

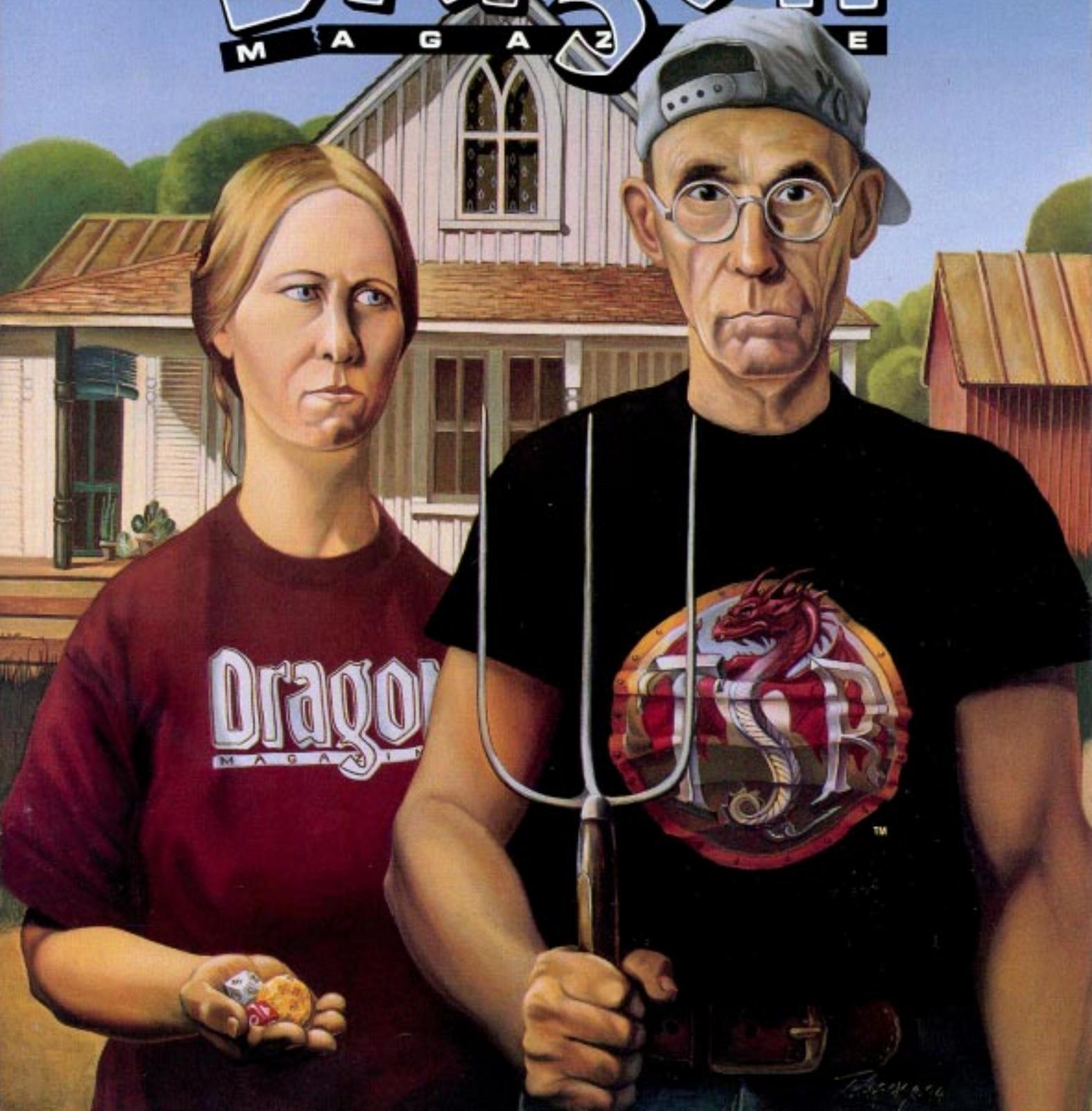
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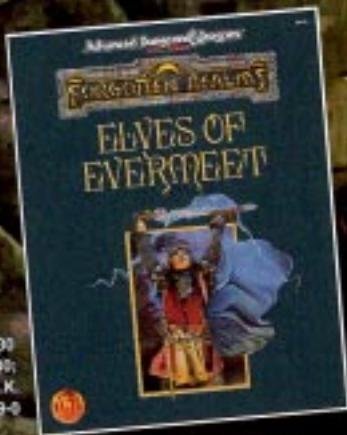
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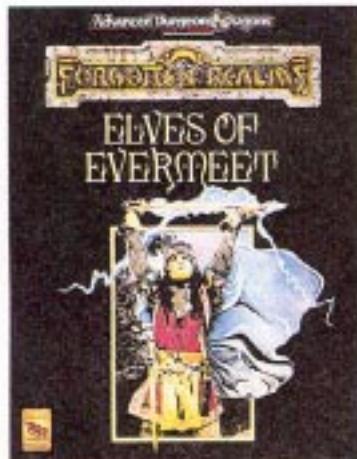
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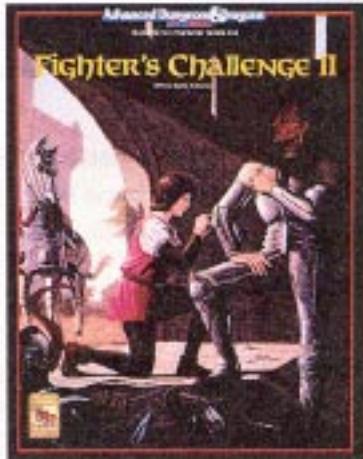
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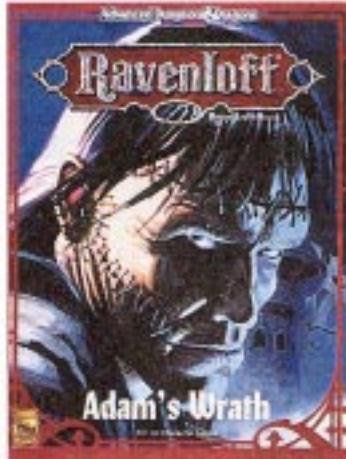
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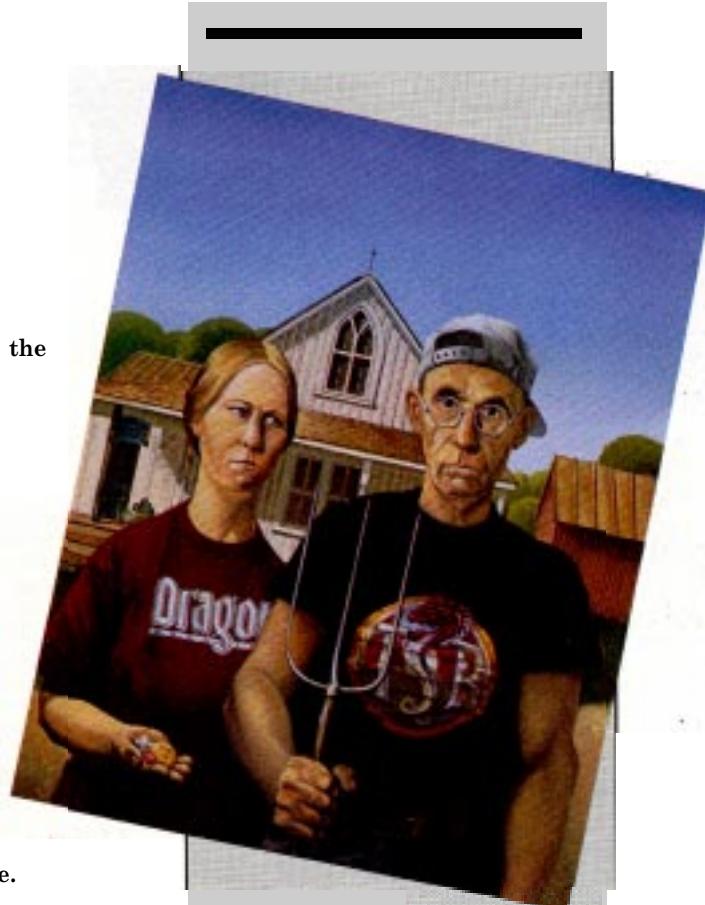
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Alan Pollack is the artist responsible for this issue's unique cover. Who says gaming isn't expanding its audience?

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# Letters

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

## Whither #200?

Dear Dragon,

Arrrgh! Woe is me! Doom, despair, and agony! I missed it! I failed to acquire a copy of DRAGON issue #200! How can I go on? I fear I shall faint dead away if you cannot aid me in my quest! How can I get my unworthy hands on a copy of that wonder of wonders, that paragon of gaming knowledge and insight, that --*The remainder of the letter has been deleted by the editor for reasons that are entirely too obvious.*

"Mr. Snid"  
Oshkosh WI

*Well, since you asked so, umm, nicely, here you go. The Mail Order Hobby Shop has a supply of DRAGON issue #200. If you're interested, you can write to: Mail Order Hobby Shop, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. If you have a credit card, you can call the Hobby Shop, toll free, at: (800) DRAGONS. (That's 372-4667 if you're telephonically-alphanumerically challenged like me.)*

## Here we go!

*The following are excerpts from letters and articles received by the staff of DRAGON Magazine. Except for minor editing, they appear as written.*

Dear Dragon,

Last night I dreamed that a tabloid newspaper said that spelljamming mind flayers were going to invade Earth. Although the tabloids are not known for their truthfulness, it set me to wondering. Do you think illithids really will attack Earth? If so, how can we prepare for it?

P.S. I'm serious. I *really* did dream that.

Dear Dragon,

I have been working on a crossover of the DRAGONLANCE®, FORGOTTEN REALMS®, DARK SUN®, and SPELLJAMMER® settings where the campaign worlds have merged to make a very messed-up campaign. . . The result of my crossover finds the characters on Toril, in the year 1993. I don't want this to be just a facsimile of Earth. True, the evolutionary patterns may be similar, but Earth never had magic to speed up evolution.

Dear Dragon,

Never serve diet raspberry cola and broccoli at a game. I learned this from a good friend.

Dear Dragon,

I just wanted to warn my (sort of) friend [name deleted for national fantasy security reasons] to remember that I have Kitara locked up in my shed. If you don't let Raistlin out of that oven of yours (even though he probably enjoys sitting in there with that duck), you will never see her again alive in this world.

Dear Dragon,

My friend and I would like to inform you, with deep regret, that the most famous and powerful mage in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting, Elminster, is now deceased.

[Our] party had developed an extreme hatred for the legendary wizard, therefore they traveled to Shadowdale to confront him.

The party managed to catch him unaware and cast a *dispel magic* on him. Now that he was unable to cast spells, the party leapt upon him and viciously cut him down. Since the [party's] only spell-caster to survive was a druid, we reincarnated Elminster.

Unfortunately, he came back as a raccoon. The barbarian decided that Elminster would be better off dead, so he killed him again and made a coonskin cap out of his hide.

How will the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting be affected by the loss of such a great hero?

*Due to the gravity of this situation, I passed the above letter to Jeff Grubb, TSR, Inc.'s Realms expert and in-house Elminster confidant. Jeff's reply follows:*

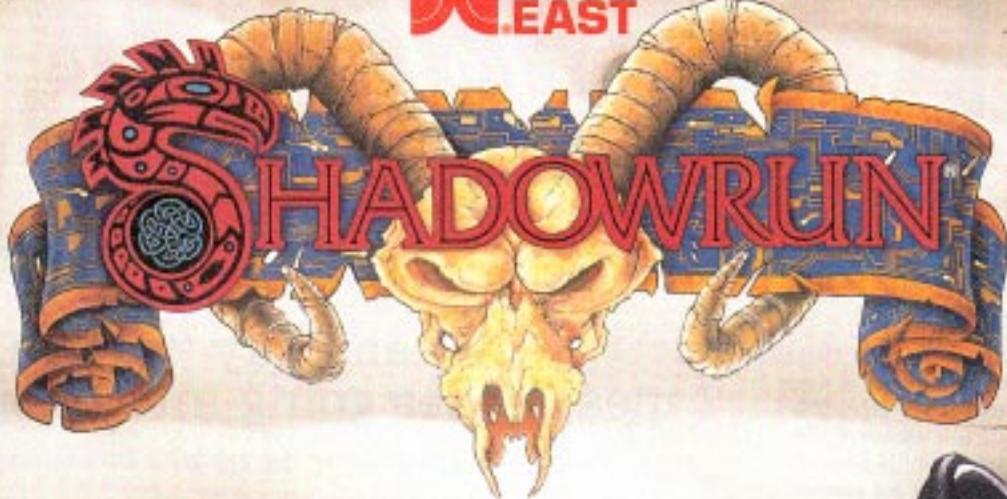
*Uh-oh, it looks like Elminster is toying with your characters. This happens every now and then with important personages of various worlds. Someone writes in and says, "Sorry, we killed Odin, so you can stop printing his statistics," and by the time we arrive on the scene, there's Odin himself, roasting the PCs on a spit. It is a scene we've seen here at TSR all too often.*

*The key to all this is in your stating that your PCs ambushed The Mage of Shadowdale with a dispel magic spell. A dispel magic does not wipe out all the spells a mage has memorized, though it will negate existing spell effects, including any spells that he is currently casting. So, while Elminster might lose the stoneskin he is currently sporting, he still has his vast arsenal of dweomercraft draw on.*

*So why did he not do so, and instead allow himself to be merrily slaughtered by your adventurers? I surmise that The Mage of Shadowdale is having a bit of fun with PCs. Even if he is affected by the dispel magic, it is relatively easy for him to use shadow magic to cast an illusion of himself in his place to take the brunt of the damage. (Even if he has nothing ready he can timestamp, teleport to a place where he has a number of scrolls and a simulacrum or two, and pop back. Your PCs, in the heat of battle and without the benefit of watches, probably wouldn't even notice the passage of time.)*

*Continued on page 72*

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# Editorial

## Who said that?

"Insanity is a great way to add spark and spontaneity to life."

"Do you still have that brain I gave you in the rubbermaid?"

There is a tradition here at TSR. There's more than one actually, but most of them can't be talked about in these pages. The one I'm referring to is the "Quote of the Day" board. It's where the employees of TSR get to roast one another for slips of the tongue, tidbits of conversations taken out of context, double entendres, etc. Since it's a DRAGON® Magazine tradition to print excerpts of the goofiest letters and articles we receive from readers in each April's "Letters" column (and this year is no exception), I thought this turnabout would only be fair play. Below is an assortment of actual, real-life quotes that should illustrate the point that even those of us who work with words for a living occasionally suffer a verbal slip. The names have been deleted to protect the innocent (not to mention the editor).

**"I'd advise punching a hole in the big purple thing and then slipping into China."**

"Don't stab people with your ninja weapons, please."

**"It's hard to be scared when you're dead."**

**"Yellow. Make it yellow."**

"Mr. Potato Head is going to be okay."

**"He's quickly becoming TSR's Man Without a Clue."**

"It's not as much fun as a tavern brawl."

**"Like eagles, Griffons are monotonous and mate for life."**

"I'm shorter than you, ergo, I'm meaner than you."

**"We gave you money to be stupid."**

"I can't look stupid every day."

**"When I say 'towers,' I mean tubes going into the ground."**

"Stop poking yourself in the eye with that reindeer hoof."

**"He does frightening things with what used to be the English language."**

"I suppose you can't slant your equipment list too much toward women's undergarments."

"Of all the mishaps my face has had with hard surfaces, nothing compares with getting your teeth caught on a car bumper."

**"Some [divorces] are good, some are bad, and some involve nail guns."**

**"I used to be a boss, but I got better."**

**"Two is good—three is eight times too many."**

"I want to be a roller-derby queen."

"We're men, we're out of shape, and we're proud of it."

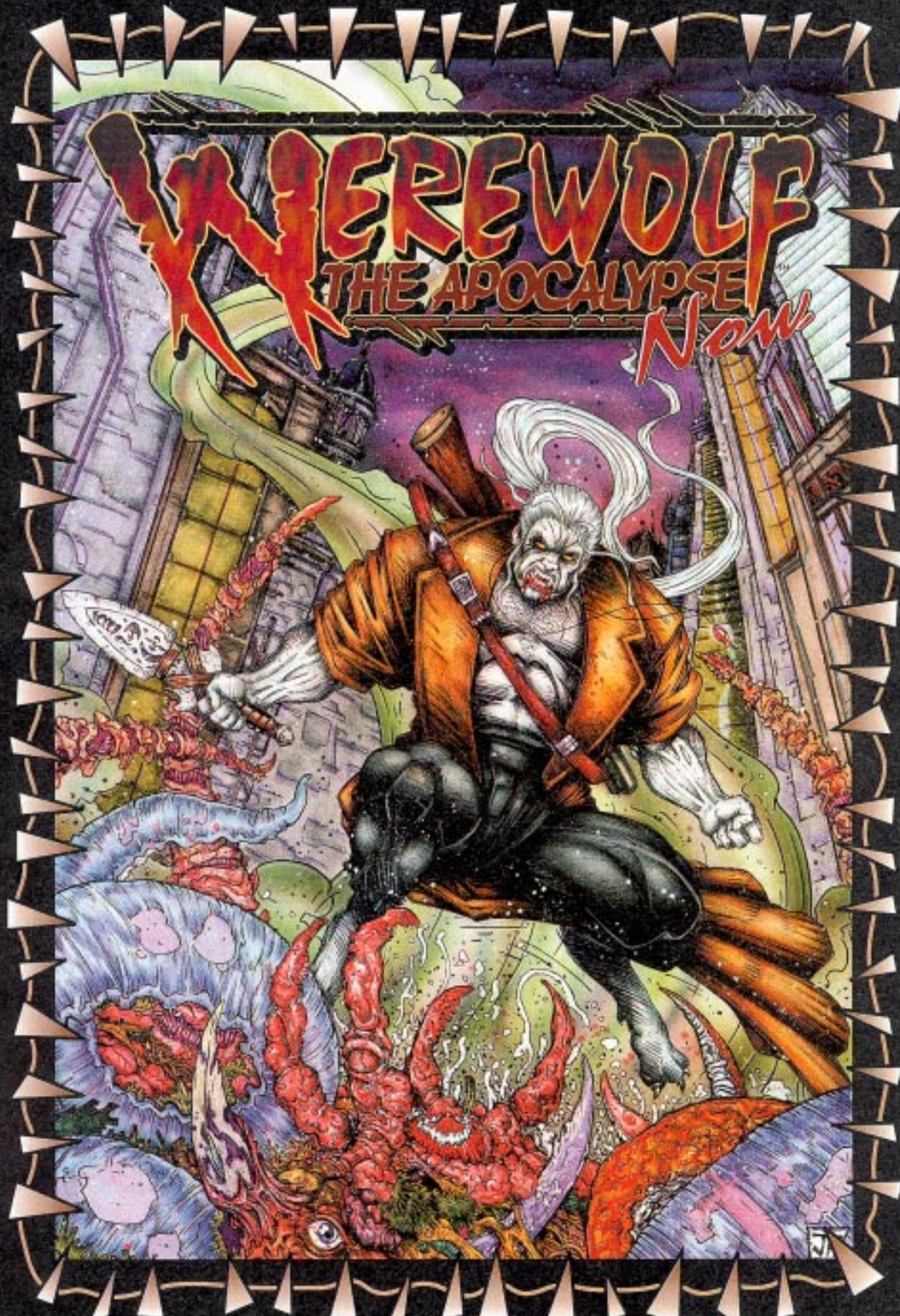
There are plenty more quotes, but most of them aren't printable. Oh well. There is one more quote, a short discussion actually, that truly deserves to be printed. simply because it's so gosh-darned strange. So, with proper fanfare, I am proud to present the strangest quote of them all:

"Don't mail the doggie until we got the crayon filled."  
"What?"

"Don't mail the doggie until we got the crayon filled."  
"WHAT?"

"Oh—I mean, don't count the doggie until we got the crayon filled."

*Dale A. Donner*



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# First Quest

by Roger E. Moore

## Verix Dwarfstomper made me do it

I was cleaning out the basement when I came across a thick manila folder full of old papers. I didn't recognize the folder at first, but the moment I flipped it open everything came back to me. The folder contained all my old player-character (PC) sheets for the AD&D® and other role-playing games (RPGs), stretching back to the time when I first began to play. I hadn't seen the folder in several years.

I sat down later with the folder and went through it. In moments I was back at Fort Bragg, NC., in Lannie's house with a living room full of laughing gamers. It was the summer of 1977, and my PC's name was Sk't-tsu.

My very first RPG character was an Oriental fighter named for a psychosis, schizophrenia (I was a mental-health counselor at the time). Sk't-tsu was rolled up from the original tan-cover D&D® game booklets that I still have. He had a Strength of 17 and an Intelligence of 5, and he carried two long swords in case he lost one. I was filled with excitement and wonder right to the very moment the orcs got him.

My next character lasted long enough to reach 2nd level before the berserkers got him. Verix Dwarfstomper was a chaotic half-orc cleric, rolled up using an article in DRAGON® issue #3, and he set the personality trend that most of my future PCs would follow: He was completely irreverent and relentlessly obnoxious.

Aside from his name, which provoked howls of indignation from the dwarves in the party, Verix ate anything he could find. He ate other people's iron rations. He ate spoiled food. He ate dead monsters. He became famous for smelling at doors to detect the creatures behind them (he was accurate, too). I painted up a miniature of him, piggy snout and all, with a shield that had the Coca-Cola emblem on it (very out of character for the campaign). He worshiped the Lovecraftian god Azathoth, lord of insanity, which I assumed explained everything. The group was relieved when the berserkers finished him off, but I was just getting started.

After Verix came a procession of characters that would look fairly bizarre by purist D&D and AD&D game standards. I had a half-elf paladin/magic-user, a goblin fighter, a winged half-fairy fighter/magic-user/thief, a centaur, and a werebear

berserker who was *reincarnated* into a silver dragon (and a reasonably successful one at that). My characters were killed by phase spiders, goblin arrows, assassins, lizard men, evil high priests, giant rats, giant snakes, something called a "mind exchanger," something else called a "laser lance," and a large group of flaming, 10'-tall balrogs who played Catch-the-Character with one of my many half-orcs.

My characters also had really strange names. After Verix, there came Orjetax Elfgrabber, Alfred E. Beethoven (a favorite), and Porky Elric-Friend, all half-orcs. Harley Quinn was a gnome warrior, Barfonix was a goblin, Sir Aqualung was a centaur, and Fairy Fawcett Majors was (of course) the half-fairy. Cyragname de Bergerac, Obi-Gnome Kenobi, Luke Gnomewalker, and the Gnome Alasca were also racially self-evident; they were part of my "gnome period" when I was transferred from Fort Bragg to West Germany (when there was such a place) and started gaming there.

In Germany, my cast of characters became even stranger. I had Ryn the Mighty (a minotaur with gills); Dauntless the Giant Eagle (*reincarnated* from Gnome Alasca); Conan the Hobbit (we weren't calling them halflings then); a gold dragon whose henchdragons were named Farrah, Kate, and Jacqueline (can anyone guess why?); and a winged kobold thief who grabbed a cursed magical item and was reluctantly blown up by his own party. I even had a halfling thief who was *reincarnated* into a black pudding, a hippogriff, and an assassin before the rest of the party got bored with the process and blew him up for good.

Cyragname de Bergerac, mentioned earlier, was a contender for being my most obnoxious character ever. He spoke with an outrageous French accent, insulted and stole from the rest of the party and pronounced booby-trapped chests "pairfectlee zafe." He was once told to watch the group's horses instead of going adventuring, so he took the horses to town and sold them. (The paladins war horse fetched several hundred in gold, though it bit him.)

Perhaps as obnoxious as Cyragname was Krud 2305, a futuristic character from GDW's TRAVELLER® game I made up who was basically a pipe-smoking dwarf in chain mail with a battle axe. He also carried a .38 revolver and a backpack with

600 bullets in it. He was fond of spontaneously reciting bad poetry while spilling bullets all over the place trying to reload during firefights.

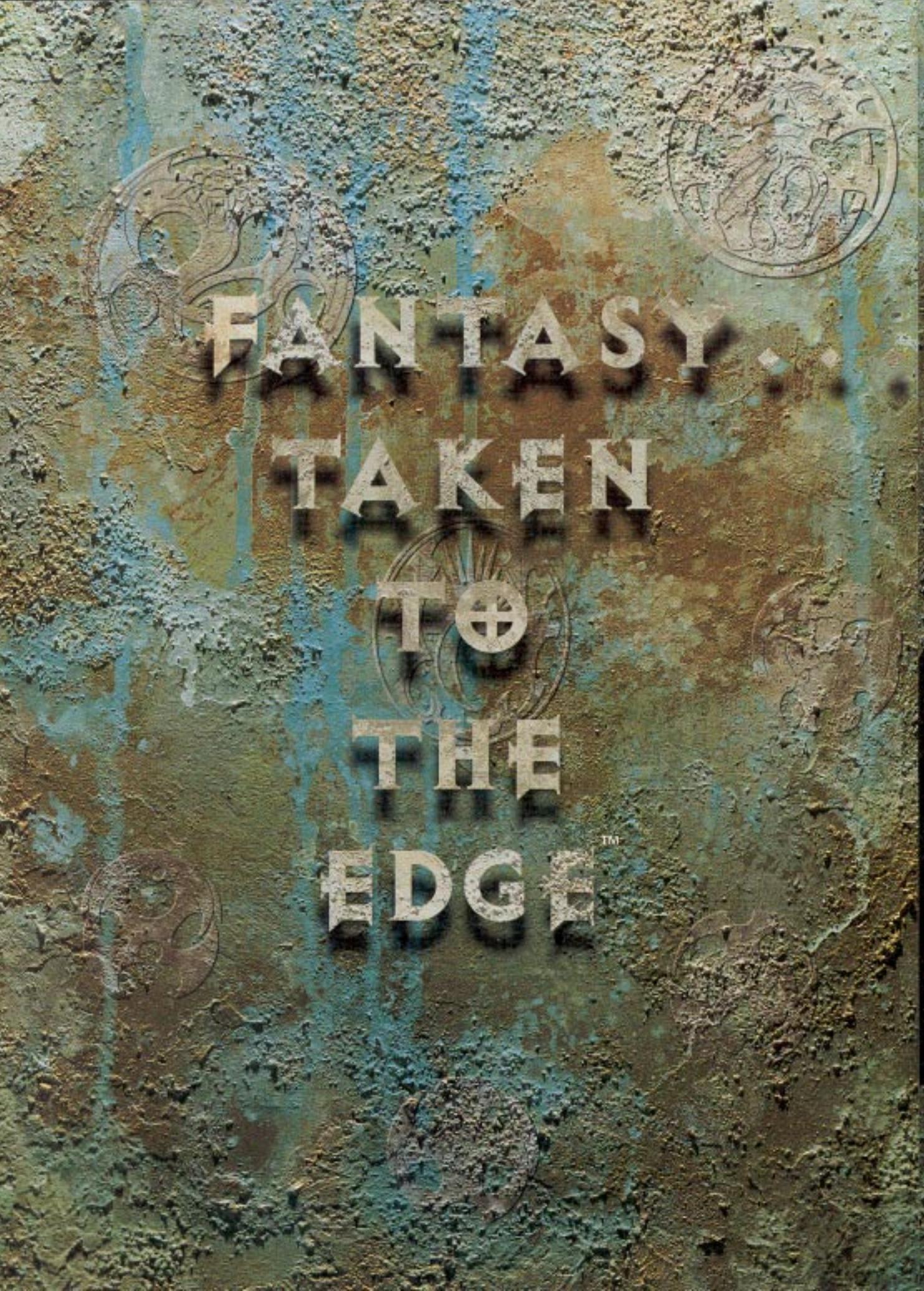
In Germany I also went through a "half-ogre period," rolling up an assortment that included the semi-famous John Grond and the not-so-famous but much bigger Snowy Humber, who had a gorilla for a henchman. (Most of the characters created in Germany did much better than those at Fort Bragg, as I was used to the game by then and was making fewer mistakes.) There were a few token dwarves, elves, and humans, and a halfling named Paladin Brandybuck, a lawful good fighter/thief who collected short henchmen like leprechauns and brownies. One human Norse cleric, Hrothgar Redbeard, took over a dungeon that the group had cleared out and began converting it into his fortress and temple to Thor. I made up another Norse cleric (a barbarian) to playtest a science-fiction campaign, and he destroyed a starship's cafeteria in the process of building his own sanctuary. I think the crew had him thrown out into space.

I returned to the U.S. in 1981 and began gaming with groups around Louisville, Ky. I was deep into a pattern of creating weird characters who could not behave themselves or take anything seriously. I played to be entertaining. I tried Metagaming's THE FANTASY TRIP®, Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU® and RUNEQUEST®, and superhero games, creating barbarian halflings, hill-giant warriors, and a mutant android who used city buses as clubs. One very gross and disgusting RUNEQUEST® character of mine, a fat dwarf named Gumbo Burgher, kept a pet giant rat. When his ship was attacked by pirates, he picked up a rowboat and threw it overboard on the pirates' heads, injuring many. I think I once role-played a duck, too, and I wanted to play a two-headed giant but no one would let me.

When I came to work for TSR, my characters were in full bloom, every one of them a direct descendant of my most obnoxious Fort Bragg personas. If everyone else in a TRAVELLER® game had a fierce human Marine, I had a lazy wolflike Vargr with revolting personal habits who also gave terrible tactical advice in combat.

*Continued on page 72*





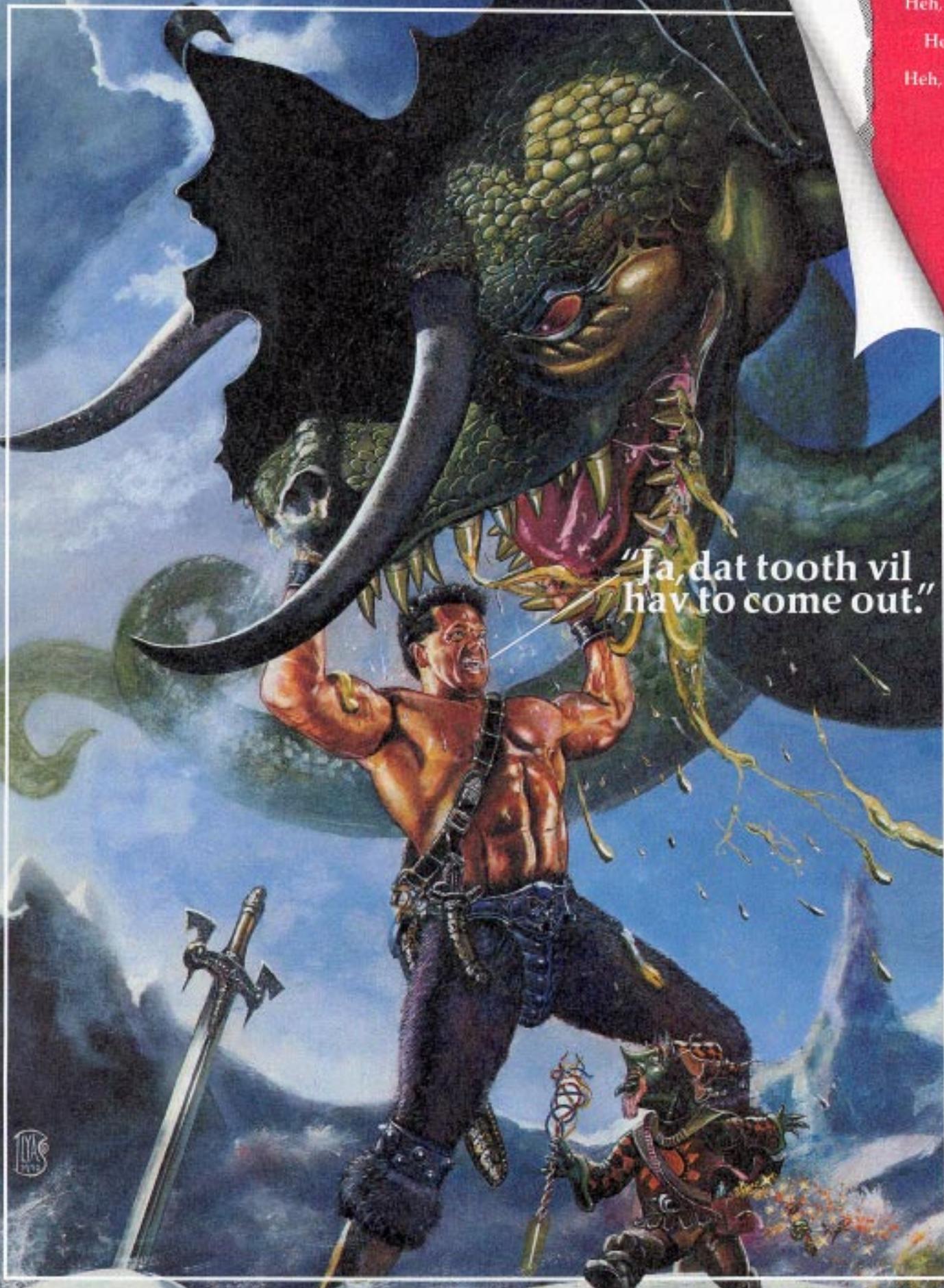
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TO  
THE  
EDGE

Heh, heh.

Heh.

Heh, heh.

"Ja, dat tooth vil  
hav to come out."





A collage of characters from the Space Hulk board game. In the center, a Space Hulk warrior in blue power armor is shown in mid-air, performing a dynamic pose. He wears a helmet with a skull emblem and carries a large, ornate sword. To his left, another warrior in blue armor looks through binoculars. In the background, there's a red banner with a golden rose and a sword, and a yellow banner with a golden eagle and a crown. On the right, several Space Hulk warriors in blue armor are shown in various action poses. One warrior has a lightning bolt on his shoulder. The overall style is vibrant and action-oriented, typical of a board game advertisement.

# 5 Dance STEPS FOR GW'S SPACE HULK\*

"Step, turn, tap, shuffle, BANG, BANG, BANG . . ."

Heh, heh.

©1994 by Allen Varney

Heh.

Artwork by Jim Holloway

Heh, heh.

*(These rules work with Games Workshop's SPACE HULK\* game alone, though the DEATHWING expansion set is helpful.)*

The Genestealers' invasion of the Imperium proceeded distressingly well. "We must boost morale in the Legiones Astartes or perish," said Chapter Master Vespasian after the fall of the planet Necromunda. He drummed armored fingers on his Command Throne.

"Perhaps we might present some merry entertainment to lighten their mood," said Brother Promatix of the Administratum.

Vespasian scowled. "A Legionnaire needs no entertainment. He lives to kill and to die in service to our glorious Emperor. No, we must publicly humiliate the Genestealers. We must prove we can move among them at our will, with impunity."

"Aha!" Promatix snapped his fingers. "I believe we may arrive at a constructive compromise."

This marked the birth of the Space Marine Recreator squad.

## The Recreator squad

The SPACE HULK Recreator squad combines the finest warrior skills with the sharp sense of rhythm and lively humor needed to entertain the galactic empire's armies. The Recreators brave Genestealer strongholds to slaughter and amuse, wreak havoc and provoke a sigh. In short, the Recreators enter Genestealer Space Hulks and dance, just to prove they can. A squad's broadcasts to Space Marine chapters throughout the Imperium demonstrates its courageous triumphs over the enemy.

### Squad Composition:

One Sergeant with storm bolter and power sword.

One Marine with thunder hammer and

music unit (see below).

One Marine with power glove and either assault cannon (one free reload) or heavy flamer.

Two Marines with storm bolter and power glove.

If you use the DEATHWING set's Terminator force list, a Recreator squad costs 10 points and offers the following options:

Replace the Sergeant with a Captain armed with storm bolter, power sword, and power glove with grenade launcher (three points).

Replace one Marine with a Librarian, psychic mastery level one, with storm bolter and force axe (three points); increasing the Librarian's psychic mastery costs three points per level (maximum 4th level).

Replace one Marine's power glove with chain fist (one point).

One or two assault cannon reloads (one point each).

One heavy flamer reload (two points).

## New actions

The Recreator dance steps involve many actions omitted from the SPACE HULK game. The Recreators' special armor, customized by the Imperium's Adeptus Mechanicus, gives the waist flexibility they need to perform their lumbering but strangely majestic dances. The following descriptions, in alphabetical order, include costs in Action Points (APs).

*Catch:* A Marine expends 1 AP to catch another Marine thrown to one of his three forward squares (see "Throw" below). The caught Marine lands on his feet or prone as he prefers. The catcher then continues his turn.

*Fall prone:* A prelude to "Spin on Ground" (see below), this action costs 1 AP and cannot be combined with a firing action. The

Marine can fall face up or face down as he prefers; turning over costs 1 AP.

**Kick:** Costs 1 AP; in close-assault combat, the Marine rolls one die and subtracts 1. The kick is the only movement on this list that Genestealers also can perform. Recreators also learn the high kick, which costs 2 APs and takes no penalty in close assault. A Marine can make a normal kick and fire for the same (2 AP) cost, but cannot fire while high-kicking.

**Leap:** Preceded by at least one square of forward movement, a leap action costs 2 APs. From a standing start it costs 3 APs. The range of the leap is two squares, anywhere in the Marine's forward firing arc. The Marine cannot leap through or onto an occupied square, nor can he leap backward. Leap and fire costs the same amount.

**Lift:** One Space Marine picks up another in an adjacent front square and lifts him, either to chest level or overhead. The lifter pays 3 APs, the Marine being lifted pays none. Neither Marine can attack during the lift, but each defends normally. The lifter can then Throw, Pirouette, or Set down. If Pirouetting, the lifted Marine may fire while turning as described under "Pirouette."

**Lift and throw:** Combines the Lift action with the Throw action (see below) for a total cost of 4 APs.

**Pirouette:** The Marine rotates 360° at a cost of 4 APs. Pirouette and fire costs the same, and a Marine who is not carrying another Marine can make up to three attacks while turning—one at 90°, one at 180°, and one at 270°. Sustained fire bonuses do not apply.

**Set down:** This action returns the lifted Marine to the ground, either standing or prone as the lifter prefers and with any facing. It costs the lifter 1 AP the lifted Marine none. This action does no damage and has no effect on combat.

**Snap fingers:** Free; however, a Marine can normally snap his fingers no more than four times per turn. Additional "Snap fingers" actions cost 1 AP each. A Marine with an assault cannon, heavy flamer, or other two-handed weapon cannot "Snap fingers" during a firing action.

**Spin on ground:** This action, important to all Break dances, requires the Marine to "Fall prone" first. Then it costs 2 APs to spin any number of times in the same square. Any attack on a spinning Marine stops the spin. The Marine can finish spinning with any facing. A Marine cannot attack while spinning but defends normally. Only Recreator armor can be spun in.

**Split:** The Marine falls to the ground with one leg stretched forward and the other back. Descending or moving into a split from a prone position costs 1 AP; rising from a split costs 2 APs. A Marine in a split cannot initiate close-assault combat. He defends normally in close assault and can fire a weapon while descending or while split, but not while rising.

**Tap/Shuffle/Stomp:** All basic tap-dance

style or soft-shoe actions cost 1 AP each when standing still or moving forward, 2 APs moving backward, and have no effect on attack or defense. They can be combined with a firing action for the same cost. Consecutive tap-and-fire actions permit sustained fire bonuses.

**Throw:** One Space Marine throws another whom he has already lifted. This costs the thrower 2 APs, the thrown Marine none. A Marine can't throw and move as part of the same action. The thrower can throw only into the forward firing arc. The thrown Marine has a maximum range of two squares and may pass through, but not enter, an occupied square. The thrown Marine lands prone and may act immediately on landing if he has not already acted this turn.

### Basic steps

All Recreator Marines learn the following steps, described here with their costs in Action Points. Dances that cost more than 4 APs either continue for more than one turn or require expenditure of Command Points.

#### Twist:

Turn left (1)  
Turn right 180° (2)  
Turn left (1)  
[Repeat]

Total dance AP cost: 4

#### Break:

Shuffle forward (1)  
Snap fingers (0)  
Fall prone (1)  
Spin on ground (3)  
Split (1)  
Snap fingers (0)  
Rise from split (2)

Total dance AP cost: 8

Individual squads train further in specialties like Tap, Polka, Swing, Ballroom, and Country & Western (Firing) Line dancing.

### Pas de deux

This ballet dance for two Marines has proven popular in the Legiones Astartes for its delicacy and extreme danger. First, here is the basic *pas de deux*:

#### Lifter Marine:

Lift (3)  
Pirouette (4)  
Set down (1)  
(The lifted Marine is set down facing right.)

#### Lifted Marine:

Move forward (1)  
Turn left (1)  
Move forward (1)  
Turn left (1)  
Here the Space Marine player often spends one Command Point so the lifter can turn left, facing the lifted Marine.  
*Basic dance AP cost: 8 APs for lifter, 4 for lifted Marine, plus 1 Command Point (optional).*

For higher stakes and a greater boost to morale, the Recreators sometimes add the following actions. Though the rules do not technically permit simultaneous movement, a cooperative Genestealer player may permit the two Space Marines to dance in unison so long as they perform identical actions.

#### Advanced pas de deux:

[Basic *pas de deux* plus:]

Turn 90°: lifter left, lifted Marine right (1)

Move forward (1)

Turn 180° (2)

Move forward (1)

Leap, running (2)

*Total dance AP cost: 15 APs for lifter, 11 for lifted Marine.*

### New equipment

**Music unit:** This lightweight, sophisticated electronic package combines holographic projection equipment, an orchestra synthesizer, and a powerful warp-wave transmitter. When deployed, the unit instantly plays lush music and projects a romantic setting such as a ballroom, moonlit garden, cathedral, or monument to fallen Space Marines. It broadcasts to receivers throughout the Imperium.

### Mission: Gotta dance!

Troopship *Broadway Bound* re-entered realspace deep in Segmentum Aurora, eight-minutes-away from the Space Hulk.

"Brother-Captain Astaire, we are ready." The Recreators of the Destiny's Arrow chapter stood proud, their black-and-white armor shining in the teleport pads actinic light.

The Captain said, "Brother-Sergeant Bolger, I salute you and Squad Berkeley. The Emperor and all the Imperium will watch with hope and good wishes. I remind you all: Should the performance prove infeasible, the anecdote must go forth."

The squad chanted, "Hail the Emperor, Humanity's protector," in four-part harmony.

Captain Astaire swallowed, wondering how many of these brave men he would see again. "Broadcast commences at your code-signal when you rendezvous with Squad Kelly. I send you off with the traditional benediction: Break a leg!"

In moments, the Recreators appeared aboard the enemy Hulk. On the *Broadway* bridge the commander of Destiny's Arrow waited in tense silence. At last the rendezvous code, fuzzy with static, sounded through the troopship. The bridge crew cheered as they heard Sergeant Bolger's signal:

"Hey, kids, let's put on a show!"

### Objectives

For this scenario use the Mission Five ("Decoy") layout from page 13 of the original SPACE HULK mission booklet. The target is the room at lower left. The Space Marine player tries to deploy the music unit in this room and execute a brief dance or, if this proves impossible, tell a

joke. The Stealer player tries to kill all the Space Marines.

#### Forces

**Marines:** One Recreator squad (Squad Berkeley) and one standard squad (Squad Kelly), plus 10 points to spend on options from this article or the DEATHWING supplement force list.

**Stealers:** The Genestealer player uses the basic Blip set. The Stealers begin with one Blip and receives two reinforcements per turn.

#### Deployment

Use the Deployment rules in the "Decoy" scenario. The Recreator squad can begin on either of the two marked deployment areas.

The Space Marines move first.

#### Special rules

**The music unit:** Use the C.A.T. counter from the SPACE HULK game to represent the music unit. To carry, pass, damage, or destroy the unit, use the rules for the C.A.T. in the "Rescue" scenario on page 9 of the SPACE HULK mission book. The music unit cannot move on its own.

Stealers may not pick up or directly attack the music unit. However, they can attack a Marine holding the unit, as per the C.A.T. rules.

The music unit can be deployed anywhere on the target room section for 1 AP. The dance cannot begin until the music unit is deployed. Only members of the Recreator squad can dance.

**The joke:** Telling the joke provided to the Recreator squad costs 1 AP. As the mission begins, only the five Marines in the Recreator squad know the joke. ("The Genestealers thought they'd know when we arrived. They thought four-armed is forewarned.") The Recreator Sergeant can teach the joke to one other Marine per AP he spends. Any Marine who knows the joke can tell it. The music unit is unnecessary.

**Ending the mission:** After accomplishing their mission or giving up, surviving Marines can teleport to safety on their ship by spending 4 APs per model, as per the DEATHWING supplement.

#### Victory

The Space Marines win a complete victory if two Marines perform a basic *pas de deux* in the target room. They win a partial victory if one Marine spends at least 4 APs on a solo dance in the room. If no Marine dances but one tells the joke in the target room, the mission is a draw.

The Stealers win by killing all the Marines before any Marine can dance or tell the joke in the target room.

#### Action Point table

Action	AP Cost
Catch	1
Fall prone	1
High kick	2
Kick*	1
Leap, running **	2
Leap, standing**	3
Lift	3
Lift and throw	4
Pirouette **	4
Set down	1
Snap fingers	0
Spin on ground	2
(spinner must be prone)	
Split, descending**	1
Split, rising	2
Tap/Shuffle/Stomp**	
forward	1
backward	2
Throw	2
Turn over	1

\* Genestealers also can Kick for same cost.

\*\* Can be combined with firing action for same cost.



\* SPACE HULK is a trademark of Games Workshop.

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Heh, heh.

Heh.

Heh, heh.

# Bard on the Run

by das Fraulein

After you read these ditties,  
you'll know why she's running

## Love Me, Kender

for the DRAGONLANCE® campaign

(with apologies to Elvis Presley)!

Love me, kender,  
Love me true.  
Steal away my heart.  
Keep it where you've put  
And that's just the start.

Love me, kender,  
Love me long.  
Each day the pain grows  
For though they say that  
I saw you take my purse.

Leave me, kender,  
Leave me now,  
All your pouches filled.  
You just don't realize you're a thief  
And you never will.



# Mister Sand Mage or A Thousand and One Arabian Knights

for the AL-QADIM® campaign  
(with apologies to the Chordettes)

(bom bom bom bom bom  
bom bom bom bom bom  
bom)

(bom bom bom bom bom  
bom bom bom bom bom  
bom)

Mr. Sand Mage  
Bring me Hakim.  
Use all your magic  
Oh, please intervene.

Create a sandstorm  
To carry him over.  
No longer need he be  
a desert rover.

Sand Mage  
Isn't he cute?  
For me, Sultana,  
I think he would suit.

## Simply Resurrectable

for the AD&D® game  
(with apologies to Robert Palmer)

This has to be correctable!  
This character's delectable!  
(Yeah, yeah.)  
This kind of thief's collectable.  
(Her tracks are undetectable!)

She can pick, on demand,  
A different lock with each hand.  
And now she's gone—what a  
sham!—  
At the DM's command?

She'll never be dead to me  
Because I find her . . .  
Simply resurrectable.

Those goblins had an arsenal.  
That's simply less than plausible.  
Your killing her is personal!  
The loss ain't reimbursable.

She can skirt every law.  
Break an armed guardsman's jaw.  
She gives the poor what she steals,  
Makes some heavenly deals.

No, she cannot be dead, you see,  
Because I know she's . . .  
Simply resurrectable. Simply resurrectable.

The girl's unstoppable  
When climbing up a wall.  
Backstab is deadly,  
Picking pockets nets a haul.  
Her face is lovely,  
Now it's covered by a pall?

She won't stay dead long, trust me  
I'll find a cleric.  
Simply resurrectable.

Her talent's undeniable.  
Her energy's maniacal. Ooh, ooh.  
The scenario's not viable.  
Clearly she's "un-die-able."

She's all mine; healer, tell me  
You can work the spell.  
She'll be fine—a day or two and  
she'll be well?

Simply resurrectable.

"Hakim the Sultan"  
Has such a nice ri-ing.  
If he won't marry me, a fling . . .

Sand Mage  
I've waited enough.  
You'd best get going,  
Or I will get tough.

All of those others,  
Well, yes, they were fu-un.  
Now Hakim's number thousand  
and one.

Mr. Sand Mage bring me,  
Please, please bring me,  
Mr. Sand Mage bring me Hakim!



## Drizzt's Lament or **(Wastin' Away Again) Menzoberranzan**

for the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign  
(with apologies to Jimmy Buffet)

Nibblin' a mushroom  
In Underdark gloom.  
All of us dark elves love this ol'  
town.  
There's a stalactite  
And a stalagmite.  
But all the same, this place gets me  
down.

Wastin' away again in  
Menzoberranzan,  
Searchin' for some way I can get  
out.  
Some people claim that that there's  
a spider to blame  
And I know, it's all Queen Lolth's  
fault.

I don't know the reason  
I'm feeling such treason.  
My restless drow feet, they are  
longing to roam.  
Wanna visit the surface,  
Sink my toes in the turf, yes,  
This curs-ed city's no longer my  
home.

Wastin' away again in  
Menzoberranzan,  
Searchin' for some way I can get out.  
Some people claim that I'm the dark  
elf to blame  
But I know, it's not all my fault.

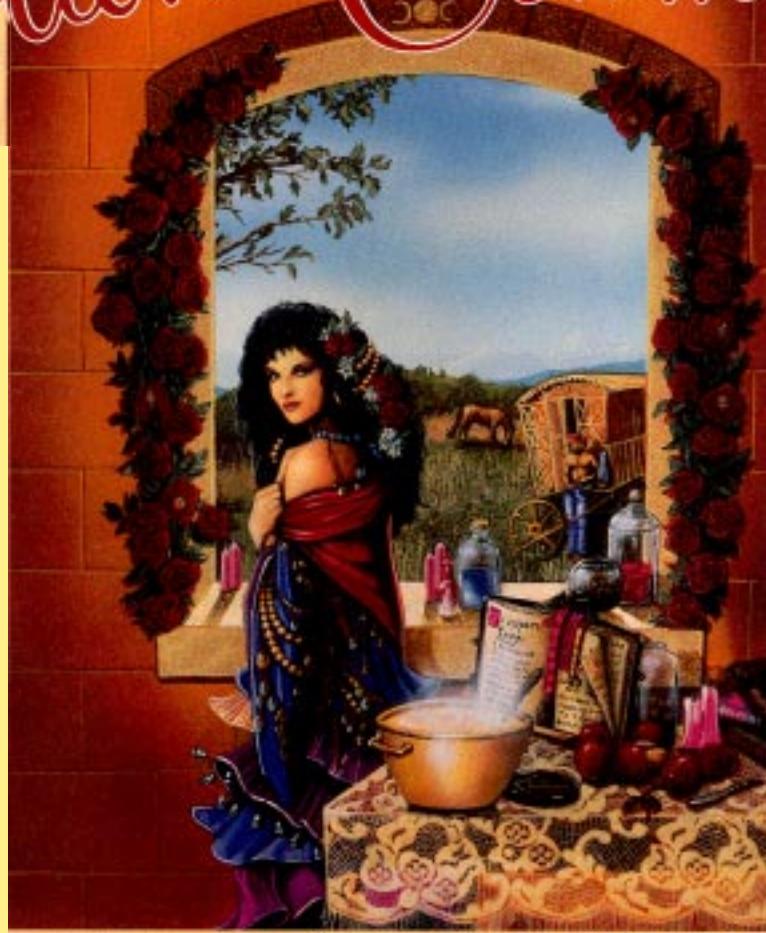
Since I met Bruenor  
My old life is no more.

