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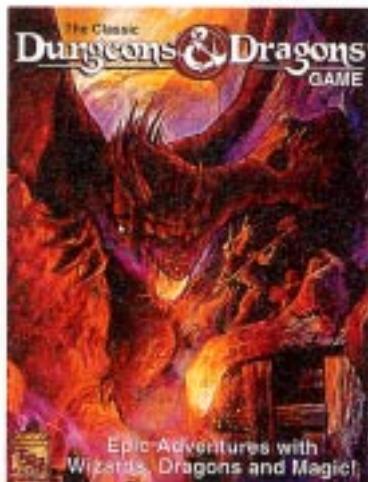
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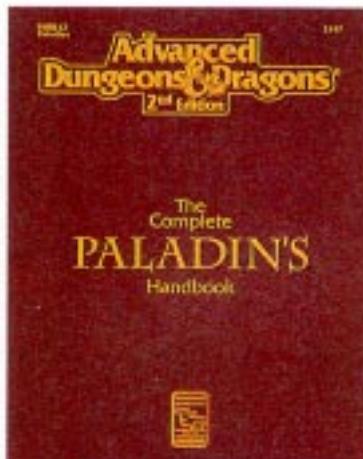
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COVER

Jeff Easley's "Lillehammer Dragons" (as coined by our own Wolf Baur) typifies the majestic presence of our favorite fantasy creature. The beauty of that stark, frozen vista is enough to melt even an editor's heart.

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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.

Quite a collection!



Dear Dragon,

I've been an avid reader since I purchased DRAGON® issue #32 in a small store in Sacramento, Calif., nearly 14 years ago. (I was 11 at the time.) I began subscribing with issue #54, and have been a subscriber ever since.

Though I've been silent all these years, I'd like to take a few minutes and say "thanks" to everyone at TSR, all the writers, and all the artists who have contributed to the magazine over the years. DRAGON Magazine has always been more than a few dollars' worth of entertainment; it's been a source of ideas, which are priceless.

Ian McAfee
Redmond WA

On behalf of everyone you mention, Ian, I sincerely thank you. I am hard pressed to think of higher praise for the magazine. DRAGON Magazine is a group effort in the truest sense of the words. Without all the gamers, writers, and artists who send in their ideas, there would be no DRAGON Magazine.

Ian included the photo you see here of his DRAGON Magazine collection (from issue #1) through #198—a complete collection at the time he wrote the letter.) I am impressed. (My collection only goes back to issue #50.) From talking to collectors over the years, I know that gathering a complete collection of DRAGON issues is an achievement. Congratulations, Ian!

Jeremy M. Price
No address given

Where to start?

Dear Dragon,

I am a new role-playing gamer, and I would like to know how to get started in a relatively inexpensive way. I'd love to get into role-playing games, but I don't know what most of this stuff means. Can you make any suggestions? (I am interested in giant robots.)

Jeremy M. Price
No address given

The first thing to do, Jeremy, is to find some folks (friends, siblings, parents, etc.) to play with. Role-playing games (RPGs) are group endeavors, and it's always easier to "get into" a new activity with others who are interested, too. Some RPGs can get expensive, so gathering several people who share your interest to chip in on purchases can defray the costs, too.

As far as TSR fantasy RPGs are concerned, I can recommend two products. If you or your family have an audio CD player, the new FIRST QUEST™ game is terrific. It contains an audio CD that introduces both basic role-playing and the AD&D® game. If you don't have access to a CD player, pick up the Classic D&D® game. A newly revised version should be on the shelves by the time you read this. Either of these products will get you (and your group) up and running.

Since you stated interest in giant robots, I must mention FASA's BATTLETECH® board game. The latest version has basic rules for newcomers like you, Jeremy. It's not an RPG in-and-of itself (though FASA does produce the MECHWARRIOR® RPG rules, set in the BATTLETECH universe), but I think you'll enjoy it. Other RPGs you might want to examine include the STAR WARS® game from West End Games, the TOON® game published by Steve Jackson Games, and the BUCK ROGERS® CLIFFHANGERS™ game from TSR. If there is a gaming or hobby store near your home, you also could try to find old copies of the GHOSTBUSTERS® or the MARVEL SUPER HEROES games. I hope that helps Jeremy, and welcome to the hobby!

A letter to a friend

Dear Dragon,

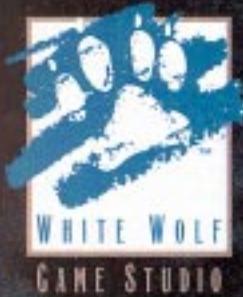
There is a bond shared by the people in a gaming group. They work together, solve problems together, slay villains together, and generally waste time together. Through all the adventures, the circle of players grows closer, the friendships binding.

Recently, our circle was tragically broken. It is always a shock when a friend is lost unexpectedly. But accidents happen and they take good people away from those who love them. Through all the heartache, I was able finally to learn why RPGs are so important to so many people.

Continued on page 20

Ozmaith

Face Death



THE WORLD OF
DARKNESS

Why we play



Like many players of role-playing games, I've often been faced with the somewhat daunting prospect of attempting to explain exactly why I play these games, why I chose role-playing games (or RPGs) as a hobby. I've addressed this topic with varying degrees of success over my years as an RPG player. I think I'll attempt again, with your indulgence.

Let's first try to define what a hobby is. According to the *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (©1981) on my desk, the word **hobby** is defined as "a pursuit outside one's regular occupation engaged in for relaxation." What I am trying to do in this column is discuss some of the attractions of our hobby—a hobby that, according to estimates, up to 10 million people around the world have tried at some time. I'm not arrogant enough to assume that I can mention every possible reason for playing RPGs, but I'll try to cover some common ground.

Let's return to the word "hobby." I define the word as "an activity that one takes part in for pleasure and that engages skills

or faculties one enjoys using." This definition separates some relaxation activities from actual hobbies. Some forms of relaxation, such as zoning out in front of the TV, do not engage skills or faculties. They are effortless. Even if you aren't paying attention, the TV drones merrily on without you. Reading, on the other hand, requires effort. Reading engages skills and faculties: the intellectual skill of assembling symbols on paper into coherent ideas (which, by the way, you are doing right now), and the imaginative faculty of filling in the details of the ideas you just intellectualized. If you look up from what you're reading, those processes come to a screeching halt. Reading requires conscious effort.

Okay, hobbies require effort. Recreational sports, playing guitar, reading, painting, writing poetry, and playing RPGs all require exertion. The exertion takes different forms, but it's there nevertheless. Since we enjoy the activity, we don't mind the exertion. To (very broadly) borrow a physics concept,

hobbies are "negative work." In theory, walking a staircase requires the same amount of exertion regardless of whether you're going up or down the stairs. But, gravity helps you go down the stairs by constantly pulling you in that direction. Climbing stairs is work, descending them is negative work. The enjoyment of a hobby activity is like gravity helping you down the stairs.

Playing role-playing games requires many of the same abilities that reading does; like reading, playing RPGs is fantastic mental exercise. The opportunity to flex those intellectual and imaginative muscles is a primary attraction of these games. As RPG players, we enjoy the experience of escaping into the game world and filling that world with the products of our imaginations.

Escaping into that make-believe world is another aspect of a hobby that Webster's definition obliquely refers to. The dictionary states that a hobby is "outside one's regular occupation." Broadening this, a hobby allows one to escape the workaday world. When engaged in a hobby, a person forgets the stresses and problems of the day, the concerns that we all must deal with. What better way is there to escape the humdrum world than by creating an entirely new and different world of action and adventure? Some people derive the same escapist joy that an RPG provides from watching a good movie or TV show, reading a good book, or going on a vacation (a literal escape from one's normal life). I guess hobbies are little mental vacations.

One essential aspect of any escapist fare, be it a TV show, comic book, novel, or 1930s movie serial, is a clash of daring heroes and dastardly villains. In RPGs, the players actually portray the heroes (through the means of their game characters) locked in a titanic struggle against the forces of evil. Few other media allow this intimacy with the heroes. The hobby of reading, while a terrific way to spend time, allows you only to view the actions of the characters, although I imagine most readers place themselves into the role of the hero while reading a good escapist story. RPGs allow the

Continued on page 20

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FIRST QUEST is the title of TSR, Inc.'s Audio CD Introduction to Role-playing Game. This series is a feature where veterans of role-playing describe their first experiences in the hobby.

"You mean fighters can't use wands?"

by Skip Williams

I had the good fortune to be born, raised, and introduced to gaming in Lake Geneva, Wis.—the birthplace of the D&D® game. In a few short years, I met and gamed with just about all the people who were important to the D&D game's development and who became involved in creating the AD&D® game.

I cannot remember my first character, but I recall my first brush with the gaming hobby. Late in August, 1973, the local paper ran a front-page photograph of several people standing around a table covered with little plastic tanks, trees, and hills. The accompanying story described what went on at the GEN CON® Game Fair, which was a tiny little event back then. The entire site, Lake Geneva's Horticultural Hall, could fit comfortably in the current convention's exhibit hall—walls, roof, and all.

At the time, the only board games I had ever played were *Clue*, *Monopoly*, *Checkers*, *Chess*, *Battleship* and the usual assortment of childhood staples like *Candyland* and *Mouse Trap*. I was very much intrigued by the little tanks, but the first week of 8th grade loomed before me and they soon dropped out of mind. Almost a year later, I spied a classmate peering at a map crudely drawn in pencil on a scrap of notebook paper. The map showed the WWII-era military defenses of a fictional country, which the fellow was defending against a series of determined assaults by columns of tanks. Several other students and I listened with rapt attention as my classmate, Don Arndt, described a miniature tank battle that culminated with a tank smashing through an abandoned house to evade and confound the enemy. Don was later to lend his name to a famous artifact, the *invulnerable coat of Arnd*, because of his utter terror at the mere thought taking any damage to his character during a D&D game. At the time, however, the D&D game had not yet appeared on the scene.

The following summer, I took part in a massive CHAINMAIL game in Don's basement. Among the notables present were Rob Kuntz and Jim Ward, who were soon to co-author the *Gods, Demi-Gods, and*

Heroes supplement. (This was to be the first in a long series of game products from Jim.) Later that summer, I attended my first GEN CON Game Fair. There were less than a dozen events on the schedule, some of them held on the grass in the Horticultural Hall's open courtyard.

The following autumn, another classmate and fellow Game Fair attendee, Marcus Kurowski, began enthusiastically telling me about a brand new game produced right in Lake Geneva, the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game. After being regaled with tales of moonlight battles against orcs, subterranean treasure quests where undead monsters lurked in the shadows, and similar feats of derring-do, I resolved to try the game as soon as possible. Marcus and I began stealing spare moments to play; I was a lone (and unnamed) hero armed with a halberd and a torch and Marcus was the DM. Marcus had a set of rules, but no dice—he just decided what happened as we went along. (At the time, I didn't find that remarkable). Later, I joined my high school's gaming club, where I played a series of wizards who died swift deaths while I learned the basics of the game. No one told me it was prudent to cast spells from *behind* the party's first rank, and I had to find out the hard way that trolls aren't affected by *sleep* spells. Survival in our group was particularly difficult, because we hadn't quite grasped the concept of hit points. Instead of rolling hit points once and recording them on the character sheet, the DM secretly rolled everyone's hit points before each game and kept them secret; nor were we told how much damage a monster had inflicted on a character.

Several referees at my high school ran games. The best ones were run by upper-classmen such as Joe Fischer, who created the original ranger class for the D&D game. Freshmen, and especially freshmen who were gaming neophytes like me, were not entirely welcome in the established campaigns and my characters kept dropping like flies. It was not until the club's faculty advisor, Jim Erdman, began running a game that I had any luck keeping a character alive.

My early failures did little to dim my enthusiasm for gaming, and one afternoon Ernie Gygax (son of the D&D game's co-creator, Gary Gygax) approached me and asked if I'd like to try another new game. Ernie and I had been in the first grade together and we hadn't exactly gotten along, but my gaming zeal erased any doubts I had. Ernie and I soon were swashbuckling our way through *Warriors of Mars*, a set of TSR rules based on Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Barsoom* books, which are best described as *Tarzan* on Mars, with "radium" guns and flying ships mixed in. I had never read the books, but I was quick to do so. *Warriors of Mars* was destined to be short lived, mostly because Burroughs' estate stepped in and gave TSR its first lesson in copyright law—the 1970s were still a time of innocence for the gaming industry.

Before long, I felt ready to become a referee. I quickly sketched out a series of crude dungeons for the D&D game and stocked them with monsters, mounds of gold, and magical items stacked up like cordwood. After 20 minutes in one of my games, every character was decked out with enchanted swords, wands, and other magical goodies. The games were silly, uncontrolled, and occasionally deadly, but we had a great time.

After hearing about my crude attempts to run D&D games, Ernie invited me to his house, where his father ran games for several of the locals. Gary's approach to the game was, not surprisingly, considerably more sophisticated than what I was accustomed to. Soon, I was a regular visitor to Gary's house, where we often watched professional football games and debated the properties of *fireballs* during commercials.

My new understanding of the game lead to a complete overhaul of my AD&D campaign, which I still run occasionally. Two of the original players, Ernie Gygax and Dave Conant, still have active characters, though I've lost touch with the rest of my original group.

Come
soar
with
dragons

DRAGON



Graff 1993

DS:More Than Just Couch Potatoes

Using these awesome creatures as long-term campaign foes

by Thomas Reid

Artwork by Alan Pollack

Dragons are some of the most powerful creatures in fantasy gaming; so much so, in fact, that their very name is an integral part of the moniker, ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® role-playing game. They are the namesake of this very magazine. Yet too often I hear gamers complain that dragons are too easy to kill and not a challenge, or that they simply do not fit in with the "theme" of their campaigns. My response is, "Then stop thinking of them as couch potatoes."

The dragon of the AD&D® 1st Edition was beefed up for the 2nd Edition game. In terms of raw combat power, few creatures match up to a full-grown dragon. This, however, is not what makes a dragon truly terrible to confront. Dragons are intelligent. Dragons are cunning. Dragons are often brighter than the most potent wizards or the rulers of powerful nations. Worse, they know they are smarter. (Remember, dragons can live for over 1,000 years—try to imagine how much knowl-

edge and insight a dragon would gather over that length of time.) Why, then, do we so often see their roles in our campaigns reduced to nothing more than passive piles of hit points with low armor classes and a few spells, waiting to be attacked and killed in their lairs?

With all that cunning in a dragon's favor, it seems odd to me that they want to do nothing more than lie around on their treasure, far from civilization. I would go absolutely nuts if I spent most of the year lounging in my bed. An intelligent, cunning mind can't help but need to be stimulated. If you doubt this, then why do you suppose we spend so much time playing role-playing games? This same tenet should hold true for dragons now and then. After all, they don't even have a television in their cave.

There are those of you out there who would argue that this does not conform to the dogma laid down in the *Monstrous Manual*, which state that dragons generally find human civilization to be petty and beneath them. For your benefit, I simply direct your attention to the character Drizzt Do'Urdan, the drow elf with a good heart in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting. He is a prime example of what sorts of interesting things can happen when the mold is broken. Not all dragons have to come from the same cookie-cutter template. In fact, it's a ridiculous assumption that they are all the same. Each dragon is a unique personality, as varied and as interesting as your favorite group of player characters.

Once we break the boundaries a little, it is logical to assume that at least a few dragons would want to meddle in the affairs of humans, if for no other reason than the sheer joy of getting away with it. Besides, if they plan it right, they could come away from the whole ordeal a tad richer. In order to do this effectively, though, a dragon must find ways to operate in civilized areas without allowing others to recognize the machinations source.

Long-term foes

It has been my experience that the most formidable opponents to characters, as well as the most satisfying to players, is the long-term NPC adversary. Powerful and clever NPCs are always at the root of player-character problems, popping up in the middle of some crisis to taunt the PCs, cause them grief, and then slip away no matter how hard the characters try to catch them. Furthermore, these NPCs irritate the players to no end, so much so that the players want nothing more for their characters than to be able to catch and exact revenge upon the hated villain.

To tie all this together, dragons can make great long-term NPC adversaries, especially if the PCs do not know that the villain is a dragon, at least initially. Whether the dragon uses a few loyal or *charmed* fol-

lowers or chooses to do the dirty work itself, its schemes will be carefully planned and meticulously carried out. Sometimes, these operations will take years. The dragon will not mind; its lifespan is such that it can afford to be patient.

If a dragon chooses to have others do the actual work while it stays in the background, then it is a relatively simple matter to build what I call the nesting adventure. This type of campaign adventure introduces the PCs to the lowest level or layer of an organization (in this case, the dragon's). As the characters accomplish their tasks and disrupt the NPCs of that particular layer, peeling it away, they discover other, more powerful agents belonging to the next layer, who in turn answer to others, and so on. Only after a long and complicated series of events, adventures, investigations, and sidetracks do the characters get to the root of the problem, the dragon itself. Even then, there will be minions to fight and several false trails that mislead them before the PCs actually confront the dragon itself.

This is all well and good, but it still makes the supposition that the dragon is content to sit idly by while other individuals get in on the action. Suppose, instead, that the dragon wishes to get directly involved? Then it must somehow interact with humans without being recognized. What better way to hide among humans than to become one? This is easily done with a few carefully selected spells. It is a fairly simple matter for a dragon to disguise itself as a human or demihuman using a *polymorph self* spell, and deter others from discovering its true identity through the use of various spells such as *non-detection*, *undetectable alignment*, and so forth. To further supplement these disguising powers, magical items can come into play, especially for those dragons that do not otherwise have the abilities to cast the necessary spells. The reliable *wand of polymorphing* has obvious uses, while a dragon that also has a *hat of disguise* could play the part of many people in a scheme. An *amulet of proof against detection and location* also could be very handy for obscuring a dragon's real identity.

In the AD&D game's DRAGON MOUNTAIN™ adventure, which I had the privilege of editing, this was exactly how the main adversary, a female red dragon named Infyrana, kept tabs on her domain. She would walk among her subjects disguised as one of them, just to see how loyal they *really* were. When adventurers trespassed, she would insinuate herself into their group as a practically helpless prisoner of her servitors. In both cases, she used spells and cunning to great effect in passing herself off as someone else.

In essence, then, a whole campaign can be based around a dragon that has its claws in many pies and is the driving force in the background of several adventures. Perhaps a dragon has gotten word that an *orb of dragonkind* has been discovered,

and sets about immediately to find the artifact and either destroy it or hide it safely away from those who would use it against her. For that matter, the rumor could be about something as small as a *potion of dragon control*. The item might not even really be around; if the dragon thinks that such an item is nearby, then it will take great pains to prevent the item from being used against it.

Another possibility is that a dragon simply wants to see what it can get away with. Maybe a dragon is the foundation of a particular thieves' guild. The dragon might simply be curious about humanity and walks among it disguised as an adventurer. In that case, it wouldn't even have to be evil, but instead is simply at odds with the PCs over a treasure hoard or political position. Perhaps it has a personal vendetta against some individual or group and is creating a very elaborate plan of retribution. The possibilities are numerous, and require a bit of planning, but they make the dragon a much more formidable foe.

A vendetta

Let's set up an example using the vendetta idea. First, we need to come up with a background story about who wronged the dragon initially. Then, we must come up with an idea for the dragon to use in seeking the revenge. While we're at it, we need to create the means for the dragon to accomplish all this. Finally, we need to determine how the player characters can be worked into the scenario, and what they can do within it.

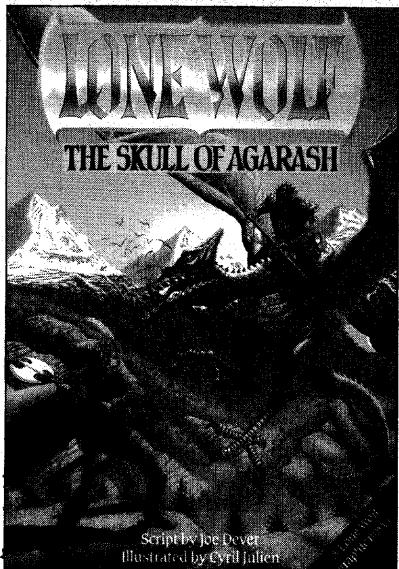
Long ago, a band of knights was adventuring in the mountains on the fringe of their small and peaceful kingdom, when it came upon and slew a mated pair of dragons. The two had one male offspring that managed to escape. Vowing revenge, this young dragon flew off to grieve and grow powerful. He spent many years collecting treasure and learning what he could about humans and their nature. He also studied magic, gaining many spells and items. He never forgot, however, the ruthless murderer of his parents. Finally, when he was old and wise enough, he returned to the place where his parents had died.

We now have a decent background story to work with, explaining what initially happened to the dragon. I leave it up to you to flesh out the various people, places, and groups in this story. For now, we need to move on and develop our dragon's nefarious scheme of revenge.

When he had grown in power sufficiently to seek his retribution, the dragon returned to the kingdom. Using a combination of spells and magical items to disguise himself as various humans, the dragon managed to assume three different alter-egos: one of the king's advisors, a leader in the order of the knights, and a leader of an underground rebellion in the kingdom. By carefully manipulating events from these three positions while never revealing who he really was, the dragon turned the kingdom in upon itself.



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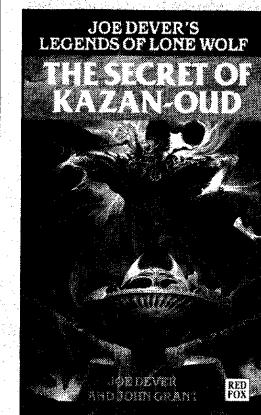
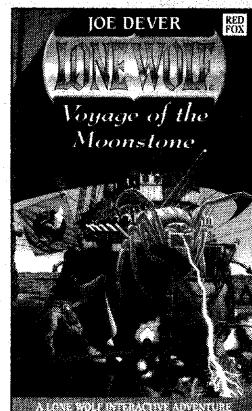
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First, as the king's advisor, he learned a great deal about the political factions within the court, including who was popular and who was not among the knightly order. He then began a subtle campaign against the knights, making them unpopular with the people and persuading the king to begin passing legislation against them. While playing the part of the knightly leader that he had cultivated, the dragon began to oppose the king more and more vehemently, while secretly planning a coup. As the secret leader of the underground rebellion, the dragon pretended to "meet" with the knightly leader (actually his other alter-ego), tying the two groups together by convincing the knightly order to attempt a coup and the underground group to support it. Then, using his knowledge of the entire situation and his guise as advisor to "expose" the coup to the king, the dragon effectively framed the entire order of the knighthood for treason and started a civil war. As a result of the dragon's machinations, the kingdom was near to collapse and the knightly order all but dissolved. The dragon had its revenge.

Now, we plant the PCs in the middle of this situation. They might be members of any of the involved groups, such as royal courtiers, citizens dissatisfied with the king's rule, or renegade knights of the banned order. They also could be independent adventurers who have wandered into

the kingdom at a bad time. Either way, their adventures can revolve around resolving all the strife in the kingdom, perhaps putting right what the dragon has done. If they are successful enough, the dragon might now include them on its list of lifelong enemies, continuing to pop up in other scenarios to torment and irritate them before attempting to carry out their utter annihilation.

You could argue that the above situation could just as easily be done with a powerful wizard, rather than a dragon, but that storyline line can get stale. How many times has there been a mad, plotting wizard standing behind the throne, whispering in the king's ear? Imagine how overwhelming it would feel for players of mid-level PCs to realize that they are up against one of the most fearsome creatures of legend. They have made themselves an enemy for life, and they never know when he'll rear his draconic head again to trouble them.

Conclusion

The above shows just one example of how to take the dragon from being a mere "monster" to becoming a worthy adversary for the characters over the course of a long campaign. The other benefit of doing this is that a dragon can now have a niche in virtually any type of campaign, in any setting where they exist. No longer

does the complaint that dragons don't fit into the theme of a campaign really hold water. If you want a dragon in your campaign, there is a way to work one in without worrying about the PCs having to confront one directly. In fact, this new type of dragon activity suggests some other more unusual scenarios. What about a world where there is a completely secret society of dragons, all working in concert? They might be trying to overthrow humanity, or there might be multiple leagues of dragons, vying with one another for power. How about a world where dragons do dominate, and act as the ruling class over other species, like humans? Now that you see where this is going, the possibilities aren't just numerous, they are limited only by your imagination.

It seems a shame to reduce a creature as magnificent and powerful as a dragon to nothing more than a punching bag and treasure dispenser for player characters. There's so much more to them than that. Remember, if we as humans are smart and clever enough to create such interesting things as fantasy gaming worlds, with all their endless variations and colorful backgrounds, then the dragons that dwell within those worlds should certainly be smart and clever enough to be a dominant force there.

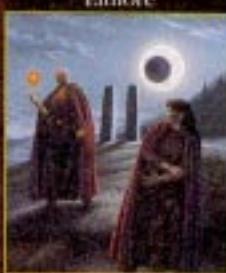
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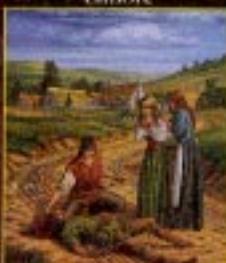
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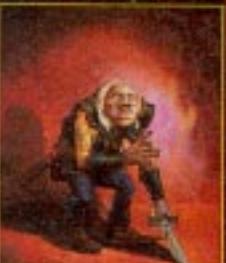


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The DRAGON PROJECT



Cerulean Glory Oversees Tides

by Sandy Petersen

Artwork by Stephen Schwartz

Five centuries ago, during the Dragonkill War, one of the many dragons that descended upon the hapless human armies was the entity named Cerulean Glory Oversees Tides. Henceforth, we shall refer to this being as simply Cerulean Glory, though the dragon itself never abbreviates his name, nor does he ever use pronouns such as "I" or "me". Instead, he uses his full name at all times when referring to himself (e.g., "Cerulean Glory Oversees Tides humbly requests your indulgence.")

Natives of the region have puzzled for many years over Cerulean Glory's nature. Is he an immature true dragon? Or a permanent dream dragon, formed from the id and spilled blood or seed of some sleeping true dragon? Is he a highly-evolved dragonewt that has retained contact with the world for dark purposes of his own? One scholar has written a work purporting to demonstrate that Cerulean Glory does not exist at all.

Those people who dwell in the area near Cerulean Glory's lair have no doubts at all about the dragon's existence and nature. Unlike most dragons, content to sleep and dream of past and future triumphs, Cerulean Glory has remained awake and active. He dwells on the sea-coast, from whence he makes periodic forays that devastate the countryside. These forays are rare—sometimes the monster remains quiescent for fifty years at a time—but when they occur, the local folk are impoverished.

History

Cerulean Glory has been an invincible monster for hundreds of years. No one knows that at the Dawn of the First Age, he was just an ordinary human rice farmer

for the RUNEQUEST* game

named Fang Leei. He lived in the lands of the East, in Kralorela, and worshiped the Dragon Gods, as is still done today in his homeland. One day, he was fortunate enough to save the daughter of the Emperor from a serious accident. As a reward, the Emperor granted that after Fang Leei's death, he would be reincarnated as an immortal dragon-like creature. After his reincarnation, Fang Leei became one of the Emperor's bodyguards.

After several decades as a bodyguard in the Imperial Household, Fang Leei realized that he had no future among humankind, and left human lands. From there, he entered into the service of the Inhuman King, lord of all dragonewts. During this time, he evolved in mind and body, gaining wondrous magical powers and using the dragonewt's metamorphic powers to change his shape to better suit his condition. During this period, his name was permanently changed to Cerulean Glory Oversees Tides.

Eventually, Cerulean Glory (formerly Fang Leei) became dissatisfied with the dragonewt teachings and doctrines, and left once again, this time seeking out a true dragon. He met the Mottled Dragon of the Homeward Ocean, and became his devoted servant for five centuries. In return, the Mottled Dragon taught Cerulean Glory many secrets, and transformed his body even more, into its current state. Once the five centuries were up, Cerulean crawled into a grotto and meditated there on the nature of the cosmos. There he stayed, ignoring wars, cosmic disasters, and the deeds of mortals, until 1100, the year of the Dragonkill War.

At that time, Cerulean Glory, along with many other dragons of the universe, was rudely awakened and summoned to Drag-

on Pass to battle the apostate humans who were trying to exterminate the last vestiges of the dragonewts. When the battle was over, not one human in 1000 had survived. Some dragons had been slain as well, but humanity knew who had won the war. Dragon Pass was unoccupied by humans for many years.

Cerulean Glory remained awake, wandering through the newly altered world, until he made his way to his current home (which is up to the game master).

Goals

Cerulean Glory has been a monster for many centuries now. His form has metamorphosed many times, and he has studied the teachings of many philosophers, kings, and dragons. Now, after thousands of years, he realizes all his philosophy and effort has not made him happy or content. In fact, he looks back to the days when he was an impoverished rice farmer in Kralorela, and remembers his wife, his daughter, his cat, and his pig with painful tears. During his lengthy wanderings, the dragons, dragonewts, and emperors he has lived with have no understanding or sympathy with his longings.

No doubt but what Cerulean Glory remembers his days as a human through rose-colored glasses. Still, the joys of hardship and seeking contentment through service to loved ones now seem desirable to him, far better than the sterile meditations and philosophies professed by the loveless dragonewts and their kin.

Cerulean Glory wants to go back. He wants to shed his dragon form and be a human once more. His belief is that he must do so in the same way he became a dragon-by studying and acting like the

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being he is trying to emulate.

It has been many centuries, and Cerulean Glory has forgotten almost everything about being human. When he encounters adventurers willing to talk with him, he will tag along, trying to learn as much as possible from them, and trying in a rather pathetic way to emulate them, trying to clutch a knife and fork in his gigantic claws, roaring out the same songs as the adventurers sing,

and generally trying to be a pal.

Of course, the results are ludicrous. Cerulean Glory is no longer even remotely human, and his personality is little-suited to companionship. He should alternate between draconic actions and attempts at humanity. For instance, when trying to be human, he may insist that he be given an equal share of loot "the same as everyone else". On the other hand, during one of his

Cerulean Glory Oversees Tides RUNEQUEST game statistics

| | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| STR 120 | CON 390 | SIZ 82 | INT 14 |
| POW 80 | DEX 12 | APP 20 | Move: 4 crawling/24 flying |
| Fatigue Pts.: 510 | Hit Pts.: 236 | Magic Pts.: 80 | Armor: 30 pt. scales |

Hit Location Table

| Location | Melee | Missile | Armor/hp |
|----------|-------|---------|----------|
| Tail | 01-02 | 01 | 30/59 |
| RH leg | 03-04 | 02 | 30/79 |
| LH leg | 05-06 | 03 | 30/79 |
| Abdomen | 07-08 | 04-08 | 30/95 |
| Chest | 09-10 | 09-14 | 30/95 |
| R wing | 11-12 | 15 | 30/59 |
| L wing | 13-14 | 16 | 30/59 |
| RF leg | 15-16 | 17 | 30/79 |
| LF leg | 17-18 | 18 | 30/79 |
| Head | 19-20 | 19-20 | 30/79 |

Weapon

| Weapon | SR | Attk% | Damage |
|----------------|----|-------|---------------------------|
| Tail lash | 4 | 20 | 6d6 |
| Bite | 7 | 90 | 12d6 |
| Claw | 10 | 50 | 12d6 |
| Undine spit | 10 | Auto. | As per undine (see below) |
| Acid spray | 10 | Auto. | 1d6 Potency (see below) |
| Magic sparkles | 10 | Auto. | Dispels magic (see below) |

Notes: Each combat round, Cerulean Glory gets a tail lash, a bite, and two simultaneous claw attacks.

Special attacks: Cerulean Glory has three special attacks, but can use only one per melee round. He normally uses at least one of these attacks every round in addition to normal attacks.

First, Cerulean Glory can choose to spit out an undine with a size of 1 cubic meter per magic point the dragon spends. Normally, he uses at least 10 magic points, to make nice big undines. This undine maintains its physical form and continues attacking for ten minutes, after which it dissolves unless Cerulean Glory spends an additional magic point to maintain its existence (only one point is needed to maintain the undine, no matter what size it is).

Second, Cerulean Glory can breathe a fine spray of acid by spending 10 fatigue points. The spray covers a cone 60 meters long and 20 meters wide at the end. The acid has an intensity of 1d6, which affects every hit location of every creature in its path. The spray damages armor first, and only after all armor in a given location is dissolved will it attack flesh.

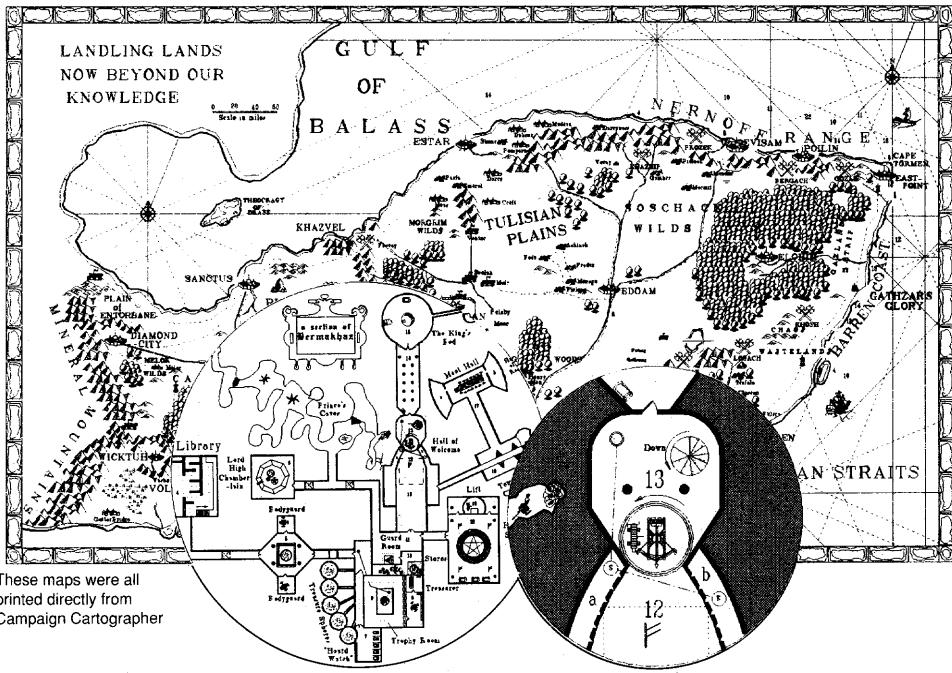
Third and last, Cerulean Glory can emit magic sparkles from its scales by spending hit points. These sparkles strike a specific creature targeted by Cerulean Glory, and cancel out every spell that the target has on him, his person, and his weapons. Add up the total Intensity of sorcery spells, the magic-point cost of any spirit spells, and double the point cost of any divine spells. The dragon loses 1d6 hit points for every 10 points or fraction thereof that are dispelled.

For instance, if Cerulean Glory used magic sparkles against someone who had a 5-intensity Resist Damage spell (sorcery), a 4-point Bladesharp on his sword (spirit), and a 3-point Shield spell (divine), the total points to be dispelled would total $5 + 4 + (3 \times 2) = 15$. Hence, Cerulean Glory would lose 2d6 hit points.

The magic sparkles cannot cancel out a creature's natural ability (such as a Jack O'Bear's Harmonize), and Cerulean Glory loses no magic points in the attempt.

Healing: For each 10 SIZ points of animal or human flesh that Cerulean Glory eats, it heals one hit point of damage. This power will not heal Cerulean Glory beyond his normal hit-point total, but can be handy if he has engaged in combat recently. Cerulean Glory cannot be healed by eating vegetable matter of any type, including elves.

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frequent relapses, he will succumb to dragon's greed, and insist on keeping all the treasure for himself alone. Once he takes it, he flies off to his secret mountain lair and stashes it away. The next day, he may feel regrets about taking all the treasure, but he won't bring it back. "What's past is past."

In general, the game master should realize that Cerulean Glory is an extremely combat-effective creature, and thus must exert herself to make the monster's presence unpleasant for the adventuring party. For instance, Cerulean Glory insists on eating all the food the party has. As a dragon, he eats a lot, and doesn't intend to go hungry for long.

Also, Cerulean Glory always refuses to help the party defend itself against attacking monsters, if the monsters are even remotely humanoid, such as giants, dark trolls, or even manticores (human faces), because that would be "betraying his nature". In addition, do not forget that Cerulean Glory is also trying to remember the less-than-noble traits of being human, such as cowardice. He is likely to scream and run away when attacked by any very tough monster, because he is trying to ape the fear and panic that true humans suffer, though he no longer feels these emotions as a dragon.

It is unlikely that Cerulean Glory will stay with an adventuring party for long. An adventure or two, and he is off to return to the life of a marauding monster once more. Of course, a week, month, or year later he may come seeking out the adventurers again, once more to pal around with his old friends, and make their lives miserable again.

Description

Cerulean Glory is a quite peculiar-looking creature, with large tattered wings and a thin, spindly body and legs. His head somewhat resembles that of a huge sea-horse, though it has large liquid eyes and tiny, mosaic-like scales. The body surface of Cerulean Glory is as smooth as marble, and mottled with an appealing blue and gold. His tail is long and mobile, prehensile with a sensitive coiled tip. His four limbs look almost insect-like in a thin jointed style, but the feet at the end of the limbs are not insect-like at all—they are rather bird-like claws with vast curling talons springing forth from the delicate-looking fingers.

Cerulean Glory is almost 25 meters (80') from head to tail, though his silhouette is no more solid than that of a crane-fly. When his wings are fully unrolled, they span over 30 meters (100') from tip to tip, with long ribbons and loops of tissue. The wings appear to be almost more decorative than functional, and are highly colorful, closely resembling the pattern of a monarch butterfly, with orange cells surrounded by black highlighting.

Letters

Continued from page 4

Our friend's name is not important. Besides, there was more to our friend than a name could convey. Our friend was someone who enjoyed life. You couldn't help being caught up in his enthusiasm for whatever project he was working on. Comic books with his friends as models, stories with his buddies as the characters, and fantasy heroes who look strangely like the crew of a certain starship were a normal part of life with our friend.

We still play every week, but a lot of the heart has gone out of the group. The absence of our friend is felt by all. In parting, let me say this: The game you're playing isn't important; it's the camaraderie that counts. Perhaps others can learn this lesson without having to lose a friend.

Name withheld by request

GM advice

Dear Dragon,

This letter is in response to the editorial in issue #202. As we all know, good GMs occasionally ignore dice rolls, especially when a PC would die if the dice were followed. This is all well and good, but if you do it too often the players will come to rely upon the GM saving their PCs' necks every time the characters get in over their heads. This can lead to problems when the time comes that the GM does not save the PCs' collective bacon. There is a solution to this, however.

I use a system in which each PC receives a certain number of points (depending on the PC's race). When a PC has a run-in with the Grim Reaper, the player can spend one of these points, and the fatal blow misses, the poison dart misfires, the 16-ton block doesn't fall, etc. If the PC has no more points, then it's time to pay the piper. The number of points I allocate is as follows: Humans 1d4; elves 1d4 - 1; dwarves 1d3; halflings 1d4; gnomes 1d4 - 1; and half-elves 1d4.

Don Harris
Palmer PA

Many RPGs use systems similar to the one above to help PCs survive. I like such systems myself, in that the characters often attempt more daring or heroic deeds if they know there's a mechanic to fall back on if their acts of derring-do don't work out quite the way they planned. And hey, daring and heroism should be a big part of any RPG!



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Editorial

Continued from page 6

hobbyist not only to take the role of a character in the unfolding story, but even to create the character from scratch.

Why are people attracted to heroic characters, even to the point of playing them in RPGs? The answer to that question could fill a lot more space than I have here, but I'll take a brief shot at it. The real world is very complex. (Now there's an understatement.) RPG worlds, for all their detail and wonder, are drawn in black-and-white. Simply put, there are good guys (the players' characters), there are bad guys (villains, sorcerers, giant monsters, vampires, etc.), and it's the good guys' job to whack the bad guys around until they stop being bad guys. The real world, by contrast, is full of an infinite number of shades of gray. Is the person who cut you off on the freeway really a vile menace to the entire community? Probably not. He's likely someone who just wasn't paying enough attention to what he was doing. Few people in the real world always know, with certainty, the best course of action to take. In contrast, few RPG characters are wracked with doubt, self-pity, or guilt. RPG players know that their characters are doing the right thing by tracking down that bad guy and giving him the whacking he deserves. The certainty that what your character is doing is right is a very comfortable feeling. That feeling is another attraction of RPGs.

Camaraderie is a pretty straightforward attraction of RPGs, and is the most important. People get together with others who share their interests to spend time, tell jokes, eat junk food, and play a game. In this sense, there are two types of RPG players. One type of player socializes with friends in order to play the game. The other type plays the game in order to socialize with friends. This helps explain why some players are very serious about their game night, and why some are just as content to trade bad puns for the evening. In any case, all RPG players should be able to get together and have fun for a few hours. That's the final attraction—spending time with people you like. Rather than expanding this point any further, I instead direct you to this issue's "Letters" column, specifically "A letter to a friend."

I hope this helps those of you who have always found it difficult to explain exactly why you play RPGs. The next time someone asks you, "So, why do you play those games anyway?" you can tell him. If you still have trouble putting your reasons into words, just hand the person this magazine, open to this page.



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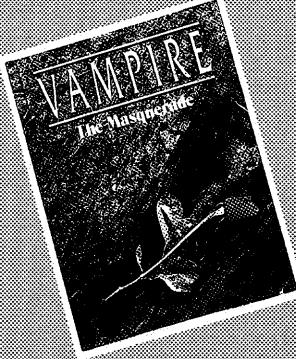


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Part Dragon, All

In the beginning, there were only humans and a handful of demihumans as player-character races in TSR's AD&D® game. Sure, there were unofficial PC races in the pages of DRAGON® Magazine, and *Unearthed Arcana* added some demi-human races, but that wasn't enough. Players wanted to step into the role-playing shoes of every being there was.

Then the DRAGONLANCE®, DARK SUN®, and SPELLJAMMER® campaigns appeared, and we had things like kender, half-giants, and xixchil PCs running around. (Xixchil? Look 'em up.) Then came *The Complete Book of Humanoids*, and everything from aarakocra to wemics was ready for players to play. You could almost forget that humans were even around.

Yet the richness of the AD&D fantasy universe was hardly touched. With the release of TSR's *Council of Wyrms* boxed adventure in June, the frontiers of role-playing are expanded yet again, this time by a huge margin. In this most fantastic of all campaign settings, players can now become the mightiest of creatures—dragons.

Dragons! But there's more. Players using *Council of Wyrms* also can become *half-dragons*, the grown offspring of the union of certain metallic dragons and their demihuman vassals. The boxed set provides many details on the statistics and role-playing of these rare, unusual beings, but the topic begs for more elaboration. Can there be half-dragons in other campaigns? If so, how are they played, and what are they like?

This article provides an expanded look at half-dragons from other TSR campaign worlds. Dungeon Masters must decide

whether to bring this information into their campaigns, of course, but guidelines for its sensible use are presented.

Fantasy genetics

Some basic restrictions should be laid down regarding half-dragons. There are important exceptions to these rules, but for the most part they should be taken as basic fantasy "truths."

First, only male dragons and female humans or demihumans can create half-dragon children; female dragons cannot be impregnated by male humans or demihumans, and beings other than humans or demihumans cannot bear a dragon's children. (An exception occurs with the Oriental dragons, as detailed later.) Demihumans include elves, half-elves, dwarves, gnomes, halflings, kender, and similar humanlike races (including drow). This category does not include giants, ogres, orcs, half-orcs, half-ogres, goblins, centaurs, and other "nonhuman" races; for now, we'll assume that these races are not fertile with dragons, or that dragons won't have anything to do with them.

Second, only those dragons with the innate power to *polymorph* themselves into human or demihuman shape can interbreed with the latter while in the latter's form.

Third, interbreeding is not possible while a dragon is using a normal *polymorph self* spell, so a red dragon or shadow dragon with a fourth-level spell slot could not impregnate a human or demihuman female.

Fourth, some dragons that might have the power to create half-dragon offspring simply have no interest in doing so, and

Half Hero

actively avoid it. These are most commonly dragons who have little or no interest in humanity or have strong prejudices against humans, demihumans, or mammals in general, greatly preferring the company of other dragons alone. (This point allows us to eliminate the half-platinum, half-adamantite, half-radiant, and other potentially over-powerful types—not a bad thing, as these admittedly make little sense in a carefully considered campaign. Imagine Zeus falling desperately in love with an overly intelligent hamster and wanting the fuzzy little rodent to bear his children. One must draw the line somewhere!)

Council of Wyrms provides the rules for generating half-dragons in the Io's Blood campaign, and these rules are generally followed here. However, not all dragons on all worlds are alike, as you will see—and there are more sorts of dragons than just gold, silver, and bronze. As noted above, we also open up the world of half-dragon/half-human offspring.

General notes

Much of what follows applies to half-dragon offspring whose dragon parents were a metallic type. The material is based on the principles set forth in the *Council of Wyrms* boxed set. The children of Oriental dragons, however, are much different in nature and receive much different treatment.

Half-dragons are subjected to considerable prejudice in many lands on many worlds, making the majority of them exiles and outsiders. The idea of creatures as different as dragons and demihumans (or dragons and humans) having offspring is



Half-dragon characters,
for the *Council of
Wyrms* setting
and beyond

by Roger E. Moore

Artwork by Arnie Sweekel

considered repugnant by most individuals of any species, even within the *Council of Wyrm*s setting. For example, half-dragons have no official place in the *Council of Wyrm*s setting itself, even though this is where they are most commonly found, and most half-dragons find themselves cast out of the societies of either parent.

Even among those dragons who willingly engage in intimate relations with human or demihuman mates, producing half-dragon young is basically unacceptable. A dragon may truly love a mate, but dragon societies of almost any land find the idea of creating half-dragons intolerable. Thus, half-dragon young are quite rare.

Half-dragon infants take the physical form of their human or demihuman parent. Few physical features identify a newborn babe as a half-dragon, though there are telltale signs that a careful observer could not miss. (Fear of discovery thus leads most mothers to leave home, never to return, to seek a secure wilderness area to give birth—often the lair of the dragon parent.) The half-dragon newborn usually has eyes or hair that are the color of the dragon parent's scales, such as gold, silver, or bronze.

As they reach adulthood, half-dragons grow tall and lean, no matter what human or demihuman blood mixes with their draconic heritage. The dragon heritage then begins to develop, overwhelming "lesser" genes. During adolescence, dragonlike powers manifest themselves. (These are called "discretionary abilities" in AD&D game terms, as they are chosen by the player during the character's progression.) These abilities become stronger and more pronounced with time and use, until a half-dragon grows to full power. Physical changes accompany the appearance of these abilities, eventually metamorphosing the youth into a beautiful and unique being—but the beauty is an alien one, not entirely along human or demihuman standards.

A mature half-dragon looks like a very tall, slender humanoid with elflike features: a thin frame, lean muscles, long limbs, and pointed ears. It does not matter which human or demihuman stock runs through the half-dragon's blood. Skin has the look and texture of normal flesh, though with the pigmentation of the draconic parent (golden, silvery, or bronzing, for example). The half-dragon's hair is luxurious and thick, of a deeper or richer shade of the flesh's color. The fingers are long and thin, with nails like talons. Yet the true mark of dragon heritage is in the face, which has a remarkably reptilian appearance: snakelike eyes, elongated features, and a hint of horns protruding from above the temples. Half-dragons have no wings, no tails, and no scales.

Half-dragons do not automatically learn any language except for those taught by their parents. If the dragon parent is

present, whatever draconic languages that parent knows may be learned, and the human or demihuman parent's native tongues also may be picked up. (The Krynnish half-silver, detailed later, will never start out knowing a dragon's language, as the once-dragon parent lost the ability to speak those tongues upon transformation.) Note the bonus languages picked up by river spirit folk, the half-dragon offspring of certain Oriental dragons, as shown in the section "Half-dragon roster."

Beyond these generalities, half-dragons of various AD&D game worlds have few things in common. A short look at each world follows, with appropriate notes and comments.

GREYHAWK® campaign

Oerth is a more cosmopolitan setting than many, its peoples long accustomed to magical displays and unusual beings in their midst. Individual power, both physical and magical, is respected and sought; the people of the Flanaess are on the whole practical, calculating, materialistic, and prone to looking out for their own interests first. This dark flavor has promoted a certain freedom from bias among its peoples, especially in the City of Greyhawk. One wag has commented that a stranger can be as strange as he wants, so long as he obeys the rules of the game.

