

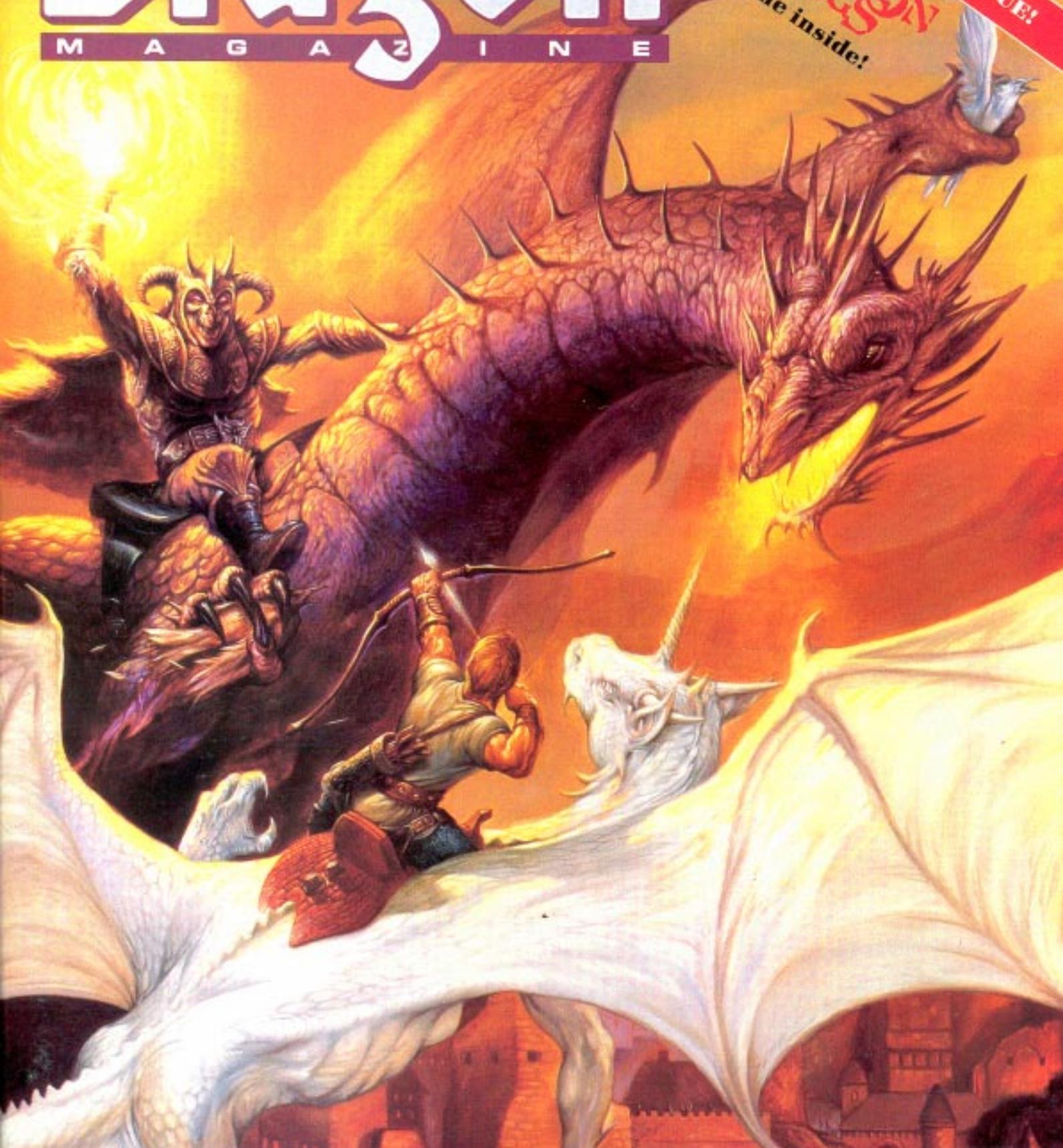
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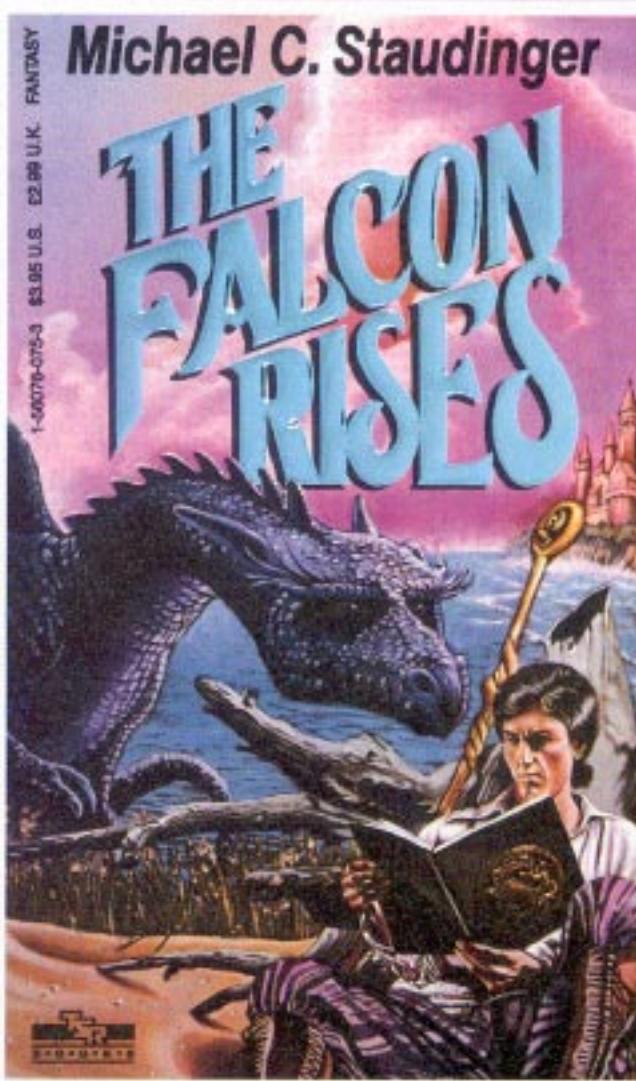
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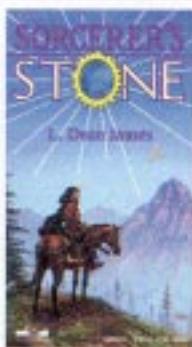
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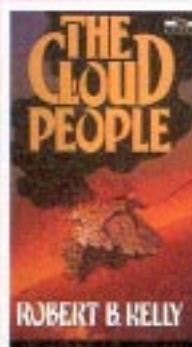
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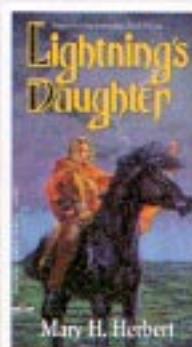
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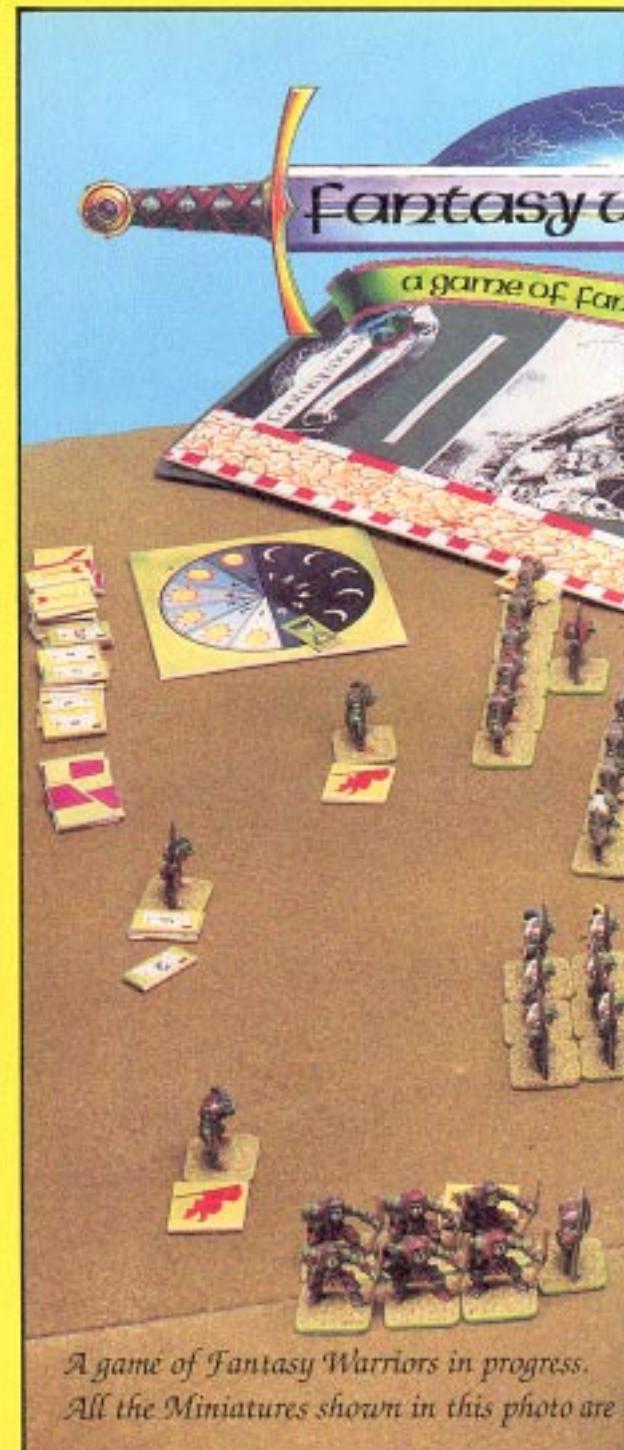
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Dragon

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Issue #170
Vol. XVI, No. 1
June 1991

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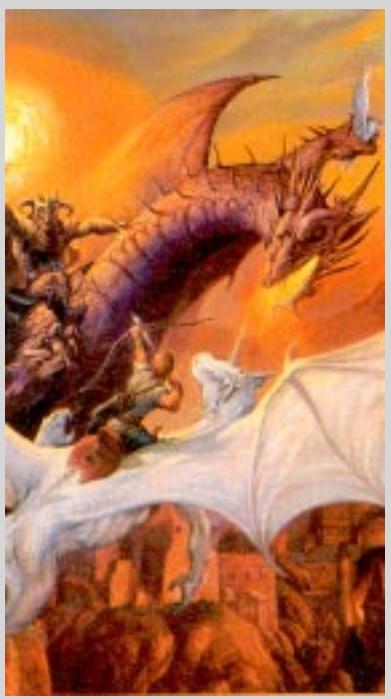
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COVER

Last year, Jeff Easley painted a 4' X 6' mural for some very lucky Californian. It was the biggest painting he had ever done, and it was so large that we were able to use two whole sections from it for our cover and our frontispiece. "The Siege of Lord Eyrie's Crag" is available in prints; just write to Jeff Easley, c/o TSR, Inc.

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.

Allen Varney Games: Going out of business!

Dear Roger,

Whoever started the false rumor that I was organizing "Allen Varney Games" — quit it! Give it a rest!

This prank has gotten out of control. A convention has invited "Allen Varney Games" to buy tables in its dealers' room. Rumors have appeared in gossip columns of computer magazines. Australia's biggest game distributor has asked for a catalog and a price list.

I am sorry to see that this "Allen Varney Games" nonsense has continued, despite my best efforts to quash it. Let me assure you: There is no "Allen Varney Games." Not now, not ever! This was a joke on me, started by persons unknown at the GEN CON® game fair in Milwaukee in August 1990, and carried forward by friends at a science-fiction convention last year. They even printed fake business cards for twelve corporate positions in this alleged game company.

But it's not true. There has never been an "Allen Varney Games," I have *never* intended to start one, and I doubt very strongly that I ever would!

I don't mind the joke. My friends who did it—whomever they are—remain my friends, with no hard feelings. In fact, the whole stunt seems to have publicized my freelance writing career. (I design games and adventures for TSR, West End Games, and other companies.) But when it wastes distributors' and convention organizers' valuable time (to say nothing of my own!), the hoax has gotten out of control.

I urge you to spread the word to anyone interested, using this letter as necessary to prove your point. I applaud anything you can do to spread the light of truth.

Allen Varney
Austin TX

Well, so much for the vice presidency I was promised in the Periodicals Division of Allen Varney Games. Rats. The logo on the business cards and press releases sure was nifty.

Tempting though it is, I won't contribute to the prank. We have room for only one piece of fiction per issue.

Another revelation

Dear Dragon,

To answer your question "Who is Dwight L. Moody?" in "Letters," issue #167: Dwight Moody was a very prominent Christian evangelist of the late 1800s. He founded several seminaries and preached extensively throughout the United States and Britain. In general, he was the Billy Graham of his day.

F.K.
Springfield OH

The Rev. Arthur Collins, fantasy gaming author and real-life minister, gave me the same answer just before I got this letter. Now we all know who first said, "Character is what you are in the dark."

And another

Dear Dragon,

I am writing to you about "Dragonmirth," in issue #149 and #165. Please correct me if I am wrong, but is the cartoon in issue #149 showing the wizard taking off his pointy hat only to reveal his pointy head, drawn by Dwain Meyer, just *very slightly* similar to the cartoon in issue #165 that shows a wizard taking off his pointy hat only to reveal his pointy head, drawn by Dwain Meyer? I would like you to know it took me about 20-30 minutes of searching through my collection of DRAGON Magazines to discover this. I would much rather have been playing [Origin's computer game] *Wing Commander's Secret Missions* disk, which I also have and think you should review or mention, having reviewed *Wing Commander* in issue #166.

One other thing I would like to ask: On AD&D® character sheets, I can't find out what the "Wounds" box is for. It is next to the "Hit Points" box as if it's important. I'd like to know how to use it.

Lewis King
Edinburgh, Scotland

Oops. Looks like we dropped a used cartoon into the main cartoon file and didn't remember having used it. We have just checked the file and believe the "recycled cartoon" problem has been cured. As for the Secret Missions expansion disk for Wing Commander, the Lessers have already reviewed it (with a five-star rating) in last issue's "The Role of Computers" column. And the "Wounds" box on the character sheets is where you mark down how many hit points your character has lost from being whacked with swords, mauled by claws, etc. The "Hit Points" box shows your characters current normal (unwounded) hit-point score.

DRAGON® Magazine (ISSN 0279-6848) is published monthly by TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756 (201 Sheridan Springs Road), Lake Geneva WI 53147, United States of America. The postal address for all materials from the United States of America and Canada except subscription orders is: DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, (201 Sheridan Springs Road), Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.; telephone (414) 248-3625; fax (414) 248-0389. The postal address for all materials from Europe is: DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom; telephone: (0223) 212517 (U.K.), 44-223-212517 (international); telex, 818761; fax (0223) 248066 (U.K.), 44-223-248066 (international).

Distribution: DRAGON Magazine is available from game and hobby shops throughout the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and through a limited number of other overseas outlets. Distribution to the book trade in the United States is by Random House, Inc., and in Canada by Random House of Canada, Ltd. Distribution to the book trade in the United Kingdom is by TSR Ltd. Send orders to: Random House, Inc., Order Entry Department, Westminster MD 21157, U.S.A.; telephone: (800) 733-3000. Newsstand distribution throughout the United Kingdom is by Seymour Press Ltd., 334 Brixton Road, London SW9 7AG, United Kingdom; telephone: 01-733-4444.

Subscriptions: Subscription rates via second-class mail are as follows: \$30 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent to an address in the U.S. or Canada; £16 for 12 issues sent to an address within the United Kingdom; £24 for 12 issues sent to an address in Europe; \$50 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent by surface mail to any other address, or \$90 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent air mail to any other address. Payment in full must accompany all subscription orders. In the U.S. and Canada, methods of payment include checks or money orders made payable to TSR, Inc., or charges to valid MasterCard or VISA credit cards; send subscription orders with payments to: TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 5695, Boston MA 02206, U.S.A. In the United Kingdom, methods of payment include cheques or money orders made payable to TSR Ltd., or charges to a valid ACCESS or VISA credit card; send subscription orders with payments to TSR Ltd., as per that address above. Prices are subject to change without prior notice. The issue of expiration of each subscription is printed on the mailing label of each subscriber's copy of the magazine. Changes of address for the delivery of subscription copies must be received at least six weeks prior to the effective date of the change in order to assure uninterrupted delivery.

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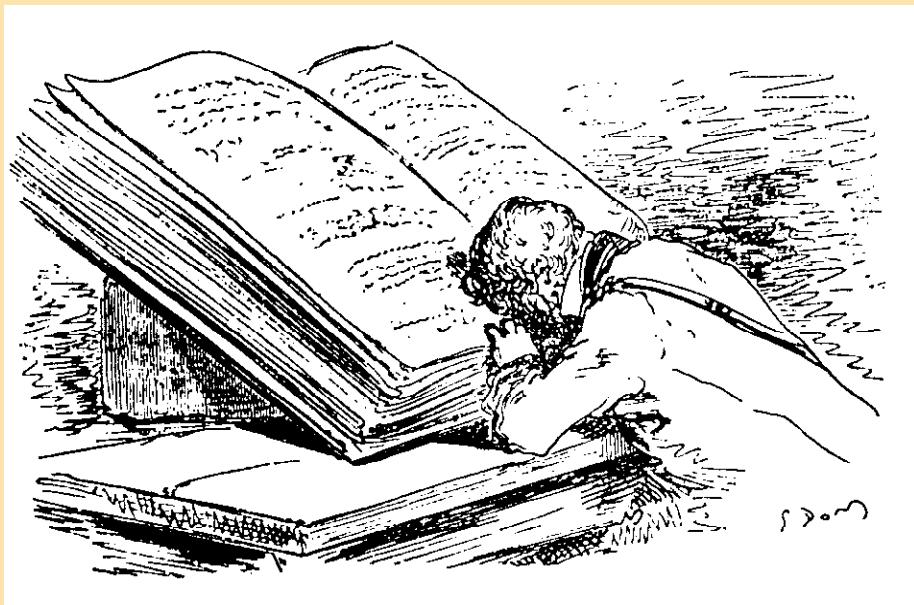
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Continued on page 7.

DRAGON 5

EDITORIAL

Whatcha want?



This issue marks the 15th year of publication for DRAGON® Magazine. A number of other magazine-related anniversaries are coming up for me, too. The eighth anniversary of the day I started work for TSR's periodicals is on May 31st. My fifth year of being DRAGON Magazine's editor occurs this fall (September 29th), and the 100th issue I've worked on since I started here is #175 (November 1991). The 12th anniversary issue since I was first published in DRAGON Magazine is #177 (January 1992), but now I'm getting too far ahead of things.*

In short, it's time to look around and see what we can do next. Is this the kind of magazine you want to read? I've taken the time to look over the numerous suggestions that readers have had for articles that they would love to see in DRAGON Magazine, and the following were noted—in no particular order:

1. An index (we're thinking about it, but see issue #165, page 5).
2. More ideas for painting miniatures.
3. More funny articles (including "tests," puzzles, cartoons, etc.).
4. Broader coverage of different role-playing games, particularly the D&D® and MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game (but with some non-TSR games as well).
5. Less coverage of every game but the AD&D® game (this contradicts #4, but there it is).
6. More on demons and devils.
7. More games (like "Dino Wars!" in issue

#166) or special game-related inserts (like the *deck of many things* in issue #148, or the AD&D Trading Cards in issue #160).

8. More articles like "The Enemy at the Gates" (issue #160) that show in detail how magic would affect a campaign world and how spells could be used in unique and creative ways.

9. More articles on how to role-play various races, classes, monsters, etc. in the AD&D game (especially "The Ecology of..." pieces, "The Sunset World" in issue #150, and "Arcane Lore: Magic of the Dwarven Priests" in issue #129).

10. More new adventuring-type character classes and races for the AD&D game.

11. More short articles.

12. More articles on TSR's game worlds (Krynn, Oerth, Toril, etc.).

13. Fewer articles on TSR's game worlds (another contradiction).

14. More magical items, monsters, spells, DM's tricks, and other bits that can be dropped into any AD&D game.

15. More SPELL JAMMER™ material.

16. More articles for the game master or how to keep your game campaign alive and going strong, and how to resolve troubles in your gaming group.

17. More controversy (okay, what sort of controversial topics would you like for us to cover?).

18. More "official" rules (even just suggestions from TSR people on different ways to run your game).

19. Fewer "official" rules (yet another

contradiction).

20. Another DUNGEON® Adventures module insert (one that was previously unpublished).

21. More on demihuman characters (elves, half-elves, dwarves, gnomes, half-lings, kender, etc.).

22. More articles on making low-level games more exciting.

23. More on the AD&D 1st Edition game.

And there you are. "Sage Advice," "Forum," and short fiction are all quite popular, and most people like the "theme" issue idea. We won't fudge with those, then.

As for my own thoughts, I'd rather that people avoided #14, as we have too many items already and can't run them all. I would love to see more on #2, #3, #7, #8, #9, #10, #11, #15, #16, and #21. Controversial topics are best placed in "Forum" letters. The jury's out on the rest.

Lots of people ask me for ideas on what sorts of articles I would like to see in DRAGON Magazine. Now you know. Get our writer's guidelines and go to it.

And let's make the next 15 years even better than the first.

* Barbara Young informs me that DUNGEON Adventures celebrates the start of its 6th year of publication this fall with issue #31. I was its first editor. Time flies....

Errata

Due to an error, part of the Close-Combat Tactics Table was misprinted in the article "The Strategy of Tactics" in issue #169 (page 30). The corrected column follows. We apologize for the problem.

Armor class

modifier * *

+ 1 / + 2 bonus

+ 2 /+ 4 bonus

- 1 penalty

-2 penalty

Letters

Continued from page 5

Still more coming

Dear Dragon,

For the past eight months, I have been waiting for someone to notice the similarity between the name "Finella Ciri" in your "Twilight Empire" series and the name "Cirilli Finla" in the AD&D module N1 *Against the Cult of the Reptile God*. Don't misunderstand me, as I personally like the series, but I was surprised that nobody noticed.

Also, I have found the bloodflower of issue #167 in "The Dragon's Bestiary" to be very similar to the vampire roses of D&D® module X1 *Castle Amber*: Another similarity occurs between the scroll of mapping on page 10 of POLYHEDRON™ issue #58 and the various magical maps in DRAGON issue #125, in the "Bazaar of the Bizarre."

Finally, you mentioned in the editorial of issue #161 that that issue held the only article on romance in your memory. This is true, except for the short section on romance in DRAGON issue # 117, in "Fun Without Fighting." That section does not compose the entire article, but it is worth mentioning anyway.

Wesley Lin
Phoenix AZ

Steve Sullivan, who writes the "Twilight Empire" series, said he got the name Finella (an Irish Gaelic name that means "white shoudered") out of a baby book; "Ciri" is the short form of her family name. Thus, similarities

between Fin and Cirilli Finla are coincidental.

TSR's fantasy games (and probably those of every other game company) have seen a long procession of blood-sucking plants in their rule-book pages, starting with the vampire vine and vampire tree mentioned in the D&D game's Supplement IV, Gods, Demigods, and Heroes (long out of print). Your editors were not aware of the vampire roses of XI, but as the latter is now also long out of print, it doesn't matter. It's a popular idea, and apparently, so are magical maps that do your cartography for you. I wrote an editorial on the independent-invention problem for DRAGON issue #148. Sometimes everyone has the same good idea at once, and sometimes they have the same idea several years apart and almost no one remembers the first one. We once received module proposals from two authors (one in Texas and one in England) who each wanted to create a dungeon in an iceberg populated by people called "bergmen"—in each case led by humans named Ingemar and Ingrid. One thought we had stolen his idea and given it to the other author (which we hadn't), and in frustration we dropped the whole project.

And my apologies to author Scott Bennie for forgetting about his discussion of romance in role-playing in his excellent article, "Fun Without Fighting." So much for my being an expert on romance. (No smart remarks from readers, please.)

Apples and GENies

Dear Dragon,

Is there a BBS system for Apple users that involves AD&D® games and role-playing in general? If so, could you please give me the number or publish it?

I also noticed the GENie system was mentioned in one of your recent magazines, but no phone number was given.

Mason Peatross
Oneida PA

We have no information on any Apple-based BBS with a special interest in role-playing games. We'd prefer not to publish the numbers for most BBSs, since many of them come and go so quickly that the information would soon be out of date and useless.

As for the GENie system, the phone number to dial for more information is (800) 638-9636. Ω

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The power and glory of Dragons

Artwork by Jeff Easley



Artwork by Jeff Easley

Dragons in the D&D® game's Known World

by Bruce A. Heard



From Hatchling to Immortal Guardian

For a game whose spiritual mascot it the dragon, amazingly little has been detailed to describe these fantastic creatures in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® system. Even less has been written about their influence on the Known World. This article might spark your imagination and perhaps be the starting point of new D&D adventures and encounters. At least it should answer many questions—and prompt more!

Dragon society

Much of dragon philosophy and society revolves around the ancient Ceremony of Sublimation. Most dragons aspire to reach a higher level of existence unique to dragonkind. After reaching maturity, most dragons spend their lives seeking the secrets and effects of this ceremony.

The Ceremony of Sublimation enables particularly powerful dragons to reach Immortality. They become immortal dragon guardians dwelling on the plane of the dragon rulers (See the D&D Master DM's Book, pages 28-29). One of these spirits may one day become a dragon ruler or perhaps even the Great One itself. This goal motivates all dragons in their quest to master the Ceremony of Sublimation. Very few are those that succeed. This drive is natural for dragons, dating back to another age, predating the birth of humankind.

Before more can be said about the society of dragons, their biology and the way they acquire power must be detailed first.

Young dragons: Only one of the parents is present when the dragon's eggs hatch. Dragons do not normally live in

groups. More often than not, the male leaves after the eggs hatch, leaving the mother to care for the hatchlings. There are normally 1d4 + 1 hatchlings. Each hatchling has a 25% chance of dying within the year due to predators, hunters, disease, accidents, cannibalism among hatchlings, etc. A dragon mates only once or twice in its lifetime.

Hatchlings rely upon the parent for food, protection, and an education befitting dragonkind. With a year of constant care, the hatchling grows to the size shown in Table 1. During this time, the parent dragon is very active and likely to attack surrounding communities and animals.

From there on, it takes five years to increase each of the young dragon's game statistics one "step" toward those given in the D&D Basic Set's *Dungeon Masters Rulebook*, page 28. A new step brings a +1 bonus to armor class, one hit die, an extra 30' of flying speed, a one-die upgrade for attack damage, and a +1 bonus to morale. The extra steps cannot increase a dragon's statistics beyond those described in the Basic Set for that particular type of dragon, so some statistics will reach adult status before others do.

Adult dragons: When a dragon reaches the game statistics described in the Basic Set, it is considered a small, adult dragon that has reached the end of its natural biological growth cycle. In order to grow in size and power beyond what it has achieved so far, the dragon has to learn the Ceremony of Sublimation and perform it many times in its lifetime.

Dragons are magical beings. They have ancient and obscure ties with the multiverse and the Immortal spheres. During their millennia of evolution, dragons progressively developed their ability to draw upon arcane powers of their world to magically mutate their adult forms toward more powerful stock. This ability affects primarily their hit dice and therefore their size, armor class, movement speed, etc. as well. The Ceremony of Sublimation may enable a dragon to enhance its intellectual perception and its spell-casting abilities as well; this often is the result dragons seek above all. When dragons reach their ultimate mortal forms (the huge dragons described in the D&D *Dungeon Masters Companion*, pages 29-31), the only remaining effect of a successful Ceremony of Sublimation lies in the possibility of becoming an Immortal guardian.

Dragon longevity varies with dragon type. The longest a particular dragon can live without magical influence appears in Table 2. After that time, the dragon dies of old age and becomes a dragon soul (increase longevity by 10%, rounded up, for female dragons).

The Ceremony of Sublimation

Small adult dragons sooner or later learn about the ceremony. They may have dreams, come across ancient writings, or perhaps be taught about it by other creatures. A dragon's life undergoes a continuous series of five cycles, ending with the Ceremony. The dragon has to go through the five cycles before attempting the Ceremony of Sublimation again. Each time the

Ceremony succeeds, the dragon becomes more powerful. The cycles go on continuously until the dragon dies or becomes an Immortal guardian.

Small adult dragons are not always capable of understanding these cycles, and sometimes they don't even suspect them. But, with age, the cycles become more obvious. Each cycle lasts one month per hit die of the dragon plus 1d6 months, except for the last cycle and the Ceremony, each of which requires one day per hit die plus 1d6 days.

Hoarding of wealth: The first cycle causes a dragon to seek material wealth. The dragon hoards precious metals, gems, jewelry, and other priceless treasures. Young adult dragons seek wealth in the accumulation of coins and gems. Older dragons favor jewelry, art pieces, and other rarities. A dragon must acquire at least 1,000 gp of treasure per HD before it moves to the next cycle.

Note that if mating and the hatching of eggs were to happen at all, they would have to take place prior to the hoarding. From the beginning of the mating period to the moment the young dragons fly away, two years plus 1d12 months may pass. The regular cycles then resume.

Quest for magic: The second cycle causes a dragon to seek magic. To this end, it will try to acquire one or more magical items. The younger adults look for the simpler magical weapons, while the older dragons prefer more arcane items, such as those wizards would use. The older the dragon, the most powerful the item or spell sought after. This cycle may end earlier than the time frame given if the dragon acquires what it desired.

Quest for power: The third cycle is one of the most important for the Ceremony of Sublimation. It causes a dragon to seek spiritual power. To that end, dragons establish territories. These do not affect human nations, although they may physically overlap national boundaries. During this cycle, a dragon will either establish such a territory or increase its existing territory's boundaries. It then seeks out and challenges other dragons living in that area. The duel may consist of a fight if the dragons are chaotic or of differing alignments, of a game of wits for neutral dragons, or a mutual agreement if the dragons are lawful.

The losing dragon must then make a Saving Throw vs. Spells. If it fails the save, it becomes in effect a vassal, and the dominant dragon its suzerain, very much like human feudalism. The bond allows the suzerain to draw a mystical force called **dragon might** from the yielding dragon, no matter where that dragon may be. This creates a pyramid of power. (The Saving Throw prevents a weak dragon from always becoming a vassal of a strong one.)

This bond has no mental or physical effect on the yielding dragon. It merely provides the suzerain with ruling authority over the vassal, as well as a spiritual

element for the Ceremony of Sublimation. The bond can be broken only if either dragon is subdued or if the yielding dragon manages to defeat its suzerain. Causing a suzerain to yield is a very effective way of increasing one's dragon might. If a suzerain dragon yields to another, all its vassals also count toward the new suzerain's **dragon might**. There is no limit to the number of layers a pyramid of power can have.

Quest for knowledge: The fourth cycle is one that causes dragons to sleep—at least, this is what humanity believes. Dragons do not merely sleep. Their bodies go dormant while their souls roam the Outer Planes. The younger adults perceive this as vague dreams and strange visions. The older ones, however, understand these trances much better and are capable of learning a great deal from them. This cycle of **spiritual vagrancy** may allow dragons to increase their knowledge on the Ceremony of Sublimation and its relationship with the Immortal world. Waking a dragon before its time is most displeasing, because the dragon may have been prevented from acquiring some important knowledge. An awakened dragon is very likely to be hostile. The dragon enters the next cycle upon its awakening.

Feeding: The fifth and final quest before the Ceremony is one that meets a more basic and immediate need for the dragon. After waking up from the long months of trance, the dragon is starving and physically weak. Very often, it feels the need to gorge itself with food for days or weeks until its cravings end. This is the most destructive and dangerous phase for dragons, especially chaotic ones. When the dragon feels it has recovered from its weakness, it then senses it must begin the Ceremony of Sublimation.

The ceremony: The dragon now begins the Ceremony of Sublimation. For days, the dragon is in pain while calling upon mystical forces to bind together the dragon's treasure, magic, power, and physical vitality. Disturbing a dragon during the ceremony is a great offense, since it ruins the attempt. The dragon will enter a frantic anger, seeking to destroy utterly whoever was involved in the incident, no matter what alignments were involved.

The ceremony does have a base 90% chance of failing on its own. Chances then vary with the dragon's achievements during the previous five cycles. The chance of failure decreases 1% for each 10,000 gp value of the dragon's hoard, up, to 100,000 gp. The chance decreases 1% more for every 100,000 gp in the hoard beyond that. Basically, the dragon translates the value of its treasure into spiritual power.

The chance of failure is further decreased by 1% for every 10 minor magical items ("minor" being a judgment call from the DM), 2% for each major magical item (another judgment call), and 10% for an artifact, up to a total 50% decrease.

Then, decrease the failure chance by 1%

for every 100 HD of dragons that are under this dragon's suzerainty. This should include all the layers of the pyramid of power below the dragon attempting the ceremony (including the followers of followers, etc.).

Decrease the failure chance by another 1%-10% (roll 1d10), a value reflecting how well the dragon did during its months on **spiritual vagrancy** (provided this period was not prematurely ended).

Then, decrease the failure chance by 2% if the dragon is a female, by 4% if she has mated once, and by 6% if she has mated twice. Female dragons are notoriously stronger than males of the same age among dragonkind.

Add the dragon's hit dice to its chances of failure (the more powerful the dragon, the harder it is to improve itself). The results of the Ceremony of Sublimation are provided in the chart below. To succeed, the dragon must roll higher than the final percentage chance of failure. The results of the ceremony depend on how well the failure percentage is beaten.

Once the ceremony is successful, the actual transformation of the dragon occurs within a period of 1d6 hours. The more spectacular transformations are quite painful to the dragon. When a dragon gains multiple hit dice or reaches the sufficient number of hit dice to qualify for the next size category (see the dragon descriptions in the Companion Set), the dragon literally sheds its skin. (*Example:* A 15 HD red dragon qualifies as a large dragon. Upon gaining an extra hit die, it becomes a huge red dragon and sheds its skin.) The transformation is profoundly magical in nature.

Soon after the ceremony, the dragon starts a new cycle in its existence. A dragon is more likely to seek a mate after an unsuccessful ceremony than at any other time in its life (10% chance the dragon finds a mate if that dragon never mated before; otherwise, a 1% chance).

If the die roll on Table 3 indicates that the dragon attains Immortality, the dragon must make a Saving Throw vs. Death Ray or die on the spot, unless it is a huge dragon, or with maximum hit dice. If a dragon does become an Immortal guardian, it leaves for another plane, taking along any artifacts it owns. All of its remaining earthly possessions, including magical items and other treasure objects, disintegrate during the ceremony.

Omens of Coming

Because of the particular relationship of dragons with the universe, various events may happen outside the dragon's lair during the sublimation, causing great turmoil among surrounding communities. The nature of these events, called Omens of Coming, varies with the alignment of the dragon.

Chaotic dragons: When a small chaotic dragon becomes a large dragon, a violent storm hits the region, causing great

fear and some damage. When a large chaotic dragon becomes huge, a devastating earthquake rocks the region, possibly causing volcanoes to surge from the earth and erupt. Upon the ascension to Immortality of a chaotic dragon, all of these signs occur. A wave of terror and destruction is inflicted upon the region as well by all the chaotic dragons that are now free from their magical bonds and eager to celebrate the event—or go to war against each other.

Lawful dragons: For a small dragon growing large, a number of good events occur locally, such as an exceptional harvest, great charity from the local nobility, the departure of an evil monster, or the curing of some other nagging problem. For a large dragon becoming huge, an aura of peace and prosperity affects the region for a number of years. The ascension of a new Immortal creates a permanent sanctuary for the power of good. The dragon's lair may become a temple, or at least a miraculous place where pilgrims may cure diseases or find greater spiritual understanding of the world.

Neutral dragons: Phenomena caused by the transformation of neutral dragons are totally unlike that of lawful or chaotic nature. These occurrences, although limited to the domain of alterations, may be more subtle yet more drastic than with other dragons. Druidical gatherings in the affected area (if appropriate) will be much more common than usual prior to an occurrence, where druids might share their concern about upcoming changes and their mystical meanings.

A small neutral dragon becoming large effects minor natural changes. For example, some wildlife or vegetation may become progressively extinct in the region, while other new life becomes more predominant. A minor water spring might dry up while another starts elsewhere. A small forest might progressively die out while a poorer region becomes more fertile. A strange lack of wildlife and winds might affect one region, while another becomes a new cauldron of activity (some minor wealth is discovered there). A change might affect the local climate, and so on.

A large dragon becoming huge causes more radical changes, affecting especially the realms of magic and time. This includes the creation of an anti-magic area of variable intensity, an aura that slows or accelerates the passage of time, or a region in which spell-casting is altered (certain spells are blocked, enhanced, or totally changed), or a place where the laws of physics and magic are constantly shifting. These places are a heaven for wizards and creatures that are magical in nature, and such regions often include magical gates, ores with strange properties, and unexplainable phenomena. This region is likely to be guarded by the new, huge dragon.

A neutral dragon attaining Immortality particularly affects the realm of thought. Major shifts in philosophy or religion

might be created among people. New ideas might cause people to progressively reject old values, such as the subjects of a king spreading ideas of democracy; slaves or a low caste struggling for emancipation; citizens of a republic supporting a hero with intent of creating an imperial hegemony; bloody barbarians yearning for peace, light, and prosperity; or longtime pacifists becoming ruthless raiders. The changes initially affect an area of 1d20 miles radius for a minor nation, double that in a large nation, or 10 times that in a major empire. The occurrence can cross human borders, affecting people in different ways on either sides of a border. If the affected area represents either 60% of the nation's surface area or 60% of its population, the whole nation will also be affected within 1d6 years. If not, be prepared for even greater trouble (revolts, civil wars, migrations, persecutions, the rise of a martyr's philosophy, the creation of new temples or new states, etc.).

Binding ties

There are ties binding dragons other than those related directly to the Ceremony of Sublimation. These are the mating and blood ties.

When two dragons become mates, a truce comes into effect. Chaotic dragons may have a mere tolerance of each other, while lawful dragons may experience true, long-lasting friendships. Mating dragons cannot attempt to establish dominance over one or the other in order to gain **dragon might**. The real danger of mating exists when a truly evil creature fakes an intention to mate to fool another dragon; mating is a tricky business! The truce ends shortly after the female is impregnated.

Blood ties link female dragons to their progeny. Mothers cannot do violence to their children, and vice-versa. For that reason, these dragons cannot attempt to establish dominance over each other. That limitation does not extend beyond the immediate mother-child level, however (so grandchildren are at risk). Both the limitation of the truce between mating dragons and the risk of the father turning against his progeny causes the weaker dragon to leave well before the end of the truce. Female dragons are excessively possessive of their progeny, and in most cases they will seek weak males.

Dragons and Immortality

When a dragon dies without attaining Immortality, it lives on as a dragon soul. A dragon soul normally returns to the plane dragons have claimed as their sacred grounds. They remain there as subjects or servants of the Immortal dragons.

Dragon souls are instrumental in the Ceremony of Sublimation and the Omens of Coming. Unseen and unheard by living dragons, they act from other planes to generate the magic or the events behind these fantastic occurrences. Dragon souls are the ones who allow the binding neces-

sary in the acquisition of **dragon might**. The dragon souls also provide magical power to the living dragons.

Sometimes, dragon souls act as heralds or messengers of the Immortals. In some cases, they perform unusual missions for one of the four dragon rulers (see the *Master DM's Book*, pages 28-29). If they do well, dragon souls may be reincarnated on the Prime Plane as hatchlings, gaining new chances at Immortality. These souls lose all memory of the other world and their previous lives upon their rebirth.

Those dragons that attain Immortality become guardians, lieutenants of one of the three lesser dragon rulers. If one of these three rulers is ever destroyed, the oldest and most powerful dragon guardian may take his place. The guardians are the ones who determine whether a Ceremony of Sublimation should succeed or fail, and how drastic the Omens of Coming should be, depending on what the living dragon achieved.

Each of the three dragon rulers (the moon, sun, and star dragons) is a champion of its ethos. They struggle for the supremacy of their own dragonkind on the Prime Plane and on the Outer Planes. The Great One is concerned with the balance of the three ideals, representing the voice of dragonkind among other Immortals in the universe. Dragonkind belongs to none of the Spheres of Power (Matter, Thought, Time, Energy, and Entropy).

There are very rare cases of dragons attaining Immortality and retaining followers on the Prime Plane. When this happens, the Immortal dragon becomes a Maverick—not really a renegade (see the following section), as far as the Great One is concerned, but nonetheless a pariah that will remain forever out of the great spiritual order of things among dragonkind. A maverick cannot call upon any guardian or any of the rulers for help, but on the other hand is not limited in power among the Immortal hierarchy. Should its following cease on the Prime Plane, a maverick will go dormant. Each maverick must choose one of the Spheres of Power as its ethos.

Finally, there are renegades among dragons who deliberately choose to serve one of the Spheres of Power during their existence on the Prime Plane. They can no longer conduct the Ceremony of Sublimation from the moment they become renegades. Spells (possibly clerical) may be granted by their patron Immortal in the chosen sphere. Renegades either become mavericks if they retain followers, undead creatures if followers of Entropy (such as the Night Dragon in the series, "The Voyage of the *Princess Ark*"), or are destroyed at the end of their lives in the Known World.

Dragon souls are detailed as follows:

Dragon soul

Armor Class: 9
Hit Dice: 1-3*
Move: 420' (140') flying
Attacks: None
Damage: None
No. Appearing: 0 (1-400)
Save As: F20
Morale: 6
Treasure Type: Nil
Intelligence: High
Alignment: Any
XP Value: 50

Dragon souls are the simple life forces of deceased dragons, each serving the dragon ruler of its alignment. Dragon souls appear in a variety of shapes and colors, ranging in size from a small apple to a large pumpkin. A dragon souls appearance, based on its color in life, could be a translucent ball of golden light, a flickering red flame, a crackling node of blue lightning, a throbbing green haze, a billowing puff of white smoke, a gloomy shadow, etc.

Dragon souls can be found only in the region of their dragon ruler. They have no physical attack or defense. If harmed, they flee to the closest dragon guardian and report the aggression. When guided by a guardian, large numbers of dragon souls can generate a frightening amount of magical energy, duplicating either clerical or magical spell effects reaching up to seventh level. Every 10 souls can contribute one spell level in this fashion. Once a spell is cast, the dragon souls must withdraw or be drained and die. It takes about 24 hours for a dragon soul to recover from "casting" a spell in this manner.

Dragon souls communicate by *telepathy*. They have the ability to see and cast spells into the Prime Plane. Their primary uses are to provide the power and effects for living dragons' Ceremonies of Sublimation and Omens of Coming. The dragon souls also physically reach for a living dragon's life force and bind it to that of its suzerain, thereby generating **dragon might**. Their secondary function is to provide the power living dragons need to cast spells. Their least important function is to bring comfort to the dragon, guardians and their rulers, or to act as their messengers, eyes, and ears. Dragon souls retain memory of their previous life until they are sent back to the Known World.

Dragon guardians

Dragon guardians are the archetype of their color and ideal. They have the statistics and abilities of the largest possible dragon in their category, with maximum hit points and spell-casting ability. For example, if a red dragon attained Immortality, it would be a 20 HD creature with 160 hp. A dragon guardian retains its former appearance, with the exception of an aura that surrounds its body. The appearance of a guardian's aura is comparable to that of the dragon souls in its

service. Dragon guardians have the same spell immunities as a lesser dragon ruler.

Dragon guardians are in charge of dragon souls, directing their efforts toward furthering the development of living dragons. A single dragon guardian can call up to 1d4 X 100 dragon souls a day for combat purposes or to effect a major occurrence on the Prime Plane. They report to their dragon ruler any irregularities on their plane or on the Prime Plane.

In cases of great need, a dragon guardian can be sent to the Prime Plane to bring a particular message or omen during a gathering of dragons of the same ethos. Dragon guardians are treated with awe and respect during their rare appearances on the Prime Plane, as befits messengers of the Immortals.

Pocket dragons

Some dragons commit grave mistakes during their life on the Prime Plane. Such errors in judgment normally cause a dragon to become a renegade. Dragon rulers occasionally allow a dragon a last chance to atone for its deeds and learn a further lesson in draconic life. This often leads the dragon to be reincarnated—with memories of its previous life intact—into a pocket dragon hatchling. If the dragon learns the reasons for its reincarnation and accomplishes a particular mission, it will be accepted as a dragon soul upon its death. Otherwise, the dragon's soul is forever destroyed.

Pocket dragon: AC 8; HD 3*; MV 90'(30')/120'(40'); AT 1 bite; Dmg 1-3 + venom; NA 1-6 (2-12); Save MU3; ML 8; TT K, L; Int 4; AL N; XPV 50. Size: 3'. A pocket dragon has no breath weapon, but its bite venom gives a victim's Saving Throws and to-hit rolls a -2 penalty (*cure disease* Neg.). AC9 *Creature Catalogue*, page 75.

The Glantrian abomination

A sect of dracomancers exists in Glantri (see GAZ3 *The Principalities of Glantri* page 71 for details). If this setting is used simultaneously with the suggestions provided in this article, dragons should harbor absolute hatred toward Glantrian dracomancers. The latter wield a formidable magic that allows them to mimic dragon attributes and abilities. Worse, at high levels they can control dragons in great numbers with virtually no way for dragons to resist or strike back. The wizards leech their power from dragon souls, which are sometimes totally drained of their life forces by these dracomancers.

Adding insult to injury, the High Master of dracomancers may challenge a lesser dragon ruler and replace it. In so doing, the High Master does **not** attain Immortality but merely gains the ability to rule dragons of the corresponding ethos. Although dragons abhor this blasphemy, they have no choice but to submit to their much despised suzerain. Of course, dragons will always follow his commands to the letter, often endeavoring to pervert the

meaning of his orders and bring the downfall of this human impostor. By draconic law, only the Great One can intervene if the dracomancer abuses his powers as a lesser ruler.

The Glantrian Wizard-Prince, Lord Jaggar von Drachenfels, became the Star Dragon and discovered the truth behind his power. He withdrew his claim on the rulership of all lawful dragons, in exchange for which he earned the Great One's absolution. He now refrains from abusing dracomancy in order to spare the dragon souls. He presently works on a project to reform the Circle of Dragon Mastery to further goodwill toward dragonkind rather than the misuse of draconic power. For this, lawful dragons have become more respectful of the High Master and his disciples. The same does not hold true for chaotic dragons, and as a result of the reform proposal there is great dissension among the three branches of dracomancy.

Immortal guardian dragons are presently competing to become the new Star Dragon, under the Great One's watchful eye. Immortals of various spheres are following the developments in this affair with interest.

The draconic plane

The Outer Plane dragons claimed as their spiritual home is a finite dimension that occupies a large sphere mostly filled with air and clouds. In its center shines a golden sun that beams rays of light spanning the entire spectrum of colors. The outer reaches of the sphere is coated with vast layers of watery, mineral, or metallic matter. Gravity affects the entire plane, pulling "down" toward the outer edges of the sphere.

The plane breaks into colored layers starting from the sun and expanding toward the outer reaches. For example, souls of blue dragons live in an area of azure skies with semi-solid clouds that they and their guardians use for lairs. Red dragons have an area of permanent twilight, with red and amber dominating the local spectrum. The change from one layer to another is very gradual, allowing for an infinite number of color combinations. Colors belong to three realms corresponding to the alignments of each realm's souls, each realm remaining under the authority of one of the three lesser dragon rulers. Sea dragons are located in the watery layer in the plane's outer edges.

Many areas display dominant colors not yet connected to known dragon types. Dragon souls do exist in these regions. The Great One could decide to send these souls to the Known World to create new species and colors of dragons not yet encountered in the Prime Plane (purple, metallic, or mineral-colored dragons for example).

All types of dragon souls can be found in the central area of the plane, as that is the Great One's realm. This region is made of solid light attuned to respond to the

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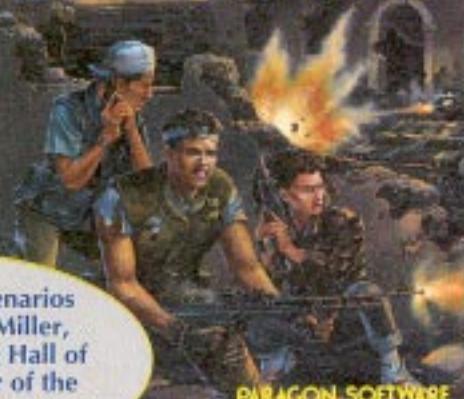
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Table 1
Young Dragon Age Groups

	Hatchling	One year old	Five years old	Ten years old
Armor Class	9	8	7	6
Hit Dice	1/2	1	2	3
Move	60'(20')	90'(30')	90'(30')	90'(30')
Flying	n/a	150'(50')	180'(60')	210'(70')
Attacks	1 bite	2 claws/1 bite	2 claws/1 bite	2 claws/1 bite
Damage	1 point	2d4 each/1d6	2d6 each/1d8	2d8 each/1d10
Breath Weapon	None	1/day	2/day	3/day
Save As	NM	Fighter 1	Fighter 2	Fighter 3
Morale	3	4	5	6
Treasure Type	Nil	U	V	A

wishes of the Great One. The Great One has the ability to control the size of the draconic plane to accommodate the population of dragon souls and their guardians. This usually creates anger and resistance among neighboring Immortals. Living creatures can enter this plane only if so wished by any of the dragon rulers.

Dragon politics

Much of the dragons' politics in the Known World are centered on the third cycle, the Quest for Power. Dragons then seek to establish or increase the size of their territories in order to gain mystical power over lesser dragons. This creates actual dragon kingdoms in which the "king" is free from any other bond and

gains *dragon might*. Weaker dragons in turn establish "dominions" within the kingdom and themselves draw power from lesser kin, and so forth. Dragons can immediately tell when another dragon is bonded to a suzerain, but the identity of a suzerain is not apparent, however.

