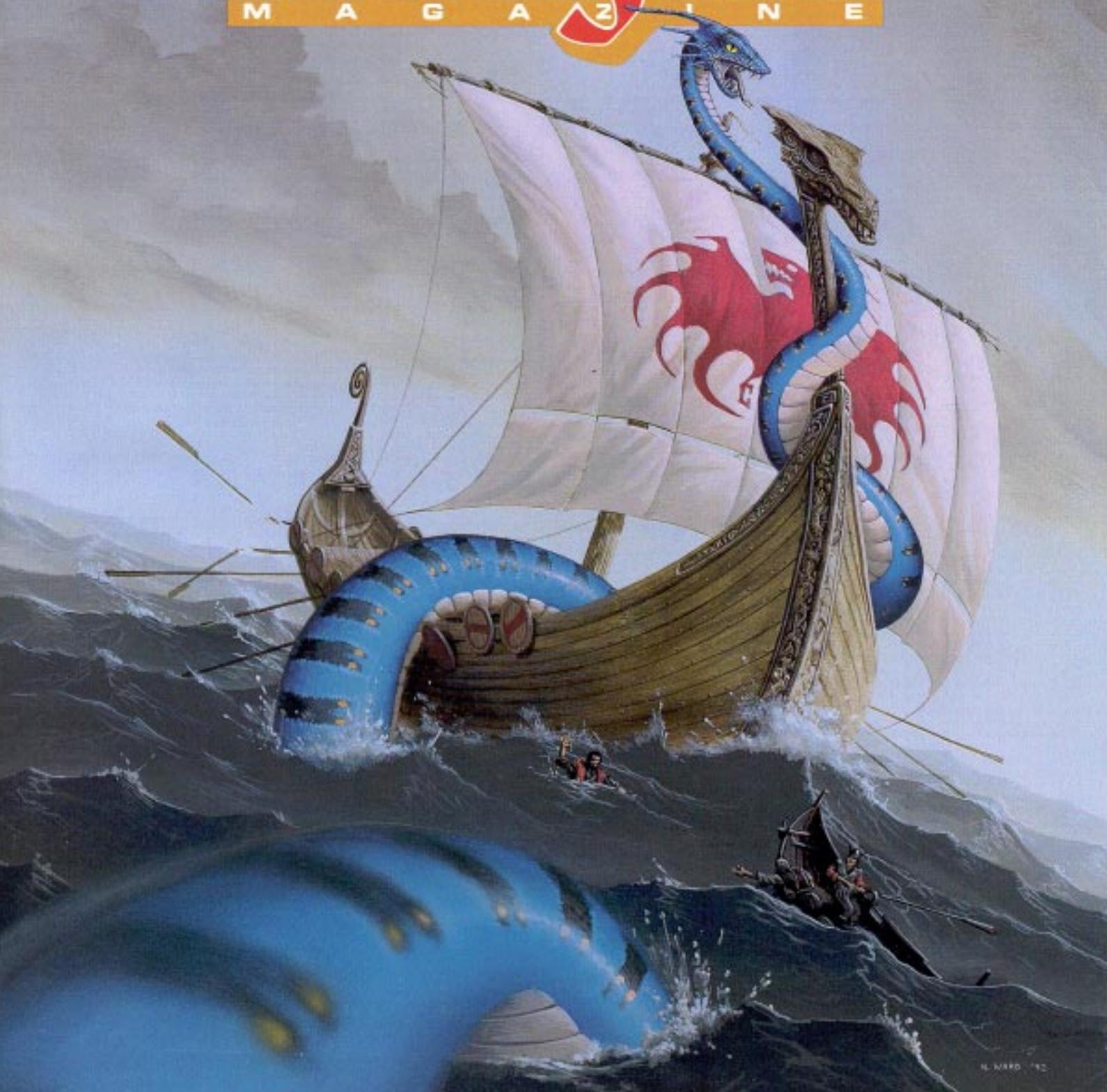


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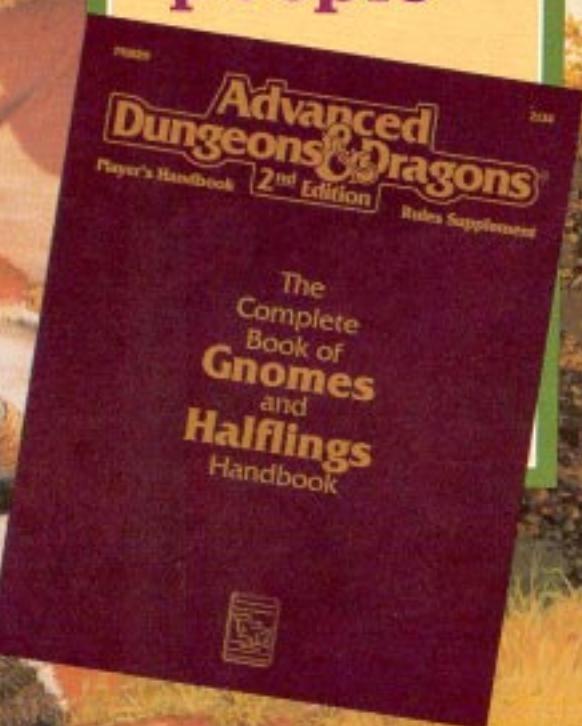


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Ah, there's nothing like an ocean cruise to help an adventurer relax. Kevin Ward, our cover artist, has painted an encounter between a sailing ship and one particularly interesting (as in dangerous) specimen of aquatic fauna.

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# LETTERS

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

## About Yamara

Dear Dragon,

About Yamara: What are the three hooded beings who seek the Headpiece of Frinn? What are the effects of wearing the headpiece (other than godhood and the three-wish aftereffect)? What race is Ogrek? If *flesh to plush* were an AD&D® 2nd Edition game spell, what level would it be? When Ralph lost his godhood, why did he not gain three wishes from the headpiece? Last question: How long does it take to don and remove the headpiece?

P.S. Which DRAGON issue contained the first Yamara strip?

Chillios Smith, Jr.  
Dawsonville GA

Rather than attempt to answer these weighty questions ourselves, your editors went straight to the source: Barbara Manui and Chris Adams. Their reply follows:

The three hooded beings are emissaries of the great wizard-couturier FriNn and are themselves known as the FriNn. He and they come from an extradimensional space which they like and will leave only under burden of great necessity. They are so fond of this place that they have named it FriNn.

Since the Headpiece of FriNn was designed for taste and simplicity, its only effect is godhead. You know, godhead: the ability to fast-forward local weather patterns, never lose another argument, be invited to exclusive parties where you hobnob with other deities, and win AD&D games. The Headpiece and its wearer are invulnerable to all attacks except flesh to plush (see later), for which there is no save. Taking the Headpiece off and putting it on are considered normal actions (one round each), but it must be worn for the godhead to come on-line, and each time it must be placed upon the wearer by another sentient being.

Ralph faked godhead. That's why he had to grab Fea's wand.

The three wishes were sent as a present to Yamara by the grateful FriNn. The wishes are not an automatic side effect of wearing the Headpiece.

By the numbers, Ogrek is one-eighth ogre, one-eighth elf, one-eighth human, one-quarter orc, and one-quarter pixie. We did some quick addition, came up an eighth short, and made some inquiries. Mr. Undisciplined's press secretary is withholding comment at this time.

As for the spell:

### Fea's Flesh to Plush

Level: 5 Comp.: V,S,M  
Range: 30' CT:2  
Duration: Perm. ST: Neg.  
Area of Effect: One creature

A version of the item spell that appeals to toddlers, this spell transforms average, live, free-willed people and monsters into small dolls. Each such doll resembles the former being in most respects and gives off no magical aura whatsoever. The plush stuffing of the doll appeals to family pets with an urge to gnaw and worry. The reverse of the spell restores a hapless victim to whatever state the doll was left in (no system-shock roll required). The reversed spell also turns plushy things (e.g., carpets, dolls, tapes tries, upholstery) into fleshy things (e.g., hormad tissue, shoggoths, the Blob).

The original Yamara characters appeared in a one-panel comic in DRAGON issue #132, page 87 (it will be five years old this April). The four-panel strip itself started two issues later, in issue #134, page 99. We're still having fun with it. Thanks for being intrigued by the minutiae.

Barbara & Chris

## Thendar—FOUND!

Dear Dragon,

Surely Brian Wilson is not the only person suffering from memory loss. I have been playing DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® games for only five years, but even I knew what a thendar is and where to find it. In DRAGON issue #101, you published your third "Creature Catalog." Within it, you will find the thendar, as well as the drawing of a knight and vines that you placed right beneath his letter [in the letters column of issue #188].

"The Innersole"  
No address given

The mysterious Innersole was not the only person who found the thendar, much to your editor's embarrassment and the amusement of many readers. The thendar do indeed lurk in DRAGON issue #101, page 54; they are a race of tall, humanlike, Astral Plane dwellers with numerous magical powers, created by Douglas Lent (the distinctive artwork was by Roger Raupp). With a little work, this would make an very interesting character race for the AD&D® game; several readers noted they had already added this race to their campaigns. Other readers recognized the pilfer vine illustration from 87 issues ago as well.

Our thanks for finding the thendar go out to: Elaine Wiedeman (Santa Ana, Calif.), Nathaniel Gilbert (Takoma Park, Md.), Peter DeCraene, Tim Lauchnor (East Greenville, Pa.), Barry Smith (Post Falls, Idaho), Donald Miller (Provo, Utah), John Tomkins (Kenosha, Wis.), David Wall (Sunderland, Mass.), Carlisle Harper (Mount Olive, N.C.), Eric Larson (Livonia, Mich.), Samuel Peebles (Baton Rouge, La.), Cal Rea (Kansas City, Mo.), Russell Kopp (Buffalo, N.Y.), James Yates

(Owensboro, Ky.), Michael De Lucia (Camillus, N.Y.), Shawn Dickensheets (Portland, Oreg.), B. Glenn (San Jose, Calif.), David Howery (Mountain Home, Idaho), and Tony Quirk (San Diego, Calif.). Your letters arrived earliest in the flood tide of replies this letter generated.

Several readers took the time to point out that we were overdue for another DRAGON Magazine index. See the next letter for details. David Howery took the time to point out that thendar wear stupid hats. Thanks.

## Index-NEEDED!

Dear Readers,

We have received many requests for an updated DRAGON Magazine index, but your editors just have not had the time to make one up. However, we are quite interested in finding out if any readers have already made up such a database, one that we would be able to use in our normal editing work and possibly publish at a later date. We would like to purchase all rights to such an index and are busy drafting guidelines for its format, contents, deadlines, etc. We can only work with material in an IBM-compatible format, and would prefer to receive the final index on diskette with hard copy. The more accurate, complete, and detailed the index, the better we'll like it.

If you have such an index and wish to contact us about it, please send a long, stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Index, DRAGON Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Do not send your index at this time; a query letter with the SASE, giving brief details on your index, would be appreciated.

We (and over 200,000 other readers) are waiting to hear from you!

## Get it straight

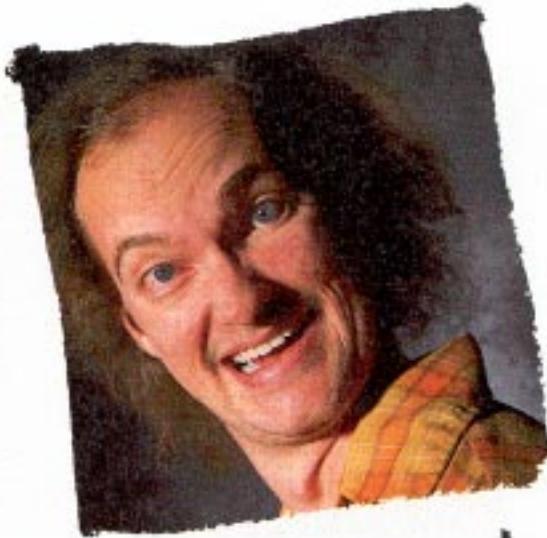
Dear Dragon,

Just to keep the record straight, I'd like to point out that in issue #185, John C. Bunnell erroneously attributed my name and short-story title to another story's plot in his review of the *Dragons over England* fiction anthology. I don't mind receiving an unfavorable review now and again (okay, you got me—I weep over every one), but I do like to be blamed for my own work, not someone else's.

Lester Smith  
TSR, Inc.



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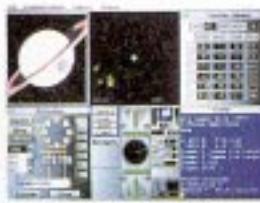
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# EDITORIAL

## The best adventures I never ran

All game masters like to brag about the best adventures they ever ran, and I'm no exception. After writing last month's editorial on creating great adventures, however, I sat back and thought about all those great adventures that I'd always meant to run but never did. Surely everyone has this problem. What can you do with all those marvelous unused ideas you get for tormenting player characters?

You do what any other GM would do with them: You tell all your gaming friends about them, and maybe one day someone else will use your ideas and torment lots of other gamers with them. (Perhaps they will even torment *your* characters with them! That sounds fair to me.)

The ideas I've had for wild-and-woolly role-playing scenarios have come from all sorts of sources. Some of the adventures I've run were sparked by letting my imagination go while listening to hard-rock music at high volume on earphones (be aware of inner-ear damage if you do this frequently). I found AC/DC, Black Sabbath, and the like to be especially helpful. Once I visualized an especially awful scene I wanted to reenact, I'd write down all the details and find ways to build an adventure around that scene. I'd then connect the episode to other equally dangerous happenings, until I had a series of high-

action events like an Indiana Jones film. My main goal was to prevent player boredom, and my methods generally worked (maybe I just choose to forget the times they didn't, but I do recall some great adventures).

The following are some of the cinematic-style adventures for different role-playing games that I never got to run. You are free to steal these ideas and use them in your own campaigns to horrify your own players. Just be warned that your players may wish to horrify you someday, too.

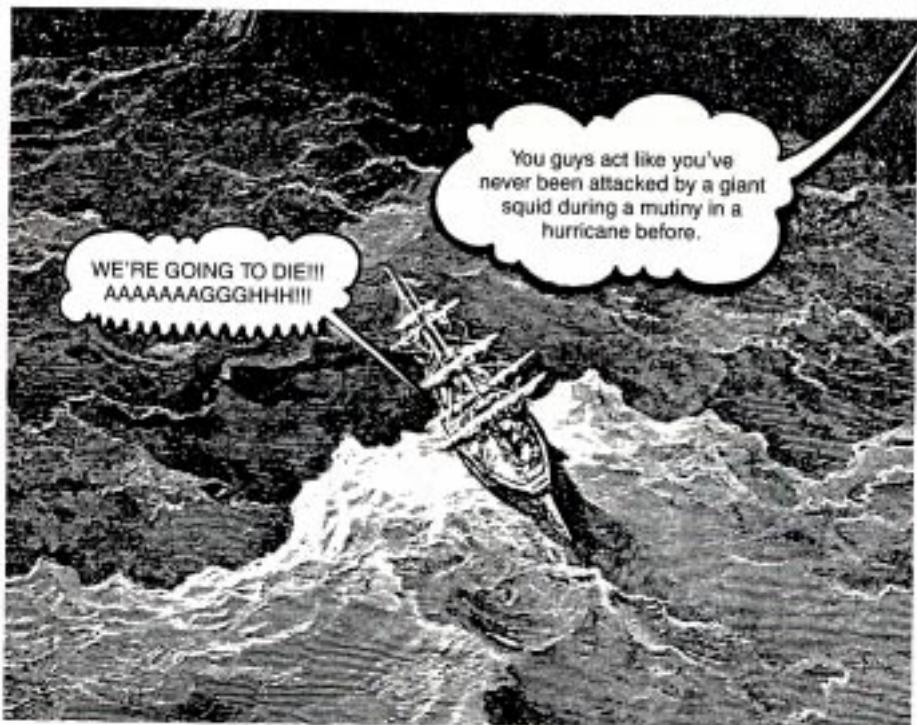
In the AD&D® game, I planned to have part of the current fantasy world invaded from space or alternate worlds by high-tech beings who set up prison camps and enslave the population (high-tech scro from the SPELLJAMMER® setting would work fine). Two of the action scenes I envisioned involved a commando attack against a military train carrying prisoners of war, pitting swords and spells against machine guns, then an assault against a death camp to free the elves within. I had read about an uprising of Soviet Army personnel in a Nazi POW camp during World War II (and had seen something similar on a TV movie), and I once saw a short film of a military train ride through a jungle during the Vietnam war. The

campaign idea grew from there.

—The PCs in my GAMMA WORLD® campaigns feared nothing more than Death Machines (see DRAGON® issue #156, page 6, for commentary). After watching the scene in *Superman: The Movie* in which Superman chases down a low-flying cruise missile, I came up with an encounter over a badlands region between the PCs and a Death Machine. The heroes are trying to track down an unknown force that has destroyed several small communities in their domain. They become the hunted, however, as the xenophobic robot tracks the PCs at long range, flying low to avoid radar detection until it is within missile and blaster range. The Death Machine then runs down the PCs as they would try to hug the terrain and escape among the towering buttes, mesas, and eroded hills. The PCs won't be able to even see the Death Machine except as a dot on their radar scopes—a nice touch of suspense there. Part of this idea came from watching the movie *Duel*, starring Dennis Weaver. If you saw it, you know what I mean.

—During a short campaign using West End Games's GHOSTBUSTERS\* rules, I considered a scenario in which the local Ghostbusters, while minding their own business, are attacked as they drive their van back from a late-night mission. Their attackers are undead motorcyclists and race-car drivers, driving weird machines powered by black magic. The undead attempt to climb onto the van and get at the Ghostbusters by smashing windows, opening doors, punching through metal walls, etc. Being dead already, the skeletal killers are fearless and wild in their assault (the Ghostbusters might be a different matter, of course). Steve Jackson Games's CAR WARS\* rules and *The Road Warrior* are, of course, the wells from which this bucket of horrors is drawn.

—I also thought about a GHOSTBUSTERS campaign in which the heroes get hold of an old bomber or similar large aircraft, then use it against an invasion of undead beings from the sea who have resurfaced a number of old shipwrecks. This "D-Day of the Dead" was to be fought entirely at night or under a preternatural thunderstorm. The old war movies of torpedo and dive bombers in action against carriers in the Pacific 50 years ago are the driving force behind this scenario. I could have also used the great war movie *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* as inspiration. In this case, the Ghostbusters fly into an alternate



universe to make a preemptive strike against hostile paranormal forces preparing to attack Earth, with their bomber being chased by undead pilots in archaic aircraft and fired upon by necromancers' spells.

— Of course, Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU\* game got its share of attention. In one scenario, I envisioned the investigators riding a passenger train through the Rockies on their way to a western city when flying bogeymen come along seeking vengeance for a past good deed committed by the heroes (perhaps the bogeymen are sent by an angry Cthulhu-worshipper). The monsters first kill the engine's crew, then leave the locomotive's throttle open and send the train on a thundering ride downhill toward a city's train station, something like the events at the end of *Silver Streak*. Some of the bogeymen may even stick around to fight the heroes as the latter try to take control of the train again, climbing on the outside of the cars to reach the locomotive. Maybe there could even be a few ghouls on the train just for fun.

— Even worse was my version of what happened to the U.S.S. *Cyclops*, a U.S. Navy collier that vanished (allegedly in the Bermuda Triangle) in the early years of this century. The investigators start out probing the disappearance of the crew of the *Marie Celeste*, a small sailing ship that

in real life ran aground in New England with no crew aboard it. While out sailing in their own ship, the investigators manage to get themselves dropped into an alternate universe, where they encounter the *Cyclops* and a sea of trouble. Borrowing details liberally from the Cthulhu Mythos stories of the Deep Ones and from "The Haunted Jarvee," a tale by British horror writer William Hope Hodgson, I imagined the *Cyclops* adrift on an oily, poisonous sea in a pitch-black pocket universe, where purple lightning flashes through clouds miles overhead. There the ship served as a breeder ship for Deep Ones, commanded by a madman once held in the brig of the *Cyclops* during its last voyage. The end of the adventure would include a massive gun battle with the Deep Ones as the latter swarm over the deck of the *Cyclops*, claws and teeth reaching for the heroes, who are trying to get to their own ship and escape before the pocket universe collapses as a result of the heroes' undoing of the magic that brought the pocket world into being (whew!).

— The TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game suggested lots of great modern-day adventures, especially after I read *The Curve of Binding Energy*, a frightening book by John McPhee about the spread of nuclear technology and its connections to terrorism. Suppose the agents uncover a plot by a terrorist group to drop a homemade atom-

ic bomb on Chicago from a renovated World War II bomber. What if they are able to infiltrate the group at the last moment, then must battle hand-to-hand against terrorists aboard the aircraft as it flies at treetop level over the Chicago suburbs and superhighways while being fired upon by jets and helicopters from the Illinois State Police and National Guard? What if the bomb suddenly arms itself during the melee and starts ticking away? Wouldn't that be grand? I thought so, too.

That's enough of that. If you've got some great ideas you've never run, tell your friends about them. And if you listen to enough good ideas, you'll develop some great adventures of your own—adventures that you *will* run!

*Roger E. Moore*

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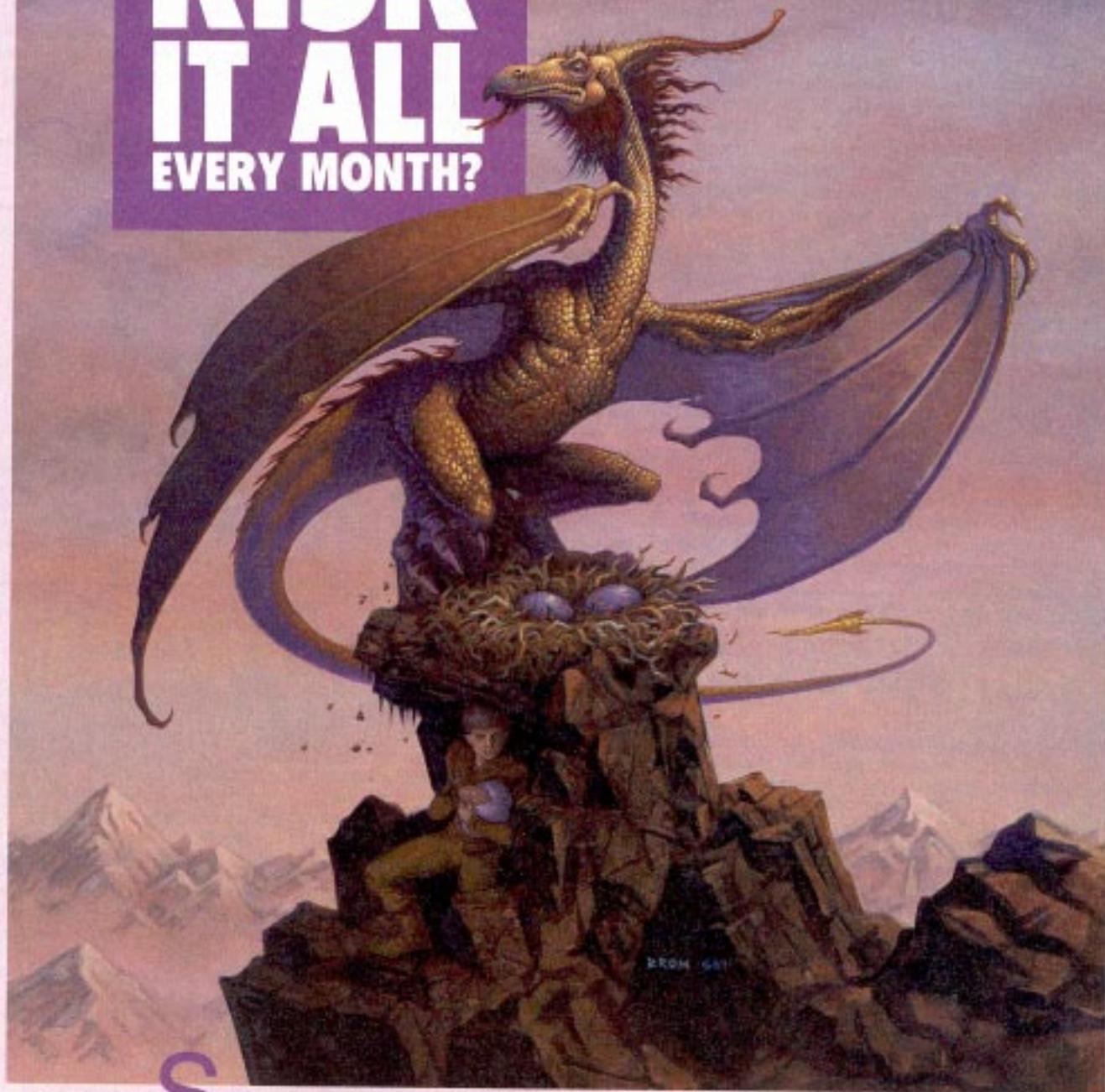
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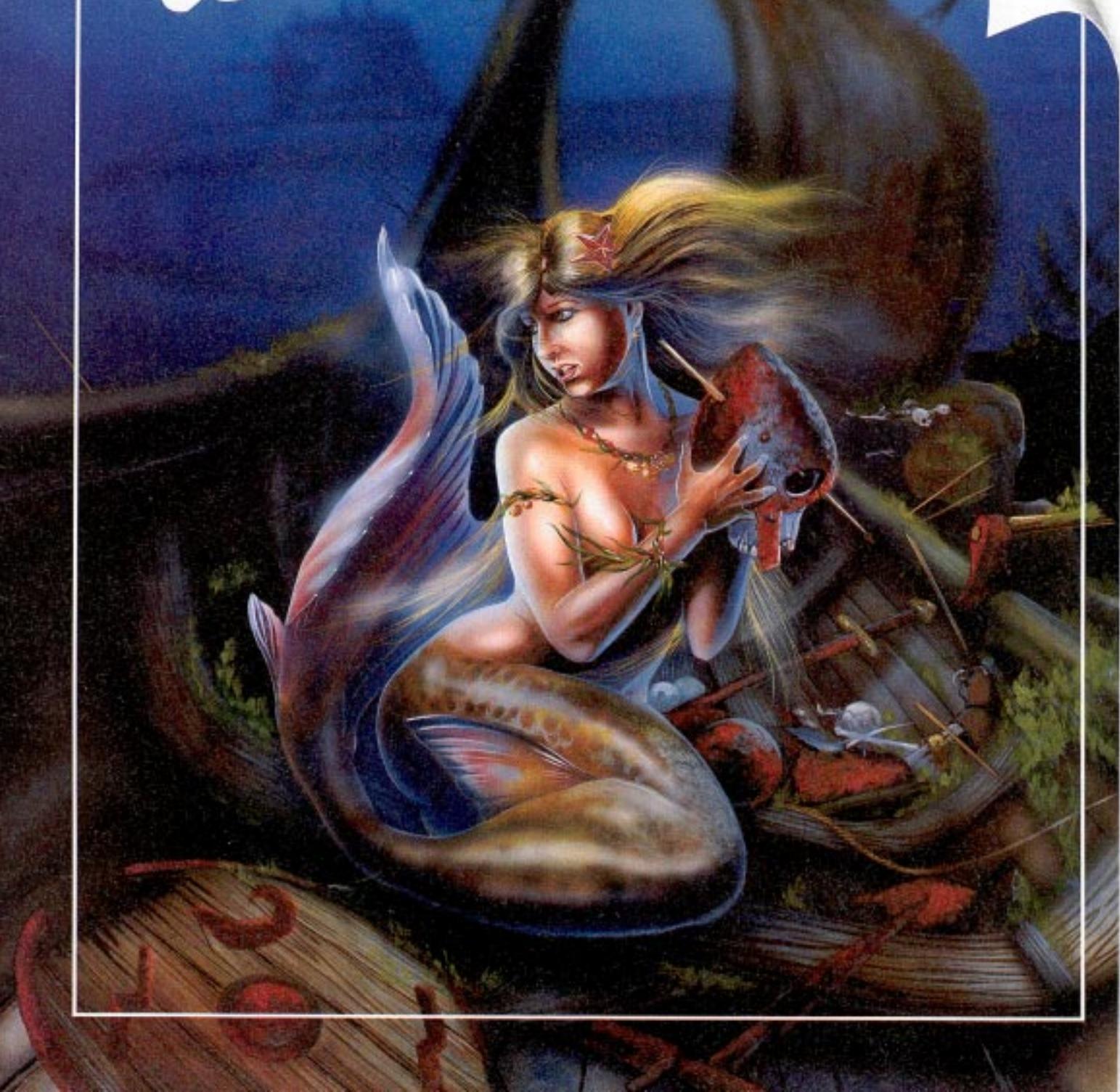
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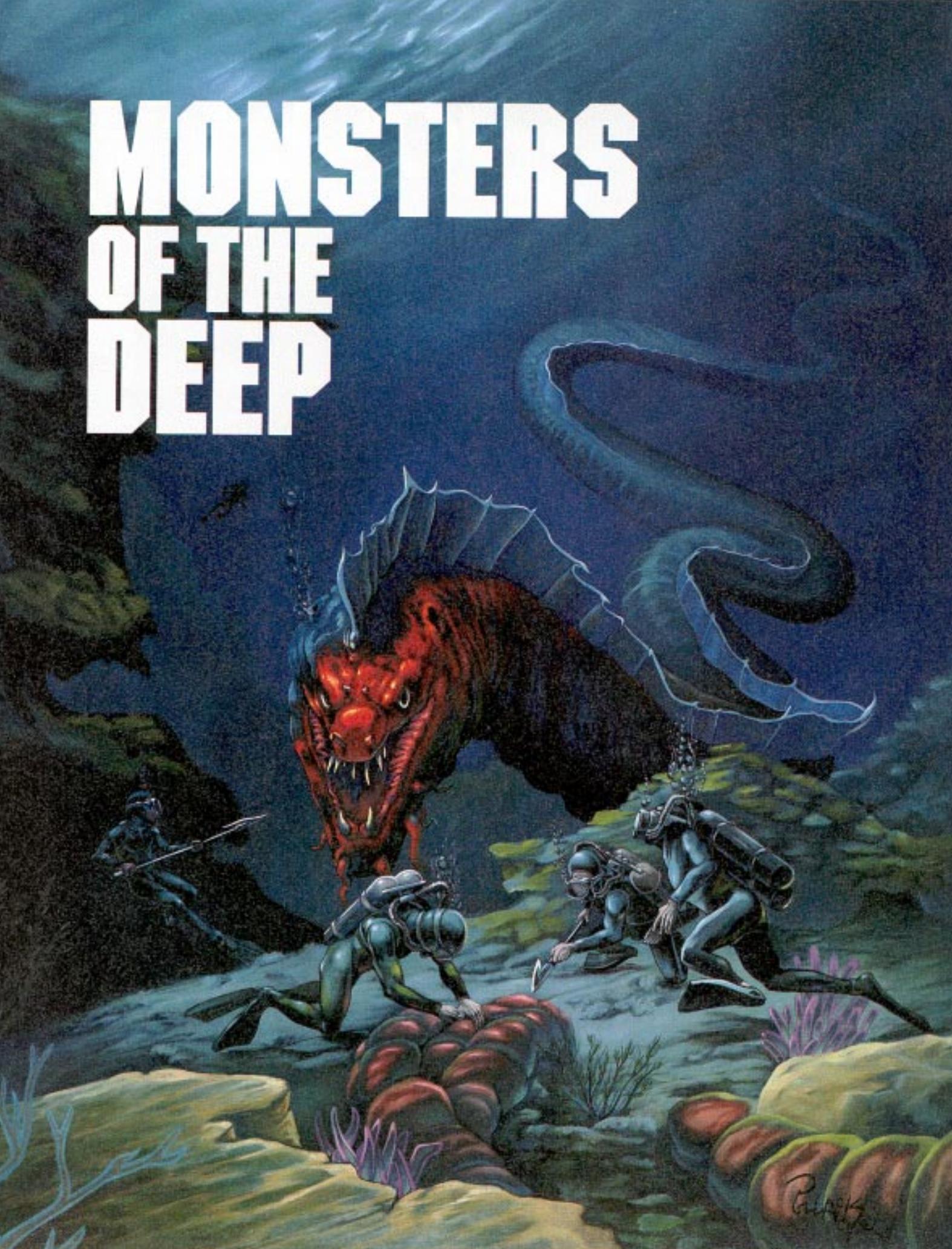
Artwork by Jim Holloway

# In Poseidon's Lair

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# MONSTERS OF THE DEEP



PARK

# Adding “real” sea serpents to your campaign

by Gregory W. Detwiler

Artwork by Alan Pollack

Sea serpents are a common part of maritime lore, and most people relegate them to myth and legend. However, some scientists have studied the reports in detail, finding many cases around the world where the reports agree on all the details. The France-Belgian zoologist Bernard Heuvelmans, current president of the ISC (International Society of Cryptozoology), is the most noted of these. By studying the most reliable sea serpent reports, he has determined that there are at least seven different types of sea serpent in the ocean today, with two more possible species that are not as well reported or described.

Aside from Heuvelmans' creatures, other scientists like Ted Holiday have theorized sea monsters of their own. This article describes these “real” sea serpents, and either names creatures already listed in the MC3 FORGOTTEN REALMS® Appendix to the *Monstrous Compendiums* that could be these serpents (some with modified statistics) or gives them entirely new statistics.

## The big nine

These are the creatures Heuvelmans describes in his massive volume *In the Wake of the Sea Serpents*. The average length for all sea serpents is on the order of 60'-100', although larger specimens are certainly possible. Heuvelmans points out that the wake a swimming creature leaves behind it may be mistaken for part of its body (hence the title of his book), resulting in exaggerated lengths given by witnesses. He also pointed out, however, that animals can grow to very great size when buoyed up by water, and that the serpentine form most of the creatures in this article have distributes weight very evenly. Thus, a serpentine creature 250' long (one of the largest sizes reported) would weigh no more than a bulky blue whale 113' long (the record for this species). As a final note of caution, none of the air-breathing animals described below spouts like a modern whale. They stick only their head or part of it above the surface to breathe, making a mockery of skeptics' claims that they would be seen more often.

**Super eel:** This is just what it sounds like: an enormous eel. There may be more than one species, as some have blunt heads, some pointed; some are reddish, some are blue or blackish-brown on top and white underneath, while still others are speckled (the speckled ones seem confined to the Mediterranean). Most seem built on the order of a greatly enlarged conger or moray eel. They are all different from the other “sea serpents”

Heuvelmans describes due to the fact that we *know* they exist.

In 1930, the Danish oceanographer and biologist Dr. Anton Bruun was conducting a marine survey in the South Atlantic; one which included trawling the depths to see what lived down there. Among the specimens he brought back up was an elver (an eel larvae) six feet long. Normal elvers are only a few inches long at most, yet they can grow into 6' eels. Extrapolating from this, Dr. Bruun calculated that this elver might grow into an eel anywhere from 108-180' in length! A more conservative approach, assuming a slower growth rate, still suggests an eel 50' in length. To top this off, he brought the eel larvae up in the exact vicinity of one of the most famous sea serpent sightings of all time: that of the S.S. *Daedalus* in 1848. The drawings and descriptions of this creature are far more like an eel than anything else: an interesting coincidence, at the very least. The last I heard, Bruun's specimen was still preserved in alcohol at the Charlottenlund Marine Biological Laboratory, on the very outskirts of Copenhagen.

For AD&D® game purposes, the super-eel should be treated as a giant eel, but one 50, 108, or 180' in length. Its swimming speed should be reduced to 8 and 7 for the last two versions, while the HD for the three specimens would be boosted to 9, 13, and 18, respectively. THAC0 for them is 11, 7, and 5. XP value is 975, 3,000, and 10,000 for the largest! Damage/Attack is 4-16, 3-18, and 5-20, while AC and all other stats are ‘the same’.

**Super otter:** This is a primitive aquatic mammal, probably closely related to whatever carnivorous mammal first returned to life in the sea. It may also be a real sea serpent that does not exist anymore; the last definite sighting was in 1848, so it may have been driven into extinction, possibly through competition with the Long-necked (see below). It has a flat, elongated head, small eyes, a slender-neck of medium length, and a long tail that ends in a point. Its spine is so flexible that it can form six or seven bends visible when the animal is on the surface. It has webbed feet with definite toes, making it the least specialized of sea serpents. It has no fins or other appendages on its back; its skin is rough or wrinkled, a light or grayish brown in color. It lives only in Arctic (generally Scandinavian) waters, and Heuvelmans makes the point that melting ice makes polar waters the least salty in the world, making it easier for a land animal to adapt itself to life in the sea. Remember, this is where the polar bear lives.

## Super otter

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Arctic waters
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1-2
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	SW 12
HIT DICE:	12
THAC0:	9
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-10
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	G (65'-100')
MORALE:	Average (10)
XP VALUE:	2,000

**Many-humped:** This long, serpentine creature is thought to be a form of primitive whale. Its head is oval-shaped, blunt, and flat on top, with a broad snout that makes it look like a hornless ox. Its neck is slender and of medium length, and a small triangular fin has sometimes been seen on the shoulders. Its most distinctive feature, however, is the row of regular humps all along the back. The many-humped serpent has a pair of flippers up front, while its tail is double-lobed like other whales'. Its skin is generally smooth, though sometimes rough. The top is dark brown to black in hue, while the lower portion is pure white. This coloration is favored as camouflage by sea creatures that hang around the continental shelf, and sure enough, that is where the reports of the Many-humped come from. Sometimes this sea serpent also has a white stripe or two on the side of the neck.

It has been suggested that the famed humps are hydrostatic organs, or sacs of skin that can be inflated with air at will. They can serve both as a reserve supply of air for long dives, and—as they are right on the spine—to provide stability for the creature when it swims on the surface. It can hit a top speed of 35-40 knots. Nearly all reports come from the eastern coast of North America, with a particular emphasis on New England. It generally stays in warm water, which in northern areas means the Gulf Stream, but does venture into the cooler waters during the summer. It has the same average length noted for sea serpents in general, but may reach a maximum of 115'. It can do 2-12 points of damage with its bite, does not attack with its tail, and has a swimming speed of



30, but otherwise has the same stats as the common whale (12 HD).

**Many-finned:** This is another primitive whale, one whose back is protected by an armor of bony plates, giving it a faint resemblance to a lobster. The armored back has a saw-toothed crest along the spine, and it also has up to a dozen projections to either side, like the side spikes of an ankylosaur. The animal is so burdened with armor that it must roll on one side to turn. When it rolls, the projections are visible, and mistaken for fins. The armor gives the creature's back AC 3.

The head is rounded, rather like a calf, with small but prominent eyes placed high on the head (like a hippo). The Many-finned serpent's mouth is wide, with its nostrils clearly visible to the muzzle's front and surrounded by hairs. It has a short, slender neck. There are flippers to the front, and it has a flattened, three-lobed tail that is only slightly spread and that increases the resemblance to a lobster. Its skin is smooth, like tanned

leather, colored brown with dirty yellow patches that can give it a general impression of being greenish gray. It is generally reported in shallow coraline or rocky waters, and creatures that live there usually have this speckled coloration.

The Many-finned can reach to a hundred feet long, but generally does not get over 70'. It lives in tropical waters all over the world, with the most famous series of sightings made by the French Navy in Along Bay off the Vietnamese coast. This may be the reason why French scientists are, as a group, less skeptical about sea serpents than their counterparts in other countries. It has the same attack as the Many-humped, has a swimming speed of 12, and otherwise has the stats of the common whale.

**Merhorse:** This creature is built like a slender-bodied plesiosaur, but appears to be a form of enormous sea lion. It gets its name from an impressive horse-like mane of reddish hair on its neck. Since most aquatic mammals have almost no hair, it

has been suggested that these "hairs" are really respiratory organs in the form of filaments, absorbing air from the water and enabling the beast to remain under longer. (Some frogs are known to have this arrangement.) The Merhorse's head is horselike, but also quite wide, giving it a diamond-shaped (and snake-like) appearance when viewed directly from the front. Its forward-facing eyes are huge, demonstrating that it hunts in the darker depths of the sea. The eyes are black, though they may seem red or green when light strikes them directly. The mouth is wide, edged with thick, light-colored lips, and surrounded by bristles. The face is very hairy, possibly giving the thing a moustache.

The medium to long neck supports the mane. Some observers report a jagged crest on the back, but this is probably just tufts of hair sticking together. The Merhorse has a pair of front flippers, with rear flippers that have either joined together in a vertical plane to form a false tail, or have disappeared entirely and been replaced by a two-lobed tail with a

jagged rear edge. It has smooth, shiny skin like a sea lion, which may be covered with short fur. The whole animal, aside from the mane, is uniformly dark brown, steel gray, or black. Merhorses reported in warm water are a mahogany color. It apparently lives on large fish and squid, as tales from such disparate locations as Scandinavia and the South Pacific tell of enmity between sea serpents and squids. Except for the Indian Ocean and the polar regions, it has been reported all over the

## Merhorse

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Subarctic to tropical waters
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1-2
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVEMENT:	Sw 30
HIT DICE:	14
THAC0:	7
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	4-16
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	G (60'-100')
MORALE:	Steady (12)
XP VALUE:	4,000

**Long-necked:** This creature is about the size of the Merhorse, and some people mistakenly assume they are different sexes of the same species. However, the differences are too great for that. For example, aside from a few whiskers on the muzzle and a hairy crest making a short ridge along the spine, no hairs are visible on the Long-necked sea serpent. Its neck is also far more slender than that of the Merhorse, and is quite long. Though it may look like a plesiosaur, it, too, is a giant form of sea lion. Its eyes are too small to be seen unless the observer is very close, and a pair of short hornlike tubes project from the top of the head. These are probably breathing tubes, erectable at will, enabling the creature to take air while remaining virtually invisible at the surface. If extended while below the surface, these tubes let the Long-necked exhale under water without blinding itself with the stream of bubbles.

The Long-necked has a very small round head, with a tapering muzzle like a seal's, often compared to the head of a horse, giraffe, or camel. Its neck is cylindrical and is flexible enough to bend in any direction or to stick out of the water perpendicularly. As mentioned before, it has no mane, but a fold in its skin behind the head seems to form a sort of collar. It has a

thick, fat body with visible rolls of fat that can form from 1-3 humps as the animal bends its body while swimming. It has four seallike flippers, and its tail is either nonexistent or a mere stump. The skin looks smooth when wet, but rough and wrinkled when dry or when viewed up close. Coloration on top is dark brown, with gray, black, or whitish mottling; the underside is a much lighter, dirty yellow hue.

The Long-necked is just as fast as the Merhorse, and, except for the fact that its bite only does 1-8 points of damage, its stats are the same. It has been reported in all but the coldest waters, and it seems to prefer cool waters in summer and the tropics in winter.

**Marine saurian:** Of the seven sea serpents Heuvelmans describes, the Marine saurian is the only one that is definitely a reptile. Generally, it looks like a giant crocodile about 60' long, with either flippers instead of legs or legs with webbed feet. The eyes are prominent, and, in some cases, its tail may end in a fishlike fin. Its grayish or reddish brown skin looks smooth, but scales still remain in some places, forming rings around the body and creating a slight dorsal crest. It is found all over the tropics, and prefers the open sea to the coast.

Given the varying descriptions, more than one species of animal could be involved here. Those with flippers could well be mosasaurs (detailed in MC3) though they could just as easily be plesiosaurs (short-necked plesiosaurs, such as the Kronosaurus from Australian waters) that should have the same general stats. The web-footed crocs could be surviving Thalattosuchians, or sea crocodiles from the Mesozoic Era. They would differ from the standard giant crocodile in the following ways: NO. APPEARING: 1-2; no land movement, SW 18; HD 14; THAC0 7; #ATT: 1 (bite); DAMAGE/ATTACK: 7-28; SPECIAL ATTACKS: Swallow whole; SIZE G (60'); XP VALUE: 8,000.

**Father-of-all-the-turtles:** Named after a similar creature from Sumatran legends, this is basically a giant sea turtle 60' long and 40' wide. It has a mouth so wide that it splits the head in two when it opens (one report claims the inside of the mouth is a brilliant red color), large eyes, and a shell whose front slopes up and backward in front, then slants down toward the rear. The scales on the front are hardly noticeable, while those to the rear of the shell are so large they have been compared to roofing shingles. Sometimes fleshy filaments are reported hanging around the mouth. There are only a few reports of this beast, the last in 1960. Oddly for a reptile, it is found in cold temperate areas. However, really large reptiles lose heat more slowly than their smaller fellows, and the Leatherback turtle *does* travel far to the north.

If it exists, the Father-of-all-the-turtles is

probably an enlarged descendant of the Cretaceous sea turtle Archelon. Stats are those from the MC3, with the following exceptions: 16 HD; THAC0 5; DAMAGE/ATTACK 2-20; SIZE G (60' long by 40' wide); XP VALUE 8,000.

**Yellow belly:** This poorly described and infrequently encountered creature is shaped like a tadpole up to 100' long, with a huge flat head that imperceptibly merges into its flat body. Its tail is extremely long and tapering. The Yellow belly is a very striking shade of yellow in color, with a black stripe all along its spine and black transverse bands on its sides. It has only been reported in tropical waters. Because its description is so vague, there is, as yet, no way to make even an educated guess about what kind of animal it is (if it exists at all). Use the statistics of common whales with maximum hit dice, doing damage only with a bite that does 3d4x5 points of damage.

**Great orm:** In July 1966, an oddly-shaped prehistoric worm was described to the scientific community. *Tullimonstreum gregarium* was only a few inches long (a school of them, possibly young ones, had been buried in a cloud of sediment and preserved that way), but it looked for all the world like a miniature plesiosaur. It had a small but distinct head (unusual for worms), a slender, swanlike neck, a torpedo-shaped body with a pair of paddle-like flippers up front, and a tail that looks like an ace of spades. In an amazing example of convergent evolution, this worm from the Carboniferous period came to look like a plesiosaur, and undoubtedly lived like one. In his book, *The Great Orm of Loch Ness*, F. W. Holiday stated his opinion that Nessie and sea serpents in general are giant forms of *Tullimonstreum*.

Holiday gives a number of good reasons for his theory. The loch has been checked by sonar a number of times, sometimes showing creatures, sometimes not. If the creatures in the loch were lying, wormlike, on the bottom, the sonar would not distinguish them as separate objects. Also, an aquatic worm would mainly breathe through gills, so it would not have to surface for air, explaining why more sightings are not made. In his second book on this subject, *The Dragon and the Disc*, he mentions a case from the past where an "orm" came ashore, got itself wedged in a crevice or something, and died. The awed locals reported that it "melted away" without leaving any traces behind. Since worms are soft-bodied, shell-less invertebrates, they would leave no bones or other remains behind once their flesh had rotted away.

Another bit of evidence is the fact that close views of Nessie instill far more revulsion in people than would seem to be warranted by a good look at a plesiosaur, long-necked seal, etc. One witness actually described the body as "wormy; creepy. The entire body had movement all over it all

the time." Echoing these sentiments was a woman who actually took two photographs of a similar beast in a different loch. She said she would not like to see the animal again because she did not like the way it moved when it swam. The two photos showed a head that merged imperceptibly into the neck (no eyes or other features were visible), and a body that changed shape as it swam. Another witness said the "obscene" thing reminded him of a giant stomach with a long, writhing gut attached. Charming! In an early sighting after the Loch Ness fracas began, a Mr. and Mrs. Spicer saw the thing flop across a road and plunge into the loch. They said that more than anything else, it looked like a giant slug. There are many descriptions of these lake monsters leaving trails of slime behind them when they come out on land. Whatever game system you use, don't be surprised if your NPC hirelings, colleagues, or whatever take to their heels at the first sight of the thing.

Use the Elasmosaurus stats from MC3 with the following modifications: ACTIVITY CYCLE Any; HD 20; THAC0 5; DAMAGE/ATTACK 3-30; SPECIAL DEFENSES Poisonous secretions from its warty flesh (save vs. poison at -1 if you touch it with bare flesh, or die); SIZE G (100'); XP Value 14,000.

## Monsters in campaigns

These creatures are intended as additional monsters for the AD&D game, so naturally this article uses AD&D game terms. However, since these creatures are reported to be alive today, they can be used in any historical or modern campaign, such as the TOP SECRET S.I.<sup>TM</sup> game, the CALL OF CTHULHU<sup>\*</sup> game, the DARK CONSPIRACY<sup>\*</sup> game, or any superhero game. Lake monsters (which, depending on which expert you believe, are either *Tullimonstreum* or giant sea lions like the Long-necked) are found in Scotland, Ireland, Sweden, the USSR, the USA, Canada, Italy, Japan, Australia, Malaysia, Argentina, and in some portions of tropical Africa, thus giving globe-trotting PCs plenty of opportunities to encounter them. True sea serpents, of course, can be encountered anywhere on the high seas.

Although they aren't sea serpents, sperm whales are their competitors and possibly their predators. They should be given a new nonmagical attack form, based on their unusual way of catching prey. I never stopped to wonder how a boxlike sperm whale could catch a torpedo-shaped, jet-propelled squid, until I actually read about how whales catch their prey—they use powerful, focused sounds waves to stun their victims. This works because sound waves have a much greater impact underwater than in the open air.

In game terms, this *sonic blast* has a range of 100' in a beam 10' wide. Any living creature hit by this sound beam (generated by the whale's sonar apparatus) must

save vs. wands. The fate of those who fail is determined by their size: Creatures of Size L and smaller are killed while larger creatures are stunned for one round. Most fish and squid found in sperm whale stomachs are relatively small; the epic battles with giant squid occur when a whale finds one that it can stun long enough to catch up to, but that is too big to be killed outright by the sonic attack. Giving sperm whales this ability adds 1,000 XP to their standard value.

In game terms, most of the creatures described here are just modified AD&D monsters. However, remember that even superficial changes in a monster's looks can make it seem brand new in the players' eyes. In the case of the mammalian sea serpents, for instance, the only superficial difference between them and plesiosaurs is a little bit of hair and a body that bends vertically instead of horizontally; the last is a reminder of the days when the first mammals had to abandon the reptilian sprawl in favor of a gait that enabled them to more efficiently slip into the smallest cracks to escape dinosaurs and other predators, making mammals the only vertebrates that move up-and-down instead of side-to-side. Look at the illustrations and think of how they'll appear to the PCs. The game stats might be basically the same, but you're the only one who knows that.

The best part about this collection of

creatures is that they are all living today, or at least are said to be living today. Thus, they are more plausible monsters for modern games than dragons, dinosaurs, etc. Unless your gaming world assumes the entire ocean has been poisoned, you can even have them on Earth in futuristic games, including post-holocaust ones like the GAMMA WORLD® game. A steady diet of them can be tiresome, but for the occasional unusual scenario, they can be just what the GM ordered. Needless to say, anything that makes games more interesting is highly desirable, indeed.

## Reference

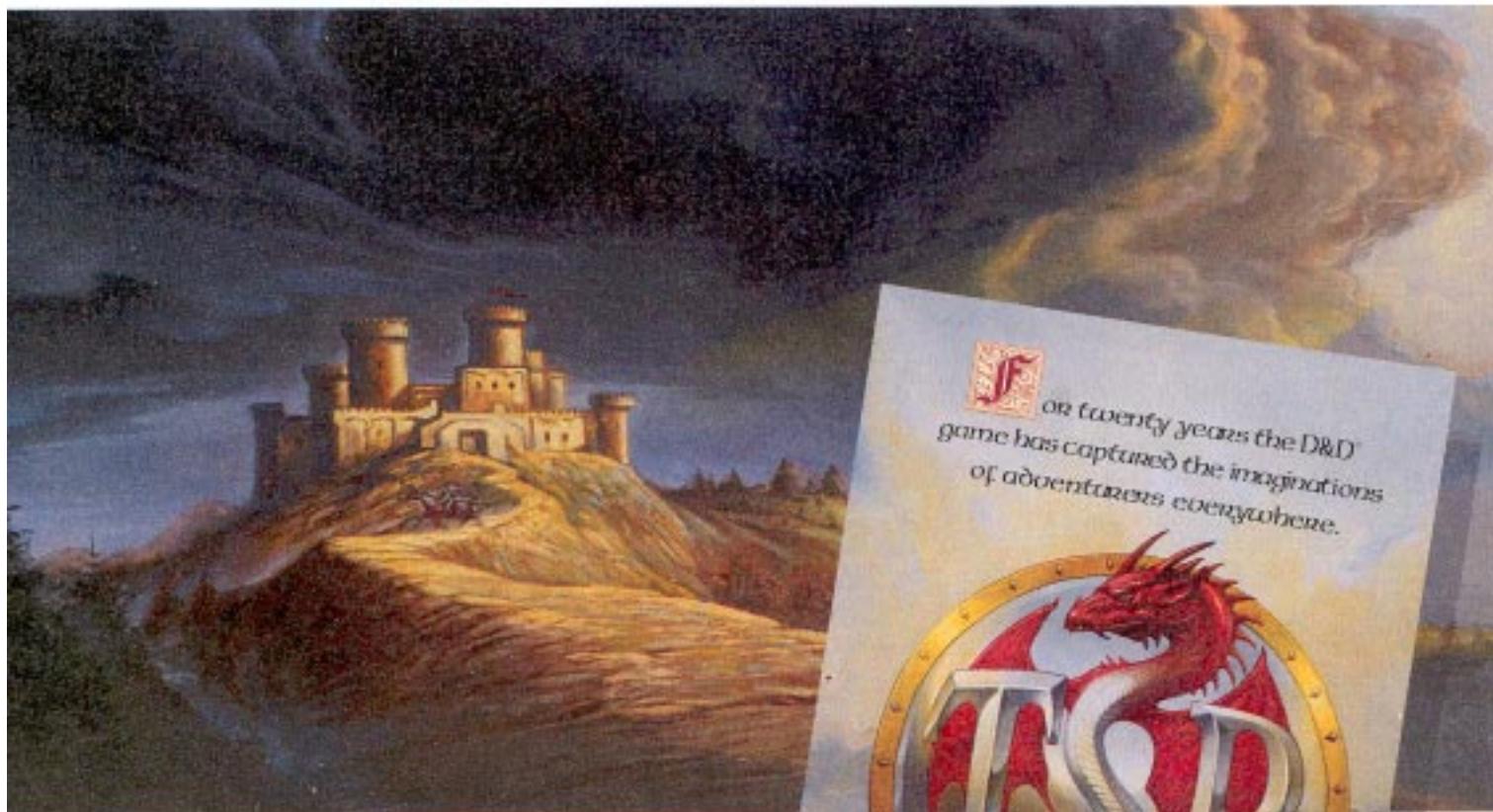
*In the Wake of the Sea Serpents*, by Bernard Heuvelmans; American edition, Hill and Wang, 1968; original French edition, Librairie Plon, 1965. This massive volume (over 600 pages) is the definitive work on the subject. Extensive lists of sightings, maps showing distribution by species—this book has it all.

*There Are Giants in the Sea*, by Michael Bright; Robson Books, Ltd., 1989. Bright is more skeptical about the more exotic creatures Heuvelmans theorizes about. The main value of this book is the fact that it includes modern sea serpent sightings from the time after the publication of *In the Wake of the Sea Serpents*, including a

*Continued on page 24*



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**In memoriam:**

Bryan K. Bernstein

Less than a month after completing this article for DRAGON® Magazine, Bryan Bernstein and his wife, Laura, were murdered while en route to the University of California-Los Angeles, in

September 1991. Both were 22 years old and graduates of Cornell University; they had graduate fellowships at UCLA.