Interbreeding between dragons and two-legged mortals is thus not unheard of here, though it will provoke anything from outrage to sighs, pained looks, and a certain rolling of eyes. Half-dragon offspring who survive to adulthood encounter few social stigmas in enlightened areas, which unfortunately are few in the postwar Flanaess. Most half-dragons will in time congregate in the City of Greyhawk, which has become a haven for them. Indeed, in Greyhawk, being the descendant of a dragon gives weight to a half-dragon's social and political status as the dragon parent is assumed to be available to perform a favor or two or to offer advice, regardless of whether this is actually true.

A few half-dragon individuals appear in the histories of the Flanaess and its nations. Rumors sometimes pass that one member of the Circle of Eight had dragon ancestors in his family tree. Still, because they look so different, half-dragons tend to be loners and have very few associates (and fewer still trusted friends).

Of the dragon types mentioned in the *Council of Wyrm*s set, only the gold and silver dragons of Oerth can interbreed with humans and demihumans. Bronze dragons of Oerth cannot assume human or demihuman form, being restricted to taking the shapes of higher mammals only.

Half-gold and half-silver: The basic statistics for these races are as described

Half-Dragon Characteristics

(Male/Female)

Table 1: Height (Inches)

| Race | Base | Modifier |
|--------------------|-------|----------|
| Half-Gold | 78/72 | 2 d 8 |
| Half-Silver | 76/70 | 2 d 6 |
| Half-Bronze | 74/68 | 2 d 4 |
| Half-Silver, K. | * | * |
| Half-Chiang Lung** | 56/51 | 2 d 4 |
| Half-Shen Lung** | 56/51 | 2 d 4 |
| Half-Greyhawk | 66/64 | 1 d 6 |
| Half-Steel | 66/64 | 1 d 6 |
| Deep Dragon | 56/60 | 2 d 4 |
| Half-Iron | 76/72 | 2 d 8 |

*Use the statistics from the *Player's Handbook*, page 24, for human, half-elf, or elf, whichever form the PC's mother took.

**As per 5' average size for river spirit folk.

Table 3: Age Range (Years)

| Race | Max. | Mid./Old/Ven. |
|------------------|----------|---------------|
| Half-gold | 300+5d10 | 150/200/300 |
| Half-Silver | 250+3d20 | 125/167/250 |
| Half-Bronze | 200+4d10 | 100/133/200 |
| Half-Silver, K. | * | * |
| Half-Chiang Lung | 125+3d20 | 62/83/125 |
| Half-Shen Lung | 125+3d20 | 62/83/125 |
| Half-Greyhawk | 170+4d8 | 85/115/170 |
| Half-Steel | 170+4d8 | 85/115/170 |
| Deep Dragon | 100/115 | 2 d 4 |
| Half-Iron | 400+3d10 | 200/267/400 |

*Use the statistics from the *Player's Handbook*, page 24, for human, half-elf, or elf, whichever form the PC's mother took.

in *Council of Wyrms*. The half-gold type is extremely rare, only two being known in the last 500 years (and they were twins). The half-silver is better known; one is rumored to operate alone in the domains of Iuz as a ranger, acting as a combination spy, saboteur, and guerilla fighter. Three are rumored to live in the City of Greyhawk, but little is known about them.

Half-Greyhawk: A unique dragon type found only on Oerth is the so-called Greyhawk dragon, which appears to be related (probably by some common ancestor) to the steel dragon of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. The dragon, described in the GREYHAWK MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® appendix and *GREYHAWK Adventures* hardbound, loves human and demihuman company, living out much of its life in cities, particularly the City of Greyhawk for which it was named. The Greyhawk dragon is said to be almost as likely to have a nondragon consort as a dragon one, which has given the city a slightly seedy reputation among knowledgeable travelers. This preference has also given the city about a dozen half-Greyhawks at any particular time, nearly all of whom find gainful employment with their draconic parents.

DRAGONLANCE® campaign

Generally speaking, residents of the continent of Ansalon are idealists, for good or evil. Their cousins on the continent of Taladas are more practical and earthy, but

still prone to carry causes. More insular than the peoples of most worlds, Krynnish folk are slow to trust outsiders and do not mingle well with those who are not like them. This caution easily crosses over into prejudice, and half-dragons here cannot expect easy acceptance, if they win any degree of acceptance at all.

Of all the dragons of the world of Krynn, only two sorts have the power to assume human or demihuman shape—gold and silver dragons. (Bronze dragons here, as on Greyhawk's Oerth, can assume only the forms of mammals.) Of these two, only silver dragons enjoy taking the smaller shape. Indeed, unlike the disdainful gold dragons who hold themselves largely apart from the affairs of two-legged beings, silver dragons love human and elven company. Legends are told of Huma and the silver dragon who loved him, and of Silvara and the elf-lord Gilthanis, who vanished from the world before the Council of Whitestone and were never heard from again.

Tragedy, however, inevitably scars any loving relationship between mortal and dragon. Without transformation (explained later), a dragon will far outlive its partner, and the couple will bear no children. With transformation, the dragon loses almost all traces of its old identity and must confront the rapidly closing specter of death that faces all humans and demihumans. Worse, the enemies of good dragons are many and have long

memories; evil forces would be only too happy to strike back at a silver dragon, in whatever form, through the dragon's loved ones. The mortal lover eventually might even reject the transformed partner for any number of reasons, leaving the former dragon devastated and alone—and perhaps with a child. (It must be added that this last possibility has never yet happened, thankfully.)

Most devastating of all, however, is the almost universal opposition that Krynnish natives—and dragons—have for any hint of intimate relations between dragon and nondragon. The discovery that a loving partner is actually a silver dragon has been known to destroy a relationship, and even an accepting human or elven partner will face horror, rage, and pity from others of his kind who learn of the situation.

Half-silver: There have never been any Krynnish stories, from any source, of any offspring resulting from the union of a silver dragon and a human or demihuman. (The few tragic romances known to legend involved a human or elven male.) There are rumors, however, that a silver dragon who loves a mortal can be given the chance to forever remain in mortal form, as a special gift from the dragon-god Paladine. Such was said to be the choice that Huma's lover faced, though she turned it down so that Huma could find the dragonlances and fight the evil dragons of the world.

Any Krynnish silver dragon who mates with a human or demihuman of the opposite sex will not be able to conceive children. However, a silver dragon who is transformed by Paladine into a mortal will be able to have children normally. Such transformations are almost unheard of, and no examples are known of it. These transformations, into human, half-elven, or elven form, would be done solely for the love of a mortal human, elf, or half-elf, invariably of good alignment, who stands out as an admired champion of Good.

The child of such a union always appears to have the normal characteristics of its mother, whether she was originally a human, half-elf, or elf (or was transformed into one). The child's silver irises and hair are not particularly remarkable to most passersby, as some elven races have the same features. However, the child will show a lifelong aptitude at understanding anything said to it, in any language. Even if spoken to in a foreign tongue, the child has a 75% chance of making its answer clearly known. Additionally, the offspring can reach considerable levels of ability in whatever character class it adopts, perhaps less than a human could do but often better than a normal elf or half-elf.

Other than this, the Krynnish half-silver has no particular legacy, except for the undoubtedly shocking discovery that one of its parents was once a dragon. This moment could be the one that casts the

Table 2: Weight (Pounds)

| Race | Base | Modifier |
|------------------|---------|----------|
| Half-Gold | 180/170 | 4d8 |
| Half-Silver | 160/130 | 3d8 |
| Half-Bronze | 150/120 | 3d8 |
| Half-Silver, K. | * | * |
| Half-Chiang Lung | 90/70 | 3d6 |
| Half-Shen Lung | 90/70 | 3d6 |
| Half-Greyhawk | 130/120 | 2d6 |
| Half-Steel | 130/120 | 2d6 |
| Deep Dragon | 100/115 | 2d4 |
| Half-Iron | 170/150 | 4 d 8 |

*Use the statistics from the *Player's Handbook*, page 24, for human, half-elf, or elf, whichever form the PC's mother took.

Table 4: Thief Skill Racial Adjustments

| Skill | H-Gd | H-Sv | H-Bz | H-Gk | H-St | DD | H-In |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|------|
| Pick pockets | -5% | - | +5% | + 5 | + 5 | -5 | - 5 |
| Open locks | +5% | -5% | - | - 5 | -5 | -5 | + 5 |
| F/R traps | - | +5% | -5% | - 5 | - 5 | +5 | + 5 |
| Move silently | -10% | - | +10% | - | - | +10 | - |
| Hide/shadows | - | +5% | +10% | - | - | +10 | - |
| Detect noise | +10% | -5% | - | +5 | +5 | - | - |
| Climb walls | -10% | -5% | - | - | - | +5 | -10 |
| Read languages | +5% | - | - | +15 | +15 | -10 | - |

Half-chiang lung and **half-shen lung** cannot become thieves, and so have no thieving-ability modifiers. Those who become bushi have normal chances for purse-cutting, pick-pocketing, and so forth, though half-chiang lung avoid doing so if at all possible. **Krynnish half-silvers** use whatever racial bonuses are appropriate to their appearance (human, elven, or half-elven).

character out into the world as an adventurer, seeking to learn more about its parent's lost dragon heritage while trying to keep the same knowledge a secret from potentially hostile strangers. Unfortunately, the character's acceptance into silver dragon society is hardly guaranteed.

FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign

The people of the Realms are almost as cosmopolitan as those of Oerth, but less inclined to self-centeredness. They are often idealistic as well, but still prone to mind their own business and avoid prying into the lives of strangers, who are generally accepted and treated well but with some reserve (at least in good societies). A half-dragon, however, will face prejudice in some areas because of its strange appearance.

A confusing element thrown into the discussion of half-dragons in the Realms is the issue of weredragons, a unique local race described in DRAGON® issue #134 and the FORGOTTEN REALMS adventure, FA1 *Halls of the High King*. This race is interfertile with both dragons and humans, but it is not (yet) suitable for presentation as a player character in the AD&D game, so we will skip further discussion of it here.

Aside from the usual gold, silver, and bronze dragons (the latter of which can assume human or demihuman form in the Realms), a few other dragon types are present that can (and sometimes do) interbreed with two-legged folk.

Half -gold, half-silver, half -bronze: These are all found in the Realms, though they cannot possibly be called common or even "rare." Even Elminster is pressed to name more than two dozen of them known from the last thousand years of Realms history, and some of these (who led less-than-exemplary lives) are suspected of fabricating their "draconic" parentage to cover darker origins or to gain a certain notoriety or respect from peers.

Half-steel: The steel dragon of the Realms, called the Waterdeep dragon by some because it is most often found in that city, appears related to the Greyhawk dragon through a rather recent common ancestor. The steel dragon (described in the FORGOTTEN REALMS supplement *Draconomicon*) shares many of the characteristics and behaviors of the Greyhawk dragon. As would be expected, there are also about a dozen or so half-steels in Waterdeep, loosely associated as a little-known group calling itself The Confluence. Members of The Confluence are supported by patrons who are usually their parents, either dragon, human, or demihuman. Half-steels travel in magical disguises or, at minimum, in all-covering robes to avoid drawing attention. They are often called upon to undertake missions for their patrons, and they themselves might hire novice adventurers to perform certain missions, though without revealing their true natures.

Drow-dragon (half-deep): The evil deep dragons of the Realms' Underdark have only one two-legged ally: the drow. One can hardly imagine the potential for evil of which the progeny of a deep dragon and a drow would be capable, and this outcome is indeed the case in nearly all "drow-dragons," as they are called. Only two have been known to recorded history; one was slain in its youth by jealous drow rivals, but the other gained considerable power and may yet live somewhere in the Underdark. It is speculated that a drow-dragon could become disenchanted with its life underground and become a seeker of good, but the chances of this are regarded as minuscule.

Kara-Tur campaign

Because of the unusual powers and status of the Oriental dragons of the Realms, they and their offspring are treated here separately from the "western" dragons of that land and other worlds. It should be noted that thanks to spelljamming, Oriental dragons are well established on a variety of worlds in many crystal spheres. Still, all that is said about the half-dragons of Kara-Tur applies to similar beings elsewhere.

Certain types of Oriental dragons of Kara-Tur are well known to take human lovers at times, either by design or whim. (Elves and other "western" demihumans are little known in Kara-Tur, and Oriental dragons are not particularly interested in Oriental demihumans such as korobokuru or hengeyokai.) Highly respected royal families and the lowest peasant clans are equally likely to have dragons as ancestors (possibly the same dragon), though such an event is still quite rare. This doesn't prevent some exaggerated boasts and outright falsehoods from being handed down through the generations by unknowing descendants. Human ancestors who were known to be the consorts of dragons have a special notoriety in family histories, and are accredited with extraordinary beauty, leadership, rightful behavior, marvelous clothing, or other such qualities. To be the partner of a dragon, under almost any circumstances, is often a badge of honor.

The reasons for such general acceptance are not hard to fathom. The half-dragon offspring of Oriental dragons, known as spirit folk, are quite beautiful by human standards. (Obviously, different laws of genetics apply to Oriental dragons than apply to their western cousins.) The appearance and mysterious natures of spirit folk make them intensely attractive. Furthermore, Oriental dragons are a central part of the much-revered Celestial Bureaucracy of Kara-Tur, and any positive association with them is widely sought, particularly by those whose livelihoods fall under the sway of particular dragons in the Bureaucracy.

Two types of Oriental dragons are known to take human lovers, and either

bear or father children by them. Both are river dragons: the chiang lung and the shen lung. Their half-human offspring are river spirit folk, detailed in the *Oriental Adventures* volume and Kara-Tur appendix to the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM supplement. River spirit folk are easily accepted into their human parents' clans or families, though they also must obey any directives, summons, or requests from their dragon parents without question or delay. They are also subject to mood swings based on the condition of their home rivers, as outlined in the two references named above.

Half-chiang lung: These are the most common half-dragons of Kara-Tur, but half-shen lung run a close second. The daughters of the officious chiang lung find humans fascinating, and often they assume human form and attempt to marry men who have caught their fancy. These daughters' fathers, however, are far from pleased at such liaisons, and might order their daughters (even the married ones) to return to their river homes forever. It is not unusual for such prohibitions to arrive too late to prevent the birth of children, however, and after a joint upbringing by dragon and human clans these youths are free to go adventuring if they wish.

Such adventurers are invariably warrior types, particularly samurai and kensai because of their high social standing and martial excellence. The grown offspring of chiang lung and humans are known (and sometimes feared) for their pursuit of perfection, honor, and duty. Some eventually lead their human parents' clans, an event that the allies of those clans celebrate and the enemies of those clans regard with great concern, if not terror.

It does happen, if a chiang lung male is without a partner, that he might be attracted to a human female of exceptional beauty or talent. This is very rare, however, as male chiang lung try very hard to discourage interbreeding of any kind. In any event, river spirit folk born of chiang lung and humans are quite welcome in either society, and many is the chiang lung elder who looks upon the achievements of his spirit folk grandchild with pride.

Half-shen lung: Nearly all that is said above about half-chiang lung is true of the half-shen lung, who are also river spirit folk. Most of those who go adventuring are chaotic but honorable bushi who do not care to submit themselves to a plethora of laws. It is also the case that male and female shen lung are equally attracted to opposite-sex human partners.

Dragons from other worlds

It is difficult to say much about the wide variety of dragons across the many crystal spheres and Outer Planes, regarding any half-human offspring they might have. About all that can be said is that the singular dragon types, such as the platinum dragon (variously known as Bahamut or Paladine) and the two adamantine dragons

of the Twin Paradises, is that they are too concerned with dragons to bother much with humans.

Only one type of dragon in Wildspace is known to be able to naturally assume human or demihuman form: the radiant or celestial dragon. However, this dragon despises mammalian beings like humans and demihumans, at best regarding them as intelligent rivals for territory. There are a few cases of radiant dragons being friendly to humankind, but these are isolated cases, and the dragons could not possibly imagine taking a human as a mate. (Remember what was said earlier about Zeus and the hamster.)

Other types of dragons may exist on other worlds, however, that could interbreed with humans and demihumans. Readers with access to DRAGON issue #170 will note the article on ferrous dragons, and in particular the iron dragon, which can assume human shape and seems to like humans a lot. This type is used here as an example of what a half-dragon with nontraditional parentage would be like.

Down to details

The AD&D game mechanics for playing half-dragons are generally like the ones given in the *Council of Wyrms* boxed set. All ability scores are obtained using any of the character-creation methods described in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*, then applying the appropriate ability-score modifiers (given here in the section on each type of half-dragon).

Half-dragons use character-class Hit Dice and all standard rules for playing human or demihuman characters. Character classes available to half-dragons are listed in the section "Half-dragon roster." Half-dragons of any type cannot become multi-classed or dual-classed. They may have one class only. Tables 1-4 offer basic information on the appearance and thieving skills of various types of half-dragons discussed here.

Half-dragons do not have to use kits, but kits are recommended for adding flavor to the PCs. Kits require use of the proficiency rules outlined in the *Player's Handbook* and in Chapter Two of the *Council of Wyrms* boxed set's *Book One: Rules*. A half-dragon PC can use any kit allowed to its class and to its human or demihuman parent's race (including kits from the Complete Handbook series), except the dragon-rider kit from *Council of Wyrms* and any kit involving the slaying or harming of dragons. A number of kits from *The Complete Book of Humanoids* also are available: (Warrior) Sell-sword, Wilderness Protector; (Wizard) Hedge Wizard, Humanoid Scholar, Outlaw Mage; (Priest) Oracle, War Priest, Wandering Mystic; (Rogue) Scavenger, Tramp.

The offspring of Oriental dragons, river spirit folk, almost never use these kits. Instead, they use kits reflecting their Oriental culture. The samurai kit was detailed

in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* (pages 31-32); the bushi and kensai kits were unofficially updated for the AD&D 2nd Edition game in DRAGON issue #189, in "The Other Orientals" (pages 28 and 30, respectively). If this issue is not available, the DM can create similar kits using the material from the *Oriental Adventures* volume.

Krynnish half-silvers, because of the unusual nature of their campaign set-up, can become members of the Holy Order of Stars (if clerics) or the Orders of High Sorcery (if wizards). Details on these variant classes are found in the *Tales of the Lance* boxed set (*World Book of Ansalon*, pages 80-96).

Two new half-dragon kits were given in the *Council of Wyrms* rules. They are repeated here, adapted for use in other AD&D game campaigns.

Exile kit

The exile is a half-dragon who was cast out of the community into which he was born. His mother's relationship with a dragon was kept secret from all neighbors, out of justified fear of their reaction. Early in life, evidence mounted that hinted at the young half-dragon's mixed heritage. The half-dragon thus begins adventuring after banishment from his homeland. Forced to fend for himself, he becomes a self-reliant wanderer seeking a place to call his own, though shunned by many.

Settings: The exile is appropriate to the *Council of Wyrms*, GREYHAWK, and FORGOTTEN REALMS campaigns. No child of an Oriental dragon has ever been known to be an exile, though bizarre circumstances might cause this. A Krynnish half-silver would be raised as a normal human or demihuman child, and also would avoid this fate.

Requirements: Any half-dragon can be an exile, though members of the kit are usually thieves who had to steal to stay alive. Exiles are typically of neutral or chaotic alignment.

Role: Exiles wander the world. They fear the repercussions that come with being a recognizable half-dragon, for such beings are generally loathed by both sides of their genetic heritage. Sometimes the fear is held at bay by hope, for exiles desperately wish for a community to accept them. Many also carry deep hatred for those who banished them and for the dragons (and humans or demihumans) who produced them. Exiles have few or no trusted friends, and they are usually cold and aloof, often consumed with bitterness though they secretly hope for acceptance.

A half-dragon exile never stays in one place too long, for eventually his true nature is revealed. Then trouble starts, and he prefers leaving on his own before being banished again. Most exiles perform odd jobs, carry news from location to location, steal, and do anything else it takes to survive in the netherworld between dragon and humans or demihumans.

Not all communities display fear and hatred toward exiles, but most do. Those that allow them rarely make them feel welcome, but they use the half-dragons to their best advantage, such as to perform special missions (item recovery/theft, spying, diplomatic go-between, etc.). While no exile enjoys being used, most will take on this kind of work in lieu of stealing or remaining alone.

Weapon proficiencies: An exile usually selects weapons much different from the traditional weapons (if any) of its non-dragon parent. Easily concealed weapons, such as daggers, saps, short swords, darts, and slings are common. Large weapons common to nobility or regular armies, such as lances, polearms, or two-handed swords are very rarely used.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Bonus – survival. Required – none. Recommended, general – direction sense, fire-building, fishing, weather sense. Recommended, warrior – endurance, hunting, running. Recommended, rogue – juggling.

Equipment: An exile can use any weapons, armor, and equipment suitable to his class.

Special benefits: Exiles receive one additional nonweapon proficiency slot to fill when they are first created. Those who have thieving skills also receive an additional 15 discretionary skill points to distribute at creation.

Special hindrances: Because of the universal dislike of half-dragons-and especially exiles-members of this kit receive a -3 penalty to encounter reactions when dealing with NPCs. Additionally, it is very unlikely that the exile will have learned to speak any dragon language.

Wealth options: Exiles start play extremely poor. They receive only 3d6 gp with which to purchase equipment, but at the DM's option might have some items they managed to scavenge or steal earlier in life.

Ward kit

The ward is a half-dragon who has a wealthy patron-usually the half-dragon's dragon parent, but possibly a government body, guild, criminal organization, or non-dragon parent. This patron provides the ward with wealth, a place to live, and tasks to perform. Some patrons provide assistance without ever revealing themselves; others are known to the wards, but the relationship is kept secret from others. A dragon parent provides help either because it is responsible for the half-dragon's birth or because it wants to use the half-dragon as a tool. Non-dragon patrons have their own reasons for employing the half-dragon, but none do it out of charity.

Settings: The ward is appropriate for the *Council of Wyrms*, GREYHAWK, and FORGOTTEN REALMS settings. This is a common kit for half-dragons with silver, Greyhawk, or steel dragon parents, especially those living in large cities like

Greyhawk or Waterdeep. It is not known to be used by the children of Oriental dragons or by a Krynnish half-silver, who would be raised as a normal human or demihuman child.

Requirements: Nil.

Role: When a ward is openly accepted by her patrons, she has a place in the patron's clan or organization, if any. She is tolerated by the dragon's allies and subordinates for work purposes but might be shunned socially. Some wards are helped in secret; these wander from place to place, though they do so with better resources than exiles.

Many wards live well. Often, all their patrons ask for in return is the same type of service their other servants provide; the half-dragon is not so much "used" as simply employed.

Weapon proficiencies: A ward can select any weapon available for her class.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Bonus – etiquette. Required – none. Recommended, general – artistic ability, dancing, riding (land-based), seamanship, swimming. Recommended, priest – ancient history, engineering, healing, reading/writing. Recommended, warrior – endurance, hunting, running. Recommended, rogue – appraising, gem cutting, juggling, musical instrument. Recommended, wizard – spellcraft.

Equipment: A ward can use any weapons, armor, and equipment suitable to her class.

Special benefits: Wards have access to the wealth and knowledge of their patrons. This does not mean that they are provided with unlimited funds and supplies, but they receive aid when they most need it, seldom more than once per year. Patrons also are likely to provide tips and quests leading to considerable rewards.

Special hindrances: Because of the universal distaste often exhibited toward half-dragons, members of this kit receive a -1 penalty to encounter reactions when dealing with NPCs. Some wards are kept on a figurative short leash by their patrons, who don't wish the half-dragons to gain too much freedom and perhaps strike out on their own.

Wealth options: Wards start play with 5d6 x 10 gold pieces to purchase equipment. At the DM's option, some of this amount might be in the form of equipment, such as weapons, armor, or other materials.

Discretionary/fixed abilities

As half-dragon characters mature and gain levels, they slowly become more like their dragon parents. These changes are reflected in the receiving of new abilities and powers as certain levels are reached. Two types of new abilities are involved here: *discretionary* and *fixed*.

Players, with their DM's permission, should decide which race (human, elf, dwarf, gnome, halfling, kender, half-elf, etc.) is mixed with their draconic heritage.

As a starting character, the half-dragon PC has all the racial abilities of his demihuman parent (as detailed in the *Player's Handbook* or other appropriate reference), though the character of course looks like a half-dragon as previously described. Half-dragons with human parents start with no racial abilities.

As half-dragons increase in level, the metamorphosis lurking within them begins to manifest. Half-dragons at this point are treated differently, depending on whether they have human or demihuman parents. Note: This material does not apply to Krynnish half-silvers or to the offspring of Oriental dragons.

At 2nd, 4th, and 6th level, the player of a half-dragon PC with a demihuman parent can choose one of the draconic discretionary abilities listed in the section "Half-dragon roster" and add it to her character sheet. To balance this, the character must lose one demihuman racial ability; this ability has been superseded and replaced by one of draconic origin, showing the character's inevitable shift toward dragonkind as her body matures.

For example, a 2nd-level half-bronze half-elf is about to take the *water breathing* draconic ability. This replaces the character's elven 60' infravision. A DM should decide beforehand if the player gets to choose which ability is replaced, or if the decision is made through random selection by player or DM.

Fixed abilities come into play here, too, but they are not chosen and occur regardless of other factors. At 5th level, all half-dragons with demihuman parents gain the ability to use their talonlike nails as claw weapons. At 7th level, they reach their full physical maturity and stop metamorphosing. While still obviously humanoid, they are also obviously related to dragonkind. At 7th level, they gain the ability to use their half-dragon breath weapon. Each of these fixed abilities must replace one demihuman racial ability, just as happens with discretionary abilities.

A half-dragon with a human parent has no innate racial abilities. The discretionary and fixed abilities are received as described above, but without the loss of any other ability. Furthermore, discretionary abilities continue to be received by the half-dragon at even-numbered levels beyond the 6th, as the half-dragon/half-human character becomes increasingly dragonlike with age. The receiving of discretionary abilities ends only when either the half-dragon has reached its maximum level within its character class, and thus cannot progress further and receive new abilities, or when no further abilities remain for it to take. A half-dragon/half-human character is likely to be more powerful in the long run than a half-dragon/half-demihuman character.

Half-dragon roster

The following material presents all the major types of half-dragons known in the

various AD&D game worlds. Ability-score modifiers are used when half-dragon characters are generated. Alignment tendencies do not have to be strictly followed for PCs, but most half-dragons of each type have leanings toward the alignments given.

Half-dragons can exceed the level limits for the allowable classes listed here if they have high prime requisite scores (as presented in the *DMG*, page 15). What specific class or kit they belong to does not matter.

Discretionary and fixed abilities available to each half-dragon type are listed below. Note again that not all these abilities are available to half-dragon/half-demihuman characters, as each such character usually receives only three discretionary abilities and two fixed abilities, no matter what level of advancement is achieved. The children of Oriental dragons and transformed Krynnish silver dragons, however, gain all the fixed abilities listed from the start of play.

Setting abbreviations

CW: Council of Wyrm boxed set

GH: GREYHAWK campaign (Flanaess continent, Oerth)

FR: FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign (Western lands, Toril)

KT: FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign (Kara-Tur, Toril)

DL: DRAGONLANCE campaign (Ansalon continent, Krynn)

OC: Other AD&D campaign

Half-Gold

Worlds: CW, GH, FR.

Appearance: Normal half-dragon with dark brown-gold hair, golden irises, pale gold skin.

Ability-score modifiers: +2 Strength, -2 Wisdom, +1 Charisma.

Ability-score ranges: Str 7/20, Dex 4/18, Con 6/18, Int 3/18, Wis 3/18, Cha 6/18.

Starting age: 14 + 1d4 years.

Alignment tendency: Lawful good.

Allowable classes: Cleric (10), fighter (11), ranger (10), mage (14), thief (9).

Discretionary abilities: *Water breathing* (at will); *speak with animals* (at will); *bless* (twice per day); *detect lie* (twice per day); *sleep* (twice per day); *dragon fear* (three times per day); immune to fire; immune to gas; 90' infravision.

Fixed abilities: Claw attacks (1d6/1d6); breath weapon (spray of fire 10' long, damage 3d6, usable twice per day).

Half-Silver

Worlds: CW, GH, FR.

Appearance: Normal half-dragon with silver-white hair, silver irises, very pale gray-white skin.

Ability-score modifiers: +1 Strength, +1 Constitution, -1 Intelligence.

Ability-score ranges: Str 6/19, Dex 5/19, Con 5/18, Int 3/18, Wis 3/18, Cha 5/18.

Starting age: 14 + 1d4 years.

Alignment tendency: Lawful good.

Allowable classes: Cleric (14), fighter (10), ranger (12), mage (11), thief (14).



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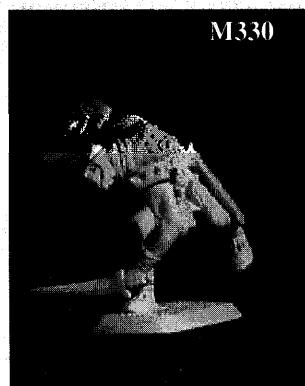
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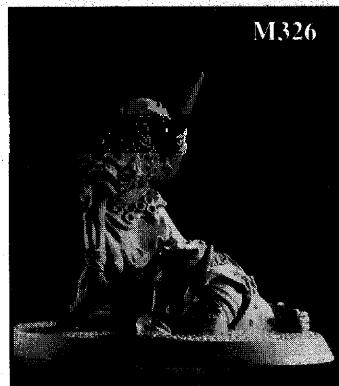
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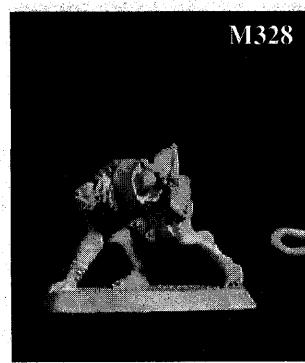
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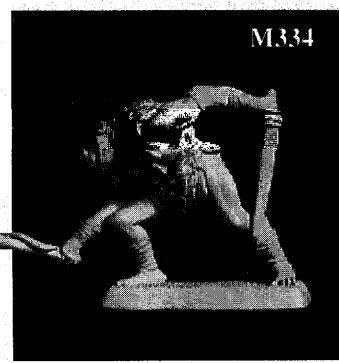
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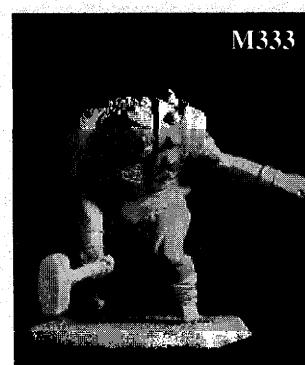
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Discretionary abilities: *Feather fall* (once per day); *wall of fog* (once per day); *cloud walk* (one hour per level per day); *dragon fear* (twice per day); immune to cold; 90' infravision.

Fixed abilities: Claw attacks (1d4/1d4); breath weapon (spray of cold 8' long, damage 4d4, usable twice per day).

Half-Bronze

Worlds: CW, FR.

Appearance: Normal half-dragon with dark metallic-brown hair bronze irises, warm bronze (light to medium brown) skin.

Ability-score modifiers: +1 Strength, +1 Dexterity, +1 Wisdom.

Ability-score ranges: Str 5/18, Dex 6/20, Con 4/18, Int 3/18, Wis 4/18, Cha 4/18.

Starting age: 14 + 1d4 years.

Alignment tendency: Lawful good.

Allowable classes: Cleric (9), fighter (14), ranger (14), mage (8), specialist wizard—illusionist (9), thief (11).

Discretionary abilities: *Water breathing* (at will); *speak with animals* (at will); *create food and water* (twice per day); *ESP* (once per day); *dragon fear* (once per day); immune to electricity; 60' infravision.

Fixed abilities: Claw attacks (1d4/1d4); breath weapon (bolt of lightning 8' long, damage 3d4, usable twice per day).

Half-Silver, Krynnish

Worlds: DL.

Appearance: Normal human, half-elven, or elven body (as per mother's race) with silver hair and silver irises.

Ability-score modifiers: +1 to all rolls for human, half-elven, or elven ability scores.

Ability-score ranges: As per mother's race.

Starting age (regardless of parentage or appearance): 15 + 1d6.

Alignment tendency: Lawful good.

Allowable classes (regardless of parentage or appearance): Cleric-Holy Orders (14), fighter (15), ranger (17), specialist wizard-High Sorcery (17), thief (14).

Discretionary abilities: Nil.

Fixed abilities: Ability to understand any intelligent communication within 5' radius and to communicate in previously unknown languages with 75% accuracy.

Half-Chiang Lung

Worlds: KT.

Appearance: Normal human body, though of great beauty, with light golden or pale yellow skin, black hair, blue or green irises (as per river spirit folk).

Ability-score modifiers: Nil.

Ability-score ranges: Str 6/18, Dex 12/18, Con 6/14, Int 12/18, Wis 9/18, Cha 14/18.

Starting age: 15 + 1d6 years.

Alignment tendency: Lawful neutral, lawful good, neutral good.

Allowable classes: Fighter (unlimited with bushi, kensai, or samurai kit), fighter (12 with other kit).

Discretionary abilities: Nil.

Fixed abilities: Swim at normal movement

rate (12); breathe air and water equally well; bonus languages (fishes, Celestial Court, trade language, spirit folk); +1 bonus to saving throws vs. all water-related spells, wands, staves, rods, and miscellaneous magical items; -1 penalty to saving throws vs. fire-based attacks; can *lower water* (as the spell) once per day by 10', for five rounds; 120' infravision; all wounds and diseases cured by bathing in home river.

Half-Shen Lung

Worlds: KT.

Appearance: Normal human body, though of great beauty, with light golden or pale yellow skin, black hair, blue or green irises (as per river spirit folk).

Ability-score modifiers: Nil.

Ability-score ranges: Str 6/18, Dex 12/18, Con 6/14, Int 12/18, Wis 9/18, Cha 14/18.

Starting age: 15 + 1d6 years.

Alignment tendency: Chaotic neutral, chaotic good, neutral good.

Allowable classes: Fighter (unlimited with bushi, kensai, or samurai kit), fighter (12 with other kit).

Discretionary abilities: Nil.

Fixed abilities: Swim at normal movement rate (12); breathe air and water equally well; bonus languages (fishes, Celestial Court, trade language, spirit folk); +1 bonus to saving throws vs. all water-related spells, wands, staves, rods, and miscellaneous magical items; -1 penalty to saving throws vs. fire-based attacks; can *lower water* (as the spell) once per day by 10', for five rounds; 120' infravision; all wounds and diseases cured by bathing in home river.

Half-Greyhawk

Worlds: GH.

Appearance: Normal half-dragon, with dark gray hair, steel-gray irises, and light gray skin.

Ability-score modifiers: +2 Intelligence, +1 Strength, -1 Dexterity.

Ability-score ranges: Str 4/18, Dex 3/18, Con 4/18, Int 8/19, Wis 3/18, Cha 6/18.

Starting age: 14 + 1d4 years.

Alignment tendency: Lawful neutral, lawful good.

Allowable classes: Cleric (8), fighter (10), specialist wizard-enchanter (15), mage (14), ranger (10), thief (14).

Discretionary abilities: Cast *cantrip* (twice per day); cast *friends* (once per day); use *dragon fear* (once per day); +4 bonus to saves vs. 1st-level wizard spells; +4 bonus to saves vs. poison; 60' infravision.

Fixed abilities: Claw attacks (1d3/1d3); breath weapon (spray of poisonous gas forming 10'-square cube in front of character, -2 save vs. poison or die, usable twice per day).

Half-Steel

Worlds: FR.

Appearance: Normal half-dragon, with dark gray hair, light gray skin, and two-color eyes (one silver, one dark gray).

Ability-score modifiers: +2 Intelligence, +1 Strength, -1 Dexterity.

Ability-score ranges: Str 4/18, Dex 3/18, Con 4/18, Int 8/19, Wis 3/18, Cha 6/18.

Starting age: 14 + 1d4 years.

Alignment tendency: Lawful neutral, lawful good.

Allowable classes: Cleric (6), fighter (11), specialist wizard-diviner (15), mage (14), ranger (9), thief (14).

Discretionary abilities: Cast *detect lie* (twice per day); cast *charm person* (twice per day); use *dragon fear* (once per day); 25% magic resistance; ability to use any magical item meant for mages/wizards; 60' infravision.

Fixed abilities: Claw attacks (1d3/1d3); breath weapon (spray of poisonous gas forming 10'-square cube in front of character, -4 save vs. poison or must *feign death* for 2d10 turns as per the spell, usable twice per day).

Drow-Dragon

Worlds: FR.

Appearance: Normal half-dragon, with black hair, bright red eyes, and deep maroon skin.

Ability-score modifiers: +2 Dexterity, -2 Wisdom.

Ability-score ranges: Str 6/18, Dex 8/20, Con 4/18, Int 5/18, Wis 3/16, Cha 3/16.

Starting age: 14 + 1d4 years.

Alignment tendency: Chaotic evil.

Allowable classes: Cleric (12), fighter (12), mage (15), thief (16).

Discretionary abilities: Use *detect magic* (at will); cast *true seeing* (twice per day); immune to *charm*, *sleep*, *hold* magic; use *dragon fear* (once per day); +4 bonus to saves vs. and -1 on each die of damage from heat/fire/cold/ice spells; regenerate 1 hp/turn; 120' infravision.

Fixed abilities: Claw attacks (1d3/1d3), breath weapon (spray of flesh-corrosive gas 5' long, damage 3d4, usable twice per day).

Half-Iron

Worlds: OC.

Appearance: Normal half-dragon, with black hair, dark gray eyes, and medium-gray or ash-black skin.

Ability-score modifiers: +2 Strength, +2 Constitution, -2 Intelligence, -2 Wisdom.

Ability-score ranges: Str 12/20, Dex 3/18, Con 12/20, Int 3/18, Wis 3/18, Cha 3/18.

Starting age: 14 + 1d4 years.

Alignment tendency: Lawful neutral.

Allowable classes: Cleric (9), fighter (15), mage (8), ranger (13), thief (14).

Discretionary abilities: Immune to all heat/fire attacks and spells; use *dragon fear* (once per day); cast *heat metal* (twice per day); cast *stone shape* (twice per day); 90' infravision.

Fixed abilities: Claw attacks (1d6/1d6), breath weapon (spray of sparks 10' long, damage 3d6, usable twice per day).

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IT WAS COLD THAT SPRING, AND THE NIGHTS WERE SILENT.

IT WAS GOOD TO BE BACK AT MY OWN HEARTH. I WAS SITTING AT MY BOARD, TAKING IT EASY AFTER WRAPPING UP THAT CASE IN THE ORKNEYS.

I ALWAYS TRUSTED ROXY TO POUR FOR ME. SHE KNEW A GOOD WINE. AND WHEN IT WAS POISONED.

GUNNAR THORSON "A CASE OF ELF-SHOT"

BUT THAT NIGHT, I'D LEFT THE DOOR UNBOLTED.

GUNNAR THORSON!

I NEED YOUR HELP. MY FATHER'S DEAD.

IT WAS INGA, DAUGHTER OF OLAF, THE LOCAL LORD. SHE'D GROWN UP A LOT SINCE I'D LAST SAT IN HER FATHER'S HALL.

MURDERED?

YES—BY ELVES—I SAW THEM IN THE FOREST—

IT'S MY FAULT. I DIDN'T TELL ANYONE.

SIT DOWN, KID. ROXY, POUR HER A DRINK.

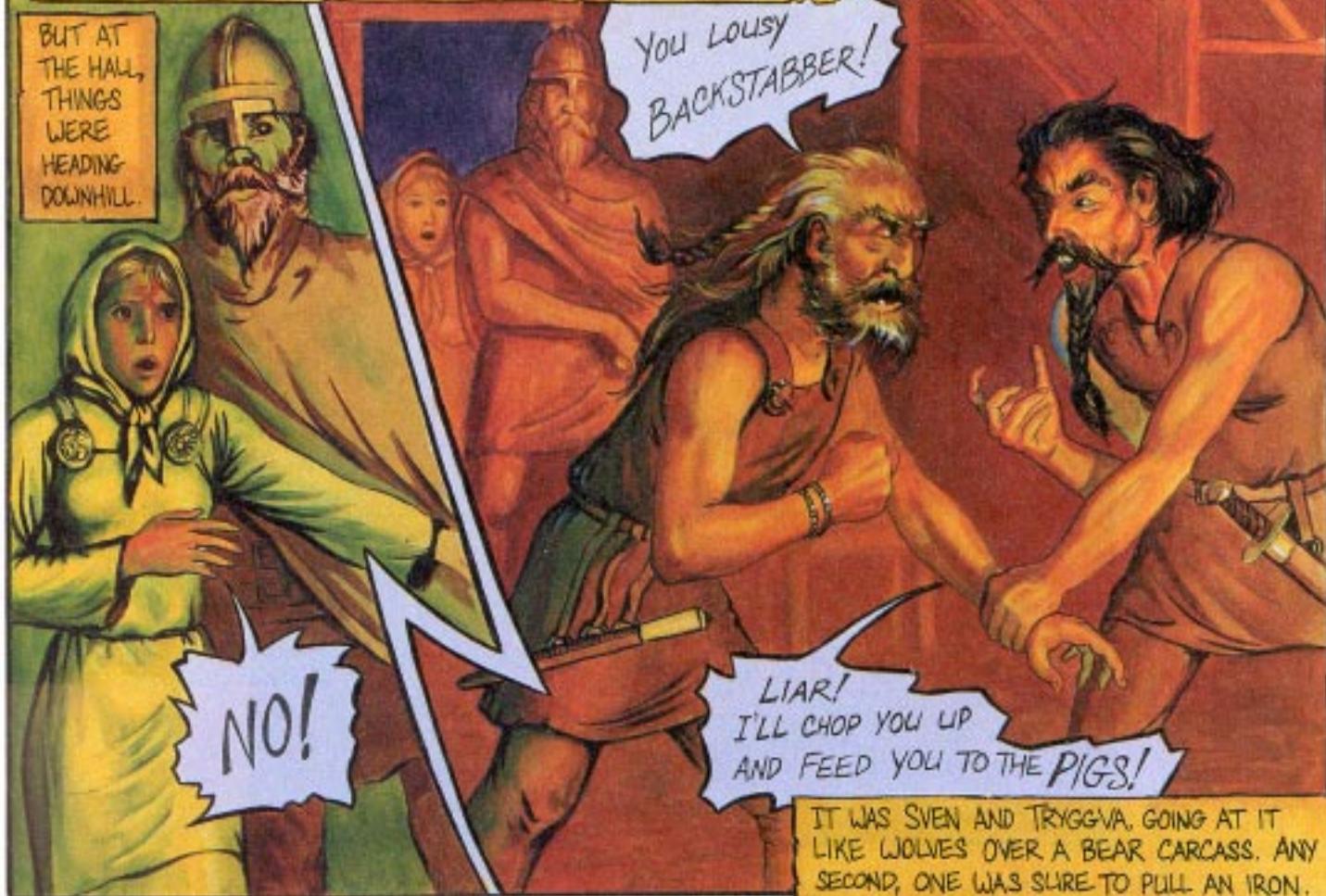
I'D NEVER NAILED AN ELF. IN FACT, I DIDN'T BELIEVE IN THEM. BUT MAYBE THE LITTLE LADY KNEW SOMETHING I DIDN'T.

FIRST, WERE THERE WITNESSES?

I DIDN'T SEE HIS DEATH MYSELF. COUSIN TRYGGA SAW IT AND SVEN LALIGAR. I THINK YOU KNOW HIM.



* WHAT WAS BEING LEFT UNSAID HERE WAS THAT TRYGGVA STOOD TO INHERIT THE HALL, AND PROBABLY INGA AS WELL. HE HAD ALL THE MOTIVE IN MIDGARD. BUT I KNEW SVEN. WE USED TO CALL HIM 'SVEN THE SHIFTY'. I HADN'T SEEN HIM IN YEARS, THOUGH I'D HEARD HE'D HAD SOME LUCK IN THE EAST, AND WAS WINTERING AT OLAF'S STEAD.



CAMPAIGN JOURNAL



The Sea Barons

by Carl Sargent

Cartography by Dave Sutherland

Compiled by Wolfgang Baur

This is the second in a short series of articles for the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting. (The first appeared in DRAGON® issue #204.) These pieces were originally written for the Ivid the Undying accessory, and together they constitute a survey of the high and low points of the most dangerous "kingdom" of Oerth—the decaying remains of Aerdy, the Great Kingdom.

This installment examines the wild rovers of Spindrift Sound, and the powerful ships, magic, and treasures hidden in their secluded coves and island strongholds.

Also in this issue is the article, "Fiend Knights and Dark Artifacts," which details several items of dark magic and the dangerous fiend knight.

The islands of the Sea Barons were among the last to be settled by the Oeridians, and many smaller islands are still largely unsettled. The settlers are largely a mix of Oeridians and the Flan. The overking's imperial charter established the isles as four Baronies: Asperd Isle, Oakenisle, Fairisle, and Leastisle. Patrolling the coasts of the Great Kingdom from Bellport far to the south, much of the Great Kingdom's naval power was concentrated here, and the position of Lord High Admiral was determined by the outcome of a naval battle fought between the baronies. Asperd Isle won that battle, and Asperd has become the largest town and center of power in these isles.

Militarily, the Sea Barons simply stayed out of the Greyhawk Wars. With war far to the west, and Rauxes many hundreds of miles away, the old Lord High Admiral Sencho Foy decided that the threats of the northern barbarians were too dangerous to risk the isles' fleets in battles far from home. Dispatching navies to Relmor Bay to fight Nyrond would be suicidal, especially since the overthrow of the Lordship of the Isles left the southern waters of the Aerdy Sea more dangerous than ever.

The old admiral suffered one of those sudden deaths so common among Aerdy rulers, and his successor is a stern and hard man, Basmajian Arras, who has the support of the barons of the two remaining isles, Fairisle and Oakenisle. All are aware that they are faced with increased threats and unknowns. The northern barbarians, no longer at war on land, have more time and resources to spend raiding the Solnor Ocean. While coastal cities offer good targets, so do the wealthy lands of the Barons. To the south, the Scarlet

Brotherhood has sent its spies and agents to Asperd and Oakenheart. They have been rebuffed, but the Barons all fear that a naval invasion might be mounted against them from the Lordship of the Isles. Then there are the new elven lands of Len-dore—a complete unknown. Though no threat seems to come from them, the Barons cannot learn what is happening behind the magical barriers there, and this makes them insecure.

Divided lands

Pop.: 45,000 (plus 8,000 on Leastisle)

Capital: Asperd (pop. 7,750)

Ruler: Lord High Admiral Basmajian Arras

Cost Multiplier: 110% of PH cost

The divisions among the Sea Barons heighten their insecurity. Most seriously, Leastisle fell to pirates and buccaneers at the end of the Greyhawk Wars. Most of these freebooters were fleeing the eastern coastal cities of Aerdy, but they brought enough mercenaries and seapower to sack Vernport. They now sail widely, attacking any target that looks soft enough, from North Province to Hepmonaland. They have not raided the other isles of the Barons after one abortive attack against Port Elder. The Sea Barons lack the will to strike against the 8,000 or so ne'er-do-wells on Leastisle, because they fear that the men and ships they might lose in such an action would leave them vulnerable to other enemies.

The other division is one of politics and temperament. Arras favors an alliance, or at least a truce, with the barbarians and Ratik. He argues that this would remove the greatest threat to the Sea Barons, and leave them better able to handle the others. However, the Barons of the other isles do not agree. They point out that such an agreement might not go down well with the eastern Aerdy cities with which the Sea Barons trade.

In the case of Rel Astra, they might get away with it since barbarians rarely raid that far south. However, the Five of Roland and the ruler of Ountsy would certainly react badly, and the Sea Barons could ill afford to lose those trade links. The temperamental division is with the younger sea captains and young bucks of the baronies, who are more aggressive and believe that, with their seapower still intact, the Barons should be more enthusiastic about raiding and piracy (not to mention retaking Leastisle). The old Mede-

gian lands offer a soft target and the Barons raid there, but apart from the occasional foray into Hepmonaland to loot that vast land's spices, ivory, and furs, the Barons' current exploits are very limited.

