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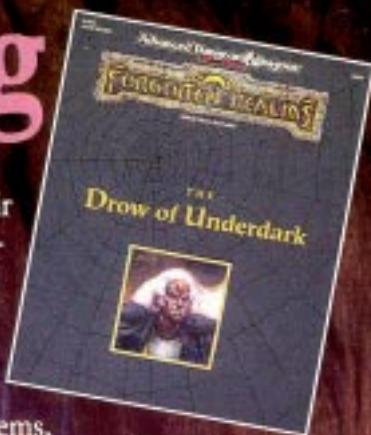
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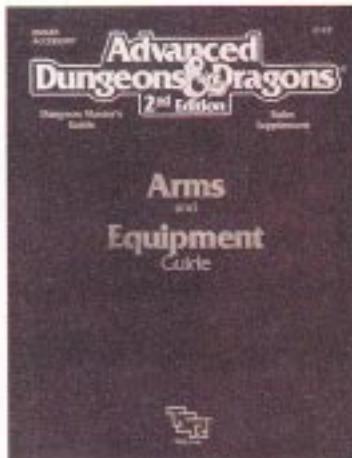


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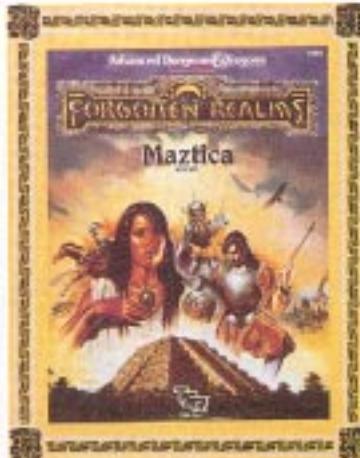
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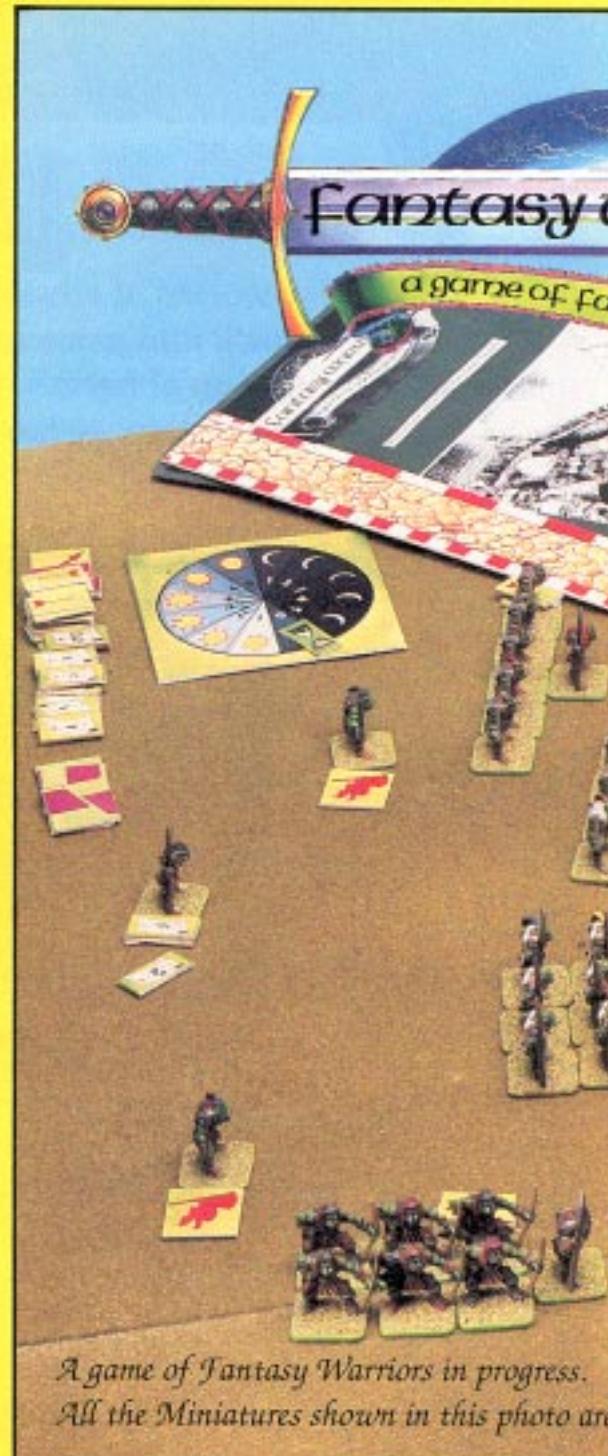


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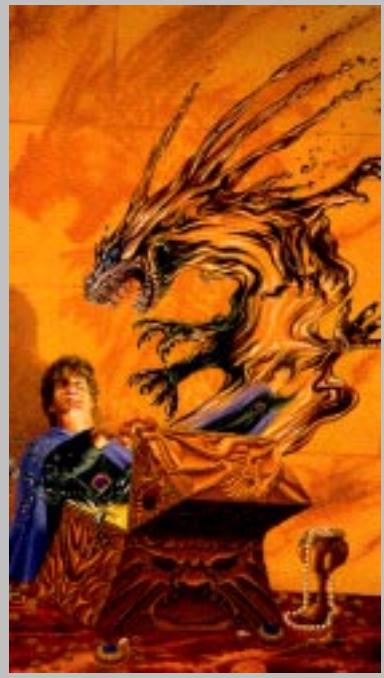
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CONTENTS

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS

Insert

AD&D™ Trading Cards — Richard Brown
A preview of brand-new product, coming to a store near you!

REGULAR FEATURES

- 6** **Guest Editorial** — Michael A. Stackpole
Role-playing and reality: The dividing line is thicker than some people think.
- 9** **Who's Who Among Dragons** — Bruce A. Heard
Dragons, too, rule kingdoms in the D&D® Known World.
- 13** **Hunting Tanks is Fun and Easy!** — Thomas M. Kane
Dragons, Hellfires, and the LAW: Antitank weapons in the TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game.
- 16** **The Making of a Monster** — Matthew Iden
If ya wanna play an orc, ya gotta *think* like an orc.
- 20** **Care For a Drink?** — David W. Montgomery and Jim Milner
It can break a siege, end a drought, slay your enemies, and water your garden. What is it?
- 31** **The MARVEL®-Phile** — Steven E. Schend
Chris Powell needed an edge against crime. He got it—and how!
- 34** **The Role of Books** — John C. Bunnell
The woman who outsmarted Sherlock Holmes takes on her own murder-mystery adventure.
- 39** **The Voyage of the Princess Ark** — Bruce A. Heard
They don't call it the "Savage Coast" for nothing.
- 48** **The Nature of the Beast** — Zoe Bell Hurst
A dozen people have a dozen ways to paint a griffon.
- 57** **The Role of Computers** — Hartley, Patricia, and Kirk Lesser
Lemmings: How long can you keep them alive?
- 66** **Child of Ocean** — fiction by Eluki bes Shahar
Mykene was the luckiest ship's pilot alive. But luck never lasts forever.
- 73** **"It's clobberin' time!"** — Dale A. Donovan
If you want to pound super villains, you need super tactics.
- 80** **Role-playing Reviews** — Ken Rolston
When was the last time you saw a great 1st-level dungeon?
- 87** **Conquer the Solar System — By Mail!** — Bruce Nesmith
Create a game and lose your friends! The making of the CONQUEST OF THE 25TH CENTURY PBM.
- 95** **101 Surprises in a Bag of Beans** — Matthew Schutt
When you plant your bean, remember to stand back-way back!
- 111** **Through the Looking Glass** — Robert Bigelow
Huge fairies, tiny undead, and an endless castle-building kit.

DEPARTMENTS

5 Letters	90 Sage Advice	104 Twilight Empire
24 TSR Preview	98 Convention Calendar	108 Gamers Guide
26 Forum	102 Dragonmirth	

COVER

Pandora was not the only person to have trouble with a box, as Donald Clavette's cover painting for this issue shows. This issue, like the box, is full of surprises—but our surprises have fewer teeth. Enjoy.

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.

Money matters

Dear Dragon,

I am writing to you about the article "Just give me money!" in issue #167. At the bottom of page 63, it says, "There are 20 pennyweights to the ounce, and 16 ounces to the pound. The standard coin ("piece") weighs four pennyweights. This gives 80 coins to the pound."

This information is incorrect. There are 20 pennyweights to each troy ounce, and 12 troy ounces to the pound. This would result in only 60 coins per pound. This greatly alters the number of coins that can be carried.

With this new system of money, would characters receive 1 XP for each silver piece found instead of for each gold piece?

P.S. Shouldn't you multiply "old" platinum by five to find the price of an item expressed in "new" silver pieces?

Justin Tracy
Liverpool NY

You are correct on your pennyweight point. I seem to have missed that in checking over the article; I apologize for the error. If you still want to revamp the AD&D 1st Edition game's coinage system, you can either have 80 coins per pound, which means that each coin typically weighs 3 pennyweights (troy), or you can have each coin weigh 4 pennyweights and have 60 coins per pound. The latter is the simpler course, as it preserves the currency statistics given in the article's tables. Characters will be able to carry less coinage than under the article's original system, but it will still be six times as many coins as allowed in the AD&D 1st Edition game's system. Not bad for a reform.

If the DM wants to keep the earning of experience at a low rate, then 1 gp = 1 XP is still the rule in AD&D 1st Edition games. Note that no experience is earned for money in the AD&D 2nd Edition game, though it is an optional rule (see page 47, DMG).

And, yes, all item values in "old" platinum pieces should be multiplied by five to get the item values in "new" silver pieces. The authors original manuscript had correctly noted that "old" platinum-piece values should be divided by four to get the "new" gold-piece values. This was a case when the editor added, rather than took out, a mistake; again, you have my apologies.

Readers' critters

Dear Dragon,

In issue #166, you wondered "what critters other readers have sympathies for." No doubt you wanted someone to write in, huh?

I have an interest in the wolf. For centuries, the name has been synonymous with cruelty and evil, whether it be from fairy tales or the writings of some 20th century "nature lovers." It was (and still is) wrongly believed that the wolf should be poisoned, trapped, or shot. To a large extent, this is what has happened.

Wolves are now extinct in the United States, with the exception of a few select areas such as northern Minnesota. The wolf was dead in England in the early 16th century, and in Ireland in the late 17th century. Yet it is very rare that a human has ever been attacked by a wolf in North America (I have no data for other continents). In fact, the majority of negative aspects pinned on the wolf are misconceptions or exaggerations of the truth.

If nothing else is learned about the wolf, I would suggest getting a recording from the library of a wolf pack howling. This unique sound will put chills up your spine in the wild, but it won't be from fear.

Steve Heitzenrater
Erie PA

Dear Dragon,

In issue #166, there was an interesting letter about vampires and sympathies for them. After this letter, there was a request for letters from others who have sympathies for monsters. I really feel sorry for werewolves; they are shunned by society, and once a month, they get to get back at those who shunned them. Society rejects them for something that is not the werewolf's fault. A werewolf is cursed with being a werewolf.

As a boy, I was always shunned by my fellow students because they thought I was rather weird. I tended to be a werewolf for Halloween. My friends tell me that I act differently on or near the full moon. Coincidentally, I tend to have better luck around that time every month. I got into college during a full moon, I was accepted to grad school during a full moon, etc. When I began reading horror-fiction, I always felt sorry for the werewolf, and I tend to cheer them on when I am watching a werewolf movie. I also write horror, and a large number of my stories deal with werewolves and their problems; the stories are written so that the reader feels for the werewolf as well as for his victims.

Two books I suggest on monsters are *The Book of Vampires*, by Dudley Wright, and *A Lycanthropy Reader: Were wolves in Western Culture*, edited by Charlotte F. Otten. They both deal with the histories of vampires and were-

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EDITORIAL

Role-playing and the real world

The following guest editorial is by Michael A. Stackpole, game designer, writer, and member of the Phoenix Skeptics.

The thief listens at the door. He hears nothing. He knocks once and waits for an answer. None comes. Because there are lights on, he knocks again, this time a little more insistently. Again, there is no reply. Just to make triply certain, he taps on the window.

All clear. Standing in the darkness, he puts his shoulder against the door. The door jamb creaks. He pushes with more effort and gets another creak. Third time's the charm; the door jamb splinters. A table near the door tips over, scattering books and scrolls across the room.

The thief waits and listens for a scream, a curse, or any sign that he's been detected. There is none. Slowly, he enters and closes the door, surveying the treasure. From just what he can see on the surface, he is rich beyond his wildest dreams.

You—you're the character defending the treasury. You just heard the break-in. What do you do? Do you bare steel and attack the thief? Do you step into the hallway from a back room and cast a spell? Do you utter a quick and dark prayer to your patron deity to summon a lightning bolt to reduce this idiot to ashes? Quick, what do you do?

In a role-playing game, as we all know, there may well be one answer to that question for each player asked. Tactics and preferences differ within groups and between characters run by the same player. Some characters would kill the thief, others would trap him, and yet others might offer to spare his life in return for information or even a possible split of the profits. Whichever answer seems to you and your group to be the most fun is most likely the one you will choose.

But what would you do if this were real life?

If you are a role-player, and if the theories expounded by groups like Bothered About Dungeons & Dragons (BADD) or the National Coalition against Television Violence (NCTV) are true, then you launch yourself at the thief in a homicidal fury. You, the poor gamer, unable to distinguish between fantasy and reality, snarl at the man, summoning different game creatures and gods to deal with him. You, the poor unsuspecting victim of institutionalized violence promoted by movies and TV, are incited to take justice into your own hands and violently deal with this threat.

You do this, groups like BADD and NCTV assert, because society and role-playing

games train you to be antisocial and amoral. Games warp your mind so you can no longer tell the difference from real life and fantasy. In games, you become involved in a web of demonic evil that will never let you go.

Dr. Carl A. Raschke is the author of a book of dubious scholarship entitled *Painted Black* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990). In the chapter on role-playing games, he notes that "One of the old tricks of brainwashing, perfected by military interrogators and even inquisitors centuries back, is to confound fantasy with reality."¹ He goes on to say:

What distinguishes "Dungeons and Dragons" [from other games] is its open-endedness. No board exists, and there are no real rules in force—only some vague limits and options for each character. The identity of the player and the character, even though they are formally separate, tend to merge.²

Clearly, in Dr. Raschke's opinion, the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game becomes an engine for developing psychoses.

When you are taught to believe that the traps and pitfalls of an inherently evil world—signified as a dungeon—are so enormous, so abundant, and so bizarre that you can only survive by a magic

without moral substance, you are likely to go off the deep end. You are even more likely to bow down and prostrate yourself before the Power that reputedly rules over the maddening mesh of wickedness. You are apt to identify with . . . Satan.³

D&D is really an elementary-level home study kit for "black magic."⁴

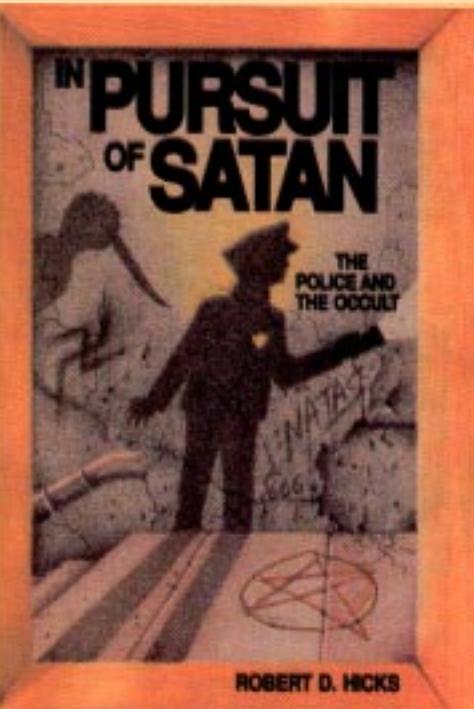
To Raschke, there is no escape from the evil snares of role-playing games:

The kind of role-playing that occurs with D&D, however, is not an attempt to learn or "model" anything. It is an increasingly desperate effort to achieve heightened fantasies of power. Complex fantasies of power by their own momentum give rise to paranoia. The more treasure the player gains, the greater the peril. Because there is no exit to the dungeon fashioned brick by brick by the mind, the suicide solution frequently seems the only cogent alternative.

If the solution is not suicide, it is rage and aggression in a desperate gambit to bring about a triumph of the will. The player of D&D finds himself or herself increasingly alone in a fantasy world of threats, feints, strategems [sic], and countermoves. There is no board to limit his or [sic] sense of where the game can, or should, be played. The game is one's fate. Like a Lear or any other tragic hero, it is not inconceivable that the only conceivable outcome is madness, or death.⁵

The focus of Dr. Raschke's book is on magic and Satanism, so his slant on role-playing is not unexpected. Dr. Thomas Radecki of NCTV on the other hand, has a wholly different opinion as to what RPGs and popular culture do to us. Radecki and his organization regularly review and rate movies, TV shows, and books for their violent content. Radecki, in conjunction with Pat Pulling of BADD, has also issued numerous press releases purporting to detail cases of mayhem and suicide caused by games. While Dr. Radecki says *all* the evidence is open for examination, NCTV has refused to provide copies of the same to the Game Manufacturers' Association, despite GAMA's offer to pay for the duplication.

In NCTV's newsletter, *NCTV News*, Dr. Radecki provides definitions for the group's rating scheme: "RV is given when the film is likely to cause viewers to become more prone to anger and violence."⁶ In other words, if you see this film or view this show, you will be more likely to commit acts of violence than someone who did not watch it. The following shows, in the Fall 1990 lineup, earned the RV rating: "The Flash," "DEA," "Young Riders," "Top Cops," "MacGyver," "Hunter," "America's Most Wanted," "Jake and the Fatman," "Cop



Rock," and "Unsolved Mysteries." "The Flash" earned top honors with an estimated 45 acts of violence per hour.⁷ *Ghost and The Witches* earned that rating for films.⁸

Given the theories that Dr. Raschke and Dr. Radecki operate under, I am a lost soul. I started playing fantasy role-playing games in 1976 and sold my first game design in 1977. Since that time, I have designed all or part of three role-playing games, three computer role-playing games, and countless adventures for role-playing games, including TSR's AD&D® and TOP SECRET/S.I.™ games and FASA's BATTLE-TECH® game. I've written nine novels, six full of BATTLETECH game violence and the other three having violence and magic in them. I've played and run all sorts of role-playing games, both at home and at conventions in the U.S.A., the U.K., and Canada. My work has been translated into five different languages, including Japanese, and my first computer fantasy role-playing game, *Wasteland*, has sold over 100,000 copies.

It gets worse. "The Flash" happens to be my favorite TV show in the current season. My choice of fare at the movies is not wimpy RV films, but films that earn the XUnfit rating, like every Arnold Schwarzenegger movie from the 1980s, except *Twins* and *Red Heat*. Not only that, but I read books that NCTV has rated unfit because of violence, like the collected works of Tom Clancy and Stephen R. Donaldson.

But wait, there's more! In my house, I have a real Japanese samurai sword. I also have an antler-handled, 15" -long dagger that friends gave me as a gift. I have a number of Buck knives, including one with an 8" blade. And my father brought me a genuine shillelagh from Ireland. I also own a replica of a 1916 broomhandle Mauser pistol; it works like real, but the barrel has not been drilled out, and even then the metal couldn't withstand the chamber pressure of a bullet being fired.

I don't own a real gun, but by Dr. Raschke's way of thinking I either don't need one because, after 16 years of gaming, I should be a full-fledged archmage (or at least think I am) or I should believe my pistol replica is real. According to Dr. Radecki—who never explains how his raters can watch and read all this stuff without going mad themselves—I'm a time bomb just waiting to tick over. As far as they are concerned, the difference between me and Hannibal Letter (of *Silence of the Lambs*) is that I don't throw enough dinner parties.

Why do I bring all this up? Last night, at approximately 10:30 P.M., I was in my apartment when I lived through the example that opens this essay. I heard the creaks as the thief pushed at the door. I went back into my bedroom and was going for the samurai sword when I heard the crack of the door jamb and the crash of the table near the door. My left hand

was two feet away from the 15" dagger, and my right hand was one foot from the Mauser replica when the thief entered my living room.

What did I do?

I picked up the phone with my left hand and dialed 911. I left it pulse-dialing on the bed as I stuck my head out to see if the thief was still in my apartment. When I caught sight of him, I was full in the hallway. Inside me a voice was screaming, "Wait, moron, what if he has a gun?" By that time, though, I saw the thief had nothing in his hands.

What did I do?

Adrenaline is a wonderful thing. It makes you immensely powerful, but it also makes you berserkly stupid. Snarling a string of curses that would have put any sailor to shame, I ran at him. I shot past the shillelagh near my desk and bypassed the 8" Buck knife on my filing cabinet. Roaring, shouting, letting every ounce of my fear and outrage and surprise ring through my voice, I bellowed at the man.

I think, in his mind, I looked something like the Tasmanian Devil from the Bugs Bunny cartoons. He had figured he was alone and had it made when this shrieking, furry silhouette shot out of the back and went after him like a shark after a bleeding fish. Realizing he'd made a mistake, he did the only sensible thing: He opened the front door and ran like he'd accidentally stepped through the gates of Hell. (Yeah, my apartment is messy, but not *that* messy.)

Dr. Radecki would point out that my first instinct was to go for the sword. Sure. The sword is a rough equivalent of a security blanket. When thinking about what I might or might not do in an intruder situation, having a sword in hand is always something that makes me feel safer. It means that, despite my small size, I can surprise an enemy. That speculation and planning clearly comes under the definition of fantasy.

The reality was this: When the door crashed in, I dialed 911. I suffered no problem differentiating between fantasy and reality. I didn't even think of grabbing the dagger that lay 4" from the phone. I didn't go back after the sword, which was buried under some shoes beside my bed. I didn't grab the Mauser replica. I called the cops.

That's what I did, but that's only one case. It's anecdotal evidence and has no validity. I am an aberration, apparently, because I have thus far avoided the diabolical and violent snares of my society.

Dr. Raschke writes:

According to psychologists Sheryl Wilson and Theodore Barber, approximately 4 percent of the population comports with a profile they term *fantasy-prone personalities*. [Emphasis his.] The fantasy-prone are not only highly hypnotizable, or suggestible, they also tend to experience their fantasies as *real*. [Emphasis his.] They see imagined sights with both their eyes closed and opened. And they respond to

their fantasies with emotions that in other people would be aroused by actual, sensory perceptions. The group is capable of experiencing "anything" in fantasy, and when embroiled in their fantasies, "they do not ask whether their experiences are real."⁹

We know that, even before the advent of the AD&D 2nd Edition game, there were literally millions of D&D® and AD&D rules sets in existence, so it is safe to posit a base of 10,000,000 people who have been exposed to fantasy role-playing games. If Raschke's theory holds true, there should be 400,000 people who have been exposed to fantasy role-playing games and who are unable to distinguish between fantasy and reality. They would believe they could work magic, since Raschke has already said the D&D game is a black-magic primer. So, somewhere out there, we have 400,000 magickers wandering in a daze, casting spells to take care of their daily chores.

That's roughly half the number of Jehovah's Witnesses in the U.S.¹⁰ or almost the entire population of the state of Wyoming.¹¹ In fact, despite the vast pool of players who have been enjoying fantasy role-playing games for over 17 years, NCTV and BADD claim that only 125 lives have been lost because of these games. If they were correct in their thinking, the toll taken because of games should be staggering, not an amount about equal to the total number of Americans killed in action in Operation Desert Storm.¹²

There is no way to overemphasize the need for clear, critical thinking about the phenomena Carl Raschke and Tom Radecki tackle in their books and publications. Robert D. Hicks, a criminal justice analyst for the state of Virginia, is the author of *In Pursuit of Satan* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1991). This book presents a detailed and in-depth study of the whole alleged "Satanic Crime Conspiracy" including an extensive section on the allegations made concerning role-playing games. As a law-enforcement professional, Hicks looks at the materials produced through "cult cop" seminars, special-interest groups, and the media to point out the fallacies concerning the myth of cult crime. Concerning tracts written to inform parents about what their teens are doing, Mr. Hicks writes:

Such literature, written by adults for other hand-wringing adults, relies on supposition, guesses, and speculation, and reacts to music, games, fads, and fashions meant to intimidate adults. Very little literature on teens' interests in things satanic involves empirical study. Much of what fuels the literature comes from what cult cops say on the lecture circuit to teachers, counselors and therapists, and parents. . . . In particular, I suggest that cult cops, in warning parents about teen's interests, have divorced themselves from law enforcement; what they tell parents consists of their *opinions* of what's harmful, occasionally mixed with specific examples of teens who went

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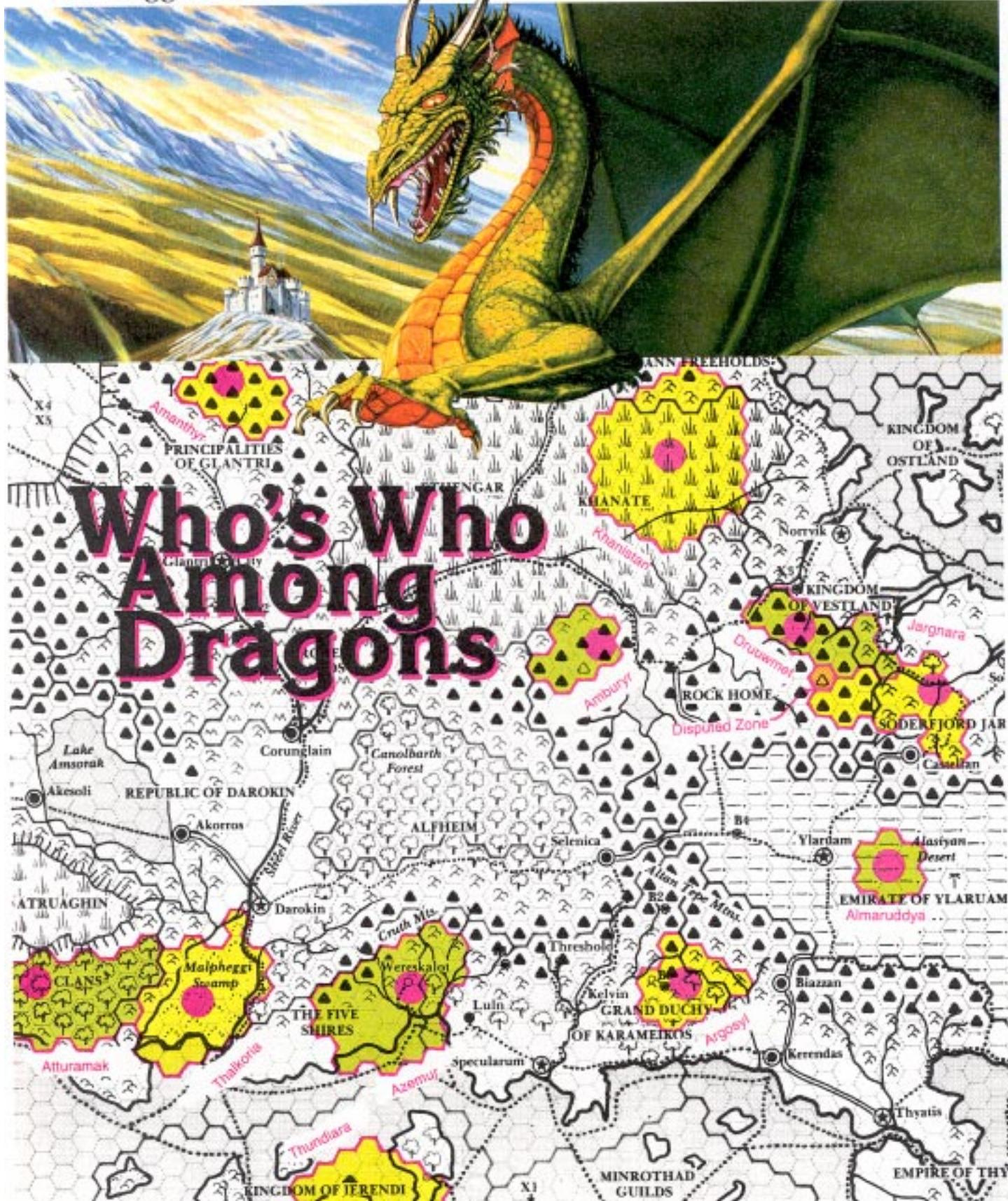
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The biggest and the best of the Known World's dragons



Map of the D&D Known World

Scale: one hex equals 24 miles

by Bruce A. Heard

In DRAGON® issue #170, ancient secrets of the dragons in the D&D® game world were revealed. But nothing was said about the major draconic personalities in the Known World. Unbeknownst to humankind, their home is the setting for a whole network of kingdoms and dominions ruled by dragons.

The more important dragon kingdoms in the Known World are now revealed here, along with their rulers and their personality quirks. These are by no means the only realms of this nature. A multitude of other draconic states—some insignificant domains that are vassals to other states, and others truly gigantic, sovereign empires—exist elsewhere in the D&D game world, but these are for you to sketch out. The borders of these dragon kingdoms are accurate as of 1000 AC (2000 AY).

Almaruddya: The ruler is Marudi, a 14-HD blue dragon. His lair is located at the southernmost end of a rocky desert strip, near the center of the Emirates of Ylaruum. Marudi's territory covers a 40-mile radius, including the oasis of Hedjazi, his main watering point. Marudi's *invisible* lair is a typical Alasyian palace with a large throne room, except that it is guarded by lesser djinn.

Marudi is a mischievous creature who enjoys fooling others, especially his foes. He is a master at illusions. When he sees a worthy victim for his pranks, he may cause his palace to appear as a small oasis. Marudi is likely to assume the shape of a desert prince or a rich merchant. His pranks, as annoying as they may be, are most often inoffensive except to true enemies.

Marudi tends to underestimate his foes to the point of being outright cocky. Aside from his jovial habits, Marudi is a rather peaceful creature. The youngest among the Known World's huge dragons, he is 98 years old and particularly skillful as a thief among humans and dragons. Marudi is the impudent son of Khanistar, described later.

Amanthyr: The ruler is Amanth, a 19-HD red dragon. Amanthyr covers a great part of the Wendarian Reaches, a chain of mountains north of the Principalities of Glantri, separating the famous magocracy from the elven Kingdom of Wendar. Amanth's lair is located on Mt. Amador, exactly 200 miles north of Glantri City. It opens on a cliff inside a narrow, hidden gorge guarded by a small army of wyverns. Amanthyr openly supports Druuwor, essentially to harass Ambur (both described later).

Amanth is 332 years old and is almost blind. She uses magic, her sense of smell, and cunning to remain ahead of the pack. Amanth has mated twice, once with Ambur. She is very cautious and will avoid any confrontation she is not sure to win. Pride and jealousy are her only flaws.

Amanth has but a few decades to live before she dies of old age. She has been seeking an opportunity to steal the *ivory plume of Maat* from Azem (see later) to

complete one of her last attempts at attaining Immortality. Amanth still does not know where Azem hides the coveted artifact. She is contemplating the idea of making a pact with Entropy if her next attempt at Immortality fails.

Amburyr: The ruler is Ambur, a 17-HD red dragon. Amburyr covers the Altan Tepes Mountains within Rockhome and the Dwarfgate Mountains separating Darokin from Ethengar. Ambur's lair is located in the ruins of Jhyrrad, 50 miles northwest of the City of Stahl. It occupies a large, dwarven-made hall under the city. The city is crawling with his followers, especially hobgoblins.

Ambur is a young, successful dragon, merely 152 years old. Impulsive and blood-thirsty, he seeks to destroy whatever stands in his way. He uses fear and raw power to rule. Ambur has been relying on a greater *talisman of elemental travel* to surprise his foes. Ambur will save this item until he is ready to attain Immortality. Ambur became a direct rival of Amanth after he mated with her. He also is an ally of Jargnir (see later) against Druuwor, whose mountain territory he covets.

Argosyl: The ruler is Argos, a 14-HD green dragon. Argosyl occupies the Dymrak Forest in Karameikos, on both sides of the Rugalov River. Argos' lair lies 48 miles north of Rugalov Village, in a cave under a small hill on the east side of the river. The dragon must immerse himself completely in the Lake of Lost Dreams in order to reach the entrance. The forest is guarded by several tribes of wolf-riding goblins that have submitted to his rule.

Argos is 148 years old. Very quiet, he always prefers stealth and trickery to violence. Argos' sphere of influence has spread steadily to the north, seeking to rally further humanoid tribes. Argos' worst enemy is Attura (see later), with whom he once attempted to mate. He was almost bound to her as a result but narrowly escaped. Argos fears Attura and has been seeking an alliance with Marudi in case of all-out aggression. Argos's flaw lies in his inability to make quick decisions. He hesitates and worries far too long for his own good. Other dragons taunt Argos by calling him Argos the Worrier.

Atturamak: The ruler is Attura, a 16-HD green dragon. Atturamak covers the large forested area in the southern Atruaghin Clans. Attura's lair is located at the center of the forest, very deep underground. It has more than a dozen entrances, some as far as 80 miles away. These entrances are overgrown with vegetation or are protected with magic. A large part of her lair is sculpted in Azcan fashion. Attura is familiar with the Hollow World.

Attura is 202 years old. She is a treacherous creature, quite skillful at politics among dragons or humans. She gained most of her power by tricking weaker dragons to come closer, then challenging them in order to bind them. She has never

mated. She dislikes Argos for escaping her, and Azem for criticizing her evil ways.

Attura currently plans on establishing her dominance over Thalkor (see later) to gain control over his lizard man army. She also was approached by a wizard, a follower of the Sphere of Energy, who promised great wealth and increased magical power in exchange for her oath. Attura is a power-hungry fool and an unscrupulous beast, which presently puts her at risk of becoming a puppet and follower of the Sphere of Energy.

Azemur: The ruler is Azem, an 18-HD gold dragon. Azem's lair is located in the village of Wereskalot, in the Five Shires. Her territory covers an 80-mile radius. Her lair is no more than a small halfling cottage, but it is laced with powerful magic. It actually contains a gate to a pocket plane that is fully attuned to Azem's mind. This microdimension is bigger than a large cavern and physically responds to Azem's commands and moods.

Azem appears to be a common looking, little old halfling lady. She appears as a very sweet person who loves growing flowers in her well-kept garden. She commonly has to leave the house to go sell her flowers in nearby villages. Three cats live in the house as her pets; they really are three shape-changed dragonnes bonded to Azem (see AC9 *Creature Catalogue*, page 69). No other dragon knows of Azem's second identity.

Azem is 323 years old. She keeps the *ivory plume of Maat* in her microdimensional lair. Azem has mated once and is on good terms with Marudi, whose constant irreverence amuses her. Khanistar and Azem respect each other. Azem's flaw lies in her love for common halfling delights and especially for wines of the Shires, sometimes causing her to lose control of herself.

Druuwmet: The ruler is Druuwor, an 11-HD white dragon. Druuwmet covers the Makkres Mountains stretching between Rockhome, Vestland, and Soderfjord. Druuwor's lair is located 24 miles south of the town of Rhoona. It is an ancient fortress built millennia ago by a forgotten civilization, before the Makkres became high mountains. White dragons and other creatures of the cold have lived and ruled from there, maintaining the dismal fortress. Druuwor occupies the cavernous hall in the keep. Frost giants guard the ancestral fortress.

Druuwor is a very old dragon, now 112 years old. His power has been waning ever since he battled Jargnir, twenty years ago. Druuwor lost the right side of his face to Jargnir's acid breath and bears other battle scars. His lair became magical when Druuwor grew into a huge white. It prevents aging from occurring within the fortress, but the sense of isolation and boredom that this place creates slowly causes the fortress inhabitants to go insane. Acutely paranoid, Druuwor hardly ever leaves his lair, fearing theft of his

treasure by his rather unstable followers.

Jargnara: The ruler is Jargnir, a 12-HD black dragon. Jargnara includes the Great Marsh in Soderfjord, the hills to the south between the Great Marsh and the Hadranger Mountain Range, and part of western Rockhome. Jargnir's lair is in the western part of the marsh, below the muck. Jargnir rules from there, with the help of trolls, oozes, slimes, and other swamp things. Druuwor and Jargnir have been longtime foes, separated by their mutual claims over the Three Volcano Lands in western Rockhome.

Jargnir is a relatively young wyrm who arose to power in a mere 105 years. She is a vicious lizard bent on destroying all human life in her path to satisfy her voracious appetite and that of her trollish minions. Jargnir is a swamp horror, a glistening black, winged serpent with slightly glowing, green eyes. Aside from weak claws at her wings' main articulation, and a thorny, prehensile tail, Jargnir is a limbless serpent.

Jargnir nourishes a profound hate for Druuwor, who killed her progeny while she was off at a dragon gathering. Jargnir's weakness is her sadism, which often causes her to stall the destruction of an dangerous foe in order to gloat and torment it.

Khanistan: The ruler is Khanistar, a 17-HD blue dragon. Her lair is located on the World Mountain, at the center of the Land of the Black Sand in eastern Ethengar. Khanistan stretches 80 miles from there in all directions. Khanistar's lair lies deep inside a tall mountain that is dotted with sinister towers. The towers, built by magic over the centuries, are covered with stone barbs and talons. Minor dragons and other lesser minions occupy these towers, remaining constantly on the watch.

Khanistar is a long, coiling, serpentlike wyrm, Oriental in style, with large globular eyes and light blue scales. She has no wings but is skillful enough a spell-caster to overcome that limitation. She spent most of her 180 years of life seeking magic. She built an impressive library of rare and ancient spells, including a few abominations dating from Nithia. Khanistar relies heavily on magic manipulation for reaching her goals. Khanistar is famous among dragons for using pocket dragons as spies or messengers. These are specially bred strains with blue scales.

She mated once and so far has remained neutral with other dragons. Her weakness lies in her excessive attraction to magic. She may agree to suspicious deals just to acquire an old spell or lost artifact that she's been seeking for so long.

Thalkoria: The ruler is Thalkor, a 13-HD black dragon. Thalkoria covers all of the Malpheggi Swamps in Darokin, with Thalkor's lair in the middle, inside the petrified remains of a very large, ancient ship built by a race of forgotten giants. It is mostly overgrown now with lichen,

Spanish moss, and glowing growths.

Thalkor is the current king of the lizard men, imposing his brutal authority on the primitive tribes.

Thalkor is 118 years old. He has been defeated in combat several times by Azem, who stole many of his dragon followers. Thalkor had to gain control over new dragons several times from scratch, for which he has vowed to kill Azem. Thalkor is allied with Amanth in a plan to discover Azemur. Thalkor's lizard men have been quietly exploring the wilderness and the fringes of the Five Shires under various disguises. They do not suspect Azem to be in Wereskalot. Thalkor's weakness lies in his incredible greed for gems and jewelry, especially crowns and scepters.

Thundiara: The ruler is Thundar, a 13-HD sea dragon. Her lair is located within an underwater inactive volcano crater called Thun, just north of the Aloysius Reefs in Ierendi. The lair is the hollowed-out hulk of a fossilized kraken. The huge eyes have been replaced with thick crystal panes, and the entrance is located underneath the hulk, where the kraken's beak should be. The beak can be opened or closed magically. Algae overgrow the outside of the hollow fossil. A dozen lesser sea serpents keep the lair safe at all times. The magic affecting Thundar's lair causes the water surrounding it to be permanently breathable by surface dwellers.

Thundiara has an 80-mile radius.

Treat Thundar as a huge green dragon as far as aging and ceremonies go. Thundar is 163 years old and has a colorful personality. Under a magical guise, she sees often mingles with tritons, whom she sees as her pet people. She hopes to influence their philosophy toward rebuilding an empire over the ruins of the past Undersea Kingdom, when she attains Immortality. In so doing, she plans to become their patron Immortal in the Sphere of Matter, while the lair would become their temple. Thundar is a megalomaniac. She mated once, many decades ago. She does not involve herself with dragons of the Known Worlds surface.

Thundar: AC -1; HD 13***; hp 73; AT 1 bite or spit; Dmg 3-24 or poison; MV (swim or fly) 180'; Save F24; ML 9; TT Hx2, I; AL N; SA fin-wings allow Thundar to glide for up to 6 rounds, poison glob breath 3x /day to 100' (Saving Throw vs. Breath Weapon or die); spell-casting as a huge green dragon. For sea serpent statistics, check the *Masters DM's Book*, page 44, or AC9 *Creature Catalogue*, page 64. Ω

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A guide to antitank weapons for TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game commandos



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Tanks (the hard way)

If you're a hero, you can climb on top of a tank and drop a grenade through its hatch. It really works. Israeli and Syrian commandos stopped tanks this way in the battles outside Beirut in 1982. Rioters sometimes do it with Molotov cocktails. However, it is not a good way to collect retirement pay.

In the course of a TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game, play out any attempt to throw grenades through a tank's turret using the normal combat rules. One cannot board vehicles traveling over 40 MPH. A character must pass a ½ DEX check to jump onto a slower tank; failure indicates the character has fallen. It is assumed that boarders will approach a tank only from behind, so they do not risk being crushed under the treads. If someone leaps onto a tank from the side, a ¼ DEX check must be made to succeed; failure means a ¼ DEX check to avoid being crushed by the treads, causing 1d3 wounds for 2d10 points of damage each (hit-location rolls must be made). Tanks usually drive with their turrets

HUNTING TANKS IS FUN AND EASY!

by Thomas M. Kane

open, because the crews are practically blind unless they put their heads out. This means commandos can find openings for grenades. It also means someone may jump out of a turret to stop a commando from making his grenade deposit. Remember that a tank usually carries two or three mounted machine guns, not to mention its cannon and any small arms the crew is packing.

What to shoot with

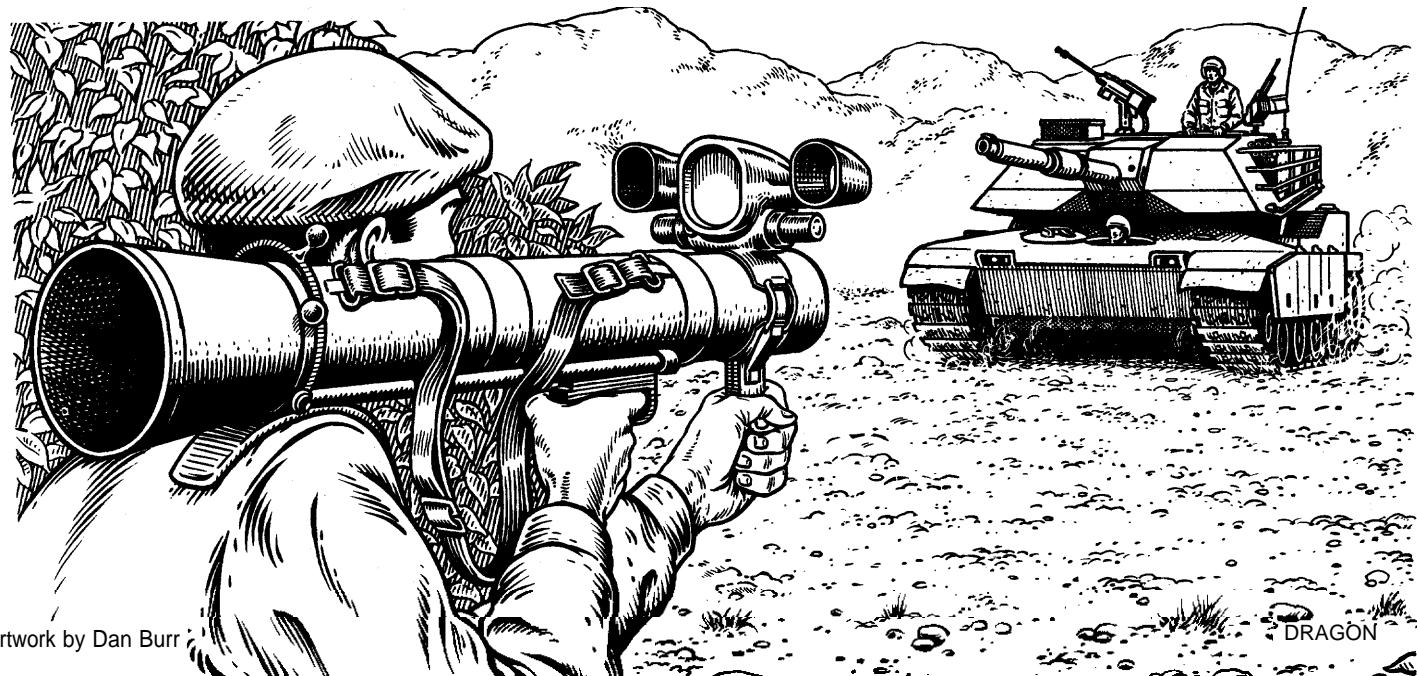
When infantry has to take on tanks, it usually uses guided missiles. The larger antitank guided missiles (ATGMs) work well only between 1,500' and 9,000'. In a city or forest, you might not see a tank until it's too close. At longer ranges, a

gunner must stand up and keep the target in his sights to guide the missile. This procedure requires nerve, especially if the tank starts shooting back.

Most ATGMs travel slowly to give their shaped charges time to work. An operator must guide this charge until it reaches the target, so he can correct mistakes in aiming and suffer no penalty for long-range fire. If the gunner flinches, his missile veers into the ground. If an ATGM gunner is fired upon while his missile is flying, he must pass a WIL check to keep the projectile on course, even if the shots miss. The Antitank Weapons Table shows missile speeds in feet per TOP SECRET/S.I. combat turn (two seconds). Use it to determine how many turns a gunner must concentrate on his target. When computing travel time, round up fractions of a turn.

Several missiles function differently. Operators of the Sagger and Swingfire ATGMs suffer a -20 penalty on WIL checks, thanks to the missiles' inconvenient joy stick aiming systems. However, the Hellfire and AT-6 have automatic seeking systems and do not need to be guided. These two missiles were designed for use from aircraft, where the gunner cannot possibly stay in one place to aim.

All antitank weapons have backblast. Anyone within 10' to the rear of a launching missile takes 1d2 wounds, each for 1d6 points of damage. Determine wound location randomly. The weapons labeled BB have particularly large exhausts that cause 1d4 wounds within 10' and 1d2 to everyone within 20'. Backblast also makes hidden gunners automatically obvious once they fire. If the Administrator considers a



missile team especially well camouflaged, he might allow it to stay hidden if all enemies fail INT checks.

At close ranges, commandos can use devices like the U.S. Army light antitank weapon (LAW), which is a simple, unguided rocket. One aims and fires it almost like a rifle. LAWs and their kin penetrate armor with shaped charges. The front half of the shell is hollow; the rear half is a conical bomb. When the shell goes off, it produces a blowtorch effect that sears through armor. Most designers build tanks with sloped sides that can deflect the jet of fire. Modern armors also use ceramic composites that don't burn. A few vehicles are swathed with explosive plates that blow up missiles before they blow up the tank. Such improvements make LAWs less effective as tank killers. Fortunately, tank armor is thin in the rear, and tanks have other vulnerable spots. Aiming for the tracks, engine, or external weapons is a good idea.

What to shoot at

The Antitank Weapons Table shows what ranges and effects these weapons have. A prepared shot (see page 74, *Players Guide*) at the side of an armored fighting vehicle (AFV) gains a +10 bonus to the gunner's weapon skill. A prepared shot at an AFV's rear gets a +20 bonus. Characters can also aim for specific machinery by

using a called shot (see page 73, *Players Guide*). The gunner must roll against $\frac{1}{4}$ skill because, although the target is large, it is usually protected by streamlining and armor. Furthermore, only weapons with antivehicle ratings of +50 or higher can be used in called shots against AFVs. When these shots hit, they cripple whatever device they strike. Typical targets are radio antennas, guns, and engines or treads.

When a normal shot (not called) hits its tank target, the target must immediately roll on the Crash Table (see page 74, *Players Guide*). After checking the Crash Table, roll 1d6. On a 1 or 2, the target loses its largest functional weapon. This damage can be fixed only at a military garage by a character with the appropriate Weapons Skill (Tank Gun for the cannon, Machine Gun for the machine gun, etc.)

A question of friction

Many countries build ATGMs in small numbers, test them insufficiently, then store them until the propellant is of doubtful quality. Commandos must pay 10 friction points (described in TSAC5 *Commando*, pages 36-38) to use most antitank weapons. Soviet missiles incur 15 friction points, due to especially poor care. However, the TOW, Milan, 106 mm recoilless rifle, and LAW are well tested. They cost only five friction points each.

In summary

The only smart way to take on a tank is to surprise it. One can use mines or concrete obstacles to "canalize" enemy vehicles into going where one wants them to go. Both commandos and Administrators should remember that a tank shoots only when its crew sees something to shoot at. As a general principle, a tank crew can see only straight ahead when inside the tank. A crew member must put his head outside to see more, and tankers are reluctant to do this when bullets are flying their way. The Administrator determines how NPCs react to fire. A clever agent will hide in smoke, trees, or buildings, wait for a tank to reach stone-throwing distance, then fire a LAW and hope it works.

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The information in this article is authentic, although standard trench/obstacle-grade data has been extrapolated to cover Soviet tanks where such information is unknown. The following sources were consulted:

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Anti-Tank Weapons Table

Weapon (nation)	Antivehicle rating	Range	Weight in lbs. (launcher/round)*	Speed			
	Dam/Exp	Min	Med	Long	Load		
TOW (U.S.)	+50	Mis BB	195	900**	4	184/40	300
Dragon (U.S.)	+40	Mis	900	—	3	32/27	150
Hellfire (U.S.)	+50	Mis	900	1,500**	5	X/95	450
LAW (U.S.)	+30	Gre	15	—	—	5.5	—
Sagger (U.S.S.R.)	+50	Mis	900	3,000**	5	X/25	225
Spigot (U.S.S.R.)	+50	Mis	150	600**	5	57/30	300
AT-6 (U.S.S.R.)	+40	Mis	3,000	—	5	X/60	450
RPG-LAW (U.S.S.R.)	+35	Gre	15	—	—	6	—
RPG-7 (U.S.S.R.)	+40	Gre	15	900	5	15.4/5	300
RPG-16 (U.S.S.R.)	+40	Gre	15	900	5	12/16	300
Milan (France)	+50	Mis	75	600**	4	X/26	270
HOT (France)	+50	Mis BB	225	1,500**	4	X/46	300
Swingfire (U.K.)	+50	Mis	450	1,500**	5	X/75	225
Carl Gustav (Sweden)	+40	Gre	15	900	2	34/5.7	—
Armbrust (German)	+40	Gre	15	—	3	14/2.4	—
106 mm RR***	+50	Mis BB	30	900	5	460/37	—

NOTES

Antitank weapons never get a short-range modifier, and some do not suffer a long-range penalty, either. However, guided missiles have minimum ranges.