We're having adventures all over the land  
But it's not all glory  
The battles get gory  
And servants of Lolth, they've got  
my death planned.

Wastin' away again in Menzoberranzan,  
Searchin' for some way I can get out.  
Some people claim that there's a  
goddess to blame  
But I know, it's Salvatore's fault.

Yes and, some people claim that  
there's a goddess to blame  
But I know, it's Salvatore's fault.

# Potion Commotion



Can you *identify* the punny potions?

by Raymond C. Young

Artwork by Lissanne Lake

## Across

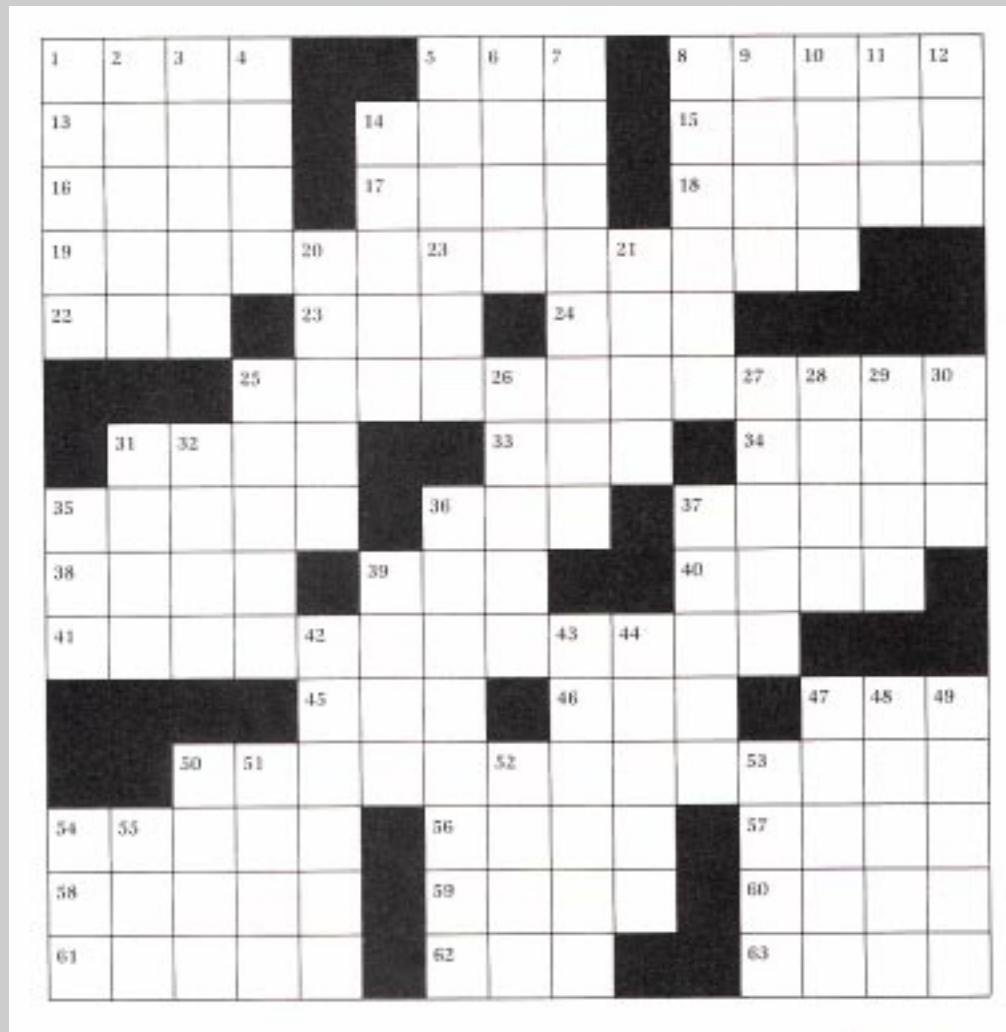
1. \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ nine-tails.
5. Seven-foot-tall jungle dweller.
8. Printing errors, like this.
13. Middle\_\_\_\_\_ (fantasy-game time period).
14. Part of cactus that holds the water.
15. Springtime weather events.
16. Money left for serving wenches.
17. A feature of intelligent swords.
18. A blue-skinned hag (not your 3rd-grade teacher).
19. A potion to evacuate theaters?
22. \_\_\_\_\_-haw (a donkey's bray).
23. Hockey's Bobby.
24. Shangi-\_\_\_\_\_ (plural paradises).
25. A potion to change Laurana?
31. A *crystal ball* is a magical \_\_\_\_\_.
33. Battle rank: abbr.
34. Captain Hook's sidekick.
35. To discharge; plural.
36. Spanish articles for *Cid* and *hermano*.
37. A relative of the harpy.
38. Infinity \_\_\_\_\_ (from the SPELLJAMMER® setting).
39. Tavern favorite.
40. Broken \_\_\_\_\_ (from the RAVENLOFT® setting).
41. A potion that trains dogs?
45. Fee, fie, foe \_\_\_\_\_.
46. Tika's vow to Caramon; two words.
47. *Magic* \_\_\_\_\_ spell.
50. Potions that purify romances?
54. Scent of wine.
56. Of a country: abbr.
57. Sts. and blvds.
58. Giant "trash" fish: plural.
59. *Uno, dos,* \_\_\_\_\_.
60. General equipment store.
61. Hack-n-\_\_\_\_\_ adventures.
62. Congressman: abbr.
63. Martial \_\_\_\_\_.



Heh, heh.

Heh.

Heh, heh.

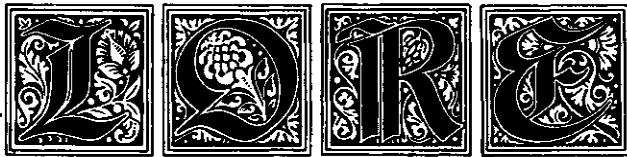


#### Down

1. What a constable does to a thief.
2. Having high Dexterity.
3. What Plains Indians slept in.
4. An outer plane, a.k.a. Aquallor.
5. A priest spell that sees the future
6. Walk in swampy lands.
7. Letter following deltas.
8. Flying carpets & horses: abbr.
9. \_\_\_\_\_-Bin, the Prince of evil aerial creatures.
10. Mountainous tree.
11. Kara-Tur's giant.
12. Giant snake sound.
14. Material component for identify spell
20. Chambers rented at the inn.
21. Locathah have fins on theirs.
25. Piper or Pan.
26. Hand-to-hand combat.
27. Fu \_\_\_\_\_ (Chinese god of joy).
28. Krynn's version of an ostrich.
29. Protected sides of galley.
30. One-fifth of a yuan.
31. Enemy of Olhydra.
32. Coloring achieved by a glassblower.
35. All Hallow's \_\_\_\_\_
36. Earth, air, fire, and water.
37. \_\_\_\_\_ - Kyuss.
39. Baba Yaga's house (two words).
42. "I'll be back in \_\_\_\_\_": (two words).
43. To detect noise as thieves do.
44. Statues of deities.
47. "Glittering heaven" as it's called.
48. Turn away; as from a medusa's gaze.
49. Stops after long travels.
50. "My kingdom \_\_\_\_\_ horse."
51. Lawful evil familiars.
52. Frequency of seeing a leucrotta.
53. A priest's title.
54. Protection scores: abbr.
55. \_\_\_\_\_ Partha (a "small" company).



# ARCANE



by Matt Posner

Artwork by Eric K. Olson

This mad wizard's spellbook offers some special treats for wizards (and DMs) with senses of humor.

*The Crazed Book of Mog* is a square book some three feet to a side, bound in ratskin, its pages of stained, discolored, and moldy vellum. On the flyleaf is written, in red ink, "Practical Jokes and Party Favors." The entire contents of the book, written in six different calligraphic styles and 11 different colors with illuminated letters at the top of each page, require a read magic spell to interpret, although even then the contents will

be found to be primarily gibberish. There are numerous childish illustrations whose subjects usually cannot be determined. The only lucid contents of the book are ten variants on traditional spells, described below.

Little is known about the origin or history of the book. The name "Mog" is repeated five hundred times during the text at what appears to be random intervals—though, as the entire book seems random, assigning the name "Mog" to its authors is mere supposition. The book has a tendency to turn up in

universities, guild libraries, and very large personal collections, sometimes after great precautions have been made to prevent just such an occurrence. Some who have studied the book have speculated that it has a capricious guardian spirit, or is itself a polymorphed spirit of chaotic neutral alignment. If examined by detect alignment or true seeing spells, it is sometimes found to be of chaotic neutral alignment and partially sentient, but these spells sometimes fail to show its presence at all,

# The Crazed Book of Mog

Heh, heh.

Heh.

Heh, heh.

## Gain weight (Alteration)

Level: 1 Comp.: V,S,M  
Range: 5 yds./level CT: 1  
Dur.: 1 hour/level Save: Neg.  
Area of Effect: One creature

The spell causes the designated target to gain useless body mass in the amount of 25% for each level of the caster, to a maximum of 300%. Thus, if a 3rd-level wizard successfully casts *gain weight* at a 200-pound man, the man's weight is increased by 75% — he gains 150 pounds of useless fat, and weighs 350 pounds until the spell's duration expires.

This spell appears to be a variant on the *enlarge* spell. It works only against living creatures. An unwilling recipient receives a saving throw to avoid the effects. The added weight is repulsive and ponderous, so that a victim of the spell suffers a -1 penalty to Charisma and Dexterity for every two levels of the caster (round down). Maximum penalty is -6. Movement rate is decreased by one-quarter for every 100% of weight gained, so that at maximum effect (300%) the victim lumbers along at only one-quarter of normal speed. It is not possible to use this spell to inflict injury by squeezing; all clothing and equipment worn by the victim fall to the ground, unharmed. After the spell's duration expires, the victim can re-equip himself. However, the sudden weight gain requires a Dexterity check in precarious circumstances—if the victim is balanced on a ledge, or a rope bridge. Attempting to use thieving abilities such as climb walls (larger fingers can't grip small cracks), hide in shadows (there's more to hide), or move silently (heavy breathing due to the exertion of carrying the extra weight) result in -25% penalty per 100% weight gained. The DM may need to make item saving throws for weak floors, old rickety chairs, etc., that the victim encounters.

If encumbrance rules are used, the additional weight counts as encumbrance, which may require victims to shed excess equipment. Any flying creature (except

those which fly magically, such as beholders) that gains more than 75% of its base weight must land by the end of the round the spell takes effect. If not, the creature crashes and suffers one-half normal falling damage.

When the spell expires, the victim returns to normal size immediately with no further harmful effects. The material component of this spell is a wheel of old cheese weighing at least fifty pounds, which the caster must balance on his head while casting the spell.

## Wake-up call (Enchantment, Illusion)

Level: 1 Comp.: V,S,M  
Range: 30 yds. CT: 1  
Dur.: Special Save: None  
Area of Effect: Special

This enchantment will stir from sleep 2d10 hit dice of monsters. The victims (and only the victims) hear loud noises such as clanging gongs, blaring trumpets, or worst of all, kazoos welcoming them back to the waking world. These monsters can be of any size and shape, subject only to the hit-dice limitation. All creatures to be affected must be within 30' of each other. All these creatures are immediately roused from even the deepest sleep—including a magically-induced or poisoned slumber—and are awake and alert (though yawning) immediately. The spells recipients are able to take any action normal for them in the round after the spell is cast. Thereafter, poisoned and magically *slept* creatures fall asleep again in the middle of whatever they are doing. Creatures awakened from a normal sleep are free-willed and may choose either to return to sleep (if unmolested), to attack the caster and his associates (if an antagonistic situation exists), or to proceed with some other business.

*Wake-up call* does not have any effect on the recipients' need to sleep—they will feel inclined to return to their bedrolls or nests as soon as they have dealt with whatever business presents itself (fending off an attack, or completing one they have initiated, for example).

The material component of this enchantment is a bell of any type that must be rung loudly during the spell's casting. The spells verbal component—which must be shouted in the wizards shrillest voice—is, "Yoo-hoo, wakey wakey, sleepyheads!"

#### **Macho's uncontrollable hideous belching** (Enchantment/Charm)

Level: 1                    Comp.: V,S,M  
Range: 60 yds.            CT: 3  
Dur.: 1 rnd./level        Save: Neg.  
Area of Effect: 30' cube

The spell causes the target creatures to save vs. spells or begin to belch loudly for the duration of the spell. The belches cause no damage and, do not physically injure the victims, but they are clearly audible and leave in their wake a faint aroma of ale. One creature for every three levels of the caster is affected by this spell—if all said creatures are within the spell's area of effect. It is impossible for a creature affected by this spell to move silently or to conceal its location. Penalties to strike victims hidden by invisibility or by darkness are halved. Additionally, any other creature able to track by scent or echolocation is precisely aware of the location of the spell's victims so long as belching continues. When the duration expires, the attendant aroma fades.

The material components for this spell are a quart of ale and two large porc sausages, which the caster must consume (quite quickly) during the casting.

#### **Pelf's rancid arrow** (Conjuration, Alteration)

Level: 1                    Comp.: V,S,M  
Range: 180 yds.            CT: 2  
Dur.: Instant.            Save: None  
Area of Effect: 1' radius/level

As no archmage named Pelf is recorded in history or legend, it is assumed that this spell is named in mockery of *Melf's acid arrow* spell. This spell fires a magical arrow from the wizards forehead that strikes with the unmodified base THAC0 of a fighter equal to the mage's level. On impact, the arrow explodes into a gout of extremely concentrated magical vinegar. The vinegar blast has a one-foot radius for every experience level the caster possesses. All edible substances—food and drink alike—within the radius become instantly fouled and unpalatable due to the high concentration of vinegar they now contain. Additionally, all creatures within the radius must save vs. poison at a +4 bonus or be blinded for 1-4 rounds. (The DM may wish to make exceptions for indiscriminant eaters such as giant insects and trolls.) The vinegar blast has no effect upon plant life (save to make it unpalatable). Pelf's rancid arrow is not a powerful enough acid to inhibit regeneration, although it will blur or smear ink and may, at DM's option, dissolve nonmagical adhesives (such as glue and spider webs). The spell leaves behind a recognizable odor that persists from minutes to hours, depending upon available ventilation.

The material component for this spell is a flask of ordinary vinegar, which the caster pours on his head during the casting.

#### **Hold portal open** (Alteration)

*Reversible*  
Level: 2                    Comp.: V,S  
Range: 20 yds./level      CT: 2  
Dur.: Permanent           Save: None  
Area of Effect: 20' square/level

This spell is very much like the alteration *hold portal*. Its effect is to keep a door, gate, or valve of wood, metal, or stone from being shut. The spell only works on a portal that is already open. When the spell takes effect, the portal is frozen in its open position. An extraplanar creature of six or more hit dice or a wizard six or more experience levels higher than the caster can destroy the spell and shut the portal (as per the *hold portal* spell). Physical strength *will* not shut the door, but may tear it from its hinges or break it to pieces. The reverse of this spell, *slam portal*, does no more than to shut an open door within the spell's range. It has no effect on a door that has been *held open* unless the caster of *slam portal* is six levels higher than the mage who *held open* the door in the first place.

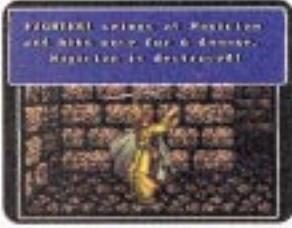
#### **Hallucinatory murrain** (Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 3                    Comp.: V,S,M  
Range: 20 yds./level      CT: 1 turn  
Dur.: 1 hour/level        Save: None  
Area of Effect: 10' cube/level

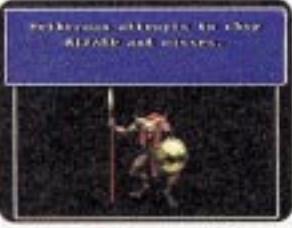
This spell causes all plant life within the area of effect to appear blighted, repellent, decayed, and sick. The illusion has olfactory and tactile as well as visual components, and works even on unintelligent



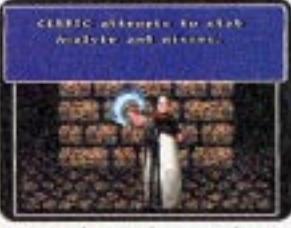
# MAKE PLANS FOR A HEART ATTACK.



With the swing of a sword, the magicians' final life points are slashed away.



In a dark corner of the Maelstrom, you are ambushed by a hungry Netherman.



Your cleric takes a stab at the Acolyte, but his magical shield repels the attempt.



## Wizardry V

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creatures. Creatures that would normally enter (such as herbivorous herd animals, pestiferous birds and insects, bandits laying an ambush, botanists, bird-watchers, and children at play) will normally avoid the area of effect. The illusion may be disbelieved by creatures of Average or greater intelligence with a successful saving throw vs spells.

The material component is a twig, a blade of grass, a bit of bark, or a green leaf that the caster must chew and swallow before the spell takes effect.

#### Wall of paper (Evocation)

Level: 3 Comp.: V,S,M  
Range: 5 yds./level CT: 5  
Dur.: Permanent Save: None  
Area of Effect: 10' square/level

This spell brings into existence a gigantic square mass of free-standing parchment or vellum. It can be created across a gap (for example, to block a corridor or span a pit), in which case it attaches itself to designated connecting surfaces, or it can be created rolled-up for later use. It is possible to mark on the *wall of paper* with any sort of ink or paint, for its surface is smooth and absorbent. The *wall of paper* is twice as sturdy as normal paper, but weighs half as much. Nonmagical writing, drawing, and painting on this paper takes

place at twice the usual speed and cannot be smudged, smeared, or erased by non-magical means except as desired by the inscribing wizard. The paper also tears and folds itself in accordance with verbal commands from the caster, and can be commanded to enclose packages, form itself into envelopes or sheets of any dimensions, attach itself to walls or flagpoles, etc. Once created, the paper is permanent (i.e., a *dispel magic* will not destroy with it), but it is otherwise normal paper, and can be destroyed by flame, electricity, acid (not including *Pelf's rancid arrow*, however), immersion in water, and heavy or magical wind and precipitation).

The material component for this spell is a bit of parchment or vellum (whichever type of wall is to be created).

#### Teleport without awareness

(Alteration)  
Level: 7 Comp.: V  
Range: Touch CT: 7  
Dur.: Special Save: None  
Area of Effect: One creature

This spell is similar to the *teleport* spell, except that only the spell's victim and his equipment are affected. Some time after the spell is cast, the victim is abruptly teleported, without warning but without physical injury, to a location he has never

been to before, where no one within fifty miles speaks any language he knows. This location must be on the same plane where the spell was cast; if the victim manages to leave the plane before the spell takes effect, it is permanently negated. Time between casting the spell and the actual instance of teleportation ranges from 1-20 hours. Although the spell is primarily useful as a curse, it is not affected by *remove curse* or similar effects, and can be negated only by a *dispel magic* or by entering another plane.

#### Power word, kill rodents

(Conjuration/Summoning)  
Level: 5 Comp.: V  
Range: 10'/level CT: 1  
Dur.: Permanent Save: None  
Area of Effect: 10' radius

When this particular power word is uttered, it instantly and utterly slays all normal mice, rats, gerbils, guinea pigs, moles, hedgehogs, shrews, squirrels, rabbits, hares, or other small, furry, fast-breeding creatures of the normal variety. Up to 1,000 rodents are destroyed by the spell. No giant or magical versions of rodents are affected by this spell, although the book details the spell's efficacy versus some unknown creatures referred to as R.O.U.S.s. Ω

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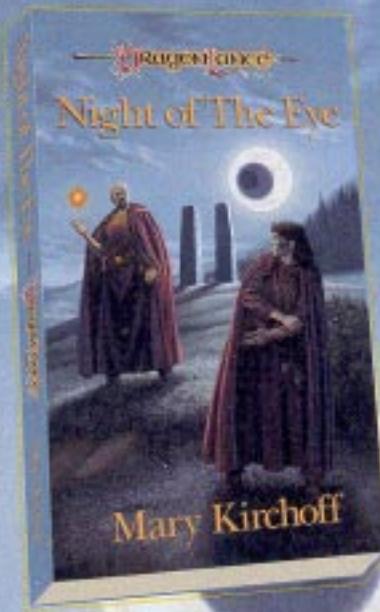
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**T**From the unpublished  
journals of Amran  
the Seeker, half-elven paladin of  
Oghma's temple at the court  
of Azoun IV; king of Cormyr.

Ten days in Sigil: As fascinating as this city is, I fear I have tarried too long. My charge was to explore the realms beyond the barriers of Toril and I must not lose sight of this goal. My friends back at court cannot wait forever for my report.

It is with reluctance and fear that I have prepared to leave this city. I have heard much of the lands beyond the doors of Sigil. Much of what I hear worries me, though I am not sure how much of what I hear is exaggeration or truth. That, I guess, is part of my duties. I have become particularly concerned about the Blood War. There is always a chance that such endless warfare will present a threat to Cormyr. Certainly the fiendish travelers I have seen pass through Sigil's gates show little concern for the lives of others, even here where peace gilds the surface of life.

This morning I hired a guide, named Glin. He is a briaur, one of a race of goat-centaur men. It was curious dealing with him—though he was quite polite, he had all the appearance of a tattooed savage. Even after spending time in the city, I barely understood him. People here speak Common but fill it with odd expressions. My guide said he was a *Free Leaguer* and a *blood* when it came to the planes and kept calling me a *clueless* or a *prime*. I can't say that I liked either and he makes me suspicious—*peery*, as they say here. Still, he was the only guide who claims to know the Outlands that I could find on my limited funds. (Sage Trandleer's maps of the planes note this as the Concordant Opposition. Glin laughed when I used the name, saying it pegged me as one of the clueless for certain. I must be more cautious in relying on the sage's works.)

Glin is ready to leave tomorrow. He has expressed no problem with my aimless itinerary. I have learned the briaur are a race quite given to wanderlust. He suggests I get new clothes, so I won't stand out so much as "a hopeless prime." Insulting as it sounds, I'll take his advice even though it stretches my funds dearly.

**One day out of Sigil:** What an extraordinary means of travel! Having arrived in Sigil by spell, I had never seen a portal in operation. From their description I had no idea what to expect, certainly nothing as simple as this.

The day began when I met Glin at the Great Bazaar. Though he said nothing, I think he approved of my new traveling gear, since it is much more in fashion with this world. He brought virtually nothing at all, save a small saddle-bag and a stem of what I gathered was horse-tail reed. The goat-man led me down several side streets,



past the hordes of beggars so prevalent in this city, until we reached an open arch that spanned the small street we were on. To my amazement, he said this was our portal. The whole thing seemed patently ridiculous—I could see the street continue, I even walked under the arch and nothing happened. Glin gave a bleating laugh and said, "Poor sod, of course it won't work without the key." Then he pulled me by the arm as he stepped through. The arch crackled with sparks that tingled my skin and before my very eyes the landscape changed as we stepped through to stand

before the walls of a great building—the Palace of Judgment. (Even though it was as large as a city, there is no note of it on Trandleer's maps. Neither was I able to find any note of Sigil where I began my travels. I suspect the accuracy of the sage more and more.)

This, Glin explained to me, was the domain of a power venerated in the Prime Material Plane as the judge of the dead, part of a great bureaucracy of powers. It reminded me of faiths I had heard of from Kara-Tur. Indeed, the building had the look of those found in far eastern lands. What

# THE PLANE TRUTH PART II: A JOURNEY + THE OUTLANDS

by David "Zeb" Cook

Artwork by Dana Knutson & Tony DiTerlizzi

made this building singular was the line of bodies filing patiently through the gate. Humans, half-elves, and creatures I could not identify, dressed in colors and ranks of clothes, waited in a queue that stretched beyond my sight.

"Petitioners, them that's died on the prime," was how Glin explained it. "Inside the proxies of the power'll send each one to his proper plane—least that's how it works for the cutters who follow this pantheon." Petitioners and proxies—two things new to me. I must learn more about them.

**Two days out of Sigil:** Ignoring the protests of Glin, I joined the petitioners on line for the palace. It seems the best means to obtain an audience with the beings within. I have been waiting the entire day, slowly shuffling forward. Glin has gone off to one of the many taverns that line the way.

Though the wait was (and is) tedious, it gave me the chance to learn more of the petitioners. My first curiosity was where did these travelers come from? Not one could answer this simple question. They had no knowledge of where they once

lived or even how they came here, only an unquenchable desire to file through the palace gates. Unable to get an answer that way, I watched for where they came from, yet this too was impossible to tell. When I watched the road behind us, not one petitioner did I see. I lowered my gaze for an instant and when I looked back, there stood two or three new travelers, not 10' from me! I could believe only that they had appeared from the very thinnest of air.

At first, when they are fresh to the line, these petitioners are like unformed clay. Their features are sharp but their minds dull. Their words are slow and halting and their passions flat. With the passing hours this mental haze lifts and they become more natural and animated until one would mistake them for a normal mortal. Still, as much as I questioned them of their previous lives, not one could dredge up even the slightest memory of a moment prior to this one.

**Three days out of Sigil:** Still waiting on line. The wonder of the petitioners has grown weary. Glin is impatient to take me elsewhere, but I think tomorrow I will reach the gate. Oghma grant me the patience to endure that long.

**Four days out of Sigil:** Today I reached the gate and had my ambitions crushed. After waiting half the day, it was finally my turn to stand before the entrance. There I was confronted by a singular creature. It was taller than a man and had the head of an oxen, like a minotaur and yet not. It was dressed in splendid robes and gleaming armor and barred the way with a massive halberd. These details are clear because I had ample time to study it as it blocked my path.

At first it spoke in a language I could not fathom. Seeing my ignorance, it shifted to another and then another, all similar in tone yet different in inflection. Only when it had failed in all this did it resort to Common. "You are not awaiting judgement," it said with some puzzlement.

I explained my nature—a prime, not a petitioner—and that my purpose here was to gain knowledge and understanding. Unfortunately, the answer was discouraging. I was welcome to apply for an audience in two to three weeks. It was clear I could not immediately get in and I have no desire to wait around here for weeks it will take to gain audience.

When I found Glin at a stable-like inn and told him, he was quite pleased to be on our way. Perhaps sensing my disappointment, he offered to take me to Ribcage, the gate-town to Baator, the plane Trandleer notes as the Nine Hells. Again there are more name changes I must learn.

*Here is the end of Vol. 7 of Ambran's journals. The next diary in the sequence, Vol. 8, has never been found. From what can be inferred from other notes in Ambran's diaries, the volume was probably lost in the flight from Ribcage or the fight that followed shortly after.*

**Nineteen days out of Sigil:** Praise Oghma for escaping Ribcage! Looking on it now, I marvel at my mad desire to view the portal to Baator or the terrible consequences it would have. I saw, yes, as I have already described and for my own peace of mind, I will write no more of it. It is effort enough for me not to dwell on it still. Sage Trandleer prepared me for nothing like what I saw.

Glin has been driving us both at a brutal pace ever since we escaped Ribcage. I cannot blame him for I too fear the town's Blackguards are still pursuing us.

Even in our flight, I cannot help but notice the mountainous landscape we are passing through. Glin says it is the Vale of the Spine and it is aptly named. The barren valley floor is almost perfectly curved and the mountain peaks arch overhead, though not quite as skeletal as they were in Ribcage.

I have not seen any game—deer, rabbits, or birds—since our descent into the Vale on the way to Ribcage. Before, even at the worst points of our journey, near Semanya's Bog, there were at least some natural animals.

**Twenty Days out of Sigil:** My guide continues his driving pace, even though there are no signs of pursuit. When I challenged him on it, the haughty bariaur claimed speed was urgent if I wished to see the wonders of the Outlands and then asked if I wanted to end his employment, leaving me abandoned out here. If he presses me on it too much, I will. I refuse to be held hostage by a guide. Oghma will guide me.

We have cleared the Vale and the land has changed. Gate-ward—the local way of saying you're moving toward the edge of the Outlands disk—the plain grows rough. (The other direction is "spike-ward," toward the spire at the center of the plane.) I can see in the distance that it is fractured along near crystalline lines, so that the hills tilt and angle like great blocks. Glin, who is at least not completely secretive, explains (in his own colorful words), "There's no dark to it, cutter. Every plane around the rim gets mirrored on the Outlands. Know it and you can fix where you stand. Them blocks are toward Acheron. Head that way and you'll find Rigus."

**Twenty-three days out of Sigil:** Glin says we're somewhere upland of Automata, the gate-town to the plane of Nirvana or Mechanus as it is known to the natives of the planes. (With all his errors, how did Trandleer ever earn the title sage?) I was told in Sigil that near Mechanus, rigid order prevailed. Then I didn't believe it—it seemed too fantastic to be real—but here

the fields are squared, the forests almost straight rows of trees. Perfect, logical order.

I do not know what I shall do if my guide does not relent. He seems to lead me with some purpose of his own, perhaps fulfilling desires I have not yet realized.

**Twenty-four Days out of Sigil:** How can I describe it, the most extraordinary thing that has happened yet? Purposes have been revealed and yet I still do not understand. This morning Glin waited impatiently, as he always has, while I broke camp. I've become used to the fact that he will not assist. We set out at his thundering pace once again, and I resigned myself to the struggle of keeping up.

At noon, we reached the crest of a ridge overlooking a walled town. From its perfectly square blocks (described to me in Sigil), I knew it was Automata. I assumed it was our goal, the cause of Glin's haste but instead of descending to town, he insisted we stop in the center of a field. There he laid out a blanket, curled his legs beneath himself, and waited. I didn't bother asking why, now accustomed to his stubborn refusals.

"You're a long-suffering cutter, Jon," Glin said suddenly without my asking, "and you're right to be peery of me. I should've said more earlier, but I'm not much of a basher to rattle his bonebox. It's bad business, you see, to linger in the Vale of the Spine too long, especially after that dust-up in Ribcage, and the ground 'round Acheron ain't much better. So that's why I pressed us at first. Then, once we were free of that case, I figured you'd want to see this." With that he pointed toward a thin line of figures that was snaking its way from the gates of Automata.

"It's the modron parade. Every seventeenth cycle, a whole troop of modrons, those strange little berks, tumble out through the portal of Mechanus and begin a march round the whole length of the Great Road. Nobody knows why they do it, but they're modrons, so it's got to be something to do with the order of the universe."

As the line marched through the neat fields outside Automata, I could estimate there were over a thousand or more of the strange creatures. They marched in perfect files, organized by rank with each led by a banner marked in symbols that only had meaning to them. "What happens to them?"

My guide shrugged at this question. "Most of the little sods wind up in the dead book, I guess. The road takes 'em right along the gates to Baator, Gehenna, the Gray Waste, Carceri, and the Abyss. At each gate they pass, raiding parties of baatezu, yugoloths, geherleths, and tanar'ri come boiling out and make a few more of 'em lost. The chant goes that maybe two or three ever make the full journey, coming home a couple of cycles later."

I was and still am stunned by this. What would possess a thousand or more intelli-



gent creatures to blindly march to almost certain death? Perhaps they march to observe the state of order along the Great Road. Perhaps their march ensures the survival of that road. Perhaps they march just to die. What would Sage Trandleer make of this?

My meditations on the whole spectacle were interrupted by the arrival of a woman, clearly a warrior, though her armor was to my mind scant. At first she kept some distance from us and surveyed the scene just as we were. At last, against Glin's well-meant advice, I hailed her. He recognized her as Doomguard by the device she wore.

Though wary, she was not hostile and we eventually fell to conversation. Her name was Rialiva and she'd traveled to Automata from one of the Doomguard citadels on the Inner Planes.

"I've come to see the modrons march,"

she explained. "We Doomguard always watch the progress of their parade to learn what our role in it should be."

"Your role?" I had to ask.

"Our universe exists but to end, and it's our purpose to see that entropy is fulfilled."

"So then the modrons are your enemies, because they seek order in everything," I guessed. "You're here to see if they fail."

"Not necessarily. Entropy is only another form of order. The modrons may serve our purpose."

"Then you're here to protect them from the fiends?" I pondered. This was becoming stranger than I anticipated.

"Not all order's entropy. We're here to decide what cause the modrons serve. If they seek the absolute rigidity of the universe, then it's no different from your kind of entropy, is it? The stopping of all things. Here's the chant, if the modrons

see order as progress to something greater, then it's the fiends we'll side with—"

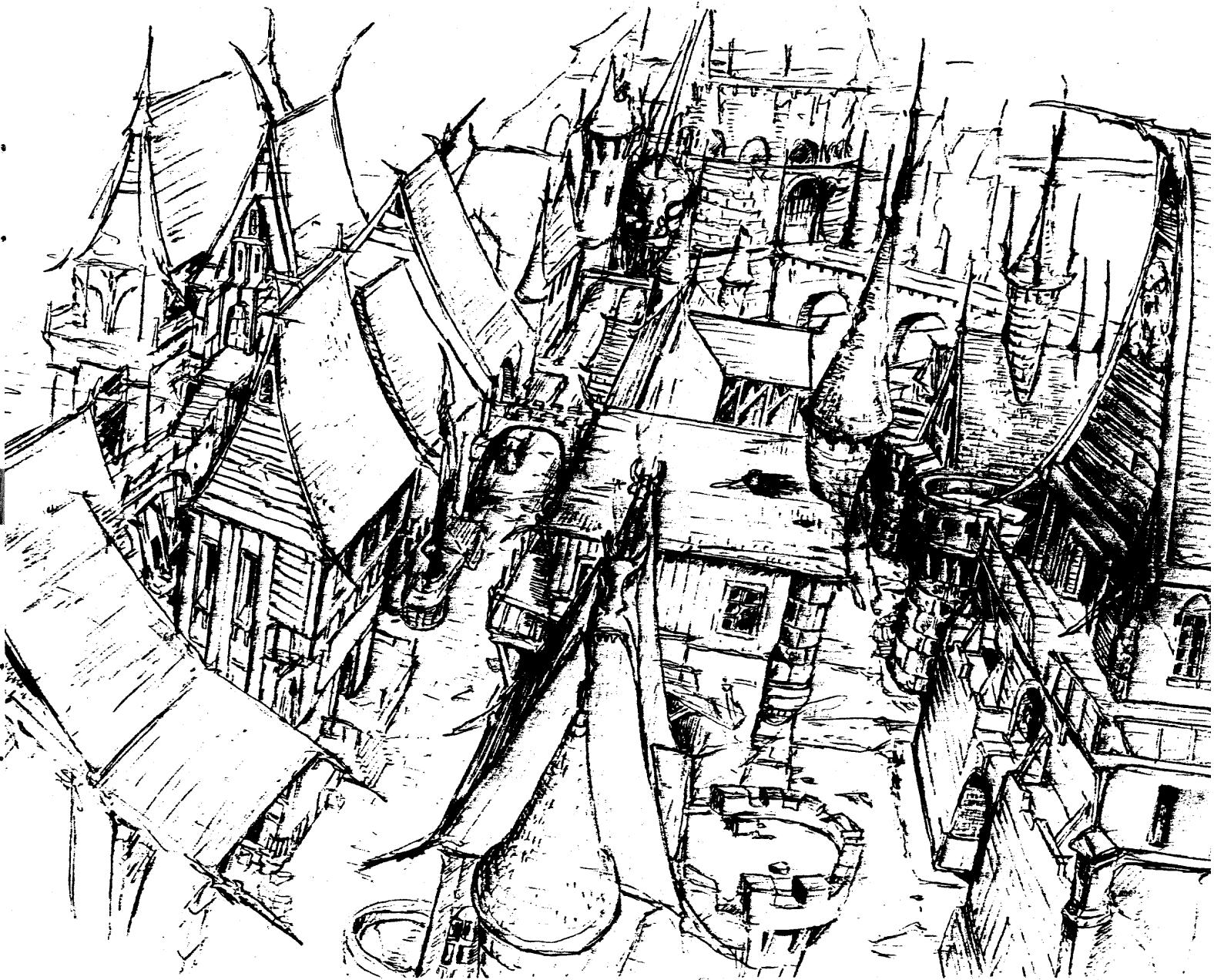
"And let the fiends rule the universe?" I blurted in horror.

Rialiva laughed, though I hope not at my simplicity. "For a handsome cutter, you must be a prime. The fiends, particularly the baatezu, are only another type of order. We don't want to be ruled by them any more than you do."

I must confess I surrendered the argument at this point. Her philosophies, like so many others in this strange realm, are deeper than I ever imagined. I have much yet to learn and see.

To Glin's raised brow, I have invited Rialiva along for the rest of my wanderings. Tomorrow Glin has promised to continue to the River Ma'at. What new mysteries will I see there?

Ω



# Creative



## Developing new psionic powers

by Jan Berrien Berends

Artwork by Mark Nelson

*His body ached from hours of sitting in a meditative poise. His head felt light from lack of food. He stood up and stretched his aching legs. Maybe, just maybe, he had gotten it right this time.*

*He walked across the room and stood before a full-length mirror. Turning his mind inward, he imagined himself as a different being. He closed his eyes and concentrated on a different form. The mayor was sufficiently different. He thought of the mayor, with his enormous belly and bulging eyes. He felt his muscles twitch and knew that his body was changing. Skin went tight here and there, and he felt his abdomen expand. Silently, he said a prayer before opening his eyes.*

*He looked himself over in the mirror. He was a full foot shorter and as he breathed the rolls of fat on his stomach rose and fell slowly. He chuckled with delight. The new power was his! He only needed the mayor's ivory pipe to be his twin.*

*Then he noticed, much to his chagrin, that his skin was now a pale blue, and his hair had become a remarkable yellow. In his elation, he had missed those insignificant details. He sighed deeply and headed back for the cushion in the center of the room. Back to work, he thought. Back to work.*

The process of developing a new psionic power is similar to the way a wizard researches a new spell or a priest petitions his deity for new powers. Of course, psionic powers are different from spells, so some steps of the process differ. However, when a player wants his character to develop a new power, the DM should read over the information concerning Spell Research on pages 43 & 44 of the *DMG*. The process for developing a new psionic power is the same except as noted below.

### **Creating new psionic powers**

The DM must be careful that the proposed power does not violate the spirit of psionics. Psionicists with the power to spew fireballs or reanimate the dead are obviously achieving powers beyond the scope intended for psionicists. However, psionicists who can turn their arms into saws or diagnose diseases fit within the spirit of the rules.

Once the power's effects have been established, it is time to develop game statistics. First the power must be assigned a discipline. If the power affects the body, for example, it is obviously a psychometra-

# Thinking

bolic power. If it involves mental interaction it is telepathic. Most of the time, the player who has come up with the power will know in which discipline the power belongs.

After the discipline has been established, it is time to decide whether the power is a science or a devotion. The decision should be based on the DM's careful consideration of the new power's effect on game balance. If frequent, widespread use of the power would upset the balance of play, but careful use would not, the power should be a science. Powers that directly cause more than one die of damage, strongly influence or control other beings, or grant exceptional powers to the psionicist also are sciences. Powers that can be used often without threat to game balance should be devotions. This includes powers that do no more than one die of damage, that fool or confuse opponents, or that alter existing reality in limited ways.

Finally, the exact statistics of the power must be determined. First the DM decides what ability the power uses. If the power directly affects or changes the psionicist's body or requires extreme physical effort, it uses Constitution. If it requires that the psionicist believe strongly in some different or new reality, visualize special effects, or use intuitive reasoning or willpower, it relies on Wisdom. If it involves special understanding, learning, or intellectual complexity, it is based on Intelligence.

The DM must use her own judgment to determine the modifier to the power score. Again, the primary consideration is game balance. If the power should function only occasionally, then a severe negative modifier applies. The modifier also should reflect the difficulty the psionicist would have and the effort she must exert to initiate the power. Certain powers will have varying modifiers based on range or the specifics of the effect.

The PSP costs are very important for game balance and should be considered carefully. The DM must be very precise in the amount of PSPs a power requires. One way to determine an appropriate amount of PSPs is for the DM to ask herself how many times per day at most the power could be used by a 10th-level psionicist. Divide 100 by that number. The result is the initial cost. This method allows for the fact a psionicist is able to regain PSPs during the day but that he will want to use a variety of powers. However, it does not allow the DM to tailor the PSPs for a more

subtle balance. I recommend that the DM use this method and then adjust the result to suit the game balance of his campaign precisely. Of course, a lot of telepathic powers will have Contact as the initial cost.

The other statistics, such as preparation time and any prerequisites, usually can be determined easily. For the most part, the best values will be obvious to the DM. A glance at similar or equivalent powers can be very helpful here.

Of course, to develop a new power a psionicist must spend time. While any psionicist can research new powers, it is best done by psionicists of higher levels because research is costly in PSPs. Certain powers simply will be out of reach for low-level characters due to the high costs of research.

While researching, the psionicist spends a great deal of time meditating, focusing her inner awareness, and experimenting. This process requires one week for every three PSPs of the power's initial cost, for a minimum of two weeks. At the end of this time, the psionicist must make a power check for the new power. She also must spend double the normal PSP cost for the new power. If she does not have enough PSPs for this, then she cannot develop the power. Of course, she will be able to try when she gains PSPs as she advances levels. Powers and items that boost the psionicist's PSPs are very useful for psionic research. If the power check succeeds, the power has been successfully researched. If the check fails, the psionicist must spend another week of experimentation, honing the power, at the end of which she may make another check.

The character can continue at this process indefinitely. However, expense and mental effort are limitations. First, the process is exhausting. The energy the psionicist must spend limits the amount of time he can research. He may not research for more weeks than his Constitution score. If he rests for one week, he may continue, but he must start from the beginning of the process.

The psionicist also must be prepared to pay the cost of research. In addition to the cost of living, the psionicist must specially insulate a chamber against psionic "noise." Even on a world where psionics are very rare, the average person's daily thought processes produce psionic activity that can, if unchecked, ruin psionic research. Thus, the psionicist must build a special

chamber that eliminates psionic noise. Any existing chamber can be used, but the psionicist must purchase special materials to deaden the psionic energy of average individuals. Because the room's only function is to keep out random psionic energy that emanates from ordinary individuals, intentional psionic activity easily penetrates the shield. No one can construct a "psionic proof" room simply by using certain materials in its construction.

The DM determines what materials are needed. Perhaps the psionicist has to gold plate the room. Perhaps he must build a pyramid of jeweled sticks. Perhaps he must line the walls with jeering faces carved in jade. In any case, the amount the psionicist pays influences his chances for success. Psionicists paying 1,000 to 10,000 gp have a room adequate for experimentation. For every additional 5,000 gp that the psionicist spends, he adds a +1 to his chance to make the power check for determining research success. The maximum bonus is +5. Once the experiment chamber is established, it is as permanent as any normal structure.

Of course, there are other expenses as well. Each time the psionicist begins new research, she must "reseal" the room. This costs from 1,000 to 10,000 gp, based on the DM's discretion.

## New powers

Below are some new psionic powers that the DM can introduce into his game if he so wishes.

## New devotions

**Diagnose** (Clairsentient devotion)

Power score: Wisdom -2

Initial cost: 5

Maintenance cost: na

Range: Touch

Preparation time: 0

Area of effect: Personal

Prerequisites: Aura sight

When the psionicist uses this power, he is able to examine the aura of any creature to determine if that creature is afflicted with any disease and, if so, what that disease is. This power enables the psionicist to detect magical as well as mundane diseases. Thus, the psionicist can determine if the subject is suffering from mummy rot or the effects of the necromantic *contagion* spell as well as if the subject is suffering from a disease contracted through a rat's bite or some other, more

mundane means.

Lycanthropy is harder to detect. The psionicist cannot detect natural lycanthropy, which is not a disease. Only the presence of the disease in individuals bitten by infectious lycanthropes can be detected. Furthermore, the psionicist can detect the presence of lycanthropy in such infected people only when they are in animal form.

If the subject is under the influence of some power that is forcing him to act against his alignment, masks his alignment, or actually changes alignment, the psionicist can detect that as well, although he cannot determine what the "false" alignment is. Charm spells, and all spells that influence the subject without affecting his alignment are not detectable through the Diagnose power.

If a subject is affected by more than one disease, the psionicist must use the power more than once. One use of the power will reveal the nature of one disease—the weakest or most common affliction the subject has. The psionicist also detects the presence, but not the nature, of other diseases.

This power does not in any way empower the psionicist to cure the disease or affect the subject creature in any way. It only gives him the power of observation.

*Power score:* The psionicist can determine how long the disease or influence has been afflicting the subject creature.

**20:** The psionicist must save vs. death magic or suffer the effects of the disease he attempted to Diagnose for a 24-hour period, without learning what that disease is.

### **Feature dancing** (Psychometabolic devotion)

Power score: Constitution

Initial cost: 10

Maintenance cost: 3/round

Range: 0

Preparation time: 1

Area of effect: Personal

Prerequisites: None

Feature dancing is the psionic art of changing one's features to disguise oneself or make oneself resemble or assume the appearance of another being. The psionicist can change his body to make it appear as another creature. He can become taller or shorter; thin, fat, or in between. He may only assume the form of another humanoid, bipedal creature.

The psionicist's body can undergo a limited alteration of up to 50% size change. The new form cannot sprout additional limbs or appendages, so the psionicist cannot grow wings; nor can he gain any special metabolic apparatus. In other words, he cannot gain gills allowing him to breathe underwater or a special hide granting him a better armor class. Although physiological changes take place, the psionicist does not gain, lose, or change any ability scores. The changes are in appearance only.

Depending on the degree of change,

there is a modifier to the power score, as indicated by the following:

Facial changes only, not in imitation or duplication of any specific individual: 0.

No more than 10% change in size, moderate facial changes, not in imitation of any specific individual: -1.

Up to 25% change in size, complex and detailed facial changes, may imitate another being if that being is of the same race as the psionicist, otherwise not in imitation of a specific individual: -3.

Up to 50% change in size, complex and detailed facial changes, may imitate another being: -5.

Imitating another race. This penalty is cumulative with others: -7.

The psionicist is not able to change his equipment, only his own physical body.

*Power score:* The psionicist actually assumes the form of any bipedal race within the size limitations. He gains all the normal abilities of that race.

**20:** Psionicist becomes very ugly (Cha 5) and glows dimly red for one turn.

### **Tool** (Psychometabolic devotion)

Power score: Constitution -3

Initial cost: 7

Maintenance cost: 3/turn

Range: 0

Preparation time: 0

Area of effect: Personal

Prerequisites: None

The psionicist can change her arms into tools. Possible tools include standard tools such as saws, hammers, axes, or carving knives. The psionicist also is able to transform her fingers into smaller tools: lock picks, small chisels, pens (not including ink), needles, or thin strips of hard material.

The psionicist is unable to use any of the tools as weapons because the concentration required to maintain the arm or finger in tool form is broken by the effort of combat. Also, although the tools are of good quality, they do not confer any special bonus to the psionicist. Thus, a psionicist who makes her finger into a lock pick is not thus specially empowered to use the pick. Only if she knows how to pick locks through some other means can she actually pick the lock.

Likewise, a psionicist who makes her arm into a saw is not automatically a master carpenter. On the other hand, however, a psionicist who has a Carpentry proficiency and uses tools made from her body parts to perform carpentry work gets a +1 bonus to her proficiency score because of the closeness she has with her tools.

*Power score:* The psionicist can maintain the tool without cost for three turns.

**20:** The limb or finger to be transformed becomes weak, limp, and useless for 2d4 hours.

### **New sciences**

#### **Bonding** (Telepathic science)

Power score: Wisdom -2

Initial cost: contact

Maintenance cost: 20/day

Range: special

Preparation time: 0

Area of effect: Individual

Prerequisite: Contact, mindlink, telepathic projection

This power is in some ways related to the Domination power. However, it is quite a bit more subtle and longer lasting, though it is by no means as strong. With this power, the psionicist is able to create a strong emotional bond between herself and another creature. The creature comes to regard the caster as a trusted friend. The creature treats the psionicist as it would a best friend and with a great deal of respect. Thus, the creature looks up to the psionicist, seeing her as an authority on every subject.

This does not mean that the subject unfailingly obeys the psionicist. The psionicist has not altered the subject's reasoning capacity. Thus, a creature will not perform obviously suicidal acts or reveal secrets it would not reveal to a trusted friend. Nor will the creature behave against its nature. An orc will still be boorish, a dragon avaricious, an ogre temperamental.

Highly intelligent and high hit-dice creatures impose penalties on the psionicist's power score. When making the power check, consult the following chart once for level or HD, and once for Intelligence. The penalties are cumulative.

#### **Intelligence/HD of target**

##### **Power score modifier**

0-4	0
5-8	- 1
9-12	- 2
13-16	- 3
17-20	- 4
21-24	- 5
25	- 6

When the power is first attempted, the creature must be within sight of the psionicist. Once the power is successfully established, the creature may move out of sight from the psionicist. However, if the creature remains out of sight for 24 hours, the power is broken.

The psionicist must work hard to maintain the bond from day to day. The psionicist may regain PSPs while the subject is sleeping, but when she does so, she must make another power check to maintain the power, with the same modifiers applied. This power check does not drain any PSPs from the psionicist. If she sleeps or attempts to regain PSPs while the subject creature is conscious, she must make a check with the above modifiers, and an additional -4 modifier is applied. The psionicist cannot regain any PSPs at all without having to make another power

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check. Also, if the psionicist at any time drops below the number of PSPs needed to maintain the power for a day (20 PSPs), she must make another power check. The daily cost of 20 PSPs is subtracted from the psionicist's total at dawn.

If the bond is broken, for any reason whatsoever, the psionicist only can bond with that creature again with a -10 penalty to her power score, because the creature feels, without knowing for sure, that it was manipulated by the psionicist.

**Power score:** Creature is bonded for 24 hours at half-normal PSP cost.

**20:** Creature is aware of the emotional tampering attempted and its source.

#### Enter dream (Telepathic science)

Power score: Wisdom

Initial cost: Contact

Maintenance cost: 4/round

Range: Unlimited

Preparation time: 5

Area of effect: Individual

Prerequisite: Mindlink, contact

The psionicist is empowered to enter and participate in the dreams of a sleeping, dreaming individual. In order to use the power, the psionicist must first enter a sleep-like trance. Once this trance is entered, the psionicist makes a power check for contact. The target individual must, of course, be sleeping. While in the trance,

the psionicist can attempt to break through the defenses of another psionicist, but the three tangents must be established in consecutive rounds. If the psionicist fails to establish a tangent with an attack, all existing tangents are lost. Thus, if a psionicist has established a two-fingered contact and he fails his third attack, the psionicist no longer has any tangents with the being in question.