Arras and the other Barons want to keep their ships close to home for protection; the younger men want to sail the blue seas in search of adventure and bounty, freed as they now are from rulership by Rauxes.

Finally, Arras is well aware that there always has been rivalry between the Barons themselves, especially between Asperd and Oakenheart. He must be sure that he can count on the support of his fellows, rather than assassination by poison or dagger (the weapon he used to eliminate the previous lord high admiral).

Trade and bounty

The isles are fertile and beautiful; the climate is warm and mild, and while grains and livestock do not fare well here, the natural riches of the islands are considerable. Bananas, galda fruit, plantains, and figs grow in abundance. Rock iguanas are as common here as are rats in Rauxes, and unlike those vermin, their tails make excellent eating, marinated and roasted. Wild goats clamber the cliffs and are hunted for their meat. Some islanders even tell the visitor that the seagulls here taste better, less fishy and tough, than anywhere else. But with the abundant seafood available, few eat the birds. Clams (especially the giant clams of Fairisle's coasts), large striped tuna-like fish, and small squid are the staple seafoods.

These goods are in demand by the hungry cities of Aerdy, but the isles have further resources. Oakenisle is named after a unique species of fine oak that flourishes in saline soil and sea breezes, and the superb wood it yields is excellent for ship construction. The oaks grow very slowly, however, so the wood is in short supply and thus commands very high prices.

Fairisle has many small wooded pockets that contain spice bushes, plants, and herbs much in demand by alchemists and herbalists. The strange Tar Hill of Asperd Isle yields a thick, resinous tar of excellent adhesive and waterproofing qualities; when treated with an ammoniac solution it becomes as hard as steel, and thus has a range of obvious uses. The Sea Barons are rich men from their trade, and as a result they can afford the mercenary garrisons that secure their towns and forts. Those

mercenaries are part of the imports the Sea Barons take in return for their goods, but they also take metal weapons and armor for their defense (since the isles have no ore deposits), worked utensils, coinage (from Rel Astra), and also stone for construction.

Ruling the isles

Each Baron administers his isle as his personal fief. Interestingly, house affiliations count for little here; the separation of the Sea Barons from the mainland has divided them from their Houses in the remainder of the Great Kingdom, and they now regard their blood relatives and loyal liegemen as an extended family. Most of the relatives have been in the service of the Barons and their ancestors for generations. Captaincy of sea vessels usually passes from father to son (or, rarely, to a daughter) unless the offspring is conspicuously unsuited to it. In this event, talented newcomers may gain a command if they prove themselves as mates.

If the Barons show more indulgence and kindness to their immediate liegemen and retainers than many other nobles do, they do not do so in the case of the common folk. Most people here are serfs, their bodies and lands owned by the Baron, and they are subject to his wishes. Given the relative richness and ease of life here (taxes and tithes are low by Aerdi standards), people

are not too unhappy with their lot. In any event, the lives of many serfs are eased by the fact the Barons and their liegemen often have slaves in their households, save in Oakenisle. These slaves are humans taken from Hepmonaland for the most part. Thus, Barons do not make excessive demands of their serfs.

Dangers of the isles

Apart from barbarian raids, the isles of the Barons have their own hazards. Poisonous snakes are common on most of the islands, and the deserted Serpent Isle is infested with them. In the coastal waters, the nastiest hazards (and an excellent discouragement to diving for pearls or large clams) are the great rainbow-hued moray eels. Their bites are vicious, and the eels do not release a victim from their jaws even when slain. However, the islanders take a symbolic revenge on this enemy by their tradition of roasting morays over charcoal fires during Brewfest and feasting on their flesh—an acquired taste, to put it mildly.

Sahuagin are the major sentient menace of the coastal waters. They do not organize themselves for more than opportunistic attacks on small fishing boats, but every year a score or more lives are lost to these predatory creatures. In the past two years, the sahuagin have grown bolder and even attacked a coaster recently, and

some fear that someone, or something, is organizing and directing the creatures. Since their numbers and home lairs are unknown, people are increasingly anxious.

The waters and coastlines of the isles are not without their dangers. Strong cross-currents can send a small vessel with an inexperienced captain or fishing crew many miles out to sea, with generally northern currents flowing up from the warmer southern waters. Whirlpools or tsunami are, however, very rare events, and gale-force winds and massive downpours are not too common. However, most people recall the three-day storm of 578 CY, which some laughingly called "Hurricane Ivid."

Asperd Isle

Largest of the islands, Asperd Isle has been the dominant power of the Sea Barons since Baron Asperd won that fateful naval battle centuries ago. Arras has three ocean-going galleons here, and a main fleet of 12 coasters (with a seaworthiness of 70%). The isle's fishing fleet of some 15 vessels almost always stays within two miles of shore.

By informal understanding with the eastern Free Cities, visiting Aerdi vessels only come to Asperd through Ironport. Most trade is conducted by the Barons' ships traveling west, but sometimes a Winethan vessel or one from Roland will

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travel here. Visitors may disembark only if they are personally known to the Naval Phalanx of Asperdi, if they have been invited by the Baron or a liegeman, or if they buy a visiting permit from the phalanx. This costs 150 gp, a price that discourages most visitors. The permit purchaser also must be tattooed with the design of an iguana's head on his left forearm—relatively few casual travelers venture here. At least, if they do, they don't land in Ironport.

Asperdi

Asperdi is a walled town, set back from the coast, built of a hard reddish-brown stone taken from a long-exhausted quarry to the east. The capital of the isles is bustling and lively, with several large markets and a strong line of armorers and ironworkers in addition to the more predictable naval artisans. The townsfolk, and the islanders generally, favor the combination of loose pantaloons and a baggy, wide-sleeved cotton blouse, though those of primarily Flan blood still use face-painting as an additional decoration. Bright colors are popular, so on a sunny day Asperdi is a vivid sight, with its literally colorful people walking in the shadow of the ornately-decorated city walls. Most townsfolk carry long, heavy, curved daggers, equivalent to short swords for the purposes of damage, weapon speed, etc.

Any town of seagoing folk has a rowdy quality, with violence not far from the surface. Asperdi is no exception. Asperdi's Naval Phalanx act both as a city watch and as judge and jury in the case of offenses; this is a place of summary justice. The city prison is greatly feared, since it is dilapidated and vermin-infested; in hot weather death from disease and infection is commonplace. For this reason, Asperdi doesn't attract many thieves. The forbidding crenellated tower overlooking the town is too visible a reminder of where thieves die if they are detected in their nefarious activities.

The main factions of Asperdi are the artisans' guilds and the priesthood of Procan. Together with the commanders of the city watch—Asperdi's galleon captains—they form an advisory council to the Baron. The council also includes the wizard Livensten, a true eccentric who often turns up for meetings in partial states of undress because he has forgotten to put on all his clothes. Livensten's passion, however, is inventions and tinkering. The new astrolabe he has just invented—and his almanacs showing how to compute latitude and distances from the position of sun and moon—is receiving considerable approval from the galleon captains. These aids have helped the Sea Barons become true ocean-goers, in contrast to their traditional role as coastal defenders.

This new freedom is a mixed blessing

for Arras, since it encourages his younger captains to do precisely what he doesn't want them to do, namely to set off on great voyages of discovery far east across the Solnor.

Finally, Asperdi is home to a small matriarchal group whose origins are in the bloodlines of the Rhennee, the bargegoers of the central Flanaess. How they came here is lost in the mists of time, but this community has been here for so long than no one really cares any more. With their mixture of soothsaying, divinations, herbalism, and a few curses when it suits them, the women are much respected by the superstitious men of the islands. One of the women, known as the rhenata, is always asked to give her blessings to any vessel on its maiden voyage, and usually to any ship about to leave port for longer than a week. This precaution is always doubled by asking for the blessings of a priest of Procan, of course, so the cost of setting sail can be quite high at times. Blessings are not given gratis.

Ironport

The only natural harbor along the rocky shoreline of Asperdi Isle, Ironport is a magnificent sight. The stone walls and cathedral to Procan built facing the bay are massive, nearly 100' high, with incredible decorations: arabesques, symbols of Procan, stone anchors adorning the bases

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of the walls, and the symbols of ropes and chains strung along below the battlements. Atop the very center is a 20' statue of Procan himself, a forbidding and truly impressive sight.

Ironport is not large—only some 2,000 folk live within the town. But it has a grandeur and sternness to its architecture, and its people are likewise thrifty, pragmatic, and (it must be said) relatively humorless souls. The naval quarter is walled off from the rest of the city so that drunken sailors do not offend the sense of propriety of the rest of the town.

Tar Hill

Tar Hill is a dangerous place; far more dangerous than all but a very few people know. Its surface appearance is strange enough, for below the slopes of the 500' peak lie many pits of resinous tar which are excavated for their special bounty. The thick, gluey tar pits are littered with the bones of huge animals, dinosaurs and the like, and some folk frighten rebellious or naughty children with tales of how the terrible great lizards that still lie far below the hill, trapped alive in tar, will come and feast on their flesh if they don't stop behaving badly.

What very few know is that, below the hill, there is indeed a hidden terror; the Cauldron of Night itself. Arras is the only one on the isles who knows of this, and the entrance to the Cauldron—fully 600' below ground and accessed through winding and dangerous mineshafts. It is protected with very powerful glyphs and other warding spells. Nevertheless, Arras maintains a mercenary force of 100 well-armed and equipped warriors, with his most trusted adjutant in command, ostensibly to guard the tar pits (which yield much money for him). Of course, they also ensure no one enters the shafts leading to the Cauldron of Night. In truth, anyone unprepared to do so would meet a swift and grisly end, either fried alive by detonating glyphs or consumed by the monsters that prowl the shafts, among which xorn and earth elementals are perhaps the least dangerous.

Oakenisle

Oakenisle is a riot of vegetation, not just the strange ancient oaks that give the island its name, but thorny palm trees, hard-barked dwarf figs, and many succulents and scrub bushes. Travel across land is difficult; all movement rates are cut in half. The island also is alive with small lizards and snakes, rodents and vermin, fruit-eating birds, and a wide variety of insects. The most dangerous are the giant dragonflies of the damper, eastern half of the island, land which is almost permanently shrouded in mist during the spring and fall.

This is a wild, untamed island, despite centuries of human occupation. The land is almost infertile if vegetation is burned and cleared. Away from Oakenheart itself,

there are no settlements of even village size, only the wooden huts of foragers and trappers.

Baron Jamzeen of Oakenisle is old now, having ruled this island for more than half a century. His triplet sons create permanent problems, both for their old father and between themselves. The three are constantly trying to outdo themselves with feats of derring-do against barbarians, and it is a major surprise that they are all still alive. They certainly know more about the bottom of empty rum bottles than they do about naval warfare. The young and reckless are in the ascendant here, for Jamzeen increasingly lacks the will to bring his fractious descendants to heel.

Because of Oakenisle's impenetrability and wildness, sahuagin and other monsters prowl the coasts more often than they do the other islands. While Jamzeen has a bounty of 50 gp per sahuagin head brought to him, the crafty creatures are making inroads. Oakenisle is said to have several old ruins scattered among its vine-infested rocky lands, all invested with many rumors and legends. Few bother to investigate, but the paladin Karistyne of the Cairn Hills traveled here incognito two years past and looted the treasure-trove of an unknown wizard on the east coast. What she retrieved, she has not revealed. (Karistyne is further detailed in DRAGON® Magazine issues #191 & 195).

Jamzeen is generally a staunch ally of Arras, but the one bone of contention between them is slavery. While Jamzeen is as evil as any of the Sea Barons, he has a particular distaste for slavery and berates Arras often on this score. Slavery is outlawed on Oakenisle, which is not to say that its captains do not take slaves and sell them in Asperdi when the opportunity arises.

Oakenheart

Oakenheart is the one natural harbor on the island. Though the city has stone walls and great bronze-coated harbor gates (magically protected both against corrosion from salt and wind, and fire-based attacks), much of the city is built from the wood of the great oaks for which the island is famous.

Oakenheart has a more swashbuckling atmosphere than Asperdi, and in particular it has the great shipyards of Walfrenden, the master shipwright of the island—and the best in all Aerdy, it should be said. Walfrenden's vessels are excellent designs (+10% to all seaworthiness ratings). His latest is a heavy caravel that the younger captains of the city's 17-vessel fleet (five galleons, 12 coasters) look upon with real yearning. Starflier, the first of these new caravels, lies in harbor awaiting an inspired captain and devoted crew ready to sail forever across the eastern horizons, the triangular sails allowing far more freedom for the vessel to sail against prevailing winds than the larger square-rigged galleons. Walfrenden is nearing his

80th year, and what keeps him alive is looking forward to the day when the captain of his pride and joy sails back into Oakenheart and tells him the wonders and strangeness of the lands he has found across the endless azure miles of the Solnor Ocean.

More mundanely, Oakenisle is almost a sealed city. Visitors are not admitted without good reason (trade or otherwise), and the harboguards are not easily bribed. The Scarlet Brotherhood is feared here, since the assassination of two of the town's finest young sea captains six months ago is widely believed to have been because of their agents.

Fairisle

Named for its rolling, fertile hills and the white sand beaches of the northwestern coastline, Fairisle is more relaxed and informal than the other towns of the isles. Baron Pamdarn is but 22 years old, and he does not have the sense of discipline and duty of the older Barons. However, he is not rash or reckless, and since this island is closest to the pirates of Leastisle, Pamdarn makes sure that his fleet of 10 coasters and three galleons is always on the alert. Pamdarn has hired three mages of Winetha (see DRAGON issue #204 for a description of Winetha and its ruler) to travel on his galleons, having an arsenal of fire-based spells at the ready to assault any pirate vessel he sees.

Fairisle also is famous for the colony of large wild apes in its northeastern woodland. These creatures are not by-and-large aggressive, but they are hunted for their furs by the islanders, who use blowpipes and nets to avoid ruining the valuable fur. Also, the island has some Suloise ruins on its southern tip, near Cape Rarn, although they are avoided by island folk. Too many tales tell of the terrors of the Isle of Serpents for the islanders to risk venturing there.

Port Elder

Baron Pamdarn's youth shows itself in the lax application of laws in Port Elder. If a traveler seeks the riotous, swashbuckling seaport of the isles, this is it. Port Elder is a free and open port, though anyone with Suel features is carefully watched by the naval militia, known as the Black and Golds on account of their uniforms. The Lordship of the Isles, and its Suel masters of the Scarlet Brotherhood, are too close for comfort here.

Pamdarn's Admiral of the Squadrons, Yendrenn Harquil, is a dashing and charismatic figure about town. His galleon, the Seawolf, bears Harquil's own symbol (a seewolf, unsurprisingly) on its sails rather than the sea serpent that almost all other Sea Barons' vessels display. With his sallow-faced mage Rhennen aboard to give aid with *airy water*, *telekinesis*, and other such spells, Harquil specializes in the discovery and looting of sunken wrecks, several of which lie south of Fairisle and



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on the eastern seaboards of all the islands.

Harquill is always eager to learn of such wrecks, if a diviner, bard, or sage knows of any—and Harquill shares the booty recovered with his source. Though chaotic, he always keeps his word in such dealings, and his recent recovery of nearly 40,000 gp worth of pearls and ingots of precious metal from the hulk of a Duxchan ship sunk in 515 CY has brought him fame.

Port Elder's city walls are being strengthened, given the threats to the south. From somewhere—no one is sure quite where—Pamdark has managed to import a half-dozen stone giants who are busy at work. Since no one on the islands speaks stone giant (save for Rhennen), and the stone giants don't converse in Common, many wild tales are flying around, some saying that they are fiends in giant form and that Pamdark has sold his soul to some Lord of the Hells or the Abyss. Few worry about such matters, however; since the repulse of the pirate raids on the city some years ago, people feel more secure behind strengthened city walls and don't much care who builds them so long as they get built.

Leastisle

Captured and sacked by seamen fleeing the wars to the west, Leastisle is now an anarchic free-for-all. Half its population lives in the ruins of Vernport, with spasmodic and ineffective attempts made from time to time to rebuild the town. About a third of the island's folk are indigenous, many of them slaves of the invaders, who have become little more than pirates now. The booty taken from Vernport has mostly been spent, and the half-dozen vessels (all coasters and cogs) in the harbor are in need of repair. The pirates here lack any leadership since Petreden of Torquann, a minor prince who masterminded the sack of Vernport, was slain in a drunken brawl last Ready'reat.

Vernport, and the scattered small settlements of the island, are a den of evil cut-throats and scum. Many people of real power live here, warriors, thieves, and mages alike—for this is one of best places to hide from enemies one has made on the continent. Somewhere on the island a priest of Nerull must be hiding in the overgrown huts or eastern sea caves, for sea zombies have been observed on the southern coasts. That puts great fear into people here, who tend to respond by drowning it in rum and samberra, a bitter, dry spirit fermented from the juices of succulent plants.

Leastisle is a great place to get one's throat cut, but a vessel from Rel Astra or even Ountsy will hazard it once in a while, especially to fish for the huge and tender sea clams that throng the western coastline. Such vessels always bring a mage with them, if only to announce their arrival with a *fireball* or similar show of strength, warning the pirates to leave

them well alone.

Leastisle is dangerous not just because of the desperation, evil, and the unpredictability of its folk but because this is surely where the Scarlet Brotherhood, acting through Duxchan, could secure a base on the southern flank of the Sea Barons. It seems certain that they will do so before long.

The Isle of Serpents

This small isle was never settled by the Oeridians because of the extraordinary number of poisonous snakes and reptiles inhabiting its lush uplands. The isle is hard to reach in any event, with sheer chalky cliffs rising 250' or more in some places. Sea serpents are often seen around the island, and nagas have been reported by the handful of travelers who braved the island's hazards.

Such travelers also tell of a set of sunken caves in the center of the island, and jade statues of a Suloise snake goddess that stand guard at the entrance. The statues are said to animate and attack anyone who is not a pureblood Suel female, so the depths of the caves have not been explored.

However, a small 6"-tall jade figurine of the goddess was taken by a distant ancestor of Pamdark of Fairisle. He owns it still, though it is kept securely locked away because of the curse it is said to bear. One sage has speculated that the goddess may be an aspect of Wee Jas, but the strangely alien facial features of the goddess, with slanted almond eyes, and short-cropped hair do not resemble the usual portrayals of that sinister power. Here is a mystery still waiting to be explored, providing the adventurer brings with him priests able to neutralize poison.

Around the isles

Pirates, barbarians, the Duxchan fleets, and sahuagin are offshore menaces to the Sea Barons. However, other races and creatures lurk in the waters around the coasts. Seawolves have been reported some 50 miles north of Asperdi Isle, though they have not yet entered the coastal waters. They seem organized, or familial, since they are always seen in groups of a half-dozen or so. Rumors say they are somehow bound to the site of their sunken ship, said to have been bearing mages seeking seabed sites akin to the Cauldron of Night. No one knows for sure, but several old salts have noted that Harquill has not sought the wreck as he usually would if hearing of such a lost vessel.

The Sea Barons almost never encounter sea elves now. In the past, the adventurous members of sea-elf tribes would sometimes trade and barter with the Barons on a fairly *ad hoc* basis, but they have not appeared in Asperdi for several years. The elves are said to have retreated to the waters around the transformed Lendore Isles.

Lastly, there are persistent tales of an

aquatic race of brownie-like creatures or sea sprites, not nixies or their kin, on the eastern shore of Oakenisle. These little folk are extremely elusive, but seem to be spying on the island and sometimes acting as sentinels or guards. What they are watching for, or watching over, is a mystery.

The Barons

Lord High Admiral Basmajian

Arras: 13th-level fighter (S 18/00, D 17, I 16). AC -2 (*chain mail* +4), hp 85, AL LE. Arras is 40 years old, with coppery fair hair and brown-green eyes. He lacks true stature at 5' 8", and is not a charismatic man, but his intelligence is high and he applies it capably to the problems of rulership. His natural Strength rating is 16; his *gauntlets of ogre power* are one of his two most prized magical items, the other being a *ring of swimming*. Arras is extremely sensitive to the fact he can't naturally swim. The high admiral also wears a *ring of free action* and a richly bejeweled *long sword* +3.

Arras lives richly and well. He takes a cut from virtually every deal in Asperdi, since he grants merchant licenses, and they are only given if he gets a kickback. He is content with his lot, and he seeks to preserve his own strength. Arras doesn't want the Sea Barons involved in anyone else's troubles, and this finds favor in Rel Astra in particular, since the protection of the Barons' coasters is not really needed there.

Baron Jamzeen:

10th-level fighter (S 7, D 6, C 6, I 16, W 16). AC 3 (*chain mail* +3), hp 66, AL NE. Once a titan among men, Jamzeen has been slowly reduced by age, he is 77. Lean as a rake, the stooping figure of the 6' Baron is still impressive, for he has a full head of crisp white hair and his gray eyes still express vigilance and intelligence. Jamzeen was a notorious rake in his youth, and still is; his triplet sons Jamair, Jaqiran, and Nandain are but 19 years old. Jamzeen has had a succession of "wives" in his long life. Other offspring have left the isles, seeking their fortunes elsewhere, or are dead, often at the hands of jealous siblings.

Jamzeen always has been happy to be Number Two. It made for an easier life. But now the old man's grip is faltering; perhaps the death of Sencho Foy, a friend for half a century and a man with whom he had a long-shared past, has drained him of some of his will. He doesn't resent Arras for killing Sencho; such things happen, and Jamzeen is philosophical about these matters given his alignment. He supports Arras, whose conservative policy is one he fully agrees with, though he has differences with him concerning barbarians and slavery. But Jamzeen grows tired, less willing to attend to the everyday practicalities of governing his island, and it may well be that one of his sons will do the time-honored thing and arrange his father's burial rites (and those of his own siblings) before the realization of their

imminent demise has occurred to them.

Livensten: 11th-level mage (I 18). AC 7 (*ring of protection* + 3), hp 27, AL NE. Livensten is 5' 5", slim of build with dark brown hair and hazel eyes. Unprepossessing of appearance, the 56-year-old mage neglects himself to the point of periodically suffering eczema through not bathing properly. Standing next to him in hot weather is not a pleasant experience.

Livensten is obsessed with researching instruments and devices connected with time and travel. He has a library of lore on such matters of startling breadth, including sacred works of deities like Labelas and Lendor. He constantly fiddles in his laboratory with new ways of measuring and recording. His astrolabe is one of his more successful inventions, and his *folding boat* is a greatly prized item—he hires it to captains in return for very large security deposits. Livensten has Arras' support and patronage, so he does not have to worry about earning a living as such.

Baron Pamdarn: 9th-level fighter (S 17, C 17, I 15, Ch 16). AC 6 (*ring of protection* +4), hp 80, AL NE. Pamdarn is young and inexperienced in rulership, but he is learning fast. He, like Jamzeen, dislikes slavery, because somewhere inside him a youthful love of freedom resents it, but he keeps quiet about this to Arras. Pamdarn knows that he has a certain amount of leeway in the court of the lord high admiral, and he doesn't push his luck; he uses the tolerance he gets to allow his captains greater freedom to sail the oceans than those of the other Barons. Pamdarn is relatively impoverished, since he has been saving funds to purchase the caravel Starflier and has also bought instruments of Livensten's devising.

Pamdarn is 6' 1", well-built, with very fair hair and blue eyes. Some mutter that there is Suel blood in his veins (actually, he has more Flan blood than anything else). His father died a year ago, and Pamdarn is just emerging from mourning. The company of his friend Harquil has done much to cheer him.

Nonetheless, Pamdarn is no pleasant soul. He is ambitious and unscrupulous. If he has some idealism, he is also quite unconcerned about how he achieves his ends. Because of his lack of monies, he recently had an Ountsy merchant executed on a trumped-up charge of sedition and arson, confiscating his vessel and goods in the bargain. Arras forced him to return the vessel and most of the money, but this episode illustrates Pamdarn's personality quite clearly.

Walfrenden: 7th-level fighter (S 7, C 7, I 16, W 18). AC 10, hp 29, AL CE. Walfrenden is 78, 5' 5", wholly bald with gray eyes and a notable tremor these days. Still, the old captain has a hungry energy within him. Maimed by a seawolf's claw many years ago, so that his left leg is almost useless and he walks with a heavy staff, Walfrenden took to the design and building of ships. He rose swiftly in his profes-

sion so that he is now the master shipwright of the barons.

All his life, Walfrenden has longed to set sail under the starry night skies and head forever eastward. He is a freedom-loving spirit, and he chafed at having to patrol and protect the Aerdy coastline. His caravel design delights him, for the vessels combination of seaworthiness and small size, allowing it to navigate close to coastlines and up estuaries, is perfect for ocean-going and the exploration of new lands. Secretly, Walfrenden longs to take the first voyage on Starflier himself, so he can end his days under the stars with a chart of new lands explored in his hands. He has received a down payment for the caravel from Pamdarn, and a condition of delivery is that Walfrenden is allowed to travel on the vessel.

Walfrenden knows the history of the eastern Aerdy lands well. He has met virtually everyone of any power in the isles over the years, and he has the finest set of maps and charts of the coastline anywhere. He has a set of seaman's tales more varied and outrageous than anyone's, but he narrates them with panache and a real love of storytelling. Sea captains who, as children, sat on his knee and thrilled to tales of savage Hepmonaland or the orcs of the Pomarj (Walfrenden has sailed all of the Azure Sea), are every bit as ready now to bring the old man a tankard of ale and hear the same tales again.

Yendrenn Harquil: 11th-level fighter (S 17, D 17, I 16, Ch 17). AC 2 (*ring of protection* +5), hp 80, AL CN. Harquil may be only 25 years old, but he has commanded the Seawolf for seven years, and his men regard him as the finest captain on all the seas of Oerth. A distant cousin of Pamdarn, he lost his own father a year before the young Baron, and thus the two have a shared experience and a strong bond. Harquil is handsome, fair of skin and hair, 6' 3", and always well-groomed, with his silk blouse unbuttoned to the navel. He is vain, but his vanity is not excessive.

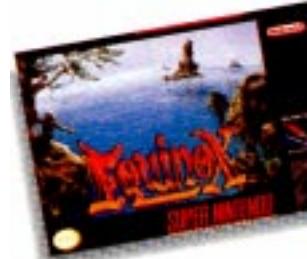
Harquil strongly loves freedom. He also has a real feel for history. He loves old maritime maps and charts; even if they are inaccurate, he enjoys taking in their sense of history, bygone days, and the sailors who drew them. He regularly begs Walfrenden for copies of his maps, and no little of Harquil's gold has gone to the old shipwright in payment for such charts.

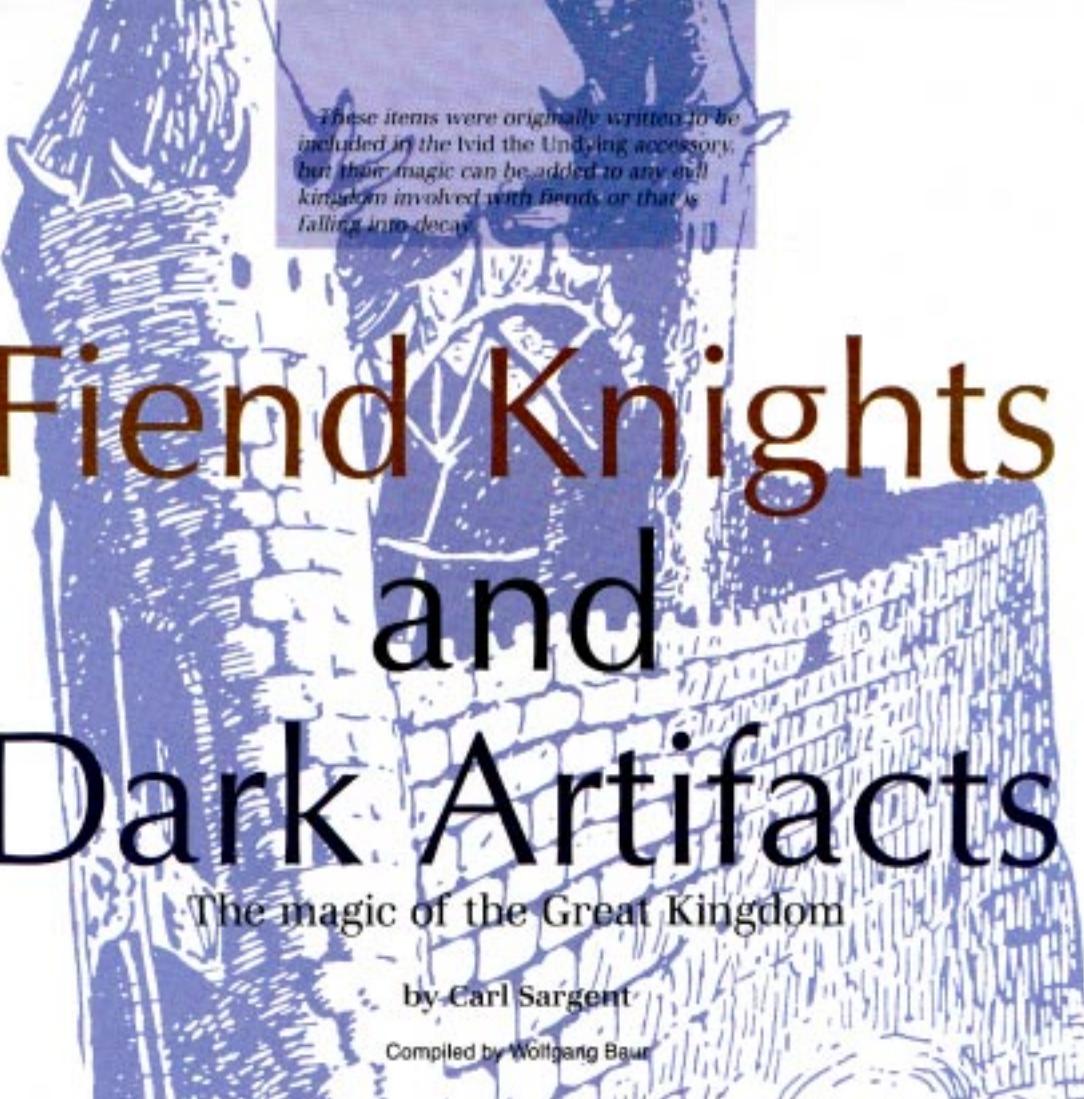
Harquil also studies the myths and legends of the islands, and has an encyclopedic knowledge of them. If a traveler wishes to know about the hidden and secret places of the islands, the captain will determine if they hail from the southern lands where the Scarlet Brotherhood may have spies and agents. If they are from somewhere else, the captain is ready to share an ale or a jigger of rum with them and talk of the islands' secrets long into the night.



HAD TO
MISS YOUR
GRANDFATHER'S
FUNERAL,
BUT YOU
FINALLY
CONQUERED
THE EVIL,
EMPERESS.

HE WOULD
HAVE WANTED
IT THAT WAY.





These items were originally written to be included in the *Ivied the Undying* accessory, but their magic can be added to any evil kingdom involved with fiends or that is falling into decay.

Fiend Knights and Dark Artifacts

The magic of the Great Kingdom

by Carl Sargent

Compiled by Wolfgang Baur



The *malachite throne* richly deserves its nickname as the “Fiend-seeing Throne”—Aerdy has closer connections to the Abyss and to the Nine Hells (Baator to those familiar with the PLANESCAPE™ setting) than any other land of Greyhawk except the lands of Iuz the Evil. The throne that the Naelax overkings have ascended was crafted between 443 and 446 CY from a great crystal chunk found in the Cauldron of Night. The throne itself, fashioned by mages and priests, has many magical properties, including the ability to provide a gate to the Hells.

Since Prince Ivid himself was an accomplished mage who conversed with fiends and considered long and hard how to deal with them (and use them for his own ends), when he ascended to the throne it was a perfect match. A complex web of intrigues has spread out, with the hunched madman on his throne firmly ensconced in the center. Almost all his plans depend on fiendish magic.

The arch-fiend Baalzephon has supplied many items of malign magic to Ivid the Undying, the Emperor of the Malachite Throne, and to his supporters, including the dreaded fiend knights. The items of the latter are dealt with first.

Fiend armor

Worn by more than a dozen commanding officers of the Companion Guard and a handful of military leaders outside of Rauxes, these sets of armor were forged in hellish fires. Chain mail and plate mail versions are known to exist, though both are wearable only by creatures of LE or NE alignments. Others donning the armor suffer 1d4 points of burning damage per round, double this if they are of good alignment. Fiend armors are worn by powerful warriors in the service of evil masters aligned with baatezu.

Fiend armor is usually of +2 or +3 enchantment. It confers the same resistances to attack modes that all baatezu possess: half-damage from gas and cold attacks, and immunity to fire, contact poison, and nonmagical iron weapons. The wearer also gains magic resistance equal to 2% per experience level and becomes immune to magical alignment change. Finally, the wearer can *animate dead* once a week as an 8th-level priest.

Fiend circlet

A *fiend circlet* is given only to a spellcaster who has made a formal pact of service to a baatezu lord (one of the Dark Eight), and therefore are very rare indeed. The wearer gains a -2 AC bonus if not wearing armor, and the resistances to attack forms and magical alignment change as per *fiend armor* above. In addition, the following powers each can be cast from a *fiend circlet*, three times a week: *advanced illusion*, *animate dead*, *charm person*, *infravision*, *know alignment*, *suggestion*.

Malachite throne

The *malachite throne* is one of a number of magical artifacts possessed by the overking and those serving him. Such malign magics are either crafted with the aid of fiends, or have been revealed to the overking and his mages through the guidance of baatezu. It rests in the Palace of the Overking, a huge magical building at the center of Rauxes. Even getting anywhere near it would be a feat in itself, given the formidable forces in the palace compound. Only the highest-level PCs could hope to enter the palace and survive; the Throne's guardians are listed below.

The palace was built using magical mortar between all the stonework, eliminating all forms of magical scrying and movement from the outside. Likewise, it is immune to fire, acid, or electrical attacks.

Surrounding the vast circular palace are eight circular guard towers, each 130' high (some 20' higher than the palace itself). Barbazu and spinagon guards occupy the top levels of these towers, and elite bowmen take up the middle floors. Separate staircases lead to the upper rooms, so at ground level *charmed* monsters with special magical attacks are kept penned, including basilisks, medusae, catoblepases, and chimeras. The doors to each tower can be magically opened from within the palace and the monsters unleashed to wreak havoc on intruders storming the palace.

The palace houses many people and chambers other than those of the royals, of course. The great chancelleries and treasure houses are found here. The treasury is largely empty, save for sealed chambers containing icons and relics of ancient civilizations that have great value in normal times but which are almost worthless to the overking now. The treasury is heavily magically warded and has many golem guards.

Patriarch-General Pyrannden of Hextor has chambers here and maintains a royal shrine to Hextor, disused since the proclamation of the faith of Baalzy. Minor ceremonial magical items, along with hordes of juju zombies, can be found therein. Ivid provides private rooms for generals and senior officers of his armies, a war-room with great magical maps of the Flanaess, and such.

The new spymaster of the Aerdy, the half-elven mage-thief Inshalzen, also cowards in his offices here. He has no idea of where his juniors are, since his predecessor was executed and he simply has been expected to know everything without being told. He is desperate to escape, but being only a 6th-level mage he lacks spells such as *teleport* to enable him to do this.

The Court of Essence is still a majestic chamber, but now is used solely for Ivid to drag forced “confessions” out of people he imagines to be traitors to the crown.

The combat mages of the overking deserve special mention; they have chambers and laboratories on many second-floor

rooms with direct access to the eight peripheral towers. This allows them to keep watch over the magical monster guards therein. There are some 30 of these mages, of levels 7-14, and they have a fair number of defensive items including *rings of protection*, *cloaks of displacement*, *bracers of defense*, and more. The mages are exceptionally well-equipped with offensive magical items, notably wands. They are under the command of Karoolck, and many of them make few bones about not liking this at all. Those who could *teleport* to escape do not do so for fear that they would be pursued by fiends and invisible stalkers or because there is simply nowhere they know well enough, or would feel secure at, to flee to.

The *malachite throne* itself rests within Ivid's throne room, an enormous 40-yard diameter circular chamber with the great throne set into the north wall. The throne casts an *invisible globe of invulnerability* on the overking seated on it and grants him *true seeing*. Once per week, if the correct command word is uttered, the throne can open a *gate* to Avernus, the uppermost of the Nine Hells. But the *malachite throne* provides no protection, against any being entering through that *gate*, and there is a 5% chance per use of bringing insanity to the person opening the *gate*.

Ivid himself wears lurid ceremonial robes at all times—sometimes purple and blue, other times red and gold, or black, yellow, and rust. The colors depend on his mood, with the more dismal tones signalling that he is in a very foul mood. Of late, he has taken to wearing a full-face white lacquered mask to hide a psoriatic skin condition that his wasting disease brings. He always bears his symbols of office, though their weight makes him stooped: the Staff of Naelax (a *staff of thunder and lightning*), the Orb of Rax (a *brooch of shielding* that regenerates 20 hp of defensive value per day), and the Crown of Aerdy (a *helm of brilliance*).

Ivid also has the remnants of the royal family here, save for his second son, Prince Konshandin, who has fled to Delaric. Almost all the surviving royal princes have been slain and *resurrected* as amuses. They are regularly administered a complex alkaloid preparation by Hextor's priests, that has the effect of dulling their minds and keeping them loyal to the overking (or at least being incapable of rousing themselves to strike against him). Ivid has had many of them executed as traitors, of course.

Spear of sorrow

The powers of darkness have long been providers of foul magics and even artifacts to the royal line of Aerdy, though exactly who serves whom in the long run is open to question. The gifts of evil often turn in on themselves.

A typical example is the *spear of sorrow*, held by General Kalreth at the keep called

Permanence. Kalreth owns a magical artifact of such power that most wizards would rather face a rampaging tarrasque than challenge the lord of the castle.

The *spear of sorrow* is a barbed, fauchard-like weapon, some seven feet in length, made entirely of black stone. Its exact origins are uncertain, but some say that it was crafted in the Cauldron of Night from whence the *malachite throne* itself came (the Cauldron of Night is described below). Karoolck gave it to Kalreth in the hope of warping him to his own will, given the magical control powers of the malign thing. But Kalreth was not overcome by it or its curse. He was, however, aware of the potential of the spear and realized what a poisoned gift Karoolck had given him.

If Karoolck had not shortly taken up his role as Ivid's favored wizard, Kalreth would have slain him. Details of the spear are given below.

General Kalreth: Animus with abilities of 15th-level fighter (Str 18/00, Dex 17). AC -6, hp 100, AL NE. Kalreth is only 5' 9" tall, but he is massively muscled and powerful of stature. His brown curly hair is cut short, and he has a very lined forehead above the thick, bushy eyebrows that dominate his face. Kalreth is a general of the Companion Guard, and he hunted down Osson in Medegia and razed much of that land. He regards anything other

than complete fealty to Ivid as treason, and he is uncompromising and brutal.

Kalreth's character has been changed irrevocably by his ownership of the *spear of sorrow*. This artifact has the following magical properties: confers a base AC -4 (to which no magical bonuses can be added), immunity to cold-based attacks and illusion/phasm spells below fifth level, regeneration of 1 hp/round during combat, and the ability to use the following powers once a day each at 18th level of magic use: *cone of cold*, *ice storm*, *Otiluke's freezing sphere*, *sink*. The artifact is NE and only can be used by a NE warrior of at least 13th level.

The spear will attempt to control any new user up to three times; in game terms, the user must roll 10d10 below the total of his level, Wisdom, and Constitution to resist control. If this roll succeeds three times, however, the spear does not attempt control again. However, it has powers of mental insinuation, tormenting its owner with nightmares of fiends, destructions, and fates worse than death in stark and barren lands and dungeons of torment the dreamer cannot place. It is a cursed weapon, of course, but only a priest or wizard of 18th or higher level can free the owner from the spear's effects.

The special purpose of the spear, which may lie dormant for many years, is to locate and revivify temples and sleeping guardians devoted to the god Tharizdun.

In campaign play, it will be an onerous task to prevent the spear from locating any such places or beings, or to destroy the weapon.

Cauldron of Night

The second wild card of the royal house and the Fiend Knights of Aerdy is their control of deposits of rare magical ores in Oerth's crust. The dweomerstones and related magical gems around the Nyr Dyv (see *luz the Evil*) are one example, but Oeridian mages and priests are unequalled in tracking down fragments of magical meteorites, stones, or crystals—some magically shaped by the divine might of powers and avatars when they still walked Oerth's lands.

In some places, such as the Causeway of Fiends, whole blocks of such ores could be extracted and enchanted. The most fell and dire of these magical deposits, of course, is the Cauldron of Night from whence the *malachite throne* itself was crafted.

Though some mages trembled at dealing with such evils, the combat mages of the Oeridians were only too ready to use any source of power if they felt they could contain and channel it. That the darker energies might escape that control over a period of decades or longer was a long-term possibility that mages in the service of aggressive generals did not bother too much about.

The Cauldron lies hidden in the hinterlands of the Isles of the Sea Barons, underneath Tar Hill. Deep below the earth, it is a great natural amphitheater of ebony stone, with a central depression 50' across and seemingly endlessly deep, for it is filled with a magical darkness no scrying spell can penetrate. Radiating intense evil, the Cauldron is almost a sentient thing. Mages of great power who have come seeking stone for making artifacts have had the very marrow in their bones frozen and their bodies shattered into dust here, while others of much lesser attainments have been able to take one of the spine-like stalactites of the Cauldron by simply reaching out and breaking it off.

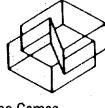
The Cauldron almost seems to choose who it will allow to harvest its dark riches and craft them into works of evil power. Yet, those mages who take something from the Cauldron always pay a heavy price for it, driven insane by their own creations or dragged off screaming by some gloating fiend, to endure untold horrors in the Abyss. Anything powerful enough to create artifacts is too powerful for the wise to tamper with.

The DM may craft additional artifacts as he wishes, using the ones described here as a benchmark. Other artifacts should not be overpowering, however, and they will only be held by rulers, priests, or mages of great power. See *The Book of Artifacts* for tips on successful artifact design. Ω

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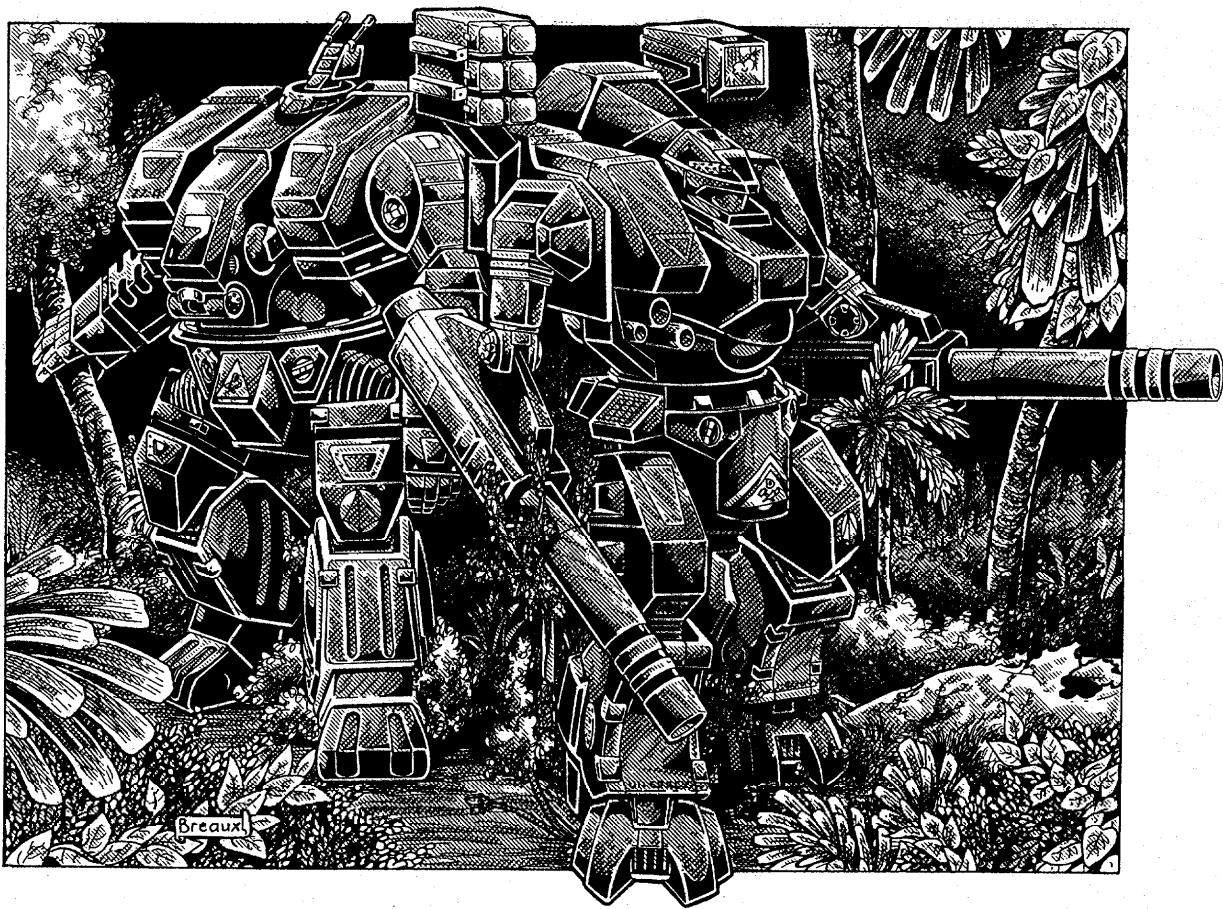
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Fiend Knight

DRAGON® #206

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| | |
|-------------------|--|
| ORGANIZATION: | Group |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE: | Constant (do not need rest) |
| DIET: | None |
| INTELLIGENCE: | Very (11-12), rarely higher |
| TREASURE: | Nil |
| ALIGNMENT: | Any evil |
| NO. APPEARING: | Variable |
| ARMOR CLASS: | 10 (unarmored), see below |
| MOVEMENT: | 12, 24 mounted |
| HIT DICE: | 4d10 to 10d10 + |
| THAC0: | Variable |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK: | By weapon type +3 or better |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS: | Nil |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Immune to <i>sleep</i> , <i>charm</i> , <i>hold</i> spells and illusion/phantasm spells below fourth level |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil |
| SIZE: | M (6' +) |
| MORALE: | Fearless (20) |
| XP VALUE: | Variable |

The Fiend Knights of Doom are an elite squad of warriors created from normal men by spellcraft on the part of both Ivid V himself, and Xaene, and also using mind-controlling magics crafted from baatezu relics. These servants are utterly, mindlessly loyal to the overking.

Combat: Fiend knights have the same number of hit dice as they had levels when mortal fighters. For example, a 5th-level fighter would become a 5-HD fiend knight. Nearly all fiend knights are 10th level or below, with three exceptions—leaders of 11, 12, and 15 HD. These three leaders, and some dozen others, wear fiend *plate mail* +3. Others are 5% per level likely to wear magical plate mail (roll 1d10: 1-8 *plate mail* +1, 9 *plate mail* +2, 10 *plate mail* +3), else nonmagical plate mail. Fiend knights always employ two-handed weapons, usually two-handed swords, and composite long bows. Again, they are 5% per level likely to have magical weapons (use the table above, independently for each weapon type). Leaders are always armed with magical weapons, and the 11 + HD leaders all possess powerful ones: a *two-handed sword of cold* +3 and a *two-handed sword* +3, *giant slayer*.

The fiend knights have high ability scores. All possess Strengths of 18/01 or better, and have minimum Dexterity and Constitution scores of 15. No ability ever has a score below 9.

Habitat/Society: The current composition of the fiend knights, in addition to their leaders, is approximately 80 cavalry, 20 of whom ride undead steeds, the other 60 riding normal heavy warhorses. Treat the undead steeds as heavy warhorses with immunity to *sleep*, *charm* and *hold* spells. These troops have heavy lances, again with a 5% chance per level for a magical lance, and they employ footman's flails in addition to two-handed weapons.

The 120 heavy infantry each carry a long spear and a variety of polearms in addition to other weaponry. They have a 2% chance per level for a magical polearm.

As currently organized, the fiend knights wear gold visors and bear a heraldic emblem etched on their armor over the heart. For cavalry, the emblem is a tan horse, and for infantry, it is a bronze baboon. The infantry are known as "The Howlers," for when they go into combat they howl and scream, hoping to strike fear into the hearts of their enemies.