Weapons without a speed entry do not need to be guided after firing. Therefore, the speed of the projectile is irrelevant in TOP SECRET/S.I. game mechanics.

* When only one number appears, both launcher and round are parts of the same device.

** This is not a medium-long range but a medium-short range. Any shots at closer ranges (but above the minimum) suffer a -40 penalty to hit.

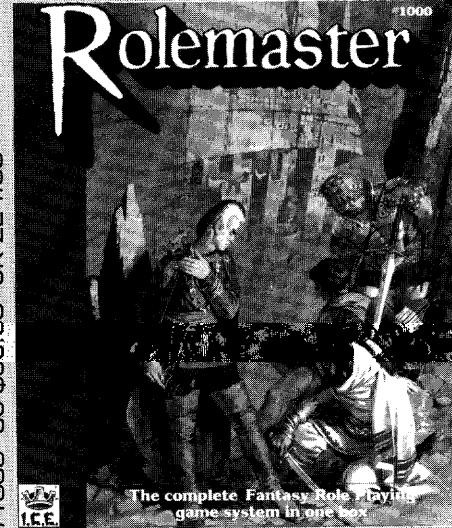
*** The 106 mm RR is a recoilless rifle that is issued everywhere, especially in the Third World.

BB = big backblast (see text); Gre = grenade-type explosion, Mis = missile-type explosion (see Explosives Table, page 80, TOP SECRET/S.I. *Players Guide*); X = nonportable system.



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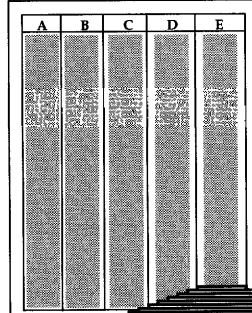
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The Making of a Monster

If you want to play tough monsters, then think like they do!

by Matthew Iden

Almost all attributes of the monsters in the AD&D® and D&D® games are detailed in ways that can be used in a precise manner during the game. Hit dice and hit points rate the creatures' toughness in attack and defense. Armor class and damage ratings have direct applications in a combat round. Monsters' special abilities are given damage scores or exact effects.

Three of the most important attributes of monsters, however, can't be converted to simple numbers. They are actually skills of the Dungeon Master: how well the monster's role is played, how the experience of the creature is interpreted, and how the monster's mind is used.

The manner in which these abilities are

played can make or break an adventure. Game characters thrive on adversity. If the adversaries aren't played with a spark of intelligence or a will to live, your game suffers. Even your most creative adventure will be nothing more than a monster convention if the party's opponents aren't played with some believability.

"If I were a monster..."

One problem that sells monsters short is indifferent role-playing on the part of the DM. This creates a detached, distant type of play, and you end up with robotic control of your monsters. You pull the switches and press the buttons necessary for the encounter, but you lose the feel of really

playing the creature. "Ho-hum" role-playing can also throw away any chance for the monster to act with creativity or intelligence. Individual monsters become automatons with hit points, armor classes, and not much else.

Playing your monsters subjectively is a good way to stop treating each monster simply as a column of statistics. You begin by actually envisioning yourself as the creature. Do this before you even get together with the players to begin the adventure. For each monster you place, take a minute to imagine what your life would be like as a hill giant, an otyugh, or whatever. Ask yourself what you would do in the creature's place, knowing the mon-



Artwork by Terry Dykstra

ster's weaknesses, strengths, and intelligence. Where do I live, and why? What do I eat? How do I get along with neighboring creatures? Whom do I hate? What special knowledge of the surroundings do I have? What objects do I possess that might aid me against potential enemies? How can I use these objects to my best advantage?

These questions add the spice for which you are looking. If you play an ogre as nothing but a collection of numbers, the players are going to slice him to ribbons. Many players can give a list of vital statistics of each monster they face right from memory. When players know that they are fighting an ogre, they adjust their battle plans according to that knowledge. Then the confrontation often turns out to be nothing more than rolling dice. Playing that same ogre as a real creature, as an extension of yourself, adds excitement to an otherwise normal encounter. You might find yourself going back to the original envisioning and playing that monster to the hilt.

Questions of survival

Thinking like the monsters that you role-play leads into the next area that is often ignored: natural advantages. Logic dictates that an ogre does not sit around waiting for a party of humans to arrive and finish him off. He's a survivor. It would be logical for the ogre to protect himself, to make use of a ledge or to set a trap. This monster knows he's fighting for his life all the time, so he's not going to ignore advantages that could increase his chances of survival. You wouldn't either, would you?

An example would be something as simple as a shield. It's almost a given that an ogre would have come across a shield during a raid against a village, mugging kobolds, or even through trade with other humanoids. A human-sized shield could be used as a buckler or even a makeshift breastplate on an ogre. Several small shields could cover vital areas, and a large shield would be used normally.

Another surprise would be to give the ogre some missile power. A normal spear would be about javelin size for the ogre; perhaps a battle axe could be thrown (with appropriate penalties unless he's practiced a lot). What if he learned from a friendly giant how to throw rocks, with maybe half the normal effectiveness of a hill giant?

A few traps could be set using natural surroundings. Even a simpleton like the ogre could pile rocks on a hill so they could be pushed down onto enemies. He might have favorite hiding places for an ambush, or there could be a warning device at the entrance to his cave-falling pebbles, perhaps.

It might seem unfair to give these advantages to the ogre. However, even considering the ogre's low intelligence, they are really just natural precautions. It's important to note that you are not changing the ogre in any way; he is the same ogre that

you can find in the books. The only difference is that you are playing him with the natural advantages he would logically have already. All monsters, not just ogres, have similar advantages if you take time to explore the possibilities.

Brains make the monster

A third ability often disregarded is intelligence. The previous suggestions on subjective role-playing and the use of natural advantages rely on background information already in place in the game. The native intelligence of a monster, however, is a highly variable thing, and the use of it is the test of a good DM.

Intelligence combines the skills of decision making, cunning, and foresight. Playing a monster according to its intelligence is difficult, because it often requires the DM to make the same immediate assessments and decisions that the monster would make (aha! subjective role-playing again). Many of the actions that create these situations are spontaneous or unanticipated, so the DM has to "wing it," using his knowledge of the monster's intelligence and personality.

Even if there are no unforeseen problems, the DM must still know enough of the monster's intelligence to decide whether or not the monster would perform certain actions. For instance, it is easy to imagine an ogre piling rocks on a hillside to push them down on adversaries; it is not logical for the same ogre to build a complex trap to accomplish the same purpose. A vampire does not place his secret crypt in the dining hall of his castle. He makes several decoys, possibly trapped, and hides his true casket in a secret chamber. Making use of a monster's mind is always going to be in the hands of the individual DM, but the following are a few tips on how to play a monster with the intelligence it was born with.

Intelligent monsters understand strategic planning, the first step to which is gathering information. This means that the party will be watched secretly by spying or through the monster's spell abilities. Once the strengths and weaknesses of the party have been assessed, measures will be taken to minimize the strengths and maximize the weaknesses of the party. Truly devious monsters will attempt to capitalize on party disagreements and rivalries by using magic or other means. Many creatures will attempt to convert sympathetic party members to their side, or will use the party's own strengths against it by using *charm* and *suggestion* spells on members.

A monster could try to separate the party in order to weaken it. Kidnapped party members can be held for ransom or simply imprisoned to divide the party. Throughout the adventure, the party must run a gauntlet that will slowly wear it down so that either the party will be eliminated outright or the monster will have an easy time of the final encounter. The party will

be harassed and guided into trapped rooms or dangerous areas. There should be decoys and deceptions; the monster may attempt to dupe the party into thinking that they have killed it, only to strike at an unexpected moment.

An attempt could be made to steer the upcoming confrontation to a location desirable to the monster, preferably with other monstrous allies around. In any event, the creature will try to ensure that it has ample time to decide how to receive an attack, how to retaliate and how to escape if necessary. If the party manages to overcome all these obstacles, and if escape seems impossible for the creature, the monster will certainly attempt to save its life first by parleying, then by offering treasure, information, or even servitude. Even in defeat, however, the monster will be looking for the opening it needs to attack or escape.

Unintelligent or foolishly confident monsters will most likely do their assessing as they attack. Don't overlook animal cunning, however. Even creatures of animal intelligence will know the advantages of luring an opponent into a dangerous area or using hit-and-run tactics to weaken the party. Most unintelligent monsters instinctively strike with surprise by using natural cover and ambushing their prey. Once the original surprise is over, the creature will probably revert to charge tactics. Unless the monster is of less than animal intelligence, it will probably retreat after sustaining serious injuries.

It is important to remember not to play monsters with more intelligence than they possess. A common problem is that many DMs combine their personal knowledge of the party and the dungeon with what the monster should properly know, the result being that the monster always knows who is weakest, who possesses the strongest weapon, where to run, etc.

A good guideline to follow is to ask yourself what the monster knows every time an important decision must be made. You can even make a short list of the knowledge it possesses so you won't go wrong. Ask yourself if the information in question is something only you would know or something that the monster would know.

Monstrous IQ levels

Sometimes a monster is played with decision-making abilities beyond the normal, and the listed intelligence score is ignored. For instance, some creatures don't know enough to pick out the mage in a party or to realize that a *cloudkill* is not just green fog. If you are uncertain as to what kind of intelligence the monster should be played with, start with its listed intelligence rating and work from there.

Unintelligent monsters (INT 0) normally attack with nothing more complicated than simple surprise and might not know enough to retreat. Bugs, slimes, and fungi are examples of this category. What might seem to be the use of superior tactics

(such as green slime lurking over a doorway) is actually predatory instinct. When it comes to playing these creatures, try to pick out their best natural advantage. For instance, beetles will burrow and surprise, slimes and molds are silent by their nature, and fungi could be concealed in a patch of less dangerous flora.

Creatures with animal intelligence (INT 1) use natural terrain, ambushes, and hit-and-run tactics often, but will run from a superior foe. Consider real animals such as wolves and great cats. The former use hit-and-run tactics and a warning system (howling). The latter are all known for their silent stalking and surprise abilities.

Semi-intelligent monsters (INT 2-3) have the ability to learn from past fights and use that information against future foes. They may also have learned to stalk foes to gain information on their strengths and weaknesses. For instance, a semi-intelligent monster may recognize armor as a symbol of fighting ability and may opt to attack a less-protected figure. If there is a group, there will be a clear leader that the others follow.

These first three intelligence levels rarely let anger or frenzy override their survival instincts, so they don't often fight to the death. They are unlikely to use tools or weapons.

Those monsters with low intelligence (INT 5-7) will use more complicated tactics and realize the advantages of missile power. They understand that there is strength in numbers and may gather in large groups for that purpose. They will have a rudimentary chain of command, including a possible religious leader. Many humanoids fall into this category. Tactics include wave charges and simple traps to safeguard their lair or valuables. These monsters may also tame animals as guardians. An individual monster of low intelligence will use its natural advantages to the utmost, making use of simple decoys and traps (a concealed pit trap filled with sharp sticks, for example). The most basic tools and weapons are favored (clubs, slings, daggers, etc.). Primitive fortifications and shelters are constructed or sought out, and these are given some maintenance and care.

Those creatures with average intelligence (INT 8-10) or who are considered very intelligent (INT 11-12) understand the tactics mentioned above. Groups will understand wave tactics and flanking maneuvers. Individuals will set traps of average complexity and may attempt to outguess the party by predicting its actions. It will be common to use animals or monsters as guardians, transportation, or alarm devices. There may also be servants that act in a guard capacity (such as a group of orcs serving a hill giant). Written, spoken, and sign languages are commonly used. Tools, weapons, and structures are complex, well crafted, and well cared for. Magic will be understood and might even be controlled by spell-casters. Always

remember that most humans are of average intelligence—and humanity today rules the real world with no competition except itself.

Highly intelligent (INT 13-14) and exceptionally intelligent (INT 15-16) beings use all of the tactics mentioned before and may improve or adjust them according to party actions. Traps may be placed to have a domino effect, so that the first trap sets off the next trap, etc. In addition to taming creatures as guards and having servants, these creatures may have alliances with other creatures they feel are of equal strength. Their tactics will be increasingly abstract, attempting to foresee and counter party actions with winning tactics. Numerous fall-back plans might be laid for attack and defense, with redundant fail-safe systems for defense in particular (multiple traps, overlapping spell traps, traps within traps, etc.). The existence of much-used libraries or other data-storage systems greatly increases the power of any beings in these categories, giving them access to huge amounts of raw information from which they can draw their plans and projects. Manufacturing systems will probably be in full gear, making the best use possible of local resources, so weapons, armor, tools, food, homes, fortresses, and other needs and supplies will be plentiful and of the highest quality. Powerful magic will be in use, applied to daily life as well as to warfare.

Beyond the level of exceptional intelligence (INT 17+), a monster becomes difficult to play. Most DMs don't have a genius-level intelligence, but a good many monsters do. How can you accurately play something more intelligent than yourself? Well, you can't. What you can do is to make up for it by affecting play so that the end result is something that a genius-level intellect might have come up with anyway. In other words, *partially* disregarding the preceding warning of playing monsters with too much intelligence.

What makes a genius is creativeness, memory, and speed of thought. The only way to simulate that in a game is to give the creature information that is normally only the DM's but might be a plausible prediction on the creature's part.

For example, suppose your party is stalking a mind flayer in its lair. This disgusting creature has filled its abode with all manner of creatures and traps; this is only natural. However, it is an alien intelligence far superior to the average man. Drawing on its decades of experience, formidable intellect, and logic beyond our understanding, it predicts what manner of humans would dare enter its lair and what their strengths would be. It can guess at what the characters have for spells and magical items, what their intentions are, what their reactions will be to being bribed or attacked, where they are from, who are the leaders, and which characters would be the easiest or most difficult to slay. If you as a DM believe that this is

possible, then you can adjust the mind flayer's selection of attacks and defenses based on what you know of the party.

As a guideline, genius-level creatures not only understand tactics, they will *immediately* improve on them according to character actions. Brilliant monsters will attempt to combine tactics for maximum effect or may invent new ones. Guards and allies will be used in the best possible manner. Most, if not all, contingencies have been planned for. Attacks on the party will come from every direction: direct frontal assaults with guards, sneak attacks, mechanical traps, insidious will-force spell attacks, illusions and deceptions, and a host of other surprises. Even learning the identity of the monster may be nearly impossible if it uses deception: Was it a vampire, a lich, an elven wizard, or a creature from the outer planes? The only certainty is that what the party *thinks* is going on is *wrong*.

Creatures with supra-genius capability and above might be aware of the party before the party even knows who or where the creature is. The monster may have already assessed whether it can defeat the party before the party leaves to attack it. If the being believes that it can defeat the party, it will execute original tactics for optimum effects. Strategies will be adjusted even before the characters encounter them. Many parties will be destroyed before breaching half of the creature's defenses. Any opponents of this creature will need a great deal of luck, power, and possibly weapons that nullify some of the creature's awesome abilities, but killing it outright should be almost impossible without long and careful (and brilliant) planning.

In short...

Subjective role-playing, making use of natural advantages, and understanding the power of a monster's intelligence are all abilities that unfortunately don't have numbers or charts to help you utilize them. They are skills that a dedicated DM develops only over time. But by taking time and care with each of your adventures, and by using the tips in this article, you should be able to convert hum-drum, run-of-the-mill encounters into exciting, believable adventures.

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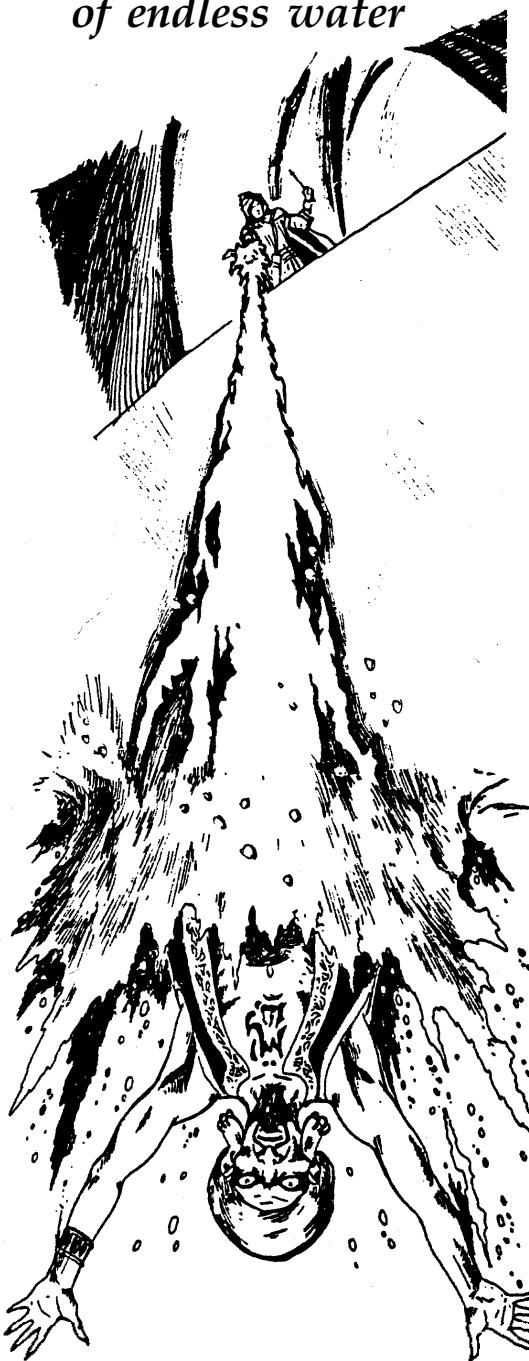
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Care For a Drink?

by David W. Montgomery and Jim Milner

A new look at an overlooked magical item: the *decanter of endless water*



So, you got a *decanter of endless water* on your last AD&D® adventure. "Goody, goody," you groan, "I guess I'll never die of thirst." Now, wait just a moment. Have you ever considered *all* the possible uses for this item? The decanter is one of the most versatile magical items you can possess. Unlike many one-dimensional glamour items, like *vorpal swords*, its potential usefulness covers a broad range of functions.

As noted in the AD&D 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 166, the decanter is a stopped flask that can pour forth fresh or salt water, starting and stopping on command, at three flowing rates (each rate commanded by a special word). The three flowing rates are: a *stream* of one gallon per round; a 5'-long *fountain* of five gallons per round; and a 20'-long *geyser* of 30 gallons per round (this option requires the user to be braced, or he will be knocked down). The geyser will kill small vermin (bats, mice, moles, insects, etc.). Most people never take its uses any further than that.

But have you ever considered just how perfect the decanter is for vampire hunting? How about firefighting, both offensively and defensively? Did you ever use it to make or find traps? What if you used it with another magical item or spell for a combined result? How about using it for sabotage? Using it with poison? The list goes on.

In our discussion of advanced uses for the *decanter of endless water*, it will be the most useful in the geyser mode. If any other mode is used, it will be specified in the text. Also, keep in mind the requirement for sturdy bracing when using the geyser mode.

As a weapon

As a weapon, the decanter is not usually lethal, yet it is highly effective against various opponents. If you have ever seen film footage of police officers using fire hoses for riot control, you can imagine the decanter's effectiveness against man-size or smaller opponents. No to-hit roll is required, as the geyser stream is continuous and its target area can be adjusted from second to second by the user, making it almost impossible for a determined user to miss a target. Up to 10 individuals may be targeted per round. Man-sized targets must pass a dexterity check on 1d20 or be knocked down. (You might even push opponents over cliffs or into pits.) Continu-

ous hosing always disrupts spell-casters, regardless of their saving-throw result. Opponents smaller than man size are knocked out of the sky if flying or are thrown to the floor if standing, then are swept 2'-12' away; tiny creatures (less than 1 HD, AC 6 to 10) immediately crash if flying, are knocked 5'-20' away, and take 1-2 hp damage per round.

Creatures from the plane of elemental Fire wouldn't like to find themselves on the receiving end of a decanter's blast. If a decanter is used to spray or pour water upon such fiery beings, a figure of 1 hp damage per gallon of water per round is not unreasonable. Affected beings include salamanders, efreet, azer, and fire elementals. All of these beings can be maneuvered or at least held at bay by a decanter; if forced onto an all-water surface, they are extinguished.

Any air-breathing opponent in a pit can be drowned, of course. If it can swim, using the geyser will frustrate its attempts to surface and breathe. Pouring an endless stream of water into giant ant tunnels will collapse or fill them in time, trapping or drowning the inhabitants.

The most effective and lethal use of the decanter is against vampires, especially in their lair. First, it quickly kills all the common rats and bats always found near vampires. Then, the user just corners the vampire, hoses him down for three rounds, and voilà! Some DMs might point out that, according to the *Monstrous Compendium*, a vampire must be immersed in running water, so the vampire must be completely submerged. The decanter's geyser, however, should produce sufficient water to count as immersion if properly handled (and if the DM is in a good mood). If nothing else, you can create a pool in which to immerse him later.

Among the more devious uses for a decanter are contaminating fresh water supplies and poisoning vegetation with salt water, and poisoning saltwater environments with fresh water (aquatic creatures that live exclusively in either fresh or salt water will take 1 hp damage per round in such a "poisonous" environment).

As a tool

The decanter lends itself well to many useful and interesting functions. Water poured out in any mode over the floor can show the location of invisible objects or creatures by their displacement of the water. This method is also very effective in

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finding traps and secret or concealed doors, by watching for drainage. The force of the geyser is also great for springing traps. Obviously, it is wonderful for drinking, fighting fires, and cleaning dirt and mud from objects, animals, and people.

Druuids, rangers, and paladins in plains and desert areas should always carry a decanter for relief of drought victims. At 30 gallons per minute, it shouldn't take long to refill small, dried-up cisterns, water towers, or reservoirs (this also makes it a perfect antisiege resource). A spray from the decanter will extinguish torches, lanterns, candles, braziers, censers, watch fires, etc. in dungeons and outdoors. If sprayed on lava or extremely hot surfaces, it can cool them and create huge steam clouds to hide movement. It is impressive when used against earthen fortifications and ramparts, though it will take some time to destroy them. In the snow, the decanter can start terrible avalanches. The decanter is a wonderful device for flooding anything. (Rumor has it that the Vast Swamp in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting originated hundreds of years ago when an experiment with a giant decanter went awry.)

In peacetime, the decanter can create aquariums and be used to save mermen, whales, and other beings stranded far inland. (You might not want to use it on ice trolls and other unfriendly monsters)

refreshed by water, though.) In fountain mode, the decanter will keep children happy in summertime and can create ice rinks in wintertime. You can water lawns and gardens with it, and you can use it for cooking and doing dishes, too.

On a bizarre note, the decanter can be used for propulsion when levitating, underwater, and in wildspace (it's just like a rocket engine). When used underwater, it can stir up bottom sediment and create clouds of debris to hide friendly movement like a *darkness* spell.

Speaking of space and the bizarre, the decanter can be put to some unusual uses in the SPELLJAMMER™ setting. If fired from a spelljamming ship as a jettison, the decanter will do little or no damage, yet its blast will wash over enemy decks and scatter loose objects and small crew members. When in a crystal sphere with sub-freezing wildspace, such as Krynnspace, the resulting storm of ice particles does damage as a medium jettison. Rumors say that special "water cannons" have been developed for use in the phlogiston; these supposedly are decanters attached to tubelike devices firing projectiles, either javelins or *beads of force*, with water pressure. A globular waterworld could be created accidentally by a decanter left "on" in wildspace, and a lake could be formed on a small asteroid for colonization purposes, like the lake on the Rock of Bral.

Combined effects

When combined with the effect of another magical item or spell, the decanter's functionality may be dramatically increased. One of the more basic combinations is to use a *cone of cold* or similar effect to freeze the water. Imagine flooding a length of passage with 1" of water and freezing it, especially around a corner. Any pursuit running headlong into an unexpected stretch of ice will get a nasty surprise.

Many other possibilities exist. Consider the flooded passage again; but, when the pursuers arrive this time, hit them with some form of electrical attack, such as a *lightning bolt* or *shocking grasp*, applied directly to the water surface. Everybody should get a charge out of that! An intriguing and nasty combination is to use a *cube of force*, a *water breathing* spell, and the decanter to drown opponents.

Finally, remember that oil floats on water. Burning oil floats on water, too.

This has just been a brief taste of the limitless possibilities inherent in the decanter. Beyond even all this, DMs can always introduce unique variations of this item. Examples are *decanters of endless holy water* (a killer vs. undead), *lemonade*, *vinegar*, *oil* (highly flammable), and *fresh air* (priceless in wildspace). What of a *decanter of endless beer*? Ω

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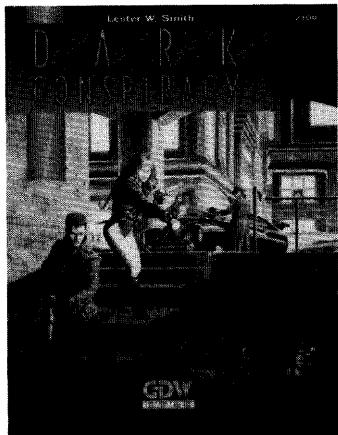
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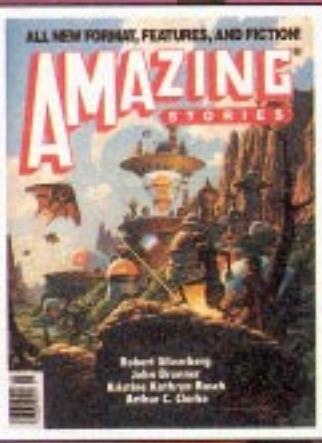
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This is in reply to the letters by Jason Williams and S. D. Anderson in #165.

Among my reasons for writing the article, "The Enemy at the Gates," was to provide the Dungeon Master with a stable area for his campaign world, one that the characters couldn't seriously harm. The article evolved after many games in which players asked, "Why can't we knock over the magic shop and steal what we need? Why can't we fight our way past the city guard? Why can't we sneak into the city and avoid the taxes?"

Remember, fantasy cities are ancient places, 10,000 years old and more. Think of how much magic your campaigners can gather or make in one game year. Multiply that by 10,000. Now, does 112 *flying carpets* seem excessive?

Similarly, if the wizards' guild contributed one *wish* every 50 years, you'd have 200 *wishes* expended on the city by now, not to mention *wishes* gathered from other sources. Suppose the city once had a saint, demigod, or avatar resident, too.

I did not mean to leave the impression that low-level mages would be common laborers or foot soldiers. But, in times of national need, either in defense or in pyramid building, people up to and including members of the ruling class are drafted to work or fight. A mage who doesn't want or need to live in a city—where he is close to spell components, libraries, and skilled artisans—may find himself in a tower out in the wilderness somewhere.

I'm sticking to my guns on the giants issue. You've got to remember the giant's point of view as well. He is not going to want to pick up and throw a sack full of yellow mold, nor one full of any other distasteful substance. This is not an issue of whether the giant is capable of throwing anything a catapult can (he can); it's a matter of volition. Most giants are stupid and suspicious of others. I don't think they would agree to throw anything but rocks, unless there was some special motivation involved.

I freely admit to the mistakes. I should not have included *legend lore* and *commune* in the list of detection spells. *Mea culpa*. Let me say in my own defense, however, that spell research goes on all the time. A given campaign might have a version of *protection from normal missiles* or *invisibility* that will work on objects. *Amulets of non-detection* are not common and might be noticed by omission (slip a stone with *magic mouth* into suspect's pocket; if the detection spells don't notice it, grab him quick!). Talk about *polymorphing* into a bee was more hyperbole than anything else; it sounded good. On the

other hand, suppose a *limited wish* was used. If a spy simply *had* to be smuggled in, wouldn't the enemy's purse strings be loosened enough to buy such a spell?

I don't know about the flying cavalry. I figured that if one lord could maintain a dragon, a city full of lords could maintain four. I suppose it depends on how easily and how much food for the dragons is obtained. I do think, however, that a powerful city, receiving tribute from the rest of the empire, could maintain large numbers of exotic animals. These monsters would be kept in order to break or counter sieges,

P.S. to J. D.: Suppose the cavalry created its griffons on the spot, using *simulacrum* spells and preserved griffin bones?

James R. Collier
Georgetown Ontario

I'm writing in response to Alan Grimes' comments in DRAGON issue #166. I've sort of kept out of the dispute with Mr. Howarth, but I've finally put my two cents in.

I'm afraid I have to side with Mr. Howarth on several of his points, but I do have points of my own, the first being that there are other video games that give you more of a chance to role-play. I am specifically talking about *Ultima VI*, by Origin. Here, though you won't win the game, you can choose a life of crime instead of following the paths of virtue. The game also allows you to talk with every person in every town; depending on how you talk to those people, you can get information out of them or nothing at all. The point is that computer games *can* be interactive.

My second point is that a computer can describe with a picture what would take a DM several words to describe. In *Ultima V* when you see a shadowlord you are stricken with fear; in all likelihood, you will leave that city immediately. It would take a good DM a couple of minutes to describe the right mood.

Now, I'm not suggesting that we put a computer at the head of a table and have everyone sit around it with their mouses, expecting the computer to be a DM, but I am suggesting that when a DM is not readily available, I find computers to be helpful in this. I live in a town of 100 people, and only five, including me, play the AD&D® game. When one of us does not want to play, we don't play. Therefore, I turn on my computer, since it does not have a choice as to whether it wants to play or not.

Alan made a point that computer programs are set, and how no two GMs' ways of handling things would be the same. This is an appropriate point, assuming that two people playing the computer game make the exact same moves. This is possible in theory, but in a computer game like *Ultima VI* or *The Bards Tale*, it is very unlikely.

Though I did not read issue #151 and don't know how the topic came up, Alan was talking about how many disks it would take to put several AD&D books on disks. I have a 40 megabyte hard drive, and it could handle 5,000 K without a problem. Anyway, why can't you use the rule books in paper form?

I welcome any letters that anybody would like to write to me in regards to my letter.

Jager McConnell
P.O. Box 15 a
Deerfield MA 01342

Lately, there have been several letters in "Forum" concerning the lack of role-playing in computer FRPGs. True! So far, nobody has combined artificial intelligence routines with computer fantasy. This is not because the technology is not here yet. AI programs can perform medical diagnoses, play world-champion-level chess, and I have seen one instance of a computer playing a multiplayer DIPLOMACY* game (by The Avalon Hill Game Company) against six human opponents. The computer was able to negotiate with other players, and it did quite well. Most remarkably, the human players could not tell which nation was controlled by the computer.

Hopefully someone will combine AI with FRPGs and come out with a really good computer game. Of course, nothing can compare to a human DM and a group of good friends bashing some troll butt in your own living room. However, computers can go a long way. I know; I am a graduate teaching assistant specializing in graphics and artificial intelligence.

But enough of that. Thanks for your time. Keep up the good work. TSR is, and always has been, #1 in my heart.

Glenn Pruitt
Richmond VA

Although fun and exciting, no computer has yet been taught to allow any and all action thought up by the PCs. Several games (like SJG's AUTODUEL* and FASA's BATTLETECH* games) go along a predetermined way, and you don't get to make any decisions on what you say or do. Few games give you true free will in your actions, and even these allow only options that have already been thought of. (Infocom games and the King Quest series by Sierra are good games that give you real, though limited, choices.) This is like playing a bad solo adventure. You come to a point at which you have a great idea, but it isn't on the "Turn to page 101 if you want to do this" list. For example, try to attack villagers in *The Adventures of Link* or *Dragon Warrior*. You can't. The Nintendo maniacs think this is because that is not in character. But once you take over the character, you define him. Just because a game has levels, armor classes, and hit points does not make it a role-playing game. The games don't let you attack the villagers because that would amend and spoil the ending toward which the game pushes you. The Ultima series games are about as close as you can get to a real RPG on a computer, many people say. That is just not true. I have played a game my gaming group created, using the traps in Flying Buffalo's *Grimtooth's Trap** and my memory of the D&D® game. The game has levels and a basic skills system, but reasoning is left up to the DM. No dice are needed, and stats are very few. The Ultima games are well-above-average computer role-

playing games, and yes, you can attack the villagers. But the only difference between it and other outstanding games like it are character statistics, and that is not enough in my book to call it a real RPG. Similarly, the computerized AD&D games are good, but they, too, force you to forego conclusions. Sure, DMs push you to do things to accept their scenarios, but you can always say no. The only gaming scenario I have ever seen that really pushed the characters was the AD&D adventure *Rahasia*, and that's why you will never see me playing it.

Matt Heusser
Frederick MD

I am writing in response to Michael Repka's letter (in issue #165) regarding DMs who play their own characters while refereeing. Mr. Repka discusses referees who use their power and knowledge to ensure the success of their own characters; this sort of self-Dungeon-Mastering, as he calls it, is simply an example of poor DMing and poor playing. If a DM is running his characters in his campaign, he should be very careful to separate them from his refereeing duties and play them in character, regardless of whether or not it is most beneficial for them. I believe that if a DM is capable of playing his characters fairly despite his knowledge, it is a sign of some maturity on his part.

As a DM with 11 years of experience, I would like to think that I have reached this level. The campaign that I have run for the past four years has only one player besides myself, and I am usually forced to bring my own characters along on our adventures in order to fill out the adventuring party. My player understands that I play my characters as impartially as I can;

sometimes my PCs do well and benefit, and sometimes they make mistakes, miss opportunities, give poor advice, and do stupid things. But I always make a strong effort to see that my PCs receive no special treatment whatsoever. An example comes to mind: In a recent gaming session, our party of three nonspell-casters and one mage battled a group of enemies equipped with, among other things, an *arrow of mage slaying*. The party mage was my own character, 13th level and one of my favorites. As DM, I could have chosen to ignore the arrow, lie about die rolls, or protect my character in any number of other ways; instead, I simply played the combat, and, unfortunately, my mage was killed. I regret that he died, but I don't regret my choice; I was fair and impartial, as I believe a DM should be, and I don't see any fault in what I did.

I don't feel that there is any problem with a responsible DM placing his own characters into a campaign. The problem begins when a DM sees his role as a referee as an opportunity to give his characters everything that he'd like them to have. This is an abuse of his power and knowledge. A DM must be able to distance himself from his own characters if he is to include them in his campaign; unless he is capable of doing so, he simply should not include them.

Mario Sismondo
Singapore

I am writing in response to Michael Repka's letter in DRAGON issue #165 on the issue of the DM playing one of his PCs as a character with a party of adventurers.

I, myself, have played and been a DM in campaigns where the DM always worked a PC.

This was done primarily so that, when that particular adventure ended, the current DM would step down and have a character equal to the others, while a new DM would take over for another adventure.

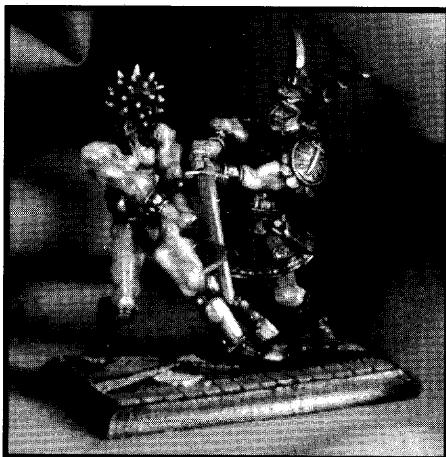
This system has worked well in just about every campaign. When I say "just about," we had one particular adventure where the half-orc character the DM was playing would take most of the magical items found, simply because, as the PC said, "Hey, I'm the party leader. I'm going to need the most powerful items."

I would approve of DMs playing characters in a campaign in which players take turns as DM. With this method, you would not have to go through the struggle of saying, "Well, this new guy just happens along and offers to join the party," so that your old DM can have a character every time you switch DMs in the same campaign.

With this method, your old DM will already have a character equal to the others when you continue. This method is, by no means, fool-proof. If your DM, for example, is biased and partial to his own character, as Michael mentioned, then you have problems. But, with enough protest from the other players (and believe me, the players in my campaign would protest), you should have little or no trouble with it.

As far as making sure your DM is not cheating for his character in combat, make all combat dice rolls candid, so that every player can see them. When the DM knows where some hidden treasure is, he should make a die roll to determine whether or not his PC searches for it.

Daniel J. Cuomo
Verona PA



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I'm responding to Michael Repka's letter in DRAGON issue #165. After over 10 years of playing, I've encountered those DM PCs you worry about. As a DM, I've run my PCs with a party, but they obtain only 1/10 XP, gain no magical items unless the other PCs give it to them, and they are only "observers" unless a specific request is made of them by my players' characters. I usually don't include my characters unless my campaign is too tough. I won't help with riddles or puzzles (my character usually has a headache around riddle-solving time). Advice is given only when asked for.

I do have some suggestions to cope with the greedy DM's PCs. First, there has to be a reason for that character to be included in the particular party (e.g., the party's light on healing, magic, thieves, or fighters). If so, some of the players can use different characters to make the party more balanced, thus negating the need for that extra cleric, etc. (Can you imagine that, a *greedy* cleric?) Besides, it will give your players a chance to play classes they haven't tried yet or haven't had much experience with.

Second, you could have your PCs hire NPCs. It's expensive, but in the long run, it's probably cheaper than having the DM's character along.

Third, I've discovered that even a DM's character is vulnerable while asleep. Cut the PC's throat. Bet the DM won't be eager to hand over many more of his character sheets. There is something to be said for negative reinforcement in this case.

Fourth, if the DM insists on playing his PCs, boycott his games. Have someone else take up DMing. If that person was an excellent role-player, chances are he will make an excellent DM. He may have to familiarize himself with new aspects of the game, but, in time, a DM extraordinaire will emerge.

The game is *not* the DM's. It is role-playing, and that means characters. The DM should be a fair and impartial referee. The game wasn't designed for the DM to create superpowered characters. The game is yours as much as the DM's and an equitable solution can usually be worked out.

Randall R. Williams
Vinton VA

This is in response to Michael Repka's letter in issue #165. Currently, the only way my friends and myself can adventure is with the DM using a PC. We are a small group consisting of three players. We are never able to find other players, or ones serious enough to play consistently. As a result of this, we tend to rotate DMing so as to relieve the burden from each of us and to always have new ideas. Sometimes ideas come as a result of the other DMs' adventures.

The group never came to any spoken rule as to the use of the DM's PC. The rules just seem to have sprung up and are followed by the three of us. One is that no campaign can be extremely beneficial to the DM's PC alone. Another is that all goodies as well as all dangers are shared by all, though each player has a choice of a particular treasure and, believe it or not, facing a particular danger.

Since we are a small group and our characters are played as PCs when the others are DMing, the DM's PC often comes across as an NPC who is along for the ride. My PCs are used, at times, as a way to give helpful hints and guide the adventure along when I DM.

Our characters are well rounded and do not seem to be ultrapowerful characters with regard to magical items and treasure. In relation to the group as a whole, all treasure is equally divided, no matter who found and carried it.

Our PCs are considered close friends and many times can be found to carry burdens or pay inn tabs for the group.

When adventuring, we assign each character a number. This helps when confronting opponents or other dangers. A simple die roll tells who gets hit or was in line when the trap was sprung. This method almost eliminates a particular PC being immune to any deadly attacks or any danger in the adventure.

Sometimes, the DM's PC is taken over by the other players when interaction is required between that character and other NPCs the DM needs to role-play.

So far, the group has not had any problems with the role-playing of a DM's PC. We all suffer similar amounts of damage. Any excessive amounts suffered by one PC is the result of his own decision or simply unlucky dice roles.

No DM's PC can be immune from any damage not assigned to the character in the rules. What Michael needs to do is have his group agree on certain restrictions to a DM's PC that will help to eliminate any unfair practices. I agree that even the most honest DM will try not to injure his PC, but, if fairly played, some inconsistencies can be overlooked. With ultrapowerful characters, take the reigns of DMing and shave down the PC a bit. If things persist, simply change DMs or rule out DM's PCs. The fun and spirit of the game can still be saved with the DM playing a PC as long as the PC suffers like the others and is limited as the other players.

Andrew A. Iacovino
Staten Island NY

Michael Repka stated in issue #165 that "I would like to find the opinions of . . . other role-players on the subject of solo gaming . . . that involves the DM playing one of his PCs as a character with a party of adventurers." I have been a player in such a campaign for six years and would like to comment on the subject.

My present DM had been playing for many years and wanted to give DMing a shot, but he did not want to lay his fairly low-level character to rest. Therefore, he decided to DM for himself along with the rest of us in his new campaign.

At first, he tried to stay out of major decisions and rolled various dice to determine his character's reactions when called upon. He wouldn't even comment on which corridor he thought we should travel in. In this manner, he kept the game fair and fun for everyone (it happened to be a Monty-Haul campaign, but that's another letter). However, he is only human, and the temptation was always present. One session, he offered to take us to a large amount of treasure if we would allow him to have one magical item hidden nearby. The players talked it over for a minute or so, decided that it couldn't hurt, and told him to go for it. He promptly took us to a large, relatively unguarded treasure hoard and picked a cube of force from the rib cage of a minotaur skeleton lying not far away. None of the players knew what it was, so no one paid it much attention. (For those of you who also don't know what a cube of force is, its various powers protect the user from any kind of attack, and its charges are restored every day.)

He pulled this stunt a few times before his character left to draw up plans for a large villa in Waterdeep (he had realized his earlier mistake of giving out huge amounts of gold and decided this would be a good way to deplete our stores). One of the players took up DMing for his character's personal work. The new DM then discovered what the character had received and informed the player some things would have to go. The player, realizing his

second mistake, grudgingly agreed, and our problem was solved.

This campaign survived because our DM was a basically fair a person who couldn't pass up a good opportunity, but he also didn't want to disrupt the flow of the game. Mr. Repka's DM seems to care nothing about the game, only for personal wealth and power. I would suggest that, when dealing with this problem, you confront the DM with the comparative strength of the characters and have all of the players express their opinions on how "enjoyable" the game has become. If the DM doesn't care, ask how much fun he will have when he has only himself. If even that doesn't work, learn from his mistakes and find a new DM.

Dan Bigwood
Loudon NH

In response to Michael Repka's letter in DRAGON issue #165, I would like to share with him and others in his situation my own experience as a DM/player.

I ran what I think was a fairly successful three-year campaign in which I also played a PC. I did this because, in addition to the satisfaction I received from creating a world and watching others enjoy themselves in it through their PCs, I still had a deep desire to see my favorite character from a previous campaign grow and develop. In short, I did not want Sir Marcus of Greenwood to retire early simply because I became a DM.

As DM, I knew everything ongoing in my campaign. I did not, however, extend this knowledge to Marcus. Instead, I kept my DM knowledge separate from my PC's knowledge, just as a good role-player keeps his own personal knowledge separate from his PC's knowledge. Granted, this presents a bit more of a role-playing challenge, but any honest DM should be up to the task.

The problem with the DM in Michael's letter is that he was not honest. If a DM is to play a PC in his own campaign, he must treat his PC the same as those of his players. This gets tough when traps and tricks are involved, but if I cannot honestly deal with them, I try to either have my PC avoid the problem entirely or have the other PCs tell me what they think Marcus should do. As proof, I offer the fact that Marcus died in one of my modules (although fortunately he was later *raised* by the surviving PCs).

I hope that players who meet DMs who also play PCs will give them a chance to prove their honesty. They may just be trying to give their old PCs a deservedly full life.

Jay G. Simpson
Chatham, New Brunswick

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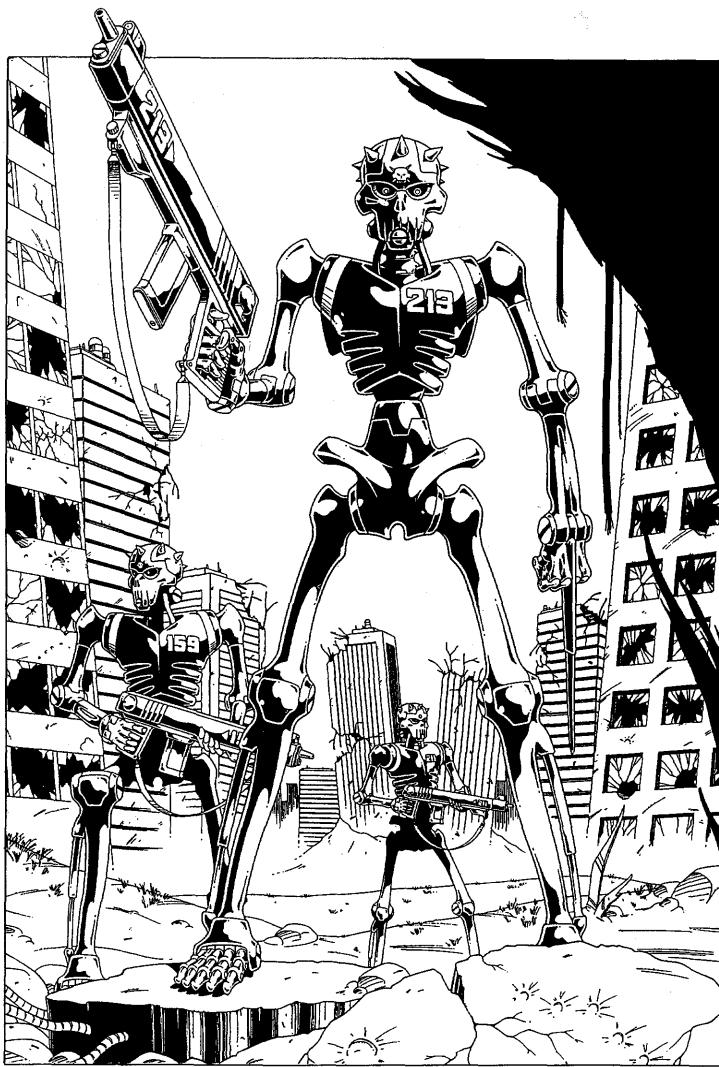
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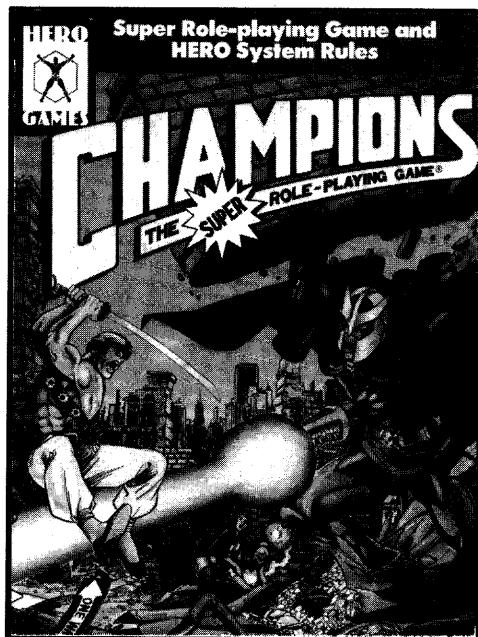


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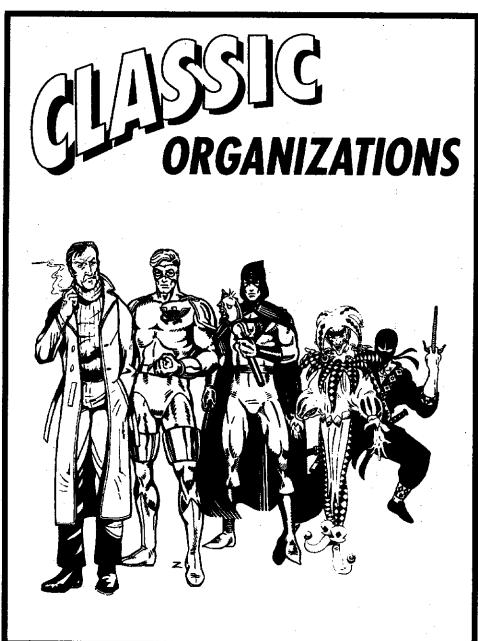
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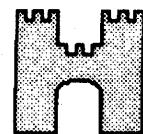
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by Steven E. Schend

THE MARVEL®-PHILE

Be careful what you wish for

This month, "The MARVEL®-Phile" takes a look at the newest hero on the block: Darkhawk. He is the latest of Marvel's inner-city heroes, taking on local crime lords for justice (and just a little revenge). He's attracted the attention of the Hobgoblin and Spider-Man with his powers and deeds, and both are trying to decide which side he's on. Darkhawk's a mystery to the citizens and law enforcers of New York, but he's just as much a mystery to himself!

DARKHAWK™**Chris Powell/
Darkhawk**

F	PR (4)/TY (6)	Health: 22/96
A	TY (6)/RM (30)	
S	TY (6)/RM (30)	Karma: 30
E	TY (6)/RM (30)	
R	PR (4)/PR (4)	Resc.: GD (10)
I	TY (6)/TY (6)	
P	EX (20)/EX (20)	Pop.: 0

POWERS: Chris Powell has no super powers, but his alter ego Darkhawk does.

Alter Ego: When Chris Powell grasps his mysterious amulet and wills it, his body transforms into a super-powered alter ego, Darkhawk. The two bodies seem wholly distinct and separate, as one body can be injured while the other is unharmed, but both bodies have the mind of Chris Powell. Darkhawk's costume seems to be part of his body, and the amulet becomes a chest emblem, though various costume parts (such as his helmet and his retractable glider wings) can be removed. At present, Chris Powell has just recently seen Darkhawk's face under the helmet, but what lies under the helmet, however shocking, is yet a mystery to readers. The powers that follow are for Chris's Darkhawk persona.

—Power Blasts: Darkhawk has the ability to fire Remarkable (30) strength blue force blasts from the amulet on his chest. The beam presently has a wide focus and affects a one-quarter-area-diameter cone with a two-area range. With a Yellow Psyche FEAT roll, Darkhawk should be able to limit the blasts to one particular



target. He cannot fire blasts while his shield is functioning.

—Force Field: When Darkhawk wishes for protection, a red energy shield emerges from the amulet. The shield offers Incredible (40) physical protection and Remarkable (30) energy protection. It can affect only one area, and it exclusively protects Darkhawk's front. A Psyche FEAT must be made every round to maintain this protective shield. It cannot be maintained if Darkhawk fires a force blast.

—Gliding: Darkhawk has Typical (6) air speed when his glider wings are extended, allowing him up to six areas per round of gliding.

—Grappling Hook: On Darkhawk's right wrist is mounted a grappling hook and firing mechanism. Darkhawk can fire this with Incredible (40) accuracy (see "Talents"), and its clawlike hook can inflict Good (10) Edged damage. It can grasp small objects or entangle larger objects on an Agility FEAT roll. The hidden mecha-

nisms within Darkhawk's forearm housing allow the hook to be fired at will, and it can rewind itself almost immediately.

Elongation: The grappling hook can stretch its cable to allow Poor (4) elongation, granting Darkhawk a range of two areas with his grappling hook.

