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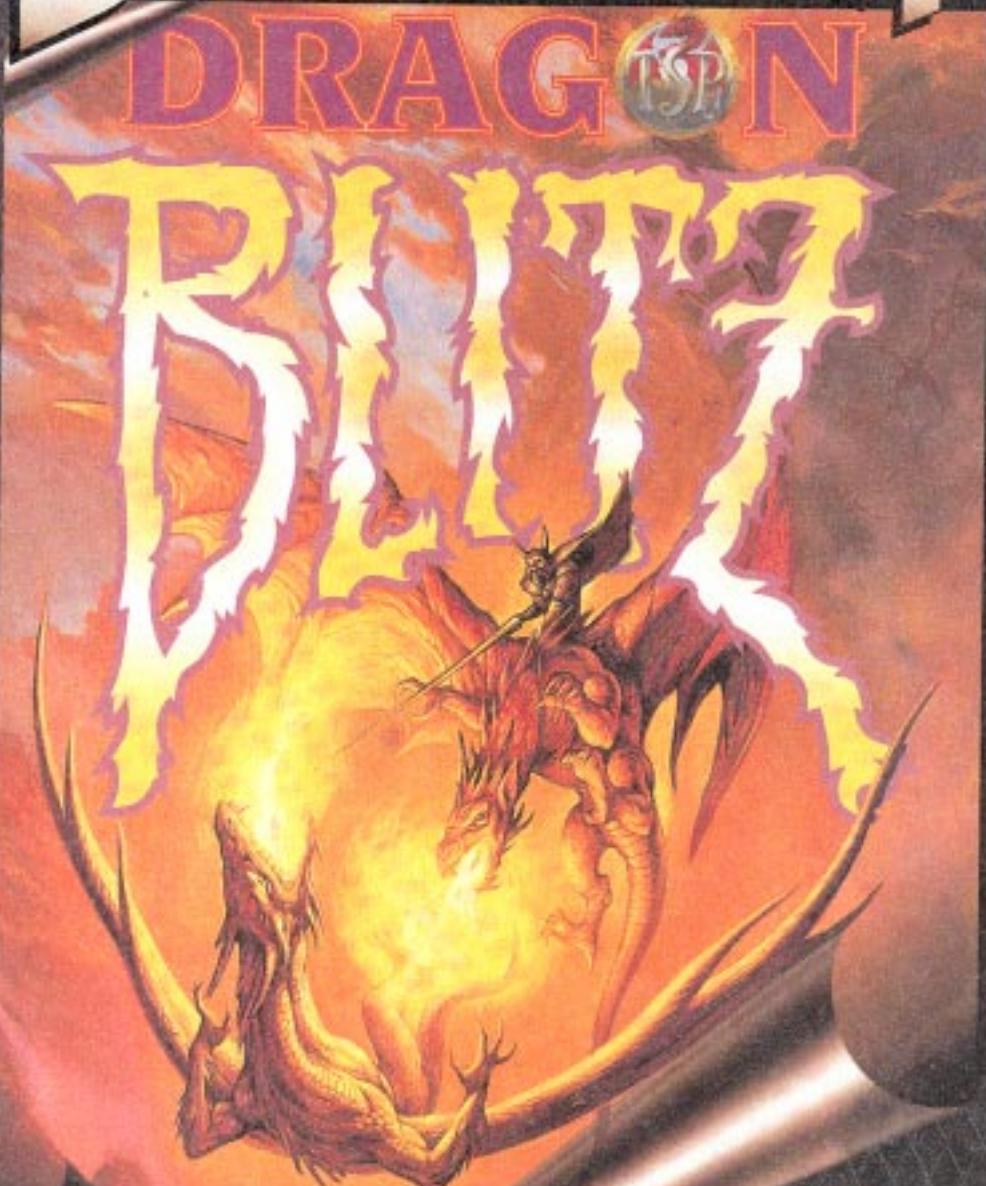
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The

# Blitz is On!



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The 1996 tour has begun. Look for TSR at these conventions, and watch for updates as Dragon Blitz '96 gets underway!

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# The Wyrm's Turn

## Where the good games are

As I write this, the past weekend was the **WINTER FANTASY**™ gaming convention.

It is over, and we've survived. **WINTER FANTASY** isn't as hectic or crowded as the **GENCON**® game fair, so we can relax a bit more, meet more people, and have more fun.

It was good meeting designers and editors from other game companies and discussing trends in the gaming industry, but it was also good sitting in the hotel bar (or better yet, Mader's, down the street) with old friends and colleagues and just talking shop.

Conventions are business, but they are also fun.

I came out of **WINTER FANTASY** with a higher respect for the people who run these things. TSR's new convention coordinator, Dee Westman, was everywhere. I couldn't round a corner without seeing her talking to someone or running off on some mission. (We're convinced now there was a clone spell in force somehow.) RPGA® Network coordinator Scott Douglas and his staff did yeoman service keeping things going so smoothly most people thought the convention was running itself.

I saw large groups of people checking out the demos of the newest card games and the old favorites as well.

The key attraction, though, was gaming. Straight gaming. All day. Virtually around the clock. There were game tournaments galore, including the RPGA Networks popular **LIVING CITY**™ campaign. (For those of you who missed the interactive, Ravens Bluff is under siege. For more information, see the RPGA Network News on page 46 of this magazine.)

One of the new things at **WINTER FANTASY** was the RPGA Networks **LIVING DEATH**™ campaign, which is based on the *fin de siècle* **RAVENLOFT**® game setting of *Masque of the Red Death*. It looked iffy for getting enough judges for the first few

slots of the two **LIVING DEATH** adventures; all the judges scheduled to run them later really wanted to play them first. That's a vote of confidence for you.

These judges really impressed me. For those of you who've never played a **LIVING CITY**, **LIVING JUNGLE**™, or **LIVING DEATH** game, you don't know what you're missing. The judges who run these things are the closest thing to a professional corps of DMs that I can imagine. Many judges have been doing this for years, and some go to gaming conventions solely for the purpose of running games. They really enjoy it, they're really good, and they really know the rules.

Now the Network drops into **GENCON** gear. Tournaments are being readied and judges are signing up.

If you like to game, you shouldn't miss **GENCON**; but if you like to game and also want to be able to sit back and breathe a little, you should come to **WINTER FANTASY** next year, too.

You should also consider joining the Network. I've thought about it myself for several months, but after seeing **WINTER FANTASY**, I'm convinced. I just finally broke down and joined the RPGA Network.

Do you think I'm going to work all the time and miss out on the fun?



# Dragon®

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Editor-in-Chief  
Pierce Watters

Editor  
Anthony J. Bryant

Associate editor  
Dave Gross

Associate editor  
Michelle Vuckovich

Subscriptions  
Janet L. Winters

U.S. advertising  
Cindy Rick

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Carolyn Wildman

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### Real Jungles

**Gregory Detwiler**

*Forget those Tarzan movies. Let us tell you about campaigning in the **real** jungle.*

Page 8

### 101 Uses for a Wet Blanket

**Spike Y. Jones**

*The humble woolen blanket can save your PC's life. You'll never look at bed linens the same way.*



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### The Athalantan Campaign

**Ed Greenwood**

*What were the Realms like when Elminster was young? Venture to the Kingdom of Athalantar to find out.*

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### Greater Familiars of Faerûn

**Jean Rabe**

*Here's a solution for when your mage's animal companions become familiar.*

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### Venturing into the City

**Paul F. Culotta**

*Sooner or later, you have to deal with a city-based campaign. It's best to be ready.*

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Roger E. Moore

Ten really embarrassing ways to die.

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### The Dragon's Worstary: Golems

Anne Brown

*They're new...they're terrifying...they're chocolate, chia, and plush golems!*

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### Rogue's Gallery: Gangsters of the Underdark

Keith "Pinball" Strohm

*Can adventurers survive against these members of the real underworld? Only Sir Elliot of Kness knows.*

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Serge Stelmack

*One d12 is all you need to create truly memorable campaigns.*

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*Can serious games be fun, too?*



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## Flumph? What's a flumph?

Dear DRAGON® MAGAZINE:

Okay, I've been patient long enough. I've bought pretty much every monster supplement that's come along. What is a flumph? The CASTLE GREYHAWK® module mentions them several times. It's just about the only monster there you haven't reprinted. Just a short description will do. Please tell me what a flumph is before I have to make up my own definition. (And that won't be pretty.)

Rip Van Wormer  
Midlan, MI

You have impeccable timing. Look on page 16 of this issue for a bit of background on the rather pathetic flumph. (You must have been skimming pages, because the flumph also appears on page 58 of the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM™ Annual, Volume Two.)

## Innovation: magic vs. technology

Dear DRAGON MAGAZINE:

I must take issue with Skip Williams' suggestion in the January 1996 "Sage Advice" (DRAGON MAGAZINE issue #225) regarding the unorthodox use of the *frisky chest* spell to move a heavy but valuable golden statue. There is simply no reason why any Dungeon Master should object to this application of a standard spell.

The priest who created the *frisky chest*

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spell may well have intended only to protect his valuables, but that doesn't mean that is the only way the magic will work. I'm sure that when Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone, he never anticipated the fax machine, but his telephone plus a little ingenuity and technological sophistication led to this advance. History has proven that scientific discoveries rarely remain confined to the intentions of their discoverers. Similarly, magical discoveries in the AD&D® game made by wizards and priests will constantly be applied in ways their inventors never imagined. I imagine the wizard Tenser never expected his floating disc to be used as a magical stretcher for a wounded companion or as a makeshift ferry across a trapped floor. Would Mr. Williams bar these uses, even if they did not violate the parameters and limitations of the spell, since the "obvious" intended use of this spell is to transport valuables? An unorthodox use of a spell is not necessarily an abuse.

As for a DM-imposed weight limit to the *frisky chest* spell, I wonder how many other spell descriptions will be altered mid-game by flummoxed DMs. Players depend on certain spells functioning in certain ways, and if the DM places new, unanticipated restrictions upon these in the heat of play, he will cause more damage to the game than misuse of a 2nd-level priest spell. If I had been the DM for these enterprising players, I would have granted them an experience point bonus for using their ingenuity.

By making an unorthodox but totally legal use of a low-level spell, the players were able to overcome difficulty and emerge victorious. Isn't this what players are supposed to do?

Any DM who attempts to thwart such innovation as Skip Williams suggests ("the statue's movement should have been contrary to what the players wanted at every opportunity") is doing his players a grave disservice and giving the morale of the group a serious injury to boot. When the players realize that the DM is using his power to balk them, despite the fact that rules, logic, and game balance

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are on their side, they will become disgusted and disinterested.

Neil McGarry  
Philadelphia, PA

We passed your letter on to Skip Williams for his response. It follows below.

"Magic is not technology, so the telephone metaphor just doesn't work. Read Chapter One of DM™ OPTION: High-Level Campaigns for a more in-depth discussion of why treating magic like technology is a bad idea.

"In any case, a technological device does what it does because that's what it must do. When you dial a telephone, the phone at your friend's house rings because that's what it must do. It makes no difference what the user intends or what the circumstances are. Knowing what a telephone must do, any bright person can adapt the telephone to perform all sorts of tricks. A message spell, on the other hand, does what it does (transmit a spoken message from the spellcaster to another creature) because that's what it was created to do. A message spell can never transmit a picture or written missive, because all it does is transmit speech. It also will never deliver a message to a recording device, because it transmits messages only to creatures. Technology is adaptable, magic is not. One could create a spell that transmits written messages, but it wouldn't be a message spell and wouldn't transmit spoken messages.

"I have no problem with innovation. I have a big problem with spells used in a manner contrary to their functions. Using *frisky chest* to make your treasure follow you out of the dungeon is just as bad as using *polymorph* other to create an army of ancient gold dragons from the local rat population. (I had a glib response to that one, too.) Anyway, if the party in question had been exceptionally clever, they could have made the *frisky chest* spell work pretty much the way they intended; it just would have taken a long time and left them vulnerable to attack while they tried to herd the statue through the dungeon.

"The letter writer has missed the original point, which I have revisited several times since the *frisky chest* column: When players start exploring the gray areas of spell effects

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so they can gain big advantages, or when they apply their brains to manipulating the rules instead of thinking up clever ways for their characters to do things, the DM must be sure that things just don't work out quite the way they expected. That's not to say that attempts to use spells in new ways should fail, oh no. Instead, the adventure should proceed in ways the players probably haven't anticipated."

## Missing AL-QADIM monsters

Dear DRAGON MAGAZINE:

I am writing to you all the way from Australia to give credit to your fine magazine and to ask a favor. I have many brilliant TSR campaign settings, including FORGOTTEN REALMS, RAVENLOFT®, and now BIRTHRIGHT™. The problem is with my favorite setting – AL-QADIM®. Unfortunately, I started collecting AL-QADIM material a little too late, and cannot get the AL-QADIM MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Appendix here in Australia.

Would you be able to put some of the more important monsters – like ghuls – in the magazine?

Adam Hock  
24 Arnold St.  
Blackwater  
QLD 4717  
Australia

Sorry, we can't rerun them here.

Many of the AL-QADIM monsters were reprinted in the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Annual, Volumes One and Two. Your local gaming store should either have these on the shelves or be able to order them. (The ghuls are in Volume Two.)

For the record, the game supplements and expansions for AL-QADIM still exist, and you can order them from distributors.

## What about the rest of Krynn?

Dear DRAGON MAGAZINE:

As an avid DRAGONLANCE® reader, I would like to say how wonderful it was to see the transformation of Krynn in *Dragons of Summer Flame*. It has given a

lot of submissions of written material and artwork; however, no responsibility for such submissions can be assumed by the publisher in any event. Any submission accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope of sufficient size will be returned if it cannot be published. We strongly recommend that prospective authors write for our writers' guidelines before sending an article to us. In the United States and Canada, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope (9 1/2" long preferred) to Writers' Guidelines, c/o DRAGON MAGAZINE, at the above address; include sufficient American postage or International Reply Coupons (IRC) with the return envelope. In Europe, write to: Writers' Guidelines, c/o DRAGON MAGAZINE, TSR Ltd., include sufficient International Reply Coupons with your SASE.

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new and wonderful life to the saga that has kept me interested for years. I am, however, curious to know if TSR has any plans to expand the setting with novels or more game products dealing with lands other than Ansalon. It seems to me that the FIFTH AGE™ would present a marvelous opportunity to do just that.

Trevor Clark  
Canmore, Canada

We know that there are people curious about other parts of Krynn, but our plate's going to be full just telling you what's going on on Ansalon after the Chaos War. But who knows...?

## Look at my game design?

Dear DRAGON MAGAZINE:

I am writing to tell you how much I appreciate your publication and to ask you to take a look at the role-playing game I have created, and possibly suggest it to the TSR producers to make it a TSR product. I will send you a copy at your request.

Matt Woad  
Vashon, WA

If you want to convince us you're a good game designer, perhaps the best way to prove yourself here is by writing a good article for DRAGON MAGAZINE or a good module for DUNGEON® Adventures.

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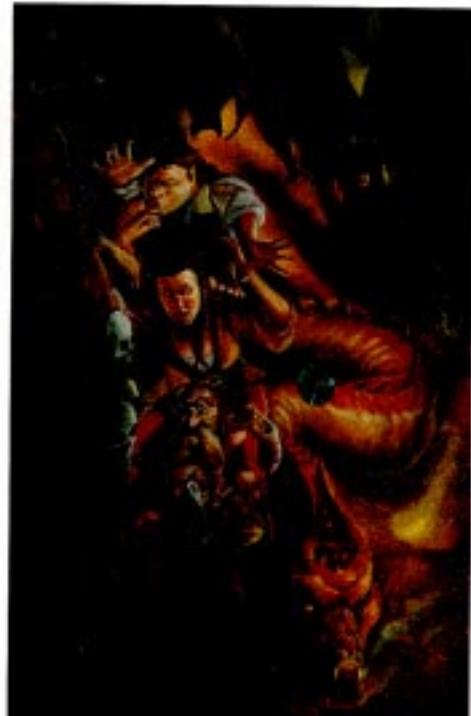
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### On the Cover

It's been a while since we've had the work of Jim Holloway grace the cover of this publication (although we've certainly kept him busy enough with interior illustration as we worked on the relaunch).

Jim is one of those working artists who still paints for pleasure, and he brought us this unfinished piece several months ago. It featured classic Holloway characters in yet another humorous predicament. We recognized its potential for our April "humor" cover and signed it up on the spot. Jim finished it over the winter, and we're certainly pleased with the results.

Thanks, Jim, for this and for all your efforts these past few months.

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# Move over, Tarzan; make room for a realistic jungle

# JUNGLES

by Gregory Detwiler

illustrated by Tony DiTerlizzi

**H**ow many players and DMs know what real jungles are like? If they don't know, how can they realistically portray them, or adventure as true denizens of them? Oddly enough, jungles have been studied for only a little more than a century. My main source of information is a book by one of the early scientists who worked in them for a long time. *Ivan Sanderson's Book of Great Jungles* was written by Ivan T. Sanderson, a Scottish-born naturalist who spent over 30 years of his life studying the flora and fauna of the jungles in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

## The basic jungle

Originally, the word "jungle" wasn't even meant to describe jungles. The word came from *djanghael*, a Persian word for the barren Iranian deserts, where scattered thorny plants were the only vegetation. British officers who were stationed in Persia spent a lot of time hunting there, and as they were transferred to new posts in the hilly Northwest Frontier, and then to true jungle country in India, Ceylon, and Burma, they carried the word with them to describe the local wilderness, gradually shortening the spelling to "jungle."

Living inside a jungle isn't really as bad as it sounds, although almost no one does. Even in lands that have jungles, the overwhelming majority of the population lives outside the jungle. They may have settlements on the very fringes or outskirts of the jungle proper, but they will not enter. This is true of the natives no matter where the jungle is.

Superstitions and mistaken beliefs about jungles are rife, and true jungle denizens often exploit them to keep outsiders away. Jungle inhabitants (Pygmies, for example) can and do make "evil spirit calls" at night around nearby settlements just to make sure that neighbors won't feel like dropping in on them. In game terms, a party of outsiders approaching or entering a jungle should get similar "scare-away" treatment at the hands of any natives.

Part of the reason for the bad reputation of jungles is the combination of climate and choice of wardrobe of the early explorers. Jungles are hot and humid, and the less clothing you wear, the better. Look at the old pictures of Stanley, Livingstone, and their compatriots in pith helmets, boots, trousers, etc.; these men were all perfectly miserable.

Jungle natives are generally happy and carefree types, but you wouldn't know it to read the account of some explorer of the "green hell." If your party from some other AD&D® campaign comes waltzing into Malatra (the LIVING JUNGLE™ setting of the RPGA® Network, introduced in POLYHEDRON® Newszine issue #102), Chult (from the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign), or some other jungle, clad in chain or plate mail, make sure they have a miserable time of it, at least until they shed most – or all – of their protection. It'll even the odds against the locals. Remember: padded armor here may be even *more* uncomfortable.

Another reason many people fear jungles is the threat of disease. Tropical diseases can be quite virulent, and West Africa was even officially labeled "the white man's grave" for this reason; but disease is equally bad in the tropics no matter what the terrain is like.

Jungles are some of the healthiest places in the world. Jungle soil is even a natural antiseptic, and if one receives a cut on the foot and walks around barefoot, the wound heals with astonishing speed. Sanderson describes an occasion when, on a temporary visit to civilization, he came down with a case of athlete's foot so bad he could hardly walk, and had to be carried back to the jungle on a stretcher. The very night he got back, his tent was washed away by a cloudburst, and he had to go wading around knee deep in the mud to rescue his possessions. Not only was the mud soothing, but by noon the next day all the pain was gone, and the sores were beginning to heal. Four days later, there was no indication that there had ever been anything wrong with his feet.

If your jungle character has healing skills, have him use jungle soil to treat wounds. At least



it's a change from the standard "herbal lore" set of cures.

True swamps and lakes, like Malatra's Dokuba and Kumbo Swamps, Lake Koro, and the Sleepy Lake, are rare in jungles. What one might find are permanently flooded depressions in the ground, often quite large, that have trapped water because the soil is so saturated it can't hold any more. Trunks of large trees may emerge from the water all over the place (giving a swamp-like appearance) or just appear along the edges (creating a lake).

All jungles exist in the tropics, and they are hit with heavy rains most, if not all, nights. The exuberant vegetation of a jungle requires a lot of rain (the minimum is 80" a year). Jungles usually get a lot more, however. Many get from 400" to even 800" of rain per year. If one insists on bringing metal weapons, armor, and other metallic gear in, one must stock up on oily rags or whatever is necessary to keep the stuff from rusting.

## Plant life

The trees in a jungle not only grow to a great height, but they are even literally bound together by the vines that grow on them. This combination produces some curious effects. If you were flying or at a vantage point where you could see the tops of the trees, you would find yourself looking at a massive blanket of a uniform dark green. No matter what species of tree the leaves come from, they always have the same green hue. There are exceptions, of course, and in some seasons, the top of the jungle canopy can be quite colorful. The shimmering of this blanket in the waves of tropical heat rising from the ground is generally the only movement to be seen. When the wind blows, a wave seems to pass over the blanket, and even then, the mass of foliage effectively muffles the sound of the wind. This tangled mass sways in a strong wind (such as a *gust of wind* spell), but that will be all, even during a hurricane.

The vines, or lianas, effectively turn the bulk of the jungle's plant life into a single living entity that is almost impossible to destroy or even cut up easily. Chopping down a tree in the jungle involves more than taking an axe to the trunk; one must also shimmy up it with a sharp knife and cut all the lianas binding it to its neighbors. Otherwise, the tree continues to stand in place. Even dead trees can stand in place for years, held fast by anchoring vines, their trunks decaying and collapsing in chunks.

Characters who want a log to float downriver on must wait longer or work harder than they'd like.

On one occasion in the Amazon basin, an expedition trying to pass through a flooded jungle discovered that their oars were useless because they kept striking submerged buttresses or other obstructions. The lianas, however, were so common and strong that the boat's crew was able to simply reach up and pull their craft through the jungle.

Not even an earthquake makes an impact in the jungle, except on the very edges (often on a river bank). Sanderson describes his experience during an earthquake in the jungles of Nicaragua in December of 1941. There was no wind, yet he and his wife Alma (a fellow scientist) heard a deep pulsing sound. Abruptly, everything was jolted straight up, with the trees shaken "like mop-heads." Then the ground not only became so fluid that they couldn't stand up, but it went up and down in waves just like those of the ocean. The trees and everything else were heaved 5' in the air by each wave, then sank back down again. There were some 80 waves that passed under a nearby river in perfect order and with no loss of speed, repeating the performance in the jungle on the opposite side. There was destruction along the river bank, but in the jungle itself, no trees had fallen, no streams had had their courses diverted or blocked, and there were no cracks in the ground. Any high-level cleric who casts an *earthquake* spell in a jungle should – if the DM describes the scene correctly – have a sudden feeling of puniness and inadequacy.

Plant life in the jungle can grow to enormous size. Common temperate zone flowers such as violets and daisies grow to such an extent that they actually develop woody trunks and effectively become fragrant shade trees. Some of the vines grow as large around as a man's thigh, and the tangled roots of the largest trees can get to the height of regular trees themselves.

Sanderson describes seeing trees 40'-50' in height, growing in the crotch of an even larger tree, nearly a hundred feet off the ground. The trees are wide as well as tall, with some branches so thick you could park a jeep on them. He mentions one 200' tall tree in Belize that was so thick it took 24 men standing with outstretched arms to ring it thoroughly.

Other trees have buttress roots running 50' and more away from the trunk,

(another reason why earthquakes and the like don't have much of an impact in the jungle). Those roots can be 2"-3" thick, up to 20" high, and are solid wood. For more weirdness, some trees have a half dozen slender "stilt roots" that lift the trunk completely clear of the ground.

If a DM wants to put plant monsters in the jungle, enlarged versions of real carnivorous plants such as sundews, pitcher plants, and Venus fly-traps are obvious choices. They can also throw an extra scare in an exploring party, which may assume that someone is magically enlarging the local foliage.

After reading the above, you're probably thinking that the undergrowth in the jungle must be absolutely impenetrable. Not so; the tall trees block out so much of the light that small ground-based plants don't have much of a chance. The floor of a true jungle has little or no undergrowth, certainly far less than in a temperate forest.

This is great if you're just passing through, but murder on a halfling trying for concealment. Most limbs start growing out of the trunks at a point higher than human hands can reach, so climbing for cover may also be out of the question. The undergrowth is all but impenetrable on the edges of the jungle, especially when on a river bank, but this mass may be no more than 10' deep. Still, it can take several hours to cut through. Few people penetrate the jungles because they struggle with this outer layer for a while and then give up, assuming the entire jungle is like this.

In many ways, travel among the branches can be safer and more convenient than on the ground. The branches are so thick that one can climb and even walk along them. If there are no lianas low enough to grip, however, PCs will have a problem reaching even the lowest branches.

The vines themselves can be climbed and traveled along hand-over-hand, but one is unlikely to find a liana simply hanging loose at one end for swinging convenience à la Tarzan.

If a liana is dangling loose like that, then it's probably dying and may also be loose at the other end. When a PC puts his full weight on it, the next thing his player does may well be to argue with the DM about falling damage.

Not all vines are smooth, and most of the trouble with jungle vegetation should consist of the vines coming down and smacking one in the face, raising welts, or even forming a natural noose around

one's neck. Other vines have concealed thorns or spikes (some barbed) inside them, and any would-be Tarzans can expect to suffer 1d4 or 1d6 hp damage to their hands if they grab them. A few spikes are even coated with anti-coagulants to keep your blood from clotting. On the other hand, vines store fluids in them ranging from water to poison, including a good many natural glues and medicines.

For a final bit of jungle color, consider the ribbon vines, which are shaped just like ribbons. One type is 2' wide, but only  $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick. How long do they get? Who knows. In Surinam, members of the Forestry Department came upon the base of one and tried to follow it to the growing tip, but they gave up in disgust after traveling hundreds of yards. If your characters try the same thing, who knows what they'll find?

It should be obvious that in the jungle the spell *charm plant* can be just as big a party-killer as *fireball*. If you can catch a hostile group, such as a war party of Huroola amazons or lizard men, among the lianas, let 'em have it! Remember the increased size of jungle plants; the damage that animated plants cause in temperate campaigns should be magnified several times here.

## Animal life

Lions do not inhabit true jungles, despite what Hollywood would have you believe. Lions live on the grassy savannas (plains) and are even colored for it. Those cats that do live in the jungle, like the jaguar, tiger, and leopard, have striped or spotted coats to provide camouflage.

Elephants may push their way through jungles, and there may be occasional small herds of wild cattle, such as the (possibly extinct) kouprey of southeast Asia, but in general, the jungle has no herbivores larger than wild boars: forest hogs in Africa, capybaras in Latin America, and tapirs in both Latin America and Asia. Asia also has the babirusa, a piglike beast with upward-curving tusks that looks like it stepped out of either a *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM*® book or a paleontology text. Most deer and antelope that live in the jungle are quite small, ranging in size from that of a poodle to half the size of a donkey. Exceptions include the bushbuck and bongo (a pair of African antelopes) as well as the short-necked giraffe called the okapi. This last is quite rare, as are the Javan and Sumatran rhinos that wan-

der in and out of Asian jungles, sticking near the edges, especially the river banks.

Next to the "lions and tigers" idea, another misconception about jungles is that they are crawling with snakes. Oddly enough, snakes of all types are less abundant in jungles than in most other types of terrain in the tropics, including deserts and bush country. This goes for reptiles in general. Adjust your encounter tables accordingly. On the other hand, feel free to go overboard with amphibians such as frogs and toads. These creatures are superabundant in most jungles, and most are tree-climbers. Characters climbing a tree might find themselves literally jumped by a swarm of small carnivorous frogs that probably lived in a pool of rainwater held in some hollow crotch. Even insect pests like mosquitoes are somewhat less abundant in the jungle than elsewhere, and you might get along quite well if you don't shine a light to attract them. If you do, consider yourselves warned.

If you have an old *DUNGEON MASTER*® Guide from the original edition of the AD&D game, you will find on page 47 a small table entitled "Frequency of Encounter Chance Time Checks," which shows whether to roll for outdoor encounters in certain types of terrain at particular times of the day and night. Sanderson almost seems to have anticipated this sort of thing, for he reveals that the animals of the jungle all have a specific schedule for finding food; not just day or night, but at particular times of the day and night. The following was found to be true of the animal life of all jungles, no matter what continent they were on, and can thus be adapted to any game system for a nice touch of realism.

The immediate predawn period of half-light sees a great deal of activity; the early risers among the day animals start to work while the late night creatures get in a final bit of hunting. Note that since the trees and their foliage block out much of the sunlight, nocturnal animals can hunt on the ground for as long as an hour after sunrise. In the immediate post-dawn, the night animals go to bed while more day animals show up; the traffic is so great that postdawn is the favorite time for native hunters in the jungle. Most of the ground-dwelling animals, incidentally, are nocturnal, so someone wandering around on the ground in broad daylight won't see much but a few glimpses of squirrels, monkeys, and birds in the trees.

As the day progresses, the animals – all of them – move about for a few hours and then have a siesta a bit before noon. The amount of light seems to determine the length of the siesta. On sunny days, the stillness (even birds and insects are quiet) lasts until dusk, while the animals resume their activity much sooner on cloudy days. The evening animals and day beasts share the stage during this period, which on sunny days, lasts from 5:00 P.M. to an hour after sundown. Activity goes on in the early night, then stops around 11:00 or 11:30, and this new cessation of activity lasts until about 4:00 A.M. Again, native hunters know this so well that they simply won't bother going out during this time. Then activity starts up again, and runs once more into the predawn period.

Both moisture and darkness have an effect on animal activity. Cloudy weather, as well as a steady rain, brings out all the animals in swarms, and if you have to go slogging through the jungle under these conditions, you can expect lots of animal encounters to add to your misery, especially at night. Speaking of which, nocturnal animals love dark nights, and the nights with the least activity are those clear nights that have plenty of moonlight. Since this also makes it easier to travel at night, PCs moving about at this time have the twin advantages of good visibility and fewer chances of a hostile encounter.

DMs should note that animals are at their most reckless from 4:00 A.M. to dawn. It's as if the day animals just getting up are still groggy while the night hunters are rushing desperately about to get a final morsel. If any animals on your encounter tables can react with either hostility or fear, or simply blunder into the party, they are most likely to interact with the PCs (as opposed to fleeing) during this time period. Sanderson relates how, in Central America, he and his wife had inadvertently pitched their tent on a natural migration route (see below), to be rudely awakened in the morning by a family of hog-sized tapirs that simply blundered into the tent as if it weren't there. At no other time of the day or night would any animal have done such a thing. So, DMs rejoice! Your predilection to hit the party at dawn – even by unintelligent animals – when they are sleepiest, now has scientific verification.

As mentioned above, jungles have definite travel paths and migration routes for their animal denizens, in the treetops as well as on the ground. Pitch

your camp there, and you will get plenty of company, especially the small stuff: insects, rodents, monkeys, etc. Way back in *DRAGON® Magazine* issue #174, in my article "Defeating More with Less," I pointed out how much fun the DM can have in harassing the party with small, 1 hp animals such as monkeys and crows, particularly when they steal small but valuable items such as gemstones and magical rings. If your players don't wise up and have their characters shift their campsite, hit them with a nonstop succession of nuisance raids until they get the message.

If a PC is on a pathway, he can expect an encounter of some sort every round in a time period when the animals are about. Of course, the majority of these encounters will be with small animals, with no chance of combat.

Sanderson discovered that you can actually mingle with the animals on the pathways, sauntering up slowly and unobtrusively, neither rushing them nor standing still. Predators lie quietly in wait for prey, so any creature that is motionless is perceived as a potential threat, while one that is rushing is "obviously" attacking. But if one goes with the flow, moving slowly with and among the animals, one can stay with them for as long as one likes without causing alarm.

This last phenomenon has adventure potential. A scout out looking for prey can saunter into a herd of game animals and drift with them on their daily route, leaving slashes on the trees or other signs to show the follow-up hunters where to go. The hunters advance post-haste, and the attack is made. Of course, if you're the scout, you have to accompany the animals all the time to pull this off, which means going everywhere they go. If the animals cross a stream, you cross a stream. If they are pigs, or have the same piglike habit of wallowing in a mudhole along the way, you wallow in a mudhole with them. And if human (including demihuman and humanoid) or animal predators are waiting up ahead, you walk right into their ambush along with the game animals. While the DM is slowing up the main party with hostile encounters, you won't run short of interesting things to do.

The savannahs will yield much better hunting than the jungle proper. Game diversity between the jungle and the Savannah is a case of quality vs. quantity. While it is true that tropical jungles have the greatest variety of living things, each individual species comes in relatively

small numbers. (By contrast, plains and savannahs have the largest numbers of animals.) The jungles have no vast herds of tapirs or capybaras equivalent to the bison and zebra herds of North American plains and African savannahs.

## People in the jungle

Few races of people actually live in our jungles, and those that do usually don't have to share the environment with other peoples. Thus, most jungle folk tend to be cheerful and carefree types, due to both safety from tribal warfare and their own lack of desire for material possessions that the jungle itself cannot provide.

As stated, people who live near the jungle will never enter it if they can avoid it. In Malatra, for example, the Savannah-dwelling Simbara tribe should stick to the wide open spaces, only entering the jungle proper under the most severe necessity or provocation.

It's not just a matter of native superstition, either. Sanderson points out that in the Pacific Theater during WWII, neither the Americans nor the Japanese entered jungles if they could help it, despite both coming from modern, civilized nations. (The Japanese entered more often, but large-scale jungle operations in places like New Guinea and India invariably turned into expensive disasters.) Troops literally preferred to be bombed and strafed in the open rather than enter the dreaded jungle.

Sanderson cites the experiences of British Lt. Col. F. Spencer Chapman, whose unit was driven into the jungles of Malaysia when the Japanese invaded in WWII. For the next three years, he learned to live in the jungle while working with local guerrillas. Of his original unit, however, only the officers survived. Outsiders seem to have some problem with dealing with jungles, with the less educated suffering more than their better educated brethren. All of the enlisted men died of hardships (and psychosomatic ills of some sort, the point seems to be), while the noncoms lasted far longer. The best-educated men, the regular officers, were the only survivors. Chapman wrote about his experiences in a book entitled *The Jungle Is Neutral*.

The above is more useful to DMs whose parties enter the jungle from outside, from more civilized campaigns. One can easily imagine first hirelings, and then henchmen, wasting away and dying, often just giving up, in the gloomy jungle, while the intrepid PCs, who are

both heroes and directly controlled by their players, soldier on. In a wartime adventure, when the PCs' unit and both friendly and enemy NPC-led units enter, Chapman's experience should be repeated. The lesser officers of a military unit are more likely to be fleshed out as full-scale NPCs than common soldiers are; now you have an excuse to stop there and just let the "upper crust" be involved in the role-playing encounters.

## Weapons

In the "Heros of Malatra" article appearing in *Polyhedron Newszine* issue #102, where classes, proficiencies, equipment, etc. for the LIVING JUNGLE was listed, it is stated that for simplicity's sake, weapons made of wood, bone, stone, etc. would be equal to that of steel weapons from all other AD&D game worlds (the exact opposite approach to the DARK SUN® world of Athas, where wooden, stone, and bone weapons get their own individual modifiers). This is not so far out as it sounds; certainly it is not without precedent in human history on Earth.

For plant materials, the Pygmies of Africa make their knives and other cutting tools of various hardwoods, while the Negritos of the Malay Peninsula make theirs of bamboo. In both cases, the knives may be honed to literal razor sharpness. As regards stone weapons, Spanish conquistadores in Florida found that the flint-tipped arrows of the Seminole Indians could pierce their steel breastplates, while for the first few blows at least, the obsidian blades of the Aztec sword-club, the *maquahuitl*, were sharper than their steel counterparts in Spanish hands. These latter weapons thus had a better chance of cutting, with a glancing blow, the quilted armor of cotton padding worn by the warriors of Mexico. Unless they are of high-quality steel, the cutting weapons of most AD&D campaigns may be less likely than the "local talent" to cut through the soft armor types of Malatra.

Ivan Sanderson made an interesting observation on one factor of the superior hunting abilities of native hunters armed with native weapons, compared with the white visitors. The outsiders had guns made of metal, which in smelted form simply does not exist in the wild. Thus, they have an alien odor that the animals immediately picked up on, and this odor is stronger when the gun has been cleaned with lubricant oils. Most outsiders from other AD&D campaigns won't

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**NOT for the WEAK at HEART**



have guns, but they do have weapons and armor of metal, and they have to use oils or other lubricants to keep their equipment from rusting.

If you allow your player characters to get their hands on metal weapons, and quickly regret it, this gives you an excellent opportunity to force the PCs to choose between their nifty new weapons or tribal membership. If a PC goes hunting with a metal weapon, or even if he merely has a metal dagger as a self-defense backup while hunting with blowgun or bow, the animals should have a much greater chance of detecting and avoiding him. Thus, metal weapons will be at least as much a hindrance as a help in the wild, where virtually all the adventuring will take place. And if your PC can't catch his share of game, he won't be pulling his own weight in the tribe, thus endangering the entire community.

Consider this reaction: Those overly-adventurous PCs have brought back strange new weapons of unholy materials quite foreign to the jungle. They're no good in the hunt; it's as if their owners have a signal beacon on them, warning all game away. They do have increased deadliness in combat, but since you can't get close enough to game animals to use them for hunting, they're really only good for killing fellow tribesmen. Obviously, therefore, such fiendish devices are the work of evil spirits, designed specifically to spread human misery. If your PCs insist on keeping them, they may find themselves faced with a lynch mob or a tribal civil war, whose very existence will tend to reinforce the critics' point. If this attitude prevails, the PCs may never be able to carry or use metallic weapons and armor in the jungle.

All in all, the jungle is an excellent place for adventuring, even when non-magical and nonmonstrous Nature is the only enemy. A thorough understanding of the jungle, gained through careful study of books like Sanderson's, will enable you, the DM, to provide your players with a campaign setting they will never forget.

Gregory W. Detwiler lives in Williamsburg, Pennsylvania. He has never lived in a jungle.

**GAMES WORKSHOP**

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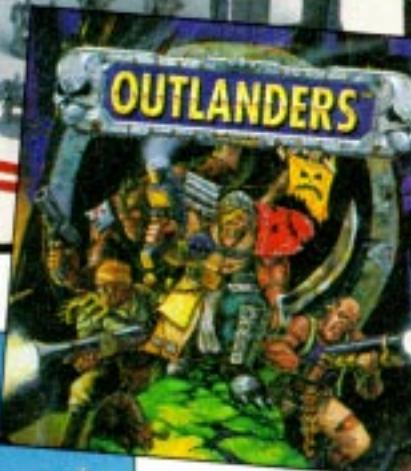


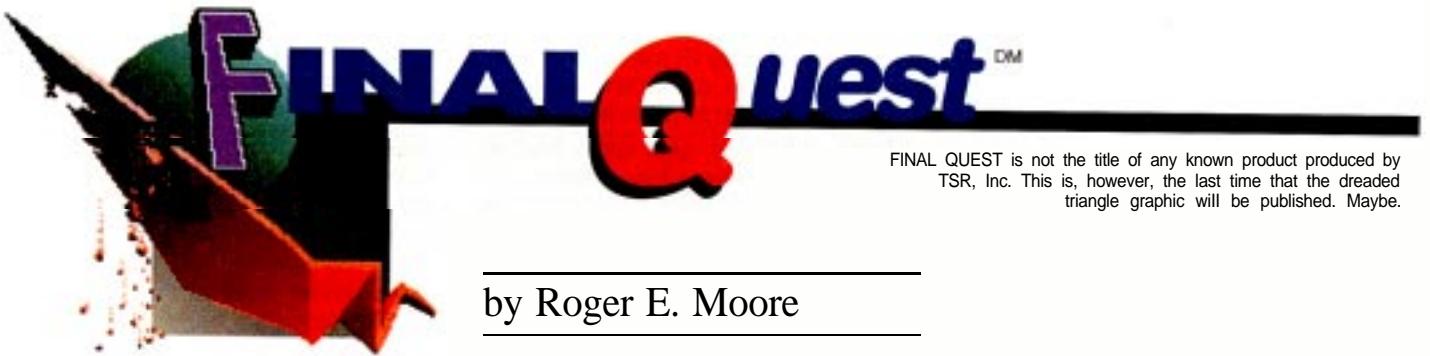
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FINAL QUEST is not the title of any known product produced by TSR, Inc. This is, however, the last time that the dreaded triangle graphic will be published. Maybe.

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by Roger E. Moore

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## They deserved it

**S**ince the glory days long ago when I first learned to play the AD&D® game, I've seen a lot of would-be heroes (some of them mine) get bumped off in very peculiar and dramatic ways, like the luckless wizardess who was caught by three beholder eyes at once and was death-rayed, turned to stone, and disintegrated before the rest of the party could even scream, "Shut the door!" But this is really a hero's death, a legendary death, the kind of gosh-darn-it-all kind of thing you come to expect when you wander into an old ruined evil wizard's tower unannounced, which this party had just done.

And there was the paladin who went on a solo adventure into the first level of one DM's dungeon, where he was immediately confronted by 10-100 stirges and a carrion crawler wearing a *scarab of insanity*, which caused the paladin to fall into a 60' pit trap full of spikes with green slime on the bottom. I am not making this up, though I wish I were. No one held this disaster against the player, since we all knew he had been gaming with a notorious killer DM who once had a red dragon breath fire a quarter of a mile long and cause 500 hp damage (half with a saving throw). Still, we all secretly thought the paladin's player should have had enough sense to game with someone else, so maybe it was a tiny little bit his own fault.

No, what this article is about are those really embarrassing, boneheaded ways in which player characters croak, events that live in gaming legends that you don't ever want to hear about again because it was your fighter who shouted a battle cry and jumped off the dock in

full plate armor to swim out to the pirate ship, which caused the pirates and the other PCs in your group to stop fighting and look over the side of the ship in astonishment at the dwindling trail of air bubbles your character left behind as he sank and drowned. It was your lawful-good cleric who tried to summon Zeus – who wasn't even your cleric's deity – to cast a *raise dead* spell on a deceased party member – a lawful-evil assassin, at that – and who then tried to summon Demogorgon to distract the angry Zeus, resulting in your cleric's being turned into a cockroach and stepped on. It was your thief who – ah, but you get the point.

Let's do a countdown of the 10 worst possible ways (in my humble opinion) in which your character could have his block knocked off. Conflicting views, so long as they are sensitive and insightful, may be sent to this magazine, but don't expect me to read them.

### 10. Killed by the treasure after the adventure is over

I regret to say that one of my characters was part of a group of adventurers that was completely destroyed by the treasure they had gained during a dangerous adventure that everyone had managed to survive. This was 15 years ago, and the other players and I still talk about it to this day. My centaur got the *cursed spear of berserking*, which resulted in his immediate demise at the hands of the rest of the party – nothing personal, of course. Another character drank a poisoned potion, thinking it might be useful, and the wizard activated the *brazier of sleep smoke*, which had the expected con-

sequences. I do not remember how the other two members of the group died; I think one of them tried to attack the fire elemental while it was turning the wizard into crunchy toast, or else he opened the *flask of curses*. No matter. We were saved from total humiliation only by the knowledge that everyone was killed by the treasure, so we weren't so inclined to torment one another about it as we were simply amazed by it.

### 9. Killed even before the adventure has really started.

I am mortified once more to report that this happened to one of my characters, a 1st-level wizard with two hit points, who was struck by the very first goblin arrow fired at the party not one minute after we arrived at the old mansion we were going to explore. Everyone thought this was quite amusing and they laughed and laughed about it until their own characters entered the mansion and ran right into the lich. The DM thought that part was pretty funny, and I confess that I did, too.

### 8. Killed 14 times in succession by enraged fellow party members who lined up and used a *rod of resurrection* on the victim so that each party member could claim to have killed the character, after the player has attempted for the third time in a row to slay the party for no particular reason.

In his favor, the player said his PC was an anti-paladin and was supposed to do things like this, but it was, after all, the third time this player had brought in an anti-paladin and had tried to kill the

entire party. Following the above action, the other players asked the anti-paladin's player never to bring another one of his anti-paladin characters to the game again as long as he lived, but he did, which led immediately to the next entry.

#### **7. Killed at long range by enraged fellow party members who merely noted that the approaching victim was wearing black plate armor.**

One of the halflings in the group used a sling to hit the correctly identified anti-paladin with a huge boulder *polymorphed* into a pebble, which turned back into a huge boulder again once it made contact with the *dispel magic* field put out by the unlucky anti-paladin's *unholy sword*. "That's okay," said the player of the anti-paladin, "my guy's got a *ring of regeneration* on!" "That's okay with us, too," said the party leader, after learning from the Dungeon Master that the squashed anti-paladin could not escape from beneath the boulder for at least 10,000 years. He wasn't dead, but it hardly mattered.

#### **6. Killed after deliberately interrupting a hill giant who was taking a shower in a waterfall.**

I should add that the character in question here was a fearless halfling fighter wearing plate-mail armor, which reduced his movement rate to a waddle. This halfling also insisted on yelling insults at the giant at close range even as the rest of the group was making a panicked retreat. The giant took care of the problem in one melee round. The rest of the party later slew the hill giant with concentrated missile fire, then went looking for the remains of the halfling. "Can we raise him from the dead?" one player asked. "He looks like a large can of tomato paste that's been run over by a tractor trailer," I replied. "Forget it," said the group, and left him there.

#### **5. Killed as a result of killing a frog.**

I have to explain that the character here was a 1st-level wizard who cast a *find familiar* spell and got a frog, which he didn't want. He killed the frog with a *magic missile* and promptly died from the magical backlash. The player failed to read the part in the *find familiar* spell about the wizard taking damage if his familiar is killed, so it can't be said he was role-playing his wizard very well anyway.

#### **4. Killed by deliberately crashing one spacecraft into another space-**

#### **craft in the belief that a head-on collision at 40 kilometers per second would result only in minor injuries.**

This wasn't in the AD&D game, of course, but I ran an SF game in which this actually happened and felt I had to include it somewhere here. There's not much you can say about this, except that basic physics should be made mandatory in high school.

#### **3. Killed after jumping into a 100' deep pit while trying to drink a potion of levitation that was for some reason left attached to the characters belt.**

This happened while a large and very high-level character group was exploring the infamous Tomb of Horrors (from the venerable AD&D module of the same name). The character would have been just another statistic given the huge casualties inflicted on the group, what with things like an 18th-level monk being squashed a millimeter thick by a juggernaut and a 20th-level cleric being vaporized by a cursed crown, but the player had clearly said that his wizard was going to jump first, then take the flask from his belt, open it, and drink it. He repeated this twice. "Well... okay," said the DM – me – and that was that.

#### **2. Killed by a flumph.**

I cannot, under any circumstances, think of a more horribly embarrassing death than being killed by a monster that was elected by some gaming groups in the early 1980s as the Most Stupid and Useless Fantasy Monster Ever Invented. It was, interestingly, the only lawful-good monster in the *FIEND FOLIO®* tome, and it was the only critter that fit no ecology at all and had no reason to exist. Having a PC killed by one would have been a mark of shame that no player could have ever erased, no matter how many tarasques his heroes killed later. ("Hey, are you the guy whose wizard was killed by a flumph? Whoa, you must be mental!") Luckily, few flumphs ever appeared to cause such humiliation because the DMs were too embarrassed to use them. I have never heard of a death caused in this manner, but I felt obligated to include this possibility simply for its shock value.

I must say, in all fairness, that the flumph has been greatly improved in its latest incarnation in the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Annual*, Volume Two (now available in your local game store, plug plug plug!). The picture of it on page 58

looks good, it has a reasonable place in an ecology, and if you think of flumphs as confused little aliens that a lost spell-jammer dumped out of its cargo hold, they even make sense. But I would never, ever, want to have a character killed by one. I would be forced by crushing shame to turn in my *Player's Handbook* and take up golf, and I hate golf.

You know, come to think of it, there might be one thing worse than having a character killed by a flumph, and that is having a character...

#### **1. Killed by a garlic-bread golem.**

This looks like something only a pathologically degenerate DM would dream up and use against an innocent party, but in my own defense I will say that though I did put a garlic-bread golem in an adventure and tried very hard but unsuccessfully to kill someone with it, at least I was not the one who created the monster, which I found in an old collection of bad fantasy monsters from the late 1970s. Maybe it is just as well that no characters were killed by that garlic-bread golem, since the players were all in the U.S. Army, with access to things like main battle tanks, and people can take only so much humiliation.

Then, too, I was the DM who sent one group of adventurers to an alternate universe where the adventurers' point man tripped and fell into Winnie the Pooh's heffalump trap ("Piglet, look! I've caught something!"), but alas, no one died here either, which would have been great, though the players did discuss some unpleasant aspects of my own demise in very serious tones. There is a moral here, I am sure. Perhaps I should take up golf.

### **Famous last words**

Many, many issues ago, a number of letters and articles appeared in *DRAGON® MAGAZINE* listing some "famous last words" that characters might utter just before their characters get killed by the Dungeon Master (e.g., "Well, forget you, I'm attacking. What's Odin's armor class?"). Creating a new list of these tidbits for this issue sounded like lots of fun. After mulling the topic over, though, a nasty possibility occurred to me: What famous last words might a character utter just before he gets killed by everyone else in his party?

'So, when I pushed the red button on the artifact, it drained six points from

everyone's highest ability score but mine? What happens if I push it now?"

"But there's no way you guys could know that my ninj- uh, my samurai poisoned your other characters' drinks!"

"This is pretty funny, but I just figured out that the way the experience-point system in the DMG works, my wizard is worth enough to bring everyone in the party up at least one level. I'm glad we're all friends here."

"Look, I didn't ask for a *reincarnation* spell, and I don't want to be a bugbear! I want a second chance right now!"

"Here's my barbarian. He's seven feet three inches tall, has smoldering blue eyes and jet-black hair, his muscles are like steel cables, and his name is Buttons."

"About time you all showed up. What did Strahd want to see you all about that took so long?"

"Guys, look! I found Stormbringer in the chest! I've got the Stormbringer!

Elric's sword! And here's the *Wand of Orcus*! I've got 'em both, and they're mine, all mine!"

"I'm not sure I should be traveling with you people. My *holy sword* says that everyone in this group is an assassin except me".

"Oh, I killed the barmaid because I need just one more experience point to make sixth level. Was she your fiancee or something?"

"I'm the only one here who saved against the mind flayer's *mass domination*? Everyone else is its slave? Cool!"

"I'll go ahead and put the ring on. Anything happen? Okay, I try jumping off a rock. Nothing? I toss a pebble at myself. Nothing? I try walking over a puddle. Nothing? Okay, maybe its a *ring of regeneration*. You guys know how we can test it and see if it is?"