Ecology: Fiend knights are not undead, and have none of their weaknesses: they cannot be turned, harmed by holy water, and so on. They are simply wholly controlled humans loyal to Ivid, created by a precursor of the malign rituals that brought the animus to Oerth. The unfeeling, "programmed" nature of the fiend knights, make them feared by all. Even Ivid's other troops hate and fear them, and loathe having to serve with them.

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This letter is in response to the "Forum" letter in DRAGON issue #199, in which a DM asked for help in dealing with a player who completely rejected role-playing and opted instead for a "hack-and-slash" style of play that is hurting the game and alienating the other players.

To the unnamed DM: you say that you have no objections to this since you enjoy this style of play but that the other players in the group are the ones affected. If that is so, why not let them deal with it, since it is their problem? Their PCs could teach this character a lesson by withdrawing from a fight and leaving him to "hack-and-slash" alone, perhaps getting him killed! Their characters could betray this loutish clod by paying a local mage to cast some nasty spell on him. They don't need to worry about hurting his feelings, because after all, they would only be role-playing how they think their characters would react to this uninteresting "hacker" character. They could approach the player outside of the game and tell him that they are frustrated with his playing style and ask him (nicely) to change. There are many options open to them other than ignoring him, which is what you say they have been doing.

On the other hand, since you seem to want to take the problem upon yourself and deal with it in your own way, then try a different approach. You say that you spoke with him outside the game and he resisted your options for how he could change. Why not do something *within* the game? Since the other players are working hard at role-playing and interacting with NPCs, grant them experience points for doing this well, then point out to him that he has earned no such points since he attacks most of the NPCs. Perhaps you

could have this character thrown in prison for disturbing the peace in one of your campaign towns, which would leave the other characters free to adventure without him for a while. That would teach him to think before he attacks. Create a subplot to the game in which the only way he can survive a certain situation is by doing some clever role-playing and interacting with NPCs. Such a situation might include the suggestion above about being locked in a jail cell with no weapons. If the character talks to the guard outside the door, he might discover that the man is sympathetic to his cause, and may let him out—but only if he does some role-playing and artfully persuades this NPC to do so. Chances are, once he gets a taste of how much fun it is to role-play, he'll want to do it more often.

You did mention the character's alignment, but it seems that he is playing a chaotic one, since he chooses to kill NPCs instead of talk to them. Chaotic characters have a way of getting themselves killed, especially when they rush in with swords drawn before carefully evaluating a situation. Make sure that the consequences of this character's actions are appropriate to his behavior. After all, if you kill every cleric who wants to be paid for healing, eventually you are going to make some enemies. Get creative.

Finally, I would suggest that you get hold of the AD&D® game's DMGRI Campaign Sourcebook and Catacomb Guide. It is full of great tips for the DM about how to deal with different personality types in gaming, and how to make sure that everyone gets the most out of each game. Don't just sit back and ignore this guy, letting him destroy the fun of the game. You are the DM, after all, and you have a responsibility to the other players and to yourself not to allow one player to ruin the game.

Kathryn Bernstein
Milwaukee WI

To the nameless "Forum" writer in issue #199:

While it has been a while since I have judged a campaign in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, I can say with reasonable assurance that either your campaign will fix itself or end. You have to be willing to play (pardon the pun) it through. These are several of my experiences:

1. Last year I was a player in a large

(twelve-player, two-judge) CHAMPIONS* campaign. It began primarily as role-playing, but gradually degraded into a hack-and-slash campaign. There were two reasons. One, the two most dominant players had participated only in hack-and-slash gaming, and were therefore unable to participate in the role-playing "action." Two, "power-gaming" was allowed (power-gaming makes hack-and-slash significantly easier on characters; they butcher the opponents).

2. This year I have begun my own campaign in a comic, fantasy setting. While it began as a basically hack-and-slash campaign, it has evolved into a role-playing campaign (probably because one of my players is an actor, and the other two are poets) in two sessions (we have yet to complete the first adventure).

3. Sometimes characters are made for hack-and-slash gaming. I know that I've had them. One of my super heroes, named Inertia, could do nothing but fight and crush things; even though I tried to play him as a well-rounded character, he still could only fight and crush things. Another character, a fighter called Luzrek, went berserk anytime he got close to anything new. One of my friends has a character that kills anything that lives indoors, no matter what. (Listen closely, I think this is the only advice I give.)

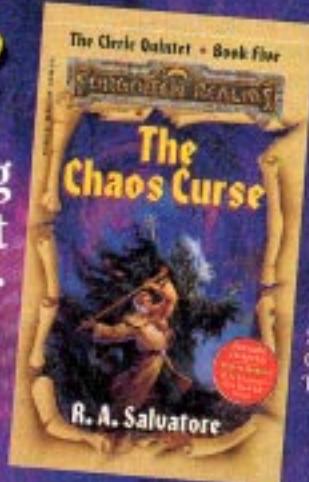
Try offering to trade some combat proficiencies for noncombat proficiencies, or even giving him some (although you will have to give the other characters the same treatment) so that he will be able to interact successfully with NPCs and PCs without killing them.

4. Sometimes it is impossible not to role-play. Put the character in a position where he has no choice. During the summer a group killed a blue wyrm using 4th- and 5th-level characters. (It was the same wyrm that killed their 12th- and 13th-level hackers and slashers.) First, they flattered it (dragons are vain). Then, they offered it all their treasure (rather foolish since it included all their weapons and armor). It then got very nice, thinking that it had some new lackeys. After two or three missions for it (and three experience levels), they drugged the fish that they had caught (the dragon always eats fresh food). The dwarf tasted it, told the dragon it was fine (it is very hard to poison a dwarf with a 17 Constitution score). The



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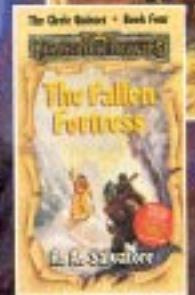
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dragon ate the fish and passed out.

No name or address given

I would like to respond to the letter in DRAGON issue #199 about the DM who is having a problem with a player who prefers to play hack-and-slash rather than joining the others in "role-playing."

I think the best thing to do, though you may not think so, is to tell that player to leave the group. Explain to him that his style of play is disruptive to the others and that you would like him to leave until he can play a character that is not so violent.

This sounds harsh, but when you are dealing with players that have minds of their own and they continue to play characters that play this way, the best thing you can do is dismiss them.

Another option you can try is every time he does something that steps out of line with his character's alignment, have a deity, or avatar, appear and talk to the character. If nothing else, the character may be taken to the deity's plane to serve the deity until the PC learns better manners. This takes that character out of the game for a while and allows the player to create another character, hopefully with an alignment and attitude that is better for the group.

Another option is to have the others in your group take the hack-and-slasher player aside and talk to him. If he still refuses to listen, then have the others play characters that will not take this kind of attitude and have him, the hack-and-slasher, convicted of the violent crime he seems to commit constantly in the game. Again, this will take that character out of the game for a while.

The main thing to remember is that this is your game and if a player is disrupting the game-play for others, then he should be dealt with. Sometimes we all have to do things that are unpleasant, but they need to be done.

B. J. Tomkins
No address given

I would like to respond to the anonymous letter in DRAGON issue #199 concerning a certain type of uncooperative player.

I have had similar conflicts (the old hack-and-slash vs. role-players and problem-solving players in the same group) with one particular player. I have had this problem in every one of my six or seven AD&D campaigns I have run since 1983. This player, when originally introduced to the game, insisted on playing an assassin. At first this was okay, as I was new to the game, and, quite frankly, the role seemed to fit. But almost every game session would end with a PC free-for-all when the assassin would see to it that he was deserving of the most choice bits of any treasure. The "good" PCs who thought through all the dangerous traps, talked their way around the evil warlord, and fought only when it seemed to be the best

course of action, were constantly watching their backs against the skulking assassin, who, it seemed, would always start the fight, always run to the back to the party when it got nasty, and always pushed his way past the others when the monsters were killed to get the treasure. As time went on, I restricted his choices of classes and he played the fighter. (Thank you very much for leaving the assassin class out of the 2nd Edition game.)

His attention span for planning, analyzing options, and gathering information from my carefully created NPCs and cryptic clues grew incredibly short with the inclusion of several new friends into my last campaign. I had always thought that his playing style was *his* problem, until, after his last character (the only fighter type in the party) was killed because he got bored when the other PCs were chatting with an important NPC, and ran off to be ambushed by a troll. I noticed that he consistently put the others in a bad situation by his actions. Often, this can be entertaining and we get a good laugh after the fighter impulsively does something self-destructive.

The other players really didn't think it was so funny, though. Their fun was seriously diminished. One player openly snapped at him. I sometimes get the feeling that the spell-casters were memorizing spells such as *silence 15' radius* and *hold person* to be cast on the fighter in critical situations. The other players made attempts to get into the background material that I had worked out, and had fun fitting into my campaign world. While the fighter decided his birth place ("some mountain cave"), race (a half-orc) and social standing (a half-orc!) and played the same character, he had played ever since we first played the game some ten years ago.

Suddenly, I was just as frustrated as my friends.

The first thing I did was begin to tailor some encounters to his temperament. I informed the other players, but not the fighter, of this change. Most game situations remained the same, replete with local history, politics, internal consistency, and interesting plot twists and stages, but a number of encounters would be simple slugfests specifically designed for the fighter. No NPC background would be included, just an ugly opponent who attacked the party without reason or natural survival instincts. In other words, I sent monsters at the party who acted just as his characters did.

His comments ranged from something like, "What a stupid monster," to "Well, that was fun," and "Where's the gold?" Afterward, I asked him what kind of encounter or plot he would like to see me create for the next session.

He and I got together one afternoon and I gave him exactly what I thought he wanted: an ultra-simple, randomly-designed dungeon with a very small number of tricks and traps, no plot, nothing to learn,

no puzzles to solve, with a steady stream of randomly placed monsters and treasures and an unhelpful NPC fighter who charged into every battle before he knew what he was fighting. It was great. It reminded me of some of my first dungeons when I didn't know a DM was allowed to prepare in advance for a game session. I simply rolled the dice to see what kind of monsters and treasures were found in a Disneyland of dark underground rooms. The solo session lasted less than two hours, but I kept getting strange and dirty looks from him.

"That was a lame dungeon," he said, when I asked how he liked it. Well, the conversation went back and forth with me trying to explain that this was the way the other players and I saw his playing style. I tried to explain that the work I do during the time between our game sessions was being wasted if the fighter just wanted an assortment of silly, random monsters, and a Monty Haul romp.

That experience did not completely change his gaming style. I would have been very naive to think that it would. I did not want to degrade his enjoyment of the AD&D game in general, just open his eyes to what his actions were costing the others in the group. I think he might be a little more aware of how the others glean enjoyment from my complicated NPCs, traps, and plots, and will be a bit more patient. He has been making some progress.

Be patient and talk with your players. They have a variety of opinions on what makes a good game session, so try to accommodate them. Also, it does a player a world of good to know what the other players think about the game, what they like and don't like about the campaign. After all, even the fighter's player wants to have a good time with his friends, playing their favorite game. As DM, let them know what you want, too. You're the one working on a whole world of possibilities. If you do, I believe the vast majority of players will respond . . . eventually.

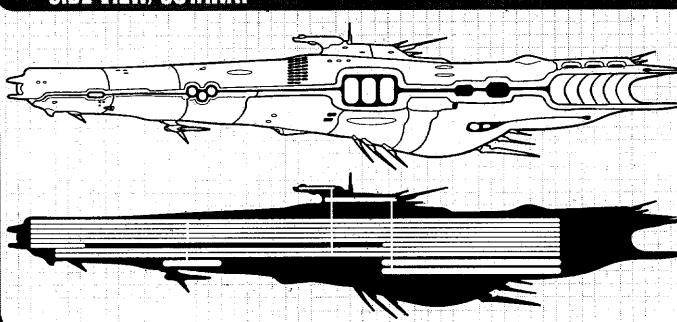
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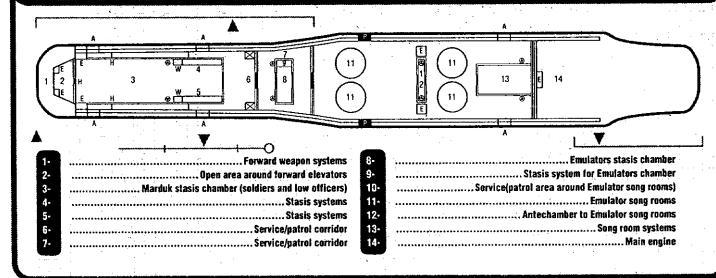
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Convention Calendar

Convention Calendar Policies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FANFAIRE '94, June 9-12 SC

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Greenville S.C. Guests include Ardath Mayhar, Holly Lisle, and Ruth Thompson. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an art show and auction, prizes, contests, and a charity auction. Registration: \$20 before April 30; \$25 thereafter. Single-day rates \$10 on site. Write to: Fanfaire Prod., P.O. Box 1801 Greenville SC 29602-1801.

CAMELOT VI, June 10-12 AL

This convention will be held at the Radisson Suite Hotel in Huntsville, Ala. Guests include Clyde Caldwell and R. A. Salvatore. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a banquet. Registration: \$25. Write to: CAMELOT VI, P.O. Box 14223, Huntsville AL 35815.

RECONN '94, June 11-12 CT

This convention will be held at the Ramada Plaza Hotel in Stamford, Conn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers and a video room. Write to: Gaming Guild, c/o Jim Wiley, 100 Hoyt St. 2C, Stamford CT 06905.

SAGA '94, June 11-13 *

This convention will be held at Glebe high school in Sydney. Guests include Ed Greenwood. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include freeforms. Write to: SAGA, c/o Dennis, P.O. Box 881 Burwood, NSW 2134 AUSTRALIA.

CON*TRETEMPS 8, June 17-19 NE

This convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Omaha, Nebr. Guests include Robin Bailey, Nick Smith, and Roger Tener. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include panels, videos,

filking, dealers, and gaming. Registration: \$25. Write to: CON*TRETEMPS 8, P.O. Box 4071, Omaha NE 68104-9998.

WYVERCON '94, June 17-19 WA

This convention will be held at the Skagit County Fairgrounds in Mt. Vernon Wa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a costume contest, dealers, and a miniatures contest. Registration: \$20. Daily rates available. Make checks payable to SVGA. Write to: WYVERCON '94, P.O. Box 2325, Mt. Vernon WA 98273.

CAPITALCON X, June 18-19 IL

This convention will be held at the Prairie Capital Convention Center in Springfield, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a miniatures-painting contest, an auction, and door prizes. Registration: \$10. Write to: John Holtz, 400 E. Jefferson St., Springfield IL 62701.

ARCHON 18, June 24-26 IL

This convention will be held at the Gateway Center in Collinsville, Ill. Guests include Jack Chalker and Martha Soukup. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, masquerades, videos, and gaming. Registration: \$22. Write to: ARCHON 18, P.O. Box 483, Chesterfield MO 63006-0483.

DALLAS GAME EXPO '94, June 24-26 TX

This convention will be held at the LeBaron Hotel in Dallas, Tex. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers. Registration: \$10 preregistered; \$15/weekend or \$5/day on site. Write to: DALLAS GAME EXPO, P.O. Box 824662, Dallas TX 75382.

NEW ORLEANS SF&F FESTIVAL June 24-26 LA

This SF&F convention will be held at the New Orleans Airport Hilton in Kenner, La. Guests include C. J. Cherryh, George Alec Effinger, and John Steakley. Other activities include panels, movies and videos, dealers, and 24-hour gaming. Registration: \$25 on site. Write to: NEW ORLEANS SF&F FESTIVAL, P.O. Box 791089, New Orleans LA 70179-1089.

SKIRMISHES '94, June 24-26 MO

This gaming convention will be held at the Americana Hotel in Kansas City, Mo. Events include role-playing, board, war, and miniatures games. Other activities include miniatures-painting contests and dealers. Registration: \$25. Write to: SKIRMISHES, c/o 812 N.E. Terr., Kansas City MO 64155.

LEGENDS-ROME '94, June 25-26 GA

This convention will be held at the Riverbend Mall in Rome, Ga. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers. Registration: \$2. Write to: Legends Entertainment Group, 514 Broad St., Rome GA 30161.

- ❖ indicates an Australian convention.
- ✳ indicates a Canadian convention.
- indicates a European convention.

PAXCON '94, June 25-26

MD

This convention will be held at the Best Western Maryland Inn in Laurel, Md. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA™ tournaments and dealers. Registration: \$12 preregistered; \$15 on site. Write to: Chesapeake Games, P.O. Box 13607, Silver Spring MD 20911-3607.

PHENOMENON '94

June 25-27

This convention will be held at Karabar high school in Queanbeyan. Guests include Ed Greenwood. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include freeforms. Write to: PHENOMENON, P.O. Box 308, Belconnen ACT 2616 AUSTRALIA.

WAR!ZONE SOUTH '94, July 1-4

FL

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

ARCANACON XII, July 7-10

CA

This convention will be held at the Collingwood Education Centre in Melbourne. Guests include Ed Greenwood. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include freeforms. Write to: ARCANACON, P.O. Box 125, Parkville, Vic, 3052 AUSTRALIA.

ORIGINS '94, July 7-10

CA

This convention will be held at the McEnery Convention Center in San Jose, Calif. Guests include Larry Niven and Steven Barnes. Events

include scores of role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Write to: ORIGINS '94, P.O. Box 3100, Kent OH 44240.

POLARISCON 3, July 8-10

MN

This convention will be held at the Thunderbird Hotel and Convention Center in Minneapolis, Minn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include seminars, demos, videos, dealers, an art show, and a masquerade. Registration: \$25. Write to: POLARISCON 3, c/o Time, Space, & Fantasy, Inc., P.O. Box 8908, Lake St. Station, Minneapolis MN 55408.

V-KHAN, July 8-10

CO

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn North in Colorado Springs, Colo. Guests include Andrew J. Offutt. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a miniatures-painting contest, plus an art show and auction. Registration: \$15 before June 30; \$20 thereafter. Write to: V-KHAN, 695 South 8th St. #55, Colorado Springs CO 80905.

WINDSOR GAMEFEST XII, July 8-10

*

This convention will be held at the University of Windsor in Windsor, Ontario. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$11 (U.S.)/weekend or \$6/day. Write to: Windsor Board and Role-playing Soc., c/o University of Windsor, 401 Sunset Ave., Windsor, Ontario, CANADA N9B 3P4.

LEGENDS-KNOXVILLE '94, July 9

TN

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn-Northwest in Knoxville, Tenn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers. Registration: \$2. Write to: Legends Entertainment Group, 514 Broad St., Rome GA 30161.

THOMAS COLLEGE MICRO-CON

July 9

GA

This convention will be held on the Thomas College campus in Thomasville, Ga. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, videos, and open gaming. Write to: MICRO-CON, c/o Michael Taylor, 123 Greenleaf Lane, Thomasville GA 31792.

DRAGON CON '94, July 15-17

GA

This convention will be held at the Westin Peachtree Plaza Hotel in Atlanta, Ga. Guests include Barbara G. Young, Harlan Ellison, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, and Clyde Caldwell. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include panels, seminars, demos, computer games, movies, and comics programming. Registration: \$45. Write to: DRAGON CON '94, P.O. Box 47696, Atlanta GA 30362-0696.

NONCON '94, July 15-17

♦

This convention will be held at the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane. Guests include Ed Greenwood. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include freeforms. Write to: NONCON, P.O. Box 328, Carina, Qld, 4152 AUSTRALIA.

QUINCON IX, July 15-17

IL

This convention will be held at the Signature Room at Franklin Square in Quincy, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGAT™ events and special guests. Registration: \$12/weekend or \$5/day. Send an SASE: QUINCON IX, c/o Mark Hoskins, 1181 Pratt St., Barry IL 62312.

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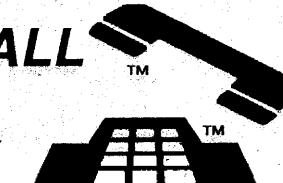
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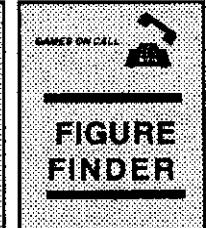
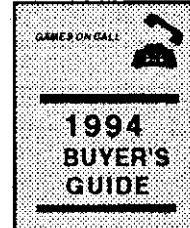
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GOBBLECON 3, July 16**PA**

This convention will be held at the Easton Inn in Easton, Pa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a games raffle, contests, and door prizes. Registration: \$8 before July 10; \$10 thereafter. Send a long SASE to: Mike Griffith, 118 S. Broadway, Wind Gap PA 18091.

GRAND GAME CON '94, July 16-17**MI**

This convention will be held at American Legion Post #179 in Grand Rapids, Mich. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA™ events. Registration: \$12/weekend or \$6/day preregistered; \$7/day on site. Write to: John Edelman, 31 Carlton SE, Grand Rapids MI 49506.

ARCEECON '94, July 23**IL**

This convention will be held at Leisure Hours R/C Raceway in Joliet, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include demos, a silent auction, and Japanimation. Registration: \$5, game fees: \$2. Write to: Leisure Hours Hobbies, 2872 Plainfield Rd., Joliet IL 60435.

CON-DOME '94, July 29-31**•**

This convention will be held at the Danish Technical University Lyngby. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a painting workshop. Registration: 80 Danish kroner. Write to: CON-DOME, c/o Mark Denninger, Kollegiekakken 1-C212, DK-2800 Lyngby, DENMARK.

LEGENDS-NASHVILLE '94, July 30**TN**

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

activities include dealers. Registration: \$2. Write to: Legends Entertainment Group, 514 Broad St., Rome GA 30161.

UMF-CON XIV, August 1-3**ME**

This convention will be held at the University of Maine-Farmington in Farmington, Maine. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$8 preregistered; \$12 on site. Single-day rates vary. Write to: Table Gaming Club, 5 South St., UMF, Farmington ME 04938; or e-mail: if15159@maine.maine.edu (be sure to include your mailing address).

GAMEFEST XV, Aug. 10-14**CA**

This convention will be held at Old Towne in San Diego, Cal. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include trivia and figure-painting contests. Registration: \$20 before July 30; \$30 on site. Write to: GAMEFEST, 3954 Harney St., San Diego CA 92110.

BUBONICON '94, Aug. 26-28**NM**

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson East in Albuquerque, N.M. Guests include Mike Stackpole, Liz Danforth, and Simon Hawke. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include panels, an art show, readings, films, and a masquerade. Registration: \$21 before Aug. 10; \$25 on site. Write to: NMSF Conference, P.O. Box 37257, Albuquerque NM 87176.

DEMICON 5, Aug. 26-28**MD**

This convention will be held at the Sheraton Conference Hotel in Towson, Md. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include seminars, a games auction, dealers, and a painted-miniature con-

test. Registration: \$20 before June 30; \$25 thereafter. Send an SASE to: Harford Adventure Soc., c/o The Strategic Castle, 114 N. Toll Gate Rd., Bel Air MD 21014.

OMEGACON 2, Aug. 26-28**FL**

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson Universal Tower in Orlando, Fla. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an artists' workshop, dealers, videos, and door prizes. Registration: \$5 preregistered; \$10 on site. Send an SASE to: John Martello, OMEGACON 2, 3415 Silverwood Dr., Pine Hills FL 32808-2847.

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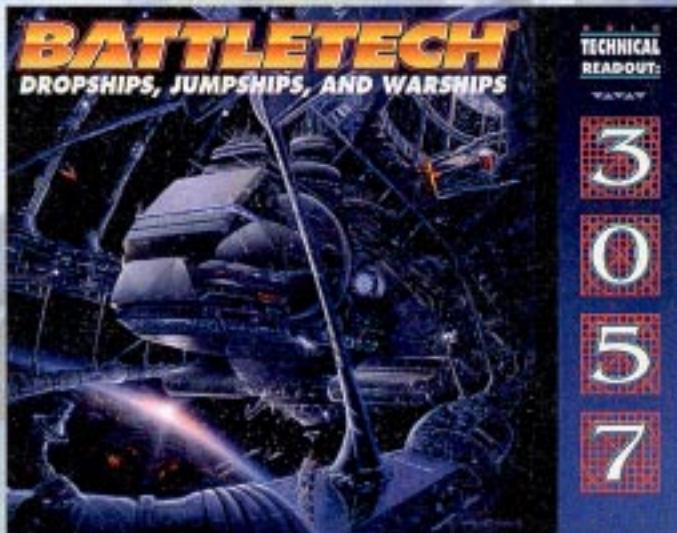
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Elderly computer games?

Computer and video games have the shortest lifespans of any entertainment form yet invented. To this day, we watch plays written hundreds or even thousands of years ago. (Anyone who's seen a play by Aeschylus, Shakespeare, or Moliere raise a hand.) We still watch and enjoy movies filmed three-quarters of a century ago (or even earlier). Reruns of TV shows that were cancelled almost thirty years ago are still popular (*Gilligan's Island*, the original *Star Trek*). Even in the realm of board games, old standbys still are popular—MONOPOLY*, CLUE*, and RISK* are as fun now as they ever were.

Role-playing games are pretty new, but the first one ever published is still going strong, as witness the continued existence of the very magazine this column is appearing in. No other RPG has done as well the AD&D® game, but there are several role-playing games out there that are over a decade old.

But there are no elderly computer games. The reason behind this is that computers become obsolete very quickly. Once a computer is gone, the games designed for it vanish, too. In addition, computer games, more than other entertainment forms, are highly limited by the medium. Until about three years ago, computer games were limited to only 16 colors. A little before that, games were restricted to what could be fit onto a floppy disk—hard drives were virtually unknown. Ten years before that games used ASCII characters to display their activities.

The advent of cartridge-based systems (Sega & Nintendo) has made it possible for games to become "classics". Since the technology supporting a Super Nintendo drive does not change over the years, a game that was good several years ago is still good today. Hence, games like *Zelda*, *Sonic the Hedgehog*, or *Super Mario* have managed to make their way into the realm of popular mythology.

It's not clear yet whether the Mario Brothers will survive another two or three decades, but if they do, it would appear at computer and video games may finally have made their way into art.

Computer games' ratings

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



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Reviews

LUFIA

Super Nintendo

Taito

This is a new role-playing game by Taito. It is very similar to *Final Fantasy II*, and if you liked that earlier game, as I did, you'll probably like this one. If not, avoid *Lufia* like the Black Death. It has all the flaws of *Final Fantasy*, and is, alas, short on some of the virtues.

There are many such games in Japan. It

is nice to see some of them finally making their way across the ocean. *Lufia*, if my sources are accurate, is actually the sixth in a series of adventures.

As you travel across the countryside, or through one of the dismal caverns or gloomy towers scattered across the world, wandering monsters occasionally appear as the world fades into obscurity behind. The monsters stand before you, and you are placed into a formal duel with your characters at the bottom of the screen and the monsters at the top. Alongside each of



your characters is a status bar giving you their hit points, magic points, etc. Just like *Final Fantasy II*, *Lufia* seems to follow the principle of "delayed gratification." Your various characters activate during their "turn," based on their agility, and you choose what you wish them to do; attack, use an item, defend (increased defensive ability), or cast a spell. But the character won't usually perform his action until much later in the combat, but occasionally if he is fast enough, and his action not too difficult, he'll do it right away. The monsters politely wait for you to take your turn, which is nice. The combat system isn't really all that great, and the animation for the monsters is very simple. They don't even have special attack animations for the monsters—they just flash the monsters and then flicker their image back and forth to simulate an attack. I guess they were trying to save money on art or, more defensibly, on chip space.

There's nothing wrong with the graphics, but there's nothing particularly remarkable about them either. I didn't see one thing that amazed me. The music was fine, with a non-repetitive, wallpaper-jazz sound.

The game has a rather amazing opening sequence. You play the four ancient heroes who originally destroyed the dread Sinistrals of Doom Island. You must quest around Doom Island, fighting megafrogs and worse monsters until you encounter the Sinistrals themselves. Then you must fight and destroy them. Since you don't know how to manage your warriors yet, it's a pretty hard fight. With luck and skill, ultimately you're able to win, at which time a fixed sequence shows two of your heroes dying heroically (is there any other way?) while the other two escape. The time then switches to 90 years later, and you get (at last) to see your own character as a little boy. Then the time switches to nine years later, when you're a Knight of Alekia, and you get to start on your game.

As the game progresses, you pick up your various followers, one of whom rapidly becomes your girlfriend (there's no provision for running a female character as your own). Further occasional cut-scenes show your characters interacting, sometimes productively, sometimes just playing jokes on one another. The jokes are pretty lame—perhaps this is the result



Lufia (Taito)

of translation from Japanese to English.

The manual tells you what you're supposed to do early on in the game, and is pretty good, though I spotted a number of mistakes in both it and the quick chart provided with the game. Unlike some games of this ilk, *Lufia* goes to some effort to prevent you from going somewhere you're not supposed to travel yet. It is so hard to explore "illegal" areas that I was very proud on the two or three occasions I actually managed it.

The game was plenty long, almost too much so. Eventually it decayed into an endless series of wandering monsters, dusty dungeons, and mysterious treasure chests. The game stayed pretty balanced until near the end, when I was able to beat almost every monster I met (though every once in a while I was still bested, so I guess I wasn't so tough after all).

Up to three games can be saved at a time, but you can only save at a town.

Game tips

1. Heal your characters whenever one of them is at less than half full strength. Doing otherwise risks death.

2. When you meet a Mimic or Redcore, attack it at all costs, expending all your energies to kill the darn thing before it flees, regardless of its companions. Killing one of these monsters provides you with an enormous amount of experience points, well worth the trouble taken.

3. When you're slain, you lose half the money you're carrying. It's best to invest it in goodies, than to carry it around as hard cash.

4. If you're not sure what to do next, just try leaving the town you're in and traveling onward. Sometimes this stimulates the

game to move on to the next stage. Also, sometimes taking an action causes something to change elsewhere in a tower or cave. If you seem to be at a dead end, look around the place some more.

ISLE OF THE DEAD

IBM & compatibles

Design: A. Sean Glaspey

Programming: Bruce J. Mack, Bryan Kolsch

Art: Myk Friedman

I like sleazy horror movies a lot. That said, I naturally like zombie movies (the essence of the genre). *Isle of the Dead* is based on those movies. You are the lone survivor of a plane wreck on a mysterious tropical island, which unfortunately teems with zombies under the control of an evil mad scientist. With this as the premise, I was all set to enjoy this game. I was hoping for a bloody, action-packed, free-for-all with tons of gore and fun. Boy, was I wrong.

This is an action/adventure game that requires a fairly fast computer. Its many failings are slightly mitigated if you have a sound card.

The game initially resembles other 3-D action spectacles such as *Wolfenstein 3-D*, *Blake Stone*, and *Ken's Labyrinth*. But it is much less competently done. For example, the blocks used for some walls don't even tile properly, so that they visibly repeat in an irritating fashion. You can see gaps in other walls, revealing blank white screen beyond. Pretty pathetic. The 3-D movement is reasonably fast (it better be, with the compromises they were willing to accept in the art), and you wander over the landscape picking up goodies and

like most other games in this genre, in which you automatically snag anything useful you walk over, in *Isle of the Dead*, you must choose to pick up an object by tapping the space bar when near it. You can store objects for future use, which is rather nice.

On occasion, you wander into a scene that is not 3-D. Here, all you can do is turn back and forth, using the mouse to click on objects you want to grab. At the start, for example, you must enter the burning plane and get the wire clippers and the machete—without the machete, you stand absolutely no chance of survival.

There are a few features of the game that are far from obvious, but most of the tidbits you can pick up simply by play. You can save and load the game in a dandy fashion, and I recommend that you do this very often.

The game art is done in an interesting cartoonesque fashion. This helps mitigate some of the horror of using flesh-eating zombies as your antagonists, and actually looks pretty good, except for a few zombies that are simply drawn too poorly. Still, the basic theory here was a good one. Each time you are killed, an exciting and violent death animation occurs, after which the evil mad doctor cackles with glee. Even if you just quit out of the game to go back to DOS, you get a violent death

keen death animations, different for each zombie.

The place this game really chews is in the game play. The zombies are incredibly deadly. In practice, what this means is that in order to kill them, you have to stand in a corner with your back to a wall while they line up and come at you one on one and you shoot or chop them down. If you try freewheeling through them in the traditional exciting zombie-movie fashion, you're an immediate *hors-d'oeuvre*. Simply put, fighting the zombies is dull, hard work. Sigh. What's the point of a game like this if the basic activity is simply not fun?

Another major problem is that when you clear out an area, then leave the area ever-so-briefly, and then return, all the monsters of the previous area have been resuscitated and are ready to fight you again. This means that you've got to fight your way through places you've already proven your ability to conquer again and again. I suppose the designers did this to make the island a little harder to beat. It does make it a lot harder to beat, but unfortunately, it makes it a lot more tedious, too. I wish designers would learn that it's not fun to keep doing the same stuff over and over,

Avoid *Isle of the Dead* even if you're a zombie buff. I was, and it didn't do me any good.

ARCHON ULTRA

IBM & compatibles

SSI

Design: Jon Freeman, Paul Reiche

Programming: Anne Westfall, Fred Ford

Graphics: George Barr, Jon Freeman, Douglas Herring, Mark Johnson, Karen Mangum, Paul Reiche, John Xu, Bill Yates

The single-star rating above may be judged by some as overly harsh, but I was extremely disappointed by this game. Several years ago, the original *Archon* came out on various old-style machines (the original Atari, for example). It was pretty fun. I had hopes that the new version, *Archon Ultra*, would be fun, too.

Archon Ultra was done by the original designers of *Archon*. It has all the flaws of that original game, but does not have any of the originality and little of the fun.

Archon Ultra superficially resembles chess, but instead of rooks, bishops, and knights, your units are unicorns, shape-shifters, trolls, valkyries, and other fantasy beings. One side represents Light, the other Dark. The board is divided into squares, some pale, some dark. Creatures of Light are boosted on light squares, and Creatures of Dark receive similar benefits on dark squares. As the game progresses, some of the squares gradually change from light to dark and back again. Power

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points scattered over the board act as targets for both sides to aim for. The chief unit of each side is a magician (Wizard for the White, Sorceress for the Dark) who can cast spells to benefit each's forces.

When you move one of your units onto an opposing square, you switch to a close-up view of that square (complete with lava pools and other terrain), and the two units engage in combat *mano a mano*.

But with this promising foundation—an undoubtedly excellent concept on which to build—the game falls down in almost every respect thereafter. The graphics are disastrously inadequate, and look like something from six years ago. The interface you must use to control your units is clumsy and frustrating. Feedback received during combat and play is far from clear, and the computer's AI is an annoying combination of the predictable and dull, yet hard to beat (because the computer does not suffer from human failings during the melee combats).

I disliked this game a lot, and so did everyone I showed it to. I think what went wrong was that the original designers got together and thought that, since the original *Archon* did so well, they could quickly hack out a second version, little improved, and have an instant success. This game is clear testimony to the fact that the standards of computer games have improved during the last decade. If the designers

had spent more effort looking at the state-of-the-art, perhaps *Archon Ultra* would be worth buying.

That said, there is still one situation in which I would recommend this game: if you have a modem. This game does support modem play, and that's a blessing. It doesn't improve the graphics or interface any, but at least your opponent suffers from the same drawbacks you do.

If you really, really liked *Archon*, and you own a modem, I recommend this game, but not otherwise.

EPIC PUZZLE PACK

IBM Epic Megagames & Xland
Design: Janusz Pelc
Support: Maciej Miasik, Paweł Wyrzycki,
 Marek Kubowicz

This is a collection of three different games: *Robbo*, *Heartlight*, and *Electro*. They are pretty fun, though each is very different.

Robbo is a simple little puzzle game in which you must maneuver a robot around simple mazes, avoiding monsters, shooting bombs, and finding bolts. It was fun and easy to get into. Sometimes arcade skills are required, as you must outrun pursuers or dodge cannon shots. The only flaw in this game as a puzzle was the fact the cannons fire their shots randomly, so you must sometimes just make a move hoping

that they won't shoot. This was unfair in a puzzle, because you can be killed in a situation where it wasn't really your fault. You had to run across that open space, and your death was just bad luck. Still, it's a minor cavil in an otherwise fun little game.

Heartlight looked a lot like a game I saw some years back on the Macintosh, *Leprechaun*. In this game, you must pick up hearts, and shove bombs, bricks, and balloons around. The game is totally logic-based, with no randomness at all. In theory, you could solve each problem simply by looking at the game for a long time, then moving your little elf sprite properly. The game has a peculiar flaw that stymied me for a long time—when it starts out, you are presented with puzzle number 70 (out of 70), which is nigh-impossible to solve. There is no indication given of how to get to another puzzle (like, say, the first). You must hold down the space bar and press the right or left arrow key to move the screen sideways to another puzzle. I was stumped for an embarrassingly long time before I blundered upon this little undocumented tidbit.

In *Electro*, you play a gun-toting superhero who battles robotic nasties. It's rather like *Duke Nukem* and other games of that ilk. If you liked those, you'll like *Electro*.

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Don't miss the 1994 GEN CON® Game Fair

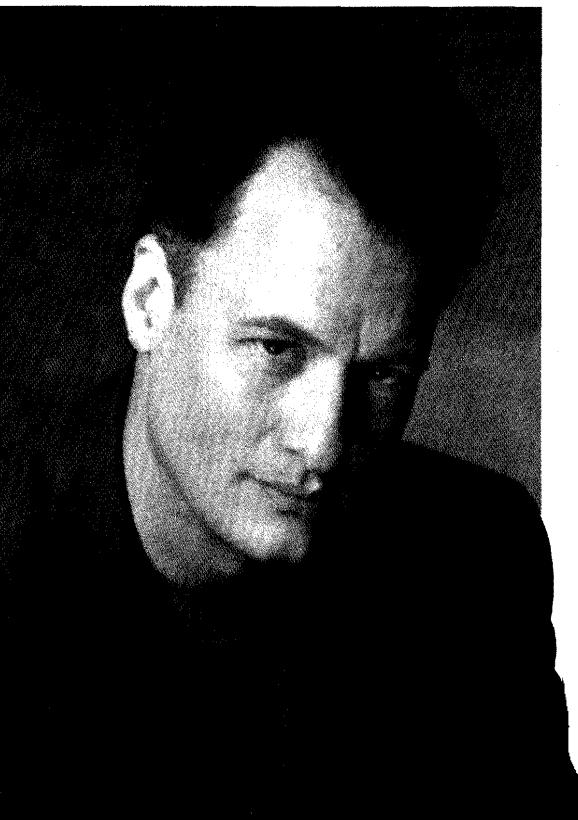
Better Than Ever

Once upon a time, at a GEN CON Game Fair long, long ago, the most sophisticated electronic device to be found was a wall socket, and the names on the guest list were known only to the small group of people who enjoyed role-playing games.

Times have changed. Boy, have times changed....

The 1994 GEN CON Game Fair will be filled to overflowing with high-tech gaming equipment and high-profile celebrities from the worlds of science fiction and comics as well as the realm of gaming. The show runs from August 18-21 at the MECCA Convention Center in Milwaukee, Wis.—and it's not too late to register in advance. (See the end of this article for details on how to get your own pre-registration booklet.)

John de Lancie



Science-Fiction Saturday

After getting off to a spectacular start at last year's Game Fair, Science-Fiction Saturday returns this year with an even larger lineup of special guests and activities. Among the headliners are **John de Lancie** ("Q") and **Majel Barrett** ("Lwaxana Troi"), two of the recurring guest stars on both *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*.

Majel Barrett has been part of the *Star Trek* phenomenon from the very start. She portrayed Number One in the first pilot episode of the original series and was later seen on a regular basis as Nurse Chapel. Now she plays the unpredictable Lwaxana Troi on the two spinoff series—and has also served as the voice of the computer on all three shows. She was married for more than 20 years to *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry, who died in 1991.

John de Lancie has appeared in several recent films (including *The Fisher King*, *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle*, and *Bad Influence*), but has reached new heights of popularity for his portrayal of the omnipotent and troublesome bad guy known only as Q. Both he and Ms. Barrett will sign autographs on Saturday afternoon, and each of them will conduct separate question-and-answer sessions.

We've just received word from Science-

Fiction Saturday organizer, Sue Weinlein, that another *Star Trek* star is joining the Game Fair's guest list. **Carel Struycken**, who plays Lwaxana Troi's manservant, Mr. Homn (and the butler, Lurch, in the two *Addams Family* movies), also will be appearing.

Another famous science-fiction guest will be **Timothy Zahn**, an award-winning writer with a trilogy of best-selling *Star Wars* novels to his credit, including *The Last Command*. Tim also will do an autograph session and a Q&A seminar on Saturday, as well as taking part in other special events.

Most of the activity associated with Science-Fiction Saturday will take place in and around the section of the MECCA Exhibit Hall known as Starbase 1. Among the attractions will be the Alien Archives, a mini-museum packed with SF film props and other memorabilia, and the Klingon Jail 'n' Bail, a popular charity event that raised nearly \$2,000 in donations last year. Other Science-Fiction Saturday gaming events and seminars are detailed in the pre-registration booklet.

Super-Hero Sunday

If any act could possibly follow Science-Fiction Saturday, it's Super-Hero Sunday, when the world of comics takes center

Peter David



Plan to attend the GEN CON® Game Fair now

stage. The extra-special guest is **Peter David**, the author of hundreds of comic books including work on *The Incredible Hulk*, *Spider-Man 2099*, *Atlantis Chronicles*, and *Aquaman*. Recently he has added to his fame with many *Star Trek* novels, the most recent of which is *Q Squared*.

Famous names from the world of comic art will also be on hand for Super-Hero Sunday, including Jeff Butler, Phil Foglio, Tim Bradstreet, and literally dozens of other artists and writers. If you can't find one of your favorites among this group... well, you just don't have enough favorites.

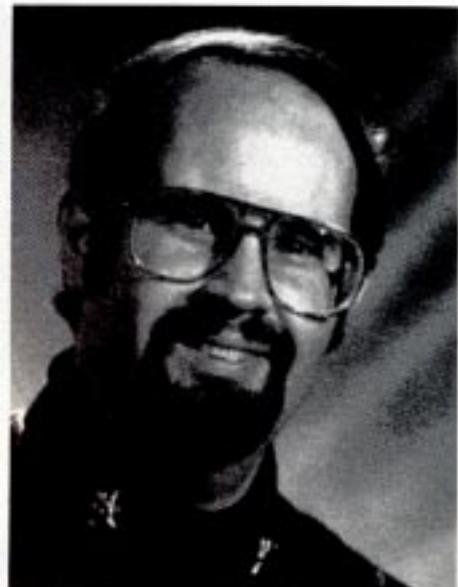
The convention also features a host of scheduled game events, seminars, and workshops on comics and super-hero gaming, many of which take place earlier than Sunday. If comics and crimefighters are up your alley, you'll find plenty of events to take up your time on all four days of the Game Fair.

Games on the edge

As the technology of gaming moves forward, the GEN CON Game Fair stays on the cutting edge. Many of the top manufacturers of interactive electronic games and virtual-reality simulators will bring their equipment and their knowhow to the convention. You can strap on a virtual helmet and step into Suki Cyberium's VR ring to compete against other opponents, experience the explosive action of the BattleTech 'mechwarrior combat simulator, and try out the Dactyl Nightmare VR competition.

If on-line gaming is your forte, you can sign up for MPG-Net's 50-player *Kingdom of Drakkar* game. For a different kind of

Timothy Zahn



interactive experience, check out CapCom's new four-player arcade game, D&D® Tower of Doom game. Or, if you prefer a "simple" human-vs.-computer matchup, you can sit down and try dozens of computer games, video games, and arcade games, including many of the newest releases as well as a wide selection of old favorites.

Guests galore

Aside from the special guests highlighted above, the roster of celebrities who plan to attend the Game Fair includes more than three dozen other "stars of the show" ranging from game designers to popular authors to famous illustrators to topflight military experts—and that's just a preliminary list, which is sure to grow by the time the show gets under way. Space doesn't permit us to list all their names, but a complete collection of all the celebrities can be found in the pre-registration booklet.

Other attractions

The largest feature of the Game Fair, as always, is the Great Exhibit Hall which is the world's biggest game, comic, book, and hobby store. Hundreds of companies will have displays in the 75,000-square-foot exhibit area, showing and selling every type of game product you can imagine...

If it's not for sale in the Great Exhibit Hall, chances are you can pick it up at the Game Fair's Auction, where for 35 hours over three days you can bid on out-of-print goodies, one-of-a-kind relics, and newer products that their owners are willing to part with for a fraction of their actual price.

Another longstanding Game Fair tradition is the Fantasy Art Show, which keeps getting better with age. Many of the most famous artists in the field will have their best work on display, and many of the pieces being shown also will be for sale, either as originals or as prints.

Also back for return engagements are special activities such as the Game Fair's Masquerade, offering prizes for the best costumes in 10 categories, and the TSR Model Shop, featuring a model construction contest jointly sponsored by TSR and Revell-Monogram. It's a cliche, but it's true: There truly is something for everyone at the Game Fair.

Register now

To have the best chance of signing up for all the events you want to take part in, write or call today for your free Game Fair pre-registration booklet, which includes 116 pages of information about the convention. The deadline for pre-registration

is **June 30th**, so there's no time to waste. Send your name and address to GEN CON Game Fair, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, or phone (414) 248-3625, ext. 424 to put in your request—and we'll see you in August!



Majel Barrett



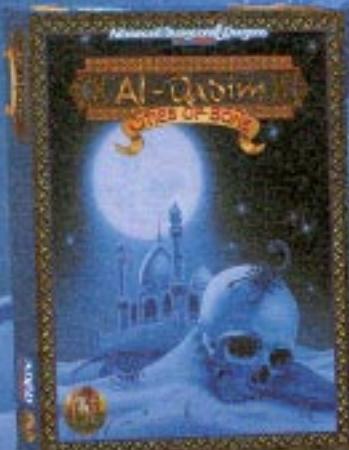
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Karameikos, Ho!

by Jeff Grubb

Cartography by John Knecht

The visitor

The visitor sat in my office chair, glancing about as if appraising my belongings for possible later resale. He was short and dumpling shaped, with a child-like face and bare, fur-covered feet that swung ten inches off the floor.

A halfling. It had to be a halfling.

Still, I tried to put the best face on it, "How can I help you, Mr. . . ."

"Gallidox," chirped the small creature, "Joshuan Gallidox. You can call me Joshuan, or even Josh." He beamed a cherubic smile, "I'm here about Karameikos."