It is important to remember that vassal dragons are not mentally controlled by their suzerains. A very powerful red dragon could rule over a variety of different dragons, including younger gold dragons. This is very much like a human knight being so unfortunate as to serve an evil but powerful king. Although the knight is free to make personal decisions, the consequences are often up to the king. After gaining great power, a gold dragon could

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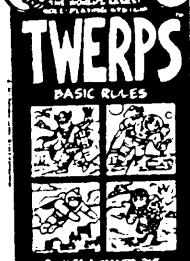
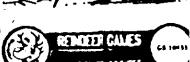
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Table 2
Dragon Longevity Without Magi-
cal Aid

Type	Years of life
White	1d20x6
Black	2d12x7
Green	3d10x8
Blue	4d8x9
Red	3d12x10
Gold	2d20x11

decide to challenge its suzerain and perhaps defeat it. If not, the suzerain may order more obedient vassals and their lesser followers to seek and destroy the renegade and possibly any of the renegade's vassals.

Of course, dragons of the same race tend to live in the same regions, either because they were born there, because of racial preference, or simply to avoid having to yield to a much-hated different dragon type. There are local exceptions to this rule, however. It should be noted that politics among dragons are often tainted by personality quirks. A dragon is an exceptionally intelligent being, but it often has an Achilles' heel in the form of a personality flaw or mental imbalance that can cause it to occasionally err (dragons have never been famous for their great wis-

Table 3
Results of Ceremony of Sublimation

Failure score

beaten by

Effect
Dragon gains 1 HD
Dragon gains 1 HD and speaking ability*
Dragon gains 2 HD
Dragon gains 2 HD and spell-casting ability*
Dragon gains 3 HD
Dragon gains 3 HD and a +10% bonus on the next ceremony's roll on this table
Dragon becomes an Immortal dragon guardian**

*If the dragon already has this ability, the dragon gets another 1 HD. This assumes that talking dragons may not necessarily be able to cast spells (the D&D Basic Set allows only the opposite to happen).

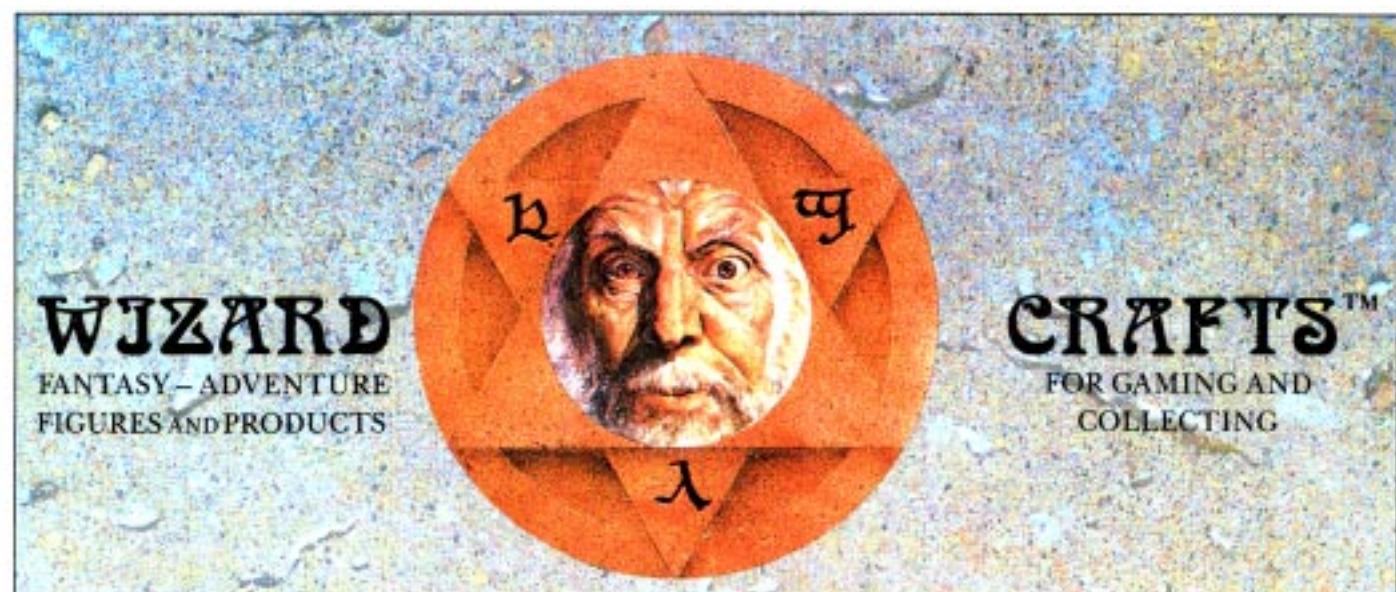
**This means the dragon must reduce its chances of failure to less than zero. Only huge dragons may become Immortal dragon guardians; treat all others as if they had rolled 99% (see text: "The ceremony").

dom). These flaws should not be readily recognizable to player characters, though.

Dragons occasionally conduct gatherings to talk about local dangers or gain status among their kin by displaying *dragon might*. They always gather if a new suzerain rose to power in the area. Sometimes they share knowledge on the Ceremony of Sublimation, or omens and signs that they may have received during their spiritual vagrancy. Most of the time, gatherings involve dragons of the same alignments or,

more rarely, dragons with the same suzerain. By draconic law, a truce always comes into effect during gatherings and up to several days before and afterward.

(For more on D&D game dragons and their rulers, see "The Mightiest of Dragons," in DRAGON® issue #158. Note that the dragon souls described herein are similar to the dragon spirits of the latter article; you can assume that each exists on the dragons' home plane.)



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Dragon hybrids, crossbreeds, mixtures, and more

by Gregory W. Detwiler

Crossing Dragons With Everything

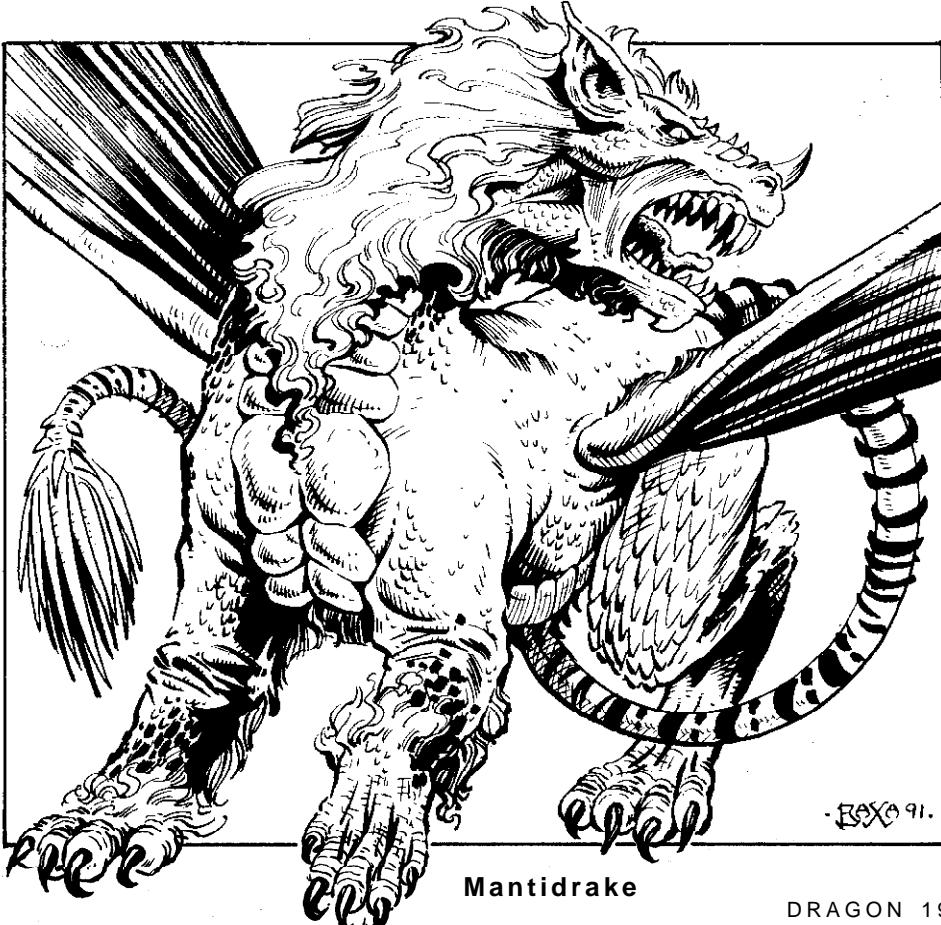
As monster connoisseurs know by now, dragons often breed with creatures other than fellow dragons, producing such terrifying hybrids as the chimera and the dragonne. Sages have recently discovered more varieties of these unusual hybrid monsters, which are described in this article.

These monsters are the result of evil dragons mating with other monsters, so the number of subspecies of each of these monster types equals the number of evil dragon types. For this article, I have used only the official "western" evil dragons in the *Monstrous Compendium*: the black, blue, green, red, and white dragons, plus the shadow dragon of the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting. Aquatic, Oriental, good, and neutral dragons are not included. The process of hybrid creation is detailed so that the DM can cobble together other hybrids using these dragons or his own unique evil dragons.

The coloration of each hybrids draconic parts is the same as that of the dragon type in its ancestry. The coloration of the rest of the hybrids body, naturally, is that of the nondragon parent, unless otherwise specified. The hybrids armor class is always the base armor class of its dragon parent (see Table 1). Though they never use spells, each hybrid has a breath weapon like that of its dragon parent (see Table 2). Damage done by a breath weapon equals the hybrids normal hit-point total; the breath weapon does not grow weaker as the hybrid takes wounds, and magical devices that increase hit points will not make a breath weapon more powerful.

The hybrid is immune to attack forms similar to those of its breath weapon (e.g., a hybrid with a green dragon parent is immune to gas-based attacks). As a final defense, the hybrids nondragon blood means that it will not receive additional damage from an attack form especially

effective against the dragon parent. For instance, a red dragon's hybrid young will not take extra damage from cold-based attacks, and a *sword of dragon slaying* has only its weaker bonus available to the wielder. A hybrid will lose only half its hit points if hit with an *arrow of dragon*



Mantidrake

slaying or an arrow of slaying designed for its nondragon parent. (The hybrid will take appropriate damage from weapons, spells, or devices designed to harm reptiles.)

Those DMs with an interest in realism should note that the most common subspecies of these hybrids will be those whose dragon and nondragon parents share the same natural habitats. However, since adventurers often drive dragons and other monsters out of their natural habitats, and wizards often create unnatural creatures in their experiments, less common combinations are still possible. Due to their nondragon ancestry, hybrids can never be subdued.

Mantidrake

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any
FREQUENCY: Very rare
ORGANIZATION: Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any
DIET: Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE: Low (7)
TREASURE: E
ALIGNMENT: See Table 1
NO. APPEARING: 1-2
ARMOR CLASS: See Table 1
MOVEMENT: 12, Fl 18 (E)
HIT DICE: 6 +3
THAC0: 13
NO. OF ATTACKS: 3
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-3/1-3/1-10 (claw/claw/bite)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Breath weapon (see Table 2), tail spikes

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Immune to breath weapon of dragon parent and like attacks (spells, etc.)

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

SIZE: H (25' long)

MORALE: Elite (14)

XP VALUE: See Table 3

The mantidrake is the offspring of a manticore and an evil dragon. It looks like a scaly manticore, with dragonlike wings and a dragon's head instead of the manlike one. When seen at a distance or by an inexperienced observer, it could well be mistaken for an Oriental earth dragon (li lung; *Monstrous Compendium*, "Dragons, Oriental"). The mantidrake has the same lionlike mane around its head that the manticore has.

Combat: The mantidrake always opens combat (preferably from ambush or from the air) with a volley of 1-6 tail spikes (180-yard range, as a light crossbow); each of these spikes causes 1-6 hp damage. This attack can be used four times per day (the spikes regrow quickly). Then the mantidrake closes in for melee, using a claw/claw/bite routine. Its breath weapon is the most potent attack form of all, but the mantidrake will generally not use it unless the need is vital, as it inherited enough "dragon sense" to know when not to waste its efforts. Because it is such a clumsy flier,

the mantidrake will avoid aerial combat if possible, or at least restrict itself to long-range attacks with its breath weapon and tail spikes.

Habitat/Society: Like their manticore parents, mantidrakes can be found in any climatic region, though they prefer warm lands to cool ones. Among other things, this means that its dragon parent is most likely to be a warm-weather-loving dragon, such as the blue dragon. These hybrids are solitary brutes, with each individual having a hunting territory of at least 25 square miles. Besides having a ravenous appetite for food, they also like to collect treasure, a habit inherited from their dragon parents. No mantidrake can be trained by humans unless it is taken shortly after birth. The only relationship mantidrakes may have with other creatures is a partnership, and even that will last only if the partnership results in plenty of food and treasure for the mantidrake.

Ecology: Like its manticore parent, the mantidrake favors human flesh above all others, though it will eat any living creature in order to survive. If a mantidrake has to live in an area smaller than 25 square miles, that area will soon be devoid of large animal and human life, as those creatures not killed and eaten will flee. The curiously supple hide of a mantidrake is worth 5,000 gp, but obtaining such a treasure intact is not easy.

Dracimera

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any temperate to tropical

FREQUENCY: Very rare

ORGANIZATION: Solitary

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any

DIET: Carnivore

INTELLIGENCE: Low (5-7)

TREASURE: F

ALIGNMENT: See Table 1

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: See Table 1

MOVEMENT: 10, Fl 16 (E)

HIT DICE: 12

THAC0: 9

NO. OF ATTACKS: 6

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-3/1-3/1-4/1-4/1-12/1-32 (see text)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Breath weapon (see Table 2)

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Immune to breath weapon of dragon parent and like attacks (spells, etc.)

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

SIZE: L (5' tall at the shoulder)

MORALE: Elite (14)

XP VALUE: See Table 3

The dracimera is the offspring of a chimera and an evil dragon. It lives in the same temperate and tropical regions as its chimera parent, and usually is crossed with an evil dragon native to such regions. It has



Dracimera

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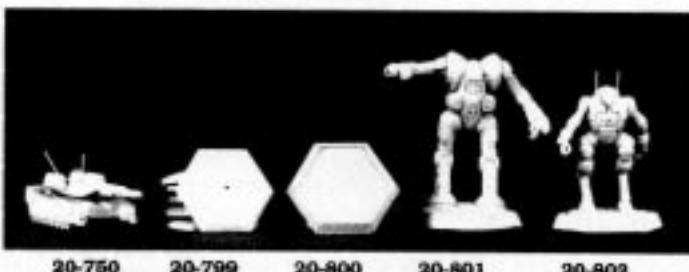
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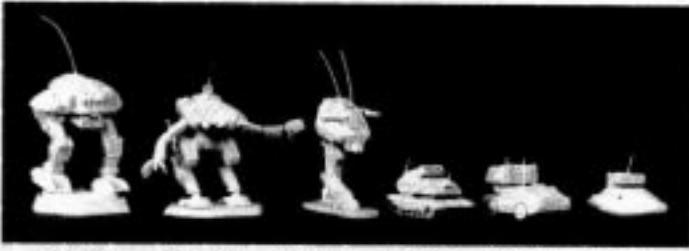
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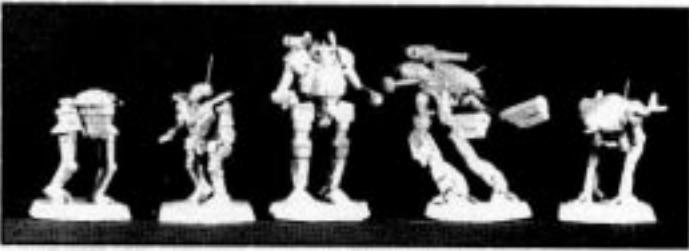
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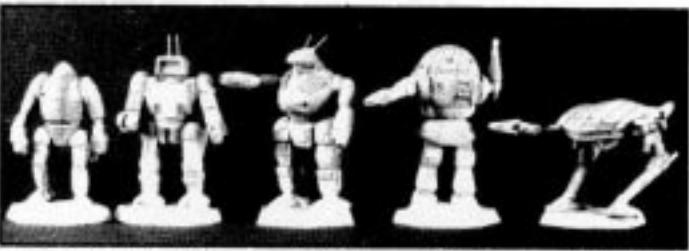
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a dragon head up front, surrounded by a lion's mane (like the mantidrake), a lizard head with two goat's horns growing in the middle of its back, and a dragon head and neck like that of its dragon parent growing where a lion's tail would be. The lizard head is blue-green, with the amber eyes and ochre horns of the chimera.

Combat: The dracimera is perhaps the deadliest of the known dragon hybrids. In physical combat, it can attack six times in a single round. It strikes with both forelegs (1-3 hp damage each), butts with both goat horns (1-4 hp damage each), and bites with its front and back dragon heads (1-12 hp damage each). Its breath weapon is the same as that of its dragon parent, and the dracimera can use it six times per day; this weapon is divided up among the three heads, with each head able to use it twice per day. If one head does not use its "share," the other heads do not gain any.

Habitat/Society: All dracimerae are solitary creatures, coming together to mate only once in a single decade. A single young one will be born; that, plus the fact that the vast majority of these creatures are created from dragon/chimera pairings, means that few dracimerae result from these matings. Dracimerae live in the most remote and inaccessible regions of their hunting grounds, which cover at least 400 square miles.

Unlike its chimera parent, the dracimera is a pure carnivore. However, it is generally not strapped for food due to this specialization, as its reptilian physiology enables it to go without eating for as long as a week, as opposed to the chimera's three to four days. When it does find plenty of flesh (whether in a herd, caravan, or town), the dracimera will gorge itself to satiation. Anything made of flesh and blood is fair game, particularly humans and humanoids, and the surprisingly large number of giant artifacts in dracimera lairs is mute testament to the creature's combat power. Dracimerae horde treasure like their dragon ancestors, for much the same reasons.

Ecology: The dracimera is an archpredator and will tolerate no other large carnivores or omnivores in its territory. It will always attack an intruder on sight. Although its hunting range is usually only 25 square miles, the dracimera can fly up to 100 miles a day and still return to its lair by nightfall.

Wyvern Drake

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Temperate mountains and forests

FREQUENCY : Very rare

ORGANIZATION: Solitary

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Dusk and dawn

DIET: Carnivore

INTELLIGENCE: Average (8-10)

TREASURE: E

ALIGNMENT: See Table I

NO. APPEARING : 1-3

ARMOR CLASS: See Table I

MOVEMENT: 6, Fl 24 (E)

HIT DICE: 8 + 7

THAC0: 11

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-20/1-8 (bite/stinger)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Breath weapon (see Table 2), poison, surprise, bombing

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Immune to breath weapon of dragon parent and like attacks (spells, etc.)

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

SIZE: G (45' long)

MORALE: Elite (14)

XP VALUE: See Table 3

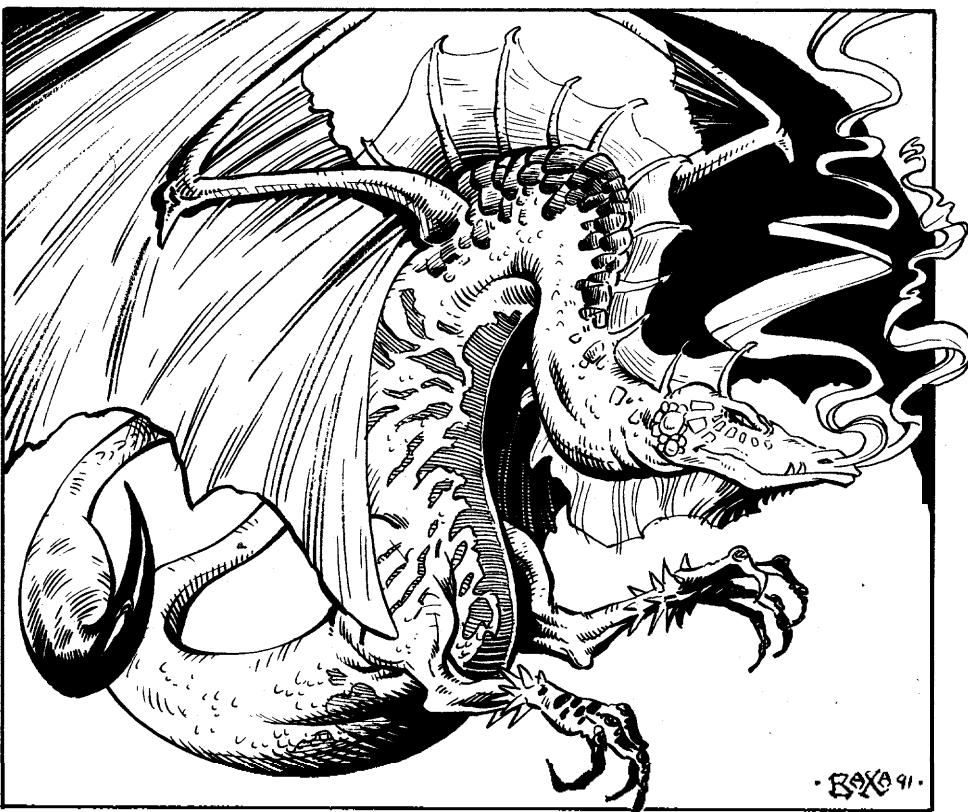
The wyvern drake is, as its name implies, a cross between a dragon and a wyvern. It is 45' long, with a 60' wingspan and a yard-long stinger at the end of its tail. Its coloration is the same as that of its wyvern parent, save for the 5' head, which is colored as its dragon parent. Besides the wyvern's hissing and roaring sounds, the wyvern drake can also speak the tongue of its dragon parent and the common tongue, and perhaps one or two other languages as well.

Combat: Having more intelligence than a normal wyvern, the wyvern drake is a highly dangerous foe. It will always fight in the open if it can, invariably attacking from the air. In addition to doing physical damage, the scorpionlike tail also injects Type F poison, killing the foe unless it saves vs. poison. The clever wyvern drake can also pick up a smaller foe, carry him high into the air, then drop him, or else pick up objects such as boulders and drop them onto foes (-2 to hit for 1-10 hp damage).

The wyvern drake also fights with a breath weapon inherited from its dragon parent, usable three times per day. Because it is a clumsy flier, the wyvern drake prefers to use its breath weapon instead of relying on physical combat when fighting an aerial opponent. Still, its sting is a useful weapon in a dogfight, as it can arch over the wyvern drake's back to strike an opponent in front. The tail-stinger can hit an enemy in any direction, so long as it is within reach.

When stalking prey, the wyvern drake uses all the combined cunning of its dragon and wyvern ancestors. Neither sound nor shadow alert the victim that he is being followed, and the attacking wyvern drake will achieve a -2 penalty on the victim's surprise roll due to its silent dive to the attack. Though it will not attack an enemy that is obviously too powerful, a large group of men will be attacked if the beast is hungry enough. Between the wyvern drake's initial surprise advantage, its breath weapon, its aerial mobility, and its use of boulders or other objects as bombs, even caravans and military units have been driven away as they attempted to cross the creature's hunting grounds.

Habitat/Society: The wyvern drake prefers to live alone, living with another of its kind only for the few months it takes to raise its young. Whenever possible, it will lair on mountains or cliffs overlooking forests or plains, particularly caravan or migration routes. The average hunting ground is some 25 square miles in size, but the wyvern drake can travel 150 miles in a single day and back again in its search for food. Unlike ordinary wyverns, wyvern drakes never fight their own kind,



Wyvern drake

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except when there is absolutely nothing else around to eat. They hoard treasure just as dragons do.

Ecology: The wyvern drake eats the equivalent of a cow or horse per day. It swallows victims whole once combat is

finished, without chewing, and only the bones are not digested. (It cannot swallow prey whole in melee.) Carrion is regarded as a food of last resort. It has no natural enemies, and no one has found any use for its body parts in magical recipes.

Table 1
Evil Dragon Alignments and Armor Classes

Dragon	Alignment	Base AC
Black	Chaotic evil	1
Blue	Lawful evil	0
Green	Lawful evil	0
Red	Chaotic evil	-3
Shadow	Chaotic evil	-4
White	Chaotic evil	1

Table 2
Evil Dragon Breath Weapons

Dragon	Breath weapon
Black	A jet of acid 5' wide and 60' long; victim takes half damage if it saves vs. breath weapon.
Blue	A bolt of lightning 5' wide and 100' long; victim takes half damage if it saves vs. breath weapon.
Green	A cloud of chlorine gas 50' long, 40' wide, and 30' high; victim takes half damage if it saves vs. breath weapon.
Red	A cone of fire 5' wide at the mouth, 90' long, and 30' wide at the cone's base; victim takes half damage if it saves vs. breath weapon.
Shadow	A cloud of blackness 40' long, 30' wide, and 20' high. Creatures caught in the cloud are blinded for one melee round and lose three-fourths (round fractions up) of their life energy (levels or hit dice); a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon reduces the loss to one-half (round up). The life-energy loss persists for a number of turns equal to the creature's hit dice. <i>Negative plane protection</i> spells prevent this life-energy loss. A character reduced to 0 or fewer levels lapses into a coma for the duration of the cloud's effect. If several beasts' breath weapons overlap on a victim, the coma time is that of all creatures' hit dice combined.
White	A cone of frost 5' wide at the mouth, 70' long, and 25' wide at the cone's widest; victim takes half damage if it saves vs. breath weapon.

Table 3
Experience-Point Values For Evil Dragon Hybrids

Dragon parent	Mantidrake	Dracimera	Wyvern drake
Black	3,000 XP	9,000 XP	9,000 XP
Blue	4,000 XP	10,000 XP	10,000 XP
Green	4,000 XP	10,000 XP	10,000 XP
Red	4,000 XP	10,000 XP	10,000 XP
Shadow	4,000 XP	10,000 XP	10,000 XP
White	3,000 XP	9,000 XP	9,000 XP

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Give your campaign some heavy metal—
dragons, that is

by Jason M. Walker

The Dragon's Bestiary



In my experience as a Dungeon Master, one of the problems I have encountered most often is finding new surprises for my AD&D® game players. The biggest surprise to my players is in encountering new monsters—the feeling that this could be your last fight, or the suspense of seeing if your plan will overcome this new threat. Such innovation and suspense adds flavor to the game and keeps players on their toes.

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Ferrous dragons

The ferrous dragons' origins are shrouded in mystery. It is known that before the coming of men and elves, when dragons ruled the lands, ferrous dragons were perhaps the most powerful of all dragons. However, at some time before the fall of dragon rule, there was a war amongst ferrous dragons that would leave its mark on their clans forever.

The Iron Wars, as the ferrous dragons refer to them today, lasted centuries. There were, at the time, at least 12 species of ferrous dragons. Two of the species are known to have been driven to extinction, but the names of the species are not known. The turning point in the war occurred when the nickel dragons changed sides to join the rightful ruler, the Supreme Dragon of the ferrous dragons. The wars ended shortly afterward, with the losing dragons fleeing to the far corners of the world. What happened to these dragons is unknown, but whenever other ferrous dragons are questioned about them, the dragons are strangely silent.

Ferrous dragons are among the deadliest forms of dragonkind in the world. They conform to the standard statistics of all dragons, as given in the *Monstrous Compendium*, with a few exceptions detailed later.

Ferrous dragons are not known to have a king, queen, or deity figure, but do have a strict hierarchy that is rigidly followed, even by the evil ones of their kind. The hierarchy among the ferrous dragons runs from the most powerful to the least, as follows: iron, chrome, cobalt, tungsten, nickel. Among each of these dragon types are several clans consisting of two or three family groups and whatever individuals dwell in the lands claimed by the clan leader. Each clan is led by the oldest or most powerful dragon in the clan. Each of these clans has its own position in the hierarchy of its dragon type. All of the clans are led by a sovereign dragon of

their species, who is almost always a great wyrm with maximum hit points. Each of these sovereign dragons is answerable to the Supreme Dragon.

The Supreme Dragon, Gruaghlothor, is a unique creature, as is detailed under Gruaghlothor's description. As for the sovereign dragons, the only thing that makes them different from others of their species is that they possess a special telepathic bond with each of the clan leaders. Gruaghlothor, in turn, has an additional such bond with each of the sovereign dragons. These bonds greatly simplify the ruling process, and almost no dragon's secret is safe from one's supreme leader. Thus, almost no secret is safe from Gruaghlothor.

Nickel dragon

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Swamps, marshlands

FREQUENCY: Very rare

ORGANIZATION: Solitary or clan

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any

DIET: See text

INTELLIGENCE: Low to average (5-10)

TREASURE: See Table 2

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic neutral

NO. APPEARING: 1 (2-5)

ARMOR CLASS: 1 (base)

MOVEMENT: 12, FL 36 (C), Sw 12

HIT DICE: 21 (base)

THAC0: 9 (at 11 HD)

NO. OF ATTACKS: 3 + special

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-7/2-7/3-18

SPECIAL ATTACKS: See text

SPECIAL DEFENSES: See text

MAGIC RESISTANCE: See Table 1

SIZE: G (27' base)

MORALE: Champion (16 base)

XP VALUE: See Table 1

Nickel dragons are the weakest of the ferrous dragons. They make up for their smaller size and lesser power with a tenacity and viciousness that would make even the boldest adventurers think twice about wanting to face one a second time. However, they are also somewhat unpredictable in nature and could well gulp down a poor adventurer in a party and then decide the others are not worth its time.

The scales of the nickel dragon are a charcoal gray at birth, changing to a more metallic gray as adults. As the dragon continues to age, the metallic gray begins to show white until, as a great wyrm, no traces of the gray remain and the dragon is a bright metallic white.

Nickel dragons speak their own tongue and a tongue common to all ferrous dragons, and 5% of all hatchling nickel dragons have a telepathic ability to communicate with any creature within 60'. The chance to possess this ability increases 5% per age category of the dragon.

Combat: A nickel dragon usually tries to overwhelm its opponents through the sheer unpredictability of its attacks. It usually attacks first with its breath weap-

on, then follows with fang and claw, saving at least one breath for a retreat, but nothing is certain when dealing with the nickel dragon.

A nickel dragon's breath weapon is a cloud of acidic vapors 30' long, 20' wide, and 20' high. Creatures caught in the cloud must save vs. breath weapon for half damage. A nickel dragon casts its spells and uses its magical abilities at 6th level, plus its combat modifier.

From birth, nickel dragons have a *water breathing* ability and are immune to acid of any sort. As they mature, they gain the following abilities: juvenile-resist *fire* three times a day; adult-mass *irritation* (affecting a number of creatures equal to the hit dice of the dragon with the *itching* version, and one-third of the dragon's hit dice, rounded down, with the *rash* version) twice a day; very old-affect *normal* fires (at double effect) twice a day; great wyrm—*assume vaporous form* (as per a potion of *gaseous form*) once a day.

Habitat/Society: Nickel dragons dwell only in swamps and marshes, preferably those that are close to or border on coastlines. There, they prey on creatures native to the area and thus seldom come into contact with men. However, being more unpredictable than others of their kind, they have been known to raid settlements near and far for treasure or just the thrill of watching lesser creatures flee in terror.

Nickel dragons are as unpredictable as parents as they are as combatants. They can be loving parents one morning and set out to find food for their young, only to return and decide to eat the meal themselves. Thus, there are fewer and fewer nickel dragons. The only exception to their chaos comes when a matter concerns the clan as a whole and the hierarchy it follows. However, when it comes to individuals, it's back to "normal."

The lair of a nickel dragon is a perfect match for its personality. It tends to dwell in shallow caves, but this is not a rule. A cave is more often a place for treasure and laying eggs, and the dragon itself dwells somewhere nearby, anywhere that suits the dragon at that particular moment.

Ecology: Like all other dragons, the nickel dragon can consume nearly anything. They are, however, particularly fond of giant, swamp-dwelling lizards.

A nickel dragon often shares the same habitat as that of the black dragon. The two often have bloody conflicts, as neither dragon's breath is effective against the other.

Tungsten dragon

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Arid, deserts, dry plains

FREQUENCY: Rare

ORGANIZATION: Solitary or clan

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any

DIET: See text

INTELLIGENCE: Average to very (8-12)

TREASURE: See Table 2
 ALIGNMENT: Neutral good
 NO. APPEARING: 1 (2-5)
 ARMOR CLASS: 0 (base)
 MOVEMENT: 12, FJ 40 (C), Br 5
 HIT DICE: 12 (base)
 THAC0: 9 (at 12 HD)
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 3 + special
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-7/2-7/4-20
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: See text
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: See text
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: See Table 2
 SIZE: G (32' base)
 MORALE: Champion (16 base)
 XP VALUE: See Table 2

Tungsten dragons are a no-nonsense species dedicated to the preservation and expansion of the forces of good. Unfortunately, tungsten dragons usually limit this preservation and expansion to their own domains. They are not fond of intruders, and such unfortunates are usually dealt with harshly unless the dragon can be convinced that said beings are acting in the best interest of the forces of good.

The scales of the tungsten dragon are a deep forest green, flecked with brown at birth. The scales lose their brown flecks and take on a metallic sheen until they become a gleaming green as adults. This metallic sheen dulls considerably after this stage until turning into a dull, flat green as great wyrm.

Tungsten dragons speak their own language and the language common to all ferrous dragons, and 10% of all hatchling tungsten dragons have an ability to communicate with any creature by using telepathy within 60'. The chance to possess this ability increases 5% per age category of the dragon.

Combat: Tungsten dragons believe in eliminating their opponents in whatever manner proves quickest and most effective. In the pursuit of good, they are strong believers in "The ends justify the means." It is in these dragons' general opinions that since evil will stop at nothing to win, then good must do whatever it can to stop evil from winning.

A tungsten dragon's breath weapon is a cone of blasting sand 70' long, 5' wide at the dragon's mouth, and 20' wide at the base. Creatures caught in the sand blast must save vs. breath weapon for half damage. A tungsten dragon casts its spells and uses its magical abilities at 6th level plus its combat modifier. At birth, all tungsten dragons are immune to any heat or flame. As they age, they gain the following additional powers: young — *detect evil/good* three times a day; young adult — *detect lie* once a day; mature adult — *sand cloud* (equal to a *fog cloud*, with the exception that the fog is replaced by swirling sand) twice a day; great wyrm — *spontaneous combustion*. This latter power causes 1-3 targets to suddenly burst into flames, doing an immediate 1d10 + 3 hp damage and 2d4 hp damage on each of the following four rounds, at which point the flames

extinguish themselves. An initial save vs. spells is allowed to negate this power, with the save at a -3 penalty if there is only one target, -2 if two targets, and -1 if three targets. All items possessed by the victims must save vs. magical flame every round or be destroyed. This ability can be used only once a day.

Habitat/Society: Tungsten dragons can be found only in arid, warm climates, ranging from deserts to dry steppes. They spend their entire day patrolling their territories in search of intruders to defeat and wrongs to right.

Tungsten dragons are excellent parents and take care of their young until the juvenile stage, where the young are invited to remain with the family or go and stake their own claims.

Ecology: Like all other dragons, a tungsten dragon can, and will, eat almost anything. They have a particular fondness for a variety of desert plants, but are careful not to unbalance the local ecosystem.

Since tungsten dragons share the same habitat as both the blue and brass dragons, there are often conflicts of interest. The tungsten dragon is nearly a match for the blue dragon, and several tungsten dragons will often band together to be rid of the evil blues. Brass dragons are not looked upon favorably, either, and are usually described as irresponsible, boorish, and not deserving to be considered one of the "good guys."

Cobalt dragon

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any forest, jungle, or subterranean
 FREQUENCY: Very rare
 ORGANIZATION: Solitary or clan
 ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any
 DIET: See text
 INTELLIGENCE: Very to high (11-14)
 TREASURE: See Table 3
 ALIGNMENT: Lawful evil
 NO. APPEARING: 1 (2-5)
 ARMOR CLASS: -1 (base)
 MOVEMENT: 12, Fl 30 (C), Jp 3
 HIT DICE: 13 (base)
 THAC0: 7 (at 13 HD)
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 3 + special
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-9/2-9/4-24
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: See text
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: See text
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: See Table 3
 SIZE: G (38' base)
 MORALE: Fanatic (17-18 base)
 XP VALUE: See Table 3

Cobalt dragons are a diabolical breed of ferrous dragon and are generally shunned by others of their kind. They have no goals other than to dominate anyone and anything they come in contact with.

At birth, a cobalt dragon's scales are a deep, dark blue with odd patches of both lighter and darker blues. These colors remain throughout the dragon's life, changing only in respect to the sizes of the

various patches as the dragon grows.

Cobalt dragons speak their own tongue and a tongue common to all ferrous dragons, and 15% of all hatchling cobalt dragons have an ability to communicate by telepathy with any intelligent creature. The chance to possess this ability increases 5% per age category of the dragon,

Combat: Cobalt dragons are crafty fighters who often prepare cunning traps and ambush those unfortunate enough to trigger the traps. Such traps consist of rock slides, dead falls, falling trees, and illusions. They are merciless and use their abilities efficiently and effectively.

A cobalt dragon's breath weapon is a pulse of pure magnetic energy 100' long and 5' wide. Creatures caught in the path of the pulse suffer damage from impact, flying debris, and tumbling. All creatures caught in the pulse are allowed a save vs. breath weapon for half damage. Creatures wearing ferrous armor save at a -4 penalty regardless of size. Furthermore, creatures caught in the pulse that are at most two sizes smaller than the dragon are hurled back 2-5' per age category of the dragon (double this distance for those wearing ferrous armor). Those creatures that strike solid objects on their way back take additional damage as if they had fallen half the distance they were thrown back. Creatures too large to be thrown back must make a save vs. breath weapon to remain standing; failure results in the creature falling down and rolling 1-10' backwards. A cobalt dragon casts its spells and uses its magical abilities at 7th level plus its combat modifier.

At birth, cobalt dragons have a *water breathing* ability and are immune to electricity and to the magnetic pulses of other cobalt dragons. As they age, they gain the following additional powers: young — *entangle* three times a day; adult-improved *phantasmal force* three times a day; very old — *plant growth* twice a day; great wyrm — *animal summoning II* once a day.

Habitat/Society: Cobalt dragons prefer to dwell deep within dark forests or thick jungles. They have been known to dwell underground, but the entrance to the caverns is always within a wooded area. They spend most of their time preparing traps in which to catch their meals or roaming their territories in search of intruders.

Cobalt dragons gather only to mate and when ordered by their sovereign dragon. Despite their cruelty, cobalt dragons make excellent parents, taking care of their young until they reach the juvenile stage. At this point the young are forced to, leave the lair, and if they are seen again, they are attacked. Thus, cobalt dragon family groups usually last for only about 25 years. It is not uncommon for two cobalt dragons to mate for life, but they are just as likely to go their separate ways as well.

Ecology: Cobalt dragons feed on the abundant wildlife within their territory, but in a pinch can eat almost anything,

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- Collect Oil Revenue
- Submit Drilling Bids

2. Military Phase:

- Demobilize
- Move Forces
- Resolve Battles

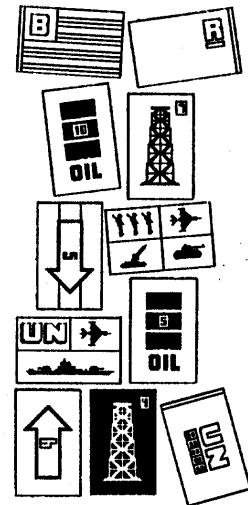
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just as other dragons.

The cobalt dragon and the green dragon are deadly enemies, each seeing the other as an intruder in its domain. Thus, such dragons are never found in close proximity of each other.

Chromium (chrome) dragon

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Arctic plains, hills, mountains, and subterranean*

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

ORGANIZATION: *Solitary or clan*

ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Any*

DIET: *See text*

INTELLIGENCE: *High to exceptional (13-16)*

TREASURE: *See Table 4*

ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic evil*

NO. APPEARING: *1 (2-5)*

ARMOR CLASS: *-2 (base)*

MOVEMENT: *12, Fl 36 (C), Jp 3*

HIT DICE: *14 (base)*

THAC0: *7 (at 14 HD)*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *3 + special*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *2-9/2-9/3-30*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *See text*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *See text*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *See Table 4*

SIZE: *G (45' base)*

MORALE: *Fanatic (18 base)*

XP VALUE: *See Table 4*

Chromium dragons (usually referred to as chrome dragons) are the most evil and greedy of all ferrous dragons. They seek treasure and are matched only by red dragons in their obsession for more.

The chrome dragons have a remarkable resemblance to silver dragons, and many an adventurer has met his end because of such a similarity. At birth, a chrome dragon's scales have the appearance of tarnished silver. As the dragon ages, the scales begin to brighten until, as adults, the scales have the appearance of pure silver. The scales continue to change until reaching the old stage, at which point the scales resemble modern chrome, even to the point of showing one's reflection.

Chrome dragons speak their own tongue and the tongue common to all ferrous dragons, and 15% of all hatchling chrome dragons have an ability to communicate by telepathy with any intelligent creature within 60'. The chance to possess this ability increases by 5% per age category.

Combat: Chrome dragons are deadly opponents. They are merciless and kill simply for the pleasure of watching their prey writhe in pain. Chrome dragons are very fond of toying with their prey, much in the same manner as a cat does with a mouse. They use their abilities with a ruthless efficiency that can also destroy an enemy in a matter of moments. Chrome dragons almost always initiate attacks from the air, opening the battle with a blast from their freezing cloud, and closing only if they feel their opponent(s) is weakened enough.

A chrome dragon has two breath weapons: a cloud of freezing crystals 50' long, 40' wide, and 20' high; or a bolt of solid ice 20' long and 5' wide, firing out to 100' from the dragon's mouth. A creature caught in the freezing cloud must save vs. breath weapon or have his dexterity cut to 3, suffer a -4 penalty on all attack rolls, and a -4 penalty on all saving throws due to numbing. A successful save prevents the dexterity loss and reduces both penalties to -2. Creatures caught in the path of the ice bolt are allowed a save vs. breath weapon for half damage. A chrome dragon casts its spells and uses its magical abilities at 8th level plus its combat modifier.

Chrome dragons are born immune to the effects of cold of any type. As they age, they gain the following abilities: young-pass **without trace** (this ability allows the dragon to move without trace over snow and ice only) three times a day; young adult-shape ice (equal to **stone shape** but working only on ice and snow) twice a day; old—**wall of ice** twice a day; great wyrm—**flesh to crystal** (equal to the spell **flesh to stone**, but is a separate spell; **transmute crystal to flesh** must be developed to reverse the spell or a **wish** must be used) once a day.

Habitat/Society: Chrome dragons live only in the coldest regions, dwelling in deep caves (often of their own making). The caves they develop themselves are masterpieces of construction. They often conceal pits with a thin layer of ice that will break with only the smallest amount of weight, sending the victim crashing into an array of sharp icicles.

Chrome dragons are poor parents at best; although the young stay with the parents up to the young stage, they are not looked after. Young who pass the hatchling stage are forced to fend for themselves or die in their unrelenting environment.

Ecology: Chrome dragons prefer meat but can subsist on a diet of ice and snow. They can eat almost anything if need be.

Chrome dragons share the same environment as the white dragon and an occasional silver dragon. White dragons are totally dominated, and only the greatest of their species is able to hold out against the terrible power of the chrome dragons.

Silver dragons, however, are the chrome dragons' deadliest enemies. Such dragons have tremendous resources and usually hunt down chrome dragons and kill them without remorse. This does not mean the silver dragon is more powerful, only that they have access to mage resources.

Iron dragon

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Tropical, subtropical, and temperate hills and mountains*

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

ORGANIZATION: *Solitary or clan*

ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Any*

DIET: *See text*

INTELLIGENCE: *Exceptional to genius*

(15-18)

TREASURE: *See Table 5*

ALIGNMENT: *Lawful neutral*

NO. APPEARING: *1 (2-5)*

ARMOR CLASS: *-3 (base)*

MOVEMENT: *12, Fl 30 (C), Br 8, Jp 3*

HIT DICE: *15 (base)*

THAC0: *5 (at 15 HD)*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *3 + special*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *2-11/2-11/4-32*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *See text*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *See text*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *See Table 5*

SIZE: *G (53' base)*

MORALE: *Fearless (19-20 base)*

XP VALUE: *See Table 5*

Iron dragons are the most powerful of all ferrous dragons. They are the rulers of all the ferrous dragons, and the sovereign iron dragon is said to be nearly unbeatable. Iron dragons frequently assume the form of men to spy on the goings-on of the world, in order to someday bring dragons back as the rightful rulers of the land.

Iron dragons are born with scales of flat black. As the dragon ages, the scales begin to take on a glossy texture until as adults the dragon is metallic black. The scales continue to take on silver highlights until, as great wyrms, the scales look like moonlight reflecting on a rippling pool.

Iron dragons speak their own tongue, a tongue common to all ferrous dragons, and 20% of all hatchling iron dragons have an ability to communicate with any intelligent creature by using telepathy (60' range). The chance to possess this ability increases 5% per age category.

Combat: Iron dragons will not usually attack unless there are intruders in its lair. They are more concerned with gaining information on events in the world than in engaging in battle. If necessary, iron dragons are deadly opponents. They always use their spells and special abilities in preference to physical combat, but will fight if need be. Their favorite spells are those that weaken or incapacitate their opponents, as they accept the surrender of their opponents. After all, how can the dragon learn anything if the ones it sought to communicate with are dead? Of course, such unfortunates are usually eaten after they have supplied all of the information they can.

An iron dragon has two breath weapons: a cloud of sleep gas 50' long, 40' wide, and 30' high; or a cone of superheated sparks 90' long, 5' wide at the dragon's mouth, and 30' wide at the end. Creatures caught in the gas must save vs. breath weapon or fall asleep, regardless of hit dice. Creatures caught in the spark cone may save vs. breath weapon for half damage. An iron dragon casts its spells and uses its magical abilities at 9th level, plus its combat modifier.