"Man, this City of GREYHAWK® campaign bites. You people should dump this stupid world. It's dead anyway. Let's get a Realms campaign going. I had a

character once who was Elminster's nephew, and he—"

I'm afraid that's all the time we have for this sensitive and insightful look at a tragic problem — intra-party killing — that has brought joy and laughter to so many gamers the world over. Thank you, and good luck. I hear Zeus has been asking about your cleric.

*Roger E. Moore is a former editor of DRAGON® MAGAZINE and still does various, highly secret projects for TSR, Inc.*



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# Forget your towel - do you know where your blanket is?

by Spike Y. Jones

Along with the all-important swords, scrolls, torches, and money-pouches on the average fantasy PC's equipment list, there are usually a few other items put there just to spend a few coppers and because they felt "proper." Sadly, while these items appear on everyone's character sheets, few gamers ever make use of their tallow candles, holy symbols (wooden), small mirrors, and sprigs of wolvesbane. Yet these "extraneous" items can be among the most versatile and important pieces of adventuring equipment, if only players would realize how to utilize them.

Case in point: many years ago in my AD&D® campaign, Malshazzit the Mage (although "the Apprentice" would have been more accurate) was traveling alone, on foot, through dense wilderness, when he encountered a ravenous giant beetle. Realizing that his one spell, *affect normal fires*, would be of little use in this situation, and that his pair of daggers were no match for the beetle, he cast about for another weapon. Then the player (Mike Sinardi) noticed the blanket on his character sheet.

Bravely (or foolishly, depending on who narrates the story), Malshazzit dived at the beetle and, with an exceptionally lucky roll, wrapped the cloth around the beetle's head, blinding it long enough for him to work his way around to the beetle's back where he could then plunge his daggers into the beetle's vitals, killing an opponent that I, as DM, had expected him to run away from. There must be, I said to him then, over a hundred uses for a simple blanket. The following are the rest:

2. (Dry): As a simple disguise, such as a makeshift robe or, with a hole cut in it, a poncho.

3. (Dry): As a complex disguise involving cutting, sewing, dying or staining (think *The Great Escape*).

4. (Dry): As padding for use under a disguise to create the illusion of pregnancy, obesity, or muscularity depending on the distribution of material.

## 101 Uses for a BLANKET (WET)

5. (Wet): As a makeshift weapon; wet it to add weight and swing on a rope. Damage is minimal and subduing only, but if it's all you've got...

6. (Wet): As part of a trap; water adds some weight and while it won't be as effective as a net, it can hamper something long enough for you to get close and thump it.

7. (Dry): Work a bunch of threads loose to use as kindling for a fire.

8. (Dry): As "firewood" after #7.

9. (Dry): To make smoke signals. Of course, for the signals to be properly understood, a code has to be worked out in advance; but, even if one isn't, smoke signals provide unambiguous signs of where you are in case you're lost and need to help rescuers

find you. And they might scare away people who interpret them as evidence of a stronger fighting force than one miserable mage alone in the woods.

10. (Dry): As a thread-source for tying fishing lures, marking paths through labyrinths, etc.

11. (Dry): To hide things. Dark blankets work best in the woods or at night, while light ones are best in the desert.

12. (Dry): As a fake ghost. White blankets work best, but it'll take more than just a single sheet flapping in the breeze to scare a hardened orcish hunting party; better practice your spooky noises as well.

13. (Dry): As spell material components or substitutes; check the *Players' Handbook*. There must be some.

14. (Wet): Depending on the material, it may stink when wet, so it could be used to attract or repel creatures with sensitive noses. Some careful experimentation will reveal which.

15. (Dry): As the world's worst pipeweed. Give it to a "friend," or use it to drive away smell-sensitive people or creatures.

16. (Dry): As the key component of a kite. The blanket had better be thin, or the winds strong, for this one.

17. (Dry): As emergency bandages and tourniquets. Best used for tying clean bandages to the wound, as they are highly unlikely to be sterile, especially if already used.

18. (Wet or Dry [depending on personal preferences]): As a strangling cord. This works best with thin blankets.

19. (Wet): For towel-snapping. The victim's



skin must be exposed if this is going to cause even minimal subdual damage, but even if not, it still makes an interesting noise and can be a shock.

**20.** (Wet): As a subdual club. Try tying a handful of iron spikes inside to give it some heft.

**21.** (Dry): For concealing secret messages. You can do this by inserting scraps of cloth (better than paper, as the texture will be correct) into a lining, if there is one. It's more likely to be prepared well in advance by weaving a coded message into it during its manufacture, with or without the knowledge of the bearer.

**22.** (Wet): As a seed bed to grow grass on. What you want the grass for is your concern, but see #13 and #15.

**23.** (Wet): As temporary protection for running through walls of fire and the like.

**24.** (Dry): As a throw rug. Primarily appropriate indoors, but a blanket can be used in the wilderness as a welcome mat in front of a tent, or as a rug inside. If an enemy steps on your "rug," you can turn it into a weapon by pulling it out from under him.

**25.** (Wet): It'll conduct a *shocking grasp* so that the caster doesn't have to touch the behemoth in the suit of plate mail. Either lay it on the ground to be stepped on, casting the spell from nearby concealment, or use it as a wet whip, casting the spell just before. The damage is reduced by 1 point either way, and the blanket may be singed in the process (see #15 for discussion of the smell).

**26.** (Dry): To wrap clanking metal bits to muffle the sounds they'd make during a stealthy approach or retreat.

**27.** (Dry): To chop up and feed to a cow; they can digest just about anything.

**28.** (Dry): Combine it with a staff, an empty scabbard and some other odd pieces to make a scarecrow.

**29.** (Dry): To make imposing shadows, with the afore-mentioned staves, etc. to give it a framework and to move it around menacingly.

**30.** (Wet or Dry): For putting out fires.

**31.** (Dry): As a makeshift canvas for anything from a sign or shield blazon to a fine painting. Unfortunately, the warmer and fuzzier the blanket is, the more difficult it will be to paint on.

**32.** (Wet – with oil, not water): As makeshift sailcloth. As with #31, heavier blankets don't necessarily make better sails. Oiling is necessary to make a lighter blanket airtight.

**33.** (Wet): As an abrasive scrubbing material. (Some of the blankets I've had

to use have been about as scratchy as steel wool and almost as tough.)

**34.** (Dry): As a polishing cloth. (Some of the blankets I've used have been a trifle softer.) You want to look your best when you're presented to the king, even if its only the king of the goblins.

**35.** (Dry): As the main component of a small tent or lean-to. It may not keep the rain out well, but snow, hail, and wind will be warded off somewhat.

**36.** (Dry): As rope. If only a single blanket is available, it'll have to be a short one, unless the blanket is cut into strips, which can reduce its strength dangerously.

**37.** (Dry): For instant accessorizing! Unlike using it for a disguise, this can be used to enhance ones appearance, not to cover it up.

**38.** (Dry): As a makeshift saddle on a stolen horse.

**39.** (Dry): To keep that stolen horse warm at night in the wilderness.

**40.** (Wet): In a particularly cold climate, mold it into shape and let it freeze to form a makeshift toboggan.

**41.** (Dry): As a summer grass-sliding toboggan.

**42.** (Dry): As a flag. A white blanket can be used to surrender or to call for a parley, or it can be painted or stitched to approximate a real flag. Darker blankets can be made into pirate colors with white paint or stitchery. A plain brown or grey blanket-flag may just foster confusion, or could accidentally be reminiscent of an ogrish battle-banner.

**43.** (Dry): To cover nettles, barbed wire, or other pointy or scratchy impediments. Multiple blankets (or alternating a pair of blankets) can make a pathway. (Also useful at picnics; if the picnic runs long, the blanket can be converted to other uses, such as #35, #45, and #101.)

**44.** (Dry): Wrapped around hands (or other body parts) to prevent rope-burns, or as "armor" before breaking a window with your fist.

**45.** (Dry): Folded repeatedly to form a pillow for sleeping on.

**45.** (Dry): Folded repeatedly to form a pillow which can be used as a silencer for a gun. Of course, this isn't much use in standard fantasy campaigns (although you could use it to muffle screams), and see prior comments about the smell of burning blankets.

**47.** (Dry): As a cape to wave at charging bulls. Despite centuries of tradition and misconception, it's not the color of a matador's cape that enrages the bull, but its movement. Thus, any color blanket

will work, as long as the user remembers to stand aside and let the bull pass through the blanket, not through his own midsection.

**48.** (Wet): In conjunction with some plaster of Paris (or maybe just mud or clay if there's no Paris in your fantasy campaign world) it can be used to wrap and protect fragile dinosaur fossils (or other fragile items such as pottery if dinosaurs are living creatures instead of fossils in the campaign world),

**49.** (Dry): As a decorative wall-hanging (patterned blankets are best), possibly concealing a secret door, a safe, a peephole, a trap, or some other surprise.

**50.** (Dry): As a surface to display portable wares on. Very convenient since the "table" can be easily folded into a carrying sack for those same wares.

**51.** (Dry): To provide some discretion when enjoying a private moment with an attractive royal ward.

**52.** (Dry): Hung over a clothes-line it can form a room divider.

**53.** (Dry): As a unique fortune-telling implement. The adept (or charlatan) could learn to read omens in the folds formed when it is thrown to the ground.

**54.** (Dry): As a gag for a talkative prisoner. If you're not worried about other people hearing the prisoner's cries but you are worried about the possibility of doing him some harm, you can cut off strips to use for ear-plugs.

**55.** (Dry): Filled with gunpowder and various pointy things, with a strip cut off and soaked in a gunpowder solution before being dried to form a wick, it could be used as a relatively weak bomb. In a modern-era setting, if the pointy things are all ordinary household items, the bomb may even be able to pass through an airport x-ray machine without any questions being asked.

**56.** (Dry): As the raw material for any item of clothing if a little scratchiness (or a floral print in a modern-era campaign) isn't going to cause too much discomfort.

**57.** (Dry): To cover the eyes of horses when you don't want them alarmed or distracted by something they may see in front or beside them.

**58.** (Dry): As a fake flying carpet for sale to a gullible novice adventurer (he had better be gullible, because even a mage with a levitation spell will have trouble explaining away the blankets plain, threadbare, and definitely non-magical appearance).

**59.** (Dry): As the primary material component in the manufacture of a real flying carpet. Unfortunately, a poor qual-



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ity blanket will make a poor quality flying carpet.

**60.** (Dry): As a makeshift stretcher, either by holding the corners or by cutting holes along the edges and inserting sturdy poles in them. (The stronger the blanket, the better.)

**61.** (Wet): As cooling headgear in the desert. You'll have to keep re-wetting it as the water evaporates, but remember not to wet it immediately before sunset, as you'll want it dry and warm for those cold desert nights.

**62.** (Dry or Wet): As a source of quick cash. (Use this article as proof that it's highly versatile and worth every copper piece you're demanding.)

**63.** (Dry): Roll it around a broken limb to partially immobilize the injury, or roll it up and then tie the limb to it as a temporary splint.

**64.** (Dry): Folded and tied, it can serve as a sling for that broken arm.

**65.** (Dry): To immobilize an entire person. The easiest way is to use it as rope to tie his hands and feet together, but blanket-knots are notoriously insecure. If the victim is small (such as a baby or a gnome) you can use it as a swaddling cloth, bundling the victim up as tightly as a parcel ready to be mailed.

**66.** (Wet [although Dry is always possible if you're not too concerned about starting a fire]): To conceal a lit lantern (or candle, but again there's that fire hazard). Folding the blanket a couple of times will allow a thin blanket to work as well as a thick one, and lifting and lowering the blanket repeatedly can turn the lantern into a signalling device.

**67.** (Dry [although not when you're done with it]): As a towel to dry yourself off after a swim or to sop up spilled water, oil, or blood.

**68.** (Wet): Cut into strips and tied to a pole as a mop.

**69.** (Dry): With people holding it around the edge, to throw a person standing in its center upward. Although normally only seen used this way as an entertainment for children (or Frankie and Anette in bad 1950s beach movies), it could also be used to throw a halving over a wall.

**70.** (Dry): Rolled up to smuggle some hidden treasure like an Egyptian princess or some really good salami (with results depending a good deal on the size and thickness of the blanket).

**71.** (Dry): As a pot-holder or (if wet) as an oven mitt.

**72.** (Dry): As a method of transmitting diseases like smallpox to a the indige-

nous population of a region your country is attempting to expand into.

**73.** (Dry): As an entertainment device. If the blanket is white you can set up a lamp in front of it and make shadow-animals on it, and if it's white and thin, you can put the lamp behind it and put on a shadow-puppet play. (A plain, white blanket will make a good screen for a slide or movie projector in a modern-era campaign.)

**74.** (Dry): As improvised clothing for use after swallowing a growth potion (the size of the blanket and the modesty of the user determining what items of clothing are improvised).

**75.** (Dry): To make toys for children. A little cutting and sewing, some colored thread and a few buttons or some paint can quickly turn a blanket into a (somewhat plain) stuffed animal or rag doll.

**76.** (Dry): As a portable checkers/chess set. If the blanket already has a checkered pattern all that has to be done is to cut out and label the pieces.

**77.** (Dry): Either suspended on a frame or stiffened with shellac, to make lightweight, movable, Japanese-style wall panels.

**78.** (Dry): As a source of all-purpose rags.

**79.** (Dry): As a burial shroud.

**80.** (Dry): As a curtain or door.

**81.** (Dry): To turn a properly-arranged pile of boxes or bricks into a chair, couch, or bed. Multiple blankets are needed if you want the furniture to be comfortable, but if you're just using it to conceal stuff from casual inspection, you just need enough to give the furniture a less "angular" appearance.

**82.** (Dry [but not for long]): As diapers.

**83.** (Dry): As writing "paper." (You'll want a fine-weave blanket and thick, non-running ink for this.)

**84.** (Dry): As a relatively clean surface to perform surgery or deliver a baby on.

**85.** (Dry): As the covering over a pit trap. It won't be very convincing in the wilderness or in a rock-hewn dungeon, but in a house (over a trap door) or with numerous cushions and rugs in a tent (over a jar of acid or snakes buried in the sand), it has a chance of blending into the surroundings.

**86.** (Dry): As quilting material to turn one blanket into another blanket. This may sound like a waste of time, but you make the quilt out of the multiple remnants of blankets you've nearly destroyed for all of the other uses.

**87.** (Dry): Tie the corners together to make a bag to hold things in (thicker

ones are better for struggling things with claws).

**88.** (Dry): As an apron (if kept wet, a thick blanket can be used in lieu of leather for a blacksmith's apron).

**89.** (Dry): As a dust or sand filter in a desert wind-storm.

**90.** (Dry): As a pasta strainer, or to filter some of the grit out of muddy water.

**91.** (Wet): As a water-lifting device. Lower the blanket (either by a corner or on a rope, depending on the distance to the water) into a deep well or from a ledge overhanging a stream, and then raise the water-logged "bucket" for use.

**92.** (Wet): As a counterweight on a thrown rope, to take it over a wall, for instance.

**93.** (Dry): Cut-up and painted, or strung along with berries and popcorn as festive decorations.

**94.** (Dry): As a dust-cover or drop-cloth to prevent nice things or delicate alchemical equipment getting messed up.

**95.** (Dry): As packing material, either shredded or whole, for boxes and bags full of delicate loot.

**96.** (Wet): As a fish-catching device; either braid threads to make a fishing line (hook not included), or cut a few small water-escapement holes in it and stretch it across a stream as a net.

**97.** (Dry): As the source of lots of little cloth strips, useable to tie bags (made from the same blanket, naturally) closed, to make ribbons, to tie weapons and tools to a belt, or as bootlaces.

**98.** (Dry): As a soft and warm liner for a pair of boots. Especially useful for padding a pair of over-sized hand-me-downs until you can grow into them.

**99.** (Dry and threadbare [which your blanket may well be after all you've done to it so far]): Hung up as mosquito-netting.

**100.** (Dry): As a source of fibers to reinforce mud bricks, as something to stick plaster, stucco, or concrete on when repairing a major hole in a wall, or as a texture mat to make interesting patterns on the plaster, stucco or concrete.

**101.** (Dry): I'd almost forgotten this one: as something to sleep on or under!



*Spike Y. Jones is a long-time contributor to DRAGON® MAGAZINE.*

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With thanks to Mike Sinardi, my wife, the ladies at the bingo hall, and the folks in the *Alarums & Excursions* APA.

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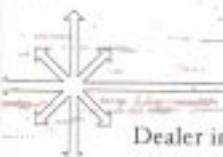
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Evansville	Hobby Town	812-477-7200
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Ft. Wayne	Phoenix Rising	219-485-6807
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Lafayette	Hi Octane Hobbies	317-742-2045
Merriville	Hobby Town	219-736-0255
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South Bend	GriFFon Bookstore	219-287-5533
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Warsaw	Arcadia Hobbies	219-269-7924
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Junction City	Book & Comic Exchange	913-238-1100
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Topeka	Gate Keeper	914-232-3429
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Rockville	<b>Gaming Realm</b>	<b>301-662-4263</b>
Rockville	<b>Dream Wizards</b>	<b>301-881-3530</b>
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Ann Arbor	Underworld Book Shop	313-998-0547
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Canton	Rider's	313-981-8700
Coldwater	Ink and Paper Place	517-278-6645
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Kalamazoo	Rider's	616-349-8866
Kalamazoo	Rider's	616-349-2666
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Asheville	<b>Pastimes</b>	<b>704-253-7872</b>
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Cullowhee	Game Express	800-780-GAME
Fayetteville	The Hobbit	910-864-3155
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They'll look back ON this time AND this realm IN years to COME, lads, AND they'll say: "There's WHERE it all BEGAN: MEN USING MAGIC FOR the GOOD OF OTHERS, AND NOT just AS A WEAPON TO CARVE OUT MORE PERSONAL WEALTH AND power."

Helm Stoneblade,  
King of Athalantar  
circa *The Year of the Ghost Horse*  
(254 DR)



# The

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by Ed Greenwood

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illustrated by Fred Fields

**S**ince the publication of the novel *Elminster: The Making of a Mage*, many Realm gamers have asked for some game information about Athalantar and Faerûn around it. So here are a few "background bones" from which an interested Dungeon Master can build a campaign.

For Realms fans who've not seen the novel, it's set largely in the backwater land of Athalantar (whose capital, Hastarl, stood on the site of the present-day settlement of Secomber) after the fall of Netheril, but before Coronel Eltargrim opened Cormanthor to all races and the golden days of Myth Drannor began.

In the 1120 or so years since the events described in *Elminster: The Making of a Mage*, the kingdom of Athalantar has completely vanished. Only the elves (and a few confused human legends, mainly told in Secomber) remember it. The Athalantan folk are lost and scattered; some became the Tree Ghost Uthgardt barbarian tribe of the Sword Coast North, and others settled in what became Tethyr and along the Sword Coast where Baldur's Gate now stands.

Much of what is today open land or scrub wilderness between The Sea of Fallen Stars and the Sword Coast was dense forest, and the power of humans was much less. Monsters, elves, and dwarves were far more plentiful, and the survival of the kingdoms of men (who alone among the races tried to clear the land and farm, rather than live in and with the forest, or burrow beneath it ignoring all above) was by no means certain.

At the time of Elminster's birth, Athalantar, the Realm of the Stag, was a fascinating, dangerous place to live. King Uthgrael, a famous warrior known as "The Stag King," defeated neighboring elves and virtually exterminated local trolls and hobgoblins to expand an essentially leaderless riverbank farming land into a prosperous realm. He made his best battle-comrades feudal knights with their own holdings across the realm. Under their ready swords and vigilance Athalantar became one of the most successful farming regions north of Calimshan. The plentiful and reliable Athalantan exports of all manner of food-

# Athalantian Campaign

## Role-playing in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® of the young Elminster

stuffs enriched the realm, and it seemed destined for a rise to greatness – until Uthrael died.

After his death, his sons warred over the Stag Throne, tearing the realm apart in the process; many capable and valiant knights of Athalantar wet its fields with their blood. The eldest son, Belaur, hired many wizards to win this struggle for him, and the plan worked too well – he soon found himself on the throne, but a virtual prisoner of the magelords of Athalantar.

The wizards' feuds and the ongoing intrigues of the surviving princes of the realm make Athalantar an ideal place for AD&D® play: it is a place of tense intrigues, and it is a time for adventurers.

It's probably best for campaign balance if Elminster himself remains yet unborn, hidden away, or protected by Mystra (this takes player tactics away from "Let's slay or control Elminster" and keeps them bent on what characters in such a setting would really be concerned with), but the politics of Athalantar are best grasped by a look at the royal bloodlines of the realm.

### The Lineage of Elminster

King Uthrael Aumar (b. ? – d. 216 DR) married Syndrel Hornweather (b. ? – d. 196 DR) who seems to have been half-elven, or at least to have had elven blood.

History records that the battle-skilled Stag King and the quiet, cultured Queen of the Hunt loved each other deeply. Wed in 188 DR, they had seven sons, known to history as the "warring princes of Athalantar." Listed in order of birth, these were:

**Belaur:** The physically powerful eldest son, this bellowing bully seized power after Uthrael's death by doing the bidding of mages he befriended; they became known as "the magelords" and ruled Athalantar until defeated by Myrjala and Elminster, who slew Belaur (in 240 DR) and crowned Helm Stoneblade king of Athalantar.

Belaur was the most warlike and best-trained of the princes, and his father's favorite. Unlike Uthrael, he had a hot temper, a cruel streak, and a lack of wisdom, and he was easily manipulated by others. Born in 189 DR, he proclaimed himself king in 218 DR and reigned until 240 DR.

**Elthaun:** Born in 190 DR, Elthaun was a soft-spoken, two-faced master manipulator who had to flee the realm for his life in 219 DR. Belaur's mages found and slew him in a city in Calimshan later that year.

**Cauln:** A sour, suspicious, and secretive man, Cauln turned to magecraft when very young. Born in 191 DR, he proved to be a natural at wielding magic and grew rapidly in power – but he was baited into spell-battle

and slain in 217 DR by a Calishite wizard, Rhanghaun of Almraiven, who had been hired by his brother Elthaun.

**Elthrynn:** This prince was a calm, peaceful, just man, one who was happier among farmers than courtiers. Born in 192 DR, he was always a sensitive, caring person who showed no taste for the intrigues and ambition of his brothers. When Elthrynn retired to the outlying village of Heldon, Uthrael gave him the Lion Sword, a long sword with magical powers that had never left the king's hand until then. Some saw this act as the king's appointing Elthrynn true heir to the Stag Throne.

In Heldon, Elthrynn married a forester's daughter, Amrythale Goldsheaf, in 210 DR. They had one son, Elminster, born in 212 DR. Both parents were slain in the destruction of Heldon under the breath of the draco-steed ridden by the archmage Undarl when he first appeared in Athalantar in 224 DR to make a name for himself.

The Lion Sword's powers were broken (as was the blade itself) by the dragonfire, but most sages agree that it could absorb lightning-spells (and probably some other magics) directed at its wielder.

**Othglas:** This brother, born in 193 DR, was fat, jolly, and food-loving from his earliest days. A glutton and poisoner, he used deadly wine and food additives to thin the ranks of the Athalantan court, advancing his own supporters. When Belaur's mages made it clear they knew what he was up to, and threatened to have him arrested and put to death for it, Othglas turned to worship of Malar for protection, moving to outlying Dalniir (in 219 DR) and joining the Huntsmen there. The magelords turned him into a boar during a hunt, and he was slain by his own men in 220 DR.

**Felodar:** From his birth in 194 DR, this brother was restless in Athalantar, and had no love for the realm or his family. He saw wealth as a way of acquiring power that had nothing to do with the Aumar name, and he became obsessed with amassing wealth. Leaving the realm in 214 DR, he established a base in Calimshan. Once there, he fostered trade between Calimshan and Athalantar, and between the Realm of the Stag and everywhere else, pleasing his father very much. Uthrael would have been less enthusiastic had he known that Felodar was enriching himself by trading in slaves, contraband, and dark magic.

Ultimately, Felodar achieved much power in Calimshan through intrigues and the efforts of his hired gang of thieves, agents, killers, and mages, and sent mages to Athalantar to take control of the realm for him. Dubbed "the night mages" because they hid by day and worked in the hours of darkness, they struggled against Belaur's



magelords but were ultimately unsuccessful.

Although Felodar remained a threat to Belaur's rule for most of the time the eldest prince sat the Stag Throne, he died of poison administered by a local Calishite rival late in the year 239 DR, though his death did not become known in Athalantar until 241 DR.

**Nrymm:** The youngest prince of Athalantar was timid and frail. Born in 195 DR, he was raised by women of the court after the queen's death, and he "disappeared" in 220 DR. Magelord records indicate that he was turned into an otyugh by the magelords, then kept in the midden of Athalgard, the royal castle in Hastarl, so they had another blood heir of Uthrael in their power, should anything happen to Belaur.

Nrymm was slain in otyugh form in 238 DR by one of Felodar's mages, in a successful attempt to draw one of the magelords into a trap under the castle, so he could be slain alone.

There is one other "prince" of Athalantar mentioned in histories and ballads who was not of Aumar blood. The only war-leader Belaur could trust once the magelords were firmly in control was the mercenary Gartos, and Belaur made him a prince of the realm so he outranked minor magelords and could carry out Belaur's will without hindrance or petty harassments. He was slain in Narthil in 234 DR.

## Sorcerers of Athalantar

A quick glance at the warring princes makes it clear their intrigues could fuel an exciting campaign in the farming realm of Athalantar even without the magelords. When one adds the jostling, ambitious mages who came to Athalantar to seize power they could not hope to win in older, more civilized lands, things can become relentlessly menacing. Here are just a few of the wizards prominent in Athalantar in those days:

**Shandrath:** Widely known across Faerûn as the "Wyrmhumbler" for the many dragons he slew or magically tamed in his youth, Shandrath was the most powerful wizard to dwell in the Realm of the Stag.

He came to Athalantar only in the twilight of his days, and folk there usually referred to him as "Old Shandrath." Over 70 years of age when Uthrael died, Shandrath was a short, stooped, crippled man whose twisted body was supported by a knobbly stick. He stumped around in constant pain, preferring the solitude of

Wyrm Tower to the company of others. He cared about the stability of Athalantar and regarded Elthryn as the best of a bad lot. Unbeknownst to the fourth prince, Shandrath watched over him in Heldon. The Wyrm-humbler used his scrying-glass and spells to learn what he could of the plans of the other princes, then sent forth spells to thwart them.

Belaur's mages regarded him as their most formidable foe, and tried to keep their deeds and true power largely hidden until they could strike at him – in a massed spell-attack on Wyrm Tower in 222 DR. The attack shattered the Tower and destroyed Shandrath, leaving the unwitting Elthryn vulnerable.

**Theskyn:** The court mage of Athalantar was an old friend and trusted servant of the Stag King. He tutored Cauln and many magelings sent to Hastarl by the outlying knights of the realm. He died soon after Uthrael in 217 DR, poisoned by Belaur's agents.

Theskyn was stout, short-tempered, and gray-bearded, with a long, hooked nose covered with warts (a likeness remembered in sayings like, "By Theskyn's warts!"). He disliked magical items and is said to have hidden away scores of them, all over the realm, to "hew down cowardly reliance on the stored magical might of others."

## The Night Mages

Here are the most mighty of "Felodar's Sendings," the wizards sent into Athalantar by Prince Felodar; they either perished at the hands of Belaur's magelords or joined their ranks.

**Maulygh:** This cruel man was driven by ambition. A master wizard of Unther, he joined the magelords (perhaps intending to betray them), but perished at the hands of the Magister at a dinner in Hastarl in 229 DR.

**Nathgarl:** A close-mouthed, careful, all-seeing wizard of Unther, apprentice to Maulygh. Always looking over his shoulder for treachery, his passion was laying spell-traps anywhere and everywhere. He was slain by senior magelords soon after Maulygh's death, who suspected him of somehow causing his master's fall... perhaps only the first step in eliminating them all.

**Orthalar:** This mage from distant Calimport was known as "Orthalar of the Winds" because of his mastery of magic that hurled wind as a weapon. Even more paranoid than Nathgarl, Orthalar always cloaked himself in contingency magics and multiple teleport escape spells. Such

precautions helped him survive at least three concerted magelord attempts to slay him. In the end, he lured five magelords to their doom, trapping them in the cellars of his house in Hastarl, but very likely perished with them. Nothing was heard of him after 240 DR.

## The magelords of Athalantar

The main villains in the lives of Athalantan folk, these hated and feared tyrants were invited into Athalantar by Belaur, to help him seize the throne. All the best histories more or less echo the writings of Urdan of Launtok on the eldest prince of Athalantar: "He ruled by means of his magelords, cruel outlanders who in the end came to rule him."

Although there were 30 to 40 minor magelings or apprentices in the lesser ranks of the magelords at all times between about 219 DR to 240 DR, the individuals named hereafter were all wizards of at least 12th level. Those who survived to 240 DR were without exception 16th level or greater. They are listed in rough order of descending importance.

**Undarl:** Known as the "Dragonrider" for his preferred mode of battle, Undarl rose to become the self-styled Mage Royal and the real ruler of the kingdom. No one knew where he was born. He was a late addition to the magelords, arriving on dragonback and destroying Heldon (and Prince Elthryn) to "prove himself." His true form (a yuan-ti) was revealed in his battle with Elminster... but this was only the body he possessed on Toril. He was actually a Malaugrym or Shadowmaster (of whom more is told in the *Shadow of the Avatar* trilogy).

**Ubriien Orlyn:** The first Mage Royal of Athalantar, this cruel and quick-witted man dominated Neldrynn and all of the other mages Belaur recruited. He took to scouting the lands around Athalantar in disguise, to learn their strengths and weaknesses – and what magic could be stolen from them. He was slain when, in the shape of an elven ruler, he tried to cast a spell on an alert dwarven Axelord at a feast; the other magelords never learned his fate.

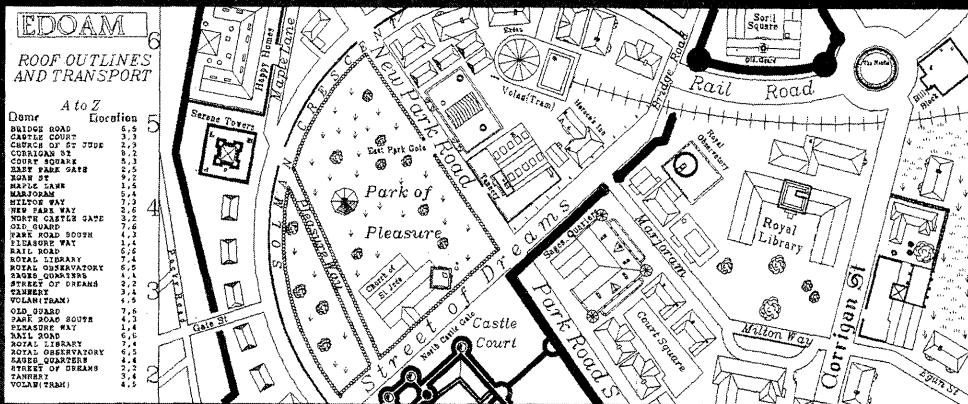
**Neldrynn Hawklyn:** A haughty, thin man who hailed from the lands that became Chessenta, he was the leader of Belaur's original recruits, and after the mysterious disappearance of Ubriien, became the most powerful magelord, the mage royal of Athalantar. He died at the hands of the Magister when he dared to summon Mystra's Servant to a dinner in Hastarl, in 229 DR. He overcon-

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fidently intended to use a Netherese magical item, the *Crystal Chain of Binding* (a transparent metal or glass chain that flies under the mental direction of a controlling being and prevents all use of magic by any being imprisoned in its coils), to defeat the Magister and take his place. Undarl moved swiftly to seize day-to-day command of the magelords after Hawklyn's death, also taking his title of Mage Royal.

**Ithboltar:** "The Old One" was an early tutor of Neldryn Hawklyn and followed his pupil to Athalantar at Neldryn's request. By far the most magically capable of the magelords, Ithboltar tutored almost all of the ambitious wizards who joined their ranks. He preferred to keep behind the scenes and was careful to gain magical holds over all the mages he trained, and to make himself their refuge, counselor, and rescuer.

When he first became aware of Elminster and Myrjala, Ithboltar saw them as a way of humbling and culling the out-of-control, increasingly reckless and arrogant younger magelords. Ultimately – and too late – perceiving the true danger they posed, Ithboltar forcibly summoned all surviving nearby mage-lords of power to battle them. In the clash that followed (in 240 DR), Athalgard was shattered and all of the magelords except Undarl perished.

**Ildryn Thallin:** A sly, oily magelord, adept at manipulation, avoiding foes, and verbal diplomacy. It was said in Hastarl that "Ildryn listens at every door in Athalantar and knows whenever coins change hands – and for what." He perished in the spell-battle in Athalgard. Contingencies he'd set to follow his death wreaked much havoc around Sam Torel, where his tower stood.

**Hulzimer Atharn:** This studious, quiet mage dwelt in the "backlands" of northern Athalantar. He specialized in magic that transformed men into monsters, or at least gained for mages a semblance of beast-powers. Many folk who'd committed crimes or merely displeased a magelord were given into his hands for use in his magical experiments; the lucky ones survived for years in stable beast-shapes.

Hulzimer tried to befriend the elves of the High Forest to learn their secrets of taking dragonshape. He was rebuffed and turned to futile attempts to worm information on dragon-mastery from Shand Rath.

Hulzimer became obsessed with defeating the Wyrmhumbler and wrest-

ing his powers from him. He made many overtures to his fellow magelords about attacking Wyrm Tower. In the end, fearing Shand Rath's power in their midst, his fellow magelords agreed, but Hulzimer perished in the destruction of Wyrm Tower, in 222 DR.

**Seldinor Stormcloak:** A tall, impressive-looking, charismatic magelord with an eye for the ladies, Seldinor took himself across the realm on consort-gathering vacations whenever he grew restless, but he spent the rest of his days working on his magic. He was interested in golems and the handling of other enchanted creatures created or augmented by magic. Elminster and Myrjala caused his death in 240 DR.

**Kadeln Clothstar:** This magelord loved battle and brawling; the armesmen of the realm hated him for the cruel goading he gave them. Fancying himself the war-leader of Athalantar, he spent his time driving the troops into the lands around – including repeated forays into the High Forest – to eliminate all the outlaws, rebels, and strong neighbors he could, ostensibly for the good of the realm (but really to keep the armesmen too busy for any thought of revolt, and to entertain himself). Many armesmen were whipped, tortured, or slain on his orders. Kadeln set himself up as their judge and trainer. His fellow magelords, uninterested in policing sweaty sword-swingers, let him have his way.

In the end, his love of war killed him; he came to the aid of his fellow magelord Taraj Hurlymm in 240 DR and was slain in battle against Elminster and Myrjala.

**Taraj Hurlymm:** An expert in the ways of beasts, Taraj hailed from far Murghom and was an avid, cruel hunter. To indulge his love of taking beast-shape and stalking men and women as if they were prey, he took over governance of outlying Dalniir for the magelords – and was eventually slain on a hunt by Elminster and Myrjala, in 240 DR.

**Malanthor Drymm:** A proud and cruel mage of Calimshan, Malanthor was much given to the use of perfumes (and sneers), and his forked black beard and long waxed moustaches were much in evidence at the best parties in Hastarl, where he fascinated the ladies as the epitome of culture and sophistication. Too lazy to do much to advance his mastery of magic, he indulged in "building contacts" for the magelords among noble and wealthy citizens of Hastarl. He inevitably found his way into their feuds, intrigues, and bechambers. Summoned

to battle by Ithboltar in 240 DR, he died in the collapse of the Old One's tower in Athalgard.

**Alarashan Tlor:** This careful, self-controlled wizard was careful to be helpful to his fellow magelords but also to stay unassumingly in the background, avoiding controversies. "Tlor the Faceless" Seldinor dubbed him, not realizing (as Ithboltar did) that Alarashan was awaiting his chance to come to power when stronger colleagues fell in the teeth of their own intrigues. Always planning for a day that never came, Alarashan liked to keep track of the names, skills, and activities of mercenaries and adventurers operating in or near Athalantar. Forcibly summoned by Ithboltar, he perished in the spell-battle in Athalgard, in 240 DR.

**Janath Rendaer:** One of the original mages hired by Belaur, the pranksome, sarcastic Janath was the only magelord to befriend any of the Athalantan knights or armesmen, who saw in him a gruff fellow cynic just trying to stay alive in the midst of "a nest of spell-hurling vipers." He perished in the assault on Wyrm Tower in 222 DR.

**Belargh Thulin:** This minor magelord was an unambitious, lazy, cruel sensualist who devoted his time to romancing all women who came within range of his eye (and his magical compulsions) in rural Ambletrees. Belargh was notable for his collection of gems and other valuables taken from ladies – and the cache of Netherese magical items he brought with him to Athalantar from an earlier adventuring career (a cache never found after his death, and rumored yet to lie beyond an invisible door that floated in midair somewhere in Ambletrees). He was slain by Elminster (while El was in female form) in 234 DR.

**Briost Elthaurny:** This calculating, quick-thinking mage was one of the most dangerous magelords, known for his quick-witted cunning and clever traps. He liked to travel Athalantar and the lands around as an envoy for the magelords, and he was a favorite of Ithboltar (who saw him as the best choice to replace the drunken wastrel Belaur as Mage-King of Athalantar. He perished in the spell-battle in Athalgard in 240 DR.

**Nasarn the Hooded:** The oldest and most experienced of the magelords after Ithboltar, Nasarn came to Athalantar desiring peace and stability. The Old One gave him the task of watching the magelords for treachery against the

Mage Royal, by pretending to be the Old One's rival (and an alternative tutor for ambitious magelings).

On several occasions, overconfident magelords tried to take advantage of the secluded locales where he liked to teach to destroy him and seize his magic. He slew all of them, transforming their bodies into stone statues and putting them in a walled garden in his country house near Jander. His fate is not recorded but he was not seen in the kingdom of Athalantar after 240 DR.

**Eth Junster:** This young magelord was known as "Stoneclaw" because he slew an umber hulk with his spells when young, then created a spell that gave him the same stone-rending claws it had boasted. A wizard with a great natural aptitude for magic, Eth devised many spells in his brief life. He was slain by "Elmara" (Elminster) at Narthil in 234 DR.

**Chantlarn Iyrmerr:** This capable, often-amused magelord kept carefully to himself, amassing magical items and planning the day when he'd overthrow the other magelords and seize the kingdom for his own. That day never came. He was forcibly summoned to the spellbattle (in 240 DR) in Ithboltar's tower in Athalgard, he was slain there.

## Magic of the day

Human sorcery in Faerûn was almost as advanced then as now – though the strong power of elven spells and the comparatively recent fall of Netheril made most folk think they were in a dark age of paltry spells and wanng human learning and power. Many of the spells known in those days have since been lost (interestingly, Elminster attests that some of them are in use in present-day Oerth and can be found in the GREYHAWK® Adventures sourcebook).

The Magister, Mystra's mortal representative, was the mightiest wizard in all Faerûn – but the position could be lost in a moment to the smiting spells of anyone ambitious enough to want the title and duties. Wizardry was generally more advanced in Calimshan and what are today known as "the Old Empires" than in the North, and the epitome of southern magecraft was the Sorcerer Supreme of all Calimshan (at the Time of the magelords, the seldom-seen planar mystic Eltehaun of Calimport).

The most talked-about – and possibly the most deadly – mage of the time was Ilhundyl "The Mad Mage." This cruel sorcerer-tyrant was cast out from Calimshan after he dealt openly with fell creatures

from other planes once too often for the likings of the Calishite satraps – particularly after they discovered that most of Ilhundyl's arrangements concerned their own destruction). The Mad Mage ruled The Calishar (the lands north of Calimshan, now much of Tethyr) from his Castle of Sorcery, until Myrjala slew him while rescuing Elminster.

Myrjala "Darkeyes" was herself famous in the lands around the Delimbiyr as a fey, beautiful, mysterious wanderer who meddled in the doings of rulers whenever she saw fit. She was unwelcome in many halls and courts and revered in many crofts and upland huts, for the unexpected aid she rendered to those in need. Her sigil was three linked silver circles on a navy-blue field, curving in an arc with one end-circle to the upper right and the other at the bottom left. When she wanted to travel unseen, she took bird- or beast-shape, or assumed the guise of the male herald Huntinghorn, envoy of Tavaray, whose crossed-trumpets badge was known across the North – by folk who would have spit or hurried to snatch up a weapon or warning-horn had they known who lurked inside that shape.

## A glance at Athalantar

The princes and wizards we've seen thus far were the most prominent folk in Athalantar; the knights and armsmen of the kingdom largely followed them (cleaving to support one or another in ever-shifting factions) or fled the realm altogether, while the wealthy merchants in Hastarl kept their heads down, concerned themselves with trade, and lost any power or influence in the realm that they might formerly have had.

Foresters hunted for game, fought elves and beasts of the woods along the northern edges of the realm, and protected woodcutters who cut whatever timber was needed, slowly expanding the realm by hewing away at the edges of the High Forest. Where necessary (as in the bandit-haunted Horn Hills and Wyrm Waste to the west and northwest), the foresters were aided by patrols of armsmen, who had strong fortresses at Heldreth's Horn in the west and Floodmeet in the east. Within the ring of protection thus provided, the hard-working farmers of Athalantar worked the heart of the realm, ensuring prosperity for all.

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by two rivers. Delimbiyr, The River Shining, then as today the main route of trade and travel between the Sword Coast and Delimbiyr Vale (known then as "Fallen Netheril" or the "Pharren Uplands" after a now-vanished elven land), formed the southern boundary of the realm.

The Unicorn Run wound down through the heart of the realm from the High Forest, draining and watering the verdant farmlands until it joined the Delimbiyr at Hastarl.

The realm's capital (and only) city was as crowded and filthy as cities everywhere, and its folk saw themselves as within reach of the sophistication of wealthy Elembar (which was seen as the height of human wealth and splendor outside of the decadent, somewhat mistrusted Calimshan). Athalantar boasted large towns at Sarn Torel and Launtok, and lesser towns at Semper, Blenth, and Ulstone. The rest of the realm was a beautiful, pastoral landscape: "too good for grasping wizards," as one local ballad, "The Rising of Helm," puts it.

The wealthiest farmers and merchants became Athalantar's nobility – such families as Bracetyr, Clorth, Dalamber, Endril, Glarmeir, Ommer, Prender, and Trumpettower boasted several country estates as well as many rented farms, as well as "high houses" (actually walled compounds around miniature palaces) in Hastarl.

A minstrel described the governance of Athalantar thus: "The magelords rule openly, issuing decrees as if they were all kings. The only entertainment we have is watching them try to outwit each other. I don't go back often. It's not a safe land for any who speak openly against the magelords – and that includes minstrels whose clever ballads may not be to the liking of any passing wizards or armsman. Athalantar doesn't see any visiting wizards, now, either... unless one has the power to defeat all the magelords, why go there? If any mage of power comes to Athalantar, the magelords'd doubtless see it as a threat to their rule – and all rise up together against him!"

The minstrel was correct; anyone in Athalantar – and the lands immediately around it, including Narthil, the Horn Hills, and the Tabath Hills to the east – who showed any evidence of owning a magical item (except for the king and nobles), and anyone at all who cast a wizard spell was given the choice of joining the magelords or suffering immedi-

ate death. (As a swordcaptain of one gate guard told Elmar, as his men prepared to attack her: "Mages who do not serve our king are not welcome here.") Induction into the ranks of the magelords involved a thorough mind-reading and verbal interrogation, and anyone with other loyalties or ties to any outlaw or enemy of the realm was slain forthwith.

Yet the magelords were not all-powerful. They were few and self-interested, and as the innkeeper Broarn described them: "The magelords have this land by the throat and don't mean to shift their grip. Yet for all their airs, they couldn't hold an apprenticeship at some places in the southlands."

Moreover, their selfish interests led to a loose command structure; although gate-guards watched over the roads and minor magelords accompanied armsmen officers as "watchhounds," they didn't bother to report much to their superiors – by order. The magelords didn't want to be disturbed by the daily business of administering a realm.

As Undarl told a junior magelord: "I'd not expect a magelord to waste magic on bothering his fellows just for idle chatter; a report should come only if something serious is amiss... if the intruding mage should prove to be a spy for another realm, for instance, or the leader of an invading army."

## Faiths in Athalantar

As might be expected, the magelords didn't appreciate unexpected and uninvited clergy of any faith showing up in Athalantar (and there were guardposts at Hastarl's docks and on the roads to prevent undesirables from entering the realm), but seldom had to act against anyone except clergy of Mystra; no one else came to Athalantar except by pre-arrangement, and such arrangements were few.

It's also unsurprising that worship of Chauntea was the dominant faith in the land. Veneration of Malar, Silvanus, and Tyche (in those days, the Luck Goddess had not yet split into Beshaba and Tymora) was also strong. The magelords took worship of Mystra as their exclusive right, closing the Hastarl temple (and all outlying shrines) of the Holy Lady of Mysteries. (Then, as now, Mystra manifested to the faithful as an eerie blue glow, or appeared as two eyes floating in flame, or as a tall, shapely woman with dark eyes, hair, and robes.)

Worship of Lathander, Helm, Sune,

and Tyr was also well represented in Athalantar, and there were local shrines to older, now forgotten gods, to Tempus, and to all of the nature deities.

Full priests of the Wargod held the title "the Sword of Tempus," and ranking priests of Lady Luck were addressed as "the Hand of Tyche." In similar fashion, priests of Helm were "the Shield of Helm" and priests of Tyr "were the Eye and Hand of Tyr." Clergy of Silvanus (regardless of rank) were referred to as "Forest Fathers," and clergy of Malar were "Huntmasters" (in both case, regardless of the gender of the priest). Priests and priestesses of Lathander were known as "Lights of Lathander," but Sune was represented only by priestesses, "Crimson Ladies" to the general public, and "High Lady" to each other.

The magelords deeply distrusted the clergy, and tried to hire or place spies in every temple. Apprentice magelings aspiring to advancement in the ranks of the magelords had to do many tiresome hours of magically spying on priests who were, by and large, engaged in nothing dangerous to the Stag Throne or to the ruling wizards. It's not surprising that the only avid magelord scrying was the watch set on the pleasure-loving priestesses of Sune, whose rituals attracted the wealthy, the noble, and the curious.

## The passing years

Some relevant dates spanning the Time of the magelords follow:

**212 DR, Year of the Awakening Magic:** Elminster, son of Prince Elthryn and Amrythale Goldsheaf, is born in Heldon.

**216 DR, Year of the Battle Horns:** The known Northlands erupt in battle as many orc bands vie for supremacy; countless thousands of goblinkin perish.

In Athalantar, King Uthgrael Aumar dies; his sons, the "Warring princes of Athalantar," begin open battle battle for the throne.

**218 DR, Year of the Dancing Lights:** Will O' wisps are seen in profusion all over Faerûn in this year; some sages believe this marks an invasion of the strange beings, perhaps through a gate unwittingly opened by a human sorcerer, from another plane.

In Athalantar, Prince Belaur proclaims himself king and takes the Stag Throne, organizing the armsmen of the realm under the command of his hired wizards. (The term "magelords" dates from this time, when Belaur named them all lords of the realm, to give them clear authority over everyone save himself.)

#### **224 DR, Year of the Flaming Forests:**

In the winter that opens this year, many forest fires rage across the Northlands. An orc chieftan, Gluthtor, emerges victorious at the battle of Blooddrivers (at the site of present-day Yartar) and spends the year uniting the orcs under his command.

The wizard Undarl comes to Athalantar; he and his dragon destroy the village of Heldon (and Elminster's parents).

#### **225 DR, Year of the Shattered Skulls:**

Gluthtor's great orc horde is turned back by the elves in the Sword Coast lands, at the cost of much of their strength, in the battles of Five Falcons (east of The Stone Bridge) and Hungry Arrows (southeast of present-day Everlund). The rise of archery among the orcs is said to date from these slaughters, wherein the surviving orcs saw a few thousand elven archers slay hundreds of thousands of goblinkin.

#### **226 DR, Year of the Empty Turret:**

Despite the lack of major wars, disease and widespread lawlessness take many fighting-men to their graves all over Faerûn this year.

#### **227 DR, Year of the Raised Banner:**

Three small realms are founded in this year. They are the halfling realm of Meiritin in what is now eastern Amn; the human realm of Shavinar north of present-day Baldur's Gate; and Tathtar at the western end of the Vilhon Reach. All have since vanished.

#### **228 DR, Year of the Loremasters:**

Several sages publish important histories of human magical achievements in the summer of this year, winning widespread fame. Today, only one of these works survives (*The Trail Of Wonder*, by Aumtevel Dlarryn; the only known surviving copy is now kept in the inner rooms of Candlekeep), and only two of the writers are remembered: the sage Aumtevel Dlarryn of Elembur, and High Scribe Blaeruityn of Ankapur, a priest of Oghma. Blaeruityn, a giant of a man who stood nine feet tall, is said to have devised the first "speaking book," wherein voices could be heard reading the words aloud as the pages are turned (the spells for doing so died with him). At least two such books were in the court library in the castle of Athalgard, sometime in the five years that followed... but what became of them is not known.

At this time, Elminster is an outlaw in the Horn Hills, on the borders of Athalantar.

#### **229 DR, Year of the Black Flame:**

A cabal of wizards calling themselves "The

Black Flame" forms in Unther and destroys several armies sent by local rulers to slay them. Over the 20 summers that follow, they develop many important magics, but dwindle in numbers, destroyed by rivals, or lost in travels to other planes. They leave behind many powerful spells that later form much of the arsenal of the Red Wizards of Thay.

During this year, Elminster, using the name Eladar the Dark, is active as a thief in Hastarl, capital of Athalantar.

#### **230 DR, Year of the Wailing Dryads :**

Crowded, rapidly-growing human realms all over Faerûn have run out of room. Trees are felled all over the human-held lands of Faerûn this year, and many roads begun, cutting into the heart of once-impassable woodlands.

Dalagar "Longwalker" becomes king of Andlath (a vanished realm that flourished on what is now The Shining Plains), and begins construction of a trade-road linking the Sword Coast lands with the Vilhon Reach; many folk say it's an insane undertaking whose building will require "a thousand thousand years" even without the attacks by elves, dwarves, and everything else that are

sure to come. (Those attacks did come, and Andlath was to endure a decade of bitter war, but through the heart of the strife the road pushed on and stretched complete from Athkatla to Ormath in eight seasons.)