"Ah, you mean the new campaign setting for the AD&D® game," I replied, warming to the discussion, "We have taken the original

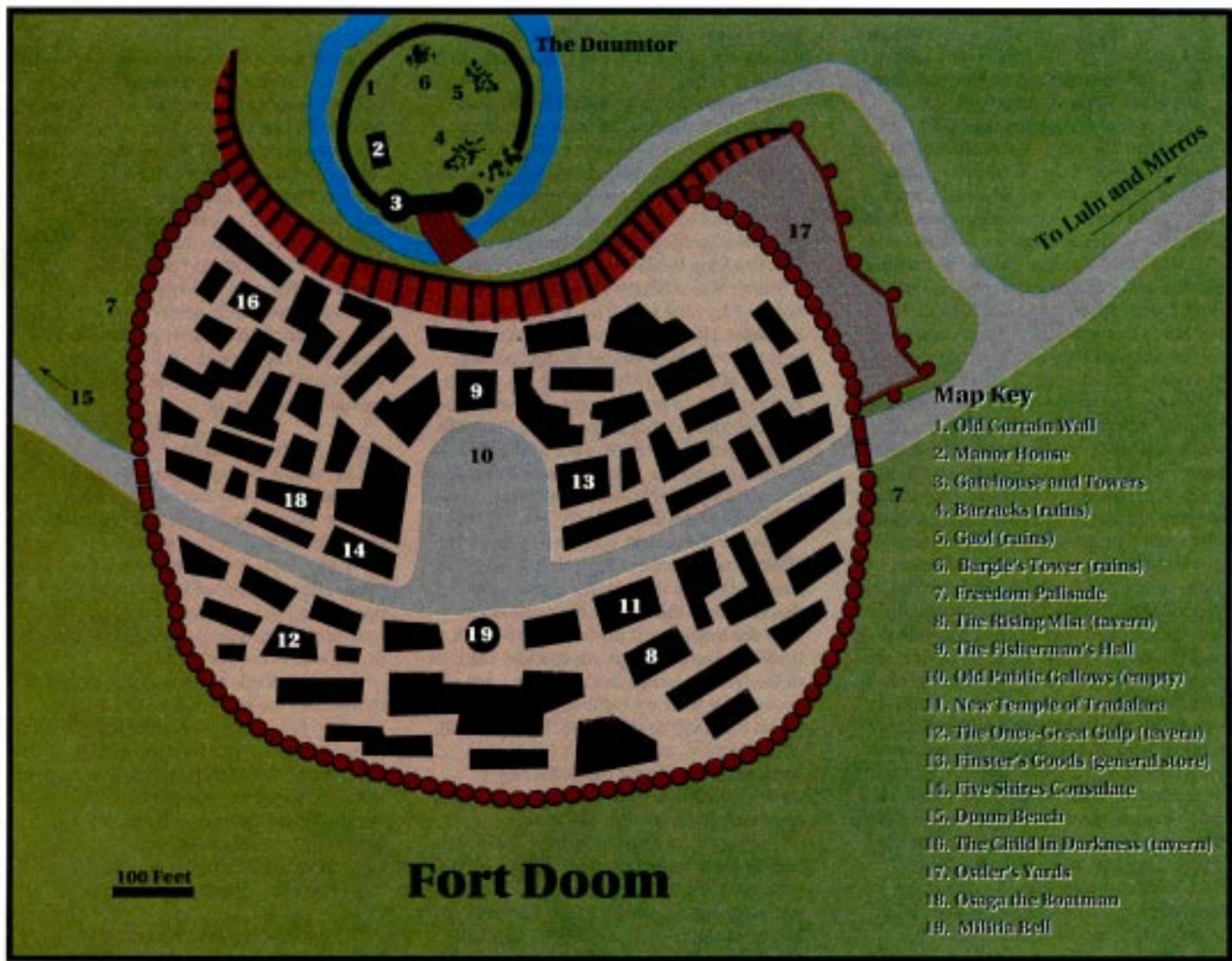
D&D® game world, which dates back to the dawn of gaming history and has been richly detailed in the Gazetteer series and almanacs, and brought it up to date in the AD&D game system. Not only that, we've included an audio CD adventure by TSR editor Thomas Reid, playable by long-time gamers as well as newcomers whose first experience with the game was through the FIRST QUEST™ game. There's a 128-page adventure book, a 32-page adventure book, the audio CD, two full-sized maps, character cards. . . ."

The halfling waved his hands at me, "Enough with the product promotion already," he harrumphed, "I'm talking about the real Karameikos—the down and dirty. From someone who knows who rules and

who thinks they rule. An agent in the field. Someone who knows the backwaters and darker side. It's all too easy to think of Karameikos as this high-faluting, white-knight kind of fantasy kingdom, what with good King Stefan and all that. There's danger in Karameikos as well, from the streets of Mirros (that's old Specularum) to the vaults of Fort Doom. . . ."

"Halag," said I, "After they kicked out the Black Eagle Baron, they renamed it Halag."

The halfling harrumphed again, "The barony is now called Halag, but the castle of the Black Eagle Baron, and the town beneath it will always be known as Fort Doom. And I know all about the fall of Fort Doom, because I was there!"



I raised an eyebrow, and the halfling nodded towards my computer, "You write, I'll tell you about it."

Presented below is what he told me. Statistics and other gaming information can be found after the narrative.

Ludwig Von Hendriks

The trouble (for Halag at least) came with Stefan Karameikos' cousin. The Empire of Thyatis had claimed the territory of Karameikos over a century ago, and about forty years back a Thyatian nobleman (who would become Good King Stefan) traded his family lands in the empire for this frontier territory. Now, Stefan was a good man, but showed bad judgment in choosing some of his friends, particularly a cousin named Ludwig Von Hendriks, who was to become the Black Eagle Baron.

Von Hendriks was enfeoffed with a large barony in western Karameikos, near the borders of the halfling nation of the Five Shires, centered on the existing town of Halag. Von Hendriks took the title of "The Black Eagle" (based on his family coat-of-arms) and the new domain became known as the Black Eagle Barony.

The town of Halag was renamed Fort Doom after the large fortification that Von Hendriks erected there. In theory, this hulking edifice of stone situated atop a cliff was to serve as protection from halfling pirates. (The narrator made a digression this point into the nature of halfling pirates being smarter than any human-built pile of stone, but we'll pass on this for now.) In reality, Fort Doom was used as Von Hendriks' power base to oppress the native population.

And oppress them he did. Von Hendriks reduced the townspeople to the status of serfs, unable to trade or even leave their land without baronial permission. To enforce his laws and collect exorbitant taxes to fund his plans, Von Hendriks brought in mercenary units and encouraged hostile nonhuman tribes to enter his service. Units of orcs, hobgoblins, and goblins soon appeared in the Black Eagle's "special service." He also encouraged a criminal organization of slavers and assassins, the Iron Ring, to operate in the barony. Lastly, Von Hendriks took into his service an extremely mad and extremely evil Karameikan wizard, one Bargle the Infamous, who used the Ludwig's captives for his own bizarre experiments. The Black Eagle's eventual goal was independence from the rest of Karameikos, or wresting the entire kingdom away from Stefan.

Throughout this, Von Hendriks was careful to avoid censure by Stefan or investigation by his agents. Rumors abounded as to his iron-fisted rule, but as

long as the Black Eagle Baron could convince his liege that these were mere rumors and exaggerations, his seat was secure. On those occasions when Stefan visited the Black Eagle Barony, he was met by smiling, happy villagers. He did not know about the hostages kept by Von Hendriks to assure his people's cooperation. Von Hendriks continued to oppress his people, and, more importantly to this story, allowed his nonhuman troops to raid the neighboring nation of the halflings regularly.

The halflings' war

The land to the west of Karameikos was occupied by a small humanoid race that humans call halflings, but among themselves are known as the Hin. The continual raiding by the Black Eagle's nonhuman troops created great suffering among the hin along the Karameikos borders, but their complaints (led by their ambassador, Jenkin Flintfoot) fell on deaf ears. King Stefan was unwilling to believe that his cousin was the evil varlet that others made him out to be.

In desperation, a group of halfling adventurers kidnaped his majesty, rolling him up in a rug and unceremoniously carrying him to the Black Eagle Barony for an impromptu (and unannounced) tour. Confronted with the plight of his people, and the enormity of Von Hendriks' treachery, the King broke all ties with his cousin.

Stefan was still unwilling to split his country by civil war. This was when Ambassador Flintfoot stepped forward and volunteered the services of the halfling armies of the Five Shires. The hin people had more than enough reason to wish to capture and punish Ludwig Von Hendriks for his genocidal tendencies, and a foreign incursion had the potential for removing the evil Black Eagle without excessive loss of loyal Karameikan life.

The halfling assault was a two-pronged affair. A large force of light skirmishers circled through the Achelos woods and descended on the Barony from the north, with the intention of drawing off the bulk of the Black Eagle's troops. Meanwhile, the bulk of the halfling troops landed to the south, brought by the very halfling pirates Fort Doom was built to withstand. With the bulk of the barony's armed forces chasing shadows along the shores of the Blight Swamp, the Black Eagle was unprepared for an assault from another direction.

Ludwig could have withstood the attack, had he the support of the villagers. However, with the halfling invasion, a popular uprising, encouraged by such Ludwig-hating humans such as Yolanda and Lady Sascia of Luln, cut off Fort Doom from its

troops. Ludwig's nonhuman armies and mercenaries were unaware of the attack on the Fort until it was too late.

During the assault, the Karameikan army was placed on a full defensive alert. The Riverfork Guard Battalion of the 5th Division ("Fury in the West") was ordered to prevent any halfling movement north of the joining of Cruth and Magos river. Similarly, the Radlebb Guard Battalion of the 5th Division ("Baator's Jailers") advanced as far of Luln. This force, commanded by the Karameikan Minister of War, General Zandra Sulanov, was charged with preventing any further halfling incursions east of the Black Eagle Barony, aiding refugees, and preventing the flight of the Baron's nonhuman troops into central Karameikos. While Baator's Jailors did not enter Fort Doom, they did acquit themselves well against a unit of orcs under gnoll leadership ("Rakash's Reavers") who, upon hearing of Fort Doom's fall, attempted to capture Luln as a new base.

Fort Doom was breached and partially burned. Ludwig was captured by the halfling forces and immediately shipped back to the Five Shires for trial (though he later escaped). Bargle the Infamous fled in the face of the invasion, abandoning his master. The Iron Ring fled to smaller bases they had set up inside the barony. The human mercenaries, seeing which way the wind was blowing, laid down their arms in exchange for safe passage out of the barony. The bands of bugbears, orcs, hobgoblins, and gnolls fought when they had to, fled when they could, and many are still surviving (in reduced circumstances) in western Karameikos.

Fort Doom today

King Stefan has appointed a Castellan to oversee the Barony until such a time that a worthy candidate appears. The Castellan is one Milo Korrigan, the nephew of Alexius Korrigan, who is another cousin (though a more pleasant one) of King Stefan. Milo has proved to be a diligent and caring individual, but is overwhelmed by the size of the task presented him. *

The Black Eagle's removal has done little to alleviate the suffering of the people, who are now embattled and raided by the very nonhuman troops that used to "protect" them. The Iron Ring is still in operation, and there are regular rumors that Bargle the Infamous has been seen on the borders of the Blight Swamp. The people have the hope of a better tomorrow, but their present is unpleasant indeed.

The halfling finished his narration and looked quite pleased. I read back what I

had typed and he nodded in approval.

I sighed, "Bargle the Infamous, the Iron Ring, nonhuman tribes—it looks like the Black Eagle—the Barony of Halag is truly in need of adventurers to set things right."

"Exactly my point," said the halfling.
"Exactly."

* Note to potential DMs: The Black Eagle Barony is a potential fief for higher-level characters, and is available for use by them. Milo Korrigan gladly will turn over the reins (and the reign) of this troublesome piece of property to anyone who will take them.

The town

The town of Fort Doom is a good-sized town of some 10,000 people, with another 5,000 or so scattered through small hamlets and villages throughout the barony. The town is clustered around the base of a basalt cliff known as Duumtor in an old dwarven tongue, a hard, rocky spur that towers some 150' above the surrounding land. There had been a number of castles and forts built on the cliff-top over the centuries, and there are legends of underground passages, secret lairs, and lost tombs within its rocky fastness. Duumtor's pale gray cliffs face south and west, but there is a winding road from the east that leads to the top and Fort Doom itself.

Fort Doom: The largest complex of structures ever built on Duumtor, the fortification was erected with the purpose (or rather, the excuse) of protecting the village of Halag and the nation of Karameikos from western invasions and raids. In reality, it was used as a power base for Ludwig to impose his will on the town.

Fort Doom consisted of a 20' deep moat, a nearly circular curtain wall, 15' high, dominated by a pair of massive 30' tall towers on the southern flank. The towers frame an impressive, skull-faced gatehouse, heavily defended and decorated with the shield of the Von Hendriks family on the gate lintel. Within the walls were a well-furnished keep for the baron, barracks for Ludwig's personal bugbear guards, a 40' tower used by the wizard Bargle the Infamous, and a gaol, used to keep hostages (to ensure cooperation from the villagers) and suspected terrorists (anyone who disagreed with Baron).

During the Halfling's War, the hin ignored the barricaded gatehouse and instead used a magical device (believed to be a *horn of blasting*) against the eastern wall, reducing it to rubble. The main keep was looted but left fairly intact, but the barracks, Bargle's Tower, and gaol were razed to the ground (the last after all the hostages and terrorists were freed).

Castellan Milo Korrigan has taken pos-

session of the keep, and, after an attack from the basement crypts by undead creatures, ordered any entrances discovered into the lower crypts and caves sealed. He intends to have these areas cleaned out eventually, but by individuals more used to risk than him. There are continual rumors circulating about other entrances to the mazework carved within the Duumtor, as well as lost treasures (and escaped prisoners or evil minions) still down there.

Freedom Palisade: This is a new construction, built since the war, keeps the nonhuman tribes no longer in Von Hendrik's service at bay. The palisade is a temporary measure until a true fortification wall can be afforded. The Palisade is 15' high and made of shaved oak poles. A thin walkway 2' wide is located 10' up on the side. Wooden gates to the east and west allow carts to pass into and out of the town, and there is a smaller postern door in the south for foot traffic. There are no towers.

The Rising Mist: The Rising Mist is the local "Adventurers Bar," the place where most of the wandering swordsmen and wizards seeking employment or adventure hang out. Before the war, this tavern was the headquarters of smugglers who evaded Ludwig's iron rule, and the ground beneath it is said to be honeycombed with old passages. The current tavern keeper is a recent arrival, however, and denies knowing anything about it. The tavernkeeper and owner is one Kermín Dilandrov, a 4th-level warrior who had served in Luln during the war. The Mist is also a popular watering hole with the halfling population, since Kermín has instituted a "Half-sized, Half-price" policy on his drinks. The Mist offers no rooms for rent, but is surrounded on three sides by boarding houses that do a good business in adventurers and merchants.

Fisherman's Hall: The bulk of Halag's population survive by fishing the nearby gulf, bringing in shad, mackerel, and tuna from its rich waters. As a result, the Fisherman's Hall is the largest building in the town of Halag, dominated by a great central vault with an arched roof. The hall was used as troop quarters by Ludwig, but now has returned to its original purpose as meeting place, dance hall, and, in the winter time, a gathering spot to repair the fishing nets.

Old Public Gallows: Situated outside the Fisherman's Hall, the public gallows was at one time framed by stocks and impaling poles. All these have been destroyed after the war, but nothing has been built on the site yet.

New Temple: With the overthrow of

Ludwig, the native religion, the Church of Traladara, resurfaced in Halag. It currently maintains a small church made from a converted warehouse, and has a staff of six—a bishop, two assistant priests, and three full-time warriors. The bishop is a human female named Calianna, and is a 7th-level priest. The two assistants are each 4th level, and the warriors are all 3rd level, dressed in chain mail, and carry swords.

Calianna is a devoted priest who believes her first duty is to the community, and to "outlanders" second. Currently, she is trying to locate certain holy relics of the former temple of Traladara which Ludwig seized, and which were not recovered in the war.

The Once-Great Gulp: Another public house of Halag, this one only opens its doors after dark, and has a reputation in town as a dangerous place. It has a quiet, smoky, and dark public room, and a large number of back rooms used for "private business." The Gulp is reputed to be a front for the Iron Ring, and whether it is true or not, agents of the Ring often use the place for meetings with new clients. The owner of the Gulp is unknown, but the evening bar-keep is a large, powerful-looking man called Omak the Silent. Omak does not speak, and scars along his neck indicate that he lost this capacity as a result of an unsuccessful hanging. He asks questions of his customers by a handful of well-thumbed cards.

Finster's Goods: Some of the human villagers supported Ludwig's reign of terror, and most of these found somewhere else to live after the rebellion. One who remained was Ivan Finster, the keeper of Halag's only "general store." Finster has most items needed for successful farming and adventuring, and what he does not have he can order from the capital at a "modest surcharge" (double price). Lean, oily, and avaricious, Finster fawns over newcomers (well, over newcomers' money sacks). He is universally hated by the other villagers.

Five Shires Consulate: This is the official representation for the Five Shires in town, and is usually used as a hin hangout by the rising number of halflings who have emigrated to Halag after the war. Rumors state that the consulate is the headquarters for a new thieves' guild, dominated by halflings. The consulate denies this, pointing out that for thieves to exist, there has to be something worth stealing.

Duum Beach: A broad, sandy beach on the Gulf of Halag, Duum Beach is used by the town's fishermen, who pull their shallow-drafted boats up on the sands in

the evening. It is located about a mile from the village proper. Guards are posted in the evening to prevent nonhuman raids of the boats, and there is discussion of erecting another palisade around the beach area, and building a true dock.

The beach is fairly well-sheltered, and some merchant craft moor in its deeper waters, sending supplies in on smaller boats. Most merchants using Halag as a port have Ierendi and Five Shires registry, as larger and more prosperous craft bypass Halag and sail directly for Mirros.

The Child in Darkness: Another tavern, this one run by Igon and Egon Trakador, twin brothers, one of whom had fled into exile, the other captured and imprisoned by Ludwig's forces. Both are serious, angry young men, and dedicate a large part of their activity to tracking down and reuniting families separated by the Black Eagle's rule. The Child has the support of a number of powerful Karameikans, including the famous entertainer Yolanda of Luln. Adventurers seeking ready (if not always profitable) employment should know that the Brothers Trakador have more leads and rumors than they can handle.

Ostler's Yards: This was the site of more barracks for Ludwig's troops, and all that remains of those structures are a few burned-out husks. It is now used to quarter horses and caravans (there are no stables inside the palisade walls). The ostler is a man named "Lanky" Nibbs, a tall, thin, talkative, merry man of middle age who claims to hail from Glantri City. Nibbs is a hopeless gossip, and often gets his information almost correct.

Osaga the Boatman: The Osaga family are the best boat builders in the barony, and there are craft over 100 years old built by the family still in service. Most of the family fled the Black Eagle, but Osaga the Elder remained. He seeks his grandson to carry on the business, but no luck so far.

Militia Bell: Erected on the site of (and made of the metal from) a bronze statue of Baron Hendriks, this bell is rung in times of emergency, to mobilize the population in the face of fire, nonhuman attack, or other dire event. There is a similar bell (with a lower tone) on Duum Beach.

The Iron Ring

The Iron Ring is a criminal organization with agents throughout Karameikos, and was, until recently, operated under the watchful eye of Baron Ludwig. Built upon small groups known as cells, with ultimate ruler is unknown to the general public. Stomping out one cell of the Iron Ring does not destroy the organization, and the surviving members can rebuild the organi-

zation when wounded in this fashion.

The Iron Ring is a brutal organization that makes it profits through assassination and slavery, and as such is actively sought by agents of the Karameikan government, which approve of neither activity. Most of the slaves taken by the Iron Ring are shipped to other lands that tolerate or encourage human slaves, including the Broken Lands and the Shadow Elf kingdom of Aengmor. The bulk are shipped to the nearby Empire of Thyatis.

Until the Halfling's War, Fort Doom was a terminus for Iron Ring slave wagons. These wagons are often disguised as common carters carrying barrels. In one spectacular case, the Iron Ring wagon was disguised as a traveling magician's show. Once at Fort Doom, slaves would be bundled onto ships and sent to buyers elsewhere. In exchange for their cooperation, Ludwig and Barge would get first choice of unusual or interesting prisoners.

With the fall of the Black Eagle, the Iron Ring has lost an important outlet. They are currently examining ways to re-institute their influence in the Halag area, while at the same time seeking out new ventures in Mirros and Threshold.

Nonhuman tribes

In the wake of the war, most nonhuman military groups have broken down to small bands under one leader or another, but some larger organizations survive. These organizations survive as several bands of 100 members or more. All survive by raiding small hamlets and caravans passing through the area. The make-up and symbols of these tribes are as follows:

The Blood Reavers: The Blood Reavers are orcs with gnoll leaders, and are the remains of Rashak's Reavers after their disastrous assault on Luln. Their symbol is a blood-red skull, and the orcs paint their faces red before a raid.

The Night Seekers: These are goblin archers originally employed by Ludwig as hunters and assassins, and are accompanied on their hunts with large, black war dogs. Despite local legends, the Night Seekers do not ride their dogs as mounts, but rather use them to track and herd their prey. The Night Seekers dress in black, and have no official symbol.

The Pit Fiends: Despite the name, these are hobgoblins with delusions of grandeur. Their symbol is a pit fiend with blood dripping from its claws, and their leaders wear full-face masks in the shape of a pit fiends head.

The White Death: One of the odder groups that found service with Ludwig, the White Death is a mystic society of goblins and orcs who have taken a vow of

silence in combat. They use talc on their faces and arms to make themselves look ghostlike, and believe themselves invulnerable when in this state.

Bargles' Bughears: One of the most organized nonhuman units remaining after the fall of the Black Eagle, these bugbears often recruit or impress other small tribes into service. They venerate Bargle's memory, and claim the wizard will return to lead them back to greatness. (The evil mage's current location is unknown.)

Ω



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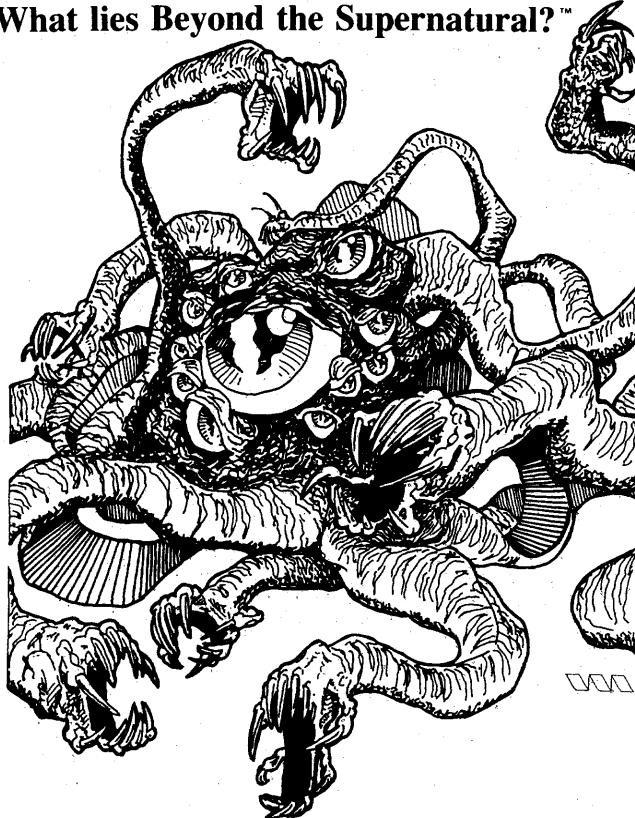
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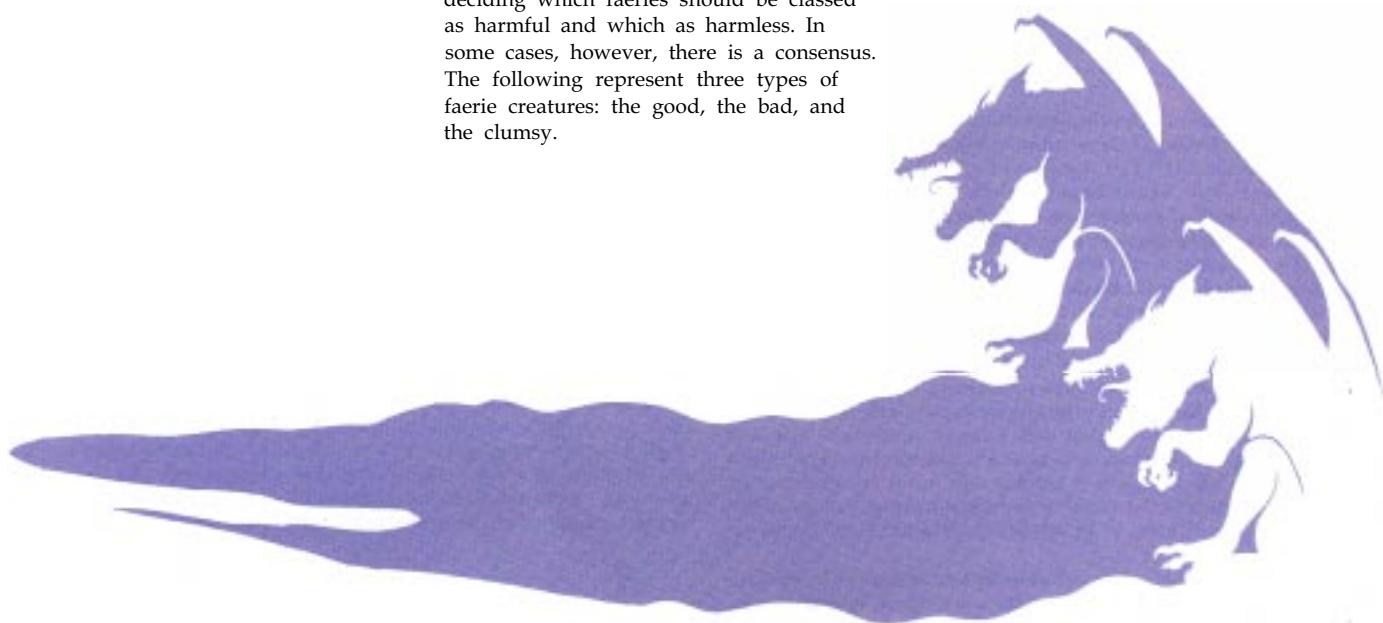
The Dragon's Bestiary

The good, the bad, and the clumsy

by Spike Y. Jones

Artwork by Chris Farris

Faeries come in all shapes, sizes, and temperaments, but because of the almost alien thought processes and motivations of the members of the faerie world, there is often disagreement when it comes to deciding which faeries should be classed as harmful and which as harmless. In some cases, however, there is a consensus. The following represent three types of faerie creatures: the good, the bad, and the clumsy.



CLIMATE/TERRAIN:

Subarctic to temperate/Grasslands, hills, and prairies

FREQUENCY:

Rare

ORGANIZATION:

Nomadic band

ACTIVITY CYCLE:

Day

DIET:

Omnivore

INTELLIGENCE:

Very (11-12)

TREASURE TYPE:

O, Q

ALIGNMENT:

Neutral Evil

NO. APPEARING:

2d8

ARMOR CLASS:

2 (8 without armor)

MOVE:

3

HIT DICE:

2 hp

THAC0:

19

NO. OF ATTACKS:

1

DAMAGE/ATTACK:

1d8

SPECIAL ATTACKS:

Poison

SPECIAL DEFENSES:

Minor spell use

MAGIC RESISTANCE:

5%

SIZE:

T (3" tall)

MORALE:

Steady (12)

XP VALUE:

65 (175 with poison)

So tiny that they might not appear dangerous, brambles are among the most aggressive and vicious of all faeries. Although currently breeding true, rumor has it that the first brambles were individual outcasts from "polite" faerie society (their size, name, and fixation with pointy things makes the Gorse their likely ancestor; see "Dragon's Bestiary" in DRAGON® issue #180).

Brambles look like tiny, dried-out people, with dark, wrinkled skin, long, pointed finger- and toe-nails, ears that come to points much sharper than those of elves, and sticking out of their backs are a brace of spines that look like they should support miniature dragon-wings, but which are unadorned. Still, most of these features are usually hidden by the plate-mail armor that they wear under normal circumstances, and even the wing-spines that come out of holes in the armor's backplate can easily be mistaken as longer versions of the artificial spines covering the rest of the bramble's armor.

Combat: The spine-covered armor of a bramble is both its best defense and its strongest attack. The armor provides AC 2 protection, and the barbs on its surface prevent other creatures from coming too close to the wearer; any animal that attempts to bite or eat a bramble suffers an automatic 1d6 damage, as would any humanoid trying to pick up a bramble with bare hands. Attackers wearing armor get to make a save, attempting to roll above the AC value of the armor covering their hands (Dexterity and shield bonuses do not apply) on 1d12 to avoid injury.

In order to turn the armor into an offensive weapon, a bramble merely has to hurl himself against a target, rolling attack and damage normally. When faced with opponents close to its own height (1' or less), a bramble will attempt to wrestle, causing 1d6 points damage per round in addition to any damage as a result of the wrestling (see *Player's Handbook*, pages 97-98).

One bramble in ten has another weapon to use in combat; poison. The wing-spines of these brambles secrete a strong poison that causes a painful burning sensation (-2 on attack and damage rolls for 2d10 rounds, with additional doses having cumulative effects) on anyone hit by them (either as an attack or automatically as a result of picking up the bramble) unless they make a save vs. poison with a -3 penalty, in which case the effects and duration are both halved. As these brambles are perfectly willing to use this poison on dissenting members of their own bands, they are generally the leaders in any bramble group.

Finally, and most strangely, brambles are often found riding a peculiar selection of animals. It is not uncommon to come upon a band of brambles riding a collection of porcupines, hedgehogs, al-m'rajs, and other creatures, looking like bizarre pixie-knights as they search for food and fights. They control their mounts with a *charm mount* spell that each can cast once per day. When so mounted, brambles also carry barbed spears (that do 1d6 damage on a hit) that they use as lances. (Statistics for these creatures can be found in individual monster listings, under the "Mammal, Small" entry in *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® 2* or in the *Monstrous Manual*.)

The final special ability of brambles is one that makes them especially dangerous to flying prey such as small birds and flying faerie creatures.



One in ten brambles (not necessarily the same brambles that possess the poisoned spines) can cast a special *anti-flying* spell once per day, which causes any one Small flying creature within 10' to be magically grounded (whether the creature flew as a result of magic or natural ability) for a period of 6d6 rounds (unless a save vs. spells is made, in which case no effects are felt). While this can be used in hunting, brambles especially like to cast *anti-flying* on pixies, sprites, and other faerie creatures, so that they can have the cruel fun of chasing them through the woods on the ground.

Habitat/Society: Brambles are nomadic creatures, constantly on the move searching for food and fights. When they rest, it is in camps hidden in thorny bushes and other natural protection, with their mounts posted as guards. As with other faerie creatures, bramble infants are never seen, but when a band grows too large, it splits in half with the two groups heading off in opposite directions.

Brambles sometimes will pick up small amounts of easily-transported treasure that they use to bribe other creatures into manufacturing their special armor for them. Despite their small size, brambles are supremely confident, even when dealing with humans and other "giants." They would think nothing of challenging a "giant" to a wrestling match, especially as they would have no intention of honoring any bets they might place on the fight. They speak their own language, as well as the languages of most other faerie creatures. Their knowledge of elvish is slim, but it should suffice to make business deals with, and to offer challenges to those forest-dwelling "giants."

Ecology: There are few ways in which a bramble can benefit another creature. The average bramble doesn't have enough meat on its bones to make a good meal for anything larger than an owl, and those with poisonous spines are also discomforting to eat as their flesh has the same effects on the eater as their poison.

A poisonous bramble's spines could be drained by a hunter to make blade poison but one bramble would only provide enough poison for a single arrowhead or dart; it would take ten or more poisonous brambles to provide enough of the substance to coat a long sword. The armor they wear is often beautiful in a dangerous way, and some collector might pay 2d8 x 10 gp for an complete, unoccupied suit.

| | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Temperate rural |
| FREQUENCY: | Rare |
| ORGANIZATION: | Tribal |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE: | Night |
| DIET: | Herbivore |
| INTELLIGENCE: | Average (8) |
| TREASURE TYPE: | Nil |
| ALIGNMENT: | Neutral Good |

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| NO. APPEARING: | 2d4 |
| ARMOR CLASS: | 5 (9) |
| MOVE: | 9 |
| HIT DICE: | 1/2 |
| THAC0: | 20 |
| NO. OF ATTACKS: | 1 |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK: | By weapon |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS: | Spells |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Save as 9th-level priest |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | As above |
| SIZE: | Tiny (2' tall) |
| MORALE: | Average (8-10) |
| XP VALUE: | 120 |

Dobies are small humanoids, similar in appearance to their cousins, brownies. They live peaceful, reclusive lives, and when they encounter humans or other civilized creatures, they try to be helpful neighbors to these "big folk," with mixed results.

Dobies resemble small elves, with brown eyes and hair, and work-a-day clothing to match. Their features are generally plain; they have ears that are only slightly pointed (as opposed to the extreme points of brownies), their faces are more reminiscent of tired farmers than bright-eyed children, and while they move with a free gait, no one would describe them as nimble. In fact, the image ones gets of them is more in line with "country bumpkin" than "mischievous faerie."

While they converse among themselves in the language of brownies, all dobies also know the Common tongue, and that of at least one other faerie creature (such as sprite or pixie).

Combat: Dobies are inoffensive creatures, and if threatened, prefer to walk or sneak away than to fight. Still, they are very protective of their big-folk neighbors, and will fight to defend them and their property against all comers.

The drab colors of their tough clothing combines with their size and activity level to help them hide in any natural setting, giving them an effective AC of 5 outdoors, or in a building furnished in natural materials. In strange environments, a dobies's armor class goes down to 9.

In combat, a dobies prefers to cast the wizard spells *confuse languages* (the reverse of *comprehend languages*), *grease*, *forget*, *fumble* and *ray of enfeeblement* (once per day each at the minimum level to cast each spell) to confound and confuse opponents. A dobies also can use a tool, such as a hoe or hammer, as a makeshift weapon doing 1d2 points damage on a hit. If they come across a real weapon, such as a dagger or short sword their inexperience means that they still only do 1d3 damage on hits. Although their features and size varies, female and young dobies all fight and cast spells with the same skill, so the figure given for Number Appearing includes women and children.

Unlike some other faeries who can see through illusions, dobies are particularly gullible, and they suffer a -3 penalty on saving throws versus illusions and charms.

Habitat/Society: Small families of dobies live in crude cottages made of twigs and thatch hidden in the thickets at the corner of a farmer's fields. If there are more than four dobies on one farmer's property, they will be split into two or more households at the corners of the fields. Like brownies, they glean food from the fields of farmers after the harvest, but they are far from efficient, and the end result of their gleanings won't be the perfectly clean fields of their cousins, but something more akin to the natural habits of birds and rodents.

As good creatures, dobies feel obligated to pay for the food they glean and the land they live on, and they offer payment in deed, such as temporarily guarding treasure or doing household chores. Because of their reclusive nature, the dobies won't ask what sort of chores need doing, and normally will perform his favors at night or when there's nobody around to see him, but his labors seldom go unnoticed.

Unfortunately, their desire to be helpful usually outstrips their ability,



and they almost always botch the favors they try to perform. If they milk the farmer's cows, they forget to close the barn door afterwards, allowing the cows to wander afield. If they rescue the wayward cows, they are likely to break fences and trample gardens as they lead the cattle back to the farm, etc. If their "landlord" knows that dobies are the cause of the accidents, and berates them about it, the dobies will misconstrue the criticism as a complaint about the amount of work done, and they will redouble their efforts to make good on their debt. While one cannot fault their intentions, if it weren't for the times that their fumbling accidentally works for the benefit of dobies's landlord, one could almost consider them a curse, instead of a blessing.

One of the few times that a dobies's fumbling becomes a blessing is when thieves, brigands, or other hostile beings (including wild animals) appear on the property. Dobies are protective of their adopted families, and will try to defend the goods and lives of their landlords against attack, especially if the farmer isn't there to defend it himself. The scene after a typical fight with a dobies family will be a jumbled mess of broken furniture, smashed crockery, and the like, but at least the lives and major goods of the farmer will have been safeguarded.

Unlike brownies few dobies ever take the step of becoming "house dobies," actually living in the big folks' home and performing services for them on a daily basis. This is not because they don't want to be close to their neighbors, but because the inadvertent damage they do is likely to convince the family they adopt that their house is haunted by some poltergeist, forcing them either to take drastic measures to remove the dobies, or even making them move away from the area, which would spell doom for the dobies living off their land. On the other hand, it is difficult to offend a dobies enough to make him leave "his" farm; they are as oblivious to insults as they are to the proper workings of a big folk family and farm.

Ecology: Dobies live on the margins of civilization, neither helping the environment nor hurting it in any major way. They are strict vegetarians, but they are unable to cultivate land of their own; it must first be plowed and seeded by "big folk," after which they do their part to care for the growing plants.

Faerie Fiddler

DRAGON #206

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| | |
|-------------------|--|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Any inhabited by other faeries |
| FREQUENCY: | Uncommon |
| ORGANIZATION: | Solitary |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE: | Night |
| DIET: | Nil |
| INTELLIGENCE: | Average (10) |
| TREASURE TYPE: | Nil |
| ALIGNMENT: | Neutral Good |
| NO. APPEARING: | 1 |
| ARMOR CLASS: | 0 |
| MOVE: | 12 |
| HIT DICE: | 1 |
| THAC0: | 20 |
| NO. OF ATTACKS: | 0 |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK: | Nil |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS: | Fiddling |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Immune to <i>enchantment/charm</i> magic |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | 25% |
| SIZE: | T (2' tall) |
| MORALE: | Elite (15) |
| XP VALUE: | 270 |

The faerie fiddler is a strange icon of faerie society. Always found in a community of faeries, there is never more than one faerie fiddler per community. The faerie fiddler's motivations are to protect other members of the society and to make the world more pleasant, according to its understanding of the term.

In appearance, faerie fiddlers are among the most human-looking of faeries. They resemble nothing so much as old, diminutive human males (there are no female fiddlers), dressed in somber, archaic clothes (such as a battered black top hat and tails), and playing a most exquisite, tiny fiddle. For all of their aged appearance, they are always in apparent good spirits, and while so skinny that it is a wonder they can keep the front and back of their coats apart, they are apparently spry and lively.

Combat: Faerie fiddlers never begin a fight, but they are quite able to defend themselves and others if one breaks out. The fiddler's primary defense is his high armor class, the result of its constant, capering dance and small size. As a faerie creature, the fiddler is naturally resistant to most forms of magic, and considering the nature of its magics, it isn't surprising to find that they are completely immune to the effects of all spells from the enchantment/charm school.

The faerie fiddler has the ability to play a number of magical tunes on his fiddle, both for enjoyment and in combat. The least of these magical tunes is one that prevents hearers from experiencing hunger, thirst, or fatigue while dancing, a tune that is woven through the melodies of common dancing songs to provide dance music for faeries and the non-faeries they invite into their circles. As this spell's effects can be felt only while the hearer is dancing, it will provide benefits only in combat if the hearer has the Dancing nonweapon proficiency and thus can alter the steps of the dance to allow fighting at the same time. Coincidentally, all faeries in a community with a faerie fiddler will have the equivalent of this proficiency, which means that they will spin and whirl as if dancing when in combat, and they will never tire from their efforts. A saving throw vs. spells will negate the effects of this tune, but only if the hearer specifically wants to resist its charms.

If the fiddler or his friends are threatened with physical harm by any outsider, he can change his tune to target one person per round with an Otto's *irresistible dance* spell having a range of 30 feet, with saving throw vs. spells negating the tune's effects. As the *irresistible dance* only lasts five rounds, the fiddler may have to renew the spell if he faces large numbers of opponents. The fiddler will use this spell to assist his faerie friends when they fight intruders, to cover the escape of those who are unable or unwilling to fight, and to cover his own escape when he finds it necessary to leave the field. Because of the fiddler's courage, he is willing to lay down his life if it will allow other faerie-folk to escape, so he will depart only after all other faeries are secure.

The most powerful tune that a faerie fiddler can play is used on someone who offends faerie sensibilities without overtly attacking the faeries, such as someone who refuses to dance with them, who claims not to believe in their very existence, or especially someone who tries to cheat a faerie in some way. This tune has the same fatigue-banishing effects of the first tune, but combines with it a powerful time-distorting effect, like an exaggerated *time stop* spell. For every hour spent dancing, a year

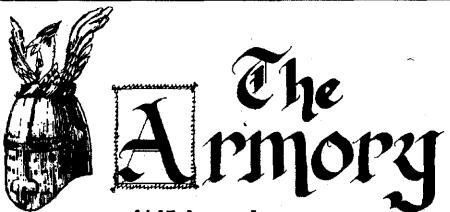


will pass in the outside world, and as the fatigue-banishing effects of the tune make one capable of dancing for a long time (i.e., if a human under the effects of this magical tune has danced for four hours, four years will have passed in the real world when he returns to his home, probably to find it long-sold after his "mysterious disappearance"). Again, a saving throw vs. spells will negate all effects of the spell, but the hearer must consciously desire to resist or receive no saving throw at all.

This *time stop* tune can be played only once per month, on the night of a full moon, and as mortal offenses against faeries can happen at any time of the month, a fiddler who wants to use this spell on an offender at some other time of the month will have to lure him back to the faerie circle. The common method to achieve this is for the fiddler to pretend that he failed to notice the offense, and then to invite the offender back to the circle a few days hence for a celebration that promises to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for the mortal invitee. Other ruses will be tailored to the personality of the offender, such as "accidentally" letting slip the fact that a precious faerie treasure will be on display during the full moon if the offender is a thief, or challenging the offender to return ("You wouldn't dare come back here and do that again on the night of the full moon!") if he is a belligerent sort.

Habitat/Society: Faerie fiddlers have no society of their own, as they are never seen with others of their type. They dwell among communities of faerie creatures, and provide a number of services for them, most especially fiddling at their convocations, parties, and gatherings. Naturally, they speak the languages of every type of faerie folk, and those of any nearby human or demihuman community.

Ecology: The fiddle of a faerie fiddler isn't magical (all its effects are the natural magic of the fiddler being channeled through the instrument), but it still has a resale value of 3d20 gp for its fine quality and miniature size.



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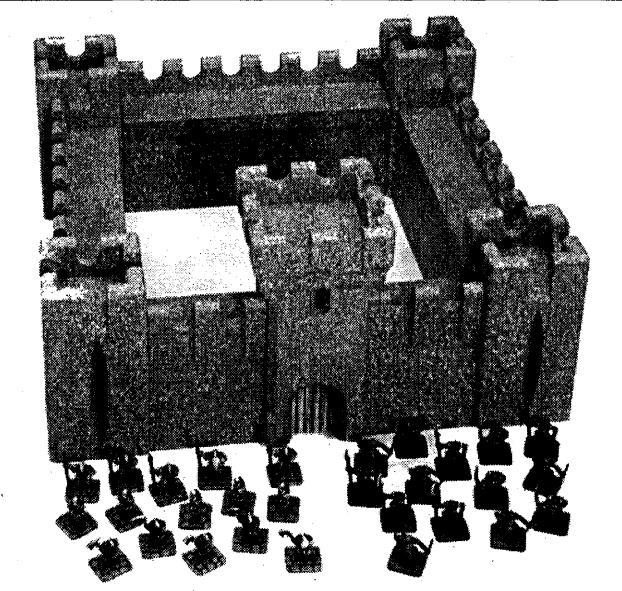


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ELMINSTER'S notebook

Tashara of the Seven Skulls

by Ed Greenwood

Artwork by Gary Williams

This sigil and items belonged to Tashara of the Seven Skulls; I've evidently stumbled upon one of her abodes or storage caches—long plundered, whatever it was.

Tashara's tale is one that bears recording, lest all knowledge of such hidden things be lost with me, in times to come.

Tashara was a beautiful woman, and also a grasping and ambitious one. She mastered small magics early in life, and used her looks and glib tongue to carry her into the hearts and trust of men who should have known better. At first she simply slew them while they slept, taking what magical items they possessed; when she had enough of these to pay for tutoring and still defend herself against treachery, she took up with mages, and learned what they could teach her before killing them and going on to the next.

This was long ago, just after Myth Drannor's fall, and Tashara seems to have come from what is now Chessenta, or lands to the south of there.

Tashara was brilliant at magecraft; she had the rare knack of being able to combine the enchantments of others into more powerful spells that hung together by themselves. Her power grew with great dispatch, until she mastered a means (doubtless by practicing on talentless farmers and later minor magelings, who ultimately became servants and guardians of her various abodes—and may survive still, in remote places around Faerun) of creating undead that retained their wits, yet were under her control.

Tashara perfected this undead in the form of a flying, disembodied skull accompanied by animated skeletal hands—the former able to speak and cast spells, and the latter able to gesture and carry small, light items.¹

Then she set about seducing the most powerful mages she could find, going far afield in Faerun to places where none had heard of her.

She succeeded with uncanny skill, becoming consort and apprentice to one archmage after another. When each was hopelessly in love with her, she "discovered" a means of lichdom and helped them to attain it—always ending up with a flying

skull that retained all of its wits and magic, was hopelessly in love with her, and that she could control if need be. This she continued until she had seven skulls of magical might serving her. This seems to the maximum she could control, or perhaps she wearied of the seductions, or ran out of mages who could teach her anything and were likely to be receptive to her. Time has taken the truth from us, as well as losing the names of all but one of the Seven Skulls: Alisker Lathundown of Nuel. (Nuel is a town on the shores of The Lake of Steam that is now lost.) Just which of the skulls he became is unknown.

Tashara had seven undead mage-skulls that were devoted to her, vied for her affections, and cast spells at her command. She could go into battle ringed by these spell-hurling undead, and always slept within a floating, ever-watchful ring of them. It is said she mastered spells that allowed her to drain the life-force of folk and feed it into the skulls—but this may be only legend born of fear-fed rumors.

So armed, Tashara set out to work her will upon the Realms. She fought the Red Wizards of Thay to a standstill, destroying three of them. She smashed an enclave of Phaerimm, and destroyed The Ring of Eyes, a beholder cabal that ruled what is now eastern Amn, herding the humans and wemics who dwelt there like cattle to be the eye tyrants' food and slave-workers.

It seemed none could stand against Tashara. So in the end, of course, she grew too bold. It was her wont to wrest magical items and spell knowledge from those she defeated. She decided to ransack The High House of Wizardry, a temple dedicated to Azuth that stood in what is now Tunland. Overmatched in battle, the high priest called on Azuth for aid, and The High One heard. He appeared, strode through all the spells Tashara hurled at him, and embraced her.

Screaming, she burned to ashes in his arms, her will and her soul were sucked into him, as the energies of all her items, spells, and contingency magics raged like wildfire around the temple.

The building was thrown down, one of

the seven skulls burst apart from the magic that suddenly flowed into it, and the other six were hurled helplessly across Faerun, howling as they were scattered from their "love."

I believe these six skulls still survive; what I've been able to learn of them is as follows:

One inhabits Skull Gorge, where it has gathered many powerful monsters and magical items around it. It can hurl spells through a scrying artifact that also can project a giant image of itself, so that the spells emanate from the giant skull.

One inhabits the ruins of Myth Rhynn (an overgrown ruin in the depths of The Forest of Tethir), where it studies and amasses magic in a shattered tower. It lures adventurers to it by magically-sent visions and rumors of rich treasure, to gain their magic.

One roams Thay, stirring up revolt against the Red Wizards, manipulating one Red Wizard against another and trying to destroy one whenever possible. Over the years, it has succeeded twice, and has adopted many magical guises in its work. It loves the spice of danger, and has become a legend among the Red Wizards, who call it "Old Thun, the Doom of Wizards." Some folk in Thay—even, it is whispered, some Red Wizards—have begun to worship it in secret.

One wanders Faerun, aiding adventurers. It delights in helping the underdog, spreading chaos and destruction, and helping beautiful females who resemble Tashara.

One is trying to found a kingdom of undead centered in the remote, ruined northern city of Ascore. It controls the undead by means of new spells it has developed.

One stays hidden in various human guises, possessing and then taking the shape of powerful rulers. It is adroit, but tales of this or that king or satrap being in two places at once (one the controlled being, the other a guise assumed by the skull) betray its activities from time to time. It loves power and intrigue, and is thought to be in Amn, working behind the

Continued on page 100

TASHARA OF THE SEVEN SKULLS
DRAWN FROM
MEMORY OF A
CAMPFIRE
CONJURED
IMAGE

NOTE ALL OF
THE SEVEN
RETAIN
THEIR
JAWBONES

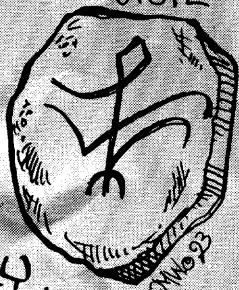
HAIR WAS
RED-SLIGHTLY
CURLY-STRIKING
TATTOO ON LEFT
CHEEK-ORIGIN
AND MEANING
UNKNOWN.

TATTOO DETAIL

CHECK WITH
AZUTH ON
HER PRESENT
STATUS

DEEPLY
GRAVEN
IN STONE. FOUND
ON STORAGE CACHES
AND WARD BOUNDARIES.

TASHARA'S
SIGIL



Easter Day Massacre!

Black Bunny of Death and Doom Thumpers stomp Easter

In a day that is typically reserved for peace and goodwill throughout the Realms, Doom Bunny, the Black Rabbit of Death, and his vile army of Doom Thumpers laid seige to Easter Bunny's "Egg Castle".

Thousands of fluffy white rabbits perished in the battle. The whereabouts of the Easter Bunny are unknown. No eggs or sweets reached the children on Easter.

