight* spell cast on a town's church steeple could be set to prevent any skyship from locating that town. However, that spell would not prevent a skyship from locating the province in which the town lay, nor could it distract a skyship whose *ship flight* spell has been cast two days before and was guiding the ship and crew to that very town. This reversed form of the spell will cause an unguided visitor to fly by and totally fail to recognize either the value or the nature of what lies below (the landscape isn't invisible—it is simply uninteresting!). *Block ship flight* does not affect visitors on foot or on the sea, as long they remain off a skyship or its equivalent. The reversed spell is frequently used to conceal secret outposts, wizards' towers, and the like.Ω

Paladin

Continued from page 17

paladins are as undistracted as possible, might forbid marriage to paladins on active service, but permit it upon retirement. Still others might forbid marriage to paladins entirely. The DM will have to make the decision in each case, based on the situation in the campaign world and the deity followed by a particular paladin

A paladin might also choose his friends based on alignment, as dictated by the church. Some religions, such as that of St. Cuthbert in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® fantasy setting, stress the lawful aspect of lawful-good beliefs. A paladin of such a faith would be friendlier to lawful-neutral beings than chaotic-good beings. Other religions might take the opposite tack, believing that association with good beings is more critical.

No retirement

Despite the dangerous nature of their duties, and their own training that makes them almost suicidally indifferent to peril, some paladins do survive to old age. Their churches are proud to honor them, but their lives of action and adventure make sitting in retirement almost pure torment. Almost any paladin who attains retirement age unmaimed begs for something useful to do.

Some of the luckier paladins amass enough wealth to purchase or build small strongholds, which are devoted to the causes of their churches in all possible ways. When a paladin builds a new stronghold, it will be in an area where it will either be a useful outpost against the enemies of humanity, or be used as a school for paladins and clerics.

With or without a stronghold, many elderly paladins wish to ensure that the upcoming generation of future paladins will be the best one possible. They may join the faculty at a paladins' school, passing on their skills and knowledge to the young. They might also make trips to churches and villages in the area to judge and evaluate youth. On these trips, they are often joined by their retired colleagues whose injuries prevent them taking a more active role in church affairs. As these elderly, famous warriors watch the children at play with a critical eye, the circle is completed—and the next generation of paladins is selected.

[Recent articles on paladins include: "A Plethora of Paladins," in DRAGON® issue #106; "The Code of Chivalry" and "Glory, Danger, and Wounds" in issue #125, "'Good' Does Not Mean 'Boring,'" in issue #148. "It's Not Easy Being Good," in the Best of DRAGON Magazine anthology, volume III, is also about paladins.] Ω



**WATCH
FOR
US
SOON!**

Sage

Continued from page 7

An ice storm or other attack that damages the protected creature does not end the stoneskin spell, as the dweomer lasts until it foils a physical attack (see *Unearthed Arcana* page 57).

How can damage to a simulacrum be repaired? Will cure wounds, raise dead, or resurrection spells work? If a simulacrum is slain, does it return to a pile of snow?

The various *cure* wounds spells will not work on a *simulacrum*; *raise dead* and *resurrection* will not work either, as the *simulacrum* was never alive. Whether or not a slain *simulacrum* crumbles into a pile of snow when killed is up to the DM—we recommend yes. Damage to a *simulacrum* might be repairable if the DM allows it. We suggest a new seventh-level spell for this purpose (or a recasting of the *simulacrum* spell strictly for purposes of repair) or perhaps a magical tome. The costs of repair should be from 300 to 500 gp per hit point in any case.

Can a magic-user use *magic jar* to transfer his own essence into a simulacrum?

Yes, but only after the *simulacrum* has been given a vital force with a *resurrection* spell. The attempt at *magic jar* is then resolved normally.

Can a magic-user complete only the somatic component of a spell, leave the material component behind, then trigger the spell with *magic mouth*?

No. All the components of any spell must be completed together; withholding or interrupting any of them ruins the spell. And, *magic mouth* cannot be used to cast any spell—not even a purely verbal one.

Can two different spell-casters charm the same creature, or will the two spells cancel each other out?

There is no limit to the number of times that a creature can be *charmed*. If multiple *charms* are cast upon the same creature, each caster will be able to influence the subject. The DM will have to decide what the creature will do in the face of conflicting instructions. It's likely that the *charmed* creature, being "best friends" with both casters, will try to reconcile any arguments between them.

Can the recipient of the second-level magic-user spell *invisibility* see himself? Does an object dropped by the recipient become visible? Does an object picked up by the recipient become invisible? The book says that any attack will end the *invisibility*; does this include the

casting of any spell or just attack spells?

The recipient of an *invisibility* spell is invisible even to himself. Any equipment carried by a creature at the time the spell is cast becomes invisible with the creature. If the creature puts an item down, the item becomes visible, but if an invisible creature picks up a visible object, the object stays visible. Nondamaging spells will not make the recipient visible, but any action intended to harm another creature will.

Is there a limit to the altitude attainable with a *levitate spell*?

