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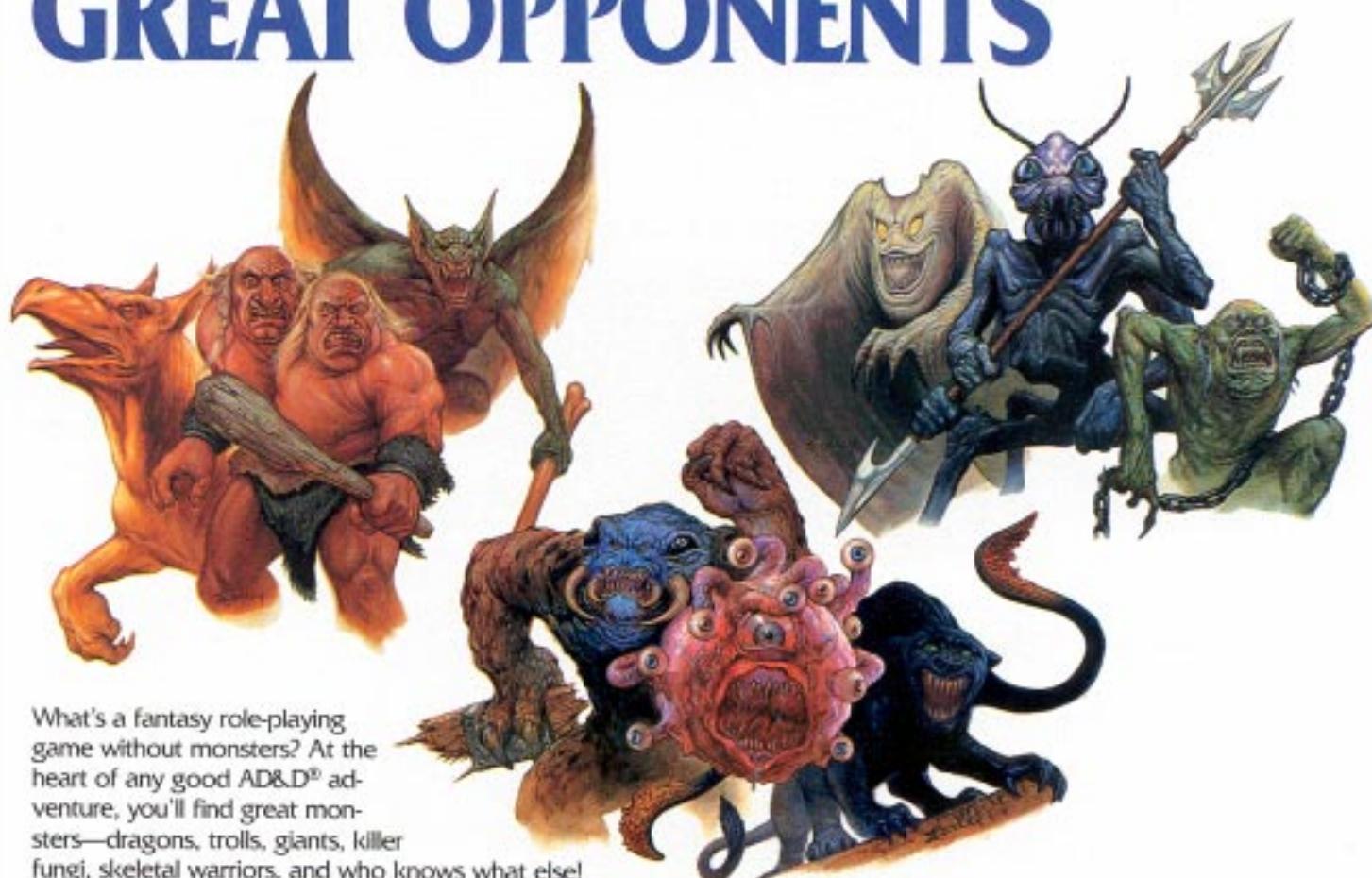
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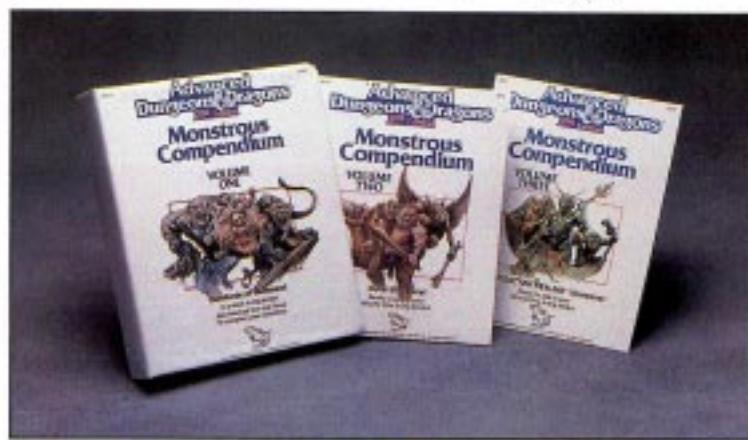
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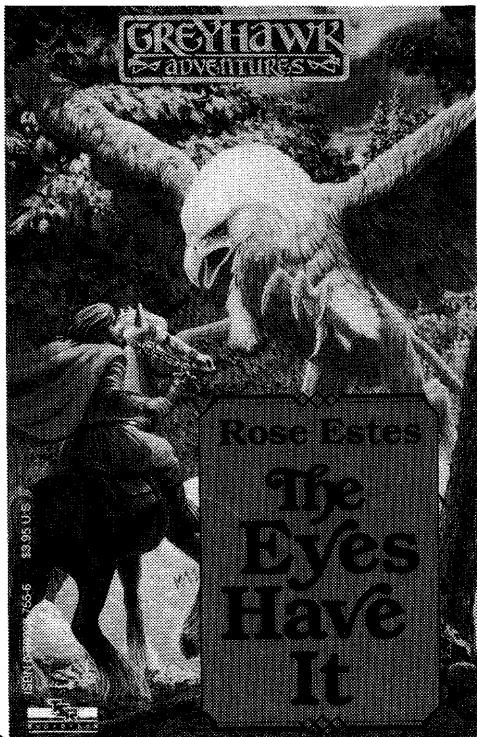
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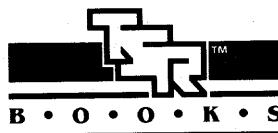
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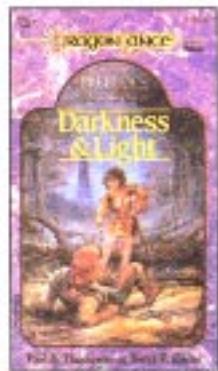
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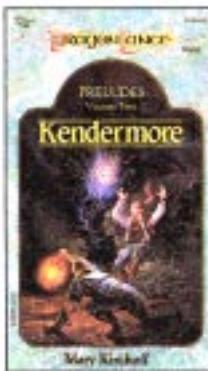
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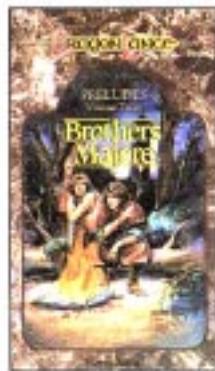
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Kimberly J. Walter

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Lori Svikel

Production staff  
Paul Hanchette      Angelika Lokotz  
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## COVER

Observant readers who examine this month's cover art will quickly be able to name the artist and the year in which the picture was painted. Color prints of our cover, "Trinket," are available for sale; interested readers may write to Robin Wood, c/o this magazine.

# LETTERS

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

## Waldorf hysteria

*One year ago, in DRAGON issue #137, we published a letter from a reader whose character, Waldorf (a 358th-level magic-user), had destroyed Greyhawk with the nuclear bombs he had invented. Only Castle Waldorf and the salt mines beneath it (in which all the deities labored) were left. We received a lot of mail about that little letter*

Please tell Waldorf that I have successfully completed making my savings roll, and ask him how much damage I took from the atomic bomb.

P.Y.

No address given, but we assume it was Greyhawk

My character, "Fist" Xavier Redlance, has become ultimately powerful. . . . He owns three or four completely paid-for and fortified castles. He and his mount, a 14-HD cloud dragon ("Phantom"), could wipe out Tiamat in one round of combat, or obliterate five tarrasques or even Waldorf. He is a 60th-level knight/23rd-level bard/23rd-level druid/14th-level illusionist. . . . His two weapons are a mounted Dragonlance and a +6 two-handed holy avenger. He is also psionically imbued.

Tell Waldorf that not all of the planet was obliterated. "Fist" Xavier has two of his castles completely surrounded by granite (i.e., they're three miles underground). The one thing he hasn't done is design a device to clean up post-explosion radiation, but he is currently working on the problem. He can come out because his armor is resistant to just about any substance known to man (or Waldorf).

Travis Fox  
Virginia Beach VA

Recently, my AD&D® game character, Mirv the Outrageous (a 360th-level mage who had developed long-range space travel and left his home in the Forgotten Realms) discovered a small barren world. There were only a few inhabitants on it, on a 3 x 4-mile island with a castle. After infiltration, Mirv and his comrades discovered the castle's name: Castle Waldorf. Beneath the castle, working in a salt mine, were the deities of the realm. What a horrible fate.

So Mirv and his friends returned to their ship and destroyed all of the remaining life on the island through the use of saturation bombing (phosphorus and antimagic bombs) and Mirv's favorite spell, *power word nuke*, a tenth-level

spell. They then returned to the island in radiation gear and liberated the poor gods who, due to their lives among the stars, were immune to radiation at ground zero. Unfortunately, the owner of the isle was standing directly at ground zero when Mirv's spell hit. We truly mourn his loss.

Jake Lovell  
Louisville KY

I was a little disturbed when I read the letter about Waldorf in issue #137. Well, it just so happens that my 421st-level magic user, Alkeronus, was in outer space for the last year and just decided to come back to Greyhawk.

Alkeronus was, of course, ticked off, so he decided to destroy Waldorf and his castle. With his supreme power, Alkeronus made the sun go supernova, which completely disintegrated the planet. Waldorf is dead, and I expect the character to never be used again. Waldorf, you should have known better than to mess with Alkeronus's alehouse!

Wade Beckman  
Sioux Falls SD

We regret to inform Waldorf the magic-user that he is in eternal servitude to Shamogroth Darkmane, a 511th-level Krynn minotaur barbarian and his 89-person barbarian horde. Shamogroth was on his home plane avenging the destruction of his original barbarian tribe, so he was absent during the holocaust.

Unfortunately for Waldorf, Shamogroth returned to his home forest to see that it was devastated. Shamogroth then searched for the only safe place on Oerth to return from the Border Ethereal: Castle Waldorf. By now, Mr. Darkmane was very steamed (and a little hungry), so he and his group of barbarians (ranging in levels from 100 to 300) plundered the castle and destroyed it and all within, save Waldorf and the deities. Shamogroth released the gods, who promptly did away with Waldorf's power by exposing him to a little Negative Material plane torture, then repopulated Greyhawk.

Shamogroth is now an epic hero and is watched over by the good and kind gods, and Waldorf is now chained to the bottom of the Valley of Eternal Pain, created by Shamogroth and his divine friends. Sorry, Waldorf.

James Collins & Jason Ross  
Woody CA

In response to this so-called wizard Waldorf's recent letter, I will not send my character sheets to Mr. Waldorf, simply because I am the most powerful being in Greyhawk. Maybe you have heard of me: I call myself the Dungeon Master. And just let me say that I've been getting pretty annoyed with Waldorf lately, so watch it!

D.M.  
Spotsy VA

*Continued on page 74*

## Ogre-chow

*It was a dark and stormy night. His heart pounding madly, he tore at the envelope. His thoughts raced as he considered the message that might lie inside. His trembling fingers unfolded the single sheet of paper then he gasped as he read the sentence that instills horror in every author: "We have no current interest in this topic."*

As the new editor on the DRAGON® Magazine block, I've recently been the perpetrator of many of these heinous letters. I hate sending them; some days I'm plagued by sounds like in *The Tell-Tale Heart*, only these hearts are breaking, not beating. So this editorial is designed to help put an end to some of this needless bloodshed by giving advice on how to get your work accepted.

We get dozens of requests for article ideas ("Tell me what to write about, and I'll write it!"). First, we almost never assign articles to authors; all the ideas you see in print come from the imaginations of their writers. Second, the content of the magazine is dictated by our readers; when you send in articles, you are determining what will be published. We simply pick and choose the best of the bunch.

Okay, so how do you avoid the rejection pile? Start by browsing through some back issues of DRAGON Magazine. By looking at the last 10 or 12 issues, you'll learn which topics have been covered recently, and you'll also get an idea of our style. Believe it or not, we get letters that read, "I've never read your magazine, but here's an article. . . ." Such submissions are usually doomed.

Follow our writers' guidelines. We can tell at a glance which authors use them. It makes our job *much* easier and increases your chances of getting published.

Ask yourself whether your idea is unique. High-powered versions of low-level spells, variations on the *bag of holding*, and different colored *magic missiles* aren't interesting. We're looking for fresh insights and original ways of playing, not just a new coat of paint on the same old monsters, spells, and magic items.

Make sure your article relates to gaming. This may sound obvious, but it's painful to reject a well-researched, interesting article on Chinese foot-binding because it has no gaming application. Now, if that same article were to provide modifiers to hit points and dexterity, and explained how foot-

*Continued on page 74*

# FORUM

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

Regarding the *wish* spell: While I agree that wish-class spells should not be used to gain experience or levels directly, I feel that these gains can be simulated. Wishing for better fighting ability in order to defend a mage against some ogres (say the mage's spell book is lost) could be granted by temporarily raising the mage's experience level in terms of hit points and fighting ability. (Remember that hit points represent not only strength, but willpower, luck, endurance, and the character's ability to dodge blows or minimize them.) Likewise, a *wish* to be able to cast a spell as if the mage were a higher-level caster could be granted; for example, a 20th-level mage might be permitted to throw a 25-HD *fireball* or some such thing.

However, I do not think that *wishes* should simply be ninth-level spells to be grabbed up. Rather, they should be spells stored by divine beings in objects, granted by supernatural creatures, or maybe deemed lost and very rare (perhaps unique) spells for use by NPC mages or illusionists (for the *alter reality* spell). As it is, an 18th-level PC magic-user (usually overly powerful and loaded with magical items) can gain one *wish* spell a day, or two with a *ring of wizardry*. The recovery period and other limitations are not counted if the spell is used for certain functions (e.g., *healing* the whole party, *teleporting* the whole party without error to anywhere, etc.). If a PC does gain the use of a wish-type spell, it should be after a search likened to that of finding an artifact or relic, and even then, if word gets out, there will be swarms of powerful mages trying to get it, banging on the player's figurative door.

Finally, to DMs: If you have a player in your group who's used to being a DM or is just an obnoxious rules lawyer, the *wish* spell has a final use. It is an excuse for something happening in your world that isn't in the books. When you can't think of any other logical excuse, tell them "it was wished!"

Toby Myers  
Hamilton NY

The article by Paul Hancock in issue #143 contains many good ideas and suggestions. There are two areas where I disagree with Mr. Hancock. The decision of whether to run a high-fantasy or a low-fantasy campaign is made by the players and the DM. This decision should not, however, be dependent on character level or character class. Many stories of high fantasy have the hero starting off at low level only to come shining through in the end. The best

campaign should be a blend of high and low fantasy. How many times can your characters save the civilized world without becoming bored? The campaign should have several elements of low fantasy to draw the players into the DM's world and also keep the players in touch with their characters.

If the DM is running a campaign and not just running players through one module after another, the DM should seriously consider starting the players at 1st level and letting them advance from there. Most players will initially say that starting at a higher level is fine with them, but after much thought, I do not think they will still agree. The players lose valuable information about their characters that cannot be filled in by a paragraph of background material. A player also needs to develop a feel for all the abilities of a character. There is a major difference between role-playing a character up to 4th or 5th level (or even higher) and just reading a brief background paragraph on how the character got to his current state.

The DM also loses when starting characters at higher than 1st level. First level is the time when the DM can develop powerful enemies for the characters, establish goals for the characters to strive for when reaching higher levels, and allow the characters to reach those goals. Various other NPCs and traveling companions can also be introduced to characters in their early stages. The DM is responsible for challenging the characters to the fullest extent, and this can be done more easily at lower levels with the wide variety of monsters and enchanted items available. The DM should also help the players get a feel for their characters and the characters' abilities. While this can be done at higher levels, the best results are obtained when the characters begin at 1st level.

Peter M. Wilbur  
Colorado Springs CO

The latest argument among players and DMs is over the weakness of the magic-user class. The magic-user class in and of itself is fine, and I have seen several players who have done quite well with mages. The problem here is with the players. Often players don't succeed with mages because the players lack experience or don't put enough thought into their actions and spells. I have seen many wizards die because they used their spells quickly and wastefully. Players need to take time to think about better uses for their spells; that is often the key to a wizard's survival. It is not much help to a novice player, however.

When players lack experience in playing a wizard, I feel that starting them out with one or two minor magical items will greatly help. I often start a player character with a *ring of protection + 1* or (rarely) *bracelets of defense, AC 8*. These defensive items, along with dexterity adjustments, can help a mage's armor class enormously and will help the wizard survive those first few quests. A DM will notice that these items are limited in use, as they quickly become obsolete. Thus, these items help a mage

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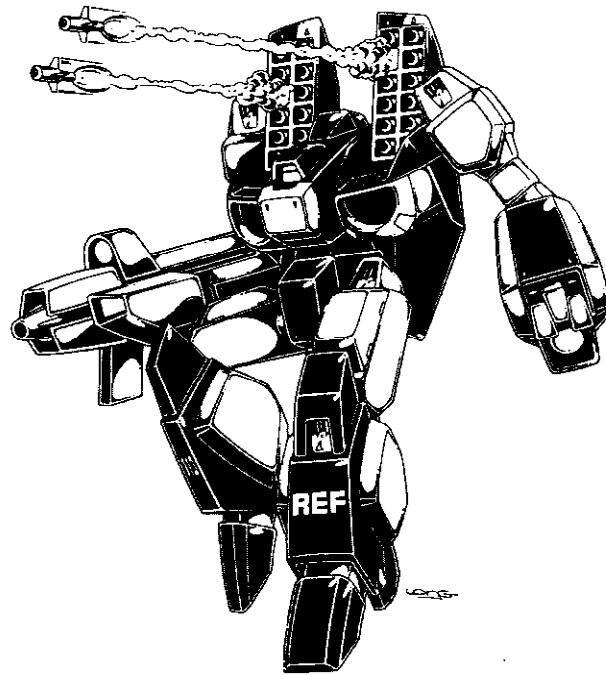
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through the toughest stages without unbalancing the game. You will, however, note that they are not substitutions for skillful spell-casting. Players still have to think before hurling magic, but this will assist inexperienced players.

Matt Richardson  
Havana IL

You know, I really can't figure out what the big deal is about magic-users and the weapon/armor debate. "Why can't my magic-user use a sword?" "Why can't he wear armor?" Hey! No sweat! Here's your sword, and here's your armor. Now get up there and stand toe-to-toe with that big ugly monster, and have a nice time. But seriously, does it really matter? I've played more spell-casters than I can readily count, and most of those were magic-users. The one thing that I learned during that time is that the last thing you want to do is get close enough to a monster so that you need a sword to defend yourself. Your hit points and hit probability tell the whole story. It doesn't matter if you're holding a light saber and wearing *plate mail +5*; you'll be raw meat in a few rounds.

I have no problem with these arguments in my campaign. I let the magic-users use any weapons and wear studded leather armor. The armor can't get any better, in my opinion, because the magic-user couldn't perform somatic gestures wearing heavy metal armor. (Note: I apply these restrictions to elves and gnomes as well, but not to clerics). The players like the freedom and the ability to swing a real weapon when they get into a jam. Game balance stays stable because a sword-toting wizard poses no real threat to anybody except himself. If he opts for a bow, he'll be a downright menace to the party. The only thing that the bow changes is his survivability at low levels. The added two or three armor-class points and extra point or two of damage potential help him fend off some of the lower-level monsters like kobolds. Don't get me wrong; I don't think low-level magic-users really need any help, but coming to the aid of a magic-user is a by-product of the above mentioned policy deviations, and it doesn't amount to much or hurt anything. You'll probably also find that your PC magic-users will revert to doing it the old-fashioned way after a while, because the rest of the party will tend to put pressure on them to do their fair share of the hack-n-slash work.

R. J. Wenzel  
Lancaster CA

I am writing concerning the letter Bob Tranino wrote in DRAGON issue #143. I have played both the D&D® and AD&D® games for some years, and I personally like the AD&D game better. Weapon speeds and dual-class characters give the game a real-world feel. I almost always play a mage/thief, and I enjoy my PC's dual-class status. The D&D game is a simple version of the AD&D game and, to me, seems too simple and unrealistic.

Jeremy Gilliam  
Valparaiso IN

I greatly enjoyed the special attraction on dragons in issue #134, but the article "dive Dragons a Fighting Chance" left me disgusted. Dragons don't need any terrifying abilities—they already have all they need, and their best assets are their brains. Dragons are very intelligent and have centuries to learn "every trick in the book," quoting the excellent "Ecology of the Red Dragon" article by Gregg Sharp. Mr. Friedlander's blue dragon, Razisiz the Regular, is better called Razisiz the Dumb Beast; how he survived

400+ years is beyond me. Now, here is this same creature using its abilities and possessions to full effect.

Razisiz the Smart: AC 2; MV 9"/24"; HD 10; hp 80; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/3-24; SA breath weapon, spell use, *fear* aura, saving-throw bonus, *detect invisible and hidden objects*. His spells are: *charm person*, *reduce*, *shield*, *darkness 15' radius*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *fireball*, and *phantasmal force*. He is asleep deep in a cave located near the top of a mountain. His cave is approached by the same "+ 5 everything" adventurers who, in Mr. Friedlander's scenario, tried to assault Razisiz II. Since Razisiz the Smart has no magic resistance, the party wizard memorizes *project image* and *chain lightning* instead of *Tenser's transformation*. Looks like poor Razisiz hasn't got a chance, right? Wrong.

Long before the party has approached the cave, the PCs have been spotted by the dragon's *charmed* servants. Most of them are zero-level peasants, but one is a 4th-level illusionist who uses his *whispering wind* spell to alert a 5th-level *charmed* thief sitting just inside the cave's mouth. The thief promptly wakes her master, and Razisiz prepares for battle.

He casts *invisibility* upon himself, followed by *phantasmal force*, creating an illusion of himself sleeping. The adventurers' *clairvoyance* will now show the dragon where he is not, and the cleric's *silence* spell will miss the head. The dragon's *charmed* thief picks a magic dagger from the treasure pile and slips into a side passage.

As the party enters the cave, a *magic mouth* in the ceiling emits a quiet, batlike chirp. The adventurers notice it, but they think the dragon is silenced and hears nothing. They are wrong. Having heard the alarm, the *invisible* Razisiz casts his *darkness* spell at a hole in the ceiling that leads to the surface, followed by *reduce* (on himself), *shield*, and *mirror image*, in that order; the shortest-duration spell is the last. As the adventurers negotiate a small chasm across the cave, Razisiz, now 10' long, spreads his wings, picks a wand from the treasure pile, and flies out of the cave through the darkened hole in the ceiling. The battle begins!

Round 1: The party crosses the chasm and reaches the dragon's chamber. Before the PCs realize just where the monster has gone, Razisiz (back to his normal size) drops a barrel of oil on the PCs from the hole in the ceiling, followed by a *fireball*. The spell does 40 hp damage, and the oil explosion adds 25 hp more. The wizard, protected by *minor globe of invulnerability*, takes only 25 hp; the thief and both fighters make their saves and take 32 hp apiece; and the cleric fails his saving throw and gets the brunt of the attack.

Round 2: The wizard extinguishes the flames with a *cloudburst* spell; the cleric brings himself up to 30 hp with a *cure critical wounds* spell; and the thief uses his *wand of illumination* to light up the hole in the ceiling. One of the fighters drinks a potion of *flying* and prepares to chase the party's adversary.

Round 3: The wizard casts a *fly* spell and takes off behind the fighter. As they near the opening, a *magic mouth* shouts a warning, and Razisiz, no longer *invisible* but safely out of sight, pulls on a stout bush, which in reality is a trap lever. A portcullis gate in the chute leading outside crashes shut and traps the wizard in the cave. Now the fighter must face the dragon alone.

Round 4: The cleric, the thief, and the second fighter hurry toward the main cave opening, while the wizard, begins casting *project image*.

As the first fighter rushes out into the open, he finds Razisiz and his three *mirror images* flying down at him. The dragon breathes lightning into the cave, bringing down the boulders that were carefully arranged beforehand to cave in. Fighter number two is the only one actually struck by the lightning; he makes his save and takes quarter damage (20 hp), but he is also buried under the tons of rock, as are the thief and the cleric; all three take another 15 hp damage from the cave-in.

Round 5: The *charmed* thief leaps from the shadows and backstabs the wizard for 11 hp damage (triple damage with a *dagger* +2). Meanwhile, Razisiz uses his *wand of polymorphing* on the *charmed* illusionist, turning him into another blue dragon! Now the flying fighter is confronted by five dragons (three are *mirror images*), and while the wizard might help him with *projected image*, the wizard has his own problems (the next hit from the dragon's puny servant may very well kill him). Which way is the fighter going to fly?

Five rounds have passed, and although all adventurers are alive, they are separated from each other and badly wounded. Except for the *wand of polymorphing*, the dragon used only its standard abilities; the portcullis trap was made by some dwarfen thieves in exchange for an irresistible amount of gold. Razisiz still has two breaths and one spell left. Chances are that at least two adventurers will escape alive, but without any prizes.

It should be clear by now that a dragon can find a way out of almost any situation, even if he cannot win in direct combat. To those who claim a dragon is too proud to use thieflike tricks, I say you do not live to the age of 400 by doing everything honorably! And if you really need a slicing, dicing, PC mincer, there is always Juiblex.

Ilya Taytchin  
Albany NY

It is my opinion that evil characters do have a place in the AD&D game, if you don't count the assassin. When played properly, the evil character usually behaves in an unscrupulous manner only toward enemies. While he may occasionally lighten another character's load a little, an evil character can often show loyalty.

An example of this behavior is present in one of the evil characters in my campaign. This character designed a ninth-level version of the *contingency* spell. She used this in one of those infamous death traps that evil characters love to produce. It works like this:

At the entrance to her abode, she laid marble stones on the floor in a pattern similar to a chessboard. This magic-user cast her new *contingency* spell on the ceiling above the fifth row of the chessboard. The spell said that if anything crossed the fifth row without first saying "checkmate," a *cloudkill* would be cast onto the chessboard. The trap can be easily circumvented just by dropping a coin onto the fifth row. Tell your friends, and they can get past it.

The simple fact is that evil-aligned characters do not necessarily go around killing each other all the time; they can in fact be quite loyal to their friends, provided their friends don't cross them too many times.

Aaron Goldblatt  
Fort Worth TX

*Continued on page 82*

# SAGE ADVICE

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LD, United Kingdom.

We present part two of our special edition of "Sage Advice" (continued from DRAGON issue #148), with an in-depth look at the AD&D® 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*. All page numbers herein refer to the 2nd Edition text alone, unless otherwise stated.

## Weapons & Combat

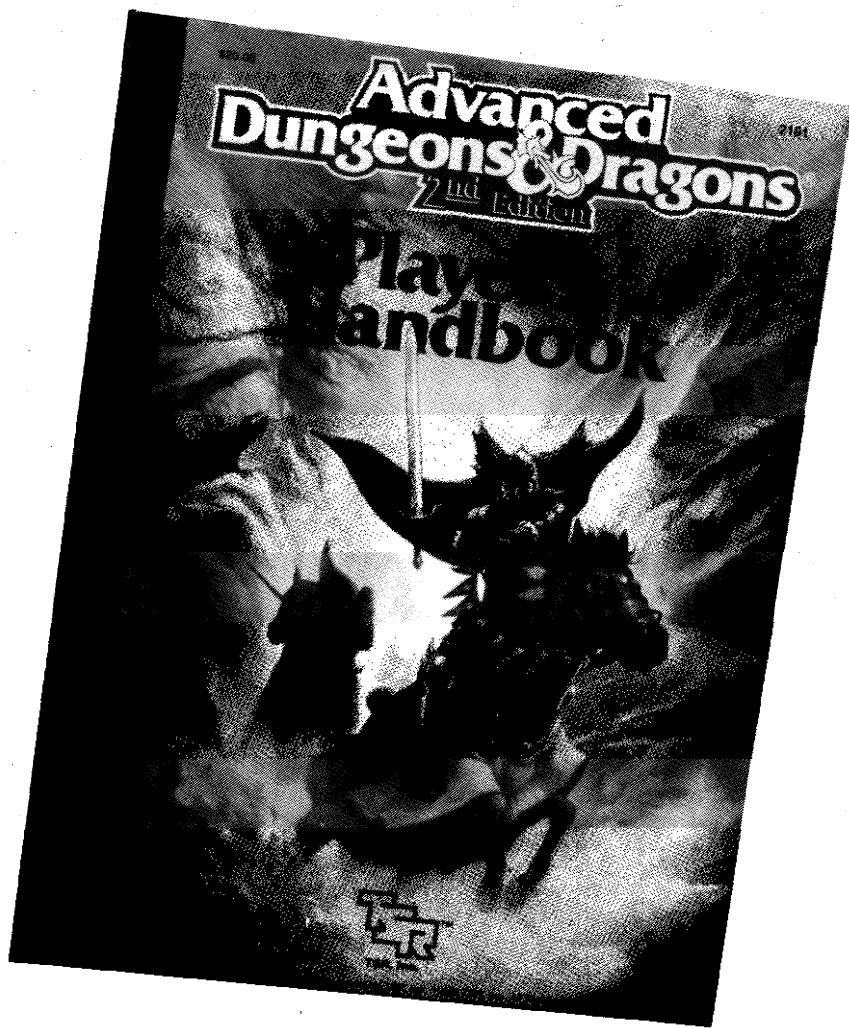
**Does a character need to spend two proficiencies in bastard sword use—one for one-handed use and one for two-handed use?**

This is up to the DM, but I suggest that two slots be required. One campaign I am familiar with allows characters with long sword or two-handed sword proficiency to use the bastard sword in its corresponding mode (in other words, a character who can use a long sword can use a bastard sword one-handed without penalty).

**How can a sling bullet do the same damage as a heavy crossbow and more damage than a light or hand crossbow? Why would anyone bother with a crossbow when a sling has a better rate of fire, the same or better damage, a lower cost, and a lower weight?**

Slings are very effective weapons and are often underrated. The bullets are heavy, have excellent aerodynamic qualities, and are hurled with a great deal of force. Why doesn't everybody use a sling? Well, try to swing a sling underwater, while hiding in dense undergrowth, or from around a corner. Also, bow and crossbow specialists get a point-blank range category and the ability to fire before the initiative roll in some cases.

**The new rules (on page 106) say a character must make a system shock roll to be raised from the dead. If so, what are resurrection survival scores used for?**



This is a typographical error. System shock rolls are made when characters are exposed to magical aging, *polymorphing*, or petrification. Resurrection survival rolls are used when bringing slain characters to life again.

**How much does a wooden staff cost?**

Any character can cut and trim his own staff. Prepared staves cost 1 sp each.

**Can characters use missile weapons when fighting toe-to-toe with an opponent?**

Characters cannot aim and fire bows, use slings, or hurl hand-held weapons while in melee. Loaded and cocked crossbows can be fired in melee but cannot be reloaded. Since light and heavy crossbows are too large to be very handy, the DM might rule that they can be fired only when the user has initiative.

**How much damage does an arrow fired from a short bow do? Can**

**flight or sheaf arrows be fired from short bows?**

Short bow arrows do 1-6 hp damage to targets of all sizes. No matter what sort of arrow is fired from a short bow, it does damage as a flight arrow (1d6/1d6).

**The charging rules say that a spear set vs. a charge does double damage, but this is not mentioned in the equipment list.**

Any weapon that can be set vs. a charge does double damage when so employed.

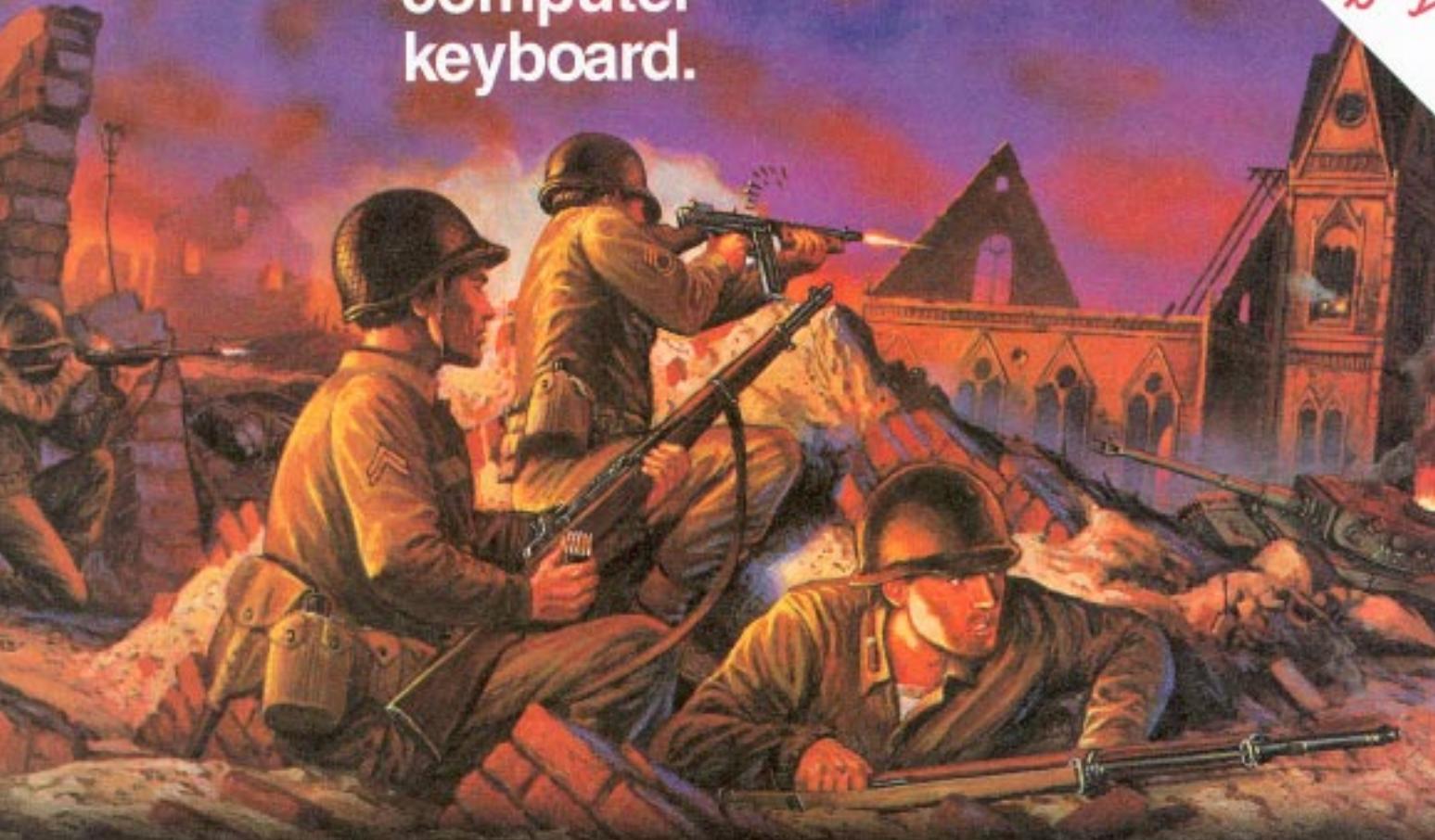
**Can a character attack while withdrawing?**

This is up to the DM, but I suggest not. If you do allow fighting withdrawals, the character making the withdrawal should get an attack only if there is an opponent following him. Even then, the character should attack last and with a -2 penalty to his attack roll.

**The rules mention nets, lassos, and mauls as possible weapons for**

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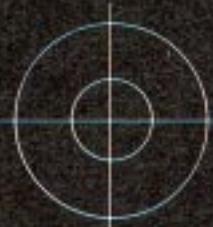
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clerics (page 34), but these weapons do not appear in the weapons charts (pages 68-69).

A maul is a warhammer; see the Weapons Table on pages 68-69. Lassos and nets are not part of the 2nd Edition game and were mentioned in error. However, a typical war net is made from woven hemp cords and has small lead weights sewn into the edges. It is 5' across, weighs 6 lbs., and costs 12 sp. It takes two hands and 6' of clear space to throw a net, and the effective range is 30'. Any target hit by the net must save vs. breath weapon or become entangled. Entangled victims cannot fight or move, and defend at -2. Entangled victims wriggle free if they make a successful wrestling attack vs. AC 2; they can make one attempt to get free each round. When used as a melee weapon, treat a net as a scourge. A lasso is simply a rope with an adjustable loop. A successful hit with a lasso puts the loop around part of the target creature's body, but this does not necessarily immobilize the creature; the DM has to decide where the loop is (around the neck, a limb, the upper body, etc.) and assess the appropriate penalty. Since the lasso's wielder can pull the loop tight, the only way to escape, short of killing the wielder or getting the rope away from him, is to cut or break the rope.

**A broad sword is mentioned as a thief's weapon (page 38), but the broad sword is not described.**

Use these statistics for that weapon: cost 10 gp; weight 4 lbs.; size M; type S; speed factor 5; damage 2d4 (S-M)/1d6 + 1 (L).

**What is the rate of fire for a high-level fighter using an arquebus?**

The rate of fire for any missile weapon stays the same for all users regardless of level, except for specialized users (see Table 35, page 52).

**How can a character become proficient with an arquebus? Wouldn't this require a large or even unlimited supply of powder and shot? If the character chooses to specialize, what would the rate of fire be?**

This is up to the DM, but your suggestion regarding gunpowder supplies sounds reasonable because the character would have to practice with the weapon. Arquebus specialists rates of fire are: 1st-6th level, 1/3; 7th-12th level, 1/2; 13th level and up, 1/1.

**Can a fighter attack with a long sword in each hand?**

No; two-weapon attacks are limited to one medium and one small weapon, or to two small weapons.

**Can a fighter who is specialized with two weapons use them both at the same time and get the damage**

**bonus and multiple attacks for each hand? Does a fighter get a strength bonus for each hand?**

Fighters can specialize with only one weapon. Any character attacking with two weapons gets one—and only one—extra attack per round; the character gets the full number of attacks for the primary weapon and one attack from the secondary weapon. The DM can allow strength bonuses for each hand, but I do not recommend it. Limit strength bonuses to one weapon or the other, or allow the character to split the bonus between weapons.

**How large are light crossbow quarrels and short swords?**

Light quarrels and short swords are small weapons. To preserve game balance, you might want to disallow the use of short swords as secondary weapons in two-handed attacks.

**What happened to weapons' space requirements?**

Space required for melee weapons can be inferred from their sizes and types. Bludgeoning or slashing weapons generally require as much clear space for use as their lengths. Piercing weapons and most missile weapons generally require 1' of clear space.

**Why can't blunt melee weapons be used in nonlethal combat? It seems to me that a weapon like a mace would be better for knocking out a creature than a sword would be.**

As explained on page 98, a mace has no "flat" side that can be used at less than full effect. Still, since using a weapon in nonlethal combat carries a -4 attack roll penalty, you could assume that the mace wielder could "pull the blow" and inflict reduced, temporary damage.

## Miscellaneous

**On page 101, the section on saving-throw priority says Table 60 is set up in order of priority. But the example given contradicts this.**

Table 60 is correct; the example is wrong.

**What is the conversion rate between the 1st Edition monetary system and the 2nd Edition monetary system?**

The new system is close enough to the old one so that you need not convert treasures or prices. (Prices in the 2nd Edition game tend to be higher, but this reflects adjustments in the relative values of some items, not a decline in the value of currency.) The only real difference is that silver and copper pieces have doubled in value with respect to gold (compare page 35 of the 1st Edition *Players*

*Handbook* with page 66 of the 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*). If you are a stickler, cut the number of copper and silver coins in any 1st Edition module's horde by half to reflect the new values of those coins.

**When setting prices for items not listed in the 2nd Edition game, what is the conversion rate between U.S. dollars and gold pieces?**

An AD&D game gold piece is worth approximately \$20 when comparing buying power. Note that if a group of AD&D game adventurers found themselves in a modern setting, their gold pieces would be next to worthless as legal tender, but very valuable for their gold content.

**Can the various subclasses be used in multiclassed combinations (e.g., a half-elf ranger/thief, or an elf mage/bard)?**

No; only the classes listed on page 44 can be used in multiclassed combinations.

**Do multiclassed characters still divide their experience points among classes?**

Yes; see page 44.

**When a character temporarily loses one point of constitution from long-distance swimming, does he also lose bonus hit points gained from that point of constitution?**

Yes; any constitution loss strips bonus hit points gained from the lost points. Temporary constitution losses thus produce temporary hit-point losses.

**Are alignment languages used?**

Alignment languages are not part of the 2nd Edition game.

**Do drow and deep gnome PCs still have the abilities attributed to them in *Unearthed Arcana*?**

All subraces in the 2nd Edition game are treated just like members of the appropriate main race. However, individual DMs are free to retain *Unearthed Arcana* attributes for drow and deep gnomes.

**What are the size classes of each of the PC races?**

Halflings, dwarves, and gnomes are small creatures. Humans, half-elves, and elves are medium (man-size) creatures.

**What good is the healing proficiency if a character can regain the hit points just by resting for a day?**

First, the healing proficiency restores lost hit points to characters who do not or cannot spend an entire day resting. Second, the two forms of healing are cumulative, so that a character who rests an entire day and receives treatment from a character with healing skill regains 1d3 + 3 hp/day. Note that a character who tends wounded characters is not considered to be resting.

**According to Table 65 (page 122), unskilled characters have a base climbing chance of 40%. The same table notes that a character who spends one slot for the mountaineering proficiency also has a 40% climbing chance. Is this an error, or do characters have to spend two slots before they are better climbers than unskilled characters?**

Yes, there is an error. The base climbing chance improves 10% for each slot spent on mountaineering; thus, a character with one proficiency slot in this skill has a 50% base climbing chance.

**According to Table 67 (page 123), it is impossible to climb a "dry" ice wall, but a character can climb a slippery ice wall at one-fourth the normal climbing rate. Is this an error?**

This is not really an error. All ice walls qualify as slippery surfaces—there are no dry or slightly slippery ice walls.

**Chapter 7 says a character can try to disbelieve an illusion just by spending a round doing so. Furthermore, if the player can give a good reason why the character is disbelieving, the DM can give a bonus to the saving throw. But Appendix 2 says a reason must be given for any disbelief attempt to succeed. Which is correct?**

Chapter 7 is correct. Appendix 2 is intended to remind players that disbelief is never automatic; disbelief must be active. In other words, do not check for disbelief unless a player says his character is disbelieving; if the character has a very good reason to disbelieve and if the player can explain this reason to the DM, a bonus to the disbelief roll might be awarded. The text in Appendix 2 is also intended to convey to players that they cannot avoid illusions by having their characters disbelieve everything that comes along. The DM need not quiz the player about the exact reasons for disbelief, but the DM should be convinced that the character has some legitimate reason for disbelieving an illusion before he allows a saving throw.

**Do full and field plate armor still absorb damage?**

No, they don't.

**What good is a helmet? Does any suit of armor come with one?**

Helmets protect the head and are important to any character with a humanoid body. Every suit of armor is assumed to include a helmet whose construction is similar to the armor. If an armored character wears no helmet, he loses one armor class (for example, AC 4 becomes AC 5).

**I was shocked to see that TSR, Inc. condones the killing of baby dragons (as graphically illustrated by the**

**color plate on page 7).**

With the new information on dragons given in the first *Monstrous Compendium* (TSR product #2102), available in July, PCs are going to have to catch dragons while they are small if they are going to have any chance to kill them at all (see also "The New Ecology of the Dragons," in DRAGON issue #146, for more information).

**If the proficiency system is used, do demihuman characters have to spend a slot to learn the common tongue since they begin with their native tongue only?**

Strictly speaking, demihumans must spend a slot to know Common. However, DMs should feel free to give Common to demihuman characters for "free." It can be fun to role-play characters who cannot speak with each other, but this kind of play can bog down the game and usually gets boring after a few sessions.

**Can the running nonweapon proficiency be used with the jogging/running rule? Are the two cumulative?**

A character using the running proficiency cannot use the jogging rule (he is already moving as quickly as the jogging rule allows). He can, however, use the running rule to increase his speed. If the character fails one of the ability checks for continued running, he must follow the rules on page 120, and has finished using his running proficiency for the day.

**Page 45 says a dual-classed character who loses a level to an energy drainer will lose his highest level; if drained again, he loses the level that is hardest to replace. However, the example shows a character losing one level in each class to a wight. What is the correct procedure?**

A dual-classed (or multiclassed) character who loses a single level to an energy drain always loses his highest level, no matter how many times he is drained. If his levels are equal, he loses the level that takes the most experience to regain. The example on page 45 is correct only if the character loses two levels at once. In this case, the dual-classed character loses one level from each class, just as in the 1st Edition AD&D game.

**I thought falling damage was cumulative per 10', reaching 20d6 at 60'. What happened?**

The controversy over falling damage has been settled. Falling damage is 1d6 for each 10' (or fraction of 10') fallen. The reasons are thoroughly explained on page 104. Individual DMs are free to plague their players with any variant falling damage systems they can devise.

**Does a character take falling damage if he deliberately jumps?**

In most cases, yes. If the DM wants to

simulate short jumps, I suggest calling for a dexterity check. If the check succeeds, subtract 10' from the jump's height—that is, a 10' jump inflicts no damage, a 20' jump inflicts 1d6, and so on. Failure results in a normal fall.

**Are the nonweapon proficiency modifiers shown in Table 37 (page 54) applied to the die roll or to the ability score?**

The adjustments are made to the character's ability score. Ω

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# Magic for Beginners

Bored with the +1 sword?  
Try magical items with a difference

by Gregory W. Detwiler

Illustrations by Jim Roslof



One of the major treasures in the AD&D® game is the magical item, in all its varied forms. Players about to dig into a treasure trove salivate at the prospect of magical treasure, especially if they've read the treasure lists in the 1st Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide* and *Unearthed Arcana* (among other places). However, there is a problem: Many magical items are so powerful that PCs should only get a chance at winning them when they have risen at least several levels. Giving a 1st-level magic-user a *wand of lightning* or a 1st-level paladin a *sword +5, holy avenger* is going too far. In many cases, even +1 versions of many weapon and armor types could be a bit too much for novice players. Once a player gets a magical item, he almost certainly wants more, and if his PC gets a +1 weapon at 1st level, he's liable to want a +5 weapon by the time he reaches 5th-level.

Magical items should be handed out sparingly, but problems still arise, especially with fighters. The majority of permanent (i.e., chargeless) magical items are weapons and armors. There is a limit to how many weapons, even magical ones, a fighter can carry, and he can only wear one suit of armor at a time. Unlike the various wands, miscellaneous magical items, and rings, the items used by fighters do not get used up; they stay in the game. Thus, the fighter is stuck with the same old weapons and armor ("Why should I let your fighter get a *broad sword +3*? He still has a perfectly good *short sword +2*"). Letting fighters use more wands is no solution; it merely blurs the differences and unique qualities between the classes, making each less fun to play.

At the same time, the lowest levels are the most dangerous. Monsters that 1st-level PCs face are the weakest available, but the PCs are also at their weakest, particularly in regard to hit points. One blow from a weapon doing maximum possible damage can kill most 1st-level characters, and can often kill even a 2nd-, 3rd-, or 4th-level character. At a crucial point during a battle, a PC may need a bit more protection than he would in most mundane encounters with wandering monsters.

Hitting power also poses problems. Even on the first level of a dungeon, PCs may meet unnatural opponents. Consider the manes demon from the *Monster Manual*. One to four of these demons may be encountered on the first level of a dungeon. At least a +1 weapon is required to hit a manes, unless a PC is wielding a weapon of cold iron. A single manes doing up to 8 hp damage per round could wipe out a cornered party that far outnumbers it in combatants and in hit points, especially if the party is armed with nothing but ordinary weapons. But giving +1 weapons to 1st-level PCs just to deal with the occasional manes is going a bit far.