The Mayor of Tinsel Town said, "This must stop! But we are doomed this day without



(From 02-120) The Leader

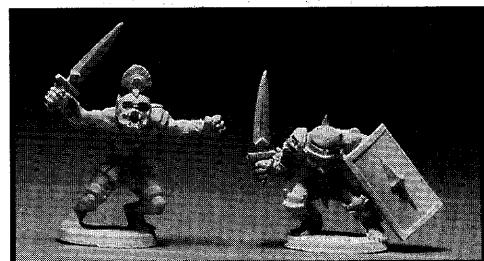


(02-123) Thumper Thrashers

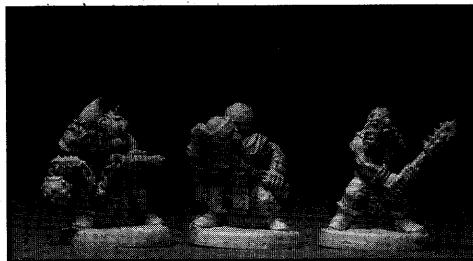
heroes to lead us."

Reports say the Thumper Horde now moves on the Forest of the Tooth Fairies. It is

guessed they intend to rob the Tooth Fairy Vaults. Nothing seems to stop the maniacal rabbits of doom.



(02-083) Orc Legion of Death Gladiators



(02-054) Goblin Berserkers

Orc Legions March!

The Orc Legions of Death have been sighted moving north. It is believed the evil army intends to attack Toytown in the North Pole.

When interviewed, Santa said, "We'll be ready for them. The good children of the Realms have nothing to fear. Christmas will come this year."

Santa's Elves are rumored to be making thousands of toy soldiers in preparation for the upcoming conflict.

Where are the Goblins?

For a change we have some good news to report. The Goblins have remained quiet since All Hallowed Eve. After their raid on St. Valentine's Castle in which hundreds of Cupids were slaughtered, the Goblins have ominously disappeared.

As a service to the community, the Partha Chronicle requests that all readers stay on the alert and report any sightings of the missing Goblins.

Known Troop Types of the Evil Armies

| | | |
|--------|--|------|
| 02-049 | Goblin Command (4) | 6.95 |
| 02-050 | Goblin-Imp Skirmishers (8) .. | 6.95 |
| 02-051 | Goblin Spearmen (6) | 6.95 |
| 02-052 | Goblin Swordsmen (6) | 6.95 |
| 02-053 | Goblin Archers (6) | 6.95 |
| 02-054 | Goblin Berserkers (6) | 6.95 |
| 02-080 | Orc Legion of Death- Light Legionaires (6) | 6.95 |
| 02-081 | Orc Legion of Death- Heavy Legionaires (6) | 6.95 |
| 02-082 | Orc Legion of Death- Auxiliary Archers (6) | 6.95 |
| 02-083 | Orc Legion of Death- Gladiator Auxiliary (6) | 6.95 |
| 02-084 | Orc Legion of Death- Leader & Guards (5) | 6.95 |
| 23-617 | Doom Bunny | 2.15 |
| 02-120 | Thumper Command Group (4) .. | 6.95 |
| 02-121 | Thumper Stickers (Spears) (6) | 6.95 |
| 02-122 | Thumper Choppers (Axes) (6) .. | 6.95 |
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"I'd like to thank the Academy"

Turn the page and you'll find the final ballot for the ORIGINS™ Awards for gaming products published in 1993.

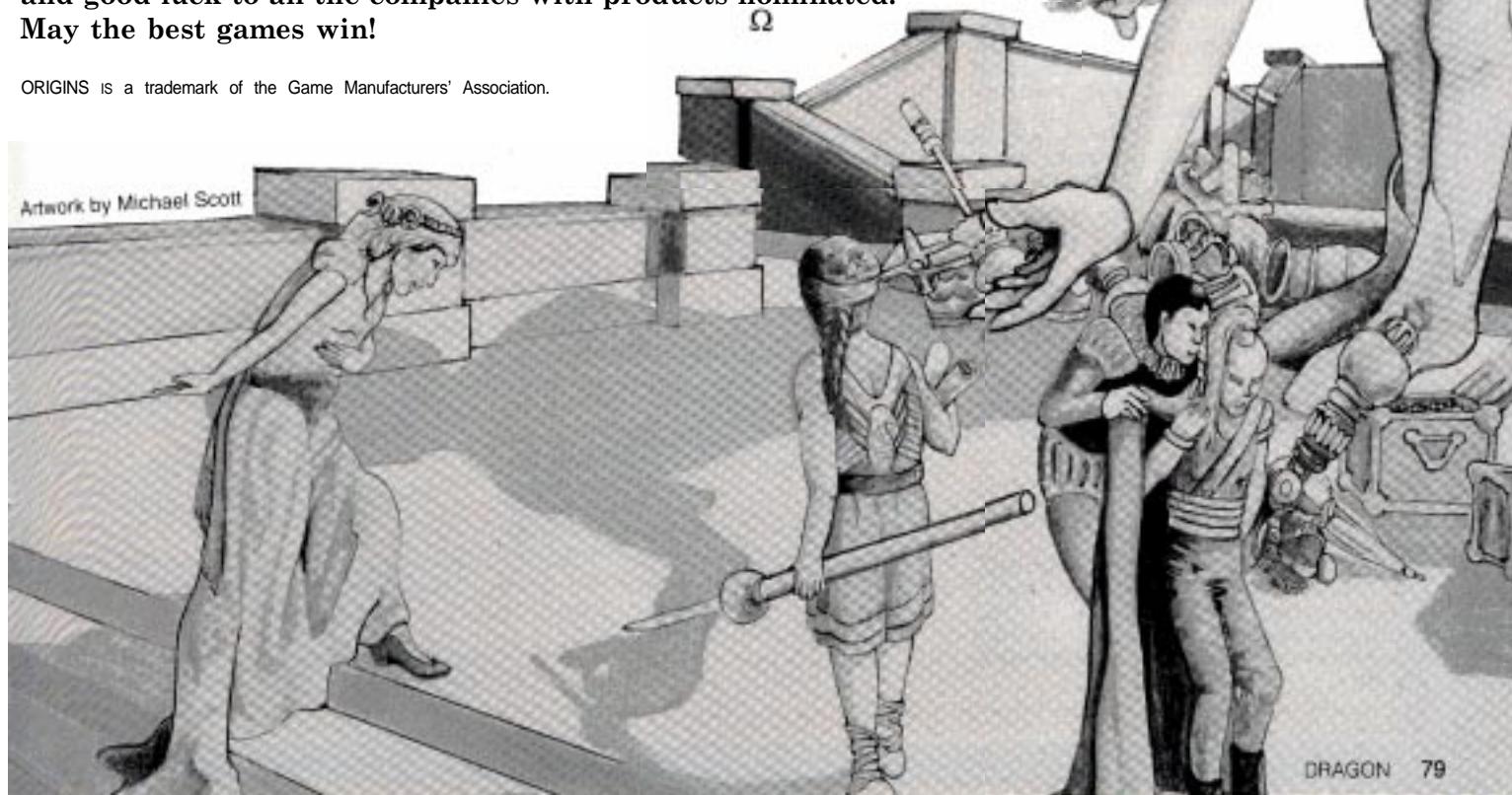
The vote is open to all gamers everywhere. The staff of DRAGON® Magazine suggests you make a photocopy of the ballot, vote for your favorite gaming rules, accessories, supplements, figures, computer games, board games, and so on from 1993, and mail the ballot by the listed deadline.

There even are spaces for write-in votes if a favorite 1993 product of yours didn't make the final ballot. Congratulations and good luck to all the companies with products nominated. May the best games win!

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Artwork by Michael Scott



Attention All Game Enthusiasts---

Vote For Your Favorite Game Products of 1993 With This Form. Do It Today!

MAKE ONLY ONE VOTE IN EACH CATEGORY. ONLY THIS FORM MAY BE USED TO VOTE. YOU MAY WRITE-IN A DIFFERENT PRODUCT.

1. Best Historical Figure Series

- Adler 6mm Napoleons Stone Mtn.
- Conquistadors 25mm Ral Partha
- Incas 25mm Ral Partha
- Medieval 15mm Soldiers & Swords
- Washington's Wars Soldiers & Swords
- Wild West 25mm Stone Mtn.
- Write-In _____
Mfr: _____

2. Best Fantasy or Science Fiction Figure Series

- AD&D Miniatures Ral Partha
- Future Warriors Grenadier Models
- Macho Women With Guns 25mm Simtac
- Shatterzone 25mm Simtac
- Star Wars West End Games
- Werewolf Game Series Ral Partha
- Write-In _____
Mfr: _____

3. Best Vehicular Series

- BattleTech Series Ral Partha
- Bio-Mechs 25mm Stone Mtn.
- Future Vehicles Grenadier Models
- Ogre Series Ral Partha
- Scotia Micro Models, Modern US Simtac
- Skaven Screaming Bell Citadel
- Write-In _____
Mfr: _____

4. Best Accessory Series

- American Civil War Buildings 15mm Stone Mtn.
- Destiny Deck Stellar Games
- Fantasy Warriors Accessories Grenadier Models
- Terrain Specialties Terrain Specialties
- Tiny Terrain, Science Fiction Simtac
- Vauban Fort 15mm Stone Mtn.
- Write-In _____
Mfr: _____

5. Best Miniatures Rules

- Flower of Chivalry Canadian Wargamers Group
- Harpoon Naval Review GDW
- Man o' War Games Workshop
- Star Wars 2nd Edition West End Games
- Warhammer Fantasy Battles 2nd Ed. Games Workshop
- Washington's Wars Soldiers & Swords
- Write-In _____
Mfr: _____

6. Best Role-Playing Rules

- Amazing Engine: Faerie Queen TSR
- Earthdawn FASA Corp.
- Elric Chaosium
- Mage White Wolf
- Prime Directive Task Force Games
- Shatterzone West End Games
- Traveller: The New Era GDW
- Underground Mayfair
- Write-In _____
Mfr: _____

7. Best Role-Playing Adventure

- Adventures in Arkham Country, Call of Cthulhu Chaosium
- Brain Burn, Shatterzone West End Games
- Dragon Mountain, AD&D TSR
- Melnibone, Elric Chaosium
- When the Cat's Away Flying Buffalo Inc.
- Write-In _____
Mfr: _____

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8. Best Role-Playing Supplement

- Barsaive, Earthdawn FASA Corp.
- GURPS Vampire: The Masquerade Steve Jackson Games
- Maps: A Book of Cities Flying Buffalo Inc.
- Middle-earth Campaign Guide Iron Crown Enterprises
- Monstrous Manual, AD&D TSR
- Star Wars Movie Trilogy Sourcebook West End Games
- Write-In _____
Mfr: _____

9. Best Graphic Presentation of a Role-Playing Game, Adventure or Supplement
Voted on by Academy Members Only

10. Best Pre-20th Century Boardgame

- Austerlitz The Gamers
- Bobby Lee Columbia Games
- Credo Chaosium
- History of the World Avalon Hill
- The Lion of the North GMT Games
- Write-In _____
Mfr: _____

11. Best Modern-Day Boardgame

- Afrika The Gamers
- Crisis Korea: 1995 GMT Games
- Hacker II Steve Jackson Games
- North American Rails Mayfair
- Rise of the Luftwaffe: Down in Flames #1 GMT Games
- Write-In _____
Mfr: _____

12. Best Fantasy or Science Fiction Boardgame

- BattleSpace FASA Corp.
- Brilliant Lances GDW
- Federation & Empire 1993 Task Force Games
- Magic: The Gathering Wizards of the Coast
- Star Trek: The Next Generation VCR Decipher
- Interactive Boardgame Decipher
- Write-In _____
Mfr: _____

13. Best Graphic Presentation of a Boardgame

Voted on by Academy Members Only

14. Best Play-By-Mail Game

- Continental Rails Graaf Simulations
- Illuminati Flying Buffalo Inc.
- Middle-earth circa T.A. 1650 Game Systems Inc.
- Monster Island Adventures By Mail
- Starweb Flying Buffalo Inc.
- Write-In _____
Mfr: _____

15. Best New Play-By-Mail Game

- A Duel of a Different Color Fractal Dimensions
- Aide de Camp HPS Simulations
- Election Year Flying Buffalo Inc.
- The Fantasy Arena Peregrine Games-By-Mail
- Quest: World of Kharne Adventures By Mail
- Write-In _____
Mfr: _____

16. Best Fantasy or Science Fiction Computer Game

- Fantasy Empires SSI
- Master of Orion Micropose
- Seventh Guest Virgin Games
- Space Hulk Electronic Arts
- Warlords II SSG
- X Wing Lucas Arts
- Write-In _____
Mfr: _____

17. Best Military or Strategy Computer Game

- Aide de Camp HPS Simulations
- Point of Attack HPS Simulations
- Seven Cities of Gold Electronic Arts
- Clash of Steel SSI
- War in Russia SSI
- Write-In _____
Mfr: _____

18. Best Professional Gaming Magazine

- Cryptch ILM Int'l.
- Command XTR
- The Courier Courier Publishing
- Dragon Magazine TSR
- Pyramid Steve Jackson Games
- White Wolf White Wolf
- Write-In _____
Mfr: _____

19. Best Amateur Adventure Gaming Magazine

- Abyss
- Alarums & Excursions
- All of the Above
- Berg's Review of Games
- M.W.A.N.- Midwest Wargamers Assn. Newsletter
- Write-In _____
Mfr: _____

20. Hall of Fame, Product

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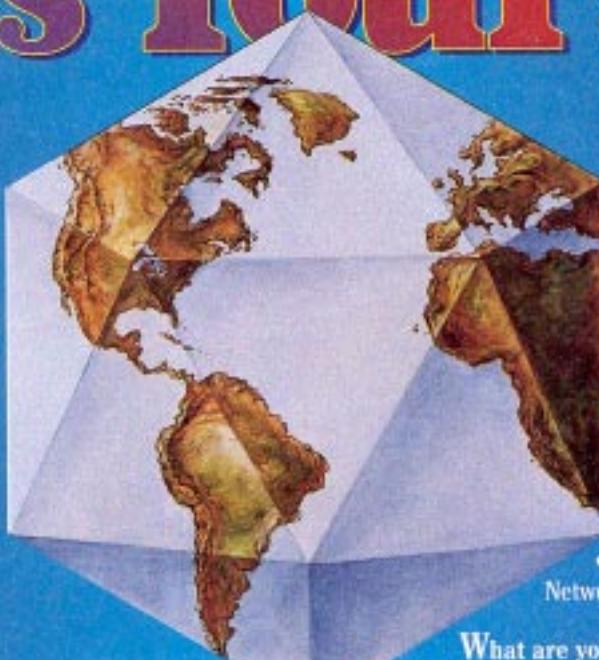
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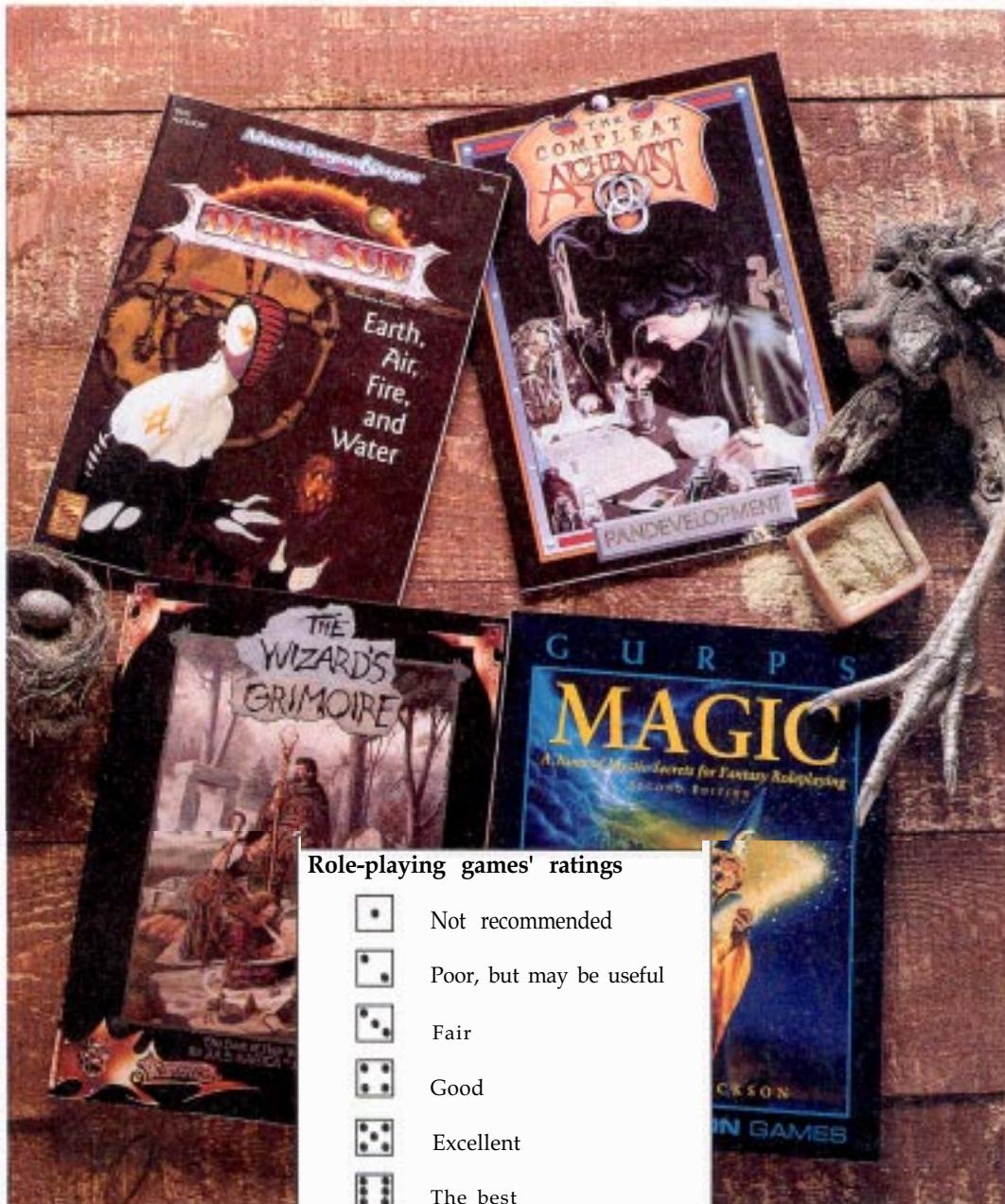
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ROLE-PLAYING Reviews

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Bland spellcasters? Spice them up with magic supplements

It seems perfectly reasonable to me that spinach makes Popeye strong enough to juggle dump trucks. I don't need any fancy explanations. I can see what happens with my own eyes—spinach causes atomic turbines to swell up inside his muscles. The sun gives Superman his powers? Sounds good to me. Peter Parker can crawl up walls because a radioactive spider bit him? Of course. Count Dracula can live forever if he drinks enough blood? Say no more.

I feel the same way about magic supplements for role-playing games. Spare me the causes; just give me the effects. You can save the long-winded essays about how magic really works. I don't care about the physical composition of a *fireball*. I just want to know how many bad guys I can incinerate at the same time.

Bring on the spells!



The Wizard's Grimoire

ARS MAGICA* game supplement
176-page softcover book

White Wolf Game Studio \$18

Design: Jarmo Ahosola, Shannon Appel, John Carey, David Chart, Ken Cliffe, Michael D. Dunn, Kevin Hassall, Geoffrey Hopcraft, Mark Keavney, Christophe Lefebvre, David I? Martin, Marc Philipp Messner, Max Rible, Rachel Thomas, and Julian Wiffen

Development: Ken Cliffe

Editing: Alara Rogers

Illustrations: Jeff Menges, Thomas Darrell Midgette, David O. Miller, Joshua Gabriel Timbrook, Bryon Wackwitz, and Allan Williams

Cover: Larry Elmore

If you think swords are for wussies and you've never met a magic wand you didn't like, then I urge you to run, not walk, to your nearest game store and pick up a copy of the ARS MAGICA game. A startlingly original treatment of a familiar topic, the ARS MAGICA system focuses exclusively on magic-users, casting them as daredevil pseudo-scientists tinkering with forces they can barely control. With its state-of-the-art PCs and unique magic system, the ARS MAGICA game is wizardly role-playing at its finest.

The folks at White Wolf claim that after the rule book itself, *The Wizard's Grimoire* "is the most important supplement in the ARS MAGICA line." While that's an overstatement—a lot of us have managed to struggle along just fine without it—it certainly makes the game more interesting.

Unfortunately, the material that players are likely to turn to first—the character templates and spells—is also the most disappointing. The ten new templates include Alchemist, Astronomer, Bard, Diplomat, and Teacher. Each comes with statistics, a spell roster, and a portrait, but

they're woefully underdeveloped, with little in the way of background notes or role-playing tips. I'm willing to take the designer's word that a mage can be a Bard, but how about explaining the connection between magic and music? The Personality Trait assignments seem arbitrary. Why does an Astronomer receive a Dedicated +3 and the Alchemist a Curious +2? Is a mage who studies the stars more devoted and less curious than a mage who mixes potions? The designers also skimp on the Skill and Knowledge descriptions. The Astronomy Knowledge includes "the ability to predict how the movement of the stars affects the lives of people upon Mythic Europe . . ." Exactly how does the Astronomer pull that off? It doesn't say.

The spell lists comprise hundreds of new Formulaic and Ritual castings, with names as whimsical as they are evocative: *violence of the longly calmed beast* (which soothes anxious animals), *eve of the wizard's swamp*, (hard ground turns to mush), and *absent mind of snapped fingers* (the victim forgets the next action he intended to perform). A set of Faerie spells, available here for the first time, enables any mage with the Faerie Magic Ability to create animal-like servitors and temporarily increase the rating of Faerie auras. A paragraph of background information accompanies each spell. We're told, for instance, that *absent mind* was invented by Tuska of Tremere to mess up the memories of townsfolk who accused her of witchcraft. The background paragraphs not only add texture, they also may inspire adventures. Who knows? Maybe Tuska is a witch.

Though the sheer number of spells seems impressive, a closer look reveals there's less than meets the eye. Many are minor variants of standard effects, applicable in only the most specific of circumstances. *Heating the frigid hall* does just that—it warms up a dining room. *Fisherman's wooden island* conjures a rowboat. If this is all it takes to invent an ARS MAGICA spell, I could whip 'em out all day. How about *create wagon?* *Create pencil?* *Create blender?* Others are stupifyingly trivial. *Cook's special* cuts meat into thin slices. *Tears of the crocodile* makes the victim weep. *Hairless hound* causes an animal's fur to fall out. All too often we're short-changed about the game effects. Maybe *tears of the crocodile* blurs the victim's vision or makes him depressed, but you'd never know it from the description: "This spell brings tears to a person's eyes, creating the appearance that the target is crying or has recently been." The *Grimoire* also features what may be the lamest spell of all time, *lips of the sky*. It turns the victim's lips blue.

The best material is tucked away in the chapter on magic theory and the appen-

dix. Intriguing new rules tell how to design magical items that can learn skills, how to make a PC's body function like a talisman, and how to perform the rituals necessary to attain lichdom. A lengthy treatise on laboratories describes unusual equipment (such as Terren's Blanket, a transparent cloth that protects the wearer from explosions), and tells how to create homunculi (don't forget the badger spittle). An overview of manuscript preparation recommends the best inks, binding, and script styles. Despite a tendency toward overcomplication—it takes almost a full page to explain how to determine a character's age—the material is well-conceived and thoughtfully presented.

Evaluation: *The Wizard's Grimoire* is so tied to the ARS MAGICA game's complex magic system that it's all but useless for other games. The mechanics defy smooth translation; I don't know what AD&D® game players could do with instructions like: "An Intellego Corporem Lab Total of 30 + is required for you to make your potion, and two pawns of raw vis must be spent for every five years of your current age." But for fans of the game, all this vis-ness should be music to the ears; they'll find the *Grimoire* to be an indispensable source of ideas.

The *Grimoire* has the potential to be a classic, but not without an overhaul. If the book makes it to a Second Edition, I hope a ruthless editor sifts the junk from the gems. It takes a lot of determination to work through the spell list when you keep stumbling over so many entries that are underdeveloped, insignificant, or just plain dumb. It's enough to make your lips turn blue. Note that Wizards of the Coast (see below) recently acquired all rights to the ARS MAGICA system.

The Compleat Alchemist (Second Edition)

71-page softcover book

Wizards of the Coast \$11

Design: Cathleen Adkinson, Anthony Pryor, and Beverly Marshall Saling (First Edition design by Stephan Michael Sechi and Steven Cordovano)

Development: James E. Hays, Jr.

Editing: Beverly Marshall Saling

Illustrations: Daniel Frazier, Daniel Gelon, Jeff Menges, Christopher Rush, and Andi Rusu

Cover: Jesper Myrfors



If you're familiar with TSR's Complete Handbook line (*The Complete Fighters Handbook*, *The Complete Bard's Handbook*, and so on), then you're familiar with the concept of kits as collections of skills, benefits, and limitations that define archetypes associated with a particular character class. *The Compleat Alchemist* is essentially a single kit, albeit an immense

one, focusing on the medieval chemist who employs both scientific and supernatural techniques to concoct magical elixirs. Not affiliated with a particular system, the material can be adapted to any RPG.

Based on the original Bard Games release from 1982, the book addresses what the designers consider to be "a glaring gap in the make-up of most Fantasy Role-Playing systems and campaigns." Of course, there's a reason other RPGs haven't given much attention to the alchemist—he isn't all that interesting. He prefers blackboards to battlefields, test tubes to treasure chests. While his buddies are out dungeon crawling, I get the impression he'd just as soon be in bed with a book. This is not exactly the stuff of epic adventure.

Still, if you're got an opening for an alchemist in your campaign, *The Compleat Alchemist* does a good job of getting him off the ground. Intended as a universal supplement, the book keeps statistics and references as general as possible. Key attributes include Strength, Intelligence, Dexterity, and Health, which the designers correctly assume that most RPGs use in some form. Attributes are rated by adjectives instead of numbers; a Low attribute is considered to be in the lowest 25% of its possible range, a High attribute in the highest 25%.

But to accommodate everything from AD&D game to the TUNNELS & TROLLS* game, the rules have to be vague. Consequently, I'm not always sure what they mean. An Expert skill rating, for instance, is supposedly held by the top 20% of the characters in the game world. How do you figure out who's in the top 20% in your AD&D campaign? Fifth-level wizards? Tenth level? If you're using a level-based system, you're supposed to give alchemists the same combat skills and hit points as other magic-using characters, but which ones? Mages? Clerics? Unless he has combat training, an alchemist doesn't know how to use a shield. Why not? Though it's implied that alchemists are wizards, there's not much about spell-casting. Maybe you don't have to modify your magic system to make it compatible with *The Compleat Alchemist*, but that's just a guess.

More troubling than the vague rules is the virtual absence of role-playing material. There's little about the alchemist's personality, no meaningful adventure hooks, no compelling reasons why alchemists would be more fun to play than, say, a priest or a paladin. The suggestions for operating laboratories and finding mentors consist mostly of number-laden game mechanics. ("Fairly poor or average masters will have a single-story building with 400-2,000 square feet of space and equipment appropriate to their status.") It'd take a real-life alchemist to transform these characters from cardboard to fresh and blood.

But while *The Compleat Alchemist* falls

short as a rule book and role-playing guide, it makes an excellent reference. Drawing on historical sources, the book describes alchemical processes in meticulous detail and includes voluminous lists of supplies. The ingredient lists contain more than 200 plant, animal, and mineral substances, each with its identifying feature, cost per ounce, and magical properties. The candlewick plant, for instance, has green stalks, grows in graveyards, and grants courage; an ounce will set you back 1,250 gold pieces. Leprechaun hair makes you invisible, powdered satyr's pipe makes you fall asleep. The Processes chapter offers formulas and techniques for alchemical concoctions, complete with components, preparation times, and the all-important chances of explosion. Plague powder, pacifism dust, and ghoul venom are among the dozens of possibilities. Don't worry about the formulas falling into the wrong hands; unless your little brother has access to an alchemy lab and a dram of contrary vine, the odds of him whipping up an actual batch of plague powder are remote.

Evaluation: I can't picture fist fights breaking out around the game table over who gets to be the alchemist. He doesn't have much to do, and the rules encourage him to stay home (when out in the world, he earns half the number of experience points as other characters). However, referees should find *The Compleat Alchemist* to be an invaluable resource for adding color to their campaigns and creating oddball treasure items. Ghoul venom, anyone?

GURPS Magic (Second Edition)

GURPS* game supplement
128-page softcover book
Steve Jackson Games \$17
Design: Steve Jackson
Additional material: Marc Janssen, Walter Milliken, S. John Ross, Steffan O'Sullivan, W. Dow Rieder, Brett Slocum, and Daniel U. Thibault
Illustrations: Dan Smith with C. Bradford Gorby, Dan Panosian, George Webber, and Charlie Wiedman
Cover: Kirk Reinert



Steve Jackson has more good ideas before breakfast than most designers have all week, which is why it's always a treat to see a GURPS book with his by-line. *GURPS Magic* has all of Jackson's hallmarks—a sound foundation, elegant rules, imaginative flourishes by the carload, and flawless writing. It's required reading not just for GURPS players, but for anyone who wants to see what goes into a first-rate magic system.

GURPS Magic builds on the magic rules introduced in the *Basic Set*; the world-specific material has been teleported to other volumes (particularly *GURPS Fantasy*). Magic draws from mysterious energy called mana, manipulated by characters

with the Magical Aptitude advantage. Among the system's features:

Anyone can learn spells, as long as they meet the statistical requirements.

*Qualified characters can learn any type of magic they like. A typical mage might know Fire, Animal, Illusion, and Necromantic spells, drawn from any of the system's 21 colleges (analogous to the AD&D game's schools).

*Spells have no components, verbal, material, or otherwise. Jackson assumes that whatever substances mages need to work their magic are always available. In other words, mages can get on with the business of spell-casting and not worry about scrounging up bat wings and toad sweat.

*Most magical items serve as spell depositories, giving mages access to spells they don't know. Basically, a physical object—a gem, a ring, a weapon—holds a particular spell until somebody decides to use it.

*The GURPS system considers magic to be just another set of skills. Characters learn spells more or less the same way as they do skills, acquiring them in accordance to their IQ ratings. (In GURPS-speak, spells are Mental/Hard or Mental/Very Hard skills). Most spells have prerequisites, ranging from a minimum Dexterity score to the knowledge of a related spell at skill level 12 or higher.

To resolve a spell, the player throws three dice and compares the result to the applicable skill level. If the roll is less than or equal to the level, the spell succeeds. Each spell belongs to one of eight classes, such as Blocking, Area, Missile, or Information. A skill roll may be modified by the spell's class. A Missile spell roll requires two rolls; one to see if the spell works, the other to determine if it hits the target. The referee makes an Information spell roll in secret, so he can lie to the player about the quality of the information if the roll is really bad. For any type of spell, a roll of 18 means disaster; the Critical Spell Failure Table determines if the spell produces a useless flash of light or if a vengeful demon appears to attack the caster.

For GURPS veterans, spell-casting couldn't be easier, as it derives from a set of mechanics they already know. The sophisticated system accommodates mages of all persuasions, allowing them to customize their spell arsenals just about any way they like. Dice-tossing takes a back seat to role-playing, meaning that referees can spend more time with their story line and less with the rule book.

For players wanting more detail, Jackson offers several sections of optional rules. In worlds where magic is inherent rather than learned, characters may be born with spell-like abilities called knacks. Knacks function automatically when the user touches the victim, requiring no prerequisites or special rituals. Experienced players may want to experiment with improvised spells, where any effect a mage can dream up can be created sponta-

neously. Rune magic enables mages to inscribe scrolls with symbols that produce supernatural effects when properly read. The alchemy chapter, with its logical and concise suggestions for creating elixirs, beats *The Compleat Alchemist* at its own game.

With more than 400 entries, the spell lists are satisfactorily complete. In addition to the expected *fireball*, *telepathy*, and *invisibility* spells, the lists include many appealing originals. *Curse missile* allows a mage to throw a *pain* or *strike blind* spell like a baseball. A mage casting *shape darkness* can mold shadows as if they were made of clay. A few duds muddy the water. *Repair arrow* isn't much different from the *repair* spell, while *mollusk control* is as trite as it sounds. It's an excellent collection, well-balanced and clearly explained overall.

Evaluation: Jackson made a few design choices that may not be to everyone's liking. In order to pack in as many spells as possible, he occasionally skimps on descriptions. For example, *sense emotion* "lets the caster know what emotions the subject is feeling at the moment." But we're not told how the emotions are perceived. (Does the referee tell the caster that the victim's angry, or does he describe the victim's thoughts and let the caster come to his own conclusions?) Nor does he dictate how much detail the spell provides. (Can the caster tell the difference between angry and furious?) The magical-item rules make it difficult to create off-the-wall oddities favored by AD&D mages, like the *portable hole* and *bag of beans*. Also, the small amount of new material—a system for limiting the power of wizards, flow charts that show the prerequisites for spells from all colleges—barely justifies a second edition; owners of the first edition can put their money away. These are nitpicks though, irrelevant to the overall impact. A dazzling performance by a virtuoso designer, *GURPS Magic* is a knock-out.

| | |
|---|------|
| Earth, Air, Fire, and Water | |
| ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® | |
| game supplement for the DARK SUN® setting | |
| One 96-page book | |
| TSR, Inc. | \$11 |
| <i>Design:</i> Shane Lacy Hensley | |
| <i>Editing:</i> Doug Stewart | |
| <i>Illustrations:</i> Tom Baxa and Brom | |
| <i>Cover:</i> Brom | |

As far as I'm concerned, cleric characters got the shaft in the original DARK SUN set. Wizards could become flashy preservers and defilers. Fighters got to operate siege towers and command armies. Meanwhile, clerics were saddled with frustrating weapon and spell restrictions. Their special powers didn't amount to much, either. If an Earth cleric managed to make it to 7th level, he learned how to

make a cubic foot of stone appear. Big deal!

Earth, Air, Fire, and Water (*EAFW*) changes all that. A top-to-bottom touch-up, the book expands the cleric's role by adding a host of new goals, duties, and abilities. In short, *EAFW* transforms the stodgy DARK SUN cleric into the setting's most intriguing character. It turns out those Earth clerics can do a lot more than play with rocks.

As detailed in the DARK SUN rules, Athasian clerics don't worship gods. Instead, they receive spells from the four elemental planes. *EAFW* clarifies the premise, explaining that clerics form pacts with elemental entities who demand absolute devotion and obedience. A Water cleric may be compelled to protect certain water sources. A Fire cleric may be required to reforest burned-out woodlands, but only so his lord can have the pleasure of setting fire to them again. To curry favor with his elemental patron, a cleric may save a piece of land from a defiler's magic by absorbing the damage himself (the land remains unharmed, but the cleric suffers one hit point of damage for every level of the spell he absorbs). The patron expresses his appreciation by nudging him towards the next level (the character earns 100 experience points for every lost hit point).

Most clerics fill one of four roles in the campaign world, serving as Wanderers (wilderness advocates of the underprivileged), Guardians of the Shrine (protectors of sacred edifices), Priests of the Cities (urban dwellers, friends of the common man), or Shamans (mysterious primitives). Each has his own responsibilities and specialties. An Earth Wanderer may spend his days teaching agricultural techniques to nomads. An Air Shaman may function as an astrologer, witch doctor, and medicine man. A cleric's race also affects his role; mul clerics tend to work with Air entities, thri-kreen priests are mostly Shamans and Wanderers, working with any elemental powers but Fire.

EAFW shifts into high gear when clerics reach 20th level. Such clerics have two options: they may continue to advance in level, or they may become elementals. Either choice moves the game in radical new directions. Clerics who continue to advance gain access to the powerful Sphere of the Cosmos. They also tap into the para-elemental planes of Silt, Sun, Rain, and Magma, which grant mind-boggling abilities. A Rain cleric can control lightning bolts; a Sun cleric can *gate* in beams of pure sunlight. Clerics who become elementals say good-bye to their humanity, relocating to the inner planes where they spend their days walking on clouds and dodging fire geysers.

Two chapters briefly address druids and templars. A druid forms a pact with the elemental powers, much the same as a cleric, though he's denied the cleric's granted powers. He also must choose between humanity and elemental transfor-

mation (becoming a "spirit of the land") when he reaches 20th level. A templar draws magic from the elemental planes, but must funnel his request through a sorcerer-king rather than contact the entities directly. At seven and six pages respectively, the druid and templar chapters seem like afterthoughts; these guys deserve their own volumes.

A strong selection of new spells rounds out the book. *Speak with water* enables the caster to strike up a conversation with a pond. *Oil spray* causes fountains of flammable oil to spurt from the ground. Perhaps the strangest is *channel stench*, where the caster expels a cone of noxious vapor to gag his victims. That's right—magical bad breath!

Evaluation: *Earth, Air, Fire, and Water* is so stuffed with ideas that it may take a while for referees to figure out which material best suits their campaigns. With all their granted powers, high-level clerics may find the encounters in a typical adventure a bit too easy. The deck seems stacked against the Water cleric; he has to empty his canteen to recharge his spells, a tough requirement considering the chronic water shortage in Athas. Still, for players who've thus far avoided Athasian clerics, *EAFW* is a revelation. It's spoiled me—I don't see how a credible DARK SUN campaign could be run without it.

Short and sweet

Creatures of the Night, by Scott Paul Maykrantz. Steve Jackson Games, \$17. *RAVENLOFT® Monstrous Compendium® Appendix II: Children of the Night*, by William W. Connors. TSR, Inc., \$11. *Thystram's Collectanea*, by Stephan Michael Sechi. Wizards of the Coast, \$15. Role-players seem to have an insatiable appetite for monsters. The sound you hear is that of publishers scraping the bottom of the barrel for new ones. *Creatures of the Night*, a GURPS supplement, offers brine-furies, corpse kissers, and river wretches. *Children of the Night* adds living brains, bardic liches, and half-golems to the RAVENLOFT roster. *Thystram's Collectanea*, for the TALISLANTA* game, serves up axe-heads, bog devils, and tundra beasts. They're all interesting, but I bet if I read you the descriptions, you'd be hard-pressed to tell which monsters belonged to which system. Maybe the best way to evaluate these collections is to price them out. GURPS creatures go for about 25 cents each, while RAVENLOFT entities sell for about twice that much (though it should be pointed out that some of the RAVENLOFT entries fill four pages). A dollar will buy you about nine TALISLANTA* monsters—there's the bargain.

When the Cat's Away, by Catherine DeMott, James L. Walker, and Rick Loomis. Flying Buffalo, Inc., \$9. If you think solitaire scenarios only come packaged in cheesy multi-path paperbacks, have I got news for you. For years, Flying Buffalo has

been publishing classy solo books for their TUNNELS & TROLLS* game, nearly all of them terrific. The latest (volume 24) is one of the finest. The title adventure sends a wizard's apprentice on a memorable excursion through his master's sanctuary. Sorcerer Solitaire challenges the player to solve the riddle of the mysterious Vaning Manor. Best of the bunch is Solo for the Intellectually Challenged, which casts the player as a shepherd who discovers a dragon's lair in the side of a mountain. If the shepherd remains with his flock (choice #2) instead of exploring the lair (choice #3), the designer reprimands him: "No, no, no. This is an adventure for stupid people. People who make intelligent choices are not allowed to play this adventure."

Eyewitness, by Mike Nystul. FASA Corporation, \$10. The last batch of SHADOWRUN* game adventures have struck me as so formulaic that I've had a hard time remembering which ones I've already read. But *Eyewitness* stands out, thanks to the satirical subtext added to the usual mix of fantasy and cyberpunk. A preppie investment broker stumbles on the corporate ladder when he's goblinized by his own genes. He then phases out his company's human employees and replaces them with ghouls (insert your own joke here). To untangle the mess, the player characters must navigate a gauntlet

of thugs and assassins. The adventure climaxes with a showdown against an army of feral flesh-eaters in a grim industrial complex. Nystul balances the chills with chuckles, and his rollicking plot should leave even in the most jaded SHADOWRUN-ners gasping for breath.

Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home, edited by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman. TSR, Inc., \$19. First published in 1987, this delightful collection of DRAGONLANCE® essays, legends, and recipes (!) perfectly captures the fairy tale ambiance of the original novel trilogy. Astinus of Palanthas discusses the creation of Krynn, Bertrem explains the difference between kender and gully dwarves, and Lord Gunthar shares his notes on dragon tactics. A short story by Weis and Hickman sheds light on the first meeting of Flint, Tanis, and the other DRAGONLANCE® companions. As for the recipes, Flamestrike's Soup tastes like a beefy minestrone, bland but filling. Also, I'd substitute melted baking chocolate for the powdered cocoa in the Nuitari cookies.

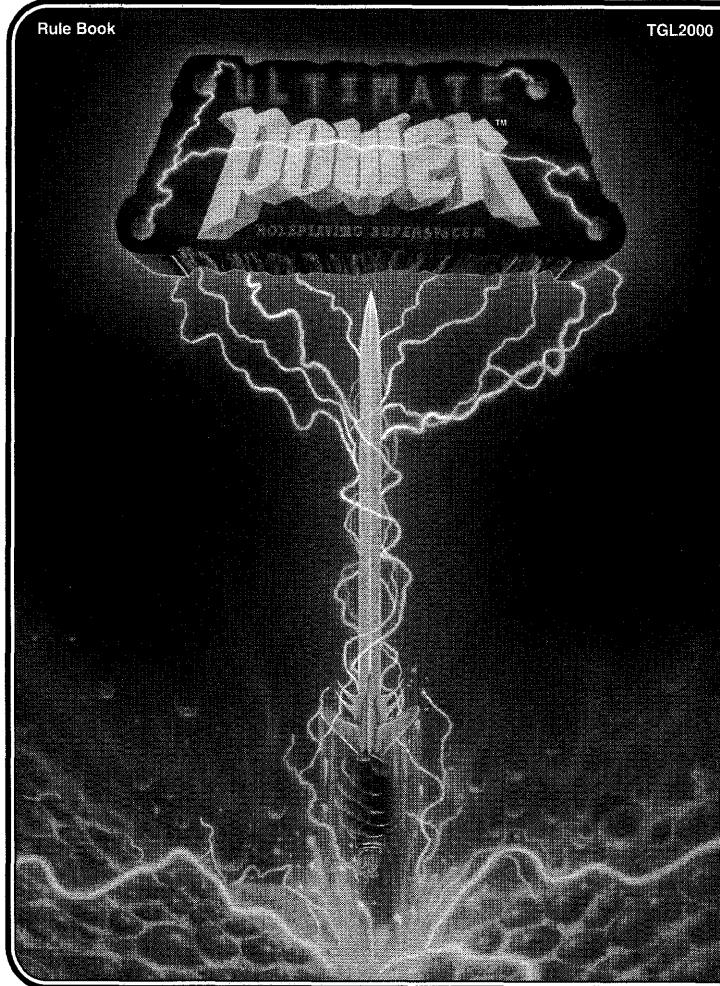
Star Wars Adventure Journal, edited by Peter Schweighofer. West End Games, \$12 single issue, \$35 four-issue subscription. The first issue of this ambitious magazine devoted to the STAR WARS* game features a scenario set on the water world of Spira,

a solitaire adventure by ace designer Ken Rolston, and an enlightening interview with novelist Timothy Zahn. The production values are impressive, the writing top of the line. A must-read for STAR WARRIORS. (Subscription information: West End Games, RR 3, Box 2345, Honesdale PA 18431-9560.)

*CREDO** game, by Chris V. Gidlow. Chaosium Inc., \$15. Tired of the same old religions? Why not invent your own? In this addictive card game, players arrange Articles of Faith and Firm Beliefs on their Doctrine Layouts, then beef up their flocks by refuting, proselytizing, and persecuting their fellow evangelists. The first player to acquire 11,000,000 followers or nail down 117 votes in the Council wins the game. Considering the meager components—four paper display sheets, two eight-page booklets, a few flimsy card decks—this is way overpriced. But there's no denying the play value. Heavenly!

Rick Swan has designed and edited nearly 50 role-playing products. You can contact him at 2620 30th St., Des Moines IA 50310. Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope if you'd like a response.

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Sage Advice

by Skip Williams

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

This month, the sage looks at spells in the AD&D® game.

Why does a priest's *locate object* spell last eight hours when the wizard's version lasts only one round per level?

You've found an error. Both versions of the spell have the same duration: one round per caster level. Note that the spell's reverse, *obscure object*, lasts eight hours for both wizards and priests. This correction is official, and will be included in the upcoming *AD&D Players' Screens* and in future reprints of the *Player's Handbook*.

Is there in error in Table 5 in the PH (page 17)? Priests with Wisdom scores of 19 or higher wind up with more bonus 4th level spells than bonus 3rd level spells.

Yes, there is an error. Wisdom 19 grants a bonus first and a bonus third-level spell, not a first and a fourth-level spell. This is an official correction.

Is there any way for a non-thief character to disarm a trap? If a group of PCs encounters a trap and knows where it is, can they avoid it by triggering it from a safe distance, or does the party thief have to locate and disarm it?

Assuming that the party already knows where a trap is, the thief find-traps ability is already pretty much irrelevant. There is no hard and fast rule for non-thieves disarming traps by triggering them. First, the DM has to decide if a trap can be disarmed at all. There's not much anybody can do with a 10-foot pit. Then there are traps such as tripwires, that can be triggered safely as long as the character messing with it has enough reach to stay out of the way (or course, the trap might be loaded with multiple shots). Then there are traps that non-thieves might be able to disarm, such as poison needles in locks, scything blades, and the like. Any charac-

ter who correctly guesses the trap's workings could have some chance to break it (by bending the needle, wedging the blade, etc.). It is best to decide the chance for success ahead of time; thieves with the remove-traps skill should get a substantial bonus. It is also fine to salt your dungeons with a few traps that can be foiled only by thieves or utter destruction. (No matter how flexible a poison needle is, it won't work after the mage has blown the door it guards to flinders with a *lightning bolt*.)

How long does an undead creature stay away from a party after being turned by a priest?

In the original AD&D game, a turned undead creature stayed away for 24 hours minus the minimum score needed to turn, so 6th-level priest would turn away a ghast for 14 hours. This formula works in the current game as well.

What's to prevent players from using the *enhance* spell from *Legends & Lore* to circumvent the limits on using wishes to increase ability scores? Wishes cannot raise ability scores over 16, but *enhance* can raise a score to 22. The wizard casting *enhance* loses a few points of Constitution, but wishes can be used to restore the loss. Isn't the *enhance* spell overpowered?

There's nothing in the rules to prevent PCs from doing what you've described. Note that this spell is intended for NPCs; most campaigns don't have wizard PCs of 16th level or higher running around. No matter how powerful the PCs are, most NPC wizards are not going to cast this spell for the PCs. The enhance spell-caster is going to need at least two—and possibly five or more—*wishes* to recover lost Constitution points from each spell. If the PCs in your game have access to that many *wishes*, you should be glad that the worst thing you have to deal with is PCs running around with ability scores of 22. Even if the PCs are using this spell themselves, the one-week rest period required after each enhance spell and the three years of magical aging for each wish spell should put the kibosh on the whole deal sooner or later. Even if you've done something silly, such as let the PCs circumvent the magical aging, a few evil NPCs and monsters showing up whenever an enhance spell goes off while the party wizard is incapacitated should persuade the PCs to find a new scam. Note also that wishes can raise an ability score higher than 16; it just takes

10 *wishes* to improve the ability score one point if it is higher than 16 but less than 20. If the ability score is 21 or higher it takes 20 *wishes* to increase the score one point (see *DMG*, pages 11-12).

If you still feel the *enhance* spell is a problem, don't let your PCs have the spell—you don't have to use a spell in your campaign just because it appears in a rule book.

The descriptions for imps, quasits, and pseudodragons in the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM* say that these creatures can become familiars. Funnily enough, the *find familiar* spell doesn't mention them. Are these creatures among the "animals" the DM can substitute from the standard list, or is the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM* erroneously referring to the *find familiar* spell from the original AD&D game?

Yes, quasits, pseudodragons, and imps can become familiars in the AD&D 2nd Edition game. Note that imps will serve only lawful evil characters and some neutral evil characters; quasits will serve only chaotic evil characters and some neutral evil characters; pseudodragons will serve only good characters. In any case, the chance to get such exotic familiars as these should be very small, perhaps only on a roll of a "1" or after the character casting the *find familiar* spell has taken extra steps to locate and attract the creature.