Donations may be made to the Cruz Bernstein Youth for Understanding

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I remember you, Bryan, and was very sorry to see you go.

—Roger E. Moore

# Deep Beneath the Waves



# Fantasy adventures on the ocean floor

by Bryan K. Bernstein

Artwork by Dave Plunkett

Far from the sunlit shore and miles beneath the ceaseless waves lies another world waiting to be explored. It is a world darker than any dungeon, filled with beasts that are as exotic, beautiful, and terrible as any that walk on earth. This world is also a repository of boundless wealth. On the ocean floor lie the wrecks of countless ships that never returned to shore, their cargoes virtually frozen in time. The sea itself contains more dissolved gold, silver, and platinum than all the dwarves will ever carve from their frigid mountains.

The deep waters, with all of their shadowy and mystic splendors, are ready to be explored. The marine environment is ideal for fantastic adventuring. While this article directs itself toward the AD&D® game, the information should prove useful to any campaign.

## Some basic facts

A common misconception is that the ocean contains life in only the first few hundred feet and that below this are cubic miles of aquatic desert. In truth, even the deepest spot on Earth, the Mari- ana Trench, over 37,000' below sea level, is known to support life. While the number, size, and diversity of organisms found in a given volume of water does diminish with depth, no spot beneath the ocean surface is barren of life. At depths of a mile, creatures as large as the legendary giant squid (and the great sperm whale that feeds upon it) may be found.

In addition to its array of life, the sea accommodates vast topographic diversity. It houses abyssal plains covering millions of square miles, chains of volcanic mountains that circle the globe (some of them taller than Mt. Everest), submarine channels vaster than the Grand Canyon, trenches over six miles deep, cliffs that rise thousands of feet above the surrounding terrain, and great valleys. Features unique to the ocean are coral reefs, ring-shaped islands formed of coral called atolls, and guyots—mountains whose peaks have been flattened by wave action and subsequently submerged. The sea even boasts its own rivers, called currents, filled with water that is either colder or hotter than its surrounding environment. While most currents flow on the surface, some (like the Cromwell Current) travel at depths greater than a mile and a half and

move a thousand times as much water as the Mississippi River. Surely, here is a setting worthy of heroic adventure.

The ocean generally can be divided into three zones, based on depth and topography. The first zone is that of the shallow waters covering the continental shelves. This region extends to about 600' in depth and is the genesis of almost all food in the ocean. Even near inhospitable shores, life abounds in this zone. In a campaign world, sea elves will be found here, as well as sahuagin, ixitzachitl, aquatic ogres and hobgoblins, mermen, tritons, and locathah. In tropical regions, coral reefs support a fantastic diversity of life: angel fish, sea anemones, urchins, rays, clown fish, starfish, sand dollars, brittle stars, cephalopods, shrimp, eels, and sea snakes, to name only a few. Almost all marine animals described in the *Monster Manuals* and *Monstrous Compendiums* come from this zone. Because of the comparatively greater attention this zone has received in other fantasy writings, the remainder of this article will concentrate on deeper waters.

The second oceanic zone is that of the continental slope, which extends in depth about 600'-4,000'. While the slope may appear quite steep on most maps and globes, this is misleading, as it is a function of the large scale involved. In reality, the slope starts out at about 6° and gradually steepens to a maximum of 12°. Here life is still quite abundant, and the sounds and calls of many animals can be heard.<sup>1</sup> Despite its abundance, however, life on the continental slope—with the exception of a few marketable species of fish—is relatively unknown to most surface inhabitants.

The third and last oceanic zone is that of the abyss, ranging in depth from about 4,000' all the way to the bottom of the ocean's deepest trench.<sup>2</sup> The ocean bottom in this zone is sometimes referred to as the abyssal plains, but this name is imprecise as it does not suggest the topographic diversity already mentioned. The conditions of this environment almost never change. Whether beneath the equator or the poles, the temperature constantly hovers around the freezing point. Although it is forever lost in shade, the water of the abyss is actually quite clear, as most falling organic material has been consumed or dissolved in the ocean's upper reaches. For this same reason (the

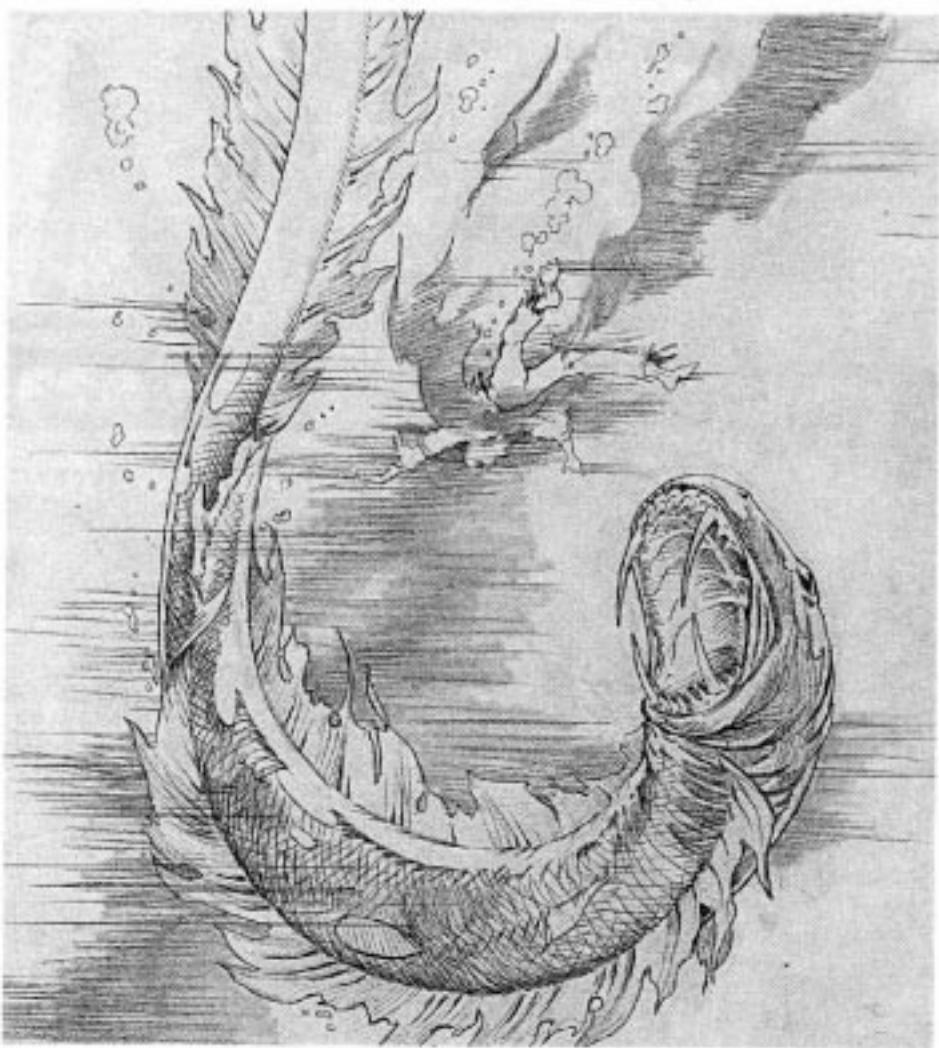
lack of debris), the deep ocean floor is generally free of the muck found at the bottom of lakes and ponds.

In general, the ocean floor away from the continental shelf is covered by either a red clay, formed from iron-rich volcanic deposits, or by various "oozes" composed of the undissolvable casings and shells of sea creatures. The composition of oozes varies according to depth, but all should be able to support the weight of characters. Covering the oozes and clay at various spots on the ocean floor are remains of some animals that are almost indestructible, such as the teeth of sharks and the ear bones of whales.

Additionally, as time passes, various metals precipitate out of the water and form nodules on the ocean floor. On Earth, these are composed principally of manganese, nickel, cobalt, and copper. In fantasy campaigns, where gold may be more prevalent and there exist fantastic metals such as adamantite and mithral, different concentrations might be encountered. The size of a nodule varies from that of a golf ball to as large as a watermelon; at the center of each will be found a bit of debris to which the metal has clung and developed in layers like an onion. Deposits may cover several million square miles, having taken ages to accumulate. Values for such nodules depend on their size and content (how much would a football-sized block of gold be worth in your campaign?)

The fauna of the abyss is like that of nowhere else on Earth. Encounters often will begin with the characters seeing distant glowing forms that may resemble underwater will-o-(the)-wisps. The light is bioluminescent—that is to say, it is produced naturally by various animals. Typically, it is a signal given off by small fish to alert possible mates of their whereabouts, but many predators also emit light as a kind of lure. For example, the eye of the deep, from the *Monster Manual I*, is particularly fond of using its illusion abilities in this way.

In addition to emitting light, the creatures of the deep have evolved in many ways to adjust to their environment. As meals tend to be few and far between, many undersea beasts are capable of swallowing more than their own body weight in prey. Also, because of the scarcity of food, most such animals are relatively small, under 1' long. They should not be to display a wicked array of



teeth. In the real world, some undersea creatures are sensitive to the faint electrical aura that surrounds all life; they use this ability to home in on prey. In fantasy campaigns, others may sense magical or psychic radiation. A few are suspension-feeders and are very adept at filtering what little food falls to them.

Without doubt, the most spectacular of the deep dwellers are those found near hydrothermal vents, springs of hot water caused by the proximity of magma. Vents come in two basic forms. The "hot smoker" variety is found near fissures adjacent to protrusions of magma. Water

seeps into the fissure, is heated to very high temperatures (200°-300°C), and rushes out with great force. The output of a hot smoker may reach a million gallons of water per minute. The second variety, called a "cold seep," is much more sedate. In this form, the vent consists of a heated flow of smooth or pillow-shaped lava. The surface area of such a flow is much greater than that of a hot smoker, so the temperature of the surrounding water is elevated only a few degrees.

In either case, the water from a vent is typically rich in dissolved minerals, much of which precipitate out of the water and

form deposits on the ocean floor. Various bacteria are able to process minerals suspended in the water to form food digestible by other animals. This process, chemosynthesis, plays a role in the vent ecosystem analogous to that of photosynthesis in the sunlit world. Many of the organisms in this environment seem to be distorted reflections of beasts inhabiting shallower waters. The overabundance of food allows such mundane animals as clams and worms to grow to gigantic proportions. Other creatures, having evolved in an environment like none other on Earth, are totally unrecognizable.

In general, hydrothermal vents form in areas that are actively volcanic, typically in deep water near the edge of a continent or amid chains of underwater volcanoes. In fantasy worlds, vents might also be found near gates to the elemental plane of Fire. Whatever their origin, vents tend to be temporary in nature. A typical vent area cools off in 10-60 years, while new ones form with similar frequency.

Having been introduced to the undersea world themselves, Dungeon Masters can encourage their players to explore the ocean. The following may serve as introductory plots for possible adventures:

1. The characters hear rumors about a sunken treasure ship or lost artifact, then go in search of it.

2. In order to be rid of a cursed artifact, the characters must throw it into an underwater volcano or into a bottomless trench.

3. An important person, perhaps a player character, has been captured by the sahuagin and brought to one of their cities. The heroes attempt a rescue.

4. One or more monsters has been attacking coastal villages. The heroes are hired to destroy all marauders.

5. A group of humans or demihumans is interested in exploiting the mineral wealth of the ocean bottom. They hire the characters to either bring deep-sea nodules to the surface, or scout an area and clear it of monsters so that the group can begin mining operations.

6. A strange object, possibly created by the deep-sea octopi (see later), washes up on shore. The characters investigate its source.

Whatever the motive, characters brought underwater will find it a mystical place. The DM will probably wish to center most adventures around a coral reef or hydrothermal vent, as these environments possess the greatest diversity of life.

When the characters do decide to embark on a deep-sea quest, they will encounter four principal difficulties. In order, these are: pressure, air, warmth, and light.

**Pressure:** Increasing pressure comes to bear on an object the further it descends. For every 33' of depth, the pressure exerted on an object increases by about one atmos-

#### Effects of pressurized gases on divers'

Depth	Symptoms	Game effects
0-99'	No adverse reactions	Nil
100-149'	Inability to think clearly	-2 Int, -2 Wis*
150-199'	Dizziness	-2 Int, -2 Wis, -2 Dex**
200-249'	Inability to communicate or perform simple tasks	-2 Int, -2 Wis, -2 Dex**
250-300'	Helplessness	Int, Wis, Dex reduced to 3
300'	Death	Save vs. death***

\* No ability is lowered below 3.

\*\* Effects are cumulative.

\*\*\* -2 penalty is applied to save for each additional 100'.

sphere—in other words, the pressure exerted on an object at 330' is 10 times that at sea level. Because the lungs and air spaces in the skull, stomach, and intestines are subject to compression (and decompression), this depth represents the absolute maximum pressure that most terrestrial creatures, including humans, can withstand.

Amphibious mammals and birds, such as seals and penguins, may easily dive about twice this far as they have evolved special adaptations to the greater pressure. Mammals that live exclusively in the water may dive as deep as 1,000' or more; the sperm whale has the almost unique ability among air breathers to descend over 5,000'. Water breathers, as they do not have to worry about their lungs being crushed, have a slightly greater range of motion than the typical amphibious mammal. Nevertheless, as most contain gas bladders that help them to float, they are generally limited to a depth range of no more than 1,000' (i.e., they can either ascend or descend up to 500' above or below their ideal depth).<sup>3</sup>

Too rapid or great a descent subjects a creature to excessive changes in pressures and may lead to "nitrogen narcosis" (see later). Too quick an ascent leads to a painful and life-threatening condition called decompression sickness, or "the bends." Very slow descents (or ascents)

allow gas from the surrounding water to flow safely into or out of an organism's bloodstream, enabling it to equalize internal and external pressure, but such slow changes in depth are not often feasible.<sup>4</sup>

**Air:** The second principal obstacle to be overcome in making deep dives is that of air. While a few characters may be of races that possess gills, this cannot be considered common. Moreover, the effects of pressure on certain gases can cause serious problems for the unwary diver. At depths greater than 100', nitrogen becomes intoxicating, a condition known as nitrogen narcosis, and oxygen must be taken in diminishing quantities or it becomes toxic (see Effects of pressurized gases on divers table).

**Warmth:** The third obstacle to be overcome is that of warmth. Water absorbs body heat about 25 times faster than air. A temperature that might be uncomfortably warm in air could be uncomfortably cold in water. For example, a resting diver chills in 1-2 hours when the water temperature is 75-85°F (25°C). People have died in an hour's time in 40°F (50°C) water, and depths greater than 1,000' are rarely this comfortable. Characters who do not take proper precautions to stay warm will suffer.<sup>5</sup>

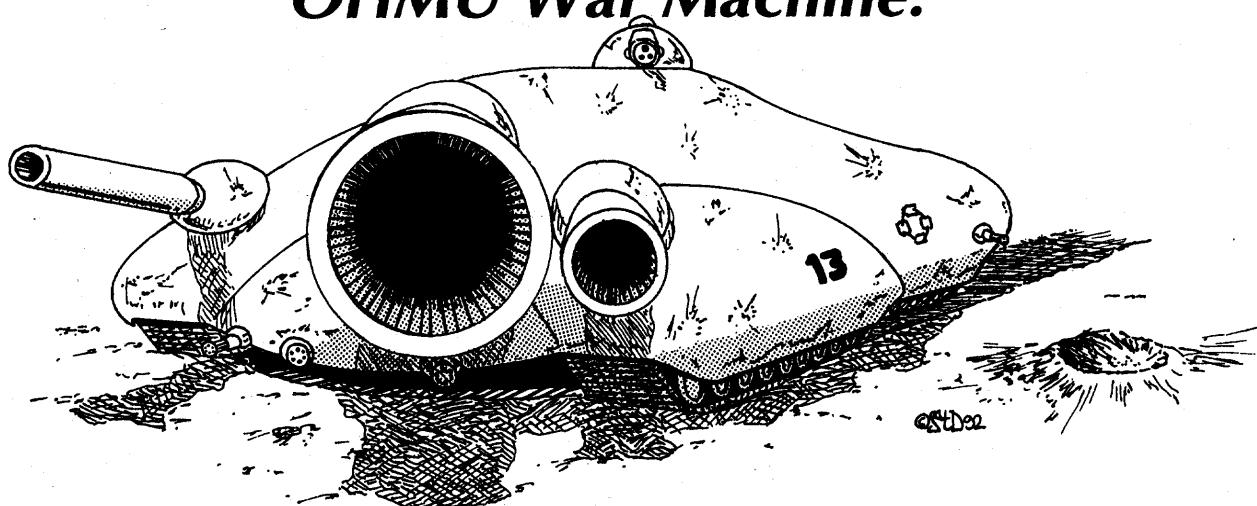
**Light:** The fourth obstacle is that of light. Light does not penetrate water sufficiently for human vision at depths of more than 200'.<sup>6</sup> Even if artificial sources

of light are at hand, vision may be hampered. Light refracts at a different angle in water than it does in air. Without a mask to trap air, or lenses to correct for the distortion, characters will find their vision to be very blurry. They cannot distinguish Tiny creatures at distances greater than one foot, Small creatures further than 10', Medium creatures further than 20', Large creatures further than 30', Huge creatures further than 40', or Gigantic creatures further than 50' away. Additionally, they suffer a -2 modifier to their attack rolls in hand-to-hand combat and a -4 modifier when using distance weapons. Opponents receive a +2 to all saving throws vs. spells cast by such a handicapped adventurer. These modifiers are in addition to any others for underwater combat. Finally, characters without corrective lenses or a mask cannot read underwater, and they perform all detailed work involving hand-eye coordination, such as picking locks, at a 75% penalty.

Goggles and masks can be purchased from an expert glassblower for 100 and 300 gp, respectively, and take a week to manufacture. It should be noted that goggles are useless below 33' because the weight of the surrounding water squeezes the air next to the eyes until the goggles become too uncomfortable to wear. Masks can be used down to 660', as

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the character can equalize the air pressure in the mask to that of the surrounding environment by exhaling through his nose. Of course, if a character is magically breathing water, this tactic is of no use as water will fill the mask and obscure vision. Eyeglasses and contact lenses that correct for water distortion do not have the depth limitations of goggles and masks because they do not rely on air spaces to correct for vision distortion. However, such eyewear can be crafted only by the most skilled artisans. The cost is 1,000 gp for glasses and 5,000 gp for contacts, and they each require at least three weeks to fashion. Use of any of the above-mentioned items quintuples underwater vision, light permitting, and negates any of the aforementioned penalties.

Fortunately, with a bit of ingenuity, all of the obstacles to underwater adventuring can be overcome with relative ease. The following magical items could prove useful: *apparatus of Kvalish; boots of the north; winged boots* (user may swim at MV 9); *cloak of the manta ray; cube of force; cube of frost resistance; decanter of endless water* (provides rocketlike locomotion); *gem of brightness; gem of seeing* (may correct underwater vision); *gauntlets of swimming and climbing; helm of underwater action; necklace of adaptation; net of snaring; oil of elemental (water) invulnerability; oil of slipperiness* (may negate effects of pressure); *pearl of the sirines; potion of water breathing; potion of flying* (imbiber may swim at MV 9); *ring of elemental (water) command; ring of free action; ring of swimming; ring of warmth; ring of water breathing; scroll of protection from water; trident of fish command; wand of illumination; wand of polymorphing*.

Characters may also create or find exotic magical items. While the effects of any given item are subject to interpretation, kind DMs may rule that magical items that allow characters to breathe water also negate the harmful effects of pressure, as the water fills all air spaces in the body.

In addition to magical items, there are various spells, psionic powers, and shape-changing abilities that could prove useful. One note of caution should be given as to the effects of the last ability. The fact that a character has been polymorphed into a water-breathing animal does not necessarily provide protection from either pressure or cold. The results depend on the species of animal chosen.

Finally, characters might use a combination of magic and technology to allow them to explore the ocean depths. Krynnish gnomes, for example, might be able to devise a submersible, perhaps with walls of adamantine able to resist tremendous pressure. Of course, considering the reputation of these gnomes, it would take a brave adventurer to test such a device.

## Deep encounters

Once the characters are properly equipped, all that is left is for them to begin exploring. The following is a list of some of the creatures they may encounter on the ocean floor. All are at least loosely based on actual animals. MC11, the second FORGOTTEN REALMS® appendix to the *Monstrous Compendium*, includes another deep-sea usable monster: the golden ammonite.

## Octopus, deep-dwelling

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Deep ocean/ Hydrothermal vents
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Colony
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (8-10)
TREASURE:	See text
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral (good)
NO. APPEARING:	10-40
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	3/Sw 12
HIT DICE:	1-1
THAC0:	19
NO. OF ATTACKS:	7 or 4
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-2(x6)/1-3 or 1-6(x3)/1-3
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See text
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See text
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M
MORALE:	Average (8)
XP VALUE:	75

The deep-dwelling octopus is a distant cousin of the common octopus, averaging 8' in diameter and weighing about 65 lbs. Its skin has a bioluminescent pigment that it manipulates with great facility. Thus, in the absolute darkness of the ocean's depths, it appears as a floating, shifting arrangement of greenish lights. Under sunlike illumination, it can be seen that the deep-dweller has a whiter skin and larger body sac than its shallow-dwelling relative. Its illuminating pigment aside, a deep-dwelling octopus possesses no ability to camouflage itself. It lives for an average of 30-35 years.

**Combat:** Peaceful by nature, the deep-dwelling octopus has little combat experience, aside from battling the occasional predatory fish. Nevertheless, when threatened, it can be a cunning and tenacious fighter. When entering combat, a deep-dweller normally anchors itself with two of its tentacles and attacks with the other six. Each tentacle can inflict 1d2 hp damage with a blow. All six may be directed against a single opponent, or the attacks may be distributed among up to three adversaries. A deep-dweller may also bite with its powerful beak for 1d3 hp damage.

The tentacles of a deep-dweller are tough and can hold with surprising strength. Opponents less than 4' tall

struck by a tentacle must save vs. paralyzation or be grasped. Grasped creatures automatically suffer 1d2 hp constriction damage per attached tentacle on each subsequent round. Moreover, if a creature has been grasped by two or more tentacles, the deep-dweller receives a +2 bonus on all succeeding attack rolls made with its beak. A victim may attempt to free itself by rolling his Strength or less on 2d8; success indicates that a tentacle has been removed (a separate check being made for each tentacle). Regardless of whether or not attempt is successful, a creature trying to remove a tentacle may perform no other actions.

Grasped creatures may also be freed by severing the tentacles that hold them. Each tentacle takes 2 hp damage to sever, and this amount is not subtracted from the creature's total hit points. Grasped creatures may attack but do so at a -2 penalty; they may not cast spells. Severed tentacles regrow in 1d6 months.

In general, deep-dwellers have little contact with hostile groups, having driven out rival predators long ago. Most reside in a state of semi-innocence and possess no weapons. The few colonies that have been recently attacked always have special defenses. Against larger opponents, for example, they have been known to employ small spears of bone. These weapons do 1d6 hp damage, require two tentacles each to employ, and cannot be thrown.

Deep-dwellers may also attempt to surprise foes. A common ploy is for the octopi to approach their victims from above, having "turned off" their luminescence. In such cases characters take a -2 penalty to their surprise rolls.

Although not cowardly by nature, deep-dwellers do not hesitate to break off combat if it begins to go against them. (An exception to this is a female protecting her young.) Typically, they emit a burst of glowing ink (sepia), turn off their own luminescence, and flee the area. At short range, the cloud obscures vision; at long range, it may be mistaken for an actual deep-dwelling octopus. Furthermore, the cloud of ink is naturally cohesive. Characters or objects caught in the cloud (all within a 10' sphere must save vs. breath weapon at -2 to avoid) continue to glow for 4d4 hours; the effect is similar to a faerie fire spell.

**Habitat/Society:** Deep-dwelling octopi are found on the ocean floor at depths greater than 9,000' and in the vicinity of hydrothermal vents. As vents are transient by nature, octopoid communities are frequently on the move.

Deep-dwellers communicate with each other by a combination of clicking noises produced by their beaks and by altering the pattern of lights on their bodies. This makes communication with other races somewhat difficult. A tongues spell grants comprehension to a character, but it does not allow him to speak unless he can also



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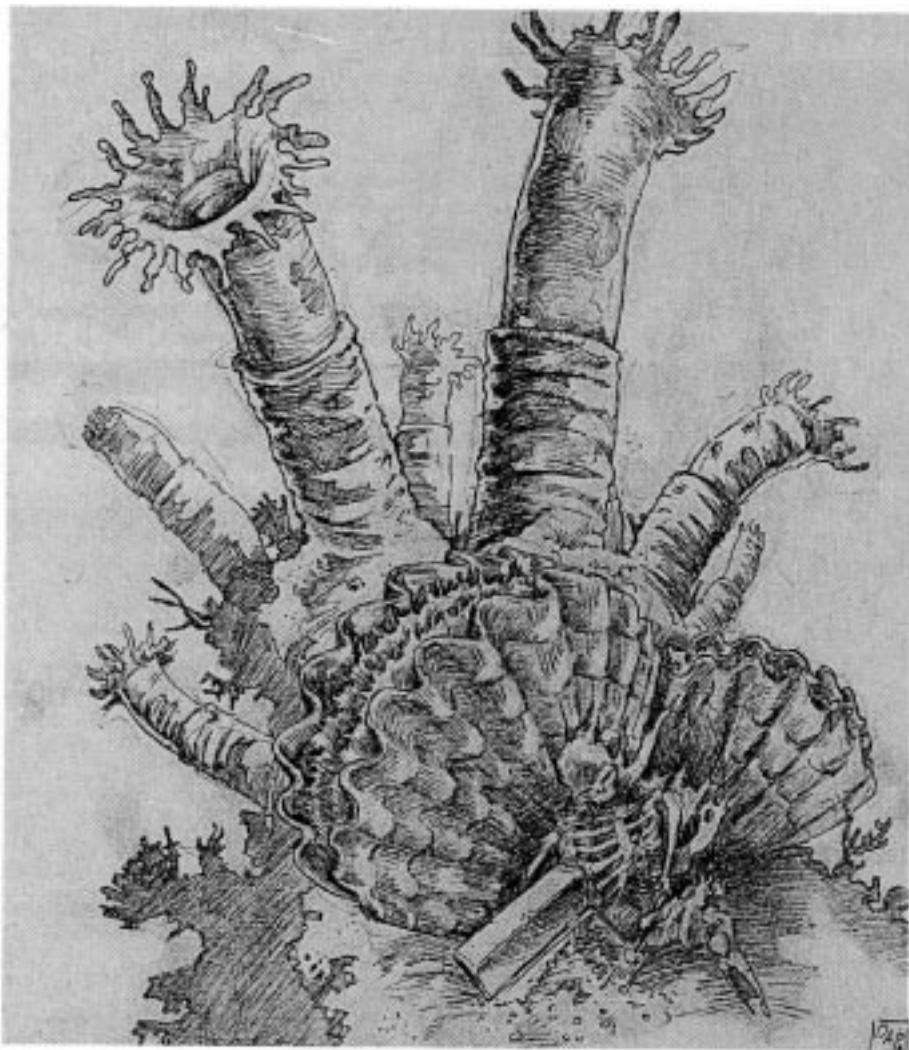
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assume the form of an octopoid and reproduce its bioluminescence.

Deep-dwellers have neither been exposed to magic nor have developed the concept of religion. Thus, they have no mages or priests. The octopi are, however,

naturally curious. Should they be introduced to either phenomenon, it could affect their culture radically.

**Ecolom:** Deep-dwelling octopi have established an agrarian society. Near the hottest land (most nutrient-rich) part of a

vent, they raise giant tube worms and clams. The clams and worms provide food and, when the shells are cleaned out, shelter. Farther from a vent, the octopoids tend fields of shrimp and mussels. Some octopoid communities are known to raise crabs and lobsters as well.

Deep-dwellers do not have a concept of money as such, but individuals may possess treasure. Pearls are often strung to form necklaces or bracelets, then sprayed with ink so as to glow. Octopoids are fine sculptors whose work would certainly be considered unique if brought to the surface. Additionally, the area surrounding the hydrothermal vent is typically rich in precious metals, though these would require excavation. Finally, many wizards would pay dearly for a bottle of deep-dwelling octopus ink, as it can be used to prepare magical glyphs and scrolls.

### Tube worm, giant

Giant tube worms are a fairly common sight near hydrothermal vents. The mundane variety consist of pacific suspension feeders, measuring about 6' high and 2' in diameter. They possess an extremely durable outer casing of a dark yellow coloration. Their bodies are of a pale yellow. The heads are topped with flowery appendages and are extended while feeding.

Carnivorous tube worms, also known as blood worms, closely resemble their peaceful relatives but are thankfully more rare. Their heads lack the flowery appendages of the common variety; instead, they are adorned with wide mouths containing an extremely wicked set of sharp teeth.

**Combat:** The common giant tube worm has no form of attack. As its body is comparatively vulnerable (AC 7), it relies on its shell to provide it with protection (AC 2). The worm can sense pressure caused by either sound or movement and is thus very difficult to surprise (+2 bonus to avoid surprise). Should it feel threatened by the approach of another creature, which is almost always the case, the worm withdraws inside its tube. A valve (AC 2) seals the tube from the top, and the animal is then well protected from attack.

Carnivorous giant tube worms are usually encountered hidden among the more common variety and are 90% indistinguishable from the latter. They typically lie in wait for a suitable meal to pass by, then strike out with speed and ferocity (+2 to surprise roll). The body of a worm is extremely flexible and can extend to 3' in all directions from the top of its tube. Carnivorous tube worms are unpleasant fighters: In addition to their nasty teeth, they secrete a weak poison through their saliva (save vs. poison at +2 or lose 2 points of Dexterity for 1d6 turns from burning and itching). They are not, however, overly brave, and if they lose more than 50% of their hit points they retreat to the compar-

### Tube worm, giant

	Common	Carnivorous
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Deep ocean/ Hydrothermal vents	Deep ocean/ Hydrothermal vents
FREQUENCY:	Rare	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Colony	Clump
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any	Any
DIET:	Suspension feeder	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Non- (0)	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Nil	See text
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	20-200	2-8
ARMOR CLASS:	2/7	2/7
MOVEMENT:	Nil	Nil
HIT DICE:	1+1	2+2
THAC0:	Nil	19
NO. OF ATTACKS:	0	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	Nil	2-8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil	Surprise, poison
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Alert	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	M (6' long)	M (6' long)
MORALE:	Unreliable (4)	Steady (11)
XP VALUE:	35	120

ative safety of their tubes.

**Habitat/Society:** Giant tube worms are found exclusively in the vicinity of hydrothermal vents. Generally, the hotter the water (and therefore the more nutrient rich), the more worms are found. Both types of worms are exclusively sexually reproductive. The young, numbering several thousand, are emitted from a genital valve found near the head on the female. While neither type of worm collects treasure, some items may (rarely) be found near the base of the carnivorous variety.

**Ecology:** The common giant tube worm lives in a symbiotic relationship with chemosynthetic bacteria. The bacteria are found in the guts of the worm and convert mineral particles into food. The worms serve as a source of food for many creatures, and their hollowed-out tubes are often used as lairs. Most creatures not native to hydrothermal vents find the worm's meat inedible because of its high sulfur content.

Carnivorous giant tube worms eat almost anything they can grab and are considered a great nuisance by deep-dwelling octopi.

## Clam, giant

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Deep ocean/ Hydrothermal vents
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Colony
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	feeder
INTELLIGENCE:	Non-
TREASURE:	See text
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	20-80
ARMOR CLASS:	0/7
MOVEMENT:	1'
HIT DICE:	5+5
THAC0:	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2-12
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Crushing
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See text
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M
MORALE:	Average (8)
XP VALUE:	430

Giant clams are huge, mostly immobile bivalves. An average specimen measures 6' high and over 3' wide. The shell is vertically symmetrical, chalk white in color, and several inches thick.

**Combat:** Giant clams do not attack per se; rather, they possess an instinctive defense mechanism that can be dangerous to the unwary. Lining the lips of the bivalve are numerous, hairlike cilia that are extremely sensitive to pressure. When touched, they cause the clam to slam shut with great speed and force. Anything struck by the two shell halves (make a normal attack roll) takes 2-12 hp crushing

damage. Moreover, a character must make a Dexterity check or have a limb trapped. Trapped characters take 2 hp damage per round until they are successfully freed. A character may attempt to get free by making a successful bend bars/lift gates check; if this is done, no other action can be taken that round. Up to four other people may attempt to help free a trapped character. For each additional person helping, add that person's bend bars/lift gates roll to the trapped character's chance to win free. The chance of opening a clam is doubled if a person uses a spear, sword, or similar item to gain leverage.

Alternatively, a character may be freed by killing the clam. This is, however, no easy task. The exterior of the clam is so thick and hard (AC 0) that piercing weapons do but 1 hp damage, plus any Strength and magical modifiers. Slashing weapons do half damage, while blunt weapons do full damage. The interior of the clam is relatively vulnerable (AC 7) but can be attacked only by missile weapons or weapons over 4' long, and then only if the clam is at least partially open. Note that a clam held open because it is gripping someone's limb is considered to be partially open. If a campaign uses the alternative critical-hit or called-shot rules, a character may sever the muscles that bind the clam shut without killing it.<sup>8</sup>

**Habitat/Society:** Giant clams are typically found in the vicinity of hydrothermal vents, although they may very rarely be encountered in other parts of the ocean. Now and then, treasure items can be found on or near a giant clam, having been left by an unfortunate trespasser.

Giant clams reproduce sexually. The female lays hundreds of thousands of eggs into the water where they are fertilized by the male's sperm. The fry hatch in 3-4

weeks, moving about slowly (MV 1) by means of undulating cilia.

**Ecology:** Giant clams are suspension feeders. Those growing around hydrothermal vents live in a symbiotic relationship with bacteria that convert suspended mineral particles into food. Those living in other areas feed on suspended organic matter. Giant clams, both as fry and in their mature state, are a source of food for many of the sea's creatures. Deep-dwelling octopi have been known to use their shells as lairs.

**Giant oyster:** A relative of the giant clam, the giant oyster has a grayish color, a more elongated shape, and a more uneven exterior, but otherwise conforms to the previous statistics. Additionally, there is a 5% chance that a giant oyster contains a giant pearl. The value of these pearls is most commonly about 1,000 gp each, but exceptionally large, flawless specimens are worth more than 10,000 gp.

## Dragon fish<sup>9</sup>

Dragon fish are very large eel-like creatures that sport a massive array of teeth and exhibit a cunning intelligence. In the case of the saber-toothed, the teeth are so overwhelming that the animal cannot close its mouth. They were named by fishermen who noted their resemblance to the Oriental dragons. While dragon fish are not actually kin to dragons, being true fish and not reptiles, they are fearsome predators nonetheless.

All dragon fish are able to distend their jaws and rearrange internal organs in such a way as to swallow meals as large as the animals themselves. The common and saber-toothed varieties have no formal language, but if a *speak with animals* spell is used they can be made to comprehend

Dragon fish <sup>9</sup>			
	Giant	Saber-toothed	Electric
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Deep ocean/	Deep ocean/	Deep ocean/
FREQUENCY:	Any	Any	Any
ORGANIZATION:	Rare	Very rare	Very rare
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Solitary	Solitary	Family
DIET:	Carnivore	Carnivore	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-70)	Semi- (2-4)	Low to Average (7-9)
TREASURE:	B	Bx2	B,H
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral (evil)	Neutral	Neutral (evil)
NO. APPEARING:	1	1	2-8
ARMOR CLASS:	3	3	3
MOVEMENT:	Sw 18	SW 18	Sw 24
HIT DICE:	6		5
THAC0:	15	14	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1		
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	3-18	4-24	2-12
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Swallow whole	Nil	Jolt
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See text	See text	See text
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	L (10' long)	L (12' long)	L (8' long)
MORALE:	Elite (13)	Champion (15)	Steady (11)
XP VALUE:	650	975	750

ideas of varying complexity. The electric dragon fish, a more intelligent and therefore more dangerous adversary, travels in family groups that communicate by a combination of clicking noises and by varying their discharge or electric current.

**Combat:** Dragon fish, often referred to as devil fish by tritons, are constantly on the prowl for a meal. They track prey at a distance, up to one-half mile, by smell and sensing their movement in water. At shorter ranges, they home in on the prey's electrical aura. Because of the acuity of their senses, dragon fish get a +2 bonus on surprise rolls.

The common and electric varieties of dragon fish stealthily approach a victim before attacking. After engaging in combat, both types are known to "play" with their food before devouring it, much as a cat plays with a mouse. The common dragon fish attempts to bite and maim its prey, then apparently let it go, only later to follow the trail of blood and finish the job. When it is actually ready to consume its victim, it attempts to swallow it whole, which it does on a successful attack roll of 18 or better. The electric variety enjoys stunning its victims with repeated electric jolts. A dragon fish emits a jolt of electricity in a 30' radius around itself. Creatures within 10' of the dragon fish take 3-24 hp damage; those 11'-20' away take 2-12 hp; and those 20'-30' away take 1-8 hp. If a saving throw vs. breath weapon is made, only half damage is taken. Additionally, creatures struck by a dragon fish's electrical attack must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation or be stunned for 1d4 rounds, losing all Dexterity bonuses for armor class and making all attacks and saving throws at -2. Electric dragon fish can discharge three jolts per day and are themselves immune to electric attacks.

Saber-toothed dragon fish, being somewhat less intelligent than their brethren, rarely employ stealth in their attacks. They also fall short of the wanton viciousness of their counterparts, being motivated more exclusively by hunger. Although larger than the common dragon fish, the saber-toothed variety lacks the ability to swallow prey whole because of its protruding teeth. Rather, it uses its scissorlike fangs to shred its victims, then suck down the remains.

**Habitat/Society:** Dragon fish generally make their lairs in the holds of sunken ships or in caverns near the ocean floor. All types have a special fondness for metals, perhaps because metals conduct electricity well, and they collect large hoards. Refined metals, such as coins and armor, are preferred to raw ore or nodules.

Mating takes place once every third year, with the young being born live 6-8 weeks after conception. Male common and saber-toothed dragon fish leave the female shortly after mating is concluded, but the male of the electric variety stays with the female to form family groups. In all species, the young rarely leave the nest

until they have achieved full size, after about one year.

**Ecology:** Dragon fish range for hundreds of miles in search of food. They have been known to attack deep-dwelling octopus communities, and the later consider them a grave threat.

## Footnotes

1. Most marine animals rely primarily on sound, as sound travels well in water whereas light does not. Several creatures use echolocation as a means of guidance and thus constantly emit noise (shallow-dwelling bottlenose dolphins are a good example).

2. In some fantasy worlds, the ocean may not even have a definitive bottom, but might instead connect directly to the elemental plane of Water.

3. An interesting exception to this rule is the race of tritons, which (although they prefer warm, coastal waters and appear to possess lungs) have the ability to travel to any depth.

4. To safely ascend or descend, a character should travel up or down no faster than 60' per minute. Additionally, a character must pause for 10 minutes after every 100' of depth change to give his body time to equalize pressure. Failure to abide by these safety restrictions has one of two effects. A character that ascends too quickly must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation. Failure indicates that the character has contracted the bends, taking 2d12 hp damage and suffering the effects of a symbol of pain. If a character descends too quickly, he must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation or take 1d6 hp damage and lose hearing in one ear, determined randomly. Note that these statistics are for game purposes only!

5. Jeppesen, *Sport Diver Manual*, (Denver, Colorado: Jeppesen Sanderson, Inc., 1975) pages 1-27.

6. Pages 55-57 in the 1st Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide* and page 79 in the 2nd Edition *DMG* have useful information regarding vision, light, spell use and combat in underwater adventuring. The statistics listed in this paper are based on actual observation and should be compatible with existing rules.

7. Jeppesen, *Sport Diver Manual*, pages 2-42.

8. The critical-hit and called-shot rules were suggested by Rick Silva.

9. The dragon fish and saber-toothed dragon fish, based on real animals having the same names, should not be confused with the dragonfish (written as one word) from the FIEND FOLIO® tome.

Jacques Cousteau: *Oasis Space*, Vol. 1. New York: The Danbury Press, 1975.

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Michelson, David Reuben et al. *The Oceans in Tomorrow's World*. New York: Julian Messner, 1972.

Pierce, Q.L. *Tidal Waves and Other Ocean Wonder*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: RGA Publishing Group, Inc., 1989. Ω

## Monsters of the Deep

Continued from page 14

1985 sighting in San Francisco Bay (that's right, the bay). This book also describes the sperm whale's sonic attack.

*The Great Orm of Loch Ness*, The Dragon and the Disc, by F. W. Holiday; W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1969 and 1974. In these two books, Holiday gives an excellent defense of the theory that long-necked lake monsters (and at least some sea serpents) are giant worms, enlarged forms of Tullimonstreum.

*In Search of Lake Monsters*, by Peter Costello; Berkley Medallion Books, 1975. Peter Costello gives a comprehensive listing of the freshwater lakes across the world that contain monsters. He supports Heuvelmans' theory that the long-necked lake monsters are of the Long-Necked variety of sea lion. There may be a monster in your neighborhood!

*Alien Animals*, by Janet and Colin Bord; Stackpole Books, 1981. In this book, the Bords argue that all mystery animals (including Bigfoot, the Loch Ness Monster, "phantom panthers," etc.) are the products of paranormal phenomena. I've included it because it has some good photos (at least as good as such photos ever seem to get) of lake monsters. Be sure to check out the ones on pages 24-25 and 29 in particular; the pictures on page 29 are mentioned in the discussion of the Great Orm. Ω

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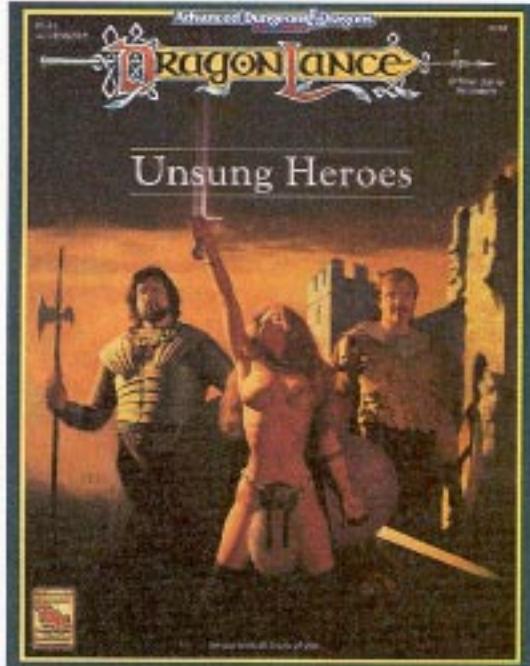
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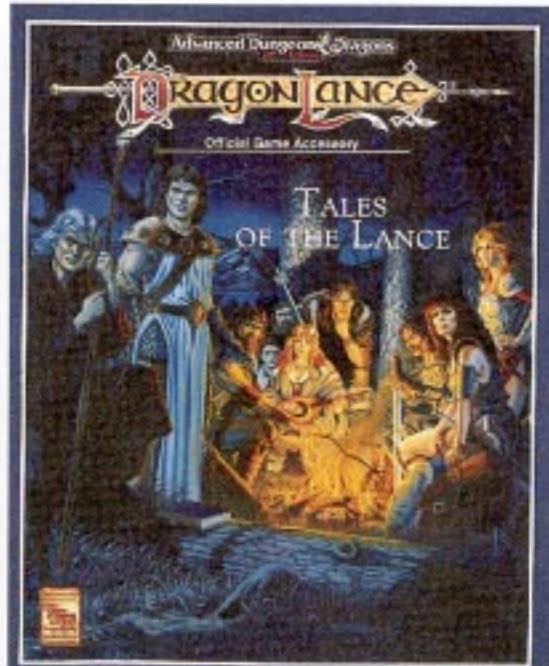


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# The Ecology of the Actaeon

Don't cross antlers with one in his forest

by Aidan Doyle

Artwork by David O. Miller

There were six of them. Too many for me to handle alone. I paused as they drew nearer. They were heavily armed. I slipped back into the foliage. There was no doubt about it: they were heading toward the Tree of Saldis. I considered my options. I could summon the help of some more of my woodland friends, but the battle would be costly, and if possible should be avoided. I had sent Grubble, a bear, to greet the party, hoping that the priest among them would try to communicate with it. However, the black-robed mage in the group had merely laughed and disintegrated Grubble.

I could not allow them to reach the tree. The Tree of Saldis had been planted over five hundred years ago, when the great elven ruler Saldis dedicated it to the woodland folk of Achelos Woods. Since then several adventuring parties had tried to hack down the tree, for its wood was valuable. Its wood was ideally suited for the manufacture of potent magical staves. Then I recalled some of my mentor's tales, tales about a hero who had saved Saldis from an ambush and then led Saldis to plant the tree. This hero of the woodland folk was a creature named Seridus—an actaeon.

I knew actaeons were solitary creatures (except for their animal companions), but Seridus had not been heard of in many years. I had heard that actaeons live for 800 years, as long-lived as the elves. Hop-

ing that Seridus was still alive, I set out for the old growth where Seridus was rumored to live, a section of the forest I do not tend.

I approached the ancient grove slowly. I could sense an aura of peace and tranquility as I entered the grove and gazed at my surroundings. In the shade of a particularly tall tree was a patch of mushrooms and fungi. I later discovered that Seridus was a vegetarian and this the food he cultivated for himself. He told me that his metabolism was slow compared to humans and that he needed little food to sustain himself.

Continuing my scouting, I saw that a crystal clear stream ran through the grove, springing from a cluster of stones and forming a small waterfall over a rocky shelf. I felt a mystic presence issuing from the waterfall, not unlike the presence I felt while meditating. Obviously, this was the place of Seridus' power and served as a temple to the power that had appointed him. Indeed, we were both appointed as caretakers of the forest, by the same power.<sup>1</sup>

I speak of Seridus as though he were male, for this is how he refers to himself. In fact, actaeons are asexual and cannot reproduce; they are the result of a transformation rather than a birth. A druid leads an elk to a place of tranquility and natural beauty, where the animal is

bathed in the power and radiance of nature and becomes a fully grown, intelligent actaeon. When an actaeon dies (either violently or of old age) another elk is summoned to replace him.

"Seridus," I called, hesitantly.

I heard a rustling sound and turned. A fearsome, towering creature had stepped out from the woods, at least nine feet tall. It was roughly humanoid but was covered in a thick, brown fur. What startled me most were the great antlers set atop the creature's head. I took an involuntary step backward.

I paused and saw that although the creature clutched a long bone spear in its hand, its face was reassuring. The gleam of wisdom twinkled behind the dark eyes.

The creature opened its mouth and spoke in a deep, measured voice. "Welcome, Dathrin Silverthrush."

I managed a bow. "Greetings, Seridus. You know of me, then?"

Seridus moved gracefully into the grove and with a thrust planted the spear in the ground. "I know everyone and everything within this forest. The animals speak highly of Dathrin, their druid."

I colored slightly at the compliment. "Thank you, Seridus. I guess you know why I have come here, then."

"You seek help to stop the band of marauders."

I nodded. "Unless something is done,

they will reach the Tree of Saldis. There are too many of them for me to fight alone. From the way they bear themselves and the equipment they carry, they are experienced adventurers. If I called on the help of my woodland friends, many of them would die driving away this scourge. The marauders have already killed Grubble."

Seridus paused for a moment, then seized his spear, wrenching it out of the ground. He thrust it into the sky and let out a booming roar. "Let all know that Seridus, actaeon of Achelos Woods, acts to defend his forest. Let those who seek to harm the forest flee, or face my wrath."

I watched as the burly warrior and the priest made their way down to the stream. The warrior stood guard as the priest knelt and filled waterskins.

Seridus emerged from the bushes and stood, spear poised. Behind him, a grizzly bear named Burgin shuffled slowly forward. I had only recently met Burgin, but he was Grubble's cousin and wanted to avenge Grubble's death. Seridus pointed the spear at the adventurers. "Who are you to attempt to violate Achelos Woods?" he demanded.

The warrior stood momentarily surprised, then brought his sword to guard position. The priest dropped the waterskins and stood up.

Seridus glared at them. "Answer me, or

face my wrath."

The priest sneered and began an incantation. The warrior bellowed a battle cry. He moved forward, ready to slash at Seridus. Seridus moved just as swiftly, hurling the spear. It struck the warrior in the shoulder and sent him crashing backward, his armor rent and a gaping wound in his shoulder.

The priest finished his spell and six wolves appeared before him. Laughing, he pointed at Seridus. "Tear it to pieces."

The wolves bounded forward, but stopped when they neared Seridus. They paused, then sat on their haunches and whined. I later learned from Seridus that an actaeon's position of respect and power is so great in the woods that no normal forest animal will attack or harm him in any way. So long as an actaeon's allies are in his presence, forest animals will spare them as well. Magically summoned, controlled, or charmed animals compelled to attack an actaeon are confused and unsure what to do. However, an actaeon does not have the power to turn animals against their controller, and the animals will still obey other commands from their controller.

The priest hissed with anger. "Kill it," he commanded. Beside him, the warrior grunted with pain as he ripped the spear from his shoulder.

Seridus reached down to pet one of the

wolves. He reached into a quiver slung over his back and pulled out two spears, hefting one of them in each hand.

The priest began casting another spell, and the warrior staggered to his feet. I murmured a phrase and silence descended on the area, drowning out the priest's spell. The priest hefted his mace, and he and the warrior moved forward to attack Seridus. The actaeon hurled both spears. The first struck the warrior on the side of the head, knocking him to the ground, dazed. The next struck the priest in the chest, rupturing his armor and knocking him to the ground.

Seridus produced two more spears from his quiver and moved forward purposefully, just as the fighter staggered to his feet and swung his sword, striking Seridus in the chest. Seridus roared in pain and stabbed at the warrior with his spear. The priest had scrambled to his feet, but before he could take action, Burgin was upon him, grasping him in a bear hug.

The warrior was faring poorly against Seridus, and a blow from a spear left him clutching a deep wound in his chest. Seridus moved closer and jabbed with his spear. The warrior raised his sword and tried to fend off the blow, but Seridus butted him with his antlers, momentarily stunning the warrior. He then slew the warrior with a thrust of his spear.

The priest had battered Burgin with his

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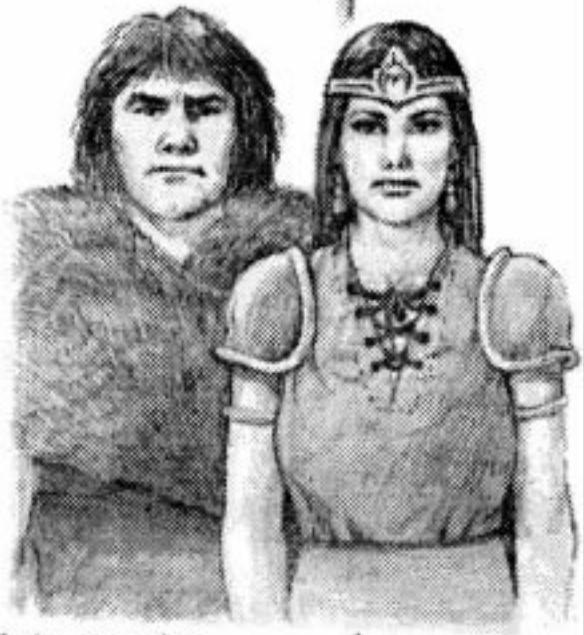
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mace and managed to free himself from the bear's deadly embrace. He staggered from the clearing, intent on escape. However, Seridus was quicker. Like a wolf bringing down a deer, he caught up to the priest and drove his spear deep into his back. The priest staggered and collapsed on the ground. Seridus paused, then raised the spear above his victim and drove it deep into the priest's exposed throat. I turned away, sickened by the blood. At the priest's death, the wolves faded away.

I was glad that I was not the one facing Seridus, for I have learned that actaeons are ruthless opponents. The concept of mercy is foreign to them—they fight until the threat to their forest is vanquished. If an opponent surrenders, an actaeon will quickly weigh the situation. If the actaeon has any doubts about the creature's sincere desire to leave the forest or to repair the damage he has caused, then the actaeon will slay the creature.

Moving swiftly, Seridus slung the body of the warrior over his shoulders. Burgin, who was badly wounded, shuffled forward and dragged away the dead priest. Even wounded and burdened with the weight of the warrior, Seridus still moved gracefully through the woods and left little evidence of his movements behind him."

I remained in hiding and watched from shelter as the other four adventurers arrived. The two thieves in the party knelt and examined the bloodstains on the forest floor. The silver-bearded fighter surveyed the woods, uneasily. The mage glanced at the blood, and then, noticing the unnatural silence of the area, moved away. He cast a spell, dispelling the silence.

One of the thieves, a thin, wiry man stood up. "Something dragged one of them into the woods. I don't know what happened to the other. Judging by the amount of blood, I'd say they wouldn't be worth bothering about."

The mage nodded. "Can you tell what did this?"

The thief shrugged his shoulders. "Judging by the tracks, I'd say it was a bear."

Seridus sprang out of the woods, spears grasped in his hands. "Who are you to attempt to violate Achelos Woods?" he again demanded.

The adventurers reacted swiftly, the mage beginning a spell, the fighter and one of the thieves surging forward with blades ready. The other thief balanced a throwing knife in his hand and aimed at Seridus.

Seridus roared, pouring a cloud of green mist from his mouth. The mist enveloped the adventurers, and I could hear startled cries of surprise from within the cloud. In a few moments the mist cleared, and four squirrels stood on the forest floor instead of the adventurers. Seridus had told me that he could breathe

this magical mist only once a day, and so saved it for use against larger groups, breathing on individuals if they were extremely powerful.

The squirrels were sniffing the ground in bewilderment, wondering how they had come to this place.<sup>5</sup> Seridus moved forward and stared intently at the squirrels. He picked up one and placed it on his shoulder. He turned to the remaining three. "Begone from this place, my little friends." Obediently, the squirrels departed.

I emerged from the woods and moved toward Seridus. "Why did you take that squirrel?" I pointed to the squirrel on Seridus' shoulder.

"For this one, the transformation is only temporary. In a day, he will revert to his normal form. I do not want him to remain in the forest. I will take him from the woods and leave him in a distant place."<sup>6</sup>

"And the others?" I asked. "Are their transformations permanent?"

Seridus nodded, then fixed his gaze on me. "Thank you for your help, Dathrin. We will meet again in the future, I am sure." With that, Seridus turned and vanished into the forest.

## Footnotes

The game statistics and description of the actaeon are found in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Rules Cyclopedia on page 156. They are also found in the older D&D Masters Set Master DM's Book on page 24.

1. Depending upon a DM's campaign, this can be a specific Immortal, a mother goddess (for example, Demeter from Greek mythology), an elven Immortal, or even the "spirit of the forest."

2. Actaeons can speak Common, Elf and Dryad fluently. In addition, they have the permanent ability to *speak with animal* (as the second level cleric spell). This applies to all normal forest creatures.

3. Depending on the nature of their opponents, actaeons often use their surprise to question their opponents' motives and to demand that they leave the woods.

4. If the optional general skills are used, then a character with the tracking skill has his proficiency halved (rounding down) when searching for an actaeon's tracks. For example, a character with a 14 intelligence must roll 7 or under to spot the tracks. If found, the tracks will probably cause confusion, because they resemble the tracks of an elk with two hooves instead of four.

5. The *polymorph* effect of the breath weapon is identical (except for duration if the saving throw is passed) to the fourth-level mage spell, *polymorph other*. The *polymorphed* creature loses its memory of its former life and acts and thinks like the creature it resembles.

