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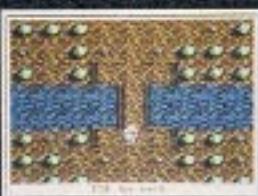
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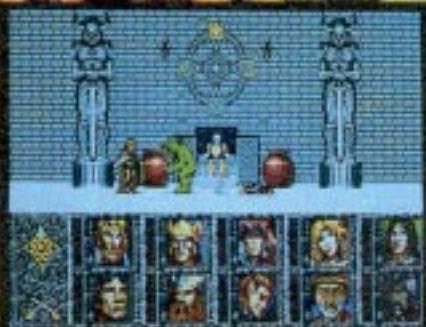
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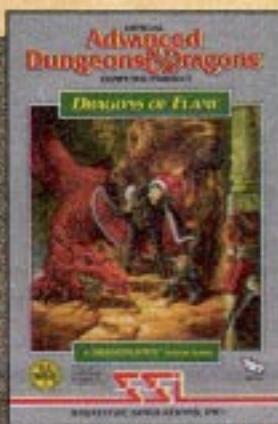
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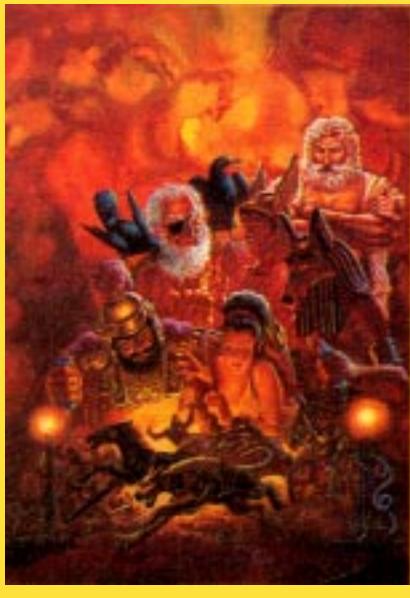
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COVER

If you ever wondered what the gods do on their lunch hours, now you know — thanks to our cover artist, Kelly Freas (yes, *that* Kelly Freas, winner of 10 Hugo awards). "Chariot races are a dime a dozen," said Mr. Freas, but he hit upon the idea of having the gods use panthers in the races they run for their own amusement (the panthers were Anubis's idea, he explained). Mercury seems to have lost his bet with Odin on the race's outcome, while Jupiter sighs in the background.

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.

Do it on disk

Dear Dragon:

This is yet another letter about computerizing DRAGON Magazine. Instead of a bulletin board, I would suggest writing the magazine in disk form, like the UPTIME disk-of-the-month subscription. You could still have ads, fine graphics, and art work incorporated on the disk.

With the price of disks so low these days, it wouldn't cost too much once the operation was set up. Shipping would be more costly, but I for one would be willing to pay a few extra dollars per year for DRAGON Magazine on disk.

Garth Shaneyfelt
Boston MA

Your idea certainly has a new twist to it, though I doubt that you will see it done. It's too easy for us to simply ship the magazine on paper. (And you don't have to plug in your computer to read each issue.)

How it's played

Dear Dragon:

There is something that I'd really like to read in your magazine: a four- or five-page transcript excerpted from a good AD&D game (possibly from a recent convention). This is something I've never seen in the years I've been reading the magazine. As far as I know, nothing like that has ever been printed for the general public, yet I can't think of anything that could potentially be more informative and enlightening about the nuances of the game.

Most of the articles in DRAGON Magazine tend to be overviews of one sort or another, which is great, but I'd also like something focusing a little more on the nitty-gritty of the playing. For instance, maybe the transcript could include the DM's comments regarding the way he ran a particularly complex combat, how and why he was assigning experience points along the way, etc.

Paul Kub
Berkeley CA

This, too, is an interesting idea, but I doubt that we will do it, either. Recording and transcribing a particularly good RPG event is difficult, but you have to decide if the game you transcribed was "good" and by what standards. What is entertaining to the players who took part in an adventure is often not so entertaining when retold later, as most of us are probably aware. As an editor, I don't object to the use of

brief transcripts of game play, either real or invented, when used as examples to highlight points in an article. Several of the AD&D® rule books use such transcripts for this purpose. I doubt that we will run a transcript just on its own merit, however.

And from Germany—

Dear Dragon:

I'm going to ask a few questions:

1. Who is the German publisher of the AD&D game?
2. What is the publishing date for the German AD&D 2nd Edition game?
3. What is the address for German friends to use when mailing proposals and questions (as you surely notice it's a little bit complicated to write all ideas in a foreign language)?

Martin Fide
Hamburg, West Germany

I called Malcolm Mitchell at TSR Ltd. in the U.K. and learned the following:

1. TSR Ltd. is now the publisher of the German translation of the AD&D game.
2. The German edition of the AD&D 2nd Edition game will be on sale in January 1990.
3. All article proposals and convention announcements for DRAGON Magazine will have to be in English; no one on our staff in Wisconsin is proficient in German. You may, however, write to TSR Ltd., and your letters will be answered in German by the staff there. A special branch of the RPGA™ Network will be established for German gamers in 1990.

Judges Guild: gone

Dear Dragon:

By chance, would any of you know what has become of Judges Guild? I assume it is out of business; a letter I sent to the company's old address was returned. If that is the case, who is marketing its old line of modules, play aides, etc.? Who owns the rights to these materials?

Larry Ries
Columbia MO

Judges Guild, a game company that produced licensed modules and accessories for a number of role-playing games, went out of business years ago. Mayfair Games, Inc., acquired the rights to some of these materials and released them in a new format: the CITY-STATE OF THE INVINCIBLE OVERLORD™ boxed set (reviewed in DRAGON issue #136). Zocchi Distributors acquired some of the other materials (see Tegel Manor on page 58).

Several people have been encouraging me to produce more hard-hitting, controversial editorials, but I'm pretty much editorialized out this month, so we'll make do with

This & that

Changelings II: Since my January 1989 editorial, we've had a few other personnel changes (a few—ha!). We wish everyone who has been with our staff over the last year the very best at the holiday season and for all of 1990. We especially wish our best to Anne Brown, who is now with TSR's games division and will need all of the luck she can get (yuk, yuk, snort).

We have with us now Dale Donovan as assistant editor, and Paul Hanchette as art director. Our new publisher is Jim Ward, who needs no introduction since he's already given himself one in issue #152 ("The Game Wizards").

Classical Art: We were informed by Larry Elmore that his painting for the cover of DRAGON® issue #150 (the witch and the scarecrow, remember?) won Best of Show at DRAGON CON in Atlanta this October. Congratulations!

U.K. Price Change! TSR Ltd has sent the following message to us, so pay attention:

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Apologies: We had a keylining error on page 49 of DRAGON® issue #150, in the article "Nobody Lasts Forever." Move the top 11 lines of that column to the bottom of that column, and the text makes sense. Sorry about that.

No misteak: Again, I remind all readers that this magazine is printed in December 1989, so all copyright notices herein are correct, as far as we can tell.

Continued on page 75

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 for clerics and druids in the AD&D® 1st Edition game are explored in this column. 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.

Clerical spells

How does one determine which spells a cleric can cast?

A cleric always has access to the full list of clerical spells (limited, of course, by that character's level). Clerics have no spell books, and their spell lists are not limited as are magic-users'.

What does a *bless* spell do, and how is it different from the *chant* and *prayer* spells? Also, are the *chant* spell's damage bonuses and penalties counted per attack or per die of damage? Do the areas of effect of these spells move with their casters?

Here's what each spell does: A *bless* gives friendly creatures +1 on morale "to hit" rolls; if reversed (as a *curse*), it gives enemies a -1 on those rolls. A *chant* spell gives friendly creatures +1 on "to hit" damage, and saving-throw rolls; at the same time, enemies receive a -1 on the same rolls. A *prayer* spell gives friendly creatures +1 on "to hit" and saving-throw rolls, and enemies -1 on the same rolls. *Prayer* does not affect damage, and neither *prayer* nor *chant* affect morale. The areas of effect for each spell are fixed and do not move with their casters. *Bless* affects creatures in its area of effect at the time of casting only; *chant* and *prayer* affect all creatures in the area of effect, even those who enter after the spells are completed. Damage modifiers from *chant* are per attack, not per die of damage.

The duration of a *bless* spell is given as "6 melee rounds." Does this mean that the *bless* spell lasts for

six total rounds of melee, possibly with days between?

No. The duration of a *bless* spell is six consecutive rounds from when it is cast.

What happens when a *bless* spell is cast upon a cursed item?

Nothing. A *bless* spell will not "fix" a cursed item, but a *remove curse* spell might (see individual item descriptions).

What is the effect of casting *bless* on a sword or other weapon?

Bless spells are cast on creatures, not objects, with the only exception being crossbow bolts that are used to slay rakshasas. In the latter case, the spell is cast directly upon a single bolt, and the effect lasts until the bolt is used (whether the bolt hits its target or misses).

How do blindness (such as from *cause blindness*) and deafness each affect spell-casting?

Blinded creatures are unable to cast any spell that requires a visible target (such as *magic missile*). Spells that can be cast on an area (such as *fireball*) or delivered by touch (such as *cure light wounds*) are still usable.

Deafness can cause spells with verbal components to be miscast and fail. The failure chance is up to the DM, but it shouldn't exceed 20% (less for spells with short casting times). A 2% cumulative failure chance per segment of spell-casting is suggested. The spell *holy word* has a deafening effect that causes spells to fail 50% of the time. This is due mostly to the extreme power of the *holy word*, not merely the condition of deafness.

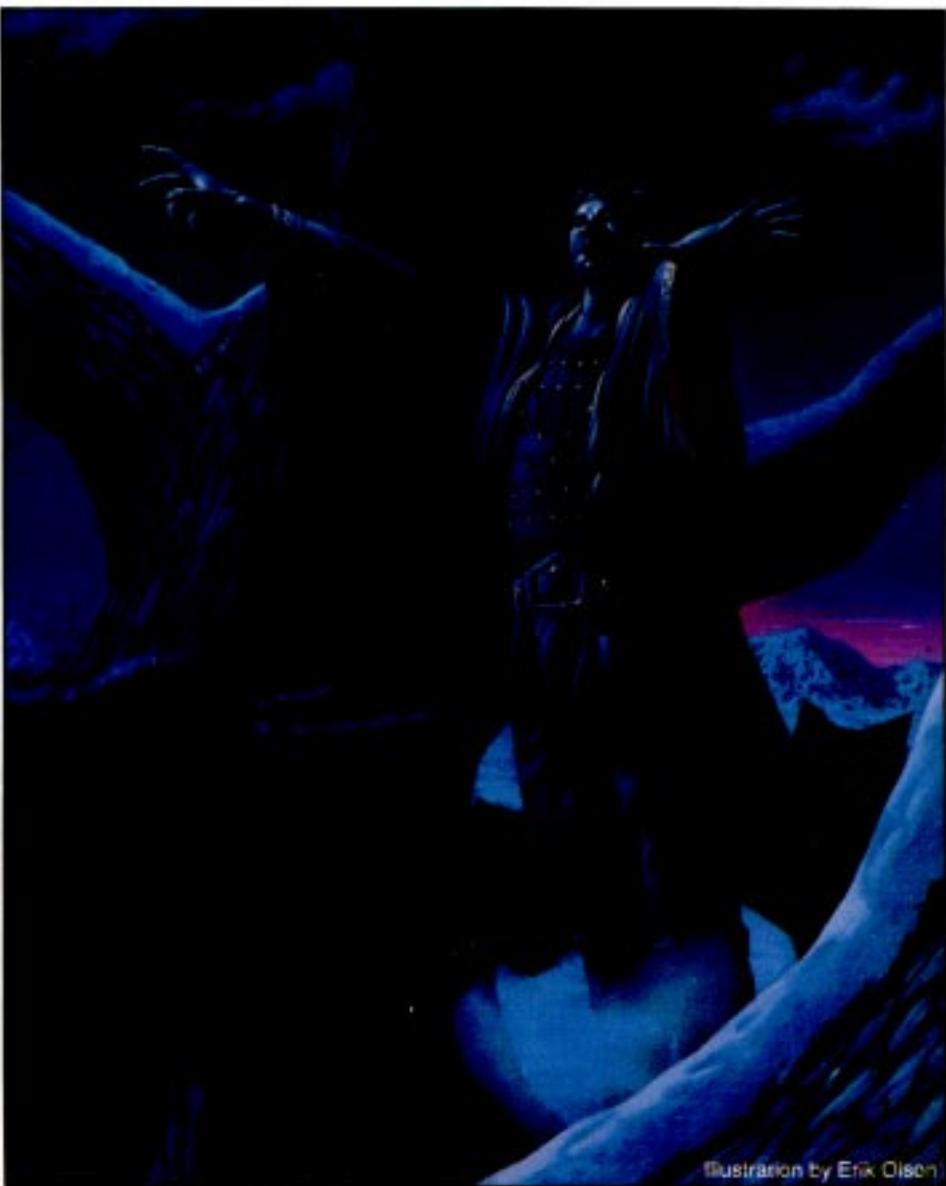


Illustration by Erik Olson

Can a command be combined with an attempt to turn undead?

Command is a spell; the cleric may not fire missiles, engage in melee, or turn undead in the same round as he casts a spell.

Is there a period of disability for characters revived with a death's door spell?

Death's door doesn't revive characters; it maintains characters at zero hit points until the spell wears off or until the character is revived with a cure wounds spell. Characters revived in this manner can resume activity immediately.

Can a glyph of warding be cast upon a portable object such as a sword or sling bullet and used offensively?

No. A *glyph* is a magical ward used to protect an object. A *glyph* can be cast upon a weapon, but it will be triggered only when a creature touches the weapon, not when the weapon strikes a creature.

Are creatures affected by one of the hold spells held immobile or simply paralyzed?

Hold spells are similar to paralysis except that the effect is mental, not physical. A *hold* creature cannot move, fight, or communicate in any way. The creature can, however, be moved by others.

Can a light or continual light spell be used to negate the darkness ability of a demon or devil?

Yes, on all counts. Each of these spells can negate darkness of any sort, though a *light* spell will "go out" immediately after negating such darkness, while the *continual light* spell will last. *Light* or *continual light* spell will negate only one darkness effect at a time; thus, if there are two darkness effects in the same area, the area remains dark until two *light* effects are used.

The spells' areas of effect listed in the *Players Handbook* have got to be incorrect. The *lower water* spell, for example, has an area of effect of a 1" x 1" square per level of the caster. Surely a cleric can affect more water than one square inch.

The area is measured in *scale* inches. One scale inch equals 10', and one scale square inch equals 100 square feet. Remember that the areas of spell effects never get larger outdoors, although ranges do get larger (see page 39 in the *Players Handbook*).

Does the circle of protection from a protection from evil, 10' radius spell move with the caster?

Yes, both versions of the *protection from evil* spell move with the caster.

If a character is killed and receives

a *raise dead* spell, how long must he rest and how many hit points will he have?

Raised characters must rest for the amount of time they have been dead. The minimum rest period is one day. Raised characters have from 3-17 hp (2d8 + 1), though this value is reduced if the PC's maximum number of hit points is less than the value rolled.

Druidic spells

What are the statistics for rocks animated with the spell animate rock? Would they be similar to the boulders animated by the galeb duhr in the Monster Manual II?

A 24-cubic-foot boulder has the following statistics: AC 0; MV 3"; HD 10; #AT 1; Dmg 5-30. The spell's effect is slightly better than the galeb duhr's ability. A statue of the same size with a human shape would have the same armor class and hit dice, but would move at 9" on its legs and strike twice per round for 2-16 hp damage per blow. Neither of the above

"rocks" is as good offensively as the elemental a druid could get with a *conjure earth elemental* spell at the same level, but the animated rocks are not balked by water nor dismissed by a *holy word* spell,

Can call lightning be used against submerged creatures?

The bolt from a *call lightning* spell ends at the water's surface, but its 1" radius of effect extends below the surface and has its full effect on any submerged creature therein.

What are the effects of the disabilities inflicted upon appendages by the heat metal and chill metal spells?

I recommend that you drop the disability effects of the *heat metal* spell and its reverse. The damage inflicted alone is sufficient for a 2nd-level spell.

Can a wall of fire be formed into a circle around a target so that the hot side faces in toward the target?

Yes, it can.

Ω

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For the sake of honest criticism, this letter was written in regard to Jeremy Gilliam's letter in issue #149. His letter stated that the D&D® game "seems too simple and unrealistic." I am a Dungeon Master of three parties of six players each. One of my campaigns uses the D&D system, and the other two the AD&D® game. Personally, I agree with Mr. Gilliam fully. But most of my players (who play in all parties) enjoy the D&D game more. They like the fast-paced, less-delayed role-playing better than the more complicated version.

Overall, the AD&D system may be more complicated, but the role-playing is not. It all depends on your work as Dungeon Master and how well you put the various descriptions into words. A bad Dungeon Master who gives choppy descriptions will not make a very realistic campaign. Some people I game with don't even care about the rules; they just enjoy the role-playing and let the DM do all of the "complicated stuff." The conclusion is that many gamers don't like to bother with things like weapon speeds and encumbrance. If this were not true, TSR would have a lot of extra D&D sets in its inventory. My D&D Ethengar campaign has been a great success in realism because of hard work and good charisma.

Alex "Maximus" Iwanow
East Brunswick NJ

I like the optional rule for slow advancement of demi-humans (AD&D 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 14), but it seems a little unfair for halflings (who can adventure for a base time of 80 years) to suffer the same penalty as elves (who can adventure for a base time of 250 years). So, instead of just multiplying the experience needed to gain levels by two, three, or four, I use the following numbers:

Dwarf	2.8
Elf	3.3
Gnome	1.9
Half-elf	1.5
Halfling	1.1

Using these values, a 1st-level dwarven fighter needs 5,600 xp to reach 2nd level ($2.8 \times 2,000 = 5,600$). A 3rd-level halfling thief needs 5,500 xp to reach 4th level ($1.1 \times 5,000 = 5,500$).

To get these numbers (or to find the multiple for a new race), subtract the base starting age from the base maximum age, then divide the result by 75. Note that, although elves live for

over 1,000 years, they only have a base time of 250 years in which they may adventure.

Rusty Ballinger
Sacramento CA

Having gone through the mill that Richard W. Emerich wrote about in "Getting It Right the First Time," in DRAGON issue #149, I can sympathize with the problems he addresses, and in general I like his solutions. I do have some solutions he overlooked.

1. If the event you are running is described in the con's program, give the sorts of characters that are unacceptable, if room permits. A simple sentence like: "3rd level or less, no magic items!" puts the ball in the court of the player with the "3rd-level thief with the *wand of Orcus*, a *rod of absorption*, and several other lesser trinkets."

2. Part of the fun of going to a con is to see how a favored character does in someone else's game world. Pregenerated characters lack the familiarity a player has with his own characters. If possible, plan your adventure to account for characters too grossly out-of-step with your regular campaign. In the above example of the relic-carrying thief, randomly roll up the malevolent effects that his artifact has in your universe. He might learn why "living in interesting times" is considered a curse in some cultures.

3. Battlemats are fine. I own a couple, though I haven't used them much lately. A convention adventure is a one-shot game, anyway. Make up the maps beforehand, photocopy them if necessary, and put them on the gaming table as needed. This saves time during play and reduces the chance of your making errors, such as drawing a secret door on the map of the room the characters have just entered.

4. Control sheets are very useful tools. Depending on the game used, the data recorded will vary, but in general each line on the sheet should have room for the character's name and class (if any) and all often-used information about the character. For the AD&D game, a sheet might include the character's stats, non-weapon proficiencies, hit points, armor class, saving throws, and THAC0s for the primary and secondary attacks made by the character. If the player tries to pull a fast one, you have his stats there to catch the attempt.

5. Get several packs of index cards, of sufficient colors, sizes, and types for each player to have his own distinct type of card. Hand out enough index cards to each player to cover his note-writing needs for the game. Passing notes can consume a lot of time but is a valued tool. A lot of players cannot distinguish what they know from what their characters know! The simple act of keeping certain things secret makes a lot of PC actions possible.

At a noisy convention, it might be a good idea to require each player to pass his actions to you on a note and let you describe what happens. Remember that players tend to describe events in present or even past tense. The player who wants to kill some captured orcs will say (or write) "I finish off all the orcs." The GM should

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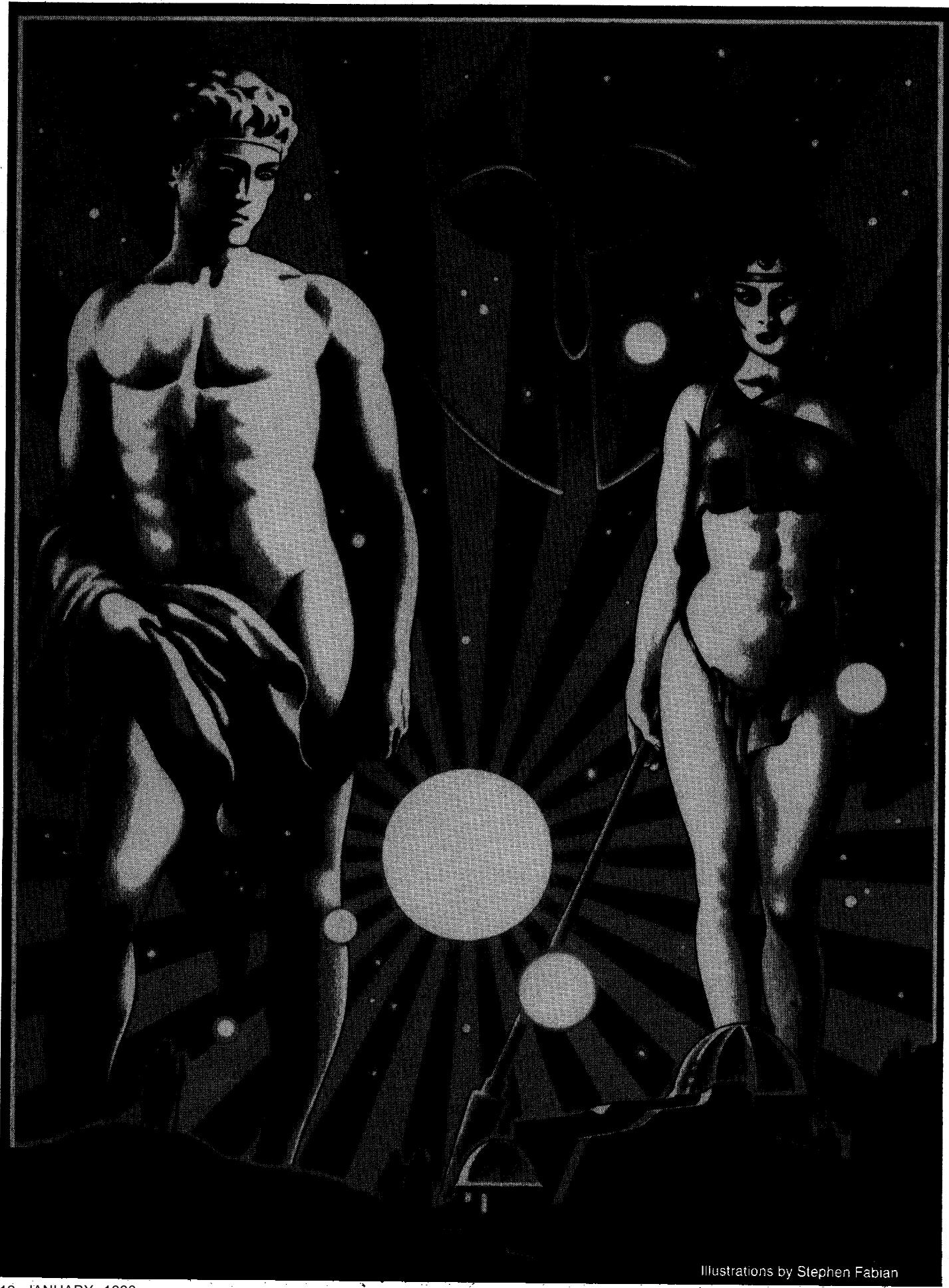
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In the Hands of the Gods



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The Goals of the Gods

Those who guide worlds should be well guided themselves

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What do you get for someone who has everything? In a fantasy role-playing campaign that includes powerful immortals, the question isn't as frivolous as it sounds. I mean, what do the gods want, for pity's sake? By comparison, mortal NPCs are easy to handle. Your normal Tom, Dick, or Bubba is only scrambling after his fair share of life, liberty, and a modicum of happiness. But all those things are part of the package if you're a god. A game master may find himself facing a restless immortal who querulously demands, "What's my motivation in this scene?"

That's what this article is about: the motivations of the gods. Why do they do what they do? Why are they involved in a game devoted mostly to mortals? And what can the game master do to make their actions more realistic, easier to portray, and more fun in his campaign?

Henry Bamfort Parkes remarked that the Homeric poems had this primary value: They provided a clearer and more rational picture "of the nature of the gods and of their ways of manifesting their power in the lives of human beings" (*Gods and Men*, page 162). The gods were no longer cloudy, indistinct shapes with mysterious and moody purposes. They had become "sharply defined figures, conceived in the likenesses of men and women" (*Gods and Men*, page 159).

We must view the gods of all national pantheons this way if we want to understand and use them as NPCs. We must see the gods as human figures, with human needs and weaknesses. Then we'll discover how to make them realistic, three-dimensional figures in an FRP campaign.

Metaphysical destinies

Of course, some claim that the gods have no place in an FRP campaign. Edward Simbalist makes this point in an article in the CHIVALRY & SORCERY Sourcebook (Fantasy Games Unlimited, Inc., 1978, "Designing C&S Monsters"). Simbalist points out that even if high-order deities such as the Nordic Odin or Robert E. Howard's Crom did appear in a campaign, they would do so only as observers, not as participants who favored one side or the other. He cites P. E. I. Bonewits to the effect that "it is often because the Gods do not give to men what they want when they want it that the impatient amongst us turn to demonic forces to grant their requests."

However, actual mythographers have

taken the opposite point of view, and some have even claimed that the fate of the gods is intimately entwined with that of mortals. Many historians agree. In *The Loom of History*, for example, Herbert J. Muller writes that gods who do not serve some abiding need in humanity are soon cast aside. The principle of universal law that states that "a day without work is a day without food" is applicable even to deities. The Olympian gods are a prime example: Although they retained their nominal stature in historic Greece for a long time, the people strayed to the gods and spirits who served some human need.

If we're discussing what the gods want and what motivates them, this is certainly a prime indicator. If the gods want humans to continue to give them homage, they must be involved with humans. Moreover, they must benefit humans.

A skeptic might argue this is true only of mythological gods, who can be treated somewhat cavalierly by their human creators since we know (or we think we know) that in the real world such gods do not exist. In an FRP campaign, on the other hand, we're playing the roles of our characters and must accept the premises of the characters' world—one premise being that the gods are very real. A real god does not depend upon the homage and respect of humans to maintain his authority, let alone his health and well-being. He can afford to be as contemptuous of human feelings as he likes. Or so our skeptic might argue.

Let's assume that our skeptic's argument is true—that a really powerful god may be as independent of humanity as he pleases. Such a god may pursue his own celestial ends, far beyond the scope of human understanding, disdainful of the fact that his worshipers are drifting away. But such a god is unlikely to appear in any pantheons at all, or will perhaps be only a distant echo of memory. Like the wind that you know only when you see the effects of its presence, this god will be as unnoticed by humanity as he is unnoticing. Humanity will pay attention to the gods who are around, the gods who have some effect on their lives.

And what about the gods who are around? Is it possible that Zeus and Odin, too, might be unconcerned with humanity's whims and would be content to merely observe? And if mortals get in the gods' way or refuse to give the gods their due, could the gods simply obliterate the offending creatures and let that be a less-

son to the rest of creation? They could, but the evidence indicates that they're not nearly so cavalier.

In the movie *Jason and the Argonauts*, the Olympian Zeus at one point remarks to his wife, the goddess Hera, that when humans cease to believe in him, he will cease to exist. That remark could be regarded as an eccentricity on the part of the scriptwriter. However, we find Meyer Reinhold, author of *Past and Present*, taking a similar if somewhat less radical view (page 74): "The relationship between humans and gods was considered to be one of mutual advantage. The gods were thought to need gifts of food and drink, though they had their own special foods (ambrosia and nectar), and could be flattered by the offer of food by humans." In Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the human heroes frequently remind the gods how faithful they've been in offering sacrifices; the heroes even offer hecatombs (sacrifices of a hundred oxen each, considered to be an excellent gift). In return, the heroes expect the gods' favorable regard.

This reflects the attitude of people who did believe in the gods, who did not expect the gods to be aloof observers. In *The Loom of History* (page 129), Muller points out that the preamble to Hammurabi's law code states a belief that the gods of Babylon were deeply interested in righteousness, and they had sent Hammurabi to pursue that interest for them. Muller adds, "Enlil, the leading god of the Sumerians, had become fatherly and beneficent, seemingly unhappy when he had to send the tempests and fires decreed by the assembly of the gods." Other gods might be rougher and more merciless, demanding, and despotic. Nevertheless, the early people of Egypt, Babylon, Greece, Rome, and Germany fully believed that the gods had many reason to be involved in the affairs of humankind.

In the modern world, it's become fashionable to affect the attitude of a dilettante agnostic: "If the gods exist, they're certainly too powerful to pay any attention to grubby little things like people." But in an FRPG, we must adopt the attitudes of people who actually believed in the gods and their influence. Their answer to the question, "Should the gods be involved with men?" would be a resounding "Yes!"

The various "Deluge" myths show that even when the gods took steps to rid themselves of the troublesome, stiff-necked, ungrateful creatures called hu-

mans, they very quickly repented of their actions—or were required to repent. It's as if a true metaphysical destiny had intervened to prevent the final annihilation of man. While metaphysical destinies may be more than typical FRP players want to fool with, these myths certainly indicate that Someone or Something of considerable power has a direct interest in seeing human beings prosper on Earth—and this Someone or Something has powers beyond those of the pantheonic gods.

The gods, you see, are not as supremely powerful as they'd have us believe.

Even masters have masters

In his article, Edward Simbalist very properly asks: If your campaign will include the gods or more than one pantheon, how will you determine the relationships between them? Both Zeus and Odin make claims about regulating the stars in the heavens and fashioning the dominions of the Earth. The Egyptian god Khepri (Ra) is said to be the original creator, the Father of All—but so is the Babylonian Anu. The Greeks have claimed the same role for Oceanus, Eurynome, and Gaea (Mother Earth). Who is right? Is any one of them right? These are not idle questions for the game master who must decide such disputes in his campaign.

The easiest course for the GM is accepting that the pantheonic gods are neither as all-wise nor as all-powerful as they pretend. The historian Will Durant describes some of the limits of the gods in *The Life of Greece* (page 181): "Nor are the Olympians omnipotent or omniscient; each limits the other, or even opposes the other; any one of them, especially Zeus, can be deceived." Speaking of the Norse gods in *The Age of Faith* (page 507), Durant adds: "The gods were magnified mortals, subject to birth, hunger, sleep, sickness, passion, sorrow, death; they excelled men only in size, longevity, and power." Of Odin, he says: "He was not unchallenged nor omnipotent; Loki scolded him like a fishwife, and Thor quite ignored him."

Lacking supreme wisdom, Odin went looking for it. He bartered one eye for the

privilege of drinking from the Spring of Mirmir, then allowed himself to be sacrificed on the ash tree Yggdrasil, all to gain wisdom and knowledge. But it was not enough. In "Ragnarok," the lead article for AREST™ Magazine issue #8, Susan Shwartz describes how Odin went to the Sybil in order to obtain a prophecy about the climatic battle of his reign—for all the gods know Ragnarok is fated and cannot be escaped. The Sybil answered Odin in detail, but a flying dragon distracted her. Though she had much yet to tell, the Sybil would not go on. Is it that Odin chose not to compel her, or that he *could* not compel her to finish?

As for Olympian Zeus, he is hoodwinked again and again. Prometheus tricked him in the matter of which portions of a sacrificial bull should be offered to the gods and which should be kept by men for themselves. Prometheus tricked Zeus again when he circumvented Zeus's prohibition against giving fire to mankind. And Hera employed the god Sleep to distract Zeus so she could do mischief to Heracles (Hercules), a trick she used once more in Book XIV of the *Iliad*. In the battle before Troy, Zeus would have liked to save his mortal son Sarpedon from death, but he could not contravene the will of the Fates. In *The Greek Myths* (volume I, page 214), Robert Graves tells us of three other sons Zeus would also have saved: Aeacus, Minos, and Rhadamanthys. But again, Zeus could not defy the Fates. Most telling of all is the story that Prometheus held a secret vital to Zeus's reign—a prophecy about a woman with whom Zeus might mate, whose son would be greater than his father. Zeus, however, was unable to wring the information from Prometheus at any price. These are not acts of omnipotence nor of omniscience.

The gaming purist will scream in outrage at all this, determined to believe that if the myth claims absolute supremacy for Odin (or Zeus, or Ra, etc.), then we have to acknowledge that claim if we bring the myth into an FRP campaign. But in fact, all the pantheonic god-kings made claims greater than the evidence will support—

and the mythographers knew it. (It didn't bother the mythographers much, since consistency was never of prime importance to them.) But, as C. M. Bowra points out in *The Greek Experience* (page 73):

"On the other hand, there were those who sought not to make godhead the ultimate power, but to find something else behind the gods which was more powerful than they. They might call this Necessity, as Simonides does when he says that even the gods do not fight against it, or Fate, which, according to Herodotus, a god cannot escape, or combine both in an ingenious scheme, as Aeschylus does when he makes Prometheus say that Zeus cannot alter what is ordained, which is itself the work of the Fates and the Furies in obedience to Necessity."

We know from the myths themselves that Zeus was in awe of the great goddess Night (Graves, *The Greek Myths*, vol. I, page 30). We also know that Zeus cannot oppose the goddess Necessity (*The Greek Myths*, page 48); that he is subject to Fate or the Fates (*Myths*, pages 48 and 214); and even that in some cases it is the Fates—not Zeus—who assign duties to each god (*Myths*, pages 70 and 83).

Odin may be called the "All Father," but in some of the older tales we hear of the *Allfadur*, so terrible and so guarded by awe that no stories are told about him. He is never even named, as his name is death to utter. He is Creator and Dispenser, master of the goddesses of Fate. It is he who has decreed Ragnarok and who will build the world anew when all has passed away.

So we do, indeed, have a Master of the Masters, whether we call this master "Night" or "Necessity" or "Fate" or "the Allfadur." This master stands over and above all the pantheonic gods. If mortals rule by virtue of the authority invested in them by the gods (as is well established in mythological thought), isn't it reasonable to assume that the divinities rule by virtue of the authority invested in them by Necessity?

When Parkes (*Gods and Men*, page 171) describes the classes of Achaean (Homeric Greek) society, he says: "These class lines are reflected in the structure of the universe, Zeus being the king of the gods in the same way that Agamemnon is the king of men." And Martin P. Nilsson writes (*Homer and Mycenae*, pages 269-270): "When Zeus enters the assembly of the gods] no one dares to remain seated but all arise to greet him. The reason of this overwhelming power of Zeus is not only his strength but also a moral fact: he has inherited the kingdom of the heavens as the eldest son of Cronos."

In other words, a greater authority than his has authorized and sanctioned his power, just as his own greater authority has authorized and sanctioned the power of King Agamemnon. And just as all Achaeans are subject to the will of their kings, and all the Achaean kings are sub-

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ject to the will of Zeus, so are Zeus and all the other pantheonic god-kings subject to the greater will of Necessity.

For some insight into what this may mean, consider the Chinese theory described by W. H. McNeill in *The Rise of the West* (pages 246-247). According to this theory, Heaven confers a definite mandate of authority upon the temporal ruler, but only for so long as he honors the terms of the mandate. If he violates those terms, the mandate of Heaven is withdrawn "in the same mysterious way in which it had been initially conferred"; the ruler (and perhaps his entire dynasty) will fall. And what were the mandate's terms? Proper sacrifices, worship, homage, and "moral conduct and good government."

Necessity would grant similar mandates for pantheonic gods according to each god's specific duties. Zeus, as Uranus and Cronus before him, is the "impartial arbiter" for gods and men. He's the defender of justice and of oaths and of strangers—not necessarily because he values these things, but because they are assigned to him as king of the gods. In order to be king, Zeus must fulfill the requirements of kinghood, even if it means some injury to

his private interests. On page 48 of *Myths and Legends of All Nations*, Robinson and Wilson note that for swearing falsely by the river Styx, a god is punished by being compelled to lie breathless and speechless for a year and by being forbidden to attend the councils of the gods for nine years. Surely Zeus himself must enforce this law. Should he fail to abide by the mandate, he will fall, and he has the fates of Uranus and Cronus to remind him of this fact.

Odin in Scandinavia, Muada in Ireland, Ra in Egypt, Enlil in Sumeria—none is a truly free agent, and this explains the curious constraints that repeatedly limit them. Neither omnipotent or omniscient, they must bow to the will of Necessity and must guess, even as we do, at the greater meaning of it all.

What's mine is mine

The gods, says Henry Parkes in *Gods and Men* (page 165), "are reasonable beings who act from intelligible motives." But what *are* their motives?

The motivations of pantheonic kings such as Zeus and Odin are integrally involved with their exercise of power, much

as a human king's are. Mortal kings reward faithful followers with grants of weapons, land, and favors. They punish enemies in dire fashion and administer justice within their domains—all the while jealously guarding the boundaries of their kingdoms and the rights of their vassals. Zeus and Odin do the same. The lesser gods attend their courts exactly as feudal barons would attend the court of a national overlord. Recognition of the god-king's ascendancy is expected and is rewarded by the delegation of power. Zeus made Hermes the guardian of treaties, commerce, and travel, and he made Artemis the protectress of the roads and harbors of 30 chosen cities.

When Apollo's son, Asclepius, the famous physician, raised a man from the dead and thereby infringed upon Hades' realm, it was from Zeus that the God of the Dead sought redress. Zeus, in turn, slew Asclepius. Apollo, Zeus's favorite son, saw this as an infringement upon his rights; he countered by slaying Zeus' armorers, the Cyclopes. Only the intercession of the goddess Leto (Latona), Apollo's mother, saved Apollo from the full force of his father's vengeance. As it was, Apollo



was condemned to serve the mortal King Admetus of Therae for one year. Apollo acquitted himself so well in this service that he was taken back into Zeus' good favor. The entire story is reminiscent of something out of the turbulent lives of Henry II Plantagenet of England and his unruly sons!

Odin, too, behaves in a similar fashion, dispensing weapons and counsel to loyal followers who thereafter are expected to serve faithfully in both life and afterlife. The similarities between Greek and Nordic myth are no accident. Martin Nilsson is only one of the authors who has drawn parallels between the Achaeans of Homer and the Scandinavians of the Viking period. In *Homer and Mycenae* (page 218), Nilsson writes: "A close resemblance exists between the old Teutonic and Homeric kingship which is explained partly by the similarity of life and of historical circumstances, but is partly due to the common origin of the Greek and Teutonic races."

Both Zeus and Odin are the eldest of three brothers and are therefore inheritors of the godly throne. In Book XV of the *Iliad*, Zeus's brother Poseidon, God of the Sea, would like to dispute the commands

of Zeus and assert his right and power to do as he pleases in his own domain—but the reminder of this moral preeminence restrains him.

Zeus and Odin also cared about the size and quality of their personal retinues. Among gods as well as among men, the power and loyalty of a king's entourage has a direct bearing on the power of the king. We know that Odin took particular pains in selecting the fallen in battle, recruiting the best to follow him and the other gods when they faced their doom at Ragnarok. While Zeus may never have been so blatant about his need of mortal followers, he certainly valued the loyalty of minor gods and demigods.

There was a time when Zeus's exercise of authority had become so intolerable to the other Olympians that they plotted against him. Having placed his fearsome weapons out of his reach, they took Zeus while he slept, binding him to his bed with rawhide thongs. They intended to depose him and raise one of their own number in his place, but they wasted time arguing over the division of spoils. It was then that Thetis the Nereid earned the lasting gratitude of Zeus, which she later put to use on

the behalf of her son Achilles. Unobserved, she left and sought out Zeus's loyal follower, Briareus of the Hundred Hands. Briareus managed to release his master, who quickly turned the tables upon the conspirators. Without the loyalty of this single mortal, Zeus would have fallen like Uranus and Cronus before him. This lesson on the importance of a king's vassals could not have been lost on the "Father of Gods and Men."

All of the gods, in fact, have their own domains and retinues. Each god jealously guards the rights and honors of his own personal sphere of interest. To understand how far that jealously extends, look at the Greek word *timé*, as defined by Hugh Lloyd-Jones: "Honour, particularly the honour due to anyone on account of his station" (*The Justice of Zeus*, page 212). This can be elaborated to include rights, powers, privileges, and even duties. Everyone has his own *timé*, including humans. *Timé* imposes duties and obligations on an individual, and it defines his relationship to others. Because of the insult to his *timé*, Achilles withdrew from the Achaean forces before Troy in Book I of the *Iliad*. It was Achilles' *timé* — his anger over his damaged honor — that prevented him from rejoining the Achaeans until his friend, Patroclus, was killed.

To the gods, who are quick to defend what is theirs, *timé* is as real as any physical object. "Greek gods, like Greek heroes, were moved by considerations of personal honour, and anything which might be construed as an affront to it excited their anger and called for violent vengeance. Forgiveness was not in their nature, and once a man had offended them, he had no excuse and could expect no mercy." (C. M. Bowra, *The Greek Experience*, page 63).

The *Iliad* provides an excellent example of how quick the gods were to defend their honor. As Book I opens, the Achaeans have abducted Chryseis, the daughter of Chryses (a priest of Apollo). They have given her over to their overlord, King Agamemnon. Chryses comes to the Achaean camp before Troy to ransom his daughter, and he carries the official symbol of his priesthood: the "scepter of Apollo," properly garnished to show his intentions. But not only does Agamemnon refuse to let the girl be ransomed, he drives Chryses off with insults. The priest is well aware of his status and of Apollo's *timé*, so he appeals to his god for redress. Apollo answers by sowing arrows of death among the Achaeans. This drives the assembled Achaean leaders (with Achilles prominent in their forefront) to force Agamemnon to return Chryses' daughter. Agamemnon complies but replaces her by taking the girl Briseis, who had been given to Achilles. This is the offense against Achilles' *timé*, mentioned above, that precipitates the disastrous quarrel that is the theme of the *Iliad*.

Artemis, Apollo's sister and the goddess of the hunt, was stirred to rage by an



unintended slight—and thus brought about one of the greatest adventures in Greek mythology. Artemis's *timé* entitled her to yearly sacrifices from such kings as Oeneus of Calydon. Oeneus neglected to make the proper sacrifice to Artemis one year, and the goddess was furious. She had been robbed of a part of her *timé*, which is as great a loss as if she had been robbed of her bow or quiver. In retaliation, she dispatched the monstrous Calydonian Boar to ravage Oeneus's lands. Helpless in the face of this menace, the king called for aid, and the finest heroes of the age assembled for the great hunt—the tale of which is told elsewhere.

Artemis was particularly quick to react to unintended slights. When Actaeon, son of the beekeeper Aristaeus (himself the son of Apollo and Cyrene), chanced to see the virgin goddess bathing naked in a Boeotian stream, Artemis changed him into a stag. She then caused his pack of 50 hounds to tear him to pieces. Why? Sworn to eternal chastity, Artemis was offended to think that any man could say he had seen her unclad. (Of course, if Actaeon lingered to enjoy the sight of the bathing goddess instead of averting his eyes the moment he realized who she was, then perhaps the slight wasn't so unintended after all.)