The only limit is the spell's duration and 20'/round movement rate (or 10'/round if cast on another creature). Smart players will make sure that their PCs leave enough unused duration to get safely back to the ground.

General questions

How many spells does a 1st-level magic-user have in his book? The DMG (page 39) says four, while the PHB (page 10) sets a minimum and maximum according to intelligence. When does the magic-user add spells to his book?

For a beginning character, ignore the minimum number of spells on Intelligence Table II in the *PHB* (page 10). A 1st-level magic-user has a book of four spells, as per the *DMG*, page 39. He does not roll his "chance to know" for these spells.

As the magic-user gains levels, he gains new spells as part of his training. It is best to simply give the magic-user a new spell for his book each time he gains the ability to cast an additional spell. For example, a 1st-level magic-user can cast one first-level spell. When the magic-user reaches 2nd level, he can cast two first-level spells, and he gains an additional first-level spell for his book. His intelligence still determines the maximum number of spells of each level he can have in his book, and his chance of successfully writing any given spell into his book.

The DM should select the new spell, and the magic-user must successfully make his "chance to know" roll in order to gain it. If the roll fails, the DM should assign another spell. To allow magic-user PCs more options when choosing spells, you might give each such PC an extra 2nd, 3rd, 4th, or 5th-level spell when the magic-user first gains the ability to cast it (this will occur at 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level, respectively).

The magic-user can also try to add spells to his book when he finds them on scrolls or in captured spell books. The magic-user rolls his "chance to know" and, if successful, may add the spell to his book. The spell disappears from the scroll or book when the magic-user adds it to his book.

If, during the course of play, the magic-user has tried every spell of a given level

but has fewer spells of that level than the minimum for his intelligence score, he can go back and try to learn one or more spells a second time.

For more information, see "Spelling It Out," in DRAGON issue #147.

Do spells end when their casters are killed?

This is up to the DM. There are two schools of thought here. One holds that a spell is a discrete, independent event involving a fixed amount of magical energy. Once the event begins, it runs like clockwork; only anti-magic in some form (*dispel magic*, *anti-magic shell*, etc.) will keep it from running its full course. The other school holds that the caster must be alive to act as a channel for the energy the spell requires. No matter which school you follow, there will be some exceptions. For example, any spell requiring concentration from the caster will end if the caster dies. Spells that are permanent will remain after the caster dies.

Many AD&D game spells require the caster to touch the recipient. Once the spell is cast, how long does the caster have to deliver it? Is there a limit on how many touch attempts the caster can make?

Some campaigns allow a caster to hold a spell "on hands" indefinitely, provided that the caster does not attempt to cast another spell. The spell "on hands" is discharged when the caster next touches someone or something. Some DMs rule that the spell remains only as long as the caster concentrates on touching a recipient—the spell is lost if the caster abandons the touch attempt for any reason.

Page 40 of the DMG refers to "various chances for spell malfunction." What are these chances, and where can they be found?

There is no spell malfunction table, but the AD&D 1st Edition game is liberally peppered with spell malfunction chances. Saving throws can partially or completely negate a spell, low wisdom scores can affect clerical spell-casting, casting a spell from a scroll is not a sure thing if the caster's knowledge is incomplete, and magic resistance can play havoc with spells. Page 40 refers to these miscellaneous rules.

How often can a character go to sleep and then regain his spells? Does a character who goes to sleep retain any uncast spells?

A spell-caster can go to sleep at any time (after the proper study or prayer) and regain his spells, even if it isn't "bedtime." We suppose that insomnia could strike a character who sleeps too often, but this is up to the DM. Sleeping does not cause a spell-caster to forget his spells. Ω

King and Country

Continued from page 41

targets, opponents, and goals for the PCs. However, there may be complications unknown to the raiders, such as a secretive wizard living in the village or an extra century of soldiers guarding the caravan. Wandering monsters and enemy patrols may also be encountered.

Scouting: Soldiers assigned to gather information outside their kingdom's borders usually search for enemy troops, but they can encounter almost anything. Long range scouting missions are uncommon, though any scouting party is often many hours' ride from friendly troops. As long as one member of the party gets back to make his report, the mission is at least a partial success.

Special mission: This assignment is more like a typical AD&D adventure than the others, and includes such things as long-range scouting jobs, bounty hunts, assassinations, rescues, artifact recoveries, cave and dungeon explorations, and sabotage. All of the PCs' adventuring skills will be tested, though the main goal of the mission will already be known to them. Ω

How to Win Wars

Continued from page 51

they do not address the larger scope of long-lasting conflicts.

3. Rallying is conducted unit by unit, not figure by figure, in the new rules. Mob formation is not a part of the new rules; units can now move at no penalty (except for terrain restrictions) if they are in regular formation, and they get a movement bonus for assuming column formation when moving across clear terrain or along a road.

4. See pages 33-34 of the 2nd Edition BATTLESYSTEM rules for notes on "chain-reaction" routing.

5. "Rough/rocky" terrain is the term in the 2nd Edition BATTLESYSTEM rules (page 35).