At birth, iron dragons are immune to heat and flame of any sort and can **polymorph self** three times a day. Each change

Table 1
Nickel Dragon Ages and Abilities

Age	Body lgt.(')	Tail lgt.(')	AC	Breath weapon	Spells (wizard)	MR	Treas. type	XP
1	3 - 6	2 - 5	4	2d4+1	Nil	Nil	Nil	975
2	6 - 1 4	5 - 1 2	3	4d4+2	Nil	Nil	Nil	1,400
3	1 4 - 2 2	1 2 - 1 8	2	6d4+3	Nil	Nil	Nil	2,000
4	2 2 - 3 2	1 8 - 2 4	1	7d4+4	1	Nil	E	5,000
5	3 2 - 4 0	2 4 - 3 0	0	9d4+5	1	6 %	E,S	11,000
6	4 0 - 4 8	3 0 - 3 6	- 1	11d4+6	2	1 2 %	E,S	12,000
7	4 8 - 5 4	3 6 - 4 3	- 2	12d4+7	2	1 8 %	H,S	13,000
8	5 4 - 6 2	4 3 - 5 0	- 3	14d4+8	3	2 4 %	H,S	14,000
9	6 2 - 7 0	5 0 - 5 7	- 4	16d4+9	3	3 0 %	H,S	15,000
1 0	7 0 - 7 8	5 7 - 6 4	- 5	17d4+10	4	3 6 %	Hx2,S	16,000
1 1	7 8 - 8 6	6 4 - 7 1	- 6	19d4+11	4	4 2 %	Hx2,S	17,000
1 2	8 6 - 9 4	7 1 - 7 8	- 7	21d4+12	5	4 8 %	Hx2,S	18,000

Table 2
Tungsten Dragon Ages and Abilities

Age	Body lgt.(')	Tail lgt.(')	AC	Breath weapon	Spells (wizard)	MR	Treas. type	XP
1	3-6	2 - 5	3	2d6+1	Nil	Nil	Nil	1 , 4 0 0
2	6-15	5 - 1 2	2	4d6+2	Nil	Nil	Nil	2 , 0 0 0
3	15-24	1 2 - 1 9	1	6d6+3	Nil	Nil	Nil	3 , 0 0 0
4	24 - 4 0	1 9 - 2 6	Ø	7d6+4	1	Nil	½H	7 , 0 0 0
5	40-49	2 6 - 3 3	- 1	9d6+5	2	1 2 %	H	1 2 , 0 0 0
6	49-60	3 3 - 4 0	- 2	11d6+6	3	1 8 %	H,S	1 3 , 0 0 0
7	6 0 - 6 9	4 0 - 4 8	- 3	12d6+7	4	2 4 %	I,S	1 4 , 0 0 0
8	69-78	4 8 - 5 6	- 4	14d6+8	5 , 1	3 0 %	H,S	1 5 , 0 0 0
9	7 8 - 8 7	5 6 - 6 4	- 5	16d6+9	5 , 2	3 6 %	H,S,T	1 6 , 0 0 0
1 0	8 7 - 9 6	6 4 - 7 2	- 6	17d6+10	5 , 3	4 2 %	(H,S,T)X2	1 7 , 0 0 0
1 1	96-105	7 2 - 8 0	- 7	19d6+11	6 , 3	4 8 %	(H,S,T) X 2	1 8 , 0 0 0
1 2	105-114	8 0 - 8 8	- 8	21d6+12	7 , 3	5 4 %	(H,S,T) X 3	19,000

Table 3
Cobalt Dragon Ages and Abilities

Age	Body lgt.(')	Tail lgt.(')	AC	Breath weapon	Spells (wizard)	MR	Treas. type	XP
1	4 - 1 0	3 - 6	2	2d8+1	Nil	Nil	Nil	2,000
2	1 0 - 2 1	6 - 1 3	1	4d8+2	Nil	Nil	Nil	3,000
3	2 1 - 3 0	1 3 - 2 1	0	6d8+3	Nil	Nil	Nil	5,000
4	3 0 - 4 6	2 1 - 2 9	- 1	7d8+4	1	Nil	E,S	7,000
5	4 6 - 5 6	2 9 - 3 8	- 2	9d8+5	2,1	1 8 %	H,S	12,000
6	5 6 - 6 6	3 8 - 4 6	- 3	11d8 + 6	3 , 1	2 4 %	H,S	13,000
7	6 6 - 7 6	4 6 - 5 3	- 4	12d8+7	3 , 2	3 0 %	H,S,T	14,000
8	7 6 - 8 6	5 3 - 6 2	- 5	14d8+8	3 , 2 , 1	3 6 %	H,S,T	17,000
9	8 6 - 9 6	6 2 - 7 1	- 6	16d8+9	4 , 2 , 1	4 2 %	H,S,T	18,000
1 0	9 6 - 1 0 6	7 1 - 8 0	- 7	17d8+10	4 , 3 , 1	4 8 %	H X 2,S,T	19,000
1 1	1 0 6 - 1 1 6	8 0 - 8 9	- 8	19d8+11	4 , 3 , 2	5 4 %	(H,S) X 2,T	20,000
1 2	1 1 6 - 1 2 6	8 9 - 9 8	- 9	21d8+12	5 , 3 , 2	6 0 %	(H,S,T) X 2	21,000

Table 4
Chromium Dragon Ages and Abilities

Age	Body lgt.(')	Tail lgt.(')	AC	Breath weapon	Spells (wizard)	MR	Treas. type	XP
1	6 - 1 4	3 - 6	1	2d10+1	Nil	Nil	Nil	2,000
2	1 4 - 2 5	6 - 1 4	0	4d10+2	Nil	Nil	Nil	4,000
3	2 5 - 3 8	1 4 - 2 3	- 1	6d10+3	Nil	Nil	Nil	6,000
4	3 8 - 5 2	2 3 - 3 2	- 2	7d10+4	1	Nil	E,S,T	8,000
5	5 2 - 6 3	3 2 - 4 1	- 3	9d10+5	2,1	24 %	H,S,T	13,000
6	6 3 - 7 4	4 1 - 5 0	- 4	11d10+6	2,2	30 %	H,S,T	14,000
7	7 4 - 8 5	5 0 - 6 0	- 5	12d10+7	2,2,1	36 %	H,S,T	17,000
8	8 5 - 9 6	6 0 - 7 0	- 6	14d10+8	3,2,1	42 %	(H,S,T)X2	18,000
9	96-107	7 0 - 8 0	- 7	16d10+9	3,3,1	48 %	(H,S,T) X 2	19,000
1 0	107-118	8 0 - 9 0	- 8	17d10+10	3,3,2,1	54 %	(H,S,T) X 2	20,000
1 1	118-129	9 0 - 1 0 0	- 9	19d10+11	3,3,2,1	60 %	(H,S,T) X 3	21,000
1 2	129-140	1 0 0 - 1 1 0	- 10	21d10+12	3,3,3,2	66 %	(H,S,T) X 3	22,000

Table 5
Iron Dragon Ages and Abilities

Age	Body lgt.(^t)	Tai1 lgt.(^t)	AC	Breath weapon	Spells (wizard)	MR	Treas. type	XP
1	6-18	3-10	0	2d12 + 1	Nil	Nil	Nil	3,000
2	18-30	10-22	-1	4d12 + 2	Nil	Nil	Nil	5,000
3	30-45	22-30	-2	6d12 + 3	Nil	Nil	Nil	7,000
4	45-61	30-40	-3	7d12 + 4	2	Nil	E,R	9,000
5	61-73	40-50	-4	9d12 + 5	2,1	30%	W,R	14,000
6	73-85	50-60	-5	11d12 + 6	2,2	36%	H,R	15,000
7	85-98	60-71	-6	13d12 + 7	2,2,1	42%	H,R,T	18,000
8	98-111	71-82	-7	14d12 + 8	3,2,1	48%	H,R,T	19,000
9	111-124	82-93	-8	16d12 + 9	3,3,2,1	54%	(H,R)x2,T	20,000
10	124-137	93-104	-9	18d12 + 10	3,3,2,2	60%	(H,R,T)x2	21,000
11	137-150	104-115	-10	19d12 + 11	3,3,2,2,1	66%	(H,R,T) X 2	22,000
12	150-163	115-126	-11	21d12 + 12	3,3,3,3,1	72%	(H,R,T)x 3	23,000

in form lasts until the dragon chooses a different form, and reverting to its true form does not count as a change. As the dragon ages, it gains the following powers: young—heat metal three times a day; juvenile—*stone shape* twice a day; adult—*ESP* three times a day; old-wall of *stone* twice a day; *wurm—rock to mud* twice a day; great wyrml-flesh to *stone* once a day.

Habitat/Society: Iron dragons dwell upon great hills or on high mountains, usually building their lairs deep beneath the surface. It is said that where you find the lair of an iron dragon, you find deposits of iron. In fact, such dragons hoard iron with more greed than any other metal. Such metal is only found in raw form, and sages believe such metal is somehow needed for their reproductive cycle as well as for food. This makes them unpopular with mining races, of course.

Iron dragons travel the world in forms other than their own to seek knowledge of the world around them. They seem to prefer human form, but whether this is a matter of preference, convenience, or both, sages can only speculate.

Ecology: Iron dragons prefer a diet of iron ore but can sustain themselves on almost anything.

Iron dragons dwell in the same regions as red dragons and the two are bitter enemies. The red dragon sees the iron dragon as a weak interloper, of course, and the iron dragon sees the red dragon as a stain on the reputation of dragonkind as a whole. The two have fierce battles always resulting in the death of one or the other, for neither will yield to the claws of the other. Iron dragons also do not get along well with dwarves and other races that mine for iron, but the skirmishing here is small compared to the wars with the red dragons.

Gruaghlothur Supreme Dragon of the Ferrous Dragons

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Subterranean
FREQUENCY: Unique
ORGANIZATION: Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any

DIET: See text
INTELLIGENCE: *Supra-genius* (20)
TREASURE: H,R,S, T(X3), V
ALIGNMENT: Lawful neutral
NO. APPEARING: 1
ARMOR CLASS: -12
MOVEMENT: 12, Fl 36 (C), Br 8, Jp 4
HIT DICE: 25 (200 hp)
THAC0: 5
NO. OF ATTACKS: 3 + special
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 3-12/3-12/7-42+12
SPECIAL ATTACKS: See text
SPECIAL DEFENSES: See text
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 80%
SIZE: G (185'body, 140'tail)
MORALE: Fearless (20)
XP VALUE: 35,000

The Supreme Dragon, Gruaghlothur, is the ruler of all ferrous dragons and is an incarnation of all the sovereign iron dragons since the dawn of time. Despite this, Gruaghlothur is not a divine power. Gruaghlothur is said to have been the very first ferrous dragon ever to exist. It was under his guidance that the clan hierarchy was formed. He was destroyed in battle with a huge pack of red dragons. With his dying breath, Gruaghlothur swore to destroy the red dragons if he had to come back from the grave, and return he did. The red dragons remain, but deep under a mighty mountain burns the smoldering hatred of a thousand kings waiting to flare into the destruction of their age-old enemies.

Whenever Gruaghlothur dies, the iron dragon chosen to replace the former goes into a state of hibernation for one year. During this time, the chosen one undergoes a metamorphosis. When it emerges, it has become Gruaghlothur. There is no solid explanation for how this works, and the iron dragons answer only, "It has always been so."

Gruaghlothur resembles a great iron wyrml in every respect except for its tremendous size. He can speak the tongue of his species, the tongue common to all ferrous dragons, and has an ability to communicate with any intelligent creature (as can an iron dragon).

Combat: Gruaghlothur is an impressive figure and does not take kindly to in-

truders, no matter what their business. He possesses tremendous spell capability and uses his spells and abilities in preference to physical combat. If pressed, however, he will engage in physical combat.

Gruaghlothur has three breath weapons, each usable twice a day: a cloud of *sleep* gas 60' long, 50' wide, and 40' high; a cone of superheated sparks 100' long, 5' wide at the dragon's mouth, and 40' wide at the end, doing 24d12 + 24 hp damage; or a bolt of solid stone 30' long and 5' wide, fired out to a 120' from the dragon's mouth, doing 24d12 + 24 hp damage. Creatures caught in the gas must save vs. breath weapon or fall asleep regardless of hit dice. Creatures caught in either the spark cone or in the path of the stone bolt are allowed a save vs. breath weapon for half damage.

Gruaghlothur possesses the same abilities and immunities as other iron dragons, with the exception that every power gains one additional use a day (e.g., *heat metal* can be used four times a day, *stone shape* three times a day, etc.). He also gains the ability to *passwall* up to three times a day. He casts spells as a 22nd-level wizard and has the following spells: five 1st level, five 2nd, five 3rd, five 4th, three 5th, two 6th, and one 7th.

Habitat/Society: Gruaghlothur dwells in a cavern far below one of the highest peaks in the world. From there he rules over all of the ferrous dragons, settling all disputes that cannot be handled by the other dragon leaders, dispensing justice to those who cannot obey clan laws, and mating with his concubines in order to produce his eventual successor.

Ecology: Gruaghlothur sustains himself on a diet of iron ore but is fond of red dragon flesh. He occasionally goes hunting for the latter fare, which he considers a delicacy.

Gruaghlothur is quite content to be left alone, where he will spend countless days devising ways to exterminate the red dragons. He has a tremendous store of knowledge and the wisdom to use it wisely; one cannot help but think that he might someday succeed in his desire. Ω

COMING THIS FALL....

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FORUM



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I would like to comment and expound on the utilization of Japanese animation in FRPG campaigns, as suggested by Mr. Gregg Sharp in DRAGON issue #155.... In his article, Mr. Sharp offered a list of several anime titles that he claims are common viewing at SF conventions. This point may seem irrelevant, but I contend that there are films that do not appear in his list that are more generally known at conventions and also contain a much broader base from which to formulate campaign plot lines. Approximately half of the titles he mentions probably fall into the category of common fare at a convention. In this list, I would also like to correct two spelling errors. The title should be *Saint Seiya*, not *Saint Saaya*, and *Dangaio*, not *Dangaioh*. [Editor's note: Karen Boomgarden, one of TSR's anime experts, believes "Dangaioh" is appropriate.]

In addressing the list of videos he compiled, my first point is I have viewed or have copies of most of the shows listed, as well as several others. Never has it been apparent that all the spells, curses, and other similar AD&D® game characteristics he states exist, in my perception of the films.

My enthusiasm for role-playing is matched only by my excitement for Japanimation, and that complements my second point. I impart here my own philosophy on the ideal films from which campaign machinations can be derived. These films are not only beautiful to watch, but their themes are much more evident than Mr. Sharp's suggestions.

Mecha designs in *Macross* (a.k.a. *Robotech*) are easy to use in FASA's BATTLETECH® game, but not because, as Mr. Sharp stated, the giant robot designs of *Macross*, *Mobile Suit Gundam*, and other mecha anime are suspiciously similar to those of the BATTLETECH game. In fact, the BATTLETECH game's mecha were taken directly from *Robotech* mecha. These films were produced before the BATTLETECH game even came out!

Megazone 23, Parts 1, 2, and 3: These films deal with a spaceship located in outer space, waiting for the radiation levels of the earth to decrease after a massive nuclear war. The first film occurs 500 years after the war. The subsequent films occur even later. The main characters are a group of young rebels who discover they are no longer on Earth, and the people in the city aboard the ship are being controlled by a super computer into believing they are still on Earth. The lead youth, named Shogo, happens to acquire a transformable motorcycle that is a link to a computer program called EVE (Enhanced Video Emulation). Eve is a computer-

generated female singer who serves to pacify the masses, but she realizes the evil intent of the city officials, as she has a good persona designed to be peaceful and protective. The officials instruct programmers of the massive computer to subdue Eve and the resistance. Eve then discovers she can communicate with Shogo through his bike's computer terminal, and she aids him in the rebellion. I highly recommend these shows, especially the second film in this series, which was dubbed into English by Harmony Gold, who did *Robotech*.

Bubble Gum Crisis: A group of four female rebels known as the Knight Sabers use transformable motorcycle mecha to do battle in a futuristic Tokyo. [Each rebel has] a "hard suit" with a different defense system. One has a rail gun, one has a razor-sharp whiplike object that can slice through metal, another has a lightsaber-type protrusion, and the last has a device located in the hand that discharges a severe energy blast if hand contact is made. This team battles deadly antagonists known as the Buma, which are biomechanical warriors that protect the conglomerate that created them. This conglomerate, known as GENOM, is similar to the computer in *Megazone*, as it has control over the city. The Knight Sabers struggle to protect their friends and undermine the growing power of GENOM, for with each installment, six so far, the Buma are revised and augmented with new strategies and weapons to prove a more menacing challenge.

Here are two perfect examples of ideas that can be easily used for campaign creation, *Bubble Gum Crisis* is a classic as it has: 1) a group of renegades each with a unique character trait; 2) a gruesome collection of monsters to battle; and 3) a setting where the odds are overwhelmingly against the protagonists.

These are two widely-known examples of films that are easy to use and can be easily found. *Bubble Gum Crisis* will span 13 episodes, and *Megazone* is rumored to go through five, eventually. I think there is a copious amount of spells already for AD&D games, and other elements should be sought out in Japanimation. One of these is just the sheer appreciation for the artwork and awesome story lines.

Joey Kostura
Fort Walton Beach FL

In issue #163, Robert Rodger asked readers to give him an idea on how to regain control over what had become a Monty Haul STAR WARS*: The RPG campaign [by West End Games]. The problem with the game was that while the GM had become bored with the undefeated bounty hunter, Red-eyes, his player had not. The secret to resolving this without resorting to the ultimate retreat of all GMs ("Because I said so") is to make the player view the invincible suit of armor in an unfavorable light. As long as the GM is willing to take a little time to do it subtly, over three or four sessions, this change can be made a part of the playing campaign and lead to character development, rather than just "Okay, this is how the DM wants to fix our problem."

The player loves Red-eyes' armor because it makes him indestructible when he goes into

battle—but what if this self-same armor becomes a liability in every situation except battle? Certainly someone who can demolish hordes of Stormtroopers without a thought is going to win some notoriety. The Empire might not be able to get Red-eyes, but that does not mean that there are not young adventurers out there who might be willing to take on the invincible hero to try and build a name for themselves. This theme frequently occurs in westerns such as *The Gunfighter* and *The Shootist*, where gunmen trying to live out their years in peace find themselves constantly being called out by young hotshots who want to see if the "great man" is really as fast as they say he is.

Certainly a person with Red-eyes' reputation would attract this sort of attention. It is unlikely that any of these challengers would be able to defeat Red-eyes. Bet's be fair, he does have some experience), but if violent shootouts broke out every time he *and his armor* walked into a town, people might start to get a little tense. It's one thing for the empire-bashing hero to enter a bar. It's something else when a certain gunman with a reputation for trouble walks into town. It's not his fault, but every time he *and his easily recognizable armor* enter a place, someone is sure to start shooting. These fights should not be limited to just a shot under the table *a la* Han Solo; these should be bar-trashing, ship wrecking, house-flattening brawls that get people's attention. After two or three settlements get badly mauled, with not too much loss of life *but lots of material damage*, Red-eyes may find that shopkeepers are a little leery of serving him. Bartenders declare "last call" as he comes through the door, and ports are "fresh out" of needed supplies and spare parts when he arrives.

This reputation should be allowed to grow over a period of time. A young "gun" might call Red-eyes out one week while on his way to his main mission. The players will see this as just a random encounter designed to spice up the evening's play. When it starts to occur in two out of every three large settlements visited, they should begin to get the idea and convince Red-eyes that he might want to leave the armor in the ship, putting it on only for those really tough battles. Once the identifying armor is left behind, there will be nothing at which the young glory hunters can open fire.

Should the player not care about having his PC be a social outcast, there are other means available. The Empire must surely have put a bounty of its own on such a troublesome entity. Sure, Red-eyes can trash Stormtroopers, but bounty hunters in general are likely to be better armed and trained than regular troopers; after all, Red-eyes is.

Wanted posters from the Empire should show good detail on the wanted armor but be hazy about the face of the man in it. That way, other bounty hunters will be identifying Red-eyes by his armor, which will lead to all the problems listed but now with a higher chance of him being hurt in a fight. The first such attacks from bounty hunters should be clumsy head-on assaults. Perhaps the young guns mentioned previously are bounty hunters looking to get

their careers off with a big-name kill. But sooner or later, a real pro will get into the act.

The secret of defeating Red-eyes is to attack his armor, not the man in it. He cannot wear armor all the time. A few minutes' work on the armor while he's at a party or in the shower, and the systems could be rigged for a power failure, implosion, or whatever. I recommend a power failure because this discredits the armor, and if it occurs while Red-eyes is in it, the bounty hunter can just scoop Red-eyes up and carry him off. This can itself lead to a few adventures as the PC group tries to recover the lost comrade, or as Red-eyes tries to escape. But the fact of it is that the armor has been dealt with.

What's to stop Red-eyes from just buying another suit? Well, it seems that the Empire has been keeping tabs on all such suits now since Red-eyes has been such a pest, and as soon as such a request comes into any reputable arms dealer, the dealer immediately contacts the Empire, which will act to stop the purchase and arrest the would-be buyer. If Red-eyes goes to a disreputable arms dealer—*caveat emptor*.

This same basic plan can be used with almost any sort of RPG that has become a Monty Haul campaign. By making the players view their all-too-powerful tools, weapons, armor, etc., as being more trouble than they are worth, order can be restored to campaigns that are hopelessly out of balance.

Paul Astle
Larchmont NY

This letter is in reply to Mr. Robert Rodgers letter in issue #163. I heartily sympathize with him, because in my first STAR WARS: the RPG campaign, I had the same problem. One of the players had a Droid character that quickly became a battle platform. All his skill points went toward improving his blaster skill and adding more armor. It's hard to penetrate 8d armor with 4d of blaster damage. The campaign was only a temporary one, and though the character was destroyed by a thermal detonator, I hadn't yet solved the problem that created him. Now I am working on starting another campaign (now equipped with the expanded rules) and I had been giving the matter some thought when I read Mr. Rodgers letter.

First, I would like to mention a few things about his admitted mistake of letting Red-eyes get 5d armor. He says the problem arose by using the equipment modification rules in the *STAR WARS Rules Companion* (pages 29-31). The costs listed are for when skill points are used. If no skill points are used, then the cost is doubled. This would be a small point when dealing with large bank accounts, but it may have been overlooked.

Next, in the same section of the *Rules Companion*, it says that whenever a piece of equipment is being improved, a technology roll must be made for each point of increase. The difficulty of this roll increases with every point of increase. Now, although it tops out at the level of Very Difficult, Mr. Rodger may have overlooked his right to use the top end of the scale, making for a Very Difficult roll of 30. Also, although the scale stops there, he shouldn't hesitate to continue to increase the difficulty number in such circumstances as those, simply to prevent this sort of thing.

Though his letter doesn't quite make clear who did the work of improving the armor, the same section of the *Rules Companion* mentions that average NPC specialists have only technology codes of 4d, and anything higher should be found only in very rare individuals. Even if a specialist had a code of 5d, he would have some

trouble making rolls of 21, and it would be next to impossible to make rolls of 30! Mr. Rodger stated that Red-eyes's codes in this area were only about 4d, so he should have had the same trouble if he were doing the work personally. (I should bite here that in most cases I would rule that unless a PC is spending his own skill points to improve his equipment, he is having it done by someone else.)

Then there is Red-eyes' exploits with his armor. Even if he possesses the human maximum of 4d strength, his damage resistance code would be 9d— one tough individual. But after only a few rounds of seeing standard blasters have no effect, even the dimmest of Stormtroopers would think to use a thermal detonator of heavy repeating blasters (10d and 8d damage, respectively; see the first *STAR WARS Sourcebook* for details). Sooner or later, Red-eyes would make low damage-resistance rolls and start to take wounds. Even assuming that Stormtroopers failed to slow him with these weapons, or that they needed time to get those weapons from an armory, they could isolate him within the base by shutting a few blast doors. If he did have weaponry to penetrate the doors, it could still slow him down enough to give the Stormtroopers time to fall back and obtain the weapons they would need.

Then there is the question of just possessing or wearing a normal suit of armor, much less one with a code of 5d! As noted in the first *Sourcebook*, wearing a full suit of armor is at best restricted and, in the case of Stormtrooper armor, highly illegal. Armor of 5d (with dexterity enhancements, no less) could safely be said to be downright treasonous. Mr. Red-eyes should be attacked on sight by any Imperials when in his armor. If discovered in possession of it, he should be arrested, executed, and then tried.

Finally, even if he did succeed in wrecking an Imperial base single-handed, the Empire would not let such a deed go unanswered. Knowing the toughness of the armor, it would doubtless be best to call in an AT-AT walker at the least, and air-to-ground support by a TIE fighter or two wouldn't be unreasonable. When they do, don't forget about the die caps for the differences in scale, charted in the *Rules Companion* (page 20). The walkers' to-hit rolls would have die caps of 4, but when they did hit, poor old Red-eyes would have caps of 2 on his damage-resistance dice.

So, not only can (and should) the problem with Red-eyes be solved, it can be prevented from recurring. As GMs, we all make mistakes. The best way to correct them is to prevent them from happening in the first place by reading and knowing the rules (especially new rules) before using them.

Duane VanderPol
Seattle WA

Robert Rodger might want a couple of tips for handling a Monty Haul character in his STAR WARS game ("Forum," issue #163). The easiest way to handle a character like Red-eyes the Invincible is to let his successes be exaggerated.

The pirate Bartholomew "Black Bart" Roberts (1682-1722) was a rather good naval commander, at the very least. His destruction came about because a panicked British Parliament put enough pressure on the Admiralty to make it commit its anti-pirate fleet to getting him—never mind the regular pirates.

1. In his dozens of kills, suppose old Red-eyes slew the son of some industrialist, Imperial Governor, or the like. A ghastly huge reward is offered for his capture, and one or two Boba Fett-class bounty hunters are hired to nail him

as well.

Any time Red-eyes shows up with the group, some NPC will likely rat on him just for the reward. His super armor is distinctive and detectable. If he wants to participate with the group, he will have to ditch the armor.

2. Some clerk in the Stormtrooper procurement department decides the armor Red-eyes uses would be great for the Empire's best, and the factory that makes it gets confiscated. Players start facing troops who can ignore the same kind of damage Red-eyes ignores. The PCs have to retreat and escape, retreat and escape. Bottom line: The players have to destroy the factory. Red-eyes' armor (which should be getting some damage fighting these improved Stormtroopers) becomes irreplaceable. Attempts to rescue the factory's planning staff so the players can keep their supply of super armor are predestined to fail. Red-eyes starts getting cautious, or else.

3. The game is set up for PCs to stomp on Stormtroopers. Players get 18 dice to build character stats; Stormtroopers get only 12. A few 18 dice (or better) opponents can really ruin Red-eyes' day. For instance: A Stormtrooper who went to the Dark Side of the Force. Make an experienced NPC along PC guidelines, using the Failed Jedi or Alien Student of the Force templates as a guide. Think of this character as a former PC who went to the Dark Side and became an NPC. He has armor as good or better than Red-eyes', a blaster pistol modified with enough skill points to be really nasty, and equivalent skill to hit with said weapon, and enough Dark Side and Force points to make sure to see Red-eyes gets hurt.

If Red-eyes' armor and skills still hold out, there is still the telekinetic strangle-let him break free from that. If he's too dumb or stubborn to flee after that, he deserves to get killed. Assuming he runs, the NPC will be assigned to go after the rebel scum wearing such armor. As above, Red-eyes will likely have to ditch his armor to avoid his nemesis.

In both cases, think like a modern-day police detective. The Empire has a few competent folks in it. Plant an informant in the places where such improved armor can be bought. The new armor leads them straight to Red-eyes and perhaps his friends. If the Imperials sabotage the new suit of armor just in case Red-eyes outwits them, and he does, he's left with a good suit of armor he dares not wear, or he must try to get a new suit through dubious sources. (Is the armor rumored to be for sale actually an Imperial trap?)

4. One of the Droids respectfully points out that Red-eyes' suit seems to be radioactive after the last battle. Red-eyes and every character on the ship will die before they can get to another planet. The armor has to be ditched.

S. D. Anderson
Whittier CA

Robert: Wow, that's some incredible armor your player has in your STAR WARS game! I have two possible suggestions that may help your problem.

First, the metal used to create such powerful armor may have long-term, unpleasant side effects. Blood poisoning, skin rashes, bone deterioration, bad headaches, impotence—use your imagination. You can pick a side effect that will give your player an interesting decision about his PC's priorities.

Another possibility would be to make the armor vulnerable to some common, simple effect. Sure it wards off heavy repeating blaster fire, but guess what? Sonics crumble the stuff to

dust! Maybe certain atmospheres cause rapid breakdowns in the metals molecular structure. Would you believe instant rust in water?

Please print my full address in case Mr. Rodger (or others) would like to respond.

Vicar Ben Ehrets
c/o Hope Lutheran Church
230 Christiana Road
New Castle DE 19720

I am writing with suggestions for Robert Rodger. Although I haven't played STAR WARS: The RPG, analogous situations in other games I know of have generated some interesting DM responses.

Start an arms race: How long do you think a group with the resources of the Empire will sit around while its bases are blown up by a hyper-armored character? The Empire is going to place at least a squad of Stormtroopers with equal (or better) armor at most installations. And the Empire will begin a crash program to figure out weapons that will get through that armor. Not to mention use of the Empire's agents, who will be alerted to try assassinations, kidnappings, etc., against the PC's less protected party and friends.

Imagine Red-eyes' surprise when he walks into the above-mentioned squad of Stormtroopers, whom his weapons can't touch, as they blast away at Red-eyes' armor? What happens when Red-eyes has to go through that squad to rescue his friends? And won't his party now have to acquire hyper-armor and new weapons just to stay even with Imperial forces? That's expensive, and the party will be no more powerful relative to anyone else than they were before (but they'll be a lot poorer!). Besides, if they're going to have to find those weapons and armor, that should be a couple of adventures in itself.

Imperial bases will also adopt tactics to neutralize the advantages of the armor. For instance, does the armor protect against gas attacks? Also, just because the armor protects Red-eyes from molten lava does not mean the armor allows Red-eyes to walk in lava (particularly if the lava is cooling and hardening rapidly)! A trap set to melt the rock under Red-eyes could trap him permanently if he gets cocky.

Equipment disadvantages: I don't know how armor is constructed in STAR WARS: The RPG; I guess some esoteric combination of exotic materials and electronics. If so, there are a number of unpleasant things you can do:

Red-eyes might, over time, develop an allergy to some exotic material vitally necessary to the armor. This results in an unsightly rash or an awful smell that comes through the armor. Then you can rule that Red-eyes can no longer deal directly with anyone unless he removes his armor for, say, three weeks.

After repeated use (and repeated blasting) of the armor, the metal will start to fatigue. The results could range from the mildly discomforting (the armor teleports 5' randomly every fifth time it is hit) to the really nasty (the armor begins to conduct energy through its gauntlets: Red-eyes takes 1-2 hp damage each time he uses an energy weapon such as a blaster or lightsaber). See the AD&D 1st Edition *Dungeon Masters Guide* tables on artifacts' malevolent effects (pages 162-163) or the list of character disadvantages in Hero Games' CHAMPIONS* system for other ideas.

Whatever the problem, Red-eyes will try to find someone to fix the armor. That should be good for an adventure or two: assume the armorsmith needs rescuing, is an Imperial spy, is halfway across the Galaxy, or some or all of

the above. When the armor is repaired, let it get fatigued again after a couple of gaming sessions (the smith warns Red-eyes that the armor is deteriorating, and no repairs can halt the process for long). Suddenly, the armor will become a valued artifact used only on special occasions.

Sentient armor: This is like the intelligent swords of fantasy RPG games. Let enough hits scramble the circuitry of the armor so that the armor suddenly develops sentience! The AD&D 1st Edition DMG is full of fun ideas for the armor. (My favorite is having the armor require Red-eyes to encrust it with gems before it will function; watch the character's finances drain! Then, of course, the finery will be damaged, and the armor will insist on replacements.)

At some point, make the armor demand to be plugged into the ship's library or local planetary library. Then you can give the armor a philosophy. Acceptable philosophies for combat armor include pacifism, cowardice, the futility of struggle ("Why should I protect you? You'll only die anyway!"), vegetarianism ("I won't let you shoot animals, even if they're shooting you. After all, I'll protect you!"), etc.

No matter what the philosophy, the armor is not going to have a human point of view. ("Are those aliens tolerating Imperials? If they don't shoot every Imperial citizen immediately, they must be enemies!") In each encounter, the armor will try to act out its philosophy, whether Red-eyes wants it to or not.

The armor might identify with one particular group and not allow Red-eyes to harm them. ("I watch Empire TV, and Imperial Guardsmen are always the heroes!") This is tricky to play; it has to be a group so rare the character won't often encounter them. It is all too tempting to throw them in whenever an adventure becomes easy, but that will ruin the fun. Just the possibility of encountering that group will force Red-eyes to plan every adventure, even if he never sees that group again. The adventure won't be spoiled if Red-eyes never has to fight the group. Make it appear that careful planning saved Red-eyes once again!

The basic point to all of this is to either reduce the advantages the armor gives the character, or make the character suffer offsetting disadvantages. There can't be plenty of plot hooks for any of these problems. Just make sure it is still marginally better to keep the armor than let it go, and you can drive your player up a wall trying to use it!

Michael R. Federow
Chicago IL

I would like to respond to Robert Rodger's letter to "Forum" in the November issue.

First, you're not alone in making those two big mistakes: letting the players have too much money, and allowing upgrading of equipment with just money. I plead guilty to both counts.

Second, there's a lot of things you can do to correct this other than just saying "Poof! Your armor disappears." Same thing with the excess money. Keep in mind that the Rebel Alliance lacks funding, equipment, and technology.

A particularly good way to accomplish taking away armor, money, or any other toy is to make the character abandon it willingly. He may complain, but he will accept the reason for this. A few good ways are to have a situation where the character may drown if he doesn't get rid of the armor, or the armor becomes infested with disease or insects. The PC might have an allergic reaction to the suit, or the suit may become magnetized so he'll find himself sticking to the nearest wall.

One of my players has a bounty hunter (Vub-

ba Lette) who will soon find himself mistaken for a Droid and taken away to have his circuitry revamped. Or my favorite: The Empire searches for someone in a particular suit of armor, using detectors to find that suit. The PC might just wake up to find a bomb wired nicely into the suit, hooked to his blaster. Now, that's called hitting three birds with one stone (the suit, the blaster, and him).

As for the excess in money, that is easily taken care of. (Vubba Lette has over one million credits somehow.) Imperial taxes on everything are excellent (about 75% to 500% is about right). Also, just hike the prices somewhere by about 500%. Or have him mugged or pick-pocketed. Also, cut back on the money given from searched bodies. Obviously, he can't have all his money with him (or he's crazy), and he probably has a lot in a bank. Have a bank close or be seized by the Empire! That's real devastation.

Third, his equipment may not be allowed on certain planets. Have the PC be searched. Also, have the rebels ask to use a lot of Red-eyes' equipment for an extended time; this also tests his loyalty and motivations. Of course, the armor will protect him well, but with every hit it takes, it will deteriorate. It may not disintegrate, but it will need constant upkeep that is very expensive. The same goes for spaceships, the upkeep of which will run into the tens of thousands of credits per month.

With all that protection, the PC will have to be very large (just look at zero-gravity Stormtroopers) and will probably have trouble fitting through doors, halls, tunnels, etc. This can be very annoying, as can be the loss of jumping, running, lifting, and especially swimming skills. Another way to rid Red-eyes of his armor is that he may be given a rebel uniform to wear, making a trade-off between protection and prestige. Finally, he may not be able to store extra equipment in the suit.

You may wish to tailor your mission settings to require a lack of armor, such as a banquet or formal gathering where normal clothes or a uniform are needed. Particularly devious is to have an NPC offer a lot of credits for some item, but the cash turns out to be counterfeit. If you are going to mysteriously steal or confiscate something from the PC, make it serve the plot (e.g., his starship is swiped, so he needs to book passage, etc.).

Update the Stormtroopers, give them portable blaster shields, better guns, medical equipment for themselves, throwable personnel mines, and nets (and maybe even a few thermal detonators now and then). Establish firmly that from now on, skill points must be used to upgrade, and that Stormtroopers aren't wimps any more.

The greatest modification, though, is to include a weighting (encumbrance) system. For example, an average human can comfortably carry 22 kilograms (approximately 45 lbs.); any more creates dexterity problems. Red-eyes' suit could easily weigh 15 kg, leaving little space for anything else. A good guideline is 2-5 kg per 1d of protection, and about 1 kg per 1d of blaster damage. Thus, a character can carry only 5 kg on each arm, limiting blaster damage to 5d. Anything over 5 kg is a heavy weapon, and grenades weigh 1 kg.

Dave Ewing
Calgary, Alberta

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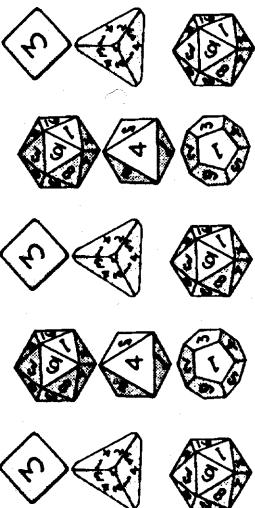
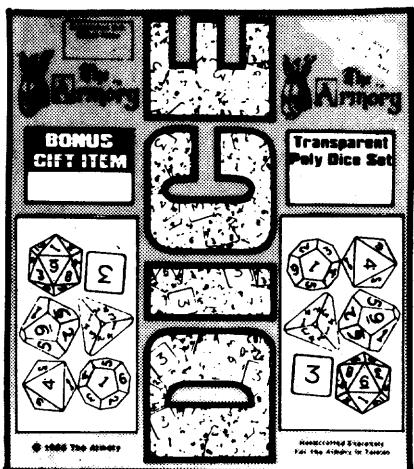
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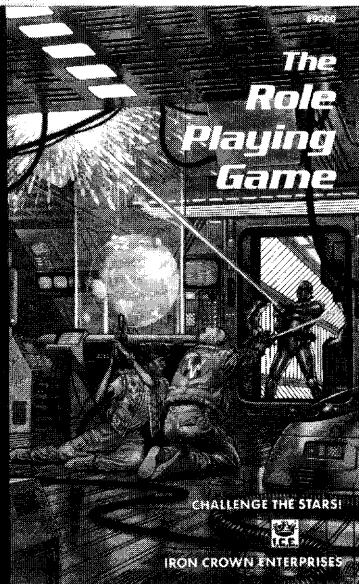
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The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

Part 17: The Serpent Peninsula revisited

by Bruce A. Heard

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from the Journals of
PRINCE HALDEMAR OF HAAKEN
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire
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PRINCESS ARK
Imperial Explorer, etc., etc.

Artwork by Jim Holloway

Cyprimir 12, 2000 AY: At long last, the Raj Tahal's construction in Jahore approached completion. There was nothing left to do that the gentle people of Putnabad could not do for themselves. Talasar had finally recovered from his wounds and was back on duty at my side. With great fanfare and fireworks, we bid the maharajah farewell. At sundown, we set a southwesterly course heading for the Most Serene Divinarchy of Yavdlom.

Yarani was kind enough to teach some of us the basics of the Yavdlom language.

Cyprimir 18: The Coast of Jaibul and the parched beaches of the Sind Desert proved so far to be of little interest, being

an endless succession of sand dunes and rocky outcroppings crisscrossed by tribal caravans and desert thieves. At night, small raiding parties of orcs and goblins often became active, scouting caravan campsites and oases. No combat took place, however.

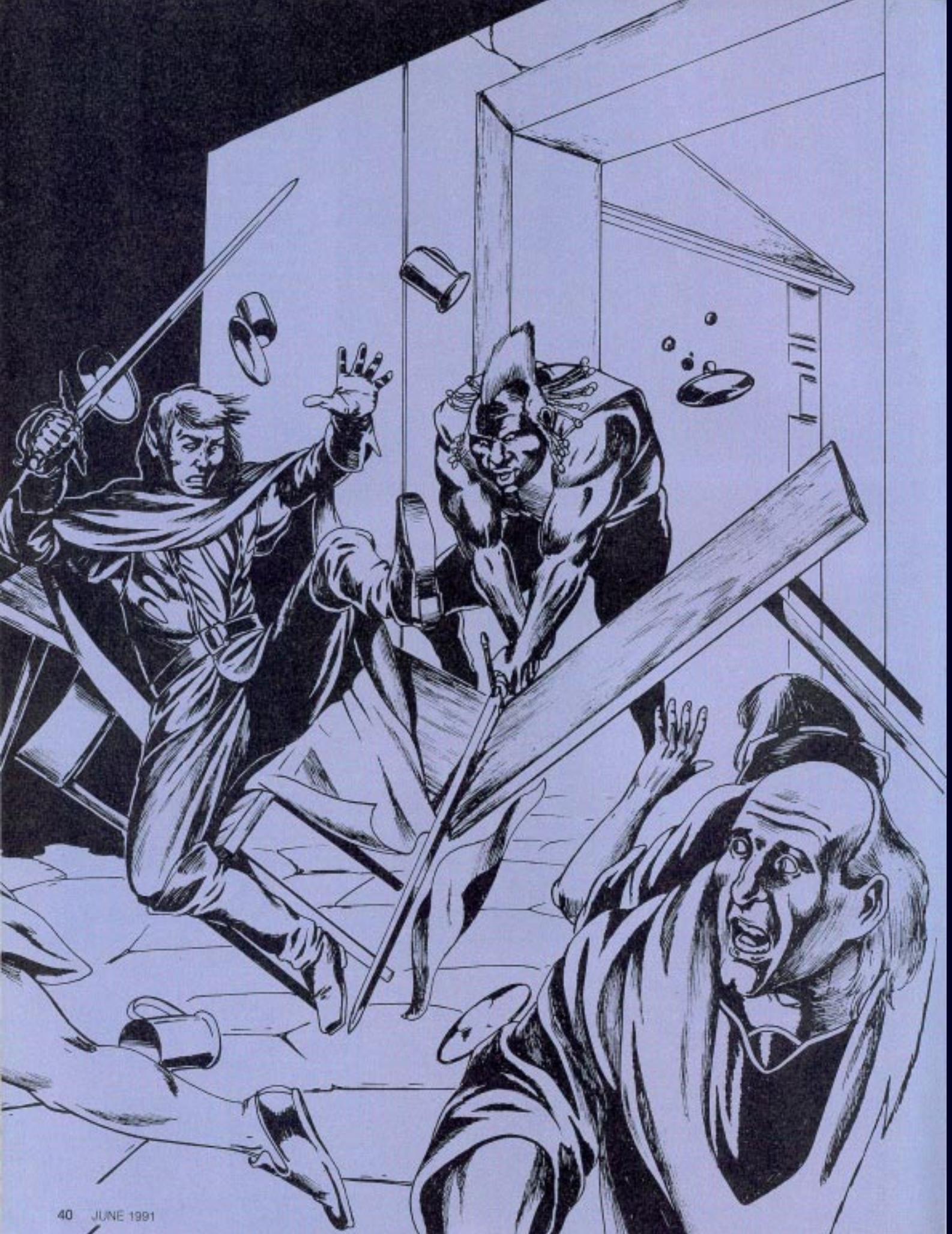
Surprisingly, we observed numerous merchantmen that bore Minrothad or Jaibul colors, sailing off the sun-baked coast. Their waterlines ran deep under the surface, betraying some heavy cargo, perhaps from the city state of Slagovich.

Yarani spoke of his fabled nation. It was a realm governed by prophets, and its clergy were soothsayers and seers that he described as the Great Watchers, Historians of Humanity. Their power over the people was so great that once their entire nation migrated to the Arm of the Immortals, far to the west, as a tribute to their Immortal patrons. Centuries later, a new generation returned and retook their ancient lands from the jungle and the swamp. This was a fascinating place that I wouldn't miss for the world!

Cyprimir 24: It has been a few days now since we flew past the Western Thanegioth Archipelago. We had reached Thanegia Island, at the southern edge of the Serpent Peninsula. Despite omnipresent jungle and swamp on Thanegia, Yarani revealed villages and small towns hiding under a thick tropical haze. They clung precariously to the sides of steep hills or were surrounded by small patches of pasture land. These were the first settlements of the Yavdlom Divinarchy that we could see.

We reached our final destination just before sunset. There, sprawling before us, lay the Most Limpid City of Thanopolis. Yarani pointed out this was a name Minrothad explorers had given to the city. Native Yavdlom called their capital Tanakumba. It stood on a few dozen small islands among





a very complicated network of rivers, canals, and lakes that led to a chaotic delta on the city's south side. Imposing stone buildings dominated the center of each island, while wooden structures stretched out toward the river banks. On the banks, a jumble of light dwellings on bamboo stilts, tiny houseboats, and floating shacks invaded the murky city waters. Every where, crowds of people ran along pontoons and streets, rushing to fulfill their daily chores before nightfall.

The most fascinating features of Tanakumba were the clusters of huge shells sitting in the city's many lakes. These graceful edifices rose from no less than 30' to 100' up. Yarani, his chest swollen with pride, identified these as the Abodes of the Seers. Indeed, we could see hundreds of small windows on each shell, balconies cascading with colorful tropical flowers, and elegant bridges that arched between the giant shells. A ballet of sail-boats took place at the water level, ferrying people and goods between the isles.

This is not to say Tanakumba had no streets, for many paved streets and a few large avenues ran through the small islands. Palm trees swayed in the evening breeze, alternating with neat rows of large potted plants along the malls where pebble mosaics in the pavement displayed colorful patterns. The important thoroughfares had massive, river-spanning bridges. The roads all converged toward the spiritual center of the Most Serene Divinarchy of Yavdlom: the Great Prophet's palace in the highest city-shell of Tanakumba. Yarani bowed deeply before this national monument.

By nightfall, the *Princess Ark* finally anchored at a large terrace of the palace. Although we noticed crowds of spectators watching from nearby islands, few of the palace's residents seemed to care about the massive *Princess Ark*. No guards were to be seen anywhere. Seeing my surprise, Yarani explained "They do not fear you. They know you." He then suggested we stay aboard until invited into the palace, which would probably happen in the morning. Yarani then left the ship, saying he had to meet relatives he knew in the palace.

The events that follow were entered into The ship's log after the officers' return to the Princess Ark

Cyprimir 25—Haldemar: At dawn and without notice, a herald of short stature entered the ceremonial deck and elbowed his way past the boltmen and crew, up to my position.

"Make way, make way, subjects of little consequence," he trumpeted. Looking around him, the fat little man then negligently waved at me and added, "Yes, yes, we knew you were coming. You, the one who seems to matter-please come along swiftly! The Great Prophet is a busy person." By that, he apparently meant me. I was pleased to learn that I amounted to something!

I quietly followed the prickly squab to the upper levels of the palace. At last, I met the Great Prophet—Yarani! With a kind smile, he waved his disciples out and gestured me to sit on a large pouf. Small cups full of a black, steaming beverage sat on a golden tray next to some ring-shaped pastries. Heavily sweetened, the hitter drink became a delectable treat.

"Of course, you are surprised," said Yarani, between two sips. I had not spoken a word. "I did not mean to deceive you. I simply desired to enjoy a fine journey on a very fine ship without the annoying pomp and etiquette."

I couldn't believe a man of his importance would waste time in such a frivolous endeavor. But again, he smiled as I thought those very words and added, "Well, it had always been clear to me that Sésékumbo, my brother, would fall before the rajah of Jaibul. We both knew this would be the end of his path in this world. His ultimate fate was to warn you of a time yet to come — a destiny that he has fulfilled well. I came to Jaibul as his final witness."

"But, Your Grace," I began, "How could you have not used your prophetic visions to save your own brother? How could you have risked being captured yourself?"

Yarani poured himself a second cup. "Fate, you see, is the result of Immortal will. And who would I be to meddle with the wishes of Immortals? I was indeed blessed with the power of true sight, but it is wise not to use it inconsiderately. Would you want to incur the wrath of the Immortals? My own destiny is already written in the Annals of Yav, and so is yours, admiral. Our fate was to meet—here or in Jaibul, what difference does this make? You came, and you returned me here, didn't you?"

Although I admired the Great Prophet's style, I could share neither his incredible fatalism nor his blind respect for the Immortals. I am a gambler. If I can't win, I make it so that I can't lose, either, I make my own destiny—and to heck with what Immortals think! With a power like Yarani's, I could do amazing things.

The prophet chuckled softly, "Tsk, tsk. Such amusing thoughts! You'll learn however, at your own time and place. But, until then, please listen to my advice and heed Sésékumbo's vision. Great powers are growing in the dark, and you, my friend, have a place in their future. As you so succinctly put it, you will weave your own destiny. But you've yet to discover it."

Yarani would not elaborate on the subject of Sésékumbo's vision. Judging from what I saw of the vision in Jaibu, there was nothing charming about the future. I gazed at length into the prophet's eyes, but all I felt was the burden of a mysterious and terrible fate now on my shoulders. Nations and perhaps whole empires were at stake. This much I could sense. His Grace Yarani bade me farewell, and I retired to a guest room in the palace.

Cyprimir 25—Tkilasar: Soon after the admiral disembarked, I ordered part of

the crew off the ship on a 12-hour leave. Unexpectedly, this created quite a clamor among the native boatmen, who furiously competed for their share of the business, all to the amusement of the remaining crew aboard the *Princess*. Small barges flocked beneath the skyship, peddling fresh fruit, shells, flowers, ivory, up to the singular services of ephebes and maidens. But many hopeful faces among the crew turned sober at the sight of Lady Ahovombe, hands on her hips, frowning severely and saying, "Not on this ship you won't, thank you!"

I allowed Xerdon to leave with the crew, to keep an eye on their behavior among the locals as well as to observe and enjoy this wondrous city. As for myself, I left Raman in charge of administering common duties aboard while I retired to my quarters. Thanegia's weather was far too humid for me, which the wounds I received on Hakh reminded me. I needed to meditate on all that had happened these past weeks. Wounds taken on outer planes are always difficult to heal.

Cyprimir 25—Xerdon: The streets of Tanakumba were amazingly busy. After fending off tenacious peddlers and hordes of children, some of us managed to get past the populous mercantile street. Others of the crew remained there, spending fistfuls of Alphatian gold crowns to the joy of the native merchants. Souvenirs, trinkets, and other shiny bric-a-brac changed hands by the bagful, without even a whisper of haggling. Already some of my boltmen, wearing ridiculous feather head-dresses—no doubt purchased at exorbitant prices—rode through the cheering crowd on bamboo palanquins. Fools.

Soon, I found myself walking down a narrow street between a row of large stone buildings. People there didn't seem to mind the presence of a foreigner. I could not avoid noticing their strange similarity to elvenkind. These ebony-skinned people, although tall even by human standards, displayed graceful facial features—and, most notably, slightly pointy ears. Among the decorative patterns and colorful paintings adorning their clothes and houses, I discerned a few stylized elven patterns. Even their writing, although clearly unique to the Yavdlom culture, showed traces of elven calligraphy. There must have been a friendly elven presence among the Yavdlom many generations ago.

The hot noon sun hung high in the sky. I stopped at a tavern. Everyone became suddenly silent as I stepped in, staring at me through clouds of pipe smoke. Slowly, they turned back to their own business as I ordered.

I had merely sipped from a buffalo horn of ale when a towering man walked up to me. The white mohawk on his head made him look even taller. "Eh, mohn," he said with easy menace. "Is no markie place for strangers. We make de tasty stew of elves hee'."

So much for the friendly elven connection. I chose to ignore the insult and was turning away when he slowly pulled out a knife. "How much for ye pointy ears, mohn?" he asked.

Everyone was watching. He made a move toward me, and I jumped to my feet. My sword swiftly came out of its sheath—and just as quickly, knives and staves appeared among the crowd.

The sound of shattering glass broke the silence. I saw Ramissur near the counter, holding a broken bottle in one hand and a wand unsheathed in his other, and Leo, nervously fidgeting with a bizarre contraption. Luckily, they'd chosen the same tavern as I. It was not yet an even match.

but better now.

The man before me smiled. "Just ye and me, thun!" A bastard sword was tossed to him from the crowd, but I could deal with that. The onlookers formed a circle, and the duel began.