If the psionicist successfully contacts the individual, he must make a power check to enter the individual's dream. Once he has entered the dream, he becomes a character in that dream. He can interact with other characters in the dream, speak to them, etc. The psionicist can use this power to gain information or affect the creature, but all desired effects must come about through adventuring in the dream. The DM should create obstacles that the psionicist must face. For example, if the psionicist wishes to glean a deep, dark secret from the subject, he may have to fight a dragon or some other guardian that is protecting the secret from discovery. Adventuring in another being's mind can be very dangerous.

Almost any mental effect is achievable. The psionicist could alter memories, cure madness, create a bond, alter emotions, or any other intellectual effect. However, the more powerful or dramatic the effect is, the greater the challenge will be. If the

psionicist wishes to wipe a simple memory from the being, he may have to fight a dream-orc to do so. If he wishes to confuse the subject's identity, he will have to change many things. Time passes in the dream more rapidly than in reality, so the psionicist can spend four rounds in the dream per round of real time. The 4 PSP/round maintenance cost is based on the passage of real time.

Any damage or effects that the psionicist suffers in the dream are real for his dream character, but not for his physical person. However, if his mind is somehow controlled in the dream, then he may be unable to break contact and come out of the dream. If the psionicist dies in the dream, he must make a System Shock roll or lose a level of experience, along with enough experience points to place him at the midpoint of the range of his new, lower level. If he succeeds in the System Shock roll, the psionicist still suffers a temporary loss of one level. He functions as if he is one level lower until he can make a saving throw v. death magic. He may attempt this save once per day. The subject will not awaken on his own during the dream. However, slaps, damage, or any other action that would normally wake a sleeping individual will wake the subject of this power. If this occurs, the psionicist must make a Wisdom check of fall into a comatose sleep, from which he cannot be

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awakened, for 1d6 hours.

The psionicist can use the power to send messages to the dreamer, though the dreamer may not believe that the message is anything other than a foolish dream. If the psionicist wishes to send messages, he has to explore the dreamscape in order to find the proper location to give messages. He probably will have to confront the dreamer's dream image and give the message to that image.

**Power score:** Time in the dream passes at eight rounds of dream time per round of real time.

20: The psionicist must make a saving throw vs. spells or fall unconscious for 1d10 rounds.

#### **Microkinesis** (Telekinetic science)

Power score: Wisdom -6

Initial cost: 7

Maintenance cost: 4/round

Range: 10 yards

Preparation time: 0

Area of effect: One item

Prerequisite: Telekinesis

*Microkinesis* allows the psionicist to manipulate very small items with great precision. This power can be used to open locks, disarm traps that use small mechanical triggers, etc. It does not empower the psionicist to examine items, nor does it give her any special knowledge. Thus, a

psionicist cannot learn whether a lock, latch, or handle is trapped. However, if she has some way of knowing this information, she can use this power to attempt to disarm the trap.

When the psionicist wishes to use this power, the DM determines the difficulty of the operation. If the psionicist wishes to slide a simple latch, the operation is considered simple. Opening a complicated barrel or combination lock would be a very difficult job.

The more complicated an operation, the longer it will take. Based on the difficulty, the DM assigns an amount of time that must be spent. The following chart gives some standard times:

Action	Time needed
Lifting a latch	1 round
Sliding a bolt	1 round
Opening a poor lock	2 rounds
Opening an average lock	3 rounds
Disarming a simple trap (a spring trap)	4 rounds
Opening a good lock	5 rounds
Disarming a moderately complex trap	6 rounds
Opening a superior lock	7 rounds
Disarming a complex trap	10 rounds

The DM can adjust these times as she sees fit.

If the psionicist does not have enough PSPs to complete the operation, the action is currently impossible. If the psionicist ever returns to the mechanism, she must start from the beginning.

**Power score:** The time needed to perform the operation is halved.

20: The psionicist has fouled the lock or trap, making it twice as difficult to open or disarm, doubling the time needed and forcing the psionicist to make another successful power check before beginning to use the power.

These powers only scratch the surface of potential psionic abilities. Players of psionicist PCs are encouraged to discuss ideas for new powers with their DMs. Other game-related sources for new psionic powers include Steve Jackson Games' GURPS\* Psionics book and West End Games' STAR WARS\* RPG (the Force powers).

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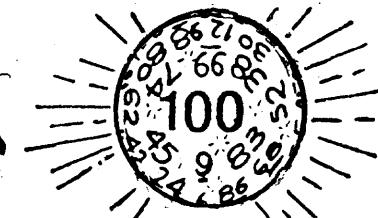
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# CREATURES THAT TIME FORGOT

by Gregory W. Detwiler  
Artwork by Tony DiTerlizzi

"Fossil" monsters for the AD&D® and BUGHUNTERS™ games

In the early 20th century, a bizarre collection of Cambrian Period (600 million years ago) fossils were found in the Burgess Shale taken from a small quarry in the Canadian Rockies. Many of the fossils were of creatures literally unheard of before, and unlike anything inhabiting the Earth today. Only recently have they been fully described in Stephen Jay Gould's book *Wonderful Life* (1989, W.W. Norton & Co., New York, NY). This collection of fossils displays creatures who followed other lines of development than the inver-

tebrates that have survived to the present, and as such, is an important look at both the life of the past and the potential of evolution. It also makes for some great monsters.

I've had to increase the size of the animals a bit; the giant of the group, *Anomalocaris*, was only two feet long in real life, while the rest were only a few inches in length. One of these creatures, *Opabinia*, has already had its AD&D statistics published in my article *Playing in the Paleozoic* (DRAGON® issue #176). Then, alas, I had no illustration;

now I do, so I'm reprinting *Opabinia*'s statistics with those of its neighbors.

Because these creatures are literally weird enough for science fiction, you get a double treat. In addition to normal AD&D game statistics, I also converted these creatures for the AMAZING ENGINE™ BUGHUNTERS game, as they would make for the products of an intriguing alternate evolution on some other planet, even without Shaper intervention. So memorize your spells or stock up on HEJA ammunition; you're in for a wild ride!

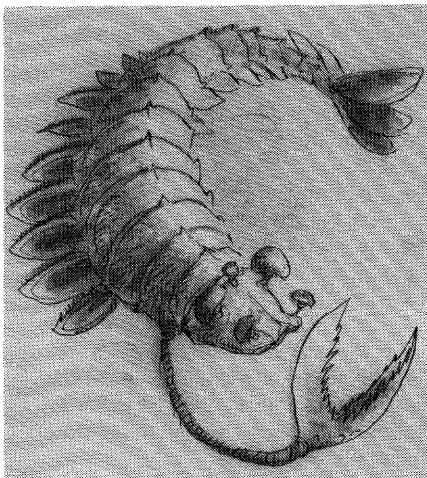
## The creatures

To simplify the listings, all creatures will conform to the following AD&D statistics unless otherwise noted:

**CLIMATE/TERRAIN:** Shallow sea floor  
**DIET:** Carnivore/Scavenger  
**ACTIVITY CYCLE:** Day  
**ORGANIZATION:** Solitary  
**INTELLIGENCE:** Animal  
**TREASURE:** Nil  
**ALIGNMENT:** Neutral  
**MAGIC RESISTANCE:** Nil

All these animals walk or crawl on the bottom of the sea, though some can swim. For game purposes, I've assumed that some can come out of the water for short periods of time. Oh, yes, one other thing: when the creatures are attacking from water that is several feet deep,

BUGHUNTERS characters will find that rounds from firearms and laser beams lose two damage points and one lethality rating due to the water's density and light-refracting qualities. All such weapons are fired with a -15 penalty on their attack rolls. Flamethrowers and stun guns are worthless against targets underwater. By way of compensation, all explosives will add two damage points and one lethality rating due to the fact that the vibrations they set up will be much more powerful when concentrated by the water. Decide whether you'll be fighting on land or in the water, and arm yourselves accordingly.



### Opabinia

FREQUENCY: Rare  
 NO. APPEARING: 1d4  
 ARMOR CLASS: 8  
 MOVEMENT: 2 (crawling and swimming)  
 HIT DICE: 3  
 THAC0: 17  
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 1  
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d6  
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: None  
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: Camouflage  
 SIZE: M (5' long)  
 MORALE: Unsteady (7)  
 XP VALUE: 175

### BUGHUNTERS statistics:

Fit: 50 Lea: NA Psy: 65 Cha: NA

Ref: 65 Int: NA Wil: 40 Pos: NA

Stamina: 25

Body: 13

Movement: *Opabinia* moves at one-sixth human speeds (i.e., it's virtually immobile during a battle).

*Opabinia* has a segmented body (the tail alone comes in three sections), five eyes, and a single tentacle (of equal length to the body) with a crablike claw at the end. It obviously hunted by grabbing passing prey with this claw. As it could not move swiftly, it relied on this ambush, either taking the color of the sea floor or lying in murky water and relying on water vibrations to tell it when prey came near. AD&D characters have a +2 penalty to surprise rolls when encountering this creature. The *Opabinia*'s is strong enough to yank a man off his feet and hold him under until he drowns. A trapped AD&D character must roll a strength check on 1d20 to escape; a BUGHUNTERS PC must make a successful Fitness check to escape the beast's grasp.

### BUGHUNTERS statistics:

Fit: 65 Lea: NA Psy: 70 Cha: NA

Ref: 80 Int: NA Wil: 45 Pos: NA

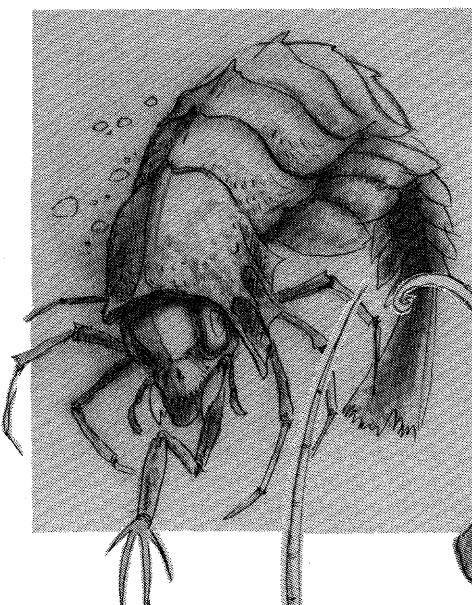
Stamina: 30

Body: 15

Movement: *Yohoia* moves at one-third human speeds when swimming, one-sixth when crawling.

*Yohoia* is obviously similar to *Opabinia*, no doubt hunting in the same manner (camouflage and ambush) with the same surprise penalty for AD&D characters. It can swim twice as fast, however, and has two four-fingered "hands" instead of the pincer. When hunting small prey, *Yohoia* spears its quarry on the fingertips, then folds its arm back to bring the food to its mouth. A group of *Yohoia* may work together against a common threat, as a hive of bees does.

I am assuming that the finger-spines themselves have some flexibility, enabling *Yohoia* to grab items too large to be conveniently speared. If it grabs a man-sized character, it may yank off a piece of gear, such as a wand, dagger, pouch, or holstered pistol. For real fun in the BUGHUNTERS game, have it grab a grenade and only get the pin. PCs trying to keep the thing from making off with their gear should make the same strength or Fitness rolls as listed above for breaking free from *Opabinia*'s grasp. In the BUGHUNTERS game, roll an attack to determine if the thing grabs a grenade. The creature has a Success Margin of 8 to see if the pin gets yanked out. Remember the earlier comments about the increased lethality of explosions underwater.

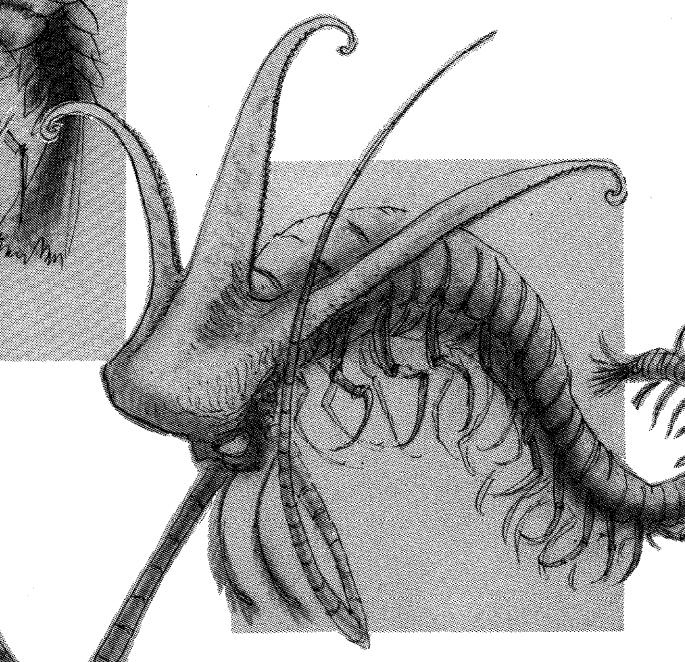


### Yohoia

FREQUENCY: Rare  
 NO. APPEARING: 1d8  
 ARMOR CLASS: 6  
 MOVEMENT: 2, Sw 4  
 HIT DICE: 3  
 THAC0: 17  
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 2  
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d8 (x2)  
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: Seize gear  
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: Camouflage  
 SIZE: M (6' long)  
 MORALE: Average (8)  
 XP VALUE: 270

### Marrella

FREQUENCY: Common  
 NO. APPEARING: 2-24  
 ARMOR CLASS: 6,2 (head)  
 MOVEMENT: 12  
 HIT DICE: 8



THAC0: 13  
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 2  
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d6/1d6  
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: Charge  
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: Nil  
 SIZE: L (12' long)  
 MORALE: Average (10)  
 XP VALUE: 975

#### **BUGHUNTERS statistics:**

Fit: 80 Lea: NA Psy: 60 Cha: NA  
 Ref: 60 Int: 10 Wil: 55 Pos: NA

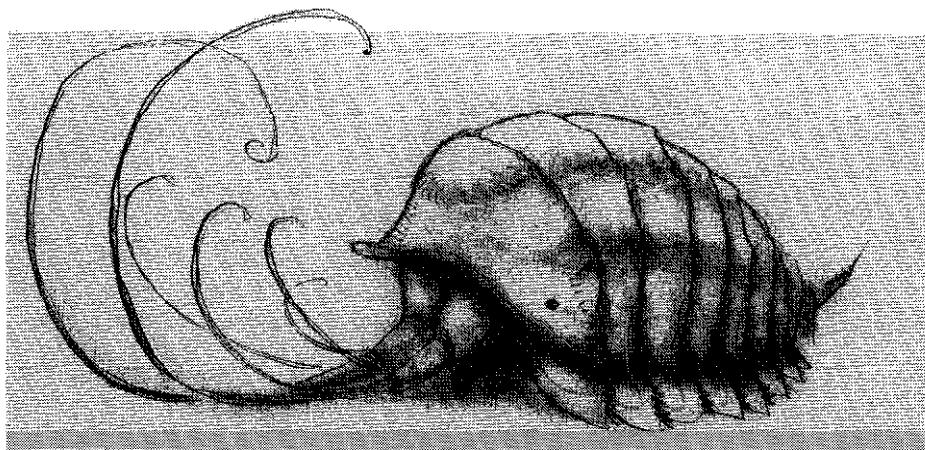
Stamina: 65

Body: 33

Movement: *Marrella* moves at normal human speeds.

This arthropod looks something like a cross between a trilobite and a centipede. It spends most of its time in the water (the fluffy-looking antennae are gills), but it can spend up to an hour at a time on dry land, and often does so traveling from one body of water to another.

The *Marrella* attacks by means of its two whiplike antennae, lashing out for 1d6 points of damage each. In addition, a *Marrella* at least 10' away from its foe can charge, doing damage through impact with its heavily armored head (2d8 damage points). Attacks on the head are less effective than on the body, and in the BUGHUNTERS game, small-arms rounds weaker than HEJA will make no impression on it. Heavier small-arms attacks have six damage points and two lethality ratings removed.



HIT DICE: 4

THAC0: 17

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d6

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Blood drain, constriction

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Nil

SIZE: H (18' long)

MORALE: Average (8)

XP VALUE: 270

#### **BUGHUNTERS statistics:**

Fit: 90 Lea: NA Psy: 80 Cha: NA

Ref: 55 Int: NA Wil: 75 Pos: NA

Stamina: 30

Body: 18

Movement: *Odontogriphus* moves at one-half human speeds when crawling, and normal human speeds when swimming.

*Odontogriphus* is seems like a cross between a flatworm (like the planaria you mess with in biology class) and a leech, with a swimming style somewhat like that of a manta ray. It has a mouth with a curious ring of teeth on its underside, so its attack method is obvious: drop down on the prey from above, bite in, and start sucking. The bite does 1d6 points of damage initially, with another 1d4 points per round (or BUGHUNTERS turn) due to blood drain. A stricken AD&D character must roll a successful Strength check (as above) to escape; a BUGHUNTERS PC must make a Fitness check at -10 to break free.

Because of its flexibility, *Odontogriphus* also has the capability for a constricting attack, dropping itself down on man-sized or smaller prey and wrapping itself around it like an aquatic version of the AD&D game's lurker above. Constriction, whether conducted during AD&D rounds or BUGHUNTERS turns, adds 1d6 damage per attack, and suffocates the victim within 1d4 + 1 rounds (or turns) at most. Even if the character is underwater and has her own air supply, she still suffocates, as this attack prevents her from drawing air into her lungs. All attacks made on the constricting monster will do half damage (rounding down) on the constricting victim.



#### **Odontogriphus**

FREQUENCY: Uncommon  
 NO. APPEARING: 1-8  
 ARMOR CLASS: 10  
 MOVEMENT: 6, SW 12

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#### **Leanchoilia**

FREQUENCY: Uncommon

NO. APPEARING: 1-4

ARMOR CLASS: 2

MOVEMENT: 4 (crawling and swimming)

HIT DICE: 5

THAC0: 15

NO. OF ATTACKS: 3

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d4/1d6 (x2)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Entangle

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Nil

SIZE: L (8' long)

MORALE: Average (8)

XP VALUE: 270

#### **BUGHUNTERS statistics:**

Fit: 60 Lea: NA Psy: 40 Cha: NA

Ref: 80 Int: NA Wil: 65 Pos: NA

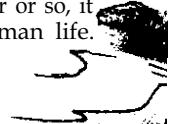
Stamina: 40

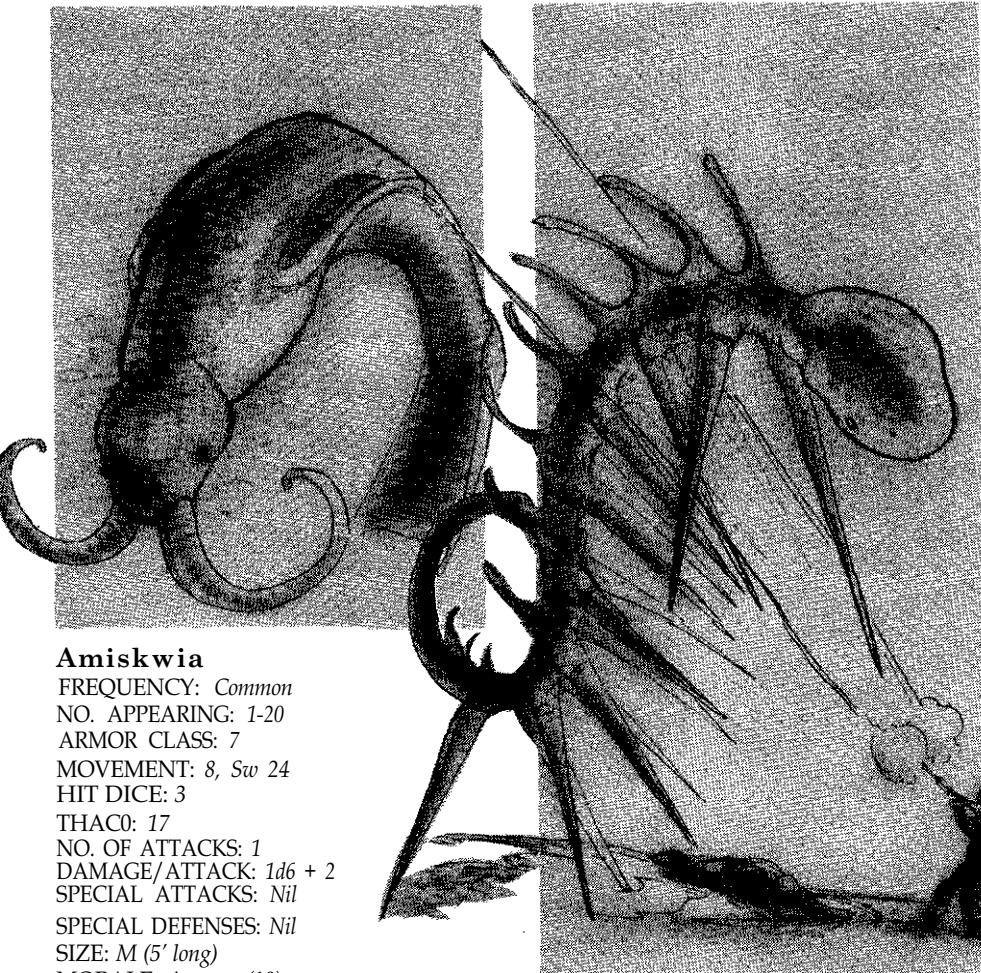
Body: 20

Movement: *Leanchoilia* moves at one-third human speeds.

This arthropod has fin-feet of the sort common to Burgess creatures such as *Opabinia* and *Yohoia*, enabling it to both swim and crawl at the same slow, steady pace. It is otherwise noted for three things: a pair of antennaelike frontal appendages, each ending with three whips; an armored shell (in the BUGHUNTERS game, this blocks four points of damage per attack and reduces lethality ratings by two); and a saw-edged tail spine that may have been used for digging. (It is not a weapon, but you don't need to tell the players that!)

In battle, *Leanchoilia* lashes out with its whiplike arms, doing 1d6 points of damage with each. Aside from laceration damage, they also may entangle a target of man-size or smaller, making him unable to fight back or escape unless he makes a Strength roll on 1d20 (in the AD&D game) or a Fitness check at -5 (in the BUGHUNTERS game). Prey that has been successfully snagged will be dragged to the mouth, which inflicts 1d4 points of biting damage per combat sequence. As the creature can come out on dry land for an hour or so, it is a considerable threat to human life.





### **Amiskwia**

FREQUENCY: Common  
NO. APPEARING: 1-20  
ARMOR CLASS: 7  
MOVEMENT: 8, *Sw* 24  
HIT DICE: 3  
THAC0: 17  
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1  
DAMAGE/ATTACK:  $1d6 + 2$   
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*  
SIZE: M (5' long)  
MORALE: Average (10)  
XP VALUE: 65

#### **BUGHUNTERS statistics:**

Fit: 55	Lea: NA	Psy: 60	Cha: 05
Ref: 35	Int: NA	Wil: 70	Pos: NA
Stamina: 25			

Body: 13

Movement: *Amiskwia* moves at double normal human speeds when swimming, and at two-thirds normal human speeds when humping along on land.

*Amiskwia* is a wormlike equivalent to modern-day seals, being a strong swimmer that hunches along on land at lesser speeds. It also spends about as much time on land as a seal would, living in small colonies. Its main attack is a bite that does  $1d6 + 2$  points of damage. The members of a threatened colony will frequently gang up on a lone intruder, or on a small group of them.

### **Hallucigenia**

FREQUENCY: Very rare  
NO. APPEARING: 1-4  
ARMOR CLASS: 5  
MOVEMENT: 9  
HIT DICE: 9  
THAC0: 11  
NO. OF ATTACKS: 9  
DAMAGE/ATTACK:  $1d10/1d6/1d4$  (x7)  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Trample*  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*  
SIZE: H (25' long, 18' high at the shoulder)  
MORALE: Fearless (20)  
XP VALUE: 3,000

#### **BUGHUNTERS statistics:**

Fit: 95	Lea: NA	Psy: 55	Cha: NA
Ref: 55	Int: NA	Wil: 90	Pos: NA
Stamina: 75			

Body: 40

Movement: *Hallucigenia* moves at three-fourths normal human speeds.

*Hallucigenia* is well named. Totally unprecedented, it is so strange that no one's sure about anything regarding this creature. It is assumed that the rounded thing at one end is the head. The thing on the tail end has an opening, and may well be a mouth and throat. Gould has suggested that perhaps this "animal" is only a complicated organ from a much larger creature. Keeping all this in mind, let's finish this listing.

Like certain other creatures, *Hallucigenia* may leave the water for an hour or more at a time, wreaking havoc on the local flora and fauna. It has nine standard attacks: the seven back-mounted, pincer-tipped tentacles do  $1d4$  points of damage each; the cluster of six small tentacles inflict total damage of  $1d6$ ; and the throat/tail/whatever can constrict for  $1d10$  points. In addition, the monster has the option of walking over a prone opponent. Its legs (if that's what they are) are so sharp that each one does  $1d8$  points of damage, and *Hallucigenia* has fourteen of them. That's a maximum of 112 points of damage for one series of attacks! Remember to roll each attack separately. If the creature is fighting other foes at the same time, we have another 44 points of potential damage. No matter how you look at it, a monster that can dish out 156 points of damage in one combat sequence is a lot of monster!

### **Hallucigenia, cave**

FREQUENCY: Common  
NO. APPEARING: 1-12  
ARMOR CLASS: 6  
MOVEMENT: 2  
HIT DICE: 4  
THAC0: 17  
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1  
DAMAGE/ATTACK:  $1d12 + 2$   
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Blood drain*  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*  
SIZE: S (3' long)  
MORALE: Average (9)  
XP VALUE: 420

#### **BUGHUNTERS statistics:**

Fit: 35	Lea: NA	Psy: 75	Cha: NA
Ref: 65	Int: NA	Wil: 45	Pos: NA
Stamina: 35			

Body: 16  
Movement: The cave *Hallucigenia* moves at one-sixth normal human speeds.

This subspecies of *Hallucigenia* has evolved to live in caverns on dry land, using its tentacles to climb slowly among the stalactites. It is a pure carnivore, subsisting solely on the blood of its prey.

The creature wraps its tail-tentacles around a stalactite hanging over a likely passage or intersection. When prey appears, the cave *Hallucigenia* drops down, swinging at the victim while its "tail" stretches to several times its length. AD&D game PCs have a +2 penalty on surprise rolls against this attack. The fourteen spines (or "legs") slam into the prey, doing up to 14 points of damage. After the initial strike, the *Hallucigenia*'s powerful tail draws up both predator and prey among the stalactites, where the victim can be drained at leisure. Each combat sequence that the victim is on the spines after the initial strike, he will take 14 points of damage due to blood drain until he is freed (he cannot free himself) or dies.

*Hallucigenia* subsists only on the victim's blood, and when it is drained, it drops the body to the cavern floor and leaves it for more conventional predators and scavengers to devour. Thus, the remains of previous victims might provide a warning for alert characters strolling through the area (Wisdom or Intuition checks as appropriate), though not enough to tell them from which direction the imminent attack will come.

### **Hallucigenia, acidic**

FREQUENCY: Rare  
NO. APPEARING: 1-2  
ARMOR CLASS: 5  
MOVEMENT: 4  
HIT DICE: 5  
THAC0: 15  
NO. OF ATTACKS: 13  
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d4 (x13)  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Acid jet  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Resistance to acid  
SIZE: L (8' long)  
MORALE: Average (10)  
XP VALUE: 2,000

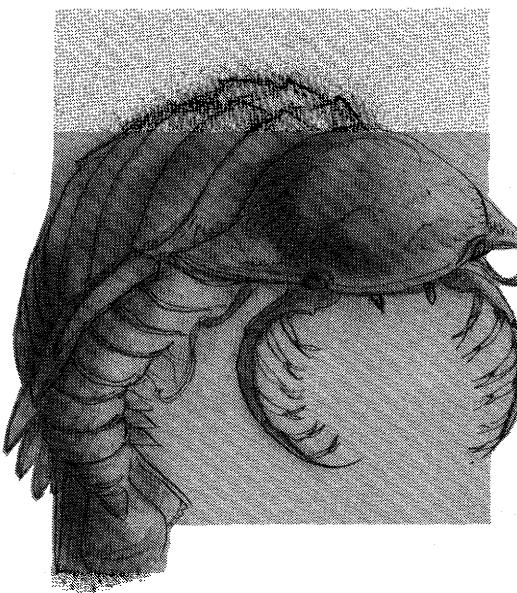
#### **BUGHUNTERS statistics:**

Fit: 70	Lea: NA	Psy: 75	Cha: NA
Ref: 65	Int: NA	Wil: 85	Pos: NA
Stamina: 40			
Body: 20			

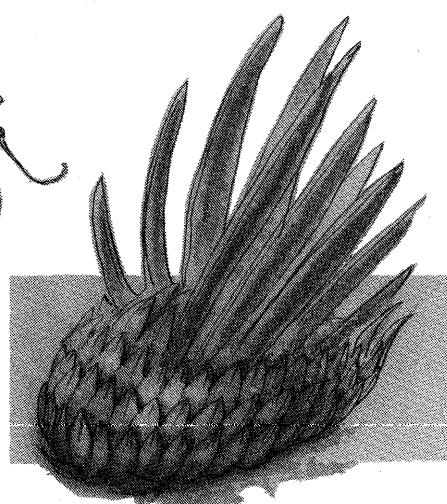
Movement: The acidic *Hallucigenia* moves at one-third normal human speeds.

Here's another land-dwelling subspecies of *Hallucigenia*, one that actively hunts its prey. When it corners its prey, or is attacked by an enemy before it can turn around, it rears up on its four rear pairs of legs and lunges forward to counterattack. It can strike with its front three pairs of spinelike legs and all seven pincer-tipped tentacles at once. Each attack does 1d4 points of damage, and the BUGHUNTERS game's UTRPF troops refer to this as "death by paper cuts."

When its prey has been slain, *Hallucigenia* squirts digestive acid on it from the hollow tube that is its tail, softening the body enough for the tentacle pincers—its true mouths—to tear it apart and devour it. If pressed, the creature also uses this as an offensive weapon, one that does 2d8 points of damage. Effective range is ten meters (or 30' in AD&D terms), and the acid is a thin jet several inches wide, only wide enough to hit a single foe. AD&D characters can avoid this attack by making a successful save vs. breath weapons. This jet may be used three times a day. Due to its particular metabolism, *Hallucigenia* is immune to all acid-based attacks.



Once "Santa Claws" gets its jaws around a victim, escaping is difficult at best. (Roll a Strength check at -1 penalty for AD&D characters and a Fitness roll with a -5 penalty for BUGHUNTERS PCs.)



### **Sanctacaris**

FREQUENCY: Rare  
NO. APPEARING: 1-4  
ARMOR CLASS: 3, 0 (head)  
MOVEMENT: 8 (crawling and swimming)  
HIT DICE: 7  
THAC0: 13  
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1  
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d12  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Nil  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Nil  
SIZE: H (15' long)  
MORALE: Steady (12)  
XP VALUE: 650

#### **BUGHUNTERS statistics:**

Fit: 55	Lea: NA	Psy: 45	Cha: NA
Ref: 35	Int: NA	Wil: 65	Pos: NA
Stamina: 55			

Body: 28  
Movement: *Sanctacaris* moves at two-thirds normal human speeds.

*Sanctacaris* is a primitive arthropod that seems to be an ancestor of the arachnids (horseshoe crabs, spiders, etc.). In appearance, it looks like a centipede with the armor of a lobster. However, the legs are more like fins, and the jaws have branching sets of feeding appendages on them. The men who described it scientifically nicknamed it "Santa Claws."

This creature bites its prey, doing 1d12 points of damage. It lives in one of two types of caves: those that are narrow tunnels, and those with narrow entrance tunnels but chambers wide enough for the animal to turn around in. It always backs into the former cave. Either way, anyone attempting to invade its lair will face its formidable jaws and head, which is more heavily armored than the body. (For the BUGHUNTERS game, attacks on the head lose four damage points and two lethality ratings, while those on the body merely lose two damage points and one lethality rating. The head is also invulnerable to all small arms rounds weaker than HEJA.)

### **Wiwaxia**

FREQUENCY: Common  
NO. APPEARING: 1-8  
ARMOR CLASS: 2  
MOVEMENT: 2  
HIT DICE: 2  
THAC0: 19  
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1  
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d8  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Nil  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Spines  
SIZE: S (3' long)  
MORALE: Steady (11)  
XP VALUE: 65

#### **BUGHUNTERS statistics:**

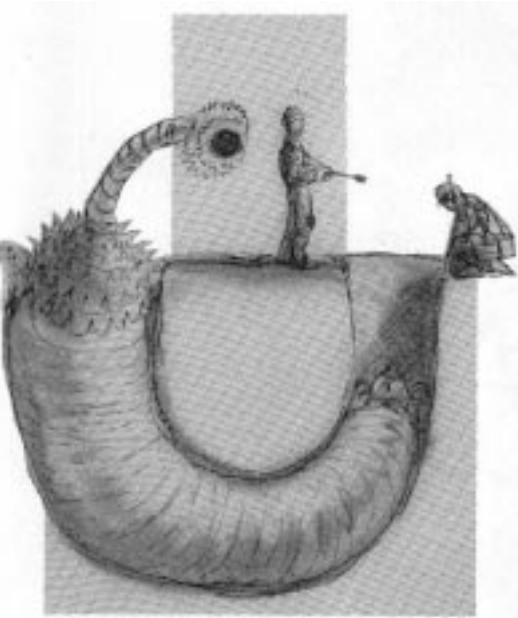
Fit: 30	Lea: NA	Psy: 30	Cha: NA
Ref: 20	Int: NA	Wil: 45	Pos: NA

Stamina: 20  
Body: 8  
Movement: *Wiwaxia* moves at one-sixth normal human speeds.

*Wiwaxia* is a small, bottom-crawling creature a yard in length, protected by hard scaly plates and fourteen long spines (seven per side). This animal is more of a scavenger than a carnivore, but it will attack live prey when an opportunity presents itself.

*Wiwaxia*'s toothy jaws slant slightly backward, while the toothless center bulges forward. The animal attacks by crawling forward, pressing the bulge against the target and causing the jaws to spring forward and snap shut, doing 1d8 points of damage. Because of its armor, *Wiwaxia* is hard to damage, and anyone who presses a melee attack will take 1d10 points of damage from the bladed, sword-like spines. In the BUGHUNTERS game, the creatures armor reduces all attacks by six damage points and two lethality ratings. This creature is not much of a threat to alert characters in the open, but cleaning out an area infested with these creatures will be a dangerous nuisance.

This space contributed as a public service.



### Ottoia

FREQUENCY *Uncommon*  
 NO. APPEARING: 1-6  
 ARMOR CLASS: 7, 3 (*head*)  
 MOVEMENT 2, *Br 6*  
 HIT DICE: 6  
 THAC0: 15  
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 1  
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2d8  
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Swallow whole*  
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Spines*  
 SIZE: G (30' long)  
 MORALE: *Fearless* (20)  
 XP VALUE: 975

#### BUGHUNTERS statistics:

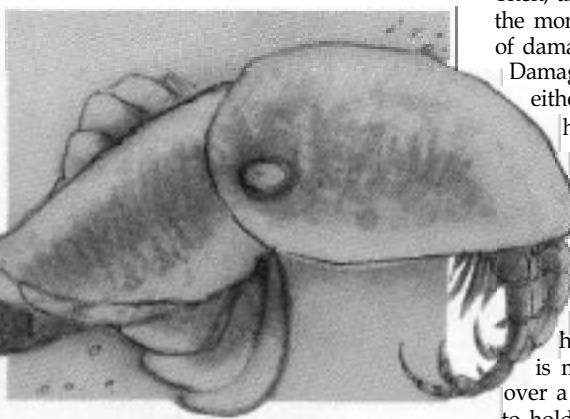
Fit: 85 Lea: NA Psy: 90 Cha: NA  
 Ref: 65 Int: NA Wil: 75 Pos: NA  
 Stamina: 50  
 Body: 25  
 Movement: Ottoia moves at one-sixth normal human speeds when crawling, and at half normal human speeds when burrowing.

*Ottoia* is a priapulid (a type of primitive worm) that is strictly carnivorous, burrowing in the sand and waiting for prospective prey to come to it. The creature senses the approach of prey by feeling the vibrations generated by its movement, and its head is several feet below the top of the hole that is its ambush point. When a victim is close enough, *Ottoia* extends its proboscis up to six feet and bites (doing 2d8 damage). In the AD&D game, if the beast's attack roll is four or higher than what was needed, the victim is swallowed whole. In the BUGHUNTERS game, the creature has a Success Margin of 7 to determine if its prey has been swallowed.

Swallowed victims have one chance to break free (make a Strength or a Fitness roll); anyone swallowed will take 1d10 points of damage from digestive juices until he dies. To make matters worse, these worms often live together in clusters of six, with their burrows arranged in a

circular formation, so getting hit by one *Ottoia* is equivalent to stepping on one mine in a minefield.

As usual, swallowed victims take half damage from any attacks on the swallow-er, but this shouldn't happen too often. Remember, the animal is completely buried under up to ten feet of sand, save for its head. Once the proboscis is withdrawn, the head presents a blank, roughly spherical front, and is covered with short spines that do 1d6 damage to any characters coming in contact with them. BUGHUNTERS PCs also remove three damage points and two lethality ratings to any attack on the head.



### Anomalocaris

FREQUENCY *Very rare*  
 NO. APPEARING: 1-2  
 ARMOR CLASS: 4  
 MOVEMENT *Sw 18*  
 HIT DICE: 12  
 THAC0: 9  
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 3  
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d8 (x2)/2d8  
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Swallow whole*  
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*  
 SIZE: G (80' long)  
 MORALE: *Fearless* (20)  
 XP VALUE: 6,000

#### BUGHUNTERS statistics:

Fit: 100 Lea: NA Psy: 55 Cha: NA  
 Ref: 65 Int: NA Wil: **100** Pos: NA  
 Stamina: 75  
 Body: 37  
 Movement: *Anomalocaris* moves at 1.5 times human speed.

*Anomalocaris*, the "odd shrimp," is the largest of the creatures in the Burgess Shale, so I felt justified in making it the biggest monster on the list. Superficially, it resembles a giant squid with curved walrus tusks. Closer examination, however, shows that the "tusks" are really tentacular appendages with additional grasping arms on them, while the tail fins are far longer and broader than a squid's. *Anomalocaris* is a strong swimmer that aggressively chases its prey.

When attacking, *Anomalocaris* seizes its

prey with its grasping appendages, doing 1d8 points of constriction damage with each, then shoves it into the round mouth (2d8 points of biting damage). This creature follows the swallowing rules above. This is another case where a swallowed victim won't have to worry much about taking half damage from the attacks of would-be rescuers, because he won't last long. It's not a matter of digestive juices dissolving him, either. If he does not break free right away (a Strength check made at -2 or a Fitness roll at -10), he will discover to his dismay that *Anomalocaris* has row upon row of crushing teeth, extending all the way through the front end of the creature's gut! Simply put, this means that the swallowed PC will take 2d8 points of biting damage for the next three turns. Then, and only then, will he be exposed to the monster's digestive juices (1d8 points of damage per turn).

Damaging *Anomalocaris* won't be easy, either. The entire animal has a tough hide that, in BUGHUNTERS terms, removes two damage points and one lethality rating from each attack.

Remember, too, the difficulty of using certain weapons on a opponent that is always in the water. Everyone fighting the creature may well wind up in the water, no matter how the fight begins, as *Anomalocaris* is more than powerful enough to flip over a small boat, even one large enough to hold an entire infantry squad or typical AD&D adventuring party.



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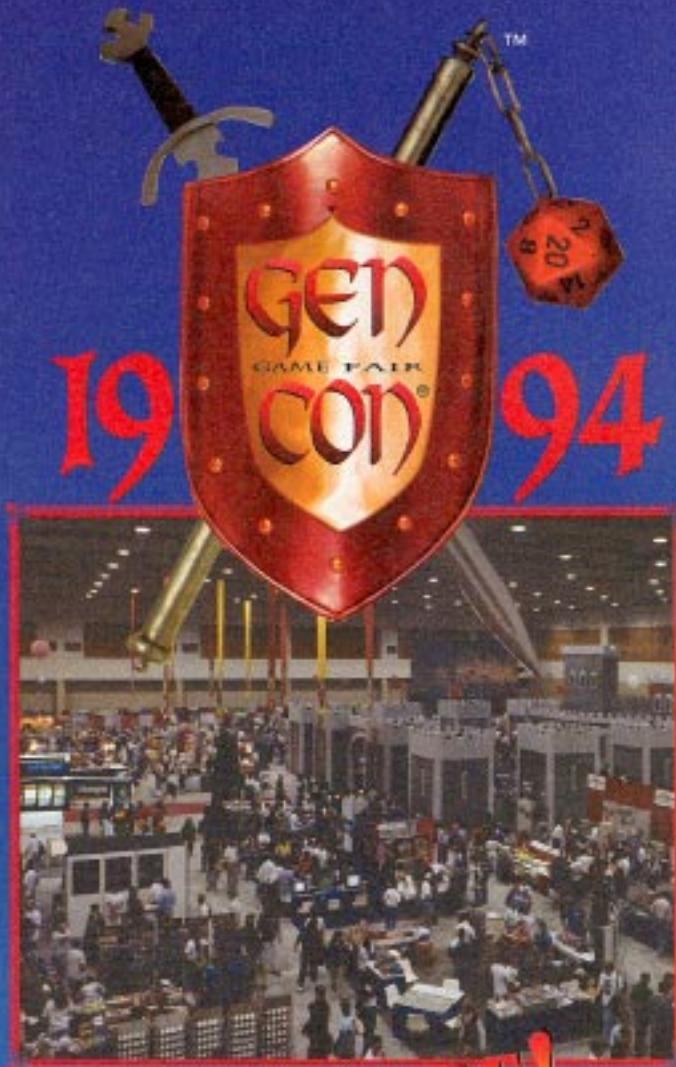
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**Majel Barrett Roddenberry**



**John "Q" de Lancie**



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# Convention Calendar

## Convention Calendar Policies

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

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

The information given in the listing **must** include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

**WARNING:** We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

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

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that your notice was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please avoid sending convention notices by fax, as this method has not proved to be reliable.

## CLARE-VOYANCE '94, April 8-10 CA

This convention will be held on the campuses of Claremont Colleges in Claremont, Calif. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an art show. GMs are welcome. Registration: \$5, plus a \$2 fee per game. Write to: Games Central, Storyhouse Claremont McKenna College, Claremont CA 91711.

## ONEONTACON '94, April 8-10 NY

This convention will be held at the Hunt Union on the SUNY campus in Oneonta, N.Y. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, videos, door prizes, and a special speaker. Registration: \$9 preregistered; \$32 at the door. Discounts for students, GMs, and clubs are available. Send an SASE to: ONEONTACON '94, c/o Student Assoc., SUNY-Oneonta, Oneonta NY 13820; or E-mail to: daviswr144@snyoneva.oneonta.edu.cc.

## MADICON 3, April 8-10 VA

This convention will be held at Taylor Hall on the campus of James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Va. Guest of honor is Sharyn McCrumb. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include movies, dealers, and RPGA™ Network events. Registration: \$10 (\$9 for students). Write to: MADICON 3, c/o SFFG, JMU Box 7202, Harrisonburg PA 22807; or e-mail: STUDDSELEY@VAX .ACS.JMU.EDU.

## PENTECON VI, April 8-10 NY

This convention will be held on the campus of Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$5. Write to: Convention Coordinators, c/o CSSS, Room #B29 White Hall, Cornell Univ., Ithaca NY 14853; or e-mail: Pentecon@cornell.edu.

## UBCON '94, April 8-10 NY

This convention will be held on the North campus of the State University of New York at Buffalo in Amherst, N.Y. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a con suite, an auction, an art show, and anime. Registration: \$9/weekend or \$6/day preregistered; \$10/weekend or \$7/day on site. Write to: UB SARPA, 363 Student Union, SUNY-Buffalo, Buffalo NY 14260.

## WAR!ZONE EAST '94, April 8-10 FL

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a flea market, an auction, and open gaming. Registration: \$19/weekend or \$7/day. Write to: WAR!ZONE EAST, c/o Wolf Ent., P.O. Box 1256, DeLand FL 32721-1256.

## CHAOTICON III, April 9-10 WI

This convention will be held at the Union on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay in Green Bay, Wis. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$7/weekend or \$5/day. Write to: CHAOTICON III, 2710 Humboldt Apt. 11, Green Bay WI 54311.

## DREAMCON VII, April 9-10 MO

This convention will be held on the campus of Northeast Missouri State University in Ophelia Parrish Hall in Kirksville Mo. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers and movies. Proceeds to benefit the Dream Factory of St. Louis. Write to: NMSU Fantasy club, SUB-NMSU, Kirksville MO 63501-4988.

## GRYPHCON '94, April 9-10 \*

This convention will be held at the University of Guelph in Guelph, Ontario. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, an auction, and movies. Registration: \$14/weekend or \$8/day preregistered; \$16 and \$10 at the door. Write to: GRYPHCON, c/o University Centre Administration, Room #266, University Centre, Univ. of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, CANADA N1G 2W1.

## CON-TROLL '94, April 15-17 TX

This SF&F convention will be held at the Clarion Inn in Houston, Tex. Guests include Margaret Weis, Alan Gutierrez, and Robert Neagle. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, panels, demos, gaming, and filling. Write to: CON-TROLL Conventions, P.O. Box 740969-1025, Houston TX 77274.

## I-CON, XIII, April 15-17 NY

This multimedia convention will be held on the campus of the State University of New York at Stony Brook, N.Y. Guests include Harlan Ellison, Gregory Benford, Peter David, and Julius Schwartz. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities

\* indicates an Australian convention.

\*\* indicates a Canadian convention.

● indicates a European convention.

include panels, dealers, filking, anime, and gaming. Registration rates vary. Write to: I-CON XIII, P.O. Box 550, Stony Brook NY 11790-0550.

#### **TECHNICON 11, April 15-17 VA**

This SF&F convention will be held at the Brown Center for Continuing Education in Blacksburg, Va. Guests include Ellen Guon, Holly Lisle, and Tom Monaghan. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an art show and auction, panels, filking, videos, anime, computer games, and dealers. Registration: \$24; \$20 for students. Student discounts are available. Write to: TECHNICON 11, c/o VTSFFC, P.O. Box 256, Blacksburg VA 24063-0256.

#### **AMERICON '94, April 16-17 NJ**

This convention will be held at the Clayton American Legion Hall on the Clayton/Franklinville border in NJ. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an art show, an auction, and open gaming. Registration: \$11/day preregistered; 12/day at the door. Game fees average \$2. Dealers and GMs are welcome. Write to: AMERICON, c/o Carl Thunder, P.O. Box 125, Mullica Hill NJ 08012.

#### **HAVOC X, April 16-17 MA**

This convention is also the Northeast BATTLETECH® Regional Tournament. It will be held at the Sheraton Tara hotel in Framingham Mass. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include individual and team BATTLETECH® competitions. Write to: Brian Reddington-Wilde, 46 Highland St., Reading MA 01867.

#### **WESCON 4, April 16-17 CT**

This convention will be held at Wesleyan University's Science Center in Middletown, Ct. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a movie room. Registration: \$2/game. GMs are welcome. Write to: Jon Metcalf, 34 Lawn Ave., Middletown CT 06457.

#### **AMIGOCON 9, April 22-24 TX**

This convention will be held at the Quality Inn-Airport in El Paso, Tex. Guests include Roger Zelazny and Dell Harris. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$18 at the door. Write to: AMIGOCON, P.O. Box 3177, El Paso TX 79923.

#### **GAME FAIRE '94, April 22-24 WA**

This convention will be held at the Student Union Building of Spokane Falls Community College in Spokane, Wa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include anime. Registration: \$20 on site. Write to: Merlyn's, North 1 Browne, Spokane WA 99201.

#### **NAME THAT CON 7, April 22-24 MO**

This SF&F convention will be held at the Airport Hilton in St. Louis, Mo. Guests include Alan Steele, Aviva, and Mickey Zucker Reichert. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include panels, videos, an art show, and dealers. Registration: \$21. Single-day rates will be available at the door. Write to: NAME THAT CON, P.O. Box 575, St. Charles MO 63302.

#### **POINTCON XVII, April 22-24 PA**

This historical, SF, and gaming convention will be held at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y. Events include role-playing, board,

and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA™ Network events, dealers, computer games, and an auction. Registration: \$10 preregistered; \$12 at the door. Write to: USMA War Games Committee, ATTN: POINTCON, P.O. Box 3429, West Point NY 10997.

#### **KETTERING GAME CON X, April 23-24 OH**

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

#### **MAYOCON '94, April 23-24 MN**

This convention will be held at the Kahler hotel in Rochester, Minn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include computer and video games. Write to: RMGC, 4211 Countrywood Dr. SE, Rochester MN 55904.

#### **SPARTACON II, April 23 CA**

This convention will be held at the Student Union of the San Jose State university campus in San Jose, Ca. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include Japanimation, a swap meet, comics, and open gaming. Registration: \$5/preregistered; \$10/on site. Write to: SPARTACON II, P.O. Box 90147, San Jose CA 95109-3147.

#### **U.D.CON '94, April 23 OH**

This convention will be held at Miriam Hall on the University of Dayton campus in Dayton, Ohio. Guests include Richard Tucholka. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include speakers and an auction. Registration: \$8.50/weekend or \$5/day. Send an SASE to: U.D.CON, c/o Shane Hoffman, 40 Chambers, Dayton OH 45409.

#### **MAGIC CARPET CON II GA**

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Dalton, Ga. Guests include C. J. Cherryh and P.M. Griffin. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Send SASE to: MAGIC CARPET CON, P.O. Box 678, Rocky Face GA 30740.

#### **WIZARD'S CHALLENGE XII CA**

This convention will be held at the Delta Regina in Regina, Saskatchewan. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Guests include Skip "Sage Advice" Williams and Sam Chupp. Registration: \$15 (Canadian). Write to: Ken McGovern, Wizard's Challenge, 2101 Broad St., Regina SK CANADA S4P 1Y6.

#### **SPRING OFFENSIVE IV, May 5-7 IL**

This convention will be held at Illinois Central College in East Peoria, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$5/weekend or \$3/day, plus game fees. Write to: Dave Kinsinger, The Game Room, 116 Walnut, Washington IL 61571-2646.

#### **ADVENTURERS' INN VIII, May 7-8 CA**

This convention will be held at Dania Hall in Livermore, Ca. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a costume contest, an art gallery, dealers, and food. Registration: \$25. Write to: ADVENTURERS' INN, P.O. Box 1654, Ceres CA 95307.

#### **MARCON 29, May 13-15 OH**

This convention will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Columbus, Ohio. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Guests include Philip Jose Farmer, Barbara Hambly, Boris Vallejo, and Forrest J. Ackerman. Registration: \$30 on site. Write to: MARCON 29, P.O. Box 211101, Columbus OH 43321.

#### **OASIS 7, May 13-15 FL**

This convention will be held at the Orlando North Hilton in Altamonte Springs, Fla. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, plus dealers, an auction, videos, and panels. Guest of honor is Raymond E. Feist. Write to: OASFIS, P.O. Box 940992, Maitland FL 32794-0902.