6. See chapter 3 of the 2nd Edition BATTLESYSTEM rules for notes on morale, as well as the notes on routing cited in footnote 4.

7. See page 18, "Rally Checks," in the 2nd Edition BATTLESYSTEM rules.

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* These books were written by real-world generals in ancient cultures; their notes might be very applicable to fantasy-game miniatures battles. Ω

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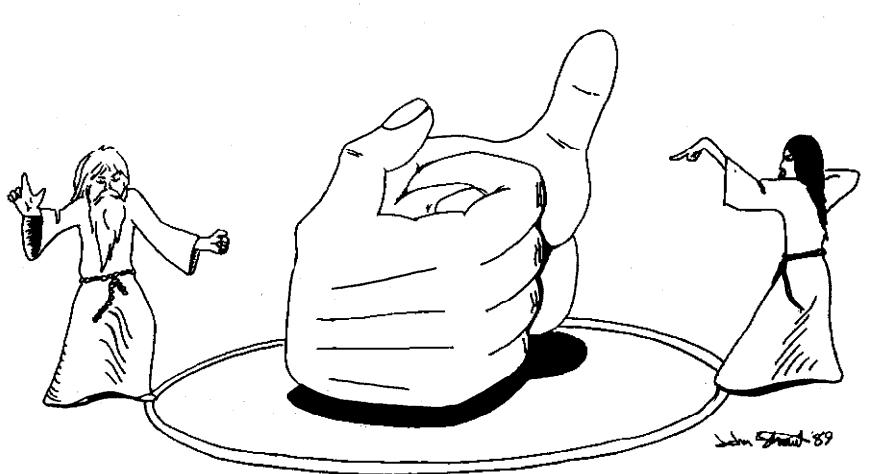