#### **231 DR, Year of the Mist Dragon:**

A gigantic dragon of this rare species appears in the lands around The Sea of Fallen Stars in the spring of this year, challenging and slaying any dragon it can find. By winter, it has amassed a huge treasure... and the first of several hundred fruitless adventurer-forays sets forth from Calimport in search of what bards came to call The Shining Hoard of the Great Dragon. (For some 60 years the mist dragon slays adventurers. After that, no trace of it or its hoard can be found.)

#### **232 DR, Year of the Leaping Centaur:**

In Andlath, centaur herds break free of human slavery in Andlath, shattering that realm into small, besieged territories and outposts.

Dalagar spends much of the year in his saddle, fighting 40 battles or more, but the road-building goes on.

#### **233 DR, Year of Much Ale:**

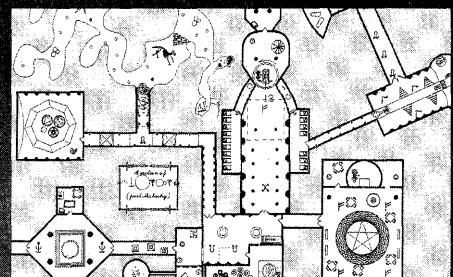
A rich bar-

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ley harvest this year makes beer plentiful and good in the lands around The Sea of Fallen Stars.

As a member of the Brave Blades adventuring band, "Elmara" (Elminster) is busy exploring old ruins, dungeons, and subterranean holds in the lands north and west of Athalantar.

**234 DR, Year of Bloodflowers:** A red-leaved wildflower, called the "blood-flower" for its hue and prevalence on open plains that often become battle-fields, seems to grow everywhere this year – and in the spring, an alchemist in Calimshan discovers a magical use for its petals, enabling wizards to heal wounds with a salve made from it that they can rub on before battle, and then activate at any time with a single word. (In the decade that follows, the bloodflower is harvested so thoroughly that it disappears from Faerûn. There are, of course, rumors of its survival in the deepest jungles of Chult and Mhair).

**235 DR, Year of Drawn Knives:** Intrigue, wars of succession, and assassinations are rife all across Faerûn; it is a time of defiance, violence, and short tempers. Elmara (Elminster) is studying and adventuring with the sorceress Myrjala.

**236 DR, Year of the Plague Clouds:** A mage in Mulhorand devises a spell that creates clouds of poisonous gas that last several days, so if local weather cooperates, the clouds can drift down to work against foes – or anyone else in their path. The wizard is slain by fearful neighbors and rival wizards, but not before someone steals at least one of the spells involved.

Elmara continues to study and adventure with Myrjala, traveling widely in Faerûn.

**237 DR, Year of the Disappearing Dragons:** Ansrynn Tehvyae, a crazed hermit-mage who dwells in Tsharoon (a land since swallowed by the Quoya Desert) develops a spell that teleports unwitting and unwilling dragons from place to place, from afar. He uses it to hurl dragons into close proximity – and usually subsequent combat with fearful defenders – above the strongholds and croplands of those he dislikes and fears, which is just about everyone in the Eastern Realms. There is much tumult in those lands until the end of the year, when Tehvyae is identified by the wisest, most furious surviving dragons, and destroyed. The fate of his spell is unknown.

Elmara's magic grows to outstrip

Myrjala's; they decide to part, and Elminster reveals his true gender to his teacher.

### **238 DR, Year of Many Mushrooms:**

Damp, cloudy weather and widespread rotting diseases promote wild growth of mushrooms all across northern Faerûn. There are tales of sinister "walking mushrooms" and fads for wild mushroom pie, mushroom wine, mushroom-laced beer – and much trade in barrels of fried mushrooms packed in salted gravy.

Elminster goes mage-hunting across Faerûn, trying to defeat evil mages and gain their powers. He travels to The Calishar to seek Ilhundyl the Mad Mage, who rules much of the region with his cruel magics. Myrjala rescues Elminster by destroying Ilhundyl with spellfire and reveals her love for the youngest Aumar prince. They decide to dwell and work together.

### **239 DR, Year of the Wandering Leucrotta:**

A sudden increase in the numbers of leucrotta drives many of these nasty creatures to roam across the North, each seeking its own territory. Much fear, widespread rumors (of various rulers being disguised leucrotta and suchlike), and bloodshed results.

Elminster and Myrjala work together, building their powers for a planned assault on Athalantar.

**240 DR, Year of The Chosen:** Elminster achieves his destiny and shatters the rule of the magelords, slaying King Beluar. El then crowns the outlaw knight Helm Stoneblade King of Athalantar. Myrjala reveals herself as the goddess Mystra; Elminster becomes one of Mystra's Chosen and is sent to Cormanthor.

**261 DR, Year of Soaring Stars:** Elven and human mages of Faerûn devise spells needed to sail the skies in this year, and new skyships are seen in Faerûn – the first such craft outside of Halruaa since the fall of Netheril. Cormanthor is renamed Myth Drannor, and opened to all "good" races. Its Mythal, a powerful, permanent protective magical field, is "laid" (cast) by many mages working together, Elminster among them.

## **The world around Athalantar**

At the time of the magelords, much of what has since become known as the Savage Frontier is wilderness – vast forests little seen by men that stretch for unknown, unexplored distances, and are rapidly swallowing up the "haunted ruins" of Netheril. The Moonsea and

Dragonreach lands are a mystery; human settlement on the north and west sides of The Sea of Fallen Stars hasn't yet reached north of the Vilhon Reach.

The High Forest wraps around Athalantar, and elves still dwell in its green depths, on the banks of the Unicorn Run. As the innkeeper Broarn tells Elminster, their superior magic fails before persistent human attacks time and again because they won't unite into armies: "Elves have little taste for war and spend much of their time feuding with each other. Most of them are also... we would call it idle. They trouble themselves more about having a good time, and less about doing things. Human wizards know less, but are always trying to find old spells or create new ones; where most elven mages smile, say that they already know all they need to – or if they're fair arrogant, lord, say they know everything there is to know – and do nothing."

Yet even in decline, the Fair Folk awe most Athalantans, and their presence discourages casual woodcutting and forays into the woods. As Broarn puts it: "If you must hide from the magelords, go up the Unicorn Run, deep into The High Forest. They fear the Fair Folk will rise against them there, with strong spells, and they're right on that. The elves fear to lose more land to the axes of Athalantar and will fight, now, for every tree. If you need to hide only from arms-men, Wyrm Wood right behind us here will do. They fear dragons. The mages know better; they slew the last dragon some 20 winters gone, but can't get us simple folk to believe that."

Such folk beliefs are complicated by the fact that a rare few of the moon elves of Sharren (the name elves use for that part of the High Forest south of the Star Mounts) have mastered magic that allows them to take on dragonshape when need be. They are the reason the magelords did so much dragonhunting in Athalantar once their grip on the realm was secure.

The far more haughty sun elves inhabit the western reaches of the High Forest, well north of Athalantar – the realm of Siluvanede. Its sigil is a silver griffon, and folk of all races venture to Lothen of the Silver Spires, at the southwestern-most point of the realm, to ask audience of the Aeltagarr, the kindly seer and sorceress of the realm (whose magic is said to rival that of the Magister himself). The Highlord of Siluvanede has made it coldly clear to all that visitors of

any sort – even elves of “lesser” races – aren’t welcome anywhere else in his realm.

Most humans only have contact with the friendly, widely-trading elves of Ardeep (a realm marked today by the vastly-shrunken, almost deserted Ardeep-forest).

The elves craft and sell exquisite goblets and bottles of blown glass (of rainbow, blue-green, or amber-to-gold hues), extremely expensive finery (a bridal gown cost one Athalantan noble a thousand pieces of gold), and two vintages: the emerald-green, chilled mint wine served in a hundred taverns and houses all over the human lands, and the far rarer moondrop – a sparkling, smoky-flavored clear liqueur reputed to have healing properties. The finest elven wares come from Shantel Othreier (a deep forest that once stood where The Green Fields are today).

Then, as today, rivalries between elf and dwarf were strong. During the Time of the Magelords, the Stout Folk were still strong, with holds scattered across the North and the proud realm of Ammarindar due east of Athalantar (in what are today known as the Greypeak Mountains).

Dwarves from Westdelve, the most westerly hold in that realm, are often seen on the River Shining, poling their trade-barges up and down. They buy much food from human traders and sell finely carved stone coffers and caskets, gems, the ruby-red wine popularly known as dragonsblood, and the sweet, sparkling lime-hued vintage called “moombubble wine,” which human newlyweds are wont to toast each other with – a wine few humans know is made from fermented fungi touched by moonlight at the bottom of deep shafts!

The Axelords (hold rulers) of the dwarves are determined to stay on good terms with the humans. They know the power of the demi-humans is waning, and the “pushy, hasty” humans will someday swarm over all.

They’ve made a good start on that already. Human wealth, power, and teeming multitudes are still in the southlands, in climes described by the garrulous Broarn as follows: ‘Aye, the lands down there have always been rich, and crowded – fair crawling with folk. The greatest realm is Calimshan; the place those dusky-skinned merchants with their heads wrapped, who come here all bundled up in furs in spring and fall, come from. There’s a huge lawless land

north of Calimshan, all forests and rivers, where their nobles always go to hunt game – or went, that is. An archmage set himself up there and now rules most of it. The Calishar, it used to be called. I know not if he’s renamed it, as he seems bent on changing all else. The Mad Mage they call him, because he chases his whims so fiercely and doesn’t care about what he destroys in the doing; Ilhundyl’s his name. Since he claimed the land, all the folk as didn’t want to be frogs and falcons and who knows what else have moved on – north, most of them, because all the land in Calimshan is held by someone, and I hear they keep slaves.”

South of Calimshan, the Tashalar (then “Tashtan” or the Cities of the Seabreeze) produced purple-and-emerald woven fabrics for trade that outshone even the fine silks of Calimshan. Its wares, however, were about all most folk of Athalantar knew about this fabled region. Northern folk believed (correctly) that beholders ruled over many small realms east of Calimshan – each beholder treating all who dwelt or came into its territory as its slaves.

What is today called The Sea of

Swords was then simply the Great Sea. The pirate-infested and storm-wrecked coast north of Calimshan kept trading ships few, though the southlands were already running short of large timbers and plentiful game, and casting eyes to the “unspoiled” north.

Some vessels did make the journey, however. They called at the rich city of Tavaray (which is now entirely sunken beneath the vast, noisome Lizard Marsh) and the tiny seacoast realms of Uthtower (covered by the present-day Mere of Dead Men) and Yarlith (which lay somewhat south of where Neverwinter is now; a land of skilled woodcarvers, hardy shepherds, and – of necessity – tireless orc-slayers).

The Delimbiyr followed almost the same course as it does today, linking these rich places to the interior: the elven realm of Ardeep and the most prosperous and sophisticated human holding in the North, Elembur, which flanked Ardeep on the east, stretching north from the River Shining almost to the site of present-day Ironford.

Travel down the Delimbiyr was an easy task of steerage, but going upriver was a long, arduous polebarge journey.

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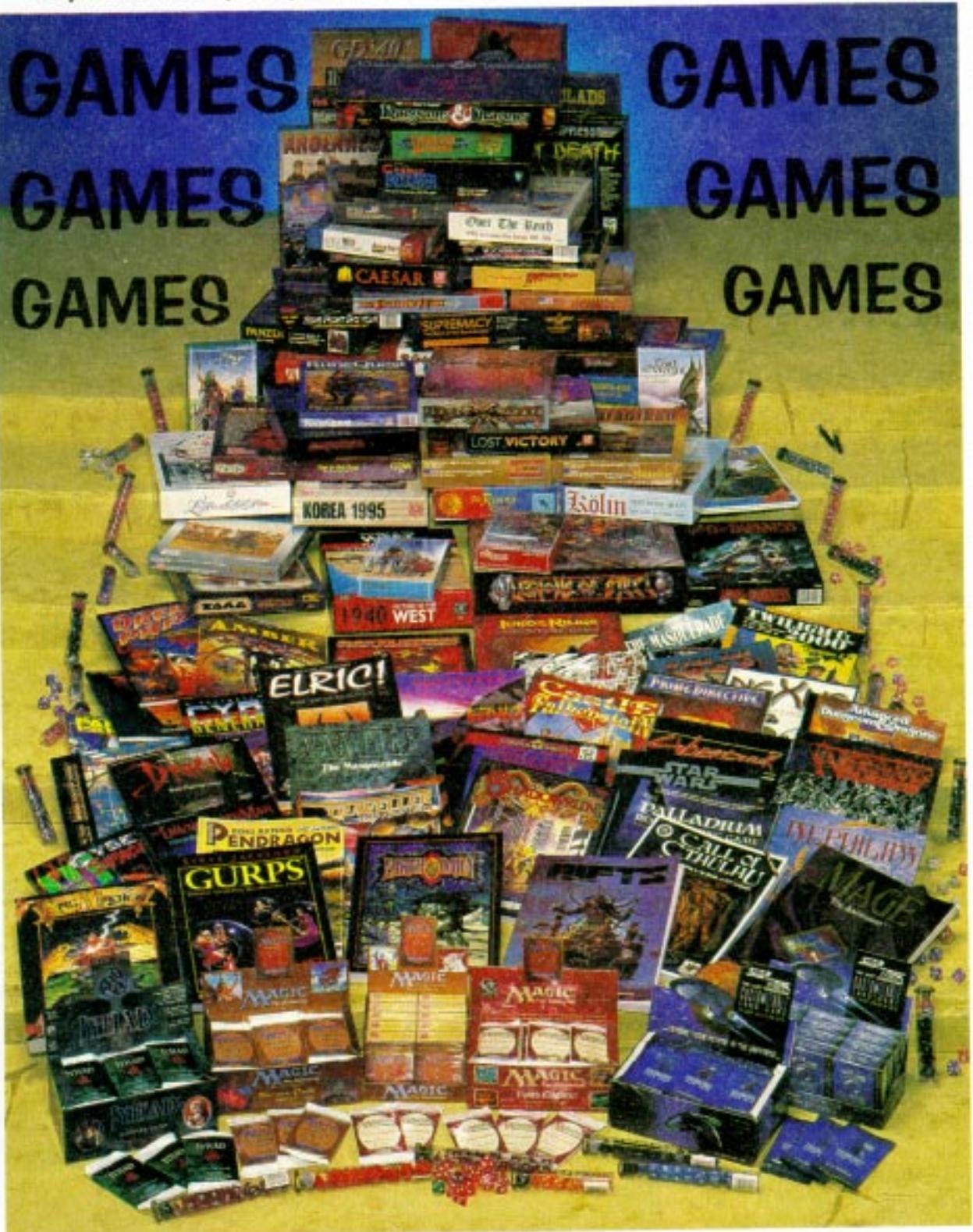
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The mouth of the river wasn't marshland as it is today, but a scattering of now-vanished bare islets of which the only one whose name survives is Mystra's Dance (because it held what folk believed was the very first Altar of Mystra).

Even before the magelords rose to open power in Athalantar, they'd set "the Great Fires" west of the Kingdom of the Stag, to "drive the elves out of all these lands and take them for men, but men huddled in ever-more-crowded cities and towns along the Delimbiyr, and summer by summer the forest crept back to reclaim the hills. Soon the elves – more bitter, and swifter with their arrows than they'd once been – would return." The wood they destroyed had been known as Halangorn Forest, and it separated Elembur from the Horn Hills (always a land of monsters, outlaws, and misfits).

At the eastern end of Halangorn Forest, on the north bank of the Delimbiyr, stood Morlin Castle, whose human lord held the titles Baron of Steeping Falls and Lord Protector of the Sword Hills – territories that lay on the south bank of the river. It was a crossroads of sorts for traders on the river.

North of Elembur was a band of sparsely-settled steadings and walled villages that were often raided by orcs, bugbears, hobgoblins, and similar monsters. The band stretched from the western fringes of Siluvanedene northwest to eastern Yarlith. Known as the Mlembryl lands, this territory boasted only one town of any size – Baerlith, at its western end – and was home to many tough, independent folk whose love of freedom made them unwelcome in more orderly realms.

The southeastern boundary of the Mlembryl lands was Ladyhouse Falls, site of a temple to Mystra, where a now-vanished tributary of the Dessarin tumbled westwards to join the Long North River.

South and west of there, the northern edge of the Horn Hills were marked by a line of hills known as the Watchers of the North. Immediately south of them was Ong Wood – and unbeknown to most folk, a secluded vale at the western end of the Watchers held the legendary Floating Tower, home and later tomb of the mighty archwizard Ondil of the Many Spells. Once guarded by liveried griffons who drove intruders away, it was found the Bright Blades adventuring band (when Elminster – as Elmara – was their mage). The tower's name came from the fact that mighty magics held it up, floating unsupported high above the ground,

after its lower floors had collapsed.

Tales say Ondil had withdrawn into this spell-guarded tower even before Netheril's rise to greatness, to craft many new and powerful spells. He was reportedly so mighty in magic that he was able to hide his tower from all Netherese mages. Older tales said Ondil had been a sorcerer of Thaeravel, the land of mages from which Netheril sprang (believed to lie – then as now – under the sands of Anauroch).

And how did the folk of these realms view Athalantar? Most termed it a backwater land where "the boar-hunting princes of the Stag" lorded it over thick-witted farmers.

In the words of an elven Highlord, Athalantar is a "land of simple farmers and boar-hunting swordswingers, whose young king has had the sense to gather in a few landless hedge-wizards to advise him. They've neither the magical skill nor the want to work destroying magic."

Into this little-known land was born the greatest wizard the Realms has ever known. Your own adventurers can step into the same tense times that reared

Elminster, with hostile wizards all around, monsters roaming the lands in deadly profusion, and the fabled riches of ruined Netheril waiting upriver.

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Why not try an Athalantan campaign?



*Ed Greenwood is the creator of the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign and the author of Elminster: The Making of a Mage, among other novels set in the Realms.*

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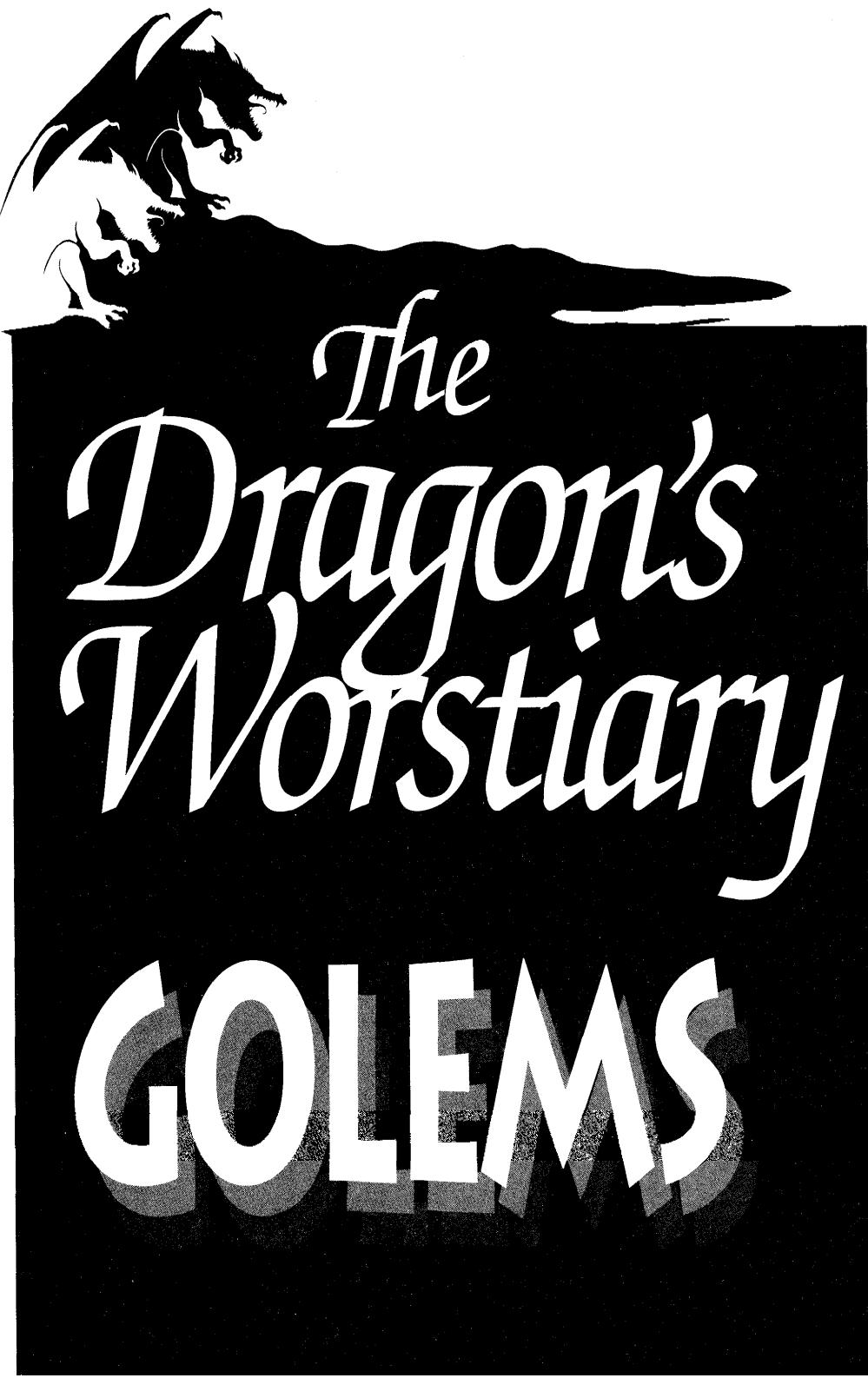
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by Anne Brown

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illustrated by Dan Burr

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Golems are potent symbols of just what high-powered magics can do. They are at once terrifying and awe-inspiring.

Sometimes the powerful mages and priests who create these monstrosities try their hands at making something different, and a new class of golems comes into being.

Sometimes, in disgust, they throw away their notes.

Unfortunately, these notes are sometimes found.

Witness the chia golem, chocolate golem, and the horrid plush golem.



# Chocolate Golem

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Nil
INTELLIGENCE:	Non- (0)
TREASURE:	Special
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	10
MOVEMENT:	6
HIT DICE:	6 or 1
THAC0:	15 or Nil
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2 or 0
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d4/1d4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Breath weapon
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (7' tall)
MORALE:	Fearless (19)
XP VALUE:	650 or 0

A chocolate golem is a sight never to be forgotten. Stories describe chocolate golems of every size and shape, including giant rabbits, chicks, dragons, reindeer, scarecrows, humans, humanoids, vampires, and other fantastic creatures.

Two types are known: hollow and solid. Bittersweet, milk, or even white or flavored chocolate may be used in construction. The hollow chocolate golem requires at least 500 lbs. of the finest quality chocolate. The chocolate may be poured into a specially created mold or may be sculpted and the middle hollowed out. Making the solid chocolate golem requires at least a 1,000 lb. block of fine chocolate. The golem is then sculpted from the single block.

Either golem may be embellished with edible paints, frosting, or small candies.

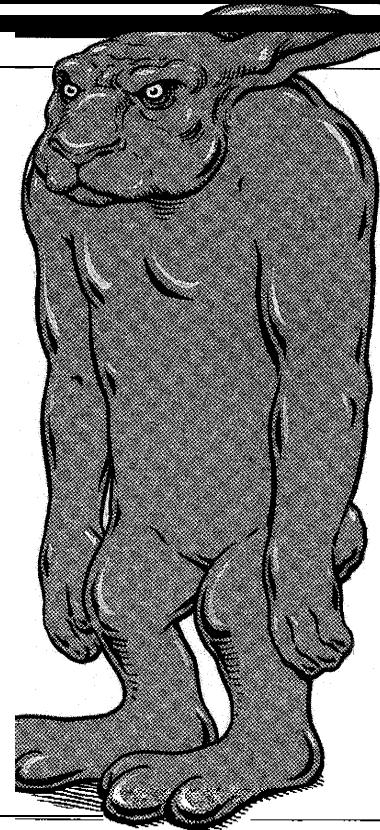
**Combat:** The deluxe chocolate golem (6 HD) typically serves similar purposes as other golems – as sentry or guard. They are sometimes used as security for large parties thrown by kings and other royalty. They appear to be nothing more than edible room decorations but can be ordered to attack. Thus, the golems offer a more innocuous presence than armed guards.

The deluxe golem attacks with both fists for 1d4 hp damage each. Approximately 25% of deluxe golems also have a breath weapon of sorts. Such golems are filled with fruit-flavored liqueur, whipped cream, peanut butter, or marshmallow. The golem can spew forth one gallon of filling every three rounds until its supply (typically 1d6 +6 gallons of filling) is exhausted.

A golem's THAC0 is 10 for purposes of spraying filling and it can hit one victim. The golem's spray causes no damage (although golems filled with chunky peanut butter cause 1 hp damage) but blinds a victim for 1d4 rounds. There is no saving throw.

The lesser chocolate golems (1 HD), often called "party golems," are typically commissioned at great expense for children's parties by royalty. The party golems are capable of nothing more than walking, sitting, or standing. They never attack.

Party golems are always hollow and are filled with small trin-



kets and candies. Children make a game of whacking the golem with a stick or pole until it shatters, spilling its treasure and shards of chocolate for partygoers to scoop up.

Chocolate golems exhibit varied reactions to spell effects. Electricity affects them normally. *Hold*, *paralysis*, and *sleep* spells have no effect. Cold-based spells improve a chocolate golem's Armor Class by 2 (making them AC 8) for 1d4 rounds. Cumulative cold-based spells have no additional effect.

Any heat-based or fire spells function fully against a chocolate golem, but with a dangerous side effect. The blast of heat instantly causes a spray of hot melted chocolate in a 15' radius. Any creatures within this area suffer 1 hp damage per die of damage caused by the spell. Thus, a golem struck by a six-die fireball causes 6 hp damage to all creatures within 15'.

**Ecology:** Like all golems, the chocolate golem is a manufactured creature and has no place in nature. They are created only through magical means.

A priest of at least 11th level can create a chocolate golem through extensive ritual, preparation of the chocolate figure, and use of the following spells: *purify food & drink*, *prayer*, *commune*, and *animate object*.

A wizard of at least 14th level must cast *fabricate*, *geas*, and *limited wish* following the construction of the chocolate figure and extensive preparatory rituals.

As part of their enchantment, chocolate golems are stable at temperatures up to 125°F. Enduring any temperature beyond that causes them to lose 1 hp per turn. When a golem loses 50% of its hit points from melting (whether magical or mundane), it is affected as if by a slow spell.

Anyone wishing to purchase a chocolate golem can expect to pay a minimum of 700 gp for a hollow golem, 1,000 gp for a solid golem, and 1,200 gp for a filled golem. The wizard's labor costs and additional 2,000–3,000 gp.

# Chia Golem

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Soil, water, compost
INTELLIGENCE:	Non- (0)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	6
HIT DICE:	8
THAC0:	13
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2d4/2d4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (6'-8' tall)
MORALE:	Fearless (19)
XP VALUE:	1,400

Chia golems span the full range from beautiful, elegant topiary creations to hideous, diseased, overgrown plantings. On royal estates, one might detect chia golems in the form of giant rabbits, mice, lions, camels, dragons, or even uniformed armed guards. Near an abandoned wizard's tower or in the courtyards of evil temples, chia golems may be present in the form of vampires, werebeasts, minotaurs, various giants, insects, or other horrid creatures.

A chia golem is a terra cotta or other baked stone sculpture that serves as a surface for plant growth. The chia golem is typically soaked in water and spread with seeds to await sprouting. They have a truly bizarre appearance until the plants have fully matured.

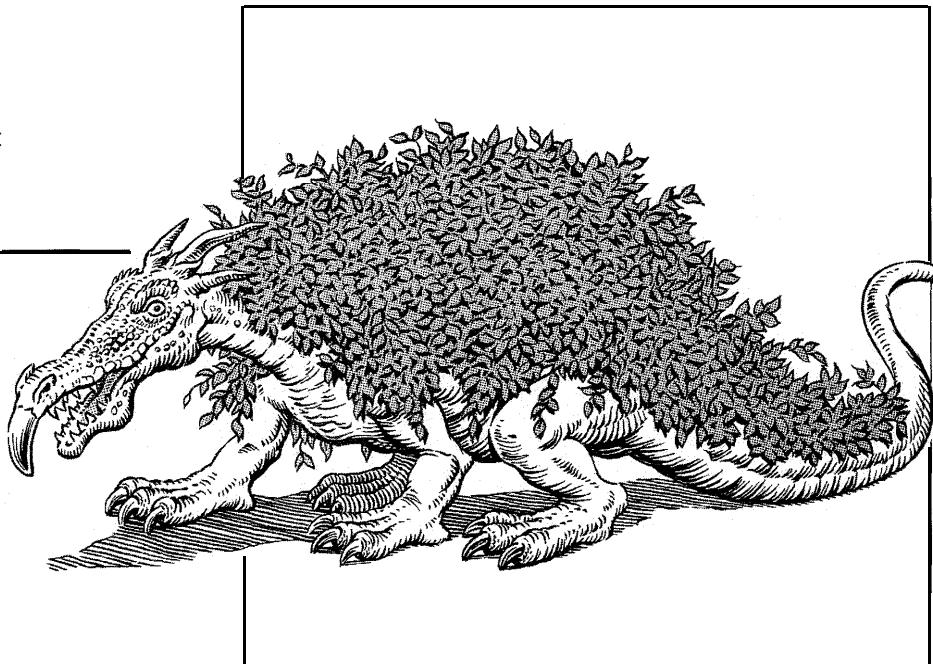
Chia golems may be planted with nearly any type of seeds, such as grass, resulting in a thick green coat; a creeping flowering plant such as phlox or alyssum, resulting in a fluffy pastel mat; a poisonous plant such as poison ivy or oxalis; or a vine plant such as morning glory, ivy, or grape (vines may cause damage in melee; see Combat). A combination of plants may be used to achieve a particular aesthetic effect.

No one has ever been known to have created a chia golem for himself; all known examples have been received as gifts.

Chia golems typically range in size from 6'-8'. Smaller golems are somehow unable to maintain the enchantments.

The creation of a chia golem begins with a sculpture in the form of the desired creature. The sculpture requires at least 1,000 lbs. of material. The material must be porous when it is hard to allow for rooting and water seepage; thus, a golem could not be sculpted of granite, but it could be sculpted of limestone or of clay and then baked.

**Combat:** Chia golems act primarily as sentries. They may be stationed in a particular place to stand guard or they may be ordered to creep slowly around the perimeter of an estate to keep watch. Their lack of intelligence and capability for imperceptibly slow movement makes them ideal for this type of watch duty.



A chia golem attacks with both fists for 2d4 hp damage each. If the golem is planted with a vine whose tendrils might slap at an opponent, +1 hp is added to each fist strike. If the creator of the golem chose to plant it with a thorny or otherwise noxious plant, other bonuses may be assessed as well.

Chia golems are immune to *sleep*, *hold*, and *paralysis* spells. Cold-based and heat-based spells may wither the foliage of a chia golem but cause normal damage. Spells such as *entangle*, *warp wood*, and *plant growth* have no effect. *Hold plant* and *anti-plant shell* work on chia golems as per the spell descriptions. *Transmute rock to mud* destroys a chia golem, but the plants will live in the resulting mud as long as conditions are right.

**Habitat/Society:** Chia golems may be planted with perennial plants and kept outdoors year round or, if planted with more tender plants, may be moved indoors with the onset of cold weather. Chia golems may also live indoors year round.

The golems, which are hollow, must contain a small amount of soil at all times, and they must be watered according to the requirements of the particular plant. A quantity of compost must also be added to the golem about once per month.

**Ecology:** Like all golems, the chia golem is a manufactured creature and has no place in nature. They are created only through magical means.

A priest of at least 11th level can create a chia golem through extensive ritual, preparation of the terra cotta figure, and use of the following spells: *plant growth*, *prayer*, *commune*, and *animate object*.

A wizard of at least 14th level must cast *fabricate*, *geas*, *charm plants*, and *limited wish* following the construction of the baked clay figure and extensive preparatory rituals.

A druid of at least 14th level may create a chia golem using *animate rock* and *plant growth* and a month-long process of fertility and other rituals that must culminate on the eve of the winter solstice.

# Plush Golem

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Nil
INTELLIGENCE:	Non- (0)
TREASURE:	None
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	10
MOVEMENT:	9
HIT DICE:	5
THAC0:	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d2/1d2
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Surprise
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (6' tall)
MORALE:	Fearless (19)
XP VALUE:	650

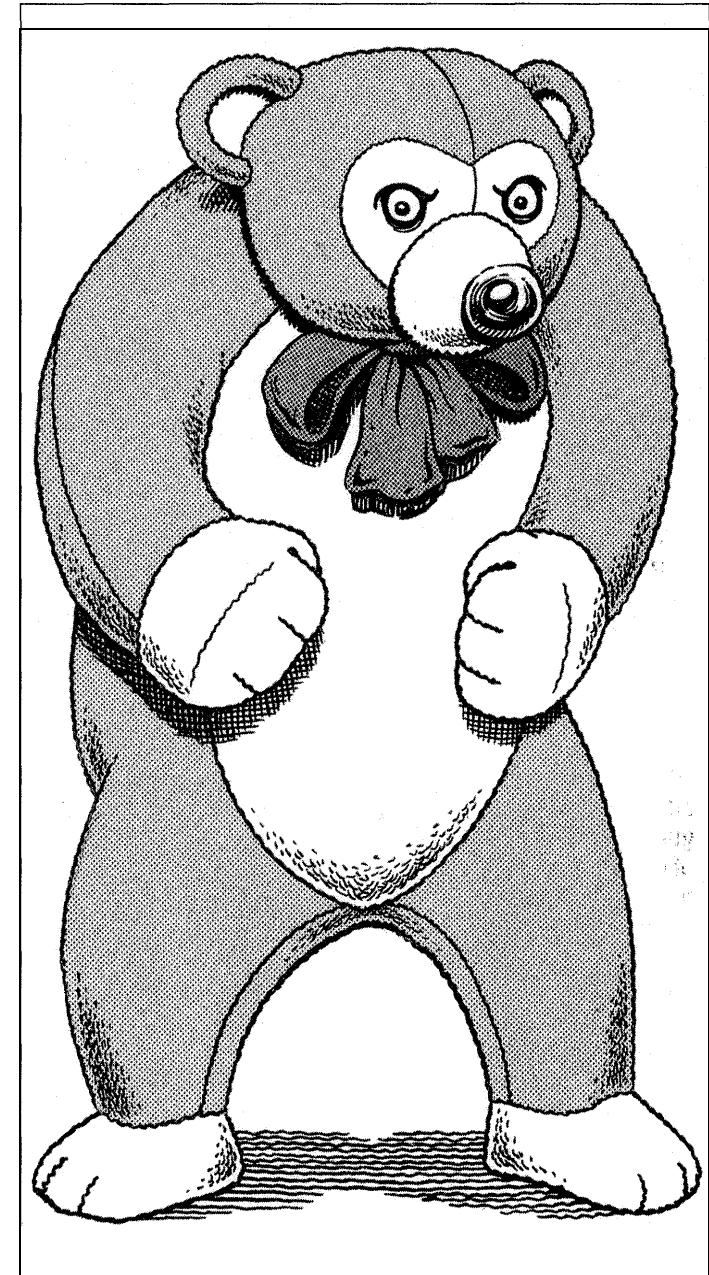
Plush golems are every parents nightmare. They are typically given as gifts to young children, usually by obnoxious aunts or uncles. Plush golems seem like ordinary stuffed animals at first, but eventually reveal their animated state of being to the children who own them. As the children treat their toy animals more and more like live creatures, the parents' frustration increases as the child insists that the toy be allowed to eat at the dinner table, go along on outings, and take part in other family activities to the nuisance of everyone.

Plush golems are finely crafted stuffed animals and may be made of velvet, cotton, or wool. They are usually stuffed with cotton batting, but are sometimes partly filled with dried beans. They may be created in realistic colors to represent a real bear, panda, lion, or tiger, or they may be fabricated into fantastic creatures such as pink elephants, purple rabbits, or lime green monkeys.

Of particular note are plush golems in the form of a large purple-and-green dinosaur. For some unknown reason, these have been seen in great numbers in recent years, and have an affect of aversion and fear in individuals over 12 years of age. Upon viewing such a creature, persons over 12 must roll a saving throw vs. paralyzation or be struck dumb for 2 rounds.

Also of note are plush golems in the form of a small striped tiger. These are far more rare than the purple dinosaurs. Children who receive the tigers as gifts suddenly seem to find themselves in more trouble with their parents than normal, find that no amount of cleaning will keep their bedrooms neat, and that they have trouble concentrating on schoolwork.

**Combat:** Plush golems never attack individuals under 16 years of age. They attack only when provoked or when the children of the household are threatened. They gain the element of surprise, since most adults never suspect the possibility of the creature's animation. Although they are weak in combat, they often provide enough distraction for a child to escape a dangerous situation.



These creatures are immune to *sleep*, *hold*, *paralysis*, and cold-based spells. They are immune to heat-based spells but suffer normal damage from fire-based spells. Plush golems suffer only half damage from bludgeoning weapons. They instinctively react to the commands of the children who receive them as gifts.

**Ecology:** Like all golems, the plush golem is a manufactured creature and has no place in nature. They are created only through magical means.

A priest of at least 11th level can create a plush golem through extensive ritual, preparation of the stuffed figure, and use of the following spells: *prayer*, *commune*, and *animate object*.

A wizard of at least 14th level must cast *fabricate*, *geas*, and *limited wish* following the construction of the stuffed figure and extensive preparatory rituals.





## Bringing the adventures closer to home

by Bryan Hudson

illustrated by Scott Rosema

t happens to every party, eventually. They've done it all: answered the summons of kings, heard the cries of fair maidens, stumbled onto ancient ruins, and listened to the pleas of frightened townspeople; they've beaten the ogre hoard, foiled the thieves' guild, and stopped the plot against the throne; they've accumulated all the wealth they need and all the magical items they want. They're worn out, and, frankly, the next time they hear a maiden calling, they might just let the dragon have a decent meal.

The DM knows this. He sits in front of his books, wondering how to motivate the party to action. He realizes that his player's enthusiasm just wasn't there last week, as they tried to protect yet another noble from assassination. He's flipping through books, magazines, anything for an idea, when Mom walks in.

"Take out the trash," she says. It is not a tone to be argued with.

And it's as he's hauling plastic sacks full of empty cartons and last weeks meat loaf to the curb that he grumbles to himself, "She's darn lucky I'm her son, or there's no way she'd be able to order me around. I'd never haul trash for some stranger. Not without a paycheck, or a thousand gold piece bounty..."

Suddenly, inspiration!

His player's characters aren't nobodies, created from nothing just to fight evil. They must have a past, and somewhere in that past there must be a family. And who's to say that family won't run into their adventurous relative sometime during his or her career? And who's to say they might not need some help?

Excited, the DM picks up the phone.

"Hi, Bob? Tell me a little about Malon the Merciful..."

The family can be a great motivating factor in real life. It can also be used quite successfully in the AD&D® game, or any other RPG, to get players and characters to stretch their necks out, to go that extra mile, to do that one crazy stunt that they probably

wouldn't do for a jewel

or treasure. It can also give another dimension of believability to the DM's campaign world, as well as to the characters that populate it and the PCs who adventure in it. back centuries— Beowulf centers on father's kinsmen — recognized in some of literature. Take, for example, the Majere twins, Raistlin and Caramon, from the DRAGONLANCE® novels. Two brothers — one physically strong, one magically so — spawned an entire trilogy of novels based on their relationship with each other and the challenge one of them faces when he must seek out, and possibly kill, his errant sibling. The conflict made each character what he was; neither would have been as interesting, or as real, without the presence of the other, and the twins would not be two of the most popular characters in fantasy literature today. From the same series one can also find Sturm Brightblade, a knight errant whose father is the most important thing in his life and the motivating factor for nearly everything he does. Again, the character is defined by his ties with his family; it gives him substance and believability. It can do the same in your campaign.

And using the family is convenient, if nothing else. When the DM is in desperate need of ideas, the players and their characters can provide a plethora of interesting — and often viable — plot lines. Bringing relatives into your campaign can also be useful if you've been having troubles with Monty Haul and want to slow down treasure accumulation among your players. Lets face it — no true Chaotic Good warrior is going to ask for reward money from his favorite uncle or the cousin he loved like a brother when the two were children.

Finally, using the family is a great way to make your gaming group feel more connected to their characters, the campaign, and the world in which it all takes place. Simply have them sit down and write a paragraph or so about their characters' backgrounds: parents, siblings, homelands, or whatever else they can come up with. The DM can even help in this process, offering up ideal homelands and other world-pertinent information to the players. Now, most players have at least some idea of character background already; its one of the keys to role-playing a PC's personality (and anything that encourages role-playing is good, right?). Having players write down their character histories not only solidifies the past into tangible form but also confers a number of advantages: it supplies the DM with ideas for potential future plot lines; it gives players some "creative power" in the campaign (they just eat this up); and it allows players to become familiar with their characters' families. If the DM simply takes it upon himself to create a character's lineage, typical PC reactions will most likely run along the lines of, "Malon's cousin who?" This way, player reaction will be something more like, "Oh, wow! Cousin Rothgar! We used to play together as kids on Uncle Brenuar's farm, out in the Hill Lands..." Essentially, it can help players gain some familiarity with a campaign world they may know little about.

There are a number of ways in which the family can be worked into an adventure, each one rife with possibilities. Some of the easiest (and most enjoyable) are listed below.

## Family matters

*He shouldn't be out here. Jeosep was a cleric, not a fighter; he'd barely hefted a mace before, let alone been in combat with an unruly owlbear. But the farm was his home, the sheep were all his family had left, and as long as anything threatened them, he'd be in the field, night after night, ready to defend it. So let the beaked horror beware.*

This first is perhaps the simplest way to bring family into the campaign. It can begin with a PC going home, whether having been called there or just visiting between adventures, or with the sudden appearance of said family at his doorstep. However it happens, it soon becomes evident that his family has a problem and that they need a warrior (or mage, or thief, or priest) to help solve it. Professional help was much too expensive, so they decide to ask their adventuring cousin, Garek the Great, to take care of things – for free, of course. The “problem” can be just about anything. Perhaps an uncle has gone missing, and the PCs must track him down; perhaps the family estate is being plagued by bothersome undead, or worse; perhaps local trouble threatens the family home; or, perhaps, just about anything. The possibilities are limited only by the DM's imagination.

Obviously, this method is fairly straightforward. In its simplest form, it merely brings spice to an otherwise normal adventure, or adds a minor spin to a pre-published module. Don't let such simplicity fool you, however; it can change a player's attitude about an adventure immensely. Most PCs will be more willing to fight the dragon if, instead of an anonymous maiden, it's their dear old mother calling for help.

## Sibling rivalry

*"Are you sure this is the right caravan?"*

*Eddinna looked down from her place between the casks and smiled. "Of course I'm sure, Garek. I was practically raised by Kam; I know his tastes like the back of my own hand."*

*"But the blokes been robbin' rich men and tax collectors; why would he risk hittin' a wagon full of wine?"*

*"Because Alderblossom Wine is his weakness; there's no way he'll be able to resist it. Now shush, and keep your head down. I think I hear a horse approaching."*

Also known as “My Brother's Keeper,” this scenario begins with a brother or sis-

ter (or other relation) of a PC causing trouble for a town or city, or perhaps even an entire kingdom; the exact type of trouble could be, as with “Family Matters” above, anything the DM wishes, so long as it is severe enough to get the local authorities desperate for help. Normal means of stopping the rogue prove to be useless, and so, having nowhere else to turn, they call in the “expert” on their problem: the PC.

DMs will find this scenario opens up a number of character-developing possibilities. First, the PCs will probably want to find a way to stop their errant sibling without killing him; after all, he is family. It's usually about this time that the players regret having ignored those net and bola weapon proficiencies (and warriors with empty slots decide to scoop them up). It can also give the PC something of an upper hand in tracking down the sibling. If a PC's history sheet says that her brother Angar always enjoyed the sea, then the DM might want to give the sibling a hideout on the waterfront, or a disguise as a sailor or captain. Then, if the PC is quick enough, she might decide to check out the sibling's favorite stomping grounds, “just in case.”

This scenario also opens up a number of future plot lines to the DM. Perhaps the “evil” sibling isn't truly evil but a pawn under the control of some higher power; in this case, a second adventure could be centered on tracking down and stopping this power. Or perhaps the sibling works out of desperation or great need and, in the end, convinces the PC to join him in his cause.

This plot can also be used against the PCs in campaigns where a Chaotic Evil PC is causing problems for the DM and/or the campaign. In this situation, it is the sibling who is called in by the local authorities to track down and stop the mischievous PC (and his companions, if they are a party to it). Or perhaps an evil baron wishes to stop the band of do-gooder PCs from roaming around his kingdom and cheering up the townspeople, and so calls in the wicked (but knowledgeable) sibling to take care of things.

## Opposing sides

*When he and his companions had been captured by the thieves guild, Malon hadn't been concerned. When he'd been captured once again after an unsuccessful jail break, he'd been only slightly worried. Even when he'd been dragged to the torture chamber he'd steeled himself ready for any pain they could deal out. But now, looking into that*

*grizzled, oh-so familiar face, and at the knurled hands holding the horsewhip so comfortably, Malon was suddenly very, very afraid. For he knew those hands and that whip. He'd felt them in action before, in his youth, and the memories were far from pleasant.*

*“F—Father...?”*

Extremely similar to “Sibling Rivalry” above, this little trick isn't sprung on the players until the end of the adventure, after they've battled their way through the monster hordes and into the deepest depths of the Mad Wizard's dungeons. They pick the lock and disarm the trap on the final door in their path, slay the guards, and burst through... only to have one of the characters suddenly shout, “Oh-my-gosh, Vall! You're the Mad Wizard!” Obviously, this can throw a PC for a loop. It can also cause some intra-party conflict (not always a bad thing), when the rest of the team decides that, hey, they've fought this far, and they're being paid to bring in his head. They don't care who the Mad Wizard is; the axe is coming out.

## Family feud

*Pwyll Backstabber skulked through the alleyway, his back against the wall. Ahead of him, oblivious, was his target: Eddinna Pinesprig, sister of the witch who'd robbed him of his only treasure and humiliated him before an entire tavern of drunken warriors. Well, she'd soon regret it. They all would. For killing her would be much too easy; she'd not suffer the way Pwyll had. But to eliminate those she loved, one by one, that was a different matter, entirely...*

This scenario typically begins with an unsuccessful attempt on the PC's life (and the escape or death of the attacker). The next night, another assault is made, and the next night another; this continues until the PC realizes that someone is out to get her, and she decides to find out why. Throughout the ensuing adventure, the PC finds that it is not only she who is being stalked; someone (or a group of someones) has called out a vendetta against the PC's entire family... and relatives are being picked off one by one. It could be a blood war between families, or the revenge of a thieves guild cheated by a relative, or even the erratic actions of a madman obsessed with destroying what he sees as “a great evil in the world.” Whatever the reason, it sets the party up for a whole series of adventures. The first could be a search for clues in an attempt to find the reasons behind the

killings, while dodging a wave of assassins out for PC blood. In the second (and beyond), the party could attempt to save the PC's family while stopping the menace, peacefully or otherwise.

For a different slant on this scenario, the PC could receive word that her family members are being murdered. When she goes to investigate (and possibly avenge) the murders, she finds that the culprit is an enemy of hers, an evil NPC from one of the PCs' earlier adventures; angry at the foiling of some evil plot, he's decided to get revenge in the worst way possible. At its best, this particular scenario can wreck havoc with a PC's guilty conscience. ("He's killing them because of me!") and sense of honor ("This time, I must stop him for good!").

## The teen idol

*"Everybody down!" hissed Eddinna, diving behind a rock. The rest of the party followed suit. In the distance, the clanking of bugbear armor could be heard approaching. "That's a whole army out there; I suggest we backtrack and wait for them to pass."*

*"What?" piped up Kip, the newest – and youngest – member of the party. "Run away? I most certainly will not! I won't stand for it. And neither will Malon. Will you, uncle?"*

*"Kip –*

*"Come on! I've heard your stories. Lets dive into the middle of them and really give them a 'once over.'" The boy pulled his small, dented sword from its sheath and stepped to the forefront.*

*"Kip!"*

*"Avast, foul varlets, and beware! Kip the Disemboweler comes to bring your doom!"*

*"Uh, guys," Malon mumbled apologetically, "I've got to go after him..."*

This scenario can be the most fun for the DM, and the most frustrating for the PCs. It is not an adventure, so to speak, but the inclusion of an NPC into the party: a young relative of one of the PCs who wants nothing more than to be like his (or her) older relative. So, as soon as he reaches the proper age, he gets himself a sword and a cheap suit of leather armor, and sets out to train under the tutelage of his kinsman and idol, the PC – whether the PC likes it or not.

The amount of spice that such an NPC lends to a campaign can be enormous. First, he's comic relief – the "lighter side" of more serious adventures. He's the one who leaps out boldly to face the dragon, only to soil his shorts and run when he finally catches sight of the beast; he's the

one who tries to open the locked door... not with lockpicks, but with his head. He can also be quite a headache, throwing in an extra bit of challenge when the PCs are having too easy a time: he's the one who bravely charges the enemy when the rest of the party tries to hide, or the one who accidentally drops and shatters the one vial of potion that would have peacefully stopped a rampaging creature. Or simply getting in the way – trying to read over the mage's shoulder as the mage studies his spells, or doing his best to help the warrior with his armor but succeeding only in making the operation take twice as long.

Not to say that such a character is all pain and suffering for the PCs. Most people have at least some redeeming qualities, and the NPC should be no different. Perhaps he is a trained leatherworker or metalsmith and agrees to fix the PC's armor for free. Or maybe he's a trained healer, or even just a good cook; anything to make him useful to have around. Even a person skilled in mending tarps or making tunics can be of use sometime.

Despite any usefulness, the players could quickly begin to dislike such a character, not to mention the DM behind it, so the "Teen Idol" scenario should be used in a campaign only after careful forethought. In fact, in some campaigns the best thing to do is to introduce the character not as an NPC but as a PC under the control of another player, perhaps one who has just joined the group, or an extremely good role-player.

New players are an especially good choice because they can be naturally brash or daft anyways, without too many cues from the DM. The character can then develop as the player does; he'd become smarter, quicker, better, and, eventually, a valuable party member (and imagine the pride that will swell in your PC's chests as they fill the roles of teachers).