6. An actaeon can sense which transformations are permanent.

## A guide to actaeons

At the most basic level, actaeons can be used as exotic druids. They can be used to curb the destruction of a forest by rampaging PCs.

Actaeons have a lot of role-playing potential if used in other ways. They can contact the PCs for help. An actaeon may face a particularly fierce foe and may need some assistance, or an actaeon may require something that is not normally found in a forest.

Actaeons can be used as long-term NPCs, especially in woodland campaigns. If any characters establish themselves as lords of a forest dominion, then an actaeon can be one of the NPCs who inhabits the land. The character could have an interesting time dealing with disputes between the characters' peasant families (some of whom are professional hunters and trappers) and an actaeon who forbids this loss of animal life.

## Historical background

This information is included for readers who are interested in the origin of the creature, the actaeon. A human named Actaeon appears in Greek mythology. When out hunting, he was unfortunate enough to stumble upon Artemis, the goddess of the hunt, while she was bathing. For this, she turned him into a stag and his own hounds killed him.

A creature similar to the actaeon can be found in Celtic mythology. Herne the Hunter, a protector of woodland creatures, is an actaeon or woodland god. The BBC television series, "Robin of Sherwood," featured Herne the Hunter and is a guide to how an actaeon can be played. In the show, Herne takes a background role and lets Robin Hood be his agent in protecting Sherwood Forest. Ω



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2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

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

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### DUNDRACON XVII, Feb. 12-15

CA

This convention will be held at the San Ramon Marriott in San Ramon, Calif. Events include over 120 game events, seminars, a dealers' room, a painting contest, computer gaming, and a flea market. Registration: \$30/weekend or \$15/day at the door. Write to: DUNDRACON, 1125 Nielson St., Albany CA 94706.

### GENGHIS CON XIV, Feb. 12-14

CO

This convention will be held at the Marriott Southeast in Denver, Colo. Activities include gaming, RPGA™ Network tournaments, auctions, a figure-painting contest, and miniatures events. Registration: \$15/weekend. Write to: Denver Gamers Assoc., P.O. Box 440058, Aurora CO 80044; or call: (303) 665-7062.

### ORCCON 16, Feb. 12-15

CA

This convention will be held at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt. Events include all types of family, strategy, board, role-playing, miniatures, and computer gaming, with flea markets, an auction, a dealers' area, seminars, demos, and special guests. Write to: STRATEGICON, P.O. Box 3849, Torrance CA 90510-3849; or call: (213) 326-9440.

### SHEVACON '93, Feb. 19-21

VA

This convention will be held at the Ingleside Red Carpet Inn in Staunton, Va. Events include role-playing, miniatures, and historical games, with parties, videos, filking, workshops, panels, a costume contest, a dance, an art show, and an auction. The guest of honor is Allen Wold. Registration: \$25; children: \$10. Write to: Susan Shiflett, 15 E. Johnson St., Staunton VA 24401; or call: (703) 885-5530.

### ARGACON '93, Feb. 20

MI

This convention will be held in the Adrian Tobias room on the campus of Adrian College in Adrian, Mich. Events include role-playing games. Other activities include strategy games, play testing, dealers, and contests. Registration: \$5. Write to: ARGA, Adrian College, Adrian MI 49221; or call: Scott at: (517) 264-3707.

### HURRICON '93, Feb. 26-28

FL

This convention will be held at the Okaloosa Island Holiday Inn in Fort Walton Beach, Fla. Guests include George Alec Effinger, Margaret Weis, Douglas Niles, David Dorman, and Larry Elmore. Activities include game tournaments, an art show, video rooms, lectures, panels, filking, open gaming, an auction, a dance, a USAF Space Command demo, and a "Winterfest" for "Beauty and the Beast" TV fans. Registration: \$30 at the door. Write to: Bards Tales Bookshop, 109D Race Track Rd., Ft. Walton Beach FL 32547; or call: (904) 862-7323.

### JAXCON '93, Feb. 26-28

FL

This convention will be held at the Radisson Inn at the Jacksonville International Airport in Jacksonville, Fla. Events include all types of games, a miniatures-painting contest, a flea market, a dealers' area, a snack bar, and door prizes. Registration: \$18/weekend. Single-day rates vary. Write to: JAXCON, P.O. Box 4423, Jacksonville FL 32201; or call: (904) 778-1730.

### NOT-A-CON V, Feb. 26-28

SC

This convention will be held at Daniel Hall on the campus of Clemson University in Clemson, S.C. Events include role-playing and miniatures games, with miniatures contests and gaming. Registration: \$3 preregistered; \$5 at the door. Write to: Larry Fountain, 807 College Av., Apt. 11, Clemson SC 29631; or call: (803)654-8902.

### TOTAL CONFUSION VII, Feb. 26-28

IL

This convention will be held at the Best Western Plaza hotel in Marlborough, Mass. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, with RPGA™ Network events, a miniatures-painting contest, and a costume competition. Registration: \$23/weekend or \$9/day preregistered; \$10/day at the door. Club rates are available. Write to: TOTAL CONFUSION, P.O. Box 1463, Worcester MA 01607; or call: (508)987-1530.

### B-CON '93, Feb. 27-28

IL

This convention will be held at Bradley University in Peoria, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, with game demos, prizes, dealers, miniatures, speakers, and artists. Registration: \$3/day or \$5/weekend preregistered; \$5/day or \$7/weekend at the door. Write to: B-CON Registration, c/o The Medieval College Soc., Bradley Univ., 425 Sisson Hall, Peoria IL 61625.

### CON OF THE NORTH '93, Feb. 27-28

MN

This convention will be held at the Landmark Center in St. Paul, Minn. Events include fantasy, war, miniatures, and adventure games, with an RPGA™ Network tournament. Registration: \$15/weekend or \$10/day. Write to: CON OF THE NORTH, P.O. Box 18096, Minneapolis MN 55418.

### CONTENTION '93, Feb. 27

MD

This convention will be held at Anne Arundel Community College in Arnold, Md. The special guest is author Robert Frezza. Activities include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. GMs are welcome. Registration: \$8 at the door. Event fees average \$2 per event. Write to: CONTENTION '93, c/o John Appel, 456 Old Quarterfield Rd. Apt. D-5, Glen Burnie MD 21061.

### MINIATURES-PAINTING CONTEST & GAME DAY '93, Feb. 27

IN

This convention will be held at Metalcraft Miniatures and More in Elwood, Ind. Activities include role-playing and war games. There is no entry fee. Fifteen categories of miniatures will be judged; get the list before entering. Write to: Metalcraft Miniatures and More, 926 N. 9th St., Elwood IN 46036.

### BAMACON 7, March 18-21

AL

This convention will be held at the Bryant Conference Center and Sheraton Capstone Inn in Tuscaloosa, Ala. Guests include Jonathan Frakes, Hal Clement, and Brom. Activities include over 30 gaming tournaments with prizes, an art show, a masquerade, a computer room, and a movie room. Registration: \$35. Write to: BAMACON 7, P.O. Box 6542, Univ. of Alabama, Tuscaloosa AL 35486-6542; or call: (205) 758-4577.

**CALCON 8, March 19-21**

This convention will be held at the Marlborough Inn in Calgary, Alberta. Events include role-playing, war, miniatures, and board games, with a comic-book convention, computer gaming, an auction, and dealers. Registration: \$10 until March 1; \$15 at the door. Visitor and day passes are available. Write to: CALCON 8, Box 22206, 401-9 Av. SW, Calgary, Alberta, CANADA T2P 4J6; or call Paul at: (403) 281-1574.

**GAMEFEST '93, March 19-21**

This convention will be held at Friend's Hobby Shop in Waukegan, Ill. Events include miniatures, role-playing, and board games. Write to: Friend's Hobby, 1411 Washington, Waukegan IL 60085; or call: (708) 336-0790.

**VILLECON '93, March 19-21.**

MO

This convention will be held at the Northwest Missouri State Univ. Conference Center in Maryville, Mo. Events include many RPGA™ Network role-playing events, plus board games, dealers, and contests. Registration: \$7 pre-registered; \$10 at the door. Write to: Brad Monger, 517 W. 7th St., Maryville MO 64448; or call: 1816) 582-8174.

**SIMCON XV, March 25-28**

NY

This convention will be held at the University of Rochester's River campus in Rochester, N.Y. Events include board, miniatures, and computer games, with a movie room, a dealers' room, and a miniatures-painting contest. Write to: SIMCON, CPU #277146, Univ. of Rochester, Rochester NY 14627-7146; or call: (716)275-6186.

**ADVENTURERS' INN VI, March 26-28**

CA

This convention will be held in the Angels Camp at the Calaveras Fairgrounds. Activities include role-playing and strategy games, a costume contest, a movie room, medieval food, and dealers. Registration: \$20 until Feb. 28; \$25 thereafter and at the door. Write to: ADVENTURERS' INN, P.O. Box 391, Mokelumne Hill CA 95245; or call: (209)286-1545.

**CONNCON '93, March 26-28**

CT

This convention will be held at the Danbury Hilton & Towers in Danbury, Conn. Events include role-playing, board, and war games, with RPGA™ Network-sanctioned events. Jean Rabe is our guest of honor. Other activities include miniatures, board and war games, a banquet, and dealers. Judges are welcome. For preregistration fee information, write to: CONNCON, P.O. Box 444, Sherman CT 06784-0444.

**COWBOY CON '93, March 26-28**

OK

This convention will be held at the Student Union on the OSU campus in Stillwater, Okla. Guests include Mark Simmons and Roger Allen. Activities include gaming, a dealers' room, a masquerade, and filking. Registration: \$8 preregistered; \$10 at the door. Write to: Cowboy Campaigners Club, c/o COWBOY CON, Student Union 040, Box 110, Stillwater OK 74078.

**ONEONTACON '93, March 26-28**

NY

This convention will be held at the Hunt Union, on the SUNY College campus in Oneonta, N.Y. Events include role-playing and miniatures games, with a dealers' area. Registration costs vary, but students receive a minimum \$1 discount. Preregistration is advised. Write to: Gamers' Guild, c/o Student Activities, State University College, Oneonta NY 13820.

**KNIGHT MARCH I, March 27-28**

\*

This convention will be held at the Pine Ridge Room of the Northumberland Mall in Cobourg, Ontario. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, plus many RPGA™ Network-sanctioned events, miniatures and art competitions, workshops, a silent auction, and speakers including Ed Greenwood and Lawrence Simms. Registration: \$8/day or \$12/weekend (Canadian). Write to: KNIGHT MARCH, 12 King St. E., Cobourg, Ontario, CANADA K9A 1K7; or call: (416) 372-4245, (705) 741-6079, or (613)234-9437.

**SF³SIG OPEN GAMING '93, March 27-28**

IL

This convention will be held at Rockford College in Rockford, Ill. Events include open gaming and Ten Backwards. Registration: \$2/day. Write to: SF³SIG, College Box 237, Rockford College, 5050 E. State St., Rockford IL 61108.

**MAGNUM OPUS CON 8, April 1-4**

SC

This convention will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Greenville, S.C. Guests include Rowena, Ben Bova, C.J. Cherryh, Robert Asprin, and David Weber. Activities include gaming, a costume contest, panels, seminars, anime, videos, dances, and a hospitality suite. Registration: \$40 at the door. Send an SASE with \$.52 postage to: MOC-8, P.O. Box 6585, Athens GA 30604; or call: (706)549-1533.

**COASTCON XVI, April 2-4**

MS

This convention will be held at the Gulf Coast Coliseum/Convention Center in Biloxi, Miss. Guests include Timothy Zahn, Michael Stackpole, Lawrence Watt-Evans, and Andrew Offutt. Activities include a dealers' room, 24-hour video rooms, a dance, a costume contest, a charity auction, and gaming. Registration: \$20 before March 1st; \$25 at the door. Write to: COASTCON XVI, P.O. Box 1423, Biloxi MS 38533.

**PENTECON V, April 2-4**

NY

This convention will be held at the campus of Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y. Events include role-playing games, war games, board games, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers and RPGA™ Network events. Registration: \$7 preregistered; \$10 at the door. GMs are welcome and will receive discount if preregistered. Write to: PENTECON V, c/o CSSS, 29 White Hall, Cornell Univ., Ithaca NY 14853; or call Kris at: (607) 253-0650. No collect calls, please.

**SPRING OFFENSIVE IV, April 2-4**

IL

This convention will be held at Illinois Central College in East Peoria, Ill. Events include role-playing, miniatures, and board games. Registration: \$3/day or \$5/weekend. Events fees are \$1 each. Write to: SPRING OFFENSIVE, The Game Room, 116 Walnut, Washington IL (no zip code given); or call: (309)444-4640.

**HYPOTHETICON '93, April 3**

CT

This convention will be held Student Union at the Storrs branch of the University of Conn. Events include gaming, movies, panels, and a dealers' room. Registration: \$4 preregistered; \$6 at the door. Write to: Vivian Norwood, UConn, Shippee Hall, Room 519, Storrs CT 06269; or call: (203) 427-5085.

**SPRING FANTASY REVEL, April 8-10**

IL

This convention will be held at the Woodfield Hilton in Arlington Heights, Ill. Events include numerous RPGA™ Network events. Other activities include the Little Wars Wargaming Weekend, running concurrently. Registration:

\$12/weekend (Little Wars passes are \$3). Send an SASE to: Keith Polster, Box 27, Theresa WI 53091.

**TECHNICON 10, April 10-12**

VA

This convention will be held at the Donaldson Brown Center in Blacksburg, Va. Guests include Scott Quirk. Activities include gaming, an art show and auction, panels, videos, anime, and a dance. Registration: \$22 preregistered; \$24 at the door. Student rate is \$20. Write to: TECHNICON 10, c/o VTSFFC, P.O. Box 256, Blacksburg VA 24063-0256; or call: (703)952-0572.

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



What are the latest releases in miniature figures and scenery? What rules are best for tabletop war games? Turn to "Through the looking Glass" in this issue and see!



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# DIVIDE and Conquer!

How to set up (and survive) a split-party adventure

by William J. White

Artwork by Jim Holloway

"Never split the party!" advised the wizened sage sternly, poling a gnarled finger at the youthful adventurers he had taken in tutelage. "You are stronger together than apart—if I had some sticks I could show you. Besides, when separated, you make more work for the Dungeon Master."

The callow youths shivered at the mention of the cruel, cold-hearted deity's name. They would follow their mentor's advice.

Keeping a party of adventurers together is usually a good idea, especially at lower levels of experience. It makes sense for the characters. They can overcome tougher challenges, and they can protect each other when wounded or otherwise incapacitated. Staying together provides plenty of opportunity for role-playing between members of the group. It makes sense for the referee as well. She can prepare a single storyline and be fairly confident she has options for all contingencies. Splitting the party does mean more work—both creatively, in terms of adventure ideas the DM needs to come up with, and logically, in terms of maps, monster

statistics, and NPC motivations.

However, split-party adventures can have terrific advantages for a campaign. The DM can tailor adventures to showcase individual PC's abilities and respond to each player's interests. Each character is the "star" of his own adventure, which means each player will feel more involved and more in control of his character's destiny. Finally, and perhaps most important, split-party adventures add drama to a campaign. One of the most tension-filled chapters in J. R. R. Tolkien's is "The Breaking of the Fellowship," when the Nine Walkers split into three smaller parties. A similar plot device incorporated

into an AD&D® campaign can turn a standard adventure into the epic saga of a band of scattered heroes struggling as outnumbered individuals against desperate odds and dire villains.

### **Breaking up is hard to do**

"I've had it up to here with you sorry excuses for heroes!" shouted Bork the Barbarian. "Your mincing civilized ways sicken me. I'm headed for the Wild Lands, where men are still men! And don't try to follow me, either."

"Go ahead, you oafish lout. I say we seek our fortunes in the Dread City of Doomcliff. Who's with me?"

"Not me. I had a vision of a pure white stallion racing through the Demon Desert. I must go and capture my new war horse. You go ahead. I'll catch up."

As the above dialogue implies, sometimes player inclinations may take their PCs in different directions. After adventuring and advancing as part of a group, it is only natural for a character to develop ambitions, obligations, or desires that his companions do not share. Some PCs may simply want to prove their independence, while others may envision their characters as lone wolves who habitually travel solo.

Since the breaking of these fellowships is voluntary, the problem for the referee is getting the party back together, which will be addressed later. However, creating adventures may be a bit easier, as the character will usually have some idea of what he is trying to accomplish by his departure, and the DM need only respond to these ambitions.

A referee can exert some control over this type of split by doing a little "pre-emptive preparation." After noting the kinds of adventures that appeal to each of his players, the referee designs a one- or two-page adventure outline (with sketch maps and the bare minimum monster or NPC stats) targeted toward each character. By listening to rumors in a tavern, picking up vague hints from a musty old tome, or hearing the intriguing song of a bard in the market square, the character's interest will be piqued, and he will investigate without too much prodding by the DM. Details can be added with little effort, and modified as needed. This type of plan can ameliorate to some degree the tendency of characters to venture to far-off lands the DM has barely had time to name, much less describe in any detail.

A simple but effective technique to use on a PC who has decided to strike out on her own without any particular goal in mind is to have her stumble upon a map—newly-made or ancient—marked with some tantalizing location like "The Lair of the Glass Spider" (or perhaps just the proverbial X). No character can resist making a beeline for the destination indi-

cated on the map, no matter what dire warnings are written in the margins. This tactic is also good to use with PCs who have been abandoned by the rest of their party.

### **The center cannot hold**

The two adventurers looked around at the remnants of their shattered camp. Luke the Bold removed his helmet and ran a hand through his sweat-dampened hair.

"What a day!" he said despairingly. "First, Sheena the Witch gets ensorcelled by the Dark Prince, then Falstave the Furious is captured by Lord Agony's minions, and now Isaac of the Valley has disappeared from camp while we were out looking for Jonas the Wanderer, who ran off this morning after being bitten by that strange wolf."

"I know," replied his lone remaining comrade, prodding the body of a goblin he had slain while it was looting the camp. "I was there."

If the devious DM decides that his players need a good shaking up or a change of pace, the characters may be separated through no fault or desires of their own!

Why would a DM want to create a split-party situation? The reasons are numerous and depend on the needs of the campaign. The referee may want to break up the party for dramatic effect, or to challenge characters who are so effective as a team that it is difficult to design an adventure that presents them with significant obstacles. Splitting this kind of party can excite even the most jaded dungeon-crawler.

A third way to split the party is as a consequence of the characters' actions. If a party is set upon by bandits and some of the PCs flee, leaving the rest to be captured, the DM should let the cards fall as they may. Three PCs may be held captive, to be ransomed, or sold into slavery, while two others are lost in the woods without food or supplies. The adventures revolve around one group's escape attempts and the other's struggle for survival.

The most worthwhile reason for splitting the party is to shine the limelight on characters who are normally overshadowed by their more aggressive peers. Nearly every campaign has someone who fits this category. If given a chance to stand on his own two feet, a player who normally stays in the background can develop his PC into a more interesting and memorable persona.

A caveat: While it is important to tailor individual adventures to the players' tastes, it is equally important to make the adventures of approximately equal consequence. That is, one group shouldn't be saving the known universe while a second is hunting for a little boy's lost dog. The players of an adventure that pales in sig-

nificance compared to the next group's will feel slighted. (If it turns out, however, that the lost dog is actually a prince of the Animal Realms exiled from his home plane, and is the only creature capable of tracking the Extradimensional Bad Guys to their lair, then there can be no cause for complaint.)

When a party is split, for whatever reason, the referee must deal with the problem of preparing two or more distinct storylines, as well as that of keeping all players, both active and passive, interested, occupied, and entertained.

### **Exit, stage left**

No matter how clever or intricate the plotlines a DM creates, his work will be wasted if the game session itself is disorganized and unevenly paced. When a party splits, it is vitally important that the referee "stage-manage" so that each player receives his fair share of attention when he is "active" and remains interested when he is "passive." In stage-managing a split party the referee's major concern is what to do with the players whose adventures are not being resolved at present—the passive players.

Most referees will not want to run separate gaming sessions. Instead, they will advance the plot of each story a little before passing to the next character or small group.

Passive players should be allowed to watch the active players. In many scenarios, passive players can control NPC actions in combat or negotiation. A player can role-play the dying messenger who begs with his final gasping breath for the active PC to deliver a message. Other entertaining roles are the bothersome tax collector or the absent-minded sage from whom the active player is wheedling information. Most players love a chance to show off their role-playing skills. Additionally, passive players can be henchmen, hirelings, servants, or allies that the active player has encountered in his travels.

Generally, the roles given to passive players fall into one of two categories: the one-shot encounter, and the recurring NPC.

The term "one-shot" refers to both combat and parley encounters. In either case, the passive player receives a sheet of paper with his NPCs' statistics and instructions regarding tactics, motivations, and goals. The referee must explain precisely what he expects the player to accomplish, as well as what liberties are allowed. For example, in telling a player to act out the role of the dying messenger, the instructions could be "Ham it up all you want, but don't die before Darkling swears to carry the message."

Letting passive players control monsters in combat can be fun, especially if the monster is especially interesting. This is a player's chance to act out all those evil



impulses. However, strict limitations should be placed on the kinds of tactics the passive player can use. This minimizes the potential for drastic upsets in the referee's game plan. As insurance, the referee should maintain control of a major bad guy who can influence events according to that plan—the "Aw gee, boss. Why can't we kill them now?" scenario.

It is best not to give control of the primary nemesis of the active player to a passive player, as this may cause tension between players and takes away from the referee's ability to control the action.

The referee can also allow passive players to control some of the active players' companions, sidekicks, or henchmen. These subsidiary characters' motivations should also be carefully spelled out. Most players will cheerfully play along if called upon to take the part of a bumbling apprentice, a wizard's familiar, a knight's oafish squire, a ranger's pet wolf, or a thief's urchin lookout. Alternatively, the referee can devise a character and give him to a passive player with orders to "tag along," whether the active player wants him to or not. Some ideas for this type of character include the 1st-level, would-be adventurer looking for a mentor; a mischievous sprite or leprechaun who has taken a shine to the PC; or a beautiful but spoiled princess who wants to run away from the palace in the company of a handsome stranger. The principle to apply in assigning these companions is

that they should complement the active player without upstaging him.

If some players are not participating in the current adventure, the referee should ensure any activity not relevant to the active player takes place away from the gaming table. This includes passive player planning as well as conversation about last night's ball game. An appreciative audience, on the other hand, can enhance the active player's enjoyment.

The individual DM is the best judge of whether his players will enjoy "helping out," watching, or going elsewhere to plan strategy. The rule of thumb, however, is "include, include, include."

#### A word on neophytes

The split-party adventure is perhaps the best way to introduce inexperienced players to the campaign. The AD&D 1st Edition game's *Dungeon Master Guide* (page 111) is worth quoting in this regard:

"...[S]et up a special area for 1st level of experience play... a couple of experienced players can act the part of some mercenary men-at-arms, as well as the roles of various tradesmen... but all actions, reactions, and decision making will be left strictly up to the neophyte...."

Eventually, according to the old *DMG*, the neophyte player will have the experience necessary to join up with the "old guard" on their adventures. However, if a

promising newcomer lags behind in experience levels, he can still participate in the "mainstream" campaign through one of the techniques suggested above. This is perhaps the best of both worlds.

#### Hints for the DM™

Keep track of time and space. It's important to keep the PC groups on parallel tracks, so that when the time comes to meet up again, no huge discrepancies exist. A little fudging with travel times can help accomplish this.

Try to switch from one group to another when play reaches a stable point—the PCs are traveling, or are trying to make a decision, or have found a room for the night. You could also switch at cliffhanger points—right before the player makes a saving throw, for instance—but this may be too much of a strain on the nervous system for some players. It's usually best to leave a player when he can plan a course of action or perform character maintenance, such as purchasing routine supplies.

Try to switch between groups several times during each gaming session. This avoids the "You mean I'm done for the night?" syndrome, which tends to leave players feeling short-changed.

At the end of each session, give a quick rundown of where each PC is in location and time. Use a large-scale campaign map if possible. While the PCs might not know this information under normal circum-



stances, it gives the players some focus and reminds them that they are all participating in the same campaign.

Finally, in terms of stage-management, the concept of "blue booking" as described by Aaron Allston in his *Strikeforce* supplement to ICE's CHAMPIONS\* game must be mentioned. The referee writes a description of the PC's current surroundings in a small notebook. Immediately below, the player writes what his character says and does. The referee determines the results of these actions and writes them in the book for the player to read, and so on. This works best in situations where little combat is involved—mysteries, intrigue, and romance.

### Meanwhile. . .

In creating adventures for split parties, two things must be kept in mind: the desires of the players and the abilities of their characters. A thief will want to pull the heist of the century, and a paladin will seek to fight evil creatures, but other PC ambitions may vary. Sometimes, a character's reason for venturing off alone is merely to travel ("I want to see the Edge of the World."). In that case, it's up to the referee to create adventures that interest the player and suit the capabilities of the character.

Certain types of adventures work well with lone characters, or with groups of two or three adventurers. Some of these

adventures include:

*The quest* — This is the archetypical adventure, a quest for a single character that involves little extra thought on the DM's part. The Quest for the Holy Grail is a good example, as are the labors of Hercules. The single-hero quest should be filled with riddles and tests of character, not heavily combat oriented.

*The contest* — The character is involved in a test of arms, wits, or skills with an NPC of about equal abilities. Think of the legend of John Henry OF Thor in the hall of Utgard-Loki from Norse mythology.

*The mystery* — This includes but is not limited to the traditional murder mystery investigation (e.g., Agatha Christie). Any unusual circumstance or event whose cause must be determined by a character using his wits and his skills can be a mystery. A priest enters a haunted house, a thief tracks down the villain attempting to frame him, or a wizard researches a spell by finding hints and clues in the pages of books from widely scattered libraries. The stories of Lord D'Arcy, by Randall Garrett, are good examples of the traditional mystery in a fantasy setting.

*In command* — The character is a leader of some armed force. He can be a mercenary captain or the skipper of a privateer, with letters of marque from the queen. Adventures can lead into miniatures battles or can be steered toward political intrigue. Raids, pitched battles, mutinies, and coups d'état are all possible. The

adventures of Conan and Elric of Melnibone include examples of this adventure.

*Capture and escape* — The character has been taken prisoner and rests behind bars until he can escape and take his revenge on his captors. Alone, hunted, and weaponless, he must find a way to recover his possessions and find safety. The archetypical example of this adventure is The Count of Monte Cristo, by Alexander Dumas.

*The vendetta* — The character is involved in a blood feud with an NPC, each seeking the other's death or imprisonment. There should be some factor that prevents them from walking up to each other and hacking away—the command of a sovereign, the fact that one has knowledge the other needs, or simply that some greater necessity exists ("We've got to put our differences aside, Mordan, if we want to beat these invading orcs.").

*The bounty hunt* — The character is a bounty hunter attempting to track down a wanted man. He can be working on his own after seeing a wanted poster, or he can be hired by the local authorities based on his reputation. The action may take place in an urban environment or occur as a cross-country chase. A character may enjoy this enough to want to bounty hunt on a regular basis. The DM should prepare a "most wanted" list and possibly some rival bounty hunters.

Alternatively, the character is pursued by a bounty hunter. He may have broken a

law or insulted a wealthy man's wife. Perhaps it's just a case of mistaken identity. He must not only defeat or escape the hunter, but also resolve the problem that put the bounty hunter on his tail.

*The spy* – The character must stealthily infiltrate an enemy area in order to gain information, steal a valuable item, or kidnap someone. This type of adventure is excellent for a thief tired of being overshadowed by high-powered fighters and mages.

*It takes a thief* – This is another good adventure for the rogue striking out on his own. The character is hired or otherwise cajoled into tracking down a criminal who has been preying on a rich merchant or powerful lord. Usually, but not always, the reward includes a pardon for past crimes; failure is punished by turning the thief over to the law.

Many other categories exist. A ranger infiltrates a bandit camp to recover a valuable heirloom. A wizard seeks a wise old hermit to tell him some Ultimate Secret of Life. Political intrigue and romance can form the basis of many more adventures. What makes a split-party adventure really satisfying, for referees and players alike, is shaping the adventure so that it ties together what the characters have been doing individually.

## Weaving the web

Player-characters, as many DMs are aware, like to feel that there is some grand scheme they can affect by their actions. It makes them feel important. The DM can heighten the characters' sense of accomplishment by leading them along separate paths to the same conclusion. This is often more satisfying than a scenario in which a unified party overcomes a series of obstacles in a linear fashion. Also, the players will think their referee is a genius, which is no small thing.

To accomplish this, the DM should first let the characters resolve the situations that caused them to separate. Then, gradually, he should hook the characters with clues that something isn't right–portents of war, perhaps, or strange happenings in the hinterlands. When the characters investigate (if not at first, then later when the danger becomes acute), their adventures will bring them closer in time and space until two or more groups meet, compare notes, and decide on a combined plan of action. Eventually, all the PCs come together at the one place at which they can stop the menace. The best sort of challenge to get characters back together is some epic villainy: The mind flayers plan to extinguish the sun, or an invasion of extradimensional monsters want our women. Even if the characters fail to stop the plan before it hatches, they can still attempt to set things as the scheme unfolds. The epic quality of such an adventure appeals to most players. If

their referee does it right, they'll be telling their grandchildren about it.

## Reunion

The referee will eventually want to get the PCs back together in order to run an adventure that requires their combined efforts. There are several ways to do this:

*What are you doing here?* – A chance meeting is the easiest but perhaps the least satisfying way. The PCs are in the same town or traveling along the same road when one spots the other, and the two reminisce about old times.

*Ill met in London-town* – The characters are reunited as they are about to separately engage in the same enterprise. Perhaps they are both attempting to break into the tower of the evil necromancer Gulgos, or are vying for the position of royal musketeer. Both PCs should be able to accomplish their objectives without direct competition that could stand in the way of renewing their friendship.

*So we meet again* – The characters are on opposite sides of some quarrel and meet during a confrontation between the two sides. They may be soldiers of warring factions, or one PC an outlaw trapped by the other, a bounty hunter. The referee must be able to provide some means of erasing the conflict between the two—a faction surrenders or is defeated, a royal

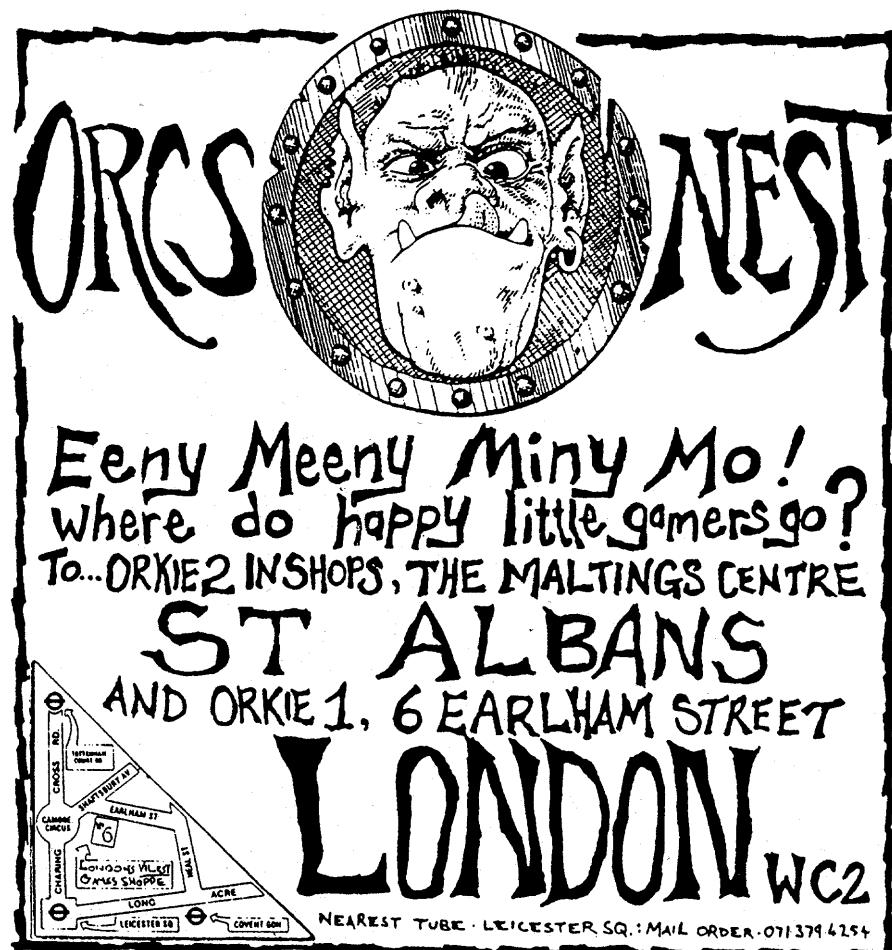
pardon is issued—in the event that the characters are not able to figure one out for themselves.

*There you are, at last* – A PC adventuring solo discovers the only thing that can help him achieve his goal is a magical item he knows is in the possession of another PC. He must track down the other character and convince him to aid in the quest. Naturally, the other PC may be reluctant. He can perhaps be persuaded to help, but he will certainly not let the item out of his possession. The first PC will owe the other a big favor.

*We don't like your kind around here* – The character is traveling through a land populated by extremely xenophobic natives. They run him out of town and generally make his life miserable until he heads in the general direction of the other characters.

*I'll get you out of this* – A character receives word that a former companion is in big trouble—imprisoned, ensorcelled, or about to be hanged. He is sufficiently loyal to rush to his friend's aid.

Other interesting, if slightly more complicated, plot devices can be used. Suppose a character has made his way to the Forbidden City and sneaked into the Kai Lin Temple. He plans to search the Book of Changes for a riddle that holds a clue to the location of a lost artifact. When he makes it to the library, he sees a hooded



monk bent over the very volume he needs. The monk is actually another PC in disguise, with similar intent. If a fight ensues, a few rounds of combat may pass before the two characters recognize each other. If the first PC waits for the monk to leave and then reads the book, both characters may meet at the location specified by the riddle. Or perhaps the false monk is discovered and runs back to the library, where the two meet and are forced to fight their way out together. Either way, some drama has been introduced and the PCs' reunion will be memorable.

## Boundaries

There are a few things the DM can do to make sure the party split lasts only as long as she wants it to. The first, and most important, is to fulfill whatever desire the character wants to accomplish by leaving the party. Whether it is a specific goal or just wanderlust, the referee must accommodate the need and then turn the character back toward wanting or needing companions to aid him.

It is helpful if there is a specific geographic focus where the PCs return time after time; in other words, a place they can call home. This could be the stronghold of a high-level PC, the castle of a friendly lord, or even a roadside tavern where the company is good and the ale is

cheap.

If stronger methods are necessary, the DM can impose some obligation on the PCs that will bring them to the same place at the same time. Their religion may require a pilgrimage to some holy shrine, or a lame bard makes them promise to return in a year's time to relate their adventures (to be immortalized in song). The PCs could be pressed into service to stop an orc invasion, and meet on the battlefield (surrounded by the enemy, of course).

The simple trick of getting a party back together is to impose a common objective, goal, or destination. Once the PCs are headed for the planned rendezvous, the referee can adjust their rates of speed by putting obstacles (wandering monsters or natural events) in the way of some. At the rendezvous, the PCs should face some challenge requiring all their combined skills.

## Putting the pieces together

A split-party campaign can be a great deal of fun for the players and their DM, despite—or perhaps because of—the increased complexity.

If a referee can pull off the split while giving all characters a feeling that they are important to the campaign, he will have provided his players with a great feeling-

that their characters live in a world of limitless options, where they can go anywhere and do anything. If the characters believe this, they will happily reunite, knowing that an adventure always lies over the next hill or down that winding road.

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### Give us the word!

What do you think of this magazine? What do you like best or want to see changed most? What do you want to see next? Turn to "Letters" and see what others think, then write to us, too!

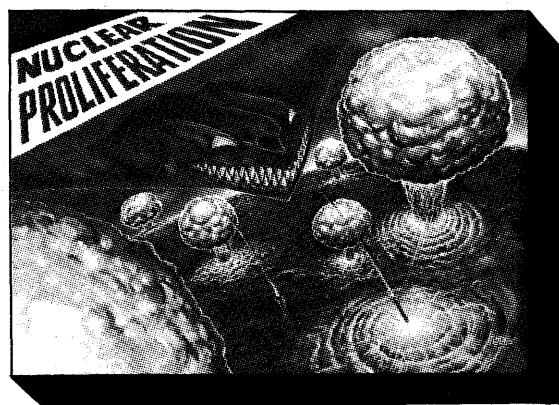
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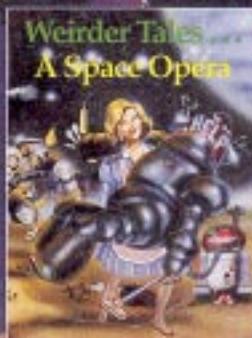
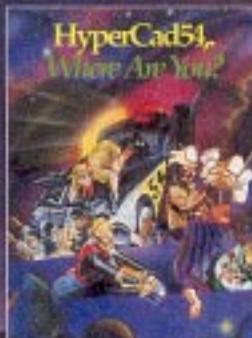
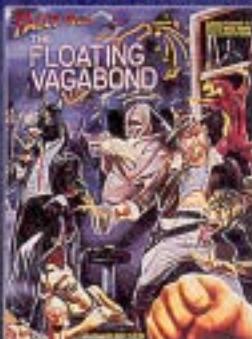


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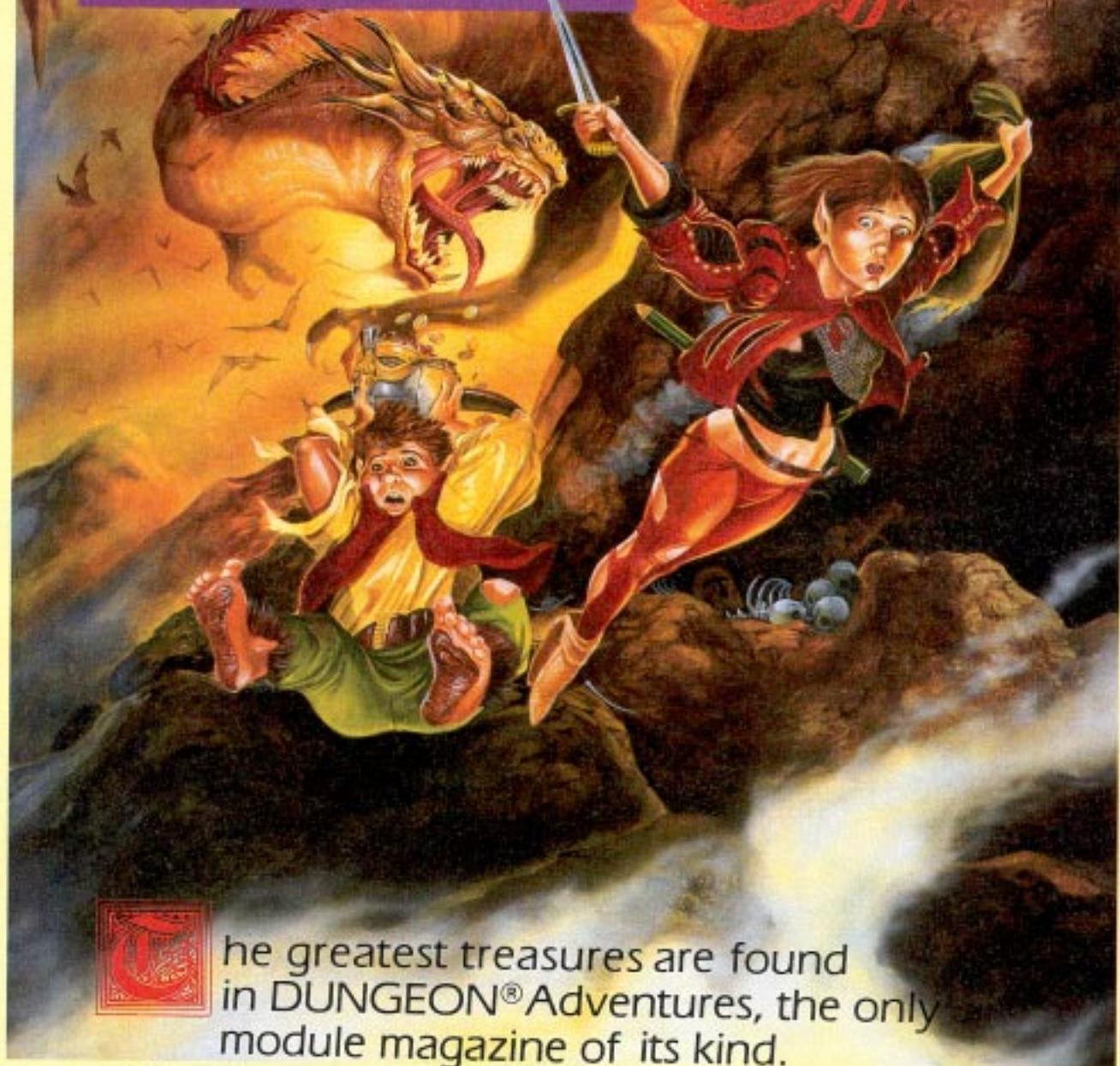
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an abridged version for players without Chapters 10-18?

No. The idea behind the Cyclopedia was to offer at the best price possible all the rules previously contained in four or five rulebooks, plus a decent monster mix and a "starter" campaign. The handy Cyclopedia also offers a more affordable and less bulky option to the \$80.00 initial pack needed for the AD&D® game (a Player's Handbook, Dungeon Master's Guide, MC1 Monstrous Compendium and a boxed campaign set). Granted, you get a heck of a lot more with the AD&D game option, and it is generally more complete in its treatment of comparable topics, but not everyone wants to shell out that much to run a complete game the first time. We also found out that most players own all the rules for their respective games anyway, so offering the whole thing didn't seem to present a major problem.

While I realize that the new D&D game boxed accessories are aimed at beginner players, that is no excuse for their poor quality.<sup>1</sup> The only artwork worth looking at is on the box covers, and some of that is totally inappropriate. Tiamat/Takhisis (on *The Dragon's Den* cover) is not a D&D monster, and any player worth his salt knows the difference between a goblin and a githyanki (see *The Goblin's Lair* cover).<sup>2</sup> Although the adventures are short and simple, that is to be expected from an introductory module.<sup>3</sup> However, why not set the adventures in the Known World rather than create a new Thunder Rift campaign setting?<sup>4</sup> I also have a problem with the maps; I find it hard to believe that even beginning players want to have the whole dungeon laid out before their eyes. It would be better to include a blank grid sheet that the DM could use to draw the maps as the adventure progresses.<sup>5</sup> A final complaint concerns the exorbitant packaging and pricing of these boxed sets. Why such a big box? Why such a high price? If you want to justify the pricing and the packaging, dump the cardboard cutouts and include plastic figures.<sup>6</sup>

I took the liberty of indexing the letter to more easily refer to its vital parts.

1. The components in the boxed sets are certainly not of poor quality in my opinion.

2. There seems to be a lack of appreciation for the half a dozen black and white illustrations – it's a question of personal taste. The remainder of the art – the color pieces on the covers; the semi-gloss, high-grade poster mapsheets; the 70+ cardboard standups; the game tiles – is quite nice. Whether the cover art is inappropriate is beside the point, since these products are targeted at beginners – people who, by definition, do not know anything about the D&D game ("gith-what?"). The boxed accessories are simply not intended for experienced gamers.

3) Thanks, we hoped so too!

4) First, the D&D rules in the game box



# The Known World Gazetteer

Letters & more economics  
by Bruce Heard

This regular feature offers suggestions on the D&D® game, its worlds and its products, occasional articles, or "first glance" reviews of D&D game products. Readers are welcome to send questions, suggestions, or criticisms on the game or on the material published here. We can't promise all letters will be answered in this column, but they all will get our attention.

## Letters

Two points of interest in the Thunder Rift accessory are marked on the pull-out maps but are never mentioned in the sourcebook itself. Will the "Dark Pit" and the "Monolith" (both near the Bone Hills) be detailed in later products, or are they left to be designed by individual DMs?

They were left to be designed by the Dungeon Master, although we may perhaps see a version developed in DRAGON® Maga-

zine some day – likewise with the missing members of the Quadrial. Feel free to submit your version after you get the magazine's writer's guidelines.

The Rules Cyclopedia is a great piece of work! In fact, it's too good. While it contains everything a DM could want (excluding the Gazetteer information), it contains material that should not be available to players. Is there any chance of producing

do not handle wilderness settings at all, much less campaign worlds. The introductory D&D game deals exclusively with dungeon-crawling. Second, in order to play in the Known World, a gamer has to own a copy of the *Rules Cyclopedia* where that world is described. Beginners, by definition, would obviously not have the *Cyclopedia*. That's why there is Thunder Rift. Trust us; we've had our share of confused phone calls from mothers who accidentally purchased the kids a copy of some AD&D campaign set, and who hadn't the foggiest idea what to do with the stuff.

5) Blank grids are visually boring. We're dealing with first-time gamers, younger players for whom the visual element is crucial, people who know neither how the game is played nor how to visualize what happens during an encounter, and apprentice DMs struggling with the game's flow. Don't make them draft the dungeon on top of everything else! That's why we have three very exciting mapsheets in each set. Of course, experienced gamers may laugh at that. But the game still remains tough when all present, including the DM, are complete rookies trying to find their way.

6) Exorbitant? At \$16.95, we're not breaking anyone's budget. Go ahead, find a product from traditional hobby game companies offering as much as what the "Lairs" sets do, at anywhere near \$16.95! Oh sure, we could include plastic, but that would drive the price higher. The packaging was designed to sell the product in the intended market of younger, first-time gamers who do not frequent hobby game stores.

The point of the "Lairs" boxed sets is that they are fun to play and quite easy to get into. Don't assume that all new players learn the game from someone who already knows it. Many people are isolated or don't even understand the basic concept and workings of a role-playing game. The D&D boxed game is not targeted at established gamers wanting to check out the D&D game, or those who are already members of gaming clubs or exposed to hobby gaming in general. We have many people out there who expect to find a four-page rule book, like in a mass-market board game, when they open their first RPG box. Anything more than 16-pages of literature quickly becomes a daunting prospect for them!

Once these new players reach the limits of the introductory game (provided they don't get discouraged and give up in the process), it will soon be time for them to go on with the Challenger Series or the AD&D game. Giving new people an accessible entry to RPG gaming is in the whole hobby's best interest. That's why the introductory D&D game and its supplements are designed the way they are. So, please, don't compare them with sophisticated hobby games. They just don't fit in the same category.

In "The Voyage of the Princess Ark in

DRAGON issue #177, a new society was introduced. I found that it is very similar in appearance to *The Adventures of Astérix*, a European comic book series by René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo. Many of the character names end in "ix" and have double-meanings, such as the bard Voxpopulix, which means "voice of the people." In the *Astérix* books, the bard Cacofonix also has a poor talent in singing. Another similarity is that of the prominence of druids in both scenarios. Was Mr. Heard at all influenced by the *Astérix* stories?

*Yes, by Toutatis! I was raised reading the *Astérix* books in Europe. My goal was to create a society of druids loosely inspired by continental Celts, but that would have reached the medieval era. Of course, some things never change, and the folks of Robrenn still fear nothing, except perhaps that the sky will fall on their heads!*

I cannot find a complete map-key anywhere. The one in the *Rules Cyclopedia*, for example, does not state that the red skull-and-crossbones are. Most of other maps have keys for only what is on them. Can you print a key in your column?

*Probably not. Most of our readers are already familiar with the hex symbols used in the D&D game. No doubt, more new ones will follow as we develop new products. They are rather obvious for the most part, except for a few like the red skull-and-crossbones. This symbol comes from *The Elves of Alheim gazetteer* and indicates bad magic points (cursed or haunted areas). The white tree symbols stand for good magic points (enchanted areas). Gray trees on a green background in Alheim indicate giant oak trees. In GAZ12, The Golden Khan of Ethengar, the dark green grassland hexes mark the location of choice grazing lands, the shaded green spots signal poor grazing land, and the gray hexes indicate a plain of ash.*

I enjoy "The Princess Ark" series, and I think the blend of characters and campaign narrative is just about right. I'm a bit disappointed that three of the past issues contained only letter columns. The questions and answers are interesting, but I hope the absence of other information doesn't mean you're running out of ideas. I'm assuming you're either too busy or are rethinking its direction in light of *Wrath of the Immortals*.

*Well, it's a little of all that. I hope the letter column covers a need for answers and attention. The reason why the adventure series went on hiatus has more to do with development of the upcoming *Princess Ark* boxed set, with which the monthly feature would have interfered, than the upheavals of *Wrath of the Immortals*. I am indeed pretty busy, and as I explained in an earlier issue, my contributions to DRAGON Magazine remain purely on a free-lance basis. As far as running out of ideas? Well, there's*

*still some steam left in this guy (or at least I hope so!)*

I read in DRAGON issue #187 that TSR widened its margins on products so that it could produce items less expensively (while still charging the same price). I wonder how wise the move really was, since it raises credibility/integrity issues?

*TSR tries to keep the price you pay for its products from rising with the cost of inflation. There's also a problem with printing material in small type that's hard to read and looks overwhelming to those gamers interested in getting started. Do you really need 10 megabytes worth of data to play a module? If you'd rather pay more for a heavier word count, let us know. You can send your comments on the topic to our Marketing Dept.*

## Economics III—Working it out

Well, yes, here's more on economics. Last month we looked at population and the food factor. There are more issues, like population growth, the creation of new villages, deforestation, etc.

### Population growth

Every year, a dominion's population should grow, barring disasters like wars, plagues, or natural catastrophes. Add up the present population for each of the land categories in the dominion (wilderness, borderland, rural, suburban, and urban). Then figure out the growth statistics for each type of area, based on the Confidence Level of the dominion (see the *Rules Cyclopedia*, page 141):

Category	Growth Per Year		
	350+ Level	349-150 Level	149- Level
Wilderness	+5%	+10%	+15%
Borderland	+16%	+8%	-
Rural			
& Village	+18%	+6%	-6%
Towns			
& Suburbs	+12%	+3%	-6%
Cities	+5%	+1%	-3%

Growth figures above include routine population migrations as well as births. All is fine when the population grows. When the population falls, entire families head for other dominions or nations, seeking a better life. The oddity here is that fewer people are likely to settle in wilderness areas when settled lands are prosperous. Likewise, when things go bad, more people are likely to run away into the wilderness and lay low!

**Example:** In the two-hex oasis mentioned in the previous issue, we had 350 people (300 farmers and 50 soldiers in a fort). Since this is borderland, the population here could grow 8% in a year. Although soldiers are technically considered "urban," military strength simply doesn't "grow" (sorry, army regulations do not allow fraternization with the natives)

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unless you are dealing with a barbarian or a tribal setting instead of a professional military unit. Only the farmers would show a population growth in the oasis—24 extra people. This includes children and outsiders (newcomers) in the oasis.

**Catastrophes:** The percentages listed in the growth chart can be modified to represent upheavals. For example, in the case of a plague or epidemic, subtract 3d6 from nonurban growth percentages on the chart (-6d6 for urban). In the case of widespread invasions, subtract 6d6 from nonurban growth percentages (-3d6 for urban), etc.

For an earthquake or volcanic eruption, roll 1d4. A roll of 1 indicates one hex is affected. A roll of 2 affects the source hex and the six surrounding hexes. On a roll of 3, add the next 12 hexes, and on a roll of 4, add the next 18 hexes (in concentric circles spreading out from the volcano or the epicenter of the earthquake). On a roll of 1, the earthquake/eruption destroys 2d6 + 1% of the population. On a roll of 2, the outside ring suffers a 2d6 + 1% loss, the epicenter/volcano hex 4d6+2%. On a 3, the outside ring suffers a 2d6+1% loss, the center ring 4d6+2%, and the epicenter/volcano hex 8d6+3%. On a 4, the epicenter/volcano hex suffers a 16d6+4% loss (etc.). On an 8d6+3% effect scale, nonmagical stone and wood structure suffer 50% damage. On a 16d6+4% effect scale, all nonmagical structures are destroyed, etc. See the next section of this article for population movements.

Great catastrophes should have no more than a 1% chance to occur per year. Feel free to modify percentages as dictated by historical events and common sense.

**Migrations:** After years of population growth, what used to be wilderness becomes borderland, what was known as borderland becomes rural, etc. Remember, some areas cannot grow beyond borderland levels (desert, badlands, mountains). Excess population packs up and moves out to other areas of the dominion (better lands, villages, etc.). In this case, the affected terrain remains at its maximum population ceiling. The excess population spreads out into three groups (rounded down). The first third mixes with rural population. The second third mixes with urban population. The last third leaves the dominion or the kingdom. Average out these numbers, dropping fractions.

Whenever events such as migrations due to overpopulation, calamities, or resettlement (see next entry) affect a limited area, it is best to average out the numbers over the whole population of the affected terrain type. Separate population accounting for the same type of terrain is to be avoided, for simplicity's sake. For example, if an earthquake wipes out most of the population in a hex of farmland (200 people die), it would be best to reduce the

dominion's total farmland population by 200 rather than that single hex. Assume that within weeks or months, the population spreads out to fill the vacuum. But if a particular village is hit by catastrophe, it stays that way!

**Resettlement:** It is possible to pay people to settle wilderness areas, above and beyond normal population growth. A 5-gp grant per person should be enough to get some people to move. If the dominion is prosperous, a 10-gp grant would be better, since the inhabitants are less likely to seek a harder life. The cost includes town criers announcing the offer, and the provosts registering and paying the new settlers.

Roll 1d20 once for each population category targeted with the resettlement offer (a town, a group of villages, a rural or borderland area, etc.). The result is the percentage of the targeted people who accept the grant and move out. But beware: if the majority of settlers are urban people, 10-100% (roll 1d10x10) of them may perish, give up, or otherwise disappear within a year of resettlement (sorry, no refund!). If the majority of the settlers are suburban, roll 1d8x10 instead. Roll 1d6x10 if the settlers are from a rural area, 1d4x10 if they are borderlanders.

## New villages

**Creation:** Part of the agricultural population may create new villages. Roll 2d20; the result is the percentage of the total new growth among the agricultural population that wants to create new villages. Always round down the number of people moving to new villages. If it is at least 50, a new village is created. If more, the newly created villages should have no more than 200 people each. Finally, cross off the new villagers from the present agricultural population total and add them to the urban population total.

**Placement:** Place the new village(s) in borderland or rural areas, preferably on solid, flat terrain near a river (especially at a river junction); by a sea or lake shore (especially in a natural cove or near an estuary); along roads (especially cross-roads), near a fortification (castle, fort, keep), or at a bridge. In a warlike setting, a higher elevation facilitating the village's defense may be desirable. A forest in an adjacent hex might also be helpful, since the wood could be used to build the village's houses. Target first those sites benefiting from several of these features.

**Limits:** In order to avoid an excessive number of villages after years of growth, it may be a good idea to limit the total number of villages to one per 5,000 agricultural people, or 1d6+2 new villages per year, whichever occurs first. Large kingdoms can grow out of control very quickly otherwise. The unhappy would-be villagers in excess of those limits will have to stay home until next year.

**Example:** The oasis mentioned earlier should be part of a larger dominion. Let's assume the total growth of the dominion's farming population that year to be 250 people. You rolled a 20 on 2d20, meaning 20% of these farmers—50 people in all—seek to create a new village. Pick an area in the dominion where you want a village, following the placement guidelines above.