What is required is a series of magical

devices made for novice PCs—devices that can be found in the treasure hoards of even the weakest monsters. In really tough campaigns, some PCs can be allowed a +1 weapon or a *potion of healing* as family bequests. One of the following items would do just as well, tiding the PC over until he can acquire a more conventional magical device without giving him a continual benefit in combat.

### Charged items

Unlike wands, these devices are conventional weapons, armor, and protective devices. Ordinarily, they are mundane and offer no special bonuses. When the command words are spoken, however, they become +1 for purposes of attack or defense (nothing greater than +1 should be used). Each weapon, suit of armor, or item has 2-8 charges, each charge lasting a full turn. Expenditure of a charge gives the PC a temporary magical benefit.

Naturally, there must be some limitations. Once all the charges are used, the device becomes an ordinary weapon or suit of armor of the finest quality. These devices may *not* be recharged; rechargeable items are little different from items with a permanent dweomer, and these magical items should be distinctive.

Another important fact about the charges is that a charge cannot be divided among turns. If a charge is expended at the beginning of a turn when a fight breaks out and the PC manages to eliminate his 1st-level opponent in the first combat round, the weapon stays +1 for the next nine rounds, even though the PC doesn't need it. In this way, players are encouraged to save the magic for the truly critical fights and not expend charges on every giant rat or ant their PCs see in the corridor.

This should also make players less likely to pick a fight with a dangerous foe than they would if their PCs had permanently magical weapons. Magical weapons can miss; the fight might take longer than expected; and if a PC runs out of charges in the middle of a crucial battle, he may come to regret his challenge. The same goes for protection; the point at which a PC is surrounded by club-wielding kobolds is *not* the point at which he wants to be reduced to his old armor class. This is especially true of protective items used by a magic-user.

Finally, these temporarily magical devices have no special abilities other than the temporary boosting of protection and combat capabilities to +1. The DM may rule that normal magical swords, even *swords +1*, can shed light. However, DMs who do not want to let 1st-level PCs have an eternal torch with an edge should announce that these temporarily magical weapons do not shed light. As an alternative, they could glow but not shed light, being useful merely for letting opponents know the owner's location in the dark. This will cause prudent characters to keep their weapons sheathed; it also preserves

game balance. A thief planning to backstab someone in the dark runs the risk of giving himself away, either by the weapon's glow or by the sound he makes pulling it out of the scabbard. A DM may also rule that the weapon glows in the dark only when a charge is being used.

Miscellaneous magical protective devices and rings are worth 100 xp, and are worth roughly the same number of gold pieces if sold while still magical. When the charges run out, they are worth only what similar ordinary items are worth. No protective ring of this sort will ever have a stone worth more than 10 gp. Weapons, shields, and suits of armor are worth 100 xp, and while magical are worth five times the gold-piece value that their mundane equivalents are worth. Thus, since a regular dagger costs 2 gp, a charged dagger would be worth 10 gp. If players are careful, the charged items should be used up just about the time the PCs get their first +1 devices (around 2nd level).

Since magical arrows and sling bullets are generally designed to be used only once, there are no charged versions of these weapons. The only charged missile weapons are the reusable ones: the aklys, harpoon, javelin, and spear, as well as throwable hand weapons such as the dagger and hammer. Weapons such as the mancatcher, sap, and garrote (having special effects) cannot be charged.

### Silver-iron weapons

As noted in the various lists of creatures, some supernatural monsters can be struck by nonmagical weapons. Some of these creatures may be struck only if the weapons are silvered; others may be struck only by weapons of cold iron. There are no creatures that are vulnerable only to either type of weapon. This leads us to a more enduring type of magical weapon.

Silver-iron weapons are created by the magical bonding of silver and cold iron. The finished products have a mottled black and silver appearance. These weapons do not have a magical bonus (not even +1), but they can hit unnatural monsters such as demons, devils, lycanthropes, gargoyles, and some undead. Note that since the weapons are magically bonded silver and cold iron, they count as magical weapons (though without "pluses") as well.

Although unnatural creatures can be hit with weapons of this nature, the weapons themselves bestow no bonuses to hit or on damage unless the creature has such an aversion to cold iron or silver that the mere touch causes extra damage. Since these weapons have no pluses, they do not grow weaker when carried to another plane any more than a wand or the average miscellaneous magical item would become weaker. A silver-iron weapon is still weaker than a regular magical weapon, but it retains its effectiveness.





Therefore, although these weapons are not in the forefront of action once conventional magical weapons are found, they are still useful backups, especially on extraplanar adventures.

Silver-iron weapons cost (in both experience points and gold pieces) exactly half of what a +1 weapon of the same type would cost. Thus, a silver-iron sword would be worth 200 xp and 1,000 gp. If the weapon is hit by a *rod of cancellation* or the beam from a *wand of negation*, the silver, cold iron, and handle (if such exists) separate from each other. The silver is worth half the weapon's weight in gold pieces. The silver and the iron must both make saving throws as hard metal in the case of most magical attacks to prevent them from separating. As a bonus, the magical bonding gives the cold iron a saving throw of 20 vs. rusting attacks like those of a rust monster.

### Dedicated weapons and armor

This is a special category of weaponry and protective devices. Dedicated weapons are a weaker version of the various magical weapons that gain bonuses against certain creature types. These weapons are "dedicated" by a high-level spell-caster (usually magic-users, but clerics and druids may also do so) for use against a specific type of monster that cannot be

harmed by normal weapons (demons, devils, etc.). The dedicated weapon normally has no bonuses and strikes most opponents as an ordinary weapon. However, against the type of enemy that it is dedicated to fight, the weapon hits and does normal damage to that creature. A mace dedicated to fighting golems, for instance, strikes and does damage against them as if it were a special weapon effective against golems. The mace has no to-hit or damage bonuses; golems are simply ordinary opponents as far as the mace is concerned. Unlike charged weapons, this dedicated power is permanent. Thus, one-shot missile weapons such as arrows and sling bullets may be dedicated.

In general, these weapons are dedicated by a spell-caster who has a strong hatred toward the target species or whose deity hates a certain race. Thus, since the Egyptian deity Seker is a special opponent of undead, a cleric of Seker would generally dedicate weapons for use against one type of undead. Note that no special benefits are gained against lesser demons, devils, undead, and so forth that can be harmed by ordinary weapons. A sword dedicated to fighting undead strikes effectively against wights and vampires, but would have no advantage in fighting other types of lesser undead, such as skeletons. There would be no benefit in dedicating a

weapon against a skeleton or zombie, since these are already affected by normal weapons. The process of enchantment is a permanent and generalized version of the first-level shukenja spell *weapon bless* in *Oriental Adventures* campaign worlds or an independently developed version in the more typical AD&D game world.

Dedicated weapons gain a +1 bonus on saving throws against special attacks launched by their special foes (including spells cast by demons or devils).

A second category of dedicated weapon is dedicated to creatures that can be hit by nonmagical weapons, but still present special problems for opponents. For instance, a weapon dedicated to the slaying of adherers would never stick to the opponent, and one dedicated against rust monsters would never rust. Such benefits can be just as important in a fight as being able to strike an otherwise-invulnerable opponent. Again, these weapons can hit the foe without any trouble, but do no extra damage to that opponent.

Dedicated protective devices, whether cloaks, rings, or armor, give protection to the wearer against the attack methods of a particular type of foe. A suit of chain mail dedicated against dragons, for instance, is +1 against the physical attacks of a dragon and bestows an additional +1 to saving throws vs. breath weapons or spell use of a dragon. Dedication is based on general groups of monsters, not on individuals or specific groups. Armor dedicated against demons works against all types of demons, not just against Type I demons, for example. Against opponents to which they are not dedicated, these devices are ordinary suits of armor or (in the case of items like cloaks) are totally useless as a means of protection.

All dedicated devices, whether weapons or protective devices, are worth 150 xp. The protective rings and miscellaneous items are worth 5,000 gp, while the weapons and suits of armor are worth 10 times as much as their nonmagical equivalents. Furthermore, the dweomer of such an item is permanent though weak.

Note again that dedicated armor provides +1 protection against all attacks by the dedicated opponent; the protection manifests itself as regular +1 armor or on saving throws as required. If multiple enemies of the dedicated type are encountered, the protective device gives both types of benefits in a single combat round, but does not confer a +2 bonus. There is no limit to the number of dedicated enemy attacks that can be countered.

Note also that the spiked buckler is treated as a weapon, rather than as armor, regarding its cost; it does, however, give the same protection as an ordinary dedicated buckler. Dedicating caltrops is possible but rather impractical.

### Items of illusion

These magical items generate illusions of weapons and armor that may then be used by the possessors of such items. In gen-

eral, the forms of these illusion-creating items are:

1. A brooch that conjures an illusory suit of armor;
2. A ring that conjures an illusory shield; and
3. A ring or small object (such as a gem) that conjures an illusory melee weapon.

Only the basic, mundane types of armors and weapons can be conjured. A *brooch of illusory plate mail armor* would give its wearer AC 3 if its illusion was successfully believed, but it could not create an illusion of magical plate mail, such as *plate mail +5*.

These devices derive their powers from the minds of their users. The owner of such an item thinks of the armor or weapon type desired, and a magical field shaped like the desired item appears around the owner or in his hand. The owner's mind creates these illusions; the minds of both owner and enemy power them in battle. If an enemy believes a suit of illusory armor is real, some of his mental strength is siphoned off to magically improve the owner's armor class. Likewise, if the foe believes an illusory weapon is real and has struck him, some of his own mental energy creates a wound equivalent to what a real weapon would have inflicted (treat illusory weapons as real ones for estimating damage). If the foe

is nonintelligent or disbelieves the illusion, no benefit is gained. As a result, these items are weaker than regular magical weapons and armor.

Because the power to create such items is drawn from the user's mind, a character may only use such illusion-creating items as his class, size, proficiencies, etc. would allow if the illusory items were real. Thus, a magic-user could not use the previously named *brooch of plate mail armor*; but could use a *gem of illusory quarterstaves* if he had proficiency with such weapons.

Remember that the successful use of these items requires an intelligent enemy. Illusory armor is no protection against a mechanically operated blade, golem, missile trap, green slime, or skeleton. Furthermore, unintelligent foes such as golems are not harmed by illusory weapons, and a character can't chop down a wooden door with an illusory axe (nor can an intelligent onlooker *think* he is doing so).

Each magical item of this sort can create an illusion of only one type of weapon, shield, or suit of armor. Each such item is worth 250 xp and 2,500 gp. Most such items are charged, having 3-30 charges (they cannot be recharged). Items that are permanent are worth twice the previous values. Each charge is good for one hour each day. Since the items must be touched or worn in order to draw mental strength

from the owner, only melee weapons can be conjured; a missile weapon would disappear the moment it left the owner's hand. Since such items are useless if disbelieved and cause no more damage or protection than mundane weapons and armor as a result, they are particularly suited to low-level characters.

### Vial bombs

These devices are found in groups of 4-16 vials. They are simply empty glass vials of the size used in storing holy/unholy water. They may be used against an enemy as grenade-like missiles with maximum range of 3". When the appropriate command word is spoken (usually right before throwing), the empty vial is magically filled with either *firewater* (as per the *Unearthed Arcana* spell), holy/unholy water, or acid. Each missile may be used only once, and each automatically breaks when striking any solid surface after being hurled. Despite the uniform size of each vial, damage is done as per the statistics given in the 1st Edition *DMG*, page 64, and as per the *firewater* spell (treat *firewater* as oil for splash effects, etc.). Each such vial is worth 50 xp and 500 gp. Any such vial may create any of the above liquids, provided that the proper command word is spoken.

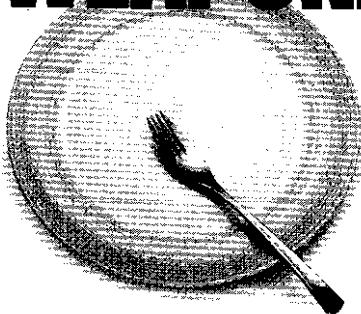
### Use in the campaign

Although most of the weapons and armor here may be altered for use in *Oriental Adventures* campaigns, this article has been restricted to Western weaponry and armor for two reasons. First, the majority of AD&D game players still play in Western-style campaigns. Second, players of *Oriental Adventures* already have adequate "borderline" equipment in the form of weapons and armor of quality. Of course, anyone who wants Oriental equivalents of the devices in this article can easily extrapolate from the lists to create their own versions.

These magical items show the most advantage in magic-poor campaigns. In some campaigns, they might even be the *only* types of magical weapons and armor available. Adventurers could pursue lengthy quests in search of weapons and armor that would last in magical form just long enough to defeat a particularly powerful opponent, (such as a demon or devil). Dedicated items should be a favorite with DMs who give players weak magical items as bequests. To return to an earlier example, a cleric of Seker could receive from his temple a weapon or suit of armor dedicated against undead. In such a case, loss of the item could cause a loss of prestige far greater than the loss of an ordinary magical item. This would be especially true if the item was presented to the character as part of an elaborate ceremony upon the completion of his initial training. If the item was a family bequest, the character would covet it as proof of lineage.



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Dedicated items may be used by high-level characters, of course. They could also be a real pain if not examined properly with an *identify* spell. If a magical suit of armor saves a fighter from a *fireball* spell cast by a demon, said fighter might assume that the armor protects against *all* fire-based attacks. When he confidently steps up to that angry red dragon in his demon-dedicated armor, he could be in for a surprise. And if use of a magical weapon against a dedicated foe makes him think it is always magical, put the character up against an unnatural foe of a different species and watch the fun! (If you're kind-hearted or if the player is generally good, you might leave an escape route open.)

Charged weapons, as stated before, should be saved for the big fights. If any reason exists to suspect that an unnatural opponent like a manes demon might be encountered, it would be wise not to waste a charged weapon on orcs. This makes fights with wandering monsters more fair, as these relatively weaker creatures won't receive the same magical might that the strongest enemy in the adventure will.

The remaining items can be used quite well by even high-level adventurers. They might even be handed over to trusted henchmen after more conventional magic weapons are located. It might be a good idea to hang on to those silver-iron weap-

ons even after "regular" magical weapons are found. If the PCs travel to another plane, either deliberately or inadvertently, a silver-iron item might be more magical and more useful than a regular +1 or +2 weapon. And if characters raise families in a long-lasting campaign, old weapons would make ideal bequests for adventuring children. Such weapons could have their own legends and history, just as normal magical weapons might.

It is hoped that this article will improve play in the AD&D game and ease the pressure on the poor DM to come up with magical treasures. These weak items should enable the DM to stretch out the supply of regular magical items by allowing him to introduce the stronger items much later in the campaign. Certainly, these items increase the variety of magical items in the game (a worthy end in itself). And, since these items are cheaper in terms of experience points and gold pieces, characters gaining them will not rise as rapidly in levels, thereby reducing the threat to game balance. Players want magical items for their PCs; you want to keep PC advancement slow. Now everyone can get what he wants.  $\Omega$

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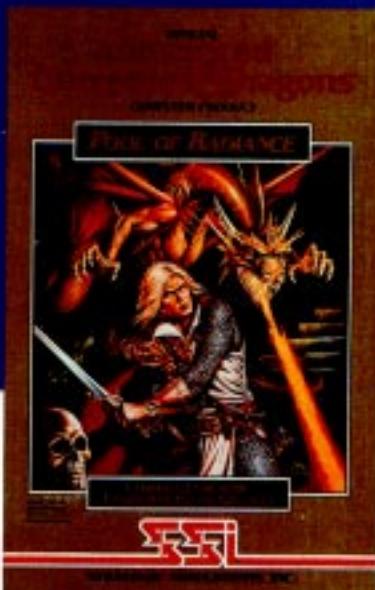
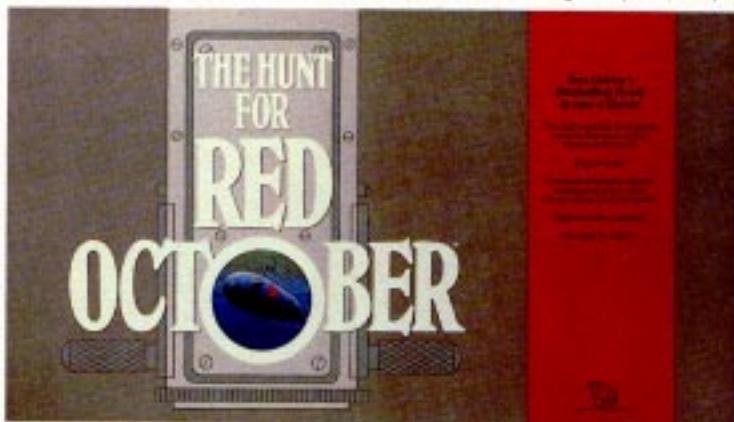
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THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER™ game (TSR, Inc.)



Pool of Radiance game (SSI)

# The Envelope, Please!

The winners of the  
1988 ORIGINS™ Awards

Each year at the ORIGINS™ game convention, the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts and Design announces the winners of the ORIGINS Awards. These awards are given for outstanding achievement in miniatures games, role-playing games, board games, play-by-mail games, computer games, and adventure-gaming magazines.

This year, the awards were presented at the L.A. ORIGINS '89 game convention in Los Angeles, Calif., on July 1, at the LAX Hilton. The host for the convention was DTI/3W Games. Our thanks to Anne Merritt and Howard Barasch of the Game Manufacturers Association (GAMA) for this information.

**Best Historical Figure Series, 1988:**  
1200 A.D. Line — *The Aztec Army*\* (Ral Partha Enterprises), sculpted by Richard Kerr.

**Best Fantasy or Science-Fiction Figure Series, 1988:** *AD&D® Metal Miniatures* (Ral Partha Enterprises), sculpted by Tom Meier and Dennis Mize.

**Best Vehicular or Accessory Series, 1988:** *BATTLETECH Mechs*\* (Ral Partha Enterprises), sculpted by Bob Charrette, Julie Gutherie, and Tom Meier.

**Best Miniatures Rules, 1988:** *To the Sound of the Guns*\*, for the JOHNNY REB game\* (Game Designers' Workshop), designed by John Hill and Dean West.

**Best Role-Playing Rules, 1988:** GURPS game, Basic Set, 3rd Edition\* (Steve Jackson Games, Inc.), designed by Steve Jackson.

**Best Role-Playing Adventure, 1988:** *Battle for the Golden Sun*\*, for the STAR WARS game\* (West End Games), designed by Douglas Kaufman.



**AD&D® Metal Miniatures** (Ral Partha)



**Best Role-Playing Supplement, 1988:** GURPS Space game\*, for the GURPS game system\* (Steve Jackson Games, Inc.), designed by Steve Jackson and William A. Barton.

**Best Graphic Presentation of a Role-Playing Game, Adventure, or Supplement, 1988:** Petersen's Field Guide to *Cthulhu Monsters*\*, for the CALL OF CTHULHU game\* (Chaosium, Inc.), art direction by Lynn Willis.

**Best Pre-20th Century Boardgame, 1988:** GETTYSBURG game\* (The Avalon Hill Game Company), designed by Craig Taylor.

**Best Boardgame Covering the Period 1900-1946 for 1988:** KREMLIN game\* (The Avalon Hill Game Company), designed by Urs Hosteller, developed by Don Greenwood.

**Best Boardgame Covering the Period 1947 to Modern Day for 1988:** THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER™ game (TSR, Inc.), designed by Douglas Niles.

**Best Fantasy or Science-Fiction Boardgame, 1988:** SKY GALLEONS OF MARS game\* (Game Designers' Workshop), designed by Frank Chadwick.

**Best Graphic Presentation of a Boardgame, 1988:** SKY GALLEONS OF MARS game\* (Game Designers' Workshop), art direction by Lauretta Oblinger.

**Best Play-By-Mail Game:** KING & THINGS game\* (Andon Games), PBM design by Gary E. Smith.

**Best Fantasy or Science-Fiction Computer Game, 1988:** *.Pool of Radiance* game (Strategic Simulations, Inc.), designed by James M. Ward, David "Zeb" Cook, Steve Winter, and Michael Breault; game created by the SSI Special Projects Group.

**Best Military or Strategy Computer Game, 1988:** *F-19 Stealth Fighter* game\* (MicroProse Software, Inc.), designed by Sid Meier, Arnold Hendrick, and Jim Synoski.

**Best Screen Graphics in a Home Computer Game, 1988:** *F-19 Stealth Fighter* game\* (MicroProse Software, Inc.), screen graphic design by Max Remington III, Murray Taylor, Bruce Shelley, Barbara Bents.

**Best Professional Adventure Gaming Magazine, 1988:** *Strategy & Tactics* magazine\* (World Wide War-games), edited by Ty Bomba and A. A. Nofi.

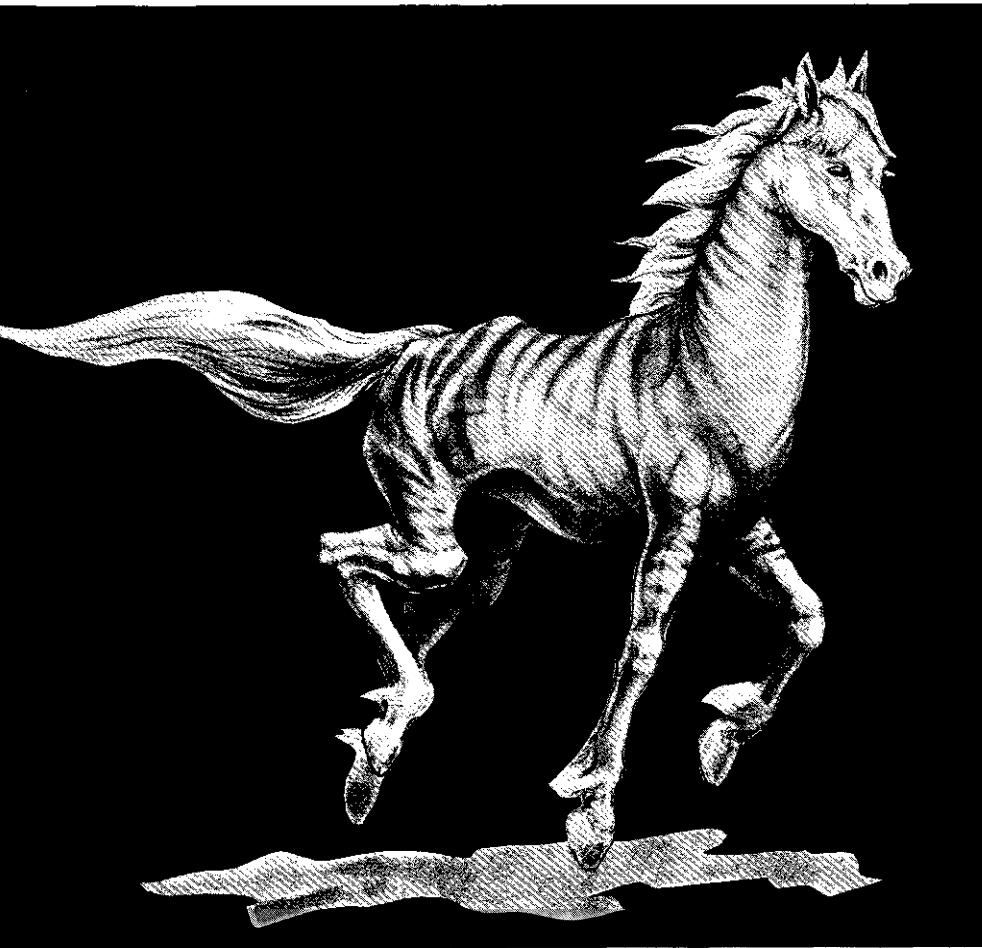
**Best Amateur Adventure Gaming Magazine, 1988:** *Sorcerer's Scroll*\*, edited by Tori Berquist

**Hall of Fame:** Rick Loomis, president of Flying Buffalo, Inc., and member of GAMA's board of directors. Rick Loomis was one of the original founders of GAMA, and helped form the PBM Association (as well as set up some of the earliest PBM games).

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# The Dragon's Bestiary

Not quite horses—but perhaps better

by Kurt Martin

illustrations by Paul Jaquays

**T**hey left me alone to guard the rocky, north-coast road, probably figuring that I couldn't do any harm there. The outlaws were supposed to be coming from the south. So I watched the road—really a path—for about an hour, jumping at every passing bird, before finally getting myself calmed down. Then I left my spear and bow on the hill and slid over the boulders down to the beach.

"A bit later, as I was leaning back to skip another stone across a wave, I heard a snicker behind me. I nearly fell over as I turned around, expecting the worst. But I wasn't being watched by the outlaws or my sergeant.

"It had come up behind me. Its flat-faced head was cocked a bit to one side, and its four hooves sank into the sand. It was something like a horse, but its eyes were much closer together and it had a furry hide that was—well, blue."

One oddity with fantasy games and literature is that the everpresent horse never seems to change from world to world. With only a few exceptions, no matter how different the campaign milieu, we always see the same ponies and chargers, bays and roans. While this continuity makes for a nice island amid the creative chaos, there is no reason that the AD&D® 1st Edition game should be limited in this way.

Of the exceptions to this rule, J. R. R. Tolkien's mearas (from *The Lord of the Rings*) form an interesting breed, but they are only normal horses of superior blood and strength. Steven R. Donaldson's ranyhyn (from the Covenant series) are quite different from other horses but would be difficult to add to a campaign without their attendant environment. There are other fantasy horse-types, but all have similar limitations. The practical solution to this is to create some unusual new "horses" with special characteristics and abilities to fill the gap.

Following are the details of five new horselike creatures. Any or all of them could be added to a world as random encounters or as established sources of transportation. They can be included with normal horses or substituted for them entirely. (My world of Lervanis uses vor predominantly, with kiita and bahtel occasionally.) Each type excels at one or more tasks, and all of them make excellent specialized mounts for certain missions and particular characters, such as cavaliers.

A new statistic is presented here: load, which shows the weight in gold pieces each creature can carry. The first value given shows the maximum load in gold-pieces weight that the creature can carry at normal movement; the second figure shows the encumbered movement maximum load, at which the creature moves at one-half normal speed.

## Av

FREQUENCY: *Rare*

NO. APPEARING: *3-60 in wild (10% chance of 1)*

ARMOR CLASS: *7*

MOVE: *30" (see text)*

HIT DICE: *2+2*

% IN LAIR: *Nil*

TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *2 hooves and 1 bite*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *1-4/1-4/1-3*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*

INTELLIGENCE: *Semi-*

ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic good*

SIZE: *L (see text)*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

LOAD: *3,000/4,500*

Av, or sand runners, are extremely thin, long-legged horses of great speed and reliability—the “greyhounds” of the horse world. They are of particular value in far-flung kingdoms, as they swim well (6” alone, 4” mounted, 2” encumbered), never get lost, and can travel without a rider to a known destination. They are also sufficiently intelligent to learn simple commands and even recognize one or two simple symbols, such as a coat of arms. Thus, their allegiance can be extended to everyone in a certain group who knows the proper commands or signs.

Av serve any kind masters and have no particular racial preferences. They dislike bardings. Sand runners like magic and are not afraid of most spells, but they are terrified of fire and all firelike effects.

Wild av travel in swift packs and are hard to catch. Once captured, they are skittish but easily trained. They can be bred, but horse-av combinations always result in fair-quality standard horses.

Av are rather weak in melee and prefer to run from trouble, but they can be trained for combat much as normal horses of good quality. However, av are forced to the fringes of battle even by light war horses and are certainly no match for medium and heavy horses.

Sand runners prefer deserts, plains, and other hot, dry regions, but are reasonably tolerant of all climates and weather with the exception of rain. They are slow and troublesome on wet days. Av have very good endurance, being able to travel up to 15 hours per day with ease, and require only three-fourths the water required by normal horses. Stallions (uncut adult males) are capable of bursts of speed of 33” (this can be added to the cavalier speed bonus). They can do this once a day for up to three turns.

Av have large, flaring nostrils and small, double-lidded eyes in thin heads. They are bony, with long, hairy tails and manes and tufts of hair around their hooves. They range from butter yellow to golden brown

in color and often have bands and stripes in dark brown or reddish-brown. Av are usually about 15 hands at the withers. They eat a normal horse diet and live up to 25 years.

## Bahtel

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

NO. APPEARING: *1-12 in wild*

ARMOR CLASS: *6*

MOVE: *18"*

HIT DICE: *4+4*

% IN LAIR: *Nil*

TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *2 hooves, 1 bite, and 1 head butt*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *1-8/1-8/1-4/2-5*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Rear-leg kick*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*

INTELLIGENCE: *Low*

ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*

SIZE: *L (see text)*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

LOAD: *4,500/7,000*

Bahtel (bah-TEL) are large, powerful horses that excel in combat. They are intense, high-strung, and always ready to fight. They are sometimes referred to as berserker horses or whirlygigs for their wildly aggressive behavior in battle. They are not as fragile as normal horses, having thicker legs and stronger bones. In melee, they bite with their strong jaws, kick with their front hooves, and use their large, bony foreheads to butt opponents. Unlike other horses, bahtel can attack on the first round of melee.

Every other round, a bahtel can kick with its rear hooves (both hooves thrusting at a single target) for 2-12 hp damage (save vs. paralyzation for one-half damage). This “rear” attack can be directed against an opponent in front, as the bahtel can leap up and kick its rear feet forward. An opponent hit by a bahtel’s rear hooves must make a dexterity check on 4d6 or be knocked down. There is only a 1% chance that bahtel will panic and bolt from a fight while mounted, but they always retreat if wounded while facing poor odds.

During combat, only cavaliers and characters with riding proficiency are able to stay in the saddle of a berserker horse. Others are thrown in 1-6 segments by the beast’s continual wild bucking and twisting as it fights. All but cavaliers have their number of attacks per round reduced by one, so that a 9th-level ranger would have one attack every two rounds and a thief of the same level would have none. All attacks by the rider are at -2 to hit. A rider must use one hand to hold the bahtel’s reins while it fights, his other hand being free to hold a weapon.

An unskilled character could tie himself into the saddle and thus stay on the horse, but there are some obvious problems with

this. Spell-casting from the back of a fighting bahtel is impossible, and only simple magical item use is possible. For instance, a character could not (safely) use an item that required aiming, such as a *wand of paralyzation*, but could use a *figurine of wondrous power*.

If there is not sufficient room for the bahtel to thrash around in melee (about 10’ x 20’ plus 14’ vertically), its armor class is one point worse (AC 7) and it does not get its rear-leg attack. However, riders have only a -1 to their attacks, and they have their attacks reduced to the next lowest level of attacks per round (e.g., from 5/2 to 2 attacks per round, from 2 to 3/2 attacks per round, etc., with a minimum of one attack per round).

A bahtel’s large hooves can be equipped with extra-heavy shoes for better effect in combat. This adds +1 hp to the damage rolled for each attacking hoof (+2 hp to the rear-hoof attack), but this also reduces the bahtel’s movement rate to 15”. Bahtel wear any bardings and can be fitted with

## Bahtel



any normal saddle, but they must have special bitless bridles in order to accommodate their huge jaws.

Berserker horses are not particularly loyal, usually following whomever feeds them best. However, since they are somewhat intelligent, they do pay attention to their masters and riders, showing preference for skilled and aggressive cavaliers, paladins, rangers, fighters, barbarians, and clerics. Riding mastery is slightly more important to them than food, so the better rider wins out over the rich one. If one master is killed, a bahtel will go with the next best one.

For some reason, berserker horses are not fond of gnomes and halflings, preferring to avoid (or kick) them. They tolerate dwarves, but recognize them as nonriders. They are neutral with regard to all other species except unicorns, which bahtel dislike. Bahtel are not interested in (or intelligent enough for) matters of good and evil, or law and chaos.

A bahtel can learn to recognize 2-5 simple verbal commands. These can be for any simple action such as charge, wait, or come. It takes a minimum of two weeks for the beast to learn each command, and it obeys the command if a roll of 1d100 is less than or equal to its loyalty score (10d4, +5% per month of service, modified by the rider's charisma (the loyalty-base modifier); 19 is maximum score). Bahtel communicate among themselves in

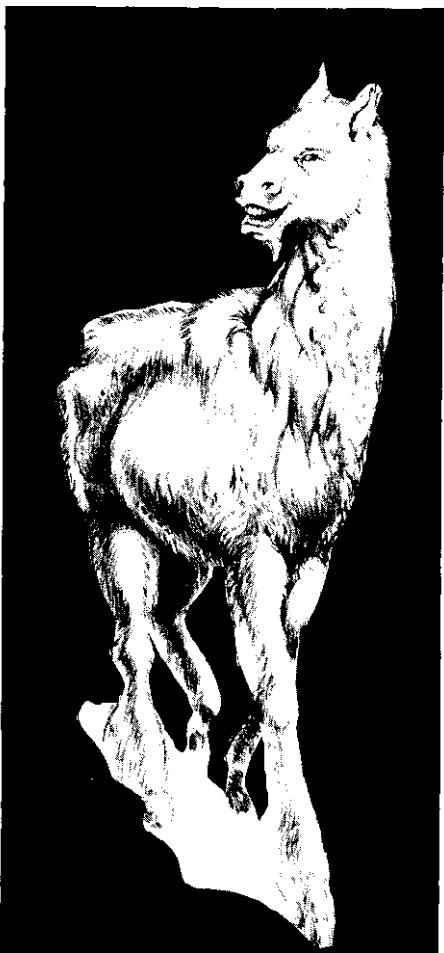
a simple language of grunts and thin whistles. During melee, they sometimes whistle quite loudly, with any nearby bahtel answering. A bahtel willingly fights any creature, including another bahtel.

Due to their thin, rough hide, berserker horses are not at all suited to cold climates and prefer hot, wet regions. They take 150% damage from cold-based attacks (e.g., taking 15 hp instead of 10 hp damage) and always try to avoid snow and ice. Bahtel are omnivores, with a normal diet of grasses and fruits supplemented with eggs, small mammals, insects, and lizards. They eat one-and-a-half times as much as medium war horses.

In the wild, bahtel travel alone or in small packs. All berserker horses have very good eyesight, and they are very difficult to catch alive. Once captured, they require six months of training in order to mesh successfully with heavy, armored riders and mounted companies, though they are subject to loyalty rolls. They never go underground or into any buildings other than stables. They are indifferent to most magic. Bahtel can sometimes be bred with other horses (see note which follows), but the horse genes dominate and sterile, normal, fair-quality war horses always result.

Female bahtel are larger and stronger than males and get +1 hp on each hit die rolled; females absolutely refuse any non-bahtel stud. All bahtel have short, broad bodies with thick, muscular legs and long, very flexible necks. Their heads are short and wide, with a heavy knot of bone over the eyes. They are usually striped in wide, vertical bands of gray, white, or black. They have no manes; their tails are short, thick and hairless. Males are usually about 15 hands and females 16 hands. Bahtel are rather short-lived, maturing in one year and living to about 12 years of age.

## Kiita



### Kiita

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*  
NO. APPEARING: *1-4 in wild*  
ARMOR CLASS: *4 (see text)*  
MOVE: *18"*  
HIT DICE: *3*  
% IN LAIR: *5%*  
TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*  
NO. OF ATTACKS: *2 hooves and 1 bite*  
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *1-6/1-6/1-4*  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *ESP*  
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*  
INTELLIGENCE: *Average*  
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral good*  
SIZE: *L (see text)*  
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil, but see text*  
LOAD: *3,500/5,000*

Kiita (KEE-tah) are intelligent creatures who sometimes choose to align themselves, singly, with powerful humans and demi-humans. They accept these friends as riders, but only within certain limits

### Kiita Reaction Table

#### 1d12 Reaction

- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| 1-4   | Leaves character or party at first opportunity  |
| 5-6   | Leaves character or party at next dangerous situation (or after a maximum of 4 hours) |
| 7-9   | Stays with character or party for 2-20 hours  |
| 10-11 | Stays with character or party for 1-4 days  |
| 12    | Stays with character or party for 5-8 days  |

and never with saddle and bridle. Because of their skills, intelligence, and loyalty, kiita are highly prized mounts.

Kiita prefer monks, rangers, and clerics as partners, and very rarely join other types. Kiita only join characters of good alignment and with intelligences greater than their own. They stay with characters of equal or lesser intelligence or of neutral or evil alignment for no more than one week.

Kiita try to meet possible partners but attempt to carefully choose the time and place of such encounters to avoid putting themselves in danger. They prefer one-on-one encounters, always keep their distance, and invariably try to surprise potential friends. When a lone kiita is encountered, a normal reaction roll is made for it. If the kiita's result is neutral or better, it wishes to go with the character or party it has met. If a monk, cleric, or ranger is present, the kiita quickly selects that character (choosing a monk over a ranger, and a ranger over a cleric) as a possible partner. Kiita also prefer elves and half-elves to other species and select such characters first if all else is equal. They are neutral toward small demi-humans, since they are not usually riders, but they dislike half-orcs.

If there are no characters of the three first-choice classes, roll for the creature's reaction on the Kiita Reaction Table. A roll is also required if and when a chosen character is not up to the kiita's standards of goodness, intelligence, and class. If a kiita decides to leave a character, it never goes to another member of the same party, regardless of eligibility.

If the chosen character proves to be one of the three preferred classes, is more intelligent, and is of any sort of good alignment, the kiita stays with that character. Once a rider is chosen (usually in return for a promise of food and security), a kiita is able to establish a limited telepathic link with that person. This requires 1-4 weeks (or only 2-8 days with a monk or psionic PC). Wounds to either partner, great distress (such as extreme hunger or strong

emotions), or separation greater than one mile between mount and rider disrupt the link, but otherwise the kiita and its rider can converse in something approaching normal speech, mind to mind. No training or riding is necessary for this; the kiita becomes something of a brave and loyal henchman.

In addition, the kiita is usually able to scan the surface thoughts of human, demihuman, and humanoid opponents, much as a doppelganger does but to a lesser degree. This anticipation produces the kiita's low armor class. Against mindless foes (e.g., slimes, skeletons, dinosaurs) or foes with psionic powers that prevent the use of *ESP*, the kiita's armor class is 6. A kiita can only *ESP* one opponent at a time.

Kiita are wary of nonclerical spellcasters (except for druids). A kiita stays on as a partner for 2-8 years, at the end of which time it suddenly departs, its whim satisfied. It is not possible to force a kiita into service, except by charm—but should the *charm* be broken, the kiita flees.

Kiita are able to twist their necks so far as to look directly behind themselves, thus being able to bite anyone near their front flanks. They are average in fighting ability. They wear light bardings (leather, padded, or lighter-weight ones). A kiita's armor class while encumbered is worsened by one point. Like bahtel, kiita can attack on the first round of melee.

The only sounds that kiita are able to make are clicks and snaps (used for communication among themselves) and a thin screech for warnings and as a fighting call. Kiita are temperate and subarctic creatures, with considerable ability to endure cold and hardship. They are only moderately tolerant of heat. Kiita dislike going underground, as do elves, but they are agile enough to enter large areas and will do so with their partners. Kiita have small, weak hooves that require monthly reshoeing by an expert if they are expected to accept riders on long journeys. They are able to digest just about anything but live best on grains and vegetables. There are no appreciable differences between male

and female kiita, and all have keen ears and noses. Note that because kiita refuse to wear saddles and bridles, they cannot wear stirrups—thus, their riders must hang on to their mounts with both hands when the mounts are running or fighting. Being very distantly related to normal horses, kiita cannot be crossbred with their "average" cousins.

Kiita have flat, expressive faces with small eyes and broad mouths. Their necks are short and thin on small, wiry bodies. They are usually about 13-15 hands. Kiita are normally pale blue in color, with some much darker and others almost white. They have warm, furry hides that are sought by (stupid) hunters, but are obviously hard to obtain. Kiita have no manes or tails. They live about 40 years.

## Vor

FREQUENCY: *Uncommon*  
 NO. APPEARING: 2-40 in wild (10% chance of 1)  
 ARMOR CLASS: 8  
 MOVE: 15"  
 HIT DICE: 3+3  
 % IN LAIR: *Nil*  
 TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*  
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 horn butt  
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-8  
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Bellow*  
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Smell poison*  
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: Standard  
 INTELLIGENCE: *Animal*  
 ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*  
 SIZE: *L* (see text)  
 PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*  
 LOAD: 5,000/9,000

Vor are extremely strong and sure-footed. They are quiet, placid creatures, valuable for their ability to carry heavy loads virtually anywhere. However, they are slow and not strong in combat. Being of animal intelligence, they recognize only good treatment and food, although they do have some rider loyalty.

## Wandega

## Vor



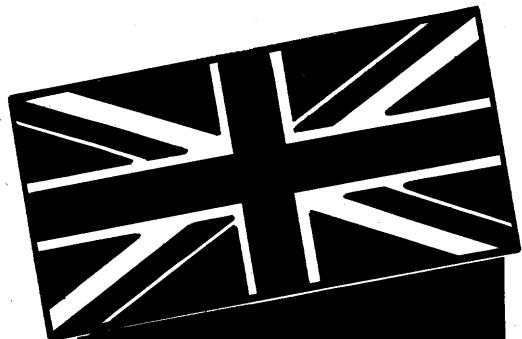
Vor are very tractable, easily-trained beasts and are usually calm and trustworthy. They are less nervous than horses. Vor dislike dwarves but otherwise enjoy the smaller demi-humans, who find vor vastly amusing and can trip up when riding the larger specimens. They are easy to catch and breed (only among themselves) and are fairly disease-resistant. Vor are comfortable in temperate regions, where they roam in small herds, often in rocky uplands. Vor are very distantly related to horses.

Vor are generally the size and weight of heavy war horses but can carry significantly more than any horse and can climb even steep grades with large loads. Vor will enter cave mouths but are terribly claustrophobic and never willingly enter any sort of enclosed space other than a stable.

In melee, vor can attack opponents only directly ahead or just to the side. They attack on the second and succeeding rounds of any melee. Vor let out a tremendous bellow when they are wounded and when charging into a fight. Anyone directly in front of the beast at this moment must save vs. breath weapon or lose initiative on the following melee round.

Vor are very faithful to masters who





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treat them well, and they stay at the sides of their dismounted riders until they are driven off or one of them is killed.

Other than their roaring and great strength, a vor's only special skill is the ability to smell poisonous substances. The vor can smell poison at 1' distance, only if there are no other strong smells present. Thus, a poison mixed in with a complete, odorous meal would escape the vor, but one in a glass of white wine would not.

Vor require only normal saddles and other tack. They can be fitted with bardings at 150% of the usual cost. They are herbivores and like most good grasses and feeds.

Male vor are larger than females and have a 60% chance of having six legs instead of four. Those with six legs are the largest and strongest, gaining +2 hp per hit die. Females have a 20% chance of six legs, with six-legged specimens receiving +1 hp per hit die.

Vor mounts are tall (16-17 hands), heavy, orange or red beasts with thin, handsome faces and large ears. They have large, hard hooves that help them climb in steep and stony areas. They each have one small, hard horn at the top of the forehead. Vor have hairy tails and manes, and live up to 30 years.

## Wandega

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

NO. APPEARING: *1-4 in wild*

ARMOR CLASS: 7

MOVE: *21"*

HIT DICE: *2+4*

% IN LAIR: *10%*

TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *2 hooves*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *1-4/1-4*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Spells*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Surprised on 1 on 1d6*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *30%*

INTELLIGENCE: *Very*

ALIGNMENT: *Lawful neutral*

SIZE: *L (see text)*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

LOAD: *2,500/4,000*

Wandega (wan-DAY-gah) are intelligent creatures with a special relationship to magic. They are rarely seen, almost impossible to catch, and, exceptionally valuable. All wandega are resistant to magic, and females are capable of learning as many as three first-level magic-user spells. Male wandega cannot learn spells. Wandega are even more distantly related to horses than are kiita or vor.

Wandega are very choosy, preferring individual freedom to pleasureless service, but occasionally one approaches an individual or a group of adventurers, hoping to attach itself to someone with spell-casting ability. This is true for both female and male wandega. Wandega encountered in this way do not yet know any spells.

They attempt to ally themselves with a lawful spell-caster, choosing a magic-user or illusionist, in that order. A wandega can sense if a character is lawful, choosing the first eligible spell-caster. The race of the spell-caster is not a factor. Wandega refuse to join any nonlawful character, but a lawful rider can be good, evil, or neutral.

A female wandega can learn one magic-user spell per month, to a total of three spells. Such spells can involve the use of verbal and somatic components only (the latter fulfilled with the wandega's hooves and tail). Learning these spells requires at least two hours per day of uninterrupted work with the teacher/partner, and any serious disruption sets progress back one week. The wandega can never relearn spells without the help of its partner.

Wandega are intensely loyal. If a wandega's master is killed, it never again teams up with another character, preferring instead to go back to the wild.

Wandega dislike buildings, including most stables, and never go underground. They are not very tolerant of separation from their partners, so provision must be made for them in dungeon adventures. However, they can be taught to wait and even stand watch over lesser creatures. This and their magic lessons are the only training they need. Wandega that are left alone have their own henchman morale and get normal morale checks.

Wandega speak their own hissing language and can learn one other language (in addition to their spells) in six months time. In human and demi-human languages, wandega speak in a weak, crackly voice and cannot speak loudly.

Wandega are weak in melee and will not wear bardings but will gladly accept magical protective devices. They do not require bit and bridle and will not accept them, but they can be convinced to carry saddles, stirrups, and light packs. Wandega are usually small (13 hands) and are never suitable war horses, though they are hard to panic.

Male and female wandega are much alike and cannot be bred with horses. They have light coats and prefer temperate grasslands and forests. When in their native terrain, they are surprised only on 1 in 6. They are herbivores, with a preference for fine grains and grasses. They are usually brown, white, or mottled combinations of the two, with thin, roundish necks and small heads. Wandega snouts are quite short, ending in small mouths. Their ears are small and pointed, and their eyes are usually green or brown. They have short, stubby manes and long, whiplike tails. Wandega females live about 25 years, males up to 35 years.

Ω

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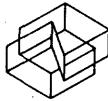
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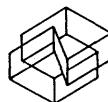
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# Advice for All Mutants

Questions and answers  
on the 3rd Edition  
GAMMA WORLD® game

by Skip Williams

This month, DRAGON® Magazine borrowed some of the questions that readers had sent to "Sage Advice" to provide you with a special article. Questions regarding the 3rd Edition GAMMA WORLD® game were selected in order to clarify some of the rules presented in the boxed set.

**What encounters are pictured on the covers of modules GW6-GW10? I can't find anything in the modules that comes close to what is shown on the covers. While we're on the subject, when did the Earth acquire a second moon, as depicted on the covers of GW6 *Alpha Factor* and GW8 *Gamma Base*?**

None of the cover art from modules GW6 and beyond reflects what is actually happening in the modules; this was done to keep the players from getting any clues about the adventures. In each case, the artwork used was the snappiest available.

**What happened to module GW5?**

Module GW5 was never published because of a "kink" in the TSR product pipeline.

**How many more GAMMA WORLD modules are going to be released?**

There are no plans for future GAMMA WORLD products.

**How are the maps for modules GW6-GW10 supposed to fit together?**

The map from GW7 *Beta Principle* does not fit with the maps for GW6 and GW8-GW10; it shows an area located some distance to the east (the referee must decide how far to the east it is). The proper positions for the other maps are:

GW6	GW9
GW8	GW10

**I have several modules with the same problem—they all have loot tables, but no descriptions for the items are given in the modules.**

The Random Loot Table in module GW7 was taken directly from module GW6. The item descriptions appear on page 35 of GW6.