## The legacy

*Garek stared at the letter he'd found at the bottom of his fathers chest. The name, the symbol; none of it made any sense. Yet it was his fathers writing...*

*"Don't worry, kid," said Malon from behind him, laying a comforting hand on his shoulder, "We'll figure it out. So yer dad kept a few things from ya. It's no big deal. It happens. Jeosep said the symbol looked familiar, which means this 'secret' society can't be too secret, and I'm sure that with a little gold we'll be able to track down this "Talin" fella*

*in no time. Okay?"*

*Garek nodded, but kept silent. Okay? Not really. Garek might not even be who he thought he was... or what he thought he was, if this mention of elves meant anything.*

This thread begins with an unexpected message for a PC: a parent has died, the family is in mourning, and could the PC please come back home and claim what his parent has left for him? When the PC returns home (hopefully with faithful party members in tow), he finds something unexpected. Be it a letter, or a map, or a mysterious dagger, something left behind by the deceased puts the PC (and his friends) on the trail of some hidden part of the parent's life, and of what turns out to be a mysterious legacy that affects the PC, too. How it affects the PC can be – as has been the running theme – just about anything. There could even be evidence that it was for this secret for which the parent died... or was murdered. Or, in some instances, the legacy – whatever it may be – could come to seek out the PC even as the PC is searching for it.

I've found that this plot line tends to get some of the strongest reaction from players. Most will like the idea of hidden parts of which their PC was unaware; some won't like the idea of the DM messing with their preconceived backgrounds. Either way, players tend to project the feeling into their characters, and role-play them as characters who are either intrigued at this mysterious twist in their life or angry at their family for hiding the secret for so long. In both cases, they will approach the adventure with renewed vigor.

The above list is not all inclusive. It is merely a jumping off point, a quick start for DMs who want to bring another dimension to their campaigns, and for players who want to add another level to their characters. The suggested plots are purposely generalized so as to fit in with anything the DM can envision, or anything the players can suggest. Used properly, the family can – and will – bring new life into your game, and who knows? Your players may never ask for reward money again.



Bryan Hudson is a student at Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant, Michigan. He also writes comic books. This is his first appearance in DRAGON® MAGAZINE.



# Network News

by Scott Douglas

The RPGA® Network is the world's largest game club, with over 9,500 members around the world. Network members often meet through gaming activities at conventions and through forming their own clubs either in their communities or on-line.

Network members receive the POLYHEDRON® Newszine monthly. The newszine helps keep members informed, with articles both from members and from well-known industry authors. In addition, the Network sanctions member-written tournaments at local conventions and game shops, and tournaments in Call of Cthulhu\*, Shadowrun\*, Star Wars\*, the AD&D® game, and many other popular game systems.

For more information about any of the Network's programs, write to: RPGA Network, 201 Sheridan Springs Rd., Lake Geneva, WI 53147, or send e-mail to: rpgahq@aol.com.

In the month of April, a unique role-playing event will involve almost 1,500 AD&D® game fanatics, all playing through the same adventures almost

simultaneously across the continent. This year's "Weekend in RAVENS BLUFF™" convention will be held at 12 separate venues from San Francisco to Orlando, from Honolulu to Toronto. You are cordially invited to participate.

Here's a great opportunity for you to discover the fun of the RPGA® Network, particularly the Networks most successful program: RAVENS BLUFF, the LIVING CITY™. And all you need to do to get involved is to contact one of the site coordinators (listed below) or me, either through e-mail or snail-mail.

The participants in this "hands across America" sort of event will be running their own player characters through five separate, member-written scenarios. You can choose to play one, two, or all five, even if you've never played in the LIVING CITY campaign before.

RAVENS BLUFF veterans will be standing by to help you create your character. I briefly summarized the character generation process in January's DRAGON® MAGAZINE (issue #225). Character sheets and creation guidelines will also be available.

The city of RAVENS BLUFF especially needs adventurers right now: it is cur-

rently under siege. Humanoid bands swept down from the Earthfast mountains in recent weeks, devastating holdings in the eastern plains and fighting their way right up to the city gates. The city's religious knights, led by the high priest of Tempus, broke up the attack in a brilliant sally.

Nearby Procampur offered troops to shore up battered defenses, but an untimely landslide closed Elvenblood Pass, completely blocking the land route on the High Trail from Procampur. Sarreenar itself has been the scene of humanoid raids of late, leading many to believe that a cunning intelligence lies behind the situation.

If you've the mettle to join the embattled adventurer community of RAVENS BLUFF, here's your chance. Contact your local event coordinator today!



*Scott Douglas is the RPGA® Network Coordinator, making him the head Dungeon Master for the LIVING City, the world's largest shared-world campaign.*

\*indicates a product produced by a company other than TSR, Inc.

## Join over 3,500 players in the largest continuing AD&D® game adventure in the FORGOTTEN REALMS®, the LIVING CITY™ A Weekend in RAVENS BLUFF™ 2

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San Francisco, CA  
Chris McGuigan  
2010 Hillside Dr  
Burlingame, CA 94010

### CapCon

Columbus, OH  
Patrick Connolly  
2509 Deming Ave  
Columbus, OH 43202

April 20-21:

### Ville-Con

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Sam Frazier II  
611 North Buchanan #A  
Maryville, MO 64468

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Don Weatherbee  
86A Dafrack Drive  
Lake Hiawatha, NJ 07034



## Second Edition Palladium Fantasy RPG™

### The "Rifts®" of fantasy gaming

The Second Edition Palladium Fantasy RPG is a dramatically revised and updated second edition of the original fantasy game rules — the first significant revision since its release in 1983.

Kevin Siembieda is personally writing the comprehensive second edition and had this to say:

"The fantasy RPG is the game that launched my company and has been its cornerstone for over a decade. The fans love this game as much as I do, so the second edition will be true to the original, but more fun and detailed than ever before. Not only will it be completely compatible with Rifts® and all our other RPGs, but it will be the *Rifts of fantasy gaming* — epic fantasy adventure, limited only by the player's imagination!"

"I guess I'm pulling a 'George Lucas,' because I'm going back to update and retool the game as the high fantasy world I have always envisioned. Loyal Palladium RPG fans and those discovering the fantasy game for the very first time will *not* be disappointed." The emphasis on the Second Edition will be on making the game better than ever, with clean, entertaining descriptions, exciting concepts, quick playability, and a better presentation of information and ideas.

The end result will be the first step into the bold and dangerous world of *high fantasy*. A world of magic and conflict. A world dominated by human civilization built on the bones of the non-humans who reigned before them. A world of unparalleled heroic adventure filled with magic, inhuman creatures and intrigue!

#### The Second Edition will Feature:

- The addition of the S.D.C. system, along with hit points.
- An emphasis on characters and role-playing.
- More world information and history.
- Clearer rules and information.
- More skills (and less clumsy charts).
- More equipment.
- New cover and great, new artwork by Siembieda, Martin, Post, and McKenna.

**Available at hobby and book stores everywhere!**

- The same great Occupational Character Classes and Racial Character Classes like the long bowman, paladin, diabolist, mind mage, changeling, wolfen, ogre, elf, faerie folk, and others. Plus dozens of optional player races and O.C.C.s as presented in *Monsters & Animals* and other Palladium fantasy RPG titles.
- The same great magic system, but modified to the P.P.E. system.
- The same great psionic powers and I.S.P. system.
- The same quick-playing combat and balanced game system.
- And for long-time fans, the changes, although significant, will *NOT* make the old edition RPG and sourcebooks completely obsolete. With a little modification, the new and old material can be made completely compatible! No stupid changes, we promise.
- Updated to fit in with Rifts®, Heroes Unlimited™, and the entire Megaverse®. Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- 320 pages! \$24.95, plus \$2.00 for postage and handling. Available at stores everywhere.

**The World of Palladium Fantasy™** is one of epic fantasy. Players can be any number of unique creatures such as the werewolf-like wolfen, the bearmen of the north, or the loathsome changeling who can assume the form of any humanoid creature. Additional player creatures include ogre, troll, goblin, orc, dwarf, elf, human, and dozens of optional races.

Magic is unparalleled, with the inclusion of the spell casting wizard, elemental aligned warlock, ward wielding diabolist, circle using summoner, psionically empowered mind mage, the metamorph druid and others.

Combat is realistic and fast playing. The world intriguing. If you play any of our other games then you're already familiar with the game mechanics. This is the original RPG system that all the other Palladium role-playing games grew out of.

### Second Editions

**Second Edition Book Two: Old Ones:** An updated version of the original title with rules modifications, new information about the Old Ones, additional new artwork and a new cover. Still contains the maps and descriptions of 34 major communities in and around the *Timiro Kingdom*. Plus adventure in the mysterious dwarven ruins known as the *Place of Magic*. The dreaded Old Ones and six adventures. Over 200 pages. \$16.95 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling.

**Second Edition Book Three: Adventures on the High Seas.** In addition to being a super-sourcebook that maps and explores the islands around the Palladium Continent, including the *Isle of the Cyclops*, the second edition includes a variety of additional new source material, magic items, magic curses, ship to ship combat, six adventures and ideas for a dozen more. Over 200 pages. \$16.95 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling.

**Second Edition Monsters & Animals** presents nearly a hundred new monsters. Many, like the Bearmen, Coyles, Rahu-men, Ratlings, and Lizard Mages, are optional races available as player characters. Most are quite new and original, not your usual repeat of monsters from myth. This sourcebook also contains 200 different, real life animals, all with complete stats and maps indicating their location in the Palladium Fantasy World. The updated version makes it even more *compatible with Rifts and the entire Megaverse*. Over 180 pages. \$16.95 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling.

**Palladium Books' 32 page Catalog** presents our entire Megaverse® of RPGs, sourcebooks, T-shirts and other role-playing products. Only 75 cents, postage included.

### The Old Kingdom Mountains™ (new) and Old Kingdom Lowlands™ (new)

These two books are being delayed until the Spring and Summer of 1996. They will be preceded by the *new Second Editions* of The Palladium Fantasy RPG, Second Edition Adventures on the High Seas, Second Edition Monsters & Animals, and Second Edition Old Ones. Each with updated rules and new material. The Old Kingdom books and all subsequent fantasy titles will be updated and improved as well.

**Palladium Books®**      12455 Universal Drive  
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## THE ARCANE CHALLENGE

TSR's biggest contest ever has the gaming community talking. The ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® TRIATHLON™: The Arcane Challenge Contest is designed to test your skill and knowledge playing the world's most popular role-playing game, while you have a whole lot of fun finding the answers to 100 trivia questions in ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS products past and present.

You must have an AD&D TRIVIATHLON Contest Entry Poster to enter. If you already received a copy with your polybagged issue of *Dragon® Magazine* in March, you're set. If you don't have an Entry Poster, you can still get one at your favorite store where TSR games and books are sold. There's a chance the store just might still have a copy from their March *Dragon® Month* promotion left. Please do not call TSR! The posters are sent only to TSR retailers. TSR cannot guarantee that the demand for these posters will not exceed the supply.

TSR employees, including Rob Taylor and TSR online staff members, cannot help you with your TRIVIATHLON answers.

For everyone who needs a clue or two, TSR has established the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS TRIVIATHLON Clue Line at 1-900-420-CLUE (1-900-420-2583). Each day you will receive a different, prerecorded clue for one, or possibly two, of the 100 AD&D Triviathlon questions in sequential order. The Clue Line began on March 1, 1996 with the clue for Question #1. The last day you can get a clue, which will be the clue for Question #100, is May 31, 1996. Each clue is available for one day only. The cost is 90¢ per minute and the average call is two minutes. If you are under 18 years of age, you must obtain your parents' permission before calling. You can

## Knowledge is the power to win fantastic prizes!

by Jeanine N. Mielecki

## Imagine winning one of these fantastic prizes:

- First Prize is your choice of a trip for two to either the Spanish GENCON® Game Fair in Barcelona held in November, 1997, or the Euro GENCON Game Fair in England in September, 1997. First Prize includes airfare, accommodations, free admission, and \$500 in spending money.

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## 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 guideline must be observed.

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

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

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

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

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

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® MAGAZINE, 201 Sheridan Springs Rd., Lake Geneva WI 13147, 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.).



## April

### East Coast Hobby Show

'96

**March 30–April 1 PE**  
Fort Washington Expo Center, Philadelphia. Write to: East Coast Hobby Show, 4400 N. Federal Highway, Suite 210, Boca Raton, FL 33431.

### Conquest '96

**April 5–8**

Melbourne University High School, Melbourne. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: demos and dealers. Conquest, 40 Glenlyon Rd., Brunswick, Victoria 3056, Australia, or e-mail: puche@ariel.uce.unimelb.edu.au.

### Minicon M31

**April 5–7**

**MN**  
Radisson Hotel South, Bloomington. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: dealers, a masquerade, and an art show. Minicon 31, P.O. Box 8297 Lake Street Station, Minneapolis, MN 55408.

### Oeontacon

**April 12–14**

**NY**  
Morris Complex, SUNY College at Oneonta, Oneonta. Events: role-playing, card,

board, and miniatures games. Other activities: a masquerade ball and a dinner. Registration: \$11/weekend, or \$5/day. Write to: Kelly Loucks, 47 East St., Apt. #2, Oneonta, NY 13820.

### Op Con

**April 13**

**IL**  
Oak Park and River Forest High School, Oak Park. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniature games. Other activities: tournaments. Registration: \$4 pre-registered, \$6 on site. Ms. Pricel, c/o Oak Park and River Forest HS, 201 N. Scoville, Oak Park, IL 60302, or e-mail: schwerin@mcs.net.

### Eucon 1

**April 13–14**

**OR**  
Holiday Inn, Eugene. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Registration: varies. Write to: Eucon 1, P.O. Box 11594, Eugene, OR 97440, or e-mail: eucongame@aol.com.

### Organized Kahn-Fusion XVIII

**April 13–14**

**PA**  
American Legion Post #751, Enola. Events: role-playing and card games. Other activities: dealers and a miniatures painting contest. Registration: varies. M. Foner's

- ♦ Australian convention
- ★ Canadian convention
- European convention

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Games Only Emporium, 230 S. 8th St., Lemoyne, PA 17043.

### Kettering Game Convention XIV

**April 19–20**

**OH**  
Charles I. Lathrem, Sr., Center, Kettering. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: an auction and tournaments. Registration: \$3. Bob Von Gruenigen, 804 Willowdale Ave., Kettering, OH 45429.

### Northeast Wars

**April 19–21**

**VT**  
Radisson Hotel, Burlington. Special guests: Brian Nystul and Tim Olson. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: tournaments. Registration: \$10/day or \$25/weekend. Quarterstaff Games, 152 Church Street, Burlington, VT 05401.

### Pittsburgh Comicon

**April 19–21**

**PA**  
Expomart, Monroeville. Guests: Stan Lee, Ed Beard, Jr., and Timothy Bradstreet. Events: role-playing and card games. Registration: \$8/day, \$20/weekend. Write to: Comics World, 1002 Graham Ave., Windber, PA 15963.

### Important:

Dragon Magazine does not publish the numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

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

**Moncon I**  
**April 20** NJ  
Monmouth University Student Center, West Long Branch. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: tournaments and dealers. Registration: \$5. Moncon I, c/o Monmouth University Game Players Club, Monmouth University Student Services, Box 15, West Long Branch, NJ 07764, or e-mail: s0114216@Hawmail.monmouth.edu.

**Eye of the Basilisk**  
**April 20** ID  
Basque Center, Boise. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: auction and tournaments. Registration: \$5 preregistered, \$8 on site. The Game-Masters Guild, P.O. Box 8823, Boise, ID 83706, or e-mail: wmb@rowena.idbsu.edu.

**Chaoticon V**  
**April 20-21** WI  
University Union at the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$5/day or \$7/weekend. Chaoticon, Gamer's Club, UWGB Student Org Office, 2420 Nicolet Drive, Green Bay, WI 54311.

**Madison Games Con**  
**April 20-21** WI  
Downtown Arts and Activities Center, Madison. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: an auction and a RPGA® Network tournament. Pegasus Games, 341 State St., Madison, WI 53703.

**Please Name Our Con'96**  
**April 20-21** MI  
St. Clair County Community College, Port Huron. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: dealers and a raffle. PNOC, 204 Huron Ave., Port Huron, MI 48060.

**O-Con '96**  
**April 21-23** NY  
Morris Convention Center, Oneonta. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: workshops, demos, contests, and dealers. Registration: \$10 preregistered, \$12 on site. Buran Doyon, 5 Valleyview St., Oneonta NY, 13820, or e-mail: doyo96@snyoneva.cc.oneonta.edu.

**Wizard's Challenge XIV**  
**April 26-28** \*  
Travelodge Hotel, Regina, Saskatchewan. Guests: Skip Williams and Sam Chupp. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: dealers, films, and a banquet. Registration: \$20 Can. Ken McGovern, c/o Wizard's Challenge Society Inc., 2101 Broad St., Regina, SK, Canada S4P 1Y6.

**Conline XXI**  
**April 27-28**  
Held on the GEnie Network in the TSR Online Roundtable. Featuring LIVING CITY™, LIVING JUNGLE™, AND LIVING DEATH™ tournaments. E-mail: the.minstrel@genie.com.

**Noahcon '96**  
**April 27-28** OH  
Aqua Marine Resort, Avon Lake. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: tournaments, demos, a miniatures painting contest, and an auction. Registration: \$3/day. Matrix Games & Diversions, 5384 East Lake Road, Sheffield Lake, OH 44054.

**Conjuration**  
**May 3-5** OK  
Holiday Inn South, Broken Arrow. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Patricia Conner, 1825 E. 16th, Tulsa, OK 74104.

**Mage Con North 2**  
**May 3-5** SD  
Guests: Margaret Weis. Events: role-playing, card,

board, and miniatures games. Other activities: dealers, and costume, art, and painting contests. Write to: Mage Con North, P.O. Box 84828, Sioux Falls, SD 57118-4828 or e-mail: con@aol.com.

**Lehicon 6**  
**May 3-5** PA  
Day's Inn Conference Center, Allentown. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: demonstrations, dealers, art and miniatures contests, food drive, and blood drive. Registration: \$20 preregistered, \$25 on site. Write to: Lehicon 6, P.O. Box 556, Horsham, PA 19044.

**At-Last-a-Con 2**  
**May 4-5** MO  
Knights of Columbus Hall, Ferguson. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: a raffle and a painting contest. Registration: \$6 preregistered, \$10 on site. SAGA, P.O. Box 297, St. Ann, MO 63074.

**Roc of Ages**  
**May 10-12** NC  
Sheradon Airport Plaza, Charlotte. Guests: James Doohan, Gunnar Hansen, Barbara Leigh, Doug Bradley, and Allan Handelman. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: tournaments, an auction, films, and an art show. Registration: \$15 preregistered, \$25 on site. Write to: GOTH, 105 Honeywood Ct., Kissimmee, FL 34743

**Fantasy Fair 6**  
**May 12** \*  
Cresset Exhibition Centre, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: dealers and films. Bruce King, 1 The Hallards, Eaton Socon, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire, PE19 3QW, U.K.

**Saga**  
**May 17-20** \*  
Mama's Two in Sussex, New Brunswick. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Saga, P.O. Box 695, Sussex, NB, Canada E0E 1 P0.

**Eclipse '96**  
**May 24-26** MO  
Holiday Inn Convention Center in Columbia. Guests: Tom Dowd, Tony Diterlizzi, Zeb Cook, and Lester Smith. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: tournaments, dealers, anime, and a murder mystery. Registration: \$18 preregistered, \$20 on site. Eclipse '96, 27 N. 10th St., Columbia, MO 65201.

**SciFi Dreamin'**  
**May 24-26** PA  
Lycoming College Campus, Williamsport. Guests: Michael O'Hare, Tom Woodruff, Dr. Richard Erikson, Louise Kleba, and Inge Heyer. SciFi Dreamin', 1738 E. Third St. #197, Williamsport, PA 17701, or visit the web site at: http://www.hway.net/dreamin.

**Gamex**  
**May 24-27** CA  
LA Airport Wyndham Hotel, Los Angeles. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: a flea market, an auction, and dealers. Registration: \$25 preregistered, \$30 on site. Write to: Strategicon, 333 N. San Fernando Blvd., Burbank, CA 91502.

**3 Rivers Game Fest**  
**May 24-27** PA  
Pittsburgh Greentree Marriott Hotel, Pittsburgh. Guests: Peter Bromley, Dave Frank, and John Bohrer. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: An auction and tournaments. Registration: \$19.95 preregistered. Andon Unlimited, 3

*Continued on page 59*

# Ye Olde GEN CON<sup>®</sup> Countdown

**6 months**

ye shall submit your pre-reg form by June 30

**5 months**

ye shall persuade a friend to attend

**4 months**

ye shall wear a GEN CON T-shirt 'round the clock

**3 months**

ye shall commit to memory the rules

**2 months**

ye shall play to gain new character levels

**1 month**

ye shall stock up on Jolt and Mountain Dew

**20 days**

ye shall commit to memory your game schedule

**10 days**

ye shall sharpen your polyhedrals

**2 days**

ye shall count down the hours 'til GEN CON

**1 day**

ye shall get to the airport early and start gaming in the waiting area

**Game Ho!**

**CUT OUT AND MAIL OR FAX BY APRIL 15, 1996**

If you've already sent in for your registration packet, you don't need to request another one. Your registration packet will automatically be mailed in May!

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THE 29TH ANNUAL



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*The 29th Annual*

# GEN CON

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# Rogue's GALLERY

## Gangsters of the Underdark

by Keith "Pinball" Strohm

illustrated by the Brothers Filbach



Beyond the bitter house rivalries of the drow, beyond the alien machinations of the illithid, beyond the power hungry plans of duergar and svirfneblin, dwells a society so secret that most inhabitants of the Underdark are ignorant of its existence. Based as it is on greed and the unjust use of power, this society swells in number every day. Its adherents, known as gangsters, have long since abandoned such concepts as racial loyalty, preferring to organize themselves into artificial units, called "families." Each family contains an authoritative head, known as a Patriarch or Matriarch, and may count representatives of every Underdark race among its members.

Here are the true powers of Underdark culture. These gangsters and their "families" control many facets of life below the

surface, including trade, politics, and entertainment. Many "families" deal in "fixed" drider races, illegal drinking establishments, and the White Market (trade with disreputable surface dwelling merchants); no vice is left unexplored as these gangsters extend their influence throughout the caverns of the Underdark.

Until now, the only information on this hidden culture came from whispered tavern conversations and fanciful bard's tales. Thanks, however, to the incredible scholarship and research of one of Toril's preeminent sages, one Gerald of

Riveyra, reliable information on individual gangsters is now available. The following information is taken directly from the Forthright Band of Investigators' secret file, *Waterdeep's Most Wanted*.



# Gnormahlenvaey "Squeaky" Catoneriehn

7th-level thief

STRENGTH:	13
DEXTERITY:	17
CONSTITUTION:	10
INTELLIGENCE:	9
WISDOM:	7
CHARISMA:	8
AC:	1
THAC0:	17/20 (with Crossbow)
MOVE:	6
HIT POINTS:	35
ALIGNMENT:	LE
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Cast blindness, blur, and change self +2 to hit with stun dart/Squeaky voice attack.
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Only surprised on a 1/+2 save versus poison/+3 save vs. all other attacks/60% undetectable when still
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	40%
SIZE:	2' 9"

**Special Abilities/Bonuses:** 120' infravision. Gnomish ability to detect underground features (as in the *Player's Handbook*). Thieving abilities: as a 7th-level thief (but Read Languages at 0%).

Squeaky possesses a high pitched and physically grating voice. Anyone who listens to him for more than three rounds must make a Wisdom check to resist the temptation to smack him. This effect continues to build until Squeaky shuts up. Those who listen to the svirfneblin for more than a turn must make a saving throw vs. spell or go insane for 1-7 days.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Crossbow, dagger, and dart.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Begging, intimidation, and voice mimicry (poorly).

**Physical Appearance:** Squeaky is short (even for a svirfneblin) and wears oversized leather armor. His hair is wild and, like his face, usually covered in grime. His skin is dark gray, a color reflected in his eyes. He is never without his human-sized crossbow, a gift from his contacts in the "open air" market.

**Background:** Squeaky hails from a small community of svirfneblin in the Underdark. Unlike most of svirfneblin society, his village was largely matriarchal. His diminutive stature and gender made him the butt of every prank. Dejected, the young Squeaky left his village and wandered the Underdark, surviving through small-time thievery.

One day, he stumbled upon a gem-laden caravan. He crept up to the caravan and began to fill his pockets, but sadly his gnomish nature surfaced with a vengeance. The young thief cackled wildly as his dreams of wealth came closer to reality. The highly

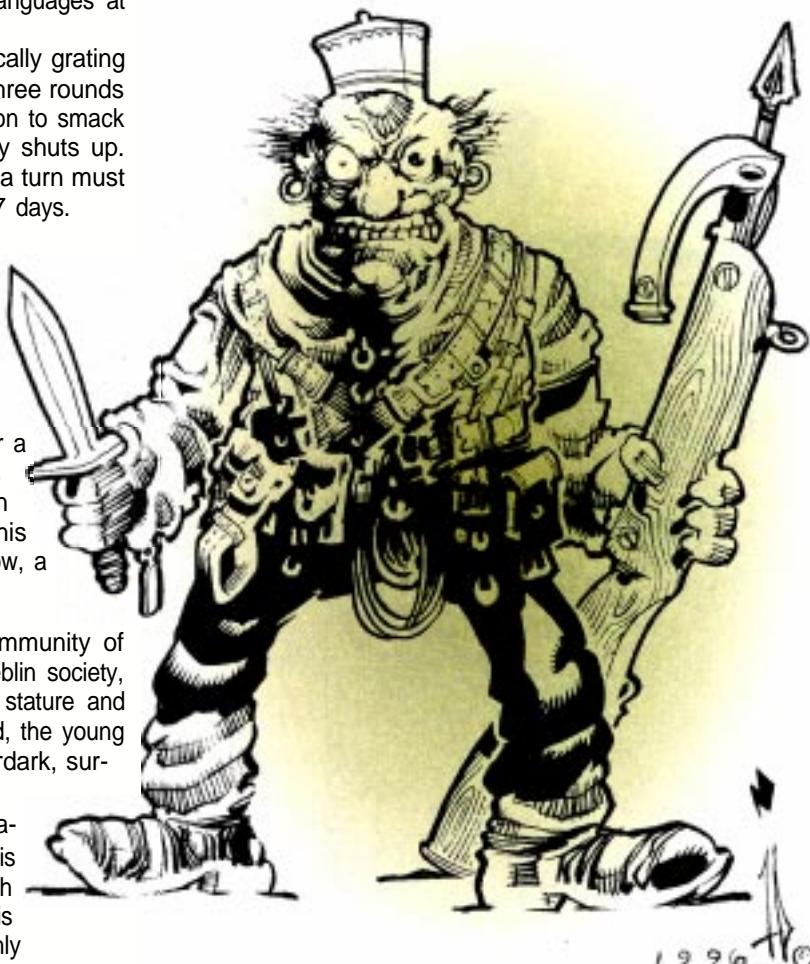
ant sound of Squeaky's cackle reached the caravan's guard. Squeaky was brought before the caravan master, who explained that the "goods" the gnome had attempted to steal actually belonged to a rather large "business consortium." Much groveling followed in which Squeaky protested his innocence and apologized for his theft all in the same breath.

It wasn't long before the caravan master, in an attempt to shut Squeaky up, offered him a job. Thus, Squeaky entered the ranks of the gangsters of the Underdark. Squeaky currently works as a "transaction facilitator" (a fence) for the various gangster families.

**Equipment:** Squeaky always wears his suit of oversized leather armor, as it makes him feel somewhat taller. In addition, he is never seen without "Da Crusha," his human-sized crossbow. He always shoots it before entering melee.

**Magical Items:** Squeaky usually carries a dagger +2 in a wrist sheath. In addition, he wears a magical copper piece around his neck. This magical item hums any time a law enforcement agent passes within 60'.

**Role-playing Notes:** Squeaky is simply an undersized bully. Years of abuse at the hands of larger svirfneblin and other creatures have fueled an intense desire for revenge. Now, as a representative of a powerful "business consortium," he feels that he can command the respect of others. After all, no one would dare lay a hand on a "family" member, would they? Thus, the gnome has concentrated on practicing the arts of intimidation (for which he is woefully inadequate).



It is quite common for the gnome to pick fights and mouth off to those he considers beneath him in an attempt to throw his "weight" around.

When in a situation that looks like it might erupt in violence, Squeaky always threatens to send his mother out to fight his opponent. His fellow gangsters find this trait amusing,

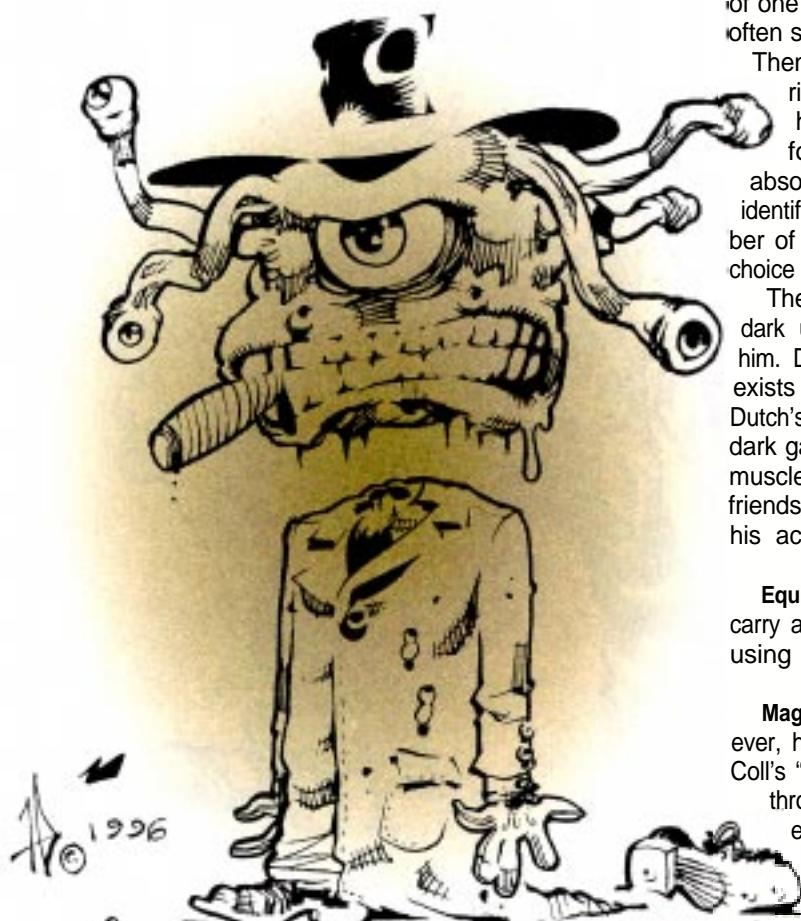
especially when Squeaky gets the tar beat out of him as a result of his silly posturing.

**Favorite Quotes:** "How you figure we gonna do dis, boss?" and "My mom, she ain't no lightweight; two foah, one fowty; she's a galeb duhr wid legs!"

# Vikhrum "100 gold" Coll

Standard Beholder Hit Man

STRENGTH:	Unknown
DEXTERITY:	Unknown
CONSTITUTION:	Unknown
INTELLIGENCE:	16
WISDOM:	7
CHARISMA:	4
AC:	0/2/7
THAC0:	9
MOVE:	Fl 3 (B)
HIT POINTS	55
ALIGNMENT:	LE
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Eye powers
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Anti-magic ray
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (5' in diameter)



**Special Abilities/Bonuses:** Coll has all of the abilities of a standard beholder.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** None.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Gambling, intimidation, and trailing.

**Physical Appearance:** Coll is an average-sized and particularly ugly beholder. His skin is gray and "pebbly." A long scar runs diagonally from the top of his body (near an eyestalk), across his central eye, and down to his underside. Coll claims that he received this scar in battle with an aboleth, but this has never been confirmed. Whatever its source, the scar gives Coll a more frightening aspect. This has given him one nickname he despises: people who call him "Scarhead" to his face tend to disappear. When in public, Coll wears an oversized fedora and levitates a long tan trenchcoat underneath him to simulate a torso. Coll also enjoys smoking rather fat (and stinky) cigars; he always has one hanging from his toothy maw.

**Background:** Vikhrum Coll was once a productive member of one of the largest beholder cities in the Underdark. It was often said that he was the "apple" of his Hive Mother's eyes.

Then, a fierce blow to the head during an attack against a rival city changed Coll's life. Though he survived, the head wound caused the beholder to suffer from a rare form of mania. Coll no longer shared his species' absolute paranoia for all things alien. In fact, Coll began to identify with other species, often confusing himself as a member of those species. Sadly, the ruling Hive Mother had no choice but to exile the demented Vikhrum.

The lonely beholder wandered the caverns of the Underdark until an illithid "businessman" named Dutch befriended him. Dutch introduced Coll into the glitzy hidden society that exists in the Underdark. Coll soon found his place among Dutch's friends and became a valued member of the Underdark gangsters. Currently, these gangsters use Coll as hired muscle. Occasionally, the beholder undertakes "hits" for his friends. His fee for these contracts is a mere 100 – hence his accepted nickname.

**Equipment:** Except for his trenchcoat and hat, Coll does not carry any useful equipment. He prefers to "rub out" his targets using his *disintegrate* eye power.

**Magical Items:** Coll does not carry any magical items; however, his cigars can be extremely noxious. Anyone exposed to Coll's "stinkers" for more than two rounds must make a saving throw vs. poison or begin helplessly retching, incapacitated for 1–4 turns.

**Role-playing Notes:** In addition to his physical repulsiveness, Coll's peculiar form of mania forces him to adopt the poor manners of every dreg in Underdark society. Coll is crude, sloppy, crass, arrogant, and just plain socially offensive. Very few of his gangster buddies actively seek out his company, though all respect (or fear) Coll too much to offend him by asking him to leave.

Another interesting aspect of Coll's mania manifests itself when he is pursuing a "contract." Despite the fact that he is quite different from the other humanoid races of the Under-

dark, Coll believes himself to be inconspicuous when trailing a target. While stalking, Coll "wears" his long trenchcoat and fedora, secure in the belief that no one can distinguish him from the many other inhabitants of gangster society. In fact, if someone were to point out his difference, Coll would adamantly refuse to believe it. The beholder has been known to kill anyone who presses this point.

**Favorite Quote:** "Duhh, ya want I should take care'a him, boss?"

## Brikhalna "Dutch" Ipprszhen

Illithid Businessman

STRENGTH:	I2
DEXTERITY:	9
CONSTITUTION:	13
INTELLIGENCE:	18
WISDOM:	14
CHARISMA:	16
AC:	5
THAC0:	11
MOVE:	12
HIT POINTS:	40
ALIGNMENT:	N
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Mind blast/Tentacle attack
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Magical Powers
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	90%
SIZE:	M (6' 3")

**Special Abilities:** Dutch possesses all of the abilities of a typical illithid. He can project a mind blast in a 60' long cone, and use his tentacles to devour the brain of a stunned victim. In addition, Dutch can use the following powers once per round as a 7th-level mage: *suggestion, charm person, charm monster, ESP, levitate, astral projection, and plane shift*.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Dutch sees himself as a cultured, urbane businessman and will never wield something so crude as a physical weapon in combat.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Brewing, etiquette, and gambling.

**Physical Appearance:** Dutch is a sophisticated businessman who likes to dress the part. He always wears formal robes or jackets and a top hat. Furthermore, he has trained his tentacles to hang in such a way as to resemble rather elegant mustaches. Dutch is rarely seen without a glass of his own home-brewed ale clutched in his hand.

**Background:** Long ago, Dutch rejected the domineering ways of his kind. The pursuit of absolute domination of the Underdark no longer held as much fascination for the peculiar illithid. Instead, he preferred the risks inherent in business transactions and gambling. So it was that the young Vinkhalna



left his people and began moving among the common races of the Underdark. Soon, Dutch was drawn in to the seedy world of gambling. After losing several fortunes playing the numbers, the illithid finally struck it rich by fixing drider races. Soon, the savvy businessman had just about every rich gambler owing him money and favors.

Eventually, Dutch settled down and became part owner of Gehirn Cibus, an extremely popular restaurant in the Underdark. Gradually, Dutch expanded this business to include a secret club or "Think Easy" for his companions. This club was connected to Gehirn Cibus by a secret cavern and soon became the most hopping "joint" in all of the Underdark – partially due to Dutch's extremely potent UnderDark Ales, which he serves with great frequency. Because Dutch's clientele often find themselves facing off across the business tables, the illithid has worked hard to make his Think Easy a completely neutral

territory, untouched by "family" rivalry or personal vendettas. A highly trained group of hidden drow assassins guarantees that the patrons of Dutch's club enjoy a peaceful evening.

**Equipment:** Dutch possesses only the finest clothes manufactured by the best tailors of the Underdark. He also enjoys fine cigars (Haba na'Kyubazs) and always have a few on hand to distribute to his friends.

**Magical Items:** Dutch has a *jug of alchemy* hidden in the brewing room of the Gehirn Cibus. He uses it to brew the finest ales in the entire Underdark.

**Role-playing Notes:** Dutch believes himself to be the most cultured member of his race and rigorously follows the social conventions of the "upper class." Although he sees himself as inherently greater than his gangster patrons, he respects their money and their physical power. Dutch seems to have a strong friendship with the much feared drow matriarch Felyndiira, though the two can always be seen arguing quite heatedly whenever they appear in public together.

**Favorite Quote:** "It's nothing personal, just business."

## Felyndiira "Mad Money" Shi'narrvha

12th-level mage/drow matriarch

STRENGTH:	14
DEXTERITY:	16
CONSTITUTION:	15
INTELLIGENCE:	18
WISDOM:	13
CHARISMA:	14
AC:	0
THAC0:	17
MOVE:	12
HIT POINTS:	46
ALIGNMENT:	CE
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Spells/Drow natural abilities
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Only surprised on a 1. Save vs. spells at +2
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	74%
SIZE:	4' 7"

**Special Abilities/Bonuses:** 120' infravision. Can use the following spells once per day: *dancing lights*, *faerie fire*, *darkness*, *levitate*, *know alignment*, and *detect magic*.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Dagger, dart, sling, and staff.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Ancient history, etiquette, herbalism, reading/writing, religion, and spellcraft.

**Physical Appearance:** Felyndiira is a stunningly attractive drow elf, though other members of her race find her coldly beautiful. She has delicate features that are set in what seems to be a permanent frown. As the head of a Noble House, Felyndiira normally dresses quite lavishly; she can usually be seen wearing expensive robes and finely cut silk.

**Background:** Felyndiira grew up as the eldest daughter of House Catanzaro, a powerful drow family. As the heir apparent to her House's fortune, Felyndiira had every advantage in drow society. Her natural curiosity and penchant for control led her to study magic with the greatest mages of Menzoberrazzan. Young and idealistic, Felyndiira believed that she



could singlehandedly change the face of drow society. With her at the helm, drow culture would take great leaps forward. Unfortunately, the capricious and totally self-absorbed nature of her race constantly thwarted her plans and completely destroyed her youthful idealism.

Convinced that her people are a scourge to all that is noble in the Underdark, Felyn seized control of her House and began a secret campaign to eradicate the drow. Using the fortunes at her command, the powerful mage adopted the name "Mad Money" and quickly rose to the top of gangster society. Now she uses the power and prestige of the Catanzaro "family" to foster distrust between all of the other gangster families. Her eventual hope is that she can spark a giant gang war that will eradicate most of the drow.

**Equipment:** Felyndiira usually carries her drow dagger in a wrist sheath. In addition, the leader of House Catanzaro has developed a fondness for hats of all kinds.

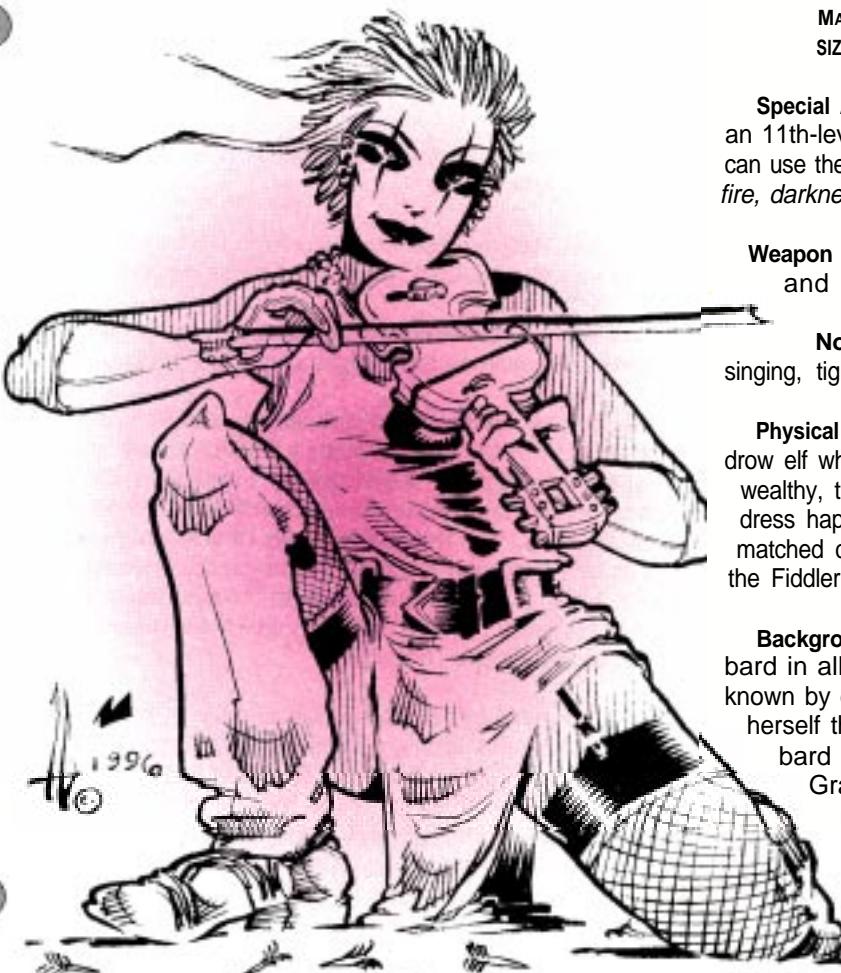
**Magical Items:** Though she has access to almost any kind of magical items, Mad Money usually carries the following: *bracers of defense AC 2*, a *ring of spell turning*, a *wand of fireballs*, and a *staff of the magi*. In addition, the drow wears a powerful *ring of wishes* in her navel.

**Role-playing Notes:** Because her high ideals have been shattered by the shortcomings of other drow, Mad Money refuses to trust anyone else but herself. In addition, she is high-

ly misanthropic and believes that everyone she meets is selfish, strange, and out to get her. As a precaution, Mad Money never sits with her back to any living creature and usually attacks (either verbally or physically) anyone who enters her personal "space." Recently, she *polymorphed* several wolverines into drow form. She constantly keeps this "Wolverine Security Shield" around her. Many business associates and would-be suitors have fallen beneath the ferocity of Mad Money's defenses.

**Favorite Quote:** "Is it important? No? Good – now go away!"

## **Gray'shivnarien** "THE FIDDLER" **Taliain** 11 th-level drow bard



<b>STRENGTH:</b>	16
<b>DEXTERITY:</b>	18
<b>CONSTITUTION:</b>	15
<b>INTELLIGENCE:</b>	15
<b>WISDOM:</b>	14
<b>CHARISMA:</b>	17
<b>AC:</b>	0
<b>THAC0:</b>	15
<b>MOVE:</b>	12
<b>HIT POINTS:</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>ALIGNMENT:</b>	CN
<b>SPECIAL ATTACK:</b>	Spells/Drow abilities
<b>SPECIAL DEFENSES:</b>	Only surprised on a 1. Save vs. spells at +2
<b>MAGIC RESISTANCE:</b>	72%
<b>SIZE:</b>	4' 7"

**Special Abilities:** The Fiddler possesses all of the abilities of an 11th-level bard. In addition, she has 120' infravision and can use the following spells once per day: *dancing lights*, *faerie fire*, *darkness*, *levitate*, *know alignment*, and *detect magic*.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Crossbow, short bow, short sword, and dagger.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Artistic ability, dancing, singing, tightrope walking, and local history.

**Physical Appearance:** The Fiddler is an extremely attractive drow elf who practically oozes charisma. Although she is quite wealthy, the fiddler's unstable mental condition causes her to dress haphazardly. She can usually be seen wearing a mismatched collection of leathers, robes, and tunics. In addition, the Fiddler practically covers her face with thick paints.

**Background:** Gray'shivnarien was once the most talented bard in all of the Underdark and her compositions were known by drow and duergar alike. Unfortunately, she found herself the target of an illithid hit man hired by a jealous bard of the notorious Montrony "family." Although Gray'shivnarien escaped with her life, the illithid's mind blast destroyed her sanity. Now she wanders around the Underdark as the Fiddler, an enigmatic (and unstable) figure almost totally engrossed in her music.

Sources report that the Fiddler has been taken in by House Catanzaro and trained as a hit man.

Gangster society is already abuzz with rumors of her prowess and more than one "family" member has been heard to say, Be careful, or the Fiddler's gonna play for you."

**Equipment:** The Fiddler always carries around her trademark fiddle. This instrument, however, has been deviously altered. Whenever she wishes, the Fiddler can shoot poison-coated darts out of this instrument while she plays. Victims must save vs. poison at -2 or slowly die.

**Magical Items:** Unconfirmed rumors report that the Fiddler carries her instrument in a magical case. On command, this case can shoot 1d4 *magic missiles* at any given target.

**Role-playing Notes:** The Fiddler is quite mad and wanders in her own mysterious reality filled with the echoes of frantic music. She usually ignores anyone who attempts to engage her in conversation unless the person is one of her intended targets. Though Gray'shivnarien once detested violence, her new persona seems to revel in it as a counterpoint to some wild melody that only she can hear. The Fiddler prefers to get to know her "hit" before striking and usually asks her victim to request a song before killing him. This can be quite disconcerting to the general public when she looks for requests when she plays at Dutch's "Think Easy."

**Favorite Quote:** "Okay, tough guy, it's time to face the music."

## Sir Elliot of Kness 14th-level paladin



STRENGTH:	17
DEXTERITY:	15
CONSTITUTION:	15
INTELLIGENCE:	13
WISDOM:	14
CHARISMA:	18
AC:	1
THAC0:	7
MOVE:	12
HIT POINTS:	111
ALIGNMENT:	LG
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Cast spells
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	<i>Immune to disease; cure disease, circle of protection, heal 28 hp/day.</i>
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	N i l
SIZE:	6'3"

**Special Abilities/Bonuses:** Sir Elliot has all of the abilities of a 14th-level Paladin.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Crossbow (specialization), dagger, longsword (specialization), quarterstaff, and long bow.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Fire-building, land-based riding, herbalism, information gathering, trailing, and religion.

**Physical Appearance:** Elliot is a tall, muscular human with strongly chiseled features. He wears a long trenchcoat and hat when out investigating illegal activity. In addition, the holy fighter has his coat of arms displayed on a small device which he wears on his coat. This badge shows Elliot's family crest as well as his connection to the Forthright Band of Investigators. Elliot's brow is usually furrowed in concentration as he attempts to piece together the clues which will allow him to put an end to gangster activity.

**Background:** Sir Elliot of Kness was once a "marshall," a devoted follower of Juris, god of law and prudence. One day, he and his companion, Thurgood, stumbled upon a business transaction between some drow merchants and surface-dwelling thieves. Although Elliot managed to capture most of the miscreants involved, Thurgood was slain. Ever since that day, Sir Elliot has devoted his life to busting up the organizations that traffic with the hated drow elves. Several years ago,

his investigations led him to discover the existence of a whole gangster society centered in the Underdark. He reported this information to Jayed Garhoov'r, master of the Forthright Band of Investigators, a small order of paladins totally devoted to the eradication of everything that offends Juris. As an agent of that body, Elliot has singlemindedly pursued the luminaries of gangster society. He has recently set his sights on busting up House Catanzaro, an influential drow family reputedly financing several gangster organizations.

**Equipment:** Sir Elliot is concerned only with the capture and extermination of all gangsters. To this end, he carries around a variety of equipment that will enable him to succeed in this quest.

**Magical Items:** Sir Elliot always wears a suit of *chainmail* +3 and a *ring of clairaudience*. In addition, his favorite weapon is *Peacekeeper*, a crossbow of speed +2.

**Role-playing Notes:** The death of Thurgood has had a profound effect on Sir Elliot. In fact, the paladin's desire for revenge against those he deems responsible borders on the maniacal. It is not uncommon for Elliot to "bend" many of the laws in which he believes to catch a gangster. In his mind, the overall good accomplished by breaking up a gangster organization justifies any action undertaken in the pursuit of this goal.

**Favorite Quotes:** "There's a new law in town... me!" and "Okay, creep, you're coming with me!"

## Cons

*Continued from page 50*

Rivers Game Fest, P.O. Box 1740, Renton, WA 98057,

**Twin Con '96** **MN**

Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: RPGA Network events, dealers, and demos. Write to: Jeff Hammerlund, 107 West Chicago St., Algonquin, IL 60102.

**June**

**Con Games**

**June 15-16** **FL**

Camberly Inn Hotel, Tampa. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: dealers, a charity raffle, and tournaments. Registration: \$10/day, \$18/weekend. Con Games, 2 Water Track Radial, Ocala, FL 34472 or e-mail: neconrep@aol.com.

**Dragon Con 1996** **GA**

Atlanta Hilton and Towers, Westin Peachtree Plaza Hotel, and the Atlanta Civic Center in Atlanta. Guests: Kevin J. Anderson, William Gibson, James

O'Barr, R.A. Salvatore, Larry Elmore, and Bruce Sterling. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: dealers, films, *anime*, tournaments, an auction, and workshops. Registration: \$50 pre-registered. Dragon Con, P.O. Box 47696, Atlanta, GA 30362, or e-mail: dragoncon@dragoncon.org, or check out the web site: <http://www.dscga.com\~dragoncon>.

**Manafest**

**June 21-23** **CA**

Cathedral Hill Hotel, San Francisco. Events: over 25 different Magic: the Gathering\* tournaments and other trading card tournaments. Registration: \$20 pre-registered, \$30 thereafter. Mana-Fest, Khalsa Brain Games, P.O. Box 170436, San Francisco, CA 94117, or check the web site: <http://www.ibar.com/manafest>.

**Michicon '96**

**June 28-30** **MI**

Van Dyke Park Hotel and Conference Center, Warren. Events: role-playing, card,

board, and miniatures games. Other activities: dealers and an auction. Registration: \$18 pre-registered, \$20 on site. Metro Detroit Gamers, P.O. Box 656, Wyandotte, MI

48192 or e-mail: dolphin2@oeonline.com.

\* indicates a product produced by a company other than TSR, Inc.