#### **MADISON GAMES CON '94, May 14-15 WI**

This convention will be held at the Edgewood High School in Madison, Wis. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a game auction. Judges and dealers are welcome. Write to: Pegasus Games, 6640 Odana Rd., Madison WI 53719.

#### **ORGANIZED KAHN-FUSION XII PA**

**May 14-15** This convention will be held at the West Enola Fire Hall in Enola, Pa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include open gaming, dealers, food, and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration fees vary. Write to: M. Foners' Games Only Emporium, 200 3rd St., New Cumberland PA 17070.

#### **PARADOXICON II, May 21-23 \***

This convention will be held at Carleton University's Tory Building in Ottawa, Ontario. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a miniatures-painting competition and a game auction. Registration: \$25 (Canadian) preregistered; \$35 on site. Write to: PARADOXICON II, CUSC, c/o Students' Assoc., 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, CANADA K1S 5B6.

#### **GAMESCAUCUS II, May 27-30 CA**

This convention will be held at the Airport Hilton in Oakland, Calif. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, two painting contests, a flea market, and movies. Registration: \$25 before May 1; \$30 on site. Write to: Trigaming Assoc., P.O. Box 4867 Walnut Creek CA 94596-0867.

#### **GAMEX '94, May 27-30 CA**

This convention will be held at the Airport Hyatt in Los Angeles, Calif. All types of family, strategy, and adventure board, role-playing, miniatures, and computer gaming are featured. Other activities include dealers, flea markets, seminars, and demonstrations. Registration: \$25/preregistered; \$30/on site. Write to: STRATEGICON, P.O. Box 3849, Torrance CA 90510-3849.

#### **MIGSCON XV, May 27-30 \***

This historical gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Hamilton, Ontario. Events include board and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers. Write to: MIGSCON XV, P.O. Box 37013, Barton Postal Outlet, Hamilton, Ontario, CANADA L8L 8E9.

#### **NASHCON '94, May 27-29 TN**

This convention will be held at the Days Inn-Airport in Nashville, Tenn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other

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# The Game Wizards

## The sound of adventure

by Bruce Nesmith

Do you remember the first time you played the AD&D® game? I do. It was in 1976. (No, I won't tell you how old I was!) To this day, I can remember that first game. Visions of dank, smelly dungeons filled my mind. I could hear the grinding of the secret door going up and the chittering of the giant rats as they surged forward to attack.

When my boss told me that I was going to get to write the FIRST QUEST™ game, all those memories came flooding back. You see, the FIRST QUEST game is the introduction to fantasy role-playing. It is meant to be the first game for new role-players. While writing it, I kept the memories of my first game session with me.

I consider it a supreme challenge to try to explain role-playing to someone who has never played before. I know that there are professional writers out there who will disagree, but I believe it can't be done in print or with pictures. I'm sure I'll get dozens of letters from gamers claiming that they bought the *Player's Handbook*, read it cover to cover, and figured out how to play just from that. Sorry guys and gals, but you are the minority.

Role-playing is not like other games. There are intangibles to this type of game that don't exist in board games or even computer games. I think that the majority of role-players learned by watching a game session in play. I'm sure many of you learned by being thrown into a game session. (Here Tim, you take the 14th-level elven multiclassed ranger/illusionist/bard. He's not in the PH, but our DM lets us use him.) I can't tell you how many times I've seen the light bulb go on for a new player after just half an hour of gaming.

Role-playing isn't hard, but explaining it can be. I'm not talking about the rules for rolling dice. I'm talking about things like identifying with your character, the complete freedom of action, and the continuity from game session to game session. You can explain them all until you are blue in the face, but it takes one real-world example to get the ideas across.

Back to the FIRST QUEST game: I had to write a game that would show people how to role-play, except that I couldn't be there to run them through a sample role-playing game session. TSR, Inc., did give me a way out, though. In the FIRST QUEST game box is an audio CD.

Anybody playing the CD gets the experience of sitting in on a game session. This makes all the difference for new gamers.

The FIRST QUEST game uses the CD to teach the new gamer all those things about role-playing that just don't come through in print. This is exciting. This is a challenge. This is trouble.

Any time a company ventures into a new area (a new technology in this case), a mountain of problems crop up. It happened when I co-wrote the DRAGON STRIKE™ game with Andria Hayday. The inclusion of a videotape and molded plastic pieces caused endless headaches before we got it all straightened out. I won't go into the gory details, but trust me, it happened with the FIRST QUEST game too.

The introduction to role-playing part of the CD is only about 15 minutes long. This is actually a long piece. Think about listening to a song that is 15 minutes long.

This left us with all kinds of cool things to do with the rest of the CD. For those of you not in the recording industry, an audio CD can hold up to 77 minutes of full stereo sound. I think we ended up filling 76 minutes and 57 seconds.

We filled the rest of the CD with sound tracks for two (out of the four) adventures included in the

learning to play a role-playing game has obstacles, then learning to be a DM is even more of a challenge. The FIRST QUEST game eases the fledgling DM into his role by giving him sound tracks for each room and situation. Instead of "boxed text," as we die-hard role-players call it, the DM cues up a CD track. Each track has background sound effects, monster voices and sounds, and even music. The result is better than anything the best DM could produce—unless your DM has access to a recording studio.

This game is not for you. That's right, if you're reading this article, the FIRST QUEST game isn't for you. Odds are, you are a devoted role-player, probably a devoted AD&D game player. You probably know the rules at least as well as I do! So you don't need the FIRST QUEST game.

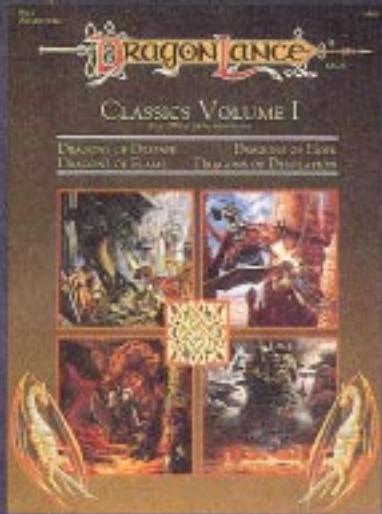
Our hobby needs to find some way other than word of mouth to grow. The FIRST QUEST game is TSR's latest attempt to find a way. Introductory games like this are not for our seasoned players, but they are one way

we get new people out there to start role-playing. The FIRST QUEST game will create the role-players of tomorrow.

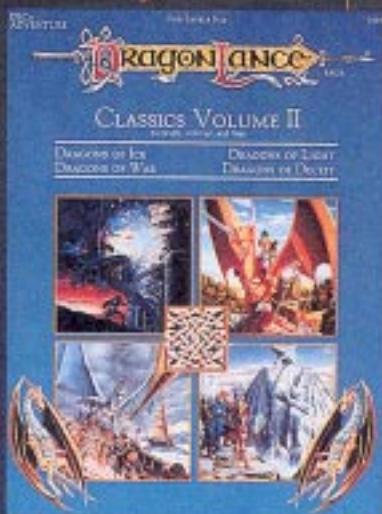




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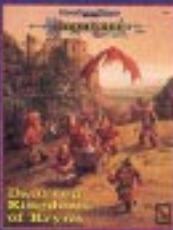
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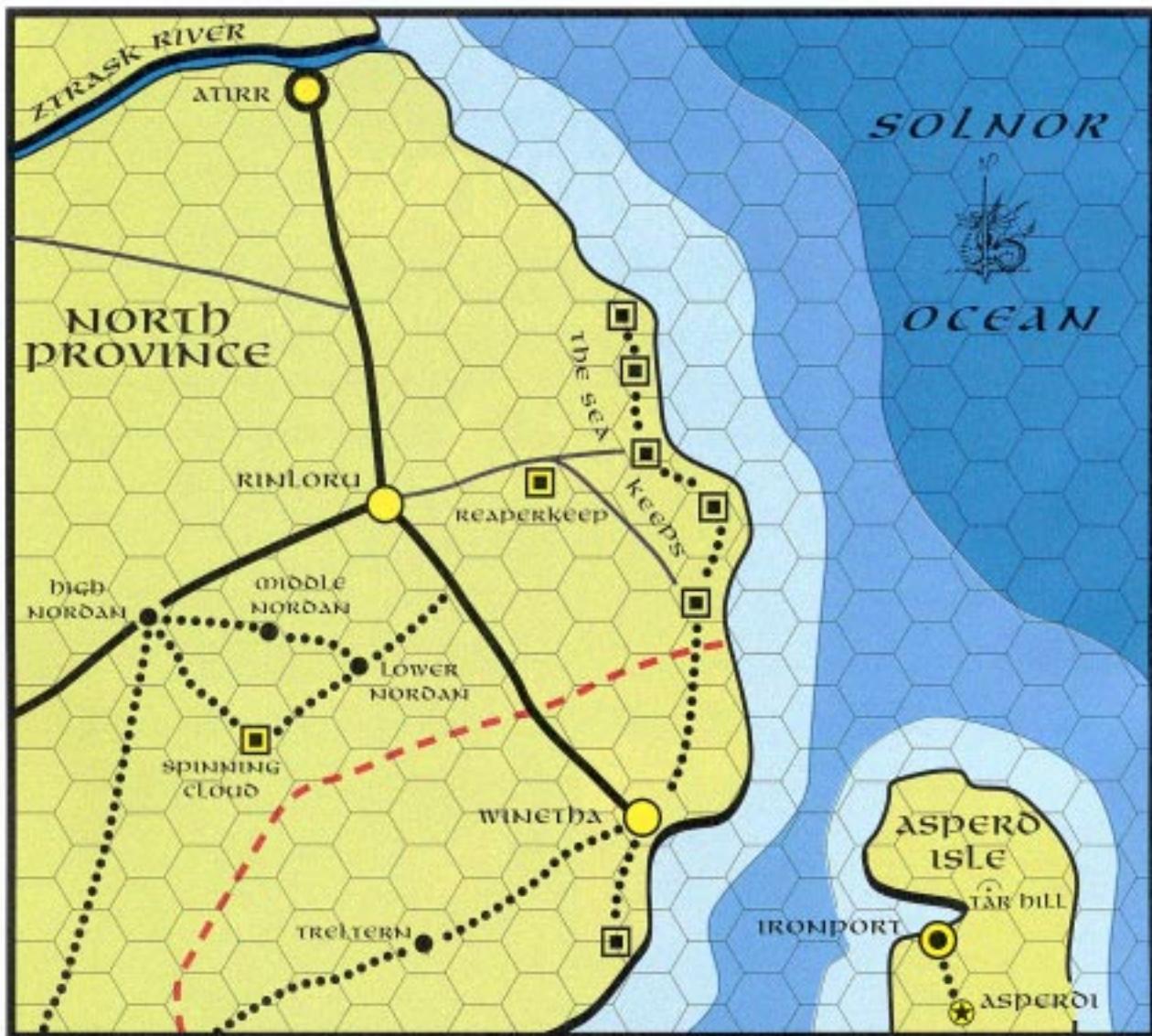
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# CAMPAIGN JOURNAL

## THE TWIN CITIES



# A strange alliance

by Carl Sargent

Compiled by Wolfgang Baur

Cartography by John Knecht

*This is the first in a short series of Campaign Journals for the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting that will appear this year. These pieces were originally written for the Ivid the Undying accessory, and together they constitute a survey of the high and low points of the most dangerous "kingdom" of Oerth—the decaying remains of Aerdy, the Great Kingdom.*

*The first installment examines two rivals and the artifacts that bind them together.*

Historically, the cities of Rinloru and Winetha have not been as intimately intertwined as the now-common appellation "Twin Cities" implies. Winetha developed as a naval base and fishing town, and also as a trade port for importing goods the Sea Barons brought in from their isles and the lands to the south. Rinloru developed later as a city set well back from the coast with an anchoring purpose. It supported and supplied the sea keeps north of Winetha, which defended the coast from barbarian raids between Atirr and the southern port. It also came to anchor a series of small garrisoned keeps that protected the inland hamlets and villages of the south. Thus, the two cities had complementary functions, but were not closely allied in any way.

Indeed, the noble houses owning the lands around the cities traditionally had considerable enmity for each other. Rinloru has been the fiefdom of the House of Torquann for generations, as has Winetha been the fief of the House of Garasteth. Part of the feud between these houses, indeed, concerns Garasteth claims to land south of Rinloru that the Garasteths assert was obtained by banditry on the part of Torquann. Minor battles between hotheaded young princelings have been common over the centuries, though serious, large-scale conflict was usually avoided.

The events of the Greyhawk Wars and two exceptional rulers have changed this. Now the cities and their lands are locked in an unholy embrace. Both rulers are appallingly evil and possessed of great magical strength. The rulers of neighboring lands do not dispute their territorial claims far beyond the Twin Cities. The fear of magical retribution is too strong,

and no one wishes to face the ghastly army of Rinloru on the plains of battle. United in evil, Delgloth of Rinloru and Prince Lakaster of Winetha are nonetheless allies—of a sort. How this came to be is a strange tale indeed.

## Delgloth the animus-priest

At the outbreak of the wars, Emperor Ivid the Undying decided that the ruler of Rinloru, Prince Grendemmen of Torquann, could not be trusted to support him. Ivid prepared to have Grendemmen and his immediate family slain, and looked around for a pliable puppet ruler acceptable to Torquann and to himself. To place the lands in royal trust would have been an affront Ivid might have risked in peace-time, but not during war. Ivid chose Delgloth for the role. An unremarkable priest of Erythnul, Delgloth was swiftly appointed a judge of the sessions and then granted the title of prince with a minor land holding in royal trust within Ivid's own territories. (This has been revoked since, of course.) Ivid then moved to slay Grendemmen, but his assassins failed to kill the prince's wife, and she remained in the Sand Castle of Rinloru, defying Ivid. In his rage, Ivid turned on the hapless Delgloth and had him made an animus, a powerful undead version of his former self. Soon the news came that Grendemmen's wife had been successfully poisoned, and Ivid marched an army to place Delgloth in command at Rinloru. It was one of the worst mistakes he ever made.

At first, Delgloth was not entirely displeased at becoming an animus. He was far more powerful than before, and his new servants and lackeys obviously feared him, which made him happy. Unfortunately, Erythnul did not take it so well. Delgloth found himself unable to cast spells, and was cast out of his priesthood.

That enraged Delgloth. His faith was important to him. Delgloth felt a cold, vile delight in hatred and brutality and had been gaining an appetite for more. Now his patron power had deserted him. Raging at his fate, the outcast invoked Nerull, the Reaper—and Nerull heard.

Soon, the court at Rinloru changed dramatically. From around the Flanaess, priests of Nerull were guided to the city

by their dreadful patron. They were not numerous, and the Reaper by no means guided all his priests there, but those he chose were powerful, and they came by stealth and in disguise. With priests of Nerull spirited into his halls, Delgloth slew a thousand souls in one night and animated them over the coming weeks as undead. To the assembled masses of the city, he proclaimed that he was now Delgloth the Undying, and that anyone who opposed him or sought to escape his realm would not only be slain but subjected to torments after death that they could hardly begin to imagine. Faced with a vast squad of undead flanking the red-robed maniac, whose own powers were evident from the serried ranks of people forced to kneel at his magical command, the survivors believed him. To be sure, thousands have successfully fled to other cities, but just as many more have suffered the awful agonies Delgloth promised them.

Delgloth also has gained experience very rapidly, becoming a formidable spellcrafter, and his dabbling in evil magic and artifacts makes him very dangerous.

## The mage-prince Lakaster

Prince Lakaster of Winetha has a brilliant, cold, evil mind, and his magecraft has few equals in all the Flanaess. He always takes the long view; with his magical aids to longevity, he can afford to.

During the wars, Lakaster cooperated fully with Ivid's orders regarding the use of Winetha as a vital supply port and in cooperating with the Sea Barons. Lakaster saved himself that way, and he also saved the Winethan navy by confining it to port for fear of barbarian sea raids. Indeed, shortly after Ivid demanded that Lakaster dispatch his vessels to Asperdi to support the Sea Barons (an order Lakaster refused), the barbarians raided the city and Winetha's six war galleys were vital in preserving the city. Ivid did not issue the same order to Lakaster again.

Lakaster is the undisputed head of the House of Torquann in these lands. He has many liegemen, minor Torquann princes, with small militias in the lands west and south of his city, and by and large, he has been a responsible lord to them. He has not extracted heavy taxes or tithes from

them, not needing to do so. Trade levies provide Winetha with enough wealth.

So, after the wars Lakaster is in a strong position. His military forces are intact. Winetha is subject to barbarian coastal raids, but these are not as severe as those inflicted on the Sea Barons. Trade has declined somewhat, with Roland taking the lion's share of cargoes from the south, but the city is still reasonably affluent.

## The alliance

Why has the archmage-prince allied with the murderous, insane Nerull priest of Rinloru—power and arrogance, as so often, are the keys.

The realities of power center on two magical artifacts the Oeridians brought with them from their lands far to the west many centuries ago. One is the Mace and Talisman of Krevell, an evil priest of great might. The other is the Helm and Wand of Lynerden the Spinner, a mage whose prowess equalled Krevell's. The component parts of these artifacts are useful, but if the two parts of each are combined, they gain enormously in power. These artifacts have long been divided between the houses of Garasteth and Torquann, and currently Delgath has the mace and helm, and Lakaster has the talisman and wand. Each desires the other half of the artifact he prizes so much.

Fighting each other for the other half of each's artifact is something both rulers have avoided. Lakaster's troops fear the undead hordes of the west, while Delgath knows full well that the magic of an archmage and his renowned Court Wizards of Winetha—not to mention the fiendish allies and elementals they could muster—would present truly formidable opposition to his armies. Besides, each spell-caster knows that the other guards his portions of the artifacts with wards and spells that may be unbreachable. War is not an option here. Yet both men—archmage and animus-crave the great power of their artifacts and have become obsessed with completing their great magical items.

Emissaries have been dispatched and very coolly received, but initial contacts have been made. The rulers have signed a treaty of mutual nonaggression. Each keeps his armies to his own lands and does not attack the lands of the other, and recognizes the land rights of the other. This has reassured the Torquann prince-lings to some extent. Delgath does not have to worry about Garasteth prince-lings since few are left in his lands, and those still alive are virtual prisoners in their keeps and mansions. Each spell-caster is now trying desperately to learn the powers of each combined artifact, to test how much he would gain compared to the other. This takes much time, and prince and priest have an uneasy alliance in the interim; Both believe that they can vanquish the other, if only they had the full power of the artifact they want.

As intense magical studies proceed in

Rinloru and Winetha, an infinitesimally thin strand of magical energy has come to link the Twin Cities. Some unique magical resonance links the artifacts and spell-casters, and this straight line of magical energy can be seen easily with a detect magic spell. The link has no magical effects, nor can it be dispelled; it is simply there. Mordenkainen believes that the strange coupling of artifacts and powerful spell-casters will generate an uncontrollable magical force that will ultimately result in a massive *Mordenkainen's disjunction*, with destructive effects on the two men and their magical possessions. The *disjunction* may create magic-dead areas around the Twin Cities. Most of the rest of the Flanaess hopes that he is right, but no one is daring to take on the might of these rulers, leaving them to their own strange interlocked pavanne of obsession and magical power.

The lands of Delgath and Lakaster are divided as shown on the map. By treaty, neither side sends any troops within six miles of this border. Sometimes stray zombies or skeletons might stray into these lands, out of control of one of Nerull's priests, but this is relatively rare, and they cause little damage in any event. In the section below, the lands are detailed, and the capital city of each area is considered before the other locations.

## Delgath's lands

*Pop.:* 160,000 + 16,000 undead (approx.)

*Capital:* Rinloru (pop. 17,100 + 3,500 undead)

*Ruler:* Delgath the Undying

*Cost multiplier:* 160% of *Player's Handbook* (PH) prices

## Rinloru

Delgath's current policy is to gradually convert all ordinary folk into zombies. Skilled artisans and the like he must keep alive, since zombies are useless for skilled work, and of course people with adventuring abilities are important to his armies. However, Delgath is not wholly mad. He knows full well that the Rinloru Light Regiment, elite infantry, are important to any campaign of conquest, and their morale hardly will be improved by seeing all their families turned into zombies. Thus, Delgath concentrates on foreigners, orphans, the poorest folk of the city, and the like as initial targets. With about 3,000 zombies in the city already, he is making progress.

What has happened to those surviving is the result of intense shock and a paradoxical passivity reaction. One might think that, faced with a charnel house of a city and the priests of Nerull in control, people would go to any lengths to flee. By now, exactly the reverse has happened. Many folk think they are virtually living dead, eking out their days until their turn comes. Their fate is inevitable. Resistance is futile.

Little trade flows through Rinloru now.

What comes from the west detours southward to avoid this horrific city. Balancing this is the city's diminished need for money and food (an advantage of having undead legions as armies). Very few approach this place now.

Delgath has 25 priests of Nerull occupying the major administrative posts in the city. His human army commanders are all wholly cowed into submission, waiting for the next set of orders. Delgath makes it plain that a military campaign will ensue in late summer, though he does not reveal to where the armies will march. Rinloru currently has an extraordinary atmosphere where despair, desperation, tension, and sheer, gut-wrenching terror are all part of the mix.

Undead are everywhere, mostly the mindless sort, but with ghosts and attendant ghouls posted at strategic points. Delgath has not ordered the city plundered yet, and there is certainly gold and good reward awaiting any who enter and begin to loot the richer residences. The city's buildings are stone, with thick walls, and are highly defensible; this was a fallback garrison city after all. The most extraordinary building here, of recent construction and walled off separately from the rest of the city, is the famed Sand Castle.

The Sand Castle was built to evade the Castle Tax in the previous century. Since it is not made of stone, it was not liable to that tax. The ruler of the time didn't care that it cost 10 times as much to build as a stone castle, even with the tax element; he just wanted to spite the overking. The Sand Castle is constructed of sand magically treated to render it as hard as stone, together with great sheets of heat-fused sand (which looks like opaque black glass) treated with *glassteel* spells to toughen it. The resulting hybrid is a part-sandy, part-glass four-towered structure with a massive wooden gate and an extensive fortified inner keep with dungeons. This is where Delgath currently resides, and the lowest level of the keep has been decorated as a parody of the magistrate's chambers where judges of the sessions held court and gave judgments.

## Nordan villages

Delgath's lands have few substantial settlements, but the Nordan villages are the most noteworthy because of their increasing importance as a trade link from Winetha to the west, bypassing Rinloru. Each has about 1,200 people and a garrison. High Nordan is actually across a border in the Naelax lands, and a large garrison has grown up there in response to Delgath's priestly and undead forces. These forces maintain a strong presence in the villages, though they do not practice the mass executions and animations that occur in the capital. As yet, the armies have not clashed at these border points, but the powerful ruler of Delaric is taking no chances.

### **Reaperkeep**

This tower (and fortified garrison houses) acted as a supply base for the eastern Sea Keeps, though these have declined in importance. The Necromancer of Reaperkeep (renamed from its pre-war title of Ratkeep) has thrown in his lot with the priests of Nerull who now control the base. The vermin that infest the dank, fetid dungeons below the keep grow fat these days, feeding on the remnants of the necromancer's researches. A command to peasant farmers to bring supplies here is dreaded, since many do not return. Reaperkeep has more powerful undead than in most outlying areas, including a group of 20 or so wights controlled by the necromancer and priests. It is said that the necromancer has somehow obtained a *blackwand* from the Lands of Iuz and is researching it, hoping to duplicate it in a form he and others in Delglath's service can use. Any hero concerned with checking the spread of evil in these lands would strike a powerful blow if he prevented this from happening.

### **The Sea Keeps**

The four keeps and northern tower (a weather-signalling beacon and mage's tower of old) protect the coastline, with each keep overlooking a small bay or inlet where military vessels could drop anchor and provision before sailing off to keep

barbarians and pirates at bay. Each keep also has a lighthouse cupola atop it. Well over half the troops here have fled, headed to Atirr or Winetha or even to the Sea Barons. There are not enough of Nerull's priests to control all these keeps, and the southernmost one is occupied solely by zombies with a vampire-mage as overseer. The result is that barbarian raids along the coast have escalated, and the barbarians have found the undead defenders, which they detest. If they raid here, they often bring one or more of the rare barbarian priests of Pelor with them, since such men are powerful in the art of turning undead. The coastline and the farmlands west have been largely depopulated here, since people rightly fear the twin menaces of marauding barbarians and undead, and only abandoned farmsteads and hamlets remain. Some houses have been occupied by men fleeing the evil wrath of their liege, and they have become increasingly desperate bandits. These are dangerous and forlorn lands.

### **Spinning Cloud**

Spinning Cloud is a stone keep that hovers 200' above the ground by means of a permanent *reverse gravity* effect that cannot be dispelled except by a wish spell. The keep's top story is hidden, enveloped in a permanent stationary white cloud. There has been no sign of the master of

the keep, an elementalist of air named Jummenen, for some five years now. Many consider that Jummenen has been lost on one of his forays into the plane of elemental Air. Whether this is true, anyone planning to loot the keep must beware the air elementals and invisible stalkers that guard it, not to mention braving a wealth of magical hazards within.

### **Lakaster's lands**

*Pop.: 140,000*

*Capital: Winetha (pop. 20,500)*

*Ruler: Prince Lakaster of the House of Garasteth*

*Cost multiplier: 110% of PH prices*

### **Winetha**

This city is almost as impregnable as Roland, with sea cliffs behind it and massive stone sea walls ringing the city below. Winetha is built along a long and narrow bay. It is overcrowded, for many have fled here from more dangerous lands.

Winetha boasts a large mages' guild and fine libraries and archives, preserved by protective spells against the corroding effect of the damp, salty air. Most remarkable of all the signs of magecraft here are the legendary Coral Towers, flanking the sea gates at the harbor entrance. These 100'-tall, 80'-diameter towers are crafted from roseate corals of the outlying Asperd Isles, melded by spellcraft and rendered as

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**ACE**

tough as steel. *Continual light* spells in great glass domes atop them are important beacons for ships, since the coastal currents here are strong, especially when Luna is full and the tides are high. Beneath the brilliant glow from the domes, wizards keep watch over the seas, aided by priests of Procan.

Winetha's mages meddle with almost everything in this city. Their alchemists extract oils that protect bow strings against sea air, so the archers of the city are effective defenders. The sea gates can be commanded to open and close by using the right command words (known only to the harbormaster mages), and so on.

Lakaster is certainly the most powerful of the 60 or so wizards of the city. He is no absolute ruler as Delglath is, for he must submit his plans and proposals to the Council of Wizards. They rarely oppose them, since few are politically inclined. So long as Lakaster's plans don't stop them from pursuing their own arcane researches, they really don't care what he does. However, tensions are rising within the council over Lakaster's plan to trade artifacts with Delglath. The wizards fear Delglath, and they don't want Lakaster to become overwhelmingly powerful. Most hope that Delglath never agrees to the trade, but a few are concocting plans to attack Delglath's outlying troops and settlements with summoned monsters and servants to force Lakaster to abandon his alliance. That, in turn, might provoke Delglath to march on Winetha—and some of the wizards believe that the city could be defended against him. Others are not so sure.

Visitors to Winetha are carefully checked these days. Each visitor must pay a 5 gp fee for a pass to the city, entitling the bearer to stay for one week. Each visitor must divulge the purpose of her visit and where she intends to stay, and members of the Town Guard do call to check on the visitor. Regularly visiting sea vessels and merchants are known to the guards at the gates, and newcomers are usually interrogated carefully and thoroughly. The town has a considerable number of eccentrics and unusual delights, though visitors are warned that the Pickled Eel Saveloys are not for those with sensitive stomachs.

### Pearl Beacon

This great sea keep with its glorious lighthouse is the home of a very unusual noble—Prince Harley of the House of Garasteth. Harley is a real rarity; in his youth he studied dutifully as a mage, as so many Garasteth children do, but he hated it. In his mid-twenties he adopted the faith of Olidammara. It was a huge relief for him. He took to drink, song, and women as a seagull does to the sky, and in the deadly seriousness of the lands of the Twin Cities, Pearl Beacon is an ocean of lightheartedness. Nearly 2,000 people live in shanty towns around the old sea village here, and

somehow they scratch out a living. Fishing is the staple source of work and food, but the pearls from the bay below the keep (which give it its name, as well as the pearly-hued *continual light* lighthouse beacon) are an extra prize for the diligent scavenger of the seabed. There are a number of wrecks along the coast here, and they too attract adventurers seeking riches. Most times they find no sunken gold, but find Pearl Beacon is a fine place to stay, at least for a summer.

Harley has managed to make peace with the barbarians by simply challenging them to drinking contests. The barbarians were bemused by such an unusual response to their arrival in the bay, but they know a priest of Olidammara when they see one, and they also know a ruler who can hold his liquor when they wake up beneath the table and find him calling for another hornful of fiery akvavit. Pearl Beacon also trades with the Sea Barons, though most vessels head for Winetha rather than to this southern outpost.

Pearl Beacon is as close to a riotous, happy seaport as one will find along the east coast of Flanaess. It carries the attendant dangers; thieves and cut-throats throng this settlement, since rulership here is low. But Harley is a ruler who the wise and bright do not dismiss as the drunken rake he appears to be. He has still his old talents as a competent mage, and his priestly talents are considerable. (He is a 9th-level mage/12th-level priest.) He is smart and cunning, and the mind behind his jests and quips is very alert, and fast on the uptake. Rumors say that aquatic elves, who have long abandoned most of the coastal waters and even the Asperd Isles for the new elven lands of Spindrift, have been seen at Pearl Beacon. Some whisper by night that a blue-skinned elf, not an aquatic one to be sure, has been seen visiting Prince Harley's floridly-decorated home, and the name of Mordenkainen himself has been uttered by one or two folk—after they had too much to drink.

Finally, the shrine to Procan here is maintained by Harley's own funds, and a blessing from the priests is greatly valued by seamen. The priests are said to have exceptional skills, and to have the favor of Procan himself. It also is said that their blessings minimize the chance of meeting fearsome sea monsters, sudden fogs, or storms in the Solnor Ocean, and some vessels travel out of their way to bring gold or other gifts to the temple in return for this blessing.

### Treltern

Lakaster himself owns about half the lands in his domain, the rest being owned by minor Garasteth and Torquann nobles. Of the many hamlets and villages in these lands, Treltern is the most sizeable with 1,600 people, a well-equipped local militia, and a strategic position along the southern trade route to Orred. Even some goods

headed toward or from Delaric come this way now, following the dirawein roads to Wendarn and then northward, though that is a hazardous route with so many miles to be covered within the overking's claimed lands.

The dirawein roads are still in good repair, and serve as trade routes. The tolls that were once collected on dirawein roads to pay for their upkeep are rarely enforced now, but the fortified inns along them still stand, and the few merchants still traveling these lands usually plan their travel routes to be sure of spending the night at them. In game terms, the dirawein roads are still in excellent repair and have a multiplier of 0.4 for movement cost, regardless of the weather.

Treltern is noted for a fine bardic collection of old poems and songs, surprising in such a small place; it was established by Nightsong of Delaric long before his alignment change, and indeed that legendary bard was born here. Few, however, would wish to see him return. Nonetheless, there is a faint whiff of magic about the recitatorium here, and Treltern has a reputation for producing musically-gifted people as well as fine poetic and declamatory bards.

## Personalities

While Rinloru has some important priests of Nerull and Winetha has some noteworthy mages, the two major protagonists of the strange alliance concern us here. Their "supporting cast" is deliberately left open for individual development.

*Animus-priest Delglath:* Animus with the powers of 13th-level priest of Nerull and additional abilities (see below, and Wis 18). AC 6 (*ring of protection +4*), hp 88, AL NE. Delglath has all the special powers and abilities of an animus, plus he has one additional talent. At will, he can cause blisters to rise on the palms of his hands that secrete a smoking, corrosive acid. This does not harm Delglath, but his touch inflicts  $1d4 +4$  hp of damage per round his palms are in contact with the skin of anyone else, and the acid corrodes cloth in one round, wood at the rate of 1" per round, and metal at the rate of  $\frac{1}{4}$ " per round. Magical items receive a saving throw against destruction by acid; non-magical items do not. "Delglath's blessing" is a laconic Rinloru saying that refers to this dreaded touch.

Delglath sees himself as a Chosen One of Nerull. In one respect, his view has some validity. Though he is but 13th level, he is a powerful enchanter of magical items (equivalent to a 20th-level priest). Delglath even has been to the Causeway of Fiends to take a stone that he polished, crafted, and enchanted to create a *talisman of ultimate evil* which he wears with pride. He has other magical items, of course, including a great sickle +2, +3 versus good creatures, a *ring of X-ray vision*, and a *brooch of shielding* with 71 charges.

Delglath has the typical wizened, wrinkled features of the animus, with unblink-

ing blue eyes. He braids his flowing white hair in the style of old Aerdi nobles. He is consumed with the desire to render Aerdy into a kingdom of the undead with himself atop the malachite throne. He is wily and cunning, and despite his insanity he knows this is not a goal he can achieve right now. He seeks no alliances, and he has eliminated all who oppose him within his own lands. He intends to do the same every where else. Once he has the talisman, Winetha will be his first target. Rauxes will be next.

*Archmage-Prince Lakaster:* 19th-level mage (Dex 16, Con 15, Int 18). AC 1 (*Black robes of the Archmagi, ring of protection +3*), hp 49, AL LE (NE). Lakaster is chronologically 77 years of age, but due to two potions of longevity and his amulet of perpetual youth (see *Tome of Magic*), he is biologically only 35 (this becomes 57 if his amulet is removed). He is an imposing 6' 5" slim, and graceful; the blond archmage has boyish good looks, a broad white-toothed smile, and friendly hazel eyes. He is a thoroughly evil power-maniac, however. Still, he is brilliant and urbane, and world-wise. He knows the value of alliance, having time to develop one's strength when facing an enemy—and the value of one well-planned, lightning-swift, devastating strike (preferably with a dash of wanton cruelty).

Lakaster has many magical items. His quarterstaff +5 can release spells, usable once a day, each using one charge: *spectral force, suggestion, wall of fire, and wall of stone*. The staff is recharged by being plunged into one gallon of fresh blood from an intelligent, humanoid creature, and Lakaster has no compunctions about recharging it when he needs to do so. Lakaster always wears his *Serten's ring*, which confers on him a permanent *Serten's spell immunity* effect.

Lakaster is on fair terms with the Sea Barons, but has few other contacts among local nobles. He is too obsessed with desire for the Wand of Lynerden to bother with politics now. Night and day he labors to research the combined powers of the wand and helm of that fabled wizard, and his researches yield conflicting answers. Anyone who could provide him with the truth would be very well rewarded; the prince has a fair collection of Asperd pearls and similar valuables among his personal wealth.

### The Mace and Talisman of Krevell

Krevell was a dreaded priest of Nerull, and his baneful items have the appropriate magical qualities. On its own, the mace is a mace +4 that can cast *animate dead* once a day and *energy drain* three times a week by touch. Alone, the talisman can cause paralysis once a day in a 20' radius around its user. Either item can be used only by an evil individual with spell-casting ability.

If both are held by a priest of Nerull, however, their combined power is vastly

enhanced. The functions above can be used seven times more frequently, and the following powers are gained, one per week each: *destruction, gate* (to Nerull's home plane), *unholy word*, and *symbol of death*. The owner of both items can adopt *wraithform* at will, *gate* himself and up to 10 attendants to the Negative Material plane at will without ill effect once a month, and can command double the usual number of undead as a 20th-level priest. No mindless undead (zombies, skeletons, etc.) will attack the bearer of the mace and talisman even if so commanded. Intelligent, free-willed undead, such as vampires and liches, must make a saving throw versus spells each round in order to attack the bearer. All spell effects are at 14th level for the items individually, and at 20th level when combined.

### The Helm and Wand of Lynerden the Spinner

Such was the power of the ancient Oeridian mage Lynerden that the individual items of this pairing are powerful indeed, though neither can be used except by a mage. The helm, if worn, provides a +3 AC bonus and +3 to all saving throws against mental control or possession (such as *charm, domination, or magic jar*). It also can cast *color spray, improved phantasmal force, and shadow magic* each once a day. The wand grants its user a +3 bonus

against all fire- and cold-based attacks, and can cast *fireball* and *cone of cold* each once a day.

When both items are held by the same archmage, however, each of the following magical powers also can be cast once a day: *delayed blast fireball, incendiary cloud, mass invisibility, meteor swarm, and screen*. In addition, the items' combined might can power a *limited wish* once a week and a full *wish* once every three months, but after 1d4 + 1 *wishes*, this function is lost. Spell effects are at 14th level for the helm or wand, and at 20th level when combined.

The functions of each half of the pair of artifacts are readily ascertainable by *identify, legend lore*, and other divinatory magics. However, the combined properties are almost impossible to scry unless one possesses both halves. Delglath and Lakaster busily interrogate extraplanar beings, pore over old tomes, and so on. Lakaster has even expended a *wish* to learn more, but to no avail. Without holding both halves, the truth can be found only in the original writings of Krevell and Lynerden the Spinner. If any copies of their works survive, they are in far-flung places, perhaps guarded by powerful mages, fiends, or worse.

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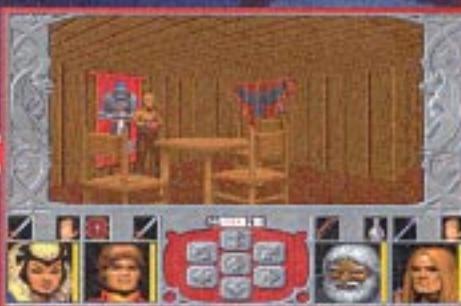
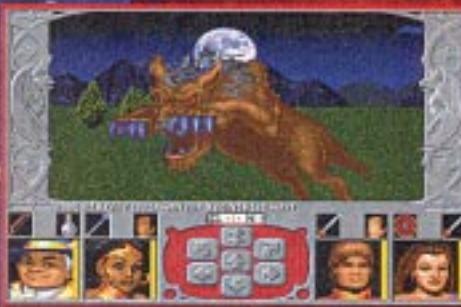
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## Game design: art or craft?

In addition to being your *Eye of the Monitor* columnist, I have a day job. Many of you may know that I'm a professional game designer. There aren't many of us in the country—a few years ago we estimated the total number of full-time game designers in America, and there are fewer of us than there are members of Congress! (This doesn't mean we're necessarily as well paid, you understand—just that the job openings are few and far between!)

Despite our rarity (or perhaps because of it), we generally know one another. Many of my friends are game designers. Though we don't often live near one another, we tend to congregate, mostly at conventions, where we discuss subjects of mutual interest. A subject of perennial interest is that of whether a game designer is an "artist" or a "craftsman." Most of us have taken sides in this unimportant debate, yet this actually affects our game design.

In general, the "artists" believe that a game designer should try to produce true Art, just like in the movies and other entertainment media. The "craftsmen" believe that a game designer should try to entertain her public, giving them what they want.

"Artistic" designers try to make quirky, didactic designs, often attempting to educate their public. At their best, they achieve novel works that are thought-provoking and intriguing. At their worst, they produce lame and incomplete paens to their own egos.

I believe that the "artists" have chosen a false analogy—they generally claim that the correct analogy for computer games are movies. In their behavior, they have acted as does a worker in the fine arts such as painting and sculpture. Famed workers such as Edvard Munch, Van Gogh, or Salvador Dali clearly labor toward some inner vision.

But the best film-makers are not the obscure "artsy" directors, but men with solid commercial success—Akira Kurosawa's critically acclaimed films are invariably crowd-pleasers. Alfred Hitchcock, another famed director, made lowly thrillers and always had an eye towards his audience.

Many "craftsmen" game designers have told me that they believe that a game cannot be art. This does not mean they don't take pride in their work; quite the reverse. Any true craftsman wants to produce good material, if only to keep his self-respect. At their worst, craftsmen may feel that, "It's just show biz and marketing." This is certainly the belief of most game company executives and marketers, and understandably so. What do they care if a game properly displays a designer's inner torment? Just so it sells. I have watched some of my friends become hacks; churning out potboilers to keep their noses above water.



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Companions of Xanth (Legend)

I believe that a game can be true art, as good as anything in the related fields of film or theater. This does not mean that I think any of us have done great art yet! Give us time. We're a small field, and still young. Further, I believe that great game "art" will first be done by someone who is a firm "craftsman." Only someone who takes extreme care over every detail of his

design, making sure the whole hangs together, can make the first game masterpiece. Remember that Shakespeare pandered to the crowd in all his plays. The *Casablanca* and *Hedda Gabler* of computer games have yet to be designed, but I feel sure that someday they will exist.

## Reviews

### COMPANIONS OF XANTH

\*\*\*

IBM & compatibles

Legend

Design & programming: Michael Lindner

Design assistance & steering: Bob Bates

Room art & animations: Paul Mock

Background art: Kathleen Bober, Chris

Grandstaff, Tim Knepp, Chris Angriani, Bob Lynch, Mark Poesch

### Computer games' ratings

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

This is a text adventure with generally good graphics and good sound, too. Legend Entertainment seems to have taken upon itself Mindscape's mantle, and is now about the only company still doing this type of game. In a conversation with Bob Bates of Legend, he was quite proud of this fact.

If you've been reading fantasy fiction regularly over the last few years, you're aware of Piers Anthony's lengthy *Xanth* series of books. Possibly you're addicted to them. Possibly you hate them. I myself take a guilty pleasure in reading them—I know they're awful potboilers, but I can't seem to help myself. I've read 'em all. Sigh.

*Companions of Xanth* holds true to the fiction series, including aspects of *Xanth* that make even me squirm (such as the juvenile conceit of the idiotic "Adult Conspiracy"). If you haven't read any of the books, take my advice—don't start! Fortunately, you need not have read any of the books to have fun with this game. The game handily gives you an on-line encyclopedia of *Xanth* so that when *Xanth*-oriented questions are asked, you can answer them without thumbing through your books.

The game presents you with a series of still shots. As you select various commands (listed to the left of the picture) and then move your cursor over the screen, the cursor changes into the command possible for that part of the screen. At the bottom of the screen are images of all your equipment. You can click on one of them, then use them with another object, just like in other graphic adventures.

The game consists of a series of puzzles. The puzzles are fairly clever, and you must go through them in order. This isn't necessarily good, since it means that if a puzzle stumps you, you can't go and do something else for a while before going back to it. You have to sit and stare at the screen, or try every item in your inventory in turn (not fun), because if you can't solve that darn puzzle, you can't do anything else.

The game initially gives you the illusion that you get many choices. For one thing, you can choose between four potential Companions. Alas, all but one are ringers—you've got to choose the right one or you can't even get out of the entry cave.

The screens aren't completely inanimate. When you accomplish certain tasks, the screen changes in a brief animation. Also, there are cinema-like clips interspersed through the game that are intended to inspire you (I guess). They aren't bad, and feature live actors playing the parts of various *Xanth* beings.

The puzzles can be quite humorous and, of course, the game teems with puns. *Companions of Xanth* made me laugh. It also made me groan. It was a lot like *Xanth*, I guess.

## BLOODNET

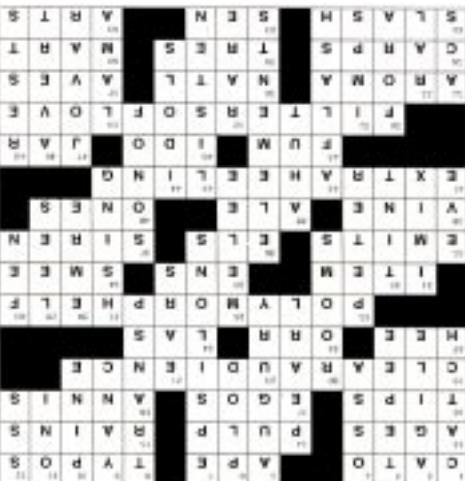
IBM & compatibles \* \* \*  
*Game design & writing:* John Antinori,  
 Laura Kampo  
*Executive producer:* Mark Seremet  
*Producer, Microprose:* Lawrence Schick  
*Programming:* Christ Short, Frank Kern,  
 Rick Hall  
*Art:* Thomas Howell, Quinno Martin, Bill  
 Petras, Kelly Trout, Kelly Vadas  
*Music:* Michael Bross

*Bloodnet* is a weird cross between a graphic adventure and a true role-playing game. You play the role of Ransom Stark, a computer programmer *cum* mercenary in the cyberpunk world of 2094. The world is very much like the cyberpunk books of William Gibson, Greg Bear, and the other noted science-fiction authors. Cyberpunk as a genre appears to have died out as an exciting new literary form, which means it's about time for games, movies, and TV shows to take the plunge and use this theme. The world is run by evil supercorporations, the world's computer net is a virtual universe, and you can have your mind and soul destroyed by the right kind of software.

Ransom's problem is that he is turning into a vampire. This kind of genre-mixing can be really bad, but MicroProse appears to have pulled it off. Paragon has done other role-playing games in this same basic style, though the details of *Bloodnet* differ.

You first roll up your character. The character generation is rather arcane, and reminiscent of some of the *Ultima* series—you are asked a number of questions. Your answers apparently generate your character's stats and skills. I don't care for this form of character generation. Since you only get one character, I'd just as soon have had a standard guy, or else have been allowed to pick his stats and skills out of a pool. The question-answering regime is, I imagine, intended to create the kind of character that I "would be happiest with." Get with it, Paragon—can't I choose better for myself than by undergoing some sort of lame-brained psychology test?

You go from scene to scene, as in a graphic adventure, with each scene being



*Companions of Xanth (Legend)*

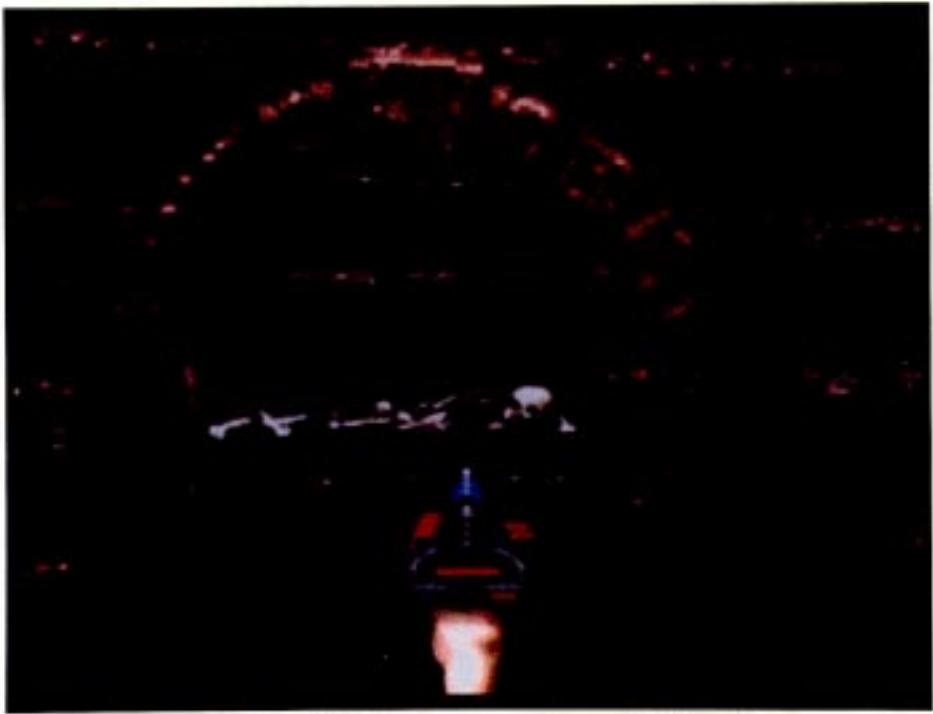
exactly one screen in size. You move between scenes by going to a big vertically-scrolling map of Manhattan, on which places you can visit glow visibly. Occasionally you take some action that causes a new spot to show up.

Within each scene, you see a bunch of rotoscoped figures hanging around. Your own figure can move around between them, hold conversations, and engage in deal-making. Oh yes, you also can bite them on the neck and suck their blood. Don't do this last one too often, because the more you act like a vampire, the less human you get until you finally turn into a full-fledged member of the undead. If that happens, you lose the game. In a rather cunning twist, the amount of "innocence" a victim possesses affects the amount of humanity you lose upon murdering him. Killing a young college girl is worse for you than offing a hardened cybernetic assassin. I guess it makes sense, in an amoral, twisted sort of way.

In the scenes you also can engage in combat. Combat is moderately complex, and exceedingly deadly. After playing the game for hours, I still don't think I've mastered it.

The game includes a special system of taking notes which is good in spirit, if not always in practice. Every single conversation you have with every single person is memorized forever, and you can call it up again to rehash old memories. The dark side of this is that after a half-hour of play or so, you've got 20-30 different cyberpunk-sounding names to go through, trying desperately to remember whether "Brill," "Wild Child," or "Seedy Romb" is the person who offered to give you money in exchange for a shot of Vasopressin.

Drug use, implied sex, theft, and violent murder is the name of the game in *Bloodnet*. The language is not as simon-pure as in most other games either, and expletives are rife in some characters' dialogue. If you don't want your game character to engage in immoral and illegal activities, consider carefully before trying *Bloodnet*. Me, I try to keep my imaginary personae



Escape from Monster Manor (3DO)

as separate as possible from my real life.

You can recruit other folks to join your party. You still see only one guy in the scenes, but when combat occurs, you get to place your minions and fight it out.

Sometimes the dialogue is very good. Other times, it's as corny as hell. I got the impression that either a couple of different people were writing the lines, or else the one person that was doing it got bored from time to time, and just put hackneyed phrases into the mouths of his characters. It's too bad, because at its best, the conversations are snappy, stimulating, and help to get you into the swing of the cyberpunk world.

The game is difficult, and despite the "conversation memory" I still found myself needing to keep notes, if only keep track of which person lived in which locale. After all, even if I know that it was Frack Tell who offered me a cybernetic nose, I still have to remember if he lived in The Abyss or The Cloisters.

#### Game tips

1. Only engage in battles you're sure to win. The combat in this game is too deadly

to trust to chance.

2. Save your game before making any deal you are suspicious of. It might turn out that the guy you made the deal with is going to double-cross you, in which case you may want to backtrack in time.

3. At first, stay away from the places where the anti-vampires live. You may think it's a good idea to visit the Cloisters, for instance. Well, it turns out that they recognize you as a loathsome undead, and try to kill you right away. Avoid both them and the real undead, at least until you've got some back-up.

#### XARGON

IBM & compatibles      Epic Megagames  
Programming: Allen W. Pilgrim  
Art: Joe Hitchens, Matt Berger, Carolly Hauksdotter  
Sound & music: Dan Froelich

free! (At least the initial installment for each is available at no charge.)

In some ways, *Xargon* rather resembles *Commander Keen*. Between adventures, you wander through a landscape viewed top-down. When you enter an area, the view switches to a horizontal scroller in which you hop from platform to platform, blast enemies with slow-moving laser shots, and pick up bonus emeralds that you can use to purchase extra lives and special abilities.