**How do you use the base service costs given in GW9 *Delta Fragment* to calculate the cost of an item made to order—e.g., chain mail?**

The base service cost determines the labor cost for any project. The base cost is multiplied by the appropriate talent or skill score to get the cost for one week's

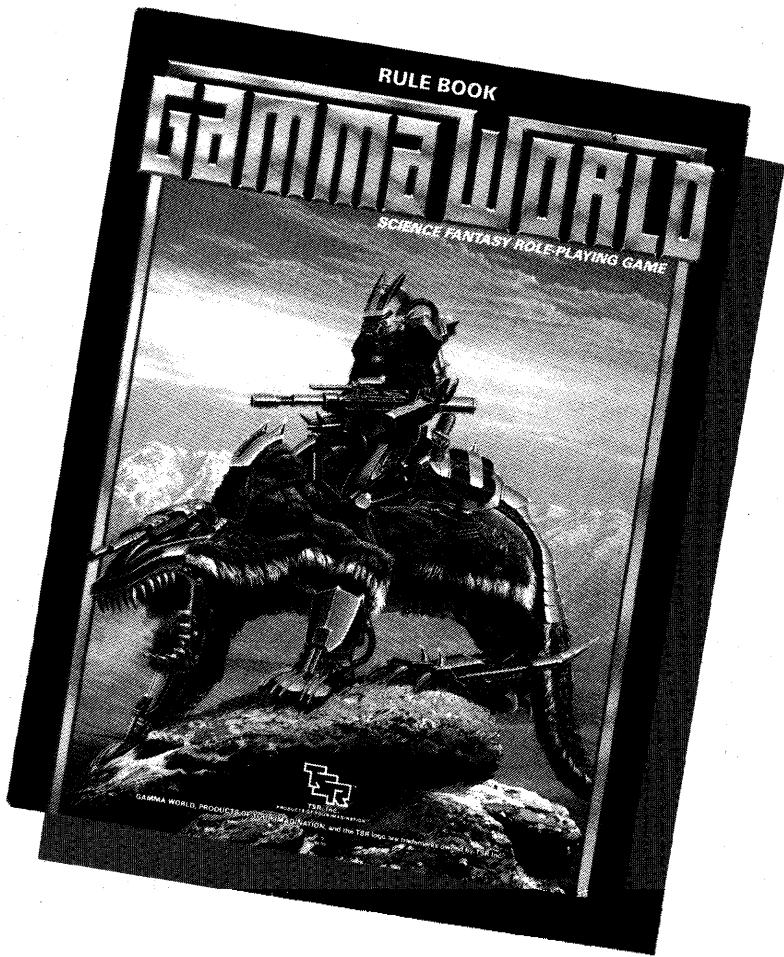
labor. Chain mail requires the services of an armorer; the armorer skill has a base cost of 9, so an armorer with an Armorer skill score of 11, for example, charges 99 gold pieces per week. The materials cost is one-half the value shown on the appropriate equipment table, so chain mail made to order costs 150 gold pieces ( $300 \div 2$ ) plus labor. Construction time for armor is one week per armor class (see page 86 of GW9), so chain mail takes five weeks, or less if the referee is kind. The total cost in gold pieces of the chain mail is  $([99 \times 5] + 150) = 645$  gold pieces.

**What does the Endurance skill do?**

A character with the Endurance skill can add his Rank to his CN score when determining endurance duration. The character can also roll against his Rank to avoid fatigue brought on by not resting, but can do this only four times every 16 hours. See GW9, page 88, for more details.

**Can a character with a high CN score attempt a CN check to avoid the effects of radiation?**

No. The radiation rolls an "attack" on the column for its intensity; then the character rolls against his CN to negate or lessen the effect.



**Please send me statistics on the following vehicles: [list of 99 assorted vehicles attached].**

Equipment and vehicles are listed on page 13 of the 3rd Edition Rules Supplement. If you don't have the supplement, write to:

GAMMA WORLD Rules Supplement  
P.O. Box 756  
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For vehicles not listed on page 13, use the nearest equivalent. For example, a turbine truck has a turbine car's Tech Level and a panel truck's AC, HD/EN, hp, Mode, A/D, Pass, and Load. It has a pickup's MV, and a turbine car's Power.

**What is a pneumo-jack? Does it need power?**

A pneumo-jack is like an automobile jack. It does not require power cells. It can lift five times the PS rating of the character operating it, and it can raise a load as high as 2 meters (see the Rules Supplement, page 14).

**Where can I find more robots and rules for robotic player characters?**

The advanced robot rules are in module GW10 *Epsilon Cyborgs*.

**How often can the mutation Telekinetic Arm be used?**

Telekinetic Arm can be used three times per day.

**What defenses protect characters from black ray pistols or blasters?**

Black ray pistols are light-wave attacks, and blasters are electromagnetic attacks; the appropriate Physical Reflection mutation will reflect these weapons' attacks. A force field will stop attacks from either weapon.

**Exactly how long does one use of the Invisibility mutation last?**

Invisibility lasts until the character uses another mutation (other than a mutation with a constant duration) or until the referee rules that circumstances render the character visible. For example, a character who has been splattered with mud will become visible.

**What happens when a mutant exceeds the weight limitation when attempting to use the Molecular Disruption mutation?**

Nothing—the mutation doesn't work. The referee can still require the character to roll for consciousness, however.

**What is the "modifier" entry in the mutation descriptions used for, and why isn't this entry present in the plant mutations?**

The modifier is the ability score that might affect the way the mutation operates. The mutation's description gives

information on how the modifier works. Plant mutations don't have modifiers because there are no ability scores that affect their operations. However, some plant mutations are similar to some animal mutations; double check the corresponding animal mutation for possible modifiers. There is more information on plant mutations on page 5 of the Rules Supplement.

**Does a mutated animal get "free" mutations according to the basic stock?**

Yes. A mutated hawk, for example, starts with wings.

**How often can the Regeneration mutation be used?**

Regeneration can be used five times per day.

**How many different kinds of energy is a mutant with the Physical Reflection mutation protected against? Can this mutation be used to protect creatures other than the mutant who has the mutation?**

Reflection works against only one type of attack, and it works only against attacks directed at the character possessing that mutation.

**What is the range of the Life Leech mutation?**

The range in meters of Life Leech equals two times the mutation score.

**How often can the Telekinesis mutation be used?**

Telekinesis can be used three times per day.

**Are weapon clips full or empty when purchased? A capacity is given for each clip, but I assume they are empty because single cartridges are also listed on the equipment charts in the Rule Supplement.**

Clips contain the indicated number of cartridges when purchased. Single cartridges (bullets) are listed separately because empty clips can be reloaded.

**What type of cell does a black ray pistol use?**

A black ray pistol uses a special chemical cell: a black crystal lozenge mentioned on page 11 of the Rules Supplement. This chemical cell is different from the one listed for the black ray pistol in the 2nd Edition GAMMA WORLD game. These cells are Tech V items and are never available for sale.

**What is the damage multiplier for a grenade?**

The damage multiplier for a grenade is  $\times 5$  at the center of its blast area.

**Against what attacks does a bu'daan's Physical Reflection—Electra-Magnetic mutation offer**

**protection? Also, is the base damage 30 for each bolt, or do all 10 bolts do a total of 30 points?**

A bu'daan (see GW6, page 38) is protected from electrical attacks, such as electrical discharges from other bu'daans and from blasters. Each of a bu'daan's 10 electrical bolts inflicts 30 points of damage. The bu'daan does not use the ACT when firing its bolts—it has a flat 75% chance of hitting.

**Does the mental mutation Pyrokinesis also protect the mutant from laser and blaster attacks?**

Although laser and blaster attacks involve some heat, Pyro/Cryokinesis (page 50 of the 3rd Edition Rule Book) does not negate the concentrated energy delivered by these attacks.

**Can a PC ultraborg have a Stage V ID?**

Yes, PC robots can have Stage V IDs (referred to as Code V IDs in the 3rd Edition rules). Such robots will respond to Pure Strain Humans wielding Code V ID items. See the Updated Robot Section in module GW10.

**Does the + 1RF from the mental mutation Genius Capability, Military, apply only to spectrum results of blue or higher, or to white results as well?**



Yes, it does apply to blue or higher and to white. Any positive result factor shifts the color upward, so a +1RF applied to a white result gives a blue result.

**Can a character who is paralyzed use mental mutations? Can a character with the Symbiotic Attachment mutation simply drop off a paralyzed host?**

Paralysis implies a loss of muscle control, not mental impairment; a paralyzed character can use any purely mental ability. Some mental abilities, however, might be limited by paralysis. For example, a mental mutation that requires the user to see his target will be limited by the mutant's inability to move his head or eyes while tracking or locating targets. Paralysis affects the symbiote and the host; the symbiote is unable to break contact with the host while the paralysis lasts.

**Can new characters be assumed to have clothing? Are they allowed to have money or weapons?**

In the 3rd Edition game, new characters start with  $3d6 \times 10$  gold pieces to buy equipment (see page 8 of the Rule Book). In addition, it is safe to assume each character has normal, basic clothing but no equipment or weapons.

**meters or less resolve all attacks at point blank range?**

No. Weapons with a base range of 5 meters or less resolve all attacks at short range. They have no point blank range.

**If a character with a defense screen that reduces attacks by -1RF is struck in combat for a blue result, would the result be a hit, but no damage?**

No. As explained on page 5 of the 3rd Edition Rule Book, result-factor shifts (except those due to Tech Level) actually change the color of the result. The blue result in your example would become a white result—a miss.

**Is it possible to overcome the result factor penalties from Tech Level differences with training? How much training would be required?**

Yes, such penalties can be overcome. Note that Tech Level differences carry a penalty to the character's Rank, as well as a result-factor penalty (see 3rd Edition Rule Book, page 19). The Rank penalties can be overcome if you are using the optional skill rule, by which penalties for Rank and result factor are reduced when the character adds Ranks to his weapon skill. Although a character can add as many Ranks to his weapon skill as he

wishes, the result-factor shift penalties due to Tech Level do not change the color of a result below blue; a hit is still a hit even though a blue result's multiplier is zero (again, see page 19). See GW9, page 84, for details on the time involved in learning new skills.

**There seems to be an error in the equipment lists. Should the weights be read in 0.1-kilogram increments or 1-kilogram increments? One-kilogram increments don't seem to be right, since that would mean that a single frag grenade would weigh 5 kilograms.**

The weights (see the Rule Supplement, page 9) should be read in 1-kilogram increments. A decimal point has been dropped from each grenade's weight, but the other items' weights seem to be correct. However, there is an updated Weapons Table in module GW9 that brings the weights of all equipment closer to real-world numbers.

**When is the Combat Results table (on the player's screen and the back of the 3rd Edition Rule Book) used?**

The Combat Results table is used when an attack might have an additional effect (see pages 18-19 of the Rule Book, "How to Attack," step 6). Note that the Range column from the table on page 20 is a shorthand version of the range rules.

**Are there reference manuals covering all the creatures and weapons in the GAMMA WORLD game? I can't help feeling I'm being had when a player tells me a slug pistol can fire 5-10 shots per turn, depending on the gun's setting.**

The Rules Supplement has descriptions for many exotic weapons, but slug pistols are not included. Slug pistols in the 3rd Edition game do not have settings, but they can fire bursts (see page 22 of the Rule Book, "Detailed Combat Modifiers"). Creatures are described in the 3rd Edition Reference Book. Modules GW6-GW10 contain additional equipment and creatures, but there is no publication that contains all the added material.

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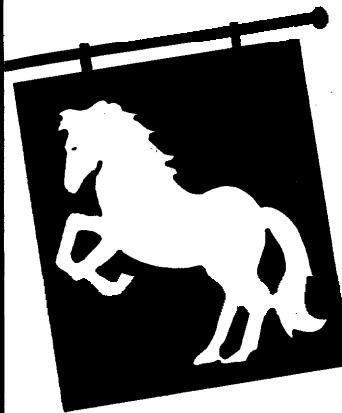
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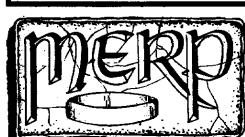
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# Orcs in Space!

Role-playing campaigns in Games Workshop's WARHAMMER™ 40,000 universe

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Illustrations by Tim Wright

**T**he Emperor Who Was a Man and Is Now a God abides in the solitude of the Imperial Palace. For 10,000 years he has ruled. Now a withered husk, sustained in an eternal living death by the vast biomechanisms of the Imperial Throne, this ghost in the machinery works his will upon a galactic empire 100,000 light years across.

Mankind is evolving into a race of beings with great psychic powers. However, to

protect mankind from void entities that would prey on a naive and immature psychic race, the Empire must ruthlessly control and suppress those having emerging psychic powers. The rule of the Imperium is harsh and brutal. The power of the Emperor is absolute, and the loyalty of his servants unquestionable. It is an age of darkness, ignorance, and unimaginable cruelty. To save Man, the Imperium must crush the precious joys and freedoms most cherished by Man. This tragedy

might weigh heavily on the conscience of the Emperor—if, indeed, that unique amalgam of man and machine still recalls such an ancient relic of his humanity.

But where there is life, there is hope. Where there is duty, there is honor. Where there is the enemy, there is courage and heroism.

This is the universe of Games Workshop's WARHAMMER™ 40,000: ROGUE TRADER game.

## Future fantasy

The WARHAMMER 40,000: ROGUE TRADER game (herein called WH40K) is a science-fantasy game for tabletop miniatures, set in the distant future. The campaign setting of WH40K has more in common with fantasy role-playing than with most other science-fiction games. Sure, there are spaceships, lasers, and plasma guns, but in WH40K these marvels are treated more like fantasy magical devices than like plausible developments of modern technology. And the WH40K universe is populated with races familiar to any fantasy role-player—such as Orks, Squats (dwarves), Stunties (halflings), and Eldar (elves)—as well as with bizarre alien races commonly found in science-fiction games.

This choice of a future-fantasy theme has two appealing features as a role-playing setting. First, a future fantasy frees the game master (GM) from the challenging task of moderating and maintaining a plausible science-fictional universe. Only veteran game designers and GMs of science-fiction RPGs can properly appreciate how difficult that is. In WH40K, you can have the entertaining trappings of high technology—robots, powered armor, and death rays—without the obligation of rationalizing them with elaborate pseudo-scientific gobbledegook.

The other major virtue of a future fantasy setting is that you can borrow liberally from the trappings and conventions of two popular adventure genres—medieval fantasy and science fiction—to create a fantasy campaign with its own peculiar and distinctive flavor. An Eldar Harlequin mercenary, wearing carapace armor with a conversion field and armed with a chainsword and a neuro disruptor, is probably not much different in game terms from an elven fighter/magic-user in *plate mail +3 with a long sword +2 and a wand of paralyzation*, but the charm and novelty of these high-tech trappings has a special appeal for fans of bug-eyed monsters and lurid space opera.

However, GMs hot to set up a WH40K role-playing campaign face one tiny problem: WH40K is a set of tabletop miniatures rules, *not* a role-playing game. A role-playing version of WH40K is currently under development but isn't likely to be available for at least 6-12 months, and maybe longer.

This article offers some rough-and-ready strategies for adapting the miniatures skirmish rules for role-playing, and suggests some models for the kinds of role-playing campaigns particularly suited to the WH40K future-fantasy setting.

## PC roles

The archetypal WH40K character role is that of a Space Marine of the Legiones Astartes. Ironically, while ideally suited for tabletop miniatures combat, the Space Marine is poorly suited as a role-playing character. A Space Marine can do only two

things: kill and wait around until he can kill some more. Such goals are ideal in a tabletop war game but too one-dimensional in a role-playing adventure. Further, Space Marines are indoctrinated to mindlessly follow orders—again, a virtue in tabletop troops but not much fun in role-playing, where independence of thought and action is the essence of an appealing PC role.

Below are some WH40K character roles more suitable to role-playing. Also included are some strategies for adapting otherwise unsuitable PC types, like the Space Marines, to role-playing campaigns.

**The Adeptus Arbites:** The Adeptus Arbites; or “Judges,” are the judicial and police arm of the Adeptus Terra, the administrative bureaucracy of the Imperium. Judges and their staffs are accorded extraordinary independence in their actions, each having the authority to act as policeman, judge, jury, and executioner. With such broad powers and discretion, they might easily fit into any sort of role-playing party, since most activities a role-playing party might pursue could conceivably be rationalized to include the crusading concerns of an independent agent of the Imperium.

**The Inquisition:** The primary duties of the Inquisition are to identify psykers and mutants, and to either indoctrinate or

eliminate them in the interests of the security of the Imperium. The Inquisition is also given broad powers to investigate any threat to humanity or the Imperium, and to employ whatever means are deemed appropriate to eliminating such threats. Inquisitors and their staffs thus have the freedom of action and broadly defined interests and motivations that make a flexible and independent PC role.

**Navigators:** Each Navigator has a single, exclusive genetic mutation that allows him to navigate through warp space. This stable mutation makes Navigators precious resources of the Imperium, and Navigators form a privileged aristocratic class in the service of the Emperor. As such, Navigators have a certain independence as a result of their exalted status, and they function in a role-playing setting as educated, elitist nobles with limited combat abilities, broad general backgrounds, and snobbish personalities.

**Astropaths:** Astropaths offer a unique character role, closest to an FRPG spell-caster or psychic in abilities but with distinctive differences. For one, all Astropaths are blind, an unavoidable byproduct of the soul-binding ritual that assures their loyalty to the Emperor. In compensation, they have a peculiar “near-sense” that permits them to perceive the features of their environment within 20 meters. In





the campaign, Astropaths are supposed to be rigidly controlled by the Imperial Bureaucracy (the Adeptus Terra), but their singular charm as a character role justifies considerable GM improvisation of rationales for including them in any given PC party.

*Rogue Traders:* This is the most promising and flexible PC type for WH40K role-playing. Rogue Traders are licensed and equipped by the Adeptus Terra to explore the frontiers beyond the control of the Imperium. Rogue Traders come from a variety of backgrounds, and they are often selected from outcasts and politically suspect individuals who are considered too useful to eliminate but best kept at a safe distance from the workings of the Imperial power structure—for example, officers of the Space Marines and Imperial Army with distressingly independent personalities, or Inquisitors who have demonstrated a too-fastidious attitude toward swift and brutal execution of justice.

*Space Marines and Imperial Army personnel:* Since soldiers in the Space Marines and Imperial Army are inducted for life service, it's hard to rationalize a class of ex-Marine or ex-Army veterans as PCs—desirable as such character roles might be. Here are a few excuses for creating Space Marine or Imperial Army veterans as PCs:

1. Psychological and dishonorable discharges: A good Space Marine or Army

soldier never leaves his service, but a defective one might be discharged for any number of reasons, such as cowardice, insubordination, insanity, political unreliability, and so on. Such rejects might still have substantial combat skills and the additional added charm of colorful backgrounds.

2. Renegades and deserters: Such might be particularly common in the Imperial Army, whose soldiers are drafted for life and swept away from home, friends, and family to fight in the remote reaches of the galaxy. Many might turn up as mercenaries in the private armies of planetary governors or on the staffs of Judges, Inquisitors, or Rogue Traders.

3. Detached agents and observers on special assignments: Judges, Inquisitors, Rogue Traders, and other powerful servants of the Imperium have unrestricted power to requisition manpower whenever they need it. A trooper might thus be separated from his unit and enlisted as a guard, scout, or military agent in the service of the Emperor.

### PC parties

The PC party is an established convention of role-playing. The trick to having a successful PC party is to provide just enough common motivation for group cohesion without unnecessarily limiting the personal expressions of the personality

and motivations of the individual characters. Here are several sample rationales for PC parties in WH40K:

1. The staff of an Imperial Agent.

Judges, Inquisitors, and Rogue Traders are defined as having the broad authority to assemble their own staffs and to draft or commandeer personnel for temporary assignments. Such a staff is likely to be made up of a variety of skilled specialists and may often be dispatched on an extended mission with considerable freedom of action. Such a mixed party of PCs might form the core of a role-playing party, with new or temporary additions to the roster being made according to the needs of a specific mission.

2. Ambitious adventurers hired (or shanghaied) by a Rogue Trader.

Rogue Traders recruit their troops, scouts, and volunteer settlers from frontier planets, where the citizens have been less spoiled by the civilized comforts of the Imperium. A odd assortment of friends and companions might be hired from a backwater planet and constituted as a small combat, scouting, or exploration unit for an outward-bound Rogue Trader expedition.

3. Rebels, renegades, and pirates.

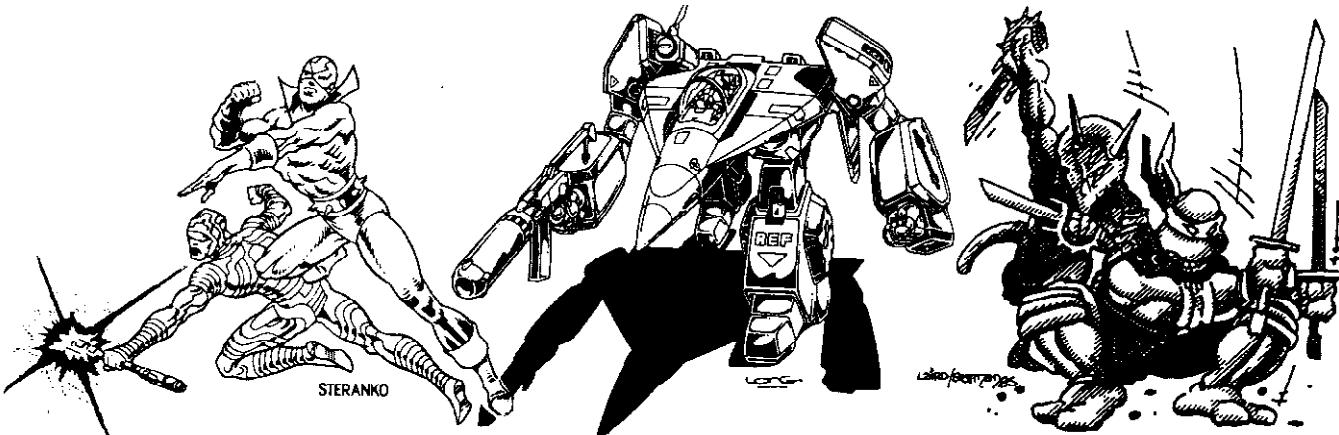
So far, the Imperium has been presented as the good guys, at least in the sense that the Emperor and Imperium are trying to protect humanity against evil races of alien beings intent on subjugating and devouring mankind. It is also easy to imagine casting the PC as rebels against a brutal and repressive Imperium. (Say, do I hear the *Star Wars* theme in the background?) In this case, the Emperor, the Adeptus Terra, and the Space Marines are cast as most formidable adversaries, while the PC party might start as resistance fighters on a frontier planet occupied by the Imperial Army, or as pirates raiding the fleet of a Rogue Trader expedition that is attempting to absorb an independent planet under the ever-expanding domination of the Imperium.

### Role-playing mechanics

The following modest alterations and additions to the WH40K rules should permit GMs and players to experiment with a role-playing adventure or campaign in the Imperium. Here are the objectives I had in mind as I designed these modifications:

1. Stay as close to the miniatures rules as possible. This keeps the design task manageable and encourages tabletop gamers to add secondary role-playing elements to their regular tabletop warfare sessions.

2. Use the most primitive and universal models of role-playing rules as standards for a successful design. There's no point trying to achieve the sophisticated elegance of systems like Chaosium's KING ARTHUR PENDRAGON or Steve Jackson Games' GURPS® game in a short article. A more practical goal is to aim for a relatively simple and popular design: the original 1975 boxed edition of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game. The original D&D®



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game was an undeniably successful role-playing design, as witnessed by its incredible popularity and innumerable hosts of successors. It is also a logical model for adapting WH40K, since the original D&D game itself was a direct modification of a tabletop miniatures system: CHAINMAIL, the ancestor of all fantasy role-playing games. Thus, if role-playing with the modifications proposed here is no less satisfactory than role-playing with the original D&D rules, I judge the proposed design to be a success.

### Characteristic profiles

One universal convention of role-playing is the personal characteristic and the characteristic test (e.g., "Roll your intelligence or less on 1d20"). WH40K characters have something called a characteristic profile, which will serve as a PC's personal characteristics. Beginning WH40K PCs simply begin with standard profiles as defined for the individual character types in the WH40K rules. (More ambitious GMs may devise systems by which players can roll up their basic characteristics.)

The following WH40K characteristics are tested against a 1d6 roll (rolling the characteristic or less is considered success): Strength, Toughness (similar to constitution), and Initiative (similar to dexterity, agility, or quickness—the ability to act faster than your opponent).

The following WH40K characteristics are tested against a 2d6 roll (rolling the characteristic or less is considered success): Leadership (similar to charisma), Intelligence, Cool (a morale stat), and Will Power (most commonly used as a saving throw against magic or psychic attacks).

### Skills and abilities

Most WH40K characters have only two skills: Weapon Skill (for melee weapons) and Ballistic Skill (for ranged weapons). This should suffice for cheap-and-cheerful RPG combat. Some WH40K characters may have psionic abilities, as per the standard WH40K rules.

To judge a character's success in any noncombat or nonpsionic action, test the most appropriate personal characteristic. If the action requires thought or personal experience, check Intelligence; if the action tests physical agility or a drilled or practiced physical activity, test Initiative.

Ambitious GMs might improvise a rough-and-ready skill system on the model of the characteristics tests, as long as they remember that some characteristics test on 1d6 while others test on 2d6. For example, a character may be assigned a First Aid skill rating in a range of 2-12, based on the notion that First Aid is a mental skill related to Intelligence.

### Character advancement

Veteran players of GDW's TRAVELLER® game know that character advancement is not strictly necessary for successful role-playing. Alternatively, since the WH40K miniatures rules already offer a crude form of character advancement, the GM can honor that practice. Review the rules provided in "Improving a Character's Profile in a Campaign" (in the WH40K rule book, page 47), which essentially allows the PC to add one point to the characteristic of his choice for each adventure session he survives, with no characteristic to exceed limits as defined by the major hero profile of that race.

### Wounds and healing

This is the trickiest part of a miniatures system to adapt to role-playing. In the WH40K rules, most characters have only one wound point. If they get wounded, they are out of the game for the rest of the session. This is fine for tabletop combat but won't do for role-playing.

For role-playing purposes, consult the Injuries table in this article when the PC has at least one wound point before he receives a wound. The character has a substantial chance of suffering only a temporary penalty without the loss of a wound point. Consult the Critical Hits table when the PC has been reduced to zero wound points in a previous combat turn before receiving a new wound. A PC who receives a wound after being reduced to zero wound points has a substantial chance of dying if he is not treated promptly.

Review "Injury statuses" (Table 1) and "Medical treatment and healing" (Table 2). Note that the medipack functions something like the magical healing of D&D game clerics, but it can be used only once per character per combat. GMs who prefer a style of fantasy combat more like the D&D game, with half-dead characters popping back into the fray after a quick, refreshing touch from the cleric, might consider easing the one-use-per-day restriction to two-, three-, or unlimited-uses-per-day.

For important NPC allies and opponents, GMs may use these charts at their discretion. For all those other one-wound-point NPCs, when they take one wound, they're dead. Most NPCs are just cannon fodder, anyway; the faster and simpler they fall down, the better.

### Dramatic tone

The following notes may help GM and players appreciate the spirit implied in the charts and rules modifications suggested above for WH40K role-playing combat:

1. WH40K combat is closer to World War II movie combat than to typical FRPG combat. Almost all characters have access to deadly ranged weapons. Many combats begin at long or medium range, with both sides immediately seeking available cover. A wounded character may thus more easily be rescued and dragged to cover,



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**Table 1**  
**Injuries**

1d100	Injury	Effect
01-40	Superficial wound	Stunned for one turn; no wound loss
41-70	Light wound	Knocked down; no wound loss
71-95	Serious wound	Knocked down; lose one wound point
96-00	Critical wound	Lose one wound point; roll on Critical Hits table

If a character has one or more wound points before being wounded, roll 1d100 and consult this table. If more than one wound is received in a single round, add + 30 to the 1d100 roll for each additional wound received.

#### Injury statuses

**Stunned:** No attacks possible; no other penalties or restrictions.

**Knocked down:** Move, Weapon Skill, and Ballistic Skill are reduced by two until the victim can stand. Roll Toughness or less on 1d6 to stand during Movement Phase.

**Table 2**  
**Critical Hits**

1d100	Injury	Effect
01-50	Severe injury	Test 1d6 vs. Toughness or become unconscious. If the victim remains conscious, his actions are limited to speech and feeble gestures. His injuries are not life threatening.
51-80	Critical injury	As for severe injury, but injuries are life threatening, with death occurring in 2d6 turns. A successful First Aid application reduces the victim to severe injury status and saves him from death.
81-95	Fatal injury	The victim is automatically unconscious with life-threatening injuries. He will die in 1d6 turns. A successful First Aid application reduces the victim to severe injury status, saving him from death.
96-00	Killed outright	The victim is Really Dead. Kiss the character good-bye.

If a character has no wound points at all before being wounded, roll 1d100 and consult this table. If more than one wound is received in a single round, add + 30 to the 1d100 roll for each additional wound received.

#### Medical treatment and healing

**First Aid:** Any character can perform First Aid by spending 1d6 -2 turns treating a victim (minimum of one turn), then testing Intelligence. A successful test means the victim is saved. If the test is failed, another character can attempt First Aid, but no more than one character at a time can perform First Aid on a victim.

**Medipack:** This item restores one wound point when applied to a victim, but it cannot raise the number of wound points above the victim's original maximum. This application removes all of a victim's current penalties and restrictions (i.e., stunned, knocked down, unconscious, coma, etc.). This works on any living character, but it can only be applied once per day per character; subsequent uses of the medipack have no effect (see the WH40K hardbound rule book, page 123).

**Stimulant:** This restores a severe injury victim to consciousness for 2d6 turns. If the character chooses to make a heroic effort (see below), the wound-point test is automatically successful; otherwise, the victim is conscious but unable to perform any action other than speech and feeble physical gestures.

**Heroic effort:** A severe or critical injury victim may choose to make a heroic effort if he can roll his wound-point score on 2d6 +2. The character remains conscious for a single turn, taking actions for that turn at a -3 penalty on all characteristic tests and having his Move reduced by two. In the turn following a heroic effort, the character falls unconscious and 1d100 is rolled on the Critical Hits table with + 50 to the roll.

**Unconsciousness:** An unconscious character can be brought to consciousness for 2d6 turns with a stimulant or with the successful use of First Aid (testing Intelligence). Thereafter, the victim cannot regain consciousness for 2d6 hours.

**Character healing:** Without medipack treatment, a character heals naturally at a rate of one wound 'point per week.

unlike victims of fantasy melees, where most participants are locked in hand-to-hand or close combat.

2. Engagements initiated at long or medium range should often permit prudent overmatched or battered PC parties to withdraw from combat. In fantasy, running from combat is unheroic—and often impractical. In WH40K, a successful escape from a dangerous enemy should be considered a moral victory at least.

3. The charts have been designed to produce numerous casualties that require a party member to rescue a wounded and disabled companion, to treat his injuries before they prove fatal, and to remove the injured companion from the risk of further wounds. This reflects my personal taste for heroic activities of this nature. Like most gamers, I like heroic combats that result in dispatching evil opponents, but my role-playing soul is most stirred by heroic rescues under fire.

4. The influence of psionic abilities and exotic weaponry on combat in WH40K is complex and unpredictable. Familiarize yourself with the rules and powers concerning these game elements—and still expect to be surprised at their dramatic effects in a combat engagement.

#### Designing a campaign

GMs familiar with the WH40K universe shouldn't have any trouble coming up with characters, settings, and plots for role-playing campaigns. However, here are some suggestions for particularly promising campaign material.

**Good guys and bad guys:** As was discussed elsewhere, the obvious choice of the good-guy team is the Imperium and its loyal agents and citizens, struggling desperately to preserve civilization against the Creatures from the Void and the numerous pirates, renegades, traitors, and hideous alien menaces of the galaxy. However, given the brutal nature of the Emperor's rule, the Imperium could just as easily be cast as the villains, with the PCs as plucky, independent frontier settlers or part of a small but dedicated Rebel Alliance.

For villains, here are some choices:

- Warp entities: These are soul-sucking demons from beyond space and time;
- Eldar: Space elves are a particularly nasty, psychotic breed in WH40K.
- Tyranids and the Hive Fleets: These cute little six-legged horrors and their biologically engineered slave race, the Zoats, are powerful, destructive, and ruthless on a large enough scale to challenge mankind itself for possession of the galaxy.
- Orks: Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy! Orcs in spacesuits, with lasers and everything! My absolutely favoritest all-time fantasy monsters! Need I say more?

**Recommended Settings:** Three types of settings seem particularly appropriate:

- Frontier planets: Here the power of the Imperial bureaucracy and military is weakest, and renegades, pirates, evil invaders, and alien beasts are strongest.

Ideally, the setting of your current fantasy role-playing campaign might be a planet openly (or secretly) visited or invaded by the Imperium or one of its enemies.

- Isolated backwaters: The vagaries of weather in warp space often cut certain planets off from the Imperium for years at a time. Such planets must be independent—and undisciplined—enough to provide plenty of excitement for their citizens. (See the WH40K rule book, pages 224-228, for a treatment of Logan's World, just such an isolated backwater.)
- Uncharted space: PCs in the service of an exploring Rogue Trader might be set down in a new and exciting planetary setting for each game session, or might labor for months to make a wild planet suitable for settlement.

### Sample campaign plots

GMs looking for an exhaustive list of appropriate campaign plots and sub-plots should review the "Plot Generator," in the WH40K rule book, pages 240-248—a list of over 100 adventure and campaign ideas suitable for role-playing in the Imperium. However, the following are three sample narrative frameworks that seem particularly well-suited for a WH40K role-playing campaign.

*The Lost Legion:* The Eyes of Fire chapter, Legiones Astartes, was dispatched to the frontier world of Niederlage, out of contact with the Imperium for a decade due to inclement warp weather and no longer answering to communications via the astropaths of Adeptus Astra Telepathica. What the Eyes of Fire found was an ambush set by the Tyranids of the Hive Fleets. Surrounded by disciplined, well-equipped units of Zoats and other Tyranid slave races, and cut off from evacuation by the destruction of his spacecraft, the Chapter Commander ordered a final transmission sent via astropath: "Avenge our fate! Long live the Emperor!" Since that transmission, no further word has come from Niederlage. The region has been assumed to have fallen under Tyranid domination, and Adeptus Terra has determined that no more units must be exposed there to further risk of ambush.

However, two members of the Eyes of Fire, marines who had remained at the chapter's home base to recover from training injuries, avoided the fate of their comrades. They have successfully petitioned the Emperor for permission to recruit a small unit of veterans and specialists to voyage in secret to Niederlage and learn the fate of the Lost Legion. They are determined to rescue any Marine captives who might endure unspeakable horrors at the hands of Tyranid interrogators. If, as is likely, there were no survivors, they hope to recover the chapter banner of the Eyes of Fire, so that the legion may be resurrected and the stain upon its honor removed.

*Blows Against the Empire:* Mona Magan, a garden planet with a stable medieval

technology lying just beyond the boundaries of the Imperium, had been visited several times by trade ships but had eluded the grasp of Imperial domination—until the discovery of valuable mineral deposits on its surface. Adeptus Terra has determined that the Empire must have these resources and has dispatched a Rogue Trader, supported by a corps of the Imperial Army, to subdue the local population and protect mining operations.

A peculiar alliance of three interest groups now resists the Imperial Army of Occupation. Two deserters from an earlier Rogue Trader visit, a Squat mercenary and a Stuntie mechtach, have settled on Mona Magan and have come to love its peace and independence. They provide resistance forces with military and technological know-how. A ruthless and unprincipled band of Eldar pirates, based in a nearby star system, regard expansion of Imperial influence in the region to be a bad thing, so the Eldar are providing the rebels with advisors and material assistance. And a powerful sorcerer's guild, painfully aware of the Empire's ruthless policies toward psykers, provides arcane abilities and resources unfamiliar to the Imperial forces. (Note: While initially this campaign would be confined to the surface of Mona Magan, the rebels might soon come in contact with other rebel groups from nearby star systems through the psionic powers of the sorcerer's guild or through contacts with the Eldar pirates.)

*Orcs in Space:* An assortment of characters gathers around the blaring brass and chattering drums of an Imperial Army recruitment mission. "Join the Imperial Army! Travel to far-off, exotic planets! Earn a fabulous salary AND a special recruitment bonus! Show your loyalty to the Emperor, and drive the heathen Orks from the Imperium! Step right up! Just sign right here. . ." After a whirlwind regime of boot camp training and psyche-hypnotic indoctrination, the small party is unceremoniously dumped on a small planet in the center of the Ork Domains and is given the assignment of acting as advisors and scouts to a courageous but pathetically untrained and inadequately outfitted guerilla army (consisting of several dozen wretched Stunties who have labored under the harsh rule of the Orks for decades). Between the bizarre and horrific local lifeforms, the aggressive pacification campaigns of the nearby Ork garrisons, and the energetic, well-intentioned, and ill-advised heroics of the Stuntie partisans, the PCs should have plenty to keep them busy for a couple of sessions.

### The Warrens Beneath WarpSpace

Finally, here's a short example of a role-playing scenario outline for WH40K, with a sample PC roster to show how a variety of characters could be assembled as a typical RPG party of adventurers.

### Player introduction

Transcript of vidifax report:

*Ad: TechPriest Phidius Quirus, StarFleet OPs  
Ex: Lord Lucinius ap Moryd, brig Moritori Capellus*

*At 17:40, Inquisitor Polo and his Psyker Interrogation staff were discovered missing from their quarters. Captain Harrack of the Marine Chapter Spacewolves, 10 troopers, and myself responded immediately Astropath Forus, two Psyketech aides, and Prefect Dwalinnarius had preceded us, searched the site, and established that Polo and his staff had indeed simply vanished.*

*Astropath Forus directed a scan for psykeforce traces or signs of warp intrusions, revealing an unsealed warp distortion at the site of the disappearance.*

*Captain Harrack accompanied his platoon into the warp distortion in pursuit of the missing Inquisitor and his staff*

*I have assembled a mixed support team from volunteers among the Imperial personnel, brig's crew, and passengers. The loyalty and combat prowess of Captain Harrack and his troopers are unquestionable, but the subtlety and discrimination of Space Marine tactics might prove inadequate to the challenges facing them. As soon as my team is assembled, it will follow the captain into the warp distortion.*

*I must repeat my strong protest against*



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*your policy of keeping these incidents secret. This is the seventh such event in my sector this month, all involving Psyketech staff of the Inquisition. As yet, none of the measures you've suggested have apparently lessened the likelihood of further incidents.*

*I can only hope Captain Harrack and the volunteer support team may be more fortunate than those who pursued through the Warp Gates in the previous six incidents.*

#### PC roster

1. Lieutenant Gradus, Imperial Army Intelligence: A standard-profile Imperial Army human with superior marksmanship (BS 4), leadership (LD 8), and intelligence (Int 8). Unfortunately, Gradus has no combat experience (Cool 5). Gradus has an inflated estimate of his abilities and is eager to impress his superiors with his initiative in rescuing Inquisitor Polo.

2. Sergeant Boorik, Security (brig crew): A standard-profile Imperial Army human with limited ambition and extensive combat experience (Init 2, WS 4, Cool 9). Boorik is more concerned about returning alive with the men in his command than with rescuing Inquisitor Polo.

3. Trooper Pallindacus, Weapons Specialist (brig crew): A standard-profile Imperial Army human with extensive heavy-weapon training (BS 4). Pallindacus is rated for all heavy weapons, but he prefers his heavy plasma gun, which he carries. "Shoot first and forget the questions!" is Pallindacus's motto.

4. Crewman "Stumpy" Grocwis, Power-Mech Operator (brig crew): A standard-profile Squat—bright but with no interest in responsibility or status (LD 7, Int 9). "Stumpy" knows robots and auto-drive systems inside and out, and he has the typical Squat gift for complex machinery (which may come in handy if alien technology is encountered).

5. Astropath Forus, Adeptus Astra Telepathica: A standard Adeptus Astra Telepathica profile with the Mental Blow, Steal Mind, Telepathy, Astrotelepathy, Locate Warp Gate/Portal, and Resist Psychic Attack psychic abilities, and a Psychic Mastery Level 1. Like all Astropaths, Forus is blind, not a warrior (WS 1, BS 2), and consequently concerned for his physical safety (Cool 4). Forus has no interest in this mission whatsoever and is following orders only because his loyalty to the Emperor has been burned deeply into his mind through soul-binding. Regardless, Forus will always discover excellent reasons to pack up and go home where it's safe and warm.

6. PsykeTech Chamos, Psyke Sensitive: A standard Psyker profile with Psyke Master Level 2 and the following abilities: Cure Injury, Telekinesis I, Teleport I, Jinx, and Teleport II. Chamos is on Forus's staff and remains with Forus to act as his eyes. Chamos carries an auto-pistol, but he can't hit the broad side of a starship with it (BS

2) and has no taste for physical rough-house (WS 2, Cool 4).

7. Passenger Dondi Fredar, BioMedTech: A cute little standard Halfling profile with surprising durability (Tough 4). He is too hard-headed to feel psychic attacks (WP 9). Dondi is a cheerful volunteer for this mission, probably because he hasn't got too firm a grip on reality, but he did get basic Home Guard training on his home planet.

8. Passenger Elrohir Flamelocks, Trader: A standard Eldar profile, Elrohir is an operative for a licensed Rogue Trader in transit to a recruiting conference on Gades Base. Outwardly a quiet, cultivated character, Elrohir is actually rather bloody minded, arrogant in the typical Eldar fashion, and looking forward to a pleasant firefight.

#### The scenario plot

Warp uglies have abducted Inquisitor Polo and his staff for mind-tapping. The victims are being held captive in a vast underground warren dug by monstrous pals of the Warp creatures. The Warp guys are presently sucking their victims dry of high-clearance secrets about Imperial antipsyke defenses. Captain Harrack and his two squads of Marines cheerfully dove into the monster nest and stirred up a mess of trouble. They waded confidently into combat but were chewed up into smaller groups that have lost contact with one other, completely failing to locate the missing Inquisitor and his staff. Though they made a lot of noise, killed monsters, and wrecked things, the captain is now dead and his squad has disintegrated as a unit. The Space Marines have had a half hour to get chopped up and dispersed before the PC party arrives.

Now, in a central warren chamber, a giant queen monster sits with a pulsing, exposed brain, and poor Inquisitor Polo and his staff lie under its vast bulk getting their souls sucked out as the nasty Warp villains stand around, wringing their hands and cackling fiendishly.

The PC lieutenant and his makeshift team must travel through the Warp portal into the equivalent of a science-fiction dungeon, with lots of spider robots and trained attack beetles running around in elaborately trapped tunnel passages. Laser-toting monsters of various species wander these tunnels and shoot it out with anyone they encounter. The PC volunteers could possibly achieve some or all of the following goals:

1. Locate and rescue isolated Space Marine survivors, then unite them into a coherent force.
2. Investigate various tactics for butchering monsters, like using medical supplies for poisons or stealing control of the local robots.
3. Look around for secret doors, of which there are millions and behind which are all sorts of useful and dangerous things, including weapons, more ro-

bots, friendly prisoners—and, of course, the Lair of the Monster Queen.

4. Mount an assault on the Lair of the Monster Queen, attempting to rescue the Inquisitor from the Queen, her body-guard, and the nefarious Agents of the Warp Madness that planned this caper.

5. And, if they can handle the above, the PCs might get back to the brig through the warp, with the rescued Inquisitor and staff, surviving Marines, and a report on the nasty boojums that been abducting the Psykestaff of the Inquisition.

The dungeon could be a tabletop layout like those used for miniatures warfare, either revealed bit by bit as the players explore or designed as a standard abstract or small-scale map as typically used for RPG adventures. The monster opponents could be based on WH40K alien horrors (Orks, Tyranids, Zoats, Ambulls, for example) or on the GM's favorite fantasy or science-fiction monsters (orcs, lizard-men, demons, beastmen, dragons, dinosaurs, robots, etc.). My suggestion is to buy a \$2 bag of plastic dinosaurs, spiders, or whatever at your local toy store and use them for table layouts. (I used a bag of 80 tiny black flies—loads of fun for me making "buzz-buzz" noises as I belabored the hapless PCs.)

#### A product disclaimer

Don't be fooled by the graceful presentation of this make-shift adaptation of WH40K for role-playing. I have cheerfully ignored lots of major problems, which are left as exercises for clever students. A few examples:

- What do things cost? Can a PC buy a plasma cannon?
- Do weapons and devices break down? How can they be repaired?
- What about game balance? Aren't certain PC types going to be more powerful than others? Some PC types start out with higher profiles than others, and some can receive some pretty powerful weapons if they are outfitted according to the rules.

Without attempting to minimize the importance of these problems, I confidently assert that experienced role-playing GMs can improvise their way around them for the first few sessions—at least for long enough to decide whether they like the WH40K universe enough to put some extra work into adapting the rules to fit their expectations. And for tabletop GMs just interested in fooling around with a bit of role-playing in their miniature campaigns, such esoteric role-playing questions aren't likely to bother them at all. Ω



# Kesmai and Beyond

Updating the *Island of Kesmai*  
on-line fantasy game

©1989 by Cheryl Peterson

## New lands in Kesmai

Even as I gaze through the shimmering curtain before me, I wonder if I'm doing the right thing in leaving friends and familiar territory to seek a more adventurous existence on the portal's other side. This one-way door leads to an entirely different world of greater riches—but also greater risks.

Thinking back to my arrival in Kesmai reassures me. I remember the young, green fighter that I was, barely off the docks with the cheapest leather armor and shortsword available, one lonely gold piece weighing down my sack. My future then was bleak, but I made it through months of hardship and trial. My dream became reality: I met the Kesmaian challenges and became a respected knight able to defeat any threat that the lands of Kesmai or Axe Glacier could throw at me.

There are dangers here that still give me pause. Facing Madam Wyrm, that flame-breathing dragon, still gets the old heart pumping. Only a full sack of balm, quick wits, and a strong right arm can defeat her, but there is no guarantee I will win the duel. And the ice dragon in Axe Glacier is the toughest opponent I have ever faced, though the giant inhabiting the castle there is almost her equal. Neither is to be taken lightly. Of course, even if you slay them, your worst foes always return.

Still, I yearn for more. I am not fool-hardy, but I search for greater challenges. Some months ago, rumors spread of strange places with monstrous beasts and fabulous treasure: weapons and jewelry with powers beyond belief. Booksellers appeared in the market offering tomes describing the horrors and delights of these unreachable climes.

And then, one day, a portal appeared.



**FIGHT OGRE**  
You hit the ogre  
with great force.



## LOOK AT OGRE

You are looking at a chaotic ogre. The ogre is wearing an iron breastplate and greaves and is carrying a greatsword. The ogre is near death. The ogre is looking at you.

This magical door led to mythical lands and eventually became the exodus point for many of Kesmai's finest warriors—but dare I admit that the first to cross were lowly thieves sent as scouts to scour those lands? With their hiding abilities, the thieves could spy out the land and report back what they had found. The initial reports were dire: monsters most foul, a dark tower inhabited by an evil wizard, a dank and smelly dungeon whose minions held wondrous maidens captive, and a dragon and a phoenix with powers beyond belief. This was the land of Annwn.

Then a second portal was found, and a surprise awaited those who crossed to the island country of Torii therein. The peaceful landscape held no threats—not a single unfriendly inhabitant! A beautiful city offered all the creature comforts a weary traveler could want. But within a castle on a cliff high above the city lurked monstrous opponents, and eventually the most horrid evil of all was discovered: the Serpent Lord Thisson, who lay hidden deep in the mines beneath the cliff. The mines themselves were a hotbed of dangerous adversaries. With lava boiling up at every turn, an adventurer can be attacked by giants, ninjas, demons, onis, and other creatures, both living and undead.

Not all the news reported by the scouts was bad. Wonderful doctors can enhance an adventurer's ability to survive combat against these terrible opponents if one can afford the fees. Great treasures can be found, making it easy to amass the fortunes needed to survive there. Magical weapons are available if one can defeat the weapons' current owners. Items rarely found in Kesmai and Axe Glacier can be found more readily in these new lands, and new magical items can be found on vanquished foes. Rings, amulets, helmets, robes, bracelets, gauntlets, and boots confer on their wearers magical protections. Safety from fire and ice, poison, lightning, and spells that can stun; instill fear, or cause blindness or death is found in pieces of jewelry. And each such device is needed to survive some foe's attack.

As I stand ready to cross the void, everything I own is with me. Thank the Ghods for the strength rings enabling me to carry all the gold I've saved for the doctors' payments! My friend, !Nocha—a neutral thief—awaits me in Annwn. She will escort me to town, fending off any unwanted company.

I hesitate momentarily, thinking of friends who don't plan to use the portal. They are probably wise to stay and be the big fish in the little pond. Here they find little to fear or threaten them. My adventurous nature may yet be the death of me, but I yearn for the challenge.

Despite my apprehensions, I face the

portal and utter the chant: "Ashtug. . . ninda. . . anghizidda. . . arrflug."

And I enter the lands of Annwn. . . .