Clearly, it is not easy to live at peace in a world inhabited by temperamental gods. The wise man is a cautious man, one who gives due respect to all the immortals and remembers the story of Hippolytus. Dedicated to Artemis, Hippolytus was determined to remain as chaste as the goddess herself. But this offended Aphrodite, goddess of love; for Hippolytus, chastity proved fatal because her behavior was too extreme. According to Parkes, the Greek virtue of temperance (*sophrosyne*) meant "the recognition, in due proportion, of all aspects of human nature and of the appropriate deities" (*Gods and Men*, page 168). With Hippolytus as an example, it's no wonder that temperance was so dear to the Greeks..

The Greeks also warned against the sin of *hubris*, that insolent excess of anything—beauty, intelligence, fame, power, wealth, pride—a godly arrogance that was certain to arouse the gods' jealousy and vengeance. Most often, however, the gods punished those mortals who went out of their way to offend divine *timé*. Bellerophon was a hero richly favored by the gods through many adventures. At last, full of his own power, Bellerophon mounted the winged horse Pegasus and attempted to fly up to Olympus. Essentially, he attempted to bridge the chasm that separates even the noblest of humans from the gods—and the gods struck him down. He was condemned to end his life alone and in disgrace.

On another occasion, Queen Niobe, wife of King Amphiion of Thebes, favorably compared herself—as the mother of seven sons and seven daughters—to Zeus's para-

mour, Leto. Leto, after all, was the mother of only two children—but those two were Apollo and Artemis, son and daughter of Zeus, while Leto herself was the daughter of the Titans Coeus and Phoebe. Further, Leto was herself a goddess. Outraged by Niobe's continued insults, Leto sent Apollo and Artemis to exact due retribution. Six of Niobe's sons and six of her daughters were killed. Only Amyclas and Meliboea, who had offered propitiatory prayers, were spared.

Similarly, the wife of King Cinyras of Cyprus once boasted that her daughter Smyrna was lovelier than Aphrodite. The offended goddess of love and beauty took predictable revenge for the insult. Other famous victims of the gods' retribution include Ixion, who murdered his father-in-law and planned to seduce the goddess Hera, and Sisyphus, who was condemned for a variety of crimes including murder and robbery—but whose most thoughtless sin was informing the river-god Asopus that it was Zeus who had abducted Asopus's daughter, Aegina. There was Tantalus, who stole ambrosia and nectar from the gods and gave them to mortals, and who even killed his own son Pelops and served the corpse to the gods as food. And there was Tityus the Giant, son of Gaea, who attempted to rape the goddess Leto. All were condemned and suffered eternal punishment in the underworld.

Obviously, much of the gods' energy is spent in exercising, maintaining, and defending their personal powers and prerogatives. As a class, they are as zealous in upholding their status as any mortals have ever been.

But not all of the gods' actions arise from the ferocious defense of their domains and their honor. The immortals have another, more engaging aspect to their nature.

In a word: sex.

Gods need love, too

There are few gods (at least in the Greek pantheon) who haven't had romantic liaisons, though some do without formal marriage. Three Olympian gods in particu-

lar are renowned for their romantic exploits: Zeus, Poseidon, and Apollo. The trysts of Poseidon and Apollo outnumbered those of most other gods—yet compared to Zeus, these two were monks.

Even a partial list of Zeus's conquests becomes tedious. They include: Metic, "mother" of Athena; Themis, who bore Zeus the Horae and the Fates; Eurynome, mother of the Graces; Demeter, mother of Persephone (Core); Mnemosyne, who bore Zeus the nine Muses; Leto, the mother of Apollo and Artemis; Dione, who some say was the mother of Aphrodite; Maia, mother of Hermes; Semele, mother of Dionysus; Tymbria, mother of Pan; and, of course, Hera, Zeus's official wife and the queen of the gods. Hera bore the deities Ares, Hephaestus, and Hebe, and perhaps bore several other goddesses as well—though it's often said that she conceived and bore Hephaestus by herself, just to prove she could do without Zeus.

Zeus fathered many human children. By Danae he had the great adventurer, Perseus. By Europa he fathered Minos, Sarpedon, and Rhadamanthus. There were many more, but the most famous of his human children was Heracles, son of Alcmene, whom Hera so devotedly hated. (And by her hatred, she made him great—an interesting object lesson.) Zeus is also said to be the father of Lucifer, whose mother in this case was either Eos or Eurybea. Whether this is the same Lucifer who later came to such prominence in human affairs is not certain.

Love is clearly as important to the Greek gods as it is to humans. Like humans, the gods do not escape the entanglements to which romance can lead, nor do they miss the intrigues, conspiracies, or delights. The Greek gods are motivated by their gender as anyone you can imagine. If this appears to be less true in other pantheons, perhaps it's more because of our lack of information than because of the gods' lack of activity. The Persian goddess Anaita (Anahita) is known as "the Persian Aphrodite," probably for very good reasons.

The Norse god Freyr (Frey), God of



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Plenty, is known to have loved the beautiful giantess Gerda. He even bartered his Sword of Victory to his servant Skirnir, so that Skirnir would act as a go-between for him. Freyja, sister of Freyr, is the Goddess of Love in the Nordic pantheon. Her enemies told many scurrilous tales about her "romantic adventures," some of which may have been true. The only reasonably documented account, however, is the story that she slept with four dwarfish artisans to "encourage" them to forge the Brisingamen necklace for her. Many giants lusted for Freyja, but she favored none of them.

Odin himself was not immune to the lures of love. Though Frigga, goddess of nature, love, and the home, was Odin's wife, she was not the mother of Odin's son Thor. Instead, Jörd, goddess of Earth, or Fjorgyn, a mountain giantess, bore Thor to Odin. Girdh, another giantess, gave Odin his son Vithar.

However, it's among the Greek gods that the most frequent and interesting love tales are told. For example, Eos (Dawn) suffered a desire for young mortals that was no fault of her own (well, perhaps it was indirectly her fault, for she slept with Ares, and the jealous Aphrodite cursed her with this longing). Among her loves was Tithonus, son of Tros, whom Eos so loved that she begged Zeus for the gift of immortality for him. But she neglected to ask for perpetual youth as well—a serious error. When Tithonus eventually grew old and withered, Eos tired of him. He was, mercifully, turned into a cicada. Immortals may love, but their love is hardly immortal.

The goddess Selene (Moon), Eos's sister, also had many paramours, among them the goat-footed god Pan (from whom our worlds "panic" and "pandemonium" derive). Her most famous love was Endymion, himself the son of Zeus and the nymph Calyce. Some say that Selene first saw Endymion as he slept at night among his flocks. She cast a spell of eternal sleep over him so that she might enjoy his love every night. Others claim that Selene visited Endymion in his dreams, and Endymion himself begged Zeus for eternal sleep so he could enjoy these dreams.

forever. Selene bore him 50 daughters, and with more foresight than Eos she sought and won from Zeus the twin gifts of immortality and eternal youth for her love. This love, at least, endures.

The love of a god is a risky thing, for we've already seen how jealous the gods are of what they claim for their own. Coronis, daughter of King Phlegyas of the Lapiths, was loved by Apollo and carried his unborn child. But while he was away on godly business, she slept with Ischys, the son of Elatus. Apollo learned of her lapse from a white crow (which he promptly turned black; hence all crows are black), and he voiced his anger to Artemis, his sister. Artemis promptly killed Coronis, but when Apollo saw the dead body of his love, he regretted his impulsive anger. He could not restore Coronis to life, but he could and did rescue the child from her womb. This child was Asclepius, who grew up to be a famous physician—the same Asclepius who raised men from the dead, which led to the divine conflict mentioned earlier.

One of the most interesting stories of godly love concerns Zeus, Demeter, their daughter Persephone, and Hades, the god of the underworld. Hades fell in love with Persephone and approached Zeus to ask for her hand in marriage. Zeus predicted, with fine understanding, the fury of Demeter, the goddess of agriculture and fruitfulness, should he condemn her daughter to the underworld as Hades' queen. But Zeus was also reluctant to offend his brother-king. So Zeus trod a middle path, with disastrous results: He gave tacit consent for Hades to do as he pleased.

Hades promptly sought out Persephone and took her to his underworld kingdom. Soon Demeter missed her daughter and grew desperate to learn her whereabouts. For 10 days she searched on Earth, finding her first clue from a mortal, Triptolemus. The rest of the story was soon pieced together, and at last Demeter knew the whole of the transaction between Zeus and Hades. Furious, she demanded her daughter's return and forbade all plants to

grow on Earth until Persephone was back. For all his power, Zeus could not interfere with this command, and he could not even order Demeter to rescind it. Twice he asked her to accept her child's fate, and twice she refused. At last, fearing the danger to the gods should all life on Earth fail, Zeus sent a desperate message to Hades: Persephone must be returned!

Persephone was duly brought back to Demeter—but she had tasted the food of the underworld (just seven pomegranate seeds), so her return could not be unconditional. A compromise was finally arranged, with Persephone spending three months of the year as queen of Hades' realm, and the other nine months with her mother in the world of gods and men. Such is love among immortals.

Gods errant

In many mythologies, the gods emerge from their remote and forbidding homes to travel the Earth to mingle with mortals. Among the Greeks, such mingling gives rise to the many love affairs of the gods. The fruits of those affairs lead to further entanglements with mortals, for the gods often have a lively interest in their children and bend their powers to advance their children's fortunes. The gods, too, have their favorites among mortals. They frequently observe, counsel, and aid those who—by valor, faithfulness, or other virtues—capture immortal attention.

A famous example of this occurs in Book I of the *Iliad*. Agamemnon and Achilles were favorites of the goddesses Hera and Athena. When Achilles, son of the mortal Peleus and the sea goddess Thetis, threatened to turn his sword against Agamemnon, Athena stayed his hand. Grudgingly, Achilles took her instruction to bide his time, for those who listen to the gods are listened to by the gods. He withdrew from the council of the kings. But since his honor had been injured, he beseeched his mother, Thetis the Nereid, to persuade Zeus to punish the Achaeans for this affront. Zeus did so—and thereby hangs the entire tale. Later, Achilles' close companion, Patroclus, was slain by the Trojan Prince Hector. Patroclus was wearing Achilles' armor, which is now taken by Hector. Achilles repented his withdrawal from the war and made peace with Agamemnon, agreeing to reenter the fray. But now he had no armor. So his mother, Thetis, intervened on his behalf once more and persuaded Hephaestus, armorer of the gods, to create new armor for her son.

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* show other gods acting on behalf of their children or their favorites. In Book V of the *Iliad*, for example, Aphrodite saved her son, Aeneas, from death at the hands of King Diomedes of Aetolia. For her trouble, Aphrodite was wounded by Diomedes. It was Apollo who spirited Aeneas from the fray, while

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Aphrodite rode to safety in the chariot of her brother, Ares.

We've already seen how Demeter wandered among men for 10 days in disguise, in search of her abducted daughter, Persephone. Artemis, goddess of hunting and the chase, must have often passed among men. Her brother, Apollo, was one of the three Olympian gods most inclined to act on behalf of humanity (the other two being Hermes and Prometheus). In his capacity as god of the flocks and cattle, Apollo was often seen with herdsmen. As a god of prophecy and a master of music, he was much sought by seers and poets, who did not find him aloof.

Athena taught the arts of civilization to mankind and frequently circulated among mortals to distribute the benefits of her wisdom. From time to time, she employed Perseus, Bellerophon, Heracles, and other heroes for the furtherance of her aims and for the protection of Athens. She taught the making of 50-oared ships to Danaus on the island of Rhodes in the Aegean. She also directed the famed shipbuilder Argos in the making of the Argo, the ship on which Jason and his Argonauts sailed in search of the Golden Fleece. Any valiant mortal dedicated to the service of wisdom and civilization can expect a good hearing from Athena.

Hermes—messenger of the gods and himself the god of roads and thieves—was

a much-traveled deity. Shepherds were favorites of his, and he had numerous children by nymphs and shepherdesses. But Dionysus (Bacchus) was the most notorious wanderer of all the gods, and many myths are told of his journeys. Born in Thebes, he visited faraway India, Syria, and Egypt. King Midas, of the "Golden Touch," was his close friend.

Even the greatest of the gods, the pantheon kings, were not above journeying on Earth. In *The Age of Faith* (page 597), Durant reports that Odin "wandered over the earth seeking wisdom." It's said that Odin loved to travel among humans incognito, to discover how they acted and what they thought. Thor, too, enjoyed such journeys; during one such trip with Loki, Thor had his famous adventure with Utgard-Loki, the giant king.

Like Odin, Zeus frequently walked in disguise among men to discover how they treated one another—and how they might treat him, not knowing his true identity. Zeus was the god of hospitality and the protector of the rights of guests and hosts. It was particularly important to him, for the protection of his *timé* to know the kind of welcome that might be accorded to wandering strangers. Zeus and Hermes once traveled together and were entertained by the poor couple Philemon and Baucis. These two were richly rewarded for their kindness toward unknown travelers, while their neighbors were killed for their ungraciousness.

Poseidon, too, traveled much. Robert Graves (*The Greek Myths*, vol. I, page 59) describes the God of the Sea as "greedy of earthly kingdoms." On one occasion, Poseidon claimed Attica for himself; when Athena came to dispute the claim, Zeus himself intervened in their quarrel. A divine court was set up to arbitrate the dispute. The right to Attica, land of Athens, was finally given over to Athena. Poseidon also tried to claim Troezen, which he ended up sharing with Athena. Poseidon quarreled with other gods over the possession of Aegina, Naxos, Corinth, and the Argolis (where the city Argos stood). His fortunes were indifferent at best, and in the case of the Argolis another divine court judged in favor of Hera's prior claim. Poseidon got revenge for his earlier loss of Attica by flooding the Thriopian Plain, where Athena had a sanctuary. On the occasion of losing Argolis, he was forbidden by Zeus to use a flood for revenge against Hera. Instead, Poseidon employed a summer drought, so that the rivers Inachus, Cephissus, and Asterion would in the future be dry in summer.

to believe. They have their weaknesses and their needs, and in compensating for the first and catering to the second, they can and do act in a very human fashion. They have their loves and their hates, and they're excruciatingly sensitive to the dictates of their honor. They have a hunger for homage—a hunger born of convenience, habit, and comfort, perhaps, but a very real hunger nonetheless.

Most of all, masters though they are, the gods have their own master. A higher power holds them accountable for their actions, a fact they are not likely to forget—but it's a foolish human who would impudently remind them of it.

Humans themselves are fascinating creatures to the gods. The immortals find human beauty very appealing, and the Greek world, at least, abounds with the offspring of gods and humankind. The gods are willing to put up with a great deal from humans. In the polite fictions of social contact, a High King may easily be considered the moral equal of a lesser god, in a nearly static social pyramid that reaches from the lowest slave up to Zeus, Odin, Enlil, and beyond. Certain impassable barriers divide the different levels of the pyramid—and woe to the mortal who pretends to be a god, or to the serf who dares to rebuke a king! But the mutual obligations involved in the relationships are strong and enduring. The feudal analogy is a good one: A wise king does not go out of his way to alienate his vassals, and neither do the gods abuse those who give them due homage.

In every situation, the gods are governed by private interests as well as public ones, just as men are. Zeus favors Heracles, for personal reasons; Hera opposes Heracles, for personal reasons. Athena aids and protects Perseus because his actions further her plans. In Book I of the *Iliad*, Achilles explains the bond between men and gods when he says that he will obey Athena because the gods will hear the man who hears them.

All of this provides a good rule of thumb that we can use to understand the gods of any mythological pantheon. Now, when an impatient immortal demands, "What's my motivation in this scene?" we will not go far wrong if we reply, "The same as a superior human's would be."

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Conclusion

We began by asking a question: What motivates a god? In pursuit of that question, we've discovered that the gods are neither so aloof as we might imagine, nor so supremely powerful as we've been led

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As Above, So Below

Three perspectives on gods and their roles in campaigns

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Greater than gods

One problem with trying to incorporate national pantheons (either singly or in groups) into an existing role-playing game campaign is that most RPG systems already include rules for dealing with organized religion (frequently as forms of medieval Christianity) and the "demons" opposed to it. It's a shame to have to dispense with the equivalent of angels and

demons just to get pantheonic gods into the campaign, yet the former are often, inconsistent with pantheons of the Greek or Nordic type. It seems you can have one or the other, but not both. [*The AD&D® 1st Edition game does have devas, solars, and planetars as "angels," all working for the major good-aligned deities just as the demons and devils work for evil deities.*]

The answer to this dilemma is to construct a universe into which *both* the rules

for angels and demons *and* the idea of the pantheonic gods will fit—a universe such as that used by the science-fiction writer Michael Moorcock in his Elric stories, based on a Law vs. Chaos conflict. The possible variations of this conflict are nearly infinite; they range from the idea of two coalitions of gods battling for sheer power and the ascent of a universal throne, to the idea of two diametrically opposed ultimate principles, one of whose victory will irrevocably alter the nature of creation. What follows is one view of how this can be arranged, and my own idea of how to fit the pantheons into it.

Some time prior to the reign of the first great Persian emperor, Cyrus the Great (550-530 B.C.), the master prophet Zarathustra ("Zoroaster" by way of Greek corruption) preached the view of reality that has come down to us as the Zoroastrian religion. This religion gives a very clear picture of an ongoing cosmic war between two celestial superpowers. On the side of Law is Ahura-Mazda (Ormazd), who is the primary and ultimate deity, the creator of all. He is supported by a host of subordinate divinities, greatest among whom (in the conception of Zarathustra's followers rather than of the prophet himself) were the *Amesha Spenta* (Immortal Holy Ones), followed by the *Yazatas* (Venerable Ones), angels, etc. Opposing Ahura-Mazda is Angro-Mainyus (Ahriman), with an equivalent army of *Daevas* (Demons) to do eternal battle against Ahura-Mazda's forces. Earth is the battleground on which they fight, and human beings are both the soldiers and the prizes of this celestial contest. But the humans are not pawns, for Zarathustra taught that men have free will—a vital point.

As with all other inspired instruction, Zarathustra's teachings were substantially altered when it came to his followers' practical application of them. "Zarathustra, had he been immortal, would have been scandalized to find statues of Anaita, the Persian Aphrodite, set up in many cities of the [Persian] empire within a few centuries after his death." (Will Durant, *Our Oriental Heritage*, page 372.) This was only one of the many changes that took place with the passage of time, as Zarathustra's teachings lost the original purity of nature with which he'd invested them. By the time the religion reached its zenith in the Roman Empire (under Aurelian, c. A.D. 275, it was the state religion), it had become Mithraism, the cult of Ahura-



Illustrations by Bob Giadrosich

Mazda's son Mithras, the God of Light or of the Sun. By now it was a military religion—democratic because it allowed commoners the chance to rise to high rank, but chauvinistic because it had little or no place for women, despite the importance of Anaita (Anahita). [Mithras is described in "The Imperial Gods," in DRAGON® issue #133.]

As it stands, this picture is not so very different from other views of the Law vs. Chaos or Good vs. Evil conflict. It fits nicely with the rules for angels and demons in an RPG campaign.

In order to bring the pantheonic gods into the picture, the first step is to avoid trying to divide up the gods on one side or the other of the celestial war. Not only would such divisions (with the impression of all creation being drawn up in opposing battle lines) create enmities that are awkward in theory and grotesque in practice, but the divisions themselves are virtually impossible to arrange in satisfactory ways.

Zeus and Odin provide perfect examples of this. From a purely historical perspective, each would appear to be a lawful god, since they are deities heavily involved with the status quo; order, and the protection of justice. Yet neither is a "good" god, and both have distinct attributes of Chaos. [However, both are listed as chaotic-good deities in the AD&D Legends & Lore tome.] In their relations with humans, they were often terrible. "The Iliad has no word either for 'god-fearing' or for 'love of god; Homer would certainly have agreed with the observation in the *Magna Moralia* that 'it would be eccentric for anyone to claim that he loves Zeus!' (Herbert Muller, *The Loom of History*, page 116.) And H. R. Ellis Davidson (*Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*, pages 49-50) discusses in some detail the argument that Odin simply cannot be trusted, a view that Joannes Brondsted echoes (*The Vikings*, page 274). So assigning Zeus and Odin to either Law or Chaos is a task fraught with peril and unlikely to be rewarding. Nor is the task any easier with the other pantheonic gods. Created by men, in the form of men, the gods share with men the attributes of being complex and contradictory creatures.

Rather than betraying the very myths we're attempting to portray by making artificial divisions, a better course is to assume that the pantheonic gods are as neutral in the celestial conflict as are humans. By "neutral," I mean that the gods have free will, and all gods are open to the blandishments and persuasions of both angels and demons. If the gods rule by a "mandate of heaven" that originated with Ahura-Mazda, the gods retain their personal flexibility. They remain as free to indulge in vice, error, and peccadillo as any human, elf, dwarf, orc, etc., and can be role-played to be true to their myths.

This arrangement allows us to put Law and Chaos, angels and demons, and pantheonic gods all into the same RPG cam-

paign. Spread out over a wide enough space land how wide that needs to be depends on personal opinion), they won't even tread on each other's toes. Since the celestial war will last into infinity, far longer than your RPG campaign (I hope!), you don't even have to concern yourself with whether or not any particular god will be enlisted with Law or Chaos in the immediate future. Like mankind generally, they're "sitting on the fence," capable of moving now in one direction, now in another, as the convenience of the moment dictates.

Of course, if you don't like the idea of putting the gods into this position, you can always chose a different arrangement from the many that are possible. Or you can even dispense with the gods (or the angels and demons) entirely, however you choose. It's your campaign, so salt it to taste.

The gods at war

While the "super-gods" such as Ahura-

Mazda and Angro-Mainyus are playing out the course of their cosmic war to its inevitable end, the pantheonic gods have their own wars and rivalries to be concerned with. Smaller in scope, these "lesser wars" have foreseeable ends within the framework of time—perhaps even within the framework of a given RPG campaign. Such wars as Armageddon, Ragnarok, and Gotterdamerung are not included among these lesser wars, for such end-all conflicts may be nothing more or less than prophetic visions of different theaters in the last, final drama of the great celestial conflict. But we do know about some of the lesser wars, which are great enough in the eyes of gods and men.

In the Nordic myths, for example, the Aesir of Odin had their war with the Vanir, of which we hear precious little except for the truces. We have somewhat more information about the rivalry between the gods and the giants, but that was neither a general nor a constant struggle.

In Irish legend, always fraught with its



fair share of travail, we have the stories of the wars between the gods (the people of Dana) and the Firbolgs, human inhabitants of Ireland who originally derived from Greece or Spain. The gods also fought a war with the Fomors. The gods won in both cases, but later (and temporarily) withdrew from Ireland, with the advent of the first Gaels.

The Olympians of Greek myth, for their part, fought one great war against the Titans at the time of the overthrow of the Titan god-king, Cronus. This was the same war in which Prometheus (Forethought) and his brother Epimetheus (Afterthought) fought on the side of Zeus against Cronus and their brother Titans. Later, another war was fought against the giants, who were related to the Titans and who attempted to put an end to Zeus's rule. It was a long and ferocious struggle, and the Olympians were frequently hard-pressed, but at last they prevailed. Afterward, lesser wars were fought against other deadly beings: one against Typhon, the youngest son of Gaea (Mother Earth), who attempted to avenge the defeat of the giants; and one against the Aloeids, who laid siege to Olympus itself. [For more on the Aloeids, as well as on ways to use deities in RPG campaigns, see "The Chest of the Aloeids," in DUNGEON® issue #21.]

The tale of wars is repeated, in one form or another, in virtually every national mythology. We can assume that the motivations of the gods were clear-cut and always the same: If they did not win, they would fall. While immortal gods would not die in most cases, they could certainly be supplanted or imprisoned in one way or another. (Immortality is a dicey thing to deal with in a role-playing game. After all, as someone wiser than I once remarked, no one is going to hang around until the end of time to find out if this or that being is really going to live forever. For RPG purposes, probably the best definition for immortality as it applies to the gods is that, while they can be incapacitated, mutilated, or even dismembered, they cannot be finally and definitely killed. As in the Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris, it's always possible to gather the scattered pieces of a god back together, make the god whole, and bring him or her back to life. Even this might have its exceptions, however, depending on the particular mythology being used.)

Victory, then, must be the goal, as in any war. Given the need and the time, the gods will enlist any allies they can to help them achieve that goal. The great immortals are merely acting as humans in the same situation would probably act.

Gods among men

In the Mesopotamian cities of the Babylonian period, a city's god was considered to be the direct and actual ruler of the

city. The king was merely his steward; the priests were his voice. The god was conceived as actually living among men in the great temple of the city, and the temple was accordingly lavishly decorated and stocked with rich foods, fine furnishings, and handsome slaves. The first portion of all the spoils of war belonged to the god, as well as a particular and significant stipend from the state's annual budget. In addition, rich and poor alike were expected to make frequent and appropriate gifts to the god. Obviously, a city's priesthood waxed fat and prosperous under this treatment, and it's not stretching a point to conclude that—in the priests' eyes, at least—everyone in the city existed for the sake of the god. Indeed, many citizens

were the gods' children, for the Babylonian deities, like those of Greece, had an abiding affection for human beauty and were not above demonstrating it.

For the Babylonians, then, there was no question of the gods' relationship to and interest in mankind. Humans were the gods' direct vassals, if not their slaves, and loyal devotion was rewarded with earthly gifts—a portion of which was returned to the gods, of course—just as if the overlord were a human monarch. In fact, the gods of the Babylonian pantheon made no bones about their need for humankind. When at one point the gods decided to destroy wretched, ungrateful, unrepent-

Continued on page 71



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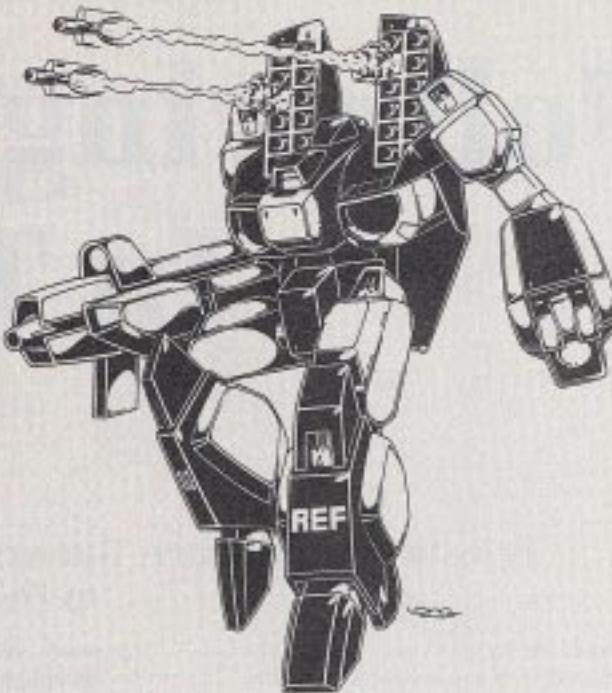
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Following In Their Footsteps

Priests should learn the skills—and hobbies—of their gods
by Fraser Sherman

What do clerics do in their spare time? For example, if you served Athena, the goddess of arts and crafts, which hobby would interest you more: fungus collecting or tapestry weaving? Wouldn't clerics of Artemis enjoy hunting and tracking more than music or mining? The same focusing of interests applies to the cults of Ares, Hephaestus, Pan, and all other gods in the AD&D® game. A cleric's interests and outlook should be appropriate to the faith he chooses.

This article adds details to the portraits of the Olympians in *Legends & Lore* (*L&L*) and suggests both a personal style and a selection of nonweapon proficiencies for their clerics. It can serve as an example for role-playing clerics in any pantheon. DMs using these guidelines should get the players to want to use them, without forcing them to do so.

New nonweapons proficiencies mentioned in this article are marked with an asterisk (*) and described later. This article

also describes two minor Greek deities not previously covered, and gives thoughts on the game-balance aspects of using religion-based proficiencies.

The Olympians

L&L suggests that clerics of different Greek deities will never go adventuring together; this strikes me as too limited a guideline. With a few exceptions noted in the text, I hold that clerics of different faiths will indeed go on adventures to-



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gether, but always on a competitive basis. If clerics of different gods travel in the same party, they will each strive to outdo the other, thus "proving" the superiority of each cleric's personal faith and religion. Each cleric must fight more, heal more, and generally do more than other clerics. Never settle for second place!

While many of the Greek gods are good, all of them are capable of great vindictiveness when crossed. Refusing their advances, offending them in any way, comparing one's own talents to theirs—all of these things bring swift, often cruel retribution. Priests and priestesses must defend their gods' reputations and will be expected to exact retribution if their deities are slighted or if they themselves are insulted.

Only priests of Poseidon are permitted to ride horses, since he created them (as explained in *L&L*). All other clerics of the Greek pantheon must make do with mules, donkeys, unicorns, etc.



Zeus

Zeus is the king of the gods. His clerics are proud and expect deference from everyone. Clerics of other gods must acknowledge the ultimate supremacy of Zeus and his church; this doesn't mean that other clerics won't compete with Zeus's, but they should never be openly disrespectful. No other clerics are allowed to cast control weather spells.

Zeus is a notorious womanizer and his clerics follow suit, treating women outside their own clergy quite cavalierly. Female clerics of Zeus (a minority) look down on other men and usually take husbands from within their priesthood.

Zeus's clerics study the sky constantly and so acquire both weather sense and direction sense at 1st level (the latter for open-air use only). Mastering the skill of

airborne riding is considered a mark of great status.

At the beginning of Zeus's reign, he, Poseidon, and Hades drew lots to determine who would rule the sky, the sea, and the underworld. Clerics of Zeus learn no skills relating to water or the underground, since this might imply that Zeus didn't get the best of the deal.

Aphrodite

The goddess of love and beauty extracts tribute from lovers, romantics, and those who agree that luxury and self-indulgence are the goals most worth having. Her clerics are similarly indulgent and not prone to go adventuring—unless, of course, their latest paramours are members of adventuring parties (they are never without companionship of the opposite sex). Her clerics surround themselves with beauty, and they favor skills such as artistic ability, dancing, musical instrument, singing, etc., skipping all things related to manual labor. There are also rumors that they are trained in skills not found on most proficiency lists (wink, wink, nudge, nudge).

Apollo

Apollo is a classic playboy—charming, handsome, talented, and, like his father Zeus, very fond of female company. His clerics—all male—aspire to the same style as their lord. They never stint (shabby robes and shoddy weapons do not reflect on the wealth and glory of Apollo), but they are dauntless, courageous warriors in the cause of good. Apollo is the god of prophecy, and his clerics make frequent use of spells like *augury* and divination, sometimes receiving visions and omens from Apollo. Despite the difference in personal styles, Apollo's clerics work well with the priestesses of his sister Artemis, but they never work with clerics of Pan (the two gods clash over who is the better musician).

These clerics study musical instruments, specializing in the lyre, and sometimes learn artistic ability or singing. They also learn healing, one of Apollo's secondary functions,

Ares

The war god Ares delights in carnage and bloodshed; the end justifies the means, as long as the end is war and victory. His worshipers are those warriors who favor brute force over strategy, and plunder over fair play. Ares's clerics are crass, brutal, and ruthless. They get what they want, and what they want is victory in battle, with glory and booty afterward. Clerics of Ares and Athena will oppose each other at every turn, except when they are on the same side in war (and even then, they hardly cooperate—they simply keep from killing each other).

Clerics of Ares pride themselves on their fighting prowess; losing a fight is tremendously humiliating. Fighting dirty is quite

acceptable, and cheating to save face is approved of (the world should not think that Ares's clerics can be bested), though it hurts the cleric's standing in the church to be so weak (cheating in this context involves drugging your foe or stealing his magical sword, as opposed to 'honest' tactics like stabbing him in the back). The priesthood is mostly male and is a bullying, unpleasant lot with little use for other clerics or nonfighters.

Ares' clerics are interested in only combat-oriented proficiencies like blind-fighting or charioteering, or ones that prove their toughness (e.g., endurance or survival skills). They have absolute contempt for skills involving the arts or manual labor.

Artemis

The goddess of the hunt is one of the three virgin goddesses of Greek myths and is the most demanding on that point. Only women may be her clerics, and they must be virgins. A man who so much as sees a cleric of Artemis unclothed will be punished severely (but her clerics avoid any public show of nudity). Her creed is a spartan one, involving simple, quiet ceremonies in woodland groves or unadorned temples. Although *L&L* makes Artemis a druidic goddess, I give that role to Demeter (hunting doesn't strike me as a druidic activity).

Artemis is mistress of every wilderness skill. When hunting for sport, she chooses either monsters or the largest and most dangerous of mortal beasts for her prey. Her hunting weapons have no bonuses but can strike any creature under demigod status.

Artemis's priestesses like the thrill of the hunt and prefer hunting down an enemy to merely seeking treasure. They study wilderness skills, favoring hunting, fishing, and tracking at 1st level. Since hunting involves a long-range weapon, clerics who take this skill should take a staff-sling or sling as a weapon; if this seems too restrictive, the DM might allow the use of a bow when hunting but not for combat.

Athena

Athena is mistress of every art and craft and is the second virgin goddess. Less demanding than Artemis, she allows male and female clerics in her cult and requires them to stay chaste only until marriage. Followers of the goddess of wisdom want to learn everything: knowledge, skills, and the secrets of human nature. They are expected to have minimum wisdom and intelligence scores of 12. Though they adventure for lawful-good ends, their greatest delights are in unearthing knowledge. Their favored proficiencies are the artistic ones, like artistic ability, weaving, and pottery (it's not enough to make a good, useful pot; it should be elegant, too), but never musical instruments (Athena is rather embarrassed by her ineptitude at that skill). Many of these clerics are

January 16, 1990

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sliced by jagged bolts of lightning.
The storm was growing,
gaining power ...**

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scholars and are intensely competitive, for Athena is as proud of her skills as Aphrodite is of her beauty.

Demeter

Demeter is mistress not only of agriculture but of all plants, an earth-mother well suited to being a druidic goddess. Because her daughter must spend part of the year as the wife of Hades, Demeter spends that time mourning, which is why the earth is barren and fruitless throughout the winter.

Demeter's druidic sect is more cooperative with farmers than most, teaching them how to work the soil without harming it (using crop rotation rather than slash-and-burn, for instance). The earth is envisioned as a great mother who will nurture her children if they respect and care for her. Favored skills among her followers are agriculture and herbalism.



Dionysus

The god of wine is chaotic to the point of insanity. His church teaches that madness and drunkenness are liberating influences, drawing the innermost self out of hiding so that strength is revealed and the deepest weaknesses and fears can be confronted. On a larger scale, chaos is good because it frees each individual and group to find its own potential and strength.

Clerics of Dionysus urge their flock to embrace drunkenness and madness as a blessed escape from their troubles. They will work against any government they deem too lawful. While many lawful-good rulers dread them for this, lawful-evil tyrants have even more reason for fear. Celebrations and church rituals resemble (and are) wildly uninhibited orgies, but the most important rituals are sacred mysteries hidden from all but the highest priests.

Priests of Dionysus are expert wine tasters, and they usually learn to make wine as well. For obvious reasons, this cult is not a very popular or stable one.

Hades

As was pointed out in "Welcome to Hades," in DRAGON® issue #113, Hades's evil is not so much active maliciousness as ruthless cold-bloodedness. This god doesn't go out of his way to cause pain and suffering, but he won't hesitate to do so if it is necessary to his plans. His clerics are much the same: ruthless and dangerous if crossed, but they wouldn't go out of their way to kick a cripple (which could not be said of some of Ares's faithful).

Hades teaches that all mineral wealth—gold, gems, and the like—belongs to him by right. The avid collection of wealth, by any and all means, is the chief reason his clerics go adventuring. They dislike dwarves (who plunder so much of Hades' 'property') and hate undead (who have cheated the lord of the underworld). They never use animate dead spells, and they are known to battle and destroy undead (and those who create them) with all the fervor of the staunchest paladin.

Clerics of Hades will study any skill relating to the underworld environment. They may take the appraising skill but only regarding gems. They use no skills involving air or water, as these are within the spheres of interest of Zeus and Poseidon (see "Zeus" for details).

Hecate

The evil of the mistress of magic is the evil of power-hunger; she delights in control and domination the way Ares glories in strength or Hades in wealth. As magic is the ultimate source of power, Hecate considers her control of magic to be the ultimate power trip.

All magic-users revere Hecate as the source of their power, even if they are not of her alignment. Her church doctrine states that finding and holding power is the primary goal of all life, and mastery of magic is the ideal path to power. A major duty of Hecate's clergy is to convince good-aligned spell-casters to use their powers for selfish and evil ends. Magic-users of any alignment can receive instruction from Hecate's church in return for undertaking some task, swearing loyalty, or offering some potent magical item. All this is in the service of Hecate's great vision—the creation of a theocratic empire in which her will is carried out by a ruling class of priests and magic-users.

Her clerics are quite ruthless in the pursuit of power and influence, and they use every trick from bargaining to blackmail. Magical items are their passion; as physical manifestations of power, such items are the only treasures these clerics value. Anything these clerics cannot use is donated to the church; finding a particularly rare or powerful item or a high-level

scroll will earn the finder much honor.

Priests of Hecate will study any skill they see as enhancing their power or prestige, as appropriate to the campaign. All take particular delight in creating their own magical items. The skill spellcraft is required.

Hephaestus

At Hephaestus's birth, Zeus hurled him from Olympus in disgust at his ugliness; the fall to Earth made this god a cripple. Although a minor deity, he is a master beyond compare in every skill related to working metal or stone. His workshops are filled with tables and chairs that move by themselves, and with metal humanoids built to assist him.

Because their church is small, his clerics rarely stand on ceremony. In their temples, which resemble gigantic smithies, these clerics work side-by-side with their worshipers (blacksmiths, goldsmiths, armorers, etc.), offering or receiving training, developing new forging techniques, encouraging finer production, and so forth. Those clerics who go adventuring seek to raise public awareness of their church and attract more respect for their lord. All of Hephaestus's clerics must help the disabled or crippled, and they are not offended by low physical attractiveness.

These clerics take skills in the same fields as their god, like blacksmithing, armorer, weaponsmithing, stonemasonry, or goldsmithing*. They must have a minimum dexterity of 14.

Hera

Queen of the gods and wife of Zeus, Hera is, as *L&L* notes, a jealous and vindictive woman (understandably so, given her husband's faithlessness). In her quest for vengeance, she may use any of her clerics as pawns. She is often invoked by those wronged by adultery.

Followers of Hera are vengeful even beyond the norm of the Greek clergy, and are capable of plotting retribution for years before they act. Since they tend to be short-tempered, suspicious, and arrogant, such clerics rarely lack targets. Killing a victim is considered merciful; destroying his world and degrading him completely is far more satisfying.

When between schemes, Hera's clerics go adventuring, but their suspicions and snooping draws them into intrigues and palace plots more than into monster-bashes in the wilderness. These clerics are the linchpins of Hera's vast network of spies, and they are accustomed to carrying out seemingly bizarre instructions ("Stand on the corner and wave your shield until the wizard in the green robe drops his handkerchief. Then follow him.") In many ways, the sect is a rather dour one.

These clerics favor any spy-related non-weapon proficiency, such as disguise, forgery, reading lips, eavesdropping*, stealth*, and tailing*.



Hermes

Con man, trickster, master thief, mischief-maker, messenger, and agent of the other gods—in all his aspects, Hermes is renowned for his quick wits and keen mind. His church is one of the most active in the affairs of the world. His clerics negotiate trade agreements, organize fairs and markets, carry messages, and serve as fences for thieves' guilds. ("If you pray to the god for the return of what is lost, it will be returned—when suitable appreciation is shown.") His clerics are tricky, conniving, and self-interested, but they are also indispensable and are certainly better to have on your side than to have working against you. They must have minimum intelligence scores of 12 and are expected to use their wits; far better to talk or think your way out of problem than depend on mere force. They adventure for fun almost as much as for wealth.

All of Hermes' clerics will be proficient runners at 1st level. The other favored skills are appraising or haggling*; nothing is more humiliating for them than being bested at bargaining. Some DMs may want to allow them certain thieving skills as well, such as stealth*.

Nike

This very lawful goddess is worshiped by strongly lawful mortals and those who actually maintain the law (judges and city guards, for instance). Her cult is small

because of the strict standards imposed on her worshipers. Her clerics are slain for their transgressions, and ordinary followers will be stricken with the loss of a spell level or a plague of bad luck (-2 on all saves) for a week if they fail her.

Her clergy are known as 'justifiers' from the belief that any action serving the law is inherently justified. Grim and serious, they are committed to rooting out evil and chaos, and they frequently clash with the cult of Dionysus. They will take any skill that enables them to serve the goddess and the causes of justice better (as fits the campaign), and they disdain 'frivolous' skills like music or weaving.

Pan

Pan is as chaotic a deity as Dionysus, but he does not preach chaos; it's simply that he embodies the evershifting powers of nature itself. Despite his alignment, he wouldn't be a bad druidic deity. Pan is worshiped by those who love nature and by those who fear and wish to appease it. His clerics are a wild lot, dwelling in the wilderness. They are friendly toward those who respect nature, but anyone who threatens the natural order will draw their wrath.

Pan is another womanizing god, the incarnation of nature's fertility. Clerics of both sexes are notoriously amorous, and their spring and midsummer festivities are legendary.

Pan's priests learn to play the syrinx at 1st level. They have an interest in all wilderness skills except animal handling, and they learn to speak the language of satyrs as soon as possible, using that tongue among themselves.

Poseidon

Perhaps the most arrogant of the Olympians, Poseidon considers it a great injustice that Zeus, not he, rules the gods. He compensates by demanding constant worship and sacrifices from all who live by or work upon the sea. His proud clerics tolerate no disrespect; aboard ship, their will is law, even over Zeus's priests. The priests work hard to gain as many converts and as much tribute as possible (some say they hope to make their lord so great he can replace Zeus), and they favor adventures that will bring their lord—and themselves—fame and glory.

To flaunt Poseidon's creation, the horse,

all of his clerics must take riding at 1st level. They would sooner walk than ride another type of mount (except for sea-going mounts). They will study any water-related skill (swimming, navigation, seamanship, and so on), but they'll learn no skills primarily dealing with the air or the underground, as explained in the section on Zeus.



Prometheus

Prometheus is the great idealist of the Greek gods, a champion of mankind even against the wrath of Zeus. Some say that as mankind's reputed creator, Prometheus feels for us as a father for his children.

Clerics of Prometheus are committed to helping humanity everywhere, but they prefer teaching people to solve their own problems—teaching a village how to defend itself against marauding orcs rather than simply slaying the humanoids, for example. Where the trouble is too great for that, they step in without hesitation. They are clever and self-reliant, with minimum intelligence and wisdom scores of 12. They are expected to use creativity and ingenuity to win their battles.

Prometheus is a master of every skill and craft, and his followers are encouraged to choose freely from the skills available. Sacrificing weapon slots for nonweapon proficiencies is considered commendable.

Tyche

Denied respect by most of the Olympians, Tyche nonetheless maintains a whimsical, light-hearted attitude toward life: It's the way the game is played, not how much you're worshiped at the end of it. Her clerics are expected to live life to the fullest, extracting the maximum adventure and fun from everything. Common worshipers tend to come and go from the



church quite frequently, depending on how much luck they need at a particular time.

Her clerics learn gaming at 1st level, but they have no particular skill preferences beyond that.

New Olympians

Two minor gods that may be of interest to adventuring groups using the Greek pantheon follow, with appropriate notes on their respective cults.