The game is far from perfect, and locked up twice on me. Ominously, during the game's load-up, a screen appears briefly, telling you what to do if your machine freezes. I guess they half-expect the game to crash right there on that screen. (It didn't, for me. My lockups happened only after half-an-hour or more of play.) No doubt future versions will be less buggy.

#### WORLD OF XEEN: CD-ROM

\*\*

IBM CD-ROM      New World Computing  
Designed and directed by: Jon Van Caneghem

Programmed by: Mark Caldwell, Dave Hathaway

Computer graphics: Jonathon P. Gwyn, Bonnie Long-Hemsath, Julia Ulanoff, Ricardo Barrera, Louis Johnson

This is the CD-ROM version of *World of Xeen*, reviewed in these very pages in DRAGON® issue #201. It's not much different than the diskette version, but does save quite a few megabytes on the old hard drive. If you own a CD-ROM, this is the version of *Xeen* to buy. Accept no substitutes.

For those who did not see the earlier review, the game is an updated version of *Might & Magic*. It is a first-person style role-playing game in the classic style, with plenty of fun quests, simple combat, and engaging characters to interact with.

The game is fun, but rather old-fashioned technologically, with bit-mapped graphics rather than true 3-D, slow load times (even slower in CD-ROM than off a hard disk), and relatively crude animation techniques. Still, I liked it. You may, too.

#### ESCAPE FROM MONSTER MANOR

\*\*

3DO      Electronic Arts

This game is designed for the new 3DO system, which is one of the first entries in the "Interactive Media" market, and clearly hopes to be a big winner. The 3DO only runs CD-ROM disks, costs around \$700, and is intended to be the big hit of the '90s. Maybe it will take off. Certainly a lot of software companies are putting out support materials for it. I'm holding my breath for the moment, since 3DO is going to have to compete with Sega CD, Jaguar, Phillips, and a bunch of other CD-ROM systems with a variety of prices and features. (Yes, I know Jaguar is not CD-ROM yet, but it soon will be, and in the mean-

*Xargon* is a new shareware release, and is somewhat amusing. It is a side-scrolling run-jump-shoot'em-up game, like 50 to 100 other similar games. Epic Megagames sells a number of these shareware products. Some are good, some are mediocre. All are

time it's a heck of a system.)

*Escape From Monster Manor* is one of the first games available for 3DO and as such, is clearly intended to show off the system's capabilities. Of course, it is unlikely that the team was able to figure out all the tricks and shortcuts the 3DO has to offer. (If it's anything like other hardware systems, even the system designers don't know all the tricks.) No doubt future games will push the boundaries of the 3DO system even farther. Still, this is a good look at the 3DO.

This is an action game much like *Wolfenstein*, *Doom*, or *Blake Stone*. You are forced to wander through a haunted mansion from a first-person point of view. Spiders, spooks, and other horrors leap out to alarm and frighten you, and you must defeat them and escape. The game has a very arcade-style feel to it—coins are huge rotating objects, rather than realistic piles of money. All walls join together at precise 30-degree angles, but you can navigate through in true 3-D.

The rooms contain interesting objects and paraphernalia that has little to do with the game, but certainly adds to the mood. These range from empty rocking chairs (still rocking away in best ghost-house tradition) to sinister hanged corpses and half-transparent spooks that appear from nowhere, then vanish. The experience is quite a bit like a spook ride in a middling-

to the creepy little details that were sprinkled around the world. One favorite of mine are Roman-style busts on pedestals that oh-so-rarely laugh menacingly (with suddenly-fanged maws).

As you take damage, your hand (visible at the screen's bottom center) starts deteriorating. Your flesh doesn't look so much wounded as "raw," and the effect was rather interesting.

In anachronistic contrast to the interesting haunted world you inhabit, you are armed with a futuristic gun that fires electric charges. A single shot accounts for most of the game's evil spirits. Annoyingly, the gun holds 100 "charges," and expends five per shot. It would have been much more convenient had it held 20 charges, spending one per shot.

The levels are huge compared with similar games. Huge to the point of tedium. It seems to take forever to scout out a level. The halls, rooms, and chambers seem to go on unendingly. It's a good thing the game has an effective automap feature, because I frequently found myself backtracking through miles of dark corridor in order to get to an ammo dump or a healing cross that I'd left behind. The only flaw of the automap is that there is no way to mark on it.

The music and sound are as good as you'd expect. In fact, the sound is so im-

pressive that it's rather obtrusive. Again and again I heard frightening noises, only to realize (after spinning around and looking for the spook) that it was just the soundtrack. Not only is there appropriate music, but screams, bestial growls, and worse.

In general, the game is way too easy. It's easy to kill the monsters. It's easy to get through the levels. It's still fun to look at the neat sprites and monsters.

For some reason there is little variety to the art. What there is though, is good. One or two types of monsters and a couple wall tiles seems to have satisfied the designers. However, the limited assortment of monsters combined with the enormous levels give the game a sameness that I didn't care for.

The game is clearly intended for a "mass" audience, by which the designers seem to mean "a pack of idiots." In an attempt to make the game accessible to "normal" people, they have tended to make it just a bit duller than necessary. For instance, the game holds no secret doors, moving panels, or other hidden tidbits. No doubt such features were considered too difficult for your typical couch potato to figure out.

The one type of puzzle you are presented with is the grim one of "find the key before you can progress," the infamous situation in which you must wander diligently through miles of empty corridor, looking for the key you missed on your last trip through.

Unfortunately, the game's biggest flaw isn't really its fault: it is *sloooow*. Access time is quite tedious. Of course, this is endemic to 3DO (or any other CD-ROM system). The game seems to take ages to load up for anyone used to a real computer, or a cartridge machine for that matter. CD-ROM just doesn't read data very quickly. I didn't downgrade *Monster Manor* for this—the programmers certainly couldn't do anything about it. I fear it bodes ill for 3DO's future success.

#### Game tips

- When you spot a cache of ammo or healing you don't need, try to memorize where it is. Look on the automap if need be to get an idea in what part of the sector it lies. When you need it, head back to these "caches." I know it's tempting to press on when ammo gets low (at least, it's what I prefer to do), but it's too easy to get surrounded by monsters and get killed once your gun runs out.

- Take your time aiming and firing. The monsters don't move all that fast, and it sure isn't fun to miss. Remember, you only get 20 shots before needing to recharge.

- I found it handy to show myself in a place; let the monsters come rushing out after me, and then back up. As the monsters come down the hall, I can bag them with comparative ease.

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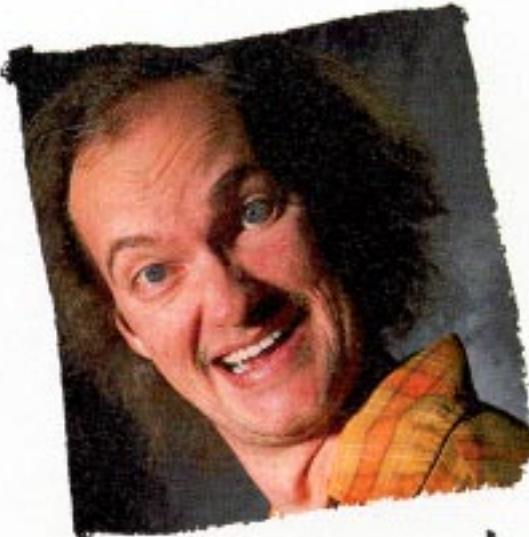
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# Tilbram

## CHAPTER 5 THE NATURE OF THE MAZeworks

STORY  
JEFF GRUBB

ART  
BOB LESSL  
COLOR  
CATHERINE LESSL

THE STORY SO FAR:  
JEN AND I HAD EVADED A NUMBER OF PERILS, AND  
CHOSE TO DECAMP TO QUIETER WATERS. SHE  
WANTED TO CONTACT THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES, WHICH  
IN TURN LED TO FURTHER QUESTIONS AND REVELATIONS.



THEY HAVE A BIG ORGANIZATION, A BIG BUDGET, AND A BIG SET OF RULES. THEREFORE THEY'RE WHAT PASS FOR THE LAW AND THE AUTHORITIES IN THESE PARTS.

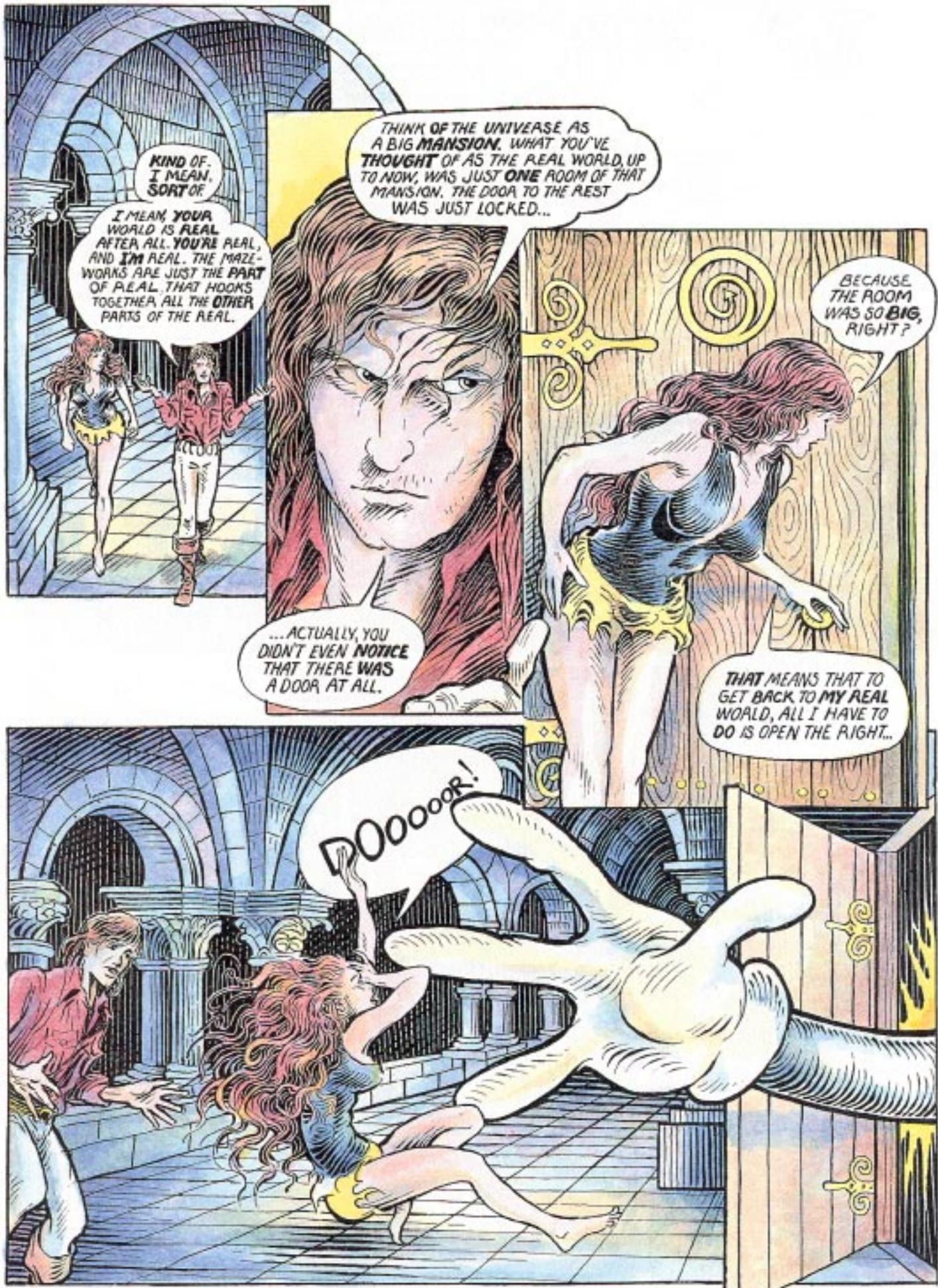
IF THEY'RE THE LAW AND YOU'RE FIGHTING THEM DOESN'T THAT MAKE YOU A...

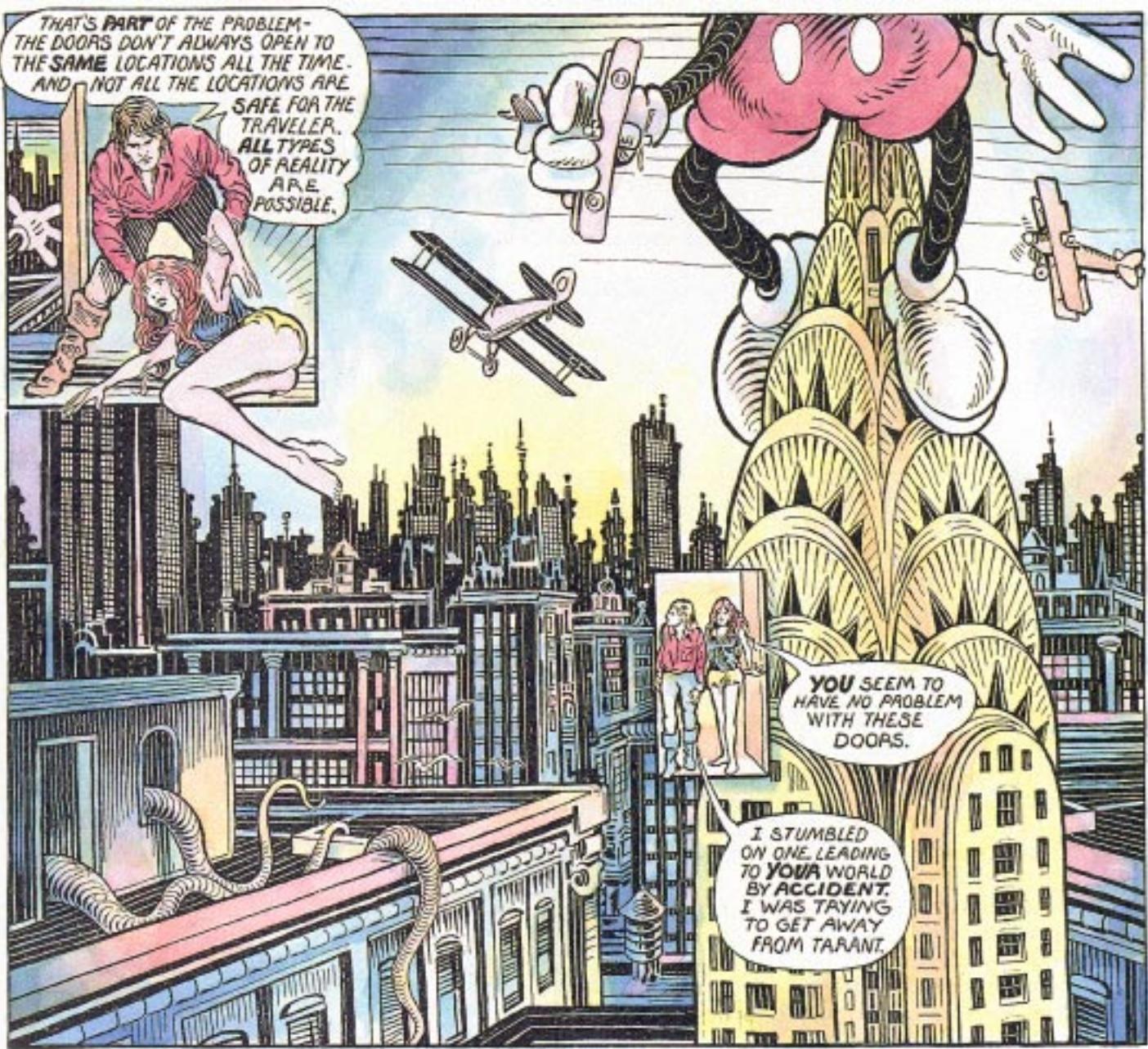
A CHAOTIC ELEMENTAL?  
A WILD CARD?  
A DANGER TO THEIR MACHINATIONS?

I WAS GOING TO SAY  
"A CRIMINAL."

I FAVOR THE  
TITLE "LIKABLE  
ROGUE," MYSELF.







TO BE CONTINUED.



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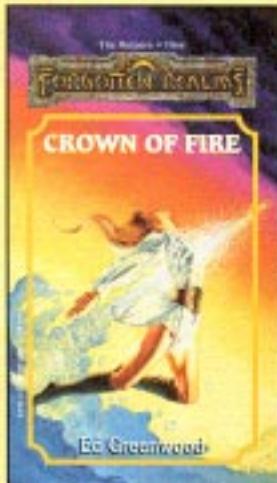
Ed Greenwood

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Frontline

# Forum

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

In the 13 years that I have played the AD&D® game, I have come to realize that change is good. In the past year, however, I've noticed in some cases it's a must. The RAVENLOFT® campaign is one such case.

The running of such a campaign revolves mainly around description. Through her choice of words, the DM inspires fear or uncertainty. Winds howl in anger and a dark shadow hides unimagined horrors. It's all a play of words but the uncertainty involved plays a large role in promoting the terror. This atmosphere is always disrupted when numbers come into play. What is so vague about the number four? What would have otherwise been a terrifying encounter with a nightmarish beast turns into an exchange of numbers.

The DM keeping track of the characters' hit points gives the players a vivid description of their state of health. A "You feel weak," or "You feel okay," is grossly insufficient. By being this vague, you're not being fair to your players. Used correctly this method complements other fear-inducing techniques, but if your DMing skills do not involve scaring the players then this option would be a mere inconvenience to you and your players.

The most obvious advantage of this method is that your players will never know exactly how many hit points their characters have left. The players tend to be more cautious and switch from the "hack-and-slash" mode. Surprisingly, it doesn't just work to inspire fear, but also to make the players think of other ways of

confronting their foes. They might try scaring them off or trapping them. In essence, they start planning more.

Don't wait until one of them asks you how he's feeling, always remind him. A number written down or a question here and there does little to make wounds a nagging problem. They are usually forgotten when in a situation that has nothing to do with combat. Always remind the players of their characters' wounds through your description of a journey or of the surroundings. Tell him his vision is hazed by the throbbing pain in his shoulder or her pace is slow because of a deep gash in her thigh. Make them feel the existence and persistence of their wounds even until it becomes a nuisance.

Other benefits include, letting the DM cheat constructively without the players knowing. If a character with one hit point is hit, it could be described as a "large clawed hand rips your shield apart to scratch your forearm." Instead of killing the PC, you destroyed his favorite shield. Try doing this when the player knows he has one hit point left and he'll notice you are bailing him out. Once this happens the player would bravely enter every battle because he knows his DM wouldn't kill a fighting PC.

With numbers omitted fights become more graphic. Characters soon amass numerous wounds—some may be so severe that the pulsing pain caused the PC to miss or to fall to his knees, sword slipping out of his hands. However you describe the wounds of battle, the battle itself is still just numbers.

The THAC0 system, no matter how convenient, is a number system and worse it's one the players know. The AD&D 1st Edition game rules use tables, however cumbersome, and have the advantage that the players do not know what they need to hit. Players, through playing, will not doubt know the AC of a lot of monsters but the THAC0 system lets them calculate exactly what they need to hit. So if a player needs a 16 on her attack roll and gets a 13 and still hits she might say "Hey, my weapon is at least a +3, I didn't even know it was magical!" I've had players

who could deduce the monsters' AC, the magical plus of their character's sword or a monster's magical protection just by a few dice rolls. Changing a creature's AC because of high Dexterity can put the players off but soon you may have no normal creatures.

I think allowing players to roll the monster's attack is also a bad idea. All I need now is for them to be able to deduce the plus of their armor or the opponent's weapon bonus. It also makes them feel in control that is contradictory to the general mood a RAVENLOFT adventure. They should instead feel that they are being controlled. I, therefore, go as far as not letting the players see their attack rolls. They still roll but not where they can see. I determine if it is a hit or a miss and then describe the swing.

A monster's attack can be made very frightening, as was described in the introduction of RA1 *Feast of Goblins*, but that's only because the DM describes the attack as such. There is little time to do this between a hit and a player rolling damage; the player doesn't even pay attention if you try. Now you can describe the whole battle in whatever way you want and have the players' full attention. A vampire could catch the fighter's arm; a sword could bounce off the dragon's scales with a shower of sparks; a thief could somersault out of the way or a goblin tumble through the character's legs.

This inevitably slows down the game's pace a bit but forcing the players to make battle decisions on the spur of the moment should maintain the atmosphere. Darkness becomes much more terrifying instead of a flat -4 attack penalty. Describe it, "As you swing wildly into the darkness, you hear a sword as it slices through the air near your head. The swing leaves you disoriented but the scuffling ahead is certain to be your foe—or at least it should be." The players will start wondering if they are facing the same direction or that what they heard is actually their enemy and not a companion. With an exchange of shouts, this predicament should be straightened out but what a shame the monsters now know exactly where each

character is.

This technique coupled with the previous one has been a backbone of the horror generated in my RAVENLOFT campaigns. If you run such a campaign, try them. It's helped me a lot to jot down notes and hit points. However you implement these procedures, always remember to keep the players wondering.

Mohammed F. Kamel  
Cairo, Egypt

I am responding to the letter written by Nicholas Abruzzo in DRAGON #187, in the hope that I can help him and his DM. I am one of the "serious role-players" he was asking for. I have been playing the D&D® and AD&D games since 1977, and I have a B.A. in History from San Jose State University. I'll draw on both of those aspects of my life to try to help.

I have not bought the AD&D 2nd Edition game, but the question of alignment and paladins should still be answerable with 1st Edition rules and common sense. The *Player's Handbook* states that lawful good characters hold truth as a "highest value," and "life and beauty of great importance. The benefits of this society are to be brought to all."

Keeping the above in mind, I do agree with your DM on one point, your killing the wounded that are dying on the ground is not consistent with a lawful good character, especially a paladin. A class of char-

acter that holds life so dear would not kill even evil beings that lay helpless and defeated on the ground. That is not a lawful action. Paladins follow the rules of chivalry and fair play. They challenge evil in order to destroy it, they defend themselves when attacked, and they defend others who are being unjustly attacked.

Killing a being that has attacked you in our society is self defense. Killing one after that being is no longer a threat is murder. The same could be said for your situation in the game. I'm sure the evil temple was exploiting and mistreating the people in its area of influence and so your paladin was justified in joining the adventure to put a stop to it. He was justified in defending himself when the evil followers attacked him. Once the fight was over, and the remaining evildoers were wounded and dying, they posed no threat, and a paladin would not slay them.

Your DM is going overboard in saying that a paladin would take them back to be converted. I agree with Nicholas that this would be impractical, and it is not the paladin's job. Paladins are not evangelical; in other words, they do not seek to bring converts to their faith. Paladins are the warriors and defenders of their church, law, and good. They would be honored if a person converted to their faith because they were impressed by the paladin's good example, but they do not bring evil beings in for forced conversions.

Your defense of your actions by saying you were carrying out the justice of your church is, shall we say, a very old excuse used throughout history. Following that logic, one could actually argue that the Pharaohs who enslaved the Israelites were lawful good; were they not simply carrying out justice based on their beliefs? Your own witch-burning example is proof of this. Many of the church officials in the Middle Ages did not try to convert the witches because they knew that many times the charge of witchcraft was false! The royalty and the church wanted the land that the "witch" lived on and so the accusation was made and person burned at the stake! Hardly a lawful good thing to do!

So what's a paladin to do? I think you have two options. Bind the evildoers' wounds and tell them to leave and never return, or leave them where they fell and thus their fate is in the hands of the gods. If you were a chaotic good fighter, your actions would be just and in character. But a lawful good paladin tempers justice with mercy. It's true you are risking having to fight those men of darkness again by letting them live; but a paladin's deep respect for all life and his unfathomable faith would mean that he'd accept that as part of the possibilities of life.

That fact is what makes paladins one of the most challenging classes to play! You don't have to play stupidly if you're lawful good, I agree. You do, however, have to realize that in being lawful good—especially a paladin—your character would have faith in her god or fate that allows her to let foes go free and to show mercy to those she's bested, even when it means perhaps having to face adversaries again.

I hope that the bad experience you had does not discourage you from playing a paladin, Nicholas. If you can master the class, you truly are a good role-player. I hope both you and your DM can come to terms on what a paladin is. Good luck in your future adventures, be just and merciful, true and stout-hearted, and count yourself among the truly few and proud—the paladins.

Todd A. Silva  
San Jose CA

Nicholas Abruzzo and his DM (from issue #187) both need to do more thinking about alignment in general, and lawful good in particular. Assuming the facts as given are true, both are correct. A proper lawful good character should want to do both, heal the evil wounded and take them back to be converted, following which they should be tried and executed for their crimes.

Law does not say you escape your lawful punishment just because you are sorry. Such changing of your mind is a clearly chaotic concept, not to be rewarded. Indeed, the very idea of change is chaotic. The law states that if you commit a crime, you are to be punished in a certain man-

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ner. Our lawful good converts should agree with this logic. If they don't, they are not proper converts and deserve punishment all the more. Note, too, that they are to be tried and executed. To imply they might get off is to say the appointed enforcers of the law arrest innocent people or the court lets guilty beings go free, both clearly chaotic heresies no proper lawful being should pollute his mind with. So they are to be tried and executed.

Abruzzo wants to plead hardship here, but does an incomplete job of it. All he demonstrates is inconvenience, and alignment is supposed to inconvenience you, just as it is supposed to provide benefits. He has to show near-impossibility, which may not be hard to do. If he is on a lawful good mission, taking the prisoners to his base is going to interfere with that, which is something a lawful good being should find very difficult to accept. But if he is merely adventuring, he has now acquired a lawful good goal, escorting the prisoners back for conversion and punishment, and only the presence of a greater goal allows any other behavior.

But he may well have a proper mission here. If he was sent out to eliminate the evil temple and its assassins, he may have to deal with these prisoners in some quicker way in order to achieve his goal. Under such conditions, he may be forced to use less formal methods to the same end. Thus, he would heal the prisoners to the point they could understand a conversion attempt, give them a quick chance to convert, and then kill them for their crimes.

Of course, we must keep in mind the possibility of atonement. This is a difficult area because law says you have a duty, period. You must provide certain services whether you receive any reward for doing so. Thus, your prisoner has a duty to atone for his crime, by betraying his evil companions, telling you where the treasure is, etc. That he might escape his deserved punishment for his crime by doing his simple duty is hardly an acceptable position. Still, there will be cases where his atonement will advance the cause of law more than his crimes have hindered it. The cop who commits a crime so that he is accepted by criminals and can capture them for their punishment is acting lawfully. So, one can't reject atonement out of hand, but one must be suspicious and willing to impose punishment where the atonement is insufficient. The cop who commits felonies to capture a person who commits misdemeanors goes to jail.

Keep in mind that lawful beings are big on form. The very idea of law requires devotion to the letter of the law. As much as possible the proper procedures must be followed both in converting and executing the prisoners.

Lawful good is lawful as well as good and both aspects are of equal importance.

David Carl Argall  
La Puente CA

I am writing this letter in response to Nicholas Abruzzo's "lawful good" question from issue #187.

Having played the AD&D game for seven years now, I, too, have had many problems dealing with alignment, particularly lawful good.

The subject has been discussed in depth within our gaming group, yet no agreement has been made. One very bold player stated that a paladin could do anything, as long as she repented afterward by praying to her god. This player's paladin soon became a fighter.

Another thoughtful player brought up the idea that a paladin always helps those in need, regardless of their intentions. To this player's surprise and anger, he soon found a dagger protruding from his back.

The majority of players thought that a paladin should not be allowed to attack another unless in self defense and then only restrict, never kill unless absolutely necessary.

Myself, being the DM for the group, found it necessary to create and enforce my own opinion. Here it is.

I first made a breakdown of the two words and defined each individually. Lawful, from the root word law, obviously means that a paladin should obey the law.

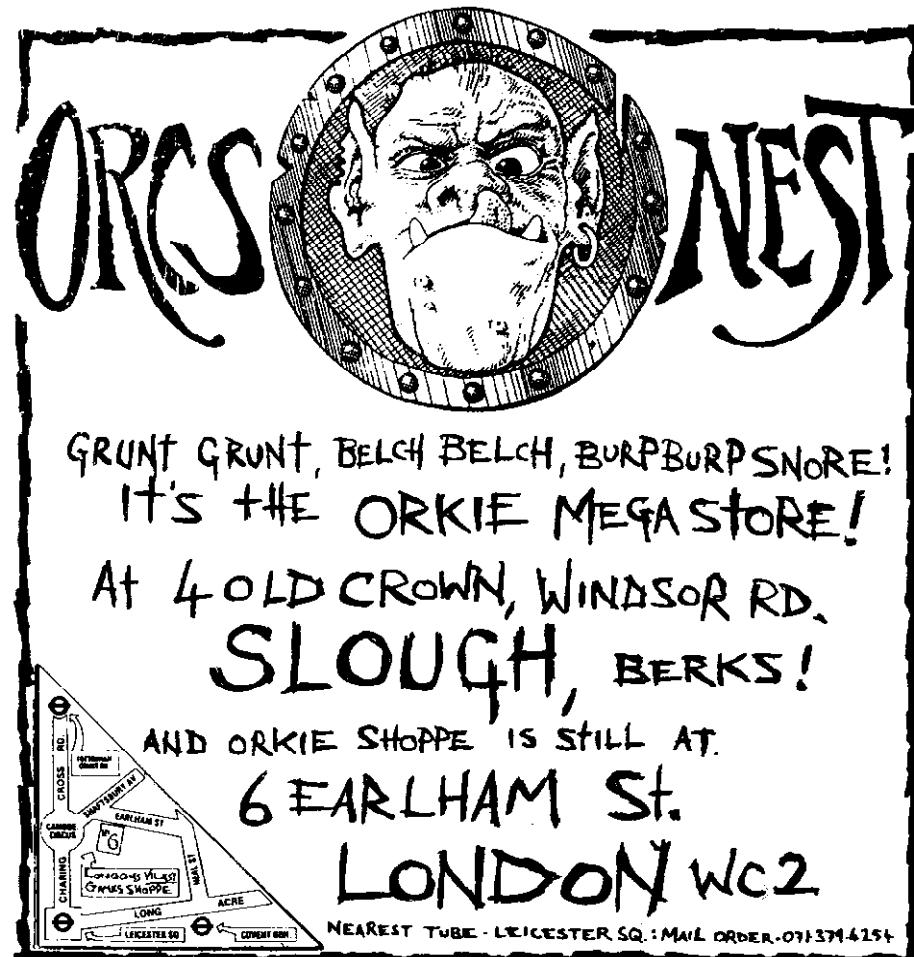
Good, meaning commendable, right, and proper, is the more difficult of the two to define.

If you were to play a paladin that obeyed all the laws, and helped everyone on his way, as well as being proper by not inflicting injury upon anyone, he would quickly deteriorate into a volunteer worker with chronic "help-others" disability! This is not the type of adventurer I would appreciate in any campaign so I revised my definition.

A paladin should obey all the laws, so long as they do not endanger his life, those of his close friends and family, or his church. He is never the first to take the offensive in an encounter but is free to retaliate if his life is in danger. He will never torture, steal, or kill unless in self defense or mercy. However, he will never obey these rules to obvious stupidity.

In your case, I believe you did the right thing. You not only ended the suffering of the evil acolytes and assassins, but used a creative and appropriate phrase in the process. I commend your performance. I would use your response as an example of proper paladin procedure.

Chad Cuss  
Lisle, Ontario  
Ω



## Letters

Continued from page 4

*The illusory or false Elminster takes the damage and is "slain." (Did anyone say, "Elminster is dead! I don't believe it!" I thought not.) The Mage of Shadowdale, meanwhile, is hanging out invisible or in a nearby extradimensional space, watching the proceedings and chuckling. When the decision to bring him back is made, Elminster pops in a raccoon. (How does he get the raccoon? Well, if gnomes can speak the language of woodland beasts, why not he? Perhaps he had a gnome available as translator. In any event, it is a small matter for him to get a raccoon that can take cues and act Elminster-like.) Tragedy strikes for the poor raccoon as the barbarian decides to send "Elminster" back to his eternal rest.*

*Now, "Elminster" is fully dead and, with the exception of the PCs who died in a fair fight (such that the druid who was the only spell-caster left standing) and the raccoon, there is little lost. Elminster is now at his liberty, with everyone thinking him deceased, to move at will. Elminster once noted, "I get the most work done when folk think I'm dead. It's better than a vacation!" Elminster has some free time on his hands-time enough to plan revenge.*

*Nothing major, of course, unless the PCs were particularly nasty to his "double." ("Let's cut his head off, just to be certain.") No, Elminster's revenge likely will take the form of the only innocent hurt in the whole proceedings—the raccoon. Yes, the PCs will find raccoons teleported into their beds at night. Strangers will buy them raccoon-flavored margaritas at inns, then disappear. Ghostly raccoons will appear in the dungeons, then pass through the walls. Gold, gems, jewelry, and equipment will disappear, with nothing to be found but raccoon paw-prints on the insides of bags, packs, and pouches.*

*I would hate to be the coonskin-capped barbarian. Druids, rangers, and gnomes will be distant, if not insulting to the PC and his friends. Bards will sing of "The Barbarian Who Confused a Raccoon with a Dragon." Children will point and laugh. The Harpers may become involved.*

*Remember, part of Elminster's power is that he is well-known and liked among both the powerful and common folk. The barbarian might just as well change his name to Raccoon-killer for the duration.*

*Don't worry too much, after a year or so of this tormenting Elminster probably will get bored with it—at his age, his attention spans not what it once was—although he will intermittently return to this theme for a decade or two.*

*In short, while your PCs may think they've nuked Elminster, they have instead grabbed a dragon by the tail and have set themselves up for retribution. It'll take more than a party of adventurers to take out The Mage of Shadowdale. We tried (check out the Avatar Trilogy of novels), but Elminster just keeps going and going—a fantasy version of the Energizer rabbit.*

Jeff Grubb

## First Quest

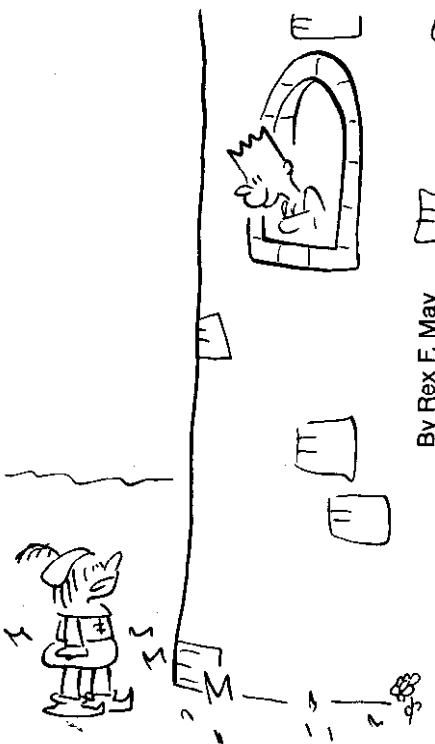
Continued from page 8

("I'm gonna kill you, Lassie!" screamed one Marine at a particularly sensitive and touching moment.) My Vargr, however, didn't hold a candle to Dave Blutarsky, private occult investigator.

Dave was my first CALL OF CTHULHU\* game character, played after I'd run the game for years. I knew that no matter what we did, the characters were doomed to go insane and die. I decided my PC would be crazy before he even started play. Dave Blutarsky, a burned-out war veteran who had a B.A. in military science, also had a business card that carried his name and profession with the reassuring note: "I have a degree in killing from Northwestern University, and I saw things in France in 1917."

Dave knew, absolutely knew, that there were unearthly things out there trying to conquer the world, and he knew they would definitely try to kill him first. He spent every last penny he had on firearms and ammo, then borrowed more money from the other characters and bought even more. The group came to fear his eager look more than the alien monstrosities they searched for.

Dave never saw combat with any alien monstrosities, however. After an unfortunate incident involving a stray cat hiding in a bush, the rest of the group had Dave arrested and sent to prison for 5-10 years



"Oh, no, Rapunzel...  
not you, too!"

on weapons-related charges. He was later kidnapped by space aliens, frozen for several decades, then thawed out in time to join a campaign of West End Games' GHOSTBUSTERS\* game. He was given an unlicensed nuclear reactor as a weapon, with which he burned down a grocery store while checking a report involving demon-possessed cereal boxes. ("All in a day's work!" said Dave.).

The CALL OF CTHULHU\* game also produced Mortimer Methuselah Northrop III, a hunchbacked laboratory assistant who once worked for a mad scientist until the latter blew himself up. "Nort" was fond of dressing in World War I aviator goggles and leather helmet, a colorful flying scarf, and a black undertaker's suit. A proud graduate of Warren G. Harding High School in Akron, Ohio, Nort carried around the brain of his third cousin "for research purposes." I can't remember his fate, but I don't think it was particularly good.

The character folder was full of other little memorabilia: a sketch I made of Cyragname on his axebeak mount (he had two, one for riding and one for cargo); a unit logo from the "Bad Boys" 151st Dungeon Buster's Army ("We steal from the rich to make ourselves rich!"); a note passed to a CALL OF CTHULHU\* game master stating that Dave Blutarsky was "taking a sabbatical to get first-hand experience in military science across America"; a list of monsters one character met, including a red dragon whose napalmlike breath was a quarter of a mile long; a personal history of a Norse cleric PC from "Belushia"; and a detailed account of the "Rumble on Luna," in which Snowy Humber, his ape-friend Joe, and a few other luminaries killed the second-to-last avatar of the villainous Sarth the Bastard (those avatars were the pits, each one worse than the one before).

I closed the folder reluctantly. The threads of role-playing have been woven into my life for over 15 years, but that first moment in Lannie's living room, rolling six-sided dice while helpful gamers pointed out all the rules I needed to know, seems like it happened just last weekend.

I wonder sometimes where everyone is who ever gamed with me. Wherever you are, my characters and I wish you well—and thank you for not beating me up. It was great. Ω

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# Role-playing

## Review

### Hitting the decks

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Photography by Charles Kohl



When I begin a review article, I gather products along a common theme. In this installment, I'm focusing on cards games. Below, you'll find in-depth reviews of four small-press games that caught my eye, plus a selection of several others worth mentioning (including one by a larger press, two older small-press games that still show up at conventions from time to time, and one game from Great Britain).

What you won't find herein is a review of WotC's MAGIC: THE GATHERING® game, despite the fact that as I write this, roughly six months after its release, it is still the single most-talked about game in

#### Role-playing games' ratings

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

the industry. The reason is that Allen Varney already reviewed the game in DRAGON® issue #201 (making some very insightful comments about its social appeal, I might add). It seems to me that I can hardly write a card-game review column without at least mentioning the MAGIC: THE GATHERING game in some way. (Okay, I lied. Despite the fact that Allen beat me to the punch, I've really wanted to review the game, and the only way I can get my comments past Dale is to include them in this introduction.)

First, I'm thrilled that Wizards of the Coast has had such success with the product. One of the reasons I like working

in this industry is that I get vicarious pleasure out of watching other people have fun, and that same nature makes me happy to see other game producers succeed, especially when they are as nice as the WotC people seem to be.

But I want to speak for a moment to a hitherto unidentified slice of the population, those unfortunate social outcasts who don't like the MAGIC: THE GATHERING game. I'm here to say that it's okay not to like it. You don't have to feel like a complete ingrate if that's your opinion. As a matter of fact, I have to admit that I don't much like the game myself. Don't get me wrong: I'm not saying that it is horrible. Actually, as far as card games go, it is a pretty good design (despite the fact that the rules are less than clear in a number of places). The cards are so darned pretty that I want to like the game. My problem is that the game just doesn't feel like what it is supposed to represent. In other words, a titanic struggle between rival wizards, drawing upon the very world itself for energy, and sending magical creatures and spells out to do their bidding, shouldn't be so random in what comes up next, nor so mechanical in its conduct.

On the other hand, if you do like the game, you are certainly in good company. It is hard to argue with success, and there is no denying the game's tremendous popularity. In making my complaint about it, I've probably offended three quarters of the gaming population. That accomplished, let me get on with my promised reviews.

## QUEST FOR THE FAYSYLWOOD\* game



Boxed deck of 112 cards, rules sheet, turn sequence reference card  
Faysylwood Press \$12.95  
Design: David Shaw  
Rules editing: Helga Baten, Patrick Haynes, Ken Steele  
Art: Tom Frank, Caryn Cooke, Mary Macvoy, Richard Voros, Wes Johnson, Josh Stainton

In this game, the players take the roles of competing gods, each of whom has sent a mortal champion to look for the legendary Faysylwood. Gameplay centers on the progress of these heroes' individual quests. By the play of cards, players determine what terrain their champions pass through on their quests, what creatures they encounter therein, and what treasures and equipment they collect along the way. Players can play cards on their own heroes, advancing their own quests, or on other players' heroes, tossing dangers and difficulties in their way. The player whose hero first finds a complete path—five clear terrain cards—to the Faysylwood wins the game.

According to the box, the game is intended for two to eight players aged 12 and up, and average playing time is two hours. From my own play, I'd say ten-year-

olds should be able to handle the game quite well, and sessions with four or fewer players actually take about an hour or so to complete.

There is a lot to like about this product. The cards are both attractive and durable. They are of the same stock as normal playing cards, with the same glossy finish to protect them from wear and make shuffling and dealing easy. Their backs are done in color. The playing side of the cards bear black-and-white drawings that are at the same time interesting to view and readily identifiable during play. Along the sides of each is an identifying word, and there is an explanatory phrase or two at the bottom of each, revealing any special conditions for their play. (For example, the champions in the game are each represented by a card, and they each have some special ability listed here to distinguish them from the others. The thief, for instance, has a chance to avoid monsters and steal their treasures while doing so, while the fighter is identified as being able to generate a second random number in physical combat, if the first results in defeat.)

Each corner of the cards bears a number for use in play. The upper left number is physical combat strength; the upper right is magical combat strength. Both bottom corners bear the same number, which serves as a random number during play. To explain, the fighter has a physical combat strength (upper left corner, remember) of 3. In physical combat, his player would draw the next card from the deck and add to his strength the random number in its bottom corners (ignoring everything else listed on the card drawn). If the fighter were carrying a normal sword—which has a physical strength of “1”—he'd get to add that to his total as well. Most of the cards also bear some sort of spell name along their top edge. The “City” terrain card, for instance, has “Finger Bolt” listed at the top. Such a card can be played as a bonus to a hero's magical attack value, much as the fighter uses the sword in the above example. Unlike physical weapons, which can be used over and over, spells are discarded when played.

Here's a quick recap, then: Cards are identified as to primary purpose by a word along each side, but some can be used as spells, instead, if a player chooses (and given a hero who can cast spells). All can serve as a random number, instead of either of these options, if drawn from the deck for that purpose. If this sounds at all complicated, it really isn't. There is an illustration in the rules to make it all clear, and the card layout itself reminds players during the game.

Speaking of the rules, they are a study in clarity. Well written and nicely organized, they are both easy to learn and to refer to during play. What's more, they are complete. No need for house rules to cover some gap during play. That's surprising and applaudable, considering the amount

of flexibility the game demonstrates during play.

Play is story-like, with heroes traveling through terrain that is sometimes friendly, other times hostile. There are cities, rivers, plains, swamps, forests, mountains, deserts, and even a magical pool. As heroes travel, they have encounters, from apprentices and followers who can join their quest, to brigands who can be hired to steal from another hero or hydras and dragons. If combat ensues, after a player's hero defeats a creature, the player can play treasure cards into the hero's possession (gold, armor, and weapons—magical and not—and special items such as staves and scrolls), based upon the creature's treasure capacity and the treasure's point value. Some creatures such as wolves and bears, have no treasure.

Interestingly, players may choose to play monsters on their own heroes, specifically to gain treasure, but this can be dangerous. If the hero gets a low random number and the monster a high one, it can be deadly. However, if a hero dies, the player is not out of the game. The player must discard all terrain and treasure cards the hero has accumulated, then starts over from scratch.

Like many multi-player games, players tend to gang up on whomever is currently ahead, giving others a chance to catch up. Besides monsters, there are droughts, famines, fogs, and earthquakes to toss on other players. Given the mix of different heroes, terrain types, creatures, and a wide range of equipment and special occurrences, gameplay is always different. As with many good games, winning relies on sound strategy, with some luck in drawing needed cards.

There isn't much to complain about concerning this product. About the worst that can be said is that the color on the box and card backs is a bit bland. My recommendation is, if you see a copy of this game, buy it. Or if you like, write for it at the following address:

Faysylwood Press  
380 Wellington Street, P.O. Box 23082  
London, Ontario  
CANADA N6A 5N9

## ONCE UPON A TIME\* game



Boxed set with 144 cards and a 4-page rules folder  
Atlas Games \$17.95  
Design: Richard Lambert, Andrew Rilstone, James Wallis  
Editing and coordination: John Nephew  
Editorial assistance: Zara Lasater  
Layout and graphic design: John Nephew  
Cover art and card borders: Kristen Copham  
Woodcuts: Eric Hotz

One exercise that some writers use on occasion as a spur to creativity is to write various words on slips of paper, then draw those slips at random from a hat and try

to build a story around them. The ONCE UPON A TIME game operates in somewhat the same way. Players are each dealt a hand of cards, each of which has a word or phrase printed on it—things such as "Town," "Giant," "Lucky," or "An Object Breaks." Then, by inventing a story that contains those elements, they are allowed to discard the appropriate cards. The first person to use all her cards wins the game.

There is a little more to the game than that, though not much. For one thing, there are actually two separate decks—one Once Upon a Time deck, and one Happy Ever After deck. The first deck is the primary one used in play. It contains characters, items, places, aspects (such as "Lucky" or "Sleeping"), and events (such as "An Object Breaks" or "An Argument"), all of which are called Storytelling cards. In addition, this deck contains Interrupt cards, each of which is tied to a particular type of Storytelling card. Finally, the Happy Ever After deck consists of cards that each have a story-ending sentence of some sort, such as "He picked up his weapon and went on his way," or "So he forgave her and they were married."

The players are dealt several Once Upon a Time cards (the exact number being based upon how many people are in the game), and a single Happy Ever After card. Then one person (by tradition, the person with the longest beard) begins play by starting a story and discarding cards that represent its details as it unfolds. The storyteller remains in control of the story until one of the following occurs: 1) The player cannot think of a way to work the remaining cards held into the story, in which case the player discards a card and draws a new one, and control of the story passes to the player's left; 2) Another player seizes control of the story, either by playing an Interrupt card that matches the most recent story card played, or by playing a normal card for a story element that has been mentioned, but for which the storyteller played no card; or 3) All Once Upon a Time cards the storyteller holds have been played and the player's Happy Ever After card can logically end the story, in which case the player wins the game.

Physically, the package is fairly attractive. The box cover has a colorful, fairytale-like illustration, and the text is set in an elegant font, appropriate to story books. The rules are nicely laid out, printed in dark brown ink on light brown paper, and decorated a bit with curlicues, sample cards, and boxed text. The cards themselves—the core game component—are somewhat disappointing, however, especially considering the game's price. They are apparently varnished white cardstock, printed in green on one side, brown on the other, with square-cut corners, and with just enough variation in sizes to make shuffling somewhat difficult. As supplementary cards to a board game, they would be about standard; but as the main component, they leave something to

be desired. This is not to denigrate their artfulness, however. The typesetting and woodcut illustrations they bear are quite nice.

In terms of play value, the game has some problems. Depending upon how one looks at things, there are either too few rules or too many. On the one hand, the main thrust of the game is the joint invention of an entertaining story—which is an inherently cooperative act, and a creative one, almost the antithesis of competitive, rule-bound play. On the other hand, there are strict rules as to how cards can be played, and a specific manner in which the game can be won. This prompts for competitive play. Any hard-and-fast decisions as to what constitutes fair play of a card in a particular situation is left to group vote, again a cooperative activity. In the end, the game fails to deliver either as a joint storytelling session or a competitive card game. In a less expensive product, this would be more forgivable. Ultimately, then, the ONCE UPON A TIME game falls short of delivering for its price.

If you are interested in this game, but can't find a copy at your local hobby shop, you can write to the publishers at the following address:

Atlas Games  
P.O. Box 406  
Northfield MN 55057

### DARK CULTS\* game

108 playing cards; rules sheet; 16-page, 5½" x 8½" magazine, with bound-in character sheet and supplementary cards; all in a resealable plastic bag

Dark House \$7.00

*Design:* Kenneth Rahman

*Art:* Eymoth



I really wish Dark House had named this game something else. I'm sure to get letters of complaint about this column, containing, as it does, two (count 'em, *two*) games with some version of the word "cult" in their titles. The thing is, the DARK CULTS game doesn't really have much of anything to do with cults. Rather, its players take the roles of two primal forces—Life and Death—wrestling over the fate of a character in a Lovecraftian sort of world. They affect that character's fate by play of cards, gaining points by the type of cards they play. Once the deck has been exhausted, points are totaled to determine a winner.

The DARK CULTS game was originally published in 1983, with just the cards and rules folder, then republished in 1985 with the magazine and sticker. I've chosen to include the game in this review, roughly ten years later, because: 1) It hasn't been reviewed in DRAGON® Magazine before; 2) it is a game worthy of attention; and 3) when considered in tandem with the ONCE UPON A TIME game, reviewed just above, it sheds some light upon the differences between fiction and gameplay. I'll explain in a moment.

The DARK CULTS rules aren't long, but as with many inventive games, they can be a trifle difficult to grasp at first. A bit of judicious editing could have made things easier. Nonetheless, there is a helpful sample of play, and after a short practice run through a couple of turns, everything becomes clear.

To begin the game, players choose who will play Life and who will play Death. (The basic game rules are written with two players in mind, but the magazine in the 1985 edition includes modifications for four players in two teams, as well as separate rules for solitaire play). Next, the players take their respective reference cards, which detail how many points each gains for play of different card types: Life gains more points for playing Localities, Neutral Characters, and Escape cards; Death for playing Evil Characters, Danger, and End (death) cards; both score the same for Start, Save, Atmosphere, and Threat cards. Then they lay out the Pace Cards and Story Cards for play, and each player draws one Story Card. (Note that the cards in the game are of standard playing-card quality.) There is a detailed diagram in the rules for exactly where to place these decks, their discards, the players' hands, cards forming the unfolding story, and even the note paper for keeping score. Suffice it to say, however, that the center of the table should be reserved for play of cards in several parallel lines, and everything else should go somewhere around the edges. Finally, the players together invent a protagonist for the story their play will deal with (the 1985 magazine includes a character sheet to aid in this). The more clearly they imagine this character, the more fun they'll have.

Once everything is laid out, and the protagonist has been invented, play begins. Life starts, drawing a card from the Story Card deck, laying a card on the Story Line, and tallying the points for it. Rather than laying a card, the player may pass. That is because each card has a list of initials in its upper right corner, detailing what types of cards can follow, so that there is a sense of syntax to the developing story. A player might not be holding a card that can be played legally, or might not want to play it. (Life generally would not want to play an End card to kill the protagonist, for example. On the other hand, if Life does kill the protagonist, Death only gains half the normal points, so if Life is convinced that Death will play an End card on the next turn, this may be a good strategy.) In some cases, cards have a symbol that means the next player must play a card *before* drawing from the deck. If unable to do so, the player draws a Pace Card and plays it instead, which yields no points. (Pace Cards have simple slogans printed on them, things like "Unexpectedly," "Afterward," "Just As," "Beyond," and so forth.)