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Contest dates: March 15 through April 30, 1996

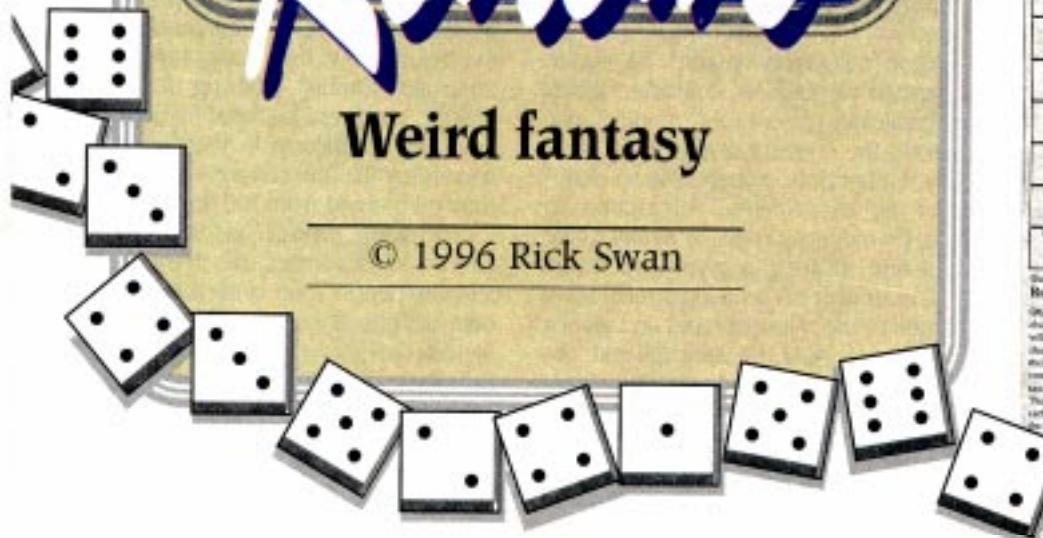
For more information, call Wizards of the Coast's Customer Service Group at (206) 624-0933.

**Wizards  
OF THE COAST**

# Role-Playing Reviews

Weird fantasy

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What say we open the old mail bag?

Reviewing the Everway\* game in **DRAGON® MAGAZINE** issue #224, I wondered why Wizards of the Coast (publishers of the world-conquering Magic: The Gathering\* game) opted for such an oddball as their first foray into role-playing. Everway designer Jonathan Tweet writes from Renton, Washington: "Why did I take the out-of-mainstream approach for WotC's first original RPG? Because I wanted to be able to reach new people. There are games for beginners out there, but they're primarily for kids. There are imaginative, fantasy-loving people out there who don't play RPGs because they don't find the current stock of games attractive. We needed to do a game that was different from what was already out there." Makes sense. Unfortunately, WotC has since dropped Everway. Let's hope it finds a new home soon.

Marcel van der Merwe of Johannesburg, South Africa, laments the sorry state of role-playing in his home country. "The simple fact is that there are no gaming companies in South Africa. With the advent of more mass media coverage, things are changing, but not very rapidly." Still, Marcel remains opti-

mistic. "I see role-playing games as one of the few truly creative pursuits. I think that people like us owe a lot to role-playing games and designers. Not only do they allow us to dream, but they also give us the gift of sharing our dreams with others." Couldn't have put it better myself.

Brian Smith of Farmersville, Texas, wants to know if game reviewers "need any special permits." No, but you're not the first to suggest that reviewers should be licensed.

From Cherry Hill, New Jersey, John Lazowski asks about a long list of products, including the Call of Cthulhu\*, GURPS\*, and Star Fleet Battles\* games; are they worth his hard-earned money? Yep. All three are first-rate and worth every cent. As it happens, we'll be looking at another product on John's list, Harn World, right here, next month.

Finally, Jeremy (or Jerry — I can't quite make out the signature) from Chicago, Illinois, wants help identifying a role-playing game that he thinks came out in the late '70s or early '80s. "All I remember is that it was in a box, and there was a flying tiger or some kind of flying cat on the cover. The characters gained spe-

cial magic powers whenever they swapped heads. Weird, no?" Weird, yes. And I have no idea what you're talking about. If this rings a bell with anyone, drop me a line, and I'll pass it along. Meanwhile, here are some weirdos of more recent vintage for your consideration.

## THROWING STONES

Collectible dice drafting/role-playing game

Game design by Jeff Siadek Graphic design by Jason Siadek

Ability	Action	Ability	Action	Ability	Action
Strength	Attack	Intelligence	Defense	Wisdom	Speed
Agility	Defense	Perception	Attack	Charisma	Health
Health	Health	Perception	Defense	Wisdom	Speed
Wisdom	Speed	Health	Health	Charisma	Health
Speed	Speed	Wisdom	Speed	Charisma	Health
Charisma	Health	Speed	Speed	Wisdom	Health
Health	Health	Charisma	Health	Wisdom	Speed
Wisdom	Speed	Charisma	Health	Wisdom	Speed
Speed	Speed	Wisdom	Speed	Wisdom	Speed
Charisma	Health	Wisdom	Speed	Wisdom	Speed

Abilities listed are relative to the throwing game. A character that scores a 10 or higher receives damage.

Health = [Strength] + [Intelligence] + [Wisdom]

Ability = 2d6 plus player initiative and equip bonuses to all rolls in the initial. Role players will add their level bonus to rolls to make them stronger. Then multiply the character's player roll by the number of abilities in a given round. The object is to have the highest total score in each round to win the game. The game ends when all characters have lost all of their health.

Throwing means have glyphs on each of the sides of the face dimensions. The side of the face dimensions is 2 Strength words. (Intelligence is gold, etc.) is added. The "face" has four characters written in English. It represents the ability of the character on the face. Roll one die per player on those which are associated to the character in something that skill.

Throwing means have glyphs on each of the sides of the face dimensions.

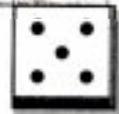
The side of the face dimensions is 2 Strength words. (Intelligence is gold, etc.) is added. The "face" has four characters written in English. It represents the ability of the character on the face. Roll one die per player on those which are associated to the character in something that skill.

Character abilities are determined by rolling the number of ability, gold and silver faces respectively. Ability equals 10 plus the number of faces the character has. All characters start at three faces. Gold points (gold) are figured by multiplying 10 by the number of 10s. (Silver points are 10 times in addition to the 10s. Total 10s are off those unused abilities.)

See the chart above for descriptions of the skills and special effects. Note that the faces on a die are not standard except that faces depict the sides of the 6x6 cube. Glyphs which appear on other faces can only benefit your character in certain ways, not all of them.

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## Throwing Stones\* game



Seven six-sided character dice, one six-sided monster die, one six-sided standard die, rules sheet, packaged in plastic tube

Gamesmiths, Inc. \$10

Design: Jeff Siadek

Graphic design: Jason Siadek

## Throwing Stones Fantasy



Throwing Stones supplement

96-page softcover book

Gamesmiths, Inc. \$10

Design: Jeff Siadek

Development: Jeff Siadek and Jason Siadek

Editing: Lauren Mandl

Illustrations: Stephen K. Ratter with Wendell Riggins

Cover: Melissa Benson

Approximate number of role-playing games published to date: 1,069,417. Approximate number of methods for resolving actions in role-playing games:

two. Method number one, introduced in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game and adopted by about 99.9% of the RPGs that came after, involves the comparison of die-rolls to numerical attribute ratings. The second, pioneered by products like the Amber\* and Everway games, replaces die-rolls with intuition and educated guesses. Now, at long last, **Throwing Stones** brings us method number three, and it's as unusual as it is ingenious.

Did I say ingenious? Revolutionary is more like it. Instead of representing characters with ability scores, **Throwing Stones** represents them with customized dice. Instead of pips, the dice bear bizarre glyphs like lightning bolts and four-leaf clovers. And virtually every aspect of the game, from picking locks to casting spells to smacking bad guys across the room, relies not on comparing die-rolls to ability scores, but on tallying those little bolts and clovers. And, no, **Throwing Stones** isn't a clone of the DRAGON DICE™ game. DRAGON DICE is a war game. **Throwing Stones** is a role-playing game – call it D&D® in a tube.

Or, more accurately, call it a player character in a tube. Each **Throwing Stones** set includes enough six-siders to get a single PC up and running (meaning that every player needs a tube of his own). The player builds a beginning character by choosing four of the seven character dice, each of which corresponds to a specific archetype. Every tube contains a different assortment. One of my sets, for instance, has two Ranger dice, two Druid dice, one Thaumaturge, one Thief, one Monk, and one Gladiator. Another has a Ranger, Monk, Amazon, Thief, Fool, Assassin, and Barbarian. A **Throwing Stones** character, then, combines traits from a variety of archetypes; depending on my choice of dice, I might end up with a Druid-Ranger, or a Thief-Monk-Gladiator-Thaumaturge. No combination is forbidden. Off-the-wall combinations are not only allowed but inevitable.

The masterfully designed dice contain a remarkable amount of information. Each face is a particular color, corresponding to a particular attribute – red for Strength, gold for Intelligence, silver for Agility. The largest glyph on a face indicates a particular skill or special effect – an 11-pointed star denotes a propensity for going berserk, a tree indicates an affinity for nature. Smaller glyphs – tiny crosses, teeny swords – represent ability modifiers. To compute his attribute levels, the player totals the

relevant colors on his four character dice; eight red faces equals Strength 8. Durability (read: hit points) equals his Strength level plus the total number of dice that make up the character (in the advanced game, a character can exchange experience points for additional dice). His mana, the mystical energy needed to cast spells, is equal to his Intelligence plus the number of dice showing a magic glyph. A beginning PC also receives a number of gold pieces equal to his Ability multiplied by his Intelligence; gold may be spent on weapons, armor, and various accessories.

Action resolution couldn't be easier. The player rolls his, er, character, tallies the applicable color-faces, modifies the result by the relevant glyphs, then compares the result to a success level determined by the referee. Attempting to stand, for example, requires Agility (silver faces) and Balance (a glyph that looks like a man with his arms outstretched). If the total of the relevant faces and glyphs equals or exceeds the difficulty roll, the attempt succeeds and the character stands up.

Combat can be resolved without a referee. At the beginning of a round, each opponent makes a selection from the Action Chart, such as Strike, Knockdown, or Dodge. The opponents roll their characters, then compare the results to the requirements of their selected Actions; for a successful Strike, the attacker's silver faces and teeny sword glyphs need to exceed those of the defender. To determine damage, the attacker rolls his character again and counts the red faces and the number of teeny swords on one, two, or three faces (the bigger the weapon, the more faces he counts); this total is subtracted from the defender's Durability. When damage exceeds Durability, the character dies.

Combat would be about as thrilling as a coin-flipping tournament were it not for the host of clever tactical options. Chief among them is the mulligan, **Throwing Stones** speak for a re-roll. After the attacker assesses damage, the defender may mulligan a number of the attacker's damage dice equal to the defender's armor value. Holding a shield enables the defender to mulligan any one of his defensive dice. Choosing the Dodge option from the Action Chart allows the defender to mulligan all of his defensive dice. A player who declares a Focus, which can be applied to any Action in any round, may mulligan as many

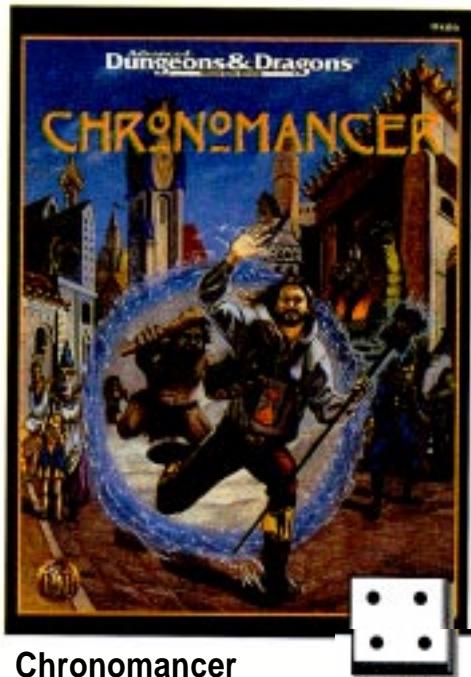
dice as he likes; his opponent, however, may also mulligan any number of defensive dice. If he's had his fill of mulligans, a character with one free hand and some Mana to spend can attempt to cast spells by consulting the Magic Chart and hoping the necessary glyphs appear on his next toss; divination allows him to throw his dice before he chooses an Action, lightning bolt inflicts 1d6 points of damage unless the target rolls up some Balance glyphs. Conjure monster uses the special monster die to simulate a creature of the player's choice, such as a cyclops or a cobra; the creature attacks as directed until the conjurer's Mana expires. Other inventive rules cover unarmed combat (utilizing fist-shaped glyphs), blindness (suffered by characters who get dirt thrown in their eyes), and cowardice (if you concede a duel, you may be banned from the arena for life).

**Throwing Stones** has its share of shortfalls. For starters, the characters feel less like people than collections of modifiers. Supposedly, you can invent personal histories for your PCs based on the dice that define them, but I defy anyone to come up with a plausible background for a Thief-Monk-Gladiator-Thaumaturge. The character dice also limit your choice of archetypes; if you want to play a Ninja, you're screwed unless your tube happens to include a couple of Ninja dice. Many of the glyphs, such as Nature and Charisma, are all but useless. And the single page of rules, included in the tube, is fraught with ambiguity; I think I understand how to cast all the spells and operate the monster dice, but I wouldn't bet the farm on it.

The **Throwing Stones Fantasy** supplement, essentially a set of expansion rules, builds on the fundamentals presented in the tube and clears up some of the mud. It clarifies the combat mechanics, explains the fine points of character creation, and offers some interesting variants, including a pretty good solitaire system. New spells include weapon wilt, wind storm, and psychic maze. Among the new magic items are the bloodhound blade, anti-magic amulet, and – my favorite – love potato. The rest of the book, however, fails to live up to promise of the love potato, depicting an uninspired game world called Chaotia. Populated by the usual assortment of elves and dragons, sliced into dreary subdivisions like Amazonia and Faerie Forest, it's a setting so blah that I wouldn't be surprised if its rainbows were black and white.

**Evaluation:** **Throwing Stones** works better as a two-player duel than a multi-player RPG. For that reason, I'd suggest investing in two of the tubes; if you've got an extra ten bucks, invest in a third tube instead of the book. (The more tubes you acquire, the more options you have for characters.) If the \$20 entry fee seems high, consider that's about what you'd spend on a couple of collectible card decks, and I'd be surprised if you didn't find **Throwing Stones** more fun than the latest Magic: The Gathering clone. With its spotty rules and underdeveloped setting, **Throwing Stones** merits only four pips. But what the heck – let's give it five. Revolutionaries deserve encouragement.

(Information: Gamesmiths, Inc., PO Box 2133. El Segundo, CA 90245.)



## Chronomancer

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game supplement

96-page softcover book

TSR, Inc.

\$13

Design: Loren Coleman

Editing and development: Matt Forbeck

Illustrations: Thomas Baxa, Adrian Bourne, Terry Dykstra, Jim Holloway, and Mark Nelson

Cover: Alan Pollack

For a game designer, no topic induces more migraines than time travel, as it demands answers to a lot of thorny questions. How, for example, do we get from era to era? Are historical events rigid or malleable? Can we meet ourselves? In this thought-provoking AD&D®

expansion, Loren Coleman bases his answers on two intriguing concepts:

1. The time traveler is a unique archetype. He's called a chronomancer, a wizard from an elite school of magic whose special training enables him to manipulate the elements of time. Requirements are rigid and demanding. Candidates must have a minimum Intelligence of 17 and Wisdom of 16, must be of good or neutral alignment, and must be human, elf, or half-elf. Further, they're forbidden from wearing armor, and they advance in level more slowly than normal wizards. On the plus side, they acquire an extra spell per level, and at 5th level become immune to the effects of slow and haste. The character kits don't amount to much – though well-conceived, the Guide, Historian, and Seer suffer from underdeveloped benefits and disadvantages – but the terrific spells make up for them. The menu includes such enticing selections as *timereaver* (the target is sent backward or forward in time, up to five years per the caster's level) and *Articus's devolutionary warrior* (the target gains Strength and loses Intelligence; his fingernails and teeth sharpen into weapons). Mysterious, guarded, and cerebral, the chronomancer is an appealing creation; think of him as the eggheaded cousin of the necromancer, only without all the dead stuff.

2. Time itself is an independent realm. It's called Temporal Prime, "an infinite expanse of black space with an infinite number of time streams flowing through it." The time streams resemble immense clusters of pale silver cords suspended in a gray mist-smoke. Each cord, which stands for a separate reality, is made of countless silver threads, the threads represent the life lines of the residents who occupy that particular reality. The physical appearance of a life line indicates its historical significance; kings generate thick bright lines, peasants generate short dull ones. Bundles of life lines, known as event tangles, indicate historical turning points, such as political assassinations or great wars. Visitors experience the realm as an eerie jungle of cables and webs buffeted by wind-like currents. Perception and movement are subjective, as are all physical laws; visitors "conceive" their own gravity.

So can history be changed? Only a little. Life lines will writhe and shift to accommodate minor alterations, but the momentum of destiny prevents radical changes. Can you meet yourself? Nope.

That'd require two life lines for the same person, and destiny allows only one per customer. Those who insist on violating these rules may trigger timestorms, which not only spew paradoxes all over the place, but might attract the attention of a temporal police force called the Guardians.

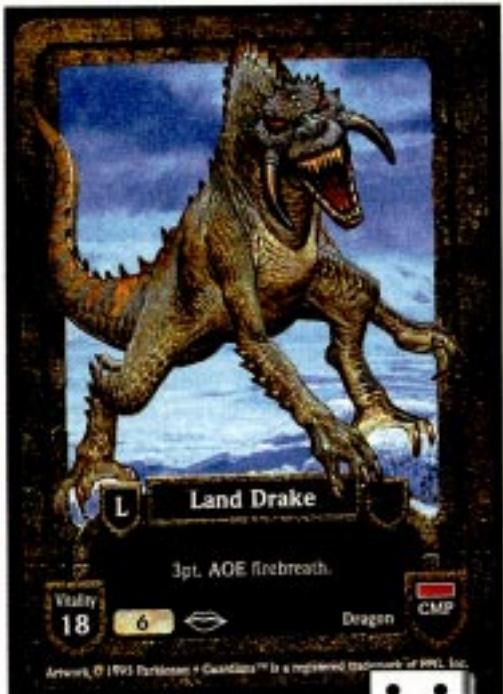
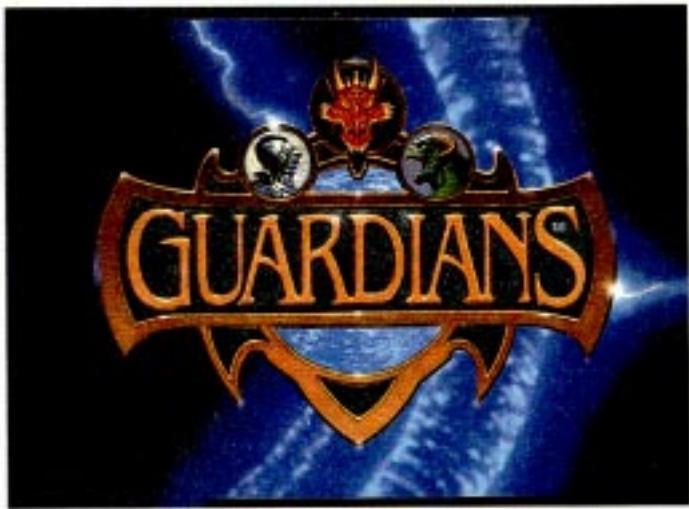
There's more – much more – but you get the idea. Coleman's analysis of temporal theory is fascinating, erudite, and convincing. But novice role-players may find it confusing, even intimidating. For instance, Coleman insists that Temporal Prime is a pseudoreality, not a plane of existence. But after reading the book twice, I'm still not sure of the difference. Nor did I understand temporal movement, although I know I'll need a calculator if I intend to try it (if my Wisdom is 16, I multiply my normal movement rate by a cross-stream objective distance modifier of 1.75). Further, pseudoreality has a lot of nitpicky effects on spells; solid fog obscures vision to four feet instead of the standard two feet, flame strike inflicts  $(1d8 - 1)$  6 hp damage instead of 6d8. What exactly is "linear existence"? And what's with this: "Many features of Temporal Prime have not been discussed in detail or at all ... their explanations are best withheld until later." The sound you hear is me beating my head against the wall.

**Evaluation:** If you want to incorporate time travel into your campaign, you have three options:

1. Do what I do and invent your own rules. I use a variant of the time pool spell from TSR's *Tome of Magic* book that allows priests to create portals to other eras. And, to be honest, I'll probably keep using it – **Chronomancer** requires more brain power than I'm willing to expend. So how do I explain the nuances of temporal theory? I don't. How do I handle paradoxes? I ignore them. (Pretty clever, eh?)

2. Use a supplement for another game, and adapt it to AD&D. My favorite: GURPS *Time Travel*. The quirky Time Lords\* game is also good (information: Blacksburg Tactical Research Center, 1925 Airy Circle, Richmond, VA 23233.)

3. Use the **Chronomancer** system. Veteran AD&D game players who have more ambition than me will undoubtedly find this the most satisfying option. But be prepared – you're going to have some homework.



## Guardians\* game

60-card starter deck,  
14-card booster pack  
FPG Inc.\$9 (starter deck), \$2.79 (booster pack)

Design: Keith Parkinson and Luke Peterschmidt

Editing: Darren Boyce

Art direction: Keith Parkinson

Illustrations: Brom, Don Maitz, Keith Parkinson, Mike Ploog, and James Warhola.

Oh boy, I thought, the day **Guardians** showed up in the mail box. Another... yawn... collectible card game. A quick flip through the rulebook, and I was rather sure I had it figured out. Monsters, spells, terrain, duels – it was Magic: The Gathering, Junior. I shelved it.



A week later, my nephew is nosing through my game collection and comes across **Guardians**. Says he's a fan. He thumbs through the decks. "Wanna trade for some of your Beer cards?"

Beer cards?

So I took another look.

I'm glad I did. Turns out, **Guardians** is an impressive little weirdo. Even if the game itself were lame – and as it happens, it plays pretty

well – it'd be worth the nine bucks for a deck just to drool over the art. The lush colors, photographic detail, and outrageous subject matter make this the most visually appealing set since the **Blood Wars™** game. I'd be hard-pressed to name my favorite cards, but here are few nominees: Crook End Snoot (a grinning pixie with a foot-long nose), Humungus Fungus (a combination of an octopus and a tree root), and Floyd the Flying Pig (a baggy-eyed porker with lips that beg to be kissed). And in what may be the most blatant display of sexism the industry's ever seen, the deck also includes a healthy number of Babes, scantily-clad traffic-stoppers guaranteed to steam your glasses and raise your mother's eyebrows. If designer Keith Parkinson ever gets slapped by a feminist, it's not like he didn't have it coming.

Each player needs a deck of at least 55 cards, including one Guardian (a super-powered entity that doubles as the player's alter ego), three Strongholds, and a variable number of Terrains, Shields, Magic Items, Spells, Bribes (the Beer and Babe cards), and Creatures. The playing field consists of a line of three Stronghold spaces in front of each player, totaling six Strongholds in all; Strongholds contain armies of Creatures, which in turn are protected by Shields. Opposite each Stronghold is an empty Disputed Land space, which will be filled with Terrain cards as the game progresses. Victory goes to the first player to control the six Disputed Land spaces, destroy five enemy Shields, or send the opposing Guardian to the cemetery.

**Guardians** consists of three-phase turns. In the Deployment Phase, players draw enough replacements from their decks to make 12-card hands, then place up to three Shields and 30 Vitality Points-worth of Creatures in their Strongholds.

At the end of this phase, a player must have no more than seven cards in his hand; extras must be discarded.

Next comes the Movement and Combat Phase, the heart of **Guardians**. Creatures deployed in Strongholds without Shields must stay where they are. Otherwise, a stack of Shield-protected Creatures can move up to two Disputed Land spaces. Combat ensues when two Shield stacks occupy the same Land. Players remove their Creatures from their Shields; the Creatures comprise their combat hands. Each opponent flops down a Creature, one at a time. The Creature with the highest Vitality score, which may be modified by Spells and Magic Items, wins the round; defeated Creatures go to the dead pile. When all of the Creatures have been played, the Vitality points of the survivors are tallied; whichever side has the most points wins the Land. The loser must retreat to an unoccupied space. If the loser can't retreat, his Shield is destroyed.

In the final phase, Terrain Settlement, the victor places a Terrain card on the just-conquered Land to indicate control. If it contains an enemy Terrain, he removes it and replaces it with one of his own.

The combat system, the game's best feature, employs several ingenious twists. If an opponent has Creatures remaining in his combat hand after the initial attack, he can make a secondary attack with his leftovers. A Creature capable of Channeling can benefit from a temporary Vitality boost if the owner discards a Power Stone. And some Creatures can be dispelled with Beer and Babes; nothing makes an Ice Ogre run for cover like a Super Model.

**Evaluation:** **Guardians** is not without its problems. For a premise this goofy – Floyd the Flying Pig? – it's way too complicated, what with all the off-color bonuses, area of effect attacks, and draw modifiers. The rulebook could've used another draft and more examples. If your opponent begins with stronger Creatures than yours, good luck trying to win. And the awkward four-player game is more work than fun. Still, the plusses outweigh the minuses, making it a must for collectible card freaks with an eye for good art. Let me know if you get any extra Beer cards.

(Information: FPG Inc., 2539 Washington Rd., Bldg. 1000, Pittsburgh, PA 15241.)

## Short and sweet

**GURPS IOU: Illuminati University**, by Elizabeth McCoy and Walter Milliken. Steve Jackson Games, \$18.

Steve Jackson has been riding high on the Illuminati: New World Order\* card game for quite a while now. But despite its title, GURPS IOU has nothing to do with cards. Nor, for that matter, does it have much to do with the GURPS Illuminati supplement of a few years back, IOU looks like a setting for the GURPS role-playing game – and indeed, it has its share of game stats and adventure hooks – but the anything-goes, logic-down-the-dumper approach makes it virtually unplayable, at least by anyone who takes their games even semi-seriously. So what is it? Basically, IOU is a glorified joke book, a drop of Monty Python mixed with a bucket of Three Stooges. Located at a “scenic dimensional nexus with convenient access to numerous world and time gates,” the university is home to a lunatic collection of aliens, mages, and cartoon monstrosities. Most of the book parodies a typical campus catalog, describing classes (Combat Uses for Toxic Wastes, Uses of Scientific Notation in Hospital Bills), staff members (Dr. What, George the Janitor) and student organizations (Society for Unimaginative Anachronism, Democrats for Cthulhu). Maybe you consider yourself too sophisticated for silly stuff like this. But you’ve gotta admit – Democrats for Cthulhu, that’s pretty good.

**Fantasy Earth\*** game, by Michael C. Zody. Zody Games, \$15. **Fantasy Earth: the Book of Magic**, by Michael C. Zody. Zody Games, \$15.

If I were a small press publisher, I don’t think I’d attempt a fantasy RPG, fearing the inevitable comparisons to AD&D. Michael Zody forged ahead anyway, with surprisingly credible results. Like the RPGs of the Jurassic Era, Fantasy Earth has no game world or campaign setting; it’s 120-plus pages of pure rules. Players construct characters by assigning 10-sided-die rolls to a list of 26 attributes, such as Strength, Perception, and Appearance. Class options include Warrior, Sorcerer, Cleric, and Burglar. Skills – Acrobatics, Boat Building, and about 120 others – derive from the attribute scores. To resolve the use of a skill, the player rolls a die, adds the number to the relevant skill rating, then compares the result to a success level set by the referee; if the result equals or

exceeds the success level, the action succeeds. The number-heavy but manageable combat system emphasizes maneuver and hit locations (wounds can be superficial, minor, major, severe, or extreme). A thick supplement, the Book of Magic, details a simple spell-casting system and hundreds of spells. I don’t imagine many folks will be abandoning their AD&D *Player’s Handbooks* for Fantasy Earth. But if you’re a supporter of the small press, or if you’re looking for a set of ready-made rules to graft onto a homemade setting, you could do worse than this.

(Information: Zody Games, One Kendall Sq. #178, PO Box 9171, Cambridge, MA 02139.)

**Neo Tribes: the Nomads of North America**, by Ross Winn and Eric Oppen, with Dan Longoria, Angelina Acevedo, Tristan Heydt, Gilbert Milner, Marian Rosensriel, Janice Sellars, Mark Schumann, Chris Williams, and Benjamin Wright. R. Talsorian Games, \$12. **Edgerunners Inc.**, by Andrew M. Borelli, Michael G. Nelson, and Scott Taylor, with Derek Quintanar and Benjamin Wright. R. Talsorian Games, \$12.

Are your Cyberpunk\* game characters looking for work? They can stop looking. Neo-Tribes describes a loose network of motorcycle jockeys who cruise the wilds of 20th Century America in search of food, funds, and fist fights; they’re always in the market for a few good sociopaths. If you want something a bit more profitable, consider Edgerunners Inc., a futuristic temp agency specializing in black marketeering, smuggling, and other enterprises of dubious legality. Though both organizations boast formidable reputations and noteworthy personnel – detailed at length in these entertaining sourcebooks – I prefer the Tribes; they wear cooler clothes.

**The Unknown East**, by Lawrence Whitaker. Chaosium, Inc., \$17.

What distinguishes the Elric\* game from every other fantasy RPG is its doom-laden atmosphere; despair practically drips off its world-weary heroes. So when I pick up an Elric supplement, I expect a little gloom. Unknown East explores the ravaged nations of the Menastree continent, presenting the history, landmarks, and citizenry in lavish detail. But despite some nice touches – a compelling treatise on eastern religion, a strong selection of adventure hooks – it lacks the grit that made previous supple-

ments like Melnibone and Sorcerers of Pan Tang so memorable. Though Lawrence Whitaker does an admirable job, he was saddled with a tough assignment. Even Michael Moorcock, author of the original Elric novels, couldn’t find much of interest in the East.

**The Gothic Earth Gazetteer**, by William W. Connors. TSR, Inc., \$10.

This guidebook to the people and events of Gothic Earth (introduced in the *Masque of the Red Death* boxed set, part of the AD&D game’s RAVENLOFT® setting) is hardly indispensable but it’s still fun. You’ll find an account of Sir John Franklin’s ill-fated arctic expedition, the history of spiritualism, and biographies of such luminaries as Susan B. Anthony, Mark Twain, and Calamity Jane. Best of all, the book comes packaged with a gorgeous poster-sized 10-year calendar that begs to be hung on the wall – just in case the 19th Century ever rolls around again.

**Mecha Press magazine**, edited by Marc-Alexandre Vezina. Ianus Publications, Inc., \$6 (single issue), \$36 (six-issue subscription).

Fans of the Battletech\*, Macross II\*, and Robotech\* games will think they’ve died and gone to giant robot heaven when they get a gander at this classy periodical, published by the same folks responsible for the Heavy Gear Fighter\* card game. Recent features include an overview of the Battletech TV series, some model-making tips, and a lively review section covering everything from comic books to metal miniatures. With its breezy text and striking graphics, it’s like a *Playboy* magazine for rivet-heads – I mean that as a compliment.

(Information: Ianus Publications, Inc., 5000 Iberville, #332, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2H 2S6.)



Rick Swan is the author of *The Complete Guide to Role-Playing Games* (St. Martin’s Press). You can write to him at 2620 30th Street, Des Moines, IA 50310. Enclose a self-addressed envelope if you’d like a reply.

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# The DM's Quick Campaign Random Generator



by Serge Stelmack

**W**hen beginning a new fantasy campaign, it is critical to decide exactly how your epic will unfold. By discerning the allies, enemies, and ultimate objective of the PCs before the story begins, the wise game master can design adventures that provide their players with a definite sense of progress and achievement.

Such decisions are hard to make and can prove overly taxing to the fragile nerves of the DM. The choices you make when first plotting the campaign can affect months of gaming.

It was for the express purpose of aiding the struggling and overworked DMs of the world that I devised the Random Campaign Generator.

By rolling on the tables below and filling in the blanks in the chart one by one, dozens of fascinating campaign ideas can be generated in minutes. All you need is a d12.

Have fun.

## Table 1

1. brave
2. not-so-brave
3. the henchmen of
4. skulking
5. arrogant, stuck-up
6. murderous
7. dyslexic
8. cute, fuzzy
9. annoying
10. argumentative
11. mercenary
12. corporate

***The player characters are 1, 2 sent by 3 on a quest to 4, 5. Along the way, they must deal with 6, 7, and 8, but finally reach their goal. In a final scene of 9, they triumph and are rewarded with 10.***

## Table 2

1. adventurers
2. pilgrims
3. Mr. Big(s)
4. thieves
5. elves
6. fighters
7. wizards
8. animals
9. halflings
10. dwarves
11. clerics
12. lawyers

## Table 3

1. the ruler of the land
2. the head of the church
3. the dubious leader of the thieves' guild
4. some guy they met in a bar
5. a really nice dragon
6. a really gorgeous half-elf
7. their drunken parents
8. the king of the gypsies
9. a mysterious stranger
10. Mr. Big
11. the frog prince
12. a loan shark



**Table 4**

1. recover
2. find
3. destroy
4. defeat
5. purchase
6. get rid of
7. paint a portrait of
8. conduct tests on
9. make material components out of
10. deliver a singing telegram to
11. kiss up to
12. rescue

**Table 5**

1. the king's daughter
2. an evil wizard
3. a marauding monster
4. a mystical sword
5. a magical amulet
6. a dragon's blood sample
7. an ancient magical tome
8. a lost city
9. a colossal space hamster
10. Mr. Big's ex-wife, Peggy
11. a magical bucket of lard
12. a wealthy relative

**Table 6**

1. a vicious tribe of orcs

2. a treacherous band of assassins
3. highly irritating minstrels
4. a lecherous innkeeper
5. nasty old women
6. traveling salesmen
7. ghosts
8. a swarm of locusts
9. heavily armed mercenaries
10. Mr. Big's evil twin, Skippy
11. misleading road signs
12. rioting kobolds

**Table 7**

1. really ugly trolls
2. exceptionally dangerous butterflies
3. the possession of one of their group
4. greedy slave traders
5. performers from a traveling circus
6. an evil lord
7. a nearsighted cyclops
8. a plague of rabid ferrets
9. poor weather conditions
10. an asteroid impact
11. vengeful wombats
12. a merciless vampire

**Table 8**

1. a voluptuous dwarven courtesan out to steal their brains
2. very cross seagulls

3. a master thief with a demented sense of humor
4. a gang of unpleasant robbers
5. a friendly dog that just won't stop following them
6. a gigantic trout
7. head lice
8. a huge labyrinth filled with traps
9. chia golems (see page 39)
10. venomous parakeets
11. a coven of diabolical warlocks
12. a killer rabbit

**Table 9**

1. epic battle
2. skillful negotiation
3. begging and pleading
4. shameful exhibitionism
5. amazing heroism
6. great personal sacrifice
7. pathetic whining
8. masterful bribery
  
9. mass confusion
10. ingenious creativity
11. wacky fun
12. tragic indifference

**Table 10**

1. fame and fortune
2. sincere thanks and a letter of reference
3. a paid vacation
4. an offer of marriage from their employer
5. a collection of attractive sea shells
6. a set of seriously flawed magical weapons
7. another crummy job
8. all the baked clams they can eat
9. a pet giant panda
10. a sack of gold
11. knighthood
12. the grudging acknowledgment of their employer



Serge Stelmack lives in Vancouver, British Columbia. This is his first appearance in DRAGON® MAGAZINE.

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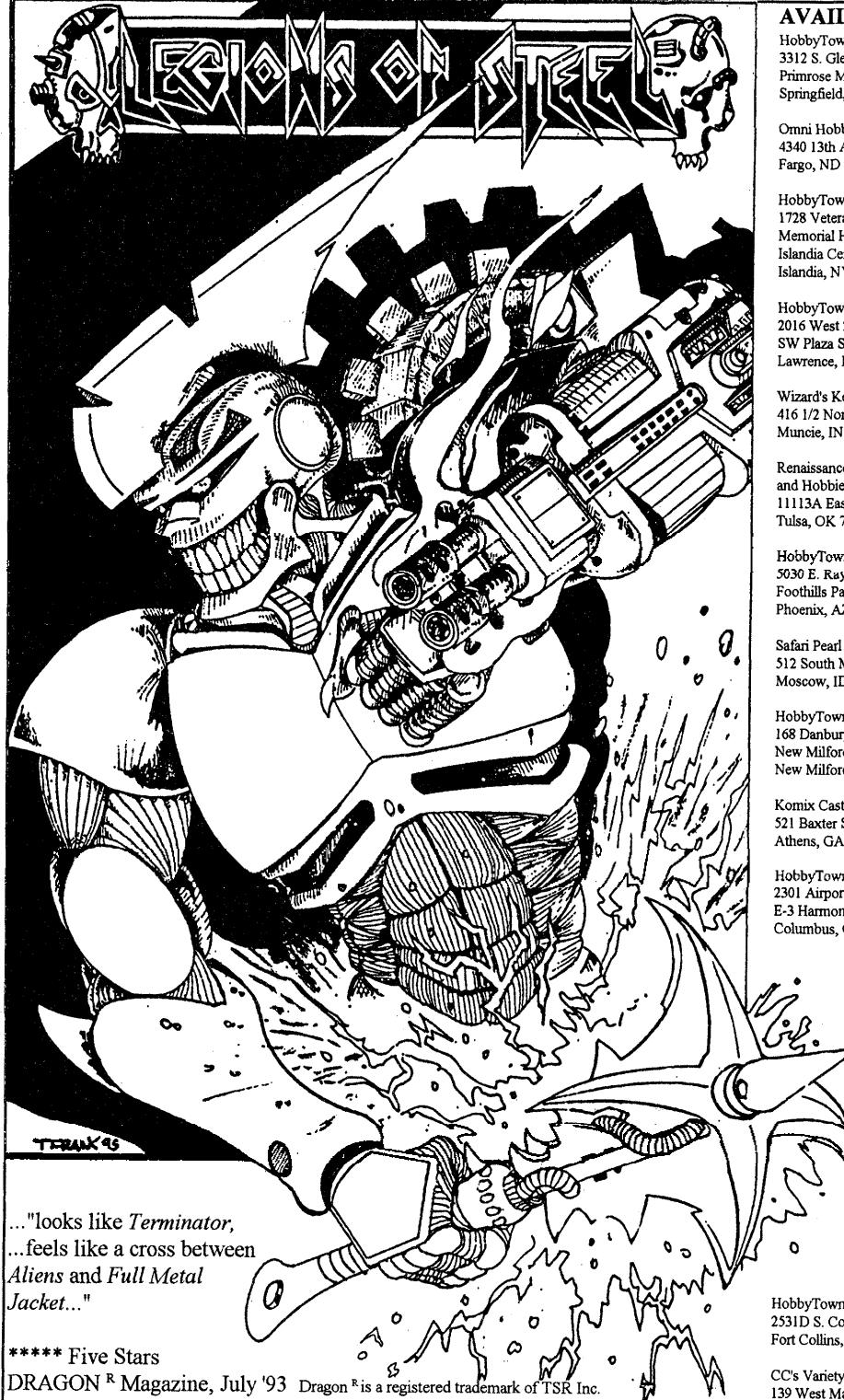
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I have been playing the AD&D® game since 1977. Most of my experience is as a DM, but I haul out the character sheets at conventions or when given a chance.

I feel the *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Skills & Powers* book, while in most ways an excellent release, does have a serious problem – namely, the Muscle subability. The major problem with this ability is that fighters (and presumably fighter subclasses, such as rangers and paladins) may raise the Muscle subability as high as 20. A Muscle score of 20 is excessive and unwarranted. Such high subability scores can later damage the campaign as cumulative effects take their toll.

Consider the standard AD&D rules: a character with a Strength of 18(00) (extremely rare in well-run campaigns) has +3 to hit and +6 to damage. My players and I have typically used Method V for character ability generation. While this gives a good chance for an 18 Strength score (with players placing 18s where they want), the percentile rolls usually fall within the 01–50 range, giving the character a +1/+3 bonus. I have seen an honest "00" result once in nearly 20

years of gaming. Thus, +1/+3 are usually the highest Strength bonuses with which a DM must contend, excepting the rarest of circumstances. Now consider the *Skills & Powers* rules: a fighter with even a 16 Strength (and how many fighters possess a Strength score lower than 15?) can shift the figures to 14 stamina and 18 Muscle, then immediately roll the percentile dice! A player with a 16 Strength is now assured of at least +1/+3 bonuses formerly reserved for those with 18 scores.

It gets worse, however, for a 20 Muscle score is now reachable for those with natural 18s, and no percentile rolls are required to get the +3/+8 bonus! Before *Skills & Powers*, a player with an 18 Strength needed a fantastic percentile roll to get a +2/+5, but now a +3/+8 may be selected with no chance of failure! Consider that a vampire has a Strength (Muscle) score of 18(76), according to the *Monstrous Manual™* tome. Vampires have a +2/+4 attack bonus and can punch for 5–10 hp damage. It seems a trifle ridiculous for a party to have one or more fighters with a Strength greater than that of the average vampire. If you've seen any vampire movies, you know what I'm talking about here.

Good DMs know that *girdles of giant strength* can upset game balance easily, yet now fighters can start as if wearing a girdle of hill or stone giant strength at 1st level! If a +3/+8 bonus doesn't seem bad, consider the cumulative effects as the fighter learns how to use his weapons. A 1st-level fighter with weapon specialization can now possess a +4/+10 before the game begins! That means a long sword damage roll of "1" still gives a minimum of 11 hp damage, enough to K.O. the typical humanoid opponent easily. If this fighter acquires a fighting style specialization, he could gain a +5/+10 or even a +4/+11 bonus. An elf or half-elf could add a further +1 to hit with a sword if desired, bringing the 1st-level fighter to a +6/+10 bonus! Just wait until this character gains weapon mastery at 5th level and gains +7/+11 or +8/+11 if elven!

I wouldn't let this character near a magical sword.

As the system stands, there isn't an easy answer to this problem. Considering the decreased Stamina to be an equalizer simply isn't good enough, as Stamina affects only encumbrance (which most DMs ignore) and but two warrior non-weapon proficiencies. Perhaps a good DM can balance this super-fighter with strong opponents, but the weaker party members will be exposed to greater dan-

ger. Why punish the AC 10 wizard or Strength 13 thief just because the party fighter is a killing machine? If the leader-type creatures (or creatures with weapon specialization) target the muscular fighters and weaker creatures fight the rest of the party, the fighters will defeat stronger creatures and gain inordinate amounts of experience compared to their peers.

Rather than try to remedy this problem with bad band-aids later, it is better to fix the problem before it begins. I recommend treating the Muscle and Stamina percentile divisions as whole numbers; thus, a character with 17 Strength can adjust to gain a 15 Stamina and maximum (18/01) Muscle. Characters rolling a natural 18 Strength could adjust as above, or simply take 18 in both sub-abilities and roll percentile dice to see what they receive. This keeps the 18(00) score the rarity it used to be, allows lower Strength fighters to increase their hitting potential, and prevents player-character giants from being created.

As a DM, I am not stingy with magical item distribution, and I don't believe in keeping characters at a disadvantage. I have, however, noticed that low-level characters with Armor Classes of -1 or greater, or +7 damage bonuses and the like, can turn game balance upside-down, removing the challenge for all concerned. The players will be twice as proud of their characters if they occasionally need good rolls and all damage is dealt fairly.

Rick Maffei  
474 Hunter Road  
Ridgewood, NJ 07450-5516

I've read many articles and letters from readers who are concerned with the changing face of TSR's products as the company tries to get back to the roots of role-playing games. There are complaints of too many rules, not enough rules, inappropriate rules, incomplete rules... but the bottom line is and always was, *there are no rules!*

The game has been around for nearly three decades, and like the enthusiastic groups of kids all over the world who first sat around a table, pencil and paper in hand, it has grown, like they, to an intelligent, outgoing body, larger than its past self, yet still full of new ideas.

Anyone who has been involved in the process, whether as a DM or PC for years or weeks, and who can still find it an enjoyable outlet in this age of electronic

Continued on page 87

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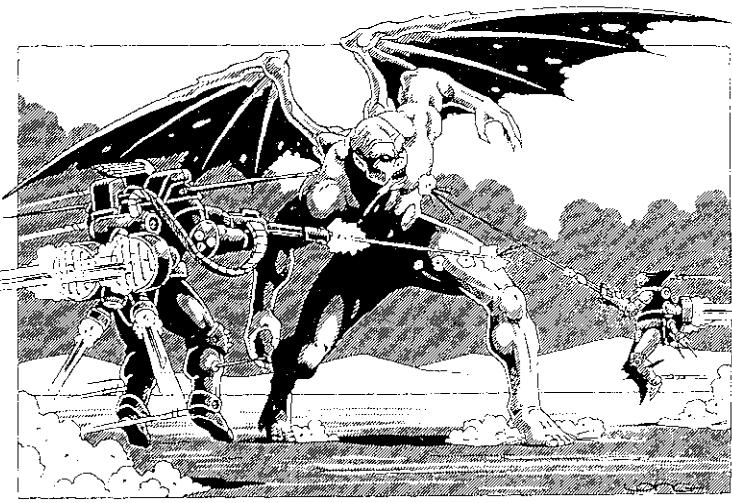
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# Humor in "serious" role-playing games

# What's So Funny?

by Ed Stark

**W**hat do you do when you can't stop the wizard from laughing? Well, not just the wizard, of course. The fighter, the thief, the space ranger, even the mutant biker might burst into giggles at any moment, in the middle of your serious adventure. I've been in a situation – and I'm sure most of you experienced gamers have too – where something happened in the most serious of adventures that cracked up every player around the table. Something is said wrong, or someone makes a joke, or something in the adventure just strikes everyone as amusing at the same time – it happens. How, as a gamemaster or a good role-player, do you handle it and keep the game moving along?

## Another fine mess...

Perhaps an example is in order. A year or so ago, I became involved in a Call of Cthulhu\* campaign that may not have been the height of seriousness in gaming, but it certainly ranked in the top 10. It was a horror game, not one of those silly slasher-type, blow-up-as-many-monsters-as-you-can-before-you-die things. There were times when one or more of the players actually cried out in surprise when we thought we'd found what was lurking behind the next door. We really got caught up in the Lovecraftian horror of the game and played our roles to the hilt.

But something happened. It was during a typical investigation of a typical haunted house (and, for those of you who've played Call of Cthulhu, you know there is no such thing as a "typical" anything). My investigating team and I probed the house with all care and alacrity, hoping to get out before night-fall with some valuable information.

But things didn't go well. (Okay, so they never do).

As a result, we ended up staying in the house until dusk. We managed to get out just as the sun was setting, and we made it to our car. Feeling pleased with herself, the owner of the car got into the driver's seat and turned the ignition.

Nothing happened. We were sitting in front of a haunted house, miles away from anywhere, and our car wouldn't start.

Naturally, one of the investigators proposed simply staying outside the house until dawn. Another upped the ante (in true investigator fashion) and declared that we might as well continue our investigations, since we couldn't leave anyway, and it was looking like rain.

That, I'm sure, is what should have happened. The gamemaster planned on it, and most of us expected it. But the owner of the car said differently.

A little background: During our last adventure, the investigator/driver's car had been destroyed in an attempt to rid the world of a nasty horror. I don't remember what happened in the preceding adventure, but it resulted in us being

carless as well. This was at least the third car the woman had gone through in as many months, and she was kind of annoyed that it might end up getting trashed yet again (I thought this was a logical conclusion, since that's the way things did seem to be going.)

She resolved to push her car out of the driveway and down alongside the road (which was about a half a mile away). The rest of us were unsympathetic. We wanted to get on with our deaths... er, lives... and investigate the house some more before it was completely dark. Besides, it was starting to pour.

Fine, she said. If we wouldn't help her, she'd do it herself. Injured from a previous battle with a rabid raccoon (which sounds funny now but wasn't so much, then), she opened the door and steered the car while pushing it herself along the muddy driveway. The rest of us stood on the dry porch and watched.

That's when it really happened.

In the course of making a Strength check, she failed – critically – and the gamemaster ruled she had fallen under the wheels of one of the back tires and it rolled over her leg. She took a few points of damage, and we all snickered a little as she pulled herself out of the mud and tried again.

And it happened again.

And again.

Now, this might not seem uproariously funny but, believe me, after the days and nights our characters had experienced, to see one of our number vainly trying to push her car downhill in the rain and mud – and fail, time and time again, to keep from getting run over by her own vehicle – cracked us up. Soon, everyone in the room (including the unlucky player) was laughing. We'd completely blown the mood the gamemaster had so carefully crafted, and we were making gags and jokes even as our merciless investigators finally broke down and helped our driver out of the mud.

This might not seem like a critical occurrence, but it was. For several hours, the gamemaster had been working to get us to this point in the adventure. He wanted us edgy and nervous as we entered the house, not laughing and light-hearted. He certainly hadn't planned on this situation.

But he went with it. Instead of ominous shadows and creaky floorboards, he greeted us with a warm, musty smell and a fireplace with wood stacked beside it. As we built a fire to dry off, his ghosts and horrors left us alone, we got rather cheery and comfortable. And then the horrors came.

I won't go into any more details, but I think that turned out to be one of the most horrific experiences my investigator ever had, and one of the most entertaining evenings of gaming I've ever played. All of us, veteran players, were drawn in by the humor of the situation and nobody was looking for the



horrors that followed. As a result, we went from secure and comfortable to horrified and screaming in a matter of moments. Shock value re-ignited the scenario, and soon we were fighting for our lives and our sanity.

## The banana peel gag

The "banana peel gag" (BPG) is a joke that's funny because no one was expecting it. Slipping on a banana peel and falling isn't really funny – watching someone doing it when you expect it isn't all that funny either. But, when it happens in a serious situation where no one at all sees it coming, it can crack you up.

Every campaign has its share of BPGs. It's funny, and everybody laughs, but most gamemasters don't know how to make efficient use of it. Some let it injure their night of gaming or the campaign in general. "This is a serious game," they cry. "Stop making jokes!" Incidental humor is the bane of their existence.

Relax. The words "serious" and "game" shouldn't be lumped together so easily. Everyone's out to have fun. A few BPGs shouldn't spoil that – they should enhance the situation.

I use the occasional BPG as a transition. If a fighter slips and falls down the stairs in a dungeon, everyone gets a laugh as this plate-armored, backpack-carrying, 18/00 Strength clod get to land on his ear. As they're all chuckling, I throw a monster at them, at the fighter, or at everyone. Soon they're up to their ears in trouble. Why? Because they weren't expecting it.

Humor as a distraction works very, very well. If the wizard states afterwards "Hey, I was looking behind us! They couldn't have surprised us!" you politely inform her that, no, she was fighting to get a bird's eye view of the warrior as his pack exploded outward, scattering gear and weapons all along the staircase.