Telescopic Vision: Darkhawk has exhibited a Good (10) range Enhanced Vision power that he has used in targeting his claw-cable (+1CS to attacks and grapples). It allows him to fire his hook without range penalties. For other purposes, consider this power to allow him to see objects or people two areas closer than they truly are (e.g., Darkhawk could see a person three areas away as if the person were only one area distant, and could see an open book two areas away as if he were holding it in his hand).

Regeneration: When Darkhawk transforms back into Chris Powell, a hidden regeneration power activates, healing any injuries to his body with Incredible ability. Within three rounds, Darkhawk's body is healed of any injuries sustained during combat. This ability apparently does not apply to Chris Powell's body while in Darkhawk form, nor does it occur while Darkhawk is active.

TALENTS: Darkhawk has the Marksman talent with his grappling hook (Incredible (40) accuracy with the hook). No further talents have been revealed for either form.

HISTORY: Darkhawk's history begins recently when Christopher Powell, the eldest son of an attorney and a policeman, was in the abandoned funhouse of the Wonderland Amusement Park in Queens, New York, searching for his two little brothers. The three of them discovered their policeman father receiving money from Phillippe Bazin, a local criminal. The boys rushed to protect their father after he was beaten by Bazin's goons, and they quickly became targets, too.

Fleeing the goons, Chris secured the boys in a closet and delayed Bazin's hitmen with by throwing everything he could find at them. While clearing away shelves, he came across a diamond-shaped amulet. Grasping the amulet, he thought of needing "an edge" and the power to defeat the hoods. Suddenly, Chris transformed into the form now known as Darkhawk.

He speedily defeated Bazin's men, though one of them died when the goon attempted to electrocute Darkhawk but

the electrical cable he was holding came into contact with the voltage box. Chris got his little brothers out safely, but his father left abruptly after being caught "on the take."

In his short career, Darkhawk has made some very powerful enemies. After his first encounter with the hit men, Darkhawk has shadowed many of Bazin's illegal operations, doing everything he can to destroy the man's criminal empire. Darkhawk has even personally threatened Bazin and doesn't seem to care about the consequences.

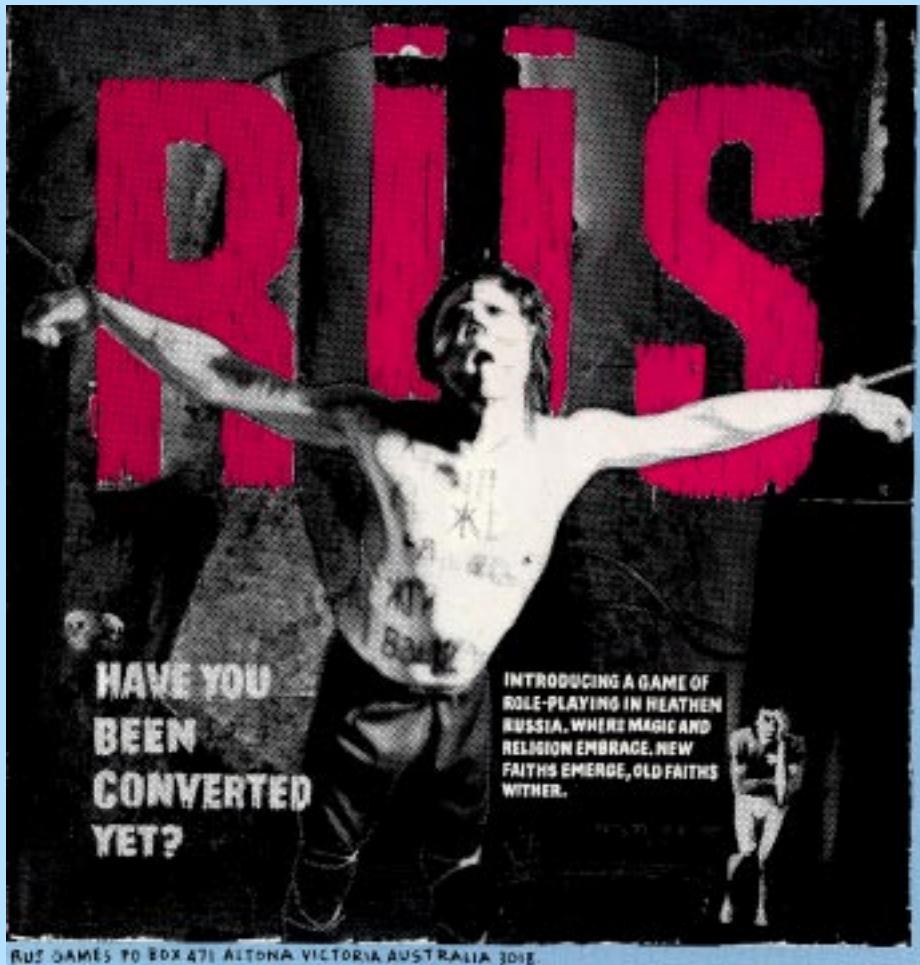
Darkhawk's most deadly foe is the Hobgoblin, the demonic mercenary currently on Bazin's payroll. Hobgoblin is searching for an "object of power," and he believes Darkhawk's amulet to be it. They have clashed twice, but Spider-Man has interfered in both fights, and the confrontations ended in stalemates. Darkhawk nearly choked Hobgoblin to death with his claw-cable in their last encounter, but Spider-Man let Hobgoblin get away alive and rebuked Darkhawk for using such unnecessary force.

Chris is now worried about his use of force, since he lost his temper against Savage Steel, an armored vigilante working with some policemen. Chris is trying to control himself when in his alter ego, but he has not shared his secret identity with anyone yet.

Christopher Powell was a normal teenager, raised with a strong belief in the law and the feeling that the forces of good needed an edge against crime. When he gained the power of the Darkhawk, his wish for an edge came true. Unfortunately, the power came with costs. Chris has alienated his friends and is now much more short-tempered. His nerves are further stretched by the threats of the Bazin mob and by ominous phone calls and notes that indicate someone knows his secret identity and wants him to retire Darkhawk quickly.

Finally, there are the appearances of Saint Johnny, a homeless man, around the old Wonderland property; he was around the first night Chris became Darkhawk and actually suggested the name to him—Chris had initially introduced himself as the Edge-Man, but luckily abandoned this name quickly. The vagrant seems to know more about Darkhawk than Chris does, though his connection is unrevealed.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: Chris Powell is a typical New York adolescent in a very atypical situation. He is brave and a quick thinker under pressure, but he is prone to making rash and sometimes careless decisions. After seeing his policeman father on the payroll of a local criminal, Chris is disheartened by the law enforcement and



legal system and works as a vigilante. He strongly believes in the fight of justice against criminals (his most common phrase is "Justice needs a razor-sharp edge"), but he is unsure as to where the line between justice and vengeance is drawn. Darkhawk tends to use excessive force, but Chris is trying to keep his temper and thirst for revenge in check.

Darkhawk could appear in your campaign while trailing Bazin or some of his men. Your heroes could intercede in a conflict between them and would then have to decide who is the villain: a normal-looking man or the dark-costumed man roughing him up. If the Hobgoblin is in your campaign, perhaps Darkhawk comes hunting for him, or perhaps the Hobgoblin captures Darkhawk in an attempt to wrest the amulet from him. If your heroes are well respected (have high Popularity scores), perhaps Darkhawk will come to them for training and help in controlling his temper.

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Puck

Alpha Flight's dwarf gymnast has new powers due to the genetic manipulations of the Master. Puck now has Remarkable (30) Strength, Amazing (50) Endurance, and Excellent (20) strength Body Armor vs. physical damage.

Super-errors

Two errors crept into "The MARVEL® Phile" in DRAGON® issue #169. In the first paragraph of the Ghost's History section, there's a sentence that begins, "Pax hoped that . . ." In that sentence, the words "weaken" and "damage" were reversed. The sentence should read, "Pax hoped that the damage the Ghost did would further weaken Accutech's financial standing, making it more amenable to Roxxon's next offer of purchase."

Also, the word "not" was dropped from a sentence in the first paragraph of the

"Role-playing Notes" section of Ghost Rider's entry. The sentence that begins, "It is interesting to speculate . . ." should read, "It is interesting to speculate on whether or not Ghost Rider would appear, for example, to get a kitten out of a tree—something most heroes would **not** be reluctant to perform."

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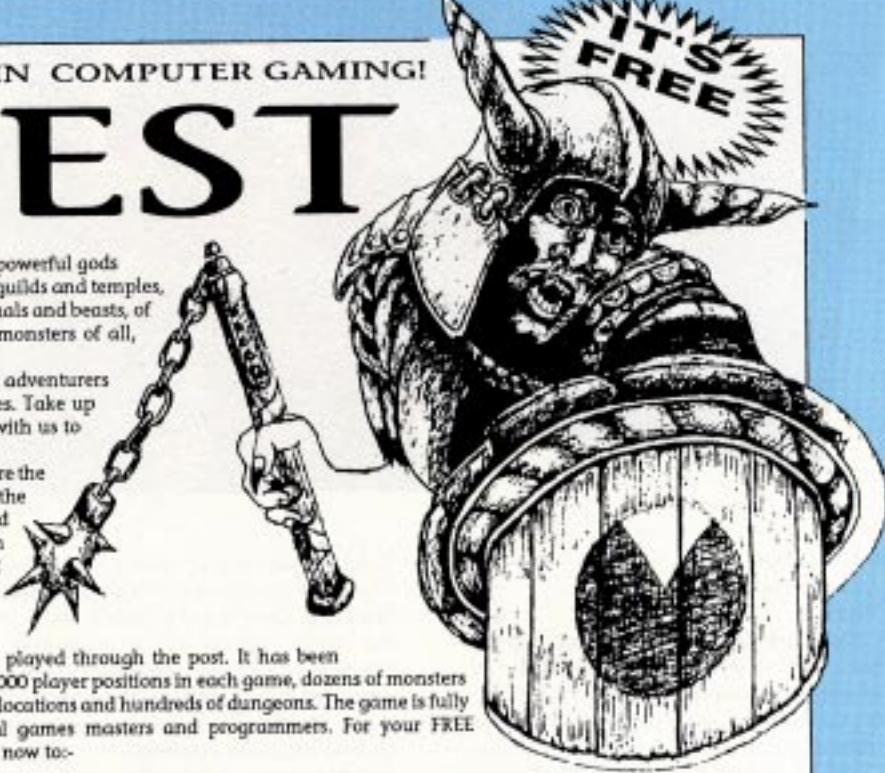
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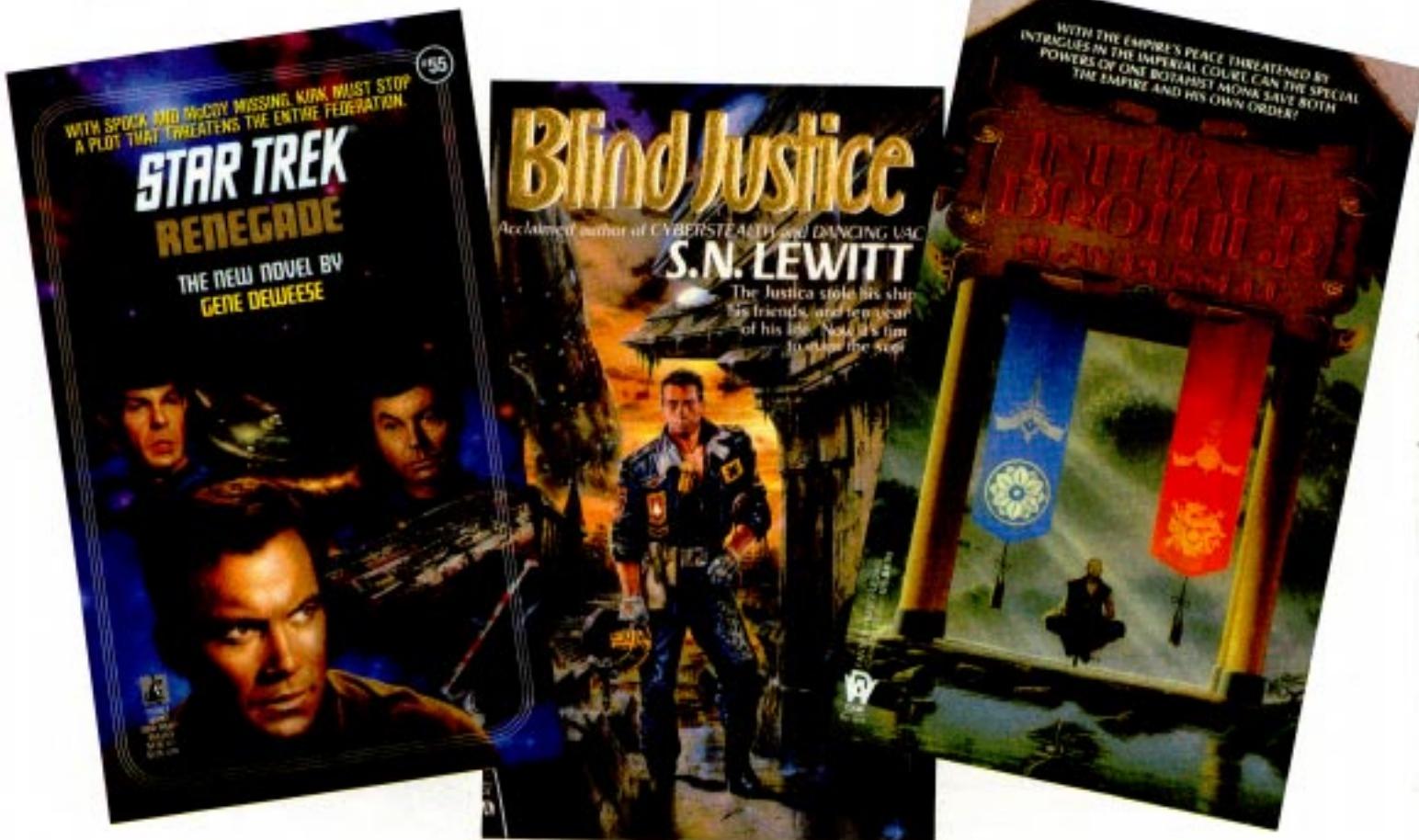
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RENEGADE

Gene DeWeese

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Star Trek stories, cinematic or literary, have been much more reliable of late as adventure yarns than as science fiction. So, Gene DeWeese's newest contribution to the series is something of a surprise, because it's a novel that should appeal especially to the technophiles and computer jockeys in the audience.

It starts out, as many of the U.S.S. *Enterprise*'s adventures do, with a pair of adjacent worlds caught in a violent conflict. Sent in to mediate, Kirk and his crew

quickly discern that there's something odd about the apparent terrorist rebellion on Vancadia. Determining what's *really* going on, though, proves next to impossible, because while Spock and McCoy are stranded on the surface and presumed dead, the starship's sensors have gone utterly haywire. Starfleet's finest are forced to play a tricky diplomatic game, despite being unable to tell whether their readings are anomalous or merely wrong.

DeWeese manages his multiple plots with efficiency, and only one of the several neatly sprung surprises feels gratuitous. Only the sharpest readers will accurately

forecast all of the twists. And one of the *Enterprise*'s very closest brushes with destruction is staged with intelligence and daring.

Renegade is short on space battles but not on dramatic tension, which makes it especially useful to the role-playing segment of the SF-gaming community. At the same time, it's a story driven by its situation rather than its characters, which may leave some personality-oriented *Star Trek* fans less than thrilled. On balance, though, the book is a marked improvement over the last few novels in the original-cast series and is a worthwhile techno-thriller on its own merits.

ACHILLES' CHOICE

Larry Niven & Steven Barnes
Tor 0-312-85099-9 \$15.95

The idea is fascinating: In the Olympics of tomorrow, superior intellect is as crucial as athletic skill, and the stakes are immense wealth, power, and life itself. The authors are the experienced and skillful team responsible for the ingenious Dream Park novels. So it's disappointing and unexpected to find that *Achilles Choice* virtually ignores its tantalizing concept in favor of a vague and unconvincing problem in political intrigue.

In this version of the late 21st century, multinational corporations have largely supplanted but not quite replaced traditional governments. Curiously, though, the few Olympic hopefuls we see seem to be self-sponsored and self-motivated, with no agendas beyond the competition, despite the fact that those who take gold medals join a select circle from which members of the world-governing Council are chosen. Certainly, Jillian Shomer has no allegiance but her own when she checks into training camp.

Her initial disadvantage is that she hasn't been Boosted, because only those who have undergone the comprehensive physiological enhancement process have a realistic chance of winning either the athletic or academic contests. The price of the Boost, though, is literal burnout, as the improvements last only a few years before the Boosted body weakens and dies. Only by winning the gold can a Boosted Olympian elude death, because victory brings with it further improvement: The winner gets a permanently implanted link to a worldwide computer nexus, and the electronic support halts and stabilizes the physical decay.

But there's no drama in Jillian's decision to accept the Boost, and little more in her subsequent competition. As far as we're shown, there are only a few contestants in any given athletic event, and the academic element consists purely of submitting and defending a doctoral thesis, of which no two appear to be in the same field. What we see of this Olympiad is mostly through Jillian; though we're told about media coverage and huge audiences, what we're allowed to feel is relentlessly intimate and personal.

It doesn't help that, apart from Jillian's personal encounters with high-level computer tampering, the world the authors create seems affluent, comfortable, and thoroughly benign. Until the very end, only statistics suggest that all is less than well for most of humanity, and even when Jillian comes face to face with the plot's prime manipulator, the conflict seems more staged than real.

Is it possible that *Achilles' Choice* isn't supposed to be a novel about the Olympics per se, but a character study exploring the decision to strive for glory? Regrettably,

no; the plot is too linear, and Jillian is too single-minded to give the book much texture in that context. Yet in fixing the novel's viewpoint firmly on Jillian, Niven and Barnes sacrifice the vastness and spectacle that make the Olympics uniquely compelling in the world of sport. They've taken their central idea far too much for granted, and added too little else to draw the reader's interest. In a purely literary Olympiad, the book simply doesn't have enough strength even to qualify for the trials.

BLIND JUSTICE

S. N. Lewitt

Ace 0-441-71843-4 \$4.50

I don't think I entirely understand Blind Justice. For me, analyzing S. N. Lewitt's newest novel is a bit like a dog gnawing a rawhide chew toy and trying to decide why it tastes good. But it's rewarding all the same, and if Lewitt's overall recipe is elusive, there are still enough ingredients in evidence to make guessing worthwhile.

The conflict between the Syndicat and the Justica isn't precisely a war. For one thing, the Syndicat is more guild than government, an organization of traders and spacefarers that acts as registry, bank, and clearinghouse for goods and personnel of all varieties. Justica authorities, though, distrust the Syndicat's immense influence on Earth's colony worlds, while the Syndicat and its members cheerfully disregard the crippling restrictions placed by the Justica on interstellar trade.

Enter the *Mary Damned*, first Syndicat starship chosen to take this defiance into the open, and enter Emile Saint-Just, its newest crewmember. Saint-Just is the last survivor when the *Mary Damned*'s crew is captured by the Justica, and as the ship vanishes into legend, he becomes the key to finding the lost spacecraft and bringing the legend back to life. After a term on a Justica prison ship, Emile returns home to the colony world of Beau Soleil—also the target of a Justica takeover—and becomes involved with a volatile team of underground resistors.

There's an authentic feel to the milieu's French flavor. Lewitt doesn't indulge in overdone accents or cinematic flourishes, relying instead on subtler nuances of setting and phrase. The effect is distinctive, successfully creating a blend of art, principle, and individualism that aptly characterizes the Gallic world view.

Properly, *Blind Justice* is more a novel of character than one of action, though there's plenty of the latter as the resistance group strikes out at the Justica and various members embark on personal missions of vengeance. But like a well-made cream sauce, Lewitt's prose is light without sacrificing richness; noting its most obvious virtues doesn't exhaust the book's possibilities. Perhaps only by delving into this world for themselves will gamers appreciate everything that has gone into the creation.

THE PARADISE WAR

Stephen Lawhead

Lion Pub. 0-7459-1850-6 \$19.95

To an extent, all Celtic fantasy is derivative, drawing material from earlier works and previously mined sources. That's not grounds for complaint in and of itself; indeed, it's inevitable. The trouble with *The Paradise War*, billed as the first novel in a new series, lies in the way the pieces have been assembled. It's the literary equivalent of Dr. Frankenstein's monster, with parts that don't match and bolts sticking out around the edges.

For the body, Stephen Lawhead uses a broad tapestry of traditional myth and rugged history. The realm of Albion is gritty and prefeudal, populated by warriors, farmers, and bards in reasonable proportion. Familiar characters and objects from legend appear in the right places: Scatha the prophetess, Dagda the god-king, the cauldron capable of restoring life to the dead. Sometimes, the novel seems almost to be a retelling of parts of the old Celtic tales. Lawhead's research rings true, and when he is setting scenes or working directly with legendary matters, the book is at its best.

At the head of *The Paradise War*, though, is a plot from a different world entirely. We start the novel in modern England, where graduate students Lewis Gillies and Simon Rawinson are looking into odd events near a mysterious barrow. Lewis eventually learns that the universe is unraveling, and only by following Simon into Albion (the ultimate manifestation of reality) can he hope to reverse the danger. Both the plot and Lawhead's writing style owe a good deal to C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* series, and the contemporary elements clash with the mythic flavor of Albion itself. The first-person narration is a particular annoyance.

The heart of the tale adds an even stranger element to the construct: the song of Albion, which provides Lawhead's series title. Apparently a force of elemental good, the song is the focus of Lewis's quest, and its unleashing forms the novel's climax. It's a peculiar, atypical sort of magic to find in a Celtic setting, even more so considering that Lawhead's Celts have no druids and very little magic of their own. Nor does the song seem well connected to the exotic cosmology on which Lawhead hangs his external plot.

Unsurprisingly, the pace lurches along in uneven bursts. It takes a quarter of the book just to reach Albion, while years of Lewis's warrior-training go by in mere paragraphs. And Lewis feels justifiably manipulated as the story progresses; Lawhead's character work consists mostly of pushing players around the landscape until they're where he wants them.

Future volumes may reveal just what Lawhead has in mind for this odd universe. Even then, it will be hard to appreciate *The Paradise War* for anything other than respectable scholarship.

GOOD NIGHT, MR. HOLMES

Carole Nelson Douglas

Tor 0-812-51430-0 \$4.99

Straightforward mystery novels don't often find their way into this space, but Carole Nelson Douglas's *Good Night, Mr. Holmes* qualifies for the short list of exceptions to the rule.

Despite the title, this isn't exactly a Sherlock Holmes story; rather, it's a parallel adventure starring Holmes' uniquely gifted female rival, singer Irene Adler. Just as Holmes' adventures are recorded by Dr. Watson, so are Irene's chronicled by Penelope Huxleigh, whose encounter with Irene saves her from a life of drudgery in a London retail emporium.

Like Holmes, Irene is a keen observer and puzzle-solver with a strong sense of justice. But her forays into detection are chiefly a hobby; her primary career is on the stage, as an actress and classical singer. It's in this role that she is noticed by the prince of Bohemia and lured onto the Continent, where she becomes the leading performer in his pet operatic company in Prague. All is going well until the prince's father dies under strange circumstances, and in solving the murder, Irene finds her own independence at risk.

Douglas neatly weaves bits of the familiar Holmes tales in and out of Irene's adventures, leading up to a final reverse portrayal of "A Scandal in Bohemia," the A.

Conan Doyle yarn in which both Holmes and Irene first appeared. More significantly, her female's-eye view of the Victorian era in which the two lived provides a distinctive slant on the period. (Players of GDW's SPACE: 1889* game may find this especially handy when creating female characters.)

The blend of entertaining characters, lightly convoluted puzzles, and a remarkably understated romantic subplot makes *Good Night, Mr. Holmes* a thoroughly readable novel that complements the Holmes canon rather than competing with it. Coming from Douglas, whose ventures into fantasy and SF have met with mixed success at best, the book is a welcome window on matters Victorian as well as a pleasantly lively mystery. Gamers whose campaigns wander through the period should find this novel both useful and entertaining.

THE INITIATE BROTHER

Sean Russell

DAW 0-88677-466-7 \$4.99

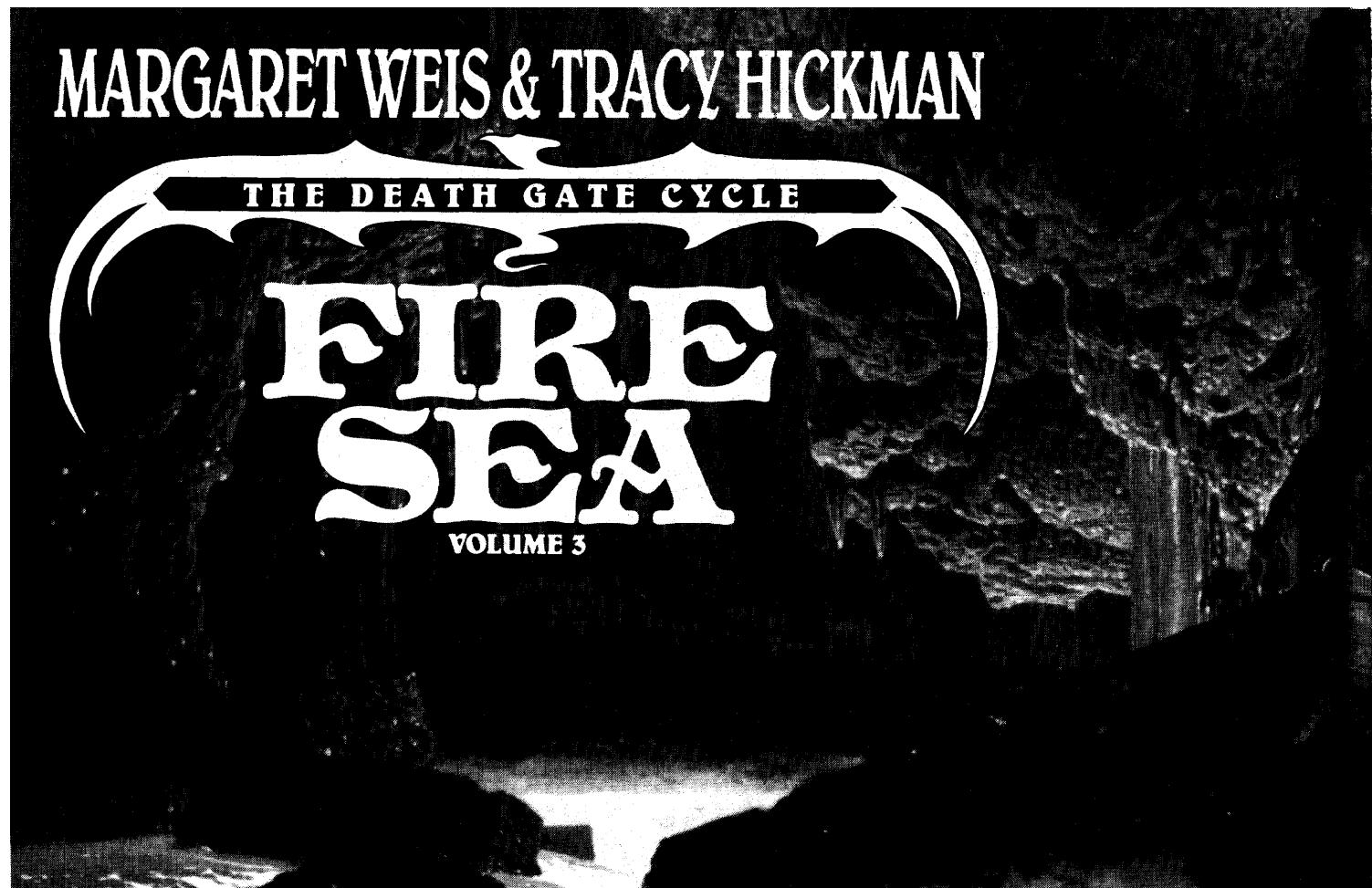
Oriental fantasy is scarce enough that any new entry in the category is usually grounds for enthusiasm, particularly if the writing is skilled and the characters are intriguing. So, it's especially frustrating to discover that despite appearances, *The Initiate Brother*, the first book in a series from newcomer Sean Russell, isn't really an Oriental fantasy.

The setting is the Empire of Wa, where

an upstart imperial dynasty is still consolidating its control of the nation. Only two major allies of the old order have been allowed to survive, but both face subtle challenges to their own security. Shonto Motoru, a canny military commander and patriarch of a noble house, has been assigned the apparently suicidal task of defending Wa's northern borders against invading barbarians. And the delicate balance between the twin orders of Botaharist monks (one male, one female) is threatened on three fronts: a set of legendary scrolls penned by Botahara himself is missing; a young initiate of the male order, Brother Shuyun, is beginning to display mystic abilities of unheard-of proportions; and the emperor's attitude toward the monks may be changing from benign neglect to active opposition.

The names, titles, and flowery language all conform to standard Oriental forms, and Russell's portrayal of Wa's ever-shifting court intrigues is deft and persuasive. But his vision of Wa is chiefly limited to the highest ranks of government, with little attention to the overall social structure. As a result, his fictional empire really differs very little from any other fictional empire. The Oriental nomenclature could easily be changed to a different linguistic formula without seriously affecting the books underlying world view.

That's a shame, because the characters who bear those names are generally appealing and well drawn. Lord Shonto is a



decisive yet cautious leader; ruthless imperial security chief Jaku Katta develops a startling streak of romanticism; and Shonto's adopted daughter, the lady Nishima, displays a plausible combination of reticence, wit, and resourcefulness. The dance of diplomacy and intrigue between the adversaries is choreographed with intelligence and style.

Set in a wholly invented milieu, *The Initiate Brother* would be a rousing success and a highly impressive debut novel. In assigning his tale to an Oriental realm, however, Russell has given himself an additional challenge that he doesn't manage to fulfill. That can't and shouldn't be equated with failure, but it's a regrettable misjudgment that casts an ominous shadow on the start of Russell's literary career.

Recurring roles

This month's department of conclusions starts off with the final volumes of three FORGOTTEN REALMS® novels. *Sojourn* (TSR, \$4.95) ably concludes R. A. Salvatore's saga of Drizzt Do'Urden; Salvatore remains the Realms' most practiced chronicler, and this character-centered trilogy is easily the most sophisticated series in the AD&D® canon since the original DRAGONLANCE® saga trilogies.

Song of the Saurials (TSR, \$4.95) brings the Finder's Stone trilogy to a close in a tale that returns to the Nameless Bard and halfling Harper Olive Ruskettle for most of

its punch. While co-authors Kate Novak and Jeff Grubb still deliver a lively, tightly plotted adventure, the cast is a bit large for comfort and the stage-managing is occasionally a bit strained; it really ought to be harder than this to keep Elminster out of the action once he's involved himself.

Douglas Niles, meanwhile, picks up some steam in *Feathered Dragon* (TSR, \$4.95), finishing the Maztica trilogy with rather more focus than is evident in the first two books. It's probably not coincidental that this volume more or less abandons previously established historical parallels to concentrate on the Realms-specific plot lines. Though a bit rushed in parts, this is a surprisingly effective closing to an awkwardly conceived project.

On a very different front, *Across the Thlassa Mey* (Del Rey, \$4.95) is the fourth and last volume in Dennis McCarty's unique sequence of chivalric novels featuring characters who speak in blank verse. This time, new hero Sir Pallador joins the aging Palomon in a race to save the kingdom of Carea from enemies old and new. Highlights include a neatly executed character revelation and the most unusual variation on the flying horse to come along in ages. The Thlassa Mey novels have been consistently distinctive, and it will be intriguing to see what McCarty will offer next.

Rob MacGregor, unfortunately, shows equal consistency with *Indiana Jones and the Dance of the Giants* (Bantam, \$4.50).

Once again, there's too much going on and too little reckless cheer in the adventure. Indy himself is really only an observer in this one, caught in a strange family conflict that spills over into an effort to link Stonehenge with the Arthurian wizard Merlin, and ties in unexpectedly with the previous novels Greek artifact. Put simply, these books lack a sense of fun, and that's a fatal omission.

The Two in Hiding (Ace, \$4.50) is a much more satisfying arrival, continuing Ru Emerson's Night-Threads trilogy in fine style. Emerson weaves a deft balance between cynical comedy and keen adventure, and it's especially welcome to find a quest novel with a realistic take on wilderness travel. Not one of the five major characters is experienced at outdoorsmanship, and their efforts to cope make for lively reading. Ω

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\$4.99



The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

Part 18: The Slagovich affair

by Bruce A. Heard

This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.

from the Journals of
PRINCE HALDEMAR OF HAAKEN
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire
Captain of the EVER-VICTORIOUS
PRINCESS ARK
IMPERIAL EXPLORER, ETC., ETC.

Hastmir 1, 2000 AY: I had a visit from Leo this morning. He wanted to show me some plans he was working on—an elaborate series of masts, sails, and rigging that, according to him, would enable the *Princess Ark* to sail more swiftly when the wind was strong. It was an unconventional setup, however. He envisioned three pairs of masts in a V-shaped configuration. The masts would jut out at a 45° upward angle on both sides of the hull, each bearing three sails with complicated rigging to operate them. The concept, although unorthodox, was fascinating. And any speed gain always remained an attractive

prospect. Velocity was definitely what I needed now.

I had been observing the swetanga's killers through my *crystal ball*. Once, their leader opened a scroll, the one given to him by the hooded figure in the mirror. It read, "Go to Slagovich immediately and meet Zgozod at the Black Samovar for your reward." That confirmed my suspicions. How kind of them to be so informative!

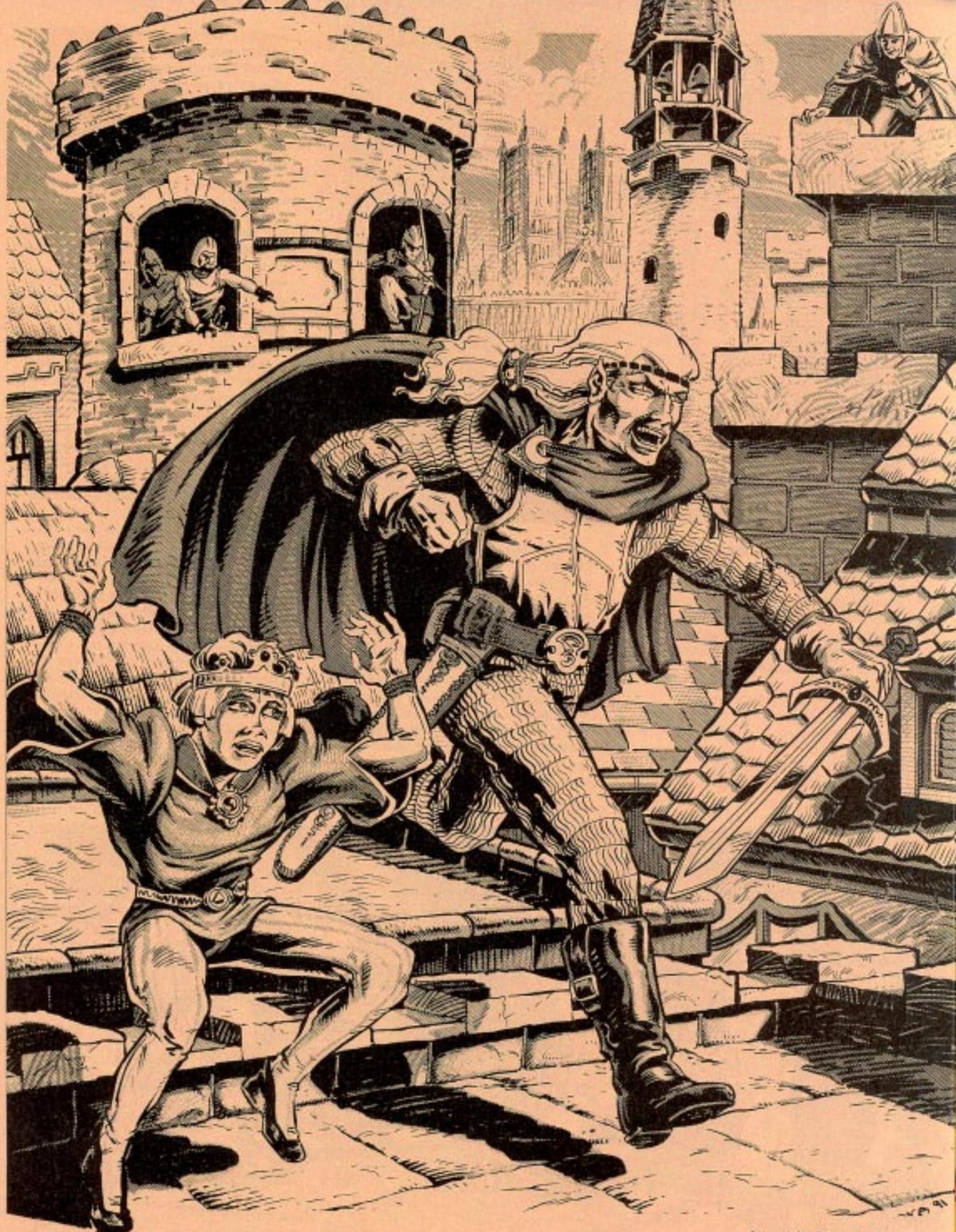
I had hoped to intercept the killers at sea, but they had a two-day head start on us, and a large water elemental propelled their boat very quickly toward the northwest—probably compliments of our dark friend in the mirror. It would take them at least two weeks to reach Slagovich, but we should be able to intercept them within four days.

There was no time for Leo's plan. The *Princess* would have been halted for days for construction material to be brought aboard. And there was no telling what Berylith's reaction would be. I had to unveil the mystery of this man in black first.

Hastmir 3: I had a strange dream last night. I saw the Imperial Palace in Sundsvall sinking into raging seas. I could not think of anything capable of causing this in Alphatia. Then the palace seemed to fly in a red sky, and my sister did not recognize me. I would have normally dismissed this nonsense, but I am afraid to admit that my visit to Tanakumba last month put some doubt in my mind about the nature of dreams. Perhaps Talasar could help.

Raman came up later that day with a scroll of spells. It held a series of enchantments that enabled recipients to speak, read, and understand foreign tongues. This wonderful discovery was obviously a must for those in our position. I ordered Raman to prepare more of these scrolls in the future. These would be a standard element of all landing parties.





Artwork by Thomas Baxa

Hastmir 4: I was unfortunate enough to run into Leo on my way to the commander's deck. In an attempt to explain to me all the refinements he brought to his blueprints, the gnome had planted a small mast on the side of the ceremonial deck. He was perched dangerously at the other end, holding the loose edge of a mockup sail. Unexpectedly, a sentinel sounded the alarm in the middle of Leo's precarious lecture.

Swarms of large insects were headed toward us. The power of the boltmen came into action almost immediately; *lightning bolts* crackled and sizzled through the blue sky, while Berylith's frightening breath charred a huge gap in a swarm. Hundreds of giant red dragonflies assaulted the *Princess Ark*. The fight became even fiercer as the ship's heavy weaponry finally opened fire. The light ballistas turned dozens of the giant insects into instant chaff, while magically *webbed* creatures fell helplessly into the dark blue sea below.

Many dragonflies got through the ship's defenses, however. I caught a glimpse of crew members bravely jumping off upper decks to take a swing at low-flying dragonflies. Even the halfling cook and his stewards were out, chasing the giant insects with frying pans or butcher knives. Despite the slaughter, the insects came back for more, delivering their fiery breath whenever they could. Soon, crew, boltmen, and officers were all struggling to put out the many small fires on board.

The *Princess* suddenly began a vertiginous dive, leveling out just in time to avoid hitting the surface of the sea. There, Berylith used her last breath to cause a huge wall of water spray ahead of us, through which she flew. That put out most of the fires. By then, all the dragonflies were dead, littering the decks. It was clear these creatures had been summoned to slow us down. We were up against a very powerful person who knew how close to the killers we were. It was time to double the guard and halt the *Princess*. There was damage to repair in many places, and crew to heal.

"Ho, hum. Sir?" Leo was still hanging from his makeshift mast. "While repairs go on, could we take the opportunity to install the new masts? It can be done."

"No. Don't you dare."

"Please. It won't take more than a week, sir."

Hastmir 5: After conferring with the other officers, it was agreed we could not afford losing track of our fugitives. Xerdon and I would go ahead, while Talasar remained behind on the *Princess Ark* to oversee repairs. Talasar was then to set sail to Slagovich and wait for us to make contact. Meanwhile, Xerdon and I would attempt to learn who was behind the slayings in Tanakumba. Raman dug up a number of references on Slagovich that helped me visualize the town through my

crystal ball. As a guide for *teleportation* it was a bit vague, so I chose a spot above the city. We would have to *fly* down upon our arrival.

We were gone before the end of the day. The arrival over Slagovich was a decent one, though Xerdon almost caused a pelican to die of a heart attack. It would be days before our fugitives would show up. We would have to come up with a plan to intercept them upon their arrival and quietly follow them.

Hastmir 10: Xerdon and I posed as fortune-seeking adventurers. These seemed a common sight in Slagovich. We took a room at the Black Samovar but noticed nothing uncommon there, other than a truly dreadful cuisine. With a few days of waiting ahead of us, we went for a reconnaissance tour of Slagovich.

Slagovich was a large town built on a plateau, next to a cliff overlooking the opalescent Gulf of Hule. At the bottom of the cliff opened a large cavern mouth into which ships could sail. At the center of the town was a huge natural shaft connecting with the cavern underneath. For a very high fee, the shaft could be sealed and filled with water to bring ships up to the level of the city. A water lock then allowed the ship to enter an artificial harbor around which the town was built. There was no apparent mechanism for the water to be pumped into the shaft and maintained in the artificial port, which led me to believe the people of Slagovich controlled a gate to the plane of water.

Indeed, hydraulic mechanisms were present everywhere in Slagovich. Sleds, pulled by a network of cables, carted scores of people up and down the town's steeper hills. Drawbridges, water locks, and portcullises allowed ships to reach deep into the town to unload their goods. At least, Slagovich had wonderful engineers.

Despite a bustling merchant business and some rich nobility, it seemed the common population was rather poor. Many of the houses, especially those farthest from the port, were badly maintained. High, well-defended walls protected Slagovich, though not the slums outside the town. Town dwellings eventually gave way to farms and hilly acreage beyond. On a darker note, armed troops constantly patrolled the streets, and there was a harshly enforced curfew after sunset.

Much of the mortar and stonework there had a common reddish-brown color, much like the people. We could certainly not pretend to be natives, our skins being much too pale for this. Judging from the language and the customs of the people, it seemed this area was populated by emigrants from the ancient Traladara era, back in the years of Halav, perhaps. Their culture evolved separately from there. Much of the region remained unclaimed, except for a few city states, like Slagovich, controlling territory in their immediate vicinities.

Hastmir 16: Day after day, Xerdon and I had spied on the central water lock, hoping to see our fugitives' boat. Today, it arrived. The men went straight to the Black Samovar. Standard procedure was followed immediately: Xerdon and I turned *invisible*, then went to observe the incoming party.

All twelve of them entered and sat in the tavern. A man in dull red armor entered sometime before sundown; as if on signal, the tavern's patrons quietly stood up and walked out. The innkeeper and his wench migrated to the kitchen. The red-armored man coldly gazed at the twelve men and tossed a pouch on their table. "Leech away, maggots!" he said with a sneer.

Four lunged to grab the pouch, pushing and shoving until their leader slammed the tabletop with the flat of his sword. "Sit back, you filth!" He poured the reward on the table, revealing a pile of bright, pink coins. With a small cloth, he picked up and gave a single coin to each of his retainers. Some received the coins with their own cloths and stored them in pouches. The others quickly placed their coins inside arm bracelets or into the recess of medallions. All this trouble for a single coin each. Odd.

The leader then returned the remaining eight coins to the pouch and dropped it into his shirt. Ominous glances went between the men and their leader. One by one, hands on hilts, the men left the tavern, never turning their backs until they were out. Only their leader and the man in the red armor remained.

"Was that you, Master Zgozod, bringing the red swarm the other day?" asked the thugs' leader. Without warning, the man in the red armor—Zgozod, I assumed—stepped forward and brutally slapped the leader across the face. The leader pulled out a dagger—but not quickly enough. Zgozod already held a sword at his throat.

"Never speak my name, ever," Zgozod said. He reached into the leader's shirt and pulled out the scroll I had seen in the *crystal ball*, then held the scroll over the flame of a candle, never taking his eyes from the leader. "Perhaps this will help you get wiser," he added when the scroll was only ashes, and he touched the leader with his sword. The leader fell to the floor, screaming. His hair turned white and wrinkles appeared on his face. Zgozod then walked out.

I looked out the window just in time to see Zgozod silently touch his forehead. He turned into a reddish *gaseous form* and disappeared into the dark. This was no clerical magic, and the man wore armor no wizard would bear. I had no clue as to what kind of sorcery this was.

Hastmir 17: Nothing else happened during that night. We recovered Zgozod's retainer and brought him back to our room. He had lost consciousness after being touched by the sword and woke up only the next morning, solidly tied up. Xerdon remained *invisible* while I ques-

tioned him.

Other than his name, Pustek, he revealed nothing of interest at first. He obviously lied and made up answers during our conversation, but he turned very pale when I mentioned Zgozod's name. He came close to revealing more, but suddenly became quiet. Finally, I took his pouch of bright pink coins and threatened to keep them—and that finished him off. Whatever these coins were, they seemed quite valuable to him.

Pustek admitted his tie with Zgozod. Apparently, the latter was the commander of the Slagovich army, a ruthless and dangerous personality, second only to the prime hierarch of Slagovich. Zgozod used this thug leader's services occasionally, particularly in "spying" missions in the neighboring city states of Hojah and Zvornik. Pustek was otherwise mere riff-raff from the streets of Slagovich, not really worthy of my time.

I could not yet let him go, however. I kept one of his coins and gagged him. Both Xerdon and I left for the hierarch's palace. Heavily armed troops still patrolled the streets and the walls around the city. It seemed like a city at war, or soon to be. We witnessed a number of troops rounding up younger civilians and forcing them into the city's army. Their methods were rather brutal.

An old beggar approached me at one point and discreetly opened his jacket, revealing a series of small chains, jewelry, and other trinkets. "Eh, care for the true stuff? Yeh, pure and untouched. It'll last years, good man." I figured it was all contraband—or fakes, more likely. The baubles were shining with the same hue as the bright pink coins I took from Pustek. There was definitely something odd about that pink metal. I ignored the man, and he spat in my direction.

I found a deserted street and turned **invisible**. The palace was near: a large, sinister fortress, with metal barbs, stone gargoyles, and other gloomy sculptures guarding the battlements. We decided to wait until nightfall before moving in.

The following events were entered in to the logbook in chronological order, after the return of the officers to the Princess Ark.

Hastmir 18—Haldemar: Last night was all but the quiet night we had hoped for. A fleet of ships sailed to the coast, blockading the cave's entrance and bombarding the city with flaming projectiles. Simultaneously, a land force assaulted the northern walls. Several buildings were soon in flames, and people ran through the streets in panic.

This is when Zgozod came back into the picture. He led a force of heavy knights wearing the same red armor as he, with golden tabards. The city's defenses threatened to collapse under the onslaught when Zgozod led a sortie against the aggressors. The results were simply amazing. Twenty knights charged the light

infantry outside the city, trampling and slaughtering at will scores of their foes. They seemed almost invincible, literally plowing through the lightly armored men-at-arms. Nothing seemed to reach the knights. The mass of infantry retreated in disorder under a shower of arrows shot from the city walls. By the end of the battle, only three of the red knights had fallen.

We could hear the people cheering on the walls. The city of Slagovich had been attacked by a joint Zvornikian-Hojahite force, apparently a common occurrence there. So much for the friendly neighborhood!

We chose that time to sneak into the prime hierarch's fortress and find out a bit more about the ruler of Slagovich. We found him before long. The hierarch was a pale and frail-looking boy, no more than fourteen. He was watching the fight from a barred window. "How long will this go on?" he sighed. "Why can't they stay away?"

Zgozod rudely broke into the chamber, fuming. "I lost three knights in that battle. Every day you refuse to sign the charter, more of your people's blood soils the walls of Slagovich. This is hopeless. You must sign now!"

"But I don't trust him," said the young hierarch. "That priest scares me!"

Zgozod slammed the table with his fist. "You will sign, or there will be no one left to sign for!"

The argument went on a little longer, with Zgozod getting increasingly angry and arrogant. Trembling, the young hierarch huddled in a corner of his room and became totally mute. Zgozod grabbed him by the shirt and yanked him to the window. "Look! They suffer because of your foolishness!" he roared. The hierarch squirmed and dropped to the floor. Zgozod then threw him a scroll and a quill. "Sign or be damned!"

With tears in his eyes, the young hierarch scribbled his name on the scroll and fell to the floor. "At last!" barked Zgozod, and he left the room. I whispered for Xerdon to remain with the hierarch while I followed the sinister red knight.

Xerdon: The child-ruler wept until late that night. I noticed the door was locked, probably to keep the hierarch prisoner in his own quarters. Much later, I heard voices behind the door. The two guards and one of the red knights burst in, swords unsheathed. I caught the gleam of murder in their eyes.

I decided to intervene. The two guards died before they realized what happened. The knight was another affair. His eyes turned totally red, as if flames consumed him inside. Each time I struck a blow, it seemed the knight blurred out of harm's way, and a red haze flared up around him. Only once did I manage to corner him and get a solid hit. This would have split wide open any other armor. But this red metal proved more resilient than I thought. My

blade found his flesh and consumed with delectation the knight's vital energy. Both horribly surprised and in pain, the knight finally retreated and called for the guard.

The hierarch had awakened and had seen me fight the knight. He was petrified by fear. I had to act fast, since I could already hear guards rushing up the stairs. I knocked the child-ruler out and discharged my **wand of lightning bolts** into the narrow hallway. While the bolt caused horrible damage to the crowd of men-at-arms, I retreated through another staircase with the child-ruler on my shoulder. With luck and the help of darkness, I reached the palace walls. I was forced to dispatch another guard at a postern before I could exit into the city. The trip back to the Black Samovar was a treacherous one. It seemed the entire city garrison was on the march. But I fooled them easily in the dark and safely reached the Black Samovar. No one saw me.

There, I found Pustek dead. His skin was the color of chalk, and his face displayed utter horror. Nothing was missing. He bore no wound, and I had no clue as to his death. I decided to dispose of the cadaver and await the admirals return.

Haldemar: Just past midnight, Zgozod reached his knights. He said to one that the hierarch had signed. The henchman picked up his sword and walked out. "Are they still at Grabana?" Zgozod asked another, who responded with a nod. Zgozod then declared, "Fine. Let us march! I want his uncle's head in a bag of salt."