Note that if players pass, their hands will continue to grow, because they are draw-

ing a new Story Card each turn. But there is an upward limit of five cards to a player's hand. A player who is forced to draw a sixth card loses three points from the tally and may discard any number of cards. Players also have a chance to discard any number of cards when a story segment ends i.e., the protagonist escapes, is killed, or is saved (by a card signalling the arrival of dawn, for instance).

Strategy in the game, then, lies in choosing when to pass, when to play a card that requires the opponent to play before drawing, and how many cards to discard when the opportunity arises. It isn't the same level of strategy as that involved in playing Bridge, but it is enough to feel satisfying, without distracting from the drama of the protagonist's plight.

The only complaint I have about the game is that the final storyline always peters out rather lamely. Up to that point, protagonists set out, wander strange locations, encounter bizarre things, and either live or die. Once one dies, another is invented (I generally make it a friend or relative come to investigate the death), and goes through the same sort of procedure. The last story seldom gets resolved, because the deck is exhausted and neither player has any End, Escape, or Save cards to play. It is just a sort of anti-climactic ending to an otherwise engaging game. That is a relatively minor complaint to make, considering how much fun the game is overall.

If your local game store can't acquire a copy of the game for you, write to:

Dark House  
R. #1, Box 149  
Millville MN 55957

Now to the promised comments about what this game and the previous one demonstrate about the differences between gameplay and fiction.

It seems to me games that try to have players cooperatively produce a reasonable story with a unified plotline ultimately fail to be much fun. The problem is that a good plot just can't be written by committee. Sure, plenty of people can pitch in their ideas, but ultimately some dominant personality has to step forward and take charge, if the story is to be tied off nicely. Both the ONCE UPON A TIME game and TSR's old ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE game fall prey to this weakness of trying to achieve a coherent story by committee.

On the other hand, "story-telling" games that are fun to play tend to ignore any need for a central theme, and instead produce unrelated or only slightly related events. They focus on character and the joy in learning what happens to that character. Two prime examples are the DARK CULTS game and West Ends TALES OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS\* game.

Players of role-playing games will note a similar truth: The fun is in what happens along the way, more than in the arriving. Readers of fiction, on the other hand,

expect those elements to reveal a single, unifying thread of plot.

Still, it may just be possible to invent a satisfying game that really does create a unified plot. If so, it probably needs to be competitive, rather than cooperative, providing its players with a core set of elements, and then challenging them to combine them into a satisfying story before their opponents can do so. Making it work would certainly be an interesting design challenge.

## CREATURES AND CULTISTS\* game



8½" x 11" book with 128 bound-in cards,  
8 play sheets, 4 pages rules

Pagan Publishing \$6.95

*Design:* Jeff Barber & John Tynes

*Design consultation:* Dennis Detwiler,

Jonathan Tweet

*Editing and graphic design:* John Tynes

*Cover art:* Chris Pynoski

*Card art:* J. Iodd Kingrea

Pagan Publishing has been around for a few years now, and is primarily known for its magazine, *The Unspeakable Oath*, which is devoted to supplementary support of Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU\* role-playing game. I mean the word "devoted" in the strictest sense. The few issues of this magazine that I have seen have all struck me with their intensity. It is evident in their imaginative adventures, their informational articles, their often disturbing artwork, and their occasionally tasteless news and notes. (I would rather not have known about the Halloween surprise one artist sent the staff, but it has been mentioned in at least two issues, and depicted on the cover of one.) The contents of the magazine are certainly not the sort of material I want my children to peruse, but many serious, adult devotees of horror will find the magazine eminently satisfying.

Given the company's intensity, then, when I came across the CREATURES & CULTISTS game, I was surprised at just how lightheartedly silly it turned out to be, well, lightheartedly silly for a horror product. In the game, three to five players invent goofy Cthuloid-style cults, and then compete to see which can first summon its dark deity to destroy the world. For players of the CALL OF CTHULHU game, it is a refreshing change of pace from watching favorite characters slowly go mad while pursuing mind-blastingly horrible creatures from beyond time and space. In the CREATURES & CULTISTS game, the players' agents are obviously already insane: They serve those hideous creatures.

The components for the game are about what a person would expect, given the price. There is no color; everything is printed in black and white, though the game's cover and the cards are of a thicker, parchment-looking stock. For this review, let's start with the middle of the

book and work outward. The cards come in several sheets, bound into the center of the rule book. They are surprisingly well cut, easy to separate, and of a uniform size, making shuffling and dealing easy. After they are removed from the book, the next items bound into the books center are the play sheets. These sheets are all identical: Facing one end (to be turned toward the player) are a CREATURES & CULTISTS game logo, spaces for recording the cult's name, credo, symbol, and corporate ability in three skills—conjuring, sorcery, and thuggery—and a boxed set of numbers for recording accumulation of "fugly points"; facing the other end (to be turned toward the other players) are a large space for the cult's name, and three rows of boxes designating the individual cult members—thugs on the player's right and conjurers on the left. The rulebook itself consists of four pages of clear, though humorously written rules inside a cardstock cover. The inside front cover is taken up with four identical reference sheets for photocopying; the inside back cover is devoted to advertising other products from the company. The outside back is given over to ad copy that begins with the words "Die, cultist sleazoid!" In order to play, some pencils and a few six-sided dice are needed.

To begin the game, players each create a cult name, slogan, and symbol, then generate initial scores for their cult's conjuring, sorcery, and thuggery skills. Each person is dealt six cards. Once this set-up is done, play proceeds by *rounds*: A round is finished when each player has played one *turn*. The reason for this distinction is that during each round, one player's cult is "favored by the stars," playing last that round, but gaining a +2 bonus to all rolls during it. Determining who is "favored" is the first thing that happens in a round. Next, players all draw to replenish their hands to six cards. Then the player to the right of the "favored" person plays a turn, followed by the next person to the right, and so on.

During each turn, the current player must first play any Mondo cards held, drawing from the deck as these are played. Mondo cards are events that affect the player's cult. After all Mondo cards have been played, the player can then do any of the following, in any order: Play Event cards or Sorcery cards (each of which affects someone else's cult); attack other cults' members with Thuggery or Conjuring cards (one per cultist in the player's current row); discard any number of cards; and—if the cult is favored by the stars—attempt to summon its deity, destroy the world, and win the game.

A lot of the fun in the game is in the contents of the cards. Mondo cards may send Lovecraftian ghouls to give aid, the fungi from Yuggoth to buy brains from you, or your patron deity to swallow up a few of your cultists. An Event card might, for instance, have one of your opponent

cults mistaken for KKK members . . . in a rough section of Los Angeles. A Sorcery card might let you resurrect dead members of your own cult, or magically make attacks into another cult's cultists behind that cult's current row. Conjuring cards allow you to summon hideous creatures such as Hounds of Tindalos, Hunting Horrors, or Deep Ones to slay other players' cultists. Thuggery cards are weapons, ranging from knives and garrotes, to firearms, dynamite, and even the Big Honkin' Truck. They allow your cultists to make rolls to attack other players' cultists. Most attacks in the game allow some chance of the target defending, but there are also Defense cards designed specifically to save your cultists from death, slaying innocent bystanders instead, for example.

Each cultist has a modifier listed for Thuggery and Conjuring attempts. Thugs are best at the first and worst at the second; conjurers are the opposite, of course. Cultists also are each identified by how many fuggly points they are worth. So when one player's cultist kills another player's, the dead cultist becomes a fuggly-point award to the killer's cult. A cult cannot attempt to summon its deity until it has accumulated a minimum number of fuggly points (and the stars favor it, remember). Fuggly points also can be spent to gain bonuses to die rolls, and to achieve effects on a few special cards. (Note that, because the cultists are arrayed in rows, and because players can make conjuring and thuggery attempts only with the cultists in the current row, a player with only a few surviving cultists in the current row is somewhat handicapped, at least temporarily, even though the next row is likely to be full. It can be beneficial, then, to play a card that lets you sacrifice the remaining cultists in your current row, so as to open up a full one for operation.)

Many of the actions in the game are resolved by the roll of dice. Making a Thuggery attack, for instance, requires a 3d6 roll versus your cult's Thuggery skill, with a modifier for the specific cultist conducting the attack, and for the card (weapon) being used to make it. Whenever a dice roll is made, a "spooge" (outstanding success) yields some wild and wooly effect beyond the norm, and a "boof" (critical failure) results in a groaningly terrible botch of some sort. Most of the cards have special results listed for spooges and boofs, making these rolls truly dramatic.

By and large, the game is well designed and a lot of fun to play. There is only one problem really worth mentioning, and that is that there is one card in the game that can make a target cult automatically boof its next roll, and it can be played at any time. Considering how difficult it is to get to the point of attempting to summon your deity, it is frustrating to have this card played on you and learn that you've boofed, with no chance of avoidance, which means that not only did you fail,

but your deity has eaten your cult and you're now out of the game. It's the sort of result that would be acceptable from a bad die roll, but not as an inescapable result of card play. Since the deck is shuffled and used again whenever all cards are discarded, there is a quite good possibility of this card being in play toward the game's end. I suggest that players make a house rule that the card results in a normal failure when applied to deity summoning. For a cleaner rule, you may prefer to have it not apply to deity summoning at all, or to take it out of the deck entirely before you play (though, admittedly, it is a lot of fun for causing boofs on other rolls).

It should be obvious by now that I'm quite fond of this game. In my opinion, it is a great value for a modest price. If you can't find a copy at your local game shop, you can order it direct from Chaosium (publishers of the CALL OF CTHULHU game) at:

Chaosium, Inc.  
950-A 56th St.  
Oakland CA 94608

If you wish to write to Pagan Publishing, you can contact them at the following address:

Pagan Publishing  
403A N. 8th St.  
Colombia MO 65201

### Short & sweet

The STAR FLEET MISSIONS\* game by Leanna M. Cole (Task Force Games, 14922 Calvert St., Van Nuys CA 91411; \$14.95). In this new beer-&-pretzels card game, players try to collect the most points in completed missions, by judicious use of a hand of ship cards. Players each hold ships from various races familiar to fans of the *Star Trek* TV series, and choose which to send on each mission. It is a simple, fast-paced game, with respectable components, for a reasonable price.

The STARSHIP COMMAND\* game by Michael J. Russell (Inferno Games, 3025 E. 5th St., Suite #18, Long Beach CA 90814; \$20). For its mechanics, this starship slugfest owes a lot to Avalon Hill's ENEMY IN SIGHT\* game. But then, so do a lot of other games. (As a matter of fact, the designers of the CREATURES & CULTISTS game, reviewed above, mention it as an inspiration, though I can't see its influence in their product.) It is rather pricey for the quality of its cards, but quite a bit of fun, nonetheless. Definitely a small-press package, this game comes in a cardboard tube about 13 inches long and 2½ inches in diameter.

The ROAD KILL\* game by Donald Greenwood, from a submission by Dan Verrsen (The Avalon Hill Game Company, 4517 Harford Rd., Baltimore MD 21284; \$29.95). Games about automotive combat ought to be easy to play, fast, and furious. This game is none of those. You know you're in for a rough time of things when the first page of the rules book has a technical definition for the word "Adjacent." In

play, cars seem to just leapfrog one another from ditch to ditch. Considering how many good car-combat games there are on the market, this one doesn't stand much chance of surviving the first heat. As a fan of many Avalon Hill games, it pains me to say so, but it's the truth.

*Destiny Deck*\*, Peter T. Busch and Dennis L. McKiernan (Stellar Games, P.O. Box 156, Swanton OH 43558; \$12.95). Not so much a game as a role-playing aid, the *Destiny Deck* consists of four decks of cards—Setting, Atmosphere, Challenge, and Bonus—intended to help game masters invent scenarios. Included is a four-page rules sheet, which is more a collection of helpful suggestions. The cards themselves each hold some central theme, with multiple variations listed in smaller type. The instruction sheet could have used a savage editing, as it is painfully inflated with a surplus of verbosity. But as a spur to creativity, the product works pretty well.

The TRIAL BY PYLON\* game by Vincent Miranda (Bar Sinister, Inc., 9156 Green Meadows Way, Palm Beach Gardens FL 33410; price: n/a). If you see this old game being promoted at a convention (which is where I picked up my copy), or on the dusty back shelves of a store somewhere, be warned. While its cards are exceedingly impressive, the game itself is truly awful. Unless you just like thumbing through pretty pictures and daydreaming about what is in them, avoid this product.

The JASMINE: THE BATTLE FOR THE MID-REALM\* game by Darlene Pekul (Jasmine Publications, address and price: n/a). Another old game that may be encountered at conventions, this product is slightly less pretty than the one mentioned immediately above, but demonstrates a much better sense of game design. It sets out to represent the political and physical battles of four fantasy nations, and does so nicely.

The EUROHIT\* game by Chris Baylis (FCB & Associates, 67 Mynchens, Lee Chapel North, Basildon, Essex, SS15 5EG, ENGLAND). In this British card game, players act as tour guides, leading dignitaries from city to city throughout Europe, while trying to avoid the hit man that is loose—at least that is the rationale. Gameplay involves traveling from city to city in a manner reminiscent of Parker Brothers' *Mille Bournes* game, and secretly passing a hit-man card from player to player. Players score points for the cities they visit, and for "hitting" other players' dignitaries. The physical components are terrible, but the game is fun.

I've just received word that The Avalon Hill Game Company is publishing the game in the United States under the title ASSASSIN.

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

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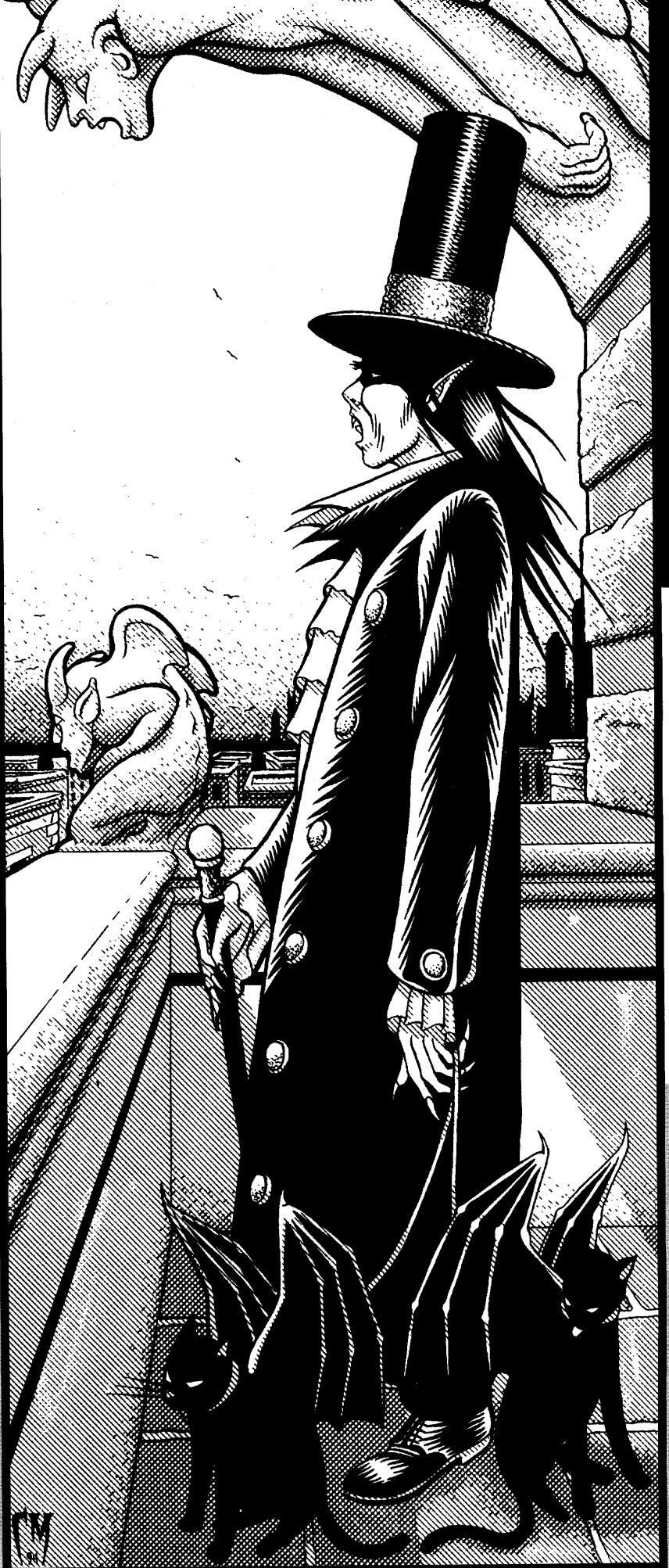
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# Sage Advice

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We are no longer able to make personal replies; please send no SASEs with your questions. (SASEs are being returned with writer's guidelines for the magazine.)

This month, the sage looks at some of the more unusual—and memorable—questions from the past year. As always, 100% of the questions were submitted in writing by the readership and have been edited only to improve readability.

**Here's a question on a solid topic; namely, a rock. Is a rock (a really big one, mind you) considered a thrown missile weapon when it is pushed off a ledge to drop onto a target below? If it was, then the attacker would get Strength bonuses to the attack and damage rolls, right?**

The strength bonus to attack and damage rolls do apply to thrown missiles. A rock dropped or pushed off a ledge, however, is not a thrown missile, no matter how big or small the rock is. To qualify for the bonus, a missile must be propelled solely by a character's muscle power, or by a specially constructed bow. "Sage Advice" previously has recommended that only composite bows should be allowed to grant strength bonuses to missile attacks, but this is not official.

**Could you establish some guidelines for the chances of hitting objects? For example, what is the armor class of the broad side of a barn? Any fool ought to be able to hit it, but if you assign it an armor class of 10, a 1st-level mage has a substantial chance of missing, even from three feet away. What is the chance for hitting the bullseye of a moving target in a shooting gallery? What does it take to hit a candle's flame with a sword without disturbing the candle? How hard is it to cut straps on an opponent's armor?**

Technically, AC 10 is the worst armor class in the game—things just don't get easier to hit than that. Note, however, that various modifiers can apply to attack rolls,

even against objects. Sleeping or magically held targets, for example, are hit automatically in melee. Barns don't actually sleep, but they aren't very lively either, so melee attacks generally hit them automatically. On the other hand, if a character was trying to chop a hole through a barn wall with a dagger, I'd require a successful attack roll vs. AC 10, because all the character's blows have to land in about the same place or the character never makes a hole.

Missile attacks are a different story. I suggest giving your barn AC 10, with a +4 bonus to the attack roll for a stunned defender. (Barns are rather passive, after all.) In this situation, your 1st-level mage sure could miss an arrow shot from three feet away. I don't have a problem with this; I've seen inexperienced archers attempting to shoot and some of them really could miss the broad side of a barn. Note that in this case, a "miss" probably indicates that the character completely flubbed the shot.

Shooting gallery targets can have just about any armor class you care to assign to them. Assuming that the gallery patrons are normal humans, I'd suggest AC 8 for stationary targets that are about the size of a man's chest, AC 4 for moving targets the same size, AC 0 for smaller moving targets and AC -2 for the target that can win the shooter the big prize. Note that such targets can be made much harder to hit by increasing their speed, and by nefarious tricks such as slipping badly fletched or crooked arrows to the shooter; if adventurers show up at a shooting gallery, the owner most likely will shut the place down or do something to stack the odds in her favor.

I'd suggest AC -2 for a candle flame, with a -4 attack penalty for snuffing it out without disturbing the candle.

Treat attacks on opponents' equipment as called shots (see *DMG*, page 58). When determining the results of a successful called shot, remember that an item such as a belt, pack strap, or armor strap might have as many as eight hit points (see *DMG*, page 38) and could very well survive a single hit. For more extensive optional rules covering hit locations and called shots, check out *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*.

**How do beholders reproduce? The Monstrous Compendium book lists their organization as "solitary" and describes them as "hateful, aggres-**

**sive, and avaricious." Divorces probably are common among beholders. How many hit points and eyestalks do baby beholders have? Would baby beholders have to leave their parents to avoid being eaten?**

Exactly how beholders procreate is unrevealed, but the *Monstrous Manual* tome suggests that beholder reproduction is parthenogenetic. That is, reproduction takes place without fertilization. This could explain why beholders are so grumpy all the time. In short, the most likely theory is that when conditions are right any mature beholder can give birth. A brood probably consists of 1-4 young beholders, and might require the body of a slain creature (perhaps even another beholder) to serve as an incubator. I suggest giving young beholders a minimum of 12 hit points—eight for the body, and four for the central eye. Infant beholders have a full complement of eyes.

I don't think beholders would eat their young, but they wouldn't hesitate to abandon them to save their own lives.

**Not long ago, my character had an accident with his spelljamming vessel—the reactor on his gnomish sidewheeler suffered a meltdown while in the phlogiston (and you know what that means). My character tried to steer the ship through a portal into Realmspace, but the ship blew up before it had exited the flow. The resulting explosion destroyed the ship, the portal, and a good portion of the crystal shell. (Fortunately, my character escaped via his amulet of the planes.) Since the resulting hole in the crystal shell is going to allow the phlogiston to rush into Realmspace, would that mean that Toril will be consumed in flames? If so, how much experience does my character get when the entire population (barring fire-resistant creatures) is killed? (A number rounded to the nearest million would be okay.) Does the character receive any additional experience from escaping the wreck?**

It's time for a few reminders about the properties of crystal shells:

First, all crystal shells are made of an unknown substance that is unbreakable; check out page 9 of the *Concordance of Arcane Space* (from the original

SPELLJAMMER® boxed set), for more details. Mortals cannot destroy or alter crystal shells, except in the limited manner described in *Concordance of Arcane Space*. Even a wish is ineffective. Exploding spelljamming ships aren't up to the job.

Second, crystal shells are so huge that the explosion in your example could not destroy a significant portion of even a small one. The Realmspace shell has an area of about 128,680,000,000,000,000 square miles (the planet earth, by contrast has a surface area of only 196,938,800 square miles). Even if the explosion created a fireball the size of the sun, the hole it would make would be a mere pinprick when compared with the size of the shell. The space inside a shell is so huge (*cosmically* huge) that time would end before enough phlogiston could leak in to flood the entire sphere, or even to threaten the outermost planets in the system.

Third, phlogiston does not tend to flow through holes in crystal shells. Every portal through a shell is a hole, but some barrier or phenomenon keeps the phlogiston out, though ships that locate the portal can pass through. Even if the explosion in your example "jammed" the portal open and allowed phlogiston to leak in, you'd probably just get a localized effect that looks just like a star embedded in the shell. Ships still could use the portal, provided their crews had enough nerve to dive into the heart of the star.

Finally, experience in the AD&D® game is awarded for success achieved in the face of a significant risk. Inadvertent destruction is not success, so even if your character had managed to incinerate all of Toril, he wouldn't be entitled to any experience for it. Your DM, however, might give the character a few experience points for surviving the wreck. How big the award is depends on the campaign, but it should be fairly small, 1,000 xp would be sufficient for a character rich and powerful enough to own a spelljammer.

#### **Can strong dwarven spirits replace greek fire?**

No, but they can come close. A flask of pure alcohol or very strong liquor would be slightly less potent, say 2d4 points of damage during the fist round, and 1d4 points the second round. (As opposed to 2d6 points of damage the first round and 1d6 points the second round for flaming oil; see *DMG*, page 63.) Note that what appears in the AD&D game equipment list as greek fire actually is just a kind of heavy fuel oil. Real greek fire, on the other hand, was something like the ancient worlds version of napalm. From all the accounts I've read, it burned hotter and longer than plain oil. Like napalm, it also stuck to whatever it hit. Also like napalm, it was self igniting (no wick or fuse required). This nasty substance might do 3d6 points of damage the first round, 2d6 the second, and 1d6 the third round.

**Suppose an old, toothless man is bitten by a vampire, then turns into a vampire himself. Will he grow fangs so he can bite his victims in the or does he have to do something else to drain blood?**

This is entirely up to the DM. Because AD&D game vampires are by definition creatures with blood-sucking fangs, it stands to reason that anyone turned into one would develop such fangs. On the other hand, there's no reason to assume that all vampires bite their victims' necks. In central European folklore, vampires drew blood from the chest. Chinese vampires have wickedly long and sharp fingernails, which serve as their primary weapons. So a vampire in the form of a toothless old man could drain its victims in any number of ways. Note that PCs might have a hard time detecting a vampire in this rather unusual form.

**In DRAGON® issue #193, you said rolls higher than 23 were impossible when using a vorpal blade. The molydeus tanar'ri carries an axe +5 that has the powers of both a sword of dancing and vorpal blade. Now, if the tanar'ri rolls a natural 20, his adjusted roll would be a 25 (which is higher than 23). Does he sever the neck with that roll?**

Yes, a roll of 20 severs the neck if the attacker has a *vorpal blade* and the opponent has a head. I'll reiterate my main point from issue #193 for the benefit of any reader who still is in the dark about this: an attacker armed with a *vorpal blade* cannot sever a neck unless the attack roll is 17 or higher. This is because the modified score to sever (see item description, *DMG*, page 186) can include only the *vorpal blade*'s +3 bonus, not bonuses due to Strength, situation, or specialization.

Of course, the molydeus' combination *vorpal* and *dancing* weapon introduces a few problems. For example, *swords of dancing* have variable bonuses, which range from +1 to +4 (see item description, *DMG*, page 185). Further, a *sword of dancing* can be made to dance only on a round when its bonus has fallen to +1. Does this mean the a molydeus's axe has a "dancing" cycle that is four rounds long instead of three rounds long? The DM also must decide what happens to the *vorpal* effect as the axe's bonus rises and falls. The simplest solution is to assume that the axe's bonus remains steady at +5, and that the axe can dance for three rounds at a time. If you take this approach, I suggest that you ignore the effect of the +5 bonus on attack scores to sever and to assume that the weapon severs a normal opponent's neck on an attack roll of 17+, a larger-than-man-sized opponent's neck on a roll of 18+, and a solid metal or stone opponent's neck on a roll of 19+.

**If greater powers cannot be slain, why does TSR, Inc. bother to print statistics for them?**

A deity cannot be slain, except by another deity of greater stature or a deity of any stature who uses an artifact. In material published for the AD&D 2nd Edition game, there are no statistics for greater powers. Instead, the rules give statistics for a deity's most frequently used avatar. An avatar is a physical manifestation of a deity's power. Avatars can be slain, but doing so does not slay the deity. Most deities can use more than one avatar at a time, check out *Legends & Lore*, page 6 for more details.

**Dear Mighty, all Knowing, and All Powerful, and Kind Sage. . . . I beg you to answer this question. . . . In the AD&D 2nd Edition game, how long does it take a character to memorize a spell?**

Boy, that's an awful lot of sucking up for such a simple question (an equal amount of sucking up followed the question, but I deleted it to save space), but you've got more class than the reader who offered me a bribe.

Wizard spells require 10 minutes of memorization time per level of the spell (see *PH*, page 81). That is 10 minutes for a first-level spell and 90 minutes for a ninth-level spell. It takes the same amount of time to pray for a priest spell (see *PH*, page 85).

#### **Pantheon of the month**

These are unofficial suggestions for using the optional spheres of priest spells from the *Tome of Magic* with the deities of the Japanese pantheon from *Legends & Lore*:

**Izanagi and Izanami:** Major: Time, Travelers; Minor: None.

**Amaterasu:** Major: Time, Wards; Minor: None.

**Tsuki-Yomi:** Major: Time, Numbers; Minor: None.

**Hachiman:** Major: Travelers, War; Minor: None.

**Susanoo:** Major: Chaos; Minor: None.

**Raiden:** Major: Time; Minor: None.

**O-Kuni-Nushi:** Major: Time; Minor: None.

**Ama-Tsu-Mara:** Major: Time; Minor: None.

**Inari:** Major: Time; Minor: None.

**Ho Masubi:** Major: Time; Minor: None.

**Nai No Kami:** Major: Time; Minor: None.

**O-Wata-Tsu-Mi:** Major: Time; Minor: None.

**Kura Okami:** Major: Time; Minor: None.

**Shina-Tsu-Hiko:** Major: Chaos; Minor: None.

**Amatsu-Mikaboshi:** Major: Time; Minor: None.

**Shichifukujin:** Major: Priest chooses one of the following: Time, Travelers, Wards; Minor: None.

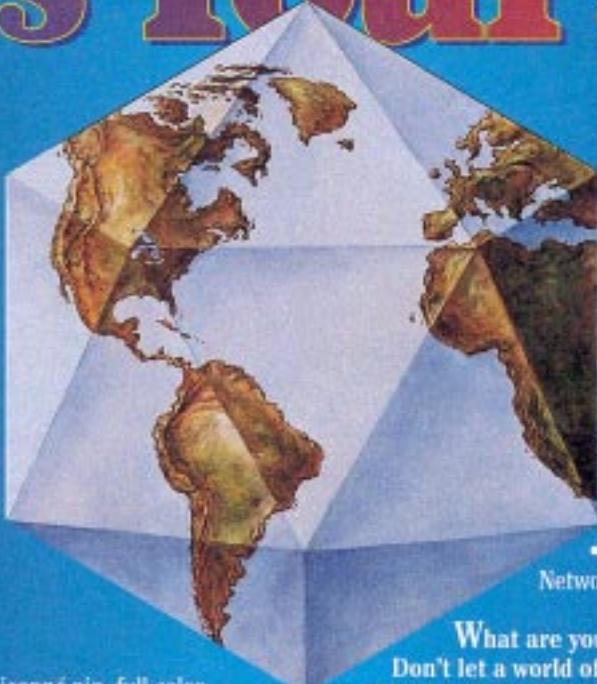
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Lem Stucker's Dragon Farm and Wrestling Show: "Dragons" in SJG's CAR WARS\* game

©1994 by Allen Varney

Artwork by Bob Walters

**T**he CAR WARS\* game, Steve Jackson Games' best-selling game of vehicle combat on the highways 50 years in the future, has developed an unusually broad setting for a board game. It takes place in a balkanized America where frontier fortress towns fend off assaults from cycle gangs—where no law guards you on the open road, unless LAW means the Light Anti-tank Weapon in the turret of your Republic Motors Peacemaker—where only well-armed auto-duellists can re-assert civil authority.

Civilization has more or less endured the Grain Blight, the Food Riots, fuel shortages, and a sharply limited nuclear war. The war took out only a few cities, including Kiev; Selma, Texas; and Lake Geneva, Wisconsin (now a popular tourist attraction: Divine Wrath Crater). Television, North America's number-two industry behind algae-food production, spotlights the duellists who compete in tournaments sanctioned by the American Autoduel Association (AADA). The AADA also lobbies for "the right to keep and bear vehicular arms," publishes authoritative road atlases, and provides many services to member travelers, something like a combination of the AAA, the NRA, and the NFL.

The CAR WARS line includes comprehensive rules for all kinds of vehicles from cycles to semi trucks to yachts to tanks; books of equipment and pre-generated designs; and sourcebooks describing its satirical, darkly humorous background. For more information, write to Steve Jackson Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin TX 78760-8957.

## Newswatch

**2004:** Harvard Medical School (Massachusetts) perfects technology for cloning mammals, after much preliminary work with lampreys, sharks, fish, salamanders, reptiles, and parakeets.

Florida alligator farming, begun in early 1980s, now a \$20 million industry (leather, food, souvenir skulls).

### LEM STUCKER'S DRAGON FARM *Best in the South!* 50 MILES STRAIGHT AHEAD

**2008:** Harvard, Stanford University (California), and Amalgamated Meditech form Mithrox, a joint initiative to create and patent new food animals (named for Mithra, Persian god who killed Ahuramazda's ox and thereby created all animals). The Rifkin Foundation, prominent anti-science group, stalls Mithrox initiative in the courts; however, research proceeds covertly.

Alligator farms now gross \$150 million per year. Lemuel Stucker, veteran of Second Civil War, returns home to Palm Beach and starts gator-farming.

### DRAGON FARM & RESTAURANT *Car vs. Dragon Wrestling!* 40 MILES—KIDS WELCOME All Major Credit Cards Accepted

**2016-21:** Grain Blight damages Florida's ecosystem and wipes out all alligator farms. Farm owners who survive later Food Riots look for other work.

Rifkin lawsuits mooted after Rifkin Foundation staffers, while attending a party, are electrocuted *en masse* when a margarita blender falls into a jacuzzi. Mithrox goes public with long slate of new bioengineered livestock.

### STUCKER'S FOOD & REST STOP **BIGGEST Dragon Farm in the South!** **DON'T MISS "DINO," FAMOUS** **DEINOSUCHUS!!!** **30 MILES AHEAD** **Se Habla Espanol**

**2035:** Greenhouse warming in Florida (summer day temperatures circa 120° Fahrenheit) helps ecosystem recover, suits Mithrox Species BA ("Big Alligator")-1. Lemuel Stucker, early adherent of BA-1 as a food source, re-opens alligator farm to disappointing business. Firefight on state road 802 destroys Mithrox truck, accidentally releasing three BA-1 mating pairs into nearby Great Marsh. Search patrols fail to locate them. TV newsmagazine *15 Minutes* breaks story; scandal forces Amalgamated Meditech to close Mithrox operation.

### THE SAILOR TRIED TO DOCK HIS BOAT THE SANDBAR MEASURED FORTY FEET BUT WHEN HE DOCKED THE SANDBAR MOVED— TO DINO THAT BOAT TASTED SWEET DRAGON FARM 20 MILES

**2042:** After three years of unconfirmed "giant gator" reports, skeptical Florida Highway Patrol officer Nathan Denzel narrowly avoids death when a 14-foot tail lashes out from the bushes and knocks his heavy cycle off the road. Denzel's frantic escape prompts FBI inquiry, U.S. Army "scour and neutralize" mission, and four competing docudramas.

Lemuel Stucker abandons gator-farming as previously practiced and tries a new, more successful strategy.

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09/14/43

*Palm Beach Shoulder Holster*

Dear Editor:

While returning home from a visit to relatives, our armored caravan stopped at a curious roadside establishment 60 miles south of Los Disney's. This "Dragon Farm" claims to display an authentic prehistoric dinosaur, a *Deinosuchus* (Latin, "terrible alligator"), which some laypersons still know by the obsolete name *Phobosuchus* ("horror alligator"). As professor of paleontology at Palm Beach Community College, I must scold the proprietor for this gross misstatement, for the putative "Dino" is obviously a specimen of *Alligator mississippiensis*—unusually large, granted, but differing from *Deinosuchus* in a hundred subtle ways. I call for the "Dragon Farm" owner, Mr. Lemuel Stucker, to correct his false claim, which can only spread misunderstanding among his visitors, many of whom are young children who cannot know better, given the squalid state of education in this country today.

Sincerely,

Professor Donald Skidnicker, Ph.D., PBCC

*Dear Prof: Seems to us if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and sounds like a duck, you can call it an alligator, but we'll all know it's really a dinosaur—or maybe even a "dragon"!—Eds.*

### YOU'RE ALMOST THERE! **LEM STUCKER'S DRAGON FARM** & family-owned **RESTAURANT & REST STOP** **VERO BEACH EXIT—5 MIN. EAST** **\*\*\*FREE PARKING!!!!\*\*\***

**2043:** Operation Dragon, an especially diligent search-and-destroy expedition, devastates BA-1 populations, but also devastates an upscale retirement condominium complex. A House investigative subcommittee recommends legislation (quickly passed into law) establishing nonviolent procurement of adult specimens and government sponsorship of their upkeep in zoos, wildlife parks, and "other recognized citizens' institutions".

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### Dino-Car wrestling

Lemuel Stucker's Dragon Farm lies on 14 verdant acres of coastal swampland five miles east of the patrolled and well-kept Highway 95, 60 miles north of West Palm Beach, Florida. Sturdy cypress trees line the farm's swampy edge, protecting it somewhat against hurricanes that strike every six to ten years. The only large building, the two-story 50' x 75' restaurant and souvenir shop with attached garage, has sort-of-yellow plasticrete walls (DP 15) that have stood through two hurricanes and look like it. The 30' fiberglass alligator on the roof can't hold up in a stiff breeze, but Stucker keeps a dozen replacements in a warehouse in West Palm Beach. (Warehouse space goes cheap in some parts of West Palm Beach.)

Other buildings, dating from the Farm's abortive period as a working alligator farm, have long since blown away. Everything left can stand the wind: the parking lot, concrete gator pit for Dino and associates, wrestling tarmac, and underground stockroom.

Lem Stucker (Driver, Mech, Gunner-1) runs the Farm with his large family: wife Charlene (Mech), 16-year-old Craig (Driver-1, Gunner), and the 12-year-old twins, Maggie and Sam (both Gunner-3, like all pre-teens in the CAR WARS game; see *Auto-duel Quarterly* magazine, Vol. 2/2). The Stuckers live above the restaurant. The referee can add cooks, wait staff, and maintenance people as desired. Each day at 6P.M. an Excalibur Deluxe van (*Vehicle Guide 2*, page 31) pulls in with 100 lbs. of government-surplus fish to feed Dino.

**Dino:** The Farm's star attraction lies in stinking green water in a 100' oval concrete pit. The pit holds a dozen young BA-1 alligators less than 12 feet long in the shallow end, and in the deep end, it holds Dino.

You can see Dino even when it's hiding underwater. It's too big—45' long, a third of

that its tail—not to mention too hideously blackish-green, to hide. Its eyes gleam darkly like a tinted visor, and its biggest teeth wouldn't fit in a gasburner's exhaust pipe. Not even the dumbest tourist gets too close to Dino.

Dino's hourly show lacks lavish production values. On the hour, Lem Stucker gives a brief talk to the tourists, recounting the history of the "prehistoric Deinosuchus dragon" miraculously recreated through genetic engineering. Meanwhile, son Craig drives a standard compact (referee's choice) onto the tarmac beyond the pit. Lem uses a 15' cattle prod to push the stodgy Dino onto the tarmac. There the overfed "dragon" engages in mock combat with Craig's vehicle, encouraged by the prod and by a small sack of fish on the car's roof. Craig fires paint clouds and smokescreens but no real ammo. All the while, Lem narrates a canned spiel with jokes about as funny as you'd expect.

After two minutes, Craig retreats in a simulation of terror, and Lem lets Dino return to the pit. The show usually goes over well, especially among out-of-towners. Perhaps world-wise duellists will yawn, but wait until they encounter one of Dino's wild cousins on the highway.

### In the wilds

You can hear the roars, especially during mating season, deep rumbles that vibrate in

your chest. Male dragons roar and also hiss loudly. But they keep quiet for hours at a time, lying partially submerged in mud, looking for all the world like sand bars. They strike from ambush with great success, eating large birds, fish, and pets that stray from the condo compounds—and, occasionally, duellists.

**Gaming the dragon:** A full-grown BA-1 "dragon" uses a single counter 3" long and 3/4" wide. It accelerates at 10 mph to a maximum of 20 mph on land or 30 mph in water; after five consecutive seconds above 10 mph, it must fall back to 10 mph to rest. The dragon has Handling Class 3 and takes no off-road penalties. It can make any maneuver except a bootlegger and never has to make a control roll. It attacks twice per turn, once with its teeth (range 1" in the counter's front firing arc, to hit 8, 3d6, no point-blank bonus) and once with the tail (range 2" in any of the three rear arcs, to hit 6, 2d6, point-blank bonus applies).

Target the dragon's body as a 40' bus; its mouth (10 DP) at -2; its tail (15 DP) at -3; and its feet as tires. Its thick hide works like non-ablative metal armor (five points in most locations), except that the armor isn't fireproof. Armor does not protect the mouth. A mouth, foot, or tail reduced to 0 DP gets blown off, but excess damage has no effect.

The dragon has a poor grasp of combat tactics. It likes to lie hidden, patiently, then

run at unwary pedestrians or vehicles and collide with them; it has DM 5 in collisions. Otherwise, it tries to bite the target that annoys it the most at the moment. When it takes damage, the dragon tries to flee anything larger than a subcompact. It also flees if it sees any flame weapon. Mothers show no loyalty to eggs or young.

In a scenario, a dragon works best in a sudden ambush to disrupt either a boat or a convoy of small cars or cycles. Then the dragon flees, and some more realistic threat takes advantage of the drivers' current disarray.

Note that Gold Cross usually cannot read a body that a dragon has killed. The reason is left to the referee's morbid imagination.

### Deinosuchus statistics

*Deinosuchus* – 45', teeth front (to hit 8, 3d6, range 1"), tail rear (to hit 6, 2d6, range 2"). Armor (as metal but not fireproof): F4, T6, U1, 5 all other locations; 40 DP; DM 5 in collisions. Accel. 10, maximum speed 20 (30 in water), HC 3; 4,000 lbs.

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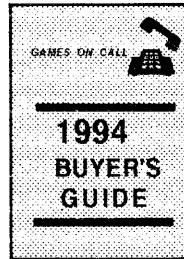
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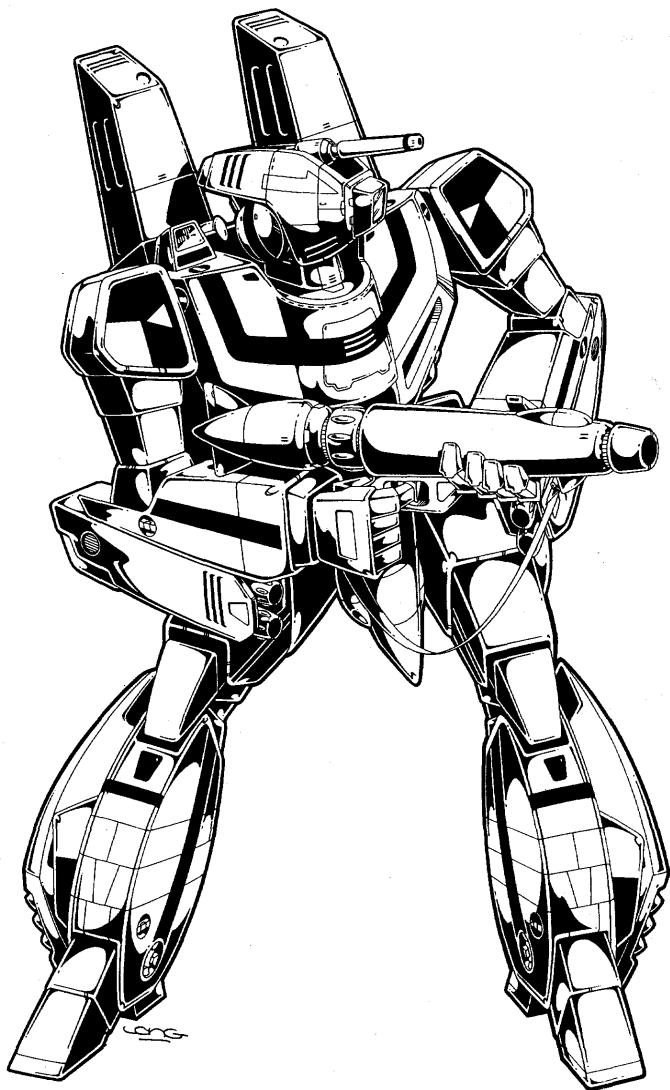
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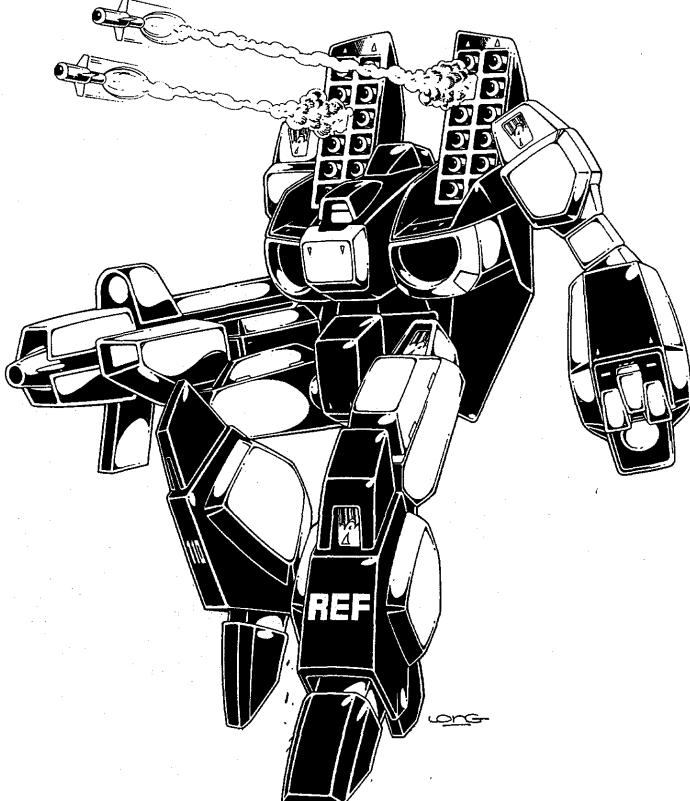
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o his parents he was Zachary Draper, or Zachary John Draper if they were exceptionally upset with him. To his friends he was simply Zach, although behind his back they were just as apt to call him "Zach the Slack," a nickname of which he was aware and that did not bother him in the least. After all, it was no secret that he took little interest in the things that his peers considered so important. He even took a sort of perverse pride in the moniker.

But to himself he was Master of Miniatures, Paragon of the Paintbrush, Conjurer of Colors. He was the Grand Master of an art form of which only an elite handful of the population was even aware, and that even fewer considered to be an art form at all.

Even now, Zach was preoccupied with thoughts of simulating dried bloodstains on a chain mail vest—a vest worn by a barbarian who measured 25 millimeters from helm to toe, so small that three of them could be hidden easily inside his fist.

Since the day several years ago when a classmate had introduced him to role-playing games, painting miniature figurines had become Zach's passion in life. Not merely slapping some paint on the figure so that, at a distance, it remotely resembled a real, living creature. For Zach, the goal was nothing less than perfection, to create the perfect illusion of reality on such a small scale. Toward this end, he had spent countless hours perfecting his techniques, so that the finished product possessed a feeling of miniaturized reality that never failed to put the viewer into a state of awe-stricken wonder.

As he arranged his worktable (which, once upon a time, had been a desk in his dorm room, now conspicuously bereft of books) for another painting session, Zach's eyes fell on his most prized possession, the only remaining paintbrush from a set his grandfather had brought back from France after World War II. This particular brush was used for only the most demanding and meticulous detail painting. The bristles came to such a fine point that he could paint a human hair pressed against a mirror without getting any paint on the mirror itself. The bristles were sable, the finest material for paintbrushes.

Zach didn't expect to need this brush again on this figure; all that remained to be done were the bloodstains, and a less precise brush would be more appropriate. Once he had mixed up a dried-blood color with which he was satisfied, he carefully dabbed a little of the paint on the chain mail vest, then applied a generous amount of the mixture to the blade of the sword that the barbarian held aloft.

Zach held the figure at arm's length and examined it with the mercilessly critical eye that he reserved for a finished product. Pleased with the result, he brought the figure closer and carefully examined each detail, not looking for mistakes as much as for areas that might in some way fail to contribute to the effect of the whole. Without a doubt, this was his best effort yet. The longer he gazed at the barbarian, the more convinced he became that there was little room for improvement. The armor looked exactly like armor, the hair and beard looked exactly like real

# A Brush With Life

by Tim Emswiler

*Illustrations by James Crabtree*

hair, and the musculature of the arms and legs practically rippled with life. The face, no larger than a dried pea, bore an expression of fierce aggression.

Nevertheless, Zach felt a nagging doubt that something was missing, one final touch that would make this figure undeniably complete.

Zach pushed his chair back from the desk and stood, stretching, hoping that a break would enable him to see the figure from a new perspective that might help illuminate the missing factor. When he returned to his seat, he saw almost immediately that something was lacking in the figure's face. He turned toward the wall on his right and looked at himself in the mirror mounted there. With a shock of inspiration, he saw it.

He looked again at the figure in his hand. Illuminated by the two gooseneck lamps, which eliminated any shadows, the minuscule eyes were as close to human eyes as had ever been achieved in such a tiny space, with the whites, the pupils, and the irises all rendered in delicate detail. But there was one addition to be made.

He plucked a jar of white paint off the shelf and armed himself with his grandfather's brush. He took a few deep breaths, held the last one, braced the heel of his brush hand against that of the hand holding the figure and, with an intensity of concentration known only to the most proficient Indian fakirs, added an almost invisible dot of white to each eye to represent the reflection of light off the moist surface of a real, living human eyeball.

And the figure blinked.

Zach blinked back, trying to dislodge whatever speck of foreign matter had caused this momentary aberration of his vision.

The barbarian blinked again.

Zach placed the figure back on the desk and proceeded to lovingly clean the paintbrush. He had been working on this figure for over two weeks now, and obviously he was suffering from the cumulative effects of prolonged periods of intense concentration coupled with an uncomfortable sitting position.

All of which proved to be of absolutely no comfort whatsoever when the barbarian stepped off of the base to which he had been mounted and strode purposefully across the desktop toward Zach.

"Great gods of Ravtecfol, you've done it!" the barbarian bellowed in a voice far too powerful to have come from such a tiny frame. "I knew that you could do it!"

After a seeming eternity of attempting to overcome his shock and disorientation, Zach managed with a superhuman effort to utter, "Do what?"

"Why, by the demons above and the angels below, bring me to life, you foolish sluggard!" the barbarian virtually roared. "Was that not, after all, your goal?"

"My . . . my goal?"

"Of course," replied the barbarian, obviously becoming exasperated with Zach's lack of comprehension. "Why else would you have striven so diligently for perfection?"

Suddenly Zach remembered a fantasy he had had while daydreaming (which he frequently did while waiting for paint to dry). It was right after he had begun to paint figures in earnest, and was still a long way from achieving the results that he envisioned in his mind's eye. In his

fantasy, the figures he painted came to life, but only after he had simulated a perfectly down-scaled reality with his paint and brushes.

Zach contemplated this turn of events for some time, but none of the questions battling for dominance in his mind could successfully be resolved into words. Finally, he just blurted out the first question to escape the jumbled mess inside his head.

"But . . . how?"

"If you mean, how can I move and speak and even think when I am essentially nothing more than metal coated with paint," the barbarian replied haughtily, "I am quite certain that I know not. You are the one that is supposed to be the Creator here. It is a sad state of affairs indeed when the wielder of the magic lacks any understanding whatever of the nature of that magic," he added with a look of disdain on his tiny but expressive face.

"Listen, buster," Zach retorted, trying to ignore the embarrassment of arguing with a man no larger than the face of his wristwatch. "I wouldn't go getting so high and mighty if I were you. A quick dip in some paint remover and you're history. Just keep that in mind."

The barbarian let out a booming laugh that made Zach grateful that the dormitory was nearly deserted at this hour on a Friday. "Silly fool!" he roared. "The magic which so plainly mystifies you has taken hold now. The paint is no longer as it once was. Were it so, it would simply flake off with each movement. No, I daresay that no elixir of yours would be sufficient to undo what you have done."