I'm having trouble with the spell descriptions in the *Player's Handbook*. Many spells have saving throws such as: Neg., None, $\frac{1}{2}$, and Special. What do these terms mean?

"Neg." means the spell has no effect at all if the subject makes a saving throw (check out page 129 of the *PH* for more details). "None" means the spell has no saving throw; barring magic resistance and other special protections, the spell always works on the subject. " $\frac{1}{2}$ " means the spell works at half strength if the subject makes a saving throw; damage-inflicting spells such as *fireball* generally have this kind of saving throw. "Special" means that the saving throw is unusual in some way and not easily summarized. The type of saving throw might vary according to the conditions under which the spell is cast, or the saving throw might depend on the type of subject, a specific action on the subject's part, or an ability check. Whenever you see a "Special" saving throw look in the spell description for the details.

Is there any way to remove the acid from a *Melf's acid arrow* before the spell duration expires? Can a spell-caster cast spells while taking acid damage from the spell?

The acid can be washed off, magically dispelled, or removed in other ways at the DM's discretion (such as hastily removing the victim's armor or clothing).

As "Sage Advice" has pointed out before, continuing damage from any source usually prevents spell casting, though the DM might allow the caster to make an initiative roll to ignore the damage and cast a spell anyway, see DRAGON® issue #198 for the particulars.

Are liches immune to *harm* spells? I think so, because harm is a disease and undead creatures aren't subject to disease.

Yes, liches are immune, but not because *harm* is a disease (it's not). *Heal*, *harm*, and all the various *cure wounds* spells and their reverses are ineffective against unliving, incorporeal, or extra-planar creatures.

When fighter/mages are casting spells that require touching the target (making an attack roll), can they use their fighter THAC0s?

There's nothing mysterious or magical about touching a creature to deliver a spell, the caster completes the spell, then touches the target. A multi-classed caster is allowed to use the best available THAC0.

Page 120 of the *Dungeon Master Guide* says an *invisible* character is invisible to everyone, including himself. Page 83 of *The Complete Wizard's Handbook* says invisibility is an illusion and the invisible character can always see himself because he disbelieves the illusion. Which book is correct? If *invisibility* is an illusion, do beings with Intelligence scores of 20 or higher automatically *see invisible* creatures because they are immune to first- and second-level illusions? Can an *invisible* spell-caster cast a spell from a scroll, or is the scroll also *invisible* because it is on the character's person? If a creature makes a successful save to notice an *invisible* creature, does it actually see creature well enough to know what it looks like or does it just have a very good idea of where the *invisible* creature is?

The DMG is correct. Generally, the most recently published material takes precedence over older material, but in this case the *Complete Wizard's Handbook* is wrong. Note that not all Illusion/Phantasm spells can be disbelieved. Spells that have no saving throw, or that are negated by a normal saving throw, such as *invisibility*, *hypnotic pattern*, and *mirror image*, do not use the disbelief procedures.

The *invisibility* spell is an illusion; as

such, creatures with 20 + Intelligence scores are immune to it. Such creatures also are immune to spells such as *mirror image*, *blindness*. This does not, however, mean that these creatures automatically see every *invisible* creature in the AD&D universe. Naturally invisible creatures such as invisible stalkers, aerial servants, and pixies are still hidden from supra-genius creatures. The DM also might rule that magical *invisibility* bestowed by items such as *dust of disappearance*, *cloaks of elvenkind*, and maybe even *rings of invisibility* also work in the face of supra-genius intelligence by virtue of the magical power invested in them.

When a character becomes *invisible*, all her equipment becomes invisible with her. The character could read a scroll, however by putting down the scroll and allowing it to become visible (see the *invisibility* spell description in the *PH*, page 142). The character can pick up the visible scroll and read it normally, and can make the scroll *invisible* again by tucking it into her clothing. I strongly suggest that you assume nonmagical invisibility detection merely reveals an invisible creature's outline and position. The viewer has a good idea of the creature's size and shape, and the viewer knows exactly where the creature is—well enough to attack the creature with spells and to make physical attacks without the usual -4 penalty.

Is casting an *animate dead* spell an evil act? Does casting this spell force good or neutral characters to change alignment?

Casting an *animate dead* spell once in awhile is not going to force a character to change alignment. The descriptions of both the wizard and priest versions of the spell make it clear, however, that casting *animate dead* is not a good act and also say that only evil characters use the spell regularly. In short, characters who consistently show disrespect for the dead by animating their remains are either evil or destined to become evil, but anyone can memorize and use an occasional *animate dead* spell.

If a *forget* spell affects a spell-caster who is in the middle of casting a spell, is the spell ruined?

There's nothing in the spell description that implies a *forget* spell disrupts ongoing actions, but it's not unreasonable to assume that it can. Casting a spell is a complex and exacting mental process and if a spell-caster suddenly forgets when and why he began the process his concentration could be broken. The DM can decide that any failed save against a *forget* spell disrupts a spell in process, or the DM can require the victim to make a Intelligence check to correctly asses the situation and complete the spell. Note that the *forget*

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spell victim still will not remember why he started the spell or what he was going to do with it.

Do the attack and damage bonuses from a prayer spell apply to magical attacks such as *magic missile* or *fireball*?

Yes, all attack and damage rolls are affected; however, a spell-caster must be within the prayer's area of effect to get the bonus. If the caster is standing outside the area of effect and casting a spell into it (as might very well be the case with a *fireball* or *lightning bolt*) there is no damage bonus, though the spell's targets still suffer the saving throw penalty.

Can wizard characters in the DRAGONLANCE® setting become specialist wizards?

No, the three orders of High Sorcery take the place of specialist wizards. Renegades, however, can be specialists.

Thanks for answering my question about *defiling regeneration* (for the DARK SUN® setting) in issue #201. However, you misunderstood my question (or I didn't make it very clear, sorry); 30th-level druids protect their guarded lands by absorbing defiling damage. How much damage does *defiling regeneration*

inflict?

Ah yes, there it is, right on pages 61-62 of *Dragon Kings*. Now you know why I ask readers to include page numbers when submitting questions. I recommend one point of damage each round for every 20 regenerating creatures, rounded up. For example, three creatures inflict one point of damage each round, and 23 creatures inflict two points a round.

Can an invisible wizard create an illusion and use it to attack an opponent without breaking her invisibility?

Directing an illusion to attack a creature is an attack and breaks the caster's *invisibility*. The same holds true for any other magical effects that cannot act without direction from the spell-caster such as *unseen servants*, and the various *Bigby's hand* effects. Note that independent creatures that obey the caster, such as golems, attack on their own and do not break another creature's *invisibility*.

Why do wizards have to spend 10 minutes memorizing a *find familiar* spell that takes up to 24 hours to cast and also spend one and one-half tedious hours memorizing a *power word, kill* that can be cast by uttering a single word?

Memorization time has nothing to do

with casting time; the two processes are related, but separate. When memorizing a spell, the caster is painstakingly building patterns of mental energy within his brain so that he can subsequently cast the spell. Casting the spell releases the stored energy. *Find familiar* can be a real bear to cast, but it still is a fairly simple bit of magic that does not require a whole lot of wizardly brain power. *Power word, kill*, on the other hand, is one of the most complex magics in the AD&D universe. Casting it is a fairly simple matter, but it requires a lot of preparation.

The Complete Book of Psionics says no psionic power can penetrate an *Otiluke's resilient sphere*. Does this include psionic teleportation?

Not necessarily. Teleportation of any kind can be construed as bypassing barriers, not penetrating them. On the other hand, strong physical or magical energies can interfere with teleportation of all kinds. I suggest that you allow teleports to work if the blocking spell is fifth-level or less. *Otiluke's resilient sphere* is a fourth-level spell, and thus probably not strong enough to prevent teleporting, but your DM has the final say.

Can undead creatures be raised, resurrected, or reincarnated?

Yes, provided that the creature is corporeal (a body has to be present for these spells to work) and the creature hasn't been dead longer than the spell allows. *Raise dead*, for example, works only on bodies that have been dead for one day per caster level (or less). Check the individual monster descriptions for any special effects these spells might have.

Pantheon of the Month

These are unofficial suggestions for using the optional spheres of priest spells from the *Tome of Magic* with the deities of the Norse pantheon in *Legends & Lore*:

Odin: Major: War, Time, Thought; Minor: Wards.

Frigga: Major: Law; Minor: Time.

Thor: Major: Time; Minor: Wards.

Sif: Major: Time; Minor: Wards.

Aegir: Major: Chaos; Minor: Time.

Baldur: Major: Thought; Minor: Time.

Bragi: Major: Thought; Minor:

Travelers.

Forseti: Major: Law; Minor: Thought.

Frey: Major: Time; Minor: Wards.

Freya: Major: Chaos; Minor: Time.

Heimdall: Major: Wards; Minor: Law.

Hel: Major: Time; Minor: Numbers.

Idun: Major: Time; Minor: Travelers.

Loki: Major: Chaos; Minor: Time.

Tyr: Major: Law; Minor: Wards.

Norns: These deities have no priests.

Thrym: Major: None; Minor: War, Wards, Time.

Surtr: Major: None; Minor: War, Wards, Time.

Ω

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uth! Ruth! Are you home? Where are you?"

The boy's call easily penetrated the wooden walls of the henhouse. Inside, Ruth picked up the last egg from the straw and peered through a crack in the wall. Paulus, the boy who lived on the next farm, was leaning over the stone wall of her garden, his eyes searching the yard as he called her name. She smiled at his agitation. He probably had some new wonder to show her. Last week, it had been the frog with the red dots on its shoulders; the week before, he had found a rusted gauntlet from some ancient battle.

"Ru-uth!" His voice cracked, skidding into a higher register. Three times in the past week, he'd shown her what he claimed were the first few bristles of a moustache. Ruth had been too kind to wipe away the smudge of farm-yard dust. Paulus was a gawky boy, all legs and elbows, with wheat-yellow hair. Small for his age, and with a face that was a little too narrow to ever be handsome. Even so, he might have made a good match for her Nicletta. And he had been kind and patient with her younger daughter Sashann.

Ruth's eyes grew moist as she thought of her daughters. She wiped away the tears with a clean corner of her apron, taking care not to spill the eggs it held. She was just about to place the last egg on top of them and open the door when Paulus called out once more.

"Ruth!" His cry was more anxious than before. "It's the dragon! She's landed on the village common and we're to go see her. They're changing the quotas!"

The egg shattered in Ruth's hand. Warm, sticky liquid trickled through her clenched fingers. She wiped them on her apron, then pushed open the door of the chicken house and stepped outside. Brown and white hens scurried out of her way as she crossed the garden to Paulus, who had clambered to the top of the stone wall that surrounded her yard. She came to a stop a few paces from him. "The dragon?" she asked, her voice tight. "Here?"

Paulus's head bobbed in a nod. His eyes were wide. Like many of the villagers, he'd seen the dragon only at a distance as she winged her way through the clouds, high overhead. Attacks on farms were a rarity, now that the quotas were in place. Ruth shivered. There hadn't been an attack since . . .

She tore her mind away from the thought. "Do we all have to go?"

He nodded a second time. "I'll go with you, Ruth. You don't have to be afraid." Tentatively, he held out his hand.

In less serious circumstances, Ruth would have smiled. She was twice Paulus's weight, and stood head and shoulders taller. Her arms were wide and muscular with the work of clearing stones from her small garden plot; she'd done the work of a man since her husband was killed in the wars nearly eight years ago. Although she was still in her early thirties, her dark hair was already starting to grey. She'd cut it short, like an old woman's. With so few men left after the battles of the woodlands, there was no point in trying to look young. She'd let her clothes run to seed, too, patching them instead of buying new ones. And she'd named each of her thirty-three hens and spoiled them, even to the point of letting them run into her house

Defiance

by Lisa Smedman

Illustrations by Peter Clarke

on occasion. It was no wonder the villagers took one look at her and muttered "Crazy Ruth" under their breaths. And now here was Paulus, gallantly offering to support and comfort her on the village green. It was a sure way for him to be mocked by the other boys.

"That's all right, Paulus," she answered. "I'll be fine."

He smiled briefly with obvious relief, and slid from the wall. In another moment he was loping across the fields for home. "I'll see you there, then!" he called back over his shoulder. "When we meet the dragon."

Ruth tried to answer, but could only manage a wave. "When we meet . . ." Her teeth clenched back the rest of the words.

Ruth stayed well to the rear of the crowd of villagers who had gathered on the common. More than five hundred people—all of the adults of the village and a few of the children, hands firmly gripped by their parents—had gathered on the grassy pasture. They stood in the cool spring sun, whispering to each other in subdued voices, keeping a wide space between themselves and the huge beast that lay with folded wings, watching them with glittering, metal-hard eyes. A faint reek of the monster's sulphurous breath carried on the breeze.

The dragon was immense—from snout to tail-tip perhaps forty paces long. Her scales were a burnished red-gold, her curving claws ivory white. A long forked tongue flickered in and out of her mouth as she tested the air like a snake. Otherwise she was motionless; her gaze slid across the crowd so slowly the beast's eyes seemed barely to move.

Ruth could bear to look only briefly at the creature. Deliberately, she stepped behind one of the larger men, hiding in his shadow. If the dragon were to look directly at her . . .

Someone patted her arm lightly. Just a touch, a murmur, "This must be difficult for you," and the hand was gone. Around Ruth, there were half-whispers of sympathy.

" . . . so tragic . . ."

"It would drive anyone mad . . ."

" . . . right before her own eyes . . ."

"They were such lovely girls. . . ."

Then the crowd fell still as the townmeister stepped to the fore. Raising clasped hands in greeting, he nodded to the crowd. Ruth's lip curled. The townmeister was a self-important strutter with oily black hair and a too-wide smile. The people were foolish to have chosen him as their leader. He pointed at the dragon behind them.

"The dragon has called for an increase in the quotas," Townmeister Stannish told the crowd. "In five days, she will retire to her cave in the mountains to lay her first clutch of eggs. While she is sitting on her nest, she will require extra food to build up her heat. We must carry it up to her lair. Normally her mate would serve her during that time, but he is dead. So from five days hence until the second new moon has risen, quotas will be tripled."

There was a moment's angry silence as the townsfolk calculated the cost. To Ruth, it would be immense. Every adult, regardless of their craft or wealth, normally had a quota of one basket of food per day. Usually, it was meat—a fresh cut of beef or lamb, a slab of uncured pork. In Ruth's case it was eggs. Tripling the quota would mean giving up every egg her chickens produced. With only a few wrinkled

root crops still left in her pantry, and her garden just sprouted, Ruth would have no fresh food and no eggs to trade for six weeks. It would mean lean, hungry days.

She narrowed her eyes and stared at Townmeister Stannish. There would be no hungry times for his family. Rumor had it he pilfered a portion of everything offered the dragon.

Someone else must have been thinking the same thoughts. A man called out from near the front of the crowd. "Triple the quotas?" he said, outrage plain in his voice. "Has the dragon herself demanded this, or is it your idea?"

"The dragon demanded it, of course," Stannish answered. "But only until her brood has hatched. Then we will be back to our usual quotas."

Ruth didn't believe it for a second. When the eggs hatched, there would be four or five new dragons to feed. The quotas would be small at first, but as the dragons grew . . . And this was only the dragon's first clutch of eggs. How many more dragons would there be to feed in the years to come?

"And if we refuse?" another man asked.

Ruth leaned around to see who had spoken. It was Bretin, Paulus's father. He struggled forward on his crutch, an empty pant leg flapping around the ruined stump of his left leg.

The dragon moved her head now. Hissing a flickering yellow flame, she narrowed her eyes and stared Bretin down. Stannish took Bretin's arm and tried to force him back to the safety of the crowd. He gave it up when he saw he would have to push Bretin over to get him to move. Releasing Bretin's arm and putting on a grave expression, he instead addressed the villagers. "We have no choice. If we don't feed the dragon, she'll kill us all, as soon as her eggs are hatched."

"Instead of just giving in to the dragon's every demand, we could defend ourselves." Bretin said. His voice was pitched low, but the anger in it carried. The dragon flared her nostrils and glared at him.

"Defend ourselves?" Stannish's laugh carried an air of superiority. "And who would lead the fight? You?" He looked pointedly at Bretin's crutch.

Ruth balled her hands up into fists. *Why didn't the others speak up, support Bretin? Why did they just shuffle about with downcast eyes?*

Stannish stood gloating, the dragon looming large on the common ground behind him. "I think the villagers agree with me," he said. "The quotas will be tripled."

When Ruth heard the frightened squawk of a chicken for the second time, she set aside her sewing. Opening the door, she peered outside. It was difficult to see; the glow from the lantern inside her home cast only a feeble gleam out the open door. Instead she listened and let her eyes adjust to the night.

A fluttering noise came from inside the henhouse. Ruth reached for the iron poker she kept beside the door. A rat or weasel had probably gnawed its way inside and was attacking the hens. Gathering up her skirts in one hand, holding the poker like a club, she strode out toward the shack where the chickens were closed in at night.

She was reaching for the handle when the door burst

open. Out charged three boys, tumbling over each other in their haste to escape. "Run! It's Crazy Ruth!" they cried.

Startled, Ruth froze with the poker half-raised. It was all the time the boys needed to scramble into the garden that adjoined the henhouse and begin a mad dash to the edge of the yard. But when she saw what the boys held in their arms, she flew into angry pursuit.

"Put those hens down!" she screamed, running across the field after them, heedless of the danger of twisting her ankle in the dark. The frightened cackles of the birds as they struggled in the boys' arms drove Ruth on. She had recognized one of the boys, and knowing the identity of the thief infuriated her. The other boys might be hungry, thanks to the tripled quotas, but Townmeister Stannish's son had no need to steal from her.

The thieves were younger and more agile than Ruth. Two of them reached the low stone wall that enclosed her garden. They dropped the birds they carried and scrambled to the top as the hens fluttered away. The third boy, Stannish's son, held on to his bird and had to climb one-handed. He was halfway up the wall when Ruth caught up to him. Smacking his leg as hard as she could with the poker, she was pleased to hear him grunt with pain. The boy fell down the other side of the wall, dropping the chicken.

As the boys disappeared into the night, Ruth climbed the stone wall herself. Then she knelt to search for the third hen. She'd smooth its feathers, cuddle it under her arms until it was quiet, then round up the other two. She felt for it in the dark. But instead of a fluttering bird, her hands found a limp body. Sometime during the theft, the Stannish boy had broken the hen's neck.

The anger drained out of Ruth. In its place came grief. She carried the hen back to her home and stepped inside into the light. It was Mrs. Cluck, a bandy-legged red that Ruth had picked out twelve years ago, when she was a young bride starting her own farm with her new husband and baby. The old hen hadn't produced more than an egg a week in recent years, but she had been Ruth's favorite. Allowed to roam free since Ruth's husband had been killed in the wars (he said a chicken's place was in the henhouse, not in the yard), Mrs. Cluck had tagged along beside Ruth as she did her gardening, pecking at the threads that hung down from the hem of Ruth's dress, mistaking them for worms. The old hen had liked the soft feathers of her throat stroked and had always been the first out of the henhouse each morning. Now she lay limp as a rag in Ruth's arms, her bright eyes already glazed with death.

Ruth didn't sleep that night. She rounded up the other two chickens that the boys had attempted to steal, then shooed the other chickens that had escaped back into the henhouse. After rigging an old cow bell on the shack wall so that it would clatter if the door were opened again, she went into her house and sat beside the body of her dead hen, letting the tears spill. She stroked the hen's throat one last time, then found a hammer, a few old nails and some boards, and built a box to bury it in.

When the sun came up, Ruth trudged out to the back field. She'd let it go fallow these past two years. It was still full of stones; she had never completed the task of clearing them. The last rocks she had lifted from the soil had been those she had used to build the cairn. It was a tidy pile of

stones, nearly as high as her waist. Around it she had planted bright yellow daisies and pale white snowdrops. The latter were blooming, their heads dipped like tiny people in prayer.

Ruth pushed the blade of her shovel into the ground and began digging a hole. If the villagers saw her here, burying one of her chickens beside the monument she had built to her two daughters, they would have even more reason to call her crazy.

There had been nothing left of her daughters to bury after the dragon attack.

Sashann, eight years old at the time, had been crouching on this spot, offering a piece of lettuce to a wild rabbit. The creatures plagued Ruth's vegetable garden, but she never had the heart to kill them. Ruth was working in a far corner of the field while her older daughter, more disciplined than Sashann, was carefully hoeing nearby.

Without warning, the dragon swooped out of a cloudy sky and plucked little Sashann up from the field. Nicletta rushed to her sister's aid, swinging her hoe like a sword. She had her father's dark ringlets and his unflinching spirit. But her brave efforts had only annoyed the dragon. Swallowing Sashann whole before the younger girl could even scream, the monster turned on Nicletta and grabbed her in its powerful jaws.

Ruth heard Nicletta's bones crunching. She ran toward the monster, screaming and holding the hoe over her head in a futile gesture of defiance. But before she was even close, the dragon spread her wings and soared into the sky. She vanished into the clouds, leaving a streak of sooty vapor in her wake.

Ruth had stood in the empty field, alone and uncomprehending. It was not the first time the dragon had eaten human flesh, but Ruth had never dreamed the monster would strike at her family. Yet in a few brief moments, the dragon had torn away everything Ruth had loved most dearly. Both of her daughters had vanished as suddenly as if they had never been.

The next day, the quota system was established, and Ruth built the cairn.

She placed the box containing Mrs. Cluck into the hole in the earth, then plucked a daisy and laid it gently upon the lid. Another death caused by the dragon. After sprinkling a handful of soil on the box, she rose and shovelled the rest of the dirt back into the hole. A shadow fell across the tiny grave as she finished tamping it in place.

"You look awful, Ruth." Paulus regarded her with the blunt stare of the young. "I thought you didn't like to come out to this field. What are you doing?"

Ruth had to wipe away fresh tears before she could answer. "I'm burying Mrs. Cluck."

"Did she die?" Paulus started to lean against the cairn, then seemed to think better of it. Instead he thrust his hands into his pockets.

"Her neck was broken." Ruth answered. "Tim Stannish killed her. He was trying to steal her last night. There were two other boys as well, but I didn't get a good look at them. It was dark."

Paulus's fists clenched. His eyes blazed. "It was probably Jolim and Marc. They're always running around with Tim, picking fights with the littler kids. If I was bigger . . ."

The sight of the boy's sudden anger brought back pain-

ful memories. Nicletta had been like this, always flying to the defense of anyone she thought had been wronged. "We don't know for certain that it was them," she cautioned Paulus. "And you're only asking for trouble if you take on the Stannish family."

"I don't care," he replied petulantly. "I can handle myself." He began to walk away, stiff with anger.

"Paulus?"

The boy paused.

"Why are you over here so early? Isn't this the day your father takes the wagon into town?"

Paulus muttered something into his chest and Ruth had to ask him to repeat it. He answered in a louder voice. "He can't. We had to kill the horse yesterday. For the quota. I came over to ask you for some eggs for breakfast."

"Ah." Ruth could hear his stomach growling. "They take them all, for the quota. But I can always say that something disturbed the chickens last night, and that some of them didn't lay this morning. So come and get your eggs. I was just about to collect them."

The knight rode into town on the eighth day of the tripled quotas. He was a broad-shouldered man on a heavy war horse. Both man and animal were clad in shining plate mail armor that was brightly polished, yet dented enough that it was clearly not just for show. A battered great shield, its face painted with a stylized green cross, hung across his back. The visor of his helmet was up, revealing a stern face with a drooping brown moustache. His horse's iron shoes rang on the cobblestone street as he rode the animal up to the fountain-fed trough in the town square. Slackening the reins to let the war horse drink, he surveyed the people with cold blue eyes.

"I have heard that you have a dragon problem in these parts," he said. His voice was deep and heroic. Ruth, who had come to town to trade her wedding dress for food, watched him from the shade of a shopfront. Like the other townsfolk, she regarded the knight with wide eyes. He looked so strong, so well fed. Clearly he was a man who killed dragons, rather than knuckling under to their demands. The town had not seen the likes of him in years. What few warriors it had produced were long since dead, or had returned from battle crippled like Paulus's father.

"Get the townmeister!" someone shouted. A boy scurried from the square in the direction of the meeting hall. Everyone else stood rooted to the spot, whispering among themselves.

"Well?" the knight asked, his eyes starting to show his impatience. "Do you have a problem with a dragon or don't you? If you're not in need of the services of Julius Dragonslayer, I'll ride on elsewhere." He gathered up his reins, jerking the horse's head out of the public watering trough.

"Wait!" Pushing his way between two villagers, Paulus ran into the square. One side of his face bore a sickly yellowish purple bruise, but his eyes were bright. He stopped a few paces away from the knight. "Do you really kill dragons?"

The man fixed his cold eyes upon Paulus. Ruth expected the boy to back up a step, so intense was the knight's gaze. But Paulus stood firm. Slowly, the knight answered. "As many as I can."

Paulus glanced down at the ground, then back at the

knight. "But we're a poor village," he said. "We couldn't . . ."

"There's no need for payment," Julius answered. "I've made it my life's work to rid the world of these demon-spawn. A dragon killed my sister and her husband, years ago. I've sworn to kill as many dragons as I can find, to even the score." He looked around at the townsfolk. "All I require is food and lodging for the few days I stay here. And the assistance of any of you brave and strong enough to wield a spear."

He looked around, assessing the villagers. "Now is the time to strike," he urged. "While a dragon's sitting on her nest, she won't leave her lair. Dragons like to keep their eggs in sight at all times. If they can't see the eggs, they assume something has happened to them. So she won't pursue us if we're forced to retreat. We can keep going back, attacking over and over again."

Julius paused. "After the dragon is dead, if you wish to give me something to see me through to the next kill, I'd appreciate it. If not, so be it." He glanced down at Paulus. "Perhaps your family could put me up for the first night?"

"What's this? Who is this man?" Townmeister Stannish shoved his way through the crowd that had gathered in the square. "You, sir!" he said, addressing the knight. "What is your business here?" Fists on his hips, he stood panting, trying to catch his breath after running from the meeting hall. As Julius repeated his explanation, Stannish glared at him with undisguised distaste. When the knight had finished, he shook his head curtly. "We have trouble enough here without strangers coming in to stir things up."

Stannish turned to face the crowd. Smoothing his oily hair with one hand, he let his eyes sweep the townsfolk. "I speak on behalf of us all when I say that any attack on the dragon would only bring increased suffering to this town. Imagine the dragon's rage, imagine how violent her revenge would be, if this alleged dragonslayer mounted an unsuccessful attack on her. Why . . ."

Stannish's gaze fell upon Ruth. Before she could duck into the shop, he strode over and grabbed her wrist. Yanking her out into the square, he gestured at her with his free hand. "Do you remember the way it was before we established the quotas? Do you want your own children to die as a result of a stranger's actions?"

Ruth tried to twist away from Stannish, but his grip was firm upon her wrist. "Don't," she whispered. Tears welled in her eyes and spilled down onto her cheeks. But now the townsfolk were murmuring in agreement with Stannish.

The townmeister's voice boomed out. "Remember little Sashann and Nicletta. Do you want their deaths to be in vain?"

An angry murmur swept the crowd.

"Please . . ." Ruth begged.

"Now just a moment," the knight growled, leaning forward on his saddle. "The only one to die will be the dragon. I know these creatures. They're at their most vulnerable when nesting. If you miss this opportunity to strike, you may never get another chance to defend yourselves."

"Defend ourselves? What need? The quota protects us!" Stannish shouted. "Without it we would all have been dragon fodder years ago!" He glared at the knight. "The answer is no; we will not help you in any way." Several heads nodded in agreement.

"Pah!" Julius spat in the dust and jerked the head of his horse around. "I won't waste my breath talking to sheep. Keep feeding the dragon, then. Take the food from your children's plates and watch them starve. But I've got a dragon to kill."

At last Stannish released Ruth's arm. Whirling to follow the knight, he puffed out his chest with self-importance. "I forbid it!" the townmeister said, his voice strangled with anger. "You will not go near the dragon's lair."

"I will," Julius said, "with or without your permission." With a shout, he spurred his horse into motion. Metal-shod hooves clanged as the horse carried him up the cobblestone street. Ruth, still wiping the tears from her eyes, caught a glimpse of Paulus running behind the knight. She heard his father call out to him to stop, but on crutches Bretin could not hope to catch the boy. Pounding after the rider, Paulus rounded a corner and disappeared from sight.

They carried Paulus home the next day, on the back of the knight's shield. He lay on his father's straw-stuffed mattress, with only a light sheet drawn partially over him despite the spring chill. His arms and chest were covered in blisters and peeling, blackened skin. His hair and eyebrows had been burned away, and his face was so swollen Ruth could not see his eyes. A healing woman was gently sponging his burns, but still a reek of sulphur clung to him. Paulus lay perfectly still, making little weeping noises whenever the healer touched him. Bretin sat on a stool, clutching his crutch so tightly that his hands were white.

"Paulus!" Ruth fell to her knees beside the bed. She barely recognized the boy. Her stomach twisted in horror at the sight of his blackened face. If he lived, Paulus would be horribly scarred. "Oh, Paulus," she said softly.

The boy's lips opened a crack. "Ru—?" His hand inched across the bed toward her, then stopped. Paulus whimpered in pain. Slowly, he struggled to get the words out. "The dragon killed Julius. I saw it."

"Stupid boy!" Bretin struggled up from his stool. "Why did you follow him?" He smashed a hand against the wall, startling the healing woman. "It was a man's job. If only I still had my leg . . ." Eventually his anger gave way to heaving sobs.

Ruth clenched her fists to keep her hands from shaking. She looked at Paulus. Another child, lost to the dragon. When would it end? Leaning closer, she fought back her revulsion and whispered into what was left of the boy's ear. "You stay alive, Paulus. For Ruth. Don't you worry about those burns. They'll heal, and you'll see again." It was a bald lie, but the boy needed something to cling to. "I need you to protect me and my chickens. You're the only real friend I have."

"I wanted to avenge Nicletta," he whispered. "Like the knight avenging his sister. But I'm just a boy."

"And I'm just a crazy farm woman," Ruth answered. "With nothing left to lose if you die."

She reached out again to stroke his cheek and felt the soft sigh of his breath. She leaned closer, thinking he was trying to say something else, then saw how still Paulus had suddenly become. His eyes were fixed on the ceiling, open and unblinking. Although his cheek was still warm, the life had slipped from his fragile body.

"Paulus!" Ruth grabbed the boy's shoulders and shook them. "Paulus, no!" Somewhere behind her, she heard Bretin groan. His crutch clattered to the ground as he fell onto his knee and grabbed frantically for his son's hand. The healer simply stood, shaking her head. "He's gone," she whispered.

Ruth's pain wrapped around her like a cold blanket, muffling the words. Sashann, Nicletta, and now Paulus. How many more children would have to die before something was done? She wept until every tear had been wrung from her body, then blindly stumbled home.

Ruth trudged through the dark forest that cloaked the sides of the mountain. From the last vantage point, she had looked down on the village, so tiny from this height. But now the trees closed around her, shutting off the light. At this altitude there was a faint dusting of snow on the ground, even though it was already spring.

The climb had taken the better part of the day. She'd had to set off well after dawn, when the villagers carrying the dragon's daily quota were already well along on the trail. Then she'd had to wait, hidden in the bushes beside the trail, until they had passed her on their way back down the mountain. Now it was almost dusk.

Ahead, the trees thinned out and she could see a rocky cliff face. At its center, opening onto a broad ledge, was a dark cave mouth. Several empty baskets littered the ground in front of it. The dragon had already devoured her daily meal. Ruth hesitated. Perhaps she should just turn around and leave. It had been eleven days since the dragon had laid her eggs. It might already be too late for what Ruth had in mind.

A rumbling, deep inside the cave, made Ruth pause at the edge of the forest. She clutched the branch of a pine tree as her knees began to wobble. A faint trace of smoke emerged from the cave, curling in slow spirals up the cliff face. A blackened spot on the ground, not yet washed away by two days of rain, marked the spot where the knight had fallen. Globs of melted metal lay nearby. There hadn't been enough left of his body to carry down the mountain. The villagers had found only part of his horse; the dragon had left half of it for a later meal.

The sun was starting to sink toward the horizon. Ruth had only a short period of daylight left. If she was going to enter the dragon's lair, it had to be soon. In the dark, she would not be able to see what she was doing. She stepped forward, her pulse pounding in her throat. Forcing herself to walk right up to the entrance to the cave, she swung her pack from her shoulders and called out into the inky darkness of the cavern.

"Hello!" Her voice was no more than a squeak. Swallowing hard, she tried again. "Hello, dragon!" It sounded silly, but Ruth didn't know how else to address the monster.

"Who comes?" The answer came from deep within the cave, a rumbling growl. Something stirred in the darkness. Ruth closed her eyes and trembled as a huge shape slithered and scratched its way to the entrance. She concentrated on her ragged breathing, forcing herself to stand her ground.

"It's me, Ruth," she answered at last. "This morning I was hungry and ate the eggs I should have saved for you. Then I realized my mistake. I didn't want you to be angry at me, so I brought the quota myself."

"What did you bring?"

A hot gust of sulphurous-smelling air stirred Ruth's hair. Opening her eyes, she found herself face to face with the dragon. The creature's eyes were each the size of Ruth's head, and each long white tooth was as long as a human hand. Only her neck and head had emerged from the cave; the rest of her scaly body all but filled the opening. Her skin radiated an uncomfortable heat, and her breath was fetid with dead flesh. Ruth fought down the bile that rose in her throat.

"A lamb," she whispered. "Freshly killed."

Opening her pack, she pulled out the carcass. She'd traded the last of her furniture for it yesterday. Like many of the villagers, she was reduced to selling her possessions to meet the quota and still feed herself. The alternative was to kill her chickens or to move away and abandon her farm, as some had already done.

The dragon sniffed the lamb. "Good meat," she said. With a snap, her jaws closed around the body. Snapping it cleanly in two, she swallowed the front half, then belched a gout of flame. "But maybe I'll eat you, too. You also missed your quota yesterday." The monster gave Ruth a wicked smile. "There were no eggs."

"Please don't eat me!" Ruth said, trembling. "I'll make it up to you. How would you like to know whether your young will be male or female before they have even hatched?"

Ruth held her breath, waiting for the dragon's reply. She could only hope that dragons shared the same curiosity that human mothers did about their unborn offspring. This was a young dragon, sitting on her first clutch of eggs, after all. It was Ruth's only chance.

"How can you tell?" the dragon asked at last.

"By the weight of the egg."

The dragon snorted a puff of soot through her nostrils, her disbelief clear.

"It's true!" Ruth insisted. "I've used the technique all my life, to sort chicken eggs. A farmer doesn't want too many males to hatch; if you get too many roosters, they fight among themselves, and you only need one or two as studs. But you want all the females to hatch and grow into hens."

The dragon ate the remainder of the lamb. Blood-tinged saliva drooled from her mouth, and the bones ground and snapped in her jaws. She regarded Ruth with one glittering, metallic eye for several long moments. Then she gestured with her head. "Come then," she said. "Tell me what my children will be."

Ruth's legs quivered like those of a newborn colt as she stepped into the dragon's lair. If she had been able to eat anything that day, she would have lost the contents of her stomach at the combined smells of acrid smoke and rotten meat that filled the cave. Instead she concentrated on feeling her way along in the dim light. The floor was littered with broken bones and piles of putrid flesh that had fallen like crumbs from the dragon's wide mouth.

The eggs were near the back of the cavern, nested on a layer of fine grey sand. The dragon curled protectively around them. Carefully, Ruth reached out and touched one of the eggs. There were five of them, each about the size of a large cooking pot and oval in shape. They were red, flecked with metallic glints of gold. The shells were leathery but strong. They had to be, to bear the weight of

the dragon when she settled upon them. Each was uncomfortably hot, like a loaf pulled fresh from the oven.

"Well?" the dragon asked. "What sex are they?"

"I have to test their weight," Ruth answered. "But first, I have to look inside one of the eggs to see what stage they are at." She pulled on woolen mitts to protect her hands from the heat, then bent over an egg. The dragon laid a clawed talon over it, preventing Ruth from picking it up.

"Look inside?" the monster asked. "I will not allow you to break the shell."

"There's no need to do that." Ruth shook her head. "I simply hold the egg up to a light and look through it. If you would be so kind as to breathe a little fire?"

The dragon was still suspicious, but released the egg and allowed Ruth to lift it. The egg proved as heavy as a stone. Then the monster hissed, and a bright yellow flame sprang from her parted lips. Quickly, Ruth held the egg up and peered through it. She sighed with relief. Inside the egg, a tiny dragon had started to form. But the yolk and the white of the egg were still distinct.

Now came the most difficult part. But if dragons assumed their eggs were no longer safe when they could not see them, the reverse should also be true. As long as Ruth kept the eggs in sight and didn't crack their shells, the monster might believe them to be in no danger.

Smiling nervously as the dragon let the flame die out, Ruth began shaking the egg from side to side. She moved it slowly at first, then with sharp jerks. All the while, she kept talking. "I think" — she shook it again — "it's heavy enough for a male, but there's a certain lightness at one end. I have to allow for the difference in size between hen's eggs and yours." She gave it another shake. "Yes, it seems to be . . ."

The dragon touched a claw to Ruth's arm. "Enough," the monster said. "What is it?"

Ruth set the egg down, waving her hands at her sides to cool them. Even with the mittens, the heat of the egg had been intense. "A male," she answered, trying to put conviction in her voice. She reached for the next egg. "Now this one looks lighter but . . ." She shook it gently, then jerked it suddenly to one side. "Perhaps . . ."

One by one, Ruth repeated the procedure, pretending to weigh the eggs. Stalling, saying she wanted to be absolutely certain, she shook some of the eggs a second time. But at last her hands and arms were red and starting to blister from the heat. The mitts that had protected her hands were charred, and the air was thick with the smell of singed wool. Outside, the light was failing as dusk fell.

"Now I'm certain," she told the dragon. "Three males, two females. You'll see that I'm right when they hatch. But don't expect . . ." She hesitated then, as if unwilling to say something.

The dragon leaned forward in anticipation. "Yes?"

"Well, it's just that . . ." Ruth shrugged. "The eggs felt a bit light to me. I think your estimation of when they will hatch might be a bit off. I'd say it's going to be later than you expect."

"Later?" The dragon hissed impatiently. Smoke curled from her nostrils. But Ruth knew she had won when she saw the doubt in the monster's eyes.

"I'd say they'll be at least four weeks late. Maybe more." Slowly, she backed toward the door. "Now if you'll

excuse me, I have to get back to my farm. I'll send you three nice baskets of eggs in the morning."

"And another man?"

"What?" Ruth had been about to dash out of the cave, but the dragon's words stopped her cold. "What do you mean, 'another man'?"

"Another. Like the one Stannish sent me."

Ruth stared in disbelief. "Stannish told you the knight was on his way here?"

The dragon nodded. "He warned me to protect my eggs. He said I could eat anyone who brought a weapon near the nest. The knight threatened me, so I ate him."

Ruth trembled and had to lay a hand on the hot stone of the cave to hold herself up. Julius might have killed the monster, but thanks to Stannish, the dragon had been forewarned and ready for him. He'd never had a chance. And Paulus, watching, had been caught in the trap.

The dragon regarded her with slit eyes. Her tongue flickered across her lips, and her mouth opened in a fang-filled smile. For one horrible moment, Ruth thought her own trick had been discovered. She braced herself, ready to meet her death in the monster's grinding jaws. But instead the dragon settled upon her eggs. "Go," she said.

Ruth turned and fled back down the trail.

Townmeister Stannish sputtered with anger as he confronted the villagers who had gathered at Ruth's home. His hair was in disarray, and his shirt had come untucked from his breeches. Behind him trailed several dozen more villagers. Their cheeks were hollow from lack of food and they were as ragged as Ruth now. All they had left was their land; everything of value had been sold to the profiteers who had flocked to the town, lured by the prospect of trading meat to the desperate villagers at high prices.

"You can't just refuse to contribute!" Stannish said, his cheeks pink with anger. "It's bad enough that the village has had trouble meeting its quota in recent days without you lot stopping altogether. The dragon's eggs are about to hatch. As soon as they do, she will—"

"The dragon will not attack," Ruth cut in. The firmness of her voice surprised even herself. In recent days, she had learned the fine art of persuasion. "She will not leave her nest until her eggs hatch, and I have seen to it that they will never hatch. If we stop feeding her now, she will be too weak to attack by the time she discovers the trick I played on her."

Stannish wrinkled his nose. "What trick? Is this another of your crazy fancies, Ruth?"

Ruth held out her arms for the villagers to see. Her hands were covered in weeping blisters. "I visited the dragon in her lair yesterday," she told them. She waited until those who were hearing her story for the first time stopped murmuring before continuing. "I told her I could determine what sex her hatchlings would be by testing the weight of her eggs. I shook the eggs, breaking up the yolk and the white and mixing them together. Because the eggs appear whole and intact, the dragon doesn't suspect anything. She's sitting on a nest of dead eggs that will never hatch."

"Impossible!" Stannish snapped. "It's too simple a trick. The dragon must have realized—"

"Then why hasn't she attacked us?" Ruth snapped back. "Explain that, if you can, Stannish."



"Townmeister Stannish," he corrected her.

Bretin stepped forward now. He had been one of the first people Ruth had encountered after returning from the dragon's lair, and the old warrior had believed her story. When others questioned it, he had lent the weight of his former status in the village, using it to gradually convince them. Now he pushed himself up to his full height on his crutch and confronted Stannish eye to eye.

"There's another thing we'd like you to explain, townmeister." The sarcastic emphasis Bretin placed on the title was there for everyone to hear. "Why is your family so plump and healthy, while the rest of us are reduced to skin and bone by the quota?" Bretin jerked up the edge of his shirt, revealing the ribs that stood out against the skin of his chest. He let the shirt drop. "Weren't you worried about angering the dragon when you held back a share of our quota for yourself? Or perhaps you had worked out an arrangement with the dragon not to eat your family. You made sure to keep in her favor by warning the monster that the knight was on his way."

The villagers behind Stannish were muttering with anger now. Gradually, they formed a circle around him. Beside the townmeister, Bretin raised his crutch like a club. All of the color left Stannish's face.

"Bretin, wait." Ruth laid a hand on the old warrior's arm. "There's a better way." She turned to the villagers and raised her voice. "My suggestion is this. The food and property in the Stannish home should be distributed among the people of the village. Stannish and his family should be confined to their home until we have dealt with the dragon, just in case they have any ideas about ingrati-

ating themselves further by informing the dragon about the true condition of her eggs."

She took a deep breath, then continued. "As for the dragon, we'll stop feeding her and tell her the food in the village has simply run out. We'll keep a watch outside the cavern, and as soon as the dragon shows signs of leaving the nest, we'll attack. But it should be some time before she abandons the eggs, especially if she thinks there's still a chance they'll hatch. By the time she's ready to leave the nest, the dragon should be weak enough that even a few warriors can dispatch her."

Stannish had been shuffling nervously as Ruth spoke. As she finished, he tried to run. There was a brief scuffle, and dozens of clasping hands held him back. The villagers were smiling openly now, hope shining in their eyes at the prospect of at last being out from under the yoke of the dragon.

"Ruth!" someone in the crowd shouted. "Ruth should be our townmeister!" The cry was taken up by several voices.

Ruth smiled and shook her head. "No" she answered. "I have chickens to care for and a farm to tend." She drew her neighbor in front of her. "I think Bretin should lead you. He'll be the one leading the attack on the dragon, after all. And the plan to ruin the eggs was his idea."

Startled, Bretin looked at Ruth. His mouth opened as if he were about to protest. But the cheers of the villagers drowned him out.

Ruth nodded at him. Her neighbor had never owned a chicken in his life and didn't know a thing about eggs. But he'd make a fine townmeister, all the same.