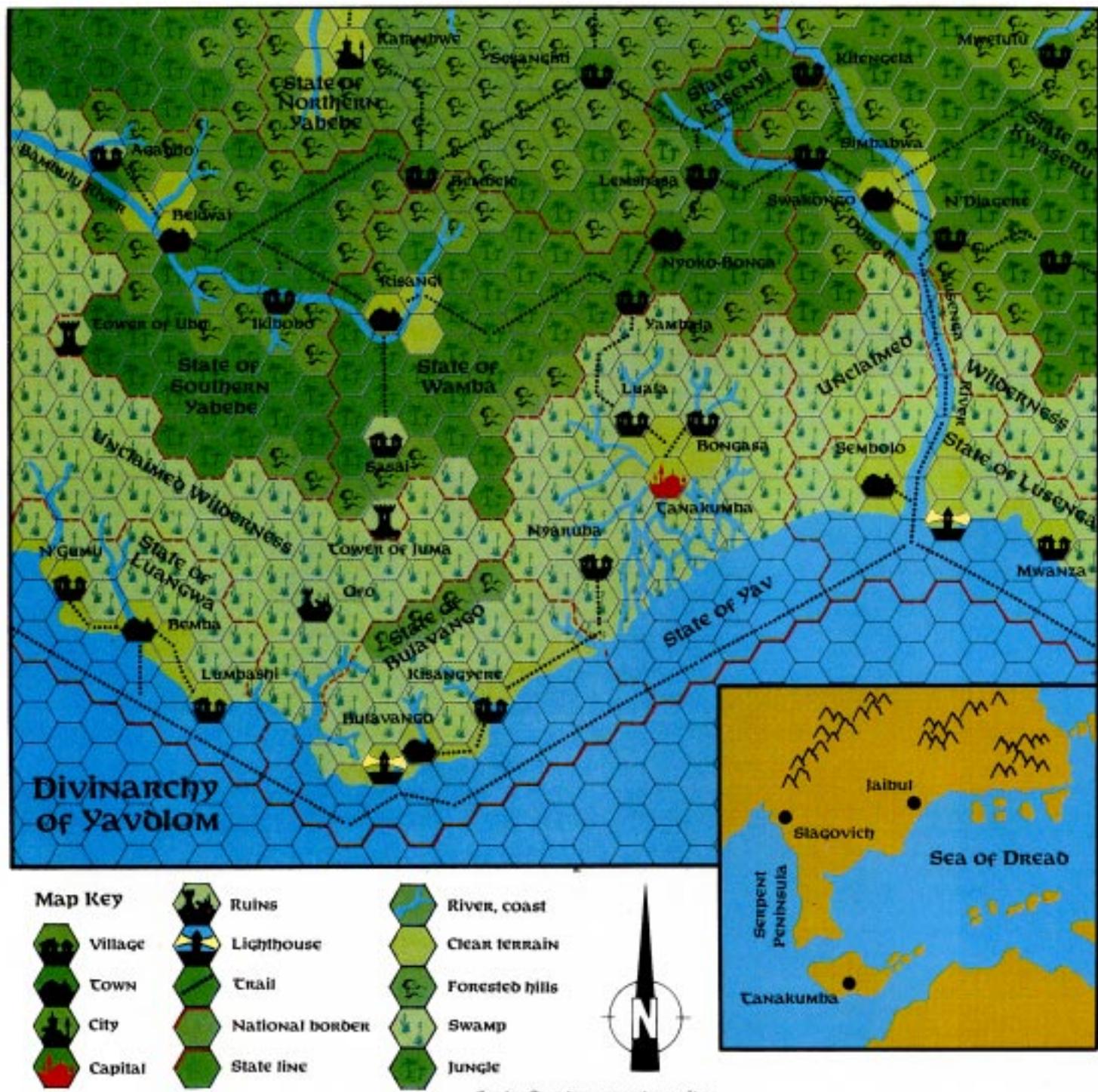
Despite his large size, he was quick and accurate. His crushing strength and humming blade spelled death at every blow. It took all of my skill to fend him off. On the bright side, the man had an equally hard time trying to keep me from reaching him.

Our fight went on. Tables, pots, windows, and most everything on the shelves paid the price of our duel. In a single strike, the man smashed a support for a wooden stairway, which then collapsed

under the weight of the spectators on it. This caused my opponent to laugh with a roar. He was clearly enjoying himself. The fight seemed to go on for hours.

Then, without warning, he stuck his sword into the floor and wiped his hands. "Is cool, mohn! I be done if ye be, too." Something in his manner said he was sincere, so I carefully let down my guard. There was no point in further battle. This man was my equal in combat. He then produced two huge tobacco rolls. "Have a smoke, friend! De name be Swetanga Nyanga."

Nyanga lit the rolls in a candle flame as the satisfied crowd settled down again, and he handed one to me. I took one puff



of the thing and knew I was in trouble. How anyone could smoke this was beyond my understanding. The smell was frightening, and the aftertaste was even worse. And soon it was making me sick.

Heedless, Nyanga roared with laughter again. "If all ye boys be half as good, ye gots me blade, mohn. Be hackin' desert raiders on de northern borders ain' no fun life. So be Tanakumba's, too."

Nyanga had potential. We could use a warrior such as he—and we could trade fighting skills, too. We discussed the pay as I grew even sicker over the nauseating smoke. The last I remembered that day was Ramissur and Leo gravely watching over me, and Nyanga laughing thunderously. I hate smoke.

Cyprimir 26—Haldemar: It wasn't long after I had left His Grace Yarani and settled down for the evening that I had a dream. I saw an ugly red mark circling the prophet's throat. He pointed at something behind me, and I woke up abruptly, just in time to catch some movement in the room. Someone was in the dark with me, holding a wire. I could barely see him in the moonlight filtering through the curtains. His intentions were plain. Without delay, I gave him a taste—a rather unpleasant one—of my closest wand. He raised his hands to protect his face at the last second, which cost him dearly. Alas, the thug's sizzling remains left little to be learned from them.

The dream bothered me. I feared for Yarani. I left quietly, suspecting the presence of other killers, and I was correct. I saw many dead people—all strangled—on my way to the prophet's quarters. There were no guards in the palace; everyone here relied on the prescience of their seers. They should have known ahead of time of any wrongdoing, yet no alarm had been sounded.

My dagger throbbed as I entered Yarani's antechamber, which confirmed my worst fears. Two masked men rushed at me from behind a large porcelain vase, brandishing daggers. Forthwith, more sizzling flesh befouled the palace's marble floor, and I pressed onward.

But I had been too slow. I noticed a shadow slipping out of Yarani's room, into a secret passage. Yarani lay next to his bed, a wire still locked around his neck. I relieved him of the deadly device. Perhaps Zdasar would be able to gain Razud's goodwill and restore Yarani to life.

Suddenly, a woman entered the room and screamed. She was one of Yarani's aides. Before I could do anything, she ran away, screaming "Murder! Assassins!"

I had more pressing things to do than to clear myself of the accusations that would inevitably follow. I entered the secret passage and pulled the door shut. I had to find out who was behind the slaying. A narrow flight of stairs spiraled down as far as I could see.

Much later, I reached an abandoned network of catacombs. Judging from the

mildew-covered bones and stonework, this was an elven sanctuary. There was no time to ponder that piece of information. The gallery was partially filled with water, probably from the swamp or the city's rivers. I could hear someone moving ahead, splashing through the water. There was no point in soiling my boots. *Flying invisible* would be a suitable way to quietly catch up with the fugitive—or, as I discovered, fugitives.

Shortly, I caught up with several masked men. They reached an exit and stepped into a canoe, pulling their masks off. I was surprised to see one of them was a native Yavdlom—a traitor, obviously someone who knew his way in the palace. The traitor snickered. "You should have seen it. The man didn't even fight. I pulled the wire and he died without a prophetic word. Peh, what a wimp!"

I was tempted to fry this happy bunch, but I needed to know more. They paddled down the river to one of the city islands, then got off at a pier that led to an elegant mansion. Soon, the thugs met in a room before a large mirror, just like the one I saw in Jaibul. I landed silently and hid near them.

Danger was close; my dagger throbbed again. A familiar dark figure appeared in the mirror. He exchanged messages with the traitor, then nodded. I was ready for the dark figure to attempt something, but the danger did not come from him. Suddenly, a dozen men burst into the room and hurled darts at the traitor and his accomplices. I found myself accidentally caught in the volley and felt a burning sting spread through my back. They were using darts with poison, the sort that paralyzes.

Helpless, I could only behold what happened next. While paralyzed, the traitor and his accomplices were coldly executed. The aggressors' leader exchanged messages with the dark figure in the mirror, bowed, and walked away. This would have been all—but, by some rotten luck, one of the men stumbled over my *invisible* body. These people knew their business, and they promptly tied me to one of the pillars. I spent the night there, unable to sleep or move.

Cyprimir 26—Talasar: Common duties aboard were carried out as usual until dawn, when I observed a wave of boats approaching the ship. The boats were crowded with furious citizens toting pitchforks, sticks, and torches. The *Princess* herself grew nervous at the many sources of flame, and she began to pull on her lines. Something terrible must have happened during the night.

There was no sign of the admiral, Xerdon, or the crew on leave. I suspected treachery. I could not allow the mob to seize the ship; they might burn her to ashes. I ordered the *Princess* to take a position above a patch of low clouds while I went below and sought an audience with the prophet.

As I entered the palace, I met a group of armed soldiers. The palace had not been guarded earlier, and I remember thinking that these must have been called in for a crisis. I was apprehended at once and was taken to the herald who came aboard the day before. He was shaking with anger as he sputtered that several High Seers and the Great Prophet had been assassinated during the night. Worst of all, he said that the admiral had been seen strangling the prophet! Haldemar was said to have fled. I could believe none of this.

I was denied an audience with the Regent Seer, since all surviving High Seers were conferring—in a sealed room—until such time they could decide who the next Great Prophet would be. This could take days. I was detained and kept under heavy guard. I decided to wait. Razud would guide my path.

Cyprimir 26—Xerdon: Coming out of my temporary weakness during the night, I felt myself roughly carried by two rather loud drunkards. I was hanging between Ramissur and Nyanga, with Leo carrying my gear. Obviously, the two brutes got along well, with kegs of ale helping. I prepared to castigate Ramissur for so contemptuously ignoring Imperial Navy Regulations that specifically prohibited crew members from fraternizing with the natives. Unfortunately, rather than words a shameful gurgle came out, followed by some quantity of undigested substance.

"Eh, mohn," shouted Nyanga happily, "I be thinkin' ye chief woke up!"

I had no wish to expand on the subject, which was just as well as a vociferous mob came down the street at us at that moment, screaming insults and raising their fists. All four of us ended up in a prison cell, along with the remainder of the crew on leave. Soldiers came several hours later and took Nyanga away. He was subsequently returned (rather, was thrown into the cell), having obviously been beaten up. He said he had been accused of treachery and duplicity with strangers who had killed the Great Prophet. This seemed like a frame-up. We had no idea what was happening.

Soon, the soldiers came back and attempted to drag me out. I supposed it was my turn to be questioned. I feigned sickness—an easy thing, considering my condition—and the crew did the rest. The soldiers were swiftly neutralized, and the other guards surrendered quickly. After recovering our impounded equipment, Nyanga led us out. We escaped through a metal grate opening over the river, entering a forest of petrified tree trunks, supporting this part of the city. There, our group discovered the city's poor, pariahs, and criminals living on urban trash and unhealthy fish. They fled as we seized some of their canoes.

We had hoped to reach the Princess, but as we entered the open lake, we observed with horror the ship taking off without us! On our right, a flotilla of angry natives

paddling toward the *Princess* now spotted our canoes. We turned around and headed back for the slovenly undercity. We lost our pursuers, but we ran astray as well. We ended up in a maze of tunnels the water had dug into the rock. We soon discarded the canoes and continued on foot. Mud and slime were everywhere. Perhaps we would find a way out of this stench by nightfall and leave the city. We could then signal the *Princess* from some vantage point in the jungle.

Cyprimir 27—Haldemar: "We've got the man, sir! We tied him to the pillar after he killed Swetanga Jio." Soldiers spewed into the room. I was rudely lifted from the pillar to which I had been tied since the previous day. Every bone in my body ached. The effects of the poison were wearing off, but I could move only the tips of my fingers. Spells were out of the question.

I was taken to the palace. The Great Prophet had been propped up on a dais, in a meditating position. Makeup covered the wounds on his neck. Members of his family and people close to him were quietly mourning his death. One of them was Yarani's aide, the woman who saw me in Yarani's bedchamber. "Is he the one you saw, Yaounda?" asked a soldier. She nodded. The man turned back and hit me in the temple with the hilt of his scimitar. I lost consciousness.

Cyprimir 27—Vhlasar: At long last, an elderly seer came in. She ordered the guard out and sat next to me. "Greetings. It seems an explanation is overdue! Please accept my apology and that of my peers. We should have anticipated your mishap. None of this is your fault. You see, my predecessor knew of his imminent death. There is no bad feeling among the seers about his departure. Unfortunately, it will take our common people some time to get over the error of their ways and their pain. My predecessor was much loved by his people."

The old lady, it developed, was the Great Prophet's successor. The decision for his replacement had been made swiftly, by Yavdlom standards. "It seems an old foe of ours has found a way to harm our order," she said. "We are dangerous to him, for we know of his future.. Because of this, he desires our end. He knows of you also and will seek your demise. Beware of a man in black."

She covered her mouth and said, "Oh, but I forget—we must go now. Please come quickly!"

Cyprimir 27—Xerdon: "At last! The end of the tunnel!" Thanks to Leo, we had found a slope upward to freedom through the back side of a sliding stone panel, perhaps a secret door. I peeked, but no one was around. It seemed like a rich abode, perhaps someone's mansion. The sun had not yet dawned, so we risked a quick sortie.

Our little troop sneaked past several guards, ducking from room to room, seeking a way out. This proved a difficult task.

Soon, the sun came out—and all became worse. An old servant saw us and sounded an alarm. "The assassins! The assassins are back!"

Assassins? There was no time for questions. We ran down a hallway as soldiers poured out behind us. We rushed into a room and stumbled into a large group of mourners kneeling before the Great Prophet himself! Worse yet, a soldier was about to behead our admiral, who was prostrated at the soldier's feet. I quickly disarmed the man as guards stormed into the room. The fight was a brutal one. Native soldiers kept pouring in.

Then, suddenly, the soldiers pulled back, and the battle stopped. I ordered likewise. At the door stood Talasar and a lady seer, the soldiers kneeling before her. She somberly gauged the damage and bloodshed in the room, then sighed deeply. After much talk and explanation, the guards picked up their wounded and left the palace.

"Good," said the lady seer. "I see Swetanga Nyanga has decided to join you. Your path will be filled with excitement. This fine warrior is also known as the Bane of Jaibul." Nyanga saluted her praise. "You must leave now," she finished, and waved us away.

Xdasar got the admiral to his feet, and soon the *Princess Ark* returned from her position above the clouds.

Cyprimir 28—Haldemar: Just before leaving Tanakumba, I paid a last visit to the ruffians who had executed Swetanga Jio—Jio the traitor, that is. But they had already vacated the house. There was no trace of the mirror nor of the thugs' bodies. It was imperative that we find out who the man in black was. Fortunately, I had a good look at the aggressors, especially their leader. My crystal ball would be helpful in this quest.

Our new recruit, Nyanga, the Bane of Jaibul, is a swetanga, formerly a noble with power who now remains as a knight errant of sorts. Nyanga explained that this situation was unique to the Yavdlom culture and politics. Some nobles did not always relish the idea of relinquishing their titles and possessions in the name of destiny. Jio may have betrayed the Yavdlom in response to his recent demotion to swetanga status. Jio indeed had power in the north, said Nyanga, where he commanded a fleet in charge of hunting Jaibul's slavers. Somehow, he fell into the clutches of the man in black. Perhaps he was promised power elsewhere but was ultimately paid back in kind for his evil deed. What more wicked justice than that of another murderer?

But Tanakumba was behind us. My *crystal ball* would not yield secrets about the man in black; magic protected him well from prying eyes. We would have to settle for his ruffians, and all indications pointed to Slagovich, a town to the northwest. So be it.

To be continued...

The Yavdlom people

The Yavdlom Divinarchy is a society ruled by soothsayers and prophets. The talent for prediction separates the laymen from the clergy and provides the basis for an entire clerical hierarchy. The different ranks among the seers range from those who have latent abilities to those who are nearly all-seeing diviners.

The caste of laymen is also divided among "those who matter" and those who don't. The former are people who will affect their environment in some noticeable fashion during their lives. There are different degrees of effectiveness; someone who will lead an army into a historically meaningful battle "matters less" than a future emperor who will conquer and rule nations for decades. This serves as the basis for the Yavdlom nobility.

Nobility is a relatively temporal thing. One loses nobility once his destiny no longer affects the world around him (hence he "no longer matters"). These destitute nobles, the swetangas, retain a status equivalent to knights in a common medieval society.

To be a noble, one must be able to affect at least 1,000 people sometime in his life, bringing about drastic and lasting changes in their lives. This makes a man a *yobar* (baron). At 5,000 people, it makes him a *kwa'a* (count); at 25,000, an *uvundi* (viscount); at 100,000, a *m'doli* (marquis); at 600,000, a *djangasa* (duke); at 3,000,000, a *mokubu* (monarch); and, beyond 15,000,000 people, a *somba* (the supreme incarnation of one of the many Immortal spirits in the Yavdlom pantheon—a king of kings among mortals). Those titles are usually added before the recipient's name.

The clergy chooses the nobles and provides them with a ruling charge commensurate with their rank, such as the rulership of an army, a dominion, a town, a city, or a whole state. The Yavdlom Divinarchy otherwise is a federation of medieval states under the administration of an overlord. Although tribal homelands correspond more or less to the states' geographic areas, partition of the land by tribes has not been in effect for two centuries. Tribal environment affects only cultural background and regional accents. As with all noble offices, the charge of overlord is mandated by the clergy (obviously "one-who-matters-most" in the eyes of the clergy). Nobility is accountable for the enforcement of the laws created by the clergy, the economy, and the defense of the land. The clergy unequivocally controls the legislative and judicial branches of Yavdlom government.

As a cultural and philosophical trait, the clergy never willingly reveals what it foresees. According to the Precepts of Yav, the greatest prophet in their history, holy ones must not interfere with the course of history set by the Immortals. Yav is now the Immortal heading the Yavdlom pantheon. His remains are thought to be buried

Continued on page 11

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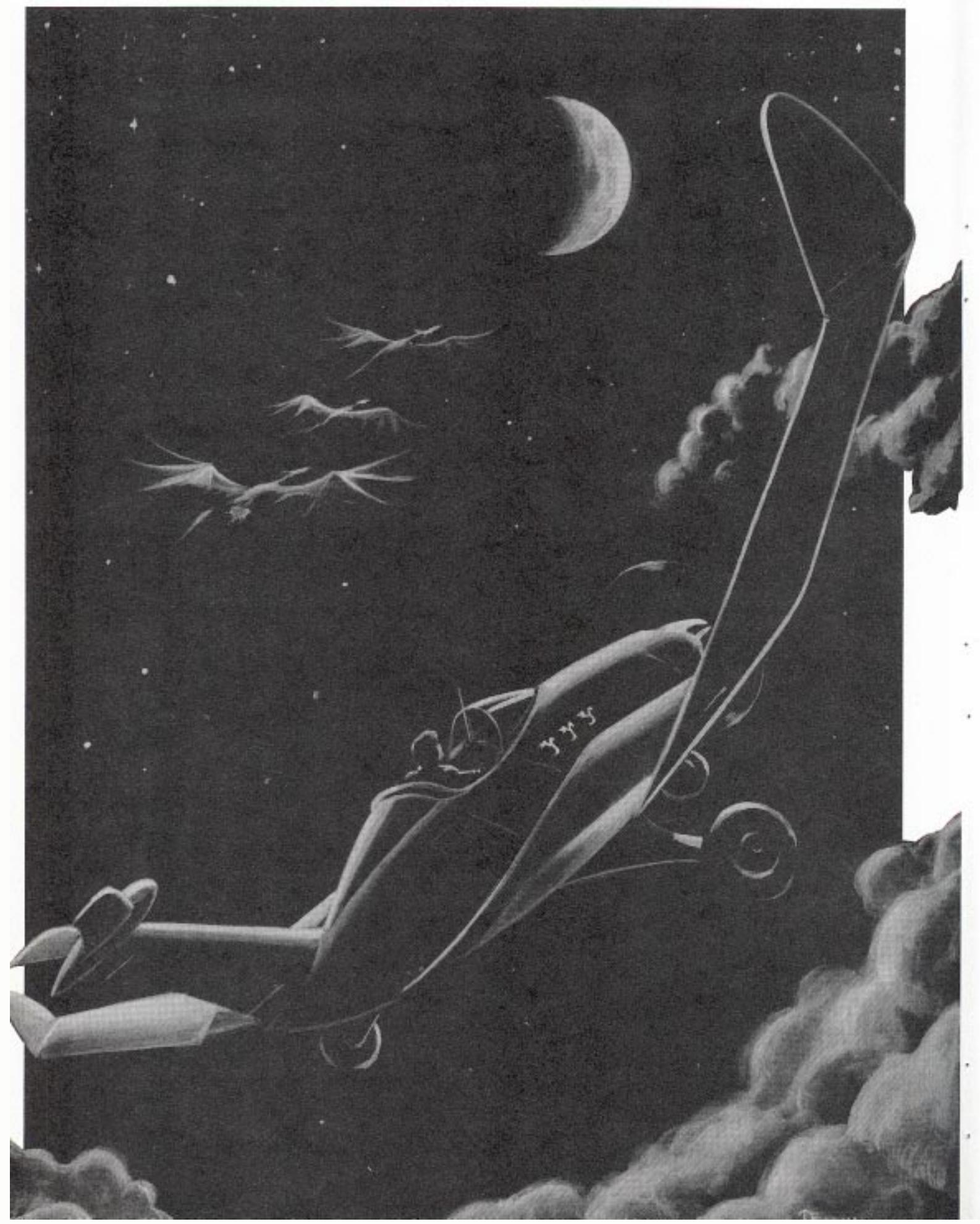
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spotted the wyverns just west of Forsyth. There were three in the wing, holding a ragged line and beating their way home. I was above the beasts, so I killed the engine and tried for a silent approach, but they saw me coming.

Two executed quick diving turns to the right. The third, burdened by the prey it carried, made a more leisurely curve to the left. I flipped the plane's small engine back to life and jerked hard on the control stick to follow the slowest wyvern, but even weighed down, the little beast was more maneuverable than me.

By the time I'd gotten the plane's nose around, the wyvern had dropped down into the tops of the twisted cedar trees below and was looking for a place to go to ground. I accelerated until it was almost directly below me, very close. I could see the multitude of veins in the thin membrane of its green wings as they spread wide. The bloody bundle in its claws was still moving.

I twisted the rifle downward and squeezed off a single shot, more in frustration than out of hope of hitting it. I got lucky. The shot didn't connect, but the crack of the rifle startled the wyvern. It dropped the lamb it was carrying into the forest and started to flap hard for the sandstone bluffs along the Yellowstone. It picked up speed quickly, but I was pretty sure I could hold on as long as the creature didn't get too acrobatic. When we were both clear of the trees and flying across a valley full of sage and sheep-trimmed grass, I got off two quick shots. On the second shot, the wyvern flipped over and began a ragged downward spiral that brought it to ground in a mass of creosote scrub.

The landing was a bit rough on the plane, but I managed to bring it to a jarring stop. Then I took the pistol from the door holster and went to finish the job.

I found the wyvern huddling between the narrow walls of a dry wash. With its accordion wings folded in, it looked terribly small, scarcely bigger than a child. Its prominent ribs made it look half starved. From the blood, one of my shots must have gone through the complex joint at the junction of its wing and shoulder blade. The wyvern turned its horny muzzle back over its shoulder and hissed at me softly. I shot it right in the center of its triangular back.

It wasn't until I grabbed it by the tail and turned it over that I saw the bold markings on its belly, a striking set of colored bands that looked a lot like a sunset. It was really quite beautiful. When I saw them, I started cussing.

Carl Madely from the state conservation department was waiting for me when I taxied up to the hanger. He stood by until I'd gotten out of the plane and stowed away some of my gear, then he came over.

"Any luck today, Bill?" he asked.

"Three," I said. I pulled open the velcro flap on the cloth side of the plane to uncover the game bin. Then I grabbed the first wyvern by the neck and handed it to Carl.

He took it over to an empty spot on the tarmac and laid it out carefully, expanding its wings fully and stretching out its neck and tail. With a tape measure and a pocket recorder in his hands, he began to make his report.

A Wing of Wyverns

by M. C. Sumner

Illustrations by Dan Frazier

"Green wyvern, male, adult. Wingspan 6.1 meters. Head to vent, 1.4 meters. Vent to tail 1.2 meters. Taken September 4, 1990 by William Mackie." He folded the wings back against the body and bound them with a length of string. Then he put the hook of a portable scale into the wyvern's teeth and held the animal at arm's length. It weighed about twenty kilos. Big for a male.

The second one was another Green. I'd picked both out of the same wing that was circling a poultry barn near Miles City. Then I handed Carl the wyvern that had been stealing the sheep.

"Boy," he said, feeling the weight in his hand. "This one's a whopper." Carl didn't notice the belly till he had it laid out.

"Blast it, Bill! It's a Painted!"

I shrugged. "Sorry, they look just like Greenies from the top."

"Well, they sure don't look the same to the statisticians back at the capitol. Western Painted wyvern's on the endangered species list. You'll be lucky if your licence is only suspended instead of revoked for good."

Carl didn't have much more to say to me that night. I made sure to get the varmint bounty for the greens right away—I figured I might need it if I was going to be out of work for awhile—then I went across the street to the Sky Gator Bar.

The girl came in when I was on my third or fourth drink. I don't drink much, so any number of drinks above one soon becomes kind of blurry.

Sleek. It's not a word I use a lot, but that was the first word that came to my mind when I saw her. She had a heart-shaped face, big dark eyes, a wide mouth, and smooth brown hair cut very short. The worn pair of jeans and long-sleeved jersey shirt might have looked junky on somebody else but fit her very well. Sleek was definitely the word. Just looking at her I could feel my heart accelerating and the blood starting to sing in my ears.

She stood in the doorway for a moment, blinking. As soon as her eyes had adjusted to the dark interior of the Sky Gator, she headed toward me. I thought maybe this wasn't going to be such a bad day after all.

"William Mackie?" She even had pretty teeth.

"That's me," I said, and I stuck out my hand. She took it and began to pump.

"I'm Janey Bochie," she said. Then she said something else. Over the noise in the bar and the buzzing in my ears, all I could pick out was the word "conservation."

That one word was enough to send my temperature down ten degrees. "What a waste," I said. I took my hand back and picked up my drink.

"What?"

"All my papers are in order. Anything else you want to know about the Painted, just ask the local worm police."

"I don't understand," she said.

I glanced over and saw that she did look a bit confused. "You aren't here about the Painted?" I said around a mouthful of vodka.

She shook her head.

"Then what do you want?"

"Everyone tells me you're the best in the state at tracking wyverns. Is that right?"

"Some people seem to think so."

"Good," she said. She climbed onto the bar stool next to me and flashed a smile that was fairly stunning in its brightness. There were mounted wyvern heads on the wall behind her; they seemed to be smiling, too. "I want to hire you."

"You want to hire me to kill wyverns?" I asked.

"Not kill them, just find them. Find one. Are you for hire?"

I doubted that she would be paying as much to locate the beasties as I got for killing them through the combination of state bounties and under-the-table funding from the local ranchers. But then again, it didn't look like I'd be collecting any bounties for a while.

I looked over at the girl. Her eyes were very large and very bright. Sometimes there are other considerations than money for taking a job.

"Would you like something to drink?" I asked.

"Is this an ultralight?" Even from right beside me in the passenger seat, she had to scream to be heard above the wind and engine noise.

"It's a Mackie," I yelled back.

"What?"

It's hard to do humor when you're yelling, "Made it myself. Too big and too much range for an ultralight. The FAA calls it an experimental aircraft."

"Oh." She seemed content with that and leaned to the right to watch the lightly forested slopes pass. I pulled my eyes off her and concentrated on where we were going.

The rumor was that there was a really big wyvern hanging around up near Glacier Lake. Janey—we were on a first name basis—thought it might be a Red Lion, and Janey was a student at Colorado State writing her thesis on "Dracian Diversity in the Northern Plains." No one had seen a Red Lion wyvern in the States since 1983. Finding one would be a "significant determining factor in evaluating recent trends in wyvern population patterns." At least, that's what Janey said. She seemed very excited about it. She'd filled the back half of the plane with camping gear, cameras, and some instruments I didn't try to understand.

The plan was to head up by the lake, find a good camp site, and start our search in the morning. For something with a ten-meter-plus wingspan, a wyvern can be blasted hard to find when it doesn't want to be found. There are several kinds that get around on the ground just fine, and in a pinch they can hunt in the forest without ever taking to the air. A half-dozen or so are exclusively nocturnal. Probably the most common wyvern in all of North America is the Night Capewing. Even city parks generally have a few hanging about. Still, you can hardly find a person that's seen one. I never have.

"Look over there," I shouted. When she turned, I pointed out a wing of Greenies headed south.

"Beautiful," she yelled.

I watched the sweep of their wide wings catching the sunlight and had to admit that they were impressive. They also represented a month's rent.

A stiff headwind slowed us down and made the three hour trip take something more like five. By the time we

came in sight of the lake, there was less than a quarter tank of gas left, the sun had already set behind the mountains, and it was getting pretty chilly in the open-cockpit plane. Janey reached through the slit at the back of the cloth-walled cabin and pulled out our jackets. I gained altitude as we drew up to the water's edge, then cut the engine to glide. My passenger jumped as the engine stopped; I probably should have warned her.

"It's okay," I said. "This plane glides real well." With the engine off, the noise level dropped considerably, and we could talk much easier. We began to circle the south shore, discussing the available places to put down. It was growing dark very quickly, and it would soon be impossible to evaluate landing sites.

"Look!" cried Janey. I followed her pointing finger toward the rising quarter moon. For just a moment, I saw silhouetted there a dark form with scalloped wings and a dangling tail. Even after ten years of hunting the beasts, that glimpse touched some internal cord of unease.

I turned the plane toward a grassy vale that looked like our best bet for a safe landing. "It looked big," I said.

"Yes,"

"Which way did it go?"

"I don't know. I lost it."

We were still a hundred feet above the ground when it passed over us. The dark form moved fast, the wind of its passage causing the plane to skew as the wyvern swept by. Then the monster banked up and right with a powerful thrust of wings and was again out of sight.

"It must be fifteen meters across the wings," Janey said. She was leaning over the side of the plane, trying to peer up and around the wing for another look at the wyvern.

"Closer to eighteen," I said. I pushed the nose of the plane down, willing it to descend faster. The ground, still forty feet below us, suddenly seemed like a very good place to be.

The wyvern struck the right wing a slashing blow from its claws. Moonlight glinted off the exposed aluminum tubing in the wing, and the wind whipping past the ragged edge of the nylon cover made a fearful shriek. The plane began to slip to the right. I fought it as best I could. I got one look at Janey—her hands locked around the edge of the open cockpit, her face turned up toward the dark sky—then the wyvern struck again.

This time the wing folded in half. In a moment, we were upside down. In another, the plane rolled back and I saw the moon shining against the beast's scales as it turned to watch us fall.

The wheels struck the ground hard, and the whole frame of the plane sagged with the impact. Somewhere a guy wire snapped like an overtaut guitar string. The undercarriage broke away, and the plane was left sliding on its nylon belly. We struck a tree and began to turn, struck a second tree, and came to an abrupt halt in a tangle of low limbs and a shower of pine needles.

"Well," I said as soon as I could catch my breath. "We're down." The plane was sprawled against a small copse of trees at the center of a tiny valley. Heavily forested slopes rose on all sides.

Janey was still looking at the sky. I looked up and saw

the wyvern swoop down past the wreck of my plane. It settled on a rise to our left, extended its neck toward us, and made a sound like a brass bell struck hard. Even with its wings folded in, the wyvern had a body bigger than a grizzly bear and a rattlesnake's head that was larger than a man's chest. There seemed to be an uncountable number of long teeth in its open mouth. It took a step toward the plane.

I felt Janey moving beside me, and when I looked her way, I saw that she was already over the lip of the cockpit and running up the hill toward the woods. I fumbled at my harness, sure that the monster would be on me at any second. Then I was free and following Janey up the slope and between the dark trunks of the pines. Once among the trees, I chanced a look back and saw that the beast had stopped by the plane and was snorting around the cockpit. Janey came up beside me.

"It's a dragon," I whispered.

"No," she whispered back. "It's a wyvern. See how the forelimbs are completely involved in the flight structure articulation? True dragons have independent forelimbs. Besides there are no dragons left in North America."

"It's got to be a dragon. Wyverns don't grow that big!" My whispers were getting close to being screams.

"I think it's a False Dragon, *Pseudodrak canadensis*. That's a species of wyvern with a demonstrated propensity toward large size."

"Yeah, so how come I never heard of it?"

"Well," she said. "It was supposed to be extinct. Nobody's seen one since 1948."

"Great." Down in the valley, the extinct animal had finished its look at the plane and turned to follow the path we had taken up the hill. It held its broad head near the ground as it came. Its long forked tongue darted out to taste the evening air. Without a word, we both turned and ran deeper into the woods.

The smell of pine. That's about all I remember from the rest of that night. Pine needles made a soft bed on the forest floor, hissing beneath our feet as we ran. The woods were impossibly dark. More than once I glanced off the rough trunk of a tree; I heard Janey do the same thing. The air was cold and filled with the scent of pine.

Through occasional holes in the green canopy above us, the moon illuminated a sky filled with racing clouds and a horde of bright stars. Several times we tried to stop and rest, but each time the sound of the wyvern sniffing through the woods behind us sounded nearer. After a few hours, our headlong run had turned into an exhausted shuffle. Just as the sky was showing the first streaks of grey, we ran out of forest.

The smart thing to do might have been to veer left or right and keep to the protection of the surrounding trees. We were too tired to do the smart thing; we plunged blindly ahead. Full dawn found us leaving the forest and scrambling over the boulder-strewn slope at the foot of, one of the glaciers. We hadn't heard the wyvern in hours, but I don't think either of us thought it had given up.

"Wait," said Janey, the first word either of us had managed in some time. She pointed out a meltwater stream trickling from the base of the glacier and we both ran through it for a hundred yards. The icy water came up to

my knees and spilled into my boots. By the time we left the stream, my legs felt like they were carved wood.

There was a ringing bellow from the edge of the forest. We made a last dash across the slope and plunged into the gaps in a large cluster of boulders, just in time to see the wyvern burst from the woods and take wing. We huddled close together while the monster flew toward us, its long neck sweeping the ground. When it reached the point where we'd gone into the stream, it bellowed its frustration. It hovered for a moment, the wind from its wings beating the water into foam, then it spiralled up and away from us.

We stayed crouched amid the boulders until the wet stone beneath us began to feel uncomfortably cold and the arms I'd thrown around Janey's waist started to feel uncomfortably intimate. I eased to my feet, knees creaking in protest. The western sky was still tinged with the purple of night, but the east was a clear, deep blue. Nowhere was there any sign of the wyvern.

"We've got to get to a phone," Janey said.

"Phone?"

"I need to report this sighting to the National Dracian Research Society."

"Report the sighting?"

"Yes. The presence of a large dracian so far south, not to mention one thought to be extinct, will surely be of interest to the entire—"

"It tried to eat us!" I cried.

She looked at me like I'd just said something really stupid. "Of course. We're close to the optimum prey size for a wyvern of that mass."

I opened my mouth to reply, but there was a sharp roar that echoed around the valley. The False Dragon swung into view over the mountains to our north.

Janey yelled something that I didn't catch, but I saw her point toward the glacier. Against the wall of compacted snow, a ragged black inverted "V" marked an opening; Again we ran from the wyvern. I glanced back over my shoulder several times, but it seemed oblivious to us. Janey reached the opening first and disappeared into the darkness. I followed on a run, slipped as soon as I stepped inside, and fell hard on a floor of smooth, black ice.

Farther in, the ice cave brightened. "There must be a fissure on top of the glacier letting in some light," I suggested. Everything was blue. It was like a scene from beneath the ocean where every color but blue has been filtered from the sunlight. The ceiling was blue-white. The slippery floor blue-black. Everything in between was blue-blue.

We walked carefully, often helping each other over tiny frozen Niagaras and around dark boulders encased in transparent coats. When we were out of sight of the entrance, we stopped and sat on a shelf of ice so clear I could see down for what seemed to be miles, but must have been only feet.

"We need to get back to the plane," I said.

"I'm sure my cameras are ruined."

"Maybe, but I bet the guns survived."

"Oh," she said. Then a minute later she spoke again.

"You don't mean to shoot the wyvern?"

"Absolutely, I've got some hollow points out there that ought to put a serious hurt to just about anything."

"But you can't! It's an endangered species. It's more than endangered, it may well be unique."

"In case you haven't noticed, your beast is not the one endangered at the moment—we are. Unless we find some way to get rid of that monster, we're never going to get to make your phone call."

"How could you think of killing what may be the last member of a species?"

"Hey," I said. "He seems to have no problem about killing the last member of me!" Again our conversation was terminated by a blast of noise from the wyvern. It seemed to have located the entrance to our cave. Sliding carefully along on the glassy floor, we moved farther back into the heart of the glacier.

Soon, we had left the bright light behind us and moved into an indigo gloom where the translucent walls seemed like velvet and reflections from more lucent parts of the cave were streaks of dying neon. Twice we had to get down on hands and knees and crawl through low passages. Other times we had to turn sideways to fit between narrow walls. Finally, we entered a broad passage with a ceiling that was out of sight in the dim light and a floor as clean as a skating rink after the passage of the Zamboni machine.

Janey's hiking shoes were not much use on the smoother ice, my battered work boots only a bit better. After several painful falls, she reluctantly took my hand. I began to notice a smell. Strong. Dank. Musty like wet leather. I was not surprised when Janey stepped on something that snapped loudly. She bent and picked up a fragment of what looked like the leg bone of a deer. A few more steps and the passage widened into an enormous room.

"The wyvern's lair," said Janey.

I nodded. I'd seen the lairs of many smaller wyverns, but, never anything like this. It was a great hall of bones hidden in the near darkness. Bones of all sizes carpeted the floor. Larger bones were arranged in rough piles in all parts of the room. "How could it fit through some of the places where we had to crawl?" I wondered aloud.

Janey released my hand and began to wander about the room, picking up jagged bits of bone as carefully as if each one was a Ming vase. "There must be another entrance," she said.

"Somebody out to tell this guy to dump his leftovers," I muttered.

"Oh, the bones don't come from their meals." She was examining what looked like a fox's skull. "The female gathers them. She needs to ingest extra calcium to produce . . ." She dropped the small skull and fell to her knees. "Over here."

I picked my way through the bone piles and saw that she was kneeling next to a clutch of pebbly round objects the size of basketballs.

"Are those what I think they are?"

She nodded. "Eggs." She laid a hand on top of one of the eggs. Immediately, the upper half of the sphere collapsed and fluid poured through the opening.

Janey sprang to her feet, then slipped and fell hard on her side. I tried to help her up, but she just pushed my hands away. "Oh, no." she said. Over and over. "Oh, no."

"Are you all right?"

At first she didn't respond, but then she nodded her head and crawled back to the broken egg. She took a rough fragment from the floor and handed it to me. "See how there are two layers to the shell? All dracian eggs are like that. There are tiny structures between the layers that give the eggs the strength they need to be this big without being so thick that the embryo can't get oxygen."

"If they're so tough, why did it break? You barely touched it."

She took the fragment back from me and pressed it between her thumb and forefinger. It broke into a shower of dust. "DDT," she said. Her voice was raw. "It weakens the shells."

"But nobody's used DDT in what? Twenty years?"

"A big wyvern lives along time. The poisons stay in the body; they never go away." The faint illumination caught the tears on her cheeks as she leaned over the broken egg.

I laid a hand on her shoulder and was trying to think of something to say when I saw a light coming toward us down the passage. "Hey!" I called. "We're here!" The light came on down the wide tunnel, glints of orange in the blue depths. "Somebody's coming. We're going to be okay."

There was a roar that vibrated along the floor and sent bones tumbling from the piles. The wyvern burst into the room. It scrambled across the ice, its talons scrapping out deep runnels and the hooks at the folded joint of its wings scrabbling across the frozen surface. Its body was studded with rows of yellow and red spots that burned like the lights on a Christmas tree.

"Bioluminescence," said Janey with eerie calm. "That's

never been reported in a wyvern before."

I looked behind us. There was only the smooth lake of ice. Ahead of us was only the monster. Janey was still sitting by the eggs, staring toward the approaching wyvern with her face strangely illumined by the banks of lights. I grabbed her by the arm, and with a sharp push, sent her sliding away.

The wyvern's sharp nose struck me in the small of my back. For a moment, I was airborne. Then I was lying in one of the piles of bones with a dozen shards sticking into my legs and side. I snatched at a thin shaft of bone, turned, and met the wyvern's descending muzzle with a sharp blow.

It roared its Big Ben roar and spread its light-studded wings until they brushed the walls. I pulled back to strike again, but the wyvern's head darted forward and it snatched the bone in its teeth, ripping it from my fingers. It crushed the bone to powder and reached down to grab one of my boots in its mouth. I could feel a horrible pressure all over my foot. It lifted me into the air and shook me like a dog that's caught a rat.

With a sudden startled bark, the wyvern dropped me. My head rang against the ice. The beast's long neck bent back as if it were going to bite its own wings off. That's when I saw Janey standing behind the wyvern, jabbing at it with a jagged fragment of bone. Her weapon had pierced the skin above its shoulder, producing a flow of blood that steamed in the cold air of the cave.

My hand closed on a thick club that must have come from the skeleton of a moose or bison. The wyvern caught Janey's arm in its mouth and lifted her from the ice. I got to my feet, blood pouring from a gash in my scalp, and



swung the club. Janey screamed.

The club struck the wyvern in the pale underside of its throat. There was a cracking noise. I didn't know if the noise came from the wyvern or from the club. The wyvern screamed. It released Janey and she fell to the floor, one of her legs bent back at an awful angle. Blood had already soaked the arm of her coat.

The wyvern turned to me, lightning fast, and opened its jaws. I swung again. A half-dozen dagger teeth went skittering away as the club of bone went through its gaping mouth. The wyvern screamed again, blood pouring from its injured mouth.

The next blow caught it between the knots of bone above its eyes. The wyvern's head was knocked down onto the floor. I hit it again. And again. The wyvern collapsed. I hit it again.

I retrieved the jagged bit of bone that Janey had been using as a weapon, walked over to the wyvern, and put the point against the glassy orb of its lidless eye. My own reflection was there, dirty and bloody. I drew a breath, preparing to push the dagger into the monster's brain.

"No." I thought at first that Janey had said it, but she was still lying unconscious on the blood-streaked ice. Finally I realized that I had said it. I dropped the bone knife and went to Janey.

Her face was covered in scratches. Her coat sleeve was heavy and wet. But she was still alive.

The wyvern was still alive, too. The patches of light still gleamed along its wings and sides as bright as ever. If I was still, I could hear the slow rhythm of its breath. And

somewhat, despite all that had happened, the other eggs were unbroken. I had no idea if they were fertile, or if their shells were strong enough to allow the embryos inside to develop.

I gathered Janey in my arms, trying to ignore the pain in my foot and ankle where the long teeth had penetrated my boot. Then I walked back along the way the wyvern had come. In a few minutes, the lights of the beast were left behind. In a few more, I saw the impossibly bright light of the sun.

The exit was difficult. The entrance was a steep ascent through knee-deep snow and loose stones. Several times I almost dropped Janey.

But I didn't. I didn't drop her then, or during the long miles I hiked to the ranger station on the west side of the lake. I didn't drop her then, and I haven't let her go yet.

She woke once in the helicopter on the way to Billings. Her eyes darted around wildly for a moment, then she saw where she was and relaxed. Her mouth moved. I couldn't hear her over the thump of the rotors, but I could make out what she wanted to know.

I leaned over to whisper in her ear. "It's not dead."

"What did you tell them?" she asked.

"Plane wreck. I told them we had a plane wreck."

She nodded slightly and slid back into sleep. I held her hand and leaned toward the window to look at the mountains getting smaller in the north. It was night again. A clear night with a cold northern sky sprayed with stars. Once, just once, I thought I saw some dark form sweep across the face of the moon.

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* Farson, Daniel, and Angus Hall. *Mysterious Monsters*. New York: Mayflower Books, 1975.

THE ROLE OF

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Rise of the
Dragon (Dynamix)

A computer quest for a king—packed on ten disks!

Reviews

King's Quest V

Sierra (209-683-4468)

PC/MS-DOS version

\$59.95

For those anxious souls who have been awaiting a grand sequel to the award-winning King's Quest series, the time has finally arrived. *King's Quest V (KQV)* is a great release, definitely a must-have adventure. We made our review of this game using VGA graphics and Roland sound boards.

The game is packaged on ten (yes, 10) 1.2 MB disks. This makes *KQV* the largest game ever designed for a personal computer, and the media requirements for your machine are well used. Superbly hand-painted backgrounds, crisp and smooth animation, and a brilliant soundtrack all make *KQV* a serious contender

for adventure game of the year. And talk about an easy user interface! Graphic icons allow you to accomplish many tasks without typing in a single word. Don't let this fool you, however. All of your intelligence and cunning will be required to complete this adventure.

The plot revolves around King Graham of Daventry. As he returns to his castle after a walk in a neighboring forest, he is

devastated to find his home and family are gone, snatched by an evil wizard. Graham learns from a non-player character (NPC), a talking owl named Cedric, that the wizard, Mordrac, is dabbling in the black arts. Cedric takes Graham to his master, who is also a wizard, albeit somewhat older and kinder. This wizard gives Graham some items to help him on his quest to find his family: a fizzled-out wand and the ability to talk with animals. After the introduction, it's time for Graham and Cedric to leave and determine Mordrac's location and solve the mystery of the disappearance of Graham's family and castle.

The user interface system is extremely easy to use for travel through towns, islands, deserts, mountains, forests, and castles. Of all available input/output devices, we found the mouse to be the most efficient. Pressing the right mouse button

Computer games' ratings

X

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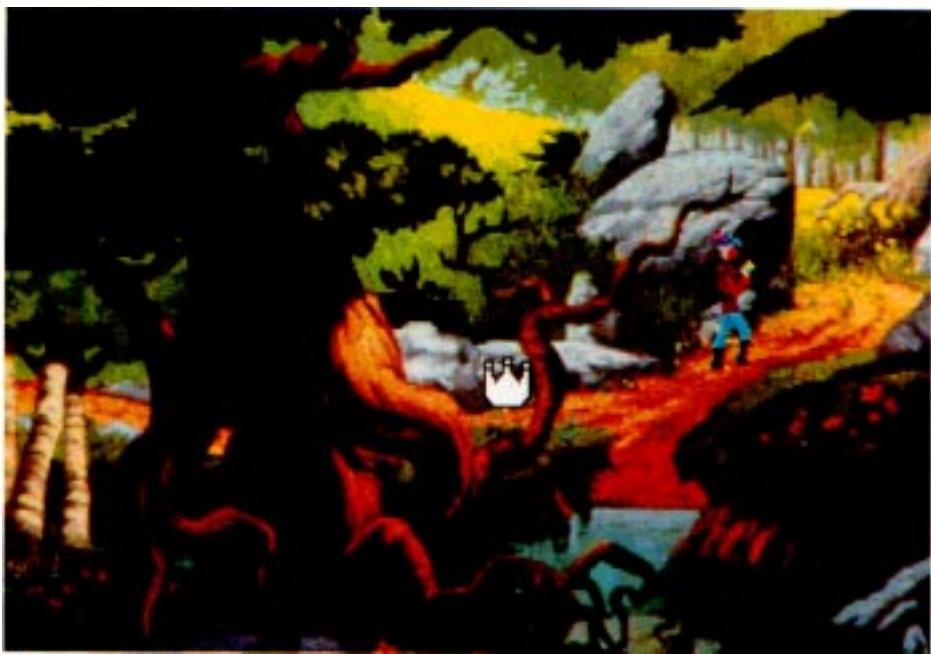
Not recommended

Poor

Fair

Good

Excellent
Superb



King's Quest V (Sierra)



King's Quest V (Sierra)

cycles the cursor through five icons that allow Graham to accomplish a variety of activities. When the desired icon appears on-screen, you press the left mouse button while the icon-cursor is atop the desired location, object, or person. Graham usually completes the action; should a red X appear, it means your selected action cannot be accomplished at the time.

Examining your inventory shows graphic representations of all the objects carried by Graham as well as your current game score. Clicking on an object that Graham needs transforms the cursor into that object. When this occurs, Graham can attempt to use that object if you click on anything on-screen with the object/cursor. The game manual describes in detail how to operate the game with a one-button mouse, joy stick, or keyboard.

Mapping is not essential, except in the desert and ocean areas where careful mapping should result in King Graham's success in mastering the puzzles and surviving. We continually attempted various direction commands, saving the game only when the mazelike puzzle was conquered. If Graham died, we simply restored the game, followed the successful routes to

the point where defeat greeted us, tried a new direction, and forged ahead until the solution was achieved. As you can save and restore the game at any time you wish, this method of mapping was quick and easy.

The copy protection is simple and straightforward. During the game, Graham needs to use his wand to accomplish something. In order to cast the spell he needs, he must convert four symbols into the English alphabet. These symbols are conveniently placed throughout the game manual. Don't lose your game manual!

KQV really is a masterpiece. From the marvelous introduction to the ending

credits, we felt as though we were involved with an interactive movie rather than game software. At some point in the future, a CD-ROM version promises more soundtracks and real voices instead of text speech. The ease of play did not diminish from the game's challenge. The ending confrontation and cut scenes are rather long but a fitting reward after battling our way through hours of puzzles. The graphics, animation, and music are truly amazing. *KQV* is an adventure game that should be bought not only to play but to study and enjoy. Best of all, *KQV* is suitable for all ages, and we found that playing it as a family was highly enjoyable. Everyone took turns accessing commands, and group decisions decided exactly what Graham should accomplish. It was fun for everyone. The final solution, though somewhat Disneyesque, was well designed to afford satisfaction for completing the quests.

Rise of the Dragon

Dynamix, distrib. by Sierra (503-343-0772)
PC/MS-DOS version \$59.95

You are William "Blade" Hunter, private investigator. You live in the year 2053 in Los Angeles. The air is as dirty as the streets, and crime runs rampant. You were once a police officer, but your disregard for regulations earned you an early retirement. Now the mayor wants you to find out who killed his daughter. He doesn't want unnecessary publicity. You'll learn, however, that the murder of the mayor's daughter will be the least of this city's worries.

Dynamix has produced a fabulous adventure game here. The graphics, animation, and music are absolutely phenomenal. We have never seen such meticulous attention to detail in any other software adventure.



Rise of the Dragon (Dynamix)

For example, when a helicopter passes outside Blade's apartment, the light fixtures sway and the light source moves as well. (This game was reviewed with VGA graphics and Roland sound boards.)