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DRAGONMIRTH

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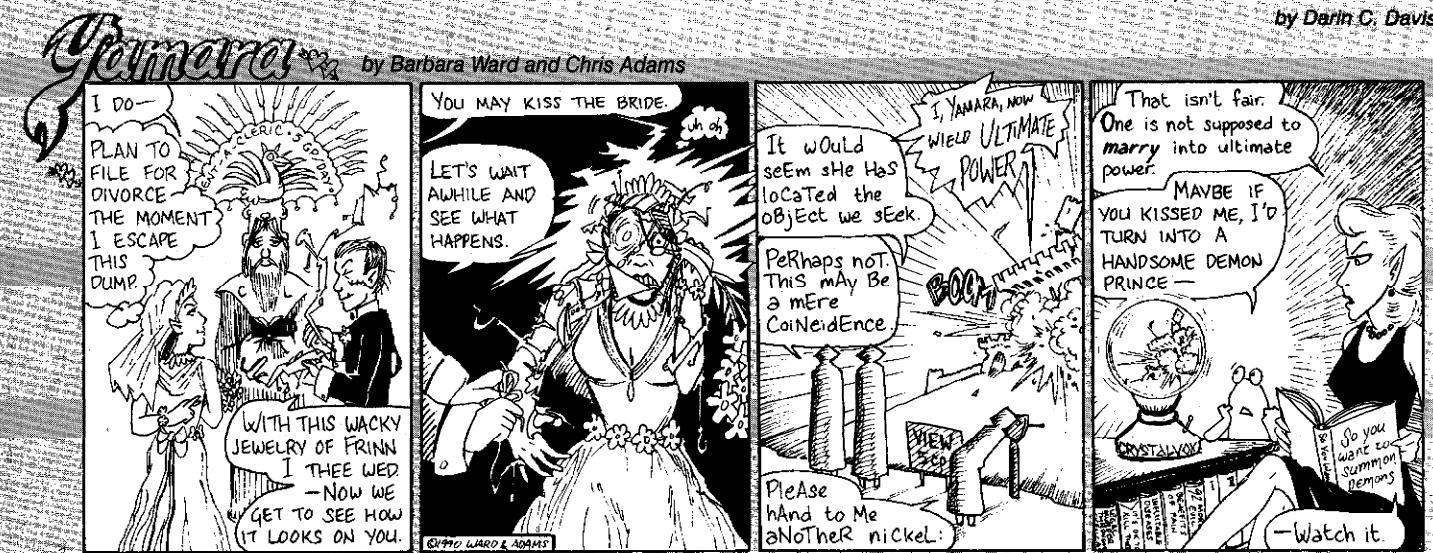
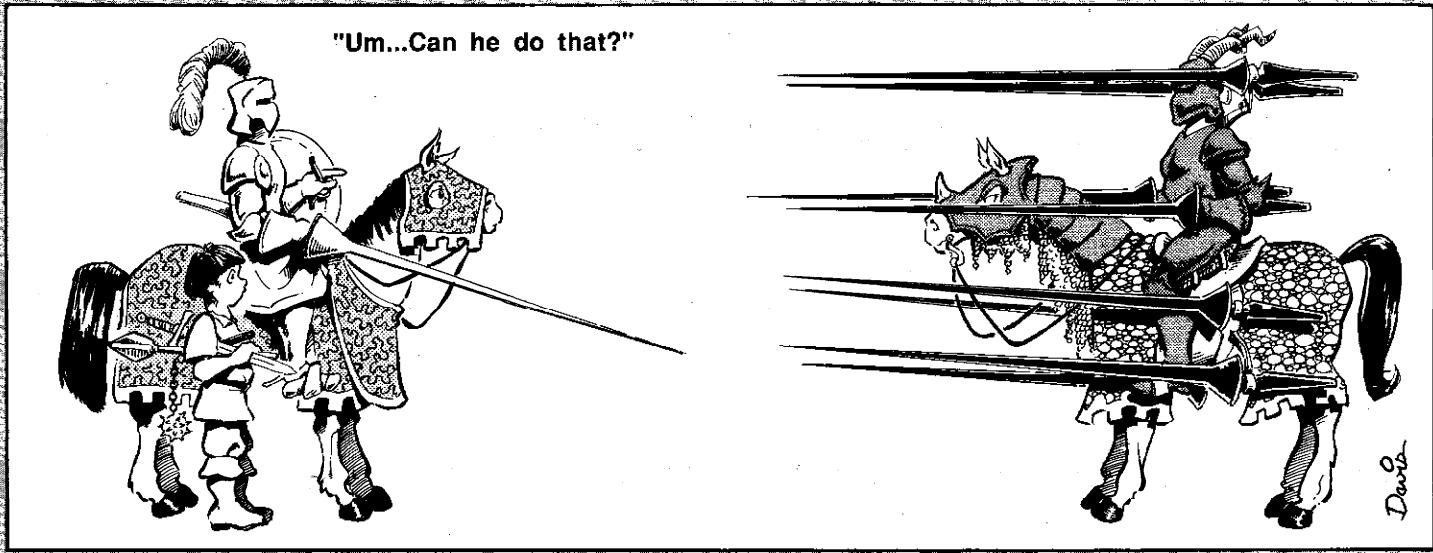
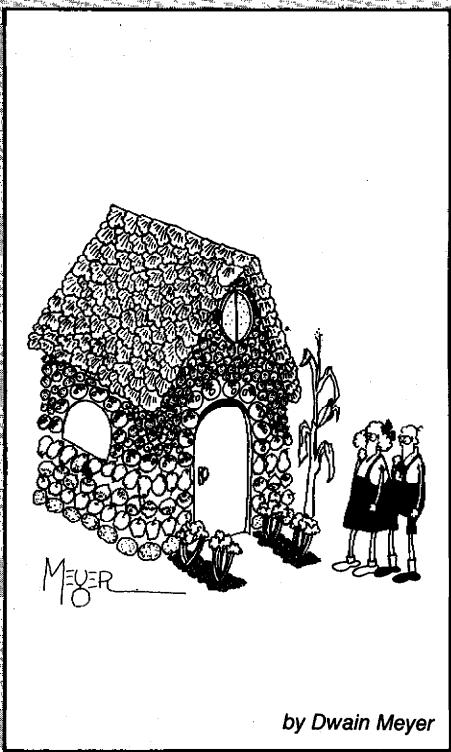
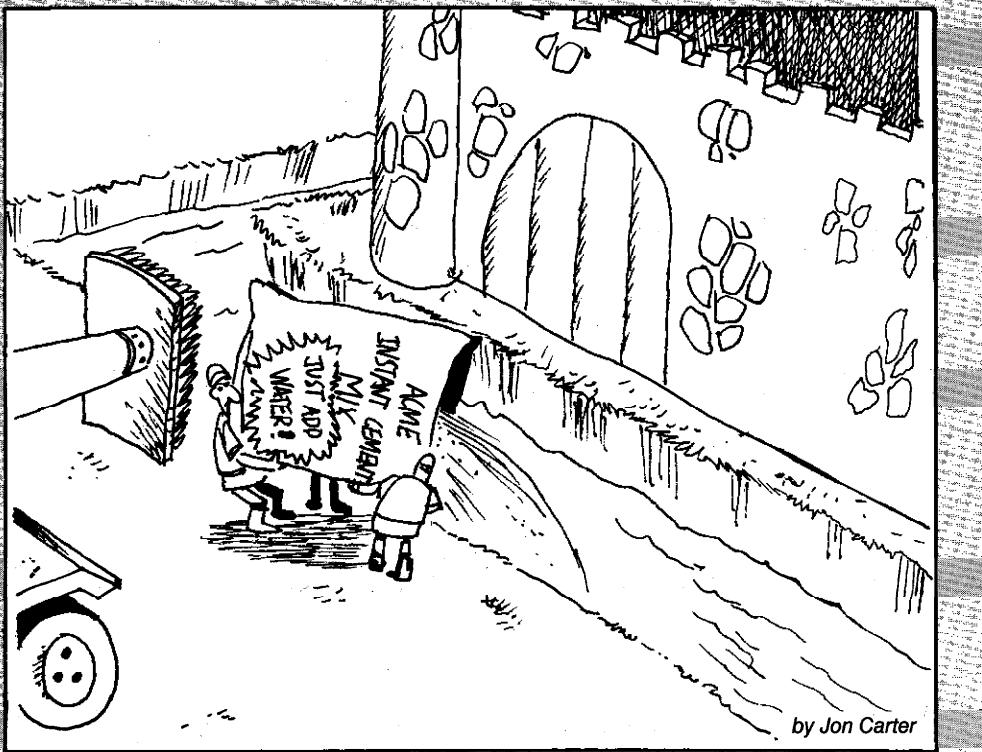