And, indeed, they marched. In the middle of the night, Zgozod and his knights mustered the city's troops and moved toward the north. Just before sunrise, they reached a ridge overlooking the camp of the Zvornik forces. The brutal onslaught that followed was worthy of the most bloodthirsty barbarians. The massive Zvornik infantry was caught unprepared and was inexorably, systematically butchered. Without mercy, fleeing troops and yielding knights alike were slaughtered. Only tattered and burning remains of their banners stood in the morning breeze. Clearly, Zgozod had many more troops than he had led the hierarch to believe.

A knight dragged an older warrior behind his destrier, and tossed him at Zgozod's feet. With a wicked smile, Zgozod said, "Good. The pleasure of beheading you, Stavro, will be all mine! Calling upon Zvornik to save your royal nephew was a pathetic move, old fool. And now you die."

But I grew tired of this knight's arrogance. He reminded me too much of the Heldannic Herr Rolf. Still **invisible**, I approached and cast a **dimension door** at the old warrior. He reappeared in the safety of thick brush, a little over 300' away. Despite his astonishment, the old warrior kept quiet and went his way, probably thanking the Immortals for their merciful intervention. Zgozod was not pleased. He cursed and rode back to Slagovich. I spent

the rest of the day searching for Stavro.

Xerdon: With difficulty, I reassured the child-ruler and explained who I was and what had happened. The child-ruler called himself Miosz II of Slagovich. Zgozod was his "servitor," said he. He had Miosz confined to his quarters for his own security ever since his uncle disappeared, fearing someone would make an attempt on his life, too. Miosz said the charter was intended to provide the Hagiarchy of Hule with some political concessions over Slagovich, in exchange for protection. Soon after Miosz's uncle disappeared, the rival city states of Zvornik and Hojah allied and marched against Slagovich. Zgozod accused them of killing the uncle, and strongly suggested that Miosz sign the charter to defeat them. Miosz felt uneasy signing any such document without his uncle's advice. But Zgozod had apparently found a way to "influence" Miosz at last. It took some time to explain to Miosz that he was being manipulated and that his life still was in great danger.

The noise of heavy boots and metal interrupted our conversation. Slagovich men-at-arms were after us. As we left through the window, I saw the innkeeper down in the street, pulling Pustek's body out of the barrel where I had concealed him. A sergeant-at-arms was watching, hands on his hips. The innkeeper must have seen me and alerted the city watch.

We lost our pursuers after a long chase across the rooftops of Slagovich. Miosz then said he knew someone who would help. It was the old general of the army, whom Zgozod replaced a few years ago. He had been accused of treachery and made to work in the mines.

There was no apparent way to enter the heavily guarded mine. Miosz then thought of setting fire to the smelting works to create a diversion. I am afraid I left a trail of dead guards behind us, despite the diversion, but finally we made it into the mine's gloomy galleries.

An eerie red glow illuminated the galleries. I had thought these were gold mines, but Miosz they produced *cinnabryl*, some metal even more precious than gold. He said it was the source of Slagovich's wealth. He did not reveal more however. I quietly pocketed a small chunk of the ore for later study. It looked a bit like Pustek's bright pink coins.

Hours later, we located a man by the name of Enver, the one whom Miosz sought. Once out of his cell, Enver promptly freed another 12 men and women from their chains. They called themselves the Knights of Halav—a brotherhood obviously persecuted by Zgozod. Their order was almost extinct in Slagovich. Our arrival offered them a chance to restore justice at last. Enver directed us to a passage that ultimately led to the palace. His plan was to return Miosz to his throne and accuse Zgozod of treachery. By law, he could still challenge the red knight to a duel.

Guards poured in the instant we entered the throne room. A number of petty nobles followed in, with rather perplexed and annoyed expressions on their faces. The unarmored Knights of Halav bravely formed a wall before their child-ruler, while Miosz ordered the troops out.

Zgozod stepped forward, followed by a man in a long white robe—perhaps a priest. The latter said, with a smile, "I dare say, young man, you seem to be mistaken. You are in no position to give orders, for this land is now part of the Great Hule. You should know. You did sign the Charter of Protection!"

"It was signed under threat," Miosz answered, "and for this, I repudiate the agreement!"

"Now, now. Surely you don't think anyone would believe this, young man?" said the priest. "No one among Slagovich's rightful nobility would attest to this! And as you can see, they are all here to witnesses that justice and order be upheld. Now, please, step down. And Lord Zgozod, would you kindly remove these ridiculous wretches from my presence."

Haldemar: I caught up with Stavro eventually and introduced myself. Stavro was the young hierarch's uncle. Zgozod had managed to separate him from his nephew in a conspiracy that could ultimately force Slagovich to become a protectorate of the Hagiarchy of Hule. Stavro opposed Zgozod's growing influence at the court and was nearly killed by Zgozod's men. He was forced to flee. Since then, he had attempted to retake Slagovich with the help of the city states of Hojah and Zvornik, who detested any Hulean hegemony in the region even more than they hated Slagovich's odious merchant wealth.

From what I knew of Zgozod, I strongly suspected him to have shady ties with Hule—so it was very likely that Hule stood behind the murders in Jaibul and Takanumba. And now this was happening here. I knew I was getting close to something very big. The only thing left to do was to find Xerdon and the hierarch. Avoiding the many Slagovich search parties that were after Stavro proved a dangerous exercise. All the trails were heavily patrolled.

As we approached the city later that night, we discovered an entire city quarter in flames. Stavro identified it as the mines' smelting works. The fire had spread to many houses nearby. This offered us a perfect opportunity to enter the city, as the night watch was too busy containing the blaze. Soon we crept into the palace through a secret passage Stavro knew about.

It lead to a small balcony in the throne room. It seemed we stepped right into another hot situation. Xerdon was standing next to the young hierarch, along with a dozen half-naked and hirsute people. They were surrounded by Slagovich men-at-arms under Zgozod's command. A man

in white robes accompanied him. After hearing what the white-robed man said, Stavro addressed him from our vantage point. "I believe him, Your Grace, as a rightful noble of Slagovich. I also have knowledge of Zgozod's attempt to kill me and his false accusations against Lord Enver! I, Count of Bistr, Hetman of the Knights of Halav, speak against Zgozod's treachery!" For several long seconds, his words hung in the air. We waited for their result.

"Kill him!" roared Zgozod. The troops hesitated. The nobles pulled out their swords, but they looked away from Stavro and instead eyed Zgozod—albeit with considerable nervousness. It was obvious that the tide had turned. Zgozod must have made himself very unpopular with his own troops.

Suddenly, the white-robed priest raised a hand. He looked like a man who has seen his most cherished plans go up in smoke. "There will be no need for violence," he said. Giving Zgozod a burning gaze of blame, he added, "Clearly, I can now see treachery at work." The man then uttered a *word of recall* and vanished.

"You haven't won yet!" snarled Zgozod. A red blur surrounded him, and he disappeared as well. His henchmen, abandoned and surrounded, dropped their swords and kneeled. The Knights of Halav cheered and placed the young hierarch back on the throne. Perhaps peace and justice would prevail, but nothing was sure with Zgozod at large.

Hastmir 24—Haldemar: At last, the familiar shape of the *Princess Ark* materialized in the sky. Familiar? Not quite. It dawned on me that something unexpected had happened. Huge sails had grown on the sides and bottom of the skyship—the handiwork of Leo. I should have known.

To be continued. . . .

Red steel

Slagovich and most of the Savage Coast is a brutal land, often plagued by wars. Centuries ago, the riff-raff of the Known World—pariahs, criminals, and unscrupulous adventurers—colonized its shores on a quest for wealth and power. Sometimes, refugees fleeing humanoid invasions and other scourges migrated to the Savage Coast and remained stranded in this unforgiving land.

Very little law exists there, except as enforced by the nobles or the personally powerful. Often, the law is that of the jungle. Indeed, the forces of good are an exception more than a rule. The Slagovich affair is a typical example of what happens in many kingdoms of the region.

What makes this region stand apart from the other places is the fact its land bears a poisoned soil. It affects everything and everybody, from the color of the people's skin to their society, right down to their money. It is the source of wealth and power, but also of rivalry and, ultimately,

grief and destruction. This poison is called "seed of cinnabar."

Seed of cinnabar: This poisonous mineral compound exists in everything at varying concentrations, including in food and water. It impairs the mental performances of contaminated people, limiting them to Intelligence and Wisdom scores of 3d4. A spell-caster is limited to spell levels equal to his appropriate ability score (Intelligence for wizards, Wisdom for clerics) minus 9. The poison also reduces the life expectancy of all life forms by 20%.

Seed of cinnabar is a very slow poison, needing a week of cumulative exposure per point of Constitution to affect game attributes, and a month of exposure per point of Constitution to affect longevity. Native life is automatically affected at birth. Animal and vegetable ecology maintained its balance with quicker proliferation. Effects on mental performance subside within 20 weeks (minus one week per point of the character's Constitution score) of avoidance of contact with the poison, but the shortened life expectancy is permanent. Seed of cinnabar can be made into a powder and stored in a pouch.

Cinnabryl: The Savage Coast harbors a rare fossil ore deriving from millions of years of awesome telluric pressures and volcanic temperatures applied to seed of cinnabar beds, deep underground. When properly extracted, the ore produces a shiny, red metal, called cinnabryl. Pure cinnabryl has the consistency and weight of lead.

When touched to fully contaminated people, cinnabryl negates the harmful effects of seed of cinnabar. Cinnabryl must be worn directly against the skin, as a bracelet or medal, for example. When wearing cinnabryl, the mind-altering effects of seed of cinnabar recede in 20 weeks, minus one week per point of Constitution. Full life expectancy is restored as long as the metal is worn at least 20 months, minus one week per point of the character's Constitution score. Going more than one week without contact with cinnabryl cancels all accumulated gains and benefits against the poison.

Contact with the skin, however, causes cinnabryl to slowly lose its properties. Depleted cinnabryl appears as a dull red metal. Some sages say that contact with life energy provokes the oxidation of cinnabryl. Depleted cinnabryl can be forged into steel with half the weight and three times the value of normal steel. This red steel makes fine weapons permitted only to the local royalty, nobility, heroes, and (sometimes) elite troops.

Undepleted cinnabryl cannot be forged into steel without a clerical or wizard *wish*. It also is poisonous to people uncontaminated by seed of cinnabar, causing them to lose one point of Constitution per week of exposure. Death occurs when Constitution reaches zero. Constitution is otherwise recovered at the same rate if

the metal is discarded or depleted. Its depleted form is harmless.

Currency & depletion rate: In the past centuries, people have recognized the value of cinnabryl. It became a coveted possession, a source of desire and bitter rivalry, as well as the standard currency on the Savage Coast. Oxidation in the hands of its owners tends to cause it to devalue regularly. This causes chronic economic downturns in the region and a quasi-permanent poverty among the common people.

Currency values are as follows:

1 Bright (Br): This coin is a mixture of 90% silver and 10% undepleted cinnabryl. It takes five weeks of continuous contact with skin to deplete 1 Br (see "1 Dim"). This glowing, pink coin is reserved for royalty or nobility, and is forbidden to commoners and foreigners.

1 Fair (Fr): This coin is a mixture of 98% copper and 2% undepleted cinnabryl. It takes a week of continuous contact with skin to deplete 1 Fr (see "1 Dark"); **5 Fr = 1 Br = 2½ gold pieces in the Known World** (see "Exchange rates"). This slightly glowing, reddish-gold coin is the standard currency of the rich.

1 Dim (Dm): This is a depleted Bright; **10 Dm = 1 Fr = 10 silver pieces in the Known World** (see "Exchange rates"). This is the coin people use most on the Savage Coast. It is light gray with a reddish tone.

1 Dark (Dk): This is a depleted Fair; **10 Dk equal 1 Dm = 10 copper pieces in the Known World** (see "Exchange rates"). This brown coin is the smallest currency denomination.

Pure cinnabryl is not minted. If it were, a coin-sized quantity of this metal would take over a Known World year (50 weeks) to deplete. In equal quantities, pure and undepleted cinnabryl costs 10 times the value of a Bright coin. Pure cinnabryl metal is abbreviated as Ci, and numerical values of Ci refer to coin-sized amounts.

Exchange rates: Precious metals other than silver and copper (e.g., gold and platinum) and precious stones are useless as currencies on the Savage Coast. Merchants will trade them for their ornamental values or 'to conduct business with foreign powers, but at half the Known World's prices. Conversely, Savage Coast Fair and Bright coins or objects made of pure cinnabryl are traded at half their values in the Known World. Depleted cinnabryl trades at the value of pure silver in the Known World. Silver ingots are used in most merchant trade. Note that the true value of a Dark coin really is 1.18 cp, but this difference is widely ignored in trade since that coin is used as petty street cash.

In the Savage Coast setting, note that jewelry is always listed with its cinnabryl alloy type and value first, followed by other ornamental elements lacking cinna-

bryl. For example: A crown listed as "10 Ci/500 gp" means that it contains 10 Ci of pure and undepleted cinnabryl, and 500 gp worth of normal metals and ornamental gems.

There is no way to tell how long undepleted currency has been used before it turns dim. For that reason, powerful people use personal talismans or bracelets of cinnabryl. It is customary to handle undepleted coins with a cloth or glove for fear of seeing them turn dim in your very hands! To keep things simple in a game setting, ignore the depletion factor of money unless characters actually use the money to counteract the poison.

Xerdon, Naduk-Sim

(Chief of the Guard)

History: Xerdon is a Shiye, an elf from the Kingdom of Shiye Lawr. His true origins are unknown. As an infant, he was found hidden in a secret recess, in a house bordering the Territory of Blackheart. The house had just been raided, and all adults had been taken, never to be seen again.

Adopted by a family of commoners, Xerdon grew to be an outstanding hunter and warrior. He became a general in the Guard of the Lawr and took an assignment on the northern border. He successfully destroyed a great many monsters, then began a series of illegal forays into Blackheart, putting a temporary end to the bloody monster incursions by burning down several towers (with their wizards). This caused an uproar at the Imperial Palace. Under Imperial pressure, the ruler of Shiye Lawr publicly "court martialled" Xerdon to appease the powerful Blackheart lobby, then quietly had him transferred to the Imperial Navy.

Personality: Xerdon is an effective, professional soldier. This cold and calculating commander shows little forgiveness and flexibility to those who fail him. Xerdon confronts adversity with great calm and resolve. Although courageous and disciplined, he is ambitious, seeing in Haldemar a possible obstacle to his career. He disliked Haldemar's decision to leave Ramissur to the night dragon, and feels contempt for Myojo whom he perceives as Haldemar's lackey and a potentially hostile outsider.

Disposition: Goodwill toward Talasar and Ramissur; Neutral toward Lady Abovombe, Ashari, Raman, and Haldemar; Antipathy toward Leo, Tarias and Myojo.

Appearance: Xerdon is a rather tall and athletic elf, bearing a golden tan from his many years of active duty in the Imperial Navy. Xerdon has long, silver hair held back with a leather headband. A scar runs down his left cheek, testifying to his numerous battles with Blackheart monsters.

Equipment carried: *Armband of protection +2, buckle of armor (AC 3), wand of lightning bolts (8d6), lunar brooch, sword +3 plus draining, normal*

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long bow and arrows, six *arrows of penetration*, and one *arrow of wounding*.

Spells memorized:

- Level 1 —Light, magic missile, shield, sleep (x2)
- Level 2 —Detect invisible, knock, levitate, web
- Level 3 —Haste, hold person, protection from evil 10' radius
- Level 4 —Dimension door, wall of fire
- Level 5 —Feeblemind

D&D game statistics: S 16, I 15, W 11, D 14, Co 13, Ch 12; 10th-level Elf; AC 0 (with Dex and magic); hp 46; MV 120'(40'); #AT 1 (sword +3 or wand); AT Rank C (smash, parry, disarm); Dmg 2d8+9/drain (Xerdon reached **master-proiciency** in his mastery of swords) or 8d6; Save E10+2; ML 11; AL N. Languages: Common Alphatian, Shiye Lawr elven dialect. Skills: Military Tactics (In), Military Logistics (In), Hunting/Tracking (In), Monster Lore (In), Leadership (Wi+1), Horsemanship (Dx), Endurance (Co).

Letters

I was pleasantly surprised to see my previous letter in your D&D Column, in DRAGON® issue #166. In the letter, I asked how the People's Temple related to the Immortals. In return, you asked "What's that?" The People's Temple is the religion introduced in GAZ4 *The Kingdom of Ierendi*. It is the religion created by the Minrothad traveler, Tomia (see GAZ4, pages 16-17).

Thanks, I had lost track of these fellows. At the time GAZ4 was written, not much thought went into the links between the various churches, their clerics, and the Immortals.

If you care to backtrack a bit, I would suggest that the Makai, the original inhabitants of Ierendi whose clerics are usually druids, were once followers of the Immortal Diulanna (see the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set for complete information). The Makai philosophy would technically be in Diulanna's sphere of influence, perhaps under a different name. The People's Temple uses a modified form of the Makai philosophy. However the People's Temple still honors Diulanna by name and by the acts of her followers. Tomia, long dead by the AC 1000 era, is now a hero and a herald of Diulanna.

Note: I observed that GAZ4 and many D&D game players commonly use the terms "religion" and "worship." In order to avoid difficulties with certain people, it was recently decided these terms would no longer be used in D&D game products. Instead, we prefer such terms as "philosophy," "precepts," "patrons," "guides," "disciples," and "followers." Of course, "gods" and "deities" are right out. You will notice this especially in upcoming products for the D&D game. As you may also recall, we changed the term "wicca" to "wokan/wokani" in the HOLLOW WORLD setting.

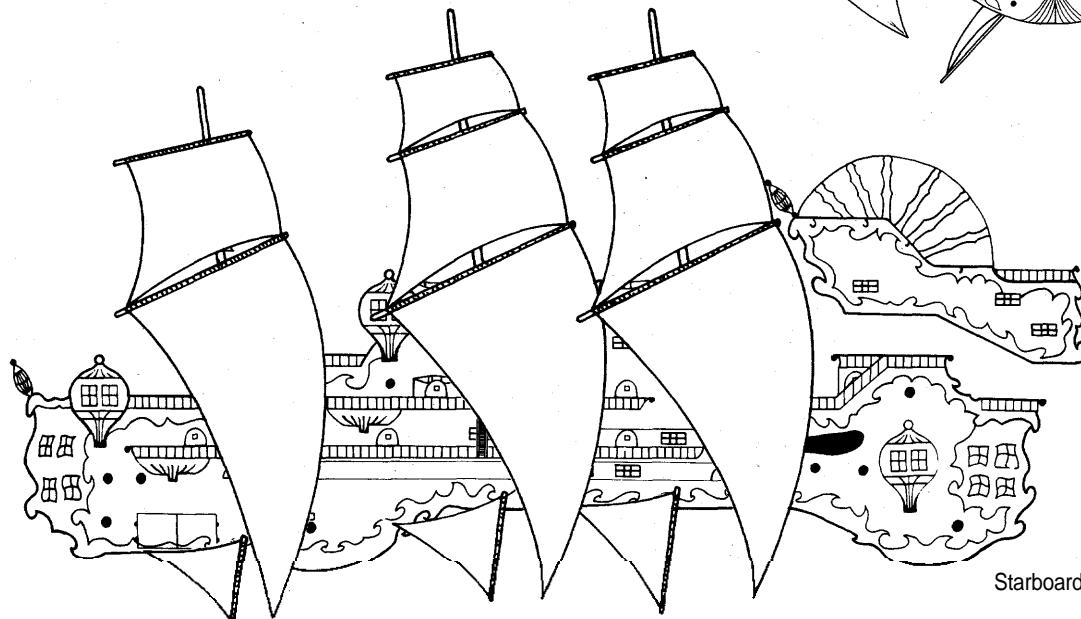
I am not a regular DRAGON Magazine buyer, but I recently picked up a stray

copy of the June 1990 issue (#158). Being a "standard D&D game" player, I naturally went directly for the "Princess Ark." Needless to say, I was wrapped! Unfortunately, the only bit of "Princess Ark" log I have is Part 6. I am dying to find out more, but have trouble finding regular issues of DRAGON Magazine in this part of the country (Queensland, Australia), let alone finding back issues. And the only bit I am really interested in is this ship's log. Is there any plan to publish information on its own, and how should I get a hold of the missing parts?

This is becoming a familiar theme! For the missing parts, you should be able to get back issues of DRAGON Magazine through our Mail Order Hobby Shop. For a catalog, write to: Mail Order Hobby Shop, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. For upcoming episodes, there is no substitute for a subscription. FYI—Part 1 of Princess Ark was published in DRAGON #152, and we skipped issue #159. And yes, we are thinking about "Princess Ark" material in a game format but it may not necessarily contain a compilation of the ship's log. All log entries put together would come close to 128 pages of material in our current game format! Instead, such a product could provide role-playing material and deck plans. PCs would either be part of the crew or would replace the officers. The point of this accessory would be to further adventuring and exploration.

Ω

The Princess Ark
(with Leo's handiwork)

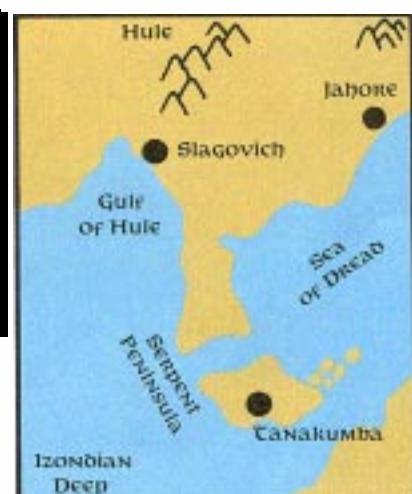
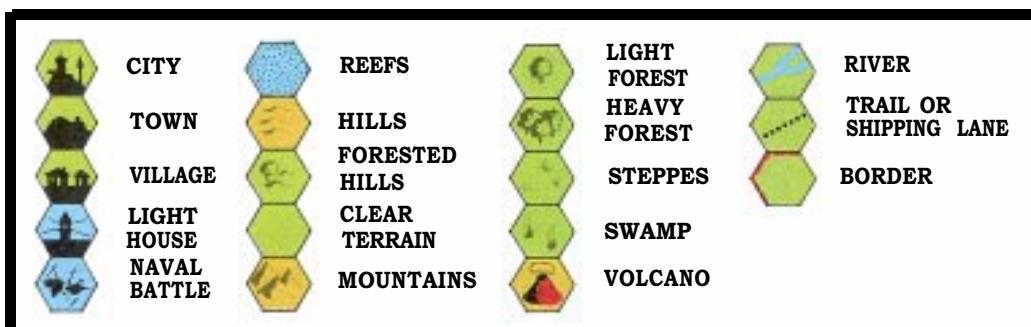


Bow side, full sail

Starboard side, full sail



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Effective monster design—with a paint brush

The Nature of

The Beast

©1991 by Zoe Bell Hurst

Dragons, griffons, werewolves, couatls, rakshasas—the pictures these names inspire in my mind's eye always tempt me to get a new miniature figure and try again to paint the perfect fantastic monster. However, capturing the power of the creatures glimpsed in my imagination has always been one of my most difficult tasks as a painter. Many attempts have failed to even come close to my ideal conception of a particular monster because I did not have a strong artistic composition for it.



A



C



B



D

The problem is the inherent weakness of the fantastic monster as a subject for the miniature figure. Because of its size, a miniature must be instantly recognizable, and this is easiest to achieve with objects that really exist. The bizarre forms of monsters work against their believability.

Miniature-figure painting has a very specific artistic goal: to create figures that seem so alive as to suggest a story. To achieve this, the miniature in question must have the theatrical ability to make a viewer suspend all disbelief and accept the miniature on its own terms. The way I accomplish this with monsters is to make them seem as realistic as possible, and this

means turning to nature as a guide. All monsters have their roots in the human imagination, and many, especially the ones found in classic mythology, are directly inspired by the natural world. Studying animal skins and colorations opens up a rich number of possibilities for improving the composition of the fantastic monster miniature.

Creating the whole

The term "composition" means the arrangement of the parts of a work of art so as to form a unified, harmonious whole. The elements that make up composition are balance, tension, and movement. Balance is the pleasing harmony of various elements in a design. Tension is the reaction between elements that are in opposition. Movement is the effect of motion in the design, the force created by the actions of balance and tension upon each other. The forms of these elements are already there in the miniature, provided by the sculptor. The qualities added by the painter to complete the composition are color, pattern and texture.

The griffin in photograph A illustrates a good composition and its separate elements. Harmony is provided by the monochromatic color scheme of various shades of golden brown. This scheme melds the disparate lion and eagle parts of the griffin into a single form.

Tension is provided by the difference in texture of the feathers and the fur. This occurs both because of the original sculpting of their surfaces and my painting. I used watered washes of paint on the fur to help the different shades of color blend together gracefully. The feathers have minute scratchings in them to suggest the individual interior structures. To bring these out, I first traced the form of the feathers in dark brown to show their layers, then brushed them with watered dark brown. After blotting to soak up the excess, enough of the brown remained to reveal the interior structures. As a final touch to give them a glowing quality, I brushed them again with watered metallic gold. Blotting the excess gold allowed the underlying colors to show through and gave the feathers a shimmering quality, creating a subtle difference in texture between the eagle and lion portions.

Movement, the final element of composition, is provided by the opposition between the harmony of the coloration and the tension of the texture. The visual pattern of the feathers also helps the movement. The pattern leads the viewer's eye down from the griffon's head to his haunches, then up the length of his wings. The combination of these three elements provides a unified, lively composition that in turn creates a believable figure. The griffon has succeeded in presenting its own reality, and thus is a character within that reality.

Other details supporting the composition, largely through the placement of color, are connecting links to give the element of harmony dominance. One connecting link between the two body portions is the dark brown used as shadowing on both the lion and the eagle. Another link is the yellow base color used on the beak and feet of the eagle. This yellow is used as the highlight for the lion's fur, with an ivory white for the highlight on the beak and eagle's feet to give them a brighter finish than both the fur and the feathers. The blue of the eye is unique in the design, and its purpose is to draw the viewer's eye to the griffon's face

as the focal point of the composition.

Before going further into developing composition, one thing you must always do is work with the sculpture. On the griffon, I made a serious mistake in my original conception. Wanting to make it really special, I decided to paint the eagle's portion to look like a peacock and the lion's portion to look like a jaguar. This was to suggest a jungle subspecies of griffon, but it just didn't work. The design was too busy and too chaotic, and it fought with the clean, spare lines of the sculpture's inherent composition. I finally realized my basic idea was a bad one and cleaned off as much of the paint as possible. Restudying the figure without the filter of my own desires, I was able to make a better, if more traditional, composition in collaboration with the sculptor.

As stated earlier, what the painter brings to the composition is color, pattern, and texture. In nature, these qualities exist in the arrangement of form and color, within the shadow of muscles and bone and through the flow of feathers, hair, or scales on an animal's hide. The presence of these elements provides the visual drama, the aspect of the composition that the painter develops. All natural animals possess some kind of visual drama in their appearance. To take advantage of this, the

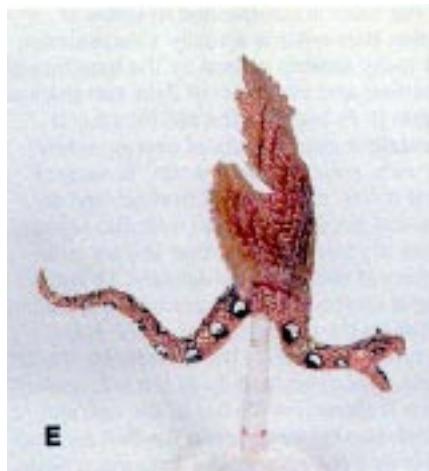
animal that you want to use for enhancing a monster's design needs to be studied and its skin's motifs absorbed into your memory. When involved in this examination, remember any animal's appearance close up is extremely complicated in both pattern and color. It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the wealth of detail.

Next door to reality

Though I have been talking about giving monsters a touch of realism, miniature-figure painting is not actually a realistic medium. The size of figures makes it physically impossible to copy exactly what is seen in nature. The key to using natural composition elements is to paint the *effect* of the animal you want to suggest for a monster's features. You have to learn how to manipulate true reality to create the reality of the figure.

The group of woodland animals in photograph B illustrate the nuances of technique involved in achieving this goal. There are two special difficulties that I had to overcome in painting their compositions. The first is their especially small size, for they are in proper scale. The second is that everyone knows what these animals look like, so it would be easy to tell if I had made a mistake. I first researched each animal, making sure that I had the right subspecies so I wouldn't make a crucial error in coloration or body markings. (These figures were so well detailed, I had no trouble with identifying them. For research, I recommend the *Audubon Field Guides*.)

The problem of size was more difficult to solve. After finding the best photograph I could of each animal, I studied that photograph and analyzed the animal to find out its "identification coat." In other words, why does the fox look like a fox and not a coyote? Each animal has a set of body features and markings that sets it off from members of other species. The perfect example of this in the woodland group is the badger. The squat legs, stout body, and even, low-hanging pelt are easy to identify. Add to this the unique facial markings of the white streak down the forehead, black



eyes and nose, white jowls, and black sideburns, and the figure is definitely a badger. The grizzled appearance of the pelt is accomplished by a gray-white base, a watered black for texture, and a darker black in the shadows. Gray is drybrushed onto the fur to bring out the coat's different strands, and white added onto this as a high highlight to mimic the effect of light on the pelt.

Many animals have markings that are extremely complex. The best way to capture their effect is to place the most obvious markings first, then cautiously add in the lesser markings until the figure has reached the optimum level of recognition. Once you've hit that, any more will only confuse the design. The particular pattern of the snake is based on that of the eastern diamondback rattlesnake. The only part of its complex markings I used are the dominant semidiamond shapes along the spine. I suggest these by squares of taupe, squared off by black. The black is edged by white with yellowish tan between the diamond. The snake's base color is tan, washed with brown to bring out the texture of the scales. In real life, the eastern diamondback has a dark brown line over its eye that is edged by two white lines. To suggest this on the figure, a dot of white is placed above the eye socket with a stripe

of white behind it. Important identifying body features are the rattles on the tail and the blunt, triangular head characteristic of this pit viper.

The bobcat is another animal with complex markings, but these are complicated by the softness of its fur. I had real trouble trying to decide how harsh the outline of its underside spots should be for effect, as the fur makes them blurry around the edges in real life. I finally solved the dilemma by concentrating on the other identifying features of the bobcat, and adding only a few spots in certain key places on the body. After deciding it was a bobcat and not a lynx because of its large ears and length of the tail (and the jowls of fur on either side of the chin; in a lynx, these go completely under the chin), I trimmed the ears with black and put white eyespots on their backs. The eyes are outlined with black, the tail is tipped with black, and the muzzle and underbelly are painted ivory. The base fur color is a mix of golden brown, mustard yellow, and orange. Shadows are straight golden brown, and the highlights are yellowish tan.

After doing this, I placed a few splotches of dark brown and black along the legs, the chest, and in a ring under the neck. In the shadows of these areas, I put on another wash of brown so the splotches wouldn't look like they were lying on top of the fur.

Fur itself is complicated in terms of color. Hair color is actually a combination of many shades, caused by the base hue of the hair and the effect of light and shadow upon it. In real life, the red fox's fur is actually a grizzled mix of orange, white, brown, gray, and golden tan. To suggest this effect, my husband first painted on a base of bright red mixed with flat orange, then drybrushed the other shades on in layers of shadow and highlight. Drybrushing is used so the different colors wouldn't obscure the sculpted lines of the hairs. White is painted on the underbelly, throat, chin, eyebrows, and tip of the tail. A black spot is placed on the top of the tail, and black also is painted onto the feet and legs to create stocking marks. Important body

features are the fullness of the tail, the jowls of fur, and the general body shape indicative of a fox.

Of all the animals, I found the deer the most difficult to paint because of its sleek, short-hair pelt. On animals with longer fur, I could simulate the different shades of hair by manipulating the texture sculpted onto the animal, but this was impossible with the deer. I solved the problem by first painting on a base coat of mustard yellow. I next applied the colors dark brown, straight brown, golden brown, golden tan, and straight tan in a series of washes. I placed each layer, then went back with a brush full of water and gently removed the color from the highlight points to allow the layers below the new coat to be seen. When this was completed, I went back and put dark brown in the definite shadow areas and tan on the highlight areas to shape the form of the figure. The controlled series of washes gives the deer's pelt a rich, glowing look of depth and points up the muscle structure of the body. The shape of the tail and ears indicate that it is a mule deer, and it has the appropriate white markings on the face, throat, underside, tail, and ears. The tail is also tipped with black.

As a final note, the mule deer figure still didn't look right to me until I realized its antlers had been molded flat. After curving them forward, this completed the deer's effect. Small details such as antlers, claws, hooves, and teeth are important in completing the realism of a figure.

The last animal in the group is a wolverine. It illustrates the major drawback of relying only on photographs for research. I was able to find only two good photos of a wolverine, and they disagreed on important points. One had apparently been taken in strong light, and the animal was a uniform dark brown with golden brown highlights. However, the photograph in the *Audubon Field Guide* showed a creature with a black pelt that had gray markings. Photographs will often do this because of many factors such as available light, film quality, etc. It is always best to study an animal in ordinary sunlight to see its true



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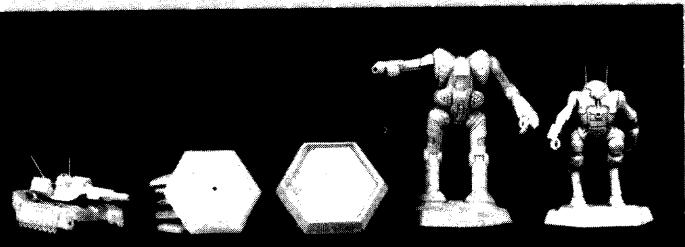
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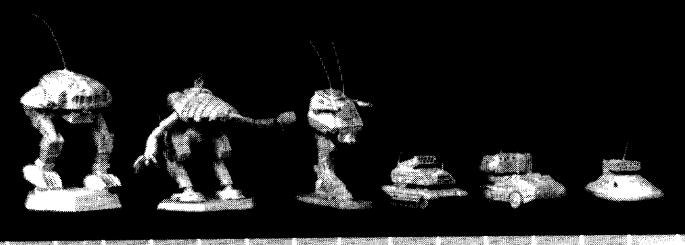
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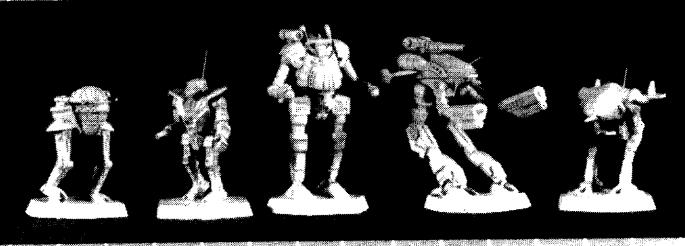
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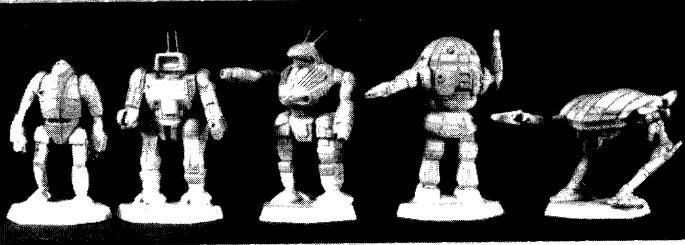
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colors. If you can't do this, try to see as many photographs of the animal as you can, for comparing them will give you a reasonable idea of its appearance.

I decided to base my wolverine's design on the one in the *Audubon Field Guide* and gave the wolverine a base coat of dark brown deepened with black. The markings along the hind legs and around the head are stone gray highlighted with white. The highlights on the black areas are also stone gray. To get the texture across, the highlights are drybrushed along the top of the fur to keep the paint from creeping into the crevices of the pelt. Identifying body marks are the wolverine's weasel-like but powerful body shape, bushy tail, and posture of the head in relation to the body.

Believing in fantasy

In order to realistically use what I've been saying about painting, you don't actually need a fantastic level of painting skill. The important thing is to understand how the elements of composition work in the pelts of natural animals. Once you have that knowledge, you can break down the elements down into their essential motifs, pick and choose what you need, and manipulate them when painting fantastic monsters. Painting skills will come with practice, and many such elements are not that difficult to apply.

My husband did a fine job with the displacer beast in photograph C. The monochromatic color scheme of blue allows the impressive muscle structure to be seen even in the figure's turned pose, but what really gives it a touch of class are the facial markings. Most big cats have white eyespots above the sockets and a white patch between the nose and upper lip. The addition of these simple details draws attention to the face and its expression, gives direction and ferocity to the emotional state of the figure, provides a contrast with the blue color scheme that enhances its beautiful gradation, and points up the resemblance of the figure's body to the tiger. By suggesting a tiger, this helps establish the displacer beast's reality because it gives a predator's credibility to the creature.

When creating the composition for a monster, the style of the figure itself will affect your concept, as I mentioned earlier when discussing the griffon. Style is the characteristic manner of design in the figure, the unique imprint of the sculptor. Think of it this way: When you say "Good morning," the pitch of your voice and the syllables you inflect in the words will affect the meaning of what you're literally saying. This phrase can be cheerful, sarcastic, reflexive, or questioning. The style of the sculptor's art affects the meaning of a figure in a similar fashion. The couatls in photographs D, E and F illustrate this.

These three figures were painted as part of an experiment in creating designs for different sculptures of the same subject.

The three are similar as far as the poses go, with wings spread, mouths open, and bodies contorted into S shapes. But their actual structure and detailing are very distinctive. My ideas for the individual compositions arose out of these distinctions. Couatls are monsters taken from Central American mythology, and I always think of them as having brilliant coloration, as do many jungle birds and insects. Using this as a beginning, I developed compositions that would harmonize with the individual styles.

The blue couatl in photograph D is rather spiky in appearance. Its scales are very long and triangular, and they echo the triangles of the wing skin flaps. It is the only one of the three with bat wings, and its head is very large. With such crisp lines available in the scales' style, I decided to try to give the couatl's texture the quality of iridescence, a term for the interplay of shifting, rainbowlike colors seen on many insects and birds (one such creature with this characteristic is the *Morpho menelaus* butterfly that occurs in South America). Iridescence is caused by light hitting certain structures in the animal's skin or feathers such that the colors change with the light's angle. The hue of the *Morpho menelaus* butterfly changes from deep molten blue to purple to light blue-green. True iridescence is a quality that cannot be captured with present-day artistic materials, but I chose this butterfly's color range to see if I could suggest its effect.

The couatl has a base of deep blue on the scales, a middle highlight of blue, and an edging of blue-green around each scale. All of the highlights are brushed with pearl as an extra attempt at iridescence. The pearl does give a pleasant sparkle to the figure, not discernable in the photograph, and the blue-green shows up wherever the light doesn't hit the pearl directly.

The red couatl in photographs E and F is the most realistic of the three figures in style. The scales and feathers are very close in their proportions to that of the body, and it is a compact, efficient miniature. Its streamlined look and the shape of its wings made me think of a parrot, so the composition is taken directly from the scarlet macaw. The faint edge of feathers on the head and tail echo the arrangement of blue, yellow, white, and red. The hollows around the eyes are painted the same shade of orange that's used on the belly, to keep the eyes from disappearing against the brilliant color scheme.

The third couatl in photographs E and F is the largest and most flamboyant sculpture. Since its body and detailing are big enough to support a complicated composition, I took some elements from the pattern of the rainbow boa of South America and painted eyespot markings along the sides to give it a touch of character. Golden tan spots are painted along the spine. Since the figure is in a flying pose, I thought in terms of a sunset for the color scheme. The body is deep pink with a

fuchsia wash on it for shadow. The large wingspan allowed me to paint the feather layers in different shades, including purple, pink, and orange. The entire body is brushed with metallic gold, both to unite the body and wings and to give the couatl's texture a glow.

Questions of style

As the painter of a figure, your own style also affects the composition. Style develops both from a person's distinctive way of handling artistic materials and from his personal viewpoint of the world. No one else has quite the same mental position as you, and no one else will have quite the same things to say when they pursue a craft or an art. The reality you want to create for a figure expresses your viewpoint of that particular miniature's meaning. Your painting style is the key to creating that unique personal reality.

For several years now, my husband and I have been developing divergent styles because we have different ideas we want to express in our composition of figures. My goal in painting is to paint "real" monsters for a fantasy-world environment. His goal is to paint fantasy monsters that could fit into the real world. A subtle difference in style, but the chimera in photograph G shows the diverse results achieved.

This is not the way I would have painted the chimera. Because of a picture in a storybook I saw as a child, I've always connected this monster with volcanoes, and I imagine it in murky shades of orange, red, and black. I would have tried to create an fiery creature of evil. My husband opted to paint it in normal animal tones, and the result is a creation of raw animal power; it's a monster possibly not prone to a deliberate lust for destruction but still dangerous for its bestial savagery. My chimera would have been one seen only in the mind; his chimera looks like one you could meet on the plains of a fantasy world.

Another example of my husband's style is the griffon in photograph H. This figure has the most realistic fur and feather structure of any of the figures illustrated. Compare it with my griffon, which is very similar in style to the depiction of a griffon in a heraldic device. The fur and feathers of my griffon have a supernatural beauty because of the deliberate harmonizing of all the shades of color. His griffon is very naturalistic in its composition, to match the accurate detailing of the sculpture.

I strive to give my monsters a bright, clean perfection of form. It's hard to imagine the griffon in photograph A having fleas, for instance. My husband's monsters have a feeling of the grit of the real world about them. We achieve these differences through the way we choose our colors, apply our shadows and highlights, and use techniques such as drybrushing or blacklining. Neither style is "better" than the other. The true judge of a figure's success is how close it comes to realizing the paint-



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Just what is fantasy?

We now come to what is the most important and most elusive factor to consider in developing a composition: the concept of the fantastic monster. A monster is more than just a couple of "normal" animals stuck together. It is an anthropomorphic representation of the elusive thoughts and symbols that exist in the human mind.

All monsters echo the human viewpoint of the world. The mind sees reality, sends it through the machinery of the brain, and creates monsters to describe its perceptions. Through an endless parade of creatures with impossible forms and powers, we acknowledge our fears, desires, anxieties, and hopes about the world, life, and each other. We turn to animals as natural aids in illuminating the shadowy ideas behind the monster because they have physical and symbolic associations of their own in our minds. The griffon has the realistic predatory aspects of the lion and eagle in its makeup. It also has the symbolic characteristics of ferocity, courage, strength, and nobility that we attribute to these creatures, although these emotive qualities are a human addition to their nature. By combining different animals into a single entity, we attempt to communicate what we cannot express through words alone.

The figure in photograph I has qualities of the wolf in its design, but it is not meant to be seen as a wolf. This is obvious by its stance, the elongated arms and legs, the enormous humanoid front paws, and the supernatural expression of malicious ferocity. The werewolf is a form we have created to give shape to our ancestral fears about the night, the predators that hide in the darkness, and the thin line that is hard pressed to keep human behavior from sliding into animal savagery. The flesh and habits of the wolf give it shape, but the nature of the beast comes from us.

When painting a monster, this "interior reality" is the important thing. This is what makes it a monster. If you can seek out the hidden human meaning of the creature and incorporate it in a practical way into your mental design, you hold the key to giving true emotive power to your monster's composition.

The werewolf, owlbear, and harpy in photographs I and J illustrate the application of color, texture, and pattern in their compositions. In adding these elements, I used real characteristics of the animals on which they are based, but I deliberately manipulated those qualities to reveal the hidden concept of that particular monster.

The werewolf's design is completely taken from that of the wolf. It has a base coat of white, shadowed with blue-gray, and a deeper shadow of grimy black in the indentations of the muscles. The markings

around the head and down the back are straight black. The gray fur is highlighted with white to reveal the texture of the fur. The black markings are also peppered with white streaks to break up their hue. This is all perfectly natural except for one important factor: The fur of most mammals, including wolves, occurs in warm shades of gray, brown, ivory, etc. I mixed blue into the werewolf's gray and used only black and white otherwise because I wanted the figure to have an cold color scheme. I deliberately did this because of the werewolf's association with the undead and the night. I wanted to suggest its estrangement from the normal world.

The owlbear in photograph I is a grotesque creature with no observable rhyme or reason to its form. To give it a coherent theme, I decided to stress the difference between its separate parts to exaggerate the impact of the grizzly bear's strength and the supersensitive senses of the owl. The combination of these animals' abilities create the concept of a powerful woodland monster. I concentrated on the texture of both the fur and the feathers, for these features are the major attributes of each animal present in the figure.

I went for a complicated series of shadows and highlights to show the pelt's rustling caused by the monster's movements and the play of its enormous muscles. The base is golden brown, shadowed with dark brown. There is black in the deep partings of fur on the belly. The highlights, in order, are straight brown, chocolate, mustard yellow, golden tan, tan, ivory, and white. I also put in some slight splotches of red-brown here and there for a trace of contrast. To emphasize the pelt's shagginess, the highlights are placed in long streaks down the body.

For the owl's part, I gave the neck and foreleg feathers a simple base of black and edged them with white for highlight. (Feathers and scales are different from fur because they have a definite outline in their structure. Hard lines of paint capture the appearance of scales and feathers better than the softened washes or dry brushing I use for fur.) The owl's eyes have orange irises and huge black pupils to emulate the characteristic stare of the owl. They are also outlined in black and have white patches painted around them. The most obvious body part of the owl, the beak, is dark gray with black for shadow. It has a gloss finish to contrast its hardness with the fur. The combination of these textures gives equal dominance to both animal parts, and leads the viewer to meld them into a single creature.

The harpy in photograph J has a definite resemblance to a large bird of prey from its body shape and wing span. I turned for its pattern to the osprey, a hawk that lives exclusively on fish. Like many monsters of Greek origin, the harpy has associations with water and wind; the osprey, a bird of prey that lives around water, seemed appropriate. The osprey's colors are white

and dark brown; on the underside of its wings, these are present in a repeating bar pattern on the feathers. The spare beauty of this motif translated well to the harpy and underlined its association with predatory birds.

The harpy's color scheme is white shadowed with watered black. Besides its associations with the osprey, the pattern echoes and reinforces the sculpture's spread of the wings. The bars are also on the tail, forming a triangular pattern with the wings. The base is deep red, and the face is pink mixed with gray to set these features off from the rest of the figure.

As a final contribution to its character, I made the eyes white with no pupils. I don't normally do this, because eyes without pupils look unfocused and consequently lifeless. However, when seen straight on, the harpy's head is tilted back and her eyes are looking up, not down her nose, although her body is leaning forward. I took this to mean she is concentrating on the use of her voice, not actually looking at anything. Painting on actual pupils would have destroyed this impression.

The characteristics of animals cannot be applied to every monster. The beholder, for instance, is a truly abstract creature. It is a bizarre creation that can be thought of as a pure representation of unbridled greed, for it is basically a ravenous mouth with many eyes to covet power and wealth. The source of its interior reality can only be human nature.

Still, the great majority of monsters can profit from the incorporation of natural visual drama into their compositions. Doing this gives them resonance, a connection to the real world and a link to the viewer's perceptions of this life. Enhancing composition in this fashion serves to make the monsters in your imagination quite real. **Q**

Photographs by Kevin Terry

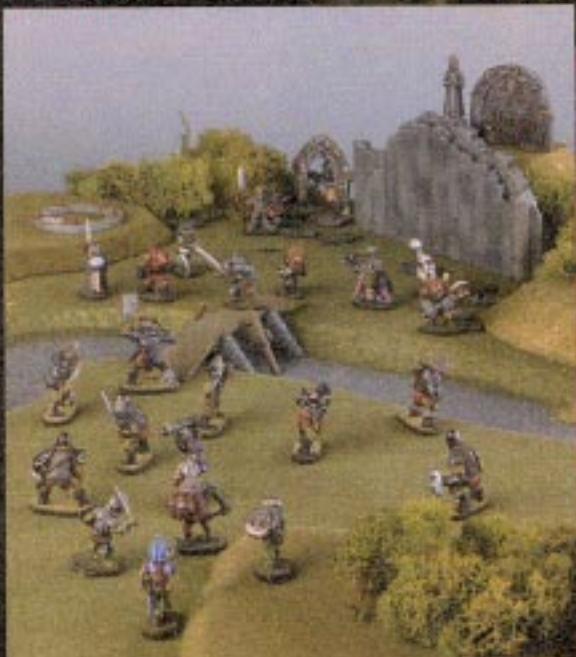
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If your gaming group is too small, or if you've just moved into the neighborhood, finding friends who are also gamers can be a problem. However, your local hobbies and games shop may have a bulletin board where gamers can advertise their groups and meeting times. The hobby store may also know of local game conventions where you can meet dozens of other gamers with the same interests. The Convention Calendar in this issue may also be of help. Don't sit at home and wish you knew more gamers. Go out and find them today.

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THE ROLE OF Computers

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Countdown to
Doomsday (SSI)

Battle the beholder-and good luck!

Not only do DRAGON® Magazine subscribers read this column, but many software publishers also peruse these pages for information dealing with their own or competitors' products. To that end, we'd like to pass along a letter we received from Ian Johnsson of Asheville, N.C.

Based on our review of *Tunnels and Trolls* in DRAGON issue #167, Ian purchased the game. He wrote, "I agree that it is an excellent game, and I especially like the attention given to languages, something many other computer games gloss over or ignore entirely." However, Ian points out that there was no troubleshooting information in the review. He adds: "Despite a fair amount of paper included with the game, there is nothing on methods of avoiding some of the more common

problems, and New World [the game's publisher] doesn't list a hot-line number, or any phone number for that matter. [New World Computing's phone number is given in the product information at the start of the review in issue #167—the Lessers.] I have been involved with computers for many years, and I have come to realize that many times start-up problems are not

Computer games' ratings

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

as serious as they may seem. And the software designers are usually aware of these potential pitfalls.

"I had a great deal of trouble with my copy of *T&T*. The game installed on my hard drive with no problems, but every time I tried to create a character, the program informed me that it could not access the appropriate files. It took over an hour of playing around and reinstalling the program to discover that apparently the problem was that I did not have enough free memory on my hard drive after the game was installed. I had assumed that the installation program would have checked for this problem and that it would have warned me when installation was complete. [Most PC/MS-DOS installation programs do this—the Lessers.] There is

new computer game that you're really excited about, then having to send it in for replacement before you've even played it.

Perhaps entertainment developers should consider including some way for consumers to contact them so that problems like this can be avoided at the start. Telephone support is a huge expense for software developers, and even large companies have trouble finding the monetary and staffing resources for such an effort. However, it sure wouldn't hurt game publishers to set up a fax machine in the office so that questions or other comments could be received and answered at reasonable cost to both consumer and publisher.