## Playing the game

The December 1987 issue of DRAGON® Magazine (#128) included an article about the *Island of Kesmai* fantasy role-playing game on the CompuServe® network ("The Island in Your Computer"). With access from most major cities, adventurers from all over North America play this multi-player game by calling local phone numbers with their computers' modems. As many as 100 players at a time can sign on and go adventuring together through the game's computer-generated landscape.

First, you use the game's character generator and specify the class, sex, and land of origin of your character. The generator creates your character's statistical values: Strength, Dexterity, Intelligence, Wisdom, Stamina, and Constitution; each is randomly set from 1 to 18. You can continue to have the computer make up new statistics until you're happy with your character. Of course, depending on your CompuServe and phone-company billings, such character generation gets expensive while you wait for perfect stats. Most players settle for 18s in their important characteristics and 17s in less important ones. Strength and dexterity are important to all characters but especially to fighters and martial artists. Intelligence is important to wizards, wisdom to thaumaturges, and dexterity to thieves.

One of Kesmai's biggest drawbacks is its cost. At 300 baud, it's \$6.30 an hour if you live in a city where you can dial CompuServe directly (it's \$12.60 an hour for 1200 baud). If you live outside such cities, you may have to pay even more. Though the cost is prohibitive for some, the convenience of being able to play any time, day or night, is a real bonus. In 2½ years of playing, I've never been on-line when there weren't at least three other players, and there are usually 10-60 players.

The Kesmai manual and on-line instructions will help you learn the commands you need to play the game. Kesmai's command structure is simple. With the exception of spell chants, all commands are common terms in English—e.g., TAKE [item], DROP [item], LOOK AT [item, person, or opponent], OPEN BOTTLE, DRINK, WEAR [item], TAKE OFF [item], THROW [weapon] AT [opponent], FIGHT [opponent], KICK [opponent], PUT [item] IN SACK, TAKE [item] FROM SACK, BELT [weapon], WIELD [weapon], CAST [spell name] at [target].

Movement is accomplished using direc-

tions. You can abbreviate directions, so N N NW means movement directed NORTH, NORTH, then NORTHWEST. You can move one, two, or three spaces per turn. In some places you must CLIMB UP or CLIMB DOWN. If there's a staircase, UP or DOWN is enough.

You can LOOK almost any time. The command N N N;LOOK allows you to move three spaces north and look at the ground for items. FIGHT OGRE;LOOK AT OGRE lets you fight the ogre and receive a description of the monster and its condition.

In towns, you deal with shopkeepers or trainers to whom you speak directly—e.g., DERMAT, BUY ALL; PHONG, TRAIN ME; OONAUGH, DEPOSIT COINS; KAVIN, APPRAISE GEM. Another command used in shops is SHOW PRICES, which lists the items for sale and their costs.

As you play, you'll see a pictorial representation of your surroundings. Since the game uses the same symbols as those found on a typewriter, it takes a bit of imagination to understand the maps of your surroundings. [For a similar type of on-line game map, see "The Game Wizards" in issue #148.] You'll also see on your screen any opponents, nonplayer characters, and other players who happen to be in your area. Beings are usually represented as alphabetical letters on the maps; those beings who are in your space are identified by name, and you can see which weapons and armor they are using.

## The evolving universe

Since the initial article in DRAGON Magazine, Kesmai's landscape has more than doubled. Complicated puzzles and quests were added to challenge even the most intrepid adventurers.

Initially the game consisted of one large and a few smaller islands and a four-level dungeon. The first improvement made to the game came when the Plains of Leng scenario was added. A magical portal was used to teleport characters between the two lands. Later, the dungeon was expanded to seven levels.

The next changes came when the seven-level dungeon was switched back to four levels, and two new lands were added: the forests of Annwn (pronounced: ah NOON) and the island of Torii (pronounced: TO ree), both part of an advanced game system. The advanced game (AG) allows players to build bigger and better characters while offering more challenging obstacles. Once you accept the challenge, there's no going back: the AG portal is one way.

Later, the Plains of Leng scenario was removed and a new scenario, Axe Glacier, took its place. Axe offered new challenges

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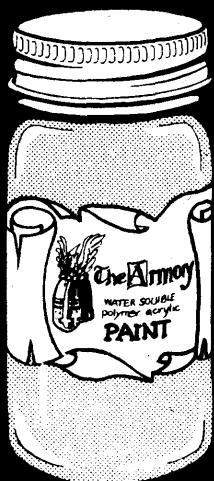
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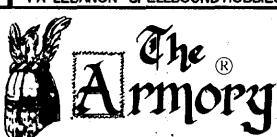
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for beginning players along with more treasures, puzzles, and opponents. The latest addition is Rift Glacier, an AG area that (at this writing) has been active for a year. Players there describe unbelievably difficult opponents and new puzzles to solve.

Mutability is one of *Island of Kesmai's* best features. Those who run the game for CompuServe expand the settings so high-level players will never get bored. The game managers keep the basic segments, so newcomers may build characters from scratch. New scenarios may be added to the basic game (BG) and to the AG.

Each game segment offers a unique landscape and puzzles that can be solved to win superior weapons. Puzzle-related items are found as random treasure on vanquished foes. If you obtain and deliver these items to craftsmen, the craftsmen can manufacture powerful magical weapons for you. There are several such specialized weapons in the BG. These include the Returning Hammer and Returning Axe (which, when thrown at opponents, will return to your hand so they may be thrown again), the Silver Axe (good against opponents who can only be affected by silver weapons), and the Black Broadsword (the most damaging weapon in the BG).

Similar weapon-creating puzzles exist in Annwn, Torii, and Rift Glacier. The Annwn puzzle requires the player to obtain four special gems and two keys. Four sisters in four widely separated areas each possess an item necessary to create the Sword of Light, and each will trade her item for a certain puzzle item taken from opponents that you have slain. Two of these sisters require a gem and a key in exchange for their items, but because some of these items are guarded by either the dragon or the phoenix of Annwn, getting these items is much easier said than done. The two remaining sisters will trade the parts of the sword they possess (the hilt and the blade) for the items their sisters carried. The parts must then be taken to the weapsmith in Torii.

Acquiring all four weapons in the Torii puzzle is more difficult. The Torii pagoda (the largest building visible in the land) houses characters who'll trade treasure items for the weapons they hold. Defeating creatures who have these items is tough (and often fatal to the adventurer). Since items are generated randomly, you may have to kill a lot of creatures before finding the item you want. For instance, an especially tough rat (who can be recognized by his roar) lives in the castle on the cliff; sometimes he carries the item needed to get the game's steel flail.

The first Torii weapon that you should acquire is the +2 katana, because the item needed to create it is found fairly easily in Annwn. Sooner or later, some critter will

have a rock with flecks of strange metal as its treasure. In fact, you sometimes find these rocks just lying around Annwn's dungeon.

Rift Glacier is the most dangerous area in which to hunt. In it, a cloud dragon may drop on you and kill you before you have a chance to react. The only defense against it is one of two puzzle weapons: either the "true hammer of Thor" or a certain magic spear. The Thor hammer is obtainable only by negotiating a dangerous area of Rift and defeating the inhabitants therein. There are only two of these hammers in the game at any one time, so getting one may prove very difficult. To obtain the spear, one must get the point and the haft, take them to a blacksmith, and have them forged into the spear.

Puzzle weapons become the exclusive property of the character who wins them. No one else can ever use them, so they cannot be given as "gifts." One popular practice among players, however, is to help friends in their quests. The cooperative nature of Kesmai is one of its most important aspects. Because it's a multi-player game, adventurers who are near each other in the game's landscape can assist each other. It thus becomes possible for players to plan campaigns against the game's obstacles.

While the Ghods (those who created and continue to improve the game) have added better treasure and more useful items, they have also added some killer opponents. Ydmos, an evil wizard in one AG segment, carries a scythe that is terribly effective but can only be wielded by evil characters. The original segments of the game rarely saw characters with evil alignment, but such characters are becoming more common in the AG segments:

Another extremely dangerous opponent is Thisson, Lord of Serpents in Torii. His lair is in a huge pit of lava. Thisson is extremely powerful and has rarely been vanquished. So far, only teams of characters have been able to kill him. Though he is no longer a key element in solving the Torii puzzle, he carries an amulet that protects against stun and death spells. If you take his body to the tailor, the tailor will use the scales to fashion some highly effective armor.

Annwn has its share of tough opponents, including a giant who carries a big spear and is very difficult to kill. A troll who haunts both the dungeon and the forest of Annwn has been dubbed Megatroll. Most trolls carry normal spears and wear chain or plate armor; Megatroll carries a +1 mace and double armor. He can withstand much more damage than other trolls, and he can dole out some very hefty blows. The spear-wielding trolls use their weapons to block blows aimed at

them, making them very difficult to hit.

Generally speaking, death isn't a permanent experience in Kesmai. Unless the critter that killed you is of the flesh-eating variety, the Ghods will usually resurrect you in a safe place—minus penalty points from your experience, strength, stamina, and constitution. However, more likely than not, some of your belongings will fall into the possession of whatever killed you. If you die among a group of critters, it's easy to be completely stripped. One nice feature of the AG is the provision of lockers in which characters can safely store their items for later use. In a worst-case scenario (you are killed, stripped, and resurrected with nothing), you can run to your locker, outfit yourself again, and try to recover the items taken from you.

Kesmai's creators have fashioned a revolutionary experience. And the best part is that it continues to develop. More segments may eventually be prepared, but with the current challenges in Annwn, Torii, and Rift Glacier, some heavy-duty play may be necessary before adventurers are ready for new challenges.

## For more information

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# From Freighters to Flying Boats

Traveling the high seas in the STAR FRONTIERS® game

by Matthew M. Seabaugh

In the STAR FRONTIERS® Alpha Dawn game rules, land travel is covered extensively. Air travel is also given its fair share of coverage in both the Alpha Dawn and *Zebulon's Guide to Frontier Space* rules. But when you reach the beach, you're stranded. Hovercraft can travel over calm water for a good distance—but after that, what's left?

This article fills the gap by describing several types of surface vessels, a few underwater craft, and some amphibious aircraft. The vessels detailed herein are essentially generic creations; referees may create variations on these for their own campaign worlds. Sea movement and combat are also covered.

## Surface vessels

### Ski cycle

*Cost:* 2,000 Cr (*rental:* 25 Cr down + 25 Cr/day)

*Top/cruise speed:* 150/90 KPH

*Passengers:* 2

*Cargo:* .5 cubic meter

*Parabattery:* Type 1

*Hull size:* A

*Bump number:* 1

*Notes:* Similar in size to a land cycle, a ski cycle has an engine resembling a jet engine that uses water as the propellant. This vessel is very maneuverable and can travel in extremely shallow water.

### Motorboat

*Cost:* 6,000 Cr (*rental:* 50 Cr down + 25 Cr/day)

*Top/cruise speed:* 120/80 KPH (15/10 KPH w/sail)

*Passengers:* 6

*Cargo:* 200 kg, 1 cubic meter

*Parabattery:* Type 2

*Hull size:* B

*Bump number:* 3

*Notes:* This is an outboard-motor craft capable of high speeds and quick maneuvering. The price includes a collapsible sail. Motorboats can maneuver in waters one meter or more in depth. A special enclosed-canopy version may be purchased, or the canopy can be added later; the canopy makes a motorboat more streamlined and, hence, faster. Any motorboat with an enclosed canopy has a top speed of 140 KPH. As the canopy is made of canvaslike material, it does not serve as armor.

### Yacht (cabin cruiser)

*Cost:* 75,000 Cr

*Top/cruise speed:* 100/60 KPH

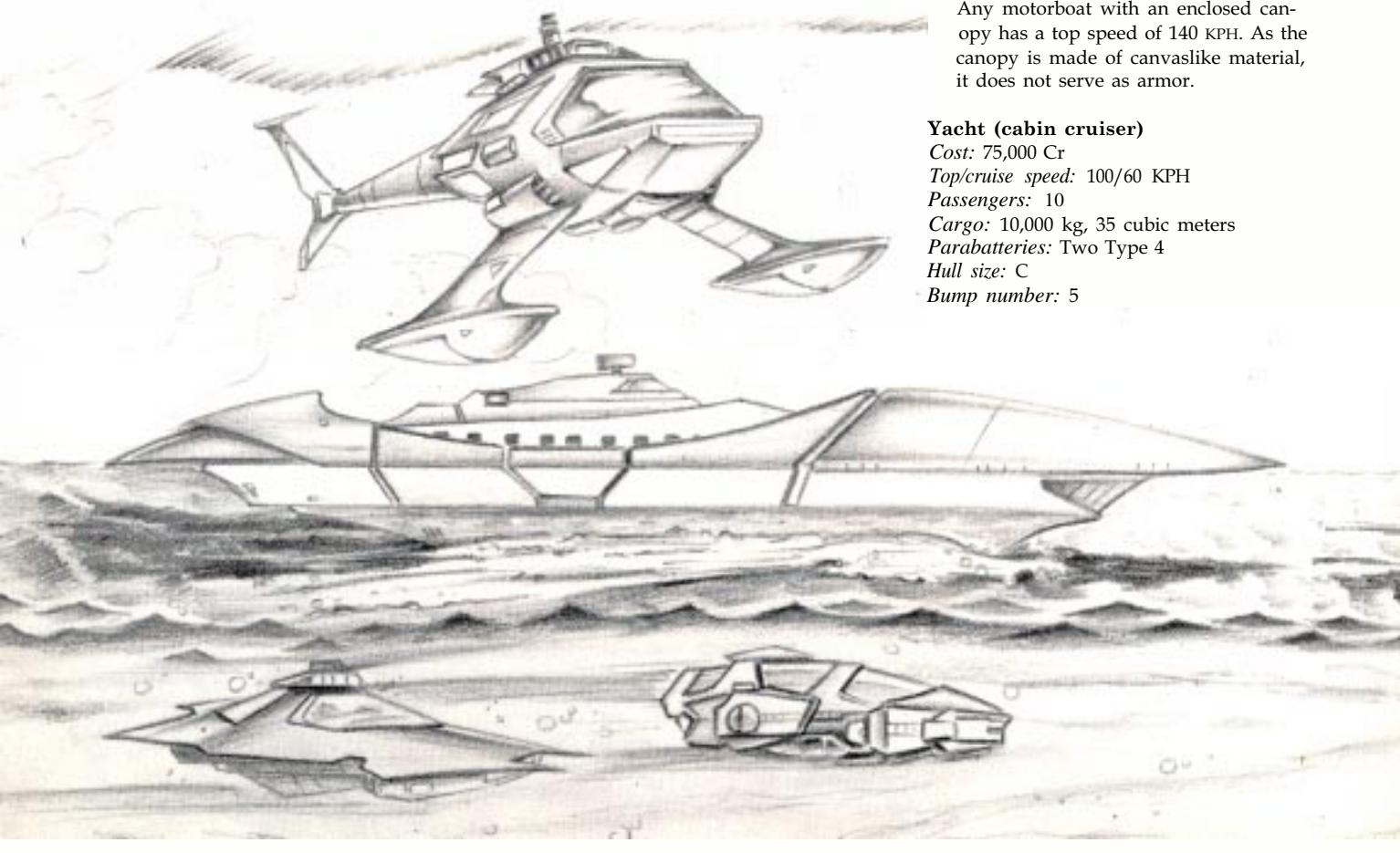
*Passengers:* 10

*Cargo:* 10,000 kg, 35 cubic meters

*Parabatteries:* Two Type 4

*Hull size:* C

*Bump number:* 5



**Notes:** This large ship has enclosed cabins with bunks, cooking facilities, and bathrooms. Many yachts have extravagant cabins for the owner or captain. These ships are favorites among the rich and powerful for their plushness and speed. Yachts are used in deep water, using small rowboats for boarding and disembarking. Yachts and larger ships may be modified to use tow lines. Any vessel of hull size C or D may have a towline on board that can be used to pull disabled ships. A ship may pull any ship the same size or smaller than itself at one-half cruise speed.

#### Transport ship

*Cost:* 200,000 Cr  
*Top/cruise speed:* 95/55 KPH  
*Passengers:* 10/30  
*Cargo:* 72,500 kg, 24 cubic meters/7,500 kg, 8 cubic meters  
*Parabatteries:* Four Type 4

*Hull size:* D

*Bump number:* 7

*Notes:* There are two types of this vessel, the workhorse of surface fleets. The first type is the cargo transport, detailed by the first set of figures; the second is the passenger transport, detailed by the second set of figures. Transports are deep-water craft and use rowboats to shuttle crewmen to and from shore in the absence of a dock. Transports may have towlines.

### Submersible vessels

#### Minisub

*Cost:* 50,000 Cr (rental: 200 Cr down + 100 Cr/day)  
*Top/cruise speed:* Surfaced—100/60 KPH, submerged—85/45 KPH  
*Passengers:* 4  
*Cargo:* 300 kg, 3 cubic meters  
*Parabatteries:* Two Type 2  
*Hull size:* C

*Bump number:* 5

*Notes:* This is a personal vessel, used often in underwater communities as a car would be used on land. Some are fitted with harvesting equipment for use on Kelp farms. Others are used as exploration vessels. Most underwater communities have several of these vessels for the maintenance of habitat walls, as well as for rescue or police vessels. Minisubs carry enough life support for 72 hours before they need to resurface. Additional units of life support may be purchased to increase this time to 120 hours.

#### Transport submarine

*Cost:* 20,000 Cr  
*Top/cruise speed:* Surfaced—90/50 KPH, submerged—70/40 KPH  
*Passengers:* 6/20  
*Cargo:* 50,000 kg, 18 cubic meters/5,000 kg, 5 cubic meters  
*Parabatteries:* Four Type 4

*Hull size:* D

*Bump number:* 7

*Notes:* Like the transport ship, there are two versions of this vessel: the cargo transport (first set of statistics) and the passenger transport (second set of statistics). Transport subs carry enough life support for 96 hours. Additional units of life support can be purchased to increase the time to 144 hours.

### Amphibious aircraft

#### Amphibian aircar

*Cost:* 55,000 Cr (rental: 100 Cr down + 100 Cr/day)  
*Top/Cruise speed:* 875/400 KPH  
*Passengers:* 4  
*Cargo:* 750 kg, 2 cubic meters  
*Parabattery:* Type 4  
*Notes:* This is an adapted version of a typical aircar. Its underside and wings

have pontoons to keep the craft afloat. These craft are often used in swamps and near underdeveloped islands.

#### Amphibian air transport

*Cost:* 125,000 Cr  
*Top/cruise speed:* 700/250 KPH  
*Passengers:* 3-12  
*Cargo:* 9,500 kg, 40 cubic meters  
*Parabatteries:* Two Type 4  
*Notes:* This is an adapted version of an aircraft, the air transport. It can be used either as a passenger transport or a freight transport.

#### Amphibian jet copter

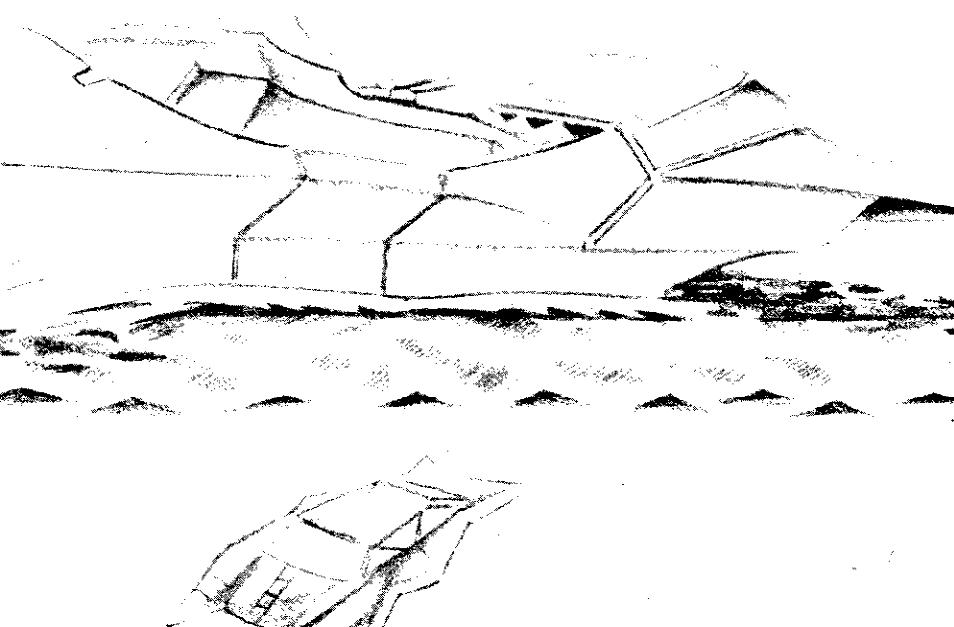
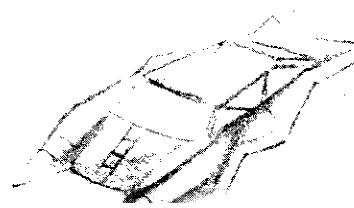
*Cost:* 45,000 Cr  
*Top/cruise speed:* 325/50 KPH  
*Passengers:* 4  
*Cargo:* 350 kg, 5 cubic meters  
*Parabattery:* Type 4  
*Notes:* This, too, is an adapted aircraft. It rests on two pontoons where skids are usually positioned. It is often used in sea rescues and for tracking criminals in swamps and bogs.

### Sea-vessel movement

In general, surface-vessel movement is similar to land-vehicle movement, while submarine movement is much like aerial movement. The rules for acceleration, deceleration, maximum speed, backing up, and turn speed are the same as in the Alpha Dawn expanded rules, page 30. See Table 1 for surface-vessel data.

*Special maneuvers:* Unusual actions may be performed as follows:

1. All ships can perform bumps and slips (as per the Alpha Dawn expanded rules, pages 30-31), as well as short corners (see the following text).



**Table 1**  
**Surface Vessel Data**  
(statistics are in meters/turn)

Hull Vessel	size	Acceleration	Top Deceleration	Turning speed	speed
Ski cycle	A	100	40	250	100
Motorboat	B	70	40	200	80
Yacht	C	60	40	170	60
Transport ship	D	40	30	160	40
Minisub*	C	70	40	170	60
Transport sub*	D	40	30	160	40

Only surface movement shown.

**Table 2**  
**Surface Vessel Control**

Speed (meters/turn)	Result
2-79	Speed reduced by 20 meters/turn
80-139	Speed reduced by 50 meters/turn
140-199	Decks awash
200-259	Engine flooded
260+	Capsized

ture is the part above the water line.

If a ship's hull is hit, the damage will affect the speed of the ship or cause the ship to sink. If the ship's superstructure is hit, the direction, speed, or communications will be affected: fires may break out, and the ship might capsize.

There are three types of combat between ships: *contact combat*, which includes ramming, bumping, and boarding; *ranged combat*, which involves both personal and mounted weapons; and *explosives*. The same three types of combat also apply to submerged combat, with some modifiers.

*Contact combat:* Bumping between two ships is similar to bumping between two land vehicles, but the sizes of the vessels involved are much more influential in sea combat than in land combat. To apply this factor, a system is used similar to the "bump number" system from Matt Brady's article, "Here Comes the Cavalry!" in DRAGON® issue #120. When a bumping situation occurs, the referee finds the difference between the two vessels' bump numbers and multiplies it by five. This number is added to the Reaction Speed of the pilot of the ship with the higher bump number and subtracted from the Reaction Speed of the pilot of the other vessel. The referee now rolls a 1d100 check for each pilot's revised Reaction Speed score. A successful roll indicates the pilot has maintained control of his ship, while a failed roll indicates the pilot of the ship has lost control of his vessel. When a pilot loses control, roll 1d100 and add his vessel's current speed in meters/turn, then apply this result to Table 2.

Ramming is a bit different. Both ships are damaged in a successful ramming attempt, not just the defender. When a ramming attempt is made, each pilot must roll 1d100, add his Reaction Speed, add his ship's bump number multiplied by three, then subtract his opponent's speed in meters/turn. If the attacker's total is higher than the defender's, the ramming attempt is successful.

If the ramming attempt succeeds, both ships are damaged. Damage is calculated by taking the attacker's speed in meters/turn, dividing that figure by 10, then adding the result to the attacker's bump

**Table 3**  
**Hull Damage Results**

Points of damage	Result
2-15	No effect
16	Current speed reduced by 20 KPH
17	Current speed reduced by 30 KPH
18	Acceleration reduced by 20 meters/turn
19	Deceleration reduced by 20 meters/turn
20	Top speed reduced by 20 KPH
21-25	5% chance of sinking (cumulative per turn)
26-30	10% chance of sinking (cumulative per turn); add 3 to next damage roll on this table
31-33	30% chance of sinking (cumulative per turn); add 6 to next damage roll on this table
34-36	50% chance of sinking (cumulative per turn); add 9 to next damage roll on this table
37+	70% chance of sinking (cumulative per turn); add 12 to next damage roll on this table

2. Only ships of hull size C or smaller can perform skid turns as well as the other maneuvers. However, yachts must attain a speed of at least 90 meters/turn to accomplish a skid turn.

3. Other special maneuvers, such as stunts, are up to the referee's discretion to use and define.

*Short corners:* Any ship may attempt a short corner, but this is especially dangerous on the open sea. If the character performing the short corner doesn't make his Reaction Speed check (Alpha Dawn expanded rules, page 31), there is a 15% chance the ship will capsize. If the ship doesn't capsize, roll 1d100 and add the ship's current speed in meters/turn, then apply the total to Table 2.

*Collisions:* If a vessel strikes an object above the waterline, treat the collision as per the Alpha Dawn expanded rules, page 31. However, if the object is struck below the waterline, there is a 1% chance per meter/turn of the vessel's speed that the vessel will take on water. Unless repaired by technicians with a total of four levels of Technician skill, the ship sinks. A ski cycle

sinks in five minutes, a motorboat or mini-sub in 10 minutes, a yacht in 15 minutes, and transport ships and subs in 20 minutes.

When submerged, submarines may make up to six 45° turns in one minute (one such movement per game turn). These turns may be made in succession or at different times during the minute. If a sub is at a dead stop, it may turn to face any direction before moving. A sub may also increase or decrease its depth by 30 meters/minute to a maximum depth of 600 meters.

### Sea-vessel combat

The rest of this article is written in terms of the Alpha Dawn expanded rules. Conversion to the *Zebulon's Guide* system should be fairly simple and is left to the referee.

### Surface combat

A ship is divided into two parts for the purposes of this article: the hull and the superstructure. The hull is the part of the ship below the water line; the superstruc-

number multiplied by three. The total is applied to Table 3 for the results. Damage to the attacker is figured in the same way, substituting only the defender's bump number for the attacker's bump number.

Boarding is the movement of the crew of one ship to another ship for hand-to-hand and ranged-weapon combat. This usually causes little or no damage to either the attacker's or the defender's ship. Even so, boarding can be the trickiest of any of the contact combat maneuvers.

Two requirements must be met for boarding to take place. First, the ships must have the same speed and heading for three turns prior to boarding, and must be at most 10 meters apart. Second, at least three grappling hooks must connect the two ships. Grappling hooks are treated as thrown weapons for purposes of determining the success or failure of the grappling attempt.

After all these criteria are met, characters may climb across the ropes to the opponent's ship. The climb takes three turns at most. A climber hit by weapons fire must make a dexterity check or else fall into the sea. After a character boards his opponent's ship, combat proceeds as usual.

For obvious reasons, boarding between high-powered ships is rarely used except against stationary ships or under extreme circumstances.

**Weapons combat:** There are two sorts of weapons used between seafaring vessels: personal weapons and mounted weapons. Usual ranged-weapons procedures are used for personal weapons, with these additional modifiers to hit:

- Attacker on hull size A or B ship: -10
- Target ship is hull size C: +5
- Target ship hull size D: +10
- Aiming below the water line: -20

Shots fired by personal weapons hit the superstructure of the target ship only, unless intentionally aimed below the waterline. Then the attacker suffers the aforementioned penalty.

When a hit is scored, the attacker rolls 2d10 and adds the number of dice of damage inflicted. This number is applied to Table 4 unless the hit was intentionally aimed at the hull, in which case the number is applied to Table 3. Note that these effects only apply to relatively small ships with little or no armor, as would be found on most colony worlds. Shooting at a really large ship, like an aircraft carrier, is an exercise in futility (and probably in suicide as well).

The number and type of mounted weapons a ship may have depends on the ship's size and ship type. Ski cycles may only have forward-firing laser pistols. Motor-boats may have any type of rifle mounted on a swivel mount. Transports may have up to four heavy weapons mounted on swivel mounts.

Mounted weapons are subject to the same modifiers as personal weapons, including the previously given modifiers

for target hull size and aiming below the waterline.

**Explosives:** These come in three different types: thrown explosives, placed explosives, and mines.

Thrown explosives, as well as grenades, are treated as ranged weapons and use the same modifiers.

Placed explosives, used often in espionage or ambushes, can be put inside or outside the ship. Determine whether or not the blast will count as either superstructure damage or hull damage, given its location. Getting the explosives to the ship without detection is the tricky part.

Mines are often used to guard harbors and military installations. Mines are often stationary, although some may break loose, floating freely. If a ship strikes a mine, treat it as 10 dice of damage applied to Table 3.

#### Undersea combat

A submarine is a versatile vessel able to fight either on the surface or underwater. When a submarine is surfaced, it follows the same surface rules as other ships. When submerged, the submarine follows a new set of guidelines.

There are three different types of underwater vessel combat: *contact combat*, *torpedo combat*, and *explosives combat*.

*Contact combat* underwater is similar to surface contact combat. The same three basic maneuvers are used: bumping, ramming, and boarding. A bump maneuver exerted underwater uses the following modifications: The submarine maneuvers in a three-dimensional environment, meaning bumps can be inflicted from the top or bottom. A bump from above grants a +5 to rolls on Table 6 made to see if the bumped vessel keeps control. In addition, maneuvering undersea is no mean feat. Most of the maneuvering of the sub is done by relying upon the onboard computers; you cannot maneuver a sub underwater by sight.

Ramming underwater uses the same mechanics as surface ramming, with the following modifiers. First, speed is divided by five rather than ten. Second, if a ship is descending in depth as it is ramming, five additional points of damage are done to the defender, and five fewer points of damage are done to the attacker. All such damage is applied to Table 7.

Underwater boarding is usually done on rescue missions rather than in combat, as it is tricky. Any men attempting to board during combat must come through the air locks, so they are easy targets for the men inside. Hence, most boarding actions against submarines take place on the surface against engine-damaged subs; holes must be cut in the enemy's hull to enter at different places. Many ships simply sink obstinate submarines rather than board them.

Underwater weapons combat uses torpedoes—self-propelled undersea missiles approximately four meters long. Most

**Table 4  
Superstructure Damage Results**

Modified die roll	Result
2-15	No effect
16	Radio knocked out
17	Steering jammed right
18	Steering jammed left
19	Steering jammed straight
20-24	Decks awash
25-29	Engine flooded
30-33	Fire
34+	Capsized

**Table 5  
Submarine Control: Surfaced**

Speed (meters/turn)	Result
0-79	Speed reduced by 20 meters/turn
80-139	Speed reduced by 50 meters/turn
140-199	Decks awash
200-259	Hold flooded
260+	Capsized

**Table 6  
Submarine Control: Submerged**

Speed (meters/turn)	Result
0-50	Speed reduced by 20 meters/turn
51-100	Depth reduced by 30 meters
101-150	Forced surfacing
151+	Ballast tanks crushed

**Table 7  
Submarine Damage Results**

2-15	No effect
16-20	Loss of control
21-25	Acceleration reduced by 30 meters/turn
26-30	Turns -2
31-35	Forced surfacing
36+	40% chance of sinking (cumulative per turn)

torpedoes carry 150 grams (15d10 points of damage) of TD-19 that explode on impact. There are three different types of guidance systems on torpedoes. Straight-running torpedoes are the simplest, and are aimed and follow their courses for 2

km, when their fuel runs out. Acoustic torpedoes guide themselves after being fired from the sub, homing in on engine sounds from the target until they hit or run out of fuel after 2 km. The most deadly type is the wire-guided torpedo, which can be guided from the launching sub using a computer with a radio antenna. Its range is also 2 km.

Combat involving torpedoes is intense and deadly. One lucky shot may disable a ship. Deception and speed are invaluable. A minisub can carry up to four torpedoes, while a transport sub can carry up to eight. These tubes are usually divided, facing fore and aft. Straight-running torpedoes use the guidelines for mounted weapons. There is no to-hit modifier for careful aim or for the water being soft cover. Acoustic torpedoes follow the same guidelines with a +10 modifier to hit if the opponent is moving or if his engines are running. Wire-guided torpedoes are not subject to any modifiers. The only way to escape these terrors is to outrun them; they travel at 125 meters/turn for 16 turns, then detonate if they haven't hit their intended targets. Damage from a wire-guided torpedo is 2d10 + 15 points, applied to Table 7.

Explosives in submarine warfare are occasionally encountered. Some harbors contain mines at the depth that a sub would have to travel to enter the harbor

undetected. At other times, spies may board ships and sabotage them. Underwater mines each carry 100-200 grams (doing 10-20 dice of damage) of TD-19.

## Results: Tables 2-7

*Ballast tanks crushed:* The submarine sinks toward the ocean bottom.

*Capsized:* The boat rolls over, and all aboard take 2d10 points of damage if outside the ship or 3d10 points if inside (C and D hull sizes only). In addition, anyone inside a C- or D- size ship when it capsizes has a 25% chance of being trapped in an air pocket with 1d10 x 10 minutes worth of air. This amount is divided equally among characters if more than one person is trapped.

*Decks awash:* The bow of the ship suddenly dives into the waves, and its decks are flooded. There is a 50% chance that any character exposed outside will be washed overboard.

*Engine flooded:* The engine immediately ceases to function, and the vessel slows to a stop. It takes 1d10 turns for the ship to completely stop, after which the engine will not start for 3d10 minutes.

*Fire:* Flames burst from a referee-determined part of the ship. Those within 10' of the blaze take one point of damage per minute. If less than 75% of the crew

helps, the fire burns an additional 1d10 minutes. For every minute the fire burns, there is a 1% cumulative chance of an explosion. If the ship explodes, the blast radii per hull size are as follows: A—50 meters; B—100 meters; C—150 meters; D—250 meters. All people within the blast radius take 7d10 points of damage; no type of screen or suit affects this damage.

*Forced surfacing:* The sub must immediately surface. All aboard take 5d10 points of damage, and the sub cannot submerge again until repaired, or else it sinks.

*Hold flooded:* Water pours into the submarine through the hatches. Speed is reduced by 20 KPH for 3-30 minutes, until the pumps can empty the ship again.

*Loss of control:* The submarine's speed is checked on Table 6 for the effects.

*Radio knocked out:* The antenna for radio communication has been downed. The antenna takes 1d10 hours to repair.

*Depth reduced by 30 meters:* The sub's depth is decreased by 30 meters (i.e., the sub rises, possibly reaching the surface). All aboard take 3d10 points of damage.

*Sinking:* If a ship has a chance of sinking, the ship has taken water into its hold. The referee rolls 1d100, and if the roll is less than or equal to the designated percentage, the ship begins to sink. A ski cycle sinks in 5 minutes; a motorboat in 10; a yacht in 15; a transport in 20. During this time, deck guns can continue to fire until one minute before sinking. If the ship doesn't sink, the appropriate modifier is applied to the next damage roll.

*Speed reduced:* The vessel immediately loses the indicated amount of speed unless it is over one-half of the vessel's current speed. In the latter case, the ship loses half speed at most. Any result below zero meters/turn is a full stop.

*Steering jammed:* If jammed straight, the vessel cannot turn. If jammed right or left, the vessel must turn 45° in the indicated direction after each 20 meters of travel. The ship can accelerate or decelerate, but it cannot change direction.

*Turns - 2:* The maximum number of 45° turns the submarine can make in one minute is reduced by two.

## Additional notes

*Ship-vs-submarine combat:* Submarines almost always have the advantage of surprise against surface ships. However, they have fairly low firepower when compared to other ships of the same size. Also, surface ships are faster than subs, so escape may be difficult for a detected submarine.

A submarine must be fairly close to the surface to fire the torpedoes it carries. This means that if a sub is sighted before it fires, it can be fired upon with deck guns from the surface ships. When a torpedo strikes a surface ship, the damage is considered hull damage, and the attack gains an additional 2d10 points of damage on Table 3 to represent the surprise factor.

In addition to torpedoes, some subs have

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a recoilless rifle or heavy laser mounted on deck. This mount takes three turns to arm and may then be used as the surface-combat rules dictate.

Often, the only weapons the surface ships have available to fight submarines are depth charges. These are special charges of TD-19 set to go off at a certain depth or on contact. The base chance to hit a sub with a depth charge is 20%. If the surface ship is using sonar (1,000 Cr/km range), the chance improves to 45% as long as the sub has its engines on; if the sub shuts off its engines, the chance decreases to 35%. A sub hit by a depth charge takes 2d10 + 20 points of damage, applied to Table 7.

Another mode of attack available to submarines is to ram ships from underneath. This is especially damaging, and the defender takes one and one half times normal damage while the sub takes normal damage. In this case, the sub rams under surface-combat rules. The damage to the surface ship is applied to Table 3, while the damage to the sub is applied to Table 7.

*Escape from sinking ships:* The methods of escape from vessels vary. Every seafaring vessel under UPF jurisdiction must carry a safe means of escape. Size A ships generally carry life jackets, and size B ships carry either life jackets or life bubbles. Life bubbles are zip-open plastic

spheres that can encase one passenger each, having enough air for two hours and a small snorkel for additional air if needed. They will take 5 points of damage before collapsing. Life bubbles cost 50 Cr.

Size C and D ships generally carry a life jacket for every passenger in addition to a number of lifeboats. Lifeboats are small boats that carry six people. These boats always have oars and a collapsible sail. More expensive versions may be motorized. Submarines carry an equivalent of a lifeboat, called an escape capsule, that is essentially a lifeboat that is pressurized for the depth. The capsule rises to the surface where its canopy opens and is treated thereafter as a lifeboat. Capsules may also be motorized. Capsules cost 100 Cr more than comparable lifeboats.

#### Lifeboat

*Cost:* 1,500 Cr (700 Cr w/sail)  
*Top/cruise speed:* 100/50 KPH (15/10 KPH w/sail)

*Passengers:* 6

*Cargo:* None

*Parabattery:* 2

*Hull size:* A

*Bump number:* 2

*Accel/Decel:* 50/40 (varies w/sail)

In addition to a means of escape, all ships must have one standard sea survival pack per passenger. The contents of such

a pack are: one all-weather blanket, one first-aid pack, four survival rations (eight days of food), one compass, 10 salt pills, 10 liters of water, one flashlight, one pair of sea goggles, and an emergency beeper that emits a signal for 20 km for 48 hours. Some packs may include a small firearm.

The sea is a huge and dangerous place, full of adventure and danger. I hope this article has opened this frontier to you. Good luck, and good sailing!

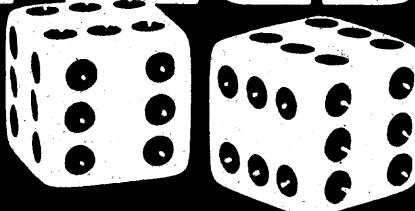
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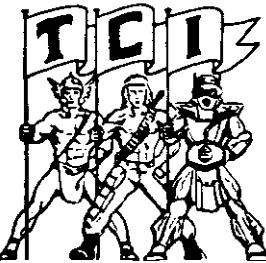
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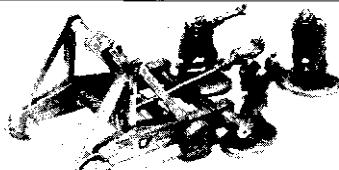
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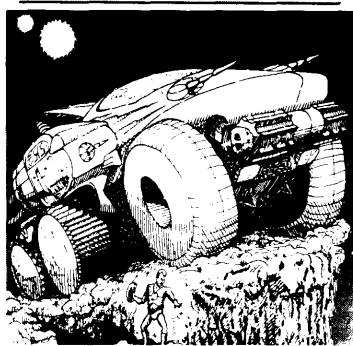
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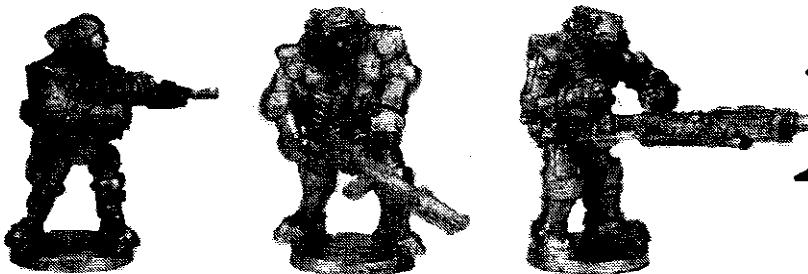
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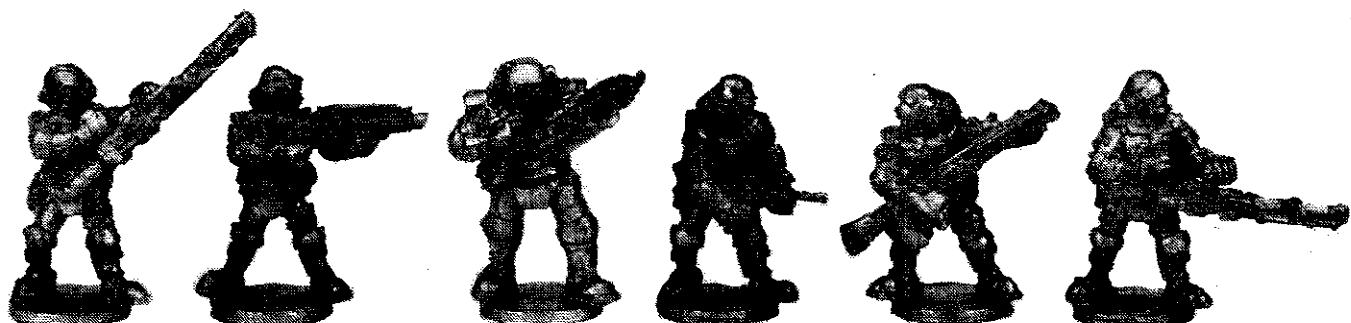
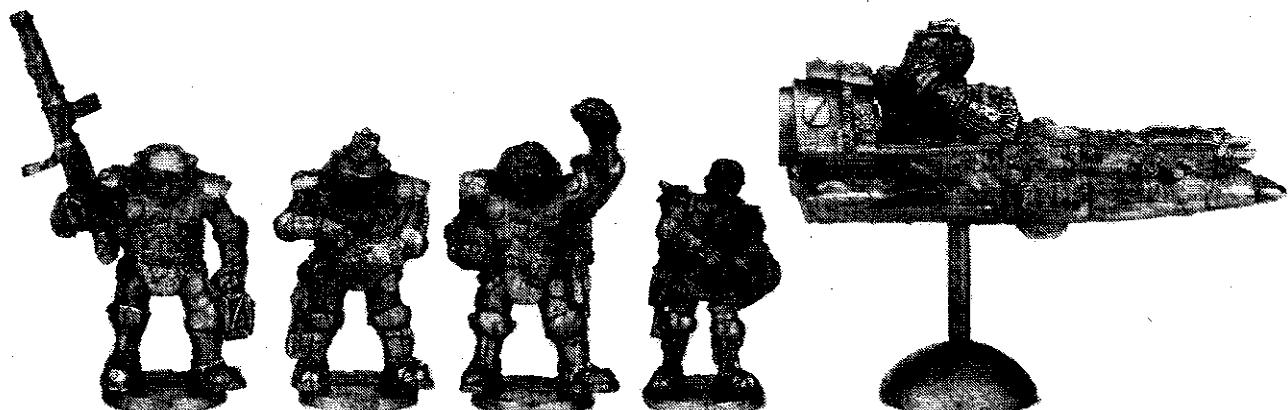
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# Getting It Right the First Time

Learn the basics of running a convention RPG event

by Richard W. Emerich

You've been running a fantasy role-playing game with your friends for a few months and think that you're a good game master. Your friends like your gaming style and the contents of your adventures, and are happy with their characters. One suggests that you run an adventure at an upcoming game convention. It sounds like a challenging idea, so you schedule an AD&D® game event. The day of the convention comes and there you are, notes in hand, at the convention table facing eight unfamiliar players.

"Do you have pregenerated characters?" one asks.

"What reference books can we use in the game?" queries another.

"Do we get magic?" questions a third.

"Can I use a 10' pole?"

"Do we get secondary skills?"

"Do you allow weapon specializations?"

You were not expecting so many questions! At home, everyone knew that you didn't allow the use of weapon specializations, that you allowed the players to use only the *Players Handbook*, and that 10' poles were ridiculous for underground adventures. Such questions should make you realize that these players need a brief summary of your gaming style. The players also need to roll up characters, so you need to tell them your method for character generation.

After the players spend about 40 minutes rolling up their characters, you begin play by reading the story line of the first encounter. Halfway through your narration, you find that you're missing the second page. After a few minutes of searching through your notes, you find the page and begin reading the end of the encounter, but you accidentally read too far and give away an important clue.

Your brilliant encounter is ruined, and you become angry with yourself. Nonetheless, you manage to recover and make up something to take its place: an encounter with an evil cleric and his pet wraiths! The characters start combat. Now you must search through the books to find damage and hit probabilities for your improvised challenge, make up spells and abilities for the cleric, then roll to determine the amount of damage in the resulting combat. The players are all calling for your attention, waiting to describe their next actions to you. . . .

Running an FRPG at home can be worlds different from conducting one at a convention. There are many considerations often overlooked when planning for a convention event, as the aforementioned example shows. The GM must often deal with time limits and unfamiliar players

with unfamiliar playing styles. In order to have fun, to accomplish something constructive, and to make the game a success, the GM and the players must cooperate, be prepared, and be organized. Nothing fun comes out of the chaos produced by players all shouting at once for the GM's attention. Smooth, continuous play is not accomplished by a GM whose notes and plans are unorganized. In short, a successful game simply does not come about without gaming experience and careful preparation.

If you've played in a good share of convention FRPGs, you've probably come to one very important conclusion: Players enjoy themselves most in those games in which the GM is prepared, organized, and motivated. They also have a better time when the other players cooperate for the common good and when they are not unruly and immature. There is no pleasure generated by a game in which the players behave chaotically, shout, and use foul language, and where the GM expects to run the game using a handful of scratch paper for notes.

As a result of these observations, I have formulated a method for preparing and organizing a convention FRPG with one goal in mind: making the game successful and fun for the GM as well as for the players. This article presents a step-by-step routine for running a successful FRPG at a convention, focusing first on the responsibilities of the GM and then on those of the players. A successful game results when the GM does not waste valuable time due to disorganization; when the game itself flows smoothly and has a logical chain of events; and when the players and GM work together to have fun. While applied predominantly to AD&D® game scenarios, the method of preparation herein is general enough to be applied to most FRPG systems.

## Preparation and organization

Preparation prior to a game is a necessity for the GM, so that playing time is maximized and his working time during the game is minimized. Since the time allotted for an event at a convention is much shorter than the weeks and months available for a home campaign, the GM should plan and prepare so he does not waste any of the precious game time.

If the GM is running a scheduled game, he must be aware of the time period allotted for his event. Most conventions allow between three and five hours. The GM must be conscious of this time limitation when he decides which of his scenarios he will use. Some time must be allocated at the beginning for the players to examine their character sheets, purchase equipment, and select spells and abilities. A period of 15 to 20 minutes is usually sufficient for PC preparation. The remaining time is then used to gather information from the players, read the introduction,

and play the game. This may require tailoring a good but otherwise lengthy scenario. Yet, no matter how well the GM plans his schedule for play, the game scenario must be organized, must progress logically, and should adhere to the rules of the gaming system used.

Next, the GM should work to organize the game. Organization should be the superstructure of any game: It speeds the game along by allowing more time for the players to play and uses less of the precious scheduled time for GM time-outs. A GM who organizes his game and his time seldom needs to stop play to reference a book or chart; all of that information is already prepared and organized in his notes and is easily accessed. The game must also be organized in the sense that its chain of events is logical. Clues must be intelligently arranged and presented to the players in a clear, concise manner. Encounters must be consistent with the overall setting and should correspond with the characters' experience levels and the geographical region within the game world.