Bigby's National Thumb-Wrestling Championship



Luckily, Merond had purchased some sticks and stones before the skeleton attacked.





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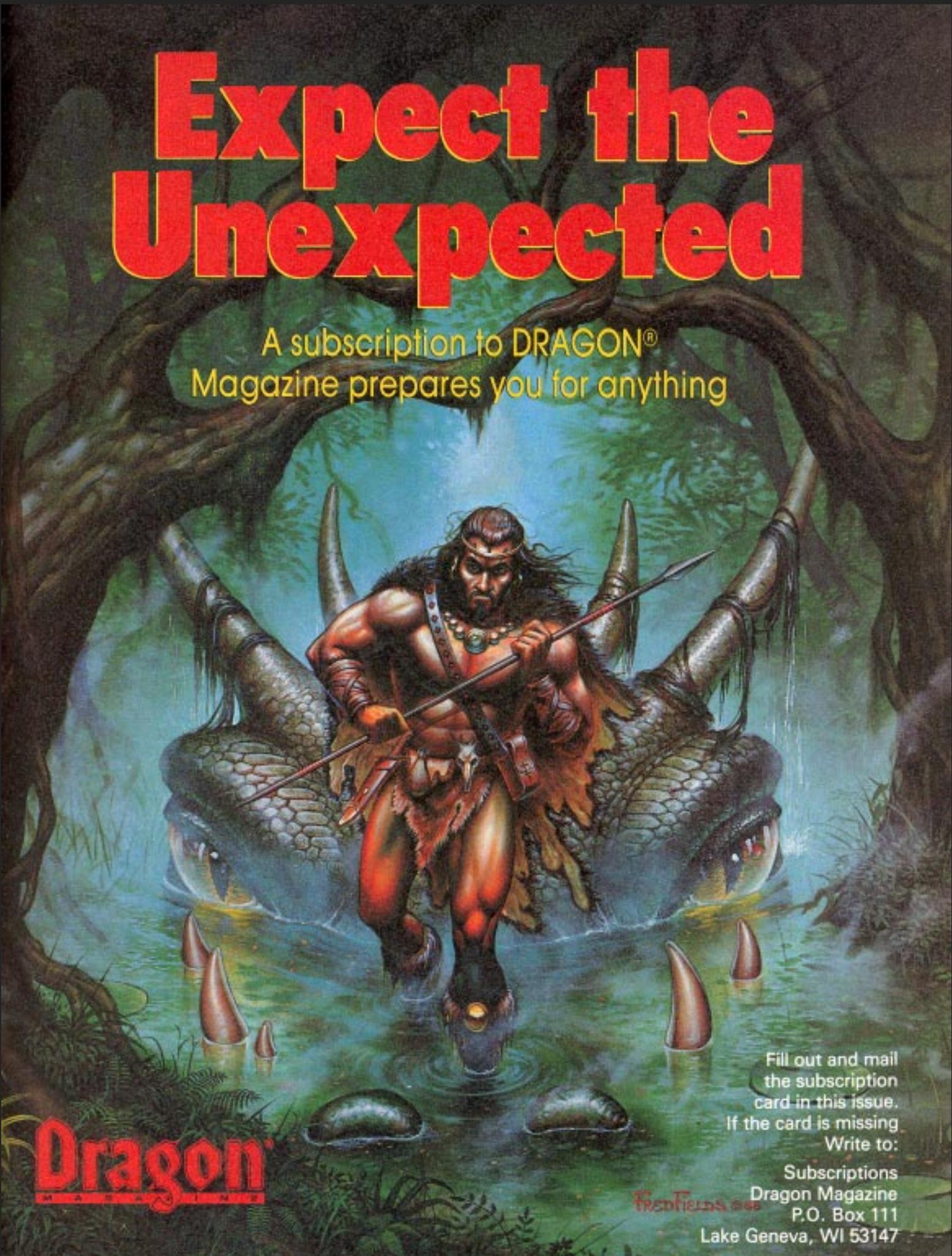
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“Who Was That Masked Android?”

How to keep a super hero's identity a real secret!

by Marcus L. Rowland

Super heroes with secret identities are often extraordinarily careless. Flimsy covers that wouldn't last five minutes in the real world are expected to stand up to the scrutiny of hostile and friendly intelligence agencies, the media, police, friends, relatives, co-workers, employers, and other heroes—no matter what.