You don't want to make your BPGs too commonplace. This can happen when you've got would-be humorists in the party who try to force these things to happen. You know the type. Every time a guy rolls a failure on the dice (whether you have critical failures or fumbles in your campaign or not), he chimes in with a humorous effect he thinks should happen. You might want to take him up on it sometimes, but not always.

## The BPG as a running gag

Another anecdote (short one this time, I promise). In a MERP\* game I was running a few years back, one of the hobbits

in the party could not resist firing his bow into melee. His accuracy was deadly and, even with the heavy penalties for shooting into combat, he seldom missed.

Except when the ranger was involved.

No matter what, the hobbit would hit the ranger accidentally with a stray shot. Now, for those of you familiar with the MERP system, you know any shot can be nasty. Fortunately, the ranger usually got off relatively unscathed. But it became a running gag.

This set up an interesting dynamic between the two characters. Normally friends, when they got into combat, the ranger would not check his foes as closely as he would that hobbit. He performed outrageous maneuvers to get out of the hobbit's line of fire, and the hobbit, perversely, always maneuvered him back into position. And, true to form, at least one of every two shots the hobbit took hit the ranger.

Now most players (and characters) would get really annoyed by this. But, for some reason, the ranger took it in stride. (No pun intended!) He seemed to think it was a challenge to survive the best his foes could throw at him and the worst his friends could deal him.

So, as a gamemaster, I tried to "weight" the situations so that the hobbit would either be able or unable to shoot at the ranger's foe. I would also "weight" (okay, cheat) to keep the arrows away from the ranger when I thought it appropriate. We still had the running gag, but it was under control.

## And every so often

When you've mastered the BPG and the running gag, you might want to inject a little planned humor into your ultra-serious campaign. In fact, I recommend it. One of the most dangerous things a player, gamemaster, or gaming group can do is take their hobby too seriously. You don't want to spoil a serious campaign with too many running gags or BPGs, but you need them to spice it up. Humorous situations are part of life. They should be part of your game as well.

So you can, as a gamemaster or a player, build in some "serious humor" in your serious campaign.

## For the gamemaster

You have more control over the tone of your game. If you discourage humor, or if you promote it, the players follow. Try to react to their moods and keep things consistent (until you want to zap them, that is).

Now, this could come in the form of a funny incident (like a planned BPG), or an encounter with a strange or humorous NPC, or it might actually be an entire adventure – depending on what you think your campaign needs.

And that's the important thing. If your campaign seems to be getting stale (your Star Wars\* (characters just keep destroying bigger and better Death Stars, for example), or your players seem to be getting too involved in their characters (the party's cleric dies and everyone has a very serious wake), shake things up with a light-hearted, nobody-is-in-danger, fun adventure. Even the most serious writers like to pen the occasional humorous story (even if they never show it to anyone); as the gamemaster, you should try to work to lighten up your ultra-serious game occasionally. Otherwise, you end up being the group at the convention that everyone avoids because they are "way too into it."

## As a player

Try not to take things too seriously when role-playing your character. Your bounty hunter might be the toughest hombre this side of the Rio Grande, but he doesn't have to gun down everybody who snickers in his presence – and he can throw people off by cracking the occasional joke, then scowling when people laugh.

Develop a few personality quirks. Most games these days encourage that anyway. Role-play them well most of the time, but go to the extreme once in a while. For example, if your serious ship's pilot is considered a "hotshot," most of the time he's going to succeed spectacularly at what he does in his starfighter – but, when he fails, he should fail big – or at least act as though he did. Make jokes about being the only pilot in the Alliance to shoot down two dozen enemy craft but never be able to land one successfully yourself. (You know who I'm talking about, don't you?) Pointing a few quips at yourself might get everyone else on a roll. If not, a few friendly jibes between comrades (or the occasional practical joke, played with the help of the game master) might get send the right message.

*Ed Stark labors in the game mines of TSR, Inc. He is a game designer and editor.*

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Sometimes, familiars are just too... well, familiar.

# Greater Familiars of Faerûn

by Jean Rabe

illustrated by Terry Dykstra

**F**ar below Waterdeep, where the labyrinths of Undermountain twist and spiral ever downward, treasure waits. One band of adventurers, braving the dangerous tunnels, came back battered and shaken – recovering only a book before escaping with their lives. But such a treasure it was – an ancient snakeskin-bound spellbook written in elvish. Among the enchantments inside were spells to attract powerful familiars. These creatures, which bind themselves to the wizards who cast the spells, imbue their mentors with wondrous abilities.

## Find Companion

(Conjuration/Summoning)

Third Level

Range: 1 mile/level

Components: V, S

Duration: Special

Casting Time: Eight hours

Area of Effect: One creature

Saving Throw: None

This enchantment is similar to the first level spell *find familiar*; however, it brings to the caster an animal companion with enhanced abilities. The creature attracted benefits a wizard by conveying its sensory powers to its master, conversing with him, and serving as a guard, scout, or spy. A wizard can have only one animal companion at a time, though he also can have a normal familiar drawn by the first level spell.

The animal companion enters into a magical bond with the wizard and will no longer age at the rate a similar normal animal would. The animal lives as long as its wizard mentor—unless it is killed earlier by spells, physical attacks, or neglect. In addition, like a

familiar, the animal companion gains the saving throws of its wizard-mentor. The wizard gains an empathic link with the animal and can issue it mental commands at a distance of up to 10 miles.

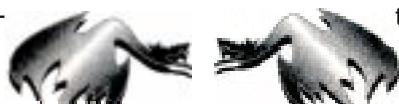
Because it is enhanced through the casting of the *find companion* spell, such an animal usually has more hit dice and a better Armor Class than a creature like it would normally possess. Its hit points are improved also. In addition to rolling hit points based on the animal's hit dice, a number of hit points are added equal to the caster's level – to a maximum of 20. For example, a 7th-level wizard with a badger companion would add 7 hit points to the creature's total. A 9th-level wizard would add 9.

Wizards can call upon these creatures to perform various tasks and missions and can rely upon their innate magical abilities. Smarter than a natural creature, companions easily can carry out basic orders and can understand when their masters are in danger. All animal companions initially have a Neutral alignment. Through association with the wizard, however, the companion assumes the same alignment as its master.

If the companion is separated from its wizard mentor by more than 50 miles, the wizard loses one hit point a day until he dies (at which time the companion also dies) or until the companion returns to within the 50-mile radius. These improved familiars gain the saving throws of their wizard-masters.

If the companion is killed, the wizard must successfully roll an immediate system shock check or lose two levels of experience. If the check is successful, the wizard loses one level of experience.

Companions vary in power and abilities, and the type of companion gained is random. Roll 1d20 and consult the following chart:



1 Raccoon	11 Monkey
2 Badger	12 Snake
3 Winged serpent	13 Stag
4 Rat	14 Otter
5 Spider	15 Fox
6 Iguana	16 Wolf
7 Talking owl	17 Horse
8 Falcon	18 Cooshee
9 Vulture	19 Brown bear
10 Bat	20 Cheetah

**Badger:** HD 2+1; AC 3; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-4; MV 9, burrow 6; SZ S

A sturdy burrowing animal with thick hair, a badger is a loyal and fierce companion. A wizard who has this animal as a companion develops a patch of white hair at the top of his head, just as a badger has a patch of white hair on the top of its head. Some wizards cover up this patch so others will not learn about the presence of a badger companion.

A badger companion, once a day, can add 15 bonus hit points to its wizard-master and confer to its master an AC of 3. The Armor Class benefit does not apply if the wizard already has an AC of 3 or better. This is done at the wizard's request or if the badger senses its master is in serious danger. The added hit points and Armor Class remain for six turns (one hour). The badger does not lose any of its hit points, nor does its Armor Class worsen in the process.

**Bat:** HD 1+2; AC 7; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; MV 1; Fl 24 (B); SZ T

A bat companion is small and has a wingspan of 6"-1'. Bats come in shades of gray, brown, and black, and their wizard companions' hair quickly matches the hue of the bats' leathery wings. A bat companion is loathe to be about during the day – unless in an underground setting. During the daylight, its movement rate is cut in half. At night, because of its sonar, it has the equivalent of infravision to 120' and can ignore the effects of fog and magical darkness. Once an evening, it allows its wizard-master to fly with a movement rate of 12 (B), and to transform himself into a bat with a flying rate of 24 (B). These abilities last for 1d6 +2 turns (30 to 80 minutes).

**Brown bear:** HD 5+5; AC 5; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/1-8; SA hug; MV 12; SL

An aggressive hunter that stands 9' tall, a bear companion gifts its master with the hunting proficiency at a score of 18. This companion animal has such keen senses that three times a day he can detect illusions within a 30' radius. This information can be readily passed to its wizard-master. A wizard with this companion grows long, thick, shaggy hair.

**Cheetah:** HD 4; AC 4; THAC0 16; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-8; SA rear claws 1-3

each; SD surprised only on a 1; MV 15, sprint 45; SZ M

A sand-colored cat that stands 4'-4½' tall, the cheetah is a skilled hunter that can naturally camouflage itself. It is surprised only on a 1. Unless springing to the attack, it has a 90% chance to go unseen in woodland settings, an 80% chance in farmlands or plains, and a 70% chance in shadowy buildings or underground areas. The cheetah possesses the following non-weapon proficiencies: hunting (15), tracking (16), and survival (16). When its wizard-master is within 30' of it in an outdoor setting, the effect is as if the wizard was wearing a *cloak of elvenkind*. Further, while the wizard is within 10' of the cat, he is surprised only on a 1. The wizard companion develops cat's-eyes.

**Cooshee:** HD 4+3; AC: 4; THAC0 16; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/2-8; MV 15, sprint 45; SZ M

Recognized as an elven dog, the cooshee only barks to warn its wizard-master of danger. A cooshee companion can *puss without truce* at will, as per the 1st level priest spell, and allows its wizard to do the same once a day. In addition, the dog has infravision to 90' can detect secret or concealed doors on a 1-2 on a six-sided die, can move silently in any woodland setting, and has the tracking nonweapon proficiency at a score of 18. A cooshee companion has a very magical nature, and once a day it can identify wizards within a 60' radius. A wizard who has this animal for a companion has brown patches on his back.

**Falcon:** HD 2; AC 4; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-3; MV 1, fly 36 (B); SZ S

Small, maneuverable birds of prey, falcons form fast bonds with their masters. Like the falcon, the wizard gains a taste for raw meat and periodically has an urge to hunt for his dinner. A falcon companion, once a day, allows its master to cast a 1st, 2nd, or 3rd level spell through it. For example, a wizard with a falcon flying high overhead could cast a *magic missile* or a *web* at a foe that would otherwise be out of the wizard's range.

**Fox:** HD 2; AC 6; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; MV 15; SZ S

A member of the dog family, foxes are noted for their bushy tails and large erect ears. A wizard who gains a fox companion also gains a slight point to his ears, making others suspect that there is a hint of elvish blood in his lin-



eage. Elves gain an even more pronounced point to their ears. Especially clever and quick, foxes bestow improved movement, so that the wizard has a maximum normal movement rate of 15.

Three times a day a fox companion is able to *dimension door* into trees and bushes, similar to the way a dryad can *dimension door* into an oak tree. The fox can stay in a tree or bush as long as it or its wizard-master desires. Once a day the fox can confer one of its *dimension door* uses to its master. However, the wizard can stay inside a tree for only up to eight hours. At the end of that time, the wizard finds himself expelled from the tree.

**Horse:** HD 4+4; AC 6; THAC0 16; #AT 2; Dmg 1-8/1-8; MV 15, gallop 30; SZ L

A companion horse is large and muscular, an impressive mount that is tremendously loyal to its master. It can travel long distances without tiring, and it can fend for itself, feeding on plants and grasses – even locating food for its master, if necessary.

Twice a day, at its master's request, a companion horse can determine how many spells remain in a designated wizard's memory. However, it cannot determine the levels or kinds of spells. A wizard with this companion comes to favor apples, oats, and sugar.

**Iguana:** HD 2; AC 6; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; MV 9, climb 6; SZ S

A large herbivorous green lizard with a dorsal crest, an iguana companion perhaps best serves as a guard for its wizard master or his home and treasures. A wizard who attracts this animal through the *find companion* spell quickly loses an appetite for meat. Like his iguana companion, the wizard now prefers fruits and vegetables.

Once a day, an iguana can be commanded to guard an object or individual. If the object or individual is threatened, the iguana changes form to defend its charge. It retains this new form for 3d4 turns (30 minutes to two hours): HD 6; AC 0; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 4-16; MV 18, climb 12; S M. In addition, once a day the iguana can cast a *strength* spell upon its master. The spell grants the wizard 1d4 additional points of Strength, which lasts six turns (one hour).

**Monkey:** HD 2+1; AC 7; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; MV 9, climb 9; SZ S

A small primate with a long tail, a monkey is fiercely loyal to its master. The wizard with this companion prefers to

eat fruits, nuts, and the occasional insect. The wizard gains the ability to climb trees at 90% and to climb walls at 50%.

Twice a day, the monkey can call upon an innate jump ability, as per the spell, with each session lasting 10 rounds and allowing him to travel much farther than would normally be possible. Also twice a day, the monkey grants to its master the ability to speak with monkeys, as per the *speak with animals* spell. Each use of this ability lasts 1 turn.

**Otter:** HD 2; AC 4; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; MV 12, swim 18; SZ S

Having webbed and clawed feet and dark brown fur, an otter companion is a fast and agile swimmer that gifts its master with the swimming proficiency at a score of 18 and a swimming movement rate of 12. A wizard with such a companion has no desire to eat red meat. He prefers fish above all other foods – raw or cooked – and goes out of his way to dine on freshwater fish.

Twice a day, an otter companion can breathe water as if it were air for up to four hours at a time. If it desires, or if the wizard requests it, the otter can bestow one of those water-breathing uses upon its master.

**Raccoon:** HD 2; AC 8; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; MV 9, swim 9; SZ S

A small, flesh-eating mammal with a bushy, ringed tail, the raccoon bestows on its wizard master a 40% chance to climb walls and an 80% chance to climb trees. Like his animal friend, the wizard prefers to eat meat – and only eats vegetables or fruit when there is no meat available. The raccoon is a timid animal and only ventures into dangerous terrain when commanded.

Raccoons see well in darkness, and once a day – at its master's request – it can grant the wizard infravision to 60'. This ability lasts 1d4 hours. If its master already possesses infravision, the raccoon increases its master's infravision range by 25% during this time.

**Rat:** HD 2; AC 6; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; MV 15, swim 6; SZ T

A small gnawing mammal with white, brown, or black fur, a rat serves as an excellent spy. A wizard with this creature as his animal companion quickly learns that his hair matches the color of his companion rat.

Once a day, the rat can assume *gaseous form* for one hour. If the rat does not assume *gaseous form* at all during the

course of a day, it can instead confer upon its master the ability to turn gaseous. This request must be made by the wizard.

**Snake:** HD 3+1; AC 5; THAC0 18; #AT 2; Dmg 1-3 (bite)/1-3 (constrict); MV 9; SZ S

A 5'-6' long constrictor, the snake causes its wizard-master's tongue to thin slightly and to fork. The wizard gains a permanent +2 bonus to saving throws vs. snake poison.

Twice a day, the snake can transform itself into a wooden staff. Each transformation lasts up to two hours. If used as a weapon, the staff inflicts 1d6 hp damage. The staff has the snake's Armor Class and can withstand the snake's hit points in damage before it – and the snake – are destroyed. Once a day the wizard can meld form with the snake, though not while it is a staff. During the meld, the snake assumes the wizard's hit points and movement rate. The wizard cannot cast spells while melded with the snake. The meld lasts 1d4 +4 turns (50–80 minutes), with the wizard being able to break the meld earlier.

**Spider:** HD 1; AC 7; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2; MV 12, web 9; SZ T

The smallest of animal companions, the spider is roughly 2"-3" across. Attracting this creature through the *find companion* spell causes the wizard's eyes to become black and glossy. Those looking closely at him see the faint outline of a spider in the center of his pupils. A spider is small enough to slip into most places unseen, acting as an excellent information-gatherer for its master.

Three times a day the spider can confer upon the wizard the *spider climbing* ability, as per the spell. The duration of each use is 1-3 turns (10–30 minutes), and the wizard must communicate his desire for the ability. In addition, the wizard gains a +2 to his saving throws if a *web* spell is cast in his vicinity.

**Stag:** HD 4+2; AC 6; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; MV 24; SZ M

As tall as a horse, though lacking some of the bulk, the stag is an elegant-looking companion. It can be used as a mount by an unarmored wizard-master. Three times a day, at its master's request, a stag can determine the alignment of a designated individual who is within 60 yards. The wizard with this companion grows twin nubs on the top of his head, roughly where antlers would be on a stag's head.

**Talking owl:** HD 3+2; AC 2; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-2; MV 1 fly 36 (B); SZ S

A diminutive bird of prey with a large head and a small hooked bill, the owl can fly at any time of the day, though it is clear the bird prefers to be about in the evenings. Its master soon feels more at ease when the sun sets, and he acquires a taste for small rodents. A talking owl speaks the language of its master, plus six additional tongues.

The bird can *detect good* at will six times a day. However, if it forgoes any of the uses of that ability in a day, it can transfer them to its wizard-companion. For example, if a talking owl decided not to use its *detect good* ability during the course of a day, it could grant its master six uses of the *detect good* spell. The owl is immune to the following spells: cause *fear*, *charm person*, *command*, *friends*, *hypnotism*, *forget*, *hold person*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *scare*, and *fear*.

**Vulture:** HD 2+1; AC 5; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; MV 3, fly 27 (E); SZ M

Scavengers with bodies roughly 2' long and wingspans of up to 7', vultures are far from the most attractive of animal

companions. They have greasy-looking blue and black feathers over their bodies, save for their heads, which are bald and pink-skinned. A wizard with such a companion also is bald. Because vultures have a knack for finding dead creatures, three times a day they can detect undead: within a 120' radius. They suffer only half-damage from physical attacks of undead creatures, and they ignore the following effects caused by undead aging, level draining, fear, mummy rot, and paralyzation. A vulture bestows upon its companion the ability to ignore one aging or one level-draining attack per day. For example, a wizard with a vulture companion would ignore the first attack from a vampire that would normally cause a loss of two experience levels. However, a second attack by the undead would result in the level drain.

**Winged serpent:** HD 4+4; AC 5; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 14; MV 12, fly 18 (B); SZ L

Colorful snakes with hues of green, blue, purple, yellow, and orange, these companions are 8'-10' long and have wingspans of 10'-15'. The bite of a winged serpent is venomous, inflicting

1-4 hp damage the first round and 2-8 hp damage the following two rounds, save vs. poison for half damage. Three times a day the serpent can use a breath weapon, which consists of a cloud of dancing sparks 10' in diameter. All those within the cloud suffer 2-16 hp damage, save for one-half, and the sparks ignite exposed flammable materials. The serpents are especially vulnerable to fire-based attacks, suffering a -2 saving throw. If they fail their saving throw against a fire attack, its wings are incinerated. The serpents cannot use their breath weapon while wingless. The serpents are immune to all electrical attacks, and they are able to regenerate their wings in 1-3 days. If they tuck their wings in close to their bodies they can *spider climb* at will. Once per day the serpent can transfer its breath weapon to its master. The wizard with this companion must spend 100 gp a month on special fruits and nuts for the winged serpent. After a few months in the company of this creature, the wizard's diet starts to mirror the serpent's.

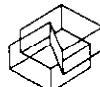
**Wolf:** HD 4; AC 6; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-5; MV 38; SZ S

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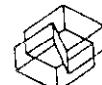
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Standing between 3'-4' high at the shoulder, this companion confers upon its wizard-master a permanent +1 bonus to saving throws vs. charm attacks. The wolf also enjoys this benefit. In addition, twice a day the animal can turn itself into a worg with these statistics: HD 5; AC 5; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; MV 18; SZ M (4'-7'). The form lasts 2d4 turns.

When in the presence of its wolf companion, the wizard is able to speak with wolves, as a *speak with animal* spell. A wizard with a wolf companion becomes almost exclusively a meat eater.

## Find Minion

(Conjuration/Summoning)

Sixth Level

Range: 1 mile/level

Components: V, S

Duration: Special

Casting Time: 12 hours

Area of Effect: One creature

Saving Throw: None

This enchantment is similar to the first level spell *find familiar* and the third level spell *find companion*; however it brings to the caster a minion with powerful abilities. The creature attracted benefits a wizard by conveying its sensory powers to its master, conversing with him, and serving as a guard, scout, or spy. A wizard can have only one minion at a time, though he also can have a normal familiar drawn by the 1st-level spell and a companion drawn by the third level spell. The minion enters into a magical bond with the wizard and no longer ages at the rate a similar normal animal would. The animal will live as long as the wizard unless it is killed earlier by spells, physical attacks, or neglect. In addition, like a familiar or companion, the minion gains the saving throws of its wizard-mentor. The wizard gains an empathic link with the minion and can issue it mental commands at a distance of up to 30 miles. In addition to rolling hit points based on a minion's hit dice, a number of hit points are added based on the wizard's level, to a maximum of 20 bonus hit points. For example, a 12th-level wizard with an owl-bear minion would add 12 hit points to the creature's total. A 16th-level wizard would add 16.

Wizards can call upon these creatures to perform various tasks and missions and can rely upon their special abilities. Minions easily carry out basic orders and understand when their masters are in danger. If the minion is separated from the wizard by more than 100 miles, the

wizard loses one hit point a day until the wizard dies (at which time the minion also dies) or until the minion returns to within the 100-mile radius. If the minion is killed, the wizard must successfully roll an immediate system shock check or lose two points of Intelligence. If the check is successful, the wizard loses one point of Intelligence. Minions vary in power and abilities, and those attracted by the spell are determined randomly. More information on each minion can be found in the *Monstrous Manual™* tome. Roll 1d12 and consult the following table.

1	Owl bear
2	Elven Cat
3	Blink Dog
4	Umberhulk
5	Unicorn
6	Pseudodragon
7	Displacer Beast
8	Peryton
9	Pegasus
10	Dragonne
11	Hippogriff
12	Griphon

**Blink Dog:** HD 4; AC 5; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; MV 12; SZ M

A blink dog minion looks like a stocky mutt or mongrel, making their kind difficult to distinguish or recognize as special. A wizard with this minion has unkempt, shaggy hair. Blink dogs have their own complex language of barks and yelps, which their masters can understand. These creatures have an innate ability to *blink*, with no possibility of ending up inside something solid. Roughly 75% of the time they are able to attack targets from the rear because of this ability. Twice a day, a blink dog minion grants to its wizard master the ability to *blink*, as per the spell for six rounds.

**Displacer Beast:** HD 6; AC 4; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 2-8/2-8; MV 15; SZ L

Looking like a puma with two tentacles, a displacer beast minion causes its master to have jet-black hair. This creature retains its lawful evil alignment, no matter the alignment of its master – who it faithfully serves. Such a minion can: displace itself, allowing it to appear about 3' from its actual location; make all saving throws as if it were a 12th-level fighter; cause attacking opponents to suffer a -2 penalty. A displacer beast grants to lawful neutral and lawful evil wizard-masters the ability to displace themselves 1'-2' from where they are actually standing for up to one hour a

day. This ability acts effectively as a *cloak of displacement*, which is listed in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*.

**Dragonne:** HD 9; AC 6 flying, 2 ground; THAC0 11; #AT; Dmg 1-8/1-8/3-18; MV 15, fly 9 (E); SZ M

A dragonne companion resembles a lion with long, feathery eyebrows and large, webbed wings. A wizard-master also gains overlong, feathery eyebrows. Three times a day this minion can emit a terrible roar that causes weakness in creatures within 120' of it unless they make a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation. Any creature within 30' of the roar is deafened for 2-12 rounds, and all those hearing the roar suffer -1 on attack rolls. A dragonne's master is immune to the effects of the roar. A dragonne minion is more powerful than its brethren. While they can fly for 1-3 turns at a time, the minion can fly for 2-8 turns.

**Elven Cat:** HD 3+6; AC 4; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-2/1-2/1-3; MV 18, swim 9; SZ T

Looking like a normal house cat, often with gray or brown fur and black stripes, these minions have their own language and also understand the elvish tongue. Unlike other cats, they love water, and they are frequently found swimming or playing in streams and puddles when not performing a task or mission. These minions are surprised only on a 1; impose a -5 to opponents' surprise roll; enjoy a 99.9% chance to move silently and a 90% chance to hide in wilderness areas; and can leap 20' with ease. Further, they have limited *ESP*, can use *enlarge* and *trip* once a day, and can employ *reduce* and *tree* twice a day – at the 9th level of ability. *Enlarge* doubles the minion's Hit Dice and damage; *tree* allows it to assume the shape of a tree limb. Once a day, they confer to their master the ability to use the *enlarge* or *tree* spell. This does not count against a wizard's spell allotment, though it prevents the minion from using the chosen ability that day. A wizard with an elven cat as a minion develops a taste for swimming and playing in the water.

**Griphon:** HD 7; AC 3; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/2-16; MV 12, fly 30 (C, D mounted); SZ L

Ferocious avians that look like the meld of a lion and a giant eagle, these minions, which can serve as mounts, are prized and powerful. A wizard with this

minion either has his hair turn a golden brown, or his skin (50% chance for either.) Further, a wizard feels compelled to provide the minion at least one horse, pony or donkey each week. In exchange, the griffon grants its wizard-master the ability to once a week control horses, as per the *animal control* potion. The wizard can influence the emotions and drives of 1d4+4 horses for 1d4+4 turns (10 to 80 minutes).

**Hippogriff:** HD 3+3; AC 5; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/1-10; MV 18, fly 36 (C, D mounted); SZ L

This monstrous hybrid of an eagle and a horse is one of the more prized minions. It will readily lay down its life for its wizard-master. Because of the bond established, the wizard cannot eat until he is certain his hippogriff is sated—even if that means offering the animal his food. Once a day it can change its form to that of a light riding horse, a shape it can hold for 3d6 turns (30 minutes to three hours), and twice a day it can assume the form of a regular-sized eagle, a shape it can hold for 2d4 turns (20–80 minutes). The hippogriff gifts the wizard with the ability to speak with horses and to speak with eagles each once a day, as per the *speak with animals* spell.

**Owlbear:** HD 5+2; AC 5; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/2-12; SA hug; MV 12; SZ L

Appearing as a cross between a giant owl and a bear, these minions weigh in excess of 1,000 pounds and are often aggressive and vicious. A minion owlbear will not fight to the death unless it is commanded to do so by its wizard-master or unless its master is in serious danger. Though these minions prefer heavily-wooded forests, they usually stay at their masters' sides—no matter where he travels. Unlike other owlbears, these minions do not lay eggs. However, like their brethren, they hibernate in the winter—provided they and their wizard-masters live in lands that have such climates. A wizard with this minion develops a small crest of yellow-brown hair at the top of his head, mirroring the owlbear's crest. A minion owl bear possesses one special ability: once a day, for 2d4+4 turns (one to two hours), it can assume the form of a giant owl or a brown bear. It retains its normal hit points and Armor Class during the transformation.

**Pegasus:** HD 4; AC 6; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8/1-8/1-3; MV 24, fly 48 (C, D mounted); SZ L

A formidable winged steed, a minion Pegasus can be found in hues of white, gray, tan, and dark brown. Such a minion can understand most human common tongues. A Pegasus remains chaotic good, and over the course of a few months; its wizard-master's alignment changes to chaotic good. A Pegasus minion can attack an opponent with its rear hooves, inflicting 2-12 hp damage; dive from 50' or higher at +2 to attack, with its front hooves inflicting double damage; and *detect evil* and *detect good* in a 60-yard range at will. The Pegasus' wizard-master is granted the ability to cast *detect evil* and *detect good* each once a day. A wizard with a Pegasus minion is only able to eat fruit, grass, and other plants.

**Peryton:** HD 4; AC 7; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 4-16; MV 12, fly 21 (C); SZ M

A peryton minion looks like a giant dark green eagle with a blue-black stag's head, obsidian antlers, and red-orange eyes. Typically an evil creature, this minion's alignment quickly changes to match that of its wizard-master. In return, its master's eyes become orange-red. Such a minion gains +2 on all attack rolls, is immune to nonmagical weapons, and can plunge from several hundred feet at a target for an additional +2 attack bonus. A wizard with a peryton minion gains an immunity to nonmagical weapons once a day for 1d6 turns (10 minutes to one hour).

**Pseudodragon:** HD 2; AC 2; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SA poison sting; MV 6, fly 24 (B); SZ T

Resembling a miniature red dragon, a pseudodragon minion is +4 on attack rolls. Its poison is quite potent—all those who fail a saving throw against it fall into a state of catalepsy that lasts 1-6 days. The creature's chameleon-like power enables it to blend with a forest background, giving it an 80% chance to be effectively invisible. A pseudodragon has infravision to 60', can see invisible creatures and objects, and has a 35% magic resistance.

Once a day, a pseudodragon minion will grant to its wizard master infravision of 60' for 3d4 turns (30 minutes to two hours) and the ability to see invisible objects and creatures for 1d4 turns (10–40 minutes). These abilities are granted when the wizard requests them. A wizard with this minion will grow a circular

band of red scales about his wrists or ankles (50% chance for either location).

**Umberhulk:** HD 8+8; AC 2; THAC0 11; #AT 3; Dmg 3-12/3-12/1-10; MV 6, burrow 1-6; SZ L

An umberhulk retains its chaotic evil alignment, even though it will obey its wizard-master, who can be of any alignment. Wizards with these minions have eyes that look like blackened circles. A powerful subterranean creature, the umberhulk prefers to remain in dark confines, where it has a greater chance to surprise opponents. Like other umberhulks, a minion can easily bite through hide or bone, cause opponents underground or in dark chambers to suffer a -5 penalty to surprise rolls; burrow; dig through stone; cause cave-ins; and cause *confusion* per the spell—if a victim looks into its eyes. This minion has infravision to 90' and grants an evilly-aligned wizard-master the same infravision ability. If the wizard is evil and is an elf or half-elf, his infravision range is increased to 180'.

**Unicorn:** HD 4+4; AC 2; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/1-12; MV 2; SZ L

A unicorn minion retains its chaotic good alignment, no matter the alignment of its wizard-master and will unerringly serve a master of any alignment. Such minions can sense an enemy up to 240 yards away, cause opponents to suffer -6 on their surprise rolls, gain a +2 bonus to hit, charge an opponent with its horn for 3-36 points of damage, and teleport themselves and their wizard-master once a day up to 360 yards away. These minions can never be *charmed* or *held* by spells, they are immune to death spells, and they make saving throws as if they were 11th level wizards. A unicorn minion will gift to a goodly-aligned wizard-master a permanent immunity to *charm person* or *hold person* spells—the choice is the wizard's. Because of the wizard's close ties to its minion, his hair becomes stark white, matching the hair color of the unicorn.



Jean Rabe is the author of several TSR novels and is hard at work on her next one—the first DRAGONLANCE: THE FIFTH AGE™ novel. She lives in Wisconsin.

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**RAL PARTHA**



# 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, 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI 53147, USA. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON MAGAZINE, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge, CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. You can also send your questions via e-mail to [tsrsage@aol.com](mailto:tsrsage@aol.com). We regret that personal replies are impossible. SASEs are being returned with a copy of our writer's guidelines.

This month, the Sage takes a long look at spells for the AD&D® game and, in honor of April Fool's Day, considers some questions that are just a tad odd.

**If a wizard uses a *shape change* spell to turn into a dragon, can he pick what age category of dragon he turns into? If not, what age is the dragon? This is important, because a dragon's age category determines what spell-like abilities it has and how much damage its breath weapon inflicts.**

Because *shape change* is a 9th-level spell that costs 5,000 gp to cast, I'm inclined to be generous. Let the caster state the approximate size of dragon he's changing into, then check that size against the age table in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* tome for the type of dragon the character has chosen. It's helpful to have the caster state the dragon's body length; you can calculate the creature's tail length separately if the need arises. For example, a wizard who changes into a red dragon with a body 100' long, he'd become a mature adult (because mature adult red dragons have body lengths ranging from 99' to 118'). The dragon's tail length would be about 90' (near the lower end of the range). The wizard would gain the dragon's Armor Class of -6 and the dragon's movement abilities: flight at speed of 30 (C) walking at speed of 9 and the ability to make jumps up to

30 yards. The wizard also gains a mature adult red dragon's physical attacks, immunity to fire, and infravision.

The wizard does not get the dragon's breath weapon, spell-like abilities (including the ability to detect invisible creatures), or fear aura because these powers depend on a dragon's innate magical nature and superior intellect (if the DM is feeling particularly ungenerous, he can disallow the fire immunity as well). The wizard does not gain the dragon's magic resistance either, because a *shape change* spell never bestows magic resistance.

Note that a character using the much weaker *polymorph self* spell can't change into a form any larger than a hippopotamus, which would limit the character to the form of a hatchling red dragon, and the caster would get no extra abilities beyond normal flight.

**If a creature with a breath weapon is subjected to a *reduce* spell, is the size of the breath weapon affected?**

No. Areas of effect for spells, spell-like abilities, breath weapons, gaze attacks, or similar abilities don't change when a creature's size changes. Though a gaze attack that actually requires an enemy to meet a creature's gaze (as opposed to merely being looked at) might be human-sized creatures, for example, probably won't look into the eyes of a medusa that has been reduced to a height of two inches.

**Can humans and demihumans enter an *antianimal shell*?**

No they can't. The shell keeps out any living creature that is wholly or partially composed of animal matter. Creatures wholly composed of plant matter or minerals (or some combination of plant and mineral) ignore *antianimal* shells. Undead are unaffected (because they are not alive) as are all creatures with a purely extraplanar origin. For example, tanar'ri,

though basically "animal" aren't affected because they aren't from the Prime Material Plane.

Note that humans and demihumans (and tanar'ri) aren't considered "animals" for game purposes (see next question).

**The description of the 5th-level priest spell *animal growth* says the spell is particularly useful when used in conjunction with *charm person* spells. Can this spell be used on humans and demihumans? Can the caster use it on himself?**

Actually, the description says the spell is useful in conjunction with a *charm person* or *mammal* spell, which affects both people and mammalian animals. *Animal growth* affects only animals; that is natural quadrupeds, insects, arachnids, avians, fish, and reptiles. As a general rule, animals fit into one of the aforementioned categories, have racial intelligence ratings of low (7) or worse, and have no magical powers. Humans, demihumans, and humanoids are composed of animal matter (see previous question), but they are not animals for the purposes of this spell or most other spells and items that affect only animals, such as *speak with animals* or the *ring of mammal control*. Note that exceptional animals with high Intelligence scores are still animals, and that exceptional humans, demihumans, and humanoids with low Intelligence scores are not.

**An *ESP* spell allows 'the caster to detect the surface thoughts of creatures within the area of effect. Does this allow the caster to pinpoint the locations of creatures he cannot see due to size, invisibility, concealment, or whatever?**

The best the caster can do is know which direction the thoughts are coming from (left, right, ahead, behind, up, down, or some combination of these). If the caster spends one round studying an area containing hidden creatures, he can tell about how many there are, just as if he could see them, but he still doesn't know exactly where they are.

**When a character uses a *protection from magic* scroll, do his own spells and magical items continue functioning? Can the globe of protection the scroll provides be removed with a *dispel magic* spell? What happens when another character enters the globe with magical items and spells running?**

The scroll creates a globe of anti-magic that negates all magical effects –

including the scroll-user's own spells and magical items – for as long as they remain within the globe. A magical item or portable spell effect carried into the globe from outside ceases functioning the instant it enters the globe, but begins working again the instant it leaves (provided its duration hasn't expired). The globe is impervious to *dispel magic* spells.

**Is there anything that can remove an anti-magic shell other than the minute chance that a *Mordenkainens disjunction* provides?**

A *wish* or *limited wish* spell can negate the shell; remember that these two spells age the caster (and don't forget the system shock roll). A 10th-level dispel effect (see the *DM<sup>TM</sup> Option: High-Level Campaigns* book, Chapter Six) destroys the shell if successful.

**The description for the *meteor swarm* spell says any creature in the straight-line path of the missiles receives the full effect of the spell without a saving throw. If the caster lines up two or more targets, do either of them get a saving throw? Where do the missiles detonate? Do they go off when they strike the first target or do they detonate at the range the caster chooses?**

If more than one target lies in a missile's path, they all suffer the full effects with no saving throw. The missiles detonate at the range the caster specifies, no matter how many targets they encounter along the way, unless they encounter a solid barrier that blocks them. In the latter case, missiles detonate at the barrier in the pattern the caster has specified. Note that each missile follows a path from the caster to its place in the detonation pattern, so each missile follows a unique path.

**How do you apply the range listings for the various *monster summoning* spells? Do the creatures summoned have to be within range of the spell? Or can the caster make the creatures appear anywhere within the spell's range? If not, where do they appear? If so, when does the caster choose the spot where the summoned creatures appear?**

The range applies to where the monster appears in relation to the point where the caster was standing when he casts the spell. The caster must choose a point where the summoned monster or monsters will appear at the time of casting, some adjustments will be necessary

when the monsters appear because the caster doesn't know exactly how many creatures he'll get. For example, a wizard standing in the middle of a corridor 20' wide and 110' long casts *monster summoning I* and chooses a spot straight ahead and 25' away, which is well within the spell's area of effect (a 30-yard radius). The spell summons five orcs. One orc appears exactly 25' from the caster. The remaining four must appear in the same general vicinity, but the caster can freely choose what formation they're standing in, so long as there is space available. He can't have them all standing in the same 5'-square area, because they won't all fit, but he could have them standing single file along the corridor or in a double row across the corridor. In any case, the orcs must appear next to each other, the caster can't string them out along the entire corridor, even though the whole corridor lies within the area of effect.

**A rod of alertness senses creatures hostile to the rod wielder within a 120' radius. Does the rod indicate where the hostile creatures are if the wielder cannot otherwise detect them?**

First, note that the rod detects hostile creatures only when planted in the ground and commanded to do so. A character can't carry the rod around using it as an early warning system. When the rod gives the alarm, it gives no indication of where the creature (or creatures) it has detected is.

**The sixth or indigo layer of a prismatic sphere or prismatic wall spell stops magical spells. What happens to any spell effects operating on a creature when it steps through the layer? Also, what, exactly, does the final "force field" layer keep out?**

No spell effect can pass through the indigo layer if cast so that its area of effect overlaps the sphere or wall or if the sphere or wall blocks a straight line between the spell caster and the target point; however, a spell cast on a creature is unaffected if the creature passes through the layer. Note that spells with mobile areas of effect that extend beyond the recipient stop at the sixth layer. Such spells either collapse if forced against the barrier (as is the case with *protection from evil 10' radius*) or simply keep the recipient from passing through the layer (as is the case with *Ottiluke's resilient sphere*).

The seventh or violet layer stops

everything except creatures who make successful saving throws vs. spell when they contact the layer. Such creatures and their equipment pass right through. Creatures who fail the saving throw go to another plane. Objects propelled or thrust at the layer are deflected – if the wielder doesn't go with the object the object doesn't go through the layer.

**The description for the 4th-level priest spell *spell immunity* says it cannot affect a creature already magically protected by a potion, protective spell, ring, or other device. Does this mean a character could remove his protective magical items, cast or receive a *spell immunity* spell, then put his protective items back on and get the benefits of both the spell and the items? What happens if the character casts or receives the *spell immunity* spell first, then casts or receives other protective spells.**

*Spell immunity* doesn't work when the recipient also enjoys magical protection from another source, no matter when the other source of protection takes effect. If the spell recipient is already magically protected, *spell immunity* has no effect. If *spell immunity* already is in place and the recipient receives another protective spell, he can choose which protection will affect him. If he chooses the additional spell, the *spell immunity* is completely negated, even if the new spell has a shorter duration than the *spell immunity*. If he chooses the *spell immunity*, the new spell remains inactive until the *spell immunity* expires or is dispelled. If the new protection spell's duration expires before the *spell immunity* expires, the recipient can get no benefit from it.

**Just how do you go about deciding which questions go into this column anyway? If I e-mail you a question, will I get a personal reply?**

I begin selecting questions by reading all my monthly mail. I tend to discard any question I can't read or that I've answered recently. Once I've sorted everything once, I take a close look at what I've got left. I look for questions from people who have put some thought into their subjects before dropping me a line and for questions whose answers will help me make the whole game a little clearer for everyone who reads the column. If I have a theme in mind, I look for questions that fit the theme. If you want to improve the chances of getting a question into print, follow these guidelines:

Type your question or print it clearly in ink or send in a clear, clean computer printout. If I can't read a question, it doesn't get answered.

Get to the point. I really don't need to read your life story, or the histories of all the characters who were in play when your question came up.

Before sending your question, get out your books and look – hard – for the answers.

If you're e-mailing a question, mention what you're asking about in the subject line of the message. Subject lines that read "a question for the Sage" aren't helpful. In any case, the "Sage" doesn't send personal replies – not even if you mail your question and send an SASE.

**During a recent adventure, I decided that my wizard would cast a *magic jar* spell and then posses himself. My character carried around the gem from the spell and used it to kill a medusa and a couple of beholders. My DM had a problem with this, so I just told him to read the spell description. He did, and he agreed that according to the wording I had not cheated or anything, but he also asked me to find out if that was a misuse of the spell. So what do you think?**

I think your DM overlooked the line in the spell description that says the spell ends when the caster returns to his own body, which is exactly what your character did when he "possessed himself." (If you're curious, it's the last line of the seventh paragraph.) I think it's also occasionally okay for DMs to say, "No, you can't do that!" And then go on with the game.

#### **Are there any modules introducing dragon werebeasts?**

No, and there probably never will be because lycanthropy only affects humanoid creatures (see the *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* tome, page 230).

**A friend of mine had an elf character who became pregnant. After only five months of game time went by, he wanted to play the character again. He said it was okay, because elves are only pregnant for two months before having their babies. Did he lie?**

Whether your friend lied is a question for philosophers. Let's just say that he probably made up his "rule" on elven gestation on the spot so you'd let him play his character. There is no hard and fast rule about gestation periods for

player character races in the AD&D game. Everybody pretty much agrees that humans gestate for about nine months. Most other human-size races should have similar gestation periods, or perhaps a little longer to account for their longer lives. One campaign I know about held that the gestation periods for elves was about seven and a half years, which is a bit too long if you ask me.

**The description for a *bag of devouring* says the bag is a lure for an extra-dimensional monster and that the *bag* is one of the creature's feeding orifices. Can this creature be killed? If so, can you retrieve items from it? What are its statistics?**

Yes, the creature can be found and killed, but only if the DM wants to take the time to create statistics for the creature and to design an adventure that might enable a party to track it down. Without such a special effort on the DM's part, the creature is out of reach. In any case, the creature digests everything it swallows and the best any group of would-be monster slayers can hope to retrieve would be a few random items from the critter's most recent snacks.

**If a polymorphed female dragon mates with a human male and remains human during the pregnancy, will the offspring be human or a dragon/human hybrid such as the draconians of the DRAGONLANCE® world? If the dragon changes back to dragon form, what sort of creature will emerge if the dragon lays an egg?**

The *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Annual Volume Two* includes an entry for half dragons, but these are the results of unions between demihuman females (elf, dwarf, or gnome) and male gold, silver, or bronze dragons in demihuman form. A union between a male human or demihuman and a dragon in human or demihuman form produces no offspring.

Note that draconians are not cross-breeds at all, but creatures created from good dragon eggs corrupted by evil magic.

**There seem to be some sloppy gaps in the current *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*. When TSR gets around to doing a third edition, I hope it contains more standardized rules for dealing with daily occurrences. For example, I give you the following scenario, which I encountered the last time I ran a game:**

**A party of adventurers kills a dragon**

**in a hall dominated by an ancient dwarven throne carved entirely out of one giant emerald. Behind the throne is a magical elven airboat lying on its side. While the party druid goes to investigate the ship, the berserker gets good and drunk. While the druid searches the ship's hold the berserker finds a large keg of gunpowder and places it under the throne. Then he lays a trail of oil from the keg to the hall entrance. The berserker gets no response when he shouts to the druid, so he drops his torch and plugs his ears. Meanwhile, the druid emerges from the hold to see what the berserker wanted. Boom! Now, assuming that the throne fails its saving throw and the boat lies between the druid and the throne, what is the chance that the druid blows up, too? What are the chances that the entire party is killed by emerald shrapnel? If the druid survives the blast and the shrapnel, what are the chances the boat lands on her? How much damage does a medium sized elven airboat do? Does the berserker get an extra experience points for inventing rocketry?**

Yeah boy, you've found a big hole in the rules all right. People go around blowing up furniture-sized emeralds with kegs of gunpowder all the time; this situation must have happened in campaigns here in the Lake Geneva area three or four times last week alone. Even as you read this, teams of designers are feverishly at work perfecting shrapnel rules for all types of gemstones, not just emeralds.

Are you wondering just when these great new rules will be available to the general public? If you are, stop, because no such rules are being written.

I'll start my real answer to this question by noting that slaying dragons and recovering throne-sized emeralds are not everyday events in well-run campaigns. Such things happen in great campaigns, but only as major events that cap a series of epic adventures. When PCs can bump off the game's biggest, baddest monsters and haul home tons of loot after every session the campaign is well on its way to being a memory (and probably not a fond one).

Likewise, it's incumbent on the DM to put a little thought into encounters. If you place a keg of gunpowder in a treasure hoard, you darn well should decide what's likely to happen if the PCs blow it up long before the game starts. You can't predict everything players will have their characters do, but continual improvisation kills a campaign.

So, before you decided your encounter was ready to play you should have decided how much damage potential that keg of power had. For brevity's sake, let's say your keg held 100 charges of powder (a pouch holds a maxim of 18, see *DMG*, page 238). That gives the whole keg of damage potential of 200 points and a blast radius of 15' (also from page 238 of the *DMG*). Knowing that, your next step is reconsidering whether to let that much destructive power into your game. You also should consider what the dragon would do with the powder; dragons aren't stupid, you know (it wasn't a red dragon, was it?). Now consider the conditions in the dungeon. Is the place fairly dry? (Wet gunpowder just doesn't blow up.)

Lets assume the power was dry and your players really are silly enough to let the berserker waste it and put another party member in jeopardy at the same time. Now 200 points is a lot of damage, but gunpowder provides more push than smash, so the throne might break if it fails an item saving throw, but it's just not going to shatter. At worst, it's just going to hop a bit into the air and crack in half when it lands. Characters outside the 15' blast radius suffer no damage, which probably includes the druid if the boat's deck points away from the throne. Nor is the blast going to be powerful enough to lift a boat large enough to have a hold so big that a character has to climb inside and search for awhile to find out what's inside. In any case the boat's bulk is going to absorb the blast and shield the druid.

And, no, the berserker shouldn't get any extra experience from this little bit of silliness.



Skip Williams is a game designer and editor at TSR. If you have any questions on TSR gaming products for the Sage, you can write to him at the address at the head of this column. We regret that personal replies are impossible.

## Forum

*Continued from page 70*

video games, should consider themselves blessed. I'll admit that I miss some of the old aspects of the game, but that's the beauty of the system as a whole: take a monster from a children's novel, borrow a plot from an epic movie, combine, dissect, revolutionize, reverse — nobody cares, as long as you don't try to publish your polished plagiarism. Above all, have fun. Think back to the first time you ran or played in an adventure. Weren't those low-level modules always the best? Your characters had nothing and wanted everything, and now you reminisce with friends about favorite battles and predicaments. For those of you still out there who haven't lost their appetite for the greatest game of all time, try picking up *The Book of Weird, Being A Most Desirable Lexicon of the Fantastical, Wherein Kings and Dragons, Trolls and Vampires, To Say Nothing of Elves and Gnomes, Queens, Knaves, and Were-wolves Are Made Manifest, and Many, Many Further Revelations of the Mystical Order of Things Are Brought To Light* by Barbara Ninde Byfield. If this book can't spice up your world, give up gaming and find a good Sega cartridge.

Roy MacEachern  
Winnipeg, Canada

Has any one else noticed a tendency toward utopian political correctness in fantasy literature and fantasy gaming?

Sure, we still have the nasty monsters out there, but the forces of evil seem to be always non-human. There aren't many seriously threatening human villains anymore. What's more, increasingly games seem to be trying to set peasants up as modern middle-class farmers and the nobility seem to be little more than corporate officers ruling with the assent of the "Board." Save for the *BIRTHRIGHT™* setting, there seems to be no concept of "Divine Right of Kings" in the game. All the absolute monarchs are evil, and it's impossible to be a "good" or "kind" ruler if you're an absolute one.

How many of the gamers have seriously studied history or base their games on historical models? Not fantasy Vikings; I mean real Norse or Anglo-Saxons, real Byzantines, and real Angevin Empire?

I'd like to play with some people who game in a world I can believe.

Adam Cole  
Pensacola, FL

I am writing in response to Jason G. Ward's letter from issue #224. I must say that Jason is nothing more than a sexist who can't admit to it. He may be right about there being things that interest one gender but not the other, but role-playing isn't one of them. In fact, I have yet to find a single female who hasn't expressed some interest in role-playing games once she knew what they were about. There are definitely not enough female players out there, but not by any fault of their own. Male players have seen to it that no enough females ever have the chance to become interested in playing. Another thing: great role-players are not at all, in my experience (and in the experience of my friends) mostly male. As a matter of fact, as near as I can tell, it's the poor female player and the female with no interest at all in role-playing that are actually the rare commodity.

I know I probably didn't make a dent in Jason's position on the matter, but I just wanted to note that at least some men don't think like he does. Oh, and a quick P.S.: If they don't come, the hobby can do nothing but suffer.

Michael Garcia  
Ringwood, NJ

As far back as I can remember, gamers have been plagued by players with the die-nudging ailment.

This is a disease that gives players a tendency to reroll or tip dice if they get an undesirable roll. Some examples:

1) The special-area roller ("Hey, I only count rolls on top of my character sheet, not on the table top!") who will immediately forget his rule if he rolls a 20 in the kitchen sink.

2) The early roller, the guy who sits and rolls his dice 20 minutes before the combat round, saving only the best rolls so when the DM calls for initiatives, he says "I've already got mine!"

3) The downright cheater, the guy who doesn't even try to have style but instead just keeps rerolling bad rolls until someone stops him.

I have seen the future of gaming, and it is the pop-o-matic bubble.

Imagine multifaceted and colored dice sealed in clear plastic popping chambers. This might lead to new gaming phrases such as, "Pop your initiative," "Pop 'em," or "Man, I really popped the #%%\$ out of that goblin!"