ASCLEPIUS (god of healing and medicine)

Demigod

ARMOR CLASS: 2

MOVE: 12"

HIT POINTS: 150

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 6-36

SPECIAL ATTACKS: See below

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Healing

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 45%

SIZE: M (6')

ALIGNMENT: Neutral good

WORSHIPER'S ALIGNMENT: Any (especially healers and those who seek healing)

SYMBOL: Silver vial

PLANE: Prime Material

CLERIC/DRUID: 15th-level cleric

FIGHTER: 10th-level fighter

MAGIC-USER/ILLUSIONIST: 10th level in each

THIEF/ASSASSIN: Nil

MONK/BARD: Nil

PSIONIC ABILITY: VI

S: 12 I: 23 W: 19

D: 23 C: 25 CH: 24

The son of Apollo, Asclepius grew up to be the greatest healer of mythological Greece. But when he discovered an herb that could raise the dead, Hades protested to Zeus, who struck Asclepius down. Continued worship of Asclepius by those on Earth led to his becoming a demigod.

Asclepius can heal himself at will, and he always carries the maximum number of clerical curing spells. He bears a staff that can strike for 6-36 hp damage and functions as both a *staff of healing* and a *staff of the serpent* (a caduceus, a winged staff with serpents entwined around it).

Though strong, this demigod is far more concerned with healing than fighting.

Clerics of Asclepius see evil as an infection that must be cleansed. They are champions and protectors of the innocent and always take healing as a 1st-level proficiency. They will never use any spell or device that raises the dead (this does not include *death's door* spells).

HESTIA (goddess of the hearth)

Lesser goddess

ARMOR CLASS: 0

MOVE: 12"

HIT POINTS: 166

NO. OF ATTACKS: Nil

DAMAGE/ATTACK: Nil

SPECIAL ATTACKS: See below

SPECIAL DEFENCES: See below

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 75%

SIZE: S (5')

ALIGNMENT: Neutral good

WORSHIPER'S ALIGNMENT: Good, and all those with homes and families

SYMBOL: Silver flame

PLANE: Prime Material

CLERIC/DRUID: 20th-level cleric

FIGHTER: Nil

MAGIC-USER/ILLUSIONIST: 14th-level magic-user

THIEF/ASSASSIN: Nil

MONK/BARD: 5th-level bard

S: 16 I: 20 W: 25

D: 19 C: 23 CH: 20

When half-mortal Dionysus was deified and entered Olympus, Zeus decreed that one of the other Olympians would have to step down. Hestia volunteered and now dwells on the Prime Material plane.

The goddess of the hearth is protector and patroness of the home and marriage, though she is a more gentle and affectionate governor of marriage than is Hera. She is skilled at cooking and fire-building, and she appears to be a quiet, motherly type, a quality that accounts for most of her charisma. She is the third virgin goddess, but her clerics, like Athena's, stay chaste only until marriage (which is regarded as an exalted state). At will, Hestia can *create food and water* or *cast sanctuary* (no saving throw), *ward* (with the effect of any glyph or symbol; no save) or endow someone with up to 50% magic resistance for one turn (this is done to protect only the helpless, never to protect an adventurer or a PC). She uses protective spells rather than offensive ones wherever possible. As goddess of the hearth, Hestia's symbol is the friendly flame; no one within 100' of her takes any damage from fire.

Her church is a small, quiet one, but it has a loyal flock. Her clerics who go adventuring do so to protect or guard their people, never to gain fame for the church. These clerics tend to be proficient in fire-building and cooking.

New skills for all

A few new skills are introducing in this article. These may be used by any character class the DM deems appropriate, but they are presented here for use by the clerics and druids of the Greek gods. See the AD&D 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*

for details on skills not described herein.

Eavesdropping: This skill is treated like the thief's hear-noise ability, starting at 5% and going up 5% per level after the 1st. No racial bonuses are given.

Goldsmithing: The ability to create objects of beauty from worked gold. Characters may take silversmithing as an alternative.

Haggling: This is a skill useful in selling or bartering items. A successful roll allows the PC to buy an item at 10% less than its asked price (or 10% over the base price if selling); a roll of 4 or less means a 25% change. A roll of 19 or 20 means the other party is outraged by the last offer and refuses to negotiate further. DMs might require this to be role-played; naturally charming characters should have an edge, while PCs who are arrogant or simply demand the 'right' price may blow it on any die roll.

Riding, seaborne: A PC with this proficiency may ride either a sea horse or hippocampus (he must specify which). The proficiency allows him to steer the mount with his knees and urge it to greater speed, as with the other riding proficiencies. If the DM wishes to expand this proficiency to cover sea lions and dolphins as well, that's up to him. This skill is exempt from the restriction that clerics of Poseidon ride only horses.

Stealth: This talent is treated like the thief's silent-movement ability, starting at 5% and adding 5% per level after the 1st. Wearing armor results in the same penalties as given for thieves.

Tailing: This skill involves tracking in cities. By keeping the subject in sight without being noticed, the character can follow him with a base chance of 10% plus 5% for each level after the 1st. If the character fails his roll, he may make a second one, at +4 to pick up the trail again. On a 19 or 20, the victim knows he's being shadowed; if the victim tries to shake the tail, roll again at +6.

Wine making: This is the knowledge of how to make wine, from selecting the best soil for grapes, to bottling and storage. On a 4 or less, the vintage produced will be exceptional.

Wine tasting: This is the ability to appreciate and judge fine wines. On a successful roll, the character can identify the kind of wine he is drinking, tell good wine from bad, and great from good. On a roll of 4 or less, the character can name the year of the vintage, and recognize the vineyard.

Problems and solutions

The biggest drawback with this system is that it gives some clerics unfair advantages. Arguably, a cleric of Artemis or Ares will gain more useful skills than followers of Athena or Hestia, and clerics with few mandated selections will have more options left to them than those with many. If you consider this a problem, here



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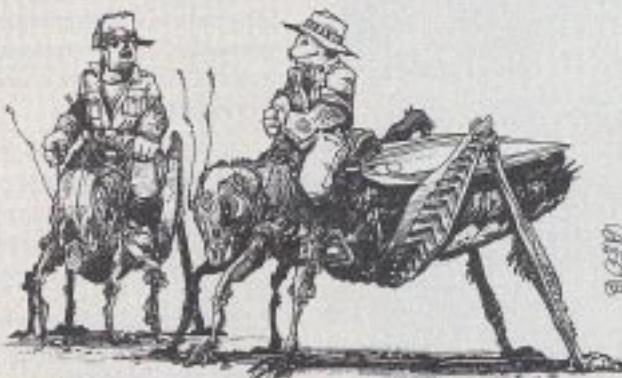
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are some possible solutions:

1. If clerics of certain gods gain special abilities, like those described in the *Glossography of the WORLD OF GREYHAWK®* boxed set, those clerics with restricted proficiencies could have a reduced experience-point penalty for gaining their special powers.

2. Clerics with few required proficiencies might have to retake the ones they do have, so they become more proficient in those skills.

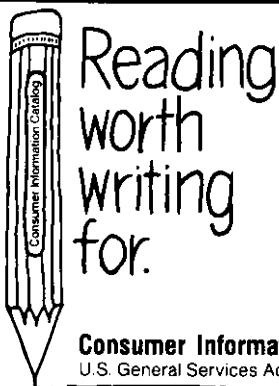
3. Some clerics may gain bonus shills. For example, clerics of Athena or Hermes might gain an extra proficiency to use as they will.

4. Just as not all clerics can use sixth- or seventh-level spells because of their deities' statuses, so not all clerics get the same treatment in nonweapon proficiencies. Those with proficiencies that are less useful must work harder to find way to use them, and the DM should make such opportunities available.

For better or for worse, these are my suggestions on the characters and proficiencies appropriate for one pantheon. It is hoped that they will encourage role-players to become more—proficient. Ω

New Nonweapon Proficiencies Table

Proficiency	# of slots required	Relevant ability	Check modifier
Eavesdropping	1	Intelligence	+1
Goldsmithing	2	Dexterity	+1
Haggling	1	Charisma	0
Riding, seaborne	2	Wisdom	-2
Stealth	1	Dexterity	0
Tailing	1	Intelligence	+1
Wine making	1	Wisdom	0
Wine tasting	1	Wisdom	0



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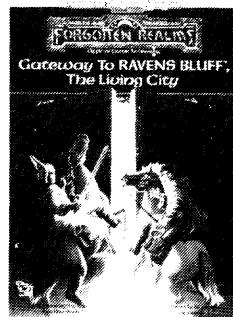
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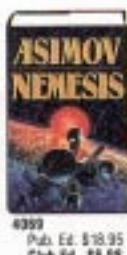
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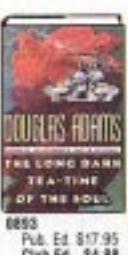


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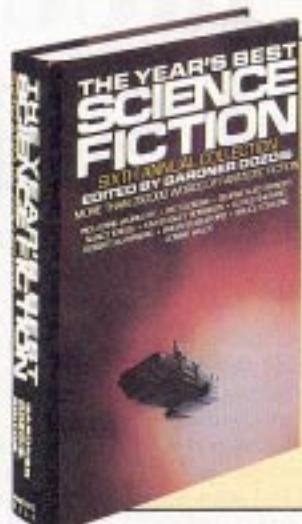
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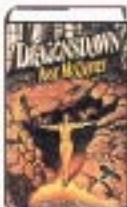
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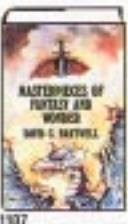
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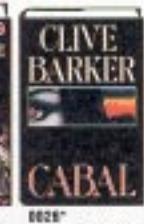
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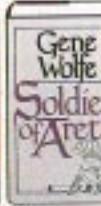
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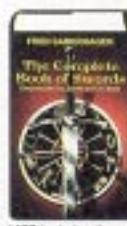
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Your Place in the Grand Scheme

Clerics, alignment, and religion—and your campaign

by Tom Little

The importance of clerics in AD&D® game campaigns is often underestimated. In particular, clerics should bear the burden of establishing and maintaining the contending alignments that define the large-scale struggles in the game world. This role can be quite direct and tangible if the clerics act on the behalf of deities who have specific purposes and interests in the campaign. So that clerics can operate in this capacity, the natures of alignment and religion must be established in the campaign, and the relationship of these two facets of the game world to clerics as a class must be defined.

It must be emphasized that the incorporation of specific religions and philosophies into a game will only be successful if all the players and the DM are comfortable with the idea, and if religion in the game is kept distinct from religion in reality. Many people would feel offended (and rightly so) if their personal religious beliefs were trivialized by translation into game terms. This article treats game religion in such a way as to minimize this possibility. However, respect for the feelings of each player in a gaming group is essential to a successful campaign and must always come first. Should any player

be offended by a group's treatment of religion in a game, that treatment should be revised or discarded without argument.

Issues & answers

The first thing to do is to establish the roles of Good, Evil, Law, Chaos, and all deities within the game world. This is ideally done by the DM with the players' cooperation and contributions. Questions that must be answered include these:

- Are Good and Evil primal forces in the universe, or are they merely ways of classifying the behavior of individuals?
- What is the cosmogony of the game world? How did man and the other races originate? Is there a multitude of deities, or one, or none?
- What is the relationship of the deities to the physical universe? Are they its creators or its products?
- What is the relationship of the deities to the individuals in the campaign? Do the deities actively intervene in directing the world? Do they communicate with individuals, or do they only observe, making their influences felt through the work of humans and other creatures of the world?

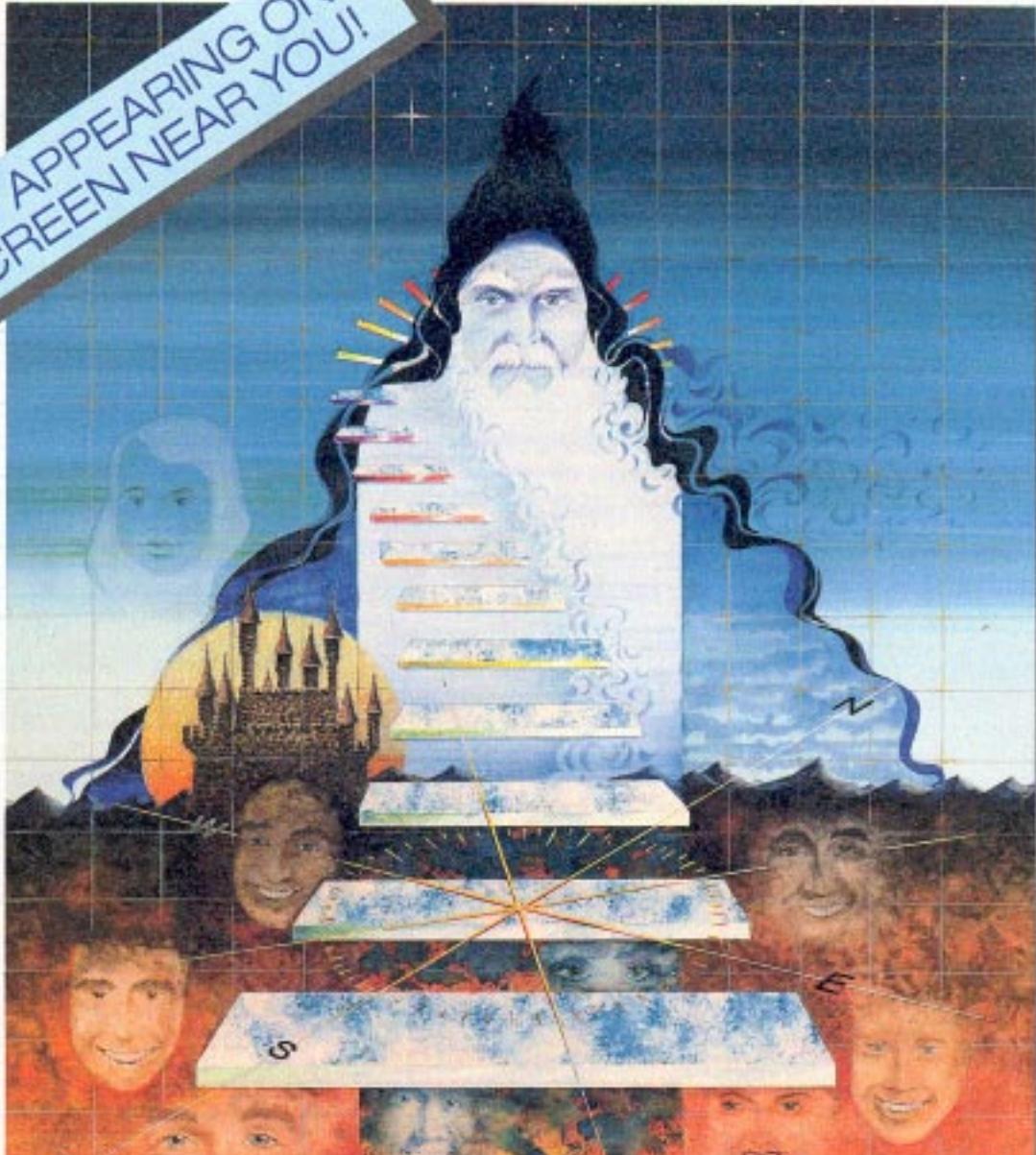
Most published material in the AD&D system that relates to these questions suggests a world in which the forces of Good and Evil (and Law and Chaos) are primal, forming a metaphysical system in which deities and characters alike are obliged to act. Furthermore, the gods are themselves inhabitants and actors in the multiverse and are *not* its creators. They intervene in worldly affairs on the rare occasions when they have sufficient incentive, inclination, or time to do so.

In a universe such as this, clerics serve the wishes of their deities, explicit or implied, and rarely consider the more cosmological or theological issues. Deities are likely to have goals similar to those of characters, but on a grander scale. Details of religious practice are probably of only secondary concern to such deities, who are no doubt preoccupied in power struggles with their rivals, in which only persons and artifacts of great power have much significance. Under these circumstances, the notes on alignment given in the *Player's Handbook* and the *Dungeon Master's Guide* are adequate for the purpose of defining the approaches of the



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rival deities and their followers.

Such a scenario establishes a specific role for characters in general, and clerics in particular, who effectively become the henchmen of beings vastly more powerful than themselves. The burden is on the DM to determine the "will of the gods" and to allow this information to trickle down into the campaign.

Other scenarios lead to quite different roles for the players and DM. For example, alignment might be given priority over the wishes of the deities. High-level clerics would have the responsibility for establishing the philosophical codes characterizing the various game alignments, and of converting others to their own worldview. In a variation of this, the deities could disseminate philosophies to their clerics. In either case, characters would be obliged to follow moral principles rather than the wishes of superior beings.

Another possibility is to allow religions of a monotheistic sort, patterned after Judeo-Christian faiths as they were practiced in medieval times. If this scenario is adopted, the supreme being of these religions should not be brought into the game in any direct way. Such a god would almost certainly be regarded as an omnipotent creator. The various "deities" of the game, if present at all, would be the angels, demons, pagan gods, and other supernatural beings encountered universally

in the religions of the Middle Ages. The supreme being might communicate through these lesser deities, but would never appear as an actor in the game. This not only reserves for the supreme being an aura of proper dignity and reverence, but is also the only practical thing to do in games terms. (There is no sense in involving a literally omnipotent being in any game situation.) In this scenario, clerics are again servants of a higher power. However, the nature of this power means that the clerics must take a more active role in discovering their god's will through the study of scripture, prayer and meditation, and so on. The lessers deities might also play a role in providing the clerics with guidance.

Yet another approach is to make the campaign world one in which deities never involve themselves in any unambiguous way in the world or its history. The gods' existence is an article of faith on the part of their followers. In such a scenario, high-level clerics believe that their deities do communicate with them, grant spells, etc., but there is no direct evidence obliging others to accept these clerics' beliefs or interpretations. Such a world will have countless philosophies, some complex and some simple. The origins of such a world and its inhabitants, as well as its purpose, are likely to be a mystery to the individuals therein. Again, the cleric establishes

his own guidelines for conduct, based on the tradition of his particular religion.

These possibilities do not begin to exhaust the choices. The reason for describing these few is that they give some idea of the many different ways in which the goals of clerics can be established. It gives richness and stability to a campaign to set it against a cosmic background. The clerics must be the primary interpreters and agents of the cosmic powers, whatever those might be in a particular campaign. On the small scale of adventuring, such considerations can be avoided. However, once the campaign has progressed to a regional or global scale, the underlying goals and purposes should be well understood, and it is best if they are established from the outset. Even on the small scale of a single adventure, a character who has an opinion regarding his place in the scheme of things is much more interesting and enjoyable than one who does not. It is one more aspect of characterization, and one that makes the cleric class in particular come alive and become something more than a walking first-aid kit.

Starting a church

If the places of humans and deities within the campaign world are understood and established, the role of religion in the game can be developed. The description of the ceremony spell in *Unearthed Arcana* is inspirational in this regard. Establishment of a congregation or church by a cleric should not be dismissed as boring or irrelevant to the progress of the game. It is through the practice of the cleric's religion that such a character may extend his belief system into the campaign. The cleric has the opportunity not only to acquire a few dedicated followers or henchmen, but also to spread his alignment through an area of the campaign world, making it a place more to his liking and strengthening his standing with respect to his deity and alignment as well. Even a 3rd-level cleric is allowed to preach and bring people into his religion. This gives the cleric the possibility for large-scale influence on the game world at a much lower level than is possible for characters of other classes.

DMs and players alike are encouraged to investigate the many possibilities of bringing religious practice into game terms. For example, in a region where churchgoers are accustomed to tithing, a preaching cleric is likely to receive monetary donations afterward. A system was devised for my campaign in which church attendance and tithing were determined by dice rolls, keyed to the cleric's charisma and recent events.

Consider the possibility of bonuses to morale and loyalty when henchmen share the religion of the cleric who adventures with them. Consider also the sanctuary afforded a party of adventurers by a church or temple of their own religion. Perhaps some cultures or societies in the milieu have a prohibition against harming

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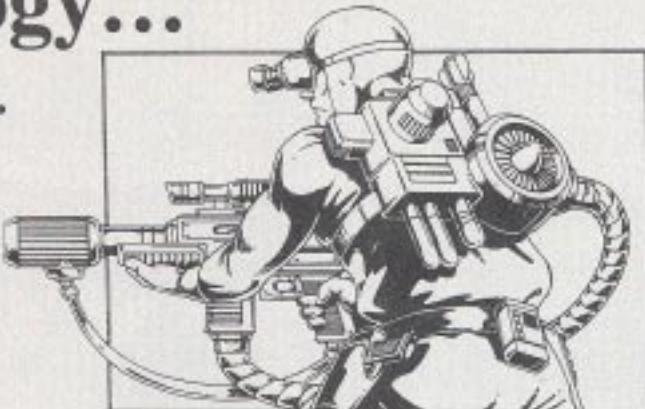
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unarmed clerics or druids.

It goes without saying that these and many other benefits accruing to clerics will apply only when a cleric actually devotes his attention (or at least part of it) to the practice and contemplation of his religion. He must study sacred writings, establish places of worship, and provide aid to those espousing his religion, as appropriate to his level and the particulars of his religion as determined by the player and DM. Donations and tithes received must be used to support the church, not to line the character's pockets (at least in the case of good or lawful clerics).

What of the religion of nonclerical characters? Many will certainly practice some particular religion. A good way to establish a character's religion is to draw up a table of the most popular religions in each PC's place of origin or residence. Each religion will have a definite alignment associated with it, though the followers of the religion will generally have a range of alignments. The table should give probabilities (in terms of dice rolls) for a character to belong each of the various religions. Such a table could also include a probability of the PC having no religion. (In wild territory, many individuals may be unconcerned with religious matters; they can be atheistic, agnostic, or otherwise occupied as suits the campaign.) If the character's alignment is already known, two or three rolls may be made on the religion table, with the player selecting the religion closest to the PC's alignment. (The process can also be reversed, determining religion first, then alignment.) Religion and alignment need not match, as some individuals may espouse religions that do not perfectly suit their own outlook on life. A cleric, of course, must always be of the same alignment as his religion.

Are you good or bad?

The problem of alignment is an old and complex one. If a player really wishes to use his character's alignment to guide him in play, he may find the paragraphs pertaining to alignment in the game rules to

be too general and difficult to apply. The solution to this difficulty lies with the gaming group and DM, who have the authority to define specifically what is meant by each alignment in the context of the particular campaign.

There is another difficulty involved in using alignment in role-playing. A chaotic character may realize that acting on his own behalf would destroy the group and all its members. Is he playing out of character by going along with the others? A lawful character may feel compelled to obey a senseless command, a good character may have to kill to survive, and so on. Many players feel that there is often a conflict between "playing in alignment" and playing intelligently.

This dilemma is not a real dilemma. It comes from considering the requirements of alignment too superficially and not integrating alignment with intelligence and wisdom to produce a consistent character.

Intelligence dictates the degree to which a character's outlook (alignment) is rationalized. An unintelligent chaotic merely resents being bossed around, whereas an intelligent chaotic consciously espouses some philosophy, such as anarchism or existentialism, that promotes the individual over the group. These two chaotics will act quite differently if given an order. The unintelligent chaotic will resent any order and will probably have to be physically coerced if what is asked of him is in any way difficult or dangerous. The intelligent chaotic, on the other hand, will readily obey any order that he considers to be logical and in his own best interest. He may resist authority that he believes to be in error, although he is open to persuasion if any one can convince him that he will ultimately benefit from obedience. (He will never consider obedience beneficial as an end in itself, but as a means to personal advancement he will accept it.)

The following notes summarize how intelligence and alignment can affect a PC's personality:

Intelligence less than 8: The character's alignment is inarticulate and unrationa-

lized. He cannot give reasons for his behavior, but he acts on his natural inclinations. A neutral character of low intelligence is easily swayed by circumstance and peer pressure. A chaotic is contrary, while a lawful is docile and obedient. A good character is naturally sympathetic and helpful toward anyone he meets, while an evil character dislikes everyone equally.

Intelligence 8-10: This character has at least some rational justification for his alignment tendencies. A good character may quote the golden rule or appeal to the authority of the prevailing culture. An evil character may take a "do unto others before they do it to you" attitude. A lawful PC will point to the stabilizing effects of order, while a chaotic PC may condemn law as a first step to slavery. A neutral PC will be motivated by a simple kind of relativism ("It takes all kinds."). Characters of average intelligence can be persuaded from their natural inclinations only with some difficulty, force or threat often being more effective than words.

Intelligence 11-14: A character in this category belongs to some specific philosophical school or holds some specific religious doctrine. He will discuss his principles and attempt to apply them when an important decision arises. However, he usually has a number of uncertainties regarding the philosophy he holds and is readily persuaded to take the most sensible course of action when in doubt. A chaotic would speak in terms of individual rights and freedom, but a lawful character would appeal to a principle such as the divine right of kings. A good character will seek the greatest good for the greatest number and will have some interest in the survival of good on the large scale, rather than just an inclination toward generosity. An evil character will see history as a pattern of force and will measure success by the injury done to opponents.

Intelligence 15-17: A highly intelligent character will have a detailed personal philosophy, often of his own devising. His justifications for his actions will be well reasoned and distinctive. Much of his life's goal consists of the creative realization of his philosophy. Many such characters are quite subtle, seeking to achieve some grand design that is not obvious to others. However, some find an intellectual challenge in holding to a strict code of ethics at all times. A good character of this latter sort might go to great lengths to survive a battle without taking another's life or shedding blood.

Intelligence 18 or higher: Such a genius character is a philosopher with a detailed moral system of his own devising (or at least his own unique interpretation of an existing system). Most such characters will endeavor to become philosopher-kings, found religions, or establish places of learning from which to put forth their ideas. They are looked upon as spokesmen for their alignments.

If alignment play is to be taken seriously, it is recommended that players whose characters have an intelligence of 15 or greater prepare outlines of each character's philosophy. This should be a one-paragraph essay describing the character's belief system and world view. It should be sufficiently detailed to serve as a guide to making decisions during the course of the game. The outline should be read by the DM to determine whether it is consistent with the character's alignment. Characters with an intelligence of 11 or more should have some idea of the religion or culture whose philosophy they espouse.

Wisdom also effects alignment play. Wisdom determines the character's ability to view the world in proper perspective, to recognize the large-scale consequences of actions as well as the immediate consequences. Wisdom is also a measure of maturity, the ability to distinguish the minor from the significant, and the possible from the impossible. A wise character knows where to apply his energies to maximize the results obtained. The effect of wisdom on alignment play is difficult to state without reference to circumstance, but here are some guidelines:

Wisdom less than 8: This PC will often totally miss the point of whatever situation he faces, acting according to his alignment (with full rationalization in the case of intelligent characters) as he sees it but quite possibly making a decision he later regrets. A chaotic PC might be told to be silent; he resents the command and argues, only to be attacked by an enemy who traces the noise he makes.

Wisdom 8-13: This PC will tend to rely on whatever intelligence he has when making decisions, but he will recognize his own fallibility and will listen to the advice of others.

Wisdom 14 or higher: This PC will rarely panic and always tends toward caution and moderation. He may be the last to speak in a discussion and will usually recognize a decision of great importance when one presents itself.

It is the perspective endowed by wisdom that makes this attribute the prime requisite of the cleric class. The wise character is able to see his place in the larger scheme of things more clearly, and he wishes to become a participant in the struggle between the forces of Good, Evil, Law, and Chaos which transcends the immediate concerns of day-to-day life. In the author's campaign world of Normara, it is common knowledge that the prohibition against clerics using edged weapons is symbolic of their removal from the technology of battle and their focus on the larger issues of the world. Even evil clerics respect and understand this important point: Warfare is a means to a greater end, serving the purposes of evil.

This brings up the issue of evil and chaotic religions and clerics. In some campaign worlds, these will not exist. However, they are perfectly possible and often

desirable from the standpoint of the campaign as a means of balance. It is even possible to have an evil monotheism, in which the universe is created for the purpose of pain and destruction, and every cleric's mission is to glorify the creator by deeds of evil (though it would not be much fun to play in such a world).

Religions tend to be lawful, since clerics act to carry out the plans of some deity or cosmic principle and thus operate in an obedient mode. However, chaos is also a cosmic principle, and obedience to chaos is chaotic, not lawful. To take another example from the author's Normara campaign, the Heveri cult is a chaotic-good religion. Each cleric of this religion chooses his own deity, and there are no organized

churches. These clerics are forbidden to establish strongholds, and all believe that diversity in religious practice keeps the cult vital and helps promote ultimate good. These Heveri clerics wander the continents, tutoring new acolytes in the philosophy of the religion but leaving them free to choose their own specific goals in accordance with the deities they have chosen.

A little time invested in fleshing out the details of clerics, alignments, and religions in the campaign world offers many rewards in terms of the depth and richness of the milieu and, more importantly, in terms of interesting and three-dimensional role-playing.

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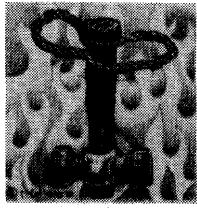
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In those distant ages when gods made war on gods, the skies were shattered by thunderbolts, the seas were breached, the earth itself was laid open and brought forth flame. Mountains were broken and raised up as the immortals strove against one another, the old against the new, Titans and their rebellious brood. In the end Keraunos prevailed: the Thunderer, the Cloud-Gatherer, hurling the Titans from heaven with his thunderbolts and binding them in chains beneath the weight of the mountains, where they lay groaning and lamenting their loss.

Into a world newly remade, humanity crept forth at last, trembling in fear and awe at the upheaval of the earth. But as they crouched at their hearthfires, from the towering heights of a bare and desolate crag came the echo of ringing hammer blows. And they shivered at the sound.

There were mornings when a silence lay on the Scythian coast before the sun rose above the mountaintops to burn away the mist, a stillness that seemed to chill the human heart. On such mornings the harsh scream of an eagle could be heard as it circled lower, descending upon one cloud-piercing crag.

The cry made Melas shudder. He stood in the doorway of his father's forge, which had been his father's before him. "Carrion bird!" he cursed the distant wheeling speck, but he spoke under his breath, for a man is rash who openly defies the gods.

But the eagle's cry echoed from the mountain, followed by a low moan, a sound of hopeless torment.

The tale was old. Melas had heard it from his father by this very forge, when he had first asked as a boy, "Why does the mountain cry out in pain?"

Then his father's hand had tightened around his hammer. "It isn't the mountain that cries out so, but the Firebearer chained there."

At the god's name, the smith's hammer struck the bronze he was working a ringing blow. He likewise was called Melas, and was well named, for his hair and beard were dark and the smoke of the forge had blackened his face. To his son, he seemed the image of Hephaistos himself. But there was yet another, older god of the forge.

"Up there? The Firebearer?" the younger Melas asked.

Again, hammer rang against bronze. "Aye, Pyrophoros, who brought the gift of fire to men and taught the crafts of metalwork, defying Keraunos," his father said grimly. "He was fettered naked to the mountain for it. But this wasn't punishment enough to satisfy the Thunderer."

By this time the hammer strokes were a rhythmic counterpoint to the ancient tale. "Every day he sends his eagle to feed on the Titan's flesh, so men and gods alike will hear his cries and learn the price of defiance."

Young Melas had raised his eyes in horror to the mountaintop where the Firebearer suffered for the crime of aiding mankind. He cried, "Is there no one who could set him free?"

The hammer blows paused briefly, then resumed their rhythm. "The gods themselves were afraid to speak out against his punishment for fear they might end up sharing it."

Firebearer

by Lois Tilton

Illustrations by Darlene Coltrain

And as young Melas had watched, the eagle rose from the crag, its crop heavy with flesh, wheeled in the air, and flew into the distance, back to its master.

Melas had since grown to manhood, the muscles of his back and arm to a smith's strength. Soon the forge would be his, to be passed on to his own son after him. But on this morning he stood, the forge forgotten, and listened to the echoes of anguish from the mountain. Each time he saw the eagle descend upon the peak, his heart would contract in pain and sympathy. His better sense argued that this was an affair of gods, not men, but always his soul cried out that such suffering was a shame to mankind, for whose sake it was endured.

On this morning he knew he could not bear it any longer. Grimly determined, he strode into the forge and began to throw his tools into a leather bag.

The old smith followed him inside and asked in a worried voice, "Where are you going?"

Melas's eyes turned to the mountain. "There."

"Fool!" his father groaned. "What do you think you can do against the will of the gods? Are you a hero? No! You're a simple bronzesmith, as your fathers were before you. Who is going to work this forge when you die on that mountain without leaving even a son behind you?"

"I know what I am," Melas flung back. "But if it were you chained up there, by the will of the gods or no, how could I live day after day hearing your groans, doing nothing? How can I do less for the father of our craft?"

The old smith said nothing while Melas packed the tools with which he hoped to free the Titan from his chains. Then he lifted his hammer, passed on to him from his own father, and his father, before him. "Here," he told his son, "take this. The tale has it that this hammer was forged in the very fire Pyrophoros brought from heaven. It may help."

Melas took the hammer reverently, stroked the face, felt the well-worn shaft in his hand. Tears stood in his father's eyes, and his calloused palms clasped his son's shoulders. "Perhaps a smith can breed a hero, after all," he said at last.

And tears rose in Melas, too, as he embraced his father, seeing him standing empty handed by the cooling forge. Only the sight of the morning-lit peak behind him restored his resolve.

News of his intention had spread by the time he departed, and the villagers stood in silence watching him approach the foot of the haunted crag, bearing little more than his bag of tools and a bow across his back. To some, the ancient tales of the god chained at the peak were no more than a myth, and the dreadful moans were heard as only the voice of the wind. Surely no mortal man could find the Titan there, could free him. And yet the gifts of the Firebearer were known to all: pottery, medicine, and all crafts that make use of fire. Melas, if he were to succeed, would be redeeming a debt owed by them all.

The mountain was a sheer cliff newly thrust up from the sea, sharp-edged granite that wind and rain had not yet had time to weather. As he climbed, Melas soon found himself crawling up the bare rock face, groping for purchase, his knees and elbows scraped raw. The muscles of his arms ached with the effort of pulling his body upward,

and the raw stone cut his fingers and left them bleeding.

Clinging to the sheer face, Melas could no longer see the peak above him. He had to turn his head to see the sky. And then he looked down. The sight made him reel with shock, for he had not realized how high he had already climbed. Seagulls wheeled through the air—below him—and the ocean's breakers were thin traces of white foam on an expanse of deepest green. At the foot of the cliff, the huts of his village clustered, and he could barely make out his father's forge. The people below were no larger than insects. This, he realized, was how the gods must view humanity—utterly insignificant.

He turned back quickly to the cliff, his heart pounding. Above him was black and white speckled granite, its crystals glinting in the sunlight. He had no way to judge how far he had come, how far he had yet to go before he reached the summit.

He climbed on, finding purchase where he could, from crack to crack, from ledge to ledge. More than once he came to a place where he could not go any farther, and he had to climb back down the way he had come to seek out some other way to reach the top.

The harsh glare of the sun had dimmed. Soon Melas found himself enveloped in the white mist of a cloud, in a chill silence. When he looked down again his village was invisible, and the peak above him was hidden in the thickening fog. Cloud-Gatherer! he breathed, terror constricting his throat. Suddenly, alone as he was on the cloud-shrouded mountain, the gods were overwhelmingly real, and present.

At that moment the sound of a thunderclap struck the mountainside, its echo making the stone tremble. The rage of Keraunos flashed through the sky. Melas clung to the rock, blinded, knowing that the god had seen his defiance. And though the wind raged around him on his exposed ledge, though the lightning made the living stone tingle beneath his feet, and Melas expected at every moment that the charred, smoking cinder of his body would be hurled earthward by the god's wrath, yet the storm did not strike him.

For a while afterward fear held him motionless, incapable either of continuing his climb or descending back through the cloud. The mountain faced him. He reached up for a handhold, grasped it. Slowly he took up his ascent, and in a while the cloud was below him, a white billow cutting off his sight of the earth. Above, the peak glowed in the light of the lowering sun. Now, truly, he was in the realm of the gods.

There was a harsh cry, and he looked up. An eagle circled far over his head. "Yes, Keraunos," Melas whispered, "I'm still here."

The sunset's glow upon the clouds was fading to purple when Melas was forced to admit to himself that he could not reach his goal before darkness. He would have to spend the night on the mountain. He halted his ascent on a ledge wide enough for him to lie down to sleep. He rubbed his sore and bleeding hands, then took out the cheese and olives he had carried in his pouch. By this time the day's heat was leaving the stone, and he shivered in his woolen garment. The night on the mountain would be cold. Though he had the gift of fire, no fuel grew on the lifeless bare rock to feed it.

As darkness fell, his thoughts returned to the god's forbearance. The tales had it that his wrath had raised this very mountain up out of the sea. Surely he could have striken a single mortal human clinging to its face. Was it that his power was less than men had believed? Melas had no answers. What did he really know of the gods? Only that they demanded worship and sacrifice from men while granting little in return. If the tales were true, the Thunderer would have destroyed mankind along with the elder gods he overthrew. Only Pyrophoros had intervened to save humanity, defying the will of Keraunos to bring down fire from heaven and earning the torment he now suffered.

And now Melas dared as well, a mortal interfering in the affairs of gods. He had not considered, when he set out, what punishment he might incur himself. Now, for the first time, he realized that there could be a worse fate than death awaiting him, whether or not he succeeded. What if he were to be chained in the Firebearer's place? Yet death would come eventually to end his suffering. No such mercy would be granted the Titan, no such release. Only when the chains that held him were struck away would the torture be relieved.

Uneasy with such thoughts, Melas slept at last. All through the hours of darkness, the moon shone her pale light down on the narrow ledge where he lay, and before dawn the granite sparkled with a thin, icy rime.

First light woke him, the dawn of a clear, cloudless day. As Melas huddled on the mountain's edge, rubbing his hands to bring back life and warmth, a swift shadow fell over him. Looking up, he heard the chilling cry of the eagle. The bird circled above the crag, but Melas was now high enough that he could see its small black eyes and cruel, rending beak. It descended toward the peak where Pyrophoros was chained, and Melas sprang to his feet with a curse, stringing his bow and setting the arrow. It flew high, straight toward its target, but at the top of its flight it fell short, and the eagle disappeared behind the rock overhead.

A sound came then, a gasp of indescribable agony. The moans Melas had heard in his village below were only the faintest echoes of this cry, which brought the rocky heart of the mountain itself alive to tremble with the Titan's pain.

Flinging the bow across his back, Melas began to climb in desperate, reckless haste, cursing the eagle and the god who was its master. All the while the cries went on, building in intensity, wringing Melas's soul with pity, but he could do nothing but keep climbing, as helpless as the chained Titan to stop the torture.

In his impatience he lunged rashly for an outcrop, only to find his hands slipping. He slid, scraping across the rough raw face of the rock until his feet found purchase on a narrow shelf. He clung to the mountain, heart pounding as he realized how close he had come to death, but then began the ascent once again, pulling his weight upward with bleeding lingers.

And then, directly over his head, came the rustle of feathers, a thunderclap of wings, and the eagle was flying directly at his head, talons extended, beak open in a scream.

Melas flung himself backward, almost off the mountain, and the eagle plunged past him, the wind of its passage striking his face. He wedged himself into a crack in the rock and braced himself with his legs as he reached behind him for his bow and set another arrow to the string, held it ready, waiting.

Again the bird stooped to strike, but Melas bent his bow with a swift, sure movement. The arrow flew straight, piercing the eagle through its breast, and the bird screamed out its pain and rage as it fell tumbling toward the surf so very far below.

Melas felt his hands tremble as he lowered the bow. He had come so far. He had killed the eagle, the instrument of the Firebearer's torment. Now he slung the bow again on his back and took out his father's hammer from his sack, risking the hope that in a little while he might actually succeed in releasing the Titan from his bondage.

He began the final ascent to the peak, all but overcome at what he had done, at what he was about to find there. He grasped a last edge of rock, wedged his toes into the stone for leverage, and pulled his body upward, then swung a knee over the top. He raised his head.

The breath froze in his chest with horror and awe. He fell on the rock, unable to move. The Titan was a giant, twice the size of a mortal man, pinioned naked against the bare granite. His arms and legs were outstretched and shackled. A collar of bronze was around his throat. But worst of all, a brazen spike had been driven through his chest directly into the living heart of the mountain, and from this wound ran glistening black blood where the



eagle had torn away the flesh to savage the tortured god's heart.

Then he spoke. "Have you come then at last, Herakles, these many years before your birth?"

Melas rose to his knees. How should he address a god, even one chained? "Firebearer?" he asked uncertainly. "Pyrophoros? Has the Cloud-Gatherer truly done all this to you, just for bringing men the gift of fire?"

The Titan's sigh was a soft wind. "My crime was to defy his will. Ten thousand years bound to this rock, with only the sun and sky as companions. And the Thunderer's wind-riding eagle, of course, as well."

Melas's heart had contracted with pity and sympathy at the sight of the mutilated flesh. But the vulture of Ke-raunos was dead. It would never return to its cruel feast. Daring to feel pride, he held out his bow. "It will never be back again, Pyrophoros."

"Ah," said the Titan slowly. He laughed then, a faint, bitterly painful sound, but a laugh nonetheless. "I shall not miss its company."

Melas had not expected, of all things, that the Titan would jest. But the Firebearer's ravaged face went grave as he looked at the man standing before him. "I owe you thanks. I would know your name, hero."

Melas shook his head. "Not a hero, not I. My name is Melas, and I'm only a bronzesmith from the village at the foot of the cliff. So often in the mornings I heard your pain, and . . ." he finished lamely, unfastening his tools from his belt, "I came to set you free."

"Ah," said the Titan again, shutting his eyes. "I fear . . ."

His eyes opened again. "But of course I am grateful. It has been so long."

Melas stepped closer, his gaze drawn against his will to the cruel spike that transfixed the Titan's chest where the eagle had feasted on his beating heart.

"It will heal," Pyrophoros assured him. His voice held bitter pain. "Each morning it is whole again."

Melas shuddered. Again he heard the agonized cries, the newly healed wound being torn open once again, every morning for the last ten thousand years.

"How could you endure it?"

The Firebearer sighed again. "I endure it because I must. So many times I have envied your mortality. Such torment as this is possible only for the gods. Yet I cannot say I did not know my fate."

Melas was no longer held motionless by awe of the god, but now as he regarded the fetters on the Titan, he grew more doubtful. Frowning, he set down his sack of tools and brought out his father's hammer.

"The tale is," he said, holding it up, "that this hammer was cast in the very fire stolen from heaven by Pyrophoros."

"Then," said the Titan, "perhaps after all . . ." He stirred, straining against his bonds. "Strike, smith!"

Melas already had seen that he could never loosen the massive spike that transfixed the Titan's chest. But if he could free his arms, perhaps the god's own strength might do what his could not.

The shackle around the Firebearer's wrist was thick and twice as broad as Melas's hand, held fast by a spike driven deep into the living granite. Straining to reach it, he set

his chisel and swung his hammer with all his mortal strength. Once again the crags echoed with the ringing sound of bronze. The smith labored until his muscular arms were weak and the sweat of exertion ran down his sides. But the fetters chaining the Firekindler were of adamant, forged by Hephaistos himself. Mortal strength was too weak, mortal tools too soft to sunder them. The last of Melas's chisels was soon blunted and useless, but the shackle made by Hephaistos was still unmarred.

Melas fell to his knees, exhausted and weary with the shame of his failure. All his efforts had gone for nothing. The Firebearer was still held fast in his chains.

The god had closed his eyes. Resignation was in his voice as he told Melas, "Do not blame yourself. The day I am destined to be freed is yet to come. I have yet another name — Foresight—and I fear that the one who will release me is not yet born. It was only when I saw you here that for a few moments I was able to hope that I might have been wrong."

Melas looked up at him, full of confusion. "Foresight? You can foresee your own fate?"