We all know that the world isn't like that. The technology of identification is highly developed and uses dozens of forensic and investigative techniques. It's virtually impossible to do anything without leaving evidence: fingerprints, photographs, saliva, skin particles, hair, blood, etc. And these aren't the only ways we affect our surroundings. Modern society runs on records, and anyone who seems to behave abnormally risks attracting the attention of tax agencies, the police, and a variety of other authorities. It's difficult enough for anyone to drop out of sight in our own world, but in a super-powered world, most agencies could call on the help of their own super-agents with a range of unusual talents that could easily track down almost any hero or villain. Add the scrutiny of the press to these factors, and it seems unlikely that a real-world super hero could stay hidden for long.

Having said this, it should be remembered that comic-book heroes are usually able to survive such scrutiny even if their disguises are nothing more than changes in hair styles or the wearing (or removal) of glasses or tiny masks.

It's sometimes difficult to understand why super heroes bother with secret identities, which often seem more trouble than they're worth. But the main reason for their use is to give heroes (and villains) a private life that isn't continually interrupted by the press and assassination attempts. For the Advanced MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game, activities in one's secret identity are important in restoring and maintaining Karma; this becomes almost impossible if the character can't maintain a normal private life.

This article presents a rating system for a new ability score, Secrecy, intended for use as a rough guide to the security of heroes and villains. Check if there is any major change at the end of each adventure; if the final rating falls below Typical, the hero may be due for some problems.

All aspects of the rating system are heavily biased toward heroes; only the most careless will suddenly learn that The Daily Bugle has published their secret identities, or find hit men waiting in their apartments after a hard day of crimefighting. This system has been tailored for compatibility with the Advanced MARVEL SUPER HEROES game, but it can easily be adapted to any other game.

To calculate the Secrecy rating, the hero must be assessed for each of the following factors: Disguise, Precautions, Confidants, Profile (Secret), Profile (Super), Concealment, and Karma. When all factors are assessed, add the points for each factor and divide by seven to get the final Secrecy rating.

Some of the heroes and villains mentioned below do not currently maintain secret identities; Secrecy ratings instead reflect an earlier period of the character's career or a potential rating. A few examples have been left blank, where no character seemed to fit the circumstances described. For the purposes of this article, anything said about the secret identities of heroes also applies to villains.

Disguise

Does the hero wear gloves, a mask, or any other disguise? Does the character change shape or size? These factors can make identification easy or almost impossible. The ratings suggested below are only guidelines and should be modified for unusual cases. Under most circumstance, a disguise should never be better than Monstrous in effect.

Feeble: A total lack of care about secrecy is shown, apart from a clothing change. (Northstar)

Poor: Flimsy precautions are taken, such as wearing a domino mask. (Shadowcat)

Typical: A cowl mask and gloves, possibly with a costume that covers the arms, are worn. (Daredevil)

Good: The costume covers the hero's entire body. (Spider-Man)

Excellent: The hero's costume incorporates padding or armor that alters his body shape, or the hero has powers that cause minor changes in his physical form. (Iron Man, She-Hulk)

Remarkable: The hero's costume or powers cause substantial changes in his

physical form. (Colossus)

Incredible: The hero's costume or powers substantially alter his size and form. (Hulk, Thing)

Amazing: The hero's costume or powers cause radical physical transformations. (Human Torch when "flamed on")

Monstrous: The hero has an unusual or extremely thorough disguise, involving a total physical change, different body, etc. (Thor/Donald Blake)

Acting talents: If the character is skilled as an actor or similar performer, and he uses the skill to enhance his disguise, this may cause a shift of 1-3 columns on his rating, as follows:

Occasional amateur actor/performer:
+1 CS

Professional performer (but not an actor): +2 CS

Professional actor: +3 CS

This assumes that the character automatically uses his skill to change his voice and posture as a super hero.

Precautions

Does the character try to avoid any connection between his secret and super identity, or are the two closely associated by common friends and interests? For example, Peter Parker has an uncanny knack of finding Spider-Man in action; how long will it be before someone puts two and two together? Under most circumstances, this rating should not exceed Incredibile.

Feeble: An obvious public relationship between a hero's secret and super identities exists; people know of the dual identity but lack evidence to prove it. (Kingpin)

Poor: Many obvious links exist between a hero's secret and super identities. (Spider-Man)

Typical: Evidence of a link between the two identities exists, such as a similarity of resources and skills. (Iron Man)

Good: No obvious links exist between the two identities, but some unusual associations could be found by investigation. (Daredevil)

Excellent: No links exist between the two identities, apart from living in same city or area. (Thor/Donald Blake)

Remarkable: The hero's super identity is mainly active in another city or country. (Nightcrawler)

Incredible: The hero's super identity is mainly active on other planets or in other dimensions. (Doctor Strange)

Confidants

Does anyone know the hero's secret identity? Even the most reliable friend might be unable to resist dropping a few hints, or might be tortured or brain-washed to reveal the information. This category also includes any enemies who might know an identity but have not yet broadcast it.