Tim Gray  
Salisbury, MD





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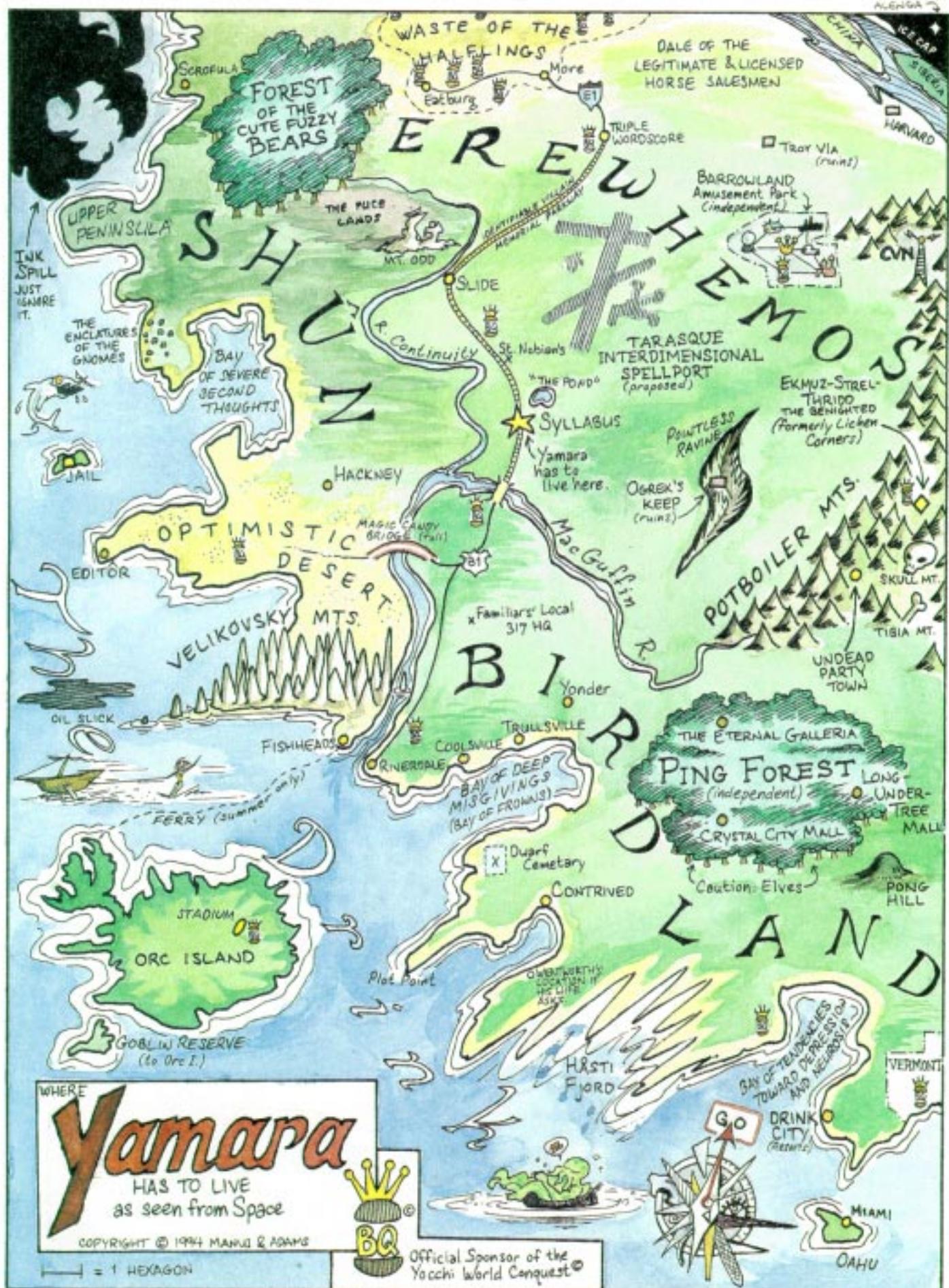
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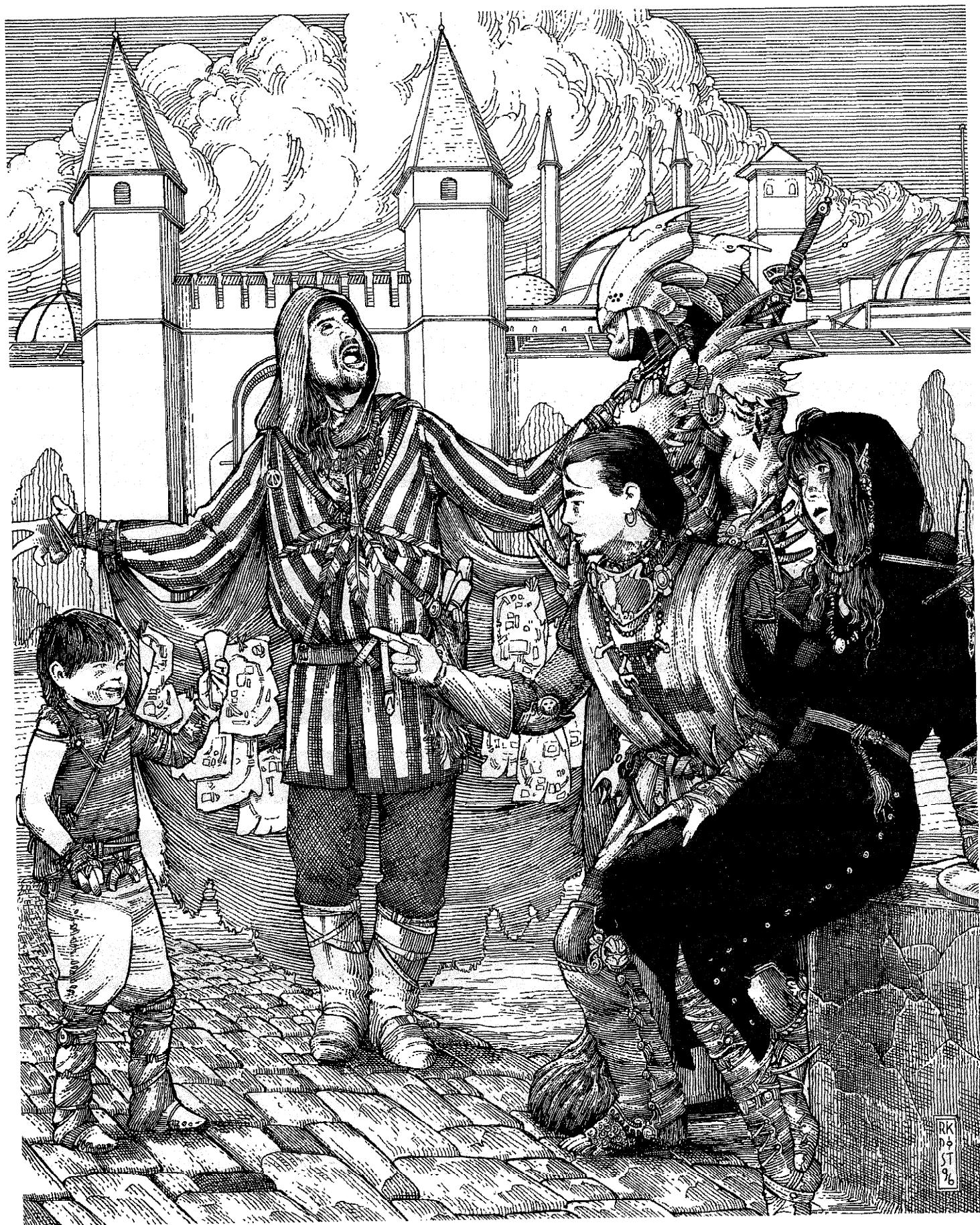
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# VENTURING UNTO THE CITY

by Paul F. Culotta

illustrated by R.K. Post

Sooner or later, the adventurers in your campaign will visit a large city. Frankly, this is inevitable. Where, other than a metropolis with all its businesses and services, are characters going to unload all their accumulated treasure? Where else might they go to take a break from orc war parties and owlbears that wander the wilderness? Face it, the heroes will want to visit the city because there are so many things to do and see. Rogue characters in particular will always want the opportunity to head into town because it is there that they usually find the greatest opportunities for playing their roles.

When they go through the gates, your skills as a Dungeon Master will probably be strained much more than when they are confronting the monsters and villains of Underdark or the Savage North. This article addresses the issues and problems that will most likely confront the DM, while running a city gaming session or adventure. It also suggests some solutions.

First, a disclaimer. While all cities are different to some degree, some cities in world-specific campaigns are very different, and have unique considerations. Sigil in the PLANESCAPE® setting has its own sets of factions and places which you had better know the dark of, cutter! Likewise, you had better not be caught by a templar reading or writing in the city-state of Tyr in the DARK SUN® campaign. And woe unto you if you are seen even possessing a weapon in the RAVENLOFT® domain of Falkovnia.

This article can not hope to address all of those peculiarities. Instead it is oriented on a "generic" AD&D® game medieval style city that can be found in most home campaigns, the FORGOTTEN REALMS®, MYSTARA®, and GREYHAWK® campaigns. Some of the concepts, however, should also apply to a campaign specific city.

## Mood

Up front, the DM must realize that when adventuring heroes come to the city, the mood of the game often changes dramatically. Instead of being huddled around campfires watching for wandering giants or wandering around the Underdark looking for brain-hungry illithids or guarded dwarven artifacts, the heroes have reached "civilization." They are in a place inhabited by their own kind (well... usually). This place is generally protected from the wilds by walls and a strong military and police-type force. There are many establishments within that provide a wide variety of diversions, places to cash in treasure, and joints to have a good time. It is also a good location to pick up a new mission, establish contacts, get level advancement training, buy animals, equipment, supplies, and services, have magical items identified, and do many, many other things that normally are not easy (or possible) to do in the wilderness. In short, it is a place to relax, take care of some housekeeping, and perhaps go adventuring.

The DM must remain sensitive to the fact that characters may have a different agendas when they come to the city. Sir Thornwood, paladin of the Order of Storm, may want to check in with the local grandmaster of his order and arrange to have his beat up armor repaired. Snickery Sam, the halfling thief, may belong to the local thieves' guild and so must report in and give the guild its share of his take. He is also looking for some halfling female companionship to help him spend some of his gold. Veronica the sorceress may wish to look up a renowned wizard and go through level training or learn a new spell.

While she is there, she wishes to have several items identified. Lady Das, a druidess and



Sir Thornwood's wife, is only in the city out of deference to her husband; she really would rather get back out in the wilderness and get to the bottom of what is polluting the Shimmering River.

With such differing agendas, it is possible that adventuring companions will not stick together the whole time they are in the city. In the wilderness or Underdark, where it is a matter of survival, they support and stay together almost all of the time. Once they get within inside the city gates, however, the perceived or believed danger of "the wilderness" is lifted. Accordingly, the characters may act as if they are on vacation and take off to do what they want, often not in the company of their adventuring companions. Even Lady Das, who is enduring city life just for the sake of her husband, will get tired of being with him as he negotiates fixing his armor or saying prayers at the dreary chapter-house of the grandmaster. Eventually, she may try to do something more in keeping with her character, like going to a park to listen to the birds sing, or paying homage at a druidic shrine just outside the gates.

Part of the time the party may stick together, such as when they are seeking an audience with the local lord, responding to a summons, or going on an adventure within the city limits itself. Even so, the many colorful things within city limits may be a terrible temptation for characters to make short, individual side trips into the bazaar, gem dealer, inns, governmental offices, or elsewhere.

Whether the party splits or stays together, however, the DM must be ready to handle a multitude of situations. Unlike the wilderness or Underdark, where you can control the tempo with planned and random encounters, now there are hundreds or thousands of NPCs — each with their own shops, temples, guilds, personalities, hopes, dreams, and plots. The complexity has increased considerably.

Although complex, one can look at city adventuring and role-playing as being roughly divided into three phases: 1) the adventurers' arrival in and introduction to the city; 2) having fun and doing business within the city; and 3) going adventuring in and around the city. (Occasionally, there is a fourth phase: fleeing from the city.) Each part must be prepared carefully.

## Arrival and introduction (Phase I)

Phase I consists of the adventurers coming into the city, getting their bearings, and obtaining accommodations for their stay. This is probably the most predictable part of city adventuring, and is the easiest to plan for.

Typically, the heroes arrive at one of the city gates, are challenged by the guards, and have to undergo some sort of entry process. If it is an open city at peace, there may be easy entry. On the other hand, if the city is on the verge of war with a neighboring power, this can be a tedious examination where the guards act like Gestapo agents ("Your papers, please!"). The DM must do whatever fits the campaign. If the PCs are going to be challenged or stopped, obviously you should have brief descriptions ready for the guards (statistics, arms, etc). If there are any rules and regulations that the PCs need to be aware of (such as having peace-knots on weapons, as is required in Cormyr in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS* setting), then now is the time to have them posted or announced — not after they're already in the city.

After this, the adventurers enter and will probably feel bewildered by a dizzying array of shops, streets, people, and noises. Unless they have been in this particular city before, they will have no idea where they are or how to get wherever they are going. As the DM, you can let them drift around aimlessly, but be warned: action and play slow down considerably when players start asking questions like: "Do I see an Inn around?" "Is there a place where I can get my armor repaired?" "What kind of houses and shops are around here?" "Are the people all human?" "Where can we stable our horses?"

These are all pleas to the DM to give them some bearings. While they were in the wilderness, it was relatively easy: all they had to do was follow a terrain feature ("We travel westerly along the northern bank of the river.") or stay on a road ("We take the fork that leads to Neverwinter."). Descriptions were fairly easy ("You are in an area of rolling hills with occasional bursts of coniferous trees."). Now you must deal with many streets and alleys, each with a different name, a multitude of homes and businesses down each one, and people — lots of people.

The best way to answer this plea is with a map. Mapping by PCs in the

Underdark is normal, but mapping in the city slows play down considerably. A better choice is to have a stall for Ebeneezer the Cartographer right there by the city gate, where the proprietor is willing to part with a map for 5 gp (or 10, 20, 50, etc). This should be a real handout that the players and DM can use as a reference while they are in the city, and it will speed things up and eliminate misunderstandings between the players and DM. The map does not have to be Rand-McNally quality, but it should show the major streets, major temples, governmental buildings, the citadel, large marketplace or bazaar areas, and any other places of unique interest. It does not need to mark every house, tavern, and armorer, but it should be enough for the PCs to get around.

A nice complement to a map is a guide. This can be a taxi-carriage driver or a young teenage rogue named Ajoba who will gladly (for the right fee) show you about the town. Ajoba knows everything: where the best inns are, who has good stables for the horses, where to find the best prices in the bazaar, etc. (Of course, Ajoba has connections with many of these businesses to bring customers to them for a reasonable kickback.) Eventually, the guide might become an important NPC who can get information in an adventure, and can be a great tool for the DM to guide the PCs to other important NPCs who will advance the story.

## Having fun and doing business (Phase II)

Once settled in, the characters may want to take care of their agendas. To prepare for this, the DM should have a good idea of where they want to go and what they want to do. The key to success in planning for this phase consists of listening to and being sensitive to the PCs remarks and desires before they ever get to the city. It can also consist of the DM dropping hints that there are people in the city that they want to see. Obviously if you listen to your players and figure out the most likely places they will want to visit, you can flesh those places out with descriptions, NPCs, etc well ahead of time. Examples of these kinds of remarks can include:

**Snickery Sam:** Sheesh, we have been traveling for 30 days and still haven't seen any halflings anywhere? Are they so rare this far north?

*DM makes note that Sam is lonely for halfling companionship.*

**Sir Thornwood:** After burning the trolls, we look through the bones and remains of their victims.

**DM:** You find nothing of value except a fine-looking but rusty longsword. It is lying by a battered shield with torn straps. Painted on the shield is a blue griffin on a gold background, and just above it is painted a small thundercloud with bolts of lightning.

**Sir Thornwood:** A fellow member of my Order! Do I recognize the coat of arms?

**DM:** No. This was apparently someone you are not familiar with.

**Sir Thornwood:** Well, we lay his remains to rest and have the shield, sword, and anything else of his sent to the nearest chapter house of the order.

**DM:** There is no mailbox near the trolls' lair. The nearest chapter house is in Waterdeep, 60 miles to the south.

**Sir Thornwood:** Well, I wanted to go there anyway. Very well, I will take it.

*DM makes a note to prepare a description of the chapter house and to consider using it as a platform to give the PCs their next mission in the campaign or to be a source of clues for their current mission.*

**Veronica:** I'm casting a *detect magic* on the pile of loot.

**DM:** You've found a silvery wand, a potion bottle, and a ring that glows with a bright green light with swirls of yellow.

**Veronica:** Hmm. I look each of them over carefully to see if there are any writings, inscriptions, runes, pictures, or anything else on any of them.

**DM:** You find none, although the potion bottle has a tiny skull emblem on the bottom.

**Snickery Sam:** Why don't you identify one of them, Veronica?

**Veronica:** And be exhausted the rest of the day in troll land? No thanks. I will wait until we get to a place where there is a high-level wizard whom we can pay to find everything out.

*DM makes note that Veronica will want to find a high level mage or sage NPC.*

**Lady Das:** Isn't that going to be expensive?

**Veronica:** Probably, but so what? Look at all this gold and jewelry we recovered! And these gems! Once we cash them in, we should be able to afford it.

**Lady Das:** I suppose that's going to take more time. Very well, let's be off to the city, but I don't want to stay too long.

We have to find out what is going on with this river!

*DM makes notes that the city will need gem dealer or perhaps a pawn shop so the PCs can cash in some of their treasure. He also notes that Lady Das the druidess is not keen on going to the city and something druidic may have to be planned to keep her interest up.*

From these and other clues, the sensitive DM can get a pretty good picture of what the PCs have in mind and prepare for it before they get to the city. NPCs can be written up, rules on things like the price of identifying magic items can be researched, and maps of specific encounter areas can be prepared.

What if the characters don't give many clues and you don't know what to prepare? The answer is to drag it out of them in other ways. One solution is to delay their arrival by having them run into a merchant or pilgrim who is coming from the city. This NPC can be chock full of news about what is going on, and the PCs will generally be interested in questioning him. Just from their questions, the same type of information might be gleaned. Here is an example:

**Father Benedicto (NPC itinerant priest):** I thank you strangers for sharing your campfire. There is always strength in numbers while in the wilderness, I say! Frankly I was worried about staying on the road. Last night I was behind the safe walls of Waterdeep.

**Snickery Sam:** You have come from Waterdeep? Tell me, are there any halflings there?

**Father Benedicto:** Well yes, I recall seeing one or two close to the public market, but there may be more. Waterdeep is a pretty big place you know.

**Snickery Sam:** Great, where there are at least two around, there's bound to be a section of the town where bunches more live. Gosh, I can't wait!

*DM, who had no idea that Sam was lonely for halfling companionship, makes a note of this. If he wants more detail of what Sam is looking for, he can have Father Benedicto ask more questions.*

If at all possible, information like this should be gathered before the play session when Phase II will occur. As soon as the PCs give any indication of going to a city, the DM needs to start making notes. If NPCs can't get the information out of them before they arrive, then perhaps Ajoba the guide can get some clues dur-

ing Phase I, and one can hope the gaming session will end before they get to Phase II. If the timing just won't allow it, then the DM, as a last resort, just needs to ask directly where the PCs are going and what they intend to do. (This may involve "winging it" until the end of a play session.)

## The adventure (Phase III)

Another phase of a city visit may include adventuring within the city itself. This needs to be planned like any other adventure. It needs a hook to get the PCs interested, a plot, and fully developed monsters, NPCs, treasure, maps, etc.

There are some special considerations for city adventuring that need to be thought out ahead of time. While wilderness and Underdark adventures have caves, keeps, chambers, isolated houses, small villages, and similar lairs, the "lair" for a city adventure can be within any number of structures: a keep, a prison, the sewers, a furniture factory, a brewery, taxidermist, mage's tower, warehouse, temple, candlestick maker shop, bazaar, etc. Again the choices have significantly multiplied. To give the city "lair" some logical consistency, the DM has to think things out and answer these questions:

- Why is the lair here?
- Why haven't the authorities already taken care of it?
- What do the neighbors know or think they know?
- What kind of creatures or NPCs inhabit the lair and is it logical for them to be here?
- How can I get the PCs interested in investigating this lair?
- If the PCs get involved in noisy combat, what will the neighbors and authorities do?
- How does it advance the campaign?

Once these are answered, then the DM can design the lair, populate it with appropriate villains, traps, treasure, etc, and mentally run through the most likely course of action the PCs will take. Reactions need to be predicted and planned for.

Here is an example. Lets assume that the DM foresees that Lady Das will get bored with the city adventure pretty quickly since she has already stated that she wants to get back to the polluted river mystery theme. He therefore plans a mini-adventure that will involve Das and

an NPC or one of the other PCs (depending on how things flow). He plans that once she gets bored he will have an NPC ranger named Rollins show up and tell her that he is the servant of a high-level druid who heard she is in town. This druid wants to give her some information about the river's condition, and the ranger asks Das to follow him to the park where the druid awaits. The hook should work since it gives Das something to do that she is interested in and she gets the chance of meeting a fellow druid.

Unfortunately, the crazed Morphene sect which is polluting the river is aware of the druidic quest to stop them, and they have targeted the NPC druid for assassination. Das arrives in the park, gets some good information and is about to get more when the druid suddenly falls over dead, a blowgun dart sticking in the back of his neck.

Possible actions by Das: *Neutralize poison* on the druid, cry for help, look for the assassin herself with ranger's assistance.

Reactions: Druid is dead (*neutralize poison* does not work). There are no watch within the vicinity so there is no immediate help. If she and the ranger look, they determine that the blowgun dart came from a grove of trees and there are fresh tracks (assassin has gone invisible from potion). The assassin rapidly retreats. The ranger tracks until they get to the public zoo where the assassin's tracks get mixed in with the public's. The assassin opens cage to the bear exhibit and citizens flee in panic. Zookeepers show up to kill the bears. Das and ranger help them or somehow round up the bears peacefully. The assassin gets away. If Das *shape-changes* into an animal good at tracking scents (e.g., a bloodhound), she can find the tracks that lead down to the waterfront where there are several fishing boats. In the meantime, the watch starts looking for Lady Das and Rollins, since they were observed fleeing the scene of a homicide.

Preparation required: Details for the assassin, Ranger Rollins, zookeepers, bears, watch members, assassin's associates, innocent fishermen. If Das and Rollins are caught by the watch, statistics for a judge, a cleric (to cast detect lie so Das can exonerate herself) and others are needed. Finally, the DM needs to determine where the assassin fled. This area needs to be mapped, and stocked with treasure, information, and a trap or two. The authorities may respond favorably to Das wanting to get the killer and offer assistance (enough so that the final

encounter is balanced, but not a platoon of soldiers). The DM also has to judge how long it will take the assassin to pull up stakes and be gone, and how long it will take Das to round up the other PCs if she wants their help. He also has to determine what the other fishermen know and whether they can give clues on the assassin's whereabouts.

The DM also needs to keep the other players involved while Das is on her mini-adventure. In an earlier article ("What To Do When the Party Splits Up," *DRAGON® Magazine*, issue #225), I suggested that in this type of situation, the other players can assume the roles of NPCs, and this type of mini-adventure is perfect for applying this technique. Thornwood's player might play the part of a city watch sergeant, Sam's player might assume the role of Rollins, and Veronica's player could role-play another city watch member or even Das' pet raccoon, who can track with its sensitive nose and certainly will want to be rewarded with some fresh fish.

## Game balance and the authorities:

A real danger of city adventuring is that player characters can get out of hand and cause some major problems within the city. This is especially true of spell-casters who now have hundreds of people to cast their charm person, suggestion, domination, and other spells upon. High-level warriors, rogues, and others can cause equal havoc. The higher the levels of the characters, the more tempting it might be for a player to "experiment" with the populace or bully them to get what they want. Considering that practically all of the city inhabitants are 0 level NPCs with mediocre saving throws, it could take no time at all to cause some real chaos and throw things way out of balance (For a good discussion of NPC levels in a city, see the text on Demographics in *DM™ Option: High-Level Campaigns*, pages 21-22, and Table 1 on page 22).

Some cities may have a rule that "no magic on penalty of death" is allowed in the city limits. That certainly gets the spellcasters to behave or at least puts some restraint on them, but it takes a lot away from the game. Why shouldn't the players be allowed to use their abilities? Should Lady Das be condemned to death because she used her speak with animals spell to calm down the bears so that they didn't attack the panicked citizens?

Prohibiting spell abilities from being used at all puts a damper on running a city adventure.

The best answer is to enforce the alignments that the players have chosen. My particular view is that any attempt to enforce one's will upon an apparently innocent person through means of torture, charm spells, psionic abilities, or the like is evil. And since I do not allow evil characters in my campaign (again my choice), those who commit evil acts must pay the grim consequences.

A good analogy on this issue comes from the film *Star Wars*. The scene where Ben, Luke, R2D2, and C3PO arrive in town is very instructive. As they arrive, they are stopped by stormtroopers who are screening everyone. Ben uses the force to get the guards to conclude that "these aren't the droids we're looking for." If it was an AD&D game situation, this would be a *suggestion* spell or similar psionic ability. This would be permissible in my campaign because the stormtroopers are evil: they enforce the will of a repressive emperor, murdered Luke's family, slaughtered a pile of jawas, etc.

Shortly thereafter, Ben and Luke go into the bar looking for transport. Notably, Ben does not use his Jedi powers on Hans Solo or Chewbacca to suggest a lower price or free ride to take him off Tatooine, although he certainly could have done so. Had he done so and it was my AD&D campaign, I would rule that this was an evil act. Yes, Hans looks and acts the part of a rough and tumble smuggler, but he is apparently innocent and is not actively opposing Ben and Luke, like the stormtroopers. While Hans' motivation is certainly mercenary, it is not evil.

Of course, despite the subtle reminders that the DM may give about alignment behavior and restrictions, some things might happen anyway. Supplementing the alignment restrictions should be the city's authorities, who preserve the peace and enforce the law. Well, how does a watch patrol of five 1st-level fighters and a 3rd-level sergeant stop the brawling of a party of six adventurers whose weakest character is 8th level and wields a sword of sharpness? Obviously the watch will get waxed.

The answer is that the DM needs to maintain game balance. One of the unwritten, but best quoted rules of the Shadowrun\* game, is "Don't mess with the police." Practically every Shadowrun player I have known has a story about how they messed with the police and got

blown away. Mine involves my prior shaman's particularly fiery death in the Florida Everglades when we (or rather the driver of the hovercraft I was riding in) decided to engage in a duel with automatic cannon against a police vessel that was trying to pull us over. It was not pretty, and I have not messed with the police since then (not that I wanted to in the first place!).

I am not advocating that the DM go out of his way to destroy characters. I do advocate that from the moment they hit town, the characters are made very aware that there are authorities in town (or nearby) that could trash them if they misbehave. This should not be a very difficult problem with low or mid level characters, but high level characters might need more persuasion. For example, if they notice that a platoon of somber paladins guards the gates, and that they have backup by seven winged stone golems and a fiery-haired mage, the heroes will certainly consider whether they really want to misbehave. A more subtle approach might involve people in a tavern talking about some tough adventurers who resisted arrest and then (they shudder fearfully) "Lord Draco himself showed up." Of course, the DM should have "Lord Draco" all detailed and ready to go if the PCs start to misbehave.

## Dealing with the population explosion

As previously mentioned, the PCs now have hundreds (or thousands) of NPCs in the city to interact with. Moreover, there are dozens, if not hundreds, of establishments and homes within the walls. A DM could spend a lifetime trying to give personalities and statistics to each of them, and still not be done, especially if it is in an enormous city like Waterdeep or Huzuz. With all these people and establishments, one cannot begin to dream of all the possibilities of things that will happen in ye olde city. One really should not even try to list all the NPCs' names.

Take Waterdeep from the *FORGOTTEN REALMS* campaign setting. It has a population of 122,000. A simple bit of arithmetic shows that our four adventurers could potentially have 488,000 different encounters, if each of the four PCs were to meet each Waterdhavian citizen and assuming that each PC, being a unique character, reacts to an NPC differently in some way. And this does not include visitors. *City of Splendors* campaign guide indicates that during certain seasons,

there are five times the normal population within Waterdeep. Assuming our group arrives during a peak period, the number of potential NPC encounters has now risen to 2,240,000 ( $122,000 \times 5 \times 4$ ). Yes, this is a bit oversimplified because some PCs will react generally the same, but the point is that there are tons and gobs of NPCs around, and the possibilities are far more than what can be planned for in advance. So what does a DM do?

A partial solution is to use gaming accessories that list numerous NPCs and establishments. Something like the Volo's Guide series will go a very long way in providing a lot of information that is readily accessible, but even this type of work does not fully answer the mail. While it might list the name of the proprietor of an inn and what he is like, it does not give you the names of all the barmaids, bartender, and stableboys, nor will it give you their personalities, goals, fears, hopes, and dreams. And the Volo's Guides will not list the transient guests staying at the inn.

The real answer is that you, the DM, must limit yourself to detailing only those NPCs who are important to the visit in the city. All others are background and you need spend no time on them, at least initially. There is no requirement or rule for you to describe fully every fishwife, urchin, city guard, and bartender that the players encounter. In fact, you should not do so. Only describe those people that the players express an interest in or who advance the story line, and give them only what they ask for, gradually increasing the amount of information a bit at a time, depending on what their interest level is.

At some point, the ever-unpredictable players will express an interest in one of the non-detailed "background" NPCs, regardless of your careful planning and subtle attempts to guide them toward someone else who advances the campaign. Frankly, your one and only choice is to improvise him or her on the spot. Make a few notes (like one or two lines) about this suddenly important NPC so you can remember it later.

I would advise never, never abruptly terminate an NPC encounter simply because it is not advancing the story line or seems uninteresting to you, the DM. Remember that there is an obligation to give the players a fun evening, and if an adventurer wants to visit a weaver's mill, let him do so. Remember also that a lot of vexing problems from players can be

policed by the peer pressure (Doug: "Aw, come on Ted, this is the sixth weaver's mill you've visited! This isn't getting us anywhere! Give us a break, will you?").

Whatever you do, act confidently the entire time. Never once should you waver in your choice of a name, description of an NPC, or their abilities. You should not disrupt the game by thumbing through rule books to consult tables and charts to figure out if the NPC is fat, short, has a moustache, or what color his eyes are. If it is a planned NPC, you should have done all the research well ahead of time. If it is an on-the-spot NPC, just describe him or her in a logical way as if you had it planned all along. If you do stammer and stutter, the players will detect that you just made this NPC up and they may get disenchanted. So put on a strong face and go for it! Remember that you are the DM and the world is in your hands.

To be sure, you need some personalities well developed ahead of time. These are NPCs who are going to be central to the adventure that you are running in the city or to the information that you hope the players will pick up while there. The trick is for you to do such a good job of role-playing that the players will not pick up on which NPCs are preplanned and which are "made up."

Here is an example of an NPC that is made up on the spot. Lord Thornwood goes to get his armor repaired. He stops at Baldwin's Armory. (Inwardly, the DM curses because he thought Thornwood would get his armor repaired at his chapter-house, but he takes a deep breath and starts to improvise).

**DM:** You enter Baldwin's armory. A heavy-set woman is seated behind a desk going over some papers and a dozen workmen behind her are working on various projects.

**Thornwood:** I go up to the lady and ask her the price for fixing my banded armor.

**DM:** She introduces herself as Baldwin, and looks over your busted armor with an appraising eye. "I think, good sir, that it will take five days to adequately fix this, and I could not do it for less than 15 gold pieces."

**Thornwood:** Is her voice really that soft?

**DM** (Thinking quickly): Yes, and she is actually quite pretty.

**Thornwood:** Does she wear a wedding band?

**DM** (not rolling dice, but just making

something up) : Well, she has a gold ring, but wears it on her thumb, not a usual place for a wedding ring.

**Thornwood:** Milady, I believe that I need it sooner than that. Is it possible to pay a bit extra for a rush job?

**DM** (Again, *no dice*): "Well, I suppose we could arrange something," she says. You notice that she is looking you over appraisingly. She calls to one of the workers, and says, "Morker, how quickly can you get this done?" A large fellow, a muscular half-orc, lumbers over, grunts, and mutters "Two days."

**Thornwood:** A half-orc! Are any of the others half-orcs?

**DM** (again, not rolling dice or looking up charts): Yes, two others, along with five humans, and four dwarves.

In this passage, note that the DM gave only a bare description of the place and that details were added the longer the player took interest in the place. Had Thornwood not cared about Baldwin's voice, rings, or the racial make-up of the employees, the DM would not have had to describe them. Note also that the DM has given Baldwin lines that invite more interaction if Thornwood wants it. It could be that she is a widow and pines for a strong paladin husband. Another possibility is that she has a young teenage son, not yet introduced, who has wanted to become a paladin and she has been unable to find a knight to sponsor him. She might want both. If Thornwood wants to just conclude his deal, that will be the end of it. If he wants to role-play the encounter out a bit more, then he might find out what her motivation is.

Lets keep the same example, but instead of Baldwin being just an on-the-spot NPC, she happens to be a planned, well thought out NPC who advances the story line. In this instance, the DM may need to be more aggressive with his descriptions. Note that the DM realized that Lord Thornwood needed to go to an armorer for repairs to his banded mail, and he has planned for this encounter.

**DM:** Ajoba takes you to Baldwin's armory, and assures you that this is the finest establishment for repairing armor in all of Waterdeep. Entering, you see a large heavy-set woman seated behind a desk going over some papers and a dozen workmen behind her working on various projects.

**Thornwood:** I go up to the lady and ask her the price for fixing my banded armor.

**DM:** She introduces herself as Baldwin, and looks over your busted armor with an appraising eye. "I think, good sir, that it will take five days to adequately fix this, and I could not do it for less than 15 gold pieces."

**Thornwood:** Sorry milady, I need it in but two days. I will have to take it elsewhere.

**DM:** Ah well, we could do it in two days, but it would cost you five extra gold pieces.

**Thornwood:** Sorry, but I'll look for a better price. Hey Ajoba, is there another place around here?

**DM:** While Ajoba is thinking about other establishments, you notice that Baldwin seems a bit disappointed and also that she is staring at the coat of arms you have on your tunic. As you turn to leave, she says, "Good sir, stay a moment, what is that symbol you wear on your shirt?"

**Thornwood:** Why, it is the Order of Storm. Do you not know it?

**DM:** When you mention the name of your Order, she gives a small cry of surprise. You see that she has a tear trickling down her eye that she wipes with a hand that bears a gold ring on her thumb. She is a fair-looking lady, and she asks you to come to the back of the shop. She says quietly, "I have something for your eyes only, good knight."

True, this is like hitting the player over the head with a mallet to get him to take interest, but most players will go with the flow.

## Every action causes something else to happen

Perhaps the most difficult things the DM has to keep track of are the results of the PCs' actions. The NPCs of a city are living, breathing beings who have emotions and reactions to things good and bad. Interactions with them by the PCs will cause reactions.

Positive actions generally can result in good things happening, but not always. Take our earlier example of Lord Thornwood the paladin. If he takes Baldwin's son as his squire, he is going to make the young man happy, as well as his mother. Lord Thornwood will also have a handy henchman to polish his armor, water the horses, put the cooking pot on the campfire, and provide another set of eyes for the evening watch.

Yet there are downsides to this henchman. First he must be properly outfitted,

and this will involve a fair amount of shopping for extra clothing, a horse, saddle, tack, weapons, adventuring equipment, food, food for the horse, etc. Furthermore, what happens when the wererats come charging down the alley, and despite fighting bravely, the henchman is killed? Lord Thornwood tries to get him raised, and the resurrection survival roll isn't good enough. Baldwin is going to be crushed, and depending on the circumstances of death and how Lord Thornwood breaks the news, she will either deal with her grief or she might just curse the name of every paladin of the Order of Storm (and especially Lord Thornwood) until her dying day.

There should be repercussions to whatever the PCs do. Getting into a bar fight may not only have repercussions with the authorities, but also affect whether the PCs are even admitted there again. Fooling a gem dealer by a successful suggestion that he buy a 200 gp gem for 3,000 gp should make the PC rich for a time. But what happens to the PC when that gem dealer discovers the fraud when his peers laugh at him and his business is ruined? And Snickery Sam "loving and leaving" his bonnie halfling girlfriend might have grave repercussions when dear old Dad writes to all the relatives and word spreads of Sam's character.

## Recording

During the gaming session in the city, the DM should keep short notes about who the players encounter and what went on. Two lines maximum per NPC and just a sentence or two about an event is all that is needed. It should be only enough to trigger the DM's memory later. An example of notes made during play:

NPC - Baldwin. Overweight widow who owns armor shop. Interested in T'wood. Has his armor; repair in 2 days for 20 gp. 3 1/2 Orcs, 5 humans, 4 dwarves workers.

After the gaming session is over, preferably within two days, the DM should review these notes and flesh them out in greater detail. So much has happened that if the details are not recorded, he may forget them. It is a solid bet that the players will not. A memorable encounter with an on-the-spot Baldwin might easily be misplaced in the DM's memory banks, and if he does not remember what happened, the next time

she shows up, he could make a mistake and have her appear as a slim-waisted blonde vixen. Such a mistake could destroy the DM's credibility and send the adventurers on a false turn.

**Lord Thornwood:** Hmmm. Just a few days ago, she was heavier! No one could do that without magic or an evil influence. I cast detect evil on the woman!

**DM** (gulp): Well, you detect no evil.

**Thornwood:** How is it, milady, that you have shed so many pounds in just a few days?

**DM:** Ummmmmmmm...

The DM could have avoided this embarrassment by recording expanded notes resulting from the game session:

*NPC Baldwina: 0 Lvl, 38 years old, Ch 14 (11 due to overweight condition). 5'5" tall, 250 lbs., pretty face, brown hair, hazel eyes, gold ring on thumb. Owns Baldwin's Armor Repair Shop on Unicorn Way. She is a widow and has son, Braxton, 15 years old. Her husband is prior paladin and she would like Braxton to follow in Dad's footsteps by serving as a squire. Thornwood is her latest attempt. She has given him very good deal on his banded armor repairs (20 gp to repair it in 2 days) to curry favor. When he returns, she will show off Braxton to him and implore him to take him on as squire. Thornwood might show romantic interest, and if so, Baldwina responds. She has not dealt well with husband's death 5 years ago. If Thornwood shows interest in her or takes Braxton on, she will trim down and be more appealing. Braxton is F1, hp 7, but needs training before he can get proficient.*

Baldwina has 12 employees, 3 ½-Orcs, 5 humans, 4 dwarves. Employee working on Thorn woods armor is ½-Orc named Morker. He is good armorer but tired of city life. He will repair Thornwoods armor but polish it highly, hoping that Thornwood needs a shield bearer or bodyguard. If necessary, he will ask for employment. Morker: F3, hp 18, no equipment. Specialized with big spiked club, S 16.

PC actions should also be recorded. During the heat of a gaming session, sometimes an NPC's believable reaction will not be readily apparent. Upon reflection, however, the DM could see how that reaction was missed, and he needs to evaluate whether he should bring it up next time. What if Lord Thornwood did not take the bait and left Baldwina anyway? In the heat of the gaming session, the DM let it pass. After the gaming ses-

sion, he thinks about it and realizes that Baldwina would not have let it go at that. Since he cannot recreate the past, the DM plans for the next session, and makes a note to himself that Baldwina will find Thornwood and lay the case for her son at his feet. Baldwina will hire a rogue (perhaps Ajoba!) to find Thornwood. Then she shows up at the Inn and pleads with him to honor her dead husband's wishes and take her son on as a squire.

Another thing that note-taking accomplishes is the opportunity for the DM to flesh out fully NPCs who are becoming important to the adventure. Say the DM predicted that Lord Thornwood would never take on a squire, but that he did so anyway. Well, it is now time to flesh the squire, a 15-year old lad named Braxton, with statistics, appearance, and personality. The best thing to do is to fill out whatever information is necessary on a 3 x 5 index card and have it handy. The card should contain only the minimum information required for the DM to properly run the PC. When several NPCs have cards, they should be arranged alphabetically for quick access. Attached is a depiction of what such a card should look like.

*NPC Braxton, NG hm F1 AC 4 7 hp  
S 15D 15C 17 I 12 W 12 Ch 13*

*5'8" tall (will grow another 3 inches in next year), 155 lbs (will gain another 15 lbs in next year), Sandy Hair, Hazel Eyes. No scars. Handsome lad, but has terrible case of acne (Ch will go up to 16 once this is cleared up).*

*Personality: Friendly but shy, especially around young ladies. Anxious to be a great knight like his deceased Dad, but afraid of failure. Can read and write and knows a bit about armor repair. Also has gambling proficiency, learned from hanging around with local urchins.*

*Equipment: Purchased by Thorn wood. Chain Mail, Small Helm, Backpack, Belt, Short Sword, Dagger, Light Crossbow, Quiver with 20 bolts, light Riding Horse with Saddle and Tack.*

*Other: Braxton needs training before he is proficient with any weapon.*

## Challenges and rewards

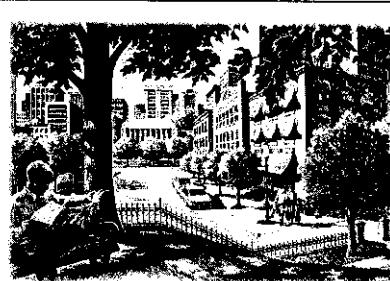
Dungeon Mastering in the city is among the greatest challenges that a DM will face, but is one that is inevitable. Preparation for each phase of the PCs' stay will pay off in the long run and keep the DM in control of the play-session's tempo and advance the story-line. Improvisation will often have to occur,

despite preparation, because of the many NPCs and unpredictable players. Finally, the DM will have to record details that will come up later and take into account the consequences of the PCs' actions. Despite these requirements, city adventuring will provide some of the richest role-playing and adventuring opportunities that a playing group could want.



Paul Culotta lives in Tacoma, Washington, and is a full time national guardsman. He is a frequent contributor to DRAGON® Magazine and DUNGEON® Adventures.

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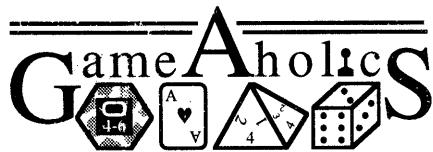
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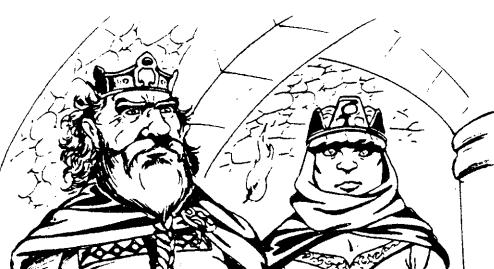
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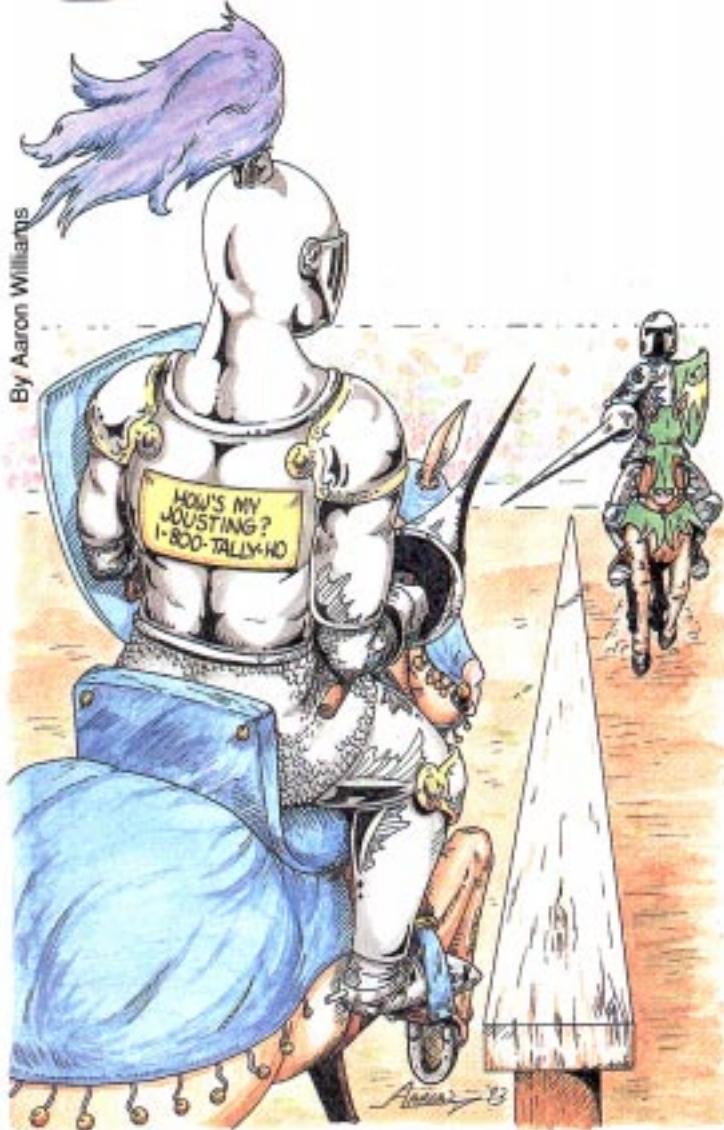
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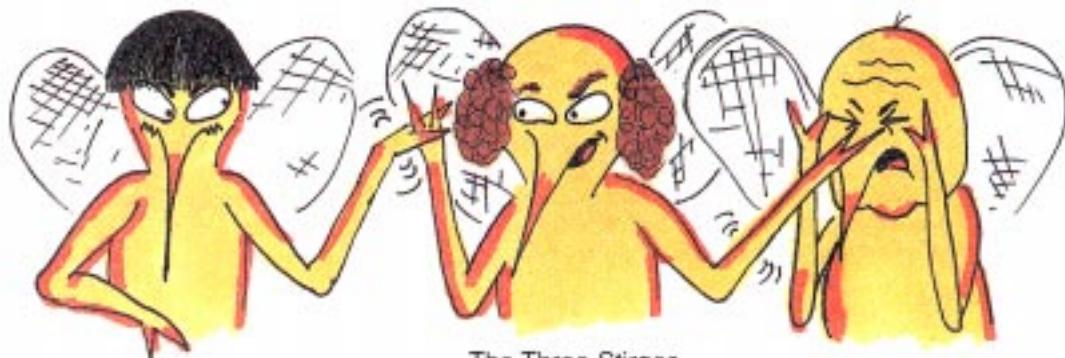
American Heart Association

# DragonMirth

By Aaron Williams



By Jeff Geraci



The Three Stirges

FLINT AND STEEL By Bill Hrenchuk



"Sorry lads...  
The I.R.S. arrived just before ya."



"Are you sure this is what a *Dancing Lights* spell  
is supposed to do?"

BY AARON WILLIAMS



By Matthew Guss



By Andrew Toos



"All right, everybody stay in line. And remember to meet back by the boat when the tour's over!"

"Wow! A wand of wishes with one wish left! I've always dreamed of owning one of these... I just wish it were a bit smaller."

# Knights of the Dinner Table™

By Jolly R. Blackburn

THESE NEW CHARACTERS LOOK PRETTY GOOD. **WOW!! THREE NATURAL 18's**, BOB? YOU MUST BE THE LUCKIEST PLAYER I'VE EVER MET.

**HUH?** OH, UH, YEAH, RUNS IN THE FAMILY. MY GREAT-GRANDFATHER WAS THROWN OFF A MISSISSIPPI RIVERBOAT AND OSTRACIZED BY CRAP-SHOOTERS EVERYWHERE.

OH, SO **CHEATING** JUST RUNS IN YER BLOOD. A CHARACTER HANDICAPPED WITH A LOW ATTRIBUTE IS THAT IT BOB?

I'VE ALWAYS LOOKED AT IT AS A CHALLENGE TO PLAY. HELPS ME BRING SOMETHING TO THE ROLE.

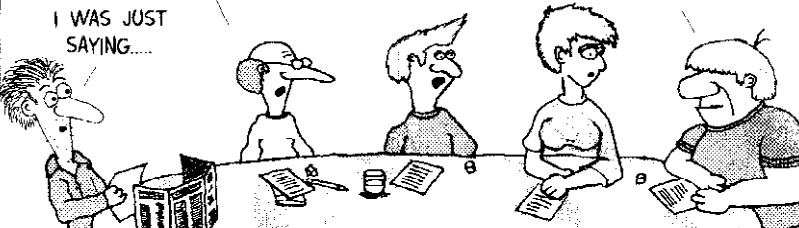
HEY I WAS A WITNESS. BOB ROLLED THOSE NUMBERS FAIR AND SQUARE. HE MUST HAVE ROLLED UP 150 CHARACTERS LAST NIGHT.

YEAH, WHATEVER. I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I KEEP THESE THINGS IN MIND WHEN I ROLL MY **TO-HITS** FOR MONSTERS. "ALWAYS GIVE A MONSTER AN EVEN BREAK" AS GARY JACKSON ALWAYS SAYS.

**DID YOU HEAR THAT?** HE'S GOING TO **KILL** MY CHARACTER. I CAN'T PLAY IN A GAME WHERE THE GM HAS IT OUT FOR ME.

HE'S GOTTA POINT. **B.A.** COULD BE ROLLING ANYTHING BEHIND THAT DAMN SCREEN. WE'RE AT HIS MERCY. IF HE HAD A BAD DAY PUSHING PIZZA, WE'RE GOING TO SUFFER.

IT'S LIKE I'VE BEEN SAYING FOR YEARS... **ABOLISH** THE GM SCREEN.



IT'S ALL DETAILED IN **PLAYER PROPOSITION** 151 WHICH I PERSONALLY DRAFTED AND SUBMITTED TO THE **HACKMASTER PLAYER'S ASSOCIATION** WAY BACK IN 1976.

MY PLAN WOULD MAKE IT MANDATORY FOR GM'S TO MAKE **ALL** DICE ROLLS OPENLY BEFORE THE PLAY-

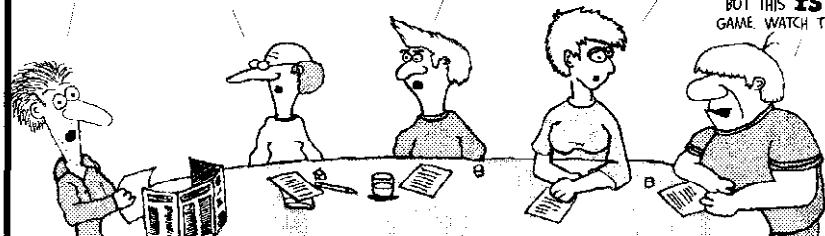
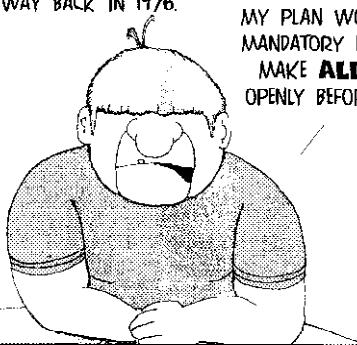
OH WE'RE NOT GOING TO GET ON THAT OLD TREADMILL AGAIN ARE WE GUYS?? HERE'S A LITTLE REALITY PILL FOR YOU: I'M CALLED THE **GAME MASTER!!** GM INFALLIBILITY AND AUTHORITY OVER HIS GAME ARE CARVED IN STONE.