Some readers have also written to us complaining that a particular game hasn't been reviewed, thinking it was an oversight on our part. We receive hundreds of press releases, calls, and games directly from the publishers. We simply don't have the time to review and comment on everything. We won't even review games that are really terrible. Rather, we like to reserve our column space for entertainments we feel you'll probably enjoy.

Should we find several good games in one month and should several of those games come from the same publisher, we still try to balance the number of reviews between companies. It then becomes difficult deciding which game review shouldn't run so we can squeeze in a few letters or hints in the column. We hope we continue to please a majority of our readers.

Reviews

Eye of the Beholder

Strategic Simulations, Inc. (408-737-6800)
PC/MS-DOS version \$49.95

This, the first graphically based fantasy role-playing game (FRPG) for computers, is fantastic. Similar to FTL's *Dungeon Master* FRPG for the Amiga, *Eye of the Beholder* was developed by SSI and Westwood Associates (the latter is now our favorite game developer!) and is based on TSR's AD&D® 2nd Edition game. This 3-D graphic interface adventure has a first-person perspective for PC/MS-DOS gamers. This review was made using a game with VGA graphics, an AdLib sound board, and a mouse.

You have been requested by Piergeiron, the chief Lord of Waterdeep, to learn more of an evil plot afoot against that city. You are directed to the sewers to learn all you can and, if possible, to end the danger for Waterdeep. With a full letter of marque, all of the treasure, artifacts, and other goodies that you locate are yours to keep—should you survive!

You must create four characters to form your adventuring party. This is done using icons in the character-generation screen. You may select from six races; human, half-elf, gnome, elf, dwarf, or halfling. As this is based on the AD&D 2nd Edition game, you must also select an occupation



Eye of the Beholder (SSI)

for each character (called a class).

With these 3-D graphics, you seem to be standing in the city sewers of Waterdeep. As your four-character party moves forward, the walls move by to either side of you. As horrible beasties approach, you can run to another locale or face the monsters down. If you spot an interesting item on the ground, you can move your cursor and pick it up. Want to try a key in a lock? Simply move the key icon from the character's hand and insert it into the lock. If it's the correct key, the door opens!

The VGA graphics are tremendous, as are the sound capabilities, which add the dripping of water, the metallic screech of opening doors, and, if you're really attuned to your adventure, even the footsteps of monsters getting louder and louder as they move in for the kill.

The mechanics of *Eye of the Beholder* (*EOB*) are simple to learn. The monitor's main screen displays the 3-D view of your party. Beneath this are six icons that control your movement. If you use the mouse interface, simply place the cursor atop the movement icon you want and hold down the mouse button. The party moves in the direction indicated.

The right portion of the screen shows the portraits of your four characters, plus whatever they are carrying in their hands. The two topmost characters are in the front line of the party, and the second two are behind them. Any non-player characters that decide to join your party in their quest will appear behind positions #3 and #4. Each character portrait also shows a value bar that indicates the health of that character. The bar decreases in value as hit points are lost.

By clicking on a character's portrait, you receive the main information about that

individual. Again, the portrait is revealed, with two bars, one for hit points and the other for food. Run out of food, and your character sustains continuous hit-point damage until he can eat. Looking at the icons on this secondary window, you'll note the plate with cutlery. Food placed on the plate is consumed by the character, which increases his food-value bar. The remaining boxes are for placement of items on your character's person.

How do you fight the beasties? Simple: As monsters approach you on-screen, you position the mouse cursor over a character's hand that holds a weapon you want to use. You strike by clicking the right mouse button. You'll immediately be able to tell if you struck the enemy or not—a green "MISS" appears in the hand box if you failed to hit your opponent. If the opponent hits you, a red spurt of blood appears in the weapon box, with the number of hit points of damage you've suffered.

To cast spells, your mage must have his spell book in hand. You click the right mouse button on the scroll icon in the mage's hand, and a secondary window appears, containing the names of the spells available to your character. There are five levels of mage spells, and you simply click on the level number you wish to cast in the window itself. Once selected, the spell is cast, and you can see the results on-screen.

Many times, an adventurer is required to throw something, to ensure that a trap remains closed or to accomplish some other task. You must make certain that the item you wish thrown is in the character's hand, then you move your cursor atop it and press the right mouse button. The object is released, and you can watch it do its work on-screen.

Should you run into a gate and you have



BUCK ROGERS®: Countdown to Doomsday (SSI)

no keys (shame!), you can try to force it open by clicking on the lower portion of the gate. The strongest member of your adventuring party will automatically try to lift it up. You might be surprised at how well and how often this works for your party.

If you see something you simply must have, move your cursor atop the item, click once, and drop the item onto the pictorial representation of the character you wish to carry it. After you've clicked on the character portrait, the secondary window opens up and you can place the item in a backpack or other holding area for later use. For immediate use, simply place the item in the character's hand. Thieves handle lockpicking in the same manner. You move the lockpick atop the lock and let your thief go to work. He will automatically try to disarm any traps in the process.

Don't forget that, in a 3-D world, you can be surrounded. You might not even notice an attack coming from behind your party until your characters suffer hit-point losses. To fight or cast spells, your character must face the enemy; this includes paladins, who automatically try to turn the undead after they gain 3rd level. You can expect to encounter all sorts of nasties, from beholders and displacer beasts to skeletons and zombies.

With the game comes a map of the first three levels of the sewers. Use the map wisely. Try to figure out why an area may be shown on the map that doesn't appear on-screen. After the 3rd level, the mapping is up to you, so be accurate!

We are delighted with **EOB**. It is truly exciting and offers first-rate FRPG fun. It is, without a doubt, the best FRPG we've come across this year, especially in that it

holds true to AD&D 2nd Edition rules of play. Play well, and you'll come across 12 special "Beholder Bonuses" throughout the game. These bonuses are the sign of a truly competent gamer and can be accomplished by successfully completing a special activity or a series of activities. A special chime sounds when you have accomplished the deed. Finish all 12 bonus sections, and you can fill in a special contest-entry form worth over \$250 in SSI goodies, included in the game box! There will be 100 such prizes.

We haven't seen the Amiga version yet, but the PC/MS-DOS VGA version presents a high mark of programming skill. If you relish excitement, a fine quest, and top-notch animation, graphics, and sound, **EOB** has got to be in your software library.

BUCK ROGERS® Countdown to Doomsday ****

Strategic Simulations, Inc. (408-737-6800)
PC/MS-DOS version \$49.95

Take an SSI AD&D computer adventure game and give it a heave into the 25th century. Remove all fantasy weaponry such as swords and maces, and replace them with microwave guns, sonic stunners, chaff grenades, and armored, self-contained atmosphere suits. Now you've got one truly good science-fiction role-playing adventure. Mix in SSI's extremely familiar user interface, and you have computer gaming at its best.

The game's title is somewhat deceptive, as you won't see Buck for quite some time; when you do, he'll be around for only a little while. But if it wasn't for Buck, Earth would still be subjugated by an evil corporation, Russo-American Mercantile (RAM). **Countdown to Doomsday (CTD)** easily stands as an exciting entertainment. We

hope that this game, the first volume in SSI's science-fiction role-playing library, will lead to sequels.

Your cause is just. RAM continues to attack Earth, which is now under the control of the New Earth Organization (NEO). At one time, RAM controlled Earth, but Buck Rogers joined NEO and subverted RAM's control of the Earth back in A.D. 2456. In a daring surprise attack, Buck and his troops knocked out an orbital weapons platform named Gauntlet and caused the leader of RAM to withdraw his forces from Earth, as it was becoming too expensive to maintain control. NEO must now not only rebuild a shattered Earth, but must also build defensive forces to combat RAM. This is where you come in. You must mold your team into an effective fighting force. You assemble at Chicagorg in hopes of victory and fame.

Character race choices include Terrans, Martians, Venusians, Mercurians, Tinkers (bioengineered from primates), and Desert Runners (from the Martian surface). The race you select affords some bonuses or penalties to your abilities. After picking a race, you then select a career, such as rocketjock, warrior, engineer, rogue, or medic. Each career is critical to the success of your team. Some careers are limited to specific races; for example, a rogue can only be human. A career also requires specific ability scores before a character can select it (e.g., to become a medic, your character needs dexterity, intelligence, and wisdom scores of at least 12 each). Remember when creating characters that space travel and combat skills are needed if you are ever to leave Chicagorg. If you have no character with navigation skills, how are you ever going to get where you must go?

You can select a maximum of seven general skills at the start of the game. For example, under intelligence skills, you could distribute your initial 40 points to any of the following: astrogation, astronomy, battle tactics, disguise, library search, mathematics, mimic, navigation, planetology, and programming. There are skills for each ability, so you have the ability to customize your characters to suit very specific needs. As your character gains in experience, additional points will be available to improve that character.

There is no doubt in our minds that each of your characters had better improve his "Maneuver in Zero-G" skills as quickly as possible. Unless you manage this, you'll find your poor team outgunned in all vacuum encounters. They'll fail their zero-G skills rolls and won't be able to maneuver against the enemy. We also believe first aid is a critical skill for each party member to acquire and improve. More specific skills are required for various sections of the adventure, and it'll take time to figure out exactly what you need to accomplish a specific quest.

CTD possesses some great combat scenes. You'll also pilot a spacecraft to

various destinations. We found four adventures on Venus alone, with Mercury packing three scenarios, including the final adventure in which you must destroy the Doomsday laser that will be used to destroy Earth if you don't stop it.

Each scenario is going to take an accomplished adventurer time to complete. One of the better scenarios we participated in was a quest in a spy ship. You must piece together bits of information found on different levels of the spaceship to simply survive the attacks of the Experimental Combat Gennies (ECGs; "gennie" is slang for "genetically enhanced human"). Gennies turn out to be much more of a problem than they first seem to be.

All sorts of nasties are around to defeat your team. Beastly opponents include acid frogs, ursadders (a Venusian gennie that is immune to gas and intimidation), RAM guard-dog gennies, hyper-snakes, and sand-squids, not to mention the Experimental Combat Gennies. You'd better pack awesome weaponry to defeat these critters, but don't forget that ammunition can run out; you'd better have money available to buy more ammo at bases. You should also consider purchasing state-of-the-art weaponry and armor as you complete each scenario, as well as breathing masks, protective goggles, and smart suits (which incorporate internal circuitry and micro-computers for climate control, defense, and communications).

During the adventures, you'll be asked to turn to the included Log Book for paragraph descriptions of important details. Make certain you highlight important facts; they will come in most useful as you progress onwards. We've included a few hints in the "Clue corner" this issue for those interested in additional data to help them through this fine science-fiction adventure.

We have touched on only a few of the ingredients that make *CTD* a highly entertaining game. The interplay of clues, the high play-for-dollar value ratio, and the ability to save games easily make it an offering science-fiction gamers probably won't want to miss.

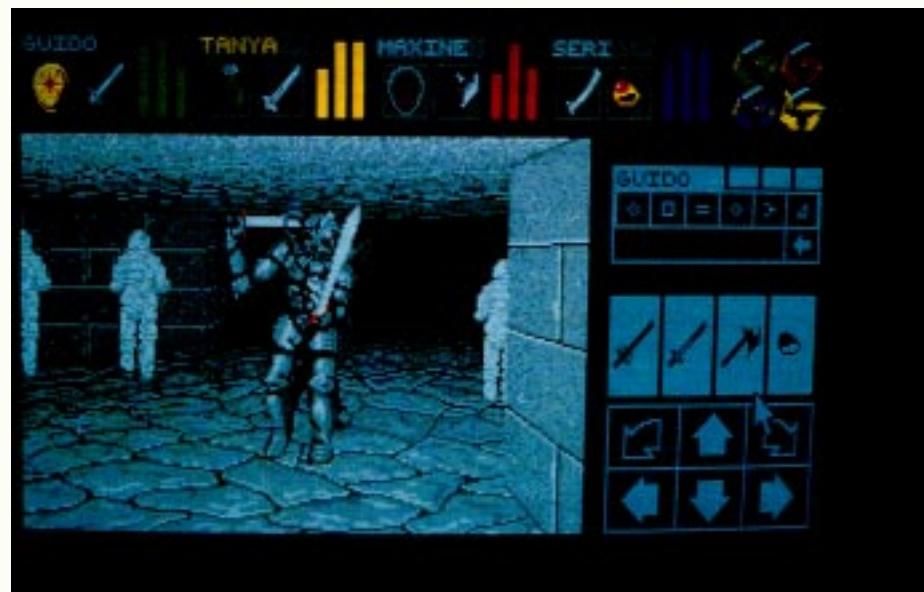
Dungeon Master: Chaos Strikes Back (Expansion Set #1)

FTL Games (619-453-5711)

Amiga 2000 version \$39.95

It seemed only fair that, since we compared *Eye of the Beholder* to the original *Dungeon Master* adventure, we should play FTL's sequel. *Chaos Strikes Back* (*CSB*) was planned as an add-on adventure for the *Dungeon Master* fantasy role-playing game. Instead, FTL Games became so involved in this adventure's planning that it has created a new adventure that is not dependent on the original game for play. This means you can ignore the printing on the *CSB* box rear cover that states that this is a new scenario for *Dungeon Master* and requires the latter game.

However, after confronting the denizens



Dungeon Master: Chaos Strikes Back (FTL Games)

of *CSB* time and time again, we state absolutely that you should experience

Dungeon Master before attempting this sequel. This is a highly rewarding but extremely tough adventure, and it is almost impossible to play unless you have *Dungeon Master* experience.

This does not mean that your characters must be *Dungeon Master* characters, although they certainly can be (such characters are playable in *CSB*). However, it is our bruised and battered opinion that unless your *Dungeon Master* characters are of extremely high level, you might consider using four of the *CSB* characters found in the prison. By examining each character carefully, you'll find four of high experience and ability who might be able to survive this sequel.

What's happened is that Lord Chaos isn't dead at all! As a matter of fact, this nasty

has hidden four corbum ore deposits that you must find and destroy in the Fulya Pit. Believe us when we state this is no easy task. The second you are thrown into the dungeon, you are assaulted by screeching worms. Besides that, it's dark and you have no weapons! How's that for a game introduction?

The three drawbacks to *CSB* are the lengthy manner in which you must create an adventure disk, the horrendous difficulty of surviving the opening sequence, and the fact that the game cannot be copied to a hard disk drive. To create an adventure disk using four characters you resurrect or reincarnate from the dungeon, you must first have two formatted disks. FTL included the Format command in the game, so you don't have to prepare formatted disks before entering the adventure.

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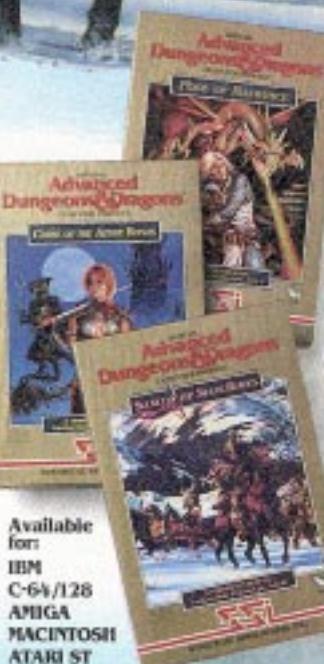
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As with *Dungeon Master*, this game's interface requires that you click on various icons to get things done. The color is stunning, the digitized sound (although far more limited than what you receive with *Eye of the Beholder*) is a good enhancement, and the action is intense. The complexity of *CSB* can, on occasion, cause you a great deal of frustration. You'll find yourself restoring a saved game time and time again.

The *CSB* utility disk gives you the opportunity to edit the portraits of your characters (your characters can also be used in other saved games). You can also change the names of your champions.

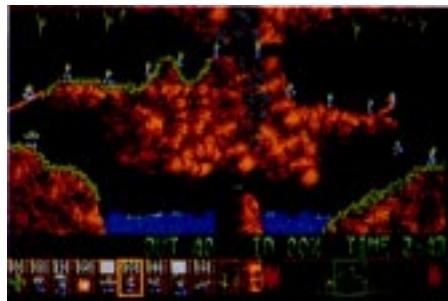
An interesting aspect of the game is that there are four Ways your party must follow, each Way dedicated to testing one of your four characters. There is the Neta Way, which tests you with thought-provoking puzzles; the Ros Way, which tests dexterity and quickness; the Dain Way, which calls for magic to be used; and the Ku Way, which tests the mettle of your characters in battle against the most nefarious and nasty creatures ever encountered in a FTL Games adventure.

CSB is an exciting, rewarding (if you survive!), and complex sequel to *Dungeon Master*. The game requires a few minutes to load. *CSB* stacks up well as a continuation for FTL's *Dungeon Master*

Lemmings

Psygnosis
Amiga 2000 version

Price n/a



LEMMINGS (Psygnosis)

Lemmings are cute, stupid creatures that like to gather in groups and plummet to their deaths by walking over cliffs into the sea. Now, Psygnosis has created *Lemmings*, the computer game. The object is to have your lemmings start out on a level and make it to the exit alive within various time limits. If you complete a level, you receive a password that you can use during later games to come back and play the level you left without having to start over at the beginning of the game.

Upon entering the screen, lemmings walk in one direction until they get killed, run into obstacles, or make it to the exit. To prevent them from encountering their demise, you assign tasks to specific lemmings. Icons at the bottom of the screen represent different jobs that each lemming can accomplish. By selecting a specific icon with the mouse and then clicking on a lemming, you give that lemming work to

perform. Lemmings can climb obstacles, use umbrellas to fall great distances without killing themselves, block other lemmings, blow themselves up (along with the surrounding area), build bridges, and dig tunnels horizontally, down, and diagonally. By strategically placing blockers, digging holes, and building bridges, you can complete a level. Each level, however, sets limits on the number of times a task can be used, and sometimes a task cannot be used at all. Combining all of these elements requires the user to plan ahead and strategically assign the task each lemming will perform.

A two-player option allows gamers to compete on a split screen. The object is to avoid the obstacles and get as many of your lemmings to your exit as possible, as well as to try to snatch as many lemmings away from your opponent as possible. The animation is great, and the digitized sound effects of the lemmings screaming "Oh, no!" and wailing as they fall add to your desire for a successful mission in saving these furry idiots. We highly recommend this game, especially to *Tetris* fanatics who are hunting for a strategy game that requires similar reflexes. *Lemmings* is sure to be a smash hit for Psygnosis.

Spirit of Excalibur

Virgin Mastertronic (714-833-8710)
PC/MS-DOS version \$49.99

King Arthur lies dead after a battle wherein he slew his illegitimate son, Mordred. You, as Lord Constantine, are Arthur's successor, but not all of England holds you in high regard. Not only is your authority as the new king of England not acknowledged, but Mordred's sons have returned in an attempt to usurp your throne. You have a mighty task ahead of you to unite England and defeat your enemies.

This is one of Virgin Mastertronic's finest games to date. Unfortunately, not all is well with its implementation. Despite excellent graphics and enjoyable sound, *Spirit of Excalibur* (*SOE*) suffers from jerky screen scrolling, limited animation that also uses identical characters in different locations, slow scene loading, and a quirky user interface that requires multiple accesses to accomplish multiple tasks. Plus, you have no control over army combat, and individual combat is limited to two types of blows: a powerful overhead blow or a thrusting attack. Being given only two offensive choices leaves you highly reliant upon the basic attribute of your attacking character. A weaker knight with many years of experience should manage a better combat against a younger knight with less experience than what results in *SOE*.

This adventure may be played with a keyboard, joy stick, or mouse. We used the latter interface and found it somewhat frustrating at times. The reason is that in each of the game levels (map and scene), the action icons are located on the right

side of the screen. If you move too quickly in the map view and run against the edge of the screen when moving your cursor to click on another icon, even if you are atop the icon you wish to access, the map immediately scrolls to the right. You can lose the view of your map position, requiring that you cancel your icon access simply to retrieve your location so that you can verify the actions you wish to take.

There are five stages for the completion of this highly interactive and strategic adventure. The first episode requires that you gain the crown of Arthur's realm. This can only succeed if you travel in a timely manner from York to Camelot. Definitely listen to all who stop you along the way, and see what you can do to assist them.

The second stage is really manifold in nature. Not only must you help London repel an invading Saxon force, but you must also find Lancelot du Lac. Only by persuading the latter to rejoin the realm will all of the disaffected knights rejoin you to defeat an invasion from Scotland by Melehan. You must try to combine forces scattered throughout Britain to harry Melehan while you find Lancelot. If Melehan and the Saxon forces join together, you can pretty much kiss success goodbye. London will fall, as will your loyal knights and you.

Succeed in defeating the invading armies, and you move on to the third episode, which finds you trying to solve the puzzle of a giant warrior who challenges you in front of the walls of Camelot. Succeed here, and you must then prove that the Round Table is a true protective force for Britain. The Brown Knight in the Forest Savauge to the north has the surrounding towns and forest gripped with fear. People are disappearing, including your own loyal knights. With time running against you, you must uncover the secret of this menace.

The final episode finds your greatest adversary, Morgan Le Fay, spreading evil throughout your kingdom. To prevent yourself from being overthrown and beheaded, and England falling into the Dark Ages, you have to find Morgan and destroy this half-sister of Arthur.

Your characters will be able to use clerical and druidic magic. There might even be found some magical items to assist in the offense and defense of the realm. Not all magic is advantageous, however.

You should carefully study the glossaries contained within the user's manual, as each major character is briefly detailed. Knowing each character's flaws, strengths, and historical background helps you to assign your knights to the most suitable tasks. Also described are some of the objects that can help you throughout the game, such as dragon's bane, which is highly effective against such beasts. The glossaries also contain information on each of the geographical positions within England, naming the capital of the area and its ruler.

A great deal of strategy is required in

WANTED



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SOE. We failed miserably on our first six games but are now getting more of a feel for exactly how Constantine should manage his forces. **SOE** should please most gamers as it incorporates a strategic war game with some elements of role-playing. **SOE** is also available for Macintosh and Amiga computers as well as PC/MS-DOS systems. This review was done using the VGA game version with Roland MIDI sound.

Letters

In DRAGON issue #167, Randy Villerneuve of Nova Scotia asked about the golden boots in Dragon Wars. Please see the "Clue corner" in this issue for the answer. Two readers immediately came to the rescue: Craig Brown of Clovis, Calif., and Anthony Della Vedova of Schaumburg, Ill. Thanks for your spirited teamwork in helping a fellow reader!

And to Doug Ryder of Las Vegas, Nev., where else but in "The Role of Computers" would he find an answer to his plea for an answer to the three riddles asked by the Gargantuan Gargoyle that will help him to defeat the Unblinking Basilisk in Datasoft's now-extinct game, *Alternate Reality: The Dungeon*. The basilisk is the creature that retains the Bloodstone and is standing in the way of the Fatigue Fountain. According to the original clue book we've pulled out from a dusty shelf, one of the answers fits perfectly into the rhythm of the riddles. This answer also rhymes with the second line of the riddle. All three of the answers relate to life in this game. It's a good bet that if you don't know the answer, the reason is because you haven't experienced that particular part of the adventure yet.

We have two questions needing reader insight this month. The first query comes from Paul Polak of Burlington, Ontario. "For the Commodore 64 version of *Wasteland*, from Electronic Arts, where do you get the Blackstar Key?"

The second question is from James Sears, of Sturgeon Bay, Wis., regarding *Ultima VI*, from Origin. "I've made it to the bottom of the Stygian Abyss, answered all questions to get to the Codex, but the final answer to the last question eludes me. The question is, 'If all eight Virtues of the Avatar combine into and are derived from the Three Principles Truth, Love, Courage . . . then what is the one thing that encompasses and is the whole of Undeniable Truth, Unending Love, and Unyielding Courage?'"

Clue corner

BUCK ROGERS®: Countdown to Doomsday (SSI)

1. Microwave guns have no effect on ECG3s.
2. Buck will join your group just in time to help you destroy a pirate ship.
3. On Level two in H. Mars Base Gradius Mons, a white passcard can open the vault.
4. When you finally arrive at the L.

Venus RAM base, do not enter the utility tunnel in the lower left corner of Level 4. It's full of acid!

5. In order to destroy the Doomsday Laser, you'll need a password from the asteroid base, the blue passcard from Mars, and a special lockpick from Venus to just get into the Mariposa.

6. Look for the parrot in the Mercury merchant's area that knows what it knows until you feed it, especially if a character has Befriend Animal skills.

The Lessers

1. Even if you hate fighting those crazy terrine warriors at the start of the game, you must if you wish to obtain any good weapons or money. If you are wise, you will fight them to obtain as much cash as possible; you'll need it after you set off the missiles.

2. When you reach the abandoned ship, you'll probably wonder why one or more of your characters start to itch. Don't fret, it can be cured. On level six, you'll find a small surgery center. To remove the itching curse, you must speak to the computer and give it Dr. Williams' sigma number, which is A95151.

3. On level nine, you will find Scot.dos. He will help you if you do exactly what he says.

4. When you are almost finished with Scot's mission, the ECGs have to mess it up. But don't worry, just go down to level one and rig the engineering panel. When those terrible gennies come to scare you off, just hold your ground. Your technician will work until the final second to save everyone.

5. When you get Buck Rogers on the pirate ship, do what he says about keeping a low profile, or else he'll leave you! But I'm certain you found that he says that on almost every level. That's because he's a wimp. The only level at which he won't leave you is level 1, which you must win to get your ship back.

6. Don't even waste your time going to the prison, Talon's base, or the commo station, because these places are guarded by invincible assault bots with rocket launchers and plasma throwers that, every time you hit them, state "And hits . . . no damage!" That's fair, huh!

Shawn Schuster
Hammond IN

Draconian: Drakken (Data East USA)

1. Talk to *all* the princes and princesses before attacking. You don't have to fight them all; some are friendly.

2. Before entering a room with a prince or princess in it (if you don't know whether or not he or she is friendly), make your party invisible and use the Shield spell on your magic-users.

3. When you locate Princess Hazulkha at her palace, she is almost dead. Send only one person, preferably a fighter, into the throne room; leave the rest of the party behind. Go into the next room and kill the knights who took her jewel. **Don't**

activate the Fight icon until you are in the room with the knights. Otherwise, you will attack the princess, and you don't want to do that. After you kill the knights, Prince Naaktha will appear and talk to you. When he is finished, bring the rest of the party into that room, then exit.

4. To prevent the drawbridge at the palace of Prince Haaggkhen from going up every time someone steps onto it, use the Unlock spell.

5. At the palace of Prince Hazulkhen, you can enter only from the south. It may take you a couple of times to get in, because you also have to enter at a certain angle.

6. Read *all* inscriptions on the tombs, or else you can't complete the game. The tombs are at the palace of the Prince of Earth, the palace of the Prince of Water, the palace of the Princess of Air, and the palace of the Prince of Fire and Death.

7. I won't say how you can complete the game, but you have to do it empty handed!

8. Save the game *often*!

Mark Fisher
Anderson IN

Secret of the Silver Blades (SSI)

1. Contrary to the advice of some, I prefer no dual-class characters because they are unable to advance as high as single-class humans. The best party I have found consists of one paladin, one ranger, two magic-users, and two clerics. This party seems to be virtually indestructible.

2. An easy way to build your party's offensive power is: When you first receive your weapons and other items at the start of the adventure, save the game. Then, reload the game, but before continuing onward, give the weapons and armor to one or two characters. Remove the other characters. Save the game. Then, reinstate your other characters. They now have all of their original equipment, plus all of the extra weapons and armor. This works at any point in the game and is the best way to build a battle-ready company.

Josh Hornbacher
Sebewaing MI

Unbelievable—another column finished! Thanks to everyone who continues to support our reviews and thoughts; you are much appreciated. We now have a fax machine available for any reader who would like to send his thoughts, ideas, game hints, praise, or criticisms. The fax number is (209) 832-5742. We would also like to hear from software publishers who have news regarding new games or other items of interest for DRAGON Magazine readers. So, fax us if you wish. And please don't forget that thousands of readers are waiting breathlessly for every hint you can send in for publication. Our regular mailing address is: The Lessers, 521 Czerny Street, 'Racy CA 95376, U.S.A. Until next month, game on!

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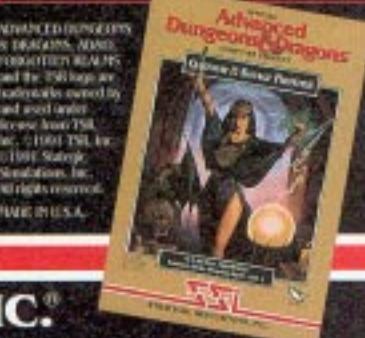


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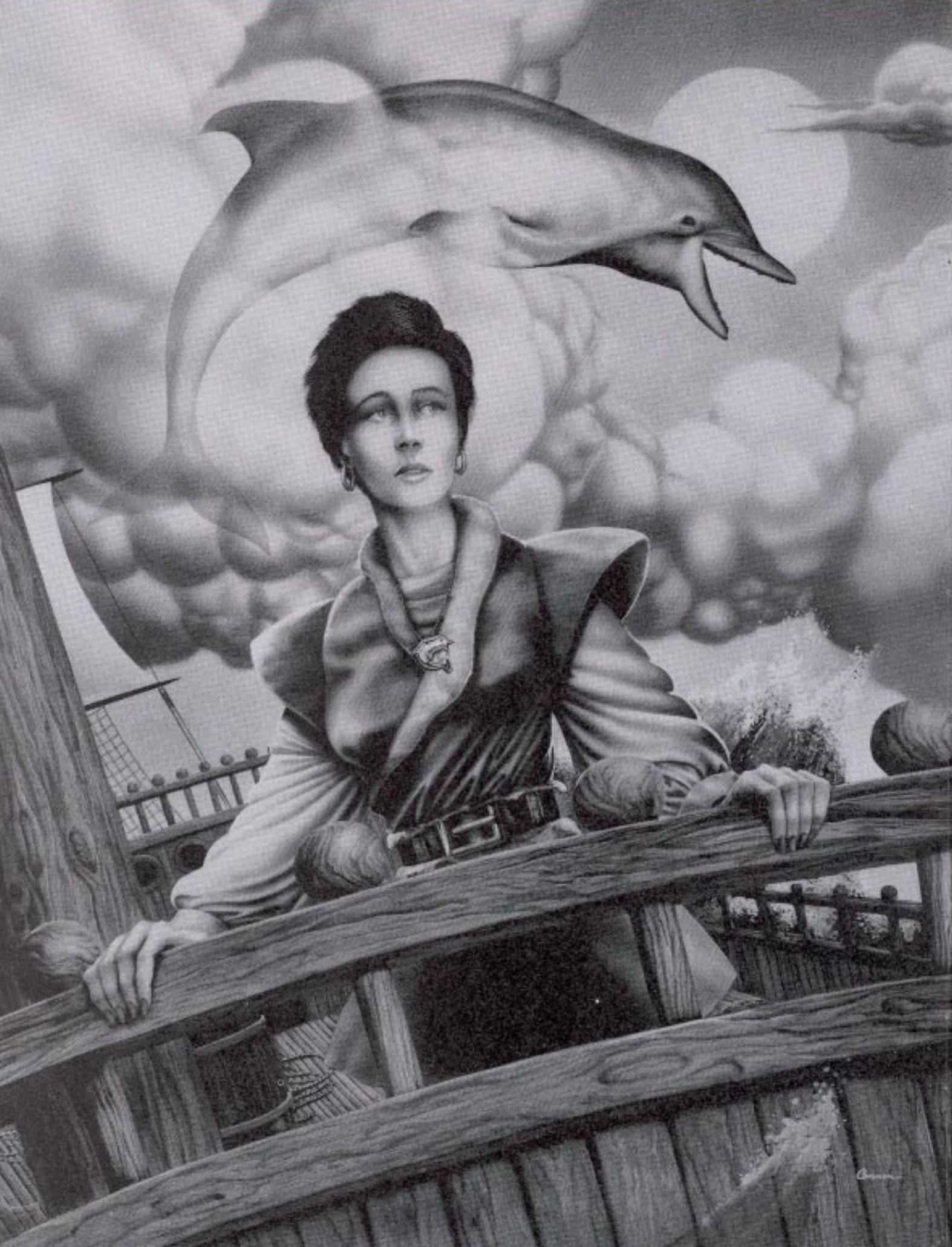
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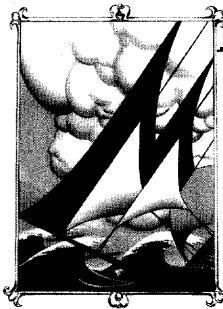


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ykene was the best pilot from Lords-deep to Downbelow. In the twelve years since she first donned her golden earrings, no ship she had sailed on had ever been lost.

The folk called her lucky, and captains vied for her presence on their decks. Mykene has been from the Pillars to the setting sun; she has luck enough to pilot a ship to Lostland if you were mad enough to go. So they said, in the taverns on the Strand, and it made pleasant hearing of a night's drinking.

But it wasn't true any more.

"Good weather, Pilot!"

"Good weather," Mykene returned.

The gangway rattled up behind her, and the captain received the office to sail. Half-oars was called, and the ship began to move sluggishly out of the harbor. Mykene turned and walked toward the bow. The wind pulled at her short dark hair. Her toes curled against the soft, smooth wood of *Grantine*'s deck. She looked down at the trip-token in her hand, but the cross cut into it was still there.

No one had seen it but her. No one would. She closed her fingers and threw it as far as she could. It flashed as it spun and then fell into the green glass waters of the bay.

Grantine passed beyond the harbormouth. The rowers shipped their oars as the sails filled, and the ship took on her deepwater motion. Mykene straddled the bowsprit, feet stirruped in the coiled bowline. *Grantine* rocked under her, dancing with wind and water.

Mykene wore a hollow golden dolphin about her throat on a golden chain. The secret of making them belonged to her Guild, as did the right to wear them. She caught the golden dolphin's tail in her teeth and blew; a skirling only a pilot could hear. One of the Underpeople appeared, dancing in the bow wake. */What news of the sea?/* Mykene piped, and the sea child sang back to her of fair seas and calm weather.

Her father had been a fisherman who took his small boat out each fair weather day to catch fish in the nets her mother spun. Mykene was a child of six when she ran up the beach to her mother to ask the question that would separate her from her people forever.

"I hear people singing in the water, Mother. Why won't they come and play?"

Remarks of this sort must be investigated, that was the law—and the honor and remission of taxes in the event of a miracle was not to be despised. Mykene's parents went together to the Harbormaster to tell him of their daughter's strange questions.

The Harbormaster heard and agreed. Many ships stopped in Riverrun to scrub and refill their water-barrels. It was not hard to find a Pilot to test the netmaker's child.

He would always be the handsomest man Mykene had ever seen. His black hair was braided back and bound with a bright red cloth. His skin was dark and his teeth were white, and the blue tattoos of completed voyages

Child of Ocean

by Eluki bes Shahar

Illustrations by Martin Cannon

dappled his arms and chest. There were crosses among the circles, but she was too young to know what they meant. The gold earrings of a Pilot danced against his neck.

"Well, now, and what would you be wanting with me?" His voice was slurred and lilting with the Lordsdeep accent, and his gaze was merry as he tilted Mykene's face up to look into her eyes.

"My daughter says she hears the Underpeople singing," Mykene's father said. His hands, blunt and strong with years of setting his will against the sea, rested on her shoulders.

"And do you?" asked the Pilot, speaking directly to Mykene. One hand toyed with a gold pendant he wore around his neck: the shape of one of the Underpeople, curved to leap, with a ring clasped in its jaws.

But Mykene wasn't sure. She turned and hid her face against her mother's apron and felt her father tense with anger. There was a clash of voices above her head and then the music, beautiful and strange, with nothing in it of the land.

Eyes wide with wonder, she'd turned to look, and the Pilot lowered the golden dolphin from his lips.

"Send her with me," Jarre said, and his smile was for Mykene alone. "She's nothing of yours anymore."

At fifteen, Mykene wore the single gold earring of a Prentice and left the Guildhouse to make her first voyage. She wore a silver dolphin whistle at her throat and sailed with this Master or that as fortune favored her, learning all the currents, reefs, and anchorages in all the round ocean.

"Good sailing, Jarre!" Her voice was high and happy as she greeted the pilot of *Orekonos*. Jarre sat upon the prow, staring out to sea, reading wind, weather, and fortune as Mykene had learned to in the years since she first met him. She could hear the Underpeople singing as they danced in the harbor: fine weather as far as the point.

Jarre turned around as Mykene set foot on the gangplank. "Find another ship."

Mykene stopped in shock. She was 'prenticed to Jarre until *Orekonos* finished her voyage. She could not imagine anything she had done to offend him so.

"But—why?"

She heard the thump of calloused feet upon the deck, and thump again as Jarre hit the gangplank. He towered over her, face dark and unhappy. "Because I wish you well," he said flatly. "Now go!"

His strangeness terrified her more than anything of wind or weather could. Mykene scrabbled backward until her feet touched the wharf; the next thing she remembered was the musty darkness of the Harbormaster's office, where she stood sick and trembling, babbling something nonsensical about needing another ship at once.

He went with her back to *Orekonos*, though she would rather have gone anywhere but there, and when there had been a few words with Jarre in the Pilot's small cabin under the foredeck, it was understood that there would be no other berth for Mykene before voyage's end.

On the third day under sail, *Orekonos* was running close along the coast. Thus far it had been an awkward voyage; Jarre was moody and distant, and spent most of his time

in his cabin and not on the wide white deck between the ocean and the sky. That was left to Mykene, and so she took it.

But now a storm was coming.

Mykene felt it on her skin. The cloudless blue sky mocked her, but her training and her senses did not lie. The storm would come before they anchored for the night. It would blow up without warning and find *Orekonos* far from haven.

And Jarre hadn't warned them.

Many things were beyond Mykene's understanding, and that had never bothered her. But this thing was beyond her experience, and that did bother her—for a Pilot's experience is all there is to keep a ship and crew safe from the whims of the Gods Below. Cowering inwardly, she went to seek out Jarre.

The tiny cabin smelled of salt and fish and the raw pale brandy distilled in a thousand towns along the Coast.

"Storm coming."

Jarre turned at the sound of her voice and set the brandy bottle down. His eyes were the red of salt tears and sleeplessness, and his mouth was taut and bitter.

"Have you never wondered, child of Ocean, what teine it is that we pay to the Gods Below to move freely upon the surface of their world?" He gazed at the brandy bottle as though he had just discovered it, lifted it, and drank again.

"Jarre, there's a storm coming—a bad one!"

"Give it this," he said, and tossed a silver disk onto the table.

Of course she recognized it. Mykene had seen trip-tokens in the Guildhouse, where she and other Prentices practiced palming them so that no one saw the luck of the ship but her pilot. Mykene had never understood the reason for such secrecy—all the tokens in the Harbormaster's bowl were the same.

This one was different. Marring each face was an X-shape cut deeply into the metal.

"Have you never wondered what teine we pay?" Jarre asked again, the Lordsdeep music in his voice supple with brandy, and Mykene watched him wide, scared eyes. He rounded the table and took the trip-token back from her cold, slack fingers.

"The Harbormaster said that I must keep my oath—and I will, but in my own good way. This is my ship; mine to pilot—and mine to see home to whatever anchorage she finds. Now do you be giving me that," Jarre added, pointing at the silver dolphin-whistle Mykene wore.

Wondering, Mykene slipped it off. Jarre took it in a white-fisted grip and removed his own golden pendant on its chain.

Graceful sculpted arch, copied from the hard bodies of the Underpeople who skirled in and out of the bow-wave even now. Jarre reached out and tossed the chain over her head, and the pipe lay chill and heavy against Mykene's skin, as if it had not just come from living flesh.

"Now this," he said, and pulled off one of his golden earrings.

One ring for a Prentice, two for a Master . . .

"Jarre! What are you doing?" The prescience of disaster was agony upon her Guild-trained senses; Jarre's mad-

ness made it worse. The storm might come at any moment; did he mean her to command *Orekonos* now?

"Each ship above a certain size carries a pilot, that is the law." He pressed close, busy at her ear, his voice, with mad pedantry, reciting Guild-law above her head. "And each pilot, before embarking, draws a token from the Harbormaster for luck upon Ocean. That too is the law." The sharp pin of the heavy gold circlet pressed through her ear as Jarre slid it home; Mykene felt heat and blood. "And Guild-law and sea-law say that a Master Pilot has the duty to save himself in time of trouble, no matter what happens to his ship. So I'll be saving the Master Pilot of *Orekonos* — they can hardly say it's the wrong one, now, can they? Can you cry aid on that, do you think?"

The song to call the Underpeople to aid was the first one a Prentice learned. Mykene clutched the golden pipe. "Of course, Jarre, but what—"

"Come then, daughter of Ocean."

But Jarre had left it too late.

When they reached the deck, the squall line was a black whip against the horizon. The Underpeople had vanished from the bow-wake, heralding the storm. Jarre swore with tears in his eyes, but no matter how hard he played "Aid to Mariners" on Mykene's silver pipe, the Underpeople would not rise to his music.

He stood and stared at her sick-eyed, and Mykene realized at last that Jarre would not give warning, had never meant to give warning, that somehow the marred trip-token in the cabin below meant that *Orekonos* must do as best she could without her pilot's skill.

She opened her mouth to warn them in his stead, but any sound she might have made was drowned out by the captain shouting, aware at last of his peril. The ship bowed sharply as the leading edge of the storm hit, and then *Orekonos* was climbing a wall of furious air, decks awash, and there was no more time to do anything but try to survive.

Mykene's bare feet slid on the pitching deck; her nose and mouth were full of the cold salt sea. She felt the captain turn *Orekonos* and try to run before the wind, and Mykene, knowing the coast, struggled to reach the helm. *Orekonos* must put to deep ocean for safety, and there was no one left to tell her captain so.

There was a boom like the sound of a drum; a grating that was felt as intimately as broken bones. The mast whipped forward and broke—Mykene was swept overboard in the first instant; she struggled above the water just in time to see *Orekonos* torn neatly in half upon the reef.

Mykene gasped for air and took water instead. The sea whirled her away from *Orekonos*. Her last sight of it was of the deck, separated from the hull, sliding with crazy slowness beneath the surface.

Take me! Take me and let the others go! she cried silently. But if the harsh gods of wind and water answered, Mykene did not hear.

Of the crew of *Orekonos*, Mykene the Lucky was the only survivor. It took her half a year to find her way home again and learn the last lesson of her craft.

Sixth day, and Mykene stood in the gull's-height calling soundings down to the helmsman, her voice a sea-bird cry. *Grantine* ran close along the coast for shelter, and the rocks here were treacherous. When the sea ran low, they were visible and easy to miss, but the sea ran higher every year—higher, but not high enough to save the wooden hulls of the ships that plied these waters. Without a pilot, no ship would dare to sail.

But a pilot's luck must be paid for, and the Gods Below must have their teine. In twelve years, Mykene had never questioned that wisdom, and for that loyalty the gods had given her luck: In all her years at sea she had never drawn the barred token.

Until now. Now the teine that Jarre had paid was hers to pay as well. One ship in fifty, chosen by lot, to pay for the luck that let the others through. One ship and all it carried, to pay the Gods Below for their forbearance, and the Underpeople for their help. One ship, and its pilot must bring it to its doom, no matter how.

Jarre had been lucky. He'd had to do nothing but give his ship to the storm.

But Mykene must do more.

Not a shadow of peril had clouded *Grantine*'s journey. Tomorrow sunset, if this went on, she would lie safe and whole in Rammage Harbor. But *Grantine* had been promised to the Gods Below, and less than a day remained for Mykene to accomplish the lot that had fallen to her in the Harbormaster's office.

Mykene was a Master Pilot; she knew the thousand ways to doom a ship. Fire, lies, poison to the crew, a dark night's weakening of the hull, and a myriad other shifts—all so the Gods Below might have their due sacrifice. Fire was the easiest, so they had told her at the Guildhouse—fire, and the Underpeople waiting by to bear the pilot alone to safety from the doomed and burning ship. For a Pilot, so said Guild-law and sea-law, must save himself, no matter what happened to his ship.

From this height, the waters of Ocean were clear. Pale blue dappled with the shadows of reef and fish shaded to the glistened gray of the northern deep. Mykene feared what walked beneath its surface with all her superstitious heart. The Gods Below were real. And by tomorrow's sunset they would be paid—or cheated.

Mykene slipped the gold chain of her calling-pipe over her head. She held pipe and chain in one glittering handful for a moment before she spilled them into the ocean. She understood Jarre now as never before. This was her ship. She would share its fate.

Whatever it was.

Grantine rode at night anchorage. Mykene curled, sleepless, in the prow. The Starharp hung before her in the night sky, a whorl of stars upon the horizon, and phosphorescence streamed from the reefs like ribbons of light. Tomorrow, *Grantine* would be in sight of Rammage Bay; the voyage would be over and with it all her choices.

Cheat the Gods Below—and doom all the ships along the round ocean that trusted their pilots to see them safe? For wouldn't the gods, thus served, withdraw the luck that led mariners home?

But even with pilots and their luck, weren't more ships

lost every year than could be accounted for in the paying of the teine? The pilots who survived tattooed a cross where a circle should have gone—she had seen them in the taverns, their skins patterned like a gods' game of naughts and crosses where Mykene's skin held naughts alone. Shouldn't the gods, who took so many ships not meant for them, be willing to let this one ship go?

Had any Pilot before her wondered these things? Had any of them dared to act upon their thoughts? There was no way for Mykene to know—any more than she knew the will of the gods. She fell asleep near dawn and dreamed of Jarre.

Rammage was a simple enough harbor; there was only one way in or out: a deepwater channel that shifted constantly. The locals took crabs and shellfish from the bay's shallows and set brightly colored glass floats at the edges of the channel. No pilot was needed to navigate Rammage Bay.

Still Mykene sat in the gull's-height and watched—for the sea-people had sung this dawn of a storm at Rammage. A storm always shifted the channel, and now, as she looked down from the gull's-height, she could see that there were no floats to show the way in.

By the time the helm saw what she could see, it would be too late. The captain trusted her. Keep silent, and she would drown *Grantine* in sight of land, as the gods and her luck intended.

She felt Jarre standing behind her, ghostly silent, wait-

ing for her to make her own sacrifice; the appeasement prescribed by generations of custom and ritual.

But if the gods must be appeased, it must be because they held power. If they held such power . . .

"Clear!" Mykene bellowed. "Steer clear! There's no channel!"

The gull's-height whipped back and forth as *Grantine* heeled over. Her foredeck rails cut a spangled scarf of foam from the water until she righted, her timbers keening sea-songs, turning out to sea again away from the treacherous haven. Mykene clung to the mast, bleeding from the blow it had dealt her, and laughed and cried like a madwoman.

It took eight hours for Mykene, in a shallow fishing boat with a pole several fathoms long, to mark the new channel and lead *Grantine* down it. The fisherfolk came out to help her, but the pilot of *Grantine* was the one who set the last marker and poled out of the way to watch her ship slip in to dock.

The Harbormaster came to meet her as she stepped from her fishing boat to the beach. "A thousand pardons, Pilot—you should never have to do such work!"

Mykene stared at him with new serenity. Jarre's storm had blown itself out at last, and her memories of Jarre could rest.

"She's my ship, Harbormaster. Mine to see safe home."

This time, and every time—for as long as skill and Pilot's knowledge could win against wind and water.

If the gods wanted their teine, let them take it. Ω

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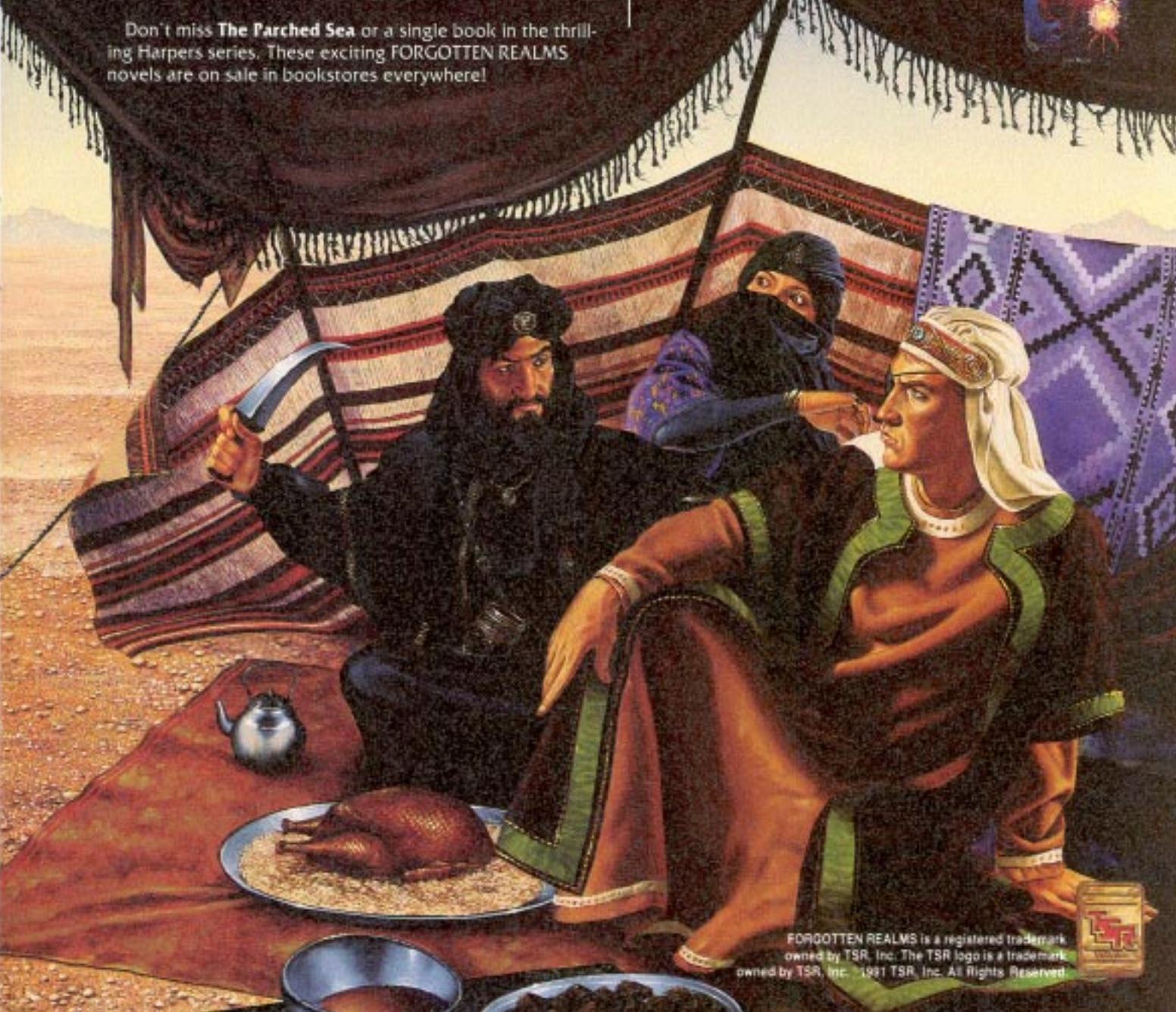
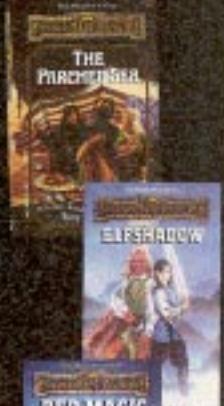
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Basic battle tactics for your super heroes

“It’s clobberin’ time!”

by Dale A. Donovan

When my gaming group started playing the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game back in high school, we were all still gaming rookies. As my game mastering and the players' skills improved over the next several months, I wanted to introduce a sense of strategy and tactics into the group's battles. I tried to have my villains use intelligent tactics whenever appropriate in an effort to show the heroes the benefits that having a sound battle plan can produce. And, after their heroes got their heads handed to them once or twice, the players caught on.