Organization is essentially the elimination of excess work in order to provide a smooth-flowing, efficient presentation that follows an ordered, logical chain of events. To eliminate unnecessary bumbling as a GM, use a three-ring, loose-leaf binder to hold your game notes. Of all the possible systems, this one seems to work best. While notes can be double-spaced and printed using a computer, handwritten or typewritten notes also work well. The GM should mark those sections that he is supposed to read to the players with a highlighting pen; this makes it easy to find an area's description. Highlighting has the added benefit of preventing the accidental reading of a section that is privileged GM information. Drawing a box around these sections or using a different color of print also works well.

Since time is a premium in a convention setting, the GM should eliminate the time-consuming chore the players must go through when creating PCs. Make up pregenerated characters that come complete with abilities, languages, hit points, equipment, and all bonuses. If necessary, use your own style of character sheet that lists only the information necessary for a short-term convention game. For spell-casters, include a pregenerated list of memorized spells; for magic-users, include a list of spells available to them in their traveling spell books. The use of pregenerated PCs is recommended not only because it saves game time, but because it gives the GM more control, as he is already familiar with each character. As a result, time is not wasted making a character from another game world compatible with the GM's campaign.

Since the GM creates the game's PCs, as opposed to using the PCs a player might bring, he is completely familiar with their abilities and attributes. If each player can

bring his own character, the GM does not have the intimate familiarity with the character's abilities, traits, likes, dislikes, etc. The GM then must spend valuable time looking over the character and deciding what is and is not acceptable for play. Invariably, the character's abilities are reduced, and some of his items are eliminated by the discriminating GM. This discriminatory process can create some hostility among the players, who may dislike the pruning of their characters. Once an atmosphere of hostility has been established, the game is no longer fun.

An example of the problems that arise from not using pregenerated PCs happened during my first convention—a small gaming event in Massachusetts. I was running an AD&D game scenario for low-level characters, and as a result of inexperience, I failed to make up pregenerated characters. Instead, I allowed the players to use their own characters. When the game started, I found myself staring at eight characters, each taken from the players' home game worlds—each so outlandish that I nearly broke out laughing. One was a 3rd-level thief with the *wand of Orcus*, a *rod of absorption*, and several other lesser trinkets that would have made a dragon's hoard look like the contents of a child's piggy bank. I had to cross off most of the items listed on the character sheet, lower the abilities randomly from a streak of 18s to more reasonable values, and bring the armor class back into the positive numbers. After all, the game was for low-level characters, not low-level gods! Needless to say, I was the recipient of many angry comments, and we wasted about 30 minutes of the event's allotted three hours to make the characters compatible with the campaign.

Admittedly, this is probably a worst-case scenario, but it does illustrate the expediency of using pregenerated characters. Yet some would argue that using this type of character removes some of the role-playing flavor from the game, since the player is forced to run a personality unfamiliar to him. This is not necessarily the case. It's just as easy to make up a new personality as it is to run a familiar, time-honored favorite at home. Furthermore, it's much more interesting and fun to accept the challenge of making a new one.

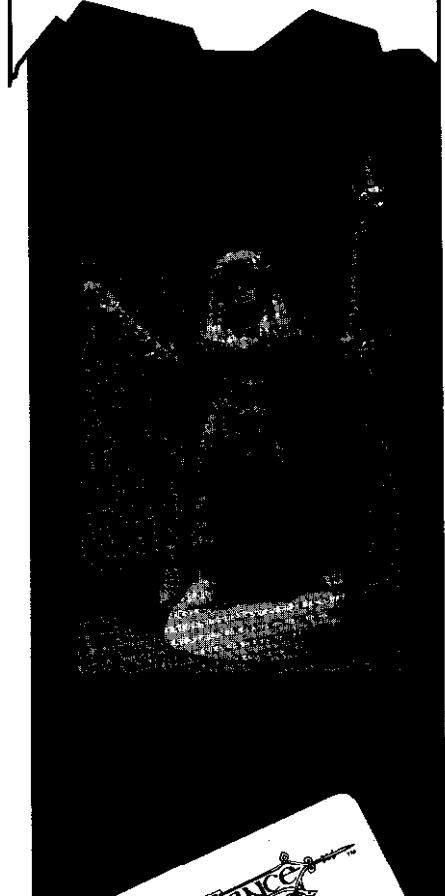
After the pregenerated PC sheets are made, the GM should draft a detailed list of what each player needs to roll to successfully hit opponents. Included on this list are important statistics: the PCs' primary weapons, any bonuses for high ability scores, hit points, armor classes, and special notations. In like manner, a chart is made for the characters' opponents. Combat thus uses indexed and easily accessible numbers, as opposed to embarking on a time-consuming search-and-calculate mission for each encounter.

To go one step further with the organization and preparation of notes, place all

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of the loose-leaf pages into plastic sheet protectors. This prevents disaster should the GM spill soda or mislay a slice of extra-cheese pizza. These protectors also simplify the record keeping during the game. Damage against monsters and characters, amounts of ammunition spent, and so forth can be recorded directly onto the plastic sheets using water-soluble markers (which may also be used for marking Battlemats). Once the game is over, the sheets can be wiped clean and the notes are ready for the next convention.

Preparation is never easy; it is, in fact, quite time-consuming. Nevertheless, it is well worth the time when, as a result of the GM's efforts, the players have fun and compliment a job well done. On the other hand, it is impossible to enjoy a convention game when the GM runs the campaign with a handful of notes scribbled on loose-leaf paper. The consistency and logic needed for a meaningful game simply cannot appear when the GM is poorly prepared.

For example, I played a 12th-level magic-user (part of a party of seven other characters) at a recent convention, in an AD&D game event where the DM expected to run a game for experienced players using such a handful of papers. After spending about 20 minutes selecting spells, equipment, and crafting personalities for the characters, play began. Minutes later, we had our first encounter.

While we were camped for the night, we were attacked from four different directions. The proverbial red dragon was zooming in from the north, demons came from the west and east, and some special DM creations came from the south. Each of the players in turn announced how his character would react to this threat, then we all sat back as the DM looked up what a dragon could do, wrote it down, rolled its hit points, and determined what it needed to hit each character. He then repeated this process with the demons and then again with the special monsters. All told, we sat for over 20 minutes waiting for our first set of instructions to be carried out. A total of 40 minutes out of the three hours allotted for the event had been used (or, more correctly, wasted), and the characters hadn't even fully responded to their first encounter! It was painfully obvious at this point that the game was going to be slow and boring. This situation could have been avoided had the DM taken the time beforehand to put a concerted effort into the organization of his campaign.

Another item of organization that can aid the GM in his task of preparation is the handout. Instead of going through the chore of explaining what will and won't be accepted during play, and invariably forgetting to mention something important, a handout with this information can be given to all players. This way, nothing is overlooked by the GM when he goes over his playing style and explains what rules

he will use. The handout should be distributed with the pregenerated PCs so the players get the important game information right at the start. The handout may be used to list the main game-rule options, what reference texts the players may use, and any background information important to the game. Each player should get a handout so that he may reference it during the game.

For easy identification of the handouts distributed to the players, use different colors of paper: plain white paper for the character sheets, pink for character spell listings (or special abilities), yellow for maps, and green for rules briefs. The use of colored paper is not necessary, but it is an option the GM may wish to consider to add some extra order to his campaign.

### Playtesting

Once the GM has his convention game organized, with notes highlighted and in order, pregenerated characters created, and various charts completed, he has one more bridge to cross: The game must be playtested. By running the game with a familiar group of players, the GM will discover any flaws in its logic, construction, or wording, and be able to make the necessary corrections. His players can suggest modifications based on their end of play—something that may help the GM make his campaign more complete. Normally, in the home-game environment, the GM creates a campaign and runs it without the benefit of prior exposure. There is little chance to debug a game beforehand, so problems almost certainly occur. Most of the time, the GM manages to overcome minor game inconsistencies and is able to improvise something to cover himself. In the convention setting, however, the GM cannot afford to use game time to formulate impromptu encounters to counter unforeseen problems.

Through playtesting, the GM becomes completely familiar with his adventure. He can modify his encounters according to the results of playtesting so that the game runs smoothly during convention play. He is also able to streamline his descriptions, correlate the actions and abilities of NPC opponents and monsters, and confirm the accuracy of his combat charts. Playtesting is possibly the most important step in the organization and preparation process.

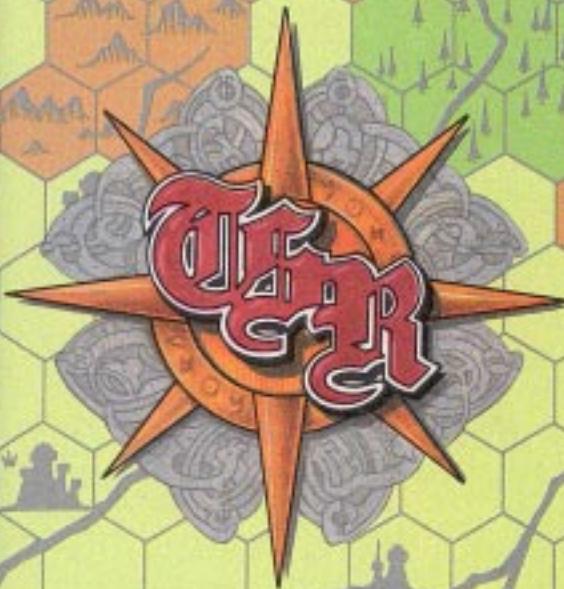
### Conducting the campaign

Now that the GM is prepared, let's move forward to the day of the convention. Let's assume that the GM has had the foresight to correspond with those in charge of the convention, thereby receiving a table assignment and a list of players in advance. Once at the convention, he has checked in at the command center and gets settled at his table. What to do now? Follow this time-tested example.

After introducing yourself to the players, conduct a roll-off for the pregenerated PCs. Give players a quick summary of

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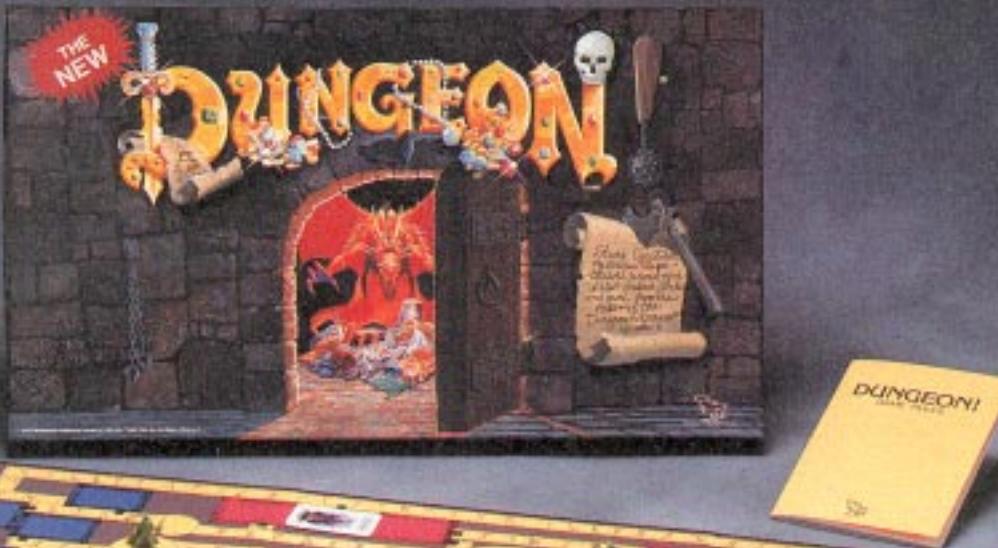


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what is available for the game, listing each character's class, level of experience, hit points, major abilities and weapons, and magic (if applicable). Then, one by one, offer the characters to the players. If more than one player wishes to play a certain character, a six-sided die may be rolled by each of the contenders, with the character going to the highest roller.

Once the characters are in the players' hands, distribute any handouts for the game. Also, make it known how you handle PCs' actions. The most organized manner is to start at one side of the table and work to the other, asking each player what his character's actions are for that round. Once the GM complies with all of the characters' actions, the situations are then described for each in order by the GM. This suppresses the chaos that can develop during the game, as each player attempts to speak louder than his fellow players in order to be heard.

Allow each character to perform one of three major actions. Most actions fall into one of three categories:

1. The character moves his full movement allowance.
2. The character moves up to one-half his movement allowance and begins another action which, depending upon the length of preparation, occurs at the end of the round.
3. The character performs an action not involving movement, such as combat, spell-casting, shooting, etc.

A character who moves only up to half his movement can attempt to perform another action by the end of the round. The GM must decide how long the action is and if it fits within the time remaining to the character for that round. If it doesn't, the action is finished in the beginning of the next round.

The GM must also consider the timing and completion of the actions for those characters who are not moving. The character whose weapon-firing, spell-casting, or other ability takes the shortest period of time (including bonuses to this effect) performs his action first. The order of actions follows with the other characters in similar fashion.

Even with these three categories, handling eight PCs' and their opponents' actions simultaneously can be challenging, to say the least. Yet the trials of keeping track of the actions can be eased through organization. For simplicity, use a chart that lists the important information for keeping game time and keeping track of each PC's actions. Each character should have a column devoted to him for notations about his actions. The chart should also have spaces to mark down elapsed game time.

Does this mean the GM should write down each character's actions word for word? Certainly not. While the chart is a helpful organizational tool, the GM shouldn't be a slave to it, nor should it detract from the game time. To this end,

the GM should develop a shorthand code for making his notations (such as "HTH-LS" for hand-to-hand combat with long sword this round, or "1/2M-Lblt" for moving half movement then starting to cast a *lightning bolt* spell). The GM should be able to keep track of hit points, spell durations, fatigue, ammunition spent, treasure taken, and other game factors involving PCs in a minimum amount of time.

The positions of the characters, their opponents, and the environment around them also need to be considered if the players are to formulate their characters' actions. These positions can be difficult to visualize when the characters are dots on a piece of graph paper, and when the room they are in, while supposedly 40' square, is but a half-inch block crowded with tiny representations of furnishings and characters. To better visualize characters' positions and furnishings, use Sleuth's (now Shamus's) Battlemat, 25mm lead figures, and cardboard props. The borders of the characters' environment, areas of explosions, and other important features can be marked directly on the Battlemat using water-soluble markers. Once the encounter is over, the markings are erased with a damp towel and the mat is ready for the next encounter.

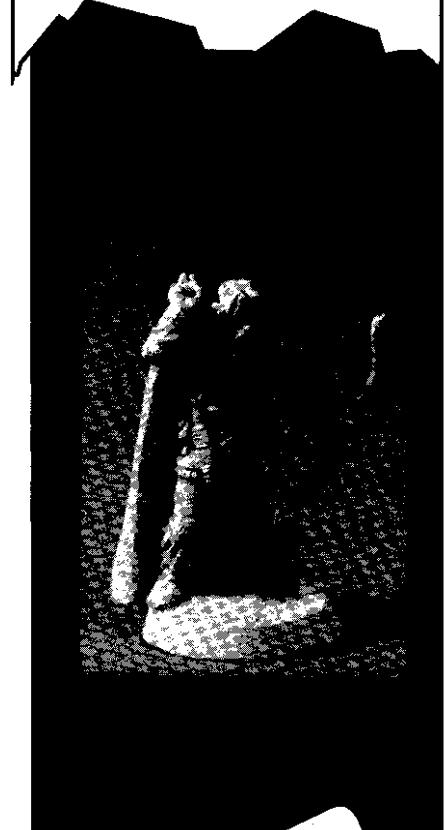
If a Battlemat surface is not available, one can substitute a roll of plain white wrapping paper (from a deli or butcher's shop), a marker, and a ruler. Draw the area on the large paper using whatever scale is appropriate (such as 1" = 5' indoors and 1" = 5 yards outdoors). If lead figures are unavailable, 1"-square pieces of cardboard can be used. In this case, put the name of the character on the square and indicate which side is the character's front for positioning reference.

### GM's responsibilities

The GM's first responsibility is to be a neutral moderator. He is not the evil force behind the scenes seeking to destroy the PCs with extreme prejudice. Instead, he must fairly and judiciously determine the outcome of the situations and events that occur in the game. He must maintain the continuity of the scenario as originally planned and playtested. He must not improvise more powerful or more daunting events if the PCs solve his prize riddles or overcome his most carefully laid plans. His preparation during the creation of the campaign should be focused on appropriate intellectual and physical challenges for the PCs, based upon their levels of experience and the resources available to them.

As a result, the GM should not have to improvise during play to challenge the players. His campaign should be designed with the PCs' abilities and limitations in mind so that the game encounters are challenging but not insurmountable. If the PCs cleverly solve what is presented to them, the GM must not feel that he is at fault for not doing his best to thwart them. After all, different people handle

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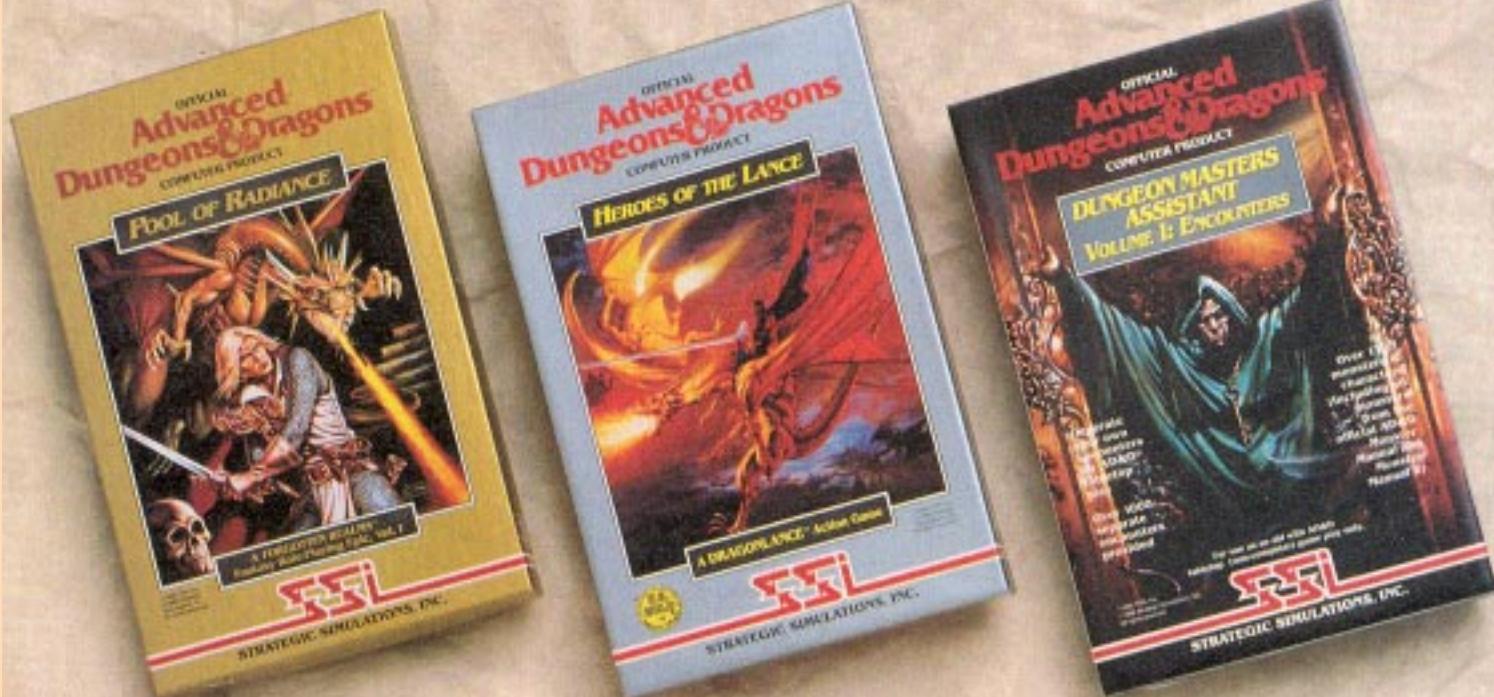
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situations differently. The GM's role is not to be a foil for the PCs; his job is to determine their successes or failures based on how they handle the events.

In general, the GM should maintain his original game plan. Admittedly, there are times when game play grinds to a halt for a relatively long period of time. In convention-tournament play, 10 or 15 minutes of inaction is more detrimental than it is for an ongoing home campaign, because convention play is restricted by a time limit. If the PCs find themselves stuck in one area, unable to overcome what has been planned for them, the GM faces a crucial question: How does he get the game moving again?

This brings us to the second role of the GM: that of the guide. In this role, the GM must subtly help the players progress in the direction outlined in his notes. In so doing, the GM walks a fine line between leading the players through his game and forcing them to discover every clue on their own. To keep his balance between these two extremes, the GM should relate the players' information in a slightly cloudy manner, thus allowing players to make the ultimate decisions concerning their characters' fates. Still, the GM should not intentionally conceal information from the players so that they have nothing with which to work.

During an AD&D game adventure I ran at a convention, the PCs came up against an impasse in play. To me, the answer to the problem was quite simple (then again, I had created the scenario and had the benefit of knowing the answer). At first, I considered simply giving them a portion of the answer so they could easily solve the entire problem. But since the encounter was one of the four major points in the adventure, I was reluctant to divulge any more information than had already been given. I had planned the clue according to the PCs' levels of experience and with the idea that the game was listed "for expert gamers only" in the convention guide book. But as the minutes passed, I realized they needed help. How would I come up with a simple, innocuous observation for the players' benefits without giving away the answer?

To this end, I used one of the accompanying NPCs as my suggestion fulcrum. Instead of using the NPC as a loudspeaker to make an announcement, I was able to have him point out some tangent to the situation at hand. The PCs picked up on it, mulled it around, and eventually came up with the answer to the problem based on their own discussion. This served the purpose well, since the players had essentially solved the problem with minimal GM input. They were able to solve it on their own because I had maintained the role of neutral moderator and guide.

It is important to understand the difference between information the GM gives out as a guide and information the characters must accumulate in the game. The

game may call for several facts to be initially hidden from the characters. This is entirely acceptable, and is the whole reason the PCs go adventuring: They seek to uncover the yet-to-be-discovered for fame, fortune, and glory. But as a guide for the players, the GM should not intentionally obscure facts if the PCs' inquiries are legitimate.

Consider an instance in which an eleven 4th-level magic-user/5th-level thief separated from the rest of his group late in the game (finding the company was not listening to his ideas) and headed away from where he thought the treasure lay. Soon after leaving, he found a secret door that led into a narrow corridor and to another door. After using a *dispel magic* spell on the trapped door, the elf found himself within a storage room where most of the treasure was located! The elf intended to take his choice of magic and treasure, then leave the place without further regard for the others, since they had little regard for him.

This appeared to be an acceptable action for the character, since he was role-played as an independent, curious, motivated, slightly egocentric elf who liked magic, challenges, and getting his own way. The elf was played this way for the better part of four hours—sufficient time for the GM to recognize the character's traits. Furthermore, the rest of the players were unorganized in their attempts to find the treasure, constantly bickering among themselves and ignoring each other's suggestions. So, both player and elf decided enough was enough.

The elf was set to leave when the GM explained that he was unable to find the door. This seemed quite strange, since the elf had hammered a spike between the frame and hinges of the door when he entered, and had marked the wall near it with a wax crayon. Using his physical abilities first, then his *wand of secret door and trap detection*, the elf searched for the exit. But there was no door, no sign of the spike, and no sign of the marking.

While the elf expended his available resources to find a way out, the GM gave the others some blatant clues to the treasure, which they found. The elf saw a secret door open and the party enter. There was plenty of treasure, so every character got his share and the game ended. Needless to say, the player was upset about the whole game.

Shortly thereafter, he caught up with the GM and started to discuss the scenario, asking why the elf couldn't escape from the treasure room.

"Oh, I made it so he couldn't get out," the GM replied.

"How so?" the player asked.

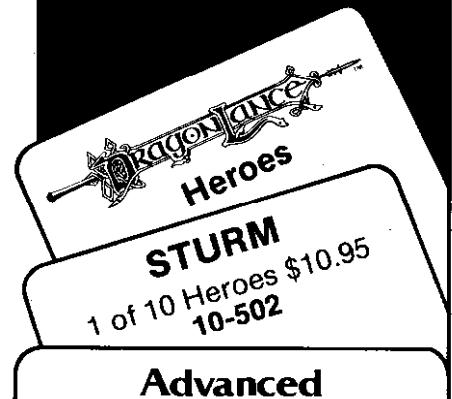
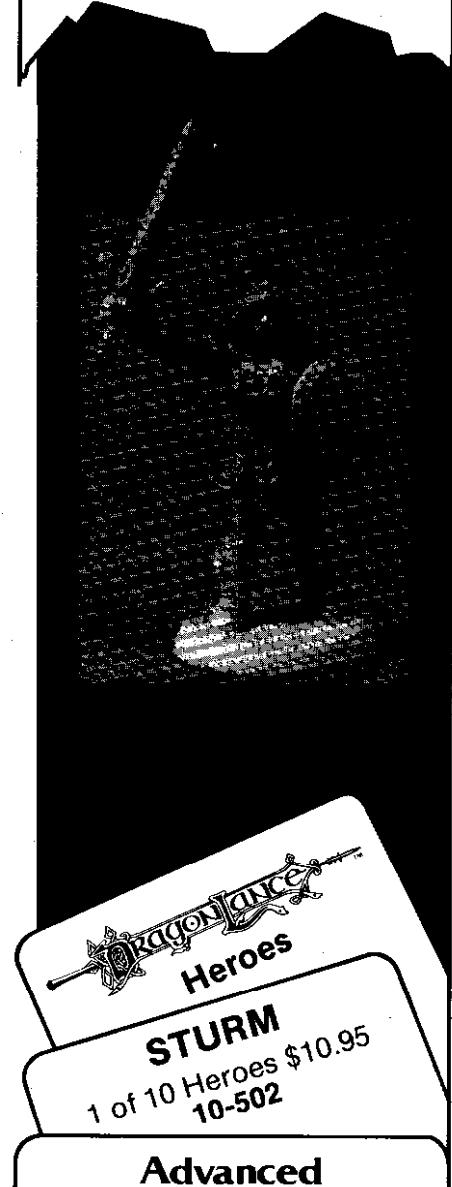
"I didn't want him to leave. If he had left, the game would have ended and the others wouldn't have found any treasure."

This case is an example of a GM who is no longer a guide or nonpartisan modera-

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tor; rather, he is a participant in the FRPG. By arbitrarily deciding what the characters can and cannot do, the GM removes the role-playing substance as well as any purpose for player participation. This is a case where the GM has obscured the facts for his own purposes—in this case, by preventing the elf from escaping simply because he didn't approve of the PC's intentions.

To successfully operate as a GM, one must also be a good storyteller. The GM's storytelling skills ultimately decide whether or not he holds the players' attentions. Once the players' attentions are held, the GM's storytelling skills are largely responsible for generating player excitement and enjoyment. Since the game actions are fantastical (not tangible), comprehensible descriptions are needed to motivate the players.

It is mainly up to the GM to make the game interesting; to do so, he must call upon the players' imaginations to visualize the events by using carefully planned words and gestures. Because the FRPGs' events exist within the minds of the participants, communication that constantly fuels the imagination is required. Without continued fueling, interest wanes and boredom sets in. With a vivid imagination and aggressive role-playing, interest in the game is maintained and the participants enjoy themselves. To this end, the GM

should actively role-play his NPCs, using such theatrical vehicles as different voices, varied personalities, or even a portable stereo to play background sound effects.

For those GMs who are not very articulate, or who do not have a large vocabulary or wide vocal range, the use of background sounds can be used to aid the storytelling process. Sound-effects records are available at most audio stores, and the sound effects can be transferred to tape in any order the GM sees fit. He can then play this tape at important times to augment the fantasy scenario.

It is essential, however, that the GM does not abuse these options for his storytelling, lest he confuse the players or waste too much game time with his media blitz. Simple, straightforward uses of these ideas enliven the fantasy atmosphere; excessive uses have the opposite effect. Playtesting the game with the desired storytelling aids is the best way to determine if they are acceptable additions.

## Players' responsibilities

So far, the emphasis of this article has been on GM organization before and during the convention game. Yet, as neutral moderator, guide, and storyteller, the GM should not be expected to do everything to maintain the integrity of the game. The GM and the players must have means of interacting at all times, thereby making

both parties responsible for the success of the game. While the GM is responsible for preparing, organizing, and running the game, the players are responsible for the actions and behavior of their characters and themselves.

For a game to be an interesting and fun experience for all involved, some rules of common sense, decency, and etiquette must be observed. The GM should include a short version of these rules in one of his handouts or review them with the players before starting the game. Briefly, the major rules for player etiquette are:

*1. No foul language.* There is never a need for rude or abusive remarks, crude language, or socially unacceptable conversations or gestures. Also, there should be no shouting.

*2. No play destructive to the group's fun.*  
Players should not ruin the game for others by causing problems. They should not behave in an immature fashion. No one enjoys unruly or obnoxious players, or players who have their characters run on chaotic rampages regardless of the consequences.

*3. No interruptions.* A player should allow a fellow gamer to finish what he's saying before speaking. He should never yell over another person's conversation, nor interrupt the GM as he tries to describe the game situation.

The GM is ultimately responsible for

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keeping game play in order. He should handle the players in a firm yet polite and friendly manner and strive to reduce the chaos that can occur. He should not ridicule or criticize the PCs' actions. Rather, he should handle the encounters judiciously. Both he and the players should maintain an atmosphere of cooperation.

In addition to adhering to the rules for player etiquette, the players should be responsible for their characters. They should be well acquainted with their characters' bonuses, abilities, equipment functions, and attributes. If the characters cast spells or have mental abilities, the players must have at least a general idea of what each spell or ability does, what its range, duration, and damage are, and how long the ability takes to activate. They should have computed their to-hit values, weapon bonuses, and classifications (unless the GM has already done so). Thus, when it comes time to calculate results of combat or action, the GM is not the only one to shoulder the responsibility.

Players must always be aware of their characters' special abilities relative to those of the party. For example, AD&D game fighters should fight and magic-users should cast spells, not vice versa. Clerics should support the party with their healing magic, and fight when the odds require it. Surprisingly, many players forget the importance of keeping their characters' actions within the limits of their characters' classifications and neglect to properly support their adventuring group.

One such example of this neglect occurred in a high-level AD&D game in which I participated. The party had an 11th-level magic-user, a 12th-level ranger, and a few other character classes. That night, while the others slept, the ranger and wizard, who were on patrol, were attacked by two fire giants. Hardly a challenge for the two powerful characters, this seemingly simple one-sided encounter turned into a fiasco because the players didn't keep their actions logically framed within their characters' classes.

The ranger, instead of going into hand-to-hand combat with the giants (by using

his magical bastard sword, his three strikes per two rounds, and his ranger bonuses which gave him a total of +16 hp damage per hit), decided to step aside to cast his *entangle* spell. This left the wizard (in the beginning stages of casting a long spell) exposed. The giants threw rocks, hitting both characters and ruining both of their spells. The rest of the party, sleeping soundly around the fire about 100' away, were now waking.

The player running the ranger still refused to engage the giants in hand-to-hand combat. Instead, he decided to cast his *faerie fire* spell for his next action, despite the red-faced prompting by the player of the wizard. The wizard saw that he would get no support from the ranger and quickly decided to race back toward camp. But the giants threw rocks again, hitting both characters. Needless to say, the wizard was killed.

After three rounds, during which he had all his spells interrupted by rocks hitting him, the ranger finally engaged in melee. By then, however, his late arrival had caused the others in his group to take severe damage. This could have been avoided if the ranger had seized the initiative and had gone into melee at the outset. The ranger was the most important asset in the encounter due to the extra damage bonus against giant-class creatures—a power unique to the class of ranger. Yet, whether due to his unfamiliarity with the ranger class, inexperience in the game system, or his own bumbling, the player made the party pay dearly.

This should demonstrate to the players the necessity of fitting their characters' actions within the frames of their classes. It is the player's responsibility not only to role-play his character, but to make intelligent decisions that protect his party and himself.

It is also the responsibility of the players to cooperate for the group's benefit. Everyone detests a player who throws a wrench into the game works by trying to have his character perform immature, rude, or destructive actions while the rest of the players are attempting to accom-

lish the game objectives. Furthermore, those who criticize or are abusive to the other players in order to be destructive are found similarly distasteful. These bad apples spoil the fun for the rest, and the GM should deal with them quickly and firmly.

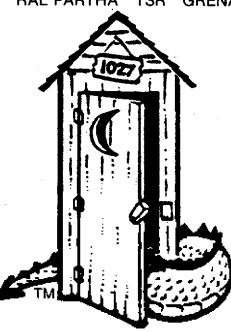
In a convention setting, especially in an event where the players need to win in order to qualify for the next round or where prizes are at stake, these immature players completely ruin the group's chances for success. The GM must remind these malcontents that others have paid money to participate and are there to accomplish something, not to put up with ridiculous antics. If, after this warning, the players do not cooperate, the GM has the right to eject them from the game and should do so without regret.

The last consideration, but by no means the least important for the game, is role-playing. Role-playing is the meat and potatoes of the fun in the game, whereby a player exaggerates and acts out his desires, thoughts, and plans through the vehicle of a fantasy character. While FRPGs are fantasy *role-playing* games, game sessions are usually dominated not by those who role-play their characters well, but by those players who have good common sense and powerful personal presences. While the latter is important for gaming, the GM should strive to encourage more role-playing in the game by giving more experience points to a character who is role-played well.

What fun is it to repeatedly play a character who mirrors your own intelligence and abilities? There is a world of personalities for the players to try on for size; players should not limit themselves to one that is but a reflection of their own capabilities. Try something new! Explore the world of the old, the young, the brave, the cowardly, the sly, the strong, or the weak. Don't play a character who is equal in stature to a god, but give him some common idiosyncrasies and phobias that make him unique.

## Conclusion

By now, the GM should have sufficient information and a complete outline that will enable him to organize an FRPG event for a convention. The outline presented in this article is flexible enough for most game systems. With the suggested points given in this article, the GM and the players should have little problem with the preparation and organization required to run an enjoyable game. The only thing left to work out is how much fun your players will have!



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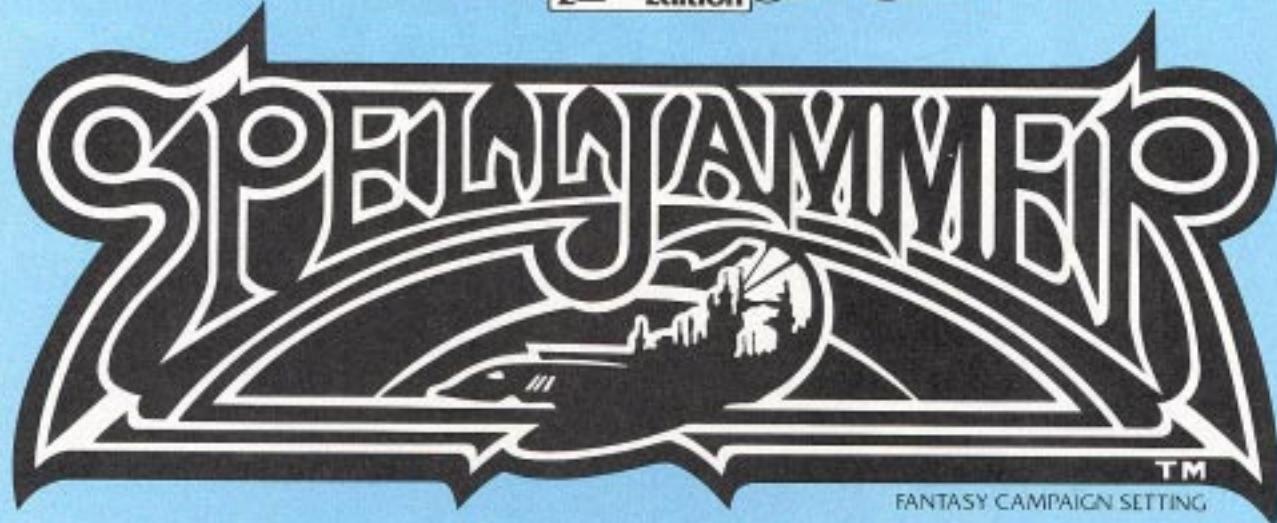
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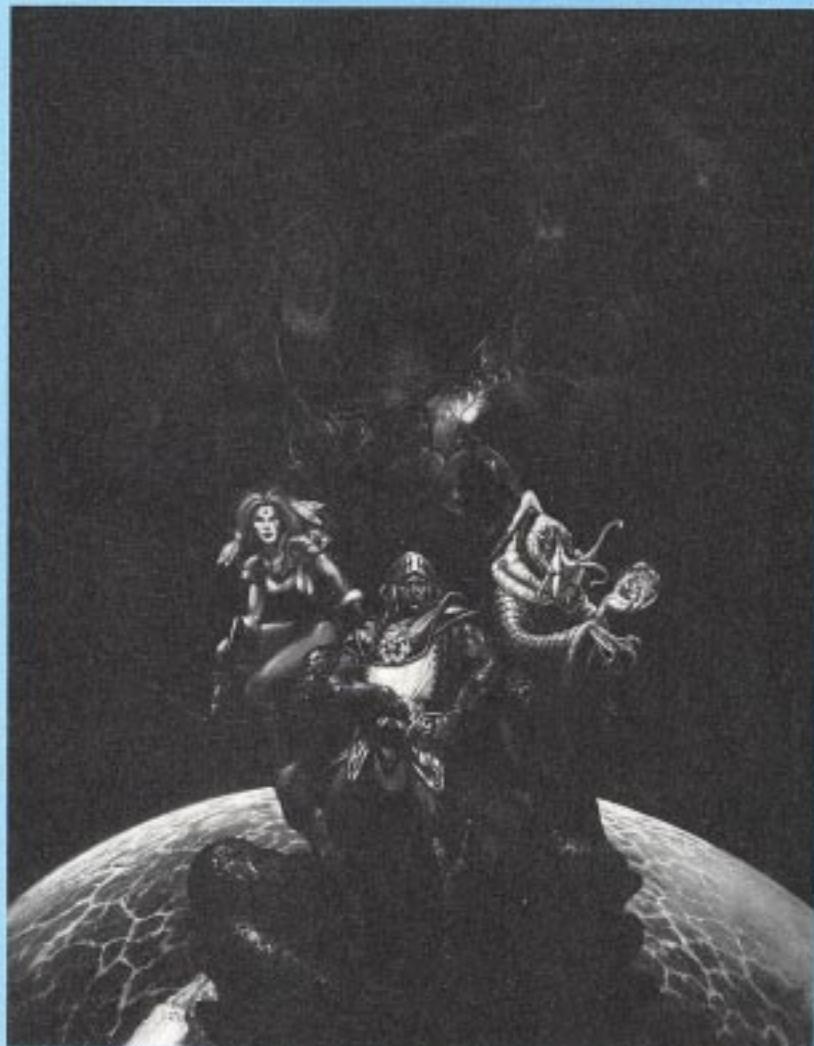
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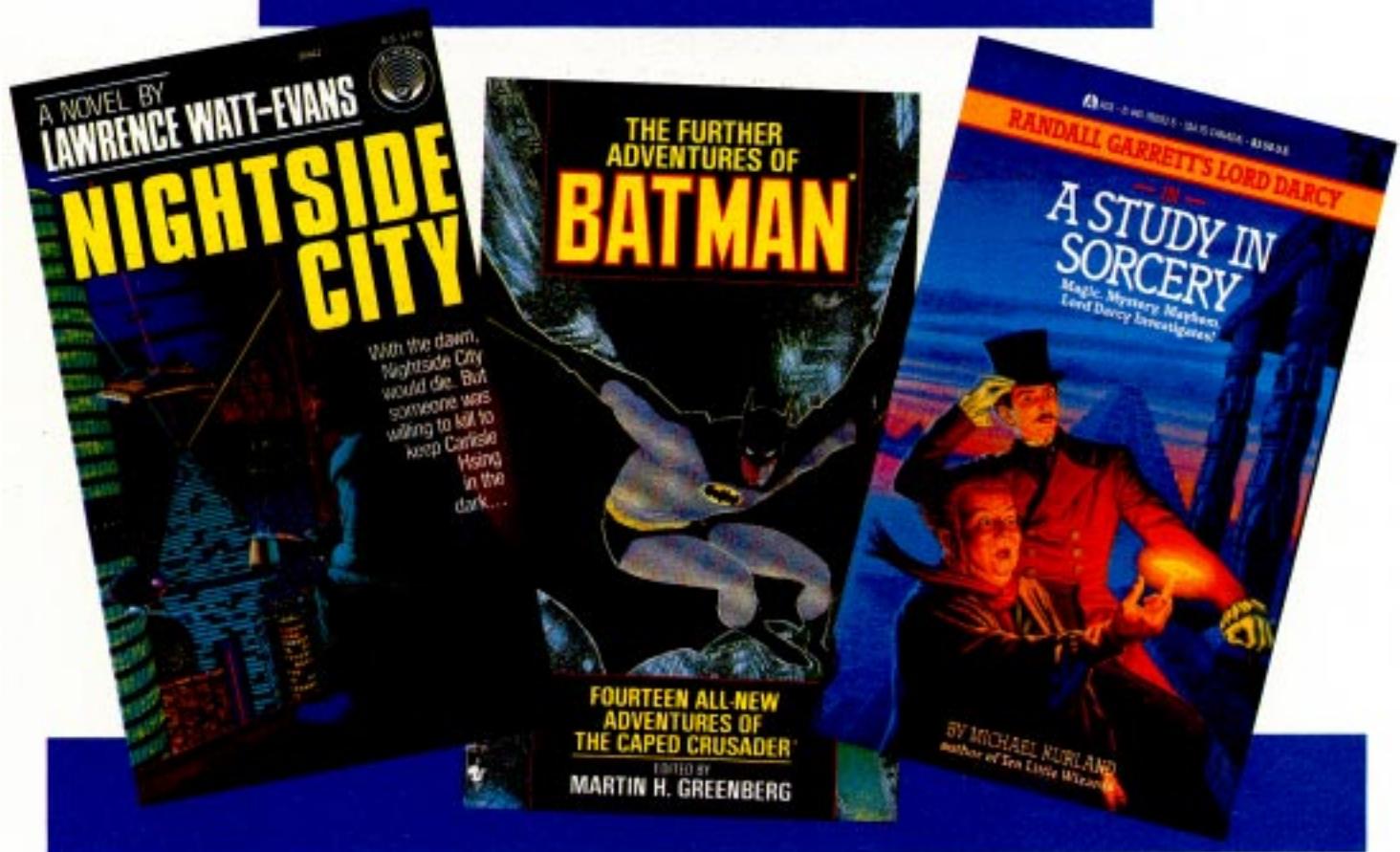
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# The Role of Books



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CHILD OF SATURN

Teresa Edgerton

Ace 0-441-10400-2 \$3.50

A great deal is going on in Teresa Edgerton's first novel—or, more specifically, in the well-worn castle of Caer Cadwy. Apprentice sorceress Teleri is scarcely visible, occupied with lore and disarray left by long-vanished wizard Glastyn. Sir Ceilyn, a popular young knight, privately struggles with personal werewolves (not to be confused with personal demons). Visiting Princess Diaspad plots, both within her

entourage and among Caer Cadwy's dissidents, to steal the kingdom from under King Cynwas's nose. And though both Teleri and Ceilyn have a fair idea as to what is going on, it seems all too possible that Diaspad's treachery will be successful.

*Child of Saturn* thus contains a generous helping of well-developed intrigue, but it is also a "people story" propelled by plausibly complicated interplay among Caer Cadwy's inhabitants. It's especially instructive to watch Ceilyn's affairs and observe Edgerton's ability to portray a broad range of relationships. For example, the knight is fiercely (but not romantically) loyal to

Queen Sidonwy; he is drawn into a frank, physical relationship with Prescelli, a maid-servant who is as much a victim as she is a seductress; and he finds Teleri to be a kindred spirit and confidante.

Edgerton's narrative style can virtually be described as invisible. No scholarly lecturing or detached analysis interposes itself between reader and story. Instead, Edgerton smoothly balances dialogue, action, and well-chosen visual detail so that events unfold almost directly into the imagination. Where some historical fantasy can be hard work to read, *Child of Saturn* is as easy as daydreaming (though

few daydreams are as intricately crafted). If there is a flaw, it's that the high degree of writing skill outshines its material. For all its virtues, *Child of Saturn* stays in familiar fantasy territory. But weighed against three solid pluses—lots of castle-life information for DMs to absorb, an ending that works both as resolution and cliff-hanger, and two more books to come—that's a problem well worth overlooking.

#### LIGHT RAID

**Connie Willis and Cynthia Felice**  
**Ace 0-441-48311-9 \$17.95**

I don't think I can explain *Light Raid*. Describe, yes; analyze, yes; explain, no. I'm not even certain the novel's authors can explain their creation.

The setting is an unspecified, near-future North America, perhaps midway into the next century. Political boundaries have changed dramatically. A vaguely defined Commonwealth exists east of the Rocky Mountains, while the part of the U.S. extending from the Rockies to the Pacific has become the independent Western States. Canada's provinces are largely independent. Quebec has declared war on the allied Commonwealth and Western States, holding them to a stalemate in a war fought with orbiting laser satellites capable of devastating ground targets.

That's a strong, complex, science-fiction premise. *Light Raid*; unfortunately, is a teenage spy thriller that mutated from old Nancy Drew and James Bond adventures. The novel follows heroine Hellene Ariadne through a rapid-fire puzzle in which her mother is accused of treason, Hellene's charms are sought (separately) by the Prince of Saskatchewan and his mysterious aide, and a Quebecker scientist may defect to the Western States. At the center of these intrigues is the Hydra Corp, a female-dominated scientific enterprise in which Ariadne's parents are highly placed.

As a thriller, this book is tightly constructed and acceptably devious, though Ariadne's own scientific contribution stretches credibility. The crisp tone utterly fails to cope with the fact that the situation presented in *Light Raid* makes no sense whatsoever.

The book's jacket copy says "a civil war is raging between the eastern half of North America and the west." Well, maybe, but nowhere in the novel do the authors define either Quebec's or the Commonwealth's sphere of influence. No eastern U.S. location is even mentioned. Why did the U.S. fall, and how did the Commonwealth rise? There are no answers or clear ideological contrasts from which to deduce them. But these are quibbles compared to the big question: How did those laser satellites reach orbit in the first place? Current North American governments have no reason to launch weapons aimed at themselves, while logically, the authors' rearranged states wouldn't have the required space-related resources.

(Also, why haven't the Soviets taken advantage of all this chaos?)

Dozens of similar questions easily come to mind. Answering them isn't particularly important; the fact that they can be asked is. Novelists normally attempt to suspend reader disbelief, but *Light Raid* actively promotes disbelief by means of its utter disregard for logic. A more spectacular literary failure is difficult to conceive.

#### WIZARD'S BANE

**Rick Cook**  
**Baen 0-671-69803-6 \$3.50**

The writing isn't polished, the premise isn't unique, and the plot is as basic as a connect-the-dots picture. But Rick Cook gives *Wizard's Bane* one precisely executed bit of gimmickry, and it's enough to justify a second look at a novel that's otherwise on the low side of average.

Wiz Zumwalt, a typical computer programmer, is yanked out of the everyday world and put into a realm of witches and spellcraft. Despite his nickname, he keeps insisting he's not a wizard—but the evil Black League is after him anyway. As a result, the benign Council of the North makes nominal efforts to keep Wiz alive, reluctantly aided by the hedge witch with whom Wiz is magically infatuated.

Technically, Cook treads thin ice with the assertion that Wiz isn't a wizard, but it's true that he's a mage of a different stripe, and therein lies the novel's claim to distinctiveness. Wiz turns out to be a *theoretical magician*, using his electronics background to develop a magical programming language that nonwizards could eventually learn to use. The novelty isn't in this book's premise, but in the execution. What sets Cook's effort apart from the others is that Wiz is possibly the first programmer in fantasy fiction who actually talks like a programmer. His spells use authentic computer commands, and his explanations are laced with high-tech industry language. It's a touch that may be lost on those unfamiliar with the world of electronics; but even novice hackers will catch the truth in Cooks prose.

Apart from the authentic jargon, the story is mostly ordinary—pleasant, but

with no sparks of originality in characters or plot. But the point it illustrates is one worth making: It doesn't take genius to make a fantasy quest interesting. One clever twisting of tradition can sometimes do the job. A sequel is apparently in the works, and it remains to be seen whether Cook's gimmick is ingenious enough to sustain more than one application.