Feeble: The hero's secret identity is known to at least one major enemy or many civilians. (Daredevil)

Poor: The secret identity is known to friends, relatives, or government agencies. (Shadowcat, Black Widow)

Typical: The secret identity is known to several civilians. (Iron Man)

Good: The secret identity is known to one trustworthy civilian or 2-5 heroes. (Scarlet Witch)

Excellent: The secret identity is known to one other hero. (Spider-Man)

Remarkable: The hero is a loner, and his secret identity is never revealed to anyone. (Punisher)

Incredible: Because of amnesia or multiple personality, the hero's secret identity does not know of his super identity.

Amazing: The hero's powers are manifested in a way that leaves no evidence of heroic involvement, or the hero is not aware of his use of his powers. ("Licorice" Calhoun)

Profile (Secret)

Is the secret identity a newsworthy figure or a total nonentity? Newsworthy figures are more likely to be noticed if

they make revealing slips, and they are often under the surveillance of police, intelligence agencies, criminals, news reporters, etc.

Feeble: The hero's secret identity is a global figure (the head of a major state, a member of royalty, a religious leader, a pop star, etc.). Everyone in the world knows of this person. (Victor Von Doom)

Poor: The secret identity is a national figure (American senator, head of a minor state, business tycoon, TV star, nobleman) known to many people in one country, but he is not globally famous. (Mariko Yashida, T'Challa)

Typical: The secret identity is regionally famous (a well-known journalist on a city paper, a prominent local industrialist, mayor, etc.) or is known to a few hundred thousand people by name (e.g., an author), but is not a major national or international figure. (Anthony Stark, Peter Parker)

Good: About 500-5000 people know of the secret identity by face, name, or reputation. He may be a lawyer, doctor, teacher, director, etc. (Dr. Donald Blake)

Excellent: About 50-500 people know of the secret identity, who may be a clerk, security guard, retired person, etc.

Remarkable: About 5-50 people know the name of the secret identity, who may be a technician who only meets a few clients, an unpublished author, a night watchman, etc. (Clint Barton)

Incredible: The secret identity is known to 1-5 others, such as a spouse or relatives. (Rachel Summers)

Amazing: No one knows the character's secret identity. The character could be unmasked on nationwide TV and wouldn't be recognized by anyone. (Red Skull, Scourge)

Profile (Super)

Is the super-character well known or a total nonentity? Prominent heroes are more likely to be monitored by intelligence agencies, the police, and supervillains. This rating is often related to the hero's Popularity, but there should not be a direct relationship. A hero dropping from 50 to 0 in Popularity because of a particularly stupid mistake would become more famous, not less!

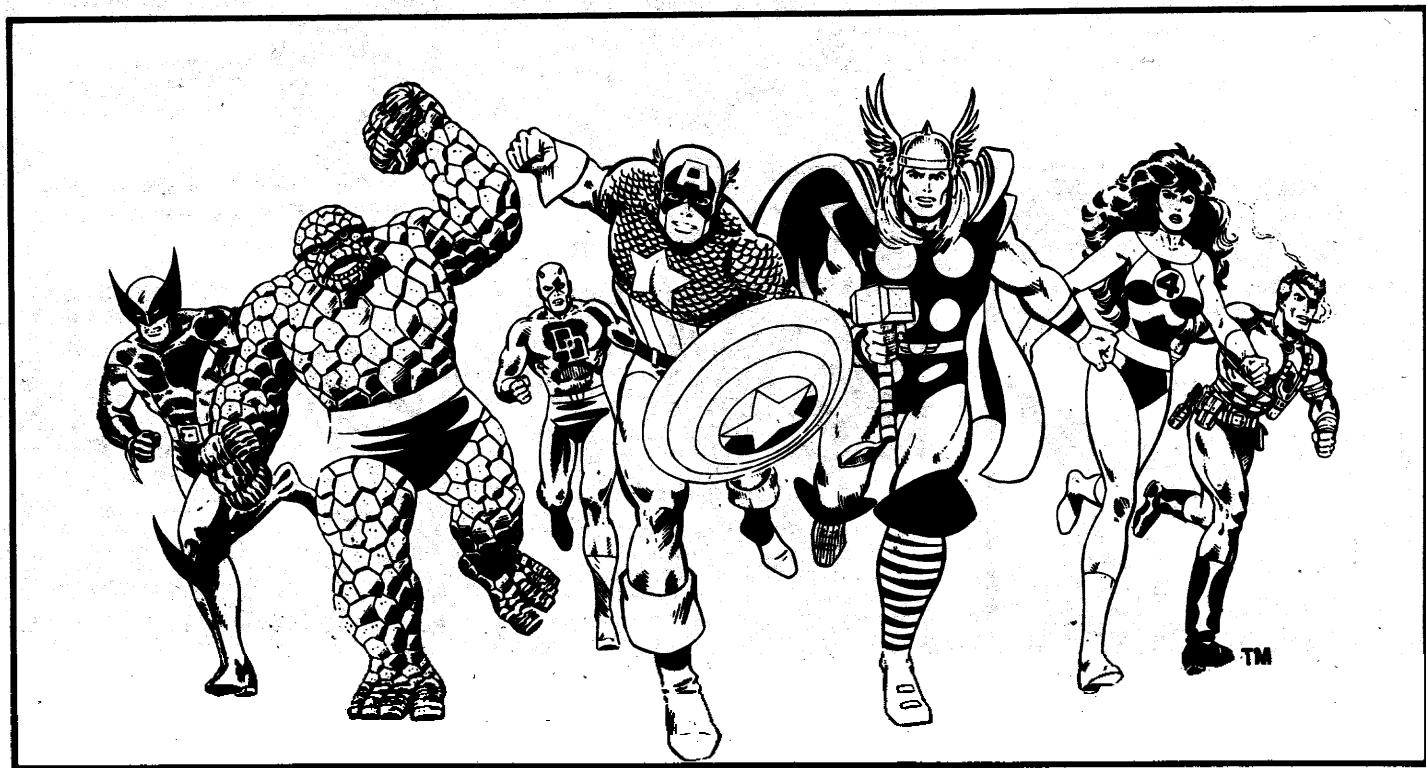
Feeble: Everyone in the world knows of this character. If a hero, the character is followed by a fan club and besieged by groupies. Both heroes and villains are always under observation by the police and intelligence agencies. In the case of villains, any appearance is always the signal for major countermeasures by military and intelligence forces. (Captain America, Galactus, Doctor Doom).