This article will help you develop an understanding of some basic tactics that you can use to help your heroes win more of their battles against the forces of evil and villainy everywhere. Heroes are sorted into various categories with titles borrowed mostly from the military, with each having certain offensive and defensive strengths. Although I'll be using MARVEL SUPER HEROES characters and game terms as examples, the categories describe heroes in general, and the tactics should apply equally well to any superhero RPG.

Combat categories

Infantry: This category of heroes is made up of ground-based (no flying, gliding, etc.) heroes who have few or no true super powers and whose main tactic is to close with the enemy and engage in melee. In the MARVEL UNIVERSE™, this category is represented by the likes of Captain America, Black Knight, Mockingbird, Black Panther, Wolverine, and Daredevil. Their styles and weapons are irrelevant, as all of these heroes do the majority of their fighting in close quarters with the enemy. Other powers or abilities that heroic infantry might possess are: martial arts, weap-



ons, or acrobatic skills; injury-resistant or enhanced senses; or the ability to make multiple attacks per combat round.

Offensive tactics: Like its military namesake, heroic infantry is the best force around at taking and holding ground. When attacking foes, infantry's success or failure often determines the ultimate success or failure of the combat. To insure success, infantry needs support from other types of heroes and should develop some alternatives to the all-too-common frontal assault. Attacking your foes from their flanks or rear is a great way to confuse and distract them. Forcing your foes to react to two or more groups of heroes, coming from different directions, often causes those foes to split up their own forces in order to deal with the threats. Just be aware that dividing your forces for a flanking attempt will also weaken your group as a whole, especially if you are discovered before you are ready to attack. If you doubt that heroic infantry can do much damage in a flanking maneuver, consider what would happen if the Daredevil, Captain America, and Wolverine attacked your heroes from behind.

Defensive tactics: Since infantry seldom has true powers, it often cannot withstand an all-out attack by super-powered foes. It is often best, when under this kind of attack, for the infantry to find cover and wait for the other heroes to give it an opening to turn the tide. If no such help is available, the infantry should stay together and make the enemy come to it. Prepare an ambush or some confining trap. Play "cat and mouse" with the foe, and use teamwork to pick off enemies one at a time. These all are tactics that Wolverine has used quite successfully

many times. The Dodging and Evading tactics from the MARVEL SUPER HEROES Advanced Set *Player's Book* can also be effective defensive tactics.

Speedsters: In super-hero games, this term refers to characters with super speed or other heightened ground-movement powers. In the MARVEL UNIVERSE, some notable speedsters are Quicksilver, Makkari, Super Sabre, and the Whizzer. Any hero qualifies who possesses a power that allows him to cover larger-than-normal ground distances in a round (such as lightning speed or leaping) or allows him to make multiple attacks per round. Note that not all GMs allow speedster characters to make multiple attacks merely because they possess super speed; they must also possess an "extra attacks" power. Characters like this may also have a high agility, endurance, or an injury-resistance power (body armor, etc.). The most common tactic used by these heroes is to simply close with the enemy and enter melee.

Offensive tactics: A hero of this type often does have multiple attacks, and this can be used to even the odds if the heroes are outnumbered. This is achieved by distributing the hero's multiple attacks among several targets within the hero's movement range. This gets more enemies involved in melee, preventing the other heroes from being overwhelmed by sheer numbers. A tactic for these heroes who do not possess multiple attacks, but who do possess a high endurance or some form of body armor, is the charge. High speed

means a lot of momentum and a lot of damage to anyone who absorbs that momentum with his body. You can also use these characters to foil enemies' plans by getting behind their lines, committing sabotage, etc. How can the evil scientist fire his atomic mutagen splurge-gun at your heroes if your speedster hero can race to the wall and unplug it before the scientist can start the firing sequence? Or imagine Maximus trying to escape from Quicksilver by running through an open doorway, only to have Quicksilver run to the door, close it, and lock it just as Maximus barrels headlong into it.

Defensive tactics: Many of the previous tactics work well in a defensive situation, too. The ability to attack multiple foes can be very important, slowing or even stopping an enemy advance. This tactic can also be used to help cover any retreat the heroes need to make. These heroes' high movement rates also allow them to harass foes, making them the ultimate hit-and-run artists. The ability to move so quickly also makes these heroes excellent choices for running diversions or feints. Foes have to pay attention to heroes who can literally run circles around them.

Airborne: This type of hero possesses some means of flight that also represents his primary super-power, outside of possible super-strength. The Sub-Mariner (when he could fly), Wonder Man, Namorita and Nova of the New Warriors, and both the original Angel and Ms. Marvel fall into this category. The most common combat tactic of these heroes is to fly to

the enemy and engage them in melee.

Airborne heroes might have other powers or abilities that supplement their flight capabilities.





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Offensive tactics: If their flight abilities are properly used, these heroes can accomplish a variety of functions. They can perform aerial reconnaissance before or during the battle, giving the heroes a better idea of their opposition. (The more you know about your enemy, the better prepared you'll be.) These heroes can also intercept any flying foes who could otherwise attack heroic infantry. Their flight abilities also could allow them to get behind their foes and attack any leaders, important machinery, or weapons caches. This type of attack could have the same effect as a successful infantry flanking maneuver. And any hero who can fly while invisible is a wonderful person to have around. Imagine all the security systems (including guards, dogs, and super villains) that an invisible flying hero could bypass. This particular hero would qualify for the stealth category mentioned later.

Defensive tactics: The main objective of airborne heroes in a defensive battle should be to prevent any aerial attacks on heroic forces who might already be overburdened. Many of the offensive tactics mentioned before could help to turn the tide in a defensive battle. Consider bombing foes with large objects, diving down onto foes (gaining bonuses on the attack), or merely scouting the battle area, looking for the foes' movements or finding a defensible position or escape route for the heroes.

Shock troops: These heroes, also known as "bricks," are the assorted strongmen of comics. They generally possess great strength, some degree of resistance to injury, and few or no other powers. The Thing, She-Hulk, and Colossus all qualify for this category. These heroes usually seek out foes similar to themselves in powers and abilities.

Offensive tactics: Shock troops are trained to lead an attack, and that is exactly what these heroes should do. Since most of them can dish out and absorb huge amounts of damage, they are the logical choice (in conjunction with speedsters) to lead any charges made by the heroes. It is often after a successful charging attack that the heroic infantry can move in. These heroes should seek out any shock troops of the enemy and engage them so that the foes' shock troops cannot harm the other heroes. Heroic shock troops can also seek out the foes' leaders or artillery heroes (described later) and eliminate them from the fight, again making things easier for the rest of the heroes.

Defensive tactics: Defensively, these heroes should try to do pretty much the same things that they do offensively, with a few modifications. Often, these heroes can use their strength to slow or stop any attackers by using the "Shockwave" tactic—striking the ground and setting up

shockwaves that knock foes off their feet (Advanced Set *Player's Book*, page 30), or by throwing or otherwise placing large objects in the advancing foes' path. Shock troops can also become strong points around which other heroes can rally and turn the tide. In this case, they should serve as "defensive linemen" for the hero team. Heroic shock troops should try to force the enemy to get past them in order to reach the other heroes. Similarly, they can cover any necessary retreats the heroes must make. Imagine trying to get past the Thing when he is determined to stand in your path!

Artillery: This type of hero has physical powers or abilities that affect targets at a distance. Some of these heroes can also fly. Examples of this type of hero are the Human Torch (I and II), Hawkeye, and Cyclops. These heroes generally do not enter melee if they help it, preferring to remain away from their foes and use their missile capabilities. Heroes having primarily "Distance Attack" powers from the Advanced Set *Player's Book* qualify for this category.

Offensive tactics: Beyond their combat-support role, these heroes can assist shock troops in the heroes' initial assault and can also support heroic infantry when it moves in. These heroes can use the "Groundstrike" tactic from the Advanced Set *Player's Book*, page 30, blasting the ground in front of the foes and causing injuries from the flying debris. These heroes can also clear the sky of aerial foes by literally shooting them down. They should try to stay out of physical combat and find cover from which to launch their attacks (unless they're fliers). Flying heroes of this type can get behind enemy lines and wreak much havoc.

One little-used option for this type of hero is playing the role of a sniper. This can be a very effective use of this kind of hero. Imagine Hawkeye in a dense forest, shooting arrows (from an almost completely silent weapon—his bow) at foes who are moving through or near the woods. Even if the sniper doesn't severely injure his foes, the victims most likely will send some of their forces to find him, again weakening their total strength and setting up the searchers for a possible ambush.

Defensive tactics: For the most part, these offensive tactics work equally well on the defensive, especially the sniper option. Artillery heroes can cover the retreat of the rest of the heroes from their positions of cover. These heroes can also keep any flying foes from harassing the retreating heroes by shooting the fliers down. Defenses can consist of some form of body armor, a force field, or even another hero acting as a "shield bearer," protecting the artillery hero from direct

attack.

Stealth: These heroes have powers or abilities that allow them to approach or contact enemies without their knowledge. Nightcrawler, Shadowcat, the Invisible Woman, and the Wasp all qualify for this category. Any powers that allow a hero to get into a location unnoticed (e.g., shrinking, invisibility, teleportation, wall-crawling, intangibility, etc.) qualify the hero for this category. These heroes most often use their abilities to surprise foes and fight them as best they can.

Offensive tactics: These heroes, like the airborne and other flyers, are excellent choices for performing reconnaissance before combat begins and acting as scouts. Infiltrating the foes' base and returning with important information can make the coming battle much easier to win. Getting behind the enemy and sabotaging or disrupting him is another option for stealth heroes. In this way, you can think of them as commandos—moving in, striking, and (if they're lucky) getting back out before their foes can react. Since these characters can often infiltrate their foes' base, they are also a good choice to set up ambushes and guerilla hit-and-run attacks.

Defensive tactics: As before, getting behind the enemy, setting up ambushes, and especially performing sabotage are tactics these heroes should take when put on the defensive. These heroes can often demoralize foes if they can damage the enemy and deny the foes a chance to strike back. Stealth heroes can also often hide themselves from foes, thereby forcing those foes to use their resources to find the heroes or risk letting the heroes run around loose in their midst.

Mentalists: These heroes usually possess exclusively mental or mind-affecting powers that allow them to perform a wide variety of feats. Some MARVEL UNIVERSE heroes in this class are Marvel Girl, Psylocke, and Phoenix II (Rachel Summers). Any hero possessing powers primarily from the "Mental Powers" category of the Advanced Set *Player's Book* also qualifies for this category. These heroes tend to avoid melee, using their mental powers on their foes from a distance.

Offensive tactics: Like stealth heroes, many mentalist heroes make wonderful infiltration agents, especially if they can directly affect others' minds. Psychic reconnaissance and astrally scouting ahead for danger is also an option, usually one with very little risk. If the mentalist can cause others to see illusions, a mentalist can seriously affect the morale of opponents (imagine an illusory elephant herd charging toward the enemy as the foes prepare to attack the heroes). Ambushes are also an option, again especially if the mentalist can psychically prevent detection of himself and other heroes. Mental-

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ists also make great communicators, passing information, instructions, or battle plans to other heroes who couldn't otherwise be reached due to ambient noise, darkness, etc.

Defensive tactics: Many of these tactics, especially illusions and ambushes, would also work equally well in defensive situations. A tactic that Psylocke has used in the past is to put into a foe's mind an illusion that causes one of her foe's allies to appear as a hero, often Psylocke herself. The victim of the illusion then attacks his ally. Mentally communicating plans or coordinating a possible heroic counterattack are further possibilities. At least in the MARVEL UNIVERSE, it is quite difficult for an enemy to sneak up on an alert hero with telepathic powers, as these telepaths often sense the thoughts of approaching foes.

Special forces: These are the heroes who possess such powerful, variable, or numerous super-powers, magical spells, or other abilities that they do not neatly fit into any of the previous categories. Some MARVEL UNIVERSE heroes who qualify are Thor, Quasar, Doctor Strange, the Vision, and the Silver Surfer. These heroes are so varied that any discussion of specific offensive or defensive tactics for this category of heroes as a whole is difficult. What can be done is to break down each special hero's powers into the categories above and adopt those tactics when using those powers. As an example, I'll categorize the powers of one of my favorite MARVEL UNIVERSE heroes, Thor, as he appears in the Advanced Set *Judge's Book*.

First, Thor has a degree of body armor, is immensely strong, and can inflict Shift X damage with his mystic Uru hammer, Mjolnir. This qualifies Thor for the shock-troops category. Second, by throwing Mjolnir and holding onto its thong, he can fly—qualifying Thor as airborne. Third, Thor can throw Mjolnir, and the mystic hammer also gives Thor weather-control powers (lightning bolts, winds, etc.), both of which qualify him for the artillery category. Thor can, depending upon his

choice of action, use any of the tactics of the categories listed in this example. Similar breakdowns can be performed for most other special-forces heroes.

Power stunts: Something must also be said about Power Stunts in the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game, and the ability to "push a power" that is present in several other super-hero game systems. Both of these concepts can give a tremendous tactical edge to the hero or heroes who devote the thought, time, and Karma to developing these abilities. The list of possible Power Stunts is far too long to describe here, but you can carefully read the "Powers" section of the Advanced Set *Player's Book* for Power Stunt ideas. Feel free to borrow ideas from the comics themselves, too. In my campaign, two heroes used a version of the X-Men's "Fastball Special" long before the Advanced Set came out with the official rules for that maneuver.

Group tactics

Now that individual tactics have been noted, fitting these tactics into a coherent whole comes next. The objective of this section is to make the sum of the heroes' abilities greater than the individuals' separate powers.

Since several of the tactics mentioned here suggest splitting up the heroes to perform reconnaissance and the like, it is a good idea to divide your group into "fire teams." A fire team is a small group of heroes who work in concert whenever possible, and whose powers and abilities complement each other. One infantry hero (Wolverine), one stealth hero (Nightcrawler), one artillery hero (Cyclops), and one airborne hero (original Angel) is an example of a fire team. Working together also allows the heroes (and the players) to get used to one another's tactics, power stunts, and personalities.

Once you have fire teams set up, develop a few standard routines of action that the heroes will take whenever faced with certain situations. I remember a certain futuristic, teenage super-team from Marvel's competitor that had a coded series of such actions. The leader of the team would shout out a code phrase to alert the rest of the team as to what was going on and what to do next. It is best to keep these routines simple; the more complicated they become, the fewer applications each routine will actually have.

A classic military axiom is "Make the enemy fight your fight." If you can force the opposition to react to your actions, as opposed to you reacting to theirs, then your battle is half won. This same idea applies in sports (the best defense is a good offense). If your team sticks to your game plan (tactics), and the other team has to improvise to stop you, you stand a much greater chance of winning. For example, if your team is made up primarily of infantry and artillery heroes, you don't want to end up toe-to-toe with your

opponents' shock troops. What you probably do want is to have a running battle, hitting the enemy with your artillery heroes until the enemies close the gap. Then, with your infantry providing cover as best they can, have the artillery heroes retreat and start the process over. This should eventually wear down the opposition to the point where it is safe for the infantry to move in and finish off the foes.

Conclusion

For more on tactics in the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game, see the tactics section in the Advanced Set *Player's Book*, pages 29-31. Also, the comics themselves are great sources for tactical inspiration. Marvel Comics' *The Avengers*, *Avengers West Coast*, *The Uncanny X-Men*, *The Fantastic Four*, *New Warriors*, and other hero-team books give good examples of some sound (and less-than-sound) tactics on the parts of both the heroes and the villains.

These tactics can also apply to other genres of RPGs, especially fantasy. Using the AD&D® game as an example, warriors are the infantry and, at higher levels, evolve into shock troops. Spell-casters, especially mages, are great examples of artillery. Rogues fit the stealth category. Psionicists easily qualify as mentalists. Most priests probably fall into the infantry category, as their spells are not generally offensive in nature and their ability to turn undead, while very important, is too specific to qualify them for shock troops. This wide variety of abilities (spells, good melee skills, and turning undead) could qualify priests as special forces, though.

Remember, GMs, that these categories and tactics apply equally well to villains as well as heroes. And remember, heroes—watch your backs, and think before you leap into the fray!

Note: For a similarly structured article discussing the basic personality types of heroes, see "The Mentally-Balanced Super-team," by David Rogers, in ICE's *Adventurer's Club*, issue #15, Winter 1990. The article categorizes heroic personalities. Although that article and this one were produced independently, they complement each other quite well. *Adventurer's Club* is published by Iron Crown Enterprises Inc., PO. Box 1605, Charlottesville VA 22901.

This article is dedicated to the players of my (admittedly on-again-off-again) MARVEL SUPER HEROES game campaign: Leon, Tim, Kevin, and the casualties thereof: Donny, and Jeff. Thank you, one and all, for all the fun and for the patience to endure what I put you through. Ω

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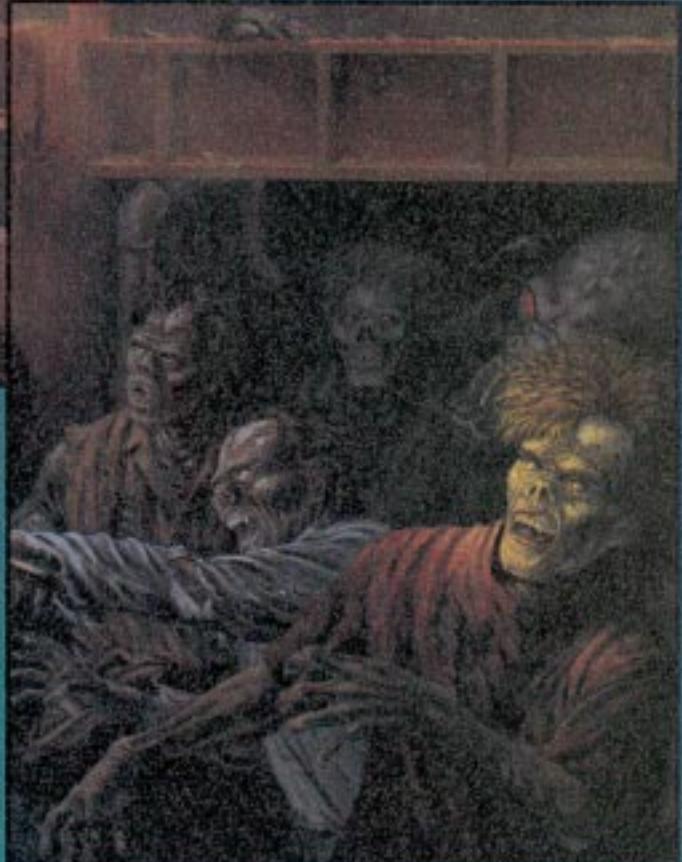
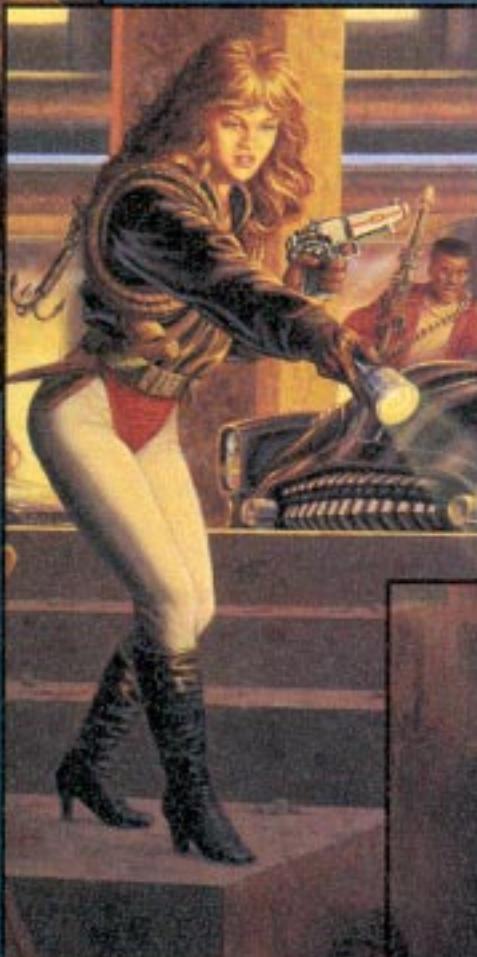
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Role-playing Reviews

From the beginning: introductory D&D® and AD&D® adventures

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Recently, I succumbed to a craving for dungeon crawling and started a Basic D&D® game campaign for my local ultra-sophisticated role-playing veterans. I decided to examine my vast collection of published scenarios and campaign settings to lighten the burden of session preparation.

Here's what I found:

All the classic D&D game scenarios for low-level play are out of print. Of course, I have copies as a collector and archivist, but the thought that posterity would be robbed of these rich treasures shocked and saddened me.

But the more recently published basic D&D game scenarios for low-level play were pretty good. So, I thought to myself,

"Here we have a perfect pretext for a theme review: supplements for low-level D&D games. And while I'm at it, how about looking at low-level AD&D® game scenarios?"

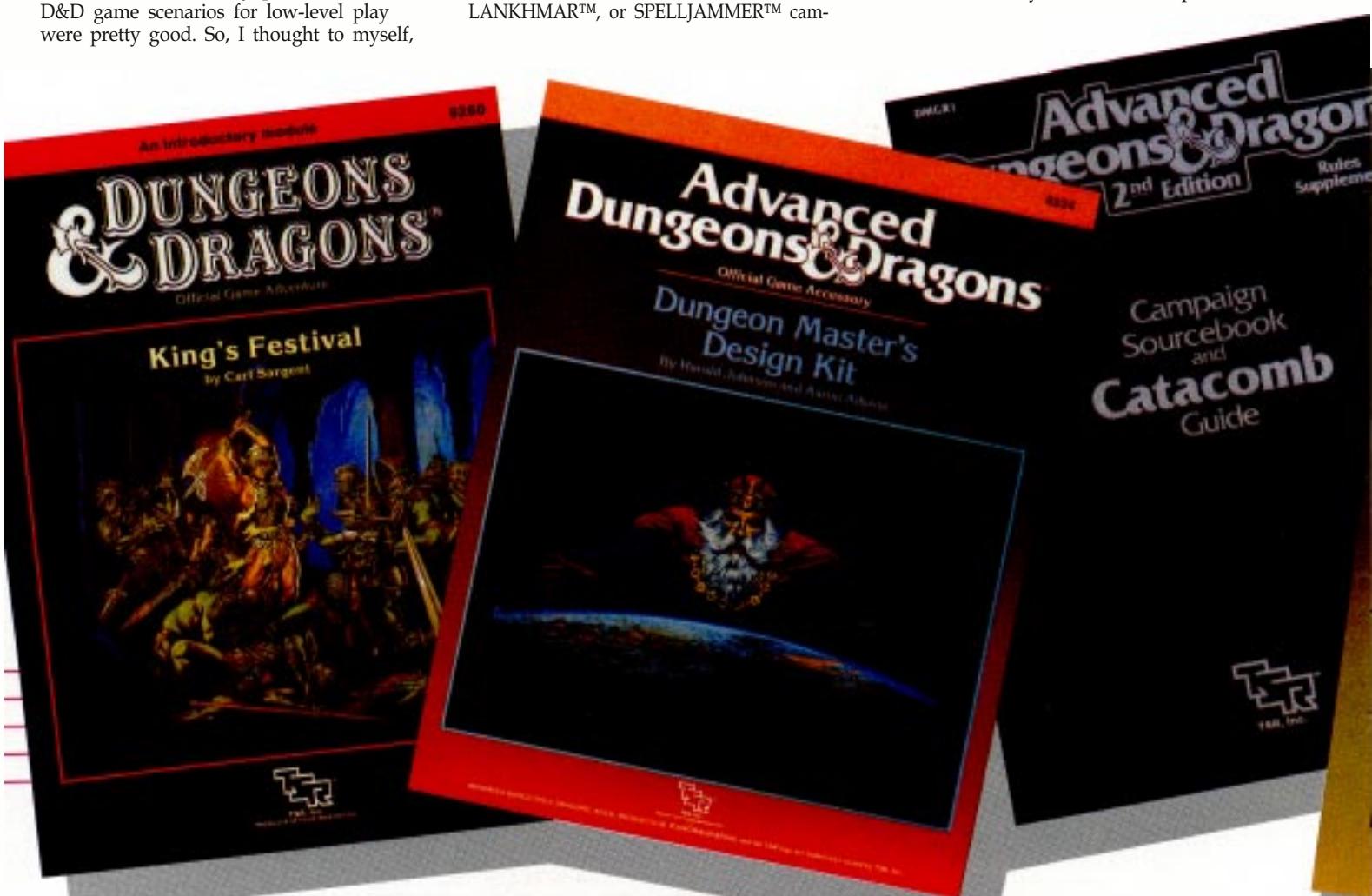
Here's what I found:

Almost all the classic AD&D game scenarios for low-level play are also out of print.

And the only recently published scenario specifically designed for first-time players of AD&D 2nd Edition game is for the DRAGONLANCE® campaign setting. There's nothing for the FORGOTTEN REALMS®, WORLD OF GREYHAWK®, LANKHMAR™, or SPELLJAMMER™ cam-

paigns, or for generic AD&D game play. You can get some very appealing AD&D 2nd Edition game scenarios designed for 2nd-level characters and up, but the absence of introductory adventure material to complement the release of the AD&D 2nd Edition game seems an unfortunate oversight, to say the least. Since the AD&D 2nd Edition game didn't even include an introductory adventure (can you think of any other role-playing game system release in the past five years that didn't include an introductory scenario?), the omission is all the more bizarre.

If there is anyone who needs published



materials to run, adapt, study, or steal from, it's the first-time Dungeon Master running D&D or AD&D game adventures for brand-new 1st-level characters. The example of a published adventure helps a new DM see what sorts of information he needs to have and how he can organize it for reference and presentation. Sure, lots of first-time DMs make up their own adventures and wouldn't have it any other way, but most beginning DMs can really use the support of a solid adventure while trying out their refereeing and role-playing wings in session play.

Advice for beginners

Start with the D&D game rather than the AD&D game. Macho types may insist on going directly to the Big Leagues, but the D&D game has the ideal campaign materials for the first-time DM. Whether you're the prospective first-time DM or just purchasing a package of materials for a older compatriot or wide-eyed youth, here's the ideal shopping list. (All the supplements in this review are available from the Mail Order Hobby Shop, Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.—unless the supplement is out of print, of course.)

-D&D game: Until lately, this was the red box with the Larry Elmore dragon on

—GAZ1 *The Grand Duchy of Karameikos*: This is the campaign setting for all the best in-print and out-of-print low-level D&D game adventures.

—B1 King's Festival and B12 Queen's Harvest: These are based in the Karameikos campaign setting (see their reviews, which follow).

—DUNGEON® Adventures issue #24 (July/August 1990): This contains an excellent low-level adventure, "In the Dread of Night" also set in Karameikos. Issue #24 also contains another valuable resource: an index listing all the DUNGEON Adventures modules from previous issues. Each listing indicates what player-character levels are suitable for that adventure.

Also see the following notes on out-of-print D&D game classics in the Karameikos setting. Look for these products in flea markets or on dusty game-store shelves.

For those dead set on starting with the AD&D game, the prospects are less appealing. Your best bet would be to start with the *City of Greyhawk* boxed set, which contains some nice adventures suitable for 1st-level characters, and *Puppets* (see the review later), which is easily adapted to this setting. Alternately, you

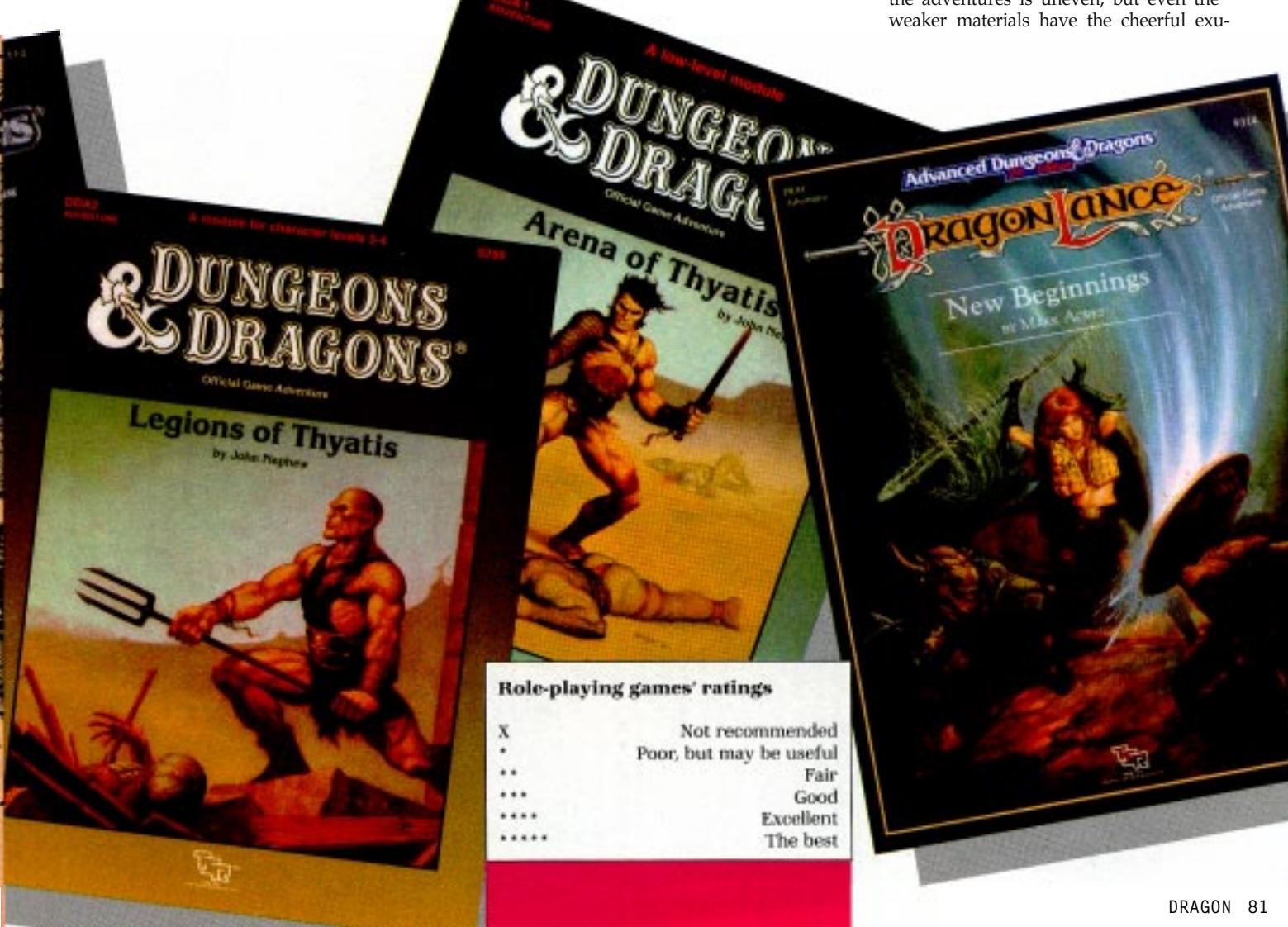
could start with the classic T1-4 *Temple of Elemental Evil* (see "Rare classics"), which is also in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting.

Rare classics

Game conventions like the GEN CON® and ORIGIN™ game fairs often have auctions and flea markets where you can pick up out-of-print games and supplements, often for a song. Also, the farther your local game store is from the ideal of retail efficiency, the better your chance of finding battered copies of rare items in a dusty display rack. Another good bet is to go begging and borrowing from veteran gamers. Furthermore, note that what is out of print in the United States may not be out of print overseas; it's possible that TSR Ltd. in England keeps things in print that we poor Yanks can't get over here.

—B10 *Night's Dark Terror* (* * * *): This is simply great: a D&D wilderness adventure set in northern Karameikos featuring a first-class, intelligent alien culture.

—BI-9 *In Search of Adventure* (* * * *): This perfect-bound book contains reprints of earlier D&D game classics by top designers (e.g., *Rahasia*, by Tracy and Laura Hickman, and *The Veiled Society*, by David "Zeb" Cook), all reorganized and adapted to the Karameikos setting. The quality of the adventures is uneven, but even the weaker materials have the cheerful exu-



Role-playing games' ratings

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

berance of early D&D games, and the best scenarios—Rahasia and *The Veiled Society*—are as good as they get.

—N4 *Treasure Hunt* (* * * * *): This AD&D module is a masterpiece of design, staging, and presentation. It's a crime that it is out of print. Ideally, it should have been revised for the AD&D 2nd Edition game and included as part of the package that every AD&D DM gets.

—Tl-4 *Temple of Elemental Evil* (* * * *): This is a reedited, repackaged version of an earlier module release, with much new material. Designers Gary Gygax and Frank Mentzer were the masters of this style of AD&D adventure. Back then, we were just beginning to come out of the dungeon and look around for campaign settings. Essentially, *Temple of Elemental Evil* is a dungeon campaign with a nice village for the players to visit for aid, supplies, and intrigue between adventures. New DMs should find it easier to run a setting like this than the sprawling, seductive, but background-heavy AD&D game campaign settings like the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign. The first third of this book covers the village of Hommlet and the ruins of the moathouse of the Temple of Elemental Evil, and is quite suitable for beginning AD&D game characters. The temple itself is huge and unwieldy, supposedly supporting characters up to 8th level. Though the basic principles and special effects of the design are charming, the presentation is overblown and antique in

style. New DMs shouldn't plan to run the whole temple; skimming and stealing the best ideas is a better strategy.

D&D® adventures

B11 King's Festival

B12 Queen's Harvest

Basic D&D adventures

32-page modules

TSR, Inc.

Design: Carl Sargent

Editing: Jim Lowder

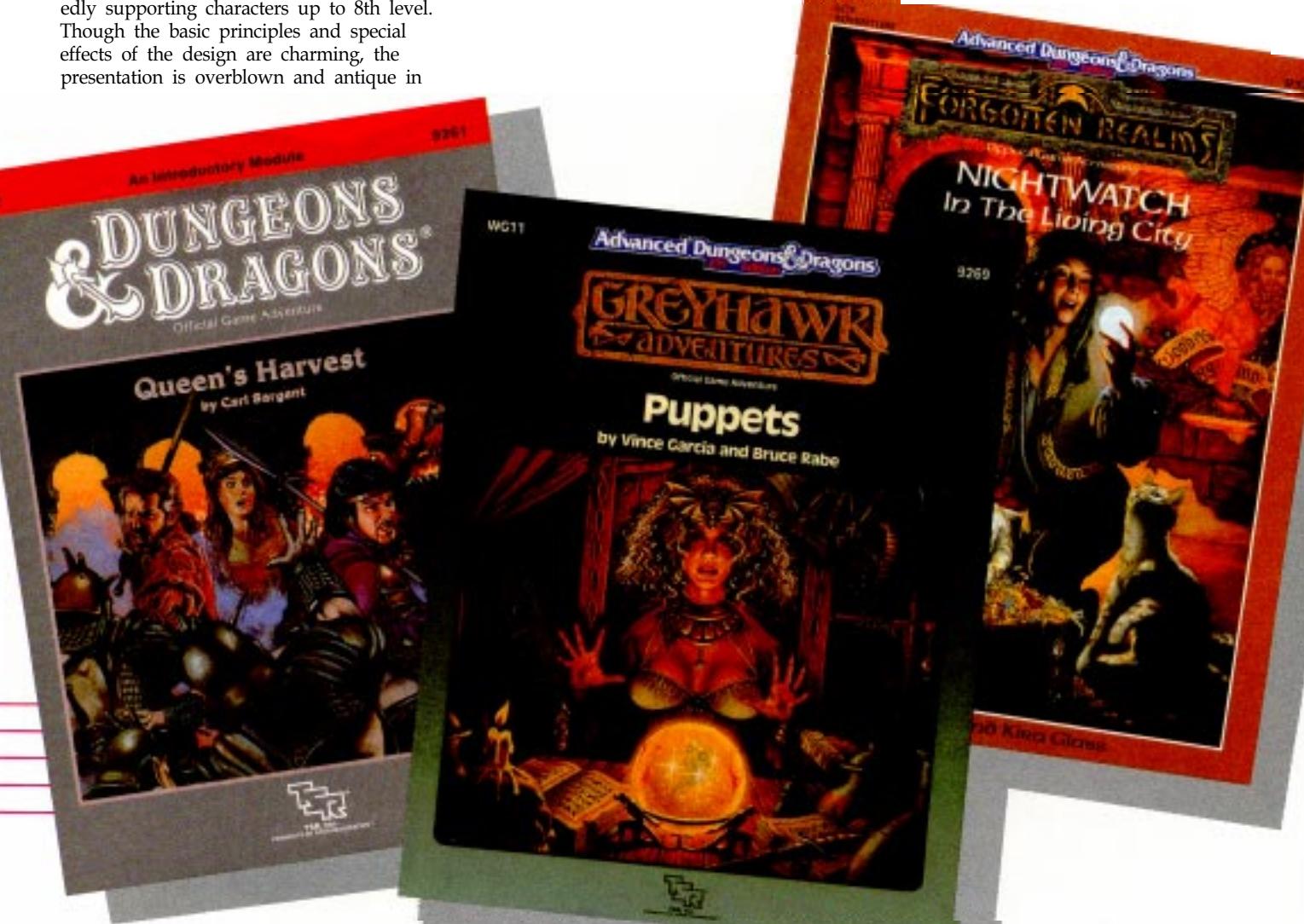
\$5.95 each

King's Festival is a combined guide for beginning DMs and introductory dungeon. The presentation is simple, streamlined, and easy to follow, with helpful staging hints and advice for first-time DMs, and concise but colorful setting detail in the read-aloud sections. Prerolled PCs are included for a quick start, and I found the pull-out "Combat Sequence Table" on the Player Reference Sheet a big help in conducting my Basic D&D game combats. The summary and reference charts are effectively employed to help organize information for the rookie DM. Sargent also provides a few recommended rules, adaptations, and clarifications, such as giving

beginning characters a minimum score for hit points at 1st level to avoid the 1 hp born-to-lose D&D game character.

He doesn't, however, take a radical enough step to remedy the 1st-level character's chronic vulnerability to death from a couple of consecutive whacks from even weedy monsters. I deal with this by using the player character's constitution score as a hit-point soak; if the PC falls below zero hit points but is not reduced below his constitution score as a negative value, he is unconscious and bleeding to death at 1 hp per round. Bandaging stops this bleeding loss automatically and can be performed instead of an attack. This still preserves the threat of death, but the thin line between "ready to rock" and "dead meat" is expanded to encourage more dashing, heroic adventuring. I strongly recommend that new DMs use this method or one of their own devising to give 1st-level characters a little more breathing room between life and death.

King's Festival offers a quick, simple dungeon with a plenty of tricks and action and a few nifty touches. *Queen's Harvest* is more elaborate in its role-playing and tactical challenges. The first half presents another basic dungeon with a clever concept and a flavorful narrative context. The second half offers an extended siege of an



enemy stronghold where the PCs are greatly outnumbered and outgunned; they must patiently whittle away at the opponents, then withdraw to regroup and heal. The clear and detailed discussion and organization of the defenders' tactics and motives includes the potential for sowing discord among defenders. A minor flaw to watch out for, though: There's no tactical map of the Queen's Keep. I had to improvise one so the enthusiastic marksmen and wizards could try to pick the sentries off the wall. Otherwise, the scenario ran very smoothly.

Evaluation: These are absolutely the best introductory adventures in print for D&D-game-style fantasy role-playing games (FRPGs). Presented simply and clearly enough for young folks, these adventures are also challenging and entertaining enough for experienced gamers.

DDA1 Arena of Thyatis
DDA2 Legions of Thyatis

Basic D&D adventures
32-page modules
TSR, Inc. \$5.95 each
Design: John Nephew
Editing: Jon Pickens

For those postmodern gamers who gag at the word "dungeon," here are two ambitious and original approaches to low-level D&D adventures. Gladiators are the theme, and a D&D-game version of ancient Rome is the setting. You have your basic criminal syndicates, debauched and corrupt senators, sinister intrigues, big parties, and lots of hearty Spartacus-style gladiators. There are a few dungeons to crawl in, but they are minor sideshows to the main event: open-ended, improvisational role-playing. No greased-rail DM-channeling here, boys and girls; the DM is out there all alone with a package of loosely linked episodes, lots of strong NPCs, and myriad plot threads blowing in the wind. And don't worry about hackneyed, predictable plot elements. This pair of linked modules features an archvillain with 3 hp and an orc gladiator as a major ally for PCs. And the narrative action starts with players invited to attend a gala fete sponsored by a senator, and ends with a trial in which the players are invited to take the parts of the judges and advocates.

However, I'm not persuaded that this is an adventure suitable for most first D&D campaigns. Nephew offers advice on "winging it" in essays and in scenario notes, but sound as the advice may be, I'm not sure it will be much help to a first-time DM simultaneously trying to master the mechanics and rhythm of refereeing an FRPG and the subtle dramatic and manipulative techniques of open-ended scenario presentation. Nephew also makes some naive assumptions about the tractability of D&D game players in the transitions he uses between major scenes. The most important advice Nephew could have given would have been to suggest that the

DM beseech his players at the beginning of each scenario to go along with his dramatic transitions, no matter how flimsy his pretexts, for the sake of some coherence and flow in the narrative. My players would have wanted to walk right out of the frame of the first scene and into the rich and totally unprepared splendors of a Hellenistic city; I would have spent the rest of the session trying to steer them back toward some bit of the plot—which, of course, is the point of improvisational role-playing scenarios, but few first-time DMs are likely to thrive in such an environment.

I admire and enjoy what Nephew has done in these modules, but I don't think he has provided enough of a safety net for experimenting with improvisational game mastering. Generous and explicit plot steering devices like powerful NPCs and narrow-funneled narrative choke points would give the DM more freedom to free-wheel, confident that he could shepherd the players back into prepared, structured materials if the action started to bog down. Nephew actually provides the necessary NPCs and plot machinery for most transitions, but he doesn't give enough specific guidance on what to do when something goes wrong, as it inevitably does in such situations. *Treasure Hunt*, for example—a much more linear and predictable scenario than these two adventures—has a two-page appendix entitled "If Things Go Wrong." Such commentary and advice is even more critical in open-ended settings like *Arena of Thyatis* and *Legions of Thyatis*.

Furthermore, the ancient Roman city of Thyatis doesn't mix comfortably with heroic, D&D-game, action-adventure role-playing. The impact of spell-casters in particular doesn't seem to have been considered, particularly the effect of *ESP* spells on intrigue plots. For example, captured and imprisoned PCs stripped of their possessions are given armor and weapons by their captors to protect themselves during an initiation rite; however, no account is made of missing spell books for the magic-users. If you're going to run a D&D game, why not use adventures that exploit its own peculiar idioms?

Evaluation: My first response was impatient and unforgiving; only my persistence in trying to appreciate Nephew's good intentions gave me a reserved affection for the most appealing features of these modules. Give them a split grade: four stars for originality, charm, role-playing potential, and right-mindedness, and two stars for quality of DM staging, plot support, and suitability for D&D-game-style play. I do not recommend them for beginning DMs, but as an earnest and moderately successful approach to designing a module for open-ended, improvisational role-playing for the D&D game, they may inspire you to experiment with this difficult but rewarding style of FRPG adventure.

AD&D® supplements

DMGRI Campaign Sourcebook and Catacomb Guide ****

AD&D 2nd Edition DM reference
128-page booklet
TSR, Inc. \$15
Design: Paul Jaquays, William W. Connors
Editing: William W. Connors, Warren Spector

This excellent game-mastering handbook tells the DM how to manage players and play sessions, and how to conceive, organize, and present a campaign. The details on mapping are especially good, as are the tips for using props and for creating and presenting vivid NPCs, and the simple guidelines for world building. I also found the chapter rationalizing the existence of dungeons marginally persuasive and thoroughly entertaining. This sourcebook addresses all the questions I hear asked by earnest, troubled young DMs at convention seminars. The writing is simple, lean, and humorous, and is full of veteran wisdom, play experience, and practical insight into gamer behavior.

With all the zillions of game supplements published, it's odd that there's never been a good book on game mastering before. The sourcebook reminded me of many principles and tricks I had learned through hard experience and obsessive study of other DMs' styles and cheap tricks; however, in my smug self-assurance of my own Grandmaster Game-Mastering skills, I have forgotten or neglected a lot of what I'd learned. For instance, I remember when I used to illustrate all wilderness locales with *National Geographic*'s photos. The sourcebook reminded me about using visual and tactile props, and what a difference they make, both for the sense of involvement of the DM and for the clarity and drama of communication to the players.

Evaluation: Beginners: You want this solid introductory reference for its ironic, practical, and amusing advice on creating, organizing, and presenting role-playing adventures and campaigns. Veterans: Enjoy this readable, amusing review of the basic problems and approaches to being an effective DM.

Dungeon Master's Design Kit **

AD&D 1st Edition DM reference
Three 32-page booklets
TSR, Inc. \$8.95
Design: Harold Johnson, Aaron Allston
Editing: Christopher Mortika

This should have been great. Aaron Allston's *Lands of Mystery* is perhaps the best campaign how-to booklet ever written for the hobby. But the *Dungeon Master's Design Kit* is based on the use of scads of fill-in-the-blanks forms. On the positive side, they are useful reminders of all the details that may be needed in an adventure design; on the negative side, they

imply that you should plan and record all those details before you run an adventure. In fact, no one method of planning and recording details will be satisfactory for all, or even many, DMs.

Almost any instinctive narrative impulse is likely to produce a more lively adventure than following the suggested procedures in this kit. The third booklet, the "Adventure Cookbook," is the most interesting reading, identifying and discussing many of the conventional plot, characterization, and thematic features of the genre; I can see where a beginning DM might find it revealing and inspiring, but experienced adventure riggers will find the treatments too elementary and bland. The *Campaign Sourcebook and Catacomb Guide* is better written (i.e., more entertaining) and helps the DM develop and organize his own ideas rather than providing him with a shopping list of ideas to consider.

Evaluation: This supplement is nonessential. Exceptionally organized and compulsive DMs who love forms and summary sheets may find it exciting, and some of the plot, setting, and character-building tips could be useful to a DM trying to improve his adventure design. Instinctive or veteran DMs don't usually have the problems this book tries to solve. If you are having trouble designing or organizing your own adventures, however, you might give this a try.

DLS1 New Beginnings **
AD&D 2nd Edition adventure
32-page module
TSR, Inc. \$6.95
Design: Mark Acres
Editing: Michael Stern

This is an unfortunate case of the designer doing all the right things, yet ending up with a not very appealing package. First, you get a clear, step-by-step walk-through of AD&D game character design, with handy tips on effective game play and role-playing. Next are semi-solitaire, word-problem training exercises designed to familiarize the reader with the AD&D 2nd Edition rules. At first I turned my nose up at these school-like exercises, but I actually found them quite instructive—in no time I realized how little I knew about the AD&D 2nd Edition rules. The exercises cover things like apparent AC vs. AC with dexterity modifiers, optional initiative modifiers, specialist weapons, wall climbing, and trap removal, but they also present moral problems, like the following:

The lawful-good cleric sees a thief PC pick a pocket. What should he do? 1) Ask the thief to return the goods and to beg forgiveness for his misdeeds? 2) Ask the thief to let the priest return goods? (This slights the law's right to punish the law-breaker, but does get the goods back in their owner's hands.) 3) Make atonement for the thief's crime by paying for the victim's loss out of the cleric's own pocket?

(Here the law is still slighted, but a confrontation with the party's thief is avoided.) 4) Turn the thief in? (This risks souring relations with a fellow party member.) 5) Try to convert the thief while limiting your association with that thief to actions that improve lawful goals? 6) Ignore the incident?

"Violation of alignment is particularly serious for the priest class," the exercise reminds us, and it should be true—though these are not the sort of rules' issues players worry about in most games.

The character-creation walk-through, the how-to-role-play essay, and the exercises are well designed and effective, given their purpose to introduce new players to the AD&D game systems. Though they didn't look like much fun to me, they worked like they were supposed to. A short adventure completes this introductory package, but in terms of appealing to the visual, dramatic, or tactical senses of the DM or players, this isn't particularly exciting or well presented.

Evaluation: *New Beginnings* does just what it ought to do, and it endeavors more or less successfully to be entertaining and inspiring in the process. Its greatest limitation is that it is specifically designed to introduce players to the Taladas campaign in the DRAGÖNLANCE setting, and it isn't suited for introducing players to any other AD&D campaign setting. However, the role-playing tips and rules exercises would be quite useful for any first-time AD&D game player or DM. And if you're going to start a Taladas campaign, this is a very valuable training tool and resource for your players.

LC3 Nightwatch in the Living City *****
AD&D 2nd Edition adventure
32-page module
TSR, Inc. \$6.95
Design: Walter M. Baas, Kira Glass
Editing: John Nephew

The Playtesting Factor (Rolston's Fourth Law of RPG Supplement Excellence): The very best adventures are those that have been playtested to death. A sad truth is that many adventure and campaign supplements receive little or no playtesting. Stuff taken from old campaigns (like much of the old GREYHAWK® material and Ed Greenwood's FORGOTTEN REALMS adventure bits) are full of ideas that have been tested and embellished in play. Better yet, consider RPGA™ (Role-Playing Game Association) tournament-based adventures. RPGA adventures are necessarily drafted with a practical eye to DM playability. The ideal RPGA tournament is something a DM can pick up, scan, and run with little study or preparation. These scenarios also usually include all the materials necessary to present a fast-paced session with a minimum of setup time and labor, and they

usually include nice pregenerated characters that you can use for a quick and easy introductions to the AD&D game systems. Both *Nightwatch in the Living City* and *Puppets* (see later) are based on tournament adventures originally designed and run through the RPGA Network.