#### FAERIE TALE

**Raymond E. Feist**  
**Bantam 0-553-27783-9 \$4.95**

"Dark fantasy" is a fairly new publishing category. As such, it's vaguely defined. It encompasses horror novels trying to look respectable, *Twilight Zone* stories translated to print, and more-graphic-than-usual mighty barbarian adventures. Then there's *Faerie Tale*. Dark fantasy is an apt categorical description for Raymond Feist's tale of eerie magic in rural New York, but the novel's roots are anchored in genres well outside those previously cited.

If anything, the book has too many ancestors. The two major plots are drawn respectively from romantic suspense (what used to be called Gothic) novels and from children's fantasy. It's even possible to identify specific references. The adventures of eight-year-old twins Sean and Patrick Hastings, particularly beneath Erl King Hill, recall parts of Susan Cooper's award-winning *The Dark Is Rising* sequence; and Feist's other story line echoes the style of suspense novelist Barbara Michaels, whose specialty is modern-day Gothics with supernatural elements.

The problem isn't lack of originality. Feist may borrow frameworks, but he uses them deftly and distinctively. In gaming terms, Feist's campaign world is overpopulated. Most supernatural novels feature one advisor on occult matters; *Faerie Tale* has three. Most contain a single strong protagonist; Feist has two, plus a third masquerading as the hero. And none of this counts another subplot, involving a reclusive mages' order, that seems no more than an afterthought. It's ironic that decoy protagonist Phil Hastings is a screenwriter. If this novel were turned into a film, half its cast would disappear.

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The abundance of characters would be logical in a game where extras can easily fade into the woodwork. That doesn't happen here, leaving too little growing room for too many people.

The overcrowding aside, *Faerie Tale* is vividly told. Feist makes the Hastings family refreshingly likeable and unaffected by their considerable affluence, and the peripheral characters are equally engaging. The development of matters arcane is handled at an assured, gradual pace. A mysterious blacksmith and the irreverently named Troll Bridge give way to more tangibly fantastic discoveries, and all events lead to a final, powerful voyage deep beneath a faerie mound on the Hastings' property. One quibble: Where most of Feist's fey folk are named for Celtic or Shakespearean counterparts, Sean's and Patrick's nemesis under the Troll Bridge is discordantly called the "Bad Thing." It's a too-casual label that detracts from the dangerous tone Feist tries to establish.

Even as a partial success, however, Feist's novel fits comfortably into the dark fantasy niche on its own merits. That, at least, gives it a well-justified advantage over the relabeled horror novels and barbarian potboilers. *Faerie Tale* may be flawed, but it's a worthwhile experiment.

#### A STUDY IN SORCERY

Michael Kurland

Ace 0-441-79092-5 \$3.50

This isn't necessarily a book the late Randall Garrett would have written—which is worth mentioning, since Garrett created the world and character of Lord Darcy, investigator to the royal Plantagenets. But it's a book he might well approve of, and Michael Kurland's second addition to Garrett's series of magical mysteries effectively catches the spirit of Garrett's own work.

Lord Darcy's adventures take place in a 20th century where the classical laws of magic define everyday existence just as ordinary biology and chemistry do in our own lives. In addition, this Earth is dominated by the Angevin Empire, which encompasses most of Western Europe and a sizable portion of the Americas. The atmosphere recalls Sherlock Holmes and a hint of James Bond—while Lord Darcy's detecting style is distinctly Holmesian, his manner is debonair and occasionally open to romance.

*A Study in Sorcery* finds Lord Darcy and expert forensic sorcerer Sean O Lochlann in New England (meaning both the Atlantic coast and the entire continent), where a young Aztec prince has been found in a long-abandoned pyramid with his heart cut out in an ancient sacrificial manner. The murder has political implications, and the everpresent Serka, secret police to the King of Poland, may be involved.

This is risky ground for Kurland, as the current novel strays further from Garrett's Holmes template than ever before, and a climactic magical duel is atypical of

Garrett's brand of sorcery. But if the middle of the book is thin on detection, the conclusion is a sharply executed exercise in deductive revelation. Only alert readers will anticipate Lord Darcy's solution. And Kurland has Garrett's literary mannerisms down cold, though his Sean O Lochlann is a touch more oblique in his explanations of the "scientific principles" of magic. This last may be a problem; it isn't safe to assume that Kurland's readers have seen the original stories (which date from the 1960s and '70s), and explicit statements of the established Laws of Magic would give new fans a better handle on the milieu.

Nonetheless, *A Study in Sorcery* is a cleverly crafted scenario, entertaining on its own merits and a worthwhile example of adventure design for gamers whose campaigns are set in preexisting worlds. Kurland's writing isn't ambitious but it's reliably enjoyable, and his continuation of the Lord Darcy series fills a too-sparingly populated niche.

#### THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF BATMAN

Martin H. Greenberg, editor

Bantam 0-553-28270-0 \$3.95

The stories that make up *The Further Adventures of Batman* are for the most part well-conceived and at least competently executed. The styles range appropriately from straightforward tales of detection to those with supernatural or fantastic overtones. Overall, though, veteran editor Martin H. Greenberg has produced an anthology that is both certifiably strange and inevitably inaccessible.

One problem is that the collection lacks context. Unlike many of Greenberg's anthologies, this one contains no introduction, no commentaries on the stories, and no biographical data on the authors—some of whom will be unfamiliar to a few readers of Batman literature. Without at least minimal framing material to define the project's vision, the strong individual variations in tone and setting are jarring, and the stories don't flow together smoothly. They are also written in wide-ranging time settings (from the 1940s to the present) but are not given in anything resembling chronological order.

This isn't a criticism of the stories themselves. Edward Wellen's "Wise Men of Gotham" is probably the book's best: a smooth follow-the-leader chase involving the Riddler, an attractive university professor, and attacks on Gotham City's leading citizens. Robert Sheckley and Edward D. Hoch also opt for detective-oriented pieces, though Hoch's is short on Battheatrics. Devotees of the Batman's darker incarnations will enjoy Joe R. Lansdale's "Subway Jack" and possibly Ed Gorman's "Idol," though the latter is only marginally comprehensible. Three tales are pure curiosities: Mike Resnick's "Neutral Ground," Stuart M. Kaminsky's "The Batman Memos," and Isaac Asimov's "Northwestward." Greenberg's editing of these is

inconsistent. The protagonist of "Neutral Ground" is referred to briefly in another tale, but a vital paragraph seems to be missing from Asimov's story—the one in which the Black Widowers' waiter, Henry, explains the ambiguity upon which "Northwestward" turns.

That's a shame, because Asimov's off-center treatment of the Batman legend is unique in the sense that it avoids the collection's real limitation: namely, that it's not a comic book. As the makers of the recent *Batman* film correctly noted, atmosphere is absolutely integral to the Caped Crusader's character. Batman is very much a visual creation, and without the striking art of the comics and graphic novels, or the sharply different but equally attentive camera work of the movie and the earlier TV series, he doesn't have the same impact. On the evidence of this collection, it's safe to conclude that Batman simply isn't the same without the pictures.

Again, this shouldn't reflect badly on the writers represented within the anthology's pages, and devotees of Batman (and superhero adventuring in general) should find Greenberg's collection intriguing if not comfortable. Greenberg and his sponsors, though, should think twice before trying further projects along this line. Some storytelling concepts just aren't meant to work, and transplanting superheroes into short fiction may be one of them.

#### NIGHTSIDE CITY

Lawrence Watt-Evans

Del Rey 0-345-35944-5 \$3.95

*Nightside City* is built on the framework of the hardboiled private-eye novel, but it's hardly a conventional example of the form such a novel usually takes. Lawrence Watt-Evans has made a number of changes in his literary blueprint, combining some subtly amusing touches with a tale that eventually transcends its origins.

The title community is a science-fictional Las Vegas whose clientele is made up both of off-world tourists and miners coming in from remote work sites. Its days are numbered, though. Contrary to expectations, a last gasp of planetary rotation will eventually push Nightside City into sunlight, where ultraviolet radiation will render it uninhabitable. Meanwhile, the casinos are booming, and business has never been better.

Perfect setting for a Humphrey Bogart or Harrison Ford film? Not exactly. This version of Las Vegas is Asian to the core. Casino operator New York Games is a subsidiary of Nakada Enterprises; the sentient taxicabs are built by Hyundai; and Watt-Evans's female private investigator is 4'9" Carlisle Hsing, whose job is to find out why someone is buying up supposedly worthless property on the almost-sunlit west end of town.

Hsing tells her story in a style that's unsurprisingly cynical but pleasantly barbed, combining street-wise intelligence with a refreshing ability to take mistakes

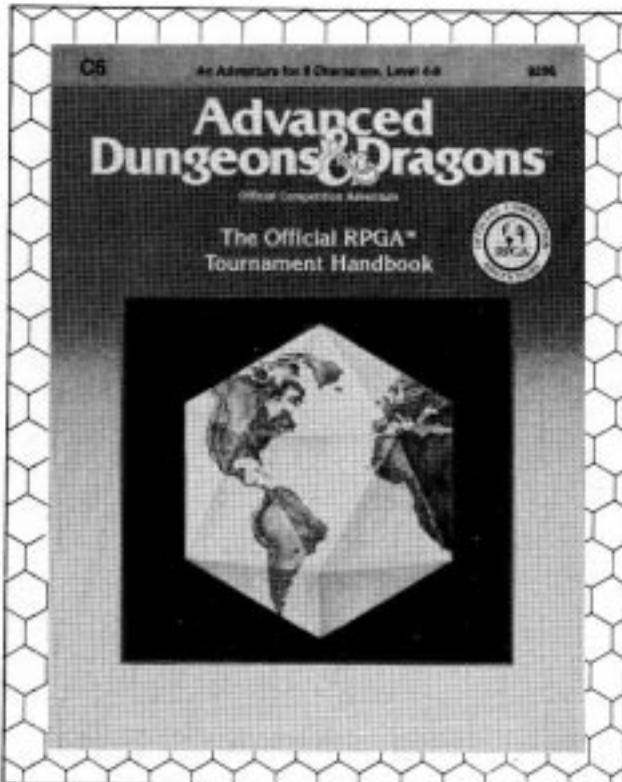
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in stride. She is the book's only major character. There are some good supporting roles—notably that of Hsing's sometime rival, casino detective Big Jim Mishima—but the novel is Hsing's story, and Watt-Evans is thoroughly successful at making her an appealing and plausible character. The mystery is almost incidental, and the SF element is nearly as much in the villains' minds as in Watt-Evans's imagination.

Solving the puzzle, in fact, isn't the novel's climax at all, which is why *Nightside City* is much more than a standard private-eye tale. Most of fiction's hardboiled PIs are stuck in their jobs—the promised giant fee never comes through, the big break never happens, and there's always some tragedy to throw the investigator back into work. Not so for Carlisle Hsing. Watt-Evans offers her the pat ending, but she turns it down in favor of a move that takes her well out of her former status quo. That's a rarity in the detective category, marking far more character growth than readers usually see in a fictional detective. Carlisle Hsing might not make a good heroine for a series (or role model for an RPG character), but in the case of *Nightside City*, that's praise rather than criticism.

#### Recurring Roles

The proper reaction to *Arabesques 2* (Avon, \$3.95) is "Wow!" Susan Shwartz's

second anthology of new Arabian Nights tales is as breathtaking and satisfying as the first, again capturing just the right atmosphere. As the heroine of Esther Friesner's story remarks (in a very different context), "Allah grant a sequel." One nit must be picked, however. Larry Niven's contributions to both *Arabesques* collections first appeared in magazines, so the "never-before published" cover line is technically incorrect. But that shouldn't stop anyone from buying this book.

Curious publication history also touches John M. Ford's *Casting Fortune* (Tor, \$3.95). An original tale occupies the book's second half; two previously published short stories make up the first. All three take place in Liavek, the shared world overseen by Will Shetterly and Emma Bull and published by Ace Books. Ford's work in the Liavek framework has always been intricate and absorbing, and the new tale here is no exception, involving a theatrical production whose players and auditorium are both haunted. One hopes, however, that the peculiar publishing arrangements are not a sign that the original Liavek series is unraveling.

The news is good in yet another case of publisher hopping: Collier Books' new edition of *Over Sea, Under Stone* (Collier, \$2.95) means that Susan Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising* sequence is finally available in its entirety from a single publisher.

Though the series is justifiably considered a cornerstone of Arthurian fantasy (young adult or otherwise), this first volume has previously been ignored by publishers of the other four books in the series. Collectors, however, should look for older paperback editions of these books under Atheneum's Aladdin imprint; the cover art for these books is vastly superior to that of the newer volumes.

Esther Friesner has been busy; *Demon Blues* (Ace, \$3.50) and *Sphynxes Wild* (Signet, \$3.95) appeared almost simultaneously in early summer. The first continues the trilogy begun with *Here Be Demons*, this time in a somewhat more focused (and therefore more successful) fashion as magic invades Yale University, where Friesner was a professor. Meanwhile, *Sphynxes Wild* picks up another thread left over from *New York By Knight*, and it weaves a generally clever tale of riddles and vice in Atlantic City's casinos. This book is good enough, but there might have been more and subtler riddles, given the concept.

Elsewhere in the world of series, the news is also mostly good. *Keepers of the City* (Bantam, \$3.95) continues Bill Fawcett's "Guardians of the Three" project with considerable skill, though writers Diane Duane and Peter Morwood treat the feline mrem somewhat more lightly than does Fawcett's earlier volume. Four more

## Letters

Continued from page 5

My 1st-level assassin from Waterdeep in the Forgotten Realms was teleported to the world of Greyhawk. He survived the dangers of radiation with his suit of +5 radiation-proof leather armor. He sought out Waldorf's castle and made it into the throne room while wearing his cloak of elvenkind, then shot Waldorf with his blowgun and a needle of slaying cheaters doused with Type A cheapo poison he bought at the Waterdeep Assassins' Guild. Waldorf dropped with one shot. My assassin then freed all the gods under the castle, and they have started to repair and rebuild the world of Greyhawk.

I think that for this deed all the people at TSR, Inc. need to send me a written thank you....I also think Waldorf should mail me his character sheet and list of possessions and magical items, so I can total the experience points for my new 14th-level Guildmaster Assassin.

Chris Bishop and Trent Ocoock  
Yakima WA

Here is your "thank you." The editors also wish to thank Bloodstone of Furondy (a 386th-level magic-user) for decapitating Waldorf with a sling. Natrixia (a 394th-level magic-user/214th-level fighter/296th-level cleric) for recreating Greyhawk and challenging Waldorf ("as his damage was such a bother to fix"), Oharan Marshall ("The Draw From Below" who replaced Lolth) who suggested polymorphing Waldorf ("Waldorf Slaad has a nice ring to it,

doesn't it?"), and all the other characters (and players) who wrote to us. Live long and prosper.

## Editorial

Continued from page 5

binding would affect the personality and attitudes of a character, we might be in the editorial ballpark. We can't use History 101 research papers, but we can use historical information that has been converted to gaming terms.

We also reject articles that leave obvious gaps. It isn't enough to say "no one knows where this magic item came from"; create a legend, rumor, myth, or something. Check your article to make sure that it is complete and logical without boring the reader with trivial details.

Finally, proofread your submission. Have a friend read it. A technique I use is to set my work aside for a few days before reading it again. Errors literally jump off the page when I put some distance between myself and my work.

Don't forget to include a SASE. And please, include a cover letter with your name and address. We have many articles without return addresses and

even a few without the authors' names! The No-SASE Ogres tell me that these are especially tasty.

Well, this has been a mouthful. We want your experience as a writer to be a pleasant one, not a devastating disappointment. We're not making any guarantees, but following these suggestions might bump your article out of the homely scene that began this column and into the pages of this magazine.

*Anne Brown*

## Get Our Guidelines!

If you want to write articles for us, get a copy of our writers' guidelines *first*. If you live in the United States or Canada, just send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Writers' Guidelines, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Writers' Guidelines, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. Our guidelines are free. Don't start your typewriter without them.

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books (at this writing) have appeared in the *Planet Builders* sequence (all Ballantine/Ivy, \$2.95) and author Robyn Tallis—actually a house name for several authors—continues to write credible teenage SE. The direction shifts with the sixth book, as ongoing puzzles are solved and subplots are tied up, but the seventh volume introduces enough new mysteries to keep the series afloat for some time. And in yet another vein, Terry Pratchett confirms his growing reputation with *Mort* (Signet, \$3.95) a Discworld novel whose title is literally a deadly pun. You'd think it would be impossible to write howling farce and authentic emotional power into the same book, but Pratchett can.

"Controversial" is likely to be the word for *Magic's Pawn* (DAW, \$3.95) Mercedes Lackey's newest novel and the first in a new Valdemar trilogy. It's a carefully crafted story about young love and coming of age, with eminently believable characters, none of which would be startling if it weren't for the hero's sexual orientation. But Lackey has emphatically resisted writing a sociopolitical tract, and the book also holds up as a magical adventure. (Actually, watching the debates over this one should be interesting. SF and fantasy writers have long written about female same-sex relationships with little comment. A male

pairing carries far more novelty and therefore more risk.)

Not surprisingly, Mary Stanton's *Piper at the Gate* (Baen, \$3.50) falls into the same trap as did its predecessor. Like *The Heavily Horse from the Outermost West*, this new novel takes a surprisingly anthropomorphic view of equestrian culture. Nowhere is this more telling than in the final line: "But in the concrete canyons of the Great Aisle, three shadows moved: El Arat and her daughters, starting to rebuild." Show me a horse that is both willing and able to build a barn, and I'll show you a very strange horse. Despite the testimonials, Stanton's premise just doesn't work.

*The Jewels of Elvish* (TSR, \$3.95) presents a trickier problem. Nancy Varian Berberick's new hovel has good intentions, but they don't quite come together. The tale is founded on ancient tensions between human and elvish societies, but supporting characters (including a major villain) are too ambiguously drawn, and late revelations undermine the validity of the premise. Berberick has done better work.

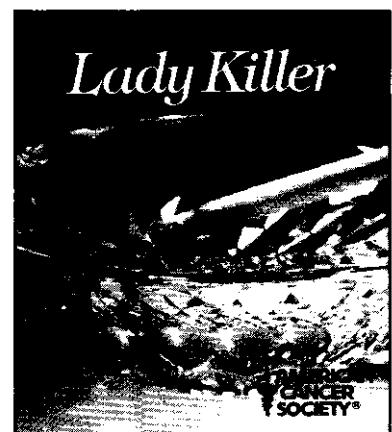
One more time: The mailing address for correspondence regarding this column has changed, as announced in issue #147. Suggestions, comments, and review copies

should be directed to:

John C. Bunnell  
12320 SW Center St. #32  
Beaverton OR 97005

I can't promise to answer all the letters or read all the books recommended (you should see the row of novels waiting on my windowsill!), but I do appreciate the comments. Thanks are especially due to Steve Marsh of Wichita Falls, Tex., who offered three pages of solid suggestions. (It's a bit late for *Cyteen*, but I'm keeping an eye on computer-game-inspired novels, and Glen Cook may well turn up in the next column.)

Ω



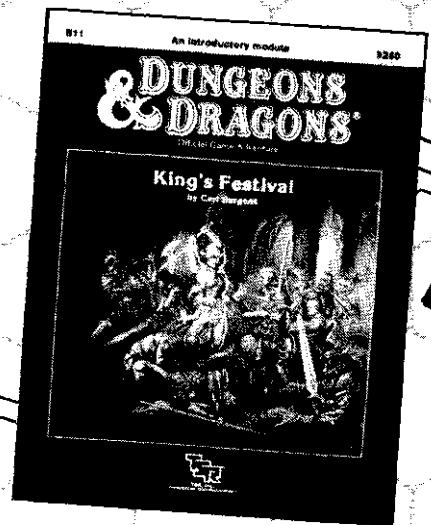
# Beginner's Luck!

A great learning adventure, *King's Festival* provides players and DMs with a valuable introduction to fantasy role-playing in the land of Karametkos.

Full of helpful hints for the players and DM, this module provides a full dose of excitement! Someone has "borrowed" a cleric, and without him, the fabled King's festival cannot go on.

Unfortunately, it looks like the orcs have him, and your characters must rescue him! Orcs, carrion crawlers, and villains challenge the characters' fighting skills, and a host of traps and puzzles confound their wits!

On sale now at your local toy, book, or hobby shop! Pick up your copy today!



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# THE ROLE OF Computers

©1989 by Hartley,  
Patricia, and Kirk Lesser

## Glued to the terminal by azure bonds

Starting with our next column, we will initiate Dragon Bytes—mini-reviews of games we'd like to present in more detail but lack the space to do so. This is our way of giving the publishers the recognition they deserve, and providing the gamer with additional information before making that all-critical game purchase.

### Reviews

#### Computer-game ratings

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

**Strategic Simulations, Inc.**  
675 Almanor Avenue  
Sunnyvale CA 94086-2901  
(408) 737-6800

**Curse of the Azure Bonds** \*\*\*\*\*  
PC/MS-DOS version \$49.95  
Commodore 64/128 version \$39.95

Earlier this year, we read one of the best FORGOTTEN REALMS™ fantasy adventure books published by TSR. It was *Azure Bonds*, by Kate Novak and Jeff Grubb. The adventure involves a heroine named Alias who, upon waking in an inn, discovers that strange blue sigils have been scribed onto her right arm. Only through an exciting adventure with Ruskettle the halfling bard, Akabar the mage, and Dragonbait the ever-so-quiet lizard man does she come to realize that these sigils are more than simple magics. Five evil masters are out to

make certain she learns the secret of the sigils only at the expense of her life.

SSI and TSR have produced *Curse of the Azure Bonds* (CAB) as the third in their line of computer-based fantasy role-playing adventures based on the AD&D® game and the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. This offering is superb both by itself and as a follow-up adventure. Our review team has logged over 120 hours of game play; you definitely won't get bored during this adventure.

We have played the PC/MS-DOS and C64/128 versions of this product and enjoyed both. The PC/MS-DOS version plays better than the C64/128 version because of the up-to-date technology employed in IBM micros and compatibles as compared to the older, 8-bit technology of the C64/128. With the PC/MS-DOS version, you can also copy all of the necessary files to a sub-directory on your hard disk. This speeds play and enables you to save many games in progress. This in no way minimizes the excellence of the game on the C64/128.

You needn't have played *Pool of Radiance* or *Hillsfar* to become embroiled in CAB. You are given the opportunity to create 5th-level (or better) characters at the start of the adventure. Or, you can import your *Hillsfar* characters directly into CAB. Neither method makes a difference in overall gameplay. You can even modify your computer-created character to more closely reflect a character you might be running in your AD&D campaign. Isn't it great when a software company understands what's important to gamers?

You start CAB by learning how to use the included translation wheel. This is the company's coded method of copy protection. If you fail to enter the appropriate letter after viewing two symbols on-

screen, you can't play. So, if you copy the game for someone else and he has no translation wheel, he can forget about playing the game.

The action takes place across a rather large portion of the Forgotten Realms. You start your adventure in Tilverton, then visit several other geographical areas. Your characters must become experienced, and thanks to the "save" feature that can be initiated while your party Encamps, you should be able to have all characters gain levels for survival. CAB is a difficult game for adventurers who don't look before they leap.

As with *Pool of Radiance*, CAB is a menu-driven adventure. By placing all of the available commands on the screen, you don't have to memorize a variety of commands in order to play. You simply enter the first letter of the menu item you wish to activate. For example, once you've created your new character, you can (A)dd the character to the party then Modify each character to more closely match one you run in campaigns. You can also View your character, and we highly advise that you make note of his statistics, possessions, spells, and so on. You're going to need this information throughout the game. You can also Remove a character from your party, Load a saved game, Save your current game, change the class of your Human character, and Begin adventuring.

When your six characters are loaded, you're ready to go. You can also add two NPCs, and you'll meet likely candidates throughout the adventure. One of the first operations your party should undertake is to buy all necessary equipment. Each character begins with 300 platinum pieces, so initial armament shouldn't be difficult.

Different screens use different menu structures. The commands given above are from the Party Creation Menu. Other menus include the Adventure Menu and Camp Menu, which include the following commands:

MOVE: You can move your character in any direction in 3-D. Each move takes one game minute to complete unless you have activated the SEARCH command to search every hex you enter for secret doors and the like. A search requires 10 game minutes.

CAST: This brings up the CAST menu for casting spells.

AREA: This provides an overhead view of the party's current locale.

ENCAMP: This calls up the CAMP menu, in which healing and resting take place.

MAGIC: Since you can memorize magic spells only while camped, this is an important activity to remember.

REST: This starts the healing or magic memorization process for a set number of hours and minutes, either automatically or as manually set by the player.

FIX: All characters with first-level clerical spells can memorize as many *cure light wounds* as they can and cast them on

wounded party members. They can then rememorize these spells and continue this process until everyone in the party is healed or an encounter occurs.

Speaking of encounters, you'll find plenty of them throughout CAB. When you meet the encounters, you may COMBAT, WAIT, FLEE, or ADVANCE/PARLAY. If you PARLAY, you can be haughty, sly, meek, nice, or abusive—whichever tone you believe will best serve the purposes of your group. However, make an error in judgment and you'll find yourself with some rather ticked-off creatures wanting to pulverize you.

Combat is intense if you decide to fight manually—i.e., if you decide how each character is going to act in battle, using sharpened cutlery, missile weapons, or spells. Ranged combat affects both sides of a skirmish, especially with bands of Fire Knives that make use of the short bow. The wise adventurer locates the missile-users and spell-casters of an opposing force and takes them out first!

You can also have the computer control the battle by selecting the QUICK option. Once combat has ended, if you've been successful, you can TAKE any of the fallen foes' possessions. These can range from better weapons and armor to money or jewelry. Keep in mind that not all treasure is desirable!

The Forgotten Realms is such a vast area that both outdoor and civilization adventuring take place. The latter adventuring is where you'll be engaged in shopping. There are inns, shops, halls, temples, and bars to visit. At temples, you can heal your party for a nominal charge. At inns, you can rest and recuperate. Training is available at halls, and bars are rather rowdy places full of gossip. A warning: One of your first encounters will be a brawl at a local tavern. Be certain your group's first activity is to purchase weapons and armor.

Magic is a critical feature of CAB. Not only can your spell-casters fling magical furies and healings throughout the game, but they can also SCRIBE new spells and gain spells as they advance in level. There are five levels of clerical spells and five levels of magic spells. The user's manual comes with complete appendices that not only delineate each spell and its effective range but also armor and weapons permitted by character class, experience-point levels, a weapons and armor list, and a glossary of terms.

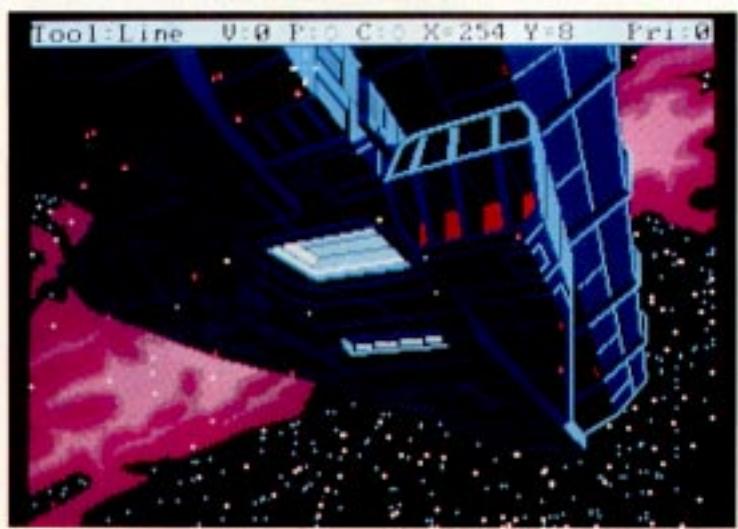
Both the user's manual and the Adventurer's Journal (reference guide) are extremely well written. Also of enormous help to us in our CAB adventure is the official game adventure, FRC2 *Curse of the Azure Bonds*, by Jeff Grubb and George MacDonald (catalog number 9239). This contains a complete AD&D 2nd Edition adventure for gamers. We found the maps and other contents invaluable in overcoming difficult situations in the computer game. You can also take your adventure from the computer into your campaign or



*Curse of the Azure Bonds:* This would be a bad time to be "abusive" on the C64/128 version.



*Curse of the Azure Bonds:* Three unpleasant opponents confront you on the PC/MS-DOS version.



*Space Quest III:* Roger Wilco's third journey across the universe.

The Atari  
Portable Color  
Entertainment  
System...



... and an action  
shot from  
one of its  
games.



#### F-19 Stealth Fighter:

The SPA's  
award-winning  
choice for best  
simulation.



vice versa. The paper adventure is exciting and excellent in its own right. By purchasing this module and the SSI game, you get two superb adventures for both your own personal gaming and your campaign with fellow gamers.

So, what's to be expected in CAB? More encounters than we've seen in almost any other adventure game. And all of these encounters advance the plot of the game. You decide whether to complete some of the quests or activities requested of your party. The choices are as diverse and important as in real life. There are characters playing charades, characters who wish to harm you, and characters who are benevolent. Many will offer to help, in their own inimical manner. Others will try to mislead you and can cause your death. You must deal with each situation in the same manner that you approach your AD&D or other FRP campaigns. But this time, you are the one making the decisions for the entire party. You'll find yourself truly concerned about each individual's well being. As the adventure continues, you'll find that tearing yourself away from CAB is the most difficult decision of all.

#### Sierra On-Line, Inc.

P.O. Box 485  
Coarsegold CA 93614  
(209) 683-4468

#### Space Quest III

PC/MS-DOS version \$59.95

Those two guys from Andromeda are back, and this time they packed better animation, graphics, and sound into their latest creation, *Space Quest III*. This game is a continuation of *Space Quest II*, but players need not to have finished the earlier games in order to enjoy the humor and fun here.

Sierra has made installation easy for *Space Quest III*; it accepts CGA, EGA, MCGA, VGA, Monochrome, and Hercules, and a variety of sound boards including AdLib and Roland synthesizer boards. The game can be installed onto backup disks or on the hard drive. User-friendly prompts help with the installation process.

When the adventure begins, Roger Wilco, intergalactic garbageman, is in suspended animation inside a space capsule after escaping from and destroying Sludge Vohaul's asteroid fortress. Roger awakens to find himself on a large ship. Roger can be moved using mouse, joystick, or keypad, and other physical actions can be ordered by typing the command on the keyboard. The animation and graphics for this game are incredible, but we were not able to listen to the soundtrack since our PC/MS-DOS computer does not have an AdLib or Roland sound board.

There are many different activities for the player, who must participate in action sequences such as playing a video game and fighting alien ships. Some scenes depart from Roger briefly in order to show the player what is happening else-

where. A face-to-face perspective appears whenever you encounter hostile creatures; this animation is superb.

This game has a few drawbacks. First, the game is on six 5.25" disks and two 3.5" disks. Making backup copies on floppy disks requires the patience of Job and the budget of the stealth bomber just to purchase the disks. A hard drive is by far the best method of backup. Second, even though you can earn 728 possible points, we finished it in four days with a score of 724 points. Not only is the game easy, but only one hint was needed. Mapping was not necessary, since you don't need to travel to many locations on the various planets.

One particular problem required that we contact Sierra through their modem-connected Bulletin Board System for assistance. We would like to compliment the way this electronic bulletin board is designed. It is easy to make the most of the on-line time to find the hints needed and log off without incurring huge long-distance telephone costs. This game is a lot of fun, and we recommend it to adventure game enthusiasts.

## News and new products

Absolute Entertainment ((201) 652-1227) has introduced its first game for the Nintendo Entertainment System. This game, called *A Boy and His Blob*, is an arcade style adventure/strategy game that recounts the story of a boy who befriends a young blob from a planet called Blobolonia. The blob came to Earth in search of a champion to help him save his planet. A shape-changing ability helps the adventurous duo in their adventures deep below a city on Earth and later on Blobolonia, where the evil king must be stopped in order to save the day. *A Boy and His Blob* will be available in the fourth quarter of 1989 for \$49.95.

Accolade ((408) 985-1700) has produced *Conspiracy: The Deadlock Files* for PC/MS-DOS micros. This game introduces over 500 digitized, television-quality photographs of New York City and is compatible with any kind of graphics card. You play an innocent bystander who has become entangled in a plot to take over the United States government. Accused of murder, you must scour New York to locate seven files that will expose the conspirators and prove your innocence. You'll be stalked by the FBI, CIA, and even the KGB for only \$49.95.

Another Accolade adventure is *The Third Courier*. Three secret couriers have been contracted to deliver NATO's defense plan to Moscow. Two couriers are dead, but the third is alive and has hidden the three pieces of the defense plan somewhere in East and West Berlin. As Moon-dancer, you must find the missing pieces and eventually confront the third courier before he can sell the plans to Moscow.

This is for PC/MS-DOS computers at \$49.95 and for the Apple IIgs for \$44.95.

*Don't Go Alone* is a game set in a house called Nostrodomo, that your grandfather swears is haunted. Unless you can prove that he's right and banish the Demon of all Demons within the house, Grandfather is destined to spend the rest of his days in St. Nicholson's home for the insane. From a roster of 16 different characters, your four-member team will enter the multi-level house to encounter more than 100 spirits, ghosts, and demons. Be careful: Each creature your team encounters affects individual team members differently. This game is for PC/MS-DOS computers for \$39.95.

Under Accolade's Avantage label comes *The Shoot 'Em Up Construction Kit*, for gamers who want to create a shoot-'em-up game better than any they've seen at their local software store. This kit provides all of the tools necessary for game designers to tailor any of the included games to their own specifications, or to start from scratch to create an entirely unique game. This is available for the C64/128 for \$14.95 and for the Commodore Amiga and Atari ST for \$19.95.

Another Avantage offering is *Harrier 7*. Enemy forces have captured seven key military bases in the Straits of Hormuz, cutting off the major oil supplies of the free world. As the pilot of a Harrier fighter jet, you must destroy those bases while avoiding low-flying enemy MiGs. An artillery supply of cannons, bombs, and heat-seeking missiles helps you deflect Exocet missiles and avoid ship-to-air fire from the enemy. This is for PC/MS-DOS computers and the C64/128 for \$14.95.

In Avantage's *Frightmare*, you have eight hours and 12 minutes to wake yourself from your worst nightmare. In this platform game of over 80 levels, you travel through seven dream states, each more horrifying than the last. With each level that you conquer, you'll gain six additional minutes in which to wake up. Courage is required to face the evil creatures trapped in your dream. Luckily, your passage may be made easier by helpful artifacts found along the winding paths. This game is for PC/MS-DOS computers and the C64/128 for \$14.95.

Mediagenic (Activision and Gamestar; (415) 329-0800) and the BattleTech Center (see ESP Corporation, later in this section) present *Mech Warrior*. Players climb into the cockpits of the future's most powerful war machines: the BattleMechs, 30'-tall combat robots. Gameplay takes place in a desperate age of continuous warfare, with five Successor States fighting for ultimate supremacy following the collapse of the Star League. Each player becomes a mercenary warrior who operates a 'Mech and takes on missions for any of the five States that pays for a job well done. Players must earn enough money on missions to eventually build a lance, a group of four 'Mechs. Missions can be long or short term and

can involve any of hundreds of planets fighting for power. Players prepare for each mission by reviewing their 'Mechs for damage, making repairs, and buying additional ammunition. *Mech Warrior* will be available this fall for PC/MS-DOS machines for \$49.95. The game was developed by FASA/ESP

Also from Mediagenic is *Cosmic Osmo*, the first animated fantasy exploration title for the Apple Macintosh family. The moment gamers enter one of the four worlds of *Cosmic Osmo*, they'll rocket to a universe where the only objective is to explore and discover all of the unusual characters and adventures along the way, for \$69.95.

*The Manhole*, winner of the 1988 SPA Excellence in Software Award for Best New Use of a Computer, will be available in August for MS-DOS computers. *The Manhole* is an interactive adventure for children of all ages. A new and improved version of a previous program, the MS-DOS version adds color to the game and includes all of the features of the original program. By developing a proprietary programming system, Activision has produced for MS-DOS systems the most elaborate scenes and characters ever to appear in *The Manhole*. In addition, music from the CD-ROM version is supported by standard PC hardware and add-on music equipment. The program requires 512K RAM and MS-DOS version 2.0 or above. EGA, VGA, MCGA, and Tandy 16-color monitor are supported. A hard disk is recommended. The program also supports the Roland MT32 and AdLib music add-on products. *The Manhole* will be offered in 3.5" and 5.25" disk formats in August.

Activision has also released *Ghostbusters II* and *Die Hard*. The entire Ghostbusters gang has returned to New York City to save it from new ghosts and ghouls. Something evil is brewing in the Museum of Modern Art that only the Ghostbusters can handle. Players can drive the famous Ectomobile through the streets of New York City, destroy a galley of ghosts, and uncover the ultimate ghoul enemy. The price is \$49.95, \$34.95, and \$39.95 for the IBM, C64/128, and Amiga versions, respectively. In the *Die Hard* game, players assume the role of John McClane, an off-duty New York police officer who finds himself thrown into a rescue mission. An international group of terrorists has seized Nakatomi Plaza on the night of a company Christmas party. The building is deserted except for John McClane, Mr. Takagi and his employees, and McClane's wife, Holly. The terrorists are demanding that Takagi release the code to the first seven locks of the high security vault. The game will be available later this year for PC/MS-DOS machines at price of \$49.95.

Addison-Wesley ((617) 944-3700) has released *The Crack of Doom*, the final chapter of a four-part series that takes you on an unforgettable trip through J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle-earth, fraught with deadly

spiders, evil trolls, and brutal orcs. *The Crack of Doom*, based on Book VI of *The Return of the King*, is no less daring than its predecessors. Like *The Shadows of Mordor* this newest addition to the Tolkien Software Adventure is a fast-paced, challenging game that demands clear-headed action. Dizzying mazes and creeping lava thwart the players, and around every corner waits Sauron, the Dark Lord. The game is available for the Apple II family and C64/128 at \$29.95 and for PC/MS-DOS and Apple Macintosh systems for \$39.95.

Atari ((408) 745-2000) has introduced the Atari Portable Color Entertainment System. The one-pound portable unit is slightly larger than a video cassette and includes a 3.5" color LCD monitor. The monitor displays graphics in up to 16 colors from a palette of 4,096 colors. A communication port built into the system allows multiplayer challenges with up to eight other units. The Atari Portable Color Entertainment System features four-channel sound, an eight-way joypad, two fire buttons, and five function buttons. The images on the screen can be rotated 180° so that both right- and left-handed players can test their skills. A headset jack is provided so players can enjoy the sounds without disturbing others. The current titles have been developed by Epyx, Inc. The game cards are as small as credit cards, and one game, *California Games*, is included with the system. The system will be available shortly and will require either 6 AA batteries; an AC adapter, or a cigarette-lighter adapter. The price will be \$149.95. The game cartridges will be available for \$34.99.

Capcom ((408) 727-0400) has announced *Code Name: Viper* for the Nintendo Entertainment System. The game lets you lead a secret U.S. mission to rescue citizens kidnapped by a Central American drug organization. Treachery and danger await players as they go undercover, infiltrate the drug lord's stronghold, and free the prisoners. The final, face-to-face confrontation with the covert operation's mastermind is full of surprises. The price is \$49.95.

*Vigilante* has been released by Data East ((408) 286-7074). In this one-player game, the vigilante goes in search of his beautiful girlfriend who has been captured by a gang of ruthless, lawless thugs. The game is now available for PC/MS-DOS, C64/128, Commodore Amiga, and Atari ST computers for \$29.95, \$24.95, \$44.95, and \$39.95, respectively.

ESP Corporation ((312) 243-5660) has announced an entirely new form of entertainment: a fantasy environment center featuring the world's first computer simulator. Called BattleTech Center, it recreates the environment of a star base, bringing the movie magic made popular by *Star Wars* to a place where consumers can participate in a futuristic world. With the BattleTech Center system, your screen is a

window on a fictional world and you pilot a jet, tank, or giant combat robot against other people. The game never repeats itself, and since people interact as a team, both team and personal skills are required. Everything is as it would be in an actual, real-time battle in the 31st century.

Each cockpit is equipped with three proprietary computers totalling over 32 MB of RAM memory. The computers communicate with the other cockpits via a local network. The cockpit's main screen can display 200 3-D objects, using a maximum of 64,000 colors on screen at any time. A BattleTech Center can change its fictional environment every 30 minutes by changing game software and video tapes, resulting in a new universe and vehicle type to master. The first BattleTech Center will open in Chicago this winter. The Chicago center will book reservations for teams or will match individuals to make up teams for each game sequence. A half-hour experience will be cost about as much as an evening of pool, bowling, or movie-going.

MicroProse Software, Inc. ((301) 667-1151) has received the award for Best Simulation at the Software Publishers Association (SPA) Awards Ceremony for *F-19 Stealth Fighter*. This is the first MicroProse title to earn an SPA award.

New World Computing, Inc. ((818) 785-0519) is planning several exciting new releases over the next few months. The first is *Nuke War*, an Amiga game (based on the NUCLEAR WAR™ card game from Flying Buffalo, Inc.) with digitized sound and exciting graphics. Next is an adventure game called *Hunter*. According to Jon Van Caneghem, president of New World Computing, this is a bounty-hunter fantasy game to be released in September for the Apple II family. The setting is medieval, and the game will require about 20 hours to finish. *Hunter* is replayable because of its nonredundant game cycle.

January 1990 will bring the release of the *Tunnels & Trolls* computer game from New World Computing, based on the TUNNELS & TROLLS™ role-playing game from Flying Buffalo, Inc. The scenario package was designed by Liz Danforth. New World Computing's Japanese affiliates are planning a simultaneous release for the Japanese version of that game, and New World Computing will release a PC/MS-DOS version and Apple II format simultaneously. In February, 1990, expect *The Awful Green Things from Outer Space*.

Sierra On-Line, Inc. ((209) 683-4468) will release several new games. The first is *Sorcerian*, a wide-ranging role-playing game from Japan with outstanding graphics and original music. There are 15 separate role-playing adventures, from searching for a lost talisman to battling the sinister Medusa's Neck. This game is for PC/MS-DOS, Atari ST, Commodore Amiga, Apple IIgs, and Macintosh computers.

Their second new offering is *Hero's Quest*, in which mountain forests and

glacier-fed streams provide the backdrop for a series of games in the mythical land of Spielburg. Design your own thief, magician, or swordsman, then use magic and daring to outwit the brigands who have kidnapped the baron's daughter. Save her and earn the title of Hero, then forge on to other adventures in a desert and the exotic lands of Silmaria. This game is for PC/MS-DOS, Atari ST, Commodore Amiga, Apple IIgs, and Macintosh machines.

Third on Sierra's new product list is *Code Name: Ice Man*. You must rescue an American ambassador from a group of fanatical terrorists. You pilot a futuristic nuclear attack submarine simulator as you guide this advanced stealth sub across the globe and into combat with enemy warships, going from Tahiti to the polar ice cap to North Africa.

*Manhunter: San Francisco* is the follow-up to Sierra's hugely popular *Manhunter: New York*. The San Francisco skyline is buried in strange mounds of dirt, and somewhere in the city is a scientist conducting genetic experiments on humans. His mistakes are crawling the streets and will pose a problem. Find out what the aliens have in store for the population of San Francisco.

*The Colonel's Request and Conquests of Camelot* are Sierra's 3-D animated adventure games. The first is by Roberta Williams, author of the *King's Quest* series. It is set on a plantation near New Orleans in the Roaring '20s and features a female lead character and an unusual supporting cast. You must find out who is killing her college friends. In the second game, you'll find yourself in search of the Holy Grail, from the highest rampart of Camelot to the Holy Land. King Arthur, Gwenhyver, Sir Launcelot, and Merlin are all involved.

These Sierra games are designed for PC/MS-DOS, Apple IIgs, Macintosh, Atari ST, and Commodore Amiga computers.

## Clue corner

### *Battletech* (Infocom)

1. Invest only in NASDIV—it pays best.
2. In the battle with the Jenners (7-8th), pick a Chameleon, wait for three turns, and run out of the base. It is possible; I've done it!
3. Don't worry about using lasers; an SR Missile is much better. Forget about bows and blades.
4. Get an experienced Tech at the first chance.
5. Train heavily in rifles and SMG before leaving the Citadel.
6. The captured agent Zeke is northeast of the Starport, in jail.
7. A mapper is really helpful.

El Hefe  
No address given

1. Take as many combat courses in the citadel as you can. If you don't, the opportunity may not come again for some time.

2. When you enter a store where the owner seems to be nervous, don't leave!

3. After picking up a new Crescent Hawk, allow the computer to do the fighting in the next battle.

Drew Higginbotham  
Middletown CT

#### **Heroes of the Lance (SSI)**

To recharge the Blue Crystal Staff, wait for an encounter with baby dragons. Then cast *deflect dragon's breath* and hold up the staff.

To enter the third level, look for holes in the floor and enter these sewer pipes. They will take you to the final dragon.

To kill the final dragon, simply throw the Blue Crystal Staff at him.

The ruins of Xak Tsaroth contain trolls. These folk aren't friendly, and they seem to enjoy causing suffering. Their restorative capabilities make them tough opponents. Even though Brightblade packs a wallop with his two-handed sword, he is somewhat slow, and despite Caramon's or Riverwind's strength, those trolls keep on coming at your party. If you want to defeat these terrors more easily, use a *web* spell before you attack with your sharp weapons.

The Lessers

[For the Commodore Amiga version.]

1. Don't waste *detect traps* spells. Use Riverwind's dexterity instead. Have him run through the caverns since he can avoid the traps when he is running.

2. When encountering a magic-using draconian, put Flint in front because most of the enemy's attacks will fly over his head. Then have Raistlin, in the fourth position, cast a *web* spell. Flint suffers only minimal damage, and he has the most hit points (42).

3. To defeat Khisanth the black dragon, first protect Goldmoon with her *deflect dragon breath* spell. Then, when you are in the dragon's lair, throw the staff. Be careful, because the structure falls in a line. Run to get the disks of Mishakal or you will be teleported before you take them.

4. Goldmoon's most important spells are *deflect dragon breath*, *cure light wounds*, and *cure critical wounds*. Raistlin's are *web*, *sleep*, and *magic missile*, which allow him to stop an enemy and inflict damage.

5. Conserve Tanis's, Riverwind's, and Tassehoff's range weapons. You will need them later.

Mark Bell  
No address given

#### **Hillsfar (SSI)**

In the Hillsfar Arena, I have found a simple pattern of attacks and blocks for defeating some opponents. Here are a few of these patterns:

Red Minotaur—block right, block special, [attack left (will miss) attack right]. Repeat the sequence in brackets until opponent is down.

Whiplash—block right, block left, block left, attack right (will miss), attack left (will hit), attack right (will hit). Repeat complete sequence.

Keller—block special, attack right (will miss), attack left twice (will hit twice), attack right three times (first one will miss). Repeat complete sequence.

Bone Breaker—block left, attack left four times (every other one will hit). Repeat complete sequence.

Bloods Bane—block left, block right, block left, block right, attack left, special attack. Repeat complete sequence.

Scarheart—special block, attack right (will miss), attack left (will hit), special block, attack right twice (second one will hit). Repeat complete sequence.

If you leave out any of the blocks or attacks (even the ones that miss), the pattern will not work properly. Also, do not wait between moves.

Alan Reiman  
South Burlington VT

When you enter Hillsfar, there are four quests. These are assigned randomly to each player when he or she enters the town. The color of your character's tunic denotes which quest he or she is currently involved in—blue is for the cleric, purple for the thief, red for the fighter, and yellow for the magic-user. Although you should pay attention to the gossip you hear, be advised that some of the data you'll receive is false.

To complete Fighter Quest #1, we suggest you talk to the master at the Fighter's Guild. By gaining prowess at the archery range, you'll advance two levels. You'll have to do this if you want to receive the second clue for this quest. Once you advance, talk to the guild master again. You must defeat the Red Minotaur in the arena to get the second clue. Again, talk to the Fighter's Guild master, then you'll be off to the cemetery. You'll find a hint in the first locked chest that refers to the jail at Hillsfar. Once you find that item in the jail, you'll also find some desirable documents. Then go back to the Fighter's Guild master and conclude your first fighter's quest.