Ω



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Elminster's Notebook

Continued from page 76

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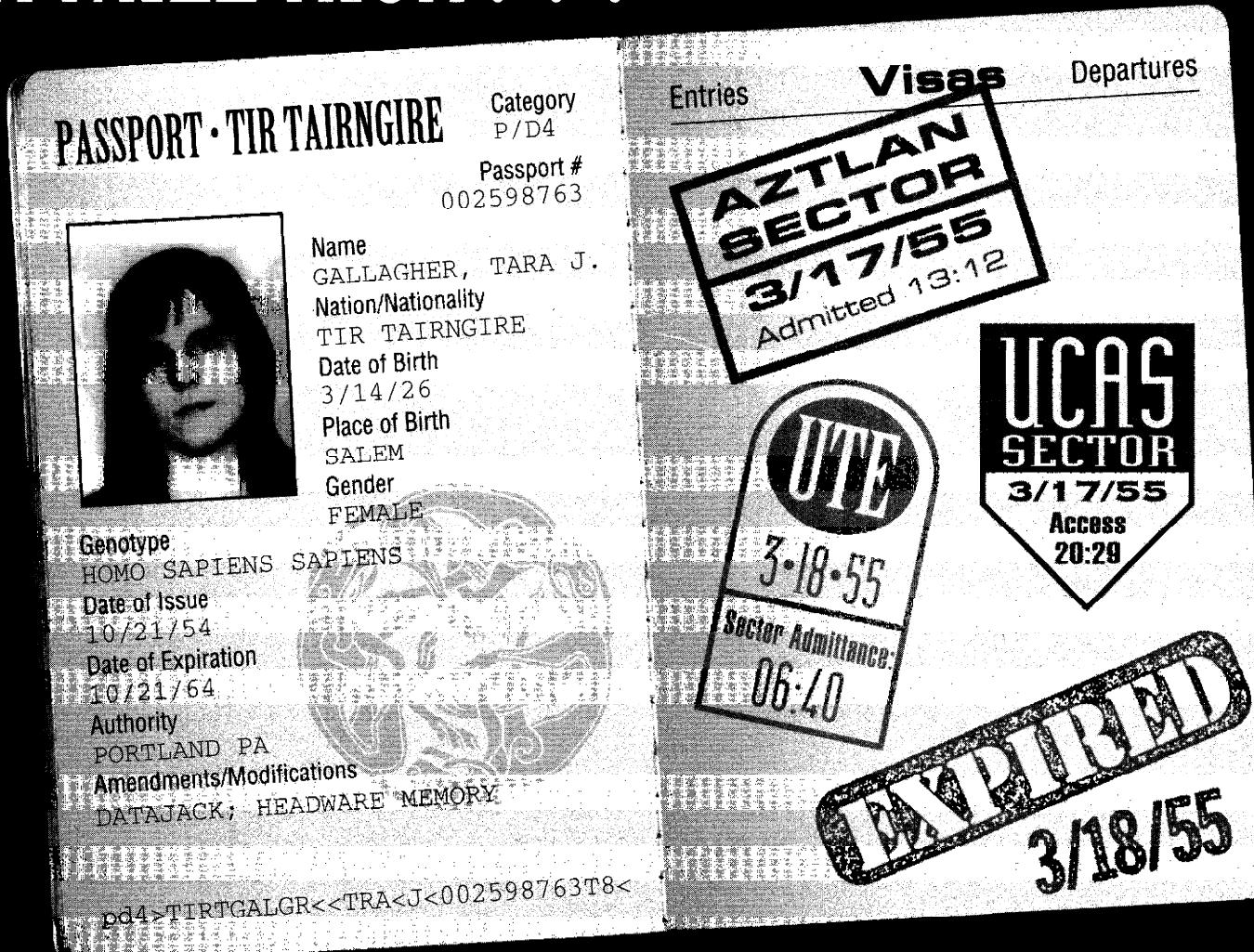
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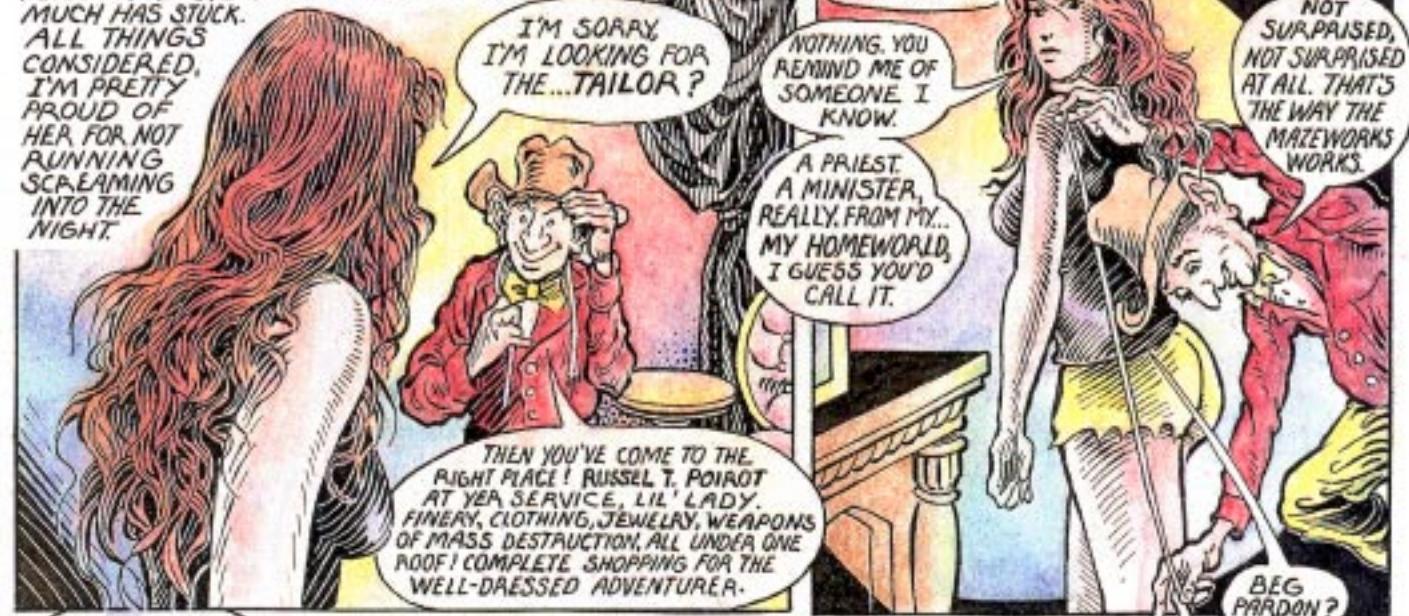
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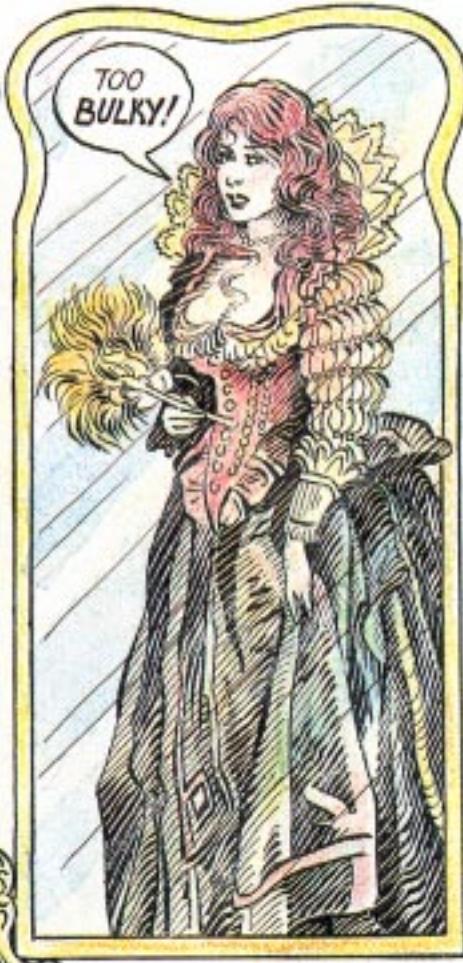
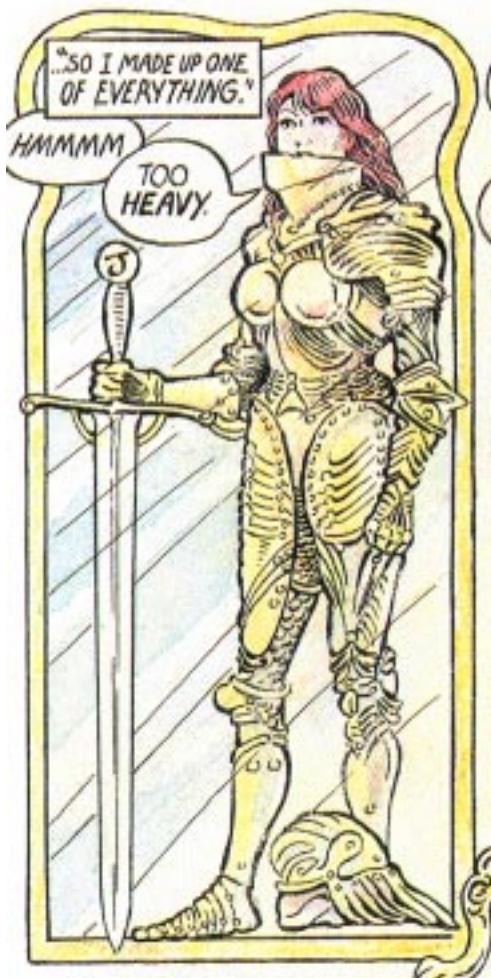
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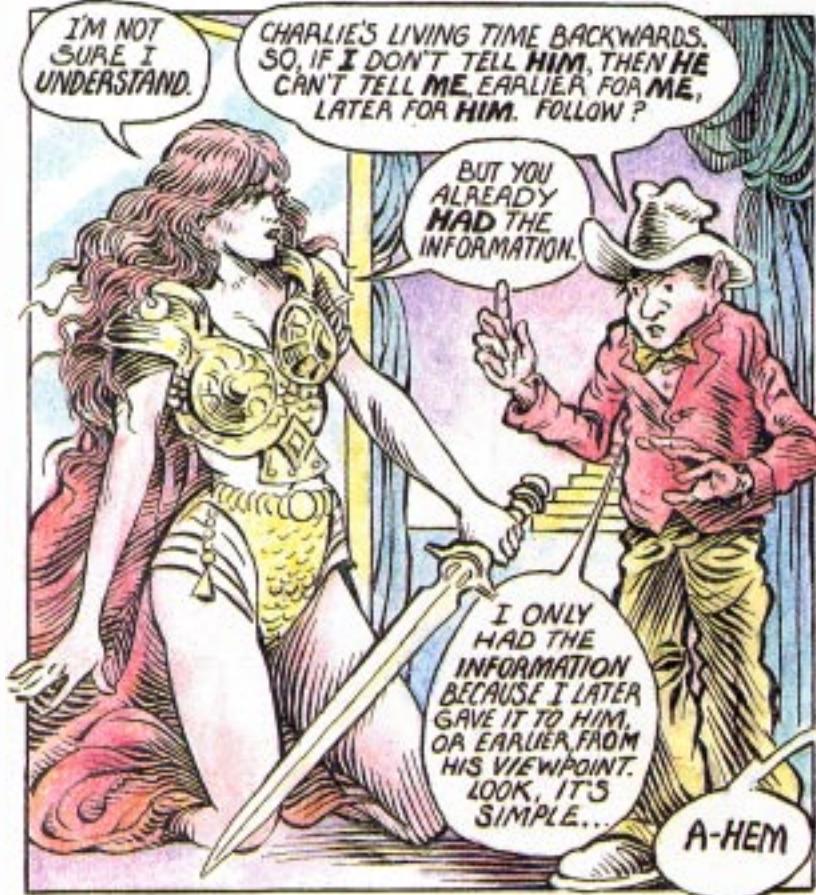
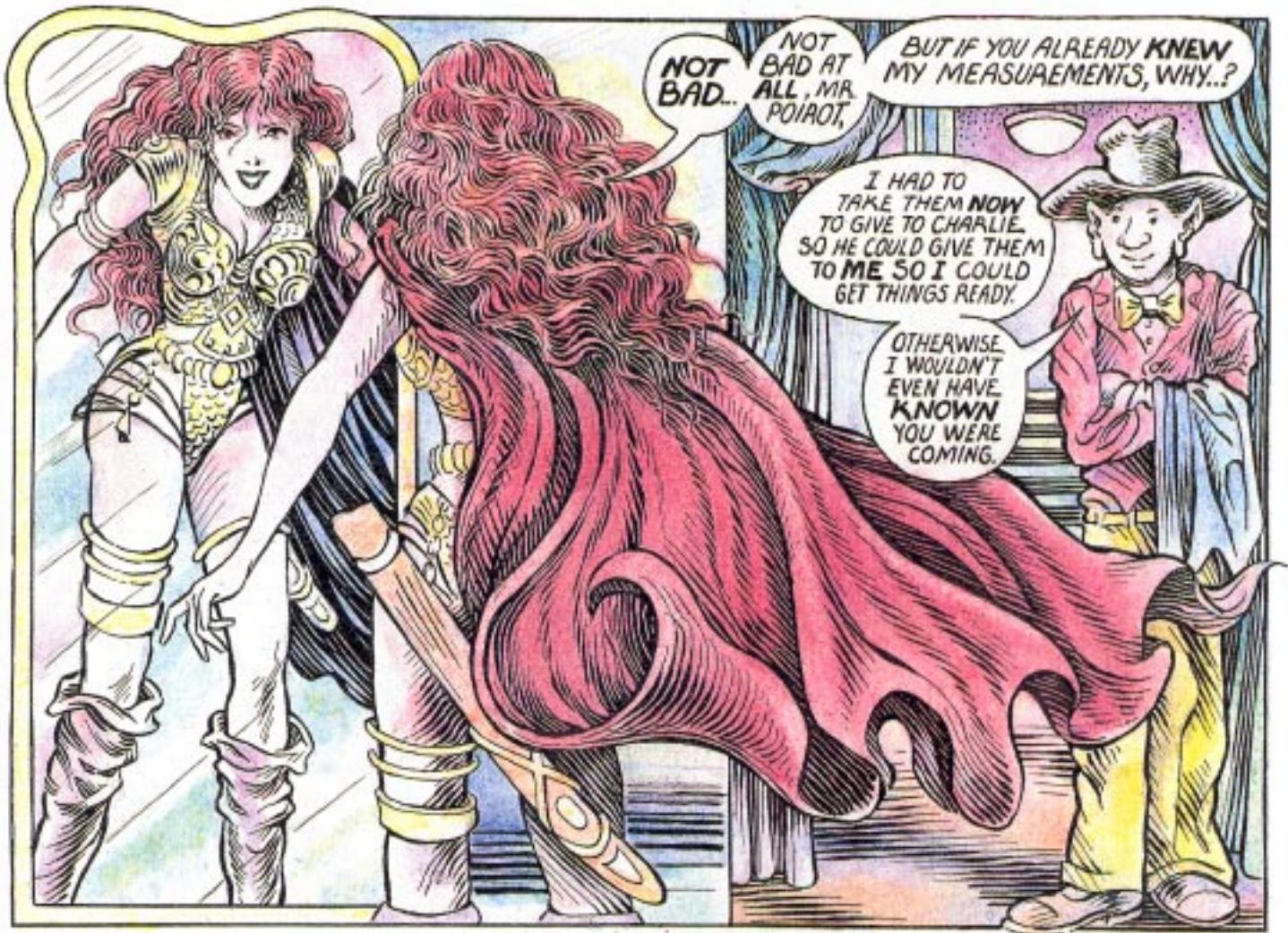
CHAPTER 7 THE FITTING

THE STORY SO FAR: JEN AND I HAVE SOUGHT OUT MY MAIN CONTACT IN THE MAZEWORKS. CHARLIE IS A WONDERFUL SOURCE OF INFORMATION ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU STOP TO CONSIDER THAT HE'S DEAD. I'M STAYING IN HIS OFFICE TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO RETURN JEN TO HER NATIVE WORLD, WHILE SHE VISITS CHARLIE'S TAILOR. I'VE TADED TO EXPLAIN TO HER WHAT THE MAZEWORKS IS, BUT I'M NOT SURE HOW MUCH HAS STUCK.

ALL THINGS
CONSIDERED,
I'M PRETTY
PROUD OF
HER FOR NOT
RUNNING
SCREAMING
INTO THE
NIGHT.







NEXT: BATTLE AT THE GATE

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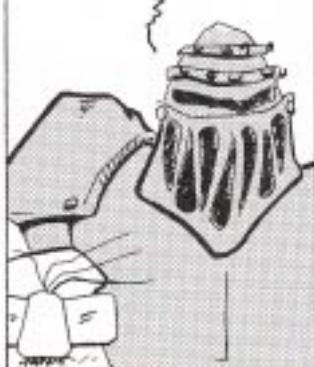


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DOESN'T HAVE
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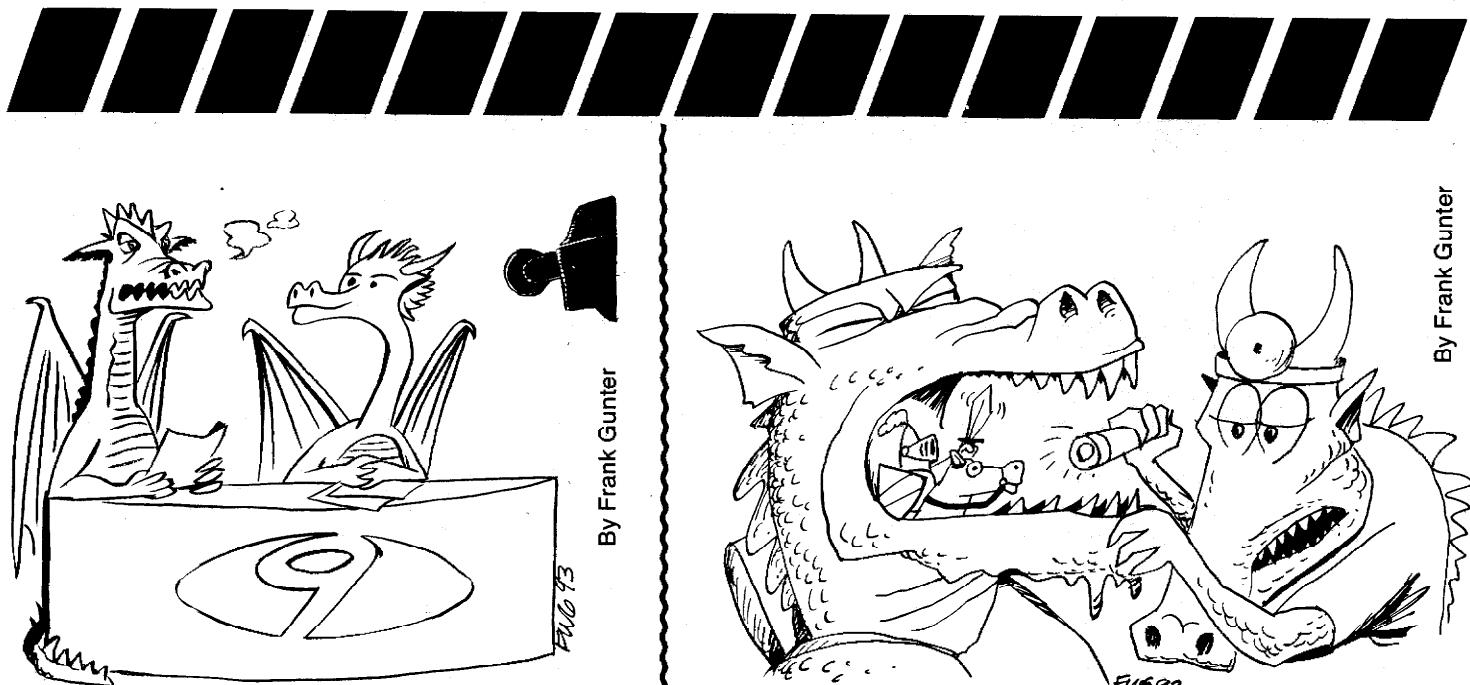
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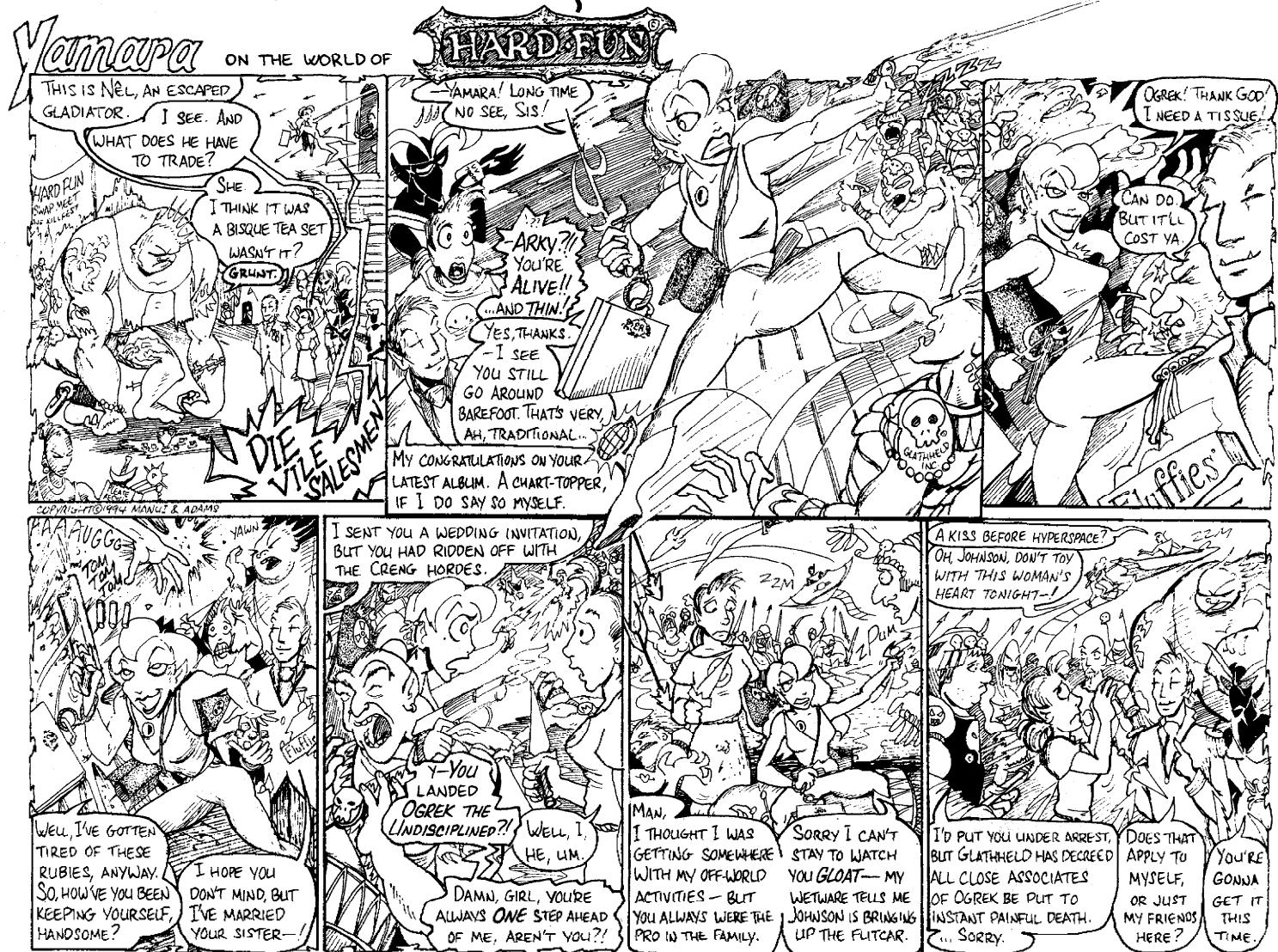
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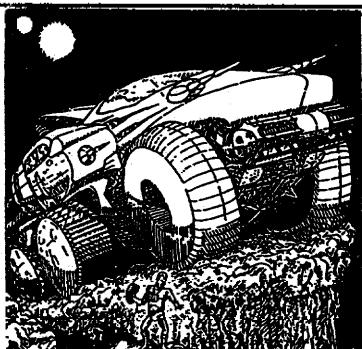
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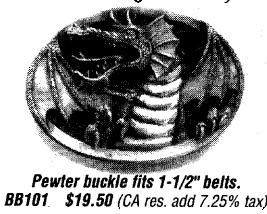
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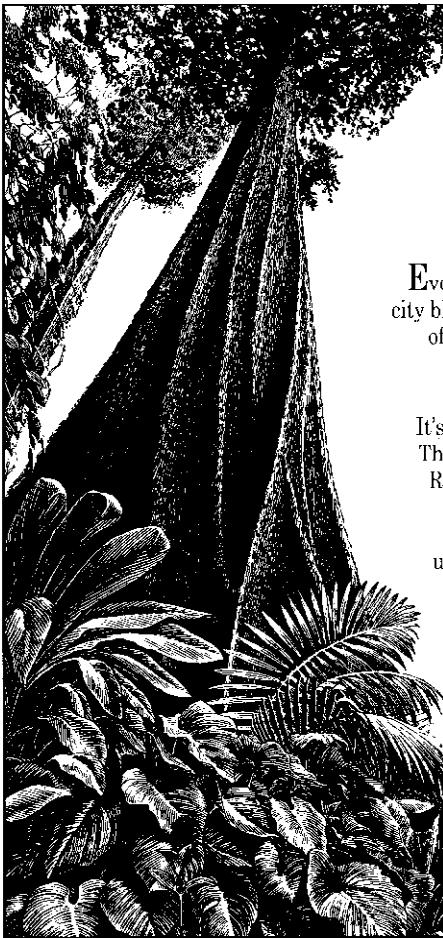
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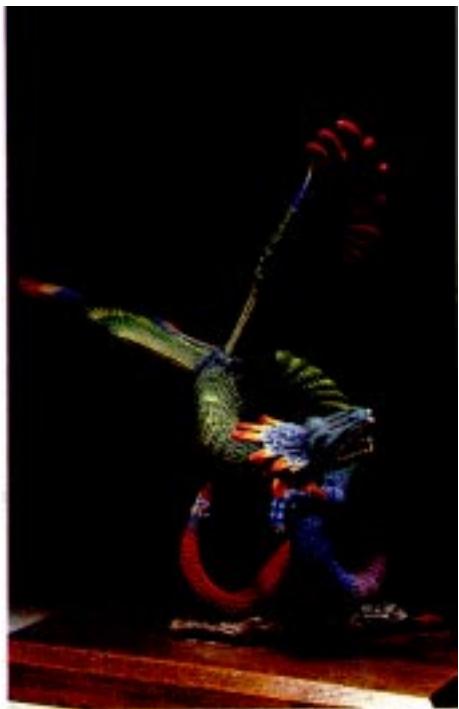
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The Feathered Serpent (Ral Partha)

The highs and lows of miniatures painting

So you read through my column in DRAGON® issue #204 and got all excited, right? You went straight out to prep 20 figures and have been waiting for this issue. You're even sitting at your painting table right now, going through this column, giggling with excitement. Well, probably not, but it paints an entertaining picture (for me, anyway).

In April's column, I discussed prepping metal figures and this time I'll talk about some basic painting techniques. Let's assume you're working with acrylics, since that's pretty much the standard for 25-mm figures. Base coating, washing, drybrushing (also called highlighting) and detailing are the most common stages of miniatures painting. While base coating isn't really a technique, it is still the most basic stage of painting and is important to the success of later steps.

When you are about to start painting, take one more good look at the figure. This gives you one last chance to catch any parting lines or unnoticed gaps before you compound the error by painting over it. It also gives you the opportunity to plan the colors you want to use. Never start painting a figure before you decide how you want it to turn out, or it'll look like it dressed in the dark.

Base coating is painting the larger areas of the figure with the colors you chose earlier. This includes flesh, boots, cape, armor, etc. It's important to paint the entire area; be sure to get every nook, cranny, and edge. You don't need to paint the smaller areas at this point, they would

only take a beating when you wash and drybrush the large areas anyway.

The next step is the wash. The purpose of a wash is to deepen the shadows and add depth to the area. To create a wash, choose a darker shade of the color over which you will be washing, then dilute it with water.

Example: Over medium gray, wash with dark gray or black. A solution of 70% (about three parts water to one part paint) water is a weak wash, 60-65% (about two parts water to one part paint) water is a medium wash and using less water creates a strong wash. I recommend a medium wash for novices, because it allows you to see the results immediately without overbearing the original color.

When applying the wash, use a larger brush than you do for the actual painting. This depends upon the size of the figure you're working with. On most 25-mm figures you can wash with a round #1 brush, or a #0 if you want to play it safe. Let the brush soak up a small amount of the solution and then lightly go over the area to be washed. The diluted paint will run into the low spots, cracks, and angles, deepening their color. Make sure you go over the whole area being washed or the areas you missed will have a lighter hue. This could be tough to correct later in the painting process.

Now you're ready for drybrushing, so called because of the state the brush is in when you do this. The purpose of drybrushing is to lighten the coloring of the miniature's raised areas, adding highlights and giving it a more life-like appearance. I recommend a flat brush for large areas, usually 1/8" or 1/4". Small areas will require smaller brushes and you can't often get smaller flat sizes.

When drybrushing you need to get a small amount of paint on the tip of your brush, this time using a lighter shade of the color being highlighted, then wipe it

Miniatures' product ratings

| | |
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| * | Poor |
| ** | Below average |
| *** | Average |
| **** | Above average |
| ***** | Excellent |

off with a paper towel or paint rag.

Example: Over the medium gray you washed earlier, drybrush with light gray. You can test the strength of the brush by wiping it on a white paper towel to see how much is coming off the brush. Only a trace of the color should be visible.

When you're satisfied with the strength, lightly brush over the highlight area. This should be done like you're using a duster, back and forth in a sweeping motion. Gradually the area will lighten, as the pigments come off the brush and adhere to the ridges and high spots of the target area. The drawback of drybrushing is that it destroys your brushes over time, so set aside a few brushes for this use.

I haven't space to cover detailing in depth; it's worth a column of its own. However, if you practice the steps above, detailing will become a natural extension of the skills mentioned here—detailing is base coating, washing, and drybrushing on a much smaller scale.

While it all sounds so simple when you read it, these techniques will require a great deal of practice. Don't use your favorite miniature when you decide to do this for the first time. The first few attempts may not make you terribly happy, but you will see an improvement with each miniature. After just four or five figures, you'll probably be pleased with the results.

With dragons being the focus of this anniversary issue, I've included some of the most impressive beasts that lurk in the dark recesses of your local hobby shop just waiting to be loosed on a party of unsuspecting characters. Dragons are, after all, a cornerstone of sword-and-sorcery fantasy and are a favorite creature of legend. Few things inspire the same feeling of overwhelming awe and wonder as a dragon.

Reviews

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#10-861 The Feathered Serpent

SHADOWRUN* series

Sculptor: Jim Johnson

Scale: 25 mm cost: \$25.95

One of Ral Partha's new Partha Plastics products, the Feathered Serpent is entirely resin, except for the large, Ralidium (pewter) base. The figure comes in eight pieces. Since it's done in resin be sure to clean the pieces with warm, soapy water to get all the mold-release gunk off. While this is a suggested step for metal figures, it's a requirement for resin and plastic pieces. Parting lines work a bit differently in



The Conflict (Ral Partha)

resin, usually looking like a rough edge or a small tear where the detail ends. Minor lines appear along the edges of the wings and along some parts of the body. There really aren't many and a hobby knife ought to correct them pretty easily.

Assembly isn't difficult, though you will need to do some filing here and there. Use epoxy putty to fill in the few gaps that are left; at the base of the wings, at the various body joints and in the area of the jaw. Carefully sculpt the putty to look like the surrounding area, so it all blends together when you have finished. On a detailed figure like this, the sculpting is the hardest part.

This serpent is very impressive, with its 7 + " wingspan and a height of over 8". The detail is excellent with realistic, layered feathers and a gracefully curved body. His head has a wide, flat, serpentine look and highly detailed features. This figure is a great Eastern dragon and fits very well into the SHADOWRUN world or any campaign that uses more than the "traditional" dragon.

Because of the level of detail present, this figure will paint very well. As you can see from the photo, this is a good figure to show the results of washing and drybrushing.

#10-452 The Conflict

Sculptor: Dave Summers

Scale: 25 mm

Cost: \$49.95

This has to be one of the most ambitious pieces done in a long time. The time and effort involved to get these two large dragons to interact so well must have been quite difficult. The set comes in 22 pieces, of which the wings and base are resin (Partha Plastic). Clean the resin of the

mold-release stuff before you begin to work with it (see the Feathered Serpent above). If you're looking for a great piece of work, this is it.

For a piece of this size there are remarkably few parting lines or blemishes, though the wings will need some filing to clean up the choppy resin mold lines. Assembly requires work, forethought, and skill since there are so many pieces. Where the pieces fit is just as important as how well they fit, because of the dragons' interactive pose when complete.

You can't assemble the whole piece and then paint, you just won't have room or the angle to do it. You should prime all the pieces separately, then paint as you get certain areas assembled. For example, look at the mouth with the arm in it; if you attach the two pieces that make the head (upper and lower halves), you can't paint the mouth very well. I would paint the mouth first, assemble the head (using putty at the back of the jaw) and then paint the rest of it. Pay attention to how the pieces fit and decide how best to paint them before you begin assembly.

I also would like to applaud Ral Partha's assembly instructions. While there is nothing out of the ordinary about the instructions, aside from being in English (unlike my VCR instructions), the Afterword gives tips on shaping and fitting the plastic pieces by using heat. This should prove a great help to any modelers that are just now getting exposed to plastics. Youngsters should not try this unsupervised, though.

The detail and design of each dragon is unique, furthering the contrast within the diorama. The dragons are great examples of western dragons and are well designed,



Cleric with Mace (Ral Partha)

detailed, and crafted. I could go on, but what good would that do? Look at the picture!

#61-003 Cleric With Mace

Ral Partha Imports series

Sculptor: Dennis Mize

Scale: 25 mm

Cost: \$2.15

A must have for anyone who plays in a medieval fantasy role-playing game, this figure has a lot of character. The models pose is realistic and gives the cleric a feeling of motion.

A slight mold line can be traced up both sides and across the shoulders, but that's the only technical flaw and it's easily corrected. The line does run through a little detail along his right arm, but it's easy to get to with a needle file or hobby knife. The base is textured like dirt or fine gravel.

The flow of the robes and mantle down his back is great. His armor, partial plate filled in with scale mail over the abdomen and chain mail at the shoulder joints, is well sculpted with sharp lines and angles. Detailed shoulder and knee guards add to the already impressive armor.

Our hero isn't the most handsome of men, but that adds personality to the figure in my book. His brows are furrowed and he appears angry or unhappy about something (which might explain the raised mace). A long Dirk hangs in its scabbard behind his shield, where the bottom of a shoulder-slung bag also is visible.



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#1507 Future Savages

FUTURE WARRIORS* series

Sculptor: Mark Copplestone

Scale: 25 mm

Cost: \$4.00

Looking like they just stepped out of a *Mad Max* movie, these figures are a clever mix of neanderthal and high-tech. Copplestone is a great sculptor and the FUTURE WARRIORS line has all the earmarks of a premium series.

There are a few minor mold lines on the figures. "Tophat" has parting lines along the front of his left leg and over his right shoulder, while the stout crossbowman has a small line between his left arm and body as well as traces along his right side. These will remove easily with needle files.

Looking first at the hefty bowman, you have to appreciate the detail of the figure (every time you look at it, you see some new detail). Aside from the mohawk, his head is clean-shaven and ornamented with goggles, earrings and a nose-ring that trails a chain to his right ear. He is short and very fat, which is accentuated by the fact he's not wearing much in the way of clothing.

Other details include a fur mantle, homemade crossbow and sword, a broken child's doll hung around his thick neck, and a belt hung with all sorts of pouches, holsters, and gizmos. On the back of his belt is strapped a keyboard with display. His fur-lined, heavy boots are starting to show wear, as evidenced by the exposure of his toes.

The other figure has shaved the right side of his head while long hair escapes from under the left brim of his beaten and abused tophat. "Tophat" wears goggles, earrings in his right ear, and some sort of high-tech panel as a breast plate. He carries a four barreled, homemade arquebus and has a heavy short sword strapped to his back. His calf-high, steel-toed boots are

in good shape but the pants he tucks into them have a frayed hole in the left knee. There are a myriad of other details such as sacks, pouches, armbands, straps, loin cloth, and all manner of intricacies.

#1826 War Dragon

WARLORDS* line

Sculptor: Julie Guthrie

Scale: 15 mm

Cost: \$6.50

Grenadier's 15-mm miniatures WARLORDS game gets even more firepower with this mounted War Dragon by Julie Guthrie. Julie sculpted a number of Grenadier's popular "Dragon of the Month" miniatures and her expertise shows on this figure.

The War Dragon comes in five pieces, not including the two-piece plastic base, and assembles easily. There are a few mold lines, though all are minor and a little filing will be required to get the fit just right. Though this figure has very minor seams at the assembly joints, all assembled models should have the joints blended with epoxy so the figure looks like it's all one piece. Mounting the rider requires a little filing, but the Grenadier metal is soft and easy to work with.

Detail is excellent on the dragon—from the rough scales to the softer, leathery belly and wings. Facial details on the dragon are exceptional and the rider is very good, especially when you consider the scale. The assembled piece has a life-like pose, making a graceful turn in mid-wing beat.

Games Workshop (Citadel/Marauder Miniatures)

3431-C Benson Ave.

Baltimore MD 21227

Voice: (410) 644-5699 Fax: (410) 242-1839

Mail Order: Yes

Catalog: Free

#9051 Boneripper

WARHAMMER* line

Sculptors: Michael Perry & Jes Goodwin

Cost: \$9.99

Boneripper is the mutant, Rat Ogre bodyguard to Thanquol, a special charac-



War Dragon (Grenadier)



Boneripper (Games Workshop)

ter available to Skaven army generals in the WARHAMMER miniatures battle game.

Boneripper comes in four pieces plus a 40-mm plastic base. There are minor mold lines on each piece, but some careful filing should take care of them. His torso has a moderate mold line under the upper right arm (Does that sound funny to anyone besides me?) and some moderate flash at the end of the claws. Files and a hobby knife will solve those.

Where the torso and lower body connect, the joint is a ball and socket giving the modeler a great deal of flexibility in

pose. His head also can rotate left or right, to suit whatever pose is chosen. The shoulder is set to one position, but that can change too, with some delicate filing and epoxy to fill in any gap.

Boneripper is highly detailed with patches of fur, heavy muscle structure, spiked shoulder guard and a spiked... something in his right hand. He wears a neck chain from which hangs a huge, round pendant, his tail ends in a spiked ball, and his belt holds a number of metal rings. Additional details include a brand of the skaven symbol on his right shoulder, bracer on right wrist, and chains criss-crossing his body, presumably to hold his shoulder guard on.

#9053 Space Wolf Scout Sergeants

WARHAMMER 40K* line

Sculptor: Jes Goodwin

Scale: 28 mm

Cost: \$6.99

Still more support for the Space Wolves chapter, these scout sergeants add more character and detail to their command.

Both figures have slight mold lines visible on legs, arms, and shoulders. Clean up should be easy, using needle files and knife.

The first sergeant, with his power sword raised high overhead, wears a wolf pelt over modified armor and carries a drumfed bolter with shoulder strap hanging loosely. His hair is shaved up the sides and hangs in long braids from about the ears. The claw-like scars in his scalp are evidence of his devotion to the chapter and his open mouth shows elongated canine teeth.

The second sergeant carries a chainsword, bolt pistol, and has a sword hung on his belt. Embellishments include the Imperial emblem on his chest, wolf teeth hanging from armor, grenades, and belt pouches.

Both figures have numerous details that add life and flavor-badges of honor, grenades, pouches, cross-hatched leg armor, etc. The facial detail of the figures is exceptional, one in mid-howl with furrowed brow and flared nostrils, the other snarling disdain as he brings his bolt pistol to bear on the enemy. They also have the new backpacks, which include a periscope-like appendage rising over the model's left shoulders.

#0152 Dark Millennium

WARHAMMER 40K supplement

Sculptor: Andy Chambers

Scale: 28 mm

Cost: \$34.99

Dark Millennium is a supplement for the WARHAMMER 40K game, so it isn't playable unless you have the game. The box is packed with 60 psyker powers, 10 vehicle cards, a deck of 36 Warp cards plus all sorts of counters and power templates. There is also a book with rules for using all of the above.

Without trying to recap the whole book, the new rules cover psykers, Strategy cards, vehicle squadrons, support-weapon batteries, and include more victory-point tables. The psykers are broken down by races or training to determine what powers are available to specific characters. The system is very similar to the magic system used for the WARHAMMER FANTASY BATTLES* game, which makes them very compatible for mixing games.

Strategy cards, a new addition for the WARHAMMER 40K game, allow a certain randomness beyond that inherent in the roll of the die. These cards allow changes to set-up, combat results, or even allow players to bring back a dead squad as reinforcements. While I enjoy the concept, and some of the cards work very well in play, a couple of the cards are powerful enough to destroy game balance so you might want to pull them all out before you play.

The rules for squadrons and batteries are simple but add a lot to play by preventing players from covering the board with "detached" vehicles and support weapons. By putting the vehicles in squadrons, or support weapons in batteries, the game approximates real-world tactics but still allows enough freedom that players don't feel restricted.

The artwork in the book is great—with numerous color photos and B&W illustrations. An attractive layout puts all the rules in easy-to-find chapters, so players can reference the material during play.

Overall, the rules work well and the psyker powers blend well into the game. Psykers will have a big impact on the game, so be prepared—a couple of tricky psykers can throw a wrench into the best of plans. I can think of a dozen nasty ways to use my Warhead orc psyker.



Space Wolf Scout Sergeants (Games Workshop)



Goblin Swordsmen (Heartbreaker)

Heartbreaker Hobbies & Games

19 E. Central Ave.

Paoli PA 19301

Voice: (215) 544-9052 Fax: (215) 544-9052
Mail Order: Yes Catalog: Free

#416 Goblin Swordsmen

Generic Fantasy Army Pack
Sculptor: Tim Prow

Scale: 28 mm Cost: \$12.50

Heartbreaker's new generic miniatures for fantasy armies give enthusiasts an inexpensive way to fill in their army with not-so-generic figures.

There are minor mold lines along the arms, weapons, shields, and legs, though

the lines are negligible and clean off quickly. The figures come with 20-mm plastic bases, the standard for the WARHAMMER and BATTLESYSTEM® systems (25 mm/28 mm as opposed to the popular 15 mm) and a number of other fantasy games. I do have one question, however. Though they are called Goblin Swordsmen, they all have meat cleavers—isn't that going to tick-off some union?

These figures are quite good and should fit well into any fantasy army. One pose holds his mighty cleaver and target shield aloft, howling his defiance to the heavens (a goblin would figure this to be reasonably safe—after all, the heavens are pretty far away from a goblin). Around his neck is a chain hung with teeth and a small

animal skull, while his thick belt with skull buckle holds a pouch. His feet are wrapped in cloth or leather.

The other pose has a skull emblem on his shield and belt buckle. Both figures have good facial detail, warts and all. The pack comes with 10 figures, five in each pose, and will fit easily into any fantasy miniatures game, not to mention the potential in fantasy role-playing games.

#345 Death's Head Nethermancer

EARTHDAWN* line

Sculptor: Phil Lewis

Scale: 25 mm

Cost: \$4.95

These Nethermancers, for FASA's EARTHDAWN RPG, are well designed and detailed for use with any fantasy setting. The blister contains two different figures, both in dramatic poses.

The parting lines on these figures are nearly undetectable, so prepping will be a breeze. Some of the detail is pretty fine, so be careful with the primer—a little too thick and you might lose some detail.

Nethermancer #1, carrying a staff with horned skull, is covered with all manner of tassels, bones, symbols, and pouch. The detail is excellent, especially when you note the embellished staff and the lapel of his robe. His lapel is one of the places you might lose detail when priming or painting, due to the fine (as in really, really small) pattern.

Nethermancer #2 has a similar level of detail, but the detail presents itself as neck jewelry, sashes, pouches, and chains. His long, fur vest is quite good and should paint up very well. Between his nose and mouth crawls a worm (9 out of 10 dentists recommend well, maybe not).

Each figure has undead facial features, as they should, while the rest of their body appears well muscled and proportioned. In addition to use as a nethermancer, these could find good use as a lich or any number of specialized undead creatures (wraith, wight, etc.).

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#3020 The Lady Of The Lake

Le Morte D'Arthur series

Sculptor: Tom Meier
Scale: 25 mm

Cost: \$6.95

I almost don't need to write anything for this figure-seeing is believing. However, since I'd get a good talking to if I didn't, I'll go ahead and write something.

I would usually say something about a parting line right in here . . . hmmm . . . is that? no . . . I guess I could say that the figures come with separate bases, which fit quite well, for both mounted and foot.

As for detail, there really isn't enough space so I'll be selective. Her hair and tiara are . . . while the cloak and gown are . . . not to mention the horse's mane and harness, which is . . . (Adjectives can be placed into the previous sentence in any order and with any frequency you'd like.) Both the foot and mounted Lady of the Lake, sitting astride her horse, share the same qualities in feature, dress, and detail.

The tack and harness of the horse is detailed with shells and leaves, to fit with the nature of its rider. The horse's tail is a little flat, but that is the only conceivable drawback to the pack. Tom Meier retains his crown.

#3027 Dwarf, Page, & Trumpeters

Le Morte D'Arthur series

Sculptor: Tom Meier

Scale: 25 mm Cost: \$6.95

This four-figure set will provide great setting figures for court events, festivals, a royal entourage, etc. While the trumpeter figures are more limited in their usage, the page and dwarf can fill any number of gaming roles, from bar patrons to characters to town folk.

At the small end of each trumpet there was a bit of heavy flash, from a large vent. Don't try to twist it off, as you might with other such flash, because the end of the trumpet is thin and could break. Use a hobby knife and file to clean the area up. It's not tough, just be careful not to mar the face.

There are minor mold lines along the left side and along the instrument of the two trumpeter figures. The hat also has a faint trace of parting line. The dwarf has virtually no visible parting lines. A mild parting line runs up the page's right arm and side, across his head and down the inside of his left arm and left leg.

Use only needle files for most of these areas. Bobinium, the alloy T-Bolt uses, is very hard and difficult to work with when using a knife. You will want to use the tip of a hobby knife to stroke through the hair, cleaning off the traces of parting line there.

A little work is required to mount the trumpeters and dwarf on their bases, as the posts on their feet don't quite fit into the holes, but the page fits perfectly.

As you might expect, the page is dressed rather plainly, but isn't lacking in detail or facial expression. His hose, slippers, and tunic should all paint up nicely, while his life-like facial features will prove an excellent challenge for any painter. The trumpeters and dwarf are more ornately clothed in detailed tabards. The trumpeters' stance, flared sleeves, feathered hats, and bannered trumpets are all well done. The dwarf's hooded, fringed mantle and tunic are excellent, as are his necklace and facial expression.

Painting will be a challenge as you decide upon the heraldry to use for the



Death's Head Nethermancer (Heartbreaker)



The Lady of the Lake (Thunderbolt)



Dwarf, Page, and Trumpeter (Thunderbolt)



Mark II Assault Fiend (Global)

trumpet banners and the coloring to use on the dwarf, who could be a visiting dignitary or a fool.

Global Games

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CANADA M6N 1H8
Voice: (416) 652-3255 Fax: (416) 656-2235
Mail Order: No

#1740 Mark II Assault Fiend

LEGIONS OF STEEL* line

Sculptor: Jeff Wilhelm

Scale: 25 mm

Cost: \$8.95

Assembled from four pieces, this figure, designed by Wes Johnson and sculpted by Jeff Wilhelm, supports Global Games' miniatures LEGIONS OF STEEL game. The Mark II Assault fiend adds yet another terror to the growing arsenal available to this game's players.

As with any larger figure, there are parting lines. Most of the lines are simple, if time consuming, to remove. Parting lines are found down the back of the body and across the chest, along both arms, and the length of the weapon's haft. Another runs along the tail.

Assembly is simple, but dry fit the right leg to the body before you glue. Some bending or filing may be required to get both the leg and base to fit just right.

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The result is a figure to strike fear into even Behemoth XRS equipped commandos. The sleek design of the head makes the figure look fast, which it is in the game. Though there appears to be musculature, the machine forces only have a humanoid appearance for psychological reasons, don't they?

The detail is very good. The legs have exposed fiber bundles (machine muscle), as do the abdomen, back, and arms. The ridged back and segmented tail, complete with bladed tip, add a sinister feel to the Fiend. His fleshless, almost grinning expression would unsettle the most veteran UNE forces.

Global has said that they intended to use some of the best sculptors in the industry to support this game, and so far they have—starting with Tom Meier, Dave Summers, and Jeff Wilhelm, to name a few. It'll be interesting to watch their line progress, and see who they have work on it. It should also be noted that RAFM casts their figures and has done an excellent job to date.

Pick of the Litter

This litter this month has such incredible pieces in it that choosing one or two is really tough. Certainly all the dragons are huge and impressive pieces, but the Future Savages figures are so creative and unique, while The Lady of the Lake miniature is such an elegant, almost perfect piece. Then there's Boneripper, which is a modeler's delight, or Goblin Swordsmen, a great value for fantasy miniature gamers. And what about Cleric with Mace? Sound pretty wishy-washy, aren't I?

Okay, we're going to do this (gulp). Ral Partha's Conflict has to be the pick for modelers, it's such an incredible piece and such a tremendous challenge to assemble and paint. The Conflict will truly be any hobbyist's pride and joy when completed.

For the gamer, with a more functional purpose in mind, the choice can't really be narrowed to fewer than two—and that's hard enough. They are Grenadier's Future Savages, which is too great a blister pack to miss out on, and T-Bolt's Lady of the Lake (saw that coming a mile away, didn't you) because it's such a finely crafted piece.

Until next time, good gaming.



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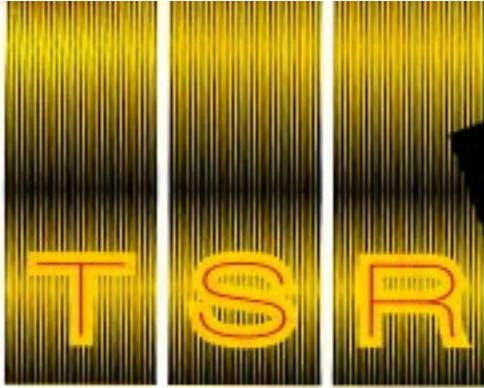


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* "The Sleeping Dragon" (An AD&D Council of Wyrms adventure; 6-8) by Bill "Spell my name right" Slavicsek.

* "Melody" (AD&D; 6-8) by Leonard & Ann Wilson.

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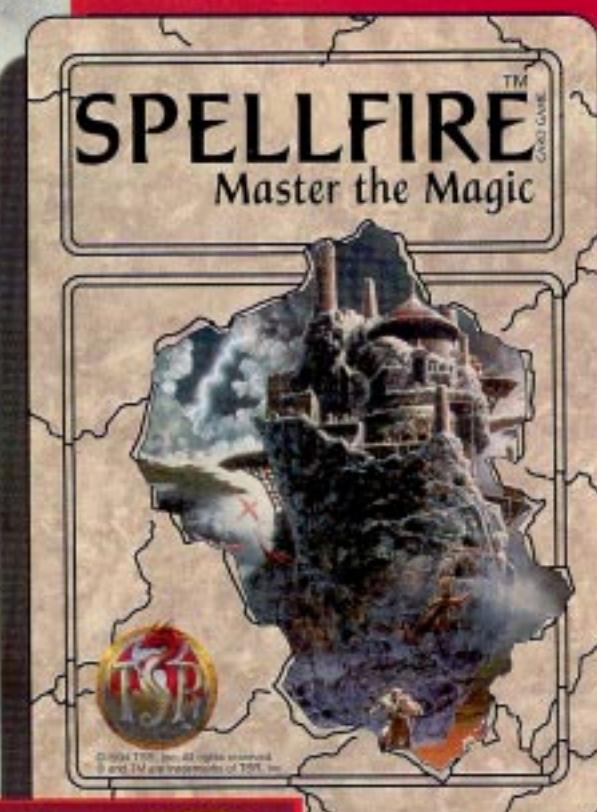


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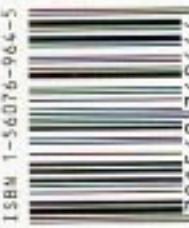
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