As the dominion ruler, your PC may help in the construction of the new village by lending or donating gold for a mill or a chapel dedicated to the PC's immortal patron. Perhaps a small guard house would keep the desert raiders away. The villagers will thank your PC for such generosity and name the village in the dominion lord's honor.

## Deforestation

**Cause & effect:** Woods are both an obstacle and a boon to the development of rural areas. Trees take up valuable land on which farmers could grow crops, but they provide essential construction material and a fuel source to heat the villagers' homes and feed the blacksmith's furnace. The result: Woods get cut down as local population grows.

In general, forest population simply does not grow beyond borderland level. The excess population moves to other parts of the dominion (as explained under "Migrations" earlier in this article). Meanwhile, the forest is gradually cut down to make way for civilization. The edges of the woods are deforested first, and the destruction continues inward.

**Method:** Your PC, as the dominion's ruler, has two choices:

- 1 Divide the total population of all the dominion's forested areas by 150. The result, rounded down, gives the number of heavy forest hexes that are reduced to light forest, or
- 1 Divide the total by 400. The result, rounded down, gives the number of light forest hexes that are completely deforested.

Changing the status of a forest, or removing it entirely, alters the limits on the number of people who can dwell in that area.

**Logging sites:** The hexes that should be deforested first are (in order of preference) those wooded hexes: 1) closest to urban areas, 2) closest to rivers, 3) to road and trails, and 4) to farmland (unforested plains) or to easily accessible regions. If there is an alternative, wooded hills should be the last to be deforested.

**Risks & limits:** As the ruler of a dominion, your PC has a duty to protect the dominion's subjects. Deforestation is a dangerous task. Monsters and forest bandits could decimate the population. Druids may not see this population encroachment with a kind eye, nor do they condone logging. If the forest population is mostly elves, no logging should take place at all.

There is also the question of Royal Hunting Grounds that by decree remain free of inhabitants and logging. These forests can become very tempting to poor peasants and poachers. Once all the forests of a dominion are gone, it is necessary to import wood for construction and heating.

## Mining

Mineral resources could already exist in a hex at the time all the details of the dominion are first created. For the sake of atmosphere, we can assume that mining is more likely in mountain areas than elsewhere:

Terrain type	Chance for mine
Mountain	1%
Hills &broken lands	0.5%
Flat terrain'	0.1%
Bogs, swamps	unminable

<sup>1</sup> Includes badlands, deserts, clear terrain, etc.

**Procedure:** Add up the number of hexes for each type of terrain in the dominion. Multiply these results by the listed percentages. The result is the chance that a mine is already being operated in each of the given terrain types.

**Example:** A dominion has 120 mountain hexes, 40 hill hexes, and 20 hexes of clear terrain. With a total of 120%, there is automatically one mine in the mountains, plus a 20% chance for another. There is a 20% chance for a mine in the hills, and a 2% chance for a mine in the plains.

**Placement:** There is no easy way of actually placing a mine on a map. If randomness is desired, find the approximate center of the largest stretch of the desired terrain type in the dominion. First, roll 1d6. The result indicates a direction (1-North, 2-Northeast, etc., moving clockwise). Then pick a die that comes close to the average number of hexes separating the center hex from the edge of the terrain type. The second die's result -1 indicates the mine's distance in hexes away from the center hex. If the second die indicate a spot outside the given terrain type, place the mine in the closest hex of the appropriate terrain type. A mine hex cannot contain a city or a large town.

**Size & income:** Once a mine is identified and placed, roll percentile dice twice and check below for the mine's nature and size:

Result (%)	Nature	Income <sup>1</sup>
01-21	Depleted (abandoned)	none
22-38	Salt Mine	50 gp/month
39-53	Alabaster, marble	75 gp/month
54-66	Iron mine	100 gp/month
67-76	Ornamental stones	150 gp/month

77-85	Copper mine	200 gp/month
86-92	Silver mine	300 gp/month
93-97	Gold mine	400 gp/month
98-99	Precious stones	500 gp/month
00	Two mines! <sup>2</sup>	n/a

R e s u l t (%)	Size	income modifier
01-50	Small	None
51-80	Average	x2
81-95	Large	x3
96-00	Major	x4

<sup>1</sup> In a feudal system, the local ruler often owns the mine. The figures listed in this column refer to net profits, after supply and operational cost. The figures do not include the upkeep of armed forces.

<sup>2</sup> Roll again twice on this column, ignoring results of 00.

**Effects:** For a mine to be fully operational, some miners must work in the quarries, and others must transport the ore and run the mine. These people will need to draw food supplies from neighboring areas, because they do not generate any of their own food, and mining wipes out farming in its hex. For more simplicity, assume the income from the mine also includes all tax income from that hex.

**Depleting an active mine:** Roll percentile dice each year. On a roll of 1-10, the mine is empty and abandoned (it may become a lair for monsters, humanoids, or bandits). On a roll of 11-20, the mine drops one category in size (a small mine is depleted). On a roll of 00, a new ore deposit is found; the mine should be upgraded to the next larger size. However, if this result is rolled for a major mine, a catastrophic collapse takes place; no income is generated for the next 1d12 months.

When a mine is depleted, roll percentile dice again. The result indicates the percentage of the population in that hex that leaves the dominion altogether. Those who remain become part of the nearby farming population. If a village exists in a mining hex and its population falls below 50, it becomes a ghost town (it is abandoned and possibly becomes haunted or a monster lair). The remaining villagers become part of the local agricultural population.

**New mines:** Professionals can be hired to search for mineral deposits. Use the salary rates given in "The Voyage of the Princess Ark," episode #34, plus a reward of 500 gp per reported deposit. Any NPC with a skill in geology can prospect for mineral deposits.

A prospector can search one eight-mile hex per week. As time passes, write down which terrain types were searched, and their locations. The controlling PC can check for the presence of mineral deposits at any time. The DM then makes

a secret skill check for each terrain type that has been searched. Add up the number of searched hexes for those terrain types for which the skill check was successful. The DM then rolls separately for each terrain type as shown in the "Method" entry earlier. The prospector must make it back to the PC's headquarters before the DM can reveal the nature and location of the mine to the player. If a skill check fails, the prospector does not find any deposit in that terrain type.

If the prospector is a dwarf, add a .5% chance per searched hex to the chance a mine will be found (hills or mountains only). For example, if a dwarf searches 20 mountain hexes and succeeds in his skill check for that terrain type, he has a 30% chance ( $1.5\% \times 20$  mountain hexes) of locating a mineral deposit (instead of a 20% chance).

The DM should check secretly once per month (1d10% chance) to see if the prospector (and his armed escort, if any) run into trouble from monsters, bandits, disease, or accidents. When a deposit is discovered, a prospector may be tempted to exploit the discovery himself without telling his PC boss, especially if not escorted by guards loyal to the PC. The chance of a prospector turning rogue are 6% for silver deposits, 12% for gold, and 24% for precious stones. (Add to the total another 12% chance for dwarven prospectors.) If an escort is present, halve these chances (the escort may be bribed to betray the PC!).

Once a deposit is discovered, the PC should invest  $4d6 \times 100$  gp to begin exploiting it. The DM should wait until the end of the first month's exploitation before revealing the actual size of the deposit and generating regular income. If the deposit is depleted at the end of the month, better luck next time!





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## T

by Steven E. Schend

## THE MARVEL®-PHILE

How many licks  
does it take to get  
to the center of a  
Sentinel?

Well, things have been quite hectic for the past few months with MARVEL SUPER HEROESTM (MSH) game line and I've been in quite a stew over what to do for the "MARVEL®-Phile." As usual, day-to-day work keeps after us here at TSR and, despite our best intentions, sometimes the things that get set aside for later attention are letters from gamers. This matter is punctuated by Dale dropping off two or three letters a week, Dale might make a good Willie Lumpkin (though he can't wiggle his ears) and he—and your letters—set me on this month's column.

Yes, after months of waiting, many letter writers will get answers to questions about the game I'll address a number of questions that we continually get here, and offer some helpful hints for Judges and players alike before future, questions arise. Ready? Let's go!

**Questions**

I have just read about {insert favorite character's name here}, and I want you to send me her game statistics.

For the past year or two, Dale and I have tried to keep up with the vast numbers of new characters coming out from Marvel Comics and to present them in these pages. We also do appreciate letters asking us to present certain characters in this magazine. These help us decide which characters are best suited for publication. Had it not been for letters to the magazine, I'd never have done Darkhawk, Cerise, and Kylun.

Many people write in asking for a huge number of characters from related or unrelated titles ("every character who was ever an X-Man") and specifically request that these characters' stats be sent to them at their addresses. As much as we'd like to oblige, we cannot provide such services





due to the sheer volume of requests, and the simple fact we have full-time jobs to perform here. Also, many of the characters requested are also published in other sources; many heroes and villains appear annually in the MARVEL UNIVERSE® Updates, and repeating them in DRAGON® Magazine would be redundant. Also, there are many characters, especially those with an "X-" affiliation that are purposefully left mysterious; exciting they may be, but without enough information, we can't present a character for the game.

Please continue to send letters suggesting characters for the column, but don't ask us to send you character stats. They may be more "official" to players if we construct them, but the MSH game is designed to allow any Judge to do the same for any character (see "Character modelling" at the end of this article for more information).

**I've heard about an old product called *The Ultimate Powers Book*. How can I get it, and when are you going to do another one?**

*The Ultimate Powers Book* has been out of print for over three years, and there are no plans to revise or reprint it. The book's purpose was to catalog every power ever seen in comic books; its character-creation tables also created much more powerful characters than those generated by the Basic or Advanced rules. It is not available from TSR, Inc., and must be sought out through collectors' markets.

**Can you send me a catalog of older MSH game products?**

Some of the older MSH products are available through the TSR's Mail Order Hobby Shop. Send your requests to:

The TSR Mail Order Hobby Shop  
P.O. Box 756  
Lake Geneva WI 53147  
(414)248-3625 or (800)558-5977

**Are absorbed powers permanent, or do they have a time limit that they stay with the absorber? Also, can a character absorb an unlimited number of powers/talents?**

Absorbed powers are not permanent unless the player specifically chooses that Limitation for the character (Rogue has this Limitation based on the amount of contact with whomever she absorbs power from.). In general, absorbed powers last for one-tenth of the Power Absorption rank + 1d10 rounds per round of contact. For example, a character has the power at Excellent (20) rank; he can maintain absorbed powers for 2 + 1d10 rounds after touching a character for one round.

Characters can absorb only one power at a time, or two if a Limitation is added to the power. The characters can add to their ability to absorb powers by Power Stunts and hypothetically can absorb as many powers as they have Power Stunts and Limitations. Most heroes (or villains) with this power temporarily absorb five powers at most before the Limitations become too debilitating. Rogue's power is extremely powerful but limited too: She absorbs all a victim's powers, but she also must absorb their memories and risk gaining them permanently. If your character wants unlimited Power Absorption, be prepared for the character to face stiff limits.

**If Wolverine's claws are Class 1000 material strength, why does he need a Strength FEAT to slice up a Sentinel?**

A character with Claws uses his own Strength to wield this power; though the Claws' power rank refers to the material strength of the claws, the damage done to any material is dependant on the character's Strength. Wolverine's adamantium claws of Class 1000 material can pierce Class 1000 and lesser materials if Wolverine makes a Strength FEAT roll (the roll is to see if Wolverine slices through it, using his Strength to widen the hole his claws make); however, Wolverine can only inflict 20 points of damage due to his Strength in using his claws to attack directly (rather than merely making a hole). The power rank determines which materials he can affect.

However, Power Stunts can be developed for claws. If a character makes a Red Strength FEAT, he successfully uses his claws to slash away whatever material he attacks, whether a wall or piece of armor. Many protected targets have very thick armor that can be cut by claws but cannot be penetrated to do damage; this Power Stunt allows the clawed character to break down defenses (but only to nonliving materials).

**Where does comparative Endurance fit in with Martial Arts A?**

Martial Arts A is a generic grouping of fighting styles similar to aikido, in which one character uses another's Strength against him. In a superheroic setting, it is often possible to face an opponent who can lift up to 200 times what your character can. Martial Arts A simply gives your character a chance to fight and Stun an opponent regardless of physical superiority. Remember that an enhanced Endurance usually prevents a strong character from being slammed or stunned; that character can be beaten by a trained Martial Artist, regardless of

Strength or Endurance. The Black Widow could, under certain conditions, use Martial Arts A and her foe's own strength to flip and Stun She-Hulk, despite the difference in their ability levels.

**How can people like assassins gain Karma? If Karma is a reflection of a hero's status compared to the ideal hero, what if a hero doesn't care about his status? The Punisher and Wolverine certainly have no compunctions against killing. I realize that this is against the heroic nature of the game, but these people do kill. How is this handled within the game?**

This has always been a sticky question to address, given the rise in vengeful, violent heroes in both the comics and other media. The answers are direct interpretations of the game rules on these matters. Keep in mind that any Judge can change these stipulations to suit the type of game they play; TSR and the MSH game will always rule against killer heroes.

Assassins in the MSH game are, by definition, villains; their crimes bring them as much Karma as heroes get for stopping the same crimes. However, villains lose only 30 Karma for killing people. The Karma gained for committing a violent crime (such as murder) is negated by the 30-point loss, and they gain zero Karma for their actions. Assassins, therefore, must gain their Karma at tasks other than killing. Characters like the Red Skull lose Karma by the ton for killing underlings, but they gain Karma in many other evil ways and these killings promote fear (and negative Popularity).

If a hero doesn't care about his status as an ideal hero, he just doesn't have the Karma to spend like other heroes. Heroes who kill (Wolverine, Punisher, Devil Slayer) gain Karma normally with many actions, but lose it all immediately upon killing. Since they don't uphold the strict ideals of the heroic tradition to protect life, they don't get the bonuses to excel at their heroic duties (Karma points). The lack of Karma also prevents new Power Stunts from being developed or new equipment from being procured; when was the last time you saw Wolverine or the Punisher perform something totally new and unexpected?

**This guy you're fighting is about to shoot you with a gun. Do you get a chance to dodge even though it's his turn?**

A character can only do this if she has not yet acted and sacrifices her intended action to Dodge or Evade the attack. If the character has already acted, the attack happens as planned. This is not too unre-

alistic given that each round is a total of about six seconds; there's a lot happening and characters can be caught dead to rights if they focus on the wrong thing.

When I am the Judge of an MSH game, I tend to give both the heroes and the villains more of a break. Regardless of their other actions, I always allow a character under fire to make an Agility FEAT; the FEAT is checked as a Dodge maneuver but only gains half the benefits if successful (i.e., a Green FEAT gives a -1CS penalty to the foe's attack; a Yellow FEAT, -2CS; a Red FEAT, -3CS). Characters who are under attack by hidden foes (invisible, behind them, snipers, etc.) use an Intuition FEAT in these same situations. Keep in mind that this is my own house rule, not an official MSH game rule. If the Judge and the players wish to use it, enjoy!

#### **Can Wolverine cut through Thor's hammer with a red FEAT? Can Thor break Wolverine's adamantium bones with his hammer?**

Wolverine might be able to scratch or score Mjolnir (Thor's hammer), but he couldn't cut through it; simply put, Thor's hammer is much more than just metal. The uru metal is Class 1000 but Odin's enchantments and the special forges of the Asgardian dwarves strengthened Mjolnir so it is a Class 3000 item. Wolverine can scratch Mjolnir, but the resulting backlash of energy would do serious damage both to him and Thor. Logan's adamantium skeleton is as strong as regular adamantium, but Thor's hammer, when coupled with his Strength, can break one of Wolverine's bones with a Red FEAT.

#### **Multiple Targets under the Single Roll option reduces attacks by -4CS. How can Spidey, Daredevil, Punisher, etc., fight all those thugs in the same area without invoking the catchall excuse of spending a lot of Karma?**

Simply put, these characters are "the best they are at what they do" and their statistics are high enough to allow some of these maneuvers almost automatically. With Spider-Man's Fighting score of RM (30) reduced by -4CS to PR (4, he can still hit a whole group of thugs with a roll of 56 or greater without spending any Karma at all. Daredevil's IN (40) Agility, with the penalty, allows him a Multiple Target hit with his billy club with a roll of 51 or better. With minimal Karma expenditures, any hero with above-average statistics has a good chance of successfully attacking whole groups of closely packed foes.

*Continued on page 52*

## **Power roster**

### **Fighting**

#### **Rank**

	<b>Description</b>
FB	No training or ability
PR	Normal human ability
TY	Natural ability; minimal training
GD	Some formal training
EX	Regular, formal training
RM	Superior talent
IN	Superior talent with training
AM	Maximum human potential
MN	Superhuman potential
UN	Superhuman with intensive training

#### **Examples**

Children, elderly
Professor X
Doctor Octopus
Police, Hawkeye
Army, Cyclops
Spider-Man
Nick Fury
Captain America
Asgard's warriors
Thor, Hercules

### **Agility**

#### **Rank**

	<b>Description</b>
FB	Physically limited
PR	Clumsy, inaccurate
TY	Normal human reactions
GD	Some training
EX	Intensive training
RM	Olympic athlete
IN	Olympic gymnast
AM	Superhuman ability
MN	Superior superhuman ability
UN	Instant reactions, rarely misses

#### **Examples**

Disabled
Children, elderly
Mr. Fantastic
Invisible Woman
Colossus
Cyclops, Mockingbird
Hawkeye
Captain America
Spider-Man,
Nightcrawler
Silver Surfer, Mephisto
Celestials, Odin

### **Strength**

#### **Rank**

	<b>Description</b>
FB	Press up to 50 lbs.
PR	Press up to 100 lbs.
TY	Press up to 200 lbs.
GD	Press up to 400 lbs.
EX	Press up to 800 lbs., maximum human cap.
RM	Press up to 2000 lbs.
IN	Press up to 10 tons
AM	Press up to 50 tons
MN	Press up to 80 tons
UN	Press up to 100 tons

#### **Examples**

Children, elderly
Normal humans
Invisible Woman
Daredevil
Captain America
Dr. Doom, Darkhawk
Spider-Man
Rogue, Vision
Thing, She-Hulk
Hulk, Thor

### **Endurance**

#### **Rank**

	<b>Description</b>
FB	Reduced or impaired ability
PR	Minimal ability or exercise
TY	Occasional exercise
GD	Moderate exercise
EX	Regular exercise
RM	Intensive exercise
IN	Enhanced abilities
AM	Enhanced abilities and training
MN	Superhuman fortitude
UN	Never tires

#### **Examples**

Elderly, disabled
Children
Normal humans
Black Knight
Daredevil
Captain America
Spider-Man
She-Hulk
Thing
Hulk, Thor

### **Reason**

#### **Rank**

	<b>Description</b>
FB	Couch potato; uneducated
PR	Primary school education
TY	Secondary school education
GD	Bachelor's degree equivalent
EX	Master's degree equivalent
RM	Doctorate equivalent

#### **Examples**

Ajax, Drax
Jubilee
Cannonball, Firestar
Captain America
Spider-Man
Shadowcat

# Previews....



## NEW PRODUCTS FOR FEBRUARY

### ALQ2 Assassin Mountain AD&D® game AL-QADIM™ sourcebox by Wolfgang Baur

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## Power roster (cont.)

IN	Genius—Level 1 (one focus); can understand alien tech.	Tony Stark, Professor X
AM	Genius—Level 2 (Multifocus); can create leading-edge tech.	Doctor Doom, Mr. Fantastic
MN	Alien genius; improve & modify alien tech.	Mephisto
UN	Knows all human & alien tech.	Watcher
<b>Intuition</b>		
<b>Rank</b>		
FB	<b>Description</b> Impaired or limited ability "Slow on the uptake"	<b>Examples</b> Drax
PR	Normal human levels	Ajax, Sunspot
TY	Above-average intuition	Quasar
3D	Fine attention to details	Shadowcat
EX	Detective background/skills	Nick Fury
RM	Strong empathic sense; "gut feeling"	Cyclops
IN	In tune with surroundings; strong hunches	Captain America, Dr. Doom
AM	Superhuman senses	Agamemnon, Prof. X
MN	In touch with the universe	Daredevil
UN		Watcher
<b>Psyche</b>		
<b>Rank</b>		
FB	<b>Description</b> Easily dominate&programmed	<b>Examples</b> Dreadnoughts
PR	Young, untrained, will-impaired	Meggan
TY	Normal human willpower	Hawkeye
GD	Resist ordinary mesmerism	Daredevil
EX	Some experience with mind control/ mystic forces	Black Widow, Nightcrawler
RM	Trained to resist will-control	Cyclops, Hulk, Mr. Fantastic
IN	Great strength of will; well-trained/focused	Spider-Man, Wolverine
AM	Indomitable willpower	Dr. Doom
MN	Intensive training & experience with mental powers	Loki, Prof. X, Doctor Strange
UN	A mind closed to external forces	
<b>Resources</b>		
<b>Rank</b>		
FB	<b>Description</b> Unemployed, fixed income	<b>Examples</b> Aunt May
PR	Freelancers, students	Spider-Man
TY	Salaried employment	Betty Banner
GD	Professional, middle class	Dr. Strange
EX	Small business, Avengers' pay	Captain America
RM	Large business, upper class	Prof. X, TSR Inc.
IN	Small corporation, millionaire	Fantastic Four
AM	Large corporation, small country	Doctor Doom
MN	Billionaire, multinational corps.	Great Britain, Roxxon, SHIELD
UN	Major country, megacorporation	USA
<b>Popularity</b>		
<b>Rank</b>		
FB	<b>Description</b> Reclusive, little known	<b>Examples</b> Archangel
PR	Known to law enforcement	Banshee
TY	Known to local populace	Cyclops
GD	Liked by law enforcement	Daredevil
EX	Known to mass media	Beast
RM	Liked by general public	Spider-Man
IN	Liked by mass media	Captain Britain
MN	Household name	Hercules
UN	Worldwide fame and acclaim	Thor
	Living Legend	Captain America

Continued from page 49

I like to play the MSH game very much; the only problem is that I don't want to be a superhero or a mutant or a robot or anything like that. I just want to be a cop in Los Angeles. My best friend is the GM, and he said it's awfully hard to find villains for me to fight and beat. What would be your suggestion as to what villains my character could fight?

What a refreshing letter! I enjoy playing superheroes and running high- and low-powered games, but this campaign would be a challenge as well as an education. A game with normal human heroes could be a chance to show players what dangers a police officer might face every day in the real world (let alone the dangers of being a cop in the MARVEL UNIVERSE).

Since the MSH game's inception, a trend has developed with more and more normal humans and vigilantes popping up to fight crime (like Nomad, Punisher, Mockingbird, Silver Sable, etc.). Use a number of their foes if you're running a normal humans' level campaign; suggestions include a number of old classic low-level villains: Eel, Hammerhead, Fu Manchu, Yellow Claw, Trapster, the Enforcers, the Vulturions or the Vulture, or Stilt-Man. If you're looking for a bit more of a challenge, use low- to medium-range villains like Constrictor, Killer Shrike, Tombstone, Sidewinder, or the Shocker.

Other options to boost the playability of normal human characters is to keep them as police, but assign them as special S.W.A.T. teams equipped with technology to deal with superhumans. New York's CODE BLUE team (from the *Thor* comic book) is a great example of normal humans in tough situations. (CODE BLUE is detailed in MU8) One other option is to enlist normal humans as SHIELD agents; the technology and the skills involved in being a member of this elite espionage group should train you in fighting superhuman menaces.

Judges interested in this type of campaign may wish to adapt the rules slightly, allowing for normal human-level characters into the game with additional talents and contacts. Remember that characters such as the Falcon, the Black Cat, Black Widow, Captain America, or the Black Knight are all normal humans with only a few added bits of technology. Street-level normal humans make for great role-playing experiences in a superheroic setting; all they need is to sacrifice technology and powers for more skills. Give it a try!

## Character modelling

To save you time writing letters requesting this or that character, here's a revision from the MSH Advanced Set rules on adapting Marvel characters from the comics to the game.

The MARVEL UNIVERSE is constantly changing its old characters and adding new characters, so how can Judges and players keep up with the changes for their games? The "MARVEL-Phile" provides new character statistics for the game, but not every character is covered. There's a simple solution—create the desired character's statistics yourself!

To create new character's statistics, a player must work with the Judge to decide the character's abilities. Collect as many appearances as possible of that character and compile a list of his abilities and skills. Next, compare the new character to previously established characters. The Power Roster with this article is a guideline to gauge a new character's abilities against those of other characters as well as provide basic rules of measurement for each primary ability rank.

The creation of a modeled character is similar to generating a new character,

except that the precise abilities are chosen by the player instead of rolling randomly. Restrictions on powers, types of powers, and contacts are ignored when modeling. The advantage of the MSH system is that the abilities are not strict numbers but number ranges to cover a wider field and to prevent hours of arguing over minutiae like Thor's exact strength.

To model primary abilities, check the Power Roster for each ability and pick the hero's abilities in comparison with his abilities in the comics. If the character isn't as smart as Reed Richards, then that character's Reason should be less than Amazing rank, Ignore powers when gauging these abilities—a character whose skin is impervious to bullets might still have a low Endurance.

Secondary abilities are easily generated as well, Health and Karma are the sums of the primary abilities, Resources start at Typical if no information is available, otherwise the Power Roster has equivalent ranks listed, Popularity has an initial rank of 5 and is altered by character origins (Mutants and characters of "Other Origins" have Popularity penalties) and actions. Finally, find the base powers and

talents of the new character and modify them accordingly to fit your campaign. Again, compare the character against other characters and the various applicable tables (Movement table, Range table, etc.) to find appropriate power and talent ranks. Contacts are found in terms of who the character knows in his comic book appearances.

One final note: If a new character has more than two Unearthly or greater abilities or powers, this is a character that is far too powerful for most Earth-based MSH game campaigns. If the Judge prefers not to use the character, choose a less cosmic character.  $\Omega$

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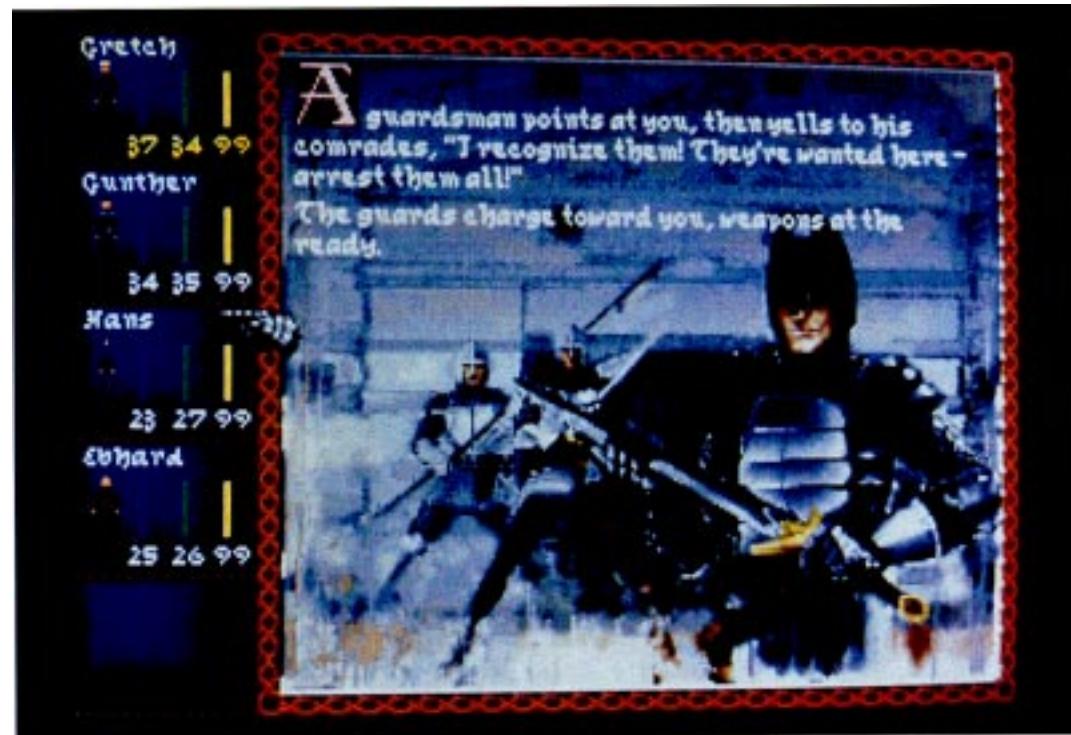
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*Darklands*  
(MicroProse)

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### H.E.L.P.

Derek Bruff of Lexington, SC., writes, "I was playing *Champions of Krynn* by SSI, and while in Kernen in the final stages of the game, Pellinore (my 102-hp Knight of the Rose) got hit by a Confusion spell cast by an aurak draconian. The first round he killed two sivaks with his dragonlance (while wearing a girdle of giant strength). The second round, he attacked my dwarf, knocking off a third of his hit points. After that, he chopped 20 points off my kender and the rest of my party began bombard-

ing him with spells. Dispel Magic failed, then Charm Person worked. With Pellinore charmed, I ended combat and saved, thinking I was safe. In the next combat, however, I found my knight on the opposing side. I Charmed him again and defeated the enemy. It seemed I had a permanently evil party member. On two subsequent combats, Pellinore was an enemy and, as of right now, I am set to take on Myrtani's Dragon Master. I've tried twice and have been decimated both times.

### Computer games' ratings

X  
\*  
\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

Not recommended	
Poor	
Fair	
Good	
Excellent	
Superb	

Now, I have beaten the game once before and Pellinore's party is a death machine, but I don't know what to do about my knight. Remove Curse didn't help. Display Function showed no evil tendencies or magical effects whatsoever. The problem is I had no backup saved, so I'm stuck. I even tried removing him and adding him back—that didn't help, either. Why does this game do this? And why does it say in the Adventurer's Journal that rangers get multiple attacks at 8th level when they cannot attain 8th level in this adventure? Why does it say in the level charts in the back of the book that knights can reach 8th level when in the game they can't? Also in the Adventurer's Journal, what are all those entries about Sir Era, the vampire, gulley dwarves, and a piece of the orb? Are they just to throw off those who read too much? Are all SSI games this problematic? I am thinking about getting

*Curse of the Azure Bonds*, but now I'm not too sure. Help!"

Brad Aufderheide, of White Plains, N.Y., has the following request: "I have solved several of the Beholder Special Quests in *Eye of the Beholder*, but I need help with the rest. On level 7, the hint from the clue book states, 'Find the three that hold the key.' I believe that the hint may refer to the three skeletal lords found in the north-east corner, but I couldn't discover the answer. Also, what are the clues to the special quest on level 12, and what is it?"

Timothy Walsh of Milton, Mass., mailed the following H.E.L.P. request to us. "In *Neuromancer*, I have Coptalk 2, Cryptology 1, Comlink 6.0, Sequencer 1.0, Scout 1.0, and BattleTech 2.0 on my starting deck. I have been over to Hosaka once and uploaded 6.0 to them. I feel sure that I could figure something out, but first I need a lot of money with which to buy a Ono-Sendai Cyberspace VII, all skills and upgrades. Do you have any tips for monymaking? It surely would be appreciated."

A few issues ago we discussed (with the help of several readers) the best way to defeat the Mulmaster Corps in *Curse of the Azure Bonds* through the use of the Dust of Disappearance. For those who are unsure if the effort is worth the risk, Matthew Appleyard of Ontario, Canada, indicates that "when you are done, go back to the room. You will find a small room with the following items in it: 31,200 cp, 9,000 sp, 6000 ep, 3,525 gp, 712 gp, 39 gems, 17 pieces of jewelry, two maces +1, three magic-user scrolls, a dagger +1, two morning stars +1, a long sword +2, a long sword +1, and splint mail armor +2."

In response to Sean Larson's question on *Spellcasting 101*, Bob Fagen of Florissant, Mo., indicates "he needs to revisit the headmaster's room (in Ernie's frat house) and cast DISPAR on the surfboard. Take the surfboard to the dock and put it on the water. Set it to the coordinates of the Isle of Lost Souls (the one that looks like a foot) and push the button. From here, you leave the university and begin your journey across the sea."

Wesley Lin, of Phoenix, Ariz., writes: "I am writing in regard to the letter written by Inoo Labion and Charles Rose in DRAGON® issue #183 about *Dragon Wars*. Namtar is in the Depths of Nisir. Cast Soften Stone on a wall, walk away from the cavern until you bump into another wall, and cast Soften Stone again. You will be able to find Mystalvision in the sun-filled place, as well as Namtar past a locked door. The rock on the Faerie Bridge in the Magan Underworld holds a stairway leading up to Nisir, but I think that this is caused by a glitch in my program. The rock's importance becomes fairly clear after you kill Namtar. The rusty axes are good weapons. Also, try moving the statue of Irkalla under Lansk. Regarding Fred Wisdom's letter concerning

*Ultima V* in the same issue, I suggest shooting the corners of the room."

Todd Mullholland of Michigan writes in response to Jake Haney's request with *Leather Goddesses of Phobos* in issue #183. "You give your flashlight to the salesman, who will, in turn, give you a tree remover machine (that you use on the unTangling ointment-remember the dude with an angle for a daughter?). To buy an exit, you must first get the coin from the visaphone booth near the scientist's house. Then, if you can get to the North Pole without having your brain fried (which, I believe, is done by using the raft in the secret catacombs), there are a group of penguins. If you give the coin to them for their retirement fund, you will get the exact change you need to buy the exit. As far as Thorbast goes, if you attack him enough times, you will eventually disarm him. Do not attack him again—instead, get his sword, and give it to him. He will realize that you are a good guy and that evil never wins, and he will impale himself. For the frog, you don't need the cotton balls, you need the clothespin from



the sultan's house. You use that on your nose, the lip balm on your lips, and close your eyes; then you cover your ears with your hands."

## Reviews

### Darklands

MicroProse, PC/MS-DOS 12MHz or faster computers

Darklands (DL) is a multicharacter adventure that takes place in 15th-century Germany. DL is replete with all manner of quests (minor and major), encounters, and city and hamlet life. It truly affords the gamer the feel of adventuring on a daily basis. You will not soon complete DL, and this fantasy role-playing game (FRPG) offers high dollar-to-adventure ratio. Yes, DL may cost a little more than other adventures, but we believe you'll be so engrossed in its environment that you may actually regret leaving to eat dinner.

Fifteenth-century Germany is not a gentle place in which to live. There are knights and castles, but there are also extremely unsafe roads, areas where despots rule, alchemy, dragons, witches, and religious fanaticism. Your object is to

gain as much fame as possible. All commands are entered by using your mouse- or keyboard-controlled cursor to click on your orders. No matter which menu is presented, you can always Escape back to the previous menu, a nice user-considerate feature.

It does take some time to learn DL, especially how to create suitable characters. You actually live their lives for them, from birth to death, and as you play you'll see why certain attributes are absolutely critical for a character's survival. You may also save your game at any time. However, you cannot recall saved games without exiting to DOS and then restarting your game, a necessity we did not enjoy, despite the fact that DL is one of the fastest-booting games when you bypass the opening animation sequences.

The animation in the game is featured strictly for outdoor adventuring (an overhead map with a single character depicting your party) and battle (all characters and opposition are seen, and controlled, individually). The animation is not extraordinary, but it does its job of identifying characters and helping gamers fight effectively. Other artwork consists of backdrops for descriptive text that define your current locale. You may also select to suppress the graphics, which is a wise idea for those playing DL on slower machines. The backdrop graphics, although marvelously rendered with an ethereal quality to them, do little to define what town or city you are. Each backdrop for a specific locale (marketplace, crafts street, etc.) is identical for every center of habitation.

Other problems are present as well. Outdoors, you're beset by repeat random encounters that sometimes make little sense. After the fifth attack by wild boars and three encounters with a rude noble who demands a toll for using his road, it can become somewhat maddening. By the time you've run into the same set of pilgrims requesting your aid over and over again you'd just as soon they'd settle in somewhere and leave you alone!

Options are presented to you on-screen. Depending upon your choice, various sub-options might then be available. For example, each city has a main street, plus other areas you can visit, at the main city option screen. You might decide to go and visit the "tall spires" of nearby churches. This delivers you into a new graphic depicting a cathedral and new options ranging from visiting a major cathedral, a church housing monks, or a university (better have a character ready to speak Latin).

You may generate your own characters or use the adventuring party already created for you in the game. If you generate your own, you must enter a name and nickname for your character. Creation of characters requires you to decide what environment the character grows up in: nobility, commoner, and others. As you pass your cursor over the options, you'll note changes in the assignment of EPs

and skills in the right screen window. If you wish your first character to be a strong fighter, we recommend you watch for the highest EP assignment to Strength. If Alchemy is to be the character's role, watch for the highest initial EP assignment to Intelligence. When you have decided on the environment for your character's childhood, training is initiated and your character turns 15 years of age. Now you must select your character's course of training, from that of a bandit or hunter to one of high nobility. You decide where the EPs for the next five years of training are to be spent—from specific weaponry such as edged or flail weapons to the character's woodwise or stealth capabilities. You continue to train your character, five years at a time. Remember that age affects his attributes.

One serious problem we continued to run into was the fact that money is not easy to earn or win. If any one area of coding should be readdressed, it is this particular environment. Without additional funds or the ability to earn larger sums of money, your characters are doomed to a life in the slums trying to eke out a living defeating bandits and robbers.

Battle can find you designating individual targets for your adventurers. Make certain those who carry missile weapons target their foes at the start of the encounter. You can even have severely wounded adventurers move away from the battle while those who are more healthy continue the fray. Of course, there's no guarantee the opposition won't pursue your wounded characters, but you can keep pursuers hopping by moving from place to place while your stronger fighters finish off the enemy and then come to the wounded characters' rescue.

The manual is extremely well-written and should be of interest to all DL gamers. Copy protection consists of an occasional call for a reference to one of the alchemical graphics in the manual itself. In all the time we've been playing DL, we've been asked only three times to input this information.

DL is a great adventure and is certainly one of the best multicharacter FRPGs we've had the delight to play. With well-drawn graphics, multiple quests, good character generation, and flexibility in play, the game's detail is phenomenal. MicroProse is going to publish a clue book soon to help all out in getting further into the adventures.

Stick with DL for a winning experience. MicroProse has intimated that additional "modules" might be released for DL characters, a rumor we heartily endorse and request the company to pursue with vigor. DL is definitely a must buy for PC/MS-DOS gamers. We would also like to see this FRPG converted to Macintosh computers as well.



*Darklands* (MicroProse)

### Ancient Art of War in the Air, The \*\*\* MicroProse, PC/MS-DOS computers

After the successful *Ancient Art of War* and *Ancient Art of War at Sea*, the creative minds at Evryware have continued their successful tradition with their latest simulation, *Ancient Art of War in the Air (AAW)*. In this installment, you play either the British or German forces in World War I, making aerial assaults against military geniuses like Lord Kitchener, Ferdinand Foch, Kaiser Wilhelm II, Helmut von Spike, or even the great Chinese militarist, Sun Tzu. Simple to learn, this simulation requires strategic thinking in order to win. Unlike previous games, however, you also need a quick trigger finger as well.

The game is easy to control and view. From an overhead perspective, you can see the enemy's and your own airfields, cities, villages, capital, factories, and supply depots. Also visible is the front where the ground forces clash. During the course of the game, these two armies move the actual front. The direction and the distance the front is moved depends upon how well the two opposing armies are supplied, the terrain, and if any planes have bombed sections of the front.

Armies are supplied through supply depots, cities, and villages. Factories make planes and bombers. The capital is a morale landmark—if it is destroyed, the army is demoralized so much that it surrenders.

By moving your marker over an airfield, a magnifying glass appears. By clicking on the airfield, you see the current fighter and bomber pilots who are ready to fly, the condition and damage of their planes, and the medals the pilots have won. An experienced pilot possesses more medals. You build a squad from your corps of pilots,

then select the speed, altitude, formation, and mission. The higher altitude ensures your squad of avoiding mountains. They also get a jump on enemy squads in dogfights. However, your pilots also tire out faster, their planes consume more fuel, and bombs drift farther off-target when flying above the clouds.

Three different formations are offensive, defensive, and cautious. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages. For example, flying offensively makes you aggressive, perhaps allowing you to catch the enemy by surprise, but it places you with a higher percentage of being surprised yourself. Missions include enemy interception, target bombing, or flying to a designated locale. You create your flight path by moving the on-screen pointer to your destination(s), then click your mouse cursor. A gauge at the top of the screen shows you how much fuel remains in your tank.

During the course of the game, you receive notices about dogfights and bombing runs. You can choose to let the computer deal with these elements, but your personal involvement improves such actions. This is where the arcade element arises. The dogfight sequence is from a side-view perspective. You can control the height and direction of your aircraft using either a joy stick or the computer keypad. The problem we had with the controls was that instead of pilot controls, you had to point in the direction the plane was to travel. The side perspective also took some time to get accustomed to, and was reminiscent of a public domain game called *Sopwith* or *Dogfight* for the Apple II back in the early 1980s.

In addition to maneuvering your plane and firing at the enemy, you must watch

your damage gauge and gun temperature. If the damage bar fills with color (indicating your plane is receiving damage), your aircraft is doomed. Raising the temperature of your gun causes it not to fire until it cools off. This gets hectic when six enemy planes and two bombers fill the screen, making it difficult to keep track of individual aircraft.

The bombing portion of this game is less thrilling. You are shown a reconnaissance photo of the area to be bombed. Circles denote the targets to be destroyed. Also revealed are anti-aircraft batteries. You have an overhead view from the bombardier's position as you fly over the target area. You take over bomber's controls and drop bombs. If an anti-aircraft gun comes into view, it fires at you, possibly causing damage.

We liked *AAWIA*. It has a different feel than other WWI simulations. However, detracting from the fun were the arcade sequences, as noted above. If you like combination strategy/arcade games, then this one could be your cup of tea.

### Goblins

\*\*\*\*\*

Amtel Vision (distributed by Sierra),  
PC/MS-DOS computers

Someone has made a voodoo doll of the king and is causing his regal personage to go insane. Who do you call to help? Would you call the mighty knight, the powerful sorcerer, or the weak goblins? Unfortunately, the solution falls to three pint-sized creatures who must solve this riddle.

These three goblins need each other's help: Hooter only can cast spells; Dwayne only can pick up objects and use them, and Bobo has a mean right hook. By utilizing these goblins' talents, you can solve more than 20 screens of logical puzzles. Your mouse controls the goblins' movement, picking up and dropping objects, and employing their individual actions.

If the energy bar at the bottom of the screen becomes depleted, the game ends. You lose energy whenever one of the goblins is hurt, gets scared, or uses the wrong object at the wrong time. Finishing a screen rewards you with a password that can be used later to start at the next level without having to trudge through completed levels.

The graphics and soundtrack are extremely humorous. The puzzles are challenging, enough so you won't solve the game in a single day. This means you get a game with many hours of entertainment value. As an added bonus, *Goblins* only requires a couple megabytes of mass-storage space, making it an excellent, space-efficient game. If you enjoy a good brain teaser or need a good laugh, *Goblins* is for you.

**Plan Nine From Outer Space** \*\*  
Konami Software, PC/MS-DOS computers

Bela Lugosi, star of the worst film of all time—*Plan Nine From Outer Space*—died



*Goblins* (Amtel Vision / Sierra)

during the filming of this picture. He was replaced with another actor who had to cover his face during the rest of the shooting. In this adventure, which takes place 33 years after the film was completed, the double has taken off with six reels of this movie. It is your job to find the hidden reels, splice them together, and make sure that all of the original scenes are intact.

*Plan Nine* is an adventure game that attempts to bring in elements of the movie's bad storyline. The action takes place on a main-adventure window that covers most of the screen. In the lower right corner are commands that you use to complete this game. Any inventory you retrieve is listed to the right of the main screen, while text about the things you do is revealed in the bottom left corner. Moving the mouse over the adventure screen allows you to use the commands in conjunction with any of the active objects or people. Talking with people requires you to simply select dialogue choices.

Once the reels are located, it is your task to check the film, which includes actual digitized footage from the original movie. You must make certain Bela Lugosi is in all of the scenes and that nothing else has been done to the film.

*Plan Nine* did not draw us in like other adventure games. It seemed as though we were merely on a treasure hunt to pick up items and solve puzzles. The characters seemed one-dimensional and the sound was annoying, even becoming stuck monotonously at one point during the game. There was little animation. The adventure system that was used reminded us of some older ICOM simulation games like *Deja Vu* and *Uninvited*, but the game itself lacks suspense or intrigue. One other problem with *Plan Nine* is there is no way to quit the game. The only way to get return to DOS is to turn off the com-



*Plan Nine* (Amtel Vision / Sierra)

puter, which we thought was absurd.

If *Plan Nine* has a good point, it is that it would probably work as an introduction to adventure gaming for beginning players. The commands are not complex and the puzzles are not too difficult. There are many other better adventure games available for both new or experienced gamers.

### Shinobi

Sega, Sega Game Gear system

### Alisa Dragoon

Sega, Sega Genesis system

Every so often, we find a few good games that require a quick trigger finger instead of a mental challenge. Two great games that satisfy the need for fast reflexes are *Shinobi* and *Alisa Dragoon*.

*Shinobi* for the Sega Game Gear possesses some of the best graphics and sound around for that machine. You control Joe Musashi, a ninja, who must rescue his fellow martial artists. The action uses a side view perspective and is, at times, intense. Your ninja can jump and wield his sword. He can also use ninja magic to destroy the opposition. When you reach the end of one of the four levels, you must face a boss that has to be defeated. Only then is a ninja rescued. Escaped ninja can then be utilized. During any level after that, you can select that

and magic. For example, one ninja can walk on water while other ninja can climb upside down. It is a fun game for taking a break from mapping mazes.

In *Alisa Dragoon*, you play a woman who must destroy a cocoon before the evil that lies within it awakens. Thankfully, Alisa has thunder magic that destroys the enemies she faces. The neat part about this magic is you only need to face the direction of the enemy. By pressing the button, the magic automatically attacks all the enemies, which surprisingly looks like the auto-fire in *Thexder* (both games were created by Game Arts). A gauge at the top of the screen shows her magic power. If you don't use the magic for a while, the gauge flashes—attack now and the thunder magic damages all of the enemies on the screen.

Alisa can also summon four different creatures for aid in the game. Each creature has a different power that helps destroy enemies. These animals can be summoned or switched at almost any time. However, Alisa and her creatures can be injured, but both can be healed as well as powered up.

*Alisa Dragoon* is a good action game with smooth animation and sound. The game is different enough to hold one's attention. The summoning of the creatures is a definite plus. This is a perfect game for those times when logic puzzles have you stuck and you want to release that frustration with some solid arcade action.

### SpellCraft: Aspects of Valor \*\*\*\*

ASCII Software, PC/MS-DOS computers

Tired of playing computer games where all you need to cast a spell is to select the right name? ASCII Software has released a product where half the fun is making the spells necessary to win.

You play a character who is snatched from our world into another realm by a wizard who needs you to save both worlds. Wizards from the realms of air, earth, water, fire, ether, and mind have found a pathway from their world into our Earth. They want to open this gateway so they can conquer our world. One wizard, however, noticed that such action would cause the destruction of both worlds. He has now abducted you in order to save both domains.

In the new realm, you must learn various magics and use them effectively—for when you enter a wizards realm, you must be ready to deal not only with various creatures and hazards but spell-toting enemy wizards as well.

You must select an elemental college to bind with yourself. There are various advantages and disadvantages to being a disciple of earth, water, air, or fire. Some of these colleges have spells that other colleges cannot use. Each of these elements has an antagonism element that, when

visiting that plane, will cause your cast spells to have a weaker effect, or won't work at all.

Creating a spell first requires an aspect ingredient. These are objects that are commonplace in our world and are used to create spells in your own Elemental college. Added to the aspect are control ingredients that consist of candles, jewels, powders, or stones. These ingredients influence the spell.

Once you know the initial number of ingredients in a spell, you can modify it by adding more of these items. For example, adding more candles increases the spell's attack ability, damage done, and duration. However, by adding more of these ingredients, you reduce other abilities of the spell, and you might end up with a spell backfire that could prove fatal.

Finally, your spell in-the-making requires a magic word that binds the spell together into a form that can be used. You begin with a magic word for your own college as well as one other word from another college. As you gain experience you learn other magic words that have greater potency. The higher potency words make your spell perform better without having to add more control ingredients.

To get these aspects, control ingredients, formulas, and magic words, you need to find them or buy them. These ingredients can be found in chests on the domains through which you travel. Others can be purchased by traveling to various places on the planet and talking with the citizens. Your allies can also provide you with information about creating a new spell and sell you components. They can also buy items from you so that you will have enough money to buy other, needed ingredients.

When traveling to a domain, you have a top-down perspective of yourself and the surrounding area. The game is played in real time, and enemies and spells fly around you. Casting a spell requires that you initially select the type of magic: attack, defense, terrain modifier, personal transformation, or conjuration. Then, by clicking the icon of the spell, you will be presented with the different modifications of the magic you wish to cast.

Casting spells and taking damage lowers your health. You are able to find spells to heal yourself. As you become more experienced, you also increase your life capability.

Should you meet an untimely demise, it doesn't mean the game is over. Your mentor is able to resurrect you a few times, but eventually you might fall into Death's domain. Here, none of your spell works and the only way to escape is to find the exit. While visiting this vile place, you can find ingredients not offered in other domains. You can also pick up items for your allies, for which you'll paid.

*SpellCraft* is an intriguing action and

role-playing game. If the action gets too fast, you can slow down the game speed. Still, we had more than one occasion where we battled enemy creatures but were defeated because we simply couldn't find the right spell in time. At other times, it was difficult to successfully face an enemy wizard's volley of spells.

Overall, we had fun creating our spells and watching them come to fruition. A detailed tutorial is included with the game, which certainly helps the beginner and experienced gamer alike. The story is quite different and exciting, and the animation and sound are quite good. We would like to see the game's spells and creatures possess more animation or color, but other than those wishes, *SpellCraft* is an adventure game that will certainly bring out the magician in you.

## Clue corner

### Bane of the Cosmic Forge

1. Bards have relatively good access to armor and weapons and can use several special items. Alchemists can't be silenced, so you might give one consideration. Blinding Flash is a wonderful spell! Valkyries are virtually identical to Lords. Faeries get an AC bonus that makes them ideal mage-types, but they are severely restricted in armor and weapons. When generating your characters, never accept fewer than 12 bonus points.

2. I had to learn the hard way about putting items in the character's off hand. Don't put a handy healing potion there, because you'll eventually throw it uselessly at a monster. Shields make good sense for your fighters until about the fifth level; then go to two weapons. Two-handed weapons are almost never as good as two separate weapons.

3. There are two types of books in the game: magical ones, and those that hold information. To read a book, go to the Review screen and Use it. The instructions tell you this, but they don't tell you that if you try to Use a spell book in combat, it will simply act like a one-shot scroll. Using the book from the Review screen lets you Learn that spell. By the way, the book of Ramm's poem is actually a set of instructions, and the Ring's Diary can't be deciphered until the end of the game.

4. As the rules imply, don't kill the NPCs: It's never necessary and it can cause major problems later on.

5. Early on, start using the Assay option and the Identify spell (from the Review screen) on everything that you find. You have to use Identify just to determine the relative merits of the different weapons, and there are a lot of magical items in this game. When you cast an Identify spell, you may get something like "SPECIAL '\$'@" or "CURSE \*!&!". This is all that the spell will tell you; you have to learn the rest by experimentation.

6. Don't take the number of graph sheets enclosed with the game to be a clue as to how much mapping you will do. The castle is just the start of the game, and unlike the earlier *Wizardry* games, not everything has to exactly fit into predictable grids. The Detect Secret spell is great to use as much as you can, but even at full power, it isn't totally reliable. On my system, at least, there was a visible difference between normal walls and those hiding secrets.

7. Don't worry about the Pirate's Den early in the game. You'll find it a long time before you'll have the ability to get into it.

8. There is no significant use for the Alchemy Lab. Just blow it up.

9. To get the idol of Mau-Mu-Mu, remember the opening to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

10. Say "No" and "Yes" to the Amazulu Queen, then give her a small trinket. This will get you on her good side.

11. When you find ashes, see that they are all given to the person who is asking for them. This will be very rewarding.

12. Don't waste the Red Mushrooms when they are given to you—you absolutely must have one later on.

13. The Faerie Queen knows how to talk to Delphi. Ask her.

Michael Booker  
Minnesota

## Bard's Tale II

1. In the Practice Dungeon, go to the long series of 1x1 rooms next to the stairs up to the first level and run back and forth through them. This provides enough experience points and magical items to catapult your characters up to 13+ levels.

2. Once you have your Magician and Conjuror up to 13th level, switch the Conjuror to a Sorcerer and the Magician to a Sorcerer. Work them both up to 13th level in those classes, then change them both to Wizards. Once they have 13th level in that, change the one who started out as a Conjuror to a Magician and the one who started as a Magician to a Conjuror. At those levels, the dungeons will give you enough XP to bring them up to 13th level in a shot. Then switch them both to Archmage. They will be become the most powerful characters in you party.

3. In the Temple of Darkness' Tombs, watch out for the room where everything is dark and there are traps everywhere. There are poison, pit, and other nasty traps in that room. If you explore it, do so with care and a Sorcerer Sight spell as well as a Cat Eyes spell.

4. Cast a Phase Door spell on the north section of the west wall in the 3x3 square entrance room of the Temple of Darkness's Tombs. Then explore those areas,

Derek Richardson  
Bellaire TX

## Dragon Strike (Commodore 64 version)

To use magical objects you collected

during the quests in the "free-for-all" mode, you must first of all load the last mission with the objects you wish to use. Once in that mission, use Disk Options to load "Free for All." You then have all your objects from the Quest game. Also, use hit and run tactics if you're having trouble with a battle. Don't stay in melee!

## Savage Frontier and Azure Bonds (Commodore 64 version)

These characters are interchangeable. To do this, simply save characters from either game to disk, then boot the target game and add the character to the game with all of the objects and memorized spells in tact. *Savage Frontier* has up to 5th level spell capability, so you will lose none of your higher level spells from *Bonds*.

Rick Sandmann  
Bellmore NY

## Ultima VII: The Black Gate (Origin)

1. Your equipment in Lord British's castle is on the top floor in the northwest corner. Lord British also will offer his Orb of the Moons. Accept the offer.

2. Joining the fellowship is vital to your quest. You may open the sealed chest, but you will receive a verbal warning. When Batlin sends you to Destard, it isn't necessary to find the chest (it's empty, except for two fellowship medals). All you have to do is walk in, then go back to Batlin and tell him of the "monsters you saw."

3. Janna in Cove makes a nice addition to your party. Don't overuse her healing abilities, though.

4. Poison can usually be cured by using the linear spell "weather" to make it rain.

5. The magic carpet that Rudyom of Cove talks about is easy to find. Go north to Britain to the dungeon of Despise. There are two entrances. The carpet is by the western entrance at 8N, 29W.

6. A sextant is a good investment. If someone in your party has a sextant and is outdoors, crosshairs will appear showing the party's location when you Use the cloth map. This is helpful, especially if you decide to use the failing moongates.

7. The generators must be destroyed in this order: tetrahedron, sphere, cube. You must enter the generators alone. To exit the generators, complete the puzzle or problem, then double-click on the prism. Don't forget to pick up the prism that is teleported out of the generator with you.