The adventure is played through a first-person perspective. The entire game can be played using a mouse, joy stick, or keyboard. The simplicity of commands is reminiscent of Sierra's Manhunter series.

Moving around requires only that you move the mouse to the edge of the screen until the cursor changes to an exit sign; a simple click of the mouse button and Blade switches to a different location.

Looking at an object is just a matter of pointing and mouse button clicking. Objects can be picked up by clicking on and dragging the object to your inventory icon in the bottom right corner of the screen.

Blade's status and inventory can be seen at any time by clicking on the inventory icon; you'll see Blade, including the weapons and clothing on his body. The other objects Blade carries are found on the left side of the screen and can be easily manipulated to be used or dropped.

During the game, cinematic "meanwhile" screens show important events that are going on elsewhere. Additionally, *Rise of the Dragon* incorporates many comic-book-panel screens to show events that have happened to Blade. These are extremely effective, thanks in part to the detailed graphics.

The Dynamix VCR menu is used, allowing the user to accomplish a variety of tasks. A slide allows you to adjust the difficulty levels of the arcade sequences. During the game, Blade may be involved in sequences requiring that you use quick reflexes instead of quick wits. This is the only time the game switches to side views of Blade, and the action is as quick and furious as you could possibly want.

The manual clearly describes how to operate Blade during these sequences. If your patience wears thin during these high-reflex activities, they can be skipped altogether. The VCR menu also allows you to adjust the duration of dialog display as well as the detail level of the animation. This latter feature is a godsend. It allows users to reduce the number of animations displayed on-screen, thus reducing loading time. We found this a real boon in areas we had investigated before, where we didn't need the extra animation to further our adventure. But that flashy animation adds a great deal of atmosphere to the game, and you may wish to view the animation a few times before reducing it for certain areas.

Rise of the Dragon is a must buy for PC/MS-DOS adventure fans. The music and VGA graphics are stunning, and it appears as though the Dynamix artists dedicated some serious overtime in creating the backgrounds and the characters. The control documentation couldn't be clearer, showing how each command should be used. The included comic book is also helpful, giving background to the game as well as detailed

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descriptions of items that may be found. Overall, this game reminded us of the Manhunter series—though we feel that this game is about 10 times better.

Space: 1889

Paragon Software (412-838-1166)
PC/MS-DOS version

* * * *

\$49.95



Space: 1889 (Paragon Software)

Imagine our world's history as if written by H. G. Wells or Jules Verne, a world where interplanetary travel was accomplished during the 19th-century Victorian era. Imagine the discovery of liftwood on Mars in 1870, a wood with antigravitational effects. Imagine hydrogen-lifted airships, with jolly-good adventures at every turn, and you have a marvelous preview of *Space: 1889*.

Space: 1889 is a science-fiction role-playing adventure suitable for all gamers from novice to experienced. It is based on the role-playing game by Game Designers' Workshop. Paragon has certainly been equal to the task of bringing the environment intact to your computer. The game runs on PC/MS-DOS computers and supports VGA, EGA, CGA, and Tandy graphics (we used VGA). COVOX sound effects are also employed.

The adventure has multiple quests that operate through an extremely easy-to-use player-game interface, requiring either a joystick, mouse, or keyboard. The graphics employed are highly effective, and the game concept is quite original. Unfortunately, there is a lack of third-party sound support. Drivers for both Roland and AdLib would have been a nice addition.

The fanciful world detailed by Paragon in this entertaining and delightful science-fiction adventure finds Great Britain a constitutional monarchy, far more interested in making her colonies profitable than with expanding her empire. You must create five characters and endow each with skills and attributes. The well-written game manual describes how each attribute and class affects character creation, and we strongly advise that you completely read the play guide from cover to cover before starting your adventure.

The game's scenario finds your lead character having been invited to a museum opening in London. The show is to unveil several new Egyptian artifacts. As several tombs have been discovered, archaeological

expeditions are constantly being financed, especially as the tomb of King Tutankhamen remains hidden in the desert.

At this gala affair, you happen upon four friends (whom you have also created) who assisted you in past archaeological expeditions, and a marvelous reunion commences. Then, during the evening, you overhear two gentlemen discussing a newly financed expedition to be carried out by the Germans, who apparently have discovered King Tut's tomb. You mention this to your friends, and it is decided that you all will mount an expedition to find the tomb yourselves. But before you can take on this quest, you must find and obtain an elusive report that outlines the German proposal. You must talk with a Claus Von Schmelling, who is ambling about London, to acquire this important paperwork.

So begins an adventure that'll have you traveling not only to the far ends of the Earth, from London to San Francisco to the Far East, but also to Mars, Mercury, and beyond. Your main missions are intriguing and exciting, and a number of miniquests can also be tackled. This is not an adventure you are likely to finish in just a few hours, but one that will require your attention for many days.

Your screen view contains 11 areas of information in sharp color. Directly at the top of the screen, you are informed as to the current date, the description of any item you are going to drop, pick up, or use, and the name of any NPC with whom you are talking.

The picture area is a square view spot directly to the left and below the previous information line. Here you'll see the picture of the ground where you happen to be, a picture of any item that you are manipulating, or the picture of an NPC you have met. A group of icons to the right of this picture

screen is for mouse users, where they click to select items from a list.

Below the picture area is the description of your party leader, including his name, wealth (in British pounds), health, weapons available, and statistics. A picture of the leader appears to the right of this information. You decide which picture to assign to each character.

One of the problem areas deals with NPCs. Before you can talk to an NPC, you must position your character so that he is facing the individual. NPCs rarely stand still to allow you to do this. They are the most mobile folk you've ever encountered, and sometimes you have to run ahead of them and hope you can box them into a corner before your Query command will work. Try running around using the mouse to lead your character, all the while depressing the Q keyboard letter to initiate the conversation. At times, it does become frustrating.

Much of the game's information comes from discussions with NPCs. But finding the right NPC can lead you to drink. Once you have encountered and talked to one of the NPCs who wanders about the screen, there is no way to determine if the next NPC you encounter is the same fellow again. You must continue to confront NPCs without any idea as to whether or not you're wasting your time. All on-screen persons look the same (males and females do wear different clothing, thank heavens). So, if you are in London and you've just spoken to the good doctor near the museum, then you notice five other NPCs in your travels to the pawnshop, any one of them could be the good doctor again. And time requires the consumption of food. So, if you talk to the same good doctor three or four times in

Continued on page 118



Space: 1889 (Paragon Software)

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LORD SOTH HAS THROWN DOWN
THE GAUNTLET
OF CHALLENGE!



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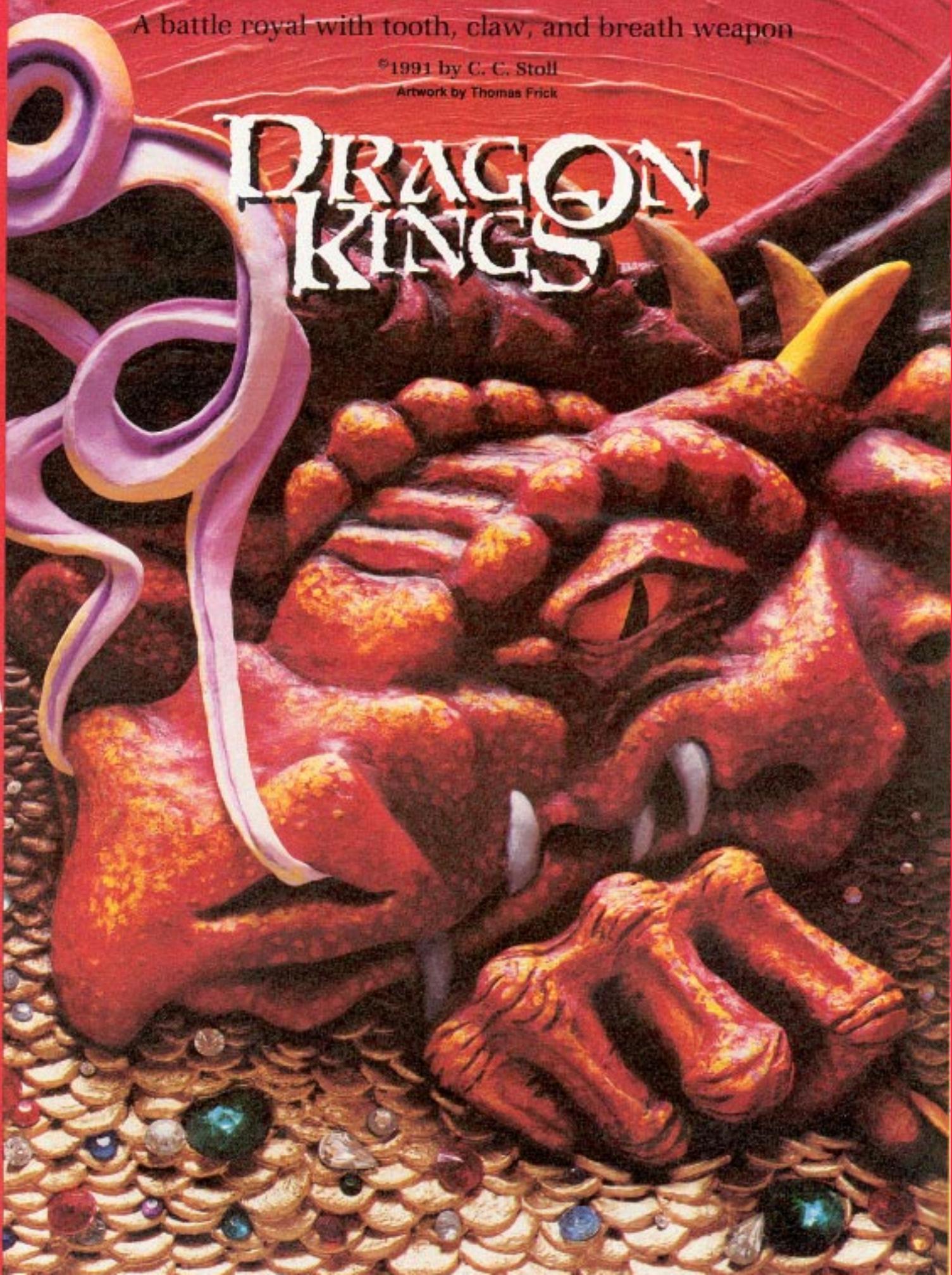
A battle royal with tooth, claw, and breath weapon

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Artwork by Thomas Frick

DRAGON KINGS

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Few are those who have even found an entrance to the true ancient homeland of the dragons. It is a harsh land, full of mountains, fire, and springs so hot a man could not endure immersion. There, every type of dragon is to be found, dwelling for the most part in huge caverns along with others of its ilk. Strife among the clans is not uncommon, for the great beasts are given overmuch to temper and arrogance, and practice war upon each other with enthusiasm and cunning.

Creatures of Earth,
by the druid Georkim

Introduction

The DRAGON KINGS game depicts war between four clans of dragons. It is a game for two players, but it can also be played by three or four.

One player commands the Black Dragons and their allies, the Red Dragons (who appear as reinforcements). The other player commands the Green Dragons and their allies, the Blue Dragons (who appear as reinforcements). The object of the game is to defeat both of the enemy clans by eliminating all of their dragons or by occupying their home caverns.

Preparing for play

The playing board can be removed from the magazine after bending the staples open (the staples should then be bent back as they once were). Carefully cut apart the counters and sort them by color (clan). Then either remove or photocopy the Rules Sheet page from these instructions. One six-sided die is required to play the game.

The playing board

The playing board consists of hexes that include the following terrain features:

Caverns—There are a total of six of these on the board. Each cavern is the color of the dragon clan to which it belongs. The caverns in which reinforcements arrive (the two Red caverns and the two Blue caverns) are each marked with an **X** sign. The other two caverns (the Black cavern and the Green cavern) have dot symbols.

The dots also mark hexes on which dragons are placed at the beginning of the game. Dots are in both cavern hexes and clear hexes. The **Xs** and dots show only where pieces are placed on the board and do not affect play in any other way. In addition to being reinforcement entry points (see "Reinforcements"), all of the caverns are important because occupying enemy caverns is one way of winning the game. Caverns do not affect movement or combat.

Volcanoes—Two volcanoes are in the center of the board. These are the only terrain features that affect movement. No dragon is allowed to move onto or over the volcanoes (even flying dragons cannot abide the noxious gases that volcanoes emit). Volcanoes do not affect combat.

Hot springs—There are a total of 36 hot springs hexes, 18 meandering along each side of the board. Wounded dragons have a chance to be healed if they are in a hot springs hex. Hot springs do not affect movement or combat.

Mountains—Unlike other terrain features, mountains do not occupy hexes, but form the border between adjacent hexes. There are six "mountain ranges" on the board, each of which consists of six individual hexsides. Mountains do not affect the movement of dragons, but mountains are the only terrain feature that affect combat. A dragon is not allowed to attack an enemy dragon if the attack would cross a mountain hexside.

The playing pieces

A total of 88 dragon counters are included with the DRAGON KINGS game. Each clan has an identical set of 22 counters, as per the Counters Table.

Each clan actually has only seven different dragons: one Dragon King and six Regular Dragons. All of these begin the game "healthy," meaning each has wings and a breath weapon with which it can attack. The only difference between a Dragon King and a Regular Dragon is that a king is twice as powerful in combat.

As the game is played, a dragon may be wounded or eliminated in combat. If a dragon is eliminated, its counter is removed and no replacement is made. If a dragon is wounded, its counter is replaced with a wounded counter. There are two kinds of wounds: a wing wound (an external wound that leaves the dragon wingless and much slower), and a breath wound (an internal wound that leaves the dragon without a breath attack and much less dangerous in combat).

Example: If the Dragon King receives a wing wound, the healthy Dragon King counter is replaced with the wingless Dragon King counter. If the king then receives a breath wound, the wingless Dragon King counter is replaced with the wingless, breathless Dragon King counter.

All of this is explained further in the "Combat" section. The point is that even though each clan has 22 counters, it has at most only seven counters in play at any one time.

Setup

Decide which player will command the Red and Black clans and which will command the Blue and Green clans. Place the board between the players so that the Black Cavern is near the Black/Red player and the Green Cavern is near the Green/Blue player. Then place the Rules Sheet from these instructions to one side of the board, so that the Black/Red side can be read by that player, and the Green/Blue side by that player.

All of the units are now placed as follows:

—The Black Dragon King counter (healthy) is placed in the Black Cavern (a

dot hex).

—The three remaining Black King counters (wounded) are placed in the appropriate box on the Rules Sheet under the words "Black Replacements."

—The six Regular Black Dragon counters (healthy) are placed on the six hexes adjacent to the Black Cavern (on dot hexes).

—The twelve remaining Black Regular (wounded) counters are placed in the appropriate box on the Rules Sheet under the words "Black Replacements."

—The Red Dragon King counter (healthy) is placed in the appropriate box on the Rules Sheet under the words "Red Reinforcements."

—The three remaining Red King counters (wounded) are placed in the appropriate box on the Rules Sheet under the words "Red Replacements."

—The six Regular Red Dragon counters (healthy) are placed in the appropriate box on the Rules Sheet under the words "Red Reinforcements."

—The twelve remaining Red Regular (wounded) counters are placed in the appropriate box on the Rules Sheet under the words "Red Replacements."

—The Green King counter (healthy) is placed in the Green Cavern (a dot hex).

—The three remaining Green King counters (wounded) are placed in the appropriate box on the Rules Sheet under the words "Green Replacements."

—The six Regular Green Dragon counters (healthy) are placed on the six hexes adjacent to the Green Cavern (on dot hexes).

—The twelve remaining Green Regular counters (wounded) are placed in the appropriate box on the Rules Sheet under the words "Green Replacements."

—The Blue King counter (healthy) is placed in the appropriate box on the Rules Sheet under the words "Blue Reinforcements."

—The three remaining Blue King counters (wounded) are placed in the appropriate box on the Rules Sheet under the words "Blue Replacements."

—The six Blue Regular Dragon counters (healthy) are placed in the appropriate box on the Rules Sheet under the words "Blue Reinforcements."

—The twelve remaining Blue Regular counters (wounded) are placed in the appropriate box on the Rules Sheet under the words "Blue Replacements."

The original quarrel was between the Black Clan and the Green Clan. Thus, all the Black and Green Dragons have gathered at their respective ancestral caverns at the time the game begins. The Red Dragons will arrive as allies to the Black Clan at the two Red caverns; the Blue Dragons will arrive as allies to the Green Clan at the two Blue caverns.

The game turn

The Black/Red player has the first turn, and the players then alternate taking turns. There are three phases to each

turn, which must take place in the order given:

1. Reinforcements—Roll on the Reinforcement Table and place reinforcement dragons on the board. (Once all seven reinforcement dragons have been entered, this part of the turn can be skipped for the rest of the game.)

2. Movement—Move up to three primary (black or green) dragons, then move up to three reinforcement (red or blue) dragons. Healing rolls are made for any dragons in hot springs hexes; movement may continue after healing, as per the "Healing" section.

3. Combat—Primary dragons and reinforcement dragons carry out their attacks.

The other player now repeats this sequence for his primary and reinforcement dragons.

Reinforcements

Depending on whose turn it is, either Red or Blue Dragons will be placed in caverns of that same color. The two reinforcements caverns are distinguished as the central cavern (the one near the center of the board) and the border cavern (the one on the edge of the board). Roll the die and consult the Reinforcement Table on the Rules Sheet.

On a roll of:

- 1: The player has a choice of entering the Dragon King counter in either reinforcement cavern, or entering two Regular Dragon counters, one in each reinforcement cavern.
- 2-3: The player enters one Regular Dragon counter in the central cavern.
- 4-5: The player enters one Regular Dragon counter in the border cavern.
- 6: No reinforcements can enter this turn.

If the designated cavern is occupied by a friendly dragon of either clan, place the reinforcement on top of the other dragon. (During the next movement phase, one of the dragons must be moved out of the cavern.)

If the designated cavern is occupied by an enemy dragon, the reinforcement dragon cannot enter the board. The reinforcement piece is not eliminated; it can still be entered on a later turn according to a later reinforcement roll.

Placing a reinforcement is not optional. The dragon must be placed as dictated by the roll unless the designated cavern is blocked.

Movement

Movement is always optional and always happens in two distinct parts. First, the dragons of the primary clan are moved. Second, the dragons of the reinforcement clan are moved.

Up to three dragons from each clan may be moved (a dragon counter can be moved only once per turn). The player may also have no dragons at all move. Each dragon may move up to three hexes if it has

wings; the three hexes do not have to be in a straight line. Each dragon may only move one hex if it is wingless.

Remember: Dragons are not allowed to move onto or over a volcano hex. A dragon can enter or leave a cavern from or to any adjacent hex.

In addition, a dragon is never allowed to move onto or over an enemy dragon. A dragon can always move onto or over a friendly dragon. However, at the end of all movement for both clans, only one dragon is allowed in each hex.

Healing

Healing takes place during the movement part of the turn, and applies only to a wounded moving dragon that occupies a hot springs hex. It costs that dragon one hex of movement to attempt to heal. Roll the die once on the Healing Table on the Rules Sheet for each healing attempt.

A dragon can have only two wounds (a wing wound and a breath wound). If a player rolls a 1 or 2 for a dragon that has only one wound, only that one wound will be healed. If a dragon has two wounds, but rolls a 3, 4, or 5, the player may choose which wound will be healed.

Example: A breathless but winged Regular Dragon counter moves one hex onto a hot spring. The player rolls a 4 for healing, using up a second hex of movement. The breathless Regular Dragon counter is replaced with a healthy Regular Dragon counter. The dragon can now be moved one more hex, its third hex of movement, if desired.

Attempts at healing can be made before, during, or after normal movement, provided the dragon is on a hot springs hex and has enough movement remaining. Note that a wingless dragon, having only one hex of movement, must move into a hot springs hex in one turn, then can attempt healing only in the next turn. It cannot move normally in the same turn that it attempts healing, even if the healing is successful and the dragon regains wings. A dragon cannot attempt healing more than once during the same turn. Remember that a dragon that attempts healing counts as a moving dragon in the turn cycle.

As dragons are healed, wounded counters that were on the board are placed off the board. Be careful to put those counters in the appropriate Replacements box and *not* in the Reinforcements box. Similarly, all counters placed on the board as a result of healing should be taken from the Replacements box and not from the Reinforcements box.

Combat

After the movement phase has been completed, each dragon from both friendly clans may attack one enemy dragon; the enemy dragon **must** be in an adjacent hex, or it cannot be attacked. Also, as noted earlier, a dragon cannot attack across a mountain hexside. Each dragon can attack

only once per turn. Each enemy dragon can be attacked only once per turn, so all attacks by several dragons on one dragon must be combined into one big attack. Dragons from both friendly clans are allowed to attack together in the same attack.

For each attack, roll the die and consult the Combat Table on the Rules Sheet. A breathless Regular Dragon counter attacks with one combat point (claws and fangs). A dragon that still has its dragon breath attacks with two combat points (one point for claws and fangs, one point for dragon breath). Both of these values are doubled for each Dragon King counter: two combat points if breathless, four combat points if the Dragon King counter still has its dragon breath. Dragon King counters receive no bonuses when defending against enemy attacks, however.

If a dragon that already has one wing wound suffers another wing wound, the dragon is eliminated. Similarly, if a dragon that already has one breath wound suffers another breath wound, the dragon is eliminated.

The status of the defending dragon never affects the column consulted on the Combat Table. It doesn't matter if the defending dragon is a Dragon King counter or a Regular Dragon counter, or is healthy or wounded.

Example: A healthy Dragon King counter (four combat points) and a breathless Regular Dragon counter (one combat point) attack a wingless Regular Dragon counter. Since a dragon can be attacked only once per turn, the combat points are added ($4 + 1 = 5$) for a single attack under the "5" column. Depending on the roll, we would get the following results:

—On a roll of 1, the defending dragon suffers a wing wound. Since that dragon was already wingless, it is eliminated instead (remove the counter from play).

—On a roll of 2, the defending dragon suffers a breath wound. Replace the wingless Regular Dragon counter with a wingless, breathless Regular Dragon counter.

—On a roll of 3, the defending dragon suffers a wing wound and a breath wound. Since the dragon was already wingless, it is eliminated (remove the counter from play).

—On a roll of 4 or 5, the defending dragon is eliminated (remove the counter from play).

—On a roll of 6, the attack has no effect (leave the defending dragon counter as is).

As dragons are wounded and eliminated, counters that were on the board are placed off the board. Be careful to put those counters in the appropriate Replacements box and *not* in the Reinforcements box. Similarly, all counters placed on the board as a result of combat should be taken from the Replacements box and *not* from the Reinforcements box.

Combat never results in harm to the attacking dragons.

A player must announce all attacks

DRAGON KINGS Rules Sheet

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Black Replacements

(12) Wounded Regular Dragon Counters	(3) Wounded Dragon King Counters
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Red Replacements

(12) Wounded Regular Dragon Counters	(3) Wounded Dragon King Counters
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Black/Red Player's Turn

1. Reinforcements (roll on Reinforcements Table and place Red Dragons)
2. Movement (move/heal up to three Black Dragons, then move/heal up to three Red Dragons).
3. Combat (Black and Red Dragons attack together)

Red Reinforcements

(6) Healthy Regular Dragons	(1) Healthy Dragon King
-----------------------------	-------------------------

Reinforcement Table

Reinforcements/Cavern location	
1d6	Result
1	Dragon King/central or border, or 2 Regular Dragons/both (one on each)
2-3	1 Regular Dragon/central
4-5	1 Regular Dragon/border
6	No reinforcements

Healing Table

1d6 Result	
1-2	Heal two wounds
3-5	Heal one wound
6	No healing

Combat Table

Total no. of combat points

1d6	1	2	3	4	5	6+
1	W	W	W	W	W	W
2	—	B	B	B	B	B
3	—	—	WB	WB	WB	WB
4	—	—	—	E	E	E
5	—	—	—	—	E	E
6	—	—	—	—	—	E

W = Wing wound, B = Breath wound,
E = Eliminated

1d6	1	2	3	4	5	6+
1	W	W	W	W	W	W
2	—	B	B	B	B	B
3	—	—	WB	WB	WB	WB
4	—	—	—	E	E	E
5	—	—	—	—	E	E
6	—	—	—	—	—	E

Total no. of combat points

1d6	Result	Heal one wound	Heal two wounds	Heal one wound	No healing
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1d6	Location	Reinforcements/Cavern	Reinforcements Table
1	Dragon King/king/central or border.	Both (one on each)	1d6 Reinforcements/Cavern
2-3	1 Regular Dragon/central	Both (one on each)	1d6 Reinforcements/Cavern
4-5	1 Regular Dragon/border	Both (one on each)	1d6 Reinforcements/Cavern
6	No reinforcements	1 Regular Dragon/Border/Border	1d6 Reinforcements/Cavern

1d6	Reinforcements	Dragon King	Regular Dragons	Healthy
1	(6) Healthy	(1) Healthy	Dragon King	Regular Dragons

1d6	Replacements	Dragon King	Dragon King	Wounded	Wounded
1	(12) Wounded	(3) Wounded	Dragon King	Dragon King	Dragon King

1d6	Replacements	Dragon King	Dragon King	Wounded	Wounded
1	(12) Wounded	(3) Wounded	Dragon King	Dragon King	Dragon King

Counters Table

#	Dragon type
1	Dragon King (Healthy)
1	Dragon King (Wounded)
1	Dragon King (Wounded)
1	Dragon King (Wounded)
6	Regular Dragons (Healthy)
4	Regular Dragons (Wounded)
4	Regular Dragons (Wounded)
4	Regular Dragons (Wounded)

Counter type
Dragon-Wings, Breath, Crown
Dragon-Breath, Crown
Dragon-Wings, Crown
Dragon-Crown
Dragon-Wings, Breath
Dragon-Breath
Dragon-Wings
Dragon

before rolling for the results of any attack. However, after announcing attacks, a player may roll for them in any order desired.

Counter note: There are six healthy Regular Dragon counters, and only four wounded Regular Dragon counters of each type (four wingless, four breathless, four wingless and breathless). Thus it is mathematically possible (although extremely unlikely) that five or six of the Regular Dragon counters could be wounded in exactly the same way, so that there would not be enough replacement counters of the right type. If this happens, any dragon that is wounded but for which all four of the appropriate replacement counters are already on the board is eliminated instead.

One might speculate that only four replacement counters of each type were included so that players would not have to hassle with counters that would almost never be needed. However, the truth is that this limitation was built into the game design to simulate the rare intervention of the dreaded dragon goddess of war, Lizz, who was known to have slain a few hapless combatants with divine invisible arrows upon seeing a particularly inept battle. (Is this game a realistic simulation, or what?)

Winning

The game is won by defeating both of the enemy dragon clans. A dragon clan can be defeated in one of two ways:

1. By eliminating all seven of its dragons.
2. By occupying all of its caverns.

The Black Clan and the Green Clan have

only one cavern each. If, at the end of any turn, an enemy dragon occupies one such clan's cavern, the clan is defeated, and all of its dragons are immediately eliminated.

The Red Clan and the Blue Clan have two caverns each. If, at the end of any turn, enemy dragons occupy both of the Red or Blue clan's caverns, the clan is defeated, and all of its dragons are immediately eliminated.

Three or four players

If there are four players, each should command one clan. If there are three players, one player commands both clans on one side, and each of the other players commands one clan on the other side. Because the two players on the same side might not coordinate their moves well, the solitary player may have the advantage in a three-player game. So, if all three players are familiar with the game, pit the two more experienced gamers against the less-experienced gamer.

The question might arise as to how much communication should be allowed between two players on the same team. This can be settled in any manner agreeable to all players.

Tactics

1. Early in the game, it is important not to let the enemy seize your central cavern. Otherwise, you may not get your reinforcements on the board before the game is over.

2. Remember that the Dragon King counter has a distinct advantage when attacking but not when defending. You need to use the Dragon King counter in

attacks to benefit from this advantage, but try not to expose it to easy elimination from counterattacks.

3. Some hexes (called "mountain pockets") are so surrounded by mountain hex-sides that they are relatively well protected from attack. Take advantage of these when positioning dragons for defense.

Optional rules

1. All attacks on dragons in caverns or hot springs are reduced by one combat point. (Thus, if two healthy dragons were attacking a dragon in a hot springs, the attack is rolled for under the 3-Combat-Points column instead of the 4-Combat-Points column.) This rule is not applied in situations where it would cause an attack to be reduced below the 1-Combat-Point column. It only matters what type of terrain the defending dragon occupies, not what type of terrain an attacking dragon occupies.

2. Immediately after a dragon is eliminated in combat, the attacking player has the option of advancing one of the attacking dragons into the hex the eliminated dragon occupied. (This rule may alter your approach to attacking and defending caverns.)

3. Each dragon exerts a "zone of control" that extends into all hexes adjacent to the hex the dragon occupies. However, a dragon never exerts a zone of control across a mountain hexside. Any time a dragon moves into a hex that is in an enemy dragon's zone of control, the moving dragon must immediately stop moving for the duration of the turn. (Even if a dragon begins in an enemy zone of control, the dragon is always allowed to move at least one hex. If, the moving dragon is still in an enemy zone of control at the end of one hex of movement, all movement must cease for that turn.)

Credits

Game design: C. C. Stoll

Playtesting: Wendy Stoll, Timothy Brown,

Scott Haring

Inspiration: The Insatiable Flying Dragon

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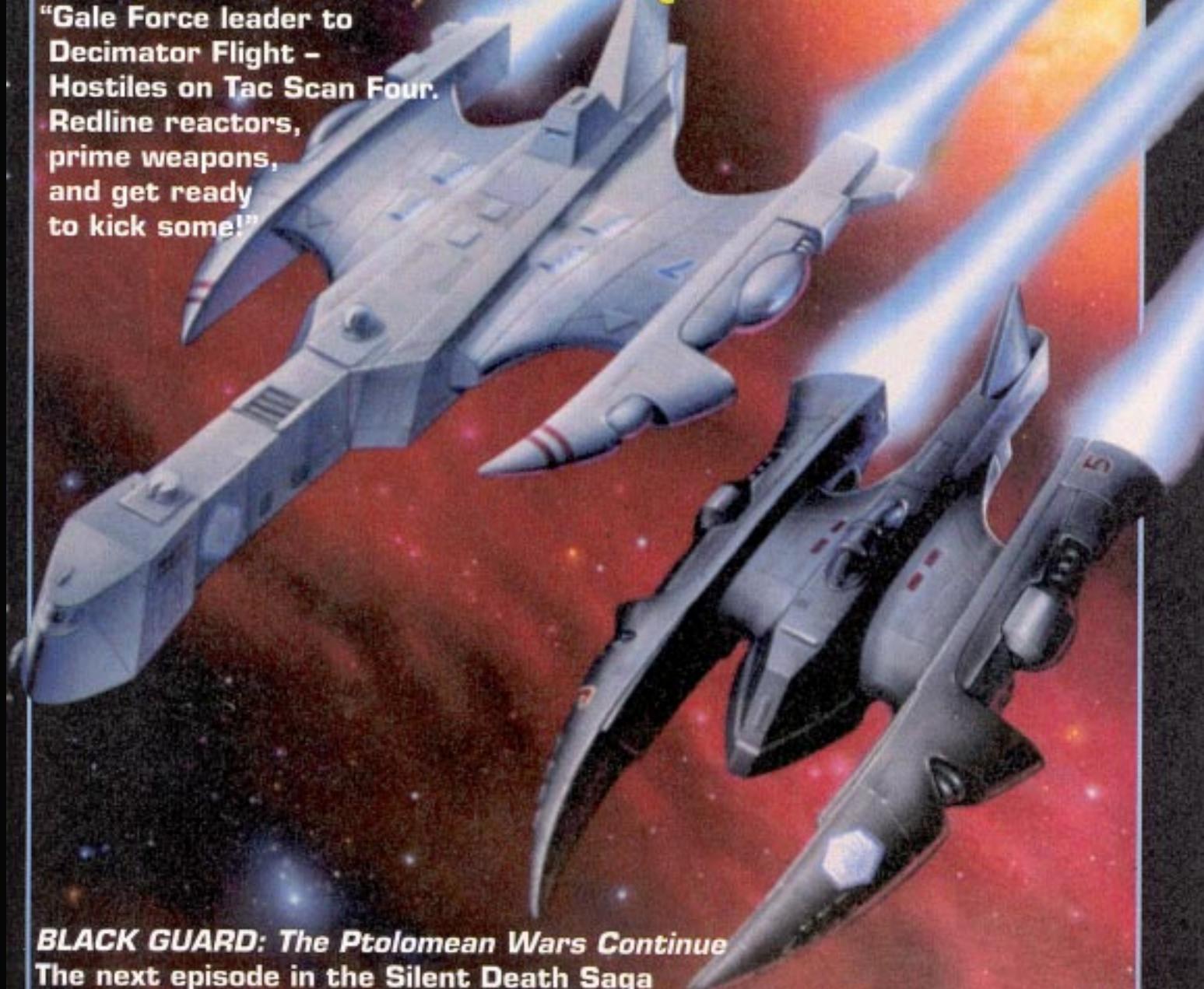
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CONVENTION CALENDAR

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 and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

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

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

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

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to 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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GLATHRICON '91, June 21-23

Sponsored by the Evansville Gaming Guild, this convention will be held at the Executive Inn in Evansville, Ind. The guests include Ed Greenwood, Alan Clark, Don Bingle, and Jean Rabe. RPGA™ tournaments include AD&D® Feature, Masters, Grandmasters, and the Joe Martin Cancer Benefit; MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ Feature and Masters, JAMES BOND 007*, PARANOIA*, PARANOIA* Masters, DC HEROES*, CHILL*, and CHAMPIONS* games. Other activities include a dealers' room, a large art show and print shop, an art auction, a masquerade, a miniatures-painting contest, seminars, panels, and additional gaming. Registration: \$20. Write to: Evansville Gaming Guild, PO. Box 15414, Evansville IN 47716; or call: (812) 421-1010.

MICHICON GAMEFEST '91, June 21-23

This gaming convention will be held in the Southfield Civic Center in Southfield, Mich. Events include 60 board game, 60 miniatures game, and 40 role-playing game events. Other activities include dealers, three used-game auctions, open gaming, and food. Registration: \$12/weekend or \$7/day. Preregistrations are accepted. Write to: Metro Detroit Gamers, P.O. Box 656, Wyandotte MI 48192; or call Barry (daytime) at: (313) 953-2125.

NEW ORLEANS SF/F FESTIVAL '91 June 21-23

This convention will be held at the Clarion Hotel in New Orleans, La. Guests include Frederick Pohl, Pat Cadigan, John Slade, Ellen Datlow, George Alec Effinger, George R. R. Martin, Richard Pini, and Walter Jon Williams. Activities include 24-hour gaming, a costume contest, programming, an art show and auction, a dance, a 24-hour hospitality suite, a meet-the-guests party, a large dealers' room, and a special charity event benefitting the New Orleans Metropolitan Battered Women's Center. Registration: \$20 until May 26; \$25 at the door. Write to: New Orleans SF/F Festival, P.O. Box 791089, New Orleans LA 70179-1089; or call: (504) 835-4314.

CONFIGURATION II, June 22-23

This convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Events include AD&D®, D&D®, AXIS & ALLIES*, BATTLETECH*, and WARHAMMER FANTASY BATTLES* games. Registration: \$3/weekend preregistered; or \$5/weekend or \$3/day at the door. Write to: David Niemeyer, 5103 S. Sheridan, Tulsa OK 74145; or call David at: (918) 742-1025.

INTERPHAZE III, June 22-23

This live-action gaming convention will be held near the Folklore Village of Dodgeville, Wis. Gather rumors and treasure from a host of characters, explore the countryside, and purchase supplies at the bazaar. There will be a

medieval banquet, complete with court-dancing, musicians, jugglers, and a magic show. Costumes are recommended. A mini-adventure, complete with a piñata dragon, will be offered for the kids. Dealers and crafters are welcome. For information, send \$1 to: Doc Bradshaw, 7637 N. 15th St., Oakdale MN 55128.

MADISON GAMES DAY III, June 30

This gaming convention will be held at the Quality Inn South in Madison, Wis. Events include role-playing, miniatures, and war games, a game auction, and a dealers' area. Door prizes and discount coupons will be offered throughout the day. Registration: \$5, that includes tickets to two gaming events. Write to: Pegasus Games, 6640 Odana Rd., Madison WI 53719; or call: (608) 833-GAME.

ORIGINS '91, July 4-7

GAMA presents this national gaming convention and trade show, to be held at the Baltimore Convention Center in conjunction with the Hyatt Regency and Sheraton Inner Harbor in Baltimore, Md. There will be over 500 events to choose from, in all aspects of gaming. Events include RPGA™ Grand Masters and Masters AD&D® games and a Boardgame Team Championship. Other activities include a large exhibit hall, an art show, an auction, Persian Gulf War seminars, a painting contest, panels, and special guests. Write to: GEMCO, P.O. Box 609, Randallstown MD 21133; or call: (301) 298-3135.

22nd ANNUAL SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON July 4-7

This comics/SF/gaming convention will be held at the San Diego Convention Center in San Diego, Calif. Guests include Harlan Ellison, Clive Barker, Joe Haldeman, and Walter Koenig. Events include AD&D®, DC HEROES*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, CYBERPUNK 2020*, GURPS UPLIFT*, Rifts*, and SHADOWRUN* games. Other activities include an art show, a masquerade, 24-hour gaming, mixers, seminars, and a dealers' room. Registration: \$45/weekend or \$16/day. Write to: Fae Desmond, San Diego Comic-Con, P.O. Box 128458, San Diego CA 92112-8458; or call: (619) 544-9555.

WESTERCON 44/V-CON 19, July 4-7 *

This SF convention will be held at the Gage Residence on the campus of the University of British Columbia at Vancouver, B.C. Guests of honor include William Gibson, C. J. Cherryh, Steve Jackson, Warren Oddsson, and many Canadian authors. Events include game's and tournaments, a gaming auction, panels, and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$45 Canadian or \$40 U.S. until May 31; \$57 Canadian or \$50 U.S. at the door. Children under 13 are half price. Write to: WESTERCON 44, P.O. Box 48478, Bentall Centre, Vancouver, B.C., CANADA V7X 1A2.

CASTLECON 4, July 5-7

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Crown Plaza in Arlington, Va. Events include RPGA™ tournaments, with live-action and regular role-playing games and board games. Other activities include videos, an art show, artists' and writers' workshops, music and comedy, a masquerade, science and technology panels, and computer gaming. Registration: \$20 until June 15. Write to: FANTEK, 1607 Thomas Rd., Fort Washington MD 20744.

CONGREGATE 2, July 5-7

This SF convention (it's theme is "heroes") will be held at the Moat House Hotel in Peterbor-



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COSCON '91, July 5-7

Sponsored by the Circle of Swords Gaming Guild, this convention will be held at Slippery Rock University campus in Slippery Rock, Pa. Events include RPGA™ tournaments and events, military miniatures, board games, a dealers' area, a flea market, and a miniatures-painting contest. Inexpensive housing will be available on site. Registration: \$15 until June 15; \$20 thereafter. Send an SASE to: Circle of Swords, PO. Box 2126, Butler PA 16003-2126; or call Dave at: (412) 283-1159.

INCONJUNCTION XI, July 5-7

This SF/fantasy convention, sponsored by the Circle of Janis SF/Fantasy Club, will be held at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Indianapolis, Ind. Events include DR. WHO*, STAR TREK*, and computer, miniatures, and board games. Other activities include Japanimation, filking, a masquerade, dancing, a con suite, and a dealers' room. Registration: \$20/weekend. Write to: INCONJUNCTION XI, P.O. Box 19776, Indianapolis IN 46219. For gaming information, send an SASE to: Steve Easley, P.O. Box 39035, Indianapolis IN 46239-0035.

DRAGON CON '91, July 12-14

This SF/F gaming convention will be held at the Atlanta Hilton and Towers in Atlanta, Ga. Guests include Piers Anthony, Philip Jose Farmer, L. Sprague and Catherine de Camp, Margaret Weis, Tracy Hickman, George Alec Effinger, Stan Bruns, Jack Crain, Mike Jittlov, Frank Miller, and Al Williamson. Events include role-playing, strategic, miniatures, and computer games, with panels, demos, open gaming, a writers' workshop, costume contest, an art show and print shop, videos, Japanimation, a con suite, auctions, filking, and weapons demos. Registration: \$26 until June 15; \$30 thereafter. Send an SASE to: DRAGON CON '91, Box 47696, Atlanta GA 30362; or call: (404) 925-2813 anytime. Advance memberships are available by AMEX, VISA, or Mastercard through Ticketmaster at: (404) 249-6400.

II-KHAN, July 12-14

This convention, previously known as I-KHAN, will be held at the Holiday Inn North in Colorado Springs, Co. The guest of honor will be Gordon R. Dickson. Events include AD&D®, CAR WARS*, WARHAMMER 40,000 *, SKY GALLEONS OF MARS*, and BATTLETECH® games, with open gaming, movies, a dealers' room, a banquet, a masquerade, a miniatures-painting "khantest," and a costume "khantest." Registration: \$15 until June 15; \$20 thereafter, plus a \$1 fee per event. Write to: Miniatures Wargamers' Guild, 7040 S. Hwy. 85-87, Fountain CO 80717; or call Perry: (719) 391-8318.

QUINCON VI, July 12-14

This convention will be held at the Roadway Inn in Quincy, Ill. The guest of honor is Lester Smith. Events include RPGA™ tournaments, with AD&D®, RUNEQUEST *, CHILL *, WARHAMMER 40,000*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, JOHNNY REB*, SPACE: 1889*, SKY GALLEONS OF MARS*, BATTLETECH *, WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLE-PLAY *, and CIVILIZATION * games. Registration: \$10/weekend before June 30; \$5/day or \$12/weekend thereafter. Send an SASE to: QUINCON

VI, c/o Quincy Hobby Center, 3632 Maine, Quincy IL 62301; or call: (217) 223-8498 days.

DOVERCON VII, July 13-14

This convention will be held at the University of New Hampshire campus Memorial Union Building in Durham, N.H. Guests include GURPS® game authors Walter Millikan and Steffan O'Sullivan. Events include several RPGA™ tournaments, and miniatures and artwork competitions. Registration: \$20/weekend, or \$15/Saturday and \$10/Sunday. Dealers and game masters are welcome. Write to: DOVERCON VII, PO. Box 753 Dover NH 03820.

LAGACON 11, July 20

The Lebanon Area Gamers' Assoc. will host this convention at Kasper's Arc, north of Lebanon, Pa. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, ASL*, and AXIS & ALLIES® games. Registration: \$5 in advance; or \$7.50 at the door. Write to: Lebanon Area Gamers' Assoc., 806 Cumberland St., Lebanon PA 17042; or call evenings at: (717) 274-8706.

HUFFCON/ADVENTURERS' INN July 20-21

This convention will be held in the California Ballroom in Modesto, Calif. Events include tournaments and open gaming, costume contests, demos, dealers, and refreshments. Registration: \$15 until June 15; \$20 at the door. Write to: Adventurers' Inn, the ICON, PO. Box 3669, Turlock CA 95381.

ATLANTA FANTASY FAIR XVII, July 26-28

This convention will be held at the Atlanta Hilton and Towers in Atlanta, Ga. Write to: Atlanta Fantasy Fair, 4175 Eliza Ct., Lithonia GA 30058; or call: (404) 985-1230.

CAMELOT III, July 26-28

The Huntsville Area Gamers & Role-Players are sponsoring this SF/fantasy convention to be held at the Huntsville Hilton and Towers in Huntsville, Ala. The guest of honor is Larry Elmore. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH *, CALL OF CTHULHU*, TALISMAN®, AXIS & ALLIES *, TOP SECRET/S.I.TM., SPELLJAMMER™, and CYBERPUNK® games. Other activities include films, a masquerade, dances, an art show and auction, open gaming, and a dealers' room. Registration: \$20 preregistered, or \$25 at the door. Write to: CAMELOT III, c/o H.A.G.A.R., PO. Box 14242, Huntsville AL 35815; or call: (205) 534-2531.

IMPACT I, July 26-28

This SF/F gaming and comics convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Central in Omaha, Nebr. Guests include Scott Heine (Hero Games), J. R. Daniels, and Gary DeLamatre. Events include gaming, an art room and auction, an electronics room, a dealers' room, videos, an "alien prom" party (raising funds for the Omaha Food Bank—bring a can or box of food), a hospitality suite, a masquerade, and a live-action, role-playing, murder-mystery game. Registration: \$14/weekend by June 1; \$18/weekend, \$6/Friday or Sunday, or \$12/Saturday thereafter. Dealers are welcome. Send an SASE to: IMPACT, PO. Box 4486, Omaha NE 68104.

POCONO GAMES DAY, July 27

This gaming convention will be held at the Sheraton-Pocono Inn in Stroudsburg, Pa. Events include AD&D®, SHADOWRUN®, and EURO-RAILS® tournaments, with prizes going to the top players, plus many more role-playing, board, and war games. Registration: \$4.50 per

four-hour time slot, or \$9/day. Write to: PO-CON GAMES DAY, c/o Ray George, 107 N. 8th St., Easton PA; or call Ray at: (215) 252-6616. No collect calls, please.

CANGAMES '91, August 2-5 *

This convention will be held at the Skyline Hotel in Ottawa, Ontario. Events include many role-playing, miniatures, and board games, with a game auction and a dealers' area. Family discount prices are available. Write to: CAN-GAMES '91, Box 3358, Station D, Ottawa, Ontario, CANADA K1P 6H8.

DALLASCON '91, August 2-5

This convention will be held at the LeBaron Hotel in Dallas, Texas. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH *, WARHAMMER 40,000 *, and AXIS & ALLIES® games. Other activities include a dealers' room and an auction. Registration: \$14/weekend preregistered, and \$16/weekend at the door. Write to: DALLASCON, P.O. Box 867623, Plano TX 75086.

DIPCON XXIV, August 2-4 *

The annual DIPLOMACY * championships of North America will be held at the University of Toronto-Scarborough campus in Toronto, Ontario. Other activities include other board games and variant DIPLOMACY games. Registration: \$20 Canadian. Write to: Doug Acheson, Unit 5, Suite 330, 320 Yonge St., Barrie, Ontario, CANADA, L4N 4C8.

HEXACON '91, August 2-4

This convention will be held at the Caravan Inn in Phoenix, Ariz. Activities include role-playing, board, military miniatures, and fantasy miniatures games, as well as RPGA™ tournaments. Write to: HEXACON, PO. Box 11743, Phoenix AZ 85062; or call: (602) 498-1759.

RIVERCON XVI, August 2-4

This convention will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Louisville, Ky. Guests include Lois McMaster Bujold and Emma Bull. Activities include a large hucksters' room, an art show and auction, a masquerade, videos, gaming parties, a hospitality suite, and children's activities. Registration: \$18 until July 15; \$25 thereafter. Write to: RIVERCON, PO. Box 58009, Louisville KY 40269-0009.

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How effective was your convention listing? If you are a convention organizer, please write to the editors and let us know if our "Convention Calendar" served your needs. Your comments are always welcome.

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TSR PREVIEWS

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T

by Steven E. Schend

THE MARVEL® -PHILE

You can't keep a dead man down

Isn't it amazing just how temporary death is in comic books? Long-dead characters simply find their way back through the topsoil, brush themselves off, and continue to astound and aggravate the continuing characters of their respective comic books. Many deaths are pure speculation, as the hero's plane blows up in mid-air or the villain's master weapon explodes with him nearby, and all involved are led to believe the character's mail should be forwarded to Kingdom Come. Remember, folks, the penultimate rule of comics: If there's no body, the character might not be dead! It's a wonderful loophole, and it's become a tradition (if not a law) to use when resuscitating characters from comic-book limbo. (Anyone believe Bucky Barnes is living in England, playing host to Jim Morrison and Elvis? It could happen—in the comics, that is . . .)

Marvel Comics dusted off quite a few deceased yet dignified characters in 1990 and 1991, and these heroes and villains alike are adding new chapters to their once-closed memoirs. Detailed below are two of the meanest, nastiest villains ever to defy the inevitable and cheat death. They have returned from beyond with powers that shadow their former abilities. They are the perennial mutant-hater Commander Cameron Hodge and the undead death-dealer himself, the Grim Reaper.

COMMANDER HODGE™

Cameron Hodge, terrorist

(Previous published appearance: MU6 *The Gamer's Handbook of the MARVEL UNIVERSE™, 1990 Character Updates*)

F	EX(20)	Health: 120
A	EX(20)	
S	IN(40)	Karma: 50
E	IN(40)	
R	GD(10)	Resources: RM(30)
I	EX(20)	
P	EX(20)	Popularity: 0

POWERS: Thanks to a deal he made with a demon, N'astirh, during the "Inferno" story line, Commander Hodge is apparently immortal. All of Commander Hodge's other powers were a result of his cybernetic body, which was constructed by the



Right (see, however, "Weaknesses/Limitations").

Immortality: If reduced to 0 Health and Shift 0 Endurance, Commander Hodge does not die but begins healing. His head, alone and isolated, has a Health total of 32, and it regenerates its lost Health with Incredible (40) speed (40 Health points in one minute). Thus, Hodge's head almost always remains active and immortal.

Psionic Reflection: Hodge, through unknown technology or his deal with N'astirh, is effectively immune to psionic attacks. He reflects any mental attacks back upon the attacker with a force equivalent to that used against him.

Cybernetic Body: Commander Hodges cyborg body was shaped like a spider's, having eight legs and a low squat body, but it also had various other attachments such as weapons systems and a scorpion-like tail. The cyborg body granted Hodge the following powers and equipment:

—**Body Armor:** Hodge had Incredible (40) protection against physical and energy attacks.