Nightwatch is a perfect example of how convention design and playtesting can produce a first-class adventure. And because the RPGA Network makes a special effort to encourage the role-playing elements of FRP gaming (as opposed to the arcade-shoot-'em-up, loot, and power-chase elements), the adventure challenges themselves are lovely role-playing set pieces. The designers have provided the necessary narrative frame and DM-control hooks to carry the PCs from scene to scene, but within each scene the players and DM are free to explore a variety of approaches in solving the conflicts. Events and encounters follow a sort of flow chart, with several linked episodes leading to a minor climax. There is also an effective major-action climax to end the adventure. Each episode is set up with a colorful entry piece, and the gaming details and anticipated player actions are concisely presented with the sort of solid practical advice that you can get only from well-tested scenarios.

Nightwatch is all the more remarkable because city role-playing scenarios are notoriously tricky to run. *Nightwatch* simplifies the DM's task by providing a narrative framework (enlisting the PCs in the city's night-watch patrols) that leads the PCs from one conflict to another so smoothly that they aren't tempted to wander off into the city streets. In particular, the skillful dramatic staging of the PCs' induction to the Nightwatch gets the PCs quickly into character and into the spirit of the adventure. The introductory player-character motivation, for example, is simple and persuasive:

"You, like so many others, have ventured to the city with hopes of finding fame and fortune. Here, you've learned the most valuable lesson of employment—it's not what you know but who you know. And you know few in Raven's Bluff. Unable to join guilds or make a place for yourself, you've come to the one place where you think you can firmly entrench yourself: the City Guard. You're not sure you want to make this a life-time vocation; but it will give you the 'in' you need to get off the streets and into a decent inn. Everyone knows that references from the City Guard are as good as gold . . ."

The adventure episodes have plenty of damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't charm that is ever the burden of the public servant. (Have you hugged your local policeman lately?) The encounters are full of lovely little misdirections and plot twists, with charming and devious NPCs, sweet little children (I know I'm in for a rough night when a DM saddles me with a lovable tyke), peculiar monsters, and plen-

ty of oddball surprises, all seasoned with pathos, humor, and irony. There's relatively little danger of death for low-hit-point characters (the ideal situation for 1st-level beings), but plenty of opportunity exists for humiliation and confusion—the only real terrors of players in an AD&D game universe where even death usually isn't a permanent inconvenience.

Like *Arena of Thyatis* and *Legions of Thyatis*, *Nightwatch* is designed to encourage role-playing and DM improvisation, but *Nightwatch* provides the necessary rigging and practical "if-this-happens" advice that *Arena of Thyatis* and *Legions of Thyatis* lack. Narrative devices in the form of powerful NPCs recognized by custom and law are provided to step in and intervene if disaster threatens or if the PCs get out of hand. Also, the scale of *Nightwatch* is more manageable for experimenting with improvisation; all the action in the 32-page *Nightwatch* module takes place in no more than a single night in the setting. It's more comfortable to experiment with improvisational game mastering in a one-shot adventure in a more-or-less generic FRPG city setting than in a full-scale, multiple-episode campaign in the distinctly un-D&D-game-like setting of a Roman city.

Evaluation: This is an inspiring piece of work, perfect to run as is or to use for stealing ideas. A well-rigged narrative

structure is given, yet with ample role-playing and improvisational opportunities for DM and players. Also present is a host of nifty characters to deal with and plot puzzles to solve, featuring numerous sly and surprising variations on conventional AD&D game clichés. Finally, good fun in abundance. I highly recommend this.

WG11 Puppets

AD&D 2nd Edition adventure

32-page module

TSR, Inc.

\$5.95

Design: Vince Garcia, Bruce Rabe

Editing and development: Jim Lowder

Puppets consists of two scenarios formerly run as RPGA tournaments. One is a linear, cross-country, convoy-guard adventure, the other a small-town adventure. Both are competently presented and playable, but their distinguishing charms are three very good ideas (otherwise known in Rolston parlance as "cheap tricks"), none of which can I reveal to prying player eyes. (Oh, how I wish there were a "Captain DM Decoder Ring" available so I could share details with DMs without spoiling the fun for the players!) Each of these lovable cheap tricks is freely exportable into other scenario and adventure settings.

The first two cheap tricks are encounters along the road in the convoy adven-

ture. **Warning:** These good ideas are humorous and whimsical, and may make high-toned heroic fantasy gamers blanch. The third cheap trick is the central plot element of the town adventure and the title concept of the module. The concept is clever, an idea you can take and run with or present as concisely as session time and interest permit.

The adventure designs are sound and reliable, easily scanned and presented by experienced DMs. An inexperienced DM or one weak on charming, improvised NPCs might find little to work with here, however. The town adventure's middle game is either pretty sketchy or appealingly open-ended, depending on how you feel about such things. The DM improvises a lot of informant NPC personalities, while the PCs hunt for clues to the plot's central mystery. The system for handling the NPCs and clues looks a bit cheesy, but it's actually just the sort of thing that skilled NPC improvisers will love. The action (read "war gaming") elements are exceptionally compact and concise—again, just the way many DMs like it.

Evaluation: These make a pair of very good adventures that are easily adapted to other settings, with nifty plot and encounter elements, abundant opportunities for clever play, and plenty of juicy character roles for the DM.

Ω

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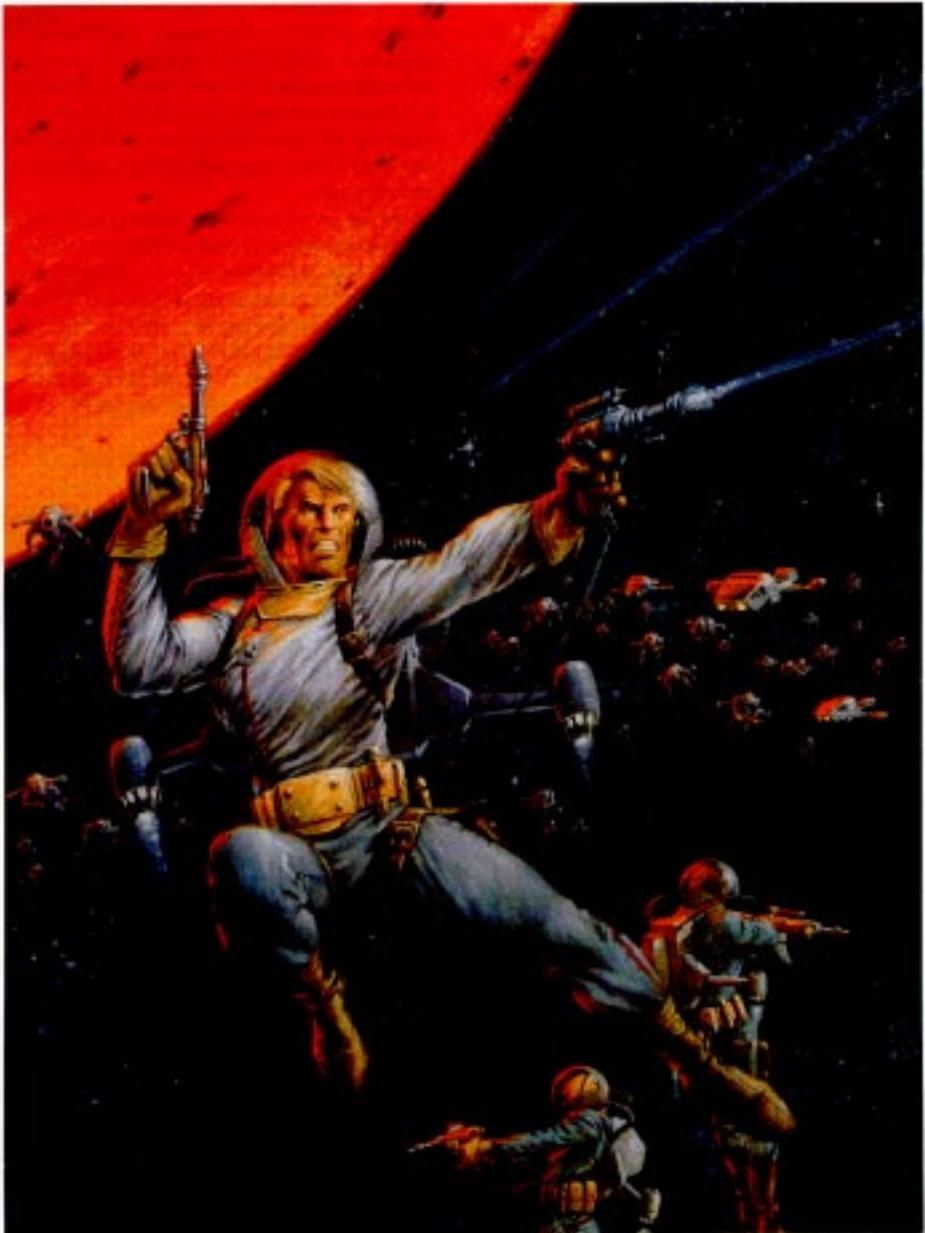
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Conquer the Solar System —By Mail!

The making of the
CONQUEST OF THE 25TH CENTURY PBM
game—the real story!

by Bruce Nesmith

Artwork by Jerry Bingham

I know nothing about computers. This is why Jim Ward, my boss and the terror of our department, asked me to make a play-by-mail game. Making a play-by-mail game requires writing an enormous computer program to moderate the whole mess.

Months before Jim came to me with this request, I knew a lot about computers. In fact, it seemed that everyone in the building was asking me to fix their computer problems. This was interfering with my work so much that my boss (Jim Ward—remember him?) put forth an edict: "Bruce knows nothing about computers, so quit asking him to help you with your computer problems. That's what we have a computer department for." So, from that day on, I knew nothing about computers.

When Jim came to me and asked me to design and program a computer moderated play-by-mail game, I reminded him that I knew nothing about computers. He didn't seem to care.

He asked me how long it would take to program a play-by-mail game based on the BUCK ROGERS® XXVc™ role-playing game. I told him that I hadn't the faintest idea. He wasn't amused. Unfortunately, I wasn't joking. Without some idea of what your final design is, estimating programming time is impossible.

Jim was relentless. He would not let me leave the room until I gave him a number. After getting him to agree to certain limitations on the game, I told him three months. Now, those of you who are in the play-by-mail industry are probably laughing hysterically. Nobody can program a game of that complexity in three months. Suffice it to say, neither can I. And remember, I know nothing about computers.

Six thousand lines of code and four months later, I was ready to playtest the CONQUEST OF THE 25TH CENTURY game. For those of you like myself who don't know anything about programming, that is a huge program. In fact, it is three huge programs because it couldn't all fit into one.

I used Microsoft's QuickBasic 4.5 to write most of the code. In the process, I had to learn to write subprograms in Postscript and HGCL. If you don't understand those terms, don't worry; they're twice as frightening to those who do understand them.

There is a saying among programmers, although it is not unique to their field, that 80% of the program takes 20% of the time to write. This means that the last 20% of the program takes 80% of the time to write. This is called the debugging stage. Having taken four months to get the first 80% of the program together, I was not pleased to think that I might need a year to finish it.

The game's basic goal is one common to many play-by-mail games: The players try to conquer the solar system. The game required 12 people to play it. So, I went to



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my fellow workers and said, "Although I know nothing about computers, I have just finished the single largest programming job of my life. Will you help me to playtest it?" If they said no, I told them that Jim Ward said that they had to. I lost a few friends that day—12 of them, I think.

In the game, the 12 players are divided up into six teams, and each team is assigned a planetary body or region (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Luna, Mars, and the Asteroids). After I passed out the turn sheets to these players, they immediately started planning, scheming, and otherwise having a jolly good time. I recovered a few of my friends.

After processing the results of the first turn, I handed out the turn sheets. Within minutes, a line began forming at my door. Everyone's turn sheet was wrong. Not just a little wrong—big time wrong. I reminded the players, as they described their problems in detail, that I didn't know anything about computers.

It took several weeks and many printings just to get the second turn's sheets correct. I was reminded of the 80/20 rule once again. Now, I was ready to enter the second phase of the playtest. I handed out instructions to each of the players. Each team had to try to do something not permitted by the rules. One player had to try to move soldiers off-planet without spaceship transports, another had to try to build more ships than he could afford, and so on. My previously happy playtesters were not pleased.

With these results in hand, I proceeded to delete a major section of the program. This was not intentional. I accidentally copied an old version of the game program over the current version. I began chanting "I know nothing about computers" while looking for the previous day's printout so I could type in a more current copy of the program. The only problem was that the needed printout was missing. I had thrown it away. I spent two hours searching through the company's garbage bin to find it.

It took a couple of weeks to fix all the problems that the player's turns caused. Soldiers were flying to other planets without spaceships, and players were stockpiling weapons that they didn't have enough money to buy. The players were shocked to learn that I was going to make them keep the results of their "mistakes" in their turn.

Now, I was ready for phase three. Each team once again received instructions. Venus was told to invade Mercury. Mercury was told to let them. One of the Mars players was told to drop out. The Earth player had to send a fleet into the depths of space. Luna was told to let Mercury completely conquer it and eliminate one of the players.

I ate lunch alone for the next few days. It took me only a week to fix the problems this time. By this time, I was working an average of 12 to 15 hours a day, six or seven days a week. Jim Ward would ask

me, "Bruce, when is this G'henna going to end for all of us?" I'd merely shake my head and walk away. I firmly believe that the only reason I am still employed today is because Jim knew how hard I was working to finish the game—that, and the fact that I kept Jim constantly supplied with donuts.

I let the next turn run without giving out any instructions. It had a few bugs to be ironed out, but otherwise it ran well. The players were beginning to get into it and were actually having fun. Jeff Grubb told me that he thought it was a good game with a solid design. I was even invited to a couple of lunchtime games with my co-workers.

After a month of working 70 hours a week, I told Jim Ward that I had had enough. He could fire me if he wanted to, but I was not working any more overtime, and at the end of the month I would be done with the project, regardless of what condition it was in.

Miracle of miracles, by the end of the month, the program was actually finished. Standing at a majestic 7,000 lines of code, it barely resembled the first version we played at all. Those last 1,000 lines had taken as long to produce as the first 6,000 lines. Most everyone involved in the playtest actually said that the finished game was a good one. Even one of the guys at RSI told me that he thought it was a good game (RSI has licensed the AD&D® game for play-by-mail adventuring).

Many years ago, I recommended to a friend of mine that running a play-by-mail game was a good way for a small company to build revenue. If you are reading this, Steve, I apologize. If you went through even half of the pain and agony that I went through, then it wasn't worth it. But what kind of advice can you expect from a man that knows nothing about computers?

Anyway, I now have this really cool play-by-mail game. (It actually belongs to TSR, Inc., but programmers always think of their programs as their children.) About half of the original playtesters signed up to play real games. If you play the CONQUEST OF THE 25TH CENTURY game, you might find yourself partnered with a TSR staffer. As for the rest of you, have no fear; I have gone to great lengths to ensure that the TSR staff cannot take advantage of their positions.

A new game starts every few weeks. We even have an international game with players from Israel, Germany, Norway, England, and Japan. Considering the lack of press coverage the game has received, the response has been excellent.

Not bad for a guy who knows nothing about computers.

For information on how to join the CONQUEST OF THE 25TH CENTURY game, see the advertisement at right, or the "Gamers Guide" in this issue. Ω

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SAGE ADVICE

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, PO. 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 writers' guidelines for the magazine).

This month, the sage shares more insights on the workings of spells in the AD&D® 2nd Edition game and takes a look into the realms of siege warfare, psionics, and the AD&D SPELLJAMMER™ setting.

Recently, one of my players wanted to have his character use a phantasmal force spell to create illusory duplicates of his entire party. I've always assumed that phantasmal force can create only one image, so I said no. Was I correct? Can a phantasmal force spell be used to hide people? Can it make a party on a road look like just a road?

The spell description supports your view. The first sentence says the spell can create the illusion of "any object, creature, or force." All the terms are singular, and this probably isn't an accident. On the other hand, one can play around a bit with the word "force." The term "force" indicates things that are not physical objects but that have physical effects, such as lightning—but a group of beings organized into a military unit or for other purposes also is a "force." I once saw an interesting compromise between these two views: The DM allowed *phantasmal* units of creatures, but only if all the creatures in a unit were identical and only if they all moved and acted together. It also isn't contrary to

the spirit of the rules to allow *phantasmal* cave-ins or avalanches. If you interpret the description narrowly, these are out of the question because they are made up of many small objects; however, the individual objects are part of a larger whole. Note that anything created by a *phantasmal force* spell (and its cousins, the *improved phantasmal force*, *spectral force*, and *advanced illusion* spells) is strictly limited to the spell's immobile area of effect. A *phantasmal* creature, for example, can move but must remain entirely within the area of effect.

The *phantasmal force* spell and its cousins create images of things. These spells do not cause things to disappear or to appear to change their forms; that's what the *invisibility*, *massmorph*, and *veil* spells are for. A *phantasmal force* spell can create a wall or boulder behind which the party can hide, but it can't make the party disappear or look like something else.

I've encountered a DM who insists that the wizard spell *fly* ends if the recipient lands, which in effect makes the spell good for only one "hop." Is this really the case?

This sounds like a workable house rule, but there is nothing in the spell description (in either edition of the AD&D game) that even begins to suggest that this is the case. Note that clever *fly* spell users can get around this rule just by hovering a few inches off the ground instead of actually landing.

Do "at will" abilities happen instantaneously? For example, can a creature that can become *invisible* at will first attack, then become *invisible* before any opponents can return the attack? If there is a delay before the creature can become *invisible*, does the delay last as long as the casting time for a spell? Can

"at will" abilities be combined with spells or melee attacks?

Innate, spell-like abilities use most of the rules for spell-casting *except* casting time. They require only a fleeting mental command; however, they cannot be combined with spell-casting or physical attacks, and they are not instantaneous (there is an initiative penalty of +3). See the combat section in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 64, for more details.

In psionic combat, are the values listed in *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, Table 14, page 26, added to the character's relevant attribute (wisdom) to get the score needed for a successful attack, or are they added to the power score? Also, why is *psychic crush* such a lousy attack mode? There are more effective attacks for every defense on the table.

The modifier is added to the power score, not the ability score. Whether or not *psychic crush* is a "lousy attack" is a matter of opinion. It is true that the other attack forms will probably yield contact against a closed mind more quickly than *psychic crush* can, but *psychic crush* has a respectable range (short, but the power score doesn't drop at the extreme end of the range), and it can do real damage.

What does the term "X Mult" mean under the PSP entry in the duergar and yuan-ti listings in *The Complete Psionics Handbook's "Monstrous Update"* section?

"Mult" means multiplier, which is the same as the creature's hit dice. The more hit dice, the more psychic power points the creature has.

How much do siege engines cost? *The Castle Guide* gives rules for their use, but not their costs.

Here's an unofficial price list to hold you until something better comes along:

Item	Cost
Ballista	200 gp
Bombard	20,000 gp
Bore	800 gp
Cannon, heavy	10,000 gp
Cannon, light	6,000 gp
Catapult, arrow	300 gp
Catapult, heavy	540 gp
Catapult, light	400 gp
Gallery	600 gp
Ram	500 gp
Siege tower	1,000 gp
Trebuchet	800 gp

When designing a custom spelljamming vessel, how do you define the ship's tonnage, maneuverability class, and crew requirements? How much does it cost to build a spelljammer from scratch?

This is a topic is too complex to deal with here. Until something official comes along, which may happen in 1992, individual DMs must make these decisions on a case-by-case basis by comparing ships designed for their campaigns with the ship statistics given on pages 28-33 of the *Concordance of Arcane Space*, from the SPELLJAMMER boxed set. Here are a few unofficial suggestions for determining

statistics and costs for new types of spelljammers:

A quick way to estimate a new ship's tonnage is to multiply its beam length by its keel length, then divide by 120 or 125. This works well only for the oblong hull types such as hammerships. Generally, a ship can carry one person per ton of displacement, and it requires one crew member per three tons of displacement. Converted groundling ships and large, blocky ships, such as neogi deathspiders and dwarven citadels, have poor maneuverability ratings (E or F). Compact, barrel-shaped ships, such as squid ships and hammerships, have midrange ratings (C or D), and light ships with lots of sail area have high ratings (A or B). Judging from the repair rules on page 70 of the *Concordance*, building a ship from scratch is much more expensive than buying one "as is!" About 1,000 gp per ton seems to be an accurate figure for medium-sized, fairly maneuverable ships (30-60 tons, maneuverability class D) made of thick wood. This cost does not include large weapons or motive power, though the builder might offer the purchaser a package deal. Highly maneuverable ships, or ships made of metal or ceramics, would cost more per ton. The 1,000 gp/ton figure is significantly lower than the repair costs, but I assume the listed repair costs reflect quite a bit of haste and desperation.

Who is the "attacker" if two spelljammers declare head-on rams against each other? It stands to reason that the ship with the initiative is the attacker, but what happens if they roll simultaneous initiative?

Designating the ship with the initiative as the attacker seems to be a good ruling to me. I suggest re-rolling a simultaneous initiative right before the ramming attempts take place. Keep re-rolling ties until one ship wins, then follow the rules on page 65 of the *Concordance*.

Where are the new proficiencies in the SPELLJAMMER boxed set? I can't find them anywhere.

I can't either (they were dropped from the rules; see "Awash In Phlogiston," in DRAGON issue #153). The module SJRI *Lost Ships* (TSR product #9280) has a few space proficiencies, and there will be a host of new proficiencies in one or both of the SPELLJAMMER rules supplements scheduled for release next year: the *War Captain's Companion* boxed set (tentatively scheduled for March 1992) and *The Complete Spacer's Handbook* (tentatively scheduled for October 1992).

The THAC0 listings for large weapons, on pages 40-42 of the Concordance of Arcane Space, conflict with the listings on page 57. Which



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ones are correct? The book says large weapons ranges are reduced inside of atmospheres, but by how much?

The table on page 57 has the correct THAC0s; this table also is included in the *SPELLJAMMER Dungeon Master's Screen*. Actually, the ranges given in the *Concordance* are for long-range combat, which is impossible in an atmosphere. To conduct combat with large weapons inside an atmosphere, use the siege rules in *The Castle Guide* or the BATTLESYSTEM™ rules. Note that spelljammers have tremendous speeds, even in atmospheres (see the *Concordance*, page 51), and two spelljammers will have little time to exchange missile fire if they are approaching each other.

What happens if a spelljammer enters a planet's gravity well? Does it retain its own gravity until it touches the surface, or does the planet's gravity immediately take over? Is there a minimum size for a planet?

The ship retains its own gravity until it touches the planet's surface; see page 14 of the *Concordance* for details. Note that the ship immediately drops out of spelljamming speed as soon as it enters the planet's gravity. A "planet" is here considered to be anything that displaces at least

10 tons. Note also that when two objects touch, the larger object's gravity is dominant. For example, a 50-ton ship touching a 20-ton asteroid imposes its gravity on the asteroid. Individual DMs might rule that certain planets immediately override a ship's gravity when the ship enters their gravity wells. This might be due to those planets' sheer size (each being, say, 100 times the ship's displacement), or it could simply be those planets' inherent properties, regardless of relative size.

How long does it take for a spellcaster to regain spells after using a spelljamming helm? Does the helmsman actually forget his spells during and after spelljamming?

How long a helmsman must rest before casting spells is up to the DM. The helmsman must rest for as long as normal for him to regain the spells he currently has memorized; spelljamming does not erase the spells' patterns from the helmsman's brain, but it does disrupt the flow of magical energies within it (see page 34 of the *Concordance*). The minimum time required to regain spell-casting ability is "a restful night's sleep" (see the 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*, page 81). For spelljamming purposes, this probably should be eight hours, though it may be slightly shorter or longer if the DM assigns a rest requirement that varies with the level or

type of spells to be cast. In any case, the helmsman does not have to study his spells unless he wants to change them.

Can an iron golem or green dragon in wildspace poison itself by using its breath weapon inside an air envelope?

No, in both cases. Golems require no air, so an iron golem's poison gas cannot harm it. However, if the air envelope is small enough (created by an object of 10 tons displacement or less), the air is immediately fouled if it wasn't already, which might cause problems for living creatures who depend on the air envelope. Poison-gas breath weapons from dragons, such as those of green and gold dragons, immediately foul air envelopes unless their tonnage is more than five times the dragon's hit dice. However, green and gold dragons are immune to gas attacks and are unharmed by air that has been fouled by such attacks, including *stinking clouds*, *cloudkills*, and similar spells; as far as the dragon is concerned air made foul by such attacks still is fresh, and it remains fresh for the normal period of time. Ω

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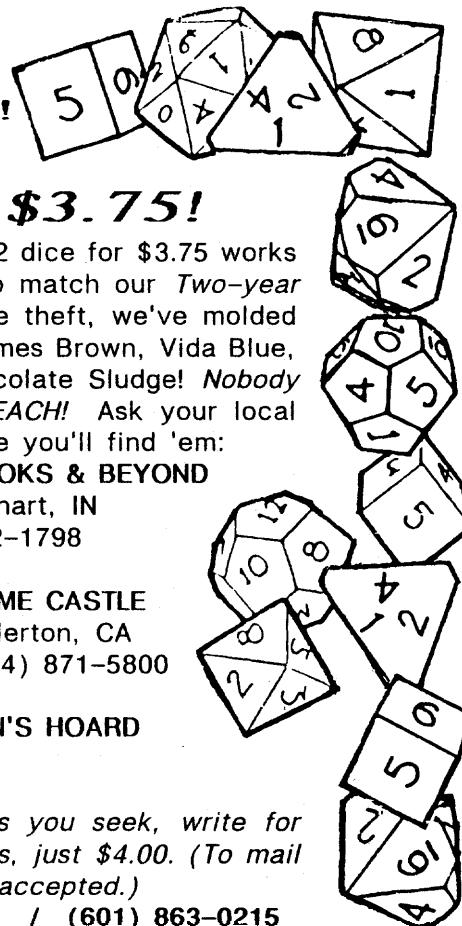
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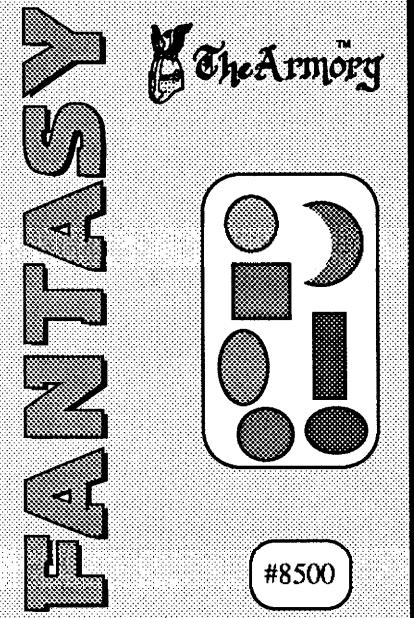
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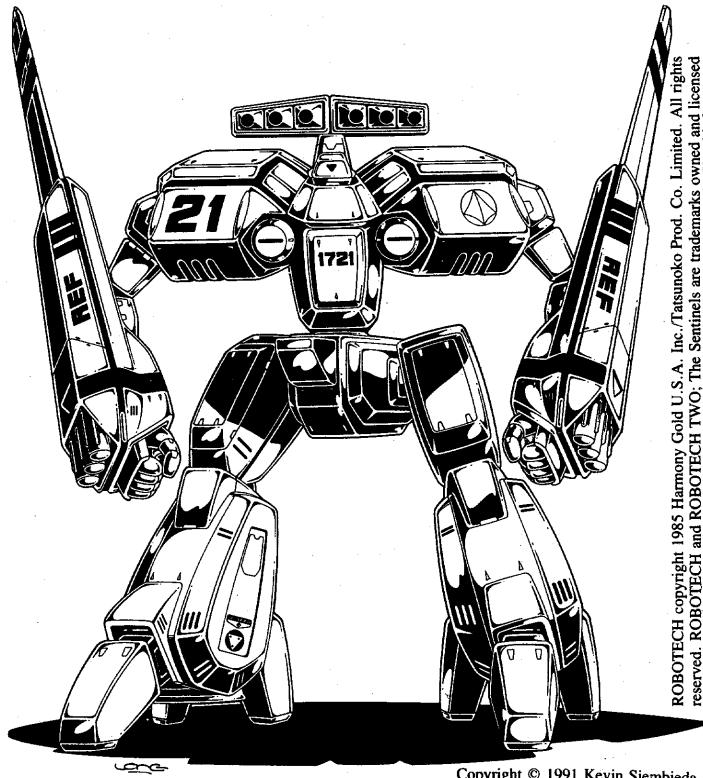
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IOI SURPRISES IN A *BAG OF BEANS*



Who says that beans are good for you?

by Matthew Schutt

Because of the attention given to AD&D® game magical items such as the *deck of many things* (DRAGON® issue #148) and *wand of wonder* (issue #147), the following list has been conjured to be used as an imaginative catalyst whenever a bag of beans is used. If it seems that a majority of these effects are harmful, remember that the bag is an item used only *in extremis* or in great curiosity. All magical effects should be assumed to be cast at 12th level of ability, unless otherwise specified. Just roll 1d100 for each bean, selecting option #101 for the last bean. Statistics for most monsters and spells should be referenced in the appropriate AD&D 2nd Edition manuals. Unless noted otherwise, all items and beings created by a bean are permanent and may be destroyed or slain normally. And in every case, the DM may make any adjustments to these results he feels appropriate.

1. Toadstools, 10-100 of them, grow from the ground about the planted bean. If eaten, they are either poisonous (50%), requiring a save vs. poison at -2 to avoid death, or act as *goodberries* (50%), as per the second-level priest spell. The toadstools vanish after 24 hours.

2. A 20'-tall tree with 24 assorted fruits springs from the ground instantly. When a fruit is cut, crushed, or bitten, out springs a device of some sort (as per the random roll table for a *robe of useful items*). The tree vanishes after 48 hours, but items from it remain.

3. A great whirlwind (exactly like one created by a djinn) instantly forms above

the bean, wreaks havoc, and dissolves a round later.

4. A 50'-diameter hemisphere of *darkness* is created and remains until dispelled (see the first-level priest spell).

5. A geyser erupts, throwing water 20' into the air for 1-12 rounds. If desired, the water may be replaced by another non-magical liquid, such as ale, beer, berry juice, tea, vinegar, wine, or crude oil.

6. A pheasant jumps up from the soil and attempts to fly away (AC 6; MV 3, fly 24; HD 1/4; hp 2; no attacks). If stopped and investigated, it may be discovered that 1-4 of its feathers are magical *Quaal's feather tokens*.

7. A spring bubbles up. The first person who drinks from it has his age reduced by 1-12 years. Succeeding drinks age a drinker by 10-120 years per drink.

8. A number of powerful zombies (#AP 3-24; AC 4; MV 12; HD 2; hp 16; #AT 2; Dmg 1-8/1-8; THAC0 19) crawl forth and attack all living things. The zombies cannot be turned and move so fast as to always strike first in a melee round.

9. A 60'-diameter *earthquake* spell strikes the area, with the planted bean at its center.

10. A chaotic-evil treant (AC 0; MV 12; HD 12; hp 52; #AT 2; Dmg 4-24; THAC0 9) of the largest size appears and attempts to destroy all living beings it can reach 10' in diameter.

11. A pool of molten lava rises to the surface, and expands another 10' every round until it is a maximum of 50' in diameter. Anyone caught in the lava receives 10-80 hp damage per round. The lava will

remain aboveground and slowly cool.

12. Gases erupt from the ground within a 60'-diameter area around the bean and have a mutating effect; anyone caught in them must save vs. spells or be affected as per a 1d4 die roll: 1) gain 1-4 hp permanently; 2) lose 1-4 hp permanently; 3) lycanthropy (DM's choice of type); 4) get a rotting disease, as if touched by a mummy.

13. *Conjured animals* begin to rise from the earth, one animal of the DM's choice appearing each round until 24 HD total have arrived (see the sixth-level priest spell). They remain until slain or 24 rounds have elapsed. They behave as if they were under a *confusion* enchantment (see the seventh-level priest spell). If the result is "Act normally for one round," the animal obeys the wishes of the bean planter.

14. A special *incendiary cloud* flows up from the ground, remaining for two full turns in a volume 20' in height and 40' in length and breadth. It remains dormant until any spells or spell-like effects are activated within it. Damage is 1 hp per level of the spell cast per round.

15. A pair of huge, disembodied, magical hands come forth. One is a *Bigby's grasping hand* and the other a *Bigby's clenched fist*. Each will attack or hold immobilized a random target within 90' of the bean for 12 rounds.

16. Fast-growing roots reach up from the ground and wrap about creatures as an *entangle* spell (40' square area), lasting for 10-80 hours.

17. A pit, 40' square and 10'-100' deep, opens up beneath the bean planter.

18. An opening in the ground appears where the bean was planted. If entered and explored, the underground complex proves to be the sewers beneath a major city. The opening to the sewer complex, which is a sort of long-distance gate, closes after 1-100 rounds, possibly stranding characters in their new locale.

19. A *simulacrum* of the bean planter rises from the ground. The duplicate joins forces with the planter initially, but after 2-20 days it decides to break away to establish a career of its own. Only 1-10 days later, it melts.

20. An *apparatus of Kvalish* appears, being operated by a single unarmed hobgoblin (hp 7).

21. The area around the bean is struck by *transmute rock to mud* (100'-cube area of effect). The area reverts to stone after 2-8 rounds, entombing anything within it.

22. A black sphere rises from the ground, appearing as a *sphere of annihilation*. The sphere moves at a speed of 9, chasing after random targets (one target per round). The exact effects of the sphere once it touches a creature are left up to the DM. Possibilities are the destruction of magical items (as a *rod of cancellation*) or the draining of spells from the minds of casters. The sphere cannot be affected in any manner whatsoever, but if all living creatures manage to avoid its touch for three rounds in a row, it disappears.

23. A clear pool of water rises to the

surface. The planter of the bean may ask the pool a question and receive a vision, as per the seventh-level wizard spell of the same name. If the powers are annoyed, the bean planter is attacked by three water weirds (AC 4; MV 12; HD 3 + 3; hp 16; THAC0 15; SA drowning).

24. A stone statue in the exact likeness of the bean planter grows from the ground. It makes all sorts of spoken threats against the planter, but it does nothing more. If left behind, it will direct anyone who will listen to its lies to attack the planter. Worse, it always knows exactly where the planter is.

25. A female arm wielding an impressive sword of random type thrusts up from the ground in the style of the famous Lady of the Lake and Excalibur. The sword can be taken only by the bean planter, after which the arm descends back into the earth. If the planter is a paladin, this is the moment to give him a *holy avenger*; otherwise, the weapon is a *sun blade*.

26. The planted bean summons a meteor from outer space that strikes the ground within five rounds. Anyone standing directly over the bean (the point of impact) is instantly killed, and all his items are destroyed. Only a *wish* can restore him to life again. All creatures within 30' receive 10-40 hp damage (save vs. breath weapon for half damage). A crater 10' in diameter is left behind.

27. A special bush grows with *fire seeds*,

as per the sixth-level priest spell; 1-4 missiles and 2-8 incendiaries can be picked.

28. A minor death (AC -4; 33 hp; MV 24; strikes with a pitchfork for 2-8 hp damage, never misses, always striking first in a round and always pursuing) appears and attacks the bean planter as if he drew the Skull card from the *deck of many things*. Only one such creature appears, but only blows and spells from the planter affect this being.

29. A *wall of thorns* springs up instantly in a 20' X 20' X 20' cube, trapping all creatures in this area.

30. A wondrous, articulate war horse appears and offers the planter of the bean a ride to any destination desired. If the offer is accepted, the horse takes its rider to the floor of Hades' first layer, then disappears. If the offer is not accepted, the horse disappears.

31. An iron golem pops into existence and attacks all nearby living things one by one. In its forehead are set three gems: a *gem of brightness*, a *gem of seeing*, and a gem worth 5,000 gp.

32. A *chariot of Sustarre* (as per the seventh-level cleric spell) is conjured to serve the planter of the bean for 18 turns. Then it explodes in a 6-36 hp *fireball*. Those on the chariot take maximum damage, no save. This could prove even more deadly if the chariot is being used in the sky when it blows up.

33. An ancestral spirit of the bean



planter is summoned. If the DM feels the planter has been faithful to his alignment, the ghostly ancestor will reward his descendant with 10,000 experience points. Otherwise, the spirit will strip away a like amount from the planter and give warning for the planter to change his ways.

34. A single campfire springs forth. Its flames are blue but otherwise normal.

35. A huge and gaudy marble fountain, decorated with nymphs and dolphins, rises from the earth, spraying water high into the air. A few copper coins (2-5) can be found in its basin. The fountain ceases after 2-12 rounds. If cast indoors, the fountain fills the room in which it appears, to a height of 20'.

36. A *creeping doom* crawls forth and moves in a random direction, attacking all creatures who do not escape its wrath. Beyond the initial 80 yards, the insect mass loses 50 of its number for every 10 yards it travels.

37. An extradimensional creature appears as if an *iron flask* were opened. It is very angry, totally hostile, and has maximum hit points. If "empty" is rolled on the table, roll again until a creature turns up; in this case, the monster is only an illusion.

38. A *well of many worlds* opens up in the ground. It can be picked up and carried away.

39. A hostile earth elemental (AC 2; MV 6; HD 16; hp 80; #AT 1; Dmg 4-32; THAC0 7; SD +2 or better weapon to hit) is con-

jured. To make matters worse, the planter of the bean and the elemental swap mental consciousnesses. Thus, the planter's body will go about pummeling people with his fists, while the planter must make do with an elemental form. If either the planter or elemental are destroyed, this malady becomes permanent. Player and DM creativity must be used to remedy the situation.

40. A hole in the ground opens up. Out crawls a wyvern with 500 gp gems for eyes, the ability to *detect invisible objects*, and the ability to breathe a *cone of cold* (for 6d4 + 6 hp damage) once every other round. When slain, the creature transforms into harmless blue smoke; the gems are left behind.

41. Sixteen thick and thorny vines crawl from the ground and, with evil sentience, seek out victims. The vines are 40' long and AC 4, have 12 hp each, and wrap around and constrict their victims, inflicting 2-8 hp damage every round after the first successful attack.

42. Flowers shoot up from the ground for 120 yards around the planted bean. On the following round, they emit clouds of magical pollen. All creatures in the area fall instantly asleep for 1-12 rounds (no save allowed). Some of these creatures (2-5, chosen randomly) will each be granted a *limited wish* of their own design, stemming from their dreams. Have the players describe their characters' dreams

without knowing the consequences, then tailor the results accordingly.

43. Appearing from the ground to attack the bean planter is a young adult red dragon. If slain, a magical red ruby will be found in the muscle of the dragon's heart. This ruby acts as a *wand of fireballs*, fully charged.

44. A cloud of *solid fog*, 120 yards in diameter and 20 yards high, rises from the earth, lasting 20 rounds or until dispersed. Just 1-20 rounds later, a *death fog* spell rises from the earth, lasting another 20 rounds and having the same dimensions.

45. An enchanted heavy catapult appears. It is +1 to attack and has double normal range. It will fire by itself every other round, requiring people only to load it. The catapult will also shrink upon command to 1" in height. Once per day, it can hurl a *ball lightning* missile (4-48 hp damage; see *ring of shooting stars* for details).

46. A huge hemispherical chunk of ground, 150 yards in radius about the bean, rips itself free from the earth and floats away. Characters standing on it are possibly stranded several hundred feet above the ground or are carried to a foreign land.

47. Nothing seems to happen. If the planter digs up the bean again, he will discover a nugget of gold worth 50 gp. Further excavation proves this site to be a

Continued on page 116



CONVENTION CALENDAR

Convention Calendar Policies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* indicates a product produced by a company other than TSR. Inc. Most product names are trademarks owned by the companies publishing those products. The use of the name of any product without mention of its trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status.

DRAGON CON '91, July 12-14

GA

This SF/F gaming convention will be held at the Atlanta Hilton and Towers in Atlanta, Ga. Guests include Piers Anthony, Philip Jose Farmer, L. Sprague and Catherine de Camp, Margaret Weis, Tracy Hickman, George Alec Effinger, Stan Bruns, Jack Crain, Mike Jittlov, Frank Miller, and Al Williamson. Events include role-playing, strategic, miniatures, and computer games, with panels, demos, open gaming, a writers' workshop, a costume contest, an art show and print shop, videos, Japanimation, a con suite, auctions, filking, and weapons demos. Registration: \$30. Send an SASE to: DRAGON CON '91, Box 47696, Atlanta GA 30362; or call: (404) 925-2813 anytime. Advance memberships are available by AMEX, VISA, or MasterCard through Ticketmaster at: (404) 249-6400.

II-KHAN, July 12-14

CO

This convention, previously known as I-KHAN, will be held at the Holiday Inn North in Colorado Springs, Colo. The guest of honor will be Gordon R. Dickson. Events include AD&D®, CAR WARS*, WARHAMMER 40,000*, SKY GALLEONS OF MARS*, and BATTLETECH* games, with open gaming, movies, a dealers' room, a banquet, a masquerade, a miniatures-painting "khantest," and a costume "khantest." Registration: \$20, plus a \$1 fee per event. Write to: Miniatures Wargamers' Guild, 7040 S. Hwy. 85-87, Fountain CO 80717; or call Perry: (719) 391-8318.

QUINCON VI, July 12-14

IL

This convention will be held at the Roadway Inn in Quincy, Ill. Guest of honor is Lester Smith. Events include RPGA™ tournaments, AD&D®, RUNEQUEST*, CHILL*, WARHAMMER 40,000*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, JOHNNY REB*, SPACE: 1889*, SKY GALLEONS OF MARS*, BATTLETECH*, WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLE-PLAY *, and CIVILIZATION* games. Registration: \$5/day, or \$12/weekend. Send an SASE to: QUINCON VI, c/o Quincy Hobby Center, 3632 Maine, Quincy IL 62301; or call: (217) 223-8498 days.

DOVERCON VII, July 13-14

NH

This convention will be held at the University of New Hampshire campus Memorial Union Building in Durham, N.H. Guests include GURPS* game authors Walter Millikan and Steffan O'Sullivan. Events include several RPGA™ tournaments, and miniatures and artwork competitions. Registration: \$20/weekend, or \$15/Saturday and \$10/Sunday. Dealers and game masters are welcome. Write to: DOVERCON VII, PO. Box 753 Dover NH 03820.

U-CONII '91, JULY 19-21

*

NOTE: This convention was originally scheduled for May 19-21, but had to be rescheduled.

The organizers apologize for any inconvenience.

This convention will be held at the University Center on the campus of the University of Ottawa, Ontario. Events include live-action role-playing, Japanimation, a miniatures-painting contest, and all types of role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$7 Canadian/day, or \$20 Canadian/weekend. Housing is provided by the university. Write to: G.D. Bowler, 155 O'Conner, Apt. #17, Ottawa, Ontario, CANADA K2P 1T3; or call: (613) 236-9235.

LAGACON 11, July 20

PA

The Lebanon Area Gamers' Assoc., will host this convention at Kasper's Arc, north of Lebanon, Pa. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH*, ASL*, and AXIS & ALLIES* games. Registration: \$5 in advance, or \$7.50 at the door. Write to: Lebanon Area Gamers' Assoc., 806 Cumberland St., Lebanon PA 17042; or call evenings at: (717) 274-6392.

HUFFCON/ADVENTURERS' INN

July 20-21

CA

This convention will be held in the California Ballroom in Modesto, Calif. Events include tournaments and open gaming, costume contests, demos, dealers, and refreshments. Registration: \$20 at the door. Write to: Adventurers' Inn, the ICON, PO. Box 3669, Turlock CA 95381.

ATLANTA FANTASY FAIR XVII

July 26-28

GA

This convention will be held at the Atlanta Hilton and Towers in Atlanta, Ga. Write to: Atlanta Fantasy Fair, 4175 Eliza Ct., Lithonia GA 30058; or call: (404) 985-1230.

CAMELOT III, July 26-28

AL

The Huntsville Area Gamers & Role-Players are sponsoring this SF/Fantasy convention to be held at the Huntsville Hilton and Towers in Huntsville, Ala. Guest of honor is Larry Elmore. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, TALISMAN*, AXIS & ALLIES*, TOP SECRET/S.I.T.M., SPELLJAMMER™, and CYBERPUNK* games. Other activities include films, a masquerade, dances, an art show and auction open gaming, and a dealers' room. Registration: \$20 preregistered, or \$25 at the door. Write to: CAMELOT III, c/o H.A.G.A.R., PO. Box 14242, Huntsville AL 35815; or call: (205) 534-2531.

IMPACT I, July 26-28

NE

This SF/F gaming and comics convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Central in Omaha, Nebr. Guests include Scott Heine (Hero Games), J. R. Daniels, and Gary DeLamatre. Events include gaming, an art room and auction, an electronics room, a dealers' room, videos, an "alien prom" party (raising funds for the Omaha Food Bank-bring a can or box of food), a hospitality suite, a masquerade, and a live-action role-playing murder-mystery game. Registration: \$18/weekend, \$6/Friday or Sunday, or \$12/Saturday. Dealers are welcome. Send an SASE to: IMPACT, PO. Box 4486, Omaha NE 68104.

POCONO GAMES DAY, July 27

PA

This gaming convention will be held at the Sheraton-Pocono Inn in Stroudsburg, Pa. Events include AD&D®, SHADOWRUN*, and EURO-RAILS* tournaments with prizes going to the top players, plus many more role-playing, board, and war games. Registration: \$4.50 per four-hour time slot, or \$9/day. Write to: POCONO GAMES DAY, c/o Ray George, 107 N. 8th St., Easton PA; or call Ray at: (215) 252-6616. No collect calls, please.

♦ indicates an Australian convention.
‡ indicates a Canadian convention.
§ indicates a European convention.

CANGAMES '91, August 2-5

This convention will be held at the Skyline Hotel in Ottawa, Ontario. Events include many role-playing, miniatures, and board games. Other activities include a game auction and a dealers' area. Family discount prices are available. Write to: CANGAMES '91, Box 3358, Station D, Ottawa, Ontario, CANADA K1P 6H8.

DALLASCON '91, August 2-5

TX

This convention will be held at the LeBaron Hotel in Dallas, Tex. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH*, WARHAMMER 40,000*, and AXIS & ALLIES* games. Other activities include a dealers' room and an auction. Registration: \$14/weekend preregistered, or \$16/weekend at the door. Write to: DALLASCON, PO. Box 867623, Piano TX 75086.

DIPCON XXIV, August 2-4

*

The annual DIPLOMACY* championships of North America will be held at the University of Toronto-Scarborough campus in Toronto, Ontario. Other activities include board games and variant DIPLOMACY games. Registration: \$20 Canadian. Write to: Doug Acheson, Unit 5, Suite 330, 320 Yonge St., Barrie, Ontario, CANADA, L4N 4C8.

HEXAGON '91, August 2-4

AZ

This convention will be held at the Caravan Inn in Phoenix, Ariz. Activities include role-playing, board, military miniatures, and fantasy miniatures games, as well as RPGA™ tournaments. Write to: HEXACON, PO. Box 11743, Phoenix AZ 85062; or call: (602) 498-1759.

RIVERCON XVI, August 2-4

KY

This convention will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Louisville, Ky. Guests include Lois McMaster Bujold and Emma Bull. Activities include a large hucksters' room, an art show and auction, a masquerade, videos, gaming, parties, a hospitality suite, and children's activities. Registration: \$18 until July 15, or \$25 thereafter. Write to: RIVERCON, PO. Box 58009, Louisville KY 40269-0009.

GEN CON® GAME FAIR 1991

August 8-11

WI

Join in the fun of the worlds largest gaming convention at the MECCA Convention Center in Milwaukee, Wis. Take part in over 500 role-playing game events, sit in on informative and entertaining seminars and demos, visit the worlds largest game auction, browse through the art show, and shop yourself silly in the huge dealers' area. To register, write to: Game Fair HQ, PO. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147.

COMMUNICON '91, August 9-11

*

This SF/fantasy convention will be held at the Chipman House of Acadia University in Wolfville, N.S. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH*, and PENDRAGON* games, with movies, a masquerade ball, an art show and auction, comics, and fanzines. Tickets: \$15 Canadian (club rate), \$17 (advance rate), \$20 (at the door). Write to: COMSTAR Society, 198A Oakdene Ave., Kentville, N.S., CANADA B4N 2C1; or call Brian at: (902) 679-0563.

COLLECTOR'S EXPO, August 10

TN

This convention will be held at the Ramada Inn-Opryland in Nashville, Tenn. Events include TALISMAN*, AXIS & ALLIES*, and open gam-

ing. Game masters welcome. Other activities include a fantasy art contest, door prizes, a video area, and a dealers' room. Admission: \$1. Write to: Dana Pinkard, c/o Legends, 2549 Redmond Circle, Rome GA 30161; or call: (404) 234-8210.

ORGANIZED KAHN-FUSION III

August 10-11

PA

This gaming convention will be held at the New Villa Inn in New Cumberland, Pa. Activities include a dealers' area, a miniature-figure painting contest, and over 60 role-playing, board, and unusual games. Space is limited. Write to: M. Foner's Games Only Emporium, 200 3rd St., New Cumberland PA; or call: (717) 774-6676.

REALMS OF ROLEPLAY III

August 16-18

This convention, organized by TRoA, will be held at Tarnhojskolen, Aalborg, Denmark. Guest of honor is Mads Lunau Madsen, the Danish RPG designer. Events include AD&D® 2nd Ed., ELFQUEST*, HIGH NOON*, MERP*, BUCK ROGERS® XXV™, CALL OF CTHULHU*, CYBER-SPACE*, SPACE HULK*, and WARHAMMER FANTASY BATTLE* games. Registration: DKK 60/weekend, or DKK 30/day. GMs are welcome. Write to: Realm of Adventurers, Hvidkildevej 20 A, 9220 Aalborg Oest, DENMARK; or call: +45 98 15 95 82.

BUBONICON 23, August 23-25

NM

This convention will be held at the Albuquerque Four Seasons Inn in Albuquerque, N.M. Guests include Simon Hawke, Arlan Andrews, and Alan Gutierrez. Activities include readings, panels, movies, a masquerade, filking, hucksters, and parties. Registration: \$20 until August 5th, or \$23 thereafter. Write to: NMSE Conference, PO. Box 37257, Albuquerque NM 87176.

GATEWAY 11, August 30-September 2

CA

All types of family, strategy, and adventure board, role-playing, miniatures, and computer gaming will be available. Catch the bargains at the flea markets, auction, and exhibitor areas. See seminars and panels with our guests. Write to: STRATEGICON, PO. Box 3849, Torrance CA 90510-3849; or call: (213) 326-9440.