8. Do not go into the tetrahedron generator without a glass sword in hand, or it will be very difficult to win the fight. Also, don't bother with invisibility—the creature sees you anyway. Entering the generator in combat mode is not a bad idea, either.

9. The answers to the sphere generator is red, blue, blue, red.

10. Caddellite can be found in Ambrosia, which is hidden behind the compass on the map. To gain access to the hydra's chamber, cast telekinesis on the

small button on the north wall of the hydra's chamber. In order to see the button, get very close to your monitor. The hydra dies quickly in combat.

11. Zorn in Minoc will make the caddelite helmets for you, but you must have enough caddelite to make a helmet for every member of your party. As caddelite is heavy, and you are the only one who enters the cube generator, one chunk of caddelite is necessary. Ask everyone to leave your party before you talk to Zorn. Then, ask them to join after Zorn has made the equipment.

12. The cube generator is the most difficult part of the game. Save the game and heal yourself before you enter. Ignore what the Guardian says because he is trying to mislead you. Magic spells can't be cast inside the cube, so healing potions work well.

13. The emps are due east of Iolo's house (it's a long walk, so don't give up.)

14. Venom can be used to temporarily increase attributes!

15. Train with De Snel, who does extensive combat training, before you mention the dagger you found at the murder site in Minoc. He responds by attacking, but don't worry; he dies quickly in combat.

16. The stone harpy in Martingo of Spektran's back room is another good opportunity to get a glass sword. His body yields a key that opens the storage room behind the pedestal. This is where the Ethereal ring can be found.

17. The five items required to enter Penumbra's house are a hammer, a gold ring, a lockpick, a spindle of thread, and some other form of gold (either a nugget or a bar).

18. Be careful about allowing party members to carry and use missile weapons. They tend to shoot fellow party members in the back. As for the comment in the manual that enchanted missiles don't miss, don't believe it.

19. When all else fails, follow the trail of Elizabeth and Abraham.

20. Use the mallets on those who found them in order to find the pirate treasure. They will provide the coordinates to an island in the southern part of the realm. Be cautious of the caltrops (the party and the Guardian don't respond well to their being moved) and the ghost.

Allen Reaves  
Ingleside TX

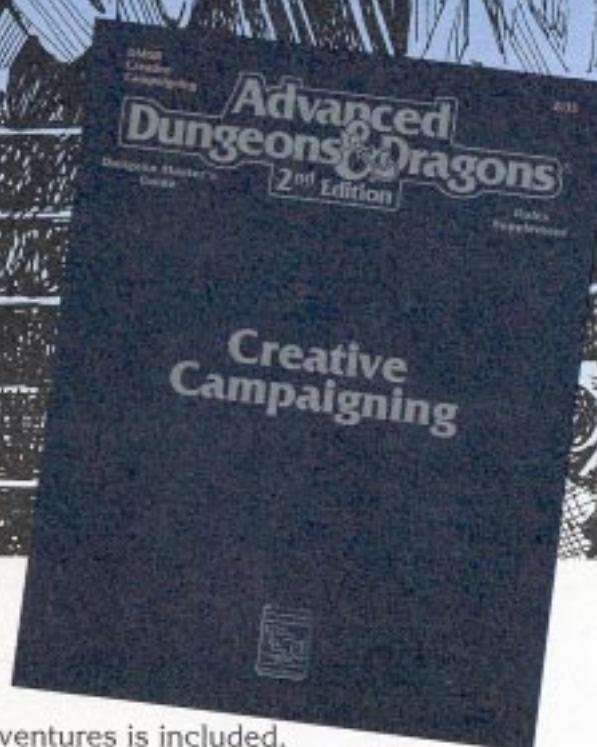
Hints and tips as well as answers to gamers' queries are needed. Please write to: The Role of Computers, 521 Czerny Street, Tracy CA 95376. We look forward to reading your letters, postcards, faxes, and whatever. Until next month, game on! ☐

# Advanced Dungeons & Dragons

2nd Edition

GAME

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# FORUM

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I've been reading your magazine for some time on an irregular basis. What I especially like are the numerous hints for DMs (although I personally prefer "GM" for "game master," as I do not play the AD&D® game). Issue #184 featured many of these GM's hints, so I really liked it a lot. "The Referee's Code of Honor" and "Audible Glamour—Not Clamor" were two of the best articles I've ever read on the subject.

Those hints are the reason for this letter, as I do miss something in them. I've been running a campaign using FASA's SHADOWRUN® game for just over half a year, and it came to an end just a month ago. Since then, I've handed over the GM's role to other players. I've done this two times now, and both experiences were quite disturbing. That's the question that not only I but all the other players had as well: What can you do as a player if the GM isn't doing a good job? What if you have the feeling that you are being used just for the GM's fun? What if the GM seems unfair to you? What if you do not enjoy his "sense of humor" (which involves causing as many PC fatalities as possible)?

I've been thinking about this for days now, but I just cannot find a usable solution. I know a group of players that agreed to let one of them be something like a "supervisor" who could overrule the GM, but I don't believe this is a good resolution, especially if the character of the supervisor is involved.

Another problem that occurred during some of our evenings involved new players. How do you show someone who has never played a RPG before just how it works?

I'd really like to know what your suggestions are, although I think I found an answer to the second problem just a few weeks ago. It came during one long evening when we started playing before the other players arrived. The GM played out every detail about how my SHADOWRUN character awoke in the morning after drinking a bit too much. The shower didn't work, there was nothing left to eat in the kitchen, and so on. It was an unusual experience, but I noticed that the gaming atmosphere was better than ever before! Because I personally think the atmosphere of the game is highly important, I am trying this method of introducing a new player. Just grab the newbie and play

an hour or two with him alone, before the other players arrive. Don't try to achieve any goals; just present the game world to him in the best way you can!

Thomas Vogt  
Hamburg, GERMANY

The first rule in presenting a case is to be accurate. A great-sounding argument that can be easily demolished does the cause no good at all.

I certainly support the efforts of GAMA in getting exemptions for lead gaming figures under the Toxic Substances Control Act before Congress. However, there are many statements in Robert Bigelow's "Through the Looking Glass" column in issue #183 of DRAGON Magazine that, if used, will cause more harm than good.

Our hobby has not been "targeted" by environmentalists because they feel our activities are frivolous and that we are a weak-spirited group that will go down without active opposition." Most environmentalists, like most of the population as a whole, don't even know we gamers exist. Many environmentalists, including this writer, are both environmentalists and gamers. Cut out the ad hominem—it does no good.

Environmentalists are concerned because people are sick and even dying because lead has not been used responsibly. It is put into toys that little children put in their mouths. It is used without control in manufacturing so that whole neighborhoods are endangered by the greed of a few. That is where the environmentalists enter the picture.

Bigelow's comment running from page 112 to 113 that slag is usable fill is the most irresponsible thing of all. This is precisely the problem. I suggest you go to West Dallas, Tex., where entire neighborhoods must be dug up because the soil is too contaminated by lead that got there from the atmosphere. The slag fills are already off-limits to human occupation. The damage to the ground water has not even been measured.

Go to the area around Ennis, Tex., where they are in a proper uproar because this contaminated soil is being shipped in open trucks across a water-supply lake to a toxic dump! Lead is cumulative. The body does not excrete it easily. Small dosages taken over a long time are as bad as a high dosage at one time. Of course lead is a natural product. So is arsenic. Both are elements. In fact, unlike lead, arsenic is a required trace mineral in the diet, but they are still both poisons. Don't ingest either of them in metallic form.

Bigelow is right that lead fumes can be contained. All parts of the process of producing useful things from lead can be controlled so they are safe for people to be around. This is the whole point of the amendment and our greatest argument in exempting game figures that will be covered by paint, kept out of the mouths of little children, and easily recycled when no longer needed. All these things can be

made safe if certain individuals currently getting rich from the suffering of the many will just control their greed and buy these safeguards instead of passing the cost on to the rest of us who are in poor health. Since these individuals show no sign of doing so, the government must exercise its just power and protect its citizens.

The main principle in getting this governmental action to do what it should and not inadvertently hurt innocent parties through badly written laws is to lobby for good laws. This can only be done by using sound arguments and not engaging in name-calling or assertions contrary to the facts.

Paul Cardwell, Jr.  
Bonham TX

This letter is regarding a trend I have seen in my own AD&D game sessions. I don't know whether the trend is appearing in any other campaigns, but I suspect it is. The trend: the insidious proliferation of the SSI computer-game version of AD&D rules in the regular game.

For those of you who are not familiar with Strategic Simulations, Incorporated, it is the maker of a number of popular computer games that incorporate the standard AD&D rules and worlds. First of all, let me say that I highly recommend these SSI games as computer games; for the most part, the games adhere strictly to AD&D rules, they have a great deal of the feeling of the real McCoy, the graphics and playability are excellent, and DRAGON Magazine recommends them in its computer-game column.

My players also enjoy these games, but they unfortunately have begun incorporating the rules the computer games use into their own campaigns, as we each take turns DMing our own campaigns. I have no objection to how they use the rules in their game, but I feel I am under attack, and this letter is my chance to fire back.

There are many rules variations that all the SSI games use that I myself use in my campaign. Among these: the optional rule of "hovering at death's door," called the "Dying" state in SSI games, that the PC enters when he has between -1 and -9 hp; and the absence of spell components from spell-casting. The first was a game designer's choice; he probably felt that the games would be too hard if this state did not exist. The second was one of game logistics—the game would have been much more unwieldy if the characters had to purchase, carry around, and use spell components (these are the same reasons I neglect to use spell components).

The SSI games allow many things that I would not. One of the primary complaints I have is that, when PCs hover at death's door, they should rest in bed for at least a week unless healed automatically. In the SSI games, a character need rest only 24 hours before he's back on his feet again. Also, any character can bandage any other character, no matter how much distance is between them on the battlefield. This is patent nonsense; in my game, I allow only a character that can actually reach a dying character to bandage the latter, and only if the bandaging character has the Healing proficiency and can work undistracted for a full round. My players expect their characters to be treated the same way as SSI characters, so they question me when I tell them that a favorite character is going to be out of the game a while after a brush with death, or that a burly, clumsy fighter can't do an acceptable job of patching up a dying mage.

Another bone of contention is the way poisons and spells that affect poisons work. In the SSI

games, a character that dies of poisoning actually dies, but apparently this death is of the temporary variety, because another character can subsequently cast *neutralize poison* on him at any time and the victim's back on his feet and ready to go 15 rounds with a hydra. He doesn't even lose a Constitution point! I'm not sure whether the game designers intended the spell to work this way, but my players insist that this is the way it *should* work. They want me to change the way I use poison!

A third dispute between myself and my players is whether a wizard should automatically receive a new spell upon reaching (and training for) a new level. I say he should not, for several reasons. One, the trainer may not have his spellbook with him when he is training the character. Two, even if he has his spellbook, he may wish to keep his spells to himself. Three, even if he is willing to allow the PC wizard to scribe a few of the spells, he is certainly not going to perform this service for free! Four, the real reason I don't give out new spells every level is that my campaign is already unbalanced by having too many spellbooks in the hands of NPCs who meet their ends at the hands of the PCs. My players say the wizard should be allowed to gain a new spell every level for one reason: The SSI games do it that way.

These and other minor rules variations may not unbalance the game individually, and they may not even unbalance the game taken all together. But they are not my own rules, and I don't want to allow players to bully me into rules changes. What I want to know is, should I capitulate and allow my players to play the game by SSI rules, or should I stick to my guns? Is anybody else out there experiencing what I am?

Cory Dodt  
Orinda CA

Ms. Whaling states in her letter in issue #179 that she has difficulties in getting other females interested in playing RPGs. I have some suggestions as to how to gain their interest.

When I introduce RPGs to novices, I first loan them one or two solo adventure books like TSR's ENDLESS QUEST® books. This gives them a small taste of what RPGs are like. I also make use of Ed Greenwood's article, "Players don't need to know all the rules," from "Up on a Soapbox" in issue #49 (reprinted in the Best of DRAGON Magazine anthology, Vol. V, as "Keep 'em guessing"). This makes playing less daunting for novices, because they don't have to learn a lot of rules or take a lot of time creating a character.

This brings me to a second letter I am responding to. In a past issue (#68, page 3), I read a letter complaining about the use of pages in issue #66 for articles on Thieves' Cant and the Old Dwarvish language. The letter's author states that he believes the pages were wasted because no one would speak the languages during a game. First of all, I have been known to use Thieves' Cant to discuss the secret plans of PC thieves, but there is no need for the languages to be spoken. When combined with the Thorass script (for Thieves' Cant) or the Dethek runes (for Old Dwarvish), these languages make excellent labels for maps found by PCs. Both the Thorass and Dethek alphabets can be found in the *Cyclopedia of the Realms*, in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® boxed set. I came up with this idea as I read Jeff Bourdon's letter in #179 (page 5), while sorting out my back issues with the help of one of my players (she had mentioned the Old Dwarvish article).

I feel that reading a dwarven map using Old Dwarvish and Dethek runes seems more realis-

tic and makes more sense than if English were used. My point is that one can always find a use for something if one is willing to think and imagine just a little bit.

I would be interested in hearing from gamers who use my suggestions, so I know how they worked. More information on any of my suggestions can be gained or shared by writing to me and specifying what you are interested in. Please print my full address for the use of anyone interested. Thank you.

P.S. Yes, I know this letter is late compared to the publication date of the letters mentioned, but that is what comes from living in a small town in rural West Virginia.

William D. Sharpe III  
Elk Route, Box 13-A  
Marlinton WV 24954

I enjoyed very much Mr. Detwiler's article, "More Magic for Beginners:" in issue #181. As a DM, I have always preferred not to give too-powerful magical items to the PCs. It's nice to have items with a lot of flash but little power. A *mask of underground* conditions is a flashy name for something you put on your eyes to dim the sunlight. Other small items can also be magical. With the right players, you will enjoy this stuff very much.

For serious magical stuff, I tend to use one-shot items, like potions. Wands with a limited number of charges and a low-level spell effect are also very useful. A *wand of armor* can be very useful for a starting wizard. A *wand of cantrips* can be used to great—or at least amusing—effect. Instead of giving a magical weapon with a permanent bonus, you can give a *sword of bladethirst* (as per the FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures second-level spell of this name) with a limited number of charges.

On the whole, I find that Mr. Detwiler's items are more imaginative than mine; when I'm the DM again (I'm currently a player), I might use them. I do have some thoughts to share about these items. First, weightless weapons should have their own proficiency slot, in my opinion, as using such a weapon feels completely different than using one with some weight. On the other hand, a proficient character might be able to wield them faster than normal weapons and with no attack penalty for low strength.

Another interesting idea and adventure hook comes from *hilts of conjuring*. Where do these hilts conjure their blades from? Think about the fighter whose sword blade disappears in the middle of the fight, only to reappear a day later after he has lost his earlier fight. Maybe the fighter with the *hilt of conjuring* takes the blade of his enemy's sword, or of one of his fellow party members. Or maybe an ornamental blade of great value is taken, and the PC party is hired to find the thief. There's no end to the possibilities.

Eyal Teler  
Jerusalem, ISRAEL

I am writing this letter to expand a little on the topic of "Magic & Technology Meet at Last" (issue #183). The article was concerned with an AD&D/GAMMA WORLD® game crossover and described that option in great detail. But there are other extremely interesting ways to make magic and technology meet. Imagine the present time: 1993, America. While investigating a series of murders, a cop finds out that a werewolf is committing all the bloodshed. With nobody believing him, he sets out with a revolver full of silver bullets to hunt the beast alone . . . until one very misty night when he spots the beast and pursues it until he reaches a small village, like one in Ireland in the 18th century. Of

course, the mists were not ordinary mists but the Mists of Ravenloft. The nature of the Demiplane of Dread makes it possible to introduce PCs from just about any time period—"standard" fantasy game, 20th century, or even post-nuclear-war. Actually many of the RAVENLOFT® campaigns Domains are of a more advanced time than "standard" AD&D game worlds. In RA1 *Feast of Goblins*, a farmer uses a blunderbuss, a weapon that even the most advanced Lantanese gunsmith does not even dream of. The time periods of the various Domains reach from Ancient Egypt in Har'akir to the time of industrialization in the domain of Yosas (see RR4 *Islands of Terror*). Thus, with a time range from 3000 B.C. to A.D. 1900, the PCs, themselves from just about anywhere, can encounter practically any period of human history.

The most interesting thing is the introduction of 20th-century persons, and with almost no effort the DM can fit those PCs smoothly into the RAVENLOFT campaign "world." Any modern equipment should be taken from the GAMMA WORLD rule book and modified to fit the AD&D game (after all, this is not a crossover of game systems but an interesting gizmo for a RAVENLOFT (i.e., AD&D) game). Ranges of weapons in the GAMMA WORLD game should be multiplied by three to find the range in feet instead of meters. Also remember that, in the AD&D system, a gunpowder weapon is especially lethal, as any die that scores maximum damage adds an additional die of damage (the only exception to that rule involves weapons that are not aimed, such as a shotgun with buckshot). Area-effect weapons should inflict an extra die of damage vs. creatures of L (large) or greater size.

I really encourage DMs running a RAVENLOFT campaign to try out a 20th century PC or NPC. It's fun and contributes to the sinister mood of the game if a PC can fire his last silver bullet on the big fury thing charging him.

Alexander Dengler  
Darmstadt, GERMANY

Since I am new to role-playing, I don't know anything about Craig Hardie's letter in issue #166, but after reading the recent responses to it, I know I can relate to this. I am 16 years old, the DM for two games and player in two other games. I was introduced to role-playing last year by my cousin. The two campaigns I run are both for the D&D® game. Because I don't have a job, I usually can't afford any of the Gazettes, so I turned to making my own world. My cousin let me have access to his library, and I found several tidbits I used for "quick" DMing.

In the *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide*, there was a thing in the back on how to make quick, random dungeons by having squares or hexes with dungeon corridors; you could rearrange them to make a quick dungeon when you didn't have one ready. I had an idea to use this for overland travel as well. All I had to do was create a hometown. When the characters wanted to leave, I juggled a dozen 10 mile by 10 mile squares to come up with the terrain. As for maps, I just used the players'. They didn't know about anything that wasn't on their maps, so why should I? I was pretty good at improvising. Eventually, I created a "skeleton" of the area that had the major cities and other obstacles. After reading some of my cousin's campaign settings (he has almost everything for the GREYHAWK®, DRAGONLANCE®, FORGOTTEN REALMS, and now DARK SUN™ settings), I decided to adapt some of that material to my own world, just for expansion. This puzzle-type mapping method can be used for anything, like a city, a castle, and even neighborhoods my PCs

want to visit. Currently I'm working on random jigsaw cultures.

Also, in the *Catacomb Guide*, it says that you can create characters by having their base statistics and rolling up names and basic variations. Why not do this for cities? Countries? Adventures? The possibilities are endless. This is a real time saver, too, because I spend about \$2 (photocopies and cardstock) in material and only five hours a week on my campaign.

I also mentioned that I play in two games. This is interesting, because my cousin, who created his own world, is the DM for one group, and I must say that his campaign is *bizarre*. He has been a DM for 10 years (he's 25), and I consider him a master from whom I learn, like novice wizards learn from greater wizards. In the other game I play in, the DM bought the DRAGONLANCE campaign set. I'll admit, while that game is fun, it does tire quickly since I have read almost every DRAGONLANCE book there is. The DM does buy most of the new upgrades, and that keeps some flavor, but I still think my cousin's campaign is better because there is *always* uncertainty.

Matthew Lyon  
San Luis Obispo CA

Because we use music in my gaming group, I have better memories of past gaming sessions. During these adventures, we all felt more involved in the game, as the music we picked was thrilling during combat, dark and evil when we were exploring forgotten corridors under forsaken cities, etc. The most difficult part for the DM is not to match his descriptions and the background music, but to simply find good background music. I mainly use motion-picture

soundtracks, for thrilling people is their most basic function. Classical music is my second source, but there is much to explore.

Here is the music I use and when I use it (in (C)ombat, (D)escriptions, or (H)orror situations): *The Name of the Rose* (H), *Conan the Barbarian* (C,D), *Conan the Destroyer* (C,D), *Willow* (C,D), *Dune* (C,D), *Star Wars* trilogy (C,D), *Aliens* (C,H), *Batman* (C,D), *Alexandre Nevsky* (C,D), *The Final Conflict* (H), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (D,H), and *Robocop* (C). Music composed by Williams, Horner, Goldsmith, or Poledouris is usually good, so don't hesitate to try it. In classical music, only one or two themes might be useful in a whole work but they are usually quite good: "Siegfried's Funeral Music" (from *Twilight of Gods*, by Wagner), "Sturmisch Bewegt" (from *Symphony no. 1 in D Major* by G. Mahler), "From Bohemia's Woods and Fields" (from *My Fatherland*, by B. Smetana), *Carmina Burana* (by C. Orff), "Swan Theme" (from *Swan Lake* by Tchaikovsky), "Overture to Acts no. 1, 2, and 3" (from *Siegfried*, by Wagner). If you find other background music, I would be pleased to know what you found. If you improved your game in other ways, I would also be very interested. Please, print my full address.

Julien Hermitte  
2, rue Edgar Quinet  
92120 Montrouge, FRANCE

After reading "Forum" in issue #184, I feel compelled to write. The comments of Maurice Sprague and Brad Allison on psionics caught my attention. In response, I have the following observations:

First, a 2nd-level psionicist *cannot* use the Disintegrate ability, as a 2nd-level psionicist only

knows one science. Disintegrate requires a previous science: Telekinesis. A psionicist would have to be at least 3rd level to utilize Disintegrate. Further, the greater wolfwre had two chances of not being affected by the psionicist. With a power score of Wisdom -4, a psionicist with a Wisdom of 18 would have a 30% chance of failure. The greater wolfwre with a saving throw vs. death magic of 8 has a 60% chance of not being affected by the psionicist! Also, a 3rd-level psionicist can have a maximum of only 58 PSPs. He might Disintegrate one foe, but what about the foe's accomplices? With only 18 PSPs left, let's hope nothing else attacks.

Second, this same psionicist would have to be 5th level to accomplish the Invincible Foes feat. As Psychokinesis is obviously his primary discipline, he has to be 5th level to pick up the Mindlink science in his secondary discipline. Even then, the shadow dragon would have had two chances to not be affected. When initial contact was made at Wisdom -7, the psionicist (Wisdom 18) would have had a 45% chance of failure. In the second round, the psionicist had a 25% chance of failure (Wisdom -3). Let's hope the psionicist wasn't reduced to 1st or 2nd level by the shadow dragon's breath weapon in the first round!

Third, a 9th-level psionicist using Control Body (not Body Control) could certainly get a paladin to kill the latter's friends, just as a 9th-level mage could cast domination on the same paladin for the same result. But let's look at what the psionicist went through to compel the paladin to do this. To make his power score (Constitution -2) vs. a paladin's minimum strength of 12, a psionicist with a Constitution of 18 has only a 20% chance to succeed—he must roll a 13, 14, 15 or 16! If the psionicist has a lower Constitution (minimum of 11), his chances go down 5% for every point below 18. Also, the paladin could have warned his friends of the impending attack, so they could prepare themselves for it. Finally, as killing one's friends would be an evil act, the paladin would lose his paladin status until he could atone. A DM could rule that the nature of this self-destructive act would make the paladin to struggle harder, causing the psionicist to make his power score each round.

With the rules in the *Complete Psionics Handbook*, I feel that the psionicist class is well balanced. For every action the psionicist attempts, there is a chance of failure by virtue of the power score. He has the same chances of failure that a mage has due to melee attacks and other disruptive activities. The final solution is for the other PCs to learn to deal with psionicists. Remember the adage "Know thy enemy," but also remember "Knowledge is power." Dealing with high-level magic-users is a learning process for PCs, as is dealing with psionicists of any level!

One last note: The DM is the final arbiter of all actions. If, as DM, you find that the psionicist is becoming too powerful, change the power scores; this increases the chance of failure and is relatively easy to do.

John M. Fairfield  
Ft. Polk LA  
Ω

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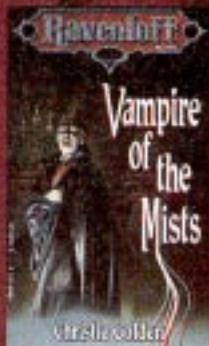
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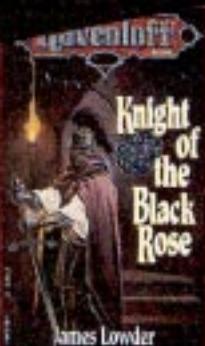
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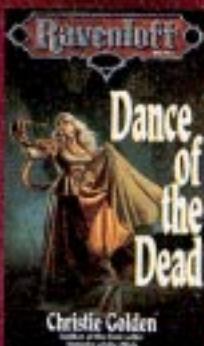
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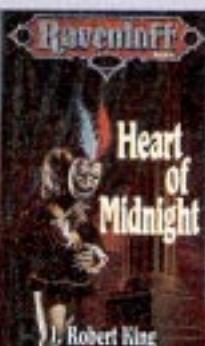
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# Role-playing

Reviews



Exploring the worlds  
of the GURPS\* game

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Steve Jackson Games' GURPS\* system—that's the Generic Universal Role-Playing System to the unenlightened—settles into the 1990s as the undisputed champion of multigenre RPGs, and rightfully so. Flexible character-creation rules and elegant game mechanics make it adaptable to an impressive range of settings. At home in outer space, ancient Rome, or a haunted house, the GURPS system has yet to meet a genre it couldn't handle, and there's a

large library of supplements to prove it.

Not everyone, of course, is a GURPS fan, and much as Steve Jackson Games (SJG) would hope otherwise, there are probably quite a few role-players who'll never get around to giving it a try. But even if you're among those who aren't in the market for a multigenre RPG—and admittedly, the GURPS system takes some effort to master—you might consider checking out the supplements. Most of them burst with ideas that can be adapted to other games without too much fuss.

GURPS supplements owe much of their appeal to the sheer volume of information they contain; with enticing detail crammed into nearly every page and margin. The books are models of organization and presentation, and are among the industry's

## Role-playing games' ratings

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

best. Thanks to the consistently high quality of the writing, they're a pleasure to read, Jackson requires his editors to be as familiar with the English language as they are with role-playing rules. That makes him almost an anomaly among game publishers, many of whom view correct grammar and syntax as expendable nuisances.

That's not to say GURPS products are perfect. Their spartan production values pale before the flashy graphics routinely used by FASA and Mayfair Games. There's nothing in a GURPS book comparable to TSR's poster-sized color maps or Chaosium's elaborate CALL OF CTHULHU\* game handouts. Illustrations tend to have little in common with the text they accompany other than their appearance on the same page. In their eagerness to cover all the bases, GURPS designers often go for the kitchen sink, throwing in everything they can think of and leaving it up to the hapless referee to separate the useful from the trivial.

Still, when GURPS supplements are good, they're very good indeed, and the industrious Jacksonites have generated their share of classics, GURPS Japan and GURPS Special Ops exemplify state-of-the-art worldbooks at their fact-based best, while the superb GURPS Riverworld and GURPS Wild Cards demonstrate that licensed properties can amount to more than cynical exploitations of familiar titles. GURPS Space remains the hobby's premiere science-fiction overview, GURPS Time Travel, which we'll be examining at length in a month or two, looks to be the definitive treatment of a topic that's frustrated game designers for years.

No game has generated as many first-rate supplements covering such a broad range of topics, and the diversity of the GURPS line remains its strongest asset. The supplements are worth a look from any role-player who's had his fill of Tolkien retreats, non-horrifying horror games, or tired science-fiction RPGs whose only points of reference seem to be old *Star Trek* episodes. Where to start? Here are some suggestions.

### GURPS The Prisoner\*

96-page softcover book  
Steve Jackson Games \$13  
*Design:* David Ladyman  
*Additional material:* Stephen Beeman  
*Editing:* Steve Jackson  
*Illustrations:* John Robinson  
*Cover:* ITC Entertainment, Inc.

\*\*\*\*

### GURPS Callahan's Crosstime Saloon\*

128-page softcover book  
Steve Jackson Games \$17  
*Design:* Chris W. McCubbin  
*Additional material:* Spider Robinson, Steve Jackson, and Christian Wagner  
*Editing:* Jeff Koke and Steve Jackson  
*Illustrations:* Donna Barr, Guy Burcham, Dan Frazier, and Rick Harris  
*Cover:* James Warhol

\*\*\*\* 1/2

The GURPS game has a knack for going where no game has gone before, filling niches that don't appear to need filling until Jackson's crew gets a hold of them. Both *The Prisoner* and *Callahan's Crosstime Saloon* are cases in point, the former based on a fondly-remembered but rather empty-headed TV show from the late 1960s, the latter derived from a pleasant but forgettable series of fantasy stories by Spider Robinson. If I'd have been in charge of acquiring properties for SJG, I wouldn't have looked twice at either one. But now that I've read their GURPS-izations, both strike me as inspired choices,

*The Prisoner* in particular is an unexpected surprise, mainly because the TV series didn't give designer Dave Ladyman much substance to work with. The original premise involved a British secret agent who was abducted by unknown captors and dispatched to a bizarre community called the Village, where residents were known by numbers instead of names and nobody was allowed to leave. Throughout the show's 17 episodes, the agent struggled to figure out where he was, who snatched him, and what his captors wanted. Neither the agent nor the viewers ever received clear answers to these questions, and these contrived mysteries accounted for most of the show's alleged charm.

I say "alleged" because I was never convinced that the mysteries were part of some grand scheme, but resulted instead from lousy plotting and make-it-up-as-you-go scripts. By distancing himself from the source material ("For our purposes, [the unanswered questions] allow you to devise the Village of your own choice, unconstrained by what has to be."), Ladyman manages to ferret out the best concepts, sweep away the debris, and patch it all together with his own imaginative touches.

The book is roughly divided into two sections, one discussing the specifics of the campaign world, the other featuring staging tips for referees. Ladyman begins by taking us on a tour of the Village, introducing us to No. 2, the shadowy figure whose identity changes from adventure to adventure, and the Village Voice, an enigmatic female who's heard over the Village's loudspeakers but never seen in person (Ladyman suggests that the referee prerecord the Voices's ominous messages and play them at appropriate moments during an adventure).

Village protocol is covered in detail. The accepted form of greeting, for instance, consists of a cheery "Be seeing you!" accompanied by a thumb and index finger circling the eye. Everyone wears a badge displaying his identification number. Hidden cameras monitor citizens' activities. Violations of the ever-changing ordinances result in punishments ranging from ostracism to death by Rover, an immense white ball that prowls the streets looking for sociopaths to envelope and suffocate. A two-page map, lavish by GURPS standards, pinpoints the Palace of Fun, the Chess

Lawn, and other creepy landmarks.

Recognizing referees may have a hard time finding their way in a setting this bizarre, Ladyman spends much of the book discussing techniques for fostering a surreal atmosphere. He shows how to build suspense by introducing clues that suggest solutions to the players' questions, all the while holding the real answers just out of reach. To keep the players off-balance, Ladyman suggests peppering them with disturbing encounters, such as a clock that runs backwards or an invitation from an addled villager to take an imaginary ride on the Stone Boat. An Adventure Design Flow Chart explains how to generate plots with sensible motivations, complications, and climaxes.

*The Prisoner* won't be everybody's idea of a good time, what with its near-powerless player-characters, absence of action, and unsolvable mysteries. On occasion, Ladyman's writing becomes aggravatingly vague, as if he's not quite sure what's going on either. (I also wish he'd have lightened up on the exclamation marks. It doesn't take much to get him excited! No kidding!) That said, *The Prisoner* provides all the raw material a creative referee needs to put together a campaign rife with psychological terror, sort of like the PARANOIA\* game without the laughs. If Steve Jackson snags the license for *Twin Peaks*, I hope Ladyman gets to GURPS-ize it.

*Callahan's Crosstime Saloon* isn't quite as compelling as *The Prisoner*, but in part that's because we're on more familiar territory. Callahan's is one of those out-of-the-way stopovers that serves as a watering hole for all variety of transient oddballs and, not incidentally, a convenient staging area for fantasy adventures. It's a cliche, to be sure, but Robinson freshens it with a dash of science fiction and some subtle satire. Callahan, the proprietor, has been sent from the future to ensure that humans will evolve along their predetermined paths and make way for the Harmonians, a race of benevolent aliens of which Callahan is a member. Between comforting lost souls and handling the occasional drunk, Callahan and his cohorts must deal with the mandates of the Time Police, the alternative realities of the Mirror Dimension, and the forbidding schemes of the Cockroaches, a nasty race of insectoid spacefarers.

It's all good fun, and designer Chris McCubbin does an admirable job of capturing the stories' gentle tone. In broad terms, he describes the utopian world of Harmonium as a place where "nobody's hungry, nobody's angry," leaving the specifics up to the referee. ("It's might be a planet, or a Dyson sphere or ringworld, or something even stranger.") Harmonium time travel is revealed as a specialized psionic talent, where users can move between eras pretty much at will. The "Strange Folks and Odd Gizmos" chapter details Callahan's cast of characters and

exotic inventions in an entertaining fashion. Game statistics take a back seat to an engaging narrative, much of it taken directly from the original stories.

Campaigning, unfortunately, receives the short shrift. Though McCubbin offers a number of ideas for creating Callahan adventures, few are adequately developed. He points out the potential for humorous role-playing, but doesn't really tell us how to pull it off. Mounting an all-Harmonium campaign, the book's most intriguing scenario, is dismissed in a couple of paragraphs in a sidebar.

**Evaluation:** It's not necessary to have seen the TV series or to have read the Robinson stories to make sense of these sourcebooks, since the designers do such a thorough job of summarizing the key ideas. Of the two, *The Prisoner* makes a smoother transition to other RPGs, as it has the fewest ties to the GURPS system. But it's a demanding setting, requiring an experienced referee to handle the unusual play style, as well as mature players who prefer cerebral challenges to physical conflict.

*Callahan's Crosstime Saloon* is less demanding, but it's also less suitable for long adventures. It works best as a framing device or an interlude in a conventional fantasy or science-fiction campaign, providing the players can tolerate a little whimsy. There are a fair number of new rules, among them guidelines for psi-blocking powers and intoxication effects, but not enough to discourage determined referees from adapting the book to a different game system.

**GURPS Middle Ages 1 \*** \*\*\*  
128-page softcover book  
Steve Jackson Games \$17  
Design: Graeme Davis and Michael Hurst  
Editing: Steve Jackson  
Illustrations: Ruth Thompson, Carl Anderson, Thomas Baxa, Angela Bostick, Dan Carroll, Evan Dorkin, Rick Lowry, and Rob Prior  
Cover: Rowena

**GURPS Camelot \*** \*\*\*  
128-page softcover book  
Steve Jackson Games \$17  
Design: Peggy U,V, Schroeck and Robert M. Schroeck  
Additional material: Aaron Allston, J. David George, Loyd Blankenship, Steve Jackson, Chris W. McCubbin, Steffan O'Sullivan, and Daniel U. Thibault  
Editing: Loyd Blankenship and Steve Jackson  
Illustrations: Ruth Thompson, Keith Berdak, Carl Anderson, and Larry McDougal  
Cover: John Zelezniak

**GURPS Old West\*** \*\*\*\* 1/2  
128-page softcover book  
Steve Jackson Games \$17  
Design: Ann Dupuis, Liz Tornabene, Robert E. Smith, and Lynda Manning Schwartz  
Additional material: Mike Hurst  
Editing: Steve Jackson and Loyd Blankenship  
Illustrations: Topper Helmers and Carl Anderson  
Cover: David Patrick Menahan

Historical worldbooks are ideal for referees who don't have access to a good library or for those too lazy to go to one. Otherwise, they're rarely worth buying just for the scraps of role-playing rules plugged into what can amount to dull-as-dishwater summaries from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

SJG's solution has been to encourage his designers to give more or less equal attention to fact, legend, and Hollywood. Referees may pick and choose what they like and ignore the rest, resulting in textbook-accurate campaigns or homegrown hybrids of reality and B-movies.

Graeme Davis used this technique to good effect in GURPS *Vikings* (reviewed in DRAGON® issue #181) and returns to it again in GURPS *Middle Ages 1*. With co-author Michael Hurst, Davis covers English history from the Dark Ages to the Renaissance (presumably, future volumes will cover other countries during the same period). In no-nonsense prose, the designers address such topics as the development of Saxon law, the influence of the Celtic church, and the ramifications of the Hundred Years' War. A chapter on spell-casting provides simple but workable rules for rune magic and Hellenistic charms (a medieval sorcery technique derived from Egyptian practitioners). The "Medieval Bestiary" compiles background notes and GURPS statistics for faerie hounds, banshees, and other mythological creatures relevant to the era.

Though the fantasy elements are well-chosen, the straight history makes for the most provocative reading. The medieval-law section lists five variants of the Trial by Ordeal, the last resort for determining a defendant's guilt or innocence in the Saxon justice system. The trial variants range from the benign Corsned Ordeal, where the accused eats a prayer wafer and hopes he doesn't choke, to the brutal Hot Iron Ordeal, which may require the defendant to walk barefoot over nine red-hot plowshares. We're also told about the significance of the Albigensian Crusade, the symptoms of the Black Plague, and differences between the arsenals of Norman Knights and Saxon Fyrdmen. Along the way, the designers lay to rest the myth that medieval clerics were prohibited from using edged weapons. Though Bishop Odo of Bayeaux was reportedly forbidden from drawing blood in the Battle of Hastings, most priests and monks had no such re-

strictions except when fighting on consecrated ground. (AD&D® game players with cleric characters might want to annoy their Dungeon Masters with this historical tidbit.)

But despite the meticulous research, the book's lack of focus often makes for a tough ride. In most cases, the material is assigned to neat, discrete compartments. History goes over *here*, fantasy stays over *there*, and rarely do the designers make an effort to show how the two complement each other. The perfunctory campaigning chapter provides broad suggestions for designing adventures but few usable specifics. Though the book presents a river of information, it's up to the referee to sift the gold from the silt.

GURPS *Camelot*, a study of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, shares the same strengths and weaknesses as GURPS *Middle Ages*. Again, the designers draw on legend, history, and movies (in particular, the *Camelot* musical), and again, the attention to detail is impressive. A scholarly examination of Arthurian lore includes capsule biographies of Arthur's predecessors, an analysis of the political environment, and a blueprint of a typical Norman castle. A chapter titled "The Historical Arthur" discusses the real-life basis of the legends, along with such minutia as 5th-century fashions and earthwork fortress construction. Role-playing receives more attention here than in *Middle Ages*—the book opens with a strong chapter on character creation—making *Camelot* as pertinent to players as to referees. There are also interesting rules for staging jousts, simulating siege warfare, and creating herbal concoctions that produce magical effects.

But how does it all fit together? The designers don't give many hints as to what they consider important in an Arthurian campaign. The book is loaded with engrossing facts, but it often reads like a term paper instead of a collection of neat ideas the designers couldn't wait to share with their fellow gamers. The "Cast of Thousands" chapter, which squanders ten pages on a list of hundreds of minor characters from Arthurian literature, should've been used for game-mastering advice or better yet, a fully-developed adventure.

There are few such problems in GURPS *Old West*, a masterful blend of fact and fantasy covering the 19th-century American frontier. What makes *Old West* an exceptional sourcebook—and one of the most satisfying entries in the GURPS line—is the care taken by the designers to shape their material to the needs of role-players rather than regurgitating every stray fact they could find in the library. Before I cracked the book, I made a list of encounters I'd theoretically like to stage in a western campaign, such as trick shooting, keelboat riding, scalping raids, show-downs, and buffalo hunts. *Old West* includes every one of them.

Like most fact-based GURPS books, *Old*

West contains its share of pure history, but the emphasis here is on drama over dry facts. Wherever reality contradicts John Wayne movies, the designers aren't afraid to goose the truth a bit, and they encourage referees to do the same. Quoting the newspaper editor from *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, they advise, "If the facts conflict with the legend, print the legend."

The book abounds with inviting activities for PCs to pursue, along with sound advice for staging memorable encounters. We're told how to free a steamboat stuck on a sandbar (wedge posts under the front, then set the paddles at full speed) and how many cowboys are needed for a drive team (one man per 100 head of cattle). Want to hunt for gold? Expect to spend 10 hours a day pawing through 50 pans of dirt. Want to rob a train? The "Transportation" chapter provides complete instructions, from liberating the goods (be sure to take care of the expressman first) to making a getaway (try a horseback leap from the stock car).

In contrast to the rather loutish portrayal of cowboys, *Old West* treats Indians as relatively dignified sophisticates who were doing fine until white men came along. In other words Native American culture is handled with reasonable accuracy (and I know whereof I speak, as my father-in-law is a member of the Blackfoot nation). However, the designers aren't quite so reverent towards Indian religion, using it as the basis for an offbeat magic system, replete with vision quests, guardian spirits, and enchanted medicine bundles. Though the approach is a bit patronizing—Native Americans undoubtedly found the white man's religion just as quaint—it's nonetheless clever and fun.

Because of the volume of new rules, mainly applying to gun play and spell-casting, *Old West* presumes a basic understanding of the GURPS system. That's a minus for fans of other RPGs who'll have to work extra hard to adapt it. And once again, there are nowhere near enough developed scenarios to get a campaign off the ground. Ditch the bibliography and give us some adventures!

**Evaluation:** GURPS Middle Ages 1 and Camelot present good overviews of their respective eras, but skimp on staging notes and the details of day-to-day existence that might help players bring their characters to life. But both work well as general reference books, particularly for referees who don't mind doing some homework.

Where Middle Ages and Camelot tend to be passionless, GURPS Old West is downright playful. The combination of diligent research and imaginative embellishments makes for an unbeatable package—one that players and referees alike ought to relish. After reading from start to finish, I was hungry for more. And that's about the best recommendation a sourcebook can get.

## GURPS Terradyne\*

128-page softcover book  
Steve Jackson Games \$17  
*Design:* Russell Brown and Mark Waltz  
*Editing:* Creede Lambard  
*Illustrations:* Ruth Thompson, Michael Barrett, Angela Bostick, Steve Crompton, C. Bradford Gorby, Denis Loubet, Rick Lowry, Michael Surbrook, and John Waltrip  
*Cover:* Alan Gutierrez

\*\*\*\*½

## GURPS Space Atlas 4\*

128-page softcover book  
Steve Jackson Games \$17  
*Design:* David L. Pulver and Stephen Dedman  
*Editing:* Jeff Koke  
*Illustrations:* Darrell Midgette, C. Bradford Gorby, Denis Loubet, Ruth Thompson, Terry Tidwell, and John D. Waltrip  
*Cover:* Alan Gutierrez

\*\*\*\*½

Concentrating on licensed titles, historical sourcebooks, and genre overviews (including the admirable GURPS Horror reviewed in DRAGON issue #186), SJG hasn't done much with original designs. GURPS Terradyne, then, comes as a welcome change-of-pace. It's a neatly executed science-fiction setting, designed by two guys who are obviously comfortable with the nuances of science (and no wonder—Russ Brown works as a software engineer,

while Mark Waltz makes his living as a systems analyst).

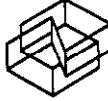
Terradyne is the name of a corporate entity that arose in the early 21st century as a holding company for aerospace and research firms. As the United States and other superpowers collapsed under their own weight, Terradyne picked up the pieces and quietly expanded. By the 22nd century, where the book begins, Terradyne had become an all-encompassing monolith and the solar system's dominant force, cornering the market on crucial technologies. While the newly-formed United Peoples of Earth (UPOE) struggled with environmental disasters and similar crises, Terradyne turned to the heavens, embarking on a series of ambitious projects including the colonization of the Moon and Mars. UPOE became increasingly nervous about Terradyne's growing influence. Terradyne wanted them to mind their own business. To teach UPOE a lesson, Terradyne engineered a worldwide economic collapse, making it crystal clear who was *really* running the show.

Things settled down after that, but only a little. GURPS Terradyne explores the continuing tension between UPOE and the Terradyne dynasty, outlining the corporate factions, security forces, and various independent alliances engaged in deadly power struggles. Earth's citizens, still reeling from the economic disaster of the pre-

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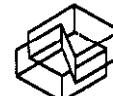
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vious century, face a gloomy future of diminishing resources, decreasing privacy, and oppressive overcrowding (the population is 11 billion and counting).

A section on the Earth's environment grimly describes the effects of ozone depletion and the greenhouse effect (huge chunks of Antarctica's Ronne ice shelf have been breaking away since the early 2040s). Chapters devoted to the Moon and Mars describe the pitfalls of settling in hostile environments. For example, a lunar colonist out for a Sunday stroll risks exposure to 1,000-plus rads of radiation per hour during a solar flare; Earthbound humans might get 0.2 rads in an entire year. On Mars, settlers contend with oxygen-rich soil that explodes into fireballs when doused with water. (Have I got a surprise for the first PC who uses a Martian sandlot for a restroom!)

Brown and Waltz are most at home with the setting's economic and scientific details. They explain convincingly how UPOE manipulates the global economy through the World Economic Reserve, and how the moon has achieved economic stability by exporting its oxygen reserves. On the scientific front, the "Space Travel and Technology" chapter weighs the pros and cons of various chemical fuels, and lists the specs for the Victoria Class Exploration Station, the Orbital Transfer Vehicle, and other common spacecraft.

The designers are on less solid ground when discussing sociology and the arts. There's not much about what daily life is like for a typical citizen or how he relates to his world. For instance, it's said that the colonies are subject to the laws and regulations of UPOE, but nowhere do we receive satisfactory documentation of exactly what all those laws entail. Elsewhere, it says that "... religious groups have seen their followings increase dramatically over the past century ..." but we're not told why. The culture of the 22nd century is pretty much ignored, aside from some arguable predictions about the entertainment industry, (Music recorded and mixed by computers? That's already happening. Virtual Reality? That'll probably seem as antique as a puppet show in the 22nd century.)

However, I doubt if these lapses will bother *Terradyne's* target audience too much. Fans of hard SF should find more than enough cold data to keep them interested. And even in the absence of useable campaign advice, ambitious referees will find a surplus of promising adventure ideas scattered throughout the text.

Should your space cadets tire of *Terradyne's* corporate machinations, there's still plenty of the cosmos left to explore, as evidenced by GURPS *Space Atlas 4*. This latest and most elaborate volume in the *Space Atlas* series catalogs close to 50 planets in the chaotic Phoenix and Saga sectors, located on the fringes of civilized space. Each planetary record includes two separate sections. The first, intended for

the referee, features a fluff-free description of the planet's history, current status, and key personalities, along with several brief adventure seeds. The second, which may be photocopied and given to the players, presents the basic information normally available to space travelers from databases or other accessible sources. This section includes facts and figures about the planet's atmosphere, mineral resources, technology levels, and weather patterns, as well as a nicely-rendered projection map showing terrain types and various points of interest.

Though designers David Pulver and Stephen Dedman take their universe seriously—there are no SPELLJAMMER® game pyramid suns or flat planets here—they still manage to include a remarkable variety of settings and more than a few fanciful touches. Covenant, a theocratic financial center in the Saga sector, attracts tourists by the shipload to gawk at its Gothic cathedrals. The water-covered Cornwall is home to a bizarre species of sea dragons who communicate with one another via *dragonsong* sonar. A race of parahuman "floaters" populate the hollow core of Starhome, a gravity-free planetoid. A rundown of three new alien races and some helpful tables round out this excellent effort.

**Evaluation:** By emphasizing technology over space opera, *Terradyne's* sober tone compares favorably to CDW's MEGA-TRAVELLER® game and other hard science-fiction RPGs. Though the dystopian outlook may strike some as overly familiar—how many times have we been warned about grasping corporations?—the thoughtful presentation results in a compelling study of greed gone amuck. And it's user-friendly to boot; except for a few pages devoted to character design, there aren't many new rules to navigate.

Likewise, *Space Atlas 4* keeps GURPS-speak to a minimum, making it an invaluable reference not only for GURPS Space enthusiasts, but for science-fiction gamers of all persuasions. The encyclopedic format is nothing new, but the quality of writing, effective graphics, and diversity of the entries distinguishes *Space Atlas 4* from its run-of-the-mill competition.

## Short and sweet

*Magic Encyclopedia, Volume One*, by Connie Rae Henson and Dale "Sladey" Henson, TSR Inc., \$10. Here's a product that's long overdue, an index of virtually every magical item from virtually every TSR rulebook, accessory, and magazine. It's quite a collection, with something like 5,500 gizmos spread out over the two volumes in the series. The book alphabetizes the items into general categories, listing their experience point values, costs, and original appearances (also included is a complete list of TSR's role-playing products published since 1974, which itself may be worth the price of admission to hardcore collectors). At a glance, we

can find that a *levitation bench* will set us back 6,000 gold pieces, or that we'll need a copy of FOR2 *Drow of the Underdark* to investigate the workings of the *driftdisk*. Since no descriptions are provided for individual items, the *Magic Encyclopedia* is less useful to new players than to old-timers who have access to a sizeable TSR library. Only the marketing department knows why it was necessary to publish this in two volumes—like anybody's just going to want the stuff from A-G.

*Inquisitor*, edited and published by Tim DuPortuis. Single copy, \$3; four-issue subscription, \$10. This quarterly fanzine devoted to Game Workshop's WARHAMMER 40,000\* game features a cornucopia of scenarios, statistics, and modelling hints made to order for anyone who can't get enough about Dreadnoughts and Terminator Squads. Highlights include a Q&A column that tackles such puzzlers as whether ectoplasmic mist can be moved by telekinesis (it can't), and several pages of photocopiable stat charts for new units. With a clean layout and plenty of crisp black-and-white photos, the production values are impressively high. Best of all, the editorial approach focuses squarely on the nuts and bolts of the game system, avoiding the lame fan fiction and long-winded analyses that drag down so many do-it-yourself publications. (For information, write: P.O. Box 14485, Santa Rosa CA 95402-14485.)

Rick Swan has worked as a rock musician, suicide intervention counselor, and newspaper publisher. He now writes full-time. Contact him at: 2620 30th Street, Des Moines IA 50310.

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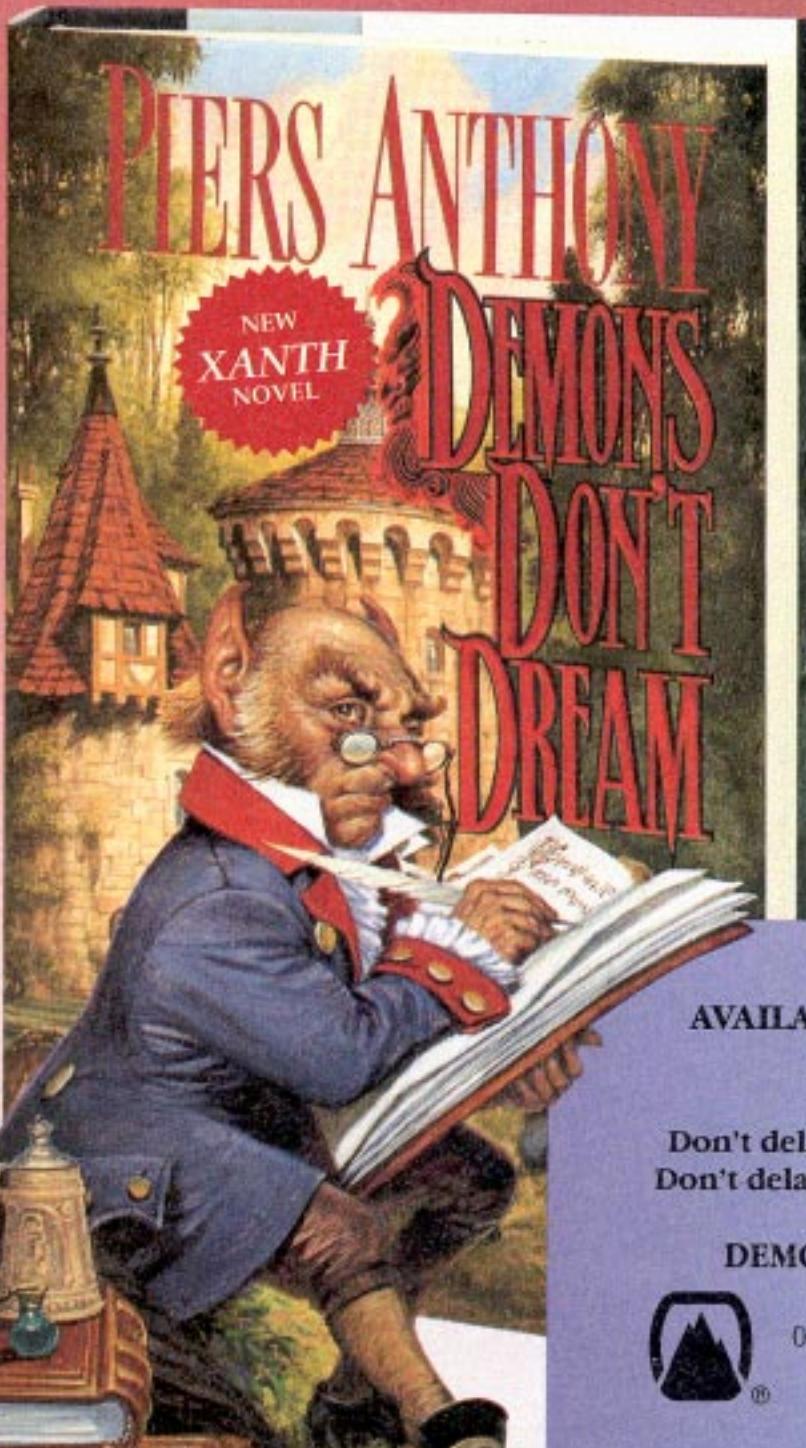


## Hunting for your next game convention?

If you're looking for a good time gaming, turn to this issue's "Convention Calendar" for current information on where the fun is.