"Alas, too well!"

"But, then you must have known all of this, the chains, the eagle! How could you do it, then? How could you still defy the Cloud-Gatherer?"

The Titan's voice was distant, as if he were staring far back into the past. "Oh, yes. I knew. I think I didn't know, really know, how bad it would be, how much pain . . ."

"Then why?" Melas exclaimed. "Surely nothing could be worth this suffering!"

The Titan's voice rose. "I was the last of my race to be free. My brothers all lie chained in the darkness, crushed beneath the mountains, blasted by the Thunderer's lightning. I alone took his side in the wars. But in his lust for power and vengeance he would have extinguished the whole race of humanity, caring nothing for its fate. The provenance of mankind was mine! Its future was my care. Yes! I defied him! I could not bow my head and yield to his will, Let him send what tortures he can devise, he can never make me submit!"

"This seems a heavy price to pay for your pride," Melas said slowly.

"So Hephaistos said, too, when he chained me here. He would have refused the task. He wept with pity and grief at my fate, but nonetheless he did the will of Ke-raunos against his own. That is the price of submission that I would not pay!"

"I will tell you another thing, bronzesmith. The Thunderer is bound by these chains as surely as I am. As long as I suffer here, the whole world must acknowledge his cruelty. And never will I beg for his forgiveness, not if I must stand here until the end of time! No, in the end, he will be the one to relent, he will be the one to know defeat!"

The Titan's voice had reached a desperate intensity. He strained against his shackles. Melas gave his head a slight shake in awe of the Titan's intransigent pride. He could not believe that anyone, even a god, would willingly choose such suffering. Had not Pyrophoros, only hours before, urged him to try to strike off his fetters? Yet pride, in his chains, was all that remained to him.

The Titan had sagged in his bonds. Now he opened his

eyes and asked calmly, "And what of you, Melas the bronzesmith, did you not also defy the Thunderer's will in coming here? Did you not fear his wrath?"

He tried to gather his thoughts into words. "Until yesterday I'd never really felt the presence of the gods. Even Keraunos wasn't ever quite real to me. Only your cries—those I could hear." His voice dropped almost to a whisper. "Now, it's different. On the mountain . . ."

"Yes," said the Titan gravely. "I felt his anger."

"I don't understand! He could shatter this mountain with his thunderbolt! Why does he stay his hand?"

"His own word binds him, when no other power could. The mountain itself, and the eagle, are to be my punishment, not the lightning. By his own decree, he may not strike at this place."

Then the Cloud-Gatherer's forbearance, Melas realized, had not been directed at him. He shook his head again, wearily, still burdened by his failure and knowing that punishment might yet come. But not this day. And whatever the future might bring, he had done all that he could.

He leaned back against the mountain and opened his pouch. He still had half a piece of cheese and a handful of olives. And there stood the Titan, fettered in this barren place for ten thousand years. Whether for the sake of humanity or his own pride, what did it matter? "I don't suppose . . . would you like som^e he offered, holding out the pouch. "It isn't much."

The Firebearer looked surprised, as if this was one thing he had not foreseen. "Yes, please," he said finally. "It is. . . hard to remember the taste of food."

Melas reached up and held an olive to the Titan's sun-cracked lips. Pyrophoros swallowed, and a small shudder took him. "Ah," he said, closing his eyes.

And so they shared the rest of the food while night fell over the mountain, knowing that in the morning Melas must begin his descent, and the Titan resume the loneliness of his punishment. As he took what shelter he could among the rocks, glad of his wool garment, Melas pitied the Firebearer, exposed to the ice-edged lash of the winds. Such agony, without end, only an immortal could suffer, only a god could bear. He consoled himself that at least the eagle was no longer alive to rend the Titan's ever-healing flesh. His punishment would be easier until the day the hero finally came who was destined to free him.

But Melas's sleep was uneasy, as throughout the night he could hear the ominous roll of distant thunderclaps.

He was awakened by a cry, an eagle's scream that chilled his spine with horror. Above his head, the long winged bird circled in its descent.

Chained to the rock, the Titan sighed, his face drawn with despair. "Curse you, Cloud-Gatherer," he said dully. And to Melas, "Ah, bronzesmith, I feared it would be so."

"No!" Melas cried, and then more grimly, "No." With deliberate haste he strung his bow. "Not as long as I'm here to stop it."

The arrow flew; the bird dropped heavily, broken-winged, to Melas's feet. And above the peak crashed the angry thunder of the god denied his vengeance.

"He will send another tomorrow," said Pyrophoros bleakly. "Yet I thank you, archer, for this day, the first in ten thousand years without that pain."

Melas bent down to the dead eagle and began with care to extract his arrow from its breast. "As I said," he declared slowly, "not as long as I'm here to stop it."

"You cannot stay here, bronzesmith! No mortal could survive on this rock. Go, man, while you can! You have done what you could. I brought this fate upon myself."

"Do you think I could go back down there and leave you, waiting for another vulture to come tomorrow? Should I turn my back and listen to your screams every morning of my life?"

"I have endured it already for ten thousand years! What real difference will another day make? Or however long you last?"

Melas shook his head, not replying. He had seen the Titan's face as the eagle began its descent. No pride could have masked that despair. He replaced the arrow carefully in his sheath.

"This is barren rock!" the Titan protested. "Nothing grows here, nothing lives. Your food is gone. What would you eat?"

Melas took out his knife and began to skin the eagle's carcass. Then he laughed. "Look, here I am, reduced to eating raw flesh as if the Firebearer had never brought down his gift to mankind! Don't you see, Pyrophoros, how much we owe you?"

"Men—you are creatures of a day."

"But our memories are generations long," Melas replied. "Down there, we remember your gift."

And when darkness once more fell over the mountain peak, god and man together looked down upon a thousand flickering hearthfires far below.



The Game Wizards

An evening (wasted) with Elminster

by Jeff Grubb

I enjoy writing about the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ campaign setting. It's a wide, sprawling world with enough room for a variety of creative geniuses to work their individual magics. It's a world that can take epic sagas, small tragedies, and personal triumphs in stride—a world that is being explored and recorded in games, adventures, novels, computer games, and comic books.

But there was one thing I truly dreaded while writing the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures* hardbound book. I was once again teamed with the Realms' most learned earthly expert, Ed Greenwood (who, in addition to providing the platform upon which the world is based, contributed new information on particular locations). Ed's a rational, reasonable human being and a joy to work with. It wasn't Ed who worried me as I toolled about the Realms.

I dreaded seeing him. Those of you familiar with the Realms and its long-standing history in this magazine know whom I'm talking about. Him. The original source. The font of information from which everything comes. The ultimate reviewer.

Elminster of Shadowdale.

The worst part of dealing with this dimension-hopping old goat is that I never know when he's going to show up, though he usually appears once I'm well into a project. Often, when I'm writing at just shy of lightspeed to make a deadline, I look up from my work and there he is.

This case was no different. One moment I was alone in my cubicle, typing away at my computer terminal about specialty priests of the Realms, and the next moment he's *there*, at the opposite side of my office. There was no way he could have gotten past me without my seeing him, though of course he had. He sat with his lanky legs resting on Ed Greenwood's original files for the Realms, thumbing through my printouts with a bemused grin on his gray-bearded face. He was totally silent. My only clue to his arrival was the stench wafting from his ornate pipe (I swear they smoke rubber bands in the Realms).

"Ever consider knocking?" I growled, half hoping he was a hallucination brought on by overwork.

"Waste of a spell," he replied evenly, looking up from the printout's dot-matrix lettering. "I was in the dimension and thought I would drop in."

"Why is it that you always 'drop in'

when I'm on deadline?" I asked.

"Thou art always on deadline," he chuckled. "It's one of thy endearing features. What is the deadline this time?"

"As if you didn't know," I said. "It's the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures* hardback, the first of the non-core AD&D® 2nd Edition hardback books. Almost done, too," I added, crossing my fingers and wondering if Elminster could cast a *detect lie* spell.

"A volume on the Realms?" Elminster nodded in mock astonishment. "The tales of my homeland must be interesting indeed to merit such treatment. Didn't thou do something similar a short while back?"

"Three years ago," I replied, "we did a surface treatment of a lot of places in the Realms, the basic set-up. This new book provides more core information on the Heartlands of the Realms, from the Sword Coast to the Dragonreach, including Cormyr, Sembia, and the Dalelands. It's new material, and it won't replace the boxed campaign set."

"Admirable. More 'raw data' on the Realms."

"There's more. In the time since the original set came out we've seen the AD&D® 2nd Edition game, a lot of new information on various parts of the Realms, and the Avatar series."

Continued on page 99



Illustration by Ned Dameron

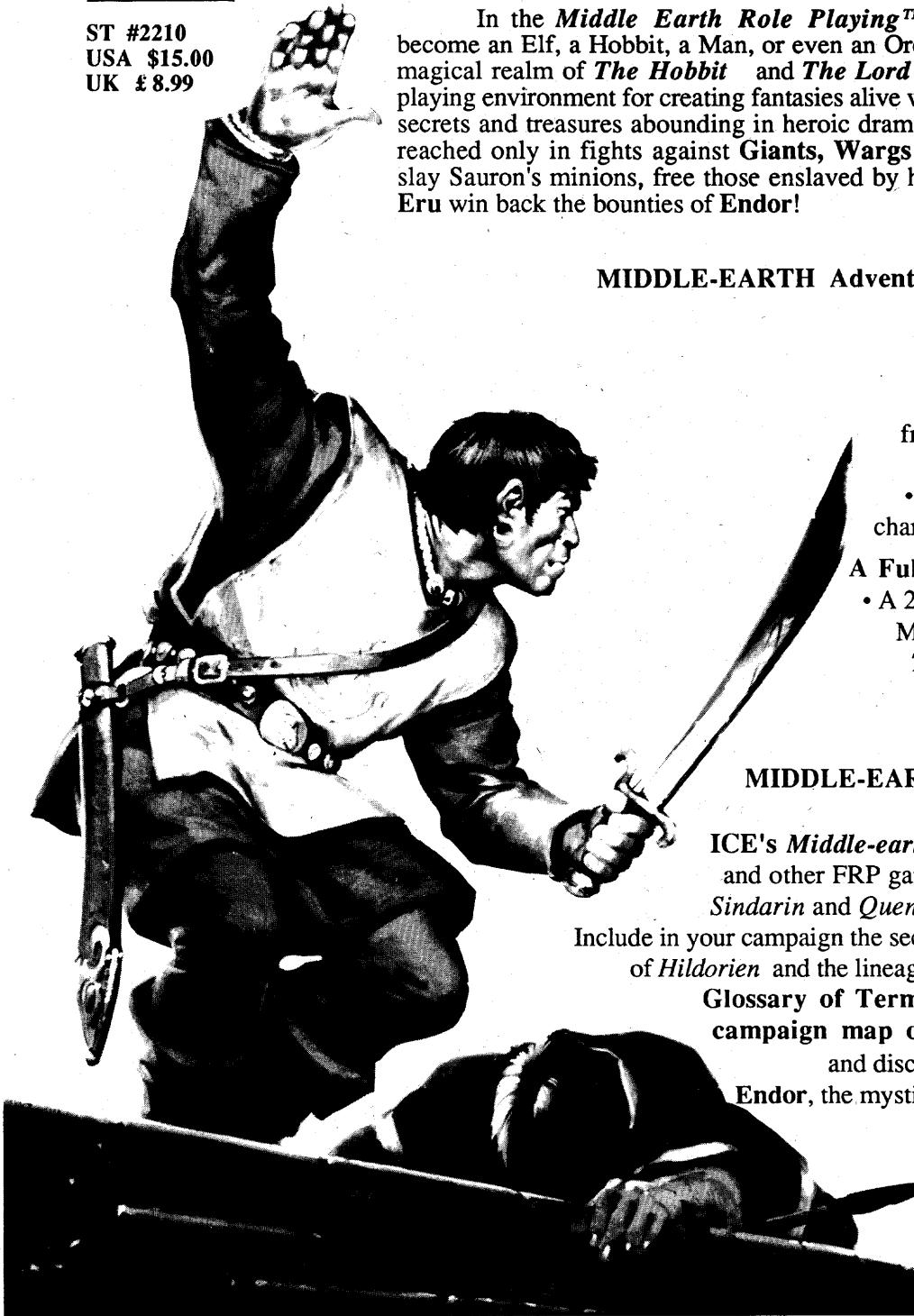
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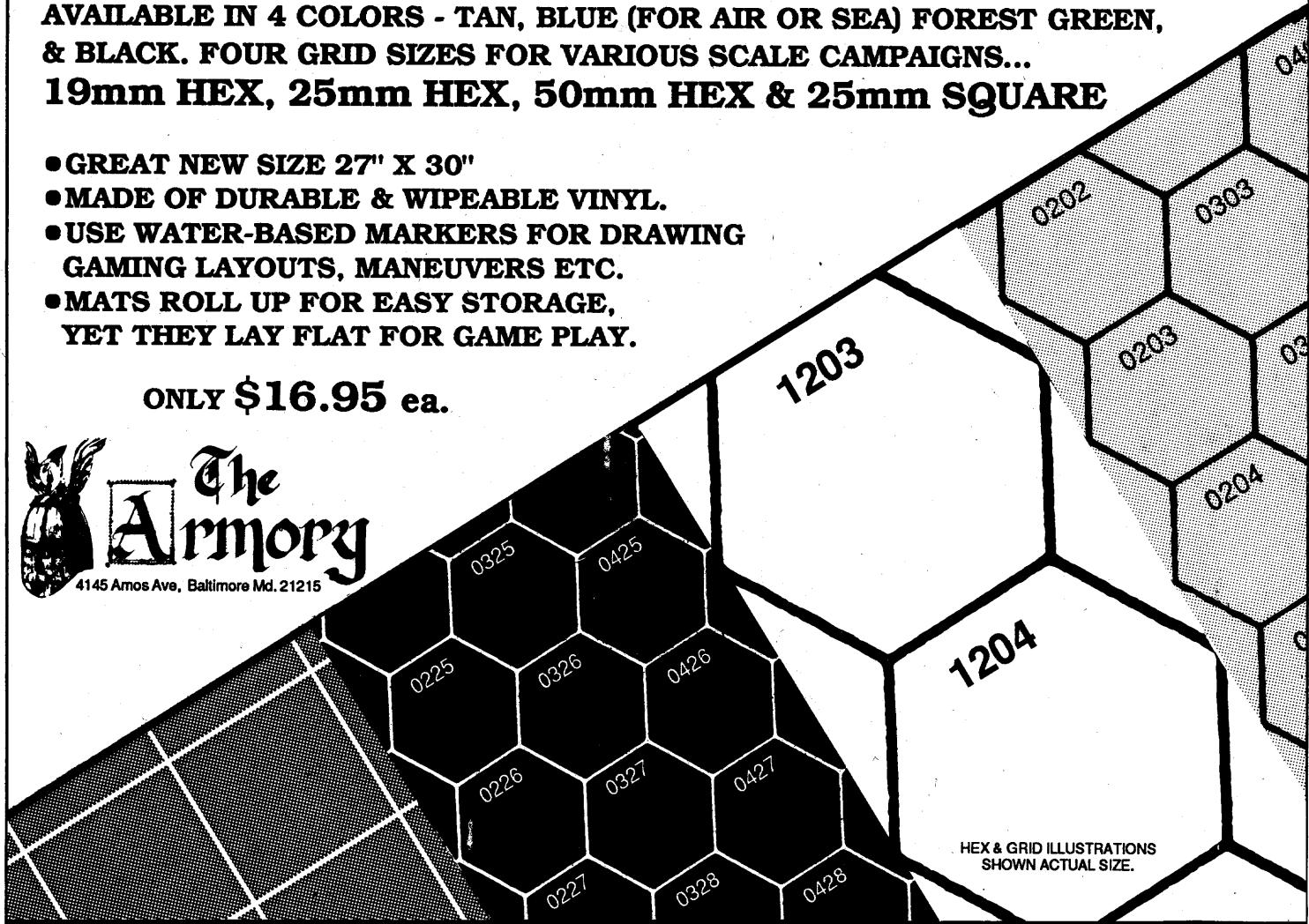
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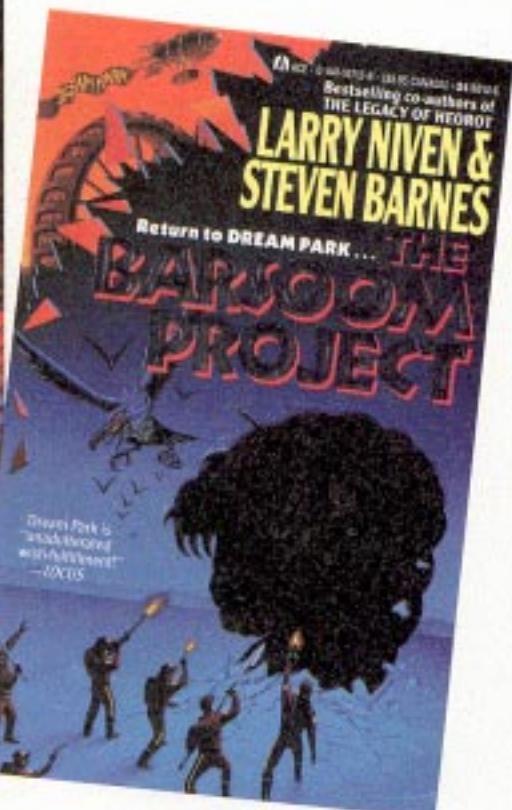
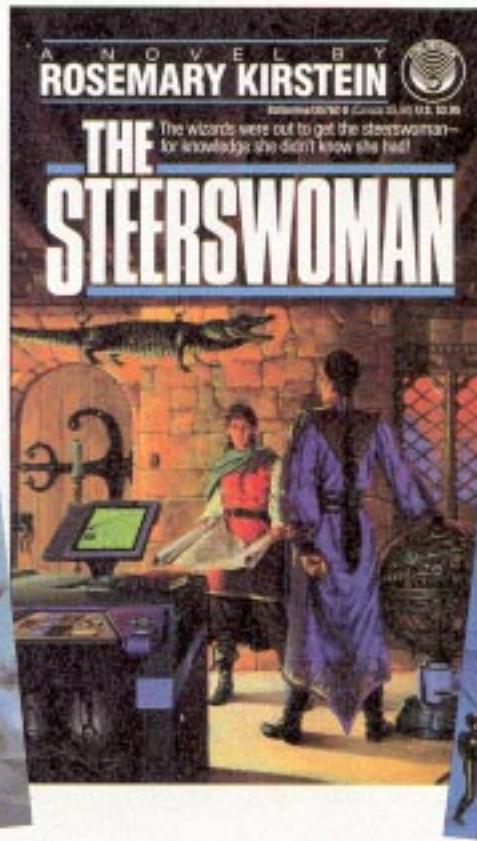
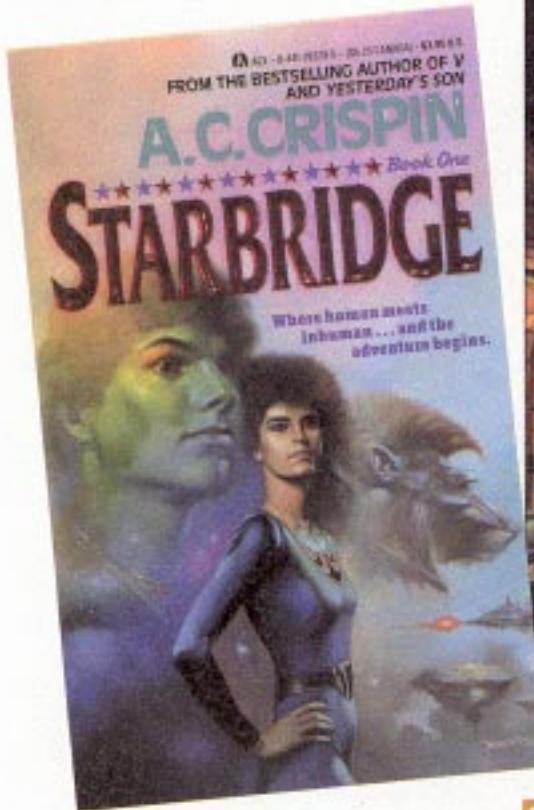
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The Role of Books

When the gods speak, everyone had better listen

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It isn't often that I can find a common thread running through the stack of books waiting for places in the next review column. Most of the time, in fact, I deliberately avoid reviewing books that are too much alike.

This month is an exception. When six different novels in the pile turned out to involve humanity's relationship with its gods (a different set of gods in each case), I decided that someone was trying to tell me something. (Now if I could just figure out what that message is. . . .)

QUEST FOR APOLLO

Michael Lahey

DAW 0-88677-364-4 \$3.95

This one is a curiosity with elements of mythology, allegory, scholarship, and mild-mannered comedy. None of this should be

surprising in a story involving the classical Greek and Roman gods (Michael Lahey uses mostly Roman names, but his deities answer to either culture's). But while Lahey doesn't quite succeed in blending his ingredients into a satisfying novel, his framework sets an excellent example for Dungeon Masters contemplating the mechanics of divine intervention.

The setting is contemporary Italy, where writer Fred Alderini hears a mysterious wolf's howl, gets lost in the woods, and promptly meets the classical poet Virgil. It develops that Fred has been commissioned by the goddess Diana to search for her lost brother Apollo, with Virgil as guide on a roundabout voyage through human history. The stake is humanity's survival; if Apollo isn't found, the world will perish in nuclear fire.

In most hands, this would be played either for howling farce or epic formality. Lahey's style is quite different, as Fred and Virgil play neatly off each other in bemused conversations liberally peppered with historical and literary allusions. Both characters are lively and intriguing: Fred, the practiced loner who finds his adventures difficult to accept, and Virgil, who tempers his services to the gods with small pleasures such as vintage wine and a Ferrari Testarossa. The overall tone is matter of fact, laced with understated humor that's sometimes broad and sometimes black.

It's that depth of characterization that eventually undercuts Lahey's plot: the initially sharp first-person narration turns out not to fit his otherwise plausible twist ending. But the mechanics are otherwise

elegantly typical of the gods' whims. Virgil is well cast as go-between, Diana's occasional walk-ons are appropriately staged, and the ritual for identifying the elusive Apollo is both brilliantly conceived and played for maximum dramatic effect. (How do you ask someone's name three times in succession without sounding as if you're crazy?)

Those with no patience for classic literature may find *Quest for Apollo* not to their taste, and the scholarly minded may consider it flippant. But if Lahey's story is pleasantly flawed, it's still worth a look for gamers interested in effectively role-playing the Greek and Roman gods.

DARKTHUNDER'S WAY

Tom Deitz

Avon **0-380-75508-4** **\$3.50**

Save for the strain of Old Northwest lore running through Charles de Lint's works, very little American Indian legendry has found its way into modern fantasy. That makes *Darkthunder's Way* distinctive twice over, first for maintaining Tom Deitz's reputation as a compelling crafter of contemporary novels of Faerie, and second for adding a strong dose of Cherokee myth to the Celtic material introduced in his earlier works.

Political conflict among the Sidhe, with outright war in the offing, again draws backwoods Georgian teenager David Sullivan across the borders of his world. This time, Deitz's plot requires merely that a message be delivered from point A to point B—but in multiplanar geography, there's no such thing as a straight line between two points. As the Celtic Tir-Nan-Og lies to one side of the mortal world, the Cherokee myth-realm of Galunlati lies to the other, only by traveling through Galunlati can David and his friends 'accomplish their mission.

Deitz's Cherokee lore possesses the authentic low-key resonance that characterizes Indian tales and legends. Yet it's also as immediate and well realized as places and characters already familiar from *Windmaster's Bane* and *Fireshaper's Doom*. Animal "spirit incarnations" are well rendered and entertaining (in particular, an unexpectedly sharp-minded bear). The battle with the *Uktena*, a deadly serpentine monster, is chillingly memorable.

By AD&D® game standards, most Indian settings possess little magic and few amenities of "civilization," comparable at best to the remote plains or steppes of barbarian hordes. But Deitz ably demonstrates that Indian culture contains its own brand of mystic lore and high adventure, and that the differences may lie in perception rather than in reality. Certainly *Darkthunder's Way* is enough to justify including North American traditions in the hat from which a versatile DM pulls his adventures.

It's also an excellent novel independent of gamers' virtues, though readers may wish for a stronger nemesis character and

for more than an offstage report of a betrayal integral to the climactic confrontation. And despite a conclusion that shuts the borders of Faerie, it seems unlikely to be Deitz's last tale of David Sullivan and the MacTyrie Gang. That may bode well for those attracted to Galunlati's potential, for those borders remain unsealed.

TANTRAS

Richard Awlinson

TSR **0-88038-748-3** **\$3.95**

WATERDEEP

Richard Awlinson

TSR **0-88038-759-9** **\$3.95**

This was originally a review of *Tantras* alone, before *Waterdeep* arrived midway through preparation of this column. The Avatar trilogy is a three-book novel rather than a three-novel cycle, and there's little in the third book that isn't in the first two.

As their names suggest, the novels are heavily preoccupied with the gods of TSR's FORGOTTEN REALMS™ setting. In itself, the premise is intriguing and generally well executed, and the best sequences are those which involve the avatars directly. Specifically, *Tantras* offers a noteworthy scenario involving Torm, god of duty, and *Waterdeep* has several dangerous encounters with the seemingly invincible Bhaal. This is godhood with some dimension, and it is a highly appropriate vehicle for DM inspiration.

The mortal characters suffer badly by comparison, particularly the determined mage Midnight and her dangerous associate, Cyric. In the magical chaos that permeates the tale, Midnight's powers are free to operate purely on the author's whims, and Cyric must function in an uncomfortable role as both co-protagonist and arch-villain. It's hard to give Midnight credit for achievements beyond her control, and difficult to put up with Cyric's coldness. (The latter feels suspiciously like propaganda aimed at discouraging the use of evil PCs.)

The cliffhanger that opens *Tantras* is equally weak. By all reports, Shadowdale folk are highly intelligent, and some of them are surely aware (as are many readers) of Elminster's elaborate precautions against permanent death. A Jack Chalker axiom applies: "Never consider a sorcerer dead for good until you have seen him die a minimum of three times." Elminster's "murder" is flatly unconvincing to characters and readers alike.

A quote from the parallel *Waterdeep* game module (page 41) explains a great deal. "Now the purpose of the Avatar storyline becomes clear: It provides a golden opportunity for DMs to change from the original AD&D® game to the AD&D 2nd Edition rules." The word "storyline" is the key. In a gaming context, the logic is justifiable though prone to excessive stage-managing. (The module instructs DMs that Midnight and Cyric must survive until the climax.) But game

mechanics are completely extraneous to a well-crafted novel, and it's in wedging those mechanics to the trilogy's plot and characters that the Avatar trilogy loses sight of its story.

Other minor irritants crop up in *Tantras*. An attempt to write the same scene from all three heroes' viewpoints is jarring, and Elminster's characterization seems rather forced at times. *Waterdeep* shows slightly smoother writing, but relies heavily on game-imported magical mechanics that detract from the atmosphere. But that's nit-picking; the real problem with the Avatar books is that they're exercises in maintaining continuity. While they're clearly essential reading for devoted FORGOTTEN REALMS gamers (and possibly those interested in the campaign conversion tactics implied in the modules), they don't transcend their origins as have so many of their predecessors.

THE BARSOOM PROJECT

Larry Niven and Steven Barnes

Ace **0-441-16712-8** **\$4.50**

Dream Park belongs in the class of things that need to be invented if they don't exist already—and, according to the authors' postscript, a real-world organization is attempting to do just that. One hopes, though, that the Dream Park of our future retains the drama and authenticity of the Niven-Barnes version while bypassing the murderously dangerous intrigues of *The Barsoom Project*.

The authors describe their novel as "fantasy wrapped in science fiction wrapped in mystery." It's an apt summary; like the novel, *Dream Park*, this sequel takes a live-action fantasy game run on tomorrow's technology, then adds a parallel plot involving murder and industrial espionage. Not surprisingly, the blend produces a complex yarn, made unusually distinctive by the choice of Inuit mythology as background for the game scenario.

It's hard to judge the Eskimo lore's authenticity. As Niven and Barnes note, the Inuit are not a single people, but rather encompass diverse groups bound together by their environments; expertise is hard to come by. But if the details seem debatable, the Fimbulwinter atmosphere is properly and fiercely Arctic, with an elemental feel to it that carries a convincing edge. For a playable fantasy setting, that's a good standard and one well achieved.

The mystery plot isn't quite as successful as the one in *Dream Park*, mostly by virtue of being too complicated. The puzzle is split too many ways—between corporate history, Mideastern terrorists, an old gaming accident, and a planned Mars project—to be properly untangled in its own half of the novel. But it moves quickly nonetheless, and the overall drama generally makes up for the rushed setup.

Some reviewers have criticized *The Barsoom Project's* concept of "Fat-Ripper Specials" as degrading or insulting. The argument holds water only if you don't

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In *Temple of the Beastmen*, each player controls one of 10 adventurers, each with their own goals and special abilities, intent on rescuing slaves and treasures from the clutches of the wicked Martian king. Random map tile layout and card sequence make the temple, its treasures, and its dangers different with every game. Stealth and strategy are essential to winning.

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read the book; in fact, the characters are treated evenly and honestly, and controls built into the games make them plausible science-fiction extensions of today's medically monitored diets or stop-smoking programs. The real-life International Fantasy Gaming Society shouldn't be alone in wanting to bring this novel's world into being, and gamers are far from the only audience to which *The Barsoom Project* should appeal.

THE JEHOVAH CONTRACT

Victor Koman

Avon 0-380-70557-5 \$3.50

Dell Ammo is an assassin masquerading as a hard-boiled PI—one you might meet in Sleuth Publication's MERCENARIES, SPIES, AND PRIVATE EYES™ game, or certain variants of TSR's TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game. Ammo's relationships with certain non-mortal personalities are plausible models for similar AD&D® situations. But author Victor Koman runs out of logic near the climax, and what begins as an intriguing problem in applied theology ends with a whimper rather than a bang.

Ammo's assignment is direct enough: kill the Judeo-Christian God. He begins with

the backing of a televangelist (who is himself backed by God's perennial Adversary), but that support quickly disappears while the mysterious Ann Perrine becomes more and more helpful. There are chases, firefights, and warnings from groups interested in God's continued existence, but Ammo persists in a clever campaign that treats Jehovah as both idea and entity.

The strategy displays the sort of inverse logic that makes fantasy capers entertaining, and Ammo is a likeable protagonist, doggedly persistent yet well aware of his limits. An ordinary caper novel with this much going for it would be more than enough to satisfy.

But the "kill God" premise aims higher, and a climax that begins aboard a private space shuttle fizzles badly when it goes metaphysical. While Ammo, under Koman's guidance, examines Judeo-Christian lore with relentless vigor, he takes Ann Perrine's supposed origins very much at face value. Yet those origins are no more authoritative than those of Ammo's target, and blithely assuming their accuracy puts a backspin on the rest of the book that threatens the validity of the plot.

When Koman is writing one-on-one

scenes, *The Jehovah Contract* is worthwhile and useful, particularly to gamers looking for a handle on institutional religion of any stripe. But while it's a clever enough guidebook to gods in general, it's utterly unpersuasive as a story about God in particular.

THE STEERSWOMAN

Rosemary Kierstein

Del Rey 0-345-35762-0 \$3.95

It's not apparent at first glance that *The Steerswoman* belongs in a discussion of novels about humanity's relationship to its gods. Rosemary Kierstein's first novel looks far more like a mild-mannered medieval adventure in an unobtrusively post-technological setting. Steerswomen (part bard and part anthropologist) comprise an immense information-sharing network, while wizards maintain limited surviving technology amid a shroud of secrecy.

What's intriguing is that there are no gods in Kierstein's culture, not even in a mythological context. There are no creation stories, no tales of godly mischief, and no mythic explanations for natural phe-



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nomena. The very idea of gods seems not to exist.

In many cases this might be considered sheer carelessness, but not here. *The Steerswoman* is an intricately constructed novel, with thoughtful attention given to its characters and their various heritages. And the lack of myths in the face of the steerswomen's exhaustive archiving further implies conscious omission, not an unconscious slip.

Not having gods doesn't prevent Kierstein from weaving a compelling tale. There's logical tension between steerswomen and wizards: The former share information willingly, the latter hoard it. When steerswoman Rowan finds a peculiar jewel that may be a wizardly power-source, a major struggle ensues for control of the knowledge. Eventually, it becomes clear that many wizards don't understand the forces they wield, but neither they nor the steerswomen can learn enough to provide final answers.

There are just enough references in the text to suggest that the novel is set on either a far-future Earth or a colony world of some kind, and more books are clearly forthcoming. Yet the tale doesn't feel incomplete, though the culture's oddness gives it a distant quality.

Gaming in a culture without gods and with highly limited magic may sound like a flavorless prospect. The realm of *The Steerswoman*, though, is fascinating enough to suggest otherwise. Between the barbarians, the wizards, the steerswomen, and a good deal of trading traffic, there's no less adventure than in many higher-powered settings, and Kierstein's novel is proof that mortals can get into trouble easily enough all by themselves.

STARBRIDGE

A. C. Crispin

Ace 0-441-78329-5 \$3.95

A. C. Crispin has been writing for several years now, turning out *Star Trek* novels, *V* novels, and a collaborative book set in Andre Norton's *Witch World*. All these have been justifiably popular, and Crispin's first solo original effort should be no exception. *StarBridge* begins a space adventure series patterned strongly after much of Norton's early work, and the introductory novel stands up very well to the comparison.

Crispin's protagonists are Mahree Burroughs, a teenage student on her way to Earth from an obscure colony world, and Robert Gable, the young ship's doctor on Mahree's passenger freighter. The two are drawn together by circumstances when an alien radio message leads the ship into an unexpected first contact, and events soon propel them into a race across the stars to prevent a diplomatic disaster.

Crispin's aliens are a diverse and fascinating lot, including the primatlike Simiu, the serpentine Mizari, and the sentient fungi of Avernum. The various human-alien confrontations are handled with assured

skill and the proper balance of drama, danger, and technical complexity. While the overall impression is of a fairly stable interstellar community, there's nonetheless plenty of room for future tensions and conflicts to develop.

In short, *StarBridge* establishes a nearly perfect milieu for future adventures—which is, of course, the idea, as Crispin explains that at least four more books are forthcoming. But the setting would be just as viable as an RPG campaign universe, if not more so. Players of I.C.E.'s SPACEMASTER™ and Steve Jackson Games' GURPS® Space systems should be especially pleased (I'd bet money on seeing an official GURPS adaptation before too long).

Any number of writers claim Andre Norton's SF novels as the childhood reading that drew them into the field. A. C. Crispin may be able to claim more; if the *StarBridge* series continues as well as it's begun, she'll be the leading candidate for the title of "the Norton of the 1990s."

Recurring roles

Kara Dalkey's *The Sword of Sagamore* (Ace, \$3.95) is, if anything, faster and funnier than her first tale of a kingdom ruled for four generations by the descendants of a mad court jester. Certainly Dalkey weaves some of the most subtle puns in the comic-fantasy ranks, and her farce has more character than some humorous series put together. Only the sharpest readers and most knowledgeable fans, though, will get all the in-jokes or figure out which of Dalkey's writing and publishing friends have walk-on parts.

But *Slaves of the Volcano God* (Ace, \$3.95) begins one of those series around which Dalkey is writing circles. Craig Shaw Gardner's premise is amusing enough: According to the Cineverse Cycle, all those old movie serials, Westerns, and swashbucklers were films of real-life alternate realities ruled over by the elusive Plotmaster, accessible by twisting a Captain Crusader Decoder Ring. But the execution is in two-dimensional black and white, with less plot, fewer sympathetic characters, and older jokes than the movies Gardner claims to be emulating.

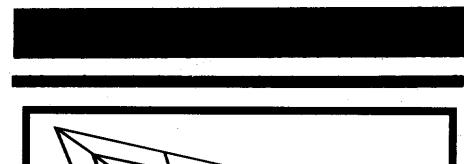
In the and-now-for-something-completely-different department, Barbara Hambly's latest endeavor is a television tie-in novel reprising the origins of *Beauty and the Beast* (Avon, \$3.95). It's not Hambly's best work, and it may be at best of peripheral interest to gamers (though TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game agents might be curious about what lives in those tunnels), but it's credible enough as a world adaptation. If future novels in the series do materialize, readers may get a look at the more magical side of the tunnel realm.

Considerably more relevant and considerably stranger is *Marianne, the Matchbox, and the Malachite Mouse* (Ace, \$3.50), Sheri Tepper's latest novel in her oddest series. This one finds heroine Marianne catapulted into a game-board reality as the

title rodent, on a quest to return a very important golden matchbox to its dangerously ambitious owner before it can be used to enslave all of Earth. It's nearly impossible to categorize the "Marianne" novels as other than original, and this one is no exception.

Two concluding volumes finish out this month's reading list. *The Prophet of Akhran* (Bantam Spectra, \$4.50) wraps up the Margaret Weis/Tracy Hickman entry in the Arabian Nights lists with a suitably grand flourish and two ingeniously staged self-sacrifices. But the final resolution seems rushed, and the parallel stories never quite come together, so that the Rose of the Prophet cycle doesn't quite equal the collaborators' previous achievements. The moral for gamers is simply that too many characters, whether player or nonplayer, tend to cause plots to get out of control.

The Flying Warlord (Del Rey, \$3.95), meanwhile, rings down the curtain for the moment on Polish time traveler Conrad Stargard's adventures in rewriting history. It's no surprise that his forces defeat the invading Mongols, and author Leo Frankowski's lively writing continues to make the saga cheerfully fascinating. But while Conrad's story comes to a satisfying finish, Frankowski leaves the time paradoxes raised by his framing device utterly unresolved. At least one report says another four books are planned, but that's no excuse for dropping the narrative in the middle of a quantum leap. Ω



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Illustration by Thomas Baxa

The Ecology of the Manticore

Manticore lessons—up close and personal

by Spike & Jones

"... Then, praying to all of the gods in the Heavenly City, Yi drew back on the bowstring, shut his eyes, and with his last remaining shaft he slew the ninth burning sun, saving the Five Seas and Four Corners from a fiery doom. In peace, Yi married his love and they settled down together, interrupted only by the occasional thankful peasant or nobleman."

His tale finished, the bard propped his feet on the bench and looked toward the hearth in the corner of the common room, where he would mull his customary flagon of wine before the entertainments of the night began. But before he could either move toward the poker or sink deeper into his chair, a tiny voice burst out from the children gathered on the rush-strewn floor before him.

"Please, Mister Farwanderer, please tell us another story!"

"And make it a real one this time," cried a second shrill voice.

"A 'real one,' little Aidan? And what was it about my last tale that failed your tests of realism?"

"Well . . . it didn't happen to anybody real. It was only about Yi the Bowman and shooting suns out of the sky. That never really happened! Tell us another story about when you weren't so old."

"He means when you weren't yet a bard, Mr. Far-wanderer."

"Ah, back in the old days, eh, Grainne? Well, then, I do recall one occurrence of some interest from my youth. If one of you would be so kind as to stoke the fire to mull my wine—" he eyed Aidan from beneath his bushy brows "—I'll recount my adventures in the hills of Bitu.

"As you may know, Bitu is a town that calls itself a city but behaves more like a village. It lies in the foothills of the Imran Mountains. Now, unlike gloried Mardukan, Bitu has none of the great culture of that civilization; in fact, its name means only 'house' in the language of those shave-headed priests.

"I was in Bitu earning a living at a trade that I found most profitable, long before I was forced by circumstance to change careers—"

"You mean—" cried Aidan, before feeling his older sister's elbow in his side. Sullenly, he merely stared at the stump at the end of the bards left arm, wondering what

circumstance might have caused such a career change.

"As I was saying, I was contributing to the economy of Bitu by stimulating the boring lives of the populace and providing distraction for the authorities of the community from the day-to-day routine with which they dealt. However—"

"I know!" yelped Aidan, not to be put off for long. "You were a thief!"

"It is not polite to interrupt one who is speaking to you, Aidan, and it is rarely prudent if that is to be the content of your outburst. The details of my exploits in that venture I shall leave until such time as you are able to properly understand them. Suffice it to say that I was not as proficient as I had thought myself to be. In due course, I was apprehended by those same authorities and put on trial for some small number of minor indiscretions. Being quite parochial in their attitudes—"

"It means they didn't believe him," Aidan whispered to his younger sister, Fiona.

"—they had to decide upon a suitable recompense beyond simple financial restitution. One hothead on the council called for my execution, and another would have deprived me of both hands at a time when I had yet to lose the first. Luckily, I suppose, a voice from the gallery intruded with another suggestion.

"The newcomer was a hunter of some sort who was in Bitu assembling supplies for a safari—and that, dear Fiona, means a hunting trip," the bard said in a stage whisper while he gave a sidelong glance at Aidan's reddening face.

"He and his band had all of the equipment they needed to hunt their game—except a suitable lure. And this man, Hengist y Helwr, he called himself . . ."

"I know that one," cried Aidan, "that's Hengist the Hunter!"

"It's heartening to see you've paid attention to some part of my lessons, Aidan. Now, as I was saying, this Hengist suggested that I would be eminently qualified for the job of manticore bait.

"The town council debated for a short time but eventually decided that it would be best to leave my fate in the hands of an outsider who was willing to part with a small sum of gold for what they called a transference fee.

"Having read the standard treatises on

the manticore, the hunters took me to a barren hillside near a frequently used trade path.¹ There they arranged themselves behind rocks and small trees after leaving me tied to stakes in the center of the clearing, stripped of all but a short kilt covered with an odious mixture they had brought with them, a mixture of which human blood must have formed a substantial portion. Their plan, you see, was to attract a passing manticore by way of the scent I now emanated, hoping the beast would recognize the smell of the blood of its 'favorite prey.' Then, as the beast gorged itself on my helpless body, they would ambush it in a hail of arrows while using their stones and trees to guard against retaliation from the beast's missiles. If I should perish by way of the monster's claws or a misguided shaft, it would be of no concern to them.

"I stank there on that hilltop for all that day and night, and it was high onto noon the next day before I'd managed to work one hand free from its bonds. But, as the fates often have it, it was at that time that my luck seemed to reverse directions.

"A shadow crossing my face caused me to look away from my accomplishment to see what I first mistook for a dragon—but which eventually revealed itself to be the dreaded manticore.

"It landed a few feet from me and proceeded to sniff the air and myself cautiously. Although its countenance resembled that of a bearded man, its senses were those of an animal.² The manticore's head appeared enormous, a fact that I first put off as an effect of my terror, but which I eventually discovered to be true; its head was nearly twice the size of the largest man's. Its eyes were like a hawks: very dark and slightly bulged, allowing it to see the movements of a single man from the loftiest heights it could attain. Its hair and beard were dark and matted with blood. Its facial skin was that of a healthy man of middle years, and its nose was wide and flaring as it sniffed about me from head to heel.

"Still, the most impressive feature was its mouth, for only this did not belong on a human face. Its lips were drawn back tightly against its jaw, exposing gums as black as a dog's. But even more amazing were its teeth. They were neither white as

yours, dear Grainne, nor yellow like your father's, nor even missing like yours, dearest Fiona." Fiona smiled, revealing the gap where her two front teeth had fallen out. "Instead, the manticore's teeth gleamed darkly in their sockets, for they looked all the world like tiny dagger blades forged of darkest iron.

"Finally, after spending only as much time inspecting me as I have spent describing its face, the monster appeared to have made up its mind about me. Having assured itself that I was no threat, it leapt forward and struck the air with its powerful wings, gaining altitude in a surprisingly short time."