NANCON XIII, August 30-September 2

TX

This convention will be held at the J.W. Marriott hotel in Houston, Tex. Tournaments will include D&D®, BATTLETECH*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, PARANOIA*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, DIPLOMACY*, and CHAMPIONS* games. Other activities include an auction, a large open gaming area, and a dealers' room. Special hotel rates are available; mention the convention. Registration (by mail only): \$18/weekend before Aug. 10, or \$22 thereafter. Send check or money order with SASE to: NANCON XIII, PO. Box 631462, Houston TX 77263-1462.

PACIFICON '91

August 30-September 2

CA

This convention will be held at the Dunfey Hotel in San Mateo, Calif. Activities include role-playing and board games, a flea market, seminars, movies, painting contests, auctions, SCA demos, and open gaming. Write to: PACIFICON, PO. Box 2625, Fremont CA 94536.

SPLITRAEF VII, September 6-8

*

This convention will be held at Sankt Hans Skole, Skibusjæv 188, Odense, Denmark. Events include AD&D® 2nd Ed., CALL OF CTHULHU*, VIKING*, and BLOOD BOWL* games. Registration:

DKK 60/weekend (\$10). Write to: Benny Miller, Solfaldsvej 12, stuen 4, DK-5000 Odense C, DENMARK; or call: +45 66 12 05 81.

GAMEFEST '91, Part 3

September 13-15

IL

The Gamemaster's Guild of Waukegan, Ill. presents this convention at Friends' Hobby Shop. Events include miniatures games and fantasy and adventure role-playing games. Registration: \$6/day, or \$9/weekend. RPGA™ Network and HMGS members will receive discounts. Write to: Gamemaster's Guild of Waukegan, c/o Friends' Hobby Shop, 1411 Washington, Waukegan IL 60085; or call: (708) 336-0790.

TACTICON '91, September 31-15

CO

This convention will be held at the Ramada Hotel of Denver/Boulder, Colo. Events include games, RPGA™ tournaments, auctions, figure-painting contests, seminars and demos, and a live-action role-playing game. Registration: \$15/weekend preregistered. Write to: Denver Gamers' Assoc., PO. Box 440058, Aurora CO 80044; or call: (303) 363-8967.

EMPEROR'S 21st BIRTHDAY

September 14

IN

This convention will be held at the Century Center in South Bend, Ind. Events include an RPGA™ AD&D® tournament, Napoleonic miniatures games, and a dealers' area. Registration: \$7. Write to: Mark Schumaker, PO. Box 252, Elkhart IN 46515; or call: (219) 294-7019.

CAFE CASABLANCA, September 27-29

CT

This live-action role-playing game convention will be held at the Days Hotel in West Haven, Conn. Players will take the roles of characters from movies like *Casablanca*, *The Maltese Falcon*, and others. Registration: \$35 preregistered (\$30 for ILF members). Write to: Cruel Hoax Prod., c/o Lawrence Schick, 226 N. 2nd St., New Freedom PA 17349; or call: (717) 235-2929.

VALLEYCON XVI, September 27-29

MN

This convention will be held at the Regency Inn in Moorhead, Minn. Guests include Margaret Weis and Erin McKee. Activities include an art show and auction, video rooms, RPGs, panels and workshops, a banquet, and a live game show. Registration: \$5/adults, \$4/13-17 y/o, \$3/3-12 y/o, preregistered; children under 3 free. Dealers are welcome. Write to: VALLEY CON XVI, PO. Box 7202, Fargo ND 58108.

NOWSCON '91, September 28-29

OH

This convention, sponsored by the Northern Ohio Wargaming Society (NOWS), will be held at the Brookpark National Guard Armory in Brookpark, Ohio. Events include an RPGA™ tournament, AD&D®, American Civil War miniatures, and other games. Other activities include a dealers' area and a game auction. Registration: \$15/weekend or \$10/day, both of which include a one-year membership in the NOWS. Event fees are included. Write to: NOWSCON '91, PO. Box 29116, Parma OH 44129.

CON-CEPT '91, October 5-6

*

This convention will be held at the Nouvel Hotel in Montreal, Quebec. Guests include Diane Duane and Peter Morwood. Activities include panels, exhibits, a dealers' room, a masquerade, an art show, an auction, and gaming. Registration: \$20 before Sept. 21, or \$23 at the door. Write to: CON-CEPT '91, PO. Box 405, Station H, Montreal, Quebec, CANADA H3G 2L1; or call (days): (514) 453-9455.

TOLEDO GAMING CONVENTION IX**October 6-7****OH**

This convention will be held at the University of Toledo, Scott Park campus. Over 150 role-playing, strategy, tactical, and miniatures games will be run. Other activities include an auction, demos, painting contests, nonstop movies, open gaming, and a dealers' area. Send an SASE to: Toledo Gaming Convention IX, c/o Mind Games, 2115 N. Reynolds Rd., Toledo OH 43615.

NECRONOMICON, October 11-13 FL

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Airport in Tampa, Fla. Guests include Piers Anthony, Andre Norton, Richard Lee Byers, and Joseph Green. Activities include a banquet, a fan cabaret, panels, an art show and auction, a dealers' room, dances, and an auction to benefit Wildlife Rescue. Registration: \$15 until Sept. 15; \$20 or \$8/day thereafter. Write to: NECRONOMICON '91, PO. Box 2076, Riverview FL 33569.

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

EDITORIAL POSITIONS AVAILABLE

TSR, Inc., the world's leading publisher of role-playing games, is searching for qualified individuals to join the staff as game editors. If you have a degree in English, editorial experience, and a thorough knowledge of the core AD&D® system (familiarity with one or more game worlds is a plus), submit your resume and, if possible, copies of your published work to the address below. Selected candidates will receive an editorial test to be completed and returned to the company; qualified people with promising test results will be chosen for

interviews. Preference is given to those with experience in the role-playing game industry, but all who are qualified will be considered. If you possess these qualifications and would like to be considered for an on-staff editorial position with TSR, Inc., send your resume and a business-size SASE to:

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Think Cold!

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**For a registration form write: RPGA™ Network, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva, WI, 53147
If you want to judge, please list the games you are interested in running.**

Editorial

Continued from page 7

astray, implying causal connections not suggested by the evidence.¹³

The real value of Hick's book is that it provides the background study necessary for people to come to grips with everything they have heard, and it supplies them a frame of reference in which to deal with it. Chapter six of his book discusses Patricia Pulling and her efforts to discredit gaming. Hicks succinctly points out the vast holes in Ms. Pulling's understanding of games, statistics, and what constitutes evidence of criminal activity. While this book is written with the law-enforcement professional in mind, it is invaluable for dealing with the assault on games and is very readable for the layman.

When all is said and done, we do have to ask ourselves, "Are there people who have trouble handling games?" Sure. We've all seen kids who spend too much time gaming and not enough time studying. The important thing is that in a social game, where people share with each other and become friends, the players build up a support network to help each other. They learn how to cooperate. They learn what is real and what is not, and they deal with the world accordingly.

As game players, we are not abnormal. We are not freaks. We're just regular folks, enjoying a hobby that demands some brain sweat but is no more harmful than a community theatrical group. Games are not for everyone, but that doesn't make them evil or tools of the Devil or violence-desensitization kits.

Oh, yeah, now that I've fantasized about what happened regarding the real-life thief, would I have changed anything? Would I rather have gone for the sword and left the man's blood on my blade? Would I have held him at bay with the fake pistol? Would I have clutched the dagger in my hand and struck silently? Sure, if it had been in a role-playing game, I might have done all of those things.

But this wasn't a game.

If I had it to do over again, I'd have dialed 911 faster, shut my bedroom door, and hoped like hell the police arrived in time to catch the thief red-handed.

Mike Stackpole

Letters

Continued from page 5

wolves in popular myth and culture. Both books are essential for anyone writing about these monsters or running a fantasy campaign that uses these monsters on a large scale. In closing, I would like to say that it was refreshing to see I was not the only one who felt for a particular type of monster.

Dear Dragon,

I really like kobolds! Ever since I first saw their picture in a friend's *Monster Manual*, I've been drawn to them. Later, when I accidentally bought the *Dungeon Masters Guide* instead of the *Players Handbook*, I came across a picture of a green dragon attacking a poor band of kobolds, and I've pitied them ever since. It's weird why I like kobolds, but when the *Monstrous Compendium* came out, I found a redeeming statement in it that said perhaps kobolds were evil because they were always beaten up by the bigger races. Anyway, I'm now a DM for an after-school group, and I plan to raise the kobold race to new levels. Strangely, even though it's not been a conscious thing, I never seem to have played a gnome character in my life.

Tristan De Buysscher
Holly Springs NC

Dear Dragon,

I've always had a sort of sympathy for rocks (not the large flying birds), because when I was a kid, my big brother would make me be one while he went off to adventure. To this day, I love rocks and am proud of my heritage as a rock.

William J. Keevan
Blue Hill ME

Footnotes

1. Raschke, Carl A. *Painted Black* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1990), p. 185.
2. Ibid., p. 188.
3. Ibid., p. 193.
4. Ibid., p. 188.
5. Ibid., p. 193.
6. *NCTV News*, Vol. 12, No. 1-2, Jan.-Feb. 1991, p. 7.
7. Ibid., p. 8.
8. Ibid., p. 11 and 13.
9. Raschke, *Painted Black*, p. 189.
10. Hoffman, Mark S., ed. *The World Almanac and Book of Facts* 1991 (New York: Pharos Books, 1990), p. 609.
11. Ibid., p. 608.
12. The total U.S. casualties from Operation Desert Storm include 128 killed in action, 18 missing in action, 357 wounded in action, and 101 killed in noncombat-related actions (*Milwaukee Sentinel*, 21 March 1991, no page number available).
13. Hicks, Robert D. *In Pursuit of Satan* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1991), pp. 271-272.

Editor's note: If copies of Robert D. Hicks's book, *In Pursuit of Satan*, are not available in your bookstore, it may be ordered directly from Prometheus Books for \$23.95 (hardbound), plus shipping. For phone orders, call: (800) 421-0351, toll free. Purchases may be made by credit card or check. Ω

Wyvern trouble

Dear Dragon,

I had an interesting problem when I played in a recent AD&D game. Our party was attacked by a male wyvern in rut. To fight him off, our highest-level magic-user turned herself into a wyvern, which made her also in heat (don't ask how, you don't want to know). What is the percent chance of her becoming pregnant? What would the offspring be like? What would happen if the wyvern were female (and in season) and the magic-user were male?

Robby Vogel
Keizer OR

On the other hand, maybe it is possible to love a monster too much. I take back my earlier statement.

Interspecies dating is one of those areas of role-playing that is best left to the DM's whim. Most likely, nothing will happen, but there are Oriental tales of dragons and humans having kids together and we all know about Gilthanias and Silvara in the DRAGONLANCE® Chronicles. Think they had fun? You bet.

I strongly suggest that no matter what the DM decides, he should sit back and smile a lot for the next few months as if something were going to happen. That's all—just smile. It keeps the players and their characters on their toes. Ω

DRAGONMIRTH

"Now, stay alert! A good scout checks out everything thoroughly."



By Michael Ferman

Yamara

DeAr Ms YaMaRa : This is to inform you THAT AS A result OF yoUr STEWARDShIP OF the HeadPiEcE of FrINN, as YOUR FREE GIFT, you haVe bEEN gRANTED ThRee WiShEs. CongrATulations,
- FrINN

Wow!



HA-HA! AT LAST! I'M YAMARA THE MASTER-THEIF!! WATCH OUT WORLD-

"I WISH THAT WHENEVER I STEAL SOMETHING, NO ONE ELSE EVER NOTICES!!"



HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE BAIL.

I STOLE IT.



By Peter Callahan



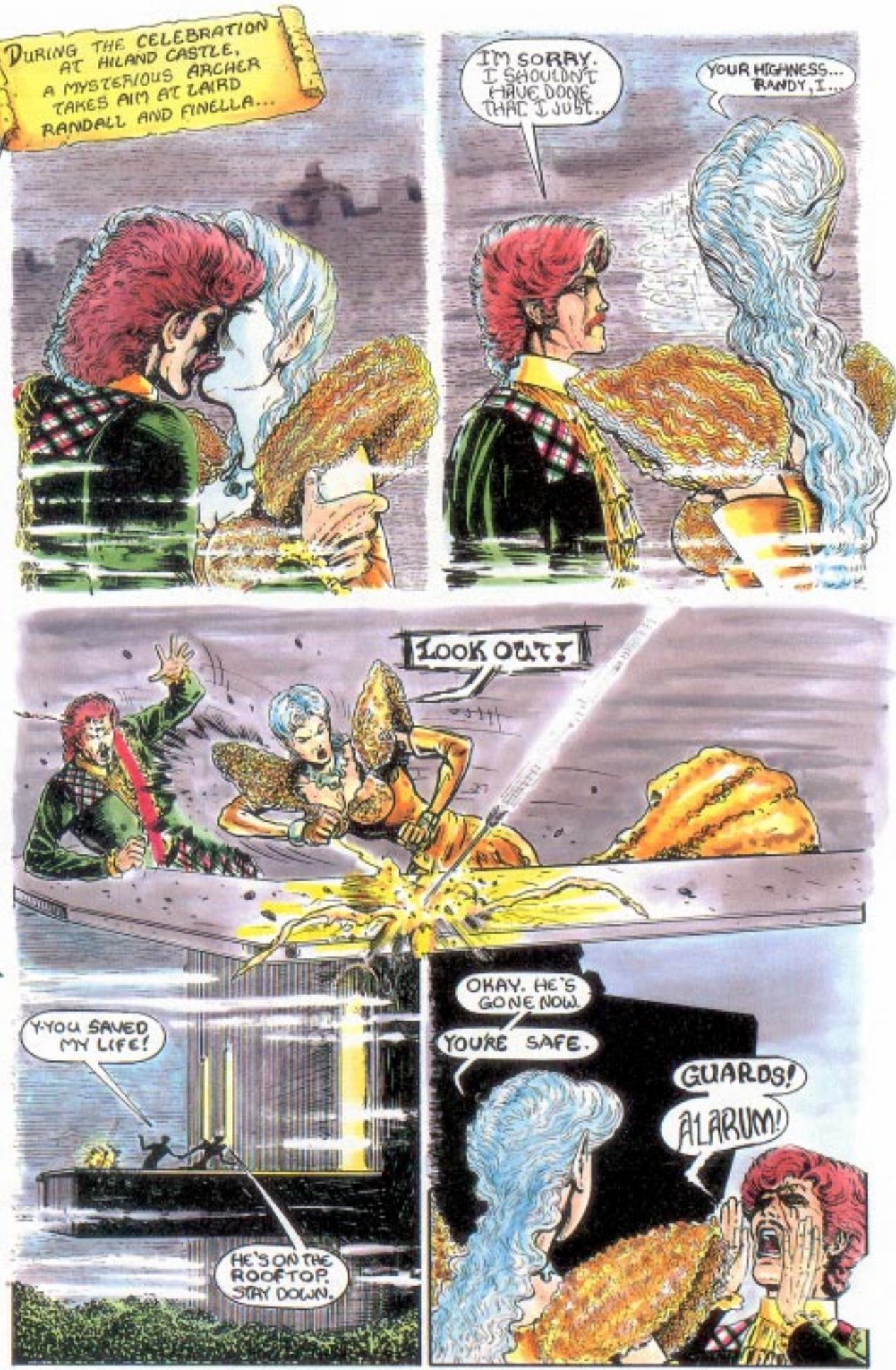
By Rex F. May



"...I KNOW THINGS GET CONFUSING DURING
BATTLE, BUT LET'S TAKE A MOMENT TO THINK...
SHALL WE?..."

THE WESTGATE EMPIRE

TM





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ROBINSON'S WAR

PART 16

DEAD





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At the 1991 GEN CON® Game Fair.

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Palladium Books® spies will be prowling the GEN CON® Game Fair floors every day looking for people who look like loyal Palladium fans. That's right, all you have to do is look like a loyal Palladium Books® fan and some stranger might walk up and hand you a Palladium Mini-Buck® (\$1) or a \$10 dollar Palladium Buck™ (both redeemable at the Palladium Booth toward product).

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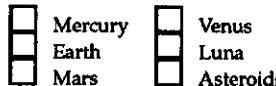
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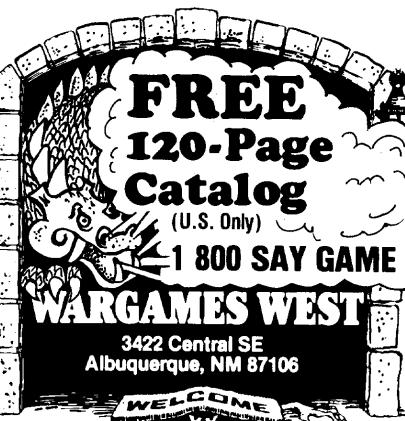
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You may think you'd have to travel to another planet to find a game convention. Finding friends who are also gamers can be a problem, too. Put your scoutsuit away and turn to the Convention Calendar in this magazine. There may be a game convention closer to your home than you'd think — and conventions are a great place to find friends who share your interests. Whether you like board-games, role-playing games, miniature wargames, or just browsing around, a game convention can be all you've hoped for. Plan to attend one soon.

Through the LOOKING GLASS

© 1991 by Robert Bigelow

Photography by Mike Bethke

Figure painting by Keith Piske



Sparrow Reed Fairy (Black Dragon Pewter)

Are gift certificates a dealer's worst nightmare?

With this issue, we are now one-third of the way through the year's busiest convention season. During summer vacation come plans to attend the ORIGIN™ and GEN CON® game fairs, as well as a host of regional cons in the tradition of MICHICON. But a disturbing trend is appearing, bringing the strong possibility of a decrease in the figures and other merchandise available to you at conventions. It is a hotly contested subject.

For a lot of people, myself included, one of the high points of a convention is in touring the dealers' area and seeing the multitude of games and game-related products. Many of the dealers' spaces are reserved by big game companies to showcase their latest products. It's fun to get new things, but you know if you miss them you can always get them at your favorite hobby shop. What you really look for are the small manufacturers and representatives, and their wealth of auxiliary

products that spruce up your games. These small companies produce many items that don't have returns high enough to interest the "big boys." These products include figures for ICE/Hero Game's CHAMPIONS* or TimeLine's MORROW PROJECT* games, modern war games in 25 mm scale, scale buildings, and futuristic vehicles, troops, and spacecraft that can be used in several different SF games. Small games, electronic items, and figure support blocks are produced by one- or two-man companies whose overhead

Miniatures' product ratings

*	Poor
**	Below average
***	Average
****	Above average
*****	Excellent

allows them to attend only a few conventions a year. In the meantime, we are asked to deal with mail order and mail service, which brings a shudder to even the most hardened storekeeper. This is our once- or twice-a-year chance to get to see new stuff.

But now these small companies are being asked to absorb discounts ranging from 25% to 40% per item purchased, thanks to event or game certificates presented for merchandise. In some cases, this means that dealers will actually lose money on sales because their profit exactly matches the discounted amount that the convention redeems. What does this mean? Here's a quick example.

You are a representative for a small American games company that does little business through stores, but you do go to conventions. After paying shipping, you make 25¢ out of every \$1 of merchandise you sell. Your convention expenses are \$1,000, including the drive to the convention but not counting your personal time. You sell \$3,000 worth of product but take in \$1,000 worth of certificates and coupons. You've now lost about \$1,250 on the convention, only part of which can be written off. How many conventions can you attend at this rate?

The picture is grim. As a result of these problems, several figures' dealers who had planned on entering new convention markets have decided to stay where they are and service only their present customers. Other companies are worried that this may be their last year in some places because of increasing expenses and new hidden costs. I've talked to a lot of smaller companies in my positions as both a retailer and a reviewer, and many are worried that such losses may decrease the amount of new products offered.

I encourage you to support these small dealers and keep this column in mind. We all want to see more gaming items available on the market. If you are on the planning commission of a convention and the gift-certificate idea is brought up, think of the long-term effects. If you see a decrease in the number of dealers at your conventions, you need to find out why and do something to change that. It's everybody's hobby, and to get new faces, you may have to make some sacrifices.

On a brighter note, I want to thank the unidentified reader from New York who sent pictures and stats on the British Mk VI AA vehicle, of which GHQ produces a model that I reviewed in issue #165 (page 108). The GHQ version was of a light tank AA, model II; the box that puzzled me on the tanks rear was an ammo storage bin. Four of these tanks were attached to regimental HQ. I did find occasional mention of this tank in some of my other books on the period, but no pictures.

Now, on to the reviews.



Land Dragon with Lizard Rider (Viking Forge)

Reviews

Black Dragon Pewter

Unit 303
2437 Bay Area
Houston TX 77058

#9357—Sparrow Reed Fairy ***

We have been reviewing Black Dragon pieces on a regular basis and have generally been favorably impressed by its pewter pieces. This figure has shown that a relatively good company may need to strive for better results.

The pewter figure submitted for review is approximately 130 mm tall. The casting represents a fairy sitting with her legs dangling and her feet rocking to and fro. The fairy is posed without clothes, but the anatomically questionable areas have been smoothed over.

The fairy's legs are angled out from her body at just short of 45°. Her legs are shaped correctly, but the polishing tools have left angular ridges running vertically. My model also has pitting on the top of the left foot and a large pit on the inside of the right ankle and heel. Both hands are good, but the left arm is obviously joined to the body, and an uncleaned, unpolished area is on the right side of the body under the arm. Further "dark" areas are on the left hip and central body. The torso would be good without the visual interference of the arm.

The face is, at first glance, strange. On close observation, the figure appears to be either sucking on the left side of her mouth or sneering. Her nose is well done, and eyebrows are visible. The cheeks have a slightly angular look that complements the deep-set eyes. These eyes are actually small jewels, and they present new prob-

lems. The jewels are glued on as if looking straight ahead. The head is turned slightly to the right, and you can immediately see that the jewels do not fit the eye sockets. It looks almost like each eye is hanging out slightly or some kind of strange contacts are present. Her hair is curly and long, hanging down in back almost to her waist. Parts of her hair look matted, and a slight line is visible on the back of her head.

The fairy's large wings are sculpted to resemble butterfly wings, with the upper and lower tips of the left wing curling slightly. Unfortunately, there are machine marks in numerous places, defects on both lower corners, and poor blending of veins in back.

I would not recommend this figure to anyone with a curio cabinet in a well-traveled area, or to anyone with inquisitive children or animals. I had my figure on a table ledge to review it when one of my cats walked up and hit the dangling feet. The figure immediately rocked forward and fell off the table, striking the cat. Luckily, the figure fell only a foot and a half and merely startled my cat. Had the figure been higher and bumped by a child, it could have caused injuries. Vibrations also cause the figure to move.

With a figure this big, even one of pewter, I expected more detail and better molding. This figure looked good on first glance but failed the test of close observation. At \$75, this is not necessarily a bargain, but it is impressive in size and in its difference from standing figures.

Late note: It has now been over two months since the fairy arrived, and it has taken over a corner in a display cabinet. During that time, the case has been bumped by several people (including me, and I am not small), and the figure has yet

to fall off her shelf. Some people have made inquiries about purchasing the piece. Looking at the figure straight on with other figures present, her expression does seem to change and the deficiencies do seem to disappear (or at least become less noticeable). The piece still has problems, but it does present an interesting illusion given time.

The Viking Forge

1727 Theresa Lane
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FM-64—Land Dragon with Lizard ****

Once in a while, we game masters want a new monster to spring on an unsuspecting party. We usually look to one of the major manufacturers and find something, but occasionally we come across an off-the-wall piece from another company that fits the bill; then we can spread terror properly.

The 25 mm lead figures submitted for review consist of a two-piece dragon and a rider. The dragon measures 112 mm from nose to tail. Its face is vaguely reptilian, with flared nostrils and a beak. Two fangs extend down from the upper jaw, and a row of teeth extends around the entire mouth. A tongue flicking out and eyes covered by hard overlapping plates finish the head, except for two small depressions that could be ears. A long neck extends to a small body, against which are tucked unused wings. The body looks comical, resembling a plucked turkey with ostrich-like legs. Each leg ends in a three-toed foot and spur claw, showing good muscle detail. The long tail has a stinger at the end. The entire body is covered with scales, except for plates on the belly. There is a slight mold line along the tail. One problem is that you must work a little on the tail-to-body joint to make the two dragon parts fit together well.

The rider is reptilian, complete with snakelike head and a tongue that hangs from the left side of his fanged mouth. Rows of small scales appear around his beady eyes and ear depressions. The rider holds a spear in his left hand, while his right hand rests on his knee. Hide boots start just below his knees. A scaled tail wraps around to the left. The rest of his body is covered by a hide vest secured by a rope belt. The vest shows the quality of this casting. The vest is actually raised away from the arm slightly and shows space between it and the arm. It looks like clothing, not like part of the rider's skin.

While the mount may not invoke terror with its comical appearance, the tail stinger and bite may change the characters' minds. Several of these mounts could cause some trouble and ruin the characters' day. The only problem with this figure is the \$8 price tag. If the figure had a lower price, it would be an extremely good value.

Jacobite Fantasy

c/o Simtac Inc.
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FWE 007—High Elf with Spear ****

Fifteen millimeter figures have long been the scale of choice for people who have limited amounts of space but want large troop engagements. Most rules sets allow you to get almost twice the number of 15 mm troops onto a given battlefield as 25 mm troops, and you still have area for maneuvering zones. The 15 mm figures have a problem with wide gamer acceptance thanks to the lack of variety in 15 mm monsters and troops and a decided lack of availability in hobby shops.

Jacobite is working to change this by spreading its line through local stores. These figures are part of a growing list of 15 mm pieces that cover many of the players' favorite characters. These high elf figures present a different vision of a favored player-character race. They look like a cross between a Saxon and a Spanish conquistador. Each wears a one-piece breastplate with metal sleeves hinged at the elbow and wrist. The legs are covered by overlapping plate, ending in high boots topped by a puffed fringe.

Twelve figures come in the elven pack. There is very little flash on these models, what little there is being along the mold lines and at the armpits and boot tops. This flash can be taken off with a file or small knife. All mold lines are even. The facial area not covered by a helmet or nose guard is detailed but not extremely so. Still, detail is good enough that the area where the scabbard is bound to the shoulder and belt is clear. The most visible problems are the spear tips, which did not come out on four of the figures, and the bases, and which had flash on the bottoms and needed to be filed to stand level. This is a good pack of elves, even if they are a bit strangely dressed. They're a good buy at \$3.

FUD 003—Undead with Sword * * * ½

The undead with sword is a simple figure. It is a skeleton holding a sword in its right hand and a shield on its left arm. A cloak stretches from shoulders to ground and provides the support for this bony wonder. The skeleton is good for 15 mm, but it has ribs indented on its upper left chest just under the clasp pin. The arms and legs are fuller than I would expect, but this is needed to support the figure. Two bad points about this figure are: 1) The cape seems to blend into the shield and sword; and 2) The hands were bent in different ways on almost every figure (at least three broke while being fixed). One good point is the skull detail. Each skull appears to be partially flat on one side, and the eye and nose cavities are especially deep, adding to the skull's appearance. The figure is not up to 25 mm standards, but it is definitely a good add-



Elves and undead (Jacobite Fantasy)

on bad guy and is cheap at 12 for \$3.

Linka Products USA

Robbins Fantasy Miniatures
1407 Trent Court
Lindenworld NJ 08021-1921

L7—Castle Gatehouse *****

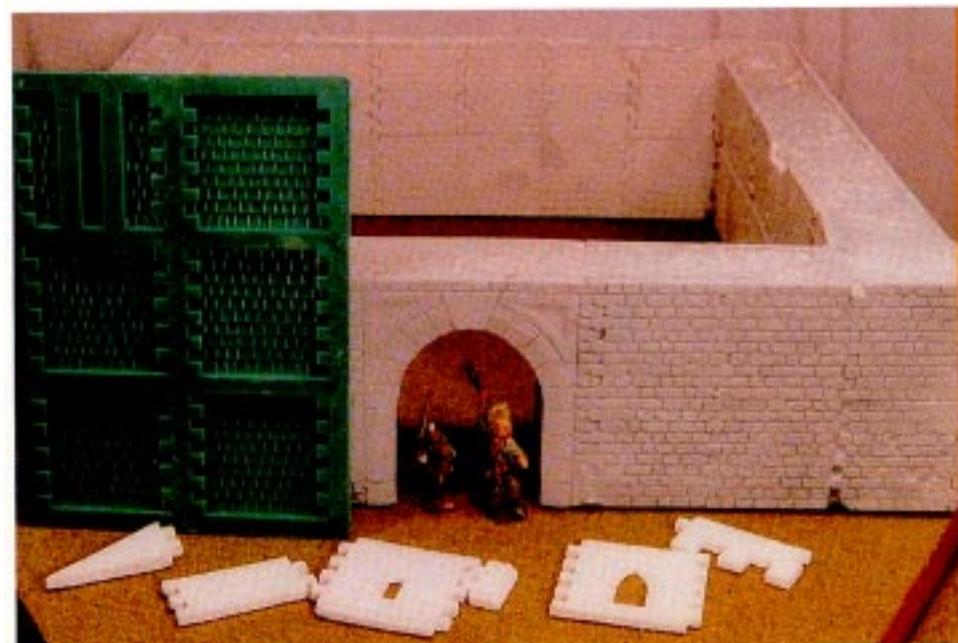
Linka has been in business a long time, but its products have only recently become available in the U.S. This company sells scenery-related structure kits that are unique. With these kits, you not only assemble the parts to build a finished product, but you mold the pieces as well!

The castle gatehouse is reminiscent of a late medieval or early Renaissance town gatehouse that has been modified to keep up with the times. The kit contains six rubber molds, gargoyles and piping in plastic, stained-glass windows done on acetate, and two pounds of plaster with premade columns and instructions. The cavities in the rubber molds contain areas

to pour wall or roof sections, with doors, windows, arrow slits, and stairs. The instructions are good, and the possibilities are endless.

Structures can be built using this kit to either 15 mm or 25 mm standards, with only a little advance planning. You can join the walls together using the simple interlocking block sections built onto every casting. The sections can be assembled using household adhesive, and the building accepts paint well after being semi-sealed.

You should know some things about this almost perfect system of scenery and city design. Read the directions carefully before you start, and follow the guides they offer for molding. Find a source of dental plaster or hydrocal before working with the kit. You will probably use up the plaster in the kit while learning the proper way to work with the solutions. Examine finished sections and carefully figure out what you need for wall sections before you assemble buildings not covered in the



Castle Gatehouse (Linka Products USA)

instructions, so you have what you need. You might also want to buy extra wall molds so the major parts get built faster; you can pour a bunch of walls, then go off and do other things while they dry.

There are also a few limitations with using this product. You should wear a mask when you work with the powder, especially if you have respiratory problems. The process is messy, so you need a flat, dry, protected area that you can cover with plastic. Don't try to work or pour if the temperature where you are pouring is under 55°F or over 60% humidity. And you must have patience; the contents of the mold will break if taken out too soon. I also suggest that you glue connecting wall sections to a piece of styrofoam or artist's board to reinforce the walls for long-lasting structures.

The initial price of the kit is high, usually over \$60 (see below), but it's worth it in the long run when you sit down and figure how many different buildings you can make. Hydrocal usually costs no more than \$1 per pound, and, with careful handling, the molds will last for years. I have some molds made in the middle 1970s for model railroading, and they are still good. Just don't heat the molds over 100°F.

Note: We have just been notified by the distributor for the U.S. that the price has dropped, but we don't know by how much. I will let you know what it is when I find out.

Ral Partha Enterprises

5938 Carthage Court
Cincinnati OH 45212

RP 11-426—Elementals of Fire and Earth

RP 11-427—Elementals of Air and Water

Ral Partha now presents us with 25 mm lead miniatures of elementals. The figures in these two packs represent all four clas-

sical elements: fire, earth, air, and water.

Fire is 50 mm tall and appears wind-swept. A very visible mold line goes across the base, up the side of the flames, and across the front of the figure's top. You could leave most of the flash and line alone, but you will have to work the top carefully so as not to damage the flow of the sculpted flames. The eyes appear as hollow areas in the flames.

Earth is sculpted to look like a rough pile of stone taking a humanoid form. It has no facial features other than eye sockets. No mold lines are visible, and the rest of the base looks a little like a lava field. The figure is well done and would be close to 50 mm tall if standing.

Air is a whirling tornado with almost full facial features. The figure starts from a narrow base, rising to broad shoulders with a small face below shoulder level. Unfortunately, this figure is the worst of these elementals, with flash along and under both arms and a very visible mold line going from one side of the base to the other. The lines are easily removed in most places, but care should be taken with the right arm when removing flash. There are also knobs in various places, but these are part of the sculpture and not "extras!"

Water looks like it should have a small surfer on its crest. Mold lines are present, but they are well worked into the sculpture. The face and eyes look like air pockets.

These figures are basic and rough, as fits their natures. I would have expected them to be somewhat larger and more imposing, but they fit the bill at \$5.50 per pack of two.

RP 31-027—Unicorn

**** ½

Unicorns are favorites of gamers, and unicorn figures show up in droves on the miniatures' market. It is not uncommon for a miniatures company to produce more than one unicorn type.

As far as unicorn figures go, this one is in the medium-size category. The figure

would be just over 40 mm high standing with a body 29 mm long. This animal gives a feeling of being petite. The miniature has some flash around its tail and left rear leg, and some light flash along the mold line in other places that can be cleaned easily with a hobby knife or file. The mane, tail, and beard detail are excellent; individual braids of hair are well defined. In its rearing position, it could be used in a diorama, destroying some low, evil being.

This figure is well worth its \$2 price tag. Combined with the larger unicorn figure from Grenadier that we received a couple of months ago or the other unicorn from Ral Partha (in the AD&D® miniatures series), you could have a great mare and stallion set.

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Unicorn (Ral Partha)



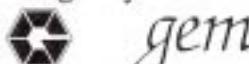
Elementals (Ral Partha)

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101 Surprises

Continued from page 97

suitable gold mine. Serious digging may be costly, however, and also means encounters with beings not happy to see miners (angry duergar, drow, purple worms, etc.). See "In a Cavern, In a Canyon," in DRAGON issue #152, for details on mining in fantasy games.

48. Nothing apparently happens, but two invisible stalkers of maximum hit points are conjured. They follow the bean planter and attempt to steal away the *bag of beans* at the most opportune moment. Resistance causes the stalkers to attack.

49. A *Leomund's secure shelter* springs forth. Inside are 6-9 trolls of different types and maximum hit points who consider this their home. If the DM so desires, a trapdoor in the floorboards of the shelter leads to an extradimensional dungeon of the DM's own design.

50. Only 2-5 rounds after the bean is planted, a *Daern's instant fortress* grows upward so quickly that all within 10 yards sustain 10-100 hp damage from its growth. Whoever planted the bean may command the fortress's entrance to open or close. The *fortress* is permanent but can never be moved or shrunk to its cube form.

51. A number of toads (1d4 + 8) crawl from the earth. Whenever a toad is touched, it will *polymorph* into a random monster (check the *Monstrous Compendium* and roll on the *monster summoning* spell

table of the appropriate level for the party). Every third round, a toad will *polymorph* without being touched.

52. Immediately after the bean is planted, a huge tent (30' X 30' X 10') springs up, enclosing all creatures within its volume. The tent is furnished lavishly with velvet pillows, golden lamps, porcelain vases, exotic tapestries, etc. and is pervaded with the scent of rich spices. All creatures in the tent are subject to *sympathy*, as per the 8th-level wizard spell; those failing to save vs. spells will not leave the tent. Anything removed from the tent turns into scraps of paper, sticks, rocks, etc. unless removed by a thief, in which case they stay normal. Individual items have values of 100-1,000 gp each. Each thief may remove as many items from the tent as he has levels of experience as a thief; thereafter, items turn into debris as noted previously. The tent vanishes after one day.

53. A mass of 4-24 laughing skulls, flying on batlike wings, spring from the ground and surround the bean planter. The demonic laughter prevents any sleep or spell-casting requiring verbal components. For each day of sleeplessness, the planter takes a -1 penalty on attacks, defenses, and saving throws. The skulls cannot be attacked by any means except one, chosen by the DM (this method may be uncovered by divination spells). The skulls remain for 2-8 days, then fly away. They will not interfere in combat, though some beings might avoid a victim so affected.

54. The bean planter receives an unhatched dragon's egg of a random type. It will hatch in 2-12 hours if kept warm.

55. A wishing well springs up. It will grant a *wish* to the first person who tosses in a coin and to a second person who dumps in at least 1,000 gp worth of coins or treasure. The well disappears after the second *wish*.

56. A great fissure in the ground opens up. It is very narrow (only 4' wide), so the bottom cannot be seen. Nothing other than possible injuries will come of climbing down into the crevasse, which is 1-4 miles deep and 10d12 X 100 yards long. After 5-20 days, the crevasse closes up again, swallowing anything within it.

57. Mist rises from the ground and, after 2-5 rounds, takes on the form of a dragon. This "dragon" breathes a blast of steam and vapor upon any creatures in the area. Damage is 6-36 hp. After it breathes, the dragon-cloud dissipates forever. It cannot be attacked except by magical electricity, which causes the cloud to fade away while it is forming-only to reappear behind the bean planter 1-4 hours later. The cloud continues to reappear until it has the chance to breath its steam.

58. A rope grows upward to a length of 30'. If the rope is climbed, an extradimensional space is found (as per the *rope trick spell*). It will last for four hours, after which the rope assumes the abilities of a *rope of climbing*.

59. A beanstalk grows up into the air. If



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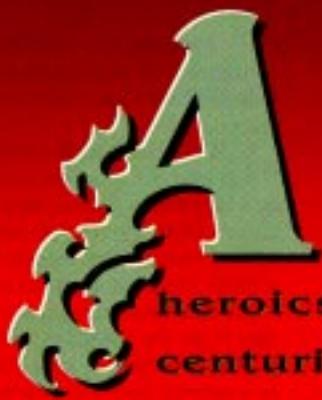
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climbed, it leads either to a cloud castle, to wildspace (for a SPELLJAMMER™ adventure), or to a different plane of existence (a cloud city on the elemental plane of Air?).

60. A lesser basilisk of average hit points crawls from the ground. Its gaze attack does not turn people to stone but rather ages them 5-50 years. The basilisk wanders away after a turn.

61. An umber hulk of maximum hit points digs its way out of the earth, then attempts to maim or kill as many characters as it can before burrowing back into the ground 1-100 rounds later. If slain, the umber hulk changes color and utters one prophecy before it turns into dust. The prophecy will always come true (the DM should use his best judgment here).

62. An entire one-story tavern pops up from the ground. The pub's interior is occupied by helpful unseen servants who dish out helpings of a *heroes' feast*. This tavern remains in place for 3-12 days before vanishing.

63. An insane gynosphinx (maximum hit points) appears and attempts to devour any creatures who cannot answer its silly children's riddles.

64. The area about the bean within a 1-4 mile radius suffers its own chaotic weather patterns. The weather changes every turn for 4-48 hours. Choose weather types randomly from those listed in the seventh-level *control weather* priests' spell.

65. A patch of pumpkins, 40 yards square in area, grows instantly. The pumpkins ripen, over-ripen, go foul, then burst open. Everyone in the area is affected by a stinking cloud spell and must save vs. breath weapon or contract a debilitating disease (see the third-level priest spell *cure disease* for details). However, 1-6 pumpkins will not explode, but they will have instead turned into scarecrows (*Monstrous Compendium*, GREYHAWK® appendix) of maximum hit points, and they will attack the party after two rounds. If they slay the PCs, these monsters will roam the land.

66. The planted bean becomes a *delayed blast fireball* of 18th level, exploding in five rounds.

67. The DM's favorite dinosaur (maximum hit points) grows out of the ground to create a little havoc among the PCs.

68. A squirrel or other woodland creature comes along, digs up the bean, and quickly devours it. The animal then addresses the bean planter in Common and may answer questions as a sage skilled in every field of knowledge. If the planter has no questions, the animal will give clues to the location of a magical artifact. One hour after eating the bean, the animal reverts to normal, though it will now follow the PCs wherever they go (it does nothing else).

69. A female vampire exits the ground at nightfall, wielding a *vorpel weapon* and a *rope of entanglement*. She will track down the bean planter to kill him. The vampire requires no coffin, merely staying in gaseous form for 12 turns when it is slain and re-forming thereafter. Her magical items may be gathered as treasures.

70. A huge eyeball 1' in diameter rises from the ground and floats 6' up in the air. All who gaze upon the eye must save vs. petrification or be transformed into statues of wax, wood, glass, ice, gold, lead, iron, or salt (roll 1d8). This can only be reversed with a *wish*.

71. A *pyxix*, a unique wooden box of intricate design, appears in place of the bean (it must be dug up). It is worth 5,000 gp. If ever opened, a horde of 10-100 grotesque monsters pours from it at the rate of 1-4 monsters per melee round. The *pyxix* can be shut only with a strength roll to bend bars and lift gates. These monsters could include aboleths, beholders, bulettes, giant crabs, giant crayfish, giant leeches, otyughs, remorhaz, ropers, rust monsters, giant scorpions, shambling mounds, slithering trackers, giant slugs, thessalmonsters, umber hulks, and xorn; all have randomly determined hit points. If all monsters are allowed to escape the *pyxix*, the person who opened the box is given one *wish* (but the *wish* cannot undo the opening of the *pyxix*).

72. Immediately after the bean is planted, a rumbling in the earth is heard. On the round after, a herd of white-furred mastodons is seen stampeding toward the area of the bean. How many they number and how far away they are depends on

party strength and conditions of the environment. The mastodons have average hit points. Their tusks have normal value for ivory.

73. A cagelike throne appears. It allows travel into the Ethereal and Astral planes at will, for one person only. It cannot be moved from the spot on which it appeared by any means. The throne may be used 1-4 times before it vanishes again.

74. This bean summons a kender handler from the DRAGONLANCE® setting of Krynn. The kender may either be adopted as a normal player character, if a player for him is available, or he may be run as an NPC. The kender is of the same level as the rest of the party and has no magical items or treasure—but he will soon!

75. A hostile skeletal creature crawls out of the ground. The creature has all of the same abilities, statistics, and possessions as the bean planter (as per a *mirror of opposition*) and wears black clothing or armor similar to that worn by the planter. The beast attacks the planter and disappears, with all its items, once slain. Only spells and attacks from the planter affect this creature.

76. A renegade leprechaun appears for one hour. It is dressed in red clothing and speaks in a normal Common accent. If upset, it attacks with its special ability to use wizards' symbols (any except a symbol of death; useable once per round, one symbol at a time, inscribed in the air). If given a magical item that is not cursed, the leprechaun grants a limited wish, then vanishes.

77. A harp floats up from the ground and plays by itself, filling the air with a soft, gentle music. All within 60' must save vs. spells or succumb to a magical effect (*sleep, fear, confusion*, or other) that lasts 2d8 rounds.

78. The ground in a 60-yard radius around the planted bean oozes with a bubbly tar. A creature must roll a strength check every round to successfully move. Movement is cut down to one-third normal in any case.

79. A hollow sphere of iron, 30' in diameter, with the planted bean at its center, is conjured. It will imprison any creatures within its area. Note that half of the sphere is hidden beneath the ground.

80. A giant oak tree grows with 10-100 acorns made of different substances—glass, amber, chocolate, jade, etc. The value of any one acorn is no more than 100 gp. The tree will regrow acorns normally once all of its unusual acorns have been picked or have fallen.

81. A wall of stone appears 500' in the air above the area where the bean was planted, and it starts to fall. The square wall is 3" thick and 20' on a side. Though it does great amounts of damage (20-200 hp; saving throw vs. death magic required if 50 + hp taken) to all it lands on, only the very slow or stupid should be unable to get out of its way. Have each character near the bean make an intelligence check

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on 1d20 to notice the falling wall or its shadow and escape.

82. A nest of 4-7 eggs springs from the ground. If an egg is eaten, a save vs. poison must be made. The person gains a point of intelligence if the save is successful, but dies otherwise.

83. A pillar of stone 30' in diameter rises from the ground and lifts all creatures in the area 100' into the air. The pillar vanishes in 3-6 turns, dropping anyone on it.

84. A simple silver headband appears on the head of the bean planter. It cannot be removed, and it reduces the character's level to zero. He retains all acquired hit points and ability scores, but is effectively a normal being. The person may assume a new profession and gain experience and levels in this class. The DM may allow the character to later perform a difficult quest for his patron deity or alignment. At the completion of the quest, the silver headband disappears forever, and the character can add the new experience-point total to his original profession or keep both classes.

85. An area 30 yards in diameter about the bean turns into a sand pit. All creatures within that area must make dexterity checks or be drawn all the way down to its center, wherein awaits either an ant lion of maximum hit points, an underground cavern, or a one-day gateway to another dimension.

86. The bean transforms into a ball of soft pastel light that floats up from the ground and approaches the nearest character. If a character allows the light to touch him, each item worn must save vs. disintegration or be transmuted into non-magical glass. On the other hand, the character gains one point to his lowest ability score.

87. The planter becomes *imprisoned* within the bean. *Crystal balls* and various divination spells will reveal what happened to the character. The person can be freed of the bean only by the spells *wish* or *freedom*, or by another creature volunteering to take the character's place.

88. The bean turns into a black-purplish gem, shooting up from the ground and embedding itself in the bean planter's forehead, inflicting 1-12 hp damage. Thereafter, whenever the character is injured, the gem drains any charged magical items, such as wands, within 20' of his person. For every charge drained, the character is healed for 1 hp. Only one charge is drained per round. This is not a voluntary power; it occurs whether the character wills it or not. As side effects, the character's eyes turn blood red, his fingernails grow long, his teeth become pointed, and his hair grows white. These effects can be undone only with a *wish*, but the character is otherwise unaffected.

89. Some creatures within 120 yards of the bean shrink while others grow (50% chance for either, no save), both by ratios of 200%. Both effects last 12 turns.

90. A tombstone springs up with the

name of the bean planter engraved on it. The character faints for 2-8 rounds, unless aroused earlier. For 1-4 weeks afterward, he has a -4 penalty to all saving throws against magical fear.

91. The bean becomes a powerful magnet, drawing all ferrous metallic items within 60' toward it. All characters in metallic armor are held paralyzed until helped out of the armor. Metallic items can be pulled out of the area of effect only with strength rolls to bend bars and lift gates. All items are considered 10 times their normal weight when being carried from the magnet within its area of effect. The magnetic effect ends in 24 hours. The bean then turns into a 5,000 gp gem.

92. A disembodied fanged maw appears in the air 4' off the ground; only the huge teeth are visible. The mouth, which cannot be harmed in any manner, opens to reveal a small extradimensional space. Inside the space may be a large cache of gems, several small magical items, or one powerful magical item. Reaching in to snatch items requires a dexterity check on 1d20. Failure indicates the mouth snaps shut on the character's arm, inflicting 4-40 hp damage and injuring the limb so badly that only a *heal* spell will restore it. Nonliving items thrust into the maw will be bitten in half and destroyed. The mouth vanishes after 10 rounds.

93. A rolled-up tapestry appears. Engraved within its patterns is a *symbol of death*. The tapestry also shows a fairly accurate map to an ancient, undiscovered treasure horde (but not an unguarded horde).

94. An ogre mage suddenly appears over the planted bean and attacks the planter of the bean. In addition to its normal powers, the ogre mage has the ability to use any power that is used upon it. For example, it could cast a spell previously used against it or attack several times in one round if attacked by someone with the same ability. The ogre mage uses a randomly determined magical polearm that may be gained as treasure.

95. A seemingly normal apple tree grows. It holds 1d10 +20 fruit, 2-8 of which will behave as randomly determined magical potions (not oils) if eaten. At least one apple is poisonous. While a person picks apples, branches in the tree quietly attempt to steal small trinkets from him. The branches have an 80% chance to pick pockets, taking one item per round and hiding such items among the leaves. The tree and all stolen items vanish after one hour, though any apples picked remain behind, staying fresh and retaining all powers for one month.

96. A small pyramid bursts upward from the ground. If its simple interior is investigated, a mummy with maximum hit points is found, wielding a fully charged *staff of withering* and *talisman of ultimate evil*. If the mummy is slain, it turns into gold dust worth 1d10 X 1,000 gp

97. A pair of bulettes with maximum hit

points burrow out of the earth, attack and devour as many victims as they can in 20 rounds, then return to the earth. If slain, each has a magical shield of random type as one of its back scales.

98. The area around the bean is struck by a *fire storm* (as per the seventh-level priest spell).

99. A totem pole grows 20' into the air. A *magic mouth* on the pole demands a suitable sacrifice from the bean planter. If monetary treasure is given, the character is given a magical weapon (roll on the appropriate tables in the *DMG*, page 140). If magical treasure is given, the character is granted a *wish* that must be used within the hour. If a sacrifice is not given, the pole will permanently drain two points from the character's main attribute.

100. A two-handed *dancing sword* (MV 15; THAC0 13; #AT 1) rises from the ground and begins striking at random targets. Though no physical attack will harm it, it can be affected by magical attacks, such as *fireball*, *lightning bolt*, or *transmute metal into wood*.

101. Another *bag of beans* appears (this option is only for the most patient of DMs and only for the last bean in the bag).

Ω

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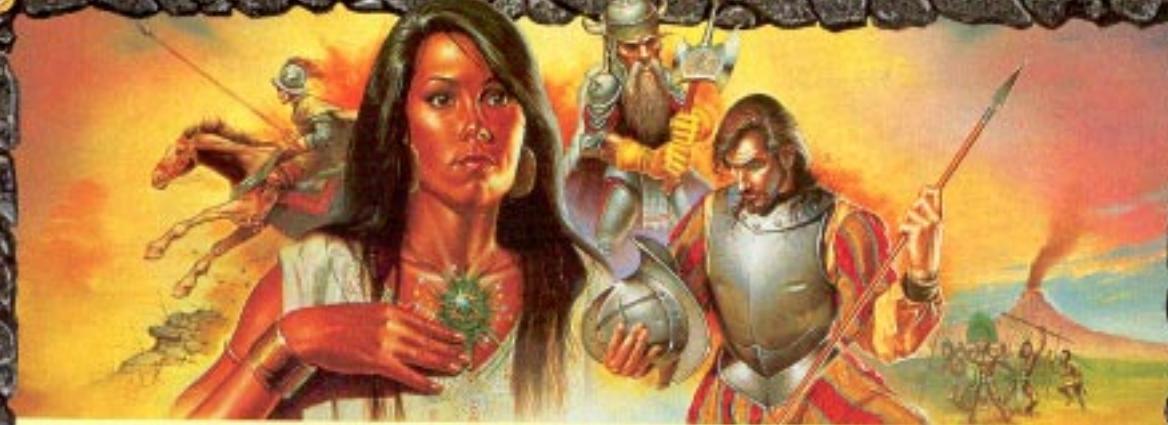
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