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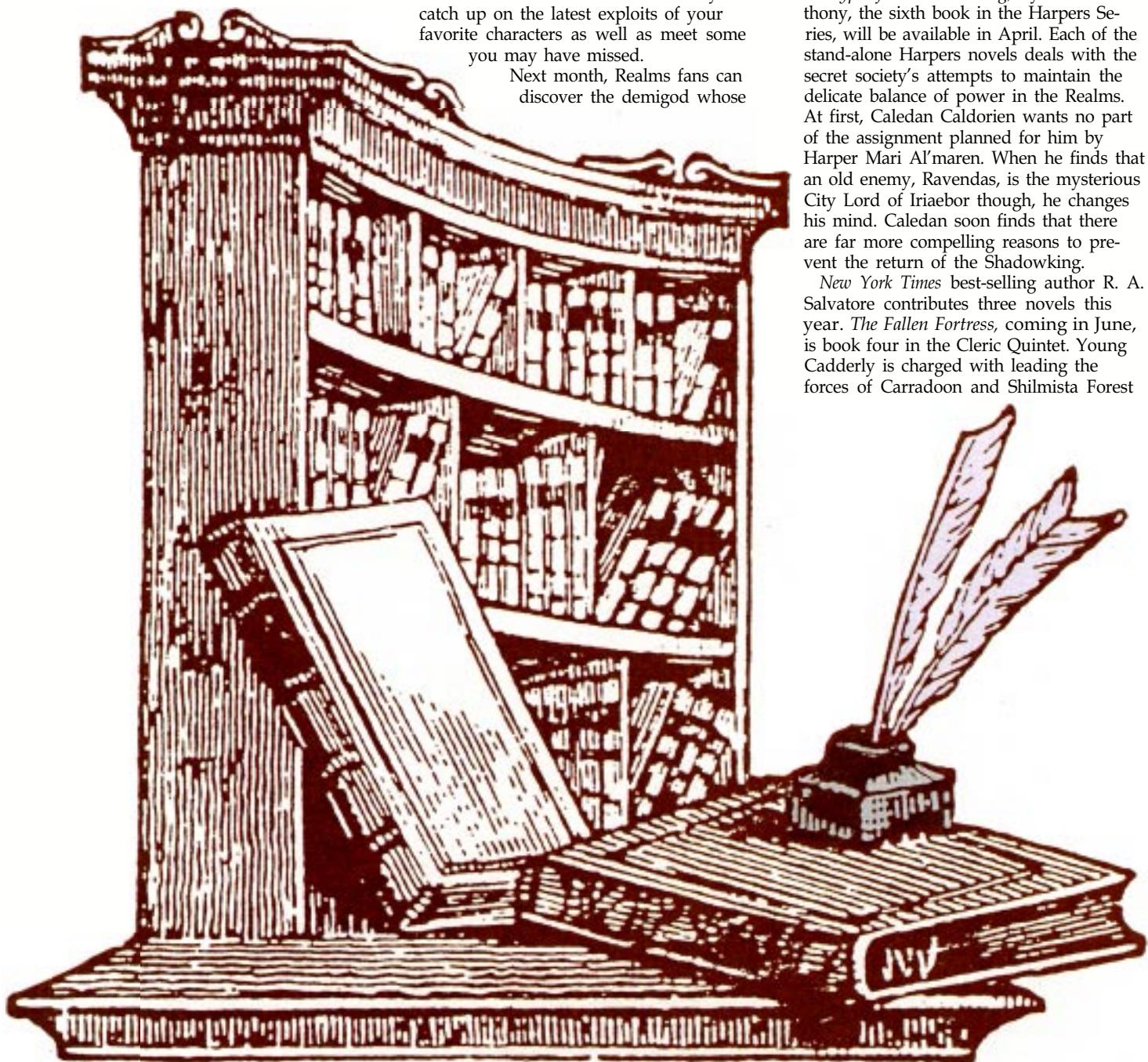
You're just in time to pick up *Realms of Valor*, the first anthology set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS world, making its way into bookstores this month. This collection, edited by veteran Realms author James Lowder, contains stories by some of the shared world's most popular authors—including R.A. Salvatore, Douglas Niles, Troy Denning, Ed Greenwood and others. This book will let you catch up on the latest exploits of your favorite characters as well as meet some you may have missed.

Next month, Realms fans can discover the demigod whose

mighty axe cleaved the Moonshaes. The *Druid Queen*, the breathtaking conclusion to Douglas Niles's Druidhome Trilogy introduces Grond Peaksmasher, legendary hero of the dwarves and firbolgs. In a heartstopping blend of murder, intrigue, and dark magic climaxed by a battle of epic proportions, Niles brings to a close this much-anticipated sequel series to his popular Moonshae Trilogy.

*Crypt of the Shadowking*, by Mark Anthony, the sixth book in the Harpers Series, will be available in April. Each of the stand-alone Harpers novels deals with the secret society's attempts to maintain the delicate balance of power in the Realms. At first, Caledan Caldorien wants no part of the assignment planned for him by Harper Mari Al'maren. When he finds that an old enemy, Ravendas, is the mysterious City Lord of Iriaebor though, he changes his mind. Caledan soon finds that there are far more compelling reasons to prevent the return of the Shadowking.

New York Times best-selling author R. A. Salvatore contributes three novels this year. *The Fallen Fortress*, coming in June, is book four in the Cleric Quintet. Young Cadderly is charged with leading the forces of Carradoon and Shilmista Forest



against the fiends of Castle Trinity, the stronghold of his nemesis. Instead, he sets off with a select force of his own to conduct a smaller campaign, using his increasingly powerful priestly magic. Neither the journey nor the battle go as easily as planned, and Cadderly must come to terms with his friends' expectations and with a past he'd almost rather forget.

TSR hopes to make this another banner year for Salvatore with a hardcover sequel to last year's blockbuster, *The Legacy*. The author's latest dark-elf book, *Starless Night*, will debut in October.

The noble dark elf Drizzt Do'Urden steels himself for a return to the brooding Underdark, to find his friends in the gnome city of Blingdenstone and travel on to Menzoberranzan, the city of drow. His scimitars slash at monsters too evil for the sunlit world, while his inner self wrestles with the emotions that assault him when he looks once more on his dreaded homeland. All the while Drizzt must fend off the weight of guilt he carries for a dear friend lost to him forever.

Concurrent with the release of *Starless Night*, *The Legacy* appears in paperback, complete with a new chapter not included in last year's hardcover edition.

When the Avatars came to Toril in the Avatar Trilogy, the Realms were changed for all time. James Lowder, author of *Crusade*, *Knight of the Black Rose*, and *The Ring of Winter*, continues the story of the heroes who became gods in his new novel, *Prince of Lies*. Cyric, God of the Dead, searches in vain for the soul of Kelemvor Lyonsbane, the friend and ally he murdered to become a god. Yet the other gods are wary of Cyric's ambitions and forge a secret alliance against him. *Prince of Lies* is due to hit the shelves in August.

In November, a new book in the tradition of *Pool of Radiance* and *Pools of Darkness* will arrive at bookstores. In *Pool of Twilight*, by James M. Ward and Anne K. Brown, chaos and death once again stalk Phlan. The city guardians send Kern, the young son of Shal and Tarl, on an urgent quest to recover the hammer of Tyr, lost in the Dragonsbane Mountains. Young Kern must unite and lead a group of disparate, sometimes squabbling companions with magical abilities. What the hero doesn't know is that one of these companions is an invincible wicked wizardess and that, once retrieved, the hammer of Tyr will unlock the worst evil of all.

David "Zeb" Cook transports us to the far north of the Forgotten Realms in *Soldiers of Ice*, the seventh entry in the Harpers Series. In this bitterly cold, inhospitable land, the Great Glacier forces tribes of savage gnolls to flee from its relentless advance. The gnolls then enter the hidden valleys of the fiercely independent gnomes. The resulting conflict summons Harper Martine of Sembia to do her best to keep peace between the warring parties.

## DRAGONLANCE® novels

The DRAGONLANCE saga, TSR's most famous and venerable fantasy epic, has always pitted courageous heroes against horrific villains. The well-received Meetings Sextet depicted the early lives and exploits of the Heroes of the Lance. In a new six-volume series, the saga turns to the villains.

April brings you the story of Dragon Highlord Verminaard: *Before the Mask*, written by DRAGONLANCE saga veterans Michael and Teri Williams. The novel tells of Verminaard's inauspicious beginnings—born in a druidess' cave during a bleak snowstorm. Unwanted and unloved, Verminaard discovers a strange soulmate to whom the fates have tied him. He also discovers a luring Voice tempting him toward evil. As he slowly falls to that temptation, Verminaard receives a deadly mace named Nightbringer and the power of Takhisis, Queen of Darkness.

The second novel of the Villains Series, *The Black Wing*, details the story of Khi-santh, the black dragon who dwells at Xak Tsaroth, whose ruins lie amid murky swampland. The first appearances of this powerful wyrm, in the best-selling Chronicles and Legends books, raised many questions as to her origin and relation to the Dark Queen. Author Mary Kirchoff will answer those questions for readers in September with *The Black Wing*.

Coming in December is *Emperor of Ansalon*, by Douglas Niles. Ariakus, supreme commander of the Dark Queen's dragonarmies, rises to power through noble villainy. His hunger for conquest is backed by the twisted dream of establishing an empire of law and beauty—an empire clutched in his totalitarian fist. The Dragonqueen senses his hunger and feeds it, turning his ambition toward her own dark ends.

Also this year, Dan Parkinson brings us the long-awaited history of the dwarves of Krynn in *The Dwarven Nations Trilogy*. The Covenant of the Forge, available this month, details the fall of the dwarven stronghold of Thorin, attacked by vengeful humans. The Hylar dwarves journey west to the Kharolis Mountains in search of a new home, but instead find themselves embroiled in many conflicts.

*Hammer and Axe*, available in July, and *The Swordsheath Scroll*, to be released in January of 1994, continue the story of the dwarves as they delve the stronghold of Thorbardin and seek an elusive peace with both their dwarven brethren and the other races of Krynn.

For years, DRAGONLANCE fans have been calling for the rerelease of *Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home*, a one-of-a-kind DRAGONLANCE sourcebook for gamers and fiction fans alike. The book is finally making its way into stores again in November.

## DARK SUN™ novels

Get ready for the final two volumes of Troy Denning's popular Prism Pentad! This series tells of the heroes of Athas, world of the dark sun, where only the strongest and bravest can stand against the might of power-mad sorcerer-kings and rampaging dragons.

In *The Obsidian Oracle*, the ambitious Tithian, new lord of the city of Tyr, follows his dream of becoming a sorcerer-king and travels into the desert wastelands searching for immortality. The nobleman Agis of Asticles, determined to bring Tithian to trial on a charge of slave-taking, follows the king in his search for an artifact that may allow the new ruler to achieve his dream. A lonely giant, a tarek sea captain, and a blind jozhai join Agis in his dangerous journey across the Sea of Silt. Look for this exciting volume in June.

In September, learn the fate of Athas in the pentad's powerful conclusion, *The Cerulean Storm*. Tithian, at last made aware of the true responsibility of being a king, enlists the aid of his former slaves—Rikus, Neeva, and Sadira—as he embarks on a desperate mission to save the desolate world from complete destruction. On their journey, old hatreds and passions prove as dangerous as the enchanted fleets and terrible dust storms that batter the tiny caravan.

As the Prism Pentad draws to a close, readers can turn their focus toward a new epic trilogy: The Tribe of One, by Simon Hawke, author of the best-selling Wizard and Time Wars series. The first book of the new series, *The Outcast*, is due out in December.

The story follows the elfling Sorak and his tigone cub on a quest for their origins, a quest that leads them from the Ringing Mountains to the Sea of Silt. Sorak's bloodline combines the grace of elves with the savagery of Athasian halflings. Also, his psionic acuity, product of a past even he does not know, provides him magnificent and unusual powers.

## RAVENLOFT™ novels

Best-selling author Elaine Bergstrom weaves a terror-filled tale in *Tapestry of Dark Souls*, fifth in an open-ended set of fantasy-horror books dealing with the masters and monsters of this Gothic setting. Her story of a cloth of magic and diabolic design will be available next month; on the heels of *Daughter of the Night*, the latest in her successful vampire series.

The Gathering Cloth is a shimmering web that traps some of the darkest evils in Ravenloft. It is up to Jonathan, son of the most powerful being in the tapestry, to find a way to destroy the cloth before the evil breaks his will and binds him to the darkness forever.

Return to the Dark Domains in July with *Carnival of Fear*, the sixth book in the series. J. Robert King, whom readers will recall as the author of last year's *Heart of*

*Midnight*, tells of a circus in-the evil land of l'Morai.

A murder has occurred along the side-show boardwalk of Carnival l'Morai. Three of the performers begin to track down the killer, but their investigation leads to more murders and the discovery of a great conspiracy that underlies it all. Before they can bring the killer to justice, though, they themselves become marked for death.

The first RAVENLOFT hardcover comes out just before Halloween. *I, Strahd* is the first-person account of this vampire's life and unlife, written by P. N. Elrod, author of *Bloodlist* and the five other books of the Vampire Files. *I, Strahd* begins with the conquest of Barovia by the warrior lord Strahd Von Zarovich, and tells of the nearly four centuries of unlife that led him to become the vampire lord of Ravenloft.

### XXVc™ novels

The thrilling conclusion to The Invaders of Charon Trilogy is *Warlords of Jupiter*, by William H. Keith, Jr., who also wrote book two, *Nomads of the Sky*. Set in the exciting world of the 25th century, *Warlords of Jupiter* will be available in March.

Seeking the origin of an apparently alien artifact, Vince Pirelli and his team journey to Amalthea, innermost of the human colonies circling Jupiter. From there, Vince and the terrine Kaiten must travel to a living city adrift in the Jovian clouds and inhabited by winged giants known as Stormriders. Meanwhile, Jovanna Trask and the tinker Galen encounter the advance scouts of a strange invasion that forces enemies to become allies and threatens humanity with extinction!

### DUNGEONS & DRAGONS™ books

Last year, TSR launched its newest line of novels for its oldest line of games. *The Tainted Sword*, first book in The Penhaligon Trilogy, by D. J. Heinrich, is the first D&D novel ever. This volume tells the story of Flinn the Fallen, a dishonored knight inspired by his young squire Johauna Menhir to regain his glory and slay the dragon Verdilith.

*The Dragon's Tomb*, due out in April, picks up the story of Johauna as she strives to complete Flinn's mission of vengeance against the dreaded Verdilith. The Great Green has his own plans for revenge, centering around the sword Wyrmblight. While behind the scenes, the evil mage Teryl Auroch pulls the strings of the dragon—and Johauna—to lead Mystara to its doom.

The final book in the trilogy, *The Fall of Magic*, launches Jo and her companions into an epic clash between Mystara and invaders from a world of darkness. Teryl Auroch's plans for the destruction of the land of Penhaligon reach fruition, and only Johauna, her dwarven comrade Braddoc, and a mysterious, majestic warrior stand in his way. This climactic tale will

reach bookstores in October.

### SPELLJAMMER® novels

*The Broken Sphere*, due out in May, is book five in the Cloakmaster Cycle. Author Nigel Findley also wrote *Into the Void*, book two of the series. In this new tale, Teldin Moore's magic amulet allows him to "see" through the eyes of the great ship *Spelljammer*, across the wilds of space. Following clues from an ancient gnomish library and his own visions, he traces the mighty craft through the crystal spheres. Teldin employs his magical cloak's powers and discovers his quarry's home, but his cloak continues to draw enemies, often in the guise of friends. He must fight to survive long enough to face the danger awaiting him at the point of the *Spelljammer's* origin—the Broken Sphere.

In September, Russ T. Howard brings us the cataclysmic conclusion to the Cloakmaster Cycle. Teldin has gone from "dirtkicker" to spacefarer, from muleskinner to captain in an elven Imperial Fleet, from outcast to intergalactic danger magnet. Now, in *The Ultimate Helm*, Teldin discovers the great ship *Spelljammer* itself. He battles to control the living ship amid the myriad plots of its inhabitants. Political intrigue mixes with colossal magical forces for an explosive ending to the Cloakmaster Cycle.

### TSR® Books

TSR Books kicks off its 1993 lineup with a surefire winner, *Valorian*, available this month. *Valorian* is best-selling author Mary H. Herbert's prequel to her popular *Dark Horse* and *Lightning's Daughter*.

More than four hundred years prior to the time of Gabria and Athlone, the Clan are an oppressed people, struggling for their very survival under the yoke of the Tarnish Empire and its cruel provincial governor, the heartless General Tyrranis. Only one man, blessed but also cursed by the gods, can hope to lead the Clan out of the Darkhorn Mountains to a new life on the bounteous Ramtharin Plains. Hero, warrior, and magic-wielder, that man was to become the legend called Valorian.

*Naked Came the Sasquatch*, by John Boston, provides both a change of scene and a change of pace in May. Set in modern-day California, this TSR Books release is a humor/horror story. Readers will become enchanted with the book's unusual love quadrangle, involving a Bigfoot (who likes drive-in movies), a werewolf (who can get *very* hungry), a newspaper editor (who thinks monsters make for some great headlines), and a thrice-divorced reporter, who has unknowingly been destined since birth to be the bride of a beast.

In August look for *Book of Stones*, the concluding volume to L. Dean James's well-received trilogy, which also includes *Sorcerer's Stone* and *Kingslayer*.

Davi Darynson, the young duke of Gosney, desires nothing more in the world

than to attain the powers of magic . . . until the lovely Sandaal D'Lekan arrives at Castlekeep to serve as lady-in-waiting to Queen Jessmyn. But Sandaal has come to serve other, darker purposes, and the duke soon is forced to choose between his love for the lady and the life of his king. Desperate, he turns for help to the mystic Book of Stones, which offers power and counsel to some—and death to others.

The fantasy romance *Greenfire*, by Louise Titchener, is the final TSR Book of the year. At her first testing at the sacred pool of her ancestors, the beautiful young water goddess Reawen learns she must steal back the green stone that confirms her mystical power. She sets off to trick Brone, the ruthless golden-haired ruler who stole the sacred stone.

*Greenfire* is filled with action, intrigue, and a mesmerizing battle of wits between a young woman who isn't quite human and a king who must rise above his humanity to save his kingdom from her magic. Titchener's style resembles that of Marion Zimmer Bradley and Mercedes Lackey, and this book is sure to find an eager audience in December.

### Top 10 reasons to read TSR® books in 1993:

10. Look for some of your favorite established authors, such as Elaine Bergstrom, P. N. Elrod, and Simon Hawke, as they venture into TSR fantasy worlds for the first time.

9. What a bargain! The average price of a mass-market sized paperback from TSR is still less than five dollars.

8. L. Dean James and Mary H. Herbert return to the fantasy worlds they made popular in their earlier TSR novels.

7. Read the climaxes to some of your favorite series, such as the Druidhome Trilogy (FORGOTTEN REALMS novels), the Penhaligon Trilogy (DUNGEONS & DRAGONS books), the Prism Pentad (DARK SUN novels), the Invaders of Charon Trilogy (XXVc books), and the Cloakmaster Cycle (SPELLJAMMER novels).

6. Your voice has been heard! The DRAGONLANCE book *Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home* is being reissued due to popular demand.

5. You can get all the excitement of a trilogy in one volume with the extra-length *Prince of Lies*, which also features a color map.

4. Dive into some great new series, including the Villains Series and the Dwarven Nations Trilogy (part of the DRAGONLANCE saga), and The Tribe of One Trilogy (DARK SUN books).

3. Find out what happens when Bigfoot goes to too many drive-in movies.

2. The dark elf Drizzt Do'Urden returns in a new hardcover adventure.

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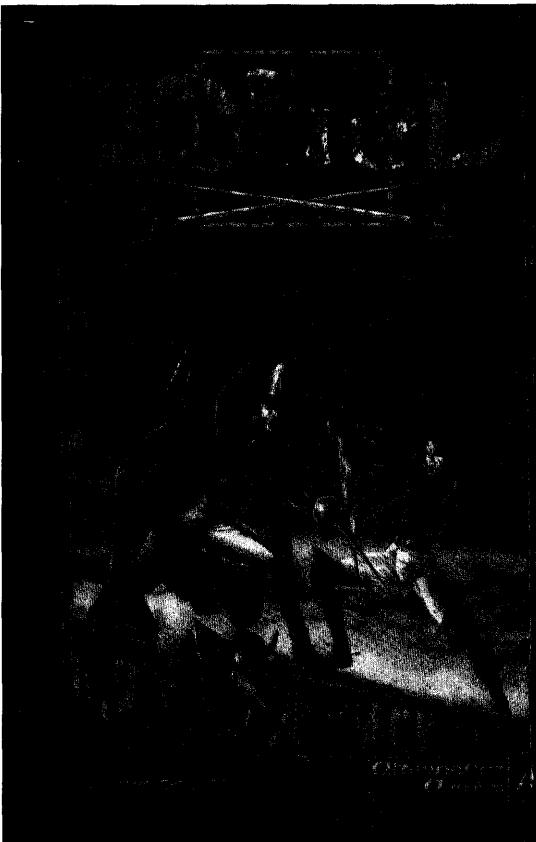
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# SAGE advice

by Skip Williams

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

This month, our sage continues to focus on questions about some of TSR's newer products.

## Where the heck is Zakhara, the Land of Fate?

Zakhara can be anywhere the Dungeon Master decides to put it. There is no place for Zakhara on Athas, the world of the DARK SUN™ setting. On Toril, the world of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, Zakhara is located south of the Great Sea and west of the southern portions of Kara-Tur. Zakhara has no official location on TSR, Inc.'s other published worlds.

## The AL-QADIM™ Arabian Adventures book says that all races can be sha'irs, even dwarves and halflings. What is the level limit for halflings?

I suggest level 10, just like dwarves. I also recommend that you also give halfling sha'irs a 20% chance for ability failure, like dwarves have (see Arabian Adventures, page 43).

**What does a ring of wizardry do for a sha'ir? How about a pearl of power? Would a potion of speed or Wallac's potion of speed casting (1992 Collector card #272) reduce the time needed for a sha'ir's gen to find a spell? If not, what sort of item would?**

A ring of wizardry does nothing for a

sha'ir, as they cannot understand the ring's workings, nor use its power. A *ring of wizardry* doubles the number of spells a wizard can prepare each day, and sha'irs do not prepare spells daily. They send out their gens to look for spells as needed. Even if a sha'ir could understand how to use a *ring of wizardry*, the sha'ir's gen still would only bring him one spell at a time and would not depart to search for a new one until the current spell was cast or had expired (see *Arabian Adventures*, pages 98-99).

A *pearl of power* might work for a sha'ir, but I recommend against it. The item description implies that a pearl's function is based upon a wizard's daily spell preparation, insofar as the pearl only can recall a spell that was part of the wizards most recent preparation. On the other hand, one could argue that a *pearl of power* can recall any spell (of the appropriate level) that the user has memorized on a given day. The case can be made that a sha'ir has "memorized" a spell when his gen delivers it. In this case, the *pearl* can recall a spell only if the sha'ir has taken "delivery" of a spell of the pearl's level during the day that the pearl is used. For example, a sha'ir who owns a *pearl of power* keyed to second-level spells could not use it on a given day until his gen had successfully found and delivered a second-level spell.

*Wallac's potion of speed casting* cannot shorten the time a gen requires to locate a spell. I suppose a wish could reduce the time to whatever the minimum would be for the type of spell being sought. For example, a sha'ir could wish that his gen would bring back a "native" sixth-level spell in seven rounds. Any attempt to break the minimum-time requirement using a wish should not only fail, but should immediately result in extra-planar

attention for the sha'ir as explained under "The Perils of Priest Spells," on page 99—even if the gen is not seeking a priest spell. Stern DMs might roll for extra-planar attention whenever a wish is used to speed spell delivery.

Note that a sha'ir can benefit from *Wallac's potion of speed casting*. Once the sha'ir's gen has delivered a spell, the sha'ir must follow all the normal rules for spell-casting, including casting time, which can be reduced by *Wallac's potion of speed casting*.

As "Sage Advice" has pointed out before, *potions of speed*, haste spells, and similar other magics never shorten a spell's casting time.

**Please explain the use of segments in the DARK SUN setting. The wall of ash spell in the Dragon Kings book uses them. In a previous "Sage Advice" column, you said the current AD&D® game does not use segments. What gives?**

The AD&D 2nd edition game does not use segments, and the reference to them in the *wall of ash* psionic enchantment description (*Dragon Kings*, page 112) is an error. The spell's creator probably was thinking in terms of the original AD&D game, where a melee round was broken down into 10 segments.

Spending a full round in contact with a *wall of ash* causes 10d10 hp; getting away from the stuff in less than a full round reduces the damage. The easiest way to keep track of this damage is to use the standard initiative system from the current game. For example, Prythony the mul gladiator loses a wrestling match with an opposing half-giant and gets pinned in a *wall of ash*. If the half-giant's attack came on an initiative number of "7," Prythony probably will spend the rest of the round

in the ash, and will suffer 3d10 points of damage, one die on each remaining initiative number (8, 9, and 10). If Prythony rolls free during the next round after getting an adjusted initiative of "4," he'll suffer another 4d10 points of damage. Undoubtedly, things are going to be a lot more complex than this if wall of ash actually get used in play. However, the DM is going to have to be prepared to deal with such things as they arise—that's one consequence of running a campaign where characters have access to magic as powerful as *wall of ash*.

**Issue #185 of DRAGON® Magazine included a Monstrous Compendium sheet for a DARK SUN setting creature called the baazrag. The sheet describes a shy, weak creature that can be kept as a pet or to catch vermin. In contrast, the novel The Verdant Passage presents the baazrag as a gladiatorial beast that is "400 pounds of fur and muscle." Can you set things straight?**

My researches into this question yielded two possible answers. One, the baazrag (pronounced BAAZ-rag) is indeed a pint-sized, timid creature, while the baazrag (pronounced baas-RAG) is a much rarer, ferocious giant. An inexplicable linguistic quirk gave both creatures similar names. (Hey! Don't look at me like that, that's

what someone in the know *told me!*) Two, a normal baazrag is small and generally inoffensive, but some institution or individual who breeds and trains domesticated baazrags managed to, at least once, produce a 400-pound mutant specimen with the nasty disposition that's particularly well suited for ripping gladiators to shreds.

**The Tales of the Lance boxed set says tinker gnomes get one non-weapon proficiency slot for every two levels and one weapon proficiency slot every 10 levels. However, the DRAGONLANCE® Monstrous Compendium says they get one weapon proficiency and three non-weapon proficiencies every two levels. Which is correct?**

With the arrival of Tales of the Lance, tinker gnomes get fewer proficiencies overall and fewer weapon proficiencies (see *World Book of Ansalon*, page 94). The Monstrous Compendium and the earlier *DRAGONLANCE Adventures* hardback are not necessarily wrong, but the newer boxed set has changed the rules to make tinkers a lot less warlike and generally less competent.

**How much damage does the kender sashik do? Page 73 of the World Book of Ansalon lists the damage as**

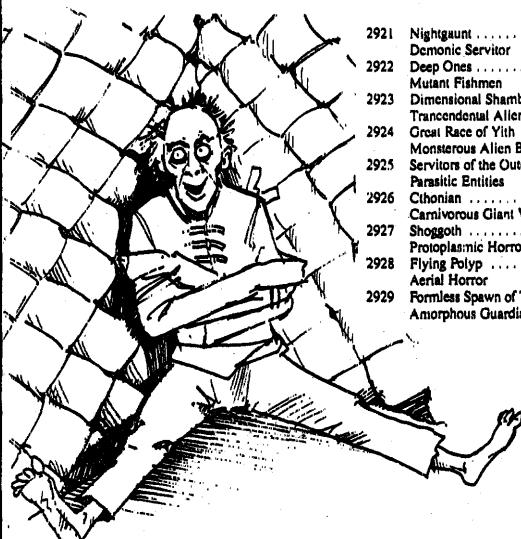
**1d8 + 1/1d10 + 1, but the Tales of the Lance DM's screen lists the damage 1d6 + 1/1d4 + 1. Also, what do the various "weapon type" codes on the DM's screen mean? They don't match the types listed on weapons table in the Player's Handbook.**

The damage listed for the sashik in the DM's screen is correct. The listing on page 73 is a typo.

The weapons table on the DM's screen does use the same weapon types as the *PH*; they're just formatted differently from the listings as they are presented on pages 68 and 69 of the *PH*. For example, the sashik is listed as type SB; this indicates that the weapon can do both Slashing damage (because it can be fitted with hooks) and Bludgeoning damage. In the *PH* format, this would be listed as type S/B.

**I'm having some difficulty understanding what spells and powers the gods of Krynn grant their priests: Mishakals entry names eight spheres of spells that she grants plus the spells *prayer* and *remove/bestow curse*. What do these two "plus" spells mean? How and when are the "powers per level" granted? One of the powers Kiri-Jolith grants is a +1 bonus to attacks on evil creatures; is this granted once a day or as many times**

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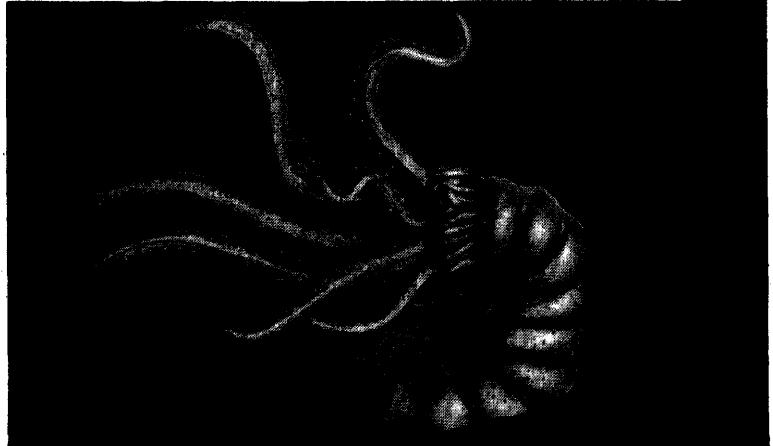


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as the cleric wishes?

The "plus" spells in each deity's list are spells the deity grants to his clerics even though they are not included among the spells covered by the deity's spheres. For example, Mishakal grants *prayer* from the Combat sphere and *remove/bestow curse* from the Protection sphere even though she does not grant other spells from these two spheres. "Plus" spells must be prayed for and memorized just like any other clerical spell.

The "powers per level" appear after each deity's name. Nonspell-like powers, such as bonuses to saving throws or attack rolls, are continuous and function whenever they are applicable. For example a priest of Kiri-Jolith always gets a +1 bonus to attacks vs. evil creatures.

Spell-like powers are granted once a day. These powers function just like the spells they are named after except that the cleric need not pray or meditate to get them—they are automatically granted each day. Each power's casting time is the same as the spell. If an effect's range, duration, etc. varies with the caster's level, use the priest's actual level to adjudicate the effect. For example, if a 10th-level priest of Majere uses the granted power *silence 15' radius*, the effect lasts 20 rounds. Unfortunately, this information is incomplete; what is missing are the numbers that indicate what level a priest has to reach to be granted the power. Here are the complete "powers per level" entries, courtesy of two *Tales of the Lance* designers, Harold Johnson and John Terra:

Paladine: 2) *know alignment*, 5) *flame strike*; TU: turn.

Mishakal: 2) *animal friendship, bless/curse, endure cold/heat, resist fire/cold*; 5) *chant, silence 15' radius*; 7) *stone shape, water walk*; 9) *holy word*; TU: turn.

Majere: Once a day, a priest of Majere can cast his medallion of faith on the ground, where it becomes a giant hornet that will defend the priest; 5) *giant insect*; 7) *repel insects, insect plague*; 9) *creeping doom*; TU: nil.

Kiri-Jolith: All priests of Kiri-Jolith receive a +1 on attacks against all evil opponents; 1) *detect snares and pits*; 2) *find traps, heat/chill metal*; 4) *magical vestment*; 6) *cloak of bravery*; 8) *quest*; 9) *heroes' feast*; TU: turn.

Habbakuk: 3) *create food and water*; 5) *commune with nature*; 7) *heroes' feast, speak with animals, forbiddance, conjure animal*; TU: nil.

Branchala: All clerics of Branchala gain +2 on any artistic proficiency; 1) *detect snares and pits*; 2) *slow poison*; 3) *create food and water, neutralize poison*; 8) *quest*; 9) *aerial servant, heroes' feast*; TU: nil.

Solinari: All clerics of Solinari gain a +2 bonus against any magical attack; TU: nil.

Takhisis: 2) *detect good, spiritual hammer*; 4) *create food and water*; 5) *flame strike*; 9) *unholy word*; TU: command.

Sargonnas: All priests of Sargonnas get a +2 to saving throws, attack rolls, and

morale when they are on a mission of vengeance; 6) *protection from fire*; 9) *animate object*; TU: turn.

Morgion: 5) *create food and water*; TU: command.

Chemosh: All priests of Chemosh gain a +2 on their undead command attempts. They also can recognize all forms of undead on sight; 9) *animate object*; TU: command.

Zeboim: TU: command.

Hiddukel: TU: command.

Nuitari: All priests of Nuitari gain a +2 bonus against any magical attack; TU: nil.

Gilean: All priests of Gilean gain a bonus of +1 on any nonweapon proficiency check, they also receive one bonus non-weapon proficiency per level of experience; 1) *speak with animals*; 3) *messenger*; TU: turn.

Sirrion: All priests of Sirrion gain a bonus of +1 per die of damage for fire-based spells; 2) +1 to saves vs. fire; 4) *fireball*; 6) *flame strike*; TU: nil.

Reorx: All priests of Reorx gain a +2 on any nonweapon craft proficiency; TU: turn creatures of darkness and shadow.

Chislev: TU: nil.

Zivilyn: TU: turn.

Shinare: All priests of Shinare get +1 XP per 10 stl of treasure earned/acquired; 3) *locate/obscure object*; TU: nil.

Lunitari: All clerics of Lunitari gain a +2 bonus against any magical attack; TU: nil.

The number immediately preceding the name of a spell-like power indicates the level at which to power is first granted to the priest. If there is no number proceeding the power, any priest of the deity can use it. All granted powers are cumulative. For example, a 6th-level priest of Paladine can use *know alignment* and *flame strike* once a day and can turn undead as a 6th-level cleric.

**What creatures can priests of Reorx turn with their ability to turn "creatures of darkness and shadow"? Why do priests of the evil deity, Sargonnas, gain the ability to turn undead? Isn't this a misprint?**

Priests of Reorx can turn any creature with the ability to drain ability scores or life energy, whether they are undead or not. For example, a priest of Reorx has no power over undead such as skeletons or ghosts because they have no draining ability (the ghost's aging attack is not a draining attack). However, priests of Reorx can turn undead such as wights or shadows because these undead can drain life energy or ability scores. Likewise, priests of Reorx can turn non-undead creatures such as fetch, which have a draining attack. Priests of Reorx use table 61 from the *PH* (page 103) to resolve turning attempts. If a creature is not listed on the table, use the line from the table that shows the creature's hit dice.

Priests of Sargonnas do turn undead. Since the ability to turn undead allows priests and clerics to blast many types of

undead to dust, the *Tales of the Lance* designers felt that this would be an appropriate ability for priests of Sargonnas, Krynn's deity of fiery destruction.

**The dates given for the delving of Kal-Thax on page 59 of the World Book of Ansalon contradict the dates given on page 5, in the "River of Time" section. Which are correct?**

The "River of Time" dates, 3100-2900 PC, are the correct ones.

**According to the note on page 86 of *Tales of the Lance*, a sword knight of Solamnia gets spells by meditating half-an-hour for each level of spell, but can meditate for spells only six hours a day. At that rate, no sword knight above 11th level can get a full complement of spells in one day. Is this a mistake? What spheres can sword knights use?**

There's no mistake. Actually, it takes even longer for a high-level sword knight to gain a full complement of spells than you think. Check out the text on sword knights on page 85. Not only can a sword knight meditate for spells only six hours a day, he can only meditate for spells one day a week. Sword knights can have large reserves of spells if they need them, but they are not priests and do not have easy access to spells.

Sword knights are granted spells from the same spheres as priests of Kiri-Jolith (see page 86), but they do not get the priests' granted powers.

**On page 116 of DRAGON issue #174, there is a photo of a displacer-beast miniature with four legs. Now, the cover of the *Monstrous Compendium Volume One* shows a displacer beast with six legs. However, the artwork in the displacer beast entry in the same volume shows the creature with four legs, while the text in the entry says a displacer beast has six legs. Well, which is it—four legs or six?**

The DM has final say on this matter, not that it really makes any difference;—displacer beasts can get around on four legs at least as well as they can on six. Nevertheless, the text in the *Monstrous Compendium* is the official and definitive authority on this matter, so displacer beasts officially have six legs, not four. I suspect that the both the artist who did the *Monstrous Compendium* cover painting and the designer who wrote the text looked at the displacer beast illustration in the original Monster Manual that showed the creature with six legs. The interior artist for the *Monstrous Compendium* probably didn't read the text before finishing the art, and the figure sculptor probably worked from the interior illustration and presumably didn't read the text either.

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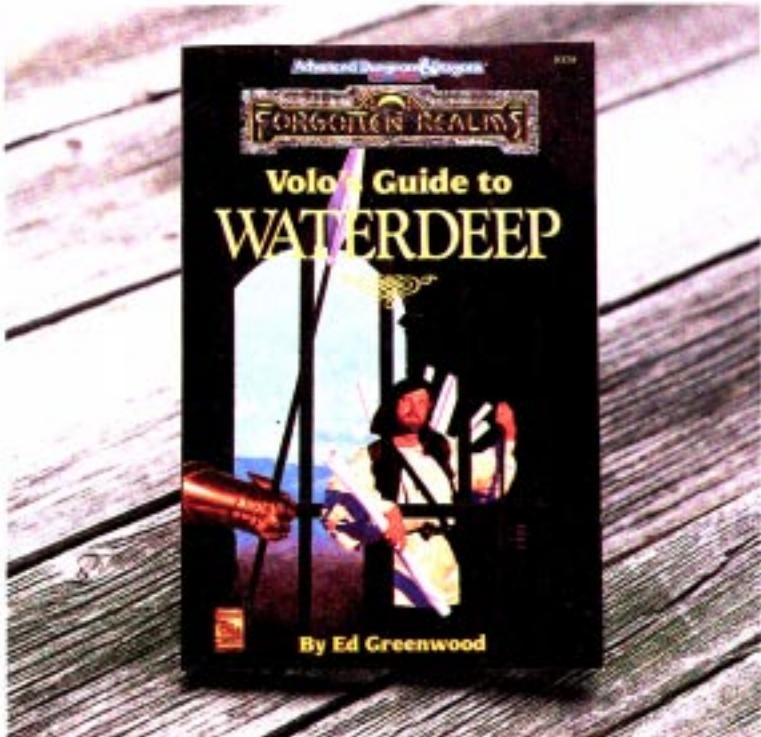
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# The Game Wizards

## Volo goes to town



Since the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting first appeared in the pages of this magazine (long before it was unleashed in print as a full-blown campaign world), readers have been asking for details of Waterdeep, the fabled City of Splendors. We've tried to comply but have been hampered by two things: First, it's a *big* place, with a lot of lives, deeds, and details to be covered; and second, Elminster likes less-crowded locales.

"When I walk, I occasionally like to see a tree or a blade of grass," he said with some asperity, when I questioned him about it. "Oh, I drank at many a Waterdhavian tavern in my younger days—four hundred winters back and more—but it was a smaller, wilder, happier place then I try to avoid it these days—how d'ye think ye'd feel, if every laughing lass ye remember has been bones and dust long years past, and all the places ye liked gone?"

Point taken; we all miss places that have changed since we were young, swallowed up in the endless rush of progress I thought for a bit, then asked Elminster if he'd recommend anyone else as a guide to Waterdeep. He fixed me with a cold eye and said Khelben, Laeral, Mirt, and Durnan were all too busy for such foolishness, and he'd trust none else as guides to the Waterdeep of today.

I remembered something he'd said about Volo (back when Jeff Grubb was assem-

bling the bits and pieces of Realmslore for the FORGOTTEN REALMS® *Adventures* sourcebook), then asked if the far-traveled Volo could be persuaded to be my guide. Elminster snorted, and said I'd have trouble stopping him, not persuading him, but I should not trust a word that came out of his mouth or pen. Summoning all my base cunning (and the aid of home cooking), I suggested Elminster contact Volo—and after the traveler handed us a manuscript, El would provide corrections behind his back, so to speak.

Surprisingly, the Old Mage agreed, and the result is *Volo's Guide to Waterdeep* (TSR Product #9379). When he read the many parchment rolls Volo gave him, Elminster told me not to throw away the sourcebook we'd compiled together (FR1 *Waterdeep and the North*) quite yet—and added that Volo was a "young fop, who'll have to be lucky indeed to see sufficient seasons to gather enough wits to become an old fool." He did arrange for me to meet with Volo, however.

When I told Volo what the Old Mage had said about him, he merely inclined his head, raised a glass of sparkling Waterdhavian blue wine, stared into it thoughtfully, and said, "He sounds like my mother. I wonder if they're related?"

I saw what Elminster meant about Volo being foolish and foppish, but he also possesses a keen eye and an endless en-

thusiasm for seeing new places and things. I asked him to tell folk why they should buy his guidebook. Here, twisted into understandable English, is the result. The words that follow are Volo's, more or less.

Volothamp Geddarm at your service, gentlefolk. Well met, and fair the weather. I've been places and seen things, and my guide will tell you all the first-time traveler needs to know about Waterdeep. Oh, there's plenty I had to leave out, and it'd take me 10 years more to learn even half of what the City of Splendors has to offer. I've learned some very interesting things since I finished the guide, too—but more about them later. Hmm, excellent wine, this—just one of the little-known things that awaits in Waterdeep.

I suppose I should sell some books. Well, want to know how the Three Pearls Night club got its name? What it feels like, to dance in the Moon Sphere? What taverns in Waterdeep to stay out of—unless you want to get into a fight or dabble in shady business? You'll find it all in my guide, along with a whisper or two about where the halflings hang out, where the folk are handsomest, which inns are the most expensive—and which are the best.

My handy numerical system rates inns by the bed and taverns by the tankard—and awards daggers to alleyways according to how dangerous they are. Shops and other, less-wholesome establishments and local sights are extensively covered, too, though rating systems would not be appropriate, given the differing tastes of travelers. A differing number of coins next to each entry indicates the relative expense of availing oneself of its goods or services.

I tell you something of Waterdeep's most famous hauntings, too, and where curses or monsters are most likely to lurk. Want to know how Jester's Court and Sighing Maiden's Walk got their names? Where you can rent a luxurious villa that most Waterdhavians have never seen, secluded and yet mere steps away from the bustling heart of the city? Want to know which noble houses give the best parties (that an outsider can get invited to, or arrive uninvited at—and expect to leave alive)? It's all in my guide and, as they say much more.

I spent some time in Waterdeep after I finished the guide, preparing for my next project (more on that later), and learned some of the daily delights of the city. Don't miss the hot cheese-and-bacon tarts served every morning by Mother Jatha (her shop's in Dock Ward, on Shrimp Alley just across from the mouth of Pressbow Lane)! A copper each, and a greasy but heavenly meal to start the day. If you wait until it's daylight, you won't have to shove for a place in line among the dockworkers. But don't tarry too long—by highsun, they're all gone, and she then bakes only the sweet tarts Waterdeep is famous for (the ones my friend, Aurora, sells in her *Whole Realms Catalog*—highly recommended, by

the way).

I've also found skewers of smoked flat-fish and eel sold from street braziers in Dock Ward to be delicious (two coppers each). The vendor at the corner of Wharf and Spices Streets makes particularly generous ones.

One morning when I was up in Sea Ward visiting temples, I found a new shop had just opened on the northeast corner of Westwall Street and Grimwald's Way: Velatha's Delights. Velatha is a short, elven woman with white hair that sweeps the ground behind her as she walks, and (though her dresses make it hard to be sure) I think she has a white tail and a mane of hair down her back, too! Whatever her ancestry, she makes griddle-cakes dripping with butter and laden with cream, as well as cold rolls to be carried away and eaten later: cylindrical pastries stuffed with chopped nuts and berries. I've enjoyed many cups of hot mulled cider there (two coppers each) with my cakes (one silver for a heaping plate, and all the extra servings you want, with free cinnamon rolls on the sideboard). The cold rolls are a copper each—a bit pricey, but they keep their tart flavor after a day riding in one's hip pouch in the city streets, and that's worth a little extra.

Please don't get the idea that all I've thought about is my gullet these past few rides. No, I'm preparing for a journey that

may be long and dangerous indeed. Yes, I'll tell you all about it later. I've found a hidden place of great interest to adventurers, called the Silent Shield. Well, actually, a friend of mine showed it to me, because I'd never have found it by myself (because of her profession, I can identify this friend only as "Lady Rogue"). It's in North Ward, on the south side of Horn Street, four buildings east of its meeting with Tower March.

The Silent Shield is named for its secrecy. It offers secure, private storage of items or folk who are trying to hide, including adventurers or their diseased, sick, wounded, or dead companions. (Corpses are kept on ice. The others are tended carefully by the proprietors.) They don't offer shelter to obviously monstrous beings ("We don't do mind flayers—drow, maybe," one of the owners told me), but a lot of human adventurers owe their lives to this establishment.

Two sisters, Sambrynn and Ansilvra Wynkwinter, run the Silent Shield and rule a staff of grizzled ex-adventurers of various races, classes, and ages. The sisters are in turn watched over and advised by a family ghost: the spirit of their great-grandfather, Feldrin Wynkwinter. Feldrin (a warrior and adventurer in life, I'm told) spies on clients and those who approach the Shield, and has been known to attack would-be thieves. He's especially fond of

appearing suddenly in front of intruders climbing onto the roof, to startle them into falling to the street below!

The Shield also procures gear for adventurers who want to stay hidden, and can sharpen swords and repair armor with great speed (usually within the day for the latter, and within the hour for the former). Prices are high and must be paid up front. Expect a day—meals and drink included—without any errands to cost 10 gp for a healthy, hiding adventurer, and 20 gp for one who must be tended. There are extra charges for errands or services, and for dealing with contagious or dangerous clients. Service is quick and unfailingly discreet.

There's another thing I'd better tell you about the Shield: It's home to some sort of being—a monster, or undead, or a curse, or magical being (I haven't been able to find out its origin) called the Floating Helm. The Helm is just that: an old, heavy helm that can fly, of the sort worn by human knights twice as tall and four times as wide and heavy as me. It drifts about, quite empty, roaming the rooms and extensive cellars of the Shield (and the streets nearby at night, as well as the sewer connections to the Shield cellars at all times of night or day), and it is a formidable opponent. It bangs against metal things to sound alarms, can ram intruders, and has the ability to telekinetic metal objects near it, using these as missiles against intruders. Watch your step.

Umm, the wine's about gone, and I've talked enough. Ah, I promised to tell you of my next project, that long and dangerous journey I spoke of. Well, I plan to write another guide, and accordingly I'll soon be leaving on a tour of the Sword Coast North, where good inns may be crucial to survival, not merely sources of comfort to the weary traveler. Everlund, Silverymoon, Neverwinter—grand places all, I've been told. See you there!

#### Campaign notes

**The Floating Helm:** INT 16; AL LN; AC 2; MV Fl 14 (A); HD 4 + 12; hp 44; THAC0 17; #AT 2 (ram); Dmg 1d4 + 1 × 2; SA telekinetic metal: 20' spherical range, can't tear free held objects, but can slow MV by 2 for armored beings, cause metal or largely metal weapons to be wielded at -1 on attack rolls, and can hurl one weapon for their normal damage per round, in addition to the Helm's own ramming attacks (small metal tools and objects do 1d4 missile damage, and larger ones do 1d6 or 1d8, up to an upper lifting limit of chair-sized or man-sized metal assemblies); SD magic missiles and all lightning attacks heal the Helm by their usual damage, rather than harming it, and the Helm has 90' infravision; MR 76% (0% against magic missiles and electrical magic); SZ S (human-sized helm); ML 20; XP 3,000. Ω

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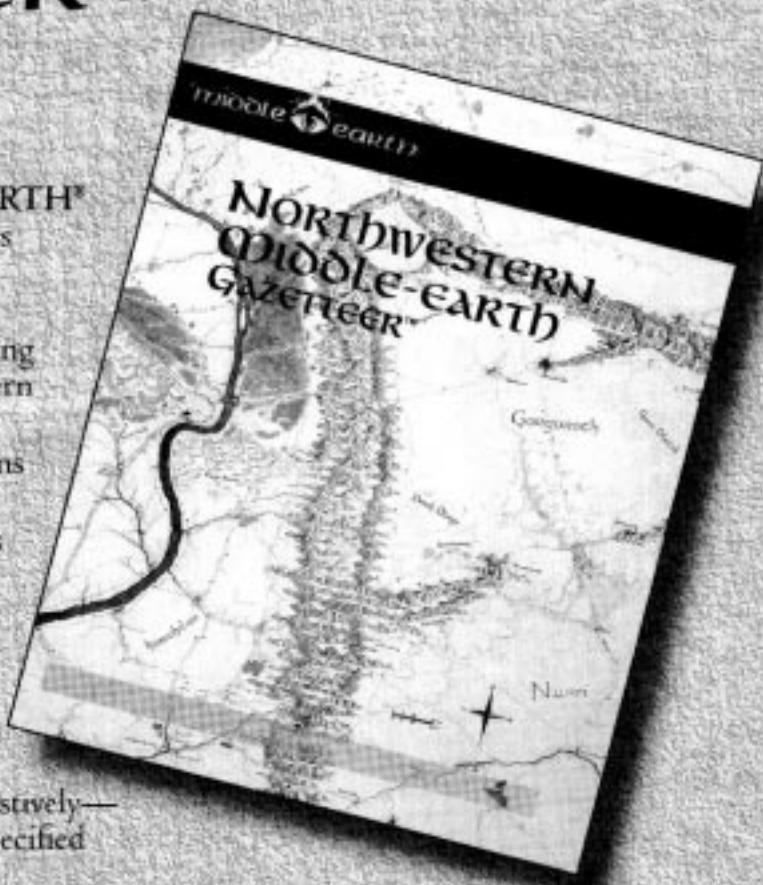
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# Sounds of Wonder & Delight

Musical and magical instruments for the AL-QADIM™ setting

by Jeff Grubb

Artwork by Steve Beck

We were in the garden, exchanging tales in the shadow of the large storm bell. I had just said, "And the rawun played upon her qanun as she spun the story—" when my companion interrupted.

"It is interesting," said my companion, "that your bards always use the qanun. Are there no other instruments in the Land of Fate?"

I had to confess that there might be, but they were unknown to me.

"Ah," said my companion, "then listen and be made wise in this matter," and proceeded to tell me this which I now tell you, both of historical instruments of the Middle East, and those unique to the Land of Fate.

## Stringed instruments

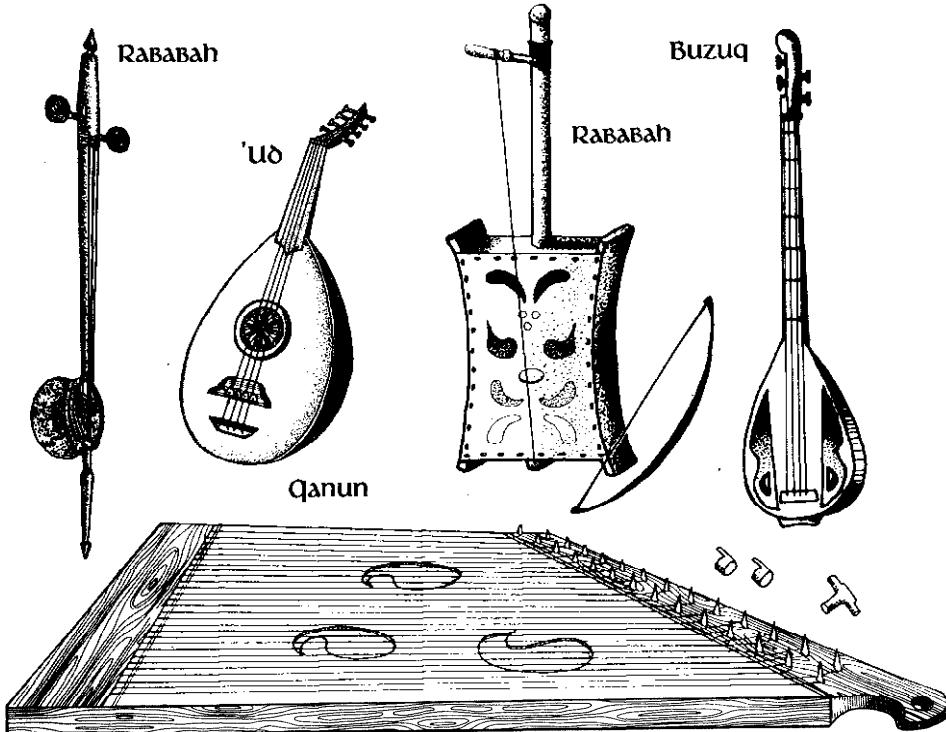
The Zakharan equivalent of the guitar or lute is the *buzuq*, an instrument with metallic strings and a long fretted neck. The *buzuq* is found throughout the southern Land of Fate, and with the 'ud and the qanun is the instrument of choice of wandering bards.

The *jawzah* is a spike-fiddle with four strings, played with a bow made of horse-hair. The soundbox of the *jawzah* is a hollowed coconut, and as such the instrument is most common among sailors of the Golden Gulf and their ports of call.

The *rababah* is the string instrument of choice of the al-Badia, the desert tribesmen. The instrument consists of a rectangular frame covered with horse or goat hide. From this soundbox rises a thin neck, upon which a single string is attached to a moveable post. The post is moved as the string is played with a horse-hair bow. The resulting music is the melodic, continuous drone familiar to Arabian music.

The *qanun* is the zither of the Land of Fate, a trapezoidal box with 24 to 36 courses, each course consisting of three wound strings made of gut, or for the most valuable types, magically strengthened silk. These strings are not strummed; the performer uses a set of hooked rings worn on each thumb and index finger to pluck the strings. The *qanun* is a large, fairly portable instrument and is used in the bazaars and suqs throughout the Land of Fate.

The *santur* is a hammer dulcimer, similar in appearance to the *qanun*. However, the *santur* uses single strings made of



metal instead of triple-stringed courses, and is played with metal hammers as opposed to being plucked. The santur is most popular within the Pearl Cities, and for that reason, if no other, its use is frowned upon within the Pantheon Lands.

The '*ud*' is found throughout the Burning World, characterized by its pear-shaped body and thick, fretless neck. The common '*ud*' has five doubled strings, though those found along the Free Cities have a sixth string located above the normal five.

It is played with a pick made of horn or the shaft of an eagle or roc feather. The '*ud*' is similar to the guitar, and as such, is a favorite among wandering bards. Those made in the land of the Crowded Sea have their bodies fashioned from the shells of great turtles, but in general they are made of hard wood giving the instrument a hearty timbre. The '*ud*' is sometimes called *amir al-tarab* or "the prince of enchantment" for its rich tone.

## Wind instruments

The *nafir* is a long metal trumpet, used primarily along the northern coast and the Free Cities as a signalling device. The mamluks of Qudra make extensive use of this device for sending orders into the field. It is less common in the south.

The *mijayrah* is a simple reed recorder, easily crafted and used by both townsmen and the al-Badia of the desert. It has a limited range but a breathy, ornate tone. The performer often hums while playing the *nafir*.

The *mitbiq* is a double-clarinet consisting of two reed tubes, each fitted with a smaller tube slit along its length to vibrate and produce the tone. The *mitbiq* is played using circular breathing to produce a continuous tone.

The *mizwid* is the Zakharan equivalent of the bagpipe, a double-reeded clarinet attached to a large hide bag. Its name means "food pouch," and it may have descended from this common item. The *mizwid* produces a continuous, droning sound against which the main melody is played on the holes of the flute-like tube.

The *nay* is an arabian flute made of dried and shellacked reed and other thin, tough grasses. The performer blows across the opening, while finger-holes along the length provide a range of two octaves. The *nay* produces a breathy, expressive tone and is called in the major cities *amir al-harab*, "the prince of the wild wastes." In reality, it is almost totally an instrument used by the city-dwelling al-Hadhar, though its ghostly, windlike sound does create the feeling of the open desert.

## Percussion instruments

The *darbukkah* is a vase-shaped drum, wider at the top and base, usually two-feet high. The performer sits or kneels before the drum to use it, but there are great *darbukkah* used in the Ruined Kingdoms and the Isle of the Elephant which are up to 4' tall and either used by standing

drummers or mounted on the side of elephants in the fashion of elephant drums. *Darbukkah* are usually carved of hard wood such as mahogany, intricately fashioned by master craftsmen, and the drums' heads are made of the tanned skins of jungle creatures.

*Elephant drums* are even larger *darbukkah*, up to 6' high, which are mounted in pairs on the sides of elephants (or occasionally camels) and struck with large mallets. Used with large military units, the elephant drums are best known for their use in the parades of the Mad Caliph of the Isle of the Elephant.