"But Mr. Farwanderer, you couldn't have scared it away, even with one hand free! You were still tied down, you had no armor, no sword or spear. You were free to be killed!"

"Exactly, Grainne. The manticore struck off into the air as soon as it discovered that I was shieldless, swordless, and armless. Hengist and his men rushed to follow the exiting beast, hoping to find its lair. Unluckily for me, one of his band thought to take me along in hopes that I could be used as manticore-fodder at the next opportunity. None of us had any idea at the time why the creature acted this way, least of all myself. Of all of us, I was the only one who had no desire to discover why, but I would be the only one to find out."

"It was not at all difficult to follow the beast, for it glided slowly through the air, always tending toward a certain nearby cliff. We arrived too late to see where it had disappeared, but a pile of scarred bones and other refuse at the foot of the cliff showed Hengist the general area in which to search the cave-pocked cliff.

"A short time after the party had spread out to look for other clues along the base of the cliff, one of the hunters cried out in alarm. We turned to see a smaller-size manticore leaping from one of the highest holes and gliding inexpertly to the forest floor. Hengist quickly decided to ignore this younger specimen and concentrate on the adult we'd followed.

"Now that he knew which cave was our target, Hengist managed to discern a rough pathway leading up the rocky face. It was steep and difficult to climb, but it was evidently sufficient for a manticore with good strong claws but with wings not yet strong enough to allow him to fly back to his roost.

"I was released from my bonds temporarily to ascend the cliff at sword point, for the path was too ill defined for a man to climb with his arms tied behind his back. As I rose, I noted the depth of the claw marks gouged into the stone, and a shiver ran through me. I was still expected to serve as a distraction for the manticore within. As I had been turned down once before by the beast, I feared more the

swords at my back, but I was none too comfortable-with the thought of claws that could easily tear a man in two—especially when I was to be that man.

"Without incident, we reached the cave mouth and proceeded into a long corridor. When we rounded the final corner in the winding cavern, we saw by our lanterns' light a large chamber, littered with human remains, bits of armor, torn clothing, heaps of coins in rotting sacks, and, in the middle of it all, *the monster*." The bard looked deeply into the wide eyes of the children. "The manticore looked even larger in the tight confines of the cave, and its ferocity was obviously increased by our intrusion.

"Faced with certain death both ahead and behind, I was too frightened to do anything but remain rooted to the spot, even as the manticore loosed a volley of iron darts from its tail.³ The spikes flew past me—and struck Hengist, in the lead of his men, an action the monster quickly followed by leaping on Hengist with claws out and teeth bared.⁴

"Knocking me aside as it flew at Hengist, the manticore gave a strange, high-pitched roar completely unlike that of the lion, of which the manticore is a part.⁵ It proceeded to tear at Hengist's armored throat and face. Although there were other members of his party standing about and raining blows on the beast, the monster concentrated all of its attacks on the one

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man most able to avoid them, for Hengist was the only one of the band equipped with armor adequate to blunt its attacks.⁶ The beast's single-mindedness blinded it to my own movements away from the melee, and I crawled and scrambled for the only corner of the room not threatened by claw or sword.

"When I reached the far wall of the chamber, I became immediately aware of the reason for the monster's anger. Two cubs were hiding there, and they made movements toward me that mimicked their mother's attacks.⁷ In my weak, confused, and defenseless condition, I could have easily been killed by these two if it weren't for a strange thing. While they swung their paws at me, flapped their tiny wings, waved their tails, and hissed through wide-open mouths, I noticed that they had no more than the stubs of claws and tail spikes, and dark, shiny ridges of strange material where teeth should be.⁸

"While I crouched, dividing my attention between the carnage I was escaping and the cubs before me, the mother manticore succeeded in slaying Hengist, but not without suffering a number of wounds of its own. Having finished off its immediate prey, it finally seemed to notice Hengist's retainers, and it turned on them and advanced, looking even more terrifying covered with gore than it had but minutes before. Guessing that the wounded manticore would eventually be brought down by the rest of the Hunter's band, I had to quickly come up with a plan of escape."

"So you snuck out just when they struck the killing blow to the manticore," suggested Aidan.

"No, silly. They blocked the entrance, so he took one of the baby manticores and used it as a hostage and kept it between him and the other guys," corrected Grainne, beaming at her superior grasp of the situation.

"Well, actually, neither of those solutions was at all feasible at the time. The egress was indeed blocked, and I'm not sure that the mother manticore would have understood the bargain implicit in a hostage-taking. Instead, I merely made for myself a disguise that all of the men were willing to believe. I smeared some of the blood and dirt from the floor of the cave over the scratches from the rough treatment at the hands of my captors and the paws of the cubs, then merely 'played dead.'

"The hunters eventually dispatched their prey but were too badly wounded to make a thorough search of the chamber. They merely took all of the valuables from the room, their leader's body, the two cubs—which they hoped to sell—and a number of samples and organs from the adult manticore's body to be sold to alchemists and mages, leaving behind my own, supposedly dead, body.¹⁰ Once they were well gone, I got up and made my way out of the cavern and off across the countryside to greener pastures. Now, off to bed with the three of you. Fiona is almost asleep

now, and you should follow her example."

"But that's not a good ending! They got all the money and they killed the manticore and took the kittens and you didn't get anything."

"And I lost all of my belongings that had been confiscated in Bitu, forcing me to start over again with nothing. Yes, Fiona, that's how it ended."

"But the bad guys shouldn't get away with everything. That's not right!"

"Well, in actual fact, they got away with very little. The vast majority of their profits went toward the purchase of revivifying prayers for their leader, from a priest of Anu in Mardukan. And as for the cubs, when they'd brought Hengist back from the Isles Beyond, he had sold one cub to a wealthy baronet with the assurance that it could be raised as a flying mount in but a few years. The other cub was kept by Hengist for the same purpose.

"In less than three years, the two cubs had grown to their full size. Unfortunately for Hengist, they hadn't taken readily to the training of their owners. The baron's manticore (for the baron had risen to become the thane of Kasayle in the intervening time) had proven so unbreakable that even the expert on manticores that he'd hired could do nothing with it. So, he sought out Hengist and demanded his original investment back, with the addition of all the money spent on raising the beast over the years, and with an additional fee levied merely for spite.

"Hengist had had more success than the baron because he was wary enough to have *charm monster* spells cast repeatedly on his own manticore. He offered to demonstrate that it was merely the other man's incompetence that had led to his failure. After having a number of his retainers lead the manticore out of its stable, Hengist prepared the saddle he'd had made, mounted the beast and strapped himself in, and rose into the air to the cheers of the small crowd attending the event. No cheers, however, came from the baron and his manticore tamer.

"The monster was somewhat startled by all of the commotion, as Hengist had previ-

ously flown it only in isolation for fear of public outcry or an unfortunate accident. As Hengist flew it in sweeping circles and in dives toward the crowd, screams of excitement went up into the air, as well as hats thrown in salute.

"Unfortunately, the manticore's reflexes and instincts took precedence over its training, and the manticore neglected the presence of Hengist riding astride it. It reacted to all of the clamor as if it were being attacked, by arching its tail over its back to send a volley of darts toward the source of the distractions. Three of those iron darts plunged into Hengist's spine, killing him instantly and breaking his bonds to the saddle. The manticore, freed from the commands of its now missing master, turned about and sailed away to the nearby mountains before anyone could string a bow."

"Only seconds after Hengist's body hit the ground, the baron stated to the crowd that this was proof of the legitimacy of his claim against Hengist. Within a few short weeks, he was awarded the greater part of Hengist's estate in compensation from the courts. Not enough money was left to have Hengist raised to life again, so he was buried and so remains today.

"And, of course, the manticore trainer, who had watched the baron's cub grow from a mewling cub to a mighty beast of prey, collected his own compensation from the baron, then moved on to find another job. Positions 'in manticore taming' would be almost nonexistent once this incident became public knowledge."

"But what were you doing then?"

"Why, Grainne, I said that I was trying to find a new job, for one can only make so much profit from three years with any type of monster, even one as magnificent as a manticore."

Footnotes

1. The *Monstrous Compendium* states that manticores prefer dismal lairs but that they are usually encountered outside of their caves 'while hunting for humans. The AD&D 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide* shows that manticores are never

Continued on page 92

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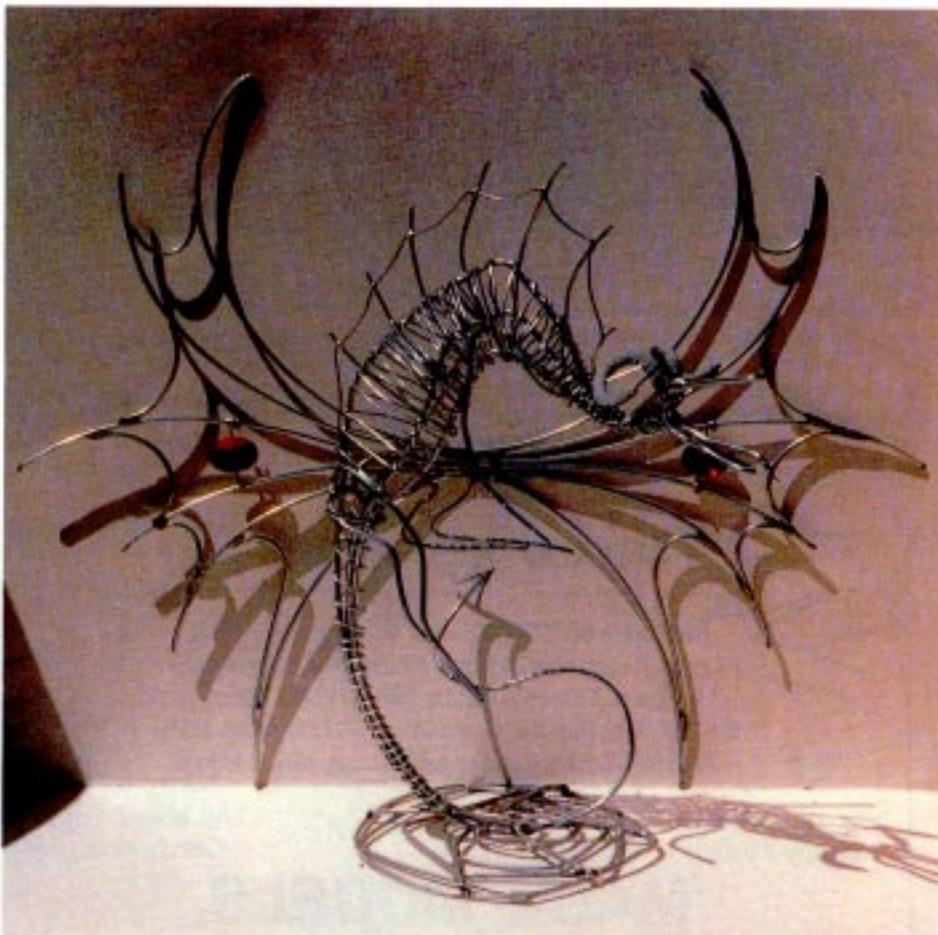
Through the Looking Glass

Do-it-yourself dragons

©1989 by Ed Dobrianski

Since the introduction of miniatures into fantasy role-playing games, I have been interested in making my own figurines. The major obstacle I had to overcome was finding suitable construction material. In

1981, I solved this problem by using a two-part solid epoxy resin found in most hardware stores. Look for a package with two different colored bars that resemble plasticine. One bar is the actual glue; the other



The body and wing frameworks for a red dragon are shown here with the wings unattached.

Photography by Ed Dobrianski

is the hardener. When buying this product, it is important to get the type that molds like clay, as other types will prove to be unworkable. This material is totally safe to use, having no toxic fumes. Although the package warns of possible skin irritation, I have used it extensively and have never had this problem.

To use, knead both bars with your fingers until they blend into one uniform color. If the epoxy appears to dry slightly, moisten your hands with water. After one hour, the material will become unworkable; it will be completely dry in about eight hours. When dry, it is harder than plastic or porcelain, so your figurine should last forever.

But first, of course, you need to know what to make and how to make it.

What can you make?

The larger your figurine, the more epoxy resin you will need and the greater your overall cost. Most of my figurines stand about 1' high and require approximately 12 packages of epoxy resin each. Each package contains 1.4 oz., which works out to 16.8 oz. per figurine. At an approximate cost of \$2 per package, it will cost about \$24 for the modeling material for each figurine. Including the wire, solder, and paint, the total cost of a figurine of this size should not exceed \$30. This is not bad when you consider that a mediocre-quality plastic airplane model costs the same amount.

I recommend that you start with a small figure to familiarize yourself with the modeling material. Do not make your figurine too small, as you will find it almost impossible to work any detail into it. Small man-size figures are best bought at your local hobby store. When making your own figurine, stick to the larger monsters, such as dragons, wyverns, and purple worms. I suggest that you start with something simple, like a purple worm, before attempting something as complex as a dragon.

After deciding what you want to make, it may be of some help to work from a picture or a sketch. Don't be disappointed, however, if your finished work does not look exactly like the picture. It's better to use your own imagination. You needn't use a picture at all, though, if you want to create a figure that is completely unique. The stranger the monster, the better.

What will you need?

The list of tools and supplies needed for making epoxy figurines is not extensive. The basic list follows.

Building materials

Galvanized wire

Solder

Soldering paste

Two-part solid epoxy resin (Epoxy Patch)

Tools

Wire cutters



Epoxy resin is used to cover the body and wings of the miniature.

Pliers
Soldering gun or soldering iron
File
Tapered instrument (cocktail stick, etc.)
Mini-grinder (not essential but very helpful)

Making the frame

Large, complex figures require a wire frame. Although the dried epoxy resin is very hard, it can also be brittle and must be reinforced. In fact, at least one third of your total time in making the figure should be spent in frame construction. For making your frame, use galvanized wire, which is specially treated to prevent rust. This wire should be stiff and not easily bent except with the use of pliers and wire cutters. This will ensure that the structure is as strong as possible. Different gauges of wire can be used for different areas of the figure. For example, the claws of the monster require a smaller gauge of wire than the frame of the body.

Construct the frame of your figure as if you were making the actual skeleton of the monster. The more work you put into the frame, the less work and modeling material will be required for the figure. Any spikes, protrusions, or appendages should be reinforced with wire. Failure to do this will result in a weak piece that may break off. Delicate parts, like claws and

wings, can be made separately and soldered to the rest of the frame. Parts that you may want to taper or end in points can be filed or ground. A mini-grinder is very helpful with these features. The finished frame should be capable of standing on its own.

Modeling the figure

The head: Start with the head when modeling your figure. If the head of the figure does not look right, the rest of it will not look right, either. Keep in mind the most important aspects of the head—the teeth and eyes. For larger figures, make the teeth individually by molding small amounts of the epoxy resin over pieces of wire. At the root of each tooth leave $\frac{1}{4}$ " of wire protruding. After making teeth in various sizes, allow them to dry for at least eight hours. Mold the head with the mouth open. Before the head dries, push the root of each tooth into the jaw to ensure maximum strength. You can mold the eyes yourself, or else use beads or jewelry. To aid in modeling, use a tapered instrument such as a cocktail stick or a toothpick. Any spikes or protrusions should be reinforced with wire. These pieces can be done separately, allowed to harden, and later soldered to the frame of the head.

The epoxy resin can be easily worked

for up to an hour. Thereafter, you can add detail for almost another hour until the resin becomes too hard. Do most of your work before the epoxy dries, as this will prove easier than trying to add detail later. If necessary, the epoxy can be sanded, drilled, or filed after it has hardened. Allow the head to harden before working on another part of the figure, to prevent accidental damage.

The body: If you have constructed a good wire frame, it will not be necessary to use large amounts of epoxy resin to fill the body of the figure. With your fingers, knead a circular piece of the material in a spiral pattern, working out from the center, until it is about $\frac{1}{16}$ " thick. Next, cover the body area with the molding material, forming a skin over the wire bones. Gently press the seams together and mold the resin to the frame. Do not cover any areas that have to be soldered at a later time, such as the upper portion of the body where wings or limbs may be attached. Press out unwanted holes, indentations, and depressions from the inside, or wait until the epoxy has hardened so that you can repair these areas with additional molding material. Before working on the details, allow the epoxy to harden for approximately one hour or until it is no longer soft. When adding details, a variety of instruments may be used to achieve the desired effect.

The wings: Knead a circular piece of epoxy in a spiral pattern until it covers a large area similar to the desired shape of the wing. It should be approximately $\frac{1}{16}$ " thick with no holes. Lay the molding material on a plastic bag, placing the wire frame of the wing over the material. Make sure that the material covers the entire frame of the wing, leaving only the area to be soldered exposed. Cut any excess material away from the frame. Next, mold small amounts of the epoxy resin over the wing, covering all exposed wire. If necessary, cut strips of the epoxy and lay them over the wire, working them into the wing. When the wing has been sculpted to your satisfaction, carefully pull the plastic bag from the resin. Add any desired details and allow the wing to dry in a vise or lay it down on the plastic bag.

The legs, arms, and claws: Legs, arms, and other appendages can be made separately, allowed to harden, and soldered to the frame of the figure. These appendages usually end in claws or talons, depending upon the type of monster you wish to create. Each digit in the claw should be reinforced by a wire that is tapered to end in a point. The wire itself can be filed or ground to fashion talons or nails. Allow the finished claw to completely harden before soldering it to the arm or leg.

The stand: You can construct your stand out of a variety of materials, including wood or plaster. I prefer to use wire covered by molding material. Your figurine should be soldered strongly to the

stand. If necessary, you can weight the stand using lead sinkers soldered to the strong wire frame of the base and cleverly concealed as rocks or hills.

Once again, knead the epoxy until you can cover the entire stand area. Place the stand on a plastic bag before covering it with the modeling material. Later, when the resin dries, the plastic can be easily separated from the base. When modeling the material, allow it to follow the contours in the wire base to create an interesting design. After allowing the stand to harden, cut and glue felt to the bottom using a waterproof glue such as Weldbond. Your finished stand should be interesting to look at but shouldn't detract from the figure itself.

Painting the figure

I recommend using an airbrush for large figures. This instrument is capable of fine gradations in colors that a brush simply cannot match. Small areas that you do not wish to airbrush can be easily covered

with sticky-tack or masking tape. Larger areas can be covered with plastic. First, spray your figure with an undercoat of primer, preferably white; the primer provides a binding surface for the other colors. A light-colored primer is best because it intensifies the brighter colors. Slightly darken your base colors and spray the areas you want shaded. For highlights, do the same but use a lighter color. Ink can also be sprayed and is excellent for shading, as it tends to find its way into every crack and crevice. Finally, add fine details using a good-quality paintbrush. A good book on airbrushing or painting miniatures is a definite asset. Let your imagination run wild. A red dragon is not just red but is highlighted with shades of brown, purple, yellow, etc. The best painted figures are done in a combination of colors, shades, and tints.

Photographing the figure

I am an amateur photographer, yet I was able to achieve excellent results when



After the epoxy covering is completed, the wings are attached and the figure is prepared for painting.

photographing my figures. By following a few simple rules, you can easily do the same. First, shoot your photos out of doors. You cannot beat natural sunlight. Bring something to set your figure on, such as a small fold-up table. Use a field or the sky as your background. Before taking your pictures, make sure the sun is at your back and pay special attention to where the shadows are cast. Crouch slightly below the table and take your picture as if you were looking up at the figure. This will give your figure the illusion of being much larger than it is. I recommend using a good 35mm camera and taking several shots of each figure from a variety of different angles.

For really spectacular photos, make your own backgrounds. If required, whole landscapes can be purchased. These are usually made from cardboard or plastic and require assembly, but you can build your own. Cardboard, plaster, and paint can be used to make almost anything you desire.

Summary

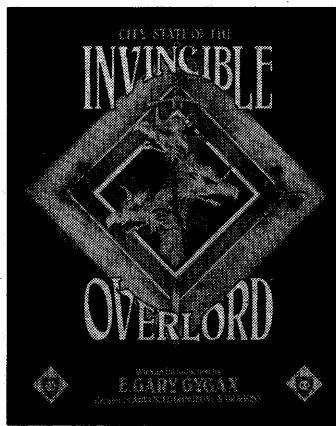
You do not have to be an expert to make your own figurines. What you really need is quite a bit of patience and time. Be prepared to spend 40 hours or more on a single large figure. Even smaller figurines can require at least eight hours. As with most things, figure modeling takes practice. Artistic ability is a definite asset. Your number one tool is your imagination.

If you love to make things, give this a try. You'll find hours of challenging entertainment and the satisfaction of creating your own figurines. Even simple figures will surprise and amaze your friends. Unlike manufactured miniatures, your figurines will be truly unique.

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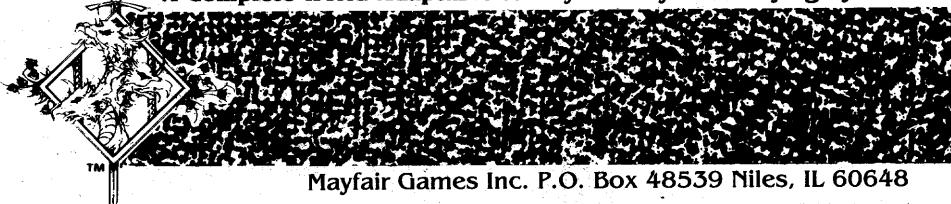
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CONVENTION CALENDAR

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines **must** be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short, 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.).

♦ indicates an Australian convention.

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WINTER FANTASY, January 5-7, 1990

The RPGA™ Network will sponsor WINTER FANTASY at the Ramada Inn Airport at Milwaukee, Wis. Special room rates are available by contacting the hotel at (414) 764-5300. Sanctioned events include AD&D® Grand masters, AD&D® Masters, AD&D® Feature, AD&D® Benefit, MARVEL SUPER HEROESTM, TOP SECRET/S.I.TM, PARANOIA®, and other tournaments. Other activities include a writers' seminar, Saturday morning breakfast, Sunday brunch, open gaming, and a dealers' area. All gaming is free except for the benefit tournament. Limited preregistration is available to RPGA Network members; contact Network HQ for a form. Registration fees for the entire weekend are \$15. Send a SASE to: RPGA™ Network, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva WI 53147.

WOTTACON '90, January 6

The Guild of Melee and Magic's second convention will be held at Goldsmiths' College, New Cross, London SE14. Wottacon will have live-action, tabletop, and PBM role-playing, as well as war gaming and board games. There will be competitions, demonstrations, a large number of trade stands and rooms in which to game. Write to: Alan Bishop, 127 Queen Adelaide Ct., Penge, London SE20 7EB, UNITED KINGDOM; or call: 01-659-4857.

CHATTACON XV, January 12-14

CHATTACON XV will be held at The Chattanooga Choo-Choo, Chattanooga, Tenn. Accommodations are \$60 flat, \$85 for sleeper cat suites. Guests will include Michael P. Kubे McDowell, Robert E. Vardeman, David Cherry, Danny Gill, Wilson "Bob" Tucker, Stan Bruns, and Dick and Nicki Lynch. Registration is \$25 by mail or at the door. Send an SASE to: CHATTACON XV, Box 23908, Chattanooga TN 37422; or call: (404) 591-9322 (no collect calls, please).

NEW MEXICON I, January 12-14

This science-fiction/science-fact convention will be held at the Las Cruces Hilton Inn. In addition to gaming, featured are a variety of people from science and the arts to hold panel discussions and give demonstrations and lectures. Confirmed guests are G. Harry Stein as scientist guest of honor; Real Musgrave as artist guest of honor; James P. Hogan as author guest of honor; and Jim Davidson, Laurie Wiggins, Dr. Mike Hyson, and Greg Kennedy as scientist guests. Author guest speakers will be Walter John Williams, George Alex Effinger, Sonni Cooper, and James Theisen. Write to: NEW MEXICON I, Box 3836, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces NM 88003-3836; or call Lew Maestas evenings at: (505) 522-0115, or Gaylord Teague at: (505) 521-3828.

GAME-A-THON 7, January 14-15

This 24-hour convention will be held at the Town Center Hall, 11740 E. Telegraph Road, Santa Fe Springs, Calif. A variety of role-playing games, board game tournaments, and miniature events will be featured, including AD&D®, CHAMPIONS®, PARANOIA®, SHADOWRUN®, STAR WARS®, GURPS®, AXIS & ALLIES®, CIVILIZATION®, EMPIRE BUILDER®, WARHAMMER

FANTASY BATTLES*, WARHAMMER 40,000*, BATTLETECH*, and ADEPTUS TITANICUS* games. There will also be computer games, continuous movies, seminars, demonstrations, a figure painting contest, and a hucksters' room. Advance registration is \$5 until January 8. Registration at the door is \$7.50. Write to: GAME-A-THON 7, c/o Santa Fe Springs Gamers' Assn, P.O. Box 2434, Santa Fe Springs CA 90670; or call Callahan at: (213) 863-7893.

PROJECT GENESIS '90, January 14-15

Project Genesis is expanding to two days! It will be held at the Ramada Inn, 324 E. Shaw Avenue, Fresno CA. Tournament and open events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, STAR WARS®, TOON®, and other games. Also scheduled are computer gaming, Japanimation, a miniatures contest, and a swap meet. Preregistration is \$6 for both days before Jan. 2; after that, all registrations are \$10. Dealers, swappers, and judges are wanted. Write to: PATCO, c/o Phillip S. Pittz, 5415 E. Washington, Fresno CA, or call (209) 255-4682. Make checks payable to Phillip S. Pittz.

PANDEMOMIUM VII, January 20-21 *

The General Staff is pleased to announce that Pandemonium VII will be held at the Ryerson Hub Cafeteria, Jorgenson Hall, Ryerson Polytechnic Institute, 300 Victoria St., Toronto, Ontario. Highlights include two game auctions, over 50 tournaments, a miniatures contest, and many local dealers. Prizes will be awarded to tournament winners. Registration at the door is \$10 Canadian per day. Write to: Pandemonium VII, c/o 17b Wales Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, CANADA M5T 1J2; or call: (416) 597-1934.

CANCON '90, January 26-28 ♦

Come to Canberra, Australia, for three days of miniatures and board gaming! Also role-play in AD&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, MEGATRAVELLER®, RUNEQUEST®, ROLEMASTER®, MERPS®, CHAMPIONS®, and EVENTYRDE® games, plus freeforms and an RPGA™ Network triad of AD&D®, PARANOIA®, and TOP SECRET/S.I.™ games. Write to: Canberra Games Society, GPO Box 1016, Canberra, ACT, AUSTRALIA, 2601 (non-Australian residents should send International Reply Coupons, not SASEs); or call: + 61-62-54-9926.

GENERICON VI, January 26-28

Sponsored by the Rensselear Science Fiction Assoc., it will take place on the campus of the Rensselear Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York. Guests of Honor are Barry B. Longyear and Pat Morrisey. Other guests include Chuck and Sue Rothman, Jeff Carver, David Kyle and Esther Friesner. Events include numerous panels, story circles, an art show, a hucksters' room, a video room, and a Japanimation room. Games include AD&D®, CHAMPIONS®, CLAY-O-RAMA, BATTLETECH®, and STAR FLEET BATTLES® games. Memberships are \$12 before Jan. 19; after that, they're \$15. Write to: Genericon VI RSFA, c/o Rensselear Union, Troy NY 12180.

WARCON '90, February 2-4

Texas's oldest gaming convention will be held at Texas A&M University in College Station, Tex. Featured events include an RPGA™ AD&D® and CHAMPIONS® Open Team Tournaments. Other events include a variety of board games, RPGs, miniatures, a dealers' room, and 24-hour open gaming. Registration is \$8 before the convention, and \$11 at the door. Write to: MSCNOVA, PO. Box J-1, Memorial Student Center, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77844; or call: (409) 845-1515.

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 \$15 until Jan. 15, \$20 thereafter. 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.

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 PUFFING BILLY® tournament. Registration is \$15 until January 31, \$20 after that. Write to: Denver Gamers' Assoc., P.O. Box 11369, Denver CO 80211; or call: (303) 433-3849 (NOTE: Phone number given previously is incorrect).

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.

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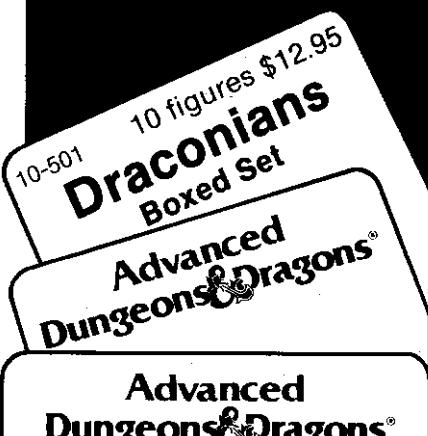
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NOT-A-CON, TOO, February 23-25

"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. Registration is \$15 for the weekend, or \$10 per day. The preregistration deadline is Jan. 20. Write to: Adventurers' Guild, Box 7979, Clemson University, Clemson SC 29632; or call John Jay Jacobs or Mark Stofega at: (803) 654-2103.

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.

CHIMERACON VI, March 2-4

After a year's absence, CHIMERACON 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: CHIMERACON 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. A wide variety of RPGs, war games, and board games are planned, including AD&D®, 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. Gamers under 17 are free if accompanied by an adult. 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 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, of course, 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.

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!

NORTH AMERICAN BATTLETECH® CHAMPIONSHIPS, March 10-11

This two-day event, devoted solely to BATTLETECH® gaming, will be held at the Gamemaster, 212 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington MA 02174. Sponsored by FASA Corporation, there will be prizes for the four top MechWarriors. The winner also gains free admission to the World Championships to be held in the summer of 1990. 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. Skelley 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®, Napoleonics, WARHAMMER 40,000®, WARHAMMER FANTASY®, CYBER-PUNK®, and TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE® games. Other features include 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.

ABBYTHON 8, March 24-25

The Community Center in Abbyville, Kans., once again becomes the Guild Hall for the Abbython Adventure Guild's 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.

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 huckster's 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 Pettit, 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, and Sam Moskowitz. 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: \$16 until December 31, \$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 Uris Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca NY 14853.

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. Tentative guests are Marion Zimmer Bradley, Hal Clement, Dennis and Kristina Etchison, Sam Grainger, Joe Lansdale, Frederick Pohl, Richard and Janice Preston, and Allen Wold. 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 before January 31 is \$8 per day, or \$20 for the weekend; after January 31, it's \$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.

SYDCON, April 13-16

This convention will be held at Globe High School in Sydney, Australia. Events will include AD&D® games, two RPGA™ Network events (for the GAMMA WORLD® and JAMES BOND 007® games), and CALL OF CTHULHU®, PARANOIA®, RUNEQUEST®, TOON®, and freeform games. Write to: Diane Leithhead, GPO Box 1560, Sydney, NSW, AUSTRALIA 2001.

JAXCON SOUTH '90, April 20-22

Jacksonville's Cowford Dragoons are hosting the South's oldest full-service gaming convention at Jacksonville Florida's Civic Auditorium. Featured are: RPGA™ AD&D® adventures, with AD&D®, SNIPER™, CIVILIZATION®, GHOST BUSTERS®, SEEKRIEG®, Napoleonics, BATTLETECH®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, WRG®, ILLUMINATI®, SPACE 1889®, TRAVELLER®, ELEMENT MASTERS®, WARHAMMER®, ROBO-TECH®, STAR WARS®, and microarmor games. There will also be computer and board gaming, a swap meet/flea market, a dealers' area, and movies. Write to: JAXCON SOUTH '90, P.O. Box 4423, Jacksonville FL 32201.

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Continued on page 75

The Voyage of the Princess Ark

Up, up, and away—across the Known World!

by Bruce A. Heard

For several years now, I have planned and monitored the development of the D&D® game's Known World at TSR, Inc. A relatively small area of the world, stretching from the Empire of Thyatis to the Atruaghin Clans, was described in great detail in the Gazetteer accessories. Only recently did we venture farther away, starting with the *Dawn of the Emperors* campaign set covering the illustrious empires of Thyatis and Alphatia.

Now, by popular demand—meaning horrible threats from gamers and designers—I have started a quest to resolve certain troubling questions. (Nope, it's not what you think!) These questions concern the intriguing continental map published in the D&D *Master DM's Book* (e.g., "Just who is Dorfin IV?"—an annoying question that came up more than once). But fear no more! Here are some logical answers for that and other strange geographical peculiarities of the Known World!

While browsing through some obscure tomes in my office, I discovered a dusty pile of scrolls written by the hand of an intrepid Alphatian explorer. Let's now embark on a fabulous journey across the D&D Known World and see what we discover.

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.

Nyxmir, 11, 1964 AY: I am astounded by the complete lack of interest in geographical matters on the part of Alphatia's younger mages. Worse, it has been found that the geographical teachings offered at Eriadna High are based on the fallacies of a Thyatian lowlife! This general—without a doubt a failure in the Thyatian legions—retired after a shabby campaign in Thothia. There he stole an ancient map of this world from a pillaged temple. The map was but a simple continental outline with a few words here and there. Upon his return, this lowlife invented kingdoms and empires, then placed them on the map and wrote tome upon tome about them. His knowledge of ancient Nithian and his

interest in the truth being what they were, nothing good came out of this ignorant barbarian's overactive imagination. He made a fortune selling his books, and many took them as the final authority on the world.

His errors were legion. Ridiculous assumptions were made about the size of the Thyatian Empire. The map shows the limits of that empire stretching beyond the Wendarian Reaches, north of the Principalities of Glantri. Poppycock! There are at least a half-dozen countries between Thyatis and Glantri having nothing to do with Thyatis.

You can forget about these absurd borders, too. These were in fact various creases in the original crumpled map which that Thyatian dimwit mistook for actual borders. The "Empire of the Great Khan," east of our province of Esterhold, is another fantasy. There are indeed large steppes there, but no Great Khan—we'd know about it by now!

And, yes, about this Dorfin Empire: It was the joke of a certain gnomish king, the inventor of wondrous but totally useless contraptions, who went by the name of King Dorfin IV. His kingdom is, in truth, merely the workshop of a few hundred gnomes in the hills of Karameikos. One of Dorf's favorite pastimes was to send loyal followers beyond the Sind Desert. There, they would pose as plenipotentiaries of the imaginary "Empire of Dorfin IV," then hire local people to carry a sealed message back to the real King Dorfin. These strange messengers, obviously from a distant place, seemed to make quite an impression on local Karameikan barons when they brought the gnomish king those phony and pompous greetings from his "imperial cousin to the west." These messages hinted at the outrageous size of this bogus empire, alleged to be twice the size of Alphatia! What nonsense! And the barons believed it, the fools.

I shall skip the details on other equally false kingdoms such as "Vulcania" (that was the Thyatian general's wife's name), "Cestia" (his mistress), "Brasol" (his dog), "Tangor" (a brand of cheap beer found in the streets of Newkirk), or "Zyxl" (a deceased gladiatorial hero whom the general claimed was also a fallen queen of that same nation). For all this, I find that I

grudgingly admire such a bold and irreverent joker. After all, everyone fell for his fake encyclopedias.

I propose that in the name of grand buffoonery, we keep these place names, since they are now the ones with which laymen are most familiar, but we should use them in a purely geographic sense. For example, let's do away with the nation of Nentsun (an Ethengarian word for a Heldanner's arm pit) and simply call that land the Nentsun Peninsula. Similarly, we'll forget about the state of Izonda (Hin for "fruitcake"—it figures), renaming that area the Desert of Izonda, since this is what is really there.

So be it! It is time to see for myself if this old Nithian map has any truth to it. I today obtained permission from Her Imperial Majesty for the *Princess Ark* be recommissioned for a last but glorious mission of exploration in the name of Our Illustrious Empire. . . .

Alphamir 15, 1965: Finally, she is airworthy again! It took no less than 35 master crafters and 300 slaves to refit the beautiful skyship. Her five masts stand majestically over her black hull, bearing the sails that will trap the magical wind. One can almost feel a strange life emanating from her as she gently pulls on her mooring lines in her desire to cast off and head into the sky.

Sulamir 10, 1965: Days have come and gone since our departure from Sundsvall. After leaving the capital, I ordered a southerly course. Our *Princess Ark* sailed well into the clouds above Edairo, Caerd-wicca, and Beitung.

Soon we reached the barbaric coast that lies east of the Thyatian Hinterlands. Some people refer to the region as The Coast, or the Four Kingdoms. The Four Kingdoms no more exist here than water exists in our bilge. As far as The Coast goes, we in Alphatia prefer calling it the Jungle Coast, because that's what it is: a forsaken, endless jumble of tropical growth. It is always hot and humid here, and torrential rains from the Bellissarian Sea drench the place every day. If the boredom doesn't kill you, then the savages, diseases, and monsters will.

It is no wonder the stiff-necked Thyatians did not waste their time in conquering this foul region. The white sandy

WRONG

WRONG

WRONG!

The Known World

- 1 Addakia
- 2 Arm of God
- 3 Arypt
- 4 Barbarians (not united)
- 5 Borea
- 6 Brasol
- 7 Cestia
- 8 Empire of Alphatia
- 9 Empire of Dorfin IV
- 10 Empire of the Great Khan
- 11 Empire of Tangor
- 12 Empire of Thyatis
- 13 The Coast (a.k.a. The Four Kingdoms)
- 14 Hyborea
- 15 Isle of Dawn
- 16 Izunda
- 17 Jen
- 18 Lower Arypt
- 19 Matriarchy of Pelatan
- 20 Minacea
- 21 Nentsun
- 22 Norwold
- 23 Oceania
- 24 The Sea Kingdoms
- 25 The Sea Kingdoms
- 26 The Serpent Peninsula
- 27 Southold
- 28 Thonia
- 29 Vulcania
- 30 Vulture Peninsula
- 31 Zyx



beaches are idyllic, but no pleasures can be found here. Immediately beyond the beaches stretch hundreds of miles of rolling hills. Dark jungles blanket the highest terrain, and repugnant swamps corrupt the lowlands.

Sulamir 25, 1965: The savages who live on the eastern Jungle Coast are quite different from those in the neighboring Thyatian Hinterlands. The latter are believed to be descendants of slaves brought from the Nithian colonies nowadays known as Ostland and Vestland. The Nithians carved out a southern domain from the jungle for their priests. Then three tribes of slaves rebelled and escaped north, seeking their fatherland. Instead, these ruffians found (and founded) what would later become Thyatis. A century later, Nithia foundered. The unruly slaves who stayed south obliterated whatever remained of their Nithian origins; in a few centuries, all was lost to the jungle. These hardy, blond Hinterlanders survived and became savage jungle warriors who were capable of fighting the original natives on equal footing.

Sudmir 3, 1965: Terrible, those natives. We came close to a large town deep in the rain forest. Smoke from their fires could be seen from miles away. Thousands of huts sprawled across a clearing in the forest, with several stone buildings placed near the clearing's center. We spotted

what seemed to be a temple of some sort. Upon our descent, it was observed that the natives were of a much smaller build than the Hinterlanders. Tattoos covered their copper skin, and most of them had long, black hair tied in the back. The natives immediately attacked our vessel, using poison needles and blowguns against our exposed crewmen when we came within range. The gray substance on the needles was deadly, and we lost two men. Magic from their barbaric sorcerers cracked and thundered, but the *Princess Ark* withstood the crude spell-strikes. As we sailed away, we spotted some of their shamans—or so we assumed those monstrosities to be, as they all had various snakelike features. Alas, we did not remain to study this culture any further. We will return at a later time to deal with these natives in a more fitting way. I sent an invisible messenger back to Her Imperial Majesty with our last position, then ordered the *Princess Ark* farther east along the Jungle Coast.

Sudmir 25, 1965: This morning I watched one of the nicest sunrises just as we steered eastward toward the Pass of Cestia. There we reached an unknown cape on the continental coast. I named it Cape Eriadna, in honor of Her Imperial Majesty. The place seems deserted. Despite the hot and rainy weather of this area, no rain forest grows here; instead, Savannah spreads out as far as we can see, with occasional clusters of trees dotting the land. Unlike the dominant northeasterly winds of the Jungle Coast, the winds here usually blow to the southeast.

Sudmir 26, 1965: Talasar, my second in command, is in charge of replenishing the *Princess Ark*'s food and water supplies. The magic from his Immortal patron is powerful, but some of the supplies are now reported to be spoiled. This is quite unlike Talasar; he is a dedicated priest. This will be investigated at a later time. I am sending an away team to gather food and samples of the local vegetation.

Vertmir 1, 1965: The away team—or what's left of it—has finally returned. Xerdon, the captain of the guard, took matters in his own hands and mounted a rescue mission to find the team. I quote from his report:

"We had marched 30 miles south when we found the antelopes that the team was tracking. With their hunting wands, the men should have easily caught their prey, skinned it, and cut it up. But there was no trace of the team nor of any fight."

"Then Ramissur, my forward boltman, saw a glint on a nearby hill. I ordered the men into skirmish order and approached it. The grass was nearly 3' tall, and the ground was a bit marshy. Suddenly, one after the other, guards screamed in horror. I ordered the men into a tighter group but found that those who had screamed were missing. We made it to the hill and found two survivors from the away team. None appeared wounded, but they bore

strange purple marks on their bodies, like bruises. Both were insane, and in their mad babbling they screamed of an attack by tentacles that shot from under mosses and peat. The other poor devils on their team must have been pulled underneath and devoured by foul beasts."

"Once warned, it wasn't difficult to spot the concealed creatures on the way back. My two elite boltmen on point took pleasure in blasting the things once they found them. Ramissur managed to stun one creature that had rags hanging from its tentacles, rags that probably belonged to Azoth, the Dispel Warden of the lost team. By Razud, I'll now have to train Ramissur in the art of magic dispelling. Azoth was a fine guard. I cast a binding on the creature's mind, then brought it back. And so we returned."

Vertmir 4, 1965: These beasts are quite a discovery—they are vegetable beings. I have named them "Cestian gobblers." Each appears to have a short, fat trunk with a slimy, sphincterlike mouth on top. Three to six gooey tentacles grow on the sides of each trunk, which are used to capture prey. The tentacles exude a substance capable of stunning an ox. When I brought fresh meat near the opening of one gobbler, small translucent tendrils stuck out of it like little tongues, each of them ending in a noisy, smacking suction cup. It took the gobbler very little time to suck the juices from the meat. Afterward, the opening widened and the gobbler gobbled its food.

I was able to retrieve Azoth's partially digested remains from one plant, and after some cleaning of his remains, I animated the late warden's body and set it on permanent duty in the hold. There, away from the common crew, Azoth will cater to the Cestian gobbler, now properly restrained and potted in a large jar. I was surprised to see that the gobbler wouldn't attack Azoth in his present state. In fact, it seems the gobbler now looks forward to Azoth's arrival with fresh food. This unusual vegetable specimen deserves to be brought to the Imperial Greenhouse.

It appears these gobblers commonly grow throughout the coast in the Pass of Cestia. This explains why we've found no human population there. Beware of lowlands with high grasses in this region! This is where gobblers are most likely to be found. After this discovery, I ordered the *Princess Ark* back to her original easterly course.

To be continued . . .

Please send your questions and comments on this series to Bruce Heard, D&D Column, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147. We cannot guarantee that all letters will get an answer, but they will be given all the attention they deserve. Your input in the development of the D&D Known World is welcome. Thank you!

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Cestian Gobbler

Armor Class: 6

Hit Dice: 3-6* * * (1 HD per tentacle)

Move: Nil

Attacks: 1 per tentacle, plus 1 cluster of tendrils

Damage: Entangle and paralysis; 1d12 per round

No. Appearing: n/a

Save As: Fighter 3-6

Morale: Nil

Treasure Type: V

Alignment: Neutral

XP Value: 125 (3 tentacles); 225 (4 tentacles); 550 (5 tentacles); 950 (6 tentacles)

The Cestian gobbler is a gray-brown plant that might be found in any tropical wilderness. It hides beneath mosses or dead branches in muddy holes. The gobbler consists of a hollow trunk, 3-6 tentacles spaced evenly around a sphincter-shaped mouth, and a cluster of small tendrils that can protrude from the mouth. Cestian gobblers never grow within 60' of each other.