"But if the nature of the paint has changed," Zach said thoughtfully, "does that mean that the nature of your body, of the lead, has also changed? Do you have organs and flesh now? That would explain how you can talk and move, wouldn't it?"

The barbarian looked as if he would collapse with mirth at this statement. At last, with nearly microscopic tears running down his ruddy cheeks, he said, "Ho! What arrogance! You think that you have changed lead, not into gold, but into flesh and bone?! Indeed!" The barbarian turned and spoke as if to an invisible audience. "In one fell swoop, he thinks he has gone from a lowly, fledgling wizard, completely bypassed alchemy, and single-handedly invented a wholly new form of black art!" and once again burst into gales of laughter.

"Um . . . ah . . . well, I'll say one thing," Zach stammered, at a loss for a suitable reply to the barbarian's attacks. "You sure don't talk like a barbarian."

"Indeed, that is because I *am* no barbarian," the little man said, striking a regal pose. "I am Chulhut, a pure-blooded descendant of the line of Thelred, noblest of all the tribes of Tanshar. Do not make the mistake of judging by appearances, young upstart. After all, I did not sculpt myself, did I? And good hells, look at this sword! Even the least civilized barbarian wipes off his sword now and again! Now, I become weary of conversing, so get busy and paint me a companion."

"Wh- what?" Zach nearly shrieked.

"You heard me. Paint another figure to life, preferably one with intelligence superior to your own so that I might carry on a more satisfying discourse with him. On second

thought, make it a 'her,' " he said, leering obscenely.

As if to emphasize his demand, Chulhut stabbed the point of his sword into the back of Zach's hand. A searing bolt of pain shot up Zach's arm, far out of proportion to the size of the sword.

"Do not ask me," Chulhut said in anticipation of Zach's inquiry as to why that had hurt so much. "It must be magic," he added with a grin.

Zach hated to admit it, even to himself, but despite Chulhut's diminutive size, something about him intimidated Zach. He didn't quite know how to get rid of the little tyrant other than smashing him beneath a heavy book, and Zach could not bring himself to do that. He didn't much relish the idea of going to sleep with the sword-bearing figure mad at him, so until he could come up with a better and more permanent solution, he set out to paint another figure.

From his collection of unpainted figures, Zach selected a female warrior of comely face and even comelier figure, which met with Chulhut's enthusiastic approval.

Unfortunately, after several long days and nearly sleepless nights, during which Zach put to use the best painting skills he could summon forth, the completed figure remained unmoving. Zach's confusion was surpassed only by Chulhut's displeasure.

"You bumbling dolt!" Chulhut said, making a visible effort (if one looked closely enough) to retain his composure. "I know not what you think you are doing, but mark my words, if this is some ill-conceived attempt to get the better of me, you will regret it." And Chulhut again drove home his point with the point of his sword.

"Ow!" Zach yelled. "For cryin' out loud, I don't know what went wrong! I don't even know how I managed to make you come to life!" And then added, to himself, "Although I'm beginning to regret it."

"Well, get back to work," Chulhut said imperiously. "I am growing increasingly bored with your ineptitude, both at conversing and at painting. I want some company."

Zach realized that there must be some specific factor that had been present while painting Chulhut that had been absent in this most recent effort. He focused his memory and came up with some possible answers, with which he experimented over the next few weeks. Finally, after four more beautifully painted but inanimate figures had been placed on the shelf, Zach was fairly certain that he had figured out the right formula.

First, the figure had to be painted to the accompaniment of Hawkwind's *Live Chronicles* album. Painting had to be started during the first track, "Song of the Swords," and regardless of how many times the entire album was played through, the final application of paint had to take place during the album-closing "Horn of Fate."

Of course, the tiny dots of white had to be added to the eyes as the final touch, and only with his grandfather's paintbrush.

And, just to be on the safe side, since the men's room in the dormitory had been undergoing repairs when he had started to paint Chulhut, Zach again took the water for cleaning his brushes from the women's bathroom upstairs. After all, one never knew.

This time, Zach was certain, it would work. He painted a new figure to a standard that he would have thought unattainable only months before. After he had painstakingly applied the infinitesimal white dots, the figure blinked.

Zach quickly added another dot of white precisely in the center of the iris, rendering the figure imperfect and causing the life to vanish from the small body as quickly as it had appeared.

Because Zach had a plan.

"Great ghost of Nosille, what went wrong *this* time?" Chulhut screamed, brandishing his sword menacingly. "I thought you said you had all of the variables figured out!"

"I thought I had," Zach said, careful to keep a proper look of contrition on his face. "I know I can get it right on the next one, though."

"Well, heed me well, little weasel. This will be your last chance. Absolutely, positively your final chance. And what, pray tell, do you propose to do differently on this next attempt?"

"Pray to the gods of Ravtecol?" Zach asked hopefully.

The barbarian's face registered shock, then pleasure.

"Good thinking," he said. "That should work."

After a trip to the local game and hobby shop to replenish his supply of female figures, Zach returned to the dorm room that he had come to regard with increasing distaste. Through a happy stroke of good fortune, Zach found Chulhut asleep. Apparently, whatever force had brought life to the little barbarian needed to be replenished occasionally through something that at least resembled sleep, although this occurred far too infrequently to suit Zach.

Moving as stealthily as he could, Zach grabbed a number of tools and other implements from the desk and quickly left the room to perform the operation out of sight of Chulhut.

By the time Chulhut awoke, Zach had applied the primer coat of paint to the figure, so that his tiny overseer could not detect where the original figure's head had been removed and replaced with the head of another figure.

*This really is ridiculous,* Zach thought to himself as he began painting. *If I just squashed the little loudmouth, that would be the end of it all.* But despite the abuses he had endured from Chulhut's tongue—not to mention his sword—Zach still could not bring himself to snuff out the life he had, albeit unintentionally, created.

Which wasn't to say that he didn't want Chulhut gone, erased, eliminated. Zach just didn't want to have to squash him. Such methods were . . . well, they were barbaric.

Several days later, the finishing touches were completed and the figure came to life.

"There you go," Zach said, placing the figure next to Chulhut on the desktop and leaning back in his chair, hands laced behind his head.

"Beautiful!" Chulhut exclaimed as he moved closer to his new companion, reaching for her as if to reassure himself of her reality. "She's absolutely exquisite!"

"She is, isn't she?" Zach said smugly.

It was then that the female figure uttered the first words of her existence.

"Keep your filthy hands off me!" she screeched. "My goodness, look at you! Bloodstains all over you, and you want to touch me? And that hair, and that beard! A little trip to a barber every now and then wouldn't hurt at all, you know. Not to mention the fact that your hair looks like it was painted onto your head! And while we're on the subject, who dressed you, anyway? Animal skins and chain mail! The only date you'll ever get is with a she-wolf! And your posture . . ."

Chulhut lopped off her head with a single blow from his sword.

He regarded Zach with a look of disappointment mixed with just a hint of rage. Zach was glad that he had disposed of the body of the harpy that had donated its head to the figure now lying motionless on the desk.

Zach was not quite sure what he had hoped to accomplish with this little stratagem. Perhaps the harpy would have driven Chulhut mad, or at least forced him to abandon his demands that Zach provide him with a companion. Or, better yet, the harpy might have killed the barbarian, as harpies are sometimes known to do. Zach fixed what he hoped was a look of innocence on his face as he turned to meet Chulhut's stare.

"Well," Chulhut said despondently, "I suppose you can't be blamed for that," waving his sword in the direction of the fallen woman. "Get back to work. Now." And he once again stabbed at the back of Zach's hand with his sword, but his heart was obviously not in it.

*Oh, the hell with it,* Zach thought, feeling a twinge of sympathy for the lonely barbarian. *I'll just paint him a nice woman and maybe I'll learn to live with him.*

For the next four days, Zach put everything he had into the painting of the figure of the female barbarian. Each stroke of the brush was executed lovingly, with all the care of a sculptor bringing life to cold stone with nothing but his bare hands and bared heart. He was, in fact, so engrossed in his work that he wasn't even bothered by the fact that he had listened to the Hawkwind album about a thousand times.

As the figure neared completion, Zach found himself wishing that he could somehow shrink himself down to her size. With her chestnut-colored tresses and full lips, firm and supple limbs, and confident pose and expression, she was the embodiment of competent yet feminine womanhood. There was an undeniable allure to her outfit, which consisted of a loose loincloth and two polished metal breastplates joined together by lengths of gold chain. She looked exactly like she had stepped off the cover of a fantasy novel.

Meanwhile, Chulhut slumped forlornly against a jar of paint. With an air of ceremony, Zach summoned him closer as the final reflection-simulating dots of paint were applied. The female figure abruptly came to life and virtu-

ally leapt off of its base and out of Zach's hand onto the desktop.

Upon looking at the vision of thimble-sized beauty before him, Chulhut looked as though he had been injected with a mixture of adrenalin and hormones.

"This is more like it!" he said, barely able to contain his excitement. "Come hither, woman. I have waited a long time for thee." Even at arm's length, Zach could not fail to see the look of unadulterated lust on Chulhut's face.

The female barbarian threw back her head and laughed derisively. "So, worm, you think that a woman should heed your every beck and call, do you? Fair of face and fine of figure you may be, but methinks your approach needs some improvement." With that, she turned disdainfully away from Chulhut.

"Come, come, my flower," Chulhut said, putting an arm around the woman's shoulders and drawing her to him roughly. "I meant no disrespect. It's just that, well, I am a man, and you are a woman . . ."

"You speak truth," the woman replied, "when you say that you are a man and I am a woman. However, someone has sadly neglected to inform you that some women have about as much need of a man as a sea serpent has of a chariot," she said as she easily broke free of Chulhut's grip on her shoulders. "I would have found you far more interesting had you done your thinking above your belt."

In the blink of an eye, she drew her dagger and drove it to the hilt into Chulhut's chest.

Before Zach even had a chance to sort out his emotions at this turn of events, the female barbarian turned a steely gaze upon him.

"Well, what are you staring at, you simpleton? Get busy and make me a companion. And make certain that this one was not raised by dogs!"

Zach stared, dumbstruck, at the figure that stood before him with fists on hips, tapping her foot impatiently.

*I should have done this in the first place,* Zach thought with only the barest hint of regret as he pulled the hardbound copy of Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary* off of the shelf above the desk and dropped it unceremoniously on the tiny figure's head.

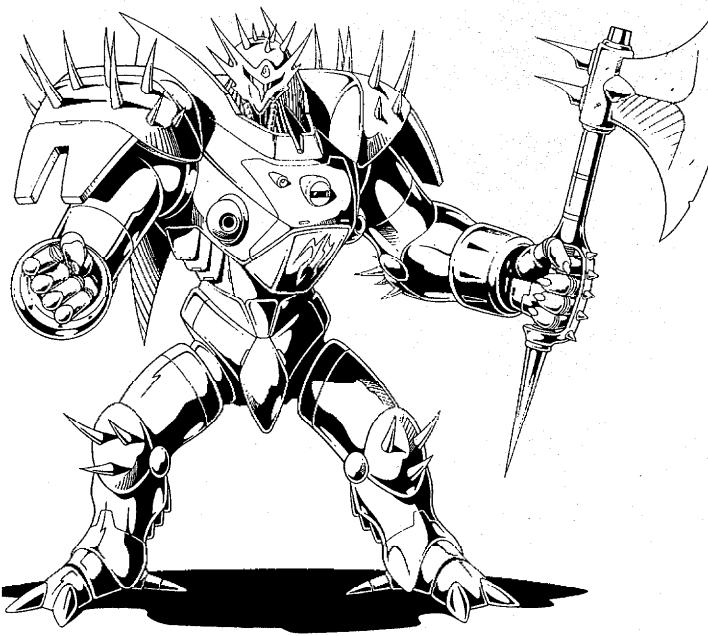
*Well, Zach thought, I guess that's the end of that hubby. Maybe it's time I started taking my studies a little more seriously.*

He tried to ignore the pangs of regret as he pulled a wastebasket over and set it next to his desk. He took a deep breath and without further ado swept all the jars of paint from the desktop into the can. The paint was quickly followed by his brushes and the remaining unpainted figures.

Zach told himself that it was only for sentimental reasons that he kept his grandfather's sable paintbrush, which he placed in a desk drawer, right next to the now lifeless body of the barbarian, Chulhut.

*Besides, a small voice inside his head whispered, you can always buy more paint.*

Ω



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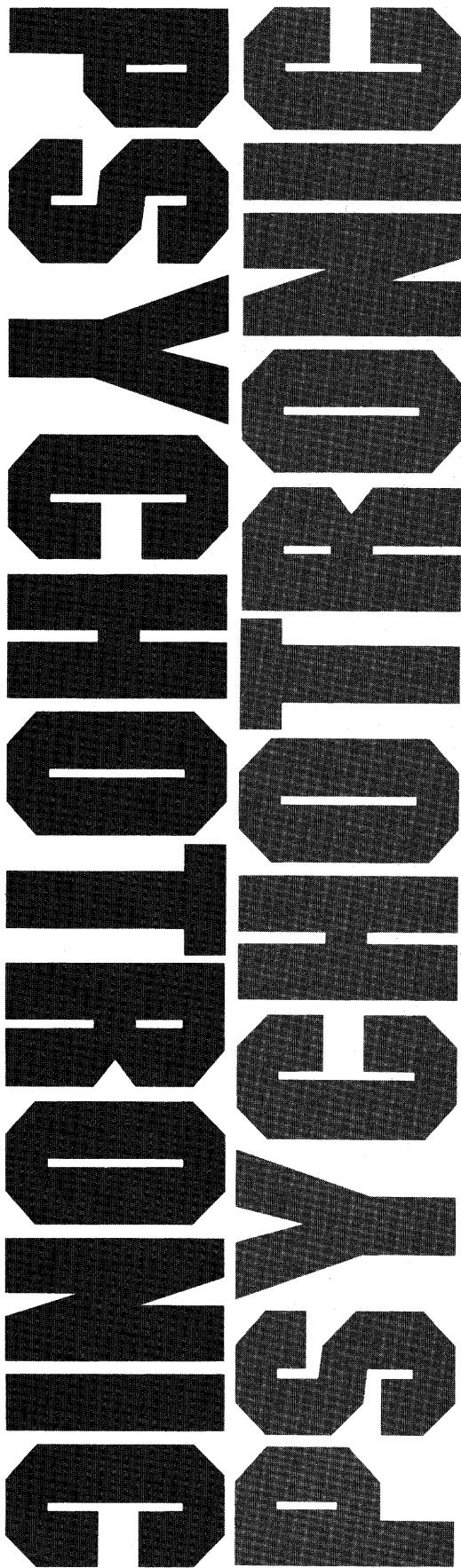
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# SUPERIOR WEAPONS

by Gregory W. Detwiler Artwork by David Plunkett



If you thought nuclear weapons were bad . . .

# SUPERIOR WEAPONS

Looking for new weaponry for your science-fiction (SF) and pulp-style role-playing games (RPGs)? Here's something special. In the course of my varied reading, I've come across a series of books by Lieutenant Colonel (U.S. Army, Ret.) Thomas E. Bearden, a specialist in computers, artillery, and air-defense systems who is working (the last I heard) on the Artificial Intelligence program of a major aerospace company. In his series of books, he has stated that what was the Soviet Union has been developing what he calls psycho-tronic weapons, borrowing the term from the Czechs. (Czechoslovakia has always produced a significant share of the Eastern Bloc's electronics.) The Soviets themselves use the term *psychoenergetics*; "energetics" is a generic term for any type of energy weapon (lasers, particle beams, microwaves, etc.).

A warning: Bearden's books are virtually the only source of information I've been able to find for these weapons, although hints appear here and there in more mainstream literature. Given the nature of the subject, hard proof is virtually impossible to come by. I'll say this, though: if Lt. Col. Bearden is making this stuff up, then anyone involved in writing SF stories and games should show professional respect at least, because this stuffs farther out than anything else I've ever read. If you want to do your own research with the aid of the sources at the end of this article, you're on your own!

## Background

What got the Soviets started was the notes and theories of the electrical genius Nikola Tesla. During the course of his studies, Tesla claimed to have discovered a means of transmitting energy from one point to another, without the use of wires. In effect, the energy would be beamed through hyperspace, without going through normal, physical space at all. No one who reads about SF spaceships with hyperdrives should have a hard time understanding the concept, and it makes sense for indestructible energy to be sent into hyperspace first, before the experimenters were ready to risk objects and people. I'll repeat that: the energy travels from the transmitter to the target without passing through physical space, only hyperspace. If you don't understand that, then none of the concepts below will make any sense to you.

Those of you who are already worrying about game balance will be pleased to know that the Soviets also allegedly discovered that there are storms in hyperspace that disturb the "flux" of the area, rendering the weapons useless for anywhere from 15 minutes to three weeks. All such

weapons are useless for this period of time, which means the owner cannot rely exclusively on them in war. Storms in hyperspace are also a good peril for SF characters whose ships travel that way, and reality storms in West End Games' TORG\* game could have similar properties. Any referee worth his salt could come up with a storm-duration chart for his SF game, to determine how long these devices would be screwed up.

Another thing should be noted: anything that transmits energy can be used as a weapon if converted to a psychotronic mode. This includes radar sets and search-lights, and as a later chapter will show, even laser beams can be made vastly more effective in the psychotronic mode. Improvisations will be the order of the day if psychotronics' use becomes widespread, and even the smallest country or terrorist group will be able to use weapons of incredible destructive power.

Any SF or modern-era RPG can use this technology, from GDW's TWILIGHT 2000\* or TRAVELLER\* games. In the TORG game, this technology could be used without contradiction not only in Core Earth, but in Nippon Tech, the Cyberpapacy, and Tharkold. This assumes the technology was discovered normally, as then it is also a prime candidate for weird-science research in the Nile Empire. However, the sudden appearance of high technology in Jean Malraux's realm means that research probably wouldn't even have been done on this stuff. Since the machines generating the fields are standard nuts-and-bolts ones and not bio-engineered creatures, the Akashans are highly unlikely to mess with it. (Coar members and the high-tech Lorbaat client race may be notable exceptions.) Because the technology won't work in the Living Land, Aysle, Orrorsh, the Nile Empire (maybe), and the Land Below, there is not as much incentive for these realms to develop it. Also, as we shall see, these weapons are so deadly that any High Lord who uses them won't have anyone in the conquered region to drain possibility energy from.

If one of the invading realms have developed psychotronic technology, it would be Tharkold. In fact, it may have been developed by both the techno-demons and the Race. This would certainly explain the near-total destruction brought about by the Spasm, as well as the disruption of even the realm's basic laws (most notably the decline of the realm's *Magic* axiom). Anyone who monkeys with the environmental-warfare techniques described later can consider himself lucky if his world isn't in worse shape than Tharkold.

### Early weapons

When using psychotronics, the owner creates fields that instantly transfer any energy placed in them from one area to another. European readers may see a connection with the controversial medical practice called radionics (illegal in the



U.S.), in which the doctor uses mental or "psychic" energy to heal a patient in his presence, or one whose photograph he is gazing at. The principle works with any source of energy, if it works at all. Electrical apparatus can be built to transfer human energy if a person touches it. If you drop a hand grenade in the chamber after pulling the pin, it will transfer the energy of the explosion, or the juice coming out the end of a high-tension power line, or—with a big enough chamber—the energy of an exploding nuclear bomb.

This sounds like scientific voodoo, with a photograph or other object containing the energy field or "vibes" of the owner, allowing the energy to backtrack to said owner via time-reversed (TR) waves. A "radionics weapon" thus allows one to destroy at any target he "has anything on"—like a photograph—at *any* distance. No matter where in the universe a target is, the energy would unerringly find it, traveling through hyperspace at speeds far beyond that of light. Needless to say, there would be no evidence for any local authorities to find after the fact. Pity the secret agent or superhero who has to track down someone who can do this. In the TORG game, the Tharkoldu techno-demons mix magic and technology in what they call "occultech," so they are prime candidates for the use of "scientific voodoo". A villain who could use high-tech voodoo to blow up an enemy rather than just make him sick also would be a worthy opponent in superhero RPG.

At Semipalatinsk in what was the U.S.S.R., the Soviets are said to have built a massive chamber in which the largest H-bombs can be placed and set off. This is a third-generation psychotronic weapon,

"hyperspace nuclear howitzer". It instantly transmits any energy released inside it to a suitcase-sized tuner set to the right frequency, no matter where it is. The idea is to bury covertly these tuners, wrapped in plastic to foil metal detectors, near ICBM silos and other important targets. In this way, a nuclear strike can be launched with no advance warning from radar. At most, any satellites that detected the blast would think nuclear testing was going on, and even people who were lucky enough to find the tuners would think they were no more than radio transmitters or receivers, as there are no explosives inside them.

It gets worse. If more than one tuner is set to the same frequency, then once the first target is destroyed, the energy released pops back into hyperspace, zips over to the next target, and devastates it as well. No matter how many targets with tuners there are, the full force of the nuclear blast comes out and incinerates the area. Thus, theoretically, a single bomb could wipe out every target in the world. Tuners with different frequencies could be set by different targets: ICBM silos, SAC airfields, ports where nuclear submarines hang out, top military headquarters, and major cities. The Soviets also could use enough frequencies to differentiate between U.S., Chinese, and European targets. Since all the energy travels through hyperspace, it is also at least possible that only the ground by the last target would be rendered radioactive, though Bearden doesn't go into this aspect of the matter. A single cloud of fallout is a nasty thing, but not when you consider a "traditional" nuclear war.

One way to foil this weapon is to find the tuners, dig them up, and replant them in enemy territory. This is the sort of thing superheroes and secret agents do all the time, and the Soviets were sufficiently cautious to develop other weapons. A newer howitzer design drops the need for tuners, which unfortunately means that it can only take out one target with one bomb. Any point on earth can be pinpointed in advance by this device and targeted. Mysterious booms have been reported in the U.S. and Britain in the late 1970s; Bearden explains these as due to the Soviets detonating tons of conventional explosives in the air near intended targets, to be detected by K.G.B. agents and reported in their efforts at what amounts to artillery preregistration on a vast scale. Of course, mysterious booms have been reported for centuries, with the famed "Barisal Guns" incident in India being the most famous, but it's something to think about.

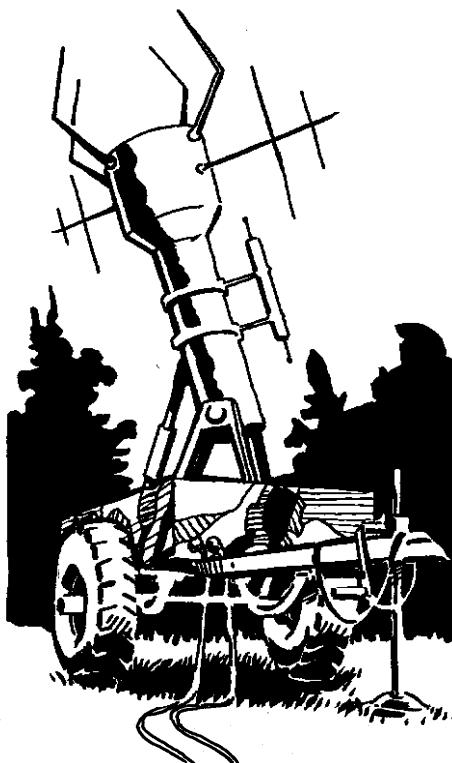
Even without nuclear weapons for ammunition, a hyperspace howitzer is a terrifying and versatile weapon for small nations, terrorist groups, and supervillains to use. In one incident of spying on U.S. Embassy personnel in Moscow, it was reported that the local workers studded the walls with tiny receivers. Use miniature blast transmitters instead, and any

building under construction where your agents are could be instantly blown apart by a single hand grenade or stick of dynamite, if you have enough transmitters. On a larger scale, bigger blast transmitters could be placed in a targeted building. Remember that they have no explosives inside themselves, so dogs and other security systems would notice nothing out of the ordinary. The stuff looks like ordinary electrical gear, and could be made up to look like TV sets, computers, etc., from the outside. It doesn't take much imagination to conceive of a front company selling computers or TVs at cut-rate prices, letting the customers set themselves up for a large-scale execution. A party of TOP SECRET/S.I.<sup>TM</sup> game agents on the alert for this form of attack would certainly have their work cut out for them! Since it is possible to wipe out all one's foes with a single bomb, this attack form would be favored by a terrorist group that could only get its hands on one nuclear device. A weapon that can stretch out the energy of a bomb blast to wipe out any number of targets: quick, decisive, and so economical!

### Energy retrieval

Also, this energy-transfer business works for energy extraction as well. Thus, one could drain all the energy out of a distant target, causing blackouts, airplane crashes, etc. An invisible energy-draining field is a good defense against incoming aircraft and missiles, and it could be placed in the air right above the enemy's airfields and missile bases. Since the fields operate in hyperspace, underwater targets are affected as much as those in the open air, and a targeted submarine could have its energy drained, causing it to loose control and sink. Once it sunk low enough, the crew would find out the hard way what "crush depth" is.

This energy-extraction field also could be used to supply energy from any source, such as heat energy from the earth's molten core (which is said to power some of the Soviets' biggest weapons) or the sun itself. It is also possible to create an energy field in hyperspace by the target in which the incoming energy is allowed to build up, rather than flowing directly into generators. Needless to say, it is possible to end the field abruptly and cause all that energy to spill out at once, blasting the area off the face of the earth in a huge plasma explosion. Note that this could be a peril due to malfunctioning energy-transmission equipment, as well as weaponry. If legitimate commercial energy transfer units become available, terrorists surely will be tempted to sabotage the facilities for this purpose. Incidentally, a plasma explosion gives off the heat, blasting energy, and electromagnetic pulse (EMP) of a nuclear blast, but without the radiation (i.e., no fallout or contaminated target site), making it favored by any conqueror who wants the land itself,



rather than the people on it.

With large enough transmitters, energy can be extracted from an entire region. If it is heat energy that is thus extracted, the effect would be what Bearden calls a "cold explosion" or endothermic explosion, as opposed to normal exothermic ones that give off heat. Everything in the area would freeze solid. Heaters, warm clothing, and tropical sunlight would be useless; when the field pops out of hyperspace, the freezing effect takes place directly inside every atom of every item in the area, effectively freezing the targets from the inside out. Every living thing in the area would freeze to death, but the facilities and machinery there would be operative once they thawed out.

### Environmental warfare

Because even vast amounts of energy

can be broadcast with sufficiently large transmitters, such as the largest radar sets, it is possible to use the transmission and extraction of heat energy to create artificial warm and cold fronts, thus enabling the users to control the weather by creating any climactic conditions they desire. Bending hot-or cold-air currents, creating floods or drought, and even stimulating the creation of hurricanes and tornadoes are all possible.

Another use of energy transmission through hyperspace is in the generation of earthquakes, anywhere in the world. Since the energy travels through hyperspace to reach its target, solid rock provides no more resistance to travel than air or water. In areas with faults, the job is simple enough: simply pour vast amounts of energy into the area right beside the fault until it gives way, and you have an earthquake. The faster the energy is deposited, the more violent the quake. In areas without faults, the entire underlying rocky crust is divided into zones, with energy being poured in only at every other zone. In the remaining zones, energy extraction takes place, so the crust is being pulled and pushed at the same time. This creates a wave-like buckling of the earth's crust, causing the entire area to move in a rocking motion that Bearden calls a "flat earthquake." Presumably it can be as destructive as the normal kind, but even if it isn't, remember that buildings in fault-free zones are not built to earthquake-proof specifications.

### Psychotronic defenses

Psychotronic devices cover the full spectrum of ABM defense, from detection to actual target destruction. First, remember that these devices can extract energy from an area. Needless to say, the machines can be equipped with devices to measure the amount of energy coming in, and it wouldn't take too long to determine the normal energy readings of regular terrain. The thing would operate like radar, but the machines would read amounts of extracted energy instead of reflected

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sound waves. If a very weak extraction field was placed in midair over an airfield or missile base and there was a sudden surge in the energy coming in, it would be a pretty safe bet that it was an airplane or missile entering the area that caused the surge. Since this system automatically drains energy from anything entering the field, and is not dependent on radar, it makes Stealth technology obsolete.

Target destruction can take a number of forms. One method simply is to increase the rate of energy drain so the planes and ICBMs simply lose power and crash. Another is to set off a massive plasma explosion in the general area (see the "Early weapons" section for details), which would destroy everything there. In fact, a powerful burst would set off the nuclear charges and cause the bombs and warheads to go off while they were still in enemy territory, causing an enemy's intended nuclear attack against you to become an actual one against himself—with his own weapons! A pre-emptive strike also could be launched, and against all three members of the nuclear triad. Air, earth, and water offer no resistance to the energy in hyperspace, so directed energy attacks would destroy planes, silo-based missiles, and submarines. The submarines would be located by means of low-power energy-extraction fields generated in the ocean depths. Surface warships, including carriers and vessels with cruise missiles, could be attacked with plasma explosions just as surface installations on the land, or the energy could be broadcast through the water and used to rip their hulls open.

Aerial interception has more phases. A literal force field, or "Tesla field," can be created, and with the electromagnetic energy extracted from the earth's crust to power it, it could be a hemisphere covering an area of several hundred miles. The energy composing the field's surface would be akin to that in the EMP following a nuclear blast. If a plane entered the field, its pilot and crew would die of disrupted nervous systems. (Low-power versions can be used simply to stun people.) With both planes and missiles, the fuel and ammunition would explode, all electronics would be useless, and a strong enough pulse can make jet engines flame out. All these disasters would occur simultaneously. The hyperspace-based energy simply bypass all armor and insulation, and because the destructive energy wells up from inside every atom of the target, ablative shielding would simply explode. If a full-sized Tesla sphere was placed in midair, then any planes or ICBMs that ran into it would get hit with the same charge a second time when they flew through or fell out of the sphere, thus doubling chances of a kill. Such vast spheres also solve the problem of decoys by a crude but effective method: just zap everything.

Note that even a "standard" SF force field would be useless against this form of attack, if the field's energy only manifested

itself in physical space. To be effective, a force field would have to be generated around the area the target would be in hyperspace. Thus, a 20th-century weapon has the potential of rendering hopelessly obsolete all the combat spaceships, giant battle robots, hover tanks, and other super-weapons imagined by SF writers. This would be a case of life surpassing art!

As a second line of defense, smaller Tesla spheres less than a hundred feet in width would fly around, directed by ground controllers. These would have the same amount of energy in them as the big spheres, but in a far more concentrated form. Anything unfortunate enough to get hit with one of these things would simply disintegrate. A novel alternative is due to the fact that the availability of vast amounts of free energy makes transmutation of the elements practical. A signal could be devised which transmutes the fissionable material in warheads and bombs into nonfissionable elements, making a nuclear explosion totally impossible. For that matter, it would make a dandy first strike as well. A large Tesla sphere over each target would be the final line of defense. The Soviets have been reported to have developed energy fields that would sweep radioactive materials or fallout into hyperspace. This would protect the planet's people and ecosystem, but anyone whose spaceship was traveling in hyperspace might not appreciate getting hit with deadly debris from somebody else's war. Any SFRPG where interstellar travel takes place via hyperspace (such as in West Ends' STAR WARS® RPG) could have this sort of thing as an accepted hazard of life, to say nothing of an extra addition to the encounter tables.

### Ground combat

This is another area where the plasma EMP pulse shows its value. Since the pulse kills personnel, detonates all fuel and munitions, and ruins all electronics in its radius, then mobile transmitters can destroy military formations and sink ships wholesale. Remember, the energy pulses, by traveling through hyperspace, avoid all insulation, vehicle armor, camouflage, bunkers, etc., so simply sweeping an area with EMP fire insures that there is no place for the enemy to hide. As a bonus, the pulse also detonates all hidden booby-trapped bombs, land-and sea-based mine fields, and hidden fuel and munitions stockpiles. If the succeeding pulses of energy are spaced close enough, they can defend against artillery and mortar barrages by prematurely detonating the rounds in midair.

Aside from using what amounts to energy-weapon artillery, the transmitters can be small, and placed inside shells, bombs, mines, and missile warheads. They also can be activated upon impact with the ground, or set to go off at a particular time, so that if the troops follow the generals timetable, he can guarantee that there will be no flank

attack (or whatever). Such small transmitters would, of course, have a well-known (to the user) limited life.

Remember the TR waves used to target items that were photographed in the "Early weapons" section above? This whole process, known as phase conjugation, also can be used to target battlefield foes. When radar sweeps the field, they target anything that sends back even the tiniest of signals, and an invisible line of energy links the two, enabling a massive destructive charge to be fired at the target. A "lead correction" signal can be added to the targeting gear in the case of fast-moving targets such as missiles and planes. This works with systems other than radar, too. A communications' jamming device could, with phase conjugation, blow away all radios transmitting within its range, along with everyone and everything near them, and a standoff radar jammer could do the same to all operating radar sets. Take away a modern force's radio communications and radar, and you render it blind, deaf, and dumb—and headless, if the headquarters broadcast are destroyed.

### Biological attacks

An interesting thing about high-powered pulses is that they automatically detonate any fissionable material in their area of effect, causing even reactor fuel and nuclear wastes to blow up as if they were bombs. Thus, the Soviets would not dare to use their guns too promiscuously on a nation with nuclear energy, or they might just as well fire ICBMs at it. Reactors and buried wastes going off would, like missiles blowing up in their silos, be "ground bursts," guaranteeing the maximum amount of radioactive fallout. In games like FASA's BATTLETECH® game, a single fusion-powered 'Mech or other vehicle thus would be a safeguard against a high-powered attack, even if no one was available to pilot it. Thus, the Soviets have had to devote considerable attention to methods of using low-powered pulses to attack.

It is generally known to the medically-minded that the human body is an electrical generator, and the fields it produces can be measured. Since the body generates these fields, the field produced by a sick person would be different from that produced by a healthy person. Since poisons, diseases, etc., act in different ways, the field generated by a leukemia victim would be different from that of someone who was bitten by a king cobra. With psychotronic generators sending energy through hyper-space, it is possible to scramble the energy fields of healthy people until they resemble those of sick people. If the new field is maintained long enough—possibly hours, minutes or even seconds—the person will exhibit the symptoms of whatever poison, disease, radiation, etc. the attacker was using, though no foreign physical substance is in his system. Emotions can be generated in

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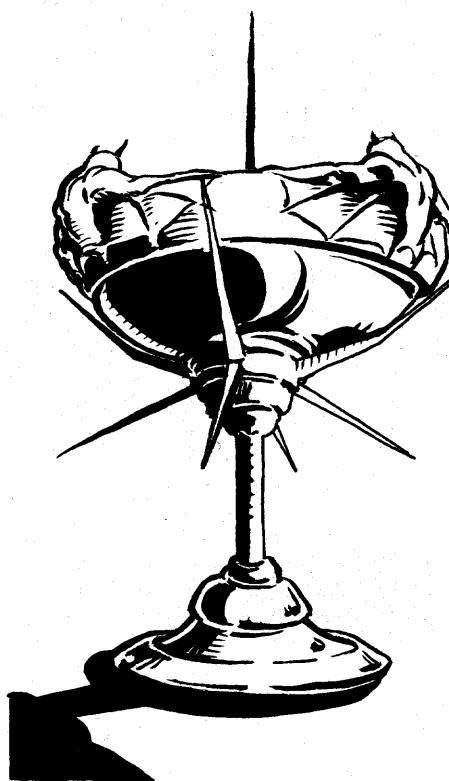
the same way.

According to Bearden, the Soviets have signals for virtually all toxins and diseases known to man. The research—on live subjects, of course—was done by Dr. Vlail P. Kaznacheyev, at the Siberian Branch of the Soviet Academy of Medicine. Now, virtually any harmful effect on the human system can be duplicated, from inducing pseudo-intoxication at a M.A.D.D. or S.A.D.D. meeting to poisonless mass poisonings and germless plagues. If, for example, you wanted to make the enemy nation stop using nuclear power plants, you hit the population around them with signals causing symptoms similar to radiation poisoning. Depending on the strength of the signals, you can control the percentage of the population that gets sick; this form of attack is far from being an all-or-nothing approach.

If the enemy doesn't believe in psychotronics, you have a great weapon of covert warfare here. The body can be treated to react as if it were poisoned or diseased when it comes in contact with virtually any substance as a trigger. In effect, these conditioning signals do to the body what a post-hypnotic suggestion does to the mind. Thus, you could make the populace think any food, drink, medication, or perfume was poisonous, changing eating habits, keeping people from using medicine during an epidemic, and putting any company in those fields out of business due to a lack of product safety. In fact, such tactics are possible, albeit taking place at a slower rate, when genetic engineering comes of age. Perfect for games with corporate wars, such as R. Talsorian's CYBERPUNK\* and FASA's SHADOWRUN\* games.

This form of warfare can be even more subtle. If the conditioning pulses are cut off after treating the population for a while, but before the disease effect actually appears, then the population is "pre-conditioned" to that disease. What this means is that the people are now more likely to catch the disease than they normally would be, given average exposure. If they do get it, it will have a much greater impact on their systems. This sort of thing can go unnoticed for years, with all sorts of common diseases getting harder and harder to cure. The diseases, however, would not be tougher; this would be an effect similar to AIDS, where the body's resistance gets weaker. Ordinary diseases like the common cold could become serious health threats, or even lethal killers, without any genetic manipulation. You could allow inspectors in all your biological-warfare plants to see that you're not producing any supergerms, and clobber the enemy with plagues just the same.

It is also possible to cure electromagnetically any disease or nullify any poison by reversing the attack signals. By doing that, you could make biological warfare obsolete, being able to cure an entire stricken population *en masse*. Unfortunately, the same machine that can cure also can cause



disease, so electromagnetic-healing devices cannot be released to the private sector without also spreading around super-weapons.

### Gravity and light

Research into psychotronics is said to have revealed one other interesting thing: there is a great deal of gravitational energy stored in light. If that energy is released through the use of psychotronics, then the energy that a beam of light contains would be increased by a factor of  $10^{20}$ .

This is one of the most destabilizing powers that psychotronics would bring about. With it, any source of artificial light could become a deadly weapon. A lowly flashlight could become a laser death-ray pistol. A car or other vehicle with headlights would become an instant assault gun (a turretless, self-propelled artillery piece capable only of direct fire). With highly concentrated light—lasers—the effects are startling. Tanks and other combat vehicles gain vastly more firepower just by modifying their laser range-finders. Even civilian lasers, such as surgical lasers, laser pointers used in meetings and briefings, and the gizmos they use at checkout counters would be highly lethal. In any SFRPG, make a flashlight equivalent to a laser pistol, and a civilian laser such as a surgical laser equivalent to a laser rifle, while vehicle headlights would be equivalent to whatever heavy laser weapons your particular game has.

The effects are greatest, needless to say, with lasers that are already powerful enough to be weapons. Bearden claims that the real reason the Soviets opposed America's SDI (Strategic Defense Initiative) is because if America ever discovered

psychotronics, a space-based laser powerful enough to burn an ICBM out of the sky would gain the capability to destroy perhaps a quarter of the USSR with a single shot. We're talking about *one* shot from one laser gun! If such a thing is true, then a rudimentary killer satellite using current technology could muster the firepower of a *Star Wars* Death Star battle station. A sobering thought, indeed. With laser weapons in an SF game, a laser pistol would be equivalent to laser artillery in firepower, and anything heavier would have to have new (and huge) damage stats made up.

Always remember that any source of light could be modified into a weapon with the proper modification. If you're one of those people who get upset over the proliferation of mere handguns, you'll probably go into shock when laser pistols and cannons become commonplace, but once the information leaks out, there's no way to stop it. If a villain uses a modified flashlight or other mundane device, and can turn it back to normal in a short time, he could commit virtually any act of vandalism or murder and have little to fear if he gets caught with the murder weapon. How would your secret agents and superheroes deal with that?

If you're into apocalyptic scenarios with a capital A, then give both sides in the *Star Wars* game the ability to turn all their spacecraft, even X-Wings and TIE fighters, into craft with firepower equivalent to that of the Death Star. With massive fleets of virtual Death Stars dueling throughout space, it would be interesting to see how long the universe lasts.

### Gaming hooks

Of course, all this is pure science fiction. It is, perhaps, best suited to post-holocaust gaming, as it would certainly explain how the world got destroyed. If you modified an RPG such as TSR's GAMMA WORLD® game however, you'd have to either cut out the mutants or assume they were due to genetic engineering, as very little nuclear radiation would be released in psychotronic war. The PCs could battle rival Cryptic Alliances for the weapons, or alien races in more conventional SF games. Finally, secret agents and superheroes could battle rival governments, terrorists, and arch-villains for the devices. Whatever you do, don't let the players themselves get their hands on the stuff, or it's instant invincibility time. For that matter, the villains can have the stuff in the experimental stage only, or they will be the ones who are unbeatable.

Another good spot for these weapons is an alternate-history adventure of some sort, as could be used in any time-travel game. Let the secret of how to psychotronically improvise lasers get broadcast on TV in the modern world, have every gang war and private vendetta be fought with laser guns and artillery (I don't even want to think about souped-up military



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lasers in conventional war), and after the world is all but destroyed, let your players use a newly invented time machine to go back and stop the broadcast. This is a good TOP SECRET/S.I. scenario, with any number of possible villains. In a modified version of GDW's DARK CONSPIRACY\* game, aliens could have released this knowledge deliberately so that those troublesome earthlings would eliminate themselves, and Nyarlathotep could do the same thing in the Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU\* game.

In the TWILIGHT: 2000 game, where the holocaust is still going on, the discovery of psychotronics technology would be a war-winner for whichever side got it first. Indeed, in a modified version of that game, you could substitute psychotronics for nukes, and use biological attacks to make up for the lack of fallout victims. In any game where the enemy just invented the stuff, it's best if both the weapons and the people who can build them are destroyed before the PCs learn how to make them, thus stopping any serious power gaming in the future.

Those of you who love fantasy games most of all are no doubt feeling left out by now. However, since this technology seems like magic, it is not at all improbable to come up with a spell that at least duplicates the EMP-like aspects of psychotronic weaponry. Details vary with the spell

radius and even the game, but what we would have would be a death spell with an electrical manifestation, which also would set ablaze highly volatile substances like oil and gunpowder (another good reason for fantasy purists not to use the arquebus in the AD&D® game). In the AD&D game, such a spell would be a high-level invocation/evocation spell. In games that have electricity as a separate class of spells, it would be in this category, while those games that merely have elemental spells would class it in the air-based spell group. The material components could be a crushed black pearl with a minimum value of 10,000 gp, wrapped up in a bit of fur. GMs are left to determine further details themselves.

#### Sources

All my sources were published by Tesla Books, P.O. Box 1649, Greenville TX 75403-1649, (214) 454-6819. The company publishes books on all sorts of stuff based on Tesla's alleged secret works. Bearden has written books other than those I've listed below, but the bulk of the psychotronic weapons stuff in them is just reprints of what's in the following:

*Star Wars Now!* 39pp-softcover, 1984. A work with the bare bones of the science behind this technology.

*Fer-De-Lance* GBC punched, 225pp., 1986. An expose on the nasty things the

Soviets have allegedly been doing with psychotronics, along with highly technical explanations of how it's done. If you're not big on physics, electrical theory, etc., a lot of it will be totally confusing.

*Excalibur Briefing* 332pp. paperback, 1988 (updated reprint; the original version appeared in 1980). A complete overview of psychic phenomena (UFOs, cattle mutilations, etc.), psychotronic theory, and Soviet weaponization. If you thought this article was weird, I can assure you that the wildest stuff was left out, but it's in this book. It includes a glossary for all the special technical terms, such as phase conjugation.

*AIDS: Biological Warfare* 486pp. paperback, 1988. The title doesn't say it all, as there's a lot of high-tech psychotronic explaining as well, but the main thrust of the book is that AIDS is a Soviet biological warfare attack. Special emphasis in the psychotronic section is on the electromagnetic transmission and curing of disease. One of the appendixes in the rear has a list of odd incidents over the years that Bearden claims are due to Soviet (and other nations?) psychotronic weapons testing.