On a smaller scale, the *jahlah* is a clay pot played with both hands, or filled with small stones and used as rattle. The *jahlah* is used by fishermen and pearl divers in the southeastern Land of Fate, as it made with easily obtained materials.

The *naqqarah* is a small drum worn at the side, held by a thong running over the shoulder. It is made of fired clay with a hide head, and played with sticks. The *naqqarah* is used by messengers and criers of small businesses.

The *qaraqib* are a set of metal clackers used by dancers in the same manner as castanets. Two sets are worn on each hand. A scurrilous rumor says that some fellowships of holy slayers can communicate information to their minions by the rhythms of these clackers. Whether it is true or not is unknown, but their use is forbidden within the Pantheon cities.

The *qas'ah baladi* are large kettle-drums made of fired and glazed clay and covered with resilient hides, and in some cases metal hammered to its ultimate thinness. They are used in the north by the mam-

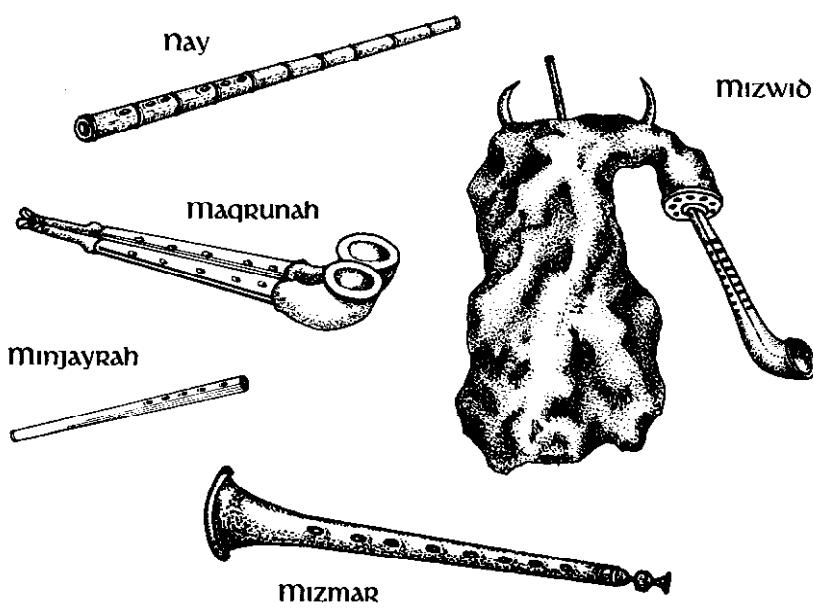
luks of the Free Cities, and occasionally in larger cities such as Hiyal and Huzuz to fanfare important announcements. They are not portable.

The *riqq* is the familiar tambourine adorned with metal plates, *sajat* (q.v.), or bells to accentuate its use. The *riqq* is often used by dancers to set their own tempos. A smaller version, know as the *daff* is used by the tribesmen of the Furrowed Mountains.

The *sajat* are a set of finger-tambourines used by dancers to accentuate their movements. A dancer using a larger ensemble as accompaniment will use the *sajat* or *riqq* to set the tempo.

*Storm bells* and *storm gongs* are the largest instruments in the Land of Fate. They are large metal cylinders or plates that are struck with great force by cloth-bound slabs of wood. The smallest can be carried in a cart drawn by a team of oxen; the largest are permanent fixtures. *Storm bells* are used as fanfares to gather people for pronouncements in the larger cities, but their true purpose is in the settled oases of the desert. The sound of the bells carries for miles, even in high winds, and can be used for guidance by travelers caught in desert sandstorms. Similar bells and gongs have been positioned along dangerous reefs, to be rung to warn sailors of their peril.

The *tabl* is a small double-sided drum used throughout the Land of Fate and is played with cloth-covered sticks or with bare hands. Each side is covered with horsehide or goatskin, but the hides of more exotic beasts are sometimes used. Among the pearl fishermen of the Pearl Cities these drums are called *mirwas*.



Large double-sided drums are known as *tabl baladi*.

## How instruments are used

The traditional rawun or storyteller favors those instruments that allow her to keep her mouth free to import words of wisdom and stirring tales to the masses. For this reason, the stringed instruments such as the buzuq, the qanun, and the 'ud are preferred by wandering bards. Among those that come from the desert tribes, the rababah is the most common instrument of choice.

More prosperous (and more settled) storytellers may gather together an orchestra as back-up to their tales. This group is known as a *takht*, meaning "platform," referring to the raised level the players are seated upon. Usually the 'ud, the qanun, the riqq, the nay, and a spike rababah are used in these groups.

Dancers and acrobatic performers prefer percussion instruments, and favor the sajat, riqq, or the qaraqib (usually played by the dancer). For more successful dancers, a wind instrument such as the nay would be used, but in these cases the dancer would still set the rhythm using percussion instruments.

Lastly, there is much music in the Land of Fate that relies on no instrumentation beyond the human voice and hands. Choral chanting is common throughout the area and is particularly popular in the Pantheon Cities. Song and intricate hand-clapping can be found throughout the High Desert and enjoys a popular following even in the larger cities.

Music is considered a worthy profession throughout the Land of Fate, and musicians are often members of a professional

guild, or *tawa'if*, in their native cities. Note that not all musicians are bards and vice versa, either in the Land of Fate or in the barbarian lands beyond it. In older times, male musicians often played for male audiences, and female musicians for women in the harim, but with the passage of time these lines have blurred. Indeed, the fourth Grand Caliph filled his harim with women judged on the beauty of their voices as well as their courtly manners, and this gathering of enslaved singers, known throughout the land as the *Qaynat*, is legendary as to its beauty, never achieved since.

My companion finished the tale there in the garden in the shadow of the storm bell, and I was made wise in the nature of the music of the Burning World of Zakhara. "But surely," I said, "were there all these wondrous instruments, there must be magical variants of them."

My companion nodded in agreement, and said, "Most wondrous magic there is in the Land of Fate. Listen again and be made wise, for these are the *instruments of the jann*."

## Instruments of the jann

The *instruments of the jann* are a collection of wondrous items that are said to have been crafted by the various genies of the Inner Planes to commemorate the ascension of the jann chieftain of the High Desert. With each new jann chief, each of the genie peoples sets its craftsmen to work to produce a full takht of magical instruments—'ud, nay, rababah, qanun, and riqq. The genies (or their mortal agents) attempt great quests to gather the needed materials for the instruments.

This takht is performed for the chiefs

ascension by the finest mortal musicians, recruited (voluntarily or not) from throughout the Land of Fate. The music performed is said to be so wondrous that the mortals who perform it and hear it are rendered deaf for the next 10 years for their troubles (saving throw vs. spells applicable). The genies reward those who perform with great treasures—gems and jewelry worth 10-60,000 gp value, and leave them in the desert to find their own way home. The instruments are kept by the ruling amir of the High Desert until his death. Then the instruments are scattered to the four winds, as custom demands. Though the amirs of the jann rule longer than their mortal counterparts, they have been ruling their people longer, and it is estimated that there are 20-40 sets of these instruments scattered throughout the Land of Fate.

*The nay of the djinn:* The nay provided by the djinn of the plane of elemental Air looks like any other reed flute. However, the reeds are metallic, the perfect specimens of a gold-bearing plant that only survives in the terrible mountains of the Yak-Men. Many brave djinn (and many more of their mortal agents) lost their lives recovering these wondrous metallic plants, called golden wands in the vernacular.

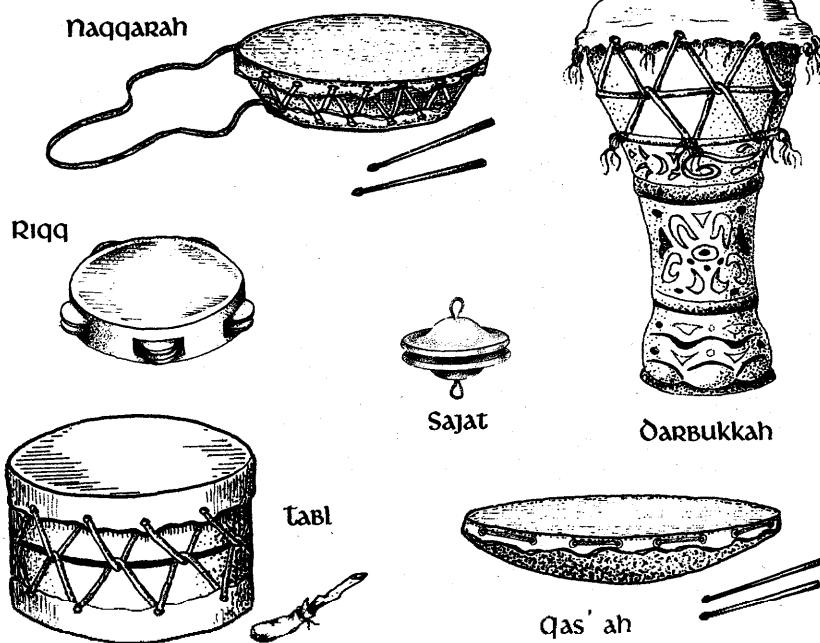
*The nay of the djinn* allows the player to cast an *enthall* spell, as the second-level priest spell of the same name. Duration is as long as the nay is played, but the spell ends when the player stops or is interrupted. The nay may be used in this manner once per day, twice per day if the user is a bard (rawun kit or otherwise).

A bard also may use the nay to "whistle up the wind": to summon an air elemental of 8 HD, as the fifth-level spell *conjure elemental*, once per week. The elemental is under the control of the user for as long as the nay is played, but if the music is interrupted, the elemental will return to its home plane and not attack its former controller.

*The riqq of the efreet:* The riqq of the efreet is a tambourine of unbreakable steel. Its cymbals are made of crushed coins from the ruined empires of Nog and Kadar, and its surface is wrapped with the hide of a white camel. These are forged in the heart of a volcano to produce the reddish riqq, and terrible runes are painted in the inside the tambourine's head.

*The riqq of the efreet* allows the player to cast *hold person*, as the second-level priest spell, by flashing the runes on the inside of the tambourine at the target(s). This may be done once per day, twice per day if it is used by a bard.

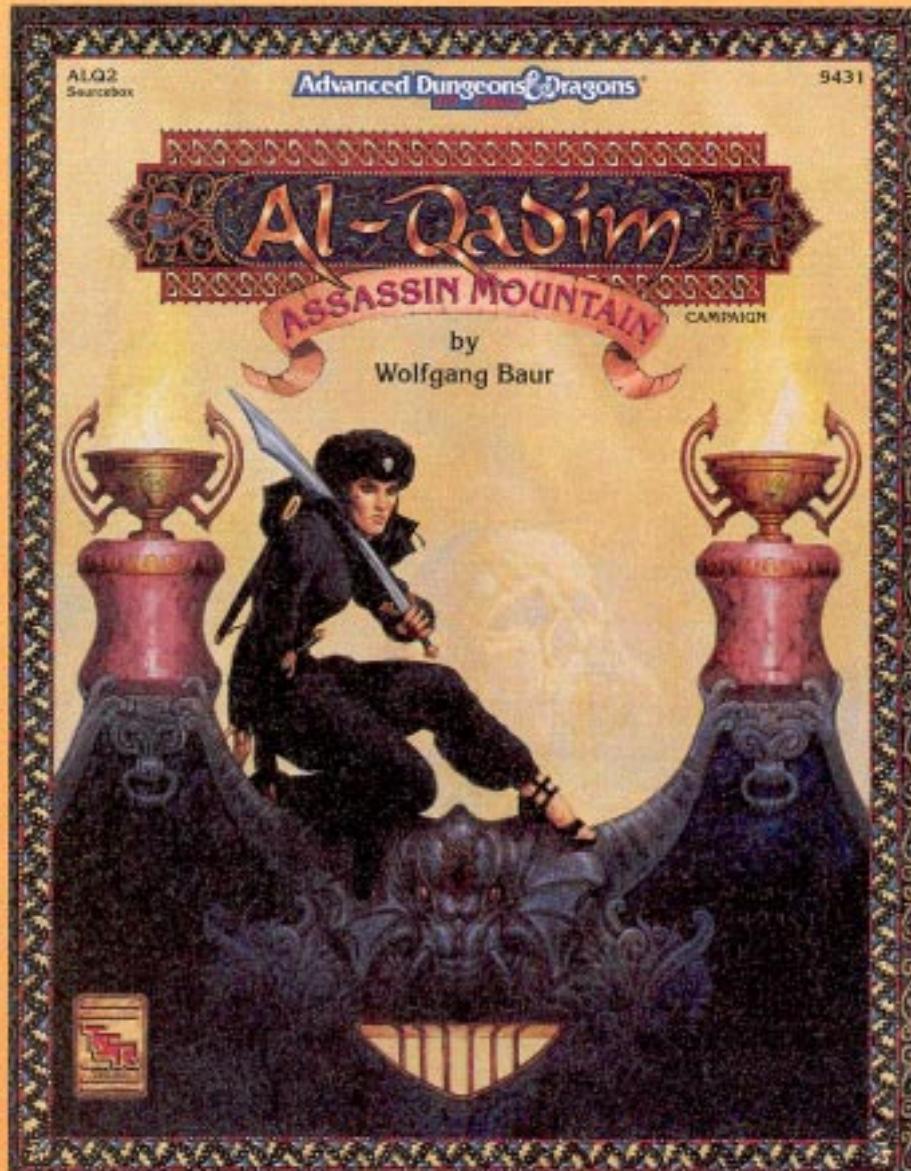
A bard also may use the riqq to "fan the flames": to summon a fire elemental of 8 HD, as above, once per week. The elemental is under the control of the user for as long as the riqq is played, and if the music stopped or interrupted, the elemental will return to the plane of elemental Fire and not attack its former controller. A



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large amount of fire (such as bonfire) is required to use this ability.

*The 'ud of the marids:* The 'ud of the marids is solid white, its hardwood surfaces covered with thin, ornate carvings of pearl. The soundbox itself is made of a single great pearl, harvested from the largest clam in the deepest part of the Crowded Sea. The marids do not risk their own lives in these endeavors, but instead avail themselves of lesser beings to recover the pearls.

*The 'ud of the marids* allows the bard to cast a powerful *charm person* spell, as the first-level wizard spell, with a -4 penalty on all saving throws against the spell. This spell may be cast once per day, twice per day if the 'ud is used by a bard.

A bard, regardless of kit or origin, may use the 'ud to "raise the waters": to summon a water elemental of 8 HD, as above, once per week. A suitable amount of water, such as a river or lake, must be available to use this ability. The elemental is under total control of the 'ud player, and if the 'ud player stops, the elemental will return to its native plane without harming the bard.

*The rababah of the dao:* The rababah of the dao is constructed of the finest materials. Its bow is made of the hair of the fastest horse in the High Desert, and the circular soundbox is made of the skull of a great roc.

*The rababah of the dao* allows its user to cast an *entangle* spell, as the first-level priest spell of the same name. This operates against any target on sand or soft soil as opposed to those near grass and vines, but the effects of the spell are the same. This spell may be cast once per day, twice per day if the rababah is used by a bard.

A bard also may use the *rababah of the dao* to "shift the earth": to call into being an earth elemental of 8 HD, as above, once per week. The elemental is under the full control of rababah player, such that if the musician stops or is interrupted, the elemental will return to its native plane without attacking the bard.

*The qanun of the spirits:* The qanun is made of the finest mahogany brought from the Isle of the Elephant. Its strings are said to be made of solidified light, though others, report they are made of spun gold, hardened and tightened to the breaking point. Its picks are carved from a single emerald gem.

*The qanun of the spirits* is the most powerful of the five instruments of the jann. When the qanun is played, the player has the effect of the *fire truth*, the first-level wizard spell. Instead of fire, the truth of the speaker's words is determined by the sweetness of the instrument's tone. Untrue statements create sour notes. The spell may be used once per day, twice if the player is a bard.

A bard also may use the qanun to "call the ancestors": to *speak with dead* as the third-level priest spell, and to *animate*

*dead* (as the second-level priest spell), both as if the bard were a 20th-level priest. Each of these abilities may be performed once per week, and the qanun is needed only to cast the spell-like abilities, not to maintain control or contact.

*The takht of the jann:* Each of the instruments of the jann is mildly powerful in its own right, but brought together into a single orchestra, they prove to be an extremely powerful magical combination. If a takht of bards (rawun or otherwise) all wield the *instruments of the jann* under the direction of a single sha'ir, the takht may summon into this plane an army of genies. There will be four units of genies, one of each of the four elemental genie races, and each under the command of a noble genie of the proper race—marid, dao, efreet, and djinn. Each unit will consist of one hundred members of the respective race. It takes an hour for all the troops to arrive and assemble, and if anything interrupts the summoning players, the spell fails and those that have arrived will not be under any control (and likely will be irritated at the sha'ir as well).

If the summoning is successful, these genies will be under the command of the sha'ir directing the takht, and will remain so for an hour and a day (25 hours). During this time they will build, move, and attack at the whim of this sha'ir. They will even fight other genies if so instructed by

the sha'ir. After their time of servitude ends, they will return to their own plane, and will not harm or act against that particular sha'ir for the next 101 years.

This is an incredible amount of power to place at the disposal of a single individual, and a complete set of instruments is only held in the hands of the living Amir of the High Desert. There are stories that a full set has also been collected and is in the hands of the Grand Caliph, but this is unsubstantiated. The genies are very aware of the potential of mortals who acquire a full set, and as such, all genie servitors (including gen and the like) are continually on the lookout for individuals attempting to assemble a full collection of the instruments. Clever fakes, mysterious robberies, and even disappearances of collectors have been reported in legend and tales of those attempting to recreate the takht of the jann.



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# Unique Unicorns

by Michael John Wybo II

Artwork by Ruth Thompson



# A dozen new horned species from the world over

One way to increase the number and range of new creatures in a fantasy campaign world without having to invent entirely new (and sometimes unbelievable) monsters is to develop new versions of an existing monster, giving each one powers not shared by similar species. In this article, unicorns—among the most popular of all fantasy creatures—are so expanded for the AD&D® game.

The AD&D *Monstrous Compendium* entry for the unicorn should be consulted briefly before reading through this material, to see how the basic creature was developed here into 12 new strains. A unicorn, as most gamers know, appears to be a white horse with cloven hooves, a single ivory-colored horn (2'-3' long) growing from its forehead, and, on males, a white beard. For our purpose, the "regular" unicorn is here called a sylvan unicorn. All unicorns, including those described here unless otherwise noted, have the following attributes:

A unicorn can sense enemies at a 240-yard range, moving so silently that foes take a -6 penalty to be surprised. It can kick with its front hooves and thrust with its horn once per round, or it can charge into battle using its horn as a lance. To make this charge, there must be at least 30' of distance between the unicorn and its opponent. Opponents struck by a charging unicorn suffer 3-36 hp damage from impaling. The horn always gains a +2 bonus to hit, regardless of how it is used. Unicorns may not attack with their front hooves in the round they charge.

Once each day, a unicorn can cast a limited *teleport* spell that will take it and any rider it has up to 360 yards away in an instant. Unicorns cannot be magically *charmed* or *held*. They are immune to death spells and make all their saving throws against spells and spell-like powers as if they were wizards of the 11th level. Unicorns are immune to poison.

## Alicorn

An alicorn is exactly like a sylvan unicorn, but with a gnarled and twisted horn.

**Combat:** Alicorns can use three *charm person* spells per day. These spells are cast at the 11th level. Those failing to make their saving throws will fight to the death to protect the alicorn from harm. Alicorns can walk on air as if it were solid, running through the air or galloping a few inches above bodies of water.

**Habitat/Society:** Alicorns are identical in habitat and society to sylvan unicorns. This may account for the fact that the two are often mistakenly classed as being of the same race.

**Ecology:** Alicorns are on good terms with and respect the territories of sylvan unicorns, cunnequines, and faerie unicorns. The alicorn is otherwise identical in ecology to the sylvan unicorn.

## Bay unicorn

Bay unicorns are chestnut-colored, with glowing red eyes.

**Combat:** Bay unicorns (called "pyrocorns" by some sages) can use the following spells each once per day: *burning hands* (from horn), *heat metal*, *pyrotechnics*, *produce flame*, *fireball*, *produce fire*. These spells are cast at the 11th level, with spell effects generally emanating from the horn. Bay unicorns are immune to the effects of fire, heat, and smoke, either magical or mundane.

**Habitat/Society:** Bay unicorns mate once per year, then go their separate ways. The young are protected by their mother until they are six months old, then are left to fend for themselves.

Bay unicorns make their homes in underground labyrinths, caverns, dungeon complexes, mines, and volcanic tunnel passages that do not go deeper than a few hundred feet. They feed upon the fungi and small creatures that can be found in underground areas. They mark the walls of their subterranean territory in the same way that sylvan unicorns mark trees in their forests. Rangers may be confused to find a unicorn's mark deep beneath the earth, but they will be even more surprised to find that the unicorn in question is both evil and omnivorous. Pyrocorns can be ridden by exceptionally evil females who have an affinity for fire magic or who worship a god of fire.

**Ecology:** The horn of a bay unicorn can be used to create potions of *fire breath*. They ferociously attack any trespassers they find in their domains, yet they will not descend into the depths,

## Black unicorn

Black unicorns are glossy jet creatures with completely black eyes. They are sometimes called nightmares, causing confusion with the outer-planes monster (see MC 8, the Outer Planes appendix of the *Monstrous Compendium*).

**Combat:** Because of the magical nature of black unicorns, they can see perfectly out to 300' in the absence of all light, even in the area of effect of a *darkness* spell. Black unicorns cannot well stand any light and thus have a -1 to saving throws against effects that blind or dazzle the eyes. They suffer a -4 to all attack rolls in daylight, being effectively blinded.

Black unicorns continually radiate a *silence, 15' radius* effect. They can cast *darkness, 15' radius* and *invisibility* spells on themselves, three times each per day. Black unicorns can *teleport* in a manner similar to sylvan and other unicorns, but they can only do so in the dark (e.g., on moonless nights or in deep shadows, in unlit rooms, or in *darkness* spells).

The horn of a black unicorn is poisonous; anyone struck by it must make a saving throw vs. poison or be paralyzed.

The paralysis lasts for three days; if the poison is not neutralized by the third day, the victim dies of heart failure.

**Habitat/Society:** Black unicorns have loose family habits similar to the pyrocorns'. They do not mark out any particular territory but continually wander from place to place (often invisibly) causing havoc. They may be ridden by exceptionally evil fighters or thieves of either sex.

**Ecology:** These monsters are extremely evil and have sharp canine teeth. They are carnivorous creatures who prefer to eat their meat while it is still alive. A black unicorn's horn can be used to brew extremely virulent poisons that kill their imbibers within one round if a saving throw vs. poison is failed or cause paralysis for 1-3 hours if the save is successful.

## Brown unicorn

Brown unicorns are unicorns with light brown body hair and dark-brown tails, horns, and eyes.

**Combat:** Brown unicorns communicate with each other mentally. They have magical (nonpsionic) *telepathy* (applicable only to all other brown unicorns within range) and *ESP* (which reaches all other beings, one person per round) out to a 60' radius; both powers operate continuously. They can cast a special *sleep* spell three times per day; this spell is exactly like the wizard spell but it affects at least one creature regardless of level. The spell works normally against creatures of 4+4 HD or less, but creatures of higher levels are allowed a saving throw vs. spells to avoid being put to sleep. Brown unicorns are never surprised, thanks to their mental talents, unless they are attacked at long range by missile fire.

**Habitat/Society:** Brown unicorns ("roanicorns," as some call them) have a herd mentality. Each herd has one stallion and several mares. Stallions mark out their territories by placing a "mental barrier" along the borders of their territories. This beacon alerts other brown unicorns or psionically sensitive creatures that have crossed into the brown unicorn's demesnes, but does not hinder them. Brown unicorns sometimes bury themselves in sand on especially hot desert days. They can be ridden by maidens of any human or demihuman race who are pure of heart.

**Ecology:** These gentle creatures are herbivores that live on desert flowers, cacti, and sparse desert grasses. They can go for up to four days without food or water.

A brown unicorn's horn can be used to manufacture a special sleeping potion. Any character who drinks this potion is placed into suspended animation that is permanent until dispelled. A successful saving throw vs. poison negates this effect.

## Cunnequine

A cunnequine is similar to a sylvan unicorn except that it is more silvery in color than white.

**Combat:** A cunnequine has all the abilities of a sylvan unicorn, though it has one other attack form. Once per day, the cunnequine can affect one creature as if he had donned a *helm of opposite alignment*. The victim must be touched by the cunnequine's horn without damage, and it is allowed a saving throw vs. spells at +2 to avoid this effect.

A cunnequine can also affect undead and conjured creatures as if it were a priest of 11th level turning undead. A turn effect causes conjured creatures to be dismissed to their home plane.

**Habitat/Society:** Cunnequines are identical in habitat and society to sylvan unicorns, except that they are more lawful in nature. Cunnequines are thus more likely to attack hunters and predators who harm living things native to the cunnequine's territory.

**Ecology:** Cunnequines are identical in ecology to sylvan unicorns.

## Faerie unicorn

Faerie unicorns have a green tint to their white fur and horns, and all have bright green eyes. They are smaller than other unicorns (3-4' tall).

**Combat:** Faerie unicorns or faerie steeds are seldom seen. This is because they can blend into their backgrounds in a manner similar to a chameleon. They can do this at will, with results identical to a creature wearing a *cloak of elvenkind*. They share a sylvan unicorn's ability to move silently in natural terrain. Once per day, a faerie unicorn can cast the following spells: *charm person or mammal*, and *animal summoning I, II, and III* (four spells total).

**Habitat/Society:** Faerie unicorns are similar in habitat and society to sylvan unicorns. Their neutral nature causes them to shun outside contact; it is very unlikely that a faerie steed will attack hunters or predators in its territory. However, wanton or senseless destruction of the flora and fauna in a faerie steeds demesnes will raise its ire. Alternately, acts of courage in defense of the same lands often wins the faerie steed's gratitude.

Faerie steeds can be ridden by halflings, gnomes, elves, or other faerie denizens of either sex who prove themselves worthy.

**Ecology:** Faerie unicorns are identical in ecology to sylvan unicorns. Once every 100 years or so, a faerie steed will shed its horn to grow a new one. The horn regrows in 3-12 days. The discarded horns are prized by elves, because the horns can be crushed to produce the dye used in the manufacture of *cloaks of elvenkind*.

## Gray unicorn

Gray unicorns are light gray unicorns with a gray horn and gray eyes.

**Combat:** Gray unicorns have taken

neutrality to an art form. They emit a field from their bodies that reflects the exact amount of damage done to them in physical combat back upon their enemies. Because their enemies must be in physical contact with the gray unicorns to receive this backlash, the gray unicorns are only rarely attacked by carnivores, who learn to leave them alone after one attack; smarter beings use missile fire, but they might still be attacked if the gray unicorns *teleport* and charge them. Gray unicorns will usually not retaliate unless they are attacked more than once by the same being or are pursued by missile fire.

**Habitat/Society:** Gray unicorns (sometimes called "graycorns") are usually found in herds, each consisting of one stallion and several mares. Gray unicorns can be ridden only by strictly neutral, passive druidic females, either humans or demi-humans.

**Ecology:** Gray unicorns live on the grasslands in subtropical climates. Their horns can be carved and enchanted to produce *rings of spell turning* or can be used in the creation of potions of *invulnerability*.

## Palomino unicorn

Palomino unicorns have white to creamy yellow hair. Their eyes are usually gray to brown in color.

**Combat:** Palomino unicorns (occasionally called "criocorns") can use the following spells each once per day: *ice storm*, *cone of cold*, *chill metal*. These spells are cast at the 11th level of effect. These spell effects generally emanate from the unicorn's horn. Criocorns are immune to the effects of cold and exposure, either magical and mundane.

**Habitat/Society:** Palomino unicorns mate for life, though a few solitary wanderers may be seen. They are found in arctic environments, giving opponents a -6 penalty to their rolls to be surprised in that environment due to coloration (this drops to -2 in other settings, as palomino unicorns will be so unused to non-snowy terrain). Criocorns may be ridden by exceptionally evil females who have an affinity for cold magic or who worship a god of cold.

**Ecology:** Palominos live off anything they can find or kill. They do not mark their territory, but will kill any who trespass. A palomino's horn can be used to create the ink necessary to produce scrolls of *protection from cold*.

## Pinto unicorn

Pinto unicorns are unicorns with patches of differently colored hair distributed randomly upon their hides. They usually have doe-brown eyes, but some have green and some have yellow.

**Combat:** Pinto unicorns (sometimes called "chromacorns") are each able to project a *prismatic spray* from the horns up to five times per day. This spell is cast as an 11th-level wizard. Pintos are also

able to cast an *advanced illusion* three times per day, also at the 11th level of ability; such illusions are usually used to reveal hunters or humanoids by showing what appears to be the pinto unicorn grazing nearby—a ruse to draw missile and spell fire.

**Habitat/Society:** Pinto unicorns live on grasslands in temperate climates. They mate for life and are thus encountered in pairs or families. Pintos do not mark out territories but rather share large expanses of grasslands with other pinto families. They continually wander these grazing lands so that no one area becomes over grazed. Pintos may be ridden by those of either sex who possess a pure heart.

**Ecology:** Pintos are much like sylvan unicorns, fighting with monsters that ravage their lands. A pinto's horn can be used to create potions of *rainbow hues*.

## Sea unicorn

Sea unicorns have three forms. The first form is that of a small whale with a long unicorn's horn, the second is that of a sea horse with the same horn, and the third is that of a unicorn with a blue-white coloration. In all three forms, the unicorn's eyes are deep blue. It takes one round for it to change shape, during which time it cannot attack; all shape-changing must be done while submerged in water.

**Combat:** Aside from being able to switch between its three forms at will, a sea unicorn or narwhal can breathe water in any form. The last form allows the unicorn to breathe air. Narwhals can *control weather* (as per the cleric spell) once per day at the 11th level of ability. The last form can also walk on water at will at normal ground speed.

**Habitat/Society:** Sea unicorns can be found in any body of water larger than a large lake. They are very ordered creatures who carefully cultivate kelp beds to graze on. They generally stay out of conflicts. Narwhals mate for life and have very carefully mapped-out territories. Narwhals can be ridden by sea-elven maidens of pure heart.

**Ecology:** Narwhals feed on the kelp beds that they carefully cultivate. A narwhal's horn can be used to brew potions of *water breathing*.

## Unisus

Unisi are unicorns with pegasi wings, the result of crossbreeding between the two species. A single such creature is called a unisus.

**Combat:** Unisi attack in a manner similar to unicorns. In a dive, a unisus does damage in a manner similar to a unicorn's charge, but it needs only 15' of space to launch the charge, as it relies on its falling momentum for the impact and can also propel itself forward with its wings if running. In such a dive, it can also use its hooves to attack at the same time. All these attacks are at +2 on the attack roll above all other bonuses (including the +2

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## New Unicorns: AD&D® Game Statistics

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CLIMATE:	Temperate	Any	Any	Tropical	Temperate	Temperate
TERRAIN:	Woodlands	Subterranean	Any	Desert	Woodlands	Woodlands
FREQUENCY:	Rare	Rare	Rare	Rare	Rare	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Family	Solitary	Solitary	Herd	Family	Family
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day	Any	Night	Day	Day	Day
DIET:	Herbiv.	Omniv.	Carniv.	Herbiv.	Herbiv.	Herbiv.
INTELLIGENCE:	Average	Low	Average	Very	Average	Average
TREASURE:	X	U	Nil	Nil	X	X × 2
ALIGNMENT:	CG	NE	CE	N	LG	N
NO. APPEARING:	1-6	1	1	1-10	1-6	1-6
ARMOR CLASS:	2	1	2	3	2	2
MOVEMENT:	24	18	24	18	24	30
HIT DICE:	4 + 4	6 + 4	6 + 4	3 + 4	4 + 4	4 + 4
THAC0:	17	15	15	17	17	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3	3	3	3	3	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-6/1-6/1-10	1-6/1-6/1-12	1-8/1-8/2-16	1-4/1-4/1-8	1-6/1-6/1-12	1-6/1-6/1-12
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See text	See text	See text	See text	See text	See text
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See text	See text	See text	See text	See text	See text
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	20%	Nil	30 %	Nil	20%	20%
SIZE:	L		L	L	L	L
MORALE:	Elite	Steady	Champion	Elite	Elite	Champion
XP VALUE:	2,000	2,000	6,000	650	1,400	2,000

	<b>Gray</b>	<b>Palomino</b>	<b>Pinto</b>	<b>Sea</b>	<b>Unisus</b>	<b>Zebracorn</b>
CLIMATE:	Subtropical	Arctic	Temperate	Temperate	Temperate	Tropical
TERRAIN:	Grasslands	Tundra	Grasslands	Oceans	Mountains	Savannah
FREQUENCY:	Rare	Very rare	Rare	Very rare	Very rare	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Herd	Family	Family	Family	Herd	Herd
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day	Day	Day	Any	Day	Day
DIET:	Herbiv.	Omniv.	Herbiv.	Herbiv.	Herbiv.	Herbiv.
INTELLIGENCE:	Average	Low	Average	Very	Average	Average
TREASURE:	Nil	W	X	Nil	Nil	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	N	LE	NG	LN	CG	N
NO. APPEARING:	1-10	1-4	2-5	1-6	1-10	1-10
ARMOR CLASS:	2	1	2	4	3	2
MOVEMENT:	18	24	24	24, Sw 36	24, Fl 48 (B)	24
HIT DICE:	3 + 4	5 + 4	4 + 4	3 + 4	4 + 4	4 + 4
THAC0:	17	15	17	17	17	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3	3	3	3 or 1	3	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-6/1-6/1-10	1-8/1-8/1-10	1-6/1-6/1-12	1-6/1-6/1-12 or 2-16	1-6/1-6/1-12	1-6/1-6/1-12
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See text	See text	See text	See text	See text	See text
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See text	See text	See text	See text	See text	See text
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	10%	Nil	20%	Nil	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	L	L	L	L	L	L
MORALE:	Elite	Elite	Elite	Steady	Steady	Elite
XP VALUE:	1,400	1,400	2,000	650	1,400	975

for the horn), and the hoof attacks do double damage.

**Habitat/Society:** Unisi are identical in habitat and society to pegasi (see the *Monstrous Compendium*). Unisi may be ridden by maidens of any race who are pure at heart.

**Ecology:** Unisi are identical in ecology to pegasi. A unisi's horn can be used to brew potions of *flying*.

### Zebracorn

Zebracorns are tropical unicorns with the black striping of zebras, though they are sleeker and not as stocky. They usually have doe-brown eyes.

**Combat:** A zebracorn can cast a color spray from its horns three times per day. It can also *polymorph* itself into any creature three times a day at will; this power is treated as if it were a *polymorph self* spell cast at the 11th-level of ability.

**Habitat/Society:** Zebracorns live in equatorial savannahs. Each herd generally contains one stallion and several mares. Being nomadic, they roam the savannah so that no one area becomes overgrazed. A zebracorn can be ridden by any being who proves itself friendly, though they can detect evil by touch and will immediately attack evil beings. They are unpredictable and willful (some say pig-headed).

**Ecology:** Zebracorns eat the coarse dry grass of the savannah. They generally stay out of fights that don't concern them, but one never knows what a zebracorn will do. The horn of a zebracorn can be used to brew potions of *polymorph self*. When in *polymorphed* form, a zebracorn generally takes the form of a muscular, hairless, black human with a warrior's bearing. Though the human-zebracorn carries no weapons, he or she can easily use any weapon it has ever seen a human use. Ω

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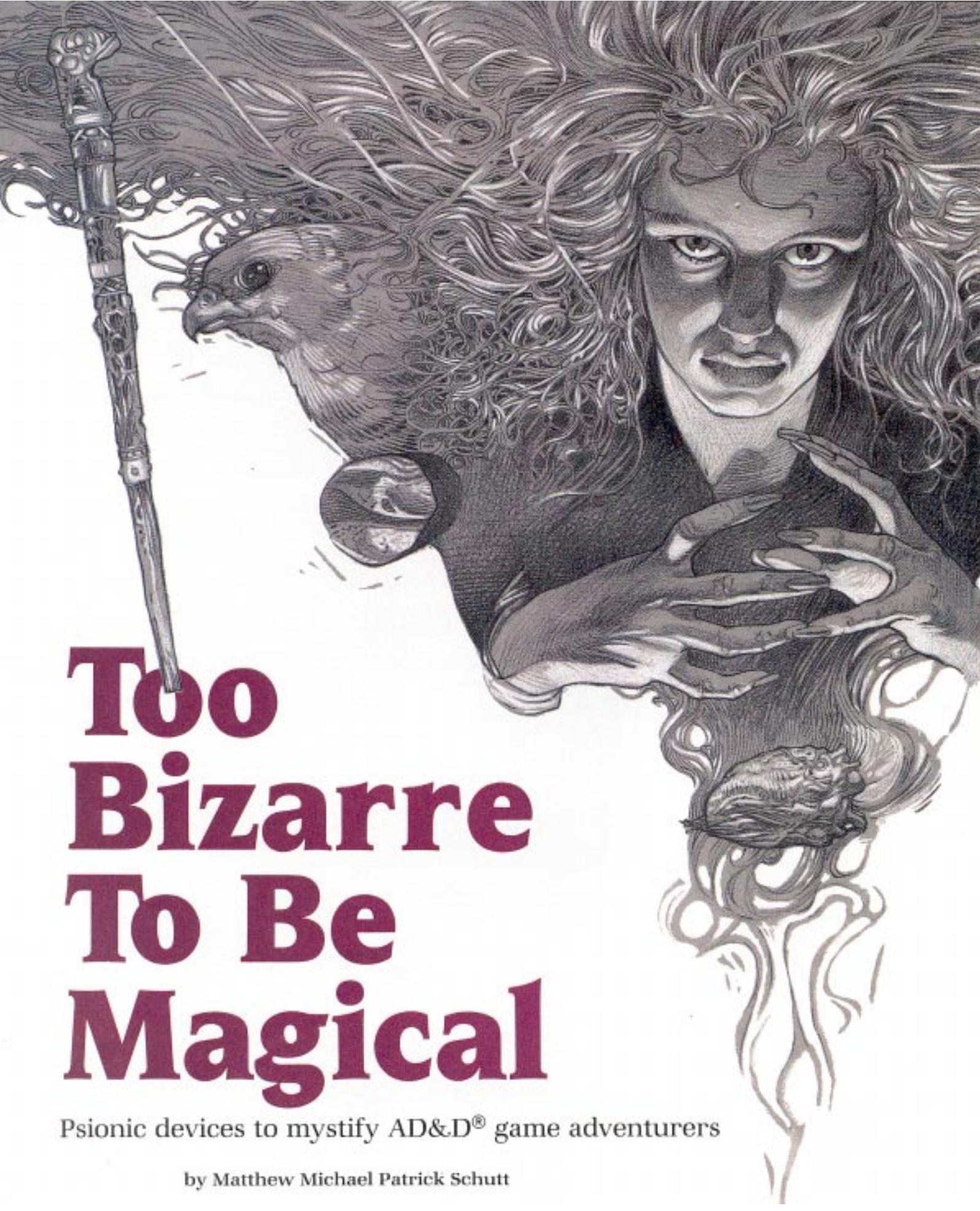
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# Too Bizarre To Be Magical

Psionic devices to mystify AD&D® game adventurers

by Matthew Michael Patrick Schutt



The metapsionic science Empower, found on pages 93-94 of *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, opened up a whole new can of worms concerning treasure troves. In addition to magical items and holy relics, a Dungeon Master can now introduce psionic devices to unsuspecting player characters if psionics are used in the campaign. Naturally, a psionicist may use Empower on any personal devices, but in the course of adventuring that character may find psionic devices not of his own making.

The DM should treat these devices much like magical artifacts. Thus, psionic devices are rarely encountered, and each is unique. A device should be placed in a campaign only after careful consideration by the DM of all its consequences. Though a device might not have a special purpose to fulfill, it does have a personality and should be role-played by the DM almost as a true member of the party. Psionic devices are not something a PC puts in a backpack, then forgets about until an application of its power is required.

Note that alignment contradictions can also cause problems. In these cases, psionic devices behave like intelligent magical weapons (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, "Weapons Versus Characters," page 188).

Can a psionic device be used only by psionicists? What about wild talents? Un-

fortunately, the description of Empower is rather vague on this point. I would say that since a device has its own source of PSPs, anyone can attempt to use one, but alignment and personality scores would dictate if a PC could control it.

The following are a few devices to send a campaign off into bizarre new directions.

**Devan's Force of Nature** PSPs: 44  
Alignment: LG Intelligence: 16  
Discipline: Psychokinesis Ego: 11

*Lore:* Histories tell of a noble, pure-hearted wizard of vast power whose entire vocation in life was to ensure the safety and improve the quality of life in his home village. The wizard was named Devan and the village Houmfort. Reputedly, Devan could divert the course of rivers, summon or calm winds, shove aside entire hillsides, and cause fire to behave in any fashion suitable to his whim. The extent of his powers is debatable, but it is agreed that his magical talents were generally manipulations of elemental matter.

However, the man known as Devan fooled both the histories and the citizens of Houmfort. Devan was not a mage; he couldn't have cast a spell to save his own life. His powers were actually psionic in nature. Like most villages of that time, Houmfort feared and reviled psionics and would not accept its use, even if used beneficially. Thus, Devan created a small (but necessary) deceit; assuming the role of a wizard. Most of Houmfort's population was half-educated and wouldn't know the difference anyway, but Devan still had quite a time putting up a mage's front-mouthing incantations, making outrageous gestures, and involving arcane materials whenever he invoked a psychic discipline. It was easier for him to carry wands, staves, and other devices to create the illusion of magical prowess, since these items usually required only a single com-

mand word to operate.

Keeping that in mind, Devan soon learned the metapsionic discipline Empower. With this he could create all sorts of psionic devices with which to improve his guise as a wizard (not to mention help his role as sole defender of Houmfort). His most famous and powerful device was the Force of Nature, a staff with which Devan could control the very elements.

*Description:* The Force of Nature is actually a staff of thunder & lightning, which anyone can use. It is stout quarter-staff of exceptionally well-carved bronze-wood, bound with iron set with silver rivets. Devan painted many weird symbols on it in bright blue paint to make it appear more mystical.

In addition to its magical powers, this staff has the following psionic disciplines: Animate Stone, Control Flames, Control Water, Control Wind, and Telekinesis. Control Water gives the user the ability to animate water. This power behaves exactly as Control Fire, except the water creature can survive for as long as PSPs are spent to maintain it. The only damage the creature can inflict is possible suffocation by engulfment (rules for drowning are found in the *Player's Handbook*, page 122, "Holding Your Breath"). A character can escape engulfment by making a successful Strength check on 1d20 at a -4 penalty. Animate Stone works exactly like Animate Object, but only stone and earth will be affected (no ability modifier applies).

*Personality:* Being both lawful and good, it would seem that the Force of Nature would get along well with its possessor, but this isn't likely to be the case. The staff wishes to remain in one area, preferably a village or small town, in order to defend it from bandits, destructive weather, supernatural denizens, and other hazards. It won't see the point in traipsing about in an unknown wilderness or dungeon need-

lessly looking for trouble. If owned by an adventurer, it complains bitterly every time it is taken beyond the limits of civilization, away from its true calling. In addition, the Force will not appreciate the use of its magical powers. The staff has no control over these magical abilities and considers them the "dark side" of its personality. Overuse of the magic abilities results in the staff halting the use of its psionic powers.

**Fleshcrawler** PSPs: 60  
Alignment: CN Intelligence: 12  
Discipline: Psychometabolism Ego: 15

*Lore:* Who knows? If asked, the thing will claim to be an artifact from the nether realms of the Nine Hells, the favorite piece of jewelry of an alien godling, and an extradimensional creature bent on world domination—all in the same breath! If the possessor gets too curious about the object's history, he probably won't want to keep it.

*Description:* The Fleshcrawler is a small, multicolored stone, though the color design is varied, bizarre, and nauseating. Anyone who touches the stone has the overwhelming urge to swallow it, but unless the individual is chaotic neutral, he will find that urge repulsive and will resist. Chaotic-neutral people still have a choice as to whether they will swallow it, but they are able to do so. Those who do swallow the stone are granted the use of its psionic powers, which include Ectoplasmic Form, Expansion, Life Draining, Metamorphosis, Reduction, and Shadow-form.

*Personality:* This object is obsessed with change. The universe, it believes, is in constant flux, changing from one form to the next with no regard to the laws that philosophers would attribute it. The object fulfills its desire to inflict change through the flesh of its possessor, using its psionic powers. The owner (imbiber, actually) of the Fleshcrawler may demand the object transform her into shapes useful to the current circumstances, but only if the owner allows the device a certain creative freedom, such as experimenting with new bodies and such. Otherwise, the possessor may lose control of her own body.

**Ynilgeira's Instrument of Pain and Misery** PSPs: 64  
Alignment: CE Intelligence: 13  
Discipline: Metapsionics Ego: 16

*Lore:* Actually, Ynilgeira (OON-eel-gey-rah) is not the psionicist who created this device, but rather is the name of a wild and ruthless barbarian warlord. Legends say that Ynilgeira was born of the simultaneous mating of a goat, bear, rooster, and human. Then, to intensify his already crazed personality, the warlord was possessed by the vengeful spirits of his ancestors, numbering into the thousands. Civilization trembled at the very name of Ynilgeira, as the barbarian made it his life's vocation to spread fear, loathing, and misery among the cities of "pretty ones"

All bad things must come to an end, however, and Ynilgeira was slain while combating a force of paladins. To insure that civilized folk would still suffer from the malevolent spirit of Ynilgeira, his tribal witch-priestess (actually a psionicist) took the heart from Ynilgeira's body and, after a ritual of several days, summoned forth the spirit of the deceased warlord, placed it within the mummified organ, and imbued it with immortality.

*Description:* The Instrument of Pain and Misery is a fist-sized lump of human cardiac muscle tissue, not even recognizable as a heart until its powers are used. Whenever Psychic Drain or Cannibalize are used, the muscle of the Instrument swells with blood and begins to rhythmically beat as it gains psionic strength. The greater the number of PSPs it absorbs, the greater the amount of blood that oozes from the heart.

The Instrument has the following powers: Aura Alteration, Cannibalize, Psychic Clone, Psychic Drain, Psychic Surgery, and Ultrablast. Note that the Cannibalize power is usable only by the Instrument itself; in fact, it drains Constitution from its possessor to convert into PSPs. The Instrument attempts this only in *extremis* and usually requires that the object win a personality conflict with its possessor.

Psychic Drain and Psychic Surgery also work differently for the Instrument. To drain a victim, the object needs only to spend the initial cost, then win a personality conflict with that victim. Sleeping victims can be drained automatically (no need for personality conflict). Psychic Surgery is always used to harm a subject by instigating phobias, aversions, idiocy, comas, seizures, and so on. Again, a successful personality conflict is needed to use this power.

Ultrablast can only be used after the Instrument has gained extra PSPs either through Psychic Drain or Cannibalize. If this power is used to successfully and permanently negate the psionic powers of a victim, then the Instrument gains those powers for 2d4 months! After this period, the powers revert to their original owner.

*Personality:* Obviously, the device does not contain the soul of Ynilgeira, but it still has the same purpose: to perpetrate chaos and mayhem. Its actions are always destructive or deceitful, and are usually aimed at causing problems within a city. Its favorite tactic is to "find" itself in the possession of someone of high social standing, such as a cardinal, duke, judge, or even a charismatic demagogue. Then, just as the individual addresses the congregation or audience, the Instrument begins to drain the will and endurance of members of the audience, like some psychic vampire. After the object has assumed enough PSPs, it will unleash its powers upon the congregation, one at a time, causing fears, hatreds, or obsessions to surface. Those with no applicable dislikes or fancies are

subjected to a fit of catatonia. These emotions reach the point of insanity. Soon these people go out into the city again, causing havoc and grief because of their new-found maladies.

**Malgovich's Portrait** PSPs: 80  
Alignment: LE Intelligence: 15  
Discipline: Telepathy Ego: 20

*Lore:* Baron Vlidmaro Malgovich was a brutish, vain, and ruthless despot who ruled his tiny country through fear, force, and not a little psychic manipulation, for the Baron was a master psionicist. As Malgovich began to grow old, he decided to create a legacy, a piece of himself that would live on to carry the family name. Not trusting his worthless sons to retain even his small kingdom, the baron created a psionic device with which to aid (i.e., manipulate) his descendants in ruling his kingdom. The kingdom fell anyway, but the device still exists, floating from one political realm to the next, hatching plots and puppeteering those in power to venerate the memory of its creator.

*Description:* Malgovich, being the conceited devil that he was, chose to use Empower on a painting of himself. The portrait is a masterful rendering in oils of the baron's handsome visage. It has a vast army of telepathic powers, including Mindlink, Probe, Attraction, Contact, Empathy, ESP False Sensory Input, Phobia Amplification, and Telempathic Projection.

*Personality:* Like Ynilgeira's Instrument, the portrait uses its talents to cause mischief in civilized places, but it is much more subtle in its manipulations. The portrait likes to use Attraction on any powerful political figures that it discovers, which usually results in the politician buying, stealing, or otherwise acquiring the painting. Over the next few days, the device uses its telepathy to investigate the psyche of its owner. When it feels ready, the portrait uses False Sensory Input and other powers to produce hallucinations in the mind of the politician. The person afflicted with these illusions may see them as omens, warnings, prophecies, or whatever, but they invariably affect the manner in which the politician rules. In this way, the portrait affects the courses of nations and has immense fun doing so.

**Man-a-ken** PSPs: 68  
Alignment: NE Intelligence: 15  
Discipline: Telepathy Ego: 17

*Lore:* Constructed by a monstrously powerful telepath many centuries ago, the Mana-ken has passed through history discreetly, ignoring the meanderings of civilization to concentrate on those individuals holding true power: wizards. The Mana-ken is invariably found in the possession of a wicked sorcerer.

*Description:* The mana-ken appears as a ragged, torn-up children's doll. This little toy, however, has enough psychic power and discontent to cause the strongest-willed paladin to perform savage and

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irresponsible acts. The doll's powers resemble voodoo. The possessor of the doll manipulates it physically, which causes a victim to act in a like manner. Also, stabbing the doll with needles can cause a victim great pain. In order for a victim to be contacted, a personal item or a lock of hair of the victim must be placed in the dolls stuffing.

The Mana-ken's powers are Domination, Inflict Pain, Mindlink, Post-Hypnotic Suggestion, Sight Link, Sound Link, and Switch Personality. Switch Personality can be used to switch a victim's body with the possessor or with the doll itself. (Giving a psionic device its own body to play with is scary indeed!)

*Personality:* Of the evil psionic devices described here, the Mana-ken is the one most likely to work with its possessor, though that owner may not realize that he is being manipulated even as he dominates other beings. The Mana-ken's favorite practice is to dominate the minds of dragons, fiends, and other powerful creatures (although parties of adventurers are fun, too). Wizards find this a viable option to charm person and demand spells. When the wizard's uses of the doll grow too self-serving (and they invariably do), the Mana-ken lets any previously dominated beasties vent their rage on the hapless spell-caster.

**Tawnwater** PSPs: 60  
Alignment: CG Intelligence: 12  
Discipline: Psychometabolism Ego: 15

*Lore:* A psionically endowed princess gave her suitor, a valiant ranger, a living falcon as an engagement gift. Not only was the animal incredibly smart and well-trained, it was also empowered with psionics, allowing its owner to run faster, lift heavy objects, and heal from wounds at a faster pace, not to mention giving him all the abilities of a falcon. Centuries later, the ranger is long since dead and buried, but the falcon is still alive and well, having been granted immortality as a side effect of its psychometabolic powers. The creature's name is Tawnwater.

*Description:* Tawnwater, though hundreds of years old, appears as a spry, young falcon of a golden hue: AC 6; MV Fl 33 (B); HD 1; hp 5; #AT 3; Dmg 1-2/1-2/1; THAC0 19; AL NG. Tawnwater's owner has access to the following powers: Adrenaline Control, Animal Affinity, Body Control, Cell Adjustment, Enhanced Strength, Heightened Senses, and Mind Over Body. Regardless of the possessor's aura, Tawnwater's Animal Affinity will always grant the abilities of a falcon.

*Personality:* Tawnwater is an easygoing, free-spirited psionic device, more alive than any other device noted here. It travels about, unrestricted by such needs as sleep, food, water, rest, or even air. Although thrilled at being exempted from the mundane life of a normal falcon, Tawnwater still requires companionship, and so intermittently seeks out one lady or gentleman who will give it the appropriate

amount of affection. The person chosen is usually a wanderer or adventurer, as Tawnwater does not like to settle in one area. When that person does finally perish, Tawnwater will be seen at the funeral for a brief, grieving moment, then it will fly away into the blue, off to seek new experiences, new sights and pleasures.

**Pennison's Light of Truth** PSPs: 52  
Alignment: N Intelligence: 13  
Discipline: Clairsentient Ego: 13

*Lore:* Pennison was a psionicist obsessed with the concept of reality. He felt that humans and other races had created too many social systems to live by, when those systems prevented a person from experiencing life. Governments, religions, guilds, and other social machines don't exist, according to the edicts of Pennison; they are illusions that have fooled entire populations into believing in them. This holds true for all systems of social behavior. In his quest to "shatter the social guises of the Demihumanities," this psionicist-philosopher created the Shining Light of Truth.

*Description:* The Shining Light is a palm-sized lens crafted from a huge, flawless diamond, cut by the sharp edge of Pennison's willpower. The device's powers come into play whenever a person looks through the lens at a creature, object, or area. Those powers are Aura Sight, Know Direction, Know Location, Poison Sense, Radial Navigation, and Spirit Sense. Note that Aura Sight also allows the Shining Light to detect the alignment of psionic devices and intelligent magic weapons, also gaining a rough estimate of power (slight, moderate, high, or massive).

*Personality:* It's tough to play neutrals, even as NPCs. With the Shining Light, it might be easier because it is an unemotional object, but the DM must still take care that the object shows no favoritism toward chaos, law, good, or evil. The device does not have to be used by a true neutral, but its possessor should show a strong desire, if not an obsession, with "getting to the heart of the matter."

**Slumbering Ferry of al-Cogia** PSPs: 8  
Alignment: NG Intelligence: 11  
Discipline: Psychoporation Ego: 2

*Lore:* Millenia ago, in a presently extinct Arabian-like land, there lived a ruler named al-Cogia Bisnigar Raschid. Although this ruler already had more than a dozen wives, he fell in love with Dhalaja, the daughter of a merchant-prince, who would not allow his only child to marry al-Cogia because of the merchant's racial prejudice. Raschid, a psionicist, crafted a psionic device that would allow Dhalaja to visit the good al-Cogia in her dreams, no matter where her travels in the merchant caravan might take her.

*Description:* The Slumbering Ferry is an incense bowl crafted of the precious mixture of silver, gold, platinum, and mercury. Whenever incense is burned in the bowl

and a person falls asleep while breathing the sweet fumes, the device's sole power, Dream Travel, is triggered. This special teleportation has no maximum range, but the effect is only temporary. After a number of hours equal to half the possessor's Wisdom score, the user fades away, returning to the location of the bowl.

*Personality:* Although the Slumbering Ferry is the least powerful of the devices described here, it is also one of the most intriguing. Its ego is not well-developed, but it will never allow its one power to be used for sinister or selfish purposes. The power score receives a +4 bonus whenever the device is used to visit a loved one.