—**Computer Interface:** He could directly access computers with his cyborg body, granting him a Remarkable (30) ability to access and receive stored computer information.

—**Molecular Adhesive:** Hodge could spray this on opponents within a one-area range; it adhered to them, acting as a Remarkable (30) Grappling attack and negating any standard missile attacks (like Archangel's neural disrupter feathers).

—**Phasing:** A mechanical unit mounted on the back of his spider body allowed Hodge to phase with Excellent (20) ability.

—**Self-Repair Circuits:** His mechanical body could repair itself automatically with Incredible (40) ability, restoring 40 points of Health to the cyborg body every minute (four points per round). It is unknown if this ability allowed Hodge to regenerate lost Health if his head were removed from the body.

Weapon Systems: Hodge's spiderlike body had the following weapons mounted on it:

—**Bolas:** This weapon counted as an Excellent (20) strength Grappling attack; the bolas were made of Remarkable (30) strength metals.

—**Laser Blasters:** These dealt Remarkable (30) Energy damage to their targets.

—**Legs:** Each of his eight legs could inflict Excellent (20) Edged Attacks damage.

—**Saw Blade:** This circular blade was capable of reaching any target up to one area away and dealing Excellent (20) Edged Attacks damage.

—**Scorpion Tail:** The enormous cybernetic tail could pin down opponents with Remarkable (30) strength (counts as a Grappling attack) and could inflict Incredible (40) Edged Attacks damage with its pointed tip.

—**Spikes:** These spikes could be fired from mountings on Hodge's underside, causing Good (10) damage on the Throwing Edged column.

—**Tentacles:** Hodges primary attack mode utilized 1-10 tentacles of Remarkable (30) material strength, each able to entangle up to two targets with Remarkable (30) strength.

—**Elongation:** Hodges tentacles could stretch up to two areas away by using his Monstrous (75) Elongation power.

WEAKNESSES/LIMITATIONS: Hodge is currently immobilized following his second decapitation. Unless some outside force replaces his cybernetic body, Hodge is trapped underneath the ruins of the Genoshan Citadel for the foreseeable future.

TALENTS: Hodge formerly had the Leadership talent, but his current state of mental instability negates any use of this talent. He does retain his knowledge of psychiatry and uses that knowledge to inflict psychological torture on any whom he sees as his enemy.

HISTORY: Cameron Hodge was formerly a normal human with a deep and abiding hatred of mutants. He organized the Right, a fanatical antimutant terrorist group, with money he embezzled from his former friend, Warren Worthington III, and X-Factor. After founding and openly aligning himself with the Right, Hodge spent much time discrediting or destroying mutants, entering into open conflict with X-Factor and the New Mutants. During the time of the "Inferno," Hodge made a deal with the demon lord, N'astirh, for immortality.

Hodge later kidnapped Candy Southern, the paramour of Warren Worthington, and subjected her to experiments that ultimately killed her. Worthington, now resurrected in the form of the Archangel, tracked down and apparently killed Hodge by decapitating him with his razor-edged wings.

For more detailed information on Cameron Hodge and the beginning of the Right, consult the "Cameron Hodge and the Right" entry in TSR's MU6 *Gamer's Handbook of the MARVEL UNIVERSE™: 1990 Character Updates*.

Due to his dealings with N'astirh, Hodge was not killed by Archangel. His head allegedly was recovered by cybernetic experts of the Right, and they constructed a powerful mechanical body for Hodges head. Hodge resurfaced during what has come to be called the "X-Tinction Agenda." Hodge somehow became the power behind the leaders of Genosha, a small island nation east of Africa whose prosperity lies in its mutant-slave population. Hodge ensconced himself in the upper echelons of power of the small country, soon run-

ning everything as he saw fit. Hodge began sending strike forces of Genoshan "Magistrates" onto U.S. soil to locate and kidnap mutants for Genosha. One strike force collected Storm, Boom-Boom, Rictor, Wolvesbane, and Warlock after a brief firefight on the grounds of the ruined Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters.

Hodge planned to utilize Warlock's "transmode-virus," a genetic virus that would allow Hodge to alter his cybernetic form into something more human. Before he succeeded in this plan, his mutant hostages escaped, and Warlock died from lack of energy. The remaining mutants were captured and sentenced to become Genoshan mutants, genetically and psychically modified to serve the Genoshan state. The release of this news, in addition to that of Warlock's death, provoked a coalition invasion of Genosha by X-Factor, the New Mutants, and the two splinter-groups of X-Men, as Hodge himself had planned.

The Genoshan Magistrates, including a mesmerized Alex Summers (Havok of the X-Men), encountered the invading mutants and were initially defeated. In separate groups, all the American mutants penetrated the Genoshan Citadel, though not in time to prevent Wolvesbane's or Storm's modifications into Genoshan mutants. Through the efforts of the Magistrates and Hodge himself, the mutants were captured and stripped of their mutant powers by the Genoshan Magistrate Wipeout. The mutants were then turned over to Hodge for experiments. Before Cyclops's capture, he managed to restore Havok's memory; Havok captured Cyclops and turned him over to Hodge, choosing to hide his returned memory and planning to rescue his friends later.

Hodge previously was a charismatic, strong-willed bigot, but his dealings with demons and alteration into a cybernetic monstrosity unhinged his mind and made him extremely cruel. He not only wanted to destroy X-Factor and its mutant allies, he wanted to torture them, too. Rahne's torture took the form of Genoshan slavery; her normal body was unable to act against the orders of her masters while her mind was free in her wolfoid and wolf forms. Hodge planned the same torture for Storm, though her mutate-state proved to be more than Hodge bargained for.

Hodge's insanity and utter disregard for the carefully balanced order of Genosha turned some highly placed Genoshans against him and his plans. Phillip Moreau, the Genegineer, altered Rahne during her modification process, allowing her autonomy when in her wolfoid and wolf forms. He also mutated Storm into appearing as a mutate, but granting her both eventual freedom and the ability to restore her fellow mutants' powers. Chief Magistrate Anderson also covertly aided Moreau in opposing Hodges plans. Both of these

people wanted to save Genosha from utter destruction by destroying Hodge and removing the now-insane President of Genosha from office.

By the efforts of Psylocke, the Genegineer, Chief Magistrate Anderson and Storm, all the members of the X-Men, New Mutants, and X-Factor escaped Hodge's clutches. In a series of battles, Hodge's cyborg body was damaged and many of the mutants were injured. Atop the pinnacle of the Genoshan Citadel, Hodge faced off against Havok and Cyclops. The mutant brothers' powers fueled each other to enormous amounts, and they destroyed the top of the Citadel with their force blasts. Hodge was soon reduced to a decapitated head again, and he fell off the side of the 160-story building. Checking to see his foe's demise, Havok leaned over the edge and was ensnared by Hedge, a metallic tentacle projecting from his mouth. Both heroes and Hodge were pulled over the edge of the building and fell to the ground; Cyclops and Havok were saved by Marvel Girl, while Hodges head fell at the feet of Wolvessbane. She threw Hodges head toward the Citadel while Rictor's mutant power shook the Citadel into rubble. Hodges head was apparently buried under the ruins of the building.

Hodge's "X-Tinction Agenda" supposedly was to heighten the world's perception of Genosha into a world power, responsible for capturing and bringing to justice "mutant terrorists." The agenda, as Hodge saw it, called first for the destruction of X-Factor and all its mutant allies, and finally for the eradication of all mutant life on the Earth. It never progressed further than the alleged death of Warlock, and Hodges agenda is as much rubble as the Genoshan Capitol building. Whether Hodge will be seen again is uncertain; his Immortality should protect him from death, though being buried under tons of rubble with no body will certainly deter him from any plans of death and destruction in the near future.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: Hodge became more of a monster than any of the mutants he claimed were the true monsters facing humanity. Though still quite clever, his plans are pursued with fanatic single-mindedness, and Hodge is manic in his desire to eradicate mutants to the exception of all else. To him, mutants and some humans are but puppets and toys, to be played with and destroyed on his whims.

In your campaign, Hodge could be resurrected by the Right, grafting his head to another body like the one detailed above. Hodge could then begin a methodical campaign to wipe out any mutant heroes in your campaign. He could work behind the scenes, even hiring some of your heroes' old foes to kill them. Hodge's head alone could also appear in your campaign

city, where he could serve as the "brains" of some criminal organization. Maybe his head could develop some mental powers.

GRIM REAPER™

Eric Williams, professional criminal

(Previous published appearance: MU2 *The Gamer's Handbook of the MARVEL UNIVERSE™, Volume Two*)

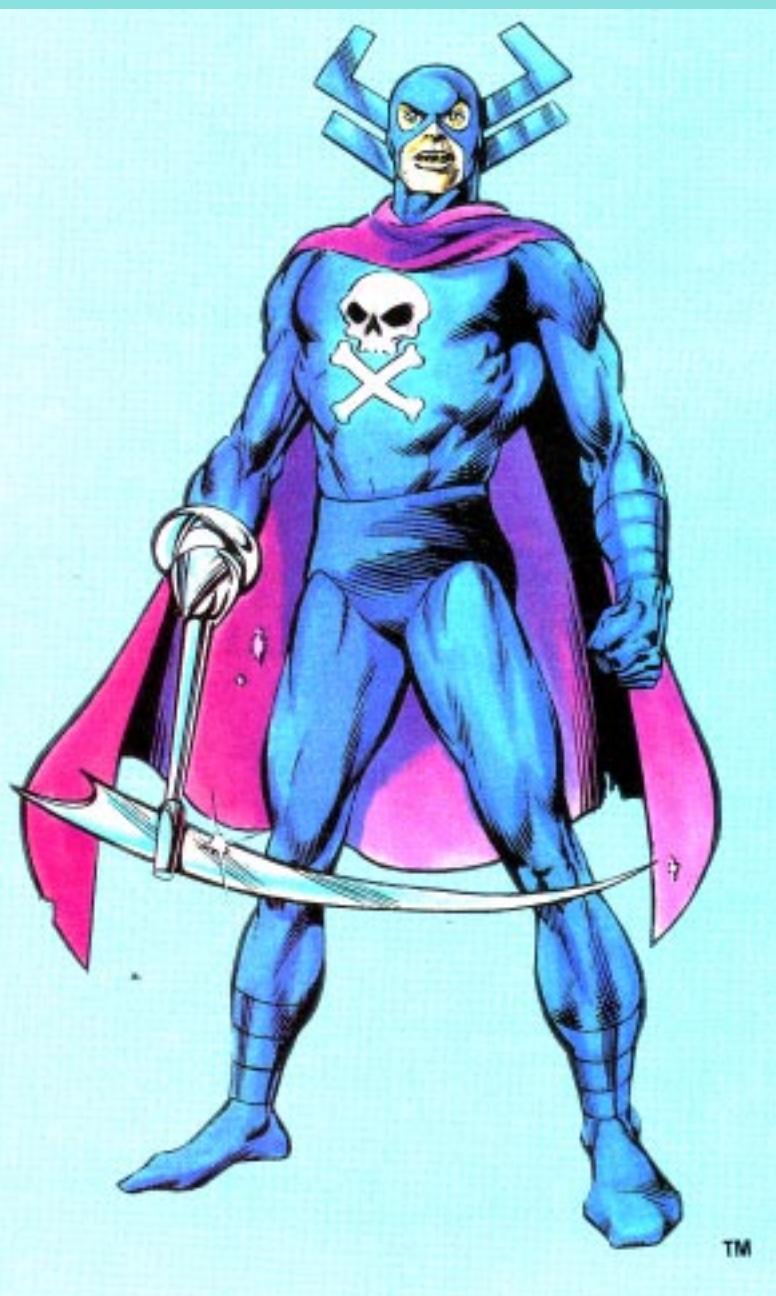
F	GD(10)	Health: 100
A	EX(20)	
S	RM(30)	Karma: 18
E	IN(40)	
R	TY(6)	Resources: 0
I	TY(6)	
P	TY(6)	Popularity: -15

POWERS: Eric Williams gains his powers from two sources: his battle scythe and

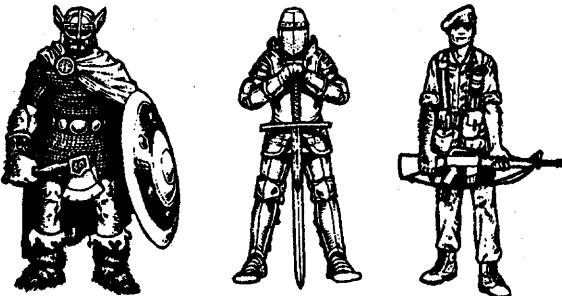
the fact that he is dead.

Battle Scythe: The scythe is made of Incredible (40) material-strength steel and inflicts Excellent (20) Edged damage (or Remarkable (30) Blunt damage when using the flat of the blade). The scythe, despite its original construction and material strength, can now cut into any target having human life-force energy in it. Therefore, natural Body Armor (like the Thing's or Colossus's) is reduced by -2CS, while external or separate Body Armor (like Iron Man's or the Guardsmen's) protects against the scythe with normal effectiveness. Ultron's adamantium armor was penetrated by the Reaper's scythe due to the large amounts of human life-energy Ultron was absorbing. The scythe also has these powers:

—**Blaster:** This does Remarkable (30) Force damage with a range of five areas.



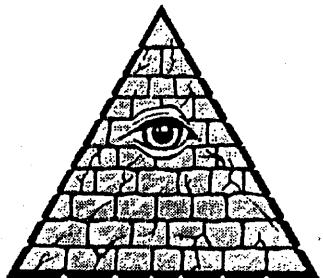
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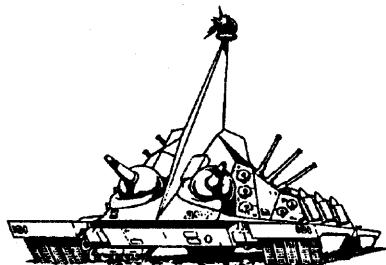
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—Knock-Out Gas: Excellent (20) intensity gas fills one area at the Grim Reaper's command.

—Rotor: The blade can act as a small helicopter blade (which allows him to fall through an atmosphere from any height without harm), a buzz saw doing Excellent (20) damage, and a shield (it can whirl in front of the Reaper to provide Excellent (20) protection against thrown objects and projectiles, such as bullets).

—Stunner: Finally, the scythe can make a Monstrous (75) intensity Stun attack by touch; this can be reversed to cancel the stun effect.

Zombie Powers: After falling in love with the living Grim Reaper, Nekra twice reanimated the Reaper's body as a zombie. In its first incarnation, the zombie had the same abilities and ranks of the living Eric Williams, with an additional Body Armor power. Most recently, Nekra reanimated the Grim Reaper as a zombie of enhanced Strength and Endurance with the following additional powers:

—Body Armor: This armor is ranked as Excellent (20) vs. physical or energy attacks.

—Health-Drain Touch: Eric now does Incredible (40) rank absorption of Health from living targets. The Reaper can absorb

more Health than his normal maximum Health total. Divide additional absorbed amounts of Health by three, and add these points to his Health, Strength, and Endurance. These enhanced scores naturally diminish by 10 points every hour until reduced to their standard levels (given previously). The Reaper's normal Health points also decrease 10 points every hour until reduced to normal, and the Grim Reaper can maintain his normal Health point level for 12 hours without absorbing any life energy. After 12 hours without feeding, his Health can wane away to zero at the rate of five Health points every hour until he absorbs enough life-energy to return his Health to normal.

—Mummifying Touch: As a side-effect of the Reaper's Health draining, his victim's body dries up and becomes desiccated.

—Invulnerability: The Reaper is unaffected by heat, cold, radiation, toxins, and disease.

WEAKNESSES/LIMITATIONS: The Grim Reaper must absorb the life force of at least one human (having a minimum of 24 Health points) per day to maintain his undead existence.

Due to unknown factors in his life-

maintaining spell, the Grim Reaper cannot absorb the life-force of Wonder Man (Simon Williams, the Reaper's brother). If the Grim Reaper's scythe comes into contact with Wonder Man's skin, there is an uncontrolled and immediate life-energy drain of Remarkable (30) intensity from the Reaper into Wonder Man.

TALENTS: As a Weapons Specialist with his Battle Scythe, the Grim Reaper has Remarkable (30) skill with this weapon.

HISTORY: The Grim Reaper began as Eric Williams, a member of the Las Vegas Maggia and brother of Simon Williams, a.k.a. Wonder Man. Upon hearing of his brother's "death," Eric vowed to avenge Simon and held the Avengers responsible, becoming the costumed villain, the Grim Reaper. For years, he continued his campaign of vengeance against the Avengers, and his hatred focused on the Vision (who, at the time, had Simon's brain-wave pattern) and the revived Wonder Man; many of his plots involved attempts to kill his brother's "imposters." After he finally realized that Wonder Man was truly Simon Williams, the Reaper died by falling off a high cliff.

The Grim Reaper was revived by his lover, Nekra, and became a zombie, although he believed himself to still be alive. He died a second time in battle against Wonder Man and Magneto, after finally realizing his state of undeath.

Recently, the Grim Reaper was once again brought back to unlife by Nekra; this time, her spell revived his body and made it more powerful, but her spell also demanded that the Reaper absorb the energy of one living human a day to maintain his current existence. The Grim Reaper claimed Nekra as his first victim, preferring to be under no one's control and insuring his freedom by killing her.

Eric's slaying of a cult of Sattanish brought him to the attention of Wonder Man and the Avengers West. The Reaper stabbed Simon with his scythe, but found that he couldn't drain his brother's life energy. In fact, the Reaper's absorbed life energy inexplicably drained from him and into Wonder Man. The Grim Reaper fled before he could be apprehended.

One night, Wonder Man found the Grim Reaper absorbing the life of a homeless person. After a brief fight, the Grim Reaper defeated his brother and prepared to collapse a building on top of him when the Reaper was attacked by the Mandrill, Nekra's brother. The Mandrill was killed before he could be saved by Wonder Man, and the Grim Reaper escaped again.

During the Reaper's killing spree, Ultron-13 cultivated a plan to turn humans into robots susceptible to control by the "psychic currents of my incomparable artificial brain." Confronting Ultron in his lair be-

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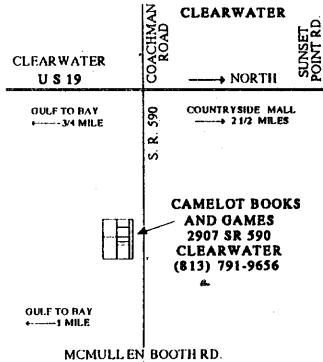
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fore three captive Avengers (Hawkeye, Tigra, and Quicksilver), the Reaper attacked the robot in self-defense and managed to sever one of Ultron's arm tendons. Ultron fused the battle scythe to the Reaper's arm, making it an extension of his arm instead of a prosthetic device. The Reaper then temporarily joined forces with Ultron—two mockeries of life, respectively undead and synthetic.

But the Grim Reaper double-crossed Ultron and set up a plan to betray him to Wonder Man and the Avengers, provided Simon agreed never to oppose him again. The deal also included the stipulation that the Reaper would never kill more than one person a day. Simon agreed to the deal and Eric directed him to Ultron's blimp headquarters where the robot planned to spray the Rose Bowl Parade crowd with his spray to turn them all into robots. Once aboard, the Reaper attacked Ultron and absorbed all the life energy from the adamantine robot. Having defeated Ultron, the Reaper turned on Wonder Man.

Ultron-13 recovered, though, and resumed his attack on the Reaper, interrupted by the entrance of Hawkeye (who had been enslaved by Ultron; see "The MARVEL-Phile," DRAGON® issue #168). Hawkeye attempted to attack Ultron, his will freed from Ultron's robotization and control; but his attack was thwarted by the Grim Reaper. The archer was attacked on both sides by the robot and the Reaper, both villains attempting to absorb Hawkeye's life energy. Wonder Man pulled Hawkeye away, and both villains collided with each other in a burst of energy, knocking each other out.

No record of his arrest has been recorded, but it can be assumed that the Grim Reaper is currently being held in maximum security at the Vault.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: Eric Williams was a psychotic villain when he was simply a normal man wielding a prosthetic scythe. His bigotries and obsessions ruled his life until he died. After death, Eric has simply become even more psychotic, though no less cunning, and his only obsession is killing for his survival. Now in his undead state, he is the embodiment of his name: the Grim Reaper.

The Grim Reaper could wreak much havoc in your campaign city. Since his abilities mimic, to a degree, those of a vampire, your heroes could be mislead into thinking there's some blood-sucking fiend abroad. Undoubtedly, they'll stock up on stakes, garlic, and religious items, only to find they have no effect on old Eric. The Reaper could also become a hired assassin, working for anyone who doesn't mind a corpse on the payroll.

Starting this month, "The MARVEL® Phile" adds a continuing feature for our readers: an up-to-date "bulletin board" of events in the MARVEL UNIVERSE that pertain to your games. This "Bulletin Box" features brief notes on major changes in characters (such as Baron Strucker's resur-

rection) and provide new statistics and powers for heroes and villains alike as warranted. Now, you can update your existing Marvel characters quickly and rest assured that your Marvel campaign is as fast paced and up-to-date as the comics themselves!

MARVEL® Bulletin Box

Avengers West Coast

The Avengers West Coast recently chose its current "Active Membership": Dr. Pym, Hawkeye, Iron Man, Scarlet Witch, Tigra, Wonder Man, and the Wasp. This membership has been amended with the addition of Spider-Woman II into the Avengers' ranks, as well as the announced resignations of Dr. Pym and the Wasp. The modified list then is: Hawkeye, Wonder Man, Iron Man, Scarlet Witch, Tigra, and Spider-Woman II. The West Coast Reserve consists of the Human Torch I, Machine Man, Mockingbird, and Quicksilver, though which member will fill the remaining opening left by the resigning founders is unrevealed.

Baron Wolfgang Von Strucker

The Baron died in the destruction of Hydra Island by the Death Spore virus bomb years ago. He was recently resurrected by isolated agents of Hydra, and he is currently purging the ranks of Hydra of those "unfit for duty" and is scouring Hydra bases world-wide "to offer my hand to those who will take it—and to those worthy enough to stand by my side."

His body now contains an irradiated form of the Death Spore virus that animates and preserves his previously unliving body. He can release the virus at will

and control those whom it strikes. If the Baron is killed again, the spores will be released from his body, "set free from my control, racing out from my body to revenge me on my killers—and everyone else." This new power is as follows:

—*Plague/Disease Control:* The Baron's Death Spore virus can be released at will, causing Amazing (50) intensity damage to any living target(s) within one area. Unless immune to disease or in possession of an antidote, victims continue to take damage from the virus for 1-10 rounds or until dead.

Vindicator

James MacDonald Hudson is back and sporting some new powers along with some cybernetic implants. He wields all his old powers (see *Gamer's Handbook of the MARVEL UNIVERSE™ Volume Two*, under "Guardian") as well as the following new powers:

—*Computer Links:* RM (30) (mental connection and communication with computer systems)

—*Energy Detection:* AM (50) (detection, identification, and tracking of any electromagnetic energy at any wavelength within 20 areas)

—*Mechanical Override:* MN (75) (take-over and control of any external mechanical, electrical, or cybernetic systems within two areas with a FEAT roll against the complexity of the target system).

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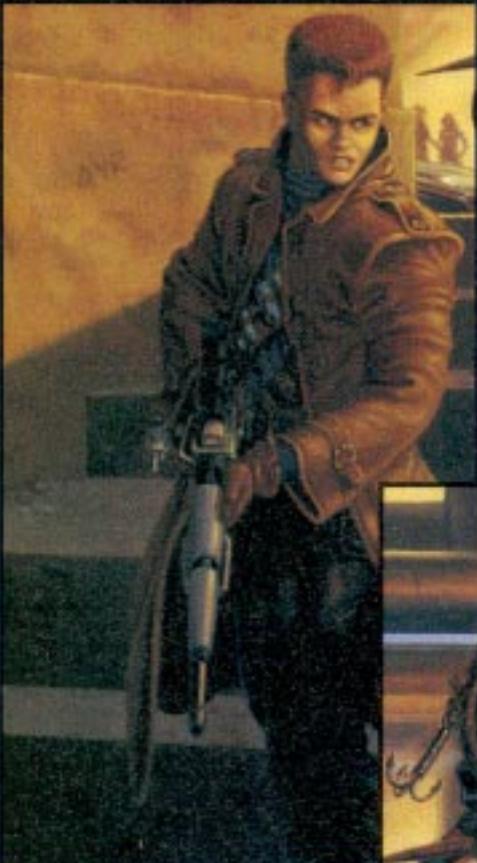


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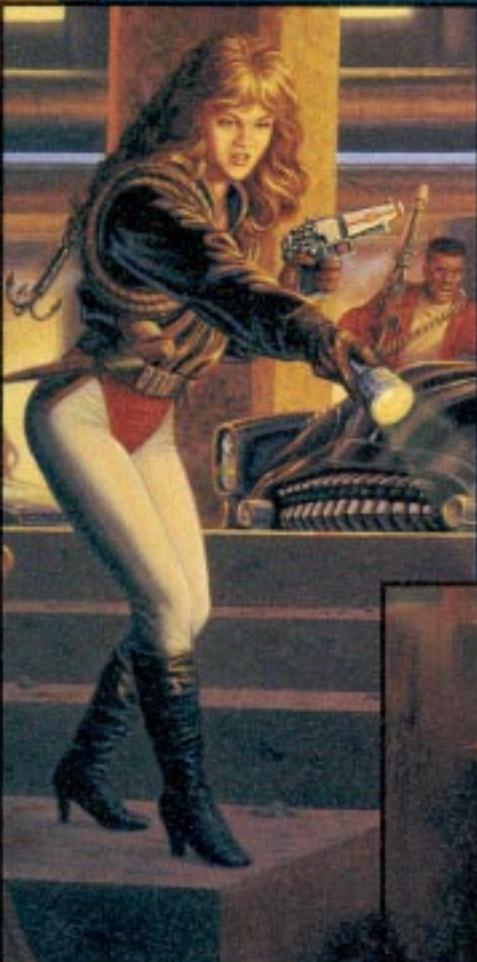
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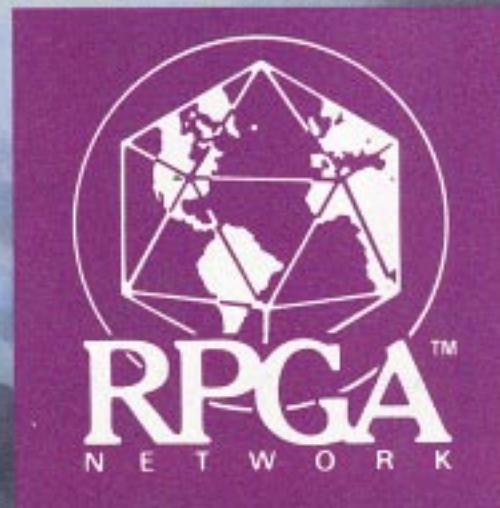
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Role-playing Reviews

An update on the wizards' spelling competition, part 2

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In a reckoning of the most original and innovative fantasy role-playing games of the late '80s and early '90s, White Wolf's ARS MAGICA* and Chaosium's PENDRAGON* games head the list. For a review of the ARS MAGICA game; see DRAGON issue #147. Reviewed here are four ARS MAGICA supplements. Three of these supplements develop the ARS MAGICA game setting, an alternate history of medieval Europe in which a small society of wizards has existed for centuries in a handful of isolated settlements. Additionally, many of the magical myths of medieval Europe (e.g., shapeshifters, faerie realms, goblins, giants) are not myths, but realities. The ARS MAGICA setting develops the alien culture of the wizard in greater detail than any other FRPG setting. Readable and dramatic, the game and its supplements offer many original story, setting, character, and theme ideas for FRPGs. They are highly recommended for your permanent gaming library, even if you never play this game.

The following four ARS MAGICA supplements are available from White Wolf (formerly Lion Rampant) at: 4153 Indian Manor Drive, Stone Mountain GA 30083, U.S.A.

The Order of Hermes

ARS MAGICA sourcebook
126-page softbound book
White Wolf Publishing

\$14.95

Design, development, and editing: Jonathan Tweet, Mark Rein Hagen, John Brandt, Lisa Stevens

It is the latter half of the twelfth century. Communities of scholars adept in the arcane are joined together in the Order of Hermes, a secret society centuries old, to preserve their rights and privacy from the meddling of the Church, the State, and the people. All they want is to be left alone to pursue their researches into the mysteries of the supernatural.

The history of the Order of Hermes is grim and dark. When the Order was founded, all practitioners of magic were invited to join it; those who refused were hunted down and slain. In the eleventh century, the Order-dominated by magi from the Latin traditions of magic descended from the Order's predecessor, the Cult of Mercury-turned upon its own House Diedne, the only house preserving the druidic magical traditions. The Order's magi destroyed the House, slaying all the House Diedne magi they could find in a terrible Wizards War.

The personalities of the magi themselves are ironic triumphs of the pursuit of pure reason and arcane power. A youth with the Gift, instinctively shunned and feared by ordinary mortals, is snatched from his parents and taken away to a covenant of Hermetic wizards, where he will be raised as an apprentice to a magus. An appren-

tice's Master, by nature and habit short on tender human feelings, is typically harsh in schooling the young apprentice-for the apprentice's own good, of course, because the path to arcane mastery is a difficult one, and only a student used to hardship will be tough enough to succeed. Emerging from his apprenticeship in late youth, the new magus can look forward to an extended lifetime, during which he may seldom leave the precincts of his home covenant. Obsessed more and more with the affairs of the world beyond, and interested less and less in the day-to-day passions and trials of common folk, a magus becomes an alien, distorted reflection of humanity. In fact, one familiar topic of scholarly debate within the Order is when a man ceases to be a man and becomes a magus.

The society of wizards portrayed in *The Order of Hermes* is not governed by a romantic, heroic code. For example, apprentices are said usually to have come willingly and freely to the Order, but the Code of Hermes (the social contract that magi live under) does not require this. Strictly speaking, magi are allowed to obtain apprentices in any manner they wish. Throughout the codes, practices, and politics of the Order, it is clear that the magi are above the laws of god and man and are ruled only by their own codes and conveniences.

I admire the complex themes implied in a campaign where all player characters begin belonging to an organization of such doubtful virtue. In *The Order of Hermes*, the wizards' society is a very human institution, driven by conflicting, often incompatible motivations, and darkened by the alien psychology of the wizard alienated and transformed by his obsessive search for knowledge and power. In itself, the Order of Hermes is neither evil nor good, dark nor light, but gray in many shades. Far from being heroic in the D&D-game sense, magi are typically self-interested, ruthless, and profoundly indifferent to the fates of the people. The advantage of such a narrative background in an FRPG setting is richness of story characterization. The disadvantage is that complex character motivation may not be to most gamers' tastes, and it is definitely not in the D&D-game and Tolkien traditions. In tone, *The Order of Hermes* has more in common with the cyberpunk genre than with most heroic-fantasy game settings.

The presentation style of *The Order of Hermes* is dramatic and well-organized, with effective use of sidebars, short essays, and narrative fragments to illustrate specific examples of concepts discussed in the text. *The Order of Hermes* also introduces several fine, atmospheric features to the ARS MAGICA game, most notably the concept of "Wizard's Twilight." As wizards grow older, they become more capable of summoning magical forces but less capable of controlling them. Wizards at the end of their careers begin to experience

episodes called Wizard's Twilights, when the wild magic seizes them as a result of some botch or slip of control in casting a spell. In mild cases, the wizard may simply suffer a spasm or pass out; in more dramatic cases, the miscast spell may have dramatic and unpredictable side effects, and the mind and body of the wizard may be altered subtly.

As age progresses, these Wizard's Twilights become more frequent, until one day the wizard leaves the real world and is lost forever. Scholars argue that, since the souls of wizards who have passed on into Wizards Twilight cannot be summoned like the souls of deceased mortals, those wizards are not dead but are in a magical limbo beyond the call of the mortal world. An example given is of an old woman wizard who has passed into Wizard's Twilight, but her body has developed such will and magical potency that it continues to function, even in the absence of the self that has passed beyond. This strange magus continues to move about the covenant-not quite dead, not quite alive, but nonetheless pleasant enough to converse with, if a bit easily confused.

The Order of Hermes describes thirteen surviving Houses of the Order. Each House has its own magical specialties and complex motivations and politics. For example, House Flambeau is a sort of college of Hell's Angels in wizard robes, with a special penchant and passion for fire and destruction. This gives the House a great deal of power in Order politics, since nobody wants to be on the other side of a dispute from House Flambeau. For their own part, the Flambeau magi don't care much how or why they use their abilities, so long as they get to burn or blow things up. On the other hand, House Bjornaer is the only surviving house that preserves non-Roman magical traditions, in particular the shapeshifting and nature magicks of the forests of northern Europe. Generally disliked and distrusted by the other Houses, Bjornaers must tread softly to avoid suffering the fate of exterminated House Diedne, while at the same time they struggle to defend the principles and practices of wild magic and the woodlands.

Evaluation: *The Order of Hermes* presents a role-playing background with a long, rich time scale and sense of history. The history is full of violence, injustice, betrayal, corruption, vengeance, and all the great themes that drive the darker, less-heroic sides of epic fantasy. The variety and charm of magicks implied in the background is imaginative and inspiring. I recommend this in part for its utility, since it would make an excellent model for a wizards society—good or evil—in a fantasy campaign, but also because it is such a good read and so full of interesting fantasy story and character hooks.

The Tekmpest

ARS MAGICA campaign sourcebook

64-page softbound book
White Wolf Publishing \$9.95
Design, development, and editing: Stewart Wieck, Mark Rein Hagen, John Brandt, Kelly Golden, Stephan Wieck, Lisa Stevens

Warning! If your GM uses published scenario materials in your ARS MAGICA campaign, *do not* read this review. I'm not going to talk plot, but even reading about the structure of this campaign pack could spoil your appreciation of it.

The Tempest features a series of linked adventures that the GM knows will eventually be revealed as having a common plot, but which initially will seem to the players to be unrelated, peripheral events. Presenting essential plot threads without giving them too much prominence is a tough stunt for the game master, but the story resources and misdirections provided for the first four episodes are masterful. The plot elements presented to the players as the apparent justification for their adventures are sufficiently engrossing that the players will little note the significance of what appear to be minor details, but which turn out to be central to the campaign.

The adventure episodes are simple in structure but well elaborated, and the player-character responses are carefully anticipated and provided for. The scenarios are internally open ended, particularly the pretext cover plots, yet there is enough detail to permit the GM to run the adventures without adhering to a narrow script. A certain heavy-handedness in preserving main nonplayer characters is inevitable in a linked series of campaign scenarios, but the means for preserving them is logical rather than arbitrary, and not particularly offensive. The scale and charm of the campaign's epic story and theme should compensate for any sense of plot railroading. Some details of the scenarios, however, seem to be distressingly vague and out of scale with the campaign setting. In particular, I found the magical raising of a Viking longboat from the sea bottom and the spontaneous animation of its ghostly crew to serve as guide and transport to a plot locale to be offensively out of proportion to magical effects seen elsewhere.

Best of all, *The Tempest's* episodes fit smoothly and plausibly into the ARS MAGICA mythic Europe setting. Part of the action takes place in the player characters' own covenant (a monastery-like settlement of wizards and their guards and companions) presumed to have been already created by the gaming group. I found the other scenario settings briefly but adequately detailed for FRPG storytelling and role-playing, though not as clearly visualized in maps and diagrams as might be useful for role-players with a war-gaming style. Some of the most satisfying role-playing encounters are found in the peripheral subplots—a corrupt pardoner, a

clever and "helpful" lad with a gift for getting PCs into trouble, and a mortally wounded whale coming to die in a sacred, magical part of the sea.

Evaluation: *The Tempest* promises good reading and good gaming, with some fine problem-solving and moral challenges in an epic campaign revealed gradually to players through what initially appear to be minor incidents. The story and theme are appealing, and the scenarios present many opportunities for rich role-playing and engaging GM performances. The presentation is well written and well organized, the illustration attractive and appropriate in tone, the staging and anticipation of player responses skilled and intelligent, and the narrative, characters, and themes dramatic and affecting.

Covenants

ARS MAGICA sourcebook
64-page softbound book
White Wolf Publishing \$10.95
Design: Mark Rein Hagen, Lisa Stevens
Editing: Lisa Stevens, John Nephew, John Brandt

Primarily a set of procedures and checklists for designing your own covenants in an ARS MAGICA campaign, *Covenants* is of modest interest to any but those who intend to run an ARS MAGICA game. The design of the player characters' home covenant is supposed to be a sort of communal process, with each player investing a bit of his personality and creative energy in the setting where most adventures will begin and end. The procedures and mechanics of designing a covenant are moderately interesting, but only if you intend to use it in play. The most significant covenant features (i.e., setting, inhabitants, relations with the outside world, magical resources, mundane resources, and obligations) are given positive and negative point values. The players and the Storyguide (the GM) balance positive features against negative features to create covenants with distinctive strengths and weaknesses that can be exploited by the Storyguide in designing campaign scenarios and themes.

The thematic elements of covenants are of more general interest. Covenants are perceived as passing through four stages of maturity: spring, summer, autumn, and winter. Spring covenants are typically occupied by a few young and inexperienced magi. Their companions (civilian support in charge of mundane tasks, from cooks and laborers to specialist companions like librarians and scribes) and grogs (guards) are typically of doubtful discipline, competence, and morale. In the summer of a covenant its magi are vigorous and powerful, and its companions and grogs skilled, disciplined, and dedicated. The covenant has survived the trials of spring and has emerged as a durable player in the complex politics of the Order. During this period, the magi are most ambitious in their researches and in their

adventures in the world outside the covenant. In its autumn, a covenant is at the acme of its power and influence, but just past the height of its vitality and inspiration. A fortunate or politically adept autumn covenant can remain in this stage for an extended period as its conservative leaders wield the covenant's power and influence to maintain the status quo. In winter, the covenant has fallen into decadence and collapse. The magi are often bizarre and distorted in personality and power, and many have lost touch with reality. The magic of such covenants may be great and wonderful, but unfocused, or even wild and dangerous. Great treasures of wizardry and scholarship may reside in such winter covenants, but the task of visiting them and seeking out these treasures is weird and perilous.

The best parts of the *Covenants* supplement are the four developed examples of covenants, one for each season, and the associated stories and characters that accompany the setting.

Lariander, the spring covenant, is located in a swamp in a faerie forest. Sure, there is lots of convenient magical energy in the air, but it tends to get out of hand, and the will-o-wisps from the swamp are a serious menace. Worse yet, the subtle influence of the faerie wood is eroding the discipline of the grogs, companions, and magi, threatening the covenant with complete chaos.

Bellaquin is a summer covenant that unlike most covenants, welcomes contact and commerce with the mundane world. Wizards are lieges over several local villages, have two knights as vassals, and are accepted as part of aristocracy. The magi of Bellaquin are active in local politics and have an obsessive love of the worldly arts and culture. At present, the church of southern France, more interested in wealth and power than orthodoxy, has tolerated the public presence of magi in Bellaquin. But since the wizards have openly defied the church by sheltering heretic Cathartists, that state of affairs is unlikely to last.

Doissetep, the autumn covenant, is a powerful fortress and tunnel complex in the Pyrenees. Because of its vast scale, Doissetep's portrayal is less vivid and dramatic than the others.

But Val-Negra, the bizarre, magic-saturated winter covenant, more than makes up for Doissetep, with mad wizards, magnificent and enigmatic magical artifacts, and a sealed, mysterious door that is thought to open on the Stairway to Hell. One old, mad necromancer has created an illusory, magical covenant for his own amusement, peopling it with the ghosts of dead wizards. The dead wizards don't know they are dead, and they perceive this illusory world as real. The mad necromancer uses the phantasmal covenant as a lab for experiments in combating diabolism.

Evaluation: *Covenants* is interesting and



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well written, but of doubtful utility unless you play in an ARS MAGICA campaign. However, the four sample covenants would make original and entertaining settings for fantasy scenarios in your own campaign.

Saga Pack

ARS MAGICA sourcepack

A three-panel GM screen, 16 pages of essays in single-sheet form, and 16 predesigned player characters

White Wolf Publishing \$9.95

Design and editing: Mark Rein Hagen, Lisa

Stevens, Marty Dennis, John Nephew, Jonathan Tweet, and Nicole Lindroos. The final ARS MAGICA supplement, *Saga Pack*, makes a poor first impression. The Storyguide's screen and supplement cover features undistinguished art, and the Storyguide's screen itself is of doubtful utility; ARS MAGICA is not the sort of game where tables and GM screens are of much use. Further, much of the material in the Briefings, a package of assorted two-page documents and essays, appeared originally in *White Wolf* magazine. How-

ever, the Briefings are nicely presented, readable, and concise, and contain useful information for a Storyguide or player.

The best feature of the pack is the selection of predesigned PC grogs (the equivalent of the fighter class in ARS MAGICA campaigns). The story hooks built into the character backgrounds are lovely: a simpleton with a gift for speech with faerie creatures; a warrior with a death wish; a man with a pleasant facile exterior, a glib friendliness, and a dark, compulsive, violent streak. Of course, if you wouldn't think of playing a predesigned character, these won't be of much use to you. But if you adore playing a hand-out character at a convention, or if you enjoy playing interesting character roles, you'll like this.

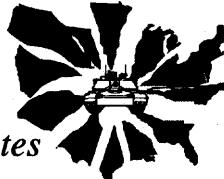
Evaluation: *Saga Pack* is generally disappointing in presentation and content, of possible value to an ARS MAGICA gaming group, and of only modest interest to browsers.

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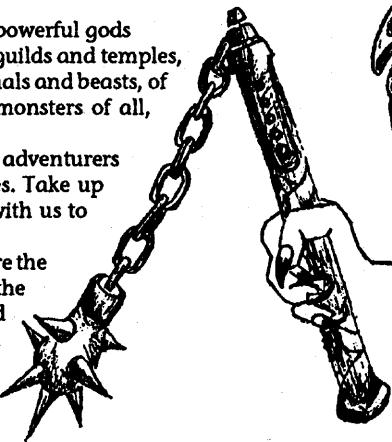
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The Pitfalls of Game Mastering

Every GM needs a *detect gaming traps* spell

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With all the talk of the comparative value of role-playing game systems, one truth always seems to be forgotten: The quality of an RPG depends not only on the system, but also on its game master.

This article isn't about rules. It's intended to help GMs become better by pointing out common mistakes made by GMs—a sort of GM's "Hall of Shame." It is hoped that, with preparation and practice, we may learn to avoid such problems as those discussed here.

Being a good GM usually means lots of work. The best-plotted campaigns with the most interesting NPCs, situations, and societies are the hardest to create. Anyone can run a game in which the players make no choices and just roll dice. That's why many role-playing game systems encourage some heavy-handed manipulation by the GM in their basic rules. You don't always have to think to be a GM. It is very easy for people to start their careers as GMs at this point.

Yet most experienced GMs get enjoyment out of running detailed campaigns. There is nothing quite like hearing your players spend lots of time discussing the situations in your world and what to do about them. If anything is worth doing, it is worth doing well, which is why this article was written.

If you are a GM, show this article to your players and have a talk with them about it. If they point out a couple of things they've noticed about your gaming



style, that's okay; nobody's perfect. But if they point out lots of examples and really think there's a problem, then you should consider changing your style of game mastering.

Improbable plots

In RPGs, plots are not set in stone. A plot is often just a situation, a set of goals for the player characters to achieve, and an outline of what is most likely to happen. Even though RPG plots are often simple, many GMs still make mistakes in setting them up. The following are the most common plotting mistakes.

Monty Haul returns

GM: "Inside the chest, Herkimer finds three artifacts, a wishing lamp, 10,000 platinum pieces, and a lightsabre."

Player: "Oh, okay. What's in the other chest?"

Monty Haul (from Monty Hall, the host of the *Let's Make a Deal* TV show) is renowned. GMs want players to have fun, and players have fun when they win. So Monty Haul GMs plot their games so that players win all of the time. What these GMs don't realize is that it isn't just the reward but also the challenge of overcoming obstacles that makes winning fun.

High-powered gaming isn't always a Monty Haul game. If everything in the game—PCs, danger, and treasure—is on a high level of power, the game can be balanced. A game is "Monty Haul" when the treasure is unrealistic or out of proportion to the danger involved in getting it.

Solution: Learn from other GMs what the risk/reward ratio should be, or examine the scenario packs from the game company that makes your RPG (though poorly written modules can also be Monty Haul; check them with care). Ask yourself "Who put this loot in here?" and "If all this stuff is here, why hasn't someone else come along and taken it?" Make sure NPCs use the magical treasure they have for attack and defense, unless they're unusually stupid.

Ritual sacrifice

GM: "You're all dead again—for the third time tonight! Things just aren't working out for you, are they?"

Player: "Yeah, our guys couldn't even touch that giant robot with all the nukes it was firing."

Ritual sacrifice is the inverse of Monty Haul: too much danger for too little treasure and experience. All paths lead to certain death, and the players get frustrated. Though some people say this is "realistic," remember that stories aren't told about corpses. Players play heroes, the lucky few adventurers whose lives are interesting, not the many others who fail to find fortune or fail to survive at all. As such, it should be more likely that the hints of treasure these characters get are

true and that enemies may underestimate the heroes.

A tough game isn't always a ritual sacrifice. If PCs can choose their targets and overcome obstacles with clever planning, then the challenges are reasonable. Ritual sacrifice occurs only when you always kill the PCs, no matter what they do.

Solution: Loosen up your game a little. Don't use death to control your players' PCs. Give them a chance to identify dangers before getting in too deep. Ask yourself "Where does the enemy get the resources to do that?" and "What are some ways in which this monster could be killed by the PCs?" Use common sense when following random-encounter tables, and don't get so involved with your NPCs that you want to *make* them always win.

Overworked clichés

GM: "Your characters just happen to be drinking in a saloon, and this dark-cloaked man sits down next to one guy..."

Player: "My gunfighter says, 'What's the mission, bub?'"

Every genre has its clichés. When moderately used, they can be fun: the evil wizard in the dark castle, the heroic space knight, the beautiful captive heroine, etc. However, clichés become a problem when you start repeating yourself. If every bar has a fight, every stranger offers adventure, and all the untrustworthy PCs suddenly meet and decide to join forces, then you need to change things.

Solution: Think of some clichés—and then avoid them. Plan reasonable ways for PCs to meet: in mercenary hiring halls, in churches, through mutual friends, anywhere but in the local tavern. Don't repeat the same plots very often, even if they were successful. Make everyday events (such as getting a drink) be normal 99% of the time; thus, when something unusual does happen, it really is surprising.

Missing motivation

Player: "What's there to do around this town?"

GM: "Nothing."

Player: "Well, how about in the capital?"

GM: "Nothing really exciting."

Some GMs fail to motivate their players. Sometimes this is tolerable because players will come up with their own motivations for their characters—greed and ambition, for example. But other motivations are often much better. For instance, PCs will take risks for the sake of revenge that they'd never take for money or fame.

Solution: Encourage the PCs to adopt motivations that fit your world. Provide a variety of motivations so that you can always tailor a plot around one of them and get the PCs' attention. Think of alternatives to seeking money and power.

Single-path plots

Player: "Wow, that was tough! We barely

beat that guy. Our group will wait for the gang leader to recover so we can talk to him. What happens next?"

GM: "I don't know."

Player: "What do you mean you don't know? You're the GM!"

GM: "Your group was supposed to lose and be thrown into the gang leader's secret prison. I don't what to do next."

Single-path plots are so rigid that if anything doesn't go as planned, everything falls apart. To force things along, many GMs use overt plot manipulations (discussed later). Don't expect PCs to do even the most logical things; you will do better by plotting several possible alternatives.

Solution: Don't make plots that depend on the PCs winning or losing a fight, solving a puzzle, or failing all saving throws at once. Players are a constant source of surprises. Also, don't make plots depend upon dice rolls (such as getting past a locked door when the party's thief has only a 70% chance of picking the lock). Provide plot alternatives. Run several plot lines at once, so if the players have trouble in one place, they can do something else.

Muddled manipulations

Every game needs some manipulation. PCs usually need a little push to get them going in the right direction, but players should not be aware of this guidance. If the PCs are forced along a preplanned plot no matter what they do, you are doing something wrong. You make the players simply dice rollers, and they will probably get frustrated with your game.

Deus ex machina

GM: "Suddenly, the sky fills with avenging angels!"

Player: "Gosh, third time this week. Look, are they going to 'un-toad' my thief now or not?"

GM: "Yes—but you are suddenly teleported to an arena by a mad wizard, and have to fight ... giant scorpions!"

Deus ex machina means "god from the machine." In Greek plays, no matter what happened, everything was solved in the end when a god (played by an actor strung up on ropes) came down and changed everything. In an RPG, it's the same idea. Under **deus ex machina** GMs, the game's rules, world, and story are all changed on whim, often several times per game. This problem often goes hand-in-hand with Monty Haul troubles: The GM gives away tons of treasure, then has NPC gods take it all away again. This is the poorest way to manipulate plots, and few players stand it for long.

Solution: Use published scenario packs and game aids to see how plots are put together. Talk to other GMs and learn the ways in which they encourage and motivate PCs. Take time to plot your adventures and explain your world. Don't arbitrarily change the world later or lead

PCs around by their noses.

Changes vs. cheating

Player A: "Bret jumps over the pit! Oops—he missed his agility roll by one. He's already badly injured, so I guess my character's dead."

GM: "No.... he just barely made it. He's okay. [To another player] "Your turn."

Player B: "So Black Bart jumps—uh, oh. He also rolled one less than his agility. But he should be fine; he has lots of hit points left!"

GM: "Wrong. Bart fell into the pit full of rattlesnakes, taking 22 points of damage."