A gobbler surprises any prey walking past it on a roll of 1-2 on 1d6, attacking with its tentacles. After a successful attack, the victim is entangled and must Save vs. Poison or be paralyzed. Although nearly instantaneous in effect, the paralysis lasts only 1-6 rounds after the victim is pulled away from the gobbler. An unparalyzed victim must pass a Strength check with a -1 cumulative penalty for each Hit Die the creature has and for each tentacle holding the victim. A roll of 1 always indicates the victim has freed himself; a roll of 20 always indicates failure. Tentacles reach lengths of 12', plus 3' per Hit Die. The gobbler can attack as many victims as it has tentacles, but the gobbler only senses creatures that walk on the ground within 30' of the plant's trunk.

The gobbler needs a full round to pull a victim toward its mouth. There, a cluster of translucent tendrils comes out and must score a to-hit roll to attach itself to the victim and draw out its blood. The tendrils cause 1-12 hp damage at the end of each subsequent round until the victim dies or is rescued, or until the plant is slain. A dead victim is swallowed whole into the gobbler's trunk, where it is eventually digested. Various treasures belonging to previous victims may be found at the bottom of the hollow, fluid-filled trunk.

Cestian gobblers of 6-HD size have a 10% chance of developing an Intelligence score of 2d6 + 1. These creatures are capable of empathy and may use bait to attract their prey (paralyzed animals, treasures, rags, etc.). A gobbler reproduces once a year by shooting 2-8 spores from its mouth. Spores are hurled 30-300' away. Each spore has a 25% chance of sprouting; it then needs six months to grow into a 3-HD gobbler. Sprouts need only water and humus.

As Above Continued from page 24

ant humanity with a flood, they soon repented the action and were delighted to discover that one man and his wife had survived the deluge. The survival of the race as a whole was thus ensured and was actively nurtured. It was important to these gods that sufficient and proper sacrifices should continue to be offered to them from Earth, and when the number of sacrifices showed any signs of diminishing (as in the story of Ishtar and Tammuz, when Ishtar went down into the underworld to rescue her dead lover, Tammuz, and fertility disappeared on Earth during her absence), the gods were quick to remedy the problem.

When the Babylonians went to war, it was at the gods' direction, and each stage of the conflict was preceded by the taking of omens by the priests who accompanied the army. The usual method of obtaining omens was by divination. Thus the gods (or, at least, the priests, depending on how cynical you are) had a direct hand in determining who should be attacked and when. Of course, a powerful king or general might have some marginal influence on what the priests reported from their omens....

The Babylonians kept statues or idols of their gods in their temples. While the commoners may have identified each god with its idol, the priests and nobility probably considered the statue merely a

symbol—but an important symbol. In a decisive victory, when the statue of the enemy's god was actually captured, the statue might be taken to a designated "prison temple" to demonstrate in tangible terms that the enemy deity, as well as the enemy state, was in captivity. This would certainly damage the morale of the defeated nation. What rebel would dare to act when his own god is a prisoner and unable to aid him? Even the less credulous priests and nobles may have believed that possession of the enemy gods statue had some sort of dampening effect on the gods freedom of action. (In the Greek story of the siege of Troy, the theft of the Palladium, a famous statue of Athena, was one prerequisite to the fall of the city—an interesting parallel.)

By the time of Nebuchadnezzar (605-561 B.C.) and Nabonidus (555-538 B.C.), the last two major Babylonian emperors, the city of Babylon played "host" to many imprisoned deities. Among other artifacts housed with these statues were the holy vessels of the Hebrews, taken from Jerusalem when that city was sacked by the Babylonians, and returned by order of Cyrus the Great, the Persian, when he conquered Babylon in 538 B.C.

The gods, then, may very well walk among men in many societies. And men will make the most of these opportunities.

Ω

Goals of the Gods

Continued from page 20

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Your Best Chances

A statistical look at the AD&D® 2nd Edition game's character creation

by Ed Friedlander

The AD&D® 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* (*PHB*) offers a choice of six systems on page 13 for generating new characters. This article tabulates the chances of obtaining a human character in each official character class (as defined in the new rules) and of obtaining certain combinations of high scores, using each of the six methods. This data should help referees:

- choose the system that will best meet the needs of their groups;
- decide whether to allow the raising of rolled scores to meet class minimums (*PHB*, page 25);
- recognize really inferior characters that may need to be rerolled (*PHB*, page 25); and,
- decide whether to admit characters from other campaigns if such characters were rolled up in other ways.

If you have not yet obtained a copy of the *PHB*, here is a synopsis of the six ways of generating a character:

Method I: Roll 3d6 once for each ability score, in the following order: strength, dexterity, constitution, intelligence, wisdom, and charisma.

Method II: Roll 3d6 twice for each ability score, in the previous order, assigning the higher total to each ability score.

Method III: Roll 3d6 six times, then assign the six totals in any order you like to the abilities.

Method IV: Roll 3d6 twelve times, then assign the best six scores in any order you like to the abilities.

Method V: Roll 4d6, drop the lowest of the four die rolls from the total, then assign the six totals in any order you like to the abilities.

Method VI: Start with an 8 in each ability. Roll 7d6 and add each of the seven values to an ability score as desired. All the points on a die must be added to the same ability score, and no ability score can exceed 18 points. (For example, if you roll seven 6s, your character will have an ability score of 14 in every category, with one die wasted.)

Here are the minimum required ability scores for humans of each official character class:

Fighter: Strength 9

Paladin: Strength 12, Constitution 9, Wisdom 13, Charisma 17

Ranger: Strength 13, Dexterity 13, Constitution 14, Wisdom 14

Mage: Intelligence 9

Abjurer: Intelligence 9, Wisdom 15

Conjuror: Intelligence 9, Constitution 15

Diviner: Intelligence 9, Wisdom 16

Enchanter: Intelligence 9, Charisma 16

Illusionist: Intelligence 9, Dexterity 16

Invoker: Intelligence 9, Constitution 16

Necromancer: Intelligence 9, Wisdom 16

Transmuter: Intelligence 9, Dexterity 15

Cleric: Wisdom 9

Druid: Wisdom 12, Charisma 15

Thief: Dexterity 9

Bard: Dexterity 12, Intelligence 13, Charisma 15

Note that there are minor differences from the AD&D 1st Edition *Players Handbook*, and that the wizard-class specialists are new. In the tabulation below, I have included the abjurer, conjuror, and transmuter as members of category "Spec-15," and the diviner, enchanter, illusionist, invoker, and necromancer as part of "Spec-16."

How it was done

All calculations were performed using an IBM-PC computer. Computations for methods I and II were carried out on a Quattro spreadsheet; those for methods III, IV, V, and VI required programming in Turbo-Pascal 4. Programs for methods III, IV, and V relied on the formula:

$$C = a^x[(1 - a)^{(n-x)}]n! / [(n-x)!(x!)]$$

in which C is the decimal chance of obtaining exactly "x" examples of a score out of "n" groups of dice rolled, "a" is the decimal probability of rolling that particular score for a group, and "!" is the factorial operator.

For confirmation, 100,000 groups of stats were obtained using each of methods



Illustrations by Timothy Truman

I-V, and the number of groups that would allow a character of each class was recorded. In all cases, this matched the calculated result within the limits of random error.

The program for method VI evaluated all permutations for seven dice. Results were rechecked using simplifying discoveries made during the original run. For example, the only combinations (with all permutations) that total 16 or better but do not qualify for a bard are 6666666, 6666665, and 4222222. Readers interested in these programs should contact me, c/o DRAGON® Magazine.

[The figures in each table have been rounded off to only three decimal places by the editors. No figure, unless so noted, is exact. Thus, "0.000%" represents an extremely small chance, much less than one in 1,000; "8.000" means "about 8%."]

Odds & ends

Demi-human characters with racial minimums (especially multiclassed characters) are harder to roll, but most such PC-creation odds are of the same orders as the odds for human characters. For example, a gnome fighter-illusionist requires strength 9, intelligence 8 (becomes 9 when adjusted for race), dexterity 16, and constitution 8. The results are:

Method I: 2.408%
Method II: 8.000%
Method III: 23.880%
Method IV: 43.381%
Method V: 56.641%
Method VI: 99.984%

The differences among the methods are clear. Judging by the results for method I, rangers and paladins are rare in campaigns where people average 3d6 in each ability. Using method VI, getting any class except ranger or paladin (or any common multi-class), plus a high prime requisite, is a near certainty, but the average ability score is not quite so high as for methods II, IV, or V (a consideration if your group uses ability checks often). Because the methods of character creation are so different, it is fairest when all players have rolled their characters in the same way.

And now, Method VII

Sooner or later, an enterprising DM who wants his adventurers to have mostly near-average stats will think of another method for rolling up characters....

Method VII: Roll 18d6 and combine them as you wish to create six ability scores. All the points on a die must be added to the same ability score, and no ability score can exceed 18 points or be less than 3 points.

Table 7 shows that this method will not work well in practice. With results anywhere close to average, major class requisites will be very high and others will be very low. Interestingly, Method VI gives significantly better chances of getting a hard-to-roll class, while avoiding low scores. Method VII will generate hordes of dim-witted fighters, clumsy clerics, feeble wizards, and foolish thieves. DMs and players who aim for diversity among characters should obviously not use it. Ω

Table 1
Method I

Character	Probability
Fighter	74.074%
Paladin	0.133%
Ranger	0.176%
Mage	74.074%
Spec-15	6.859%
Spec-16	3.429%
Cleric	74.074%
Druid	3.472%
Thief	74.074%
Bard	0.900%

Tables continued on page 74

How To Avoid BEING LOWERED SLOWLY INTO A CAULDRON OF BOILING SZIGLION OIL...



In Flux players compete against one another for the title of Master of Wizards. This annual event, held on the Great Plains of Grob during the month of Forthauary is used to select the Loremaster for the Associated & Amalgamated Guild of Wizards, Warlocks, Witches & Magic Users (1978) for the coming year.

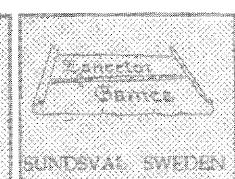
Using the flux globes scattered over the Great Plains aspiring Loremasters caste either Earth (forest, marsh, mountains etc.) or Animate (troll, gnome, manticore, great dragon, knights etc.) spells in their battle to claim the most territory while disputing the territory of others.

Thankfully the days when the losers were lowered slowly into a cauldron of boiling sziglion oil laced with bat's wings and viper droppings are long gone.

Nowadays they leave out the bat's wings.



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continued from page 73

Any 18	2.746%
Two 18s	0.032%
Three 18s	0.000%
18 & 17-18	0.216%
18 & 16-18	0.554%
No 15-18	55.823%
No 16-18	75.246%
No 17-18	89.391%
No 18	97.254%
Average	10.5 (exactly)

Table 2
Method II

Character	Probability
Fighter	93.278%
Paladin	0.941%
Ranger	1.807%
Mage	93.278%
Spec-15	16.474%
Spec-16	8.437%
Cleric	93.278%
Druid	10.762%
Thief	93.278%
Bard	4.857%
Any 18	5.416%
Two 18s	0.125%
Three 18s	0.002%
18 & 17-18	0.819%
18 & 16-18	1.966%
No 15-18	31.162%
No 16-18	56.619%
No 17-18	79.907%
No 18	94.584%
Average	12.176

Table 3
Method III

Character	Probability
Fighter	99.970%
Paladin	5.779%
Ranger	3.669%
Mage	99.970%
Spec-15	44.112%
Spec-16	24.722%
Cleric	99.970%
Druid	38.879%
Thief	99.970%
Bard	22.761%
Any 18	2.746%
Two 18s	0.032%
Three 18s	0.000%
18 & 17-18	0.216%
18 & 16-18	0.554%
No 15-18	55.823%
No 16-18	75.246%
No 17-18.	89.391%
No 18	97.254%
Average	10.5 (exactly)

Table 4
Method IV

Character	Probability
Fighter	99.999%
Paladin	18.718%
Ranger	33.984%
Mage	99.999%
Spec-15	68.838%
Spec-16	43.381%
Cleric	99.999%
Druid	68.206%
Thief	99.999%
Bard	62.377%

Any 18	5.416%
Two 18s	0.137%
Three 18s	0.002%
18 & 17-18	0.893%
18 & 16-18	2.118%
No 15-18	31.162%
No 16-18	56.619%
No 17-18	79.907%
No 18	94.584%
Average	12.740

Table 5
Method V

Character	Probability
Fighter	99.999%
Paladin	26.685%
Ranger	30.470%
Mage	99.999%
Spec-15	79.395%
Spec-16	56.756%
Cleric	99.999%
Druid	78.245%
Thief	99.999%
Bard	68.908%

Any 18	9.337%
Two 18s	0.377%
Three 18s	0.008%
18 & 17-18	2.091%
18 & 16-18	4.502%
No 15-18	20.603%
No 16-18	43.243%
No 17-18	69.930%
No 18	90.663%
Average	12.176



Table 6
Method VI

Character	Probability
Fighter	100% (exactly)
Paladin	90.045%
Ranger	74.283%
Mage	100% (exactly)
Spec-15	99.997%
Spec-16	99.984%
Cleric	100% (exactly)
Druid	99.954%
Thief	100% (exactly)
Bard	97.786%
Any 18	99.458%
Two 18s	82.024%
Three 18s	5.899%
18 & 17-18	89.763%
18 & 16-18	93.147%
No 15-18	0.003%
No 16-18	0.013%
No 17-18	0.089%
No 18	0.542%
Average	12.083

Table 7
Method VII (new)

Character	Probability
Fighter	99.999%
Paladin	81.368%
Ranger	68.412%
Mage	99.999%
Spec-15	99.996%
Spec-16	99.993%
Cleric	99.999%
Druid	99.975%
Thief	99.999%
Bard	97.772%
Any 18	99.999%
Two 18s	98.426%
Three 18s	52.591%
18 & 17-18	98.911%
18 & 16-18	99.263%
No 15-18	0.000%
No 16-18	0.000%
No 17-18	0.000%
No 18	0.000%
Average	10.5 (exactly)

Convention Calendar

Continued from page 67

OURCON II, April 20-22

This year's convention will be held on the campus of the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. There will be three RPGA™ AD&D® tournaments, as well as open gaming, board games, miniatures, and CLAY-O-RAMA. Write to: OURCON II, 605 Jonesberry Road, Box SS-7, Carrboro NC 27510.

NAME THAT CON III, April 27-29

Sponsored by the St. Charles SF/Fantasy Society, "III" will be held at the Holiday Inn St. Louis-Downtown. Guests of honor are George Alec Effinger, Todd Hamilton, Wilson (Bob) Tucker, and Laura LeHew. Events include programming, a masquerade, filking, a play, workshops, an art show, a hucksters' room, videos, and a charity auction. Registration is \$16 until March 1, or \$20 thereafter. Write to: NAME THAT CON III, P.O. Box 575, St. Charles MO 63301; or call either Marie at: (314) 724-0808, or Cheryl at: (314) 946-9147; no collect calls, please. For hotel reservations, call: (314) 421-4000 or (800) 465-4329.

GAMECON II, May 4-5

The Game Master presents this convention at the Village Mall Auditorium, Lower Level Bergen Mall, Paramus NJ. Events include RPG and war game tournaments, board games and open gaming. Featured are RPGA™ Tournaments, a games auction and miniatures contest. Games include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, WARHAMMER 40K®, STAR WARS®, CAR WARS®, and more. Registration: \$1 at the door. Write to: GAMECON II, c/o The Game Master, Bergen Mall, Paramus NJ 07652; or call: (201) 843-3308.

GAMEX '90, May 25-28

This will be held at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt where all types of family, strategy and adventure board, role-playing, miniatures, and computer gaming will occur. Events include flea markets, auctions, an exhibitor area, seminars and demonstrations, and special guests. Write to: STRATEGICON, P.O. Box 8399, Long Beach CA; or call: (213) 420-3675.

SAGA '90, June 9-11

This year SAGA is moving to Globe High School in Sydney, Australia. Events include AD&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, and many more role-playing, board, miniatures, and freeform games. Write to: SAGA, P.O. Box 71, Kingsway, NSW, AUSTRALIA 2208.

POLYGON VIII, June 22-24

The Simulation and Adventure Gaming Assoc. of CalPoly is sponsoring "VIII." Events include stories and illustrations, movies, Liventures, speakers, games, and a dealers' area. Registration is \$15 by April 13, \$18 by May 18, or \$22 for weekend passes and \$12 for one-day passes at the door (GMs have special prices). Write to: POLYCON VIII, c/o SAGA, Activities Planning Center, Box 168, San Luis Obispo CA 93401, and ask about special room rates; or call Stacey Fetter at: (805) 545-9858.

ORIGINS/DRAGON CON '90, June 28-July 1

The 1990 National Gaming Exposition and Trade Show will be held at the Atlanta Hilton and Towers, Atlanta, Ga. Guests of honor are Tom Clancy and Doug Niles, with more guests to

be announced. Role-playing, strategic, miniatures, and computer game tournaments will be held around the clock. Other activities include panels and workshops, game and consignment auctions, a masquerade, an art show and print shop, and video rooms! Write to: ORIGINS '90, Box 47696, Atlanta GA 30362.

CONJUNCTION, July 27-29

This convention will take place at New Hall College, Cambridge, England. The guest of honor will be Gregory Stafford. Events include numerous RPGs, panels, a masquerade, and a dealers' area. Membership is £12 for those over 18. Write to: CONJUNCTION, 25 Wycliffe Road, Cambridge CB1 3JD, UNITED KINGDOM.

1990 GEN CON® Game Fair, August 9-12

Make your plans now to attend the biggest and best game convention of them all, at the MECCA Convention Center, Milwaukee, Wis.! Don't miss the "Early Bird Special" form in this issue! We've pulled in over 10,000 people for two years running! Write to: 1990 GEN CON® Game Fair, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147.

GEORGIA FANTASY CON '90

September 28-30

This celebration of fantasy and horror is going to be held at the OMNI International Hotel and Convention Center, Atlanta, Ga. The guest of honor is Michael Moorcock, with many more guests to be announced. Events include four tracks of panels and workshops, a masquerade, an art show and print shop, video rooms, art, and consignment auctions! Write to: GEORGIA FANTASY CON, Box 148, Clarkston GA 30021.

How effective was your convention listing? If you are a convention organizer, please write to the editors and let us know if our "Convention Calendar" served your needs. Your comments are always welcome.

Editorial

Continued from page 5

Don't write to us to say that we made a mistake. We didn't.

Moore rumors: A friend in California passed along the rumor that I was resigning, and another editor called me to see if it was true. I hope it isn't, since I just redecorated my work cubicle, though my Goodyear blimp needs more air and I don't have room for the pirate flag. Yes, I am still here.

That just about covers it for now. We wish all of you a wonderful holiday season, and we hope you'll enjoy all the things we have coming in 1990. It should be quite entertaining.

THE ROLE OF Computers

©1989 by Hartley,
Patricia, and Kirk Lesser



Now that the earth has settled....

We'll start this month's column by saying how thankful we are to have survived the 7.1 earth-shaker that struck northern California last October. An earthquake puts your life in perspective; this one gave us an opportunity to see how people can care for one another in a time of need. It was heartening to see the massive volunteer effort within the computer industry. Thousands of people, from programmers and developers to salespeople and secretaries, moved in to help those whose lives had been uprooted, even though the helpers' own situations were uncertain.

In the days that followed, we were able to devote some pleasurable hours to the reviews for this column. When things became too hectic, the diversions of gaming proved healthful. Computer gaming is perhaps one of the best tension relievers available to anyone. You don't forget your troubles; you simply share them with your

on-screen character and focus your attention on matters that aren't quite as bad as those in the real world. This gives you time for a breather before once again tackling reality.

Reviews

Computer game ratings

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

Lucasfilm Games
P.O. Box 10307
San Rafael CA 94912

Their Finest Hour: *The Battle of Britain*

PC/MS-DOS version (EGA) \$59.95

Lucasfilm Games can teach other software game publishers what it means to put a total package together. Not only is this World War II combat simulation the best of its kind, but the peripheral material that accompanies the software is first rate.

The manual is one of the best we've had the opportunity to read. It is packed with historical background concerning the Battle of Britain, covering the different phases of the battle, flight fundamentals, and battle maps. However, because of the enormous amount of information in the manual, an index by subject would have been a nice addition.

One of the most interesting features of the game manual is a section entitled "Pilot's Perspective," with comments from the English and German pilots who survived the Battle of Britain. This offers insight into some of the battle tactics used during World War II, and it reveals the human side of the battle.

Also included is a handy reference card and a code wheel. The program is not copy protected, but the code wheel is needed to tune your aircraft's radio to receive vital battle information. If you don't have the code wheel, you don't have a game.

The EGA graphics are absolutely superb. To run this game in VGA must be great!

You can build your own World War II campaigns with the game's Mission Builder program. Numerous models of aircraft are provided, such as fighters, dive bombers, and medium bombers with as many as seven crew positions. During combat, you can even turn on your plane's camera to film your engagement.

The Battle of Britain (TBOB) possesses an extremely smooth user interface. A joystick, a mouse, or the cursor keys are used to make menu selections and to fly your aircraft. At the main menu, you can fly training missions, combat missions, and customized missions (the latter using the Mission Builder program). You can also



Sword of Aragon (SSI)

play a campaign game (taking up to 25 missions for a winner to be declared) and review your combat films.

To learn the game, the training flights should be tackled first. You can fly one of eight German or British aircraft. We decided to start our training in the RAF's Hurricane MK1, a single-seat fighter plane. Because of its lighter frame, it had the ability to stay in the air longer than the German aircraft. (Its main use was to attack German bombers, while the Spitfires were assigned to attack the German fighter planes protecting the bomber group.) The Hurricane also possessed a higher ceiling, being able to climb to 35,000'. This enabled the fighter to dive onto enemy formations.

Controls are simple to use. With a joystick (our recommended input/output device), pushing forward causes the plane to dive; pulling backward produces a climb. Moving the joystick to the left or right banks the plane. (If you are using a joystick, you'll be asked at the beginning of the game to adjust the device.) Your normal view is forward, through the plane's windshield. You can look in other directions using your computer's numeric keys. Your machine gun is fired by either holding down your joystick fire button or by depressing the space bar on your computer's keyboard. If you are piloting a bomber, pressing the RETURN key or both buttons on your joystick or mouse will drop your bombs.

Our first campaign ended rather successfully. We were assigned to intercept several Junkers medium bombers that were flying with Messerschmitt fighter cover. The bombers were slower than the Messerschmitts but still did not present easy targets (as we were targeting the bombers, the fighters were targeting us). We could see everything, from dogfights between other Hurricanes and Messerschmitts to our own targets caught in our barrage of machine-gun fire, bursting into flames, and falling toward the ground. Parachutes popped open if the German crews successfully jumped from their burning planes.

There was very little time to follow a plane to the ground as the constant press of bombers and the buzzing of the fighters got us totally involved and committed to the mission. If anything can feel like World War II flight combat, this simulation does. We logged in over three hours of flights before we even realized it!

During one mission in which we were chasing several bombers while trying to avoid six fighters, the on-screen display could not refresh itself as quickly as was necessary. The screen flickered, and the animation slowed perceptibly. However, by diving and removing the need to refresh several on-screen targets through the windshield, the game's speed returned to normal. This occurred only once during this particular mission; the fact that our PC/MS-DOS machine could handle these



Their Finest Hour: The Battle of Britain (Lucasfilm Games)



Targhan (Star Games)



Star Trek V: The Final Frontier (Mindscape)

numerous animation algorithms at all is an astounding accomplishment.

With the Mission Builder and the campaign mode of play, *TBOB* will afford thousands of hours of exciting, real-time, combat simulation entertainment. Remember, you can also pilot the German aircraft and even change the course of history. With a richly illustrated and extremely informative game manual, the finest EGA graphics, real-time flight experiences, and the ability to become part of history, *TBOB* should definitely find a place of honor in your software library.

Strategic Simulations, Inc.

675 Almanor Avenue
Sunnyvale CA 94086-2901
(408) 737-6800

Sword of Aragon

PC/MS-DOS version * * * 1/2

\$39.95

Sword of Aragon is a strategic fantasy role-playing adventure requiring your involvement in nearly all levels of character and city development. The object of the game is to conquer the land of Aragon. You have plenty of opposition to this task, mainly from rulers of other cities. Not only must you develop your own city, but you must build and care for your armies and the citizenry of each city you rule. This is not an easy chore; the game offers you many minor and major disasters ranging from inclement weather to inclement orcs, trolls, and other beasties. These dangers can leave your city in ruins and your plans for conquest in pieces.

We found the game a little difficult to start. For example, the protection method used requires that you type in the first word of a description found in the user's manual following a computer-generated query. The user manual displays the word in upper- and lower-case letters. If you type the word in as it is printed, you'll be told that the word you have entered is incorrect. You must enter the word in all capital letters, which is not explained in the manual. This will frustrate users, as they know darned well they're entering the correct word but the game refuses to acknowledge their input.

There are 13 cities in the land of Aragon, each one with different potential and leadership. They range from small coastal villages like Brocada to large, sprawling cities like Sothold. You begin as the ruler of the small town of Aladda and must decide how you are going to conquer these cities to become the supreme ruler of the land. The user's manual offers some pertinent facts about each city's ruler. For example, Lucinian III—the current "Emperor" of the "Tetradan Empire"—is ruthless and powerful. Combine that information with the fact that Tetrada has a population of 30,000, and you can bet your knight's armor that Lucinian's standing army is also quite powerful, one not to be tampered with by your young and rather small initial force of arms.

You start the game as either a warrior, knight, ranger, priest, or mage. After numerous game starts, we found the knight to be the most adept leader, as you can hire the others during the game. You need someone to command your troops right from the start, and the knight is an able commander for mounted troops. A warrior would be our second choice, as a warrior is more adept at leading ground troops.

You can start the game with a pre-assigned army or you can make up your own forces. The latter should only be undertaken after you have become accustomed to the game. Troops consists of infantry, mounted infantry, cavalry, bowmen, and horse bow soldiers. We found that a force of 50 infantry, 50 bowmen, two warriors, one knight, a mage, and a priest were enough to withstand the orc attacks against Aladda at the game's start.

The priest and mage can cast spells to aid in the defense of your city, although at the start of the game they have rather weak spells. The priest can chant a Vigor spell that energizes your army, while the mage can Slow an enemy unit to make it easier to hit and give you some protection. As they gain in experience, these two characters can also cast more potent spells such as Bless, Bridge (creates a pathway across an impassable river), Confuse, Cure, Disintegrate, Dry, Fear, Gate (creates a troll or demon unit to fight for the caster), Grow, Haste, Heal, Light, Wither, and Xhaust. These spells affect either the caster's units, the enemy, or local crops (e.g., Wither can harm an opponent's agricultural potential).

When creating your own units, you decide how many conscripted citizens form a unit; you then decide what each unit will be, name your troops, and buy their equipment (if you have been judicious in the development of your city, you'll have the funds to build your army). We found that 25 troops per unit was adequate, with a warrior or knight hired to lead that unit.

You also need to develop your city's resources, which may include agriculture, mining, lumber, commerce, or manufacturing. Development of your resources increases the amount of gold in your coffers and improves the health and loyalty of your citizens. During those rotten winters, it's nice to know that the city has spent the gold to build structures to store enough grain for everyone; otherwise, grain must be imported at great cost. If you can't import enough, and that leads to famine!

Once you've built a decent army and have developed resources, it's time to go a-hunting. Several messages appear on the screen as you move from month to month. Some messages tell of a kidnapped boy whose rescue will bring 8,000 gold to the rescuer. Others are falsehoods, such as the one describing the capture of an alleged murderer. Some of the messages from

couriers are misleading as well. Don't fall for every tip or hint that comes your way.

One city that will give you some trouble is Paritan, on the north coast of Aragon. Its leader, Pitlag, is a ruthless dude. After a great deal of struggling and much loss of life, we finally managed to occupy his city while he was away defeating a neighboring city, Brocada. Unfortunately, Pitlag costs a pretty penny to develop and really isn't worth the extreme effort at the start of the game. There is little to support the city other than piracy and trade. We suggest you move west with your first armies and see what happens. If you have a small army, we also advise you to avoid giants and titans; they can decimate your units and underfortified cities with very little trouble.

Sound good so far? It is, but *Sword of Aragon* also has some problems. One major problem is that you simply cannot retreat from an overwhelming force once it attacks. For example, you have a force of 25 infantry, 10 mounted infantry, 25 bowmen, two warriors, a knight, and a mage. You meander southward from Aladda into the mountains. A message comes on-screen to announce that giants have attacked, giving no indication of the number of nasties. You are then asked to place each of your units. Well, a commander with any common sense would depart the field of battle as quickly as possible. But this cannot be accomplished. You have to stay for at least four turns. During those four turns, the giants can whittle your troops away to nothing! When you finally leave the battle, you also lose several hundred points for losing the battle.

This is not really fair. Not only did you not want to become embroiled in the fight, but no method for quick escape was made available. The battle wastes your time because, even though you can save games in progress, you must wait until the four turns are over to quit the battle, quit the current game, return to the game-selection screen, and load a saved game (loading a saved game is far better than proceeding with mutilated forces). But wouldn't it be better to avoid the battle in the first place?

The game is also hard to master. It seems that no matter what you do, the opposing cities develop into huge cities without harm to their resources at a far more rapid pace than yours. You'll think your force of 50 to 75 troops (developed after about 25 turns) is quite a dynamic army. Guess again! The giants and titans will make mincemeat of you. And other cities are already packed with troops to ward off your advances.

Alliances can be made, especially with the elves. For example, in our attack on Pitlag, the elves committed 200 bowmen to the cause. We took Pitlag but at enormous cost; because we lost so many troops in the conquest, we were unable to defend the city against other intruders. Since these actions take a great deal of time and

game play to institute, having your victories be so easily tossed aside by foes is quite frustrating.

The potential for *Sword of Aragon* to be a dynamic game is there. The only problem is that it seems as though some areas were left unfinished. Perhaps this feeling exists because the game was written in Microsoft's QuickBASIC, a language that (in our opinion) doesn't possess the crackle and zip of other programming languages. After nearly 50 hours of game time, we left the campaign with a sense of overall disappointment. However, this feeling could have been due to the fact that we had just reviewed another game before starting this one.

We hope we haven't misjudged *Sword of Aragon*. There are many exciting moments, but the overall slowness of the game and the inability to avoid battles leave too much of your success to chance. *Sword of Aragon* is certainly a worthwhile offering from SSI, but it just doesn't equal the quality of its other recent releases.

Origin

P.O. Box 161750
Austin TX 78716

Space Rogue

PC/MS-DOS version

* * * 1/2
\$39.95

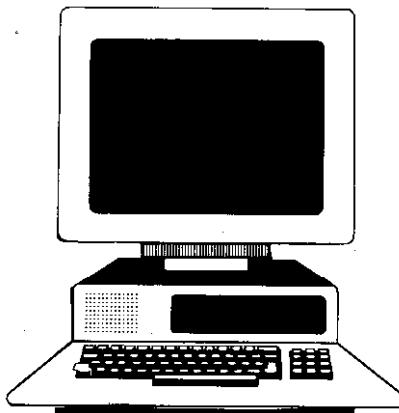
A strange ship has just been noticed on your viewscreen. Your crew moves in and identifies the spacecraft as the *Jolly Roger*, but there is no one on board. You volunteer to go over to the abandoned craft. As you cautiously search the inside of the ship, an alarm warns you of danger to the mother ship you just left. You watch helplessly as the mother ship is destroyed by a Manchi warship, which disappears without harming the *Jolly Roger*.

So begins the story of *Space Rogue*, the latest role-playing game from Origin. This game demands fast reflexes; it's a flight simulator that requires you to avoid obstacles and enemy ships. You must also earn money to better equip your ship by trading materials between planets, destroying pirate ships, and perhaps becoming a pirate yourself.

The game's introduction leaves you in the cockpit of the *Jolly Roger* from which you can view space, check your engines and ship's speed, examine a weapons' display, get information on other types of ships, and find out what tactical maneuvers enemy ships are performing. You can then use a navigation screen to pilot the *Jolly Roger* to different planets, bases, and wormholes. The screen shows the star system that you occupy and allows you to chart courses to other planets, examine a status report on the ship or your possessions or statistics, or retrieve data about a sector.

During your journeys, you may see a message announcing contact with another ship. You can view the ship and engage it from the cockpit, using the appropriate weaponry. Beam weapons, for example,

require that you target the enemy ship in the center of the screen before firing. Missiles need to be locked on target only once; then they automatically seek out the enemy to destroy it. If the enemy was a pirate, you pick up credits as a bounty. During combat, you might have to maneuver



ver around obstacles such as asteroids or antimatter shards. After combat, your reputations with the Free Merchant's Guild, the Imperium, and the Pirates will change. Your reputation as a combat pilot could also change, depending upon the outcome of the battle.

Space Rogue is a refreshing science-fiction game with crisp graphics that give you the feeling of flying in space. The adventure adds a new dimension by allowing you to walk around a base or outpost, to converse with people, and to pick up items. Science-fiction fans will love this game, but you should not let the role-playing aspect mislead you—this is a strategic game, and fast reflexes are needed to survive space combat and to maneuver around obstacles. We found *Space Rogue* to be an enjoyable adventure that offers a lot of action for a minimal investment. Once again, Origin offers a game with a high entertainment-to-dollar ratio.

News and new products

Broderbund Software (415-492-3178) has released *The Dark Heart of Uukrul*, a fantasy role-playing game that features colorful animated combat as well as a complex and intriguing plot. The game is available for the Apple II computer family for \$49.95. The game's dungeons and other visual aspects are shown in 3-D detail. All of the action takes place in the twisting mazes and catacombs of the mountain city of Eriostho. You guide a party of four characters through the city's passages using single-key commands. Your small band must vanquish Uukrul and his forces by finding Uukrul's heart.

Broderbund has also released *Joan of Arc: Siege & The Sword* for PC/MS-DOS, Commodore Amiga, and Atari ST computers. This game combines strategy and fast-paced action with outstanding graphics and sound. Bringing history to life, the game includes Joan of Arc's battles against

the English and Burgundians in her campaign to have Charles VII crowned King of France (you take the role of Charles VII). There are five action sequences, including large-scale battles in the countryside, hand-to-hand struggles with individual English soldiers, and perilous assaults on soaring fortress walls as boulders and scalding oil rain down. This game costs \$44.95.

Dynamix (503-343-0772) has released *David Wolf: Secret Agent*, an interactive movie for PC/MS-DOS systems. You are cast as American agent David Wolf, who is pitted against the international crime force, Viper. The story is told through a blend of interactive storytelling and arcade simulations with completely digitized artwork, solid-fill 3-D worlds, animated story sequences, and multiple story progression and ending possibilities. You'll battle the Viper forces in hang-glider combat, a fast-paced car chase, skydiving free-fall, and in aerial combat as a pilot of a stealth fighter. The price is \$49.95.

From Electronic Arts comes *Keef The Thief* for the Apple IIGS, priced at \$49.95. This is a unique role-playing game that mixes humor with action in an adventure that includes dramatic combat, multilevel spells, and puzzles to solve at every step. Your goal is to become the absolute ruler of everything and everyone. As Keef, a young juvenile delinquent, you're faced with an evil magician trying to create the magic necessary to rule the continent. You set out to beat him.

Mindscape (708-480-7667) has released *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier* for PC/MS-DOS systems, with VGA graphics and digitized footage from the film. You become James T. Kirk, assigned to boldly go where no man has gone before. Strategy and arcade sequences await you in this game. Photographic-quality screen art creates the most lifelike game ever released. Commodore Amiga and Apple Macintosh versions will be available early in 1990, with an Atari ST version available in March 1990.

Omnitrend Software (203-658-6917) has announced *Breach 2*. Using colorful graphics, animated combat, digitized sound effects, and a rousing musical score, *Breach 2* provides the player with an extremely rich environment: 3-D maps and views, multilevel terrains for missions in space as well as alien worlds, and support for the AdLib and CMS sound boards in the PC/MS-DOS version of the game. Ten unique opponents are featured, with artificial intelligence and the same equipment that you have. There are many different victory conditions, and each scenario has a different objective.

Star Games (813-222-0006) has debuted *Targhan* for PC/MS-DOS computers. This is the first and only PC/MS-DOS game that incorporates real, digitized sounds that are simultaneous with game play. EGA, CGA, and VGA graphics are all supported. There

Continued on page 102

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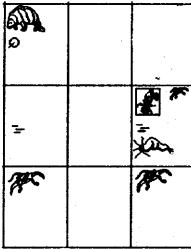
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The Play-By-Mail Association

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**PBMA, PO Box 431870,
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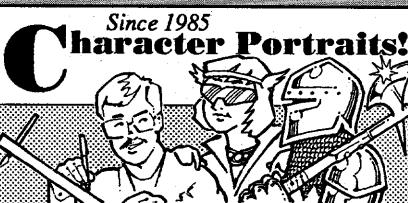
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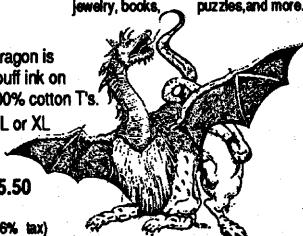
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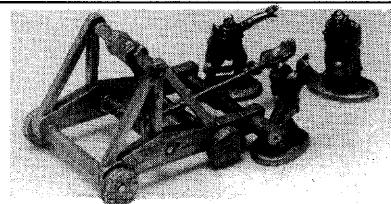
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Forum

Continued from page 8

remember that this is an attempted act, not an accomplished act. You should tell any party members who can witness this that "[character's name] draws his weapon and stalks toward the captured orcs," not that "[character's name] walks toward you, having just slain all the captured orcs." If any other PCs want to do something about his actions, they can.

A word of caution about notes: You are not obligated to stop what you are doing in order to read each and every note passed to you. Politely accept the note, then continue, and read the note when it is convenient.

6. Every player I've ever met is guilty of this, and I'm no different. We tend to have a "cookie cutter" approach to character generation, particularly if the game is a point-based game, such as Hero Games' CHAMPIONSTM or Steve Jackson Games' GURPS® system.

Things that worked for one character tend to be repeated in other characters. If you design your pregenerated characters, they tend to have a lot of similarity, and a player who doesn't like one character might hate the rest for the same reason. Worse, if you also designed the adventure, the pregenerated PCs may be too well tailored for it.

If every character "happens" to have just the right skill or item needed for this or that part of the adventure, the game starts to stink of predictability, and the players feel like puppets being jerked around by the GM. Having to improvise (and succeed) is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the game.

Suggestion: Have your regular players design several pregenerated PCs for your convention event. You'll get characters you can be familiar with, and the players get a broader choice of PCs. Your players know your DM's parameters

fairly well, so the PCs they design shouldn't conflict greatly with the way you run the game.

7. If you design the adventure, get someone else to run at least one of the playtest games for you. This is one of the fastest ways in existence to find mistakes.

8. Here I disagree with Emerich utterly. Do not have players roll for pregenerated PCs unless no other method is left. The player who likes to play thieves or assassins but gets stuck with playing a paladin isn't going to be very happy. If you will not allow a character into the game, let the player get a character that is as compatible with his own as you will permit.

9. When allowing already existing PCs into the game, make sure any and all unusual equipment, powers, and whatever are brought to your attention before you accept the character. A good rule to establish is: "I do not have time to run this adventure and thoroughly read all 11+ handwritten pages of information in this folder, let alone everyone else's material as well. I assume everything after page two is standard and by the book, and that all relevant nonstandard material is on page one or page two. If there is anything nonstandard on the back pages, it is your responsibility to point this out to me before I accept the character—otherwise, you lost it, you forgot how to use it, or it doesn't work here."

10. Again, I disagree with Emerich. The "bad apples" he recommends be ejected from convention games also paid to play there. GMs who toss players out had better have a superb reason, if for no other reason that the remaining players might be more troubled by your actions than the offending player's actions. A more circumspect solution would be to give the offending player a clue that leads that character into a death trap, such as letting him find a secret door that leads to a room with five (count 'em, five) *mirrors of opposition*. You are still getting rid of an obnoxious player, but in a way that at least pays lip service to the goal "to be a neutral moderator." Done with wit and style, the offending player may not realize he was set up.

S. D. Anderson
Whittier CA

It was a pleasure to see the response, both positive and negative, to my article "Give Dragons a Fighting Chance" (in issue #134). Douglas Porter (issue #139) and Ilya Taytchin (issue #149) confirmed my prediction that any player could offer better suggestions than my own. I especially enjoyed the recent DUNGEON® Adventures feature in which a small green dragon challenges a medium-level party with traps and tricks (DUNGEON issue #16, "Vesicant").

I decided to omit any consideration of Razisiz's possible "thieflike tricks" for two reasons. First was the classic example of Brazzemal (cited by Doug), from a time when the AD&D game was closer to its roots in military simulations. Second was the variability in how DMs adjudicate these situations. This was amply documented in previous "Forum" controversies over D&D game dragons and AD&D game "killer kobolds." Razisiz the Smart's stratagems could have been executed just as effectively by a kobold witch doctor supplied with several medium-level magical items.

Before planning a raid on a dragon's lair, thoughtful local clergy "bringing Razisiz his tribute money" might cast *detect charm* on "peasants" foolish enough to live near a dragon's lair. We can hope that adventurers cast *clairvoyance* from cover before they arouse suspicion. If one of the fighters is a dwarf, he could recog-

nize (and perhaps topple) Razisiz's boulder trap. Clerical *true seeing* is a better choice than *cure critical wounds* when expecting a crafty foe, and applying it on two characters just before entering the cave would have countered most of Razisiz's stratagems. *Dispel magic* on a victim of *charm person* or *polymorph other* could generate a grateful ally before or during combat. *Strength*, *knock*, or *dimension door* can deal with a portcullis, and hopefully no wizard is really foolish enough to cast *project image* unguarded from an unknown lair. Who's "dumb" now?

Both Ilya and I noted a dragon's need for lookouts. But a dragon who depends on traps and tricks must also depend on stealth or allies when raiding and extorting. In classic heroic fiction, the supreme fighting opponents are dragons, not filth creatures. It was gratifying to see upgraded dragons in the AD&D 2nd Edition *Monstrous Compendium*.

Nevertheless, the best AD&D game battles are battles of wits. I hope all DMs will incorporate Doug's and Ilya's insights as models for their own dragonish planning.

Ed Friedlander
Kansas City KS

S. D. Anderson (issue #147) seems to see my case for restricting the spells that a cleric receives as unreasonable. However, I don't think that any self-respecting god would allow his clerics to use just any of the spells given in the *Player's Handbook*. In addition, giving clerics specific sets of spells gives them a little bit of character, something that sets them apart from each other.

Clerics tend to be played as nothing more than convenient combat magicians, good in a fight with good magical spells as well. This is likely to be all the variety you get when the cleric's god is paid so little heed.

Clerics are supposed to be the foremost exponents of their gods' faiths. They should believe in and practice the philosophies of their gods. Suppose a most merciful priestess of Kuan Yin (Chinese goddess of mercy and childbearing, noted in *Legends & Lore*) steps forward. She wears *plate mail* +5, wields a *mace* +3, and is preparing to cast a *flame strike* spell. A cynic in the back row of the party calls out, "Hey, lady, aren't you supposed to be all peaceful and that sort of thing?" "No, not at all," she replies. "Haven't you read the *Player's Handbook*? We clerics are allowed all this stuff."