The Lessers

#### **Legend of Blacksilver (Epyx)**

When rescuing Seravol, you'll need two or three forays into his chambers to complete this mini-quest. Also, a quick method to obtain free life elixirs is to talk to Seravol's assistant. He will give you a life elixir. Then exit his chamber. When you go back to talk to him again, he might give another one. Be certain to kill *all* of the orcs!

Getting temple relics is a little tricky. Both Eagle and Owl Temples have grails. However, Hawk Temple is rather unique—to find its "relic," speak to one of the inhabitants of the second "castle."

If you talk to a certain elf in the second castle, he will test you with three riddles. Before answering, think about what is

morally correct. You *must* answer his questions, because his prize is essential to your quest.

Try to get the mountain-climbing gear from the archive as soon as possible.

Mapping is essential, especially in the Labyrinth. Idols and Bags-o-Bones are both immune to Flame Tongue and Lightning Bolt.

Bob Tarantino  
Etobicoke, Ontario

#### **Questron (SSI)**

[Hints courtesy of SSI's product newsletter; Inside SSI.]

When you're in a town, it's a good idea to talk to the guards and bribe them. This will enable you to talk to those who are incarcerated. You can also destroy and rob the peasants, become adept at thievery in the shops, buy supplies that include magic where available, and play Black Jack (but *not* double for nothing). If you've got good strength, hit points, and weaponry, you might even want to take on some of the guards in combat.

You must also realize that the dungeons have to be entered in order. The reason is that an item you find in the bottom of the first dungeon will be required to gain access to the second dungeon, and so on. The first dungeon is the Mountain Catacombs, the second is the Dungeon of Death, and the third is Mantor's Mountain.

#### **Questron II (SSI)**

[Hints courtesy of SSI's product newsletter; Inside SSI.]

The Wand of Power/Silver Wand is in a chest in Rivercrest Tomb, which is beyond Morle or in the Inner Sanctum. The first quest reestablishes the link through space and time with Mesron in the Hall of Visions. Upon returning to the Hall with the wand for the first time, the player's rank becomes Adventurer. If used, the wand can have two or three charges to increase hit points.

The Evil Book of Magic is being created by Mantor and six mad sorcerers. To find them, you must enter through the eighth level of the Dungeon of Despair. Win the game by destroying the Evil Book of Magic through use of the Destruct Spell.

#### **Wasteland (Interplay)**

Give your characters Brawling skill rather than Knife Fighting or Pugilism. Brawling allows you to use a wide variety of weapons such as clubs, sledgehammers, chainsaws, and empty guns. You also get double experience for defeating a foe using Brawling.

There are many necessary skills that require an IQ of 19 or better: Electronics, Cyborg Tech, Energy Weapon, and others. Try gaining a 24 IQ by Vegas.

In Quartz, you can find Ugly's hideout directly northeast of the courthouse.

Look for the Bunny Master among his charges' favorite food.

Visit the waste pit in Needles, but bring

plenty of explosives.

A rope will get you across the sewage river in Vegas.

Finster's head, Cybor Tech skill, and the Mindlink equipment will get you a Secpass B if you use them properly.

Charles Raye  
Washington, D.C.

### The Beastie Awards

Thanks to all of you who continue to vote for your Beastie Award. We'd like to express a special thanks to Joe Slag of Duluth, Minnesota, who took the time to take up the pen and describe one of his group's many adventures in SSI's *Pool of Radiance*. Well done! For those of you who haven't completed your ballots yet, there is still time to do so. Simply write the name of your favorite computer game on a postcard, along with the system you play on, your name, and your address, and mail it to:

The Beastie Awards  
179 Pebble Place  
San Ramon CA 94583

The Beastie Awards will be tallied and announced in DRAGON issue #151! And don't forget to send in your game hints. There are thousands of gamers out there just waiting for your words of wisdom! Until next month, game on!

In a campaign that dates back that far, the overwhelming conflict is between Law and Chaos.

The main characters in our campaign have managed to stay together and *play* together for almost nine years, and among them are: several high-level, lawful-good fighters; a lawful-good cleric; some lawful-neutral magic-users; and a very powerful lawful-evil cleric. (These are not the only characters we use, but they make the point.) There is no reason for the evil cleric to refuse to help his companions; the Law vs. Chaos conflict is much more important and critical in this campaign than any petty differences caused by minor disagreements. Everyone [in our campaign] agrees that Law is preferred to Chaos; with such in mind, they have a common ideal that has made for many interesting adventures. On one hand, the lawful-good people may disagree with some of the cleric's methods, but by keeping the big picture in mind, they cooperate. On the other hand, the cleric may feel that he is surrounded by weak-minded fools who believe that the forces of Good are strong enough to survive the coming cataclysm, but who are helping him in his crusade against Chaos. All in all, our campaign has worked very well.

One letter mentioned that an evil cleric would be limited to the reversed versions of his spells. No way. There is no reason why an evil cleric of the lawful persuasion would be prevented from helping those who are helping him further his cause. The point I am trying to make is that evil is what you make it, and it certainly doesn't have to be destructive.

But what happens when a few people try to ruin everyone else's fun by choosing a chaotic-evil alignment? A good DM can do plenty to ensure that a minority of evil characters doesn't destroy the fun for the remainder of the party. It has been said before (and will be again): "Good is NOT stupid!" Why should good characters knowingly allow evil deeds in their midsts? Why shouldn't good characters be able to take measures to protect themselves? Evil characters should receive no special protection from the DM. Stanley Bundy wrote that those who played evil PCs could not be excluded [from a campaign]; rather, a DM who remains in charge of his world (as it should be) should have been able to keep a hold on the situation. The good characters did not have to stand idly by while the neutral character (by definition) strives for balance. If the evil faction had gained the upper hand, the neutral characters should take the side of the good faction. This applies either to a Law vs. Chaos orientation or to a Good vs. Evil campaign.

I would like to reiterate a point mentioned in the previous paragraph: A DM creates a world; that world has characters, places, and events, and the picture created by mixing these elements is called a campaign. Players can influence the development of the world with their actions, but ultimately it is the DM who controls the destiny of the campaign and answers to the players if he allows a few evil PCs to spoil the fun for everyone else. If this happens, then the DM has failed his prime responsibility.

I guess you could say that a DM's alignment must be lawful neutral. A DM should be strong enough to maintain order in his campaign, yet flexible enough to allow the characters to live and grow in their own directions. With eight of the nine alignments to choose from, characters should have enough selections to make them happy. If a player insists on being chaotic evil, simply point out to him the drawbacks of the alignment. If he persists, allow him to play the

character, but insist that he play the alignment as it was meant to be played. I think you will find that people who are really interested in role-playing will not stay with a chaotic-evil character for very long.

David G. Rathbun  
No address given

I have several comments in regard to Stanley Bundy's letter to "Forum" in issue #143. The reason the role-playing group collapsed was because the GMs ignored other evil characters. What of the wealthy lawful-evil merchant? Won't he feel threatened if people start dropping like flies? What of the government? Why aren't they after the evil characters for the murders they've committed? The way to handle this situation is to turn the tables on the evil characters. The above-mentioned merchant, along with others not known for kindness, could hire several high-level magic-users and assassins to begin systematically hunting down the evil characters. Meanwhile, the government puts out massive rewards for the capture or deaths of the evil PCs. If the campaign contains many high-level characters, nobility may feel threatened and hire the assassins' guild to eliminate the PCs.

Other threats will include the surviving good and neutral PCs. Paladins and clerics will go on holy quests to cleanse the evil from the area. If the dead PCs are resurrected, they will most certainly be out for revenge, as will the people who knew those dead PCs. When the evil PCs are surrounded by a couple thousand assassins, magic-users, and paladins, all prepared to eliminate them, they will realize what their evil ways have done to them.

This does not mean that evil characters cannot work in a campaign. It just means that the campaign cannot adapt to those characters. Evil PCs could work with Iuz or the Scarlet Brotherhood from the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting. Assassins can only assassinate with guild permission; so what will happen to rule breakers? Certainly, rule breakers and nonmembers cannot be allowed by the guild. Look at renegade magic-users and illusionists in Krynn [in DRAGONLANCE® campaigns]; they're considered threats and are persecuted. The best places for evil PCs to be are in free cities, such as Dyvers and Greyhawk on Oerth, where the guilds have some open power.

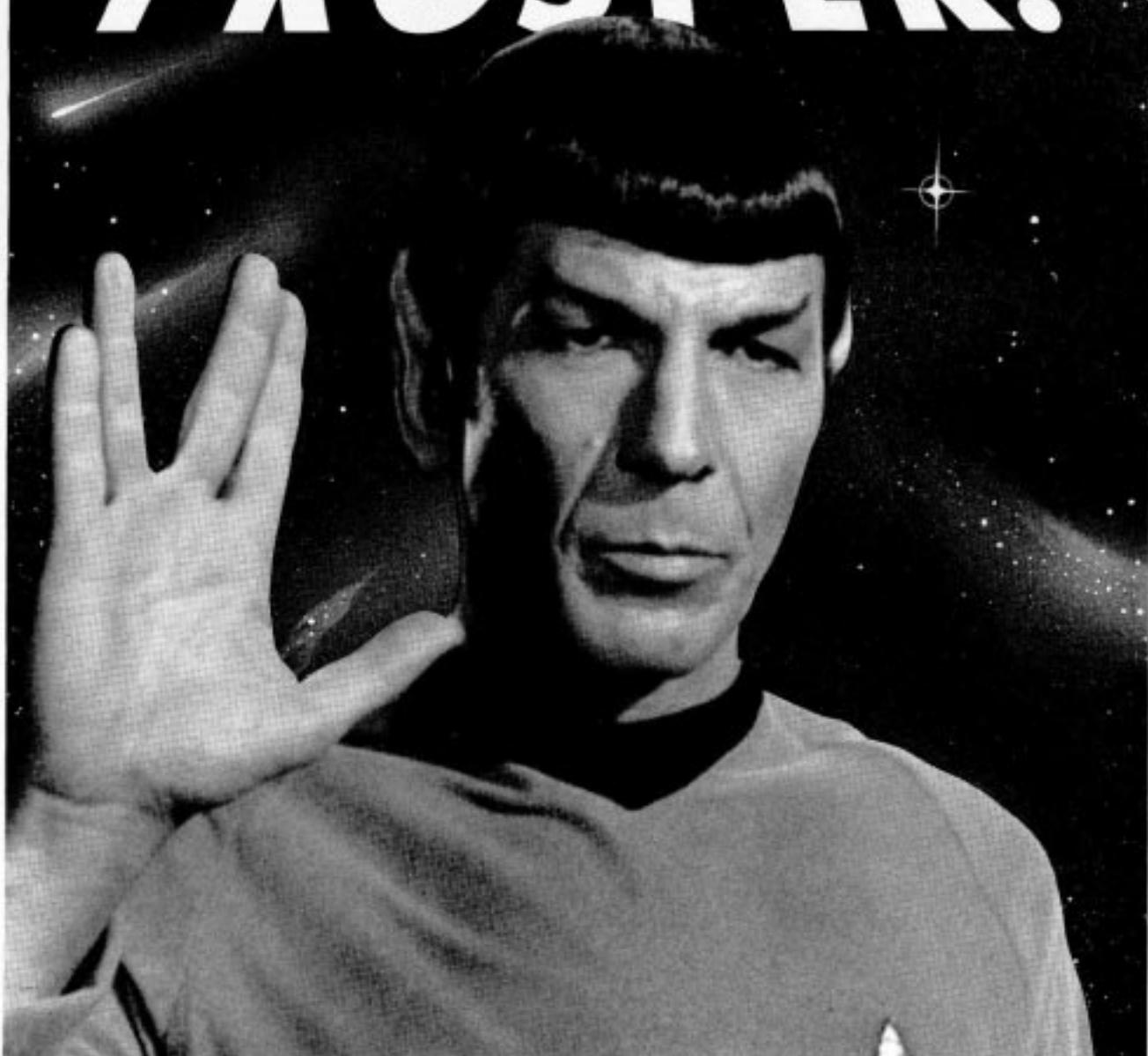
The main problem I have is coming up with new ideas for adventures. I have done so many variations of the evil marquis cambion Arch-Mage threatening the Prime Material plane that the players finish the game in one-third the time that it should normally take. Even when I detail each step of the game, they still finish it in record time. I did manage to get them interested in a 300-encounter game that utilized foils and various sorts of hidden golems (I thank the authors of those DRAGON articles).

I also surprised them with technological weaponry. I do not understand why technology is not allowed. I simply make hand-held grenades and missile launchers into variations of the *fireball* spell. Electrical discharge weapons are equivalent to *lightning bolt* and lasers are equivalent to the prismatic spells. Light sabers are basically technological versions of the *rod of lordly might*'s sword function. My players' PCs now avoid technology after a rather haphazard flight in a MiG-28.

Tarun Nagpal  
Oakbrook IL

This space contributed as a public service.

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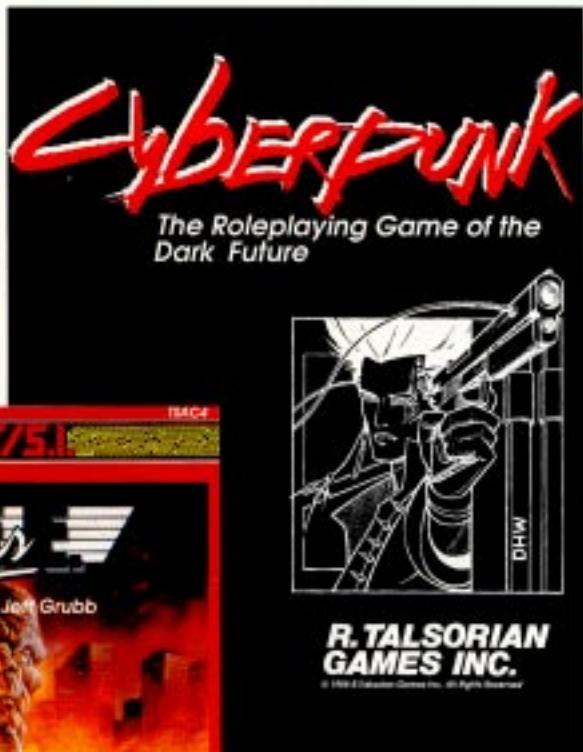
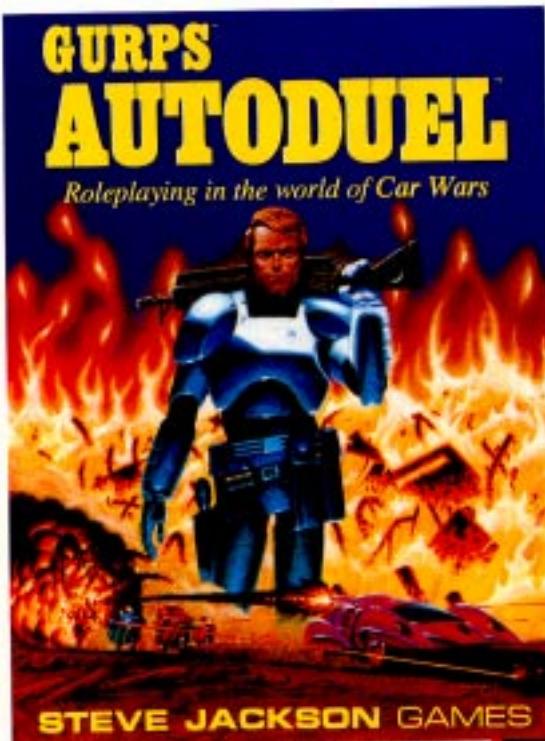
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# Role-playing Reviews

Future shock aftershocks

©1989 by Jim Bambra

Do you ever think about the future? Sure you do. You look forward to your next game or to the holidays, or you dread your rapidly approaching exams or filing your 1990 income tax returns. But have you ever contemplated what your life is

going to be like in 10, 20, or 40 years?

The world is changing quickly. Consider how technology has progressed in the last 20 years. Video recorders and personal computers are now common household items, transportation is faster than

ever before, and medical science is advancing in leaps and bounds. We seem to be riding a wave of unstoppable progress and improvement. But is it all for the best?

Urban areas are steadily increasing in size, leading to seemingly endless sprawls

of concrete and glass. Inner-city decay is faced by most western countries. Violent crimes increasing. War is a reality for many people across the globe, and large areas of the planet are being destroyed by pollution and rapacious production techniques. The Chernobyl disaster and the near-meltdown at Three Mile Island could be a taste of things to come.

Maybe it's all going to work out fine, and we'll reap the benefits of progress and enter a future full of promise. But it could, just as easily, go hideously wrong.

Games set in the near future can be classified as science fiction. But instead of dealing with remote and advanced settings we will never see, they present views of a future that may lie just around the corner. Of the games under review this month, two present a dark future where many aspects of life have suffered dramatically. R. Talsorian's CYBERPUNK game is set in A.D. 2013, and Steve Jackson Games' GURPS™ AUTODUEL™ game takes place in 2036. Both paint a picture of a grim world where human life is cheap and power is the final arbiter. On a more cheerful note, TSR's TOP SECRET/S.I.™ supplement F.R.E.E. Lancers is set in 1998. It's recognizably the same world, but advanced technology has had a profound effect on life as we know it. No major disaster has occurred here, but that's not to say that a disaster isn't waiting to happen.

Let's throw aside the fears, hit the fast-forward button, and zoom into the future.

## CYBERPUNK game

44-page Cyberpunk Handbook, 38-page Sourcebook, 20-page Combat Book, four pages of game aids, and two dice

R. Talsorian Games, Inc. \$20.00

Design: Mike Pondsmith

Additional material: Colin Fisk; Dave Friedland, and Will Moss

Illustrations: Sam Liu, Scott Ruggels, and T. K. Scott

Looking for a game about a bright future where technology has enabled humanity to advance into a new golden age? Then you'd better look somewhere else. The CYBERPUNK game offers a dark and depressing future in which daily survival is the primary concern of billions of people. This is a game in which violent death is not something people fear—they fatalistically expect to happen to them at any time.

**Background:** The CYBERPUNK game is not a licensed product. Instead, it draws on the Cyberpunk style of science fiction to create its own vision of the future. The world has undergone rapid and dramatic changes: The once-mighty nuclear powers of the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. have suffered severe setbacks; internal dissension and disastrous external wars have relegated them to the status of second-class states. Now, the Corporations hold the balance of world power. But they, too, have battled among themselves in two Corporate Wars.

The lives of billions of people have been disrupted and changed by widespread food blights. Governments have collapsed, and the Middle East has been turned into a radioactive wasteland. But technology continues to advance. Cybernetics is now a part of daily reality. With the development of synthetic muscle fibers, organic circuitry, advanced telecommunications, and designer drugs, the people of the future have either adapted to or suffered from technoshock: an inability to comprehend or live with the new technology. Psychosis is widespread, and violence has escalated.

Enter the Cyberpunks—the new-age warriors who live on the edge and wholeheartedly take on the attitudes and style vital to survival and success. Have your body redesigned and fitted with the latest in microcircuitry: plugs in your head that allow you to jack into the worldwide computer Net, razor-sharp steel claws that extend from your hands, and maybe cybernetic limbs or cyberoptic eyes. Thanks to the new technology, punk fashions have advanced in leaps and bounds. Want to look really weird or threatening, or just sport the latest in designer cool? You can do it. All you need in order to look like part of the future is money and contacts.

**Presentation:** The CYBERPUNK game gives you the future in a no-nonsense, gritty style. It's a game where the characters make the best of a bad situation, and style is paramount. It doesn't matter what you do as long as you do it with style. The rulebooks show you how to take on the "right" attitudes, but never do anything unless you mean it. You might sport the latest in high-tech body parts, but so do lots of other people, and they are just itching to show what they can do.

Essays and "newspaper reports" give vital insights into the world of 2013 and make assimilating the background easy and enjoyable. After reading the rulebooks, players and GMs are able to live life to the fullest in the streets of Night City.

In the CYBERPUNK game, players take on many roles: Rockerboys (characters who use their music and charisma to lead others in a fight against authority and corruption); Solos (highly trained assassins and soldiers with so much implanted hardware that it's hard to say where the cybernetics end and the person begins); Netrunners (computer cowboys who jack directly into the computer Net and hack their ways through the best defense programs money can buy); Techies (whiz kids who delight in building, fixing, and modifying all items of technology); Medias (the newsmen of the future, who are always alert for the big stories to embarrass the Corporations and boost their own ratings); Cops (lawmen who risk their lives against the cybernetically enhanced street gangs); Corporates (junior executives who'll do anything to advance further up the Corporation ladder); Fixers (black-market racketeers who'll fix you up with weapons, drugs, information or people); and No-

mads (highway warriors who lost their homes long ago and who now drift along the roads of the world). There's something for everyone here, and each character comes with its own special ability: Interfaces for Netrunners to allow them to survive in the alternate reality of the computer Net; enhanced combat abilities for Solos; family ties for Nomads; and other neat benefits that give their own distinct advantages.

The standard of physical and graphic presentation is quite high but suffers from numerous typos. The game is relatively complete. One problem is the lack of an encounter table, which is mentioned in the rules but failed to make it into any of the books. This is not too disastrous since GMs who feel the need for one can easily create their own.

**Game systems:** The character-creation system is easy to use and free flowing. Players receive a random number of character points that are used to buy the attributes vital to survival. Once this has been done, the character is run through the Lifepath Section of the rules to determine starting skills and personal background. This process turns out skilled characters and interesting backgrounds in which the character's love life and personal relationships are developed. At the end of this section, you could find yourself grieving for a lover gunned down in a firefight, hiding from the law for crimes you didn't commit, or possessing useful connections with powerful NPC groups. It's similar to the character-generation rules of GDW's TRAVELLER® and MEGA-TRAVELLER™ games, but with lots of interesting role-playing hooks. I recommend it to those who like romance and characters with interesting backgrounds.

The rules have so far created the people, but to be a true Cyberpunk, you need hardware: cyberoptics, cyberaudio, interface plugs that let you plug into and directly control other types of hardware, boosterware that enhances your reflexes or senses, artificial limbs, and chipware. Chipware items are cybernetic devices that plug into your body, giving you access to various skills that you otherwise lack. Plug a chip into your hand, and you can gain additional skills. Sounds good, eh? But all of this comes at a price. The more cybernetics you have, the more your humanity suffers, making you susceptible to violent outbursts and turning you into a machine. Go too far down this road, and you end up as a psychotic NPC run by the GM. Before you finally give up your humanity, you can have some of your hardware removed and undergo therapy to restore you to normal—at least, as normal as you can be in the world of the CYBERPUNK game. Some people handle cybernetics better than others, but it's all a matter of luck, as the effect of each cybernetic enhancement is rated according to its Humanity Cost.

The combat system is true to the feel of

the rest of the game: It'll get your character killed very fast. Forget heroics. This is a game of survival; ambush and stealthy attacks are the key to success. Combat is fast and bloody. One shot can put you on the deck; two shots and you're most likely dead or so close to it that immediate medical attention is required. The combat system suffers from relying a bit too much on table checking, but once players are familiar with the system, it should run smoothly.

Then there is the Net—a vast web of telecommunications that links all the world's computers together. It's the domain of the Netrunner characters and is a highly dangerous playground. The CYBERPUNK game really shines here. The Net is laid out as a series of maps that PCs can plug into. The Net comprises computer signals and data, but (by employing an interface) Netrunners can visualize it as shapes and sounds. Plug in with a Dungeon interface and the Net appears as a classic dungeon setting complete with monsters, doors, and treasures in the form of data. Use a Tronnic interface and it appears as a black, star-strewn void filled with glowing lights, abstract shapes, and chromium-plated entities. The Mega City interface places you in 1930s downtown San Francisco, where the defense programs appear as gangsters, cops, and other period characters.

Netrunners, no matter which interface they use, zip down the phone lines into the computers that hold restricted information. By employing various programs, they can crack their way through the programs defending the data. Skilled Netrunners get into the Net, access information, then jack out. Unskilled or unlucky ones get their brains fried in the process.

The setup of the Net is brilliantly and evocatively described in game terms. Sample maps are liberally supplied to ease players and GMs into Netrunning adventures. Top marks for originality and design are earned here.

**Adventures:** The CYBERPUNK game comes with only one adventure, presented as a short story rather than as a "traditional" adventure. Game statistics, maps, hints, and tips appear in sidebars, making it a simple job to adapt the story into an adventure for group play. It's a fast-moving and potentially lethal adventure. As such, it captures the flavor of the rules and setting nicely. Live fast, die hard.

**Evaluation:** Fans of the Cyberpunk style of science fiction will like this game. It does a superb job of capturing the flavor and atmosphere of a disturbingly plausible and realistic future. The development and presentation of the Net is stunning and can be used as a basis for countless numbers of adventures. No other game has succeeded in portraying computer hacking in such a vibrant and absorbing way. Whether the CYBERPUNK game will have a wide appeal is a different matter. Gamers brought up on heroic-fantasy or shiny

science-fiction games may find the gritty realism of the CYBERPUNK game not to their liking. Death comes easily, and the difference between right and wrong is so blurred that it's really a matter of personal taste; no one is going to tell you the right thing to do. To decide if this is the game for you, read a few of the Cyberpunk style novels. If you like them, don't waste any time—rush out and buy the CYBERPUNK game. Welcome to life on the edge. The CYBERPUNK game is available from R. Talsorian Games, Inc., P.O. Box 7356, Berkeley CA 94707 (its new address).

#### **GURPS AUTODUEL™ game**

GURPS® game supplement

84-page book

Steve Jackson Games, Inc. \$11.95,

*Design:* Aaron Allston and Scott Haring

*Additional material:* Steve Jackson and Allen Varney

*Editing:* W. G. Armintrout

*Cover illustration:* Denis Loubet

*Interior illustrations:* Mark Angeli, Angela

Bostick, Graham Chaffee, Norman

Doering, C. Bradford Gorby, Denis

Loubet, Dan Panosian, Kim Strombo,

Michael Surbrook, Jason Waltrip, John

Waltrip, and George "Speed" Webber

Since its appearance in 1981, the CAR WARS® game has been fully supported by Steve Jackson Games, Inc. New cars, new and improved rules, new dueling settings, more background materials, and a regular quarterly magazine have combined to make the CAR WARS game the best-supported board game ever produced. Even TSR published a series of CAR WARS Adventure Gamebooks a few years ago.

With such a strong commitment to the CAR WARS game, it comes as no surprise that the game world has been given the full GURPS treatment in the GURPS AUTODUEL game, produced in 1986. Considering that the CAR WARS game deals with death and destruction on the highways of the future, one could assume that the GURPS AUTODUEL game merely converts the CAR WARS game into GURPS game mechanics. You wouldn't be wrong in your assumption, but the GURPS AUTODUEL game also contains vast chunks of solid role-playing background and flavor. It presents a picture of a world that, like the one in the CYBERPUNK game, is detailed and highly plausible. Before examining the game's merits, a brief look at the CAR WARS game is in order.

In the CAR WARS game, players battle one another along the highways of the future. Each character takes one or more heavily armed and armored cars and proceeds to blow the opposition off the road. The game is fast and furious; vehicles are rated in terms of speed, handling, weapons, and armor. It's not all freeway madness; organized arenas have been established where autoduellists can compete for cash prizes in a kind of upgunned demolition derby. Towns and truck stops

are also featured as settings in CAR WARS accessories, making for a wide diversity in battle zones and available game boards. The CAR WARS game is lots of fun and allows players to indulge in all manner of violent actions. But can it really be converted into a satisfying role-playing game?

The answer is a resounding yes! The GURPS AUTODUEL game makes the transition and makes it with style. The CAR WARS rules cross over smoothly, and the background is ideally suited to a wide range of adventures.

**Background:** Briefly, things have gone very wrong in the future. In the 1990s, the world's oil supply started to dry up. The Middle East was rocked by terrorism and war. The U.S. government tried to hold onto its own dwindling oil supplies by nationalizing the oil fields. The oil-producing states of Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma seceded from the Union in protest. Meanwhile, death sports were gaining in popularity, but this was a minor consideration compared to the Grain Blight. In 2012, a deadly virus destroyed grain supplies and crops around the world. Countries that had not experienced famines for centuries suddenly found themselves faced with great civil unrest. To make matters worse, nuclear weapons were launched by the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. Advances in satellite defenses minimized the effects of the exchange, and the superpowers gave up their conflict and turned to their own domestic problems.

Now, in 2036, the world has stabilized and improved slightly but is still a far cry from the Golden Age of the 1980s. Cities have collapsed, large areas of farmland have been turned into deserts, and unemployment is at an all-time high. Watching TV has become the great escape for millions of people.

**Presentation:** The overall presentation is very good. Like other GURPS products, the GURPS AUTODUEL game is written in a clear style and contains numerous examples that demonstrate how the rules work. A comprehensive index is included, and sidebars are used effectively to add marginal notes and elaborate on items covered in the main text. As a bonus, the GURPS AUTODUEL game comes with a sheet of cardboard figures and vehicles for staging tabletop actions. Two of the vehicles are in 25mm scale; the rest are in the smaller CAR WARS game scale.

**Game systems:** The GURPS Basic Set has recently undergone a revision (set the "Short and sweet" section that follows), which means that some of the older GURPS supplements, including the GURPS AUTODUEL game, are now slightly out of tune with the new rules. This is not a great problem, as the only real area of disparity is in the rules for range weapons. A second edition of the GURPS AUTODUEL game incorporating these changes will be available in 1990. For those of you who cannot wait, a comparison of the weapons in the new GURPS Basic Set with

those in the GURPS AUTODUEL game will give you a good starting point for making your own conversions.

Where the GURPS AUTODUEL game adds to the GURPS Basic Set, it does so convincingly. CAR WARS game characters can be converted, and all existing CAR WARS game accessories can be used in the GURPS AUTODUEL game. If you're not a CAR WARS game player, no problem; the rules are equally suited to more freeform styles of play. With these rules, you can design your own vehicles, carry out dangerous high-speed maneuvers, and fire at the opposition with blazing weapons.

But you were looking for a role-playing game, not mechanics for indulging in mass death, right? You'll find it here as well. The world of 2035 has more to offer than a steady diet of violence. In addition to a wide variety of highway warriors, players can take on the roles of militiamen, cops, rangers, sportscasters, private investigators, cameramen, and any other occupation you might care to design.

Copious hints and tips show how to set up and get the best out of any campaign setting. They pay special attention to getting the characters to find adventures outside their cars and interact with the locals on a more meaningful level. Background material also brings the setting alive and expands it beyond the world of death-dealing machines.

**Adventures:** The first adventure is really just an excuse to get characters into their cars to blast away at each other. The adventure involves the characters in an Amateur Night competition at a local dueling arena. As well as being a shoot 'em up adventure, it comes with a well-conceived NPC opponent and familiarizes players with the details of car combat.

The next scenario pits the adventurers against a gang of mercenaries who are terrorizing a town. Thought and deduction are important here, making for an interesting mixture of action and detective work. This is followed by some adventure outlines for the GM to develop into full role-playing sessions.

**Evaluation:** The GURPS AUTODUEL game presents an interesting and detailed setting for near-future role-playing. The well-presented background and the emphasis on role-playing rather than combat makes the GURPS AUTODUEL game much more than it first appears. As an added bonus, the GURPS AUTODUEL game has received consistently good support since its appearance (see the "Short and sweet" section). As a near-future setting, the GURPS AUTODUEL game scores high. Its game mechanics are detailed and mesh nicely with the GURPS Basic Set. If you love the CAR WARS game, you can't afford to be without this. If you're not a fan of CAR WARS, don't let its initial appearance deceive you; this game can be played without the characters ever coming anywhere near an armed car. CAR WARS and GURPS game accessories are available

from Steve Jackson Games, Inc., P.O. Box 18957, Austin TX 78760-8957.

#### *F.R.E.E. Lancers*

TOP SECRET/S.I.<sup>TM</sup> supplement  
96-page perfect-bound book  
TSR, Inc. \$8.95

*Design:* Jeff Grubb

*Editing:* Scott Bowles and Warren Spector

*Vehicle rules:* Doug Niles and Warren

Spector

*Cover illustration:* Jeff Easley

*Interior illustrations:* Jim Holloway and Jeff Butler

The TOP SECRET/S.I. game's main campaign deals with modern-day secret agents of the Orion organization who battle against the evil forces of the Web organization. The game boasts slick game mechanics and fast action in the James Bond mold. But the TOP SECRET/S.I. game is also readily adaptable to other gaming genres. To date, it has featured real-world espionage activities in the two *Covert Operations Source Books*, modern antiterrorist missions in the *Commando* sourcebook, and the world of 1930s pulps in the *AGENT 13<sup>TM</sup> Sourcebook*. With the appearance of the *F.R.E.E. Lancers* sourcebook, the TOP SECRET/S.I. game shifts 10 years into the future.

**Background:** The year is 1998, and superpowered humans are an established part of the world. Many of these new supercharacters have been recruited by the F.R.E.E. Lancer organization to help in its battle against crime and espionage in the Chicago area. The name "F.R.E.E. Lancers" stands for Fast Reaction Experimental Espionage Branch, and the organization was originally part of Orion until the mid-1980s. The F.R.E.E. Lancer organization recruits characters who possess metabilities—special powers that set them apart from the rest of humanity.

In 1998, science has progressed to performing transplants with ease, and cyborging and the creation of artificial intelligences are becoming part of everyday life. Social and political changes are also apparent; superpower rivalries are being overtaken by those of the big corporations and other powerful groups.

**Presentation:** The rules build on those in the TOP SECRET/S.I. boxed set, making superpowers an integral part of the game and adding futuristic devices and weapons. The layout and textual presentation are clean, and the format is similar to the boxed set. Finding your way through the book is easy.

Inside the *F.R.E.E. Lancers* book, you'll find the F.R.E.E. Lancers history, detailed and interesting descriptions of major NPCs (who may be used as player characters, if desired), and new rules for futuristic campaigns.

**Game systems:** The system is a logical extension of the original game rules, but it's been pumped up to accommodate the powers of supercharacters. In the original

rules, the upper limits of characters' attributes were restricted. Now, character attributes can easily surpass 100 points. This improvement in attributes is primarily a product of the characters' metabilities. A character may possess savant powers that allow her to use skills at very high levels, or she may have the ability to go berserk in combat, gaining high skill levels by doing so. She could have improved senses, increased toughness, or even exhibit poltergeist, telekinetic, telepathic, or pyrokinetic powers. Even more bizarre are the undocumented and theoretical metabilities. With these, a character can move at high speed, heal others by touch, gain empathetic powers, regenerate physical damage, gain the power of flight, or use other powers not normally seen outside the pages of comic books and superhero role-playing games.

These powers do not come without a price, however. Disadvantages associated with them add a necessary measure of game balance, but they also supply some neat role-playing touches. The more powerful a character's particular metability, the worse the disadvantage that is associated with it. For example, a character with enhanced strength may find that he is more vulnerable to damage, looks inhuman in some way, or is able to employ his enhanced strength for only a short period each day. A character with the armor metability may find that he's unable to move at all while the armor is in effect or that he needs to concentrate in order to gain the benefits of the armor.

Additional rules include new advantages and disadvantages for use in a F.R.E.E. Lancers campaign and a reprint of the improved vehicle-combat rules from the *High Stakes Gamble* boxed campaign set.

**Adventures:** The *F.R.E.E. Lancers* supplement contains five mini-adventures suitable for a F.R.E.E. Lancers group operating in the Chicago area. These adventures can be used with the F.R.E.E. Lancers NPCs detailed in the supplement or can be used with PCs designed by the players. The miniaventures can also be easily converted to suit any other near-future setting.

A good feature of these adventures is that they have an influence on future events and on the reputation of the F.R.E.E. Lancers organization. As representatives of the organization, PCs have a duty to present themselves in the best possible light to the public and the government of Chicago. PCs who blow a mission might find that their standing within the organization could suffer as a consequence. If they mess up too many missions, the future of the F.R.E.E. Lancers organization could be in doubt.

**Evaluation:** The *F.R.E.E. Lancers* supplement is a very worthwhile and entertaining addition to the TOP SECRET/S.I. game. The world it presents bears a great resemblance to our present world but with sufficient changes to make it interest-

ing. For those of you looking for a near-future setting that is neither depressing nor grim, the *F.R.E.E. Lancers* supplement is an ideal choice. It can even be played without the addition of the new metability powers, if you want to maintain a high level of realism in your games. I recommend it highly to anyone who is already playing the TOP SECRET/S.I. game. For those of you don't play the TOP SECRET/S.I. game, compare the background of the *F.R.E.E. Lancers* supplement with the other two game backgrounds discussed this month, and decide which one best fits your own vision of the future.

#### **Short and sweet**

GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition, and GURPS Players' Book, by Steve Jackson. Steve Jackson Games, Inc., \$22.50. Now in its third incarnation, the GURPS Basic Set is better than ever. For those of you who are not familiar with the GURPS game, the name stands for Generic Universal Role-Playing System. It's a game designed to be used with an unlimited variety of backgrounds and settings; to its credit, the GURPS game does so admirably.

Regular readers of the "Role-playing Reviews" column will have noticed that I have very eclectic tastes when it comes to role-playing games; my enthusiasm for role-playing is only matched by the way I move from genre to genre. In the past, this has meant learning new rules for each new setting; with the GURPS game, I can cheerfully flit from one to another with only minimal effort. But the GURPS game is more than just a vehicle for role-playing eclecticism; it's also a very well-designed system.

Previous editions of the GURPS Basic Set have tended to concentrate on the medieval aspects of gaming. The third edition of the GURPS Basic Set corrects this bias. You'll find rules for psionics, magic, modern (and not-so-modern) firearms, science-fiction weapons, and one of the best man-to-man combat systems for gaming ever published.

GURPS game characters take a long time

to create, but the effort is worth it. Using the vast number of skills, advantages, and disadvantages available, it's possible to create any kind of character you could wish for. These characters come with lots of built-in character traits, so it's very easy to get a handle on any character you design. The game mechanics are also easy to use, making for smooth play, fast action, and a minimum of fuss. The Advanced Combat Rules are very detailed and may not be to everyone's taste. But that's not a great problem, as you can easily use the more abstract Basic Combat Rules, if combat does not play a major part in your adventures.

Another great feature of the GURPS game is the large number of world books now available. A few years ago, the GURPS game was less appealing since support for it was very thin. That situation has now been rectified [see Ken Ralston's comments in the *GURPS Magic* game review in issue #147, page 61]. World books are currently available for role-playing based on medieval Japan, science fiction, Alan Dean Foster's Humanx series, Robert Adams's Horseclans series, swashbucklers, horror, fantasy magic, the Ice Age, and firearm technology.

The GURPS Players' Book is a straight reprint of the character-generation and skill rules from the Basic Set. You do not need this book in order to play the GURPS game, since it contains nothing new. However, it does ease play by minimizing the number of times the rulebook has to change hands during play, and it allows players to design characters without having to steal the GM's book.

*AADA Road Atlas Survival Guides, Volumes 1-6*, by lots of folks. Steve Jackson Games, Inc., \$8.50 each. Five of these 64-page booklets provide details on the states of the North American continent; Volume Four details Australia. They all follow a similar format with essays on local road conditions, organizations, customs, and other background.

Each sourcebook comes with a detailed

miniadventure for the GURPS AUTODUEL game and various miniscenarios for use with that game and with the CAR WARS game. The miniadventures are of a consistently high standard and are aimed at getting players out of their duelling vehicles. I particularly liked the mini-adventure in *Volume Two: The West Coast*, because it requires a hefty amount of detective work. If you like the GURPS AUTODUEL game, you'll find these books to be an excellent source of background material and ideas.

TS3 *Orion Rising*, by lots of people. TSR, Inc., \$8.95. This book takes a detailed look at the 12 Orion offices across the world. Each office is described in terms of its key personnel, location (including background information on the city of residence), and its sphere of operations. This book is an invaluable reference for TOP SECRET/S.I. game Administrators. As an added bonus, each office location has an accompanying adventure. All in all, TOP SECRET/S.I. game Administrators or GMs of other spy/spionage games will find plenty in *Orion Rising* to ease their workload and provide them with inspiration.

DARK FUTURE game, by Richard Halliwell. Games Workshop, \$47.95 (U.S.)/£19.99 (U.K.) Although sold as a 3-D role-playing game, don't be fooled; it's a board game with no provisions for full-fledged role-playing. Sure, you can take on the roles of the drivers, but following this criterion, TSR's MERTWIG'S MAZE™ gamefolio or West End Games' JUNTA game could be sold as role-playing games. Instead, you get a game that bears more than a passing resemblance to the CAR WARS game; you speed down highways in armed and armored cars attacking other cars on the road.

Where the DARK FUTURE game scores high is in its presentation; the physical components are impressive, and the rulebooks are well illustrated. You get 14 sections of laminated track, four model plastic cars (with interchangeable weapons), four plastic bikes, and various markers. Fans of games with high-quality components won't be disappointed; gamers looking for a fast-playing game of highway combat will find the DARK FUTURE game worthy of recommendation. This product is available from: Games Workshop US, 3431 C Benson Avenue, Baltimore MD 21227 (its new address). In the U.K., contact: Games Workshop, Chewton Street, Hilltop, Eastwood, Nottingham, England NG16 3HY. Ω

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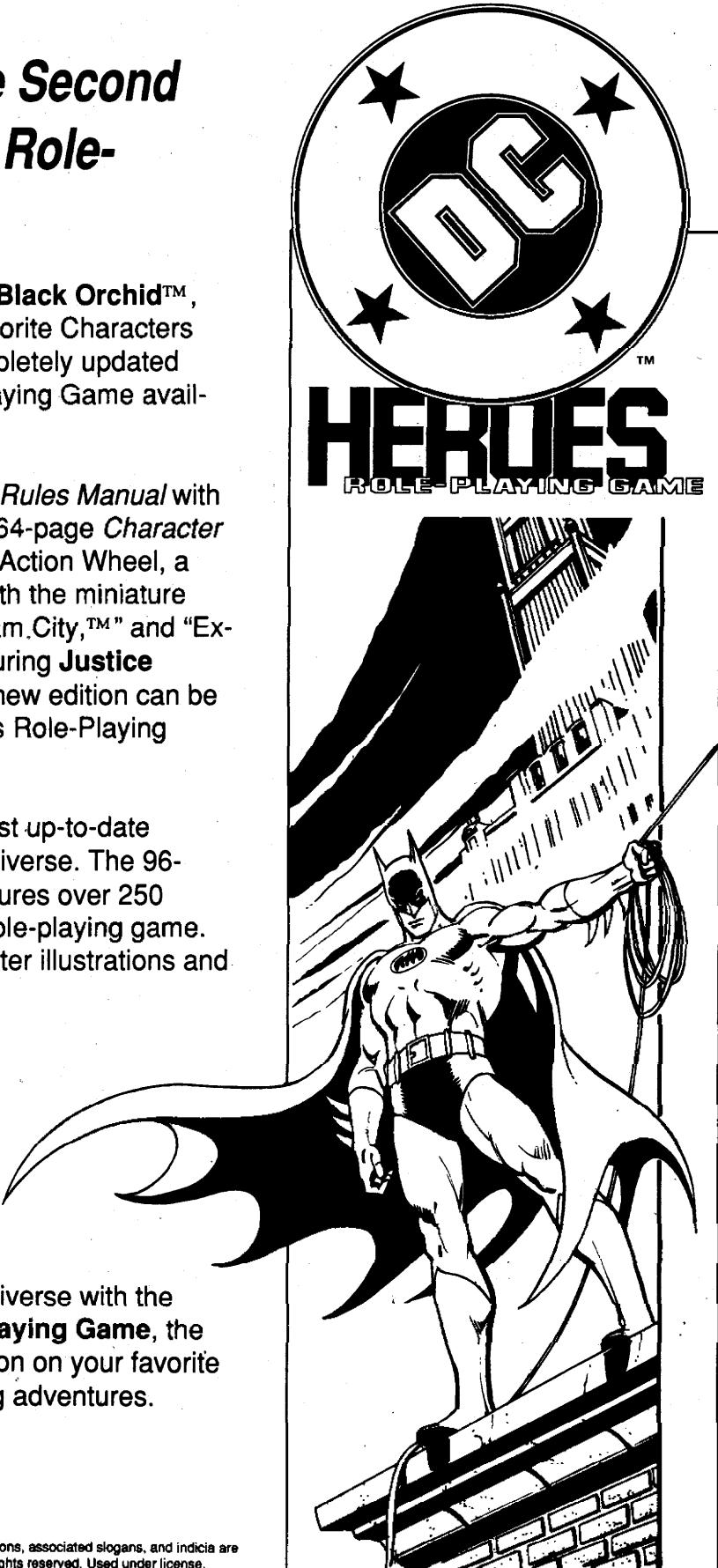
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# Through the Looking Glass

Elven kings, micromarines, and  
football fantasies

©1989 by Robert Bigelow

Photographs by Ral Partha

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures releases a new line of fantasy figures: the Swan Ship (at left) and the Elven Kings (at right).

**L**ately, I have received a lot of letters complaining about companies that have failed to answer mail sent by readers or that have told readers that the companies do not sell directly to customers. Readers then write to me to say that they feel slighted because we mentioned these names and addresses as points of contact with such companies.

In all such cases, except where noted otherwise, you should first check with your local hobby shop for the figures you want. Frequently, the store has the merchandise or is awaiting shipment from its distributor. If the store does not stock the merchandise you're looking for, ask if someone can order it. Be prepared to give the item's name, stock number, description, and address of the manufacturer. Many merchants have access to as many as 10 distributors that stock thousands of items. In most cases, the retailer can order from the distributor or directly from the manufacturer.

If a store cannot or will not order merchandise for you, or if you are not near a hobby shop, write to the manufacturer. Frequently, the company will have a list of dealers from whom you can purchase the product. Several retail stores, including my own, have a mail-order option for customers who live too far from a hobby shop. Try contacting a store that is still within driving distance. Most stores will put merchandise aside for a customer to pick up or will order merchandise so you can make one trip.

## Reviews

### Miniature-figure ratings

*	Poor
**	Below average
***	Average
****	Above average
*****	Excellent

### Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

P.O. Box 37024  
Cincinnati OH 45222-0024

Three Elven Kings  
Swan Ship

\*\*\*\*\* 1/2  
\*\*\*\*\*

Last year, at the GEN CON®/ORIGIN™ 88 game fair, a very successful and competent sculptor introduced a new miniatures company and a new line of collector fig-



ures. The company was Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures, and the sculptor/designer was Tom Meier. The new line is a set of adventurer characters, nearly all very well made. This year, Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures produced new entries for sale at the GEN CON '89 game fair; these are reviewed here.

The Elven Kings set contains three figures on hexagonal bases. Each of the figures is 25mm scale and was poured as two parts: the figure and the base. Pouring the figure separately allows for better detail on the figures, eliminating almost all mold lines or sprue marks. The figures have then been joined to the bases using the foot pins and a minute application of heat. The bases are all smooth, making it easy to apply grass or ground cover to them.

The first figure could pass as an Aztec elf, except for his full-length chain mail that extends to the tops of his boots. The figure's boots have pointed toes and intricate designs. The chain mail is covered almost completely by a poncholike garment, reminiscent of Aztec robes, with embroidered hems and realistic folds. His right hand, covered by a gauntlet, grips a large spear. This figure also has a two-handed sword strapped to his back and a metal-covered wooden shield (board details are visible). The herald on the shield is of a live tree. The figure's head is covered by a combination helmet/crown topped with ostrich plumes. The face is partially hidden by the poncho, but is definitely elven and almost looks Oriental. The only bad point on this sculpture is the

sprue from the spear to the foot. However, this sprue does keep the spear stiff and intact, and is forgiven because it serves a useful function.

The second king is a typical fighter. From the tips of his pointed, articulated metal boots to the top of his helm, this figure spells War. He wears scale mail that extends down to the ground. Both arms are enclosed in chain mail and soft gauntlets. His left hand holds a full body shield with a starburst herald; the inside of the shield is wooden. The figure's right hand holds an ornate battle axe that looks more decorative than useful. The axe has markings that could be runes, so it may be a magical weapon. The figure's full-length cloak hangs straight from his shoulders to just short of his feet, and it is embroidered at the hems in a simple stitch. Chain mail surrounds his scowling face. His helm bears the same star emblem as the shield, as well as a pair of elaborate feathered wings, bent as if taking off. However, these wings are a liability, since they are so detailed that they are easily bent even when handled gently.