YEAH, HIDE BEHIND YOUR PRECIOUS **GM'S GUIDE**.

LOOK AT HIM.. ALL HIGH AND MIGHTY BEHIND HIS SCREEN.

BRIAN, DON'T PROVOKE THIS. I CAME TO GAME.

BUT THIS **IS** A GAME. WATCH THIS.



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**REVOLUTION!!**



**LATER: AFTER BRIAN'S INSPIRED FORTY-MINUTE ORATION.**

OKAY, I'LL CONCEDE ON THE **EQUITABLE EXPERIENCE POINTS VS. RISK FACTOR** STANDARDS YOU'VE PROPOSED. BUT I ABSOLUTELY WILL NOT AGREE TO ITEM SEVEN OF YOUR RESOLUTION. FULL DISCLOSURE OF THE GM'S ADVENTURE NOTES AFTER AN ADVENTURE?? THAT WOULD CHANGE EVERYTHING.

AH BUT REVOLUTIONS ARE ALL ABOUT CHANGE AREN'T THEY? BEND AND MY GROUP COMES BACK TO THE TABLE.



**HISTORICAL NOTE:** This notable event came to be known as "BRIAN'S FOLLY" what began as a noble gesture on Brian's part ended under a veil of secrecy with the group returning to the table without any concessions on the GM's part. For months, ugly rumors circled the table with speculations on why Brian's Magic-User (Teflon Billy) seemed impervious to all saving throws and attack rolls.



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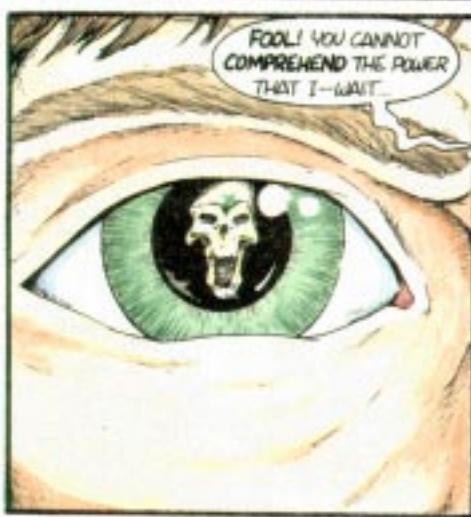
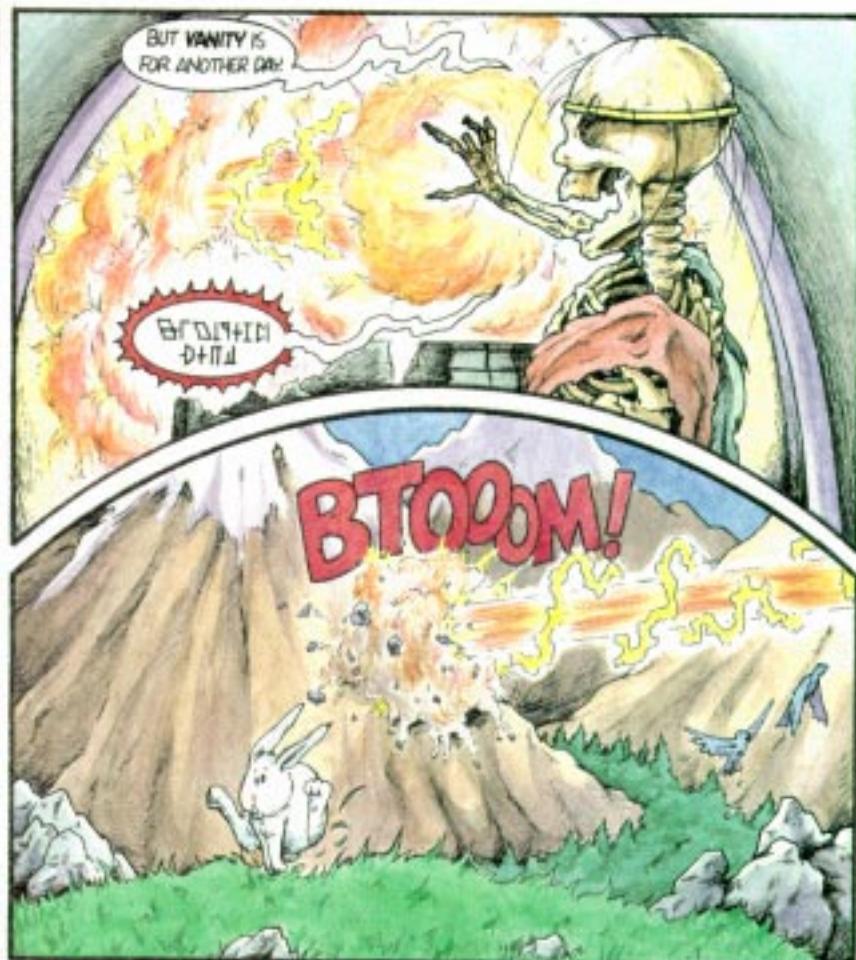
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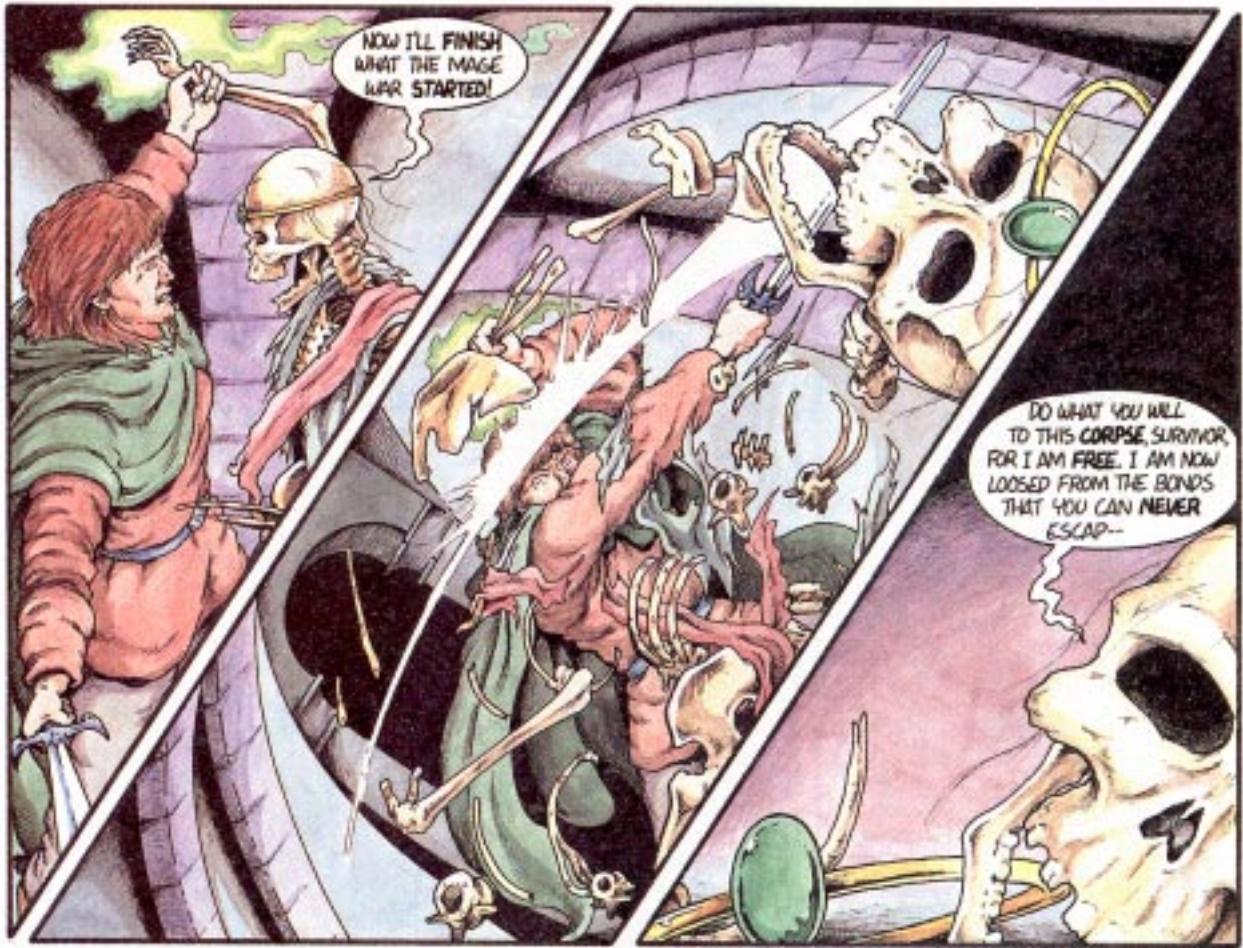
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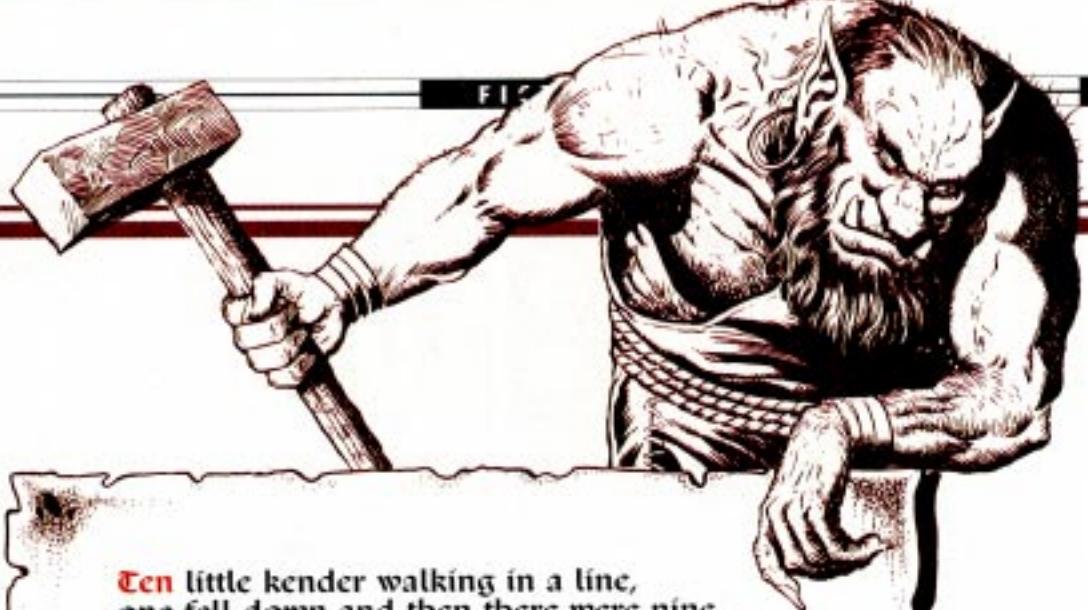
# FLOYD











**Ten** little kender walking in a line,  
one fell down and then there were nine.

**Nine** little kender tempting their fate,  
one complained and then there were eight.

**Eight** little kender climbing down from heav'n,  
one moved too slow and then there were sev'n.

**Seven** little kender crawling in betwixt,  
one got stuck and then there were six.

**Six** little kender playing with a hive,  
one got stung and then there were five.

**Five** little kender weary, tired, and sore,  
one daydreamed and then there were four.

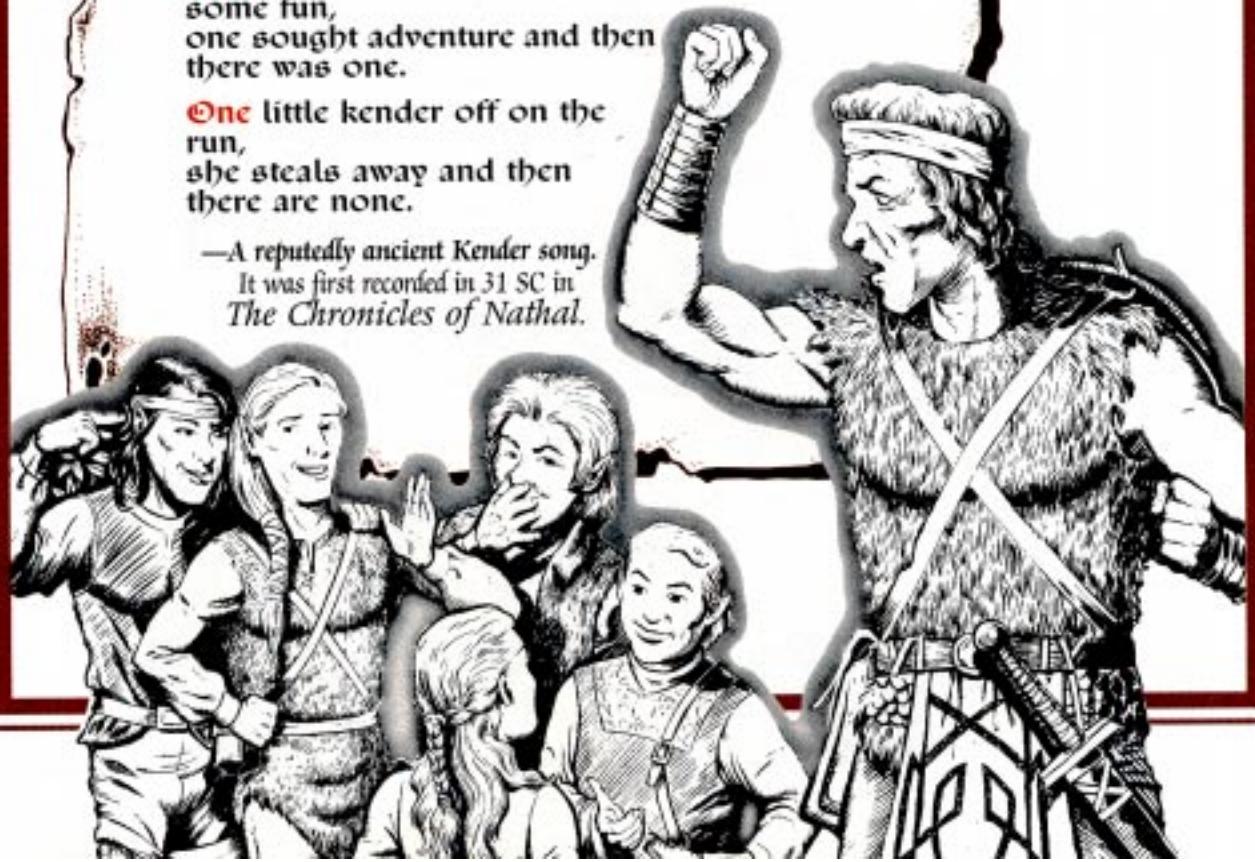
**Four** little kender trying just to flee,  
one found a cave and then there were three.

**Three** little kender swimming 'crost a slough,  
one sailed away and then there were two.

**Two** little kender looking for  
some fun,  
one sought adventure and then  
there was one.

**One** little kender off on the  
run,  
she steals away and then  
there are none.

—A reputedly ancient Kender song.  
It was first recorded in 31 SC in  
*The Chronicles of Nathal*.



Tales of the Fifth Age



# Mission from Kendermore

by Harold J. Johnson

## Part Two

2 SC, early winter:

Malystryx, the Red Marauder, swept the Dairly Plains with her fiery breath. Then the dragon turned her attention West, toward Kendermore. While the hero Riverwind led the kender's heroic stand, a small team was dispatched to warn the outside world of the awesome threat. And of course, for kender, half the fun was getting there...

— From the *Chronicles of Nathal*, compiled in 31 SC

Five straws and she'd drawn the short one. There was no need to draw straws for night watch, Crystal mused. I was the perfect choice all along. I can go days without sleep.

Crystal studied her comrades, sprawled in a heap among the filthy furs and blankets the hobgoblins had left behind. Dare lay on his back, snoring loudly. Myeki slept leaning against a tree trunk. Blister lay on her side with only half a fur across her chest, pushing at Jinx, who slept sprawled sideways across her.

Sleep well my friends, the young sentry thought. Fear not; with Crystal Dreamchaser standing watch, no fearsome beast will disturb your rest. Crystal stomped her feet — one leg was going to sleep. She wondered if standing watch meant you had to stand all night, or was "keeping" watch good enough? It can't hurt to sit a bit, she decided.

Crystal yawned. Keeping watch is not easy, especially on a glorious night like this. I wonder...they said to keep an eye open for danger. No sense watching with two eyes. After all, Crystal Dreamchaser's eyes are sharper than a griffon's. She tried one eye closed.

Of course, I'm such a light sleeper, I might catnap a bit, she thought. I can spring awake if anything comes within fifty paces. Crystal tried to doze, but between Dare's snoring and her empty belly, she couldn't sleep.

Crystal paced, trying to stay alert. The sounds of small night animals rustled in the brush. If I didn't have such an important duty, I'd solve our ration shortage, she thought. I can bean a rabbit at twenty paces with a rock. She picked up a small stone and zinged it into the brush. Wouldn't that be something? To have fresh rabbits waiting for breakfast when they awoke! There was that rustle again.

Crystal smiled, picked up several stones, and crept toward the brush. "Now, I've got you, Mr. Hare," she murmured. "You'll make fine stew." She let fly three stones in rapid succession and heard an outraged squealing.

A wild boar charged into camp! Crystal let out a hoarse bleat, "Look out...!" and ran in the opposite direction. The commotion woke Blister, who dumped Jinx off her and struggled to her feet. Jinx didn't stir. The boar, which had been chasing Crystal around a tree, spotted Blister standing alone and charged! She shouted to wake up the others and ran like crazy.

Myeki was instantly awake and added his voice to the shouting. Jinx opened her eyes, shrieked in surprise and, scrabbling for her lucky feather, dived behind a log. Dare, seeing Blister's plight, shouted and stood, boldly waving to distract the pig.

The enraged boar, now with several targets,

charged headlong at Dare, who looked ready to wrestle the wild beast. But, as the boar charged, a lasso flew through the air and dropped around its head. Hoping to snare the pig, Blister had thrown a rope. With a squeal, the boar tried to flee the annoying noose and yanked little Blister right off her feet.

Shouting for Blister to let go, Dare leaped and rolled out of the way. But Blister's arm had gotten tangled in a loop of the rope and she went sliding past, dragged by the crazed pig.

Myeki jumped forward, waving a blanket to get the boar's attention, then scrambled up the side of a tree. The confused boar, more frustrated by the minute, stopped and blew steam. Then it turned to charge the battered and muddied Blister as she stood shakily, trying to get free.

"Hey!" came a shout. Crystal stepped before the boar, waving a scrap of fur wildly. Dreamchaser will save us all! she thought. "Come on, Mr. Pig, leave her alone! Charge me!" The boar complied.

Blister was once again pulled off her feet and dragged across the camp toward the wildly gesticulating girl. "Get out of the way, Crystal!" she screamed.

"What?..." Crystal couldn't make out her words. Wrapped up in her vision of saving the camp, she forgot to save herself.

The boar plowed into her. Crystal reflexively grabbed the beast's ears as it charged into the woods, dragging Blister behind. At the edge of the brush, the rope suddenly snapped, slinging a winded Blister to a smashing halt against a tree. The boar did not turn back. Dare, Jinx, and Myeki rushed forward.

Blister stumbled to her feet, stunned, holding one end of the rope. "Bit of luck," Myeki remarked. "The rope broke just in time."

"It must have been my lucky feather," quipped Jinx, holding it up as she dusted off Blister.

Blister stared numbly at the rope, confused. "It didn't break." There was silence. "It was cut!" All crowded around to see the rope. Indeed, it had been neatly severed by a sharp blade. But none of them had a knife.

"It's too bad," sighed Myeki at last.

"What?" asked Dare. "That Crystal's gone? She should have been more alert. She could have gotten us all killed."

Myeki nodded. "But, we could have eaten that boar."

Four days of trekking along the broken coast and scrub woodland. Now it was midday, and they were all weary, though at least they'd filled their water-

skins at a river. Jinx shinnied up a tree to look ahead.

"What do you see?" shouted Blister.

"I...I'm not sure," Jinx called down. "It looks like plains for the next few leagues."

"Anything else?" It sounded too good to be true.

A hail of pine needles and pinecones pelted the company as Jinx fell from the tree. Breathless, she gasped, "D- dark clouds in the sky, could be a storm. M- maybe we should find shelter?"

An hour later they stood beside a pile of boulders debating. The rain still had not begun. Jinx claimed it was due to her lucky feather. All were tired of hearing that.

"Looks like a cave," stated Dare. "Let's check it out."

"Wait!" called Blister. "It could be some animal's lair."

"Won't know 'til we look," the brave kender said.

Looking up at the still clear sky, Blister scowled. "Let's keep going."

Dare hesitated, confused. He looked back at the black hole. "Aren't you curious? Could be a bandit's horde," he suggested hopefully.

Blister paused, wrinkling her brow as she studied the bones and bits of fur scattered about the cave entrance. "I don't like it."

Dare kicked at a bone. "Come on! We should at least see if there's treasure." He looked to the others for support. Myeki yawned. Jinx idly picked up a deer skull crushed by a powerful set of teeth.

Blister frowned and looked at the sky again. "Which direction were those clouds you saw?" she asked Jinx.

The girl thought a moment, then pointed inland. "West."

"West?" Jinx nodded. "Storms blow in from the east!" Blister declared. "There's no storm coming!"

Dare scowled at Jinx, but turned away in resignation. "Too bad," sighed Jinx, tossing the skull into the dark opening.

A roar erupted from the cave!

The kender stared as a bundle of fur and teeth sprang from the cave. The great cat stood taller than any of them at its shoulder. A black mane formed a ruff behind the flat head, with its mouth of snarling teeth. Its mottled fur and long, tufted tail looked the twin of the fur Dare wore. It threw back its head and roared again.

The kender ran.

The leonine bounded after Dare, who swung his walking stick to fend it off. The stick broke across the great cat's broad shoulders. With a snarl, the cat batted him through the air with a powerful swipe. "Dare!!!" Jinx screamed. The cat turned from its

downed prey to those still moving.

"Look for shelter!" huffed Blister, dodging.

"Someplace to hide!"

"Too... bad... this one doesn't... just want... a thorn pulled... from its paw!" panted Myeki, diving across a thicket and rolling.

The mention of thorns gave Jinx an idea. "Quick! In here!" she called and leaped into a briar patch. It seemed like a good idea, so Blister and Myeki leaped after her.

Now, though nettles do tend to dissuade cats, they do not make ideal hiding places. Though driven half crazy from scratchy thorns, still the three kender seemed safe for the moment.

Eyes wide, they watched the great lion prowl the edge of the brambles, sniffing for a way past the thorns. It crouched and stared at its cornered prey, its tail twitching.

"What happened to Dare?" hissed Jinx. Blister scanned the treeline; Dare was not in sight. Tears filled her eyes as she imagined that the beast's blow had slain him.

Suddenly, something sailed through the air and landed kersplat against the head of the great cat. The leonine did a back flip, yowling and pawing at the mass of soaking fibers draping its snout. A whistle pierced the yowling, and they saw the bloodied Dare standing beside a thick tree two dozen paces away pouring water onto a spongy mass of moss and whistling tauntingly.

The cat crept toward Dare as if stalking a bird, but he laughed loudly, flinging the moss into its face. He bounded away, only to stop again and scoop more moss from the base of a tree. The cat howled, shaking its head to get its bearings before bounding after the retreating Dare. Again came the yowl of anger as another wet mass struck the cat on the nose.

"What's he doing?" cried Jinx, amazed.

"Shush," whispered Blister. "He's leading it away so we can escape. Cats don't like water. If he can make it back across the river, he should be safe." Myeki nodded. They watched Dare retreat until he was out of sight.

After a while, the caterwaul faded in the distance. The remaining three kender struggled out of the nettles, pulling burdocks from their clothing and scratching madly.

"That was pretty much a catastrophe," moaned Blister.

Myeki smiled, pulling burrs from his hair. "I don't think I've been in a stickier situation." Jinx bit her lip.

Blister rolled her eyes and chuckled. "Are you netting me?"

"Nope," he grinned, rubbing his itching neck red. "But I think we'd better get out of here before we do something rash again." Blister groaned and nodded.

"B- but what about Dare?" Jinx sniffed back tears.

"We've got to go on," Blister said. "He bought us time to escape, to complete the mission: We'd better flee."

\*

Three leagues! The salt marsh had to be three leagues across. But Blister knew it would take even longer to go around!

"I...I'm sorry!" Jinx sobbed. "I...it looked like plains."

Blister and Myeki exchanged glances. "Whatever," the boy shrugged.

"We'll just have to find a way across," said Blister, trying to sound encouraging, but tired. If not for Jinx's bad luck, she thought, we'd have no luck at all. Sighing, she studied the bog. Here at its edge, their feet left deep impressions that filled swiftly with mud. The land ahead sank beneath brackish waters, and beyond lay open channels of sea-green water. Much too vast to swim, she thought. But there might be another way.

"We can bundle reeds together to make rafts and pole ourselves across," she suggested.

"Sounds like fun," Myeki grinned. Even Jinx gave a half-hearted smile, clutching her lucky feather tightly.

Gathering the reeds got them as wet as if they'd

swum the slough. But, once they'd bound the reeds with torn strips of Blister's tunic and a layer of Jinx's leggings, they had three crude floats.

Travel through the shallows was easy, but when they reached deep water they had to work against the outgoing tide, and they tired quickly. The kender had to beach their craft at the infrequent sandbars to catch their breath.

Late in the day, they sighted the far shore. Blister and Myeki poled with a renewed vigor, quickly outdistancing little Jinx. Exhausted and famished, she let herself drift, fishing out her lucky feather. If only she could make up for all the trouble she'd caused, Jinx thought. Ever since finding her feather, it seemed like bad luck was perched on her shoulder. She held the feather up and frowned, spinning in the waves.

Something that looked like a great green rock broke the surface to her right. It was a sea turtle! Delight danced in her eyes. This had to be it — her luck had turned.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to catch that turtle for dinner? she thought. Then no one could call me Miss Fortune. I'll show them. But, how do I catch it?

Jinx wished she had a fishing rod, then realized her poling reed could work. She slipped the red scarf from her hair and tied it to the end. Then, to make sure she wouldn't lose it, she tied it again, then wrapped a stocking around that. The turtle watched lazily.



The kender stretched out her makeshift fishing rod and dangled the red cloth in the turtle's face. It looked unimpressed. She wiggled the pole. The turtle blinked. Then she rapped it on the head. The turtle lunged at the scarf and somehow got its head tangled in the loop. Startled, the creature tried to dive, but the pole made that awkward. So it chose to swim away.

Determined not to lose the turtle, Jinx held on for dear life, laughing with excitement. She quickly overtook her friends, as her raft sliced through the water. "I've caught us something to eat!" she called. Then the turtle headed for the open sea.

Blister watched, bewildered, as Jinx skimmed past. "Where's she going?" she wondered.

Myeki shrugged, then pointed toward a far-away set of white sails. "Maybe she's headed to that ship. With luck she'll beat us to Orebond."

"Do you think she'll be okay?" Blister worried.

Myeki pondered a moment, then noticed something in the water. He fished it out and showed it off with a smile. "I think she'll be just fine now." He held Jinx's lucky feather.

Blister smiled too. She felt sure Jinx's bad luck had flown. She would make it through.

Two left. There were two turtle eggs left, but Blister was full. Their fortunes had turned once they'd lost Jinx. After leaving the bog, they quickly found a road to Orebond.

Blister sighed. So much had happened on the trip, so many friends had been lost, and it was her fault — she was the leader. Riverwind made a poor choice in me, she thought sadly.

She watched as Myeki wrapped the last eggs then began sharpening an ironwood staff on a rock. His brows knit in concentration.

"What are you thinking about? How to get past the city gates?" Blister talked to fill the silence in Jinx's absence. "Not all ogres like kender, y'know. Still, no turning back."

"Maybe," grunted Myeki. "Makes one think."

The girl sighed. "Yeah. What I think is that Riverwind was crazy to make me the leader. He should have chosen you."

Myeki frowned and looked up. "Me? You've done all right. I could learn from you." He turned back to his staff. "Cept I'm going back."

Blister was puzzled. "Back? Back where?"

Myeki Thrillseeker examined his work. "Things have been kinda quiet on this trip." Blister choked at his choice of words, but he continued. "I came along for the fun, but things haven't been too exciting. Now that you're here, I'm going back to Kendermore."

The girl was stunned. "But Malys might be there by now! And we haven't finished our mission! We promised. One of us must get through to the Knights!"

The boy shook his head and brushed himself off. "We're at Orebond. You're one of us. You go. 'Sides, weeks on the sea will be really boring." He stood and shouldered the eggs. "Right now they're probably fighting a dragon back home. Now that's excitement!"

Myeki hesitated, then gave Blister a hug. "I'll tell Riverwind you made it." He turned toward the southern hills. "Uhm, by the way?"

"What?" whispered Blister. She'd never felt worse in her life.

"Thanks for being leader. I couldn't'a done it." She looked up and smiled. "Luck and safe trip, and, er...whatever." Myeki waved as he strode off.

Blister watched him vanish the way they'd come, wishing she could go with him. But she had made a promise.

I should have offered him my sling or half the coins, she thought as she felt for them on her belt. But nothing was there. Now, what had she done with them? She was sure they'd been there after losing Jinx. Ah well, with luck Myeki had found them before he left. They might prove handy on his adventure. "Good luck fighting the dragon, Myeki," she murmured, turning toward Orebond. "It sounds like fun."

\*

"One last chance," thought Blister. "On my own now."

The kender stood behind a barrel at the lip of an alley, watching the crowd of scoundrels, ruffians and ogres passing on the wharf front. She had arrived at Orebond alone and with nothing save the dirt behind her ears. No coin, no food, and her clothes so torn and muddy, she looked like a beggar. Oh well, she thought, things could be — have been — worse. At least she had a plan. With a cheerful smile, Blister set off to find a job so she could buy passage on one of the ships in port....

Half a day later, things were going great. Shows what the right attitude could do, Blister thought. She'd wanted to work, but people here seemed to so appreciate just her offer to help, they gave her stuff for free!

At the butcher shop, where she had offered to clean up (though she smelled more ripe than the rotting meat), a half-ogre had heaved a meaty bone at her. She'd caught it deftly and thanked him for his generosity, though she wasn't sure he heard her above his shouting.

Then there was that vintner stomping winter

berries into a fine paste in her bare feet. When Blister offered to help, the maid had taken one look at her muddy garb and snapped, "Get off! Take a bath!" Now, Blister's policy was never to take something unless she was invited first. Thanks to the maid's generous offer, she made liberal use of the winery's horse trough to wash the mud away.

She was just as amazed to find clean clothes hanging abandoned on a rope in a back yard. Though the shirt and pants were a bit large, the rope worked as a belt, and a stocking made a serviceable sling. The butcher's bone had come in handy for the poor dog trapped in that fenced lot — Blister even left the gate ajar as she left, so he could escape.

Now she walked along the wharf, pondering the ships and her empty belly. How to get passage on a northfaring schooner? She could offer her services, but she wasn't much of a sailor, having sunken only a small skiff in her youth, and that wasn't really her fault, if the others had only explained what the bilge plug was before she'd brought it to their attention. She hadn't found any coin to buy passage, so that left just stowage as a route.

Blister's stomach growled, and she took a bite from the fresh loaf of bread and beefy cheese she found in her hands. Behind her she heard some shouting. People tended to shout a lot in Orebond. Then an ugly ogre came charging down the road at her, a gnarled cudgel in one paw. Blister dodged under a fruit cart. He must not like kender, she thought, absently hooking her foot around the carts rear support. Suddenly the whole thing toppled forward, spilling winter apples in a cascade across the road. An ogress joined the chase.

Blister dodged through the crowd, slipped around a net on the edge of the wharf (discarding the core of her apple), and leaped over a heap of crates. Behind her she heard a cry of dismay as the ogress's foot slipped on the core, sending her tumbling into the briny water. Now the cries of anger and outrage multiplied as other voices joined in. Perhaps she should find someplace to hide till they calmed down.

"Here," called a cheery voice as an empty sack sailed over the crates. "Hide in here." It seemed a good suggestion, so the kender crawled into the potato sack, plopping down on a stack of other bundles. After a time, loud voices surrounded her, and she felt herself being lifted and carried aboard a ship as a bag of cargo. It all worked out rather handily, from Blister's point of view.

After several hours ticked by, the kender climbed out of the potato sack. It was dark and musty, the odor a mix of damp earth and sea water. She could

just dimly make out the vessel's name painted on the door: the *Lucky Son* — of Sanchrist! She grinned as she sat down on the rolling wooden planking.

Things at last were looking up. She had a comfortable berth, plenty to eat — though she'd probably be sick of raw potatoes by the end of the voyage — and clean clothes. "Glad to meet you, *Lucky Son!*" Blister gaily told the ship. "My mission is nearly done!"

"There, are you satisfied?" grumbled the Dwarf as he turned back to the forge. "Awful lot of trouble over one blasted kender, if you ask me. What's so special about her that you had to help?"

"It's important...you'll see," answered the Kender.

"Hummpf!" grunted the Dwarf: "Are you through?"

"Yes," smiled the Kender. "It's finished for now. She's on her way." The little fellow flipped his unruly topknot back and rummaged beneath a workbench for an everfull flask. "Come on! Take a break and share a drink." He raised the flask in invitation, and the Dwarf dried his sweating palms in anticipation. "For now it's enough. For a while we've won."

— And Then There Were None.



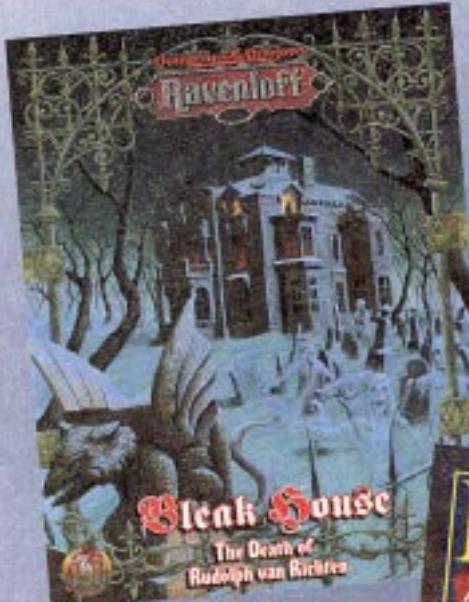
Harold Johnson is a creative director at TSR, Inc. He was responsible for the RAVENLOFT® and DRAGONLANCE® lines in 1995, and has added management of the DARK SUN® line to his responsibilities. Harold is the man who created kender.

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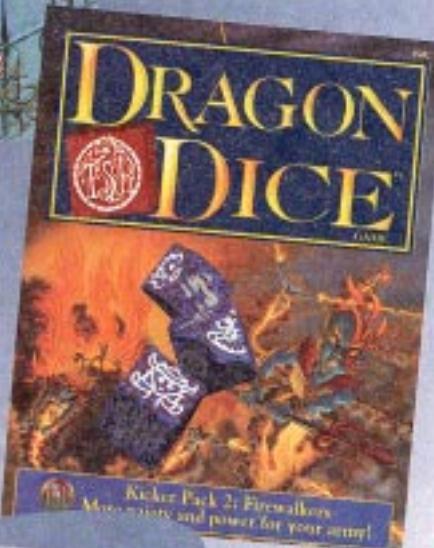
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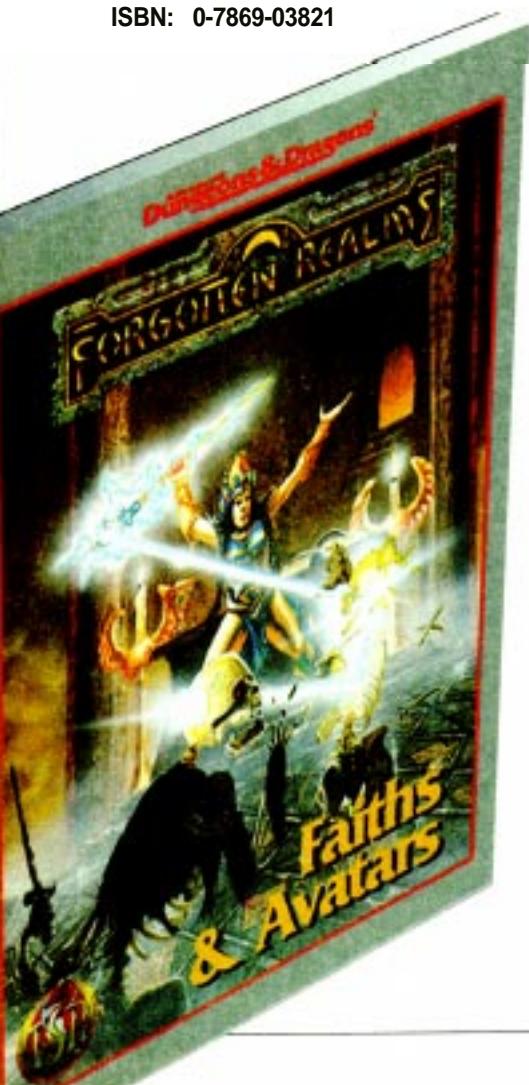
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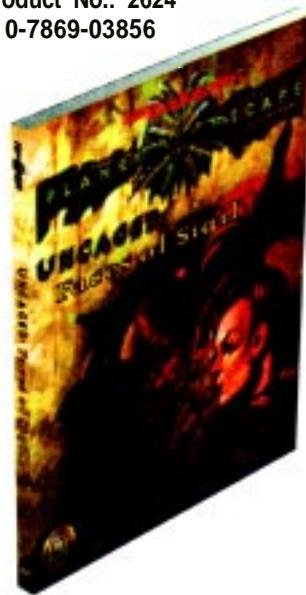
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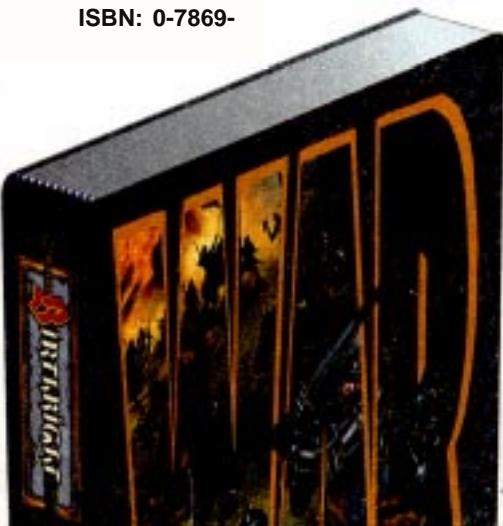
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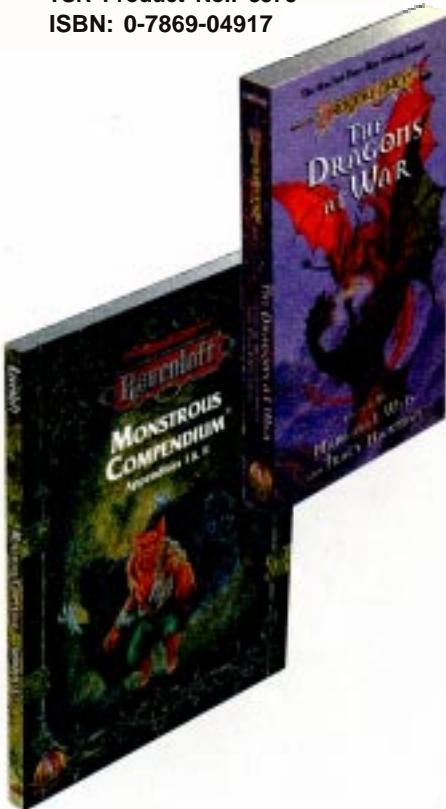
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Cover art by Dan Frazier

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# Clack

Continued from page 120

The Everway\* game has attracted interest from two existing and two possible startup companies, and two startups are interested in WotC's first product, The Primal Order\* game. Jonathan Tweet, designer of the Everway game and co-designer of Ars Magica, remains at WotC in the R&D department. He hopes to stay involved with his RPGs after they move to new publishers.

SLA industries\* game designer Dave Allsop will have final say on where SLA ends up, said Adkison, and "the acquiring company will get the line according to a very generous agreement." Apparently this company will be a reformed Nightfall Games, SLA's original publisher in the United Kingdom.

## Table games

Here WotC apparently plans a speedy return. A new "Stealth Games" team, formed to husband the existing Robo-Rally\* and Great Dalmuti\* games, hopes to release two or three new table games a year.

## Books

According to Adkison, "We'll still be doing lots of books! But we're not moving forward with the idea of eventually being in the book publishing business ourselves; we'll mostly work through licensing arrangements. Kij Johnson has been retained from the original Book Publishing team to support ongoing releases of Magic-related books." WotC is renegotiating its contract with HarperCollins, original publisher of the Magic game-related novels.

A book of Magic puzzles, by The Duelists popular Mark Rosewater, is due this summer. Rosewater recently joined the Magic game R&D team at WotC after a career writing TV comedy in Los Angeles.

## Games and movies

The Mutant Chronicles\* role-playing game, published by Target Games (Sweden), has already engendered a Doomtrooper\* trading card game, video and CD-ROM games, and an Acclaim comic book (Golgotha). Next? A movie. Pressman Films (*Judge Dredd*, *The Crow*, *Wall Street*, the *Conan* films) started filming March 6 on a Mutant Chronicles movie. The director is Stephen Norrington.

(*Death Machine*), and the cast includes Ben Kingsley (*Gandhi*). A press release says the story, written by Philip Eisner, "involves Mega-corporations of the future which assemble an unlikely team of heroes to save mankind from a nightmarish force emanating from the tenth planet." The movie is scheduled for release in spring 1997.

You have to know these things when you're a king: A licensed trading card game based on the movie comedy *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975) has been announced for June release. The small publisher Kenzer & Company (Palatine, Illinois) is designing a light-hearted, fast-playing game that "you can enjoy whether you win or lose," says David Kenzer. "Imagine cards bearing Brave Sir Robin, the rude Frenchmen, or the vicious Chicken of Bristol." Kenzer & Company previously published a 1994 fantasy campaign setting, *Kingdoms of Kalamar*. The movie was adapted to fantasy role-playing over 15 years ago in Steve Jackson Games' Space Gamer magazine. (Contact: kenzerco@aol.com.)

## Frontiers of science

How does your brain determine where you are? Researchers are using computer games to find out.

In February of 1995, graduate student Geoffrey K. Aguirre and his advisor at the Hospital for the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, Mark D'Esposito, got the idea of mapping brain activity in subjects who played id Software's Castle Wolfenstein\* computer game, a precursor of Doom\*. In the game, the player moves around a maze in first-person view, much as a rat moves through a lab maze.

With an editing program, the researchers took the Nazi villains out of the maze and put in landmarks such as tables. They projected a view of the virtual maze on a large screen, and volunteers used a game pad to move around the maze while lying in a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine. As an experimental control, the same volunteers also viewed a featureless maze where they could only move in a circle. The different patterns evoked by the two tasks showed the regions of the brain involved in learning new locations and recalling earlier ones.

MRI technology can provide detailed real-time images of brain activity. But MRI machines are big cylindrical magnets, and subjects in them cannot move. Brain studies of people in motion were impossible before the advent of virtual reality.

Reporting at a Society for Neuroscience meeting in San Diego in November 1995, Aguirre identified the specific brain areas activated by the maze experiment. They were tiny spots in — yes, you guessed it — the parahippocampal gyri, two patches that lie just under the hippocampus. Earlier studies of stroke victims who had damage to these areas found that the victims could not learn new routes or travel known ones. This research may lead to greater understanding of such victims. John Travis described the project in the January 13, 1996, *Science News*.

"I'm the only guy I know who can justify buying video games on grant money," says Aguirre.



Send news to tsrmags@aol.com.

\* indicates a product produced by a company other than TSR, Inc.



By Dwain Meyer

"How do you like my new dragon call?  
Sounds real, doesn't it?"



# the Current Clack

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## Hero Games/ICE split

In February Hero Games (Aptos, CA) and Iron Crown Enterprises (ICE; Charlottesville, VA) announced the end of their 10-year-long distribution agreement, under which ICE produced and distributed over 75 Hero Games products, including the Champions\* RPG and Hero System\* games and supplements. ICE will sell the current Hero Games line until the end of June but will produce no new Hero products.

"Our agreement has been beneficial for both companies," said Steve Peterson, Hero Games partner and co-designer of the Hero System with George MacDonald. But "we feel the best course is for both companies to proceed independently."

Begun in 1981 with the first edition of the Champions game, the long-lived Hero System line went to ICE in 1986. It reached its height of popularity in 1988-90, during the tenure of ICE's Hero line editor Rob Bell. Bell supervised the game's superb 4th edition (1989) and many landmark supplements, which together accounted for a fifth of ICE's sales.

Since Bell's departure in 1990 to enter law school (he is now a lawyer in Washington, D.C.), the Champions line has run a rocky course. ICE has not had an in-house Hero editor for many years, and the Hero System has received limited support. The December 1995 release of its Middle-earth: The Wizards\* trading card game has brought ICE new prosperity. Peterson said that a split between the companies made sense now because it would not damage either company.

### Hero Plus: paper games via computer

Although the startup company Gold Rush Games has a license to produce

Hero System adventures, Hero Games has not found a new publisher for the paper version of its games. But in March the company starts a new division, Hero Plus, which will produce text supplements for the paper RPG on floppy disks in DOS, Macintosh, and Windows format using Adobe Systems Acrobat technology. This allows a document to look just like the original on any computer, layout, artwork, and all; users can print out the finished pages on a printer. Hero Plus will ship disks by mail order, and within a year customers should be able to download the products over the World Wide Web, paying by credit card. The same products will be available by mail as three-hole punched photocopies.

Peterson said, "We can provide more products than ever before, with much less time in production, and at lower cost, too." Hero can be much less concerned with such issues as page counts, and need not spend huge amounts up front for printing. Products need never go out of print. Peterson says the economics make sense by mail order alone to the large Hero Games mailing list, let alone by the Web. Based on his experience with the HeroMaker character generation program and his computer game background, he says piracy should not be a significant problem. "I'm not aware of anybody else doing anything quite like this. It's kind of fun to be on the leading edge."

The first Hero Plus product is *The Ultimate Super Mage* by Dean Shomshak (\$10) which debuted February 17 at the DunDraCon gaming convention in Oakland, CA. Many more disks are planned, drawing on a large backlog of unpublished manuscripts. For more information, contact [herogames@aol.com](mailto:herogames@aol.com).

Players who have waited for the Champions computer game since 1992 must keep holding their breath. The game is still dormant, though Peterson continues to look for a publisher to revive it.

## WotC update

After laying off some three dozen employees and cancelling its non-card game lines in December 1995 (see DRAGON® Magazine issue #226), Wizards of the Coast (WotC; Seattle, WA) has regrouped strongly. In mid-January WotC announced Alliances, a new 140-plus card expansion set for both the Magic: The Gathering\* and Ice Age\* card games, due by early summer. This year also brings another stand-alone Magic game/expansion à la the Ice Age game, self-contained but compatible with the Magic game.

The Vampire: The Eternal Struggle\* game receives two new expansions this year, Ancient Hearts (vampires of the Mediterranean and Near East, due by April) and one about the Sabbat. Richard Garfield's Netrunner\* card game, loosely based on R. Talsorian's Cyberpunk 2020\* RPG, ships in April; it will have one expansion this year. Later this year The Duelist magazine may go monthly.

WotC will make an appearance at significantly fewer conventions this year than last.

## Role-playing

The long-planned Magic role-playing game got a temporary reprieve shortly after its announced cancellation. Three members of the design team (Wolfgang Baur, Teeuwynn Woodruff, and Mike Selinker) remain on staff through March to design a prototype game. Then the Magic game research and development team will decide whether to proceed with it.

"We are still entertaining several proposals for [sale of] the various RPG lines," WotC president Peter Adkison said in an early January post on the Internet. The Ars Magica\* game may go to either Atlas Games (Northfield, MN) or a potential startup company headed by WotC's Ars Magica developer, Wade Racine. Racine was laid off in December.

*Continued on page 119*

# Advanced Dungeons & Dragons® GAME



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1972 saw the genesis of the role-playing game genre, spawned by the creation of the Dungeons & Dragons® game. At long last, young people had an open outlet into the fantasy-fiction universe; a universe with no limit to heroic deeds and epic adventures.

Since that time, the old D&D® game has undergone many changes. But the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons® game continues the tradition; even today the AD&D® game is the most flexible, most expandable, and most popular role-playing game in the world.

#### Flexibility

Most role-playing game systems blend their rules and campaigns into one package: If you like the rules, you're stuck with the pre-generated world included with the game. AD&D takes a different approach. The core AD&D rulebooks give you everything you need to play the mechanics of the game, and just enough flavor that you can play a variety

of settings with only minimal adjustments.

TSR then takes the next step by publishing several campaign worlds for Dungeon Masters to choose from—including the classic fantasy of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign, the epic power of the BIRTHRIGHT™ Campaign, the far-flung thrill of the PLANESCAPE™ Campaign, and the gothic horror of the RAVENLOFT® Campaign. But DMs aren't limited to this selection. As many experienced AD&D players will tell you, playing a homemade campaign is extremely rewarding: And it's an option with the AD&D game!

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No RPG offers the expandability of AD&D. Consider the PLAYER'S OPTION™ and DM™ OPTION Rulebooks, which give players and DMs hundreds of optional rules to enhance their games. By picking and choosing different rules and options, each gaming group has the opportunity to create a customized game.

Other expansions add excitement and danger to the game. MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® tomes, for example, give a DM hundreds of nasty creatures that will terrorize his players. A DM can also expand the scope of the campaign by running a pre-generated adventure, or use other accessories that offer far-reaching intrigue ideas or epic-scale battles.

#### Popularity

Hundreds of role-playing games have been introduced since the creation of the genre. But none have even come close to challenging the popularity of AD&D. It has been translated into ten languages, and is consistently the top-selling, number one choice of role-players worldwide.

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Dungeons & Dragons®

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into the city of woe:

Through me you pass

into eternal pain:

Through me among

the people lost for age....

Before me things

create were none, save things

Eternal, and eternal I endure.

All hope abandon, ye who enter here.

—Dante Alighieri,  
*The Divine Comedy*

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