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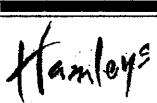
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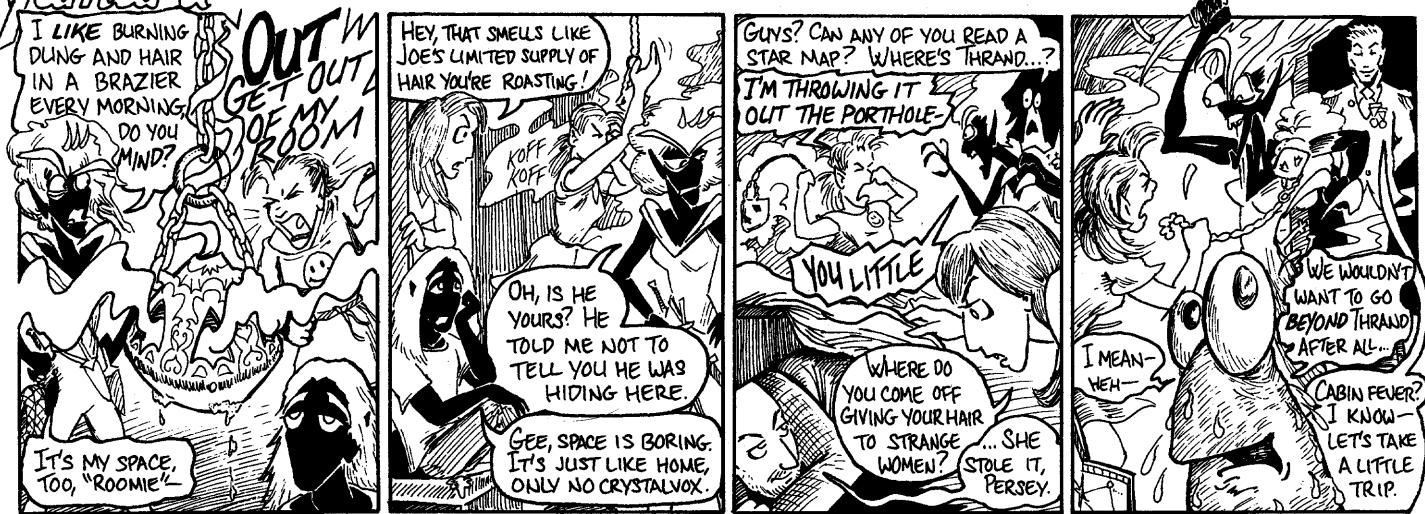
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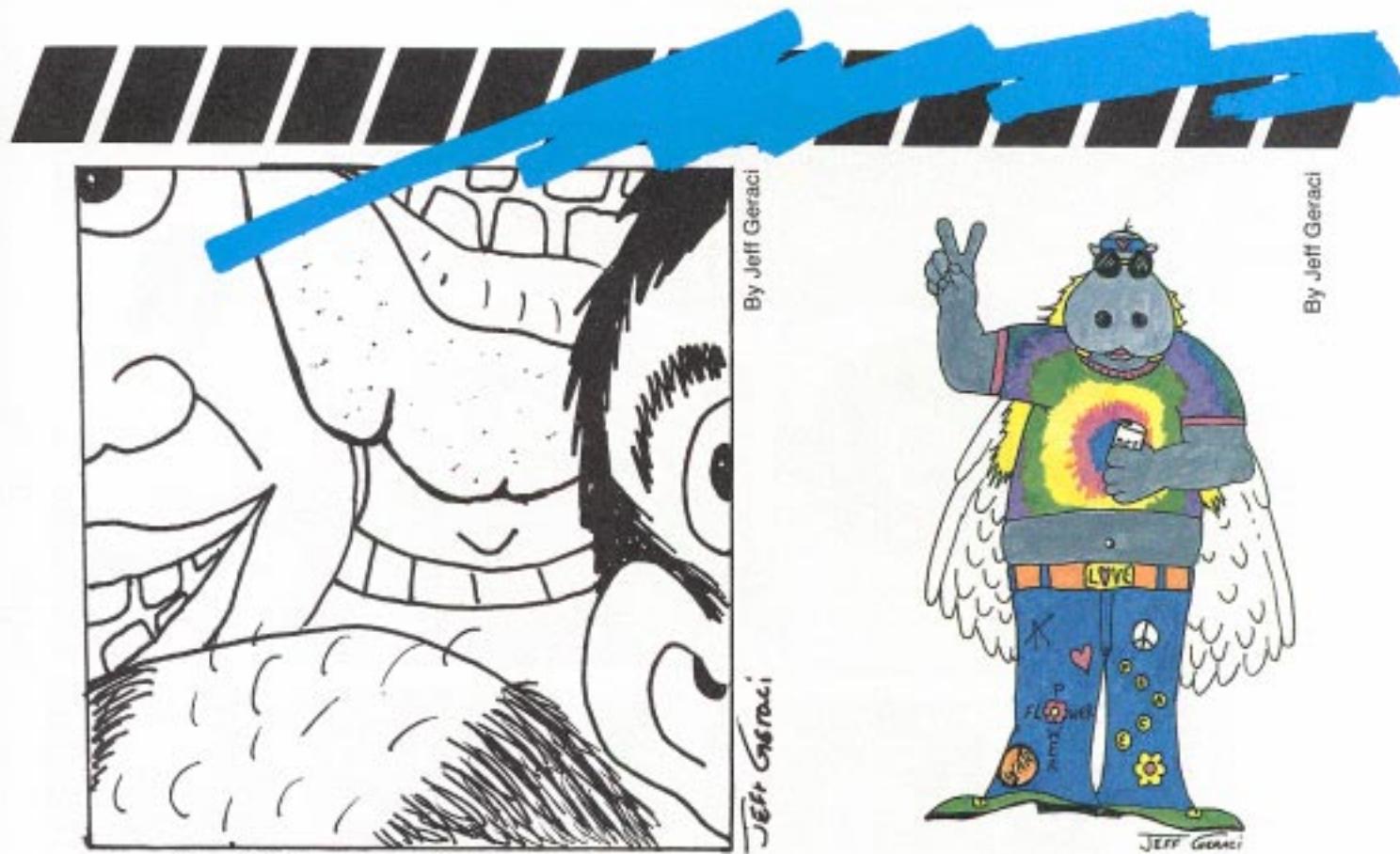


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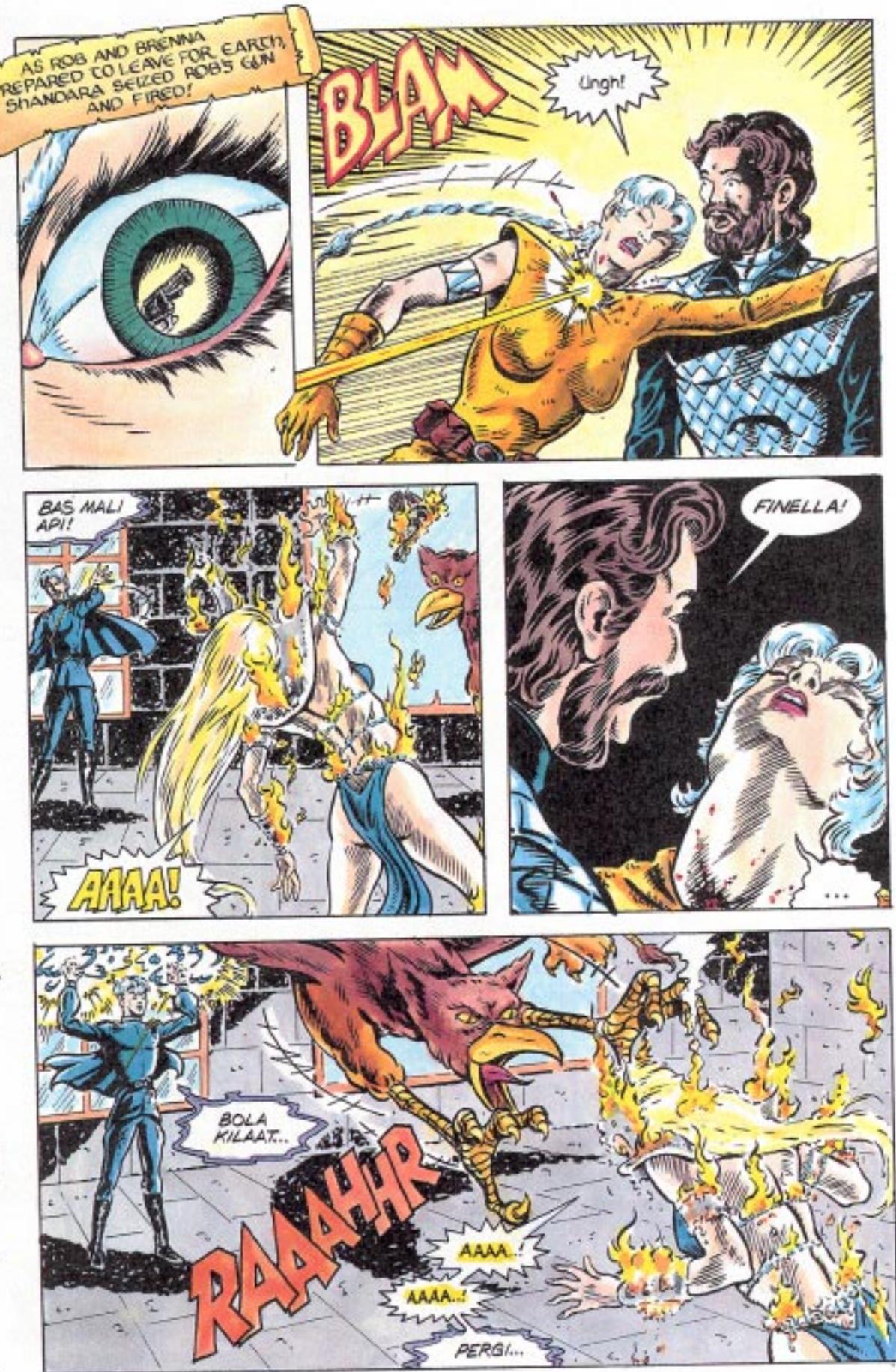
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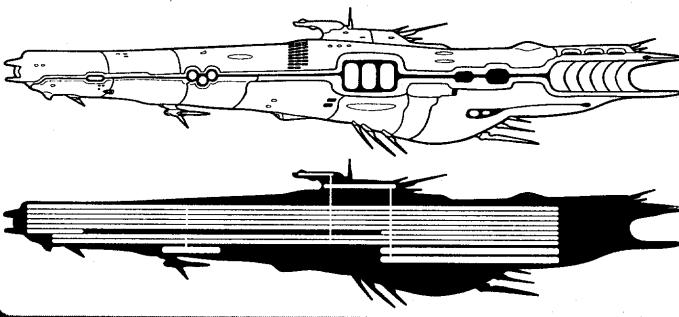
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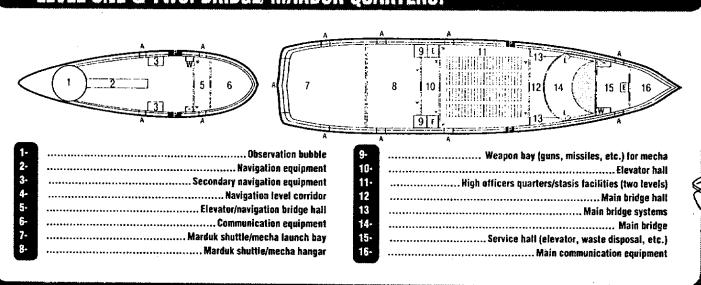
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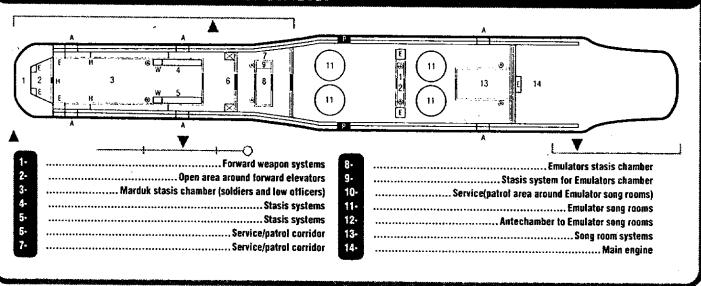
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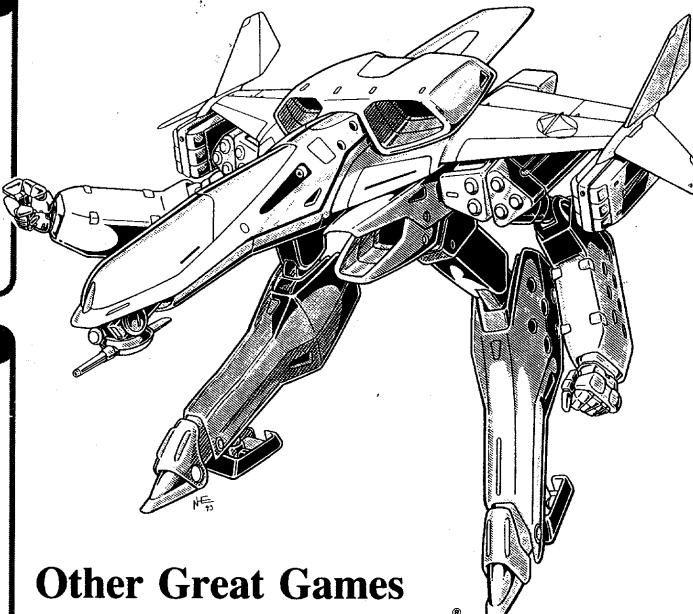
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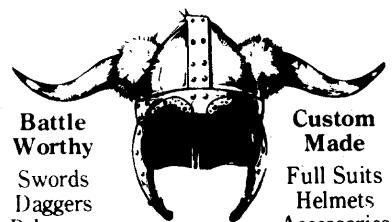
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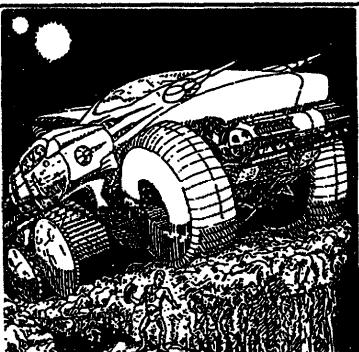


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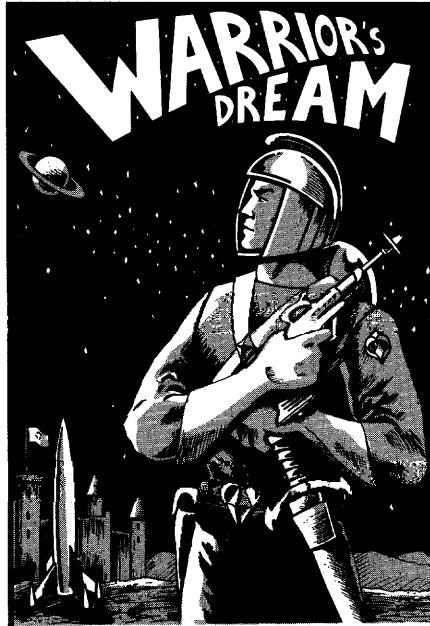
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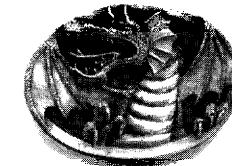
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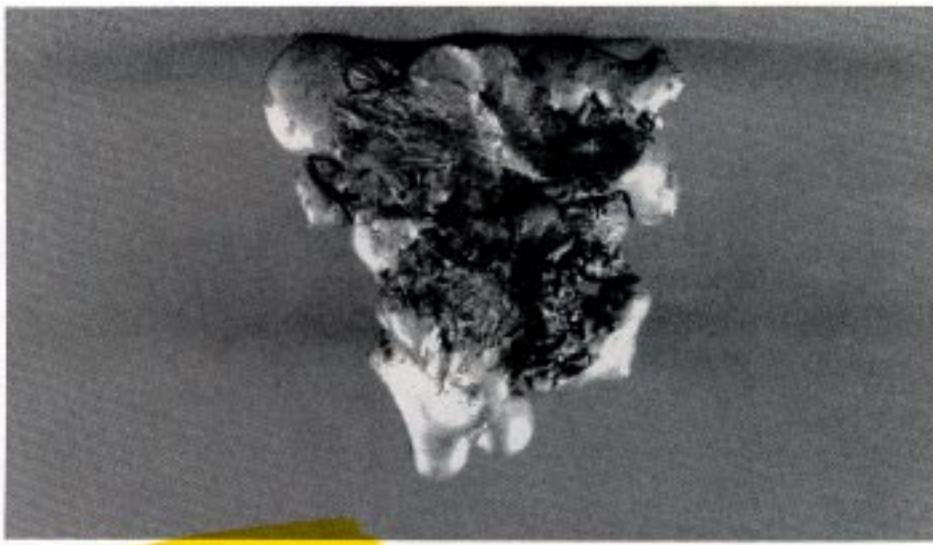
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# Through the LOCKING Glass

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"I got a rock."

## Preparation is everything

How long have you been collecting figures? Maybe you've been doing it for years, or maybe you just started a couple of months ago, after seeing a review of something that you absolutely had to have.

You probably looked at your first figure and thought, "Now what?" The picture on the box showed what it looked like with a really good paint job. The problem was: "How do I get my figure to look like that?"

I bought my first figure in the mid 1970s. I had just figured out what a needle file was and the only paints I could find were those little bottles of Testor's enamel—the ones we used on our plastic models, remember?

My first paint job was a Heritage Were-rat and it looked a lot like my second paint job, a troll. Hey, what do you want from a 16-year-old novice using enamels? I was thrilled when Ral Partha started putting those little "How to" pamphlets into their boxed sets around 1979 or so. That was about the time I discovered acrylic paints

and a whole new world opened for me.

The point of this is that if you're just getting into miniatures collecting or painting, it's a cold, cruel world out there. I thought I'd help out by giving some tips on prepping figures.

When you're going to get into painting, you'll need to make sure you have the right equipment. For the preparation (the pre-painting stage) you need a set of needle files, a hobby knife, and some primer. A needle file set usually has five or six files of various shapes. The hobby knife will need #11 or #16 blades. (Be careful—these things are programmed to attack at random.) If you use a brush-on primer you also will need the brushes to apply it. All these things are available at your better stocked gaming store or through mail-order hobby supply businesses like The Armory and Micro Mark.

Now you're sitting at a desk with a miniature that you can't wait to paint and the tools I mentioned above. The first step is

to view the miniature, up close, with a critical eye. Every thread must be removed, every parting line carefully filed away, every joint covered and blended with epoxy putty. I can't stress that enough because any slight aberration in the prepped model will come back to haunt you when you paint. The faintest remnant of a joint or parting line will be obvious after washing and drybrushing.

When you file, use short, light strokes. There's no speed contest for filing and one hard stroke could remove the mold line, sleeve, and arm of the figure. You have time, so just use the tools lightly.

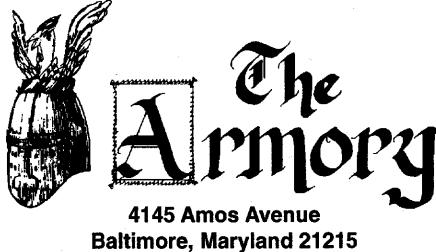
The knife is useful for cutting away threads and areas where a little "sheeting" took place (usually between legs or the arm and body). It also comes in handy for heavy-duty problem areas, like those that sometimes appear on larger figures, and it's the best way to remove "tabs" from weapons and accessories. Once again, it's better to cut too little and go over the area a second, or even third, time than to cut too much and ruin a good figure.

Once you're satisfied that the figure is without a blemish, all the curves are graceful, and the angles are sharp, you're ready to prime it.

Recommending a primer is a tough area, because there are so many options and varying schools of thought. There are spray primers and brush-on primers in a range of colors, textures, and consistencies. Floquil and Ral Partha both make good spray primers, but some painters use cans of regular spray paint. Everybody makes brush-on primers, from The Armory to Floquil/Polly S to Ral Partha.

Whichever you decide to use, it should go on thin so the primer doesn't obscure any details on the figure. For spray primer users, this means you will have to do the unthinkable—read the directions! Nothing can ruin a miniature more than a thick coat of primer—all the great details that endeared the figure to you are lost.

Finally, on the topic of primer colors, novices might want to stick with white or



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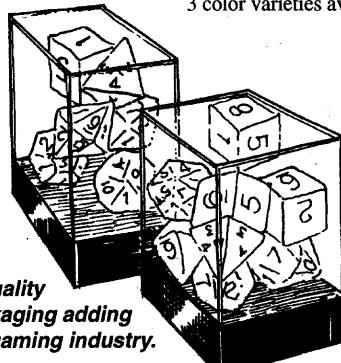
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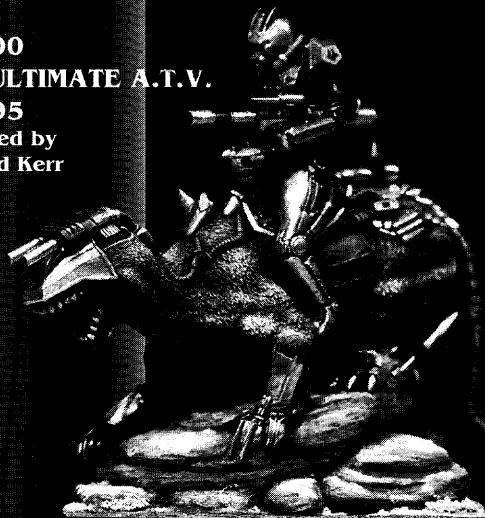
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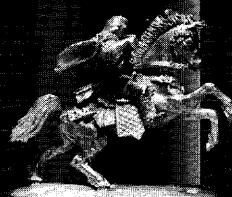
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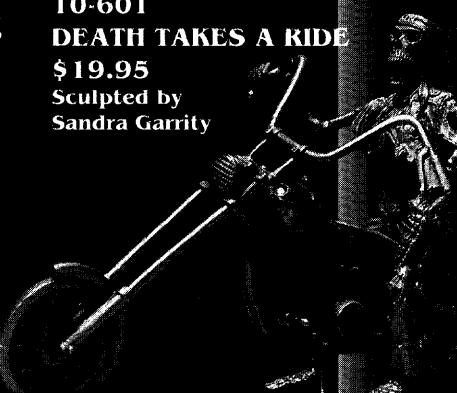
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very light gray. Colored primers alter the final appearance of your paint, while white will leave it bright and unchanged. The last thing you need is to use a red or brown primer undercoat only to discover that your brightly colored jester character is now a beige and brown lump.

Don't misunderstand me, some incredible effects can be accomplished with the use of colored primers, but that's something for an experienced painter to experiment with.

Primer hints for the experimental painter: Black primer will deepen colors and mute them somewhat, which is great for drab characters and darkly colored monsters. Black is a good undercoat for most metallic colors and to achieve deep color tones, but is very bad for flesh and bright colors. If you use black primer, you still can achieve brighter areas by using white paint on an area then painting over it with your chosen color.

Red or brown primers not only deepen, they actually change the color a bit. No matter which color you use over this primer, it will end up leaning toward earthtones or create a strange color mutation of the paint you used. This is a good undercoat for some metallic colors and some flesh tones, but not for most colors.

## Reviews

I thought that, in the name of continuity, I'd review one of my favorite old miniatures from the 1970s. It's only fair to acknowledge the growth and change the miniatures industry has endured to bring you what we currently criticize. Oh, by the way, April Fool's!

**Manufacturer:** Too many to name, too small to remember

**Name:** 1970's miniatures in general

**Series:** Monsters, Characters and Inanimate Objects

**Sculptor:** Would prefer to remain anonymous

**Scale:** It really didn't matter, they all looked like this

**Cost:** Get serious, would you pay for this?

This miniature could be found in every game store carrying the D&D® or AD&D® games in the mid '70s. It was made by many manufacturers, most of whom have graciously ceased to exist, and was one of my first miniatures. I have to apologize because the photo is upside down, but who'd know?

Technically, it is very nice-no mold lines and no heavy threads. There are, however, a few bubbles and pits.

This is quite clearly a black pudding or green slime or an elf. If you turn it clockwise 35° it's also a cleric. My wife thinks it's two monsters crawling across the floor after someone, but she doesn't know that much about miniatures.

If you turn the figure over, you can see that it's a warrior in armor, with

a weapon. The detail is well, it's understated-yeah, that's it! Understated!

I would highly recommend this to David (for use against Goliath). Or, as Charlie Brown would say, "I got a rock."

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game: SIEGE OF THE CITADEL \*

Cost: \$25.00

This miniatures-based, combat-oriented board game is based in the none-too-cheerful future of the MUTANT CHRONICLES world. For the uninitiated, the MUTANT CHRONICLES setting is very big in most parts of Europe and the owners, Target AB Games, would very much like to see it do well in the states. To that end they have "franchised" certain rights to US. companies.

The game consists of nine, full-color floor tiles that can be re-arranged to create numerous floor plans for the game. There is also a two-piece Citadel that can be erected to encompass four of the floor sections, adding atmosphere. Also included are five Hero cards and trays (used to hold the cards), pegs (for keeping track of things on the cards), nine specialty dice, game cards (for events, equipment, etc.), reference cards, and, get this, 38 plastic figures.

The quality of plastic figures has improved a great deal over the years, and some of these are great. One piece, an Ezoghouli, is a strange centaur-like monster with huge bony ridges protruding from his back. There are also 10 heroes, 12 Undead legionnaires, nine Necromutants, three Centurians, two Razides, and a Nephariite in a pear tree. (Okay, forget the pear tree.) The figures alone are worth the price of admission.

The game, billed as "An adventure game for 3-5 players" should have four players minimum. One player, determined at random, runs the Dark Legion forces while the others try to accomplish missions within the Citadel.

The basic game is pretty simple and gives the players a chance to get used to combat, movement, and simple missions before giving them "The Rest of the Rules," which is another section of the rulebook altogether. The complete rules include short- and long-term campaign play. The missions book includes ten missions, and by the time the players are through those, they will be ready to design their own.

An interesting facet of this game is that, while the players are cooperating against the Dark Legion, they are also competing against each other. To further accentuate that concept, each player can have separate, secondary missions that the other players know nothing about. In campaign play these missions gain you points, and



Hunting Horror (Ralff)

when the campaign ends, the player with the most points wins.

I wasn't sure how I'd like this game-it sounded like a rip-off of Games Workshop's (GW) SPACE HULK\* or Milton Bradley's HEROQUEST\* games at first. In fact, it is rather like the SPACE HULK game in some ways, but because the players are also competing while working together, there is another dimension. The bottom line is, we had a good time, and that's what it's all about.

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### #2940 Hunting Horror

CALL OF CTHULHU\* line

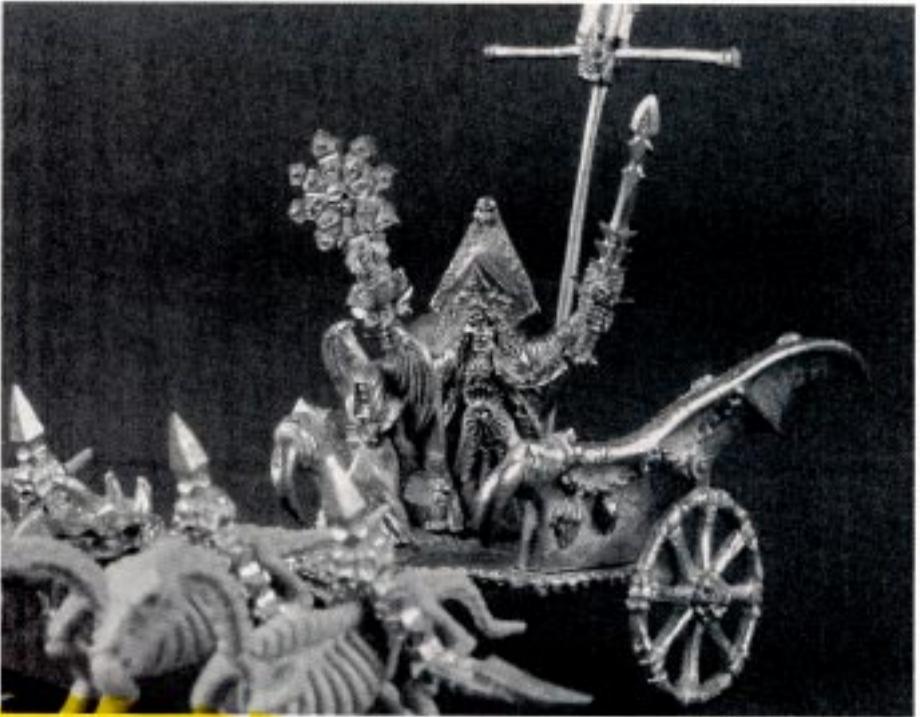
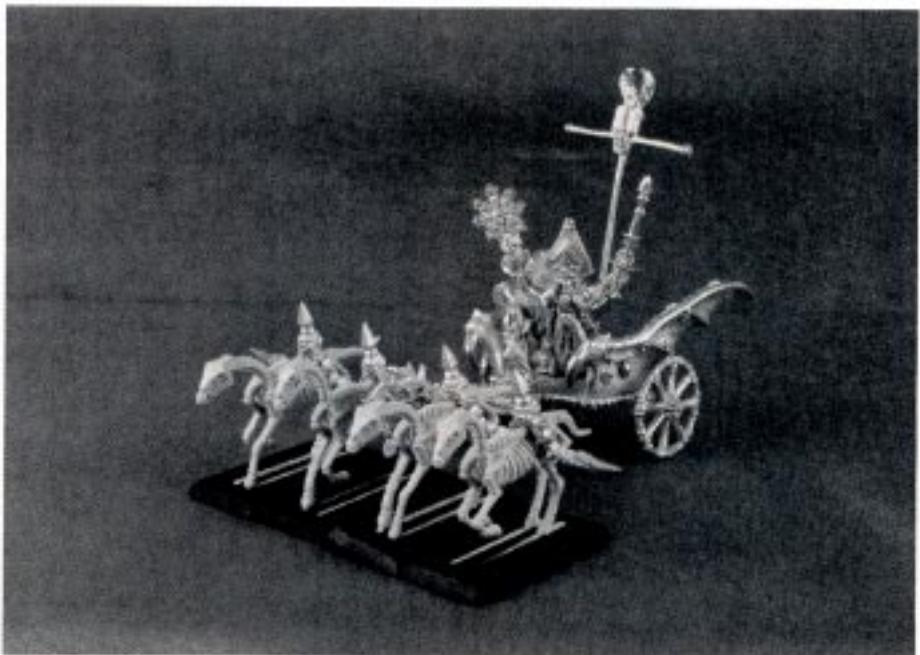
Sculptor: Bob Murch

Scale: 25 mm cost: \$7.75

Bob Murch has done a wonderful job with this piece-it screams Cthulhu. In fact, I've been impressed with Rafm's CTHULHU line as a whole.

This pack contains three pieces, two of which make up the Hunting Horror. The other is a tentacle reaching up from a stone formation.

The horror has a minor parting line running down the front and back. The line isn't bad, but it runs through a lot of detail. A few minutes of careful filing will clean it up. The toughest spot is inside the mouth, but a hobby knife and delicate file work will take care of that as well. There are no pits or fill problems. The wings



Liche King's Chariot (Games Workshop)

attach relatively well to the body, though I always recommend pinning and using putty to blend the seams.

The horror has features that only a mother could love. Those cute little bug-eyes and long curved teeth-don't look for this guy to replace the Gerber baby. The body is rough and wrinkled like a dried-up earthworm but the wings are smooth and graceful. If this doesn't drive those Cthulhu hunters insane, then you didn't paint it right.

The separate tentacle looks like something you'd expect to see on an otyugh-rough, horny outside and textured and sticky-looking on the underside.

four plastic bases for the horse team. This is a real project for any modeler, though directions for assembly are provided.

There are light parting lines on all the pieces, but care was taken to place them in low-detail areas or in joints (where pieces attach). Since there are so many pieces, and it's such a large figure, expect assembly time to run an hour or more. The plastic horses have some mold lines as well, but they scrape off easily with a hobby knife.

The pieces fit together pretty well, but I would suggest a little filing to assure a flush fit on all of the parts. The better the fit, the less putty work is needed to cover the joints.

The King is possessed of incredibly detailed attire and staff, plus an impressive sword (one would have to assume it's magical in nature). The headdress, jewelry, and staff are particularly eye catching, as is the scarf about his neck, bearing all manner of runic symbols.

A cowled figure bracing a magical tome stands before the king. The chariot appears to be mostly bone, apparently from a dragon carcass, except the wings that are smooth and well preserved. From the wings hang a variety of disturbing paraphernalia-heads, hands, claws, etc. The war machine also bears a tall standard topped with skull, book, and demon.

The purpose here is obviously to win the battle before it's ever joined by having more impressive transportation for your leader, because this thing leaves the dwarf king's ride in the dust. This is an awesome model when assembled.

#### **#0516 Skaven Vermin Lord**

WARHAMMER\* line

Sculptor: Michael Perry

Scale: 28 mm      cost: \$17.50

Now that the Skaven Army has been released, the rats are coming out of the woodwork (sorry). The Vermin Lord model comes in six parts and assembly instructions are provided.

Minor parting lines run the length of his horns, along his arms, and the length of his weapon, though clean-up should be simple. There are some areas that require heavy filing, but these are placed at the joint end of pieces, so they won't be seen.

The body of this particular piece has a small chunk missing from the left lower belly, but a little epoxy putty and five minutes of filling will take care of that. I recommend, as always, that you pin the larger pieces together and use putty to cover and blend in the joints, making them invisible after the prime is applied.

Vermin (Mr. Lord, to you) stands roughly three figures tall and is mounted to a 40-mm base. The right side of his head is skeletal while the left side is that of a skaven. His fur and musculature are well done. The stance lends a feeling of forward motion to the figure and the strange composition of his body, cloven hooves,

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#### **#0519 Liche King's Chariot**

WARHAMMER\* line

Sculptor: Gary Morley

Scale: 28 mm      cost: \$29.99

The largest new war machine for the WARHAMMER Undead army, this model is impressive. It comes in 11 metal pieces and eight plastic pieces, not including the

goat-like legs, and hugely muscled body, are in keeping with GW's idea of demons.

His weapon is large and impressive, requiring that a rock be attached to the base as a counterweight to the heavy, bladed end. Other details include arm bands, rune-covered wrist bands, and a huge piece of neck jewelry, from which hang numerous bells.

It's usefulness in the WARHAMMER game is unquestionable, though its 600-point price tag could make it a hard sell to some generals.

#### #9050 Black Orc Command

WARHAMMER® line

Sculptor: Kev Adams

Scale: 28 mm Cost: \$6.99

Kev Adams, one of GW's long-time sculptors, gives us two Black Orc leaders, a unit commander, and a standard bearer.

These figures have little in the way of parting lines and no visible blemishes. The axe blades are attached to the hafts via small tabs of metal, but these are easily removed. The standard's cross section comes as a separate piece and fits the upright very well, requiring only a drop of super-glue to join them.

The standard bearer is well detailed in chain armor with partial plate coverage on the shoulders and left arm, plus a couple of plates hung to protect the thighs. His serious face bears a scar from a long forgotten battle. Across his chest and pot belly are crossed belts supporting a symbol.

While I like the standard bearer, the treasure of this blister is the leader. With two axes, partial plate over chain mail and a grin (?), he is the epitome of a Black Orc commander. The plate on his shoulders and arms looks good, with sharp detail and angles. Chains hang from his belt, attaching his minotaur head belt buckle to the skull symbol on his chest. His stance shouts defiance to the heavens, or maybe he's just hungry.

#### Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.

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Mail Order: Yes Catalog: \$4.00 (New)

#### #09-004 Krogar the Gorillama with Damsel in Cage

The Titans of Terror series

Sculptor: Dennis Mize

Scale: 25 mm Cost: \$8.95

Krogar, possibly a distant relative of King Kong, has similar tastes in women—he just doesn't know how to play nice. This vignette comes in 11 pieces, most of which make up the cage.

Except for minor mold lines on the woman's arms and left leg, she is flawless. Gorillama is just as clean, having only slight parting lines on his sides. The cage has more visible parting lines, but there's little detail to disturb when filing.

The cage has a solid bottom and cover while the sides are lashed wood. Gorillama is clothed in a tunic, belt, and arm bands. His spear and shield are crude but look effective.

His captive, a sparsely covered woman, looks none too happy about the situation. Her clothing has been shredded from abuse and harsh conditions. Few sculptors can match Dennis when it comes to human faces and physique—this figure is a perfect example of why. The facial detail, proportion, and build of both models is incredible. You'd almost believe they were real.

This is a great, if somewhat challenging, model. It's not for a beginner, but anyone with an eye for detail and realism will appreciate this scene. It's perfect for vignette or diorama work, too.

#### #11-971 Orc Bowmen

BATTLESYSTEM® line

Sculptor: Dave Summers

Scale: 15 mm Cost: \$6.95

With blisters like this, RP continues breathing new life into BATTLESYSTEM, TSR's miniatures battle game. This blister contains 13 figures: one leader, one standard bearer and 11 bowmen in two stances

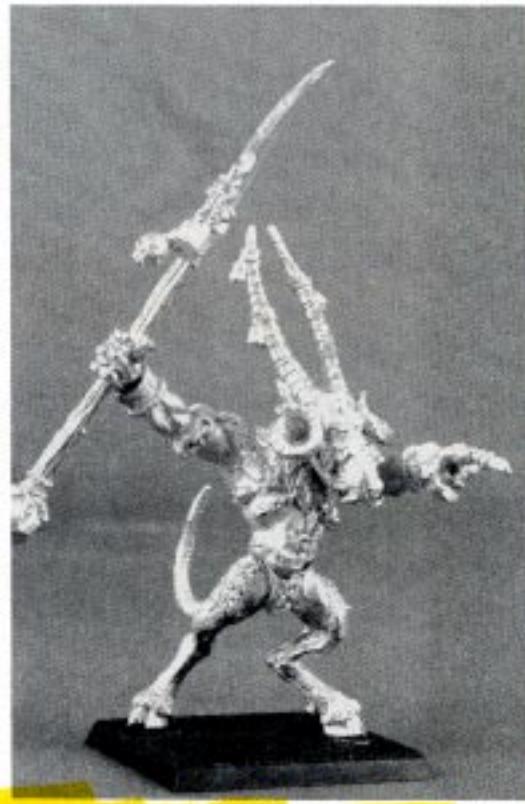
There are few parting lines among this group, and those are faint. Just as well, at this scale you don't want to do much filing. The casting was very good, producing complete figures despite the narrow bows and thin standard.

Bearing in mind that these are 15-mm figures, the detail work is quite good. The faces are nicely sculpted and the figures are well proportioned . . . for orcs. The two stances of bowmen are: orcs reaching for an arrow from their quiver as they raise their bows, and cowled orcs with

bows lowered, as if they are moving to another position. All the orcs have shields with emblazoned symbols.

The chain-wearing standard bearer, holding his feathered standard aloft, has a shield and wears an axe in his belt. The leader carries a mace and polearm, wears chain with metal plates protecting his thighs and has a Roman style plumed helm. He also has an emblazoned shield.

To give you an idea of the detail, nearly all the orcs have belt pouches, bracers, or daggers.



Skaven Vermin Lord (Games Workshop)

Black Orc Command (Games Workshop)





Krogar the Gorilla with Damsel in Cage (Ral Partha)



Orc Bowmen (Ral Partha)

### #20-793 Hollander B2K-F3

BATTLETECH \* line  
Sculptor: Richard Kerr  
Scale: 1/285th cost: \$4.75

As FASA's BATTLETECH timeline marches on, so does Ral Partha's BATTLETECH line. This newer piece, from the 3055 Technical Readout, is a 35-ton, mobile assault rifle.

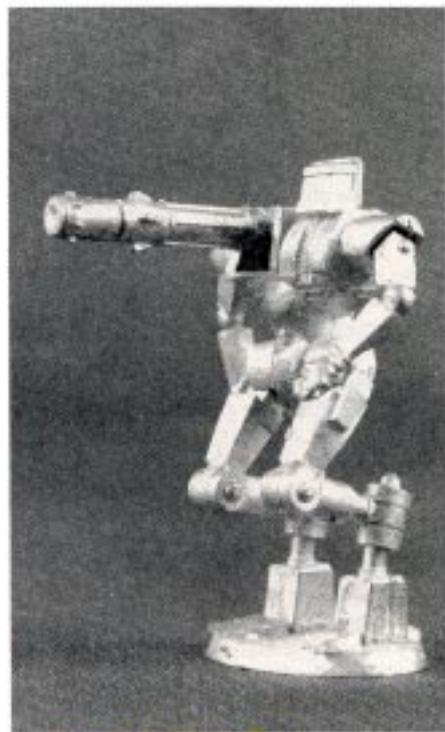
There are seven pieces to the figure, but assembly is easy and requires no pins, though putty could help cover the joints. There are a few minor to moderate mold lines, carefully placed, that can easily be removed without touching the details.

As I mentioned above, the Hollander is a weapons platform for the gauss cannon (also called gauss rifle in many BATTLE-

TECH references). With low tonnage, light armor, and good speed, there wasn't room for much more than the weapon. Consequently, the figure is a little on the scrawny side—especially when you consider the size of the gauss rifle.

The head has been shifted left to accommodate the huge gauss rifle that is the most embellished piece of this figure. The legs are well detailed and designed for maneuverability. The thickness of the legs tells you the myomere bundles give this 'mech a decent speed.

The Hollander was built for mobile, ranged support and, used in that role, it can have devastating effect in your game.



Hollander (Ral Partha)

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### #317 Dragon

EARTHDAWN\* series  
Sculptor: Tim Prow  
Scale: 25 mm cost: \$7.95

Designed for use with FASA's EARTHDAWN\* game, this rearing dragon comes in nine pieces. There are two body sections, two "arms," two legs, the wings, and the upper half of the head.

The figure is nearly free of any parting lines, so little work will be required in that regard, but the pieces will require a little filing to get heavy tabs off the joint ends of a couple pieces. A little extra work also may be required to attach the two body parts. Once that's done, however, the figure fits together quite well.

The only technical flaw is that the right foot has quite a bit of excess material clinging between the toes. Luckily, this too is easily remedied with your #11 hobby knife and file. Due to the location, no detail is jeopardized.

The positioning of the right foot is critical in order to steady the figure, so make sure you play with it a little before you add super-glue. I do recommend using pins in this piece to make sure it has the necessary strength to hang together—there's a lot of weight on that bottom joint and you won't want it to break after you have the figure painted.

The detail is very good overall. The head

is shaped perfectly, with a heavy boned jaw and skull, bony ridges, and horns. The mouth is shaped just right for a maw full of teeth. The scrawny arms serve much the same purpose as those of a Tyrannosaurus Rex—they hang there and perplex scientists. The wings are rippled, a little too much so for my taste, but they will paint up nicely.

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### #3023 The Green Knight

Le Morte D'Arthur series  
Sculptor: Tom Meier  
Scale: 25 mm Cost: \$6.95

As an avid fan of both King Arthur and great miniatures, I can't help but love this figure. Tom Meier always seems to one-up himself with each new project—and this one, his Le Morte D'Arthur series, is of epic proportions already. This figure comes mounted and on foot, with a selection of weapons. There are five pieces, not including the weapon selection.

The moldsmanship is excellent. The

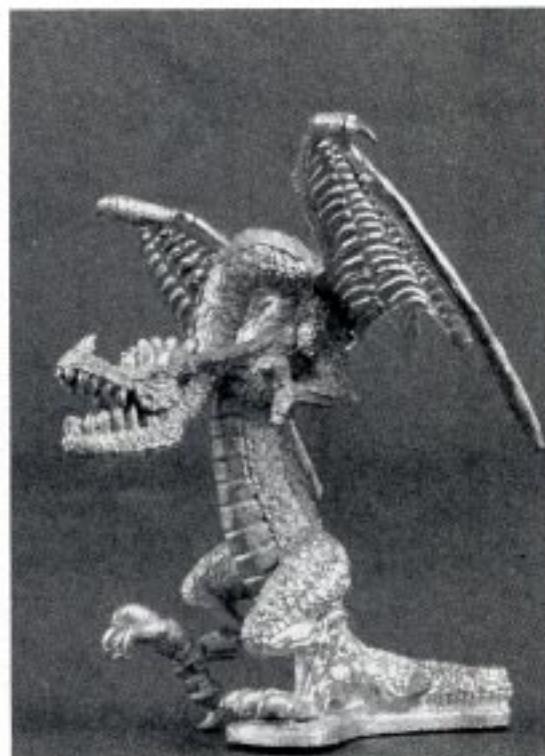
knight only has visible parting lines on the shields of both the mounted and foot version. The horse has parting lines between both sets of legs and along the right front leg. The lines are very faint, requiring minimal time and effort to remove. The knight(s) and horse have tabs, used in the casting, that need to be removed with a hobby knife.

The detail on the knight, both foot and mounted, is incredible. His helm, mantle, and tunic are all trimmed with a leafy edged pattern, his shield is emblazoned with a rampant bear and there is a bear-head jewelery on his chest. From a decorative chain about his neck hangs a large pendant. His waist is bound with a thick, wide belt, held by a large clasp bearing a precious stone. Making its way around the belt is a winding pattern that should be fun to paint.

The horse is well proportioned and has fine musculature. The details of the harness and flaming mane are excellent while the life-like stance creates the illusion of a pawing horse.

### Pick of the litter

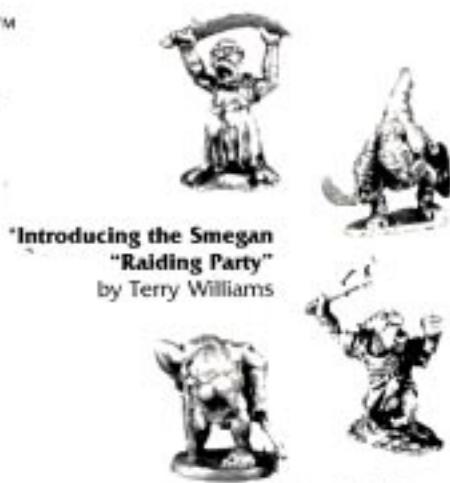
The modeler's pick is a tie. Both "Liche King's Chariot" and "Krogar the Gorilla" are such incredible pieces that I couldn't choose one over the other. They are each incredibly detailed pieces that present a



Dragon (Heartbreaker)

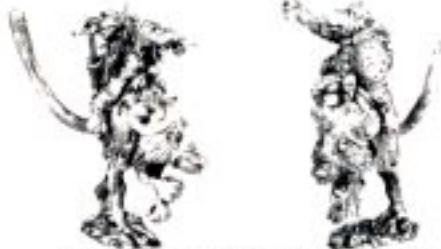


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The Green Knight (Thunderbolt Mountain)

challenge to assemble and prepare.

My definition of the gamer's pick includes minimal, if any, assembly and requires that the piece be usable in a variety of games or genres (so you know what I mean when I say gamer's pick). The gamer's pick for this column has to be "The Green Knight!" It really stands out and the detail almost brings it to life. Plus, it can fit into nearly any game system with a medieval setting.

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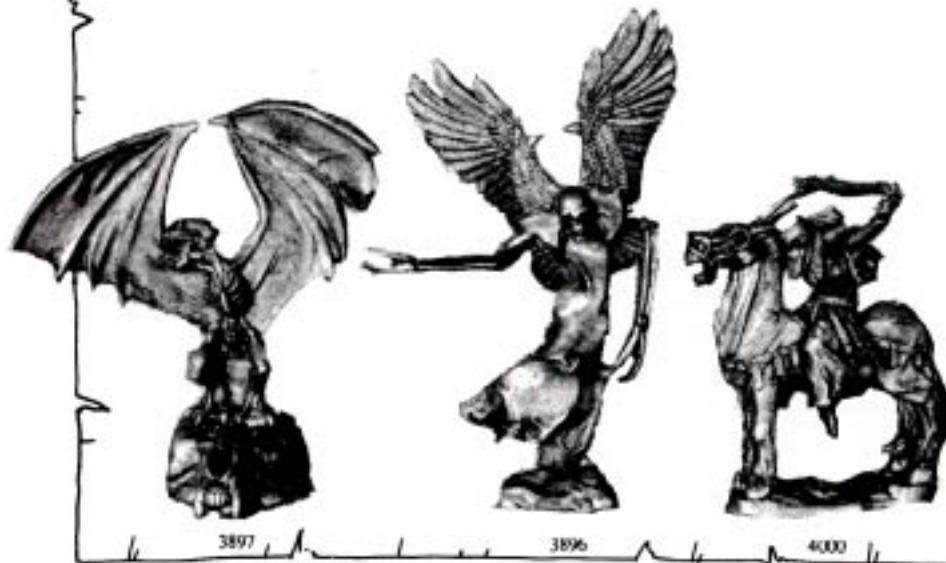
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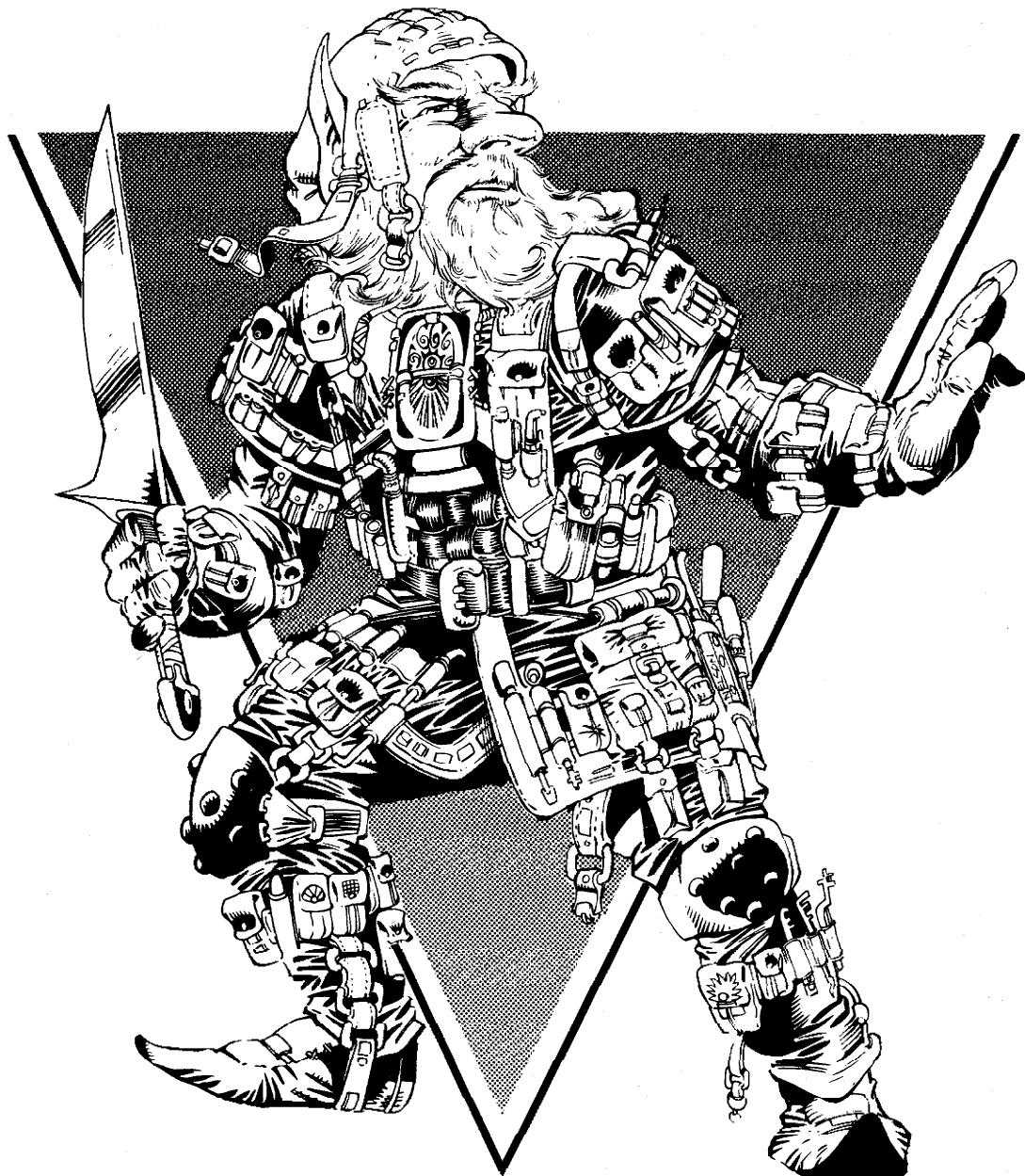
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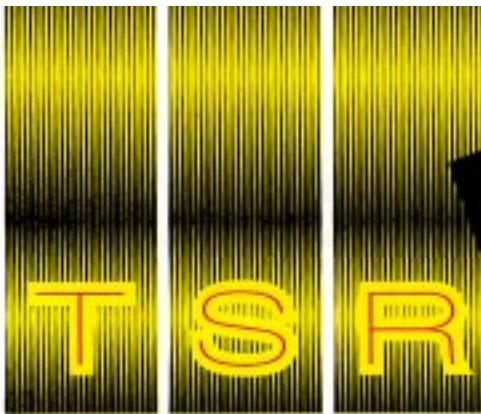


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Cover art by Stephen King

This issue's theme is Wilderness Adventuring and includes articles on:

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- \* A Native-American campaign setting for the AD&D® game.

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### *DUNGEON® Adventures #47*

Cover art by Robin Wood

This issue's adventures include:

- \* "Shades of Darkness" (AD&D® game; levels 4-6) by David C. Wright.

- \* "Quelkin's Quandary" (AD&D® game; 3-5) by Christopher Perkins.

- \* "Fraggett's Contraption" (AD&D® game; 1-2) by Willie Walsh.

- \* "The Assassin Within" (AD&D® game; AL-QADIM® game; 3-5) by Paul Culotta.

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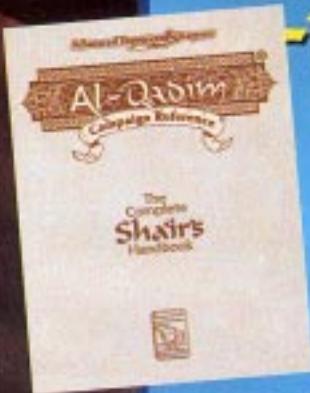
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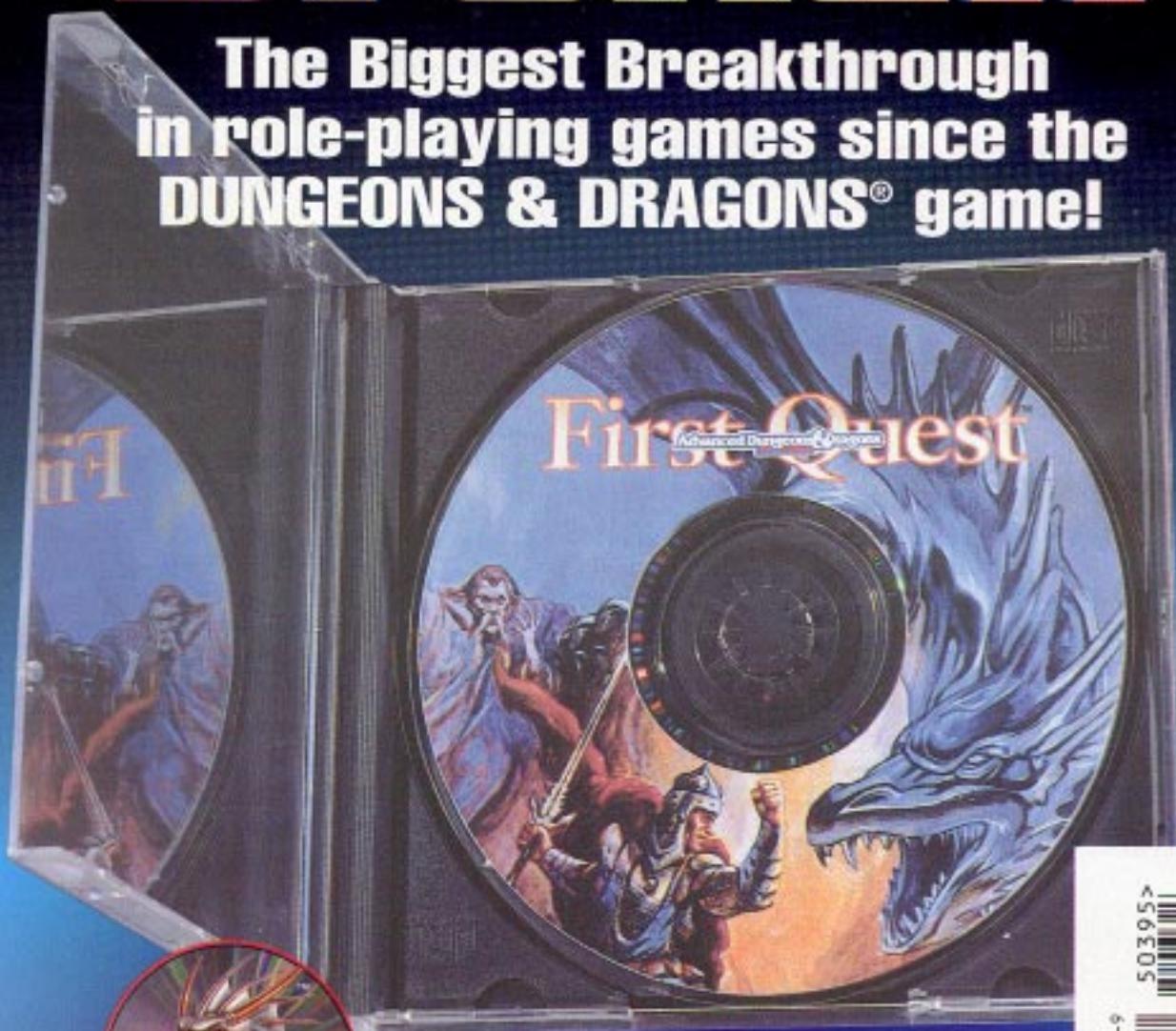


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