**The Arbiter** PSPs: 80  
Alignment: LN Intelligence: 15  
Discipline: Psychokinesis Ego: 20

*Lore:* Just as Pennison was insanely infatuated with the neutrality of reality, the creator of the Arbiter has an unhealthy obsession with law and order. Created only months ago, the Arbiter is still in possession of its creator, a 12th-level psionicist named Mynwer Tarrontoch.

*Description:* The Arbiter is a black silk robe of finest quality. Anyone who wears it is imbued with a vast array of psychokinetic powers: Ballistic Attack, Control Body, Detonate, Disintegrate, Inertial Barrier, Levitation, Project Force, and Telekinesis.

*Personality:* The Arbiter is still too new to have developed any definable personality of its own, so still relies on Mynwer's for its patterns of behavior. Mynwer is a relentless enforcer of the letter of the law in whatever realm he inhabits. He will react with an explosive lecture and possibly even violence if he witnesses any law being broken, whether it be the most universal more or the most insignificant tort.



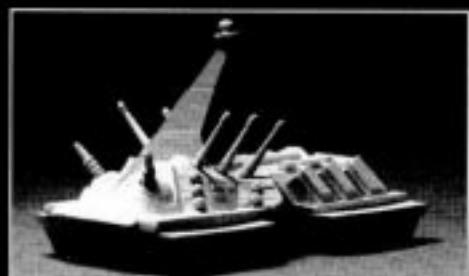
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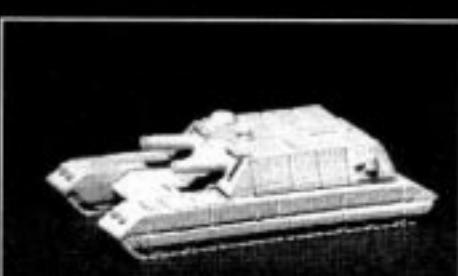
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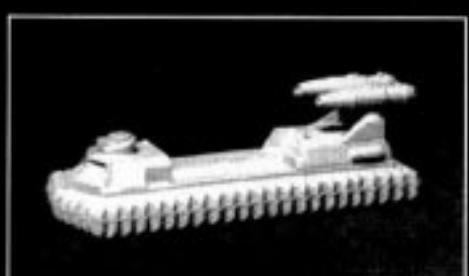
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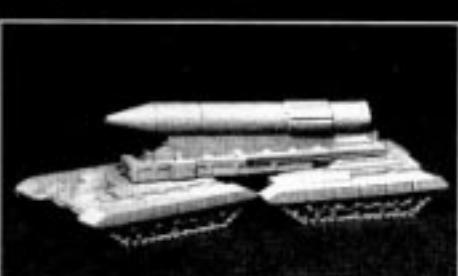
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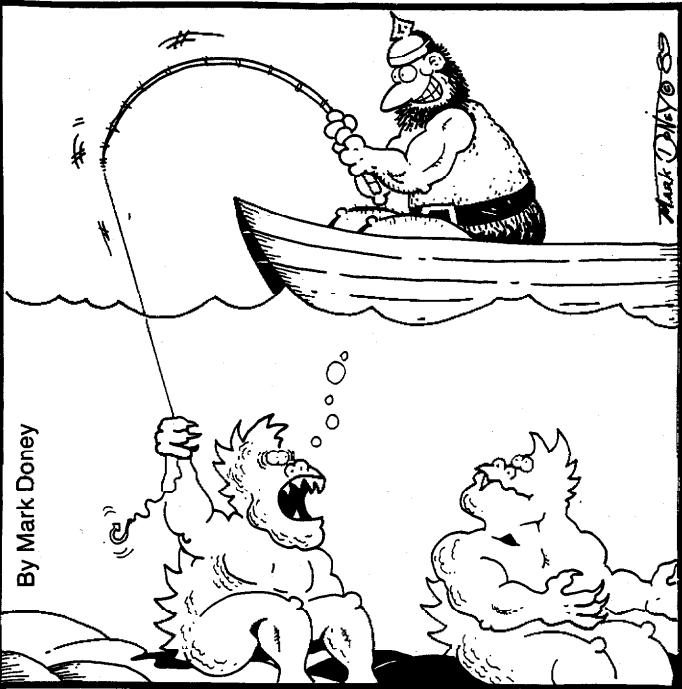
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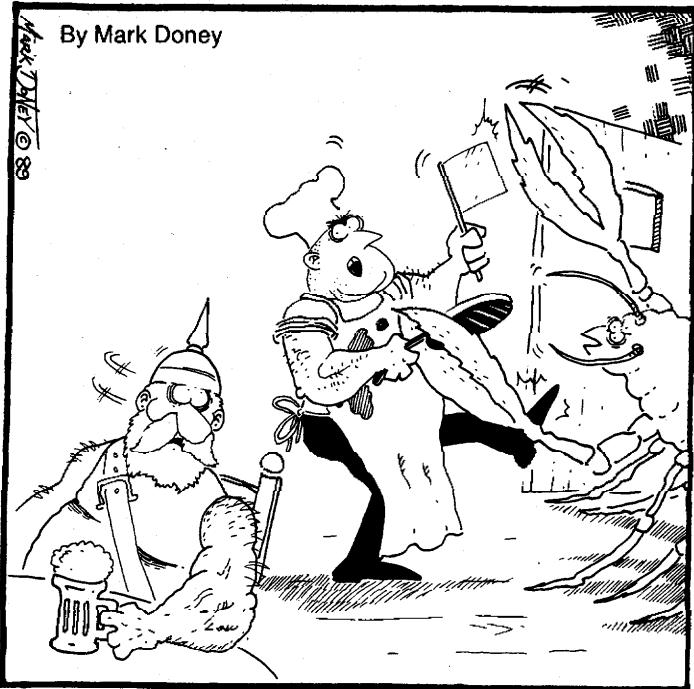


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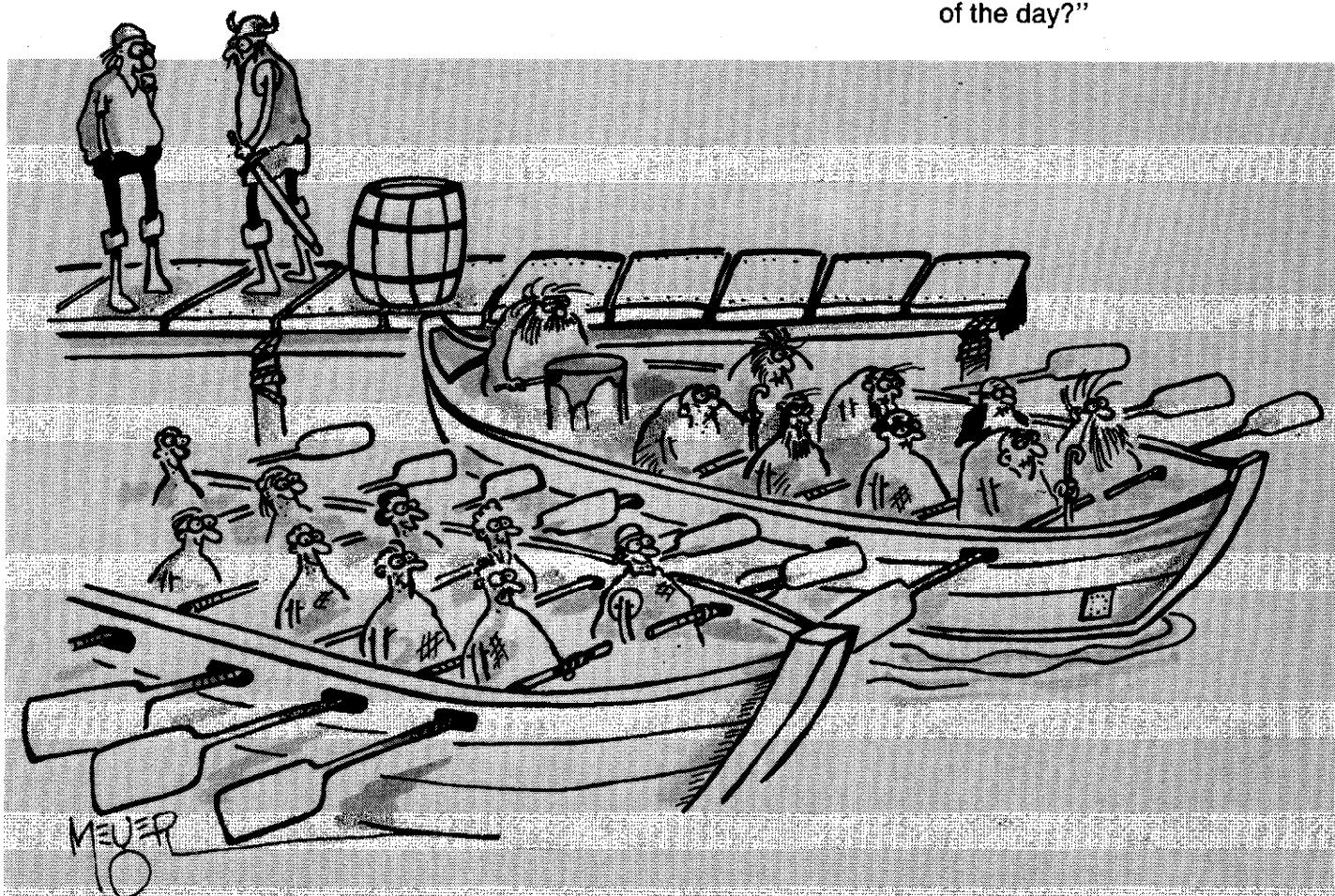
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"I think it's a big one!"



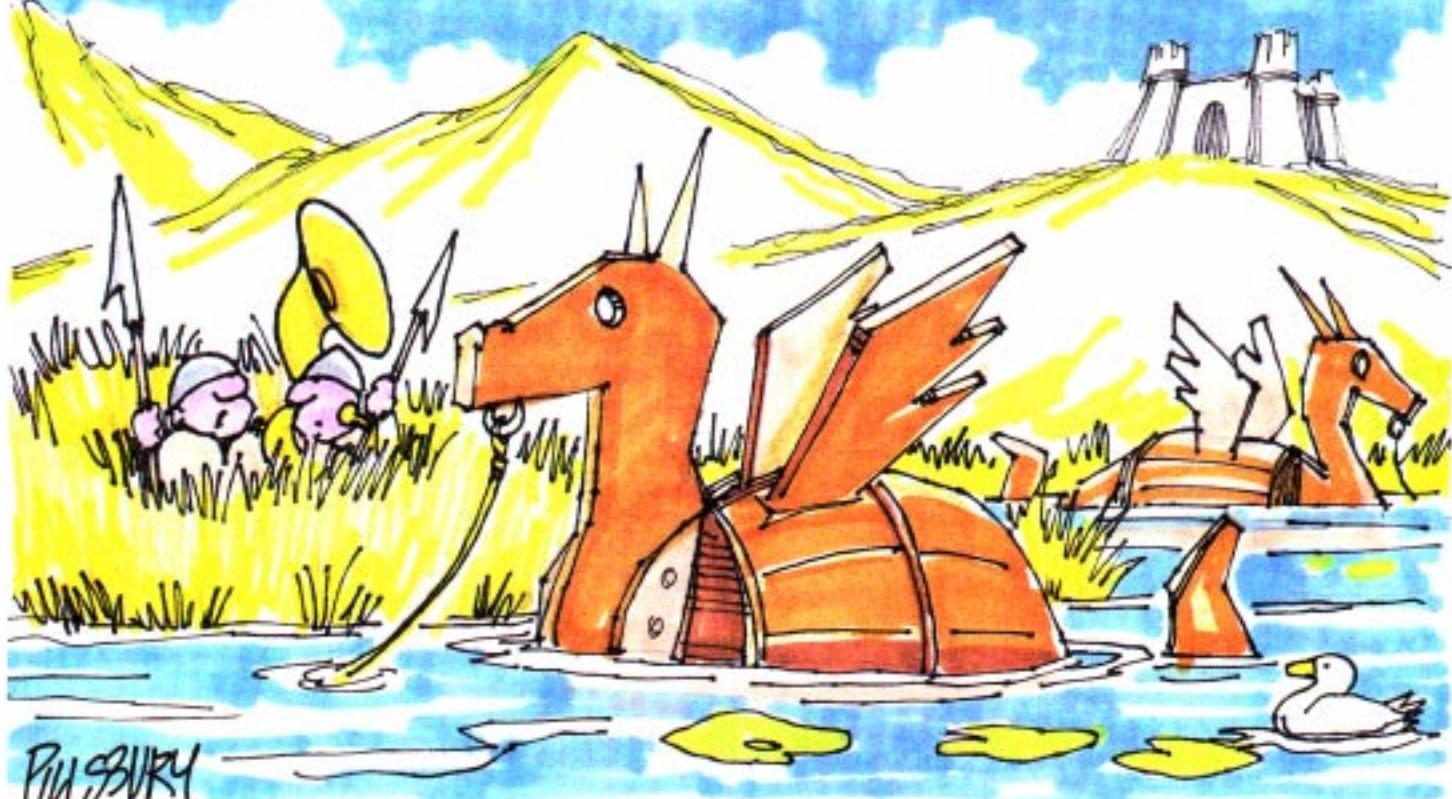
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YAMARA. UNDISCIPLINED.



UH-OH

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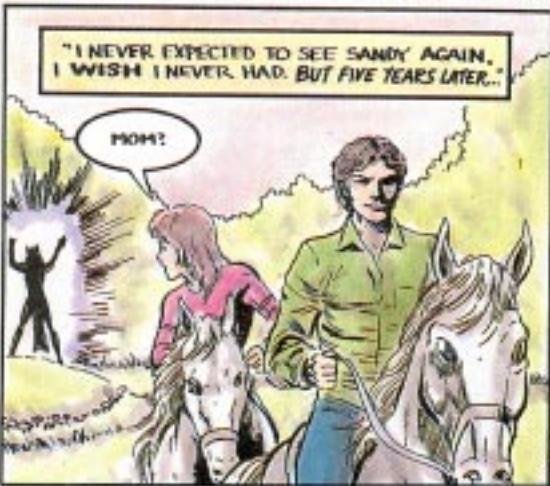
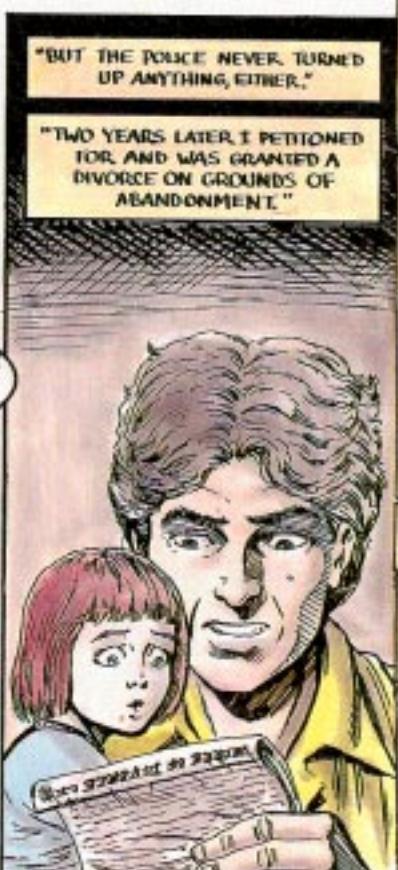
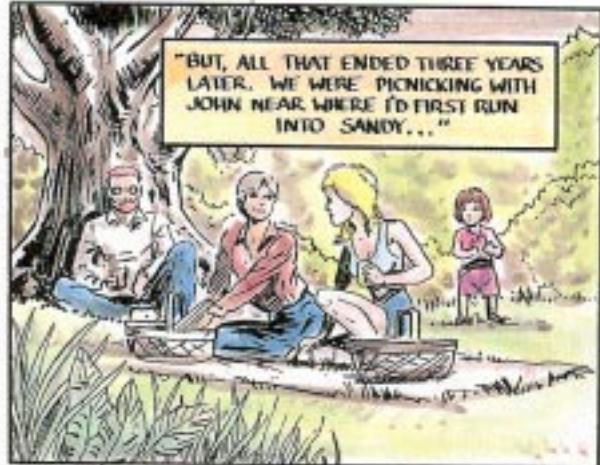
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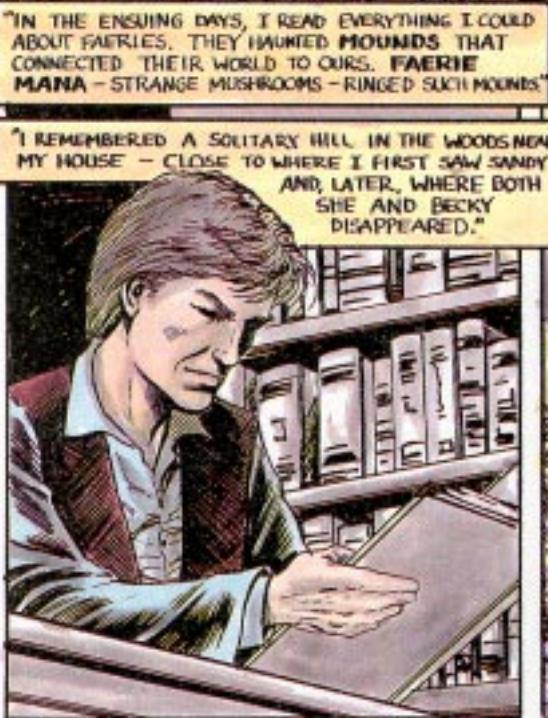
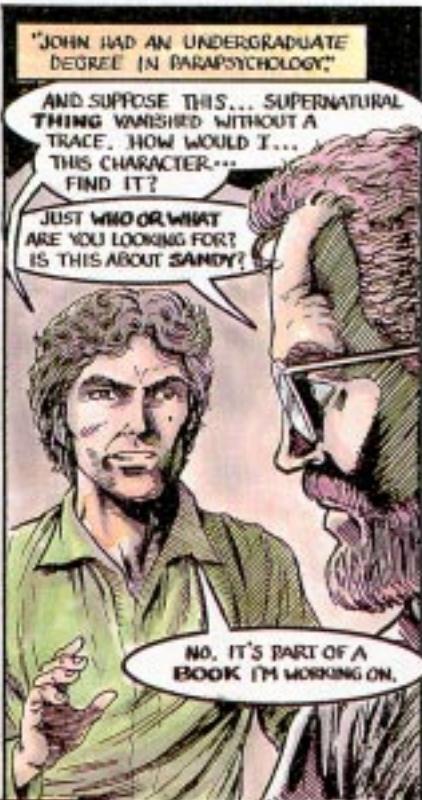
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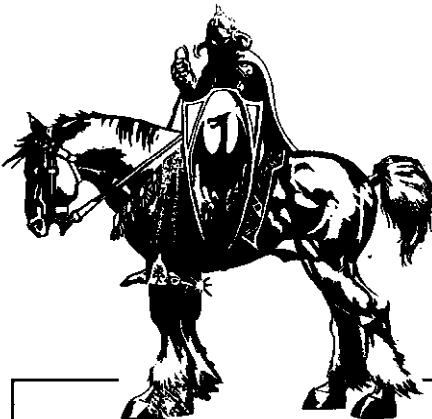
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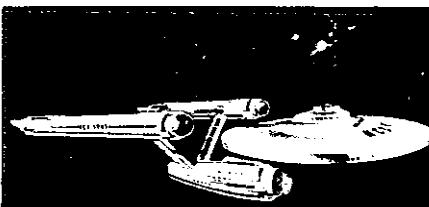
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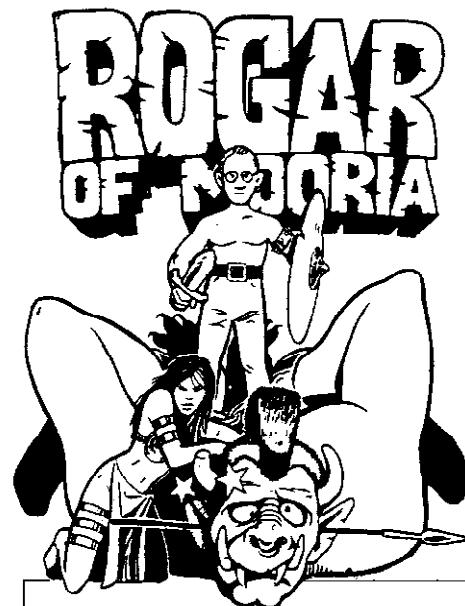
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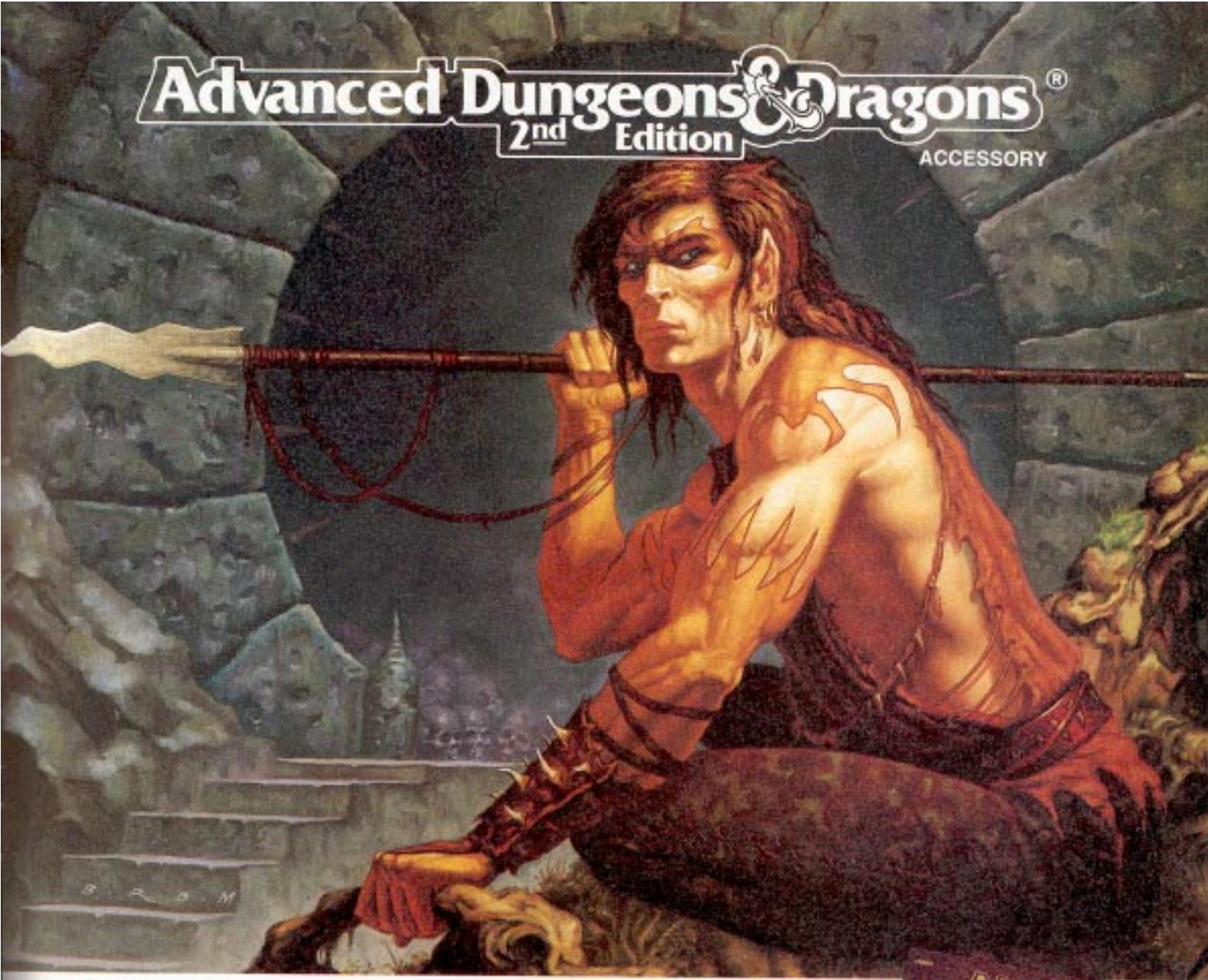
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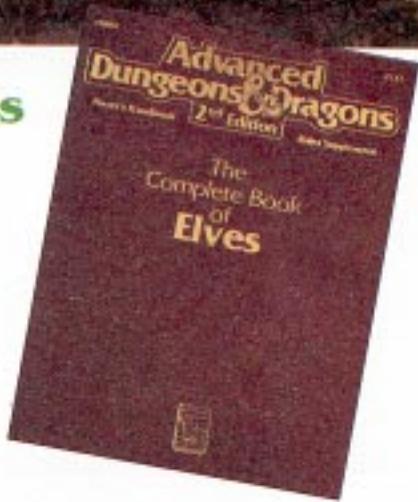
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# Through the LOOKING Glasses

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Infestor and Brain Worm (Fortress Figures)

## Aliens and demons are a-knocking at your door

This month, we have a full house of miniatures. I want to thank Sam White for his work on the Gate Crashers miniature kit, Chris Osburn for the Ultimate ATV, and Tina Druce-Hoffman for the Amazon Attack Chariots. Now, on to our reviews.

### Reviews

#### **Fortress Figures**

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#### **XL12 Infestor**

The Infestor is a 25mm lead figure that stands about 54 mm from top to bottom and is about 10 mm wide at the chest. The

23-mm circular base has a rough, molded surface resembling earth and grass. The creature's claws extend over the forward edge of the base, while his back pin claws extend over the rear edge. The kit comes in two parts, the body and the arms.

The body is of a biped that looks like a cross between the Alien and an armored lizard. The figure has three-toed feet and

#### **Miniatures' product ratings**

*	Poor
**	Below average
***	Average
****	Above average
*****	Excellent

is cast walking forward. It has the ribbed belly of a dragon, and its upper body is covered in overlapping plates. The arm assembly fits into a groove on the back. The webbed hands have four fingers each and are well detailed on top but less so on the palms. The arm-body joint needs slight filling, as there is a discernable gap. The head looks like a slug's, with a neck. The head is also ridged and plated, giving an open-mouthed hiss.

The figure has great potential in a number of modern-type combat and superhero role-playing games, or as a surprise guest with your own statistics for the D&D® or AD&D® games. The detail is fair and could be much sharper, but at \$2 each, the figure is reasonably priced.

#### **XL21 Brain Worm**

The Brain Worm is a monster scaled in 25 mm and made of lead. It stands 27.5 mm high and rests on a smooth, circular base. It consists of a human brain, without left and right lobes; optic nerves and eyes are visible, and there is a separation under the eyes in front that could be a mouth. The medulla oblongata is not readily visible. A long network of nerves drops to the ground. The whorls on the brain are obvious.

This model reminds me of certain 1950s sci-fi flicks featuring rebellious brains. The model is good, but it should have deeper detail. This figure can be used in a number of genres. The price is a little high at \$2 each.

#### **Black Dragon Pewter**

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#### **Beware of Dragon**

This miniature is a free-scale piece cast in pewter. The figure, a baby dragon, has no separate base and rests on its coiled tail for support. Measuring 45 mm high, it sits behind a warning sign as if enforcing the message. The dragon rests its head on the top of the sign pole with its hands on the sign. It has small, smooth wings held straight out from its body.

The facial expression is that of a puppy looking for a petting. The dragon wears a collar around its neck. Two red jewels serve as eyes, and a multifaceted ball sits at its feet.

This is a cute model that would serve well as a Valentine's Day gift. Its few flaws include some filled or machined detail that is now obscured. I liked the letters on the sign. This figure is recommended at \$15 each.

#### The Alchemist

The Alchemist is a one-piece, 54-mm pewter casting. The figure stands on a thick base molded to represent the floor of a stone building. Rising from the floor is an ornately embossed pedestal with a square stone base, on which rests a pillar with arcane symbols and a band of round stones and a collar. This is topped by a stone plate or brazier that has alchemical symbols on the side and top, with a mixing trough in the center. In this circle lies a lump of goldlike material that is obviously the result of an experiment (the lump is actually a piece of iron pyrite).

The alchemist is dressed in long robes, open at the waist to show the plain inner lining. The dress robe is full length without a hood, featuring billowing sleeves, pleats, and hems engraved with arcane symbols. The robe is cinched by a rope belt supporting an embossed bag and a curved dagger. The alchemist is tall and thin, with narrow shoulders and outstretched arms. The right hand has a bracelet; the left hand tightly clasps a beaker, with the wrist wrapped in bands. The figure's head is capped by a conical hat with a braided band and a crescent moon pin over a jewel.

The alchemist's face is exuberant, although looking slightly tired. A ragged, stringy beard drops to his waist, wisps flying off in all directions. There is no pupil detail to the eyes, which look a little dead.

This piece is highly recommended at its \$35 price tag as a present or as an addition to any collection.

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#### 1024 Gate Crasher \* \* \* \* (with work)

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Beware of Dragon (Black Dragon Pewter)

The base is a circle just over 5 cm in diameter. Half the floor represents a summoning circle, while the other half represents the remains of a stone floor. The pentagram/circle has each of its major points outlined with deeply engraved lines. The outer rim of the circle has a number of well-done runes, and the words "Decos Con Demonicum" are clearly visible in small print after a careful painting and wash. A pair of books sits in the circle. The stone floor is molded as if it were being shattered as the second major piece, a demon, erupts from the floor.

The demon measures 20 mm across its chest and 45 mm from the floor to the tops of its wings. Muscle detail is good with some sharp angles on the arms, chest, and head to depict its nonhuman lineage. The demon is twisting slightly and its mouth, full of sharp teeth, is open in a scream. Pointed ears are pressed against the mostly folded, leathery wings. You can't be quite sure whether things are going the demon's way or not.

The wizard, reading from a book held firmly in a serpentine book holder, stands in the protected circle. The book is excellently engraved with words on its pages. The wizard's summoning brazier is held by a creature that looks like a cross between a bat, a hawk, and a snake. The brazier has individual coils molded on it that will require careful painting. The creature looks like it could be alive, but it could also be just a holder. It stands about 15 mm tall. The last accessory piece is the long ornate cape that fastens at the wizard's collar and swirls out behind him as if caught in the wind.

The wizard is tall, measuring 28 mm to his slightly wrinkled eyes. Besides his cape, he is dressed in a jacket with billow-



The Alchemist (Black Dragon Pewter)

## Lance and Laser Model, Inc.

P.O. Box 14491  
Columbus OH 43214

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### C-005 Turtles

The CRITTER COMMANDOS\* game has been out for years, and this Turtles pack expands the races available for miniatures combat. These four figures are scaled to 25 mm and made of lead. All the Figures are one-piece castings, showing a turtle trader and its snapping-turtle bodyguards.

The turtle trader is armed with a pistol-grip pump shotgun in its right hand and a two-edged sword in its left. The turtle wears cloth sashes over its shell, gloves on its hands, a campaign hat complete with folded left brim and medallion, boots, and a jet pack. The shell design is simple. There was no major flash on this piece, and no mold-line interference. The turtle is snarling, and its facial details and teeth are fair.

The two lightly armed bodyguards are snapping turtles, each carrying a pistol-grip shotgun and two bandoleers of ammunition slung over their shoulders (individual rounds are visible). These turtles have no extra clothing, and the jet packs on their backs are held on by the ammo belts. There was no flash, and the mold lines are well hidden. Both rest on round, undetailed bases.

The last turtle is encased in a battlesuit (maybe it's a cyborg turtle). No part of the turtle shows except its shell, which is that of a snapping turtle. The turtle is in an aggressive stance, poised to launch the four guns or missile units on its back. All joints are hinged and plated, some slightly exaggerated for effect. The turtle has a steel-trap jaw and bulbous eye lenses. Even the feet and tail are armored and jointed. There was some light flash around the legs and bottom shell, but it was easily removed.

This pack could be used for a number of games besides the CRITTER COMMANDOS setting, such as Palladium's TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES\* or RIFTS\* games. They could even be Chaos troops for Games Workshop's WARHAMMER 40,000\* system. This pack is recommended if you play any of these games, and it is not badly priced at \$6 per pack.

### TORG 016 Corporate Ninja

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The Corporate Ninja works well in any "techno-enhanced" games. This lead figure is scaled to 25 mm and stands on a roughly finished oval base. The figure is bent at the knees, as if dodging to the side. He wears high-topped soft boots with full lacing, and the typical outfit of a ninja: loose-fitting pants ballooning over the boots, a loose shirt with hood, and a face covering that leaves the area from the nose up open. The ninja has an optical device on his right eye for sighting, probably to enhance the use of the silenced



Gate Crasher (Thunderbolt Mountain)



Turtles (Lance and Laser Model)

wears a long robe that stretches from neck to ankle and extends to the palms of his hands. The robe is cinched by a wide, ornate sash. A simple necklace hangs around his neck. A stern face with a braided beard and a moustache gazes at the rising demon; his eyebrows are knit in concentration. His right hand clasps a hook, his left hand poised in the midst of a spell. His head is capped by a conical hat with an elaborate band and a star ornament.

You must do a little work on this miniature. The base edge must be cleaned of flash and mold marks, and the book and

marks. The cape requires some heavy cleaning and mold-mark removal, and it doesn't quite fit onto the figure, leaving a small gap at the collar. Be careful when cleaning so as not to destroy the runes. The demon had flash on its ears and wing tips, and mold marks on its arms, but it cleaned up easily and quickly. The wizard has light flash on the side, as does the stand and the bird. All are easily fixed.

I highly recommend this kit for its detail and story content. For the amount of time and effort it took to produce this kit, the \$9.95 price is very reasonable. This is definitely a take-your-time model.

pistol in his right hand. His weapons also include a throwing star in his left hand, a set of throwing knives on a belt, and a ninja sword wrapped on his back. Fir: is equipped with a storage pack, shoulder holster; and a pattern on his hands and arms that could be light armor or a cyber weave.

The detail is a bit on the shallow side, and there was loss of detail just from handling. I firmly recommend this figure for West End (Games's TORG® system, FASA's SHADOWRUN® game, or R. Talsorian's CYBERPUNK 2020® rules. The price is \$1.50 each.

### **Mithril Miniatures, Ltd.**

Macroom, Co. Cork  
IRELAND

### **Ed Wimble/Prince August**

Miniatures USA  
The Byrne Building, Lincoln & Morgan  
Streets  
Phoenixville PA 19460

### **M251 The Ancient Folk: Undead Warrior**

This figure is a two-piece, 25-mm lead casting that comes already primed. It stands on a rectangular base with sloped edges and a pebbled, rough top. The face consists of only a skull with a thatch of long hair blowing in the wind. The death's grin includes well-done teeth and is highlighted by a tall collar on the rotting cape. The underarmor padding and garment are visible and show numerous rips, tears, and slashes. The hands are covered by leather gloves. The right hand holds a two-handed sword while the left hand grasps a scabbard. Rusty, torn, and sliced chain mail completes its outer protection; belts hold the remains together. The legs are covered by tattered pants.

This figure is well done and could be used as a leader for a number of different undead units. There was light flash on the sword, and the nub needed to be shortened for the arm to fit into the socket. You must remove a small amount of primer for the glue to stick and must carefully find the right position for the sword. It's a good figure, but having to reprime the figure because of its arm negates any time saved from its being preprimed. The price is a hit high at \$2.25 per figure.

### **M253 The Ancient Folk: Swamp Star**

The Swamp Star is a one-piece casting with a base identical to that of the Undead Warrior. The figure is supposed to represent an evil undead that lures its victims into the swamp by carrying a lantern and walking ahead of a party to make it think there is civilization ahead.

The figure is dressed in long flowing robes from shoulders to feet and has a large pointed hood. Skeletal feet protrude from under the robe, while skeletal arms



Corporate Ninja (Lance and Laser Model)



The Ancient Folk (Mithril Miniatures)

and hands extend from the bell-shaped sleeves. The left hand holds a lantern with shade, supports, and knobbed handle clearly visible. A skeletal face with empty eye sockets and a leer across its jaws completes this figure and points to the evil inherent in this kind of creature.

This figure could be used in other games (including TSR's AD&D® RAVENLOFT® setting) as a spectral visitor or a guide for an undead army. Its cost is \$2.25 each.

### **Ral Partha Enterprises**

5983 Carthage Ct.

Cincinnati OH 45212-1197

### **Ral Partha Enterprises**

c/o Miniflgs

1/5 Graham Rd., Southampton

UNITED KINGDOM SO2 OAX

### **10-600 The Ultimate ATV**

TSR's GAMMA WORLD® game has undergone a number of changes through the years. One of the earlier rule-book covers



The Ultimate ATV (Ral Partha Enterprises)



Zombies (Heartbreaker Miniatures)

had an illustration by artist Keith Parkinson that was later used on a GEN CON® game fair booklet cover and inspired this miniature. The figure is a 54-mm scale model consisting of 21 parts made of "fine" pewter. The model represents an early hunter robot on a genetically altered and mechanically amplified cat.

The robot is just over 65 mm tall and rides slouched in the saddle. The legs and feet are a collection of front-armored plates supplemented by ribbed conduits. Joints are shown as plates with hydraulic assists and shock absorbers. The bottom

half of the robot is molded onto the cat body. The top half of the body is a separate piece and, on our model, ends in a waist that is smaller than the connection to the bottom half. This looks wrong, but we called Ral Partha to make sure that it wasn't a problem and were assured that it was as it should be. The rib cage has armored plates with a number of sensor arrays and a rough finish in the back; the front has still more sensors and overlapping corrugated plate designed to be flexible. The arms are hexagonal bars with joints and flexible joints at elbows, shoul-

ders, and hands. The right hand guides the controls, while the left supports a conversion rifle with electronic sights. The head has a pair of pointed "ears," a sensor eye like that of the Cylons from "Battlestar Galactica," and a voice box with a hose leading to a power core. There was some easily removed flash, and the peg joining the body sections has to be trimmed some, but the robot is still very well done.

The cat is an excellent model with the exception of some flash between the front legs. It measures just over 130 mm and resembles a fisher or large wolverine. The fur detail is excellent. The head is encased in a mechanical device from the top of the upper jaw back, and there is some exposure into what would be the brain pan. The head has a number of mechanical devices including eyes, a pair of blasters, and a mechanical brain. The teeth are nicely done. The feet are covered by bionic "gloves" with metallic claws that can be used for climbing or attacking. A number of cables snake across the back from the head to controls and tanks located behind the saddle. The saddle is braced by a wide belt running under the beast. The rear and tail of the animal are protected by overlapping plates with a spinal hump. The power source, fuel cells, sensors, and plug-ins are all behind the saddle. There is a huge amount of detail that should keep you busy painting for quite a while.

The base is a well-detailed collection of two windswept rocks with myriad cracks and crevices. This completes a piece that could be a showcase model. Because this piece is pewter, some people may choose not to paint this miniature. This piece is detailed enough that you can do this, but painting brings out a number of details that could easily be overlooked. This is not suitable as a playing piece unless you are a glutton for punishment. The claw holes on the feet are very small and shallow, and it is hard to move the model without loosening them. We left them out, and the model still looked good. This is highly recommended even with the faults. The cost, mostly because of the pewter, is \$30 each.

### Heartbreaker Miniatures

P.O. Box 105  
Folsom PA 19033

### Gamecraft

A16 Gardeners Row  
Business Center, Ltd., Liverpool  
UNITED KINGDOM L3 6TJ

### 218 Zombies

\*\*\*\*  
Zombies are a necessary part of any undead army, and this set is as nasty as I've ever seen. The figures are scaled for 28 mm and are made of a low-lead compound. The figures feature slotted 20-mm square bases that are high and beveled, being compatible with the combat stands in Milton Bradley's BATTLEMASTERS\* and GW's WARHAMMER FANTASY BATTLES\*

games. The three figures vary in their decomposition, so we'll go from worst case to the newly dead.

The worst case is dressed in rotten and tattered pants held only by a ragged belt. Its left leg is skeletal with bones visible but not well defined. The right leg has holes in rotting, wrinkled skin that expose muscles, tendons, and worm holes. The upper torso has ribs showing on the left and entrails falling out. The right arm has some flesh on the bottom and a well-done pectoral muscle showing through. The left arm is skeletal, with the hand clenched in a fist, while the right arm shows three stages of decay with a bracer holding the wrist flesh together. Muscle detail is good, and a relatively intact right hand clutches a huge battle axe. The back is totally skeletal, as is the head, mouth open in fury. The eye pits are not quite as deep as they should be; you may want to drill them out a little. This figure came with a badly twisted base that had to be carefully straightened.

The second figure looks like it was once a farmer or peasant conscript. Its pants have rotted away to hip height. The legs have a number of holes where rot has started, and both feet have bone showing. The upper torso is partially covered by a rotted, tattered shirt and has a loss of definition to the muscles that sometimes comes with death. Both arms show skin peeling and underlying muscles. The left hand holds a scythe, and the right is balled into a fist. The figure has a full head of hair and eyebrows, but the skin is pulled back and pinched in the rictus of death. Rot is beginning to show even in the eye sockets. The only mold line blends in with the rot.

The last figure looks like one of the recently dead. It wears decaying pants and ripped boots. The upper torso is covered by chain mail with a crumbling surcoat and chest armor. The arms are covered by rotting cloth. The right hand holds a nicked sword while its left hand supports a wooden shield. Its face is contorted into a sort of sneer with parts showing the beginnings of rot. All of its hair is still on but should be painted with flat paint, then repainted with clear flat.

These figures are mostly well done, although I wish the bone detail were better. These figures are well worth it for their "gross" value. The price is \$4.95 per pack.

### Leading Edge Games

P.O. Box 70669  
Pasadena CA 91117

#### LE 20300 Alien Warriors Set #1 \*\*\*\*

The Alien Warriors set is produced to support both the ALIENS\* adventure game and ALIENS\* role-playing game by Leading Edge. The role-playing game allows you to reproduce the movies or create new adventures. This set contains 18 pieces that form six Alien warriors. The



Alien Warriors (Leading Edge Games)



Alien Warriors (Leading Edge Games)

figures are made of lead and scaled slightly larger than 27 mm, given their description in the RPG. Most of the web sprayers do not fit on the bodies correctly and require some filling; they give the appearance of being spare pieces when first viewed in the box, so don't throw anything out. Each head attaches to the body by a peg, but the body had a depression rather than a hole for the peg. The head is 18 mm long and fits over the rigid bony carapace. Jagged teeth and the tongue are visible in the mouth. The paralyzer injector and sac are very visible on the long tail

that wraps around each body. The six figures are posed differently, from hunched down to jumping up.

My set was missing a spinner but had an extra head that could be used as a Marine trophy. These figures could also be used for TSR's SNIPER® BUGHUNTER game or other SF games. The price seems high at \$17.95 for six figures, unless you remember that you get a figure case, too.

#### 20303 Queen's Lair

The Alien queen was a fearsome creature in the movies and is also fearsome in



Queen's Lair (Leading Edge Games)

miniature form. The miniature consists of eight pieces. The body is over 160 mm long from nose to spiked tail, and stands 75 mm at its highest point. The head and crest together are nearly 70 mm. The body has an external skeleton that has an almost undead look to it, except for the central torso and chest. The back has a row of square spines, and cleaning the flash from between the spine pieces and tops took time. The legs have a hard outer shell and external veins, with feet that look like the queen wears high heels. The legs fit well after the center pegs were trimmed to fit. The hand and arm assembly fit well, although the molded arms in the chest are rather fragile. The side spikes require trimming and filling when added to the body. The huge head, with its very visible rows of teeth, requires support while the adhesive is drying; it fit well after minor trimming.

The set also includes two eggs, one open with the facehugger missing and one closed. The two facehuggers on large bases, in two different positions, are the last pieces in the set and match the movie photos closely.

Combined with the warriors set, this is an impressive group to unleash on any sci-fi group or ALIENS game player. If you're going to use the set, I recommend picking up a package of weapons for the warriors.

The queen set is recommended, especially at \$19.95, which also includes a figure case.

#### |RAFM Co. Inc.

|20 Park Hill Rd. East  
|Cambridge, Ontario  
|CANADA N1R 1P2

#### |3714 Cave Giant on Hunt \* \* \* \*

The Cave Giant is a one-piece 25-mm lead casting. The figure, measuring just over 55 mm high and 23 mm across the shoulders, is of a male humanoid striding forward. There is a slight mold line on the right leg that required minimal but careful cleaning. The skin over his whole body is covered by blemishes that look like small rocky outcroppings. Muscle detail looks blocky, almost as if cut from the stone he lives around. He wears nothing but a loincloth held up by a belt that also supports a large purse. Around his neck is a necklace made from the skulls of different animals, with a human skull in the front. His chest appears to be muscular but also flabby. A high spiral crest rises from his back and ends at the collarbone. His arms are blocky and support a huge stone axe tied to a tree trunk by thick leather thongs. A slain deer hangs in back from his belt.

The most nonhuman part of this figure is the head, which is totally bald except for a long fringe of hair. His eyes look bugged out. He has a long sharp nose, ridged cheeks, and uneven teeth. He gives the impression of being part insect (which makes sense if he can see in the dark of his environment).

This extremely interesting figure could really ruin a dungeon-crawling party's day. It is recommended even with the light flash between the arms and the body. Each figure costs \$5.

#### Grenadier Models Inc.

P.O. Box 305  
Springfield PA 19064

#### Grenadier Models UK Ltd.

19 Babage Rd.  
Deeside, Clwyd, Wales  
UNITED KINGDOM CH5 2QB

#### 5302 Amazon Attack Chariots \*\*\*½

The Amazon Attack Chariots set contains two chariots, each consisting of nine different pieces. The chariots could be used for either 25 mm or 28 mm, as the figures check in at 26 mm to the eyeballs. The tigers are mounted on long, thin bases that probably should be wider. The chariots have no bases, and I recommend that you make some.

The draft animals consist of two sets of cats, one pair each of sabre-tooth and normal tigers. The cats are well done, with shallow surface detail for fur, and stand 16 mm tall and 57 mm long. The mouth is

wide open in a snarl on all tigers, with the long teeth of the sabre-tooth visible. The regular tigers are charging while the sabre-tooths are in a fast trot. All wear harnesses, and the chariot attachment points are high on their backs between the shoulder blades.

The chariots consist of five pieces each. They are 63 mm long and 48 mm wide, and have excellent wood grain detail on the decks. The wheels and sides appear to be metal with wood.

There are two crew members per chariot. The drivers wear heavy boots with pointed tips, heavy pants with wrinkles, and a belt from which hang a short sword and a wide pouch. The drivers wear tank-top shirts with high necklines and heavy gloves; their whips are really too thick. The fighters wear low boots and knee protectors, and small shields. Their legs, midriffs, and arms are all bare. Each has a bikini-style bottom held up by a belt with a shield front, and a chain-mail top with shoulder protectors. The left hand holds a round shield; in the right is a serrated-edge sword.

I highly recommend this set for anyone putting together an Amazon army, or just as an interesting piece. You could even spend some time removing the top piece and camouflaging the straps to get four tigers out of it. The price for the set is \$14.95.

That's it for this month. If you want to buy a product pictured in this column, bring this magazine with you to your local hobby store. If the store does not stock the miniature and is unwilling to order it, contact the manufacturing company. Companies often have a list of stores carrying their products or can let you know how to purchase their items directly or from a mail-order hobby shop.

If you wish to speak with me, my telephone number is: (708) 336-0790. It is often easier for me to answer your questions by phone rather than by letter. My hours are MWThF 2-10 P.M. or S&S 10 A.M.-5 P.M. CST. You can also write to me at: Friend's Hobby Shop, 1411 Washington St., Waukegan IL 60085.

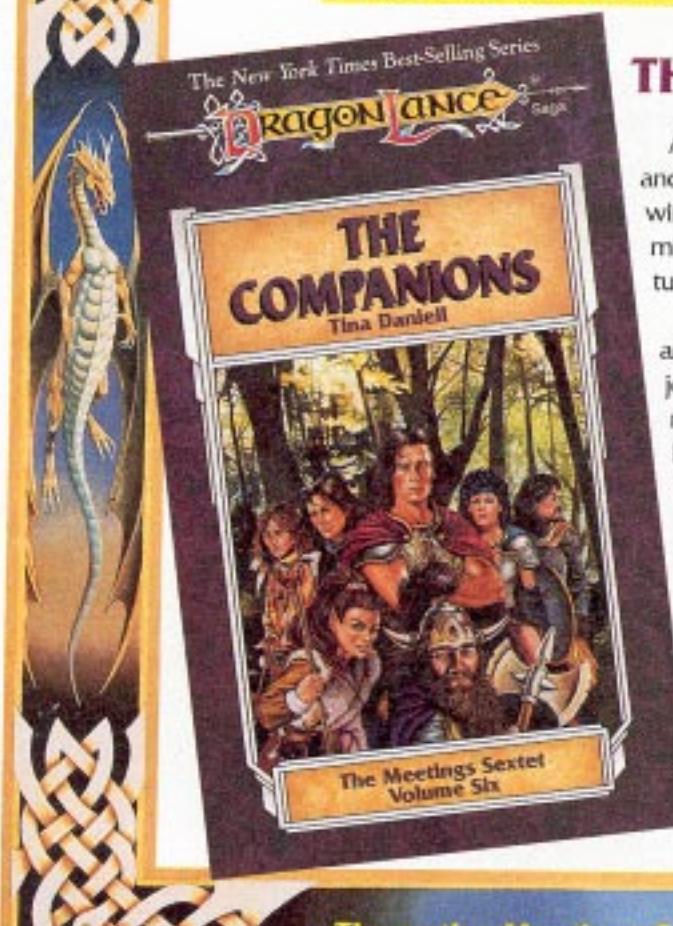
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What is the future direction of role-playing games? What problems do you have with your role-playing campaign? Turn to this issue's "Forum" and see what others think—then tell us what you think!



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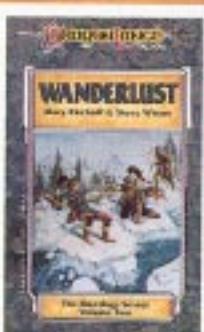
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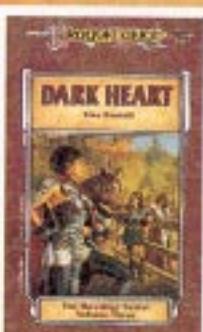
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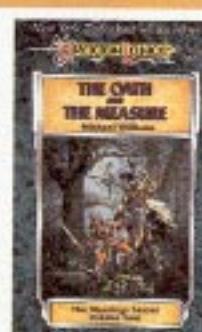
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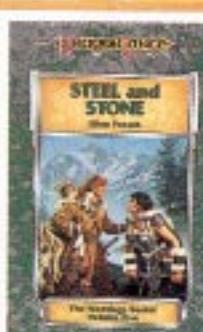
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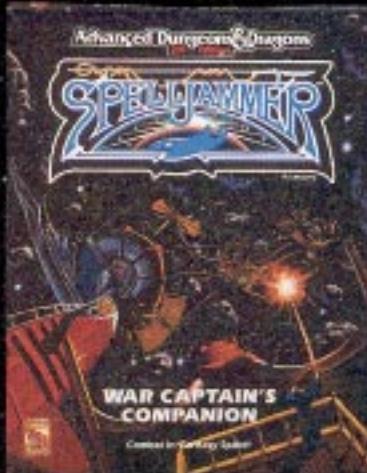


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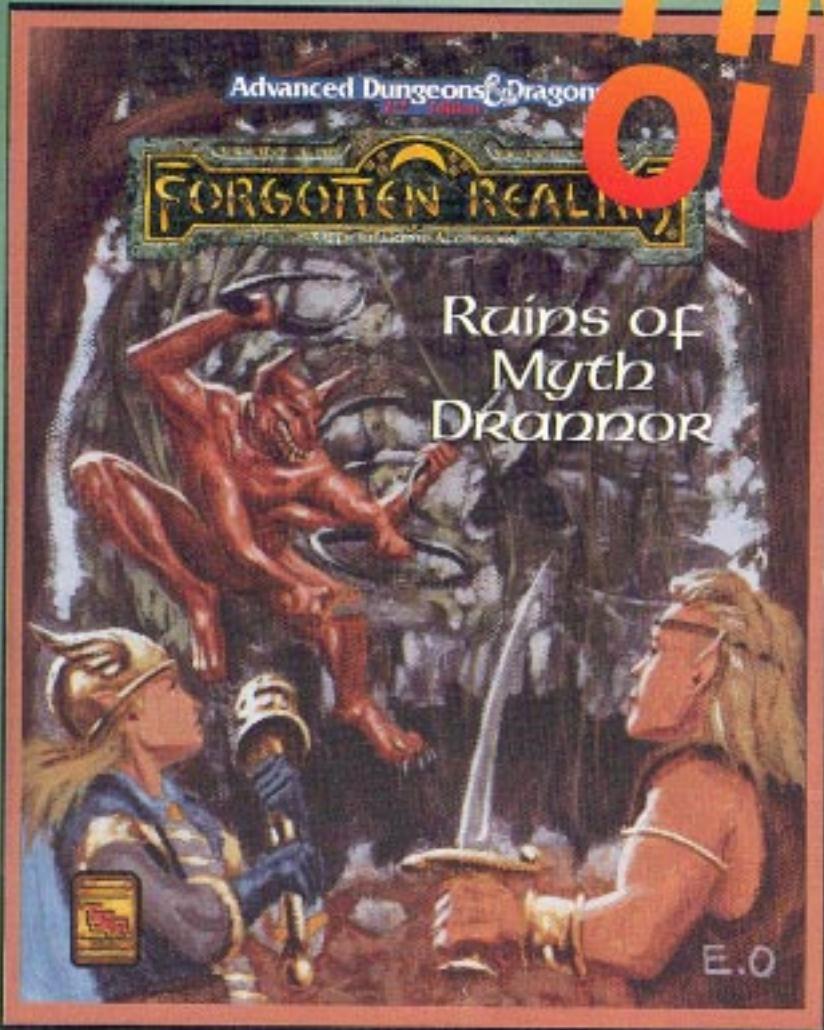




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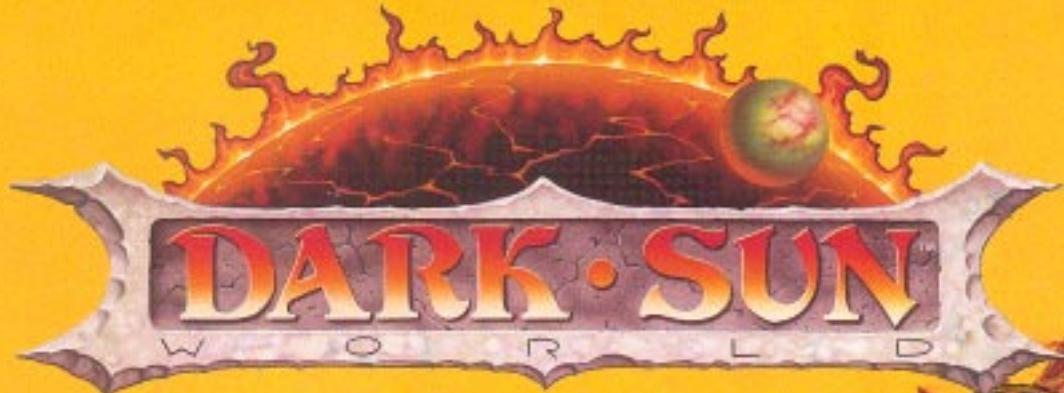
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