Altering the rules is fine. Changing the rules to manipulate the plot is not. Changing them back and forth depending on the situation is even worse.

Solution: Be brave and stick with the rules as written, even if it means killing a character. If you must alter the rules, don't alter them to punish or reward players. Know the rules well before you try to change them. Check for loopholes in your new rules so you don't have to change the rules back again once the game starts. Always be consistent. If you have to shade things, do it by fudging dice rolls behind a GM's screen, not by changing the rules. Finally, discuss rules changes with players; it's often fun to talk about "what will happen if" situations in your group.

Unwanted interference

GM: "Okay, stop the arguing! Your group divides the treasure up the way I've written it down."

Player: "Hey! You're the GM. Why are you deciding how we divide things up?"

GM: "Because I'm the GM!"

The GM has every right to control the "above-game" action: who gets to talk, what the rules are, who rolls dice, etc. But the "in-game" PC interaction is the province of the players. Don't interfere with it. This doesn't mean that NPCs can't react to what PCs say; it just means that you should apply no godlike powers on the PC actions.

Solution: Stay out of "in-character" arguments, but firmly control all the player-to-player arguments. Let NPCs make in-character comments, but don't give them godlike knowledge (see "Oracles"). Add time limits to the plot so the PCs don't have all day to get their job done—and all day to argue about it.

Forced marches

Player: "We don't care what the reward is. Our characters are *not* going to mount an attack on the Nine Hells. Period."

GM: "Look, do you want to play the game or not?"

Another poor way to manipulate PC actions is to force actions into a set mold. If the PCs don't do what a game-forcing GM wants them to do, the GM refuses to play. If a PC feels compelled to leave the party because of things that have happened, that GM won't let the player play again. If the PC does leave for a time, the GM refuses to give the character any experience points. This is simply wrong.

It's okay to force the *tone* of a campaign ("I'm doing a science-fiction game" or "Good PCs only for this next scenario"), but don't use this to influence what the PCs decide to do. Players shouldn't have to worry that what they do will change whether you will be their GM or not.

Solution: Don't force the players to send their PCs where they don't want them to go. Anticipate the players when possible. Give the PCs a reason to go on the adventures you've planned and to stay together as a coherent group. If a PC performs a dangerous or solitary side errand, have a gaming session with him some other time to resolve this. Make it known that unplanned actions are not going to suddenly stop the game.

Railroading

GM: "So one of your characters pulls the lever on the wall by the computer console, and a huge—"

Player: "No, wait! No one in the group is



going to pull that lever! We never said anyone was doing that!"

GM: "Fine. Suddenly, Zack the astrogator trips, flails his arms, and accidentally pulls the lever. Just then, a huge ..."

This is another poor plot manipulation that will get players very upset, because you take away the only thing they have control over—their characters. Again, if you designed the plot with enough flexibility in the first place, you won't have to railroad your PCs.

Solution: If your plot absolutely demands you to railroad the PCs, use the "magician's force" rule (also known as "Heads, I win—tails, you lose"). Simply make the consequence you want to occur happen anyway, and tailor the explanation for why it happened as a result of what the PCs did. In the previous example, if the plot demands that the PCs fall into a trap, have the lever spring the trap if the PCs pull on it—and have the trap spring if the PCs don't pull it (the lever having been designed to prevent the trap from going off). The PCs can't win, of course, but they don't know that.

The "magician's force" rule is dangerous, however. If you overuse it, the players will catch on, and they may decide your game isn't worth playing if they have no say in anything that goes on.

Rewriting the past

GM: "You open your chamber door—and you see Karzat the Merciless!"

Player: "WHAT?! What do you mean?! Karzat's *dead*! My paladin killed him months ago!"

GM: "Ah, you thought he died, but he didn't!"

Player: "My paladin cut off his head and burned the head and body separately! Even the clerics said Karzat was dead, and their gods told them so!"

GM: "Well . . . that was just a robot. This is the real Karzat."

Player: "The robot could bleed and be burned up?"

It's okay to fill in details about the past, even details that really didn't happen (you can always say that the little things weren't noticed at the time), but altering major events in the past is not okay. Even comic-book writers have shied away from this in recent years (well, some of them have), so unless you are running a campy comic-book super-hero game in which all the villains keep returning from the grave, don't do it.

I know some of you will still change the past anyway, so here is some advice: If you must do it, use subtlety. Always leave a few dangling plot threads on which to dangle your rewritten version of the past. Give a few bits of needless detail as the adventure progresses, so that you have something later on which to hang your rewritten plot. (For example, the shadowy figure the paladin thought he saw before

he killed Karzat was actually an old necromancer friend of Karzat, who had just taken a tissue sample of the evil warlord for a clone spell.)

Solution: Leave the past alone; what's done is done. Be willing to see NPCs die permanently and past history remain unchanged. To avoid losing NPCs you need around, figure out escape plans and alternate defense plots long before those NPCs need to use them. If you must change the past, do it as seldom as possible.

Unlikely actions

Player: "While the tavern keeper is out, my assassin will clean out his till."

GM: "Right then, the tavern keeper runs back inside the building with an axe and attacks your guy."

Player: "Gosh, it's amazing how a tavern keeper can see through walls!"

GM: "No, no—he just decided to turn around then."

Make sure everything in your game is logical. Just because things aren't going the way you planned them doesn't mean you should give NPCs extra knowledge or make implausible or illogical events start happening whenever the PCs try to get clever. It's okay to cheat a little when you're the GM, but you have to be subtle. Work within the world you've defined; don't change it at your own whim to get back at "bad" PCs."

Using implausible actions to help the PCs is about as common as using it to hurt them and is just as bad. Many GMs have their monsters start fighting over the treasure in the middle of combat just as the PCs start to lose, thus giving the PCs a huge advantage. Properly played PCs do not gain or lose intelligence points depending upon how well the players are doing.

Solution: Use logic in playing out situations; don't stretch everyone's credulity with claims of "coincidence" or "it must be magical." Don't let the current gaming situation cloud your judgment about how the game world should work. Remember that most situations last only a short time, but you may want to run your game world for a long time.

Saying too much

Player: "Boy, that scientist sure is a swell guy! He really helped my character."

GM: "Of course, he might have ulterior motives for helping you."

Player: "Hey, I hadn't thought of that. Maybe he does!"

GM: "But remember—your character doesn't know that."

Every GM lets things slip, but some make a habit of it. Telling players how to do things makes them mere dice rollers, so avoid this. Few players can genuinely keep the information that they know as players separated from what their PCs know. Even if they can't, it's more fun to actually figure out puzzles than to be told the

answers. Keep surprises and secrets to yourself until they're ready to be revealed.

Note that improper commenting doesn't mean just talking about the PCs; it's giving the players hints while you're doing it. Even talking about things the PCs missed is bad. You prevent them from ever coming back to that particular setting and having a second shot at figuring something out themselves.

Solution: Remember that, as a GM, your voice in the matter will carry more weight than anyone else's. Even innocent comments may be examined by justifiably paranoid players for hidden meanings. It's better to keep your mouth shut when you don't want the players to catch on to something.

Oracles

GM: "The kobold porter you hired wants to say something."

Player: "Okay, we stop arguing and listen to him."

GM: "He says, 'Why don't you pour water on the Talking Rock?'"

Player: "Okay, we'll do that."

GM: "Suddenly, you hear a voice that says, 'Good thinking!'"

This method of manipulation is rather common. All NPCs in this sort of game are oracles of wisdom and knowledge, the mouthpieces of the GM. Sometimes, NPCs may make good guesses because they're experienced or smart. But if they do it regularly, the players will start trying to get the GM's hints out of really stupid NPCs.

Solution: Play NPCs according to their intelligence. The dumber they are, the less likely they'll know anything. Even the smartest NPCs should make mistakes. Remember that the three most common responses people make to strange questions are "I don't know," "Haven't the faintest idea," and "Why are you asking *me*, of all people?"

Giveaway details

GM: "In the hallway, you see some doors. At the end of the corridor is a walnut door with a brass handle."

Player: "What about the other doors? What do they look like?"

GM: "Oh, they just look like doors."

Player: "Gosh, I wonder which door we should go through."

The level of detail with which you describe things may determine where the PCs go and what they do. This isn't the worst mistake you can make, but it's really a problem if you describe a puzzle's solution better than you describe the dead ends. At worst, a GM who does this is willing to describe only the places where the PCs are to go. This is very obnoxious.

Solution: Follow the players' lead as to the detail they want. If the PCs study something, no matter what it is, give lots of details about it; if they aren't paying

attention, don't. Whenever the PCs think they are in danger, whether they really are or not, give out lots of details as if everything were sudden very important. Sometimes give out details even if they are not important, so that players can't tell by your level of abstraction whether a situation is dangerous or not.

Rifts in the world

The best game world doesn't just have a set of maps, NPCs, and place descriptions. It has a logical view of its world, a set of unwritten rules that gives the world self-consistency. This is the key that allows players to make the willing suspension of disbelief.

Because of this, having a good game world is critical. You might get away with a bad plot or an occasional overmanipulation, but a world must be as real as possible. Otherwise, you'll never have a campaign.

Imagination isn't always necessary. There are published game packs which define different worlds in great detail. But you must be consistent with your world to really bring it to life.

Unfinished planets

Player: "My barbarian walks into the shop and says, 'Hey, what's new in town?'"

GM: "The shopkeeper says 'Nothing'."

Player: "Sure. Thongar looks around. What does the shop have for sale?"

GM: "Everything you sold him the last time you were here."

In an incomplete world, no one but the PCs seems to do anything. Nothing ever changes except when the PCs change it. NPCs dully stand around waiting for the PCs to talk to them.

Complete worlds lived independently of the PCs. Actions and events happen whether the PCs are there or not. The players are left with the feeling that their characters are just part of a larger world, and so it becomes more real to them. Running a complete world is the mark of excellence that distinguishes good GMs from mediocre ones. Unfortunately, there just aren't that many complete worlds around.

You don't have to play out hoards of NPC interactions to run a complete world. Just change things a little without the PCs being involved. The shopkeeper's wife gives birth to a son, and the prince orders a bar curfew because of drunken hooligans at night. Make things progress logically. If gold is discovered in the hills, the PCs won't be the only ones going there to look. If armies clash near town, some people will pack up and leave.

Solution: Remember that game worlds are living things and change over time. Incorporate prominent characters into the history of the world, keeping a list of current events involving both PCs and NPCs. Put some work into thinking about changes to your game world after each

game session, and keep a calendar of events.

Basic stupidity

Player: "You know, by your price list, these blast rifles are less expensive than their components."

GM: "So?"

Player: "So, why don't people just buy blast rifles and make money selling them for their components?"

GM: "Uh . . . because, um, because the ultrapowerful weapons makers guild will come around and kill you if you do that."

Player: "Gosh, they sure have that market cornered!"

Everyone makes mistakes when designing a world—even game designers. However, some GMs are too proud to admit mistakes. Instead, they create ever-more-unbelievable justifications for why the world works in a particularly stupid way. Eventually, the entire world looks really stupid to the players.

Solution: If players present reasonable arguments about why things should work differently, listen to them. Make changes in the world as early on as possible. (Special tactic: If you're really embarrassed at a particular mistake, just do what game designers do: Say it was a typo.)

Unbearable silliness

GM: "As you walk down the street, you run into a Denebian slime devil wearing a Mickey Mouse hat and an 'I love New York' T-shirt. He sees your group and slithers over, screaming 'Oh, adventurers! I *love* adventurers!'"

Player: "We ignore him."

If you are running a parody game, your world can be as silly as you want it to be. But if you're not, don't try to add in silly things as part of a serious world. It won't work. Believe me.

Game worlds that draw from literary sources (e.g. fantasy, science fiction, mysteries, etc.) are best when they are reasonably serious. That's not to say there can't be laughter in the game; it's just that the players shouldn't laugh at the silliness of the world, but at the funny situations that sometimes come up in a serious world.

Solution: Whenever you feel the urge to add a bad joke, try to remember the last time someone complimented your sense of humor. If that doesn't humble you, or if by some quirk of fate you really are funny, make your jokes about the world—don't make the world a joke. Don't force the PCs to react seriously to something the players find silly.

Wild exaggeration

GM: "On the other side of the hill, your barbarian sees the most amazing castle he's ever seen!"

Player: "No problem. He's got this 'incredibly stupendous castle-destroying + 20 sword you gave him last week, so he'll just

cut the castle in two."

GM: "Well, he tries it, but there's a KA-BOOOOM!!! The sword breaks into a billion fragments!!! The castle is so powerful that even the pieces of that stupendous sword are overawed!!!"

In an exaggerated world, nothing normal ever happens. No barkeep is simply a barkeep; they're all grossly powerful retired wizards. All the non-enemy NPCs are so incredibly tough that they must have been living for at least 200 years to have all the skills they have. Even if the PCs become equally powerful, one wonders just who takes out the trash; it certainly isn't anyone the players have ever seen. Eventually, in an exaggerated world, supposedly stupendous events soon become ho-hum. A GM addicted to exaggeration will combat this by making everything even more huge, powerful, and deadly, which further increases the sense of mediocrity, and so on.

Solution: Don't feel like you have to make everything fantastic. Even galactic overlords need to go to the bathroom once in a while. Ask yourself: "Who does all the support work to maintain this marvelous world I've designed?" Play out normal encounters occasionally, so that players get a feel for what the world is like when their character are *not* fighting for their very lives.

Forgotten bits

GM: "Your dwarven blacksmith says he worships Glazrok, the orcish god of fire. He was a member of this orcish tribe, and he—"

Player: "Hey, you said last week that no dwarf in your world would have anything to do with orcs."

GM: "Oh. Um, well . . ."

Inconsistent GMs can't make up their mind on how the world should work. Unlike a world run by a *deus ex machina* GM, it isn't that there's no plot, it's just that the GM doesn't write things down so he forgets them. You can make exceptions to things that happen in your world, but be sure to point them out as exceptions.

Solution: Think your world through before you run it, so that you don't run into consistency problems. Whenever you describe something new to the players, make sure you have it written down somewhere for future reference, and study your notes before each game.

Backbone required

Player: "My warrior wants to experiment with some stuff. He randomly picks out some jars of saltpetre, sulfur, and charcoal from the alchemist's shop, and he mixes them together and sets fire to the mess."

GM: "Uh, okay. Um, well, he's invented gunpowder, then."

GMs sometimes let players push their

vision of the world around. This is sometimes okay, but draw the line somewhere. Otherwise, you'll quickly find yourself running a Monty Haul game. Make sure players use only the knowledge their PCs should have. No medieval fighter is going to know how to make gunpowder or suddenly realize that someone stole something of his just because his player hears about it.

Solution: Keep tight control over your game world, including the kinds of PCs you allow into it and the things those PCs do that could change the campaign. Try to explore the possible consequences of certain changes, so that you aren't surprised later on. Don't be afraid to reject "perfectly reasonable" PCs, actions, or inventions that either don't fit into the game or will disrupt the balance of power. If something secret is about to happen (like an orc ambush), and you think the players will have their PCs act on this knowledge even if the PCs aren't supposed to know about it, keep the coming event a secret from the players, too. And if someone tries to use player knowledge with his PC, and the result looks like it will cause problems later, just change the expected result into an unexpected one: "Well, when he sets fire to the saltpetre mixture, it fills the room with blue smoke but does nothing else. Funny thing about chemistry in a magical universe—you never know what it's going to do."

Communication problems

Even if the game world is good and the plots are excellent, you can make mistakes in presenting the game to the players. The players know only what the GM tells them. If the GM doesn't communicate well, it makes it that much harder to play the game. Communication problems often vanish with practice, so if you are a beginning GM, don't get discouraged if everything isn't perfect.

Lost in space

Player: "Where are we?"
GM: "In a starship."
Player: "Well, what does it look like?"
GM: "A starship."

A nebulous GM never presents any detail in his world. This is one of the worst things a GM can do. Even good scenario packs won't add anything to your game if you read their detailed descriptions to yourself but then say to the players: "Well, you're there." To make a world real to the players, you must describe it to them. Otherwise, they'll never see the world as you do—and they'll get bored and leave the game.

Solution: The best designed worlds do no good at all if you don't describe them to the players. If you have trouble thinking of the right words to use, read books and module packs that include detailed and vivid descriptions of people, places, and things. Make sure that your world has a

background worth talking about, or else use a background from an appropriate novel or game aid. You can often read material directly from another source, as long as it's short. While you can over-describe a world (see "Myopic vision"), few people do this.

Missing the details

GM: "So you get into the room, and there's a chest there. I guess you want to add this to the party treasure?"

All players: "Yes!"

GM: "Hmm . . . seems like there's a trap on that chest. Who exactly touched the chest first?"

All players (pointing at each other): "He did!"

Inappropriate abstraction is much like "Giveaway details." The GM doesn't know when to ask for details on the PCs actions and when not to. Here, the GM errs on the side of not asking for relevant details before he pops a surprise, which leads to lots of arguments later.

Solution: Follow all the suggestions from the "Giveaway details" section. Remember to get the information you need (in as subtle a manner as possible) before you act on it.

Myopic vision

GM: "On the badge, you see a boss of Harold Bluetooth, a famous Viking king, so the badge probably dates from the 9th or 10th century. Harold reigned about ten years before the first invasion of England, when the Danes gathered over five hundred ships and set sail to . . ."

All players: "Zzzzzz . . ."

This seems to be a rare problem. A GM with game myopia gets sidetracked into giving out details that have nothing to do with the adventure at hand. This GM must learn to wave a *wand of abstraction* and assume that things which are easily done are done (no need to detail every moment of a PC's life, for instance, or exactly how a complex piece of mining equipment works). Don't force players to role-play or understand everything.

Solution: Give details only when they have some (even possibly remote) connection to the plot, or if the players are really interested in hearing them.

Snagged on the rules

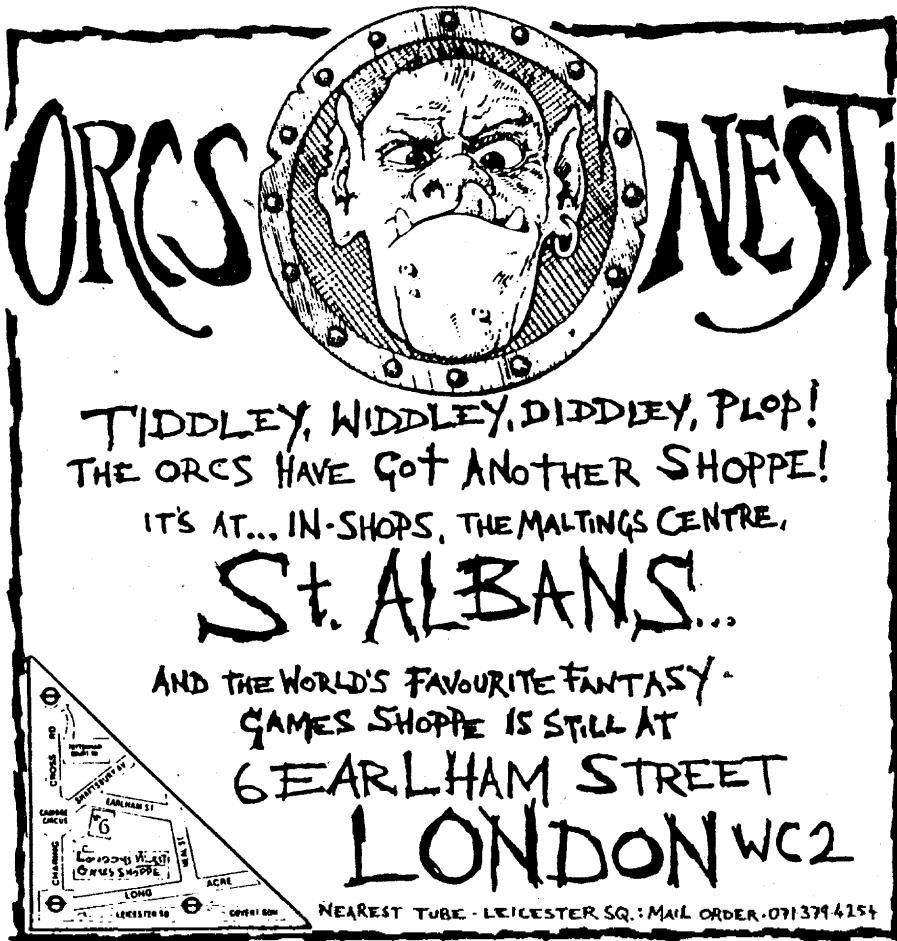
Mishandling the rules of a game can cause loads of trouble for everyone. Usually, this problem goes away as a GM gains in experience.

Simple ignorance

GM: "The crazed tribesman attacks you with a greatsword in each hand."

Player: "Uh, greatswords are two-handed swords. You need two hands to wield them."

GM: "Well, these are one-handed greatswords."



Player: "One-handed two-handed swords?"

GM: "Okay, okay. I meant, the tribesman has a halberd in each hand."

Player: "No! A halberd is a two-handed weapon, too!"

Before you become a GM, be as familiar as possible with the game's rules. You can change whatever rules you like, but be sure you understand the results of your changes. Don't change the rules just because you don't want to bother looking them up.

Solution: Familiarize yourself with a game system before trying to GM it. Ask players who are familiar with the system about obscure rules when you need help finding them.

Rules or dice worship

GM: "So, agent Dinzel reaches terminal velocity, hits the cement at 400 miles per hour, and dies."

Player: "No, he doesn't. The rules say Dinzel takes 30 dice. But he's got lots of hit points. See here? Page 92, subsection C, paragraph 3, chart M. All I have to do is roll an 18 or better, and Dinzel's okay. See? I did it."

GM: "But that's a crazy rule. Dinzel should be a pancake."

Player: "Hey, those are the rules!"

GM: "Okay, I guess Dinzel lives."

Player: "Fine. Now Dinzel gets up, shoots the guard at the front door, then steals a tank and escapes."

Don't let game rules, die rolls, or player reactions to them push you around. If the rules conflict with the game-world reality you want to portray, then change them with care. Just make sure that you are consistent with your changes, and avoid doing things by whim.

Solution: Make sure you feel comfortable with the rules you decide to use, but always inform players of rules changes before they make decisions based on the old "universal laws" —then stick to your guns for consistency's sake. Rules and dice are secondary to the enjoyment you and your players receive in a game.

Problem personalities

This final category consists of three problems that go beyond the game and extend into real life. As such, even when these problems are pointed out, the GM will almost never change. These problems are described here because many experienced players think they can help new GMs with problems like these—but it isn't possible. These problems go away only when the affected GM gains more emotional maturity. Be prepared to talk about these problems if necessary, but also be prepared to walk away from the game and find another GM.

Playing favorites

GM: "Jake, your dwarf finds 29 silver pieces. Fred, your wizard gets 12 silver pieces and a jeweled dagger. And sweetheart . . ."

Player: "Yes, honey?"

GM: "You find the lost sacred artifact of the elven folk!"

Some GMs, often quite unintentionally, let their personal feelings about players influence their decisions in their games. Some players get all the luck—and some get no luck at all. For good or ill, it's a bad way to run a game.

Bragging and gloating

GM: "Boy, I really fooled you guys this time! That gold mine was empty! Ha, ha! What idiots! Am I smart or what?"

GMs are supposed to be neutral to the PCs' fate. But the kind of GM described here is on a power trip and gets enjoyment from "beating" the players and crowing about it. No player should ever have to put up with an insult like this.

Supreme arrogance

Player: "Here's my character from Bob's game. Can I bring him into the campaign?"

GM: "This character is so bad, you know what I think of it?"

Player: "What?"

GM: "This!" [tears up character sheet]

Some GMs think that "playing god" extends into the real world. They have the need to always be right or the most powerful. Avoid these people at any cost, and resist the urge to tear them limb from limb. Remember that it's all just a game—and find another GM.

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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 writers' guidelines for the magazine).

This month, the sage again looks at the theory and practice behind the spells in the AD&D® 2nd Edition game—among other things.

Can the victim of a maze spell choose to remain inside longer than his intelligence would allow, or must he escape immediately? What about a held, unconscious, or slain victim? Would a blind victim require more time to escape than his intelligence would indicate? Can the victim do anything while in the maze except try to escape? That is, can he cast a spell, drink a potion, scry, lay on hands, etc.? Can a teleport without error spell be used to escape the maze, since it allows the caster to "jump" planes?

The spirit of the spell description suggests that the nature of the labyrinth created by the maze spell prompts the victim to escape as soon as possible, and that no actions other than escape are possible while a victim is within. The victim can try a spell to get out, but he cannot do anything that does not contribute directly to escape. A slain victim is no longer a creature and is not subject to the spell, which affects only creatures. A *held* victim cannot begin to escape until the *hold* spell wears off, but the maze spell's duration can never exceed eight turns. Likewise, an unconscious victim will emerge from the labyrinth when its duration expires 2d4 turns later. Note that the victim's intelligence, not speed, is the primary factor in escape; a slowed victim does not spend additional time in the labyrinth. If the labyrinth's "shifting planes of force" are similar to walls of force, sighted victims would have to feel or sound the way out, as the planes would be invisible. In any case, the spell description implies that the labyrinth is a visually confusing place, so blind victims should have no extra difficulty escaping and

creatures well adapted to blindness might escape more easily at the DM's option. Local conditions can make *teleportation* of any kind impossible, and the labyrinth would seem to be one of those places.

Can innate shape-changing abilities, such as those possessed by vampires or high-level druids, be dispelled? Are such abilities temporarily negated by anti-magic shells?

Innate abilities of any kind can be dispelled (see the *PHB*, page 148). *Anti-magic shell* foil innate abilities that are directed at other creatures (such as *fear* spells), but I suggest that innate abilities that affect only the user—such as *shape change*—remain unaffected. Note that divine abilities of any kind generally are not affected by mortal anti-magic.

Will an anti-magic shell spell negate innate magic resistance? What about magic resistance from a magical item?

Magic resistance comes into play only when the *anti-magic shell* spell could directly affect the resistant creature. A conjured or summoned magic-resistant creature would be hedged out by an *anti-magic shell*, and its magic resistance, regardless of its source, would come into play. If the magic-resistance roll succeeds, the *anti-magic shell* collapses, as would any other in-place spell (see the *DMG*, page 67). If the magic-resistant creature is not conjured or summoned, it is not hedged out, but its magic and magical items cease functioning while within the *anti-magic shell*. If a conjured or summoned creature fails its magic resistance roll, it is hedged out by the *anti-magic shell* and all its abilities and items work normally. However, the *anti-magic shell* continues to negate any of the creature's magical effects that are cast into it. In no case does magic resistance allow nonartifact magical items to continue functioning inside an intact *anti-magic shell*. Note that a magic-resistant creature inside an *anti-magic shell* still is magic resistant, but this usually is irrelevant as no mortal magic works within that spell.

What should be considered when calculating the damage inflicted on an attacker by a fire shield spell? If a man-sized creature attacks a large creature with a weapon, does the attacker suffer damage at the weapon's larger-than-man-size rating or at the man-size rating? What if the

target is immune to the attack?

A *fire shield* returns the actual damage inflicted on the protected creature. If an attack delivers 10 hp damage, then the attacker suffers 10 hp damage even if the weapon used couldn't do 10 hp damage if employed against the attacker. If the attack fails to deliver any damage to the victim, the attacker suffers no damage.

The ranges of the two globe of invulnerability spells are 0. Since this means the spell is automatically cast on the wizard, why can't these spells move with the caster?

The two effects are immobile. In this case, the effect appears at the caster's location and remains behind when he moves.

Can a creature's innate abilities be foiled as spell-casting can?

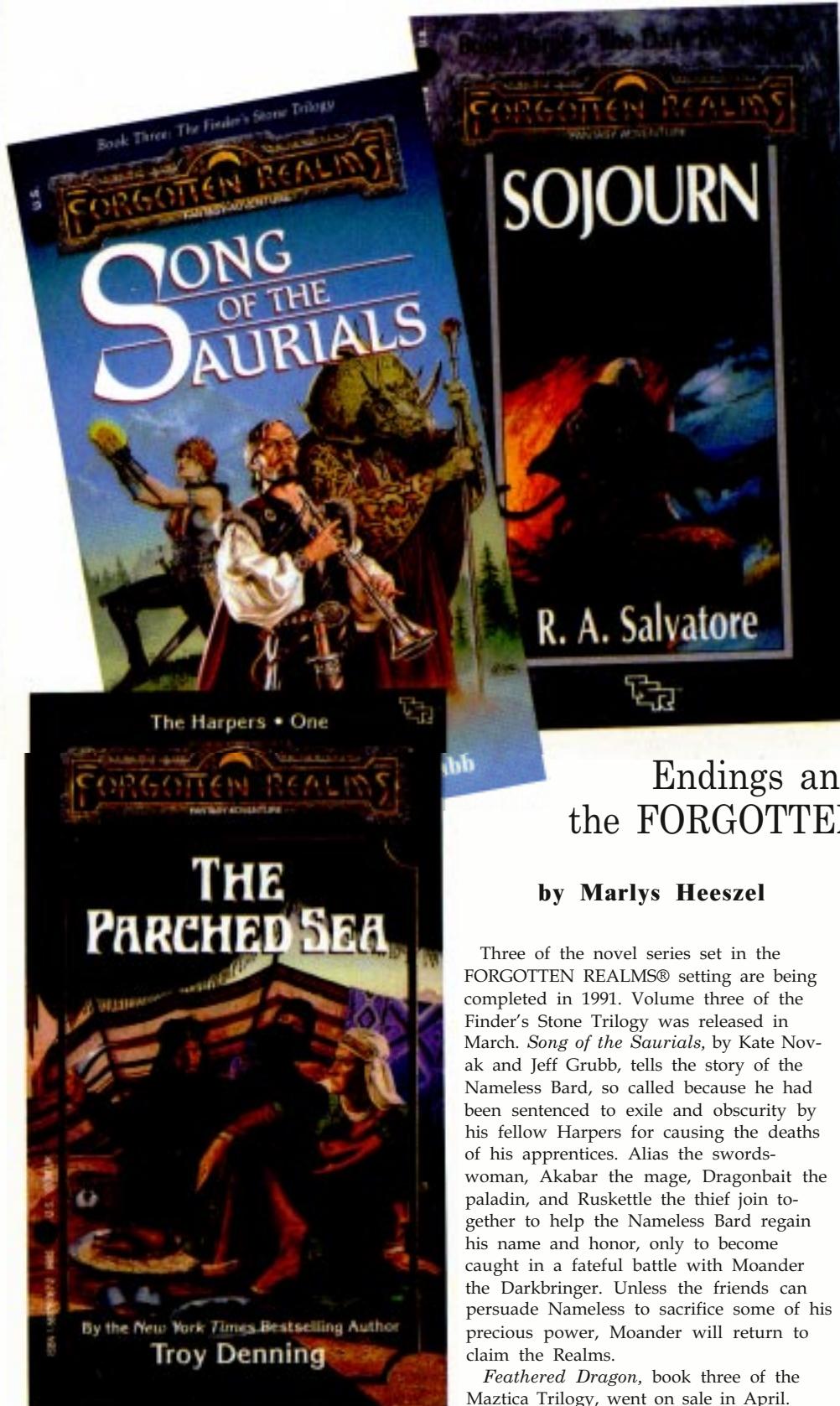
Generally not. Using an innate ability can cause an initiative delay (see the *PHB*, page 94) but does not require a significant amount of concentration.

In an AD&D SPELLJAMMER™ campaign, do personal air envelopes exist on planetary bodies? For example, is a mountain climber at extreme altitude able to breathe in his air envelope, or is the envelope absent until the character leaves the atmosphere completely?

I suggest you allow personal air envelopes to exist only in wildspace or the phlogiston. However, DMs are free to decide exactly where an atmosphere ends and wildspace begins, and they may even vary it from planetary body to planetary body. Some planets might have a sharply defined boundary between the two; in such systems, a traveler either is in the atmosphere or in space. Other planets might have an indefinite boundary; travelers in the atmosphere near the boundary might have difficulty breathing until they cross into wildspace and carry away enough atmosphere to form a breathable envelope. The boundary between space and atmosphere needn't be uniform. Such a boundary might exist at different altitudes at different spots on one planet, and a planet might have mountains that poke through the atmosphere into space. Ω

NOVEL

I • D • E • A • S



Endings and beginnings: the FORGOTTEN REALMS® series

by Marlys Heeszel

Three of the novel series set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting are being completed in 1991. Volume three of the Finder's Stone Trilogy was released in March. *Song of the Saurials*, by Kate Novak and Jeff Grubb, tells the story of the Nameless Bard, so called because he had been sentenced to exile and obscurity by his fellow Harpers for causing the deaths of his apprentices. Alias the swords-woman, Akabar the mage, Dragonbait the paladin, and Ruskettle the thief join together to help the Nameless Bard regain his name and honor, only to become caught in a fateful battle with Moander the Darkbringer. Unless the friends can persuade Nameless to sacrifice some of his precious power, Moander will return to claim the Realms.

Feathered Dragon, book three of the Maztica Trilogy, went on sale in April.

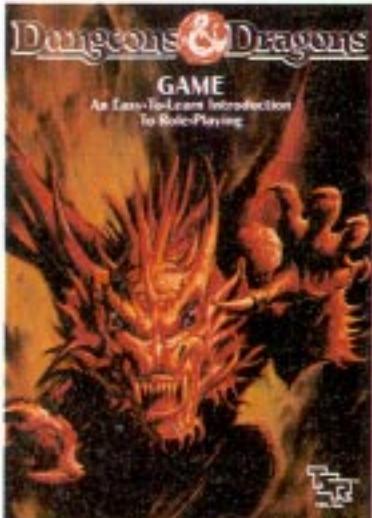
Douglas Niles continues the story of Erixitl and Halloran as they flee the cleric-beast Hoxitl and his hordes of ogres and orcs. Erixitl, who reluctantly wears the Cloak-of-One-Plume, and Halloran join forces with the desert dwarves and others as they await the prophesied arrival of Qotal, the immortal Plumed Serpent, who will meet the monolith Zaltec in a final battle of the gods.

The Dark Elf Trilogy also concluded this year with the publication of *Sojourn* in May. Author R.A. Salvatore brings the drow Drizzt Do'Urden to a world that is ill-prepared for dealing with a dark elf. Not only must Drizzt meet the challenge of seeking acceptance by the hostile surface-dwellers, he soon learns that the sunshine that burns his eyes also steals his magical powers. Drizzt's long journey to a place of belonging is threatened once again as the



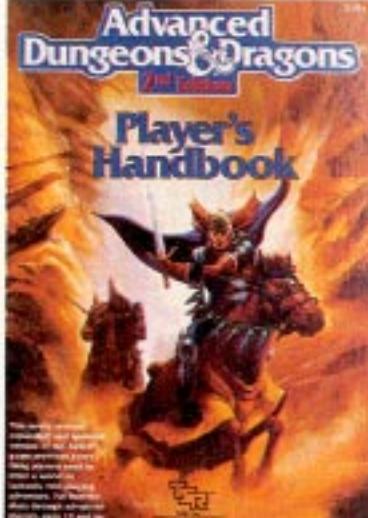
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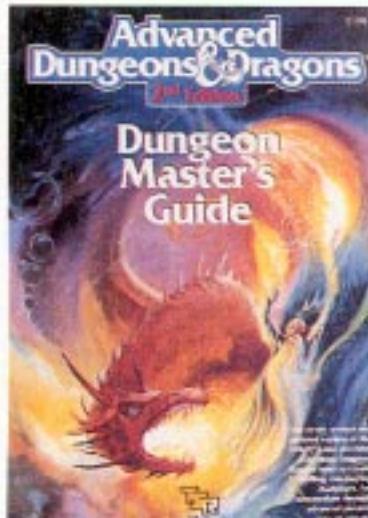
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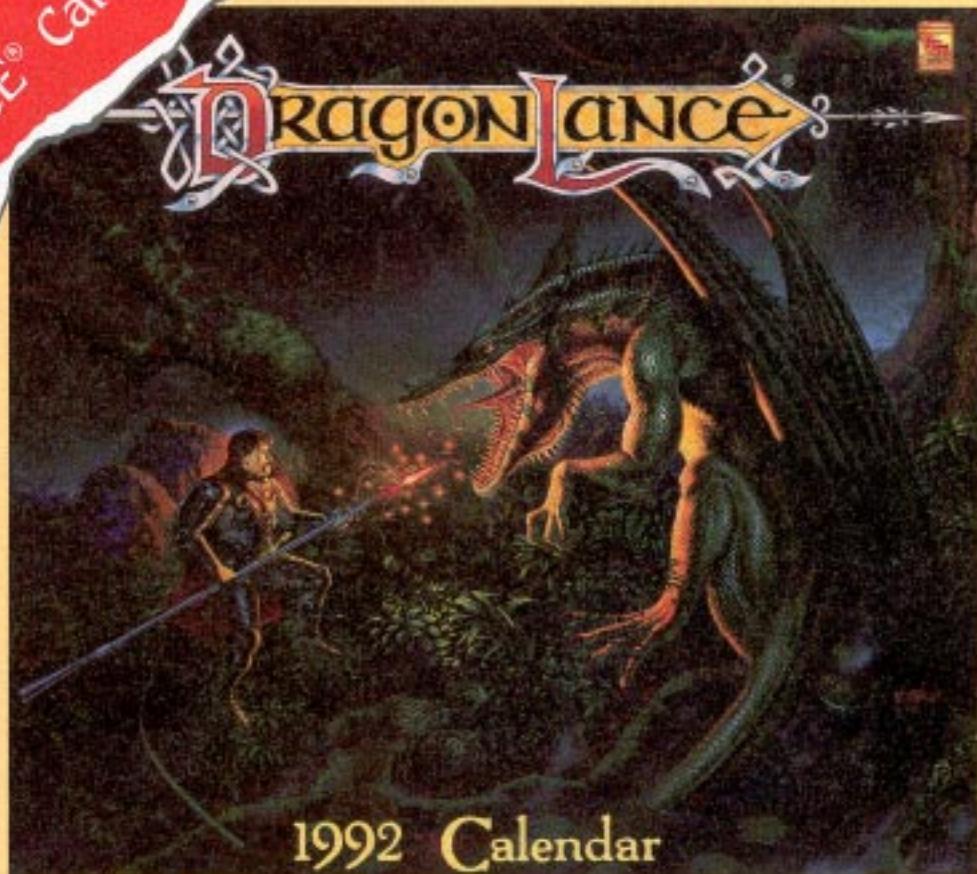
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Volume Three.
(November)*

Dark Heart
*Meetings Sextet,
Volume Three.
(January 1992)*



reputation of the dark elves precedes him. Don't miss these exciting conclusions to some of your favorite FORGOTTEN REALMS series!

The Harpers series

Endings bring beginnings, as a secret organization comes into prominence. A silver harp-and-moon pin is their only identification. Few know who they are or where they will appear. They move in secrecy and silence. They are the Harpers, guardians of the Realms.

Whether the threat comes from the powerful Red Wizards of Thay, the corrupt and wicked Zhentarim, or one of a multitude of other evils, the Harpers move to oppose anything that endangers the Realms. Their methods are as unobtrusive as their agents, for the Harpers don't send armies equipped with powerful weapons. Instead, Harper representatives work undercover, aided by others who believe as they do, so that peace and the natural order remain intact.

This summer, TSR introduces an ongoing series about the Harpers that allows for a wide variety of new books based in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. The novels will not be linked to each other by story line, but instead will focus on the Harpers, permitting great latitude in location and plot. Three books in the series will be released in 1991, beginning in July with *The Parched Sea*, by Troy Denning. *Elfshadow*, by Elaine Cunningham, will follow in October, and Red Magic, by Jean Rabe, will be released in December.

To understand the concept of the Harpers series, it's necessary to look at the history of the Harpers as they have existed in the Realms. When formed several hundred years ago, the Harpers were primarily bards, druids, and rangers dedicated to maintaining peace between the cities of the Heartlands and to protect the land and its people from goblin tribes and other threats, both natural and magical. They formed a loosely knit group whose members maintained a strict adherence to the ideals and philosophies of the organization. Violation of those principles could result in a Harper being expelled, imprisoned, or even slain, depending on the severity of the offense.

Over the years, as the threats to the Realms have increased, the Harper organization has grown and changed. Although they have no official headquarters, Twilight Hall in Berdusk acts as an informal training ground, while the village of Shadowdale serves as a gathering place and source of information. By maintaining a low profile, the Harpers are able to mix with the more nefarious elements of the Realms, often enabling the Harpers to learn their enemies' plans. An agent is then sent to counteract the threat.

The individual who volunteers or is chosen for a Harper assignment realizes the personal risk involved. He or she must often work alone or with only a small

group to fight a much larger and better-prepared force. Evil wizards, malevolent rulers, and monstrous creatures from the Realms and beyond are possible adversaries. Spies are everywhere, and both physical and spiritual dangers abound. Being a Harper in such circumstances can be both lonely and frightening.

Why, then, does anyone choose to become a Harper? What makes an individual decide to stand up and be counted, to put life itself on the line in the pursuit of right? And how does one go about joining a group that is, after all, secret?

Entry into the organization must be sponsored by a long-term member who is in good standing with the group. The new recruit is assigned a series of tasks that will both forward the Harper cause and test the worth of the newcomer. When accepted, the novitiate is given a silver pin decorated with a moon and harp, the symbol of the order. Acceptance is only the beginning, however, as the new Harper soon realizes. Missions are often dangerous, and treachery can come from unexpected sources.

While a certain amount of camaraderie exists, the true power of the Harpers lies in the individuals who make up the group. The skills and talents of each Harper combine to make a strong and cohesive force, yet the members must place the good of the Harpers over personal desires. There is no room for glory seekers or egocentrists, for they would weaken the organization, making it vulnerable to the evil forces opposing it.

There are as many reasons for joining the organization as there are members. Some reasons are highly personal; some have to do with remote, abstract ideals. A sense of adventure and a willingness to take risks are valuable qualities in a Harper, as are loyalty and the ability to make decisions that at times must be based on little more than instinct.

The Parched Sea

In *The Parched Sea*, a Harper agent named Lander volunteers for an assignment in the desert of Anauroch. Lander knows that the success of his mission depends not only on himself but also on the Bedine tribes he is trying to save. They must be willing to help themselves, for there is little he can do on his own to stop the powerful Zhentarim forces from decimating the nomadic tribes and claiming the desert trade routes for their own.

Lander is joined in his cause by a Bedine woman who has been an outcast since childhood, when it was found she saw visions of the future. Only Ruha's developing skills as a witch and Lander's knowledge of the Zhentarim's plan stand between the Bedine and enslavement. The sheikhs distrust both Lander and the witch's magic, but they soon find the alternative—annihilation by the Zhentarim—incentive enough to put their cautions aside. The relationship between

Lander and Ruha remains unsettled as cultures clash and personal desires must be delayed in the face of the Zhentarim threat.

Troy Denning—who also wrote *Waterdeep*, a *New York Times* bestseller—tells us, "Lander's mother was a beautiful, charming woman who also happened to be a deceitful Cyric-worshiper. She had wed a wealthy merchant, Lander's father, in order to gather commercial information for the Zhentarim. Eventually, during a Zhentarim plot to take over Archendale, a rich valley where he often did business, the merchant discovered the truth about his wife. He sent Lander to warn a Harper friend about the conspiracy, while he went to Archendale to warn the farmers. Lander's mother sent assassins after her husband and tried to stop her son, first through persuasion, then by force. Lander escaped and passed the warning to the Harpers.

"Lander never saw either of his parents again and was raised by the Harper Florin Falconhand. Lander grew to manhood feeling betrayed by his mother and hating the Zhentarim who controlled her. At the same time, he idolized his dead father, who had given his life helping the Harpers oppose the Zhentarim's plans for Archendale. It was only natural that, upon reaching adulthood, he would dedicate himself to destroying the nefarious organization that had made a mockery of his childhood and had taken his beloved father from him."

Elfshadow

The second Harper adventure for 1991 is *Elfshadow*, a combination of high adventure and murder mystery that tells the story of a half-elven adventurer, Arilyn Moonblade. Arilyn, who has worked as a Harper agent but is not yet a member of the organization, becomes mixed up in a string of murders, all involving prominent Harpers. Unsure if Arilyn is a suspect or an intended victim, the Harpers send an agent, Danilo Than (nephew of Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun) to investigate and take appropriate action.

Meanwhile, Arilyn is tormented by strange dreams and stalked by shadows. She finds her life filled with danger and haunted by questions she can't answer. Why is her sword a *moonblade*, and how does it gain magical powers from her? What caused her mother to die, and why has her father gone into hiding? And most important, who wants Arilyn dead?

The answers to all these questions intertwine, as do the lives of those involved in the mystery. Arilyn finds that distinguishing friend from foe and truth from deception is mandatory for survival. Making the wrong choice might result not only in her own death but in the deaths of all the elves of Evermeet.

In *Elfshadow*, author Elaine Cunningham explores elven culture to an extent seldom seen in any of the Realms

novels. She says, "To most of the other races of the Realms, all elves seem alike, yet to the moon elves, the royal family of Evermeet, and the gold elves, who make up most of its population, the differences are paramount. The racial conflict between the moon elves and gold elves is an integral part of the mystery that surrounds Arilyn and threatens her with both death and dishonor. The history of Arilyn's sword Moonblade helps explain the antagonism between the two types of elves."

Red Magic

A quest for power drives one of the Red Wizards of Thay to deception and beyond in *Red Magic*. Driven by greed for lands and wealth, the wizard Maligor attempts to gain control over his fellow countrymen by the use of deceit and treachery. Three Harpers—Galvin, a human; Wynter, a centaur; and Brenna, a magic-wielding council member—pose as slaves and slaves to infiltrate the evil land in a daring attempt to maintain the precarious balance of power.

Jean Rabe, author of *Red Magic* and editor of the POLYHEDRON™ Newszine, is also coordinator for the RPGA™ Network. When asked about the setting of her book she replied, "Thay, which is often labeled the most wicked country in the Realms, begs to be explored through books and gaming materials. The maligned Red Wiz-

ards, who practice magical games of one-upmanship in their continual bids for power, make for wonderful villains. Through the wizards' schemes, readers can learn more about the country, its politics, and why it poses a threat to nearby lands.

"*Red Magic* gave me the opportunity to expand the Realms lore about Thay and the wizards who control it. I had great fun creating a powerful Red Wizard and designing his personal scheme for power. I also enjoyed expanding material on the Harpers.

In *Red Magic*, a pair of Harpers and their sorceress associate must penetrate Thay's boundaries to learn the scheme of a Red Wizard. However, the trio soon learns that the red wizards of Thay are devious and influential, and the heroes find themselves pawns in a power struggle."

In the future...

The Harpers Series won't be the only new addition to the Forgotten Realms in 1991. TSR will also introduce the Cleric Quintet, beginning with Canticle, which will be released in November. Written by R. A. Salvatore, author of the bestselling Icewind Dale and Dark Elf Trilogies, the novel tells the story of Cadderly, a student at a little-known conservatory in the Snowflake Mountains. When danger threatens, the young scholar-priest must

enter the catacombs in a desperate attempt to save his brothers and himself.

Watch for more information about Cadderly and his misadventures in the future, and be sure to join us in August as we learn about the art of spelljamming. Journey through Realmspace, explore different worlds, and meet new cultures as we investigate the SPELLJAMMER™ novels that will premier this summer. Ω

LOOKING FOR A GAME CONVENTION?

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

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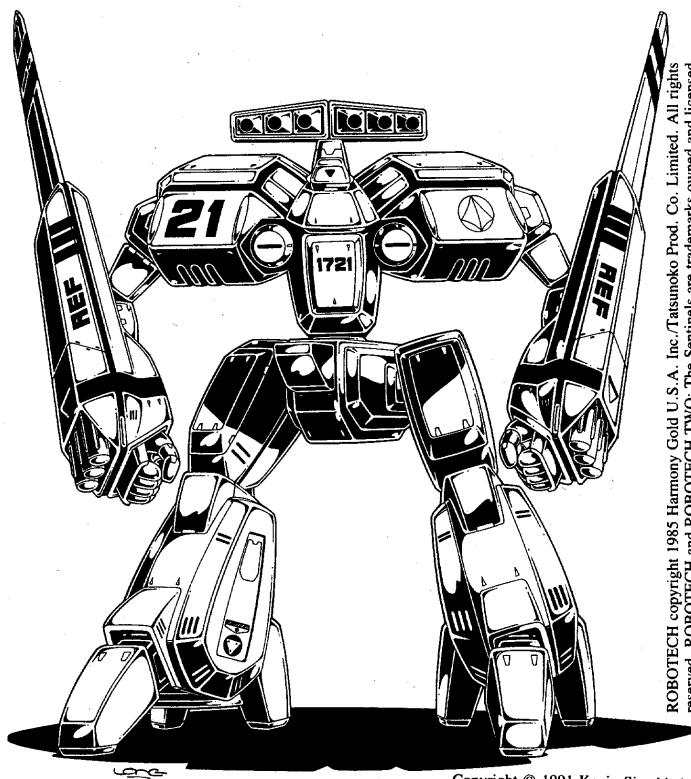
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Volume Five: Presents episodes 73: Sandstorms, 74: Annie's Wedding, 75: Separate Ways. Rand has a psychic vision about the Invid and their purpose, the mystery of Marlene deepens, Annie gets married (?) and the group looks to be splitting up after a desperate clash with invid forces lead by a "Pincer" Command Unit.

Available June 28th.

Volume Six: Contains episodes 76: Metamorphosis (Corg and Sera are introduced), 77: The Midnight Sun, 78: Ghost Town. The Regis creates two humanoid Royal Invid to track and destroy our heroes, naval battle, a dangerous trek through snow covered mountains, old rebels, tragic death, and continuing battle with the Invid Royal Command Battroids and their Invid legions.