The third figure is my personal favorite — a ruling wood elf (or so I imagine). His boots rise to just below his knees and appear to be deer- or calfskin with laces and ornate tops. His breeches are of scale mail or possibly very rough quilting. He is

wearing a kilt and tunic with wide sleeves and embroidery. His cape is of a rough textured fabric — most likely an animal skin — that hangs in thick, heavy folds to his knees. He wears gauntlets of soft leather, and his right hand clasps a spear. An animal tail hangs, as a talisman would, from the shaft behind the spear point. This elf's face is narrow, with the high cheekbones usually equated with elves. The eyes are extremely intricate and appear to be looking at you even before being painted. His hair flows, with a crown braided into the locks. Most interesting of all, if you look closely (try a magnifying glass), the figure has a Kirk Douglas chin!

These figures are excellent, but have two major drawbacks. The first is the price. At over \$3.00 per figure, these are not player characters. The second problem is that some of the detail is lost when the figures are handled frequently. These two factors lead me to discourage any buyer who is not a collector, yet heartily recommend them to collectors. The price is \$9.50 for the set, plus \$1.50 postage and handling (Ohio residents must add 5.5% sales tax).

Another Thunderbolt Mountain release is the Swan Ship. This is one miniature that you can almost see soaring across the sky like a huge bird. The craft is a magical joining of a giant swan and a royal sailboat to provide the perfect transportation for the princess who rides aboard it. And fine transportation it is!

The boat is a beautifully produced, 14-piece assembly. The model dimensions are large, with a height of just over 5½". The model comes with a large ground stand with a wire supporting the ship. The boat itself is a good model of a small, old-fashioned sailboat, 3" long and just over 1" wide. The boat appears to have been built plank by plank with overlaid boards. Two bands of either wood or metal, one at the waterline and one below the gunwale, are thickly covered with runes. The bow has an exaggerated keel with a sea horse carving that extends the length of the boat to the rudder. Built into the stern is a finely detailed, wooden throne. The back of this studded chair is detailed wood, and the front is made of padded cushions with extra padding on the arms. The sail is molded as if it were caught in the wind and stretching forth to pull the ship. The mast includes the lines that would hold the sail to the mast. There is even a grommet at the end of the sail for attaching a line to the ship!

Extending from the stern of the craft are

two large legs with webbed feet. These legs have muscles that closely resemble those of a real swan. This model is extremely realistic, including veins and ruffling in the feathers. The wing spread is 7½". It is incredibly lifelike!

The female figure included with the model is dressed as a typical medieval princess with long flowing robes, head-gear, puffed sleeves, and a chain belt with a large, jeweled clasp. Surprisingly, she has a stern look on her face. Her hand holds an intricately formed rose.

There are only a few things wrong with this model, but some of the problems are inherent in any miniature this detailed and this large. You must be careful when you handle the model, as the webbed feet and pennants fall off easily. And the stand and wire holder detract from the beauty of the miniature, but the liberal application of fluffed cotton to the stand to give the appearance of clouds should eliminate this problem.

I highly recommend this miniature as a favored addition to a collection. The care taken in molding this miniature sets it apart from typical miniatures. As Mike Weaver of Ral Partha said, it can make a dandy elf command ship and bomber by removing the female and using an elven mage (*fireballs* from above!) and a unit commander or trumpeter instead. Just don't go back to the castle if you wreck

the princess's boat! The price is \$29.95, plus \$1.50 shipping and handling (Ohio residents must add 5.5% sales tax).

## Scotia Micro Models

c/o SIMTAC, Inc.  
20 Attawan Road  
Niantic CT 06357

## SFI-2 Marines with Pulse Rifles

In DRAGON® issue #147, this column reviewed Games Workshop's ADEPTUS TITANICUS game. This game heralded Games Workshop's entry into 1/300 scale, already used by Steve Jackson Games' OGRE® and GEV®, FASA's BATTLETECH® (at about 6½ mm), and old SJG CAR WARS® figures, as well as scores of other miniatures rules. The problem with this scale is that there have been many vehicles available for it, but not enough good, well-detailed infantrymen to work with these vehicles.

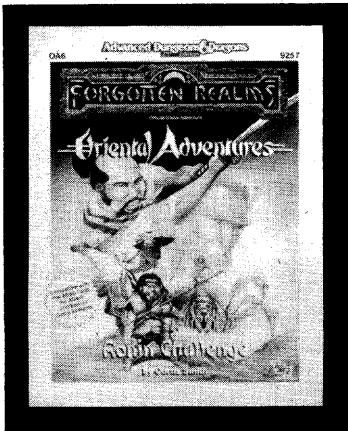
Enter Scotia Micro Models. This line consists of a large number of useful science-fiction vehicles accompanied by a line of infantry or foot soldiers, with over eight different packs in all.

The Marines with Pulse Rifles pack consists of 10 strips with five figures per strip. These strips are made of individual figure bases joined together and require a knife or cutting pliers to separate the figures. All 50 figures in this pack are posed standing, with legs together, a rifle slung over each figure's right shoulder, and with each left arm outstretched. Observation under a magnifying glass shows each base to be slightly different, probably a result of casting rather than planning. Each figure wears boots with thick soles, probably to represent magnetic shoes. The boots rise to mid-shin. The figures are clad in rigid armor that bulges slightly at the seams and features pockets on arms. The backs of the uniforms have what seem to be either breathing apparatuses or backpacks. The figures' heads are covered by helmets.

These figures have some flaws. Very close examination shows many flat surfaces. The detail is fair but not as good as that on some soldiers molded in 1/300th scale for American Civil War, microarmor, or Napoleonics games. Of the 50 figures, five were missing rifle barrels, but these figures could easily be used as squad officers. The most distressing problem was that 10 figures had small cracks at the ankles. When I attempted to straighten them, they broke. I notified SimTac about this problem, and the company said that it had not had a problem with this before but would look into it. Yet even this problem had its good points, as the broken figures now serve as crew members for my vehicles in BATTLETECH game units.

I recommend these figures, even with the slight problems, for anyone who plays BATTLETECH, OGRE/GEV, or ADEPTUS TITANICUS games. The figures fit in well with the 'Mech figures and provide alter-

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Photographs by Mark Hammegren



Two characters from Games Workshop's Star Players pack: the human and the cyborg orc.

native opponents and units in all these games for only a small cash outlay. Outlaw marine units and mercenary 'Mech infantry units are just two examples of units that can be created. The price is \$3.00 per pack. Readers in Europe may wish to write to the manufacturer for locations of nearby outlets.

#### **Games Workshop Ltd.**

Chewton Street  
Hilltop, Eastwood, Nottingham  
England NG16 3HY

#### **Games Workshop US**

3431 C Benson Avenue  
Baltimore MD 21227

#### **BB109 Star Players**

\*\*\*\*  
For those of you not familiar with Games Workshop's BLOOD BOWL game, it is a parody of American football, played by fantasy teams. These teams have the dual purpose of moving a "pigskin" (still squealing) to get touchdowns and eliminating all opposing teams. Teams include orcs, humans, elves, dwarves, and more. The rules even allow for leagues, and teams can be played right into the playoffs—if you have a team left!

This package contains five star players (one for each team), including a dwarf, human, cyborg orc, snotling, and a misplaced halfling. Each figure has a round, slotted base and is ready for action.

Most heavily armed is the dwarf. The figure wears quilted armor with extra

flaps in strategic places, and he has boots, gloves, and a belt. You realize just how serious he is about Blood Bowl when you look at his right shoulder and see the proton cannon he's holding. Close observation of his helmet reveals the sighting device alongside his humorously large nose. The power pack is on his back.

Next in line for nastiness is the cyborg orc. The cyborg looks gruesome, with his legs encased in hinged shielding. The power pack on his waist leads to his legs and to the controls on his belt. His boots have small nubs on the toes that appear to be for braking; bionic legs are hard to stop. The upper half of his body is organic except for his left eye. He is also wearing shoulder pads (made of plates with spikes) and spiked bracelets.

The human character looks strange. He is dressed in a simple uniform with extra padding on the left arm, right leg, and groin. He carries a helmet under his left arm and wears studded gauntlets but

wears little other armor. The muscle detail is slightly exaggerated.

The least armored creature in this pack is the snotling. Slightly smaller than a halfling, he is wearing nothing but boondockers, a loincloth, and a spiked bracelet on his right arm. He has his arms raised as if to block or give a "high five" sign. His grin almost demands that you knock his teeth down his throat. The rules make him a formidable opponent because of his speed and dexterity.

A most unlikely sight is the halfling, wearing armored shoulder pads with spikes and mailed gauntlets. This sharply contrasts with his bare, hairy feet. Even with his helmet, he doesn't appear to be a fierce competitor.

This set is truly interesting and fun, but is only useful for BLOOD BOWL games. The figures should offer lots of laughs after watching a normal football game. The price is \$7.95 per pack.

#### **Ral Partha Enterprises**

5938 Carthage Court  
Cincinnati OH 45212

The All-American Line:  
12-000 Fighters

\*\*\*\*

Set 12-000 consists of twelve different fighters, each with a shield and extra weapon that can be attached to the figure. These packs have no secondary identification, so the figures have been assigned random numbers in order to cover each individually. Each figure is also rated on its own merits.

Fighter #1 is partially armored and holds a large bastard sword over his head. He also has a large breastplate and a buckle bearing symbols. Separate items include a short sword and a plain shield (\* \* \* \*).

Fighter #2 is clad in chain mail that reaches from his shoulders to his knees,



Two snotlings, ready for a good game of Blood Bowl.

The halfling and the cannon-toting dwarf from the Star Players pack.

supple boots and trousers, and a fur cape draped about his shoulders. He is armed with a bow in his right hand, a medium sword in his left hand, and a quiver of arrows on his back. The figure also has a square wooden shield and a short sword that came as separate parts (\* \* \* \*).

Fighter #3 is truly strange. He is wearing a winged jester's mask attached to a short helm, and shoulder and arm protectors with flexible joints. He is also wearing chain mail covered with flexible bands with "face" designs. He wears slippers of a sort and is armed with a long sword. Extra parts are a buckler and a knife. This man's enemies probably laugh themselves to death (\* \* \* \*).

Fighter #4 looks like a Spanish conquistador. Although he is carrying a large axe and has a bare arm for the attachment of a shield (included with the set), he would probably be more comfortable carrying a rifle. The figure wears the typical sloping helmet and baggy pantaloons typical of early Spanish explorers. His chest and arms are bare except for a shoulder plate on the right arm. Holes exist to mount the accompanying curved sword and shield. He even has a bushy mustache (\* \* \* \* 1/2).

Fighter #5 is a barbarian dressed in skins and a breastplate. He is yelling at the sky and holds a short sword and a long sword over his head. His flowing hair covers most of his back (\* \* \* \*).

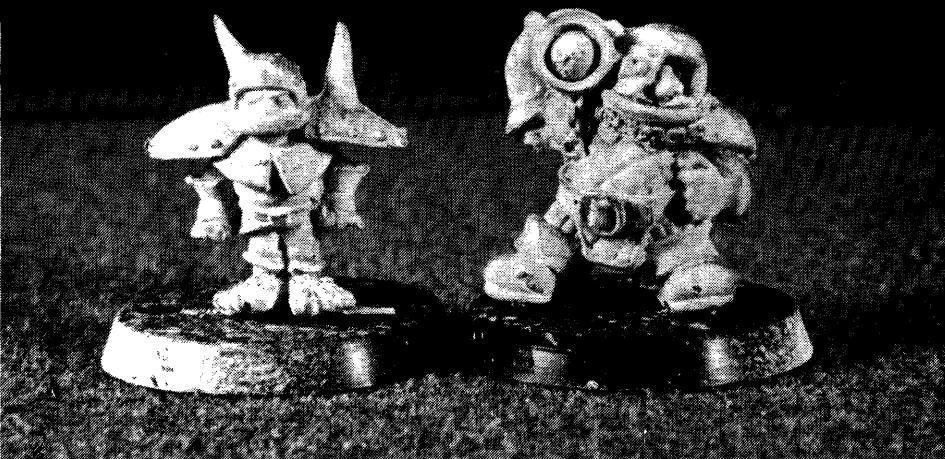
Fighter #6 is a basic fighter wearing a riveted helmet and a full suit of plate mail. He is holding a two-handed sword over his head. An extra shield is in the package. The helmet visor is down (\* \* \* \*).

Fighter #7 is wearing plate mail but no helm. This warrior appears to be an old fighter on his last battle. He is carrying a medium axe and comes with a sword and shield in the pack. The figure is bald (\* \* \* \*).

Fighter #8 wears overlapping plate. He is carrying a bastard sword, and the pack includes a simple riveted shield and dagger. His cape is full length, with fur trim at the collar. His helmet leaves just the main facial features exposed, and the figure wears a slightly surprised look (\* \* \* \*).

Fighter #9 appears to be Greek. His helmet is of split design with a mane and a full-length cloth cape. This figure deviates from Greek models by wearing trousers and a chain shirt. He is equipped with a long sword and a long wooden shield (\* \* \* 1/2).

Fighter #10 is similar to Fighter #6, except his armor is more angular and his



helmet is horned. He has a round, metal-sheathed, wooden shield, as well as a dagger and a huge hammer (\* \* \* \*).

Fighter #11 is partially armored, with knee-high boots, loincloth, belt, and pouch. The figure wears a full helm adorned with feathers and eye slits. He is armed with a wicked-looking cutlass. Included with him is a full-length, teardrop-shaped shield with a stag herald (\* \* \* 1/2).

Fighter #12 resembles a guard with a strangely shaped pole axe and quilted armor. His helmet is similar to a Norman helmet, and he wears a full-length cape. There is also a sword and shield in the package (\* \* \* 1/2).

This is a package deal that is difficult to rate; a lot depends on how your dealer sells the figures. If he sells them individually, you should have no problems. If he

sells the figures in sets-of-12 only, you're going to get some mediocre figures with the good. While all the casting is good, some of the figures have limited appeal. These figures are priced at \$1.25 each or \$15.00 for the set.

If you have any questions or suggestions concerning this column, contact: Robert Bigelow, c/o Friends' Hobby Shop, 1411 Washington Street, Waukegan IL 60085; or call: (312) 336-0790. My hours are: Monday and Wednesday-Friday, 2 P.M. to 10 P.M., and Saturday-Sunday 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. Ω

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Fighters #4 and #5 from Ral Partha's All-American Line.

by Thomas M. Kane

# Time Marches On

An RPG campaign creates  
its own history as you play



The golden apple was destined "for the fairest," so naturally Hera, Aphrodite, and Athena each wanted it. They took their dispute to the King of Gods, but Zeus certainly did not care to infuriate two goddesses by choosing a third. He suggested that a mortal decide upon the fairest. So the three goddesses appeared before Paris, prince of Troy, and he agreed to choose the most beautiful of them all. Hera and Athena promised him great victories for the apple, but Aphrodite whispered that she could make Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world, his wife. Paris found that last offer irresistible and so chose the goddess of Love. Unfortunately, Helen already had a husband . . . a Greek husband. When Paris carried Helen away, he laid the groundwork for the adventures of Aeneas, Ulysses, Achilles, Hector, and many others.

Role-playing campaigns need some squabble in the background to make the PCs take up their adventures. This mechanism must be vast enough so that even the mightiest hero cannot upset it, and a quarrel between gods solves this problem perfectly, though there are many other equally useful theme-generators. Writers of myths and novels need to keep their adventures flowing along just as much as gamers do, and DMs can study the techniques used in novels for their own gaming purposes.

The theme of a campaign does not need to intrude on every adventure that takes place within it, but the theme should always be available to start a new adventure. The Greek heroes knew nothing about Paris' choice among the goddesses, but that event continued to influence all events that followed. When Helen's husband nearly resolved the struggle in single combat with Paris, Aphrodite saved her benefactor's life. After that, even the Trojans conceded that Paris had lost, and both sides agreed to a peaceful settlement. But once again, a goddess kept the story (and the war) from ending. Athena sent a Trojan arrow into Greek ranks, for she wanted to see Troy properly punished for Paris' insult to her—and the Trojan War came to life once more.

One famous fantasy novel that covers great spans of time is J. R. R. Tolkien's *Silmarillion*. In it, the elf Feanor and his sons swear an oath to recover the stolen Silmarils, defying their laws, their kin, and the gods themselves to pursue these gems. Melkor, the evil spirit who took the jewels, retires to his vast fortress in Middle-earth and gradually expands his influence across the world. During the millenia this story covers, countless minor events become great sagas: Beren falls in love with Luthien; Turin goes to exile in Doriath; Maeglin leaves his father. As separate as these tales are, the Silmarils energize each story and give it importance.

Even after the Silmarils meet their fates, several protagonists remain to create *The*

*Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. One can fully enjoy these novels and know nothing about *The Silmarillion*. Still, as Tolkien devotees will attest, almost everything in those latter books can be traced to earlier events. Galadriel, who seems to be a tranquil helper who offers the protagonists refuge, had actually fled to Middle-earth with the Silmarils and was the last rebel elf to be forgiven. The dreadful Balrog was only one remnant of a great host like him. The more internal history a fantasy world includes, the more chances it offers for new stories to evolve. PCs might wonder how the Balrog managed to survive in his underground prison. More frightening to consider is the question: What else might have survived with him?

You do not need divine intervention to maintain adventures for centuries of game time. Edward Rutherfurd's recent novel, *Sarum*, follows the history of England from the Ice Age to modern times without losing the tale's central coherence. Obviously, few characters in the book last for more than one chapter. Since there is no single quest which spans this much time, Mr. Rutherfurd depends on less obvious devices to link his stories, and family dynasties fit the bill. We see how the descendants of pillaging raiders become cultured nobility, the "rightful" owners of land that their ancestors seized. Then a warrior loses his estate, and his heirs live in increasing poverty as English class lines develop, until one member of the family becomes rich selling wool. Geographical landmarks such as Stonehenge and the Dover cliffs also last throughout the book. It is easier to design a campaign around a major quest (as in *The Silmarillion*) or battle of the gods (as in the *The Iliad*), but subtle backgrounds can seem much more realistic.

Fantasy games provide special opportunities to contrast major trends and particular stories. The nonhuman races of a fantasy world have varying lifespans which give them different attitudes and information. Tolkien used this idea frequently in his books. For example, Elrond Half-elven, in *The Lord of the Rings*, recalled centuries of the One Ring's past, showing the reader how history led to the events at hand. In role-playing games, the DM might wish to give PCs of different races slightly different adventure introductions to play upon what each race knows about the events within the game campaign.

By emphasizing such memories, the DM can create interesting conflicts between PCs of different races. The concerns of a long-lived race seem irrelevant to other peoples, such as in *The Lord of the Rings*, wherein human lords of Gondor wanted to keep the mighty One Ring and defend all Middle-earth with it, but elves remembered well how the other Rings had corrupted their previous owners. The racial tensions shown on the Racial Preferences

Table (AD&D® 1st Edition *Players Handbook*, page 18) need not be mere prejudice. Different views of time give characters more interesting ways in which to argue.

A complex fictional history not only inspires adventures but can start whole new campaigns. If your players enjoy using many different characters, or want to retire their old PCs for new ones, you can explore a fresh facet of the same milieu: The new characters can live in what was previously the past or future of the current campaign. These new characters might have completely different sympathies from their ancestors or their descendants. *Sarum* often presents both sides of a story by presenting characters from different factions. One chapter tells how the Celts struggle against Rome. In the next part of the book, readers see the heirs and children of those Romans being destroyed by Saxons. This sort of role-reversal can be especially interesting if a few long-lived characters play in both campaigns and remember things that NPC historians forget. Reusing campaigns not only saves work, but it means that the players already know the background and geography of the game world.

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# CONVENTION CALENDAR

## Convention Calendar Policies

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

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short, succinct, and under 150 words long.

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

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

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

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

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

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

♦ indicates an Australian convention.

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## AMERICAN GAMES FAIR, September 8-10

Communications, Conferences & Exhibitions Ltd. presents this premier event, rescheduled from earlier this year. This show will be held at the Roosevelt Hotel (45th Street and Madison Avenue). This event is the first consumer and trade show for the games industry to be held in the New York area. A program of special events will run the duration of the fair. Highlights include: prize-winning RPGA™ Network AD&D® game tournaments and RPGA Network PARANOIA® tournaments; an open-gaming area; daily game demonstrations and presentations; seminars for game enthusiasts, manufacturers, retailers, and designers; an exhibit of original and poster art; and a "Best of Show" game competition. All categories of games are included within the scope of the show. Hours for this fair are as follows: Friday, trade only, 9:30 A.M. to 1 P.M.; Friday, trade and public, 1 P.M. to 10 P.M.; Saturday, trade and public, 9:30 A.M. to 10 P.M.; and Sunday, trade and public, 9:30 A.M. to 6 P.M. Write to: CCE Ltd., 122 East 42nd Street, Suite 1121, New York NY 10168; or call: (212) 867-5159, (212) 682-6232 (fax), or 425442 MEDIA (Telex).

## AUSTIN FANFAIR, September 8-9

Over 60 dealers' tables, 15 guests, and over 700 convention-goers will be in attendance for this fantasy festival, which will be held at the Marriott North, I-30 at 290. Features will include a video room, Japanimation, programming, gaming, an open con suite, a masquerade, an art show, filksinging, and more. Admission will be \$5 for Saturday, \$4 for Sunday, or \$6 for both days, and will be available at the door only. Write to: Bulldog Productions, P.O. Box 820488, Dallas TX 75382; or call: (214) 349-3367.

## MIRACLECON '89, September 9

This convention, originally scheduled in Sharon, Pa., has been cancelled.

## VALLEY CON 14, September 9-10

This science-fiction, fantasy, and comics convention will be held at the Days Inn Conference Center at 600 30th Street South in Moorhead, Minn. Activities will include video rooms, an art show and auction, a hucksters' room, panels and demonstrations, a banquet, and many gaming events, including STAR TREK®, RUNEQUEST®, ROLEMASTER®, SPACEMASTER®, STAR WARS®, DR. WHO®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, and AD&D® games. Send an SASE to: VALLEY CON 14, P.O. Box 7202, Fargo ND 58108; or call: (701) 232-1954.

## KETTERING GAME CONVENTION

### September 10

This convention, sponsored by Kettering Parks and Recreation Division, will be held at the Rose E. Miller Recreation center, 3201 N. Marshall, Kettering, Ohio. Games will include CIRCUS MAXIMUS®, RISK®, NUCLEAR WAR®, FAMILY BUSINESS®, LIAR'S DICE®, CONSPIRACY®, MONOPOLY®, PICTORIARY®, TRIVIAL PURSUIT®, UNO®, CLUE®, SCRABBLE®, YAHTZEE®, AGGRAVATION®, EUCHRE®, and fantasy role-playing games. A game auction will also be featured. Hours are 12:30 P.M. to 7:30 P.M. Admission is \$0.50 for children 12 and under, \$1 for 13 and older. Write to: Bob Von Gruenigen, 2013 Gay Dr., Kettering OH 45420.

## SIOUX CITY WARGAMES IV

### September 15-17

This gaming convention will be held at the Marina Inn in South Sioux City, Nebr. Featured events will include RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN®, DIPLOMACY®, ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER®, SPEED CIRCUIT®, CAR WARS®, AXIS & ALIES®, EMPIRE III®, JOHNNY REB®, HARPOON®, CHAINMAIL, WWII and modern microarmor, and SF games. Special room rates will be available to conventioners. Admission is free. Write to: SIOUX CITY WARGAMES IV, ATTN: Dave Patch, 1600 Pierce, Sioux City IA 51105.

## COLONIAL CITY GAMEFEST 1989

### September 16-17

The Mt. Vernon Gamers Association will hold the 7th Annual Colonial City Gamefest at the Mt. Vernon Memorial Building, East High St., Mt. Vernon, Ohio. Games will include AD&D®, HARN®, TWILIGHT 2000®, GLADIATORS®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, CIRCUS IMPERIUM®, and historical miniatures games, including WWII HO-scale armor, microarmor, micronaval, ACW, and colonials games. Also included will be WARHAMMER FANTASY® and WARHAMMER 40,000®, and 25mm CHAINMAIL games. Sunday will include the ever-popular Battle of Mt. Vernon 1862. The convention will also feature a miniatures painting competition auction, retail vendors, and demonstration games. Hours are: Saturday, 10 A.M. to 11 P.M.; Sunday, 10 A.M. to 11 P.M. Admission: \$5 for the weekend, preregistration only; \$3 per day at the door. Write to: Colonial City Gamefest, c/o Mt. Vernon Gamers Association, P.O. Box 1184, Mt. Vernon OH 43050.

## 1989 CALGARY GAMING CONVENTION

### September 22-24

Hosted by the Canadian Wargamers Group and the University of Calgary, this convention welcomes all gamers. This three-day con will include events in SYSTEM 7®, KREMLIN®, SHOGUN®, WORLD IN FLAMES®, ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER®, BATTLETECH®, and CIRCUS MAXIMUS® games. Write to: The Canadian Wargamers Group, 207 Bernard Drive N.W., Calgary, Alberta, CANADA T3K 2B6.

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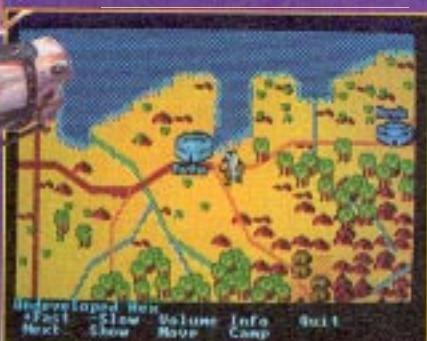
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## MUNCIECON '89 GAMES DAY

**September 23**

This convention will be held on the second floor of the L.A. Pittenger Student Center at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind., and will begin at 8:00 A.M. Events will include AD&D®, STAR FLEET BATTLES\*, BATTLETECH®, STAR TREK®, DR. WHO®, WARHAMMER®, WARHAMMER 40,000®, and more. To run an event, contact Stan Stephens at The Wizard's Keep, 409 N. Martin, Muncie IN 47303; or call: (317) 286-5145. Tickets are \$2 until September 16 and \$3 at the door. Make checks or money orders payable to MUNCIECON, and send to MUNCIECON GAMES DAY, 903 E. Jackson St., Muncie IN 47305. Include names of those attending and a SASE. Call (317) 747-0023.

## CONTACT-7, September 29-October 1

This science-fiction, fantasy, and gaming convention will be held at the Ramada Inn, located on Hwy. 41 North in Evansville, Ind. Andrew J. Offutt will be the guest of honor; other guests will include George "Lan" Laskowski, Rick Dunning, and Arlan Andrews (toastmaster). Events include RPGA™ Network sanctioned gaming, closed-circuit television programming, an art show, a dealers' room, and a 24-hour hospitality suite. Membership is \$15 until September 1; \$20 thereafter. Write to: CONTACT-7, P.O. Box 3894, Evansville IN 47737-3894; or call: (812) 853-5730.

## STAR CON '89, September 29-October 1

This convention will be held at the Regency Hotel in Denver, Colo. The guest of honor is John de Lancie. Events will include fantasy and SF movies; Japanimation; Star Trek trivia and episodes (and a musical); a blood drive; the advance screening of new films; prizes; and more. Admission is \$25-30 at the door. Games are free. For gaming events, write to SSG Chet Cox, 166 S. Rosemary St., Denver CO 80231; or call: (303) 399-9352. For tickets and other information, write to Starland, P.O. Box 24937, Denver CO 80222; or call: (303) 671-TREK.

## SKELETORN, September 30-October 2 ♦

The Engadine and Heathcote Gaming Group is holding its convention in Oatley on the grounds of Oatley Public School, Sydney, Australia. Events will include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, CYBERPUNK®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, and STAR WARS® games. Prizes will be awarded, and retailers will host demo games. Registration is \$10 (Australian), and each event carries a fee of \$3-5 (Australian). Write to: SKELETORN, 79 Thurlgona Rd., Engadine, NSW 2233, AUSTRALIA; or call: (02) 852-366(AH) and ask for Paul.

## COUNCIL OF FIVE NATIONS 15

**October 6-8**

Hosted by the Schenectady Wargamers Association, this convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Schenectady, N.Y. A number of RPGA™ Network events are planned, including a Master's Level AD&D® tournament. There will also be several other AD&D® tournaments and single-round events. Other events will include BATTLETECH®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, CIVILIZATION®, DIPLOMACY® (Youngstown 10-player variant), CHAMPIONS®, CAR WARS®, RUNEQUEST®, and various other role-playing, board, and miniatures games. The convention will also feature a miniatures-painting contest and games auction. Advance registration will be \$10 for the weekend, or \$15 at the door. For a preregistration booklet, send an SASE to: Eric Paperman, Con Director, 418 Vliet Blvd., Cohoes NY 12047. Room rates for this event are \$60 a night for

double occupancy and \$75 a night for quad. For information about lodging, contact the Schenectady Ramada Inn at: (518) 370-7151.

## DRAGON CON '89, October 6-8

This science-fiction, fantasy, and gaming convention will be held at the OMNI International Hotel and Convention Center in Atlanta, Ga. Guests include Anne McCaffrey, Wes Craven, Michael Whelan, Andrew Greenberg, Margaret Weis, Tracy Hickman, Gary Gygax, Richard Garriott, Robert Asprin, Lynn Abbey) and Larry Elmore. Preregistration (through September 15) is \$30. Fantasy role-playing, strategic, miniatures, and computer gaming will be featured in over 100 tournaments. Other events will include four tracks of workshops and panels, masquerade shows, an art show and print shop, video rooms, art and consignment auctions, a con suite, and more. Send an SASE to: DRAGON CON '89, Box 47696, Atlanta GA 30362. You may also purchase your advanced membership by VISA or MasterCard by calling Texev, toll-free, at: (800) 456-1162.

## SUNCOAST SKIRMISHES '89, October 6-8

SKIRMISHES presents the ninth-annual presentation of this gaming extravaganza. This event will take place at the Holiday Inn-Ashley Plaza, 111 West Fortune Street, in Tampa, Fla. Room rates are \$50 for one to four people. Events will include: AD&D®, TRAVELLER®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, CAR WARS®, Napoleonics miniatures, SEEKRIEG®, and other games; board gaming; a KILLER® tournament; and dealers. Registration is \$18 for the weekend; send your fees to receive a program booklet. Write to: SKIRMISHES, P.O. Box 2097, Winter Haven FL 33883; or call: (813) 293-7983.

## TITANCON/TNT III, October 6-8

The Historical Simulation Society of Charlottesville, team winner of Titan National Tournament II, is hosting TNT III in Cabell Hall at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Va. Teams and individuals are invited to compete with the best U.S. TITAN® game players in a round-robin, no-elimination event for team and individual trophies. Registration is \$3. Write to: Derek Craxton/HSS, 1711 Galloway Dr., Charlottesville VA 22901; or call: (804) 296-4897.

## TOLLEDO GAMING CONVENTION 7

**October 7-8**

The seventh-annual edition of Northwest Ohio's largest gaming convention will be held at the University of Toledo's Scott Park Campus. This year we will have over 140 events, including: role-playing, strategy, tactical, board, and miniatures tournaments; two auctions; demonstrations; painting contests; and dealers and exhibitors. Featured this year are AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, WARHAMMER 40,000®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, GURPS®, STAR WARS®, ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER®, AXIS & ALIES®, and SPACE: 1889® events. In addition, there will be nonstop movies and open gaming. Send an SASE to: TOLEDO GAMING CONVENTION 7, c/o Mind Games, 3001 North Reynolds Road, Toledo OH 43615.

## QUAD CON, October 13-15

The RiverBend Gamers Association will sponsor QUAD CON '89 at Palmer Auditorium, 1000 Brady St., Davenport, Iowa. Special room rates are available at the Best Western Riverview Inn by calling 1-800-528-1234 or (319) 324-1921. Games will include AD&D®, D&D®, BATTLETECH®, RECON®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, CAR WARS®, STAR TREK®, GURPS®, MARVEL SUPER

HEROES®, GAMMA WORLD®, TRAVELLER 2300®, TWILIGHT 2000®, TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES®, MERP®, DR. WHO®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, DC HEROES®, ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER®, CIVILIZATION®, DIPLOMACY®, and AIR SORTIE® games. Other events will include microarmor, a painting contest, a multievent ancients-to-future combat tournament, and a costume contest (no weapons, please). Preregistration (\$7 for the weekend, \$3 per day) must be received by October 1. At-the-door fees are: \$10 for the weekend, \$5 per day. Send a #10 SASE to: RiverBend Gamers' Association, P.O. Box 8421, Moline IL 61265.

## NECRONOMICON '89, October 20-22

NECRONOMICON '89, a science-fiction, fantasy, and horror convention, will be held at the Ashley Plaza Holiday Inn in Tampa, Fla. Guests of honor will be George Alec Effinger (author of *When Gravity Fails*) and artist Tom Kidd. Other guests include Richard Byers (author of *Fright Line*) and Richard Louis Newman (author of *On Wings of Evil*). Membership rates are \$15 until September 15, and \$20 at the door. One-day memberships are available at the door only. Hotel room rates are \$50 for single to quad occupancy. Activities will include author and artist panels, a fan cabaret, a masquerade, a Batman 50th Anniversary Trivia Quiz, autograph sessions, an art auction, a late night dance, and an Ygor party. Write to: NE-CRONOMICON '89, P.O. Box 2076, Riverview FL 33569; or call: (813) 677-6347.

## NOTJUSTANOTHER CON, October 20-22

The Science Fiction Conventioneers of U. Mass. (SCUM) will hold its fifth NOTJUST-ANOTHER CON in the Campus Center of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Guest of honor is Oscar-winning filmmaker Mike Jittlov (*The Wizard of Speed and Time*). Membership rates are \$13 through October 1; \$15 from October 1-19; and \$17 at the door. Send an SASE to: SCUM, RSO 104 SAO, U. Mass., Amherst MA 01003; or call: (413) 545-1924.

## QUEEN CITY GAMES '89, October 20-21

QUEEN CITY GAMES '89 will be held at the Cincinnati Technical College, Cincinnati, Ohio. Events will include BATTLETECH®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, and microarmor games, with an RPGA™ Network tournament, role-playing, miniatures, door prizes, seminars, and a costume contest. Write to: Cincinnati Adventure Gamers, Q.C.G. '89, P.O. Box 462, Cincinnati OH 45201; or call (513) 542-3449, 1:30-6:00 P.M.

## CONFIGURATION, October 21-22

CONFIGURATION will be held in the Student Union and Post Hall of Rogers State College, College Hill, Will Rogers Blvd., Claremore, Okla., minutes northeast of Tulsa. Tournaments include D&D®, AD&D®, MERP®, WARHAMMER®, WHRHAMMER FANTASY BATTLE®, SPACE OPERA®, TWILIGHT 2000®, and other games. Prizes will be awarded in each tournament. Also featured will be a large dealers' room, open gaming, artists, and guests. Admission is \$5 in advance, or \$7 at the door. One-day admission prices are \$4 per day, or \$1 for a dealers' room pass. Write to: CONFIGURATION, 107 E. 7th St., Owasso OK 74055; or call: (918) 272-4171.

## MILEHICON 21, October 27-29

This science-fiction, fantasy, and gaming convention will be held at the Executive Tower Inn in Denver, Colo. Robert Bloch will be the guest of honor; Forrest J. Ackerman will be fan guest of honor; and Simon Hawke will be toast-

master. Events will include: literary and scientific panels; an art show and auction; exhibits; a Critter Crunch; videos and movies; filk programming; a gaming area; a costume contest; and a masked ball. Room rates are \$47 for single or double occupancy; \$52 for triple or quad occupancy. Dealers' tables are \$35 until October 1, then \$40 until October 27. Registration fees are \$20 until October 15, or \$22 at the door. Write to: MILEHICON, P.O. Box 27074, Lakewood CO 80227; or call: (303) 426-0806.

#### **WARGAMER'S EXPO, October 27-29**

This expo will be held at the Holiday Inn Baymeadows, 9150 Baymeadows Rd., Jacksonville FL; call: (904) 737-1700. This convention will deal in science fiction, histories, and comics. Events will include a costume party with contest, dealers' room, and gaming. Preregistration is \$15, or \$18 at the door. One-day rates will be available. Write to: Xeno's, Wal-Mart Center, 103rd St., Jacksonville FL 32210; or call: (904) 777-9366 from 10:30 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. Mon.-Fri.

#### **COMMAND.CON 1, October 28**

This convention will be held at the Forest Park Community College campus cafeteria. Events will include RPGA™ Network AD&D® games, miniatures battles, and a game auction. Admission is \$5. Write to: COMMAND.CON 1, P.O. Box 9107, Richmond Heights MO 63117; or call: (314) 727-1508 or (314) 721-1155 before 10:00 P.M. No collect calls, please.

#### **ADVENTURE '89, October 28-29**

Canada's Premier Gaming Convention is to be held in Mississauga, Ontario, at the University of Toronto's Erindale Campus, 3359 Mississauga Rd. Guests include Lloyd Blankenship from Steve Jackson Games, Kevin Barrett of I.C.E., and Bob Simpson of Supremacy Games. Events include AD&D® tournaments, and BATTLETECH\* and more than 20 other role-playing games, many sponsored by the RPGA™ Network. Also featured are over 25 board games, miniatures gaming, professional seminars, a game auction, and a costume contest. For hotel reservations, call Novotel at (419) 896-1000 (mention ADVENTURE '89 for discount rates). Preregistration, in Canadian or U.S. funds, is \$15 for the weekend or \$9 per day. Registration at the door is \$20 for the weekend or \$12 per day. Send check or money order, or write to: ADVENTURE '89, 257 Queen St. South, Mississauga, Ontario, CANADA L5M 1L9. Include your phone number with all correspondence.

#### **STARD '89, November 4-5**

For the first time, STARD will be a two-day event, to be held at the Curio-Haus, Rothenbaumchaussee 13, on the Hamburg University campus. Events will include hundreds of role-playing, tabletop, and board game events, miniatures exhibitions and competitions, a game auction and art exhibition, workshops, panel discussion, demonstration games, and a dealers' area. Hours are Saturday, 10:00 to 22:00, and Sunday 10:00 to 18:00. Write to: Citadel Verlag, Mühlendamm 41-43, D-2000 Hamburg 76, WEST GERMANY, or call: 40-220 14 14/5.

#### **CONTRARY, November 10-11**

CONTRARY '89 will be held at the Parwick Center in Chicopee, Mass. The convention will feature military/strategy games, role-playing games (including at least two RPGA™ Network events), and miniatures events. Preregistration is \$10 for both days or \$8 for one day. Write to: CONTRARY '89, 933 Belmont Ave., Springfield MA 01108; or call Mark at: (413) 731-7237.

#### **AU GAMERS CONVENTION November 10-12**

The Au Gamers are proud to hold the largest fantasy role-playing convention in New Jersey at the Sheraton Tara Hotel, 199 Smith Rd., Parsippany NJ. Events will include RPGA™ Network tournaments, a charity game, a costume contest, a dealers' area, a miniatures painting contest, and more. Prizes will be awarded for best players and best gamemasters. For reservations, call: (201) 515-2000, ext. 5800. Mention the convention to receive special room rates. Registration fees before Oct. 20 are \$7 per day or \$18 for the weekend. After Oct. 20, rates are \$8 per day and \$20 for the weekend. Registration at the door will be \$10 per day. Write to: Steven M. Scheel, Oakwood Village, Bldg #26, Apt #9, Flanders NJ 07836, phone (201) 927-8097; or John Moir, 361 Vandvier Ave., Sommerville NJ 08876; or call: (201) 725-1257.

#### **SC1 CON II, November 10-12**

This science-fiction and gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Executive Center in Virginia Beach, Va. Artist guests of honor are Ron Lindahn and Val Lakey-Lindahn. Special guest is Frank Kelly Freas. Events will include panels, readings, video presentations, a costume contest, an art show, gaming, and more. Memberships are \$15 until September 30, or \$20 at the door. Huckster tables (which include one membership) are \$75 until October 1; any tables available after that point will be \$100. Send an SASE to: SCI CON 11, Dept. DR, P.O. Box 9434, Hampton VA 23670.

#### **ARMISTICE CON '89, November 11-12**

This gaming event will be held at the Horizon Activities Center in North Olmsted, Ohio. Special events will include TRAVELLER\*, CAR WARS\*, BATTLETECH\*, DIPLOMACY\*, microarmor, and AD&D® game events, as well as Napoleonic miniatures, board and role-playing games, a miniatures exhibit, a miniatures-painting contest, and 24-hour gaming. Registration fees are \$12. One-day passes will be available for \$7. Write to: ARMISTICE CON '89, c/o Horizon Activities Center, 30395 Lorain Road, North Olmsted OH 44070; or call Dave Smith or Fran Haas at: (216) 779-6536 during business hours.

#### **GAMESCON (UK) '89, November 11**

This gaming convention will be held at the Lairdon Community Centre, Basildon, Essex. Dungeon Masters and players are required for AD&D® competitions. Contact Chris Baylis at tel: 0268-419933, or write to: 67 Mynchens, Lee Chapel North, Basildon, Essex SS115 5EG, UNITED KINGDOM.

#### **PENTACON, November 11**

The Northeast Indiana Gaming Association will be hosting the fifth annual PENTACON gaming convention in the Grand Wayne Convention Center in Fort Wayne, Ind. Games will include an RPGA™ Network AD&D® tournament, and BATTLETECH\*, CAR WARS\*, CHAMPIONS\*, CIVILIZATION\*, DARKUS THEL\*, MORROW PROJECT\*, and SPACE: 1889\* games. Other features are a painting contest and dealers' area. Send an SASE to: N.I.G.A., P.O. Box 11146, Fort Wayne IN 46856.

#### **UMF-CON, November 11-12**

This role-playing and war-games convention will be held at the Student Center of the University of Maine in Farmington, Maine. Events will include TOP SECRET/S.I.™ and AD&D® games, DIPLOMACY\* competitions, miniatures, board games, and contests. Also planned is another

murder mystery. Admission is \$5 per day and \$2 per game. Send an SASE to: Table Gaming Club, c/o Student Life Office, Student Center, 5 South Street, Farmington ME 04938.

#### **UCON '89, November 17-19**

This role-playing and strategy gaming convention will take place in the Michigan Union at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Events will include: live role-playing; dealers' tables; a movie room; a costume contest; an AD&D® tournament; and CIVILIZATION\*, STAR FLEET BATTLES\*, DIPLOMACY\*, and THIRD REICH\* games. Write to: The Michigan Wargaming Club, P.O. Box 4491, Ann Arbor MI 48106.

#### **UK Masters 1989 AD&D® Tournament**

##### **November 11-12**

This tournament will be held at the WAR '89 Convention at the Rivermead Leisure Center, Richfield Ave., Reading. Entry fee is £3.50 (£2.50 for players with UK ranking points). Make cheques payable and mail to: Mr. C. Froud, 88 Southview Ave., Reading, Berkshire, ENGLAND. Space is limited, so register early.

#### **DALLAS FANTASY FAIR, November 24-26**

Featuring over 140 dealers' tables, more than 60 guests, and over 2,000 attendees, this fantasy event will be held at the Marriott Park Central, 7750 I-635 at Coit Road in Dallas, Tex. Attractions will include two 24-hour video rooms, Japanimation, 24-hour gaming, four-track programming, a masquerade, an open con suite, an art show and auction, a charity auction, artists' and writers' workshops, autograph sessions, filksinging, dancing, an amateur-film festival, a talent show, and more. Admission is \$15 for all three days in advance, or \$20 at the door. Single-day admissions may be purchased at the door; prices are \$8 Friday, \$10 Saturday, and \$8 Sunday. Write to: Bulldog Productions, P.O. Box 820488, Dallas TX 75382; or call: (214) 349-3367.

#### **MACQUARIECON '89, December 8-10**

The Macquarie University Role-Playing Society will host Australia's largest role-playing convention at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. Events will include AD&D®, PARANOIA\*, CALL OF CTHULHU\*, JAMES BOND\*, TRAVELLER\*, STAR WARS\*, M.E.R.P.\*, WARHAMMER\*, SPACE: 1889\*, JUDGE DREDD\*, and board games. Registration is \$30 (Australian) for the weekend or \$3 (Australian) per session with a \$7 registration fee. Write to: M.U.R.P.S., P.O. Box 1577, Macquarie Centre, North Ryde NSW 2113, AUSTRALIA.

#### **WINTER FANTASY, January 5-7, 1990**

The RPGA™ Network will sponsor WINTER FANTASY 1990 at the Ramada Inn Airport at Milwaukee, Wis. Special room rates are available by contacting the hotel at (414) 764-5300. Sanctioned events include AD&D® Grand Masters, AD&D® Masters, AD&D® Feature, AD&D® Benefit, MARVEL SUPER HEROES®, TOP SECRET/S.I.™, PARANOIA\*, and other tournaments. Other activities include a writers' seminar, Saturday morning breakfast, Sunday brunch, open gaming, and a dealers' area. All gaming is free except for the benefit tournament. Limited preregistration is available to RPGA Network members; contact Network HQ for a preregistration form. Registration fees are \$10 to Network members, \$12 to nonmembers until November 1. Afterward, fees for the entire weekend are \$15. Send a SASE to: RPGA™ Network, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva WI 53147.



# DRAGONMIRTH

by David King



by Dwain Meyer



by Joseph T. Pillsbury

by Jerry Fuchs

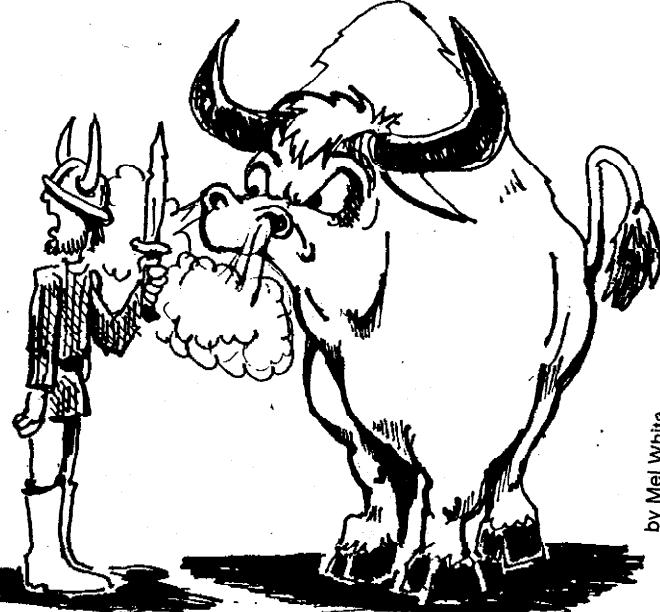


"Quick guys! Make up your minds!  
Which one?"



by Chris Adams and Barbara Ward

by Mel White



"Uhhh . . . what say we send out  
for pizza instead?"

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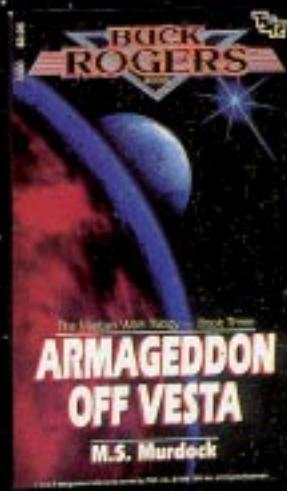
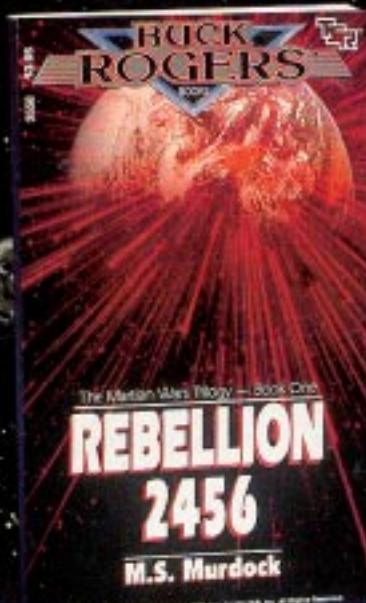
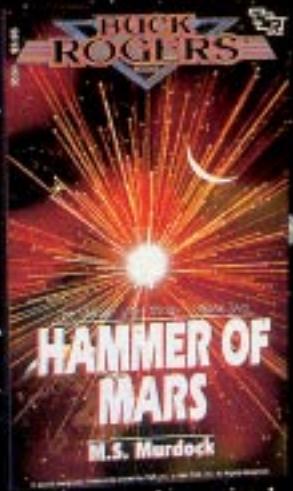
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