Poor: Famous on an international or national level, this character is usually monitored by intelligence agencies and foreign spies; (Red Skull, Thor)

Typical: The character is famous, probably one of the top half-dozen heroes or villains in the country, and he is frequently pursued by the press, spies, etc. (Mr. Fantastic)

Good: The character is moderately well-known, with a reputation that probably extends to several cities. He receives routine attention from police and intelligence agencies. (Black Knight)

Excellent: Though not the premier hero or villain of a city, the character tries hard. He is occasionally pursued by the press, but his activities are rarely the main concern of any national or international agency. (Mockingbird, Spider-Man)



Remarkable: One of the crowd, the character is probably only remembered as "one of those super guys." The average man in the street is unlikely to be able to list his powers. (Shaman)

Incredible: A second-string hero or villain, this character is someone well divorced from routine public attention. Typically, he seen in action only against other super-characters without much effect on the public. (Kraven)

Amazing: One or two people probably know of this character; most don't and wouldn't care if they did. The character is ignored by the press and other agencies. (Mandrake)

Monstrous: Who? No one has ever heard of this character, who may be brand new or have little effect on the general public. ("Licorice" Calhoun)

have evidence to back up their ideas.

Poor: There has been one recent major slip, or a series of minor slips that could lead a reasonably competent investigator to suspect the truth.

Typical: There have been a few minor slips, but nothing would immediately lead an investigator to the truth.

Good: One or two very minor slips have been made.

Excellent: No slips have been made (applies to most brand-new characters).

Karma

If a hero has Karma, he tends to be lucky. The fates are on his side, the Force is with him, and coincidences and accidents are resolved in his favor. If he lacks Karma, he won't be saved by lucky accidents, and someone with the CIA or KGB might decide to start looking at those old files on him and analyzing them for clues. If enemies know his secret identity, Karma may bring about a situation that prevents them revealing the information.

Effects of Secrecy

Feeble: The police, intelligence agencies, and other organizations probably know of both of the hero's identities. This information can be learned by any competent researcher. Gossip columnists may be waiting for a slack day to reveal the information if it hasn't already been released, and the truth is definitely known to

S.H.I.E.L.D., the CIA, the FBI, the KGB, and other major intelligence forces.

Poor: The connection between the identities could be learned if a major intelligence agency made a real effort, or if super-powers and detective techniques were used. The connection is definitely known to S.H.I.E.L.D. and is probably known to other major agencies.

Typical: The identity connection is well-concealed unless a real slip is made. The truth is probably known to S.H.I.E.L.D. but not to other agencies.

Good: The identity connection is unlikely to be known to anyone, apart from any confidants that may exist.

Excellent or better: The separation of secret and super identities is totally secure, barring disaster.

Judges are advised to avoid publicizing secret identities unnecessarily, even if the PCs are extremely careless. Any factor that might reduce the effect of mistakes should be taken into account. Remember that it is rare for a hero's alias to be revealed in the comics. Unless it is essential to the plot, most super hero RPGs should reflect this philosophy. Ω

Concealment

How many of this hero's last few missions have involved no slips or mistakes threatening his identity (e.g., ripped masks, fingerprints embedded in girders, etc.)? Since the status of characters changes constantly in the comics, there are no examples in this section.

Feeble: There have been major mistakes in several recent missions, and friends (or enemies) suspect the hero's secret—and

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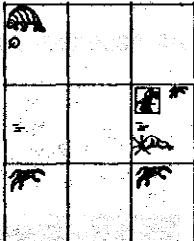
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