Well, maybe they are, but to ignore one's god and his wishes is to ignore the most important aspect of a cleric's life. A cleric should not quibble about the number and type of spells he received from his deity. He should be grateful for whatever he got.

Of course, it is the DM's role to ensure that the clerics in his world are balanced for play purposes. That is why I suggested that my hypothetical clerics of Tempus would be able to use any sorts of weapons they could get their hands on. A pacifist deity would give spells of a more interesting and pacifistic nature instead.

I think the work needed from the DM would be well worth the effort.

Michael Norrish
Wellington, New Zealand



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A Funny Thing Happened On the Way To the Mission

Spies should hope for the best—but prepare for the worst!

by Merle and Jackie Rasmussen

Agent Lafayette True is having a bad day. After a briefing on the need to recover a poisonous briefcase accidentally issued to a British agent, he was late getting to the airport. Fortunately, his flight was delayed and he boarded—just in time to be skyjacked to Beirut. Then Jordanian officials detected his fake passport, and the secret police are now detaining him indefinitely. So far he's received two pieces of mail. One informs him that his luggage arrived safely in Athens but was stolen from the airport. The second piece of mail is a Dear John letter from his wife.

Have you ever run a TOP SECRET/S.I.TM mission in which each agent's well-rehearsed split-second actions occurred on schedule—but you wished something exciting would happen to liven things up? Now, Administrators, wait no longer: The following material will provide you with plenty of unplanned, unexpected complications to disrupt a smooth-sailing but boring espionage campaign!

If you do not have unexpected events built into a mission you are administering, the following checklists may be used for added plot development. These should not be used in keyed, programmed missions, but they are useful in adventures that you have not otherwise planned out.

Our only recommendation is that you do not go overboard and throw one mind-boggling disaster after another at a team of shell-shocked agents. At most, use only one occurrence from each complication

chart per mission. Once an agent has survived a hurricane, a forest fire will stretch his suspension of belief past the breaking point. Use one complication at a time during the development of the story to see how the players react to it. Complications during the exposition, climax, and coda of a story should be used sparingly because they will confuse or frustrate agents during these critical periods.

Take a look at the AD&D® *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide*, page 99, and note the types of players described therein. (It's out of the spy genre, but the player types are universal.) If your players are of the *adventurer* type, they will enjoy a series of these events just for the sake of excitement. The right kind of distractions and red-herring events will also work with *role-players*. *Problem-solvers* are least likely to appreciate unexpected events that do not advance the plot, though they may like the mystery involved in some events.

These complications can be interspersed with the main plot's story elements to provide foreshadowing, mystery, pacing, timing, and challenge, as well as a taste of the unusual. These complications can be used with linear, open, and matrix story lines and may reduce the huge investment of time for research and preparation needed for an open story line.

To use these checklists, examine the Master Disaster Checklist first. Choose one of the categories, check it off the list, and find the accompanying complication checklist. Pick one of the events on the

chart, check it off, and work it into the mission. Those complications not checked off become possibilities for the next mission. Never use the same complication twice in the same campaign!

Working some events into the mission may be difficult or impossible. For example, if an agent's plane is supposed to be hijacked but the agent only travels by train, the event should modified. Someone the agent knows might be involved, though he was not there. In the case of criminal activity, the victim of a crime might be the agent himself, a fellow team member, a family member, a friend, an enemy, or the agent's contact for the mission. The agent might be blamed for crimes committed against any of the above. For example, an agent might have a difficult time explaining the untimely demise of his superior after a noisy argument with the superior about a payoff.

Do not overcomplicate these events. A player may be confused enough trying to figure out what his agent's domestic problems have to do with the mission. Do not explain things to the player; let him try to sort out his character's complex life. And do not have one agent on a team take the brunt of all the bad news. Spread the difficulties among everyone. A really big event might affect them all, like having a tsunami hit the beach on which the agents are camped.

As always, provide the agents with a way out of their predicament. Devastating, difficult, mysterious complications will test

your players' resiliency, stretch their imagination, and give them a sense of accomplishment. They might even thank you for an exciting and suspenseful mission!

Agency high jinks

Agency complications may be planned or accidental. If they are planned, they might have been designed by someone with malicious intent. Perhaps the agent had offended a superior years before, or the agency has been infiltrated and the superior is merely following orders from higher up. Perhaps there has been a simple, typographical, paper-shuffling, bureaucratic blunder, and the agent will suffer because of it. Life is hard.

- The agent is underinformed or misinformed about the number of persons present at the target site, a security system, the number of guards present at target site, the amount of ransom to demand, the target's armament, the consequences of discovery, or special identifications, signs, passwords, rituals, tests, or rites.
- The human target of the mission is a double, or the object target of the mission is a fake.
- The agent has been paid in counterfeit currency.
- The agent has been issued faulty documents: identity papers, passport, driver's license, orders, etc.

- The agent has been issued incorrect, faulty, or sabotaged equipment for the mission.
- The agent has been framed as an enemy or a criminal.
- The agent is to be sacrificed in a deal to protect another mission or another agent.
- The agent's cover is about to be deliberately or accidentally blown by a friend or the agency.
- The agent is the unwitting decoy or bait for another mission.
- The agent's contact or superior disappears, is incapacitated, arrested, captured, or killed.
- The agent's contact, teammate, or superior is an enemy agent.

Serious slip-ups

At the site of a mission, an agent might fail to do one of the following cover-up activities. Additional slip-ups can be created by the Administrator if the mistake is one the agent would obviously not have made—but we all make mistakes.

- Make a clean sweep, combing the job site to remove all incriminating materials or clues (including fingerprints and bullets), and either vacuuming, sweeping, or mopping job site for hairs, soil, and trash.
- Sanitize, removing all references that might identify the source or motive of

an action, or the places and people involved.

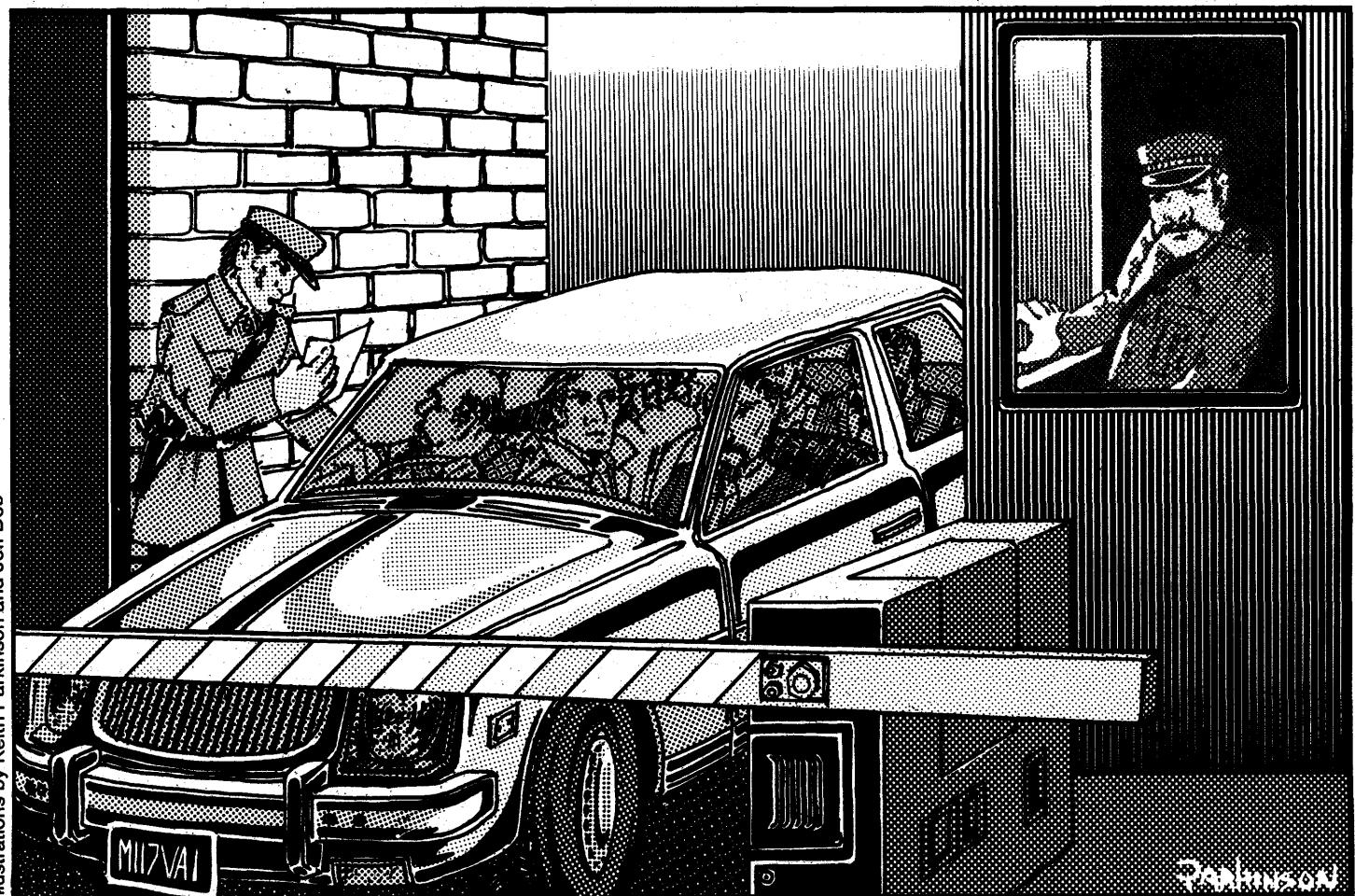
- Plant false, confusing, or misleading information (to include misleading messages from a "victim") to create a frame up, allow for escape time, or misdirect authorities.
- Disguise an operation as a natural occurrence or random event.
- Leave (or take) a rope, ladder, or climbing device hanging out of a window.
- Tape (or remove tape from) door latches to prevent latching.
- Loosen, open, or lock man-size gratings, access panels, windows, or doors from the most likely sides.
- Fake a suicide (leaving note or death weapon within reach), a self-defense killing (leaving two or more bodies involved in believable positions), or a natural death.
- Destroy a target or weapon to ensure it cannot be found.

Travel problems

Travel problems are divided into four sections: air, water, rail, and highway. Enjoy your trip.

By air

- The agent's flight is delayed or cancelled just before boarding due to mechanical failure or weather conditions.
- The agent does not clear health certificate inspection, passport inspection, or



Illustrations by Keith Parkinson and Jeff Dee

"Excuse me, but you do not resemble your passport photograph in slightest, Mr. Bond."

customs inspection.

- The airline does not have the agent's flight reservation, is overbooked, or has bumped the agent for other reasons.
- The agent (or a companion) smokes in a restricted area or makes an inappropriate joke about bombs or skyjacking, resulting in his detainment and possible arrest.
- The aircraft has an accident during take-off or landing (tires blow, skids on ice, strikes ground wires or vehicle, overshoots runway, hits wind shear, encounters fog or whiteout, etc.).
- The aircraft is skyjacked by terrorists or a madman.
- A bomb threat is received, or an unexploded bomb is found aboard the aircraft.
- A fight breaks out or a murder or theft takes place aboard the aircraft.
- The food served on the flight is tainted or poisoned, resulting in illness among the crew and passengers.
- The aircraft accidentally or deliberately (but without the agent's knowledge) flies into restricted airspace.
- The aircraft has an onboard explosion or fire, caused by a bomb, lightning, mechanical failure, or dangerous cargo.
- The aircraft flies into turbulent air, a violent storm, or icy conditions.
- The aircraft's wing, tail, cargo door, engine, or landing gear falls off in flight.

- The aircraft is shot at accidentally or by hostile forces, using bullets or missiles.
- The aircraft must make an unscheduled landing at the nearest available airport due to bad weather, mechanical failure, poor passenger health, closing of the destination airport, or other problems.
- The aircraft must make a crash landing due to bad weather, mechanical failure, sabotage, terrorist action, or pilot error or incapacitation.
- The aircraft collides with a mountain, trees, power lines, antennas, tall building, second aircraft, or UFO.
- The aircraft ditches in water and begins to sink.
- The burning aircraft lands safely, but the passengers are unable to escape.
- The aircraft lands safely but at the wrong airport due to pilot error.
- The agent's luggage is lost, temporarily or permanently.

By water

- The vessel runs aground on a sandbar or shore.
- The vessel sinks or capsizes, taking on water either across its decks, through a leak below the waterline, through a large hole, or from the breakup of the hull (see following for causes).
- The vessel strikes an iceberg, buoy, reef, dock, sea mine, or second vessel.
- The vessel is struck by a waterspout, freak wave, high winds, heavy seas, or

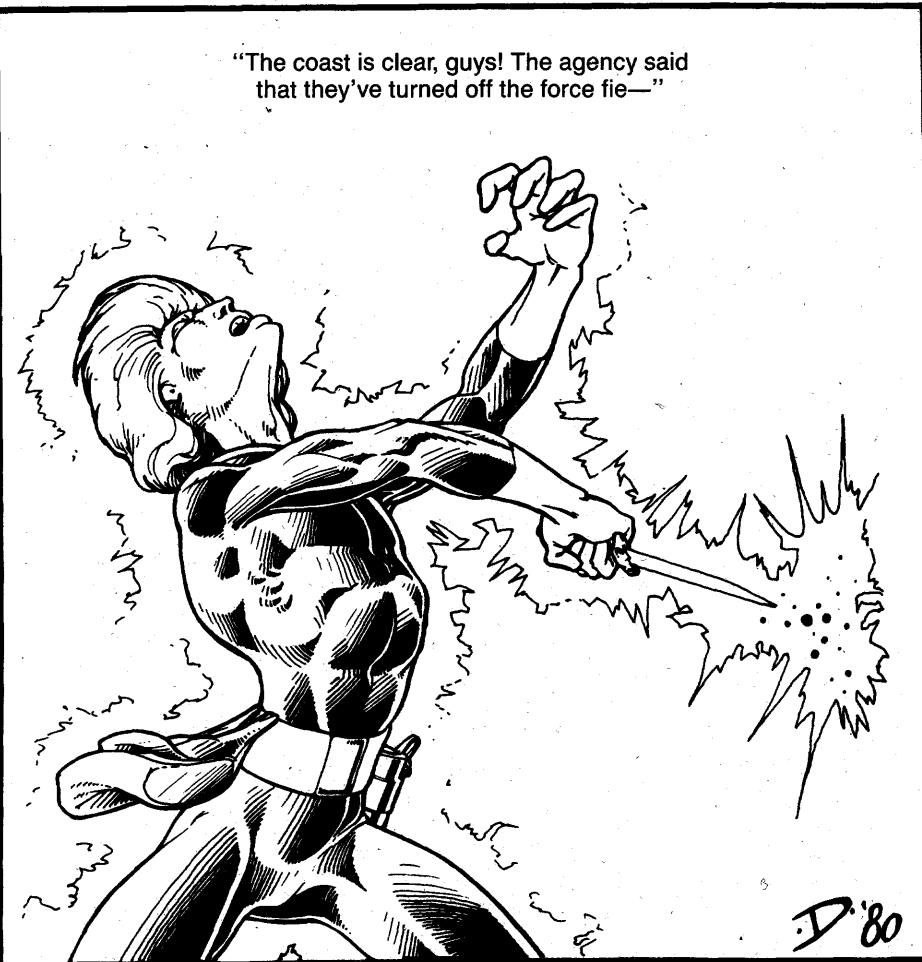
hurricane.

- The vessel encounters an unfriendly whale, sharks, or sea monster.
- The vessel explodes or catches fire; the cause is located in either the engines, fuel tanks, boiler, cargo hold, or the passenger compartment (and may be sabotage).
- The vessel is targeted by a torpedo or a land-, sea-, or air-launched bomb or missile, either accidentally or by hostile forces.
- The vessel is attacked by modern pirates or terrorists using high-speed boats, minisubs, aircraft, agents aboard the ship, etc.
- The vessel loses all power and communications, and is adrift on the open sea with no S.O.S. sent.
- A barge explodes, causing clouds of smoke and fumes.
- A sunken vessel or collapsed bridge blocks the waterway.
- Select an appropriate problem from the "By air" section (hijacking, missed or delayed boarding, etc.).

By rail

- The train is grossly delayed by bad scheduling.
- Mud, rocks, trees, or snow block the railroad tracks after a slide, avalanche, or earthquake (cows can block a track, too, as can a child with a bar of soap).
- The train encounters a major grass or forest fire.
- The train is switched to the wrong track, leading to a derailment, collision, or simply a long delay in getting on the correct route again.
- The train is forced to stop by military forces, terrorists, or bandits.
- The train is shot at accidentally or by hostile forces.
- The train derails but does not tip over, coming to a halt in a canyon, on a trestle, in the wilderness, or in the middle of a town; the derailment resulted from high winds, a tornado, sabotage, human error, or simple mechanical failure.
- The train has a severe derailment, with cars falling over a cliff, into deep water, etc.
- The train collides with a vehicle at a crossing, with debris on the track, with another train standing still, with another train head on, or with an end-of-line obstruction.
- The train passes through an open drawbridge or downed bridge.
- The train stalls in a tunnel without adequate ventilation, causing mass suffocation.
- A gas leak causes an explosion in the subway.
- Wooden platforms catch fire, at an outdoor or subway station.
- The train does not stop at your station.
- Select an appropriate problem from the "By air" section (hijacking, missed or delayed boarding, etc.).

"The coast is clear, guys! The agency said that they've turned off the force fie—"



By highway

- Mechanical failure causes the vehicle to not start, to stall in traffic, to lose its brakes, or to develop any one of many other serious problems.
- The vehicle runs out of gas, oil, brake or transmission fluid, or coolant, possibly from a puncture.
- The vehicle has a flat tire.
- Thieves break into the car while it is parked, possibly slashing the tires or smashing the windows.
- A severe traffic slow-down is caused by an accident or decreased visibility due to snow, fog, fire, or smoke.
- Mud, snow, flood waters, ice, lava, farm animals, or rocks block the road, stranding the agent's vehicle only.
- A traffic jam is caused by a vehicle accident, mine explosion, stopped train, raised bridge, blocked or destroyed road, bandits, farm animals, rush hour, construction, or bad weather.
- The agent encounters a poorly designed and dangerous highway (narrow bridges, sharp curves, no center-lane divider, unmarked railroad crossings, large potholes, etc.).
- A strong wind or a tornado blows the vehicle off the road-and possibly off a bridge.
- Snow or ice forces the vehicle off the road or causes a collision with a railing, sign, or vehicles.
- A bridge collapses; it may have been overloaded, struck by a passing ship, or undermined by high water or an earthquake.
- The vehicle is hijacked or stolen by thieves, terrorists, armed robbers, desperate citizens, children, or a madman.
- The vehicle is shot at accidentally or by hostile forces, possibly by the police or by rioting or careless citizens.
- The agent is threatened by a drunken or careless driver, an armed hitchhiker, or a disturbed passenger.
- The agent is involved in a vehicle accident or traffic violation, possibly leading to his detainment or arrest.
- The vehicle is correctly (or incorrectly) reported to be stolen or to have a violation pending.
- The agent or driver becomes intoxicated or overtired while driving.
- The agent cannot find his car keys or locks them in his vehicle.

Criminal activities

The agent, or someone the agent knows, is assumed to be the victim of one of the following (attempted) crimes. The offenses are divided into violent crimes, property crimes, and other crimes. The crimes in this checklist might be avoided if the agent has taken proper precautions. (Imagine the look on a mugger's face if an agent defends herself by drawing an automatic weapon!) Of course, it is possible for the agent to have actually committed such

crimes and be sought for them—or else the agent is believed to have committed them (perhaps he has been framed). The agent might also be an unexpected witness to a crime, being thereafter sought by criminals and police alike.

Violent crimes

- Murder or non-negligent manslaughter
- Robbery
- Aggravated assault

Property crimes

- Burglary
- Larceny—theft
- Motor vehicle theft
- Arson

Other crimes

- Other assaults
- Forgery and counterfeiting
- Fraud
- Embezzlement
- Stolen property—buying, receiving, possessing, etc.
- Vandalism
- Weapons—smuggling, possession, etc.
- Commercial vice
- Drug abuse violations
- Gambling
- Offenses against family and children
- Driving under the influence
- Liquor laws
- Public drunkenness

- Vagrancy
- Curfew and loitering violations
- Runaways
- All other offenses, except traffic (see "Travel problems: By highway")

Domestic stress

The events on this checklist were taken from the Life Change Units Scale developed by Drs. Thomas H. Holmes and Richard Rahe, psychiatrists at the University of Washington Medical School. The events are listed in order of descending stress value. These are generally severe disruptions of an agent's private life and are in addition to any number of other personal problems an agent might have (bills, taxes, arguments, etc.). The stress produced may be physical, mental, or emotional, but not all stress is bad (even good things can cause stress and upheaval). Role-player types of players thrive on this detail.

It is recommended that Administrators go easy when using this particular checklist, especially if the player seems to be quite attached to the NPCs in his character's life. However, consider the possibility of having one or more of the following faked by enemies of the agent (e.g., a false Dear John letter) or appear in (false) rumors that might surprise the agent.

- Death of spouse
- Divorce
- Marriage



"Wha—what do you mean I'm a spy? I'm a tourist! No, really! Wait!"

- Jail term
- Death of close family member
- Personal injury or illness
- Marriage
- Fired from job
- Reconciled marriage
- Retirement
- Illness in family
- Romantic difficulties
- Pregnancy
- Gain new family member
- Change in business
- Change in financial state
- Death of close friend
- Change in line of work
- Change in number of family fights
- Mortgage over \$10,000
- Mortgage or loan foreclosed
- Grown child leaves home
- Change in job duties
- In-law troubles
- Outstanding achievement
- Spouse begins or stops work
- Begin or end school
- Change in living conditions
- Change in personal habits
- Trouble with boss
- Change in work hours or conditions
- Move to new home
- Change in schools
- Change in recreation
- Change in church activities
- Change in social activities
- Mortgage loan under \$10,000
- Change in sleeping habits
- Change in number of family get-togethers
- Change in eating habits
- Vacation
- Christmas
- Minor violations of the law

Natural disasters

The adventurer and the problem-solver types of players thrive on big problems like these, which can affect the entire team. It is a good idea to limit the number of natural disasters to one per campaign unless the players particularly enjoy surviving against the elements or will not

notice that Mother Nature is always acting against them. These natural disasters can also be combined with "Travel problems."

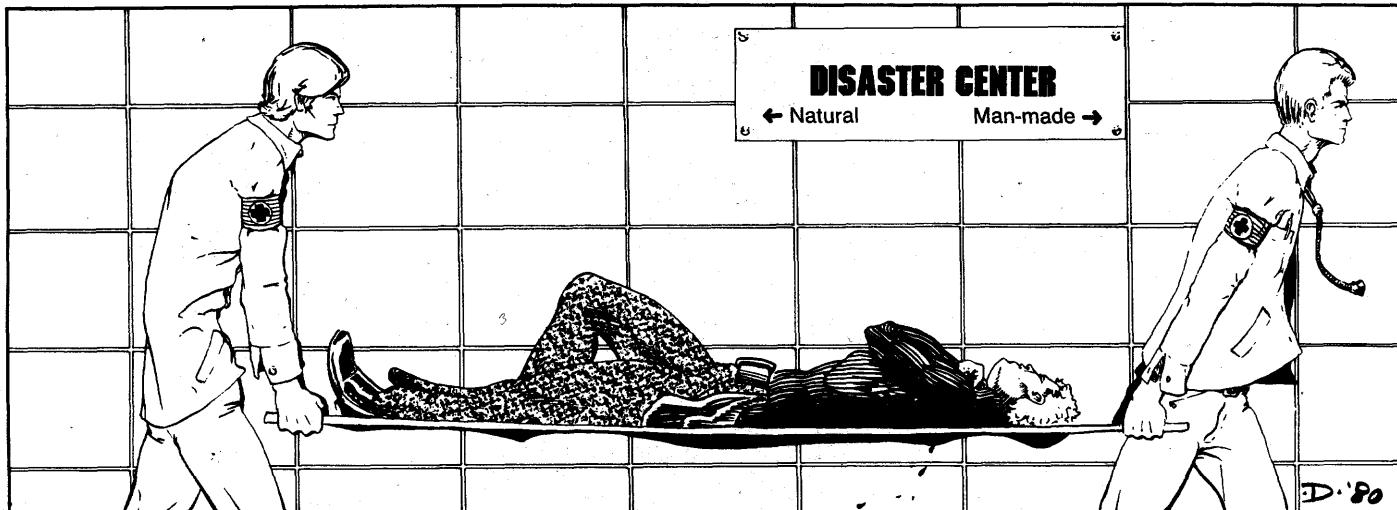
- An avalanche changes the course of a river, buries skiers, or buries buildings.
- An earthquake triggers a volcanic eruption, destroys buildings, causes city-wide fires, starts a tsunami, ruptures gas lines, bursts water pipes, causes mass hysteria, causes a mud slide or rock slide, destroys railroads and highways, destroys bridges and tunnels, or triggers geothermal activity in the vicinity (geysers, hot springs, fumaroles, etc.).
- A fire spreads through a forest or across a prairie.
- Flooding occurs as melting snow or heavy rains cause the sea or a river to overflow, which causes starvation (because food is destroyed), disease (cholera and malarial, mass drowning of animals, contamination of the water supply (from bodies and debris), land slides, or mud slides).
- One or more of the following occur, causing widespread damage or danger: hurricane or cyclone; tornado or waterspout; sudden high winds; dust storm; sandstorm; blizzard; icestorm; hailstorm; monsoon; thunderstorm; electrical storm; drought with heat wave; heavy fog; freak shower of live animals or strange debris.
- A freak sea wave or tsunami strikes.
- A volcanic eruption produces ash clouds, destroys buildings, starts a lava flow that starts fires, releases noxious gases, or pours ash and pumice on populated areas.
- Wild or domestic animals attack the agent (insects, spiders, snakes, dogs, lions, elephants, etc.).

Man-made disasters

Humanity is no slouch when it comes to disaster-making, either (see "Natural disasters" for other details). Humans are very creative in inventing new types of acciden-

tal calamities; those in this checklist are very specific and were drawn from historical and recent records. For more ideas, watch the evening news.

- A massive blackout or brownout of electrical power occurs.
- Oil spills from a storage tank or ship.
- A crane or scaffolding collapses at a construction site.
- A floating hotel or oil rig capsizes.
- A dam or dike collapses.
- A fire or explosion occurs in a church, government building, hotel, industrial plant, mill, mine, missile silo, night club, oil rig, refinery, school, or theater.
- A chemical explosion in a factory, ship, or mobile tank causes poisonous fumes or smoke to spread.
- A ship or truck carrying explosive or poisonous material detonates in port, on a highway, or in a city.
- A nuclear reactor leaks gas or melts down, causing radioactive contamination of air, water, and earth.
- A racing car crashes into a grandstand.
- Sky divers jump through an overcast sky from an off-course plane and land in a lake.
- Bleachers at a sporting event or political rally collapse.
- A riot or stampede occurs at a sporting event, political rally, or rock concert.
- Rioting and looting break out in an area of civil unrest.
- Terrorists attack unarmed citizens with guns or bombs.
- The agent enters a war zone. (The Administrator should use this event only in areas where this is likely to occur. The range of awful things that can happen to an agent in a war zone is far too extensive to list here.)
- An allergic reaction or food poisoning strikes the agent.
- Choose an event from the "Travel problems" checklists but have the agent be a bystander, not a traveler.



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Police involvement

A funny thing about the covert operations business is that its activities sometimes attract the attention of local law enforcement officials. The police do not care to have crimes committed in their jurisdiction. They also share information with other agencies and make it hard for agents to escape detection, arrest, and prosecution.

- A weapon used on a mission is found and examined.
- The motive for a mission that involved breaking the law is discovered.
- The agent's physical description is accurately recorded after one of his missions (unless he used a disguise). The agent cannot return to the job site without almost certain arrest.
- A routine check of the agent's files during an unrelated event (like a traffic violation) reveals irregularities that the police begin to check out, possibly blowing the agent's cover or leading to his arrest on other charges.
- Crooked cops want a payoff, or the agent will be arrested anywhere for his law-breaking activities.
- The agent is arrested and sent to the police having jurisdiction over one of his job sites; the agent has been connected with that job.

Secret police

The internal security organizations of a nation are known as the "secret police." No two secret police organizations are the same, but none is completely unique. Secret police forces may be politically left-wing or right-wing, technically backward or advanced, minute in size or gigantic. The secret police become a state within a state the moment that a nation allows its citizens to be detained indefinitely. Four other elements of hard-core secret police activity come into play once a citizen experiences the loss of all legal recourse to protest his detention (see the checklist).

Events listed herein can be circumvented by agents if they take proper precautions. It could be extremely frustrating for the secret police to have their listening devices detected and destroyed almost immediately after being planted! The agent or an associate is the target of whichever event is selected.

- Surveillance by illegal means
- Searches, usually disruptive and without warrants
- Arrest, at a time and place of the secret police's own choosing
- Interrogation, including physical and psychological torture
- Indefinite detention, often under inhuman conditions

Interceptions

Whenever messages are transmitted by phone, mail, radio, or what have you, the

possibility of interception exists.

- Part or all of the message is broadcast to others (enemies, police, other agents, ham operators, etc.)
- The message is jammed.
- The message (and mission) are known to the police.
- The agent is discovered and is being tracked.

Surveillance problems

Whenever a human target is being watched, there is a chance the surveillance will be detected and blown.

- The target discovers he is being watched.
- The target knows who is watching him and may seek revenge (see "Revenge").
- The agent loses track of the target, and the mission fails.

Occupational hazards

Just being an agent has its own particular blend of dangers and obstacles. Some of these complications become dilemmas that lend themselves particularly well to players who enjoy in-depth role-playing. A few of these events are repeated from other lists to emphasize the particular problems associated with maintaining a good cover or staying on top of things.

- The agent's conscience or morals are offended. (Caution: Some players resent being told how their agents "feel." If an agent shows moral sensitivities, however, the Administrator may test them.)
- A superior requests or orders the agent to perform a mission that the agent believes is "wrongfully" illegal. The agent can either obey, disobey, or go over the superior's head.
- The agent suffers an illness or accidental injury.
- One or more pieces of the agent's equipment are damaged, lost, or stolen (Administrator's choice).
- The agent loses his glasses, contact lenses, hearing aid, or other corrective or prosthetic device.
- An unleashed dog, guard animal, or wild animal attacks.
- Organized crime figures, enemy agencies, secret police, or terrorists attempt to recruit or press the agent into service for them.
- Smugglers unwittingly place contraband in the agent's vehicle before he crosses a border or check point, in hopes of retrieving the contraband on other side.
- An acquaintance (spy, family member, friend, co-worker) blows the agent's cover under pressure or by mistake.
- The agent gains inside information which, if used correctly, can make him very wealthy—but will jeopardize his cover, mission, team, or agency.
- The agent wins a lottery or sweepstakes, but publicity may blow the

agent's cover.

- The agent is involved in a vehicle accident, traffic violation, or petty crime (e.g., jaywalking) that endangers his cover; see "Police involvement."
- The agent is called to be on jury duty, is subpoenaed to appear in court, is sued, or is made executor of a will.
- The agent is the victim of mistaken identity and is involved in subsequent events against his wishes.
- The agent is photographed by a newspaper photographer or filmed by a television crewman at some news event, but publicity may blow the agent's cover.
- The agent's activities have attracted the attention of a news reporter, and the reporter begins an in-depth check-up on the agent, possibly with the backing of others in the media.
- The agent attracts the attention of someone who either worships him, is obsessed with him, or is otherwise greatly attracted to him; the agent cannot shake this person, who follows him everywhere.

Counterintelligence

When a rival agency's counterintelligence force or target group detects the agent working against it, a variety of reactions and retaliations are possible.

- Discovering the identity of the agent responsible for a job becomes the main goal of the target group.
- The agent's identity is discovered, and his dossier is circulated.
- The agent (and possibly his superior and co-workers) is put on an extermination list; assassination attempts will be made in 1-10 weeks.
- The agency or bureau is penetrated, and a double agent is insinuated. All bureau missions will be compromised (targets and objectives are known with 10-90% accuracy, though specific mission are not discovered by the double agent on roll of 00 on 1d100) until the double agent is discovered and eliminated. This double agent can be either an NPC or a willing player character, who may then be a triple agent.

Publicity

In the espionage business, one of the worst things an enemy agency or group can do is leak information or expose an agent to the devastating brilliance of public scrutiny. If the agency is funded with public funds, those resources may suddenly vanish. Disruptions in the agent's personal and family life, as well as police investigations, may follow.

- The existence of the agency is hinted at, but no real data is exposed and little actual harm is done.
- A cover-up is successful, but the agents concerned must operate in a foreign area for 1-10 months. The agents must

work in a different bureau, and missions must take place in a region other than where the cover-up occurred.

- Because of unfavorable results, no bureau bonuses are awarded in the affected bureaus for the next 1-10 missions.
- The agents involved must either retire or transfer to another bureau as their identities are compromised.
- The agency's public funding is reduced; government controls are instituted or tightened.
- Public outcry may demand that the agency's powers be curtailed, that its activities be closely monitored and regulated, that it be forced to report to a governing body in detail, or that the agency be completely disbanded.

Revenge

The victims of crimes (and the agent's actions) often want justice served. If they cannot or do not want the law involved, they will take the law into their own hands. Determined or rich individuals can plague agents for years, even creating opportunities for blackmailing the agent.

- A private investigation of the agent begins, and the agent is tailed.
- All of the agent's belongings not on his person are stolen or destroyed.
- An enemy attempts to capture or slay the agent.
- The agent's activities are recorded or fabricated and used for blackmail.
- The agent's activities are recorded and turned over to the police or to a media reporter.

Vendettas

Sometimes whole organizations that have been thwarted by the actions of an agent or agency attempt to seek revenge. In such cases, a single agent, his family, or his entire agency may be at risk.

- One agent (Administrator's choice) is suspected to be the cause of a criminal, terrorist, or espionage group's problems. An assassination attempt will be made in 1-10 weeks on the agent or the agent's family members.
- All agents who have worked against the group are identified. Assassination attempts will be made in 1-10 weeks on each agent or his family members.
- All agencies involved in opposing the group are found out. The agencies' headquarters and safe houses will be attacked by bombs or arson in 1-10 weeks.
- Assassination attempts, bombings, and arson will be attempted, and information on the agencies involved will be leaked (see "Publicity") within 1-10 weeks.
- A full-scale vendetta begins, lasting

indefinitely. While the goal of previously noted attacks was "an eye for an eye," now the "injured" group wishes nothing less than the total destruction of the agency, its agents, and its allies. The vendetta will take on the aspects of a holy war and will end only when one side or the other ceases to exist.

Disinformation

The lifeblood of espionage is not money, it's information. When a target organization can poison this lifeblood with disinformation, the investigating agents become weak and ineffectual without ever being personally threatened.

- False information is gained but is not important compared to the balance of data; however, no monetary bonus will be paid because of it.
- False information is received that delays the usefulness of the remaining data; no bureau bonuses in cash or experience are awarded.
- False information is received that causes great harm to the agency by concealing the true intentions of the target or by concealing another agency-threatening situation. The effects of such disinformation (which could conceal a highly placed mole in the agency or the existence of a group opposed to the agency) will not be immediately felt, but will take their toll on the agency over time.
- An agent is discovered after false information that he acquired has been traced; he may be quietly noted, his cover may be blown, he may be revealed to the media (see "Publicity"), or an assassination may be attempted.
- False information is used to cast doubt on the reporting agent's loyalty; the agent is accused of being an enemy or double agent. Unless special steps are taken to prove his loyalty, the agent will be deemed ineffective and forced to retire from the agency.

The last word

The list of things that can go wrong on an espionage mission is long and frightening.

indeed—and it is hardly complete. It must be emphasized again that the Administrator should not throw more than a few unexpected problems at the agents during any mission. Otherwise he risks losing the coherence of the adventure plot (as well as the interest of the players).

But what's life without a few surprises, eh? Pencil in a twist or two to your agents' next trip abroad. And enjoy the fun that follows. Ω

Master Disaster Checklist

- Agency high jinks
- Serious slip-ups
- Travel problems
- Criminal activities
- Domestic stress
- Natural disasters
- Man-made disasters
- Police involvement
- Secret police
- Interceptions
- Surveillance problems
- Occupational hazards
- Counterintelligence
- Publicity
- Revenge
- Vendettas
- Disinformation

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Manticore

Continued from page 59

found in uninhabited areas but that they are most frequently seen over the forests and hills of sylvan settings. To ensure themselves a ready food-supply, manticores will rarely lair more than 20 miles (three hours leisurely flight time) from a human settlement or trade route.

2. The manticore's sensory organs are more efficient to some degree than the human organs that they resemble. Manticores possess eyesight like that of birds of prey, which they use to spot distant movements that could signify human activity. At closer ranges, they use their sense of smell to find metal that they may not be able to see because of poor lighting, clothing, or layers of decorative paint.

3. A healthy adult manticore has a complement of 12 iron darts in its tail that can be flung at prey in four volleys of three darts each. As the darts take about 24 hours per volley to grow back, emerging like shark teeth from a supply within the end of its tail, a manticore will not choose to fire all four sets of darts at any one opponent or group of opponents, preferring to soften up foes with one to two volleys before closing with its claws or teeth. Only in dire emergencies will all 12 darts be used, for it would take four days for the manticore to be fully armed again.

When an adult manticore is encoun-

tered, it will not necessarily have a full set of spikes readied. Roll 1d6. On a roll of 1, the manticore has only one volley of darts at the moment. A roll of 2 means two volleys are ready, and 3 means three volleys. Rolls of 4 and 5 both signify four volleys, and only a 6 means the manticore has no darts ready for use. A manticore is unlikely to attack when at its weakest.

4. Although manticores have teeth tough enough to pierce armor, and jaw and neck muscles strong enough to force these teeth through armor and tear it apart, they rarely use these fearsome weapons in combat because of the human configuration of their facial features, requiring them to twist their heads at an uncomfortable angle to catch upright foes. In extremis, they can bite for 1-8 hp damage, but all attacks with claws or tail in that same round are made at -2 to hit. If the manticore is blinded and using its teeth in combat, it will use them at -3 to hit and all other weapons will be at -6 (which is why they are unlikely to use both teeth and claws when blinded).

5. The voice of the manticore, coming as it does from a strange combination of a man's and a lion's throat, is higher in pitch than either, sounding like a man's falsetto voice. This is compounded by the relatively inflexible lips and jaws of the manticore to greatly reduce the number of sounds it can produce. Therefore, its language is relatively simple but still diffi-

cult to imitate.

6. Iron and steel form an important part of the manticore's diet as their claws, teeth, and tail darts are formed of them. If given a choice between an armored or a bare victim, the armored one will be attacked to provide the beast with both meat and metal, while the other is fairly ignored as it does not satisfy all of the manticore's dietary needs. Although the *Monstrous Compendium* states that they prefer human victims, manticores do so not because of the taste but rather because humans often carry more metal on them than any other creatures.

7. Manticores appear in groups of one to four. If a single manticore is encountered, it is most likely a rogue male or a female searching for food for her young. If two appear, they are probably a mated pair, while larger groups are usually simply mothers with their young (the males leave their females soon after the mating season ends). The female manticore normally fights with the same strength as the male, but if she is protecting her young she will have a bonus of +1 to hit and damage on all attacks, including those from each individual tail spike.

8. Manticore cubs are born in litters of one to three, almost five months after the end of the autumn mating season. At birth, they are almost helpless and must depend on their mother for pieces of meat and ferrous metals that have been torn into manageable sizes for them.

Even with a regular and balanced diet, young manticores do not develop a full set of teeth, claws, and spikes until they are at least a year old. It takes at least another year before their wings are strong enough to carry them. During this year, they are able to glide unsteadily, but no powered flight is possible; their muscles are capable only of holding the wings rigidly open.

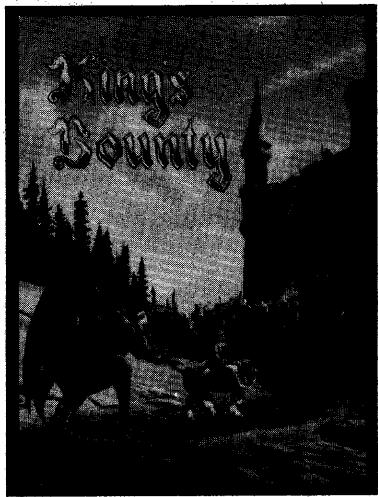
Although they are physically able to hunt and survive on their own two years after birth, manticores do not reach their full size until their third year, and they are not sexually mature until their fourth. Once a cub has reached the age of three, it behaves in all ways as a mature specimen described in the *Monstrous Compendium*.

Between the time a cub has claws and spikes and the time its wings grow fully, it can fight as a medium-size, 2+1 HD creature doing 1-2 hp damage with each paw, 1-4 hp damage with its teeth, and 1-3 hp damage with each tail spike. Under certain circumstances, it can use its rear claws for 1-2 hp damage at -4 to hit. The cub moves at a ground rate of 6 or at a gliding rate of 12.

At the age of two years, until it attains its full growth and fighting capabilities at three years of age, the cub is man-size, has 4+2 HD, and does 1-3 hp damage with its front and rear claws (with the rear claws used at -3 to hit), 1-6 hp damage with its teeth, and 1-4 hp damage with its tail darts. It can move at 9 on the ground or 15 in controlled flight.

King's Bounty

Be it decreed that on this eve of the mid-summer festivals, Overlord Ay-Sen, High King over the peoples of the Inner World of Rhan, offers to his subjects a purse of 1750 fingerweights of gold for the capture and return of Jharsvend, half-elven, notorious Blue Thief of Iniali...



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9. Conspicuously lacking in the treasure troves of manticores are any items made of iron and steel, these being used for food. Any items found in their lairs that are made of these materials will be incomplete (e.g., a suit of chain mail with one of the arms chewed off) or mangled so that it is unusable. Enchanted items made of ferrous metal are also eaten. Even if a manticore has a steady diet of magical metals, its spikes and claws do not partake of the magicks, as those special properties are generally destroyed when the articles are chewed and digested.

10. The treasure strewn about a manticore's lair is the primary income to be derived from manticore hunting, but there are many other ways to eek a profit from it. The first of these is by capturing manticores alive and selling them to holders of menageries or the like, where they can attain prices up to 1,000 gp. Less mundane uses of manticores come from the sale of various parts of their freshly slain bodies. Their eyes can be used as ingredients in potions of *clairvoyance*, their blood in the ink of *protection from missiles* scrolls, and the hearts of female manticores can substitute for lion hearts in potions of *heroism*. In addition, the tail spikes can be used by mages to make many forms of magical darts and arrowheads. Finally, all of the metal in the beast's claws, teeth, and tail can be melted together and forged into the finest of steels, good enough to be utilized in magical weapon creation, as all impurities in the original ores are removed by the manticore's digestive system. The value of all of these body parts is usually one-tenth of the value of the product that can be constructed from them.

11. Unlike many other monsters that can be broken and trained to become flying mounts, without the liberal use of *charm* spells, manticores are absolutely untamable. Even with the use of *charm* spells, they are unlikely to remain tamed. If a *charmed* manticore is brought into combat, the strength of its instincts are likely to override the power of the spells so that it may make a saving throw versus spells every round it is in combat, with a successful saving throw breaking the effects of the *charm*.