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Volume Seven: Presents episodes 79: Frostbite, 80: Birthday Blues, and 81: Hired Gun. More intrigue and subplots develop with Marlene, as well as between Lancer and the Invid Sera, Annie has a birthday, Invid combat and the appearance of the cyborg anti-hero, Dusty Ayres.

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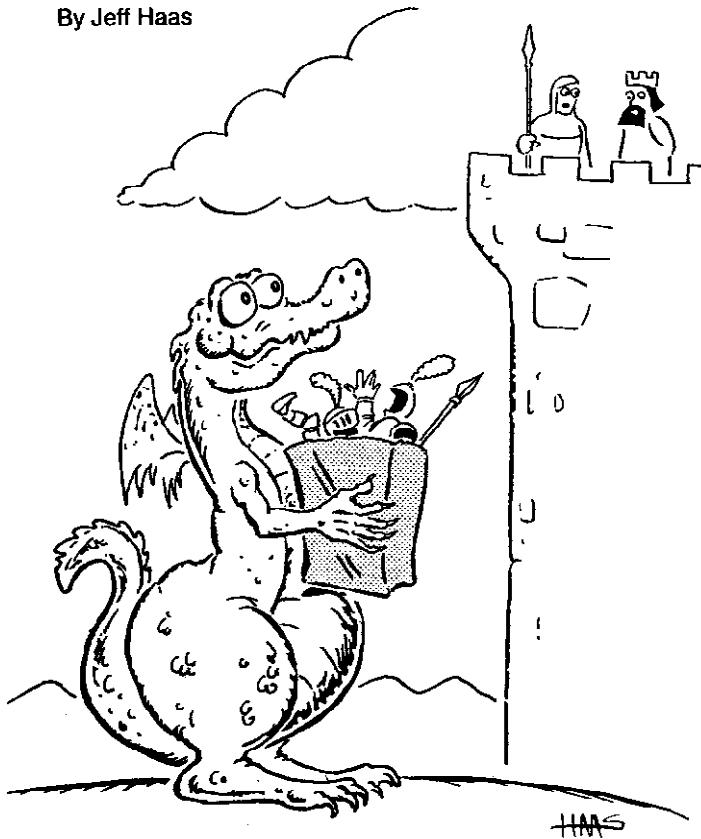
Volume Four: Episodes 70: Enter Marlene, 71: The Secret Route, 72: The Fortress. The Invid Regis creates a simulagent to infiltrate the group of human freedom fighters who are beginning to become a serious nuisance (Marlene). *The Secret Route* reveals Lancer's secret past and the woman he once loved. The combat inside an Invid hive concludes this volume in a spectacular adventure. A must for Robotech fans!

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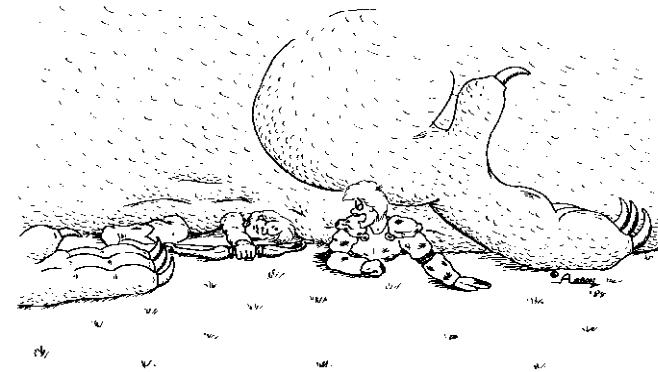
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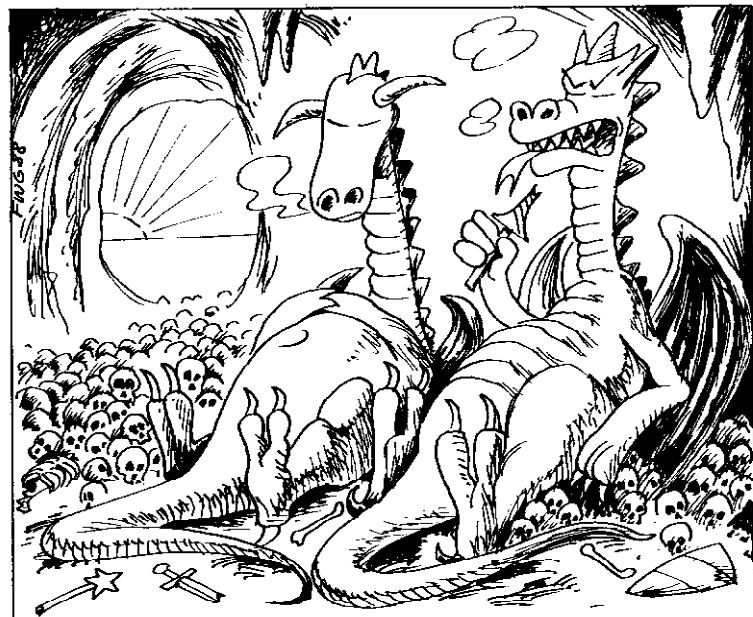
By Jeff Haas



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Yamara



By Barbara Manui & Chris Adams



By Daril Davis

"Say, haven't I seen you somewhere before?
You look awfully familiar."

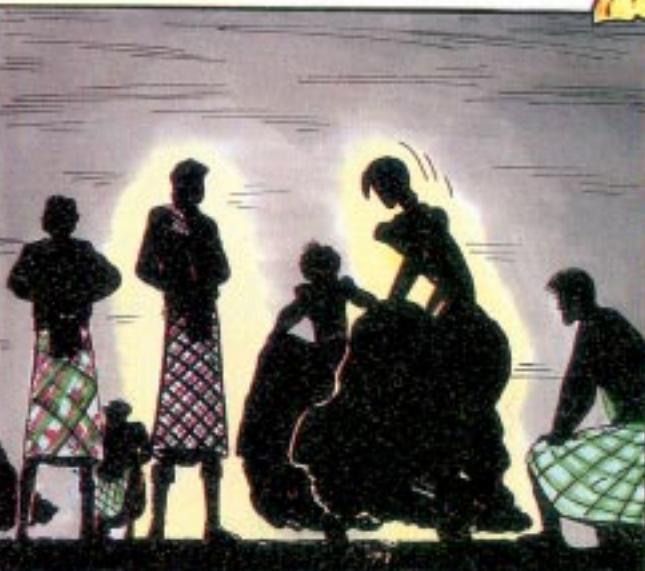


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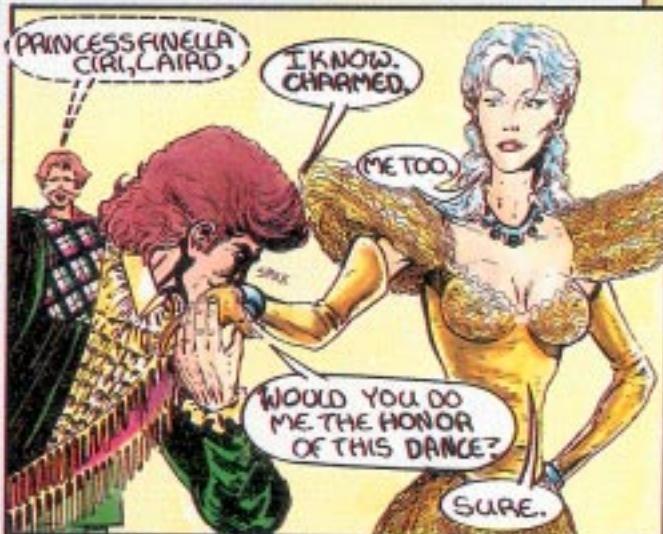
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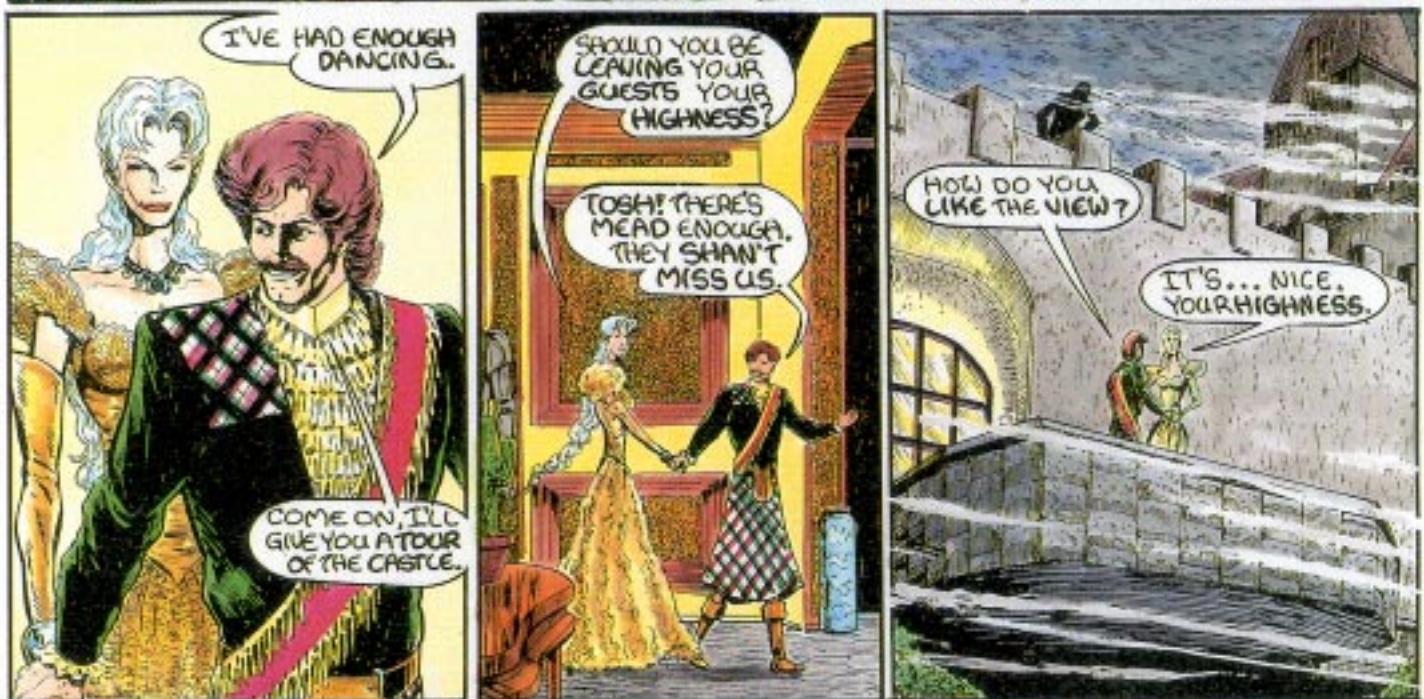
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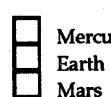
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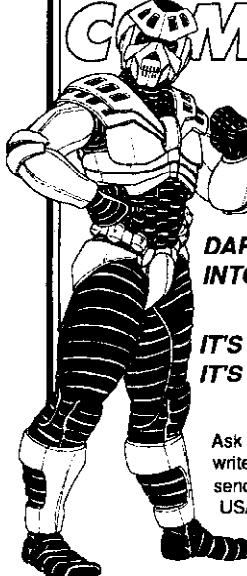
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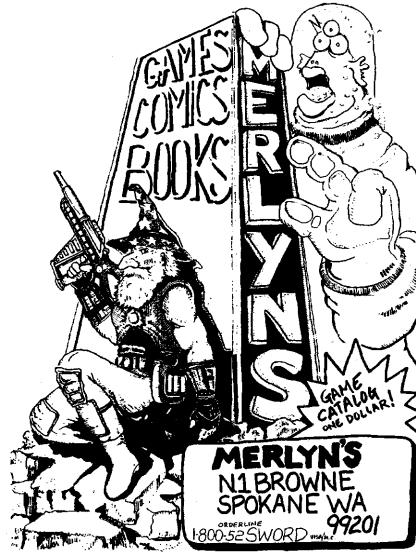


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You may think you'd have to travel to another planet to find a game convention. Finding friends who are also gamers can be a problem, too. Put your scoutsuit away and turn to the Convention Calendar in this magazine. There may be a game convention closer to your home than you'd think — and conventions are a great place to find friends who share your interests. Whether you like board-games, role-playing games, miniature wargames, or just browsing around, a game convention can be all you've hoped for. Plan to attend one soon.

Through the LOOKING Glass

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Photos and painting by Mike Bethke

Hatching Babies (Black Dragon Pewter)



Dragons galore! An anniversary celebration of big reptiles

This month, we celebrate DRAGON® Magazine's 15th anniversary by featuring an all-lizard lineup of miniatures. Mike Bethke worked very hard to make sure we had painted miniatures for this issue's photographs, so you would have an outstanding color photo spread.

But first, a note about a small error in last month's column. My gaming club actually has two quick-playing miniatures war games involving the sinking of the *Bismarck*. One version requires The Avalon Hill Game Company's BISMARCK* game, particularly its game boards and search rules. The second game does not require that game, and I hope to have this alternate game appear next month in this column.

And now, we bring you our line-up of stately guests from many companies.

Reviews

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Hatching Babies

Dragons are reptiles, and reptilian young hatch from eggs. Black Dragon Pewter has made a pewter piece that captures this point well. This piece is big by 25 mm scale standards, but with the new AD&D 2nd Edition dragon statistics, this could be used as a gaming prop. This is a limited production piece (the total run

Miniature's product ratings

*
**

Poor
Below average
Average
Above average
Excellent

is 3,000), and each set has an individual serial number etched and molded onto the bottom of the base. The piece consists of five separate parts.

The largest component is the base. This uneven, rough-hewn shape measures 70 mm X 55 mm at the bottom and has walls 4-11 mm high. Four indentations hold the four eggs. The detail inside the nest is negligible, but there are four fingerprints visible that apparently transferred from the original. The exterior is molded to be rough stone, and several pieces of eggshell complete the finished area.

The other components are hatching eggs and little dragons. On the front left is a dragon "pup" holding the lower two-thirds of his shell. The dragon is 40 mm tall and has four taloned legs, visible stomach plates, and a rough-scaled body. Very small wings unfurl behind him, and there is a spinal ridge as well as horn nubs. Floppy ears and a dumb but endearing look complete this picture. Dragon two, front right, is at rest, with his head on his front right paw and tail. His wings are folded down, as are his ears and back ridges. Scale detail is good. This dragon is supported by a sloped ridge, with the top half of his shell molded onto the base. It looks as if breaking out of his shell has worn him out. Third is an egg at the right rear, still intact but severely cracked; it obviously won't be whole for long. Dragon four, left rear, looks happy to be out of his egg. He has a toothy grin and big bugged-out eyes. His wings stretch out to the sides, and his ears are relaxed and smooth. Skin texture is bumpy and looks scaly. The egg shell is rough edged. To top the figure off, a piece of eggshell covers the dragon's ears and horn nubs.

There are no obvious defects or unfilled areas on this piece, and it is cute. Install a large pewter or painted lead dragon behind this set, and a catchy family scene appears. Detailing on the base could be better, but overall the piece is very nice in spite of its hefty \$100 price tag. There is a lot of pewter here.

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Gren-2531—Lizard King

This figure consists of a huge *Tyrannosaurus rex* and a large lizard-man rider. There is no listed scale, but the rider could conform either to 54 mm scale or, as a very large lizard king from the AD&D® game, 25 mm scale. The tyrannosaur is just about perfect as a 25 mm scale miniature for AD&D games. The figures are made of lead and come in a total of 12 pieces, eight for the dinosaur and four for



Lizard King (Grenadier)

the rider. The set comes in one of Grenadier's special large boxes, with a cover photo of the model with a gaudy paint job. I'll start on the dinosaur first.

If you get one of these figures, your first job is to remove the very small mold line and any flash (there was no flash on our model). The base is a large mosaic of molded boulders, with the frontmost part of the dinosaur's toes molded onto it. Check the bottom of the base, as ours had a high point on the bottom that caused the model to rock. After this, dry fit the rear legs to the base to check the fit. Then, fit the body onto the legs and position the legs properly. If the fit is good, apply glue to

the leg sockets on the body, put the legs into the sockets, and again dry fit the legs to the base. Hold the model together like that, or use an accelerator to speed up the super glue. Then, glue the legs to the base. Make sure that there are no gaps at the hips or where the feet join the toes.

Next, attach the tail to the body (we used two model railroad track nails as anchors). Then, glue on the two front legs and the top of the head. The detail is excellent, with good, rough, scaly skin including folds and rib detail. The chest plates are good, but Mike deepened the grooves for painting and washing, which greatly improved the chest detail. The right nostril

was filled in and had to be drilled out. Otherwise, the fit is excellent. The dinosaur is just over 228 mm from tip of tail to nose, which comes out to around 50'-55' long. You need to check closely, though, as our model had a small gap in its spinal ridge at the back of the body section; this is less noticeable after painting.

After you finish the dinosaur, the lizard rider is easy. Glue its upper body to the lower part. A small gap lies in front, as the two halves of the body join with an oval-shaped joint that is slightly off-kilter if you turn the upper body like we did. This is almost unnoticeable with the wide leather belt the lizard rider wears, especially after priming and painting. The belt supports large leather flaps that flank his scaly tail, which is a separate piece, and a groin flap held by a simple round buckle. The figure wears leather wrappings on his feet, metal leg and knee guards on both legs, and a leather band on his thigh. His shoulders and chest are protected by plates, all bound by leather straps joined by a metal "circle" at his back. His breastplate features a winged pattern, and a cow skull necklace is at his throat. The right hand is cupped and has no detail on the palm; this hand is meant to hold onto the dinosaur's neck. The left hand, gripping a large sword, is the fourth piece; care should be taken with it as the sword bends easily. Finally, his helmet looks almost Oriental, and it frames his reptilian features and highlights his scales. The body, if stretched out, would measure almost 62 mm tall.

The two miniatures can be the foundation for several game scenarios and are also a nice conversation piece. They will take a little work to get right, so gauge your time accordingly and watch the detail. This set is recommended at \$24.95.

Gren-99—Julie Guthrie's Fire Dragon (Grenadier)

Looking at this dragon miniature, I can see traces of a fiery heritage in more than just color. This figure has seven parts that incorporate twists and turns like a flame in a draft. This 25 mm lead figure stretches just over 165 mm from the spiked tip of his tail to the end of his snarling maw.

The head is in two parts: the upper head part, and the lower jaw, neck, and front right leg part. The upper part of the head has two horns, flared nostrils, intense eyes, and the start of a long, hairy mane and "beard." Four lower horns jut out and back from the lower jaw. The two long lower horns are partly molded to the neck and require careful prying to pull them free, but the effect will be worth it. The patch of flowing hair that replaces the familiar spined ridge down the back continues to midtail, giving this dragon an almost Oriental look. The hair is molded as if blowing in the wind, and it is an excellent effect. The wings on this dragon consist of two identical pieces, so you



Julie Guthrie's Fire Dragon (Grenadier)

won't have to worry about reversing them. You'll probably want to brace the wings before gluing with a track nail (done by using a pin-vise drill to carefully make a hole in both the body and the wing). The wings also detract slightly from the model. For some reason, Grenadier wings seem to be getting thicker, and this model is no exception. The wings also seem small for the dragon, even if used only for steering. There was also some flash and a mold line, both of which were easily fixed.

The figure is twisted strangely as if getting ready to pounce or as if crouching and getting ready to breathe on someone. The other two pieces that join to the body (the left legs) both have small gaps, so some filling is required. Almost all the pieces have some flash that needs to be removed.

This piece lends itself more to a diorama than a playing piece. The figure sits awkwardly on the ground with its legs pointed at different angles (the photo on the box looked about the same as our photo here). This is recommended for a dragon's cave diorama, and the price is \$11.95 each.

Gren-9911—Julie Guthrie's Hydra Dragon

The hydra is a legendary beast with nine heads that appears in Greek myth. The legend states that the middle head is important, and that if you cut off a head, two more will take its place. Jason (of Argonauts fame) burned off the eight heads and buried the ninth, thereby fulfilling his second quest and ridding the land of a terrible monster.

The hydra dragon from Grenadier represents a dragonlike creature with many of the same properties as the original. This 25 mm scale lead dragon displays seven heads instead of nine and is just under 155 mm from its middle heads snout to tail. The seven heads are basically identical except for expressions and the positions of their jaws, as well as the twisting of their necks to avoid having them be bunched. The middle head is warily watching to the sides, with its mouth closed. Five of the other heads have their mouths open. Tooth and tongue detail is good, except for the molded area between the upper and lower front fangs, which must be blackened with paint or filed down carefully. Claws on the feet are good except for the front right, which leads me to believe that one of the heads bites its toenails. Spinal ridges extend from just behind each head to the body, then join to form one large finlike ridge down the back to the start of the tail. Scale detail is very good, as is the detail on the finlike membranes on each head.

The hydra is assembled out of five parts that require some work. The base needs to be ground down so the figure will not rock. No flash was on this model, and only small mold lines were on some of the heads; the mold lines were removed easily. The heads should be assembled from the



Julie Guthrie's Hydra Dragon (Grenadier)

model's right to left, allowing each section to dry before gluing on the next. Some light filing needs to be done on the finished product. The rear leg and its accompanying part of the base need to be glued on next, with some filing needed on that small part of the base.

The main detractions on this model are the spinal ridge and the body size. The ridges are a bit too thick and are not easily thinned if you want to keep the fin detail. The body is simply a matter of perspective. The thin, arched body does not look capable of supporting and sustaining the writhing mass of seven heads on the front. My personal feeling is that the body should be bigger, but the heads and body do blend well.

This is a good miniature for its price and is recommended for ruined characters' days at \$11.95 each.

Gren-9912—Armored Dragon

This armored dragon from Grenadier is a strategic nightmare, but as a model, it rates highly. This dragon is made of lead and measures just over 128 mm from snout to tail when assembled. The dragon comes in five parts, including the main body and base, a pair of wings, an armored caprice that doubles as a saddle, and a head and neck section. Little flash was on the model; mold lines were almost nonexistent and easily cleaned up. The pieces go together well, except for the wings. The wing slots on the body are fairly rounded, and the wings do not fit perfectly into them. The rider had no flash, and the lance fit well into his hand.

The dragon's detail is excellent, with visible chain mail under overlapping plates that cover much of the body. The chain is done in such a way as to look separated from the body of the dragon. The figure is balanced on its tail and back legs, as if



Armored Dragon (Grenadier)

rearing back from an attack, with his jaws open wide. The jointed plate extends from the snout over the back and sides to half-way down the tail. The wings, part of the rear belly, and the tail are uncovered except for the edges of a pad under the chain. The armored saddle holds a well-done cape or saddle blanket. Scale detail is very good.

There are only two problems: the base and the wings. The base may be covered by gravel, but the wings are identical to each other and appear to be flattened.

The rider is covered in an overlapping plate suit from head to toe. His helmet is contoured so as to appear horned. He has a standard shield on his left arm and an ornate lance with engraving on the handle in his right gauntlet. The armor is simple, with few decorative flourishes.

This dragon's pose, appearance, and rider all give off an evil look. I highly recommend this figure to all gamers. The price is \$11.95 each.

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ENGLAND SO2 OAX

RP 10-419—Armored Dragon *****

It is unusual for two miniature companies to release very similar figures at the same time. Two such figures that defy the odds are the Grenadier Armored Dragon (mentioned previously) and this piece from Ral Partha.

The 25 mm scale lead miniature submitted for review is about 178 mm from nose to tail fin and stands 54 mm high at the

head, although the wings stretch almost straight upwards and add 78 mm of height. The dragon consists of nine parts that had no flash and negligible mold lines. Very small bits of mold were left on the leading edges of the wings, but those came off with a fingernail. The dragon's parts are as follows: head/neck, body, two wings, front left foot, right foreleg, two back feet, and horns. The only problem with the figure concerns the rear feet. These feet should be put on with the "big toes" pointing inward, but the two toes get in each other's way; you will have to angle the feet outward slightly. Otherwise, all the parts fit well. The only other problem with the figure is with its great height, it is slightly unstable and can fall over easily. It might be a good idea to mount the figure on a base.

The detail on the miniature is excellent. The dragon's head is covered by an ornately worked helmet, under which the eyes and nostrils are clearly visible. The horns jut out in such a way, after gluing, that there is the proper amount of space between them and the helmet so as to make it very realistic. The scale detail is excellent over the entire length of the figure. The mouth is closed, but teeth are visible from the side. The wings are slightly wrinkled with muscle grooves and well-done claw tips. A ridge of spikes runs from neck to front tail. The dragon wears chain mail from neck to midside. Large jointed plates cover the neck, tail, and legs; rivet detail is very good. Even the horns have ridges on them.

The rider is dressed in overlapping plates, with chain mail only on the back of his legs, on his seat, and under his armpits. The visor is open slightly, and a fairly well-detailed face from bridge of nose to forehead is visible. Both hands are mailed, and the left hand and arm are raised to

provide a perch for a falcon. A large lance is held in his right hand, and it is anchored in a stirrup and wrapped up to its cross-piece, which is molded as a set of wings. The lance is a metal wire that needs to be glued to the lance handle, and it has a lead spearlike tip in typical Ral Partha fashion.

I highly recommend this miniature. With very little work and careful painting, you can have a fine, quality piece. This one is well worth its \$16 price tag.

RP 11-428—Young Dragon of Krynn ****½

This is definitely a young dragon, measuring only about 90 mm from tail to nose. The dragon comes in two pieces: the body with the left wing, and the right wing. The wings both point nearly straight up from the body and are roughly 50 mm in height, with a rough appearance. The right wing required some patience to glue on, as the slot for the wing is deeper than it should be. The scale and belly-plate detail are well done. A set of spikes runs along its spine from head to tail. The dragon roars defiance, poised to leap into flight with its mouth open. Horns are molded to the head, lower jaw, and neck. Both front feet are poised ready to strike or defend.

This is an excellent model and is highly recommended to those people whose adventurers deal with young dragons. This piece is well worth its \$5 price.

RP Imports 31-030—Huntress and Hunter Dragon *****

This pack contains two figures, a female hunter and her dragon. The dragon measures about 115 mm long and just short of 35 mm high. A triple row of very small, sharp ridges run from his nose to his tail, and from the bottom of his jaw to his lower chest. All four legs are well muscled and are visible even with the dragon half-

Armored Dragon (Ral Partha)



Young Dragon of Krynn (Ral Partha)





Huntress and Hunter Dragon (Ral Partha)

squatting. The skin is mottled and bumpy in texture, with very small scales. Folds of skin, like those on a gila monster, are under the chin, and there are ridges over the small, beady eyes, like those on a horned toad. The most striking thing is the expression on the dragon's face; when painted, it brings to mind the toothy grin of the Cheshire cat.

The female figure is dressed in a two-piece outfit, with soft boots with fringes on the top and a leather belt with a simple buckle. She has a bowstring guard on her right wrist, and a composite bow in her hand (use a hair or a very thin wire strand for a bowstring). Her left hand is raised in greeting or as a command to the dragon, and well-done bracelets adorn her wrist. A sword scabbard is on her hip, and a quiver of arrows complete with feather detail is set on her back so arrows can be grabbed with her left hand. Facial and hair detail are excellent.

Each of these pieces could be used alone in a variety of different scenarios. This pack is highly recommended at \$5.

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

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Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

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#1007—Archangel Michael and Dragon

This diorama represents a struggle between a dragon and an archangel. The lead figures are fighting on a desolate, rocky, square base. The angel comes in three parts; the body, the wings, and the shield. The figure is made to look as though he is flying into the air to gain the advantage; this is done thanks to a peg coming out of his robes, fitting into a high piece of rock. Michael is dressed in a long

robe that flows out behind him and is held by a rope belt. He is unadorned by jewelry or any flashy symbol, but has a simple round shield on his left arm. His right hand is empty, with thumb extended as if to hitch a ride, but a spear should be there (there was no spear in our kit). The face is set as if concentrating; it has no wrinkles, and the detail is good. The hair is long, and strands are visible, with curls in the back. Even his fingers and toes are well detailed. There was no flash on the angel. A set of large, feathered wings that stretch 75 mm up fits into the slot on the angel's back, but the slot is a little too long for the tab, so the gap needs to be filled in. Make sure you glue down the rocks to which the angel is mounted, and you might use a pin vise and track nail to mount the angel to the rocks.

The dragon is rearing, ready to attack. His body is in an S shape, with his jaws open, darting tongue, and glaring eyes. The dragon comes in seven parts; body, tail, two wings, top of head, front legs, and back legs. His head is crowned by large horns, and his mouth contains ferocious teeth. A finlike ridge runs down the back of his neck. The part that contains the forelegs, outstretched and ready to strike, joins the body at the chest. We had problems here with a slight gap, but it filled in pretty well. The wings are large and slightly wrinkled, giving the appearance of age or abuse. The gluing of the wings is a major problem with the figure, as the negligible nubs that go into the very small round slots on the back do not hold well. The slots should be deeper, and the pegs should be longer. Mike fixed this by drilling a hole crosswise through the back and into each wing, then using a $\frac{3}{4}$ " piece of paper clip to mount the wings securely. The dragon rocks too much to use alone, but if you file a groove in the rock pile to the rear of the dragon, so his tail sits in it, the figure will be secure.

We had a lot of problems with this kit, mostly with the wings, but the part of the dragon with its back legs also had a slight gap when mounted, and the heads top



Archangel Michael and Dragon
(Thunderbolt Mountain)

piece seemed a little large for its bottom half. Thunderbolt is in the middle of remaking the molds for this kit, and new models should be on the shelf by the time you read this. The model will look the same but should be much easier to assemble. If Thunderbolt sends us the new kit, we will let you know. It's a nice diorama, but it needs a lot of work. It costs \$19.95.

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Princess Ark

Continued from page 44

at the ruins of Ofo, which are taboo.

The clergy's lower levels perceive only minor events within a relatively close future. These are soothsayers dealing with the common population. They can generally tell if someone "matters" or not, however. The present Great Prophet of Yavdlom, the head of the clergy, can discern major future events with more accuracy and farther into the future. As an effect, the common population tends to consult soothsayers for just about any major decision in their lives; however, few are those who correctly interpret the diviners' clues. The commoners do spend much money this way, and status can be gained according to the quality of the seer's services secured. For the rich, this is a constant pursuit.

At the upper levels, holy wards prevent the clergy from revealing their visions. This explains why the clergy can never gain nobility and thus remains extremely passive; they are the watchers of humanity and demihumanity. However, upon an omen from Immortals, they may help someone's cause, but then only with sibyl-like riddles. Yavdlom seers never openly reveal to foreigners (including PCs) whether they matter or not; consider the DM's problems if this was done!

There are Yavdlom seers who do not belong to the clergy. If they're unaware of their talents when discovered by the clergy, they must join the ranks of the "true seers." Otherwise, they are hunted down as heretical pariahs. Their powers make them dangerous, since they would be capable of interfering with the divine course of history without limitation. There are very few of these people. Most leave the Yavdlom Divinarchy; others remain in the undercity. Any member of the clergy would instantly sense unholy powers upon meeting a pariah.

Seers must remain free from passion, since emotions cloud (and sometimes distort) their visions. Most use profound meditation to overcome their personal feelings. As a result, the more powerful seers are excessively dispassionate and passive people. There are, however, some things the Yavdlom seers cannot see: the Immortals, their heralds, or those mortals who are destined to attain Immortality in their lives. These appear as "people who matter;" but how *much* they matter remains murky. This has led to some of the biggest misreadings on the part of Yavdlom seers.

History: Yavdlom was founded by stray Tanagoro colonizers in 2200 BC. They settled at the time of a major elven migration from Davania to Brun. Many wars occurred between the two races, and the elves eventually moved on. Some of

the population mixed, and a very light, permanent strain of elven blood now remains among the present Yavdlom people. Yav died at the hands of an elf, which explains a certain antipathy toward the fairy races. To avoid the wrath of their Immortal patrons, the Yavdlom people made a mass pilgrimage to the Arm of the Immortals, where they remained for a century. Following omens from Yav, the people finally returned to their ancestral lands. The uncanny prediction ability of some Yavdlom people comes from their culture and their particular racial makeup. The Yavdlom population has spread to all of the Serpent Peninsula, up to the border of the City State of Slagovich and the outskirts of the Great Waste. The divinarchy has had a number of clashes with Jaibul along the coast or caravan trails. It is now a strong but peaceful empire that trades mainly with Slagovich, Sind, and Minrothad (the latter keeps its knowledge of the Yavdlom very quiet).

Map Correction

Several provincial boundaries were left out of the map of the Kingdom of Sind in DRAGON® issue #169, on page 47. Those boundaries are reproduced below in red, and they may be carefully drawn onto the map in issue #169 with a red pen.



Professional Freelance Candidates

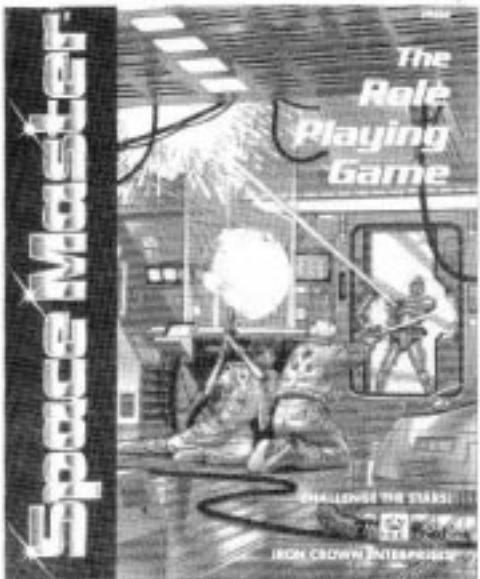
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Role of Computers

Continued from page 58

London, you could quite literally end up wasting a day or two of food just trying to locate an NPC you haven't talked to yet. There should be some method by which the game can mark NPCs you've already conversed with to save time and frustration.

Anyway, as you rapidly learn how to confront and chat with the NPCs, you learn important facts. These facts lead you all over the world and, eventually, into space. Such important miniquests as obtaining bids from Canal Martian Kaaraahn Kershneek in Boreo Syrtis League and Lizard Man Ralax in the Thetis Mountains could lead you into a position of purchasing transparent aluminum, the army's latest invention. Or you could find yourself in a position to purchase the blueprints for an ether flyer—no small matter.

Space: 1889 is highly entertaining and highly addictive, despite some frustrating moments when you are trying to talk with NPCs. The addition of more sound effects that support additional third-party sound boards would certainly embellish the adventures. Paragon has managed a first-rate job of transporting this GDW game to your computer, and it is a jolly good adventure!

Clue corner

Buck Rogers: Countdown to Doomsday (SSI)

(These hints are for the C64/128 version.)

1. If you are having problems with a specific battle, an easy bypass is to switch the level of play to Novice just for that fight, then return to your normal mode of play after the battle has been won.

2. In the pirate ship during the battle against the engineers, you should finish them off and then kill Buck Rogers himself. This has no detrimental effect on the game, and you obtain a Lunarian Smartsuit and a weapon that does 1d4 + 6 points of damage, has four attacks per round, and lowers THAC0 by six points.

3. After you acquire either the rocket launcher or plasma thrower, you should give it to either a Medic or Engineer. After a battle, you should select the Yes option to continue and ready either of those weapons. At the start of the next combat, the character who readied either weapon will be able to use it during the *first* round, rather than the second round, when the character would normally be able to fire.

4. Each of the different asteroids has a special guest. Here they are, listed by asteroid and mission:

Psyche: An old mining asteroid that has been taken over by ECGs (very beneficial).

Pallas: An old man who used to be Talon's ally but quit can be found in the bar.

Juno: RAM captured Atha, Tuskon's wife, and they dare you to rescue her. This

adventure is extremely difficult!

Thule: Here is a rescue mission to free a NEO agent from imprisonment.

Tycho: Wilma Deering asks you to fight a combat robot (big spider type), but you get a valuable weapon for your troubles.

Ceres: The RAM asteroid base is explained to you by Carlton Turabain.

Hygeia: A mysterious RAM communications center is here.

Aurora: A difficult adventure to find a nonexistent treasure in Talon's base of operations lies here. Talk to Garrity for the exact location.

Fortuna: This is the only asteroid with no adventure, but it does have valuable grenades at fairly reasonable prices. Plus, it has a bank for your convenience.

Jeff Oler
Oxford AL

Champions of Krynn (SSI)

1. In Mendor's library, keep Search on and you may find some interesting items (many magical). Don't worry about random encounters, as there are none. When you are about to leave, save the game; if you took anything from the library, you will be attacked by a spectre.

2. When you find the Cardorna Textile House treasure, don't break the seal. Instead, go to a well in the northwest corner of the area. Here you will find a note to some thieves. Climb down the well and a thief at the bottom asks you if you want to forge the seal. Say yes and you can keep half of the Cardorna treasure without Cardorna ever noticing the acquisition! José

Pablo Zagal
Santiago, Chile

Countdown (Access Software)

If you are having trouble getting out of the sanctuary, here are some clues:

1. You need the key to the furnace room. The door is on the lowest level. The key is found in Barney Sacnussen's room.

2. To stop the guard from noticing you are missing from your room, you need to obtain the CPR dummy (found in the dorm in the northernmost section of that floor) and place it in your bed.

3. To wake up Dr. Hashish, you must threaten him with a scalpel (found in one of the operating rooms on level one).

4. Be sure to look at all the books in Dr. Hashish's room. You must also obtain his car keys, which are on his desk.

5. In the storeroom on the third level is a crowbar. It is hard to spot, but it is resting on the chest of drawers. Use the crowbar to open the box containing the grappling hook.

6. In the furnace room, you must cut the telephone wires (with the scissors found in the broom cupboard), or else the guards will call the police and you will be captured.

7. To open the secret door in the wine cellar, you must move the bottles in the correct order. The monastery was founded in 1433, and this is the key to the proper

sequence.

8. Once you are outside, use your mountaineering boots and grappling hook to scale the cliff. Then take Dr. Hashish's car, and you have escaped!

Aidan Doyle
Melbourne, Australia

Curse of the Azure Bonds (SSI)

I would like to correct the "Clue corner" entry for Curse in DRAGON® issue #164. It was said that while you are in the Red Wizards Tower, you should not accept the challenge of the sphere because you will be annihilated. This is not true.

The trick is to create a new magic-user just before going into the tower. If you can keep him alive through the drow lair, let him accept the challenge. He should win, and the wizard who asked you to accept the challenge will be annihilated. You then find magic weapons, items, and gems.

Craig Jarrel
Warner Robins GA

Dragon Wars (Interplay Productions)

1. The bones on Rustic Bridge have no use in the game.

2. The Enkidu totem can be used to gain a difficult passage.

3. In the magical college, the spells to cast are Fire Light, Reveal Glamour, Ice Chill, Cloak Arcane, and Soften Stone. Choose the Soul Bowl because the Laugh Staff and Sing Ring have no use.

4. When fighting a small number of foes in hand-to-hand combat, an excellent tactic is to have your front rank block while your rear rank fires missile weapons. This allows you to damage the enemy while taking none yourself. This is especially effective with the Gatlin Bow/Magic Quiver combination. This is less effective when fighting larger numbers of foes, as blocking stops only the first attack.

5. Venture into Dragon Valley only after befriending a dragon.

6. A high lockpick skill is *essential*.

7. There are four ways out of Purgatory; avoid the Underworld until your characters are better equipped.

8. Dwarves do not like thieves.

9. Use a Create Wall to stop Quag from sinking. The item you get for this is essential to your quest.

Allan Seyberth
Fort Drum NY

Might and Magic I (Electronic Arts)

1. Doom holds the key to the messages. The six castles have the silver messages. The toughest dungeons (except Doom) usually have gold messages on their last levels.

2. If you set off an alarm, get out quickly unless you can handle Doom-type encounters.

3. Visit Ranalou, but don't disturb experiments. There are better ways to get Thundranium than that.

4. Doom is filled with hints and clues.

5. The strangers in E-2 hold another key

to the game.

6. The minotaur has a maze, but there is a path to get you through it.

7. Don't go up or out to find the tones, but be prepared for hardship finding them.

8. The Dungeon of Dusk is a nice place to visit if you can protect yourself.

9. Horatio Harper has the password.

10. It's pretty tough getting to the center of the land time forgot.

11. Luck Island holds the bonus if you have earned it. Luckily, it doesn't penalize you, but it doesn't always reward completely, either.

12. There's a reason you can't go to all of level one of the Wizard's Stronghold.

13. The Volcano God is kind of tough, as is the Dragon Town meeting.

Andrew Mussell
Brandon WI

Wizardry (Sir-Tech Software)

[These hints are for the Nintendo Entertainment System version.] The two most devastating experiences in this game both result from your thief tripping a teleporter. If you don't have a level 13 thief, do not mess with any of the teleporters, or you may have to start the game over.

Usually, the first time you'll meet "teleporter disaster" is when you break into the monster allocation center on floor 4. When the teleporter nails you here, it puts you into a hallway with no escape doors. You will find that this hallway runs outside a 4' X 4' square. To escape this, you must run in circles until you beat an enemy with a treasure chest that is booby-trapped with another teleporter. Approximately one out of every 20 treasure chests has this device, and only one out of every two enemies has a treasure chest. Thus, you are looking at 40:1 odds per encounter of busting out!

The worst thing that could happen to you often happens on floor #10: You are teleported into bedrock. If this happens, you must immediately use DUMAPIC to determine your location, then cast MALOR or LOKTOFEIT (both require level 13 casters). When casting MALOR, never go anywhere other than your current floor's elevator square, or you are guaranteed to send yourself into some pile of bedrock. Note that the teleporters on the 10th floor often send you to another floor, so be extremely careful when you cast MALOR.

Chris Coakley
Waterford MI

Wizardry II: Knight of Diamonds

(Sir-Tech)

(These hints are for the Macintosh version.)

1. On level one, beyond the teleporter, you'll find a door. Go through the door and prepare yourself to battle some animated armor. This is not any old plain animated armor, however. It is the magical armor of the Knight of Diamonds. (You'll be running into various pieces of this armor throughout the maze.) In order to possess this armor, you've got to defeat it, and the only way to manage that is by persistent physical attack. Use your clerics to heal your fighters' wounds as they tackle the armor.

2. On level six, the answer to the Sphinx's riddle is an anagram. Perhaps the title of the game will help you.

The Lessers

Don't forget to ensure your place in history by aiding other readers with their quests. Mail your hints and tips to: The Lessers, 521 Czerny Street, Tracy CA 95376. You never know when the character you assist will aid you in a future adventure!

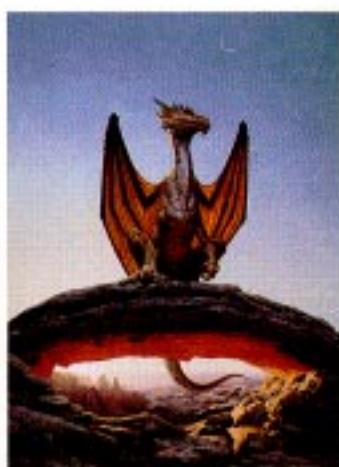


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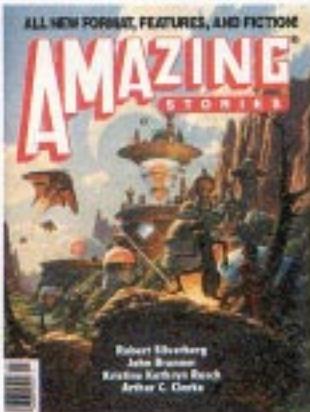
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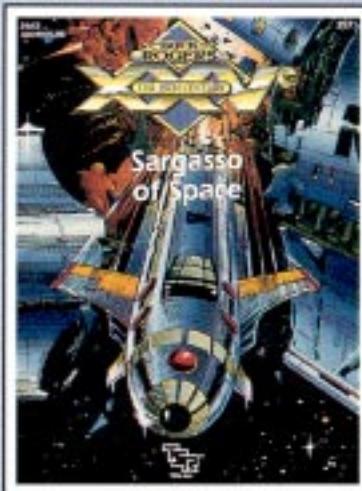
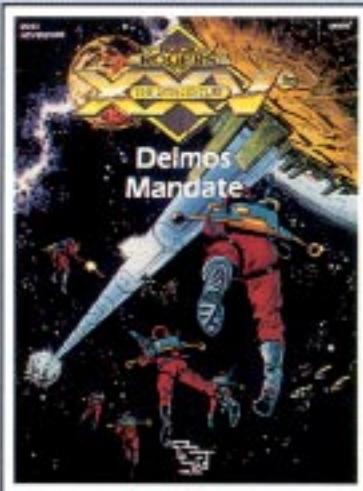
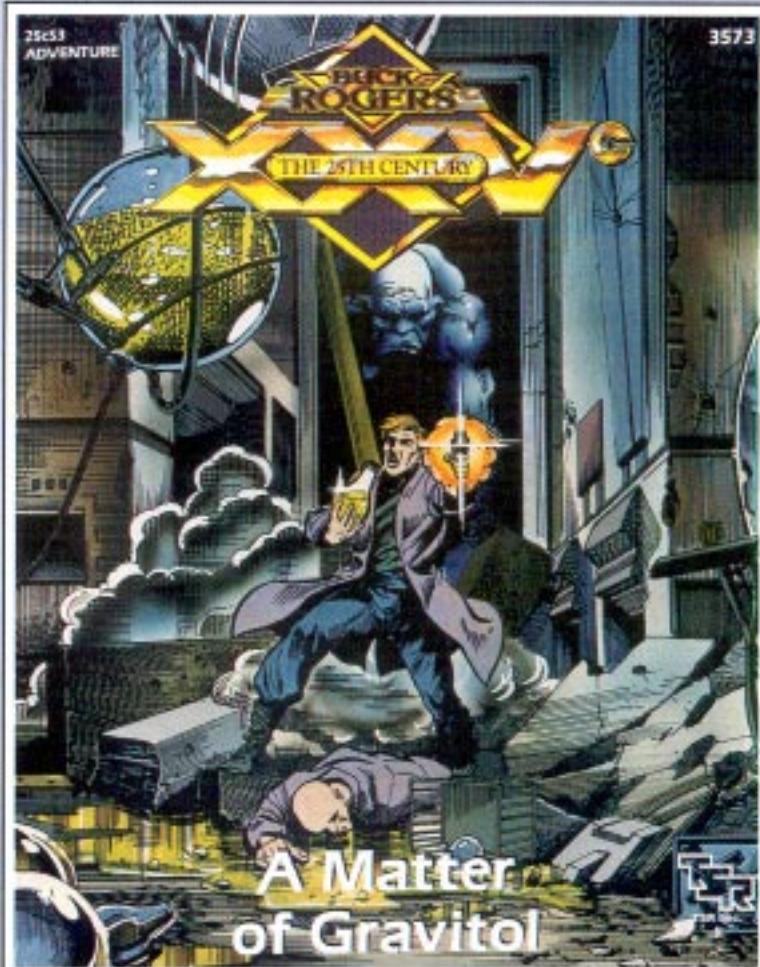
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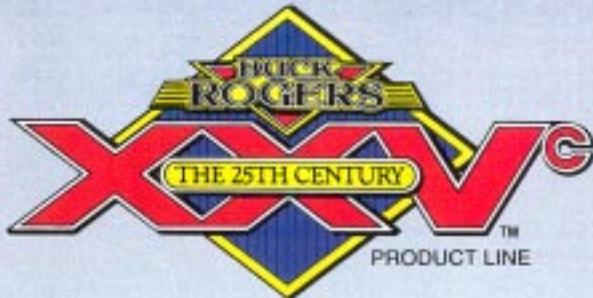
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Then Colonel Marcus Wolfe sends countless RAM mercenaries to the planet to capture the scientist. So your crew must risk all to run the blockade, escape RAM's henchmen, and smuggle her from Venus. If RAM finds Alexis Hansen, nearly all will be lost for the NEO cause.

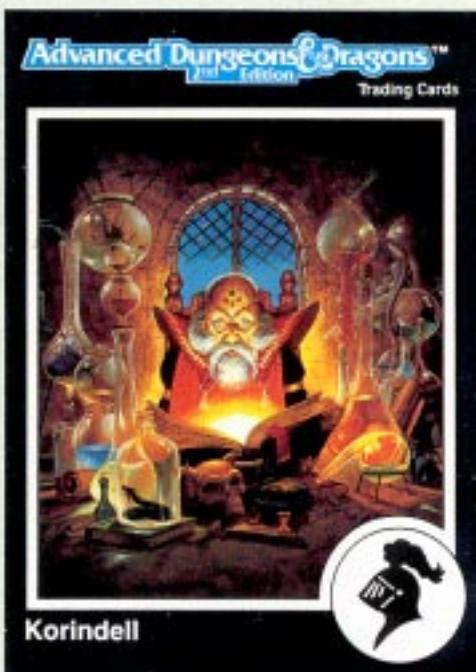
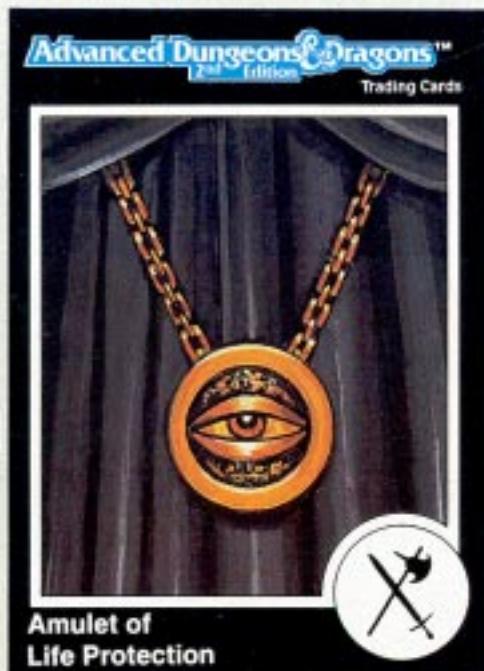
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ISBN 1-56076-170-9