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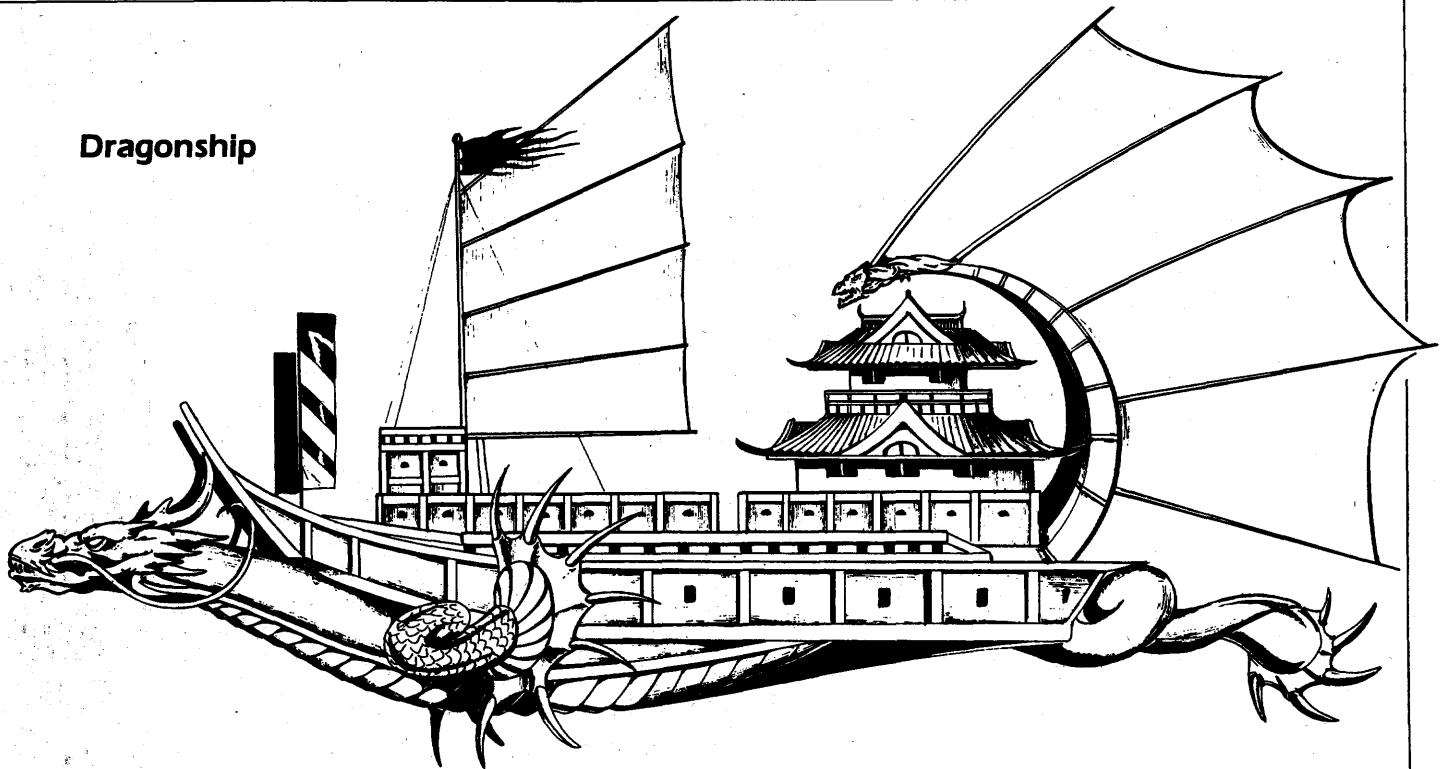
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Awash In Phlogiston

Answers to questions on the SPELLJAMMER™ boxed set

by Jeff Grubb

Dragonship



Illustrations by Jim Holloway

Of the many phone calls I receive every year from gamers, almost all have been pleasant, if sometimes a little odd. But the last four calls I got (including one from Britain) have followed a disturbing pattern:

First, the caller asks if this is really Jeff Grubb, who created the SPELLJAMMER™ boxed set.

Then he says that he just bought that boxed set and really enjoys it.

Then there is this intake of breath, as if he's about to tell me that my cat is dead, and then . . .

Then come the questions. Some concern rules interpretations. Some concern rules *mis*-interpretations. Some require clarifications, and some involve fixing out-and-out errors. Three particular questions have come up regarding the SPELLJAMMER boxed set, so I asked Roger for this space to answer them.

Ship cards

The most-asked question involves a situation that is not an error, but the problem is confusing enough to merit attention. There are 24 cards in the boxed set:

2 Hammerships

- 2 Squid Ships
- 2 Tradesmen
- 2 Dragonflies
- 2 Nautiloids
- 2 Dragonships
- 2 Wasps
- 2 Men-o-War
- 2 Galleons
- 1 Neogi Deathspider
- 1 Neogi Mindspider
- 3 Sheets of Ship-Counters
- 1 Sheet of Planetary Counters

We provided two each of many ship types to allow both the players and their DM to use them during their games. We had originally planned to have only one sheet of ship counters among the 24 cards; when we found that we needed three ship counter cards, we dropped the extra copies of the Neogi ships, since they were unlikely to be used by PCs. That left us with 20 cards of ships and four cards of counters. We settled on having 11 ships, nine of which would be doubles.

What we (that's myself, Steve Winter, the rest of the editors, the graphics department, etc.) did not notice at the time is that we had given ship statistics for 20 ships in the *Lorebook of the Void*. People

who bought the boxed set became confused: If 20 ship cards were available, why didn't they show all 20 ships? Or did most boxed sets have all 20 ships on the cards, and only some consumers got sets with the wrong sorts of cards? Because all of the ships present were doubled except two (the Neogi ships), something seemed to be wrong.

Nothing is wrong with the cards. The ships we chose to use as doubles were selected on the basis of usefulness and size. The Flitter and the Mosquito were too small to justify a full page for each. The Caravel was too similar to the Galleon. The Damselfly was a late-entry variant of the Dragonfly that artist Jim Holloway developed, and we thought it deserved an entry in the main book. The Tyrant Ships and the Gnome Sidewheeler are unique objects, varying in appearance from encounter to encounter. The Armada and the Citadel are larger than we could comfortably handle on cards, and larger than we would want to turn over to first-time crews. And the gigantic *Spelljammer* got its own map in the boxed set; its full deck plans would demand a boxed set in its own right (requests for such a boxed set

are commonly heard from those who call in, and we're looking into it).

Proficiencies

The next question involves the SPELLJAMMER proficiencies, or lack thereof. On page 17 of the *Concordance of Arcane Space*, we refer to the new "Proficiencies section" for races native to space. Would-be spacefarers will search all 192 pages of text for this section in vain, because there's no such animal. The standard AD&D® game proficiencies function normally for space travelers; no additional material is needed. In some situations, new proficiencies (such as zero-gee fighting) will be useful, and we will add them as we go on. But Groundling characters who are just getting into space need no additional proficiencies.

Phlogiston arrows

We have a similar situation with the "phlogiston arrows." On page 11 of the Concordance, it says that navigation charts of the phlogiston "show the major channels of flow between the spheres" (with references to arrows showing the phlogiston flow "on the map"). You're led to believe that there are navigation charts of the flow in the boxed set—but there aren't. We hadn't planned to put such charts in the boxed set; this was an error

of wording—my fault. I meant that the DM should use arrows showing the phlogiston flow when he is creating such navigation charts for the PCs.

How, and what next?

Two definite errors and one failure to communicate—not too bad. There will probably be other questions later (including a few corrections that we may make on our own). How do these things happen, and what are we going to do about them?

TSR's creative area has all the hustle and bustle of a news room, but instead of a daily deadline, everyone has continual deadlines—plus emergencies, phone calls from fans, and other events. Think of our area as a MASH unit with ink instead of blood. In the confusion, mistakes are made.

In the case of the phlogiston arrows, a badly worded sentence remained badly worded after it was edited. In the case of the proficiency section, the material was included in the original project proposal, but it seemed less useful as time went on and was dropped. However, the reference to it was not dropped, hence the phantasmal proficiency section.

The card problem was simply bad design, something that I should have caught. It's easy to look at the set as it stands now and think that something's missing, despite the fact that we've stuffed as much as we possibly could into a 1"-deep box.

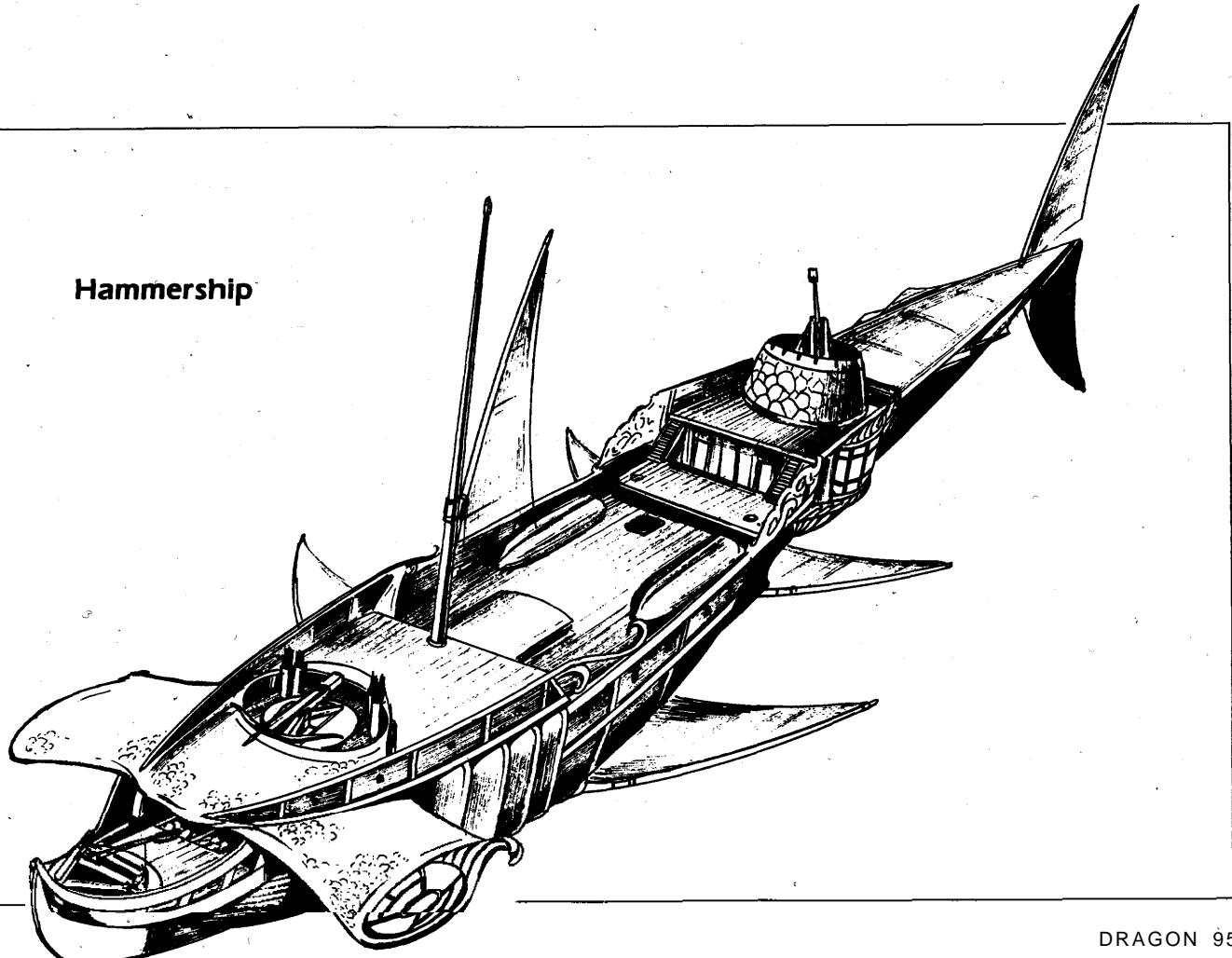
To fix things, Harold Johnson has put in an ECN (Engineering Change Notice) to correct the "phlogiston arrows" section and to drop the reference to space proficiencies. And I've proposed to my boss, Jim Ward, that we put a note in future printings of the set that details exactly which ship cards should be present.

Send feedback!

As long as I have the floor, I'd like to ask you what you think of the SPELLJAMMER boxed set. We did something very radical with this set; it is an experiment in taking the AD&D system to a new dimension, and we're excited about what the set can do. We want to hear from you: What should we do next? What should we not do? What needs to be clarified? Do you want more ships? (Ed Greenwood is already adding more than a dozen new ones for his project, *Lost Ships*.) Do you want details of the phlogiston or all the spheres of known worlds of the AD&D game? Write to: Jeff Grubb, SPELLJAMMER Comments, c/o TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. (but note that we won't be able to reply to very many writers).

And no phone calls, please. If the results of past requests for feedback are any indication, I'm bound to receive a lot of mail, and I've got these *other* deadlines to meet. Ω

Hammership



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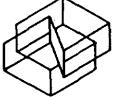
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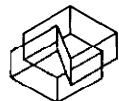
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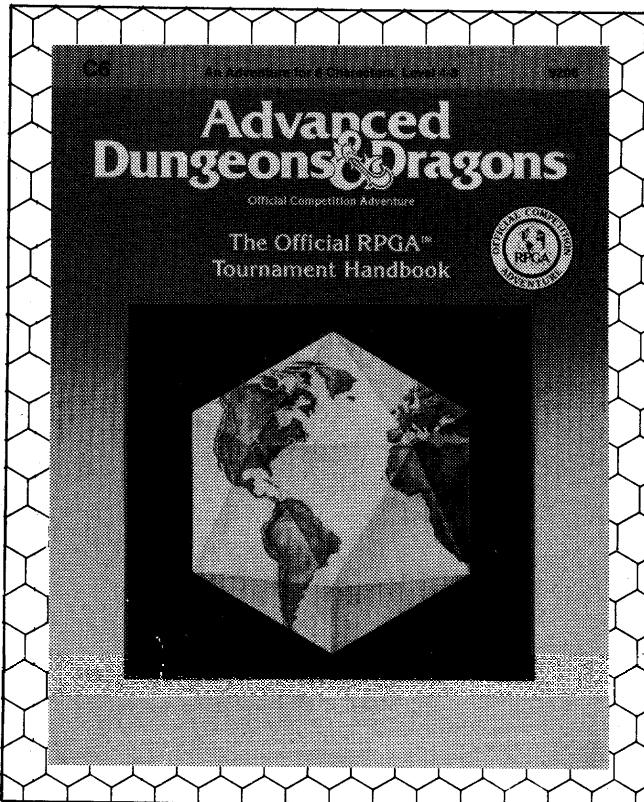
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The Game Wizards

Continued from page 48

"The Avatar series, yes," said Elminster, his face suddenly growing clouded. "The recent . . . unpleasantness. Your readers should know all about it."

"Right. The Avatar series has left its mark on the Realms, and it represents the break between the original and 2nd Edition versions of the AD&D game. But many other things in the Realms have changed. There are new gods, wild magic areas, dead magic areas, character classes that have been dropped or altered, new schools of magic, and gunpowder. All of these will have longstanding effects.

"Of course, there's more," I continued. "A lot of little things changed with the appearance of the AD&D 2nd Edition game, such as the nature of spell lists and the official introduction of proficiencies and ability checks. The FORGOTTEN REALMS setting is TSR's official AD&D 2nd Edition world. In showing how we made the switch to the AD&D 2nd Edition game, we show all the other DMs how to make the transition, both for their own worlds and for the Realms."

"And thou has an example?"

"Right here on the screen." I tapped the computer, and the gangly wizard leaned forward. "In the new *Player's Handbook*, we talk about specialty priests who worship a particular mythos. We touch on typical priests of war gods, peace gods, sea gods, and the like, but deal with only one type of specialty priest in detail: the druid. In the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures* book, we cover the specialty priests of every major human deity in the Heartlands, from Auril to Waukeen."

"Even the dead gods?"

"Bhaal, Bane, and Myrkul? Yeah, because nobody knows when and if that lot may make a comeback."

"And that group of young pups who achieved godhood as well?"

"If you mean Cyric and the new Mystra, who was Midnight, yep. And we also go into detail as to the relationship between Cyric and the followers of the old gods that he replaced."

"It is not a harmonious unification, as I understand it."

"Not hardly. The Ava-, um, 'unpleasantness' left all of these old faiths and power bases shattered. If Cyric is to gain the power of those old worshipers, he'll have to help the old priests. But the priests of the Dead Three don't like Cyric very much, and they can barely stand each other as well. So there's a lot of tension that could lead to a full-blown holy war."

Elminster scowled slightly. "Hmmm. What else hast thou been tinkering with?" "Magic. The magic of the Realms in AD&D 2nd Edition game terms, with old and new spells. Realms-specific treasure tables. Magical and nonmagical glyphs, including the use and misuse of mage sigils and symbols."

"Such misuse can be a shocking thing for the misuser," Elminster mused.

I made a mental note to check on his comment, but I continued. "Then we go into detail in the Heartlands region, offering a detailed overview of the major cities between the Sword Coast and Sembia, complete with maps. Most of our readers have at least a working knowledge of Shadowdale or Arabel but not Ordulin, Westgate, Elturel, or Marsember. We fill in a lot of blanks from the DM's view—what he needs to know when the adventurers arrive in town, beaten up and looking for a priest, soft beds, and a rollicking good tavern?

"Ah, yes. Master Greenwood has been pumping me for information on cities for weeks now. He knows I'm partial to your Australian beers, and he has kept a ready supply."

"Right—the cities are Ed's department. He's working in long-familiar territory, and his only problem is to distill the information on each city down to its bare bones: who rules, who really rules, what temples are around, what goods are available, and where you can get a drink and a room."

"And maps," muttered the sage. "He's had me sketch out what the various cities look like."

"Before or after the beers?" I asked, then changed the subject quickly. "I also want to deal with the various power groups operating in the Realms—Zhentil Keep, the Harpers, the Cult of the Dragon, the Iron Throne, the Red Wizards of Thay—and describe what they are doing in this part of the Realms. This will provide the DM with the background for adventures.

"Finally, we'll update the tales of the Moonshaes and Icewind Dales, and those of Alias as well, with notes on continuing stories and possible new adventures. If I get the chance—" and am not bothered by old sages, I added silently "—I also want to go on a quick tour of the old dungeons of the North, including Dragonspear, the Haunted Halls, and Yulash. I won't design their entire set-ups, but I will provide enough background, history, and critters to give the DM a good base on which to build an adventure."

"So this tome is . . ."

"It's the ultimate DM's tool for running campaigns in the Realms, with all the pieces needed to bring the Realms fully into the AD&D 2nd Edition game and to serve as a springboard for new adventures. We'll be dropping hints throughout about the future of the Realms as well, such as the reverberations of the Avatar series and the coming of the Horde."

"Ah, yes, the Horde," sighed the mage. "That's all coming down right about now. I take it there are skilled writers who are recording the outcome and the fate of the Realms, both east and west?"

"The authors of the tale of the Horde, which we are calling the Empires trilogy, are Zeb Cook, Troy Denning, and Jim

Lowder. Zeb is the master of *Oriental Adventures* and is doing a boxed set this summer describing the barbarians currently moving your way. Troy and Jim are seasoned veterans at Realms reporting having done portions of the Avatar trilogy. And Troy's doing a tie-in trilogy of adventures set in the Horde lands."

"Hmmm. Any chance of this Master Cook finishing his project early? Any information about the horselords would likely be helpful."

"We know only what we come up with ourselves. How accurate is that?"

"Surprisingly so," said the sage. "I often wonder if we come up with tales for thee, or if thy people predict our own future."

I diplomatically shrugged. "Anyway, the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures* book is the next step in the evolution of the Realms, as well as a good starting point for newcomers. I'm excited about the artwork, too. Ned Dameron, who did the incredible illustrations for FR7 *Hall of Heroes*, is doing some color illustrations showing the specialty priests in full regalia. Stephen Fabian is doing the interior artwork, and Clyde Caldwell is creating the cover." I turned back to my computer to quickly note what Elminster had philosophized about who created whom.

"Caldwell . . . he did the *Azure Bonds* cover, did he not?"

"Yep," I said as I typed. It would be nice to know if we created Elminster's worlds future or if that future was somehow coming to us. It was an idea to pursue in the future.

"I must tell Master Caldwell that Alias was most amused by the cover. Oh, yes—she says ye had best treat Olive and Giogi correctly in thy next book, *The Wyvern's Spur*, or she'll come after thee and thy lovely wife with a broad sword. Well, must run. Ta for now."

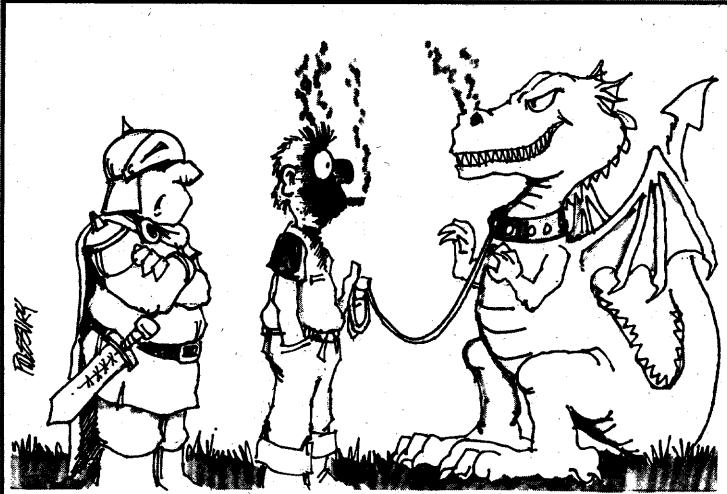
"Wait! How did you know about the—" I said, turning to Elminster, but only an empty chair remained, the air around it smelling of singed rubber.

I like the Realms. I really do. If only its ultimate reviewer would learn to schedule his appointments.

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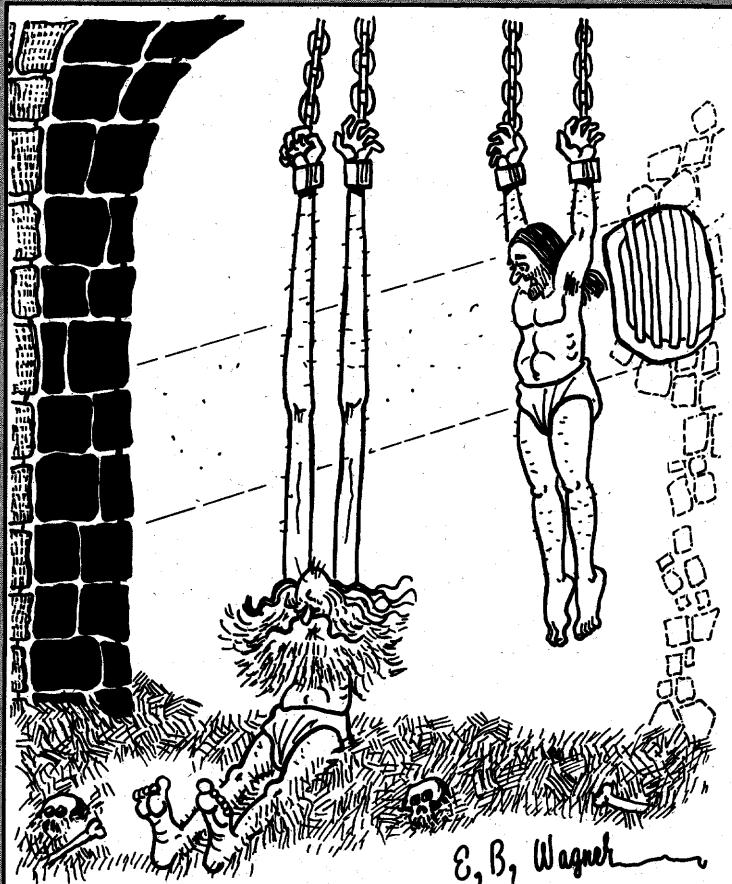
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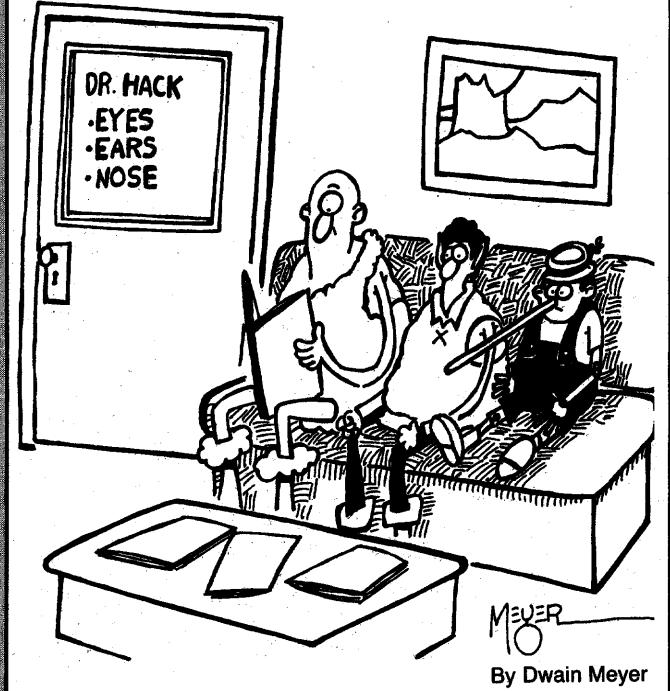


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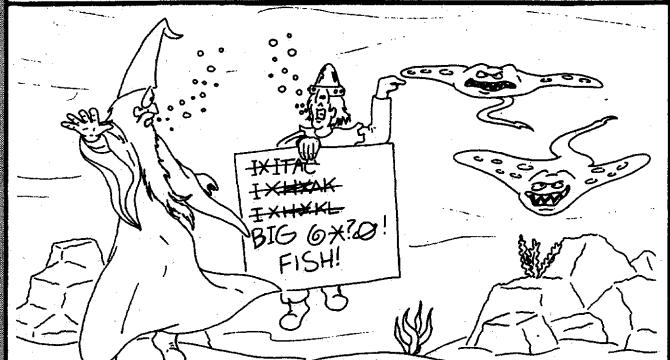


"How long have you been here, old timer?"

By Edward B. Wagner



By Dwain Meyer



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By Aaron Williams



LACKENSMITH

**"If we only had some small clue
as to how close we are to the giant!"**

By Walt Hackensmith, Jr.



YOU MAY CERTAINLY
THE FRINN JEWELRY
ONCE YOU CONSENT
TO BE MY WIFE.

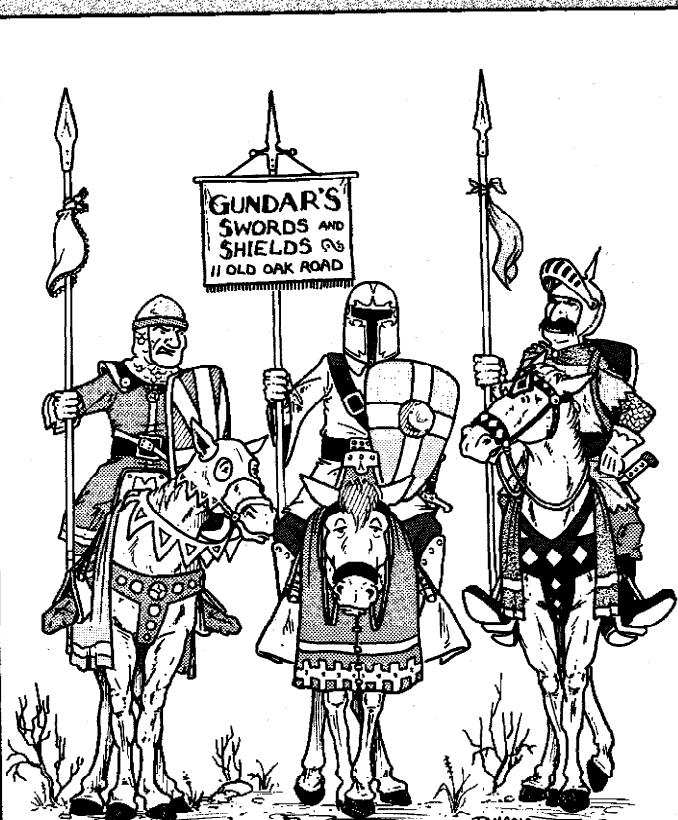
I'M ONLY BEING
PAID 75 G.P. TO
STEAL IT FROM
YOU.

VERY WELL, WE'LL
KEEP IT AND LIVE
HERE IN COMFORT.

**Comfort... Look, OGREK. I'M
NOT THE DOMESTIC TYPE.
I'M A CAREER HALFLING.**



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Role of Computers

Continued from page 79

are 40 characters and 120 landscapes. It can be played using the keyboard or joystick and costs \$39.95.

Strategic Simulations (408-737-6800) continues its barrage of excellent AD&D® products. Look for *Dragons of Flame*, wherein you control 10 Companions, one at a time. Your quest is to rescue slaves held by the ravaging Dragonarmies in the fortress of Pax Tharkas. You'll explore the wilderness of the Elven Mosaic where valuable allies—the mysterious elves of Qualinesti—are gained. Each Companion has a specialized skill that must be used wisely. All of the action is in real time, requiring gamers to be alert to the ever-changing environment. The game, authored by U.S. Gold, will be released in formats for PC/MS-DOS, Atari ST, Commodore Amiga, and Commodore 64/128 computers. Its ability level is Introductory. The PC/MS-DOS version will support CGA, EGA, and Tandy 16-color graphics.

The second AD&D offering is *War of the Lance*, the first AD&D computer war game. You must prepare for all-out war when the forces of Whitestone clash against the evil Highlord Dragonarmies. You may select to play against a friend or go against a computer-controlled enemy. Use diplomats to forge treaties—but if they fail, draconians, ogres, dwarves, elves, dragons, and other creatures will deal with you in other ways. You can view a broad map of Ansalon or go to tactical view and watch a battle in detail. The game will be released for the Apple II and C64/128 computers. The ability level is Intermediate.

Clue corner

Battletech (Infocom)

If you are being attacked more often than you think you should be, and the people in town won't even give you the time of day, it is because one of your characters is a Kurita double agent. Inspect your characters (other than Jason and Rex, of course). You may find one of them hiding something from you. Inspect that character again to learn the truth.

In order to see Dr. Tellhim in the Inventor's Hut, your Tech and Medic must be trained in their respective fields as high as they can possibly be trained.

In the Mayor's house, read the newspaper first!

Peter Hayes
Kailua HI

[Hints for the Atari ST version:]

Don't attempt to complete your sixth mission until your Piloting and Gunnery skills are both Excellent. Sometimes skills go up even if you don't win a fight. Kill off one of the Locusts with the Chameleon, then don't use your weapons on the last

Locust; turn your back and run away from it. It will be easy for the Locust to destroy the Chameleon with a few hits.

On the seventh mission, keep playing until you fight three Locusts, not four Kuritan Jenners, and win. On the eighth mission, get the Chameleon and go down until you get even with a small tower. Then go as close to it as you can and stay behind it. You won't always make it to the tower, but if you do, the Jenners won't be able to shoot at you until they get very close. This is how I beat the four Jenners and got to keep the Chameleon. The speed shops in the Mechit-Lubes won't improve the Chameleon, but it is better than a Commando with a Blazing Inferno job. Keep trying this until you win; you'll be glad you did.

After you join up with Rex, go to the Mechit-Lube in Starport. You will find a tech there who will join your party. Be sure to save your game before you go in, though. Sometimes the person who joins you is a spy sent to sabotage you and your mechs. Just keep reloading until the tech's not a traitor. You can tell if he is a traitor by inspecting him; if he is acting suspiciously, simply reload.

A third Mech pilot is in a jail in a town east by northeast of Starport. A doctor is in the town north of Starport. Be sure to apprentice your tech at the Mechit-Lube, and let your doctor attend a medical seminar at a hospital. They will then both be excellent in their respective fields.

You can get the Stinger at the jail. Your tech will be able to replace armor and weapons from destroyed mechs if you lose any during a battle. He can't fix actuators, though.

Be certain to check each mech after a battle for damage to engines, gyros, and sensors; make sure all are working. A red square means that something has been damaged. The Mechit-Lubes and your tech cannot fix these things; only your load function can.

When you get to the Star League Cache, get a large piece of graph paper. Use a ruler to find out how long a square is on your monitor; this will help you determine how to graph the cache. Hint: The doors are three squares long.

Wynne Taylor
Natchitoches LA

Curse of the Azure Bonds (SSI)

Make certain you clean out the Thieves' Guild and Fire Knife headquarters completely on your first run. You won't get a chance to return. Especially useful are the items in the Guild treasure room in the northeast. Searching around Myth Drannor can be very helpful, but leave animated armor alone!

Mark Mackey
Hobart, Tasmania

Pool of Radiance (SSI)

If you need help clearing the Valhingen Graveyard, visit the silver dragon in the

Dragonspine Mountains. Be prepared for a mighty task from the dragon, for which you will need three or four Fireball spells on scrolls as well as from memory.

Attacking the Temple of Bane will lead to one final and very large battle. A Lightning Bolt wand will be most useful here. You must have the priest from Bishop Braccio get you into the temple.

Seedy-looking monsters will flee from you if you wait.

Porphyrys Codorna isn't to be trusted. His mission for you to go to Zhentil Keep could get you killed!

Dan Howard
Flagstaff AZ

If you ever find an item called a Mail Plate in your equipment list, but don't know where it came from, don't sell it! It is a one-shot missile weapon that will give your characters a THAC0 of approximately -12 and a damage potential of 1d3 + 5! Save Mail Plates for fights with big opponents.

Also, if you get caught in the maze in the pyramid, you must go to the southeast corner to get out.

In Mendor's Library is a Manual of Bodily Health that will increase the constitution of one of your characters.

Jamie Worrall and Mark Magill
Glovertown, Newfoundland

Times of Lore (Electronic Arts)

To get into the castle in Ganestor, go to the inn. Behind the bar is a stairway leading to the basement. Follow the stairs and look for a lever. Touch the lever, then follow the stairs into the castle. Kill all of the guards except the one who is guarding the top level. One of the guards has a document that you have to show to the Warden on the top level. If the Warden ignores you, go out and come back later. He will send you on a quest that will lead to another quest, which will lead to another quest, and so on. By the way, it helps to have the magic axe, which can be purchased (or stolen) from an old man in Lankwell.

Alex Iwanow, Jr.
East Brunswick NJ

Don't forget to send in your hints and clues to help other readers. If you help them, maybe they can help you in a future issue! Mail your hints to: The Lessers, 179 Pebble Place, San Ramon CA 94583. Until next month, game on! Ω

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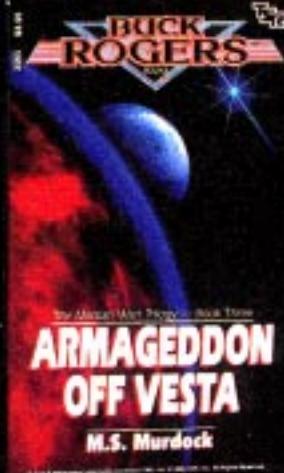
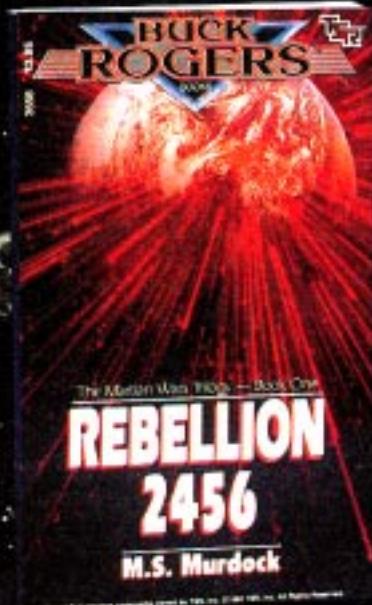
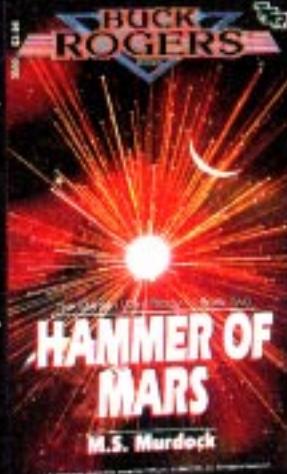
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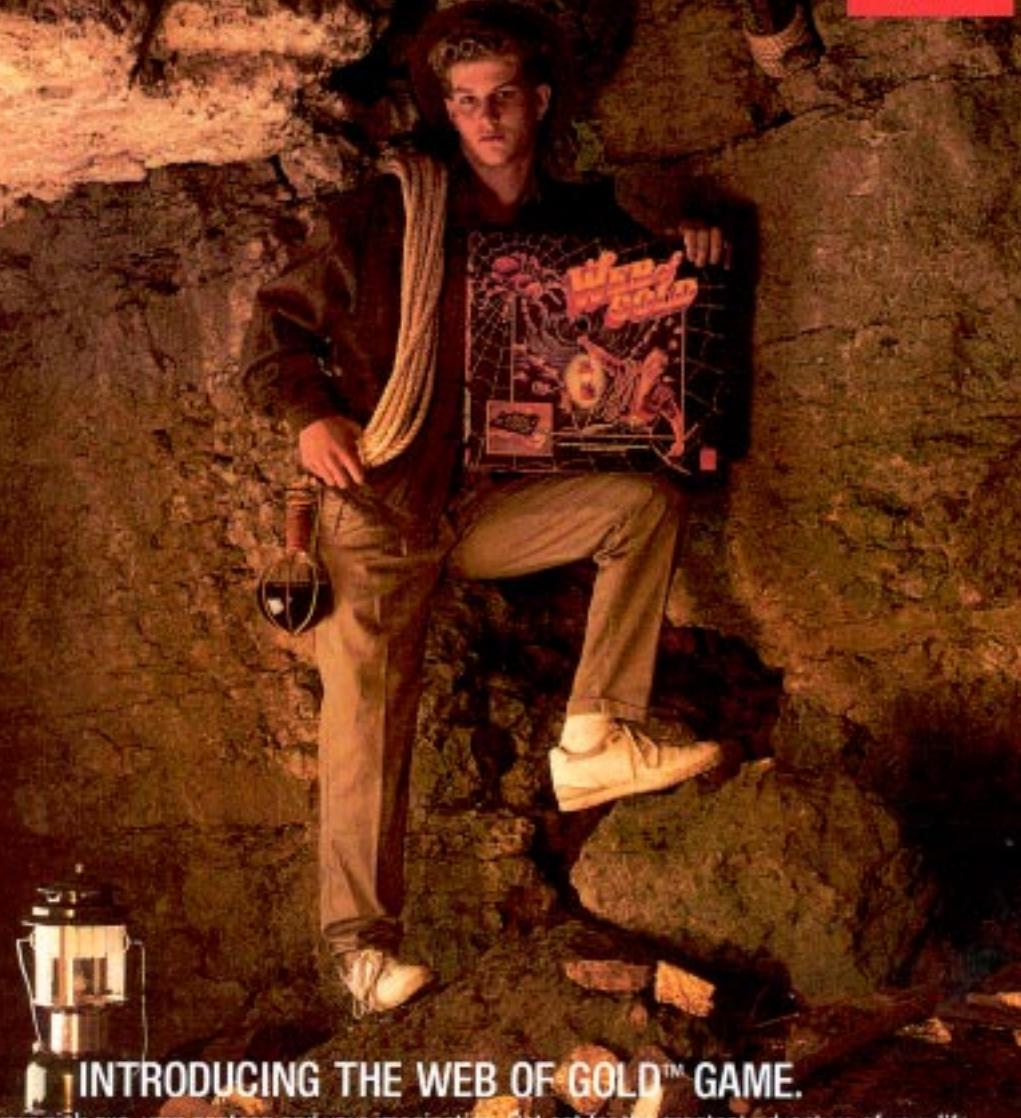
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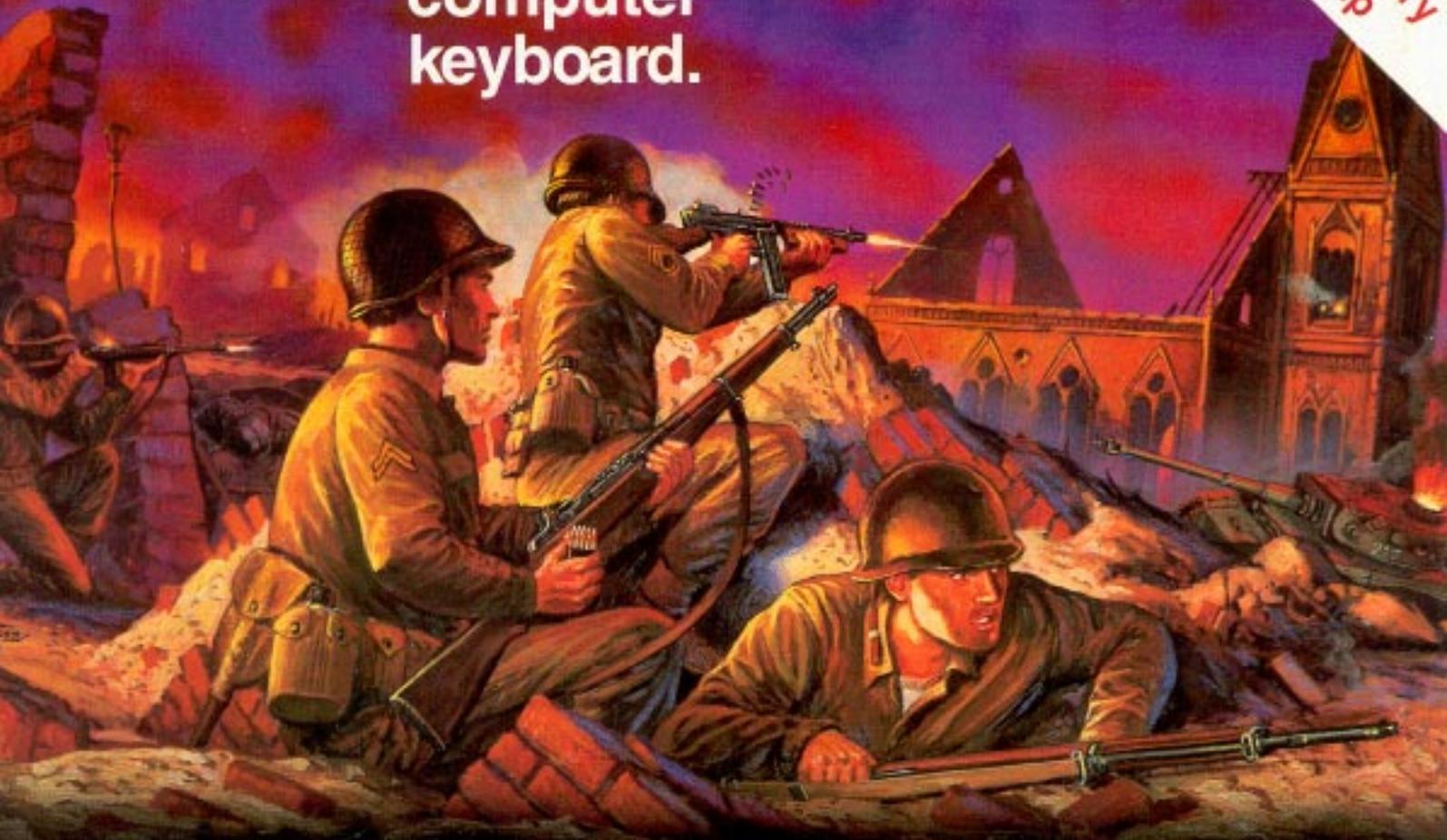
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